

# Young children's participation in the arts and reading outside of school in 2008:

A first look at data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth



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**10<sup>TH</sup> SEASON!**  
**10<sup>E</sup> SAISON!**

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## **Executive Summary**

Very little statistical information exists regarding the arts participation of Canadian children. *Young children's participation in the arts and reading outside of school in 2008*, the 35<sup>th</sup> report in the *Statistical Insights on the Arts* series from Hill Strategies Research, provides a first look at data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) regarding the frequency with which Canadian children between three and seven years of age participate in the following arts and reading activities outside of school:

- Taking lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities
- Taking lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts. (A separate question, not analyzed in this report, addressed sports with a coach or instructor.)
- Reading on their own

The report also examines the frequency with which the parents of Canadian children:

- Sing songs with their children
- Read aloud to their children or listen to their children read (or try to read)

While the arts are not the main focus of the NLSCY, an analysis of the few arts and reading-related questions in the survey may begin to fill in some gaps regarding this important topic area.

Where comparable data is available, trends in children's cultural activities between 1998 and 2008 are also highlighted.

### ***Lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities outside of school***

Among Canadian children between three and seven years old, 18% take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. On the other hand, 80% "almost never" take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. The remaining 2% take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities "about once a month".

There has been an increase in the number of four to seven year olds taking lessons in music, art or other non sport activities at least weekly, from 14% in 1998 to 19% in 2008. (Note: Because of changes in the age ranges asked this question between 1998 and 2008, the analysis focuses on the participation of children between four and seven years of age, the years in common between the two surveys.)

### ***Lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts outside of school***

Among all children between three and seven years old, 35% take weekly lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts (or “other organized physical activities”). In contrast, about two-thirds (64%) “almost never” take lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts. Only 1% of children of all age groups take lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts “about once a month”.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of four to seven year olds taking lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts at least weekly, from 27% in 1998 to 38% in 2008. (Note: Because of changes in the age ranges asked this question between 1998 and 2008, the analysis focuses on the participation of children between four and seven years of age, the years in common between the two surveys.)

### ***Parents singing songs with their children***

A very high proportion of parents sing songs with their children at least weekly, including 94% of parents of three year olds, 91% of parents of four year olds, and 87% of parents of five year olds.

This question was not asked in 1998, so an analysis of changes is not possible.

### ***Children’s reading activities***

The report examines four questions from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) about children’s reading activities:

- “At home, how often does this child do these activities ... look at books, magazines, comics, etc. or try to read on his own?” (Children aged 3 to 5 years old)
- “At home, how often does this child do these activities ... look at books or try to read on his own?” (Children aged 6 years old)
- “How often does this child read for pleasure?” (Children aged 7 years old)
- “How often do you (or your spouse) ... Read aloud to him or listen to him read or try to read?” (Children aged 3 to 7 years old)

The first three questions are combined here in order to examine the frequency of children reading on their own. A majority of children read on their own on a daily basis: 73% of three year olds do so (including those who “look at books”); 68% of four and five year olds do so; and 70% of six year olds read daily. The percentage is lower for seven year old children, 52% of whom read for pleasure daily. It is possible that the slightly different phrasing of the question for seven year old children has an effect on these results.

Between 1998 and 2008, there was essentially no change in the percentage of three or four year old children looking at books, magazines, comics, etc. or trying to read on their own. However, there was a decrease in the number of six year olds who look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis, from 77% in 1998 to 70% in 2008. Similarly, there has been a decrease in the number of seven year olds who read for pleasure on a daily basis, from 58% in 1998 to 52% in 2008.

### ***Parents reading aloud to their children***

About two-thirds of parents (64%) read daily with children who are between three and seven years of age. Another one-quarter of parents (26%) of children between three and seven years of age read with them a few times a week. Five percent or less of parents read with their children “about once a week”, “a few times a month”, or “rarely or never”.

This question was modified between 1998 and 2008, and changes over time were not analyzed.

### ***Factors in music, arts and reading activities***

The report examines the variations in children’s participation in the arts and reading based on a variety of demographic and geographic factors. The participation of children in multiple arts and reading activities is also examined.

There are many similarities between participation in weekly lessons in music, art or other non sport activities and weekly lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts. Both of these types of activities have an important influence on each other. In other words, many children between three and seven years of age who take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons at least weekly also take lessons in music, art or other non sport activities at least weekly.

On the other hand, there is no difference in either type of activity based on the frequency of children reading on their own.

Weekly participation in music, art or other non sport activities and weekly participation in dance, gymnastics or martial arts are higher for children:

- With highly-educated parents.
- In households at or above Statistics Canada’s low-income cutoff.
- Residing in large urban centres.

Girls are much more likely than boys to participate in dance, gymnastics or martial arts, but participation in music, art or other non sport activities is similar between girls and boys.

The report also highlights provincial differences in participation in these childhood activities. There is not a consistent pattern between the provinces for the two types of activities.

The report's analysis of factors in children's daily reading shows that, in general, children are more likely to read daily if they:

- Are girls.
- Live in a higher-income household.
- Reside outside of Quebec.
- Have parents who read aloud to them.
- Take lessons or instruction in music, art or other similar activities.

### ***Methodological notes***

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth asked the "person most knowledgeable" in the household (usually a parent) to report on the activities of the child during the 12 months prior to the survey. For the ages covered in this report (three to seven year olds), the number of survey respondents was 10,309.

The survey is very specific in the type of information provided regarding Canadian children's cultural activities. For example, only participation outside of school hours is covered by the survey. In addition, the arts and reading-related questions (noted above) combine a number of activities that, ideally, the arts community might like to examine separately. Further, not all art forms are covered by the arts-related questions.

This report provides information only for children between three and seven years of age. The NLSCY could provide some data for younger children, but this report focuses on the activities of children between three and seven years of age, as this is the age range of some key arts-related questions.

Older children and youth are asked questions in other sections of the NLSCY. However, the data on older children and youth only provides trend data for children covered in previous iterations of the survey, rather than all older children and youth in Canada.

### ***Future research considerations***

This report provides a first look into a data source that has, to date, not been extensively used by the Canadian arts community: the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). It is important to note that the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth was substantially revised in 2010 and is now called the Survey of Young Canadians. The new survey, which covers children between one and nine years of age, attempts to provide nationally representative indicators on child development.

Many of the questions from the NLSCY were retained in the Survey of Young Canadians, including questions that are the same as (or very similar to) the five key arts and reading-related activities examined in this report.

The Survey of Young Canadians also asks a number of questions about children's health and well-being, their cognitive, emotional and behavioural development, as well as their social environment. Because the arts and reading questions are contained in the same survey as these broader social questions, there is the potential to link children's arts participation with other social indicators. While this was also possible with the 2008 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, an examination of these social linkages was beyond the scope of this report. Future research could pursue this possibility.

## **Section 1: Introduction**

Very little statistical information exists regarding the arts participation of Canadian children. This report provides a first look into a data source that has, to date, not been extensively used by the Canadian arts community: the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). While the arts are not the main focus of the NLSCY, an analysis of the few arts and reading-related questions in the survey may begin to fill in some gaps regarding this important topic area.

The NLSCY provides reliable data about the frequency with which Canadian children between three and seven years of age participate in the following arts and reading activities outside of school:

- Taking lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities
- Taking lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts
- Reading on their own

The report also examines the frequency with which the parents of Canadian children:

- Sing songs with their children
- Read aloud to their children or listen to them read or try to read

Where comparable data is available, trends in children's cultural activities between 1998 and 2008 are also highlighted. There are some limits regarding the comparability of certain questions and the age groups covered in the different iterations of the survey.

