

1997 Graduates

TWO YEARS AFTER GRADUATION • 1999 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

About the 1999 Survey Highlights

The *1999 Survey Highlights* provide a summary of key findings from the report *1999 Two Year Follow-Up Survey of 1997 Baccalaureate Graduates from BC's Public Universities*.

In 1999 there were 9,169 graduates selected for surveying. Of these, 5,688 eligible graduates participated in the survey, resulting in a response rate of 62 percent. The survey was conducted by the BC University Student Outcomes Project, which is a long-term research project dedicated to gathering student outcomes information for BC's universities and the Province of British Columbia. The University Presidents' Council and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and

Technology established the project. It is directed by the University Outcomes Steering Committee and is managed by the Centre for Education Information.

Since 1995 the project has been tracking outcomes of baccalaureate graduates from BC's public universities. Currently five institutions participate: University of Northern British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, University of Victoria, and Royal Roads University. Graduates are surveyed by telephone both two and five years after their graduation and are asked to report their level of program satisfaction, degree of skill development, employment and further education outcomes, and education financing.

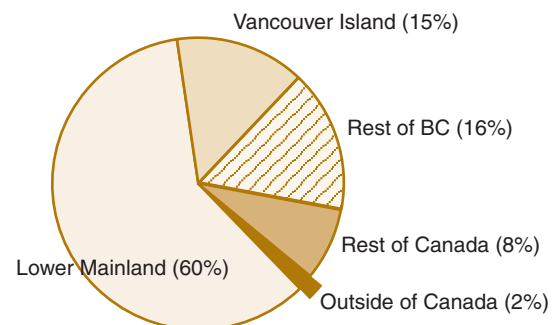
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Where are 1997 graduates two years after graduation?

Most respondents (90%) remained in BC after completing their studies. For those graduates who left BC, but remained in Canada, Ontario was the most frequently mentioned destination, followed by Alberta.

The most common reason given for leaving BC after graduation was education, followed by employment. Women were more than four times as likely to leave BC for family or spousal reasons—18 percent compared to 4 percent.



graduates' location

Are graduates' goals and expectations met?

About 70 percent of graduates surveyed attested they had “mostly” or “completely” met their enrollment goals. The most common goal was a desire to acquire skills for employment, selected by 47 percent of graduates.

Respondents also expressed a high level of satisfaction: 88 percent were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their respective baccalaureate programs. Over three-quarters of these graduates stated they would take the same program again. Difficulty finding work in their field was the reason cited most often by those who would not take the same program again.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents rated course availability as either “good” or “excellent.” When asked how to improve program content, almost one-quarter of respondents cited “curricular and instructional changes,” and about 35 percent of graduates suggested either more practical experience, computer skill courses, or co-op education opportunities.

Do graduates continue their education?

More than three-quarters of all respondents pursued further education after graduation. Excluding short-term continuing education and personal interest courses, two-thirds of graduates pursued further education at the university level and over one-quarter enrolled in master’s or doctoral studies.

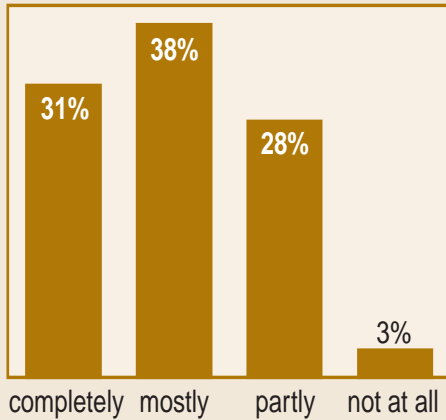
Graduates of Business (67%) or the Social Professions (36%) were most likely to take some form of professional association certification.

Students pursued further education for personal and professional reasons.

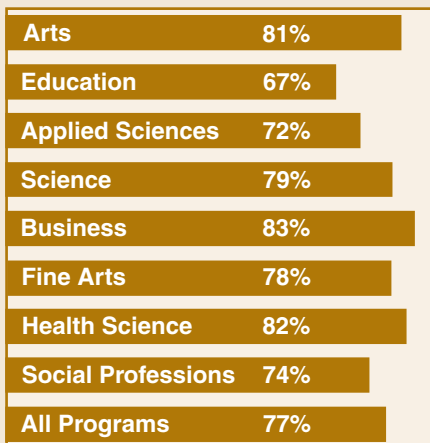
What skills do graduates develop?

