

Census Portraits

Understanding Our Students' Backgrounds

Ethno-Racial Series: South 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. 14/15-19



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 term South Asian refers to individuals who trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent (i.e., India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). The diaspora has a long and diverse history within Canada and as such, not all South Asians speak the same language, practice the same religion, share the same culture, or arrived in Canada under the same circumstances.

- The first group of South Asian immigrants arrived from India over 100 years ago. They were almost exclusively male and arrived via Vancouver to work as labourers, aiding in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. At that time, Canada and most of South Asia were under British Colonial rule; therefore, South Asians were able to immigrate to Canada as members of the British Commonwealth. However, as a result of anti-Asian sentiments, in 1908 Canada imposed the *Continuous Journey Regulation*, which required immigrants to arrive in Canada directly from their country of origin. This regulation stopped South Asian immigration until replaced with an immigration quota in 1951, which permitted 300 South Asians to immigrate per year.
- South Asian immigration to Canada did not expand again until the 1960s/1970s, when new criteria for immigration were established. The new system allowed many immigrants from India and Pakistan, who were skilled workers and professionals, to immigrate to Canada. The new points system introduced in the 1970s also led to increased immigration of South Asians from the Caribbean. The term Indo-Caribbean is often used to identify those who are the descendants of indentured labourers brought to the West Indies by the British.
- In contrast, the majority of Sri Lankan immigration to Canada has occurred in the past 20 years. These students often face unique challenges since many have arrived in Canada as refugees. Finally, immigration from Bangladesh only began to increase to significant numbers 15 years or so ago.

South Asians are the largest visible minority population in Canada (2006 Federal Census) and account for 4% of the Canadian population. More than two-thirds (69%) self-identify as East Indian, 9% as Pakistani, 8% as Sri Lankan, 4% as Punjabi, 3% as Tamil, and 2% as Bangladeshi. The majority of South Asian immigrants are concentrated in Ontario and British Columbia, more specifically in Toronto and Vancouver.

Ethno-Racial and Family Background

South Asian students were the largest visible minority group in the TDSB. Although nearly half (45%) had parents with university degrees, most of the families were in the two lowest income brackets.

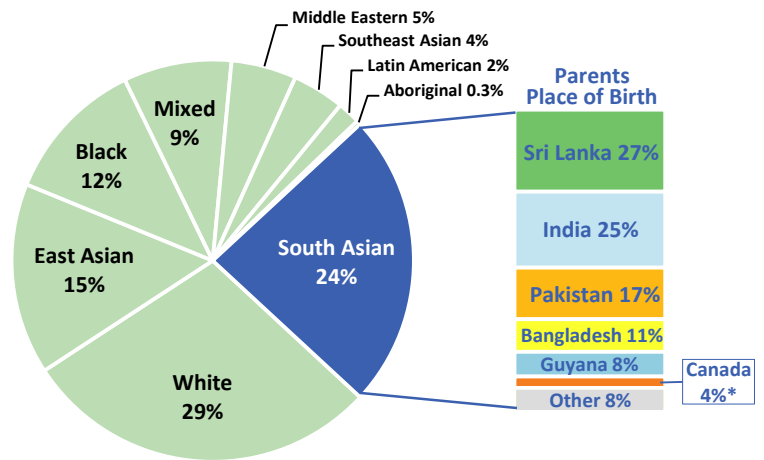
- South Asian students made up 24% (about 61,000 students) of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) population.
- Most of their parents were from Sri Lanka (27%), India (25%), Pakistan (17%), Bangladesh (11%), and (Guyana 8%). Just 4% had one or both parents born in Canada.
- Most students with Guyanese (83%), Sri Lankan (80%), and Indian (55%) parents were born in Canada, compared to 45% of students with Pakistani or Bangladeshi parents.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students were as or more likely to live with two parents (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent);
- students of Pakistani background were much more likely to have multiple siblings;
- Sri Lankan and Guyanese parents were less likely to have university degrees, while the other groups were more likely;
- more South 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 of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan background.

