

# The BOOMER Factor

WHAT CANADA'S MOST FAMOUS GENERATION  
IS LEAVING BEHIND

REGINALD W. BIBBY

Bestselling author of

*RESTLESS GODS* and *CANADA'S TEENS*

*"... informative  
and provocative ..."*

— Brian Bethune, *Maclean's*

*"... wonderfully  
readable ..."*

— Roy MacGregor,  
*Globe and Mail*



# About the Author

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**Reginald W. Bibby**, Ph.D., holds the Board of Governors Research Chair in the sociology department of the University of Lethbridge. For the past three decades, he has been monitoring social trends in Canada through his well-known series of Project Canada national surveys of adults and teenagers. These surveys are producing unparalleled, historic trend data, and have been described by colleagues and the media as “a national treasure.”

Widely recognized as one of Canada’s leading experts on religious and social trends, Professor Bibby has presented his findings in North America, Europe, and Australia, speaking at universities including British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, McMaster, Queen’s, Toronto, Acadia, Oxford, Notre Dame, and Harvard. His commitment to taking his work beyond the academic community has resulted in a large number of public appearances, a high media profile, and the publication of 10 bestselling books, which, to date, have sold more than 120,000 copies. In 2006, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the nation, the Governor General appointed him an Officer of the Order of Canada.

## Also by Reginald W. Bibby

*The Emerging Generation* (with Donald Posterski), 1985

*Fragmented Gods*, 1987

*Mosaic Madness*, 1990

*Teen Trends* (with Donald Posterski), 1992

*Unknown Gods*, 1993

*The Bibby Report*, 1995

*There's Got to Be More!*, 1995

*Canada's Teens*, 2001

*Restless Gods*, 2002

*Restless Churches*, 2004

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IS LEAVING BEHIND

**REGINALD W. BIBBY**



**BASTIAN  
BOOKS**

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***To Sahara and Lita***

*a special Baby and a special Boomer,  
who gave much and gave up much  
so this book could be written*





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# Preface

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I frequently tell people I'm not all that interested in numbers, or surveys, or even sociology. It's true. What I'm really interested in is life and ideas – trying to figure out how the world works and then trying to figure out what can be done to optimize personal and social living.

Consistent with my primary interests, this book, while containing a lot of numbers, is not primarily a book about numbers. What I do is draw on my Project Canada survey findings, spanning the years 1975 through 2005, to tell a story about where we have come from and where we are headed, taking time along the way to pause and reflect on what it means for us all.

The story centres on 10 trends, each making up a chapter in this book, and the people behind them. That, of course, takes us to the Baby Boomers – that much-heralded age cohort born between approximately 1946 and 1965. Because of their large numbers, the Boomers have had the opportunity to play the lead role in shaping Canada over the past few decades. They have seized that opportunity and have had a significant collective impact on Canadian life. But, as we will see, their contribution leaves much work still to be done. Despite all the consternation we may feel about younger people, the findings point to a surprising conclusion – that the Post-Boomers, in collaboration with aging Boomers and others, are poised to make an even greater contribution to personal and collective life than the Boomers.

One quick Canadian-American observation. Over the years, “our Boomers” haven’t received the fanfare “their Boomers” received – much like what happens with the CFL versus the NFL, or *Canadian Idol* versus *American Idol*. Our Boomers didn’t have a highly publicized counter-

culture movement, regular clashes with the police, a Woodstock, religious brainwashing, or a Vietnam War. Still, as will be readily apparent, our quieter, lower-key Boomers are leaving a definite imprint on our culture. Consistent with that unobtrusive style, I have included some Canadian-American data comparisons at the end of every chapter with little or no comment, leaving it to readers to draw their own conclusions as to which set of Boomers has been having the greater impact.

I am extremely indebted to Canadians young and old – now totalling more than 20,000 people – who generously gave of their time to participate in the surveys. Thank you so very, very much! The Lilly Endowment and the Lilly-funded Louisville Institute have provided grants making the six surveys since 1990 possible; my deepest gratitude to Craig Dykstra, Jim Lewis, and Chris Coble for their generous support. I also remain very grateful to the University of Lethbridge for resources and tranquility.

A number of individuals have made important contributions to the surveys over the years, notably my three guys, Reggie, Dave, and Russ, along with Jim Savoy, Michèle Therrien, and Diane Erickson. My thanks to colleague Don Posterski, who collaborated with me on the 1984 and 1992 youth surveys. I want to acknowledge two special people who were there “in the beginning,” Professor Fred Elkin of York University and David Stone, the former Research Officer with the United Church of Canada. It also has been a privilege to work again with Donald G. Bastian on the production of the book – our ninth together. Many thanks also to key members of his team, Daniel Crack and Araby Porter. Finally, I express my loving appreciation to the two people to whom this book is dedicated. They have brought much, including the reminder of what makes life both purposeful and gratifying.

Over the next two decades, Boomers increasingly will disappear from the Canadian stage. Much will be written and said about their legacy. Already the debate has begun, with some observers heralding their contributions<sup>1</sup> and others claiming they will drain our pension plans, overwhelm our health systems, and leave us with labour shortages.<sup>2</sup> My hope is that, in the midst of all the commotion, this book will contribute some concrete facts and sound ideas to those conversations. More generally, I hope the book will be informative, stimulating, and even a bit entertaining for people who – like me – love ideas and love life.

REGINALD W. BIBBY

Lethbridge, Alberta, August 2006

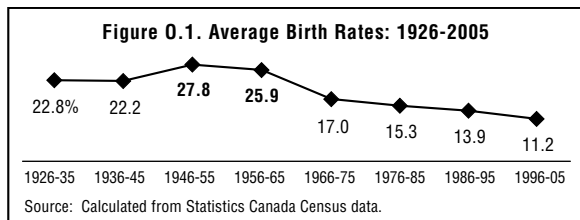
# Opening Thoughts

IN his 1996 bestselling book *Boom, Bust & Echo*, demographer David Foot dismisses as “nonsense” claims that Baby Boomers have been particularly creative and innovative, “infusing all of society with new ways of thinking and new ways of doing things.” As he put it, “The only thing special about the baby boomers is that there are so many of them.”<sup>1</sup>

## Lots of People, Lots of Talent

There’s little doubt that there have been many of them. Between 1946 and 1965, Canada’s birth rate increased sharply, resulting in a “baby boom” in which an average of more than 400,000 babies were born per year. These babies were joined by immigrant babies born during the same period, resulting in Canada’s Baby Boomers, who comprised one-third of the national population by 1991.

But their sheer size has made them “special,” giving them the unique opportunity to create social life in Canada as they see fit, in the course of living and working alongside smaller numbers of both older and younger Canadians.



- By 1975, the oldest Boomers were around 30, beginning to join older adults in holding positions of leadership and influence.
- From the early 1980s through 2000, during a time when the oldest Boomers moved from being 35-year-olds to 55-year-olds, they comprised just over 50% of Canadians between the ages of 20 and 64 – joined, of course, by other younger and older non-Boomers.

As a result, size-wise, Boomers have been uniquely positioned to have significant input into every sphere of Canadian life – business corporations, media, government, education, health, entertainment, leisure, religion, and so on.

With the passage of time, that input is obviously waning. Retirement, health problems, and death are resulting in their passing from the national scene. They no longer make up a majority of the pivotal 20 to 64 age group; by 2016, with all of them over 50, they will be relegated to a one-third minority. Through 2030, when the youngest Boomers will hit 65, their numbers and collective power will be further diminishing.

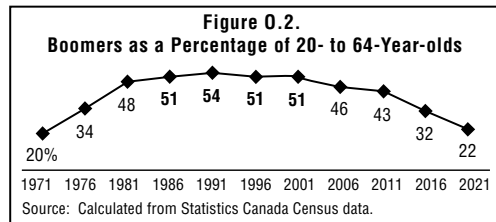
But that's not to say they won't have a significant

legacy. The impact of Boomers has hardly been the result of large numbers alone. With due respect to Foot, demographics may provide an important aerial photograph of population characteristics, but they tell us very little about the human content “inside” the numbers. The individuals who are part of the Boomer cohort have included many “special” people who have left vivid imprints on a wide spectrum of Canadian life.

