



2008 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning:

Results for learning throughout the lifespan

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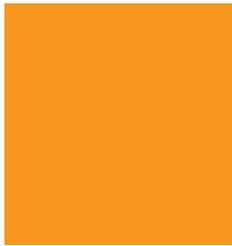


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The Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning

About the survey

The Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning (SCAL) is an annual survey of Canadians' attitudes, opinions, beliefs and experiences with learning across the lifespan. The 2008 edition represents the third iteration of the survey and covers the following four learning domains:

- Early childhood learning
- Structured learning at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels
- Work-related adult learning
- Health-related learning

The survey was designed by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) in consultation with Statistics Canada, which administered the survey on behalf of CCL. SCAL data were collected between April 1 and May 16, 2008. A total of 5,488 Canadians aged 18 to 74 were surveyed by Statistics Canada. All respondents had previously participated in Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. Canadians living in institutions, on reserves, or in the northern territories were not included in the sample.

The questions

1. Early childhood learning and child care

- What kinds of child-care arrangements do Canadian parents make?
- How often do parents engage in learning activities with their young children?
- How often do parents encourage or allow children to engage in unstructured play?
- How much “screen time” do parents allow their young children?
- Do parents try to teach their young children new skills?

2. Schools: quality, access and mobility

- Are schools meeting Canadians’ expectations?
- How important are high-school programs that include work experience?
- Which subjects should be included in the compulsory curriculum?
- What kinds of extracurricular activities do Canadian children participate in?
- How well are Canada’s post-secondary institutions doing?
- Do all qualified students have the same opportunity to get a post-secondary education?
- How affordable is post-secondary education in Canada?
- How mobile are post-secondary students?

3. Work-related adult learning

- How important is adult learning?
- How many Canadians take formal work-related training?
- What forms of employer support do Canadians receive for their formal work-related training?
- What factors prevent Canadians from taking formal work-related training?
- What factors would foster greater participation in formal work-related training?
- What forms of non-formal work-related learning do Canadians engage in?

4. Health and learning

- What resources do Canadians use to learn about health issues?
- What prevents Canadians from using various sources of health-related information?
- How strong are Canadians’ health-literacy skills?

Key Findings

1. Early childhood learning

- 67% of parents of young children report using some form of child care on a regular basis.
- Parents in Quebec are more likely to use child care and more likely to use day-care centres, in particular, than parents in other parts of the country.
- Parents with higher incomes are more likely to use day-care centres, while parents with lower incomes are more likely to have their children cared for by other relatives.
- Parents who do not use child-care services make more frequent use of public facilities (e.g., libraries, museums, parks).
- Most parents limit their young children's "screen time"—although they allow more time for watching television, videos or DVDs than for playing video or computer games.

2. Schools: quality, access and mobility

- Canadians generally indicate that schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations, except with respect to preparing students for work. Canadians with children at home are generally more satisfied with schools than Canadians without children at home, and those born outside of Canada are generally more satisfied than those born in Canada.
- Canadians are strongly in favour of high-school programs that include a component of work experience, such as co-op programs, apprenticeships, work placements, or trade/vocational programs.
- Canadians generally indicate that post-secondary institutions are doing a good job, except with respect to providing access to all qualified students. Canadians are particularly concerned about post-secondary access for low-income students.
- Canadians believe student loans and financial aid are generally available, but over 80% feel that students have to borrow too much money to pay for their post-secondary educations.
- About 40% of Canadian post-secondary students take courses at more than one institution over the course of their studies. One-quarter of these mobile students end up repeating coursework as a result of moving from one institution to another.

3. *Work-related adult learning*

- 51% of non-retired Canadians report engaging in formal work-related training within the last year.
- 88% of non-retired Canadians report engaging in non-formal work-related learning within the last month.
- Older workers and those with less education are less likely to receive formal work-related training, but are almost as likely to participate in non-formal work-related learning.
- Among Canadians who do not participate in formal work-related training, financial considerations are an important factor relevant to fostering higher levels of participation.

4. *Health-related learning*

- Among Canadians, the most popular sources of health-related information are:
 - family doctors (73%);
 - other health professionals (69%);
 - friends or family (69%); and
 - newspapers or magazines (64%).
- Older Canadians are more likely to consult their family doctors for information, while younger Canadians are more likely to consult friends or family and the internet.
- Most Canadians can read directions (71%) and warnings on new medicines without difficulty, but fewer than half (46%) report reading nutritional labels without difficulty.
- Canadians with more education appear to be more discerning consumers of health-related information and they report more confidence in their health-literacy skills.

In the following sections, results from each learning domain are presented in some detail. Each section includes an overview of the questions that were asked and the responses that were given. As well, specific questions of interest are analyzed in some depth and results are presented in the context of relevant research conducted elsewhere.

Canadian Attitudes toward Child Care and Early Childhood Learning

The foundations for successful learning are laid during children's early years: their activities, and the quality of care¹ and support they receive at this time² play a fundamental role in preparing them for learning in school and throughout their lives.³

Recent research reveals that growing numbers of Canadian parents are relying on non-parental care during the early years.^{4,5} This is due to rising living costs requiring both parents to work, greater labour force participation by women,⁶ the need for respite from child-rearing responsibilities, and a strong parental desire to provide their children with the best learning opportunities. As a result, parents and policy makers are paying more attention to the quality of care received by children during their early years.^{7,8}

SCAL 2008 examined Canadians' attitudes, experiences and beliefs about learning during the early years. Questions about early childhood learning collected information about experiences in child-care settings and the home.

These questions were asked only of parents with children aged 0–12. Parents were asked to answer questions only about the youngest child in this age category. A total of 1,757 parents (50% male and 50% female) responded. Nearly all fathers (93%) and three-quarters of mothers (76%) who took part in this section of the survey were employed. Employment status information was only obtained for the survey respondents, and not for spouses or partners.

Overview: What we asked, what Canadians told us

1. What child-care arrangements do Canadian parents make?

- What types of child care do parents use?
- How many hours per week are children in child care?

Parents were asked about their use of several different types of child care:

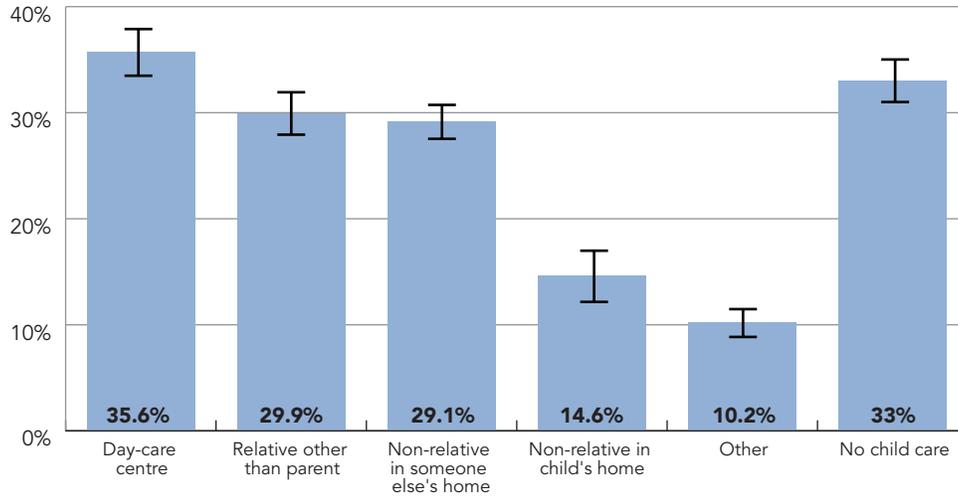
- day-care centres;
- care in someone else's home by a non-relative;
- care in the child's home by a non-relative;
- care by a relative other than a parent; and/or
- any other child-care arrangement.

Two-thirds of parents of children aged 0–12 years indicate that they have, at some point, made use of some form of child-care services on a regular basis. These parents rely on a range of services to meet their child-care needs, with day care (36%), care by a relative other than a parent (30%), and care in someone else's home by a non-relative (29%) being the child-care options used most frequently.ⁱ

ⁱ These options were not mutually exclusive and respondents may have reported using any combination of child-care services.

Figure 1

Types of child-care services used by Canadian parents on a regular basis

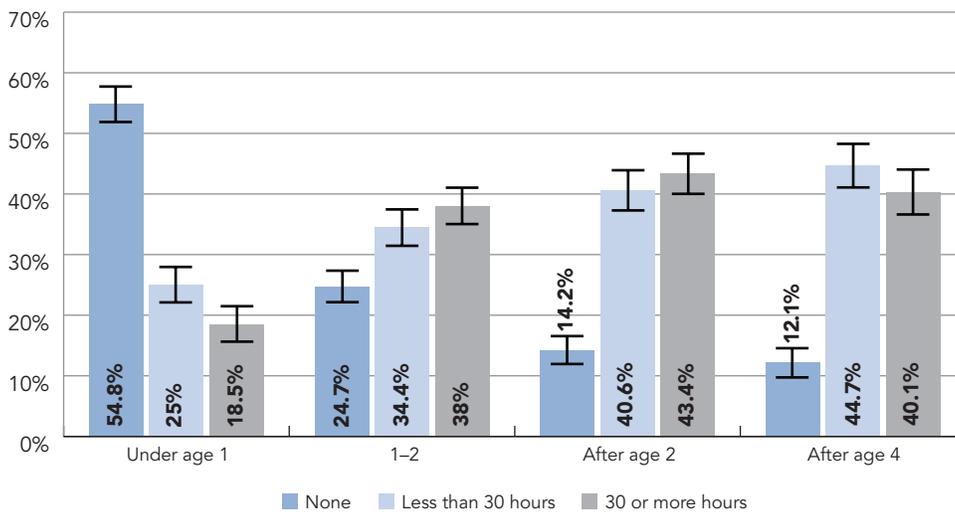


Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Parents rely more on child care as young children grow older. Fewer than 20% report that their infants under age one were in care for 30 or more hours per week. After their children turn two, more than 40% of parents report that their children are in care for at least 30 hours per week.

Figure 2

Average number of hours per week spent in care, by age of child



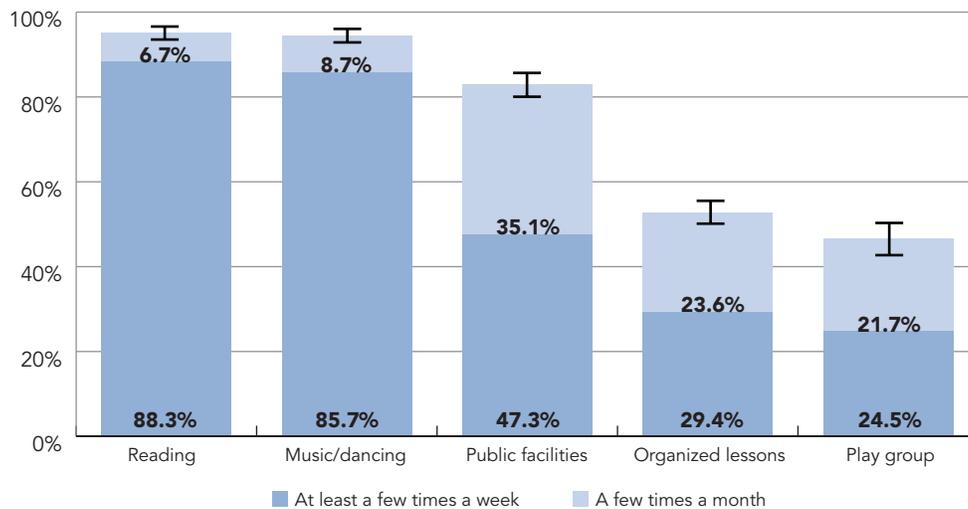
Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

2. How often do parents engage in learning activities with their young children?

- Reading to their children
- Singing with, listening to music with, playing music with, or dancing with their children
- Taking their children to organized play groups or drop-in programs at community centres
- Taking their children to public facilities such as libraries, museums and parks
- Taking their children to organized lessons or classes

Figure 3

Proportion of parents who report engaging in learning activities with their young children (ages 2–5)



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Canadian parents recognize the importance of exposing their children to a variety of learning experiences during the early years. When asked about the learning activities in which they engage their 2- to 5-year-olds, nearly all parents indicate that they read to their children at least a few times a month, and that they listen to music together, sing with their children, or dance or play music with them at least a few times a month.

