



# The Daily

Statistics Canada

Wednesday, November 14, 2001

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time

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- **School performance of children from immigrant families, 1994 to 1998** 2  
Children of immigrant parents start school with less-developed reading, writing and mathematics skills than do their classmates with Canadian-born parents. But they overcome this disadvantage before the end of elementary school, according to a new study.

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## MAJOR RELEASES

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### School performance of children from immigrant families

1994 to 1998

Children of immigrant parents start school with less-developed reading, writing and mathematics skills than do their classmates with Canadian-born parents. But they overcome this disadvantage before the end of elementary school, according to a new study.

The study used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth from 1994 to 1998 to assess the academic performance of children of immigrants in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as their overall aptitude.

The study found that, overall, children of immigrant parents started school with less-developed skills in reading, writing and mathematics than did their classmates with Canadian-born parents. However, with each passing year, they made gains in overcoming this disadvantage.

In fact, their performance generally reached, or even exceeded, the performance of children of Canadian-born parents before they completed elementary school.

Children from immigrant families in which the mother tongue was neither English nor French had particularly large disadvantages when starting school, but were able to catch up to their classmates by age 10 or 11. Children from immigrant families in which the mother tongue was one of the official languages were in a better position when starting school and were able to catch up to children with Canadian-born parents by age 9.

Student performance was based on the teacher's assessment. Children were deemed to have high performance if the teacher rated the child as being either "near the top of the class" or "above the middle of the class, but not at the top." Children were deemed to have low performance if the teacher rated the child as being in the middle, below the middle, or near the bottom of the class.

The study also examined student performance based on the parent's assessment and on the results of a number of tests designed to assess vocabulary, reading, writing, and math skills. Generally, the findings were the same regardless of the source. These results

#### Note to readers

*This release presents the results of a study that analyses the school performance of children from immigrant families. The study used data from the first three cycles of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, conducted between 1994 and early 1999. Calculations were based on the 29,287 children who were enrolled in school at the time of the survey.*

*Children of immigrant parents are children for whom the person most knowledgeable about the child is an immigrant. These children may or may not have been born in Canada. Children of Canadian-born parents are those for whom the person most knowledgeable about the child was born in Canada. For 92% of all children surveyed, the person most knowledgeable was the child's mother. Children whose most knowledgeable parent has one of the official languages (English or French) as a mother tongue are compared with those whose parent has a different mother tongue. The mother tongue is the language the parent first spoke and still understands. It may or may not be the language actually spoken in the home to the child.*

*This release focusses on the teacher's assessment of the child's performance in reading, writing and mathematics. The teacher was asked to rate the child's performance using the following categories: near the top of the class; above the middle of the class, but not at the top; in the middle of the class; below the middle of the class, but above the bottom; and near the bottom of the class. A measure of school performance was created from this information. A child was deemed to have "high" performance if the teacher rated the child as either "near the top of the class" or "above the middle of the class, but not at the top." A child was deemed to have "low" performance if the teacher rated the child as being in one of the last three performance categories.*

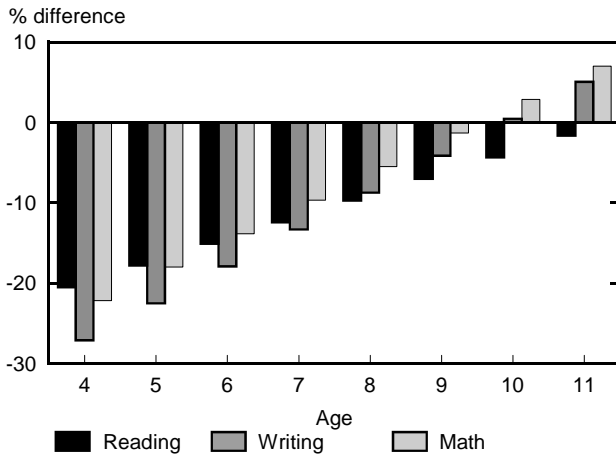
reflect the average differences between children of immigrant parents and those with Canadian-born parents. There may be large variations underlying these averages.

