

# 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:<sup>1</sup>

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| ● 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 group<sup>2</sup> under the following sections:

- |                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Historical Context <sup>3</sup> | • 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](http://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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 South Asian Students

## Some 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.

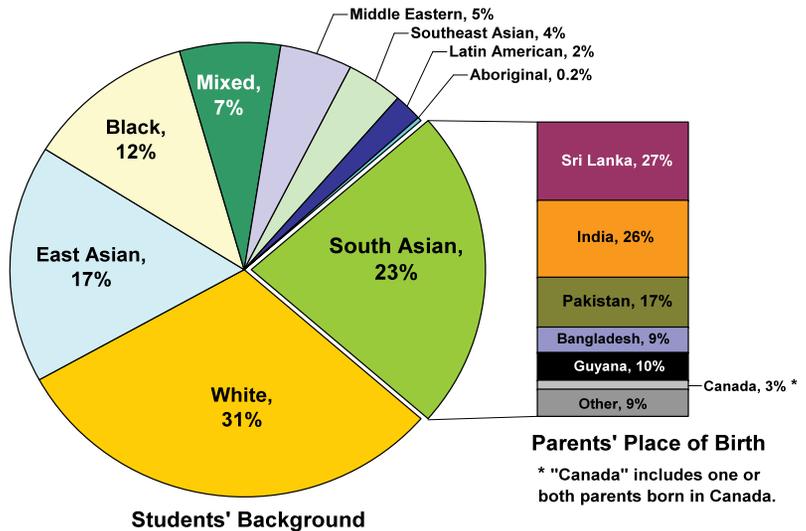
The first group of South Asian immigrants arrived from India over 100 years ago. They were almost exclusively male and arrived via Vancouver to work as labourers, aiding in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. At that time, Canada and most of South Asia were under British Colonial rule; therefore, 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 these individuals who are the descendents 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 due to the fact that 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 vast majority of South Asian immigrants are concentrated in Ontario and British Columbia more specifically in the large metropolitan areas of Toronto and Vancouver.

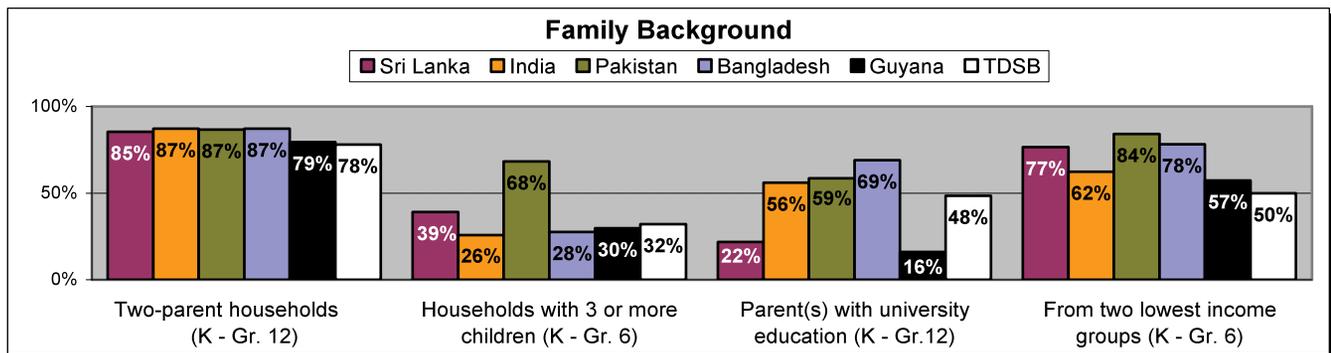
## Ethno-racial and Family Background

- South Asian students make up 23% of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) population (about 61,000 students).
- Most of their parents are from Sri Lanka (27%), India (26%), Pakistan (17%), Guyana (10%), and Bangladesh (9%). Just 3% have one or both parents born in Canada.
- Most students with Guyanese (76%) and Sri Lankan (70%) parents were born in Canada, compared to half (50%) of students with Indian parents, and fewer than half of students with Bangladeshi (38%), and Pakistani (32%) parents.



Compared to the overall population:

- South Asian students are 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 are much more likely to have multiple siblings;
- Sri Lankan and Guyanese parents are less likely to have university degrees, while the other groups are more likely;
- more South Asian 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) especially those of Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi background.