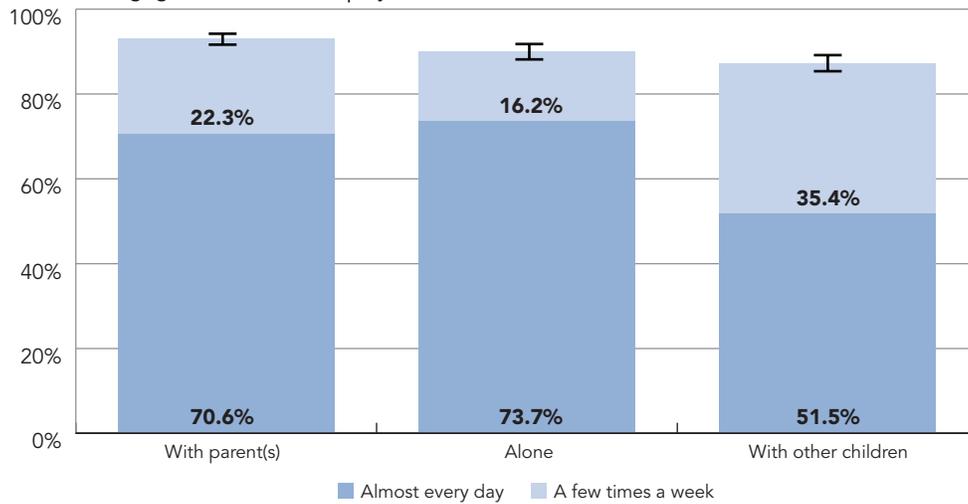
3. How often do parents encourage or allow children to engage in unstructured/“free” play for periods of at least 30 minutes:

- Alone?
- With other children?
- With parent(s)?

Canadian parents appear to recognize the fundamental importance of play to young children’s healthy physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. Nearly all parents report encouraging or allowing their 2- to 5-year-olds to engage in unstructured play for periods of at least 30 minutes.

Figure 4

Proportion of parents who report encouraging or allowing young children (ages 2–5) to engage in unstructured play



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

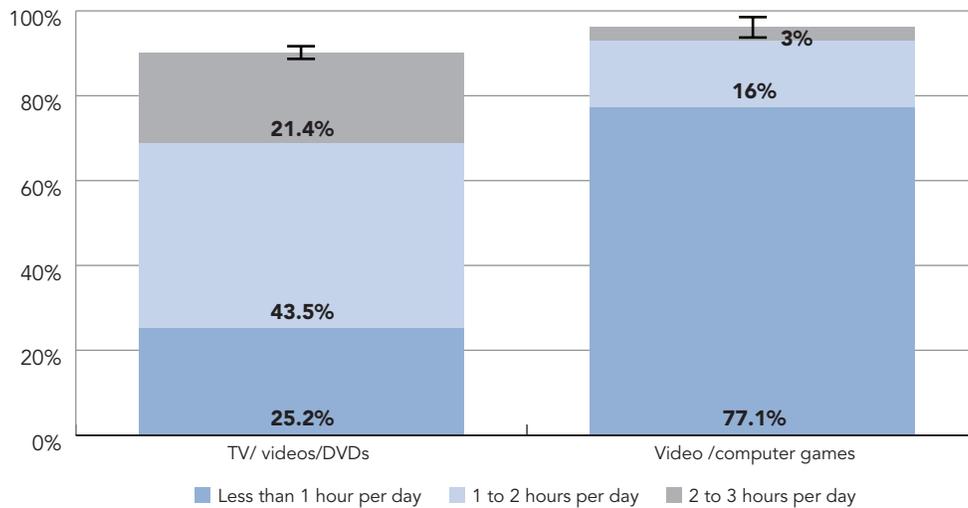
4. How much "screen time" per day do parents allow their young children:

- For watching television or videos/DVDs?
- For playing video or computer games?

Most parents report that they limit the amount of time their 2- to 5-year-olds spend playing video or computer games to less than one hour per day. A majority of parents reports allowing their children to watch television and videos/DVDs for more than one hour per day.

Figure 5

Proportion of parents who allow their young children (ages 2-5) "screen time"



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

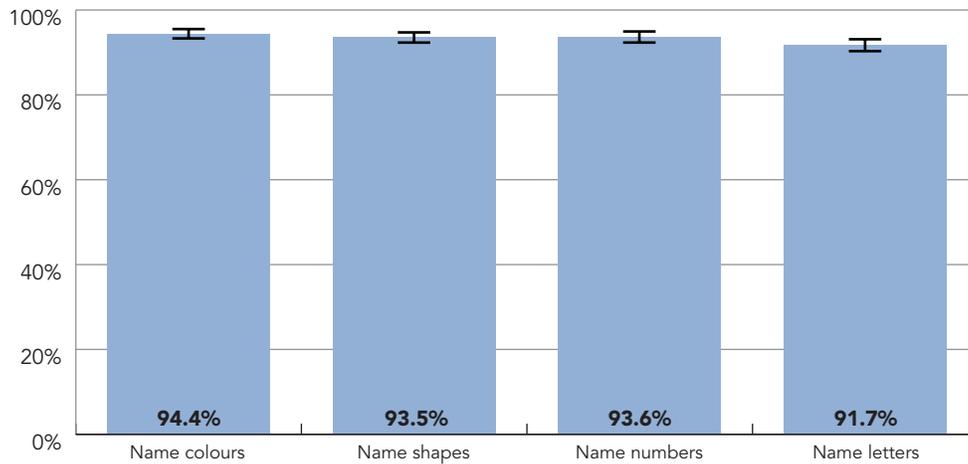
5. Do parents try to teach their young children skills such as:

- Naming colours?
- Naming shapes?
- Naming numbers?
- Naming letters?

Almost all parents report teaching their children over the age of one to name colours, shapes, numbers and letters.

Figure 6

Proportion of parents who report teaching their young children new skills



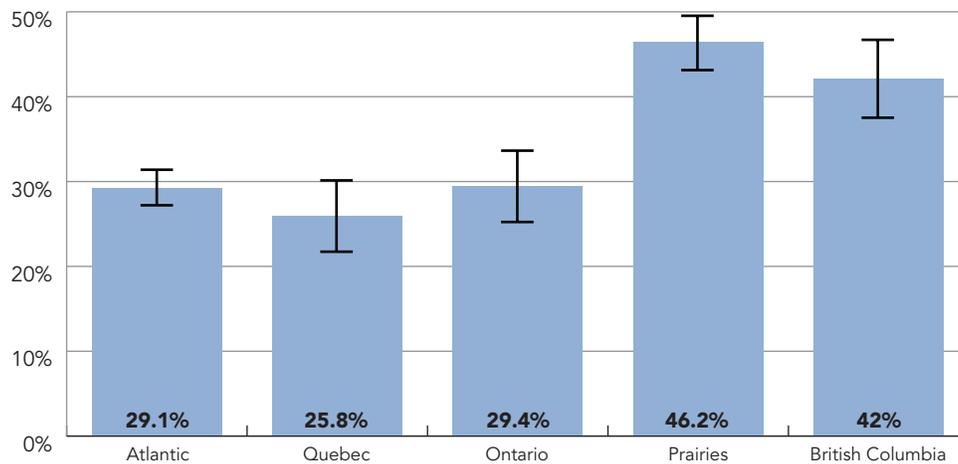
Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Regional and income-related differences in parents' use of child-care services

Parents' use of child-care services for children under the age of 13 varies significantly from region to region across the country. Many parents in the Prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) and British Columbia do not use child-care services on a regular basis. In contrast, most parents in Quebec do make regular use of child care: only one-quarter report that they do not regularly use any form of child-care services.

Figure 7

Proportion of parents who do not use child care on a regular basis, by region

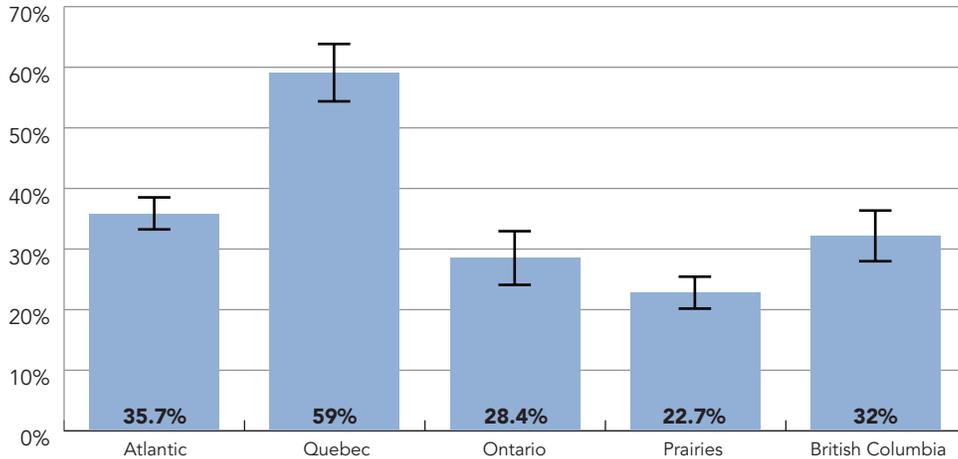


Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Regional differences are especially striking with respect to parents' use of day-care centres. For example, parents in Quebec are more than twice as likely to report using day-care centres than parents in Ontario and the Prairie provinces.

Figure 8

Proportion of parents who report regular use of day-care centres, by region



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Differences in access and affordability of child-care services across the country are likely important factors in shaping parents' decisions to use child care.

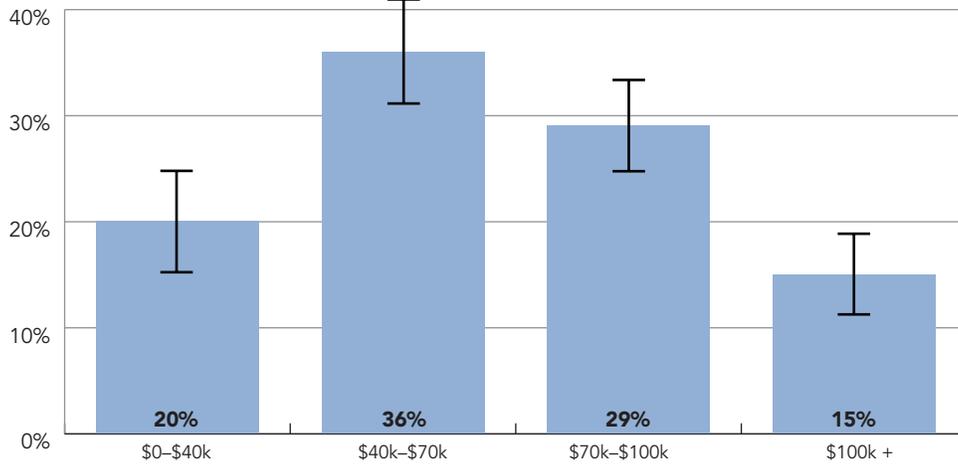
For example, an analysis of data gathered from the *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2006* report reveals that there are .83 regulated child-care spaces per child aged 0 to 5 in Quebec (almost one space per child) while this ratio falls significantly to .34 in British Columbia, and .23 in the Prairie provinces.⁹ The greater availability of regulated spaces in certain provinces, in addition to significant differences in the level of public funding allocated to child-care services across provinces, underscores the important influence of access and costs on parental decisions about child care.

Use of child-care services also varies across parents' income levels. Parents in the highest and lowest income quartiles are most likely to use child-care services, suggesting that income is only weakly linked to use of child-care services. However, high-income and low-income parents use different types of child care: high-income parents are much more likely to send their children to day-care centres, whereas low-income parents are more likely to have their children cared for by other relatives.

