Red Deer UEY Understanding The Early Years

The Socioeconomic Status of Red Deer Families with Young Children:

Relationships to school readiness and educational outcomes

A Preliminary Report

November 2009

FAMILY SERVICES of Central Alberta

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Executive Summary

Research has consistently demonstrated that there are many factors that affect the ways in which socioeconomic status (SES) affects school readiness and educational outcomes. These factors vary in both magnitude and effect.

This report is based upon data from the 2006 Federal Census and provides a socioeconomic profile for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada. The selected variables for this study represent family or parental characteristics that have been shown to be reliable predictors of school readiness and children's educational outcomes. In this report, information about children from 0-6 and 6-14 age ranges are included.

Population size, growth and structure

- The percentage of children 0-6 years of age in the total population for Red Deer was 8.4% (8.6% for Alberta and 7.6% for Canada.

- The proportion of children aged 0-14 years in Red Deer was 18.1% of the total population as compared to 19.2% for Alberta and 17.1% for Canada.

Family structure

- Red Deer has a lower percentage of children aged 0-6 years in couple families (79.9%) than Alberta (83.9%) or Canada (82.1%) and higher percentage living in lone parent families (Red Deer 19.9%; Alberta 16.2%; Canada 17.9%).

- Red Deer has a lower percentage of children between 6 -14 years of age in couple families (66.4%) than Alberta (74.1%) or Canada (71.8%) and a much higher percentage of lone parent families (Red Deer 33.6%; Alberta 25.9%; Canada 28.2%).

- With respect to total census families in Red Deer, 82.6% were couple families while 17.3% were lone parent families. Overall, Red Deer has a higher percentage of lone parent families compared to Alberta and Canada.

Aboriginal identity population

- The proportion of children with Aboriginal identity was 26.8% for Red Deer, 31.1% for Alberta and 29.7% for Canada.

Mobility and migration

- A large proportion of the population across all the three geographic regions remained in their usual residence indicating general residential stability. However, Red Deer had a much larger segment of its population that were “movers” (25.6%) compared to Alberta (18.9%) and Canada (14.1%).

- Red Deer had a higher percentage of its population that moved but within the same census subdivision (14.5%) as compared to Alberta (11.2%) and Canada (8.3%).

Language

- Compared to Alberta, a greater proportion of Red Deer children 0-14 had English as their first language; the same proportion with French as their first language; and a much lower proportion with other languages as their mother-tongue.

Education level of parents

- Red Deer had a higher percentage of the 20-44 age group (sub-population who are most likely to be parents of children living at home) with *no* certificate, diploma, or degree (16.2%) as compared to Alberta (14.6%) and Canada (12.2%).

- Red Deer had a lower percentage of people within this sub-population (20-44 years) that had a university certificate or degree (16.6%) as compared to Alberta (25.7%) and for Canada (28.6%).

Labour force activity

- While Alberta and Canada recorded higher participation and employment rates, the Red Deer population aged 24-54 years with the presence of young children under the age of six years at home had a lower unemployment rate of 5.0% compared to 5.3% for Alberta and 6.3% for Canada.

Housing tenure and affordability

- Out of all couple families in Red Deer, 19.5% rented their dwellings while 80.5% owned. At the same time, out of the lone parent families in Red Deer, 46.8% rented while 53.2% owned.

- In terms of affordability, 12.1% of couple families spent more than 30% of their before-tax income on housing costs as compared to 37.9% for lone parent family households in Red Deer.

Family Income

- There are fewer families in Red Deer (7.7%) that have low income rates than in Alberta (8.7%) or Canada 11.6%).

- Lone parent families are five times more likely to fall into the low income category (23.2%) than couple families in Red Deer (4.4%).

The Red Deer Understanding the Early Years Project

The early years are critical for children's development, shaping long-term outcomes related to school achievement, employment success, health, and quality of life. Understanding the Early Years is a community research initiative funded by the Government of Canada. Over 40 communities across Canada have completed or are currently working on UEY projects. The UEY Initiative's overall purpose is to enable members of communities to work together to address the needs of young children by:

- Raising awareness of the importance of family and community factors that can influence young children's development.
- Strengthening the community's ability to use local data to help make decisions to enhance children's lives.

The three year project includes the completion of research on four types of information:

- Readiness for school of kindergarten children
- Family circumstances and children's experiences at home and in their community
- Information about community resources and programs
- Local socioeconomic characteristics, with the goal of creating an evidence-based community action plan for young children.

