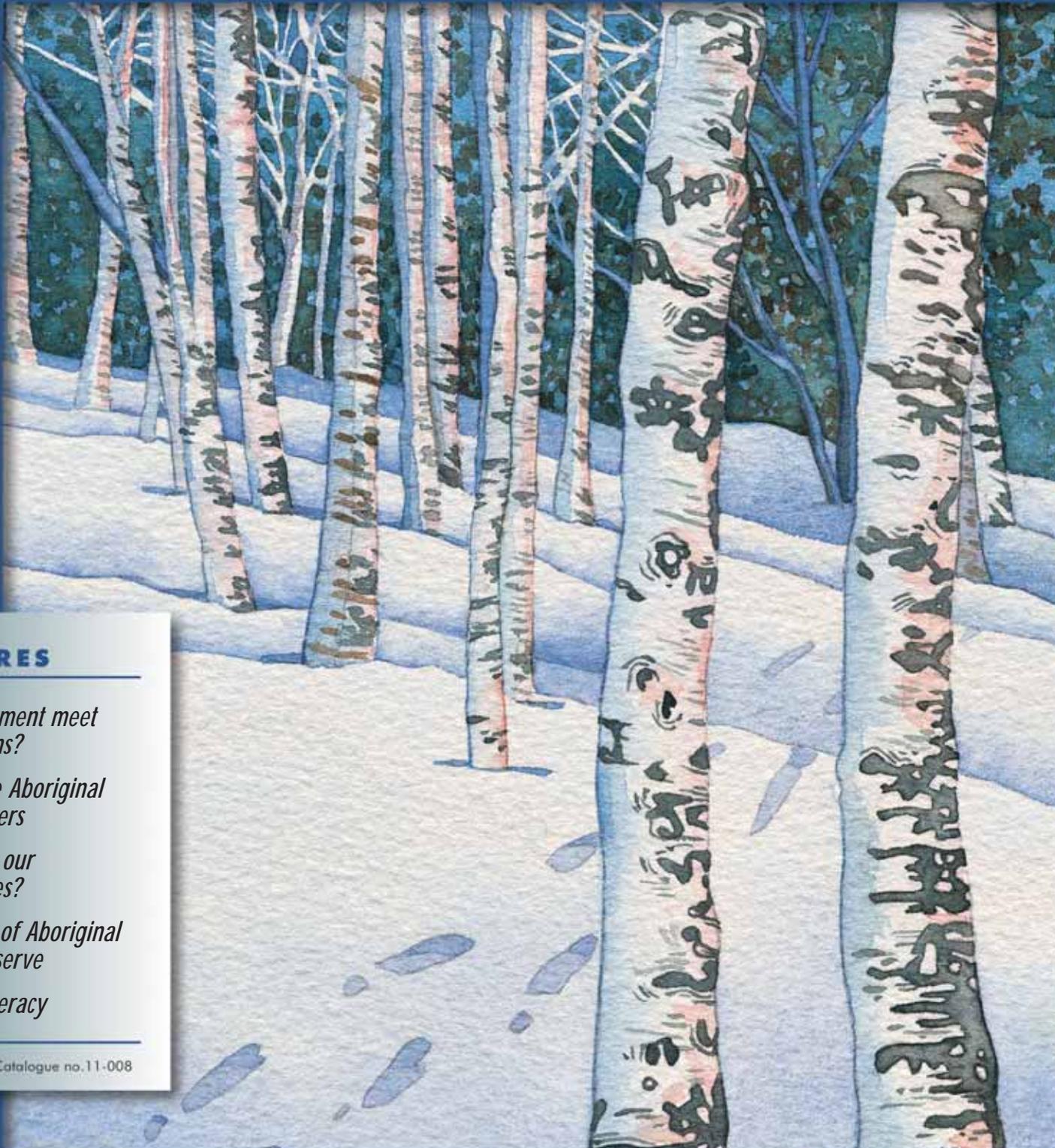




# CANADIAN Social Trends

WINTER NO. 75  
2004



## FEATURES

*Does retirement meet expectations?*

*Off-reserve Aboriginal Internet users*

*At home in our communities?*

*Well-being of Aboriginal kids off-reserve*

*Teenage literacy*

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# You can't always get what you want: Retirement preferences and experiences

by Grant Schellenberg and Cynthia Silver

An important aspect of the retirement transition is the extent to which its timing and circumstances match the preferences of older workers. No doubt, people would prefer to leave the labour force under terms and conditions of their own choosing rather than being forced to leave. The underlying issue is that those who are forced to retire may not have had adequate opportunity to prepare for retirement, either financially or psychologically.

This article uses new information from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) to examine the match between the retirement preferences and experiences of recent retirees who first retired during the period from 1992 to 2002. It identifies people whose retirement transitions were characterized by a high, moderate or low degree of congruence with their preferences, and examines their characteristics and experiences.

## Why experiences may differ from retirement preferences

Often the match between retirement preferences and experiences is defined in terms of the voluntary or involuntary nature of retirement.<sup>1</sup> Voluntary retirees are thought of as older workers who left the labour force because they wanted to, while involuntary retirees are those who left despite wanting to continue working. According to the GSS, about one quarter of recent retirees left work involuntarily.

## CST What you should know about this study

The congruence of retirement preferences and experiences is examined using data from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). The target population for the 2002 GSS was persons 45 years of age and older residing in private households in the 10 provinces. Nearly 25,000 people responded to the survey.

The 2002 GSS used a subjective definition of retirement that involved several questions. First, people who said their main activity during the previous 12 months was "retired" were identified as retirees. Others were subsequently asked, "Have you ever retired?" and those who said "yes" were also identified as retirees. Finally, individuals who said they had not ever retired were probed further; those who answered "yes" to any of these follow-up questions were also classified as retirees.

This analysis is limited to recent retirees, defined as people who first retired during the years 1992 to 2002 inclusively. This focuses the analysis on the characteristics and experiences of individuals who had made a recent transition to retirement. Only those who retired at age 50 or older are included. This results in almost 4,500 respondents covered by this article.

While the voluntary/involuntary distinction is useful, it fails to capture more subtle degrees of choice in the retirement transition. Voluntary retirees may leave the labour force willingly, but within the context of narrow options such as time-limited early retirement incentives. In this situation, individuals may want to continue working, but decide to retire because they may be concerned about future job termination under less advantageous conditions. Although they left their job voluntarily and exercised choice in making their decision, their first choice of remaining employed was not viewed

as a viable option. Similarly, people who chose to retire because of health problems may view their retirement as voluntary, even though they might have continued working had circumstances been different.

Using GSS data, the match between retirement preferences and experiences can be examined in more detail. In addition to the voluntary/involuntary retirement question, retirees were asked nine questions to establish whether they would have continued to work had working conditions or other circumstances been different.

Nearly 60% of recent retirees responded positively to at least one of these nine questions, indicating they would have continued working if the circumstances had been different. The fact that the majority of recent retirees said that they would have been willing to keep working under certain circumstances may be somewhat surprising, given the appetite that employed Canadians express for early retirement.<sup>2</sup> However, responses to hypothetical questions must be treated cautiously. Responses may overstate retirees' willingness to have continued working, particularly if they have found their retirement to be less satisfying than they expected. In such cases, the option of continued employment may look appealing in retrospect.

Over one-quarter of recent retirees said they would have continued to do paid work if they had been able to reduce their work schedule without affecting their pension, either by working fewer days (28%) or by working shorter days (26%). Just under one-fifth of recent retirees (19%) said they would have continued

working if they could have taken more vacation without affecting their pension. Altogether, 30% of recent retirees cited at least one of these three pension-related reasons.<sup>3</sup> The importance of work arrangements was also evident in the fact that 28% of recent retirees said they would have continued working had they been able to do so on a part-time basis.

Health problems were a consideration for many recent retirees, as 26% of them said they would have continued working had their health been better. Considering financial incentives, 21% of recent retirees said that they would have continued working had their salary been increased. Finally, smaller shares of recent retirees said they would have continued working if mandatory retirement policies had not existed in their workplace (12%) or if they could have found suitable caregiving arrangements (6%). Results were similar for men and women.

The apparent willingness of some recent retirees to have continued working also has implications for labour supply. With the imminent retirement of the baby boomers,

some analysts have stressed the importance of strategies to encourage or enable older workers to defer retirement and remain on the job.<sup>4</sup> According to the GSS, many recent retirees would have been amenable to such initiatives. However, almost one-half of retirees who would have continued working under different circumstances had experienced health problems. Excluding individuals whose prospects for continued employment were limited by health, 33% of recent retirees said they would have continued working under different circumstances.

### A typology of retirees – How closely retirement preferences match experiences

By combining the information on willingness to have continued working rather than retiring with that on the voluntary or involuntary nature of retirement, a better understanding of the match between the retirement preferences and experiences of recent retirees can be achieved. This results in four possible retirement categories.<sup>5</sup>

People who had retired voluntarily and would not have continued doing paid work had circumstances been different may be a best-case retirement scenario. They retired willingly and without second thoughts about leaving; this group represents 38% of recent retirees. They are labelled *high-congruence retirees* to emphasize the fit between their retirement preferences and experiences.

Recent retirees who left the labour force voluntarily, but who would have continued working had circumstances been different, essentially have left the labour force prematurely. Nonetheless, the circumstances were not so unsatisfactory or difficult that they viewed their retirement as involuntary. This group represents 36% of recent retirees, and are labelled *moderate-congruence retirees* to highlight the partial mismatch between their retirement preferences and experiences.

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## Many recent retirees would have continued to do paid work

	Total	Men	Women
<b>% of recent retirees who said they would have continued to do paid work if circumstances had been different</b>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Would have continued to do paid work if...<sup>1</sup></b>			
Could work fewer days without affecting pension	28	29	27
Could work shorter days without affecting pension	26	26	25
Had more vacation leave without affecting pension	19	20	18
Any combination of above three reasons	30	31	30
Could have worked part-time	28	28	27
Personal health had been better	26	27	26
Salary was increased	21	22	20
Mandatory retirement policies had not existed	12	12	12
Could have found suitable caregiving arrangements	6	7	6
Other reasons	11	10	13

1. Respondents could report more than one reason.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2002.

Recent retirees who left the labour force involuntarily and who would have preferred to continue working exercised less choice and expressed more dissatisfaction in their retirement transition. This group accounted for 24% of recent retirees. A fourth group, making up 3% of recent retirees, retired involuntarily, but would not have kept working in any case. All involuntary retirees have been combined into a single group labelled *low-congruence retirees* to emphasize the mismatch between their retirement preferences and experiences. This group accounted for 27% of recent retirees.

Overall, these three groups represent first-, second- and third-best retirement transitions because of the varying degrees of consistency between retirement choices and preferences. The characteristics and experiences of individuals in these groups differ considerably.

### High-congruence retirees

Financial considerations, rather than unemployment, poor health or other factors, were the most frequent reasons why high-congruence retirees left the labour force. More specifically, 79% of them said that one of the reasons for retirement was because it was financially possible to do so and 47%, because they had completed the years of service needed to qualify for a pension. Furthermore, in 2002, over half were receiving income from an employer-sponsored pension and resided in households with incomes of \$40,000 or more. Most (78%) said that their financial situation was better than or the same as it had been in the year prior to retirement.

Health problems were not a central feature in the retirement transition of high-congruence retirees. Only 10% said their health was a factor in their retirement decision and most were in very good or excellent health when they left the labour force (70%). Furthermore, very few high-congruence retirees

CST More than one in four recent retirees retired involuntarily		
	%	Level of congruence
Retired voluntarily – Would not have continued doing paid work	38	High
Retired voluntarily – Would have continued doing paid work	36	Moderate
Retired involuntarily – Would have continued doing paid work	24	Low
Retired involuntarily – Would not have continued doing paid work	3	Low

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2002.

experienced downsizing or unemployment on their way to retirement.

High-congruence retirees were satisfied with their choice as only 16% of them returned to the labour force after their initial retirement. Of returnees, few cited financial circumstances as a reason for returning (20%); most cited reasons related to the intrinsic satisfaction derived from work such as 'wanted something to do', 'asked to help out' and 'enjoyed the work'.

### Moderate-congruence retirees

Compared with high-congruence retirees, moderate-congruence retirees typically left the labour force at a younger age. More specifically, 52% of them first retired before the age of 60 compared with 44% of high-congruence retirees.

For many of these individuals, financial considerations and organizational change were factors in their retirement decision. Similar to high-congruence retirees, about three-quarters of moderate-congruence retirees said they retired because it was financially possible to do so and about one-half because they were eligible for a pension. Over one-quarter (27%) of them cited early retirement incentives as a reason, 13% downsizing and 3% unemployment, suggesting that they left work due to organizational restructuring.

Moderate-congruence retirees were similar financially to high-congruence retirees. According to the

GSS, 49% had household incomes of \$40,000 or more. About two-thirds reported that their financial well-being was the same or better than it was during the year before retirement.

Finally, health considerations were a motivating factor in the retirement decisions of 31% of moderate-congruence retirees. About 22% said that their health was fair or poor at the time they retired. Of those who retired for health reasons, 65% said that retirement was financially possible.

The mismatch between retirement preferences and experiences of moderate-congruence retirees was evident in that 32% of them returned to the labour force after their initial retirement, double that of high-congruence retirees. Of those who returned to the labour force, 41% cited financial circumstances as a motivating factor.

### Low-congruence retirees

The retirement experiences of low-congruence retirees were very different from other retirees. This was certainly evident because finance-related reasons for retirement were less common. While about three-quarters of high- and moderate-congruence retirees said they retired because it was financially possible to do so, only one-third of low-congruence retirees reported this reason. Furthermore, only 26% retired because they were eligible for a

pension and 13% because they received an early retirement incentive.

In 2002, 37% of low-congruence retirees were receiving income from an employer-sponsored pension. About two in five resided in households with incomes of \$40,000 or more compared with about half of high- and moderate-congruence retirees. In terms of financial well-being, half of low-congruence retirees felt financially worse off in retirement than they were in the year prior to retiring, compared with about one in five high-congruence retirees.

