

Census Portraits

Understanding Our Students' Backgrounds

Ethno-Racial Series: Aboriginal Students Report

Aboriginal

Middle Eastern

Black

South Asian

East Asian

Southeast Asian

Latin American

White



Toronto District School Board 2011–12 Student and Parent Census

Research & Information Services

Toronto District School Board

June 2015

Report No. 14/15-14



Ethno-Racial Series

Gender

Sexual Orientation

Socio-economic Status

Students with Special Education Needs

tdsb.on.ca



TDSB's 2011-12 Student & Parent Census

Having recognized the value of the Board's very first *Student Census* (2006) and *Parent Census* (2008), the TDSB conducted its second *Student and Parent Census* in 2011-12.

The *Census* data has offered the Board hard evidence for:

- **Needs identification**
identifying achievement gaps and determining barriers to achievement;
- **Programming and intervention**
reviewing and implementing effective systems, supports, and initiatives across the system; and
- **Accountability**
establishing a baseline of data to measure improvement over time.

Data Sources

The findings generated in this series of *Census Portraits* are based on data combined from three sources – *TDSB's 2011 Student Census* (103,000 students in Grades 7-12), *TDSB's 2012 Parent Census* (90,000 Kindergarten-Grade 6 parents), and the Board's central academic achievement databases.

Information on students' cultural backgrounds is based mainly on their parents' country of birth derived from the Board's *Census* data. For more details about *TDSB's 2011-12 Student Census and Parent Census*, refer to the TDSB website: www.tdsb.on.ca/Census

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About the Census Portraits

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has one of the world's most culturally and demographically diverse student populations. While earlier TDSB studies have shown diversity *among* student identities and family backgrounds, there is also great diversity *within* these groups. Each group is made up of sub-groups from varied ethno-racial backgrounds (cultural, linguistic and/or religious backgrounds or countries of origin), gender identities, sexual orientation, and family socio-economic status. Additionally, differences are explored among students with Special Education Needs.

The *Census Portraits* examine the unique characteristics of these sub-groups.

The purpose is:

- to provide a better understanding of the similarities and differences within each sub-group; and
- to target interventions to ensure the needs of all students are addressed effectively and equitably.

Content

Each *Census Portrait* describes and compares the background, experiences, and achievement levels of the students of each sub-group under the following sections:

- Context (including group description or historical factors)
- Family Background
- Life in School
- Life Outside of School
- Student Health and Wellness
- Self-Perceived Abilities and Academic Achievement

Historical Context

The First Nation, Métis, and Inuit population in Toronto is very diverse with many cultures, languages, customs, and traditions represented within these Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal population in urban centres has grown substantially in recent decades, and Toronto has one of the largest populations of Aboriginal people of any community in Canada.

- School-aged children make up a larger share of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada compared to the rest of the population. In 2006, 28% of the urban Aboriginal population was under 15 years of age compared to 17% of the non-Aboriginal population.
- As well, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit urban populations are very mobile. This high rate of mobility can create some challenges in educational systems in ensuring continuity of learning experiences. Frequently, links to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities remain, as Aboriginal people continue to visit family and friends in these environments. On the other hand, many Aboriginal people in Toronto, who have always lived in urban contexts, may have few such ties and an urban Aboriginal identity is their only experience.
- Aboriginal people are much less visibly different from others in a very diverse city like Toronto, and are often “hidden in plain view”. This cultural anonymity can act as a shield against racism as many Aboriginal people choose not to self-identify in order to avoid the risk of racial stereotyping and discrimination. Accordingly, the number of Aboriginal people in Toronto who identify as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit is quite likely a substantial under-representation of the total population. It is estimated that as many as 80,000 Aboriginal people live in the Greater Toronto Area.

It is important to understand that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives about the school system have been strongly affected by residential school experiences and have resulted in intergenerational mistrust of the education system.