The NLSCY is very specific in the type of information provided regarding Canadian children's cultural activities. For example, only participation outside of school hours is covered by the survey. The arts and reading-related questions (noted above) are very particular. The questions combine a number of activities that, ideally, the arts community might like to examine separately. For example, it is not possible to isolate music lessons from instruction in the visual arts or other "non sport activities". In the case of dance, the artistic activity of dancing is combined with "other organized physical activities" such as gymnastics and martial arts. In addition, not all art forms are covered by the arts-related questions.

This report provides information only for children between three and seven years of age. The NLSCY could provide some data for younger children, but this report focuses on the activities of children between three and seven years of age, as this is the age range of some key arts-related questions.

Older children and youth are asked questions in other sections of the NLSCY. However, the data on older children and youth is only reliable in examining trends for children covered in



previous iterations of the survey. The respondents for these sections of the survey do not adequately reflect all older children and youth in Canada.

The survey asked the “person most knowledgeable” in the household (usually a parent) to report on the activities of the child during the 12 months prior to the survey. For the ages covered in this report (three to seven year olds), the number of survey respondents was 10,309, including parents of 2,729 three year olds, 1,761 four year olds, 2,369 five year olds, 1,636 six year olds, and 1,814 seven year olds.

## **Section 2: Children's participation in arts-related activities**

This section of the report examines three questions from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth about children's arts-related activities:

- "In the past 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has this child ...Taken lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities?" (Children aged 3 to 7 years old)
- "In the past 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has this child...Taken lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts?" (Children aged 3 to 7 years old)
- "How often do you (or your spouse) get a chance to ... Sing songs with him/her?" (Children aged 3 to 5 years old)

### ***Lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities outside of school***

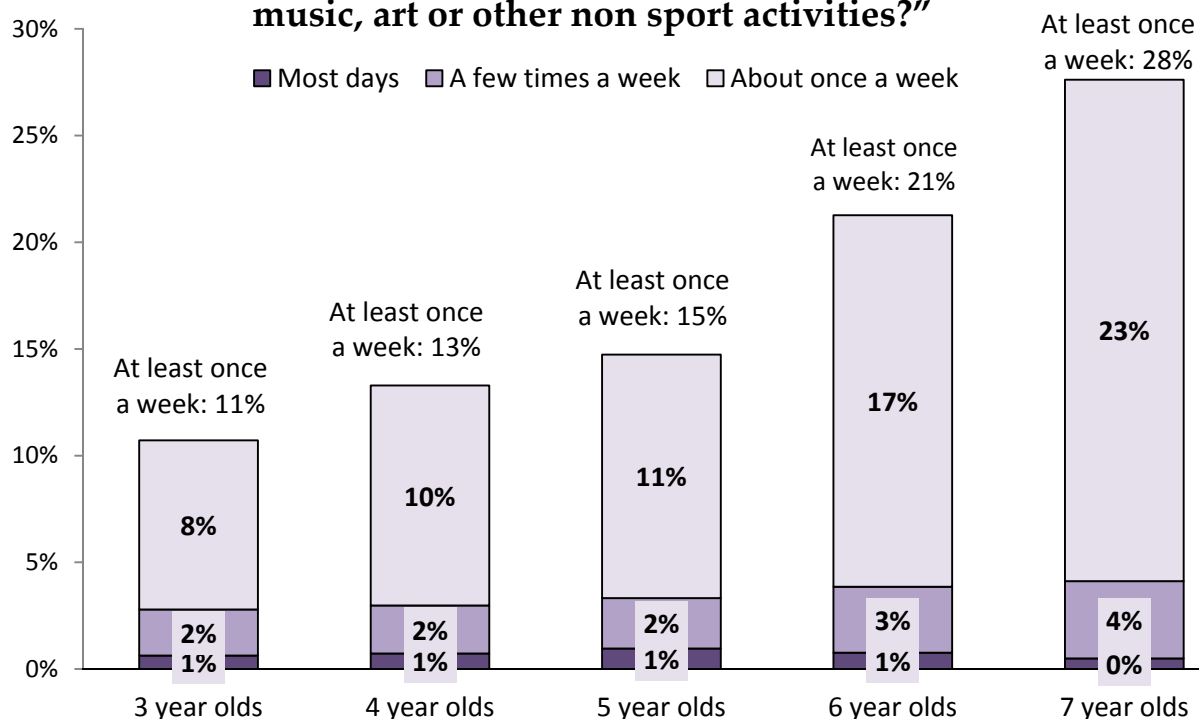
The NLSCY asked parents about the frequency with which their children take "lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities". Unfortunately, it is not possible to isolate music lessons, instruction in the visual arts, or instruction in other "non sport activities".

Among all children between three and seven years old, 18% take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities.

As shown in Figure 1, children's participation in these lessons or instruction increases with age. Only 11% of three year olds take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. This figure increases consistently to reach 21% for six year olds and 28% for seven year olds.

Figure 1 also shows that very few children of any age take these lessons or instructions more often than once a week (the darker shaded areas in the chart).

**Figure 1: “In the past 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has this child ...Taken lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities?”**



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of the frequency with which children between three and seven years old take music, art or other non sport lessons or instruction.

Among all children between three and seven years old, 18% take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. On the other hand, 80% “almost never” take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. The remaining 2% take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities “about once a month”.

A large majority of children in all age groups almost never take these lessons or instruction:

- 88% of three year olds almost never take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities.
- 85% of four year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 83% of five year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 77% of six year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 70% of seven year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.

<b>Table 1: “In the past 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has this child ...Taken lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities?”</b>						
	<b>3 year olds</b>	<b>4 year olds</b>	<b>5 year olds</b>	<b>6 year olds</b>	<b>7 year olds</b>	<b>All ages</b>
Most days	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	<b>1%</b>
A few times a week	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%	<b>3%</b>
About once a week	8%	10%	11%	17%	23%	<b>14%</b>
<i>Subtotal: At least once a week</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i><b>18%</b></i>
About once a month	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	<b>2%</b>
Almost never	88%	85%	83%	77%	70%	<b>80%</b>
<i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09</i>						

### ***Lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts outside of school***

The NLSCY asked parents about the frequency with which their child takes “lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts”. Unfortunately, it is not possible to isolate dance lessons from gymnastics lessons or instruction in the martial arts.

Among all children between three and seven years old, 35% take weekly lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts (or “other organized physical activities”).

As was the case with lessons or instruction in music, art or other non-sport activities, children’s participation in dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons increases with age. As shown in Figure 2, 23% of three year olds and 31% of four year olds take weekly lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts. This figure increases at age five (40%) and remains constant for six year olds (41%) and seven year olds (41%).