When asked to what extent university helped to develop skills, 91 percent of graduates surveyed reported their ability to think critically had been developed to “a great” or “some” extent, and 84 percent reported the same results for problem solving. In contrast, 58 percent of graduates said that mathematical skills appropriate to their field were developed to “a great” or “some” extent.

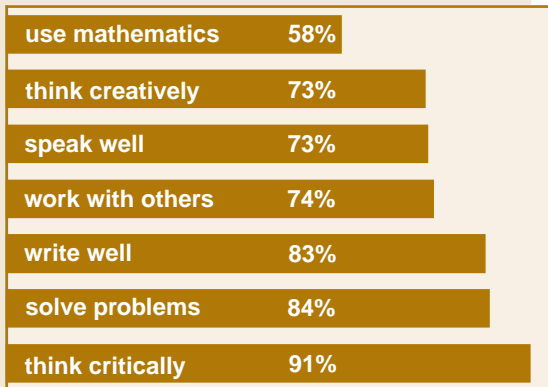
Graduates from Applied Science and Business were most likely to rate the development of their mathematical skills highly (83 percent and 80 percent respectively), while graduates from Social Professions (18%) and Fine and Performing Arts (33%) programs rated the development of their mathematical ability the lowest.



goals attained



further education



skills developed to “a great” or “some” extent

The majority said computer skills were important to graduates.

The majority of respondents (84%) felt that computer skills were “very” or “somewhat” important to graduates of their programs. The computer skills most graduates viewed as being strengthened or attained while at university were word processing (83%), email and keyboarding (68%), and browsing the web (66%).

Respondents in the Social Professions were most likely to view their computer skills as adequate when they entered university (72%), but less than half of those from Fine and Performing Arts said the same. After graduating, two-thirds of respondents said there were no computer skills they needed but did not acquire during their program.

What are graduates’ employment outcomes?

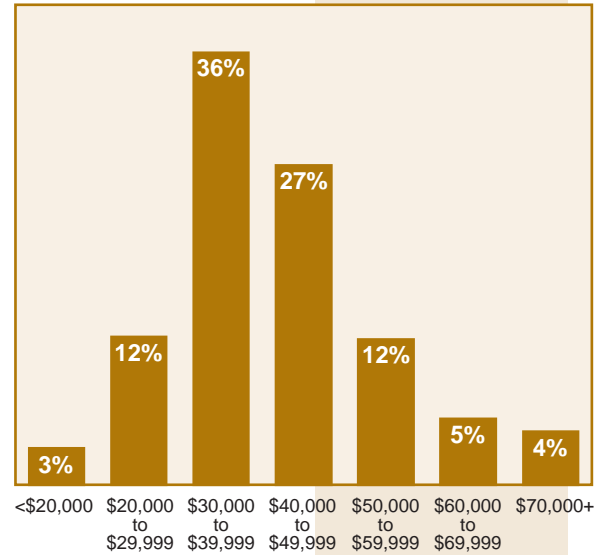
At the time of the survey, 92 percent of those graduates who were in the labour force were employed, and 3 percent had a paid position lined up to start in the future. Of those who were employed, 80 percent were in a full-time position. Self-employed individuals accounted for 6 percent of the employed respondents.

Almost one-half of full-time employed graduates earned \$40,000 or over. For full-time employed 1997 graduates with no further education, the median salary was \$37,000, and there was substantial variation when median salary was examined by program area. For graduates of Fine and Performing Arts, the median was a low of \$30,000, while for respondents in the Social Professions, the median was the highest at \$45,380.

Over three-quarters of graduates who were employed full-time were working in management or professional level occupations and 69 percent said their job was to “a great” or “some” extent related to their field of study.

A majority of respondents (62%) said they had found employment within 12 months of graduating. Results differed by program, ranging from 85 percent of Business graduates to 50 percent of Fine and Performing Arts graduates. The most frequently cited method of finding employment was direct contact with the employer.