Employment disruption was another pathway into retirement for this group, as 25% said they had retired because their job was downsized and about 15% because of unemployment or mandatory retirement policies. The mismatch between retirement preferences and actual outcomes for the low-congruence retirees was evident in that 32% of them returned to the labour force after their initial retirement, primarily for financial reasons; however, only about two-thirds were successful in finding new employment (65%).

Health was the primary factor forcing low-congruence retirees out of the labour force, with 43% of them citing health as a reason for retirement and 37% saying they were in fair or poor health at the time they retired. Most of these retirees perceived themselves to be in a weak financial situation with only 34% saying retirement was financially possible.

Nearly half of low-congruence retirees said they would have stayed at work if their health had been better. Although tighter labour markets and policies designed to encourage older workers to remain on the job may reduce the number of involuntary retirees, those with health problems severe enough to cause them to retire are unlikely to respond to such changes as long as their health is problematic.

**CST**

## High-congruence retirees have significantly different characteristics than low-congruence retirees

	Level of congruence		
	High	Moderate	Low
	% (distribution down columns)		
<b>Age at first retirement</b>			
50 to 59	44	52	55
60 to 64	33	29	26
65 and over	23	19	19
<b>Reasons for first retirement<sup>1</sup></b>			
Retirement financially possible	79	74	34
Eligible for pension	47	54	26
Early retirement incentives	19	27	13
Job was downsized	6	13	25
Unemployment	1	3	15
Own health	10	31	43
Mandatory retirement policies	11	12	16
Care for family members	7	9	8
<b>Receives pension benefits from a former employer</b>			
Yes	52	58	37
No	48	42	63
<b>Financial well-being relative to the year prior to retirement</b>			
Better	15	12	10
Same	63	55	40
Worse	22	33	50
<b>Household income</b>			
Less than \$20,000	11	14	28
\$20,000 to \$29,999	18	19	20
\$30,000 to \$39,999	16	18	13
\$40,000 to \$59,999	24	23	19
\$60,000 or more	31	26	20
<b>Health at retirement</b>			
Excellent	40	30	22
Very good	30	23	19
Good	25	25	22
Fair or poor	6	22	37
<b>Satisfaction with life in general</b>			
Very satisfied	38	31	22
Satisfied	40	39	35
Dissatisfied	18	24	30
Very dissatisfied	4	7	13
<b>Labour market involvement after retirement</b>			
Did not return to the labour force	84	68	68
Returned to the labour force	16	32	32
<b>Of those who returned to the labour force...</b>			
% who found paid employment	97	90	65
% who returned due to financial considerations	20	41	60

1. Respondents may report multiple reasons for first retirement and therefore percentages may add to more than 100%.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2002.

	Level of congruence		
	High	Moderate	Low
	% (distribution across rows)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>
Men	37	37	26
Women	38	34	28
<b>Age at first retirement</b>			
50 to 59	33	37	30
60 to 64	42	35	24
65 and over	42	33	25
<b>Marital status at retirement</b>			
Married	39	36	25
Other	31	35	34
<b>Immigration status</b>			
Canadian-born	38	37	25
Immigrant	35	32	33
<b>Educational attainment</b>			
Less than high school	37	32	31
High school/some postsecondary	37	37	26
Certificate or diploma	37	35	28
University degree	42	39	19
<b>Class of worker prior to retirement</b>			
Paid employee	37	37	26
Self-employed	45	31	24
<b>Occupation prior to retirement</b>			
Managerial	40	35	26
Professional/technical	46	38	16
Clerical	36	37	27
Sales/services	34	33	33
Trades/transportation	32	40	27
Primary, processing, manufacturing, utilities	37	33	30
<b>Industry prior to retirement</b>			
Agriculture, primary industries	38	38	24
Utilities, transportation, warehousing	31	44	25
Construction	37	40	24
Manufacturing	38	31	31
Trade	32	31	37
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing or professional services	37	36	27
Health, education, social services	45	37	18
Food, accommodation, culture and other services	36	35	29
Public administration	39	40	21
<b>Receives pension benefits from a former employer</b>			
Yes	39	41	20
No	36	30	34

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2002.

Perhaps because of their health and financial insecurity, low-congruence retirees were also less satisfied with their lives in general. Fifty-seven percent were satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 70% of moderate- and 78% of high-congruence retirees.

### Who was likely to be a high-, moderate- or low-congruence retiree?

The level of congruence was associated with several demographic and labour market characteristics. Men and women had similar levels of retirement congruence. Unmarried people at the time of their retirement were more likely than married people to be low-congruence retirees. This may have been due to greater financial insecurity and more reservations about the retirement transition. Immigrants were more likely than the Canadian-born to be low-congruence retirees, perhaps reflecting less opportunity to prepare financially for retirement. Finally, individuals with a university degree were more likely to have high-congruence between their retirement preferences and experiences.

The pre-retirement type of job was also associated with the retirement congruence. Self-employed workers were more likely than paid employees to be high-congruence retirees. This may occur because they have more opportunity to adjust their work routines and to control the timing and process of their retirement. Furthermore, unlike paid employees, self-employed workers do not typically face premature retirement because of organizational downsizing, mandatory retirement policies or early retirement incentives.

Pre-retirement occupations and industries may also influence the level of congruence. Professional and technical workers were more likely than others to be high-congruence retirees. Those previously employed in health, education and social

services and in public administration industries were more likely than retirees from other industries to have high congruence between retirement preferences and experiences.

Pension coverage was also an important factor. First, pension plan members were less likely than non-members to be low-congruence retirees. This may reflect that pension plan members have longer job tenure and higher rates of unionization and may be less subject to involuntary retirement due to downsizing or unemployment. Plan members also have more financial security than non-members and hence are more willing and able to retire. Second, pension plan members were more likely than non-members to be moderate-congruence retirees. One explanation is that pension plan members became eligible for retirement at relatively young ages and were more likely to have been offered an early retirement incentive to leave their job.<sup>6</sup> However, while they received financial incentives to leave the work force, they may not have been psychologically or financially ready to retire.

Finally, the timing of retirement itself was associated with the match between retirement preferences and experiences. Those who first retired in their fifties were more likely to be moderate-congruence retirees than others who did so in their sixties or older because they may feel they had just reached their full earnings capacity or were not yet psychologically ready to withdraw from employment. The likelihood of low-congruence retirement was greatest among individuals who retired in their fifties. Within this group, retirement before age 60 was often a result of health problems or unemployment.

## Summary

People enter into retirement for many different reasons and through many different pathways. Overall, the characteristics and experiences of high-, moderate- and low-congruence retirees differ markedly in terms of reasons for retirement, health characteristics, financial well-being and life satisfaction.

A number of factors differentiated moderate- and high-congruence retirees. Moderate-congruence retirees typically retired at an earlier age and were more likely to have done so because of pension eligibility, early retirement incentives and downsizing. They were especially more likely to have retired because of health problems. Furthermore, moderate-congruence retirees were more likely than high-congruence retirees to have returned to the labour force, and to have done so because of financial considerations, although non-financial reasons were also important.

Low congruence retirees were less likely than other retirees to have retired because it was financially possible or because they were eligible for a pension, but were more likely to have retired for health reasons or job disruptions. They were more likely than either moderate- or high-congruence retirees to have fair or poor health, to be worse off financially after retirement than before and to be dissatisfied with their lives.



**Grant Schellenberg** is a senior analyst with Demography Division and **Cynthia Silver** is a senior analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

1. Rowe, G. and H. Nguyen. 2003. "Older workers and the labour market." *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XPE) 15, 1: 55-58; Pyper, W. and P. Giles. 2002. "Approaching retirement." *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75-001-XPE) 14, 4: 9-16.
2. Schellenberg, G. 2004. "The retirement plans and expectations of non-retired Canadians aged 45 to 59." *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11F0019MIE2004223, no. 223).
3. Many retirees who did not receive income from employer pensions responded to these questions, perhaps because they answered them in relation to their inclusion in the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans. If the analysis is limited to individuals who received income from employer pensions, the share who said they would have continued working had they been able to reduce their work time without affecting their pension increases to 37%.
4. Hicks, P. 2002. "Preparing for tomorrow's social policy agenda." *Social Research Demonstration Corporation Working Paper Series 2*, 4.
5. Responses to the nine questions regarding willingness to have continued working were used to create a dichotomous variable that identified recent retirees who either 1) would have continued to do paid work under different circumstances or 2) who would not have done so. The resulting yes/no variable was cross-tabulated with information regarding the voluntary/involuntary nature of retirement, resulting in four possible categories.
6. Among recent retirees who were paid employees before they retired, 38% of those receiving pension income indicated early retirement incentives were a factor in their retirement decision, while this was the case for only 7% of those not receiving pension income.

# Off-reserve Aboriginal Internet users

by Susan Crompton

For the majority of Canadians, the Internet is now a common means of keeping in touch, doing errands and other routine activities. They go online to exchange e-mail, browse for news or information, make travel plans, bank electronically, do job-related work and so on.<sup>1</sup>

People have adopted the Internet so rapidly that governments and businesses are increasingly using it to communicate with their citizens and their customers. With so much information now distributed via Web sites and e-mail, people who do not use the Internet risk being “out of the loop” in ways that may affect their ability to participate fully in their communities. In Canada, the biggest barriers to Internet adoption are cost, access to computers or the Internet, and lack of skills or training.<sup>2</sup> Researchers at the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development have also identified living in a rural location, being a member of a minority ethnic group and speaking a minority language as significant barriers to participation.<sup>3</sup>

These barriers are particularly pertinent to Aboriginal people. But according to the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) on technology use, off-reserve Canadians with Aboriginal ancestry were just as likely to be Internet users as people without Aboriginal origin — 50% and 53%, respectively, had used the Internet at some time in the 12 months

preceding the survey (the difference is not statistically significant). So it appears that access to the Internet may not be the main barrier to its use.

In fact, almost since the birth of the “digital divide,” researchers have spoken of the “second digital divide.” This term acknowledges that there can be a divide between users themselves, based on whether they are frequent Internet users, are confident of their skills, use the technology effectively, or view the Internet as valuable, among other factors.<sup>4</sup> Although it is less noticeable, this second divide can inhibit effective Internet use just as much as the first.

This article uses the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) to draw a basic profile of Internet use among Aboriginal ancestry Canadians living off-reserve. Then, with the 2000 General Social Survey on technology use, it asks whether a second digital divide exists between these users.

## **The first digital divide: Differences between Aboriginal Internet users and non-users**

The general portrait of Internet users in Canada is well-known by now. People who use the Internet are younger and better-educated than those who do not; they are employed, have a higher income and generally live in urban centres. According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey the same is true of Aboriginal Internet users. Off-reserve

users with Aboriginal ancestry tend to be better-educated and more urban than those who do not use computer technologies. For example, more than half of non-users had less than secondary school education, compared with less than one-quarter of users. About three-quarters of Internet users lived in urban areas, which are generally well-served by Internet service providers, while almost half of non-users lived in rural areas or the North, where access can be more difficult.

Aboriginal people who used the Internet were also much more likely to be working: 68% versus 37% of non-users were employed, and they were frequently members of higher-income families: 44% lived in households reporting annual income of \$60,000 or more, compared to 19% of Aboriginal persons who were not Internet users.

## **The second digital divide: Differences between users**

Most Aboriginal Internet users were going online at home; with 73% of users identifying home as one of the places they went online, it was by far the most common place to surf the Net. The reasons for this are self-evident: home is much more convenient than other places where the time available may be limited and, in the case of public facilities such as libraries and community centres, opening hours are restricted. However, a home connection is not

This study draws on two surveys. The first part of the article, which compares Aboriginal Internet users and non-users and common Internet access points, relies on data from the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS); the second part, which discusses the digital divide between Aboriginal Internet users, is based on information from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS). Basing this article on two surveys enriches the findings, but it does present some difficulties. First, each survey defines geographic regions somewhat differently. Second, although the study population is the Aboriginal ancestry population, the APS and the GSS populations are not necessarily identical. Please read the definitions below.

## Aboriginal Peoples Survey

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey was conducted by Statistics Canada, in partnership with several Aboriginal organizations, to collect information on the lifestyles and living conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada. The Aboriginal organizations included: the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, National Association Friendship Centres and Native Women's Association of Canada. The survey was conducted from autumn 2001 through spring 2002, from a sample of about 117,000 people.

**Aboriginal ancestry person:** Respondents to the APS were asked "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong? For example, Canadian, French, English, Chinese, Italian, Irish, Cree, Micmac, Métis, Inuit, East Indian, Ukrainian..." They could specify as many groups as applicable. If at least one of the groups listed was an Aboriginal group, respondents were considered to be members of the "Aboriginal ancestry" or "Aboriginal origin" population. Readers should be aware that the ancestry population is somewhat larger than the "Aboriginal identity" population, whose members report Aboriginal ancestry and additionally identify themselves as North American Indian, Inuit or Métis; having registered Indian status as defined by the *Indian Act*; and/or having Band or First Nation membership.

**Off-reserve population:** Aboriginal persons living outside most First Nation or Band-affiliated communities.

**North:** refers to all four of the Inuit regions as defined by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, where the majority of Inuit live.

**Urban:** refers to those areas outside the North, with a minimum population concentration of 1,000 persons and population density of at least 400 people per square kilometre.

**Rural:** all areas outside urban areas and the North.

## General Social Survey

The APS data about Internet use is limited, so it is supplemented with information collected by the 2000 General Social Survey. This survey measured the nature and extent of personal computer and Internet use in Canada. Data were collected from 25,000 respondents living in private households in the 10 provinces. This article uses information provided by almost 700 respondents, representing almost 620,000 Canadians with Aboriginal ancestry.

**Aboriginal ancestry person:** Persons interviewed for the GSS were asked "Canadians come from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, French, Scottish, Chinese, South Asian or Haitian. What is your background (ancestry)?" Respondents were permitted a maximum of three answers; if one of those given was "Aboriginal," they were considered a member of the "Aboriginal ancestry" population for purposes of this study.

**Non-Aboriginal person:** Persons who did not include "Aboriginal" as part of their ethnic or cultural background.

**Urban:** census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs).

**Rural:** areas outside CMAs and CAs.

**Regular Internet use:** using the Internet at least several times a week.

**Workplace access:** refers to full-year employees or self-employed workers who used a computer in their main job and had used the Internet in the preceding 12 months.

