



CANADA EDUCATION SAVINGS PROGRAM

2020

Annual Statistical Review



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada

Canada 

Canada Education Savings Program — 2020 Annual Statistical Review

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About this report

Each year, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) produces an Annual Statistical Review (ASR) for the Canada Education Savings Program (CESP). The 2020 ASR provides statistics on Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) and the federal education savings incentives, for the period between January 1 and December 31, 2020. The report also provides historical data.

The ASR focuses on Canadians who received a Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) or Canada Learning Bond (CLB) payment, or both.

Introduction

The Government of Canada encourages the use of RESPs to save for a child's post-secondary education (PSE) including full- or part-time studies at a trade school, college, university, or in an apprenticeship program.

ESDC administers the CESG and the CLB, two education savings incentives paid into RESPs. This report presents key statistics for the year 2020 and provides an overview of the evolution of the CESG and CLB take-up rates.

It is important to note that 2020 was a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on Canada's economy and society. Canadians experienced unprecedented disruptions in their social and economic lives. As a result, some statistics for 2020 differ significantly from those observed in previous years. ESDC will continue monitoring these statistics in 2021 and will provide relevant analysis in next year's report.

Definition of concepts used in this report

Cumulative number of beneficiaries: count of beneficiaries who received a CESG or CLB payment at least once since the inception of the program.

Example: Sarah received the CESG in 2015 and 2020. Therefore, she will be counted **once** in the cumulative number of CESG beneficiaries **as of 2020**.

Total number of beneficiaries: count of beneficiaries who received a CESG or CLB payment in a given year (for example, in 2020).

Example: consider Sarah from the above example. In this case, she will be included in the total number of CESG beneficiaries **in 2015 and in 2020**.

Total number of new beneficiaries: count of beneficiaries who received a CESG or CLB payment for the first time in a given year.

Example: Lu received the CESG in 2020 for the first time. He will therefore be included in the total number of **new** CESG beneficiaries in 2020.

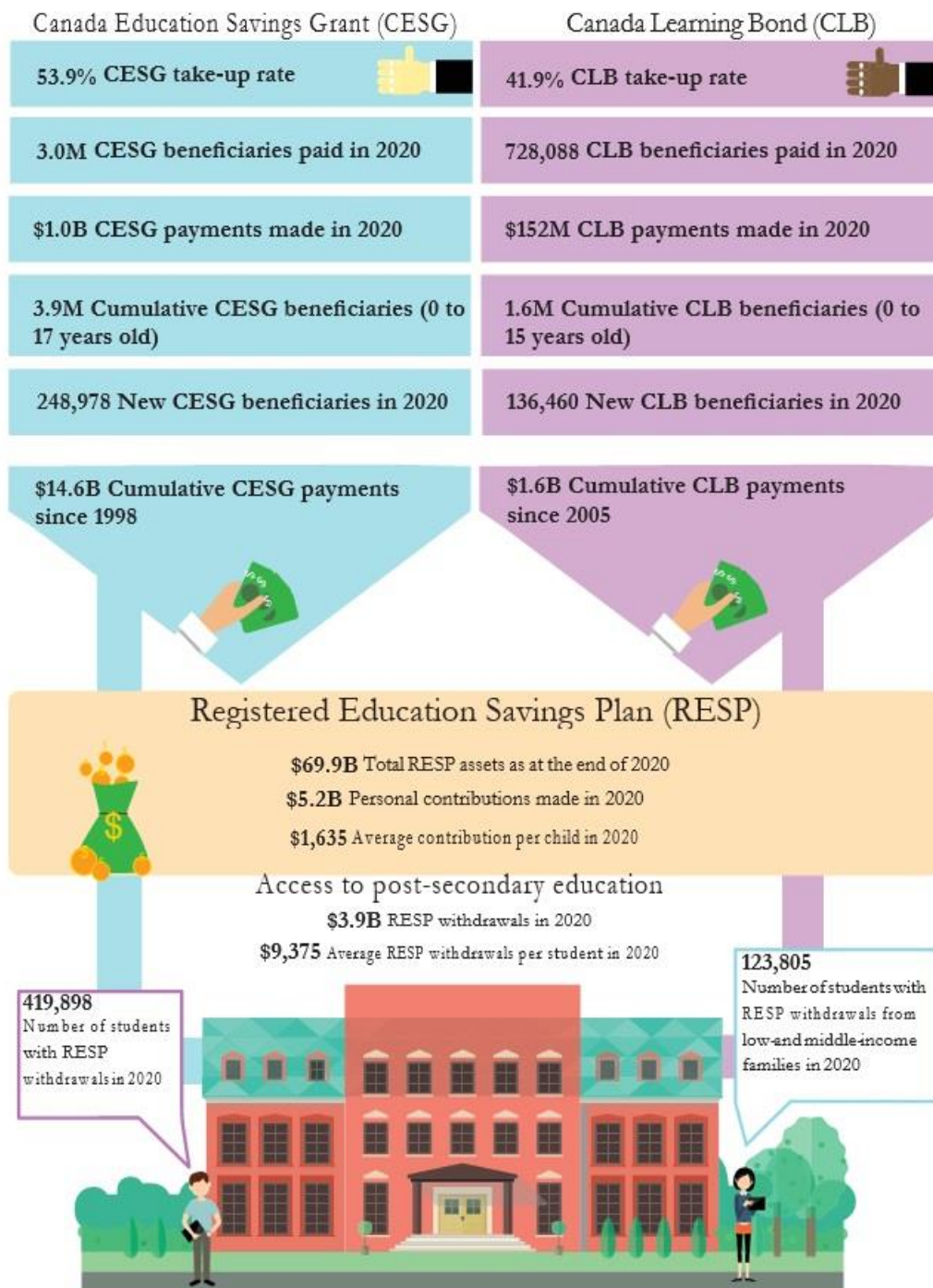
Note that, as the above definitions suggest, Lu will also be included in a) the total number of CESG beneficiaries **in 2020**, and b) the cumulative number of CESG beneficiaries **as of 2020**.

All **dollar figures** in this report are **nominal** and do not account for inflation.

The data in this report come from the CESP reporting database, which does not include data on family income. For this reason, the receipt of different education incentives are used to proxy different income groups. More specifically, the receipt of the CLB and/or the 20% additional amount of CESG (Additional CESG) is used as a proxy for RESP beneficiaries belonging to a **low-income** family. The receipt of the 10% Additional CESG, but no CLB, is used as a proxy for belonging to a **middle-income** family. Finally, the receipt of the Basic CESG with neither the Additional CESG, nor CLB, is used as a proxy for beneficiaries belonging to a **high-income** family.

The Canada Education Savings Program briefly

Figure 1: Key statistics infographic



Note: Payments are education savings incentives provided by the Government of Canada and paid into an RESP. Million(s) and billion(s) are abbreviated to M and B, respectively.

Part I: Program background information

This section describes education savings incentives available for PSE in Canada.

Registered Education Savings Plans

To receive education savings incentives, an RESP must be opened with a bank, financial planner, scholarship plan dealer, or an insurance company.

Anyone can open an RESP and name a beneficiary in the plan. Typically, a parent, grandparent, or other family member opens an RESP and names a child as the **beneficiary** of the plan. The individual opening the RESP is referred to as the **subscriber**. The subscriber does not need to be related to the beneficiary to open an RESP.

There are two types of RESPs:

- **Individual plans:** only one beneficiary is named to the RESP
- **Family plans:** multiple beneficiaries may be named, but they must all be related by blood or adoption to the subscriber



Group plans are also available where savings for several (non-family) beneficiaries of the same age cohort are pooled together and collectively invested by a scholarship plan dealer.



Funds in an RESP can be held in a variety of forms (for example, savings deposits, guaranteed investment certificates, mutual funds, and other types of investments) and grow tax-free until withdrawn. Depending on the promoter and their offer, there are many RESP options available, including low- or no fee options¹.

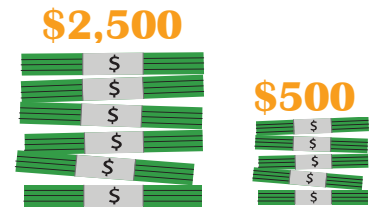
Canada Education Savings Grant

The CESG consists of a basic grant (Basic CESG) available to families of all income levels, and an additional amount of the CESG (Additional CESG) for beneficiaries from low- and middle-income families.

¹ For a complete list of RESP providers, please visit: <https://www.canada.ca/list-resp-promoters>.

Basic CESG

The Basic CESG is a 20% payment on the first \$2,500 of contributions made into an RESP each year, or up to the first \$5,000 in contributions if sufficient carry forward room exists. Beneficiaries are eligible to receive the Basic CESG up to the end of the calendar year in which they turn 17. The Basic CESG is available to all eligible beneficiaries, regardless of income.