Thirty-seven percent of unemployed respondents (n=87) were attending school at the time of the survey. An additional 16 percent (n=37) believed that a lack of suitable opportunities was the reason for their unemployment.

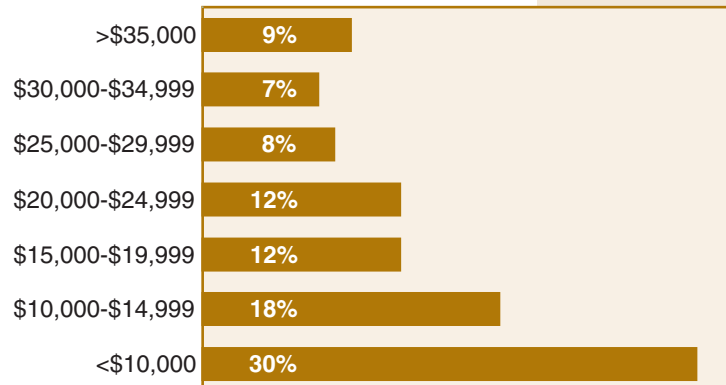


salaries earned

How did graduates finance their education?

Graduates surveyed were asked to list the three main sources of funding they used to pay for their education. Seventy-five percent cited employment income, 47 percent reported receiving assistance from either parents or relatives, and 44 percent obtained student loans.

When asked about their primary source of funding, just over one-third of graduates indicated they relied primarily on employment income to finance their education. Health



1997 debt amounts

Science (39%) and Arts (38%) graduates relied most on employment income, while Social Professions (38%) and Education (36%) graduates relied most on student loans.

Forty-nine percent of respondents reported incurring some debt. While their debt levels varied a great deal, the median or middle amount was \$15,000. The mean was higher at \$17,200, suggesting that some graduates had debt loads considerably above average. At the time of the survey, about one-fifth of graduates with debt reported that they had repaid their loans.

Over 20% of graduates repaid their student loans within two years.

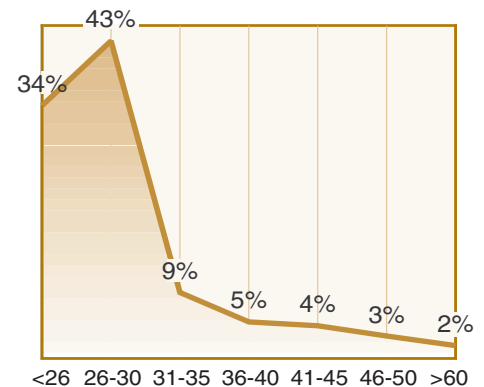
| Male | | Female |
|------|--------------------|--------|
| 34% | Arts | 66% |
| 27% | Education | 73% |
| 76% | Applied Sciences | 24% |
| 53% | Science | 47% |
| 56% | Business | 44% |
| 32% | Fine Arts | 68% |
| 21% | Health Science | 79% |
| 33% | Social Professions | 67% |
| 39% | All Programs | 61% |

Who are the 1997 graduates in this survey?

Many graduates who responded to the survey were from Arts programs (35%). Science graduates and graduates who completed either an Education degree or the Professional Development Program in Education each accounted for 17 percent of respondents. Female graduates accounted for 61 percent of the respondents.

Twenty-three percent of respondents were members of a visible minority. An additional 2 percent were Aboriginal and 3 percent had a long-term physical or mental disability that limited their activity.

At the time of the survey, 1997 graduates ranged from 21 to 77 years old; their average age was 29. While there was a fairly consistent age distribution across all program areas, the average age for those who completed a program in the Social Professions was the highest at 33.



gender distribution by program area

age distribution

University Student Outcomes



University Outcomes Working Committee



The report of findings from the 1999 two year follow-up survey of 1997 baccalaureate graduates was prepared for The University Presidents' Council of British Columbia by Colleen Hawkey, Walter Sudmant, and Wency Wu from the University of British Columbia.

This summary, *1997 Graduates: 1999 Survey Highlights*, and the report, *1999 Two Year Follow-Up Survey of 1997 Baccalaureate Graduates from BC's Public Universities*, are available on the Internet from The University Presidents' Council of BC: <http://www.tupc.bc.ca>.

Limited quantities of print copies are available by e-mailing: publications@ceiss.org.