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School Enrolments in Québec and the OECD Countries in 1995–96

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Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has published a series of education indicators for a number of years. Among these indicators are enrolment rates by age. This bulletin compares enrolment rates in Québec with those in the OECD countries. The indicators for the OECD countries are taken from the most recent edition of the series published by that organization in *Education at a Glance. OECD Education Indicators 1998*. The calculations for the province of Québec were done by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ). The rates are reported for the 1995–96 school year.

The enrolment rates were calculated by dividing the number of students in a given age group by the total population of the same age group (multiplied by 100). School population was expressed in numbers of individuals and included persons studying full time and part time. Adult education students in programs leading to the same type of certification as "regular" students were included in the school population. The rates attained were calculated on the basis of the individual's age on January 1.

The rates must be interpreted with caution. First, there are significant differences in education systems from country to country. In addition, the quality of the statistics transmitted to the OECD by each country may vary. Hence, the figures should be considered to represent orders of magnitude, and an analysis of very fine differences is to be avoided.

Results

It is possible to determine the number of years of education an individual may have attained by adding the enrolment rates observed at the various ages. The OECD proposes an indicator known as "**schooling expectancy**" for each age after the age of four. This indicator makes it possible to estimate the number of years of full-time and part-time education attained by a five-year-old. The results of this calculation are presented in [Table 1](#).

Among OECD countries, this figure was between 12 and 19 years at all levels of the education system, with an average of 16 years. With a schooling expectancy of 19.4 years, Québec was among the leaders, along with Australia (19.3 years), Belgium (18.3 years) and Sweden (18.0 years). In Australia, Québec and Sweden, these relatively high figures were partially the result of the large number of part-time students. However, taking into account only full-time students, Québec still ranked among the countries that had the most educated populations, with a schooling expectancy of 16.7 years, along with Finland (17.2 years), Denmark (17.1 years), Spain (16.7 years), Belgium (16.6 years), Germany (16.5 years), France (16.5), and The Netherlands (16.5 years). The average among the OECD countries was 15.4 years.

With regard to postsecondary education, schooling expectancy in Québec was 4.7 years, in comparison with 2.3 years for the OECD average. Québec led, followed by Canada (including Québec) (4.1 years), the United States (3.7 years) and Australia (3.6 years). Various factors explained the high result. First, postsecondary education in Québec includes preuniversity education, which elsewhere is included in secondary or university education. The result is also explained by the relative size of Québec's continuing education programs and by the existence of short certificate and diploma programs offered by Québec universities. With regard to full-time postsecondary education, Québec retained its leading position, with a schooling expectancy of 3.3 years, closely followed by Finland (3.2 years), Canada (including Québec) (2.8 years), Belgium (2.6 years), France (2.6 years), and Spain (2.5 years).

Table 2 presents **enrolment rates by age**, all levels of education considered together. The relationship between the school population aged five years and up and the population between the ages of five and 29 — an overall measure — provides a list such as that in Table 1. Québec ranks first, with a rate of 78.0%, followed by Australia (76.7%); close behind are Belgium (70.8%) and Iceland (70.5%). The average among the OECD countries was 62.8%.

Other than differences in the intensity of school attendance, the rates for each age group emphasized the differences in education-system structures. In this regard, Québec lagged far behind the OECD countries regarding preschool education before the age of five years. Québec's level for the two- to four-year-old age group was only 4.5%, in comparison with an average of 41.0% in the OECD countries. It should be pointed out that, as regards preschool education, the situations varied tremendously from one country to another. The nature of the services offered, as well as the methods each country used to compile its statistics on such services, were very different from country to country. The preschool level attained might include daycare services, which devote very little time to academic learning. Québec, in which similar services exist, did not include them in its education statistics.

Among 5 to 14-year-olds, school attendance was generally compulsory. Québec, with an enrolment rate of 96.0%, ranked close to the average of the OECD countries (97.6%). Starting at the age of 15 years, however, Québec was among the countries with the highest enrolment rates, along with Australia, Belgium and Finland. The rates of Québec and these countries were much higher than the average.

Table 3 depicts **postsecondary education**, which the OECD divided into two categories: non-university postsecondary education (which corresponds to college-level education in Québec) and university postsecondary education. Overall, Québec ranked first by a clear margin, with an enrolment rate of 20.3% between the ages of 17 and 34, followed by Canada (including Québec) (16.9%), the United States (16.2%) and Australia (15.0%). The average among the OECD countries was 11.2%. The rates for the various age groups presented in Table 3 confirmed the strong performance of Québec both among those under 22 years of age and those 22 years of age and up.

