

# 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>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: purple;">●</span> Aboriginal   | <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Middle Eastern      |
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Black         | <span style="color: red;">●</span> South Asian            |
| <span style="color: orange;">●</span> East Asian   | <span style="color: lightgreen;">●</span> Southeast Asian |
| <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Latin American | <span style="color: teal;">●</span> 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 White Students

## Some 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.

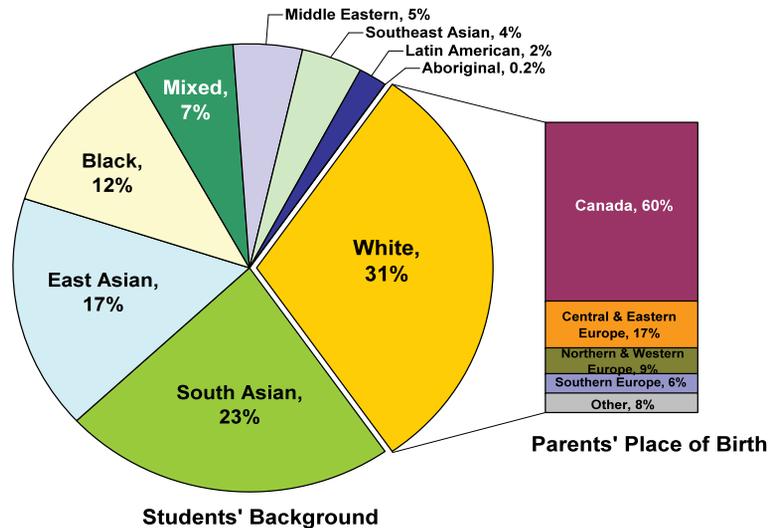
Post-war immigration policy changes removed admission barriers that existed since the mid-1920s leading to the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons largely from Central and Eastern Europe (Polish, Yugoslavian, Hungarian), Southern Europe and Jewish immigrants who survived the Holocaust. Immigration policy shifted again in the late 1960s from a preference for European immigration to a points system.

As a result, by the 1970s, the proportion of total immigrants of European origin declined dramatically as more arrivals were increasingly from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. In the 2006 Federal Census newcomers born in Europe accounted for 16% compared to over 60% in 1971.

The mid-1980s and 1990s saw an increase in the share of Central and Eastern European arrivals including refugees from Poland and 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.

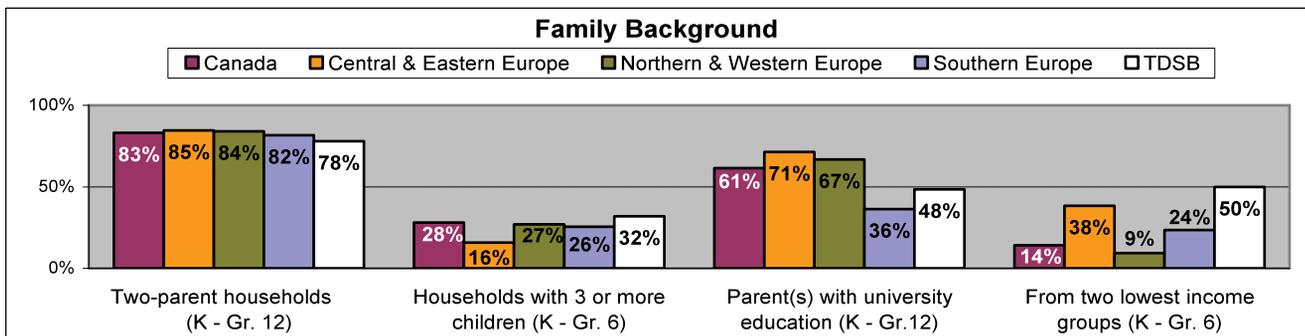
## Ethno-racial and Family Background

- White students make up 31% of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) population (about 82,000 students).
- Most of their parents are from Canada (60%), Central and Eastern Europe (17%), Northern and Western Europe (9%), and Southern Europe (6%).
- Most White students (86%) were born in Canada. However, the majority (60%) of students of Central and Eastern European background were born in other countries such as Russia, the former Yugoslavia, and Albania.



Compared to the overall population:

- White students are more likely to live with two parents (includes those living with step-parents or living half-time with each parent);
- students of Central and Eastern European, Northern and Western European, and Southern European backgrounds are less likely to have multiple siblings;
- more parents from Canada, Central and Eastern Europe, and Northern and Western Europe – but fewer parents from Southern Europe – have university degrees;
- fewer White 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); this is especially true for students of Canadian and Northern and Western European backgrounds.

