
Report Highlights

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

- The population of the Province is declining as a result of a lower fertility rate and high levels of out-migration, especially among those aged 15 to 29. There are, therefore, fewer students enrolled in the K-12 and postsecondary sectors. (Sections 1.2 and 1.5)
- Over the next 10-12 years the extreme enrolment decline seen in the K-12 system will carry over to the postsecondary sector. A projected 44% decline in the number of K-12 graduates by 2010 is expected to have a significant effect on postsecondary enrolment, particularly at the university level. (Section 1.3)
- Personal financial resources available to support education are lower in this province than elsewhere in Canada. Average family income is 20% lower than the Canadian average, and the gap is increasing. The unemployment rate is approximately double the national average. (Section 1.6)

GRADUATE OUTPUTS AND ATTAINMENT

- There were 57% more students graduating from the public and private college sectors in 1995/96 than in 1989/90. The proportion of female graduates increased, although traditional gender imbalances in many programs remained. Graduates from private colleges increased dramatically. Nearly half the college graduates in 1995/96 had attended a private college. (Section 2.3)
- Memorial University graduation rates for four-year programs fluctuated between 38% and 53% in the years 1990/91 to 1995/96. Graduation rates for five-year programs exceeded 80% for each year between 1990/91 and 1994/95. High attrition rates among first-year students and high numbers of students who “stop out” for various periods of time had a negative effect on graduation rates. (Sections 2.4 and 2.7)
- Public college graduation rates from three-year programs ranged from approximately 35% to 70% from 1991 to 1997. However, most programs graduated fewer than 50% of students who entered. (Section 2.7)
- Newfoundland’s university graduation rate as defined by Statistics Canada is below the national average. Given the positive relationship between university completion and employment this is a cause for concern. (Section 2.5)
- The success rates for Newfoundland candidates in national professional certification examinations, such as those for medical sciences and accounting designations, relative to Canadian performance, indicate that preparatory programs in this province have been effective. (Section 2.8)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- In spite of substantial improvements in educational attainment levels over the last 20 years, this province continues to be below the Canadian average, largely because of very low attainment levels among older adults. It is anticipated that as the population ages the percentage of people with less than high school completion will decrease, relative to the national average, and the percentage with higher attainment levels will increase. (Section 3.1)

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- The proportion of adults with a high school education and above nearly doubled between 1976 and 1996, from 29.4% to 58.1%, while the proportion with less than grade 9 education decreased by more than 50%. The rate of improvement was higher than in the rest of Canada. It is expected that attainment levels will continue to move closer to the national level and eventually close the gap, but some of these gains are being offset by high levels of out-migration. (Section 3.2)
 - The proportion of females with a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree increased 122% over the 20-year period between 1976 and 1996. Male attainment levels have not increased at the same rate, with the result that there currently exists a substantial gender difference in attainment levels, both provincially and nationally, in favour of females. (Section 3.3)
 - High school graduation rates increased by 31% over the last 10 years. The proportion of young adults who have a high school graduation certificate is still lower in Newfoundland than in other provinces, but differences among provinces are very slight. (Sections 3.4 and 3.5)
 - There is a clear relationship between educational attainment and employment. Those with high levels of educational attainment are more likely to be in the labour force and less likely to be unemployed. The higher the level of postsecondary attainment the greater the likelihood that employment will be in a training-related area. (Sections 3.6 and 3.7)
 - Social assistance benefits recipients have significantly lower educational levels than the general population in this province. Education levels improved marginally between 1991 and 1996, however, the vast majority of individuals receiving benefits have education levels below that which would be required for most entry-level positions in the labour force, even in a period of economic upswing. (Section 3.8)
 - The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) program resulted in over 15,000 people taking some form of educational course or program. Just over 70% of those registered to receive TAGS benefits had less than a high school education before the TAGS program began. At the conclusion of the program there was a 25.0% increase in the number of TAGS clients in the "high school or higher" attainment category and a 10.7% decrease in the number in the "less than high school" attainment category. (Section 3.9)