Additional CESG

Beneficiaries from low- or middle-income families may also qualify for the Additional CESG, a payment of 10% or 20% on the first \$500 of contributions made each year on or after January 1, 2005, up to the end of the calendar year in which the beneficiary turns 17.



\$7,200

The Government of Canada pays a maximum lifetime amount of \$7,200 in the Basic and Additional CESG to each beneficiary.

For 2020, the ACESG eligibility was based on the following income thresholds:

Table 1: Additional CESG eligibility thresholds	
Additional CESG	Adjusted income
20%	up to \$48,535
10%	greater than \$48,535 but not more than \$97,069

Canada Learning Bond

The CLB is available to eligible beneficiaries born on or after January 1, 2004, from low-income families or for whom benefits are payable under the *Children's Special Allowance Act*. The CLB provides an initial payment of \$500 in an RESP, and \$100 for each subsequent benefit year of eligibility, up to the benefit year in which the beneficiary turns 15, to a maximum of \$2,000. Contributions are not required to receive the CLB. The CLB can also be claimed for previous years during which the child was eligible, even if no RESP was open during those years.

The eligibility for the CLB is based, in part, on the number of qualified children and the adjusted income of the primary caregiver, including the income of a cohabiting spouse or common-law partner, as outlined in the *Canada Education Savings Act*. Accordingly, a child receiving the CLB in a given year might not be eligible in subsequent years. For example, a child who received the CLB in 2019 would not be eligible in 2020 if their adjusted family income was greater than \$48,535 in 2020.

For the July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, period, the CLB eligibility was based, in part, on the following income thresholds:

Number of qualified children	Adjusted income
1 to 3	up to \$48,535
4	less than \$54,764
5	less than \$61,016
6	less than \$67,268

Investing in tomorrow

For youth to make the most of future opportunities, they need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience that come from PSE. By offering education savings incentives to Canadians towards their PSE studies, the Government of Canada is investing in a skilled and innovative workforce of tomorrow.

According to the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, between 2010 and 2020, employment rates were consistently higher among individuals who had some PSE than among others. In addition, according to the ESDC [Canadian Occupational Projection System](#), between 2020 and 2028, two thirds of Canadian jobs will require some PSE. For more information, please visit [Labour Force Population](#).

² Beneficiaries from larger families with higher adjusted income may also be eligible for the CLB. Information on CLB eligibility for these families is available on request. The eligibility period is set up according to the Canada Revenue Agency benefit year. CLB eligibility is based, in part, on the individual's adjusted income, which is reported in the income tax return due by April 30th each year.

Benefits of saving early for PSE

Research shows that when money is set aside for PSE, children are more likely to access higher learning opportunities. Helping more families with low and middle incomes save for their children's PSE contributes to reducing barriers to higher learning.

In 2020, 53.9% of eligible children (0 to 17 years old) in Canada received federal education savings incentives. The Government of Canada is committed to helping all eligible children access the incentives, particularly those from low- and middle-income families.

Government priorities

The more skills and training that Canadians acquire, the better the outcomes, both for individuals and for society as a whole. Efforts to help Canadian families save for a child's PSE contribute to the government's priority of making higher education more affordable and accessible for all Canadians.

ESDC is advancing several initiatives to promote the benefits of early savings through RESPs:

- The Government of Canada invested approximately \$5.3M over three years (2019 to 2021) to **fund 12 projects from community-based organizations**. These projects are exploring new and innovative approaches to reach potential beneficiaries, particularly among Indigenous Peoples and harder-to-reach populations. The projects will inform policy initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and take-up of the CLB
- The Government of Canada is working towards **enabling eligible young adults to request the CLB**. Typically, a parent, grandparent, or other family member opens an RESP and names a child as the **beneficiary** of the plan. Nevertheless, under current legislation, individuals who are eligible for the CLB, but have not yet received it, can also apply for the incentive for themselves as soon as they turn 18. They will have up until the day before they turn 21 to apply. The oldest CLB-eligible individuals will begin turning 18 in 2022. ESDC is currently developing promotional materials to encourage CLB-eligible individuals 18 years of age or older to apply.
- The Government of Canada is **working with provinces and territories and with child welfare organizations** to facilitate the opening of RESPs and to improve access to the CLB for children in care
- The Government of Canada continues to **collaborate with a range of partners and stakeholders**, including provinces, territories, and Indigenous organizations, through the Canada Learning Bond Champions' Network, to explore new ways of promoting and accessing education savings, especially in the current environment. ESDC will continue to monitor the impact of these initiatives

Part II: Program statistics

National summary

Description	2018	2019	2020
Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP)			
Total RESP assets as of the end of the year (billions)	\$56.1	\$63.7	\$69.9
Contributions made during the year (billions)	\$4.9	\$5.0	\$5.2
Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)			
Total gross CESG payments made during the year (millions)	\$973	\$1,004	\$1,034
Cumulative gross CESG payments since 1998 (billions)	\$12.5	\$13.5	\$14.6
Total number of beneficiaries receiving the CESG during the year (millions)	2.9	3.0	3.0
Total number of new beneficiaries in receipt of the CESG during the year	292,897	288,540	248,978
Cumulative number of beneficiaries who have ever been in receipt of the CESG aged 0 to 17 years (millions)	3.8	3.9	3.9
Cumulative number of beneficiaries of all ages who have ever been in receipt of the CESG (millions)	6.3	6.6	6.9
CESG take-up rate ⁵	52.9%	53.7%	53.9%
Average annual contribution per beneficiary	1,588	1,607	1,657
Canada Learning Bond (CLB)			
Total net CLB payments made during the year (millions)	\$186	\$200	\$152
Cumulative net CLB payments since 2005 (millions)	\$1,214	\$1,414	\$1,566
Total number of beneficiaries receiving the CLB during the year	723,424	780,499	728,088
Total number of new beneficiaries in receipt of CLB during the year	158,841	196,796	136,460
Cumulative number of beneficiaries who have ever been in receipt of the CLB (millions)	1.3	1.5	1.6
Cumulative number of CLB-eligible children (millions)	3.3	3.6	3.8
CLB take-up rate ⁶	38.2%	40.7%	41.9%
Cumulative contributions made to RESPs of CLB beneficiaries (billions)	\$7.8	\$9.6	\$11.5
Average annual contribution per beneficiary	\$1,151	\$1,186	\$1,230
Access to post-secondary education (PSE)			
Annual RESP withdrawals (billions)	\$4.1	\$4.4	\$3.9
Annual number of students withdrawing funds from RESPs	446,461	466,203	419,898
Annual number of students withdrawing funds from RESPs from low- and middle-income families	111,249	126,747	123,805
Average annual RESP withdrawals per student	\$9,169	\$9,453	\$9,375

³ Due to the nature of financial transactions, the data for previous years are updated annually to reflect corrections or additional reporting by financial institutions that may have been delayed. As such, past results in this report may differ from those of previous ASR editions. The 2020 report results supersedes those of previous editions.

⁴ CESG payments are reported on a gross basis, as the CESP cannot identify CESG repayments by beneficiary. On the other hand, CLB payments are reported on a net basis (gross payments minus repayments) as it is possible to identify CLB repayments by beneficiary.

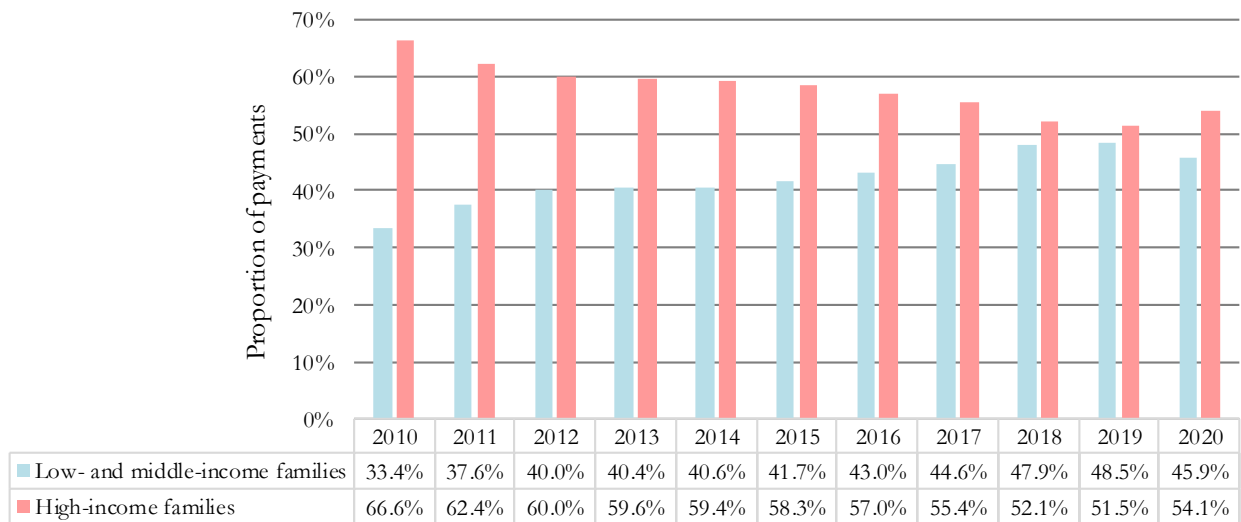
⁵ The CESG take-up rate is calculated as the number of beneficiaries in receipt of the CESG (age 0 to 17) divided by the number of eligible children (age 0 to 17).

