



CANADIAN

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# SOCIAL TRENDS



## FEATURES

*Family disruptions  
and childhood  
happiness*

*Internet kids*

*Generosity*

*Mobile homes*

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# Family disruptions and childhood happiness

by *Cara Williams*

**M**ost adults believe that childhood should be a care-free time. Studies in the United States and Europe generally attribute happiness to family life and social support;<sup>1</sup> that is, it may be closely associated with satisfying family relationships. Indeed, the stability of our family life during childhood affects our early years perhaps more than anything else. Disruptions in this stability such as divorce, remarriage, the death of a parent, or someone taking a parent's place can influence how happy we were as children and the type of relationships we had with our parents.

1. See Lane, Robert E. 2000. "Diminishing returns to income, companionship and happiness." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 1: 103-119.



This article is based on data from the 1995 General Social Survey on the family. The group studied began life living with both parents (adopted or birth); some remained in intact families until they were at least 15 years old, while others experienced a parental structure change before age 15. These changes consist of separation or divorce of parents, death of a parent, remarriage of a parent, or other changes in living arrangements for a child — such as living with other relatives, living in a foster home, or living with someone else. “Other changes” may be the result of parental break-up or death. The data do not indicate what precipitated these changes.

**Respondents are considered to have had a very happy childhood or have been very close emotionally to father/mother if they answered that they agreed or strongly agreed with such a statement.**

In the World Database of Happiness,<sup>2</sup> happiness is defined as “the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole positively.” When adults who experienced change in their parental structure look back at their childhood, do they see themselves as happy? Were they less close to their parents than children whose families remained intact? This paper uses data from the 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) to investigate these questions.

### 13% of Canadian adults experienced change in parental structure as children

According to the 1995 GSS, 96% (22.5 million) of Canadians 15 and older were born into two-parent families and most (87%) continued to live with both their parents until they were at least 15.<sup>3</sup> Before age 15, about 1.9 million adult Canadians (8%) experienced one change in the parental structure of their family. Just over 800,000 experienced two and another 200,000 went through three or more. Most of these disruptions in family life are caused by death or divorce; for example, more than one-half of first changes a child

experienced resulted from separation or divorce, one-third from the death of a parent and the remainder were due to some other type of parental change.

### Children of divorce have higher chance of marital instability

Many factors influence our happiness and how close we were to our parents in childhood. Although the consequences of divorce, separation or death of a parent on a child’s psychological health are complex and not easy to measure, many of the social and economic effects have been well documented. For example, children of divorce are more likely to live in low income and have emotional, behavioral, social and academic problems.<sup>4</sup> Children who experience a parent’s death or divorce are more likely to leave home earlier, are less likely to finish high school and are more likely to rely on Income Assistance as adults. However, while the death of a parent does not seem to affect the likelihood of a child marrying or experiencing marital instability, adult children of divorce are more likely to put off marriage and have a higher chance of marital instability.<sup>5</sup> Many of these

consequences might be considered markers of emotional upset that can influence a child’s long-term life prospects.

### The more instability children experience, the less happy they are

Overall, almost 89% of adult Canadians said in 1995 that they had had a very happy childhood. But the rates vary with different family experiences. Among those who lived with both parents from birth until age 15, 92% felt that they had a very happy childhood. On the other hand, far fewer (72%) respondents who had experienced change in parental structure before age 15 believed they had been very happy children. This finding supports the notion that children find disruptions in the family’s stability disturbing.<sup>6</sup>

2. More information on the World Database of Happiness can be found at [www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness/hapintro.htm](http://www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness/hapintro.htm).
3. This includes birth parents and adopted parents.
4. Ambert, Dr. Anne-Marie. 1998. *Divorce: Facts, Figures and Consequences*. Vanier Institute of the Family.
5. Corak, Miles. 1999. *Death and Divorce: The Long Term Consequences of Parental Loss on Adolescents*. Statistics Canada catalogue 11F0019MPE, no. 135; Gruber, Jonathan. 2000. *Is Making Divorce Easier Bad for Children? The Long-run Implications of Unilateral Divorce*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper no. 7968; Boyd, M. and D. Norris. Autumn 1995. “Leaving the nest? The impact of family structure.” *Canadian Social Trends*, and Frederick, J. and M. Boyd. Spring 1998. “The impact of family structure on high school completion.” *Canadian Social Trends*.
6. It is important to note that the perception of childhood happiness is affected by numerous things in addition to structural change. For example, children of divorce may find themselves living in low income, or living in a new neighbourhood without old friendship and family ties.



## Changes in parental structure are associated with childhood happiness

Respondent had a very happy childhood	Number of changes in parental structure			
	None	One	Two	Three or more
Adults aged 15 and over	19,435,000	1,916,000	819,000	245,000
	%			
Strongly agree/agree	92	76	70	50
Disagree/strongly disagree	8	23	27	49
No opinion/not stated	0	1	3	1

Note: Includes all individuals who began life with two parents (biological or adoptive).  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1995.

up, compared with 79% of those that had some parental structure change. The real disparity, not surprisingly — because mothers more often get custody — occurs in the case of fathers; 74% of respondents from intact families agreed or strongly agreed that they had felt close to their father versus 52% of those who had experienced a change.

### Adult sons are closer to their mothers than are daughters

In the general population, men and women have somewhat different perceptions of childhood happiness and the emotional closeness they felt to their parents as children. Almost 90% of men and 87% of women said they had had a very happy childhood. While the likelihood that sons and daughters felt close to their fathers was similar at about 70%, sons were more likely to feel close to their mothers than were daughters: 90% versus 85%, respectively. However, men and women who did not come from an intact family reported virtually the same levels of childhood happiness, suggesting that these changes affected both sexes equally.



## Both men and women who experienced parental structure changes are less likely to remember their childhood as very happy

	Men		%	Women	
	No change	Change		No change	Change
Very happy childhood	93	74		91	71
Very close emotionally to mother	92	83		87	76
Very close emotionally to father	73	53		75	49

Note: Includes all individuals who began life with two parents (biological or adoptive).  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1995.

GSS data indicate that the more often children experience change in parental structure, the less likely they are to reflect upon their childhood as happy. The proportion of respondents who remembered their childhood as very happy declined from 76% of those who had only one change, to 70% for those with two changes and to 50% for those who reported three or more changes before age 15.

The likelihood they felt that their childhood was very happy was significantly different for children of divorce than for those who experienced the death of a parent. Among those whose parents separated or divorced, 71% felt that they had had a very happy childhood; among those who experienced the death of a parent, the proportion rose significantly to 87%. This finding

suggests that the effects of divorce on childhood happiness may be more pronounced than the effects of death and may have deeper consequences on quality of life or emotional health.

### Children from intact families feel closer to parents

Changes in parental structure during childhood may influence whether or not we remember being emotionally close to our parents when we were children. After a divorce or separation, a child may not have as much contact with the parent who left since that parent is probably not as active in the child's day-to-day activities. In 1995, 89% of respondents who lived with both parents from birth to at least age 15 stated that they felt very close to their mother when they were growing

### Summary

When adult children who experienced family disruptions during childhood look back on these years, they are less likely to recall their childhood as happy than those whose families were intact. Furthermore, the greater the number of parenting changes these individuals experienced, the less likely they are to believe they were happy. It also appears that adult children who experienced a structural change do not recall being as close to their parents as those who did not experience a change.



