

# Census Portraits

*Understanding Our Students' Backgrounds*

## Ethno-Racial Series: East Asian 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. 14/15-16



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](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Census)

### Report Authors:

Maria Yau, Research Coordinator  
Lisa Rosolen, Research & Information Analyst  
Bryce Archer, Research & Information Analyst  
*Research & Information Services*

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Pascal Huang, Research & Information Analyst.

**Cite as:** Yau, M., Rosolen, L., & Archer, B. (2015). *Census portraits, understanding our students' backgrounds: East Asian students report* (Report No. 14/15-16). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

### 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

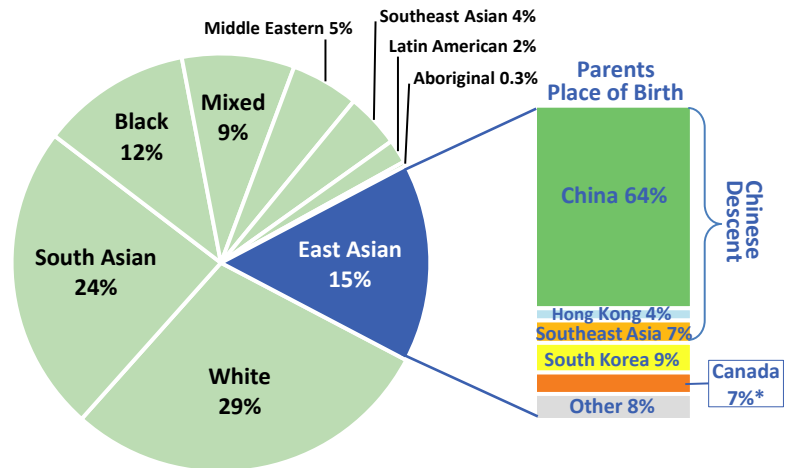
The first wave of East Asian immigration to Canada was marked by the arrival of Chinese male laborers in the mid-19th century as railway workers in British Columbia. After the completion of the railway in the late 19th century, the door for Chinese immigration was virtually closed until 1967 when Canada's Immigration Act was amended. Since then, there have been other waves from different areas of East Asia.

- In the 1970s and 1980s, fast-growing numbers of young adults from Hong Kong (then a British colony) came as visa students to attend post-secondary institutions. After graduation, many stayed and established themselves in Ontario. They made up the largest proportion of East Asian immigrants in Canada then. Today, they are the parents of many of the second-generation immigrant children. Immigration from Hong Kong continued to grow (more as families or independents) until the return of the colony to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. In the 2000s, with its open-door policy, mainland China surpassed Hong Kong as the largest source of East Asian immigration.
- Aside from mainland China and Hong Kong, there were Chinese immigrants from Southeast Asia (mainly Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) who arrived in Canada mostly as "boat people" in the late 1970s after the Vietnam War and continued until 1981. Many of these young refugees of Chinese origin have settled in Ontario and are parents of their Canadian-born children.
- Japanese immigrants, mainly young males, arrived in Canada since the 1890s as farmers, fishermen, and merchants in the West. During the Second World War, Japanese immigration stopped altogether and resumed again after 1967. The second wave of Japanese immigrants were generally educated; most settled in Western Canada instead of the East, and worked in the service sector and skilled trades.
- South Korean immigration to Canada, especially to Toronto, also began in the late 1960s. While East Asian students made up nearly half of the total Visa students in Canada in the late 1990s, South Korea has been the largest supplier of International students to Canada (21%) in recent years, followed by China (16%) and Japan (8%).

### Ethno-Racial and Family Background

*East Asian students were the second largest visible minority group in the TDSB. While half (54%) had parents with university degrees, over half (52%) of the families were in the two lowest income brackets.*

- East Asian students made up 15% (about 39,400 students) of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) population.
- Most East Asian students were of Chinese descent with parents emigrating from China (64%), Hong Kong (4%), and Southeast Asia (7%). Other East Asian students included South Koreans (9%), those with one or both parents born in Canada (7%), and the remaining with parents coming from other countries (8%).
- Most students with Southeast Asian (92%), Hong Kong (85%), and Canadian-born (82%) parents were born in Canada, compared to half (51%) with parents from China and just over one third (36%) with parents from South Korea.



