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# SOCIAL TRENDS

## FEATURES

*Young adults at home*

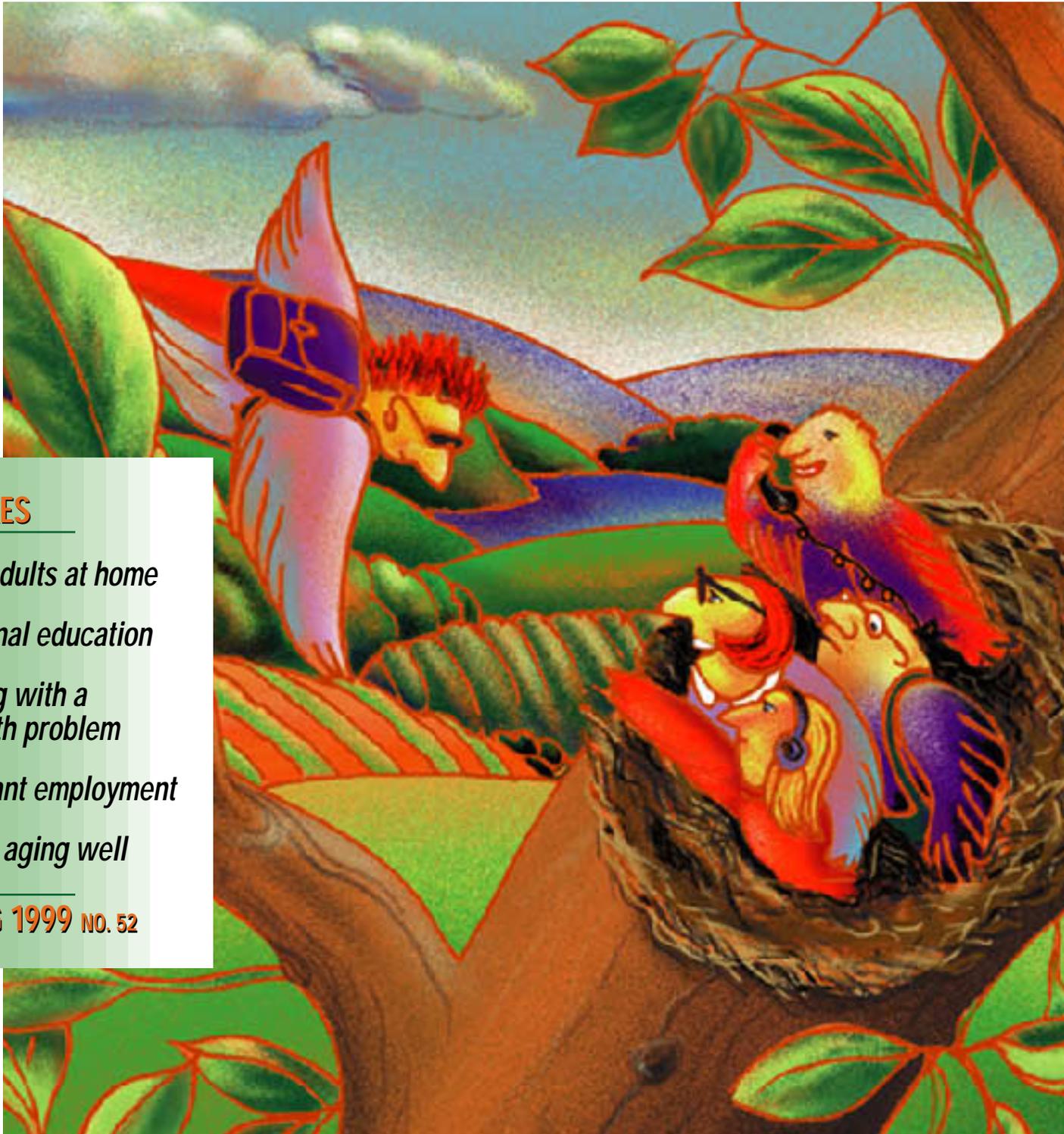
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*Christopher Emmanuel immigrated to Toronto, Canada at the age of 10 from Granada, WI. Throughout his high school years Christopher focused on Fine Arts and Studied Graphic Design at George Brown College. He resides in Toronto where his focus is integrating Fine Art discipline with modern technology.*

# The Crowded Nest: Young adults at home

by *Monica Boyd and Doug Norris*

**B**ecoming an adult involves many changes in a teenager's life. Leaving high school, going to college or university, getting a full-time job, becoming economically self-sufficient, getting married — all these are commonly accepted indicators of being an adult. Since these changes often go hand in hand with leaving the parental home, many people also think of “moving out” as being part of the transition to adulthood.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, most people viewed the steps to adulthood as sequential and irreversible. Today, however, these changes are not one-time-only events that occur in sequence. Young Canadians may stay in school and live with a partner, rather than first completing school and then legally marrying. They also may find jobs and subsequently, or simultaneously, return to school. And they may continue to live with their parents, or move out and then move back in, throughout these schooling, employment and family-building years.

According to Canadian censuses, the proportions of young adults who lived with their parents fell between 1971 and 1981, following the general twentieth century trend toward non-familial living arrangements for the young and the older generations. Since then, however, the transition to adulthood has become more dynamic and young adults are now more likely to live with parents. This article uses census data from 1981 to 1996 to examine the growing phenomenon of young adults living at home.

## **Young adults now more likely to live with their parents**

Since 1981, the percentage of young adults in their twenties and early thirties living in the parental home has been increasing. In 1996, 23% of young women aged 20 to 34 lived at home, up from 16% in 1981. Over the same period, the percentage of young men the same age residing in the parental home rose to 33% from 26%. Most of the increase



## **CST** What you should know about this study

This article is based on the Census of Population. Young persons living with parents were identified as any woman or man aged 20 to 34 co-residing with at least one biological or adoptive parent. Those living with parents are also referred to as “living at home.” Using this data source, it is not possible to identify whether these young adults have continually lived with their parents or have returned after living elsewhere for a period of time.

**Unmarried:** a young adult who was not married at the time of the Census, including divorced or separated, widowed as well as never-married.

**Married:** a young adult who was either legally married or living common-law.

took place from 1981 to 1986 and from 1991 to 1996, both periods of economic recession and slow recovery.

The growing propensity to live at home was common to both unmarried and married young adults. In 1996, nearly half (47%) of unmarried women aged 20 to 34 lived with parents, up from 44% in 1981. More than half of young unmarried men also resided in the parental home, about the same as in 1981. Despite a brief decline from 1986 to 1991, by 1996, the percentages of young unmarried adults living with their parents were the highest in 15 years.

In Canada and other industrial countries, young couples are usually expected to establish residences separate from those of their parents; as a result, not many young adults in common-law or legal marriages reside with their parents. Nevertheless, in 1996 a higher percentage of young married adults (including common-law) were living in the parental home than in 1981. Unlike their unmarried counterparts, the proportion of married young adults living with their parents has risen steadily over the past 15 years.

### Young adults living at home are older and the majority are men

One of the most notable shifts in the characteristics of young adults living at home is that they are older. In 1981, only about one-quarter of unmarried women and men living with their parents were aged 25 or over; by 1996, the percentages had risen to 33% and 40%, respectively.

Changes were even more pronounced for young adults who were married, jumping from 52% of women and 64% of men in 1981, to 69% and 78% in 1996.

Many other studies in Canada and the United States have found that the living arrangements of young adults differ considerably by gender. Smaller percentages of young women live at home, which researchers speculate may be partly explained by gender roles. Parents may more closely supervise the social lives of their daughters than their sons, so that women may feel they have more independence living elsewhere. Researchers also suggest that, because they are more involved in household tasks as teenagers, young women may be better able to take care of themselves in terms of cooking, cleaning and laundry skills.<sup>1</sup>

Differences in the way families assign chores to men and women may also deter young women from living with their parents. When at home, young women report spending more hours doing housework than young men, whereas

1. Boyd, Monica and Edward T. Pryor. 1989. "The Cluttered Nest: The Living Arrangements of Young Canadian Adults," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 15: 462-479. DaVanzo, Julie and Francis Kobrin Goldscheider. 1990. "Coming Home Again: Returns to the Parental Home of Young Adults," *Population Studies*, 44 : 241-255. Ward, Russell A. and Glenna Spitze. 1992. "Consequence of Parent-Adult Child Co-residence: A Review and Research Agenda," *Journal of Family Issues*, 13: 553-572.

	The proportion of young adults living at home has been rising over the past 15 years							
	Percent living with parents							
	Total	Unmarried			Total	Married*		
20-24		25-29	30-34	20-24		25-29	30-34	
<b>Women</b>								
1981	44	60	27	18	1	3	1	1
1986	46	64	32	18	2	3	2	1
1991	44	63	33	19	2	5	2	1
1996	47	67	36	19	3	7	4	2
<b>Men</b>								
1981	55	69	40	28	2	3	2	1
1986	57	72	45	30	2	4	2	1
1991	53	71	44	29	3	6	3	1
1996	56	74	48	32	4	9	5	3

\* Married includes legal marriages and common-law relationships.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population.

young men are more likely to pay room and board.<sup>2</sup> Another explanation could be that women outnumber men as lone parents, since the presence of children dampens the likelihood of young women living with parents.

### Education, labour markets and marriage are factors at work

The growing tendency of young adults aged 25 and over to co-reside with their parents suggests that fundamental changes are occurring in the living arrangements of young Canadians. And indeed, this increase has coincided with significant social and economic changes. Starting in the 1960s, the expansion of colleges and universities has led to higher rates of enrollment, extending young people's adolescence and their dependence on their parents. The economy likewise has gone through several business cycles, recording prolonged boom times but also periods of severe

recession, when young people generally experience higher rates of unemployment than older adults.

Fluctuations in living arrangements and in school enrollments of young adults are sensitive to labour market conditions.<sup>3</sup> The upswing in young unmarried adults living at home between 1981 and 1986 coincided with a severe recession in the early 1980s. A more prolonged recession occurred in the early 1990s, and was followed by increased percentages of young adults at home in 1996. Economic downturns do not mean that young adults automatically either stay in the parental home or move back in. But living with parents can be one of the ways in which young adults respond to unemployment, relatively low wages or low incomes while attending school.

