



## PART I: The Educational System

### Chapter 2: The Province's Student Population

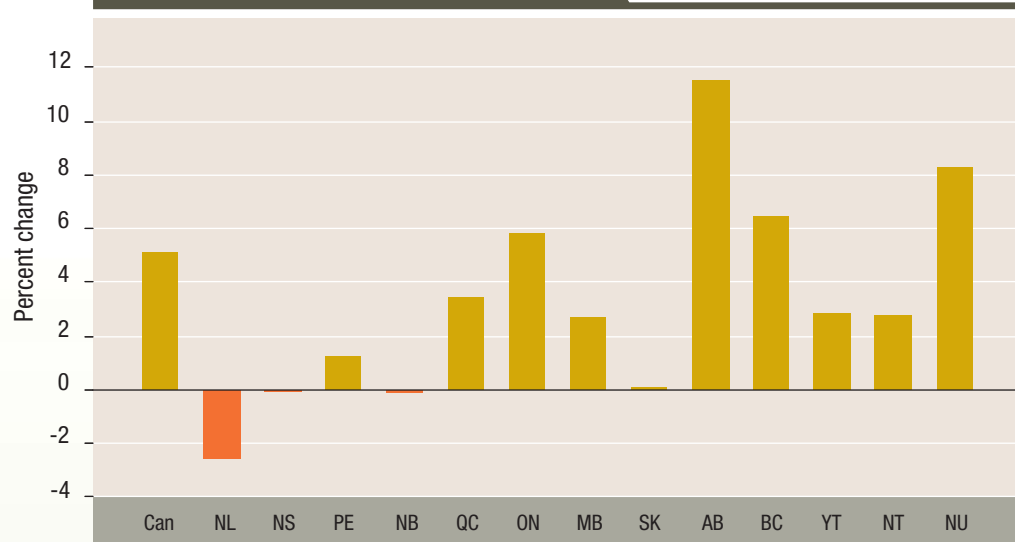
The province's school age population is declining. In fact, enrolment has steadily declined since peaking at 162,818 students in 1972/73. Looking back over the previous six years (i.e., between 2002/03 and 2007/08), the student population shrank by 14.5%, from 84,268 students in 2002/03 to 72,084 in 2007/08. Before focusing on characteristics of the province's student

population, it is important to explore the factors attributing to this decline.

#### Population dynamics

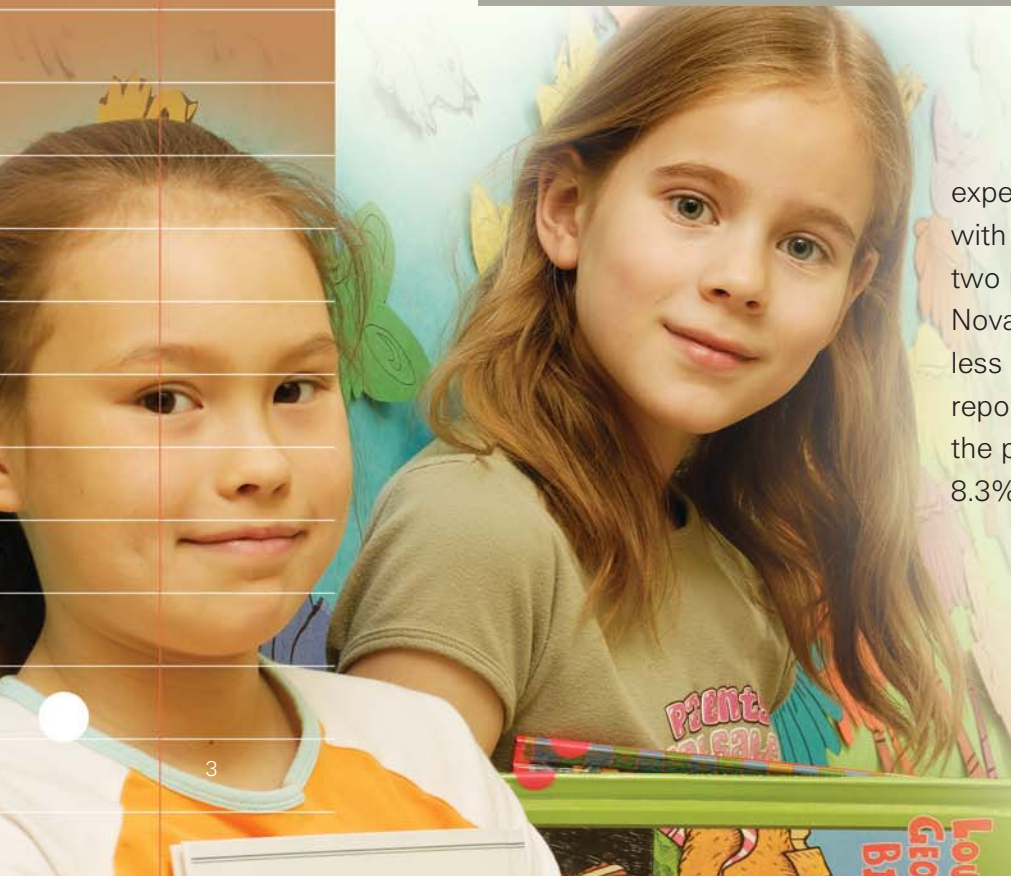
While the Canadian population increased between 2002 and 2007, this growth did not occur across the country. Newfoundland and Labrador was one of three provinces where the population declined. As shown in *figure 2.1*, Newfoundland and Labrador

