

## Ten Years Out: Educational and Occupational Patterns of the Class of '88

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Since 1989, over 1000 individuals from the B.C. high school graduating Class of '88 have participated in the **Paths on Life's Way** Project. The Paths Project is the only longitudinal study of its kind in British Columbia and one of a handful of longitudinal studies of youth in Canada. Data collection now spans ten years and was designed to provide a detailed examination of students' lives, choices, and post-secondary education and work experiences across different points

in time and in relation to changing social and cultural conditions.

The purpose of this research report, commissioned by BCCAT, is to highlight key findings about the educational and occupational trajectories of British Columbia young adults. Respondents to all three waves of this study (n=1055) are included in the analyses. The full report may be found at [www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/paths2002.pdf](http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/paths2002.pdf)

### The Findings

#### Post-Secondary Participation

Very few individuals in this study did not participate in post-secondary education within ten years of leaving high school. Over 80% of respondents had attended a post-secondary institution within one year following high school graduation. Of the 203 individuals who had identified themselves as non-partici-

**Table 1. Post-secondary Destinations between September 1988 and February 1998 by Institutional Type**

|   | Sept. 88<br>to<br>Aug. 89<br>% | Sept. 89<br>to<br>Aug. 90<br>% | Sept. 90<br>to<br>Aug. 91<br>% | Sept. 91<br>to<br>Aug. 92<br>% | Sept. 92<br>to<br>Aug. 93<br>% | Sept. 93<br>to<br>Aug. 94<br>% | Sept. 94<br>to<br>Aug. 95<br>% | Sept. 95<br>to<br>Aug. 96<br>% | Sept. 96<br>to<br>Aug. 97<br>% | Sept. 97<br>to<br>Feb. 98<br>% |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Public Post-secondary Institutions Within B.C.:</b>  |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |
| Community Colleges                                      | 24 <sup>1</sup>                | 21                             | 14                             | 10                             | 12                             | 9                              | 14                             | 12                             | 16                             | 15                             |
| University Colleges                                     | 23                             | 19                             | 13                             | 10                             | 10                             | 10                             | 11                             | 8                              | 8                              | 8                              |
| Voc. or Tech. Institutes                                | 2                              | 4                              | 5                              | 5                              | 6                              | 8                              | 11                             | 12                             | 11                             | 12                             |
| Universities  | 38                             | 44                             | 55                             | 59                             | 54                             | 51                             | 41                             | 37                             | 33                             | 31                             |
| <b>Total % places</b>                                   | <b>87</b>                      | <b>88</b>                      | <b>87</b>                      | <b>84</b>                      | <b>82</b>                      | <b>78</b>                      | <b>78</b>                      | <b>69</b>                      | <b>68</b>                      | <b>65</b>                      |
| <b>Public Post-secondary Institutions Outside B.C.:</b> |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |
| Community Colleges                                      | 1                              | 1                              | 2                              | 1                              | 2                              | 1                              | 0                              | 1                              | 2                              | 1                              |
| University Colleges                                     | 0                              | 0                              | 0                              | 0                              | 0                              | 0                              | 1                              | 2                              | 1                              | 0                              |
| Universities  | 6                              | 7                              | 8                              | 10                             | 11                             | 13                             | 12                             | 14                             | 15                             | 15                             |
| <b>Total % places</b>                                   | <b>8</b>                       | <b>8</b>                       | <b>10</b>                      | <b>12</b>                      | <b>13</b>                      | <b>14</b>                      | <b>13</b>                      | <b>18</b>                      | <b>17</b>                      | <b>17</b>                      |
| <b>Private Post-secondary Institutions</b>              |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |
| Private Training Institutions in B.C.                   | 2                              | 1                              | 1                              | 1                              | 2                              | 3                              | 3                              | 5                              | 7                              | 6                              |
| Private Training Institutions outside B.C.              | 2                              | 1                              | 1                              | 1                              | 1                              | 1                              | 1                              | 3                              | 3                              | 4                              |
| Other   | 1                              | 2                              | 2                              | 2                              | 3                              | 5                              | 5                              | 6                              | 6                              | 8                              |
| <b>Total % places</b>                                   | <b>5</b>                       | <b>4</b>                       | <b>4</b>                       | <b>4</b>                       | <b>5</b>                       | <b>8</b>                       | <b>9</b>                       | <b>13</b>                      | <b>16</b>                      | <b>19</b>                      |