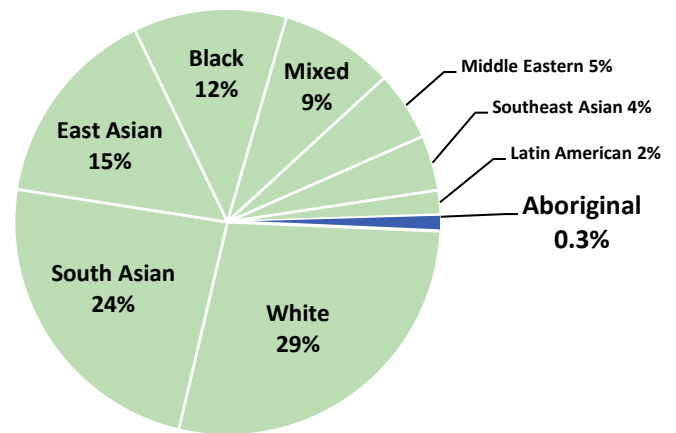
Ethno-Racial and Family Background

Aboriginal students were one of the smallest visible minority groups (0.3%) in the TDSB. Only about a quarter (26%) of Aboriginal students had parents with university degrees, while more than half (59%) of their families were in the two lowest income brackets.

- Students who self-identified as Aboriginal made up 0.3% (about 850 students) of the Toronto District School Board’s (TDSB) population.
- Almost all (99%) of students with Aboriginal parents were born in Canada.

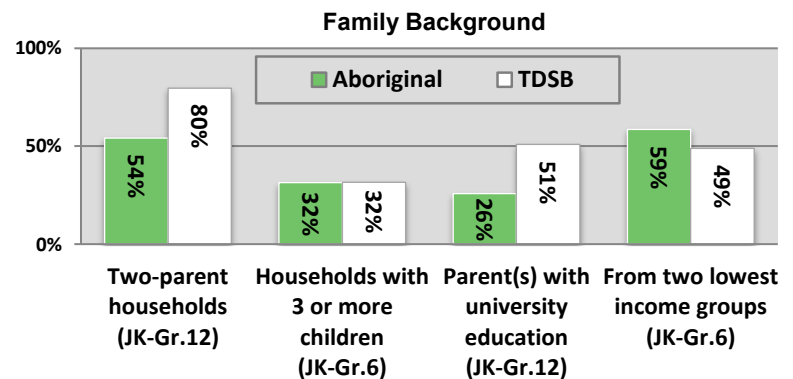
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- approximately half of Aboriginal students reported living with two parents (54%) (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent);
- Aboriginal students were as likely (32%) to have multiple siblings;
- parents of Aboriginal students were half as likely to have university degrees (26% compared to 51%);
- over half of Aboriginal students (59%) come from families in the two lowest income groups (i.e., with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000 or between \$30,000-\$49,999).



Learning about One’s Culture (Gr. 7-12 Students)

Compared to the TDSB general student population, Aboriginal students were more likely to agree that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (75%), help them enjoy school more (64%), and help them do better in school (59%).



Census Portraits: Aboriginal Students

Life in School

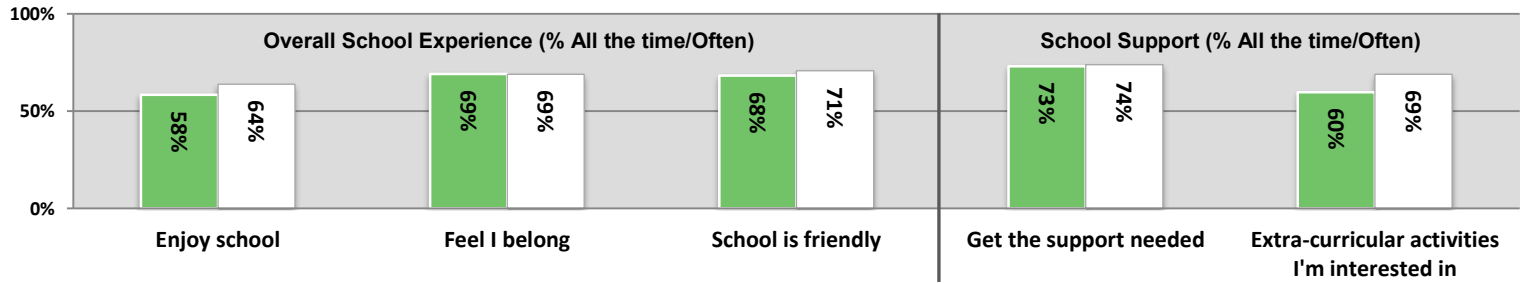


Student Perceptions of School

Aboriginal students' perceptions of their overall school experience and school support were mixed.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were as likely to report their sense of belonging in school, that school was a friendly place, and that they received the support they needed from school;
- however, fewer Aboriginal students agreed that they enjoyed school, and that their school offered the extra-curricular activities they were interested in.

