



Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de l'Éducation
Direction des statistiques
et des études quantitatives
<http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca>
No. 4 – June 1998

0123456789012345678901234567890123456789012345
 $\sum \geq \approx \leq \int \%_0 + - \pm \div \mu \times \infty$ **Education Statistics**
01234567890123456789012345 **Bulletin**

Graduation from Secondary School, College and University in 1995: A Comparison of Québec and OECD Countries

ISSN: 1480-364X
Code: 28-2696A

Summary

In 1995, Québec's graduation rate compared positively with the OECD country mean for secondary education, college and university (bachelor's, master's and doctorate).

Introduction

Since 1988, member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have participated in updating and distributing education indicators on the context of different education systems, as well as on the resources used, the processes implemented and the results obtained in these systems. In December 1997, the fifth edition of *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* was published. The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec has been participating in this OECD program since the beginning.

The OECD is not seeking to prepare an honour roll, but rather, by providing comparisons, to help countries have a clearer idea of the state of their education system and the consequences of their choices. Also, knowing the results that some countries have achieved may help others decide on their objectives in educational matters.

Limitations Regarding the Comparability of Indicators

Regardless of the efforts of those representing the various countries, indicators must be considered with caution for several reasons. Education systems vary; the organization of different levels of instruction, the number of years of study in each level, the various options available, certification requirements, the various diplomas available—all are specific to each country. In the case of federations, we sometimes see, as in Canada, significant variations among provinces, states, regions and so forth. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is a tool that allows each country to situate its various programs within a common structure. The development of a new classification (ISCED-97) should improve the comparability of indicators in the coming years.

The quality of the data available is not the same for each country. It is often by calculating or analyzing indicators using raw data that anomalies appear in the basic data. Most countries are aware of these problems and attempt to improve the compatibility between the data transmitted to, and the data required, by the OECD. Regular readers of *Education at a Glance* have been able to observe that the data quality has improved considerably over the years.

OECD Methods of Calculation and Instructions

The OECD publishes graduation rates as a percentage of the population of typical age of graduation. Here, the number of diplomas issued at a level of instruction is divided by the population in a given age group. The age used is the typical age at which a student who has progressed normally through the education system (without interruption, grade repeating, etc.) earns a diploma.

For secondary education (ISCED 3), the graduation rates are based on the first diploma obtained. In Québec, it is possible to earn more than one diploma. For example, a student may first earn a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), then a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) and then an Attestation of Vocational Specialization (AVS). In this case, only the SSD would be counted. Not all countries are able to separate the first diploma from subsequent ones. [Table 1](#) indicates several countries with graduation rates higher than 100%, which may be a result of not being able to count only the first diplomas earned. The permanent code of the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec makes it easy to identify first diplomas.

For higher education, the OECD does not provide figures for the first diploma only. Also, for various levels of instruction, the OECD does not make the distinction between continuing education (also called adult education) and basic education (also called the youth sector or regular education). The diplomas earned by non-residents are counted in the countries in which the diplomas were obtained and not in the country of origin.

For university education, the OECD also publishes net graduation rates for countries able to provide the required data. Here, the number of diplomas obtained for each age is divided by the population of the same age. The net rate represents the sum of age-specific graduation rates. The synthetic cohort method is used, based on demographic analysis.

In its own publication of education indicators, the Ministère de l'Éducation uses the equivalent of the OECD's net rates, with two nuances:

1. Québec's figures include only the first diploma earned, for all levels of instruction;
2. Québec publishes a graduation rate for master's degrees (but following discussions with the OECD's secretariat for international education indicators, it was decided that graduate degrees would be included with the master's degrees).

In this bulletin, we have applied the OECD's methods of calculation and instructions so as not to introduce factors that would interfere with the comparability of indicators, which explains the slight differences in the indicators published by the Ministère for Québec.

Results

In Québec, the secondary school graduation rate for 1995 was 87%, that is, close to the rate for Germany and Korea, but less than that for Ireland, Japan and New Zealand. Québec exceeds the OECD country mean (80%) and the rate for the United States (76%).

For college education (ISCED 5), Québec (44%) significantly surpassed the graduation rate for the OECD country mean (13%). Only Norway had a higher rate (48%) than Québec. It is the special organizational structure of colleges in Québec, with pre-university education leading to a diploma, that accounts for our high result.

For university education, the graduation rates were first examined as a percentage of the total population at typical age of graduation ([Table 1](#)). With the graduation rate for bachelor's degrees at 31%, Québec ranks among the top with Australia (34%), the United States (32%), and Canada and the United Kingdom (both at 31%). The OECD country mean was 20%. Japan had a rate of 23% and Germany, 16%. Results vary a great deal at the master's level: Québec's rate was 7.8%, which is lower than that for certain countries, such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom (approximately 12%), but higher than for the OECD country mean of 3.6%.

