

CHAPTER 5: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Each year, thousands of students begin their final year of high school. This chapter will describe how they fare by exploring graduation rates and diploma status. Additional information about high school graduation requirements can be found in the following resources:

- *On Course: A Handbook for Grade 9 Students and Parents* provides a basic overview of the graduation requirements.
- *The High School Certification Handbook* provides a more detailed explanation of graduation requirements.

Both of these resources are located on the Department of Education's website and can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/highschool/gradreq.html>

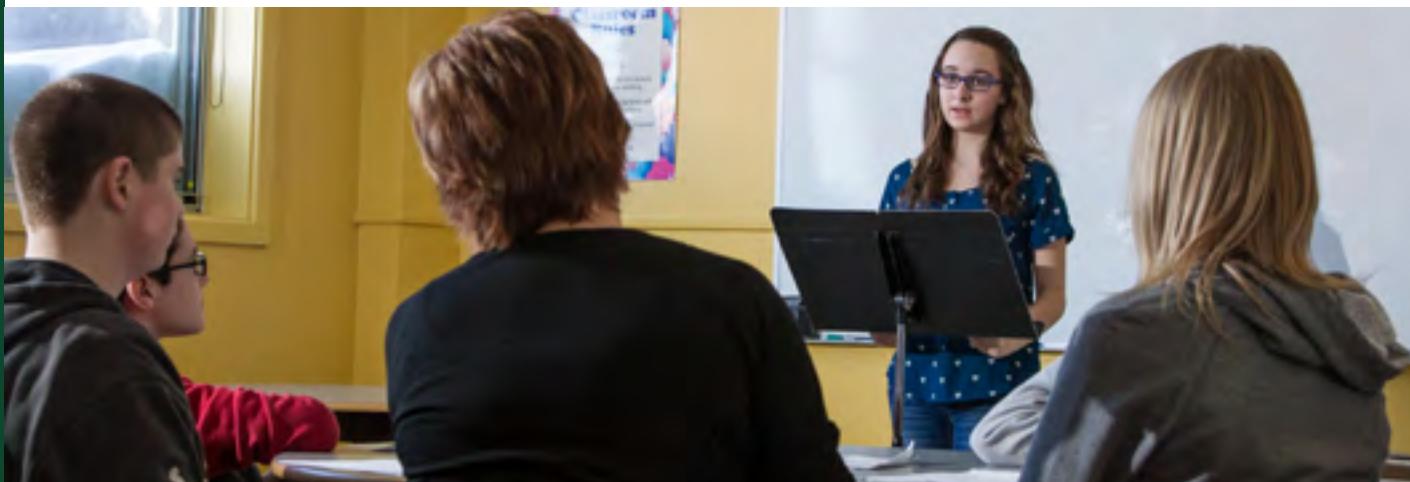
Pass rate versus graduation rate

There are two ratios that can be used to describe the number of students who successfully complete (i.e. graduate) high school – the pass rate (provincial) and the graduation rate (national). While each describes the same concept, they are calculated differently and may give slightly different results.

The provincial pass rate defined

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. Students are considered to be 'eligible to graduate' if they are enrolled in the courses needed to meet graduation requirements for that school year. These students will graduate IF they successfully complete the courses they are registered in. In other words:

$$\text{Pass Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of students who 'actually' graduate}}{\text{Total number of students 'eligible' to graduate}}$$



The national graduation rate defined

Since other jurisdictions may have different ways to calculate the high school completion rate, a standardized way of calculating this is needed to make reasonable comparisons. To accomplish this, Statistics Canada developed the graduation rate. The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates with the average of the 17 and 18 year old population. This includes individuals who may not attend school. In other words:

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

Provincial pass rate

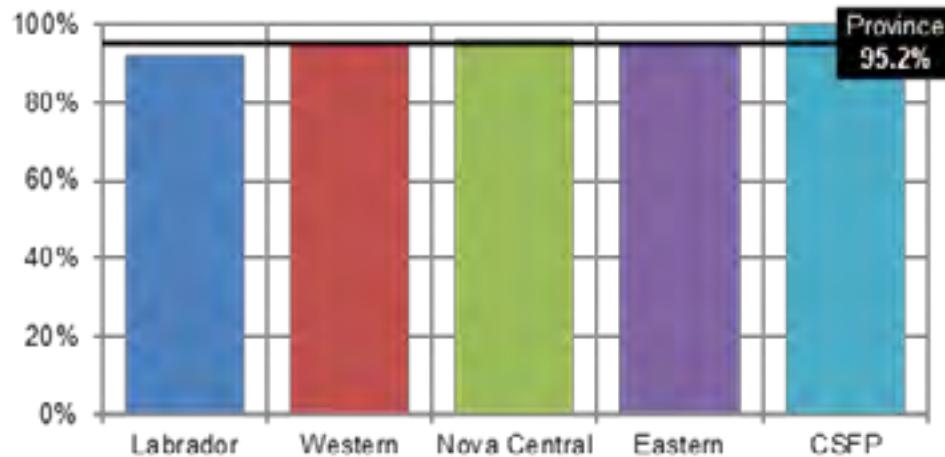
The vast majority of students graduate from high school. In 2012/13, 95.2% of the 4,962 eligible graduates actually graduated. A high pass rate was seen across the, ranging from 92.1% in the Labrador School District to 100.0% in the CSFP (see figure 13a).

The pass rate appears to be on an upward trend. As shown in figure 13b, the provincial pass rate has increased from 90.3% in 2008/09 to 95.2% in 2012/13. This gradual upward trend is also seen in the Western, Nova Central and Eastern School Districts (see figure 13c).

Each year, girls have a higher pass than boys (see figure 13d). However, 2012/13 was the first time when the female and male pass rates were virtually the same (95.4% and 94.9% respectively). In 2008/09, the female pass rate was 4.3% higher than the male (92.4% and 88.2% respectively).

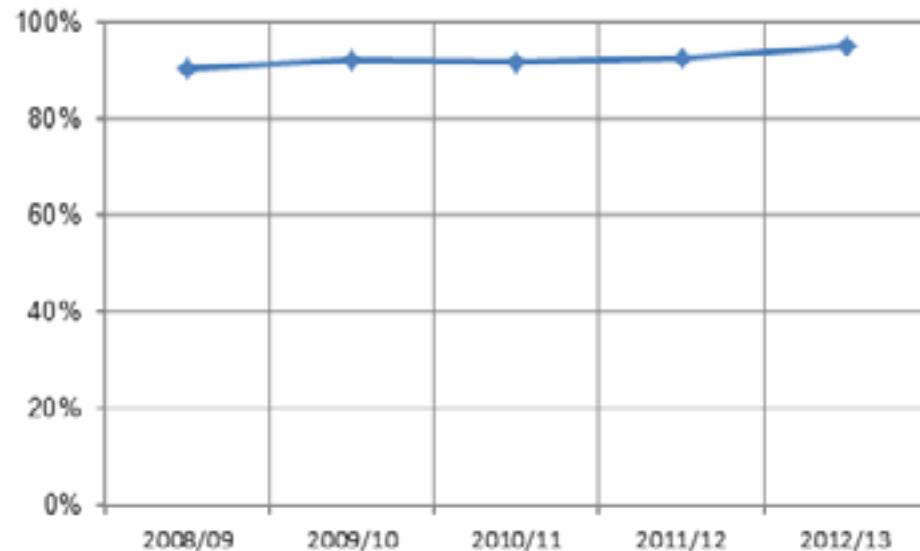
Figure 13: High school pass rate

(a) Provincial and district pass rate (2012/13)