By way of illustration, here's a Boomer short list: Peter Mansbridge, Pamela Wallin, and Rex Murphy; Terry Fox; Michaëlle Jean; Bryan Adams, k.d. lang, and Shania Twain; David Foster; Liona Boyd and Karen Kain; Ovide Mercredi; Stephen Harper, Jack Layton, and Gilles Duceppe; Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux; Sandra Schmirler, “Pinball” Clemons, and Kurt Browning; Rohinton Mistry and Douglas Coupland; Allan Gregg and Michael Adams; Jeffrey Simpson, Chantal Hébert, and Margaret Wente; Mary Jo Leddy; John Candy and Jim Carrey; James Gosling; Ivan Fecan, Keith Pelley, Nancy Lee, and Leonard Asper; Todd McFarlane; Marc Garneau and Roberta Bondar; John Ralston Saul; Maude Barlow and David Frum.

And then there have been large numbers of less visible but still powerful Boomers strategically located in financial institutions and other corporate high places, exerting economic and political clout. In addition, Boomer educators, while lacking that explicit clout, quietly and unobtrusively have been instilling ideas and stimulating thought and behaviour in settings ranging from preschools to universities.

Clearly, such Baby Boomers have been anything but inanimate num-



bers. To varying degrees, they have been adding important strokes to the Canadian cultural canvas.

There consequently is considerable value in assessing the directions that they have been taking the country, and, as they pass from the scene, in getting a reading on the kind of Canada they are leaving behind.

I need to interject a quick methodological note. As is already apparent, when I am speaking of “Baby Boomers,” I am referring to people who were born between 1946 and 1965. I realize there are diverse views on what the precise cut-off years should be. In the end, the choices are fairly arbitrary; these things are not written in the stars. My preference is to keep it simple and round things off a year or so, in the process making our Boomers essentially the same age as their American counterparts, with whom they may have much in common.

In making age cohort comparisons, I will refer to people who are older as “Pre-Boomers.” Obviously, this is a diverse category composed of more than one generation, at least until about 2005, at which time they became 60 and over and a bit more homogeneous. I am using the term “Post-Boomers” to refer to adults who are younger – meaning that, as of 2005, the cohort was composed of adults under 40. Rather than getting mired in debates as to whether they are Xers, or Y’s, or Echoes, or whatever, I prefer to isolate this age cohort and treat them as “the emerging generation” that is following behind the Boomers. Readers can label them as they choose.

## **The Project Canada Survey Series**

During the rise and fall of Boomer leadership, I have been something of a social photographer, taking snapshots of Canadian life through national surveys conducted every five years from 1975 through 2005. I also have been taking pictures of teenagers throughout the period of maximum Boomer leadership – in 1984, 1992, and 2000. The adult photos are particularly illuminating in that they include many of the same people who have appeared in earlier shots, enabling us to see how much they themselves have changed as they have been getting older.<sup>2</sup>

In short, my Project Canada national surveys of adults since the 1970s and Project Teen Canada surveys of young people since the 1980s provide some valuable and fairly unique readings on what has been taking place in Canada over the past four decades – readings that tell us much about the collective impact that Baby Boomers, in concert with their older and younger collaborators, have been having on Canadians and Canadian culture.

## Making Sense of It All

Anyone who has tried to organize photos, especially since digital technology has increased the number of shots exponentially, knows that anyone can take a lot of them. The trick is being able to organize all those individual shots in order to get a sense of sequence. Having to look at an endless number makes for tedious viewing – painful viewing if the pictures don’t involve one’s immediate family or very close friends. Similarly, survey findings can make for monotonous reading, especially if the numbers are mindlessly strung together. The challenge for me is to find a way to pull together a very large number of survey photos that strikes a balance between telling you what I think is an interesting story and providing you with adequate evidence to back up that story.

The seven adult surveys and three youth surveys provide me with approximately 3,000 individual photos spanning the years from 1975 through 2005 – photos that each can be examined from about 20 different angles, making for a total of about 60,000 shots in all. In variable language, we have about 3,000 independent variables that can be analysed using a minimum of 20 independent variables.

I, for one, am interested in the results on any given item – say, the percentage of Canadians who are concerned about terrorism, engage in sex, or think they are wiser than their parents. But, like most of you, after spending awhile looking at individual item results, it all starts to blur, and I find myself asking, “So, what does it all mean?”

From the beginning, the surveys have had some clearly defined themes. The first survey in 1975 focused on social issues, intergroup relations, and religion. The succinct subtitle of the summary report – “Project Canada: A Study of Deviance, Diversity, and Devotion” – drew a chuckle from Alan Maitland, the co-host of *As It Happens*, as he provided the introduction to a 1976 interview I had with Barbara Frum. Over the years, the findings of each survey have raised additional questions calling for greater depth, while the emergence of new issues has called for greater breadth. Each new survey has built on what has gone before.

As I reflect on Canadian culture and survey findings dating back to the mid-70s, it seems to me that there are a number of important ways in which Canadian life is changing. There also are a number of areas where, contrary to prevalent assumptions and rumours, things are staying pretty much the same.

In this book, I am going to identify six areas of change and four areas of continuity. Obviously, the number of areas one may attempt to isolate is



fairly arbitrary – just like the number of albums or files in which we decide to place all those photographs. Here, I am bowing to convention and focusing on 10. If you want a further rationale for that number, then know that I am limiting the analysis to what I see as “the top 10” developments, well aware that additional, but less significant, patterns exist. Incidentally, in practical terms, nine would leave some of you who are completion-minded wondering what happened to the 10th, while 11-plus would simply be too difficult for most of us to grasp. There are 10 commandments and many Top 10 lists for a reason.

As we will see, the nation’s Baby Boomers have been playing a central role in significantly altering Canadian life over the past 40 years. They also have played a central role in ensuring that a number of things stay the same. In some trend instances, the credit doesn’t necessarily belong to them. The findings will show that, to varying degrees, the new, emerging generation of Post-Boomers has learned a lot from Boomers regarding how they *should live life*; in other cases, they have learned a lot from Boomers regarding how they *don’t want to live life*.

One quick prediction. We probably will agree on most of the six areas of change. If you find yourself saying, “I knew that,” then good. There would be something wrong with my data and interpretations if you didn’t recognize yourself and Canadian life in what I am reporting. At minimum, I will be providing some additional data that support your impressions.

I also suspect we may have some disagreements when it comes to some of the areas where things have been staying pretty much the same. That’s a function, in part, I think, of the pervasive message that everything is changing – summed up in phrases like, “The only constant is change.” That simply is not the case. Change has been oversold. What hasn’t changed also deserves to be front-page news.

## **The Backdrop to the Trends**

Social trends, of course, are not simply the product of the input of influential individuals and organizations. Canadian trends take place in the context of much broader social and cultural developments that are national, American, and global in nature. In the post-1960s, a number of such sources have been fairly transparent. While they are analytically distinct, in practice they typically are highly interrelated.

In the course of discussing the 10 trends, we’ll be referring to these contextual factors often. There may be some value in briefly highlighting a number of the ones that, by now, are pretty familiar to all of us.

## Demography

Beyond the Baby Boom, some additional demographic developments have contributed to changes in who we are and where we live.

- *Immigration* continued to take place at a high level in the 1970-2000 period. However, a major change was the increase in the proportion of people coming from Asia – with the numbers typically exceeding immigrants from Europe from 1979 on. There also were noteworthy increases in the number of people emigrating from Central and South America, along with Africa. Toronto was by far the destination of choice, followed by Vancouver and Montreal.
- Between 1976 and 2000, *urbanization* slowed, but *urban growth* was dramatic in places such as Toronto (2.8 million to 4.7 million), Vancouver (1.2 million to 2 million), and Calgary and Edmonton (each doubling from around 500,000 to just under 1 million).
- From the mid-70s through the end of the century, *migration* tended to see sizable numbers of Canadians moving to three provinces – Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. The movement was intermittent, in keeping with economic conditions. But these were the three favourite places of destination.

