



Where Our Students Are Educated

Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada

by Deani Neven Van Pelt, Jason Clemens, Brianna Brown, and Milagros Palacios

This study analyzes enrolments in public schools, independent schools, and home schooling in Canada over the 2000/01 to 2012/13 period. During this period, the number of Canadians aged 5 to 17 declined by 6.4 percent. Every province, except Alberta, recorded a decline in their school-aged population over this 13 year period.

Public schools

Education in public schools is the dominant form of education in all provinces. In 2012/13, New Brunswick had the highest level of enrolment in public schools (98.7 percent). Quebec had the lowest level of public school enrolment (87.3 percent).

Over the period 2000/01 to 2012/13, every province except Alberta (which had an increase of 7.2 percent) recorded an overall decline in enrolment in public schools. Newfoundland and Labrador recorded the largest decline in public school enrolment over the 13-year period (-25.1 percent).

Considered from the perspective of share of total enrolment, every province including Alberta experienced a decline in the share of total students receiving their education from public schools over the period.

Each province provides a majority language public school system (English in nine provinces and French in Quebec) as well as the official minority language system (French in nine provinces and English in Quebec). The highest rate of Anglophone, non-religious public school enrolment in 2012/13 was in Newfoundland and Labrador (98.0 percent). Not surprisingly, Quebec maintained the lowest level of

enrolment in Anglophone public schools (8.9 percent). The lowest enrolment level outside of Quebec was Ontario (63.1 percent).

Quebec maintains the highest level of enrolment in public Francophone schools (78.4 percent). New Brunswick follows Quebec in terms of enrolment in public Francophone schools with 28.4 percent. Four provinces have less than one percent of their students in Francophone public schools, with Newfoundland and Labrador registering the overall lowest rate of enrolment (0.5 percent).

Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta also offer Anglophone religious schools within their respective public school systems, mainly Roman Catholic separate schools. Over one in five students in 2012/13 in these provinces attends an Anglophone separate school: 26.5 percent in Ontario, 21.9 percent in Saskatchewan, and 23.1 percent in Alberta. In addition, both Ontario and Alberta offer Francophone Roman Catholic separate schools in their public school systems, accounting for 3.3 percent of total enrolment in Ontario and 0.2 percent in Alberta.

Over the 2001/02 to 2012/13 period, enrolment in separate schools in Ontario, both in absolute numbers and as a share

of total enrolment, declined. On the other hand, enrolment at separate schools in Alberta, both in terms of absolute numbers and as a share of total enrolment, grew.

The final category of public schooling (only available in Alberta) is charter schools. In 2012/13, 1.3 percent of Alberta students attended a charter school and, over the period, charter school enrolment increased 229.1 percent.

Independent schools

Five provinces—Quebec and the four western provinces—provide government funding for independent schools. Ontario and the four Atlantic provinces provide no financial support to independent schools.

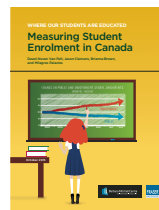
Quebec maintains the highest level of enrolment in independent schools (12.6 percent) with British Columbia following closely (11.6 percent). New Brunswick maintains the lowest level of enrolment at independent schools (0.7 percent). Indeed, all the Atlantic provinces record comparatively low levels of independent school enrolment. Ontario has the fourth highest level of enrolment in independent schools (5.6 percent), even though it provides no financial support for such schooling.

Every province except Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick (-2.3 and -14.0 percent, respectively) recorded

growth in the number of students enrolled in independent schools between 2000/01 and 2012/13. Saskatchewan recorded the strongest growth in independent school enrolment (plus 34.2 percent) over this period. The share of total enrolment represented by independent schools increased in every province between 2000/01 and 2012/13.

Home schooling

Parents are the primary providers of education to students who are home schooled. Comprehensive data for all the provinces is available from 2007/08 onwards. In 2012/13, Alberta recorded the highest rate of students enrolled in home schooling at 1.4 percent. Although nine provinces saw an increase in home school registrations and an increase in the share of total enrolment represented by home schooling, in seven provinces enrolment rates were less than 1 percent. Home schooling remains a modest, but growing part of education in Canada.



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Public school enrolment as a share of total enrolment, by type of school, 2012/13

