

Chapter 9: Graduation

Each year, thousands of students begin their final year of studies. This chapter will examine this group of students by exploring the provincial pass and graduation rate, and the type of diploma earned. For a description of the regulations high school students must meet to graduate in the 2007/08 school year, refer to page 3 of the *Handbook for Grade 9 Students and Parents*. This document is available on the Department of Education's website, www.gov.nl.ca/edu/K12/handbook.htm.

Pass rate versus graduation rate

There are typically two ratios used to describe the number of students graduating from high school - the pass rate and the graduation rate. The pass rate is a provincial measure useful for exploring differences among the province's schools. It is calculated by dividing the actual number of graduates by the number of eligible graduates in a given school.

The graduation rate, as defined by Statistics Canada, is useful when drawing comparisons to other Canadian provinces. The annual Pan-Canadian Educational Indicators Program (PCEIP) report, published by the Canadian Education Statistics Council, provides the graduation rates across the country.

The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates with the average of the 17 and 18 year old population (Blouin, 2008, p.56). This includes individuals who may not attend school. In other words:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of secondary graduates}}{[(17 \text{ year old population} + 18 \text{ year old population})/2]}$$

The following example is provided to illustrate the difference in how the pass rate and graduation rate is calculated. In a hypothetical school, there are 35 Level III students. Thirty students pass their courses and graduate from high school. The pass rate would be calculated by dividing 30 actual graduates by the 35 eligible graduates in the school. This gives a pass rate of 85.7% (or 30/35). Including eligible graduates, there are 40 young people living in Fog Bay who are the same age as the graduates. For one reason or another, these additional five young people do not attend school. The graduation rate would be calculated by dividing the 30 graduates by the 40 residents. This gives a graduation rate of 75% (30/40) in the community.

With the difference between these two rates clarified, the pass rates seen in the province's schools will be discussed. Comparisons of graduation rates will be further explored in a later section.





Pass rates

The vast majority of students graduate from high school. This is reflected in the increase in the provincial pass rate during the past six years from 85.1% in 2002/03, to 91.0% in 2007/08 (see figure 9.1).

Pass rates - A district perspective

Figure 9.2 presents the pass rate in each of the five school districts between 2002/03 and 2007/08. With the exception of the CSF in 2002/03, the pass rate has consistently remained over 80%. The Labrador district was the only region where the district pass rate was consistently lower than the provincial rate.

Figure 9.1: Provincial pass rate (2002/03-2007/08)



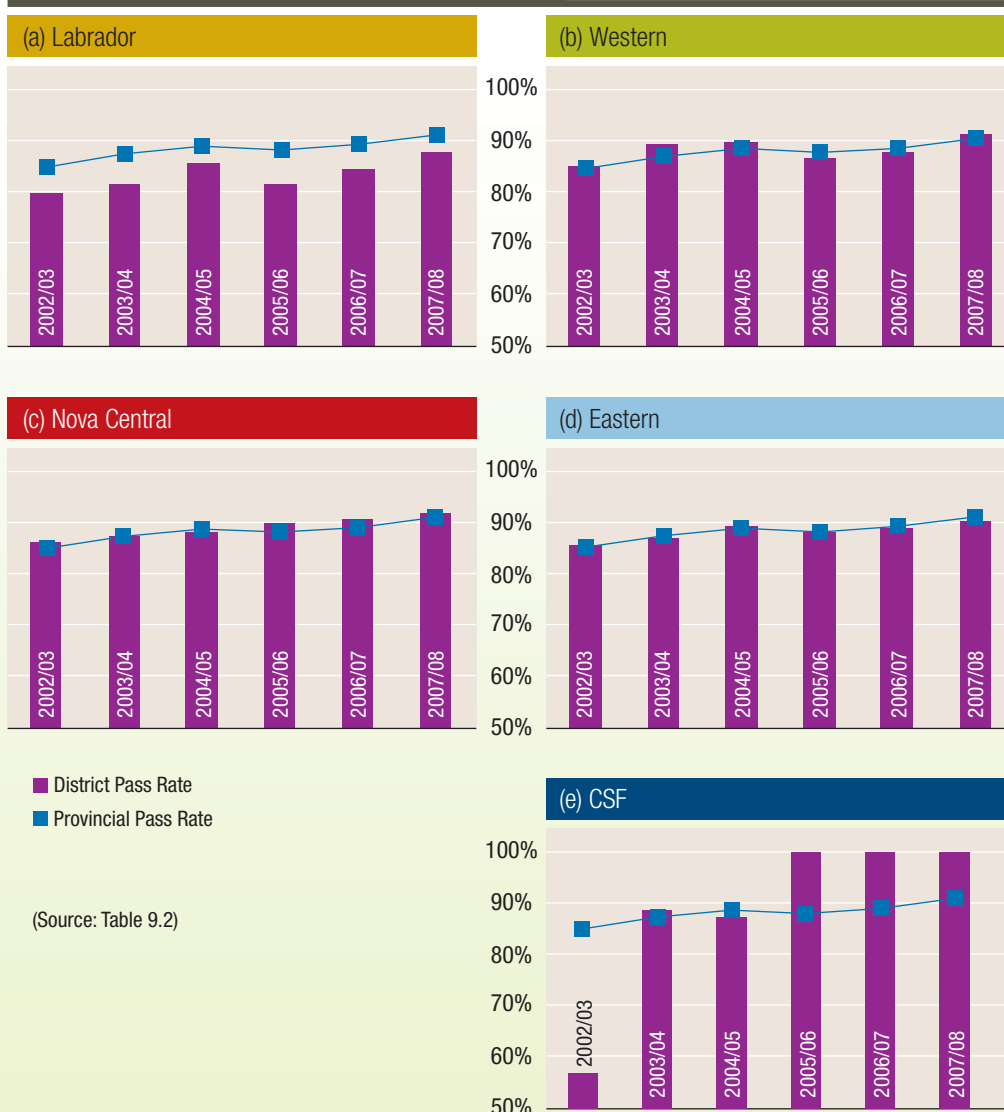
(Source: Table 9.1)



