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Education Statistics Bulletin

Exploratory study of the educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds from the 1994-1995 cohort of secondary school students

Introduction

The main objective of this bulletin is to study the educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds, measured in terms of academic delay, school leaving, and secondary school and college graduation rates.

The study continues the line of research undertaken by the Ministère de l'Éducation in 1995[1], which examined the educational paths of students in the 1989-1990 to 1993-1994 cohorts and the amount of time they spent in reception and francization services. However, the present survey covers a broader spectrum, comparing the academic situation of students from immigrant backgrounds with that of other students in the same cohort, and describing some of their cultural, demographic and academic characteristics. The Ministère has also published a detailed description of students from immigrant backgrounds for the 1994-1995 to 2003-2004 school years[2].

Methodology

The analysis distinguishes between students from immigrant backgrounds and other students. A "student from an immigrant background" is taken to refer to any of the following: a student born outside Canada (a first-generation immigrant), a student born in Canada to a parent born outside Canada (a second-generation immigrant), or a student whose mother tongue is neither French nor English (also a second-generation immigrant). A student who does not meet any of these definitions as a student from an immigrant background is classified among the "other students."[3]

To trace students' educational paths, the study monitored all the students in the 1994-1995 cohort from the start of secondary school to the end of college (103 372 students over 10 years). The target population (Figure 1) was composed of three groups of students. The *first group* consisted of "ongoing" students, that is, students enrolled in Secondary I in 1994-1995 who had spent the preceding years in elementary school in Québec. For the 1994-1995 cohort of students, 89.4% were "ongoing." For students from immigrant backgrounds, the proportion was 67.4%, while for the other students, it was 93.9% (Table 1).

1 Guy Legault, *Services d'accueil et de francisation. Durée des services et cheminement scolaire des élèves. 1989-1990 à 1993-1994* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, 1995).

2 Claudine Provencher, *Educational Profile of Students From Immigrant Families, 1994-1995 to 2003-2004* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et des indicateurs, 2006).

3 Aboriginal students were also classified as "other students." To be considered Aboriginal, they had to declare a Native language as their mother tongue. These students were considered to belong to the "First Nations" (including Inuit students).

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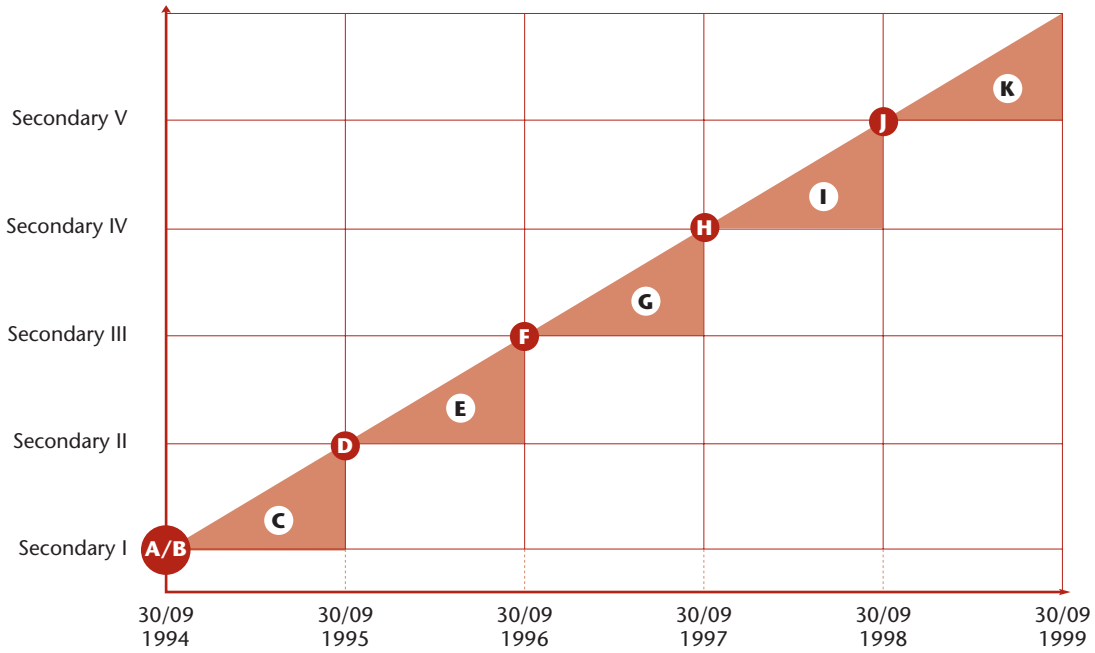
The *second group* consisted of students who entered the Québec education system in 1994-1995 at the Secondary I level. Of this group, 79.6% were first-generation immigrant students. In the target population, 14.1% of all students from immigrant backgrounds were in this second group, compared with 0.6% of the other students. The *third group* consisted of students who entered the Québec education system at the secondary school level, enrolling directly in Secondary II in 1995-1996, in Secondary III in 1996-1997, and so on up to Secondary V. The third group comprised 7.7% of students in the cohort studied; 18.4% of the students from immigrant backgrounds and 5.5% of the other students. It is important to note that students in the second and third groups were likely to display different educational behaviour than students who went through the elementary system in Québec. They were also more likely to have received welcoming services and assistance in learning French.

Figure 1 **Target population**



Ongoing students at start of educational path
TOTAL : 92 452

A Ongoing students enrolled on September 30, 1994 in Secondary I (N = 92 452)

New students at start of educational path
TOTAL : 2 956

B New students enrolled on September 30, 1994 in Secondary I (N = 1 889)
C Students enrolled on September 30, 1994 in Secondary I (N = 1 067)

New students during educational path
TOTAL : 7 964

D New students enrolled on September 30, 1995 in Secondary II (N = 539)
E Students enrolled after September 30, 1995 in Secondary II (N = 362)
F New students enrolled on September 30, 1996 in Secondary III (N = 610)
G Students enrolled after September 30, 1996 in Secondary III (N = 913)
H New students enrolled on September 30, 1997 in Secondary IV (N = 594)
I Students enrolled after September 30, 1997 in Secondary IV (N = 1 067)
J New students enrolled on September 30, 1998 in Secondary V (N = 683)
K Students enrolled after September 30, 1998 in Secondary V (N = 3 196)