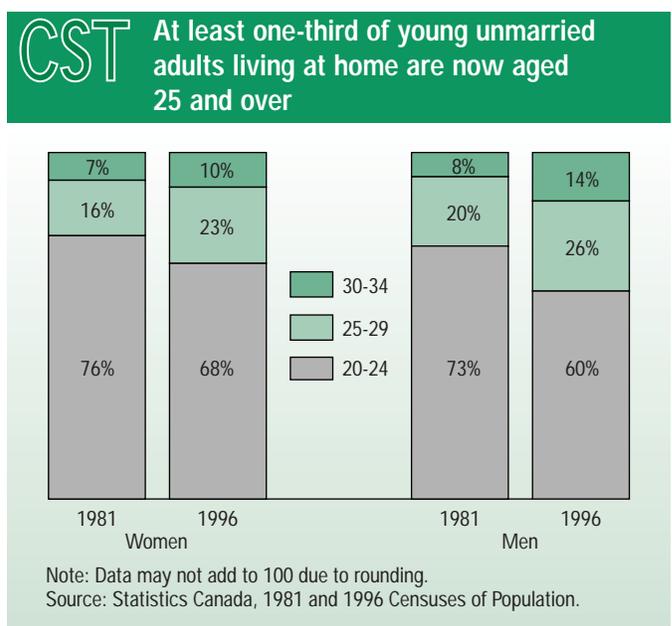
In 1996, for example, 71% of unmarried women aged 20 to 29 who were full-time students lived at home, as did 66% of unmarried men with incomes of only \$10,000 to \$14,999 a year. These patterns are consistent with other studies which suggest that co-residency is a strategy for minimizing the household expenditures of young adults. But it also may represent an economic strategy for the family. When living together, parents and children can share

CST Full-time students were most likely to live at home				
Percent of young adults aged 20-29 living at home				
	Unmarried		Married	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>All</b>	55	63	5	6
<b>School attendance</b>				
Full-time	71	76	6	7
Part-time	52	64	5	6
Not attending	45	56	5	6
<b>Labour force status</b>				
Not in labour force	52	69	6	9
In labour force	56	62	5	6
Employed	56	61	4	5
Unemployed	58	68	7	8
<b>Income</b>				
Less than \$5,000	69	75	6	10
\$5,000-9,999	65	70	6	9
\$10,000-14,999	47	66	5	8
\$15,000-19,999	43	61	4	7
\$20,000-29,999	42	54	4	6
\$30,000-39,999	34	43	3	4
\$40,000 or more	27	33	2	3

Note: Because the proportion of 30- to 34-year-olds living with parents is quite small, data are presented for the population aged 20 to 29 only.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

- Ward, Russell A. and Glenna Spitze. 1996. "Gender Differences in Parent-Child Coresidence Experiences," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58: 718-725.
- Boyd, Monica and Doug Norris. 1995. *The Cluttered Nest Revisited: Young Adults at Home*. Working Paper Series 94-127, Center for the Study of Population and Demography, Florida State University. Card, David and Thomas Lemieux. Forthcoming. "Adapting to Circumstances: The Evolution of Work, School and Living Arrangements Among North American Youth," in *Youth Unemployment and Employment in Advanced Countries*, David Blanchflower and Richard Freeman (eds.). University of Chicago Press for the National Bureau of Economic Research.



resources and adopt economies of scale with respect to food and shelter costs.<sup>4</sup> It should also be noted that there can be a cultural component to such living arrangements, since rates of co-residence with parents are greater for some ethnic and immigrant groups than for others.<sup>5</sup>

## CST What might have been

Noteworthy as they are, the increases in the percentages of young adults living at home would be even greater if the age structure of this population had not changed over the period. Between 1981 and 1996, the age profile of the population aged 20 to 34 became older, resulting in proportionately fewer young adults in their early twenties and proportionately more in their late twenties and early thirties. Since children tend to move away from home as they get older, the aging of the young adult population has artificially reduced the overall percentage of 20- to 34-year-olds living at home. If the age profile had been the same in 1996 as in 1981, young adults would be even more likely to be living at home with their parents — 26% of all young women and 36% of all young men.

### Percent of young adults aged 20 to 34 living with parents (age standardized)\*

	Unmarried	Married
<b>Women</b>		
1981	44	1
1986	47	2
1991	47	3
1996	50	4
<b>Men</b>		
1981	55	2
1986	59	2
1991	57	3
1996	60	5

\* Age standardization is a technique adopted when the age profile of a population (in this case, those aged 20 to 34) has changed significantly and might affect the results of comparisons over time. The population in this study has been standardized to the 1981 age distribution, using sex specific age distributions for unmarried women and men.

Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population.

A final factor underlying the increasing percentage of young adults co-residing with parents is that they are remaining unmarried longer. Since the mid-1970s, the rate of first (legal) marriage has declined and the average age at marriage has increased. Women marrying for the first time were on average about three years older in 1996 than in 1981 — 27 versus 24 years. Similarly, men married at the more mature age of 29, compared with 26. And although the drop in legal marriage has been somewhat offset by an increase in common-law marriages, the percentage of young adults who are unmarried rose substantially between 1981 and 1996: from 35% to 45% for women, and from 45% to 56% for men.

### Summary

Many young Canadian adults live with parents not just in their late teenage years but also throughout their twenties and early thirties. Interpretations of this phenomenon vary. One view assumes that living apart from the family of origin signals the successful transition to adulthood, alongside other indicators such as completion of education, employment, marriage and childbearing. From this perspective, the continued presence of adult children in the parental home is unusual.

Yet a more general lesson from the 1980s and 1990s emphasizes the fallacy of holding a narrow image of family life. The forms of Canadian families are diverse and constantly changing over the life cycle of their individual members. From this perspective, young adults live at home because this arrangement ultimately benefits them in making other types of transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

4. Grisgby, Jill S. 1989. "Adult Children in the Parental Household: Who Benefits?" *Population Studies*, 44: 241-255.

5. Boyd, Monica. 1998. *Birds of a Feather: Ethnic Variations in Young Adults Living at Home*. Working Paper Series 98-140. Center for the Study of Population and Demography, Florida State University.



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# Educational achievement of young Aboriginal adults

by Heather Tait

The Aboriginal population in Canada is young and growing quickly, and over the next few decades, a large number of young adults will be making the transition from school to work. Given that the labour market demands higher levels of schooling than ever before, obtaining a solid education is becoming increasingly important. A well-educated Aboriginal workforce is essential to meet the requirements of the labour market, and hence reduce high levels of youth unemployment and dependence on social assistance.

In general, the relationship between education and employment is clear: the unemployment rate for young Aboriginal adults without high school was 40% in 1996, compared to 9% for those with a university degree. Over the past decade, Aboriginal people in Canada have made some notable educational gains at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Further improvements in young Aboriginal peoples' academic qualifications would continue to narrow this differential and so reduce the employment disadvantage faced by groups with lower educational levels. This article explores the educational attainment of young Aboriginal adults aged 20 to 29 in the

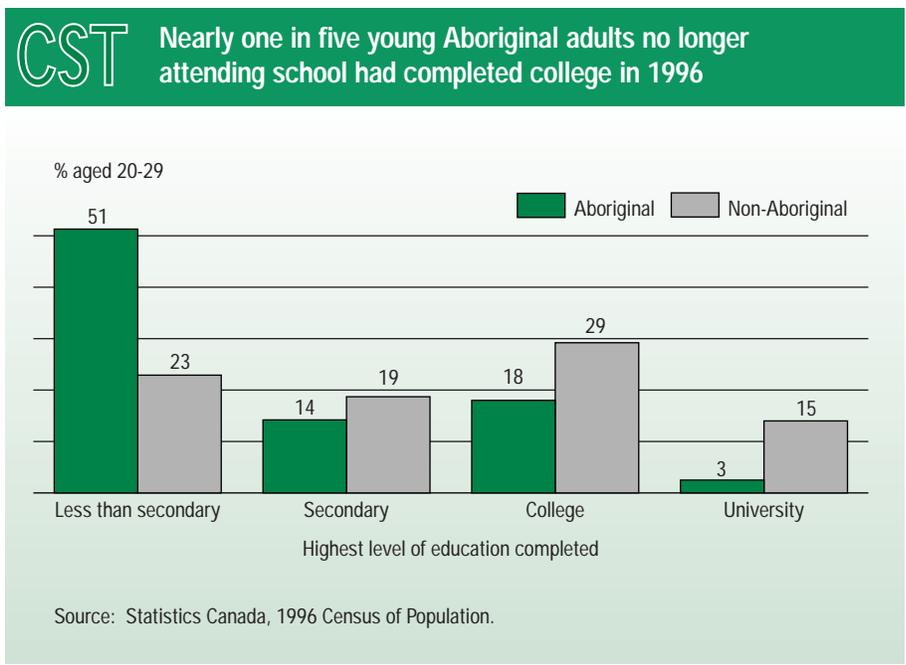
1980s and the 1990s, and compares their levels of schooling with those of other young Canadians.

## Proportion of college and university grads doubles over past decade

Between 1986 and 1996, young Aboriginal adults improved their qualifications at every level of education. At one end, the proportion of young Aboriginal people (including current students) with less than a high school diploma fell from 60% in 1986 to 45%

in 1996; at the other end, the share of those who completed their college education (refers to all postsecondary, non-university diplomas or certificates) increased from 15% to 20% during the same period. Progress was also evident at the university level: the percentage of those with a degree doubled, from 2% to 4%.

Despite these educational gains, in 1996 there were still large gaps in relative attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people aged 20 to



29. In fact, the gap widened during the decade for those with less than high school completion. While in 1986, Aboriginal people were 2.2 times more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have less than high school, by 1996 they were 2.6 times more likely to be without high school completion.

However, the opposite was true at the postsecondary level (including college, university and other post-secondary institutions), where the gap narrowed modestly, indicating a slight improvement in the relative position of Aboriginal people. For example, in 1986, Aboriginal people aged 20 to 29 were 60% less likely than non-Aboriginal people in this age group to have completed their postsecondary studies. By 1996, they were 50% less likely to do so.

The past decade's upward trend in Aboriginal education, however, may not be as significant as the figures suggest. During the 1986 to 1996 period, an increasing number of people, mostly those with North American Indian and Métis background, began to identify with an Aboriginal group, thus raising the total number of people who reported an Aboriginal identity on the Census. Many of these people were relatively well-educated and, as a result, may have helped push upward the average educational attainment of all young Aboriginal adults over the decade.<sup>1</sup>

### Educational levels rise for both men and women

Although the educational attainment of both young Aboriginal men and women improved between 1986 and 1996, women had a somewhat higher

1. See also Guimond, E., A. Siggner, N. Robitaille and G. Goldmann. "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: A Demographic Perspective." *Census Monograph Series*. Forthcoming.

Data in this article come from the 1986 and 1996 Censuses of Population and the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. In the 1986 and 1996 Censuses, two questions may be used to determine the size of the Aboriginal population: one on Aboriginal ethnic origin/ancestry and the other on Aboriginal identity. The 1996 total Aboriginal population estimate (799,010) used in this article is based on the identity question, which asked: "Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?" The 1986 total Aboriginal population counts (455,130) were calculated by cross-tabulating data from both the ethnic origin and identity questions included in the questionnaire that year.

The large increase in the Aboriginal population between 1986 and 1996 cannot be completely explained by demographic factors, such as fertility and mortality. One must also consider that a significant number of people who did not report an Aboriginal identity in 1986 did so in 1996, most likely due to heightened awareness of Aboriginal issues. For the most part, the socio-economic characteristics of this new group were generally better than the characteristics of those who had previously identified. This contributed to some of the improvement observed in the socio-economic profile of the Aboriginal population as a whole during this period.

The Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) was a large-scale survey conducted as a follow-up to the 1991 Census. Persons who reported Aboriginal ancestry on the census questionnaires were asked in the APS about their identity. Slightly more than one million persons reported at least some Aboriginal ancestry, and just under two-thirds (625,710) self-identified as an Aboriginal person and/or a Registered Indian.

**Incompletely enumerated reserves:** In both 1986 and 1996, some Indian reserves and settlements were incompletely enumerated. In 1986, 136 reserves and settlements with an estimated population of 44,700 did not take part in the census. In 1996, 77 reserves, with an estimated population of 44,000, did not participate. These people are not included in this article.

**School attendance:** Because the 1986 Census did not ask about school attendance, 1986 and 1996 data compare highest-level-of-schooling figures for everyone (including students) in the specific age group. When only 1996 data are presented, figures cover only those who were not attending school at the time.

rate of success at most levels. For example, in 1996, the proportion of women, who had completed college was 21% compared with 19% of men. Similarly, a slightly higher share of women had completed their education at the university level.

Lone mothers, in particular, attend school more frequently than one would expect based on their often difficult circumstances. It is often stated

that the responsibility of caring for children may make it more difficult for women to continue their studies, especially in lone-parent families where there is no spouse to help with childcare. However, according to the 1996 Census, Aboriginal lone mothers were more likely than mothers in two-parent families to be attending school. Indeed, some 30% of Aboriginal lone mothers were attending school, most

on a full-time basis. This compared with 20% of Aboriginal women with children in two-parent families. Young Aboriginal mothers in both lone-parent and two-parent families most likely to be attending school had an incomplete postsecondary education.