1 Discrepancies in totals are due to rounding or participation by individuals at more than one type of post-secondary institution in a given year.

pants in 1989 and who remained in the 1998 sample, only 57 had never attended a post-secondary institution. In other words, 72% of those who were non-participants directly out of high school eventually became participants. This finding suggests that the diversity of the B.C. post-secondary system, together with offerings in other jurisdictions, allow for some type of post-secondary experience for almost all high school graduates.

### Post-secondary Institutions Attended

The vast majority of participants attended post-secondary institutions in British Columbia (Table 1). However, out of province participation, primarily at universities, and attendance at private institutions increased over time. Members of this cohort appear to have followed a traditional route of transfer to university. Newer routes of transfer to other degree granting institutions such as university colleges may have been relatively unknown to them.

### Credentials Earned

By 1993, 93% of women and 92% of men attended some type of post-secondary institution since high school graduation (Figures 1 & 2) and 62% of women and 49% of men had earned some type of credential. Twenty-seven percent of women earned bachelors degrees or higher; the comparable figure for men was 20%. Men were over 10% more likely than women to be university non-completers. In total, 31% of women and 43% of men who had commenced post-secondary study had not earned any type of post-secondary credential by 1993.

By 1998, participation and completion rates had increased dramatically. Figures 3 and 4 indicate that only 16% of women and 22% of men who had enrolled in post-secondary studies between 1988 and 1998 had not completed at least one credential. Almost 50% of both women and men had earned bachelors degrees or higher. Given that approximately 80% were enrolled at some post-

secondary institution in 1988-89 it appears most of the participants took more than five years to complete their studies. Few respondents, and particularly few female respondents, earned tickets within the apprenticeship tradition.

### Educational Aspirations and Expectations

For many students, there were considerable differences in what they wanted to accomplish, what they expected to accomplish and what they actually did accomplish. By 1998, only 20% of those who had never attended a

post-secondary institution since high school graduation **wanted** a high school diploma as their highest educational credential. At least 45% of those who had participated in or completed some type of post-secondary study wanted to earn a bachelors degree or greater. In addition, several gender differences emerge. For example, considerably more male (64%) than female (36%) university graduates wanted to complete professional or graduate degrees.

By 1998, approximately 80% of non-participants and more than 90% of those who had attended but not completed their studies continued to **expect** that they would complete some type of post-secondary credential.