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS SURVEYED: 103 372

Table 1 **Status of students starting the educational path**

Student status at start of secondary educational path	Students from immigrant backgrounds		First generation		Second generation		Other students		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ongoing student at start of secondary school	11 659	12.6	4 114	4.4	7 545	8.2	80 793	87.4	92 452	100.00
New student at start of secondary school	2 443	82.6	2 354	79.6	89	3.0	513	17.4	2 956	100.00
New student during secondary school	3 190	40.1	2 782	34.9	408	5.1	4 774	59.9	7 964	100.00
Total	**17 292**	**16.7**	**9 250**	**8.9**	**8 042**	**7.8**	**86 080**	**83.3**	**103 372**	**100.00**

Student status at start of secondary educational path	Students from immigrant backgrounds	First generation	Second generation	Other students	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Ongoing student at start of secondary school	67.4	44.5	93.8	93.9	89.4
New student at start of secondary school	14.1	25.4	1.1	0.6	2.9
New student during secondary school	18.4	30.1	5.1	5.5	7.7
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**

1 Overview of students in the cohort by selected cultural, demographic and academic characteristics

1.1 Sociodemographic characteristics

Almost half (46.5%) of the students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 cohort were second-generation immigrants (Table 2). More specifically, 44.6% were born in Québec and 1.9% were born in another Canadian province. The remainder—53.5% of the students from immigrant backgrounds—were first-generation immigrants.

Among the latter, over one third (34.1%) were born on the Asian continent, including 8.1% in Southeast Asia and 7.8% in the Middle East, while 28.6% were born in Latin America, mainly in the Caribbean, Bermuda and Central America. Another 21.8% of first-generation immigrant students were born in Europe, mainly Eastern Europe (8.6%) and Western Europe (7.6%); only 9.1% were born in Africa.

French was the mother tongue of roughly one quarter (25.7%) of all the students from immigrant backgrounds, whatever their origin. The proportion of native English speakers, at 12.4%, was only half as large. Four other languages were spoken as a mother tongue by over 5% of the students from immigrant backgrounds: Spanish, Arabic, Italian and Creole. Approximately 120 other mother tongues were recorded.

Table 2 **Sociodemographic characteristics of students in the target cohort**

Sociodemographic characteristics	Students from immigrant backgrounds		First-generation		Second-generation		Other students	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number								
Compared with all students	17 292	16.7	-	-	-	-	86 080	83.3
Compared with all students from immigrant backgrounds	-	-	9 250	53.5	8 042	46.5	-	-
Student's mother tongue								
French	4 445	25.7	1 309	14.2	3 136	39.0	79 054	91.8
English	2 144	12.4	659	7.1	1 485	18.5	6 351	7.4
Spanish	1 685	9.7	1 429	15.4	256	3.2	-	-
Arabic	1 058	6.1	860	9.3	198	2.5	-	-
Italian	946	5.5	34	0.4	912	11.3	-	-
Creole	937	5.4	756	8.2	181	2.3	-	-
Chinese	741	4.3	552	6.0	189	2.4	-	-
Portuguese	526	3.0	198	2.1	328	4.1	-	-
Greek	461	2.7	33	0.4	428	5.3	-	-
Russian	355	2.1	349	3.8	6	0.1	-	-
Vietnamese	350	2.0	208	2.2	142	1.8	-	-
All other languages	3 644	21.1	2 863	31.0	781	9.7	675[1]	0.8
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 080**	**100.0**
Student's region of birth								
Québec	7 707	44.6	0	0.0	7 707	95.8	83 279	96.7
Canada excluding Québec	335	1.9	0	0.0	335	4.2	2 793	3.2
Caribbean and Bermuda	1 155	6.7	1 155	12.5	-	-	-	-
Central America	836	4.8	836	9.0	-	-	-	-
Western Europe	791	4.6	791	8.6	-	-	-	-
Southeast Asia	745	4.3	745	8.1	-	-	-	-
Middle East	718	4.2	718	7.8	-	-	-	-
Western Europe	700	4.0	700	7.6	-	-	-	-
South America	659	3.8	659	7.1	-	-	-	-
Eastern Asia	647	3.7	647	7.0	-	-	-	-
Southern Asia	577	3.3	577	6.2	-	-	-	-
Western and Central Asia	463	2.7	463	5.0	-	-	-	-
Southern Europe	379	2.2	379	4.1	-	-	-	-
North Africa	332	1.9	332	3.6	-	-	-	-
North America outside Canada	301	1.7	301	3.3	-	-	-	-
Western Africa	182	1.1	182	2.0	-	-	-	-

Table 2 **Sociodemographic characteristics of students in the target cohort (cont.)**

Sociodemographic characteristics	Students from immigrant backgrounds		First-generation		Second-generation		Other students	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Student's region of birth (cont.)								
Eastern Africa	172	1.0	172	1.9	-	-	-	-
Northern Europe	143	0.8	143	1.5	-	-	-	-
Central Africa	139	0.8	139	1.5	-	-	-	-
Oceania	45	0.3	45	0.5	-	-	-	-
Southern Africa	9	0.1	9	0.1	-	-	-	-
Other[2]	257	1.5	257	2.8	-	-	-	-
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 072**[3]	**100.0**
Sex								
Female	8 512	49.2	4 515	48.8	3 997	49.7	41 934	48.7
Male	8 780	50.8	4 735	51.2	4 045	50.3	44 146	51.3
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 080**	**100.0**
Socioeconomic background								
Not disdvantaged	10 673	62.3	5 072	55.6	5 601	70.0	61 337	71.5
Disadvantaged	6 445	37.7	4 049	44.4	2 396	30.0	24 424	28.5
Total	**17 118**	**100.0**	**9 121**	**100.0**	**7 997**	**100.0**	**85 761**	**100.0**
Unknown	174	1.0	129	1.4	45	0.6	319	0.4

1 Aboriginal language or Inuktitut..
2 Places of birth seldom declared; students are included in the "other" category in the MELS database. The region of birth cannot be determined.
3 Eight Aboriginal or Inuit students were born outside Canada.

The proportion of male and female students was similar to that observed for other students: 49.2% of these students were girls and 50.8% were boys.

In the 1994-1995 cohort, 37.7% of the students from immigrant backgrounds lived in communities defined as disadvantaged[4], compared with 28.5% of other students. This may be explained by the fact that 44.4% of the first-generation immigrant students came from disadvantaged areas, since the percentage for second-generation immigrant students was comparable to that for other students.

