

Education Matters: Insights on Education, Learning and Training in Canada

**Changes in Participation in Adult
Education and Training, 2002 and 2008**



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- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
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- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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Changes in Participation in Adult Education and Training, 2002 and 2008

Lifelong learning is increasingly recognized as an important element in today's knowledge-based economy defined by rapid advancements in technology and constantly changing skill needs. Lifelong learning acknowledges that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations. It also recognizes that formal learning, typically concentrated in the earlier stages of life, does not necessarily sustain individuals throughout their lives any longer, as adults find they must learn new skills in order to adapt to changing circumstances at home and at work.

Lifelong learning is supported by education and training. Education consists of formal modes of learning and is defined as structured learning activities that lead to a credential, specifically programs that combine multiple courses toward the completion of a diploma, degree, certificate or license. Training consists of non-formal modes of learning and is defined as structured learning that does not lead to a formal credential and includes courses that are not part of a program, workshops and seminars.

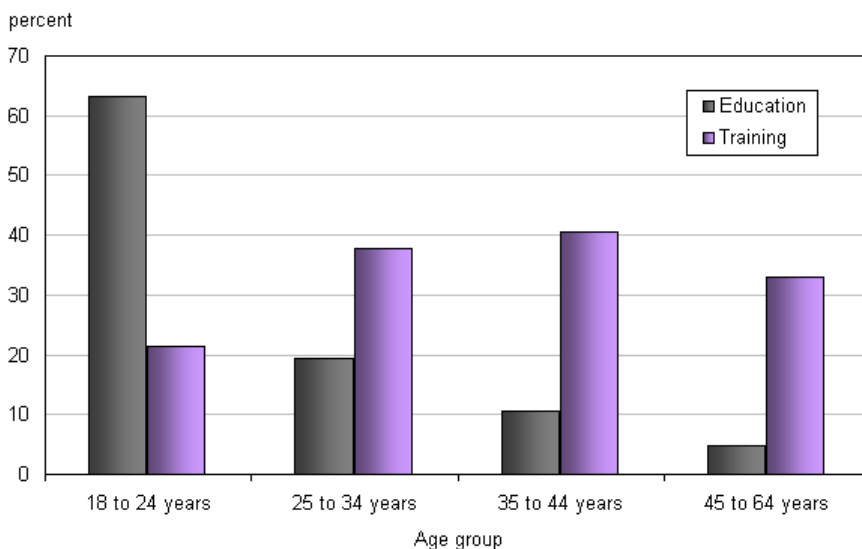
Information on the participation of Canadian adults in education and training activities is provided by the [Adult Education and Training Survey \(AETS\) 2003](#) and the [Access and Support to Education and Training Survey \(ASETS\) 2008](#). This article highlights some of the key findings of a recent Statistics Canada report that examined trends in adult education and training, based on data from these two surveys.

Almost half of Canadians aged 18 to 64 participated in some type of education or training

Between July 2007 and June 2008, an estimated ten million Canadians aged 18 to 64 had participated in some type of education or training, whether it be for personal interest or for their career or job. These learning participants represented almost half (47%) of the Canadian population aged 18 to 64. On the whole, Canadians were more likely to engage in training than in formal education: almost twice as many Canadians aged 18 to 64 (34%) participated in training activities such as courses, workshops and guided on-the-job training compared to formal education programs (18%).

This is primarily a reflection of the type of learning activities that Canadians engage in at different stages of their lives – participation in formal education programs decreased with age while participation in training activities generally increased (Chart 1). A majority of young Canadians aged 18 to 24 participated in formal education, which is not surprising since this is the age at which many Canadians are completing secondary school and pursuing postsecondary education. However, education is not the only means through which young Canadians were improving their knowledge and skills as one-fifth (21%) of 18 to 24 year-olds had participated in training activities.