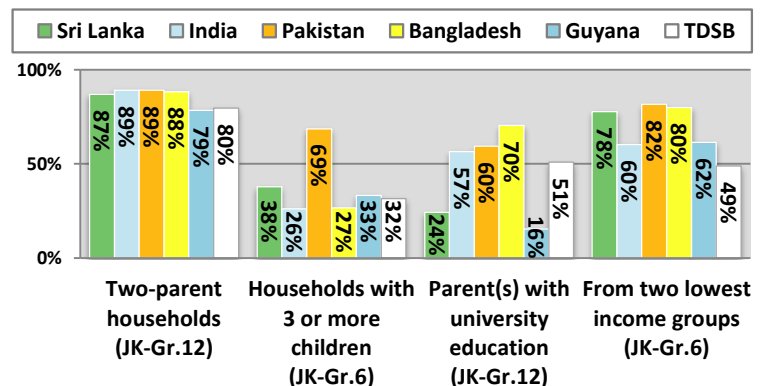
Learning about One's Culture (Gr. 7-12 Students)

Compared to the general TDSB student population more South Asian, except for Bangladeshi, students agreed that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (68%), help them enjoy school more (55%), and help them do better in school (46%). Those of Guyanese background in particular agreed that it would make their learning more interesting (71%) and help them enjoy school more (60%), and Pakistani students were more likely to agree it would help them do better in school (51%).



*Canada includes one or both parents born in Canada

Family Background



Census Portraits: South Asian Students

Life in School



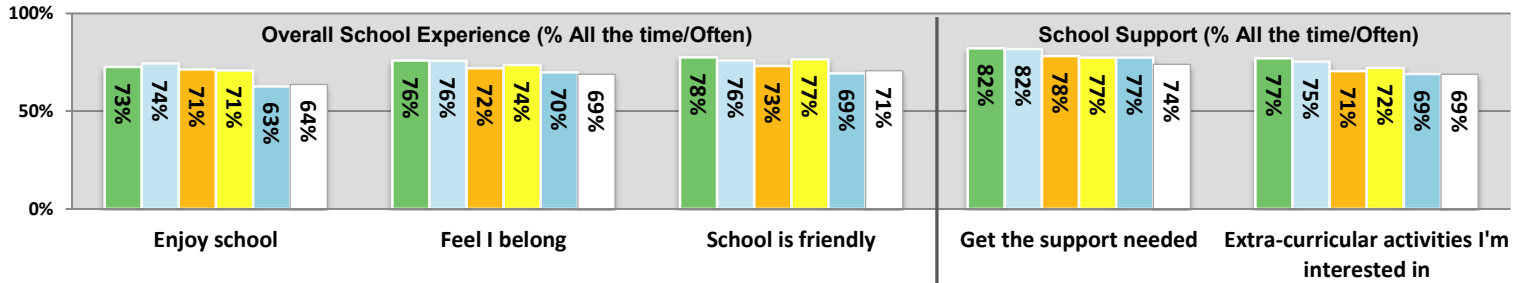
Student Perceptions of School

South Asian students were as or more satisfied than the general TDSB population about their overall school experience and the support they received from school.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- students of Pakistani and Guyanese backgrounds held similar perceptions about their overall school experience and the support they received from school;
- the perceptions of Sri Lankan, Indian, and Bangladeshi students

were even more positive in terms of enjoyment of school, sense of belonging, school being a friendly place, and getting the support they needed from school or the extra-curricular activities they were interested in at school;



Student Participation at School

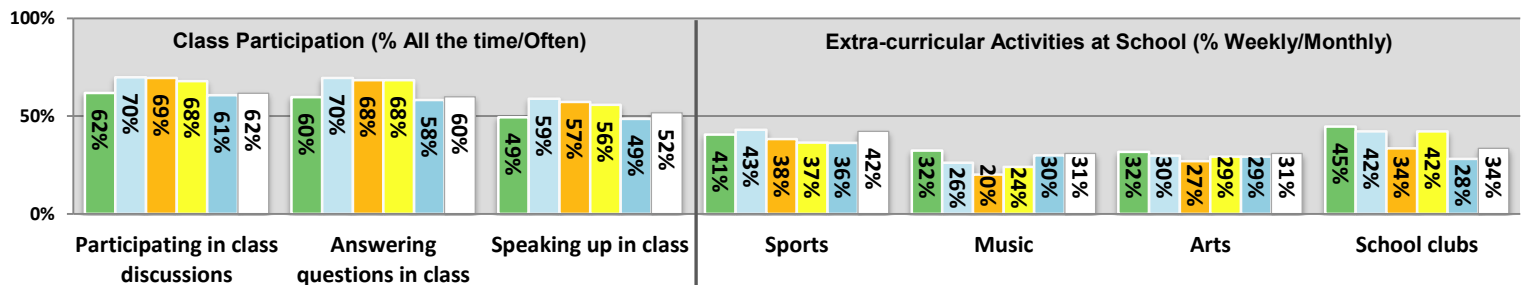
South Asian students, except for those of Sri Lankan and Guyanese background, felt comfortable participating in class. They were more active in school clubs, while Pakistani and Bangladeshi students were less active in sports or music activities in school.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students felt more comfortable participating, answering questions, and speaking up in class, with the exception of those of Sri Lankan and Guyanese backgrounds whose comfort level was similar to the general TDSB student population;
- regarding extra-curricular activities, South Asian students, other