## Education

It may come as a surprise to many readers to realize that, at the end of 1950s, only 15% of Canadians had at least a high-school diploma and a mere 5% had university degrees. The 1960s and 1970s saw an extremely strong emphasis on education, with the number of universities increasing from 45 to 65 between 1955 and 1975 alone, and reaching some 90 by 2000. Emphasis was also given to the development of technical schools and community colleges. For example, between 1960 and 2000, the number of community college and tech programs increased from about 30 to more than 200.<sup>3</sup>

The results are impressive. As of 2001, 23% of Canadians were university graduates, and 30% had diplomas from other post-secondary institutions. In all, almost 80% had at least a high-school education.<sup>4</sup>

## Government

In addition to giving high priority to education, the federal government of the 1960s and 1970s, led by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, engaged in a number of explicit efforts to bring about a more just society. Numerous

studies, along with Royal Commissions examining language, culture, and the status of women, played a part in subsequent decision-making. Notable legislation included the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1965, the legal enshrinement of bilingualism in 1968, the unveiling of the multiculturalism policy in 1971, along with the ensuing passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and the Multiculturalism Act in 1988.

Such federal initiatives were accompanied by provincial legislation establishing laws and regulatory bodies, including human-rights commissions to deal with discrimination and foster equality.

Beyond striving for a just society, the federal and provincial governments endeavoured to enhance the quality of life for families, the poor, and the challenged, giving particular attention to children and seniors.

### **Technology**

It is hard to overstate the significance of technological revolution that has occurred globally and in Canada since the 1960s. Readers hardly need to be reminded of what has taken place with respect to sight and sound, communication and information. Led by the computer and the Internet, the ways in which we work and study, relate to each other and are entertained – to mention just a few areas of our lives – have changed dramatically from what many of our parents and most of our grandparents experienced.

### **Media**

Led by television, radio, and newspapers, media have been central players, both in being affected by technological developments and in providing information 24/7 via an unprecedented number of communication possibilities. The old, standard forms of dissemination have been supplemented by specialty channels, the Internet, DVDs, and multi-tasking cellphones, all offering highly individualized, custom-made information and entertainment from the comfort of just about anywhere. The world has never been smaller, “the global village” reduced to “the global neighbourhood.”

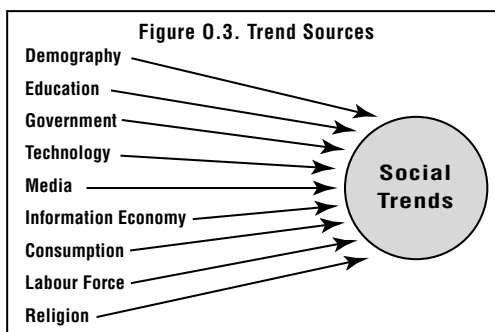
### **The Information Economy**

Technology, in turn, has contributed significantly to a significant shift from an economy based on agriculture and manufacturing to one where the majority of us are employed in so-called information industries. We are in a position to declare new, previously undiscovered areas of need, and to inform our potential markets that we happen to be the people who can provide the required expertise. This is the era not of the old proverbial bricks and mortar but of ideas and services.

## Consumption

Where there is information and technology, there also are fortunes to be made and careers to be had. So it is that economies have become increasingly global, corporations increasingly multinational, and marketing extended from television sets through Internet sites to hockey boards. Our personal wants have been redefined as our personal needs, with our individual needs inseparable from our individual wants.

The competition for our dollars not only is intense, it also is relentless. Pre-Christmas sales are rivalled by Boxing Day sales, which, in turn, are rivalled by January clearance sales – and that's only talking about December and January. There is little time for a breather. Even at home, the ads keep appearing, the telemarketers keep calling, the spam keeps rolling in. And if the store is closed and we are so inclined, we can always access it by turning on our computers, day or night, and be promised quick delivery, right to our homes.



## The Labour Force

A particularly important development since the 1960s has been the increasing presence of women in the paid labour force. Between 1900 and 1930, the proportion of employed women doubled from about 15% to 30%. That proportion doubled again between 1960 and 2000 to around 60%.<sup>5</sup>

However, what was different about the post-1960s was that employed women were just about as likely to be married as to be single. They also were increasingly likely to be mothers of young children who were returning to their jobs when their children were very young – sometimes only a few months old. By 2000, women in the paid labour force included 65% of mothers with children under six and 60% of those with children under the age of two.<sup>6</sup>

## Religion

As of the beginning of the new century, a paradox appeared to exist: Canadians were continuing to identify with religious groups, yet, relative to the 1950s and 1960s, attendance was down significantly, especially for

Mainline Protestants along with Roman Catholics in Quebec. In the midst of such a downturn, evangelical groups seemed to be flourishing and Catholics outside Quebec appeared to be increasingly healthy. In addition, as a result of accelerated immigration in the 1990s, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Islam were all showing both an increased profile and considerable vitality.

~

Together, these various factors have provided an important social and cultural backdrop for Canadian life over the past 40 years. But these factors by themselves do not produce social trends in any given setting, any more than a stage set determines the story that is about to be performed. What is key to what happens is how people respond to these factors. In the Canadian instance, the primary performers have been Baby Boomers.

What follows are some of the key trends that the Boomers, together with their supporting cast of older and younger Canadians, have been putting into place.



# PART I

## Six Major Shifts

---

*The survey findings document six ways in which social life in Canada has been changing since the 1960s. Baby Boomers, in concert with older and younger Canadians, have been centrally involved in bringing about these shifts. Their numbers and occupation of pivotal roles throughout Canadian society have positioned them to have a significant impact. But, as we will see shortly, many Boomers brought outlooks to those roles that were quite different from those of their parents and grandparents.*

*The common thread running through each of these six Boomer era shifts is an intense emphasis on the individual.*





# From Dominance to Diversity

## *The Endorsement and Expansion of Pluralism*

### **Major players**

*demography, government, education, media,  
labour force, religion, globalization*

- **Multiple mosaics**

*... including ethnicity, race, gender, family, sexual orientation,  
religion, and morality*

- **From ideals to policies to legislation**

- **Equality for individuals and groups**

- **Minimal response required: tolerance**

THE idea of the mosaic is as Canadian as hockey. We aspire to be a country where people of different backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyle inclinations are able to live together. Rather than dividing us, our differences provide us with a wealth of diverse traits from which we can construct a richer life for us all. There is no place for individual or group dominance, or claims of superiority. We can live out life as we see fit and express our views with intensity. But the rules of the pluralistic game call us to reciprocate, hearing others out and responding to what is different with tolerance, if not approval. In Canada, diversity is king. As we look around the globe, it doesn't sound all that bad. Little wonder that most of us are glad to be here and plan to stay.

The pluralistic dream is definitely a game in progress. We struggle to

find ways to balance individual and group values with our collective life as a whole. There is ongoing give and take. But one thing is certain: During the past several decades, groups and belief systems and institutional forms that held sway over the country have had to make room for newcomers, alternate ways of interpreting the world, and changing institutions. We have shifted from dominance to diversity.

## Pluralism's Enshrinement

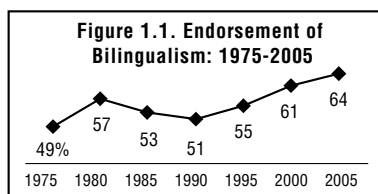
It hasn't happened by accident. While the notion of Canada as a colourful mosaic has been around for a long time, the official support for the notion was put in place in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

In 1969, the Official Languages Act was passed. This extremely important legislation was a direct response to a recommendation of the historic Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which spanned the years 1965 to 1972. The commission recognized that if Quebecers were ever to feel included in the country, it was essential to assure them that their language and culture would be preserved. It therefore was decreed that Canadians hereafter were free to live their lives in English or French. Francophones could now enjoy the country in its entirety, without having to sell their linguistic and cultural souls.

Many people in the rest of Canada, particularly the West, were slow to catch on. They couldn't understand, to use a well-worn phrase, why French was being stuffed down their throats. They missed the symbolism of those bilingual signs in the national parks.