⁶ The CLB take-up rate is calculated as the cumulative number of children in receipt of CLB divided by the cumulative number of children eligible for CLB.

The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on low-income families

Compared to 2019, relatively fewer families with low and middle incomes received savings incentives.

Figure 2
Proportion of CESG and CLB payments received by children,
broken down by family income level



Up to 2019, the education savings gap between beneficiaries from low- and middle-income families and those from higher-income families was decreasing. In 2020, this trend reversed. More specifically, in 2019, 48.5% of incentives paid by ESDC went to beneficiaries from low- and middle-income families (i.e., those eligible for the Additional CESG and/or CLB⁷). In 2020, this proportion decreased to 45.9%.

A number of factors can explain this drop:

- A decrease in the number of new beneficiaries of the CLB and the 20% Additional CESG. This is likely owed to a drop in income experienced by lower-income families and the physical closure of financial institutions (which meant that in-person visits to open RESPs were not possible)
- A decrease in the number of subscribers contributing to the RESPs of beneficiaries from low-income families. As a result, many who received the 20% Additional CESG in 2019 no longer received it in 2020

In comparison, the total number of beneficiaries from high-income families that received education savings incentives increased in 2020.

⁷ Beneficiaries whose primary caregivers had an adjusted family net income under \$48,535 in 2020 are considered low-income, and those with an adjusted family net income between \$48,535 and \$97,069 are considered middle-income.

New beneficiaries	2019	2020	Change between 2019 and 2020
New CLB beneficiaries	196,796	136,460	-30.7%
New Additional 20% CESG beneficiaries	76,956	58,364	-24.2%
New Additional 10% CESG beneficiaries	68,390	60,545	-11.5%
New Basic CESG only beneficiaries	143,194	130,069	-9.2%

Total beneficiaries	2019	2020	Change between 2019 and 2020
CLB beneficiaries	780,549	728,088	-6.7%
Additional 20% CESG beneficiaries	558,121	540,239	-3.2%
Additional 10% CESG beneficiaries	678,950	691,833	1.9%
Basic CESG only beneficiaries	1,752,178	1,772,916	1.2%

Fewer students withdrew funds from RESPs to finance their PSE



Once enrolled in a qualifying PSE program, a beneficiary can request an Educational Assistance Payment (EAP)⁸. An EAP consists of CESG and CLB amounts, as well as amounts paid under a provincial education savings program and income earned through assets in the RESP. EAPs are taxable income for the beneficiary who often has a modest income while studying, so the amount of income tax paid on EAPs is generally low. The beneficiary can use EAP funds to pay for their tuition and other PSE expenses, such as textbooks and rent.

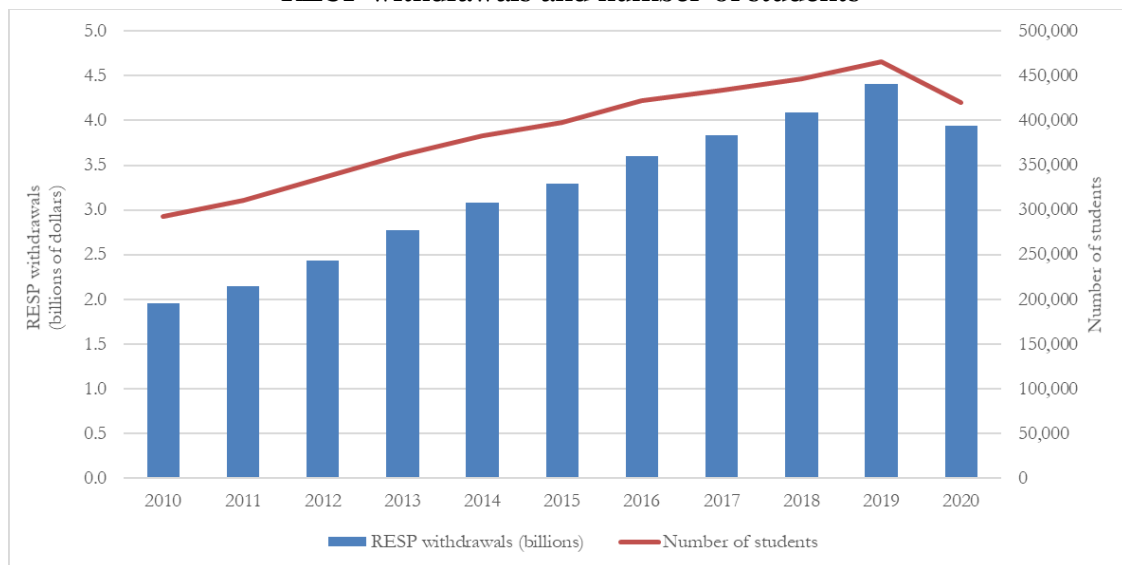
The amount of funds withdrawn from RESPs dropped from \$4.4 billion in 2019 to \$3.9 billion in 2020. This marks the first decrease in withdrawals since the CESP came into effect. At the same time, the number of students making withdrawals dropped from 466,203 in 2019 to 419,898 in 2020.

⁸ A qualifying PSE program is an educational program offered at a designated post-secondary institution where a beneficiary, who is at least 16 years of age, is enrolled full-time or part-time. For more information, please visit [Educational Assistance Payments \(EAPs\)](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic may have reduced students' financial needs for part of the year for several reasons:

- With the temporary closure of PSE institutions early in the pandemic, costs associated with in-person PSE attendance decreased. For example, residences closed resulting in lower room & board costs.
- Some students may have temporarily opted out of their program because of class cancellations and/or decided to wait for in-person classes to resume.

Figure 3
RESP withdrawals and number of students



Of the funds withdrawn from RESPs, \$1.1 billion were from RESPs that had received the CLB and/or Additional CESG, therefore supporting 123,805 students from low- and middle-income families. This is a decline relative to 2019, when 126,747 students from those families withdrew \$1.1 billion from their RESPs⁹.

Contributions to RESPs

Contributions to RESPs attract federal education savings incentives and, in some cases, provincial incentives. RESP funds grow tax-free until withdrawn when the beneficiary enrolls in PSE.

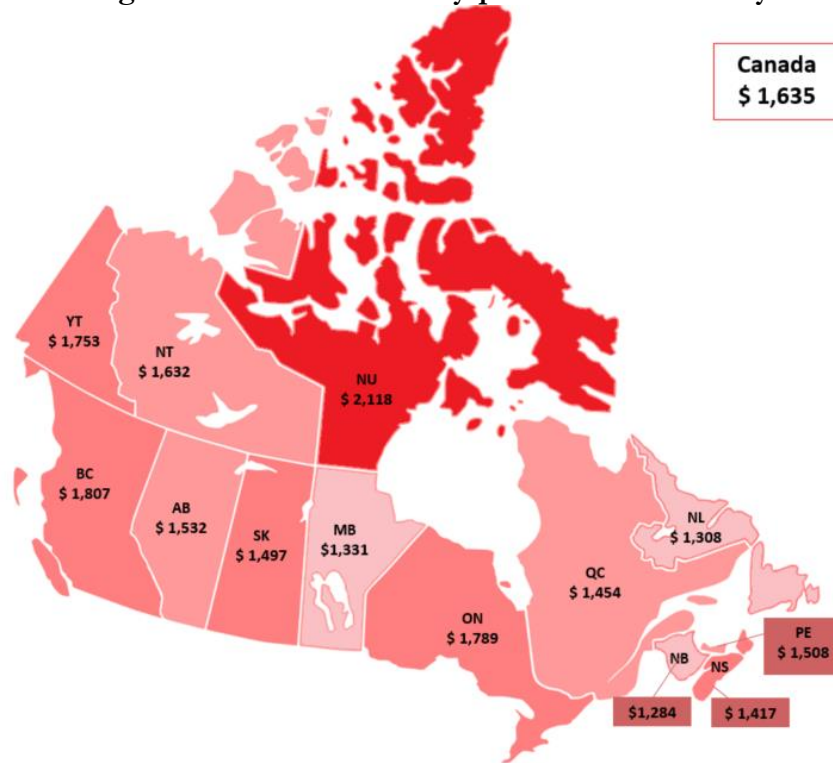


In 2020 alone, Canadians contributed \$5.2 billion into RESPs. For historical contribution numbers, please visit [Registered Education Savings Plan \(RESP\) Contributions](#) on the Open Government Portal (OGP).