In Red Deer, Family Services of Central Alberta, in partnership with the Red Deer Catholic and Red Deer Public Schools, is the recipient agency responsible for the Red Deer Understanding the Early Years project. Red Deer UEY is part of the final cohort of 16 projects across Canada, and the only UEY project in Alberta. The UEY Advisory Committee, with membership from education, health, government, non-profits, and parents plays a vital role in

providing input to the project. The work is also guided by a coalition made up of local organizations and individuals committed to helping children reach their full potential. This coalition, the Children's Working Group, meets regularly and, together with other stakeholders, will provide insight and guidance to the community action plan.
A large part of the UEY team's work has involved data collection. Information has been gathered from four sources:

- The Early Development Instrument
- Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children
- Community Resources and Services
- Socioeconomic Characteristics

The *Socioeconomic Status of Red Deer Families with Young Children* Report is one of several reports and products released by the Red Deer Understanding the Early Years project.

1.1 Introduction

There is compelling evidence that there is a strong relationship between a family's socioeconomic status and children's readiness for school and educational outcomes.[1] A family's socioeconomic status (SES) is based on family income, parental education level, and parental occupation. While these factors capture some aspects of SES, other elements such as family structure, housing security and stability are thought to be important as well. The link between SES and children's readiness for school and educational outcomes begins at a very early age -- before formal school begins.[2]

Why is SES important to children's school readiness and educational outcomes? Some people suggest that it is not whether wealth or socioeconomic advantages affect educational attainment per se, but whether the behaviours and resources made possible by wealth and socioeconomic advantage affect educational attainment.[3]

It appears that families with high SES often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they typically have access to a wide range of resources to promote and support young children's development.[4] On the other hand, families with low SES often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterize families with high SES. Poor families may also have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness.[5]

It has been found that a student from a higher SES group will achieve better test results than a student from a lower SES group within the same school.[6] It has also been demonstrated that a family's SES affects educational outcomes such as grade retention and high school graduation.[7]

Canadian studies show that SES has a large and pervasive influence over children's school achievement. For example, SES has a strong and direct impact on the following:

- level of social support perceived by parents,
- level of parental depression,
- tendency to use hostile parenting practices, child's academic skills, and
- level of achievement attained by the children.[8]

1.2 Purpose of this report

This report is part of the Red Deer *Understanding the Early Years* (UEY) project that aims to enable the community to better understand the needs of young children and families so that programs and services can be developed to meet those needs. The main goal of UEY is to build community capacity by utilizing local research to help make decisions to enhance children's lives and enable community members to work together to address the needs of children.

This report focuses on describing the socioeconomic status of Red Deer families with young children. Data for this report were obtained from the 2006 Federal Census carried out by Statistics Canada. The census data provides information on a variety of socio-economic characteristics for Red Deer and also for Alberta and Canada. These data were analyzed and reported for this study as a way to compare the socio-economic circumstances of Red Deer families with those of Alberta and Canada.

It should be noted that the 2006 census data describes the entire population (e.g., Red Deer) and does not necessarily represent the sample of children or families who participated in other areas of the UEY research (e.g., school readiness of kindergarten children in 2009). Nonetheless, this report offers a good overview of the socioeconomic characteristics of Red Deer families with young children, focusing on the age range of 0-6, with additional data for children ages 6-14.

The purpose of this report is to present data on the following key variables of SES and to explore their relationship to school readiness and educational outcomes:

- Population size, growth and structure
- Family structure
- Aboriginal identity population
- Mobility and migration
- Language
- Education level of parents
- Labour force activity
- Housing tenure and affordability
- Family income

1.3 Population size, growth and structure

The population of Red Deer reached 82,772 as of May 2006. Comparatively, Alberta recorded a total population of 3,290,350 and Canada of 31,612,897.
Table 1 shows the population size and growth for the three geographic regions between 2001 and 2006. Red Deer had a growth rate of 22% which is about twice as high as the rate for Alberta (10.6%) and four times the rate for Canada (5.4%).

