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# SOCIAL TRENDS

## FEATURES

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# CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS

## FEATURES

<b>Driven to excel: A portrait of Canada's workaholics</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>by Anna Kemeny</i>	
<b>Staying in touch: Contact between adults and their parents</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>by Barbara Townsend-Batten</i>	
<b>The changing recreational spending patterns of Canadian families</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>by Frances Kremarik</i>	
<b>Learning computer skills</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>by Heather Dryburgh</i>	
<b>Keeping track</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Social indicators</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Lesson plan: "Learning computer skills"</b>	<b>28</b>

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# Driven to excel: A portrait of Canada's workaholics

by Anna Kemeny



Whether it's paid work at the office, volunteer work at the library or unpaid work at home, work is essential for our well-being. Through work we define ourselves, develop our strengths, and take our places in society. Work provides us with direction and gives us goals to reach and hurdles to overcome.<sup>1</sup>

Work addiction — better known as workaholism — is a different matter entirely. Like other extremes of behaviour, working excessively long hours does not generally lend itself to a healthy, balanced way of living. Workaholics tend to invest all their energies into their particular area of work to the exclusion of many other parts of life.

According to popular perception, workaholics tend to be middle-aged men in white-collar occupations — the very people who are least likely to be driven to overwork by economic necessity. Many are described as “Type A” personalities. In their search to excel, they often ignore their

1. Killinger, B. 1991. *Workaholics: The Respectable Addicts*. Toronto: Key Porter Books. p. 5.

Data in this article come from the 1998 General Social Survey on time use. The survey interviewed a representative sample of nearly 11,000 Canadians aged 15 and over living in private households in the 10 provinces.

**Workaholic:** In this article “workaholic” refers to all those who answered “yes” to the question “Do you consider yourself a workaholic?” Because the survey did not ask why people felt this way, we do not know what type of workaholics the respondents represent. What we do know is simply that, for whatever reason, they perceived themselves as such.

**Researchers divided about dangers of workaholism**

Given its derivation from “alcoholic,” the term “workaholic” has understandably negative connotations. But although it has become a household word denoting someone who works unreasonably long hours, no widely accepted definition exists in the literature. Most writing has been clinical or anecdotal. Basic questions of definition have not been addressed and measurement concerns have been avoided.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, some of the more common types of workaholics covered in the literature are described below.

Experts’ opinions often conflict about the elements and consequences of workaholism. For example, Barbara Killinger, a clinical psychologist in Toronto, is one of many who see the workaholic personality as obsessive-compulsive and fraught with problems. She describes workaholics as “people who gradually become emotionally crippled and addicted to control and power in a compulsive drive to gain approval and success. For these people work is the fix, the drug that frees them from experiencing the emotional pain of anger, hurt, guilt and fear.”<sup>2</sup>

Others, for example, researchers Scott, Moore and Miceli, claim that workaholism is not necessarily a negative attribute. They have identified several different types of workaholics. One, the “achievement-

oriented” workaholic, is productive, happy, has a high self-esteem and is driven by enjoyment of work.<sup>3</sup> Although these people also put in very long hours, work beyond what is expected, and think about work a lot, they do so because of the challenge it poses and the satisfaction they derive from it. For them work is not an obsession or an escape from a damaged sense of self, and they do not suffer from the same host of problems that their obsessive-compulsive counterparts do.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, many people, although not workaholics in the above two senses, find themselves — perhaps because of financial reasons — caught in a workaholic lifestyle that creates some of the same physical and psychological symptoms that obsessive-compulsive workaholics have. They are exhausted, emotionally burdened, and suffering from stress and relationship problems because of the disproportionate amount of time and emotional energy they put into their jobs.<sup>5</sup> Still others may be forced into a workaholic lifestyle by the corporate culture of the organizations they work for and by society’s tacit approval of this way of working.

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1. Burke, R.J. 1999. “Workaholism in organizations: gender differences.” *Sex Roles* 41, 5/6: 333-345.
2. Killinger, B. 1991. *Workaholics: The Respectable Addicts*. Toronto: Key Porter Books. p. 6.
3. Scott, K.S., K.S. Moore and M.P. Miceli. 1997. “An exploration of the meaning and consequences of workaholism.” *Human Relations* 50, 3: 287-314; Machlowitz, M. 1980. *Workaholics: Living with them, Working with them*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
4. A 1992 study identified one cluster of workaholics characterized by above-average work involvement, who were being driven by an enjoyment of work. Spence, J.T. and A.S. Robbins. 1992. “Workaholism: Definition, measurement and preliminary results.” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 58: 160-178.
5. Robinson, B.E., Ph.D. 1998. *Chained to the Desk: A Guidebook for Workaholics, their Partners and Children, and the Clinicians who Treat them*. New York: New York University Press.

physical and mental health, and inadvertently compromise relationships with family and friends.

This is how the world sees them. But do they really fit this picture? Who are Canada's self-proclaimed workaholics? This article will use the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS) on time use to provide a brief profile of people who describe themselves as workaholics and then to investigate how they rate the quality of their lives.

### More than one in four Canadians report being workaholics

In 1998, 6.6 million Canadians, or 27% of the population aged 15 and over, considered themselves workaholics. This proportion agrees with studies done in the United States, which estimate that approximately 27% to 30% of the U.S. population is "addicted" to work.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, no way to establish which types of workaholics these people may be. Some of them are likely to be obsessive-compulsive; others may need to work long hours in order to make ends meet. And still others may be motivated by the satisfaction they derive from their jobs.

Despite the popular myth that workaholics are mostly men, approximately one-quarter of both men and women report thinking of themselves as workaholics.<sup>3</sup> And although it tends to occur more often in paid jobs, workaholism is not related exclusively to paid employment; it can occur in many unpaid activities when carried to extremes.

### Children make a difference

The proportion of Canadians living alone who report being workaholics is similar to those who are married (including common-law) but have no children: 23% and 25% respectively. Rates of workaholism climb substantially among those with children; for example, 35% of respondents in lone-parent and 34% in two-parent



## Parents of children between 5 and 18 years are most likely to perceive themselves as workaholics

		Workaholics
		%
<b>Living arrangements</b>		
Alone		23
Spouse <sup>1</sup> only		25
Spouse and child(ren)		
Age of youngest child		
Less than 5 years		31
5 to 14 years		34
15 to 18 years		32
18 and over		31
Lone parent		
Age of youngest child		
Less than 5 years		23
5 to 14 years		35
15 to 18 years		36
18 and over		26

1. Includes common-law.  
 Note: Percentages refer to population aged 15 and over who reported being workaholics.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998.

families with children aged 5 to 14 years profess being workaholics. Of course, children generate considerable amounts of unpaid work in childcare, cooking, cleaning, running errands and many other activities. In addition, most parents of school-aged children also work in the labour force and thus are faced with long-term juggling of work and home responsibilities.

The years from the mid-20s to the mid-50s are the prime working years during which most people are busy investing in their careers and increasing their earning power. Despite this, there are no significant differences between the rates of perceived workaholism of various age groups. It appears that workaholism does not vary on the basis of age.

### High-income Canadians more often claim to be workaholics

High levels of income and work addiction seem to go hand in hand. In 1998, 23% of Canadians with personal incomes under \$10,000 reported being

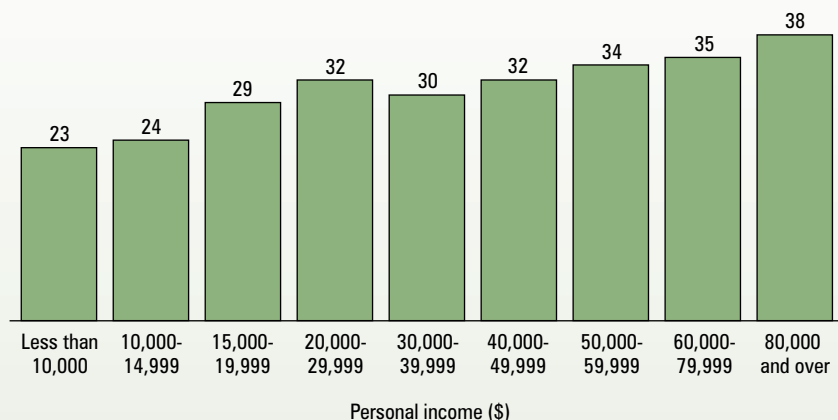
workaholics compared with 36% of those whose income was \$60,000 or over. Because jobs with higher pay often confer more responsibility, it is possible that people in these positions are under more pressure to work long hours and hence develop workaholic tendencies. It may also be that those with innate workaholic tendencies pursue careers that yield more income.

Nonetheless, it is clear that workaholics are represented in all walks of life. Surprising as it may sound, 22% of Canadians with no income also consider themselves workaholics. On closer examination, however, this is not as startling as it first appears. Most

2. Robinson, B.E., Ph.D. 1998. *Chained to the Desk: A Guidebook for Workaholics, their Partners and Children, and the Clinicians who Treat them*. New York: New York University Press. p. 2.

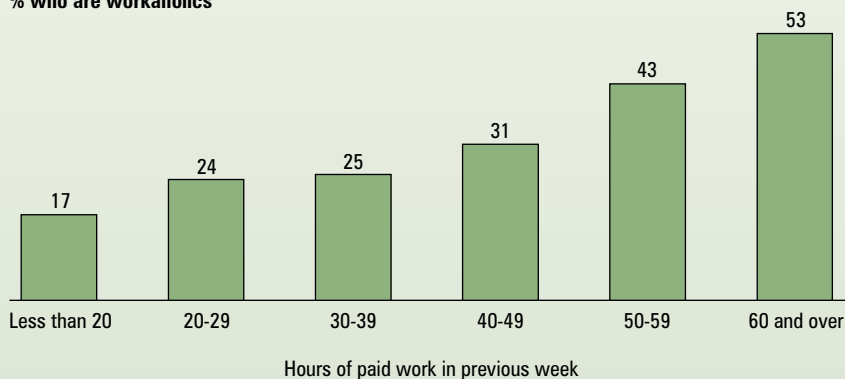
3. In the United States, the number of female workaholics has been climbing as women enter more traditionally male-dominated jobs. Robinson. p. 55.