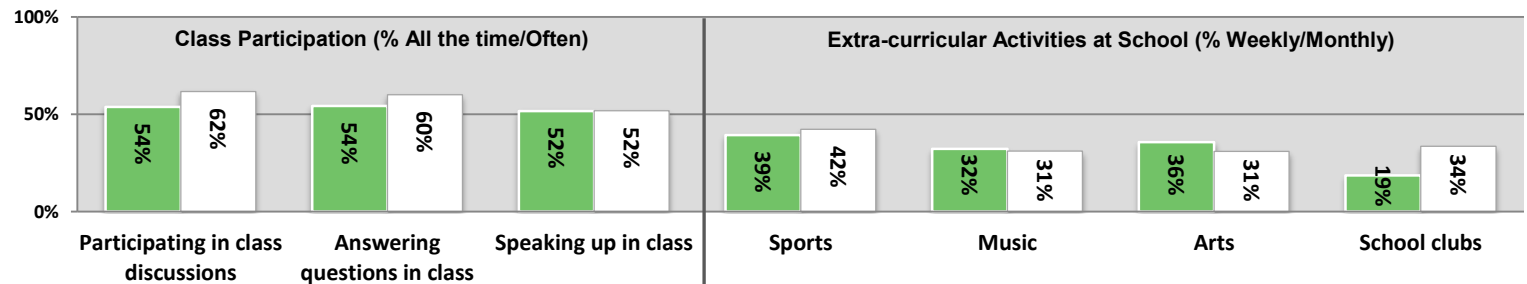


Student Participation at School

Aboriginal students felt less comfortable participating in class discussion or answering questions compared to others, although they were as likely to speak up in class. They were as or more actively involved than others in various extra-curricular activities but less in school clubs.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students felt less comfortable participating in class discussions and answering questions in class, but were as likely to report speaking up in class;
- they were equally involved in extra-curricular activities related to sports or music and were more involved in the arts;
- Aboriginal students were much less likely to join school clubs.

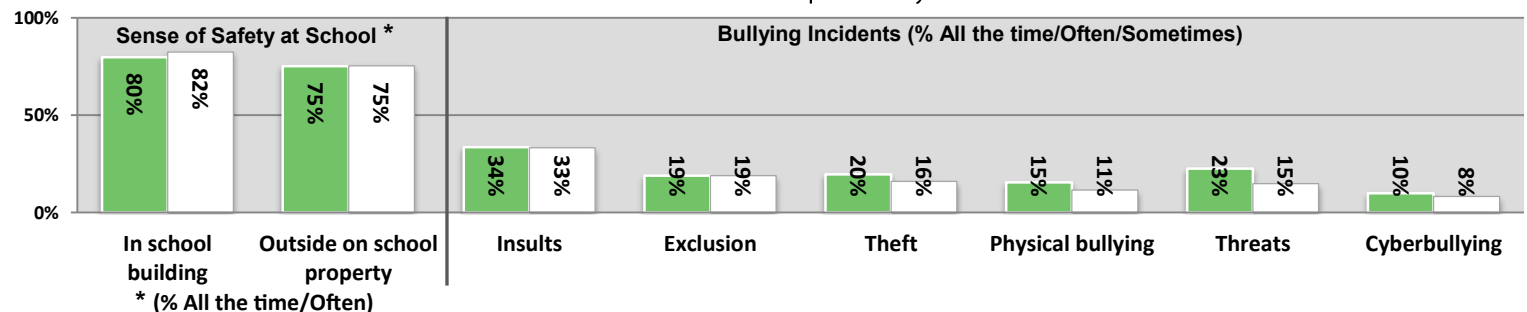


Safety at School

Aboriginal students felt as safe as others in school, but they were more likely to report experiencing incidents of theft, physical bullying, or threats.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students felt as safe as others inside the school building and outside on school property;
- Aboriginal students did not experience more bullying incidents than others in terms of insults, exclusion or cyber-bullying, but they did report higher incidence of theft, physical bullying, and particularly threats.