Table 1: Population size and growth for Red Deer, Alberta, and Canada (2001-2006)

Geographic Name	2001	2006	% Change
Red Deer	67,829	82,772	22.0
Alberta	2,974,807	3,290,350	10.6
Canada	30,007,094	31,612,897	5.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

Table 2 shows the total population of the three geographic regions (Red Deer, Alberta, Canada) as categorized into three main groups:

- Children - aged 0 to 14,
- Working population - aged 15 to 64,
- Seniors - aged 65 and over.

The proportion of children in Red Deer was 18.1% of total population as compared to 19.2% for Alberta and 17.1% for Canada. This means that Red Deer has a lower proportion of children than Alberta but a higher proportion than Canada.

In terms of the working population, Red Deer has a higher percentage (72.0%) as compared to Alberta (70.1%) and Canada (68.6%). For the senior's population, Red Deer has a lower proportion (9.8%) as compared to Alberta (10.7%) and Canada (13.7%).

Table 2: Population age structure for Red Deer, Alberta, and Canada, 2006

Geographic Name	Age Category					
	0-14	**%**	**15-64**	**%**	**65 and over**	**%**
Red Deer	15,010	18.1	59,620	72.0	8,140	9.8
Alberta	631,515	19.2	2,305,425	70.1	353,410	10.7
Canada	5,579,835	17.7	21,697,805	68.6	4,335,255	13.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

Looking more closely at the population of specific interest to the Red Deer UEY project, the percentage of children 0-6 years of age in the total population for Red Deer was 8.4%. Alberta has a slightly higher percentage of 8.6% and Canada a lower percentage of 7.6%. Table 3 depicts the proportion of children 0-6 years of age as a percentage of the total population within the three geographic regions.

Table 3: Percentage of Children 0-6 years of age for Red Deer, Alberta, and Canada, 2006

Geographic Name	# Male	# Female	# Total	% of total population
Red Deer	3,510	3,455	6,965	8.4
Alberta	144,755	138,020	282,775	8.6
Canada	1,223,520	1,168,230	2,391,750	7.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

1.4 Family structure

Family structure significantly affects children's preschool readiness and educational achievement at the elementary, secondary, and college levels.[9] Table 4 reports on *census family* structure* and children at home between the ages 0 to under 6 and 6 to14 years for Red Deer, Alberta, and Canada.

- With respect to total census families in Red Deer, 82.6% were couple families while 17.3% were lone parent families.
- Comparatively, there was a higher percentage of couple families in Alberta (85.6%) and a lower percentage of lone parent families (14.4%). For Canada, couple families constituted 84.1% and lone parent families formed 15.9% of census families.
- Red Deer has a lower percentage of couple families and a higher percentage of lone parent families than Alberta or Canada.

With reference to the age of children in census families – Red Deer has a lower percentage of children aged 0-6 years in couple families (Red Deer 79.9%; Alberta 83.9%; Canada 82.1%) than Alberta or Canada and higher percentage living in lone parent families (Red Deer 19.9%; Alberta 16.2%; Canada 17.9%).

Red Deer also has a lower percentage of children between 6 -14 years of age in couple families (Red Deer 66.4%; Alberta 74.1%; Canada 71.8%) than Alberta or Canada and a much higher percentage of lone parent families (Red Deer 33.6%; Alberta 25.9%; Canada 28.2%)

It has been reported that in terms of physical health, young children in lone parent families are less healthy overall than are children in all other family types. Children living with their own married parents are more likely to be involved in literacy activities (e.g., being read to or learning to recognize letters) than are children from lone parent homes. Not growing up with their own married parents appears to have a negative effect on young children as the cognitive and social behaviors developed early on persist throughout childhood and affect the course of their entire education. [10]

* Census family refers to a married couple (with or without children of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (with or without children of either or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child living in the same dwelling. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. Children in a census family include grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present.

Table 4: Census family structure and children at home (under 6 years and 6-14 years) for Red Deer, Alberta, and Canada, 2006

Red Deer	**Total Census Family Structure**	**Total Couple Families**	**%**	**Lone Parents**	**%**
Families by age group of children at home	22,405	18,515	82.6	3,885	17.3
All Under 6 years	2,785	2,225	79.9	555	19.9
All 6 years to 14 years	2,860	1,900	66.4	960	33.6
Alberta					
Families by Age group of Children at home	904,850	774,580	85.6	130,265	14.4
All Under 6 years	103,470	86,690	83.9	16,775	16.2
All 6 years to 14 years	112,250	83,180	74.1	29,065	25.9
Canada					
Families by Age group of Children at home	8,896,840	7,482,775	84.1	1,414,060	15.9
All Under 6 years	900,165	739,110	82.1	161,055	17.9
All 6 years to 14 years	1,093,740	785,695	71.8	308,045	28.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

In summary, Red Deer has higher percentage of lone parent families compared to Alberta and Canada. Red Deer also has much higher percentage of children under 6 years and 6-14 years of age in lone parent families than Alberta and Canada**.** All these have implications for children's school readiness and educational outcomes.