⁹ These amounts include withdrawals of EAPs and subscriber contributions.

The figure below shows, for 2020, the average contribution by province and territory. Yukon, Nunavut, British Columbia, and Ontario had higher averages than the national mean (\$1,635).

Figure 4
Average RESP contributions by province and territory

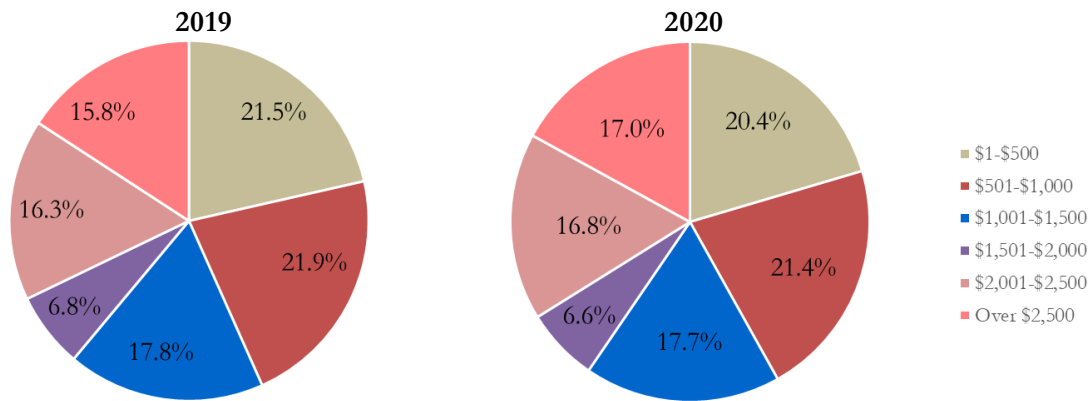


Note: For data on contributions by province, please visit [Average Registered Education Savings Plan \(RESP\) Contributions by Province/Territory](#) on the OGP.

The CESG is paid on the first \$2,500 in contributions per year, or up to the first \$5,000 in contributions if sufficient grant room (carry forward) exists. In 2020, the majority of contributions (59.6%) were under \$1,500, indicating that most Canadians are not saving enough to maximize their annual grant room.

However, the share of contributions under \$1,500 declined relative to 2019, while the share of contributions over \$2,000 increased.

Figure 5
Contributions in RESPs, 2019 and 2020



Contributions to the RESPs of CESG beneficiaries

In 2020, over 3 million beneficiaries received contributions to their RESPs, with total CESG contributions totalling \$5.2 billion. Of these, 59.0% received the basic CESG only, 23.0% received the basic and 10% Additional CESG and 18.0% received the basic and 20% Additional CESG.

Table 6: Total annual number of CESG beneficiaries

Year	Number of beneficiaries in receipt of the Basic CESG only	Number of beneficiaries in receipt of the 10% Additional CESG	Number of beneficiaries in receipt of the 20% Additional CESG	Number of beneficiaries in receipt of the CESG
2010	1,624,576	314,457	305,941	2,244,974
2011	1,613,612	369,940	367,064	2,350,616
2012	1,619,116	418,201	409,299	2,446,616
2013	1,656,750	454,482	428,309	2,539,541
2014	1,694,805	481,662	439,471	2,615,938
2015	1,731,518	517,634	462,181	2,711,333
2016	1,759,436	548,822	482,891	2,791,149
2017	1,779,271	586,499	503,184	2,868,954
2018	1,731,189	657,837	544,150	2,933,176
2019	1,752,178	678,950	558,121	2,989,249
2020	1,772,916	691,833	540,239	3,004,988

Between 2010 and 2019, the number of CESG beneficiaries that received contributions consistently increased. However, in 2020, it increased only for those who received the basic CESG or Additional 10% CESG, while it decreased for those who received the 20% Additional CESG.

Over the past decade or so, average annual contributions increased for all beneficiaries. In 2020, they were highest for those who received only the basic CESG (\$1,898) followed by beneficiaries who received the 10% Additional CESG (\$1,365) and those who received the 20% Additional CESG (\$1,240).

Various factors affect the trends in contribution amounts. For instance, while contributions appear to increase, when controlling for inflation (as measured in constant dollars), the real contributions have decreased slightly over time. In addition, the subscribers contributing smaller amounts in previous years may not have been able to contribute during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 7: Total average CESG contributions per beneficiary¹⁰

Year	Average annual contributions for beneficiaries in receipt of the Basic CESG only	Average annual contributions for beneficiaries in receipt of the 10% Additional CESG	Average annual contributions for beneficiaries in receipt of the 20% Additional CESG	Average annual contributions for beneficiaries in receipt of the CESG
2010	\$1,585	\$1,208	\$1,182	\$1,478
2011	\$1,609	\$1,201	\$1,158	\$1,474
2012	\$1,636	\$1,202	\$1,160	\$1,482
2013	\$1,667	\$1,201	\$1,154	\$1,497
2014	\$1,692	\$1,211	\$1,153	\$1,513
2015	\$1,713	\$1,228	\$1,158	\$1,526
2016	\$1,734	\$1,245	\$1,149	\$1,537
2017	\$1,784	\$1,277	\$1,167	\$1,572
2018	\$1,821	\$1,310	\$1,184	\$1,588
2019	\$1,846	\$1,325	\$1,195	\$1,607
2020	\$1,898	\$1,365	\$1,240	\$1,657

Contributions to the RESPs of CLB beneficiaries

Since its introduction in 2005, 1.6 million beneficiaries received the CLB. Virtually all CLB beneficiaries (97%) also saw the subscribers of their RESP account make at least one contribution, even though it is not required to receive this incentive. The CLB acts as a 'kick-start' for education savings.

Table 8: Contributions for beneficiaries in receipt of the CLB

As of	Cumulative number of beneficiaries in receipt of the CLB with RESP contributions	Cumulative number of beneficiaries receiving CLB	Cumulative contribution rate	Total contributions (billions)
2020	1,559,125	1,613,248	96.6%	\$11.5

¹⁰ Dollar amounts reported in this table are in constant dollars.

However, among RESPs belonging to CLB beneficiaries, the proportion that received some contributions continued to decline.

Table 9: Contributions for CLB beneficiaries

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Proportion of RESPs that receive some contribution	82.8%	81.5%	80.8%	79.9%	78.7%	78.2%	76.8%	74.8%	73.2%	72.6%	72.3%
Average contribution	\$996	\$988	\$1,010	\$1,030	\$1,050	\$1,065	\$1,076	\$1,122	\$1,151	\$1,186	\$1,230

Note: This data set is also available on the OGP. Please visit [Contribution Rate with Average Contributions for Canada Learning Bond \(CLB\) Beneficiaries](#).

CESG take-up and beneficiaries



In 2020, over 7.3 million beneficiaries (0 to 17 years old) were eligible for the CESG. Of these, 53.9% received the CESG at least once in their life. The CESG take-up rates in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec were higher than the national average. British Columbia had the highest take up at 58.3%.

Table 10: CESG take-up rate, nationally and by province and territory

Provinces and territories	Cumulative number of beneficiaries in receipt of the CESG (age 0 to 17)	Number of eligible children (age 0 to 17)	CESG take-up rate	Cumulative CESG payment (millions)
	(1)	(2)	(1) ÷ (2)	
Newfoundland and Labrador	38,218	85,791	44.5%	\$147.9
Prince Edward Island	12,548	29,826	42.1%	\$41.6
Nova Scotia	73,026	165,962	44.0%	\$257.8
New Brunswick	59,974	136,187	44.0%	\$199.5
Quebec	910,249	1,601,864	56.8%	\$2,540.7
Ontario	1,538,184	2,762,885	55.7%	\$6,709.3
Manitoba	123,521	310,710	39.8%	\$373.7
Saskatchewan	115,413	273,058	42.3%	\$397.6
Alberta	520,207	976,730	53.3%	\$1,727.2
British Columbia	509,153	873,740	58.3%	\$2,102.6
Yukon	3,524	8,392	42.0%	\$13.1
Northwest Territories	3,237	10,731	30.2%	\$11.8
Nunavut	774	14,475	5.3%	\$2.6
Canada	3,908,131	7,250,351	53.9%	\$14,525.2

CESG take-up rate by province and territory over time

In Canada and across provinces and territories, the CESG take-up rate increased steadily between 2010 and 2020. Quebec experienced the steepest increase over the past decade (20.9 percentage points), while Nunavut had the smallest increase (1.4 percentage points).