When viewing the pass rates in the CSF, it must be remembered that these schools have low enrolments. This results in only a small number of students who are eligible to graduate each year. For example, between 2002/03 and 2007/08, there were a total of 36 students who were eligible to graduate. Of these 36, 31 actually graduated. The low number of eligible graduates accounts for the 100% pass rate seen during the previous three years (from 2005/06 to 2007/08) when all 14 eligible students graduated.



Figure 9.2: District pass rate (2002/03-2007/08)





Gender and pass rates

The pass rate of girls is consistently higher than boys. However, this gap is gradually closing from a difference of 6.0 percentage points in 2003/04, to 1.9 percentage points in 2007/08 (see *figure 9.3*).

Graduation rate

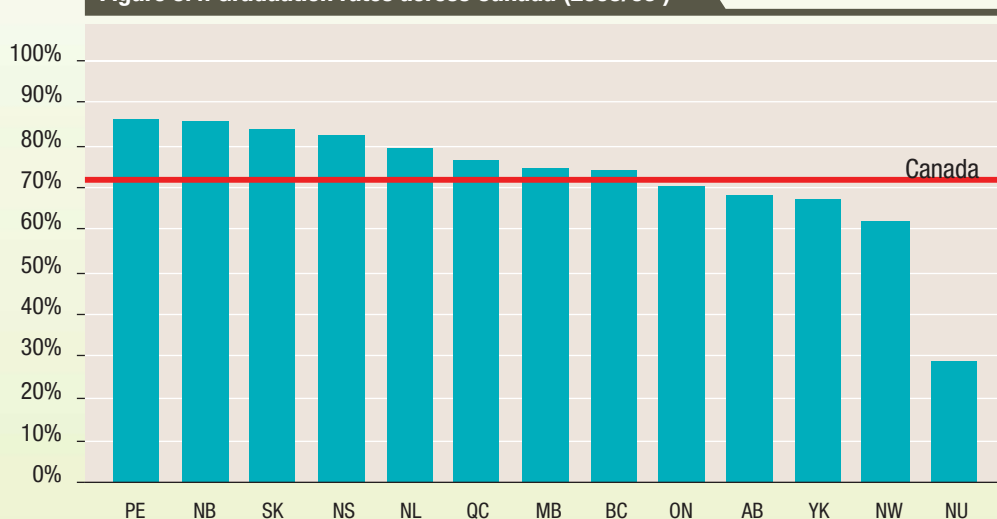
As previously stated, the graduation rate is a ratio used by Statistics Canada, that is useful when drawing

comparisons to other Canadian provinces. It is calculated by dividing the number of graduates by the average of all 17 and 18 year olds. This includes individuals who may not attend school. In 2005/06, Newfoundland and Labrador was among the top five provinces in terms of graduation rate and was above the Canadian rate. It was only in the Maritime Provinces and Saskatchewan where a higher graduation rate was found (see *figure 9.4*).