% who are workaholics



## ... as well as people who work long hours for pay

% who are workaholics



Note: Percentages refer to population aged 15 and over who reported being workaholics.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998.

Canadians with no income consist of homemakers, students, retired people, individuals looking for work, and those who are ill. Individuals in each group may have their own reasons for claiming to be workaholics.

For instance, homemakers face a multitude of tasks, such as bringing up children, running errands, cooking, scheduling and keeping house, while students carry out research, perform experiments, take notes and study for exams. In a quest for perfection, it is possible to carry any of these activities to extremes. As for retired people, those looking for work and people who

are ill, their claim to be workaholics may be a reference to their previous work habits or simply a general personality trait that affects their lifestyle regardless of circumstances.

Although work addiction can happen to anyone in any setting, Canadians in management occupations (38%), trades (36%), and processing, manufacturing and utilities jobs (36%) were most likely to consider themselves workaholics. Workers in clerical occupations were least likely to do so (27%). These findings indicate that workaholics are not always in corporate or office jobs.

## Over half of people working more than 60 hours a week are workaholics

Although long hours spent at work are in themselves not enough to qualify someone as a workaholic,<sup>4</sup> the more hours GSS respondents put into paid work, the more likely they were to consider themselves workaholics. Fifty-three percent of those who had worked 60 hours or more at a paid job during the past week report being workaholics compared with 43% who spend 50 to 59 hours on the job and 31% of those who work between 40 and 49 hours.

While workaholics tend to work more hours than others, it's a myth that they work all the time. Work addiction manifests itself in many work styles, patterns, and types. Some workaholics work incessantly, while others go through peaks and valleys or even procrastinate.<sup>5</sup> Still others spend their time relentlessly obsessing about work regardless of where they are — during family gatherings, at the theatre, on holidays or while at the gym. They may not be at work, but they are working.

## Nearly 6 in 10 workaholics worry about lack of family time

Worry, guilt and feelings of anxiety tend to characterize work addicts to a larger degree than other people. While more than half (57%) of self-identified workaholics say they worry about not spending enough time with family and friends, only 35% of non-workaholics feel this way. Clearly,

4. Scott et al. identified three elements of workaholic behaviour patterns: discretionary time spent in work activities, thinking about work when not working, and working beyond organizational requirements. Scott, K.S., K.S. Moore and M.P. Miceli. 1997. "An exploration of the meaning and consequences of workaholism." *Human Relations* 50, 3: 292.

5. Robinson. p. 55.

Do you...	Men		Women	
	Workaholics	Non-workaholics	Workaholics	Non-workaholics
	% who answered "yes"			
Plan to slow down in the coming year	33	21	36	23
Cut down on sleep when you need time	65	46	61	43
Feel that you're constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than you can handle	55	26	61	32
Worry that you don't spend enough time with family and friends	59	35	53	35
Feel trapped in a daily routine	49	33	58	36
Feel that you just don't have time for fun any more	55	28	58	32
Experience a lot of stress <sup>1</sup>	24	13	38	20
Describe yourself a very happy person	34	42	39	42
Feel very satisfied with your life as a whole	30	40	31	37

1. Refers to the 2 weeks preceding the survey.  
 Note: Percentages refer to population aged 15 and over.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998.

workaholics are aware of the disruption their work style causes in the lives of those around them. This realization, however, is often difficult to translate into action. Achieving balance requires more than cutting back on hours; for obsessive-compulsive workaholics, in particular, it involves deep personal introspection and insights as well as attention to the parts of life that have been neglected.<sup>6</sup>

Psychologists who treat them and researchers who study them point out that families of workaholics often pay the price for this behaviour. According to Diane Fassel, "Workaholics are not emotionally available to their loved ones. They are often preoccupied and make promises they don't keep."<sup>7</sup> Children frequently grow up without being able to establish a solid relationship with the workaholic parent, while spouses suffer from a sense of abandonment and loneliness. According to many psychologists, workaholism is a major source of marital breakdown.<sup>8</sup> In addition, because workaholism is accepted and frequently encouraged by society, families of workaholics often receive very little support or understanding

from relatives and friends, who see only a hard worker trying to provide for his or her family.

For obvious reasons, time spent — or not spent — on other areas of life was also of concern to workaholics. They are nearly twice as likely as other Canadians to feel somewhat or very dissatisfied with the way they spent their other time: 26% versus 14%. When work dominates to the exclusion of all else, there simply may not be any time or energy left for other interests or activities.

**Workaholics twice as likely as others to feel stressed**

In addition to worries about time, notable differences also show up in other areas of emotional well-being. Stress, feelings of helplessness and a life without fun appear to be more of an issue for workaholics than for others. For example, workaholics are twice as likely as other Canadians to report feeling constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than they could handle (58% compared with 29%). Over half feel trapped in a daily routine compared with just one-third of their non-workaholic counterparts,

and nearly six in 10 state that they just don't have time for fun any more, versus three in 10 others.

According to researchers and psychologists, true workaholics are seldom happy. Many are driven by some inner compulsion, or work to overcome low self-esteem and feelings of emptiness. Some say they will feel happy when their tasks are accomplished, but since the work is never done, happiness is always the next project away.<sup>9</sup> Those who owe their workaholic lifestyles to financial difficulties may not have any of the above problems, but still lead unbalanced, hectic lives which often get in the way of happiness. Indeed, the GSS data show that workaholics are

6. Robinson. p. 37.  
 7. Fassel, D. 1990. *Working Ourselves to Death: The High Cost of Workaholism and the Rewards of Recovery*. New York: Harper-Collins. p. 14-15.  
 8. Robinson, B.E., Ph.D. 1998. "The workaholic family: a clinical perspective." *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 26: 65-75.  
 9. Fassel. p. 16.



significantly less likely than others to report feeling very happy: 36% versus 42%, respectively.

Closely related to happiness is satisfaction with life as a whole. It is, therefore, to be expected that people who are less happy would also be less satisfied. When asked by the GSS if they were very satisfied with their lives, 31% of workaholics compared with 38% of non-workaholics answered "yes". It's not difficult to see why this may be so. People whose identity has been consumed, time and energy robbed and thoughts seized by work are unlikely to feel that life is very satisfying.

### **Workaholics rate their health worse than others**

A variety of health problems ranging from exhaustion and anxiety to high blood pressure are attributed to workaholism.<sup>10</sup> In fact, working longer than the standard 35 to 40 hours a week is thought to be detrimental to health regardless of workaholic tendencies. While Statistics Canada's 1996-97 National Population Health Survey has linked longer work hours with increased chances of weight gain, smoking or alcohol consumption, studies in Japan have associated them with high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising to find that in 1998 self-reported workaholics were less likely to rate themselves as very satisfied with their health: about 36% compared with 40% of non-workaholics.

Researchers also differ on how much satisfaction workaholics actually get out of their jobs. While most claim that workaholism is an addiction that has nothing to do with pleasure or satisfaction, others maintain that some workaholics are motivated by the pleasure of doing a job well. Data from the GSS indicate that workaholics derive as much satisfaction from their careers as other workers: nearly four in 10 of both

workaholics and other Canadians report feeling very satisfied with their job.

The two groups are also equally likely to report being very satisfied with their finances: 18% of workaholics versus 19% of non-workaholics. At the other end of the spectrum, however, workaholics are more likely to be very dissatisfied with their finances (12% versus 9%).

Self-esteem presents another finding that contradicts some of the research which claims that workaholics have low levels of self-esteem compared with others. GSS data show no difference between workaholics and non-workaholics: around 4 in 10 of both groups report being very satisfied with their self-esteem.

### **Summary**

More than one-quarter of Canadian adults identify themselves as workaholics, with men and women reporting this trait in nearly the same proportions. Certain socio-demographic characteristics appear to be linked with work addiction, among them high levels of income, working very long hours in paid jobs and having children aged 5 to 18.

Those who report being workaholics worry more and are less likely to feel happy or satisfied with life than other Canadians. They feel under

constant stress trying to accomplish more than they can handle, speak of being trapped in a daily routine and complain of never having time for fun. They are also concerned about not spending enough time with family and friends, and feel dissatisfied with the way they spend their other time. On the other hand, workaholics are just as likely to enjoy their jobs, and equally likely to be happy with their finances and their self-esteem as other adults.

10. Haymon, S. 1993. "The relationship of work addiction and depression, anxiety, and anger in college males." (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1992) *Dissertation Abstracts International* 53, 5401B; Oates, W. 1971. *Confessions of a Workaholic*. New York: World; and Spence, J.T. and A.S. Robins. 1992. "Workaholics: Definition, measurement, and preliminary results." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 58: 160-178.

11. Statistics Canada. November 16, 1999. *The Daily*. "Long working hours and health."



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# Staying in touch: Contact between adults and their parents

by **Barbara Townsend-Batten**

*The red flag is up on the rural route mailbox signaling a letter from a son has come; the telephone rings and it's the daughter who lives "away" with the weekly news about the grandkids; or the sound of a car in the driveway tells mum and dad that the kids have arrived for Sunday dinner. All are means by which adults and their parents maintain these close family relationships.*

## CST What you should know about this study

This article uses data from the 1995 General Social Survey on the family. Interviews were conducted with more than 10,000 Canadians aged 15 years and over living in private households in the 10 provinces. The study population for this article consists of adults aged 25 to 54 who provided information about the frequency of contact they had with their mother (about 4,900) and father (about 3,700) living in a separate household. This age group was chosen because younger adults are often still living with their parents or may have left the parental home temporarily to attend school, while many adults over age 55 do not have living parents (and those who do might be expected to have different issues with their parents than younger adults). Because the survey was conducted before the widespread use of e-mail and other messaging services available through the Internet, it seems reasonable to assume that rates of frequent contact may now be higher.

**Contact:** during the past 12 months, adult child has visited, written to or spoken with a parent who lives in a separate household (private household or institution). The survey does not identify who initiated the contact. *Frequent contact* constitutes contact at least once a week, including every day.