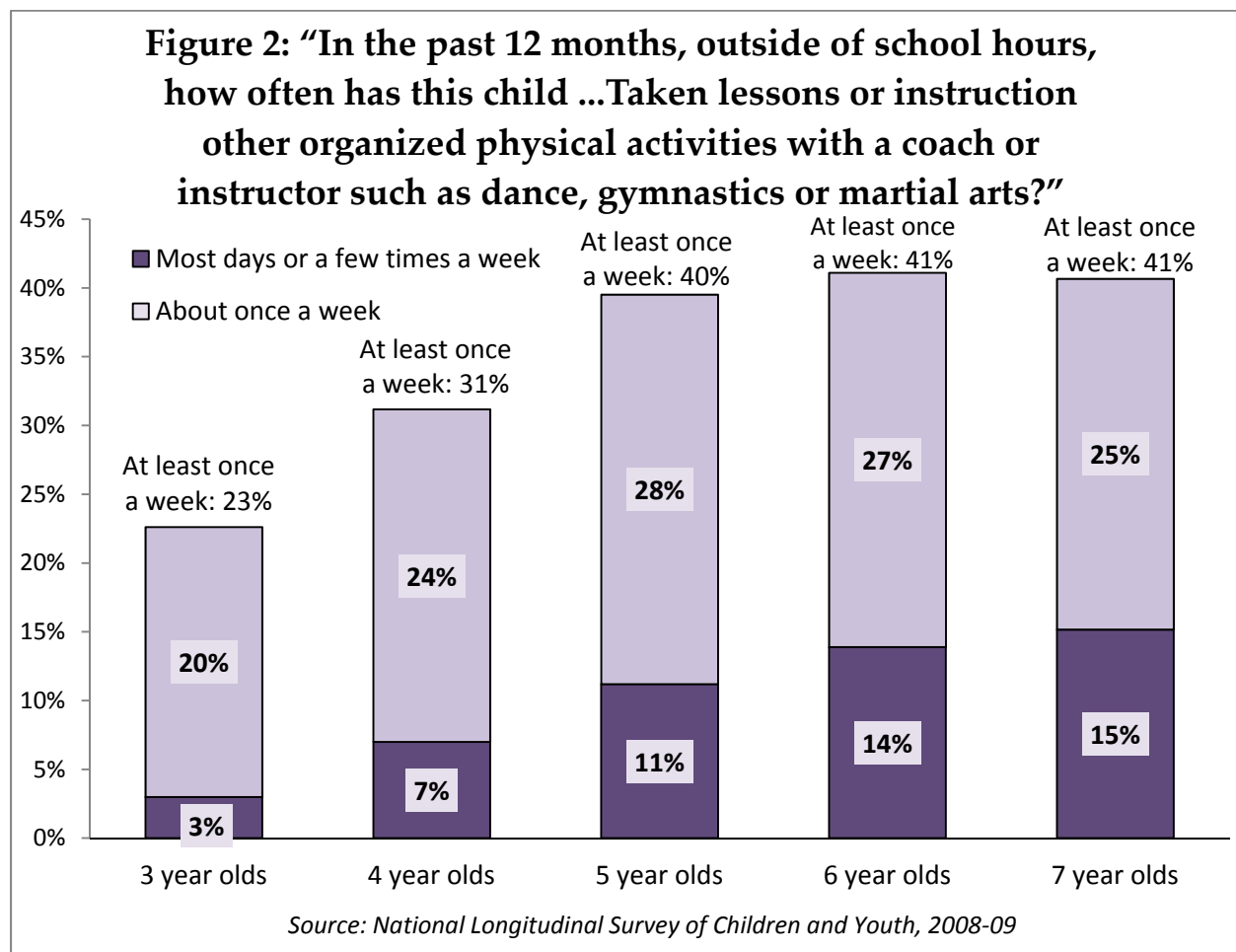


Table 2 provides a full breakdown of the frequency with which children between three and seven years old take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons or instruction.

Among all children between three and seven years old, 35% take weekly lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts (or “other organized physical activities”). In contrast, about two-thirds (64%) “almost never” take lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts. Only 1% of children of all age groups take lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts “about once a month”.

A majority of children in all age groups almost never take lessons or instruction in these areas:

- 76% of three year olds almost never take lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts.
- 68% of four year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 60% of five year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 58% of six year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.
- 58% of seven year olds almost never take these lessons or instruction.

<b>Table 2: “In the past 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has this child...Taken lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts?”</b>						
	<b>3 year olds</b>	<b>4 year olds</b>	<b>5 year olds</b>	<b>6 year olds</b>	<b>7 year olds</b>	<b>All ages</b>
Most days	n.r.	n.r.	0%	1%	0%	<b>0%</b>
A few times a week	n.r.	n.r.	11%	13%	15%	<b>10%</b>
About once a week	20%	24%	28%	27%	25%	<b>25%</b>
<i>Subtotal: At least once a week</i>	<b>23%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>35%</b>
About once a month	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>
Almost never	76%	68%	60%	58%	58%	<b>64%</b>
<i>Note: n.r. = not reliable</i>						
<i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09</i>						

### Parents singing songs with their children

The NLSCY asked parents about the frequency with which they sing songs with their child. This question was asked of parents with children between three and five years of age.

Figure 3 shows that a very high proportion of parents sing songs with their children at least weekly, including 94% of parents of three year olds, 91% of parents of four year olds, and 87% of parents of five year olds.

There are some age-related differences in the percentage of parents singing songs with their children *daily*: 58% of parents of three year olds sing songs with their child daily, 56% of parents of four year olds do so, but only 41% of parents of five year olds do so.

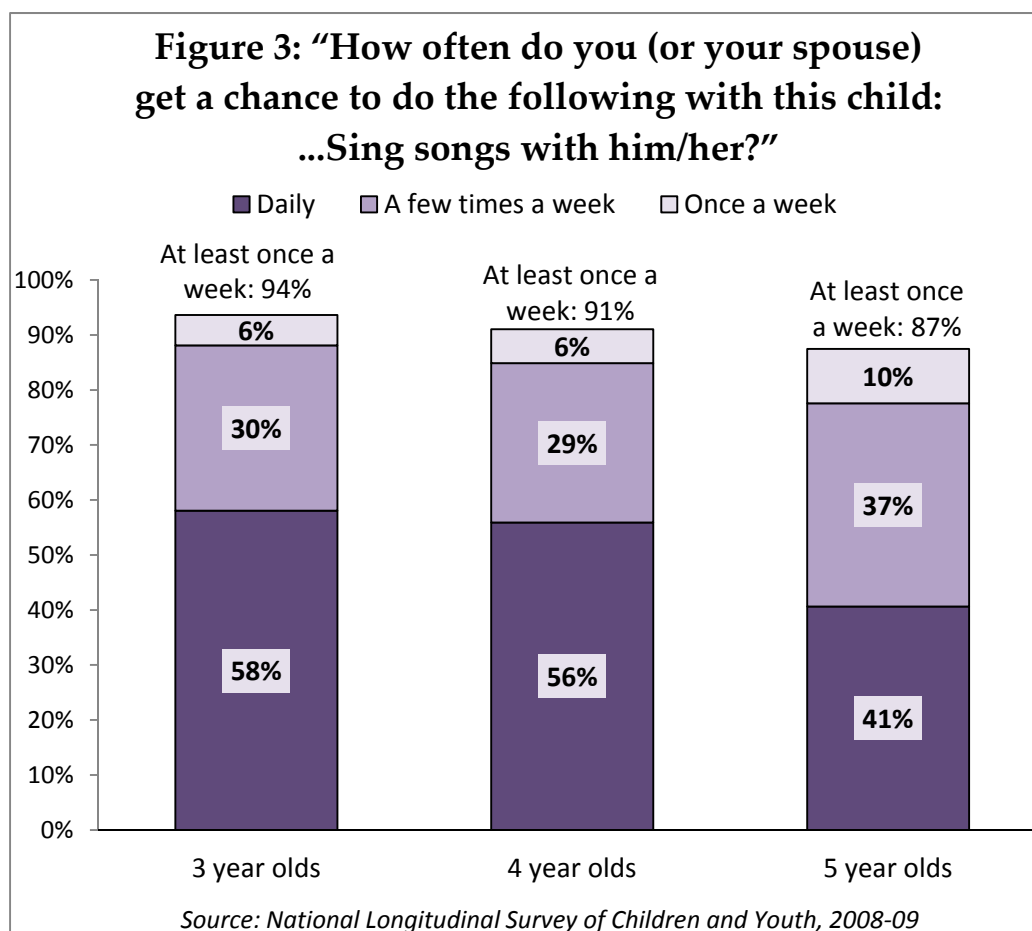


Table 3 provides a full breakdown of the percentage of parents who sing songs with their children between three and five years of age.