**Cara Williams** is an analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

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# Kids and teens on the Net

by Warren Clark

The Internet is changing the way we communicate, receive news and information, acquire new skills, work and do business. It is also transforming the world of education and learning as people of all ages can now communicate and work with others from all over the world. In addition, the Net provides opportunities to bring an abundance of images and information into homes and classrooms.

More and more households are connected to the Internet. This might be because parents believe their children need Internet access at home to keep up with their peers; in fact, 55% of parents with home computers said they had bought them specifically for their children.<sup>1</sup> Some teachers now give homework assignments that require finding information on the Internet and students without home access may have to queue up to connect in the classroom, school library or a friend's home. But even having the Net at home may be problematic, especially if there are several children competing for time. Because over 75%

1. 66% of parents reported educational advantages as the greatest benefit of their children's use of the Internet. Media Awareness Network and Environments Research Group. *Canada's Children in a Wired World: The Parents' View — Final Report*. 2000. p.14. <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/SS1/sf/finalreporteng.pdf>.

## CST What you should know about this study

The 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) interviewed about 25,000 adults aged 15 and over living in private households in the 10 provinces. It researched access to and use of information communications technology, primarily the Internet. This article focusses on the Internet use of children and teens aged 5 to 18 living with their parents. Parents were asked if and where their children used the Internet, how their children's Internet use is monitored and whether they encourage the use of the Internet for schoolwork or entertainment.

Counts of children using the Internet are not available from this survey because parents were asked general questions about the Net use of all their children and not that of each particular child. Thus, parents are identified as having a child using the Internet if at least one of their children does so. The results are often presented as a percentage of parents with children aged 5 to 18; this represents about 6.0 million parents. In some cases parents may not know if their children use the Internet at school, at a friend's house or at the library, meaning that Internet usage by children may be underestimated. The survey asked if children used the Internet at several locations, but did not inquire about how much time they spent connected to the Net.

Parental computer skills were self-assessed and rated relative to people the same age. About 23% of parents rated their computer skills as very good or excellent, 24% as good, 21% as fair, 14% as poor and 17% had never used a computer.

**Important: Strictly speaking, parents are responding to questions about the Internet activities of their school-aged children, therefore the figures quoted reflect the knowledge of the parents. For brevity, the text may refer to the percentage of school-age children or the percentage of children.**

of children who use the Net at home access it through a telephone line, “surfing” competes with family telephone use, unless another line or a more expensive high-speed service is available.

This article examines the extent to which children between the ages of 5 and 18 have access to the Internet at home. It focusses on parents’ knowledge of their children’s use of the Net, the factors that contribute to or limit access, parental concerns about privacy, and the limitations parents place on using the Internet.

### Nearly half of children used the Internet at home

In 2000, 82% of parents reported that their school-age children used the Internet. School was the most common point of access (71%), while 45% accessed it at home.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, a considerably smaller proportion of parents (59%) than children used the Internet themselves. Nonetheless, over one in three parents helped their children with the Internet.

Boys and girls had nearly equal Internet access rates at home,<sup>3</sup> although girls may visit different sites than boys.<sup>4,5</sup> Young children between the ages of 5 and 9 were only about one-third as likely to use the Internet from home (21%) as teens aged 15 to 18 (58%).<sup>6</sup> The rate of school use and access at other locations also increased with the age of children.

### Children of educated and high-income parents more likely to use the Internet at home

In 1999, Canada completed connecting all interested public schools and public libraries to the Information Highway. Consequently, about 9 out of every 10 students attended elementary, intermediate or secondary schools that had access to the Internet for educational purposes.<sup>7</sup> With nearly every school having connections, children’s Internet access at school shows

## CST Internet use is highest among older teens...

Parents with children aged	Location of children’s access to the Internet			
	All locations	Home	School	Other
	% of parents whose children use the Internet			
5-18	82	45	71	37
5-9	48	21	32	13
10-14	93	50	84	43
15-18	96	58	85	55

## ... and in homes with high socio-economic status

	Location of children’s access to the Internet			
	All locations	Home	School	Other
	% of parents whose children use the Internet			
All children	82	45	71	37
<b>Education of parent</b>				
High school diploma or less	79	34	69	34
College, trade/vocational diploma or some postsecondary	82	45	73	40
University degree	86	66	73	38
<b>Household income</b>				
Less than \$30,000	78	26	69	35
\$30,000-\$49,999	77	33	67	35
\$50,000-\$79,999	83	48	73	40
\$80,000 and over	86	65	74	37

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

little variation regardless of the socio-economic status of the household.

In contrast, children from households with higher income and education levels were more likely to

have home access. About two-thirds of parents with a university degree had children who used the Internet from home compared with one-third of parents with a high school diploma

- Parents were less likely to know about their children’s Internet access at school or at other locations than at home. About 14% of parents did not know about Internet access at school, 10% at other locations and 3% at home. The percentages reported here are of parents who know about their children’s Internet use.
- Comparison of the access rates for families who had only boys with those who had only girls.
- YTV Kid & Tween Report 2000 Wave 6*. October 25, 2000. <http://www.newswire.ca/releases/October2000/25/c6279.html>.
- Environics Research Group. 2000. *Young Canadians in a Wired World — Parents and Youth Focus Groups in Toronto and Montreal*. p.5, <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSI/sf/05380report.pdf>.
- Among parents of 5- to 18-year-olds, one million reported that none of their children used the Internet. Nearly 85% of parents whose children did not use the Internet had young children aged 5 to 9.
- Statistics Canada. October 12, 1999. “Computer technology in schools.” *The Daily*. <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/991012/d991012a.htm>.

Parental education	Parental computer skills (self-assessed)						Never used a computer
	Total	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	
<b>All parents</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>
High school diploma or less	34	63	51	50	41	30	17
College, trade/vocational diploma or some postsecondary	45	65	57	51	43	35	16
University degree	66	79	73	64	63	44	--

-- Sample size too small to produce reliable estimate.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

or less. Similarly, about 65% of parents with household income over \$80,000 reported that their children used the Internet at home, compared with 26% of parents in households with an income under \$30,000.

Lone-parent families are more likely to have lower income than two-parent families and this affects the home Internet access of their children. In 2000, 32% of lone parents said their children used the Internet from home compared with 47% of two-parent families. In addition, lone parents were less likely to help their children with the Internet and tended to have fewer computer skills to provide help.

**Parent’s computer savvy helps kids connect**

Children used the Internet at home much more frequently if their parents had strong computer skills.<sup>8</sup> About 71% of parents who considered their computer skills excellent reported that their kids used the Internet at home compared with 16% of parents who never used a computer. Parents with more computer savvy were more likely to have the equipment necessary for their children to connect to the Internet, to help their children use the Internet and to be less concerned about security and privacy

issues. All in all, they viewed the Internet more positively than parents with less computer savvy.