**Mother:** birth mother or mother substitute as defined by the respondent.

**Father:** birth father or father substitute as defined by the respondent.

Keeping up with family news and events can become more difficult when children grow up, move out of their parents' homes and set up their own households elsewhere. As the distance between family members increases, the amount of visiting tends to fall because personal visits over greater distances require more time, money and motivation.<sup>1</sup> But while growing geographical distance between family members can cause difficulties if aging parents need physical care, phone and mail are available and most adults stay in touch with their parents irrespective of physical need or proximity. However, the frequency of contact between adult children and their parents is often influenced by many other, non-geographic factors.

Using data from the 1995 General Social Survey (GSS) on family and social support, this article examines the factors that contribute to frequent

contact between adult children and their parents. "Frequent contact" covers telephoning, writing letters or visiting at least once a week. The study population is Canadians aged 25 to 54 with at least one parent living in a separate household.

### Women are the ones who stay in contact

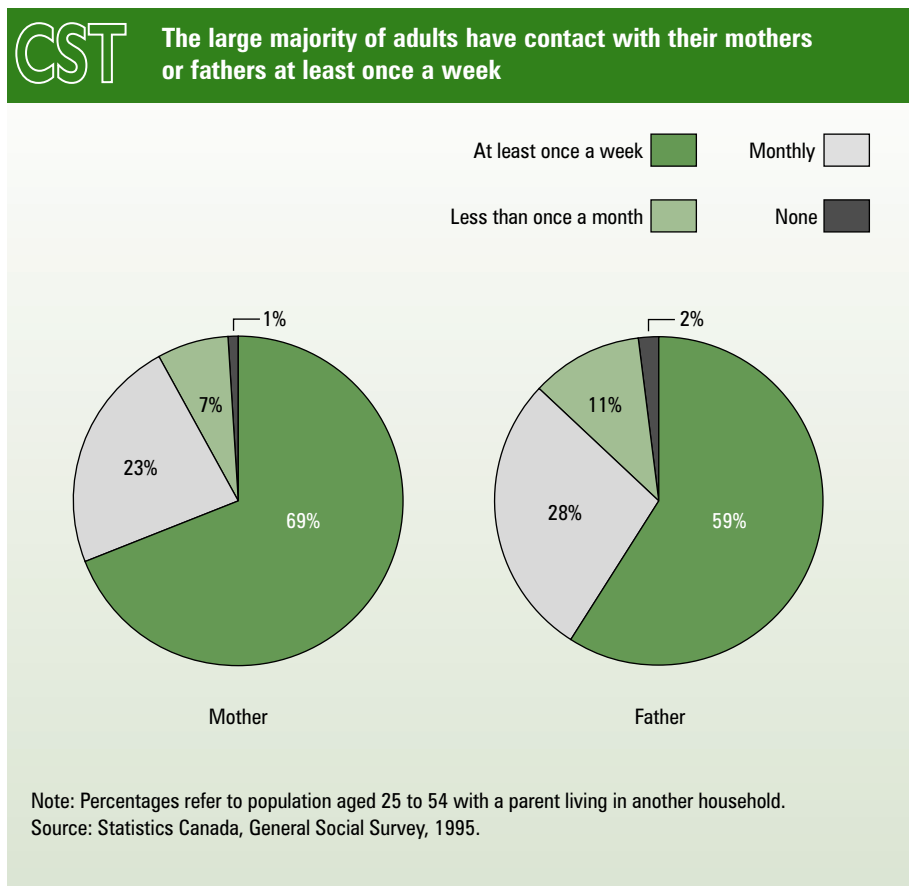
Adults keep in close touch with their families. Almost 7 in 10 adults aged 25 to 54 phone, write or visit their mothers at least once a week; nearly 6 in 10 communicate with their fathers that often. Few have contact less than once a month or not at all (8% for mother and 13% for father).

Daughters are more likely than sons to be in frequent touch with their mother, that is, at least once a week: 74% versus 64%. This is not surprising since women's traditional family role has been to play the main caregiver and kin keeper of the

family<sup>2</sup> and women generally feel more "responsible" for keeping open the lines of communication. This sense of kinship is common to both generations since both sons' and daughters' contact with mother is more frequent than with father. (Because the higher rate of contact with mothers is consistent across all variables, the rest of this article refers to data for mothers only unless otherwise stated. Data for fathers are presented in tables and charts.)

Because families with young children often require help, support or child minding assistance during the early family formation years, it is surprising to find that the presence of children does not affect the frequency of adults' contact with their mother. Neither does the adults' marital status. On the other hand, their age does have an effect: younger adults aged 25 to 39 have more frequent contact than older adults aged 40 to 54.

For many Canadian families, religious worship plays an important role in keeping the family together across the generations: 71% of adults who report having a religious affiliation were in frequent contact with their mothers, compared with 61% of those who stated they had no religion. As well, adults who go to religious services more than a few times a year are more likely to have frequent contact with their mother than those who do not attend at all (73% versus 67%).



1. For further information see McDaniel, S. 1995. "Emotional support and family contacts of older Canadians." *Aging and Society: A Canadian Reader*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada. p. 326-331.

2. A kin keeper is someone in the extended family who assumes the role of providing personal advice and emotional comfort to other family members. For further information see Rosenthal, C.J. 1995. "The comforter." *Aging and Society: A Canadian Reader*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada. p. 342-351.

This finding echoes results of a previous study which shows that people who regularly attend worship services place greater importance on the family than other adults.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the GSS asked respondents, “do you think that you are a better parent than your father/mother

was?” Daughters who answered “no” to this question have more frequent contact with their mother than daughters who answered “yes”; the same holds true for sons and their fathers. The belief that your parent did a “good job” of raising you may indicate a good on-going relationship

between the generations, again reinforcing frequent contact.

### On the other hand...

While some factors generate increased contact with a parent, others tend to have a negative effect. Adults 25 to 54 have a markedly lower likelihood of frequent contact with a parent who is living with a spouse other than the adult’s father or mother. This finding may reflect difficulty accepting a parent’s new partner, or the new partner’s difficulty accepting the children. Interestingly, frequent contact with mother was just as high whether she is living alone or with father (71%), while contact with father is considerably lower if he lives by himself (48% versus 65% if he lived with mother). Weekly communication with father is lower still if he is living with a new partner (40%).<sup>4</sup>

The mobility of Canadian society has raised the possibility that family ties may be weakening. Certainly, adults aged 25 to 54 who have moved more than once in the previous 10 years report less frequent contact with mother than those who have moved only once (or not at all), and the effect is more noticeable for contact with father. Possibly the adult child develops new substitute or surrogate “kin networks” among neighbours and friends in their new location, and

## CST Religious affiliation and the parents’ current living arrangements have the most effect on adults’ level of contact with parents

	Frequent contact with	
	Mother	Father
	%	
Both sexes	69	59
Daughters	74	61
Sons	64	57
Age of adult		
25-39	71	62
40-54	66	51
Children in the home of the adult		
One or more	70	59
None	67	59
Religious affiliation		
Affiliation	71	60
No religion	61	53
Religious attendance in last 12 months		
Attended at least a few times	73	63
Did not attend services	67	56
Believe they are better parents than their parents were		
Agree	69	48
Disagree	81	65
Current living arrangement of parent		
Living with mother or father of adult	71	65
Living with other partner	61	40
Living alone	71	48
Number of times adult moved in the last 10 years		
None or one time	73	65
Two or more times	66	56
Balance of job, home and family life		
Satisfied	70	61
Dissatisfied	66	53

Note: Percentages refer to population aged 25 to 54 with a parent living in another household.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1995.

3. Clark, W. Autumn 1998. “Religious observance, marriage and family.” *Canadian Social Trends* 46: 2-7.

4. Research on parent–adult-child relations indicates that parental divorce later in the child’s life has a negative impact on several factors including contact; divorce while the children are still young has the most negative effects on father–son ties. Connidis, I.A. 1999. “Anticipating change in family ties and ageing: The implications of demographic trends.” *Cohort Flow and the Consequences of Population Ageing*. (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-569-XCB).

	Frequent contact with	
	Mother	Father
	%	
<b>Very happy childhood</b>		
Agree	72	63
Disagree	54	31
<b>Emotional closeness to parents (before age 15)</b>		
Agree	72	65
Disagree	56	46
<b>Place of birth</b>		
Canada	74	63
Other country	50	42
<b>Language first spoken</b>		
English	70	61
French	74	60
Other	55	49

Note: Percentages refer to population aged 25 to 54 with a parent living in another household.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1995.

becomes less reliant on parents for day-to-day support or conversation.<sup>5</sup>

Another factor that reduces contact is having trouble juggling the demands of present-day life. Adults 25 to 54 who are not satisfied with the balance of their job, home and family life are in touch with their mother less often than those who are satisfied (66% versus 70%). Perhaps overwhelming immediate priorities eat up the time available for a regular weekly call or visit.

**A good relationship in childhood lasts into adulthood**

The bonding that occurs between child and parent is often the basis for future relationships maintained between adult generations in a family.<sup>6</sup> Canadians aged 25 to 54 who say they had a very happy childhood are more likely to have frequent contact with their mother than those who do not, at 72% compared with 54%.

Similarly, emotional closeness to the mother during childhood and early adolescence is linked with significantly more frequent contact (72% versus 56%).

Two other aspects of the childhood experience seem to have an effect on contact. Adults born outside Canada have less frequent contact, as do those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. This finding probably reflects the fact that the parents of some of these adults may live abroad, making weekly communication expensive or difficult.

**Summary**

Contact between adults and their parents contributes to overall feelings of well-being, inclusiveness, belonging, self worth and security.<sup>7</sup> Although there are no perfect families and no flawless blueprints for intergenerational contact, most Canadian adults talk to their parents once a week

or more. In general, women are more likely than men to pick up the phone, write a letter or visit. Adults with a religious affiliation tend to have more frequent contact than those without; similarly those who attend religious services report regular weekly contact more frequently than those who do not attend services at all. Not surprisingly, perhaps, frequent contact is also reported more often by adults who feel that their childhood had been very happy and that they had a strong emotional bond with their parents.