The data in the table shows that about one-half of parents (52%) sing songs daily with children who are between three and seven years of age. Another one-third of parents (32%) of children between three and seven years of age sing songs with them a few times a week. Overall, seven percent or less of parents sing songs with their children “about once a week”, “a few times a month”, or “rarely or never”.

<b>Table 3: “How often do you (or your spouse) get a chance to ... Sing songs with him/her?”</b>				
	<b>3 year olds</b>	<b>4 year olds</b>	<b>5 year olds</b>	<b>All ages</b>
Daily	58%	56%	41%	<b>52%</b>
A few times a week	30%	29%	37%	<b>32%</b>
About once a week	6%	6%	10%	<b>7%</b>
<i>Subtotal: At least once a week</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>87%</i>	<b><i>91%</i></b>
A few times a month	3%	4%	6%	<b>4%</b>
Rarely or never	3%	5%	7%	<b>5%</b>
<i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09</i>				



### Section 3: Children's reading activities

This report examines four questions from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) about children's reading activities:

- "At home, how often does this child do these activities ... look at books, magazines, comics, etc. or try to read on his own?" (Children aged 3 to 5 years old)
- "At home, how often does this child do these activities ... look at books or try to read on his own?" (Children aged 6 years old)
- "How often does this child read for pleasure?" (Children aged 7 years old)
- "How often do you (or your spouse) ... Read aloud to him or listen to him read or try to read?" (Children aged 3 to 7 years old)

The first three questions are combined here in order to examine the frequency of children reading on their own. Figure 4 shows that a very high proportion of children read at least weekly, including 96% of children between three and five years old and 97% of six year old children. This percentage is somewhat lower (85%) for seven year olds, largely due to a lower percentage of children reading on a daily basis at age seven. It is possible that the slightly different phrasing of the question for seven year old children has an effect on these results.

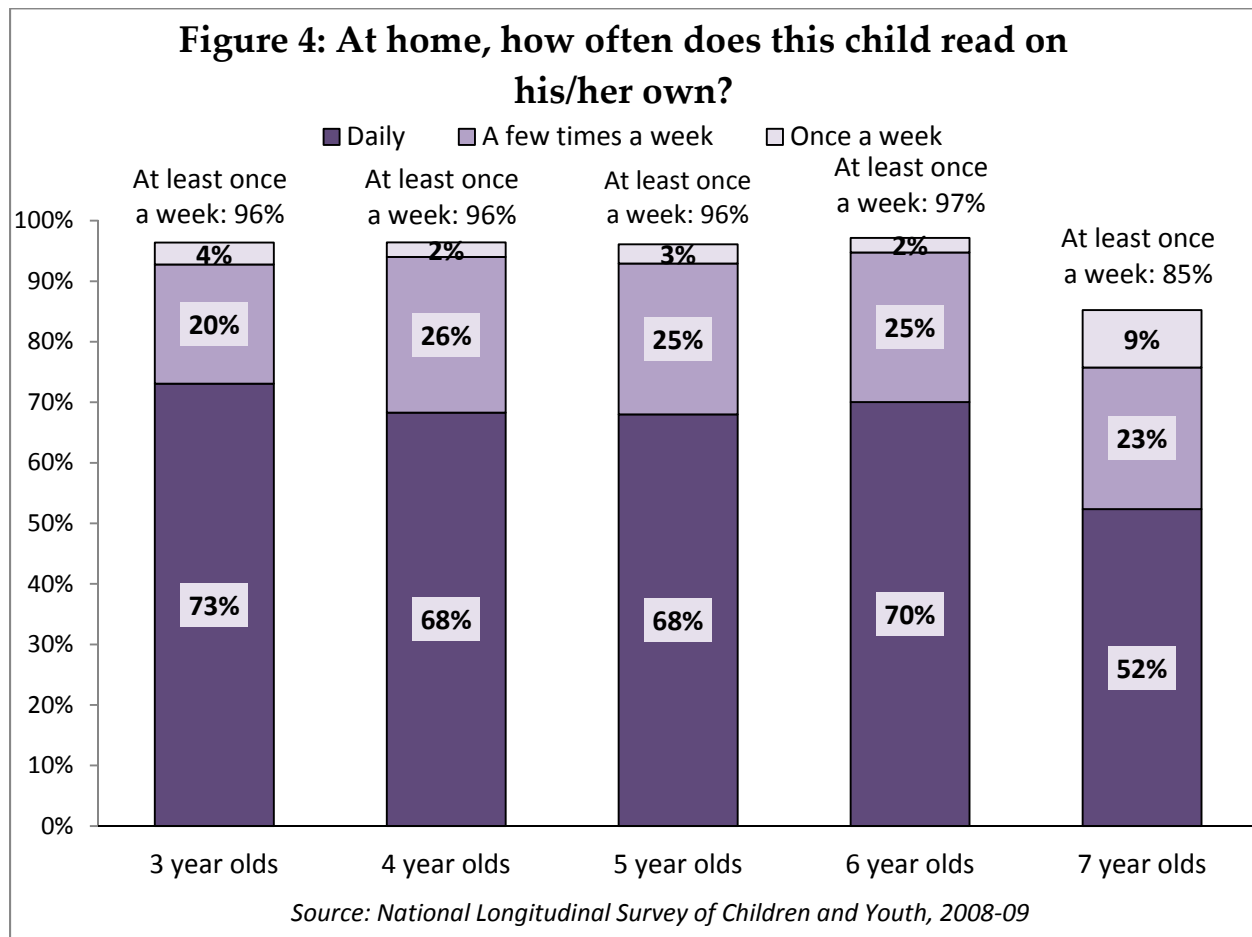


Table 4 provides a full breakdown of the frequency with which children between three and seven years old read on their own.

Among all children between three and seven years old, 4% “rarely or never” read on their own. This percentage is much higher for seven year olds (11%) than for younger children (only 1% or 2%).

A majority of children read on their own on a daily basis: 73% of three year olds do so (including those who “look at books”); 68% of four and five year olds do so; and 70% of six year olds read daily. The percentage is lower for seven year old children, 52% of whom read for pleasure daily. It is possible that the slightly different phrasing of the question for seven year old children has an effect on these results.

<b>Table 4: At home, how often does this child read on his/her own?</b>						
	<b>3 year olds</b>	<b>4 year olds</b>	<b>5 year olds</b>	<b>6 year olds</b>	<b>7 year olds</b>	<b>All ages</b>
Daily	73%	68%	68%	70%	52%	<b>66%</b>
A few times a week	20%	26%	25%	25%	23%	<b>24%</b>
Once a week	4%	2%	3%	2%	9%	<b>4%</b>
A few times a month	1%	2%	3%	1%	4%	<b>2%</b>
Rarely or never	2%	2%	1%	2%	11%	<b>4%</b>
<p><i>Note: The phrasing of the reading questions varied somewhat for children of different ages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “At home, how often does this child do these activities...Look at books, magazines, comics, etc. or try to read on his own?” (3 to 5 year olds)</li> <li>• “At home, how often does this child do these activities...Look at books or try to read on his own?” (6 year olds)</li> <li>• “How often does this child read for pleasure?” (7 year olds)</li> </ul> <p><i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09</i></p>						

Table 5 provides details about the frequency with which parents read aloud to their children or listen to them read. The data in the table shows that about two-thirds of parents (64%) read daily with children who are between three and seven years of age. There is very little difference in frequency between children of different ages.

Another one-quarter of parents (26%) of children between three and seven years of age read with them a few times a week. There are relatively small differences in frequency between children of different ages.