Census Portraits: Aboriginal Students

Life in School (Cont'd)

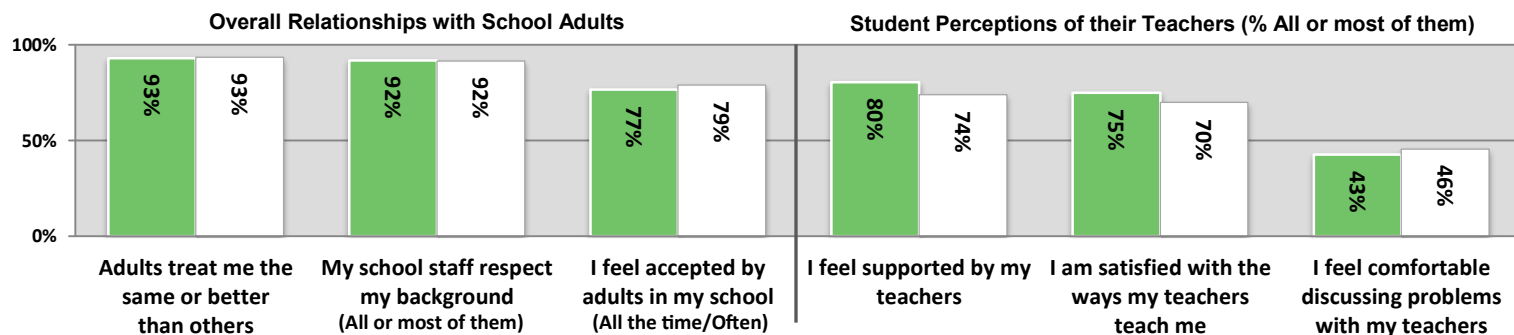
■ Aboriginal □ TDSB

Relationships with School Adults

Aboriginal students were as or more positive than others about their school adults. However, they were less likely to have more than one school adult who they could turn to for personal support.

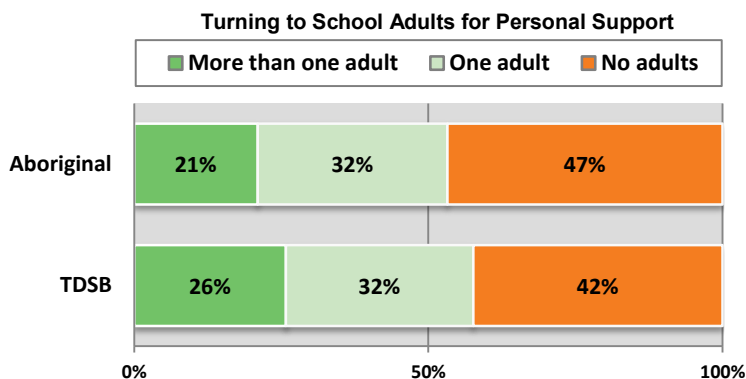
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students felt equally positive about their school adults in terms of how they were treated, their background being respected, and feeling accepted;
- they were more likely to report feeling supported by their teachers and that they were satisfied with the ways they were taught;
- Aboriginal students felt as comfortable as others discussing problems with their teachers.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- nearly half (47%) of Aboriginal students reported having no school adults who they could turn to for personal support, help, or advice;
- only about a fifth (21%) reported having more than one adult who they felt comfortable turning to.