5. For further information see Pearlin, L.I. 1982. "Discontinuities in the study of aging." *Aging and Life Course Transitions: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Edited by T.K. Hareven and K.J. Adams. p. 55-74.
6. For further information see Long, M.V. and P. Martin. 2000. "Personality, relationship closeness, and loneliness of oldest old adults and their children." *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 55 (March 2000): 311-319.
7. Rowe, J.W., M.D. and R.L. Kahn, Ph.D. 1998. *Successful Aging*. New York: Dell Publishing.



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# The changing recreational spending patterns of Canadian families

by Frances Kremarik

**W**hen you went shopping for your 10-year-old son's Christmas present last year, did you stop in the sporting goods aisle for a baseball glove or a basketball, or did you walk on past to the electronics section to pick up a video game or a DVD player? Perhaps you thought about a trip to the hockey game because his sister received tickets to the latest boy-band on her birthday? Maybe you weren't sure what you could afford because you had already promised the family a Caribbean vacation during March break?

Using data from the 1982 Family Expenditure Survey and the 1999 Survey of Household Spending, this paper will look at the choices Canadians make when deciding how to spend their recreation dollar. The primary focus is the household, and the differences between different types of households will be examined. This paper will also look at whether the increase in average spending observed over the last 20 years is due primarily to an increase in the dollars spent by households, or due to an increase in the percentage of households spending.

## We spent much more

The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were marked by two recessions. Average after tax income for Canadian households was only about 4% higher at the end than at the beginning of this period, rising from \$41,000 in 1982 to \$42,500 in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Income growth did not keep pace with spending increases as average household expenditures on all items (excluding income tax) rose 10%

while spending on recreation jumped by almost 40%.<sup>2</sup>

Although spending rose in every recreation category, it did not increase by the same rate for all components. Recreational fees and athletic equipment grew by only 8%, but most other categories recorded significantly larger increases, with the highest being 253%.

These increases in overall average spending mask more complex and subtle shifts in recreation expenditures. We certainly know that the products and services available to help us enjoy our leisure time have changed substantially over the last 20 years; some were scarcely on the horizon while the quality and reliability of others improved significantly.

1. All dollars have been adjusted to 1999 dollars using the Consumer Price Index.
2. From 1980 to 1989, consumer credit debt increased by 9%; from 1990 to 1999, it increased by another 22%. Williams, C. Winter 2000. "100 years of income and expenditures." *Canadian Social Trends* 59: 7-12.

This paper uses data from the 1982 Family Expenditure Survey (FAMEX) and the 1999 Survey of Household Spending (SHS), which replaced FAMEX in 1998. The 1982 FAMEX surveyed almost 11,000 households and the 1999 SHS over 16,600.<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked about their household income and expenditures, including their recreational spending. All dollar values have been adjusted for inflation and are presented in 1999 dollars. Percentage increases or decreases are calculated using 1999 dollars.

**Overall average expenditure:** The overall average expenditure covers all households, regardless of whether they reported expenditures in that category or not.

**Recreational expenditures:** The following are groupings of recreational spending used in this article. The items in each category are not necessarily exhaustive.

*Event admission:* movie theatres, live sports events, live performing arts.

*Recreational fees:* single use and seasonal fees to sports and recreational facilities. Also includes children's camps.

*Home recreation equipment:* playground equipment, toys, board games, electronic and video games, computer equipment and supplies, photographic goods and accessories, and musical instruments.

*Computers:* a subset of the home recreation equipment category that includes electronic and video games, computer equipment and supplies.

*Athletic equipment:* sporting and athletic equipment such as ice skates and golf clubs. This category does not include athletic clothing.

*Recreation vehicles, camping:* picnic equipment, bicycles, snowmobiles, boats, campers, and the associated costs of operating equipment.

*Home entertainment equipment:* radios, CD players, tapes, televisions, camcorders, videotape rentals, and satellite dishes.

*Cablevision:* includes cablevision and satellite services.

*Package trips:* travel tours.

*Other:* unspecified recreation items. Please note that although the spending in this category is included in the total recreation average, no analysis specific to this category is conducted.

1. Data from intervening survey years (1986, 1992 and 1996) support the trends noted here, but they are not discussed in this article.

Furthermore, people's definition of what constitutes recreation has expanded during this time as well.<sup>3</sup>

Spending on recreational goods and services has changed because we are spending more (or less), in conjunction with more (or fewer) of us purchasing the product. Determining how much each factor influences the overall average spending gives us a more accurate picture of how expenditure patterns are shifting.

At first glance, it would seem that average spending rose because we were buying goods and services that just were not available in 1982 and, therefore, spending more. For example, CD players and cell phones were not on the market, and items like VCRs and personal computers were just beginning to appear. When products enter the market, they often carry a high price tag. Over time (sometimes only a year or even less), the price declines to a point where more consumers are able to purchase them.

3. Entertainment services like live events and the world of videos and TV packages are becoming increasingly important consumer items. Live spectacles and leisure parks are designed to allow people to purchase an "experience," rather than entertaining themselves, many people now expect leisure and tourist destinations to entertain them. Notable places such as the Disney parks offer tourists a memorable experience, but places like the West Edmonton Mall and the Mall of America also are considered leisure attractions. Although their primary focus is shopping, they provide a variety of experiences from theme parks to rinks and golf courses and are conceptually no different than resorts. Earl, L. June 1999. "Entertainment services: a growing consumer market." *Canadian Economic Observer* 12, 6 (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-010-XPB): 3.1-3.13; Butler, R.W. 1991. "West Edmonton Mall as a tourist attraction." *The Canadian Geographer* 35, 3: 287-295; Rojek, C. 1993. "Disney culture." *Leisure Studies* 12: 121-135; Jackson, E.L. 1991. "Shopping and leisure: Implications of West Edmonton Mall for leisure and for leisure research." *The Canadian Geographer* 35, 3: 280-287.



	Average spent by all Canadian households			Allocation analysis					
	\$		% change in spending	Components of change in spending (%)					
	1982	1999	(a)	=	(b)	+	(c)	+	(d)
Total recreational spending <sup>1</sup>	2,134	2,962	39	=	36	+	2	+	1
Event admission	155	228	47	=	43	+	3	+	1
Recreational fees	221	238	8	=	45	+	-26	+	-11
Home recreation equipment	421	727	73	=	63	+	6	+	4
Home recreation equipment (excluding computers)	362	361	0	=	-3	+	3	+	0
Computers	59	366	515	=	55	+	296	+	164
Athletic equipment	124	134	8	=	34	+	-19	+	-6
Recreation vehicles, camping	471	516	10	=	11	+	-1	+	0
Home entertainment equipment	422	503	19	=	5	+	13	+	1
Cablevision	94	333	253	=	134	+	51	+	68
Package trips	197	256	30	=	2	+	27	+	1

1. Categories listed do not add up to the total because of the exclusion of the "other" category.

Note: All values are presented in 1999 constant dollars.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1982 and Survey of Household Spending, 1999.

This increases market penetration, thus contributing to even lower prices as manufacturers take advantage of economies of scale and produce more units at less cost.

Many electronic goods became more affordable in the 1980s and 1990s for this reason. From 1985 to 1999, the price indices for both audio and video equipment fell by 21% and 33%, respectively. Despite lower prices, though, overall average household expenditures on these items rose. This example suggests that the overall average cannot tell us what really underlies the increases in recreational spending in recent years.

To find out, the change in spending over time was examined using an allocation analysis framework. This technique identifies whether the

change is due to households spending more money, or due to a larger percentage of households buying. For example, average household expenditures on home entertainment equipment rose 19% from 1982 to 1999, even though real prices dropped. In fact, increased spending accounted for only about one-quarter of this growth; two-thirds was due to more households buying these goods in 1999 than in 1982.

On the other hand, higher expenditures on other recreational items may reflect substantial spending increases. Average household spending on cablevision grew by 253% from 1982 to 1999. Just over half (53%) of this increase was attributable to the higher level of spending, although the substantial growth in the number

of Canadian households buying cablevision was also a significant contributing factor, as cable systems expanded into smaller urban and rural areas. Of course, the reason that households spent more and that more households purchased cable was, in part, due to the mushrooming variety of channels available beginning in the late 1980s.

Expenditures on computers represents both increasing popularity and improving quality of the product. Between 1982 and 1999, overall average spending on computers rose from \$59 to \$366, or 515%. However, 58% of this increase was due to more households buying and only 11% to households spending more (32% was due to the interaction between the two). By 1999, computers were a

		Average spent by all Canadian households				
		\$		% change in spending	% of households reporting	
		1982	1999		1982	1999
Total recreational spending	Two-parent households	2,718	4,089	50	100	100
	Lone-parent households	1,433	2,243	57	97	99
	Two adults	2,148	2,921	36	95	99
	Lone person	1,238	1,442	17	88	93
Event admission	Two-parent households	182	315	73	84	89
	Lone-parent households	126	189	50	74	80
	Two adults	129	196	52	62	67
	Lone person	124	121	-2	59	56
Recreational fees	Two-parent households	292	353	21	77	63
	Lone-parent households	160	189	18	64	51
	Two adults	202	224	11	56	39
	Lone person	108	93	-14	45	29
Home recreation equipment	Two-parent households	619	1,110	79	93	96
	Lone-parent households	281	599	113	80	88
	Two adults	335	587	75	75	84
	Lone person	177	276	56	53	60
Home recreation equipment (excluding computers)	Two-parent households	516	556	8	93	94
	Lone-parent households	245	296	21	79	84
	Two adults	308	311	1	75	82
	Lone person	159	132	-17	53	57
Computers	Two-parent households	104	554	433	20	67
	Lone-parent households	35	303	761	11	44
	Two adults	27	276	921	4	34
	Lone person	19	144	674	3	19
Athletic equipment	Two-parent households	185	230	24	60	52
	Lone-parent households	78	77	-2	37	32
	Two adults	97	102	5	35	28
	Lone person	98	54	-45	21	17
Recreation vehicles, camping	Two-parent households	594	716	21	64	62
	Lone-parent households	189	249	32	36	41
	Two adults	640	658	3	38	42
	Lone person	236	212	-10	19	21
Home entertainment equipment	Two-parent households	521	684	31	84	95
	Lone-parent households	287	481	68	70	90
	Two adults	383	389	2	65	77
	Lone person	280	276	-1	55	61
Cablevision	Two-parent households	108	374	245	54	80
	Lone-parent households	99	322	224	53	73
	Two adults	90	341	278	47	76
	Lone person	65	251	288	38	62
Package trips	Two-parent households	185	267	44	7	11
	Lone-parent households	180	115	-36	9	7
	Two adults	254	407	60	9	14
	Lone person	172	152	-12	10	9

Note: All values are presented in 1999 constant dollars.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Family Expenditure Survey, 1982 and Survey of Household Spending, 1999.