Québec's graduation rate of 1% for doctorates is the same as the OECD country mean.

[Table 2](#), which presents net graduation rates, reveals similar findings. Readers will note that Québec's rates are slightly lower than in [Table 1](#). This is due to the age structure of Québec's population. A number of diplomas are earned by individuals over 30 years of age, age groups for which the basic demographic figures are higher than those used as denominators in calculating the rates for the first table. The Direction des statistiques et des études quantitatives believes that the net rates are more accurate than the others. In the coming years, these rates will be used by the OECD.

Conclusion

In 1995, Québec had higher graduation rates than the OECD country mean for secondary education, college and university (bachelor's, master's and doctorate).

For further information:

Robert Maheu
(418) 644-0383

Other [Education Statistics Bulletins](#) available:

- Lespérance, André. *Level of Graduation Upon Leaving the Education System*, No. 1, November 1997.
- Demers, Marius. *Statutory Salaries and Teaching Time of Teachers in Public Elementary and Lower Secondary Schools: A Comparison of Québec and OECD Countries*, No. 2, November 1997.
- Demers, Marius. *Educational Expenditure Relative to the GDP: A Comparison of Québec and OECD Countries*, No. 3, June 1998.

Table 1
Ratio of graduates to
population at typical
age of graduation, by
type of program, 1995

	Secondary	College	University		
			Bachelor's Degree (short and long)	Master's Degree (or equivalent)	Doctorate (or equivalent)
North America					
Canada	72 ¹	m	31	4.9	0.8
Mexico	26	x	11	x	x
United States	76	22	32	12.0	1.2
Québec	87	44²	31	7.8³	1.0
Pacific Area					
Australia	m	m	34	12.1	0.8
Japan	94	29	23	1.9	0.4
Korea	85	16	23	3.0	0.5
New Zealand	95	17	26	9.8	0.5
European Union					
Austria	m	5	10	a	1.2
Belgium (Flemish Community)	110	28	26	5.2	0.7
Denmark	81 ¹	8	29	2.1	0.6
Finland	102	22	21	x	2.0
France	m	m	m	m	m
Germany	88	12	16	a	1.6
Greece	80	5	14	0.3	0.4
Ireland	94	14	20	9.8	1.0
Italy	67	7	12	a	1.6
Luxembourg	m	m	m	m	m
Netherlands	80	a	19	a	1.9
Portugal	m	6	15	1.2	1.2
Spain	73	2	24	x	0.9
Sweden	64 ¹	9	16	2.8	1.7
United Kingdom	m	17	31	11.2	0.9
Other OECD Countries					
Czech Republic	78	6	13	x	0.2
Hungary	76	a	18	4.3	0.2
Iceland	m	m	17	m	m
Norway	106	48	22	8.4	0.9
Poland	m	m	m	m	m
Switzerland	79	23	9	a	3.1
Turkey	37	3	8	0.6	0.2
Country Mean	80	13	20	3.6	1.0
Other non-OECD Countries					
Russian Federation	88	26	21	a	0.7

Sources: - *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators, 1997*, pages 324 and 333
 - Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (diplomas)
 - Statistics Canada (population estimates as of January 1, 1995)

Symbols used: a: data not applicable
 m: data not available
 x: data included in another column of the table

1. Excludes continuing education.
2. Only Diplômes d'études collégiales (DECs—diplomas of college studies) were counted.
3. Includes graduate degrees.

Table 2 Net graduation rates in university-level education, by type of program, 1995 (%)	Bachelor's Degree (short and long programs)	Master's Degree (or equivalent)	Doctorate (or equivalent)
North America			
Canada	29	4.4	0.7
Québec	29	7.0	0.9
Pacific Area			
Australia	34	12.4	0.8
European Union			
Austria	9	a	1.2
Belgium (Flemish Community)	27	5.2	0.7
Denmark	28	2.1	0.6
Finland	19	x	1.9
Italy	11	a	m
Netherlands	20	10.2	1.8
Spain	19	x	m
Sweden	15	2.8	1.8
United Kingdom	30	10.9	1.0
Other OECD Countries			
Hungary	18	m	m
Iceland	24	0.6	n
Norway	22	8.6	0.9
Turkey	7	0.6	0.2
Country Mean	20	3.6	1.0
Sources: - <i>Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators, 1997</i> , page 334 - Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (diplomas) - Statistics Canada (population estimates as of January 1, 1995)			
Symbols used: a: data not applicable m: data not available n: magnitude is either negligible or zero x: data included in another column of the table			