



Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity

Canada Report for the UNESCO 10th Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, 2017–20



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Council
of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada

Conseil des
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de l'Éducation
(Canada)

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Rapport du Canada pour la 10^e consultation des États membres sur l'application de la Convention et de la Recommandation concernant la lutte contre la discrimination dans le domaine de l'enseignement, 2017-2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on December 14, 1960. Canada is not a signatory to the convention. This report summarizes the application of the recommendation in Canada for the period from 2017 to 2020.

Context and legal framework

In 2016, Canada's population stood at 35,151,728, an increase of 5 percent since the previous census five years earlier. Canada is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world, and 22 percent of its population are visible minorities. More than 7 million people living in Canada are immigrants. They account for approximately 21 percent of the country's population. Just under 5 percent of the country identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), for a total of 1.7 million people. Canada has two official languages (English and French) and mother tongue speakers of more than 200 other languages.

Canada's *Constitution Act, 1867* grants complete legislative responsibility for education to its provinces, and the federal government has delegated similar responsibility to the territories. While the education acts in each province or territory vary in specific details, all share a common guiding principle: every child has the right to attend a public school if they satisfy age and residency requirements, and no child or parent shall be charged tuition for attending a public school. The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations for providing education to children who ordinarily reside in First Nations communities and attend provincial, territorial, federal, or First Nations community schools.ⁱ

To support this guiding principle, governments in Canada have enacted a series of laws and policies that prohibit discrimination on the grounds outlined in the convention and recommendation — race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, or economic condition. Protection from discrimination extends beyond access to education to encompass the quality of the educational experience itself. This has led ministries and departments of education in Canada to embrace the concept of truly inclusive education, which places the best interests of the students, social inclusion, equality of opportunity, and active participation at the heart of the learning experience.

Access to quality education

Early childhood learning and development (ECLD): The final year of ECLD before primary education is known as Kindergarten in Canada and has a dedicated curriculum in all 13 provinces and territories. While this final year of ECLD is compulsory in only three provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), 97 percent of children who are of eligible age attend Kindergarten in Canada.

Elementary and high school systems: The vast majority of the population between the ages of 5 and 17 years attends school. In 2016, for example, 97 percent of 15-year-olds

Executive Summary

were enrolled in school, and most students at this age go on to complete their education. In 2017, 80 percent graduated from high school on time (i.e., within three years of having entered Grade 10), and a further 9 percent obtained their diploma at a later date.

On international tests of basic skills, Canadian students have consistently performed well for many decades. In addition, Canada records high levels of equality of educational opportunity, as indicated by the narrow gaps between the scores of the highest-performing students and those of the lowest. Significantly, variables such as socioeconomic status had less of an impact on student achievement than they do in other countries.

Postsecondary education: According to the 2016 Census of Canada, more than half (54%) of the population aged 25 to 64 have successfully completed a program of postsecondary education, which is far above the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. More than a fifth (22.4%) hold a certificate or diploma from a college, 3.1 percent hold a university certificate below a bachelor's degree, and 28.5 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Among Indigenous peoplesⁱⁱ in the same 25–64 age group in 2016, a much smaller proportion have graduated from university (10.9%, up from 7.7% in 2006), but college completion rates of 23% in this population are comparable to that of the population as a whole. Additionally, although 7.8% of young men in the general population have indicated having an apprenticeship certificate in the skilled trades as their highest level of education, that number rises to 9.6% for Indigenous men. Finally, research indicates that the level of parental education is a strong determinant of student participation in postsecondary education for all populations

Adult learning and skills development: Data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012 indicate that approximately 58 percent of Canadians aged 16 to 65 and not engaged in their initial formal cycles of educationⁱⁱⁱ participated in some form of adult learning, whether formal, nonformal, or both, in the 12 months preceding the study. Generally, Canadian-born respondents were more likely than immigrants to take part in adult learning. Canada's PIAAC results also show that, generally, Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous populations have similar participation rates.

Continuing challenges

Some 89% percent of the general population aged 25 to 64 years had obtained at least a high school diploma in 2016, compared to 74% in the Indigenous population. However, Indigenous graduation rates have consistently improved in recent years.

Provincial and territorial education systems provide education to Indigenous students with the exception of those attending schools in First Nations communities, where education is provided by community-run schools that are either largely or fully funded by the federal government.^{iv} The ministers responsible for education in the provinces and territories, working together as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), have identified Indigenous education as a key area of focus. In particular, they have prioritized multiple initiatives that aim to eliminate the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. These initiatives range from changes to curriculum and education in racism prevention, to funding policies and administrative measures, all designed to increase levels of Indigenous attainment.

Canada can justifiably claim to provide high levels of accessibility and inclusivity in education to its student population. On most measures, Canada performs remarkably well in ensuring that the vast majority of its youth participate in formal education and receive the support they need to achieve their highest potential. However, it falls short in educational attainment among persons with disabilities (approximately 73% of those aged 15 to 34 had attained at least a high school diploma in 2017) and among Indigenous students (74% in 2016, as seen earlier), compared to 89% among the general population.

Provincial and territorial as well as federal governments are well aware that the continuing gaps in learning outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, as well as between people living with disabilities and those who are not, prevent the country from claiming that it has achieved full equity and inclusion for all its citizens. Thus, provincial and territorial governments are taking steps to eliminate those gaps and thereby help Canada realize its democratic ideals, by developing policies and guidelines that are more inclusive and by reporting data on school performance of Indigenous learners.



INTRODUCTION

The nature of the report

1. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on December 14, 1960. The convention, which has been recognized as a key pillar in the Education for All process, contains 19 articles that define discrimination and the goals and policies of education systems free from discrimination. The purpose of the convention and the recommendation is not only the elimination of discrimination in education but also the adoption of measures aimed at promoting equality of educational opportunity and treatment.
2. The recommendation sought to take into account the diversity of states and the capacity of all legal and political systems to ratify the convention, particularly those states, such as Canada, with a federal structure. Barring differences in wording and in legal scope, the content of the recommendation is identical to that of the convention. The substantive difference is that the convention has binding force, and the states that are party to it must incorporate its provisions into their national constitution or domestic law. The recommendation, nonbinding in nature, is a norm that Member States are invited to apply. It is intended to influence the development of national or, in Canada's case, provincial/territorial laws and practices.
3. Canada, with its federal structure, is not a signatory to the convention, so this report relates to the application of the recommendation only. The provinces and territories affirm their commitment to the recommendation as best reflecting their priorities and responsibility for education in the Canadian federation.
4. UNESCO has conducted nine previous consultations of member states since the adoption of the convention and the recommendation. This 10th Consultation covers the period from 2017 to 2020.
5. The definition of discrimination in the convention includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference which — being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, or economic condition — has the purpose of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education, in particular with regard to access, education of inferior quality, or inflicting conditions that are incompatible with human dignity. As this report shows, the legislative framework established in Canada does not permit these, or any other, forms of discrimination in education or any other aspect of life. For this reason, the Canada report focuses on the promotion of equality of education opportunities and success and the provision of inclusive education, rather than documenting efforts to prevent discrimination.
6. Canada has 13 provinces and territories, all of which are committed to preventing all forms of violence, including discrimination, in education at all levels. This report is not intended to include all the activity and legislation concerned with promoting equality of educational opportunity in Canada from 2017 to 2020. Instead, it presents an overview of the levels of access to and graduation from educational opportunities at all levels of public education. Policies, programs, and resources that address the ongoing challenge of eliminating the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students highlight how

Canada has 13 provinces and territories, all of which are committed to preventing all forms of violence, including discrimination, in education at all levels.

- governments and educators continue to strive for true equality of educational opportunities.
7. This report has been prepared by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) in consultation with the federal government and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO). The council is an intergovernmental body through which the ministries/departments of education in Canada share information, consult with each other, undertake projects of common interest, and represent the provinces and territories internationally in matters related to education. The report responds to UNESCO's monitoring of the state of discrimination prevention policies and measures in education around the world. It takes the form of an overview of the cultural, demographic, and administrative context within which education in Canada is delivered, together with summaries of specific issues raised by the Member State questionnaire.
8. Four reports completed by CMEC, in cooperation with CCUNESCO, offer extensive detail on the specific activities of the provincial and territorial departments or ministries of education and civil society to promote equality of educational opportunities. For a full list of these reports, see Appendix B.
- Demographic context**
9. Canada's population in its 2016 census was 35,151,728, a number 5 percent larger than it was in 2011. Most of this growth was a result of international migration because immigrants around the world view Canada as a very attractive destination that welcomes newcomers. There are more than 7 million immigrants living in Canada — over one-fifth of the entire populace — and the four largest source countries of this population are India, China, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom. Immigrants to Canada tend to congregate in urban centres, and 4.6 million (61% of the total) live in just three cities: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.
10. Canada's population is also very diverse. Twenty-two percent of its residents are visible minorities, of whom East Asians constitute the largest group (8%), followed by South Asians (5%) and Black people (3%). The Indigenous population comprises 1.7 million people, representing 5 percent of the total. The *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes three "Aboriginal" peoples: "Indians" (First Nations), Métis, and Inuit. Respectively, these peoples represent approximately 58 percent, 35 percent, and 4 percent of the Indigenous population in Canada.^{v,vi}
- Education systems in Canada**
11. Responsibility for education at all levels is vested in provinces and territories. The *Constitution Act, 1867* confers upon the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over education and stipulates that the power to make laws in relation to education and the right to develop and implement educational policies are exclusively assigned to the provincial governments. By virtue of the federal acts that created them, Canada's three territories — Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut — have comparable delegated powers. In these 13 provinces and territories, departments and ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels. Provincial and territorial governments are also responsible, at varying levels, for oversight of postsecondary institutions, which enjoy varying degrees of autonomy, depending on the province or territory. The ministers responsible for education in the provinces and territories come together through CMEC to discuss matters of mutual interest, undertake educational initiatives cooperatively, and represent the interests of the provinces and territories within Canada and internationally.
12. In Canada, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments have a constitutional responsibility for the education of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. While the Government

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Introduction

of Canada has a responsibility for the education of students who attend schools in First Nations communities, provincial and territorial public education systems provide education to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students who attend schools outside of these communities.^{vii}

13. CMEC outlined the four pillars of lifelong learning in the document *Learn Canada 2020* (CMEC, 2008), with commitments that reflect the components of the UNESCO recommendation:
 - Early childhood learning and development: All children should have access to high-quality early childhood education that ensures they arrive at school ready to learn.
 - Elementary and high-school systems: All children in our elementary to high-school systems deserve teaching and learning opportunities that are inclusive and that provide them with world-class skills in literacy, numeracy, and science.
 - Postsecondary education: Canada's provinces and territories must

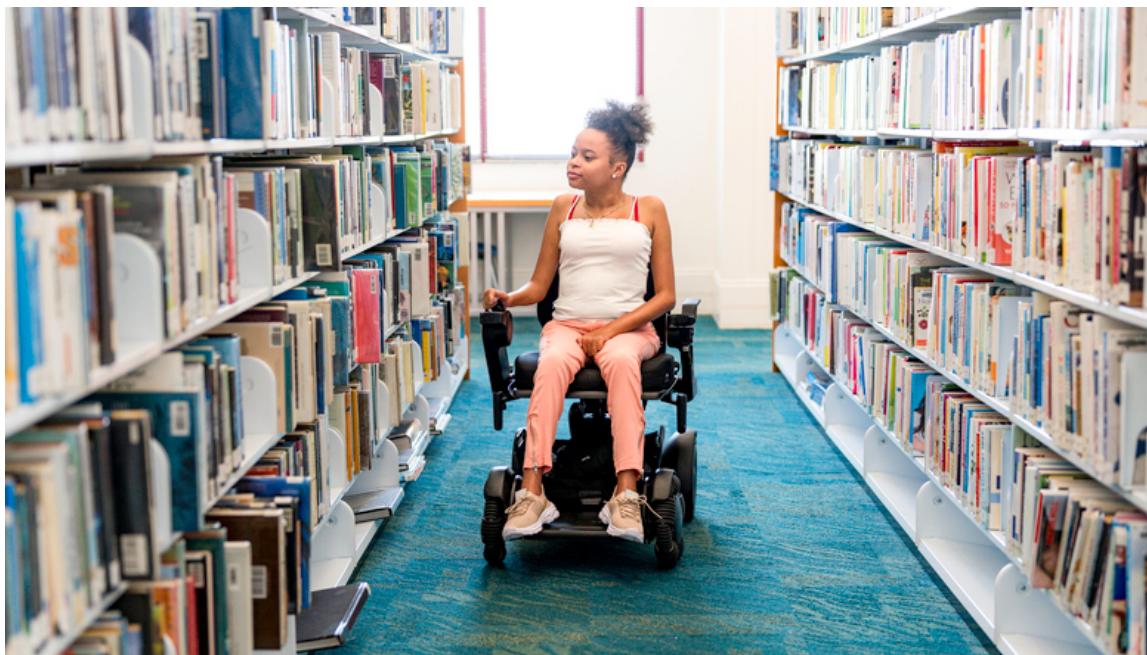
increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education by increasing the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education.