## CST What is allocation analysis?

Allocation analysis is a way to determine why overall average expenditures increase or decrease. It is comprised of three components. The first component identifies the change in the average dollars spent by those households that purchased the good. The second component distinguishes the change in the percentage of households purchasing the good (household reporting rate). The third component is an interactive variable that acknowledges that neither factor is truly independent of the other. The overall average includes all households, regardless of whether they reported expenditures in that category or not.

Difference in overall average spending between 1999 and 1982 =  
 Change in expenditures + Change in percentage of households reporting +  
 Interaction between change in spending and change in reporting

Mathematically:

$$D = (S_{1999} - S_{1982}) * R_{1982} + (R_{1999} - R_{1982}) * S_{1982} + (S_{1999} - S_{1982})(R_{1999} - R_{1982})$$

where

D = Difference in overall average spending between 1999 and 1982

$S_{1982}$  and  $S_{1999}$  = Average dollars spent by households purchasing the item in 1982 and 1999

and

$R_{1982}$  and  $R_{1999}$  = Household reporting rates in 1982 and 1999

For example,

	Overall average spending (D)	Average dollars spent by reporting households (S)	Households reporting (R)	Interaction effect
1982	\$20	\$100	20%	--
1999	\$40	\$160	25%	--
1999-1982	\$20	\$60	5%	--
Difference due to change in \$	\$20	\$12	\$5	\$3

common item in Canadian homes because they had become far easier to use, more powerful and more versatile (product improvement) and their price had dropped substantially (the computer price index dropped 55% from 1995, when it was created, to 1999).

The case of athletic equipment illustrates another outcome. Overall household spending rose minimally from \$124 in 1982 to \$134 in 1999. This virtual stagnation was actually a case of fewer households buying athletic goods, but those fewer households spending more on their purchases.

### Kids count when it comes to recreational spending

As we all know, households make different spending decisions according to their particular needs. Over the past two decades, spending on recreation by households with children grew faster than that of others. Two-parent households saw their recreational spending increase by 50% and lone-parent households by 57%. Couples without children recorded a 36% growth in expenditures and one-person households a 17% rise.

Purchases of cablevision represented the largest single increase in recreational spending for all types of households. The home recreation equipment category also recorded large increases regardless of household type, mainly because this category includes computer equipment and supplies.

However, the purchase of computers and computer-related items increased most for those households that had children. Sixty-seven percent of two-parent and 44% of lone-parent households spent money on computers in 1999, compared with 34% of couples only and 19% of one-person households. The computer's presence in schools and libraries, and its growth as a teaching tool, has created a situation in which many parents

feel that owning a computer is no longer a luxury but a necessity to help their children succeed scholastically.<sup>4</sup>

But even when computers are excluded, spending in the home recreation category rose considerably in households with children. Almost one-quarter of increased expenditures by two-parent households, and nearly one-third in lone-parent households, was due to proportionally more households purchasing these items; but the lion's share was due to more dollars being paid to buy recreational items.

Event admission is another key area of increased recreational spending for families with children. In this category, the increase was driven primarily by households spending more rather than more households buying. In fact, 75% to 87% of the change in event admission expenditures in households with children was due to higher spending.

Families with children also spent more on home entertainment equipment in 1999 than 1982, rising 31% for two-parent and 68% for lone-parent households. Almost half of the increase — 50% in two-parent and 45% in lone-parent households — can be attributed to families spending more on these kinds of goods. The situation was different for other households, where average spending on home entertainment equipment was stagnant, even though more couples and one-person households reported buying such products.

Not all recreation items enjoyed surges in popularity. While more households bought goods like TVs, VCRs, CD players and laptop computers, fewer of them spent as much on athletic equipment and recreational fees. For example, in one-person households,

the dollars spent on athletic equipment dropped significantly between 1982 and 1999, accounting for almost three-quarters (71%) of the overall decrease in spending in this category for these households. And even though one would expect households with children to be more involved in sports activities, proportionally fewer of them spent money on athletic equipment and recreation fees. Nevertheless, overall average spending on equipment increased moderately for two-parent households. This was due to the fact that although fewer households were purchasing athletic equipment and paying recreation fees, those that did spent considerably more in 1999 than in 1982.

### Summary

The toys we used in 1999 had more glowing buttons and made more beeps than their predecessors in 1982. The rise of the computer industry appears to have influenced not only our work, but also our play. More of our recreation dollar is devoted to purchases of electronic entertainment goods as opposed to more traditional pursuits, such as sports. The growing attraction of these indoor and relatively sedentary activities suggests that even the instruction to “go out and play” may become obsolete.



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4. Clark, W. Autumn 2001. “Kids and teens on the Net.” *Canadian Social Trends* 62: 6-10.

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# Learning computer skills

by Heather Dryburgh

In the western world, one widely-held assumption links men with a fascination for machines and technology. The computer is proving to be the latest machine attracting the attention of men, who are training and working with computers in much larger numbers than women. However, computers are an essential part of many workplaces and employers need both men and women with computer skills.

Although some come to the job with computer-related education, many workers need training or retraining to keep up with new hard- or software. Various training and education methods are available, but do men and women choose similar ways of learning computer skills? How effective do they feel their computer training has been? This article uses the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) to examine how men and women aged 15 and over learned their computer skills and which methods they found most important. After a brief look at all computer users, the article focusses on the training preferences of men and women working in three broad occupational groups: computer professionals, high skill occupations and all other occupations.

## Most learn by trial-and-error, or with help from friends or family

In 2000, 96% of all computer users reported that they had taught themselves computer skills through

trial-and-error; 78% had received informal help from a friend or family member. Formal training, such as a course at an educational institution (54%) or an employer-provided course or training program (40%), was less common. Web-based training on the Internet was the least common way to learn computer skills (30%).

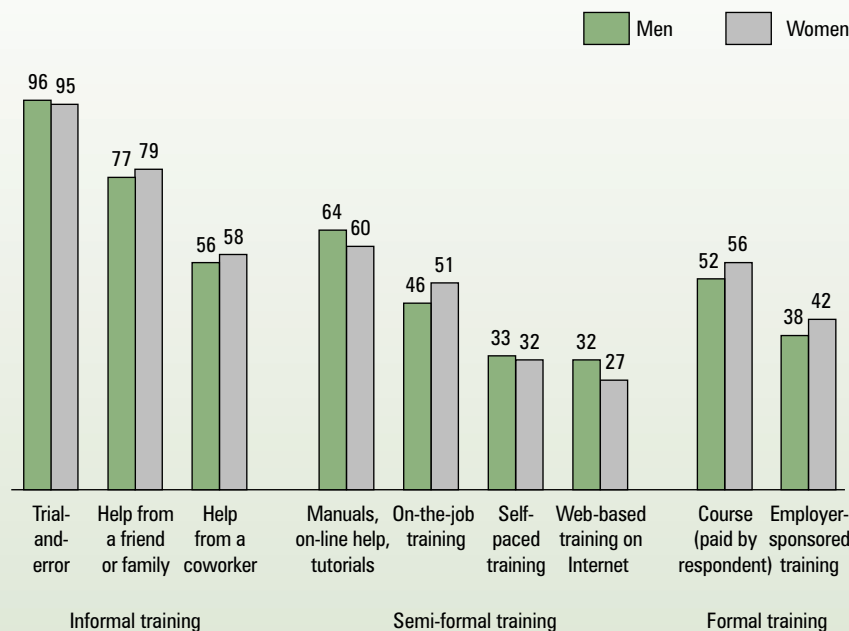
Men were generally more likely than women to use self-learning methods; on the other hand, women

were more apt to use facilitated methods such as on-the-job training and informal help from friends, family and coworkers.

The majority of computer users had used several training methods to acquire their computer skills. Over half had received between two and five different kinds of training, while 11% reported using all nine methods. Very few people (5%) learned their computer skills using

### CST Trial-and-error is the most common way for both men and women to learn computing skills

% of all computer users



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

This article is based on data from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) on access to and use of information communication technology. The GSS is an annual telephone sample survey covering the non-institutionalized population aged 15 and over in all provinces. The representative sample had 25,100 respondents, with an 81% response rate.

**Working population:** refers to those persons aged 15 and over working for pay, including the self-employed.

**Occupation:** three occupational groupings were used in this analysis: *computer professionals* are computer programmers, systems analysts, and computer engineers; *high skill occupations* are jobs where workers are not computer professionals, but perform high skill computer work such as data analysis, some types of computer programming, graphic design or desk top publishing; and *all other occupations*.

**General technology use:** this is an index of general technology use, with one point scored for use of each of the following: fax machine, cellular telephone, automated teller machine (ATM), telephone answering machine or service, pager, cable television, satellite dish, and digital video disc (DVD). Scores range from 0 to 8. High scores indicate high technology use and low scores indicate low technology use.

## Training

Nine measures of training are used in this article. They can be grouped into three general categories of formal, semi-formal, and informal training methods.

**Formal training:** This category includes two components: (1) taking a course at an educational institution (school, college, institute) for which the person registered and/or paid; and (2) taking a course or training program provided by the person's employer or a former employer, held in a classroom or training facility on or off the worksite.

