



# Chalk Talk

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

In his 1978 radio broadcast comedy series, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, author Douglas Adams takes on solving **The Ultimate Question** — 'What is the Meaning of Life?'

**42** Using the most highly sophisticated technological resources, The Computer 'Deep Thought', reveals — after a 7 1/2 million year period of calculations — the solution to be the number '42', described as "The Answer to Life, the Universe and Everything". Puzzled by this answer, two philosophers ask for a clarification of 'The Ultimate Question'. Deep Thought cannot supply this but does propose designing an even greater computer that would be able to do it in 10 million years.

The joke, of course, is on us. In 1994, Douglas Adams' response to a Brown University student who queried "Why 42?" was simply — **"42 is a nice number that you can take home and introduce to your family"**. Asking for answers without clearly defining the question leads to answers that are puzzling and often meaningless. Analyzing numbers without understanding the context is equally an exercise in futility.

In a world of political polling, market research, focus groups and surveys, finding statistical information that comes from a trustworthy, objective source can be a challenge. Helping students to understand how statistics are gathered, analyzed and reported and how these numbers help us to understand ourselves as Canadians is the theme of this week's issue of *Chalk Talk* features educational material from Statistics Canada.

CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing resources on a range of topics for the classroom. We invite you to visit our website at [www.4edu.ca](http://www.4edu.ca) to view the many free teachers' resources on offer.

[As always, we'd love to hear your thoughts.](#)

Mary Kovack

## Statistics Canada—Learning Resources



**"According to Statistics Canada...":** we read or hear these familiar words almost everyday in the media. **Statistics Canada**, our national statistical organization, is a mirror of who we are as Canadians, producing the numbers and analysis that help us better understand our country—its population, resources, economy, society and culture. In addition to conducting the national census every five years, Statistics Canada runs about 350 active surveys on virtually all aspects of Canadian life.

Statistics Canada is mandated by the federal government to produce objective statistical information that is vital to an open and democratic society. This information is used by elected representatives, businesses, unions and non-profit organizations, as well as individual Canadians, to make informed decisions. For teachers and students too, Statistics Canada is the ultimate reference source about Canada.

**Learning Resources** at [www.statcan.ca/english/edu](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu), is a special area of the Statistics Canada website for teachers and students. It links to the information and teaching tools that are most relevant to K-12 curricula and to postsecondary learning.

**Choose from three entry pages:**

- **Teachers:** support for elementary and secondary school teaching
- **Students:** homework help and **Kids' Zone** fun activities
- **Postsecondary:** more detailed data for in-depth research

**Support for teaching and learning in schools**



**Teachers**

Connect to data, reference material, lesson plans and teaching tools for school teachers and teacher-librarians.



**Students**

Make the grade with the data and information you need to get your assignments done, as well as ideas for your projects.

**Kids' Zone** Try our fun activities!



**Postsecondary**

Find data and programs to support in-depth research, teaching and learning, including the Data Liberation Initiative and Research Data Centres.

**Or link to our main resources for the education community:**

[E-STAT](#) — an interactive data tool for schools about Canada's society and economy

[Census at School](#) — an international online survey project for students aged 8 to 18

**Or under "Quick links", choose popular resources**

## Website of the week

Keep up to date with **Statistics Canada's** official release bulletin, **The Daily**, the Agency's first line of communication with the media and the public. [The Daily](#) issues news releases on current social and economic conditions and announces new products. It provides a comprehensive one-stop overview of new information available from Statistics Canada.



*The Daily* is available by RSS feed,

PDF or in plain text (ASCII) formats and can be ordered by subject. For your **FREE** subscription, [click here](#).

**For research:** Type a topic in the "Search The Daily" box, then click on "sort using date" to get the latest summary articles, tables and graphs. Also, links to tables in StatCan's socio-economic database, CANSIM, can be accessed free from E-STAT.

Or under "Quick links", choose popular resources such as:

[Canadian Social Trends](#) — featuring today's social issues

[Population pyramids](#) — animations showing the baby boom moving through history

[Resources by school subject](#) — lesson plans, key resources and data tables relevant to your courses.

[Source: Statistics Canada]

## Educators— Subscribe to StatCan's bi-monthly e-bulletin!

The Learning Resources Bulletin connects teachers of K-12 with news of the latest resources every month by e-mail. To subscribe and to view current and past issues, go to 'What's New' at [www.statcan.ca/english/edu](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu).