	Total off-reserve aged 15 and over	Used computer	Used Internet	Did not use either
	'000			
	767	579	506	185
	(% distribution down column)			
<b>Both sexes</b>				
Male	47*	45	45	51*
Female	53*	55	55	49*
<b>Age group</b>				
15 to 24	25*	29	31	9*
25 to 34	22*	24	25	15*
35 to 44	24	25	25	21*
45 to 54	16*	15	14	21*
55 and over	13*	6*	5	34*
<b>Highest level of education</b>				
Less than secondary	32*	24	22	58*
Secondary completion	14	15	14	13
Some postsecondary	19*	23	23	9*
Trade school completion	9	9	9	9
College or university completion	24*	29	30	9*
<b>Region</b>				
Urban	72*	75	77	60*
Rural	25*	22	22	33*
North	3*	2	2	7*
<b>Employment status</b>				
Employed	60*	67	68	37*
Unemployed	9	8	8	10*
Not in the labour force	32*	25	24	52*
<b>Household income</b>				
Under \$25,000	24*	19	18	40*
\$25,000 to \$34,999	11*	10	10	14*
\$35,000 to \$44,999	12	11	11	12
\$45,000 to \$59,999	15	16	16	12*
\$60,000 to \$79,999	17*	19	19	11*
\$80,000 to \$99,999	10*	11	12	5*
\$100,000 and over	11*	13	14	4*

Notes: Respondent used computer and used Internet in the 12 months preceding the survey. Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

\* Indicates statistically significant difference from reference group. Reference group (Internet users) is marked in italics.

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

feasible or affordable for everyone, and APS data show that rates of Internet use from home are lower among users from lower income households.

People are much less likely to use the Internet at other locations. The second most common point of access, where 37% of off-reserve Aboriginal users go online, is at work. The rate of workplace access is higher among those users with a college or university education (58%) and a household income of \$60,000 or more (from 42% to 50%), probably because they are more likely to occupy jobs in which they use computers. On the other hand, for users with lower income or less than secondary education, school was a common point of access, with a friend's house also a frequent location for going online.

According to the APS, one of the biggest differences separating Aboriginal Internet users is place of residence. Off-reserve users in rural regions, and especially in the North, have lower rates of use from private locations, that is, from home, a friend's or relative's home, even a community centre or library. In contrast, the two key locations where Northerners get connected are school and work, suggesting that in more remote areas, Internet access is readily available only at an institutional or community level.

### Differences between urban and rural Aboriginal Internet users

There is no question that, although barriers such as cost, access and lack of training are significant, one of the most important barriers is place of residence. Living in a rural area is a significant factor limiting Internet use. Even after taking account of most of the socio-economic factors that are associated with Internet use — age, education and income — a recent Canadian study has shown that households located outside large urban centres still have to overcome problems in getting connected.<sup>5</sup>

	Place of Internet use						
	Home	Work	Friend's home	Relative's home	Community/ friendship centre	Library	School, college or university
% of off-reserve Aboriginal ancestry Internet users							
<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>
Male	76	35	27*	20	4	13	22
Female	72	38	22	18	3	12	23
<b>Age group</b>							
15 to 24	69*	19*	38*	25*	6*	19*	49*
25 to 34	72	43*	25	22*	3	10	14*
35 to 44	78*	48*	16*	14*	2*	10*	10*
45 to 54	77	46*	10*	11*	2 <sup>E*</sup>	8*	7*
55 and over	82	36	7 <sup>E*</sup>	9 <sup>E*</sup>	F	6 <sup>E*</sup>	2 <sup>E*</sup>
<b>Highest level of education</b>							
Less than secondary	67*	12*	31*	19	5*	15*	40*
Secondary completion	73	29*	23	20	2 <sup>E</sup>	10	10*
Some postsecondary	75	27	24	20	4	16*	33*
Trade school completion	74	40	19	16	4 <sup>E</sup>	8*	6 <sup>E*</sup>
College or university	79*	58*	20*	19	3	11	12*
<b>Region</b>							
Urban	75	38	25	19	3	13	22
Rural	73	33*	20*	18	4	12	24
North	36*	42*	14*	11*	2 <sup>E*</sup>	7*	42*
<b>Employment status</b>							
Employed	77*	48*	22	17	3	10*	15*
Unemployed	66	21*	30*	29*	6*	20*	31*
Not in the labour force	68	10*	27*	20	4	17*	42*
<b>Household income</b>							
Under \$25,000	58*	23*	29	24	6*	19*	31*
\$25,000 to \$34,999	65	31*	29	21	5 <sup>E</sup>	15	26
\$35,000 to \$44,999	71	34	26	19	4 <sup>E</sup>	13	22
\$45,000 to \$59,999	76	34	21	20	3 <sup>E</sup>	10*	18*
\$60,000 to \$79,999	78	42*	21	17	2 <sup>E</sup>	9*	19*
\$80,000 to \$99,999	81	43*	22	14*	2 <sup>E</sup>	11	19
\$100,000 and over	86*	50*	21	16	2 <sup>E*</sup>	10	21

\* Indicates statistically significant difference from reference group. Reference group (overall average for location) is marked in italics.

<sup>E</sup> Use with caution.

F Estimate too unreliable to be published.

Note: Respondents were able to list more than one location. Estimates for the following locations are excluded from this table due to their high sampling variability: Internet or cyber café or coffee shop; youth employment centre, employment centre or Employment Insurance office; Human Resources and Development Canada office; Band office; resource centre; and "another location."

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

In examining the second digital divide between Aboriginal users themselves, the first thing that should be noted is that the off-reserve Aboriginal population in general is much more likely to live in rural areas, 38%, versus 21% of non-Aboriginal people. And according to the 2000 GSS, rural Aboriginal residents are much less likely to be Internet users — 37% compared with 58% of urban Aboriginal Canadians. And many rural users are recent learners, since half (48%) had only been online for one year or less, compared with one-third (34%) of their urban counterparts.

The reasons for poorer Internet access in rural areas are multiple. Competition among service providers in cities can keep costs to the consumer down, whereas high operating costs and a small potential subscriber base can keep service providers out of rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, while urban dwellers may be able to connect using telephone, cable or even wireless technologies, people in rural areas may not have cable access, and telephone service to an Internet service provider may be long distance, which limits the amount of time a user can affordably be connected. Satellite offers an option to rural dwellers who wish to get connected, but it tends to be more expensive than land-based telecommunications.

These reasons may explain the situation described by the GSS data. Over half of Aboriginal users have a home connection, regardless of their place of residence — 52% of rural and 58% of urban users (the difference is not statistically significant). However, they tended to use the Internet from home less frequently if they lived in a rural area, with only 53% compared with 72% of urban-dwellers being online at least several times a week.

As researchers have pointed out, the key issue in the second digital

	Off-reserve Aboriginal ancestry users			Non-Aboriginal users
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Population aged 15 and over ('000s)	619	379	240	23,365
Number of Internet users ('000s)	307	219	88	12,430
Internet users as % of population	50	58	37†	53
Computer skills are excellent/very good <sup>1</sup>	29	34	21 <sup>E†</sup>	32
Household is connected to the Internet	56*	58	52	81
Uses computer in main job	55*	60	44*†	68
Using Internet for less than 12 months	38*	34	48†	22
<b>First learned the Internet due to ...</b>				
School or work	37	36	38 <sup>E</sup>	33
Personal interest	60	62	57	66
<b>Last month, used the Internet every day/several times a week ...</b>				
At home <sup>2</sup>	67	72	53 <sup>E†</sup>	72
At work <sup>3</sup>	38	41	F	45
<b>Used the Internet less than one hour or not at all last week at ...</b>				
Home <sup>2</sup>	17 <sup>E</sup>	17 <sup>E</sup>	F	16
Work <sup>3</sup>	26 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	23
<b>Average weekly hours spent on the Internet at ...</b>				
Home <sup>2</sup>	7.3	8.2	4.4 <sup>E</sup>	7.4
Work <sup>3</sup>	5.7 <sup>E</sup>	6.0 <sup>E</sup>	F	6.5

\* Statistically significantly difference from non-Aboriginal Internet users at 95% or more.  
† Statistically significantly difference from urban Aboriginal Internet users at 90% or more.  
<sup>E</sup> Use with caution.  
<sup>F</sup> Too unreliable to be published.  
1. Respondents who have used a computer.  
2. Users with a home connection.  
3. Employed persons with access to a computer at work.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

divide is people's ability to use the Internet effectively and in a fashion that best meets their particular needs. One-third (34%) of urban Aboriginal Internet users rated their computer skills as "excellent," while barely one-fifth (21%) of rural users were confident enough to describe their skills that way.

The difference in self-rating is a concern because a 2002 U.S. study found that the more time people spend online, the more proficient they are at navigating the Internet. The author noted that "if users often

give up in frustration and confusion" then a digital divide still exists, regardless of their access to a connection.<sup>7</sup> However, it also showed that people who devoted at least one hour a week to navigating the Internet were able to do the tasks assigned in the study, though more experienced surfers needed less time to complete them. In light of this finding, it is important to note that the great majority (81%) of Aboriginal users with online access at home had been connected for a minimum of

one hour in the week preceding the survey, whether they lived in rural or urban areas. And although rural users still spent only about half as much time as their urban counterparts on the Internet at home (4.4 hours versus 8.2 hours), the result suggests that Aboriginal users were gaining solid Internet experience regardless of their place of residence.<sup>8</sup>

### **Is there a digital divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Internet users?**

The 2000 GSS on technology use shows that half of Canadians of Aboriginal ancestry had used the Internet in the preceding year, a rate just the same as that of the non-Aboriginal population. Furthermore, Aboriginal Internet users recorded these rates even though they generally had less access at home and at work, the two most common points of access for users. In 2000, only 56% of Aboriginal Internet users had a home connection, compared with 81% of non-Aboriginal users. And at the workplace, where working with a computer was key to having Internet access, only 55% of Aboriginal versus 68% of non-Aboriginal workers used a computer in their main job.

Nevertheless, Aboriginal Internet users who were connected at home recorded a rate of regular home use the same as that of non-Aboriginal users, (at 67% and 72% the difference is not statistically significant). Furthermore, these regular users averaged virtually identical amounts of time on the Internet at home, whether they were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal users (7.3 and 7.4 hours a week, respectively). Similarly, among people with workplace access, Aboriginal users were just as likely to have been on the Internet regularly, although they spent somewhat less time online (5.7 hours versus 6.5 hours), which may reflect the types of industries and occupations in which they were employed.

## **CST Connecting rural communities to the Internet**

In its final report, the federal government's National Broadband Task Force identified broadband access as key to strengthening the economies, improving the health care and making available new learning opportunities to rural, remote and northern communities. It argued that being connected via the Internet would help to close the "systemic gap between the quality of life" of urban compared with rural Canadians, and of Aboriginal compared with non-Aboriginal Canadians.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments have all been active in launching initiatives to provide broadband networks and services to rural and isolated communities.

The March 2004 report of the National Selection Committee of the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program (established by Industry Canada in September 2002) estimates that by the target date of 2005, investments by government and the private sector will have brought broadband to approximately 1,550 rural and northern communities, leaving about 1,700 communities still waiting for access. Without these initiatives, the Committee estimates that over 3,250 communities, accounting for 3 million people, would have been without broadband.

For more information, see *Stronger Communities for a Stronger Canada: The Promise of Broadband: Report of the National Selection Committee, Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program*. March 2004. [www.broadband.gc.ca/pub/media/nsc/report/index.html](http://www.broadband.gc.ca/pub/media/nsc/report/index.html) (accessed May 10, 2004).

Despite the similarities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Internet users in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and patterns of use, data from the GSS do suggest that Aboriginal people have historically had less access to the Internet. First, Aboriginal users were much more likely to be recent learners, with 38% (but only 22% of non-Aboriginal users) having used the Internet for one year or less at the time of the survey. This may in turn be linked to the fact that they were much more likely to be living in a rural area, at 29% compared with 17% of non-Aboriginal users, with the Internet-related disadvantages that that implies.

### **Summary**

About half of adults of Aboriginal ancestry used the Internet in 2000, about the same proportion as non-Aboriginal Canadians. Generally speaking, Internet users share the same type of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, whether they are of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal origin: they have high levels of education, live in higher income households, are employed in the workforce and tend to live in urban areas. In contrast, non-users tend to be older, less well-educated, less well-off and residents of rural or northern regions of the country. As such, off-reserve users with Aboriginal ancestry have more in common socio-demographically with other Internet users than with Aboriginal non-users.

However, at the time the surveys were conducted, a gap existed among Aboriginal users themselves, separating more experienced urban users from their rural counterparts. Social researchers have long suggested that there is a second digital divide, and that access to a connection is not qualitatively the same as effective use of the Internet.



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7. Hargittai. 2002.
8. Sample sizes are too small to provide a reliable urban-rural comparison of average Internet hours at work.

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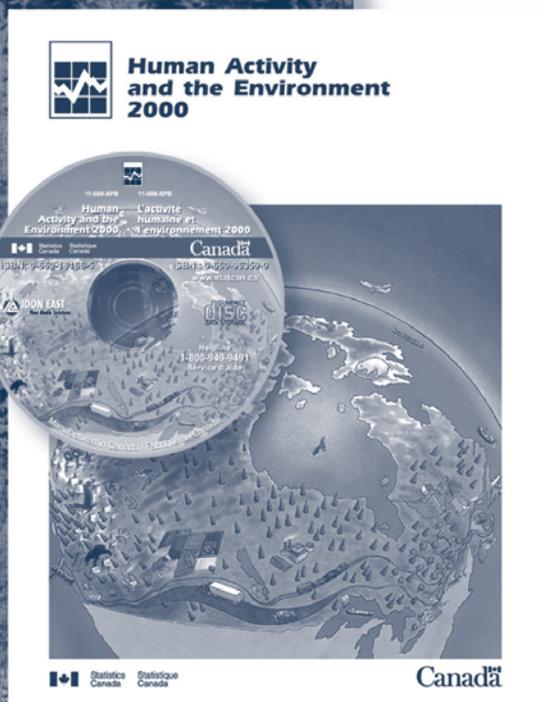
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# Perceptions of Canadians: A sense of belonging, confidence and trust



by Grant Schellenberg

This article is an adaptation of *2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, Cycle 17: An Overview of Findings* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-598), which is available free of charge from the Statistics Canada Web site: [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-598-XIE/free.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-598-XIE/free.htm).