than those of Pakistani and Guyanese descent, were more likely to join school clubs;

- however, Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi students were less likely to participate in music activities; also fewer Guyanese and Bangladeshi students took part in sports.



Safety at School

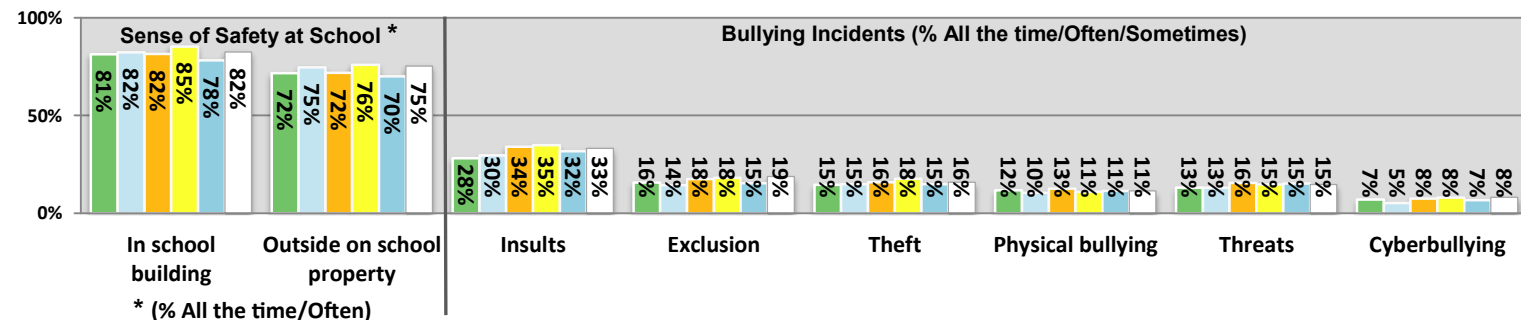
South Asian students, with a slight exception of those of Guyanese background, felt as safe as others in school.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students felt as safe as others inside the school building, and outside on school property;
- the only small exception was those of Guyanese background who

felt less safe outside the school building;

- South Asian students did not experience more bullying incidents, whether the incidents were socially, physically, or cyber-related.



Census Portraits: South Asian Students

Life in School (Cont'd)