The second pivotal building block was multiculturalism. Bilingualism helped to address the issue of Quebec's inclusion in Canadian life. But what about other cultural groups? In book four of the Royal Commission's six-volume report, it was recommended that people from other countries be allowed to retain those features of their national cultures that they valued and were positive for everyone. Cultural diversity, it was argued, would be good for Canada – we would become a nation of nations, a community of communities.

So it was that in 1971, the prime minister of the day, Pierre Trudeau, announced, "A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians."<sup>1</sup> In clarifying the concept, the former PM told a Winnipeg Ukrainian audience in 1972:



*Our image is of a land of people with many differences – but many contributions, many variations in view – but a single desire to live in harmony.... On a planet of finite size, the most desirable of all characteristics is the ability and desire to cohabit with persons of differing backgrounds, and to benefit from the opportunities which this offers.<sup>2</sup>*

With the passing of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, cultural diversity became law. This was to be a country where people from everywhere could participate in Canadian life fully without facing barriers of cultural background or race, a country where they could have the opportunity – if they so desired – to retain those aspects of their previous cultures that they viewed as important. The result, to recall the prime minister’s phrase when he unveiled the policy in 1971, would be “a richer life for us all.”<sup>3</sup>

As with bilingualism, not everyone was thrilled with the idea of multiculturalism. In the early years of the policy’s implementation, it unfortunately was frequently viewed as a policy that encouraged people to live out their own cultures and little more. In 1991, at a time when Canada seemed extremely fractured and fragmented, the federal government’s Citizens’ Forum on Canada’s Future, headed by Keith Spicer, took the pulse of the nation and reported the following:

*A majority of participants said our different origins are less useful in building a united country than emphasizing what we have in common. Many regard funding of multiculturalism as an example of government fostering division rather than unity ... We believe that the government should devise far clearer, bolder and more imaginative public information programs on the value and benefits of cultural diversity.<sup>4</sup>*

Despite the resistance to both concepts, bilingualism and multiculturalism have known growing acceptance across the country. Indicative of bilingualism’s near sacred status is the stigma that quickly is assigned to any political party or candidate who goes on record as being

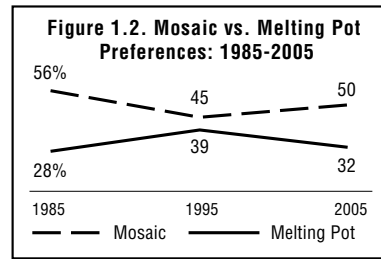
opposed to the idea of two official languages – a label affixed to many Reform Party alumni, for example, as they attempted to live new lives in Alliance and now Conservative Party circles.

Support for a multicultural model of Canadian life also has been increasing. During the Citizens’ Forum/National Referendum era of the

**Table 1.1. Endorsement of Bilingualism by Region: 1975-2005**

	1975	1990	2005
Quebec	71%	82	89
Ontario	47	46	62
Atlantic	45	43	59
BC	37	38	49
Prairies	28	39	47

early 1990s, the previously valued mosaic ideal fell significantly, to the point that it was closely rivalled by support for the melting pot, assimilationist model. In the past decade or so, the mosaic has regained some of its support, but the level of that support still lags behind what it was in 1985.



It would be a serious error, however, to equate Canadians’ ambivalence toward official multiculturalism with ambivalence toward diversity. On the contrary, the official declaration that Canada is a country of many cultures was a declaration with effects that went well beyond the cultural group realm. The message everyone heard? We are diverse.

As a result, what started out as a policy explicitly aimed at addressing the place of national cultures in Canadian life quickly emerged from this limited cradle to add legitimacy to a broader pluralistic mindset. For some time now we have had not only a cultural mosaic, but also a family mosaic, a moral mosaic, a religious mosaic, an educational mosaic, a media mosaic, and a sexual-orientation mosaic – to offer just a short list.

Pluralism’s third major building block in Canada was the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, included in our 1982 Constitution. As most readers are well aware, the Charter reaffirms collective rights and also guarantees the freedom of individuals – of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, movement, and liberty. It declares the equality of all Canadians and gives unequivocal legal protection to the rights of every individual. The Charter further permits laws, programs, and activities that are aimed at “the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups.”<sup>5</sup>

Reflecting on the Charter in a presentation to a Senate committee in 1989, former prime minister Pierre Trudeau explained that it “was meant to create a body of values and beliefs that not only united all Canadians in feeling that they were one nation but also set them above the governments of the provinces and the federal government itself.” As a result, he said, “people have rights which no legislative body can abridge.”<sup>6</sup>

If bilingualism and multiculturalism served to enshrine group rights, the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms served to enshrine individual rights. In the process, the warm and fuzzy notion of a mosaic gave way to a clearly articulated commitment to pluralism, complete with its


carefully constructed and legally entrenched bilingual, multicultural, and Charter foundations.

In the aftermath of the establishment of official pluralism in Canada, we gradually have come to have a very different outlook from Canadians in the early 1970s on issues such as interracial marriage, ideal families, sexual orientation, and moral and religious truth. We are expected to let people with varied ideas and behaviours express themselves. At minimum, we also are expected to tolerate what we hear and see, regardless of our personal values.

Those pluralistic expectations are being met.

- Some 95% of us maintain that we are willing to at least tolerate how other people choose to live their lives.
- We also are not exactly xenophobic. Led by women, more than 80% of us indicate that racial and cultural diversity is something that is good for Canada, with such sentiments expressed by more than 9 in 10 people who are under the age of 40.

The widespread adoption of such pluralistic ideas, of course, has not been the inevitable result of the mere passing of laws. The first Baby Boomers were making their way onto the adult Canadian stage in about 1965 – just as bilingualism was being put into place, and just before the launching of the multiculturalism policy. The youngest Boomers, born in the early 1960s, have never known a Canada without bilingualism, multiculturalism, the Charter, and a strong emphasis on pluralism.

Table 1.2. Outlook of Canadians Toward Diversity: 2005									
				Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers		Post-Boomers	
	ALL	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Generally speaking, I am willing to at least tolerate how other people choose to live their lives	94%	95	93	95	93	96	94	94	93
Racial and cultural diversity is a good thing for Canada	82	85	80	80	75	82	74	93	89

The surveys indicate that the Boomers, from the time they were young adults, tended to differ from their older siblings and parents in embracing the idea of diversity. They carried such views with them into the various societal roles they played and continue to play. The result, in the course of living and working alongside people who have been both older and younger, is that Boomers have contributed significantly to the pervasiveness of the pluralistic mindset in Canada.

## Some National Snapshots

### Intermarriage

It's hard to believe that as recently as 1975, 1 in 4 Canadians did not approve of whites and aboriginals marrying each other, while 1 in 3 had similar negative feelings about marriages involving whites and Asians. Even more people – close to 1 in 2 – disapproved of marriages involving whites and blacks, along with whites and East Indians or Pakistanis. Today, fewer than 1 in 10 Canadians express disapproval of such interracial marriages.

It is important to note that in 1975, Baby Boomers differed very much from older Canadians in their views of interracial marriages. No fewer than 81%, comprising slightly more women than men, said they approved of whites and blacks marrying, compared with 45% of other adults. By 2005, that 81% increased to 94%. Over the 30-year period, Boomers not only played a major role in altering public opinion but became even more accepting of interracial marriages themselves.

<b>Table 1.3. Approval of Intergroup Marriage: 1975-2005</b>			
	<b>1975</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2005</b>
Whites and Aboriginals	73%	84	93
Whites and Asians	64	82	93
Whites and East Indians/ Pakistanis	56	76	91
Whites and Blacks	55	78	92
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>94</b>
Women	84	91	93
Men	78	90	95
<b>Other Canadians</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>90</b>
Women	45	68	92
Men	46	67	88

<b>PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS</b>						
<b>Significant Progress ... Some Distance to Go</b>						
Would feel uneasy around a person, initially knowing only that the person is ...						
	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>East Indian/Pakistani</b>	<b>Muslim</b>
<b>2005</b>	5%	6	8	10	12	18
<b>1990</b>	7	7	9	10	15	***
<b>1975</b>	9	15	17	13	22*	***
*1980    ***Item not in the survey.						