These findings suggest that affordability is a significant factor in parents' decisions to use child care. The differences in child care use among income groups may reflect the financial burden imposed by the frequently high costs of child-care services and suggests that less affluent parents may need to turn to child-care providers with less experience and training, or to services that are not as stringently regulated as those attended by the children of wealthier parents.^{10, 11}

Figure 9

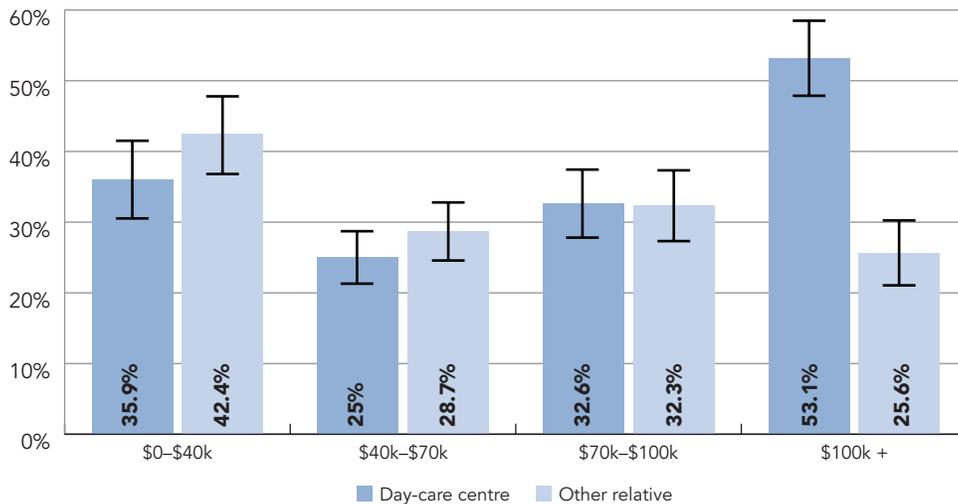
Proportion of parents who have never used child care, by income



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Figure 10

Proportion of parents who report using different types of child care, by income



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Learning activities adopted by parents who do not use child-care services

In addition to temporarily relieving parents of child-care responsibilities so they can work, study or pursue leisure activities, child-care services provide important learning opportunities that can carry long-term benefits for children.¹²

However, SCAL 2008 results suggest that many parents who do not send their children to child care find other ways of providing learning opportunities.

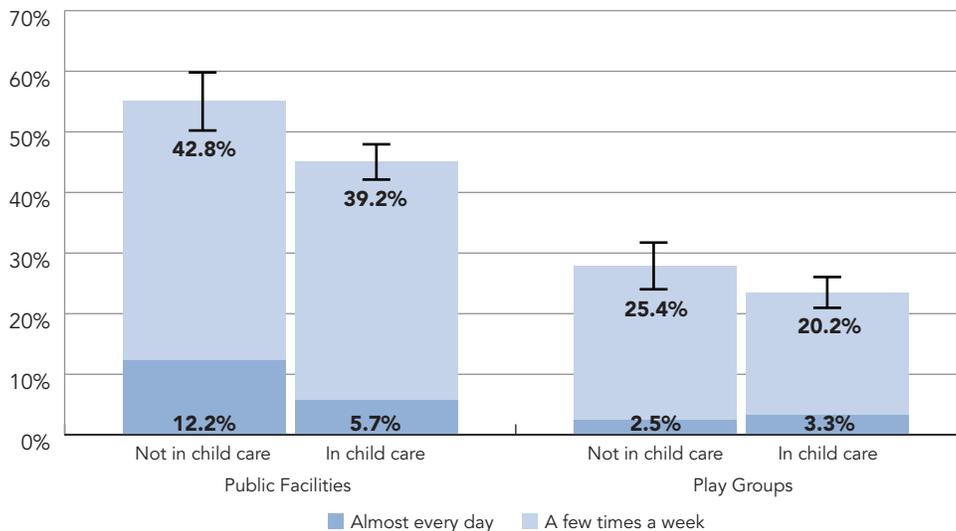
Compared to parents whose children regularly attend child-care services, a greater proportion of parents whose children have not attended any form of child care report taking their children to public facilities (e.g., libraries, museums and parks) and to organized play groups. These activities expose children to a variety of experiences by providing access to resources, environments and activities that can help support learning.

Organized play groups and public facilities provide opportunities for children as well as parents:

- children can interact with other children in structured and informal environments;
- children can access learning resources (such as books, displays, artwork, craft materials, etc.), activities, and physical settings that may differ from those in their own homes; and
- parents have a chance to socialize with each other.

The greater use of public facilities and organized play sessions by parents who do not use child care may indicate that these parents rely upon these programs and resources to complement their children’s learning experiences.

Figure 11
Proportion of parents (with and without children in child care) who engage in learning activities with their children



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Conclusion

Two-thirds of Canadian parents of young children report using some form of child care on a regular basis. Parents in Quebec—where regulated child-care spaces are more abundant and on average less expensive than in the rest of the country—are more likely than parents elsewhere to use child care, and especially more likely to use day-care centres. Parents with higher incomes are also more likely to use day-care centres. Parents who do not use child-care services provide learning opportunities for their children by making more frequent use of organized play groups and public facilities such as libraries, museums and parks.

Canadian Attitudes toward Schools: Quality, Access and Mobility

To learn about Canadians' attitudes toward their structured learning systems (e.g., formal learning institutions including schools and postsecondary institutions), SCAL 2008 posed a number of questions about elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges, CEGEPs, and universities.

Schools and post-secondary institutions perform vital functions in Canadian society, so much so that structured learning in Canada is heavily subsidized by the public. The services that schools and post-secondary institutions are expected to provide are numerous and relate not only to educational outcomes, but economic and social conditions as well.

With regard to K–12 (kindergarten to grade 12) learning, Canadians expect their school systems to go well beyond teaching the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Schools are also expected to prepare students for the workforce, develop an informed citizenry, and prepare students for ongoing learning. We asked Canadians whether and to what degree these expectations are being met.

With regard to post-secondary education, we asked questions regarding the perceived quality, accessibility and affordability of colleges, CEGEPs and universities. Of respondents who reported having undertaken post-secondary studies, we also asked whether they had undertaken their studies at more than one institution. These questions were asked in order to understand the prevalence of post-secondary student mobility and experiences with credit transfer Canada-wide.

Overview: What we asked, what Canadians told us

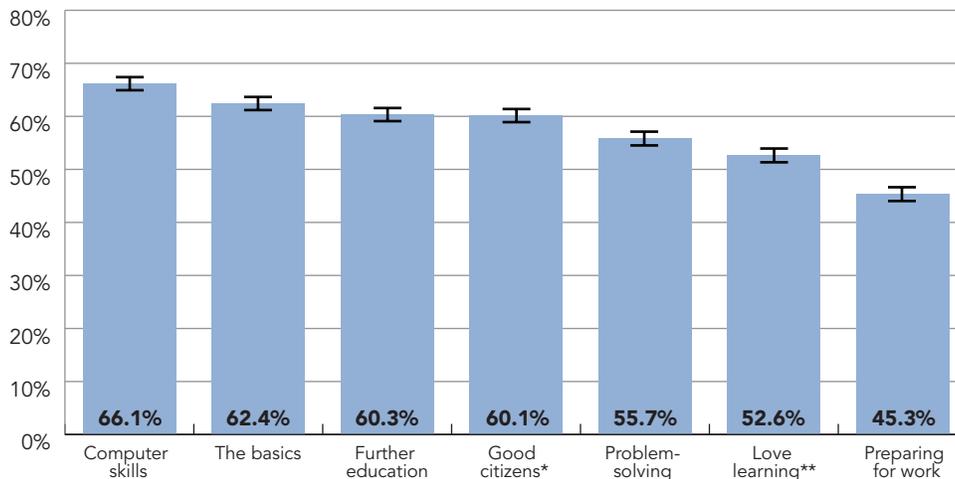
1. Are elementary and high schools meeting expectations with respect to the following?

- Teaching “the basics” like reading, writing and arithmetic
- Teaching computer skills
- Teaching problem-solving skills
- Preparing students for work
- Preparing students for further education after high school
- Teaching students to be good citizens
- Teaching students to love learning

Canadians’ attitudes toward K–12 schools are very positive. High proportions of respondents report that schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations for teaching computer skills, teaching the basics (reading, writing and arithmetic), and preparing students for further education. However, when it comes to preparing students for work, Canadians are less than satisfied: less than half (45%) feel that schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations in this regard.

Figure 12

Proportion of Canadians who say elementary and high schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations



* Teaching children to be good citizens ** Teaching children to love learning

Source: Canadian Council on Learning, Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

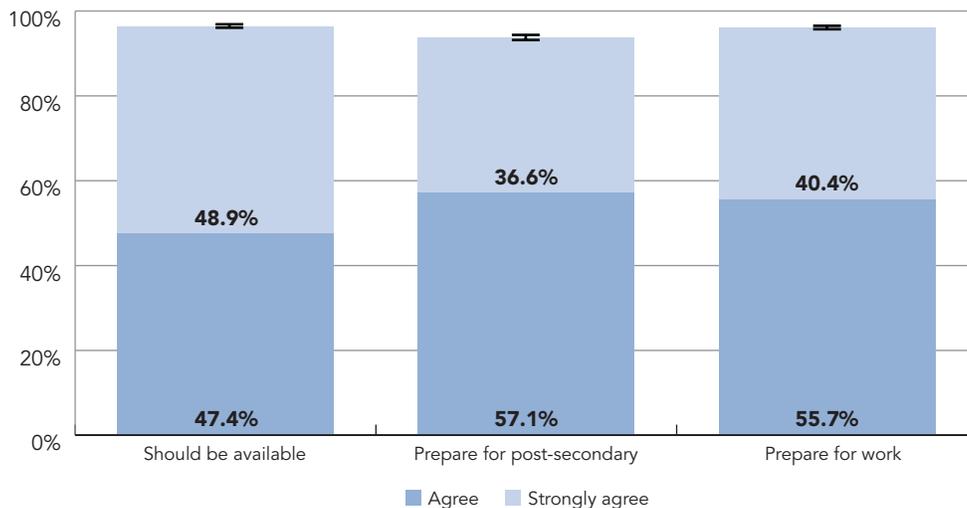
2. How important are high-school programs that include work experience?

- Should they be available to all secondary-school students in Canada?
- Do they help prepare high-school students for post-secondary education?
- Do they help prepare high-school students for work?
- How many schools offer these programs?
- Do parents encourage their children to participate in these programs?

Canadians express very strong support for high-school programs that allow students to gain work experience and job-related skills through activities such as co-ops, apprenticeships, work placements, and trade or vocational programs. Over 90% of Canadians agree or strongly agree that such programs should be available to all high-school students and that they contribute to preparing students for post-secondary education and work.

Figure 13

Proportion of Canadians who agree or strongly agree that high-school programs that include work experience should be available to all students and help prepare students for post-secondary education and work



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Although Canadians are nearly unanimous in their support for work-experience programs, parents do not necessarily want their own children to participate in such programs. Only 59% of parents of high-school-aged childrenⁱⁱ indicate that such programs are available in their children's schools. Of these respondents, 70% indicate that they have encouraged their children to participate in programs with a work-experience component. Of parents who say that their children's schools do not offer programs with work experience, only 36% indicate that they would encourage their children to participate if such programs were available.

ⁱⁱ "High-school-aged" was defined as ages 15–24, thus including parents of children who are currently—or were recently—in the upper grades of high school.

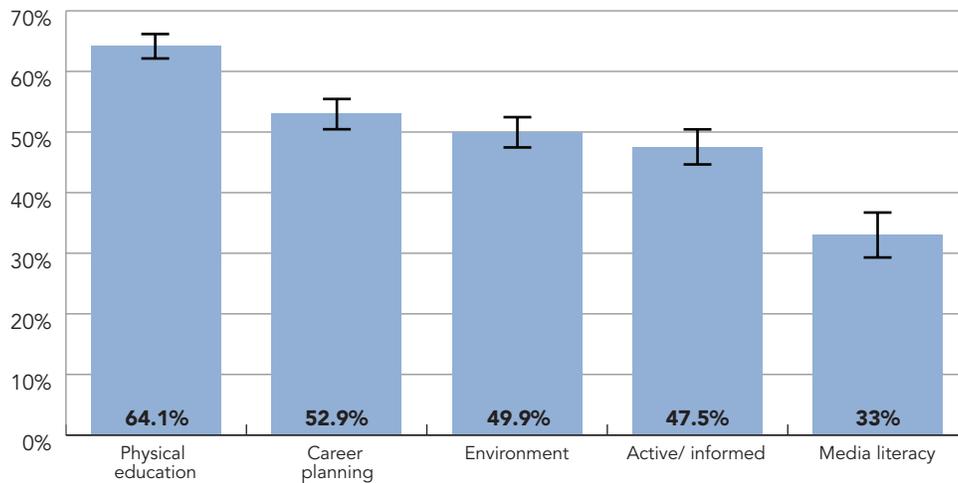
3. Which subjects should be included in the compulsory curriculum?