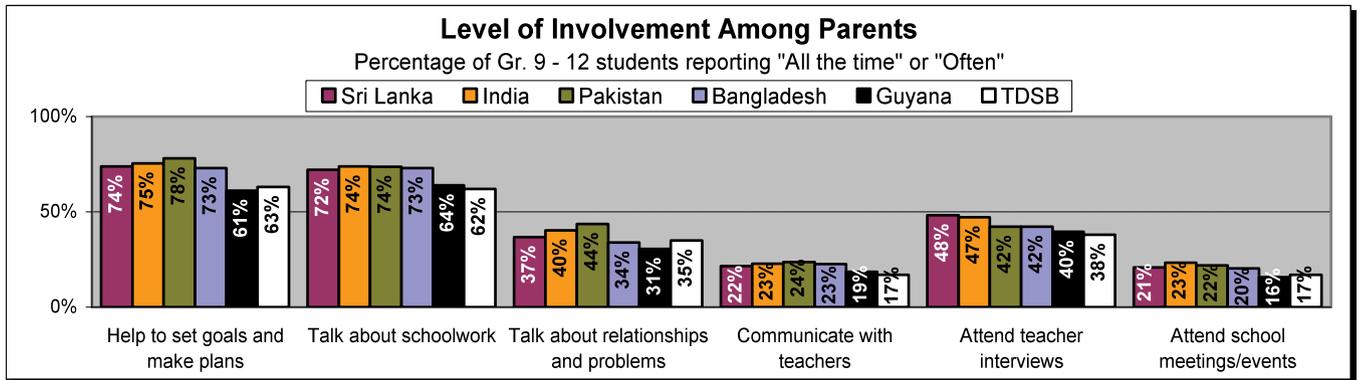


## Life Outside of School

### Parent Involvement In and Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

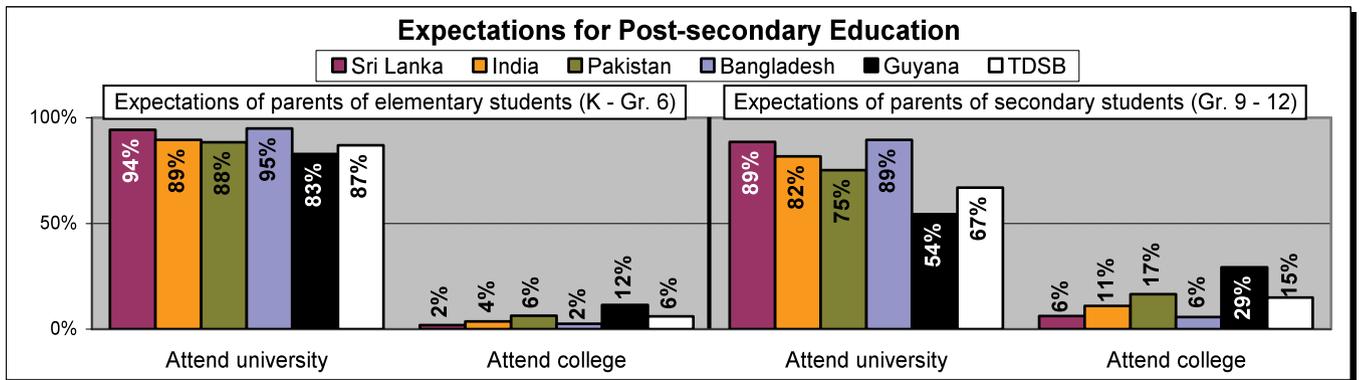
- South Asian parents, except for those from Guyana, are more likely to help their children set goals and make plans, talk to them about school work, and communicate with their teachers;
- Indian and Pakistani parents are more likely to talk to their children about relationships or problems, and attend more school meetings or events.



### Post-secondary Expectations

Compared to the overall population:

