

Chapter 13: Public Examinations

This chapter will examine how students performed in public examination courses over the past five years. It will focus on two indicators of student performance - average final mark and pass rate. As a starting point, the provincial results in June 2010 will be reported. The following sections will present student performance at the district level. When focusing on district comparisons, the public examinations are grouped into four categories: science; mathematics; language; and social studies. The chapter concludes by exploring the five year trends in student performance.

There were two courses only offered in the province's francophone school district - mathématiques 3231 and biologie 3231. The results of these two courses are not reported separately in the following sections due to the small number of students who completed these examinations. Student performance in these two subjects is provided in the associated tables found in the appendix at the end of the report.

Student performance at the provincial level (2009/10)

Average course mark

In June 2010, 20,595 public examinations in 14 courses were written by the province's senior high school students. Figure 13.1 reports student performance on the science and mathematics examinations, and Figure 13.2 summarizes the language and social studies results.

Average final marks ranged from a low of 61.4% in Earth Systems 3209 to a high of 77.9% in Mathematics 3205 (Advanced). Overall, little difference existed between the performance of boys and girls on these examinations. However, there were three subjects where this difference was slightly larger. In both Biology 3201 and English 3201, the girl's average mark was 3.7% and 4.6% higher than the boys. In Historie mondiale 3231, the average final mark achieved by boys was 3.3% higher than the average final mark achieved by the girls (see Figure 13.2a).

Pass rate

The majority of students achieved a passing grade on the public examinations. The pass rate ranged from a low of 79.9% in Mathematics 3204 (Academic) to a high of 99.6% in Français 3202 (Immersion).

In five subjects, less than 5% separated the pass rate of boys and girls. However, in six subjects the difference in the pass rate was somewhat larger. A higher percentage of girls passed the Biology 3201, Earth Systems 3209, Mathematics 3204 (Academic) and English 3201. The difference in pass rates ranged from 4.0% to 4.3%. Boys, on the other hand, experienced slightly more success on the Historie mondiale 3231 and World History 3201 public examinations. The male pass rate in these two courses was higher than their female peers by 4.7% and 5.3%, respectively. In the remaining courses, the differences between boys and girls varied between 0.3% and 3.3% (see Figure 13.1b and Figure 13.2b).

Figure 13.1: Student performance in science and mathematics public examinations (June 2010)