Over a lifetime, Canadians engage in many types of civic and social activities. They donate their time and money to charity, become members of organizations, vote in elections and engage in other political activities; they attend religious services; and they establish social networks with friends, neighbours, co-workers and acquaintances.

These activities play an essential role in the health and vitality of Canada. For example, according to the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, Canadians gave more than \$5 billion in financial support to charitable and non-profit institutions in 2000, and over one-quarter of all adults had done some volunteer work over the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

Civic and social engagement has certainly been pushed to centre-stage by widespread interest in 'social capital.' Although there is ongoing debate about how to define and measure social capital, a common theme is that "...how we associate with each other, and on what terms, has enormous implications for our well-being".<sup>2</sup> Robert Putnam, a leading figure in this field,<sup>3</sup> draws on American data to argue that various forms of social engagement

## CST What you should know about this study

The 2003 General Social Survey (GSS) on Social Engagement surveyed about 25,000 Canadians aged 15 and older living in private households in the 10 provinces. It was developed to explore the measurement of social capital and develop a better understanding of how social networks and norms of trust and reciprocity contribute positively to individual and social outcomes. It was designed to collect information on a wide range of activities, such as social contacts with family, friends and neighbours; involvement in organizations, political activities and volunteer work; and the informal care they provide or receive. It also explores the values and attitudes and the level of trust in people and in public institutions. Overall, the survey provides comprehensive information on the many ways that Canadians engage in civic and social life.

Three aspects of social capital are explored in this article: *sense of belonging*, *confidence in institutions* and *trust*.

have declined markedly since the 1970s. He further claims that this is not without consequence as there are strong correlations between social capital and various indicators of well-being, such as child welfare, educational performance, violent crime, health and tax evasion.

This article provides a broad snapshot of the outlooks and activities of Canadians in 2003 in three areas: a sense of belonging to Canada, to their province, and to

their community; confidence in public institutions such as the health care system and the federal parliament; and trust in others. Having a strong sense of belonging is an outcome of strong social networks, which in turn broadens feelings of solidarity.<sup>4</sup> Confidence in public institutions is thought to be essential for a healthy democracy. Trust in others is vital for effective co-operation, communication and positive relationships.

## Over 8 in 10 Canadians feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada

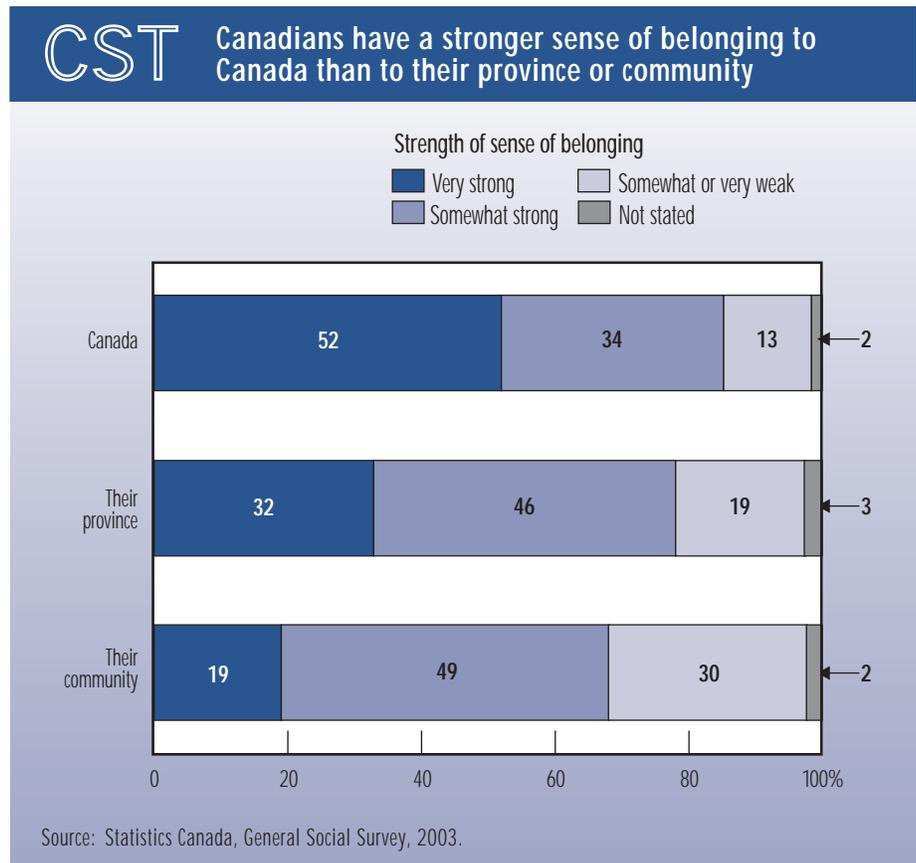
Social networks can create a sense of belonging as interaction between people builds community and a sense of connectedness. Interaction builds trust between strangers, which may lead to shared values and expectations, thereby broadening the individual's identity and feelings of solidarity with others.<sup>5</sup> Thus, feelings of belonging may be an indicator of our connectedness to each other.

Overall, 85% of Canadians described their sense of belonging to Canada as somewhat or very strong whereas 13% professed somewhat or very weak feelings of belonging. The majority of Canadians also felt a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to their province and their local community, although such views were less prevalent than belonging to Canada.

The vast majority of individuals in all age groups felt a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to Canada. However, 'very strong' feelings of belonging were more prevalent among seniors than among people under age 30. This difference may indicate that young people have always been less likely than older individuals to feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada. Alternatively, it may mean that today's young people are less likely than young people of previous generations to feel a sense of belonging and will continue to feel a weak sense of belonging as they get older. It is not possible to determine which of these interpretations is correct with data from a single point in time.

Outside Quebec, provincial differences in somewhat or very strong feelings of belonging to Canada were quite modest, ranging from 87% in British Columbia to 95% in Prince Edward Island. In Quebec, however, 74% described their sense of belonging to Canada as somewhat or very strong.

Within Quebec, feelings of belonging to Canada differed along



linguistic lines, with individuals who spoke French in the home less likely to describe their sense of belonging to Canada as very strong (29%) than those who spoke English in the home (66%). Nonetheless, the majority of Quebec residents who spoke French in the home described their sense of belonging to Canada in positive terms (70% somewhat or very strong). Outside Quebec, feelings of belonging to Canada did not vary much between individuals who spoke French or English in the home.

Immigration is a central feature of Canada's demographic landscape, and in 2001, immigrants represented 18% of the population of Canada — higher than it has been in 70 years. The vast majority described their sense of belonging to Canada as somewhat or very strong. This was the case for 84% of immigrants who arrived in Canada since 1990. However, these immigrants were somewhat less likely than earlier arrivals to feel this way, possibly

because their shorter tenure in Canada had provided them with less opportunity to cultivate a strong sense of attachment.<sup>6</sup> Strong feelings of national belonging were prevalent among immigrants who arrived in Canada before 1980 (91%), reflecting the fact that most were aged 50 or older in 2003.

### Newfoundlanders feel strongest sense of belonging to their province

The majority of Canadians (78%) described their sense of belonging to their province as somewhat or very strong. These feelings were most prevalent among older age groups.

Very strong feelings of provincial belonging were most prevalent in Newfoundland (53%) and Prince Edward Island (46%) and least prevalent in Ontario and British Columbia (29%). Nonetheless, the majority of people in all 10 provinces felt a somewhat or very strong sense of provincial belonging. Overall,

	% who have a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to...		
	Canada	Their province	Their community
<b>Total</b>	85	78	68
Men	85	78	67
Women	86	78	69
<b>Age group</b>			
Under 30	80	72	64
30-49	85	76	67
50-64	87	82	71
65 and older	92	86	74
<b>Immigration status</b>			
Canadian-born	85	79	68
Immigrated before 1980	91	78	68
Immigrated 1980-1989	88	72	64
Immigration 1990-2003	84	72	65
<b>Province of residence</b>			
Newfoundland and Labrador	89	90	82
Prince Edward Island	95	89	78
Nova Scotia	93	85	75
New Brunswick	92	82	76
Quebec	74	82	69
Ontario	89	75	66
Manitoba	91	78	68
Saskatchewan	89	78	73
Alberta	88	78	63
British Columbia	87	75	68
<b>Province of residence and language used at home</b>			
Quebec			
French	70	84	69
English	95	70	67
Other	91	75	66

	% who have a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to...		
	Canada	Their province	Their community
<b>Rest of Canada</b>			
French	91	80	74
English	89	77	68
Other	86	76	66
<b>Educational attainment of persons aged 25 to 54</b>			
Less than high school completion	82	78	69
High school diploma or some postsecondary	86	77	66
College diploma	86	78	67
University degree	86	73	64
<b>Household income of persons aged 25 to 54</b>			
Less than \$20,000	85	71	59
\$20,000-\$39,999	84	77	65
\$40,000-\$59,999	83	78	65
\$60,000-\$79,999	85	79	69
\$80,000 or more	88	76	67
<b>Size of community</b>			
Rural and small town areas	85	82	76
Census agglomerations with less than 50,000 people	87	82	74
Census agglomerations with 50,000 or more people	87	79	71
Census metropolitan areas with less than 1 million people	87	77	66
Census metropolitan areas with 1 million people or more	83	75	63
<b>Number of institutions respondents have confidence in</b>			
3 or fewer	79	67	57
4 or 5	85	75	64
6 or 7	87	81	71
8 or 9	89	87	77

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2003.

French-speaking Quebec residents reported similar feelings to those of residents of other provinces; however, English-speaking Quebec residents were less likely than their French-speaking counterparts to have strong feelings of belonging to their province.

Feelings of belonging to a province were also associated with whether or not an individual had been born there. Specifically, 34% of Canadians

residing in their province of birth said they had a very strong sense of provincial belonging, while this was the case for 26% of those who were not born in their current province of residence.

**Sense of belonging to one's community increases with years spent there**

The majority of Canadians assessed their sense of belonging to their local

community in positive terms, with 68% describing this as somewhat or very strong. Again, older people reported stronger feelings of belonging to their community than did young people.

Feelings of community belonging were more prevalent among individuals who had lived in their area for longer periods. For example, individuals who had lived in their community for five years or more

were about twice as likely to feel a 'very strong' sense of belonging as those who had been there for less than three years.

Finally, when individuals who had resided in their area for five years or more were considered, those in rural areas and smaller towns<sup>7</sup> were more likely than those in large cities to describe their sense of community belonging as somewhat or very strong.

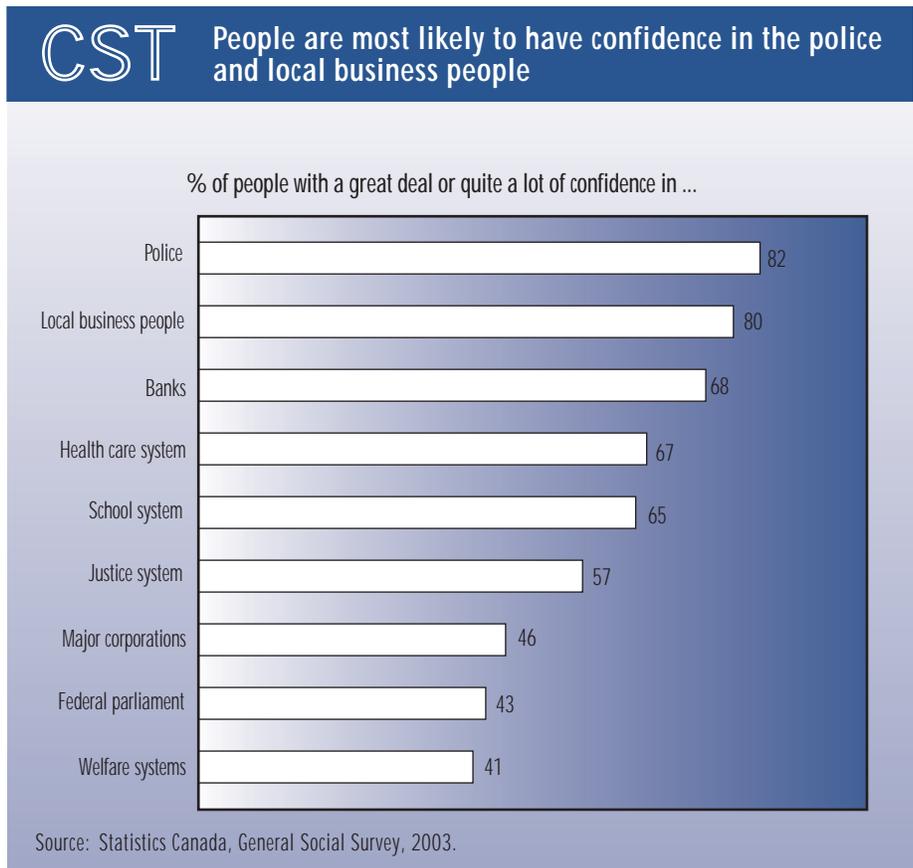
### Confidence in institutions

Public institutions, such as the health care system, the education system and the federal parliament, play an important role in shaping the lives of Canadians. Institutions often are considered the basic pillars of society, so if people begin to lose confidence in them, there may be cause for concern. Observers argue that in a global and increasingly impersonal modern world, confidence in institutions has become even more important.<sup>8</sup>

General Social Survey (GSS) respondents were asked about the level of confidence they have in various institutions.<sup>9</sup> Canadians provided their most favourable assessments of the police, with 82% of respondents saying they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police. Local business people and merchants also ranked high, with 80% of Canadians feeling confident in this group.

About two-thirds of Canadians said they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the health care system and the school system, while smaller proportions said they have confidence in the justice system (57%). The welfare system and the federal parliament were at the bottom of the list of public institutions in which Canadians said they have confidence, although significant proportions of respondents were unable to answer or declined to answer these questions.