### Women

Similarly, our views of women have been changing, with Baby Boomers leading the way. In 1975, 67% of Boomers felt women did not have sufficient power in national life – a position held by only 46% of other adults. Boomers also were far more inclined than others to maintain that women should have the freedom to join the paid workforce. In the past 30 years, growing numbers have followed the Boomers' lead, believing that women should have equality with men on issues such as pay, employment outside the home, and involvement in politics.

The fact that such topics are seen today as “givens” is indicative of how

much our views of women have changed over the past four decades. It's worth noting, however, that the overall perception that women have too little power in our nation's affairs has not changed much among Boomers since the 70s. Furthermore, their take on the gender power imbalance situation is now shared by a similar proportion of other Canadians.

<b>Table 1.4. Attitudes Toward Women: 1975 and 2005</b>			
	<b>1975</b>	<b>2005</b>	
Women who do the same work as men should receive the same pay ( <i>Agree</i> )	91%	98	
Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to the men ( <i>Disagree</i> )	78	94	
Married women should not be employed if their husbands are capable of supporting them ( <i>Disagree</i> )	65	89	
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>91</b>	
Women	87	92	
Men	81	91	
<b>Other Canadians</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>88</b>	
Women have too little power in the nation's affairs ( <i>Agree</i> )	52	63	
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65</b>	
Women	81	75	
Men	50	55	
<b>Other Canadians</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>61</b>	


### Sex and Pot

The pluralistic outlook that has become so pervasive in Canada can be seen further in our views of sex outside marriage to our views of the legalization of marijuana.

In 1975, on the heels of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, Boomers – 94% strong – indicated that they approved of premarital sex, well above the 57% level for other Canadians. While even the Boomers have become a bit more moderate over the years, approval of sex outside marriage has jumped to 76% among other adults.

In the case of marijuana use, many Canadian Boomers were influenced by the views and practices of the American counterculture movement of the 1960s. So it was that, in 1975, 43% of our Boomers – 51% of men versus 37% of women – felt marijuana use should be legalized, which was well above the 19% level for other adults. In the ensuing four decades, that pro-legalization Boomer group not only has persisted but actually has grown slightly, joined by a similar proportion of other Canadians.

Here again, the views of Boomers have had an important impact on the views of the nation as a whole. Whereas 26% of Canadians in all endorsed the legal use of marijuana in 1975, that figure now stands at 45%. For their part, Boomers haven't backed down over the years: the 43% figure of 1975 has risen to a current 48%.

<b>Table 1.5. Two Areas of Controversy by Age: 1975 and 2005</b>				
% Indicating Approval				
	<b>Premarital Sex</b>		<b>Marijuana Use</b>	
	<b>1975</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>2005</b>
	<b>67%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>45</b>
18-34	90	77	40	48
35-54	63	87	19	48
55+	40	75	14	38
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>
Women	93	86	37	45
Men	94	87	51	50
<b>Other Canadians</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>43</b>

## PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- While 29% of Canadians personally approve of the recreational use of marijuana, another 34% are nonetheless willing to accept people using the drug – bringing the total of acceptance with or without approval to 63%.
- In the case of the legal use of marijuana for medical purposes, 70% approve, and a further 23% say they would accept its use for such purposes, for an acceptance total of 93%.

### Family

We also have become mosaic-minded when it comes to family life. Today's families obviously come in all kinds of configurations. We Canadians consequently are often reluctant to be dogmatic when it comes to talking about ideal family types.

In a national survey of family aspirations that I conducted with the Vanier Institute of the Family in 2003, we asked Canadians if they think that any one family arrangement is ideal. Despite the fact that the survey found most people personally opt for “a married man and woman with at least one child” initially or eventually, a solid 40% said they don't think there is any one ideal family form, sending the message that good family life can take on many different forms.

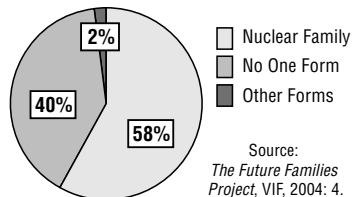
Canadians back up such generalizations with specifics. When it comes to unmarried adults engaging in sex, living with sexual partners without being married, having children without being married, or getting divorced:

- a majority of Canadians say they both approve of and accept such situations;
- most of the remainder say they are willing to accept such realities, even if they personally do not approve;
- only about 1 in 10 people say they neither approve nor are willing to accept these kinds of scenarios.

Overall, Canadians are considerably less likely to say they both “approve of” and “accept” these family variations when their own children are involved versus individuals outside their own families. Still, very few actually “close the door” on their own children.

What these family-related findings document is an important Canadian characteristic: We may not personally approve of what people do, but we nonetheless are willing to at least tolerate what they do.

Figure 1.3. One Ideal Family Form?





<b>Table 1.6. Some Sexual and Family Attitudes: One's Children vs. Others</b>					
		<b>Approve and Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove but Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove and Do Not Accept</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Unmarried adults engaging in sex	Generally	65%	27	8	100
	Children	53	36	11	100
Living with a sexual partner without being married	Generally	73	20	7	100
	Children	53	35	12	100
Having children without being married	Generally	57	31	12	100
	Children	33	50	17	100
Getting a divorce	Generally	70	26	4	100
	Children	41	51	8	100


Sources: "Generally" – Project Canada 2005; "Children" – *The Future Families Project*, VIP, 2004.

The distinction is important. Take divorce, for example. The fact that divorce is so common may lead us to conclude that people readily accept it. Such is not the case, according to the survey findings. Only about 40% of Canadians say they “approve of and accept” divorce among their own children. Yet, another 50% indicate they are willing to at least accept such an outcome. Similarly, just 1 in 3 people report they “approve of and accept” their sons and daughters having children without being married – and another 5 in 10 say they are willing to accept such situations. We aren’t always excited about certain realities. But, given the choice of responding by ostracizing versus accepting our kids and our friends, our neighbours and our colleagues, we opt for acceptance.

## Homosexuality

In 1975, fewer than 3 in 10 Canadians offered tacit approval of homosexuality, indicating that sexual relations between “two adults of the same sex” were “not wrong at all” or only “sometimes wrong.” The remaining 7 in 10 maintained that such activity was “always wrong” or “almost always wrong.”

However, a significant departure in thinking was apparent among Baby Boomers in the 70s. Some 43% indicated that they approved of homosexuality – approximately double the 21% figure for other Canadians. What is


<b>Table 1.7. Approval of Homosexuality by Age: 1975 and 2005</b>			
		<b>1975</b>	<b>2005</b>
		<b>28%</b>	<b>62</b>
18-34		42	68
35-54		25	67
55+		12	50
<b>Boomers</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>66</b>
Women		52	70
Men		33	61
<b>Other Canadians</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>60</b>

<b>Table 1.8. Views of Gay Marriage and Gay Adoption: 2005</b>				
	<b>Approve and Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove but Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove and Do Not Accept</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Marrying	48%	22	30	100
Adopting	40	21	39	100

very important to note is that the approval level for women was considerably higher than that for men – 52% versus 33%.

Over the past four decades, the approval level among Boomers has jumped to 66%, with men now closer to women (61% versus 70%). And as Boomers, led particularly by women, have become more embracing of homosexuality, they have been influencing the rest of the country. The approval figure for other adults has tripled since 1975, now standing at 60%.