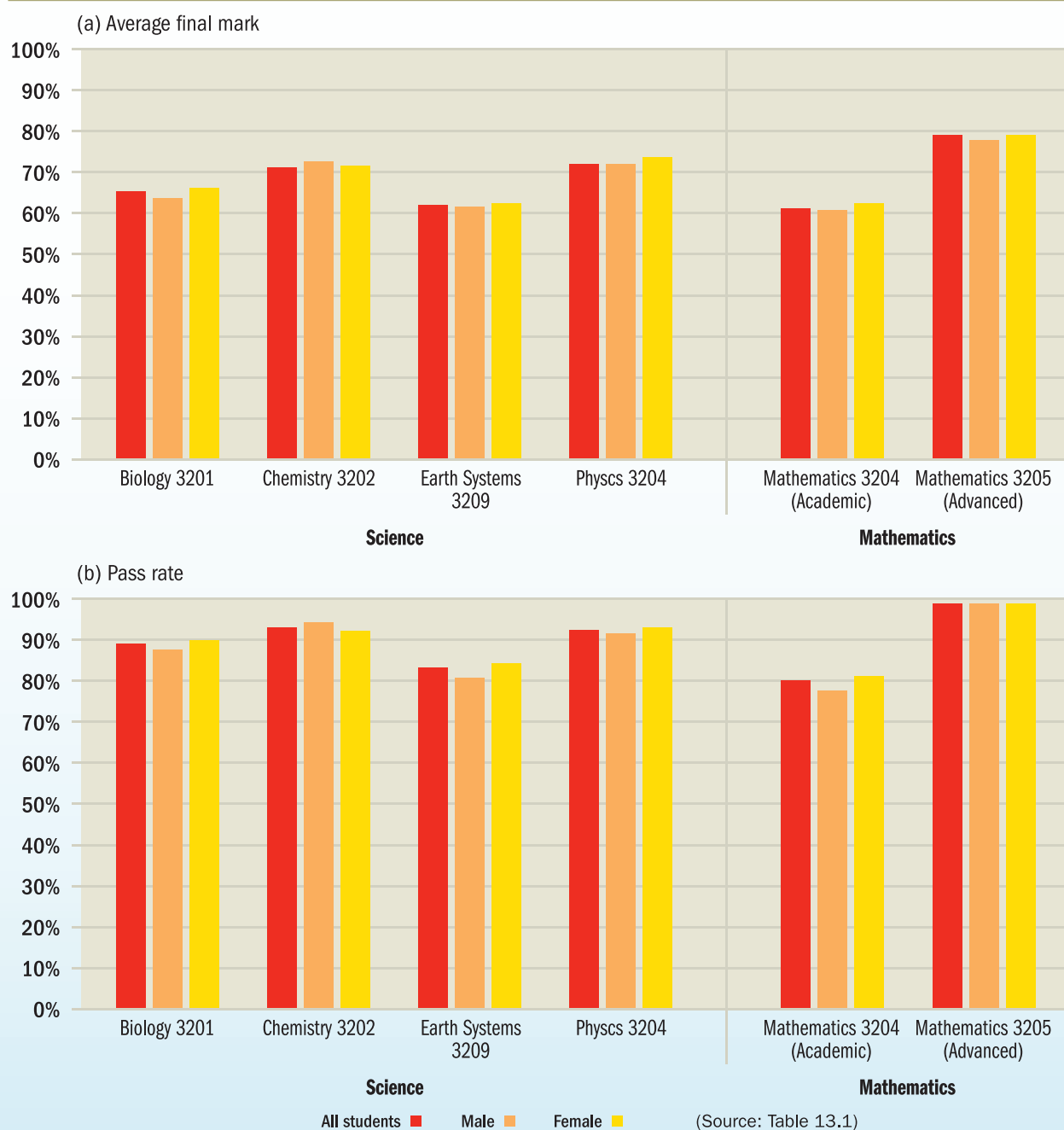
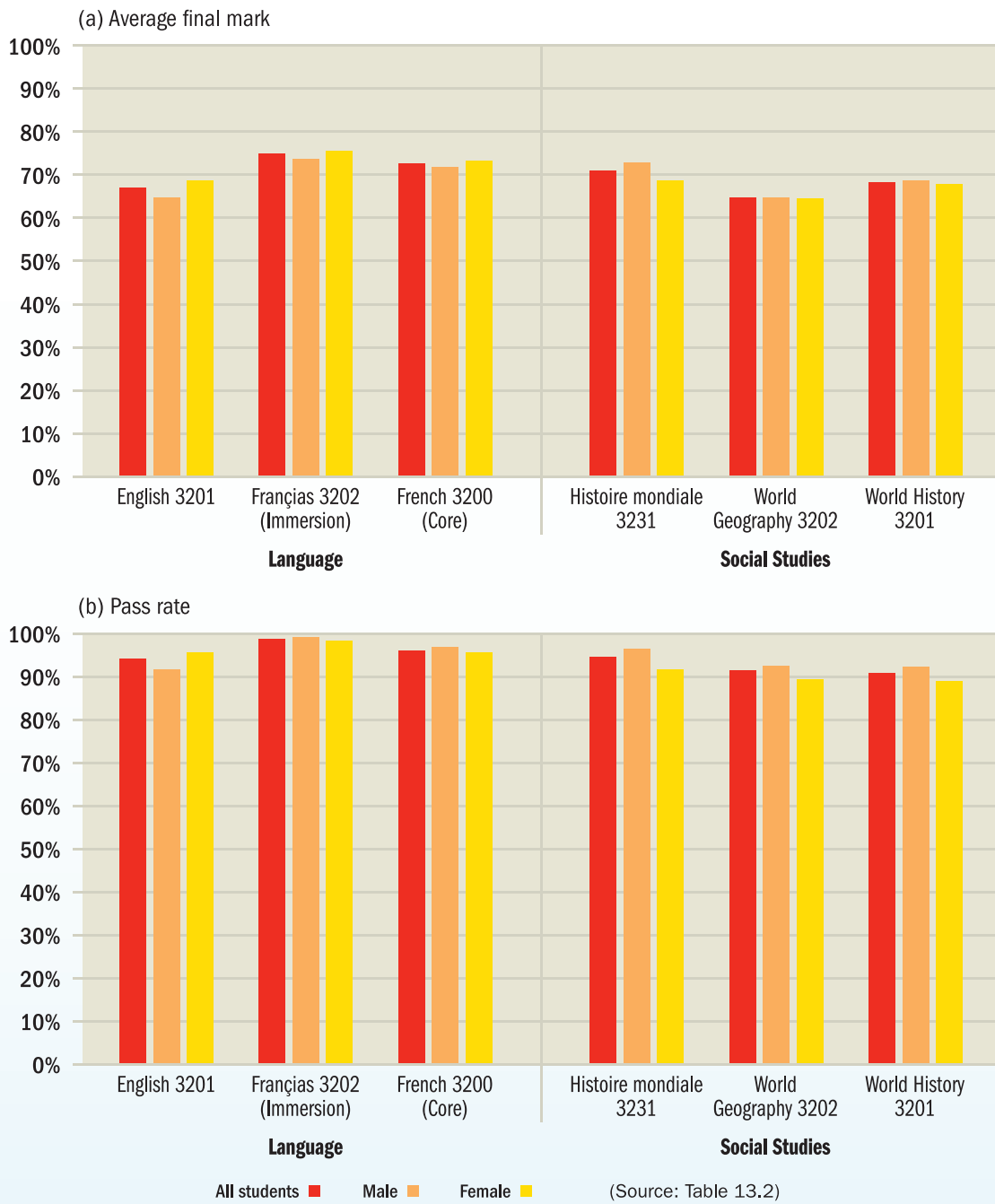