**About half of parents worry about privacy**

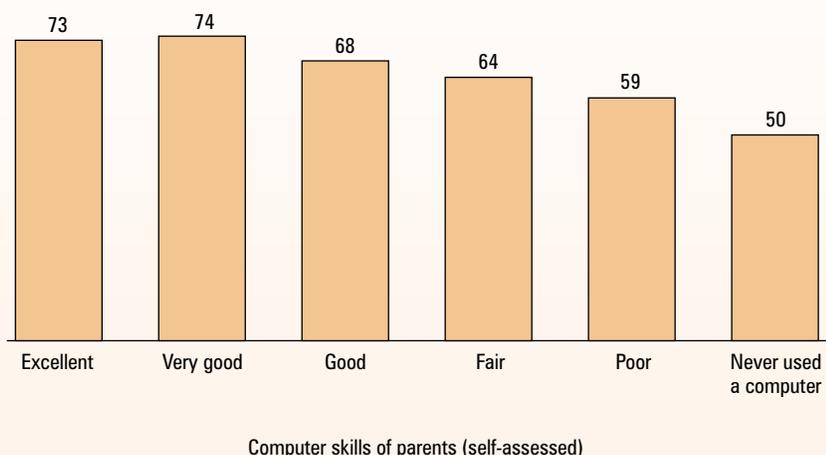
It is easy for children to become skilled navigators of the Net, and advertisers and marketers are increasingly using this medium to target children and gather information for marketing purposes. Such information can be obtained by asking children to register in order to play games, visit their favourite cartoon site or enter a contest. As users move from Web page to Web page, “cookies” (electronic files) may be placed on the computer’s hard drive to record

what was done at a Web site and possibly track where they go on the Web.<sup>9</sup> When you enter information on a Web site or any other place on the Internet, you potentially give up a bit of your privacy. Recently enacted federal legislation limits the uses of personal information for some enterprises.<sup>10,11</sup>

Parents worry about online privacy. In 2000, 46% of parents expressed great concern over this issue. This worry had an impact on their children’s access to the Internet at home. Those parents who were most concerned about privacy were less likely (44%) to allow their children to use the Internet at home than those who were not (52%). About 470,000

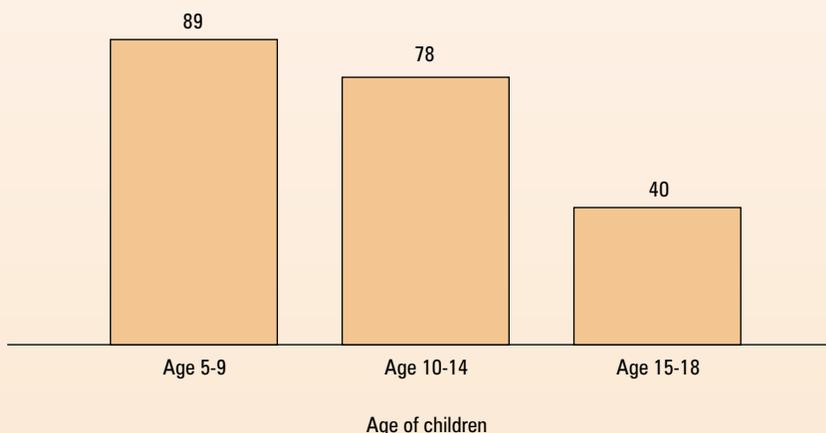
8. Strong parental computer skills are linked to higher levels of education and household income. After accounting for these factors, however, children’s use of the Internet at home is still positively influenced by the parent’s computer skills.
9. Cookies identify the computer, not the person using it. But information that you provide about yourself to a Web site may be linked to the cookie that is placed on your computer.
10. *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (Bill C-6) came into effect on January 1, 2001. It protects the personal information of individuals in the course of commercial activities. The Act gives people control over their own personal information by requiring organizations to obtain consent to collect, use or disclose information about them. As of January 1, 2001 the Act encompasses federal works, undertakings and businesses including banks, telephone companies, cable television and broadcasting companies, firms engaged in interprovincial transportation and air carriers. By January 2004 the Act will also cover provincially regulated enterprises such as retail stores. [http://www.privcom.gc.ca/information/02\\_05\\_d\\_08\\_e.asp](http://www.privcom.gc.ca/information/02_05_d_08_e.asp).
11. The Statistics Canada Web site, <http://www.statcan.ca>, does not use cookies.

% of parents who monitor their children's Internet use at home



## ... or if they have younger children

% of parents who monitor their children's Internet use at home



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

parents (8% of all parents) expressed no opinion about Internet privacy. This group of parents reported the lowest level of home Internet use among their children, at 23%.<sup>12</sup>

### Protecting children

Many parents are concerned that the content their children may be viewing includes sexually explicit material or sites that promote hate, drug use, fraud or computer hacking.<sup>13</sup> While

79% of parents encourage their children to use the Net for school work and 45% for entertainment, the accessibility of unsuitable information continues to generate debate and concern. An innocent keyword typed into a search engine or the misspelling of a Web site's name can lead to sites that may contain objectionable content. Unsolicited e-mail messages sent to thousands of people at a time encouraging them to buy something,

do something or visit a Web site, can entice children to visit sites that are inappropriate for them. About 6% of parents whose children use the Net reported that their children had come across content that promoted hate or violence while another 12% simply did not know if their children had seen such material.

Internet chat rooms, where children can communicate with each other in real time, are enormously popular, but are not without risk. Children may encounter profanity, inquiries about personal information, inappropriate advances, or adults masquerading as children.<sup>14</sup> Cyberstalking is a threat to many users of online chat rooms, including children. Teenagers are particularly at risk because their Net use is more often unsupervised than younger children's.<sup>15</sup>

Although few parents thought their children had seen content promoting hate or violence, most parents recognized the need to monitor their children's use of the Net. Nearly two out of three (63%) stated that it was very important to monitor their children's Internet use, one in five (20%) thought it was somewhat important and only one in seven (14%) felt it

12. Of the 470,000 parents who had no opinion on Internet privacy, 60% had never used a computer (compared with 17% of all parents of school-age children), 78% had never used the Internet and 59% did not report their level of household income.

13. "Digital chaperones for kids." *Consumer Reports Online*. March 2001. <http://www.consumerreports.org/Special/ConsumerInterest/Reports/0203fil0.html>.

14. Ipsos-Reid. November 14, 2000. *Uncomfortable Liaisons*. [http://www.ipsos-reid.com/media/content/displaypr.cfm?id\\_to\\_view=1113&refer=main](http://www.ipsos-reid.com/media/content/displaypr.cfm?id_to_view=1113&refer=main).

15. American Bar Association. August 2000. *Facts about Privacy and Cyberspace* (page 5 of 6). <http://gigalaw.com/articles/aba-2000-08-p5.html>.

was not at all important. Many of the parents in this last group had older teenagers and perhaps felt that they were mature enough to manage their own Internet use. Nevertheless, 67% of parents employed some means to monitor their children's use of the Internet at home, most often supervising their time on the Net. Only 8% of parents locked or disabled the home computer to control access, and 8% used software to monitor their use or filter offensive sites.

Parents make efforts to regulate the use of the Internet while at home, but elsewhere, control is more limited. About 53% of parents reported that their children's Internet access at school was monitored compared with 38% at other locations. However, 30% of parents didn't know whether or not monitoring took place at school or at other locations.

The parents who did not monitor their children's use of the Internet at home were more likely to have older teenagers (49%), or were not computer savvy themselves and therefore may not recognize the risk of exposure. Half of parents who had never used a computer monitored their kids' use of the Internet at home, compared with 73% of those who rated their computer skills as excellent.

### Summary

Children are frequently more comfortable, knowledgeable, and literate than their parents about computers and the Internet. Today, kids are learning, playing, communicating, working and creating communities in very different ways than their parents. Internet access at school is a great equalizer as it shows little variation by social status. Perhaps because of this, children are more likely to be Internet users than their parents.

Many parents are concerned about their children's use of the Internet. Despite their anxieties, Internet users engage in a wide range of activities that require them to trust in each other and the organizations that run Web sites. Parents can support their children by teaching them to validate and authenticate information, to identify offensive material, to protect their privacy, and to manage their time online.