### Education cuts unemployment substantially

Without question, the higher the level of education, the lower the rate of unemployment for young adults who are no longer attending school. In 1996, young Aboriginal adults without a high school diploma reported an unemployment rate of 40%. In contrast, unemployment rates were only half as high for those with secondary (23%) or college (20%) completion. Young Aboriginal people with a university degree recorded the lowest rate, at 9%. The corresponding figures for the non-Aboriginal population aged 20 to 29 showed the same disparities between educational attainment and unemployment, although at considerably lower rates — 20%, 13%, 9% and 5%, respectively.

### Métis lead the way in educational achievement

Canada's three broad Aboriginal groups — North American Indians (comprising Registered Indians and non-status Indians), Métis and the Inuit — have notably different levels of schooling, due mostly to their varying historical, economic, social and geographic circumstances. The opportunities available to them in the form of financial help also vary. For instance, Registered Indian and Inuit students are eligible to receive grants from the Postsecondary Student Support Program, which is funded through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. For the year 1997/98, a budget of \$276 million assisted these students.<sup>2</sup>

Although most Métis people are not eligible for these grants, young

CST

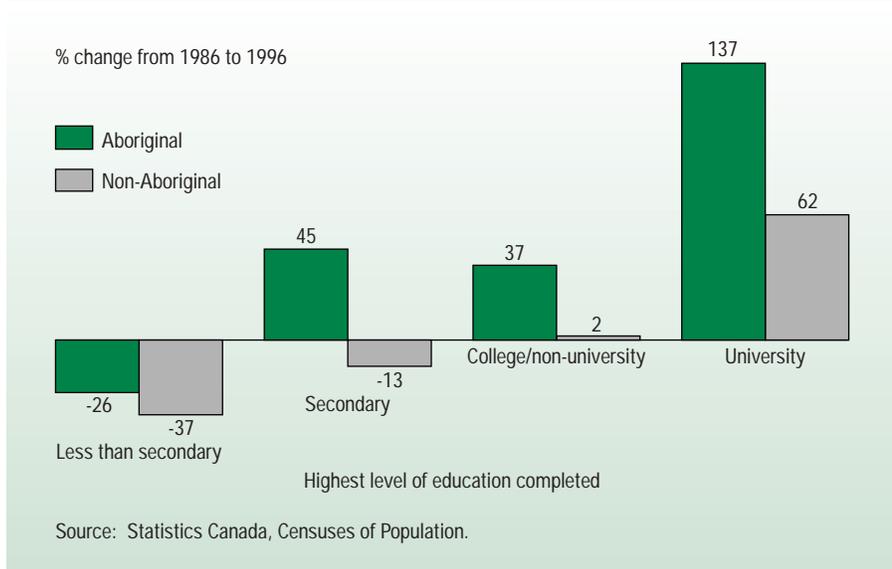
Between 1986 and 1996, both Aboriginal men and women aged 20 to 29 increased their educational attainment

Highest level of schooling completed	Men		Women	
	1986	1996	1986	1996
Less than secondary school	62%	48%	59%	42%
Secondary school	8%	13%	9%	11%
College	14%	19%	15%	21%
University	1%	3%	2%	5%
Incomplete postsecondary	14%	18%	16%	21%
<b>Total number of people</b>	<b>42,110</b>	<b>65,385</b>	<b>46,800</b>	<b>71,595</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population.

CST

Between 1986 and 1996, the proportion of young Aboriginal adults with a university degree more than doubled



Métis adults had the highest level of education in 1996. Several factors may have contributed to this. First, the Métis are less likely to live in remote communities or the far North than the other two groups, and thus have better access to postsecondary institutions. And second, the Métis have a longer history of formal education and a greater familiarity with other mainstream institutions than other Aboriginal people growing up in remote communities. Indeed, in 1996, some 21% of Métis aged 20 to 29 completed their college education compared with 17% of both North American Indian and Inuit people. Underscoring the same trend, 4% of Métis had university degrees compared with 2% of North American Indians and just under 2% of Inuit in their twenties.

In all three Aboriginal groups, however, those who did complete their postsecondary education tended to choose similar fields of study. The most popular field for all three was engineering and applied science technology, with 39% of Inuit and 27% of both North American Indians and Métis specializing in it. Within this field, the majority of people enrolled in the building technology trades (comprising construction, plumbing, welding and other similar trades). The next most common area of study was commerce, management and business administration, with nearly equal concentrations of North American Indians and Métis (22% and 24%, respectively) and a somewhat lower share of Inuit people (18%).

2. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. 1998. Post-secondary Student Program Database. Inuit students account for roughly 1% (or 280) of the total number of students in this program.

## CST Family and money issues mostly responsible for young people not completing studies

In 1991, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked young adults who did not complete their postsecondary studies why they had decided not to continue. The reasons cited most frequently were family related and money issues, followed by a lack of interest or a dislike of school. Interestingly, women and men voiced different concerns. While the top reasons among women were family responsibilities (25%), the most important reasons among men related to money (18%).

However, it appears that with time some Aboriginal people may overcome these barriers. In general, Aboriginal people are more likely than other Canadians to return to school at older ages. The educational level of young Aboriginal adults may therefore improve as they get older.

### Those in large cities most likely to hold degrees

Young Aboriginal people living in Canada's largest cities were the most likely to have completed a university degree, while those in rural First Nations communities (commonly referred to as reserves) were the least likely to have done so. And the differences were quite pronounced. For example, in cities with populations over 100,000, approximately 4% of Aboriginal youths had a university degree. This compared with just over 1% of those who lived on rural reserves.

Although pronounced, these disparities are not surprising because opportunities to pursue higher education and find employment tend to be limited in most rural reserves. While some isolated communities have access to satellite campuses, many people are still faced with the prospect of leaving their family, friends, community and way of life and traveling great distances to attend postsecondary institutions. Once enrolled, they are often confronted with unfamiliar surroundings and customs, resulting in feelings of isolation. Others are faced with "thought processes and ways of

knowing and learning that are a lot different than their own traditional ways."<sup>3</sup> Students may be discouraged when they find few or, in some cases, no other Aboriginal students and faculty on campus.<sup>4</sup>

Adding to these difficulties is the fact that many reserves are found in remote regions, where jobs are scarce and the land base inadequate. In these situations, people with high levels of formal education may feel obliged to leave their community in order to find employment.

### Summary

From 1986 to 1996, there was much improvement in the educational achievement of Aboriginal people aged 20 to 29. While still falling below the levels of other Canadians, at the

3. Wilson, Darryl. 1998. "You Must Learn to Use Words Like Bullets." *Winds of Change*. Winter Issue. Boulder, Colorado, 24-30.

4. The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. 1994. *Aboriginal Post-secondary Education: Indigenous Student Perceptions*. Report prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa.

On April 1, 1999 Nunavut, Canada's third and newest territory, will become a legal and political reality. The existing Northwest Territories will be split, with Nunavut making up the eastern two-thirds of the area. The creation of the territory will result in various public-sector job opportunities for the Inuit people. One long-term goal is to create roughly 600 new jobs and to have a territorial government that is 85% Inuit (to match the proportion of Inuit persons who comprise the population of Nunavut). As a start, it is hoped that in 1999 the Inuit people will hold about 50% of all government jobs.<sup>1</sup>

These new positions require a well-educated workforce, but meeting the labour market demands of Nunavut will be challenging. Not only is there a small population base (24,665 people), but the educational attainment of Inuit in this territory is below that of other Aboriginal people. Nearly half (46%) of the Inuit population 15 years and over had less than grade nine education in 1996 and just over 1% had completed university.

Nunavut's younger adults appear similarly disadvantaged as their educational attainment fell substantially below that of other young Aboriginal people. Some 34% of young Inuit adults aged 20 to 29 had less than grade nine education compared with roughly 12% of other young Aboriginal adults.

At the other end of the scale, slightly more than 1% of Inuit youths had completed university compared with nearly 3% of all young Aboriginal people.

The new administrative structure will require a host of qualified individuals including those with training in human resources, senior government management, land and resource planning and computer technology. To meet the demand for a well-educated workforce, job-training, along with efforts to encourage Inuit children and young adults to stay in school, have become top priorities in recent years.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, the most common postsecondary qualification held by young Inuit people residing in Nunavut was engineering and applied science technology (32%), with the majority concentrated in fields such as welding, plumbing and construction. Commerce, management and business administration was the second most popular choice (19%), followed by education, recreation, and counseling (14%). In addition, 9% enrolled in science and technology, a field where, because of rapidly changing technology, experienced people are in great demand.

1. Laghi, Brian. July 4, 1998. "Inuit find no magic solution on the way." *Globe and Mail*. p. A6.

2. Ibid.

postsecondary level the educational gap between the two groups has narrowed somewhat over the past decade.

Higher education is one factor which may help Aboriginal people compete in a rapidly changing labour market. More advanced levels of schooling and a narrowing of the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people may improve young peoples' chances of finding suitable employment. As well, younger generations of Aboriginal

children may also benefit, by having role models to follow.<sup>5</sup> These events, in turn, may reduce some of the socioeconomic disparity that continues to exist between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. In addition, a well-educated group of young adults will be better able to contribute to the development of new government

structures and institutions among all Aboriginal people.



**Heather Tait** is an analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

5. See Ponting, J. Rick. and Cora Voyageur. 1998. *An Hundred Points of Light: Grounds for Optimism in the Situation of First Nations in Canada*. Forthcoming.

# At work despite a chronic health problem

by Kelly Cranswick

Being employed is one of the central aspects of a person's life. It offers a sense of identity and purpose, and provides the means by which people can support themselves and their families. However, for Canadians with a chronic health problem, performing the daily activities required at work may be difficult. The 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) found, in that year, over 3% of working-age Canadians had a long-term health problem sufficiently severe to warrant receiving some assistance with their day-to-day activities.

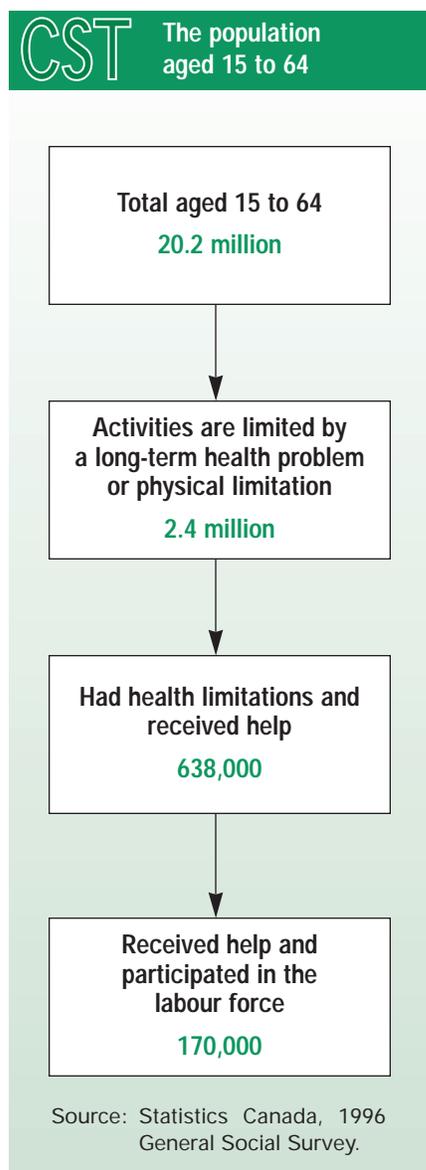
To date, most research about the labour force participation of people with long-term health problems has focused on employed individuals and the barriers they face in the workplace. However, only one in four working-age care-receivers getting help at home actually entered the workforce. An important question, then, is whether substantive barriers to employment must be overcome before a person with a long-term health problem even reaches the workplace. This article uses the 1996 GSS to identify some of the characteristics that determine whether or not a working-age Canadian receiving care for a long-term health problem would participate in the labour force.