Five percent or less of parents read with their children “once a week”, “a few times a month”, or “rarely or never”.

A combination of the top three categories shows that 94% of parents read with their children at least weekly. This percentage is quite similar for different ages of children, varying only between 92% and 96%.

<b>Table 5: “How often do you (or your spouse) get a chance to do the following with this child ...Read aloud to him or listen to him read or try to read?”</b>						
	<b>3 year olds</b>	<b>4 year olds</b>	<b>5 year olds</b>	<b>6 year olds</b>	<b>7 year olds</b>	<b>All ages</b>
Daily	67%	65%	60%	67%	61%	<b>64%</b>
A few times a week	21%	23%	29%	26%	30%	<b>26%</b>
Once a week	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	<b>4%</b>
A few times a month	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	<b>3%</b>
Rarely or never	4%	4%	5%	2%	3%	<b>4%</b>
<i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09</i>						

## **Section 4: Demographic, geographic and other factors in music, arts and reading activities**

The demographic analysis in this section of the report examines the variations in children's participation in the arts and reading based on the following demographic and geographic factors:

- Sex of the child
- Education of the "person most knowledgeable" (usually a parent)
- Household's low-income status
- Household income group
- Child's mother tongue (i.e., language first learned and understood)
- Marital status of the person most knowledgeable
- Size of area of residence
- Province of residence

The participation of children in multiple arts and reading activities is also examined in this section.

The influence of these factors on five key statistics will be examined:

- Weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities
- Weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts
- Daily reading of books, magazines or comics by children between three and five years of age
- Daily reading by children six years of age
- Daily reading for pleasure by children seven years of age

### ***Weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities***

As noted previously in this report, 18% of all Canadian children between three and seven years of age take lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities on at least a weekly basis.

There is only a very small difference between girls (19%) and boys (16%).

Children whose parents have a college diploma or university degree (21%) are more likely to take music, art or other lessons at least weekly than children whose parents have some post-secondary education but no diploma or degree (15%) or a secondary school diploma (9%).

In households living below Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, 11% of children take music, art or other lessons on at least a weekly basis. In households at or above the low-income cutoff, 19% of children take music, art or other lessons on at least a weekly basis.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the analysis of low-income households, survey respondents were divided into five household income groups, each containing 20% of the overall population (called "quintiles"). This detailed analysis of household income levels confirms that the higher the household income level, the more likely it is that children will take music, art or other lessons at least weekly:

- Lowest household income quintile (less than \$25,000): 9%
- Second household income quintile (between \$25,000 and \$41,999): 14%
- Third household income quintile (between \$42,000 and \$64,999): 15%
- Fourth household income quintile (between \$65,000 and \$100,999): 16%
- Highest household income quintile (\$101,000 or more): 24%

Children with English as their sole mother tongue are more likely (19%) to take music, art or other lessons at least weekly than children with French (13%) or other languages (14%) as their sole mother tongue. The data for children with multiple mother tongues is not reliable.

Children with married parents are most likely to take music, art or other lessons:

- Married: 20%
- Living common-law: 11%
- Separated: 13%
- Single (never married): 13%

Children residing in large urban centres are most likely to take music, art or other lessons:

- Rural residents: 11%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less: 13%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999: 12%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 100,000 and 499,999: 17%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 500,000 or over: 21%

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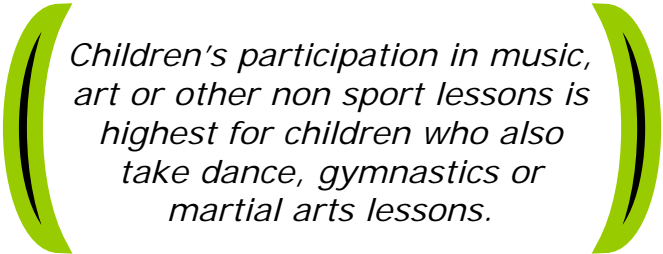
<sup>1</sup> The low-income cutoff measures an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family.

There are some provincial differences in children's participation rates in music, art or similar lessons. The percentage of children taking lessons at least weekly is highest in British Columbia and Newfoundland, and lowest in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. From west to east, the percentages are:

- British Columbia: 23%
- Alberta: 19%
- Saskatchewan: 16%
- Manitoba: 18%
- Ontario: 18%
- Quebec: 14%
- New Brunswick: 11%
- Nova Scotia: 15%
- Prince Edward Island: 12%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 21%

*Children who are active in dance and gymnastics are also active in music and art*

While the above analysis shows that some demographic and geographic factors are related to children taking lessons in music, art and similar activities, there is also a very strong crossover between certain arts activities, despite the time constraints of taking part in multiple activities on a regular basis. The percentage of children taking weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities is much higher for those children who also take lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts at least weekly (27% vs. 18% for all children). This percentage is even higher than the percentage of children in the highest income households taking music or art lessons at least weekly (24%).

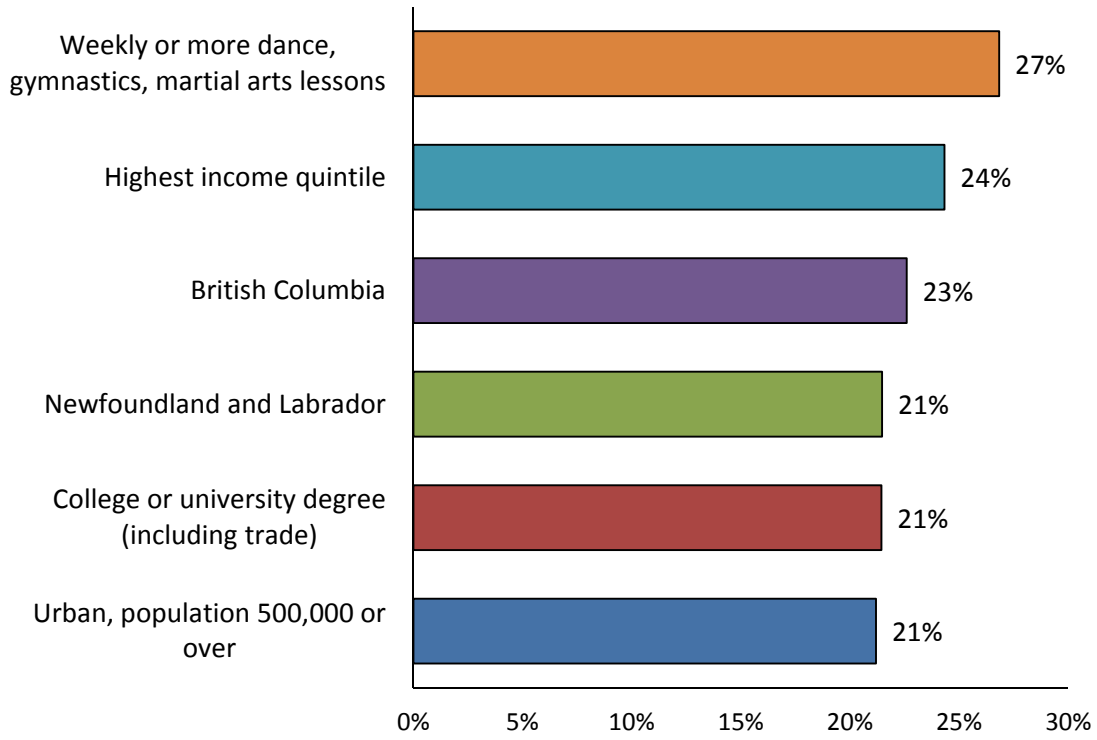


*Children's participation in music, art or other non sport lessons is highest for children who also take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons.*

There is no difference in participation in weekly music, art or other non sport lessons based on the frequency of children reading on their own. Among children between three and seven years of age who read on their own daily, 18% also take weekly lessons in music, art or other non sport activities. This is exactly the same percentage as other children.