There were considerable inter-provincial variations in the extent to which individuals have confidence in



public institutions. People in Quebec were consistently more likely than those in other provinces to have high levels of confidence in public institutions. Confidence in the federal parliament and the justice system was less prevalent in the Western provinces than elsewhere.

Individuals residing in households with higher incomes were somewhat more likely than others to say they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police and the justice system and somewhat less likely to say they felt that way with the welfare system than people with lower household income.

There was a relationship between the number of types of institutions individuals felt confidence in and the likelihood of having a strong sense of belonging towards Canada, their province and their local community. For example, 87% of individuals who felt confidence in eight or nine institutions had a strong sense of belonging to their province, while

67% of those who had confidence in three or fewer institutions felt that way.<sup>10</sup>

### Just over one-half of Canadians trust others

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the meaning and measurement of trust within countries. Economists, for example, have tried to determine if economic growth is associated with the level of trust that people have in one another. Trust is fundamental to the functioning of our interdependent society. People count on other drivers to share the roadways and obey traffic laws, they trust those who hold and invest their money, they rely on the teenager down the street to baby-sit their children and they depend on their Internet service provider to deliver e-mail to the correct people. These are just a few examples of how people trust others in their everyday lives. When trust dwindles, people are less likely to



take risks, they demand more protection against possible inappropriate deeds of others and they may make provisions for the possibility of something going wrong.<sup>11</sup>

One way the GSS tries to discern whether people trust others is by asking them if they would say that most people can be trusted or if they feel that they cannot be too careful in dealing with people. Overall, 53% of Canadians said that people could be trusted while 43% said that one could not be too careful in dealing with people.<sup>12</sup> Women and men had comparable views in this respect, as did individuals in different age groups.

People with higher levels of educational attainment and those residing in households with higher incomes were more likely than others to say that people could be trusted. There were no clear differences across immigration status groups.

Provincially, a relatively small share of Quebec residents (35%) said that people could be trusted, compared with over 60% of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and the western provinces. Compared with people in other provinces, those in Quebec were less likely to trust other people but were more likely to have confidence in institutions.

To further gauge the level of trust people had in others, the GSS asked two hypothetical questions on whether the respondent would expect to have a lost wallet or purse containing \$200 returned if it was found by a complete stranger or by someone living close by. Most people (55%) said that the return of their wallet or purse by a complete stranger would be not at all likely, while 37% said it would be somewhat or very likely.<sup>13</sup> People were more optimistic about having their wallet or purse returned by someone living near them. In this case, only 15% of respondents said that its return was not at all likely, while 79% said it was likely.<sup>14</sup>

Atlantic province residents were most trusting when measured in this way, with at least 46% saying it would be somewhat or very likely that their wallet or purse would be returned if found by a stranger, and 88% believing it would be returned if found by someone living nearby. People in Canada's largest urban centres were less likely than those in smaller centres to expect their wallet or purse to be returned.

### Summary

There is great interest in the social and civic activities in which Canadians are engaged. This is driven by the implications that social engagements and social networks may have for outcomes in areas such as public health, economic growth, innovation, educational achievement and community development.<sup>15</sup> Although the examination of these linkages is beyond the scope of this article, the GSS did find that there was a link between strong feelings of belonging, trust in others, confidence in public institutions and higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction.



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1. Hall, M., L. McKeown and K. Roberts. 2001. *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 71-542-XPE).
2. Woolcock, M. Spring 2001. "The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes." *Isuma* 2, 1: 11-17.
3. Putnam, R. Spring 2001. "Social capital: Measurement and consequences." *Isuma* 2, 1: 41-51.
4. Putnam, R. 1995. "Bowling alone: America's declining social capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6, 1: 65-78.

5. Ibid.; Beem, C. 1999. *The Necessity of Politics: Reclaiming American Public Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. The smaller share of recent immigrants who described their sense of belong to Canada as 'very strong' was not attributable to the younger age profile among this group compared with Canadian-born persons.
7. Rural and small town areas are areas outside the commuting zone of census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). CMAs and CAs are large urban areas (known as urban cores) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban cores. A CMA has an urban core population of at least 100,000 and a CA has an urban core population of between 10,000 and 100,000, based on the previous census.
8. Newton, K. and P. Norris. 1999. *Confidence in public institutions: Faith, culture or performance?* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3, Atlanta. <http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris.shorenstein.ksg/acrobat/newton.pdf> (accessed July 7, 2004).
9. Specifically, they were asked whether they have a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all. Respondents answered based on their own understanding of the term 'confidence'.
10. Respondents who had been unable or unwilling to answer five or more of the nine questions pertaining to confidence in institutions were excluded from these calculations.
11. Tschannen-Moran, M. and W.K. Hoy. Winter 2000. "A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning and measurement of trust." *Review of Education Research* 70, 4: 547-593.
12. Just under 5% of respondents were either unable or unwilling to answer the question.
13. The remaining 9% of respondents were either unable or unwilling to answer the question.
14. Seven percent of respondents were unable or unwilling to answer the question.
15. Woolcock. 2001.

# Well-being of off-reserve Aboriginal children

by Martin Turcotte and John Zhao

This article is adapted from *A Portrait of Aboriginal Children Living in Non-reserve Areas: Results from the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-597). It is available free of charge from the Statistics Canada Web site: [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-597-XIE/free.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-597-XIE/free.htm). Please note: the term “non-reserve” used in the original report was changed to “off-reserve” in this article.

According to the 2001 Census, there were about 227,000 off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 14 and under. These children accounted for 70% of all Aboriginal children aged 14 and under living in Canada. Off-reserve Aboriginal children represented 32% of the off-reserve Aboriginal population, far higher than children’s share of the non-Aboriginal population (18%).

This article describes the well-being of off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 14 and under at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key factors involved in human well-being include the physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual and emotional aspects of life, as well as the land. Well-being stems from a balance and harmony between these interrelated factors. This article uses data from the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) to focus on off-reserve Aboriginal children in regards to three areas — health and well-being, education<sup>1</sup> and learning and use of Aboriginal languages.

## Parent-rated health of their children

Many Aboriginal peoples have a holistic concept of well-being in which mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of well-being are just as important as physical health. Health

### CST What you should know about this study

Following the 2001 Census, Statistics Canada, in collaboration with national Aboriginal organizations, conducted the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). This report examines data from the component of the survey that covers children aged 14 and under who were identified as Aboriginal by a parent<sup>1</sup> and who lived off-reserve.

The Aboriginal population is defined based on “identity”: 1) being North American Indian, Métis and/or Inuit, and/or 2) having registered Indian status as defined by the *Indian Act*, and/or 3) having Band or First Nations membership. This article focuses on off-reserve Aboriginal children across Canada. Unlike the 2001 Census, however, for the Northwest Territories, both on- and off-reserve children are included in this study. Aboriginal children living in a few other communities in Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Yukon Territory treated as reserve communities in the 2001 Census are also included in the group of off-reserve Aboriginal children in this article.

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1. In the Aboriginal Peoples Survey on children, the respondent is the person most knowledgeable about the child. In the majority of cases, this person is a parent of the child (93%), but may also be a grandparent (4%) or other relative. In this article “parent” means the person most knowledgeable about the child unless otherwise specified.

and epidemiology researchers also acknowledge that it is inappropriate to assume someone is in good health merely because of the absence of illness or physical problems. A “positive” assessment of general health and overall well-being is of much greater value.

Parents rated the health of off-reserve Aboriginal children as slightly lower than that of all Canadian children. For children aged five and under, 90% of all Canadian children had very good or excellent health, compared with 83% of off-reserve Aboriginal children.<sup>2</sup> The difference

in health status was smaller for older children aged 6 to 14, where 86% of all children and 82% of off-reserve Aboriginal children had very good or excellent health.

Numerous studies have found a link between parental socio-economic background and children's health.<sup>3</sup> According to the APS, parental education plays a crucial role in the health of off-reserve Aboriginal children. Barely three-quarters (73%) of Aboriginal children whose parent had completed elementary school or less had very good or excellent health, compared with 89% of those whose parent had completed university studies.

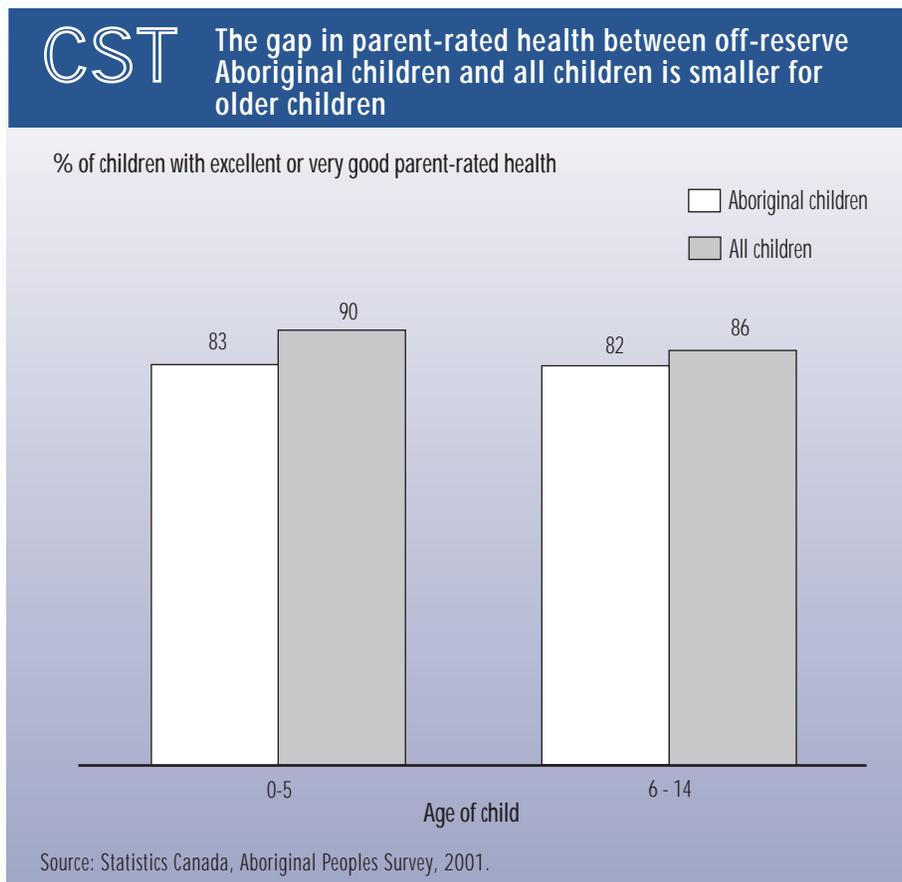
### Accidental injuries

One of the most frequent causes of health problems, hospitalization and even mortality among young children is injuries sustained in situations such as falls and car or bicycle accidents. According to the APS, about 13% of off-reserve Aboriginal children had been accidentally injured in the previous year, slightly higher than 11% for all children.<sup>4</sup>

Like the general population, Aboriginal boys (15%) were more likely to be injured than girls (11%). Inuit children were least likely to be injured (9%) compared with 12% of off-reserve North American Indian and 15% of Métis children. This may reflect, in part, the definition of injuries used in the 2001 APS. Respondents were instructed to report only injuries serious enough to require medical attention.<sup>5</sup> However, residents of the North are less likely to have access to medical attention. Because Inuit live predominantly in the North, the injury rates of Inuit children may have been underestimated.

### Eating breakfast

Eating breakfast has many benefits for children, including providing energy for the morning's activities, helping them to get ready to learn, maintaining a healthy body weight



and helping kids to feel good. About 80% of off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14 ate breakfast every day whether at home, school or at a caregiver's.

As Aboriginal children grow older, they are less likely to eat breakfast every day. About 86% of 6-year-old Aboriginal boys and 91% of girls ate breakfast every day, compared with 64% of 14-year-old Aboriginal boys and 55% of girls. Generally speaking, though, the difference between Aboriginal boys and girls was not significant.

### Breast-feeding

Breast-feeding is considered by public health authorities to be the most nutritious choice for newborns. According to the 2001 APS, 67% of off-reserve Aboriginal children were breast-fed by their mothers when they were young. Breast-feeding has increased as 72% of Aboriginal children aged five and under were

breast-fed when they were young, compared with 63% of Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14. Off-reserve Aboriginal children aged three and under were less likely to have been breast-fed when young than Canadian children in general (73% versus 82%).

There is a strong relationship between a parent's education and incidence of breast-feeding of children. The incidence of breast-feeding among off-reserve Aboriginal children increases with parental education, except among Inuit children, where parental education was not related to the incidence of breast-feeding.

### Birth weight

Low birth weight has a crucial impact on a child's likelihood of survival at birth and during the first year of life. Birth weight may also be a factor in a child's future health and life. For example, children who are born at

term but with low birth weights are more likely to develop diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease during adulthood.<sup>6</sup> Low birth weight may have a negative impact on the development of cognitive abilities in childhood and into adulthood.<sup>7</sup> According to the APS, 8% of off-reserve Aboriginal children had low birth weights, compared with 6% of all Canadian children.<sup>8</sup>

### **Learning is multi-dimensional for Aboriginal children**

In Aboriginal societies, the family, Elders and the community play key roles in children's learning and education. In this context, the socialization of children includes not only the development of cognitive capacities, but also the learning of ways to behave in society. Ultimately, the child needs to develop fully "intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically" to become an "Aboriginal citizen" capable of assuming community and societal responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

The APS includes information on extra-curricular activities, including time spent with Elders, helping out in school and communities, participation in art or music, or group activities such as dance, drum and youth groups. It also includes information on Aboriginal language abilities and preschool programs, especially those designed specifically for Aboriginal children. However, there is still much about learning outside school that is not captured by the APS, as its measures of education outcomes are confined to school outcomes such as repeating a grade, rather than to a wider spectrum including spiritual and emotional development.