- Physical education
- Career planning
- Learning about the environment
- Preparing to become active and informed citizens
- Training on interpreting information presented by the media

Respondents were asked how important it is to include certain subjects (beyond the usual core curriculum) in the compulsory curriculum. Of the subjects we enquired about, physical education received the strongest support, with nearly two-thirds of Canadians indicating it essential to include in the compulsory curriculum. Training in media literacy appears to be much less important to Canadians: only one-third consider it essential to include in the compulsory curriculum.

Figure 14

Proportion of Canadians who believe it is essential to include various subjects in the compulsory curriculum



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

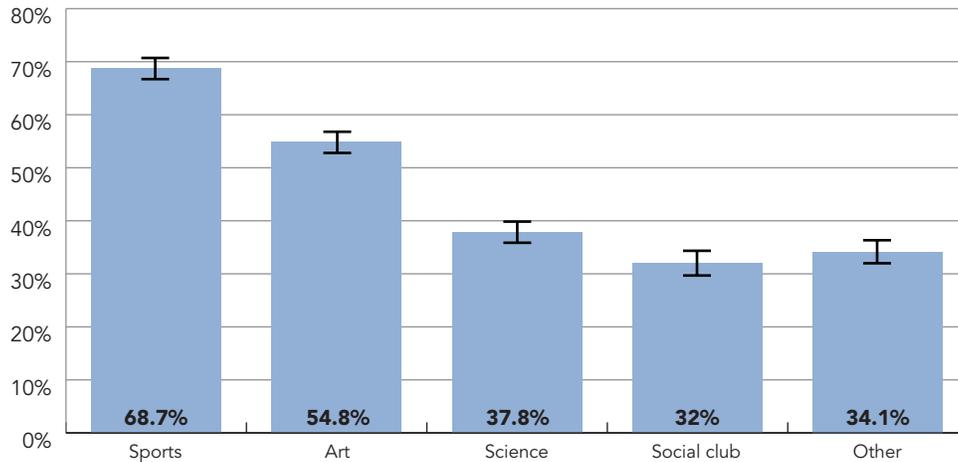
4. What kinds of extracurricular activities do Canadian children (aged 6–24) participate in?

- Art (including drama, music and dance)
- Sports
- Science (including multimedia and computer usage)
- Social groups (including Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H club, youth group)

The vast majority (88.5%) of parents with children aged 6–24 report that their children participated in at least one type of extracurricular activity during the past year.ⁱⁱⁱ Participation in sports is higher than any other type of extracurricular activity.

Figure 15

Proportion of parents who report their children aged 6–24 participated in extracurricular activities within the last year



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout this report, any timeframe references (e.g. “with the last year”) refer to the time period prior to respondents taking the survey.

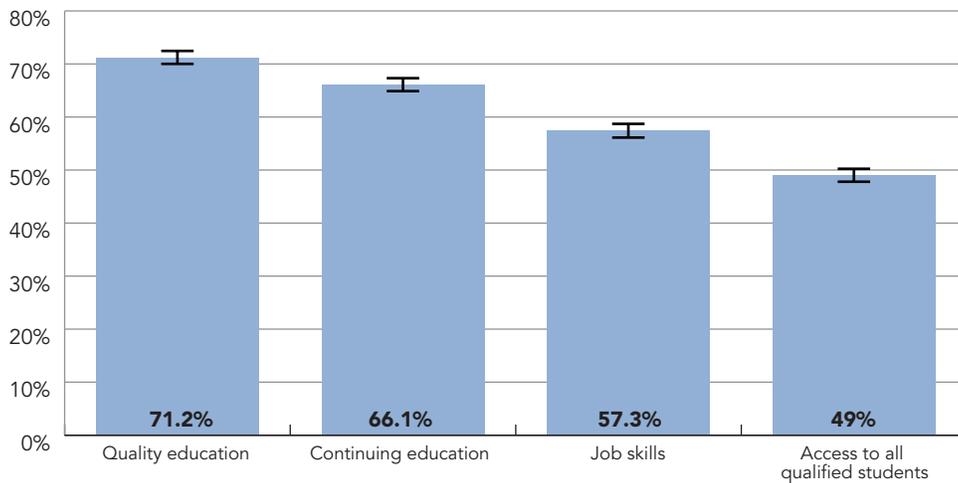
5. How well are Canada's post-secondary institutions doing with respect to the following?

- Providing quality education
- Teaching students the skills they need to get jobs
- Ensuring that all qualified students are able to attend
- Making continuing education available

Canadians are generally satisfied with the quality of education provided by post-secondary institutions: 71% believe that post-secondary institutions do a good or excellent job of providing quality education. However, many are concerned that post-secondary institutions are not ensuring that all qualified students are able to attend: only 49% feel that post-secondary institutions are doing a good or excellent job in this regard.

Figure 16

Proportion of Canadians who believe post-secondary institutions are doing a good or excellent job



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

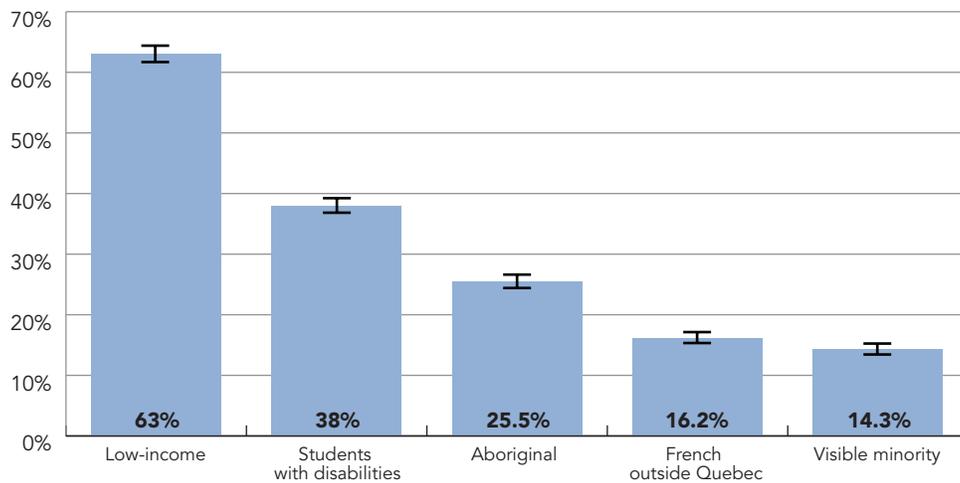
6. Do all qualified students have the same opportunity to get a post-secondary education, including the following demographic groups?

- Students from visible minority groups
- French-speaking students outside of Quebec
- Aboriginal students
- Students with disabilities
- Students from low-income families

Canadians are concerned that students from some demographic groups do not have the same post-secondary opportunities as other students. In particular, nearly two-thirds (63%) of Canadians feel that students from low-income families have somewhat less or much less of an opportunity to get a post-secondary education.

Figure 17

Proportion of Canadians who believe that some students have less opportunity to get a post-secondary education



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

7. How affordable is post-secondary education in Canada?

- Are loans and financial aid available?
- Do students have to borrow too much money to pay for their post-secondary education?

About two-thirds (68%) of Canadians believe that student loans and financial aid are available, but 82% also believe that students have to borrow too much money to pay for their post-secondary education. Most Canadians (93%) agree or strongly agree that cost should not prevent qualified and motivated students from getting a post-secondary education.

8. How mobile are post-secondary students?

- How many take courses from more than one post-secondary institution?
- How many have to repeat coursework when moving to different institutions?

Post-secondary students in Canada are quite mobile: 41% of those who had at least some post-secondary education indicate that they have taken courses at more than one institution. Of these, 25% have had to repeat coursework or learning as a result of moving from one institution to another.

Attitudes toward learning in elementary and secondary schools, among different groups of Canadians

Impressions of education in Canada vary across demographic groups. In particular, Canadians with children at home have different opinions about elementary and secondary schools than do Canadians without children at home. Additionally, immigrants often have different opinions than Canadian-born respondents.

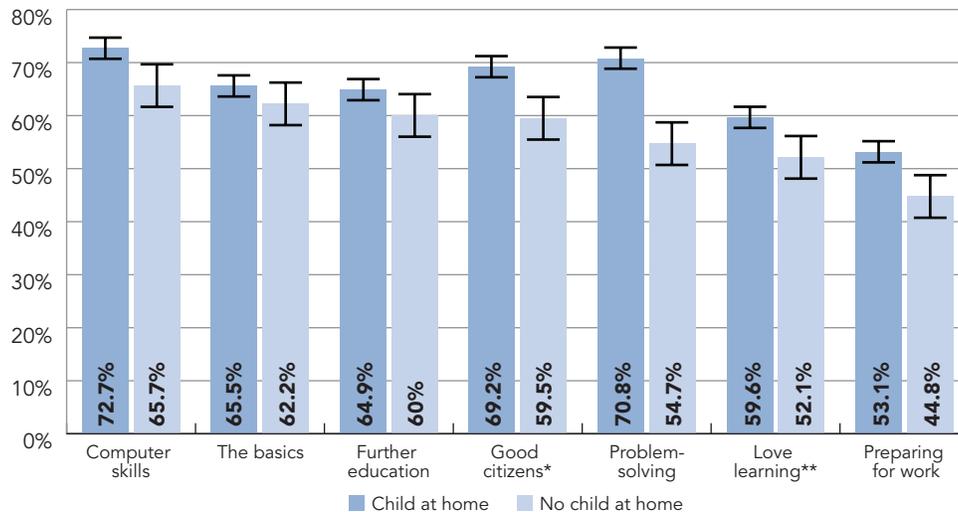
1. Canadians with children at home vs. Canadians without children at home

Canadians who have children at home have more direct knowledge of elementary and secondary schools than those who rely on the media or other sources of information. Some researchers have argued that Canadians without children at home—e.g., non-parents and parents whose children have left home—may be the most disenchanted with schooling systems, because they may find current educational practices unfamiliar, foreign, and ill-disciplined.¹³

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has reported that 67% of parents with children in public schools give the schools an 'A' or 'B' rating, whereas only 59% of the general public does so.¹⁴ SCAL 2008 results show a similar pattern: Canadians with at least one child at home are generally more satisfied with Canadian schools than are those who do not have children at home.

Figure 18

Proportion of Canadians with and without children at home who say elementary and secondary schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations



* Teaching children to be good citizens ** Teaching children to love learning

Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

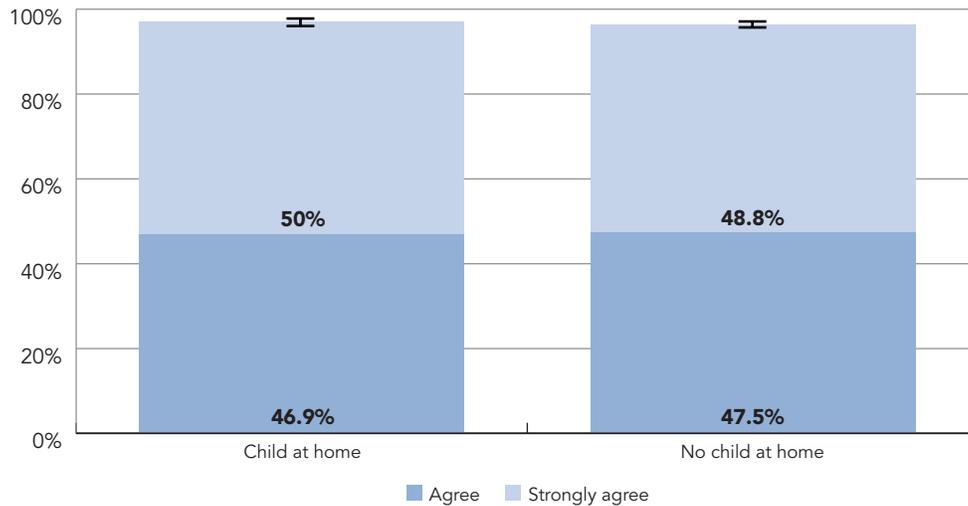
The largest opinion gap between Canadians with and without children at home is in the area of problem-solving. While 71% of Canadians with at least one child at home feel that schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations with respect to teaching problem-solving skills, this is true for only 55% of those who do not have children at home. Canadians with children at home see teaching problem-solving as a particular strength in Canadian schools, while those without children at home see it as an area of weakness.