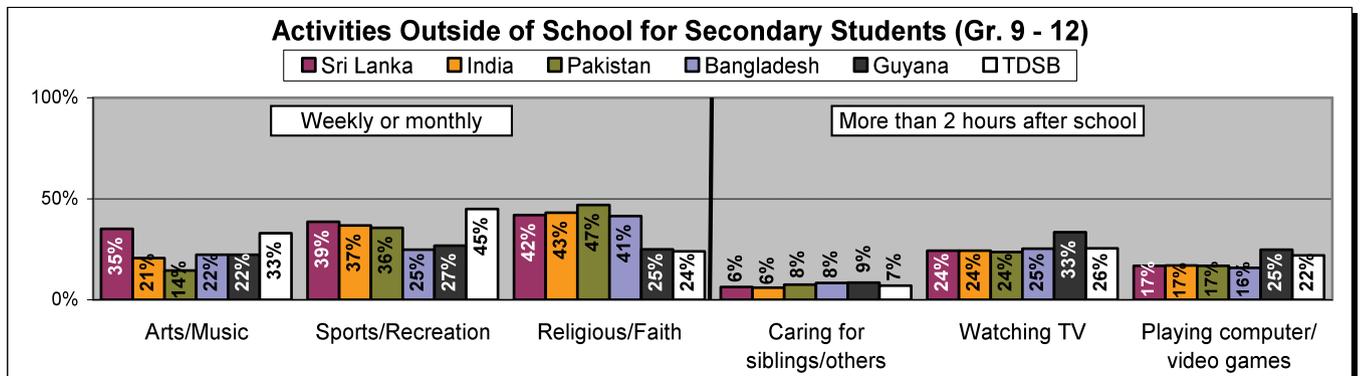
- South Asian parents, except Guyanese parents, are more likely to expect their children to go to university;
- Guyanese parents are more likely to expect their children to go to college.



### Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

- South Asian students are generally less active in arts or music and sports or recreation;
- South Asian students, except for those of Guyanese background, are more likely to participate in religious activities, and spend less time playing computer/video games;
- students of Guyanese background spend more time watching television;
- secondary school students of Guyanese background spend the same amount of time per week on homework and studying (12 hours), while other South Asian students spend more time (14 hours for students of Pakistani background, 15 hours for those of Indian, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi background).

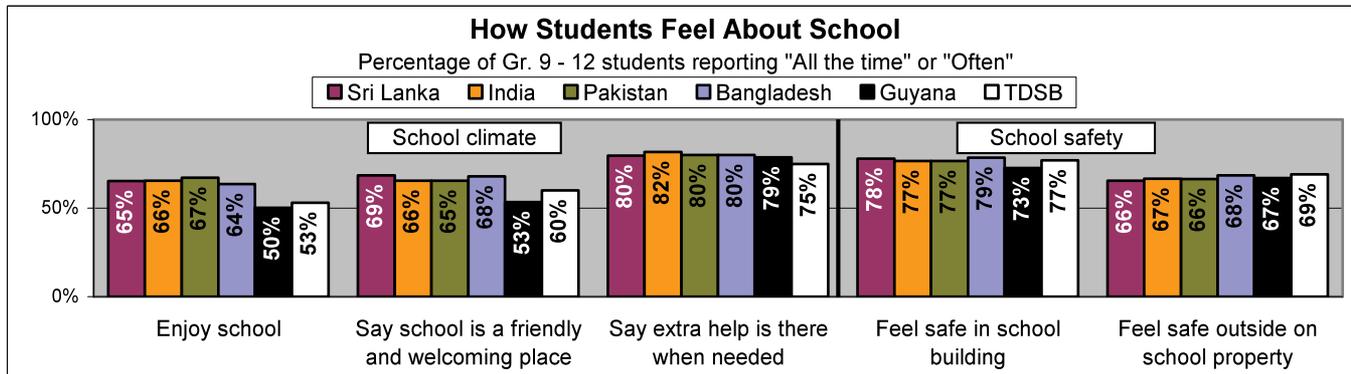


## Life in School

### School Climate and School Safety

Compared to the overall population:

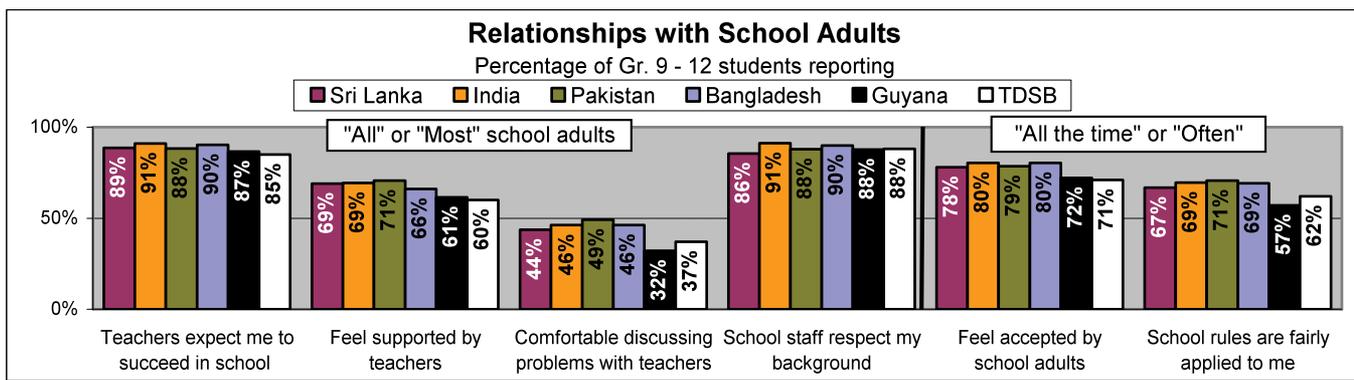
- South Asian students, except for those of Guyanese background, feel more positive about school climate;
- fewer students of Guyanese background say school is a friendly and welcoming place;
- South Asian students generally feel the same about school safety.



### Relationships with School Adults

Compared to the overall population:

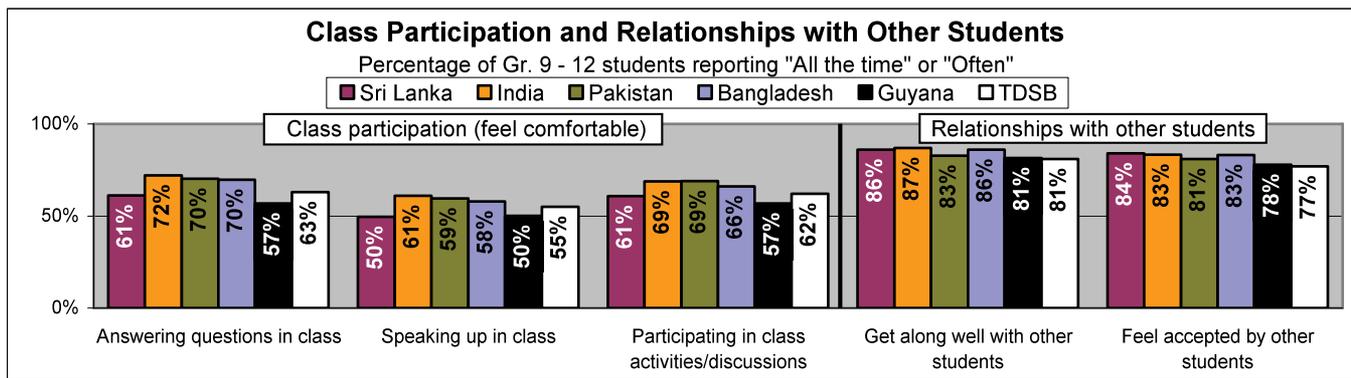
- South Asian students generally feel more positive about school adults;
- students of Guyanese background feel about the same as the general population towards school adults, though they are less comfortable discussing problems with teachers and are less likely to feel school rules have been fairly applied.



### Class Participation and Relationships with Other Students

Compared to the overall population:

- South Asian students are generally more comfortable participating in class, except for students of Sri Lankan background who feel as comfortable as the general population, and students of Guyanese background who feel less comfortable;
- South Asian students, except for those of Pakistani and Guyanese background, feel more positive about their relationships with other students.



### Learning about One's Culture/Race

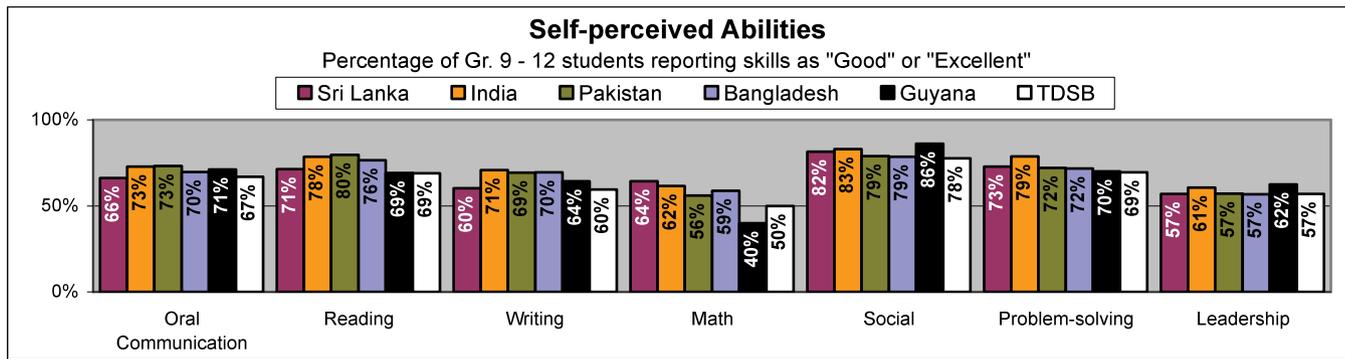
Most South Asian students say that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (76%), help them enjoy school more (65%), and help them do better in school (54%).