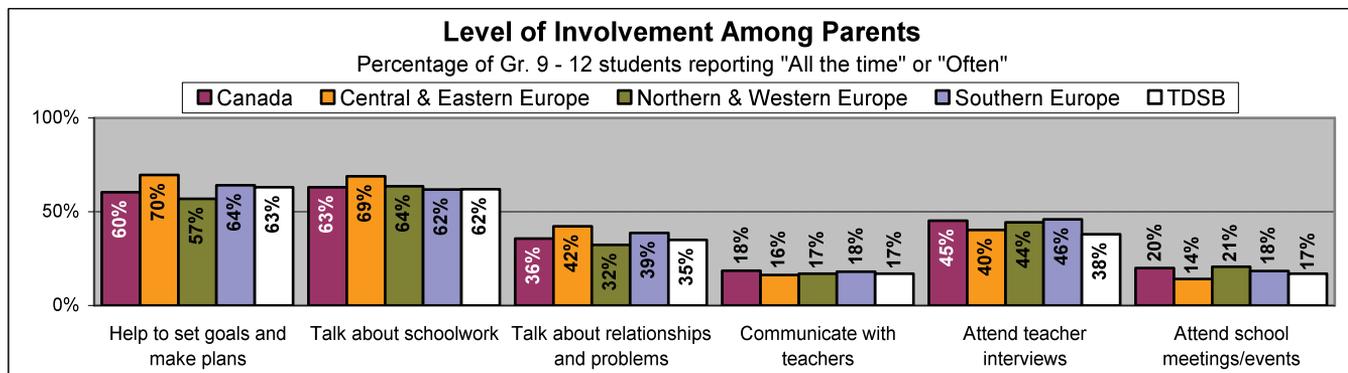


## Life Outside of School

### Parent Involvement In and Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

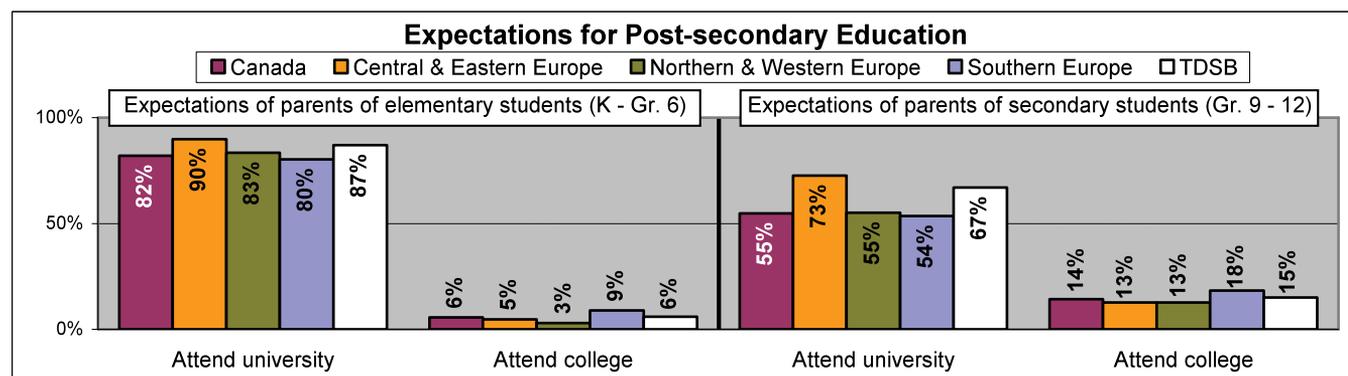
- White parents are as likely – and Central and Eastern European parents are more likely – to help their children set goals and make plans and to talk with their children about school work, relationships and problems; parents from Northern and Western Europe are less likely to help their children to set goals and make plans;
- White parents are also as likely to be involved in their children's school; Canadian, Northern and Western European, and Southern European parents are more likely to attend parent/teacher interviews.