1.5 Aboriginal identity population

Aboriginal identity reflects those persons who report identifying with at least one Aboriginal group (North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit). It also includes those who report being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada and/or those who report they are members of an Indian Band or First Nation.

- The number of people of all ages reporting Aboriginal identity population constitutes 4.4% of total population in Red Deer, 5.6% of the total population of Alberta and 3.7% of Canada's total population.

- The population structure of the Aboriginal identity population reveals a high proportion of children (0-14 years of age). The proportion of the children in Aboriginal identity population was 26.8% for Red Deer, 31.1% for Alberta and 29.7% for Canada.

- Red Deer has a higher proportion of the 15 to 64 years of age working population within the Aboriginal identity population (70.8%) compared to Alberta (65.1%) and Canada (65.5%).

- The seniors population (65 years plus) is significantly lower in the total Aboriginal identity population. Seniors constitute only 2.4% of the total Aboriginal population in Red Deer, 3.8% for Alberta and 4.8% for Canada.

- Couple families in the Aboriginal family structure constitute 81.3% of total census families as compared to 18.7% for lone parent families in Red Deer. In Alberta, couple families comprise 80.6% of all census families compared to 19.4% for lone parent families. For Canada as whole, couple families constitute 80.3% of the total census family compared to 19.7% of lone parent families. Red Deer has a lower proportion of lone parent families among Aboriginal identity population than Alberta and Canada.

- The high percentage of lone parent families combined with a greater proportion of the Aboriginal population between the ages 0-14 years has implications for the school readiness and educational outcomes of children within this sub-population.

1.6 Mobility and migration

Residential mobility and migration† has implications for children's readiness for school and educational outcomes. The relationship has been shown to be associated with negative behaviours and difficulty integrating into the new environment which then affects school readiness and educational outcomes.[11] Table 5 shows mobility status (i.e., people who moved or did not move) for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada in 2005.

- Most people across all the three geographic regions remained in their usual residence (Red Deer 74.4%; Alberta 81.1%; Canada 85.9%). This group is called "non-movers" and the data indicates residential stability over the year (2005).
- However, Red Deer had a much larger segment of its population that were "movers" (25.6%) compared to Alberta (18.9%) and Canada (14.1%).

Within the category of "movers", a further distinction is made between non-migrants and migrants and this is called migration status. Non-migrants are movers who, on Census Day, were living at a different address, but in the same census subdivision (CSD) as the one they lived in one year earlier. Migrants are movers who, on Census Day, were residing in a different CSD one year earlier (internal migrants) or who were living outside Canada one year earlier (external migrants).

† Refers to the relationship between a person's usual place of residence on Census Day and his or her usual place of residence one year earlier. A person is classified as a **non-mover** if no difference exists. Non-movers are persons who, on Census Day, were living at the same address as the one at which they resided one year earlier. Otherwise, a person is classified as a mover. **Movers** are persons who, on Census Day, were living at a different address from the one at which they resided one year earlier. This categorization is called mobility status

Within the category of **movers**, a further distinction is made between non-migrants and migrants. This difference is called migration status. **Non-migrants** are movers who, on Census Day, were living at a different address, but in the same census subdivision (CSD) as the one they lived in one year earlier. **Migrants** are movers who, on Census Day, were residing in a different CSD one year earlier (internal migrants) or who were living outside Canada one year earlier (external migrants).

- Non-migrants comprised 14.5% of Red Deer's total population compared to 11.2% for Alberta and 8.3% for Canada. Red Deer had a higher percentage of its population that moved within in the same census subdivision as compared to Alberta and Canada.

- Migrants constituted 11.1% of the Red Deer population compared to 7.7% for Alberta and 4.8% for Canada as whole. Red Deer has a higher percentage of its population that moved from a different subdivision or who were living outside Canada as compared to Alberta and Canada.