**Warren Clark** is a senior analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

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# Generosity: 30 years of giving

by Paul Reed

This article has been adapted from *Generosity in Canada: Trends in personal gifts and charitable donations over three decades, 1969-1997*. This is the second article in a series of reports on giving and volunteering from Statistics Canada's Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project to mark the International Year of Volunteers.

Generosity — giving freely to others — is a complex and multifaceted behaviour, one that is highly susceptible to social judgement. Though it is treated extensively in major religions, in works of philosophy and in literature, it has received little empirical examination in the social sciences. Because a very large part of generosity in contemporary societies is expressed through household spending behaviour, broad features of Canadians' generosity can be learned from surveys of household expenditure.

From 1969 to 1996, the Family Expenditure Survey (FAMEX) provided such data in Canada. In 1997, FAMEX was redesigned and renamed the Survey of Household Spending, with several changes made in the gifts and contributions category; for example, expenditures on non-monetary gifts other than clothing were no longer being identified. The following analysis is based principally on FAMEX figures for the 1969 to 1996 period because of the continuity and consistency of subcategories; selected statistics are provided, however, for 1997, 1998 and 1999. This 30-year statistical series contains a rich array

## CST What you should know about this study

### Definitions:

**Persons outside household:** individuals (family, friend or other) who do not live in the same household as the respondent.

**Charitable contributions to organizations:** can be either direct financial donations or in-kind donations. *Financial* donations involve giving money directly to organizations, depositing spare change in cash boxes, or leaving a bequest to a charitable, religious or spiritual organization. *In-kind* donations include giving clothing, household goods or food to a charitable organization or food bank.

**Non-monetary gifts to individuals:** gifts of flowers, clothing, household goods or food items.

**Income quintile:** division of the population into five equally-sized groups from the lowest to the highest income. The lowest quintile contains those 20% of households with the lowest income, while the highest quintile contains the 20% with the highest income.

of patterns that reveal Canadian households' diverse and changing giving habits. While overall expenditures on gifts and charitable donations have been rising slowly for many years, the manner in which Canadians give has been undergoing significant change.

### Total giving to individuals and charitable organizations

- The proportion of households that reported giving gifts and charitable donations declined from a peak of 92% in 1982 to 87% in 1996.
- From 1969 to 1999, average annual total giving by all households — both gifts to individuals outside the household and charitable

contributions — rose from \$986 to \$1,700 per year.<sup>1</sup> This increase, however, amounted to a rise from 3.3% to 3.5% of disposable income. This small change is understandable in light of the fact that the disposable income of Canadian households has remained flat for the past two decades.<sup>2</sup>

1. All dollar values are presented in constant 1996 dollars.
2. It is possible that there has been a net decline in total giving by households because the expenditure category "gifts of money and contributions" includes spousal and child support payments and the incidence and magnitude of such payments has been rising.

## Gifts and contributions to individuals

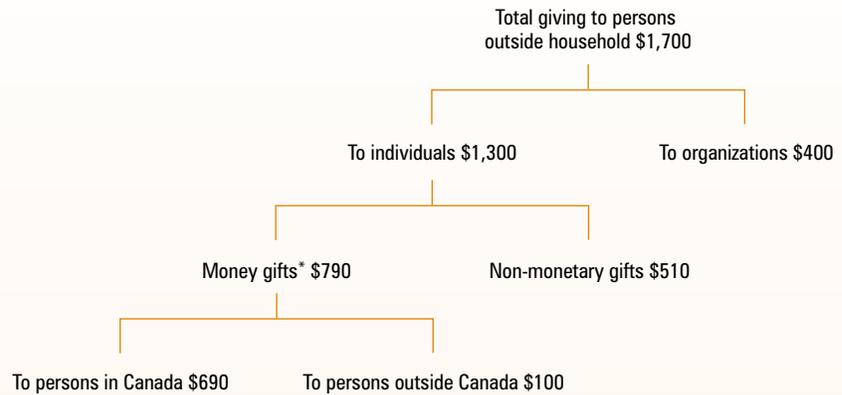
- In 1996, 76% of all giving was to individuals, up from 62% in 1969. A significant portion of this involved spousal and child support payments, however. In 1998, support payments amounted to 30% of total gifts and contributions to individuals.
- Money gifts (averaging \$790) made up 61% of all gifts to individuals in 1996, a large increase from 38% in 1969.
- Of every dollar given to individuals in 1996, only 12 cents went to people living outside Canada, down from 34 cents in 1969.
- Non-monetary gifts to individuals, which accounted for 39% of all gifts in 1996, included items such as flowers, clothing and toys. The proportion of households receiving non-monetary gifts declined from a national average of 67% in 1969 to 51% in 1996.

## Charitable contributions to organizations

- The proportion of households that contributed to charitable organizations declined from 78% in 1969 to 73% by 1997. Averaged over all households, charitable contributions stood at \$428 in 1997.
- Over the same period, charitable contributions as a proportion of total household giving also fell, from 38% to 24%. This was due mostly to a marked drop in donations to religious organizations, from 28% to 15% of total giving and from 74% to 64% of total charitable contributions. Both the incidence of donating to religious organizations and the total amount donated to them has declined.
- Contributions to charitable organizations accounted for 1.2% of households' disposable income in 1969; after declining to a low of 0.8% in 1978, the proportion returned to 1.2% in 1997.

CST

## Average annual expenditures on gifts and contributions, all households, Canada

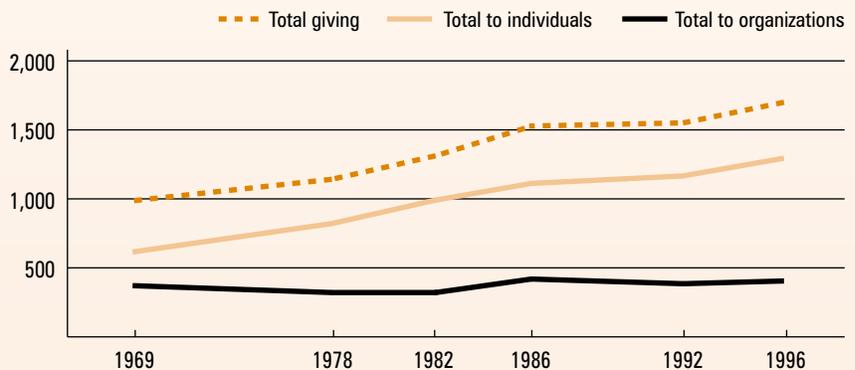


\* Includes spousal and child support payments.

Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1996.

## Average annual giving, all households, Canada

Constant 1996 \$



Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1969 to 1996.

## Total giving as a % of disposable income, all households, Canada

% of disposable income



Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1969 to 1996.

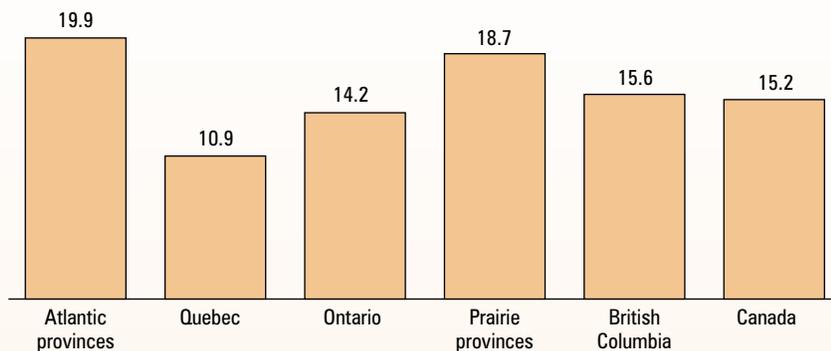
### Highest and lowest income quintile households

- In 1996, 96% of households in the highest income quintile reported giving and donating, compared with 72% in the lowest quintile.