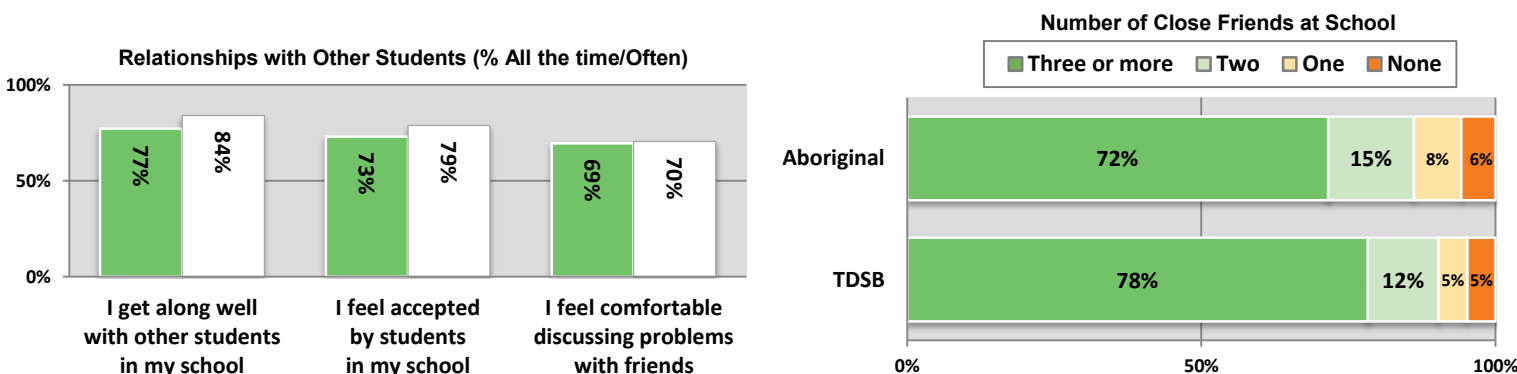


Relationships with Peers

Aboriginal students reported having less positive peer relationships at school than the general population, but they did feel as comfortable as others discussing problems with their friends. They were less likely than others to have three or more close friends at school.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students did not feel as positive about their relationships with other students in terms of getting along well and feeling accepted by their peers;
- they felt as comfortable discussing problems with friends as others;
- they were as likely to have one or two close friends at school, but less likely to have three or more friends.



Census Portraits: Aboriginal Students

Life Outside of School

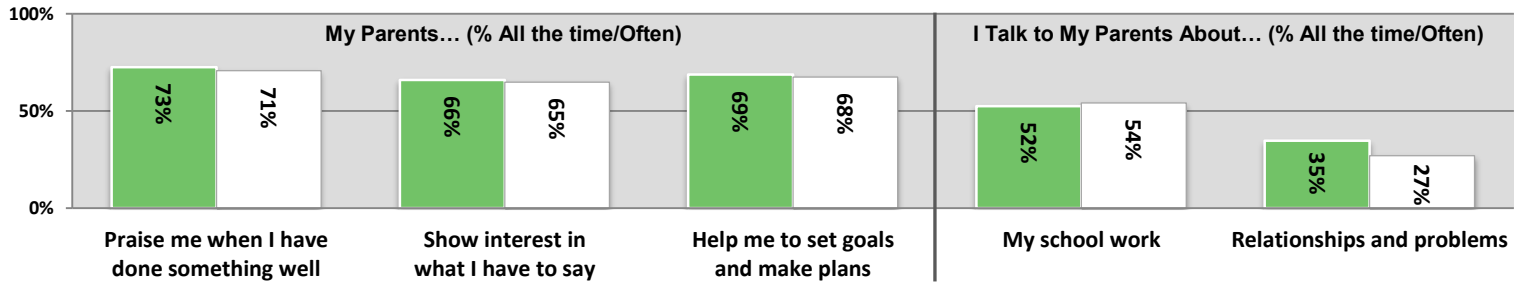
■ Aboriginal □ TDSB

Relationships with Parents

Aboriginal students reported having positive relationships with their parents, and were more likely than the general population to talk with parents about relationship problems.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were as likely to report that their parents often praised them when they had done well, showed interest in what they had to say, and helped them make plans or set goals;
- while they were as likely to talk to their parents about their school work, they were more likely to talk about relationships and problems with their parents.