- Adult learning and skills development: Canada must develop an accessible, diversified, and integrated system of adult learning and skills development that delivers training when Canadians need it.
- 14. While there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are important differences that reflect the geography, history, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the populations served. The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflects the societal belief in the importance of education. More information on the educational systems in Canada can be found through the CMEC website at <http://www.cmecc.ca/299/Education-in-Canada-An-Overview/index.html>.

The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflects the societal belief in the importance of education.



The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms clearly states that “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.



SECTION ONE – LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

15. UNESCO's Recommendation against Discrimination in Education aims at eliminating inequality in access to education within Member States, as well as ensuring that all students in any state receive education of the same quality, in conditions that acknowledge their dignity. Governments in Canada are strongly committed to these aims, and the provision of education in Canada proceeds from the assumption of equality for all. This assumption is crystallized in a legal framework operating at the federal, provincial, and territorial orders of government that acknowledges education as a significant human right. The foundation of this framework is the guarantee of equal access to education for all students, which is complemented by policies that promote positive learning environments, inclusive curricula, and high-quality pedagogy.

Legislation protecting the rights guaranteed under the recommendation

Legislation of the Government of Canada

16. The Government of Canada has established a solid legal framework that integrates a collection of laws and policies that prohibit discrimination on the grounds outlined in the convention and recommendation — race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, or economic condition.
17. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* was put in place to give effect to the principle that all individuals should have equal opportunities. In this act, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation,

Section One – Legislative and Policy Frameworks

- marital status, family status, disability, and criminal conviction for which a pardon has been granted. In defining discriminatory practices, the act states that it is illegal, for any of the reasons listed, to deny, or deny access to, any good, service, facility, or accommodation to any individual or to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual. Access to education is included in this prohibition.
18. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* clearly states that “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability” (p. 50). It further ensures that this guarantee of rights “does not preclude any law, program, or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability” (p. 50).
19. The *Citizenship Act* provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, are entitled to the same rights, powers, and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties, and liabilities.
20. The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* provides that the “Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour, and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of Canada” (p. 2).
21. In November 2010, the Government of Canada joined other countries in supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reaffirmation of its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world.^{viii} The declaration sets out the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education, and other needs. In December 2020, Bill C-15, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, was introduced into parliament. Bill C-15 introduces legislation to affirm the declaration as a universal, international, human rights instrument with application in Canadian federal law and provide a framework for the Government of Canada’s implementation of it.
22. The Government of Canada, with the support of all the provinces and territories, has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The core obligations relate to nondiscrimination and reasonable accommodation, with specific provisions for education.
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- Legislation of the provinces and territories**
23. Every province and territory has its own human rights legislation and procedures, and education is included in this legislation as a service that is subject to the provisions of the law. The provinces and territories also have human rights commissions or tribunals. These promote and educate about human rights and discrimination prevention laws, as well as work to settle claims of discrimination. They are collectively represented by the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA), whose website provides links to the respective agencies (<https://cashra.ca/about-us/>) and the corresponding legislation for each province or territory.
24. The human rights acts or codes provide protection from discrimination or denial of service, with variations by province or territory, for such reasons as age,

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- colour, race, ethnic or national origin, criminal conviction, political belief, sexual orientation, association, creed or religion, family and marital status, physical and mental disability (including addiction), and source of income. The federal and provincial/territorial legislation is inclusive in terms of individuals, businesses, and services to which they apply.
25. The education or school act in each province and territory specifies who is entitled to attend school. Although each act differs in specifics, the overall principles are consistent throughout the country. All children have the right to attend a public school if they meet the age and residency requirements. No tuition is to be charged to the student or the parent for this public education. The respective acts are long-standing pieces of legislation that reflect a strong tradition of equality in education in Canada. They are amended or updated from time to time. For example, in 2017 Newfoundland and Labrador enacted changes to childcare regulations regarding facilities and staff qualifications, and Quebec extended its guarantee of access to education to all students, regardless of immigration status — including immigrant children without proper documentation.
26. School systems reflect the values of the legislation cited by creating and maintaining conditions that foster success and equitable treatment for all. The education acts also address the provision of reasonable accommodations to meet the learning needs of students with special education needs. Codes of conduct in some provinces and territories refer to the standards of behaviour that are expected from all members of school communities related to safe and positive learning environments and respecting the rights of others.
27. Canada's provinces and territories recognize that access to postsecondary education constitutes an important part of the professional and social development of their populations, and they strive to make postsecondary institutions and learning as accessible as possible. Human rights legislation in Canada extends to the postsecondary sector and is complemented by policies that range from encouraging postsecondary education completion among at-risk groups to providing financial assistance to students whose socioeconomic background might otherwise prevent them from furthering their education beyond high school.





SECTION TWO — ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

From discrimination prevention to inclusion

28. Within the framework of this legislation and policy, the rights of students to be free from discrimination encompass not only access to education but also the quality of the educational experience itself. Provinces and territories in Canada are reaching beyond the idea of discrimination prevention to the concept of truly inclusive education. In inclusive education, educational values and beliefs are centred on the best interests of the students, thus promoting belonging, equal opportunities for success, and active participation in learning.
29. As an example of equal opportunity for success, the Ontario government provides \$1.5 million annually to 21 Education Championship Teams across the province to support youth in extended society care (formerly known as Crown wards) in addressing transportation barriers, thus enabling these young people to attend and

participate in events such as mentoring and tutoring programs, conferences where important information is being shared about how to harness support to pursue their goals, and training for skills development. This supports youth on their path to acquiring a good education and transitioning from high school to postsecondary education. In addition, Ontario has issued Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 entitled “Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools,” which directs school boards to develop, implement, and monitor equity and inclusive education policies that support student achievement and well-being. In addition to addressing the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the memorandum instructs boards to take into account individual differences and such characteristics as socioeconomic status. In Quebec, the *Education Act* and the *Act Respecting Private Education* require that all educational institutions adopt and implement an anti-bullying

and anti-violence plan that covers all grounds for discrimination. The Quebec government also provides language-acquisition resources for newcomers to the province, notably refugees and asylum seekers. Liaison services are provided to ease the integration of students into the school system and Quebec society more generally, for example by fostering collaboration between schools and immigrant families.

30. Recently, the concept of inclusive education has also informed discussion around sustainable development. In 2015, the United Nations articulated 17 goals that it identified as necessary to a “better and more sustainable future for all.” Seven of these have education-related targets. Education is not only linked with specific social and economic factors underpinning development in countries around the world, it is also tied to raising awareness of core sustainable development issues. More detail on the policies and practices of inclusive education in place within Canada’s provinces and territories can be found in the report *The Development of Education: Report for Canada. Report Two: Inclusive Education in Canada: The Way of the Future*; further information on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and education in Canada can be found in *Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Canada 2020*. For information on actions to ensure equality of opportunity in provinces and territories, see Table 1, Actions taken and planned to ensure equality of opportunities (in terms of access, participation, and completion), equal treatment, and to support the inclusion of all learners (including girls and women, the economically and socially marginalized, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups) in learning processes, provinces and territories, 2019.



Section Two — Access to Quality Education

Table 1. Actions taken and planned to ensure equality of opportunities (in terms of access, participation, and completion), equal treatment, and to support the inclusion of all learners (including girls and women, the economically and socially marginalized, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups) in learning processes, provinces and territories, 2019

	ON	QC	NB	NS*	YT	AB	SK	NL
Providing financial incentives and fellowships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ^a	✓	
Providing positive or affirmative action measures	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Ensuring inclusion in mainstream schools for all learners	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ ^b	✓	✓
Training teachers on inclusive education	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
Ensuring gender parity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and in technical and vocational training (TVET)	✓	✓					✓	✓
Providing re-entry programs for young mothers		✓			✓			
Eliminating all barriers for pregnant girls or young mothers in education		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Providing auxiliary assistance			✓					✓
Adapting education infrastructure		✓	✓	✓		✓ ^b	✓	✓
Adapting curricula and methods	✓		✓			✓ ^b	✓	✓
Providing language classes to newcomers (e.g., refugees)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ ^a	✓	✓
Eliminating administrative barriers to education	✓		✓				✓	✓
Providing flexible learning pathways	✓		✓		✓	✓ ^{a,b}	✓	✓
Valuing diversity in schools	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ ^b	✓	✓
Combatting stereotyping and stigmatization	✓	✓			✓	✓ ^b	✓	✓

Note: The table presents only information from provinces and territories that responded to the policy questionnaire.

* Denotes information provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education as known actions taken or planned by postsecondary institutions. Some of the actions may be taking place in the K–12 system; however, the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development did not participate in the 2019 survey.

^a Refers to actions taken by the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education.

^b Refers to actions taken by the Alberta Ministry of Education.

- 31.** Child, early, and forced marriage is a global problem, occurring in every region of the world, even in Canada, and it disproportionately affects girls.^{ix} It can occur for a number of reasons, including gender inequality, poverty, insecurity, and tradition. When girls learn about and exercise their human rights, are able to take care of their health, are protected from violence, and go to school they are empowered to work toward a better future. Governments in Canada work to end child, early, and forced marriage so that girls in Canada and around the world can reach their full potential.

Access to quality education

- 32.** Equality of access is a highly important measure of discrimination prevention in education, but it is not the only one. To fully serve all children equally, systems of education must also achieve a broad degree of equality of attainment, most notably in the area of graduation and advancement. This report highlights attainment levels in Canada, noting the progress that has been made but also underscoring the ongoing challenges Canada faces in achieving the vision set out in the convention.