**Semi-formal training:** This category includes four components: (1) self-paced training provided by the person's employer or former employer using videos, CD-ROM, training manuals, or training based on computers; (2) on-the-job training provided by the person's employer or a former employer; (3) manuals, on-line help, or tutorials provided by the computer or software manufacturer; and (4) Web-based training on the Internet.

**Informal training:** This category includes three components: (1) informal help from a coworker; (2) informal help from a friend or family member; and (3) teaching oneself through trial-and-error.

**Self-learning methods:** Generally preferred by men, these methods include Web-based training; self-paced training; use of manuals and on-line help; and trial and error.

**Interactive (or facilitated) methods:** Generally preferred by women, these methods include formal courses; employer-sponsored courses; on-the-job training; help from friends and family; and help from coworkers.

only one method, and of that 5%, the majority taught themselves through trial-and-error.

However, this general description of education and training obscures the somewhat different patterns that are found when looking specifically at computer users in the workforce.

According to the 2000 GSS, the computer training and education

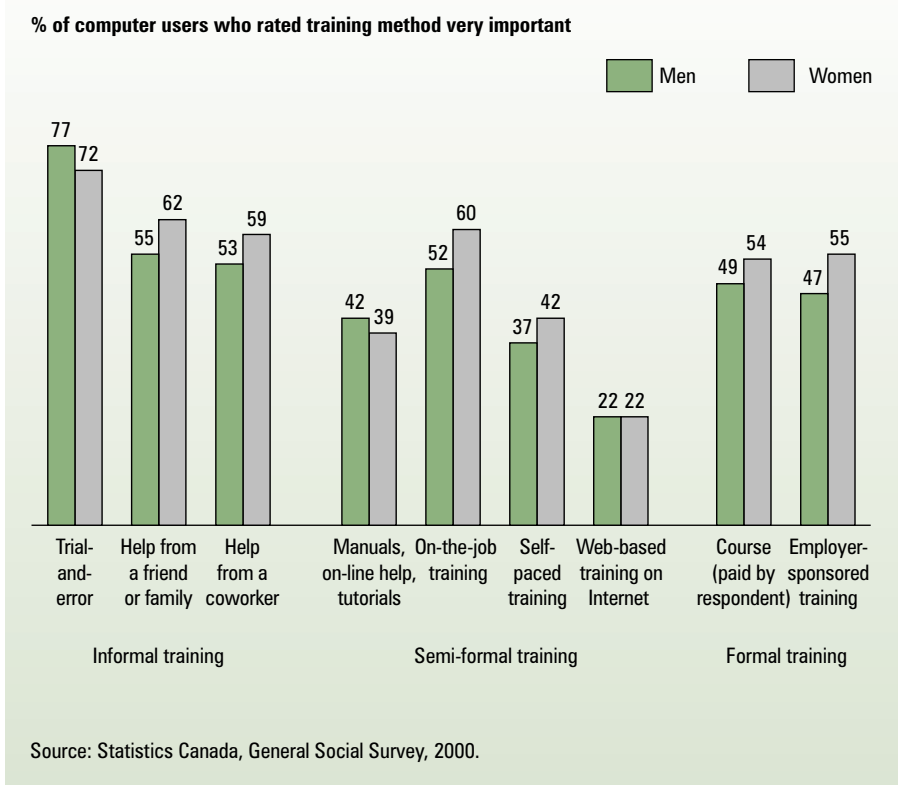
of working women varies across the three occupational groups; it also differs somewhat from men's experience within these groups. For example, women computer professionals were significantly more likely than women in the other two occupational groups (high skill and all other occupations) to use Web-based training; nevertheless, they were still much

less likely than men computer professionals to learn this way. Other than Web-based training, the education and training experiences of men and women in computer professions were fairly similar.

The differences in the high skilled and the "all other occupations" groups were more considerable. Women in jobs requiring high-level

	Men	Women	Total	% women
	(000)			
Computer professionals	293	104	397	26
High skill occupations	4,039	3,137	7,176	44
All other occupations	4,494	4,059	8,553	48
Total	8,826	7,300	16,126	45

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.



computer skills were more likely than their male colleagues to report using interactive training methods — both formal and informal; men were more likely to rely on self-learning methods. On the other hand, women in the “all other occupations” group were more likely than men to have experienced training. This was true for eight of the nine training methods, the exception being trial-and-error.

**Informal training methods get largest proportion of high ratings**  
Workers who used computers were asked to rate the value of each training method they had used on a scale from very important to not at all important. Compared with formal or semi-formal methods, they were more likely to rate informal methods as very important for learning computer skills. The only exception was on-the-job training. Men ranked

trial-and-error and using manuals higher than women. These two methods most closely represent the self-learning ideal often associated with computer work, and which tends to be highly valued by professors of computer science.<sup>1</sup>

Working women rated facilitated methods — for example, on-the-job training, informal help from a coworker, family or friends, and self-paced learning — higher than men. These results are consistent with research that finds women greatly benefit from using social facilitation to learn computing skills.<sup>2</sup> Women were also more likely than men to identify formal training as a very important method of learning.

**Computer professionals find formal training more important than others**

Looking at how the working population rated various training methods, some similarities and differences emerge among the three occupational groups. First, whether people were in computer professions, high-skilled jobs or all other occupations, they rated trial-and-error most important and Web-based training least important for learning computer skills. On the other hand, computer professionals were more likely to report having these two types of training and to consider them very important than were workers in the other two groups.

Workers’ assessment of the usefulness of the remaining types of training also differed between occupations. For example, compared with other workers,

1. Rasmussen, B. and T. Håpnes. 1991. “Excluding women from the technologies of the future? A case study of the culture of computer science.” *Futures* 23,10: 1108-19.  
2. Busch, T. 1996. “Gender, group composition, cooperation, and self-efficacy in computer studies.” *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 15, 2: 125-35.



computer professionals more often described employer-provided courses, manuals, on-line help, and on-the-job training as very important.

Informal help from coworkers, family or friends were among the highest rated learning methods for the “all other occupations” category, whereas computer professionals ranked family or friends fairly low and were divided on the importance of help from coworkers. And while women computer professionals did not consider help from coworkers to be one of their most useful training method, their male colleagues rated it the third most important way to learn computing skills.

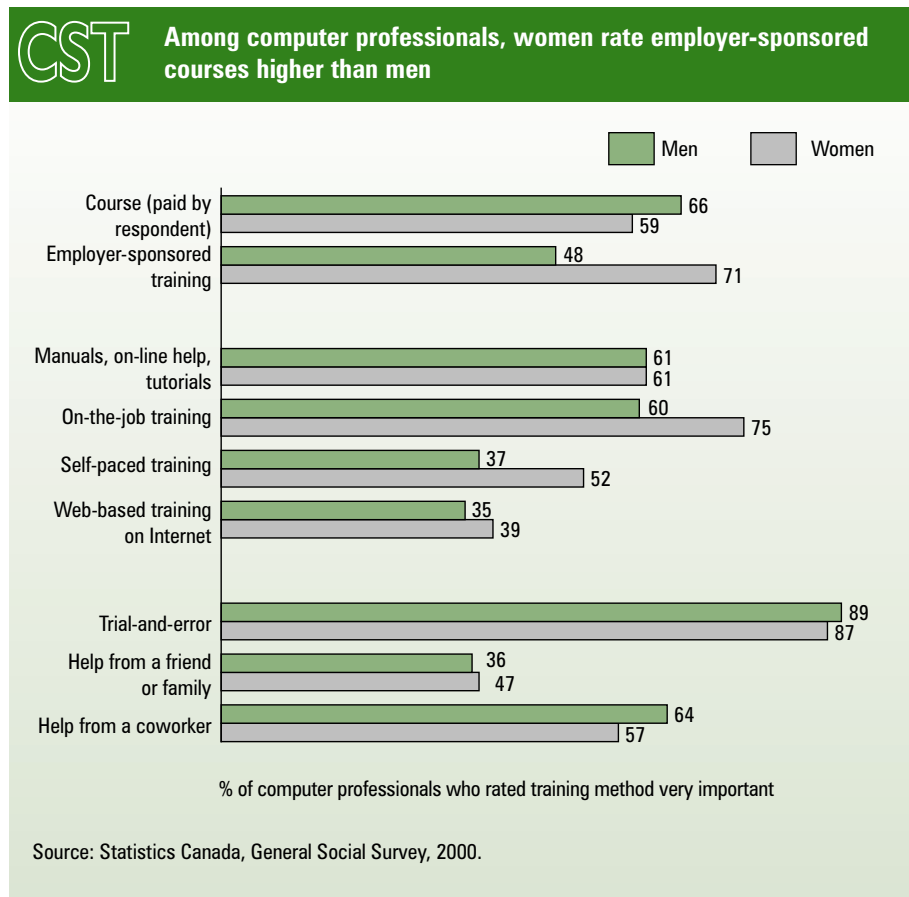
### Gender differences in training ratings greatest among computer professionals

Although women and men ranked training methods differently within each occupational group, computer professionals showed the largest contrast. Women computer professionals had taken training similar to men’s, but did not find the same things to be very important; considerably more women than men gave a high rating to employer-provided courses, on-the-job training, and self-paced video and CD-ROM training provided by their employer.

Academic research on computing culture suggests that many women feel isolated and hesitant to seek help in the male-dominated environment of computer education and work.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2000 GSS, although men computer professionals seemed more likely than their women colleagues to highly rate informal help from a coworker and formal courses, the differences were not statistically significant.

### Men have more experience with computers than women

Factors other than the ones already mentioned could also influence the way



men and women assess training methods. For example, research indicates that computer experience may have an impact on the kinds of training men and women find effective for learning computer skills.<sup>4</sup> GSS data show that a larger percentage of men than women have access to a computer, use the Internet and rate their computer skills as excellent. Men also tend to score higher than women on a general technology use measure and have more years of experience with computers.