## Who were the working-age Canadians receiving assistance?

Almost 638,000 Canadians aged 15 to 64 — about 338,000 women and 300,000 men — received assistance for a long-term health problem or condition in 1996. The majority were between 45 and 64 years old (60%); the remainder were evenly split between younger adults aged 15 to 34 and those aged 35 to 44.

When asked to describe their main activity in the 12 months preceding the GSS, the largest proportion of working-age care-receivers (40%) reported they were not in the labour force because of their long-term illness or condition; another one-third said they had not been in the labour force because they were retired,<sup>1</sup> keeping house and/or caring for their children, attending school, or were engaged in other activities. Only about one-quarter (27%) said they had been active in the labour force, that is, either working, looking for work or on maternity/paternity leave.

1. It is difficult to untangle what "retired" actually means, since some care-receivers would have retired because of their health while others may have developed the problem after retiring.



Given that they were experiencing a long-term health problem, it is unexpected that almost one in six

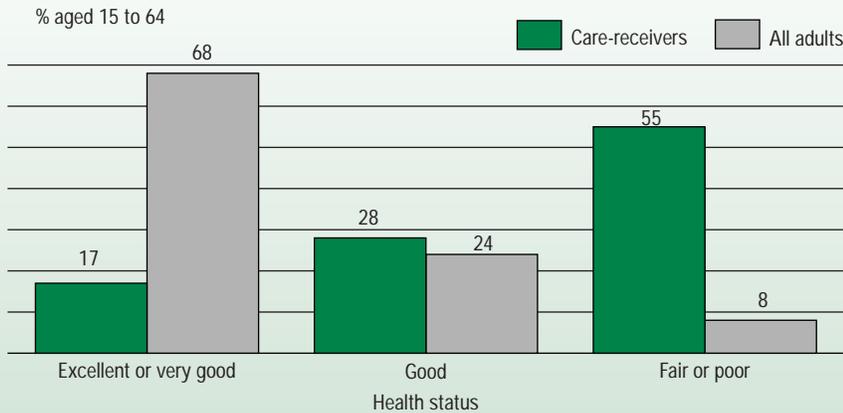
care-receivers (17%) felt that, compared to other people their age, their health was very good or excellent.

Over one-quarter assessed their relative health as good. But more than half rated their own health as only fair or poor compared to other Canadians. Not surprisingly, it was younger adults under 45 who tended to describe their health in more positive terms.

The greatest number of working-age care-receivers (75%) were getting help with tasks around the house. More than one-half (54%) had help running errands, and over one-quarter (28%) received assistance with their personal care, such as bathing and dressing.

Looking at the relationship between the type of care provided and employment status of care-receivers begins to illuminate the factors that influence labour force participation. For example, most care-receivers — 70% of those

## CST The majority of care-receivers felt their health was only fair or poor



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

## CST What you should know about this study

This study is based on data from the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) on social and community support. The GSS interviewed almost 13,000 Canadians aged 15 and over living in private dwellings in the ten provinces. Data were collected on help received in the previous 12 months due to a long-term health problem or physical limitation or due to a temporarily difficult time. Help could have been provided informally by family and friends or formally by paid employees, government and non-government organizations.

The article also draws on the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS), which was conducted in order to develop a national database on disability. HALS interviewed over 91,000 Canadians aged 15 and over living in private dwellings in the ten provinces, and 26,000 respondents were identified as having disabilities. Included in the interview were questions on the barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities. While it would have been helpful to have more up-to-date information than that collected in 1991, more recent data are not available.

*Care-receiver:* A person who received help with day-to-day tasks from another person or organization because of a long-term health problem or physical limitation lasting (or expected to last) more than six months. Care is divided into four basic sets of tasks: personal care, including bathing, dressing and toileting; household tasks, including meal preparation and clean-up, house cleaning, laundry and sewing, and house maintenance and outside work; running errands, including shopping for groceries or other necessities, providing transportation, and banking and bill paying; and childcare.

*Labour force participant:* A person whose main activity in the 12 months preceding the GSS had been working at a job or business, looking for work or being on maternity/paternity leave.

*Health status:* The respondent's perception that, compared with other Canadians the same age, his or her health is excellent or very good, good, or fair or poor.

who were in the labour force and 79% of those who were not — were getting help with tasks around the house. However, those not in the labour force needed considerably more help with daily tasks that are more demanding. Two-thirds (66%) of these care-receivers had help running their errands, compared with just over one-quarter (28%) of labour force participants. And the overwhelming majority of people receiving help with personal care were not in the labour force.

### What factors influence the ability to work with a long-term health problem?

What was the likelihood that someone receiving assistance for a long-term health problem would be a member of the labour force? After controlling for other factors,<sup>2</sup> care-receivers under 35 were four times as likely to be labour force participants as those aged 45 to 64. Higher education also increased the likelihood of participation; compared with people with high school or less, people with at least some postsecondary education were more than twice as likely to be in the labour force.

But among working-age Canadians receiving help at home because of a long-term health problem, the strongest predictor of labour force participation was how healthy they perceived themselves to be. Compared with care-receivers who considered their health to be poor or fair, those in good health were more than two-and-one-half times as likely to be working or looking for work. And care-receivers who described their health as very good or excellent were 31 times as likely as those with poor or fair health to be in the labour

force, after controlling for other factors.

Research suggests that having a spouse who is employed may reduce the pressure to find a job. However,

*Among working-age Canadians receiving help at home, the strongest predictor of labour force participation was health*

this did not hold true for working-age care-receivers. They were two-and-one-half times as likely to be in the labour force if they had a working spouse than if they did not.

Some characteristics that are often associated with labour force participation did not significantly influence care-receivers. For example, in the general population, men record higher labour force participation rates than women; however, among people receiving assistance for a long-term health problem, men were no more likely to be participants. Also, when other factors were controlled for, care-receivers without children were no more likely to be in the labour force than care-receivers with children.

Labour force participation is often lower in rural areas where job

CST The most important determinant of labour force participation for working-age care-receivers was their health status		
	Odds ratio of being in the labour force	
Perceived health	<b>Fair or poor</b>	1.0
	Good	2.6
	Excellent or very good	30.8
Age	<b>45-64</b>	1.0
	35-44	2.5*
	15-34	3.7
Education	<b>High school or less</b>	1.0
	Some postsecondary or more	2.4
Working spouse	<b>No</b>	1.0
	Yes	2.6
Gender	<b>Male</b>	1.0
	Female	0.9*
Presence of children	<b>Yes</b>	1.0
	No	2.1*
Place of residence	<b>Urban</b>	1.0
	Rural	0.5*

Note: An odds ratio close to 1.0 means there is little or no difference between the groups, but a ratio of more than 1.0 means the odds of participation are higher for the comparison group (e.g., those in good health) than for the reference group (e.g., those in poor health). A ratio of less than 1.0 means the odds are lower for the comparison group. Reference group is shown in bold.

\* Not statistically significant.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

2. The factors examined in this study are perceived health status, age, education, gender, working spouse, presence of children and place of residence (urban or rural).

opportunities are not as abundant. One might assume that this would be especially true for people with long-term health problems, but this was not the case. Care-receivers in urban areas were no more likely to be in the labour force than those in the country.

### Where are workers with health problems employed?

In 1996, over one-quarter — 27% or 170,000 — of working-age care-receivers with long-term health problems were in the labour force. It might be assumed that their ill-health would limit their employment opportunities, or the extent of their time on the job, but in fact it does not. Care-receivers put in a full workweek, averaging 38 hours per week on the job, while the overall workforce averaged 42 hours. Nor was there any

substantive difference in average personal income: workers with long-term health problems estimated their personal income to be almost \$37,000, mostly from employment or self-employment, while the overall working population reported just under \$36,000.

The most notable difference between workers receiving care for their chronic health problem and the general workforce was in the types of jobs they held. In 1996, the majority of working care-receivers (64%) were employed in white-collar occupations, working, for example, as architects, teachers and managers. This was almost twice as high as the percentage of the general workforce employed in white-collar occupations (35%). Most other care-receivers worked in clerical, sales and service jobs, but virtually

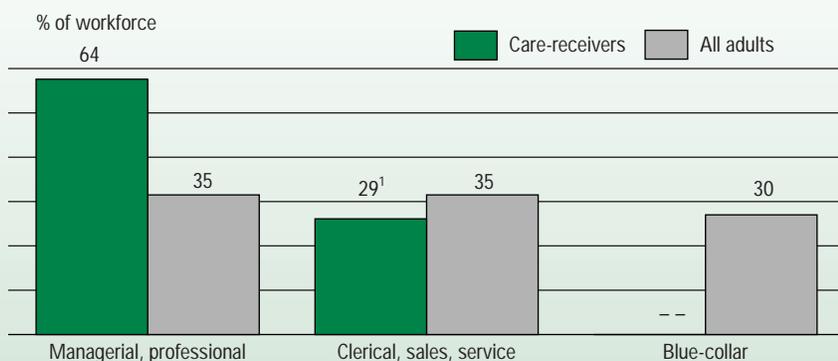
none were employed in blue-collar jobs (compared with 30% of the overall workforce).

The occupational profile of care-receivers may be explained by the basic demands of each type of job. Clerical, sales and service occupations may require extensive travel or long hours on one's feet; blue-collar occupations can also be physically demanding. These requirements could be strenuous for a person with a long-term health problem, who may choose to avoid such jobs. On the other hand, professional and managerial occupations offer working conditions that are more manageable for someone with a chronic health problem. Since these occupations also tend to require higher levels of education, the occupational profile of care-receivers suggests that education may improve the employment effects of poor health.

## CST Who helps care-receivers with daily tasks?

Working-age Canadians receiving help for a long-term health problem in 1996 most often turned to family members for assistance. Spouses (27%), children or children-in-law (24%), parents and siblings (16%) and other family members, friends and "others" (15%) provided help. A substantial amount of care (18%) was also provided by formal sources, such as paid employees and organizations.

## CST Most care-receivers worked in white-collar jobs



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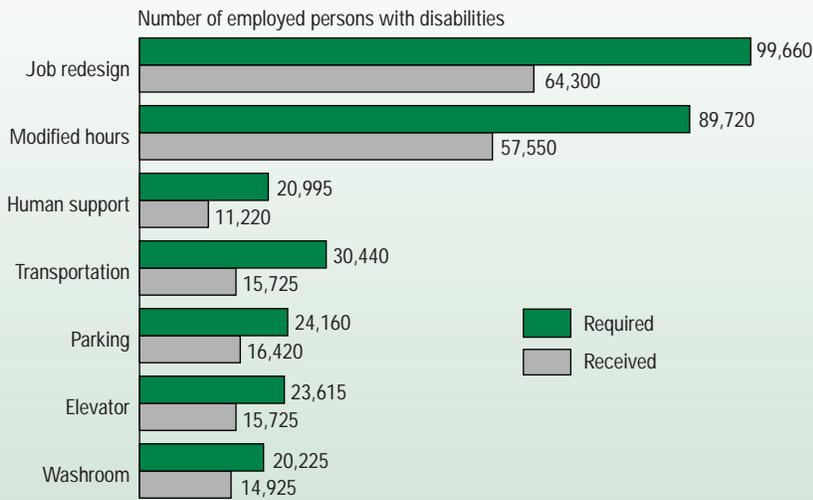
1. High sampling variability.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 General Social Survey.

