

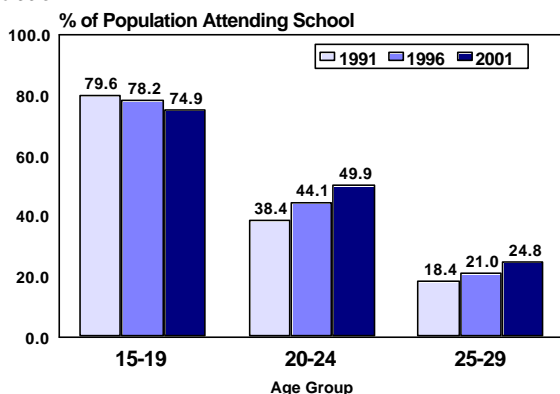
## Earnings & Employment Trends ♦ March 2003

### Are youth staying at school longer?

The Census of Canada asks the respondent "In the past nine months (that is, since last September), was this person attending a school, college or university?"

Since 1991, the proportion of the 20-24 year old BC population attending school has risen dramatically from 38 to 50 per cent. This large increase shows a continuation of the trend seen through the 80's -- in 1981, only 28 per cent of 20-24 year olds were attending school. All age groups older than 20 to 24 have shown increases in participation in education, but none as dramatic as the 20-24 year olds.

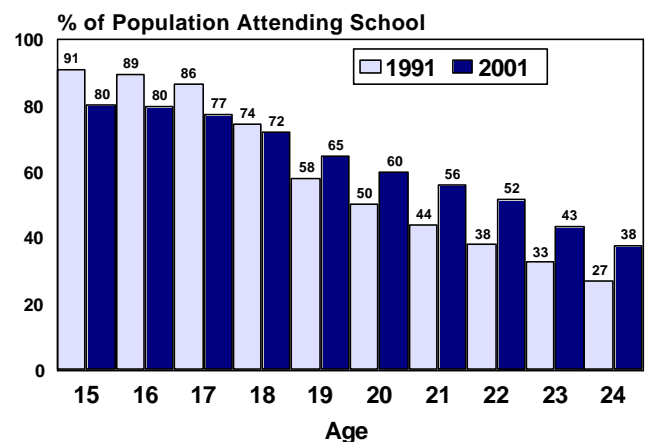
*In recent years, teenagers have been less inclined to stay in school than they were 10 years ago. However, youth in their twenties have gone the other way and have increased their school attendance over the 90's..*



However, the story is different for the 15-19 year olds. It appears as though the 15, 16 and 17 year olds have significantly decreased their attendance at school. Eighty per cent of 15 and 16 year olds were in school

sometime between September 2000 and May, 2001, which means that one in five of them were not in school at any time in the 2000/2001 school year.

*Among the 15-18 year olds, the age when one would usually be working towards a high school certificate, the school participation has declined over the decade.*

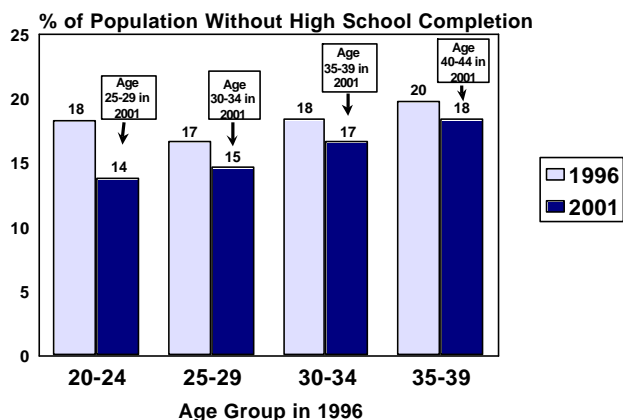


Is this significant decline in the 15-18 year olds' participation in school alarming? In reality, the school participation by high school age students fluctuates over time, often driven by job opportunities in the local economy -- the more jobs available, the more likely they will drop-out, at least for a while.

However, an increase in job opportunities did not seem to apply between 1991 and 2001. In fact, the job market was worse in 2001 -- the unemployment rate among the 15-19 year olds was actually higher by 3 percentage points than in 1991 (18% vs 15%). Under such circumstances, one would expect a higher school participation in 2001 over 1991.

It could just be that youth of today are postponing their high school education in their teenage years but will return to school in their 20's to catch up. There is certainly evidence that this does occur.

The proportion of the population without high school completion decreases among the same age cohort, 5 years later.

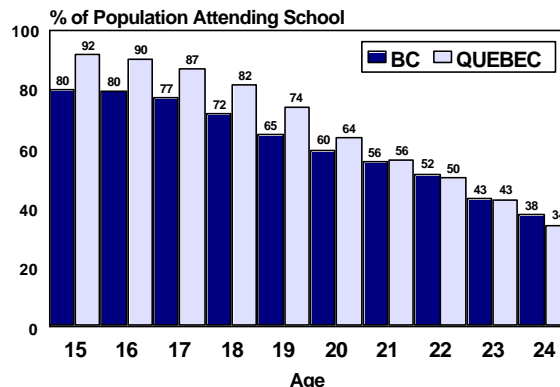


For example, in 1996, 18 per cent of those age 20-24 had not completed their high school and five years later, in 2001, among the same group (they are now age 25-29), only 14 per cent had not completed high school. In other words, 4 per cent of the 2001 population between the ages of 25-29 had managed to get their high school completion in the previous five years<sup>1</sup>. If the pattern seen in the chart above of non-high school grads returning to complete their high school in their thirties, we can expect that among those aged 20-24 in 2001, less than 10 per cent will not have completed their high school by the time they are 40.

<sup>1</sup> These figures assume no difference in the education profile of the in/out migrants and the resident population.

How does BC's school attendance compare to the other provinces?

In 2001, Quebec's teenagers stand out as having the highest school attendance record in the country.



Quebec's school attendance far exceeds BC's in the teenage years but then their rates are similar among the 21-24 year olds. On the other hand, Ontario and BC's profile is very similar up until the age of 17 and then BC's youth fall behind for the next 5 years. The province that is surprising is Alberta. Their school attendance among 15-24 year olds was one of the lowest in the country in 2001.

Where BC makes up ground in school attendance is among the 25-29 year olds. Their school participation rate far exceeds all other provinces.

Where BC stands out is that so many of the post-youth population continue to attend school. One in four of BC's 25-29 year olds, was in school in 2000/2001