\*Canada includes one or both parents born in Canada

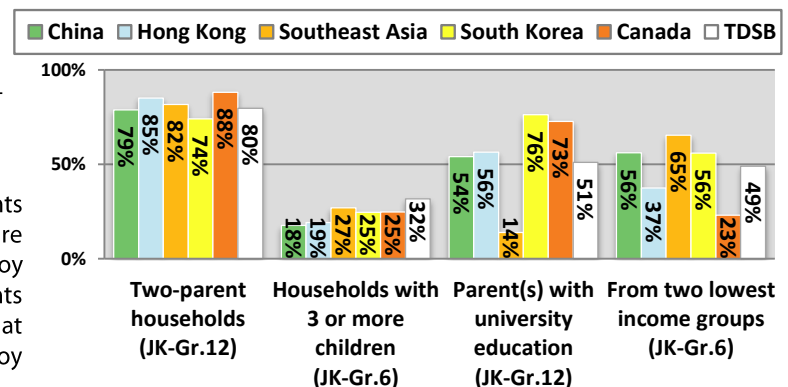
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students were generally as or more likely to live with two parents (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent), and those from South Korean background were less likely (74%).
- East Asian students, especially with family origins from China and Hong Kong, were much less likely to have multiple siblings;
- Chinese parents from Southeast Asia were less likely to have university degrees, while the other groups were more likely;
- more East Asian students came from the two lowest income groups (i.e., with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000 or between \$30,000-\$49,999) especially those with families originating from Southeast Asia, China, and South Korea.

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

Compared to the general TDSB student population, East Asian students were as or less likely to agree that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (62%), help them enjoy school more (49%), and help them do better in school (41%). Students with parents from Hong Kong, in particular, were less likely to agree that it would make their learning more interesting (56%), help them enjoy school more (37%), or help them do better in school (about 30%).

### Family Background



# Census Portraits: East Asian Students

## Life in School

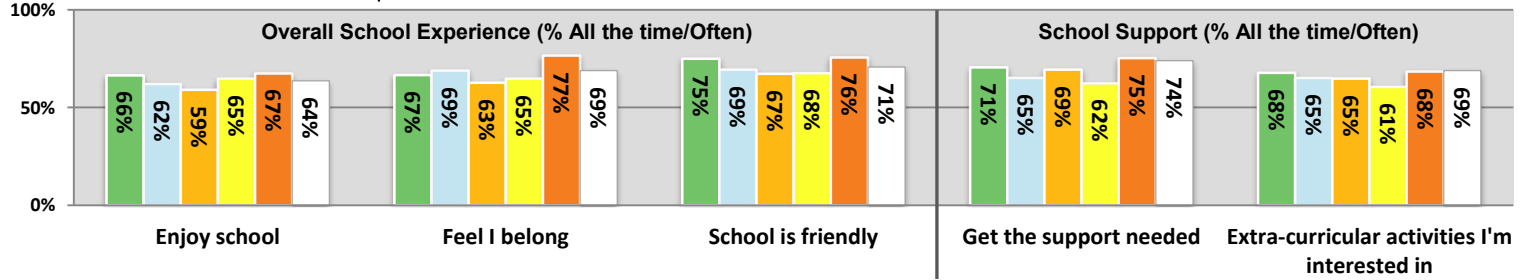


### Student Perceptions of School

East Asian students in general were as satisfied as others about their overall school experience, except for those with Canadian-born parents who were more satisfied, and those with parents from Southeast Asia who were less. Regarding school support, those with parents from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and South Korea were less satisfied.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students in general felt similarly positive about their overall school experience - in terms of enjoyment of school, sense of belonging, and school being a friendly place;
- exceptions include those with Canadian-born parents who were more satisfied, and those with parents from Southeast Asia who were less satisfied;
- students with parents from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and particularly South Korea, were less satisfied with the support they needed from school or the extra-curricular activities offered at school.