Early childhood learning and development (pre-primary education)

- 33.** The early years are a critical period of rapid physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development that helps build every individual's foundation for growth and success. Because of the early years' importance, every province and territory devotes considerable resources to early development and education. Provinces and territories provide ample opportunity for parents to enrol their children in an educational pathway that begins before the first year of primary school, which is consistent with SDG Target 4.2. The final year of Early Childhood Learning and Development (ECLD) before primary education is known as Kindergarten in Canada. In provinces and territories where Kindergarten is optional, children may attend other ECLD programming

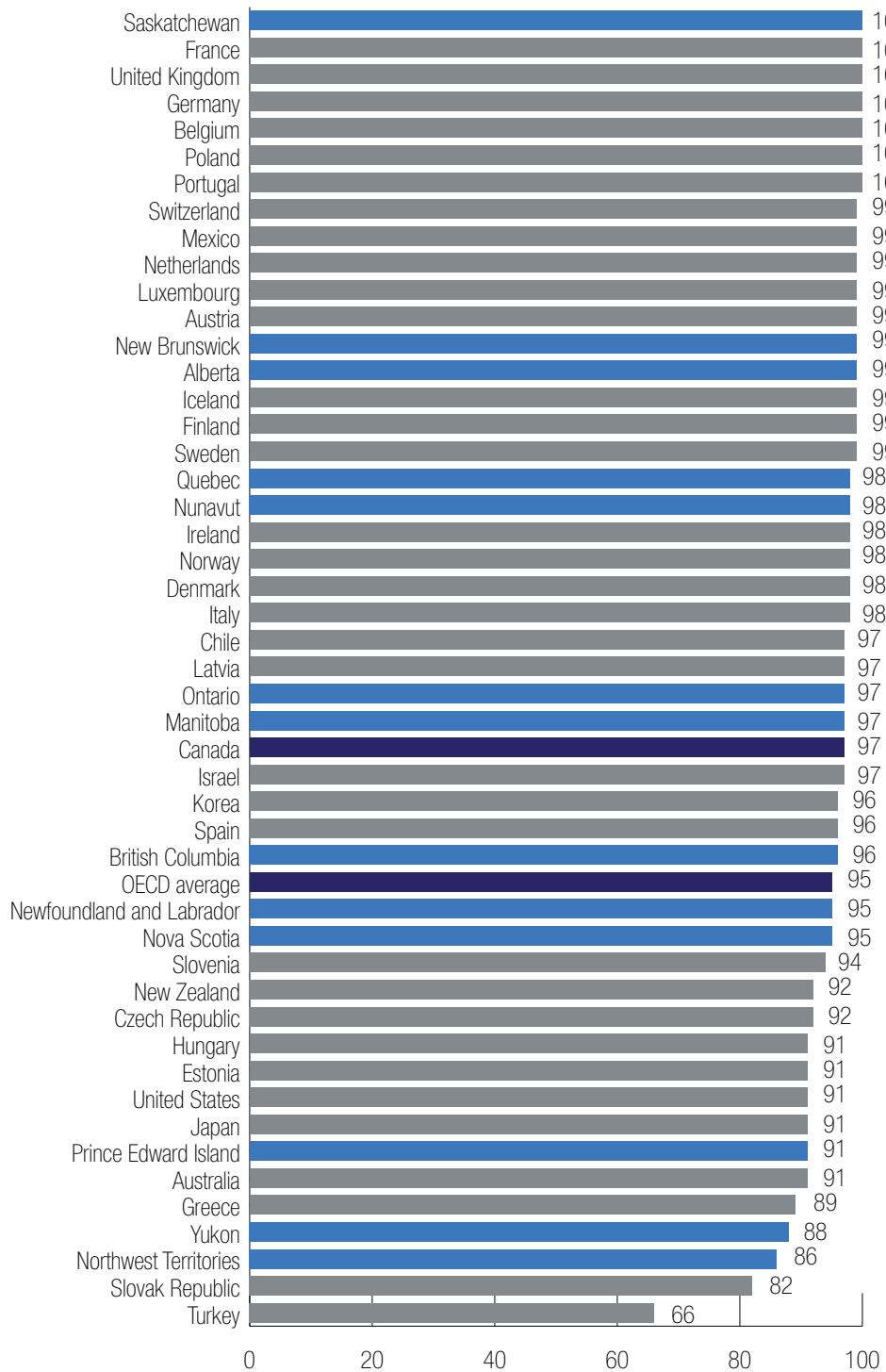
aside from Kindergarten in the final year before compulsory education. While Kindergarten is mandatory in only three provinces, it is available in every province and territory, and in 2019–20 the total number of children enrolled in pre-primary instruction (Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten) was 528,243. For participation rates in organized learning one year before primary education in Canada and across OECD countries, see Figure 1, Participation rate in organized learning (one year before primary education), by percentage, OECD average, OECD countries, Canada, provinces and territories, 2015–16.



The early years are a critical period of rapid physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development that helps build every individual's foundation for growth and success.

Section Two — Access to Quality Education

Figure 1. Participation rate in organized learning (one year before primary education), by percentage, OECD average, OECD countries, Canada, provinces and territories, 2015–16



Source: Adapted from Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective (2018), retrieved from: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2019/statcan/81-604-x/81-604-x2018001-eng.pdf, and the OECD.

- Each province and territory provides free public elementary and secondary education to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents — typically up to age 18.**
-
34. Kindergarten programs differ significantly across provinces and territories. They are either:
 - full-day or half-day (alternating full days/consecutive half days);
 - compulsory or optional; and
 - available for both four-year-old children (i.e., Junior Kindergarten, pre-Kindergarten, or Kindergarten for four-year-old children in Quebec) and five-year-old children (i.e., Kindergarten, Grade Primary), or available for five-year-old children only.
 35. Program characteristics differ both among and within provinces and territories, depending on local authorities (such as school divisions, districts, or boards). Some provinces and territories that generally offer half-day programs extend this offering to full-day programs for vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous children, learners with special education needs, and children whose first language is not English or French
 36. Provision of pre-primary education, including private daycare services, is governed by a variety of legislative acts and statutes, such as the *Education Act* and the *Child Care and Early Years Act* in Ontario, the 1988 *Law on Public Education* in Quebec, the *Child Care Act* of 2017 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the *Child Care Act* and *Education Act* in Saskatchewan. These laws address the establishment and operation of early childhood services programs, including such matters as application processes, safety standards, programs and policies, teacher qualifications, common age of entry for Kindergarten, financial reporting and auditing, and insurance. In some cases, the respective laws may outline specific program planning requirements, such as those for early-childhood home schooling in rural and remote communities where the small number of pre-primary-age children makes the operation of an early-childhood-education program financially unviable for

public school boards or private operators. The legislative framework may also be supplemented by policies designed to facilitate access for children. In New Brunswick, for example, the government has established an Early Learning Centre designation for early-learning and childcare (ELCC) facilities across the province that are committed to working with the government to provide more affordable, accessible, inclusive, and safe early-learning services

37. The Government of Canada also invests in early learning and childcare by providing funding to provinces and territories through a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework, to help all Canadian children get the best start in life and have a fair chance to succeed. This framework supports a commitment by governments to work toward investments to increase quality, access, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in ELCC, with consideration for those in need.
38. The design, delivery, and governance of Indigenous early-learning and childcare programs and services are guided by a framework that was co-developed with Indigenous peoples and endorsed by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership and the Government of Canada in 2018. This framework reflects the unique cultures, aspirations, and needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children across Canada. It provides a guide for communities, program administrators, service providers, policymakers, and governments to work toward achieving a shared vision where all Indigenous children have the opportunity to experience high-quality, culturally strong early learning and childcare. The framework is intended to support, coordinate, and guide the design, delivery, and governance of Indigenous ELCC that is anchored in self-determination, centred on children, and grounded in culture. The framework aims to achieve this through new policies, processes, partnerships, authorities, capacities, programs, and investments that will strengthen Indigenous ELCC in Canada.

Primary and secondary education

39. In each province and territory, departments or ministries of education are responsible for organizing, delivering, and assessing education at the elementary and secondary education levels, as previously noted. Each province and territory has developed its own system of education and has, to that end, established legislation, policies, programs, curricula, and practices for its elementary and secondary education system. Different systems of education reflect the unique contexts of their provinces or territories, thereby allowing them to respond to their specific needs, most notably to their historical and cultural realities. The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflects our society's belief in the importance of education.
40. Each province and territory provides free public elementary and secondary education to all Canadian citizens and permanent residents — typically up to age 18.
41. While each province and territory has legislation, policies, programs, curricula, and practices that reflect their individual needs, their systems of education all share broad similarities. Schooling is

generally divided into elementary school (the first six to eight years) and high school (the final four to six years), with junior high or middle school sometimes occupying the middle part of the typical 12-year trajectory of a child's education. In Quebec, students who have completed 11 years of elementary and secondary school can then proceed to the postsecondary level, choosing either vocational training or a cégep (*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*).^x

42. The age for compulsory schooling varies across the country, although most provinces and territories prescribe mandatory years of schooling — typically between the ages of 6 and at least 16. In Alberta, for example, the *Education Act* requires that children must attend school from age 6 to 16; in Ontario attendance is mandatory until graduation or the age of 18; and in New Brunswick school attendance is required for all children between the ages of 5 and 18. For information related to years of compulsory schooling in provinces and territories in Canada, please see Table 2, Years of compulsory schooling, provinces and territories, 2019.

Table 2. Years of compulsory schooling, provinces and territories, 2019

	ON	QC	NB	NS	MB	NT	BC	PE	AB	SK	NL
Number of years of compulsory primary education (ISCED 1)	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Number of years of compulsory lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Number of years of compulsory upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Compulsory school-starting age	6	6	5	5	7	6	6	5	6	6	6

Note: The table presents only information from provinces and territories that responded to the policy questionnaire.

- One of the most important milestones in education is high-school completion because achieving it is strongly correlated with significant social, health, and economic outcomes.**
-
43. Legislation ensures that education is provided free of charge at the primary and secondary levels, and this policy extends to the provision of books and other learning materials for all students. Here again there are provincial and territorial variations: Saskatchewan provides the right to free schooling up to the age of 22, while in Ontario students may remain in secondary school until the age of 21. In some cases, tuition fees may be charged to non-residents.
44. The provision of compulsory schooling for all, free of charge, serves as a foundation for Canada's commitment to equity in education, as embodied in the UN's SDG Target 4.5, related to the elimination of gender disparities in education and the guarantee of equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable. The vast majority of school-aged children in Canada are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. Specifically, there were 4.9 million students enrolled in all grades across Canada in the 2018–19 school year, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12. This figure included 88 percent of 15-year-olds, 86 percent of 16-year-olds, and 72 percent of 17-year-olds. There are also further percentages enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools.
- Equality of attainment: graduation**
45. One of the most important milestones in education is high-school completion, because achieving it is strongly correlated with significant social, health, and economic outcomes. The rate of high-school completion (also referred to as “upper secondary attainment”) in Canada is very high: over 90 percent of the population in 2019 had graduated.
- Equality of attainment: skill levels**
46. Target 4.1 of SDG 4 aims to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. The key concepts to measure include the quality of education and learning in two subject areas: reading and mathematics.
47. Canada's high levels of high-school graduation are matched by high levels of skills, as measured by international standardized assessments. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), for example, tests close to half a million 15-year-old students in 65 countries, including almost 23,000 in Canada, in science, mathematics, and reading. In each cycle it places special emphasis on one of these domains.
48. In Canada, 85 percent of students met the minimum proficiency level (defined as level 2) in reading compared to the OECD average of 80 percent. In each of Canada's provinces, over 80 percent of 15-year-olds attained proficiency level 2 or above in reading, with 90 percent or more of students attaining proficiency level 2 or above in reading in Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia.
49. In the latest iteration of PISA, conducted in 2018, Canada's students achieved a mean score of 520 in reading, which was 33 points above the OECD average. This placed Canada first (along with Estonia, Finland, Ireland, and Korea) among OECD countries and fourth among all participating countries, exceeded only by Singapore and two areas in China. Girls in Canada outperformed boys in reading in PISA 2018. Some 90 percent of girls achieved level 2 or higher, compared with 82 percent of boys, a difference that is typical across most participating countries and that echoes a similar gap in performance in PISA 2009 (when reading was also the chief domain) and PISA 2015.
50. Average scores for reading should be viewed in conjunction with the difference that exists between students with the highest and those with the lowest levels of performance, as the difference between the mean score of students at the 90th percentile and those at the 10th percentile is often used as a proxy

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for equity in educational outcomes. In 2018, Canada demonstrated a gap of 259 points between students in the highest decile and those in the lowest, which is similar to the gap across OECD countries. Further measures of equity revealed the following:

- PISA examined the reading outcomes of those it defined as socioeconomically advantaged (the top 25% of its index) and socioeconomically disadvantaged (the bottom 25% of its index), and compared the two. On this measure, Canada demonstrated a greater degree of equity than the OECD on average. The gap in reading between these two groups was 68 points in Canada, compared to 89 points in the OECD. To evaluate socioeconomic status, PISA uses an index derived from three measures: the highest occupational status of students' parents; the highest educational level attained by students' parents; and a number of proxies for material wealth, including the number of books and other educational resources available in the home. According to this index, Canada scored very high relative to the rest of the OECD in terms of socioeconomic status, with only three PISA-participating countries (Iceland, Norway, and Denmark) achieving a higher score.
- Immigrant students in Canada performed as well as non-immigrant students in reading, but this result conceals two important outcomes: first-generation immigrants performed lower than their non-immigrant peers, and second-generation immigrant students (i.e., those who were born in Canada to parents who were born outside of Canada) performed higher than their non-immigrant counterparts (by an average of 10 points). These results are of particular significance, since Canada is home to the second-largest foreign-born population (proportionally) in the world, and in Canada — as elsewhere — immigrants are more likely than non-immigrants to have low incomes. When viewed in light of immigrant performance in other countries, these results indicate that Canada is especially successful in closing the “immigrant achievement gap” by ensuring equitable outcomes for immigrant students.
- Students in Canada have the opportunity to enrol in French-language or English-language school systems. The reading outcomes of students are not, however, consistent across systems within a given province or territory. Equity between the two language systems in overall reading scores was achieved only in Quebec, a majority-francophone province, whereas students in English-language systems performed better than their counterparts in French-language systems in other provinces (which are majority anglophone) — with differences ranging from 27 points in New Brunswick to 83 points in Nova Scotia.
- In 2018, PISA also measured mathematics and science, but they were not the assessment's chief focus. Students in Canada scored well above the OECD average and were outperformed by students in only nine countries in mathematics and five in science. In mathematics, boys continued to outperform girls in Canada overall, while in science there were no statistically significant differences in performance between the sexes. In mathematics, students in francophone school systems outperformed their peers in anglophone school systems in Canada overall and in Quebec. In science, there was no difference in performance between the francophone and anglophone school systems in Canada overall, whereas provincially, anglophone students

outperformed their francophone peers in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Alberta; no significant difference in performance between the two language systems was observed in the remaining provinces (New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia).



Reading Performance among Students Attending Majority- and Minority-Language School Systems

Across the different provinces and territories in Canada, students attending majority-language school systems and those attending minority-language systems perform differently in reading, according to PISA 2018 results.

In seven Canadian provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia), samples were representative of both majority and minority official language groups.

Overall, similar proportions of students in francophone and anglophone schools (85 and 86 percent, respectively) achieved level 2 or above. English-language school systems had a greater proportion of students attaining the highest levels of performance (levels 5 and 6) in comparison to their French-language counterparts, while both systems had a similar proportion of students performing below level 2.

New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia were the only provinces with parity in reading achievement between the two language systems with respect to students at level 2 or above. In the remaining provinces, performance on the overall reading scale was statistically different between the anglophone and francophone school systems. Students in the majority-language systems in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta performed better than their counterparts in the minority-language systems.

Equality of attainment: Indigenous students

51. A notable shortcoming of the Canadian educational system in achieving broad equality of outcomes relates to high-school completion rates among Indigenous populations, which are significantly lower than they are among their non-Indigenous counterparts. Ninety-two percent of non-Indigenous Canadians between the ages of 20 and 24 held a high-school diploma in 2016, yet this figure drops to 84 percent among Métis, 75 percent among First Nations living outside of

First Nations communities, 49 percent among Inuit, and 48 percent among First Nations peoples living in First Nations communities. Overall averages for Indigenous high-school attainment improved significantly since the previous census, and some provinces and territories show considerably better outcomes. Nonetheless, a significant gap remains across Canada between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attainment.^{xi}

52. The reasons for this disparity of achievement are numerous and complex. Significantly, though, provinces and territories have recognized that such

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disparity is incompatible with its commitment to achieve fully inclusive education, and, in response, they have put in place numerous programs and policies to address it. These — along with the historical and socioeconomic conditions that inform Indigenous achievement — are discussed in greater detail in Section Three.

Indigenous Education

Indigenous peoples are linguistically, culturally, and politically diverse. However, all Indigenous peoples in Canada have experienced colonization processes that have undermined Indigenous young people's access to their identity, language, and culture. Indigenous children have not generally had access to an equitable quality of education that other children in the country enjoy. In combination these two forces have undermined the educational opportunities and outcomes for successive generations of Indigenous children and young people — at times with catastrophic effects.

Since 2004, education systems across Canada have made it a priority to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to achieve their full potential. With the focus on improving Indigenous education, student achievement, and well-being, and closing the achievement gap between Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous counterparts, successive action plans from provincial, territorial, and federal governments over the last decade have led to improvements — in particular, by sharing best practices in Indigenous education, strengthening the capacity for evidence-based decision-making, and working to support teacher training. Actions underway in individual schools, education systems, and relevant forums have been designed to improve opportunities for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, and to increase all students' knowledge and awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives.

Postsecondary education

53. In Canada, responsibility for postsecondary education rests with provinces and territories. Postsecondary education is available in both government-supported and private institutions, which offer degrees, diplomas, certificates, and attestations, depending on the nature of the institution and the length of the program. Universities focus on degree programs but also offer diplomas and certificates, often in professional designations. Public and private colleges in Quebec offer diplomas (*diplôme d'études collégiales*, or DEC) and certificates (*attestation d'études collégiales*, or AEC). There are two main pathways: a two-year pre-university program in preparation for university study, or a three-year technical program that leads directly to the labour market.
54. Postsecondary educational institutions establish their own guidelines regarding entrance requirements for both domestic and international students. However, legislation ensures that discrimination in access to postsecondary education is prohibited across Canada. Institutions of higher learning are subject to a variety of acts and policies in their respective province or territory (such as human rights acts and accessibility acts) that ensure that such characteristics as race, colour, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, disability, and religion, among others, do not limit access. As an example, in 2017 the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission released its Guideline on Accommodating

Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Institutions that outlines the legal obligation of postsecondary institutions to accommodate students with a disability under the New Brunswick Human Rights Act. Another example is the Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP), which provides colleges and universities with outreach, transition, and retention support for students who would not otherwise access postsecondary education. It is designed to help students see the value of postsecondary education, see themselves there, help them make the transition, and succeed once they are there.

55. Provinces and territories — notably, Quebec, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador — aim to facilitate access to postsecondary education through credit-transfer systems. Provinces and territories also undertake systematic efforts to facilitate access to postsecondary education through a variety of administrative initiatives. Examples of these are the Alberta Dual Credit Framework and dual credit programming, which allow Grade 10, 11, and 12 students in that province to earn high-school and postsecondary credits at the same time. These can count toward a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree, including apprenticeship education, and involve the collaboration of many separate institutions, school authorities, and businesses. Alberta complements this initiative with the Alberta Learner Pathways System, which provides information and guidance for students in their learning journey, including targeted high-school transitions information (e.g., AP, IB, dual credit, academic upgrading, and provincial equivalencies) and transfer decisions for transfer credit.
56. Recognizing that affordability is also a significant component of access to postsecondary education, the provinces and territories and the federal government provide different types of financial assistance to students in need. In Quebec, cégeps are publicly funded

More than half (54%) of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a college or university qualification.

establishments that provide the first year of higher education at low cost, as outlined in Article 24 of the *General and Vocational Colleges Act*. Additionally, 24 private colleges in Quebec receive grants from the Ministry of Higher Education for key programs. In the 2018–19 school year, Quebec provided financial support in the form of over \$1.1 billion in loans and scholarships to almost 160,000 students. Other provinces and territories also provide loans and bursaries, and since 2019, Nova Scotia has had provisions in place that permit the forgiveness of student loans in a variety of different circumstances. Nova Scotia also provides financial support that is targeted to career development, operating under the auspices of the *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act*. The Government of New Brunswick works together with the Government of Canada to provide student financial assistance, including grants, loans, and bursaries. New Brunswick has also recently eliminated interest accumulation on student loans. In Saskatchewan, according to the *Education Act, 1995*, with respect to the division scolaire francophone and minority-language education programs, a board of education may provide scholarships, bursaries, or similar awards for the purposes of teachers' and pupils' attendance at postsecondary institutions. The Ontario Postsecondary Application Fee Reimbursement Program for individuals who are or were in extended society care reimburses eligible postsecondary application fees for a first postsecondary degree, diploma, or certificate. Two initiatives from the Prince Edward Island government support equity and inclusion for vulnerable populations: funding to the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) to establish open educational resources, which benefits students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by working toward free access to textbooks and materials, and funding support for the establishment of the Faculty of Indigenous Knowledge, Education, Research, and Applied Studies at UPEI.

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57. Canada has long ranked first among countries in the OECD in the proportion of its population that has attained a college or university education. According to the 2016 census, more than half (54%) of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a college or university qualification, compared to 36.7 percent for the OECD as a whole. This figure represents an increase in Canada of 5 percentage points from 10 years earlier (48.3%). The major factor contributing to Canada's pre-eminence in postsecondary attainment is its robust college sector. Over 22 percent of Canadians aged 25 to 64 possess a college diploma, a figure that is almost three times the level for the OECD as a whole (8%).
58. Participation in postsecondary education is also marked by a clear difference in gender. Women have outnumbered men in college and university enrolment in Canada for decades. In 2018–19, for example, women represented approximately 56 percent of postsecondary enrolments whereas men represented just under 44 percent.
59. Gender differences manifest themselves not only in the level of education that men and women attain, but also in the subjects they choose to pursue. Women constitute the majority of students in 9 of 12 fields of study defined by the International Standard Classification of Education, and in five of those account for 60 percent or more of the student body. Correspondingly, men are a majority in only three fields: personal, protective, and transportation services (54.1%); mathematics, computer, and information sciences (70.4%); and architecture, engineering, and related technologies (81.1%).
60. Indigenous people in Canada have made considerable gains in postsecondary education over time. In 2006, 7.7 percent of Indigenous adults between the ages of 25 and 64 held a bachelor's degree or higher, yet in 2016 this figure had risen to 10.9 percent, an increase of nearly 30 percent. The percentage of Indigenous people with a college diploma also increased over this period, from 18.7 to 23 percent, while the figure for Indigenous men with an apprenticeship in the trades rose from 6.8 to 9.6 percent.
61. In some respects, these figures are very similar to those for Canadians as a whole, while in others they are quite different. The proportion of Canadians aged 25 to 64 who held an apprenticeship in the trades was 10.8 percent in 2016, and (as noted earlier) the number of those with a college diploma was 22 percent. Thus, the levels of Indigenous attainment in both of these sectors are very close to those for the broader population. This contrasts strongly with the university sector, however. Fully 28.5 percent of Canadians aged 25 to 64 have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, a figure that is more than 2.5 times that of Indigenous people in the same age cohort. On a positive note, that gap does represent a narrowing from 10 years earlier, when the attainment level for the entire population was more than three times that of Indigenous groups.
62. The comparatively low rate of participation in university education among Indigenous students can be explained in part by the fact that many live in remote and rural communities that are far from centres of higher education. As a result, they face additional burdens (such as longer travel times, higher travel costs, reduced community and family support, and unfamiliar environments) in carrying out a program of study that their non-Indigenous counterparts may not encounter at all.
63. Recognizing the barriers that Indigenous people face in accessing higher education, provinces, territories, and institutions of higher learning have implemented numerous programs to support Indigenous students and raise their levels of postsecondary attainment.^{xii} These include mentorship programs, bursaries and other types of financial support, counselling services, specialized health services, curricular changes, distributed learning in remote areas, and the establishment of postsecondary

Women have outnumbered men in college and university enrolment in Canada for decades.

Immigrants bring much-needed skills to the labour market and contribute to the country's economic growth and prosperity.

Indigenous institutions (such as First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan).