However, those households in the lowest quintile that did contribute spent an average of 6.8% of disposable income on those gifts and donations in 1996; the highest quintile spent 4.5%.

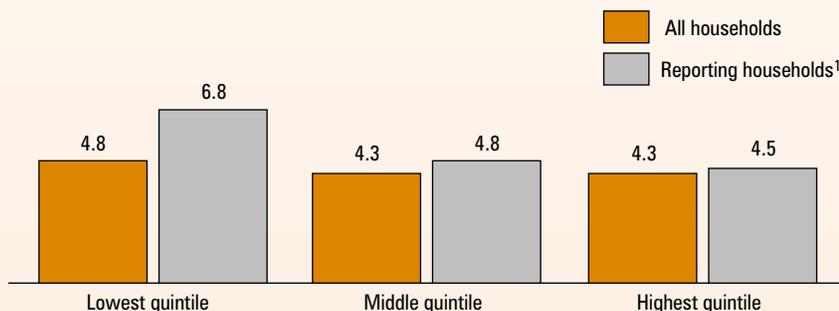
- The percentage of disposable income spent on gifts and donations declined for all income quintiles between 1969 and 1978 but has been rising since then. Not surprisingly, the rate of giving has shown more variability for lowest-income quintile households than for those in the highest quintile.

### CST Religious contributions as a % of total giving, all households



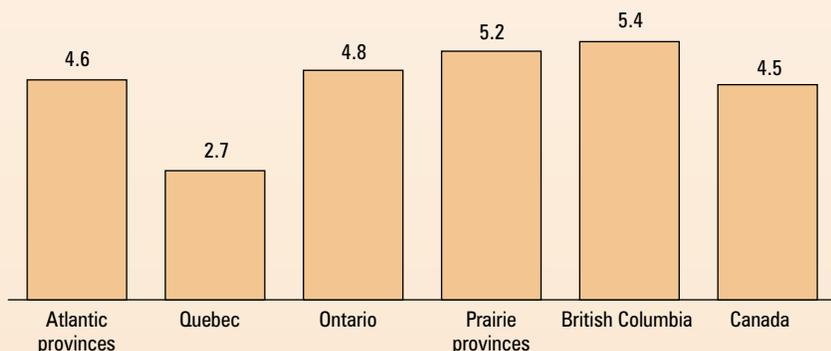
Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1996.

### Total giving as % of disposable income, by income quintiles



1. Includes only those households that reported expenditures on giving.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1996.

### Total giving as % of disposable income, all households



Source: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1996.

### Distinctive regional patterns

- The percentage of households that give to individuals and charitable organizations varies across the country. In 1996, the highest incidence of giving was reported in the Atlantic and the Prairie provinces (over 93%), and the lowest was recorded in Quebec (74%).
- Expenditures on giving as a percentage of disposable income were close to the national average of 4.5% in the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario. Notable divergence from the national average was recorded in Quebec (where the proportion was 2.7%), the Prairie provinces (5.2%) and British Columbia (5.4%).
- Donations to religious organizations as a proportion of total giving were highest among Atlantic households at 20% and lowest in Quebec at 11%.
- In 1996, the value of non-monetary gifts, as estimated by the recipients, averaged \$379 for all Canadian households; it was \$239 for Quebec, and it ranged from \$408 to \$455 for all other regions.



**Paul Reed** is Senior Social Scientist in the National Accounts and Analytical Studies Field, Statistics Canada and Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University.

# Mobile homes in Canada

by Frances Kremarik and Cara Williams

*Have you ever been zooming down a highway only to come upon the taillights of a police vehicle providing a safety buffer behind an extra wide load carrying a mobile home? As you slow down, do you ever wonder where the mobile is going or who lives in a mobile home? Perhaps you think back to the first time that you saw a mobile on a highway or local road. Maybe you just wonder why they are called 'mobiles' when they have to be transported by another vehicle at such slow speeds.*

## CST What you should know about this study

This article is based on data from the 1996 Census of Population. In addition to responding to general socio-economic questions (such as age, educational attainment, and labour force status), each household was asked about the state of repairs required to their dwelling as well as other dwelling features such as the number of rooms and the number of bedrooms. Information on housing type was recorded by the census enumerators.

**Mobile home or mobile:** a single dwelling, designed and constructed to be transported on its own chassis and capable of being moved to a new location on short notice. It may be placed temporarily on a foundation such as blocks, posts or a prepared pad which may be converted by a skirt. If placed on a permanent foundation, it is considered (for census purposes) to be a single detached dwelling.

**Urban:** an urban area is an area that has attained a population concentration of at least 1,000 and a population density of at least 400 per square kilometre.

**Small town:** an urban area that has a population of less than 30,000.

**Rural:** areas that lie outside urban areas.

**Rural farm residents:** members of rural farm operator households who live on their farm for any length of time during the 12-month period prior to the census.

**Rural non-farm residents:** people who live in rural areas that are not classified as being farms.

Built on a chassis, mobile homes and travel trailers were synonymous until about 1960 — both were trailers that were also private dwellings. At about this time, the industry restructured and since then a distinction has been made between the trailer used for camping (the travel trailer or recreation vehicle) and the trailer used as a house. While travelers can pull their trailers from campground to campground, once a mobile home has been placed on a site, it often remains rooted.

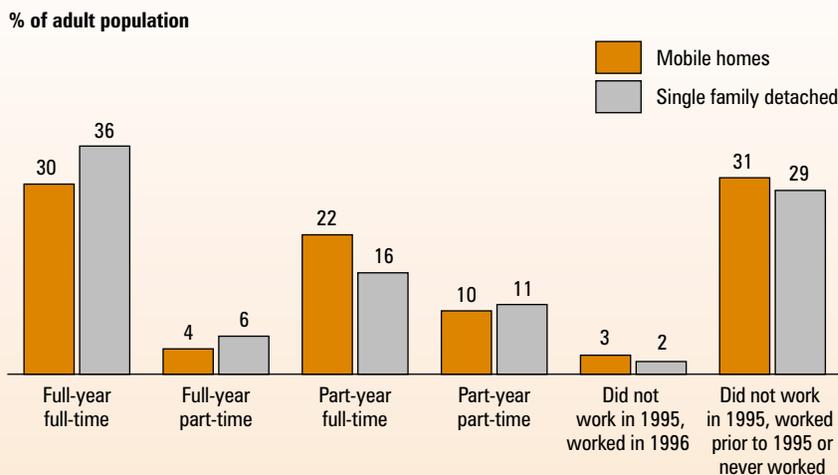
This article examines the characteristics of people living in mobile homes, with special emphasis on the differences between rural and urban households. Because mobiles are single family homes with a chassis instead of a foundation, mobile home households are compared to those residing in single family detached dwellings.