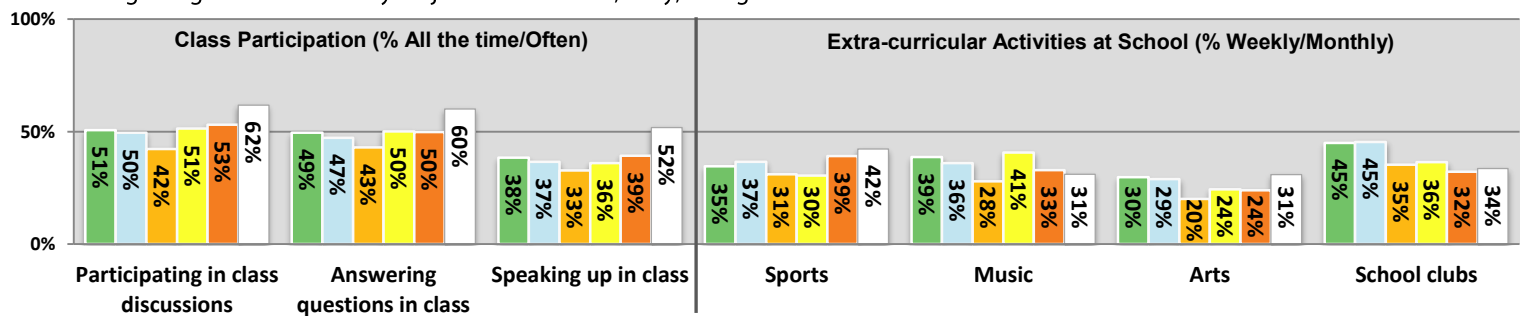


### Student Participation at School

East Asian students felt less comfortable participating in class compared to the general TDSB student population. They were more active in school clubs and music activities, but less active in arts or sports activities.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students, especially those from Southeast Asian background, felt less comfortable participating, answering questions, and speaking up in class;
- regarding extra-curricular activities, those with parents from China and Hong Kong were more likely to join school clubs; they, along with South Korean students, were also more likely to participate in music activities;
- all East Asian groups, especially those of Southeast Asian and South Korean backgrounds, participated less in sports or arts activities at school.

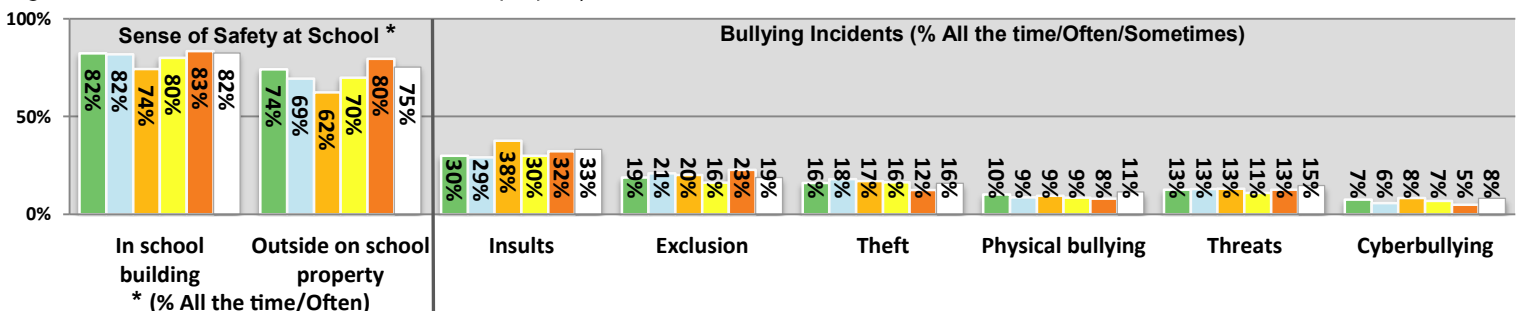


### Safety at School

East Asian students, except for those of Southeast Asian background, felt as safe as others within the school building. However, students of Hong Kong, South Korea, and particularly Southeast Asian backgrounds, felt less safe outside on school property.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students felt as safe as others inside the school building, except for those of Southeast Asian background who felt less safe; the latter, along with those of Hong Kong and South Korean backgrounds, also felt less safe outside on school property;
- East Asian students did not experience more bullying incidents than others; the only exception was those of Southeast Asian background who reported higher levels of verbal bullying.