64. There are other population characteristics that merit scrutiny in evaluating Canada's performance in providing access to education to its entire population, including family income, immigration status, and parental education. To begin with the first, across all income groups, enrolment in postsecondary institutions has grown since the beginning of the century. This growth has been uneven, however. In 2001, enrolment among 19-year-olds whose parental after-tax income was in the top quintile was 72.6 percent, and in 2014 it had grown to 78.7 percent. Among the same cohort in the bottom income quintile, however, enrolment grew from 37.7 to 47.1 percent in the same period. These figures show that those in the lowest quintile enjoyed a much greater increase (24.9%) than those in the highest (8.3%), which means that even though the former still lag the latter considerably in educational attainment, that gap is shrinking.
65. Canada has very high levels of immigration, which it encourages for a variety of economic reasons, as well as for family reunification and humanitarian reasons, including refugee protection. Immigrants from economic, family, and humanitarian programs bring much-needed skills to the labour market and contribute to the country's economic growth and prosperity. Canada selects many immigrants based on a variety of criteria, including educational attainment (as is the case for economic programs). Canada also welcomes postsecondary students from abroad and has implemented programs that make it easier for them to remain in Canada as immigrants once their studies have finished.
66. The educational profile of immigrants to Canada shows that they have very high levels of attainment. According to the 2016 census, approximately 40 percent of immigrants between the ages of 25 and 64 had attended university and obtained

a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the corresponding figure among the Canadian-born population of less than 25 percent. At the level of master's degree or higher, the discrepancy was even greater: more than twice as many immigrants as native-born Canadians had completed this level of attainment, at 11.3 percent versus 5 percent, respectively. For recent immigrants (who are classified as those having arrived in the previous five years), this number was even more impressive, with 16.7 percent holding a graduate degree in 2016.

67. These figures have an important bearing on access to education and educational attainment in Canada. As many studies have shown, educational attainment of children is positively correlated with the educational attainment of their parents. The reasons behind this correlation are varied and include such factors as income, material resources, values, and expectations. It could be expected, then, that the high level of postsecondary attainment among immigrants to Canada may produce similarly high levels of advanced education in coming generations; certainly data from the 2016 census support that conclusion. For example, youth with an immigrant background outperformed their Canadian-born counterparts on a wide range of educational measures, including high-school attainment, postsecondary attainment, postsecondary university attainment, and university attainment in a STEM field. This was true for immigrants from almost every region of the world and was especially pronounced among those from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.
68. Provincial, territorial, and federal governments in Canada provide significant financial support to students pursuing or planning to pursue postsecondary education. Providing financial supports to students is one way that governments try to reduce barriers to attendance in postsecondary education and promote the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills

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that will serve Canadians well in work and life. Financial support is provided directly to students who apply to, and are eligible for, student financial assistance programs, as well as through other means, including scholarships, the tax system, and savings incentive programs.

Adult learning and skills development

69. The rapid pace of change in the global economy, coupled with the increasing adoption of information technology in the workplace, has transformed the labour market in Canada. Workers can no longer automatically expect to pursue a “career for life,” and many face growing pressure to learn new skills or upgrade existing ones in order to find and maintain gainful employment. This in turn has made adult learning an important focus of education systems, as well as of training programs in the workplace. Adults’ acquisition of new skills takes many forms in Canada, including language training for immigrants, job-placement training, academic upgrading for mid-career employees, basic general education, and technical and vocational training. It can take place in settings as structured as universities, colleges, adult education centres, and vocational training centres, or also as informal as in the workplace, via business services provided by educational bodies.
70. All of Canada’s provinces and territories have specific strategies, policies, or legislation relating to adult learning and skills development that are developed and implemented by the ministries or departments responsible for education. Since 2008, a number of additional provincial and territorial policies and strategies have been developed, including new legislation related to adult learning, comprehensive literacy policies, and adult-literacy strategies. Several provinces and territories have also developed policies to recognize and validate nonformal learning for the purposes of official accreditation or other forms of certification. Every province and territory provides significant funding to adult learning and skills development

as part of its overall expenditure on education.

71. The nature of adult-learning and skills-development opportunities varies across provinces and territories, sectors, and communities. Programs are in areas such as basic skills and learning programs for adults, English or French as a second/additional language, community and volunteer-tutor adult-literacy programs, vocational education and training, apprenticeships, and workplace and workforce learning. In Alberta, for example, adult learners have access to a variety of programs that facilitate transition to postsecondary studies and meaningful employment, such as academic upgrading, English as a second language, and pre-apprenticeship programs. Those with low income may be eligible to receive grants to help cover tuition, fees, books and supplies, living expenses, and health benefits.
72. These programs are delivered through a variety of learning providers, including publicly funded postsecondary institutions, community-based learning providers, and First Nations colleges. New Brunswick offers numerous programs in academic upgrading, personal learning, digital literacy, GED (General Education Development certificate) preparation, and essential workplace skills, and Nova Scotia offers a comparable suite of programs — as well as providing funding for professional associations and immigrant settlement organizations that deliver educational programs for internationally educated professionals working toward licensure in Canada. Saskatchewan promotes literacy and essential skills through the Saskatchewan Literacy Network and through Family Literacy Hubs that work in collaboration with communities to deliver programs designed to improve the literacy abilities of both children and parents.
73. Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) show that Canadian-born respondents (59%) were

more likely than immigrants (53%) to take part in adult learning. Recent immigrants (those residing in Canada for less than 10 years) were generally more likely than established immigrants (those residing in Canada for more than 10 years) to participate in adult learning, except in British Columbia.

- 74. PIAAC results also show that Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous populations in Canada had similar participation rates in adult learning, except in Northwest Territories and Nunavut, where non-Indigenous respondents participated at a higher rate. Indigenous peoples tended to participate in two categories — formal learning only and both formal and nonformal learning — at higher rates than non-Indigenous peoples did. The highest rates of participation for both groups were in nonformal learning only. Outcomes for Indigenous peoples are influenced by a range of historical and contemporary factors, including social and economic exclusion and the legacy of colonization.^{xiii}
- 75. Most provinces and territories have targeted specific learner groups in their adult-learning and skills-development policies. All include a focus on youth, Indigenous learners, the unemployed, and persons with disabilities, and most focus on immigrants. For example, in addition to offering programs to the general population, Quebec provides free French-language classes and other training to immigrants and refugees, as well as assisting these groups in integrating into the labour market. Alberta earmarks funding for literacy programming at each of the five First Nations colleges in that province, and reduces or waives fees for learners who face financial barriers. It also invests in professional development for educators delivering foundational skills programs so that they better understand the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of their students. And in 2019 Newfoundland and Labrador launched a five-year action plan directed at the acquisition and enhancement of skills among people who have not

received or completed their entire primary education, which includes adults intent on achieving high-school equivalency. Programs are delivered by a wide spectrum of agencies, organizations, and institutions, with much of the funding provided by provincial and territorial governments, often in cooperation with the federal government.

Quality of education provision and learning environment

- 76. Education systems in Canada have rigorous policies in place to ensure that all students enjoy high standards of pedagogy and learning, and that education takes place in safe environments. Educational bodies support local initiatives in educational institutions designed to promote the inclusion of all students, regardless of differences, with the objective of living together in harmony.
- 77. The provision of a high-quality learning environment takes many different forms and covers a wide range of areas, from quality of infrastructure and physical plant to use of pedagogical tools and techniques. Quebec, for example, follows a 33-point information-technology action plan that promotes the development of digital skills among students and encourages their use in the entire educational system. As part of its overall strategy, it specifically targets the reduction of the digital divide that exists between certain segments of society. Ontario requires all district school boards to have policies in place that support equity and inclusion, as well as guidelines for religious accommodation. They are also required to administer school-climate surveys to students, parents, and staff at least once every two years, with a view to making informed decisions regarding the provision of a positive learning environment and the implementation of policies concerning issues such as bullying. In Alberta, in addition to general building standards that are embedded in capital-funding agreements, individual institutions themselves take steps to

Education systems in Canada have rigorous policies in place to ensure that all students enjoy high standards of pedagogy and learning, and that education takes place in safe environments.

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reduce discrimination in education through such measures as building barrier-free entrances, providing gender-neutral washrooms, and improving lighting to discourage violence. Finally, provinces and territories sometimes also cooperate in achieving the goal of quality education. The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, for example, improves the student experience by providing quality-assurance services for all publicly funded universities in the three Maritime provinces. The commission assesses all academic programs prior to implementation and follows up to verify that institutions are internally assessing their existing programs and activities with a focus on students and learning.

Education personnel

78. Qualified teachers form the backbone of any educational system, as Target 4C of the UN's SDG 4 recognizes, which aims to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers by 2030. In every province and territory in Canada, teachers must obtain formal training and certification before embarking upon a career in teaching. Training is available in every province and territory through institutes of higher education. In the three northern territories, teacher training is provided through colleges in cooperation with a university from one of the provinces.^{xiv} Professional development for practising teachers is shared among the departments or ministries of education, school boards, universities, teachers' associations, and unions, as well as nongovernmental organizations with particular expertise.
79. Data presented in *Education at a Glance 2015* (OECD, 2015a) and in the OECD report, "Education Policy Outlook Canada" (OECD, 2015b), paint a picture of the state of the teaching profession in Canada. Teachers had above-average teaching time compared to other OECD countries. Teachers' salaries in Canada were higher than the OECD average across all levels of education in 2012 and higher than those of their counterparts with similar qualifications in other sectors in Canada. The estimated class size was below the OECD average.
80. Provinces and territories maintain high professional standards for teachers and provide support that allows them to meet those standards throughout their careers. This includes opportunities for professional learning and development, as well as guidance and orientation. In Ontario, for example, the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) provides orientation, mentoring, and professional learning for newly hired teachers. Participation is mandatory and is supplemented by two evaluations with the first 12 months of employment through the province's Teacher Performance Appraisal process.
81. Support can extend beyond general teacher training and development to specific areas of expertise or specialization. In Quebec, for example, the Ministry of Education funds and maintains RÉCIT, a network focused on developing student skills through the use of technology. This network targets the professional development of school staff for the use of technology in pedagogical practices. In Ontario, the ministry developed Professional Activity Day training resources aimed at educators; these resources were designed to help educators understand their obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The training focuses on learning, dialogue, and reflection about human rights, anti-oppression and anti-colonial education, as well as anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism in education. See Table 3, Measures taken to improve the teaching and working conditions of educational personnel, especially teaching staff at all levels, provinces and territories, 2019, for further information.

Provinces and territories maintain high professional standards for teachers and provide support that allows them to meet those standards throughout their careers.

Table 3. Measures taken to improve the teaching and working conditions of educational personnel, especially teaching staff at all levels, provinces and territories, 2019

	ON	QC	NB	YT	AB	SK	NL
Teachers' average salaries are competitive or at least comparable to those paid in other professions requiring similar or equivalent qualifications (at all levels)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Initial training and continuous professional development is provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minimum standards and qualifications are required for the teaching profession	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Measures taken to strengthen the social status and attractiveness of the teaching profession	✓	✓	✓				✓
Performance monitoring systems	✓		✓		✓		
Measures taken to increase women in leadership positions in education	✓						

Note: The table presents only information from provinces and territories that responded to the policy questionnaire.

*Denotes information provided by the New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

82. As noted earlier in this report, Canada's educational systems understand respect for human rights in education to extend beyond equality of access and nondiscrimination. They also promote inclusive education, which promotes social inclusion, anti-oppression, belonging, and sustainable development. Their commitment to inclusive education manifests itself in numerous ways. One of the most important is the promotion of human rights in the curriculum. Curricular activities help students develop respect for human rights and dignity, understand diverse points of view and experiences, and learn about the contributions of a variety of peoples to the development of Canada.