Though Canadians with children at home are more likely than those without children at home to be satisfied with schools' role in preparing students for work, both groups express relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with schools in this domain. Researchers have also reported that students are similarly dissatisfied. For example, recent findings indicate that Alberta high-school students value career transition resources but do not perceive their high schools' career development resources to be effective.¹⁵

Other researchers have noted the critical shortage of skilled trades workers expected within the next few years, and suggest that young people be encouraged to participate in programs such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.¹⁶ Canadians with and without children at home agree with this assessment: the majority of Canadians in both groups agree or strongly agree that programs with work experience should be available to all high-school students.

Figure 19

Proportion of Canadians with and without children at home who agree or strongly agree that programs with work experience should be available to all high-school students



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

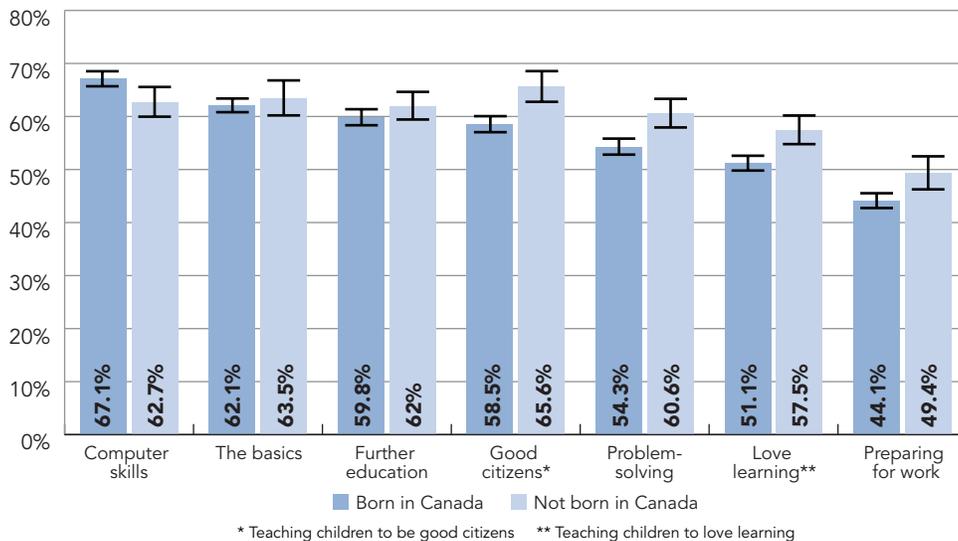
2. Respondents born in Canada vs. those born outside Canada

Some Canadian research has revealed negative perceptions of elementary and secondary schools among parents born outside of Canada. For example, several researchers have identified these parents and parents of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) high-school students as particularly unhappy with their children’s schooling programs, and have described conflicts between the educational philosophies of their home countries and Canadian schools.¹⁷ In particular, a dominant pattern among Canadian educators is to pursue a child-centred, progressive pedagogy that encourages children to be critical, communicative and to hold multiple points of view. By contrast, some immigrant students and their parents expect learning to be a task consisting of a large number of discrete skills learned through rote memorization.¹⁸

Based on these findings, we might expect those born outside of Canada to be less satisfied with Canadian schools than those born in Canada. However, SCAL 2008 results reveal that attitudes toward elementary and secondary schools are generally more favourable among those born outside of Canada. There is one notable exception to the general trend: respondents born outside of Canada are less satisfied than those born in Canada with respect to schools’ efforts to teach computer skills.

Figure 20

Proportion of respondents born in and outside of Canada, who say elementary and secondary schools are meeting or exceeding their expectations



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

The largest opinion gap between these two groups is in the area of preparing students to be good citizens. Although citizenship education often carries an extra dimension for children of those born outside of Canada (e.g., learning to integrate into Canadian society), respondents born outside of Canada are particularly satisfied with this aspect of schooling in Canada.

Mobility among post-secondary students

Canadian post-secondary education students are increasingly pursuing non-traditional pathways through college and university.¹⁹ Among these are students who delay transitioning to post-secondary education after high school, those who oscillate between part- and full-time study, those who switch programs, and those who transfer between post-secondary institutions.

While non-traditional student pathways may be on the rise, established institutional and system structures may not always accommodate these pathways. Challenges pertaining to credit transfer are a good example of this. In provinces such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec, long-established systems facilitate some aspects of student mobility between institutions. Additionally, there are sector-wide protocols—such as the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada’s *Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits*—under which degree-granting institutions agree to recognize one another’s first- and second-year courses where appropriate.

Some pathways for inter-institutional student mobility are more complicated than others, and many remain difficult to negotiate with administration. When students are unable to transfer credits from one institution to another, they often have to repeat courses and learning that they have already successfully completed at another institution.

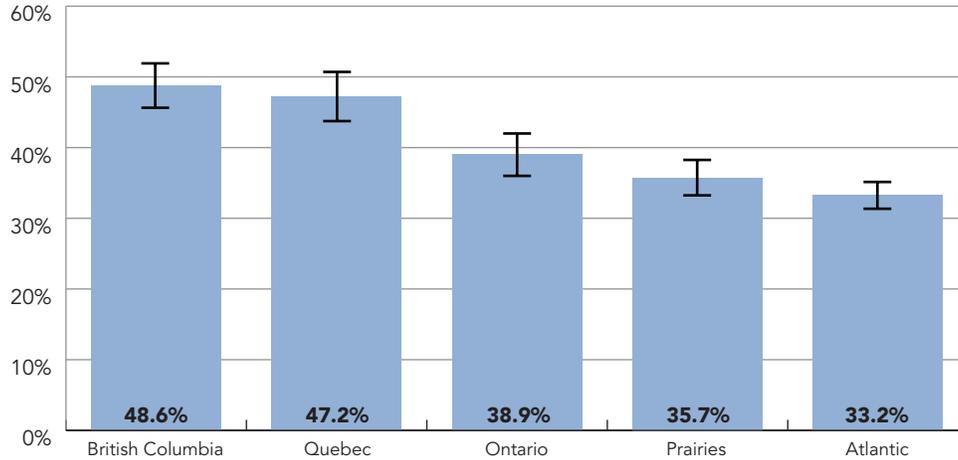
With increasing frequency, there are calls for attention and action on transferability in Canada. The Certified General Accountants of Canada is one example: in its report following its 2008 Summit on Skills and Learning, the CGAC called for Canadian policy-makers to “consider a national credit transfer system to address the issue of academic mobility and to encourage lifelong adult learning with a highly mobile population.”

Some provinces have established systems to facilitate the transfer and recognition of students’ credits as they move from one institution to another. For example, Quebec students attend CEGEP before moving on to university. In British Columbia, many colleges and other institutions offer the first two years of a baccalaureate degree, and through established articulation agreements between institutions, students can transport these college courses to count toward completion of a degree at a university.

Patterns of student mobility in different Canadian regions suggest there is greater mobility among post-secondary students in jurisdictions with established credit transfer systems. In particular, students in Quebec and British Columbia appear to be more mobile than students in other parts of the country: in BC, nearly half (49%) of those who have some post-secondary education have attended more than one post-secondary institution, whereas in the Atlantic provinces only one-third of students attend more than one institution.

Figure 21

Proportion of Canadians who have attended more than one post-secondary institution, by region

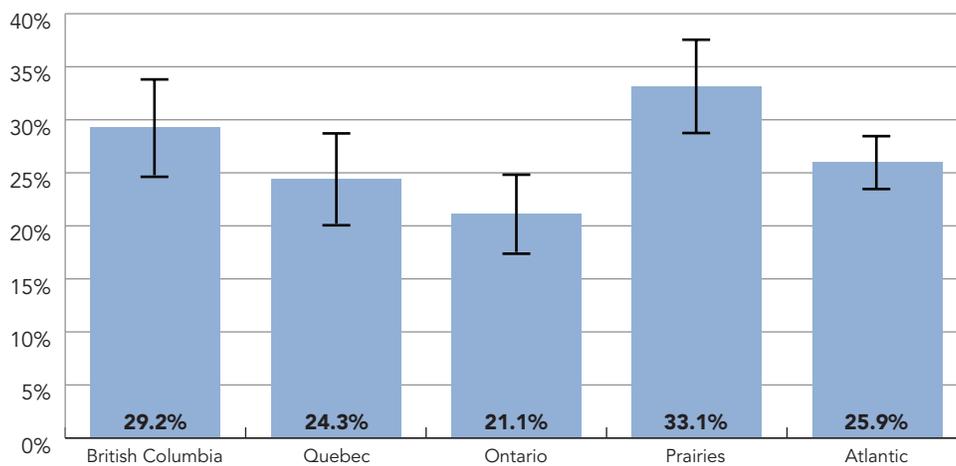


Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Although students in jurisdictions with established credit transfer systems are more mobile, they are not necessarily more successful in transferring their credits from one institution to another. Between one-fifth and one-third of mobile students in all jurisdictions report repeating coursework or learning that they have already successfully completed.

Figure 22

Proportion of mobile post-secondary students who report repeating coursework at different institutions



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Conclusion

The results of SCAL 2008 reveal positive attitudes among Canadians toward K–12 schools and post-secondary institutions. Canadians with children at home are generally more satisfied with K–12 schools than are those respondents who do not have children living at home. Similarly, immigrants are generally more satisfied than Canadian-born respondents.

SCAL results also reveal a few areas where Canadians may welcome improvements, specifically:

- preparing high-school students for work;
- providing opportunities for low-income students to pursue post-secondary studies; and
- accommodating mobility among post-secondary students.

Canadian Attitudes toward Work-Related Adult Learning

Learning takes on many forms in adulthood, from non-formal learning—such as reading books and manuals, researching online, problem-solving, and asking friends and colleagues for help—to more formal learning activities such as degree courses and facilitated workshops. Since much of an adult's day revolves around work, it is likely that much of adult learning is job-related.

Fostering formal and non-formal work-related learning is increasingly important in growing Canada's economy. The rise of information technology and a shrinking workforce due to retiring baby-boomers are putting pressure on employers to upgrade workforce skills.²⁰

Investing in workplace training yields increased productivity, innovation and economic success.^{21,22} For the individual, workplace learning contributes to increased job satisfaction and performance, promotes social and personal development, and supports lifelong learning.²³

Formal work-related learning: Learning in the form of organized training programs, courses, workshops or seminars towards a degree, diploma, or certificate related to a job or career. Formal learning is structured and typically takes place in an educational or training institution.

Non-formal work-related learning: Learning while on the job (e.g., direct instruction, mentoring, coaching, or observation by a superior), job rotation, e-learning (e.g., online courses, tutorials or seminars), or self-guided learning (e.g., reading, researching, using manuals, asking a colleague for help, or problem-solving on one's own). Non-formal learning does not lead to certification.

Note: SCAL 2008 uses *non-formal* to refer to both non-formal and informal learning. However, the OECD makes a distinction between these two types of learning: the OECD defines *non-formal learning* as any organized and sustained educational activity, and can take place both within and outside educational institutions.

Overview: What we asked, what Canadians told us

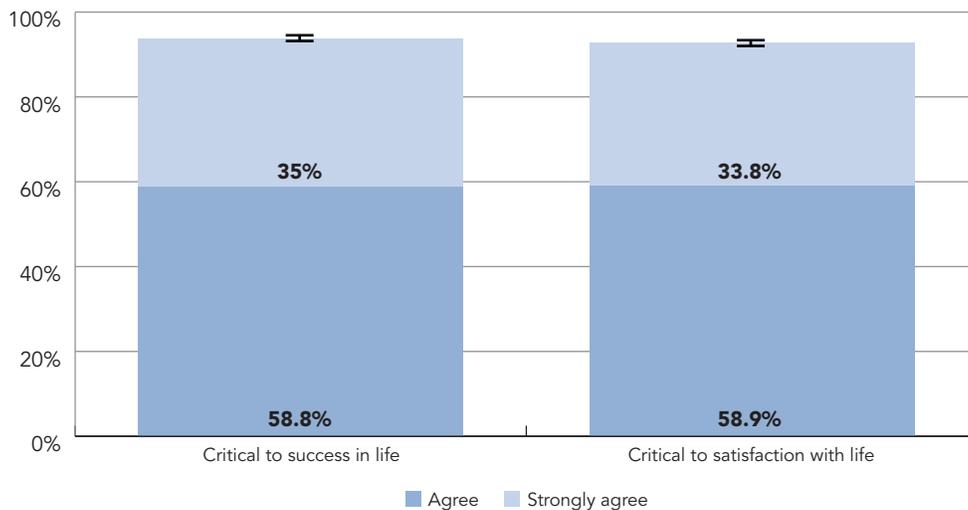
1. How important is adult learning?

