

# 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

## Southeast Asian Students

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

### Some Historical Context

Southeast Asian immigration to Canada is a relatively new phenomenon. The first wave was sparked by the fleeing of many South Vietnamese business and government officials in early 1975 just before the fall of South Vietnam to the Communist North Vietnam. The next wave began in the late 1970s after the Vietnam War and continued until 1981 with a large influx of refugees, commonly known as the “boat people”, arriving from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Many of these young refugees are now parents with children born in Canada. The 1980s witnessed only the “continuous flow wave” through family-reunification, and after 1991, immigration from these countries declined as economic conditions in Southeast Asia began to improve.

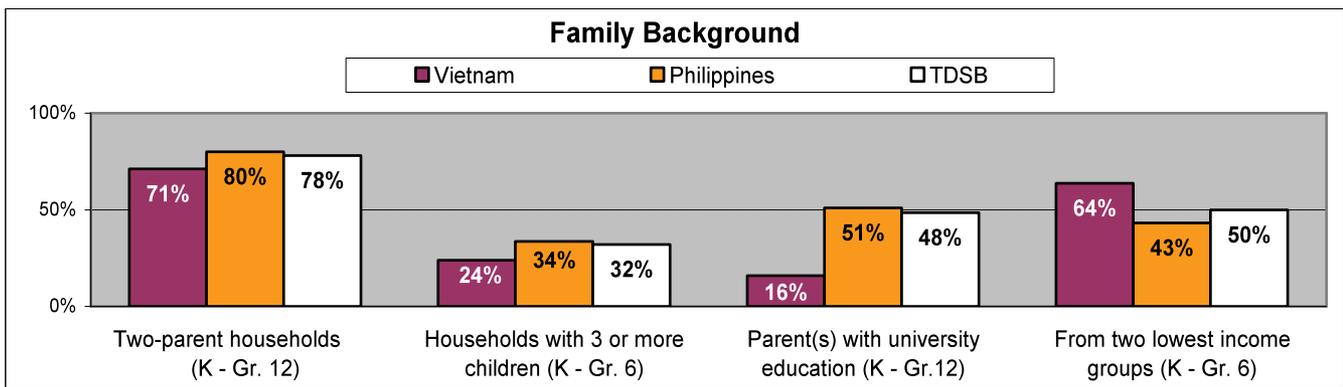
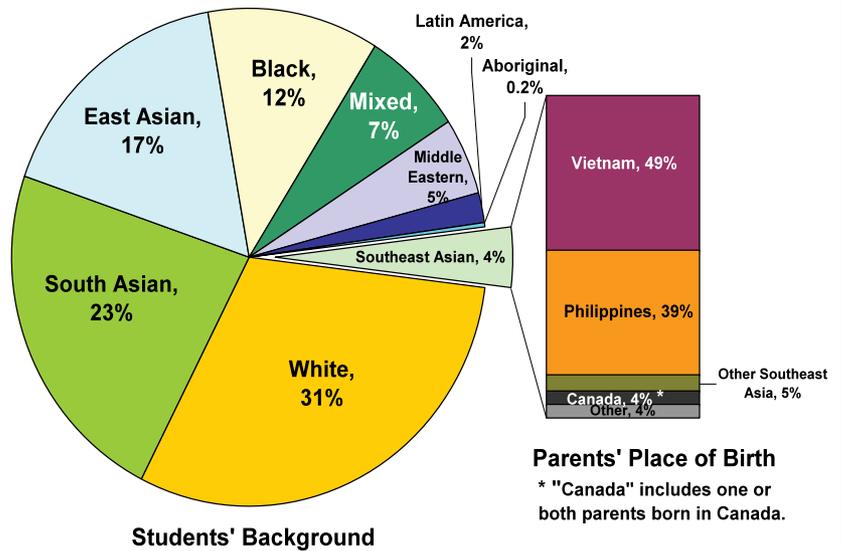
During the 1980s, Canada also saw an influx of Filipino contract workers, many who found work as live-in caregivers and later became landed immigrants under the Live-In Caregiver Program. During the 1990s, more Filipinos came as families and independents instead of being sponsored by family or being recruited as contract workers. From 1990 onwards, there has been a steady flow of Filipinos entering Canada, particularly Toronto, with about 10,000 to 20,000 arriving each year. As of December 2008, the Philippines surpassed China as Canada's leading source of immigrants.

### Ethno-racial and Family Background

- Southeast Asian students make up 4% of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) population (about 10,600 students).
- Most of their parents are from Vietnam (49%), the Philippines (39%), and other Southeast Asian countries (5%). Just 4% have one or both parents born in Canada.
- The vast majority of students with Vietnamese parents were born in Canada (86%), compared to about half (56%) of those with Filipino parents.