4 The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport calculates a socioeconomic environment index that links students to the characteristics of their environment. For more information on the index, see Luc Beauchesne, "The School Population Map and Poverty Indices," *Education Statistics Bulletin N°. 26* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, March 2003). http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/Bulletin/bulletin_26an.pdf (October 10, 2007).

1.2 Academic characteristics

At the start of their secondary education, the proportion of students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 secondary school cohort whose language of instruction was French was 79.7% (Table 3), below the percentage of 92.1% recorded for the other students. The difference is due to the fact that only 66.7% of the second-generation immigrant students were studying in French[5].

Table 3 **Academic characteristics of the students in the target cohort**

Caracteristics	Students from immigrant backgrounds		First-generation		Second-generation		Other Students	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Language of instruction (at start of educational path)								
French	13 776	79.7	8 409	90.9	5 367	66.7	79 315	92.1
English	3 516	20.3	841	9.1	2 675	33.3	6 763	7.9
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 078**[1]	**100.0**
Students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties (at start of educational path)								
Not declared	15 638	90.4	8 434	91.2	7 204	89.6	74 432	86.5
Declaration integrated	614	3.6	250	2.7	364	4.5	3 806	4.4
Declaration not integrated	1 040	6.0	566	6.1	474	5.9	7 842	9.1
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 080**	**100.0**
French language support for at least one year in secondary school[2]								
Yes	3 224	23.4	3 181	37.8	43	0.8	52	0.1
No	10 552	76.6	5 228	62.2	5 324	99.2	79 263	99.9
Total	**13 776**	**100.0**	**8 409**	**100.0**	**5 367**	**100.0**	**79 315**	**100.0**
Not applicable[3]	3 516	-	841	-	2 675	-	6 765	-
Years of academic delay at start of educational path								
None (normal age)	10 127	58.6	3 957	42.8	6.170	76.7	63 342	73.6
1 year	4 541	26.3	2 935	31.7	1 606	20.0	18 541	21.5
2 or more years	2 624	15.2	2 358	25.5	266	3.3	4 197	4.9
Total	**17 292**	**100.0**	**9 250**	**100.0**	**8 042**	**100.0**	**86 080**	**100.0**

1 Two students receive instruction in a Native language.
2 It is possible that these students received French language support at elementary school.
3 Students whose language of instruction was English at the start of their secondary school educational path.

5 For more information on eligibility for instruction in English at the pre-school, elementary and secondary level, see: Charter of the French Language, Title I, Status of the French Language, Chapter VIII, The Language of Instruction: http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/charter/ (October 10, 2007).

Some of the students in the 1994-1995 cohort were declared to be "students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties" when they entered secondary school in Québec. This was the case for 9.6% of the students from immigrant backgrounds, a lower percentage than the 13.5% concerned among the other students. There was no notable difference in this area between first- and second-generation immigrant students.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec offers immigrant students welcoming services and assistance in learning French,[6] and 23.4% of the students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 cohort received such assistance at the start of their secondary schooling in Québec. This percentage does not include any ongoing students who participated in the program during their elementary education.

Academic delay is calculated on the basis of the "normal" age on September 30 of the school year, the level of education and the grade concerned. For general education in the youth sector, the normal age is 12 in Secondary I and 16 in Secondary V. The students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 cohort were more likely to have an academic delay at the start of their secondary education than the other students: 41.5% compared with 26.4%. The difference may be explained by the fact that 57.2% of first-generation immigrant students experienced academic delay,[7] compared with 23.3% of second-generation immigrant students. More specifically, 31.7% of the first-generation immigrant students in the 1994-1995 cohort had a one-year delay, and 25.5% had a two-year delay. In short, not only were immigrant students more likely than all other students to have an academic delay at the start of their educational path, but the delay was more likely to be significant.

2 Educational paths at the secondary level

Because of the specific characteristics of students from immigrant backgrounds, it seems reasonable to expect that their educational success will differ from that of the other students. Our hypothesis is that first-generation immigrant students will be less likely to complete their secondary education, given that they are more likely to come from disadvantaged areas and to have an academic delay at the start of secondary school. One factor, however, works in their favour: they are less likely than the other students to have been declared "students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties."

2.1 Educational paths of all students from immigrant backgrounds

This section examines the educational paths of all students from immigrant backgrounds compared with those of the other students. For each group, the following elements are considered: graduation from secondary school, the proportion of students leaving the school system, and the expected progress.

6 To benefit from French language support, students must: 1) be non-francophone and enrolled for the first time in instructional services in French; 2) have a knowledge of French that does not allow them to keep up, without support, in a regular class; 3) be enrolled in a school where all pedagogical and administrative activities take place in French; 4) not be on a student exchange program. See Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Direction des services aux communautés culturelles, *Guide de gestion des allocations relatives aux services aux élèves des communautés culturelles – Commissions scolaires 2005-2006* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), p. 4.

7 It is possible that first-generation immigrant students had already experienced academic delay before immigrating, or that they experienced delay on entering the Québec school system because the criteria used to assess academic level were different from those used in their country of origin. In addition, some first-generation immigrant students with a limited knowledge of French could face more difficulties at school and become delayed in a system in which instruction is given in French.

First, it is important to specify that the immigrant parents of students from immigrant backgrounds are more likely to migrate again than those of other students[8]. Taking into account an estimate of this student migration permits a fairer assessment of the factors influencing students' educational paths. We estimate that 2.5% of the students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 secondary school cohort left Québec each year (Figure 2). For the other students, the comparable figure was 0.3% (Figure 3). The data presented here have been adjusted to take migration into account.

The students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 secondary school cohort were less likely to obtain a diploma after five years than other students: the respective percentages were 55.9% and 61.0%. However, after seven years, the gap of five percentage points had shrunk to three, with scores of 69.2% and 72.4%, respectively. In other words, both groups eventually increased their score, but the increase was more marked among students from immigrant backgrounds.

After seven years, the students from immigrant backgrounds who had obtained a diploma were divided as follows: 98.9% had obtained a general diploma, the secondary school diploma (SSD) (Figure 2), 93.4% in the youth sector and 6.6% in the adult sector. Among the other students (Figure 3), the equivalent percentages were 96.3%, 95.2% and 4.8%; 3.3% had obtained a vocational training diploma or attestation, compared with 0.9% among the students from immigrant backgrounds. Overall, compared with the other students, those from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to choose a program leading to a general diploma (SSD), and more likely to obtain their diploma in the adult sector.

