

Canadian postsecondary enrolments and graduates, 2017/2018

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Student enrolment at Canadian public universities and colleges rose for the third consecutive academic year in 2017/2018, largely driven by higher enrolments by international students, particularly from China and India.

Over 2.1 million students enrolled in Canadian public universities and colleges in the 2017/2018 academic year, up 1.9% from the previous year. This growth was largely attributable to an increase of 15.6% (+40,014) in international student enrolments in universities and colleges, while enrolments by Canadian students edged up 0.2% (+3,081).

Just over half of international students are from China or India

Canadian enrolments in public universities and colleges have generally been trending downwards since 2012/2013, but the number of international students has almost doubled—accounting for 14.1% (296,469) of all postsecondary enrolments in 2017/2018.

While Canada attracted students from over 200 countries in 2017/2018, just over half of all international students enrolled in Canadian public colleges and universities hailed from China (28.1%) or India (22.8%).

China was the top country of citizenship for international students in seven provinces. Conversely, India accounted for the largest share of international students in Ontario, while it was France in Quebec and Trinidad and Tobago in New Brunswick. These variations may reflect specific provincial or institutional policies and partnerships with different countries.

A small share of international students (1.7%) were enrolled at foreign campuses or in distance learning programs offered by Canadian postsecondary institutions.

The growth in international student enrolments was more pronounced for colleges, with the number of international college students up by almost one-third (+30.3% or +23,247) from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018. This increase was mostly attributable to students from India (+18,870). The number of international university students rose 9.3% (+16,767), led by India (+5,562) and China (+5,151).

Enrolments in STEM programs are on the rise

Students enrol in a diverse range of programs, which are broadly classified as STEM programs or BHASE programs. STEM includes science and science technology, engineering and engineering technology, and mathematics and computer and information sciences. BHASE includes business and administration; arts and humanities; social and behavioural sciences; legal professions and studies; health care; education and teaching; and trades, services, natural resources and conservation.

In the 2017/2018 academic year, just over one-quarter of students (26.3%, or 494,244) were studying towards a credential in a STEM program. Enrolments in these programs have risen by 16.4% since 2013/2014. Higher enrolments in mathematics and computer and information sciences (up 46.9% since 2013/2014) led the gains over this period. Meanwhile, enrolments in BHASE programs decreased by 0.7%, largely as a result of lower enrolments in the arts and humanities (-10.6%).



Table 1
Enrolments in Canadian universities and colleges by STEM/BHASE credential program, 2013/2014 and 2017/2018

	2013/2014	2017/2018	2013/2014 to 2017/2018
	enrolments		% change
Total, STEM programs	424,551	494,244	16.4
Science and science technology	203,685	218,103	7.1
Engineering and engineering technology	154,011	177,900	15.5
Mathematics and computer and information sciences	66,855	98,238	46.9
Total, BHASE programs	1,392,198	1,382,412	-0.7
Business and administration	333,594	351,201	5.3
Arts and humanities	316,575	282,945	-10.6
Social and behavioural sciences	244,218	238,620	-2.3
Legal professions and studies	27,393	28,458	3.9
Health care	189,909	203,103	6.9
Education and teaching	91,170	84,318	-7.5
Trades, services, natural resources and conservation	189,339	193,767	2.3

Note(s): Science and science technology, engineering and engineering technology, and mathematics and computer and information sciences (STEM). Business and administration; arts and humanities; social and behavioural sciences; legal professions and studies; health care; education and teaching; and trades, services, natural resources and conservation (BHASE).

Source(s): Postsecondary Student Information System (5017).

Students may change programs over the course of their studies. A previously released [study](#) by Statistics Canada showed that 4% of students who enrolled in STEM programs leading to a college diploma ended up switching and eventually graduating from a BHASE program four years after enrolment. In contrast, just under 1% of students who started in a BHASE program had switched to, and graduated from, a STEM program four years after enrolment.

Men accounted for 62.1% of enrolments in STEM programs in 2017/2018, while women accounted for 37.9%. Within STEM programs, women outnumbered men in sciences and science technology, while men accounted for the majority of enrolments in engineering and engineering technology and in mathematics and computer and information sciences.

Women traditionally represent the majority of enrolments in BHASE programs, and they accounted for 62.0% of enrolments in these programs in 2017/2018. Women outnumbered men across all BHASE programs, with the exception of business and administration, where men accounted for just over half (50.2%) of enrolments.

Number of postsecondary graduates continues to rise

In the 2017 calendar year, 543,321 students received a credential, such as a certificate, diploma or degree, from a public postsecondary institution, up 2.2% from a year earlier.

Table 2
Graduates from Canadian universities and colleges, 2016 and 2017

	2016	2017	2016 to 2017
	number of graduates		% change
University	308,334	315,630	2.4
College	223,194	227,694	2.0

Source(s): Postsecondary Student Information System (5017).

Almost half of 2017 graduates obtained a degree at the bachelor level or above, with 35.8% of graduates receiving a bachelor's degree, 11.5% a master's degree and 1.5% a doctorate.

Women accounted for 57.3% of all graduates in 2017, and they outnumbered male graduates at every level of education except at the doctoral level, where they accounted for 45.6% of all graduates.

Graduates with higher levels of education generally have higher earnings. A recent [study](#) using data from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform showed that, when earnings of graduates with different types of credentials (for example, college-level certificate versus diploma, undergraduate degree versus master's degree, or master's degree versus doctorate) were compared, the gap between the earnings of undergraduate and master's degree holders was the largest. Master's degree holders were earning, on average, 40% to 47% more than undergraduate degree holders two years after graduation.

Note to readers

Administrative data on Canadian postsecondary institution enrolments and graduates are obtained from public colleges and universities using the Postsecondary Student Information System. The counts exclude students enrolled in apprenticeship programs. Enrolment and graduate counts for certain institutions are preliminary or are based on estimates.

The levels of enrolment presented are not meant to represent a complete enumeration of all students at postsecondary institutions during the 2017/2018 academic year. Rather, they are based on students enrolled in postsecondary institutions at the time of the fall snapshot date, that is, a single date chosen by the institution that falls between September 30 and December 1. Therefore, students who are not enrolled during this time period are excluded. This has a greater impact on colleges as they have a continuous intake of students and offer shorter programs.

Enrolments are based on program counts and not on student counts. If a student is enrolled in more than one program as of the snapshot date, then all of their programs are included in the count.

Graduate data are published based on the calendar year.

Some programs at the bachelor level and above can be offered in colleges.

All numbers, including the totals, have been rounded; therefore, sums of the values may not match the total counts. Percentage changes were calculated using rounded values. The data are subject to annual revisions. These revisions are applied to include new data submissions from 2004, any updates to classification standards and changes in concepts.

Available tables: [37-10-0011-01](#), [37-10-0012-01](#), [37-10-0015-01](#), [37-10-0018-01](#), [37-10-0020-01](#), [37-10-0069-01](#), [37-10-0070-01](#), [37-10-0086-01](#), [37-10-0087-01](#), [37-10-0090-01](#), [37-10-0112-01](#), [37-10-0135-01](#), [37-10-0163-01](#) and [37-10-0164-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: [survey number 5017](#).

The infographic "[International students enrolments at Canadian public colleges and universities, 2017/2018](#)" is now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics (11-627-M)*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).