Figure 5 shows the demographic factors and arts activities that have the strongest connection with children taking lessons in music, art or other non sport activities at least weekly. The top bar shows that 27% of children between three and seven years of age who take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons at least weekly also take lessons in music, art or other non sport activities at least weekly.

**Figure 5: Key factors in participation in weekly music, art or other non sport lessons**



*Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2008-09*

*Weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts*

As noted previously in this report, about one-third (35%) of all Canadian children between three and seven years old take weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts.

Nearly one-half of girls (45%) take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons on at least a weekly basis, compared with only one-quarter of boys (25%).

Children whose parents have a college diploma or university degree (41%) are more likely to take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons at least weekly than children whose parents have some post-secondary education but no diploma or degree (30%), a secondary school diploma (24%) or no secondary school diploma (12%).

In households living below Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, 19% of children take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons on at least a weekly basis. The percentage is twice as high (38%) for households at or above the low-income cutoff.

A detailed analysis of household income levels confirms that the higher the household income level, the more likely it is that children will take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons at least weekly:

- Lowest household income quintile (less than \$25,000): 17%
- Second household income quintile (between \$25,000 and \$41,999): 22%
- Third household income quintile (between \$42,000 and \$64,999): 26%
- Fourth household income quintile (between \$65,000 and \$100,999): 36%
- Highest household income quintile (\$101,000 or more): 49%

Among linguistic groups, children with both English and French as their mother tongues are most likely (44%) to take lessons on at least a weekly basis, followed by children with English (38%), French (32%) or English and another language (25%) as their mother tongue(s). The data for other language groupings is not reliable.

Children with married parents are most likely to take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons:

- Married: 38%
- Living common-law: 29%
- Separated: 28%
- Single (never married): 25%



The larger the population of their area of residence, the more likely it is that children will take dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons:

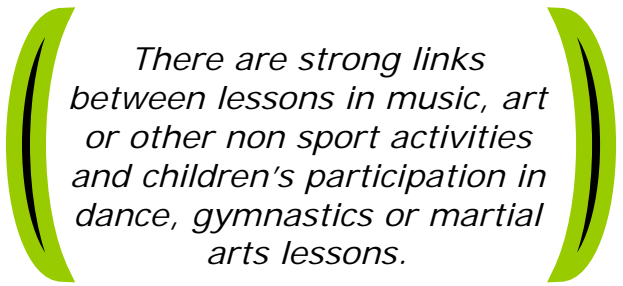
- Rural residents: 24%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less: 28%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999: 35%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 100,000 and 499,999: 35%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 500,000 or over: 39%

There are some provincial differences in children's participation rates in dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons. The percentage of children taking lessons at least weekly is above the national average in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, and lowest in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. From west to east, the percentages are:

- British Columbia: 41%
- Alberta: 37%
- Saskatchewan: 35%
- Manitoba: 31%
- Ontario: 36%
- Quebec: 31%
- New Brunswick: 28%
- Nova Scotia: 31%
- Prince Edward Island: 23%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 32%

*Children who are active in music and art are also active in dance and gymnastics*

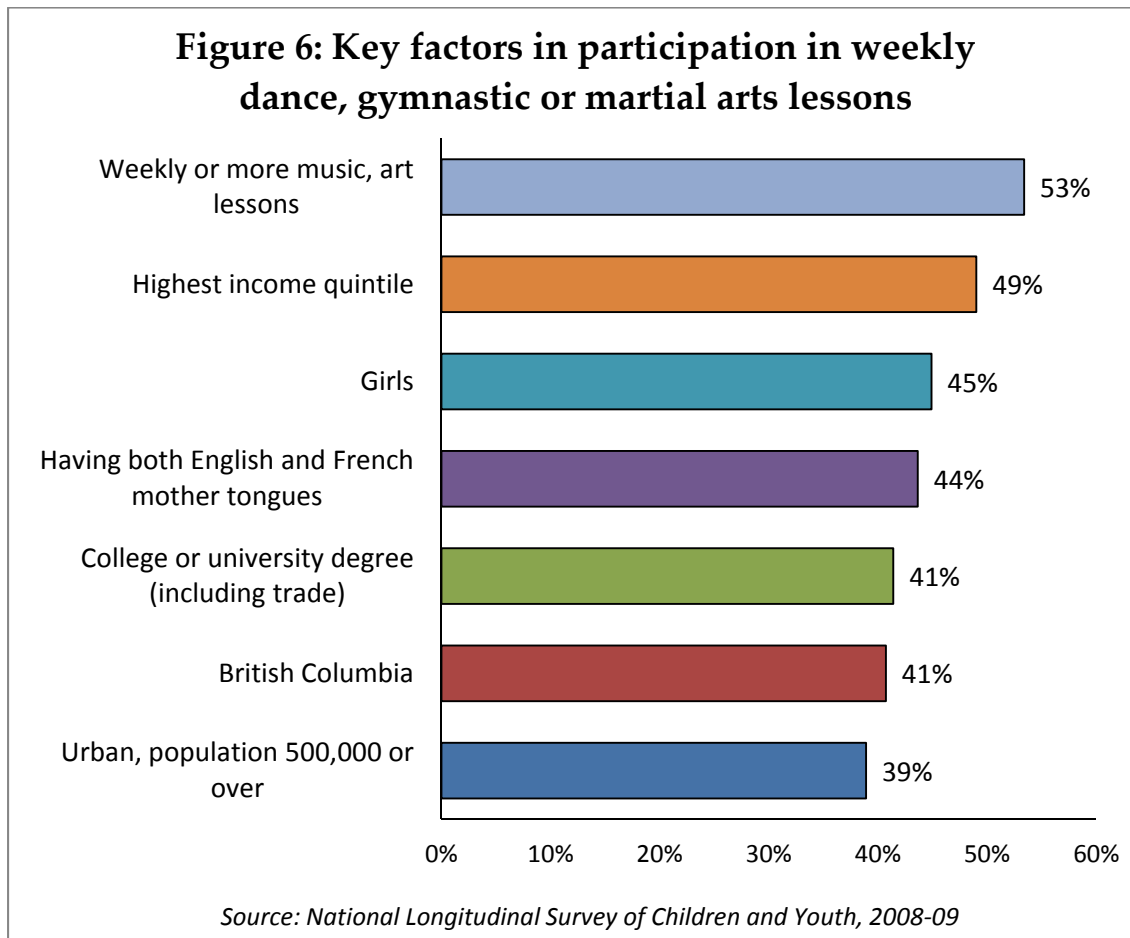
While the above analysis shows that some demographic and geographic factors are related to children taking lessons in dance, gymnastics and martial arts, there is also a strong crossover between certain arts activities. The percentage of children taking weekly lessons or instruction in dance, gymnastics or martial arts is much higher for those children who also take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities (53% vs. 35% of all children). This percentage is even higher than the percentage of children in the highest income households taking dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons at least weekly (49%).



*There are strong links  
between lessons in music, art  
or other non sport activities  
and children's participation in  
dance, gymnastics or martial  
arts lessons.*

There is no difference in participation in weekly dance, gymnastics or martial arts lessons based on the frequency of children reading on their own. Among children between three and seven years of age who read on their own daily, 35% also take weekly lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts. This is exactly the same percentage as other children.

Figure 6 shows the demographic factors and arts activities that have the strongest connection with children taking lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts at least weekly. The top bar shows that 53% of children between three and seven years of age who take music, art or other non sport lessons at least weekly also take lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts at least weekly.