Figure 13.2: Student performance in language and social studies public examinations (June 2010)



Student performance at the district level (2009/10)

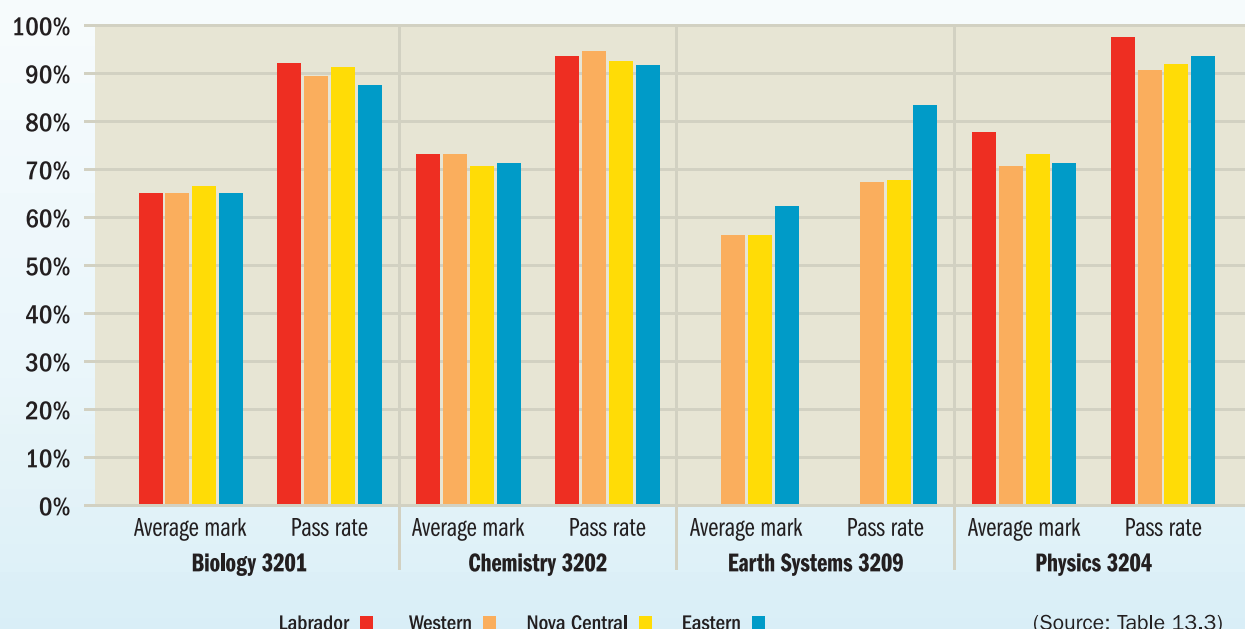
Science

There were four science courses with public examinations – Biology 3201, Chemistry 3202, Physics 3204 and Earth Systems 3209. Overall, there was little variation across the districts in terms of the average final mark and pass rate. However, as shown in Figure 13.3, two exceptions were present.

Students in the Eastern school district performed better on the Earth Systems 3209 public compared to the Western and Nova Central districts. The Earth Systems 3209 public was not written by any students in the Labrador district. The average final mark of students in the Eastern school district was approximately 6.9% higher (62.0% vs. 55.1% respectively). Also, 83.7% of the students in the Eastern school district achieved at least 50.0% on the final compared to 66.7% and 67.6% of students in the Western and Nova Central districts respectively.

The second exception is found in the results of the Physics 3204 public examination. In this case, the highest average mark and pass rate was found in the Labrador district (see Figure 13.3).

