



**Ontario Association of Youth  
Employment Centres (OAYEC)**

120 Carlton Street  
Suite # 209  
Toronto, ON M5A 4K2  
Tel: (416) 323-9557  
Fax: (416) 323-9927  
Email: [info@oayec.org](mailto:info@oayec.org)  
Website: [www.oayec.org](http://www.oayec.org)

---

# **Double Cohort: Double Workforce?**

---

March 2003

*A report by the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centers based  
on Province-Wide Research on the Implications of the Double Cohort for  
Work-Bound Youth*

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Executive Summary	3
I Background	4
II Research Objectives	5
III Research Design	5
Figure 1: Plans for Graduation in June 2003	5
Chart 1: OAYEC Double Cohort Survey Respondent Characteristics	5
IV Findings	6
Chart 2: Survey of Students Taking a Year Off: Overall Findings	7
Chart 3: Survey of Students Planning to Work: Overall Findings	8
Figure 2: Changed Plans or Indicate Concern about the Double Cohort	9
Chart 4: Survey of Students Applying to University: Overall Findings	10
Chart 5: Survey of Students Applying to College: Overall Findings	12
Chart 6: Survey of Students Returning to High School: Overall Findings	13
V Conclusion	14
Appendix 1	15

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Double Cohort refers to the double graduating class of 2003 where both students from the newly revised four-year Ontario secondary school curriculum and the old five-year curriculum will graduate. In 2001, the Ontario Ministry of Education predicted approximately 16,000 additional youth will enter the workforce over the next few years because of the double cohort.

The Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC) is a non-profit organization that supports and advocates for the development of youth employment services in Ontario. Last Year, the 68 OAYEC member agencies helped over 100,000 high school graduates and 'early leavers' in their transition from school to work.

In the fall of 2002, a written survey was distributed province-wide through youth employment centers serving 85 different Ontario communities in all corners of the Province. A total of 3756 students responded to the survey whose characteristics reflect approximately 2/3 from grade 12 and 1/3 from OAC and a balance of male and female responses.

The results indicated that 801 students or 21% of respondents are going straight to work or taking a year off starting the summer of 2003. Of those responding in detail to 'taking a year off', 159 (33%) would not be doing so if not for the double cohort, and 73% of those students will be seeking full time employment. Of the students responding about their plans for work, 50 (16.84%) would not be going to work if not for the double cohort, and 39% of those will be looking for full time employment. ***What this means is that the number of youth looking for full-time work will be 30% higher than usual, in the short-term, as a direct result of the double cohort graduation in June 2003.***

The other significant finding is that those students bound for university and college have changed their behaviour more often and are more concerned with the double cohort than work-bound youth. Overall, 1093 respondents or 41% of the total reported they had changed their behaviour as a result of the double cohort. However, only 31% of those taking a year off and 28% of those working had done so. As well, overall, 1757 or 47.98% are concerned with the double cohort. However, only 37% of students taking a year off are concerned and only 23% of students planning to work after graduation are concerned. ***This lack of concern and lack of behaviour change among work-bound youth is troubling, especially given the anticipated 30% increase in work-bound youth noted above.***

OAYEC hopes this research sheds light on the impact of the double cohort on work-bound youth and highlights the magnitude of the issue with regard to increased competition for full time jobs for youth as a direct result of this educational policy change.

---

# Double Cohort: Double Workforce?

March 2003

## I BACKGROUND

The Double Cohort refers to the double graduating class of 2003 where both students from the newly revised four-year Ontario secondary school curriculum and the old five-year curriculum will graduate. The result of this double cohort will be an increase in the number of youth entering post-secondary education and entering the labour market.

### Forecast Increase of Work-bound Youth in 2003

In 2001, the Ontario Ministry of Education predicted approximately 16,000 additional youth will enter the workforce over the next few years because of the double cohort. The Ministry derives this number from examining other jurisdictions that have moved from a five- to four-year high school curriculum. The prediction assumes that the increase in youth entering the workforce is comprised mainly of students who, after graduating, go straight to work. The prediction also assumes that the proportion of students leaving school before graduation (early school leavers or 'drop outs') will stay the same regardless of the double cohort.

