

Census Portraits

Understanding Our Students' Ethno-racial Backgrounds



Research & Information Services

Aboriginal Students

Black Students

East Asian Students

Latin American Students

Middle Eastern Students

South Asian Students

Southeast Asian Students

White Students



Census Portraits: Understanding Our Students' Ethno-racial Backgrounds

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The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has the world's most racially diverse student population. While earlier TDSB studies have shown diversity *among* racialized groups, there is also great diversity *within* racialized groups, as each is made up of sub-groups from varied cultural, linguistic and/or religious backgrounds or countries of origin. 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 racialized group; and
- to target interventions to ensure the needs of all students are addressed effectively and equitably.

Content

The Census Portraits folder contains individual portraits for the following groups represented in the TDSB's student population:¹

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| ● Aboriginal | ● Middle Eastern |
| ● Black | ● South Asian |
| ● East Asian | ● Southeast Asian |
| ● Latin American | ● White |

Each portrait describes the background, experiences, and achievement levels of the major ethno-cultural sub-groups within each racialized group² under the following sections:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Historical Context ³ | • Life in School |
| • Ethno-racial/Family Background | • Student Success |
| • Life Outside of School | • Highlights of Census Findings |

Data Sources

The findings generated in these portraits are based on data combined from three internal sources - *2006 Student Census*, *2008 Parent Census*, and the Board's central academic achievement databases. Information on students' cultural backgrounds is derived from the Board's Census data and is based mainly on their parents' country of birth. For more information about the *2006 Student Census* and *2008 Parent Census*, refer to the TDSB website: www.tdsb.on.ca/studentcensus.

Acknowledgements

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- Aboriginal – Catherine Pawis, Aboriginal Education, TDSB
- Black – Dr. Carl James, Professor, Faculty of Education, York University
- East Asian – Maria Yau, Research & Information Services, TDSB
- Latin American – Dr. Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, Assistant Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), & Cristina Guerrero, Graduate Student, OISE, University of Toronto
- Middle Eastern – Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov, Associate Professor, OISE, University of Toronto
- South Asian – Sangeetha Navaratnam, Graduate Student, OISE, University of Toronto
- Southeast Asian – Maria Yau, Research & Information Services, TDSB
- White – Lisa Rosolen and Dr. Rob Brown, Research & Information Services, TDSB

¹ Students identifying as having a Mixed racial background were not included in the analysis because the varied combinations within this group were so great that it was not possible to identify a few major sub-groups for comparison.

² For Aboriginal students, no sub-group breakdown is provided due to the small number of students who identified themselves as Aboriginal in the *Census*. Therefore, the Aboriginal portrait compares the findings for Aboriginal students as a whole with those of the overall population.

³ Historical background is provided for a better understanding of the various racial groups and does not imply causality of student experiences and academic achievement.



Census Portraits Aboriginal Students

Aboriginal • Black • East Asian • Latin American • Middle Eastern • South Asian • Southeast Asian • White

Some 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 than that of the general 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 (GTA).

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

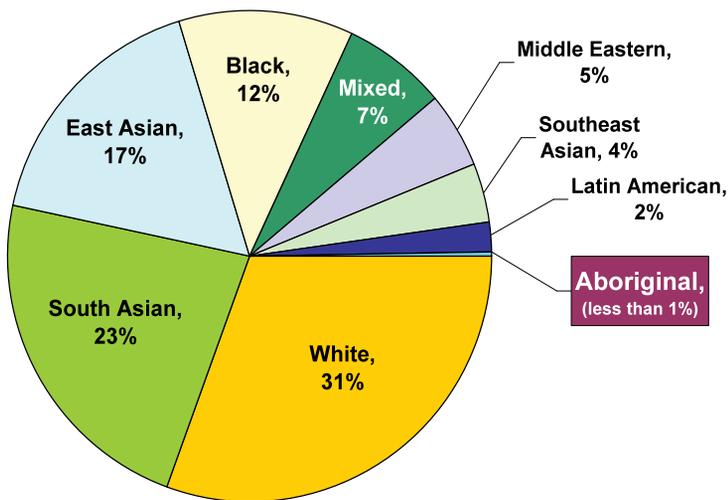
Ethno-racial and Family Background

- Aboriginal students make up less than 1% of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) population (fewer than 1,000 students).

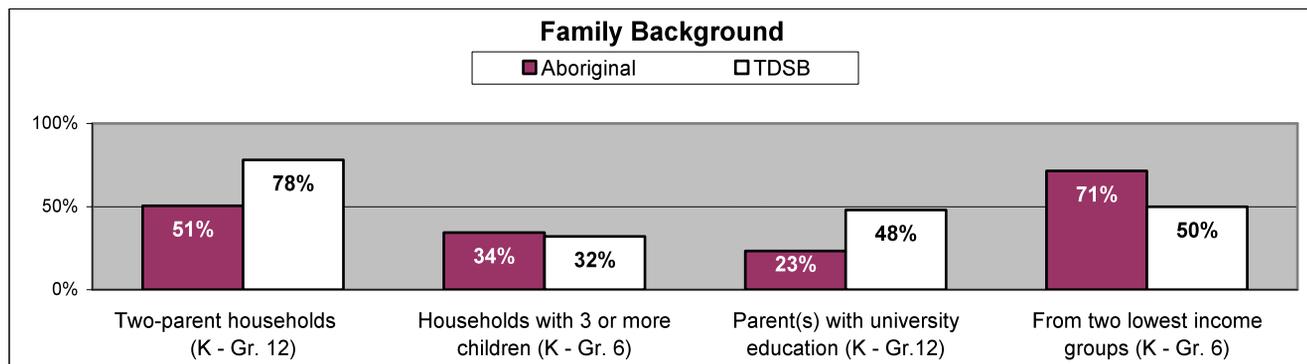
- Parents of almost all Aboriginal students (96%) were born in Canada.

Compared to the overall population:

- Aboriginal students are less likely to come from two-parent households (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent);
- fewer Aboriginal parents have university degrees;
- a higher proportion of Aboriginal students come from the two lowest income groups (i.e., with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000, or between \$30,000-\$49,999).



Students' Background

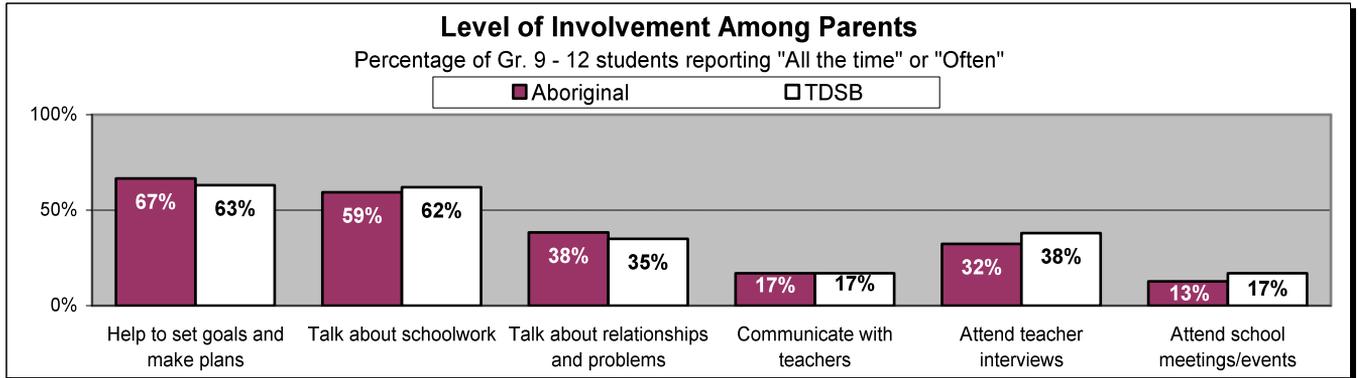


Life Outside of School

Parent Involvement In and Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

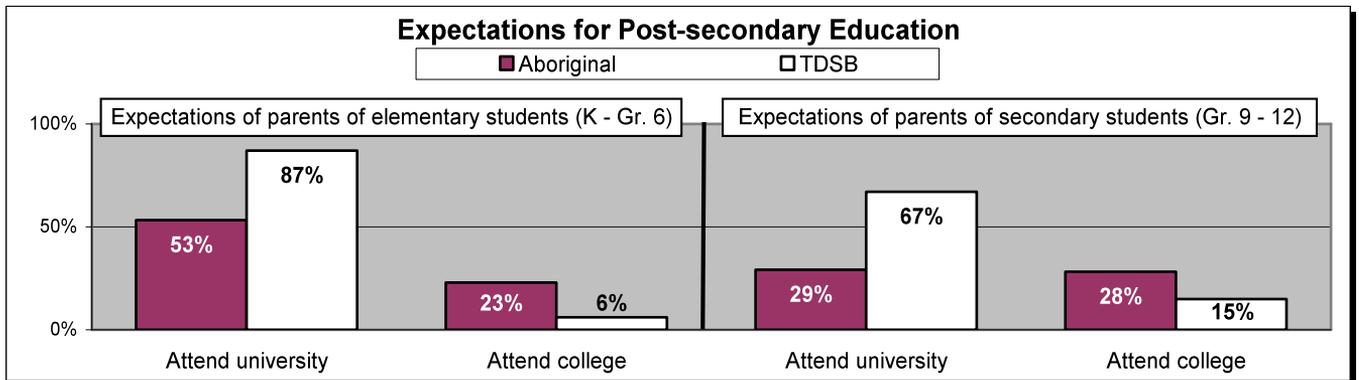
- Aboriginal parents are as likely to help their children set goals and make plans, talk about school work, relationships and problems, communicate with teachers, and attend school meetings/events;
- fewer Aboriginal parents attend teacher interviews.



Post-secondary Expectations

Compared to the overall population:

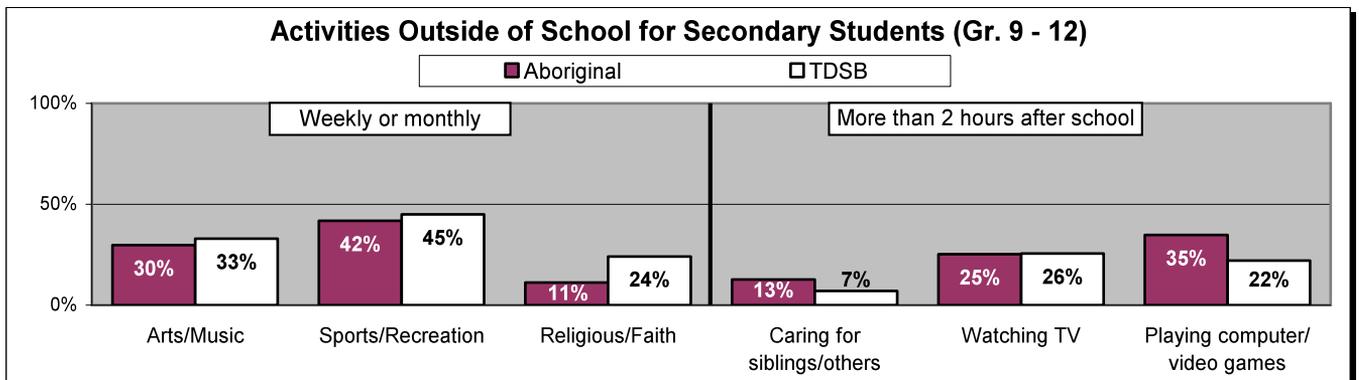
- Aboriginal parents are much less likely to expect their children to attend university and more likely to expect them to attend college;
- they are less likely to expect their children to pursue post-secondary education; however 25% of Aboriginal parents (versus 13% for the overall population) are "not sure" about their expectations for their children's post-secondary study.



Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

- outside of school, Aboriginal students participate as frequently in arts and music and sports and recreation, and are less involved in religious activities;
- Aboriginal students spend more time caring for siblings and playing computer/video games;
- they spend less time per week on homework and studying (7 hours for Aboriginal students, compared to 12 hours for the overall population).

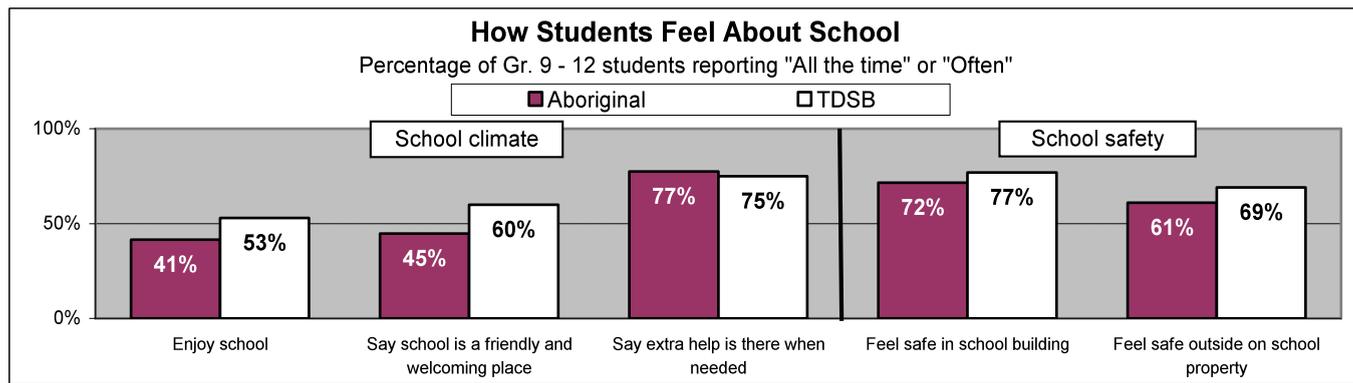


Life in School

School Climate and School Safety

Compared to the overall population:

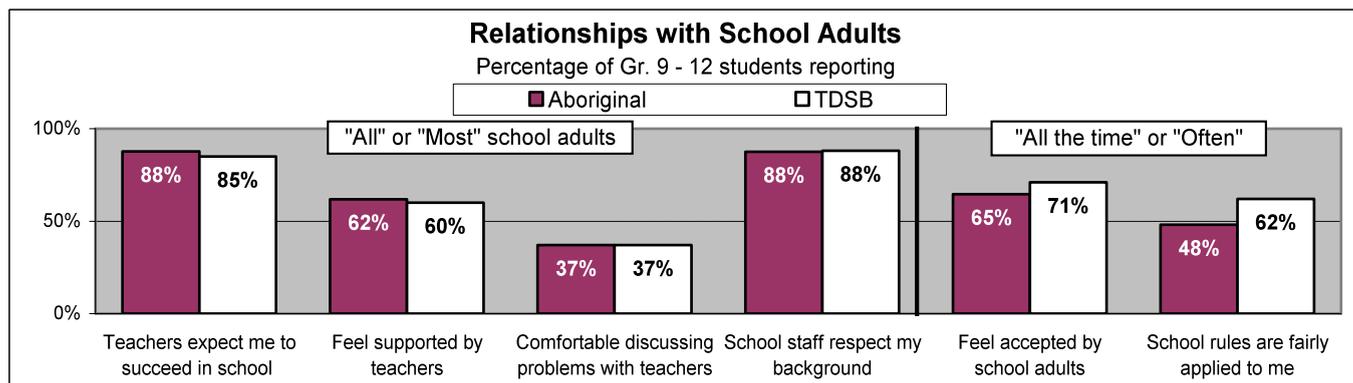
- Aboriginal students are as likely to say extra help is available in school when needed;
- they are less likely to enjoy school, say school is a friendly and welcoming place, or feel safe at school.



Relationships with School Adults

Compared to the overall population:

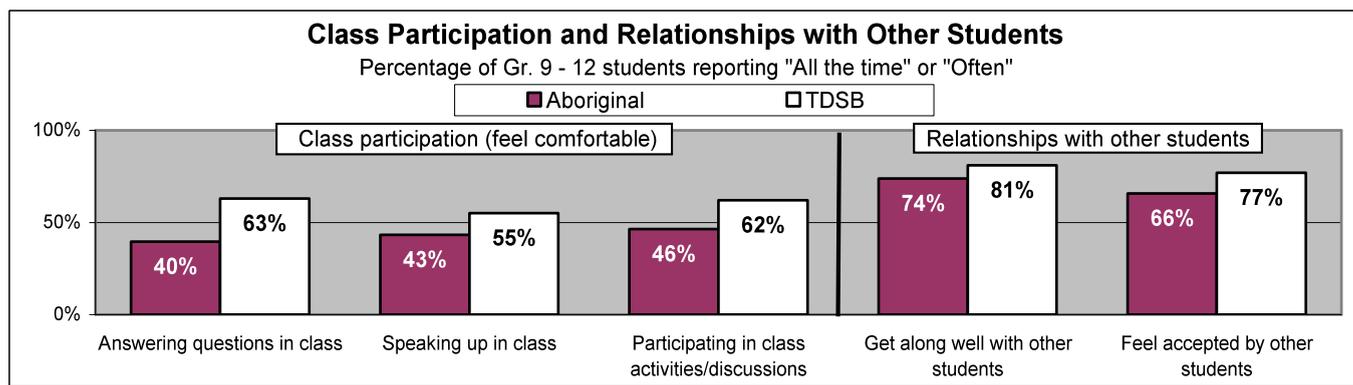
- Aboriginal students are generally as positive about school adults, but fewer feel accepted by school adults, or feel that school rules are fairly applied to them.



Class Participation and Relationships with Other Students

Compared to the overall population:

- Aboriginal students are much less comfortable answering questions, speaking up, and participating in class;
- fewer Aboriginal students are positive about relationships with other students.



Learning about One's Culture/Race

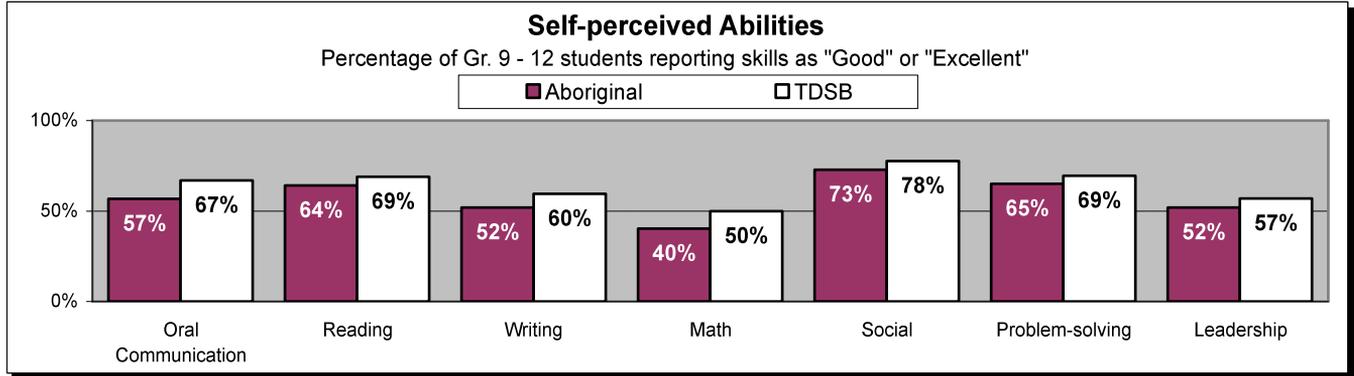
Aboriginal students say that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (76%), help them enjoy school more (63%), and help them do better in school (49%).

Student Success

Self-perceived Abilities

Compared to the overall population:

- a lower percentage of Aboriginal students rate themselves well in different skill areas, including oral communication, reading, writing, math, social, and leadership skills.



Academic Achievement

Due to the very small number of self-identified Aboriginal students for each grade (less than 50), their academic results are not presented graphically to avoid misinterpretation when comparisons are made. Nevertheless, despite their small numbers, there are indications that a higher proportion of Aboriginal students are highly at-risk academically. For example:

- based on the 2007-08 Gr. 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results, 80% or more of self-identified Aboriginal students did not meet the provincial standard (Level 3) on the Gr. 6 EQAO Reading, Writing or Math tests;
- according to the 2006-07 Gr. 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) results, 50% of Aboriginal students passed the test compared to 71% of the overall population;
- less than half (47%) of Aboriginal students have earned at least 15 credits by the end of Gr. 10, compared to 69% of the overall population. This means that they are less likely to graduate on time.

(Note: Caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the above percentages for Aboriginal students due to the small number of students examined at individual grade levels).

Highlights of Census Findings

Compared to the overall population:

- Aboriginal students are less likely to live with two parents or to have university educated parents and are more likely to live in lower income households;
- their parents are as likely to be involved in their children's education, but they are less likely to expect their children to pursue post-secondary studies;
- fewer Aboriginal students feel positive about school climate or school safety, and fewer feel that school rules have been fairly applied to them;
- they are less likely to feel comfortable participating in class and are less positive about relationships with other students;
- Aboriginal students spend more time caring for siblings or family members and playing video games, and less time on homework or studying;
- they are also less confident about their abilities in many areas;
- academically, a higher proportion of Aboriginal students are highly at-risk.

Census Portraits

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www.tdsb.on.ca/studentcensus