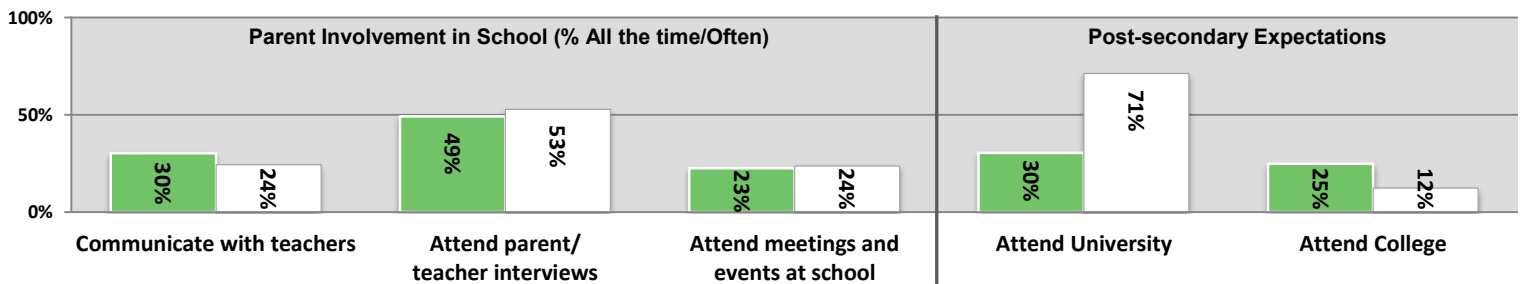


Parent Involvement and Expectations

Aboriginal parents were as or more involved at their child's school than others. Considerably fewer Aboriginal parents expected their child to attend university.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal parents were more likely to communicate with teachers and were as likely to attend parent/teacher interviews and meetings or events at school;
- less than a third of Aboriginal parents expected their child to attend university, and a quarter expected their child to attend college.

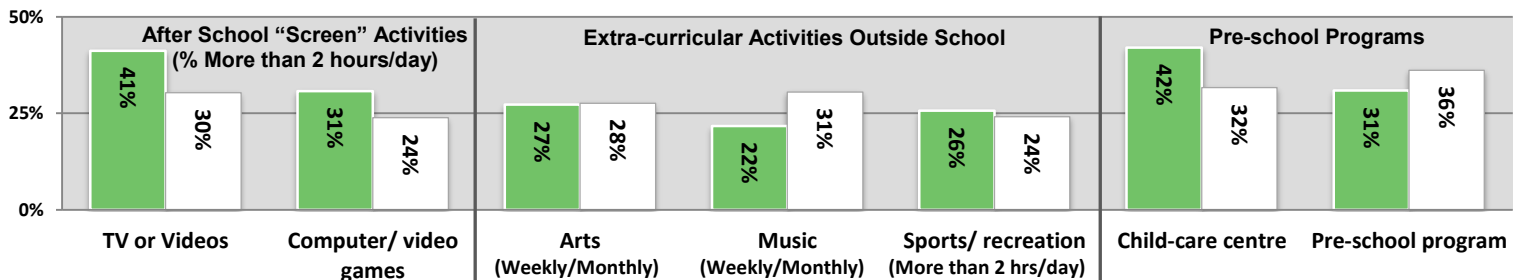


Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Aboriginal students spent more time on screen activities compared to others. Fewer Aboriginal students attended pre-school programs when they were young, but they were much more likely to have attended a child-care centre.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were more likely to spend over 2 hours per day watching TV or playing computer or video games;
- they were as likely to participate in arts and sports activities outside of school, but were much less likely to be involved in music activities;
- more Aboriginal students attended a child-care centre when they were young, but they were less likely to have attended pre-school programs.