Table 11: Evolution of the CESG take-up rate between 2010 and 2020, nationally and by province and territory

Provinces and territories	2010	2020	Change in percentage points 2010-2020
Newfoundland and Labrador	40.7%	44.5%	3.8
Prince Edward Island	36.2%	42.1%	5.9
Nova Scotia	36.2%	44.0%	7.8
New Brunswick	39.9%	44.0%	4.1
Quebec	35.9%	56.8%	20.9
Ontario	46.5%	55.7%	9.2
Manitoba	30.0%	39.8%	9.8
Saskatchewan	33.3%	42.3%	9.0
Alberta	42.8%	53.3%	10.5
British Columbia	46.1%	58.3%	12.2
Yukon	35.0%	42.0%	7.0
Northwest Territories	21.8%	30.2%	8.4
Nunavut	3.9%	5.3%	1.4
Canada	41.9%	53.9%	12.0

Note: This data set is also available on the OGP. Please visit [Canada Education Savings Grant \(CESG\) Take-up Rate by Province/Territory](#).

Compared to 2019, the CESG take-up rate increased slightly at the national level (0.2 percentage points) in 2020. Most provinces continued to experience an increase. The provinces and territories that saw a drop in their take-up rate between the two years were Newfoundland and Labrador (less than 0.1 percentage point), Prince Edward Island (0.1 percentage points), New Brunswick (0.5 percentage points), Alberta (0.1 percentage points), Yukon (0.8 percentage points) and the Northwest Territories (0.1 percentage points).

Table 12: Evolution of the CESG take-up rate between 2019 and 2020, nationally and by province and territory

Provinces and territories	2019	2020	Change in percentage points 2019-2020
Newfoundland and Labrador	44.6%	44.5%	0.0
Prince Edward Island	42.2%	42.1%	-0.1
Nova Scotia	44.0%	44.0%	0.0
New Brunswick	44.5%	44.0%	-0.5
Quebec	55.8%	56.8%	1.0
Ontario	55.7%	55.7%	0.0
Manitoba	39.5%	39.8%	0.2
Saskatchewan	41.9%	42.3%	0.3
Alberta	53.3%	53.3%	-0.1
British Columbia	58.2%	58.3%	0.1
Yukon	42.8%	42.0%	-0.8
Northwest Territories	30.3%	30.2%	-0.1
Nunavut	5.3%	5.3%	0.0
Canada	53.7%	53.9%	0.2

Note: This data set is also available on the OGP. Please visit [Canada Education Savings Grant \(CESG\) Take-up Rate by Province/Territory](#).

CESG beneficiaries through time (0 to 17 years old)

Beneficiaries are eligible for the CESG until the end of the year when they turn 17. Since the program started in 1998, 6.9 million children have received the CESG. Parents start to save early for their child's PSE, with the average age of new beneficiaries in 2020 being 3.4 years old. The earlier that Canadians start to save in RESPs, the greater the chances to maximize education savings incentives, benefit from investment growth, and to accumulate funds to finance their children's PSE.

**Table 13: Average age of new CESG beneficiaries by year**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Average age of new beneficiaries	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.4

For information on the cumulative number of CESG beneficiaries, please visit [Cumulative Number of Canada Education Savings Grant \(CESG\) Beneficiaries by Age Group](#) on the OGP.

The proportion of beneficiaries that received the Additional CESG increased from 27.6% in 2010 to 41.4% in 2019. However, in 2020, the proportion dropped by 0.4 percentage points to reach 41.0%. Fewer CESG beneficiaries from low-income families received contributions to their RESPs in 2020 compared with 2019.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of beneficiaries receiving Additional CESG	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2
Number of beneficiaries receiving Basic CESG only	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8
Total number of beneficiaries receiving the CESG	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0
Percentage of beneficiaries receiving Additional CESG	27.6%	31.4%	33.8%	34.8%	35.2%	36.1%	37.0%	38.0%	41.0%	41.4%	41.0%

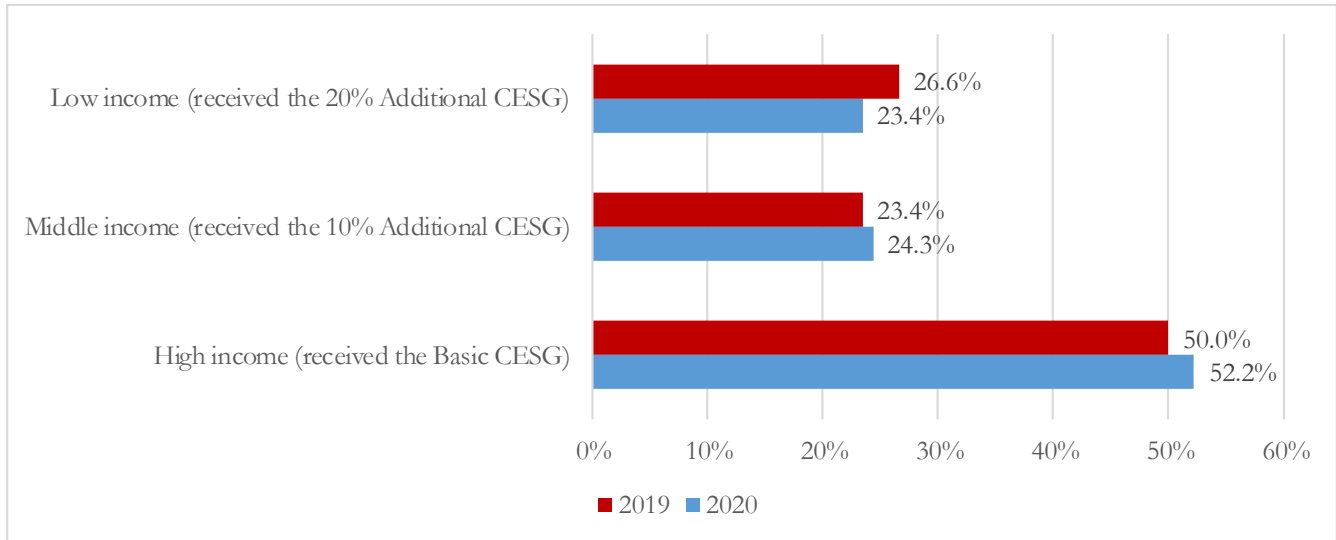
Note: This data set is also available on the OGP. Please visit [Number of Canada Education Savings Grant \(CESG\) Beneficiaries \(Basic and Additional\)](#).

New CESG beneficiaries

In 2020, governments put in place a number of measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these measures led to the physical closure of financial institutions. As a result, in-person visits to open RESPs were no longer possible.

This may have had a significant impact on the number of new beneficiaries receiving the CESG. More specifically, in 2020, there were 248,978 new CESG beneficiaries, around 40,000 fewer than in 2019. Furthermore, the proportion of new beneficiaries from low-income families dropped from 26.6% in 2019 to 23.4% in 2020.

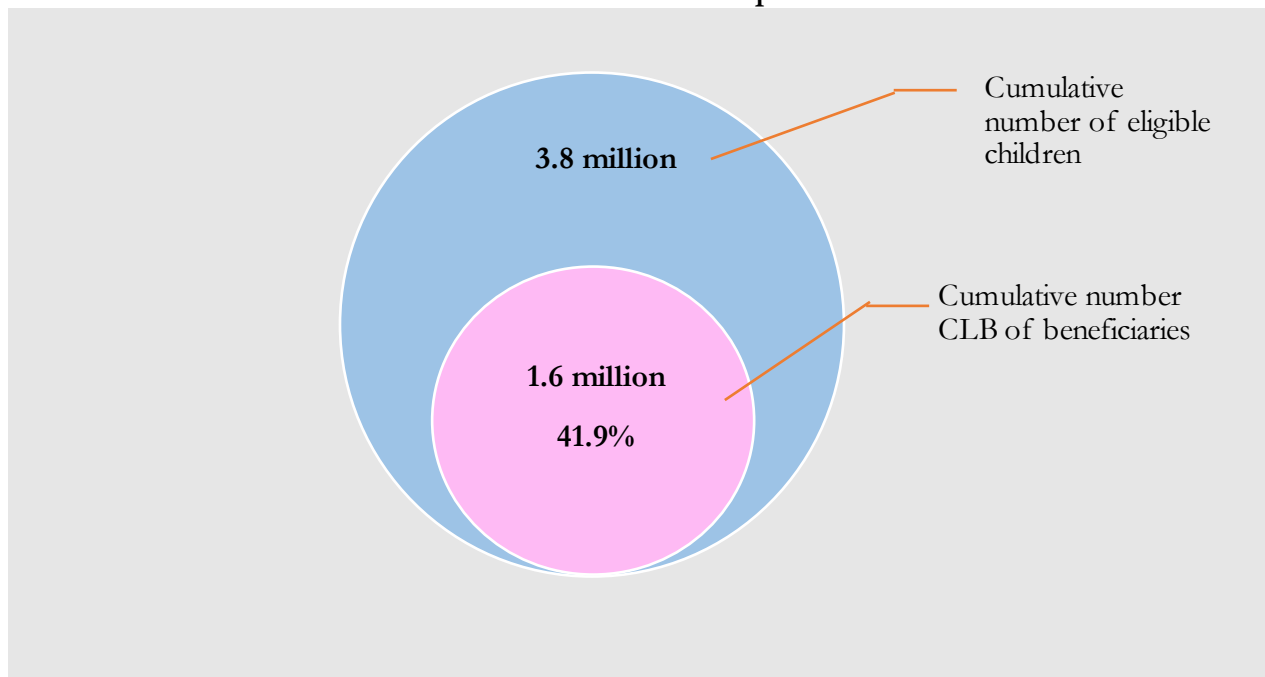
Figure 6
Proportion of new beneficiaries by family income



CLB take-up and beneficiaries

In 2020, the cumulative number of CLB beneficiaries increased to 1.6 million and the take-up rate to 41.9%. British Columbia had the highest CLB take-up (50.4%), followed by Quebec (48.3%).