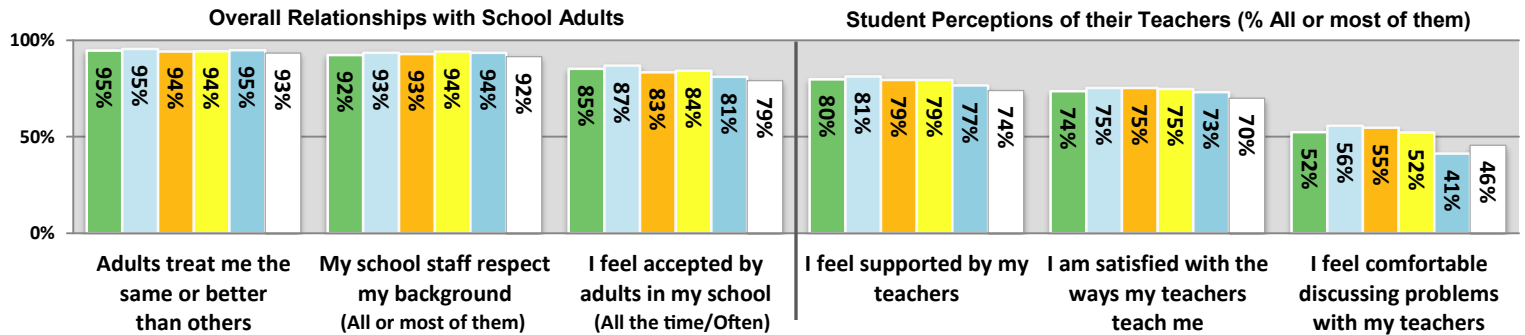


Relationships with School Adults

South Asian students, generally felt more positive than others about their school adults and teachers. While Bangladeshi and Pakistani students were less likely to report having a school adult(s) that they could turn to for personal support, Guyanese students were more likely, although they seemed less comfortable discussing problems with their teachers.

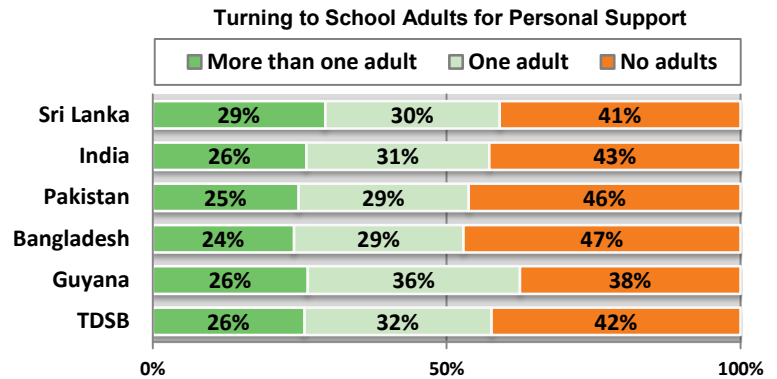
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students felt equally or more positive about their school adults; in fact, except for the Guyanese, they were more likely to feel accepted by adults at school;
- South Asian students also had more positive perceptions of their teachers; those of Guyanese background, however, were less likely to feel comfortable discussing problems with their teachers.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students of Guyanese descent were more likely to have one or more adults who they could turn to for personal support, help, or advice;
- on the other hand, higher proportions of Bangladeshi and Pakistani students did not have a school adult they felt comfortable to turn to.

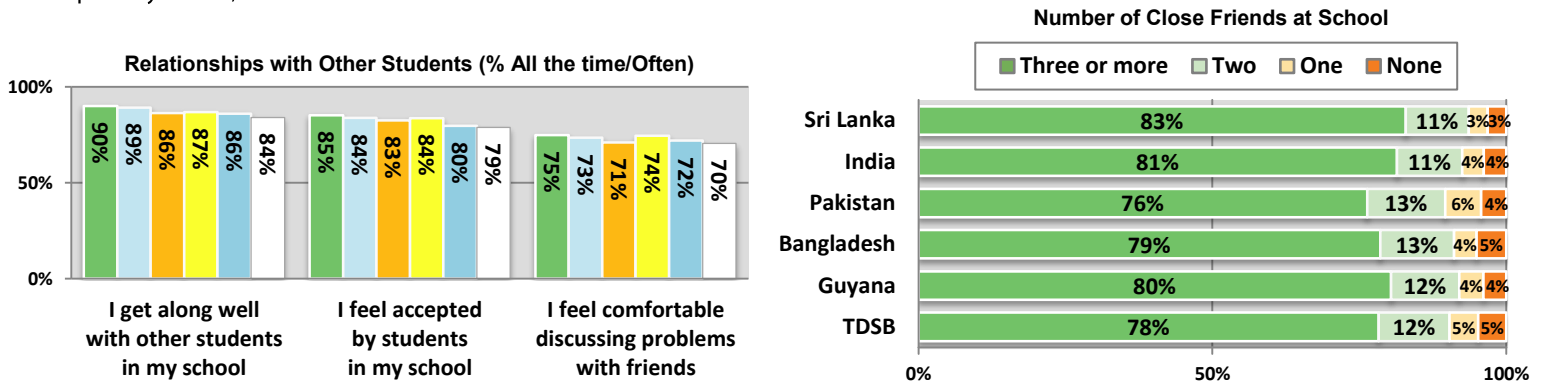


Relationships with Peers

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

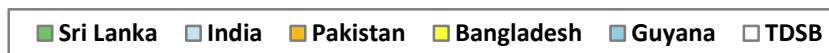
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students, especially those of Sri Lankan and Indian backgrounds, felt more positive about their relationships with other students, particularly in terms of getting along well with and feeling accepted by others;
- regarding the number of close friends at school, the finding for South Asian students was about the same, except for Sri Lankan students who reported having more close friends at school.