# Census Portraits: East Asian Students

## Life in School (Cont'd)

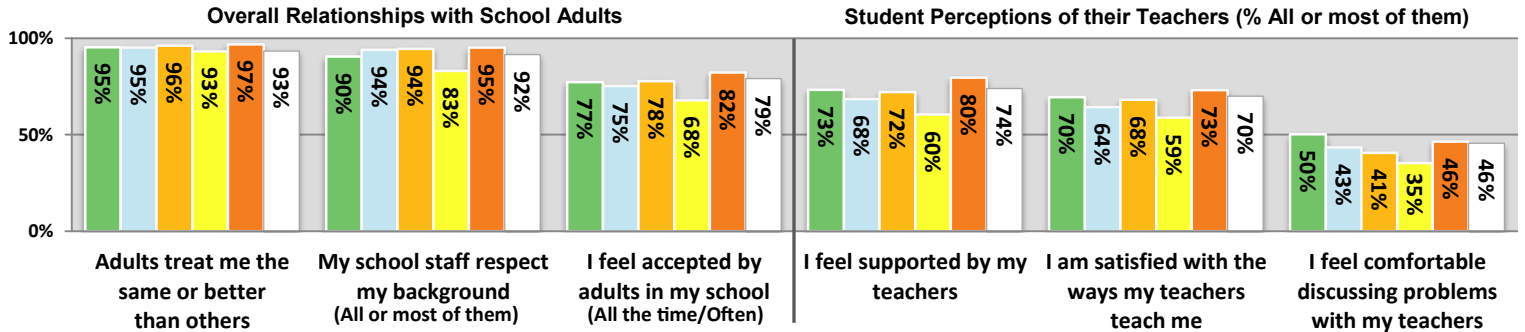


### Relationships with School Adults

East Asian students, except for those of South Korean descent, felt as positive as others about their school adults. South Korean students, along with those of Hong Kong background, felt less satisfied with their teachers. All East Asian sub-groups, other than those with Canadian-born parents, were less likely to have a school adult(s) who they could turn to for personal support.

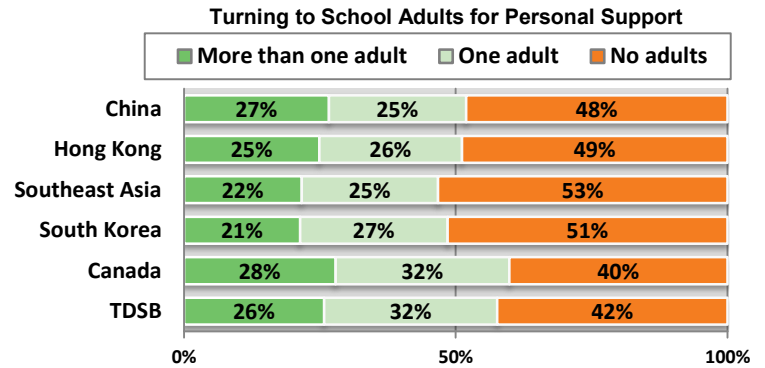
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students felt equally positive about their school adults, with the exception of South Korean students who felt less positive in terms of feeling their background being respected or feeling accepted by school adults;
- South Korean students, and to some extent students with Hong Kong background, felt less positive about their teachers: they felt less supported, less satisfied with the ways they were being taught, and less comfortable discussing problems with their teachers.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students, except for those with Canadian-born parents, were less likely to have one or more school adults that they could turn to for personal support, help, or advice;
- over half of students from Southeast Asian backgrounds, and about half of students with family backgrounds from South Korea, China, and Hong Kong did not have a school adult they felt comfortable to turn to.

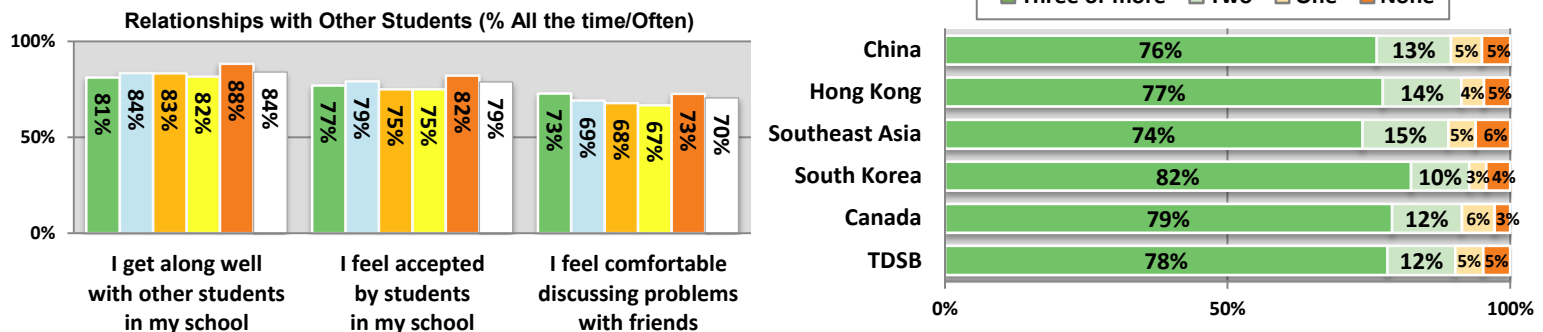


### Relationships with Peers

East Asian students generally felt as positive as others about their peer relationships at school. They had about the same number of close friends as others at school, with South Korean students reporting more.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students felt as positive about their relationships with other students in terms of getting along, feeling accepted, and feeling comfortable discussing problems with friends;
- among the different East Asian sub-groups, those whose parents were Canadian-born tended to be the most positive;
- regarding the number of close friends at school, the finding for East Asian students was about the same, except for South Korean students who reported having more close friends at school.