### *Daily reading of books, magazines or comics by children between three and five years of age*

As noted above, over two-thirds (70%) of Canadian children between three and five years of age look at books, magazines, comics, etc. on their own on a daily basis.

Young girls are more likely (76%) to look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis than young boys (63%).

There is very little difference in children's reading activities based on their parents' education level:

- Children whose parents have a college diploma or university degree: 70%
- Children whose parents have some post-secondary education but no diploma or degree: 71%
- Children whose parents have a secondary school diploma: 67%
- Children whose parents do not have a secondary school diploma: 70%

Among linguistic groups:

- Children with both English and another language (other than French) as their mother tongues are most likely to look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis (81%).
- Children with English only (76%) and English and French (73%) have relatively high rates of looking at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis.
- Children with another language only as their mother tongue are somewhat less likely to look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis (62%).
- Children with French as their mother tongue are least likely to look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis (54%).

Children with married parents are most likely to look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis:

- Married: 73%
- Living common-law: 63%
- Separated: 67%
- Single (never married): 61%

In households living below Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, 63% of three to five year old children look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis. In comparison, 71% of children in households at or above the low-income cutoff do so daily.

A detailed analysis of household income levels shows that children in the two lowest income groups have the lowest reading rates:

- Lowest household income quintile (less than \$25,000): 66%
- Second household income quintile (between \$25,000 and \$41,999): 66%
- Third household income quintile (between \$42,000 and \$64,999): 72%
- Fourth household income quintile (between \$65,000 and \$100,999): 68%
- Highest household income quintile (\$101,000 or more): 73%

There is no consistent pattern of reading by children between three and five years of age based on the population of their area of residence:

- Rural residents: 76%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less: 75%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999: 64%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 100,000 and 499,999: 74%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 500,000 or over: 66%

The percentage of children looking at books, magazines or comics daily is particularly low in Quebec (55%). This percentage is highest in Newfoundland (82%), Prince Edward Island (81%) and Nova Scotia (also 81%). From west to east, the percentages are:

- British Columbia: 71%
- Alberta: 77%
- Saskatchewan: 77%
- Manitoba: 77%
- Ontario: 72%
- Quebec: 55%
- New Brunswick: 76%
- Nova Scotia: 81%
- Prince Edward Island: 81%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 82%

*Children whose parents sing with them and children who are active in music and art read more frequently*

Children whose parents read aloud to them daily are much more likely to read on their own daily than the overall average (81% vs. 70%). Similarly, 80% of children with parents who sing songs with them daily also read on their own on a daily basis. In addition, 76% of children who take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities read books or magazines on their own on a daily basis.

*Young children's reading activity is linked with reading or singing with their parents as well as taking lessons in music, art or other non sport activities.*

### *Daily reading by children six years of age*

As mentioned previously, over two-thirds (70%) of all six year old children look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis.

Six year old girls are more likely (75%) to look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis than six year old boys (66%).

Among linguistic groups, children with French as their mother tongue are least likely to look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis (47%). This percentage is much higher for children with English as their mother tongue (77%) and children with another language only as their mother tongue (63%). The data for other language combinations is not reliable.

Children whose parents do not have a secondary school diploma (63%) are least likely to look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis. The percentages are similar for other parental education levels:

- Children whose parents have a college diploma or university degree: 71%
- Children whose parents have some post-secondary education but no diploma or degree: 72%
- Children whose parents have a secondary school diploma: 69%

There are moderate differences for children based on their parent's marital status:

- Married: 72%
- Living common-law: 55%
- Separated: 80%
- Single (never married): 76%

Reading rates are slightly lower for six year old children in low-income households than for other children. In households living below Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, 66% of six year old children look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis, compared with 71% of children in households at or above the low-income cutoff.

A detailed analysis of household income levels shows that six year olds in the lowest income households have the lowest reading rate and those in the highest income group have the highest reading rate:

- Lowest household income quintile (less than \$25,000): 60%
- Second household income quintile (between \$25,000 and \$41,999): 66%
- Third household income quintile (between \$42,000 and \$64,999): 69%
- Fourth household income quintile (between \$65,000 and \$100,999): 69%
- Highest household income quintile (\$101,000 or more): 75%

There are moderate differences in the likelihood of six year olds looking at books or trying to read on their own on a daily basis based on the population of their area of residence:

- Rural residents: 74%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less: 68%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999: 63%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 100,000 and 499,999: 76%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 500,000 or over: 69%



The percentage of six year old children who look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis is particularly low in Quebec (48%). This percentage is highest in Newfoundland (86%), New Brunswick (84%) and Saskatchewan (84%). From west to east, the percentages are:

- British Columbia: 76%
- Alberta: 81%
- Saskatchewan: 84%
- Manitoba: 77%
- Ontario: 73%
- Quebec: 48%
- New Brunswick: 85%
- Nova Scotia: 79%
- Prince Edward Island: 75%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 86%

*Six year old children whose parents read with them and children who are active in music and art read more frequently*

As was the case with younger children, six year old children whose parents read aloud to them daily are much more likely to read on their own daily than the overall average (80% vs. 70%).

One other cultural activity has a strong link with daily reading among six year olds: 81% of children who take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities read books or magazines on their own on a daily basis.



*Six year olds are more likely to read on their own if their parents also read to them or if they take lessons in music, art or other non sport activities.*

### *Daily reading for pleasure by children seven years of age*

As noted previously in this report, about one-half (52%) of seven year old children read books for pleasure on a daily basis.

Seven year old girls are much more likely (60%) to read for pleasure on a daily basis than seven year old boys (45%).

Among linguistic groups, seven year olds with French as their mother tongue are least likely to read for pleasure on a daily basis (39%). This percentage is much higher for children with English as their mother tongue (52%), children with both English and another language (not French) as their mother tongues (64%), and children with another language only (neither English nor French) as their mother tongue (69%). The data for other language combinations is not reliable.

Children whose parents have some post-secondary education but no diploma or degree are least likely to read for pleasure on a daily basis (42%). The percentages are similar for other parental education levels:

- Children whose parents have a college diploma or university degree: 55%
- Children whose parents have a secondary school diploma: 51%
- Children whose parents do not have a secondary school diploma: 51%

Children in single-parent (never married) families are least likely to read for pleasure on a daily basis (35%), followed by children whose parents are in a common-law relationship (41%). The reading percentages are higher for children whose parents are separated (54%) or are still married (56%).

Seven year old children living in low-income households read for pleasure in the same proportion as children in other households. In households living below Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff, 53% of seven year old children read for pleasure daily, compared with 52% of seven year olds in households at or above the low-income cutoff.