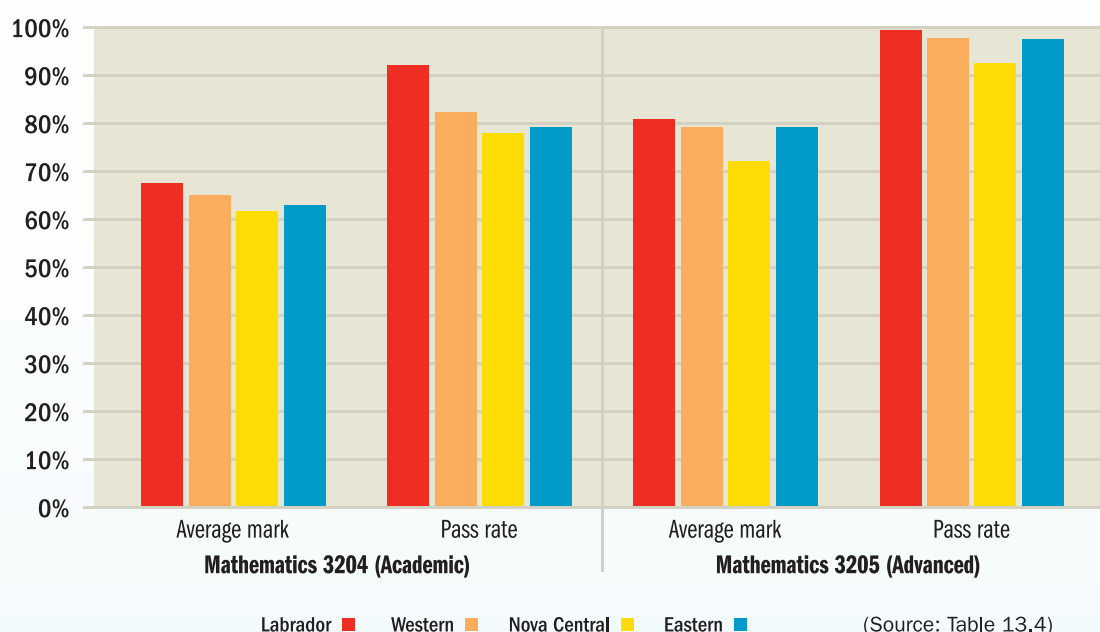
Figure 13.3: Student performance in science courses (2009/10)



Mathematics

Two mathematics courses have public examinations – Mathematics 3204 (Academic) and Mathematics 3205 (Advanced). Students in the Labrador district achieved slightly higher average marks in both the academic and advanced mathematics examinations than the other districts. They also had the highest pass rate among the districts with the largest difference occurring in academic math where 92.1% of students receiving at least 50% in the course. This ranged between 76.2% and 81.9% in the other districts. Students in Nova Central earned the lowest average marks across the four districts (see Figure 13.4).

Figure 13.4: Student performance in mathematics courses (2009/10)