# Census Portraits: East Asian Students

## Life Outside of School

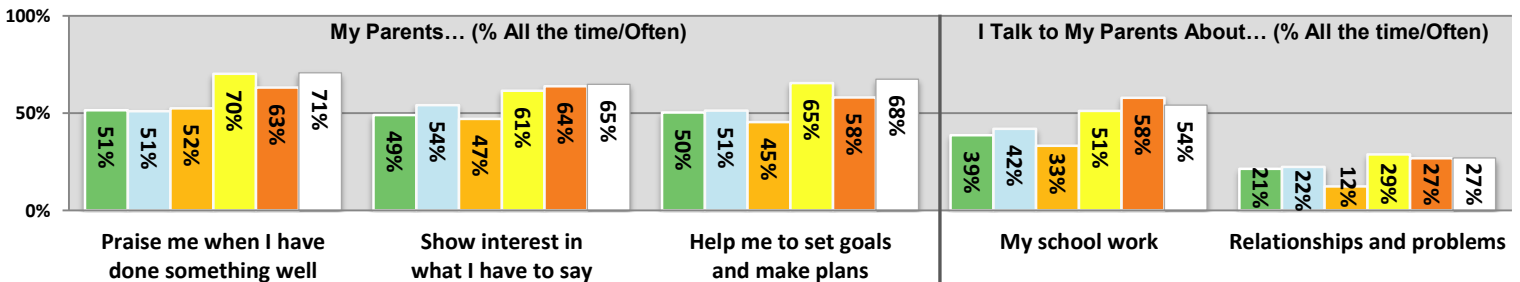


### Relationships with Parents

*East Asian students, except for those of South Korean and Canadian backgrounds, seemed to have less positive relationships with their parents.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Korean students were about as positive about their relationships with parents;
- on the other hand, Chinese students regardless of origin were much less likely to report that their parents often praised them when they had done well, or helped them set goals and make plans;
- Chinese students, except for those with Canadian-born parents, were also much less likely to report that their parents showed interest in what they had to say;
- again these students with parents from China, Hong Kong, and particularly Southeast Asia, were much less likely to talk to their parents about school work or relationships and problems.

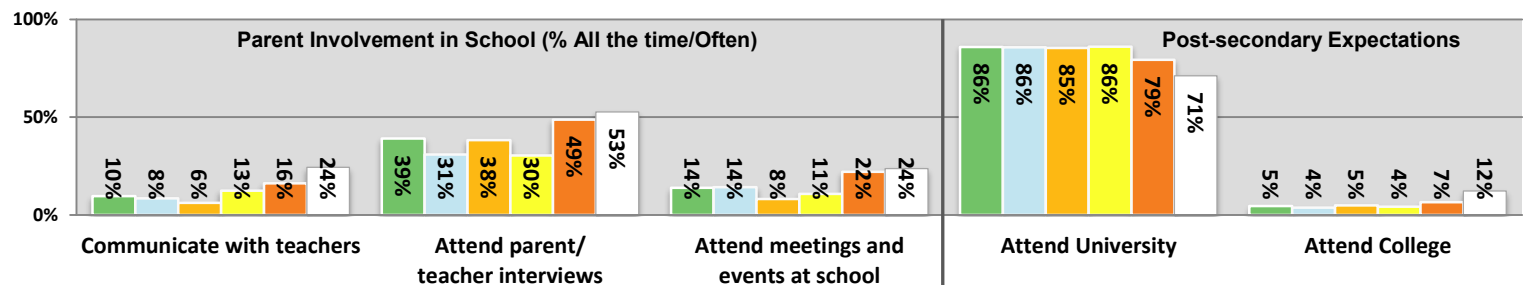


### Parent Involvement and Expectations

*Compared to others, East Asian parents were much less likely to be involved at their child's school but they were much more likely to expect their children to attend university,*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- parents from China, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and South Korea were much less likely to communicate with their child's teachers, and to attend parent/teacher interviews, school meetings, and school events;
- East Asian parents, especially those from outside of Canada, were much more likely to expect their child to attend university.