The importance of a sound formal education is increasing. The advent of the knowledge-based economy has made jobs requiring less than a high school diploma increasingly scarce. Educational attainment among the Aboriginal population in

Canada has increased. Between 1996 and 2001, the percentage of the off-reserve Aboriginal population aged 20 to 24 who had at least completed high school increased from 48% to 52%. Yet, in 2001, a large gap remained between that group and the general Canadian population aged 20 to 24, as 74% of the latter had at least completed high school.

### **Preschool programs specifically designed for Aboriginal children are on the rise but still uncommon**

Many authors have traced the path toward dropping out of school to a child's first years at school.<sup>10</sup> Attendance at a quality early childhood development or preschool program often facilitates a child's cognitive and social development, especially among children from economically disadvantaged families.

According to the 2001 APS, just over half (53%) of off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14 had attended an early childhood development program when they were younger. Younger off-reserve Aboriginal children were more likely to have attended preschool programs that were specifically designed for them. For example, 16% of six-year-old off-reserve Aboriginal children had attended preschool programs specifically designed for Aboriginal children compared with only 4% of 14-year-olds. In contrast, younger off-reserve Aboriginal children were just as likely as older off-reserve Aboriginal children to have attended other preschool programs not specifically designed for the Aboriginal children.

### **Doing well at school is affected by many factors**

In general, researchers have found that reading, or being read to (apart from as required by school), can have a positive impact on a child's education outcomes and reading skills.<sup>11</sup> Off-reserve Aboriginal children who

read or were read to more often were less likely to repeat a grade. About 26% of those children who didn't read or were never read to repeated a grade, twice the proportion of those who read or were read to just a few times a week.

Girls read or were read to more frequently than boys. Among girls aged 6 to 14, about 56% of them read, or were read to, on a daily basis, compared with 43% of boys. Conversely, only 4% of girls never read or were never read to, compared with 9% of boys.

### **Off-reserve Aboriginal children who participate frequently in extra-curricular activities are more likely to do very well at school**

Previous research reveals a positive correlation between participation in extra-curricular activities and self-esteem, social interaction with friends and scholastic achievement.<sup>12</sup> However, although the APS shows a similar correlation for off-reserve Aboriginal children, it is not possible to establish a causal relationship between extra-curricular activities and academic performance.

Among off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14, sports were most popular, with 71% of children participating at least once per week. Time spent with Elders (34%), on art and music (31%), in youth, drum and dance groups or clubs (30%) and helping out with community or school activities without pay (21%) were other popular extra-curricular activities.

The survey found significant differences in school performance<sup>13</sup> between those who frequently engaged in extra-curricular activities, and those who rarely or never did so. Children who helped in the community or school without pay four or more times a week were most likely to do very well at school (64%). In contrast, only 38% did very well among those who rarely or never helped.

## Most Aboriginal children get along with classmates and teachers

In general, children who have problems interacting with their classmates and their teachers are more likely than others to drop out of school and/or experience difficulties because they may be less motivated to attend school or may suffer a loss of self-confidence.<sup>14</sup>

The vast majority of Aboriginal children maintained harmonious relationships at school. Nearly all off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14 (97%) got along fairly well, well or very well with other children. Frequent or constant problems with teachers were rare, although older children and boys were more likely to have such problems.

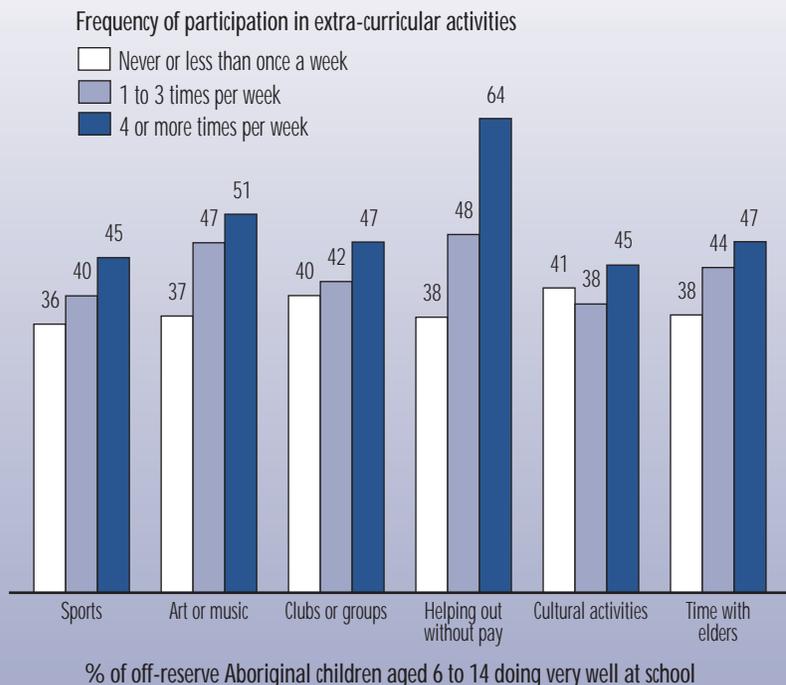
## Off-reserve Aboriginal children with a highly educated parent were less likely to repeat a grade

Researchers have found a link between high parental education and high eventual educational attainment of their children.<sup>15</sup> Many factors may explain this link. For example, parents with higher levels of education take a greater interest in their child's academic performance, encourage activities that facilitate academic success and have higher expectations of success at school for their children.

According to the APS, the higher a parent's education, the less likely their child is to ever repeat a grade. Just over one fifth of off-reserve Aboriginal children aged 6 to 14 whose parent had not completed elementary school had repeated a grade, compared with 6% of children whose parent had a bachelor's degree or more. Similarly, about 16% of children in families below the low income cut-off had repeated a grade, compared with 10% of children in families at or above the low income cut-off.

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Off-reserve Aboriginal children who frequently participate in extra-curricular activities are more likely to do very well at school



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

## Most parents of off-reserve Aboriginal children believe it is important for their children to speak and understand an Aboriginal language

Language is often considered as both an instrument and an essential part of culture. In many Aboriginal societies, "the fundamental teachings are preserved in sacred stories, ceremonies and symbols," which are "the symbols of the ideas, concepts, and beliefs of a society which has an oral tradition."<sup>16</sup> In this context, mastery by children of the language of their ancestors greatly assists in the transmission of values, beliefs and communication skills from generation to generation.

Parents of 6 in every 10 off-reserve Aboriginal children (62%) believed it was somewhat or very important for their children to speak and understand an Aboriginal language. Parents of Inuit children (89%) were much more likely than parents of off-

reserve North American Indian (67%) and Métis (50%) children to believe so.

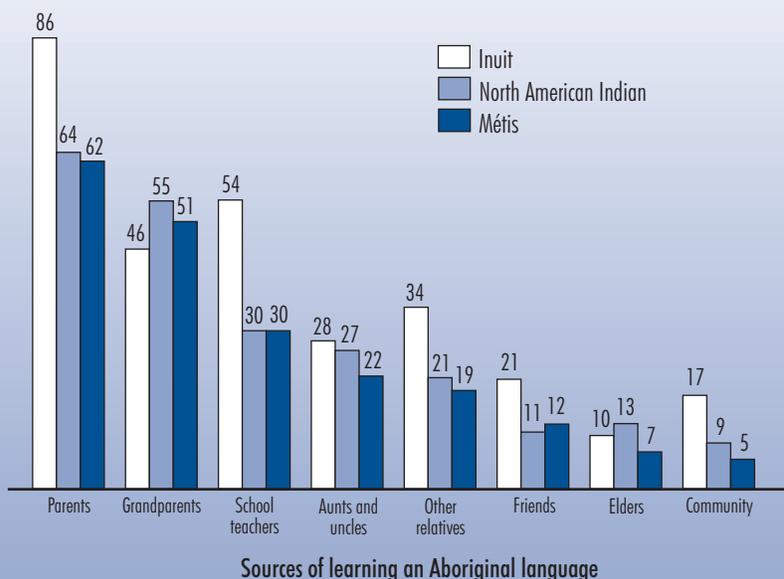
There are marked differences in Aboriginal language skills between Inuit children and off-reserve North American Indian and Métis children. Among Inuit children aged 14 and under, and excluding those too young to speak, 76% could speak or understand an Aboriginal language while 25% of North American Indian children and 12% of Métis children also could. These differences may be explained by the fact that the vast majority of Inuit children live in northern remote communities. Among North American Indian children, Aboriginal languages are more likely to be spoken among those living in First Nations communities. Those living off-reserve frequently live in highly urbanized areas where Aboriginal languages are less common.

Off-reserve Aboriginal children may learn an Aboriginal language from many sources but most often from their parents. About 86% of Inuit children got help from their parents, compared with 64% of North American Indian children and 62% of Métis children.

The more sources a child can rely on to learn an Aboriginal language, the more likely they are to speak and understand it well. For example, among off-reserve Aboriginal children who speak or understand an Aboriginal language, only 15% could speak and understand an Aboriginal language very well or relatively well if they had only a single source of assistance to learn. In contrast, among those children who relied on three sources of assistance, 38% were able to speak and understand an Aboriginal language well, while 80% of those who had seven sources of assistance could speak and understand an Aboriginal language well. It is likely that children who can rely on assistance from many sources live in communities where Aboriginal languages are very common.

Parents with higher levels of education are less likely to have children who can speak or understand an Aboriginal language. About 17% of children of a postsecondary-educated parent could speak or understand an Aboriginal language, compared with 44% whose parent had not gone beyond elementary school. This difference was common to all three major Aboriginal groups. To properly determine why such a relationship between parental education and their children's speaking or understanding an Aboriginal language exists, further studies are needed to examine other factors, such as location of postsecondary institutions, location of work, effect of residential schools, marriage between Aboriginal people and other Canadians, and home languages.

% of off-reserve Aboriginal children learning from...



Note: Includes off-reserve Aboriginal children who speak or understand an Aboriginal language.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

Summary

The off-reserve Aboriginal population is young and growing with proportionally more children than the entire Canadian population. The health and well-being of off-reserve Aboriginal children, their education and learning and the transfer of Aboriginal languages to these children were all explored in this article.

The health and well-being of Aboriginal children will define the future of Aboriginal communities. It is hoped that this article will contribute to new ideas on how the situation of off-reserve Aboriginal children can be further improved.



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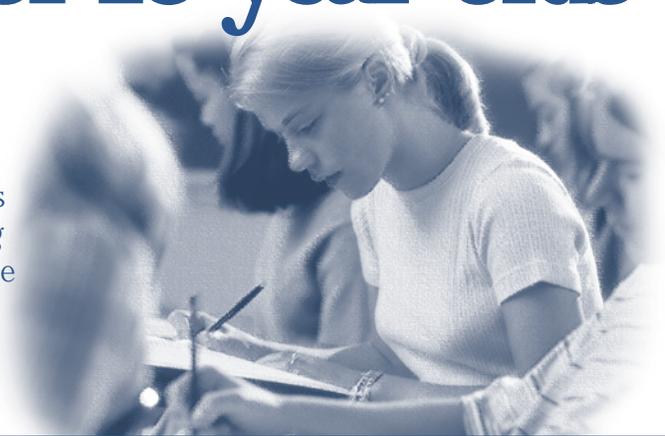
1. The 2001 APS examines school outcomes such as school performance and grade repeating. It does not explore issues such as the development of life skills or spiritual and emotional development, nor does it examine other important learning activities, which may occur in the homes and communities of Aboriginal children.
2. The results for all Canadian children are estimated using the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), Cycle 4 (2000/2001). Comparisons between Aboriginal and all Canadian children are based on the results from the 2001 APS and the 2000/2001 NLSCY respectively unless otherwise specified.
3. Statistics Canada. 1999. "Health status of children." *Health Reports* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 82-003-XIE) 11, 3: 27-38.
4. Includes children who experienced injuries requiring the attention of a doctor, nurse, dentist or traditional healer during the 12-month period prior to the survey. Self-inflicted injuries and injuries resulting from assaults and fatal injuries are excluded. Two percent of off-reserve Aboriginal children suffered injuries from self-inflicted wounds, while 2% were assault victims.

5. In the 12 months prior to the survey, parents of 71% of Aboriginal children living in the North had obtained medical attention (including over the phone) from doctors, nurses or traditional healers for their children, compared with parents of 84% of Aboriginal children living in the rest of Canada.
6. Wadsworth, M.E.J. 1997. "Health inequalities in the life course perspective." *Social Science and Medicine* 44, 6: 859-869.
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# Provincial variation in reading scores of 15-year-olds

by J. Douglas Willms

This article has been adapted from “Variation in literacy skills among Canadian provinces: Findings from the OECD PISA,” *Education, Skills and Learning Research Papers*, no. 12 (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE2004012). It is available for free online at: [www.statcan.ca:8096/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=81-595-M2004012](http://www.statcan.ca:8096/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=81-595-M2004012).



**T**oday, more than ever before, literacy skills are essential for participation in the labour market, and are a precursor to an individual’s long-term health and well-being. The demand for these skills has been steadily increasing, and is likely to continue to do so over the next decade. Earlier research has also shown that young people with strong literacy skills are more likely to enter postsecondary education and have better employment opportunities and higher wages when they enter the labour market.<sup>1</sup>

This article uses data from the 2000 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to examine the variation between Canada’s provinces in the literacy skills of 15-year-old students; it also looks at family background and school factors as potential explanations for these differences.

## CST What you should know about this study

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a collaborative effort among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to regularly assess the achievement of 15-year-olds in three domains—reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy—through a common international test. Thirty-two countries participated in PISA 2000. In Canada, approximately 30,000 15-year-old students from more than 1,000 schools took part, a large sample to enable reliable national and provincial estimates. The PISA 2000 survey included a direct assessment of students’ skills through reading, mathematics and science tests, as well as questionnaires collecting background information from students and school principals.

In PISA, reading literacy is defined as the ability to understand, use and reflect on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate effectively in society. PISA 2000 used about 140 items representing the kinds of reading literacy tasks that 15-year-olds may require in the future. The reading score assigned to students was designed to average 500 across all OECD countries, with about two-thirds of students in OECD countries scoring between 400 and 600 points. In Canada, the average reading score was 534 and about two-thirds of students scored between 439 and 629.