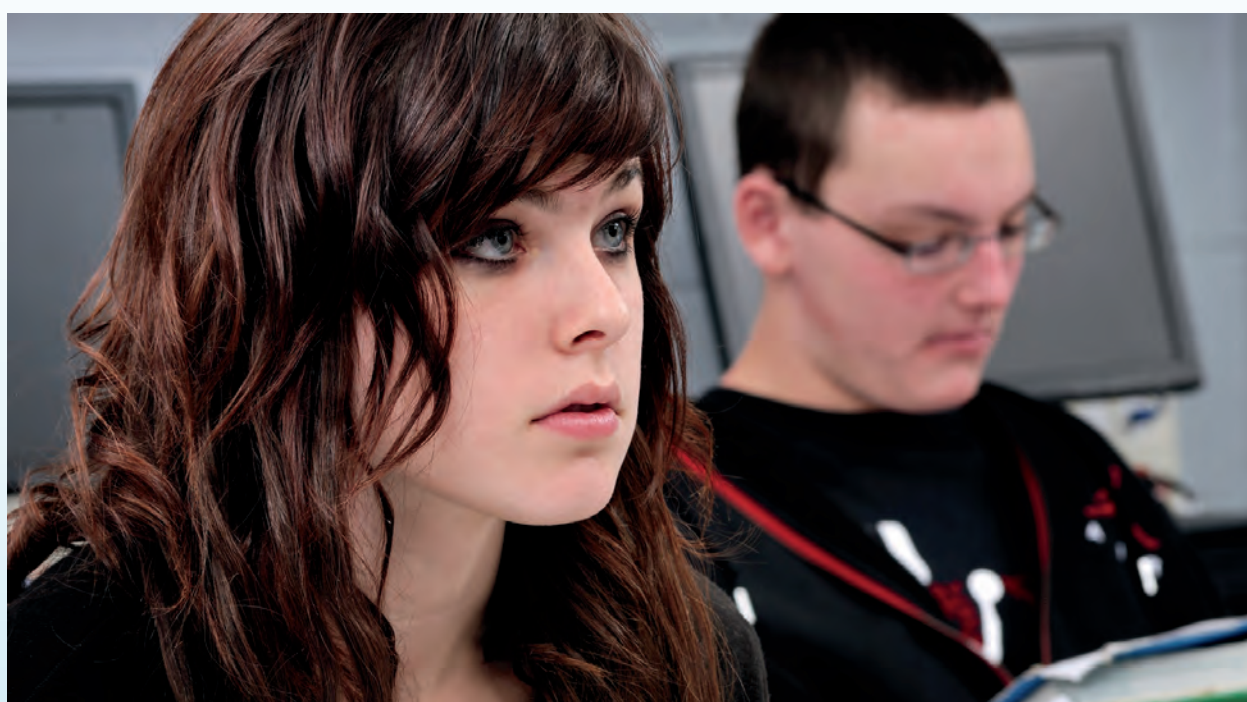
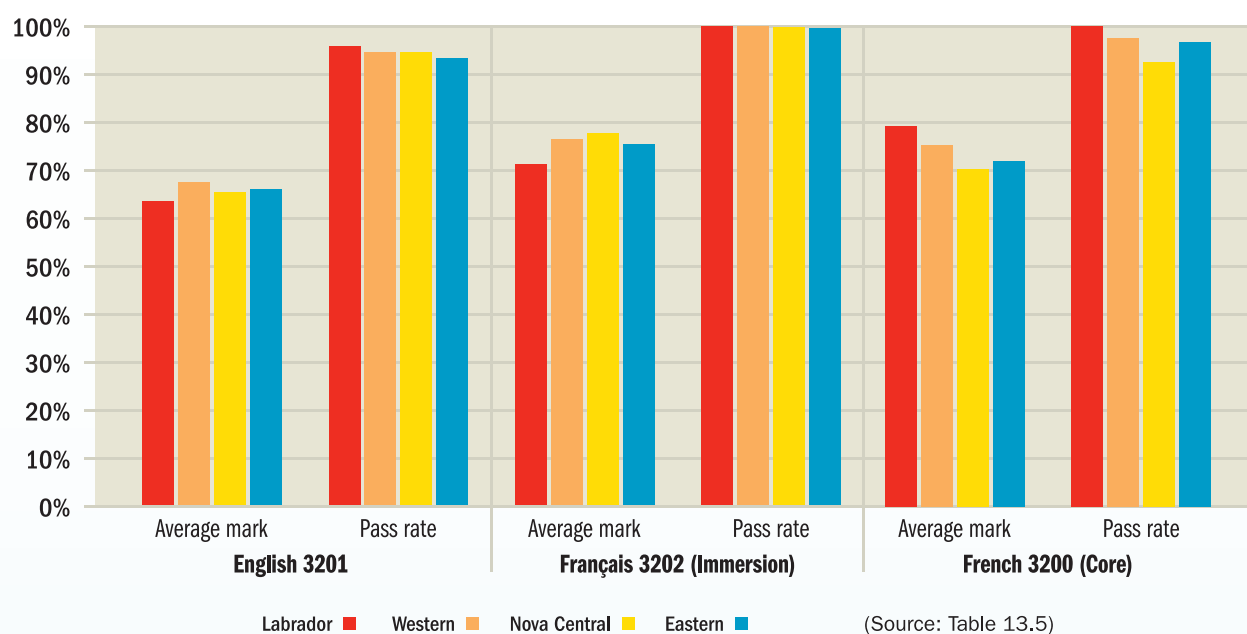


Languages

There are three language courses with public examinations – English 3201, Français 3202 (Immersion) and French 3200 (Core). There was little variation among the average course marks in English with only 3.5% separating the highest (67.0% in the Western district) and lowest (63.5% in the Labrador district) average marks in the districts. At least 94% of all students in each district received a passing grade in the course.

There was a greater difference present among the districts on the final average course marks in the two French courses. Students in the Western district received slightly higher average final marks in Core French and the Labrador district had the highest average course mark in Français 3202 (Immersion). Virtually all students who completed the Français 3202 (Immersion) public examination received a passing grade in the course (see Figure 13.5).