### Did employees with disabilities get what they needed?

Once someone with a long-term health problem has found a job, special arrangements may be required in the workplace to enable them to work. While the GSS did not collect data about the workplace, the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) did ask employed people with disabilities if they required assistance in order to work.

In 1991, almost 100,000 Canadian workers wanted to have their job redesigned or to be given different duties because they had a health condition or disability. Almost as many (90,000) wanted modified days or reduced work hours, while 30,000 needed accessible transportation to get to the workplace. And between 20,000 and 24,000 employed Canadians with disabilities wanted human support, such as a reader, an oral or sign language interpreter, or a job coach; appropriate parking; or accessible elevators and washrooms.<sup>3</sup>



Source: Statistics Canada, Health and Activity Limitation Survey, 1991.

Because requiring some type of workplace adaptation is not the same as receiving it, HALS respondents were also asked whether their employer had accommodated their needs. Nearly three-quarters of the people requiring them got accessible washrooms; about two-thirds were provided with parking, elevators, redesigned jobs and modified hours. However, access to human support and transportation was less common, being offered to only about one-half of the workers who required such assistance.

**Summary**

In 1996, about 638,000 working-age Canadians received assistance for a long-term health problem. Only about one-quarter were members of the labour force; they tended to be younger and better educated than care-receivers outside the labour force, but most importantly, they were healthier. Even after other key factors

are controlled for, the data show that a person's perceived health is the most important predictor of labour force participation among care-receivers aged 15 to 64. While there are definitely workplace barriers to the employment of people with long-term health problems, there are also barriers for which workplace adaptations cannot compensate. Analysis of the 1996 General Social Survey suggests that, in many cases, people with long-term health problems are simply too ill to work.



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3. It is likely that there is overlapping among these categories; for example, someone requiring reduced work hours might also want transportation to work.

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# Recent immigrants in the workforce

by Jane Badets and Linda Howatson-Leo

During the first part of this decade, some 1.4 million people immigrated to Canada, contributing to one of the highest immigration flows since the 1940s. Nearly half of these new arrivals — 46% — were in the prime working ages of 25 to 44 years. As a result, recent immigrants have come to account for a growing proportion of new entrants to the labour force.

The ease with which these newcomers integrate into Canadian society depends, to a large extent, on their ability to find jobs. How have these recent immigrants fared in terms of employment (or unemployment) and the types of jobs they have found? And has their experience differed from that of others, including earlier groups of immigrants and people born in Canada? Using data from the Censuses of Population, this article explores the labour market experiences of recent immigrants in the 25 to 44 year age group from 1986 to 1996.<sup>1</sup>

## Most recent immigrants speak English or French and are highly educated

Knowing the language of one's new country helps to understand that country's culture and allows one to take part in day-to-day life. Becoming part of the workforce also tends to

1. All populations discussed in this article refer to those aged 25 to 44 years, unless otherwise indicated.

## CST What you should know about this study

*Recent immigrants:* People who immigrated to Canada 5 years or less prior to the date of the Census. For example, in the case of the 1996 Census, recent immigrants refer to those who immigrated between 1991 and the first four months of 1996.

*Canadian youth:* People aged 15 to 24 who were not students (non-students) at the time of the Census, unless otherwise indicated.

*Employment rate:* The percentage of employed persons in the week prior to Census day in a particular population group (for example, women, immigrants, population aged 25 to 44). Also known as the employment-population ratio.

*Unemployment rate:* The percentage of unemployed people in the total labour force (which consists of the employed and the unemployed). The unemployed are those who, during the week prior to Census day, were without paid work but were available for work; they either had actively looked for work in the past four weeks or were on temporary lay-off or had definite arrangements to start a new job in four weeks or less.

*Full-time or part-time employment:* The total number of hours per week a person reported working in the Census reference year (the year preceding the Census). Full-time employment is considered to be 30 hours or more per week; part-time is less than 30 hours.

*Full-year, full-time workers:* Persons who said they worked 49 to 52 weeks in the Census reference year (1995), mostly full-time.

*Part-year or part-time workers:* Persons who said they worked less than 49 weeks in the Census reference year (1995), or who worked mostly part-time.

*Occupation:* The kind of work a person was doing during the week prior to the Census. If someone was not employed in the week prior to Census day, the information relates to the job of longest duration since January 1 of the previous year. The 1996 Census classified occupation information according to the 1991 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

be easier if one speaks and understands the language, particularly in professional occupations where communication is an essential part of the job. Among immigrants who spoke neither English nor French, people with lower levels of schooling had higher rates of employment than those who were highly educated. However, educated or not, in both the 1980s and the 1990s recent immigrants who could speak English or French were more likely to be employed than those who could not.

Canada's newcomers appear well equipped with language skills. In both the 1980s and the 1990s, the overwhelming majority of recent immigrants reported that they were able to conduct a conversation in one of the country's official languages.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, for example, 94% of men and 91% of women said that they spoke English or French. The figures in 1986 were similarly high: 93% of recent immigrant men and 89% of women claimed to speak at least one official language. One must, however, keep in mind that being able to converse informally does not necessarily indicate an ability to work in a language.

In general, education is also an important predictor of labour force performance. And newcomers who entered the country during the 1980s and the 1990s had, on average, higher levels of education than Canadian-born people in the same age group (25 to 44 years). In 1996, for example, the proportion of men with a university degree was twice as high among recent immigrants as among the Canadian-born: 36% versus 18%. Similarly, recent immigrant women were also more likely than Canadian-born women to have completed their university education: 31% compared with 20%. A similar pattern, although not as pronounced, appears at the other end of the educational spectrum: the proportion of men without high school graduation was

18% among recent immigrants and 23% among the Canadian-born aged 25 to 44. Among women, the proportion who had not completed high school was, at 19%, the same for both immigrants and those born in Canada.

### Recent immigrants less likely to be employed in 1996

Despite their language abilities and high qualifications, recent immigrants are generally less likely to be employed than people born in Canada. In the short term this is not surprising, given that establishing oneself, making contacts and applying for jobs in a new environment tend to take time. However, compared with 1986, the employment situation of recent immigrants seems to have become more precarious both in absolute terms and relative to the Canadian-born; in 1996, immigrants found it substantially more difficult to secure jobs than did their predecessors in the 1980s. While this was also true for many Canadian-born, opportunities for immigrants have deteriorated more significantly.

For example, while in 1986 the employment rate of recent immigrant men aged 25 to 44 years was 81%, by 1996 it had declined to just 71%, indicating a substantial reduction in the likelihood of finding a job. Although during this period the employment rate of Canadian-born men also declined, it did so only slightly, from 87% to 84%. Immigrant men of the 1990s were notably worse off in the job market than their counterparts in the 1980s. And when

2. The census question on knowledge of official language asks respondents whether they are able to conduct a conversation in either or both of the official languages. The information collected, then, is based on respondents' self-assessment and may overstate (or understate) the actual abilities of these individuals in either or both languages.

Highest level of schooling completed	% employed age 25 to 44			
	Men		Women	
	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>51</b>
Less than high school	71	65	52	38
Secondary school	85	69	71	44
Non-university	88	74	79	58
Some postsecondary	83	67	72	47
University	92	73	86	58

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

**CST** Education does not improve employment opportunity for recent immigrants as much as it does for the Canadian-born

it came to finding a job, in 1996 they fell farther behind Canadian-born men than had immigrants a decade earlier.

Recent immigrant women were in an even more disadvantaged position. While their employment rate was already low at 58% in 1986, by 1996 it had fallen to an even lower 51%. Meanwhile, as a result of changing career aspirations, higher educational attainment and families' need for two incomes, Canadian-born women's employment rate continued its upward climb, from 65% in 1986 to 73% in 1996. It appears that immigrant women of the 1990s lost out in the job market. Their employment rates were lower than those of their counterparts in the 1980s, they lagged behind Canadian-born women with the gap rising over the years, and they were also substantially behind immigrant men when it came to finding employment.

Why employment was more problematic for immigrants of the 1990s is not clear, particularly since these newcomers had higher educational levels and better language skills than those who had arrived in the 1980s. Partly, it may be the result of the economy's difficulties in absorbing new entrants. But a host of other issues, such as the types of skills immigrants bring with them, their cultural background and their personal characteristics, are likely at work as well.

### Education doesn't pay off for recent immigrants

For the Canadian-born, more often than not, education is the key to finding employment. The situation for recent immigrants, however, is very different.<sup>3</sup> Although their chances of

finding employment did increase somewhat with higher levels of education, their employment rates continued to lag far behind those of the Canadian-born. Among men with less than high school, for example, some 71% of the Canadian-born and 65% of recent immigrants were employed in 1996. However, at the university level, 92% of those born in Canada had jobs, compared with only 73% of recent immigrants. The difference was even more pronounced for immigrant women. For Canadian-born women, employment rates climbed from 52% for those with less than high school to 86% for the university educated. In contrast, the employment rate of recent immigrant women with a university degree was just 58%.

### Nearly one out of three recent immigrants work in sales and services

When looking for jobs, newcomers are often willing to make what they hope will be short-term sacrifices. To get established in a new country, some may initially take jobs that fall below their qualifications or expectations. Others may be able to find work in areas of their expertise.

3. The employment and unemployment rates for recent immigrants were adjusted to take account of the different educational profiles of the immigrant and Canadian-born populations. This adjustment (known as standardization) removes the effect of any differences due to education when comparing the two populations. As well, the unemployment rates were standardized by age to account for the fact that a higher proportion of recent immigrants are in the younger age group of 25 to 34 years.

	Men		Women	
	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants
<b>All occupations</b>	%		%	
Management	11	9	7	5
Business, finance and administrative	10	10	33	21
Natural and applied sciences and related	9	12	2	4
Health	2	2	10	6
Social science, education, government service and religion	5	5	10	5
Art, culture, recreation and sport	2	2	3	3
Sales and service	17	24	27	38
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related	27	18	2	2
Primary industry	6	2	2	1
Processing, manufacturing and utilities	10	17	4	15

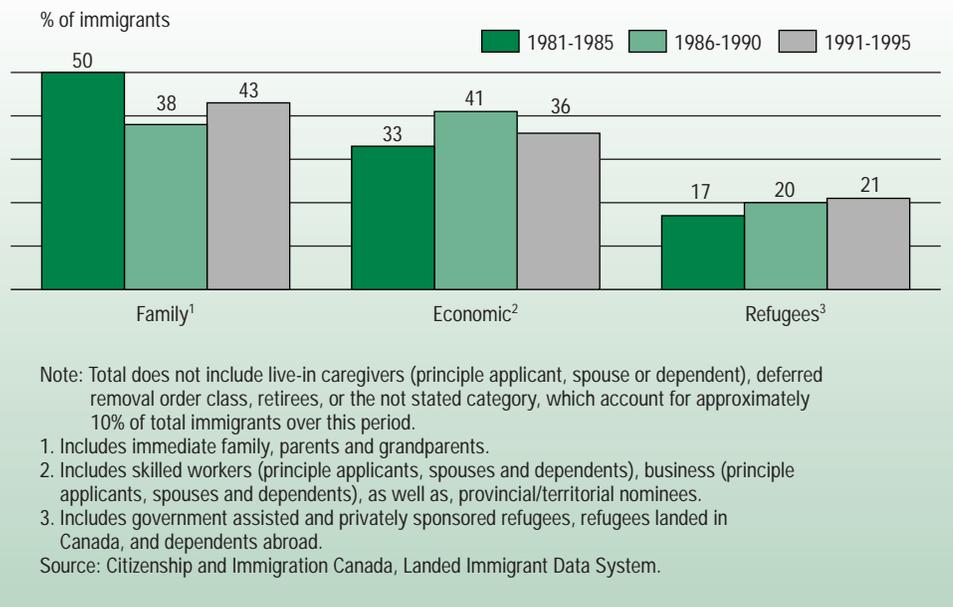
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

Immigration to Canada in the past two decades has been characterized by several changes: source countries of immigrants, selection criteria, and higher numbers of immigrants entering Canada each year in the 1990s (over 200,000). The number and selection of immigrants entering Canada are determined to a large extent by government policies controlling admissions. Since the late 1970s, Canada's immigration policy has been guided by three broad objectives: to reunite families; to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations, and compassionate and humanitarian traditions with respect to refugees; and to foster a strong and viable economy in all regions of Canada.<sup>1</sup>

These objectives are reflected in the three categories under which people are admitted each year as permanent residents: family, humanitarian (refugees) and economic (skilled workers, business immigrants and their spouses and dependents). Only skilled workers and business immigrants (including investors, entrepreneurs and the self-employed) are selected on the basis of their labour market skills. Since 1967, skilled workers have been rated on a "point" system based on their age, education, training and occupation skills, demand for their occupation in Canada, existence of pre-arranged employment, and knowledge of one of Canada's official languages.