The type of work done, and the kinds of skills required for that work, may also influence people’s assessments of the various methods for learning computing skills. A comparison of the skill level of computer activities identified has shown that women were more likely to be doing moderate skill level computer activities than men (47% of women, 35% of men), and less likely to be doing high skill level activities (53% of women, 65% of men).<sup>5</sup>

### Men and women still rate training differently even when they have similar experience, skill and training

Because the experiences of men and women are often dissimilar, a multiple regression model was developed to see if the gender differences in training ratings held true after

- Rasmussen and Håpnes.
- Fisher, A., J. Margolis and F. Miller. 1997. “Undergraduate women in computer science: Experience, motivation and culture.” *SIGCSE Bulletin* 106-10.
- High skill is defined as data analysis, write computer programs, graphics or desk top publishing; moderate skill is defined as word processing, data entry, record keeping, using a spread sheet program, playing games, and using a CD-ROM encyclopedia or educational CD-ROMs. See also: Marshall, K. Summer 2001. “Working with computers.” *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 2, 5 (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE).

	Men	Women
	%	
Access to computer	69	66
Self-rated computer ability		
Excellent	15	8
Very good	19	22
Good	28	31
Fair	24	23
Poor	15	16
Internet use in past 12 months	56	50
General technology use index <sup>1</sup>	3.8	3.5
Average years of using computer	7.5	7.1

1. See "What you should know about this study" for definition.  
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000.

accounting for differences in experience and skill.<sup>6</sup>

The results generally confirmed the differences already seen: women were significantly more likely than men to rate employer-provided courses, self-paced training, on-the-job training, and informal help from friends or family as very important. Men, on the other hand, rated trial-and-error higher than women. However, there was no significant difference in men's and women's ratings of manuals, on-line help and tutorials.

The regression analysis does suggest that age is an important factor in the way people choose to rank training methods. Among those 25 years and over, women in both high skilled jobs and all other occupations rated formal courses higher than did their male counterparts and than women in the computer professions; this did not hold true for workers under 25.

6. Variables in the model include experience with computers, skill level of work, number of training methods experienced, education, and occupation.

It is possible that younger computer professionals are in the process of taking formal computing courses or have just completed them. As such, they may rate the value of their training higher than older colleagues who did their formal training less recently and may find it less relevant to their current work.

When all other factors including gender are taken into account, computer professionals rated most methods higher than workers in highly skilled occupations; however, informal help from friends or family was less important to computer professionals than highly skilled workers. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences among the three occupational groups in the ratings given to the trial-and-error and self-paced methods of training, after controlling for other factors in the model.

### Summary

Among computer users in the population aged 15 and over, a higher proportion of men than women used self-learning methods to acquire their

computer skills. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to employ formal methods such as on-the-job training as well as informal help from coworkers.

In assessing the importance of various kinds of computer training, both men and women in three broad occupational groups rated trial-and-error as the most important, and Web-based training as the least important, method. Overall, a higher proportion of women than men rated facilitated computer training as very important, while men tended to regard self-learning as very important. These findings suggest that employer-sponsored training is particularly valuable for women working with computers.



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## *Special insert*

### **At a Crossroads: Highlights**

*The results of the 2000 Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) for the 18- to 20-year-old cohort, a longitudinal survey undertaken jointly by Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, were released on January 23, 2002. The first cycle of the survey was conducted between January and April 2000. More than 22,000 young people aged 18 to 20 in the 10 provinces participated. For our readers who are interested in the latest data on youths, Canadian Social Trends reprints this extract of the foreword and highlights of **At a Crossroads**, a descriptive overview of results from YITS covering 18- to 20-year-olds.*

Human capital – having a highly educated labour force that possesses the knowledge and skills needed for innovation and productivity growth, and that is flexible and adaptable in the face of ongoing change – is the cornerstone of success for societies living and working in today's knowledge-based, globalized environment. Given this context, Canada's long-term economic and social potential depends in good measure on how successfully youth navigate school and work transitions. The Youth in Transition Survey was designed to examine key transitions in the lives of young people as they move from high school to post-secondary education, and from schooling to the labour market.

In several respects, youth aged 18 to 20 are at a crossroads. For many, the transition from school to work is a complex, non-linear process – some youth attend school and work at the same time, others return to school after starting out in the workforce, and others move between a number of part-time or temporary jobs before entering into a more stable employment relationship. With such variable pathways, a survey that tracks the progress of youth over time is a key instrument for identifying the factors that can assist youth in the successful pursuit of their education and employment goals. The second cycle of YITS, scheduled for early 2002, will collect new information from this same group of youth, tracking their educational and labour market activities over time.

**At a Crossroads: First results for the 18- to 20-year-old cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey** is available free on Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). Look under our Products and Services, Free Publications, and then Social Conditions. It is also accessible at Human Resources Development Canada's Applied Research Branch Web site at ([www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/arb](http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/arb)) as well as at the PISA/YITS Project Web site at ([www.pisa.gc.ca](http://www.pisa.gc.ca)). The report is also available in paper format (81-591-XPE).

## Introduction

Global change and the information and communications revolution present both opportunities and challenges to young people who are learning and working in the first few years of the new millennium. Young people who have the needed skills and knowledge will be better equipped to succeed as global trade expands and as economic opportunities open. As baby-boomers reach retirement age, the demand for new, skilled labour market participants will grow. In addition to the expanded opportunities that become available for youth themselves, Canada's competitiveness is improved by having young, highly skilled additions to its labour pool.

Global economic fluctuations typically have a large impact on youth employment. Business leaders and social analysts believe that to succeed, Canada's young people will need to be adaptable and innovative, and to have sophisticated communication and technological skills.

Building the requisite human capital, or skills and knowledge, begins with a strong educational foundation. The completion of high school is widely recognized in Canada and in other countries as the minimum education requirement. However, the labour market demand for skills and knowledge suggests that post-secondary education is fast becoming the new educational standard. Certainly, those youth who fail to complete high school will have particular problems integrating into the new economy and society.

The Youth in Transition Survey for the 18- to 20-year-old cohort provides a range of information on the education and employment experiences of youth including secondary and post-secondary participation and comprehensive employment histories. Data were also collected on school engagement, skills, training, volunteering, extra-curricular activities, and educational and occupational aspirations as well as on income and post-secondary financing, family socioeconomic characteristics, parents, social and cultural capital, ethnicity, language spoken in the home, behaviours and peer influences.

## Highlights

The report provides a descriptive overview of where youth stand in terms of both their educational participation and attainment, and their labour market participation.

By the age of 20, the vast majority of Canadian youth (85% as of December 1999) had graduated from high school. About 70% of high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 20 had gone on to post-secondary education.

## Dropping out of high school

There was a sharp decrease in the high school dropout rate through the 1990s. As of December 1999, the high school dropout rate for 20-year-olds stood at 12%. This compares to a dropout rate of 18% reported by the 1991 School Leavers Survey.

Although, in general, high school dropouts had lower grades than graduates, 47% of dropouts obtained a B grade average or better. Dropouts were less likely to have had close friends who pursued post-secondary education, and were more likely to have engaged in skipping class, drinking alcohol regularly and using drugs frequently. Dropouts were twice as likely as graduates to live with a single parent (32% versus 16%) and three times as likely to have parents who had not finished high school (27% versus 9%).

High school dropout rates remained high in most jurisdictions for young males compared to young females.

## Post-secondary participation

Higher percentages of young women were either currently enrolled in post-secondary education (PSE) or were post-secondary graduates than young men.

PSE participants were least likely to have come from single-parent families and were more likely to report having lived with both parents while in high school.

PSE continuers tended to come from families where one or both parents had a university degree.

### Skills

Youth generally felt most confident about their reading skills and least confident about their math and computer skills. There were clear gender differences: girls tended to rate their reading and writing skills more positively than did boys; boys, in contrast, rated their problem-solving, math and computer skills more highly than did girls.

Larger proportions of high school dropouts consistently assessed their skill levels as being fair/poor; the largest percentages of youth who assessed their skills as being very good/excellent were those enrolled at the post-secondary level.

High school dropouts were less likely than other young people to have been exposed to career and job-skills courses while in high school.

### Volunteering

Youth generally regarded their volunteer experience positively – over half of those who had volunteered reported that they had learned new skills they could apply to a job.

### Labour market participation

Labour market participation patterns reflected education status. Rates of full-time employment were highest for 18- to 20-year-olds who had completed a post-secondary program. Though employed, many of the jobs held by high school graduates with no PSE were part-time. The jobless rate (which includes both those who were unemployed and those not in the labour force) was highest for high school dropouts with no PSE.

Gender differences in labour market participation are apparent. Generally, higher percentages of males had full-time jobs; part-time work was more common for females, especially among high school graduates with no PSE.

### Experiences during first year of post-secondary education

Close to half of PSE participants attended a community college or CEGEP in their first year of PSE; about one-third attended university; and the balance attended a range of other non-university post-secondary institutions such as technical, trade or vocational schools, university colleges or private business or training schools.

Just over 40% of university students lived in residence in their first post-secondary year; 43% lived with their parents. The vast majority of students at other types of post-secondary institutions lived with their parents during their first year of PSE.

PSE participants generally had positive attitudes and relationships during their first post-secondary year. But PSE leavers (individuals who left PSE before graduating), tended to be much less positive than continuers in terms of their “fit” academically.

### Access to post-secondary education

Just under half of 18- to 20-year-olds reported facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like. About two-thirds of those reporting barriers cited financial barriers.

Additional barriers reported by high school continuers and dropouts were: not being able to get into the PSE program they wanted or marks that were too low; not enough interest or motivation; and in the case of high school dropouts, wanting to work and needing to care for their own children.

Students relied on a wide variety of funding sources for PSE. The most common source was earnings from employment. Compared to PSE graduates and PSE leavers higher percentages of PSE continuers also received money from their parents or partner, from scholarships, awards or prizes, from personal savings and from government-sponsored student loans.

The percentages who had ever applied for a government-sponsored student loan were highest for PSE participants. Relatively few high school graduates with no PSE, high school continuers or high school dropouts with no PSE had ever made such an application.