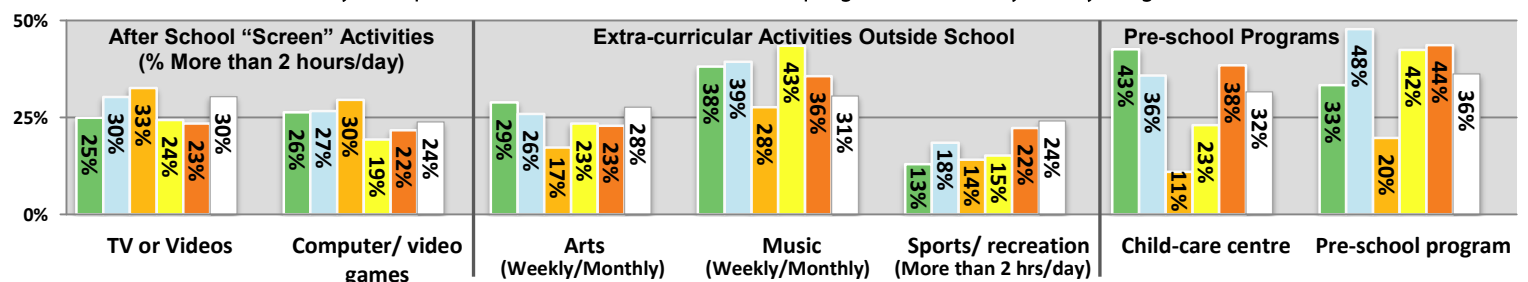


### Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

*Chinese students generally spent more time than others on computer games. Also Chinese students, except for those with Southeast Asian background, were more likely to participate in music and arts activities outside of school and to have attended pre-school programs when they were young.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students whose parents were born in China, South Korea, and Canada were less likely to spend over 2 hours per day watching TV or videos; but students from Chinese immigrant families tended to spend more time playing computer games;
- East Asian students were as or less likely to participate in arts activities outside of school; but they, except for those of Southeast Asian background, were more likely to participate in music activities;
- all East Asian sub-groups, other than those with Canadian-born parents, were less involved in sports and recreation activities;
- East Asian students, except for those of Southeast Asian origin, were much more likely to have attended child-care centres or pre-school programs when they were young.



# Census Portraits: East Asian Students

## Student Health and Wellness

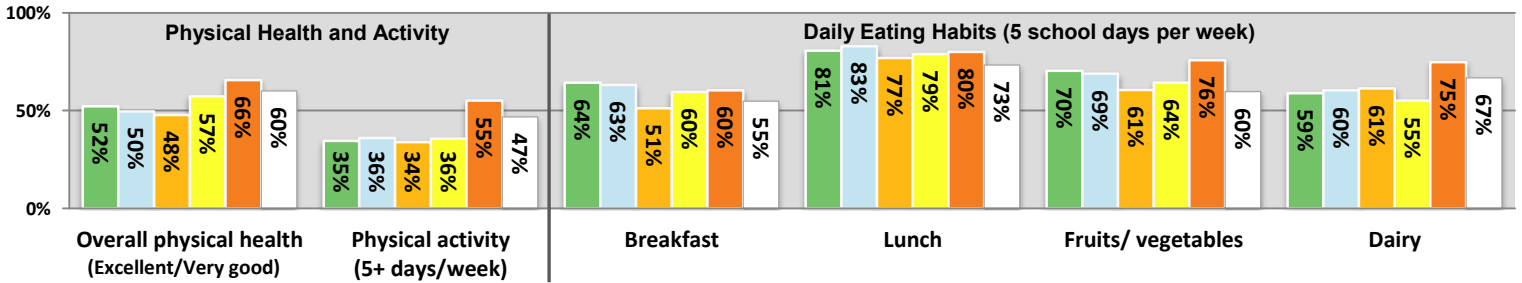


### Physical Health

East Asian students from immigrant families tended to report being less physically healthy or active than others. In terms of diet, except for those of Southeast Asian background, they were more likely to eat regularly, and have fruits and vegetables daily. East Asian students with Canadian-born parents were more likely to report being healthy physically and in their eating habits.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- lower percentages of Chinese students from immigrant families reported their physical health being excellent or very good; these students, as well as those of South Korean descent, were also less likely to have daily physical activity;
- East Asian students were as or more likely to have breakfast, lunch, fruits, and vegetables at least five days a week, but fewer of those from immigrant families reported having dairy products regularly.