Between 1981 and 1985, the largest proportion (50%) of immigrants were admitted for reasons of family reunification, much higher than the 33% admitted in the economic category. In the following five year period (1986 to 1990) this pattern had changed, with the economic category accounting

for the largest proportion (41%) of immigrants and a slightly smaller proportion (38%) in the family category. During the early 1990s, a higher proportion of immigrants was admitted in the family category than the economic category, a pattern similar to that of the early 1980s. In contrast to these shifting trends in the economic and family component of immigration, the proportion admitted to Canada as refugees has remained fairly constant throughout both the 1980s and 1990s at around 17% to 21% of total immigration.

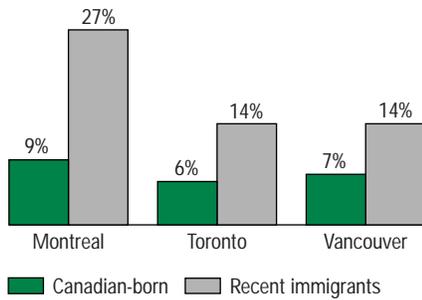


A number of factors affect the extent to which recent arrivals integrate into Canada's labour market, as well as how quickly and easily this integration occurs. This article focuses on two important ones, level of education and knowledge of Canada's official languages. Other possible factors which may influence labour market outcomes are the selection of immigrants, their skills and attributes at the time of entry, their country of origin or visible minority status, as well as their intentions and aspirations for immigrating to Canada.

1. Citizenship and Immigration Canada. October 1994. Annual Report to Parliament. Ottawa. p.11.

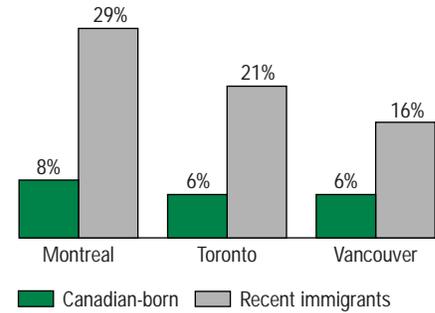
For various reasons — such as the availability of jobs, proximity to others with the same origin, or educational opportunities for themselves or their children — most of Canada's recent immigrants have made their homes in the country's three largest cities. Toronto received the lion's share, with 42%, followed by Vancouver (18%) and Montreal (13%). The impact on the working-age population has been significant: in 1996, recent immigrants accounted for 14% of Toronto's population aged 25 to 44, some 13% of Vancouver's and 6% of Montreal's. It is in these cities that the majority of immigrants are working or looking for jobs. Immigrant unemployment, then, is mostly an urban phenomenon, belonging particularly to Canada's three largest cities.

Unemployment rate for men aged 25-44 ...

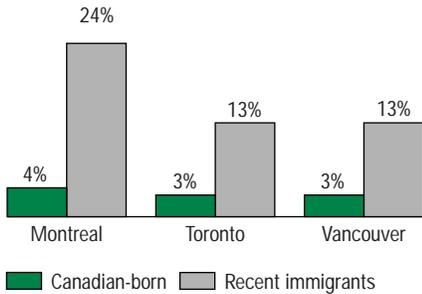


- Recent immigrants – both men and women – had the highest unemployment rates in Montreal.
- In Toronto and Vancouver, recent immigrant men were about two times more likely to be unemployed than their Canadian-born counterparts.
- Recent immigrant women had higher jobless rates than either immigrant men or women born in Canada.

Unemployment rate for women aged 25-44 ...

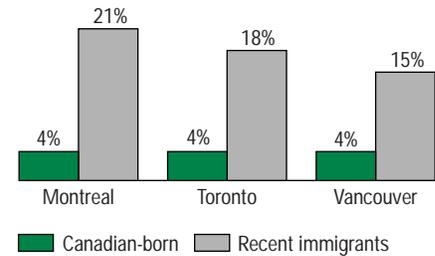


... with a university degree

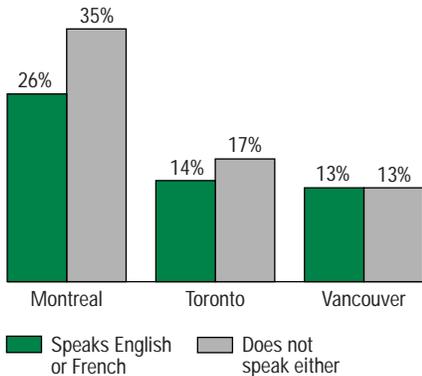


- Unlike the Canadian-born, recent immigrants did not see their unemployment rate decline significantly with higher education.
- University educated recent immigrants — both men and women — were most likely to be unemployed in Montreal.
- In both Toronto and Vancouver, university-educated immigrant men's jobless rates were more than four times the rate of their Canadian-born counterparts.

... with a university degree

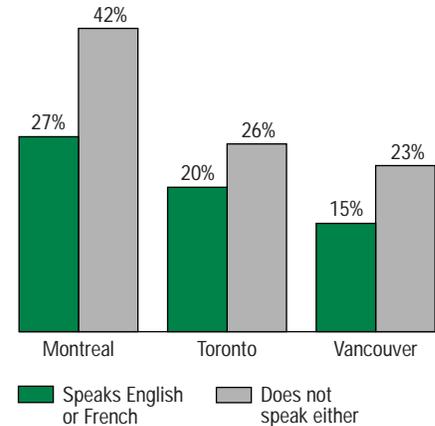


... recent immigrants



- In all three CMAs, knowledge of an official language affected women's unemployment rate more than men's.
- In Vancouver, immigrant men's unemployment rate did not vary with official language knowledge.

... recent immigrants



Note: See footnote 3, page 18 about standardization of unemployment rates.  
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

In 1996, recent immigrants were most likely to be employed in sales and service occupations. These jobs, which often require little or no previous experience and relatively few skills, tend to have easier entry requirements than other occupations. In addition, in today's increasingly service-oriented economy, sales and service jobs tend to be plentiful. It is not surprising, then, that some 31% of employed recent immigrants (38% of women and 24% of men) held these types of jobs compared with 23% of Canadian-born people aged 25 to 44 years. And although some in this sector were not highly educated (one-third of recent immigrants with less than high school worked in sales and services), others appear

to have been considerably overqualified. For example, nearly one-quarter of recent immigrants with university degrees held jobs in sales and service occupations, making them about twice as likely to work at these jobs as their Canadian-born counterparts. It is possible that some highly educated immigrants whose qualifications are not recognized in Canada fell into this category.

On the other hand, substantial proportions of recent immigrants, particularly men, were employed as highly skilled professionals. Nearly one-quarter of immigrant men with university degrees were working in occupations in the natural and applied sciences as, for instance, computer

## CST Youths and immigrants: new entrants facing a tough market

In some ways, the hurdles that recent immigrants face in the labour market resemble those faced by Canadian youths. While there are undoubtedly differences between these two groups – educational profile,<sup>1</sup> age, skills, social network, family responsibilities – youths and recent immigrants share some important characteristics. As new entrants to a competitive, and in some regions a tight, labour market, both groups are disadvantaged: they lack work experience (or Canadian work experience in the case of immigrants), tend not to have a well-established network of contacts, and are often under financial strain.

Indeed, even when they did succeed in finding employment, youths and immigrants were more likely than the rest of the population to work part-time or part-year and in entry-level service jobs. In 1995, the majority of employed people in both groups – 68% of youths and 58% of recent immigrants aged 25 to 44 years — were working part-time or part of the year compared with 42% of the Canadian-born between the ages of 25 and 44. While high levels of part-time employment are not a new development for either youths or immigrants (many in the 1980s were also in this situation), the incidence of this work arrangement has become more frequent since 1990. Industrial restructuring, rapid technological advances and a large baby-boomer workforce have all contributed to new entrants' increasing difficulties in securing full-time employment.

Both youths and recent immigrants were most likely to be employed in sales and service occupations. Among those in the labour force, 31% of recent immigrants and 43% of Canadian youth

were employed in these jobs compared with 22% of the Canadian-born aged 25 to 44.

The parallel between these two groups does not, however, end with work arrangements or type of employment. The proportions of youths and recent immigrants who were not able to find jobs were also remarkably similar. Indeed, in 1996, the overall unemployment rate of recent immigrants was virtually identical to that of youths: 17% and 18%, respectively.<sup>2</sup> And as did immigrants, young people also had most difficulty trying to find jobs in Montreal, although their unemployment rate (18%) was not nearly as high as that of recent immigrants (27%). In Toronto and Vancouver, unemployment rates for both groups were the same.

While the unemployment scenario of Canadian youths and recent immigrants converged in 1996, the situation in the 1980s was quite different. For example, in 1986 the jobless rate was a relatively low 12% for recent immigrants compared with a much higher 17% for youths. So while finding jobs that year was already difficult for young people, immigrants had an easier time.

1. Immigrants aged 25 to 44 were more highly educated than Canadian youth. Immigrant men were seven times more likely than young Canadian men to have a university degree. Immigrant women were almost four times more likely than Canadian young women to do so. However, the education gap becomes smaller if the comparison is restricted to large urban areas, where most immigrants settle.
2. Because information on school attendance was not available in the 1986 Census, the unemployment rates for Canadian youths (in both 1986 and 1996) refer to the population aged 15 to 24, regardless of school attendance.

engineers, chemists and aerospace engineers. In contrast, 17% of Canadian-born men with university degrees worked in these types of jobs.

### Summary

The labour market of the 1990s has undergone a number of changes. Significant shifts in the composition of the workforce, industrial restructuring, rapid technological advances and a prolonged recession altered employment opportunities. As new entrants to this labour market, immigrants who came to Canada during the 1990s experienced difficulties finding employment. These initial difficulties are often related to the fact that newcomers tend to go through a temporary adjustment period while they become established in their new country. In that they lack Canadian work experience, do not yet have a solid network of contacts, and have faced labour market difficulties in the 1990s, their situation is more difficult than that of their Canadian-born contemporaries.

Based on the experiences of earlier immigrants, however, one might expect that with time the 1990s wave of immigrants will find jobs and participate fully in the Canadian economy. Indeed, over a decade, the unemployment rate of immigrants who came in the early 1980s dropped to the point where the rate for men matched that of the Canadian-born. Women also experienced improvements, if to a somewhat lesser extent. It is true that the 1990s immigrants arrived during a different economic climate, and that factors not addressed in this article — such as cultural background, intentions and aspirations, types of skills and attributes — also affect the ease of labour market entry. However, it seems reasonable to assume that time will again improve the employment opportunities of Canada's newcomers.



Jane Badets is a senior analyst and Linda Howatson-Leo is an analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.