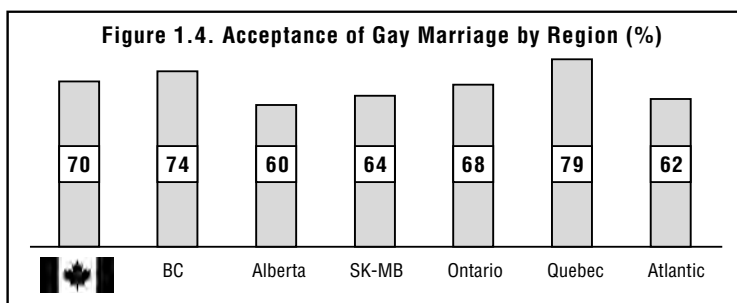
Currently, close to 50% of Canadians approve of gays marrying, while 40% approve of gays adopting children. However, exhibiting classic “Canadian tolerance,” another 20% or so are willing to “accept” both gay marriage and adoption. One 41-year-old mother of three from a small city in Ontario is explicit in explaining

	<b>Approve and Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove but Accept</b>	<b>Disapprove and Do Not Accept</b>	<b>Totals</b>
	<b>48%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	56	20	24	100
Men	39	24	37	100
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	58	21	21	100
Men	42	23	35	100
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	33	26	41	100
Men	22	26	52	100
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	68	16	16	100
Men	48	23	29	100

her response: “It is important to distinguish tolerance from approval. While I know homosexual couples and understand they have the right to their own decisions, it doesn’t mean I approve of their relationship or things like their right to adopt.”

Approval of gay marriage is highest among young adults. It is also striking that approval levels are considerably higher for women than men regardless of the age cohort involved. Resistance is greatest among adults 55 and over, particularly men. Regionally, receptivity is higher in Quebec and BC than elsewhere.

It is clear that acceptance of homosexuality and homosexuals still comes with qualifications for many Canadians. A single 27-year-old woman from Toronto put things this way: “In answering your question on what relationships constitute a family, I was quite surprised by my reluctance to



tance to consider a same-sex union and the ‘offspring’ of a same-sex union a family. In conversations with gay friends, I support their relationships and wish them every happiness ... but, if I’m honest, I guess this happiness that I desire for them has limits.” Still, attitudes toward gays and lesbians have changed significantly over the past three decades.


### The True North Strong and Free?

These survey snapshots point to a 21st-century Canada where people have a remarkable amount of freedom to be what they want to be and to do what they want to do. On the negative side, are there still some barriers that some individuals face as they live out life in Canada?

PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS			
Indicative of the progress Canadians think they have made, these were the social issues ranked in the bottom 11 of 30 posed in 2005 (% refers to “Very Serious”).			
22. Unity	20%	27. Aboriginal-white relations	15
23. Marijuana use	19	28. Racial discrimination	13
24. Mental disorders	19	29. French-English relations	12
25. Unemployment	19	30. Autism	12
26. Inequality of women	16		

We put the question to our Project Canada 2005 respondents, asking them directly, “*Do you yourself find you face any barriers to full participation in Canadian life?*” Perhaps surprisingly, 24%, or about 1 in 4, say they do. Younger adults are more likely than others to say they experience barriers. This undoubtedly reflects the irony that a greater emphasis on equality is creating greater expectations: people are not supposed to face barriers and therefore have never been more sensitive to their existence.

- Just under 10% of Canadians cite *age* – an issue for the youngest and oldest – and *gender* – typically mentioned by women, but also by some men – as barriers.

Table 1.10. Barriers to Full Participation by Age and Gender: 2005						
		18-34	35-54	55+	Women	Men
Face barriers*	24%	31	23	18	24	23
Age	8	13	4	9	8	8
Gender	8	10	9	5	12	4
Education	5	8	4	5	5	6
Race	5	9	4	3	3	7
Religion	4	11	1	2	4	5
Nationality	4	6	3	5	4	5
Sexual preference	2	3	1	1	2	2
Language	2	2	3	2	2	3

\* Column totals exceed the barrier total since more than one barrier could be cited.

- *Education*, *race*, *religion*, and *nationality* are each cited by about 5%, with those individuals including about 1 in 10 adults under the age of 35. Religiously devout young adults, both Christians and adherents

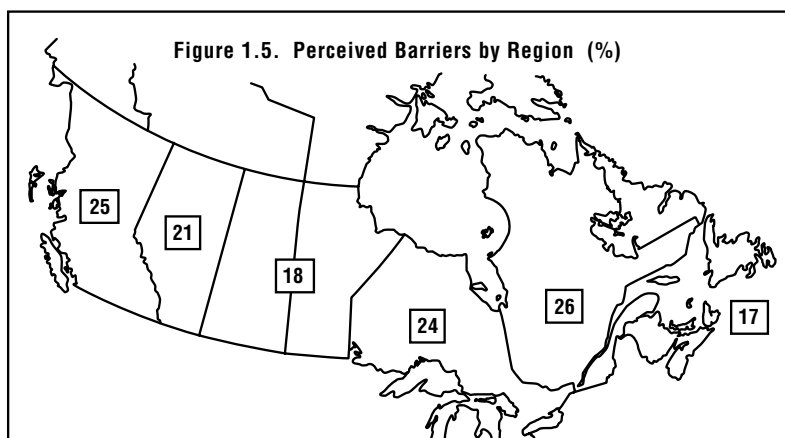
of other world faiths, are considerably more likely than their older counterparts to see religion as a personal barrier to their involvement in Canadian life.

- About 2% of people across the country – including 20% of those who identify themselves as gays, lesbians, or bisexuals – report that their *sexual preference* is a barrier to full participation. Fewer than 1% of those who identify themselves as heterosexuals report sexual preference to be a barrier.
- *Language* is a participation barrier for about 2% of Canadians, with the figure fairly constant across age groups as well as among women and men.

Full participation in Canadian life, of course, continues to be withheld from a variety of stigmatized people, such as sexual offenders, drug addicts, and ex-convicts. If anything, negative feelings toward such individuals have been increasing since the 1970s. Stigma also continues to be assigned to people who presumably should be shown a bit more compassion, since their conditions generally are viewed as medical in nature – alcoholics, former mental patients, and people with AIDS. While the stigma toward those with AIDS has gone down substantially since 1990, it nevertheless remains high.

Some other individuals are also creating some uneasiness in people for religious, occupational, and physical disability reasons. They include born-again Christians, police officers, and, to a lesser extent, people in wheelchairs.

Table 1.11. Some Lines Are Still Being Drawn									
Would feel uneasy around a person, initially knowing only that the person is ...									
	A known sex offender	A drug addict	An ex-convict	An alcoholic	A former mental patient	A person with AIDS	A born-again Christian	A police officer	A person in a wheelchair
2005	96%	87	86	71	63	49	31	24	10
1990	95*	80	76	54	68	77	31*	22*	16
1975	***	77	71	60	68	***	***	15	***
*1995	***Item not in the survey.								

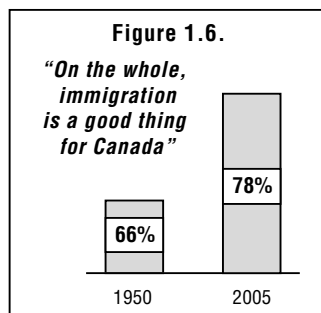


## Assessment

In attempting to pull together some of these findings, Lianne George of *Maclean's* points out that the Canada of today, described by *The Economist* in 2003 as “rather cool” – as in open-minded, progressive, and inclusive – is a far cry from the Canada of only a short time ago. “As recently as the early '70s,” she writes, “nobody would have accused us of that.”<sup>7</sup> There’s no question but that we have come a long way down the road of pluralism, in a remarkably short time.

It is initially difficult to find much to complain about when observing both the presence of diverse people and the growing levels of acceptance they have of each other – apart from recognizing that pluralism continues to be a goal rather than something that has been reached. After all, the fundamental issue that social groups and societies have had to grapple with since the beginning of time is how to balance individuals with collectivities – the personal good with the social good. Diversity provides a pool of personal and cultural resources from which societies as a whole can be enriched. The trick is finding ways to enable diverse peoples to live their lives together in harmonious and productive ways.

As the recipient of a higher percentage of immigrants than any other country in the world, with the sole exception of the United States, Canada has a rich resource pool. What is impressive is that Canada has more than just sheer human diversity. The country’s explicit efforts to cultivate a



productive form of pluralism have resulted in noteworthy increases in the acceptance of that diversity, and the belief that, in the long run, cultural and racial and lifestyle diversity is good for the country.