Compared to the overall population:

- fewer students of Vietnamese background live with two parents (this includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent) or have multiple siblings;
- far fewer Vietnamese parents have university degrees;
- students of Vietnamese background are more likely to be in the two lowest income groups (i.e., with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000 or between \$30,000-\$49,999), while students of Filipino background are less likely to be in the two lowest income groups.

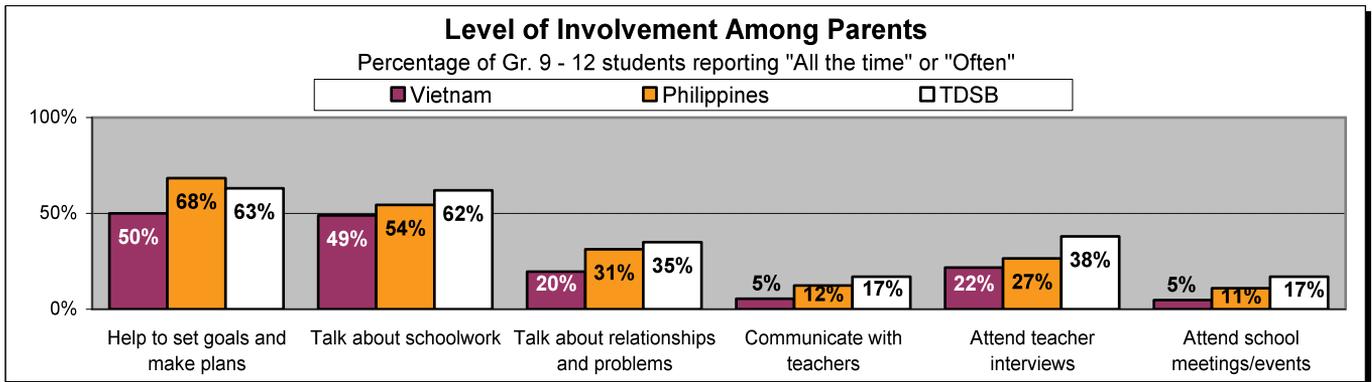


## Life Outside of School

### Parent Involvement In and Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

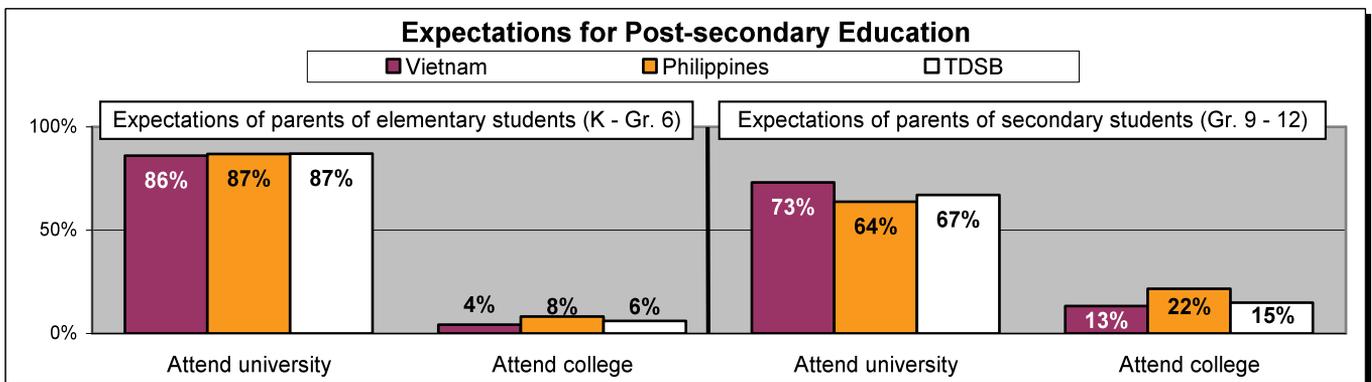
- Vietnamese parents are less likely to be directly involved in their children's education in and outside of school;
- Filipino parents are less likely to be involved in their children's school work or school activities; however, they are as or more likely to help their children set goals and make plans, and to talk with their children about relationships and problems.