Conclusion

Québec compared favourably with the OECD countries in terms of school enrolments. Québec was among the leaders, along with the Scandinavian countries, Australia, Belgium, Germany, the United States, and France.

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Table 1 Schooling Expectancy in Québec and the OECD Countries*

	Full-time and Part-time Students		Full-time Students	
	All Levels of Education	Postsecondary Education	All Levels of Education	Postsecondary Education
Australia	19.3	3.6	14.1	1.7
Austria	15.8	2.0	15.4	1.8
Belgium	18.3	2.8	16.6	2.6
Canada (including Québec)	17.1	4.1	15.1	2.8
Czech Republic	14.6	1.1	14.6	1.0
Denmark	17.1	2.3	17.1	2.3
Finland	17.2	3.2	17.2	3.2
France	16.5	2.6	16.5	2.6
Germany	16.6	1.9	16.5	1.8
Greece	14.2	2.1	14.0	2.1
Hungary	14.8	1.3	13.9	0.8
Iceland	17.5	1.8	16.2	1.8
Ireland	15.6	2.2	14.7	1.7
Italia	m	m	m	m
Japan	m	m	m	m
Korea	14.8	2.5	14.8	2.5
Luxembourg	m	m	m	m
Mexico	12.0	0.8	12.0	0.8
Netherlands	17.5	2.2	16.5	1.9
New Zealand	17.2	3.0	15.3	1.8
Norway	17.1	2.8	15.8	2.2
Poland	14.8	1.9	m	m
Portugal	16.9	2.0	m	m
Québec	19.4	4.7	16.7	3.3
Spain	17.5	2.5	16.7	2.5
Sweden	18.0	2.2	15.9	1.6
Switzerland	15.7	1.5	15.4	1.2
Turkey	m	m	m	m
United States	16.8	3.7	14.8	2.2
United Kingdom	17.3	2.3	14.2	1.6
Country Average	16.4	2.3	15.4	1.9

* Not including preschoolers under five years of age.

m : Data unavailable.

Sources : OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD Education Indicators 1998*, p. 168.
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.

Table 2 Enrolment Rates in Québec and the OECD Countries, by Age Group, in 1995-96 (Age as of January 1, 1996)

	Students Aged:						
	5 years and up as a % of the population aged 5 to 29 years	2 to 4 years as a % of the population aged 2 to 4 years	5 to 14 years as a % of the population aged 5 to 14 years	15 to 19 years as a % of the population aged 15 to 19 years	20 to 29 years as a % of the population aged 20 to 29 years	30 to 39 years as a % of the population aged 30 to 39 years	40 years and up as a % of the population aged 40 years and over
Australia	76.7	24.1	96.6	82.6	24.5	13.6	5.3
Austria	58.0	34.8	98.6	75.7	16.8	2.7	0.3
Belgium	70.8	79.4	98.9	92.1	m	m	m
Canada (including Québec)	68.2	16.5	99.2	78.6	21.4	4.7	1.2
Czech Republic	56.3	45.9	98.8	72.2	11.1	0.2	n
Denmark	63.9	46.3	96.7	79.6	26.0	4.9	0.7
Finland	69.1	20.0	89.5	81.8	29.6	6.8	1.2
France	64.5	76.9	100.1	88.3	19.1	m	m
Germany	61.8	44.7	96.5	87.9	20.5	2.5	0.1
Greece	53.0	22.4	94.1	72.0	12.0	0.1	0.1
Hungary	56.6	54.5	99.7	68.5	11.7	m	m
Iceland	70.5	77.2	98.4	79.7	24.5	3.8	0.8
Ireland	64.9	19.0	99.6	79.3	14.6	x	x
Italia	53.8	61.6	m	m	m	m	m
Japan	57.0	49.2	101.1	m	m	m	m
Korea	55.8	12.5	92.3	78.3	16.0	0.6	n
Luxembourg	52.3	m	m	m	m	m	m
Mexico	51.9	20.8	94.0	35.6	8.4	0.5	0.1
Netherlands	65.3	33.4	99.2	88.5	23.7	3.8	0.7
New Zealand	69.3	79.0	100.2	75.3	19.4	8.1	2.6
Norway	65.4	42.1	95.4	83.8	25.2	4.9	1.0
Poland	63.6	16.0	90.8	80.9	19.3	m	m
Portugal	62.0	32.8	101.2	67.5	20.5	3.6	0.5
Québec	78.0	4.5	96.0	88.9	31.4	10.4	3.4
Spain	63.0	59.2	104.2	73.8	21.8	2.2	0.2
Sweden	69.8	39.5	96.1	83.3	23.6	8.9	1.8
Switzerland	59.5	12.1	97.5	80.6	15.8	m	m
Turkey	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
United States	68.8	34.2	101.2	72.9	20.0	5.9	7.7
United Kingdom	66.8	49.0	98.8	72.1	17.5	8.4	3.3
Country Average	62.8	41.0	97.6	77.2	19.3	4.5	1.5

m : Data unavailable.

n : Negligible order of magnitude or nil.

x : Data included in another column.