### Over hill, over dale...

In 1996, there were more than 150,000 mobile homes in Canada, representing about 1% of total private dwellings. Although they are not as common as other types of housing, they can be found in every province and territory. In 1996, British Columbia and Alberta accounted for almost half (48%) of mobile homes in Canada. Mobile homes represented 3% of occupied dwellings in BC and 4% in Alberta. In other provinces, usage varied widely from Newfoundland, where they made up less than 1% of all dwellings, to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, where they accounted for 9% and 8%, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Mobile homes are both a rural and an urban phenomenon. Indeed, over half (57%) of all mobile homes in Canada are located in rural areas (both farms and non-farms) and another 22% are in towns and small cities with populations under 30,000. These figures are not surprising. In

## CST Adults in mobile homes are less likely to work in full-year full-time employment



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

rural areas mobile homes can be a low-cost and low-maintenance retirement home for seniors; on farms they may represent an easily installed farmhouse or additional living quarters. In smaller urban areas, mobile homes allow for the fast expansion of housing stock in economic boom times; for example, more than 70% of the mobiles in the Yukon are in small towns. For the most part, however, mobile homes are restricted in many large urban centres by municipal by-laws.

### Nearly half of mobile home residents are younger than 30

In general, the age structure of people living in mobile homes is similar to that of people living in single detached houses. In 1996, 45% of mobile home residents were under 30 compared with 41% of single family home occupants. Seniors 65 and older made up 10% of the population in mobiles and 11% of residents in single detached homes.

The family structure of households in mobile homes does, however, differ from that of people in single detached houses. Mobile homes are almost

twice as likely to house only one individual than are single homes: 24% versus 14% respectively. This is to be expected as mobile homes are generally less costly to own and maintain, and one-person households generally have lower incomes than other types of households. The lower cost may also be an attraction for lone-parent families who made up 10% of households in mobile homes compared with 8% in single family homes.

Couples with one child are almost as likely to be found in a mobile home as in a single detached home, at 13% and 15% respectively. However, larger families are clearly more comfortable in bigger houses. For example, two-parent families with two or more children account for 31% of single detached households, but only 19% of mobile households. The one exception occurs on farms, where

1. Since these data are from the 1996 Census, the Northwest Territories in this article includes both the current Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which did not become a separate territory until April 1, 1999.

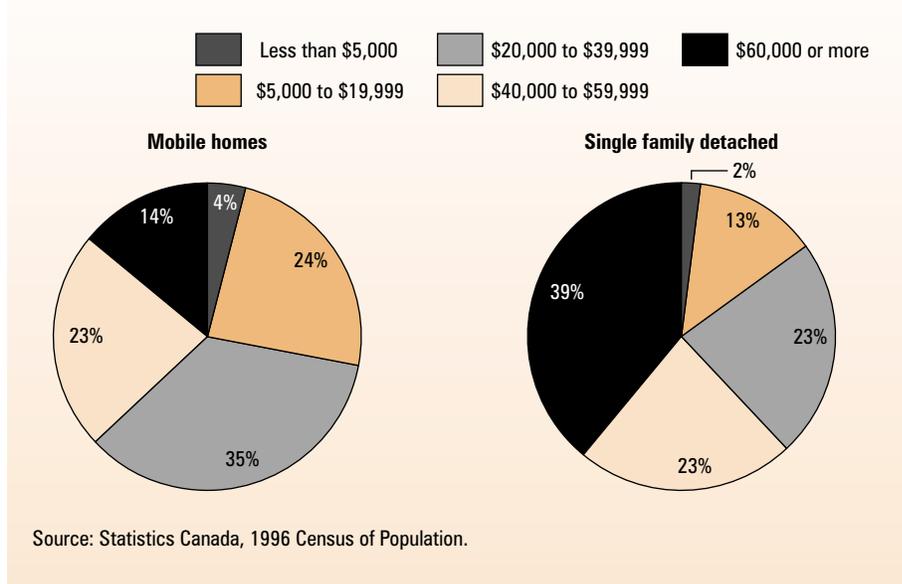
larger families are equally likely to live in mobile homes and single family dwellings.

Since they are built to be moveable, mobile homes are smaller than conventional single family dwellings: nearly all mobiles (94%) have between 4 and 6 rooms, while close to half of single detached homes have between 7 and 9 rooms. Although mobile homes tend to house single people and smaller families, they are more likely to be somewhat crowded. Ten percent of mobiles have a crowding index<sup>2</sup> of 1.0 or higher, compared with 3% of single family dwellings. Crowding is even more common in rural farm areas (22%) where mobiles are more likely to house families with two or more children.

### Lower income and education common among mobile home residents

One-half of all Canadians in mobile homes, compared with 36% of those in single family dwellings, had not completed their high school education;<sup>3</sup> mobile residents were also much less likely to have finished a university diploma or degree (4% versus 15%). This difference in educational attainment is smaller in rural than in urban areas. While half of mobile home residents in rural areas have not completed their secondary education, neither have 44% of single family detached dwellers. In urban areas, however, figures for less than high school completion are 50% for mobile residents compared with 33% for dwellers in single detached homes. Differences in post-secondary attainment are also quite noticeable in urban areas; only 2% of mobile residents have obtained a bachelor's or higher degree, while almost 16% of single detached dwellers have done so.

Being without higher educational qualifications usually affects a person's employment profile.<sup>4</sup> In 1996, 30% of mobile home residents were



employed full-time full-year (49 to 52 weeks); another 22% had worked full-time but had not been employed year-round. In contrast, 36% of adults in single family homes worked full-time full-year and only 16% were full-time workers without full-year employment.

Nevertheless, the majority of mobile home residents (60%) reported wages as their major source of income; this was similar to the rate for households in single family dwellings (63%). On the other hand, 28% of households living in mobile homes stated that government transfers were the major component of their income, compared with 20% of single family households.

Mobile home residents had lower household income than those in single detached houses. Almost one quarter of households in mobiles had an annual income between \$5,000 and \$20,000 in 1995; this represents nearly twice the proportion of those living in single family dwellings. While 35% of mobile home households reported an income between \$20,000 and \$40,000, nearly the same proportion (39%) of households in

single family dwellings had incomes of \$60,000 or more.

This income disparity was most evident in urban areas; 45% of single family households had incomes of \$60,000 or more compared with 15% of mobile home dwellers. Similarly, 27% of urban mobile households reported an income under \$20,000 while only 12% of single detached households were in the same situation. The income gap was not as wide in rural areas, where 29% of mobile and 21% of single detached households had incomes under \$20,000; incomes over \$60,000 were reported by 13% of mobile and 27% of single home residents.

- The crowding index is the number of persons per room. Bathrooms, kitchens, and closets are not included in the number of rooms.
- Population numbers and rates used for highest academic achievement refer only to Canadians who are 15 years of age or older.
- Crompton, S. 1995. "Employment prospects for high school graduates." *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 7, 3: 8-13.

	Total	Rural %	Urban
<b>Mobile homes</b>			
Couple with no children	29	29	29
Couple with one child	13	13	13
Couple with two or more children	19	21	16
Lone-parent families	10	9	12
One-person households	24	24	25
Other	5	4	5
<b>Single family detached</b>			
Couple with no children	27	30	27
Couple with one child	15	15	16
Couple with two or more children	31	30	32
Lone-parent families	7	7	8
One-person households	14	15	13
Other	6	3	4

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

### A place to call home

Many people want to own their homes, no matter how modest their income and for some, mobile homes make a good choice. They are cheaper than more conventional housing: the average value of mobile homes in 1995 was about \$43,500, less than one-third that of a single detached home. Lower priced mobile homes provide persons who might not otherwise be able to afford to purchase a home with a low-cost ownership alternative. Some 77% of mobile homes were owner-occupied, compared with 87% of single family homes.