Preventing Anti-Black Racism

Recent highly publicized events have raised awareness of anti-Black racism and prompted discussion of this issue in many countries around the world. In 2020, governments and ministries and departments of education in Canada undertook various initiatives to examine and address anti-Black racism in the educational context. These took various forms depending on the province or territory in question and ranged from statements of support for the prevention of racism, to the establishment of a task force that will identify priority areas and develop actions to prevent racism. Nova Scotia's K-12 education sector, for example, issued a policy in June of that year that specifically addressed the question of anti-Black racism and also shared a variety of racism prevention resources for parents, families, and schools, while in higher education, the Post-Secondary Advisory Council on African Nova Scotian and Black Students was formed to specifically address the issue of equal opportunity in postsecondary education with respect to African Nova Scotians and Black students. In British Columbia, the province accompanied its statement condemning racism with a provincial action plan aimed at ensuring that all students and staff feel welcomed and respected in schools. In Ontario, the government has modified its policy governing discretionary suspension (for students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3), eliminated Grade 9 streaming into academic and applied courses, and strengthened sanctions for teachers who engage in racist behaviour. Additionally, in 2019, the Ontario Ministry of Education launched the Graduation Coach Program for Black Students in 2019. The program supplies selected school boards with funding to hire graduation coaches who provide intensive, culturally responsive supports to support the well-being and academic achievement of Black students, and who also provide advice to boards and school leadership to inform system change so that Black students feel welcomed, have a sense of belonging, and have a better school experience.

83. Examples of a curricular commitment to human rights are numerous in Canada's school systems. In Ontario, for example, the program planning section includes information on the instruction of Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Education, applicable to all subjects and disciplines in Grades 1 to 12. This section highlights the key strategies and policies that educators and school leaders consider as they plan effective, inclusive, and culturally responsive programs for all students. Many curriculum documents also include mandatory learning opportunities related to anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and the promotion of inclusion. This learning about human rights begins in elementary school throughout the Health and Physical Education, and Social Science, History, Geography, and Science and Technology curricula. Similar learning opportunities continue in secondary school, where students are taught about past human tragedies within Canadian history, and about human rights —

including civic engagement, human-rights violations, and the assessment of responses to phenomena such as acts of genocide. This learning is supplemented by a suite of four Equity Studies courses at the secondary level that allow students to engage in deeper examination. The courses examine various aspects of diversity, including those related to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, and ability. Students learn about the nature and impact of power relations, the importance of respecting diversity, and the role of personal engagement and social action. By exploring the contributions of individuals and groups toward the creation of a more just society, students come to realize the importance of personal engagement and social action. In each course, students move from theory to practice by developing and implementing an initiative to address an equity-related issue.

84. Alberta recently outlined a new framework for student learning that promotes, among other things, equality of opportunity and respect for difference; the inherent dignity of each individual; an understanding of our rights and freedoms; respect for others; a commitment to the common good; and an understanding of the needs, beliefs, and expectations of diverse communities. Alberta's current K-to-12 curriculum addresses human rights education by teaching students, at various grade levels and in a number of subject areas, to value diversity, respect dignity, and support human equality, and the new curriculum developed in line with the new framework will continue to do so. Another example of this commitment to human-rights education is found in Saskatchewan, where democratic ideals are integrated into the curriculum. In high school, students examine human rights from multiple perspectives when studying concepts such as the use of power, and they have opportunities to advocate for themselves and others, as well as act for the common good.
85. New Brunswick includes diversity and meeting the needs of First Nations children and youth as main themes in its 10-year Education Plan. Additionally, the province features diversity and social responsibility as one of the four goals of its Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care. Finally, British Columbia structures its curriculum around developing three core competencies, one of which is Social Awareness and Responsibility, which focuses on interacting with others and the natural world in respectful and caring ways.
- latitude to parents. Depending on the province or territory in which they live, parents may choose to send their children to a secular or nondenominational public school; a religion-based separate school; a French- or English-language school; or a private school that may or may not receive public funding. Every province and territory also implements a policy that ensures that no child is required to take part in any religious observance or instruction if the parent wants to have the child excused, or if the child asks to be excused.
87. Parents may also choose to home-school their children, provided that they meet certain criteria regarding the curriculum that they deliver. The vast majority of students (over 90%) receive their education in public or religion-based separate schools. For more information on provincial and territorial policies concerning parental choice, see pages 12 to 16 in *UNESCO Seventh Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education: Report for Canada 2007* at <http://www.cmecc.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/105/Canada-report-antidiscrimination-2007.en.pdf>.

Private education

88. As noted before, Canada's provinces and territories require parents to ensure that their children receive education, which they view as in a child's best interests. Within this context, they grant parents the right to make fundamental choices about how that schooling will take place, including the choice to school a child in a private setting that is not part of the public-school system. The great majority of public, separate, and private schools are equally accessible to boys and girls; only a very few private schools are restricted by sex. Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories, and British Columbia fund private schools if certain criteria, which vary among provinces and territories, are met. No funding for private schools
86. As guardians and custodians of children, parents are granted the right to make fundamental choices about the nature of the education their children will receive. While these choices are constrained by the requirement that they comply with legislation regarding the best interests of the children (such as compulsory education), they provide considerable

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- is provided in the other provinces and territories, although they still may be regulated.
89. In Alberta, financial support is given to private schools that provide an acceptable standard of education and that employ teachers who have certificates and teach either the provincial curriculum or one approved by the Minister of Education. The accredited private schools receive approximately 60 percent of the per-student instructional grant accorded to the public school system.
90. In Manitoba, the government differentiates between two kinds of independent schools — Funded Independent Schools and Non-Funded Independent Schools. Funded Independent Schools receive grants from the province because they use the public-school curriculum, employ provincially certified teachers, are legally incorporated, have an elected parent advisory board, and comply with other requirements prescribed by regulation. These schools include Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, Jewish, Mennonite, Lutheran, Islamic, Sikh, and Christian schools; they may also charge tuition. Graduating students are eligible to receive a Manitoba High School Diploma. The Non-Funded Independent Schools do not use the provincial curriculum, and the teachers in these schools are not required to have a valid Manitoba teaching certificate. The province does not support these schools financially, except for an annual 60-dollar per-student textbook grant. Communities that operate Non-Funded Independent Schools must offer curricular programming equivalent to that provided in a public school and include language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education/health education, arts education, and, where applicable, high school electives such as additional languages, computer applications, and career development. Students completing their education in a Non-Funded Independent School are not eligible to receive a Manitoba High School Diploma. British Columbia has four classifications of Independent Schools, with two of the four classifications receiving some level of provincial funding. The largest groups, Group One and Group Two schools, receive 50 percent and 35 percent of their local school district's per-student operating grant, respectively, and offer a curriculum consistent with ministerial orders, employ BC-certified teachers, and meet other pedagogical and administrative requirements. Group Three and Group Four schools do not receive provincial funding. Group Three schools are not required to employ BC-certified teachers and are not required to follow the provincial curriculum. Group Four schools may operate for profit and predominantly enrol non-resident students. BC's Independent Schools landscape includes a diverse range of schools offering faith-based and secular options, including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Mennonite, Muslim, Seventh-day Adventist, Sikh, Montessori, Waldorf, play-based, and ecological schools.
91. Private teaching establishments in Quebec, whether francophone, anglophone, or known through another designation, must have permission from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education to offer educational services with the principal goal of developing students' competencies in programs at the elementary, secondary, college, or university level. Before granting the permit, the ministries assess the quality of the educational and pedagogical structures of the school, the criteria used to select the teaching and administrative personnel, the nature of the need the school is responding to, and the participation of parents in the life of the school.

Rights of Indigenous peoples

92. As noted, in Canada, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments have a constitutional responsibility for the education of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. While the Government

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) identifies education as the key to reconciliation (TRC, 2015) and provinces and territories are committed to achieving reconciliation by working together to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students.

of Canada has a responsibility for the education of students who attend schools in First Nations communities, provincial and territorial public education systems provide education to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students who attend schools outside of these communities. Since the 1970s, Indigenous peoples have actively sought and promoted the importance of Indigenous control of Indigenous education. As part of this work, Indigenous communities and organizations have established agreements with provincial, territorial, and federal governments to broaden their control of education services, including increased government funding, to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. For instance, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement allowed for the creation of Cree and Inuit school boards, which offer educational services that are adapted to the needs of their local students. Note that the Naskapi are also a signatory to the agreement and belong to the network of the Ministry of Education, but they are served by the Central Quebec School Board. These education services are supported by funding from the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada. In British Columbia, Cowichan Tribes, Lil'wat, ?aq'am, and Seabird Island First Nations have signed education jurisdiction agreements with Canada and now hold recognized law-making authority over their K-12 education systems. This includes authority over teacher certification, school certification, graduation requirements, curriculum, and course approvals. The First Nations Education Authority has also been newly established to assist participating First Nations in developing the capacity to provide education on First Nations land.

93. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) identifies education as the key to reconciliation (TRC, 2015), and provincial and territorial as well as federal governments are committed to achieving reconciliation by working together to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students. Among other

initiatives, the TRC's Calls to Action encourage education ministers to support the education of all Canadians on the legacy of residential schools and the history of Indigenous people in the country. In Manitoba, Mamāhtawisiwin – The Wonder We Are Born With – An Indigenous Education Policy Framework is a provincial policy directive and conceptual framework that supports educators in incorporating Indigenous pedagogy, languages, and cultures into their teaching and practices. This framework outlines guiding principles, strategies, and actions for closing achievement gaps and realizing improved learning outcomes not only for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners, but for all students in Manitoba. Within Mamāhtawisiwin, everyone has a commitment to Understanding World Views, Values, Identities, Traditions and Contemporary Lifestyles. The framework fosters an understanding of shared true histories, including developing a strong understanding of the treaties, responsibilities, and relationships.

94. Additionally, Manitoba's Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Initiative supports students, educators, and families to learn First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, traditional values, languages, contemporary lifestyles, and traditional knowledge systems across all learning environments.

Rights of official-language minorities

95. Canada is an officially bilingual country, with French and English recognized as national languages. However, French- and English-speaking communities are not evenly distributed across the country. The majority of French-first-language communities in Canada live in Quebec, where 79 percent report French as their first language. New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada, also has a large proportion of francophones, with over 32 percent of the population reporting French as their first language. Outside of Quebec, francophones live in minority-

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- language situations that present particular challenges for their language and the culture.
96. To ensure that Canadians are provided with learning opportunities in their own language, and to provide opportunities for everyone to learn both English and French as a second or additional language, public education systems in Canada offer learning opportunities in both official languages. Since 1983, the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction sets the key parameters for collaboration between governments (provincial/territorial and federal, with the exception of the Government of Quebec, which has not been a signatory to the protocol since 2019) regarding education in English and French. The protocol outlines the major elements in bilateral agreements between the Department of Canadian Heritage and ministries and departments of education in provinces and territories. These agreements aim to cover the additional costs that the provinces and territories incur in delivering minority-language education and second-language instruction, or multiple second-language instruction in the case of Quebec. Generally, schools in Canada offer second-language instruction in French or English.
97. Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and has a long tradition of welcoming refugees and migrants. People who are Convention Refugees, or whose claims have been accepted by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) as protected persons, are considered permanent residents of Canada and have the same rights and privileges as permanent residents. A claimant who has not been heard by the IRB, however, does not have permanent resident status and may not have the same rights and privileges as permanent residents. Through Canada's Settlement Program, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funds and works with many partners to support the delivery of services to newcomers to Canada. These initiatives help newcomers establish themselves and integrate into Canadian communities. A range of supports are available to eligible immigrants and refugees of all ages under each core component of the Settlement Program.^{xv}
98. Provinces and territories recognize that the provision of education and skills training is an important part of the integration of all newcomers into Canadian society, and they take steps to promote that integration. In Ontario, for example, school board staff are trained to support students who have refugee status. That province's *Education Act* also stipulates that such children are not charged international fees, and that students who are in the country unlawfully are still permitted to enrol in school. Quebec makes provisions to ensure that refugees, like other newcomers, have access to French-language training so that they can advance their integration into Quebec society. School is also free in Quebec for all students, regardless of their or their parents' immigration status. Refugees in Alberta also have access to that province's Community Adult Learning Program, which delivers grant funding to nearly 100 community-based learning providers. A significant portion of that funding is dedicated to English-language learning. Alberta also has a formal funding mechanism in place that allocates additional financing to primary and secondary school authorities for the provision of language, social, and educational supports to refugee students. Refugee students are also included in the calculations that determine the disbursement of Specialized Learning Support (SLS) grants, which are supplementary funds available to any public school that needs them.