The effect of the double cohort on the youth labour market is unpredictable. In 2001, OAYEC envisioned a high-impact scenario in which the majority of the work-bound youth entered the workforce in two years (2003 to 2004), and a low-impact scenario in which work-bound youth entered over five years (2003 to 2007). These scenarios implied that anywhere from 1,600 to 8,000 additional youth would enter the workforce in 2003, the double cohort year. For the details, please refer to the 2000 OAYEC research briefing on this forecast, available at [www.oayec.org](http://www.oayec.org).

### Role of OAYEC In The Double Cohort

The Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC) is a non-profit organization that supports and advocates for the development of youth employment services in Ontario. Last Year, the 68 OAYEC member agencies helped over 100,000 high school graduates and 'early leavers' in their transition from school to work across the Province. Responding to the increased demand and competition for student jobs as a result of the double cohort is a critical challenge for OAYEC member agencies. The current research is intended to anticipate the number of youth entering the workforce in the near future and to help youth employment centers adjust their services appropriately. It is also intended to raise the public awareness of the issues faced by work-bound youth. OAYEC is funded through a wide mix of private, charitable and government fees, grants and contributions.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of our current study is to find out the attitudes of the students toward the double cohort. Specifically, the objectives are to examine:

- The degrees of concern graduating students have about the double cohort;
- The plans of double cohort graduates and how those plans have changed as a result of the double cohort;
- The expectations of double cohort graduates as they enact their plans

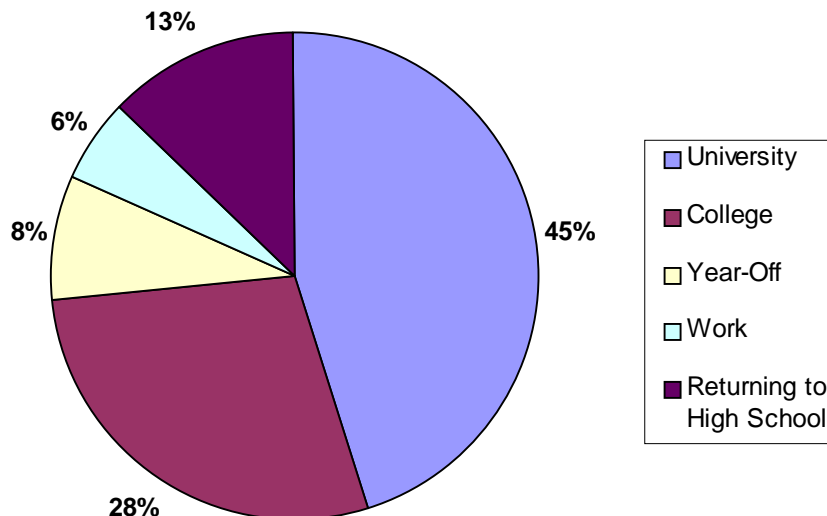
Our current research is informed by OAYECs April 2001 Research Brief: *“Double Cohort: Implications for Work-bound Youth”* available on line at [www.oayec.org](http://www.oayec.org).

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

In the fall of 2002, a written survey was distributed province-wide through OAYEC members – youth employment centers serving 85 different Ontario communities in all corners of the Province. Centers were asked to seek respondents to the survey questions from those youth who came into their center or from nearby schools where the youth employment centre had a good relationship. In total, respondents represent 23 communities in which 39 schools were engaged.

## IV. FINDINGS

**Plans for Graduation in June 2003**



A total of 3756 students from across Ontario responded to the survey. Of these, 2511 (66.85%) were in Grade 12 and 1173 (31.23%) were in OAC as at September 2002. There were 2914 (77.58%) from the Public schools, 761 (20.26%) from the Catholic Schools, and 49 (1.30%) from other schools. Of these, 1833 (48.80%) were male students and 1907 (50.77%) were female students.

