



# New Northwest Territories High School Graduation Rate

There are a variety of paths to high school graduation in the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) wants to ensure the territory's graduation rates are based on the most accurate data available. For this reason, ECE developed a new graduation rate methodology in 2021 to ensure it continues to reflect the unique realities of the North.

The previous graduation rate in the NWT was calculated by dividing the number of students who enrolled in Grade 12 at the start of the academic year by the number of students who graduated before the end of that academic year. This is a Grade 12 graduation rate as it shows the percentage of grade 12 students that go on to graduate within a year.

While no graduation rate method is perfect, this approach to the graduation rate did not accurately count all students who graduated, as it is possible for students enrolled in Grade 10 or 11 to graduate by the end of the year. This can happen when, for example, a student takes a required core Grade 11 course in their final year of high school, and so while their grade level is officially 11, they may have completed Grade 12 courses while waiting to take the needed Grade 11 course. The other problem with this method is that it only counts students who make it to Grade 12. A student who does not graduate because they dropped out in Grade 10 or 11 is not counted by this method.

The new way the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment (ECE) reports the NWT graduation rate eliminates both of these problems.

The new method, developed in 2021, is a cohort method. It starts by grouping students into a cohort. A student's cohort is the academic year that they first enrolled in Grade 10. Then, the number of those students who graduate within six years of first enrolling in Grade 10 is divided by the total number of students in the cohort. Only students who are 18 or younger in the year they first enrolled in Grade 10 are included in the cohort. The graduation rate counts all students who graduate within six years of starting high school. This method reflects the Department's philosophy that there are many paths to graduation beyond the traditional three-year time frame. Six years ensures that all students, no matter their circumstances, have a chance to be counted in the graduation rate.

This update is based on what we learned from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada's report on Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 12 Education in the NWT, as well as consultation with the B.C. Student Outcomes Reporting and Analytics team, which uses a similar method for their Six-Year Dogwood Completion Rate.

# What the results tell us

The six-year graduation rate is improving. We have work to do to improve graduation rates in the NWT.

The six-year graduation rate in 2021 for the NWT was 60% (Table 1). When we look at the six-year graduation rate by community type, Yellowknife had the highest rate in 2021, with 74% (Table 2). The six-year graduation rate in Small Communities was the lowest at 45% (Table 2). This trend, of Yellowknife having the highest rate and Small Communities having the lowest, has been true for the last 10 years (Figure 2).

The six-year graduation rate in the NWT has been steadily trending upwards since the 2011-2012 academic year, going from 49% in that year to 60% in 2020-2021 (Figure 1). This trend is reflected in each of the community types, all three of which have shown an overall increase in graduation rate over the last 10 years (Figure 2).

The gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous six-year graduation rates has also decreased since the 2011-2012 academic year (Figure 3). However, the 2020/21 Six-Year Graduation Rate shows that the gap remains large, with only 49% of Indigenous students graduating within six years of starting high school compared to 81% of Non-Indigenous students (Table 3). The overall upward trend of graduation rates is seen in both of these populations, but is more pronounced for the Indigenous population (Figure 3). However, since 2016-2017, the six-year graduation rate for Indigenous students has decreased. This is a trend that ECE is closely monitoring.

**Table 1: Comparing the Grade 12 Graduation Rate and 6-Year High School Graduation Rate (2009-2020)**

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Grade 12 Grad Rate	60%	58%	55%	60%	59%	58%	49%	50%	51%	48%	45%	-
6-Year Graduation Rate	-	-	49%	52%	52%	54%	57%	62%	57%	61%	58%	60%

**Table 2: 6-Year High School Graduation Rate by Community Type (2011-2020)**

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Northwest Territories	49%	52%	52%	54%	57%	62%	57%	61%	58%	60%
Small Community	32%	41%	38%	42%	40%	45%	44%	47%	43%	45%
Regional Centre	49%	50%	47%	50%	54%	65%	61%	53%	59%	59%
Yellowknife	62%	63%	67%	67%	73%	73%	66%	75%	69%	74%