Is there any downside? For those individuals and groups aspiring to have monopolies, the negative, I suppose, is that they have to be content to live with limits. Not everyone is going to see life as they see it. Yet, such tolerance seems to be a relatively small price to pay for being guaranteed, themselves, the freedom to live out life pretty much as they see fit, in a context of high social harmony.

<b>PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS</b>					
<b>Perception Groups Have “Too Much Power” in Canadian Life: 2005</b>					
Aboriginals	26%	Whites	17	Asians	11
Immigrants	25	East Indians/Pakistanis	17	Blacks	6
Muslims	22	Jews	16		

The potential for problems, however, lies not only with some groups wanting to monopolize things – reflected in accusations that are frequently directed at white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (“WASPs”) and older males (“old boys’ clubs”). This potential also lies with some groups and individuals who want to sabotage things. Here people who have been allowed to be part of the Canadian mosaic attempt to destroy it along with the country itself. Such a response to diversity can be seen in the alleged terrorist activity plans of close to 20 Toronto-area Muslims in June 2006.

One of our 2005 survey participants, a 72-year-old woman from Victoria, sums up the diversity dilemma this way: “Racial and cultural diversity can be good things. Some types of diversity can make Canada a better and more interesting place. However, if a particular kind of diversity causes problems and does not blend in well with our society, then it is not a good thing.”

Cynics may go further and say it is pluralism that makes such a situation possible in the first place. However, the solution does not lie in rejecting pluralism. It lies, instead, in taking firm steps to remind everyone that there is no place in Canada for such anti-pluralistic – let alone anti-societal – activities. Wajid Khan, a Toronto-area Muslim MP who grew up in Pakistan, sums things up this way: “We are Canadian, our hallmark is justice, peace, multiculturalism, and diversity, and I think Canadians are smart enough not to sacrifice that because of a group of alleged terrorists.”<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Stephen Harper, speaking at a United Nations

conference in Vancouver shortly after the Toronto arrests, had this to say: “Canada’s diversity, properly nurtured, is our greatest strength.” He added, “The terrorists and their vision will be rejected by men and women of good will and generosity in all communities.”<sup>9</sup>

Since I brought up the controversial topic, let me speak very bluntly about the pluses that I think our pluralistic norms in Canada bring to the religious scene in thwarting any attempts on the part of any groups of any kind to overstep acceptable boundaries. Our entrenchment of pluralism seems to contribute to a fairly unique religious situation. Religious groups here have to play by the rules of diversity, being respectful of each other. This means not making excessive claims of uniqueness, not being overly aggressive in raiding each other’s ranks, not being exploitative of vulnerable categories such as immigrants, children, and seniors. And they have to respect individual rights in keeping with the Charter.



So contained, religious organizations that otherwise might have a detrimental effect on collective life in Canada are kept in check. We have no effective “Moral Majority” as found in the U.S. The same-sex marriage issue was not allowed to become an unrestrained and uncivil debate, and if someone tested the boundaries – as one Alberta bishop was tempted to do on occasion – public opinion tended to result in public-relations retreats. This is not a country where Christians can call other people “heathen,” but they also cannot be ridiculed as “bigoted Bible-thumpers.” This is not a country where Muslims can call for the heads and hands of artists who draw caricatures of Muhammad, but it also is not a place where artists can insult and incite Muslims. Some groups may not always like the rules, but that’s the way the religion game is played in Canada. So contained and so restrained, religion – it seems to me – is positioned to contribute positively to our individual and collective life.<sup>10</sup>

Our pervasive pluralism was brought into being, in large part, by Baby Boomers, and, to a lesser extent, by older and younger Canadians who have been living alongside them. On the surface and at this point in our history, at least, this aspect of their legacy appears to be valuable and important. At the same time, the pluralistic country they are leaving behind clearly is not without its occasional problems. Foremost is the ongoing question of how tensions between the mosaic and its individual tiles can be reconciled, an issue that is readily apparent in the trend we examine next.

## CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING

### Diversity-Related Attitudes: 1975-2005

% Indicating Approval

						
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
Whites and blacks marrying	55	78	92	40	48	73
Immigration a good thing for the country			78			61
Married women being employed	65	84	85	71	82	82 <sup>1</sup>
Premarital sexual relations	78	80	80	57	63	64 <sup>2</sup>
Legal abortion available upon demand		38	43	22	27 <sup>3</sup>	27
Homosexual relations	28	34	60	22 <sup>4</sup>	19	38 <sup>2</sup>
Same-sex marriage			48			39 <sup>1</sup>
Legalization of marijuana use	26	24	45	21	17	36 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2006. <sup>2</sup> 2004. <sup>3</sup> 1989. <sup>4</sup> 1974.

U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago.

U.S. sources: Gallup archives for white-black marriages: years = 1978, 1991, 2003.

Immigration – The Gallup Poll, Dec. 6, 2005. Same-sex marriage, The Gallup Poll, May 31, 2006.



*The Acceptance and Acceleration of Individualism***Major players***pluralism, technology, demography,  
corporations, consumption*

- **An individualistic mindset**
- **Decline in group membership**
- **Focus on friends, family, self**
- **Participation à la carte**
- **Accelerated relativism**

I smile when I hear the age-old definition of the key concept of socialization that sociologists give to first-year students: “Socialization is the process by which individuals learn how to become participant members of a society.” In the words of the popular commercial, “*If life were only like that, we wouldn’t need ...*” – in this case, we wouldn’t need to spend so much time dealing with a problem that is age-old, universal, and never will go away.

It comes down to this: In order for individuals to be happy and groups of any kind to work, there has to be a balance between what is good for the individual and what is good for the group. There are no exceptions. This is one of those few rules that is written in the stars. It is true of all social arrangements. Think of friendships, marriages, children and parents,

school, work, teams, membership groups, and business dealings – to offer a meagre short list. Unfortunately, the need for that balance is easier to recognize than to attain. It also is not something that we simply teach children, like walking and talking. On the contrary, early childhood experts, theologians, and many a mother and father have been bewildered as they have tried to relate to a child who obviously has not yet heard of the importance of the individual-group balance.

It wouldn't be so bad if it were a problem that children simply outgrew. Alas, it's a life-long issue, a *problem* – and I use that word purposely, as we are looking at more than a mere “challenge” here – that is common to people of all ages. Depending on where they are in their life cycle, they are variously described in such terms as “uncontrollable,” “strong-willed,” “selfish,” “insensitive,” “self-absorbed,” and “stubborn.” Life could be better.

There's an extremely important point to all this. In Canada, we have been giving considerable energy to enhancing the life of individuals and individual groups. Those efforts have been badly needed to ensure that people have the opportunity to pursue the best that life has to offer, without having to face barriers of any kind.

However, there is growing evidence that our efforts to create a more pluralistic Canada are resulting in accelerated individualism and relativism. It's a movement from “we” to “me,” one that celebrates the individual as well as a highly personal sense of morality and ethics. The scales are tipping in the direction of the individual, to the detriment of our collective life.

## **Pluralism Without a Cause**

Throughout the ages, social theorists and more than a few practitioners have had to deal with the basic problem of how much individuality a society can have and still be a society.<sup>1</sup> In the Canadian setting, the problem was summed up well in the late 1960s by the Pre-Boomer who would become one of the chief advocates of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Pierre Trudeau. He wrote, “The oldest problem of political philosophy ... is to justify authority without destroying the independence of human beings in the process. How can an individual be reconciled with society? The need for privacy with the need to live in groups? Love for freedom with need for order?”<sup>2</sup>

At the time the Charter came into being, in 1982, highly respected American political sociologist Seymour Lipset envisioned that the ensuing

judicial intervention to protect individual rights and civil liberties would be “important, even revolutionary.” In Lipset’s words:

*[The Charter] probably goes further toward taking the country in an American direction than any other enacted structural change, including the Canada-U.S. free-trade agreement. The Charter’s stress on due process and individual rights, although less stringent than that of the U.S. Bill of Rights, should increase individualism and litigiousness north of the border.*<sup>3</sup>

In light of such potential problems, it is striking that the architects of a new and improved Canada in the latter part of the 20th century offered little in the way of official checks and balances to safeguard collective life. Statements of national values and expectations, for example, are conspicuous by their absence. There are no specific guidelines for bringing individual mosaic tiles together.