<b>Chart 1: OAYEC Double Cohort Survey Respondent Characteristics (total respondents: 3756)</b>		
Grade (as of September 2002):	67%	Grade 12
	31%	OAC
School Board:	78%	Public
	20%	Catholic
	1%	Other
Sex:	51%	Female
	49%	Male
Student Perception of their Marks:	61%	Average
	31%	Above Average
	6%	Below Average
Working Style of Student:	3%	Work as little as possible
	6%	
	37%	Average
	42%	
	11%	Always work as hard as I can

## Profile of Respondents

The survey asked for basic information on respondents. This helped categorize them into groups that would see employment services as more or less relevant depending on their plans for graduation. As well, information such as grade, school (public, catholic and other), sex, and perceived marks (below average, average, and above average) as well as work style (from “do as little as possible” to “work as hard as I can”) were collected to see if differences in responses to the double cohort issue could be seen among different groups of students.

## Work-Bound Youth

801 students or 21% of respondents are going straight to work or taking a year off starting the summer of 2003. Of those responding in detail to ‘taking a year off’, 159 (33%) would

not be doing so if not for the double cohort, and 73% of those students will be seeking full time employment. Of the students responding about their plans for work, 50 (16.84%) would not be going to work if not for the double cohort, and 39% of those will be looking for full time employment.

What this means is that the number of youth looking for full-time work will be 30% higher than usual, in the short-term, as a direct result of the double cohort graduation in June 2003.

<b>Chart 2: Survey of Students Taking a Year Off: Overall Findings</b>		
<b>(total respondents: 487)</b>		
If there were no double cohort, I would probably go straight to University or College:	15%	Agree Strongly
	18%	Agree
	23%	Neutral
	20%	Disagree
	24%	Disagree Strongly
By waiting a year after the double cohort, I will be able to get into University or College more easily:	10%	Agree Strongly
	29%	Agree
	40%	Neutral
	14%	Disagree
	7%	Disagree Strongly
I plan to work full-time, in Ontario at least part of my year off:	49%	Agree Strongly
	19%	Agree
	16%	Neutral
	7%	Disagree
	10%	Disagree Strongly
The double cohort will increase the competition for jobs in the year after graduation:	22%	Agree Strongly
	27%	Agree
	33%	Neutral
	12%	Disagree
	5%	Disagree Strongly
I am less confident that I will get a full-time job in the year after graduation, because of the double cohort:	8%	Agree Strongly
	14%	Agree
	36%	Neutral
	24%	Disagree
	18%	Disagree Strongly
Generally, are you concerned about the Double Cohort?	60%	No
	37%	Yes

Of course this may vary depending on the community. However, the 30% figure may actually underestimate the increase in full time youth labour market participants as it does not take into account those who will look for full time work once University and College acceptance (or rejection) decisions are made. If University or College rejections are higher

than usual, as many argue they will be<sup>1</sup>, it would be safe to assume that full-time job seekers will increase even more than the 30% indicated.

<b>Chart 3: Survey of Students Planning to Work: Overall Findings</b>		
<b>(total respondents: 297)</b>		
If there were no double cohort, I would probably go straight to University or College:	6%	Agree Strongly
	11%	Agree
	23%	Neutral
	18%	Disagree
	34%	Disagree Strongly
By working for some time after the double cohort, I will be able to get into University or College more easily:	10%	Agree Strongly
	21%	Agree
	37%	Neutral
	15%	Disagree
	15%	Disagree Strongly
I plan to work full-time after graduation as part of my plans to handle the Double Cohort:	21%	Agree Strongly
	17%	Agree
	27%	Neutral
	13%	Disagree
	18%	Disagree Strongly
The double cohort will increase the competition for jobs in the year after graduation:	21%	Agree Strongly
	27%	Agree
	31%	Neutral
	16%	Disagree
	9%	Disagree Strongly
I am less confident that I will get a full-time job in the year after graduation, because of the double cohort:	11%	Agree Strongly
	10%	Agree
	25%	Neutral
	26%	Disagree
	28%	Disagree Strongly
Generally, are you concerned about the Double Cohort?	70%	No
	23%	Yes

This makes for interesting comparison with further results of our survey that 205 (42.1%) of students taking a year off are confident that they will find full-time employment during that year and 160 (53.87%) of students planning to work are confident that they will find full-time employment as well.