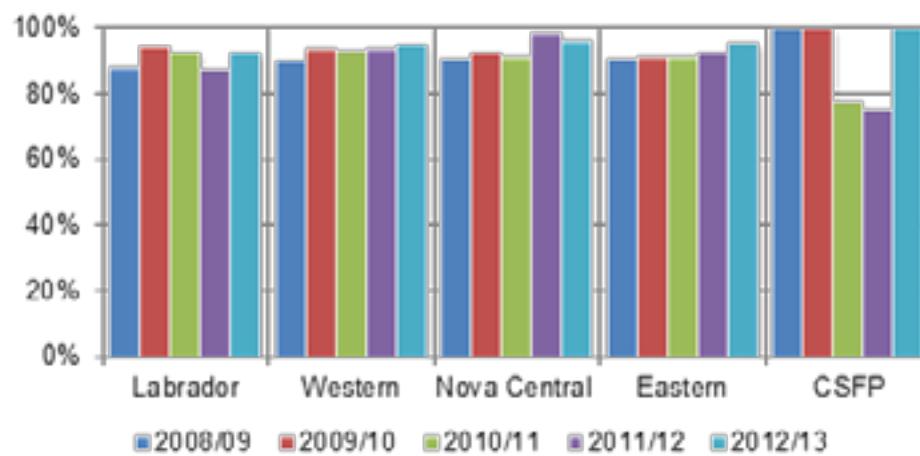




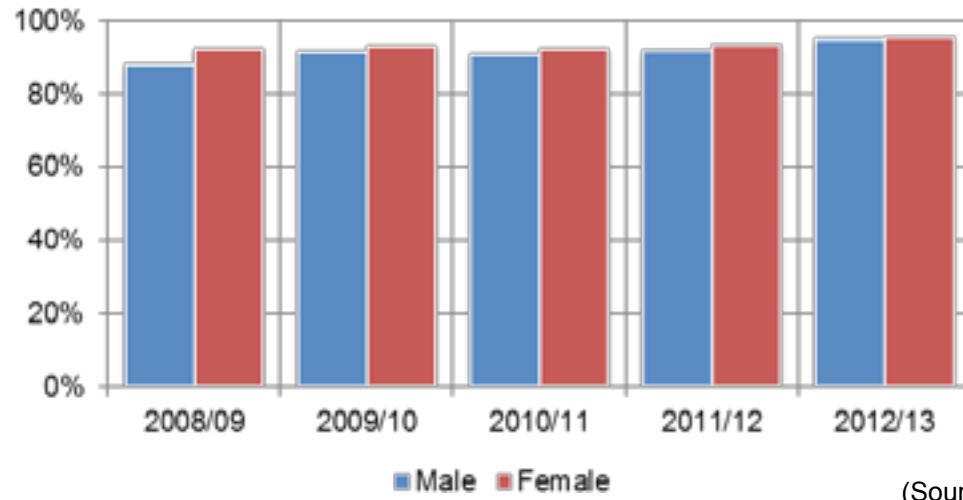
(b) Provincial trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)



(c) District trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)



(c) Gender and pass rate (2007/08 – 2012/13)

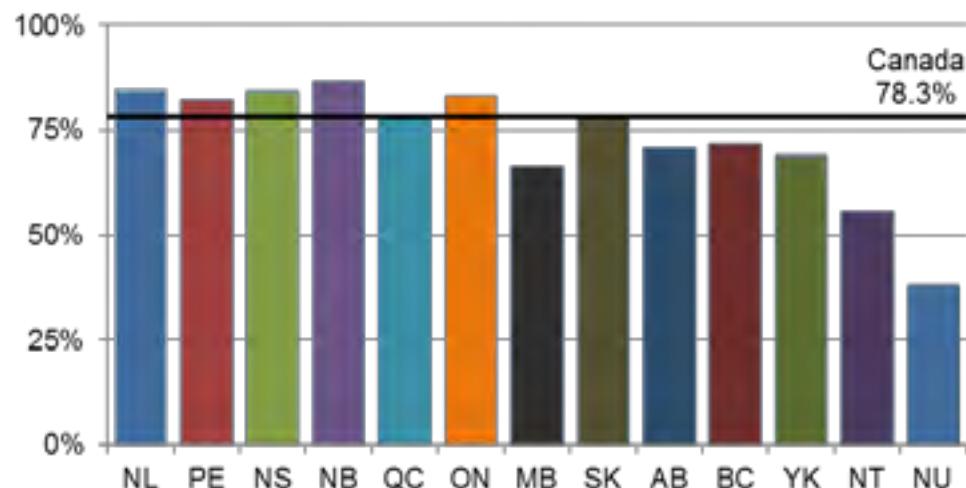


(Source: Table 13)

National graduation rate

The most recent graduation rate provided by Statistics Canada is for the 2009/10 school year. As shown in figure 14, the provincial graduation rate (84.5%) is among the highest in the country. Only the province of New Brunswick had a higher rate (86.5%).

Figure 14: Graduation rates across Canada (2009/10)



(Source: Table 14)

Graduation status

There are three different types of high school diploma students can earn once they graduate. These are based on student performance.