The proportion of students in general education in the youth sector[9] who left school permanently increased over time from 3.0% in 1995-1996 to 10.6% in 1998-1999 for students from immigrant backgrounds (Figure 2), compared with 0.2% and 9.4% for the other students (Figure 3).

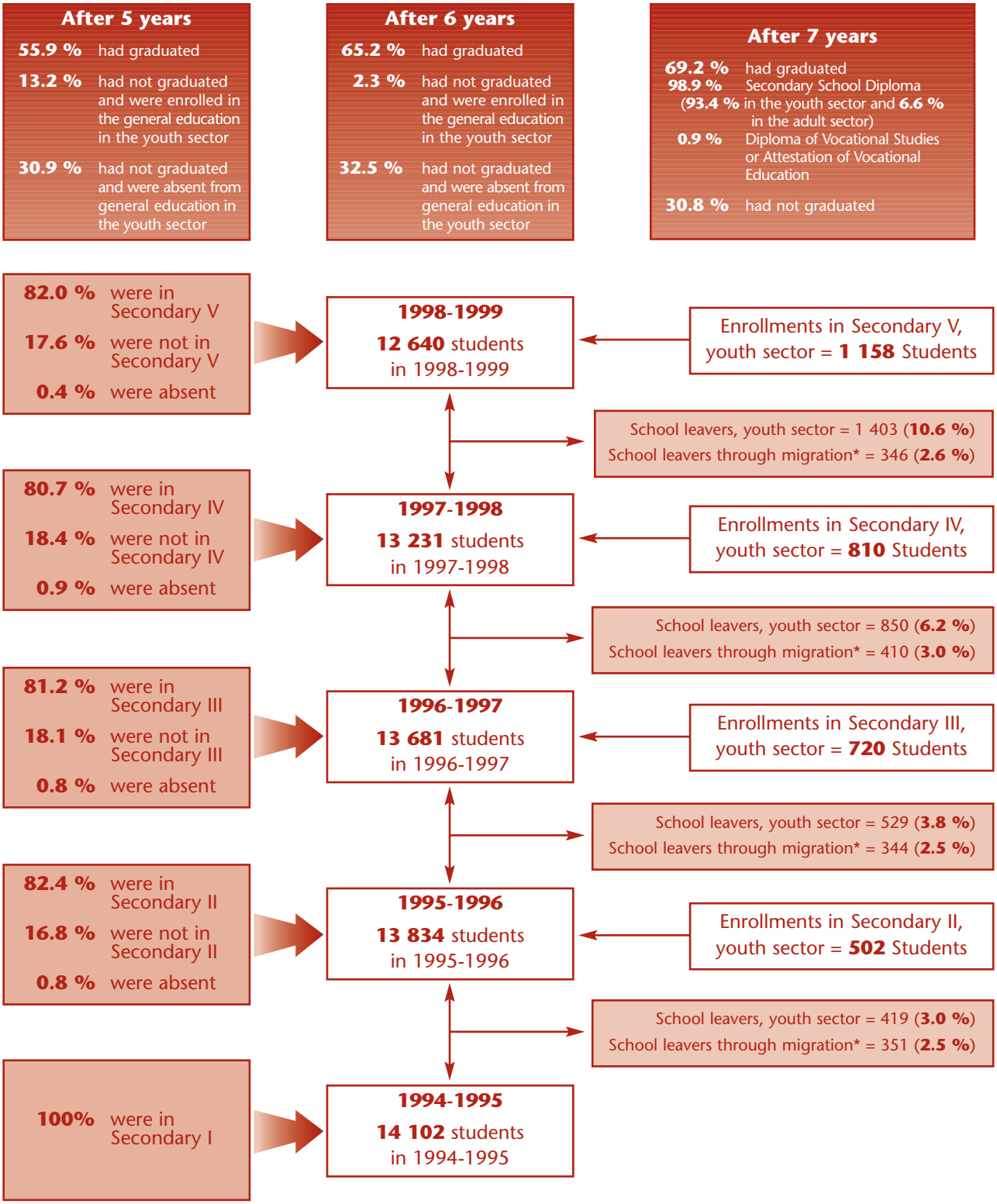
There was also a difference between students from immigrant backgrounds and other students with respect to the annual percentage who failed to reach the expected level: those from the first group were more likely that those from the second to repeat a year at the start of secondary school and less likely to do so at the end of secondary school. Thus, in 1995-1996, 16.8% of the students from immigrant backgrounds had failed to reach the Secondary II level, compared with 12.8% among the other students, whereas in 1998-1999, the year in which students from the target cohort should normally have entered Secondary V, 17.6% of the students from immigrant backgrounds and 19.2% of the other students had not reached that level.

Overall, compared with other students, students from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to obtain a diploma. However, after seven years they had begun to catch up. Although most students from immigrant backgrounds obtained their SSD in the youth sector, they were more likely than the other students to obtain it in the adult sector, and also less likely to obtain a vocational training diploma. The students from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to leave general education in the youth sector, and to repeat a year at the start of their secondary education.

8 Ross Finnie, I*nternational Mobility: Patterns of Exit and Return of Canadians, 1982 to 2003* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Business and Labour Market Analysis, 2006), catalogue no. 11F0019MIE – no. 288.