#### Mother tongue influences schooling outcomes in child's early years

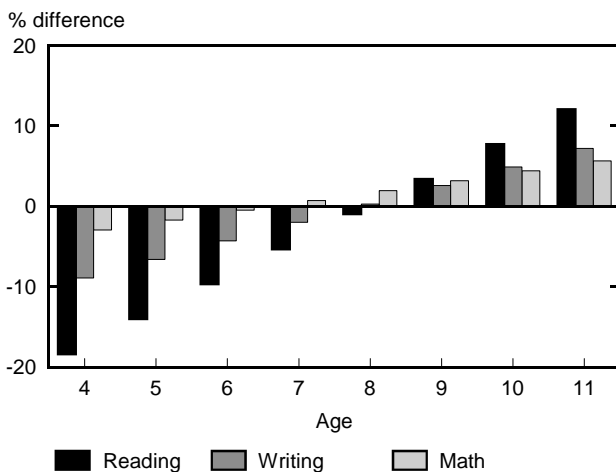
This study showed that mother tongue has an impact on school performance in the child's early years.

Children from immigrant families whose parents' mother tongue was neither English nor French faced significant disadvantages in the first years of elementary school, but they made significant gains with each passing year.

**Children of immigrant parents whose mother tongue is neither English nor French catch up to children of Canadian-born parents by age 11**



**Children of immigrant parents whose mother tongue is either English or French catch up to the children of Canadian-born parents by age 9**



Teachers were much less likely to consider these students as being near the top of the class or above the middle of the class than their classmates with Canadian-born parents. Their mathematics and reading skills were some 20% lower and their writing skills almost 30% lower. However, by age 10 or 11, these children were considered to be performing as well as their classmates in all three areas.

Children from immigrant families whose parents' mother tongue was one of the official languages had similar experiences, though not to the same degree. They were about as likely to be above the middle of the class in mathematics when they started school, but 10% less likely in writing, and about 20% less likely in reading.

By the age of 9, they had caught up to, and may have even fared a bit better than, their classmates with Canadian-born parents.

**Children with more-educated parents are at an advantage**

Children of parents with high levels of education had above-average performance in school, according to the study.

Children with a parent who had only an elementary-level education fared worse than children whose parents' highest education was a high school diploma. They had 10% lower performance in reading, 12% lower performance in writing, and 14% lower performance in mathematics.

Children with a parent who had a university degree did significantly better than children whose parents' highest education was a high school diploma. They had 20% higher performance in reading, 17% higher performance in writing and 21% higher performance in mathematics.

Immigrant parents were more likely to have both lower and higher levels of education than Canadian-born parents.

About 7% of children of immigrant parents whose mother tongue was neither English nor French had a parent with no more than elementary-level education. This compares with 3% for children of Canadian-born parents.

However, children of immigrant parents were also more likely to have a parent with a university degree: 23% of children of immigrant parents with neither English nor French as a mother tongue, 23% of children of immigrant parents with either English or French as a mother tongue, compared with 15% of children of Canadian-born parents.

**Lone parenthood also associated with lower school performance**

Children from a single-parent household had lower school performance than children from two-parent households. Reading skills were judged on average to be 12% lower for children from lone-parent families, writing skills 10% lower, and mathematics skills 12% lower.

About 12% of children with immigrant parents whose mother tongue was not English or French came from lone-parent families; this was also the case for 22% of children with immigrant parents whose mother tongue was one of the official languages.

By comparison, about 17% of children whose parents were born in Canada lived in single-parent households.

### **Girls did as well as or better than boys**

Generally, teachers rated girls' performance better than boys' during elementary school.

On average, girls were 11% more likely to be considered near the top of the class or above the middle

in reading, 17% more likely in writing, and as likely as boys in mathematics.