## ABORIGINAL PEOPLES survey

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are currently underway.

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## Young men more likely to try more than one potentially harmful behaviour

According to the 1994/95 National Population Health Survey, the majority of teenagers and young adults (aged 15 to 24) had engaged in at least one of four potentially harmful activities (binge drinking, smoking, sex without a condom or sex with multiple partners) in the previous year. Men aged 20 to 24 were most at risk. More than one in five (22%) in this age group reported engaging in at least three of the four risk behaviours, compared with 17% of women. On the other hand, 19% of men and 31% of women aged 20 to 24 reported that they had tried none of these activities.

*Health Reports, Autumn 1998, Vol. 1, no. 2  
Statistics Canada,  
Catalogue no. 82-003-XPB or  
Internet product 82-003-XIE*



## National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Cycle 2

In 1994/95, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) began a comprehensive study of children under the age of 12. The second cycle, conducted in 1996/97, shows that the vast majority of these same children were growing up healthy and well-adjusted, and were progressing well in school. Still, a significant proportion of children lived in difficult family circumstances and faced other disadvantages that put their

development at risk. The movement of children's families into and out of a lower-income situation between 1994 and 1996 is attributable primarily to family breakdown and formation. Children of families that broke down between 1994 and 1996 were four times more likely to have moved into the lowest income quartile than others (26% versus 6%). The reverse was also true. Children of parents who were single in 1994 but were living with a partner in 1996 were also more than four times as likely to move out of the lower-income quartile as other children (30% versus 7%).

*For information about the National Survey of Children and Youth, contact Sylvie Michaud (613)-951-9482 or Yvan Clermont (613)-951-3326.*



## Rural and small town population grows in the 1990s

Canada's rural and small town (RST) population grew by 4% between 1991 and 1996 (if reclassification of some RST areas into larger urban centres is not taken into account). This growth was not even across Canada. Newfoundland's RST population dropped by 5% while British Columbia's grew by 13% during this period. Canada's RST population was 19% smaller in 1996 than in 1976 due to the reclassification of RST areas into larger urban centres. In 1996, the share of Canada's population living in RSTs was 22% compared to 34% in 1976.

*Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin Vol. 1, no. 1  
Statistics Canada,  
Internet product 21-006-XIE*



## Income of dual-earner families hits record high in 1996

The recession of the early 1990s had only a temporary impact on the income of dual earner families. In 1996, the average income of two-partner families in which both had earnings matched the previous record of 1989, reaching \$71,100 in 1996. In contrast, average income of single-earner two-partner families in 1996 was still 7% lower than in 1989 at an average of \$52,500.

*Characteristics of dual-earner families, 1996,  
Statistics Canada,  
Catalogue no. 13-215-XIB*



## Homicide rate declines

In 1997, the national homicide rate declined 9% to 1.92 per 100,000 population, its lowest point since 1969. The homicide rate has generally been decreasing since the mid-1970s, following rapid growth during the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were 581 homicides in 1997, 54 fewer than in 1996. Compared with other industrialized countries, Canada's 1997 rate was less than one-third that of the United States (6.70), but higher than that of most European countries, such as England and Wales (1.00) and France (1.66).

*Juristat: Homicide in Canada, 1998  
Vol. 18, no. 12  
Statistics Canada,  
Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE or  
Internet product 85-002-XIE*



## Survey on the Importance of Nature to Canadians

About 85% of adults participated in one or more nature-related activities ranging from a picnic at the beach to camping, canoeing, sightseeing, fishing or hunting. People spent an estimated \$11 billion on nature-related activities averaging \$550 per participant. About one-third of participants visited a provincial or national park or other protected area.

*For information about the Survey on the Importance of Nature to Canadians, contact Marc Hamel (613)-951-2495 or Chantal Hunter (819)-994-2177 (Environment Canada)*



## Undergraduate enrolment drops

After peaking early in the 1990s, undergraduate enrolment has declined for five consecutive years. The five-year decline was due to a sharp drop in part-time undergraduate students, especially among older age groups, while full-time enrolment has remained steady. Women aged 18 to 24 were the only group whose full-time undergraduate enrolment increased between 1992/93 and 1997/98 by 6%. In contrast, enrolment of men in this key age group declined by over 2% over the same period.

*CANSIM tables 00580602, 00580603, 00580701 and 00580702*

# Seniors: A diverse group aging well

by Colin Lindsay

The United Nations has designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The goals of the year are to enhance understanding, harmony and mutual support across generations, and to help recognize seniors' contributions to their families and communities.

As part of Statistics Canada's involvement with the International Year of Older Persons, *Canadian Social Trends* will feature a series of articles over the next four quarters that address some of the issues affecting older Canadians. This first article sets the stage by highlighting the key demographic and socio-economic characteristics of seniors in Canada.

## More very old seniors

The senior population in Canada has grown rapidly throughout most of the 20th century. In 1998, there were 3.7 million people aged 65 and over. They represented 12% of all Canadians, up substantially from only 5% in 1921. Growth is expected to continue, particularly after 2010, when the Baby Boom generation begins turning 65. According to Statistics Canada projections, seniors will account for 18% of the population by 2021, and for 23% by 2041.

The growth in the number of seniors has resulted largely from longer lifespans. A person aged 65 could expect to live an average five more years (to 83) in 1991, compared to the period between 1921 and 1941 (to 78).

People aged 85 and over account for the fastest growing component of the senior population in Canada. In 1998, there were more than 380,000 people in this age group, up from 140,000 in 1971. Overall, people aged 85 and over currently represent over 1% of the total population, double the share in 1971. Statistics Canada projections indicate that in 2041, there will be almost 1.6 million Canadians aged 85 and over, accounting for nearly 4% of the total population.

Women make up the majority of Canadian seniors – in 1998, 57% of all people aged 65 and over, and 70% aged 85 and older, were female. Women outnumber men in these age groups largely because they live considerably longer than men. A woman aged 65 in 1996, for instance, could expect to live another 22 years, compared with 17 years for a man the same age. Unfortunately, the Health Adjusted Life Expectancy indicator, which estimates the number of years a person can expect to live in good health, suggests that a considerable portion of the extra years women live is actually spent in poor health.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of Canadians aged 65 and over are married, but in fact,

women were more likely to be widowed (46% in 1996) than married (41%). On the other hand, most men were married (77%) and only a small percent were widowers (13%).

## Most seniors live in their own homes

Almost all seniors, 93% in 1996, live in a private household. In that year, the majority were living with their immediate (62%) or extended (7%) families. At the same time, over one in four (29%) lived alone. Because women tend to outlive their spouses, they are much more likely than men to live alone: 38% versus 16% in 1996. This is particularly the case for women aged 85 and over, 58% of whom lived by themselves.

A relatively large proportion of seniors own their homes. In 1997, 84% of families headed by someone aged 65 and over and 50% of unattached people aged 65 and over owned their home, compared with 71% and 35% of their counterparts aged 15 to 64.

Most senior homeowners — 84% of families and 89% of individuals — have paid off their mortgages. Also, the quality of seniors' homes is generally as good as, if not better than, that of their younger counterparts: seniors tend to have more living space and are less likely to live in houses needing repairs other than regular maintenance.

## Seniors get, and provide, much social support

One of the questions most often asked about the aging of society is, "Who is

1. Berthelot, Jean-Marie, Roger Roberge and Michael Wolfson. 1992. *The Calculation of Health-Adjusted Life Expectancy for a Canadian Province Using a Multi-Attribute Utility Function: A First Attempt*. Statistics Canada, Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series No. 50.

looking after Canada's seniors?" The answer is that, for the most part, they are looking after themselves.

At the same time, however, substantial numbers of seniors do get help around the house from family and friends. In 1995, 62% of people aged 65 and over received some help with household chores and other personal tasks.

Family support networks involving seniors, however, are a two-way street, with considerable help going from seniors to their families. For example, in 1995, almost 20% of people aged 65 and over looked after children at least once a week. Almost as many (23%) provided unpaid care to other seniors, though mostly it was seniors aged 65 to 74 who tended to help out those aged 85 and over.

### Many seniors have a chronic health problem

While the majority (73%) of seniors living at home report that their overall health is relatively good, most do have some kind of chronic health condition, such as heart trouble, diabetes, rheumatism or arthritis. In 1995, 81% reported they had at least one chronic health condition that had been diagnosed by a health professional, and 39% said their activity was somewhat restricted by their condition.

In addition, 33% reported they had cognition problems, that is, they were either somewhat or very forgetful, or they had difficulty thinking. And 8% of seniors could not see well enough to read, even with glasses, and 6% could not hear well enough to follow a group conversation, even with a hearing aid.

Because seniors generally have a number of health problems, they tend to make substantial demands on the health care system. In 1993-94, for example, seniors had a hospitalization rate almost three times that of people aged 45 to 64. As well, the

average hospital visit of people aged 65 and over lasted 20 days that year, compared with 10 days or less among those under age 65.

However, hospitalization rates also differ significantly between younger and older seniors. In 1993-94, the hospitalization rate for people aged 75 and over was almost 70% higher than among those aged 65 to 74, while the average stay per visit was 25 days for these older seniors, versus 15 days for their younger counterparts.

The majority of seniors use prescription or over-the-counter medication. In 1995, 74% had taken at least one type of medication in the preceding two days and 51% had taken two or more.

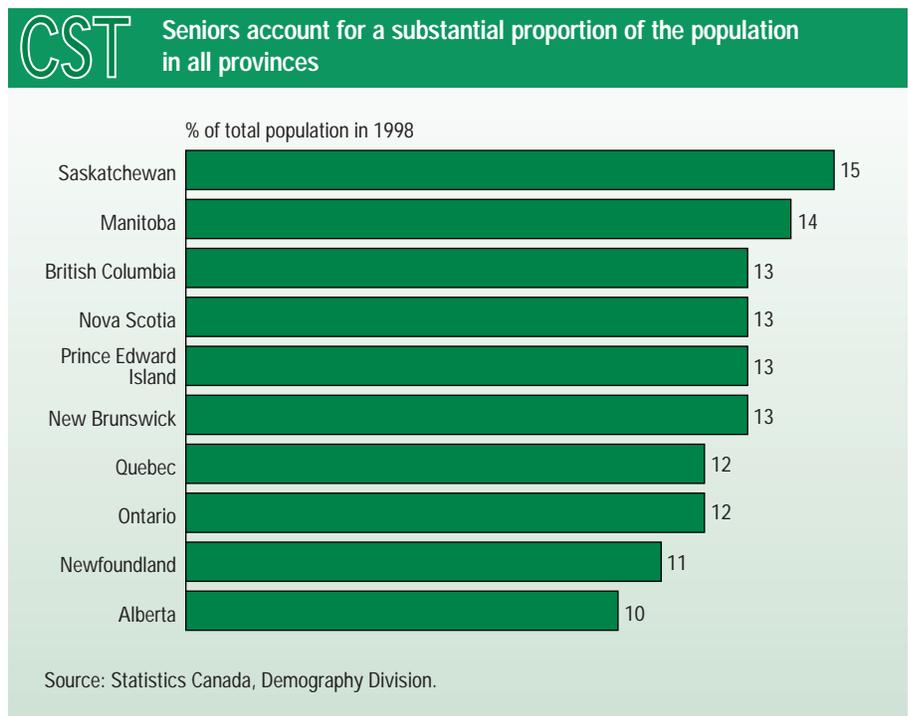
### Rising incomes among seniors

In contrast to Canadians under 65, whose average incomes have not changed significantly in the past two decades, seniors have seen their incomes rise since the early 1980s. Between 1981 and 1997, the average income of seniors rose 17% (adjusted for inflation), compared with a 2% decline for the population under age 65. This has resulted, in part, in a

significant drop in the share of seniors living below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs), from 34% in 1980 to 21% in 1996. Nonetheless, seniors are still moderately more likely than younger adults aged 18 to 64 to have low incomes.