Of those who had applied for a government-sponsored student loan, close to 20% of PSE continuers reported that they had been rejected at least once; this fell to 16% of PSE leavers and 13% of PSE graduates.

Today's knowledge-based society presents youth with both opportunities and challenges as they make the transition to the labour market and full adulthood. The challenge for youth is to ensure that the education and labour market choices they make now will allow them to participate fully in the economy and the society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That means having the education and skills that are needed and having the ability and flexibility to be able to learn new skills as time goes on.



## After the layoff

Between 1993 and 1997, just over one million individuals were laid off from jobs in which they had at least one year of tenure. About three-quarters found a new job within a year but almost half took a pay cut and, for some, the success was short-lived. One year after a layoff, one in five individuals were unemployed, either because they had not found a new job or had lost one. Over the period, the time to find a new job after a layoff declined, reflecting the more favourable economic conditions at the end of the period and the more rapid adjustment by workers. Men under 35 and women under 25 had the best chance of finding a new job after a layoff; the odds decreased with age. Having been laid off from a long-duration job (one of at least five years) also decreased the likelihood of finding a new job. Professionals and managers were the most likely to find a new job after a layoff, whereas clerks, salespersons and those working in the service industry were the least likely to do so. Receipt of EI benefits tended to increase the duration of joblessness.

### Perspectives on Labour and Income

*Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE, Vol. 2, No. 10*



## Anyone for a movie?

After four decades of decline, movie-going rebounded in the 1990s with a 60% rise between the beginning and the end of the decade. By 1999, attendance reached 111 million, the highest level in 39 years. New larger theatres opened in many parts of the country between 1991 and 1999, and the future of the film industry may depend on the profitability of these large theatres. In 1998-99, while small and medium theatres had a total loss of \$1 million, larger cinemas earned profits of \$75 million.

### Focus on Culture

*Catalogue no. 87-004-XPB, Vol. 13, No. 1*



## E-commerce: Household shopping on the Internet

Canadians more than doubled their on-line purchases of goods and services between 1999 and 2000. Households placed an average of 6.2 orders, representing approximately \$121 per order. Of every \$7 spent on-line, \$4 was used to purchase goods or services directly from Canadian sites. People were much more likely to buy clothing and less likely to purchase software or music. Ontario households spent \$529 million on-line, accounting for

almost half of the national total. Alberta followed with \$160 million, British Columbia with \$145 million and Quebec with \$144 million. Households that only window-shopped and did not order over the Internet expressed the highest level of concern about the security of on-line financial transactions: 80% compared with 75% of those that actually ordered or paid on-line.

*The Daily, October 23, 2001*



## Maths and science

The *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* was designed to compare the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in elementary and secondary schools in 38 countries around the world. About 8,800 Canadian students from Grade 8 or the equivalent across 385 schools participated in the study. Results for Canada and each of the provinces were higher than the international average in both mathematics and science. In fact, out of 38 countries, only six scored significantly higher than Canada. In science, only five countries had scores that were significantly higher. No gender gap was found in mathematics but boys had higher science achievements than girls. Generally, Canadian students felt more positive towards mathematics and science than their counterparts in other countries.

### Education Quarterly Review

*Catalogue no. 81-003, Vol. 7, No. 4*



## Potatoes and bananas top the list in 2000

Potatoes top the list as Canadians' preferred vegetable in 2000. Consumers ate just over 74 kg per person, either in fresh form or as processed products such as french fries, potato chips, instant or frozen mashed potatoes. Consumption of fresh vegetables, excluding potatoes, stood at about 68 kg per person, slightly below previous years, but up almost 5% from 1990. Lettuce, onions, carrots, tomatoes and cabbage all remained popular choices. Bananas topped the list of favourite fruits; each person consumed an average 13 kg. Apples were in second place at almost 11 kg per person and oranges reached 9 kg. Consumption of tropical fruits, such as guavas, mangoes, papaya and kiwi, levelled off in 2000 after gaining ground during the 1990s.

Consumption of oils and fats was nearly 32 kg per person, up from 22 kg in 1990. Much of this growth was due to higher use of canola, soybean, olive, and other speciality oils by households and food service outlets in salad dressings and commercial food preparations.

### Food Consumption in Canada – Part II

*Catalogue no. 32-230*



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

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>INCOME<sup>1</sup></b>									
<i>Average market income</i>									
Economic families <sup>1</sup>	51,450	50,192	51,328	51,527	52,204	53,689	56,190	56,998	--
Unattached individuals	20,773	20,175	20,152	20,449	20,211	20,209	21,121	22,038	--
<i>Average total income (includes transfer payments)</i>									
Economic families <sup>1</sup>	58,802	57,605	58,666	58,592	59,451	60,772	63,247	63,818	--
Unattached individuals	25,943	25,512	25,726	25,634	25,414	25,431	26,289	27,058	--
<i>Average income tax</i>									
Economic families <sup>1</sup>	11,338	11,077	11,556	11,625	11,701	12,028	12,708	12,346	--
Unattached individuals	4,616	4,582	4,693	4,668	4,569	4,465	4,800	4,994	--
<i>Average after-tax income</i>									
Economic families <sup>1</sup>	47,465	46,528	47,110	46,967	47,750	48,744	50,539	51,473	--
Unattached individuals	21,327	20,930	21,033	20,965	20,845	20,966	21,488	22,064	--
<i>Average after-tax income by quintiles for families</i>									
Lowest quintile	17,811	17,721	18,128	18,096	17,665	17,640	18,110	19,056	--
2 <sup>nd</sup>	31,744	30,746	31,612	31,196	31,170	31,437	32,340	33,197	--
3 <sup>rd</sup>	43,333	42,116	43,050	42,322	43,154	43,520	44,804	45,652	--
4 <sup>th</sup>	56,627	55,516	56,010	55,580	56,721	57,701	59,569	60,805	--
Highest quintile	87,812	86,556	86,765	87,654	90,048	93,445	97,881	98,657	--
<i>Earnings ratios (full-year, full-time workers)</i>									
Dual-earners as % of husband-wife families	61.3	60.3	60.4	60.5	61.5	63.4	63.6	64.0	--
Women's earnings as % of men's (full-year, full-time workers)	71.9	72.3	69.8	73.1	73.0	69.6	72.2	69.9	--
<i>Prevalence (%) of low income after tax (1992 low income cut-offs)</i>									
Families with head aged 65 and over	2.6	4.0	2.5	2.1	2.9	3.7	3.5	2.2	--
Families with head less than 65	10.4	11.2	10.8	11.4	12.0	11.2	9.7	9.6	--
Two-parent families with children	7.2	8.8	8.4	9.8	9.7	9.2	7.4	7.3	--
Lone-parent families	41.1	41.3	42.2	42.4	45.2	42.1	36.7	36.9	--
Unattached individuals	30.5	30.9	30.4	30.5	32.6	31.9	30.1	29.9	--
<b>FAMILIES<sup>2,3</sup></b>									
Marriage rate (per 1,000 population)	5.8	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.0	--
Crude divorce rate (per 1,000 population)	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.3	--
Total number of families ('000)	7,581	7,679	7,778	7,876	7,975	8,039	8,093	8,142	8,194
<i>% of all families</i>									
Husband-wife families	86.7	86.4	86.1	85.8	85.5	85.2	84.9	84.6	84.2
with children	51.7	51.4	51.1	50.9	50.6	50.4	50.1	49.9	49.7
without children	35.1	35.0	35.0	34.9	34.9	34.8	34.7	34.7	34.6
Lone-parent families	13.3	13.6	13.9	14.2	14.5	14.8	15.1	15.4	15.8
<i>% of husband-wife families</i>									
with children	59.6	59.5	60.2	60.2	59.2	59.1	59.1	59.0	59.0
all children under 18	67.0	66.6	66.2	65.8	65.4	65.0	64.6	64.2	63.8
Females as % of lone-parent families	82.6	82.7	82.8	83.0	83.1	83.2	83.3	83.4	83.4

-- Figure not available.

1. All incomes are in 1999 constant dollars. An economic family consists of two or more people who live in the same dwelling and are related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.
2. Excluding the Territories.
3. A census family is referred to as immediate or nuclear family consisting of married or common-law couples with or without children, or lone parents and their children, whereas a child does not have his or her own spouse residing in the household.

Sources: *Income in Canada* (Catalogue no. 75-202-XPE), *Income Trends in Canada* (Catalogue no. 13F0022-XCB), *Annual Demographic Statistics* (Catalogue no. 91-213-XPB) and *Divorces* (Catalogue no. 84F0213-XPB).

# LESSON PLAN

*Suggestions for using Canadian Social Trends in the classroom*

## *Lesson plan for “Learning computer skills”*

### Objectives

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- To become more aware of each individual’s learning style.
- To discuss different learning methods.

### Method

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1. Survey the class to determine the top five computer skills that students have. Do computer skills of boys and girls differ? Ask the class how each skill was acquired. Do the learning methods differ for girls and boys?
2. Ask the students if they learn computer skills more easily when they are learning with others or by themselves. Is there a difference between boys and girls? Discuss why this might be.
3. Ask the students to interview parents or other family members about their computer learning experiences: the method they like best, and use most, to keep pace with changes in their field.
4. Ask the students if any of them plan to become computer professionals (e.g., systems analysts, computer programmers, software engineers, Web masters). How would they go about getting the skills needed to become a computer professional?
5. Ask the boys in the class “If you had to learn a new programming language to complete a school assignment, how would you go about learning it?” Ask the girls the same question and compare how learning methods differ.

### Using other resources

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- Read the *Canadian Social Trends* articles “Learning on your own” (Spring 2001) and “Kids and Teens on the Net” (Autumn 2001). The articles are available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/social.htm>. Teachers can access over 15 lessons for use with computer technology courses and over 250 lessons in all at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/teach.htm>. One of these lessons, the “Statistics Canada Web page contest,” encourages students to display data in creative ways based on data in the STC Web site. The Web page should display data visually and illustrate conclusions that can be drawn from the data. A \$100 prize is given for the best Web page prepared by a student for each grade level.

### Share your ideas!

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

### Educators

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



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