Figure 7
CLB cumulative take-up rate



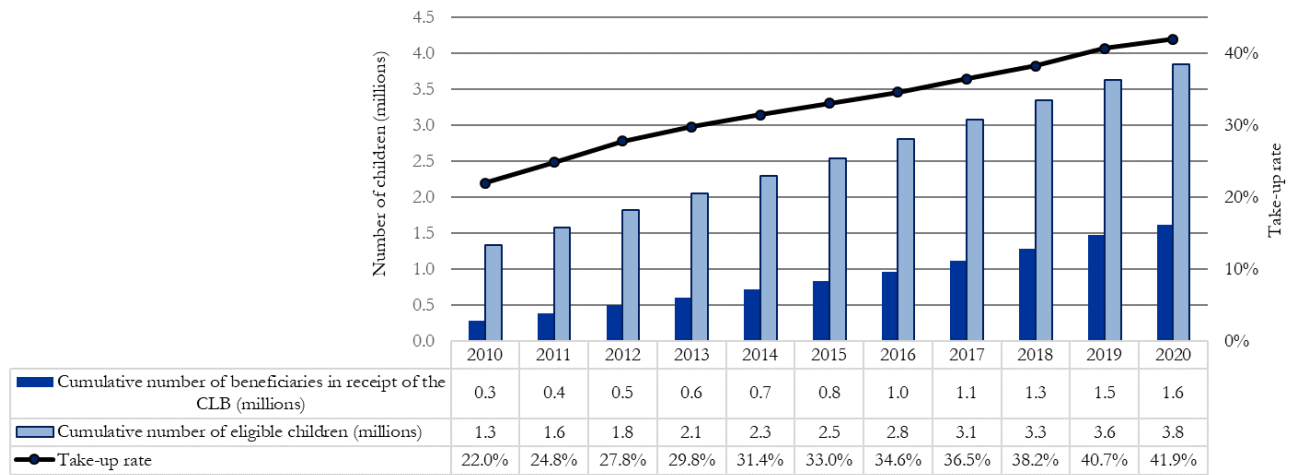
The cumulative number of CLB beneficiaries increased from 1.5 million in 2019 to 1.6 million in 2020 (9.2%). At the same time, the number of eligible children increased from 3.6 million in 2019 to 3.8 million in 2020 (6.0%). As a result, the cumulative CLB take-up rate continued its upward trend in 2020.

Table 15: CLB take-up rate, nationally and by province and territory

Provinces and territories	Cumulative number of children in receipt of CLB (1)	Cumulative number of children eligible for CLB (2)	CLB take-up rate (1) ÷ (2)	Cumulative CLB payment (millions)
Newfoundland and Labrador	12,642	45,115	28.0%	\$12.3
Prince Edward Island	4,963	15,371	32.3%	\$4.8
Nova Scotia	30,550	94,337	32.4%	\$30.2
New Brunswick	24,838	75,870	32.7%	\$24.9
Quebec	407,632	844,018	48.3%	\$395.8
Ontario	594,053	1,440,531	41.2%	\$598.1
Manitoba	61,594	195,221	31.6%	\$24.9
Saskatchewan	45,464	161,010	28.2%	\$40.1
Alberta	200,975	496,194	40.5%	\$177.2
British Columbia	222,724	441,853	50.4%	\$210.5
Yukon	1,155	3,623	31.9%	\$1.0
Northwest Territories	928	5,813	16.0%	\$0.9
Nunavut	274	10,719	2.6%	\$0.2
Canada	1,613,248	3,848,191	41.9%	\$1,566.3

The take-up rate almost doubled over the last decade, thus more children from families with low incomes have received support from the Government of Canada.

Figure 8
Cumulative number of CLB beneficiaries



Note: This data set is also available on the OGP. Please visit [Canada Learning Bond \(CLB\) Participation Rate \(percentage\)](#).

Number of new CLB beneficiaries

An important number of new beneficiaries receive the CLB each year, showing the support of the Government of Canada to families with low incomes. In 2020, because of the pandemic, many Canadians lost their jobs or experienced reduced hours of work (and saw a drop in their income). At the same time, financial institutions temporarily closed in-person services making it more difficult for some populations to open RESPs. A number of factors related to the pandemic may have resulted in the number of new CLB beneficiaries decreasing significantly in 2020 (by 30.7% compared with 2019).

Table 16: Number of new beneficiaries in receipt of the CLB

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
New beneficiaries	78,990	99,963	114,050	106,619	107,844	116,020	133,715	150,629	158,841	196,796	136,460

CLB payments and beneficiaries by year

Up to 2019, CLB payments continually increased, reaching a high of \$200 million that year. However, payments dropped to \$152 million in 2020.

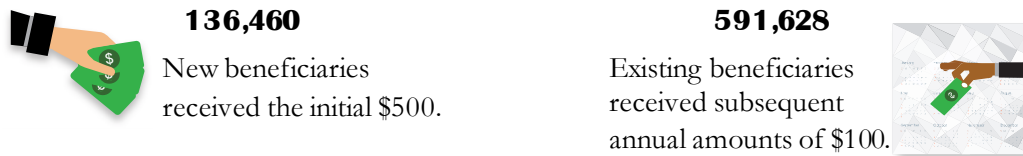
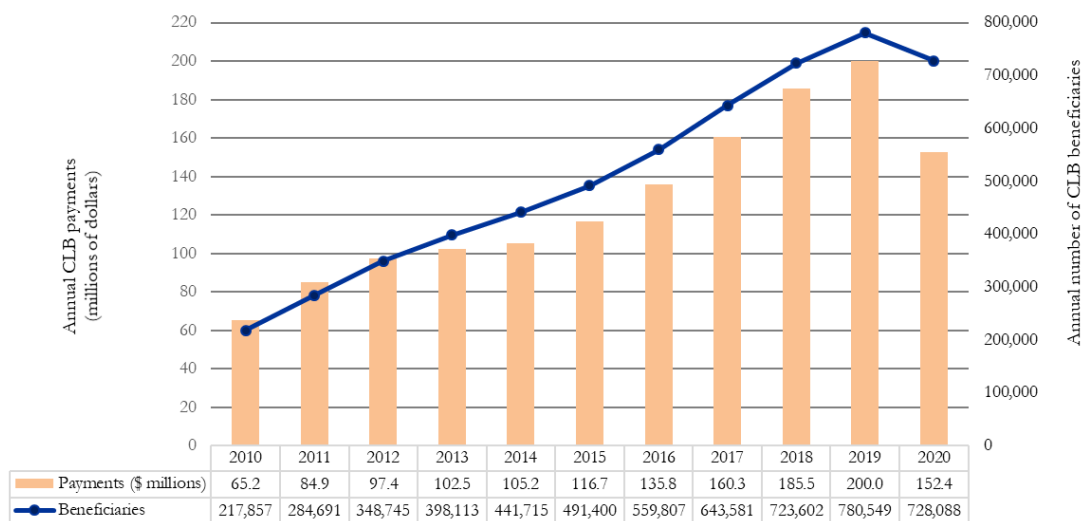


Figure 9
CLB payments and number of beneficiaries in receipt of the CLB by year



The decrease in the number of CLB beneficiaries contributed to the drop in annual CLB payments. The implementation of the spousal functionality in 2019 is also a contributing factor.

More specifically:

- Implemented in June 2019, the spousal functionality allows the cohabitating spouse or common-law partner of a child’s primary caregiver to request education incentives on behalf of the child. The functionality eases access to the CLB and Additional CESG for children from low- and middle-income families
- In 2019, the government allowed RESP promoters to re-submit past spousal requests, therefore creating a surge in beneficiaries that year. As a result, the difference in the number of CLB beneficiaries between 2020 and 2019 appears larger than it would have otherwise been
- In 2020, 728,088 beneficiaries from families with low incomes received CLB payments. This is 52,411 fewer beneficiaries than in 2019

Total RESP assets

As of December 31, 2020, families had set aside \$69.9 billion in RESP assets for their children's PSE, an increase of 10.2% over 2019.