In addition, mobile homes have lower shelter costs thus contributing to their affordability.<sup>5</sup> While only 8% of single detached owner-occupied households have monthly shelter costs of less than \$200, 34% of mobile

dwellers did. At the other end of the scale, 27% of single detached homeowners spent \$1,000 or more every month on shelter costs compared with only 5% of mobile owners. Approximately 85% of all homeowners, mobile and single detached, spent less than 30% of their income on shelter.

The construction techniques that make mobiles portable may contribute to their need for repairs, which is considerably higher than that of single homes. In 1996, most mobile homes were in good condition and required only minor repairs or regular maintenance. However, 14% needed major repairs, compared with 9% of single detached homes. Mobile homes in rural areas were moderately more likely to need major repairs than those in urban sites (15% versus 12%); the same pattern applied to single detached dwellings: 12% of rural

homes versus 7% of urban ones needed major repairs.

### Summary

More than half of all mobile homes are in rural areas, and they can be seen in every province and territory. Almost half are home to small families, and another quarter house a single individual. The majority of mobile households rely on wages as their major source of income, but many residents are not employed full-time year-round. Mobile homes are in greater need of major repair than single detached dwellings, but they are nonetheless an alternative option for people seeking home ownership. When someone says “home” the word conjures up different meanings for different people. For 380,000 Canadians, home is a mobile.

5. Shelter costs include payments for electricity, oil, gas, coal, wood or other fuels, water and other municipal services, monthly mortgage payments, and property taxes (municipal and school).



**Frances Kremerik and Cara Williams** are analysts with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.



## Asset versus debt

The average Canadian owed \$16 for every \$100 of assets they owned in 1999. But lone-parent families maintained much higher debt burdens overall (\$29 per \$100), and two-parent families with children owed \$23. Single senior women had the lowest debt to asset ratio at \$1 per \$100 and persons under 25 in families who didn't own their own home had the highest at \$53.

The median net worth of Canada's families was \$81,000 in 1999. This is the amount left over when all assets are sold and all debts are paid. Families headed by seniors held the highest median net worth at \$202,000, largely because their homes were mortgage-free. Single men under 65 had the lowest net worth, at \$11,200. Key factors in determining net worth are education, occupation, age, income and the number of earners in the family.

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## Smoke signals

As of June 2000, there were 6 million people (15 years and over) who have quit smoking and 5.9 million who smoked daily or

occasionally. The highest incidence of smoking occurred among people aged 20 to 24: 35% of men and 30% of women. Teenagers aged 15 to 19 were the next most frequent group of smokers, at about 26%.

In provinces where the taxes on, and the prices of, cigarettes were higher (the Western provinces and Newfoundland), people smoked between 14 to 16 cigarettes a day. In provinces with lower taxes and prices, consumption averaged around 18 cigarettes a day.

British Columbia had the lowest average use at 14 cigarettes a day while New Brunswick registered the highest, at 18.

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## Lure of the city

All provinces lost youth from their rural areas between 1971 and 1996. The greatest loss occurred in Saskatchewan and in the four Atlantic provinces, particularly in Newfoundland and in Prince Edward Island. The provinces with the smallest loss of rural youth were Alberta and British Columbia.

Urban areas gained youth in all provinces except in the Atlantic provinces. Urban areas in Alberta recorded the largest gains. In the Atlantic provinces, urban areas lost youth in Newfoundland and in Prince Edward Island, but only in some age groups. In Nova Scotia

and New Brunswick, the urban youth population appeared stable.

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## Reading and writing

International adult literacy skills in 22 countries have been measured using prose, document and quantitative literacy by the International Adult Literacy Survey between 1994 and 1998. Canadian adult literacy is rated below those in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands but is at the same level as literacy rates in the United States, Australia and Germany.

Comparisons between literacy rates in Canada and the United States show that the bottom quarter of Canadians score higher than the bottom quarter of Americans, but that the top quarter of Canadians score lower than the top quarter of Americans.

The study findings confirm that low literacy rates are of concern in all regions and countries. Some proposed tools for improving literacy outcomes for North America include: life-long learning, early childhood education and care programs, improvements to the quality of education, reducing inequality in schooling, improvements to adult education access, promoting literacy-rich environments at work, at home and in the community, and improving access to information and communication technology.

### Culture, Tourism, and the Centre for Education Statistics

T. Scott Murray

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## Net catch

Internet use has risen from 18% of the population age 15 and over in 1994 to 53% in 2000. Women, francophones and rural residents were less likely to use the net than men, anglophones and urban dwellers. Overall, Internet users tend to be younger, and have higher income and education levels than non-users. Nine out of 10 teenagers aged 15 to 19 reported using the Internet at some time in the past 12 months, the highest proportion of any age group. Internet use declined steadily for each subsequent age group. Individuals with household incomes of \$80,000 used the Internet much more frequently than those with household incomes of less than \$20,000, at 81% and 30% respectively. Persons 20 and older with a university education were much more likely to use the Internet (79%) than persons with less than high school diplomas (13%).

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# S O C I A L I N D I C A T O R S

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>ECONOMY*</b>								
<i>Annual % change</i>								
Gross Domestic Product <sup>1</sup>	2.3	4.7	2.8	1.5	4.4	3.3	4.5	4.7
Wages, salaries and SLI	1.8	2.6	3.4	2.4	5.7	4.7	5.1	7.2
Expenditures on goods and services <sup>1</sup>	1.8	3.1	2.1	2.5	4.4	2.9	3.5	4.0
Consumer Price Index	1.8	0.2	2.2	1.6	1.6	0.9	1.7	--
Saving rate (%)	11.9	9.4	9.2	7.0	4.7	4.5	3.6	3.2
Prime lending rate	5.94	6.88	8.65	6.06	4.96	6.60	6.44	7.27
5-year mortgage rate	8.78	9.53	9.16	7.93	7.07	6.93	7.56	8.35
Exchange rate (with U.S.dollar)	1.290	1.366	1.372	1.364	1.385	1.484	1.486	1.485
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>								
<i>Average Annual Air Pollution</i>								
Ozone <sup>2</sup> (over one hour)	86	92	94	89	90	--	--	--
<i>Total suspended particulates<sup>2</sup> (over eight hours)</i>								
	51	50	51	50	53	--	--	--
<i>Government Pollution Abatement and Control (PAC) Expenditures</i>								
<i>Sewage disposal as a % of total PAC expenditures</i>								
	42.9	42.3	48.5	48.4	--	--	--	--
<i>Waste disposal as a % of total PAC expenditures</i>								
	26.4	29.0	24.2	24.7	--	--	--	--
Billions of public transit passengers	1.38	1.35	1.39	1.37	1.40	1.43	1.43	--
<i>Total consumption of refined petroleum products<sup>3</sup> used for transportation (thousand m<sup>3</sup>)</i>								
	46,545	49,115	49,596	51,062	52,574	54,182	55,838	--
<b>JUSTICE</b>								
<i>Rate per 100,000 population<sup>4</sup></i>								
Total Criminal Code offences	9,531	9,114	8,993	8,914	8,453	8,137	7,733	--
Property offences	5,571	5,250	5,283	5,264	4,867	4,556	4,266	--
Violent offences	1,081	1,046	1,007	1,000	990	979	955	--
Other Criminal Code offences	2,879	2,817	2,702	2,650	2,596	2,602	2,512	--
<i>Average days to process case through courts</i>								
Adults	--	135	141	148	157	150	--	--
Youths <sup>5</sup>	112	111	118	117	105	107	--	--
<i>Average length of sentence per case</i>								
Adults (days in prison)**	--	116	122	126	129	137	--	--
Youths (days of open and secure custody)	92	88	82	79	74	75	--	--
<b>CIVIC SOCIETY</b>								
Voter turnout in federal elections	69.6	--	--	--	67.0	--	--	61.2
<i>% of eligible foreign-born holding citizenship</i>								
	--	--	--	83	--	--	--	--
Attendance at heritage institutions('000 <sup>6</sup> )	108,194	111,236	--	112,965	--	114,064	--	--
Government expenditures on culture (million\$) <sup>7***</sup>	5,492	5,37	5,318	5,241	5,054	4,910	5,021	--
<i>% attending religious services at least several times a year</i>								
	52.9	54.2	50.9	49.7	53.7	52.9	52.0	--
<i>% of taxfilers making charitable donations</i>								
	28	27	27	27	26	26	26	--
<i>Average amount of charitable donations (current dollars)</i>								
	610	634	647	728	808	860	899	--