Table 5: Mobility status for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2006

	Red Deer	%	Alberta	%	Canada	%
Total Population	80,275	100	3,214,140	100	30,897,210	100
Non-movers	59,715	74.4	2,606,575	81.1	26,534,115	85.9
Movers	20,560	25.6	607,565	18.9	4,363,090	14.1
Non-migrants	11,675	14.5	359,015	11.2	2,554,260	8.3
Migrants	8,890	11.1	248,550	7.7	1,808,830	5.8
Internal migrants	8,100	10.1	214,910	6.7	1,511,305	4.8
Intra-provincial migrants	5,100	6.4	127,915	4.0	1,221,560	3.9
Inter-provincial migrants	3,000	3.7	86,995	2.7	289,740	0.92
External migrants	790	0.97	33,640	1.0	297,530	0.95

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

Within the migrant category, there are internal migrants or those people who moved from within Canada and external migrants or those who moved from outside Canada.

- Internal migrants made up 10.1% of Red Deer's total population (6.7% for Alberta and 4.8% for Canada).
    - With respect to intra-provincial migrants, Red Deer has a higher percentage than for Alberta and Canada (6.4%, 4%. 3.9% respectively). This is also the case for inter-provincial migrants (3.7%, 2.7% and .92%).

- Red Deer had 0.97% of its total population who were external migrants (1.0 % for Alberta and 0.95% for Canada). This shows that Red Deer has a lower percentage of people who moved from outside Canada than Alberta but slightly higher than for Canada.

Residential mobility has been shown to be linked with other key demographic and socioeconomic trends. For example, lone parent families are twice as likely to move residences frequently as couple families. This is often due to housing and employment instability.[12] Furthermore, the odds of high school dropout were increased for children who had experienced family moves especially when the moves occurred during early childhood and for children residing in single-parent and stepfamilies versus two-parent or couple families.[13]

There is some indication that children from high-SES families were more likely to make longer-distance moves than low-SES children, perhaps indicating that the more affluent families were moving in response to better opportunities and most often into better neighborhoods with much higher educational outcomes for children. Comparatively, for low SES families the move is most often horizontal to a similar or worse neighborhood with significant implications for children's education.[14]

1.7 Language

The focus on language characteristics for this report is children's mother-tongue; that is, the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census. The presence of different mother-tongues other than the two official languages (English and French) shows linguistic and cultural diversity. This diversity is clearly reflected in the more than 200 different languages reported in 2006 census question on mother-tongue in Canada.

The growth in the population whose mother-tongue is neither English nor French is attributable to the increase in the number of recent immigrants whose mother-tongue is neither English nor French.[15] The increased percentage of the population without English or French as mother-tongue has an impact on children's readiness to school and education outcomes.

Children with English as the second language, on average, are achieving at rates below their native English speaking peers.[16] In other words, if their pre-school experience does not include English language proficiency before grade school, these children are more likely to lag behind their peers who English is not their second language.

Statistics Canada noted that the number of people in Canada whose mother-tongue is neither English nor French tend to adopt one of the two official languages as their home language with increasing length of stay in Canada.[17] For many children this may be too late, as it may affect their integration into the school system and academic performance. Because of the potential impact on children's long-term educational outcomes, the preschool educational needs of these students are critically important in ensuring that children arrive at school ready for school.[18] Table 6 shows population by mother-tongue for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada.

Table 6: Population by mother-tongue for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2006

Geographic Name	Total Population	English	%	French	%	Non-official languages	%
Red Deer	81,370	72,775	89.4	1,360	1.7	7,235	8.9
Alberta	3,256,360	2,580,995	79.3	62,305	1.9	613,060	18.8
Canada	31,241, 025	18,055,685	57.8	6,892,230	22.1	6,293,110	20.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

- People whose mother-tongue is English make up the majority of the population in Red Deer (89.4%), Alberta (79.3%) and Canada (57.8%).
- People whose mother-tongue is French account for 1.7% in Red Deer, 1.9% in Alberta and 22.1% in Canada.
- People whose mother-tongue was neither English or French (official languages) was 8.9% in Red Deer, 18.8% in Alberta and 20.1% in Canada.

While the above proportions represent the total population, a further analysis of the children population (0-14 years) was undertaken to examine the distribution of the mother-tongue among the school going population. Table 7 shows population by mother-tongue for the 0-14 years of age population.