### Post-secondary Expectations

Compared to the overall population:

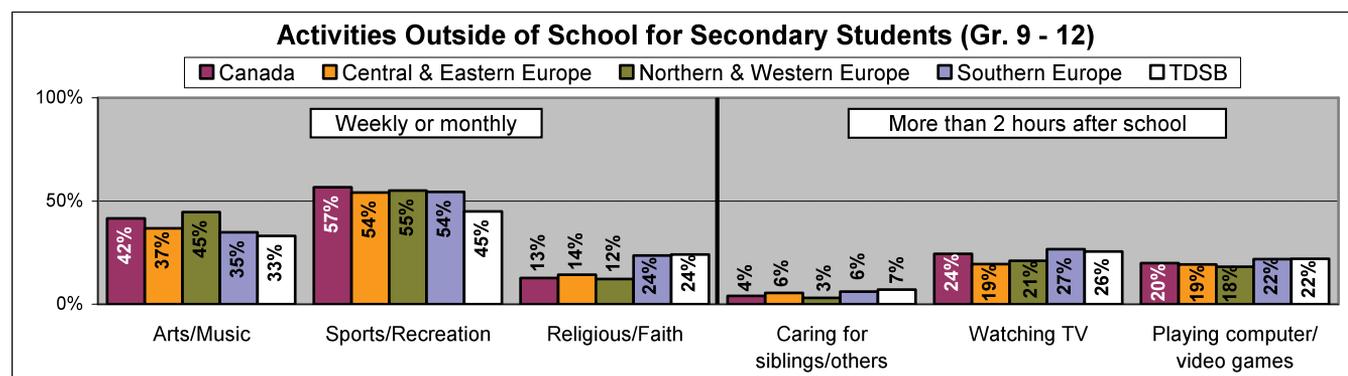
- Central and Eastern European parents are more likely to expect their children to attend university;
- fewer Canadian, Northern and Western European, and Southern European parents expect their children to attend university; more secondary students indicate their parents are "not sure" (21% versus 13% for the overall TDSB).



### Activities and Opportunities Outside of School

Compared to the overall population:

- White students participate more frequently in sports and recreation, and less frequently – except for students of Southern European background – in religious activities;
- students of Canadian and Northern and Western European backgrounds are more involved in arts and music;
- students of Central and Eastern European and Northern and Western European backgrounds watch less TV;
- students of Central and Eastern European background spend the same amount of time per week on homework and studying (12 hours), while students of Northern and Western European (9 hours), Southern European (9 hours), and Canadian (8 hours) backgrounds spend less time.

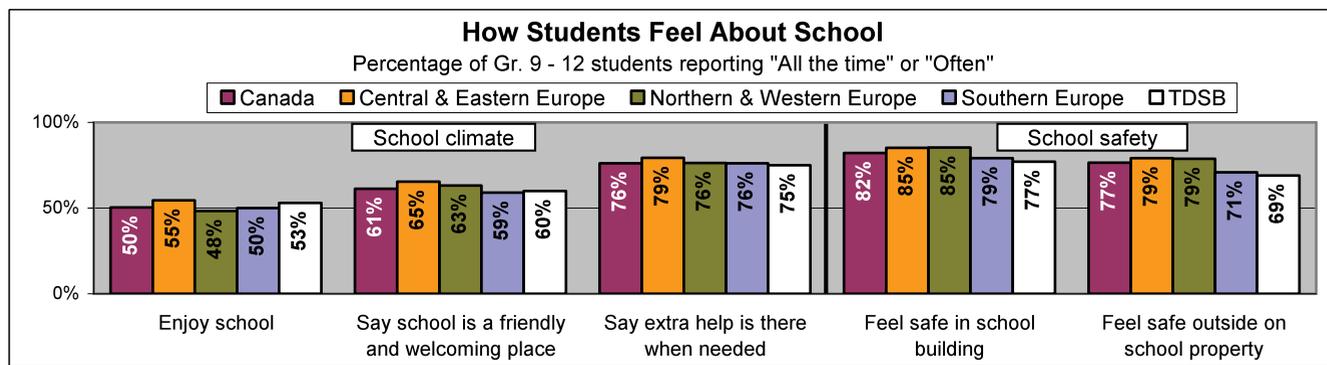


## Life in School

### School Climate and School Safety

Compared to the overall population:

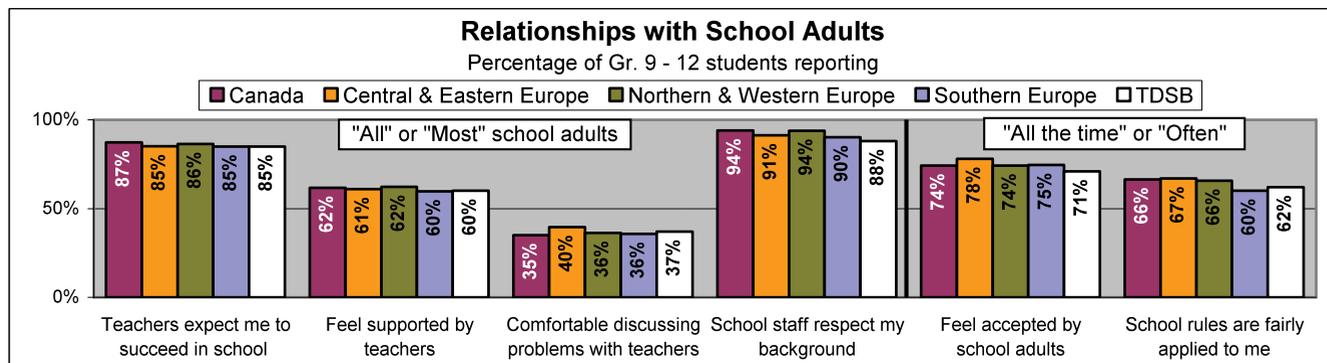
- White students have similar opinions about school climate, though fewer students of Northern and Western European background reported that they enjoy school, and more students of Central and Eastern European background feel that school is a friendly and welcoming place;
- students of Canadian, Central and Eastern European, and Northern and Western European backgrounds are more likely to feel safe at school.



### Relationships with School Adults

Compared to the overall population:

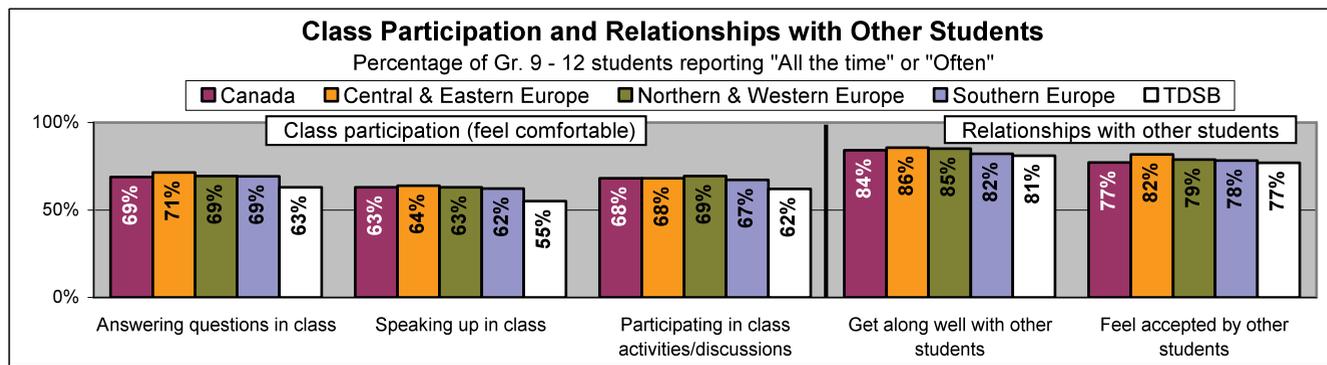
- White students are generally as positive about school adults;
- students of Canadian and Northern and Western European backgrounds are more likely to feel that school staff respect their background;
- students of Central and Eastern European background are more likely to feel accepted by school adults and that school rules are fairly applied.



### Class Participation and Relationships with Other Students

Compared to the overall population:

- White students are more comfortable answering questions, speaking up, and participating in class;
- students of Central and Eastern European background are more positive about relationships with other students.



### Learning about One's Culture/Race

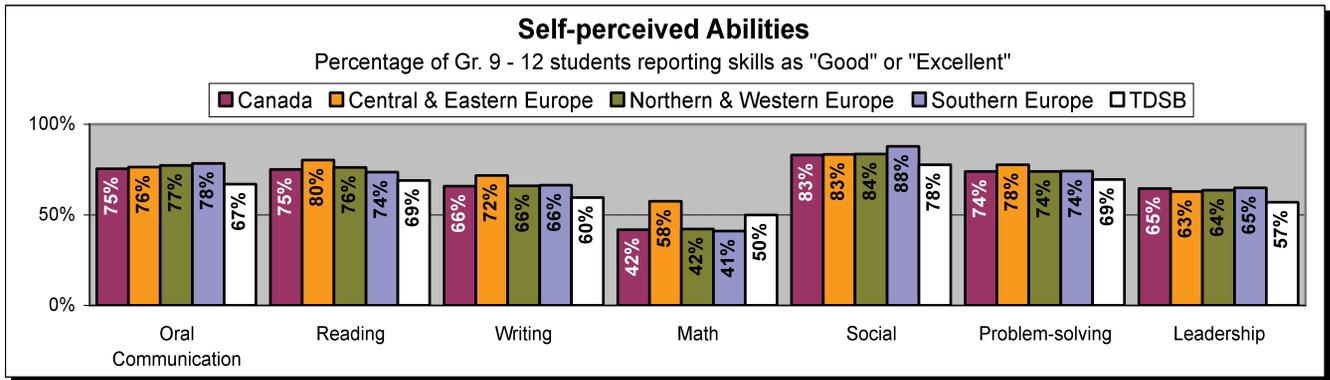
Among White students only students of Central and Eastern European and Southern European backgrounds are more likely to say learning more about their own culture would make their learning more interesting (70%) and help them enjoy school more (58%).