A detailed analysis of household income levels shows that seven year olds in the lowest income households have the highest rate of reading for pleasure. The percentage of seven year olds reading for pleasure daily is quite consistent in other households:

- Lowest household income quintile (less than \$25,000): 61%
- Second household income quintile (between \$25,000 and \$41,999): 50%
- Third household income quintile (between \$42,000 and \$64,999): 53%
- Fourth household income quintile (between \$65,000 and \$100,999): 51%
- Highest household income quintile (\$101,000 or more): 53%

There are only small differences in the likelihood of seven year old children reading for pleasure on a daily basis based on the size of their area of residence:

- Rural residents: 52%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less: 48%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 30,000 and 99,999: 48%
- Residents of municipalities with a population between 100,000 and 499,999: 52%
- Residents of municipalities with a population of 500,000 or over: 54%

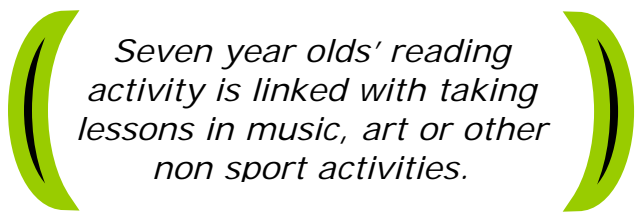
Among the provinces, the percentage of seven year old children who read for pleasure on a daily basis is highest in the five western-most provinces, lowest in Quebec, and below the national average in the Atlantic provinces. From west to east, the percentages are:

- British Columbia: 62%
- Alberta: 59%
- Saskatchewan: 56%
- Manitoba: 55%
- Ontario: 53%
- Quebec: 42%
- New Brunswick: 48%
- Nova Scotia: 51%
- Prince Edward Island: 46%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 48%

*Seven year old children whose parents read with them and children who are active in music and art read more frequently*

Seven year old children whose parents read aloud to them daily are more likely to read books for pleasure daily than the overall average (58% vs. 52%).

One other cultural activity also shows a strong link with daily reading: 58% of seven year olds who take weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities read books for pleasure on a daily basis.



*Seven year olds' reading activity is linked with taking lessons in music, art or other non sport activities.*



## **Section 5: Changes in children's participation in music, arts and reading activities between 1998 and 2008**

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth has been conducted every two years between 1994 and 2008. This exploratory report examines changes between 1998 and 2008 for the following arts and reading-related activities outside of school:

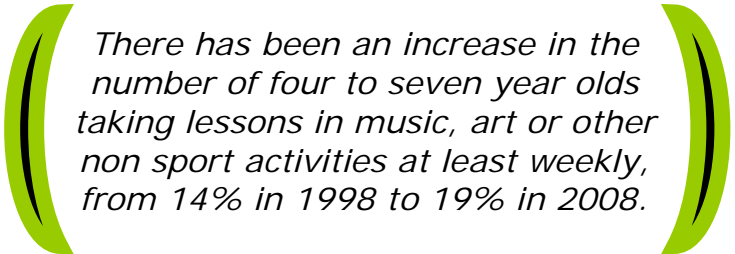
- Lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities (children between four and seven years of age).
- Lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts (children between four and seven years of age).
- Reading of books, magazines or comics (children three or four years of age).
- Reading books on his/her own (children six years of age)
- Reading for pleasure (children seven years of age)

There are some limits on the comparability of the NLSCY questions over this period. The question regarding singing songs to children was not asked in 1998, and the question regarding reading to children was modified between 1998 and 2008. As such, an analysis of changes is not possible for these questions. For many of the questions that remained consistent between the two iterations of the survey, the age ranges of children were slightly different. In these cases, only the age or the age range asked in both years was examined. For questions where the data by age is not reliable in 1998, summary data for the entire age range is examined.

### ***Weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities***

Between 1998 and 2008, the question regarding children taking lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities did not change. However, the question was asked of parents of children between four and nine years of age in 1998 and parents of children between three and seven years of age in 2008. This report analyzes the participation of children between four and seven years of age (the years in common between the two surveys).

In 1998, 14% of children between four and seven years old took weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities. By 2008, this percentage had increased to 19%.



*There has been an increase in the number of four to seven year olds taking lessons in music, art or other non sport activities at least weekly, from 14% in 1998 to 19% in 2008.*

***Weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts***

Between 1998 and 2008, there was no change in the question regarding children taking lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts. However, the question was asked of parents of children between four and nine years of age in 1998 and children between three and seven years of age in 2008. This report analyzes the participation of children between four and seven years of age.

In 1998, 27% of children between four and seven years old took weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts. By 2008, this percentage had increased to 38%.

*There has been a substantial increase in the number of four to seven year olds taking lessons in dance, gymnastics or martial arts at least weekly, from 27% in 1998 to 38% in 2008.*

***Daily reading of books, magazines or comics by children three or four years of age***

Between 1998 and 2008, there was no change in the question regarding children looking at books, magazines, comics, etc. or trying to read on their own. This question was asked of parents of children between two and five years of age in 1998 and parents of children between two and four years of age in 2008. This report analyzes the reading of three and four year old children. The data is reliable for both of these ages.

There was almost no change in the percentage of young children looking at books, magazines, comics, etc. or trying to read on their own:

*There has been essentially no change in the number of three or four year olds who look at books, magazines or comics on a daily basis.*

- In 1998, 75% of three year olds looked at books, magazines, comics, etc. or tried to read on their own on a daily basis. In 2008, this percentage was 73%.
- In 1998, 69% of four year olds looked at books, magazines, comics, etc. or tried to read on their own on a daily basis. In 2008, this percentage was almost identical (68%).

### *Daily reading by children six years of age*

Between 1998 and 2008, there was no change in the question regarding children looking at books or trying to read on their own. This question was asked of parents of children between five and nine years of age in 1998 and parents of children six years of age in 2008. This report examines reliable data for six year old children.

There was a decrease in the percentage of six year old children looking at books or trying to read on their own on a daily basis. This percentage declined from 77% in 1998 to 70% in 2008.

*There has been a decrease in the number of six year olds who look at books or try to read on their own on a daily basis, from 77% in 1998 to 70% in 2008.*

### *Daily reading for pleasure by children seven years of age*

Between 1998 and 2008, there was no change in the question regarding children reading for pleasure. This question was asked of parents of children between seven and nine years of age in 1998 and parents of children seven years of age in 2008. This report examines reliable data for seven year old children.

There was a decrease in the percentage of seven year old children reading for pleasure on their own on a daily basis. This percentage declined from 58% in 1998 to 52% in 2008.

*There has been a decrease in the number of seven year olds who read for pleasure on a daily basis, from 58% in 1998 to 52% in 2008.*

Table 6 provides an overview of the changes between 1998 and 2008.

<b>Table 6: Changes in young children's participation in the arts and reading between 1998 and 2008</b>			
	<b>1998</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Change</b>
Weekly lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities (4 to 7 year olds)	14%	19%	5%
Weekly lessons or instruction in organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts (4 to 7 year olds)	27%	38%	11%
Daily reading of books, magazines or comics (3 year olds)	75%	73%	-2%
Daily reading of books, magazines or comics (4 year olds)	69%	68%	-1%
Daily reading (6 year olds)	77%	70%	-7%
Daily reading for pleasure (7 year olds)	58%	52%	-6%
<i>Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1998-99 and 2008-09</i>			

## **Section 6: Future research considerations**

This report has provided a first look into a data source that has, to date, not been extensively used by the Canadian arts community: the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). While the arts are not the main focus of the NLSCY, an analysis of the few arts and reading-related questions in the survey has begun to fill in some gaps regarding this important topic area.

It is important to note that the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth was substantially revised in 2010 and is now called the Survey of Young Canadians. The new survey, which covers children between one and nine years of age, attempts to provide nationally representative indicators on child development.

Many of the questions from the NLSCY were retained in the Survey of Young Canadians, including questions that are the same as (or very similar to) the five key arts and reading-related activities examined in this report:

- Taking lessons or instruction in music, art or other non sport activities
- Taking lessons or instruction in other organized physical activities with a coach or instructor such as dance, gymnastics or martial arts
- Reading on their own
- Parents singing songs with their children
- Parents reading aloud to their children or listening to them read or try to read

The Survey of Young Canadians also asks a number of questions about children's health and well-being, their cognitive, emotional and behavioural development, as well as their social environment. Because the arts and reading questions are contained in the same survey as these broader social questions, there is the potential to link children's arts participation with other social indicators. While this was also possible with the 2008 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, an examination of these social linkages was beyond the scope of this report. Future research could pursue this possibility.