-- Data not available.

1. Data in 1992 dollars.

2. % of National Ambient Air Quality Objectives (NAAQO) maximum acceptable levels.

3. Refined petroleum products refers to diesel oils, light heating oils, residual fuel oils, aviation gasoline, fuel for gas turbines and motor fuel.

4. Revised rates based on updated population estimates.

5. Alberta is excluded due to the imputation methodology on date fields thereby making an accurate calculation of a case processing time impossible.

6. Includes only not-for-profit institutions that have an educational and/or interpretive components: nature parks, historic sites, museums, archives and other institutions.

7. Excludes intergovernmental transfers. Data in 1990 dollars. Municipal spending is on a calendar year basis.

\* *National Income and Expenditure Accounts* (cat. no. 13-001-PPB)

\*\* *Adult Criminal Court Statistics* (cat. no. 85-002-XIE)

\*\*\* *Government Expenditures on Culture* (cat. no. 87F0001XPB)

# EDUCATORS' NOTEBOOK

*Suggestions for using Canadian Social Trends in the classroom*

## Lesson plan for “Kids and teens on the Net”

### Objectives

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- To examine what types of children have home access to the Internet and what they use it for
- To discuss concerns about risks
- To discuss how the Internet has changed lives.

### Method

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1. Take a quick poll of the class to determine what proportion of the group uses the Internet at home? What proportion uses the Net at locations other than school or home? In an average day how much time do they spend on the Internet?
2. What are the impediments to using the Internet at home?
3. Statistics show that there is a digital divide in Internet access where children from lower-income families are less likely to have access at home. Does access at school and public libraries compensate for no access at home? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of access from home, school, and libraries.
4. Discuss if boys' and girls' Internet use differs and, if yes, how.
5. Do parents monitor children's use of the Net while at home? Do parents influence this use?
6. Poll the class to determine what proportion have come across Internet content that promoted hate or violence. How did they deal with this situation? Discuss what would be a suitable response.
7. Discuss privacy and security concerns about using the Internet. Has anyone discussed these issues with you? (parent, teacher, librarian, etc.)
8. Discuss how the Internet has changed your life. How has it affected the time you spend on other activities, your schooling, interaction with others and your mental and physical health?

### Using other resources

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- For other lesson plans for Social Studies courses, check out the Statistics Canada Web site, <http://www.statcan.ca> under Education Resources. Select Teaching resources, then Lesson plans. There are more than 120 lessons available, listed by level and subject. E-STAT, is now free to Canadian education institutions at <http://estat.statcan.ca>. Students may now access E-STAT from home. Please ask the person responsible at your school for the User Name and Password for E-STAT. To check if your school has already registered for E-STAT visit <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Estat/licence.htm>. If your school is not a member, please ask your licence administrator to visit the licence site above.

### Share your ideas!

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Would you like to share your lessons using *CST* with other educators? Send us your ideas and we will send you lessons using *CST* received from other educators. For further information, contact your regional Statistics Canada education representative at 1 800 263-1136 or Joel Yan, Education Resources Team, Statistics Canada, Ottawa ON K1A 0T6, 1 800 465-1222 fax (613) 951-4513 or Internet e-mail [yanjoel@statcan.ca](mailto:yanjoel@statcan.ca). Details on regional education support are available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu/rep-tea.htm>.

### Educators

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**You may photocopy “Educators’ Notebook” and any item or article in *Canadian Social Trends* for use in your classroom.**

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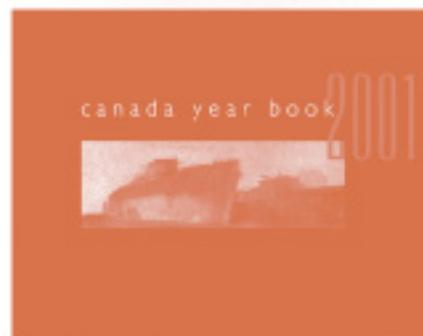
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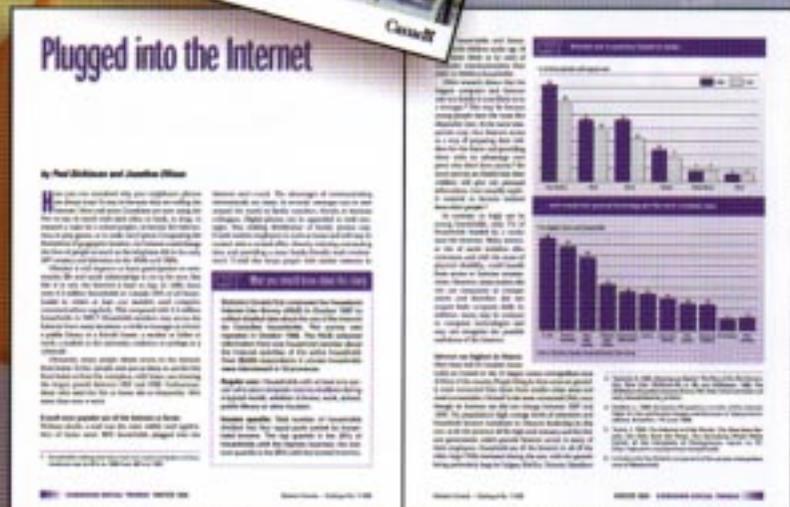
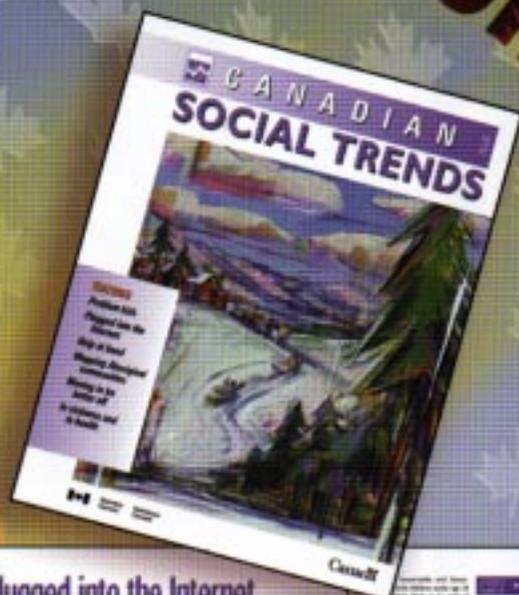
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