The overall decline in low income, however, masks the fact that, in 1996, 53% of senior women living without families (either on their own or living with non-relatives) were in a low-income situation. In contrast, 33% of unattached men aged 65 and over had incomes below the LICOs. Meanwhile, only 8% of senior women living in a family had low incomes.

Most of the gains in the average incomes of seniors over the past two decades have come from work-related pensions, either CPP/QPP or private employment pensions. The largest share of seniors' income, however, remains the Old Age Security program, which in 1997 provided 29% of all the income of seniors. At the same time, 20% of the income came from CPP/QPP, while 21% came from private retirement pensions and 14% from investments.



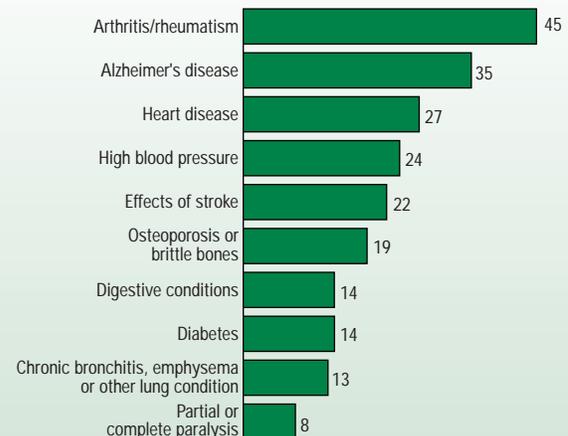
While most seniors live in a private household, over 250,000 (or 7%) lived in an institution in 1996. These seniors made up 74% of all institutionalized Canadians that year. Most institutionalized seniors (about 85%) reside in special care homes for the elderly and chronically ill. Not surprisingly, the very elderly are most likely to be in an institution. In 1996, 38% of women and 24% of men aged 85 and over were institutionalized, compared with 10% and 7%, respectively, of those aged 75 to 84 and only 2% of both women and men aged 65 to 74.

The health of seniors living in an institution is not as good as that of their counterparts living in a private household. Indeed, 95% suffered from at least one chronic health condition. The large majority (80%) also experienced some activity restriction because of a long-term health condition. Consequently, 72% needed help with personal care such as bathing, dressing, and eating; while almost half needed help either getting in and out of bed, getting in and out of a chair, or moving about the facility.

As with seniors living in private households, arthritis and rheumatism were the long-term health conditions most likely to affect seniors living in an institution. In 1995, 45% had arthritis or rheumatism. However, many had more debilitating conditions:

over one-third had Alzheimer's disease or other dementia, while about one-fifth were suffering the effects of a stroke. Over one-quarter were also severely vision- and hearing-impaired. Despite these problems, only 22% of seniors living in an institution rated their health as poor.

**% of institutionalized seniors with chronic health condition**



Source: Statistics Canada, National Population Health Survey, 1995.

### Seniors have an active lifestyle

Seniors engage in a wide range of activities, taking advantage of the leisure time that retirement offers (7.7 hours per day, compared with 5.4 for younger adults). A considerable amount of this leisure time, about 2 hours per day, is spent socializing, visiting or talking on the phone with friends, going to restaurants, having people over for meals, and so on. Almost an hour and a half is devoted to other leisure activities such as sports, hobbies, playing cards, and driving for pleasure. Television is also important to seniors, with women spending 3.1 and men 3.5 hours per day watching their favourite programs.

Many seniors are also physically active, with almost half (47%) reporting they engaged in regular physical activity in 1995, and a substantial minority (14%) taking part occasionally. Walking

and hiking was the most common pursuit (14%), but exercise or yoga classes were also popular (5%). Almost one in five (19%) participated in formal volunteer work.

Seniors are more likely than younger adults to attend church or other religious functions regularly. In 1996, 37% of people aged 65 and over attended religious services at least once a week, compared with less than 16% of those under age 45. Seniors are also travelling more than they did in the past, making an average of 3.2 trips within Canada and one trip outside the country in 1994-95.

### Summary

Canadian seniors are, in general, doing reasonably well. Most live at home with their family; most believe their health is good; most are reasonably

comfortable financially; and most lead relatively active lives. The senior population is not, however, a homogeneous group. Seniors between 65 and 74 more closely resemble people under 65 than older seniors, while 75- to 84-year-olds appear to be in an age of transition. Canadians aged 85 and over are most likely to be characterized by many of the serious problems usually associated with old age.

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

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>INCOME*</b>								
<i>Average total money income</i>								
All	19,876	19,311	19,450	18,998	19,353	19,426	19,516	-
Families	58,945	57,540	57,224	56,047	57,098	57,000	57,546	-
Unattached individuals	26,264	24,919	25,274	24,824	25,037	24,932	24,829	-
<i>Percent of income from transfer payments</i>								
All	11.8	13.2	13.8	14.3	14.1	13.5	13.3	-
Families	10.6	11.9	12.5	12.9	12.5	12.1	11.7	-
Unattached individuals	17.7	19.7	20.0	20.9	21.7	20.2	20.8	-
<i>Average income of families, by quintiles</i>								
Lowest quintile	18,871	18,391	18,009	17,884	18,360	18,284	17,729	-
2nd	36,821	35,179	34,914	33,886	35,011	34,545	34,402	-
3rd	52,874	50,692	50,878	49,453	50,914	49,857	50,366	-
4th	70,881	68,861	68,923	67,630	68,710	68,319	69,293	-
Highest quintile	115,291	114,560	113,399	111,371	112,491	113,964	115,938	-
Dual-earner couples as % of husband-wife families	62.0	61.5	61.2	60.3	60.4	60.5	60.5	-
Women's earnings as % of men's, full-time full-year workers	67.7	69.9	71.9	72.2	69.8	73.1	73.4	-
% of persons below Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs)	15.4	16.5	17.0	18.0	17.1	17.8	17.9	-
Families with head aged 65 and over	7.6	8.2	8.7	9.7	7.1	7.8	8.7	-
Families with head less than age 65	13.1	13.8	14.4	15.5	14.6	15.4	15.5	-
Two-parent families with children	9.8	10.8	10.6	12.2	11.5	12.8	11.8	-
Lone-parent families	54.4	55.4	52.3	55.0	53.0	53.0	56.8	-
Unattached individuals aged 65 and over	50.7	50.9	49.2	51.9	47.6	45.1	47.9	-
Unattached individuals less than age 65	32.4	35.2	36.3	36.2	38.0	37.2	37.1	-
<b>FAMILIES**</b>								
<i>Marriages and divorces</i>								
Number of marriages ('000)	188	172	165	159	160	160	-	-
Marriage rate (per 1,000 population)	6.8	6.1	5.8	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.2	-
Number of divorces ('000)	78	77	79	78	79	78	-	-
Total divorce rate (per 1,000 population)	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	-
Total number of families ('000)	-	7,356	-	-	-	-	7,838	-
<i>Family composition (%)</i>								
Married couples with children	-	48.1	-	-	-	44.6	45.1	-
without children	-	29.2	-	-	-	29.8	28.6	-
Common-law couples with children	-	4.0	-	-	-	5.3	5.5	-
without children	-	5.8	-	-	-	6.7	6.2	-
Female lone-parents	-	10.7	-	-	-	11.7	12.1	-
Male lone-parents	-	2.2	-	-	-	2.0	2.5	-
<i>Number of one-person households ('000)***</i>								
Under age 65	1,584	1,688	1,685	1,873	1,888	1,909	1,300	-
Age 65 and over	854	871	1,058	1,034	1,013	1,138	1,776	-

\* All income data in 1997 dollars; families are economic families.

\*\* Family composition data from the Census of Population for 1991 and 1996, and General Social Survey for 1995. Families are census families.

\*\*\* Data on one-person households from the General Social Survey.

# EDUCATORS' NOTEBOOK

*Suggestions for using Canadian Social Trends in the classroom*

## Lesson plan for “The Crowded Nest: Young Adults at Home”

### Objectives

- To explore why young people today are more likely to live with their parents than did those a generation before.
- To become aware of the underlying social, economic and psychological reasons that contribute to young people's decision to leave their parents or stay with them.

### Method

1. Read “The Crowded Nest: Young Adults at Home” and write down five key facts or ideas in point form.
2. The article suggests that events such as leaving high school, securing a full-time job, becoming financially independent, getting married and leaving parents' home are indicators of being an adult. Do you agree? Explain your answer.
3. What does being an adult mean to you? Does it include living away from your parents?
4. “. . .because they have greater involvement in household tasks as teenagers, young women may be better able to take care of themselves. . . in terms of cooking, cleaning and laundry skills.” Set up a debating team with one side agreeing and the other side disagreeing with the above statement.
5. Conduct an informal survey of the students to determine how many know of older brothers, sisters or cousins in their 20s or 30s who still live with their parents. Do the socio-economic characteristics of these young people differ from those who have left their parents' home?
6. Research how much it would cost to live away from your parents. Use newspapers, flyers and other local guides to calculate expenditures such as rent, food, clothing, entertainment, education, and repayment of student loans. Determine how you would pay for these expenses by visiting Human Resources Development Canada's web site, which shows earnings of different types of jobs. Other resources may be available in your guidance office.
7. Interview your parents to find out why they moved out of their parents' home when they did. Compare their situation with your own. Have circumstances changed and if yes, how? Consider issues such as economic cycles, number of children per family, youth unemployment rate, educational costs, peer pressure and the generation gap.

### Using other resources

- Morissette, René. “Declining Earnings of Young Men.” *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 11-008-XPE, Autumn 1997.
- Clark, Warren. “Paying off Student Loans.” *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 11-008-XPE, Winter 1998.
- Picot, Garnett and John Myles. “Children in Low Income Families.” *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 11-008-XPE, Autumn 1996.
- Sunter, Deborah. “Youth and the Labour Market.” *Labour Force Update*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 71-005-XPB, Spring 1997.

### Share your ideas!

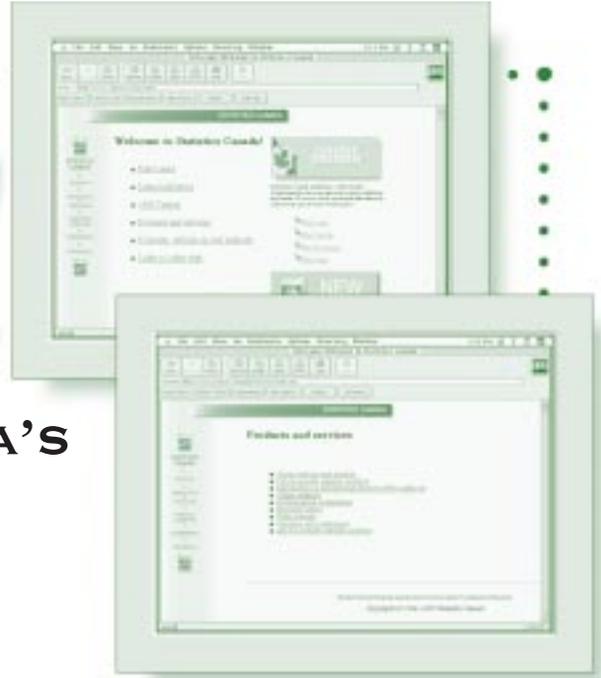
Do you have lessons using **CST** that you would like to share with other educators? Send us your ideas and we will ship you lessons using **CST** received from other educators. For further information, contact Joel Yan, Dissemination Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa K1A 0T6, 1-800-465-1222; fax: (613)-951-4513 or Internet e-mail: yanjoel@statcan.ca.

### EDUCATORS

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

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