Students’ reading score was related to their socioeconomic status. The PISA index of socioeconomic status (SES) included several measures describing economic, social and cultural aspects of students’ families. It was measured using a statistical composite of parental education, parental occupational status, educational resources in the home, family wealth (based on household possessions) and classical cultural possessions.<sup>1</sup>

1. The PISA index of possessions related to “classical” culture in the family home were derived from the availability of the following items in the home: classical literature, books of poetry and works of art.

## Reading performance varies among provinces

The average score of Canadian students on the PISA reading test was 534, just 12 points below that of Finland, the highest-scoring country. The average scores by province varied from a low of 501 in New Brunswick, very close to the OECD average, to 550 in Alberta, comparable to that of Finland. The average scores for the three largest provinces, Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, were 533, 536 and 538, respectively. Because almost three-quarters of all 15-year-old students live in these three provinces, their reading performance anchors the Canadian average of 534.

Not all 15-year-olds are in the same grade, so an analysis of grade and reading score differences can help in understanding how much of a reading score change may be associated with a difference of one grade. This may put the provincial variations into perspective, although the variations are not solely attributable to the grade difference, but also to a difference in accumulated learning and skill development that has occurred since birth. A difference of one grade makes an estimated average 34-point difference in the reading score; in other words, a one-point difference might be worth about five school days.

## Socioeconomic status is one factor associated with reading performance

Compared to the OECD median, Canada has a higher median socioeconomic score (SES) and a narrower range of SES scores. Canadian students scored above the OECD average in reading at all SES levels, but this lead was slightly greater for low SES students, suggesting that Canada does well in developing the literacy of youth from less advantaged circumstances. Yet, a large performance gap still exists between students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, a typical student at the bottom 5%

CST

## Students in Alberta scored highest on the reading performance test

	Average reading score (unadjusted)	Average reading score (adjusted for socioeconomic status of students)
<b>Canada</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>527</b>
<b>Province</b>		
Newfoundland and Labrador	517	513
Prince Edward Island	517	518
Nova Scotia	521	515
New Brunswick	501	503
Quebec	536	539
Ontario	533	519
Manitoba	529	526
Saskatchewan	529	529
Alberta	550	535
British Columbia	538	528

Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Programme for International Student Assessment, 2000.

point of the SES scored about 479 in reading literacy, while a typical student at the top 5% point scored around 580.

While a student's socioeconomic background is a factor in explaining reading score variation, only some of the variation in reading performance between provinces is attributable to socioeconomic status. After adjusting for the effects of SES, the adjusted average reading scores were not much different in six of the provinces, but they were lower than the unadjusted scores by 6 to 15 points in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. After accounting for the socioeconomic status of students, there is still a substantial variation in reading scores between provinces—from 503 in New Brunswick to 539 in Quebec—indicating that other factors are also at work.

## Reading performance of schools varies substantially even after accounting for students' family background

For the PISA survey in Canada, schools were sampled and 15-year-

old students were chosen within the selected schools. Characteristics of schools and their policies and practices were collected to enable exploration of the relationship between the average reading performance and school characteristics, practices, resources and policies.

There is a substantial variation between schools in the reading performance of their students even after accounting for differences in family background. In every province, reading scores for schools with average SES intake range from 50 to 100 points between the highest and the lowest performing schools. Some of these average SES schools score at or above the Canadian average, and some are among the top scoring ones in the OECD study.

In some national and provincial assessments, the relatively low performance of some schools was linked to the low socioeconomic background of students attending them. But according to PISA, many schools with low SES intakes have exceptionally high performance, while others with high SES have

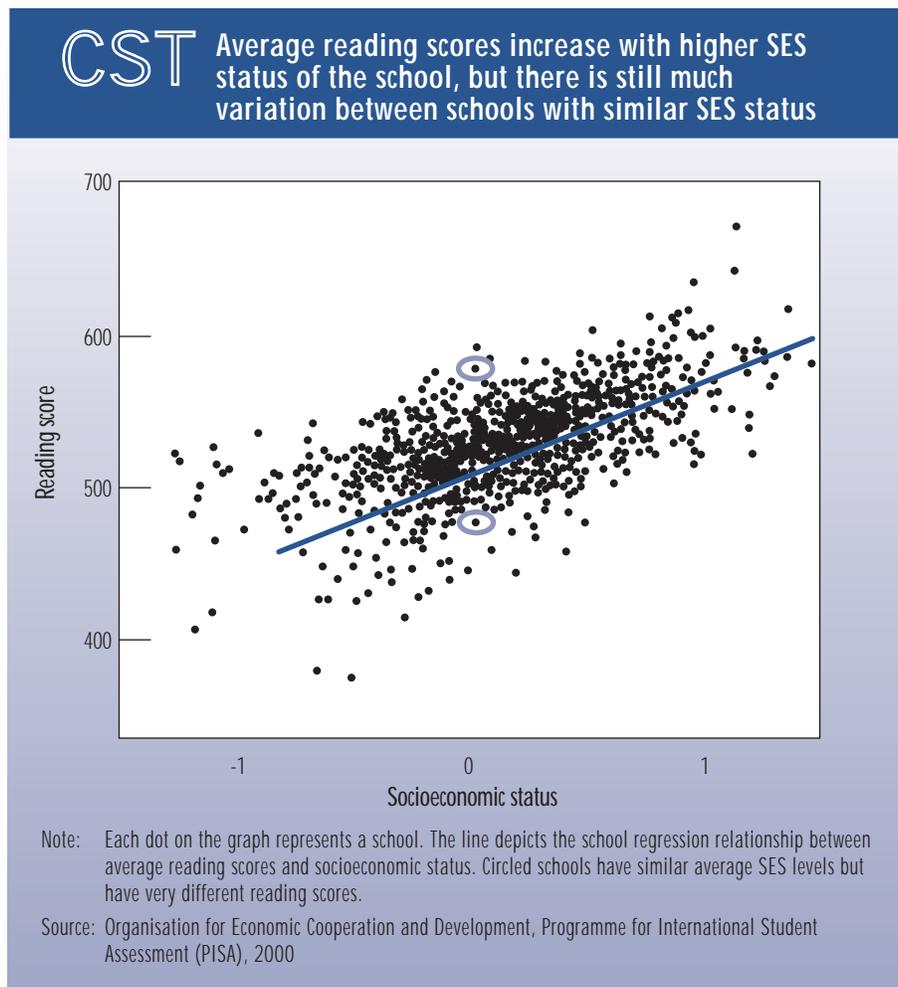
relatively low performance. Clearly then, there are exemplary schools in every province, including ones that serve students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>2</sup>

### Students from less advantaged families do better in a high SES school

To understand which factors influence reading scores, a model including factors such as family background of students, school context<sup>3</sup> and school process<sup>4</sup> was developed. This model showed that, on average, an increase of one standard deviation<sup>5</sup> in student socioeconomic status is associated with a 28-point increase in reading performance. In addition, a number of studies have found that the average level of school SES has an effect on student performance over and above the effects already associated with a student's individual level of SES.<sup>6</sup>

According to PISA data, if a student with average family background attended a school with a high SES (half a standard deviation above the OECD average), rather than one with a low SES (half a standard deviation below the OECD average), the student's expected reading performance would be 41 points higher. Students from less advantaged families tended to perform considerably worse if they attended a low SES school than if they attended a high SES school. The same applies for students from high SES families, but the effect was not as pronounced. This suggests that when schools differ substantially in their average socioeconomic intake, the disparities in their reading performance increase.

The differences in reading performance between students from differing SES backgrounds are less pronounced in high SES schools than in low SES schools.<sup>7</sup> For example, if two students—one high SES and one low SES—attended the same school, the expected reading performance gap between them would be 25



points in a high SES school and 31 points in a low SES school. This is called triple jeopardy because youth from low SES families have lower reading performance, they have lower scores if they attend low SES schools, and the effect is particularly pronounced if a low-SES student attends a low-SES school.

Accounting for family background, school context and school processes, girls outperformed boys on the reading test by 34 points. Foreign-born 15-year-olds scored 25 points lower than Canadian-born 15-year-olds, after accounting for other factors. This result is not too alarming since earlier research suggests that the literacy gap for foreign-born residents decreases sharply during the first 10 years they are in the country.<sup>8</sup>

Other school-related factors also influence reading scores. The analysis

shows that larger schools perform slightly better on average than small schools: an increase in school size of 100 students is associated with an increase in reading performance of 2 points. However, reading performance declines in schools beyond an optimal school size. Schools where the teachers had specialized training in language arts also scored slightly higher: on average, a 10-percentage point increase in the percentage of specialized teachers was associated with a 1.5-point increase in reading scores. The quality of school infrastructure and the availability of school computers for students were not significant. However, in schools where students made better use of resources, reading scores were higher. Factors pertaining to school policy and practice had no significant effect, except for teacher autonomy.

Two of the measures of classroom practice were also significant factors. A one-point increase on the teacher-student relations scale was associated with a 2.3 point increase in reading performance, while a one-point increase in the disciplinary

climate scale was associated with a 2.6 point increase in performance.

### Provincial reading scores differ for many reasons

The variation in average provincial reading scores is related to many

factors. After accounting for family background or student characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status and immigration status, those provinces with higher SES scores (Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia) saw their reading scores adjusted downward, while those with lower SES scores (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick) saw their average reading scores adjusted upward. About 40% of the variation in provincial performance was attributable to differences in family background.

Accounting for the effect of the average SES of schools further reduced the variation between provinces: 63% of the variation in provincial performance was associated with family background and school context combined. Finally, controlling for school process such as school resources, school policy and practice, and classroom practices implies that provinces with high scores on the measures of school process will see their scores decline (Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia) while those with low scores will see them increase (Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick).

After controlling for all of these factors, the average reading scores in eight provinces turn out to be quite similar. This analysis permits an understanding of some of the factors contributing to variations in reading scores between provinces. For example, Quebec's average reading performance was high because it had disproportionately more schools with students of average socioeconomic background scoring in the top range. In contrast, Alberta's average reading performance was relatively high partly because its student population came from a comparatively advantaged background and partly because of positive school policies and practices. Ontario's higher performance was due largely to relatively high socioeconomic status, as well as positive classroom policies and practices.

## CST The socioeconomic status of students and schools are associated with differences in reading scores

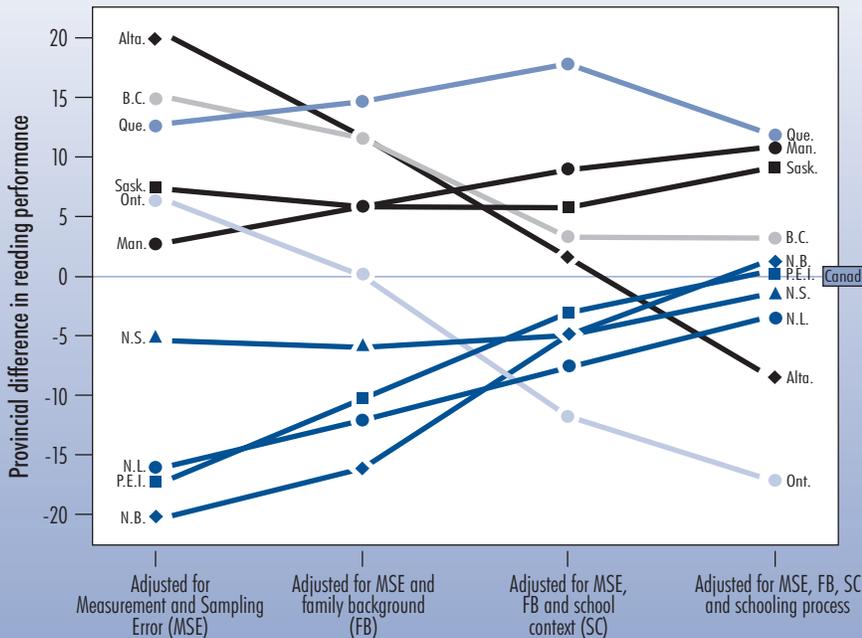
Model coefficients for reading scores controlling for family background, school context and school processes

	Model coefficients for reading scores controlling for family background, school context and school processes
Reading score mean	508.7
<b>Family background and student characteristics</b>	
Socioeconomic status (student-level)	<b>27.9</b>
Female	<b>34.2</b>
Foreign-born	<b>-24.6</b>
<b>School context</b>	
Socioeconomic status (school level)	<b>40.8</b>
Socioeconomic slope (indicates extent of inequality attributable to SES)	<b>-6.5</b>
Female-male performance gap	-6.8
<b>School processes</b>	
<b>School resources</b>	
Student-staff teaching ratio (unit is 1 student)	-0.2
School size (unit is 100 students)	<b>2.1</b>
School size squared (school is larger than optimal size)	<b>-0.1</b>
Students access to school computers (unit is 10%)	1.4
Teachers have specialized training in language arts (unit is 10%)	<b>1.5</b>
Teachers get professional development (unit is 10%)	-0.4
Quality of school infrastructure <sup>1</sup>	-0.3
Students' use of resources <sup>1</sup>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>School policy and practice</b>	
Conduct formal assessment <sup>1</sup>	0.2
Quality of teaching staff (administrators assessment <sup>1</sup> )	-0.1
Teacher morale <sup>1</sup>	-0.1
Teacher autonomy <sup>1</sup>	<b>0.5</b>
Principal autonomy <sup>1</sup>	0.1
<b>Classroom practice</b>	
Conduct informal assessment <sup>1</sup>	-0.4
Teacher-student relations <sup>1</sup>	<b>2.3</b>
Disciplinary climate <sup>1</sup>	<b>2.7</b>
Achievement pressure <sup>1</sup>	0.0

Note: Bold numbers are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. Many of the school scales used in the model are described in Appendix A of Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development. 2001. *Knowledge and skills for life: First results from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000*. Paris: OECD. [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) (accessed September 2004).

1. This school-level variable was scaled on a 10-point scale, ranging from zero to 10 representing a school's position relative to other schools in the OECD. For example, a score of 3.4 on the 10-point scale indicates that the school's score was at the 34<sup>th</sup> percentile among all OECD schools.

Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Programme for International Student Assessment, 2000.



Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Programme for International Student Assessment, 2000.

