

NEWS RELEASE

International tests (PISA) show Canada's performance continues to decline

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For immediate release

TORONTO—Despite scoring comparatively well internationally on the recent international PISA tests, results in all three disciplines—reading, math and science—have declined across the country, substantially so in some provinces, 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.

“Policymakers and educators shouldn’t let Canada’s relatively high international ranking on the PISA tests detract from the worrying fact that scores in every province in all three disciplines are on the decline,” 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 in the 2018 PISA assessment—the most recent for which results are available—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 subjects, results have declined. Over the twelve years from 2006 to 2018, Canada’s reading score dropped 7 points while all other G7 countries made gains, by as much as 9 points in the UK and 8 points in Italy. In science, Canada dropped 17 points while the USA gained 14 over the same period. In math, Canada lost 15 points over these twelve years while four G7 countries, including the UK and USA, made an average gain of 10 points.

“We should always strive to do better when it comes to education, and the fact is that scores in every Canadian province are heading in the wrong direction,” 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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