

New Northwest Territories High School Graduation Rate

CHANGING THE WAY WE REPORT NWT GRADUATION RATES

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is adopting a new approach for measuring graduation rates in the Northwest Territories (NWT) that provides a more accurate snapshot of grade 12 graduates within a given year.

Due to fluctuations in population dynamics and the variety of paths students can take to graduate in the NWT, the previous graduation rate methodology was not calculating the rate of high school graduation as accurately as it could have been. ECE has found a new method for measuring high school graduation rates that better reflects the NWT's reality.

The previous graduation rate in the NWT calculated the graduation rate by dividing the number of high school graduates within a given year by the number of 18-year-olds in the NWT that same year. All high school graduates in the year were included in the count, regardless of their age.

While no graduation rate method is perfect, this approach inflated our graduation rates beyond a reasonable margin of error. This is because, in the NWT and across Canada, students take a variety of paths through high school before they graduate. As a result, not all, or even most, NWT graduates are 18 years old, but are often younger or older. The old approach was also sensitive to changes in the NWT's population size from year to year. With fewer and fewer 18-year-olds counted from year to year, the NWT's graduation rate appeared higher and higher.

The new way ECE will report graduation rates eliminates the sensitivity to changes in the 18-year-old population while still taking varied paths through high school into account. The new method calculates the graduation rate by dividing the number of high school graduates (who are enrolled in grade 12 for the first time) by the total number of first-time

grade 12 students. High school graduates up to 21 years of age are included in the count. The new rate of graduation will therefore not be impacted by population fluctuations, because no specific age is built into the calculation, and varied pathways to graduation will still be accounted for, as graduates up to 21 years of age are included in the count.

Table 1: NWT High School Graduation Rate, 2007-2017 (OLD METHOD)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Northwest Territories	52.8	58.0	55.1	54.8	54.1	55.0	63.4	66.6	66.6	67.5	78.0	-

The old methodology stopped being applied after 2017.

Table 2: NWT High School Graduation Rate by Community Type, 2007-2018 (NEW METHOD)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Northwest Territories	57.5	56.5	60.1	65.1	62.8	59.6	66.9	63.7	63.8	55.5	60.6	61.3
Regional Centres	57.1	61.3	65.0	54.8	69.5	63.2	75.6	75.3	79.0	63.4	78.1	83.1
Small Communities	45.7	44.2	43.9	55.1	46.5	44.5	59.0	46.2	38.1	35.1	38.1	33.1
Yellowknife	63.6	61.0	67.7	75.4	66.8	66.3	67.5	68.9	74.1	67.5	69.9	72.4



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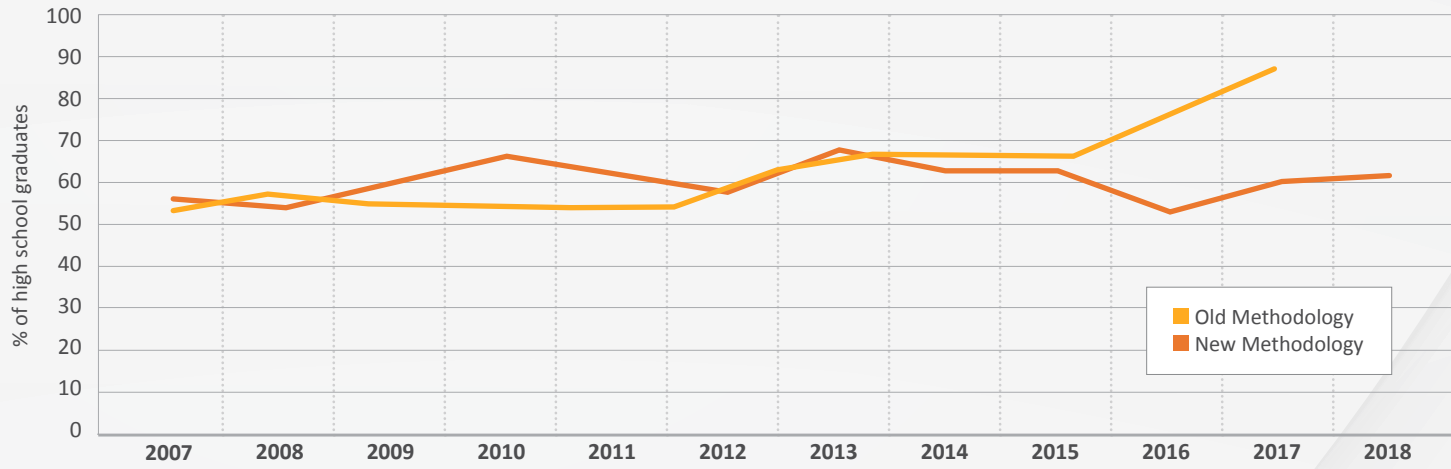
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Figure 1: Old graduation rate methodology and new graduation rate methodology over time