This can be attributed in part to:

- the positive financial market investment returns
- to a lesser extent, to the decrease in RESP withdrawals that year and to the overall increase in contributions

RESP assets more than doubled (in nominal terms) over the past decade.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Assets (billions)	\$27.6	\$31.6	\$35.6	\$40.5	\$44.4	\$47.0	\$51.3	\$55.9	\$56.1	\$63.7	\$69.9

CESG and CLB results by gender¹¹

In 2020, CESG and CLB beneficiaries were split almost evenly between males and females.

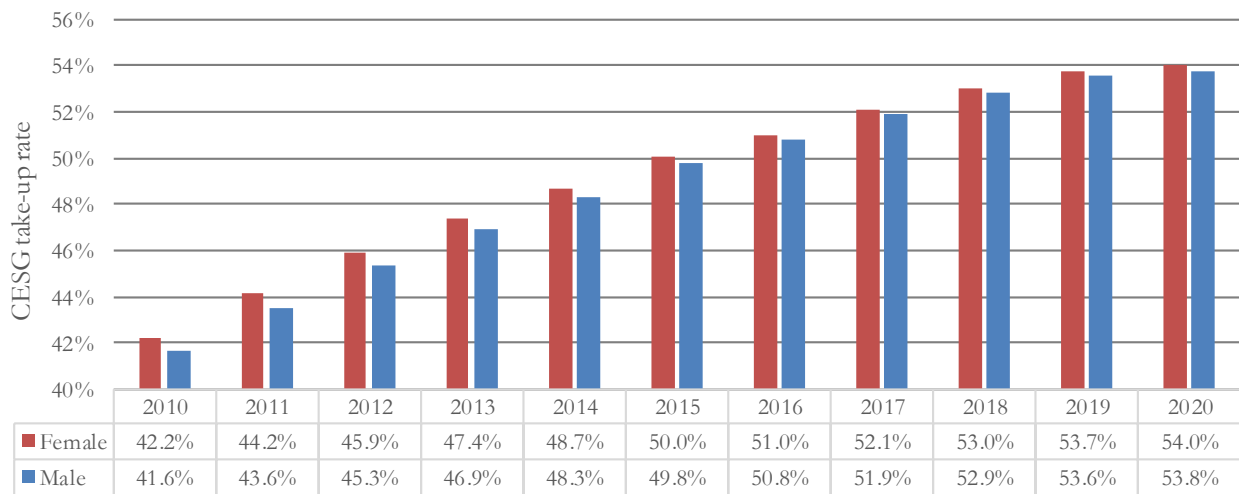
Cumulative number of CESG beneficiaries	Female	Male
Total number of CESG beneficiaries	1,914,935	1,993,196
Proportion of cumulative number of CESG beneficiaries	49.0%	51.0%

Cumulative number of CLB beneficiaries	Female	Male
Total number of CLB beneficiaries	791,617	821,631
Proportion of cumulative number of CLB beneficiaries	49.1%	50.9%

The CESG take-up rate constantly increased over the past decade for both genders. Females have a slightly higher CESG take-up rate than males, and the gap is shrinking. More specifically, the difference decreased from 0.6 percentage points in 2010 to 0.2 percentage points in 2020.

¹¹ ESDC collects the sex of the beneficiary on its application form for education savings incentives. Current options are male or female.

Figure 10
CESG take-up rate by gender



Part III: RESP promoters

The role of promoters—the organizations offering RESPs and education savings incentives—is essential. They assist with the application process and help the subscriber understand the various investment options.



In 2020, there were 85 RESP promoters that fell in four categories:

- **Banking services:** deposit-taking institutions that provide private and commercial services to their clients
- **Insurance and other:** institutions that offer insurance to clients (property, casualty, life, and health) and other registered plan promoter types
- **Investment services:** institutions that provide services to clients in investment banking, brokerage services, wealth management, fund operations, and private equity, security and commodity exchanges
- **Scholarship plan dealers:** institutions that offer registered plans by age cohort, as well as family and individual plans

In 2020, investment services held the largest share of RESP assets (45.1%) and received the bulk of CESG payments (39.9%). Banks received the highest proportion of CLB payments (50.2%).

Figure 11
RESP assets by promoter type

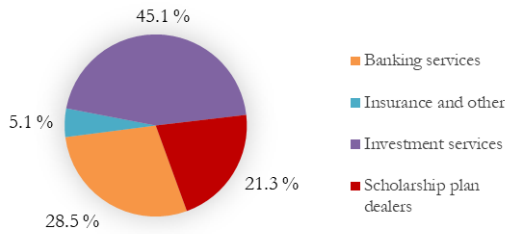


Figure 12
CESG payment by promoter type

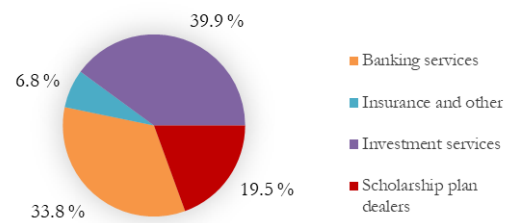
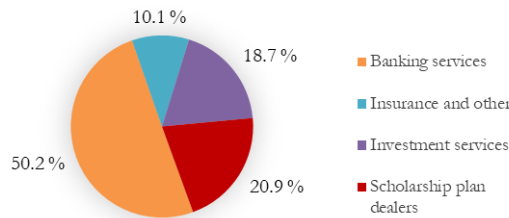


Figure 13
CLB payment by promoter type



RESP withdrawals for PSE

RESPs are becoming increasingly important to help families with low and middle incomes pay for their children’s PSE. Additional loans and grants are also available to those families to help fill the gap. The Additional CESG, introduced in 2005, targets those families.

Table 20: Average RESP withdrawals for beneficiaries

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
(1) Total value (billions)	\$2.0	\$2.2	\$2.4	\$2.8	\$3.1	\$3.3	\$3.6	\$3.8	\$4.1	\$4.4	\$3.9
(2) Number of students	293,045	310,562	336,051	361,197	382,552	397,553	422,550	434,007	446,461	466,203	419,898
(3) Average = (1) ÷ (2)	\$6,660	\$6,927	\$7,255	\$7,671	\$8,045	\$8,297	\$8,512	\$8,832	\$9,169	\$9,453	\$9,375

Table 21: RESP withdrawals for beneficiaries from low- and middle-income families

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
(1) Total withdrawals by students from low- and middle-income families (millions)	\$139.0	\$207.7	\$291.1	\$392.5	\$494.9	\$601.4	\$718.4	\$829.3	\$963.9	\$1,127.9	\$1,112.5
(2) Number of students from low- and middle-income families	19,128	27,582	38,127	49,685	61,606	73,077	87,097	98,807	111,249	126,747	123,805
(3) Average = (1) ÷ (2)	\$7,268	\$7,532	\$7,636	\$7,900	\$8,033	\$8,230	\$8,248	\$8,394	\$8,664	\$8,899	\$8,986
(4) Percentage of withdrawals made by students from low- and middle-income families	7.1%	9.7%	11.9%	14.2%	16.1%	18.2%	20.0%	21.6%	23.5%	25.6%	28.3%
(5) Percentage of students using RESP withdrawals from low- and middle-income families	6.5%	8.9%	11.3%	13.8%	16.1%	18.4%	20.6%	22.8%	24.9%	27.2%	29.5%

Note: Prior to 2013, families defaulted to the BasicCESG only, unless they specifically applied for the Additional CESG, so conclusions cannot be drawn regarding their family income.

Between 2010 and 2019, an increasing number of students who benefited from the Additional CESG were withdrawing funds from their RESPs to attend PSE. However, in 2020, fewer of them did. As a result, total RESP withdrawals dropped by \$15.4 million over the period.

Educational Assistance Payments versus PSE withdrawals

Educational Assistance Payments (EAPs) is a payment from an RESP to help an eligible beneficiary cover expenses associated with PSE. It is a combination of federal and provincial education savings incentives paid into RESPs, as well as accumulated returns over time. These amounts are withdrawn upon proof of PSE enrolment and are taxable income to the beneficiary. Since most beneficiaries earn limited income during their PSE, the amount of tax payable is generally low.