### Post-secondary Expectations

Compared to the overall population:

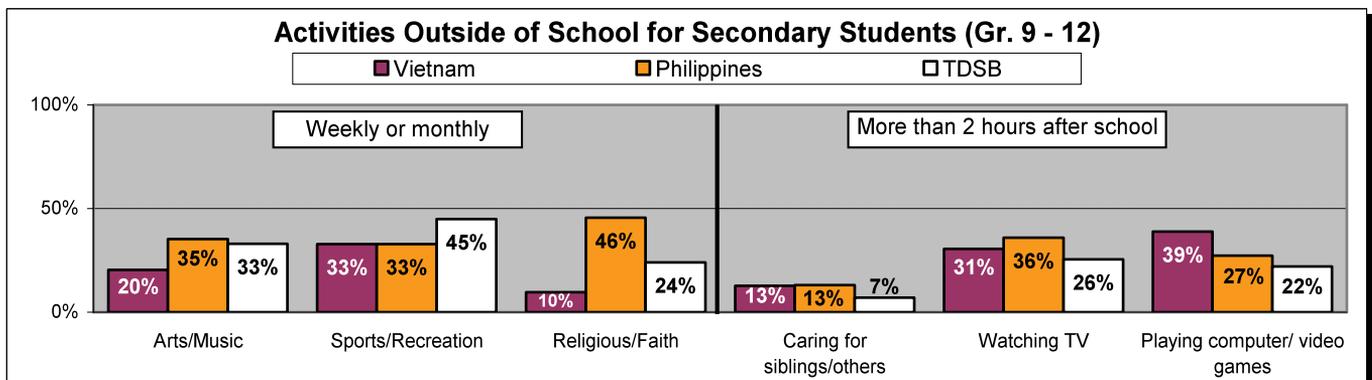
- Southeast Asian parents of elementary students have similar university expectations for their children;
- among parents of secondary school students, more Vietnamese parents expect their children to go to university, while more Filipino parents expect their children to go to college.



### Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

- students of Vietnamese background are less active in arts or music, sports or recreation, or religious activities, but are more likely to spend time caring for family members, watching TV, and playing computer/video games;
- students of Filipino background are as active in arts or music and more active in religious activities, but are less active in sports or recreation; they also tend to spend more time caring for family members, watching TV, and playing computer/video games;
- Southeast Asian students spend the same amount of time per week on homework and studying (12 hours).

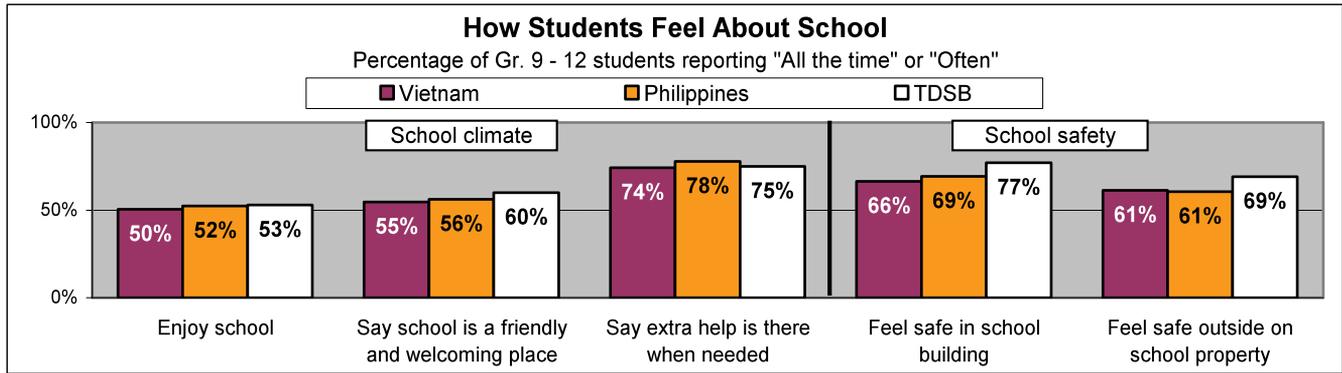


## Life in School

### School Climate and School Safety

Compared to the overall population:

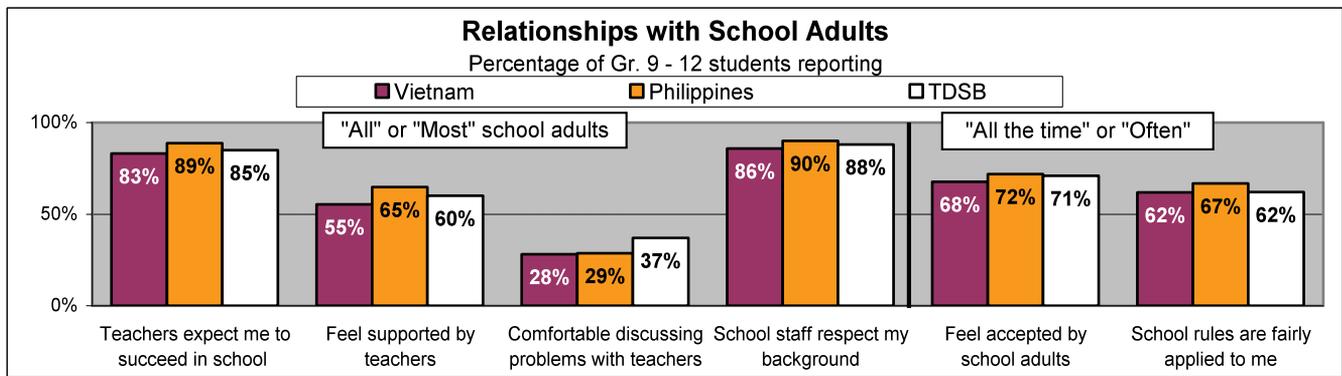
- Southeast Asian students have similar opinions about school climate, though students of Vietnamese background are less likely to say school is a friendly and welcoming place;
- both groups of Southeast Asian students feel less safe at school.



### Relationships with School Adults

Compared to the overall population:

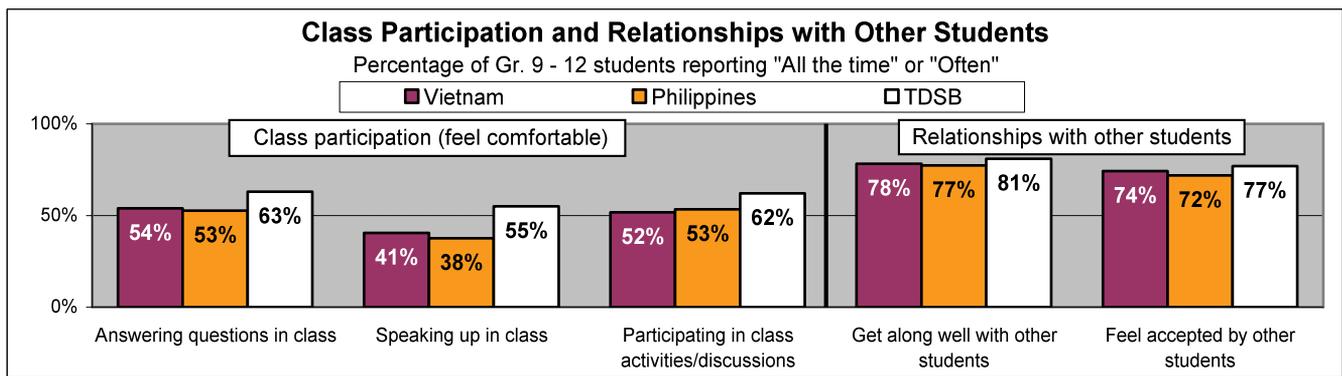
- Southeast Asian students generally feel the same about school adults, though they are less likely to feel comfortable discussing a problem with teachers;
- students of Vietnamese background are less likely to feel supported and encouraged by teachers, while students of Filipino background are more likely;
- more students of Filipino background feel that school rules are fairly applied.



### Class Participation and Relationships with Other Students

Compared to the overall population:

- Southeast Asian students are less comfortable answering questions, speaking up, or participating in class;
- Southeast Asian students are as positive about relationships with other students, though Filipino students are less likely to feel accepted by other students.



### Learning about One's Culture/Race

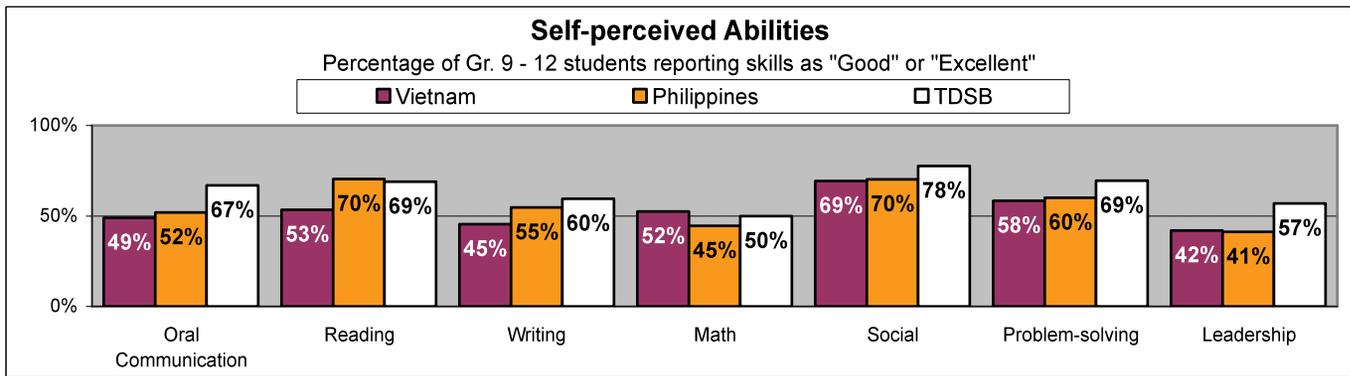
Students of Filipino background are more likely than students of Vietnamese background to say that learning more about their own culture would: make their learning more interesting (78% versus 70%); help them enjoy school more (67% versus 52%); and help them do better in school (56% versus 39%).