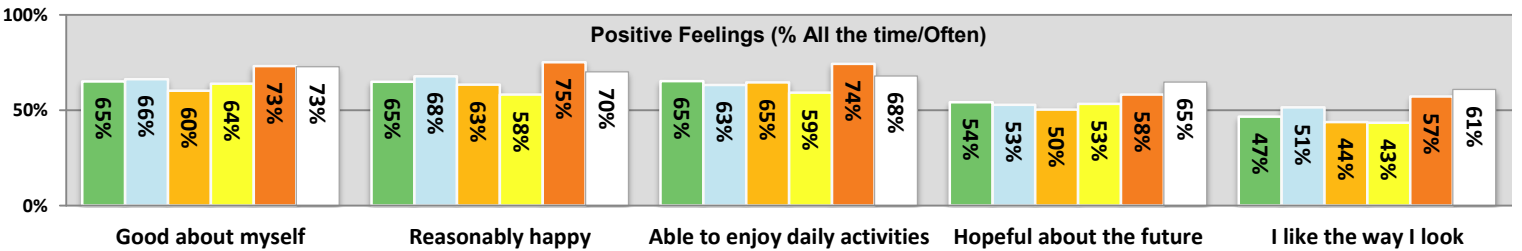


### Social and Emotional Well-being

Compared to other students, East Asian students, especially those from immigrant families, felt less positive about themselves and were more likely to experience emotional challenges and worries about their future and school work.

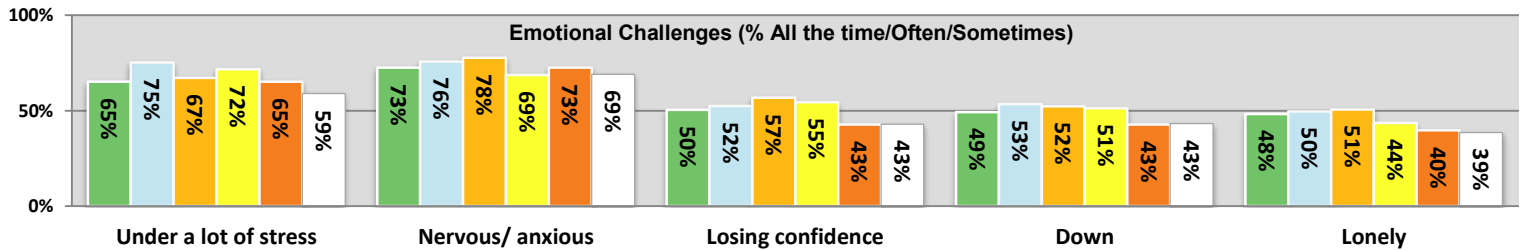
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students from immigrant families were less likely to report feeling good about themselves, and being able to enjoy their daily activities;
- students from all East Asian groups were less likely to feel hopeful about the future or like the way they look.



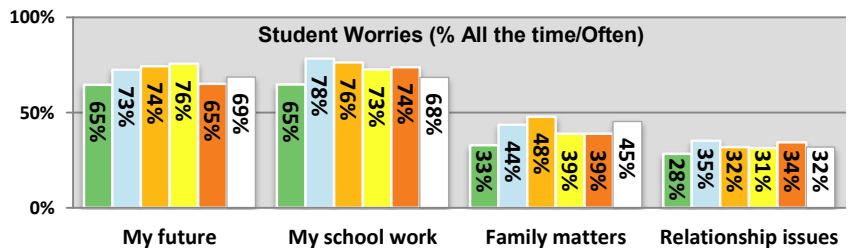
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students from immigrant families were more likely to report that they were under a lot of stress, feeling nervous or anxious, losing confidence, and being down and lonely;
- the only exceptions were South Korean students who were as likely to feel anxious or nervous, and East Asian students with Canadian-born parents who were as likely to report losing confidence, and feeling down and lonely.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- higher percentages of students from Hong Kong, South Korean, and Southeast Asian backgrounds worried about their future; they as well as those with Canadian-born parents were also more likely to worry about school work;
- on the other hand, East Asian students were as or less likely to worry about family matters and relationship issues; among East Asian sub-groups, those with origins in China seemed even less worried.