Sources : OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD Education Indicators 1998*, p. 169.
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.

Table 3 Enrolment Rates (as of %) in Postsecondary Education in Québec and the OECD Countries, by Age Group, in 1995-1996 (Age as of January 1, 1996)

	17-34 years			18-21 years			22-25 years			26-29 years		
	Non-university postsecondary level	University postsecondary level	Total	Non-university postsecondary level	University postsecondary level	Total	Non-university postsecondary level	University postsecondary level	Total	Non-university postsecondary level	University postsecondary level	Total
Australia	5.1	9.9	15.0	8.4	22.9	31.3	5.5	9.2	14.7	4.1	5.1	9.2
Austria	0.8	8.9	9.7	2.6	13.5	16.1	1.7	15.0	16.7	x	8.8	8.8
Belgium	6.1	6.3	12.4	20.0	19.6	39.6	6.7	8.7	15.4	2.2	1.8	4.0
Canada (including Québec)	6.9	10.0	16.9	17.3	23.1	40.4	7.3	14.6	21.9	3.7	5.4	9.1
Czech Republic	1.1	5.8	6.9	3.6	13.3	16.9	0.5	7.9	8.4	n	2.1	2.1
Denmark	1.1	10.0	11.1	1.0	7.5	8.5	2.2	21.2	23.4	1.2	10.8	12.0
Finland	2.8	11.8	14.6	4.8	13.3	18.1	5.6	23.2	28.8	1.8	11.8	13.6
France	x	x	13.9	x	x	36.0	x	x	18.6	x	x	4.4
Germany	1.3	8.1	9.4	2.9	7.9	10.8	1.7	15.5	17.2	1.9	9.8	11.7
Greece	3.5	8.0	11.5	10.1	29.3	39.4	4.6	5.3	9.9	1.0	1.0	2.0
Hungary	a	7.4	7.4	a	13.4	13.4	a	9.0	9.0	a	2.8	2.8
Iceland	1.4	7.3	8.7	0.8	6.7	7.5	3.3	17.9	21.2	1.4	5.6	7.0
Ireland	m	m	m	x	x	31.4	m	m	m	m	m	m
Italie	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Japan	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Korea	4.3	9.4	13.7	15.1	25.6	40.7	4.2	13.2	17.4	0.7	3.0	3.7
Luxembourg	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
Mexico	x	4.1	4.1	x	6.6	6.6	x	6.1	6.1	x	2.0	2.0
Netherlands	a	10.7	10.7	a	24.0	24.0	a	19.2	19.2	a	5.4	5.4
New Zealand	3.2	9.5	12.7	6.1	23.3	29.4	3.3	10.5	13.8	2.3	4.8	7.1
Norway	4.1	9.3	13.4	8.7	10.3	19.0	6.2	18.6	24.8	2.4	8.1	10.5
Poland	1.9	9.4	11.3	5.5	15.8	21.3	2.2	16.4	18.6	x	x	4.2
Portugal	2.4	8.1	10.5	5.2	14.2	19.4	3.5	12.5	16.0	1.1	5.0	6.1
Québec	10.8	9.5	20.3	31.2	16.4	47.6	7.7	19.7	27.4	3.0	7.7	10.7
Spain	0.3	12.5	12.8	1.0	26.3	27.3	0.3	19.4	19.7	n	6.2	6.2
Sweden	x	9.9	9.9	x	13.7	13.7	x	17.9	17.9	x	8.0	8.0
Switzerland	3.4	4.6	8.0	2.4	5.1	7.5	6.1	9.2	15.3	3.5	3.8	7.3
Turkey	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
United Kingdom	2.0	7.3	9.3	4.7	22.2	26.9	2.2	7.2	9.4	1.4	3.4	4.8
United States	6.0	10.2	16.2	12.9	21.7	34.6	7.4	14.0	21.4	3.8	7.3	11.1
Country Average	2.4	8.3	11.2	5.3	15.2	23.2	3.1	13.0	16.9	1.4	5.1	6.8

a: Not applicable.

m: Data unavailable.

n: Negligible order of magnitude or nil.

x: Data included in another column.

Sources: OECD, *Education at a Glance, OECD Education Indicators 1998*, p. 195.
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.