- (1) **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).
- (2) **Academic:** If students meet the same criteria as the honours diploma but have a minimum mark of 50% in each of the required courses. A student is awarded an academic high school diploma.
- (3) **General:** Students who meet the minimum graduation requirements but not the requirements for an academic or honours diploma are awarded a general high school diploma.



The majority of students graduate from high school with an academic or honours diploma. In 2012/13, this was the case for approximately two thirds (67.1%) of graduates. The remaining 32.9% graduated with a general diploma. Figure 15a reports the percentage of students graduating with an academic/honours diploma or general diploma in each of the school districts. The percentage with an academic/honours diploma ranged from 57.1% in the CSFP to 70.4% in the Eastern School District. The Labrador School District and CSFP had the highest percentage of students graduating with a general diploma.

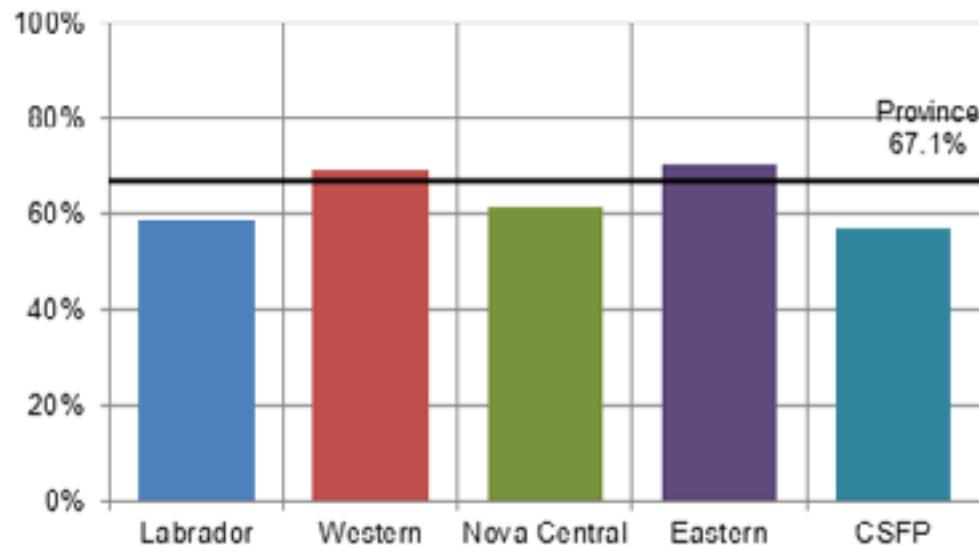
Looking back over the previous five years, there was a general upward trend in the percentage of students graduating with an academic/honours diploma. With the exception of the Eastern School District, the percentage of students in 2012/13 graduating with an academic/honours diploma was higher than 2008/09. In the Eastern School District, this percentage has hovered around 70.0% during this time. The Eastern School District consistently had the highest percentage of academic/honours graduates in the province (see figure 15b).

Higher percentages of girls than boys earn academic/honours diplomas. In June 2013, despite the fact that a similar number of females and males graduated (2,379 and 2,343 respectively), 74.1% of the girls earned an academic/honours diploma compared to 60.1% of boys. A similar pattern was seen over the past five years. Each year, the percentage of females graduating with an academic/honours diploma is approximately 13 percentage points higher than the percentage of males (see figure 15c).