Census Portraits: Aboriginal Students

Student Health and Wellness

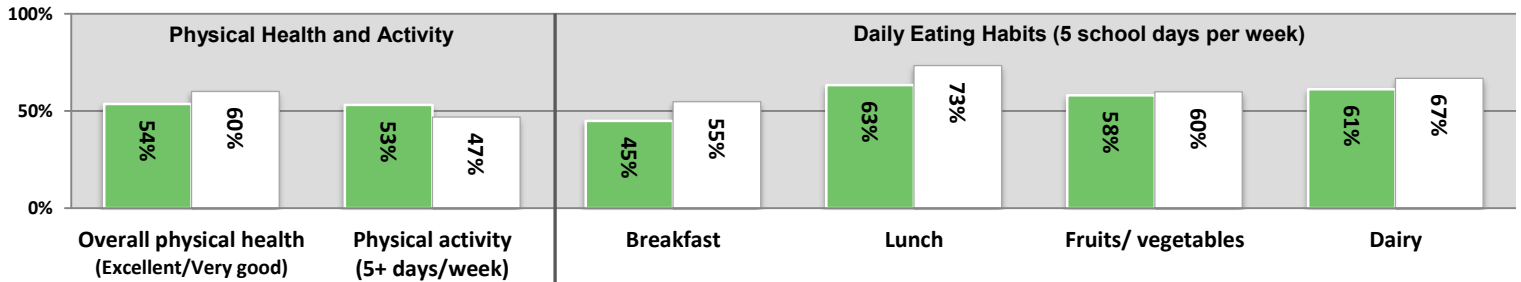


Physical Health

Aboriginal students reported being less physically healthy but more physically active than other students. In terms of eating habits, fewer Aboriginal students than the general population ate breakfast, lunch, or dairy products on a daily basis.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students reported lower levels of physical health, but higher levels of daily physical activities;
- they were considerably less likely to eat breakfast or lunch five days a week or to have dairy products regularly;
- Aboriginal students were as likely to have daily intake of fruits and vegetables.

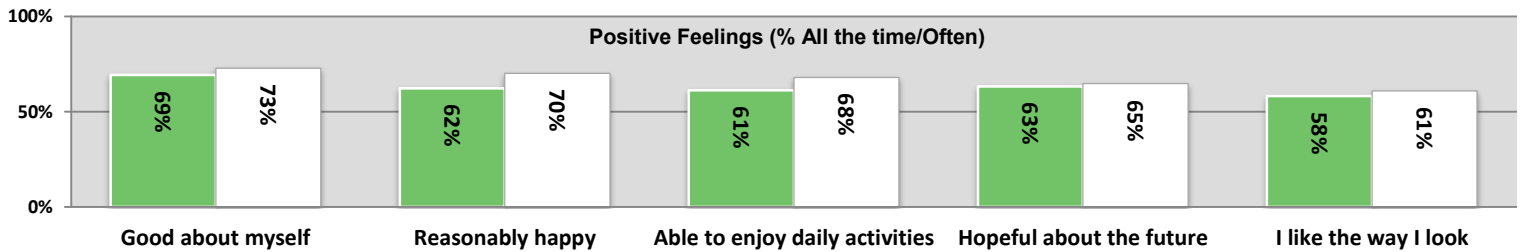


Social and Emotional Well-being

Aboriginal students were as or less likely to feel positive about themselves and were as likely to experience emotional challenges as others. They particularly felt less happy and confident about themselves, and more worried about family matters and relationship issues than the general population.

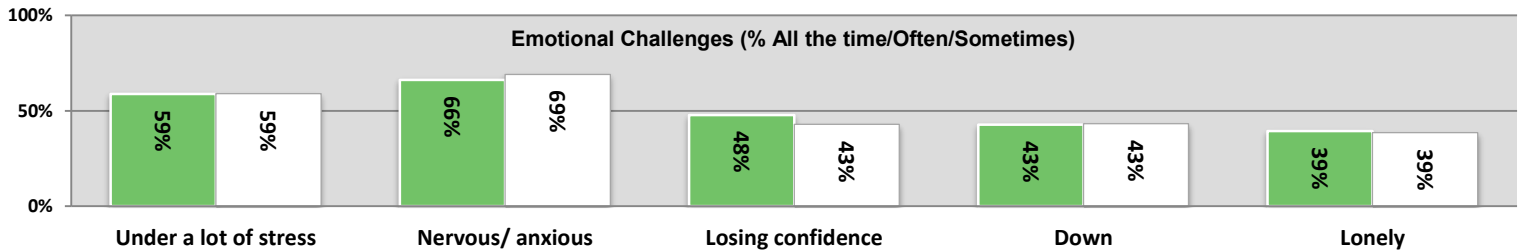
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were less likely to feel good about themselves, to enjoy daily activities, or to feel happy;
- but they were as likely as others to feel hopeful about the future and to like the way they look.



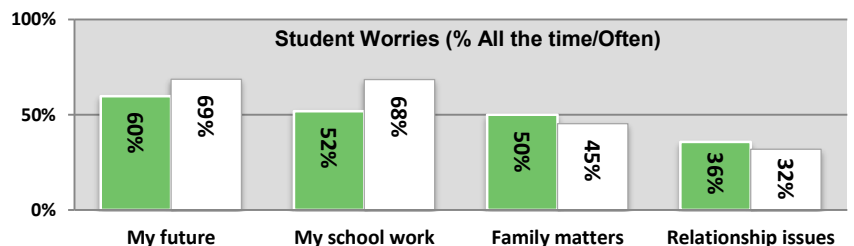
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were much more likely to report losing confidence in themselves;
- they were as likely to report feeling stressed, nervous or anxious, or feeling down or lonely.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- considerably fewer Aboriginal students reported worrying about their future or school work;
- but they were more likely to worry about family matters and relationship issues.