# Census Portraits: East Asian Students

## Self-Perceived Abilities and Academic Achievement

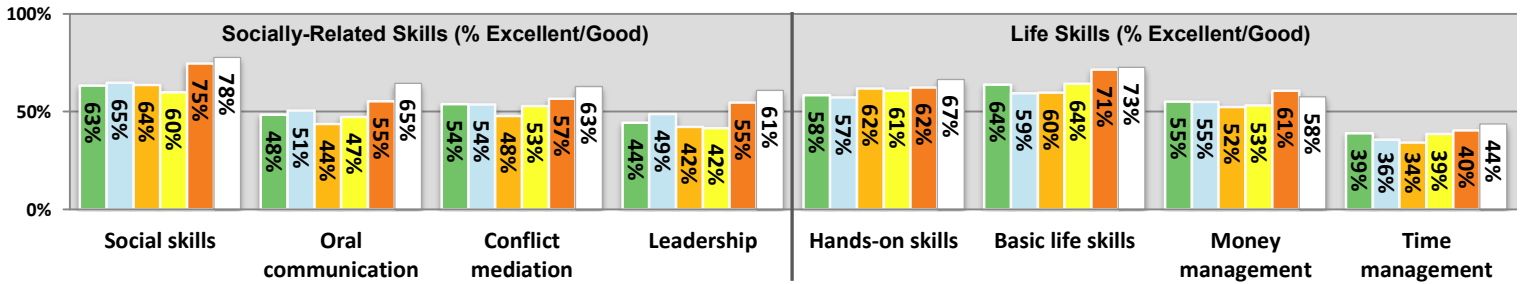
■ China ■ Hong Kong ■ Southeast Asia ■ South Korea ■ Canada ■ TDSB

### Self-Perceived Abilities: Social Skills and Life Skills

*East Asian students, especially those from immigrant families, were less likely to rate themselves highly in socially-related skills and various life skills.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students, particularly those from immigrant families, were much less likely to rate themselves excellent or good at social skills, oral communication, conflict mediation, and leadership skills;
- they also rated themselves lower in terms of life skills such as hands-on skills, basic life skills, and time management;
- the only exception was those with Canadian-born parents who rated themselves similarly as others in terms of social skills, basic life skills, and money management.

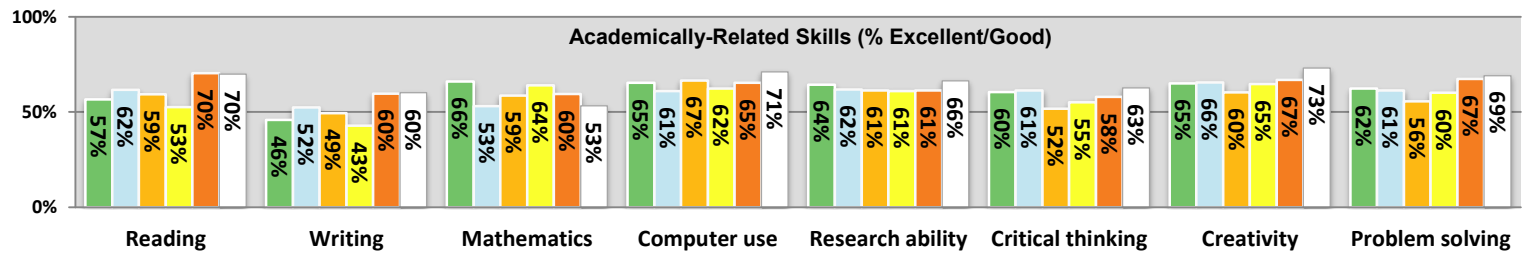


### Self-Perceived Abilities: Academic Skills

*East Asian students generally felt more confident in mathematics, but less confident in other academically-related skill areas. The exception was those with Canadian-born parents who rated themselves similarly as the general TDSB student population in literacy and problem solving.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- East Asian students from immigrant families were much less likely to rate themselves excellent or good in reading and writing, but they were more confident in mathematics;
- all East Asian students regardless of their parents' origins were less likely to rate themselves highly in other academically-related skills, especially in terms of creativity, research ability, and computer use;
- students from Southeast Asian background felt the least confident about their critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving skills;
- East Asian students with Canadian-born parents were as confident in reading, writing, and problem solving, and were more confident in mathematics but not in other academically-related areas.



### Academic Achievement (2011-12)

*East Asian students consistently performed better than the general TDSB student population academically.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- all East Asian sub-groups outperformed others on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Grade 6 tests in Reading, and particularly Writing and Mathematics;
- again, East Asian students were much more likely to succeed on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT);
- East Asian students also had much higher proportions earning 16 or more credits by the end of Grade 10.