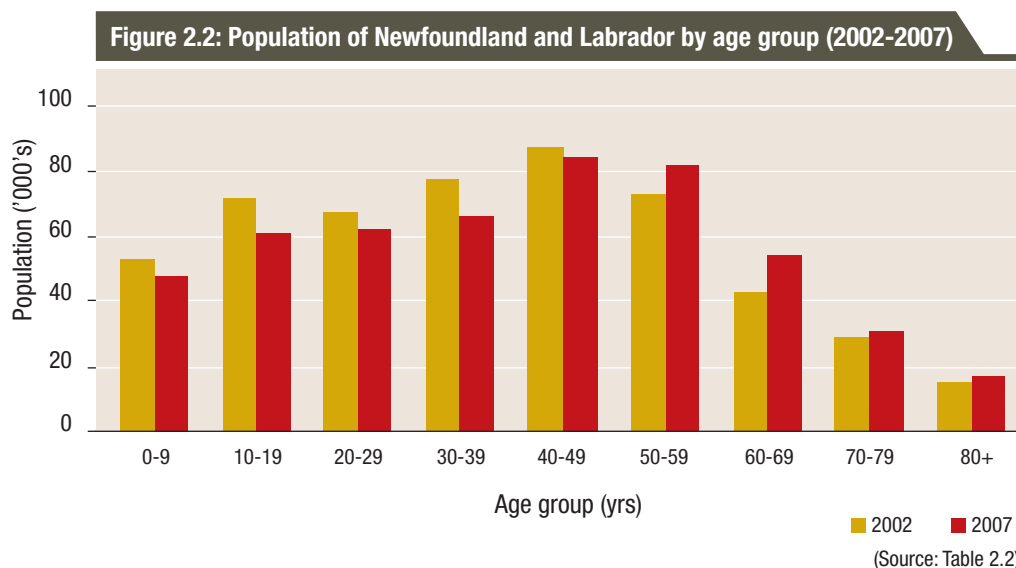
Figure 2.1: Population change (2002-2007)



(Source: Table 2.1)

experienced the sharpest decline with a decrease of 2.5%. The other two provinces, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, experienced declines of less than 0.1%. Alberta and Nunavut reported the greatest gains where the population grew by 11.5% and 8.3%, respectively.