## Student Success

### Self-perceived Abilities

Compared to the overall population:

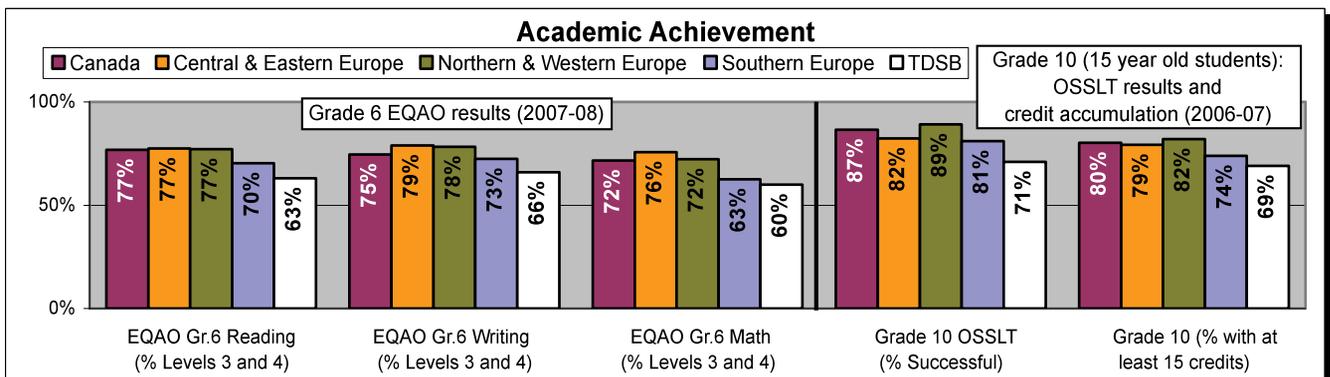
- with the exception of math, White students are more confident about their abilities;
- fewer White students – except students of Central and Eastern European background – give their math skills a high rating.



### Academic Achievement

Compared to the overall population:

- more White students – especially students of Canadian, Central and Eastern European, and Northern and Western European backgrounds – meet or exceed the provincial standard (Level 3) on the Gr. 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Reading, Writing, and Math tests;
- White students are more likely to successfully pass the Gr. 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT);
- White students are more likely to earn the expected number of credits (at least 15) by the end of Gr. 10, making them more likely to graduate on time.



## Highlights of Census Findings

The four main sub-groups of White students share several commonalities. Compared to the overall population:

- White students are generally more likely to have smaller families, higher income households, and university educated parents, and they are more likely to live with two parents;
- they participate more frequently in sports and recreation and less frequently in regular religious activities;
- they are more comfortable participating in class; and generally spend less time studying and doing homework;
- they are more confident about most of their abilities, and perform better academically.

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

- Students of Canadian and of Northern and Western European backgrounds are more likely to feel that school staff respect their background. They participate more frequently in arts and music, and spend less time studying and doing homework. Their parents are more likely to be unsure about post-secondary plans; but they perform as well or better than other White students, despite being less confident about their math skills. They are less likely to see benefits in learning more about their own culture.
- Southern European parents are less likely to hold university degrees and are more likely to be unsure about post-secondary plans. Compared to other White students, they are less likely to feel safe at school or perform well academically (but they feel as safe and perform as or better than the overall population).
- Students of Central and Eastern European background are more likely to have university educated parents and fewer siblings, and they are more likely to come from the two lowest income groups. Their parents are more likely to help them set goals and make plans, and to talk about schoolwork and relationships and problems; and are more likely to expect them to attend university. They spend more time studying and doing homework and less time watching TV. They are more likely to rate their math skills highly and more likely than other White students to perform well in math.

## Census Portraits

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