- Is learning throughout adulthood critical to success in life?
- Is continuing to learn after leaving the school system critical to satisfaction with life?

The vast majority of Canadians agree or strongly agree that adult learning is critical to success in and satisfaction with life.

Figure 23

Proportion of Canadians who agree or strongly agree that adult learning is critical to success and satisfaction



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

2. How many Canadians take formal work-related training?

Among Canadians who have not retired, 51% report taking some type of formal work-related training within the past year. For most Canadians (75%), this training came after they had already finished formal schooling, but for one-quarter of Canadians this training was part of a continuous path from high school through college or university.

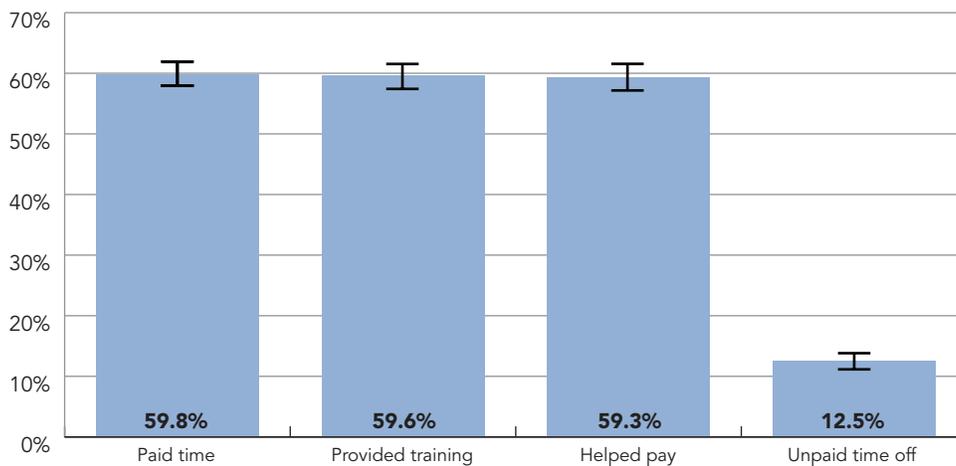
3. What forms of employer support do Canadians receive for their formal work-related training?

- Unpaid time off
- Paid time while on training
- Employer provided or arranged the training
- Employer helped pay for training costs (e.g., tuition or course materials)

Of those who received formal work-related training during the past year, 78% indicate that they received some form of employer support for that training. This typically involved employers either paying employees while they were receiving training, employers providing the training or arranging for it to be provided, or employers helping to pay for training costs.

Figure 24

Proportion of non-retired Canadians who received formal training during the past year, who report employer support for that training



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

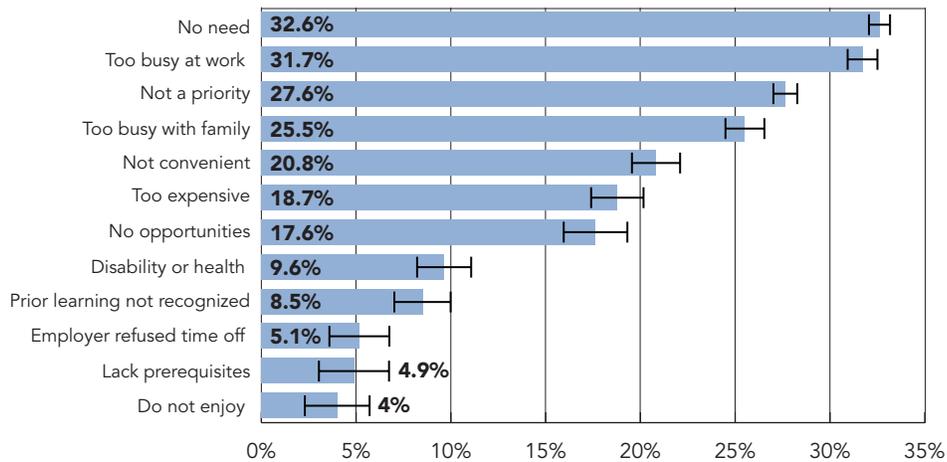
4. What factors prevent Canadians from taking formal work-related training?

Canadians who had not taken any formal work-related training within the last year cite many different reasons for abstaining from training. The most common reasons are that they:

- did not need further training;
- were too busy at work to take time off;
- did not see training as a priority; and
- had no time due to family responsibilities.

Figure 25

Proportion of abstainers who report each reason for abstaining from training



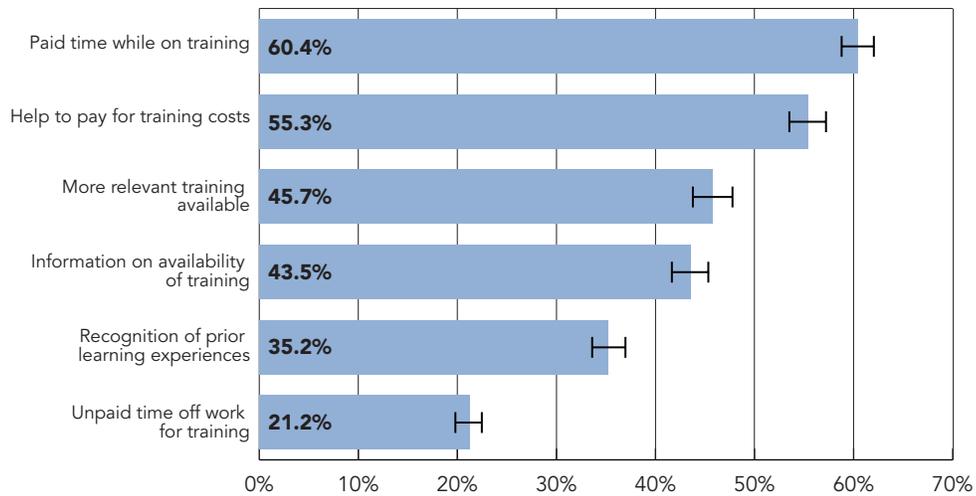
Source: Canadian Council on Learning, Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

5. What factors would foster greater participation in formal work-related training?

Financial considerations appear to be very important with respect to fostering greater participation in formal work-related training. Over half of those who had not taken any training in the past year indicated that they would be more likely to participate in formal work-related training if they could get paid time off for training, or assistance to pay for training costs.

Figure 26

Proportion of abstainers who would be more likely to participate in formal work-related training, given various forms of support



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

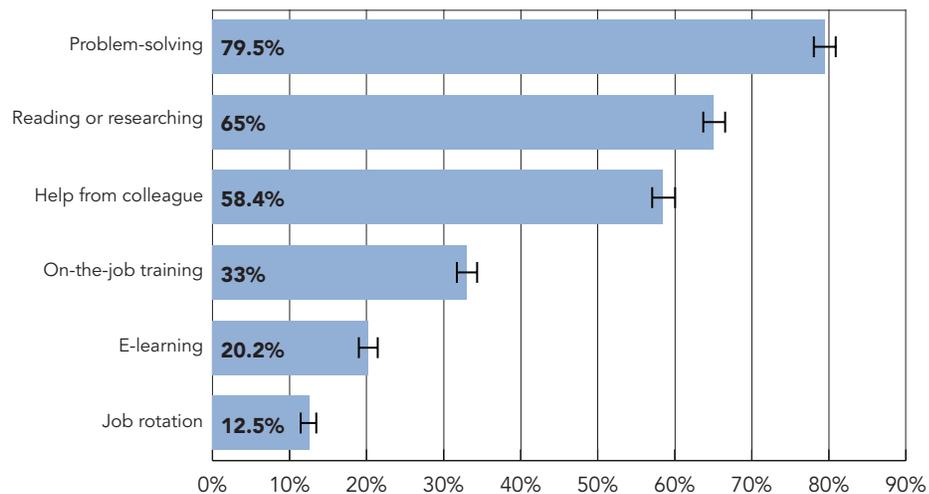
6. What forms of non-formal work-related learning do Canadians engage in?

- On-the-job training including direct instruction, mentoring, coaching, or observation by a superior
- Independent learning by reading, researching or using manuals
- Asking a colleague for help
- Learning by independent problem-solving
- E-learning, such as online courses, tutorials or seminars
- Job rotation

Overall, 88% of non-retired Canadians report engaging in some type of non-formal work-related training within the past four weeks. Independent forms of learning—such as problem-solving, reading books or researching online—were the most popular forms of non-formal learning. More structured forms of non-formal learning—such as on-the-job training, e-learning and job rotations—were less popular.

Figure 27

Proportion of non-retired Canadians reporting non-formal work-related training within the past four weeks



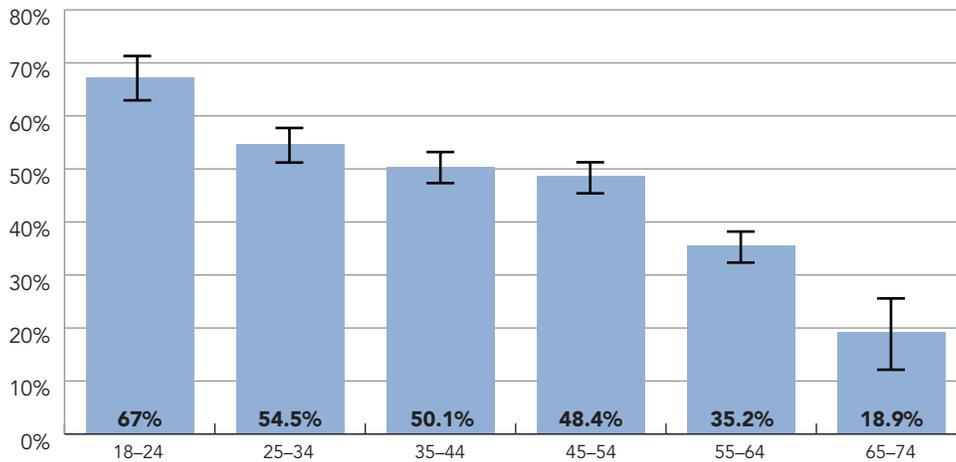
Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Older workers

SCAL 2008 results reveal that older workers are less likely to participate in formal work-related training than those in younger age groups.

Figure 28

Proportion of non-retired Canadians who report participation in formal work-related training within the past year, by age



Source: Canadian Council on Learning, Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

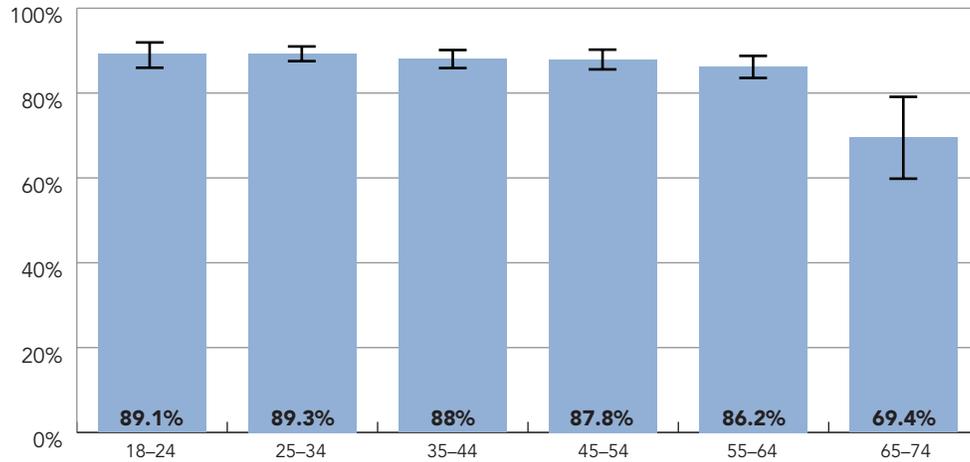
These results are consistent with the OECD's finding that participation in formal work-related learning continues until about age 50, after which it tends to drop off.²⁴ Older workers might not perceive workplace learning to have a high rate of return, and age might thus act as a disincentive. Likewise, employers may be less inclined to invest in workplace training for older adults, given expectations that they will soon retire. However, research also shows that older adults are more likely to face difficulties as new information technologies are implemented.²⁵

These findings point to an important gap within current work-related training patterns. With fewer young workers available to replace retiring workers, it is important to retain older workers in the labour force as long as possible. Older workers who remain in the workforce may require at least as much training as younger workers in order to maintain their skills (including literacy skills, which have been shown to decline with age) and to adapt to the implementation of new technologies.