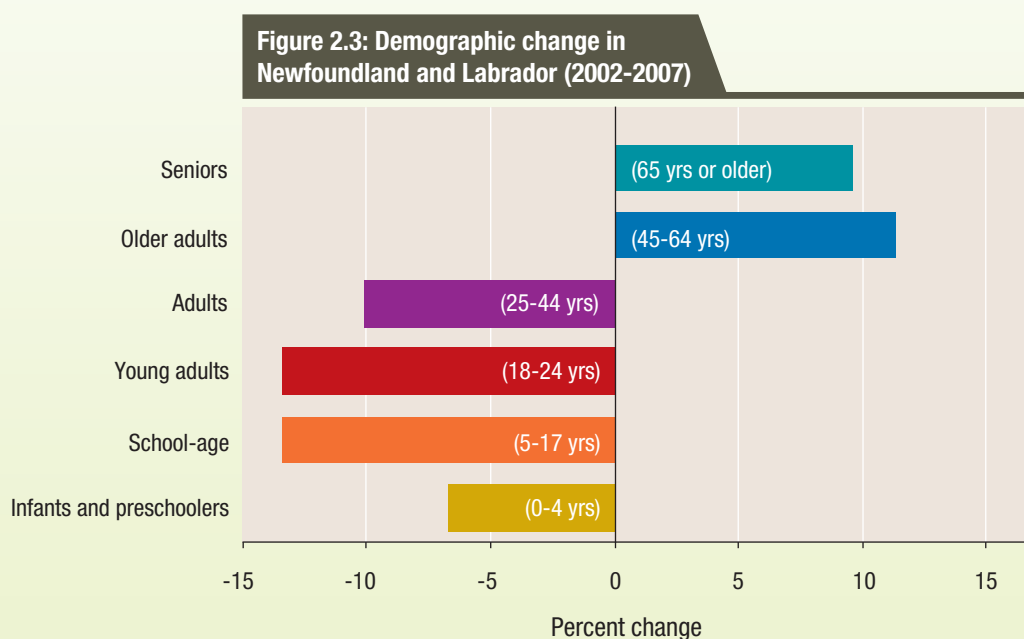




The age profile of the province's population has also changed during this time. During 2002, more of the province's population was younger than 40 years of age. By 2007, this had reversed with more people in the province over the age of 50 (see *figure 2.2*).

To examine which segments of the population experienced the greatest change, it is helpful to regroup the age categories reported in *figure 2.2*. As

shown in *figure 2.3*, the number of infants, school-aged children and adults under the age of 45 declined, with the largest decrease seen in the number of school aged children and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. It was only the number of older adults living in the province where a positive change occurred. This aging trend is reflected in the change in the median age of residents from 38.8 years in 2002 to 42.0 years in 2007 (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

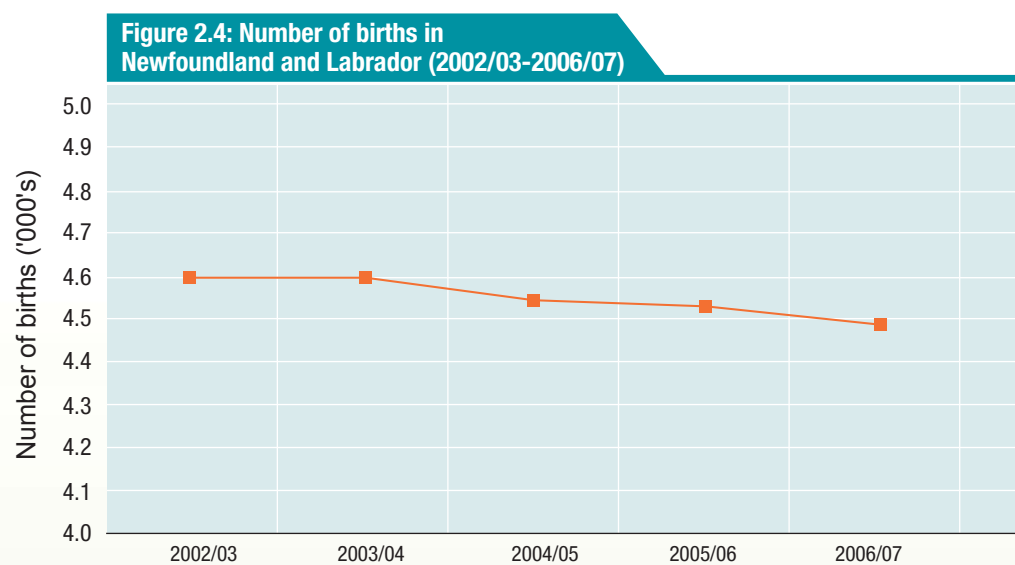




## Number of births

As one might expect in light of the decreasing number of young families living in the province, the number of births has been declining. In fact, between 2002/03 and 2006/07, there were 5.9% fewer births in the province (dropping from 4,596 in 2002/03 to 4,326 in 2006/07, see *figure 2.4*).

The province's declining population and birth rate has and will continue to impact the student population. The remainder of this chapter will explore enrolment trends and other student specific characteristics, such as class size and pupil-teacher ratios.