## Student Success

### Self-perceived Abilities

Compared to the overall population:

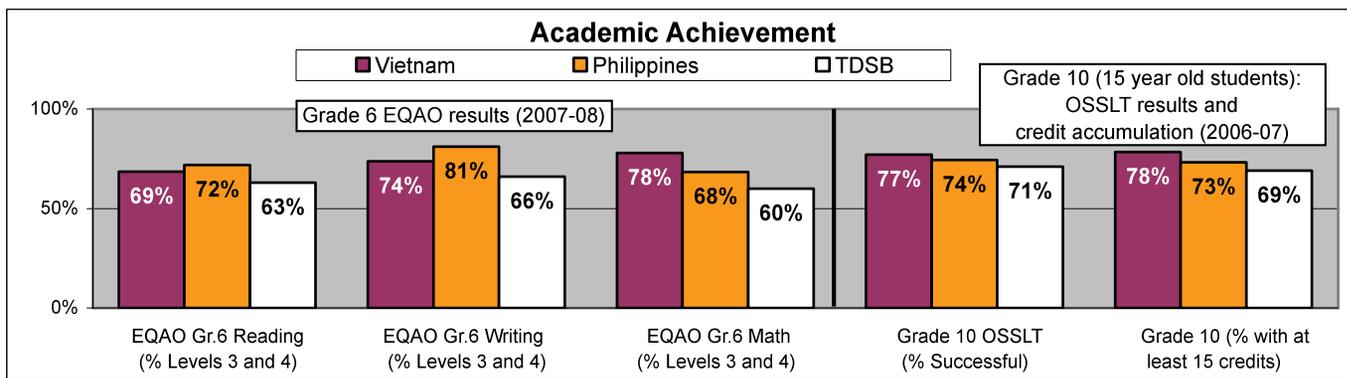
- students of Vietnamese background feel less confident in all skill areas except math;
- students of Filipino background are also less confident in most skill areas, except for reading.



### Academic Achievement

Compared to the overall population:

- more Southeast Asian students meet or exceed the provincial standard on Gr. 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests; this is especially true for students of Filipino background on the Gr. 6 EQAO Reading and Writing tests, and for students of Vietnamese background on the Gr. 6 EQAO Math test;
- students of Vietnamese background perform better on the Gr. 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT);
- Southeast 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 as likely to graduate on time.



## Highlights of Census Findings

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

- their parents are less likely to be involved in their children's education;
- they are less involved in sports and recreation, and spend more time caring for siblings, watching television, and playing computer/video games;
- they are less likely to feel safe at school or comfortable discussing problems with teachers;
- they are less likely to feel comfortable participating in class, and are less likely to rate many of their skills highly;
- they are more likely to do well academically.

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

- Students of Vietnamese background are less likely to have university educated parents, to live with two parents, or to have multiple siblings. They are also more likely to come from the two lowest income groups.
- Vietnamese parents are less involved in their children's schooling, and are more likely to expect them to attend university. Filipino parents are more involved, particularly in terms of helping their children to set goals and make plans, and more expect their children to attend college.
- As noted above, though both groups are less involved in sports or recreation, students of Vietnamese background are also less involved in arts or music. They are less likely to feel supported by teachers, and fewer feel confident about their reading and writing skills, although they perform well on the Gr. 10 OSSLT.
- Students of Filipino background are more likely to feel supported by teachers, and feel that school rules are fairly applied, but they are less likely to feel accepted by other students. They are also less confident about their skills in math.
- Students of Filipino background are more likely than students of Vietnamese background to say that learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting, help them enjoy school more, and help them do better in school.

## Census Portraits

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