Figure 9.3: Gender and pass rate (2002/03-2007/08)



Figure 9.4: Graduation rates across Canada (2005/06⁹)



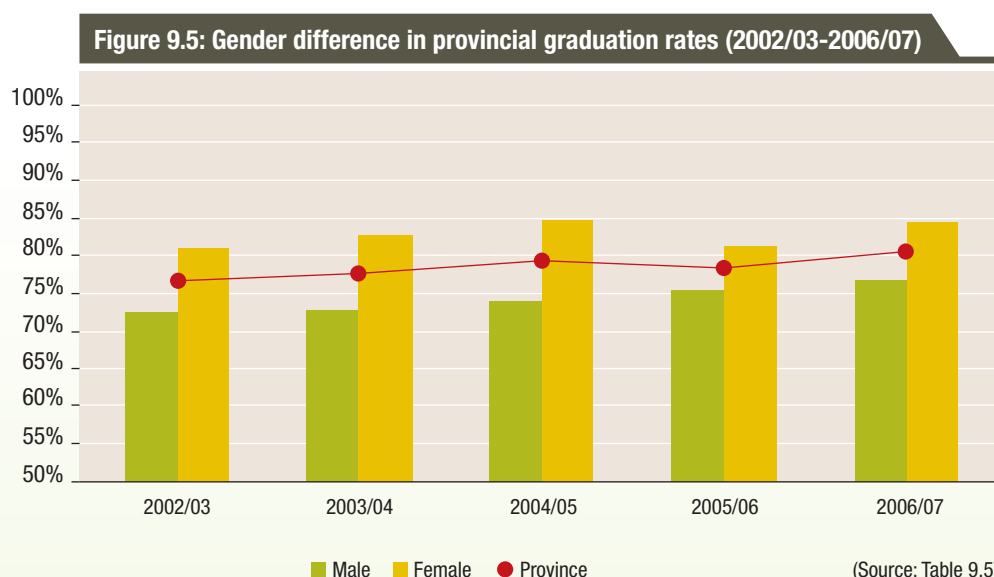
⁹ This is the most recent information released by Statistics Canada.

Gender and graduation rate

As expected, based on provincial pass rates, girls consistently have a higher graduation rate than boys. This trend is also seen both nationally and internationally in reports published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The 2008 Education at a Glance report (based on information from 30 countries including Canada) states that with the exception of two countries, females consistently have higher graduation rates than males (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008, p.52).

Graduation with honours

Students earn an honours diploma upon graduation if they achieve an overall average of 80% in five subject areas (English, mathematics, science, social studies and an elective). Provincially, the percentage of students earning an honours diploma has increased by approximately five percentage points between 2002/03 and 2007/08 with a continual increase between 2005/06 and 2007/08. In June 2008, the highest percentage of students (25.0% of the 5,284 graduates) during the past six years earned this type of diploma. With the exception of 2003/04, the



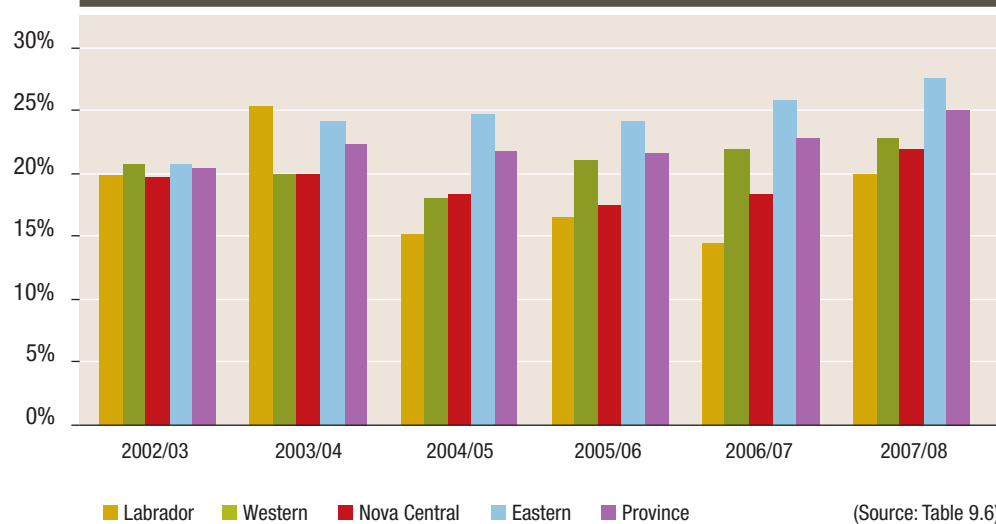
Provincially, the graduation rate of boys has gradually increased between 2002/03 and 2006/07 but has consistently remained below that of girls. During the same time, the increase in the female graduation rate was interrupted in 2005/06 with a drop of 3.3 percentage points. However, it rebounded the following year to reach the same level achieved in 2004/05. The female graduation rate was consistently above the provincial rate during these six years and the male rate was below (see figure 9.5).

Eastern district reported the highest percentage of students with an honours diploma (see figure 9.6).





Figure 9.6: Percentage of students graduating with honours (2002/03-2007/08)



Gender differences

Higher percentages of girls than boys earn honours diplomas each year. In June 2008, 20.3% of the 2,579 diplomas earned by boys were honours compared to 29.6% of the 2,705 earned

by girls. The same trend is seen between 2002/03 and 2007/08 with the gender gap ranging from 6.9% to 12.0% (see *figure 9.7*).

Figure 9.7: Gender and diploma type (2002/03-2007/08)