The research paper *School performance of the children of immigrants in Canada, 1994/1998*, no. 178 (11F0019MIE01178, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's Web site ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)). From the *Our products and services* page, choose *Research papers (free)*, then *Social conditions*. A paper version (11F0019MPE, no. 178, \$5/\$25) can be ordered by contacting Joana Malette (613-941-6386).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Christopher Worswick (613-941-2311) or Miles Corak (613-951-9047), Family and Labour Studies Division. ■

## OTHER RELEASES

### Non-residential building construction price indexes

Third quarter 2001

The composite price index for non-residential building construction (1992=100) was 125.1 in the third quarter, up 0.2% from the second quarter and up 2.5% from the third quarter of 2000.

The index for Edmonton rose 0.4% from the second quarter, followed by Halifax and Calgary (both at +0.3%), Toronto (+0.2%), Ottawa and Vancouver (+0.1%). Montréal registered no change.

Compared with the third quarter of 2000, Toronto saw the strongest advance (+3.4%). Calgary and Edmonton gained 2.9%, followed by Ottawa (+2.8%), Vancouver (+1.2%), Montréal (+0.8%) and Halifax (+0.5%).

### Non-residential building construction price index (1992=100)

|                  | Third quarter<br>2001 | Third quarter<br>2000<br>to third<br>quarter<br>2001<br>% change | Second<br>to<br>third<br>quarter<br>2001 |
|------------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Composite</b> | <b>125.1</b>          | <b>2.5</b>   | <b>0.2</b>                               |
| Halifax          | 109.8                 | 0.5  | 0.3                                      |
| Montréal         | 119.3                 | 0.8  | 0.0                                      |
| Ottawa           | 125.3                 | 2.8  | 0.1                                      |
| Toronto          | 130.8                 | 3.4  | 0.2                                      |
| Calgary          | 124.8                 | 2.9  | 0.3                                      |
| Edmonton         | 123.7                 | 2.9  | 0.4                                      |
| Vancouver        | 120.1                 | 1.2  | 0.1                                      |

**Note:** Non-residential building construction price indexes provide an indication of changes in construction costs in seven major urban areas (Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver). Three construction categories—industrial, commercial and institutional buildings—are represented by selected models (a light factory building, an office building, a warehouse, a shopping centre and a school). Besides the major urban areas and composite indexes, a further breakdown of the changes in costs is available by trade group—structural, architectural, mechanical and electrical—within the building types. These price indexes are derived from surveys of general and special trade group contractors. They report data on various categories of costs (material, labour, equipment, taxes, overhead and profit) relevant to the detailed construction specifications included in the surveys.

**Available on CANSIM: tables 3270001 and 3270002.**

The third quarter 2001 issue of *Construction price statistics* (62-007-XPB, \$24/\$79) will be available in December.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Susie Boyd (613-951-9606; fax: 613-951-1539; [infounit@statcan.ca](mailto:infounit@statcan.ca)), Prices Division. ■

## NEW PRODUCTS

**School performance of the children of immigrants in Canada, 1994–1998, no. 178**  
Catalogue number 11F0019MIE01178  
(free).

**School performance of the children of immigrants in Canada, 1994–1998, no. 178**  
Catalogue number 11F0019MPE (\$5/\$25).

**Canada's mineral production, preliminary estimates, 2000**  
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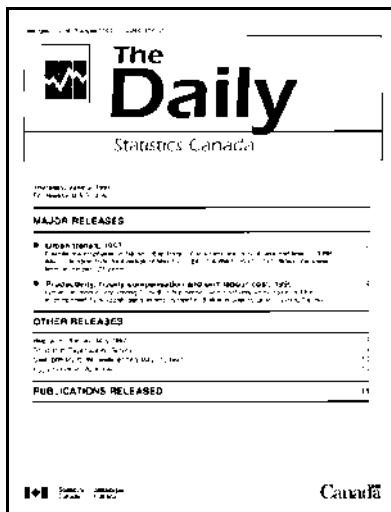
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#### Statistics Canada's official release bulletin

Catalogue 11-001E.

Published each working day by the Communications Division, Statistics Canada, 10-H, R.H. Coats Bldg., Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6.

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