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

- Over 34% of 1995 postsecondary graduates reported having earnings of \$8.00 an hour or less when surveyed 16 months after graduation, while 31% reported earnings of \$14.00 or more. Most of those in the high earnings category were graduates of university or three-year public college programs. Most of those in the low-earning group had taken one-year or two-year college programs. A slightly higher percentage of private college graduates than public college graduates from these programs were in the low-earnings group. (Sections 4.3 and 4.4)
- Graduates of university Master's and diploma programs and public college three-year programs were more likely to have full-time jobs related to their area of study than graduates from other postsecondary programs. Those least likely to have obtained full-time related employment were graduates of one-year and two-year private college and one-year public college programs. (Section 4.5)
- Sixteen months after graduation most of the 1995 graduates of postsecondary programs had obtained full-time or part-time work, either related or unrelated to their area of study. University graduates and graduates from two-year and three-year public college programs had more success in obtaining employment than one-year and two-year private college and one-year public college graduates. For those who did find work, on average the job search took four months. (Section 4.6)

ATTITUDES AND SATISFACTION WITH EDUCATION

- A majority of those who graduated from postsecondary programs in 1995 were satisfied with both the institution and the program they had chosen. Of those who reported they would not repeat their experience, university and public college graduates cited the program they had taken as the reason whereas private college graduates cited the institution. (Section 5.1)
- On most satisfaction measures, the proportion of graduates satisfied was highest for public college programs and lowest for private college programs, with university graduates indicating satisfaction levels in the middle of the range. A higher proportion of private college graduates expressed dissatisfaction with program cost, the skills and knowledge they had gained, and instructional and student facilities than either university or public college graduates. (Sections 5.2-5.5 and 5.7)
- A higher proportion of private college graduates, compared to public college or university graduates, were satisfied with the ability to access programs at the time desired. (Section 5.3)
- More public college graduates than graduates of other sectors were satisfied with program and teaching quality, course content, the level of technology available to students, student facilities, and skills and knowledge gained. Public college graduates were also more satisfied with the extent to which they were prepared for the job market, the likelihood of having a good income, and the cost of their program. (Sections 5.2 and 5.4-5.7)
- The cost of postsecondary education is a public concern. Less than one-third of the general public, in 1995, expressed satisfaction with the cost of postsecondary education, the financial assistance available for students, or the flexibility of the student loan system. (Section 5.11)

PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS

- Approximately 70% of the 1996 high school graduates continued their education at the postsecondary level directly from high school. Forty-four percent of graduates attended university following graduation - 36.7% attended Memorial University and a further 7.3% enrolled in universities outside the Province. Nearly 26% enrolled in college programs - 12.6% in public colleges and 13.3% in private colleges. (Section 6.1)
- The cost of postsecondary education is becoming a barrier for an increasing number of young people. The Department of Education survey of 1996 high school graduates showed that 18.7% of those who did not enrol in a postsecondary program cited cost as the reason, an increase from 16.5% of 1995 graduates who chose not to continue their education. (Section 6.1)
- In 1995/96 there were 32,275 students enrolled in some form of postsecondary education program in this province, an increase of 59.1% since 1986/87. (Section 6.2)
- The relative proportion of postsecondary students enrolled at Memorial University, public colleges and private colleges has changed substantially. In spite of actual enrolment increases, between 1986/87 and 1995/96 Memorial's share declined from 59.1% to 42.7% and the public college share declined from 35.2% to 28.5%. The private college enrolment share increased dramatically over this period, from 5.7% in 1986/87 to 28.8% in 1995/96. (Section 6.2)
- Undergraduate full-time and part-time enrolment at Memorial University increased from 4,674 in 1966 to a peak of 17,453 in 1992. Between 1992 and 1997 university enrolment declined by 18.9%, reflecting the enrolment decline in the K-12 education sector. This trend is expected to continue into the next century. (Section 6.3)

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- The university participation rate, defined as the proportion of the population in this province aged 18-24 attending university, increased from 16.1% in 1990/91 to 17.2% in 1994/95 and is similar to the national rate. The public college participation rate increased from 5.0% in 1990/91 to 8.4% in 1994/95 and is significantly lower than that for the Country as a whole. This is believed to be related to the high proportion of students enrolled in private colleges in this province. (Section 6.4)
 - The most current available data show that on a per-capita basis Newfoundland is third in the Country in exporting university students to study in other provinces. In 1993, 2611 graduate and undergraduate students were studying outside the Province compared to 931 out-of-province students who were studying at Memorial University. (Section 6.5)
 - University enrolment by females is higher than for males, and between 1987/88 and 1996/97 the enrolment gain for females greatly exceeded that for males. At the undergraduate level there are now about 13 female students attending university for every 10 males, reflecting the higher high school graduation rate for females. (Section 6.9)
 - For 1995/96, male enrolment in the public colleges was slightly higher than female enrolment, while the reverse was the case in the private colleges. Although there have been some changes in recent years, enrolment in public and private college programs generally continues to follow traditional gender divisions, that is, significantly more females are found in health sciences, social sciences and business studies, and more males are enrolled in trades, engineering technology and fisheries and marine studies. (Section 6.9)