Chart 1
Proportion of Canadians aged 18 to 64 who participated in any type of education or training between July 2007 and June 2008, by age group



Source: Statistics Canada, [Access and Support to Education and Training Survey \(ASETS\) 2008](#)

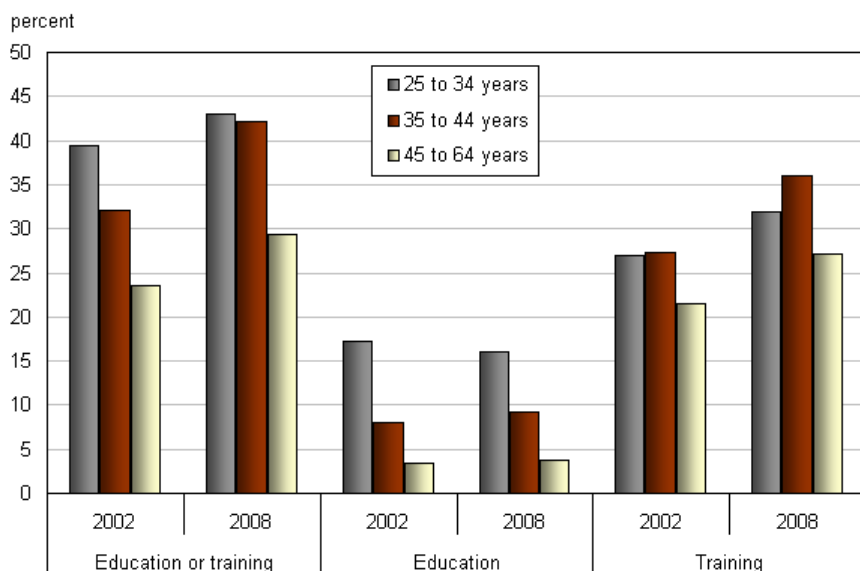
While participation in training activities was higher among the adult population, notable proportions of them also participated in formal education programs 2007/2008 – 19% of 25 to 34 year-olds, 11% of 35 to 44 year-olds and 5% of those aged 45 years or more. Adult Canadians who participated in formal education programs were more likely to have pursued non-university postsecondary education such as a college or trade/vocational program while young Canadians aged 18 to 24 were more likely to have pursued a university program.

Changes in rates of participation in job-related education or training among Canadian adults between 2002 and 2008

Overall, 36% of working-age adult Canadians (age 25 to 64 years) participated in education or training that was specifically job-related in 2008, an increase from 30% in 2002. This increase is wholly attributable to an increase in the rate of participation in job-related training which rose from 25% in 2002 to 31% in 2008. In contrast, participation in job-related education programs remained unchanged at 8%.

Historically, the tendency has been for younger workers to have higher participation rates in job-related education or training than older workers. However, data from the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey show that job-related education and training is becoming more prevalent among middle-aged Canadians. In fact, between 2002 and 2008, the largest increase in participation occurred among middle-aged, followed by older Canadians. In 2008, participation in job-related education or training was highest among those aged 25 to 34 (43%) and 35 to 44 years (42%); among 45 to 64 year-olds, the rate was 29% (Chart 2). The increase in participation was less pronounced for younger Canadians. As a result, for the first time, those aged 35 to 44 had participation rates in job-related education or training that were similar to those of younger Canadians aged 25 to 34 years.

Chart 2
Proportion of Canadians aged 25 to 64 who participated in job-related education or training, by age group, 2002 and 2008



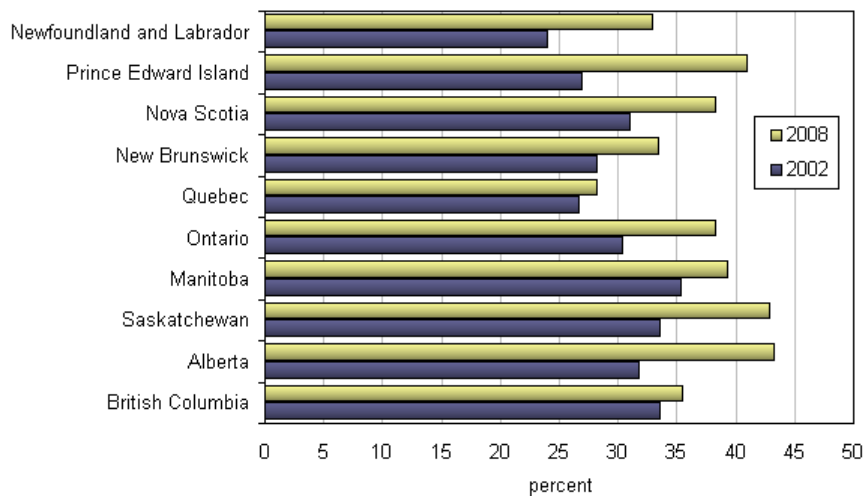
Source: Statistics Canada, [Adult Education and Training Survey \(AETS\), 2003](#) and [Access and Support to Education and Training Survey \(ASETS\), 2008](#)

Males and females saw similar increases in their rates of participation in job-related education or training between 2002 and 2008, with both rising from 30% to 36% over the period.