Census Portraits: South Asian Students

Life Outside of School

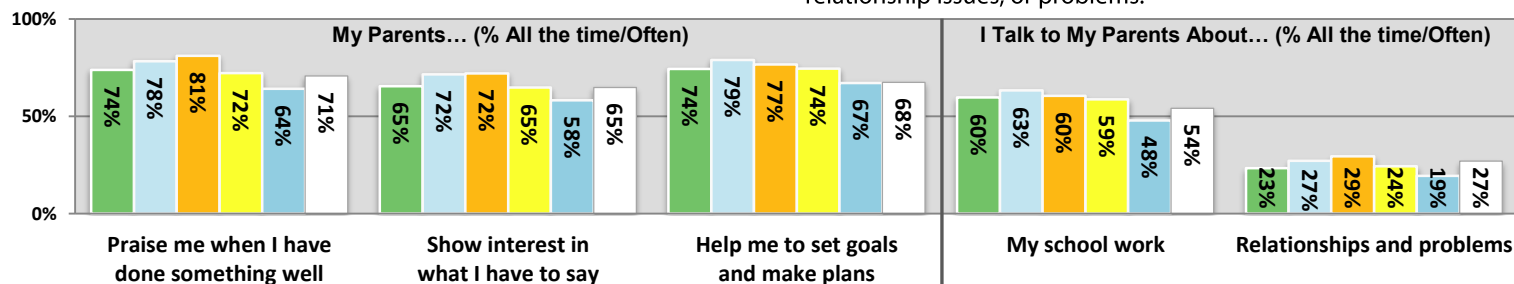


Relationships with Parents

South Asian students, except for those of Guyanese descent, were in general more likely than others to report having positive relationships with their parents.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students, other than Guyanese, were as or more likely to report that their parents often praised them when they had done well, showed interest in what they had to say, or helped them set goals and make plans;
- South Asian students were more likely to talk with their parents about school work, and as likely to talk about relationships or problems; again the exception was those of Guyanese descent who were less likely to talk with their parents about their school work, relationship issues, or problems.

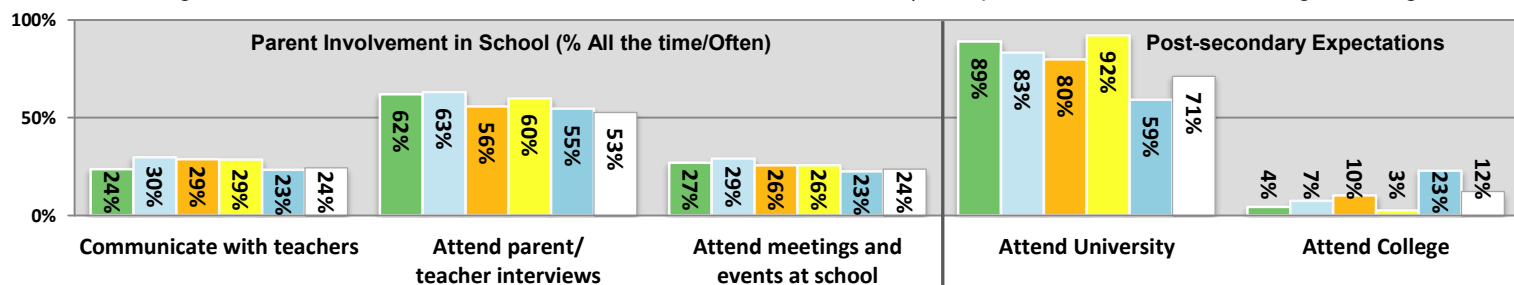


Parent Involvement and Expectations

South Asian parents were actively involved in their child's school. Except for those of Guyanese descent, they were much more likely to expect their children to attend university.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian parents were as or more likely to communicate with their child's teachers, and to attend parent/teacher interviews, school meetings, and school events;
- South Asian parents were much more likely to expect their child to attend university, with the exception of the Guyanese who were more likely to expect their child to attend college after high school.