HUMAN RESOURCES

- In 1997 approximately 55% of the academic staff at Memorial University hold a Ph.D. and a further 26% hold a Master's or professional degree. In the public and private college systems most instructors have Bachelor's degrees or postsecondary diplomas, and 22% of public college instructors and 2.6% of private college instructors have a Master's degree. (Section 7.1)
- The number of faculty at both Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic has decreased in recent years. The most significant decline was in the public college system where the number of full-time and part-time instructional staff decreased by 61% between 1994 and 1997, mainly as a result of campus closures, the consolidation of the remaining colleges into one administrative unit, and the termination of the training component of the TAGS program. (Section 7.2)
- A minority of academic staff positions at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic are held by women. At the university the percentage of women faculty at all professional ranks is increasing but is substantially lower at senior than at junior professional ranks. (Section 7.2)

COST OF EDUCATION

- Newfoundland's financial commitment to postsecondary education, as defined by the amount spent as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product, is higher than the Canadian average and most other provinces. (Section 8.2)
- The most current interprovincial data show that university tuition in Newfoundland is lower than in most other provinces. In 1995/96 only Quebec, Saskatchewan and British Columbia had tuition fees lower than those in Newfoundland. However, in 1997 the cost of university tuition in Newfoundland increased substantially. (Section 8.6)
- Tuition fees at Memorial University began to show an annual increase in 1981, and since that time have increased 350% in actual dollars. In terms of constant (1968) dollars fees did not exceed inflation increases until

1995. The proportion of total university revenue from tuition fees increased from 15% in 1991/92 to 24% in 1996/97. (Sections 8.3 and 8.7)

- With the exception of a small increase between 1995/96 and 1996/97, the amount of money received by the Province from the federal government specifically for postsecondary training has decreased since 1991/92, from \$11,840,656 to \$6,023,485 in 1996/97, a decline of 49%. (Section 8.4)
- Tuition fees at private colleges are significantly higher than those at the public college or the university. In 1996/97 the average tuition cost per semester at a private college was \$2,297 compared to \$1,335 at Memorial University and \$600 at the College of the North Atlantic. (Section 8.5)
- Between 1992/93 and 1996/97 there has been an 89.6% increase in the number of student loans issued to students attending the public college and a 500% increase in the number issued to private college students. (Section 8.10)
- The effect of the elimination of provincial grants for postsecondary study has led to an increase in the average annual amount borrowed by students. Compared to the 1993/94, when grants were available, 1994/95 average loans increased by approximately 100% for Memorial University students, 75% for public college students and 170% for those studying at private colleges. (Section 8.10)
- In 1996/97 student borrowing varied greatly among postsecondary sectors. Students attending private colleges borrowed, on average, \$9,128, substantially more than the average of \$6,059 borrowed by students attending public colleges. Memorial University students borrowed an average of \$7,220. (Section 8.10)
- As of 1995/96 students in undergraduate, Master's and diploma programs at Memorial University had accumulated a higher level of debt than most college students. However, more university graduates report high initial earnings in the job market than graduates of other postsecondary sectors. Private college graduates borrowed substantially more than public college graduates, but may have more difficulty repaying their loans, since over half of them reported initial earnings following graduation. (Section 8.12)
- In 1996 students who took two-year programs at private colleges borrowed, on average, \$7,535 more than those who took one-year programs, yet the earnings profile of the two groups was essentially the same. In the public colleges each year of a program led to an increase in the amount borrowed but also improved the earnings profile of graduates. (Section 8.12)
- In 1995/96 the average accumulated debtload of Newfoundland students who borrowed under the Canada Student Loan Program was nearly 13% higher than the Canadian average, reflecting the lower family income levels in this province. The difference between the provincial and national debt amounts was greater for college graduates than for university graduates. (Section 8.13)
- Default rates on Canada Student Loans are lower for Newfoundland students than the Canadian average. As is the case for the rest of Canada, the most current data show default rates are lowest for university graduates and highest for graduates of private colleges. (Section 8.14)
- In 1995/96 research support to Memorial University from federal granting councils and federal departments and agencies was 23.3% lower than it was five years before, while support from Canadian and foreign businesses was 25% higher. The largest proportion of research funds is obtained by the Faculty of Science. (Section 8.15)