Figure 13.5: Student performance in language courses (2009/10)

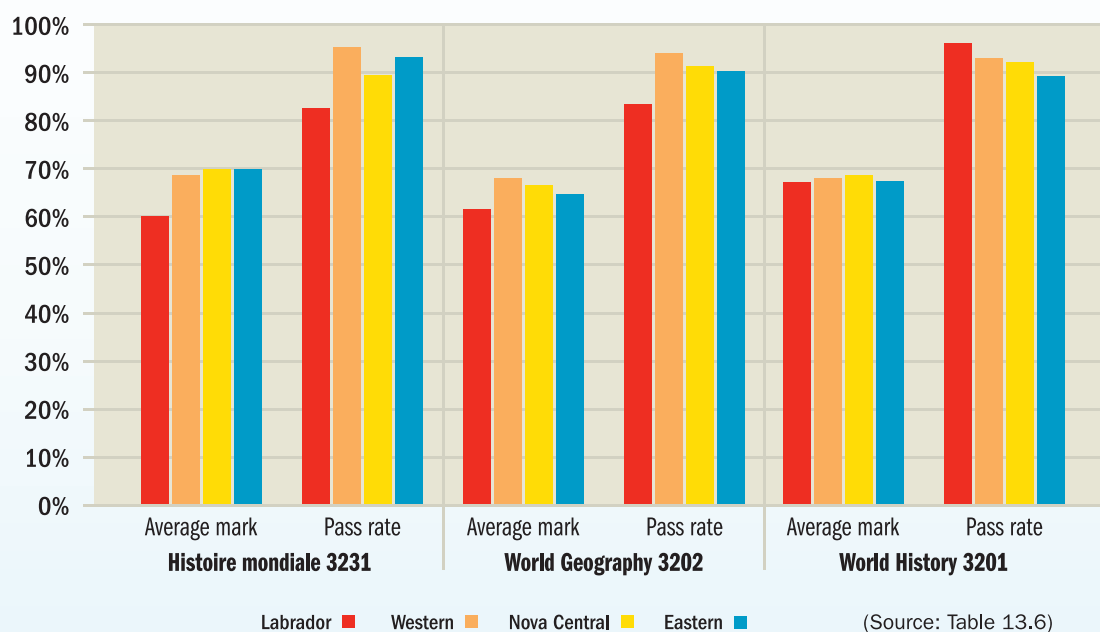


Social studies

Public examinations occur in three social studies courses – Histoire mondiale 3231, World Geography 3202 and World History 3201. Students in the Labrador district received the lowest average course mark in Histoire mondiale 3231. However, it must be noted that only six students wrote the final public exam. The highest percentage (95.0%) of students who passed Histoire mondiale 3231 was in the Western district. On the other hand, the lowest occurred in the Labrador district where 83.3% passed the course.

Average final marks in the two world studies courses (World Geography 3202 and World History 3201) fell in the low to mid 60's with very little variation present among the districts. The majority of students (90% or more) who wrote the public examinations passed the course. The only exception was found in the performance of students in the Labrador district in World Geography 3202. In this case, 83.0% of students passed the course.

Figure 13.6: Student performance in social studies courses (2009/10)



Five year trends (2005/06-2009/10)

The following section will explore five year trends in student performance on a provincial level. When examining student performance during this time, the range will be used to assess the variability of the indicators, average final mark and pass rate. The range is calculated by subtracting the lowest score from the highest score between 2005/06 and 2009/10. If the indicators are close together, the range is low. This would mean that student performance has been consistent during the past five years.

Figure 13.7 provides the average final course mark and pass rate for each of the public examination courses over the past five years. The average final course marks were quite stable during this time with less than 4.0% separating the highest and lowest average final course grades. There was only one course where student performance continually increased from one year to the next – Français 3202 (Immersion) (see Figure 13.7c).

There was very little variability in the pass rate for each course during this time. There were seven subjects where at least 90.0% of students received a passing grade in the public exam course every year during the past five years. These include Physics 3204, Mathematics 3205 (Advanced), English 3201, Français 3202 (Immersion), French 3200 (Core), Histoire mondiale 3231, and World Geography 3202. The pass rate was at least 95% in Mathematics 3205 (Advanced), Français 3202 (Immersion) and French 3200 (Core).

Focusing on the past two years, (2008/09 and 2009/10), the average final course mark in 2009/10 was equal to or higher than the previous year in all subjects except in the three social studies courses.