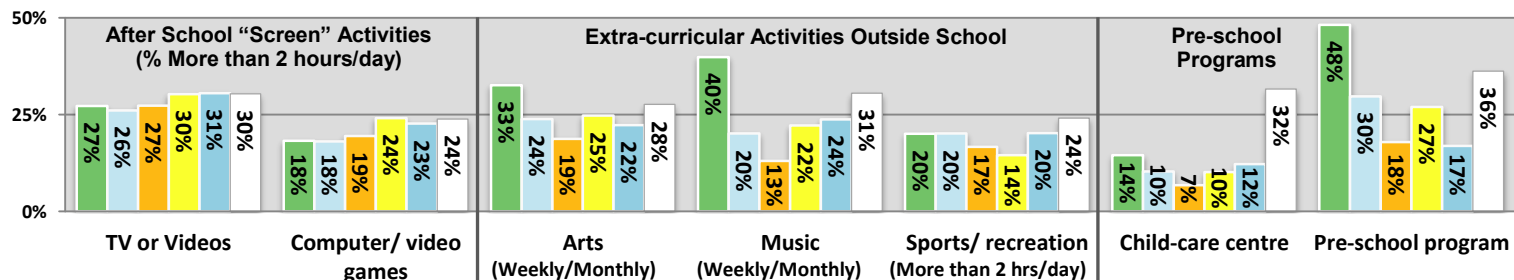


Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Sri Lankan, Indian, and Pakistani students did not spend as much time as others on computer games. South Asian students, except for the Sri Lankan, were less likely to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of school, or to have attended child-care centres or pre-school programs when they were young.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- similar proportions of South Asian students spent over 2 hours per day watching TV or videos; but Sri Lankan, Indian, and Pakistani students were less likely to spend the same amount of time on computer games;
- fewer South Asian students participated in extra-curricular activities outside of school; the only exception was Sri Lankan students who were more actively involved in arts and music, but not in sports or recreation activities outside of school;
- regarding pre-school activities, South Asian students were much less likely to have attended child-care centres or pre-school programs, although a higher percentage of Sri Lankan parents reported their child had attended a pre-school program.



Census Portraits: South Asian Students

Student Health and Wellness

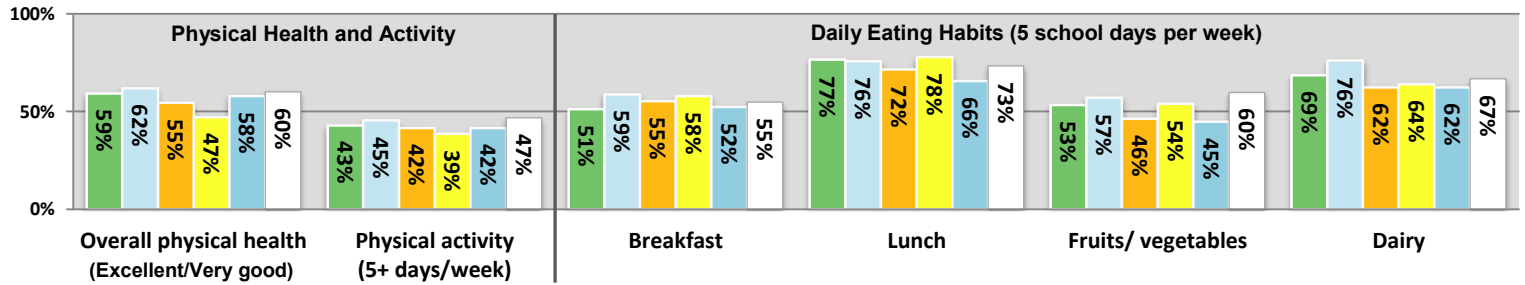


Physical Health

Compared to other students, fewer Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Guyanese students reported being physically healthy or active. In general, South Asian students were less likely to report having fruits and vegetables in their daily diet.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- lower percentages of Bangladeshi and Pakistani students reported their physical health being excellent or very good; these students as well as those of Guyanese descent were also less likely to have daily physical activity;
- while South Asian students were as likely to eat breakfast and lunch for at least five days a week, fewer reported having fruits and vegetables on a daily basis; also Pakistani and Guyanese students were less likely to have dairy products on a regular basis.