Table 7: Population by mother-tongue (0-14 years) for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2006

Geographic Name	Total Population	English	%	French	%	Non-official languages	%
Red Deer	15,050	14,190	94.2	105	0.7	755	5.0
Alberta	631,210	542,525	86.0	4,730	0.7	83,955	13.3
Canada	5,576,805	3,620,605	64.9	1,102,015	19.8	854,185	15.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

- In Red Deer, 94.2% of children had English as their mother-tongue, 0.7% had French and 5% other languages.
- Comparatively, 86% of children in Alberta had English as their mother-tongue, 0.7% had French and 13.3% had other non-official languages.
- For Canada, children's whose mother-tongue was English comprised 64.9% of their total population while, French made 19.8% and 15.3% constituted other non-official languages.
- In summary, Red Deer children between the ages of 0-14 years had a much higher proportion than Alberta in terms of mother-tongue being English, the same proportion regarding mother-tongue being French and a much lower proportion with respect to other languages.

1.8 Education level of parents

There is consistent evidence that parent's educational status predicts children's educational outcomes.[19] The influence of parental education is both direct and indirect.

- Parental education can contribute directly to a child's education by providing a more or a less supportive environment for learning.[20] This is often reflected in early language development and reading between parents and children, which in turn, predicts better language and reading skills throughout childhood.[21]
- Parents with more education also have higher expectations for their children, which in turn, predict greater educational attainment.[22]
- Parental education also affects children's education through hereditary and cultural factors.[23]
- Furthermore, parents with higher levels of education tend to expose their children to educational opportunities in their communities.[24]
- Indirectly, parent's level of education tends to pave the way for a higher level of educational attainment through better labour market outcomes for parents, higher incomes, and better family residence and neighborhood opportunities.[25]

To assess the parent's level of education‡ for this report, the 20-44 age cohort was used to represent the educational level of parents. Five major categories of education were used for this report:

- no certificate, diploma or degree,
- high school certificate or equivalent
- apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma College,
- CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma,
- university certificate, diploma or degree

‡ Refers to the highest certificate, diploma or degree completed based on a hierarchy which is generally related to the amount of time spent 'in-class.' For postsecondary completers, a university education is considered to be a higher level of schooling than a college education, while a college education is considered to be a higher level of education than in the trades. Although some trades requirements may take as long or longer to complete than a given college or university program, the majority of time is spent in on-the-job paid training and less time is spent in the classroom.

Table 8: Educational attainment for people age 20-44 years in Red Deer, Alberta and Canada 2006

Level of Educational Attainment	Geographic Name		
	Red Deer	Alberta	Canada
	%	%	%
No certificate, diploma or degree	16.2	14.6	12.2
High school certificate or equivalent	33.2	28.3	26.5
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	11.9	10.2	10.8
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	22.1	21.2	21.8
University certificate, diploma or degree	16.6	25.7	28.6

Source**:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

- Red Deer had a higher percentage of the 20-44 age group with no certificate, diploma, or degree (16.2%) as compared to Alberta (14.6%) and Canada (12.2%). This is important because employment and income status are associated with level of education.

- Red Deer had a higher percentage of people within this sub-population that had a high school certificate or diploma (33.2%) as compared to Alberta (28.3%) and Canada (26.5%).

- For apprenticeship or trade certificates or diploma 11.9% of people within this sub-population in Red Deer had acquired certification as compared to 10.2% for Alberta and 10.8% for Canada.

- A higher proportion (22.1%) of the population within this sub-population in Red Deer had a college certificate or diploma (21.2 % in Alberta and 21.8% in Canada).

- Red Deer had a lower percentage of people within this sub-population that had a university certificate or degree (16.6%) as compared to Alberta (25.7%) and for Canada (28.6%).

1.9 Labour force activity

Labour force activity[§] is the study of participation in the labour force, employment and unemployment rates of the population. The presence of young children affects labour market participation of parents and labour market participation of parents is in turn determined by the presence of young children. This report examines the later.