Figure 13.7: Trends in student performance (2005/06-2009/10)

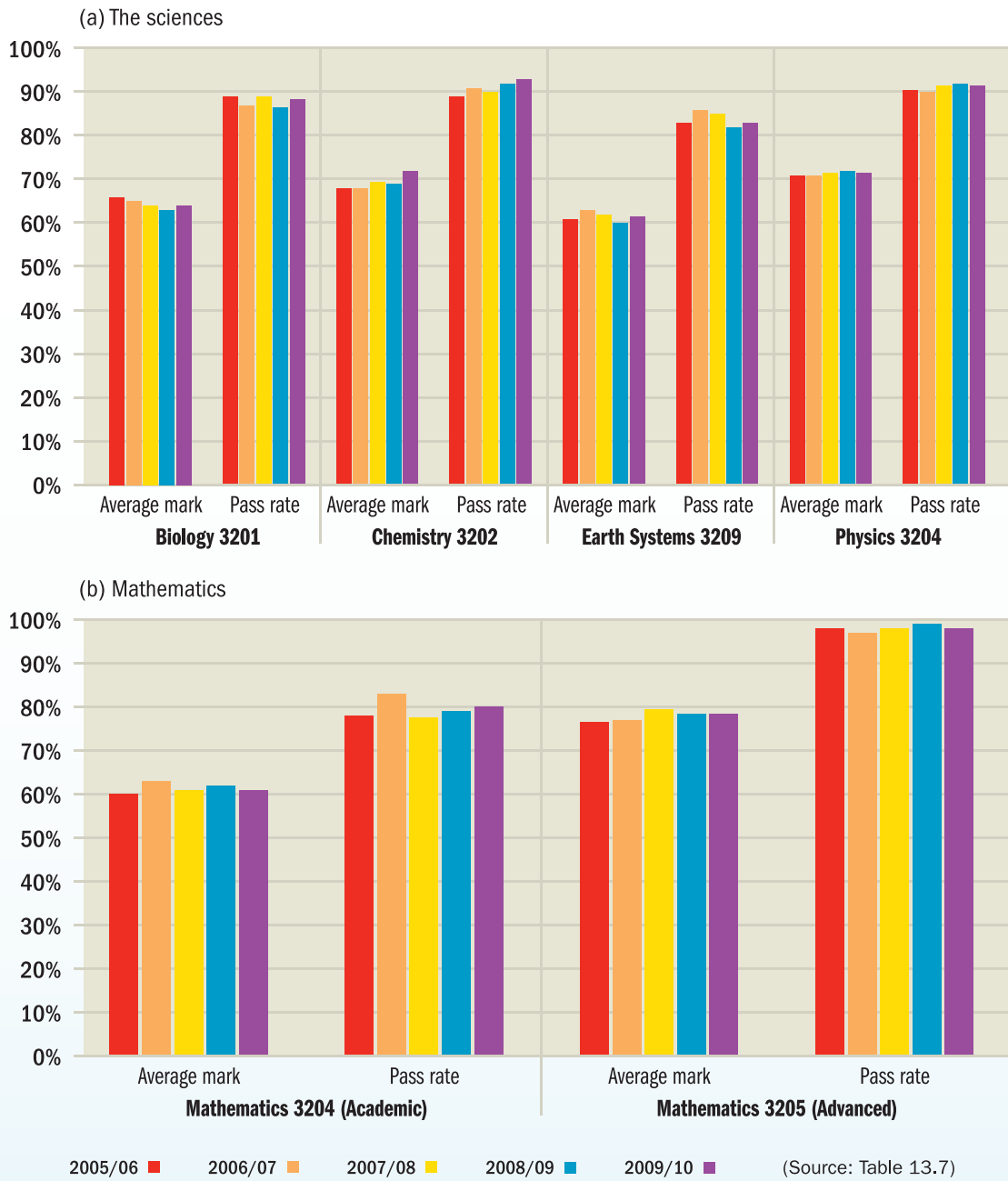
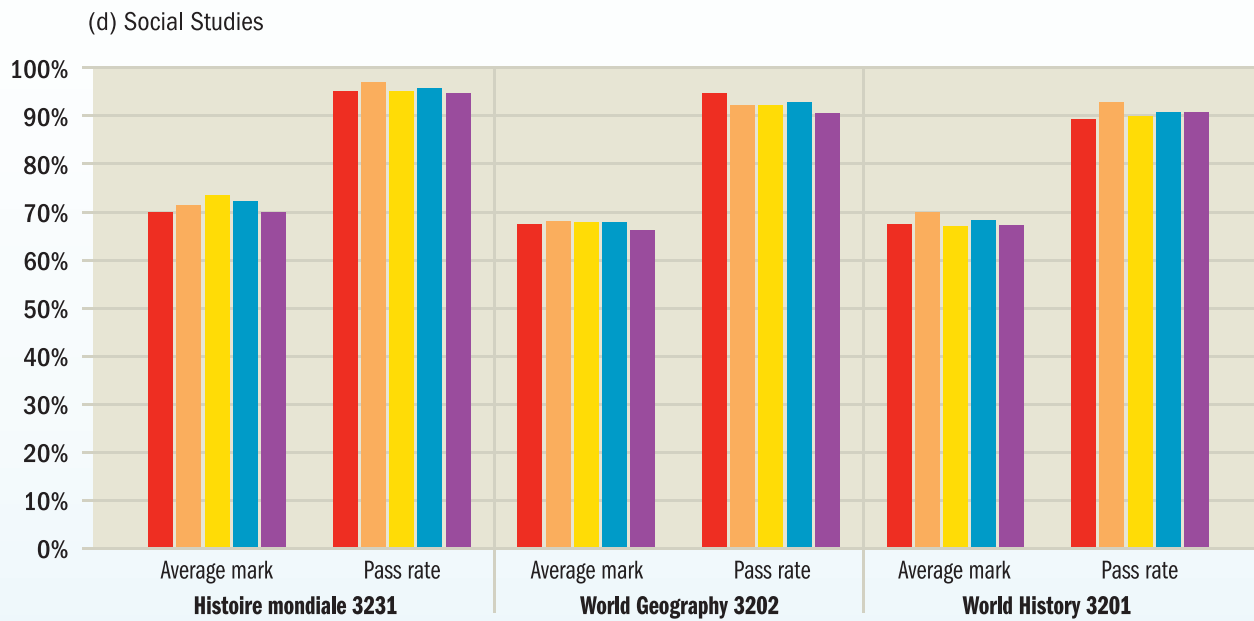