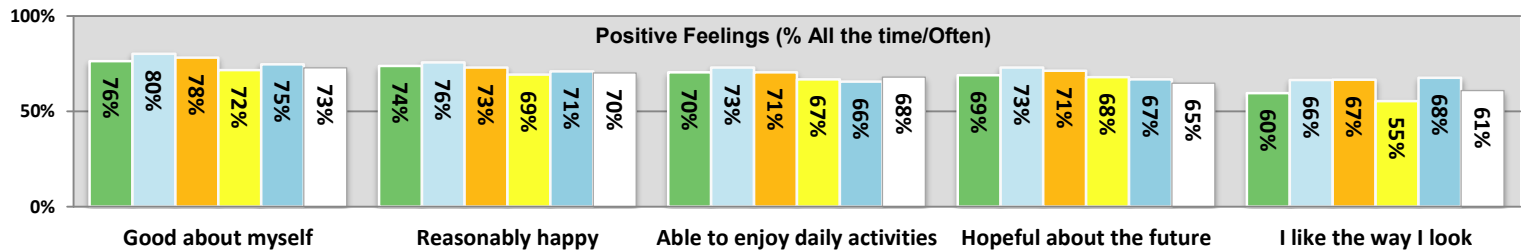


Social and Emotional Well-being

South Asian students were as or more likely to feel positive about themselves and as or less likely to experience emotional challenges, with the exception of Bangladeshi students who seemed less confident about themselves. However, more South Asian students than others worried about their future, school work, and family matters.

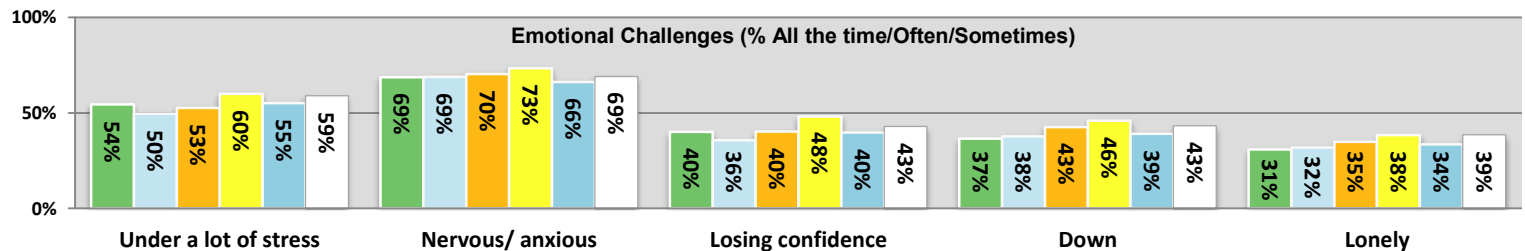
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students felt as or more positive about themselves, especially among those of Indian and Pakistani descent;
- the only exception was Bangladeshi students with a lower percentage reporting liking the way they look.



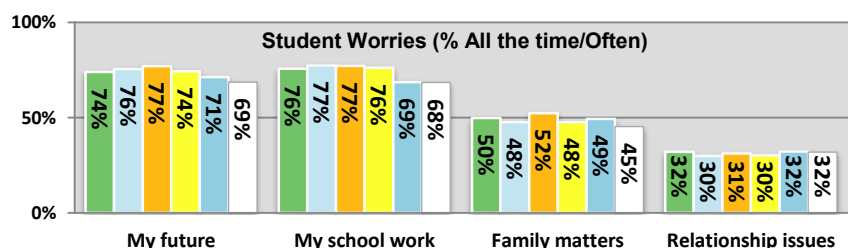
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- South Asian students were as or less likely to report feeling under a lot of stress, nervous or anxious, losing confidence in themselves, down or lonely; this is especially the case for Sri Lankan and Indian students with smaller percentages reporting having experienced some of these emotional challenges;
- the only exception was Bangladeshi students; while they were as likely to report having different emotional challenges, they were more likely to admit losing confidence in themselves.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- more South Asian students, other than those of Guyanese descent, worried about their future and school work;
- Pakistani and Sri Lankan also seemed more worried about family matters;
- regarding worries about relationship issues, the results for South Asian students were about the same.