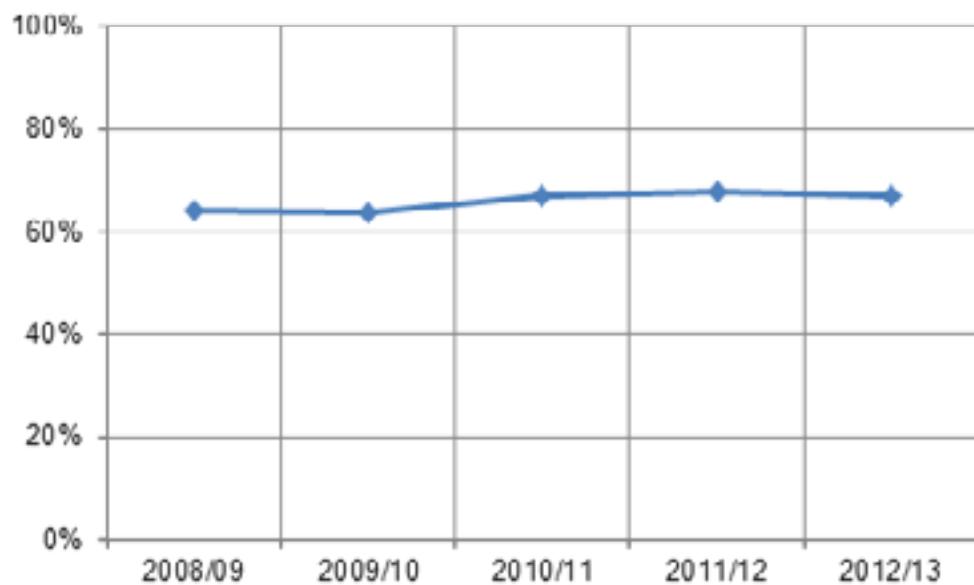


Figure 15: Percentage of students graduating with an honours/academic diploma

(a) District and province (2012/13)

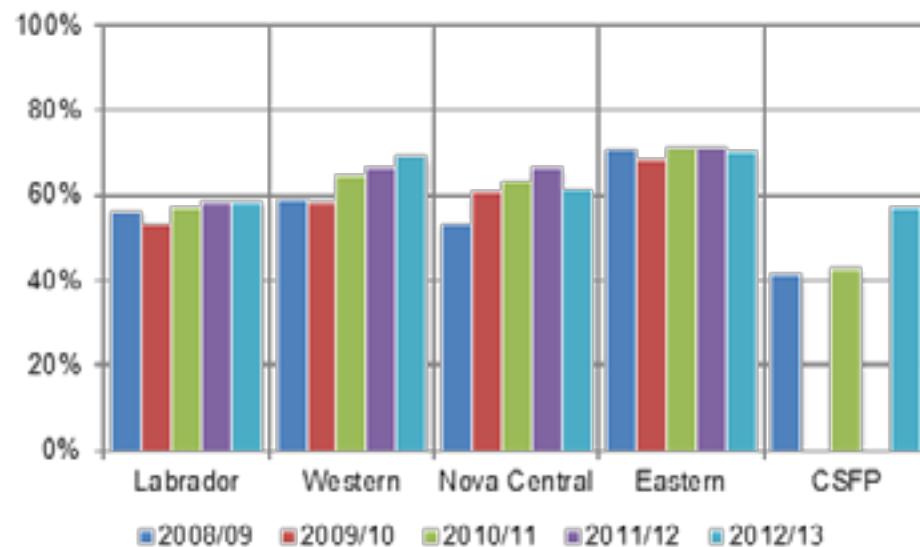


(b) Provincial trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)

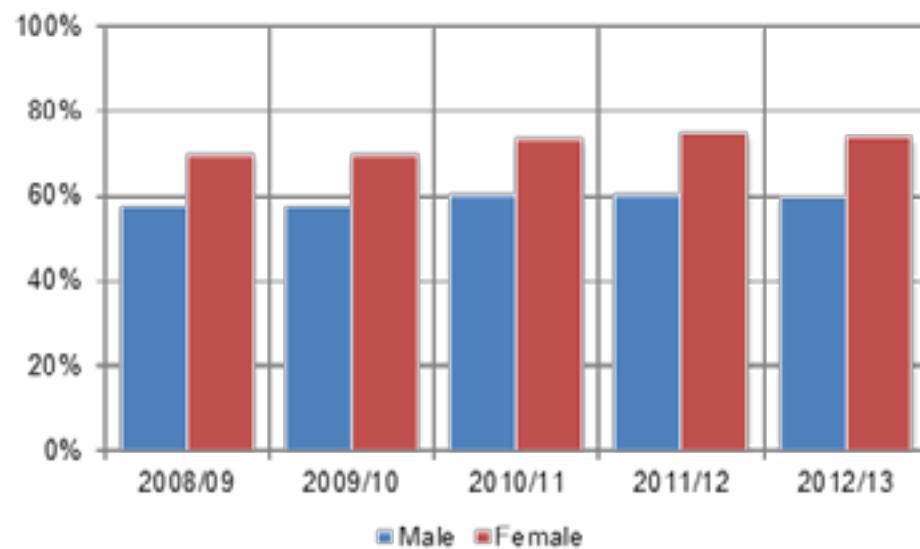




(c) District trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)



(d) Gender trends (2008/09 - 2012/13)



(Source: Table 15)