

Education in Canada

7.1

Statistical highlights

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Education was the primary activity of 6,400,000 Canadians in 1976-77, about 28% of the total population. They included 325,000 full-time teachers and 6,100,000 full-time students in 15,500 educational institutions. Expenditures on education for 1976-77 amounted to an estimated \$15 billion or 7.9% of the Gross National Product (GNP).

Enrolment. Total full-time enrolment at all levels rose steadily from 4,367,400 in 1960-61 to a record high of 6,363,900 in 1970-71, a 46% increase in 10 years. The subsequent 4% decrease to 6,099,900 in 1976-77 occurred at the elementary and secondary levels, reflecting the decline in the number of children aged 5-17. Post-secondary enrolment continued to grow.

Full-time post-secondary enrolment in 1976-77 was 603,500, a 2% increase over the 592,000 enrolled in 1975-76. University students made up 62% of the total, but their rate of increase over the past decade was lower than that of students in non-university institutions. Full-time enrolment in the latter almost tripled, rising from 80,200 in 1966-67 to 227,000 in 1976-77. Simultaneously, full-time university enrolment went from 230,300 to 376,500, an increase of 64%. The proportion of women enrolled full-time at the post-secondary level rose from 38% in 1966-67 to 45% in 1976-77. But while the percentage of female students in universities grew from 32% to 42%, their representation in non-university institutions fell from 55% to 49%.

Elementary-secondary enrolment was 5,496,400 in 1976-77, a loss of 2% from the previous year. Since the all-time 1970-71 high of 5,900,000, enrolment fell 7% because the young population had diminished. Likewise, the number of elementary-secondary schools was reduced, but this began much earlier. In 1960-61 there were 27,000 schools; by 1976-77 the total was 15,200. Whereas recent cuts in the number of schools were forced by the enrolment decline, the drop in the 1960s was a result of school consolidation. At that time small schools were being replaced by large buildings in response to the pressure of rising enrolment.

Enrolment in the future, as in the past, will be significantly affected by trends in the birth rate. At the elementary-secondary level where most attendance is compulsory the number of school-age children almost predetermines enrolment. And 18-24-year-olds make up about 80% of post-secondary students. Thus, the post-war baby boom, during which annual births soared from 300,600 in 1945 to 479,300 in 1959, meant that enrolment at all levels would increase as these children progressed through the education system. But starting in the 1960s annual births declined, falling to 343,400 in 1973. The low birth rates of these years will produce an enrolment slump at every educational level as the children mature.

Small annual reductions in elementary enrolment are expected for the rest of the decade. The drop from the 1968 high of 3,844,000 to the projected 1981 low of 3,011,000 is 22%. Enrolment will stabilize for several years and then rise until the mid-1990s. However, the next "peak" should be much below the baby boom maximum.

Secondary enrolment patterns resemble those at the elementary level but are delayed seven or eight years because of the age difference. From 1966-67 to 1974-75, enrolment rose 32% from 1,366,200 to 1,808,600. By 1976-77, it had fallen to 1,704,900. A continuing decline to about 1.4 million in the early 1990s is expected, followed by an increase peaking at about 1.7 million at the turn of the century.

The decrease in the post-secondary-age population will become evident in the mid-1980s. Since 1970-71 the full-time post-secondary enrolment rate rose from 18% to