SCAL 2008 results suggest that non-formal work-related training may be at least partially filling the age gap in work-related training. Participation in non-formal work-related training remains relatively constant across age groups, with only a small drop-off among the very oldest group of workers (in contrast to a larger drop-off among older workers pertaining to formal work-related training).

Figure 29

Proportion of non-retired Canadians reporting participation in non-formal work-related training within the past four weeks, by age



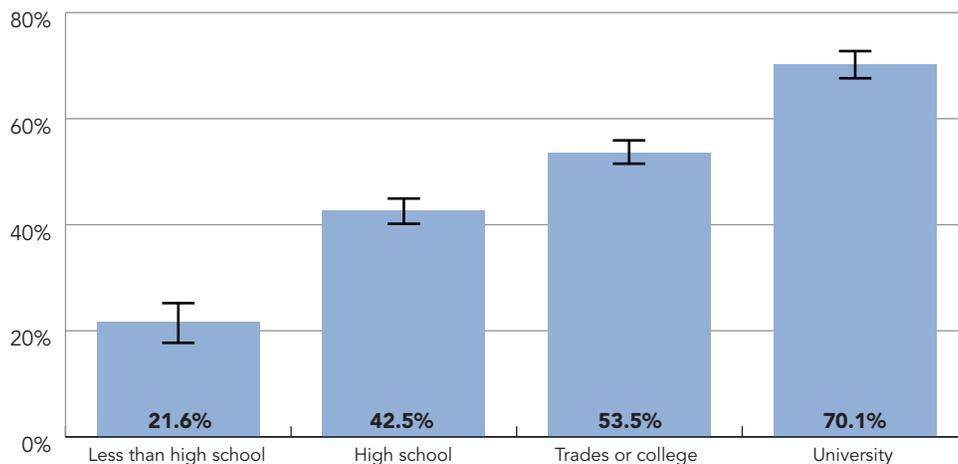
Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Workers with less education

Among non-retired Canadians, those who already have higher levels of education are more likely to participate in formal work-related training. In fact, workers holding a bachelor's degree or higher are more than three times as likely to participate in formal work-related training than workers who ended their formal education without a high-school diploma.

Figure 30

Proportion of Canadians who participated in formal work-related learning within the past year, by highest level of education attained

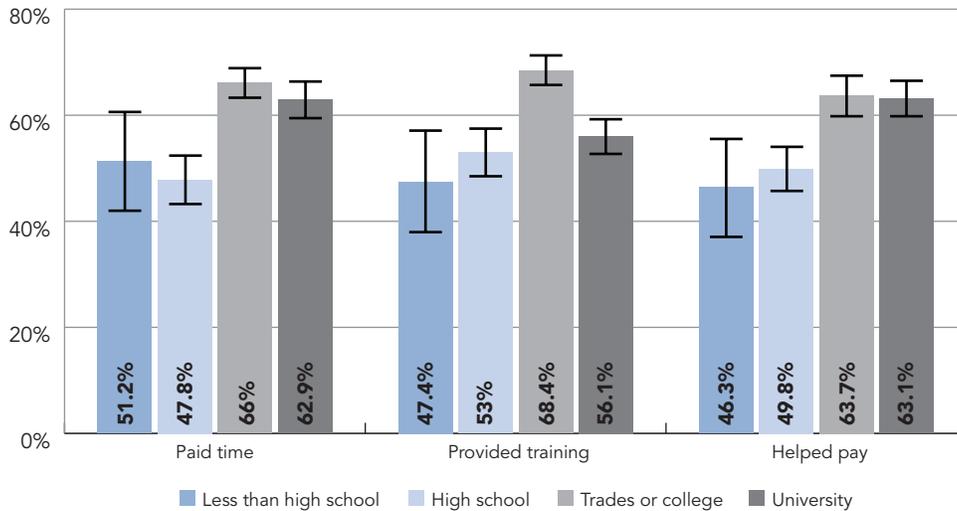


Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Canadians with more education are also more likely to have employers who support their formal work-related training, either by providing paid leave time for training, providing or arranging for the training, or by paying for some or all of the costs of training.

Figure 31

Proportion of Canadians who received formal training within the past year, who report employer support for that training, by highest level of education attained



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

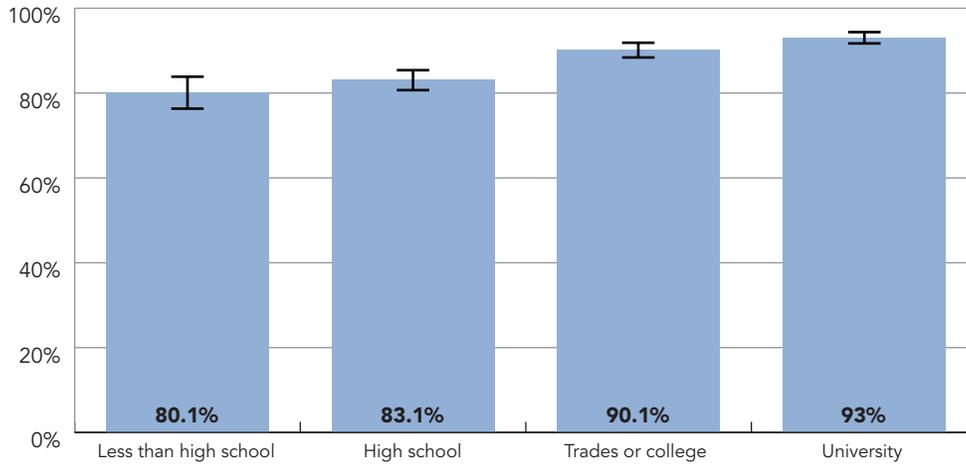
These findings are similar to other research indicating that Canadians without a high-school diploma or post-secondary credentials often work in low-paid, low-skilled jobs, and that employers tend to invest in workers who are already qualified and who work in higher-level positions.²⁶ This suggests that persons working in certain low-skilled occupations—those who are the most likely to benefit from workplace training—are less likely to develop the skills demanded by the new economy.

Research shows that when less educated workers have the opportunity to participate in training, they are more likely than their more highly educated counterparts to realize economic gains as a result of their training. According to a recent study, 53% of respondents with a high-school diploma or less reported that their training helped increase their income, compared to 44% of university graduates.²⁷

Non-formal training may be one avenue for closing the training gap between highly educated and less educated Canadians. As with formal work-related training, participation in non-formal work-related training depends on previously achieved levels of education. Highly educated workers are more likely to participate in non-formal training. However, the training gap between highly educated and less educated Canadians is much smaller for non-formal than for formal training.

Figure 32

Proportion of non-retired Canadians reporting participation in non-formal work-related training in the past four weeks, by highest level of education



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Conclusion

About half of non-retired Canadians report participation in some type of formal work-related training in the past year. Among Canadians who do not participate in such training, financial considerations are important with respect to fostering higher levels of participation. The majority of non-retired Canadians report participation in non-formal work-related learning. While older Canadians and those with less education are less likely than their counterparts to receive formal work-related training, their levels of participation in non-formal learning are very high.

Canadian Attitudes toward Health and Learning

Learning about health is an important aspect of lifelong learning. It can directly affect individuals' overall level of well-being by allowing them to make informed decisions to improve their health.

More than half of all Canadians over the age of 12 report having at least one chronic condition.²⁸ By age 65, 77% of men and 85% of women have at least one chronic health condition.²⁹ Individuals who can learn about their health issues and manage the day-to-day details of living with their chronic conditions face better health outcomes than those who are unable to do so.³⁰ Well-informed patients are also able to reduce their need for health-care services.³¹ Thus, the ability to access health-related information and to learn about health issues is critically important to all Canadians.

Overview: What we asked, what Canadians told us

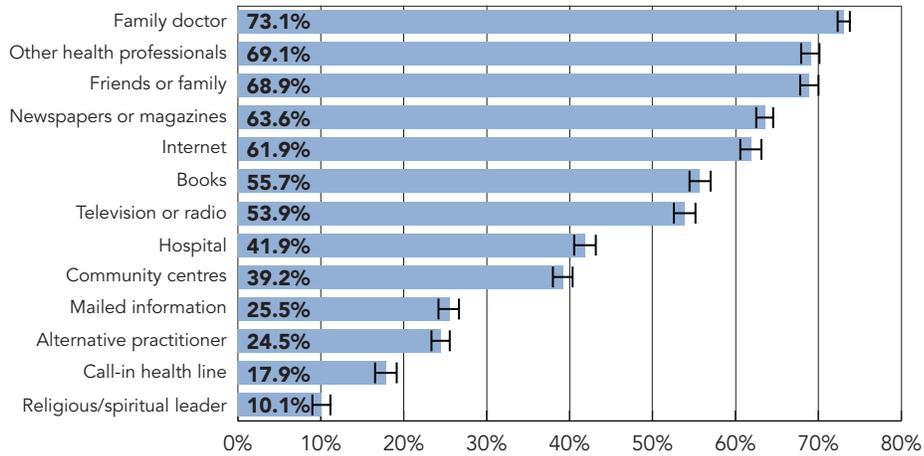
1. What resources do Canadians use to learn about health issues?

- Friends or family members
- Family doctors
- Community health service centres, units or clinics (CLSCs in Quebec, and public health professionals such as nurses, dieticians, etc.)
- Call-in health lines or hotlines
- Internet
- Hospitals
- Alternative medical practitioners
- Other health professionals (e.g., pharmacists, dentists, physiotherapists, psychologists or other specialists)
- Religious or spiritual leaders
- Television or radio
- Newspapers or magazines
- Books
- Information received in the mail

Canadians rely on a variety of sources of information to learn about health, using an average of six different sources within the past twelve months. A majority of Canadians consult family doctors (73%) and other health professionals (69%), family and friends (69%), and newspapers and magazines (64%). Nearly two-thirds (62%) of Canadians look for health-related information on the internet; and over 50% turn to books and television. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that family doctors, general practitioners and the internet are among the most commonly used sources of health-related information.^{32,33,34}

Figure 33

Percentage of Canadians who consult each source of health-related information



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

2. What prevents Canadians from using various sources of health-related information?

- Source was not considered
- Source was not available
- Source was inconvenient
- Not a reliable source of information
- Source was too expensive
- Not needed

The most frequently cited reason for not using the above sources of information was that these sources were not needed. Other reasons varied across types of sources. Some sources were considered unreliable (friends and family, television and radio, information received in the mail); other sources were unavailable (family doctors, internet, information received in the mail); and many other sources were simply never considered.

Table 1: Reasons for not using sources of health-related information		
Reason	Source	% of non-users citing reason
Not reliable	Friends/family	26%
	Television/radio	35%
	Mailed information	24%
Not available	Family doctors	25%
	Internet	24%
	Mailed information	29%
Not considered	Health centres	20%
	Hotlines	28%
	Alternative practitioners	21%
	Spiritual leaders	30%
	Newspapers/magazines	24%
	Books	26%

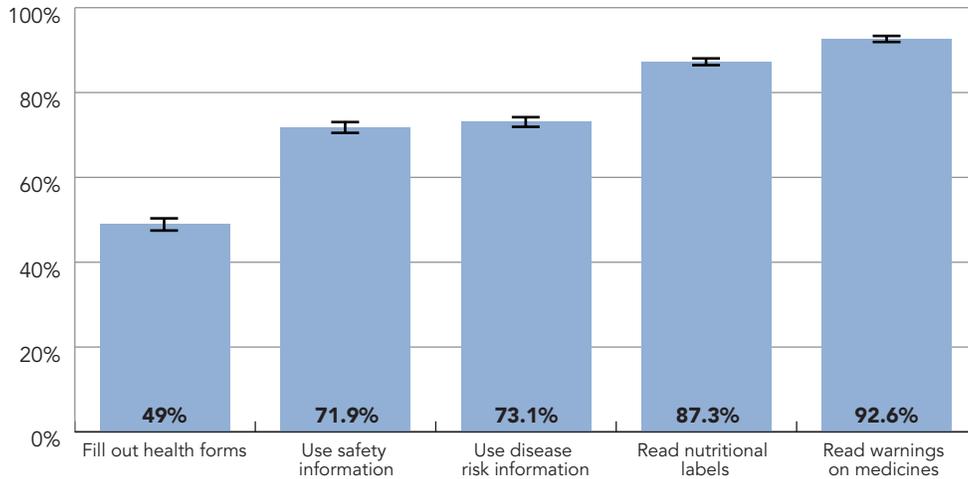
3. How strong do Canadians believe their health-literacy skills to be in the following areas?