Previous surveys and studies have shown that education is strongly linked to participation in lifelong learning: the higher the level of education a person has, the higher the rate of participation in further learning activities. Data from the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey support these findings – in 2008, the rate of participation in job-related education or training rose from 14% of those with less than a high school education, to 25% of those with high school, to 44% of those with a postsecondary education. Notable gains were made between 2002 and 2008 in participation among those with less than a high school education, with the rate increasing from 8% in 2002 to 14% in 2008. No such gain was evident, however, among those with only a high school education, with the participation rate being similar in both 2002 and 2008.

In 2008, rates of participation in job-related education and training among 25 to 64 year-olds were well above the national average of 36% in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island (Chart 3). Large gains in the participation rate between 2002 and 2008 were evident in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The rate of participation was well below the national average in both years in Quebec, and it changed little between the two years (27% in 2002 and 28% in 2008). In contrast, the participation rate was above the national average in both years in Manitoba and, while higher than the national average in British Columbia in 2002 (34%), the change over the period was relatively small (36% in 2008).

Chart 3
Proportion of Canadians aged 25 to 64 who participated in job-related education or training, by province, 2002 and 2008



Source: Statistics Canada, [Adult Education and Training Survey \(AETS\), 2003](#) and [Access and Support to Education and Training Survey \(ASETS\), 2008](#)

Finally, differences are apparent when participation rates among the Canadian-born are compared to those born outside Canada, with the gap becoming larger in 2008 compared to 2002. In 2002, 31% of Canadian-born adults between the ages of 25 and 64 reported participating in job-related education or training, compared to 26% of the foreign-born; by 2008, these rates were 37% and 30%, respectively.

Intensity of training

Canadians who participated in job-related training spent an average of 50 hours in their training activities. This translates to eight days of training over a twelve-month period, based on a training day of 6 hours. Males spent more time in training than females (57 hours and 44 hours, respectively).

When intensity (average hours) of job-related training was examined by level of educational attainment and employment status, an interesting relationship was found in comparison with participation. For each of these two characteristics, the group with the lowest participation rate was also the group with the highest intensity of job-related training. For example, when examined by level of educational attainment, although those with less than high school had the lowest participation rate, participants with this level of education had the highest intensity of training. Similarly, while those who were not employed were the least likely to take job-related training, they were also the group whose participants had the highest intensity of job-related training.

The vast majority of job-related training activities were sponsored by employers

The majority of job-related training activities undertaken by employed adult Canadians aged 25 to 64 in 2002 were employer sponsored, with that share rising from 88% in 2002 to 91% in 2008.

Between 2002 and 2008, the proportion of employer-sponsored job-related training activities increased more among Canadians aged 35 to 44 and 45 to 64 compared to younger Canadians aged 25 to 34. The proportion also increased more among those with a high school diploma compared to those with postsecondary education. When examined by province, the proportion of job-related training activities that were employer sponsored increased the most in Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba. In contrast it decreased in Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Alberta.

Conclusion

Given ongoing changes in technologies, work methods and organizational structures, the theme of lifelong learning continues to resonate with employers, employees and policy makers. Learning does not stop with formal education, but is a process that happens throughout the lifecycle.

Change is evident in the participation of Canadian adults in education and training activities. Considering only the adult population aged 25 to 64, the evidence suggests that engagement in job-related education and training activities is no longer concentrated among the young but increasingly involves individuals aged 35 to 44 and 45 to 64. Another important indicator of change is the increased participation of those with less than high school in job-related education and training. Overall, employers continue to be a key source of support for job-related education and training, investing in skills development not only for employees with a postsecondary education, but also for those with a high school education or less.

Further analysis of data from the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey is needed to fully explore the motivations of Canadian adults for engaging in education and training activities, barriers to participation and the reasons why certain groups are underrepresented in such learning activities.

Reference

Adapted from Tamara Knighton, Filsan Hujelah, Joe Iacampo and Gugsu Werkneh. 2009. [Lifelong Learning among Canadians Aged 18 to 64 Years: First Results from the 2008 Access and Support to Education and Training Survey](#). Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistic: Research Papers. No. 079. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-595-M. /pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2009079-eng.htm (accessed on February 15, 2010).