Over the years, there has been an increase in labour market participation, especially for women.[26] It has been noted that while this increase in labour market participation has been advantageous in many ways (e.g. rising economic output, more income to meet family needs), parents may feel they have less and less time available for their children or for themselves, and may find it increasingly challenging to reconcile family and work responsibilities.[27]

The relationship between labour market participation of parents and children education outcomes is often viewed in terms of time spent with children and income obtained through labour market activities. Lack of time raises a different set of well-being issues for families with children. For instance, studies have shown that children enjoying more available parental hours fare better at school.[28]

Income obtained from labour market activities also support parents in getting their children's ready for school.[29] However, the effects vary from the structure of the family and other factors such as the parental occupation.[30]

[§] Labour force activity refers to the labour market activity of the population 15 years of age and over in the week (Sunday to Saturday) prior to Census Day (May 16, 2006). The participation rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic area, etc.) is the total labour force in that group, expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over, in that group. The employment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic area, etc.) is the number employed in that group, expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over, in that group. The unemployment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic area, etc.) is the unemployed in that group, expressed as a percentage of the labour force in that group, in the week prior to enumeration.

For the purposes of this report, no direct information on labour market participation for families was available. However, labour market activity for the population 24-54 years of age with the presence of young children under the age of six years at home was used to present the picture of parents' level of engagement in the labour market.

Labor market participation rates, employment and unemployment rates were studied to provide an overview of market outcomes for this population (see Table 9).

Table 9: **Labour force activity and the presence of children under 6 years of age for 24-54 years of age population for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2006**

	Participation Rate %	Employment Rate %	Unemployment Rate %
Red Deer	79.6	75.7	5.0
Alberta	81.9	77.6	5.3
Canada	83.9	78.6	6.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

- The participation rate for the Red Deer population aged 24-54 years with the presence of young children under the age of six years at home was 79.6%, for Alberta it was 81.9% while Canada recorded a participation rate of 83.9%.

- With high participation rates, the employment rates were also very high. Red Deer had employment rate of 75.7%, Alberta had 77.6% while Canada's employment rate was 78.6%.

- In contrast, while Alberta and Canada recorded higher participation and employment rates, Red Deer had a lower unemployment rate of 5.0% compared to 5.3% for Alberta and 6.3% for Canada.

1.10 Housing Tenure and affordability

Among housing variables, homeownership and residential stability appear to be the two most important determinants of a child's educational attainment.[31] Housing cost and affordability are key aspects of housing that affects children educational outcomes as affordability problems lead to increased residential mobility, which has detrimental effects on children's educational attainment.[32] Spending a large or disproportionate amount of income on housing means less money is available for other necessities or non-housing expenses that will support children's education.[33]

Extreme stress caused by housing insecurity can strain parents' relationships with one another and their children which can contribute to dysfunctional family relationships. In turn, dysfunctional family relationships can result in lower educational outcomes for children.[34]

This report examined two housing variables: housing tenure[**] and affordability[††] . Table 10 illustrates housing tenure and affordability based on family household type across the three geographic regions.

- Couple family households and lone parent family households differed greatly across the three geographic regions in terms of housing tenure and affordability.
    - Compared with lone parent families, more couples families are likely to own than rent possibly due to the double income effect. Out of the total of all couple families in Red Deer, 19.5% rented their dwellings while 80.5% owned. At the same time, out of the total number of lone parent families in Red Deer, 46.8% rented while 53.2% owned.

[**] Refers to whether some member of the household owns or rents the dwelling.

[††] Affordability is the ratio of housing costs to total household income. A household paying 30% or more of its pre-tax income for housing is considered to have affordability problems. It should be noted that not all households spending 30% or more of incomes on shelter costs are necessarily experiencing housing affordability problems. This is particularly true of households with high incomes. There are also other households who choose to spend more on shelter than on other goods. Nevertheless, the allocation of 30% or more of a household's income to housing expenses provides a useful benchmark for assessing trends in housing affordability. The relatively high shelter costs to household income ratios for some households may have resulted from the difference in the reference period for shelter costs and household income data. The reference period for shelter cost data (gross rent for tenants, and owner's major payments for owners) is 2006, while household income is reported for the year 2005. As well, for some households, the 2005 household income may represent income for only part of a year.

- In terms of affordability, only 12.1% of couple families spend more than 30% of their before tax income on housing costs in Red Deer as compared to 37.9% for lone parent family households. This pattern was also the case for Alberta and Canada.

For Alberta, 15.2% of total couple families rent their dwelling while 84.8% owned their dwelling. Comparatively, 37.0% of lone parent families in Alberta rented while 63.0% owned their dwellings. Only 13.4% of couple family households spend more than 30% of their before tax income of housing cost compared to 35.2% of lone parent family households.

