

CARDUS

EDUCATION SURVEY

SCHOOL EFFECTS ON GRADUATE OUTCOMES IN QUEBEC

2016



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ABOUT CARDUS

Cardus is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Headquartered in Hamilton, ON, with an office in Ottawa, Cardus has a track record of delivering original research, quality events, and thoughtful publications which explore the complex and complementary relationships between virtues, social structures, education, markets, and a strong society. Cardus is a registered charity. To learn more, visit us at www.cardus.ca

THE CARDUS EDUCATION SURVEY 2016:

Educating to Love Your Neighbour

In this report our goal is to provide a “fuller picture of Canadian graduates.” That is, too many studies of graduate outcomes provide a reductive analysis of how well education prepares one for a good job. While this matters, our report enfolds graduate job and income findings into a much broader, multi-dimensional focus that additionally looks at the school effects on political involvement and religious orientation, habits of home and social ties, levels of trust in institutions, and how much a graduate gives of his or her time and resources. In other words, we want to go beyond a two-dimensional analysis and give you a fuller picture of how Canada’s graduates are being prepared for adult life together. To get the full report, visit: www.cardus.ca/research/education/publications/surveys



SCHOOL EFFECTS ON GRADUATE OUTCOMES IN QUEBEC

The Cardus Education Survey (CES) has been measuring the education outcomes of graduates in Canada and the United States since 2011. Cardus reported the most recent outcomes for Canada's graduates in 2016 in a report entitled *Educating to Love Your Neighbour: The Full Picture of Canadian Graduates*. The last time we surveyed a nationally representative sample of respondents aged 29 to 34 in Canada was in 2012. The CES measures the sector effects of attending an independent school including independent non-religious, independent Catholic, independent Protestant Evangelical and, in Canada, a separate Catholic school and compares this to the public school. In addition to academic outcomes, we report social, religious, cultural and political outcomes because we believe this draws a fuller picture of how various school sectors prepare the next generation for adult life together.

Because of historical, cultural, and governmental differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada, we considered responses from Quebec high school graduates separately from the primary Cardus Education Survey 2016 report (Green, *et. al.* 2016). This research brief reports the findings from 354 Quebec participants, including 149 independent Catholic school graduates, 82 independent non-religious school graduates, 98 government non-religious school graduates, and 25 government Catholic school graduates. We also surveyed 16 graduates of other types of independent schools, but we were unable to draw reliable conclusions from their data because of their small sample size.

The Quebec schooling landscape has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Most of our Québécois respondents would have graduated after the 1997 policy change that attempted to create some form of “secular” government schools in place of Catholic and some Protestant confessional schools, which dominated the Quebec public education system in the 20th century. Many fully funded Catholic government schools remained, though they varied considerably in the extent that a Catholic mission or teaching continued. Quebec has the largest independent school sector in Canada, including 12 percent of elementary and high school students (Van Pelt, *et. al.* 2015). About half of these are non-religious. Catholic schools dominate the independent religious school landscape, though many of these have dropped their religious mission as secularization has proceeded apace in the surrounding province.

About 75 percent of independent schools receive provincial funding, substantially reducing the tuition cost (Allison, *et. al.* 2016). Further complicating the picture are differences among Franco-phone and Anglophone public schools in Quebec, which are under the purview of separate school boards. Only a small percentage of Canadian citizens in Quebec, however, have the right to attend Anglophone public schools. The result is that only about 8 percent of students are enrolled in Anglophone public schools (Van Pel, *et. al.* 2015), a percentage too low to allow statistical analysis of linguistic differences within sectors.