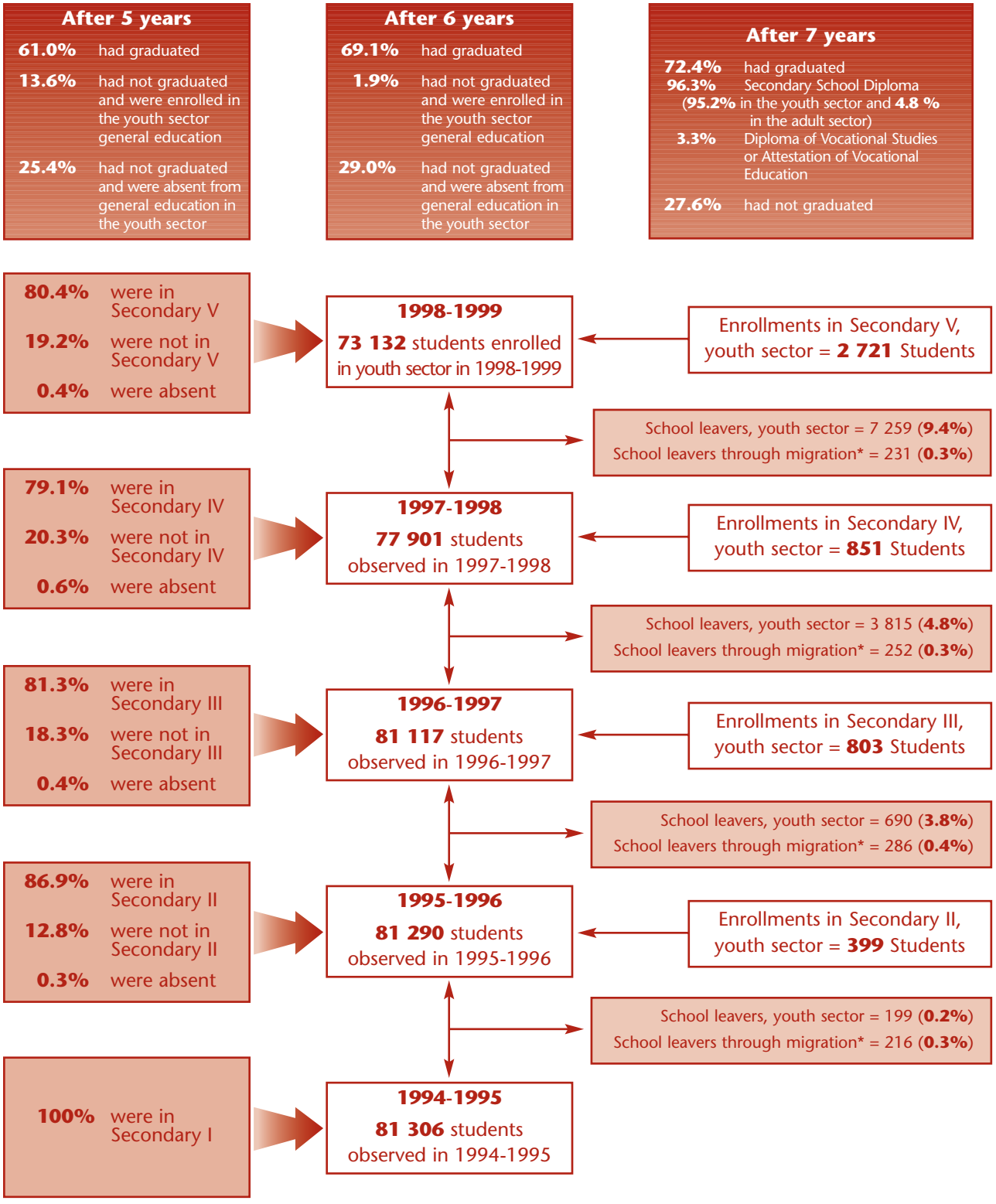
9 Students who drop out and then move to the adult general education or vocational training sectors explain these figures. This study has also showed that some of these students later enroll at the college level without obtaining a diploma during the survey period (see Section 3).

Figure 2 **Educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds in the 1994-1995 cohort**



* These figures include school leaving due to death, serious illness and home schooling. Almost all school leaving, however, was caused by migration.

Figure 3 **Secondary school educational path, general education in the youth sector, other students**



* These figures include school leaving due to death, serious illness and home schooling. Almost all school leaving, however, was caused by migration.

2.2 Educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds by immigrant generation

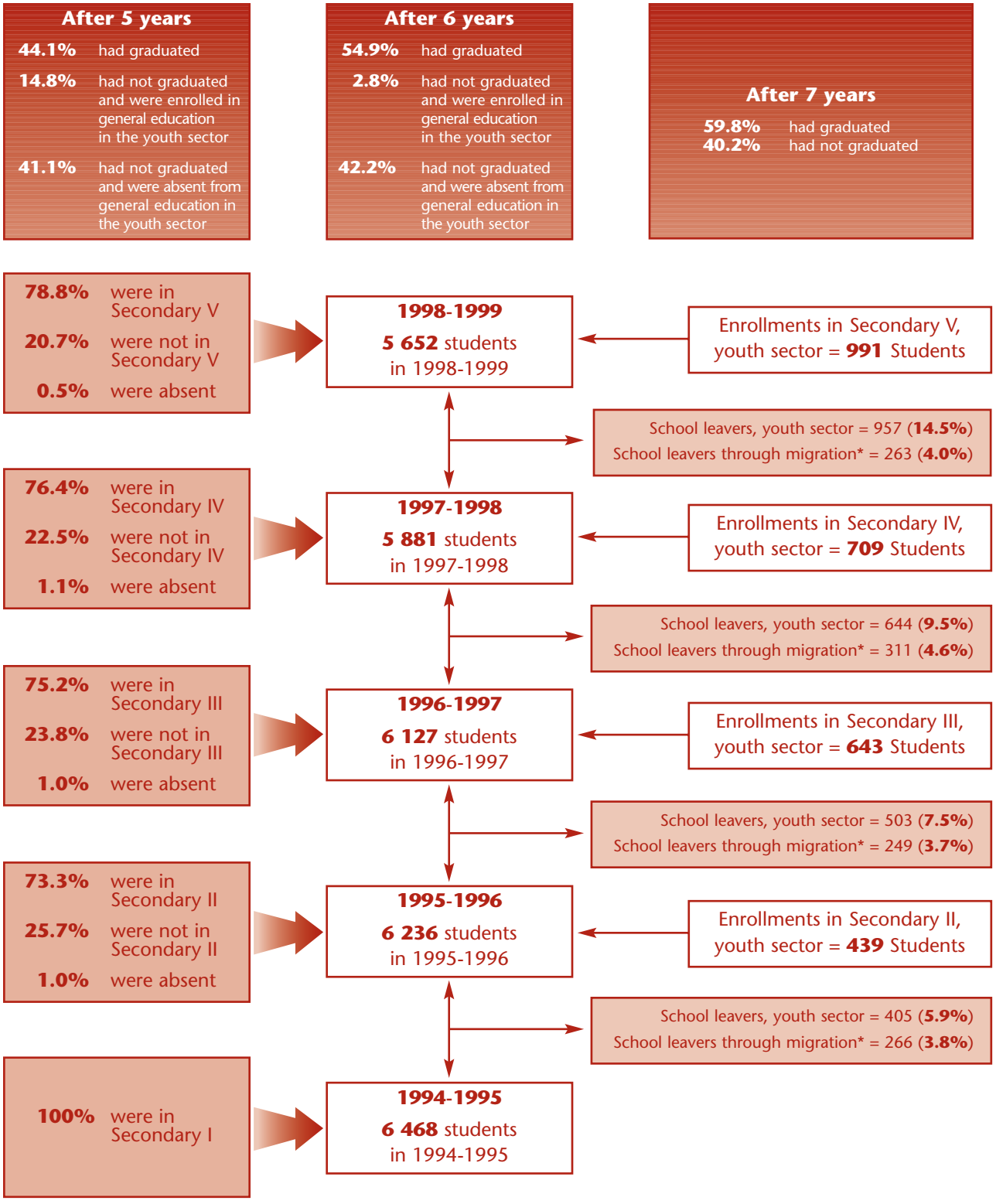
The educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds can also be studied in terms of the immigration generation of the students concerned. Since first-generation immigrant students have sociodemographic and academic characteristics that differ from those of second-generation immigrant students (see Section 1), it is reasonable to suppose that their educational paths will also be different at the secondary level.