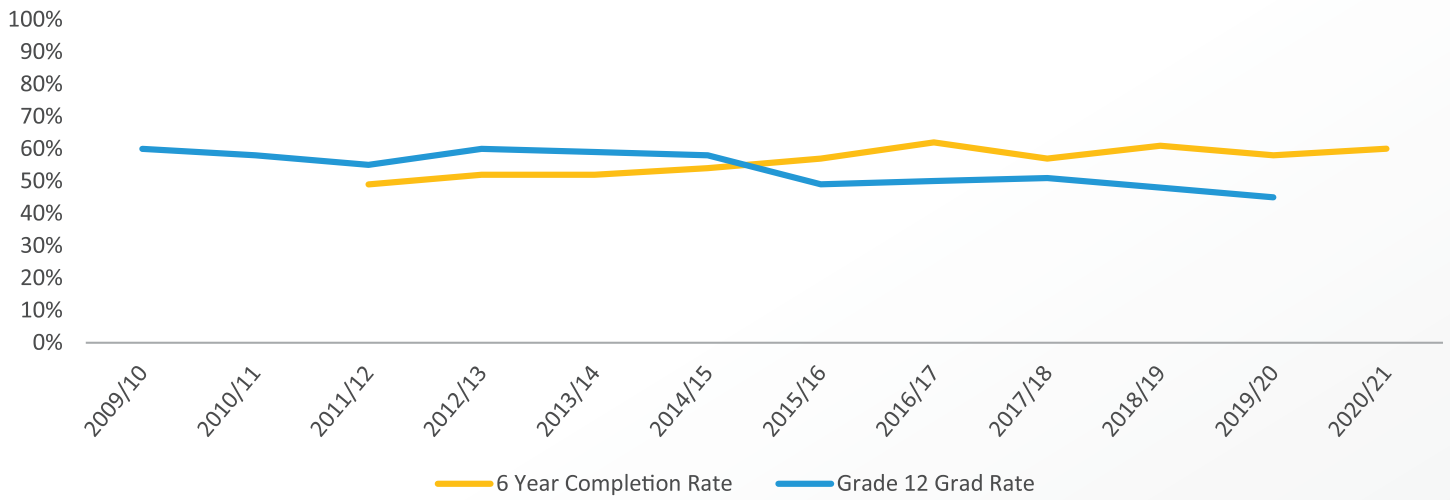
Regional centres include Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith

Small communities include all NWT communities except Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife

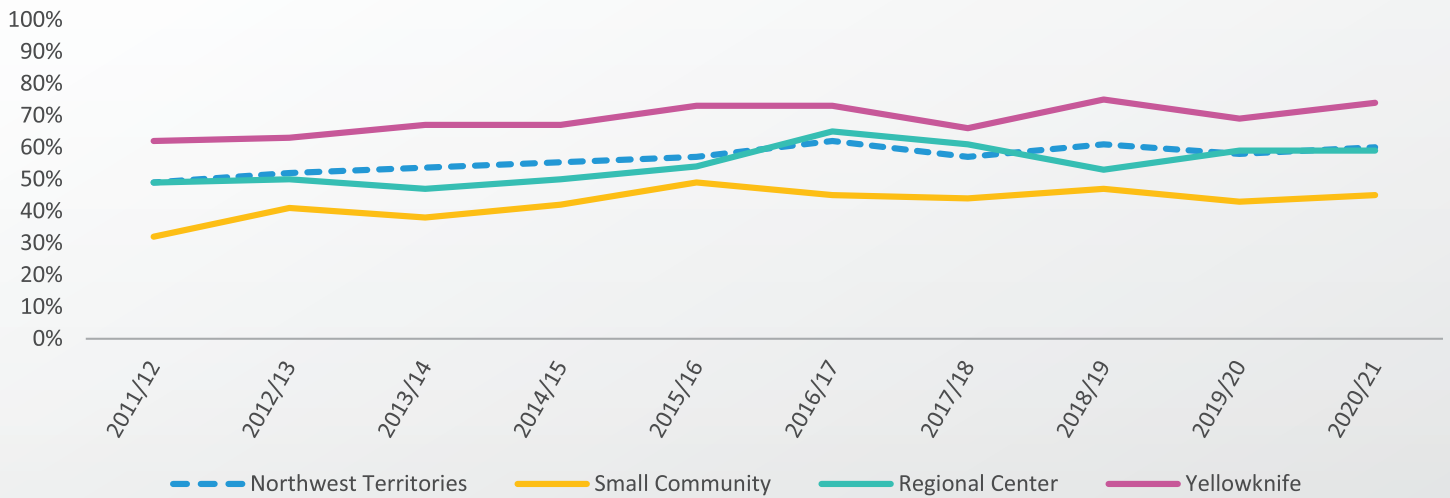
**Table 3: 6-Year High School Graduation Rate by Ethnicity (2011-2020)**

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Indigenous	35%	43%	38%	42%	46%	50%	47%	48%	46%	49%
Non-Indigenous	74%	74%	78%	79%	80%	84%	79%	84%	81%	81%

**Figure 1: Grade 12 Graduation Rate and Six-Year High School Graduation Rate (2009-2020)**



**Figure 2: Six-Year Graduation Rate by Community Type (2011-2020)**



Regional centres include Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith  
 Small communities include all NWT communities except Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife

**Figure 3: Six-Year High School Graduation Rate by Ethnicity (2011-2020)**