Categorizing graduates into school sectors in Quebec is incredibly fraught. We asked our respondents if they attended public school, government-funded Catholic school, an independent school with tuition, or homeschool for their high school education. We expect that most respondents could correctly classify into independent schools, since paying tuition provides a fairly clear separation from “public” schools. It is not clear whether respondents in the “public” sector could accurately classify their school as Catholic or not, but their responses are meaningful since they most likely reflect the student experience in the high school. If the graduate remembers the public school as a Catholic school, we expect that they experienced some aspects of Catholic education or mission during their high school years. Similarly, for the independent school graduates, the respondent who sees their high school education as Catholic may provide the best available measure of whether at the time of graduation the independent school was Catholic or not. It is possible that respondents who identified themselves as nonreligious independent school graduates attended historically Catholic schools that over the years have left behind the religious mission of the school. While there would be other defensible ways to group respondents, the respondent’s self-report does have the advantage that it may better account for changes in religious school mission over time.

Educational attainment and satisfaction

Graduates of *independent Catholic* and *independent non-religious* schools, in comparison with government school graduates, report higher satisfaction with their high school experiences, including the quality of the education they received, and relationships with other students and teachers. They were more likely to say that high school prepared them for university. They also took significantly more math courses in high school than did government school graduates, and reported higher grades in high school. Finally, *independent school* graduates were more likely to have earned a university or graduate degree. On all of these measures, graduates of *government-funded Catholic* schools were indistinguishable from public non-religious schools with the exception of being more likely to agree that their high school experiences prepared them for a vital religious or spiritual life.

Involvement in society

Graduates of *independent non-religious* schools are more politically active than their public non-religious school graduate peers. They are more likely to have participated in a political movement and to have held public office. Graduates of both *independent Catholic* and *independent non-religious schools* are more likely to agree that they have an obligation to vote, and are also more likely than government school graduates to donate money to charitable causes and to agree that it is important to help people in need. We also find a Catholic school advantage in terms of volunteering. *Independent Catholic* school graduates spend significantly more time than government non-religious school graduates volunteering, and *government Catholic* school graduates are more likely to volunteer for a religious organization. *Government Catholic* school graduates are more likely to value jobs that give them the opportunity to help other people directly, and those jobs that are worthwhile to society. In terms of civic participation,

independent Catholic school graduates are more likely to be involved in non-partisan civic groups, neighbourhood groups, and community groups. *Government non-religious* school graduates are less likely than graduates of any other type of school in Quebec to agree that they are responsible to end social injustice.

Religious commitment and involvement

Graduates of *government Catholic* schools have higher rates of religious behaviors and belief than do graduates of government non-religious schools. They are more likely to pray, read the Bible, and talk about God with their families, to participate in a religious small group, to agree that they have an obligation to pray, tithe, and to volunteer at the church, and to accept the authority of the church and its leadership. They are also more likely to believe that divorce, living together before marriage, and same-sex marriage are morally wrong. Graduates of government Catholic schools are also more likely to maintain traditional gender role expectations and less likely to have gay friends and family. Finally, government Catholic school graduates are more likely to agree that God called them to a particular line of work. Family background variables on religious identity and participation were taken into account in these analyses, so these effects are beyond the effects of other measures of religiosity.

We can conclude from these findings that independent schools, both Catholic and non-religious, are successful in preparing graduates for traditional measures of success, including preparation for university and civic involvement. Their graduates also report higher satisfaction with their experiences in high school. Government Catholic schools are indistinguishable from government non-religious schools on these traditional measures of academic success, but we do find that they have much more active religious lives in adulthood than do graduates of public non-religious schools.

Therefore, it seems that independent Catholic schools are influencing their students in ways that match independent non-religious schools much more so than government Catholic schools. Does the focus on future academic success and civic participation come at the expense of a focus on the importance of religiosity in adulthood? Or, could it be that families who select into independent Catholic schools have a different focus than do those who enroll their children in government Catholic schools? We have attempted to control for family effects that would account for these so-called selection effects, such as parents' religiosity, religious tradition, education, income, and employment status, but it is possible that other unmeasured factors might influence these differences in adulthood that mask family effects as school effects. More likely, though, it seems that schools in Quebec may be choosing between an emphasis on faith formation *or* academic and civic formation.

References

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