Second-generation immigrant students were less likely than first-generation students to leave general education in the youth sector. The proportion of school leavers for second-generation students was 0.2% at the start of secondary education and 6.0% at the end (Figure 5) compared with 5.9% and 14.5%, respectively, for first-generation students (Figure 4). The same observation applies when they are compared with other students. In addition, the percentage of students who failed to reach the expected level was lower for second-generation students than for first-generation students, and also lower than that for the other students: the percentages were 9.5%, 25.7% and 12.8% respectively after one year of secondary education (in 1995-1996), and 15.1%, 20.7% and 19.2% at the end of secondary education (in 1998-1999). The incidence of grade repetition and leaving the youth sector are reflected in the graduation rates for students in the 1994-1995 cohort.

Excluding students who migrated,[10] the graduation rates for students from immigrant backgrounds who were born in Canada (second-generation immigrants) were higher than the rates for both first-generation immigrant students and other students. After five years, the rates were 68.1%, 44.1% and 61.0%, respectively. After seven years, they were 78.7% for second-generation immigrant students, 59.8% for first-generation immigrant students and 72.4% for other students. Overall, the second-generation immigrant students in the 1994-1995 cohort achieved greater academic success, while first-generation immigrant students experienced the most difficulty. Despite this, the graduation rate for first-generation immigrant students jumped by ten percentage points after six years of secondary education compared with the rate after five years of education, which shows there was a tendency to catch up. Overall, the difference between the academic performance of the students from immigrant backgrounds and the other students can be ascribed entirely to the first-generation immigrant students.

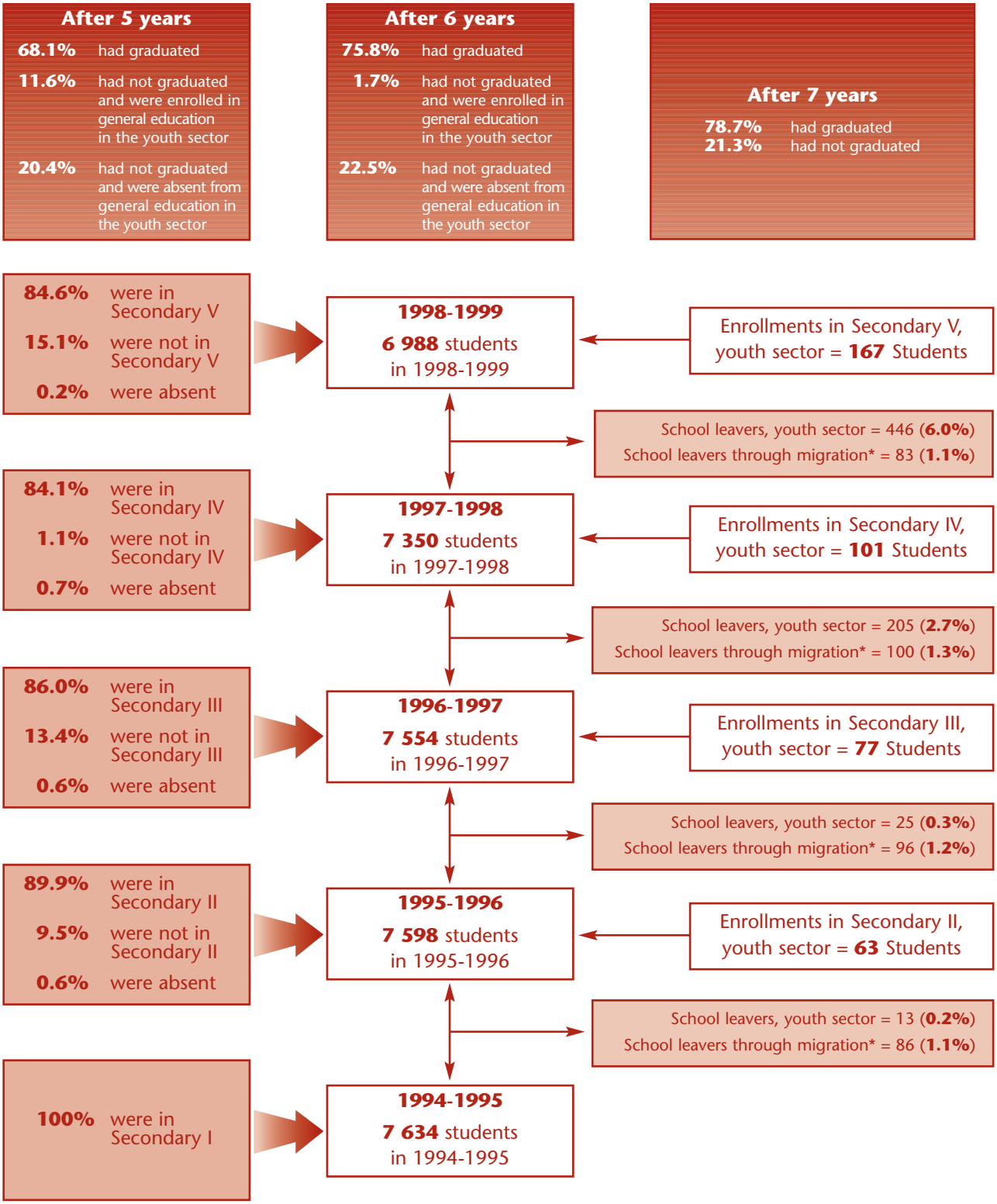
10 Each year, just over 1.0% of students from immigrant backgrounds born in Canada (second-generation immigrants) of the 1994-1995 secondary school cohort left Québec (Figure 5), compared to roughly 4.0% of first-generation immigrant students (Figure 4).