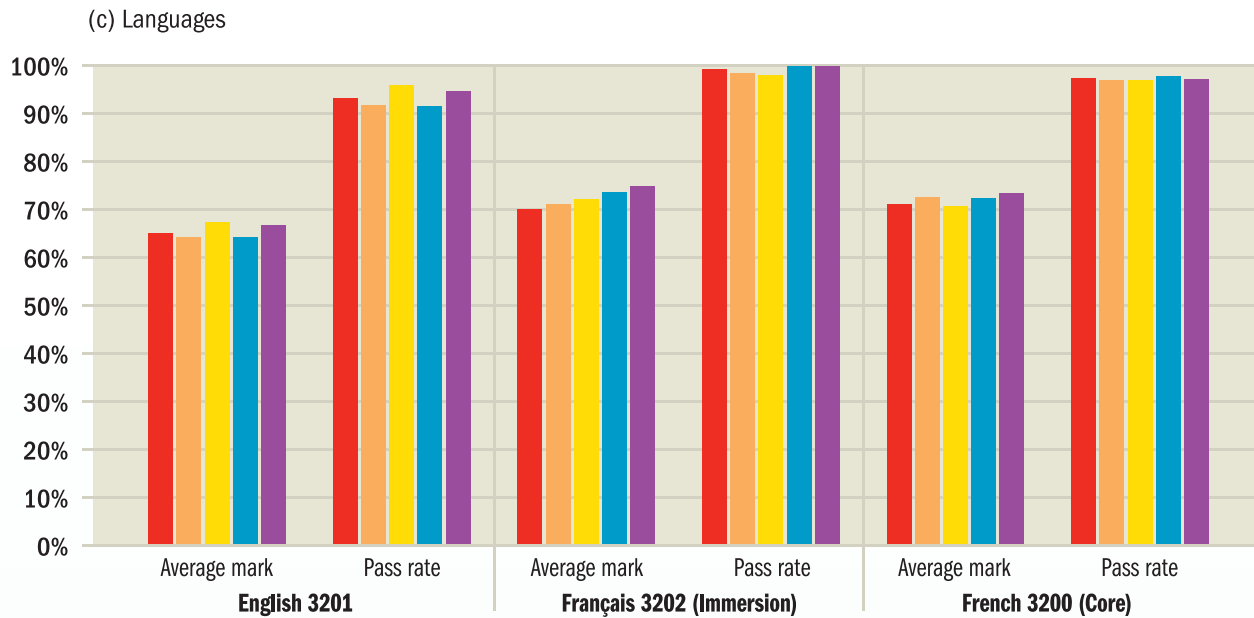


Figure 13.7: Trends in student performance (2005/06-2009/10)



2005/06 ■ 2006/07 ■ 2007/08 ■ 2008/09 ■ 2009/10 ■ (Source: Table 13.7)