SECTION THREE – CONTINUING CHALLENGES

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created [...] to inform all Canadians about the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

99. Canada is generally very successful in providing equality of access to education and promoting high levels of educational attainment, but some difficulties persist, notably in gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in academic achievement, high-school completion, and participation in university education; gaps between students living with disabilities and those who are not, in terms of high-school completion and participation in postsecondary education; rights to equality of attainment in both official languages; and rights to education for LGBTQ2SI+ communities. School systems and educational authorities in all provinces and territories are committed to addressing these gaps. This section of the report explores their efforts in greater detail.
100. The cause of these gaps can be traced historically. Starting in the 1840s^{xvi} and continuing until the 1960s, schools for Indigenous students were more focused on erasing Indigenous cultures and languages than on providing educational opportunities. For the most part, Indigenous children were taken from their homes at age six — some as early as age three — and put into “Indian Residential Schools” to be assimilated into the ways of the dominant society. Family bonds were broken and the traumatic repercussions of these schools are still felt in Indigenous communities. The 1996 *Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples* stated that “Assimilation policies have done great damage, leaving a legacy of brokenness affecting Indigenous individuals, families, and communities. The damage has been equally serious to the spirit of Canada — the spirit of generosity and mutual accommodation in which Canadians take pride.”
101. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created as part of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to inform all Canadians about the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. In February 2012, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Interim Report* was released along with *They Came for the Children* — an examination of more than 100 years of history regarding the purpose, operation, and supervision of the residential school system, as well as the effect and consequences of the system and its legacy. The findings state that the residential schools constituted an assault on Indigenous children, families, and culture, as well as on self-governing Indigenous nations. The impacts of the residential school system were immediate and have been ongoing since the schools’ earliest days. In 2015, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report* was released along with 94 Calls to Action, encouraging governments, educational and religious institutions, civil society groups, and all Canadians to join together to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation.
102. The policies and practices of assimilation have left a deep sense of mistrust of education and schooling among Indigenous people. Indigenous education as it has been practised since before colonization stresses experiential learning and oral traditions, rather than classroom-based approaches. Indigenous students often experience a sense of cultural dislocation and isolation in mainstream educational settings. Other issues involving levels of federal government

Section Three — Continuing Challenges

funding for schools in First Nations communities, the lack of a system of First Nations education, and accountability have also contributed to the need to improve Indigenous education.

103. The federal government provides supports for education to students who ordinarily reside in First Nations communities and attend provincial/territorial, federal, or First Nations community schools. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) provides funding to First Nations for 107,000 eligible students who are 4 to 21 years of age, ordinarily live in First Nations communities, and are enrolled in and attending an eligible elementary or secondary program. First Nations community schools located in First Nations communities educate approximately 60 percent of the students living in First Nations communities, while 40 percent go to schools under provincial authority, usually for secondary school. First Nations children living outside of First Nations communities are educated in the public elementary and secondary schools in their cities, towns, and communities, with the provinces and territories providing the majority of educational services for Indigenous students. Recognizing that many First Nations education initiatives are led by First Nations authorities, this report restricts itself to public education systems under the responsibility of provincial and territorial departments or ministries of education.

104. With respect to education in First Nations communities, the Government of Canada has made a commitment to reform in a variety of areas. In 2016, the government announced an unprecedented \$2.6 billion over five years in additional funding — investments that support First Nations control of education and are helping to ensure that students living in First Nations communities receive a quality education.

105. In January 2019, ISC and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) announced a new co-developed policy and improved funding approach for education in First Nations communities. Following extensive

engagements in 2016 and 2017, this co-developed approach to K-12 education aims to better meet the needs of students, improve education outcomes, and strengthen First Nations educational autonomy. As of April 2019, the new approach aims to:

- replace outdated proposal-based programs with improved access to predictable core funding;
- ensure base funding is comparable to provincial/territorial systems across the country while working toward additional funding agreements based on need to better account for factors such as remoteness, school size, language, and socioeconomic conditions;
- provide First Nations schools with \$1,500 per student, per year, to support language and culture programming;
- provide new resources to support full-time Kindergarten in every First Nations school for children aged four and five; and
- ensure special education funding is more predictable, with fewer application-based requirements.

Work by Canada's provinces and territories in Indigenous education

106. Provincial and territorial education systems provide education to Indigenous students, with the exception of those attending the schools in First Nations communities. Ministers responsible for education in the provinces and territories have been working together on Indigenous education since it was made a priority in 2004. Through CMEC, ministers have collectively committed to respond to the TRC's education-related Calls to Action.

107. Indigenous education has been a key activity area within *Learn Canada 2020*, CMEC's framework to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall education

outcomes. Key activities for Indigenous education support the elimination of the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and CMEC has regularly advanced this goal through various meetings that advance its strategy.

In 2009 at the CMEC Summit on Indigenous Education, the ministers discussed ways of strengthening Indigenous success in education with leaders of national and regional Indigenous organizations. In February 2011, ministers of education and national Indigenous organizations held a further meeting, with topics such as new initiatives and policies, data collection, and funding of Indigenous education. As well, CMEC shared ideas on a new strategy for Indigenous education which provides for regionally appropriate work at the Canadian level on Indigenous-education data collection and research, teacher education, and knowledge transfer among all those involved in Indigenous education, as well as ongoing discussion with the federal government on Indigenous education issues. As part of the meeting, provincial and territorial initiatives addressing key issues in Indigenous education were presented and discussed.

108. In December 2011, CMEC held the Educators' Forum on Indigenous Education, bringing together a wide range of individuals and groups interested in Indigenous education — including educators, academics, government officials, and representatives of Indigenous organizations — to address persistent issues within Indigenous education and to share ideas, evidence, and experiences in Indigenous early childhood education and elementary and secondary school.

109. In June 2015, CMEC held the CMEC Aboriginal Educators' Symposium. It aimed to provide a forum for Indigenous educators to discuss how best to attract more Indigenous people to teaching careers, encourage existing Indigenous

educators to remain in the profession, support Indigenous students entering the field of education, and support all Indigenous educators in their training and career development.

110. In July 2018, CMEC organized the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education. It gathered participants from across Canada, along with Elders and students, to share their perspectives on the Indigenizing of teacher education programs and how to help teachers Indigenize their K–12 classrooms. The event aimed to identify and highlight learning environments that reflect and respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
111. More recently, CMEC released the CMEC Indigenous Education Plan, 2019–22, a three-year strategic plan with four priority areas designed to provide a more coordinated, strategic approach for provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education to work together to improve Indigenous education outcomes for all learners. These priority areas are:
- supporting Indigenous student success and well-being in education;
 - mobilizing and disseminating provincial/territorial and international successful practices and proven actions to improve Indigenous education;
 - teaching excellence in Indigenous education; and
 - revitalizing Indigenous languages and strengthening culture and identity through education.

Section Three — Continuing Challenges

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

112. Provinces and territories have dedicated themselves to erasing inequity in their education systems through a variety of formal commitments. In Ontario, for example, the government's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools," gives direction to district school boards to develop, implement, and monitor policies that support student achievement and create equitable, inclusive school environments. In Saskatchewan, where the right to education is guaranteed in The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, every higher-education training institution has its own racism and harassment prevention policies. And various provinces and territories have, as part of their broader equity policies, specifically identified certain groups (such as Indigenous communities) as meriting targeted programs and initiatives that address gaps in participation and achievement.
113. These formal commitments are also embodied in other concrete actions taken to ensure that they have practical consequences. In 2017, the Government of Ontario enacted an *Anti-Racism Act*, which requires the government to maintain a racism prevention strategy that includes targets and indicators to measure progress. Under the Act, the government must establish data standards for the collection, use, and management of information, including personal information, to identify and monitor systemic racism and racial disparities. As a result, Ontario school boards will be required to collect voluntary race-based data respecting the Indigenous identity, race, religion, and ethnic origin of pupils, beginning on January 1, 2023. (Note that all 76 Ontario school boards and school authorities have reported voluntary, confidential, Indigenous student self-identification data to the Ministry of Education since 2015.)
114. Ontario's Ministry of Education provides funding to support school boards in the collection, analysis, and use of these data. It is anticipated that the data will enable school boards to address and monitor gaps in student experiences and outcomes, including in such areas as program and course enrolment, academic achievement, suspensions, expulsions, exclusions, and graduation rates. Related to this issue, Ontario has also eliminated the use of discretionary suspensions in schools from Kindergarten to Grade 3. This policy was adopted, in part, in response to disparities between groups with respect to disciplinary action taken during the school year.
115. Ontario has also placed a special focus on graduation rates and gaps between certain groups and the general student population. It has implemented two separate graduation coach programs, one for Black students and one for Indigenous students. In addition to supporting Indigenous students in obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, the latter program helps them transition from federally funded/First Nations–operated schools to provincially or territorially funded secondary schools, as well as into postsecondary education, training, or labour-market opportunities. The program was launched in 2019–20 and is approved to continue in 2020–21. Furthermore, the province announced in 2020 that it will end Grade 9 streaming into applied and academic courses, which may, in part, have contributed to disparities between certain groups in terms of graduation rates and rates of postsecondary enrolment. This measure will be coupled with additional racism and discrimination prevention training for teachers, as well as stronger sanctions for teachers who engage in racist behaviour.
116. The provinces' and territories' inclusion efforts extend beyond racism prevention training or policies and address the issue of gender and sexual diversity. For example, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education created an online resource,

Provinces and territories recognize that providing learning opportunities for adults is a key element of an inclusive education system.

titled Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexual Diversity Toolkit, which went live in 2019. The toolkit complements the foundational document Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexual Diversity, and consists of a series of online professional development modules to support school divisions and school staff in increasing awareness, as well as supporting students who are gender and/or sexually diverse.

117. Provinces and territories equally implement policies to address on-campus harassment. For example, Quebec introduced the Intervention Strategy for Preventing and Countering Sexual Violence in Higher Education, which proposes measures to enable higher education institutions to become learning, working, and living environments that are free from sexual violence and where everyone is entitled to respect and physical integrity. Similarly, Nova Scotia created the Provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee, which developed guidelines and recommendations for postsecondary institutions to help ensure that students can learn in environments free from sexual violence.
118. Provinces and territories recognize that providing learning opportunities for adults is a key element of an inclusive education system. These range from foundational learning programs and academic upgrading to English- or French-as-a-second-language courses and pre-apprenticeship programs for mature students. Programs are tailored to local needs and include such initiatives as the Community Adult Learning Program in Alberta, The Way Forward on Adult Literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Family Literacy Hubs in Saskatchewan. Some target specific groups with special assistance, such as grants for low-income applicants, or funding earmarked specifically for literacy programming in First Nations colleges. Prior-learning recognition services also help adults obtain official recognition for skills acquired outside of a school setting.

Accessibility

119. Recognizing that ease of access to educational systems is an important component of equity, provincial and territorial governments review the participation rates of various groups to identify disparities and take measures to address them. In 2018, Ontario amended its *Education Act* to facilitate the attendance at provincial schools of First Nations students living in First Nations communities. Previously, such students could attend provincially funded schools only if the respective school board and First Nation had signed an agreement, the absence or delay of which could impair a student's participation in formal education. Following the amendment, the process for allowing students living in First Nations communities to attend provincial schools was streamlined and simplified, and included a standardization of payment requirements incurred by the First Nation in question.
120. Provincial and territorial initiatives to promote access also focus on technical barriers to education. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted this aspect of accessibility because of the sudden move from in-person to online learning in the education system. Lack of access to internet and/or technology-based devices was particularly pronounced among lower-income and Indigenous students in remote and rural areas. Provinces and territories are aware of the need to ensure equality of online accessibility and are taking measures to address this. As of March 2022, Ontario completed implementation of its Broadband Modernization Program, which supports access to reliable, fast, and secure internet services at school at a speed of one megabit per second for every student in all regions of the province. It is also taking action to ensure that First Nations students living in First Nations communities are not disadvantaged by limited connectivity and bandwidth, and to identify options that will provide printed materials directly to these students.