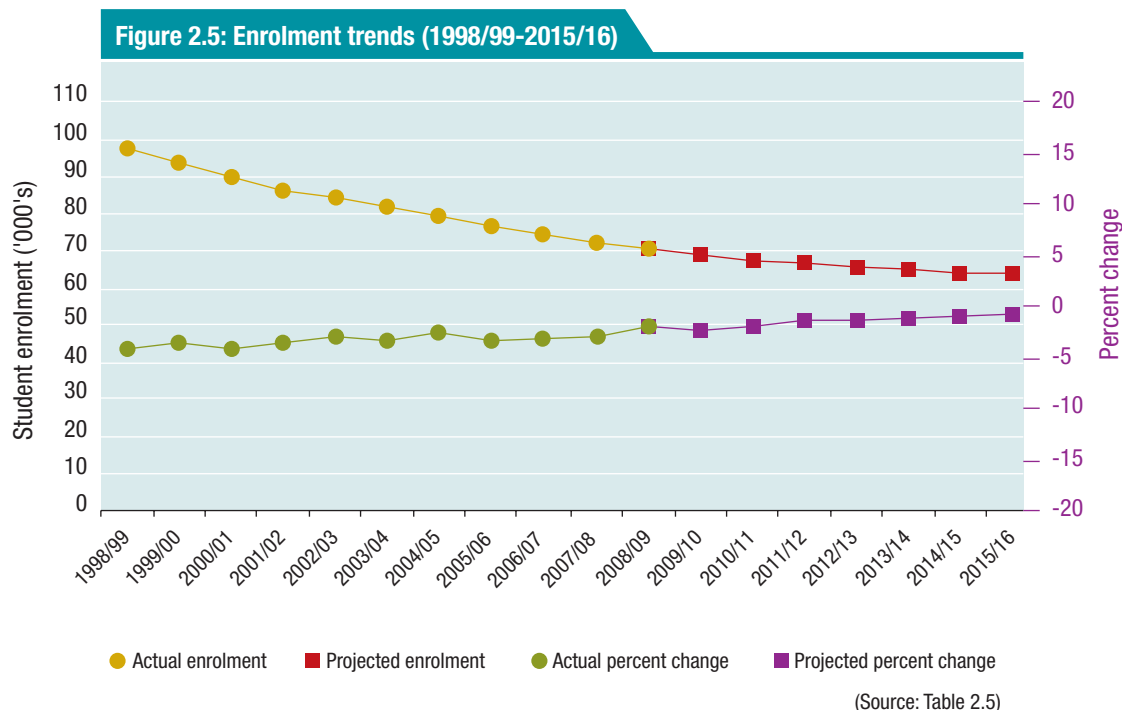
NOTE: A one year period runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> of one year to June 30<sup>th</sup> of the next year.

(Source: Table 2.4)

However, recent statistics released by the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information show this declining trend has ended. There were more babies born in the province in 2008 than in any year since 1999. In 2008, there were 300 more babies born than the previous year (an increase of 3%) (Centre for Health Information, 2009).

## Provincial enrolment

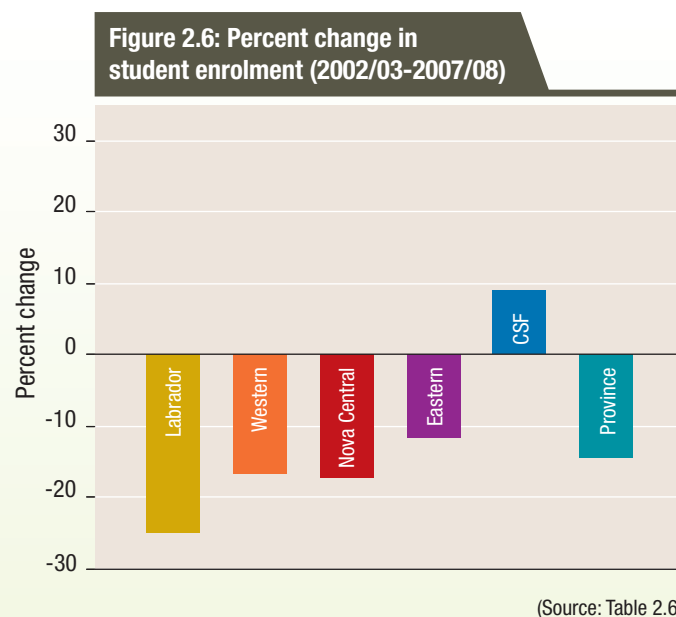
Over the past six years, provincial enrolment shrank by approximately 3.0% each year and this decline is projected to continue into the near future (see *figure 2.5*). However, with the provincial population appearing to be entering a period of growth and expansion, these enrolment projections may change.