Census Portraits: South Asian Students

Self-Perceived Abilities and Academic Achievement

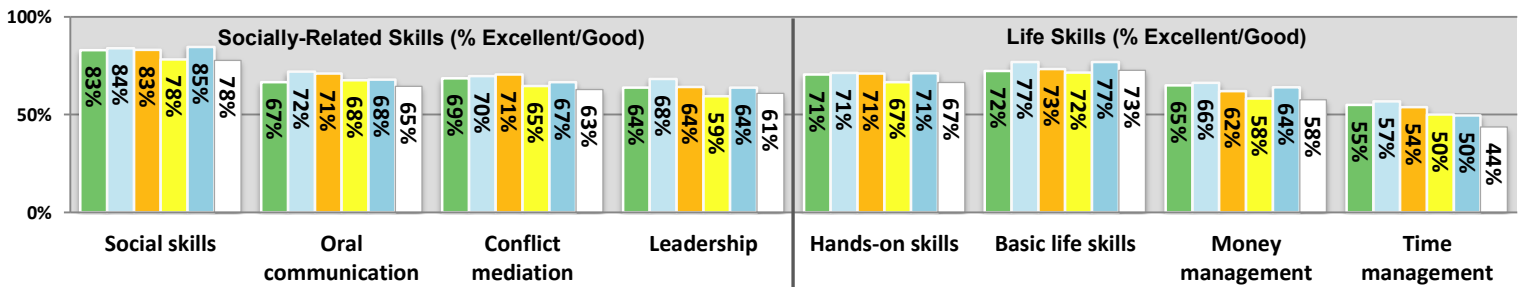
■ Sri Lanka ■ India ■ Pakistan ■ Bangladesh ■ Guyana □ TDSB

Self-Perceived Abilities: Social Skills and Life Skills

In general, South Asian students rated themselves highly in socially-related skills as well as in money- and time-management skills.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- more South Asian, except for Bangladeshi, students rated themselves excellent or good at social skills and conflict mediation;
- while most South Asian sub-groups were as likely to find themselves good at oral communication and leadership skills, Indian students were even more likely to rate themselves high in these two areas;
- regarding hands-on and basic life skills, South Asian students also rated themselves as well as others;
- but they had higher proportions who rated themselves excellent or good at money- and time-management skills.

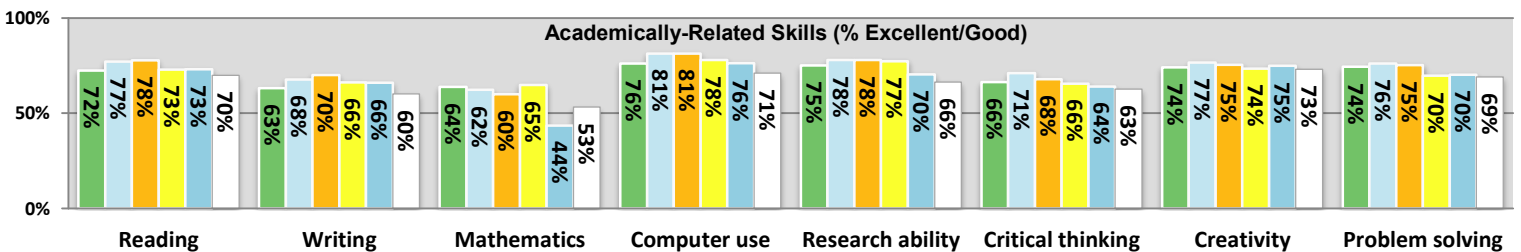


Self-Perceived Abilities: Academic Skills

South Asian students were confident in all academically related skill areas, except for Guyanese students who rated themselves low in mathematics.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- all South Asian sub-groups, except for Guyanese, were much more likely to rate themselves excellent or good at mathematics;
- also higher proportions of different sub-groups, except for Sri Lankan students, rated themselves highly in reading and/or writing;
- South Asian students, especially those of Indian and Pakistani background, seemed more confident in such areas as research, critical thinking, and problem solving.



Academic Achievement (2011-12)

South Asian students, except for those of Guyanese background, performed as or better than the general TDSB population academically.

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- most South Asian sub-groups outperformed on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Grade 6 tests in Reading, Writing, and particularly Mathematics;
- those of Guyanese background, however, underperformed on the EQAO Grade 6 Mathematics test;
- South Asian students were as or more successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT);
- other than the Guyanese, they also had higher proportions earning 16 or more credits by the end of Grade 10.