The old methodology stopped being applied after 2017.

Figure 2: New graduation rate by community type over time

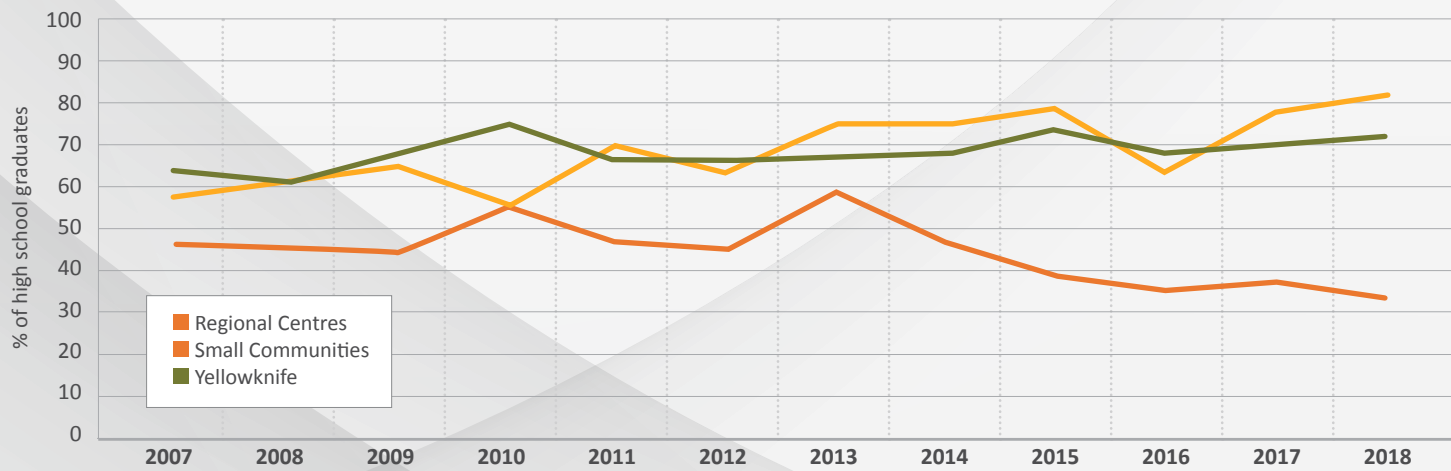


Figure 3: New graduation rate by ethnicity over time

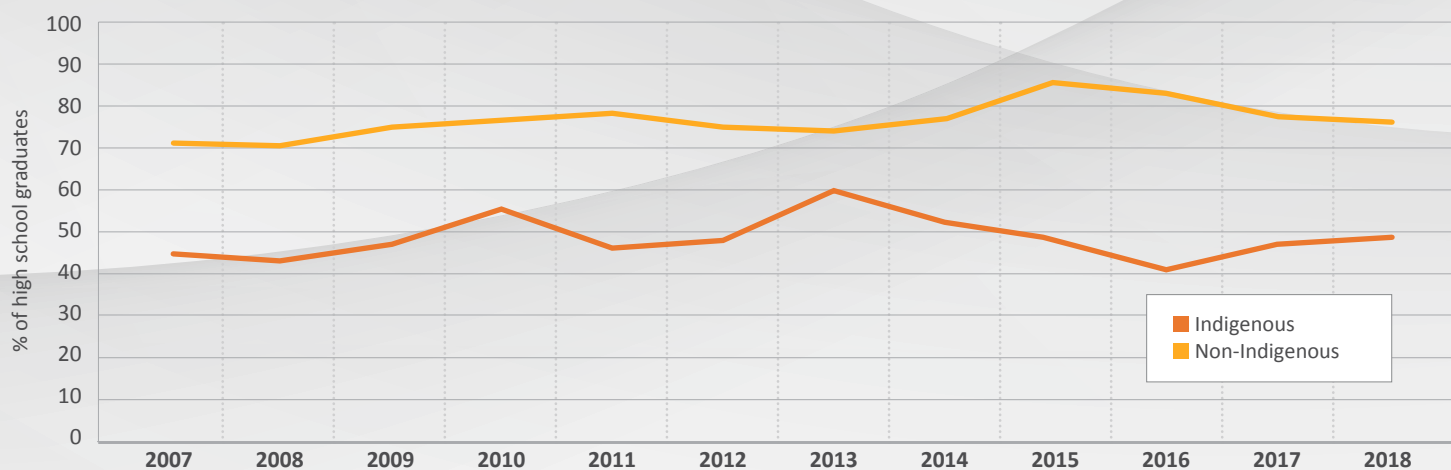


Table 3: High School Graduation Rate by Ethnicity and Gender, 2007-2017 (OLD METHOD)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Indigenous	39.4	46.0	44.8	43.0	38.1	44.1	54.5	55.2	57.3	61.3	69.8	-
Female	48.4	54.1	48.8	50.8	48.5	49.3	69.6	61.9	67.7	67.2	64.7	-
Male	31.0	39.3	40.3	35.3	28.6	39.5	42.5	48.7	47.7	55.2	76.9	-
Non-Indigenous	75.6	78.3	72.8	76.0	85.4	75.0	78.3	81.6	85.1	78.3	93.9	-
Female	77.9	84.6	76.4	79.5	90.9	71.3	78.7	81.7	86.4	78.2	89.4	-
Male	73.0	72.5	69.0	72.3	80.2	78.9	77.9	81.5	83.7	78.4	98.7	-

The old methodology stopped being applied after 2017.

Table 4: High School Graduation Rate by Ethnicity and Gender, 2007-2018 (NEW METHOD)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Indigenous	44.5	44.0	47	55.9	46.1	48.0	60.2	52.0	49.6	40.3	47.0	48.3
Female	50.4	45.3	53	63.2	49.2	55.1	58.6	60.2	60.1	43.1	50.4	52.6
Male	37.5	42.9	41	47.7	42.1	42.5	62.3	44.4	37.7	37.9	43.7	44.0
Non-Indigenous	70.7	70.4	74	76.5	78.9	76.2	74.5	78.1	85.1	83.3	79.1	77.9
Female	72.6	82.3	78	76.4	85.0	77.6	75.4	78.6	94.2	85.2	88.0	83.2
Male	68.8	60.0	70	76.7	72.5	75.0	73.6	77.6	76.1	81.4	70.8	72.8

What the results tell us

GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL IS MORE CRITICAL TODAY THAN IT WAS EVEN A GENERATION AGO.

More and more, employers in the workforce look for job candidates who have finished high school. Helping students achieve their high school diploma is therefore a key priority of the NWT JK-12 education system.

The new NWT graduation rate methodology shows us much more consistent graduation rates over the past decade compared to the old graduation rate methodology (Tables 1 and 2, and Figure 1). This suggests that changes in the graduation rate in the past decade resulting from the old methodology (Table 1) were more likely due to changes in the population size of 18-year-olds than real changes in graduation.

In 2018, the average high school graduation rate for the NWT was 61.3% (Table 2). When we look at high school graduation rates by community type, regional centres had the highest graduation rate in 2018, with 83.1% (Table 2). Results from Yellowknife and regional centres have been

fairly close over time. However, there is an increasing gap in graduation rates between small communities and the rest of the NWT (Yellowknife and regional centres), which has grown significantly over the last 10 years (Figure 2). Graduation rates in small communities have actually declined over time, despite rising in Yellowknife and regional centres (Figure 2).

The gap between Indigenous student and non-Indigenous student graduation rates has varied over the past decade, but has for the most part stayed the same, as was found through the new methodology (Table 4). This gap persists regardless of what method we use to measure graduation rates (Table 3 and Table 4).