Census Portraits: Aboriginal Students

Self-Perceived Abilities and Academic Achievement

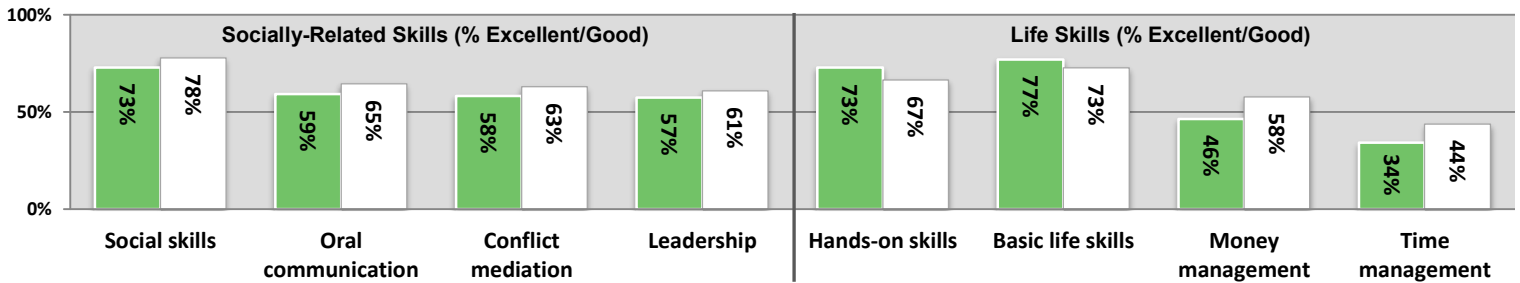


Self-Perceived Abilities: Social Skills and Life Skills

Aboriginal students rated themselves lower than others in socially-related skills, as well as in money- and time-management skills. However, they rated themselves more highly in their hands-on and basic life skills.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were much less likely to rate themselves excellent or good at social skills, oral communication, conflict mediation, leadership skills, money- and time-management skills ;
- but they rated themselves higher than others in hands-on and basic life skills.

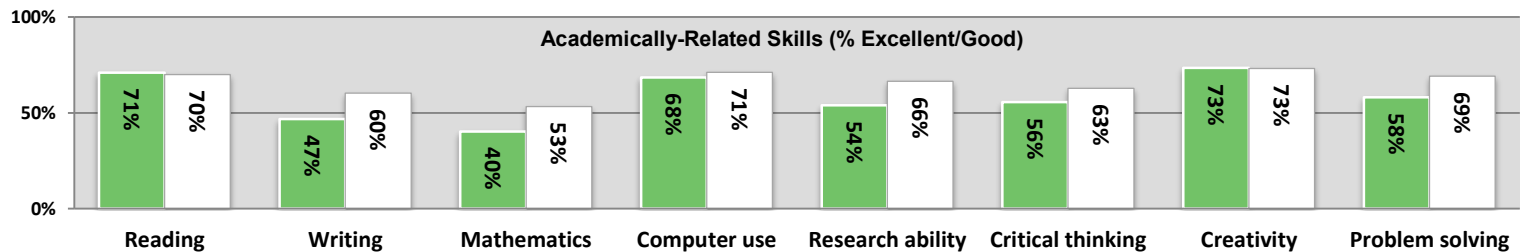


Self-Perceived Abilities: Academic Skills

Aboriginal students were as confident as others in reading, computer use, and creativity, but less confident in other academically related skill areas.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Aboriginal students were much less confident about their writing, mathematics, research ability, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills;
- they were as likely to rate themselves highly in reading, computer use, and creativity.



Academic Achievement (2011-12)

Aboriginal students generally underperformed academically.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- much fewer Aboriginal students achieved at Level 3 or 4 on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Grade 6 tests in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics;
- less than half of Aboriginal students were successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT);
- substantially fewer Aboriginal students earned 16 or more credits by the end of Grade 10.