At the district level, Labrador experienced the sharpest decline, with enrolment dropping by 25.2% between 2002/03 and 2007/08. The only increase seen in the province occurred in the Francophone school district, the Conseil scolaire francophone. During this time, enrolment grew by 9.1% (from 230 in 2002/03 to 251 in 2007/08, see *figure 2.6*).

### Average class size

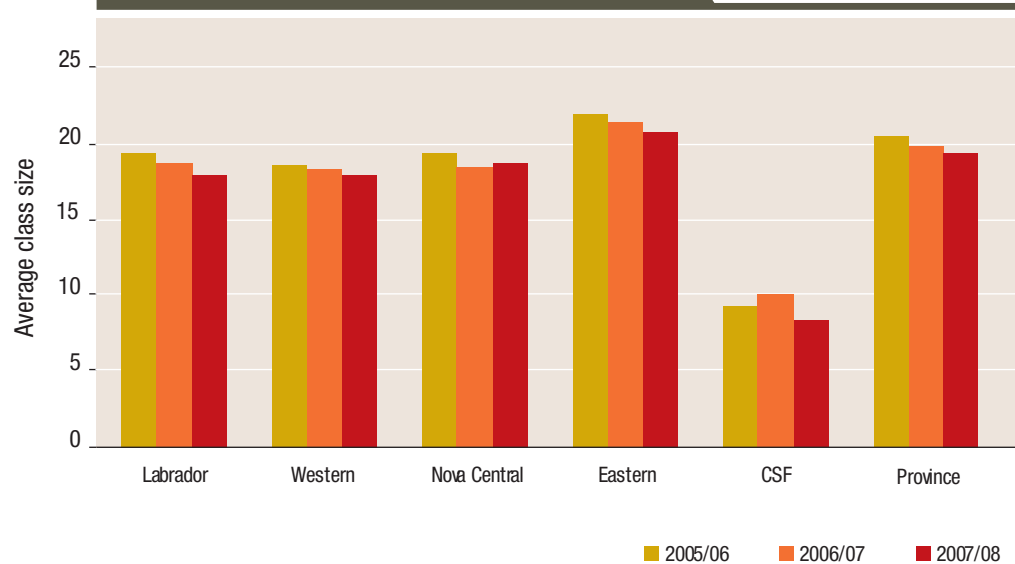
Provincially, the average K-9 class size has steadily declined since 2005/06 with the lowest average class size (19.5 students) seen in 2007/08. On a district level, the average K-9 class size decreased each year in three of the five school districts. It is only the largest school district in the province, the Eastern district, that consistently recorded average class sizes higher than the provincial average (see *figure 2.7*).



This decrease can be attributed to both the declining enrolment and government's investment of resources to set class size maximums in Kindergarten to Grade 9. Provincially, the maximum class size was limited to 20 students in Kindergarten, 25 for Grades 1 to 4 and 27 students in Grade 7 in 2008/09. These maximum limits will be



**Figure 2.7: Average K-9 class size<sup>1</sup> (2005/06-2007/08)**



<sup>1</sup> Average K-9 class size for the 2002/03 and 2003/04 school year was unavailable

(Source: Table 2.7)

extended to 25 students in Grades 5 & 6, and 27 students in Grades 8 & 9 over the next two school years.

### Pupil-teacher ratio

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is a measure of human resources to the system. It is a national indicator developed by Statistics Canada to enable comparisons to be made across provincial jurisdictions. The PTR is calculated by dividing the total enrolment of all public school students

by all school-based educators, including principals, assistant principals and learning resource teachers (many of whom also teach in classrooms). However, this is not meant to represent an average or ideal class size.

Provincially, the PTR has been declining over the past ten years with the only exception occurring between 2001/02 and 2004/05. The ratio of students to teachers has decreased from one teacher for every 14.7 students (or 1:14.7) in 1997/98, to 1:12.7 in 2007/08 (see *figure 2.8*).

**Figure 2.8: Pupil-Teacher Ratio (1997/98-2007/08)**



(Source: Table 2.8)