The study also found that a majority of work-bound students were males. This finding is similar to those of other school-to-work transition studies.

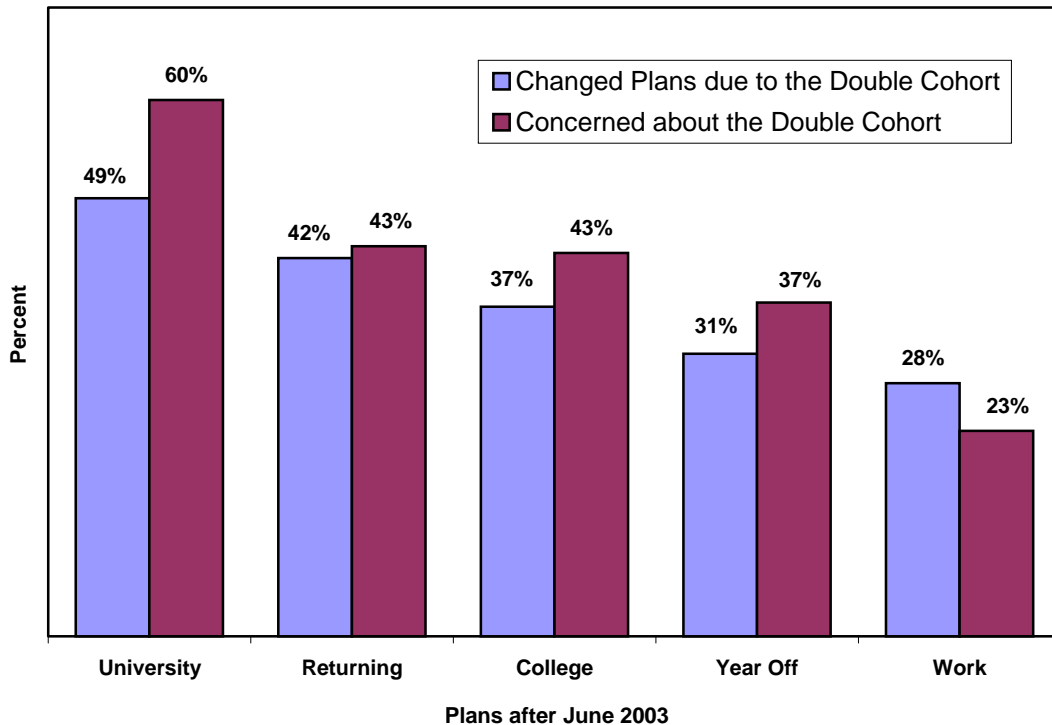
<sup>1</sup> Louise Brown, Toronto Star Jan 8/03

## Change in Plans/Behaviour and General Concern for the Double Cohort

Overall, 2184 respondents or 58% of the total reported they had not changed their behaviour as a result of the double cohort, while 1564 respondents or 41% who reported they had changed their in plans or behaviour.

An interesting trend, however, is that those students bound for university and college are both more concerned and have changed their behaviour more often than work-bound youth. This is illustrated in the figure 2 below.

### Changed Plans or Indicate Concern about the Double Cohort



**Figure 2**

So while 1093 or 40.97% of students surveyed had changed their behaviour or plans because of the double cohort, only 90 (31.5%) of those taking a year off and 51 (28.18%) of those working had done so. This downward trend is also reflected in the levels of concern showed by students, of whom a total of 1757 or 47.98% are concerned, but of whom only 181 (37.17%) of students taking a year off are concerned and only 68 (22.90%) of students planning to work after graduation are concerned.

This lack of concern and lack of behaviour change among work-bound youth is troubling, especially given the anticipated 30% increase in work-bound youth noted above.

