

# Census Portraits

*Understanding Our Students' Backgrounds*

## Ethno-Racial Series: White 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. 14/15-21



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)

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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

While successive waves of immigration continue to shape patterns of settlement in Canada, historically, newcomers were of White/Caucasian background from British and American origins. In the mid-1800s the Irish Potato Famine caused a significant wave of Irish immigration. Other European groups followed in the late 1800s and throughout the 1900s. Yet, there have been two peak waves which greatly expanded Canada's agricultural settlement and populations in the key gateway cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver:

- the first occurred in the early 1900s with most new Canadians coming from Northern Europe (British, Irish) and the United States of America; and,
- the second followed World War II with arrivals from Northern Europe (British, Dutch) and Western Europe (German, French) in the 1950s, and, increasingly Southern Europe (Italian, Greek, Portuguese) well into the 1960s.

Post-war immigration policy changes removed admission barriers that existed since the mid-1920s leading to the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons largely from Central and Eastern Europe (Polish, Yugoslavian, Hungarian), Southern Europe and Jewish immigrants who survived the Holocaust.

Immigration policy shifted again in the late 1960s from a preference for European immigration to a points system. As a result, the proportion of European immigrants declined dramatically. By the 1970s more arrivals were coming from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. The mid-1980s and 1990s saw an increased share of Central and Eastern Europeans including refugees from Poland, Romania, and increasingly, the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the former Yugoslavia, and Albania into the early 2000s. As the leading immigrant-receiving centre, Toronto has become home to many of these more recent arrivals.

### Ethno-Racial and Family Background

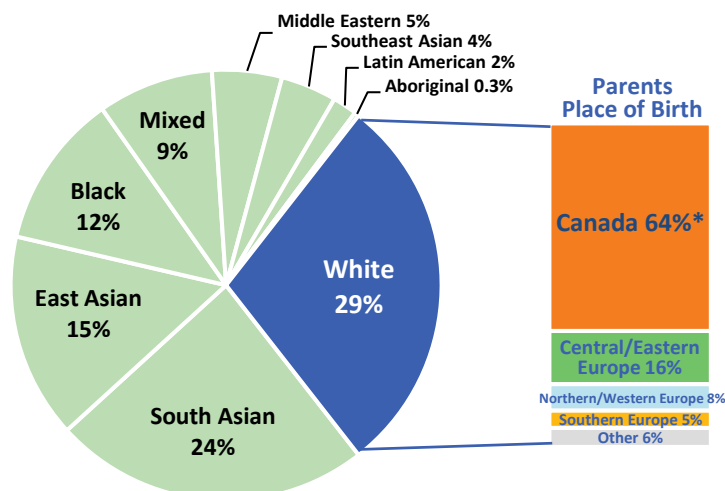
*Students who identified as White were the largest ethno-racial group in the TDSB. Two thirds of the White students (67%) had parents with university degrees, while a minority of families (17%) were in the two lowest income brackets.*

White students made up 29% (about 73,900 students) of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) population.

- Almost two thirds (64%) of the White students had both of their parents born in Canada, 16% in Central/Eastern Europe, 8% in Northern/Western Europe, and 5% in Southern Europe. The remaining 6% had one or both parents born in other countries.
- Most White students were born in Canada, especially among those with Canadian-born parents (98%), with parents from Southern Europe (92%), with parents from Northern/Western Europe (89%), and with parents from Central/Eastern Europe (52%).

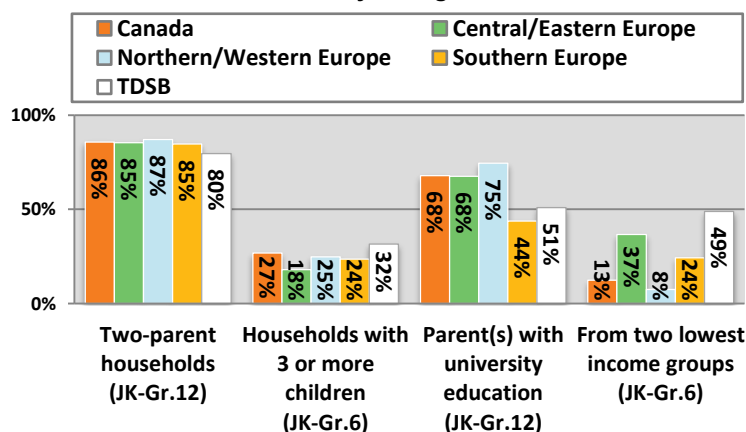
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were more likely to live with two parents (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent);
- they were less likely to have multiple siblings, particularly those from Central/Eastern Europe (18%);
- White parents from Canada, Central/Eastern Europe, and Northern/Western Europe were much more likely to have university degrees, whereas parents from Southern Europe were less likely;
- lower proportions of White students were from the two lowest income groups (i.e., with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000 or between \$30,000-\$49,999).



\*Canada includes one or both parents born in Canada

### Family Background



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

Compared to TDSB students of other ethno-racial backgrounds, White students as a whole were less likely to see the need to learn more about their own culture. The only exception was those of Central/Eastern or Southern European background, who were as or more likely as the general TDSB population to agree that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (67% and 69%), help them enjoy school more (55% and 57%), and help them do better in school (42% and 45%).

# Census Portraits: White Students

## Life in School

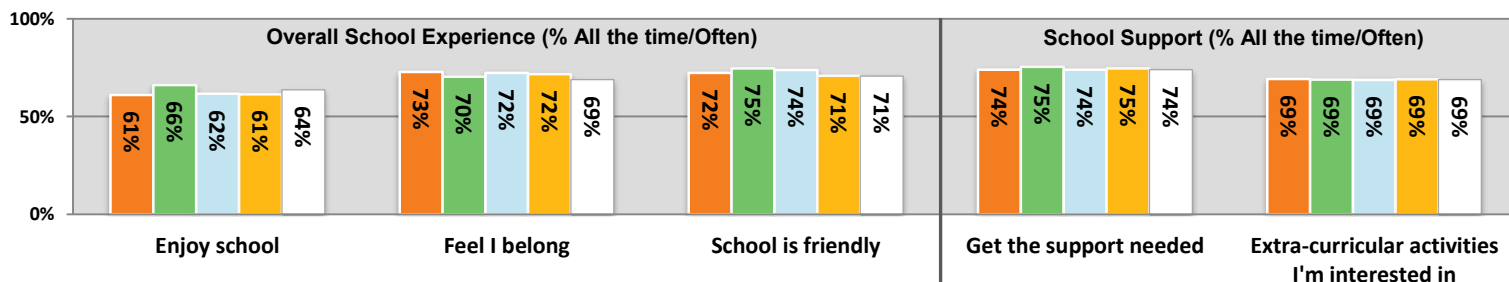
Canada Central/Eastern Europe Northern/Western Europe Southern Europe TDSB

### Student Perceptions of School

*White students were as satisfied as the general TDSB population about their overall school experience and the support they received from school.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were as likely to feel that they enjoyed or belonged in school, that school was a friendly place, and that they received the support they needed from school;
- White students were also as likely to feel positive about the extra-curricular activities offered by their school.

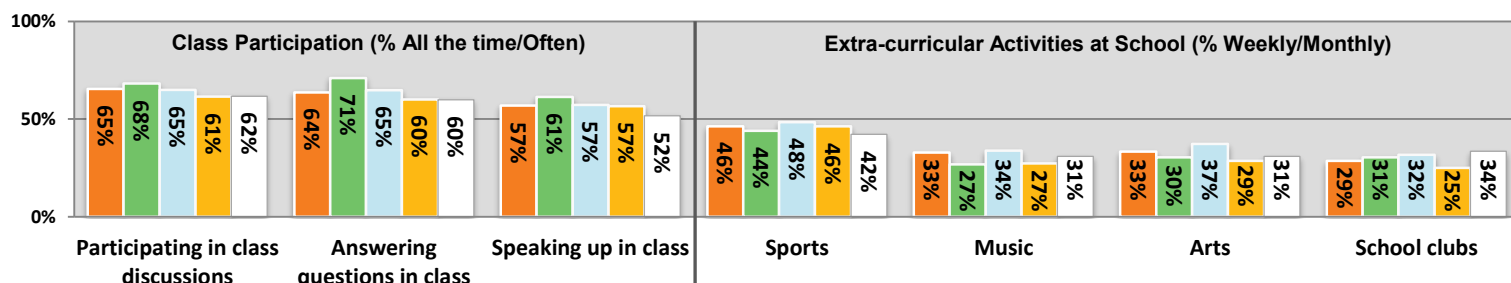


### Student Participation at School

*White students felt more comfortable speaking up in class compared to the overall TDSB population. They were as active as others in extra-curricular activities, although those of Northern/Western European descent seemed more active in sports and arts.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students felt as comfortable taking part in class discussions with those from Central/Eastern Europe feeling more comfortable;
- in terms of answering questions and especially speaking up in class, almost all sub-groups of White students felt more comfortable;
- a similar proportion of White students were actively involved in various extra-curricular activities, except for Northern/Western European students who were more active in sports and arts, while White Canadian and Southern European students seemed less likely to participate in school clubs.

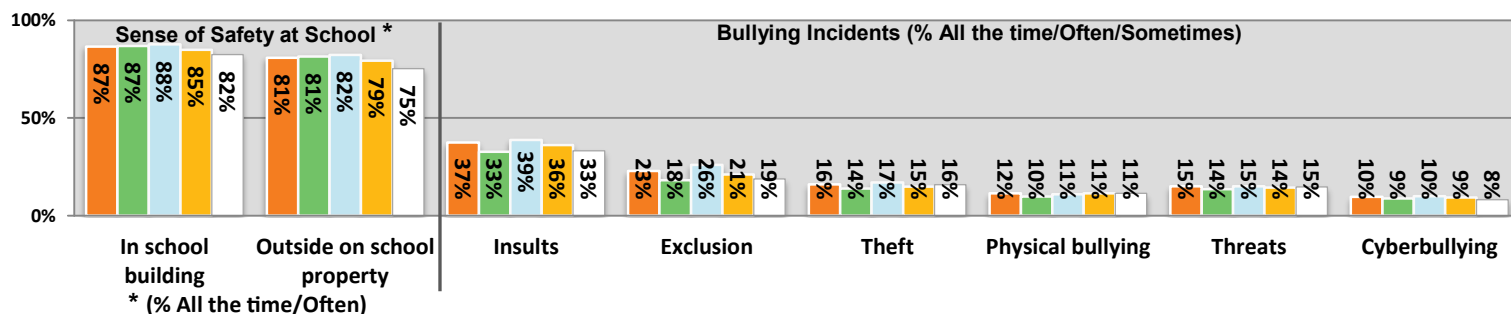


### Safety at School

*White students felt more safe than others at school.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students felt more safe at school whether it was inside or outside the school building;
- while White students generally did not experience more bullying incidents, students of Northern/Western European background were more likely to report having experienced insults and exclusion by their peers.



# Census Portraits: White Students

## Life in School (Cont'd)

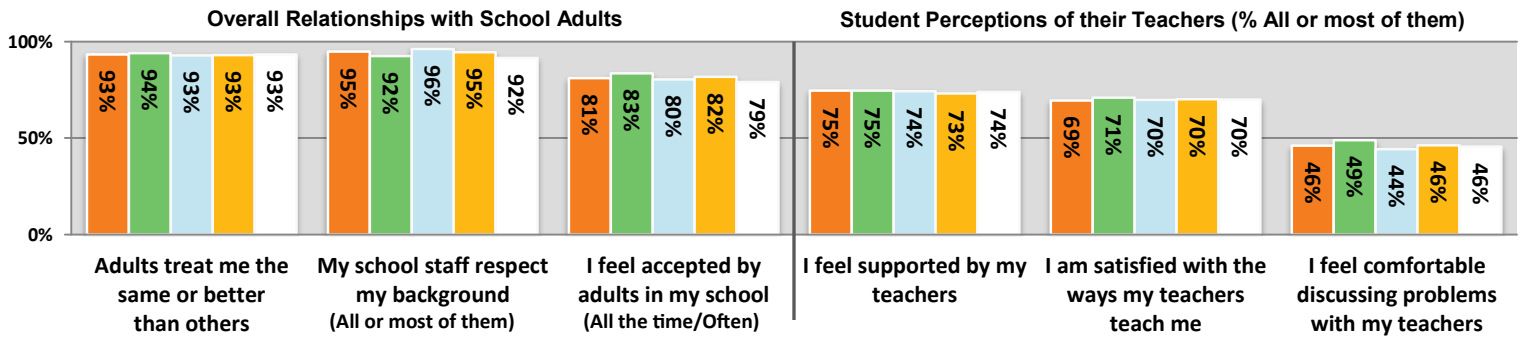
Canada Central/Eastern Europe Northern/Western Europe Southern Europe TDSB

### Relationships with School Adults

*White students felt as positive as others about their school adults and teachers. They, except for those of Central/Eastern European background, were more likely than others to have one or more school adults who they could turn to for personal support.*

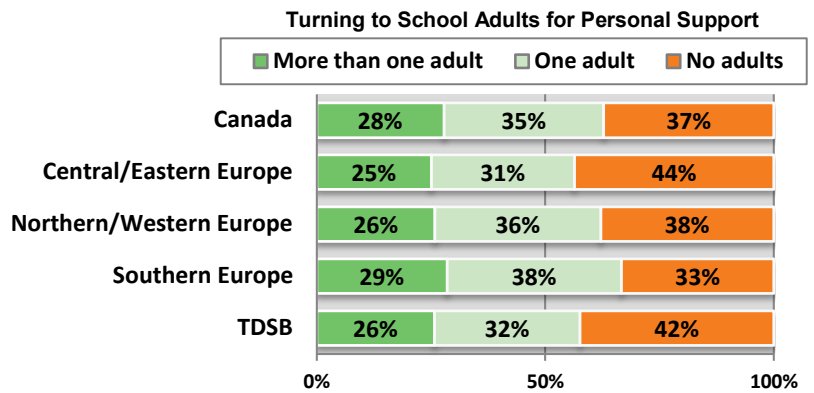
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

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



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were more likely to have at least one school adult who they could turn to for personal support, help, or advice;
- the only exception was those of Central/Eastern European descent who were as likely to have one or more adults they felt comfortable to turn to at school.

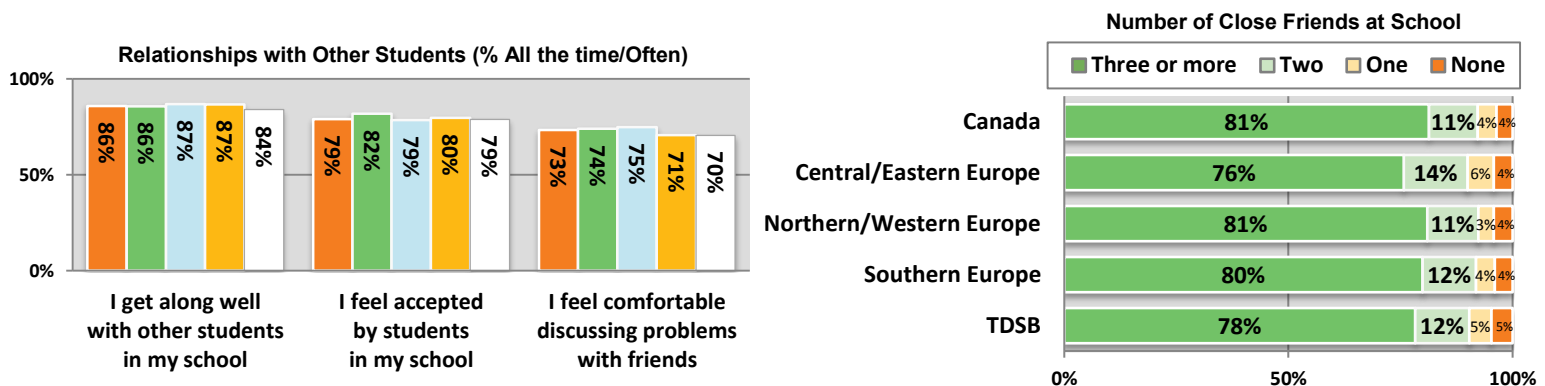


### Relationships with Peers

*White students felt as positive as others about their peer relationships at school. They had about the same number of close school friends as others.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students felt as positive about their relationships with other students in terms of getting along well, feeling accepted by their peers, and feeling comfortable discussing problems with friends;
- similar proportions of White students reported having three or more close friends at school.





# Census Portraits: White Students

## Life Outside of School

Canada Central/Eastern Europe Northern/Western Europe Southern Europe TDSB

### Relationships with Parents

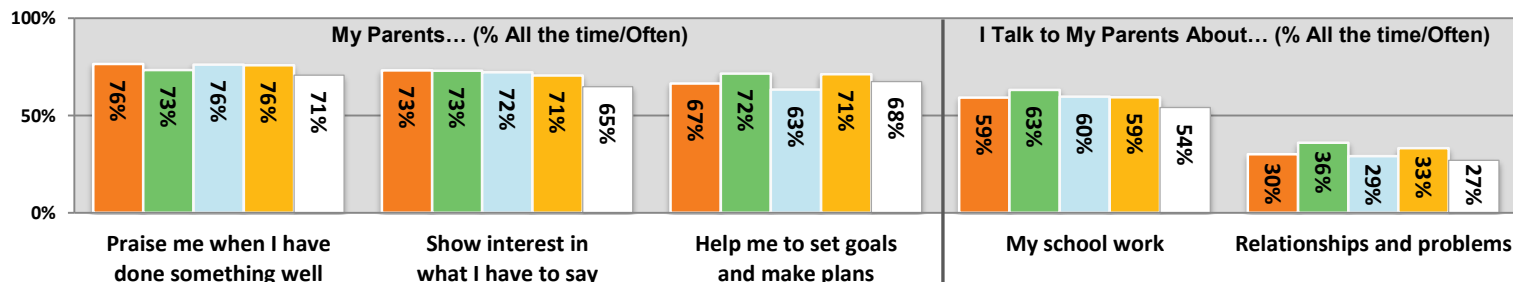
*White students were more likely than others to report having positive relationships with their parents.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were more likely to agree that their parents often praised them when they had done well, and showed interest in what they had to say;
- they generally reported that their parents helped them set goals and make plans, except for those of Northern/Western European

background who were less likely;

- higher proportions of White students often talked with their parents about school work and relationship problems, particularly those of Central/Eastern European and Southern European descents.

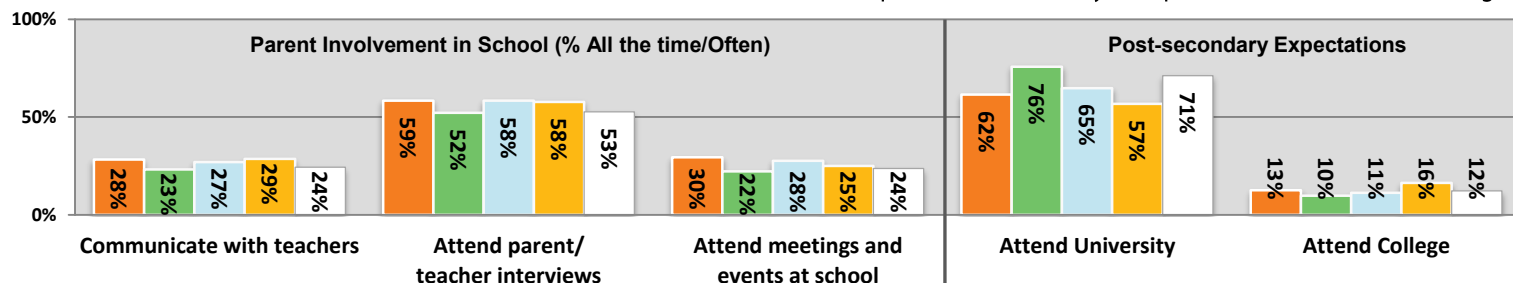


### Parent Involvement and Expectations

*White parents were as or more involved than others at their child's school. While Central/Eastern European parents were more likely than the general TDSB population to expect their child to attend university, White parents from other sub-groups were less likely. On the other hand, White parents were as likely to expect their child to attend college.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White parents were as or more likely to communicate with teachers, attend parent/teacher interviews, and attend events or meetings at school;
- Central/Eastern European parents were more likely to expect their child to attend university, other White parents were less likely;
- White parents were as likely to expect their child to attend college.



### Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

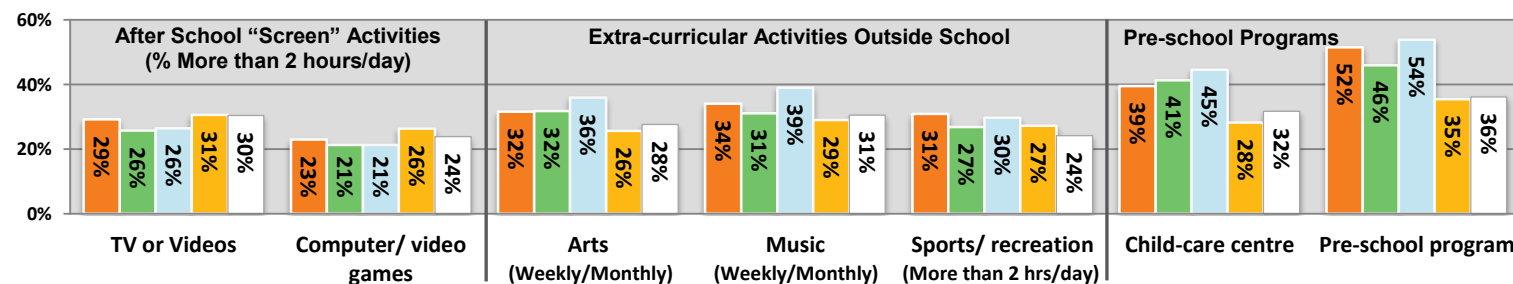
*White students spent similar or less amount of time than others on screen activities. In general, White students were more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of school, and to have attended child-care and pre-school programs when they were young.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were as or less likely to spend over 2 hours per day watching TV/videos, or playing computer or video games;
- White students were as likely to participate in music, arts, or sports and recreation activities outside of school, except for Northern/

Western European students who were more likely;

- higher proportions of White students attended a child-care centre or pre-school program when they were young, with the exception of Southern European students.



## Student Health and Wellness

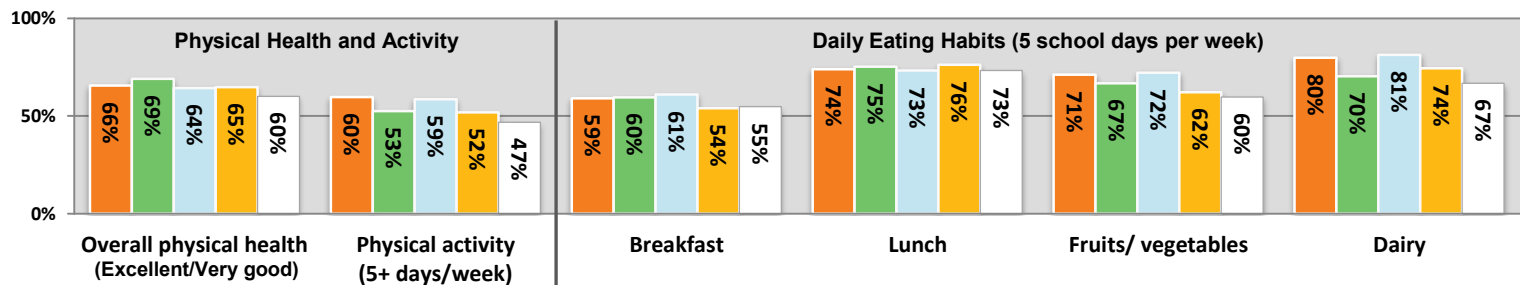
Canada Central/Eastern Europe Northern/Western Europe Southern Europe TDSB

### Physical Health

*White students were more likely than other students to report being physically healthy and active. They were also as or more likely to report eating breakfast and lunch as well as fruits, vegetables, and dairy products on a regular basis.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students reported better levels of physical health and higher levels of weekly physical activities;
- White students were as or more likely to eat breakfast and lunch five days a week;
- while Southern European students were as likely to eat fruits and vegetables five days a week, all other sub-groups were much more likely; also, White students regardless of background were much more likely to have dairy products regularly.

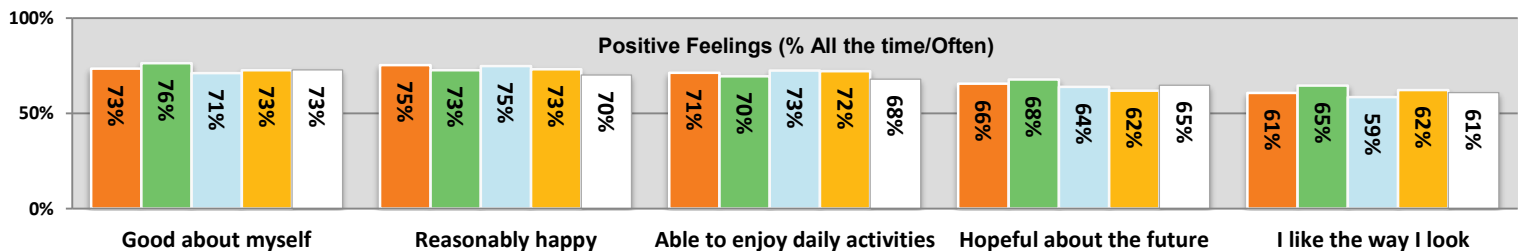


### Social and Emotional Well-being

*White students generally feel positive about themselves. They were as likely as others to experience emotional challenges, and as or less likely to worry about their future, school work, family matters, or relationship issues.*

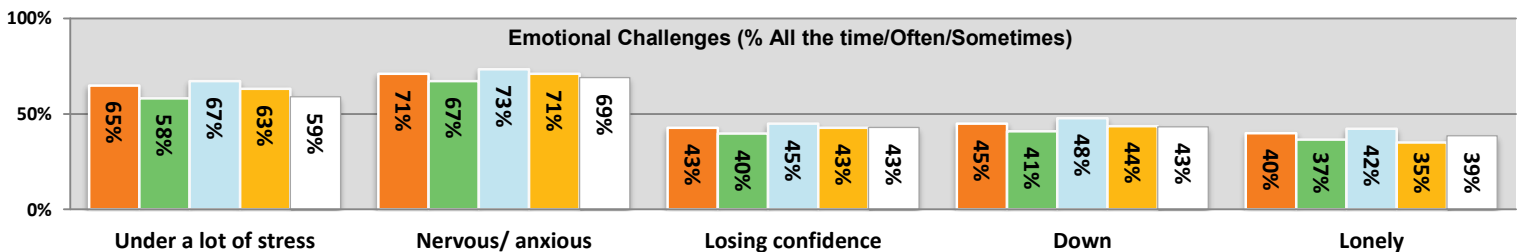
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students from all sub-groups were as or more likely to feel positive about themselves, to feel reasonably happy, to enjoy their daily activities, to be hopeful about the future, and to like the way they look.



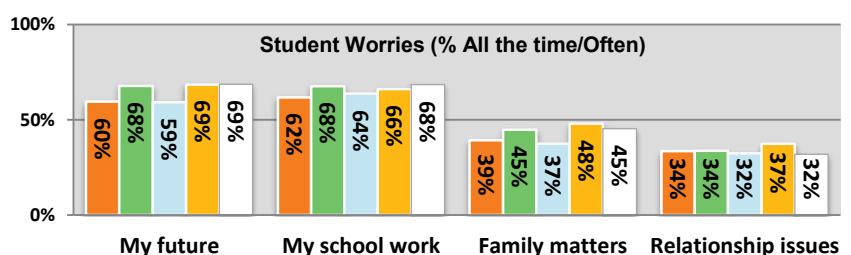
Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- generally White students were as likely to report that they were under a lot of stress, nervous and anxious, losing confidence in themselves, feeling down, or feeling lonely;
- some minor exceptions were students of Northern/Western European descent who were more likely to report feeling stressed, nervous and anxious, and feeling down.



Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White Canadian and Northern/Western European students were less likely to report being worried about their future, school work, or family matters, although they were as likely to worry about relationship issues;
- Central/Eastern and Southern European students were as likely to worry about their future, school work, and family matters, and Southern European students were more likely to worry about relationship problems.



# Census Portraits: White Students

## Self-Perceived Abilities and Academic Achievement

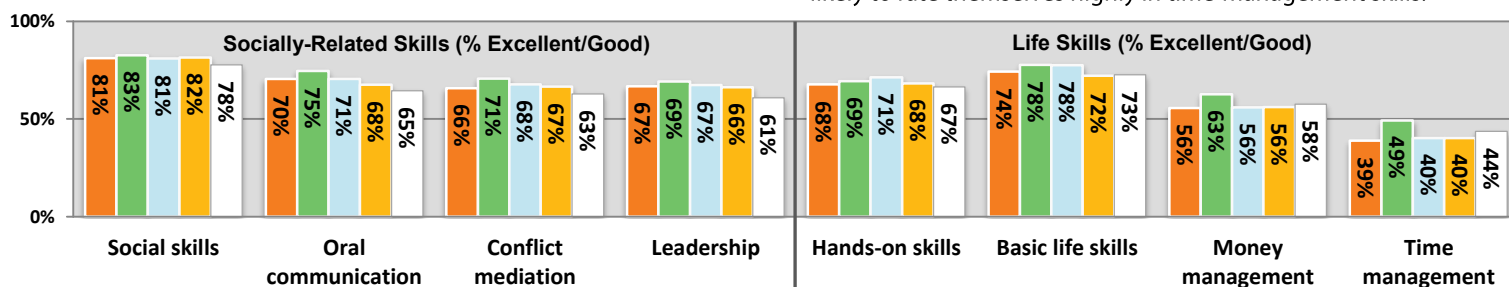
Canada Central/Eastern Europe Northern/Western Europe Southern Europe TDSB

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

*White students rated themselves more highly than others in socially-related skills, and as good or better in various life skills, except for White Canadian students who saw themselves doing less well in time-management skills.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White students were more likely to rate themselves excellent or good at social skills, oral communication, conflict mediation, and leadership skills;
- they were as or more likely to rate themselves excellent or good at hands-on skills, basic life skills, money- and time-management skills;
- the only exception was White Canadian students who were less likely to rate themselves highly in time-management skills.

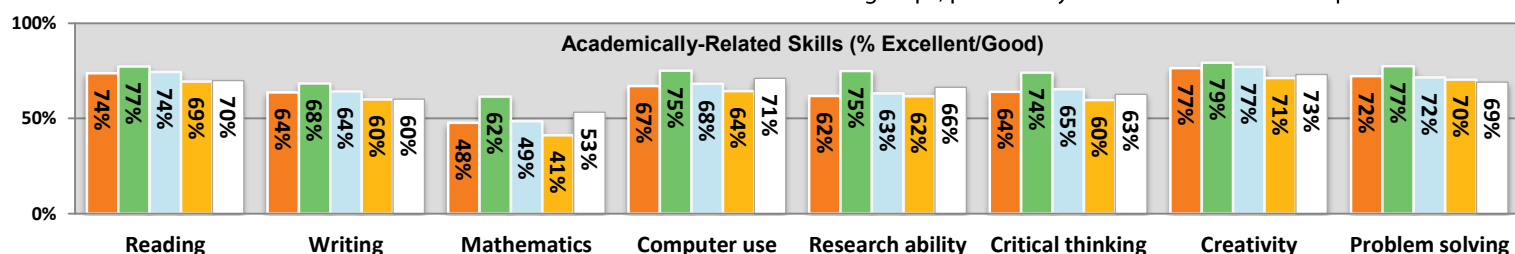


### Self-Perceived Abilities: Academic Skills

*White students were as or more likely to rate themselves excellent or good at different academically-related skill areas, except in mathematics. Students of Central/Eastern European background rated themselves even more highly in all these areas including mathematics.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- Central/Eastern European students were more confident than others about their reading, writing, mathematics, computer use, research ability, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving skills;
- White Canadian and Northern/Western students were as likely as other students to rate themselves highly in all academically-related skills, except in mathematics;
- Southern European students felt less confident than other White sub-groups, particularly in mathematics and computer use.



### Academic Achievement (2011-12)

*White students outperformed the general TDSB population academically, except for those of Southern European origin who performed as well as others on the provincial Grade 6 tests.*

Compared to the overall TDSB student population:

- White Canadian, Central/Eastern European, and particularly Northern/Western European students performed better on the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Grade 6 tests in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, whereas Southern European students performed as well as others on these tests;
- White students were much more successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), and higher proportions of them earned 16 or more credits by the end of Grade 10.