Section Three — Continuing Challenges

121. Additional measures to provide equality of access in Ontario include a Rapid Response Northern Schools Team (RRNST), which is a trained, trauma-informed team composed of board-employed, certified educators, administrators, and related personnel (e.g., Elders) to respond to urgent requests from remote First Nations communities experiencing a temporary crisis. The RRNST can be mobilized and deployed quickly upon the request of a First Nation to keep classrooms and schools open in remote First Nations communities and support the academic success and well-being of students.

122. Full equality of access to education for Indigenous peoples can be achieved only if shortfalls in funding for education and other drivers of inequality in First Nations communities are addressed.

Curriculum and school experience

123. Provinces and territories aim to inculcate in students a respect for others and a commitment to the common good. They encourage students to exercise compassion, empathy, and support for people from different backgrounds, and to identify connections that transcend difference. As part of this program, they have in some cases revised — or are in the process of revising — school curricula to promote understanding of Canada's multicultural character and the historical experiences of different groups. Revisions address issues relating to human rights and discrimination, including the perspectives of Indigenous peoples, the history of treaty rights, and the importance of reconciliation.

124. In addition to promoting a general awareness of human rights, provinces and territories undertake initiatives that address specific issues related to various groups. All provinces and territories, for example, now teach the history of residential schools in Canada in their school systems, and in 2015 Nova Scotia signed a memorandum of understanding that includes a commitment to integrate aspects of treaty education into the curriculum.

125. In Ontario the Ministry of Education supports three school boards in implementing training for school system leaders and programs aimed at understanding Indigenous learners' social, emotional, physical, and cultural needs, and supports two school boards in hiring Ojibwe language instructors to preserve cultural identities and Indigenous languages. It is also working with 10 school boards in a pilot project that critically examines suspension/expulsion policies and practices, with a focus on groups that are overrepresented in suspension and expulsion data. These include students from families living in poverty, as well as students with disabilities or belonging to Indigenous, Black, and other ethno-racial groups.

126. The foregoing are supplemented by the Indigenous Education Grant, a more general funding program that supports initiatives promoting the academic success and well-being of Indigenous students, as well as building the knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions to Canadian society.

127. Curriculum reform is complemented by professional development programs for teachers that allow them to effectively deliver Indigenous-related material. These programs range from qualifications in cultural understanding and traditional teachings, to courses in Indigenous leadership and supporting Indigenous students with guidance and counselling. Teachers can also obtain qualifications in a wide range of Indigenous languages, such as Cree, Inuktitut, Michif, Ojibwe, Oneida, and more.

Full equality of access to education for Indigenous peoples can be achieved only if shortfalls in funding for education and housing infrastructure in First Nations communities are addressed.



SECTION FOUR – CONCLUSION

128. This 10th Consultation on the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education covers the period from 2017 to 2020 and provides an overview of participation and graduation rates in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, as well as adult learning in Canada. For many, education in Canada is widely accessible and inclusive. The country enjoys a strong legislative and policy framework that prohibits discrimination in education, and this is buttressed by a vigorous culture of equity in the political and social spheres. The result is high levels of participation in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education across society, and narrow differences in educational achievement between different socioeconomic groups compared to other countries.

129. Nonetheless, gaps in educational attainment and achievement exist in Canada. Most notable are the comparatively low attainment rates of people living with disabilities and Indigenous peoples relative to the rest of the population.

Provinces and territories are acutely aware of the need to address the issue of Indigenous attainment, which touches on a host of questions related to accessibility, curriculum, teacher training, and policies of equity and inclusion. They have put in place a series of policies that are designed to remove barriers to educational attainment facing Indigenous peoples, and are committed to working with their communities to achieve better results and greater equity for Indigenous students. Provinces and territories are also aware of the need to address issues relating to attainment for people with disabilities, and many are putting in place policies to remove barriers and help each student achieve better results and attain their highest potential.



Appendix A – Sources

APPENDIX A – SOURCES

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Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

<http://www.cmeec.ca/>

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Provincial and territorial ministry/department websites

Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education

<http://advancededucation.alberta.ca>

Alberta Ministry of Education

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

Alberta Ministry of Community and Social Services

<https://www.alberta.ca/community-and-social-services.aspx>

British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/aved/>

British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>

Manitoba Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration

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Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

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Ministère de l'Éducation, Quebec

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[Education Act \(gov.nu.ca\)](http://gov.nu.ca)

Early Childhood Educators Act Ontario

[Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, S.O. 2007, c. 7, Sched. 8 \(ontario.ca\)](http://ontario.ca)

School Act Prince Edward Island

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APPENDIX C — MAPPING OF THE REPORT

The table below indicates the location of the answers provided by provinces and territories in the report.

Dimension	Section of the Report
I – Information on the legislative, judicial, administrative, and other measures taken by the state	
1. Legal framework governing the protection of rights guaranteed in the Convention and the Recommendation in the provincial/territorial legal system	Section One – Legislative Policy Frameworks <i>Legislation protecting the rights guaranteed under the recommendation</i> <i>Legislation of the provinces and territories</i>
II – Information on the implementation of the Convention or Recommendation	
1.1 Please indicate measures adopted by your government to eliminate and prevent discrimination in education within the meaning of the Convention/Recommendation	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>From antidiscrimination to inclusion</i>
1.2 Please indicate actions taken by your government to guarantee equal access to all levels and types of education in your province/territory	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Access to quality education</i> <i>Early childhood learning and development (pre-primary education)</i>
1.3 Please indicate the actions taken and planned in your province/territory to ensure equality of opportunities (in terms of access, participation, and completion), equal treatment and to support the inclusion of all learners (including girls and women, the economically and socially marginalized, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups) in learning processes	Section Three – Continuing Challenges <i>Work by Canada's provinces and territories in Indigenous education</i> <i>Diversity, equity, and inclusion</i> <i>Accessibility</i> <i>Curriculum and school experience</i>
2. Progress made with respect to implementing the right to education in the context of SDG 4	
2.1 Pre-primary education	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Early childhood learning and development (pre-primary education)</i>
2.2 Universal primary and secondary education	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Primary and secondary education</i> <i>Equality of attainment: graduation</i> <i>Equality of attainment: skill levels</i> <i>Equality of attainment: Indigenous students</i>

(cont'd on next page)

Dimension	Section of the Report
2.3 Higher education	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Postsecondary education</i>
2.4 Adult education and alternative learning	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Adult learning and skills development</i>
2.5 Quality education provision and learning environment	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Quality of education provision and learning environment</i>
2.6 Education personnel	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Education personnel</i>
2.7 Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms</i>
2.8 Private education	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>The issue of parental choice</i> <i>Private education</i>
2.9 Rights of national minorities	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Rights of national minorities</i>
2.10 Rights of refugees and migrants	Section Two – Access to Quality Education <i>Rights of refugees and migrants</i>
III – Methods used to draw the attention of the various authorities in the province/territory to the instruments and to remove the obstacles encountered	
1. Challenges and obstacles	Section Three – Continuing Challenges <i>Work by Canada's provinces and territories in Indigenous education</i> <i>Diversity, equity, and inclusion</i> <i>Accessibility</i>
2. Awareness-raising	Section Three – Continuing Challenges <i>Curriculum and school experience</i>

Notes

- ⁱ However, in Quebec, under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, financial responsibility is shared in part by the federal and provincial governments. The Kativik School Board and the Cree School Board, which are primarily composed of Indigenous students, belong to the network of school service centres and school boards of the Quebec Ministry of Education. The Naskapi Nation is served by the Central Quebec School Board.
- ⁱⁱ The profile of the Indigenous population in Canada is characterized by a great deal of diversity. This diversity has a number of important dimensions, including, but not limited to, language, culture, history, demographic structure, legal status, and living situation (i.e., First Nations living in First Nations communities), in addition to geographical location.
- ⁱⁱⁱ PIAAC data for the 16–24 age group include only those individuals who have completed their first cycle of education or have left the education system without attaining a qualification, and not individuals who are still involved in their initial cycle of education.
- ^{iv} In addition, a new co-developed funding and policy approach was implemented in 2019 that transformed education funding to better meet the needs of First Nations students living in First Nations communities.
- ^v The remaining share of the population was those who reported multiple Indigenous identities (1.6%)—for example, First Nations and Métis—and those who were part of the Indigenous population not included elsewhere (1.9%).
- ^{vi} Quebec does not recognize the existence of a Métis nation on its territory.
- ^{vii} Information on federal support for Indigenous education, including support that addresses the distinct cultural and linguistic needs of First Nations elementary and secondary students in First Nations communities, can be found on the Indigenous Services Canada “Education” webpage via sac-isc.gc.ca.
- ^{viii} Canada is a full supporter of the UN declaration and is working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to implement the UN declaration domestically.
- ^{ix} While child marriage affects both girls and boys, globally, the prevalence of child marriage among boys is just one-sixth that among girls (UNICEF, 2021).
- ^x It should also be noted that in Quebec, vocational training for more than 150 trades is also offered at the high-school level. Depending on the program of study they choose, students can begin training in their ninth year of schooling. Other students who have completed 11 years of schooling can then pursue training at the postsecondary level.
- ^{xi} Quebec does not recognize the existence of a Métis nation on its territory.
- ^{xii} In addition, to improve access and foster the success of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students pursuing postsecondary education, the federal government launched distinctions-based Indigenous postsecondary education strategies in 2019–20, which aim to help close the postsecondary education attainment gaps between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians through distinctions-based supports. While the federal government has supported First Nations students to attend postsecondary education for decades, this is the first time that it has provided specific supports for Métis and Inuit postsecondary students. This transformational approach for postsecondary education for Métis and Inuit students includes allocating funds to Métis and Inuit recipients through each group’s respective strategies. These funds are then provided as direct support to students, and are also used both for complementary programs and services and governance capacity to support service delivery.
- ^{xiii} For PIAAC 2012, Indigenous populations were oversampled in specific provinces and territories so as to provide provincial and territorial estimates about Indigenous populations in particular. More specifically, the sample size of the Indigenous population was increased in order to obtain statistically reliable results for those provinces and territories. Oversamples of Indigenous peoples were drawn in British Columbia (only for those living outside of First Nations communities in large urban centres), Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. As a result, these findings cannot be applied to Quebec.
- ^{xiv} Currently, there is no teacher training in Northwest Territories. However, during the timeframe of the report (2017–20), teacher training was provided at Aurora College in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan.
- ^{xv} A key component of the Settlement Program is Community Connections, which builds bridges between newcomers and host communities. Projects are funded to support newcomers in making connections, forming networks, and fully participating in Canadian society. A wide variety of activities encourages crosscultural exchange and learning to promote social inclusion and belonging by engaging the broader community in welcoming newcomers. Programming is also in place to address institutional barriers associated with newness to Canada. Complementary to Community Connections is the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) initiative, which provides in-school support and programming that assists newcomer youth (elementary and secondary students) and their families in breaking down and removing barriers to school success. SWIS act as cultural liaisons and system navigators — the services they provide range in intensiveness depending on the family situation and the school context.
- ^{xvi} In New Brunswick, several schools that included Indigenous students were established as early as the 1770s. These were consolidated into the Sussex Vale school, which had residential and “apprenticeship” programs. The “apprenticeship” aspect included infants as young as 15 months being sent out for work experience. Residential facilities were added as an effort to break family and community bonds.

Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity

Canada Report for the UNESCO 10th Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, 2017–20