<b>Chart 4: Survey of Students Applying to University: Overall Findings</b>		
<b>(total respondents: 1636)</b>		
In general, it will be harder to get into Universities during the Double Cohort year:	43%	Agree Strongly
	35%	Agree
	17%	Neutral
	4%	Disagree
	1%	Disagree Strongly
The Double Cohort will mean Universities will increase the minimum requirements (marks):	36%	Agree Strongly
	38%	Agree
	18%	Neutral
	6%	Disagree
	2%	Disagree Strongly
I have worked harder to get higher marks because I believe that there will be an increase in the minimum requirements for Universities:	28%	Agree Strongly
	33%	Agree
	27%	Neutral
	9%	Disagree
	3%	Disagree Strongly
The Double Cohort will affect Universities in Ontario, but not other Universities in Canada:	8%	Agree Strongly
	17%	Agree
	31%	Neutral
	30%	Disagree
	14%	Disagree Strongly
The quality of education at Ontario Universities will be lower for those students entering during the Double Cohort year:	5%	Agree Strongly
	13%	Agree
	26%	Neutral
	32%	Disagree
	24%	Disagree Strongly
I have applied to Universities outside of Ontario because of the Double Cohort:	10%	Strongly Agree
	6%	Agree
	9%	Neutral
	12%	Disagree
	61%	Strongly Disagree
Generally, are you concerned about the Double Cohort?	40%	No
	60%	Yes

Not all work-bound youth are unaware of the impending challenges, however, since some work-bound students do indicate their belief that the double cohort will increase competition for jobs in the year after graduation. Among students taking a year off, 238 (48.87%) feel that the double cohort will increase competition for jobs in the year after graduation, and among students planning to work, 140 (47.14%) feel the same way.

To understand better how students have changed their plans, the following statements are some of the more common reflections of how some of the students adapted to the impending double cohort:

“...I have worked harder in school trying to bring up my marks”

“...I tried harder with my work habits”

“...I am taking a year off and working”

“...I am taking another semester and working ½ a year”

“...I am going back to school to earn extra credits, then go to college or university”

“...I applied to more schools”

“...I applied for scholarships early. I tried for highest mark possible, became heavily involved in extracurricular activities to have a well-rounded and leadership-oriented resume for applications”

“...it made me think more about what I wanted to do after high school. It made me work harder than I usually would.

Some of the students were confused about the impact of the double cohort. This is what one of the students had to say:

“ I was going to take a year off to avoid the trouble. Then I was going to go out West. Then I realized that I wanted to go to school right away and relatively close, so I am trying”

We found, not surprisingly, that many students are aware of broad social issues and policy changes such as the double cohort and have the capacity to adapt to them. However, that those students less aware and less likely to change are also the ones choosing to go to work rather than post-secondary institutions indicates the need for greater public intervention to raise these students capacity to be aware and adapt to challenges.

<b>Chart 5: Survey of Students Applying to College: Overall Findings</b>		
<b>(total respondents: 1113)</b>		
In general, it will be harder to get into College during the Double Cohort year:	27%	Agree Strongly
	30%	Agree
	29%	Neutral
	8%	Disagree
	4%	Disagree Strongly
The Double Cohort will mean Colleges will increase the minimum requirements (marks):	16%	Agree Strongly
	35%	Agree
	32%	Neutral
	10%	Disagree
	4%	Disagree Strongly
I have worked harder to get higher marks because I believe that there will be an increase in the minimum requirements for Colleges:	14%	Agree Strongly
	29%	Agree
	33%	Neutral
	16%	Disagree
	5%	Disagree Strongly
The Double Cohort will affect Colleges in Ontario, but not other Colleges in Canada:	6%	Agree Strongly
	11%	Agree
	27%	Neutral
	26%	Disagree
	27%	Disagree Strongly
The quality of education at Ontario Colleges will be lower for those students entering during the Double Cohort year:	3%	Agree Strongly
	12%	Agree
	33%	Neutral
	28%	Disagree
	21%	Disagree Strongly
I have applied to Colleges outside of Ontario because of the Double Cohort:	4%	Strongly Agree
	5%	Agree
	13%	Neutral
	13%	Disagree
	57%	Strongly Disagree
Generally, are you concerned about the Double Cohort?	52%	No
	43%	Yes