## Statistics Canada knows *Education Matters*

Stay informed about your profession and education-related issues with **Education Matters: Insights on Education, Learning and Training in Canada**, a bi-monthly online publication from **Statistics Canada**. Offering the latest research findings, each issue of *Education Matters* will help teachers find the most current numbers on enrolment, graduation, financing and characteristics of the school-age population for all school levels and for every province and territory. Topics range from educational services for children with disabilities to streaming and pathways to postsecondary studies.



September is back to school time for tens of thousands of students from kindergarten to college and university, for their teachers and principals, and for tens of thousands of families who are busy preparing for another school year. In honour of this annual ritual, StatCan has put together a special edition of **Education Matters** which brings together facts and figures relating to education, from the important role that parents play in preparing their children to begin school, to enrolment trends in college, university and apprenticeship training. The September, 2007 "**Back-to-School**" edition, now available at [www.statcan.ca/english/edu](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu) > [Quick links: Education Matters](#), features:

- [Fewer kids, more old people](#)
- [Readiness to learn](#)
- [The busy lives of teens](#)
- [Literacy level at age 15 a good predictor of dropping out of high school by age 19](#)
- [More young adults returning to the family home](#)
- [Continuing growth in apprenticeship registrations](#)
- [In most jurisdictions, the student-educator ratio has declined](#)
- [Average levels of remuneration for educators varies a great deal across the country](#)

[Source: Statistics Canada]

## Canada at a Glance Free booklet and lesson

Up-dated each year, this popular 24-page booklet offers StatCan's

most requested tables on Canadian demographics, education, health, the economy and more, as well as, comparisons with data from other countries, Suitable for Mathematics and Social Sciences in Grade 6 and up. It's available online in HTML formats or as a free print booklet.

## Educators — Do you need help using StatCan resources?

Ask one of the five StatCan education full-time regional representatives across the country, who offer these free services:

- one-on-one telephone/e-mail support
- workshops on StatCan resources at

print booklet.

Look for Canada at a Glance on the **Teachers Page** in **Learning Resources**. Click **Lesson Plan** to access the worksheet that students can use to analyse tables of interest.



**Hint:** For a **free class set**, order online or by calling 1-800-263-1136. Or go to [www.statcan.ca/english/edu/Teachers/Canada at a Glance](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu/Teachers/Canada%20at%20a%20Glance).

- workshops on StatCan resources at professional development days and conferences, or made-to-measure for your school or district
- consultation with curriculum advisors and textbook publishers
- articles for teacher newsletters and websites

To find your nearest representative, go to the Teacher's page of Learning Resources, under "Regional support" at [www.statcan.ca/english/edu/reprs-tea.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/edu/reprs-tea.htm).

## Statistics Canada — *Newsworthy ... Everyday*

[Youth taking longer to reach adult life stages: Statistics Canada](#) — [CBC News](#), September 18, 2007

"Young women are going through the rites of passage to adulthood at a faster rate than men, according to a study released Tuesday by Statistics Canada. Examining the 18- to 34-year-old population, the study shows women are more likely to leave home, marry and have children at a younger age than men. But men are more likely to finish their schooling and enter full-time employment in their mid-20s. Both male and female youth, however, are staying in their parents' homes longer than 30 years ago. Comparing statistics from 1971 to 2001, Statistics Canada found grown children are taking longer to achieve their independence. They are leaving school later, staying home longer, postponing entering the labour market and not as readily marrying and having their own children. Three-quarters of young adults had left school by the time they reached 22 according to the 1971 statistics; nearly half were married and one in four had children. But in 2001, half of all the 22-year-olds in the study were still in school, one in five was living with a partner and one in 11 had children."

[Girls study harder than boys, says StatsCan](#) — [The Canadian Press](#), September 20, 2007

"Young men are far less likely to attend university than young women, and a new study attributes the gap to differences in academic performance and study habits at the age of 15, as well as parental expectations. Statistics Canada says about a quarter (26 per cent) of 19-year-old men had attended university in 2003 while almost two in five (39 per cent) 19-year-old women had done so. The study found that more than three-quarters (77 per cent) of the gap was related to differences in the characteristics of young men and women that were available in the study. Weaker academic performance among men accounted for almost half (45 per cent) of the gap — specifically, young men had lower overall school marks at age 15, and had poorer performance on a standardized reading test. Another 11 per cent of the gap was related to the fact that boys spend less time on their homework than girls and about 9 per cent was associated with the lower educational expectations placed upon boys by their parents."

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We are the Company for Education Communications. We specialize in developing, producing and evaluating school resources and award programs. Working in conjunction with Departments/Ministries of Education, school district/boards, associations, teachers and subject specialists across the country; we provide free, curriculum-based educational resources to Canadian classrooms.

The opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in the preceding content do not necessarily reflect the views of and are not endorsed by CoEd Communications.

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