Figure 4 **Secondary school educational path, general education in the youth sector, first-generation immigrants**



* These figures include school leaving due to death, serious illness and home schooling. Almost all school leaving, however, was caused by migration.

Figure 5 **Secondary school educational path, general education in the youth sector, second-generation immigrants**



* These figures include school leaving due to death, serious illness and home schooling. Almost all school leaving, however, was caused by migration.

2.3 Educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds by region of birth

Table 4 gives the secondary school graduation rates by region of birth for the first-generation immigrant students in the 1994-1995 cohort. The table shows, first, that after seven years the graduation rate of students born in 4 of the 19 regions presented was higher than the rate for other students (72.4%). These regions are Southern Africa, Western Europe, Eastern Asia and the Middle East. The graduation rate of students born in the last two regions also exceeded the rate for second-generation immigration students (78.7%).

The graduation rate for students born in 7 out of the 19 regions was lower than the overall rate for the first-generation immigrant students (59.8%). Four regions had rates below 50%: students born in Central Africa, Southern Asia, the Caribbean and Bermuda and Oceania had the lowest graduation rates after seven years.

Table 4 Graduation rates of students from immigrant backgrounds by generation and by region of birth, and of other students, ranked by graduation rate after 5 and 7 years

	Graduation rate		
Students' region of birth or community	**After 5 years %**	**After 7 years %**	**Difference**
Middle East	64.2	79.6	15.4
Eastern Asia	66.1	79.2	13.1
All second-generation immigrants	**68.1**	**78.7**	**10.7**
Western Europe	59.3	74.7	15.4
Southern Africa**	62.1	74.6	12.4
Other students	**61.0**	**72.4**	**11.4**
North America excluding Canada	57.8	70.5	12.8
Northern Africa	46.7	68.1	21.4
Southern Europe	50.8	66.7	16.0
Other	57.0	66.7	9.6
Western Africa	43.7	63.8	20.1
Southeast Asia	48.0	63.4	15.4
Western Europe	51.7	62.8	11.2
South America	44.1	62.4	18.3
Western Africa	43.8	59.9	16.1
All first-generation immigrants	**44.1**	**59.8**	**15.7**
Northern Europe	45.5	56.9	11.4
Western and central Asia	33.0	55.5	22.6
Central America	33.5	50.8	17.3
Central Africa	34.7	49.8	15.1
Southern Asia	28.2	48.2	20.0
Caribbean and Bermuda	24.5	42.6	18.1
Oceanie*	23.3	27.7	4.3

* These cohorts had fewer than one hundred students. The results must therefore by treated with caution.

Some regions with low graduation rates after five years, the prescribed time, showed much higher rates between the fifth and the seventh years of observation. Four regions—Western and Central Asia, Northern Africa, Western Africa and Southern Asia—jumped by more than 20 points. The increase was greater than that recorded for the other students (11.4 points), second-generation immigrant students (9.9 points) and first-generation immigrant students overall (15.7 points).

2.4 Educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds by status at the start of their secondary education in Québec

Educational paths may be influenced by the fact that some students arrive at the start of or during secondary school, while others have been through elementary school in Québec. Various studies have shown that the earlier immigrant students enter the education system, the more chance they have of succeeding. This section examines how a students' status on entering secondary school influences academic success.

Table 5 presents the graduation rates, after five and seven years, of students who were "ongoing" students at the start of secondary school, and of those who arrived at the start of or during secondary school. Among "ongoing" students, second-generation immigrant students were more likely to obtain a diploma. First-generation immigrant students who completed some or all of their elementary education in Québec ("ongoing" students) had graduation rates comparable to the average after five years and above average after seven years: 60.5% of "ongoing" first-generation immigrant students obtained a diploma after five years, compared with the average of 61.4%. After seven years, the rates increased to 75.2% and 72.8%, respectively.

Table 5 **Graduation rate by immigrant generation and status on starting the secondary school educational path**

	Status on starting secondary school educational path		
Graduation rate and generation	**Total**	**"Ongoing" students at start of secondary school**	**"New" students at start of secondary school**
Graduation rate after 5 years (%)	60.2	61.4	45.5
Students from immigrant backgrounds	55.9	66.1	31.9
First-generation	44.1	60.5	31.3
Second-generation	68.1	67.8	52.8
Others students	61.0	60.8	59.4
Graduation rate after 7 years (%)	71.9	72.8	60.2
Students from immigrant backgrounds	69.2	77.4	49.1
First-generation	59.8	75.2	48.3
Second-generation	78.7	77.7	60.5
Others students	72.4	72.2	71.4

11 Guy Legault, *Services d'accueil et de francisation. Durée des services et cheminement scolaire des élèves. 1989-1990 à 1993-1994 (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, 1995). Christopher Worswick, School Performance of the Children of Immigrants in Canada, 1994-98* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Family and Labour Studies, 2001), catalogue no. 11F0019MIE No 178.

The picture is different for students who entered the Québec education system at the start of or during secondary school. First, the graduation rate after five years was generally 15 percentage points lower for "new" as opposed to "ongoing" students (45.5% compared with 61.4%). After seven years, there was a similar 12-point difference (60.2% compared with 72.8%). The trend was different for first-generation and second-generation students. As regards the graduation rate after seven years, 48.3% of first-generation immigrant students who were "new" students at the start of or during their secondary education obtained a diploma, compared with 75.2% of "ongoing" first-generation immigrant students, a difference of 28.3 percentage points. The difference for second-generation immigrant students was 17.2 points (a graduation rate of 77.7% for "ongoing" students and 60.5% for "new" students). For other students, the difference was 0.8 percentage points.

Overall, the analysis shows that immigrant students in the 1994-1995 cohort who entered the system at the elementary level were more likely to obtain a diploma than students who entered at the start of or during secondary school. This corroborates the findings of other research on the same subject.

