

PARTICIPATION IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

WHAT IS IT?

The proportion of Canadians aged 20 to 24 participating in post-secondary education (university, college, or trades program), according to Statistics Canada's annual Labour Force Survey. This indicator measures the skill and knowledge levels of young Canadians who are preparing to enter the workforce.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEARNING IN CANADA?

Early adulthood is an ideal stage for formal education, as the majority of young adults have fewer of the responsibilities—both familial and financial—that make participating in formal education difficult later in life.

Post-secondary participation during a person's early 20s not only provides valuable skills, but establishes critical learning habits that are important for personal and professional success throughout one's entire life.

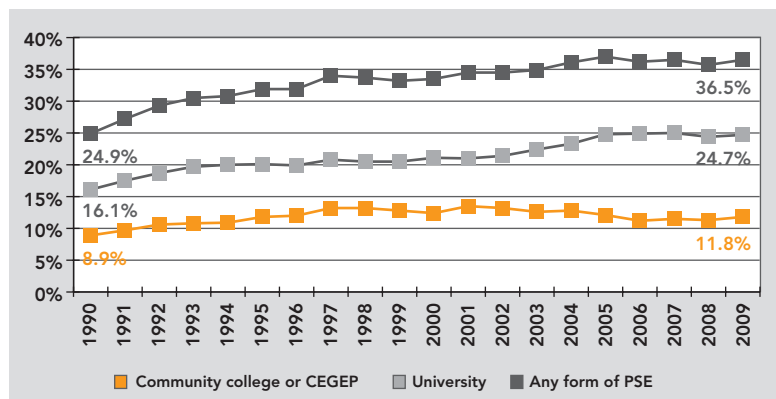
PROPORTION OF YOUNG ADULTS PARTICIPATING IN PSE REACHES ALL-TIME HIGH

In 2009, the proportion of young adults participating in formal post-secondary education (PSE) rose to its highest point in Canadian history. Over the past 20 years the overall trend has seen a steady increase from 25% in 1990 to 37% in 2009 (see Chart 1).

UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE DRIVES STEADY CLIMB IN PSE PARTICIPATION

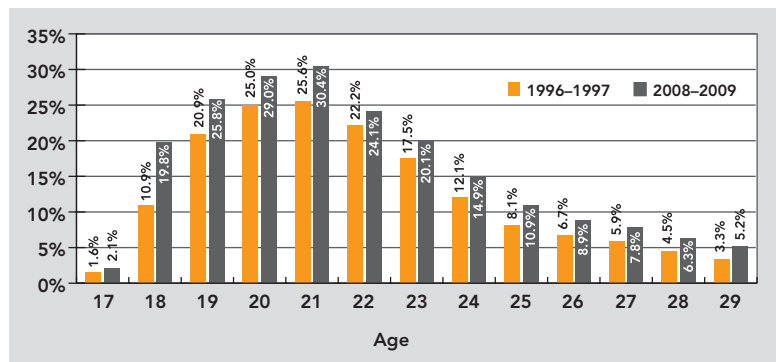
The increasing proportion of young people attending Canadian universities has been the main driver behind the overall increase in PSE participation rates over the last decade. Of those attending university, the highest percentage increase was among 18-year-olds whose participation nearly doubled from 11% in the 1996–1997 school year to 20% in 2008–2009 (see Chart 2). The college participation rate for 18-year-olds over the same period of time remained practically unchanged.

CHART 1: Post-secondary participation, ages 20–24, 1990–2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

CHART 2: Participation rate at the university level, Canada, 1996–1997 and 2008–2009



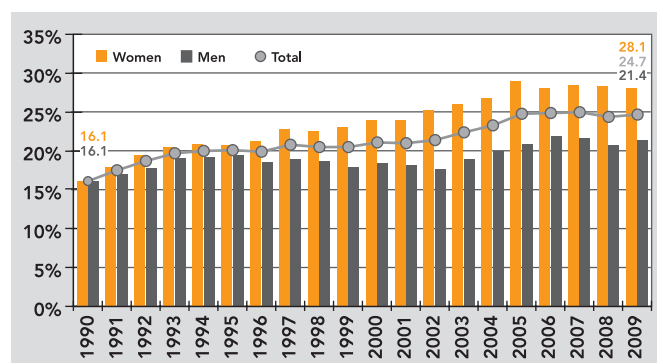
Source: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Statistics Canada's Canadian Education Statistics Council, *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2009). Data updated February 25, 2010, Catalogue no. 81-582-XIE.

THE UNIVERSITY GENDER GAP

According to Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey (LFS), in 1990 more than 16% of Canadian men aged 20 to 24 were enrolled in university—almost exactly the same rate as women. Since then, young men in Canada have consistently shown a lower university participation rate than similarly aged women.

In 2009, 28% of young women (aged 20 to 24) were attending university compared to 21% of young men (see Chart 3).

CHART 3: University attendance, ages 20–24, by gender, 1990–2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

CANADIAN YOUTH RANK HIGH INTERNATIONALLY IN PSE PARTICIPATION

Canada’s PSE participation rates for youth rank very high when compared to jurisdictions across the world.

When making such comparisons, it is necessary to account for the variance in educational structures and practices from country to country. For example, youth in Canada attend and often complete PSE at earlier ages than in some European countries. As a result, in considering 20- to 24-year-olds it is necessary to include those who have PSE education but are not currently attending school.

Table 1 shows that Canada ranks third among 24 OECD countries for the rate at which its 20- to 24-year-olds participate in education, behind Poland and France.

TABLE 1: Distribution of 20- to 24-year-olds, by educational situation, selected OECD countries, 2005

OECD countries	Not in education, with tertiary education (%)	In education (%)	Total (%)
Poland	1.0%	62.7%	63.7%
France	11.5%	47.4%	58.9%
Canada	16.5%	41.6%	58.1%
Denmark	3.5%	54.2%	57.7%
Netherlands	8.0%	49.2%	57.2%
Finland	3.0%	52.8%	55.8%
Ireland	27.4%	28.0%	55.4%
Luxembourg	6.5%	47.4%	53.9%
Hungary	4.6%	46.6%	51.2%
Spain	10.0%	40.7%	50.7%
Belgium	13.8%	36.1%	49.9%
Greece	6.6%	42.6%	49.2%
United States	12.7%	36.1%	48.7%
Country mean *	7.3%	41.4%	48.7%
Norway	5.2%	41.5%	46.7%
Germany	2.5%	43.9%	46.5%
United Kingdom	14.4%	31.6%	46.0%
Sweden	2.7%	41.6%	44.4%
Portugal	5.1%	37.4%	42.5%
Australia	4.2%	38.3%	42.5%
Switzerland	4.4%	37.3%	41.7%
Italy	1.6%	38.6%	40.2%
Czech Republic	2.5%	35.9%	38.4%
Slovak Republic	4.0%	31.0%	35.0%
Austria	4.2%	30.4%	34.6%

* Country mean for the 24 OECD countries in this table

Note: Observations with missing values for level of education or educational attendance status have been excluded from the calculations.

Source: OECD INES-Network B, Transition database 2007

For more information on the post-secondary sector in Canada, please see the Canadian Council on Learning’s February 2009 report, *Post-secondary Education in Canada: Meeting our Needs?*, available at www.ccl-cca.ca/pse.