Figure 1. Highest Educational Credential Earned by 1993 - Females

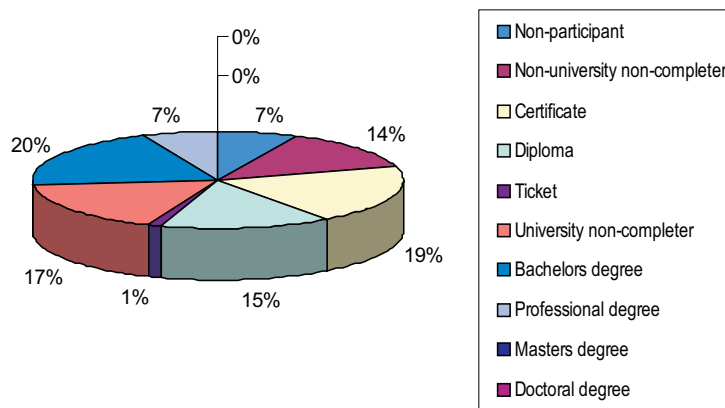
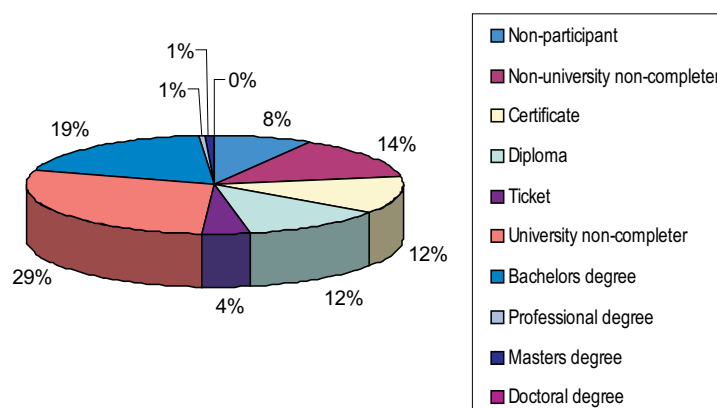


Figure 2. Highest Educational Credential Earned by 1993 - Males



Only 23% of female and 17% of male non-participants expected that a high school diploma would be their highest educational credential. And most interestingly, more university graduates expected than aspired to complete professional and graduate studies. For example, 16% of female and 37% of male university graduates wanted to complete a masters or doctoral degree but 57% and 52% respectively expected to complete graduate level studies.

### High School Credentials vs. Eventual Post-secondary Completion Status

There is a clear association among completion of academic courses in high school, grade point average, and post-secondary completion. Over 80% of non-participants had not completed courses in high school which were required for university entrance. The opposite is the case for university graduates; over 80% of this group had taken senior secondary level courses required for university entrance.

However, it is evident that high school graduates with low or mediocre academic

standing in high school can and do succeed at non-university level studies. Approximately one quarter of both young women and men who earned an average grade of C or less in mandatory high school courses successfully completed their studies within the community college and institute sector.

This study also provides clues about why some students do not finish their studies. When compared with other women in this study, a substantially higher proportion of women who had not finished their post-secondary studies within ten years of high school graduation had children within five years of high school graduation (25% compared with 8% of female non-university graduates). This may indicate that motherhood and its related demands may lead to post-secondary non-completion. Men who did not complete their studies had the second highest median earnings in 1998 (see Table 2, below), which suggests that they may have been lured away from their post-secondary studies by the prospect of high paying (but not necessarily high status) jobs.

### Financing Post-secondary Studies

More than half (53%) of those who participated in post-secondary studies sometime over this ten year period did not take out student loans. Slightly more women (50%) than men (44%) reported financing their post-secondary studies with student loans. According to Figure 5, of women with student loans, 37% had accrued balances of \$10,000 or less, 35% owed between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and 29% owed more than \$20,000. Patterns of indebtedness by men were very similar (38%, 34% and 28% respectively).

### Gender, Education, and Work

The young women in this study were more likely than the young men to complete high school academic programs and to earn higher grade point averages in high school. However, they were more likely than young men to begin their studies in community colleges. Within five years of high school graduation