3 Transition to college

Students from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to enroll at the college level than other students (65.4% compared with 56.9%) (Table 6). A similar difference is observed if only those who graduated from secondary school are considered: 87.5% of secondary school graduates from an immigrant background enrolled at the college level, compared with 77.2% of other students. In addition, the proportion of students from immigrant backgrounds who enrolled at the college level[12] without having obtained a secondary school diploma was larger than that of other students (6.8% and 1.8%, respectively).[13]

The percentage of college-level students obtaining a diploma was similar for students from immigrant backgrounds and for other students (52.1% and 54.1%, respectively). The students from immigrant backgrounds were, however, more likely to obtain a Diploma of College Studies (DCS) in the pre-university program (80.4% compared with 67.1% of other students enrolled at the college level) than in a technical program (16.4% compared with 30.1%).

Among the secondary school graduates in the 1994-1995 cohort, those from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to enroll in English-language colleges: 50.6% of students from immigrant backgrounds chose English-language colleges, compared with 10.7% of the other students. Based on the language of instruction at the start of secondary school, a majority (96.9%) of the students from immigrant backgrounds who attended English-language schools enrolled in English-language colleges. This observation does not appear to be linked to the migratory factor, since a similar percentage (94.2%) applied to the other students. Similarly, 36.1% of the students from immigrant backgrounds who attended French-language schools enrolled in English-language colleges, compared with 3.7% of the other students. For the students from immigrant backgrounds, knowing more than one language and living on the island of Montréal or in the outlying suburbs (Laval, Montérégie) where English-language instruction is more prevalent appear to be among the explanatory factors.[14]

12 At the college level, a student registered for a single course is considered to be enrolled. First-generation immigrant students without a secondary school diploma were slightly more likely to enroll in a private, subsidized college, which offered more programs leading to an attestation of college studies than the public colleges. The data does not show the type of program in which the students enrolled (attestation or diploma).

13 Some students without a secondary school diploma may be admitted on certain conditions (such as passing a particular course). In addition, colleges may admit students they consider to have adequate qualifications, in particular for programs leading to an attestation.

14 In addition, Québec students who enroll at the college level are not required to study in French, since the *Charter of the French language* applies only at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels.

Table 6 **Transition to and graduation from college[1]**

Event at college level	Students from immigrant backgrounds		Other students	
	N	%	N	%
First enrollment at college level (after start of observation period)				
Yes	9 854	65.4	48 052	56.9
No	5 214	34.6	36 361	43.1
Total	**15 068**	**100.0**	**84 413**	**100.0**
Cumulated migration (estimate)[2]	2 224	-	1 667	-
Secondary-school graduation status on enrollment in college				
Secondary school diploma	9 186	93.2	47 195	98.2
No diploma	668	6.8	857	1.8
Total	**9 854**	**100.0**	**48 052**	**100.0**
First enrollment at college level of secondary school graduates				
Yes	9 186	87.5	47 195	77.2
No	1 309	12.5	13 960	22.8
Total	**10 495**	**100.0**	**61 155**	**100.0**
Annual migration (estimate)[3]	37	-	66	-
Graduation from college by enrolled students				
General program	4 022	41.9] 52,19	17 366	36.3] 54,1
Technical program	980	10.2]	8 527	17.8]
No diploma	4 591	47.9	21 951	45.9
Total	**9 593**	**100.0**	**47 845**	**100.0**
Cumulated migration (estimate)[4]	261	-	207	-
Type of college diploma obtained				
Attestation of College Studies or Certificate of College Studies	156	3.2	708	2.7
Diploma of College Studies - general	3 930	80.4	17 310	67.1
Diploma of College Studies - technical	803	16.4	7 761	30.1
Total	**4 889**	**100.0**	**25 779**	**100.0**
Language of instruction at college level of secondary school graduates				
French	4 366	47.5	41 446	87.8
English	4 652	50.6	5 069	10.7
French and English	168	1.8	680	1.4
Total	**9 186**	**100.0**	**47 195**	**100.0**

1 Data from May 2004.
2 Estimated migration is cumulated from the start of the educational path and includes estimated migration between graduation from secondary school and enrollment in college.
3 In other words, estimated migration between secondary school graduation and enrollment in college.
4 Estimated migration for two years.

Table 6 **Transition to and graduation from college[1] (cont.)**

Event at college level	Students from immigrant backgrounds		Other students	
	N	%	N	%
Language transfer with regard to language of instruction				
Language of instruction at start of secondary school educational path: FRENCH				
Language of instruction at college level				
French	4 319	61.8	41 263	94.8
English	2 520	36.1	1 603	3.7
French and English	147	2.1	650	1.5
Total	**6 986**	**100.0**	**43 516**	**100.0**
Language transfer with regard to language of instruction				
Language of instruction at start of secondary school educational path: ENGLISH				
Language of instruction at college level				
French	47	2.1	183	5.0
English	2 132	96.9	3 466	94.2
French and English	21	1.0	30	0.8
Total	**2 200**	**100.0**	**3 679**	**100.0**

1 Data from May 2004.

Conclusion

This study describes the situation of students from the cohort that started secondary school in 1994-1995, and traces their progress over time by examining their educational paths, academic delays, secondary school graduation rates and transition to college.

Second-generation immigrant students (born in Canada, but to parents who were immigrants or whose mother tongue was neither French nor English) had the highest academic success rates, outdoing not only first-generation immigrant students but also all other students. First, they were less likely to repeat a year at the start of secondary school and to leave general education in the youth sector; second, they were more likely to obtain a secondary school diploma.

Overall, first-generation immigrant students appeared to experience the most academic difficulties, including accumulated academic delay during their secondary education. However, their graduation rate, although below that for other students, had partly caught up seven years after the start of their secondary education. It is important to note that the graduation rate for first-generation immigrant students varied widely depending on their region of birth. In addition, first-generation immigrant students were more likely to live in disadvantaged areas and to experience academic delay when they started secondary school than the second-generation immigrant students or the other students.

This study also shows that the earlier first-generation immigrant students entered the Québec school system, the more chance they had of achieving academic success. This finding has also emerged from other studies.

Finally, students from immigrant backgrounds were more likely to choose a general education path at both the secondary and college levels than vocational or technical training. In addition, those who obtained a secondary school diploma were more likely to enroll at the college level, where their graduation rate was similar to that of other students.

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