1. Raudenbush, S.W. and R. Kasim. 1998. "Cognitive skill and economic inequality: Findings from the National Adult Literacy Survey." *Harvard Educational Review*, 68, 1: 33-79.
2. There is also a wide range of school SES scores in Canada. In fact, nearly 20% of schools have an average socioeconomic status score, similar to the average SES of schools in Greece, Latvia and Spain. About 8% of schools have an SES average score equivalent to the average school in the Russian Federation and below that of Portugal and Poland.
3. School mean of SES was used as a proxy for the factors associated with school context.
4. "School process" covers three categories of school-related factors — school resources, school policy and practice and classroom practice. School resources include student-staff teaching ratio, school size, computers in schools, teachers with specialized training in language arts, teachers involved in professional development programs, quality of the school infrastructure and students' use of school resources such as the school library, calculators, labs, the Internet. School policies and practices include formal assessments indicating the frequency of use of standardized tests; quality of the teaching staff as assessed by the school administrator; teacher morale; teacher autonomy and principal autonomy. Classroom practices include measures of informal assessment indicating the frequency of use of tests developed by teachers, teachers' judgmental ratings, and assessments based on student portfolios, assignments, projects and homework; student-teacher relations; disciplinary climate and achievement pressure.
5. Standard deviation is a commonly used measure of variation or spread of values around their average.
6. Willms, J.D. 1999. "Quality and inequality in children's literacy: The effects of families, schools and communities". In D. Keating and C. Hertzman (eds.), *Developmental Health and the Wealth of Nations: Social, Biological and Educational Dynamics*. p. 72-93. New York: Guilford Press.
7. Negative coefficient for socioeconomic slope under school context indicates this.
8. Willms, J.D. 1999. *Inequalities in Literacy Skills among Youth in Canada and the United States* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89F0116XIE). Statistics Canada, Human Resources Development Canada and National Literacy Secretariat.

**Summary**

Differences in reading performance among schools, provinces or countries are the result of several factors that contribute to children's development from birth. Therefore, average scores may reflect the quality of care and stimulation provided to children during infancy and the pre-school years, and the opportunities children have to learn both in school and at home during the elementary and secondary school years.

Some of the variation among schools and provinces in their reading performance is attributable to school resources, policies and practices and classroom practices. It is not possible to identify one or two factors that explain most of the reading score variation among schools or provinces. Higher and less variable outcomes are associated with a broad set of classroom and school factors.

The most important school resource factor for reading performance is whether students were taught by teachers trained in language arts. In addition, two aspects of classroom practice emerged as contributing to higher performance: better teacher-student relations and a strong disciplinary climate. Several factors, including family background, school context and school processes, contribute to the differences in average reading scores between the provinces.



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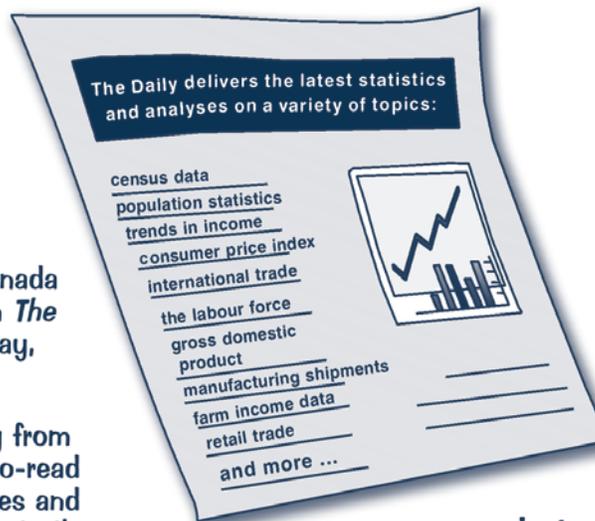
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# KEEPING TRACK

## Education and labour market pathways of young adults



In December 1999, 12% of 20-year-olds were no longer in high school and had left high school without graduating. Two years later, this dropout rate had edged down to 11% as some of these young people had returned to high school.

Some high school dropouts went on to postsecondary studies without having completed their high school diploma. When this was taken into account, by the age of 22, only 9% of youths had dropped out of high school and had not pursued any further education.

Most youths, in fact, continue their education beyond high school. By the age of 22, 76% of youths had some postsecondary experience, up from 70% at age 20.

As with high school, pathways through postsecondary education are complex. By the age of 22, just over 1 in 10 youths had left their postsecondary studies without graduating, according to the Youth in Transition Survey. However, this did not necessarily mean they had called a halt to higher education; some may continue their education later.

**Education and labour market pathways of young Canadians between age 20 and 22: an overview**

Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE2004018

## Use of cannabis

The proportion of Canadians aged 15 or older who admit at least once in the past year using cannabis nearly doubled in 13 years, with the highest rates among teenagers, according to a new study based on data from the Canadian Community Health Survey. According to the study, 6.5% of Canadians reported using cannabis in 1989, 7.4% in 1994, and by 2002, the proportion had reached 12.2%.

Cannabis use was most prevalent among young people, and its use peaked in the late teens. Close to 4 of every 10 teens aged 18 or 19 reported having used marijuana or hashish in the past year. The proportion among 15- to 17-year-olds was about 3 in 10.

Although most Canadians were not current users of illicit drugs in 2002, many had tried them at some point in their lives. More than 10 million people reported having tried cannabis. These people represented 41.3% of the population aged 15 or older. If one-time users are excluded, the proportion would be 32.0%.

**Health Reports, vol. 15, no. 4**

Catalogue no. 82-003-XIE



## Alcohol and drug use in early adolescence

One major factor plays the biggest role in children's alcohol and drug use in early adolescence and the factor is the behaviour of friends, according to National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth.

Two-thirds of adolescents who reported that all or most of their friends were using alcohol had, themselves, been drunk at least once. Only 8% of those who reported having few or no friends who used alcohol had ever been drunk. Similarly, four-fifths (82%) had smoked marijuana if most or all of their friends had done so, too. This compares with only 7% who didn't have friends who used marijuana.

The study adds to evidence that peer behaviour is related to an adolescent's own alcohol and drug use. However, it is not possible to determine a causal direction. For example, friendships may provide opportunities to learn through imitation and reinforce behaviour. It could also be that "birds of a feather flock together," and adolescents seek friends with similar attitudes toward alcohol and other drugs.

**Health Reports, vol. 15, no. 3**

Catalogue no. 82-003-XIE



## Family violence

Individuals convicted of sexually abusing their children receive harsher sentences than other offenders. According to the police and court files in the subset of 18 urban centres studied, between 1998 and 2002, there were more than 4,000 convicted cases of assault against children and youth under the age of 18.

Men were implicated in 84% of convicted cases of assaults against children and youth. About 4 out of every 10 convicted men were family members of the child victim, compared with 5 out of 10 convicted women.

Family members convicted of a single violent offence against children and youth were less likely to receive a prison sentence. About 15% of convicted family members got a prison term, compared with 28% of convicted offenders who were friends or acquaintances and 23% who were strangers. Much of the difference in incarceration rates was restricted to convictions for physical assault.

In sexual assault cases against children, family members tended to receive more severe sentences than those who were not family members. Almost half (47%) of family members convicted of sexual offences against children and youth received a prison sentence, compared with 39% of non-family members.

**Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile**

Catalogue no. 85-224-XIE





# SOCIAL INDICATORS

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>POPULATION</b>										
Total population (July 1)	28,999,006	29,302,091	29,610,757	29,907,172	30,157,082	30,403,878	30,689,035	31,021,251	31,361,611	31,629,677
0-17 years	7,124,812	7,160,626	7,198,047	7,201,692	7,189,595	7,157,941	7,137,778	7,121,952	7,091,307	7,032,597
18-64 years	18,435,949	18,632,121	18,833,689	19,050,774	19,243,135	19,459,398	19,698,290	19,976,237	20,279,848	20,536,933
65 years and over	3,438,245	3,509,344	3,579,021	3,654,706	3,724,352	3,786,539	3,852,967	3,923,062	3,990,456	4,060,147
Population rates (per 1,000)										
Total growth	10.6	10.5	10.3	9.3	7.7	8.8	9.8	11.1	9.6	8.8
Birth	13.3	12.9	12.4	11.7	11.4	11.1	10.7	10.8	10.6	10.5
Death	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.3
Natural increase	6.1	5.7	5.2	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.3
Immigration	7.7	7.3	7.6	7.2	5.8	6.2	7.4	8.1	7.3	7.0
Total emigration	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8
Interprovincial migration	9.9	9.8	9.6	9.7	9.9	9.1	9.5	9.0	9.6	9.4
Marriage	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	4.7	4.7	4.7
Percent growth in largest census metropolitan areas (to July 1)										
Toronto	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.9	2.6	1.8	..
Montréal	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	..
Vancouver	3.2	3.2	2.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.1	..
<b>HEALTH</b>										
Total fertility per woman	1.66	1.64	1.59	1.55	1.54	1.53	1.49	1.51	1.50	..
Teenage pregnancies	46,484	45,161	44,140	41,540	41,588	40,370	38,600	37,049	..	..
Pregnancy rate per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19	48.8	46.9	45.2	42.1	41.7	40.0	37.9	36.0	..	..
Low birthweight babies (<2,500 grams) as % of all births	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.7	..
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	6.3	6.1	5.6	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.2	..	..
Life expectancy at birth (years)										
Men	75.0	75.1	75.5	75.8	76.0	76.3	76.7	77.1	..	..
Women	81.0	81.1	81.2	81.3	81.5	81.7	82.0	82.2	..	..
Selected causes of death for men (per 100,000 males)*,***										
Cancer	242.7	239.9	237.6	230.7	231.1	228.9	225.3	223.8	..	..
Lung	75.5	73.2	72.9	69.9	70.1	70.3	64.3	64.6	..	..
Colorectal	25.0	25.1	24.3	23.5	24.1	24.1	24.0	22.8	..	..
Prostate	30.7	31.0	29.0	28.4	27.9	26.7	26.7	26.6	..	..
Heart diseases	249.5	245.6	240.9	231.8	227.8	220.8	202.9	189.7	..	..
Cerebrovascular diseases	54.8	54.6	52.5	52.4	49.6	47.3	46.4	44.6	..	..
External causes**	65.8	66.1	64.3	60.8	61.2	63.7	58.6	57.9	..	..
Selected causes of death for women (per 100,000 females)*,***										
Cancer	155.6	152.4	155.7	149.1	151.6	149.4	149.4	147.6	..	..
Lung	31.9	31.3	33.6	32.3	34.5	34.8	34.4	34.4	..	..
Colorectal	16.1	16.2	15.7	15.2	15.7	15.2	15.1	14.9	..	..
Breast	30.0	28.7	28.9	27.4	26.4	25.2	25.0	24.9	..	..
Heart diseases	139.9	137.5	135.3	130.2	126.2	121.1	113.4	107.6	..	..
Cerebrovascular diseases	45.9	44.9	44.3	44.2	41.9	40.0	38.8	37.1	..	..
External causes**	25.3	25.8	25.5	24.4	24.4	25.0	23.5	22.6	..	..

\* Age-standardized to the July 1, 1991 Census of Population (both sexes combined).

\*\* Includes environmental events, circumstances and conditions as the cause of injury, poisoning and other adverse effects.

\*\*\* Significant disruption of some mortality trends was caused by the implementation of ICD - 10 as the Canadian mortality classification standard, effective in 2000. The impact of the implementation of ICD - 10 on Canadian mortality trends is assessed in Health Statistics Division's ICD-9/ICD-10 comparability study.

.. Data not available.

Sources: Population estimates come from Demography Division, and birth and death statistics come from Health Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

# LESSON PLAN

## Suggestions for using *Canadian Social Trends* in the classroom

### “Perceptions of Canadians: A sense of belonging, confidence and trust”

#### Objectives

- To understand and define the meaning of social capital
- To understand how social capital is developed

**Curriculum areas:** Civic, family studies, social studies and economics

#### Classroom instructions

1. Young people engage in different types of social communities including school, extracurricular groups and family where they learn what is expected of them and what to expect from others. In these places, young people learn powerful lessons about the role of the individual in society. Schools create and depend on social capital. For example, several provinces have volunteering as part of their curriculum which builds the social capital of the community, but schools depend on the involvement and cooperation of parents and organizations to fulfil their role. Research the meaning of social capital and then discuss its importance.
2. At the core of social capital is trust. One of the ways used to gauge the level of trustworthiness of the members of a community is to measure the expectation of having a lost wallet or purse returned with its contents if found by someone they know or by a stranger. Take a quick student survey to determine what percentage of the class would expect to have their wallet or purse returned if another member of the class found it. What are the expectations of a returned wallet or purse if found by a stranger? Discuss how trust might be improved.
3. Communities with strong social networks are more likely to encourage people to behave in a trustworthy manner as the reputation of untrustworthy people travels fast in well-connected communities. Discuss how people trust others in their day-to-day activities. If trust dwindles, what are some of the repercussions?
4. In recent elections, there has been concern that young people are less likely to vote than older people. Some have suggested the decline in voter turnout rates does not signal a decline in civic participation, but rather a shift to more unconventional activities such as participating in petitions, boycotts and public demonstrations. Discuss why young people are less likely to vote and how they are engaged in civic activities.
5. Confidence in public institutions such as schools, the health care system, the police, the justice system, banks and federal parliament is also a measure of strong communities. Which public institutions have the highest level of confidence in your class? Discuss why your class is more confident in some institutions than in others. Compare your class results with the Canada-wide results given in the article.

#### Using other resources

2003 *General Social Survey on Social Engagement, Cycle 17: An Overview of Findings*, (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-598). [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-598-XIE/free.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-598-XIE/free.htm).

- To find lesson plans, articles and data for elementary and secondary schools, check out the Statistics Canada Web site at: [www.statcan.ca/english/kits/teach.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/teach.htm). There are more than 150 lesson plans for high school classes, many articles, E-STAT access and other data.
- See the Family studies kit at: [www.statcan.ca/english/kits/Family/intro.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/Family/intro.htm) for detailed graphs that you can use to make overheads for your class.

#### Educators

**You may photocopy “Lesson plan” or any item or article in *Canadian Social Trends* for use in your classroom.**



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