Figure 3. Highest Educational Credential Earned by 1998 - Females

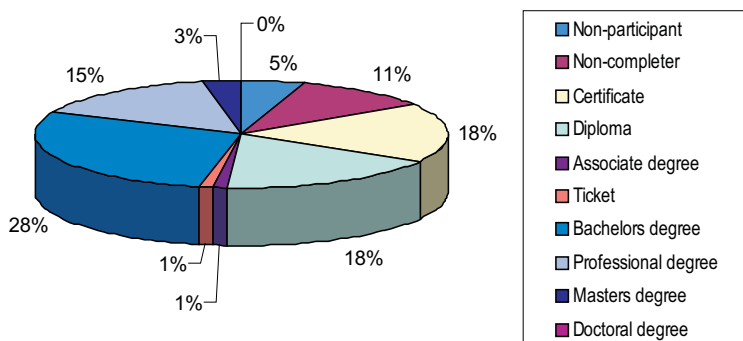


Figure 4. Highest Educational Credential Earned by 1998 - Males

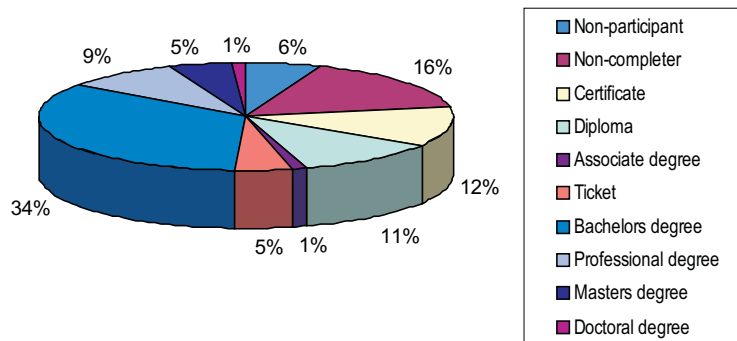


Table 2. Median Salary Per Hour by 1998 Post-secondary Completion Status and Sex

|         | Non-participants<br>\$ | Non-completers<br>\$ | Non-university<br>graduates<br>\$ | University<br>graduates<br>\$ | All<br>respondents<br>\$ |
|---------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Females | 14.00                  | 13.37                | 17.03                             | 18.56                         | 17.06                    |
| Males   | 16.00                  | 19.40                | 17.50                             | 20.03                         | 19.48                    |

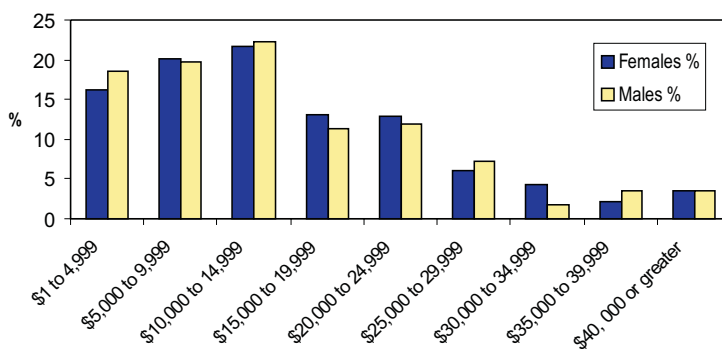
tion, they had higher rates of university degree (or higher) completion and lower university non-completion rates than did men (see Figures 1 & 2). As Table 2 demonstrates, by 1998, higher levels of post-secondary education did pay off for both women and

men in terms of median income levels. However, in all post-secondary completion categories women earned less money than men. In fact, male non-completers earned a higher median hourly salary than female university graduates.

Ten years following high school graduation, the young women in this study who had never participated in post-secondary education were most likely to be employed in the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled clerical, sales, and services. Young women with non-university credentials were concentrated in unskilled or skilled clerical, sales, services and the semi-professions. Male non-participants were most likely to be employed in skilled crafts and trades or as foremen, while young men who had graduated from non-university institutions were most likely to be employed in skilled crafts and trades, middle management or the semi-professions.

Both women and men who had graduated from university tended to be employed as semi-professionals or professionals. However, men were 10% more likely to be located in the employed professional category, and women were 10% more likely to be employed as semi-professionals.

Figure 5. Total Amount of Student Loans Incurred between 1988 and 1998 by Sex



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## Summary

The Paths on Life's Way project offers a wealth of information that is not available elsewhere. This longitudinal study provides unique insights into the educational and occupational trajectories of British Columbia young adults which, in turn, can help inform B.C. post-secondary policy and practice and provide direction for further research. The full report has several recommendations which will be of interest to educators in general and particularly for those concerned with issues of access to, participation in, and completion of post-secondary studies by young adults in British Columbia.