



NEWS RELEASE

Atlantic Canadian students have among the lowest scores on international tests (PISA) nationwide in reading, math and science

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—15-year-old students in Atlantic Canada recorded some of the lowest scores across the country in the international PISA tests for reading, math and science, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan, Canadian public policy think-tank.

Conducted every three years, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is the most extensive and widely accepted measure of academic proficiency among lower secondary school students around the world.

“Although Canada scored well compared to other developed countries on the most recent PISA tests, students in the Atlantic region performed worse than students in most other provinces and that should be worrying for policymakers, educators and parents in the region,” said Derek J. Allison, professor emeritus at the University of Western Ontario, a Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *What International Tests (PISA) Tell Us about Education in Canada*.

The study finds that the scores in reading, math and science in all four Atlantic provinces were below the national average and have been declining over time.

New Brunswick in particular scored poorly with the lowest scores nationwide in reading, and the second lowest score across Canada for science.

Nova Scotia achieved the highest results in all three subjects among the four Atlantic provinces, but still trailed students in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia in every subject.

One bright spot was Newfoundland and Labrador which had the second highest proportions of high achieving students from disadvantaged backgrounds nationwide, after Ontario, and was also tied with Nova Scotia for the smallest declines in reading performance nationwide from 2000 to 2018.

Internationally, Canada ranked comparatively high, outperforming all G7 countries in reading, and coming second among G7 countries (after Japan) in math and science. But crucially, across all three disciplines, results in each province have declined since PISA testing began in 2000.

“Canada’s relatively high PISA scores internationally should not detract from the fact that, in general, students in Atlantic Canada are performing worse than students elsewhere in the country,” Allison said.

“The PISA tests are an opportunity for policymakers and educators to learn best practices from more successful jurisdictions and correct course, if necessary, for the benefit of their students.”

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