For Canada, 17.9% of couple families rented their dwellings and 82.1% owned. 45.4% of lone parent families in Canada rented while 54.6% owned. Again, 15.3% of couple family households spent more than 30% of their before tax income on housing cost compared to 35.9% of lone parent family households.

Table 10: Housing Tenure and Affordability for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2006

	Housing Tenure		Housing Affordability
Red Deer	Rent (%)	Own (%)	Family households spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs (%)
Couple families	19.5	80.5	12.1
Lone parent families	46.8	53.2	37.9
Alberta			
Couple families	15.2	84.8	13.4
Lone parent families	37.0	63	35.2
Canada			
Couple families	17.9	82.1	15.3
Lone parent families	45.4	54.6	35.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

1.11 Family income

Research demonstrates that parental income is positively correlated with children's educational attainment and readiness for school.[35] Children from lower income households score significantly lower on measures of vocabulary and communication skills, knowledge of numbers, copying and symbol use, ability to concentrate and cooperative play with other children than children from higher income households.[36]

Low income disadvantage and the associated risk factors such as high family stress have negative effects on cognitive development and academic achievement of children.[37] While there is no agreement on the causal link between parental income and children's educational outcomes, the impact of low income disadvantage and children readiness for school and educational outcomes cannot be overstated.

This report examines median[‡‡] and average[§§] family incomes and the prevalence of low income[***] by family types[†††] across the three geographic regions using income data from 2005. Table 11 depicts the median and average income for family types across the three geographic regions.

- Alberta had the highest income levels in terms of median and average incomes, followed by Red Deer and Canada as whole.

[‡‡] The median income of a specified group of families (census/economic), persons 15 years of age and over not in families, or households is that amount which divides their income size distribution, ranked by size of income, into two halves. That is, the incomes of the first half of the families, persons 15 years of age and over not in families, or households are below the median, while those of the second half are above the median

[§§] Average income of families (census/economic) or persons 15 years of age and over not in families or households refers to the weighted mean total income of families (census/economic), persons 15 years of age and over not in families, or households in 2005.

[***] Refers to the position of an economic family or a person 15 years of age and over not in an economic family in relation to Statistics Canada's low income before tax cut-offs (LICOs).

[†††] Refers to the specific economic family type a person belongs to. Economic family persons refer to two or more household members who are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption, and thereby constitute an economic family. They can be further classified as follows: Couple families are those in which a member of either a married or common-law couple is the economic family reference person. Lone-parent families are those in which either a male or female lone parent is the economic family reference person.

- Couple families across the three geographic regions also had higher income than lone parent families due to the double income effect. For instance in Red Deer the ratio difference between the median income of couple and lone parent families was almost two to one. The ratio followed a similar pattern in Alberta and Canada.

Table 11: Median and Average Income for Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2005

	Median Income	Average Income
Red Deer		
All Economic Families	74,566	90,333
Couple families	81,993	99,237
Lone parent families	41,928	49,705
Alberta		
All Economic Families	76,526	98,240
Couple families	82,818	105,760
Lone parent families	43,977	54,926
Canada		
All Economic Families	66,343	82,325
Couple families	72,265	88,863
Lone parent families	39,227	48,251

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

A person in low income is someone whose family income falls below Statistics Canada's low income cut-offs (LICOs). The cut-offs reflect an income level at which a family is likely to spend significantly more of its income on food, shelter and clothing than the average family. Low income cut-offs depend on family size since larger families need more income to meet their needs. The cut-offs also take into account the varying costs by community size.

Table 12 shows family type and prevalence of low income across three geographic regions. Red Deer has a lower prevalence rate of low income for all economic families (7.7%) than for Alberta (8.7%) or Canada (11.6%). Lone parent families have five times the prevalence of low income (23.2%) than couple families in Red Deer (4.4%).

Table 12: Family Type and Prevalence of Low Income in Red Deer, Alberta and Canada, 2005

Low Income Status by Family Type	Prevalence of Low Income (before tax) %
Red Deer	
All Economic Families	7.7
Couple families	4.4
Lone parent families	23.2
Alberta	
All Economic Families	8.7
Couple families	6.1
Lone parent families	24.7
Canada	
All Economic Families	11.6
Couple families	8.4
Lone parent families	29.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006

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