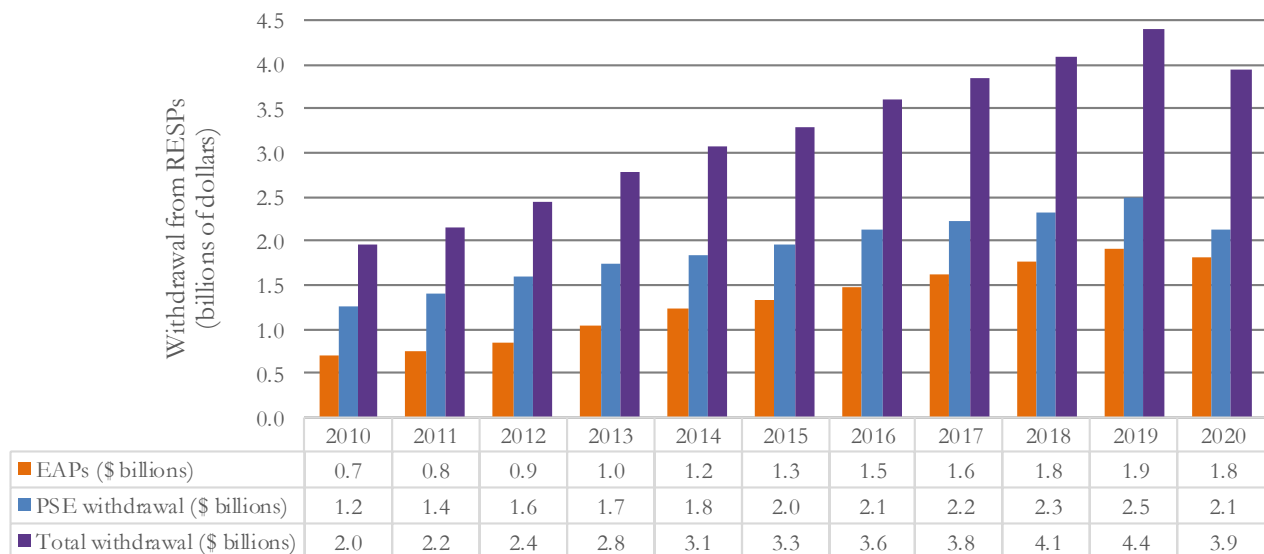
A PSE withdrawal is a withdrawal of contributions made by subscribers without penalty when the beneficiary enrolls in PSE.

In 2020, of the \$3.9 billion in funds withdrawn from RESPs, 45.9% were withdrawn as EAPs and the remaining as PSE withdrawals. There was a reduction in EAP and PSE withdrawals in 2020 compared with 2019.

This is likely owed to the possible reduction of student financial need during part of the year because of:

- The temporary closure of PSE institutions early in the pandemic, which reduced the costs associated with in-person PSE attendance. For example, residences closed resulting in lower room & board costs
- Some students may have temporarily opted out of their program because of class cancellations and/or deciding to wait for in-person classes to resume

Figure 14
EAP and PSE withdrawals



Note: This data set is also available on the OGP please visit [Educational Assistance Payments \(EAP\) and Post-Secondary Education \(PSE\) Withdrawals](#).

If the funds in an RESP are not used to pay for a child's PSE and the RESP is closed:

- any amount contributed to the RESP is returned to the subscriber tax-free
- CLB and CESG amounts are returned to the Government of Canada

The accumulated interest earned in the RESP can be:

- paid to the subscriber and taxed
- transferred to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan of the subscriber or the subscriber's spouse

- transferred to a child's Registered Disability Savings Plan
- donated to a designated educational institution in Canada

RESP withdrawals by gender

In 2020, a higher proportion of beneficiaries who made RESP withdrawals were female (53.3% versus 46.7% for males). However, average RESP payments were slightly higher for men than for women (\$9,613 versus \$9,167).

Table 22: Proportion of beneficiaries with RESP withdrawals, by gender

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	53.1%	53.0%	53.0%	53.1%	53.0%	52.9%	52.9%	53.0%	53.0%	53.0%	53.3%
Male	46.9%	47.0%	47.0%	46.9%	47.0%	47.1%	47.1%	47.0%	47.0%	47.0%	46.7%

Table 23: Average RESP withdrawals by gender (\$)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	6,583	6,834	7,148	7,552	7,921	8,147	8,340	8,687	8,993	9,254	9,167
Male	6,747	7,031	7,377	7,805	8,186	8,465	8,706	8,995	9,367	9,678	9,613
Total	6,660	6,927	7,255	7,671	8,045	8,297	8,512	8,832	9,169	9,453	9,375

Part IV: Government of Canada outreach activities

Despite the increase in CESG and CLB take-up rates, there remains room for improvement. Moreover, COVID-19 continues to challenge ESDC's ability to engage community partners and stakeholders.

In response, ESDC is:

- continuing to adjust its promotional activities; and
- exploring different approaches to work effectively with partners in the context of the pandemic

This section describes the main challenges faced by those who are eligible for, but not receiving the education savings incentives. It also presents the outreach activities undertaken by ESDC to address these challenges.

Challenges to access education incentives

Canadians may encounter a number of challenges opening an RESP and applying for the education savings incentives on behalf of an eligible child.

These challenges include:

- lack of awareness
- lack of time and documents required to get a Social Insurance Number, including a child's birth certificate
- choice overload when making investment decisions
- limited access to financial institutions and services
- logistical challenges associated with attending appointments in person at financial institutions. For example, transportation, childcare, and time off work
- lack of access to online services

These obstacles may be more pronounced for some groups, including newcomers, lone parents and Indigenous Peoples, as well as those living in rural or remote communities. The pandemic has increased these obstacles, as many in-person services and supports have not been available.

An updated approach

Despite the pandemic, ESDC continues to promote the benefits of saving early for a child's PSE using RESPs. ESDC also continues to raise awareness of the CLB and CESG. To this end, it is undertaking a number of outreach activities, such as:

Support for community-based organizations:

ESDC works with a range of partners and stakeholders, including through the CLB Champions' Network – a network of nearly 300 loosely affiliated ESDC partners and stakeholders, notably:

- community-based organizations
- RESP promoters
- federal, provincial and municipal governments
- other organizations working to promote and enable access to the CLB, provide front-line supports and services to children and families, particularly among:
 - low-income families
 - those living in Indigenous communities
 - rural and remote communities
 - newcomers to Canada



In 2020, ESDC hosted an in-person conference that brought together over 80 CLB Champions from across the country. The conference, entitled “Taking Action Together” featured a diverse group of panellists, presentations, and discussions related to the promotion, innovation, and emerging areas of activity connected to the CLB.

ESDC also supported 12 funded community-based organizations in implementing their CLB contribution agreements by:

- hosting calls amongst the organizations to discuss best practices
- helping them with specific initiatives, such as mailings to primary caregivers with CLB eligible children in their communities
- providing assistance in adapting their approach to consider the impacts of COVID-19

In 2021, ESDC will work on a second phase of funding to organizations to increase take up of the CLB.

To further support community-based partners, ESDC continues to develop and disseminate communication products and information resources for community-based organizations to help support ongoing efforts to reach priority populations.

Education Savings Week:

Supported by ESDC, Education Savings Week (ESW) is a community-led communications and outreach initiative celebrated in November each year. It brings together partners and stakeholders to increase awareness of the benefits and availability of the Government of Canada's education savings incentives. A particular emphasis of the ESW focus is on the CLB.

The ESW coincides with the Financial Literacy Month (November), the National Child Day (November 20) and the Financial Planning Week. In 2020, in addition to a social media campaign, ESDC hosted a webinar panel discussion on "Understanding Access to Education Savings: New Findings and their Implications in a Changing Environment". Speakers included representatives from Statistics Canada, community-based organizations and an academic.

The data in this report

Each year, ESDC produces an annual statistical review of the Government of Canada education savings incentives. The present report provides statistics on RESPs, the Basic and Additional CESG, and the CLB. The review examines the January 1 to December 31, 2020 period. It also reports on historical data going back a decade.

Data sources: The data in this report come from the CESP reporting database, which compiles information from 85 RESP promoters.

Rounding: Due to rounding decimals, numbers presented in this report may not add up precisely.

Aggregation and non-Canadian residents: National totals include data on beneficiaries whose regional identity is either unknown or outside of Canada; as such, provincial and territorial statistics may not add up exactly to the stated national total.

Historical data: All figures reported here are nominal and do not account for inflation. The 2020 report supersedes previous editions. Due to the nature of financial transactions, the data for previous years are updated annually to reflect corrections or additional reporting by financial institutions that may have been delayed.

As well, in previous years, the statistics for CLB were calculated using the date when the incentive was paid into an RESP. In this report, it was calculated using the date on which a transaction takes place between an RESP subscriber and an RESP promoter. This was done to align the CLB with other statistics in this report.

Readers who require older data or who wish to refer to available data, please refer to the corresponding data sets on the [Open Government Portal](#), or contact the CESP by phone toll-free at 1-888-276-3624 or by email at cesp-pcee@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca.