

NEWS RELEASE

B.C. student scores on international PISA tests plummeted from 2015 to 2018

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For immediate release

TORONTO—15-year-old students in British Columbia experienced some of the steepest declines nationwide in the most recent international PISA tests, 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.

“Over the past few PISA tests, scores for students in British Columbia have declined significantly, and that should be worrying for policymakers, educators and parents in the province,” 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 from 2015 to 2018, B.C. student scores declined 17 points in reading, 18 points in math and 22 points in science for a total overall loss of 57 points, which was more than twice the national average. Over the fifteen years of PISA math tests from 2003 to 2018, B.C. math scores fell 34 points—the third worst decline nationwide after Manitoba (-46) and Alberta (-38).

Internationally, Canada ranked comparatively high and outperformed all G7 countries in reading and was second among G7 countries (after Japan) in math and science. But crucially, across all three disciplines, results in each province have declined, since the first PISA tests in 2000, markedly so in B.C. and other western provinces.

“The evidence is clear—there is a worrying decline in test scores, and the decline has been happening more rapidly in B.C. in recent years,” Allison said.

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

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