- Reading nutritional labels on food packaging
- Reading directions, warnings or other information provided with new medicine
- Filling out forms in order to receive health benefits
- Using health and safety information to assess products
- Using health information to assess risk of developing disease or contracting infection

Health literacy is the ability to access, understand and use health-related information.^{35,36} Canadians use their health-literacy skills in many different ways: only about half of Canadians report filling out forms to receive health benefits, but the majority of Canadians read and/or use health and safety information in a variety of contexts.

Figure 34

Proportion of Canadians who engage in activities requiring health-literacy skills

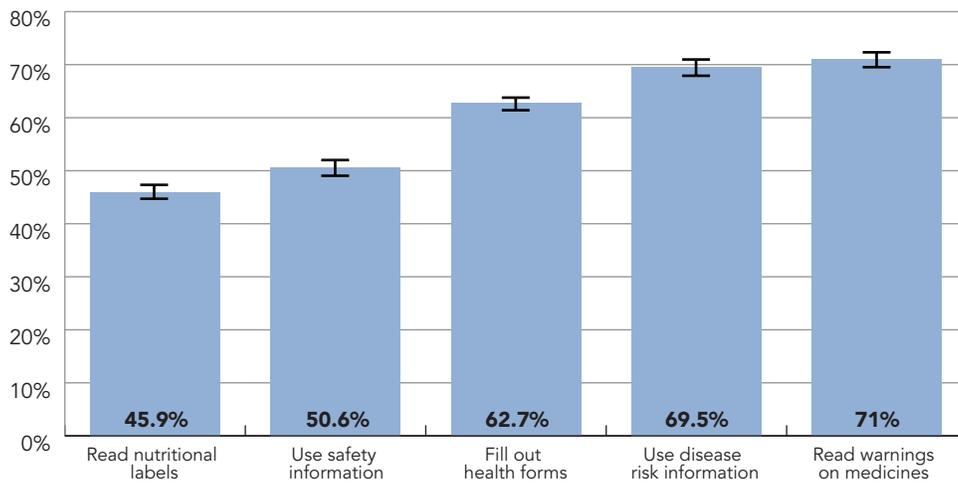


Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Of those who perform various activities requiring health-literacy skills, Canadians are most confident in their ability to read directions and warnings on new medicines, and least confident in their ability to read nutritional labels.

Figure 35

Proportion of Canadians who engage in activities requiring health-literacy skills and report almost never having trouble understanding the health information



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Access to health information: Effects of age and education

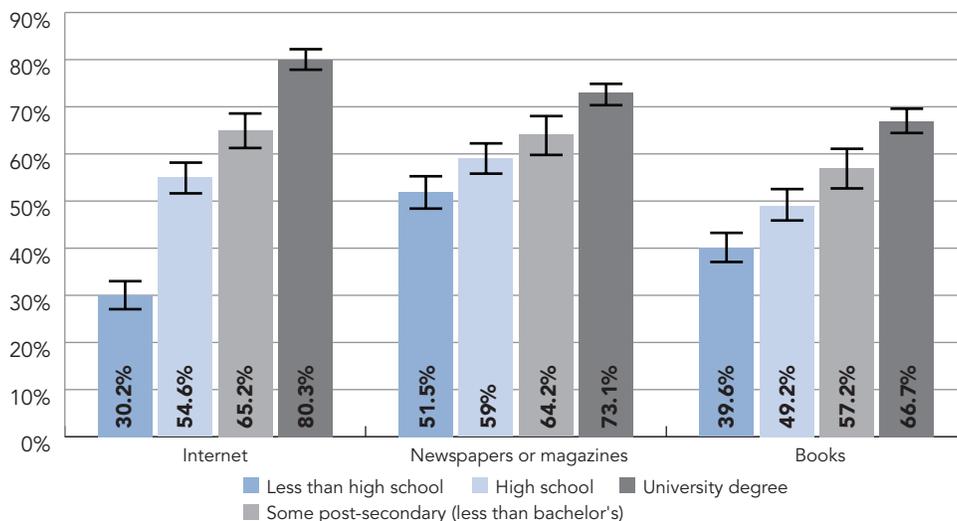
While SCAL 2008 results indicate that most Canadians search for health-related information through a variety of media and other sources, the results also show that certain groups of Canadians are more vulnerable when it comes to accessing health information. Factors that affect use of information include age and educational level.

There are differences in the sources of information used by younger and older Canadians. SCAL results reveal that, while younger Canadians (aged 18–24) report that they would turn first to family and friends (33%), the internet (28%) and a family doctor (22%), the majority of older respondents (aged 65–74) see their family doctor (62%) as the primary source of health-related information. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that, as the number of health-related problems increases with age, people will become more likely to turn to their family doctors for information.^{37,38,39} Furthermore, while some studies indicate that computer literacy among older people is improving, this age group is still less likely to use the internet for information, compared to younger groups.⁴⁰

Education level is another factor associated with the use of sources of health-related information, especially sources of information that depend on literacy skills. Canadians without a high-school diploma are much less likely to turn to the internet or to books and newspapers for health information than are Canadians with higher levels of education. For example, fewer than one-third (30%) of Canadians without a high-school diploma report using the internet to learn about health issues, compared to two-thirds (65%) of Canadians with some post-secondary education and 80% of respondents with a university degree. Similarly, the proportion of Canadians who obtain health information from books is 40% for respondents without a high-school diploma, and two-thirds (67%) for Canadians with a university degree.

Figure 36

Percentage of respondents who report using each source of health information in the past year, by education level



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

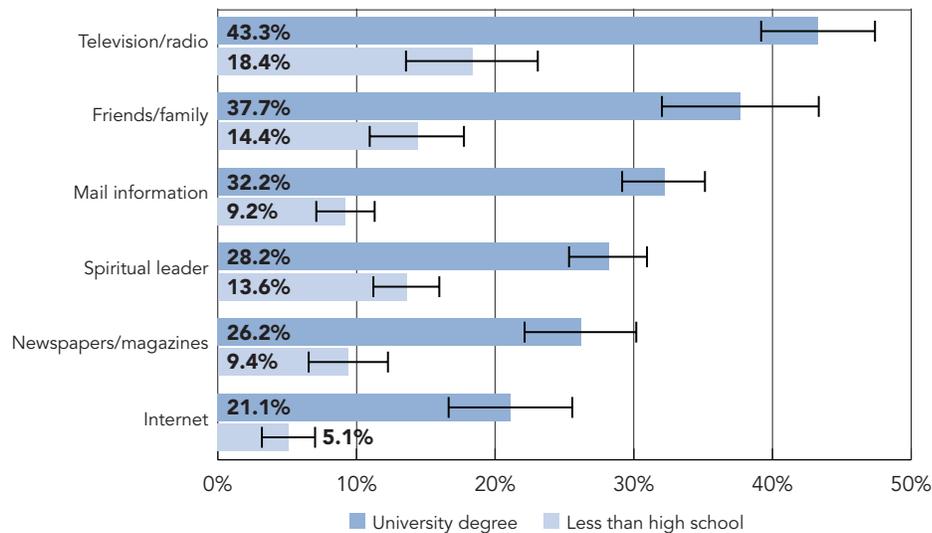
Assessing the reliability of sources of health-related information

“Unreliability” is one of the reasons cited by Canadians for not using specific sources of health-related information. This scepticism is an important aspect of carefully assessing sources of health-related information.

Canadians with more education appear to be more sceptical of the reliability of a variety of different sources of information, and are more likely to report not using certain sources of information because of reliability concerns. For example, 43% of Canadians with university degrees report not using media such as television and radio to learn about health issues because these sources of information are unreliable, while only 18% of Canadians without a high-school diploma say the same.

Figure 37

Percentage of respondents who report not using sources of information due to concerns about their reliability, by education level



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

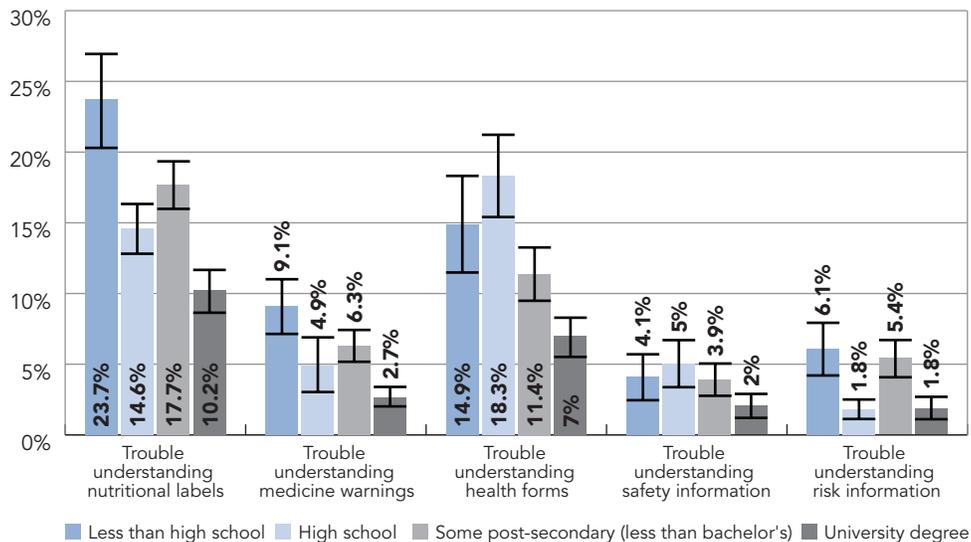
Educational attainment and health-literacy skills

Health-literacy skills are essential for accessing, understanding and using health-related information to make sound health decisions. Recent reports suggest that health-literacy levels in the Canadian population are critically low: three in five (60%) Canadians do not have the health-literacy skills required to manage their everyday health and health-care needs.⁴¹

According to recent research, educational attainment is one of the strongest predictors of health literacy.^{42,43} SCAL 2008 results reveal a similar pattern: individuals with lower levels of education report having more trouble understanding health information in a variety of contexts. For example, nearly one-quarter (24%) of respondents without a high-school diploma who report reading nutritional labels say that they have trouble understanding these labels frequently or almost always, compared to one in ten (10%) respondents with a university degree.

Figure 38

Percentage of respondents who report performing each activity and who report almost always or frequently having trouble understanding the written information associated with the activity



Source: Canadian Council on Learning. Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 2008

Conclusion

Canadians consult a variety of sources of information to learn about health-related issues. Younger Canadians frequently turn to friends, family members and the internet, while older Canadians are more likely to turn to their family doctors. Canadians with more education make more frequent use of literacy-dependent sources of information including the internet, newspapers and magazines, and books. Canadians with more education also appear to be more sceptical of the reliability of various sources of health-related information, and are more confident of their health-literacy skills.

Endnotes

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- ² Christa Japel, "Risques, vulnérabilités et adaptation: Les enfants à risque au Québec," *Choix IRPP* 14, no. 8 (Juillet 2008): 1–48.
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- ⁵ Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, *The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care: The Economic Rationale for Public Investment in Young Children* (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, March 1998).
- ⁶ Jacqueline Luffman, "The core-age labour force," *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 7, no. 9 (September 2006): 12–17. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE.
- ⁷ Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre, *Why is High-Quality Child Care Essential? The Link Between Quality Child Care and Early Learning* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning, 2006). Available at www.ccl-cca.ca.
- ⁸ Gordon Cleveland, Barry Forer, Douglas Hyatt, Christa Japel, and Michael Krashinsky, "New evidence about childcare in Canada: Use patterns, affordability, and quality," *IRPP Choices* 14, no. 3 (October 2008): 1–41.
- ⁹ Martha Friendly, Jane Beach, Carolyn Ferns, and Michelle Turiano, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2006* (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, 2006).
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