Finally, our survey results found that female students were more concerned and responsive than males. In all the different categories of plans for graduation, female students were more apt to change their behaviour and indicate concern for the double cohort than the males. Overall, for example, 442 or 34.1% of male students changed their plans because of the double cohort, while 649 or 47.6% of female students did.

**Chart 6: Survey of Students Returning to High School: Overall Findings**

**(total respondents: 129\* )**

**\*value taken from total of 1345 surveys**

If there were no double cohort, I would probably go straight to University or College:	29%	Agree Strongly
	16%	Agree
	16%	Neutral
	13%	Disagree
	26%	Disagree Strongly
By completing high school after the double cohort, I will be able to get into University or College more easily:	16%	Agree Strongly
	28%	Agree
	39%	Neutral
	12%	Disagree
	4%	Disagree Strongly
I plan to study full-time, in Ontario at least part of my extended high school:	43%	Agree Strongly
	22%	Agree
	22%	Neutral
	5%	Disagree
	7%	Disagree Strongly
The Double Cohort will increase the competition for enrollment in College/University in the year I graduate, even though I have extended my high school:	27%	Agree Strongly
	31%	Agree
	25%	Neutral
	10%	Disagree
	6%	Disagree Strongly
I am less confident that I will get admission into College/University in the year after graduation, because of the double cohort:	13%	Agree Strongly
	16%	Agree
	33%	Neutral
	21%	Disagree
	17%	Disagree Strongly
Generally, are you concerned about the Double Cohort?	57%	No
	43%	Yes

## **V. Conclusion**

In attempting to assess the degrees of concern, plans, and expectations of high school students in the double cohort, OAYEC has been able to anticipate the impact the double cohort will have on the number of youth entering the labour market looking for full time work. Based on this study, we believe that 30% more students will be seeking full time work in the short term as a direct result of the double cohort. The study also revealed a trend that students bound for University and College are much more concerned with and responsive to the double cohort issue than those headed into the workforce, despite the anticipated increase in competition for full time work.

As a major shift in the school-to-work transitions of many Ontario Youth, the double cohort issue presents compelling short-term challenges to both youth and those who assist them with their employment search. OAYEC will continue to examine this issue, always from the perspective of the youth employment labour market, in an attempt to raise awareness of youth employment issues and provide insight into better ways of supporting youth to find fulfilling work and anticipate social change to their advantage. Of particular interest and what cannot be determined at this time, is the number of young job seekers who will enter the workforce as a result of University or College rejections in late spring.

### **A note on Research Design**

The design of this survey benefited from the guidance of OAYEC's Research Advisory Committee consisting of a cross section of stakeholders made of representatives from academia, research institutions, and youth employment agencies. A literature review was conducted on the double cohort. The survey tool was developed and revised based on feedback (available on request).

Implementation of the survey relied on voluntary participation of OAYEC member agencies. Letters (via e-mail) were sent to over 70 OAYEC's network of youth employment agencies two weeks before the implementation of the survey. As a result of suggested modifications, two of the locations accounting for 1345 of the respondents had a survey tool with an additional choice of "Return to High School" as an option after graduation. Where the addition of this option had a significant impact on responses, it is noted in the results.

# APPENDIX 1:

---

## List Of Participating Locations

1. Collingwood
2. Cornwall
3. Delhi
4. Elgin
5. Fort Frances
6. Kenora
7. Kingsville
8. Ingleside
9. Lakehead
10. Langton
11. Leamington
12. Nepean
13. Port Colborne
14. Port Dover
15. Simcoe
16. St. Catherines
17. St. Thomas
18. Sudbury
19. Thunder Bay
20. Toronto
21. Waterford
22. Welland
23. Williamstown