## Student Success

### Self-perceived Abilities

Compared to the overall population:

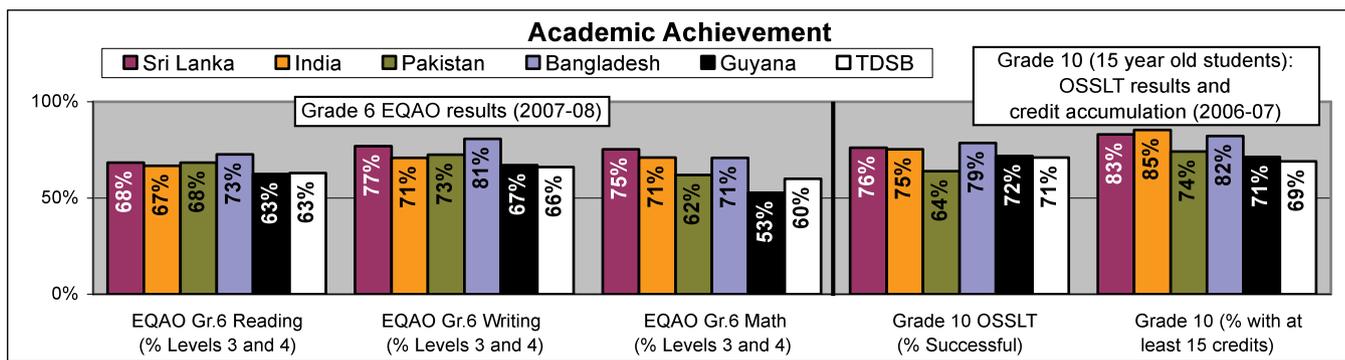
- South Asian students are generally as or more confident about their abilities in various areas;
- students of Guyanese background are less positive about their math skills, but more positive about their social skills and leadership abilities.



### Academic Achievement

Compared to the overall population:

- more South Asian students, except for those of Guyanese background, meet or exceed the provincial standard (Level 3) on the Gr. 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Reading, Writing, and Math tests;
- students of Guyanese background perform as well as the overall population on the Gr. 6 EQAO Reading and Writing tests but not on Math;
- in secondary school, South Asian students are as or more successful on the Gr. 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), except for students of Pakistani background who are less successful;
- South Asian students are as or more likely to earn the expected number of credits (at least 15) by the end of Gr. 10, meaning they are more likely to graduate on time.



## Highlights of Census Findings

The five main sub-groups of South Asian students share several commonalities. Compared to the overall population:

- more come from two-parent households, and the two lowest income groups;
- their parents are as or more involved in their children's education, and are more likely to expect them attend university;
- the students are generally as or more positive about school climate and safety, school adults, and their relationships with other students;
- they generally spend more time on homework and studying, but participate less frequently in arts/music or sports;
- they are as or more likely to rate their abilities highly and achieve well academically.

There are also some differences among the sub-groups. For example:

- Pakistani students come from larger and lower income families, and fewer are successful on the Gr. 10 OSSLT.
- Fewer Sri Lankan parents hold university degrees, but more expect their children to attend university, and they are more connected with their children's teachers.
- Bangladeshi parents are more likely to have university degrees, and their children have EQAO and OSSLT results that are higher than both the TDSB average and the other groups.
- Fewer Guyanese parents have university degrees, and fewer expect their children to go to university. The students spend more time than other groups watching TV and playing video games, and less time on homework and studying. They are less likely to feel school is a welcoming place, are not as comfortable discussing problems with teachers, and are less likely to say rules are fairly applied. They are less comfortable participating in class, though they are more confident about some of their abilities. While they do as well as the overall population in literacy, they are less confident and not doing as well in math.

## Census Portraits

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