Explicit efforts to promote a pluralistic society, without complementary efforts to promote an interdependent and integrated society, would be expected to have a predictable outcome: social fragmentation. An excessive emphasis not only on individuals but also on individual groups would have a similar result.

A good case in point has been Canada’s official multiculturalism policy. Introduced in 1971 to ensure that everyone could participate fully in Canadian life, and, in the process, to elevate the quality of life for us all, it fell into disfavour by the end of the 1980s. In fact, as we saw earlier, the backlash was so great that people actually were ready to abandon the mosaic ideal and embrace the melting pot model.

The disenchantment with official multiculturalism was not surprising. When the multicultural model was unveiled, it was supposed to enrich all of our lives, newcomers and the existing population alike. Instead, it was perceived as being preoccupied with perpetuating homeland cultures and calling on everyone to be tolerant. As such, the policy became an uninspiring end in itself with few payoffs for the host population. To ask Canadians to get excited about multiculturalism was like asking NHL fans to get excited about a national anthem that was not followed by a hockey game.

What was not conveyed or understood clearly is the fact that cultural diversity is potentially an invaluable national resource. When a society is composed of people who have been exposed to a wide array of social structures and lifestyles, ideas and experiences, values and beliefs, the

cultural pool from which that society can draw is exponentially enriched. Everyone benefits.

But for that potential to be realized, society must make it possible for people to talk to each other – to reflect together on their rich body of ideas and behaviour – so they can sort out the true from the trivial, the banal from the best. Interactive environments – schools, the media, religious groups, and the like – consequently need to be encouraged and made possible by governments and major institutions.

As unveiled in 1971, federal multiculturalism had the potential to realize such a dream. The policy had three central elements: preservation, participation, and interaction. People who chose to retain valued aspects of their previous culture were encouraged to do so; everyone was to have the opportunity to participate fully in Canadian life regardless of their background or personal characteristics. In the words of the prime minister, people of various cultures and ethnic groups would be “encouraged to share their cultural expressions and values with other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for us all.” According to the tabled document, “The Government has made it very clear that it does not plan on aiding individual groups to cut themselves off from the rest of society.” On the contrary, it would promote “creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups.” Presumably “all” meant everyone.

By the late 1980s, the federal multicultural program was experiencing reasonable success with respect to the first two objectives of preservation and participation. However, along the way, the critically important third objective of stimulating creative interaction between all groups, in order to tap the national resource of diversity, was largely lost, at least to the public eye.

The result was that multiculturalism came to be viewed as a program that was primarily aimed at preserving cultures and producing tolerance – a view that was confirmed in the preamble of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988:

*... the Government of Canada ... is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians ...*

It was not a program that emphasized the idea that the end result would be “a richer life for us all.” Multiculturalism offered few pluses for the population as a whole.

Little wonder that many Canadians were calling for the melting pot

alternative. At a time when it seemed that the nation was falling apart, multiculturalism seemed to be adding to national divisiveness. Who needed it?

In the early years of the new century, a social calm seems to have set in across the country – at least compared with the era of Meech Lake and national and provincial unity referendums. Immigrant parents and “host” parents may not have spoken to each other and shared cultures to the extent that Trudeau envisioned back in 1971. But the good news is that many of their children talked – in playgrounds, in schools, in the workplace, in print, in social situations, as friends, lovers, and marriage partners. Official multiculturalism may have failed, but unofficial multiculturalism has triumphed.

What the presence of federal multiculturalism and bilingualism *did* do was instill in Canadians a sense that we do not have a single, monolithic culture. Canada is a country of diversity. That is readily evident both racially and ethnically. But that diversity extends to all facets of our lives. Combined with the Charter, bilingualism and multiculturalism have contributed to a pluralistic Canadian mindset. As individuals we are free to live out life as we see fit, limited only by laws that have to be compatible with the Charter.

The greatest legacy of the multicultural initiative may be its ability to instill in Canadians the fact that we have “a multi-everything” society. In the process, it has played a major role in heightening individualism, leaving us with the task of finding new, creative ways to put all the pieces together again.

Ironically, that process will be made easier as we recover the original “richer life for us all” idea that was such an important part of Trudeau’s vision of multiculturalism. Ryerson professor Myer Siemiatycki says that is precisely what Toronto is aspiring to do, having adopted the motto of “Diversity Our Strength,” where it formally recognizes the benefits of its diversity in improving the fabric of life for everyone. He writes that Toronto “recognizes that diversity brings fresh ideas, new skills, labour, capital, resourcefulness and cultures that enrich the city.”<sup>4</sup>

Initiatives like that give pluralism a cause that everyone can celebrate.

## **Technology Without an Agenda**

It seems to me that if pluralism does not necessarily have a cause – an inherent social objective – technology, like science, does not have an inherent social agenda. It simply is a process that produces a tangible

outcome that typically has multiple uses – be it a toaster, a car, or a gun. In the case of the computer and electronics areas, technological production and innovation are driven largely, if not totally, by concerns about profit, with limited concern for personal and social consequences beyond the fairly obvious safety considerations that the manuals warn us about. For example, I doubt very much that the invention of the laptop computer, let alone the cellphone, was accompanied by concerns about the implications such portability may have for social interaction.

In the last few decades, these two seemingly disparate societal components – individualism and technology – have teamed up to have a significant impact on social interaction and social life. At times it is not clear what causes what: Does individualism determine what technology produces, or does what technology produces contribute to individualism? Either way, the relationship is a powerful one.

To be more specific, computer-related technological developments in the post-1970s are having a profound impact on social interaction and social life. Some quick examples:

- Drive-in theatres made it possible for families and groups of people to attend a movie together. They now are close to being extinct, replaced initially by the VCR, and these days by portable DVD players that make it possible for us to view what we want, when we want, with whomever we want – including our solitary selves.
- Not very long ago, Canadians, young and old, who found themselves in the presence of people they didn't know were faced with the possibility of initiating some kind of contact with those people. That's how we met a fair number of individuals who were outside our normal social networks. Now the awkward silences and reluctance to speak to someone we don't know (or *do* know) are things of the past. Our cellphones allow us to reach beyond our immediate settings, in the process tuning out the people around us. And if we don't have a cellphone handy, we can always plug in our headphones, or pull out our laptops, or reach for our hand-held computers. Technology allows us to control – and custom-make – our social spheres.
- A major new factor that has revolutionized social interaction, of course, is e-mail. From the privacy of a setting of our choice, we engage in conversations with people around the planet, with people in our own home. Our parents and grandparents belonged to a set

number of groups; we can relate to any number of groups whenever we choose, including “virtual” ones. Our friends can be accessed as never before. Interesting new people are just a message or two away. Experts and columnists and superstars are seemingly at our fingertips. And the beauty of it all is that we are in charge – contacting the people we want to contact, ignoring the people we want to ignore.

In providing us with so many personal and private means of indulging ourselves and relating to others, technology has played a major role in heightening individualism in our society. But, then again, the fact that such an incredible market for individual-centred products exists suggests that technology not only is contributing to the “we to me” trend, but also is responding to it.

So it is that, in Canada, during the era of Baby Boomer prominence and influence, pluralism and technology have teamed up to give the individual centre stage. The evidence is everywhere.

### Some National Snapshots


#### Membership in Groups

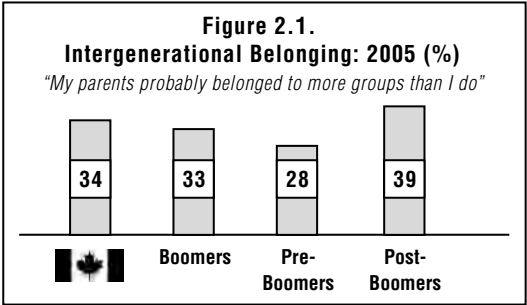
Canadians have hardly abandoned group participation. However, by their own admission, fewer are members of groups. Some 1 in 3 people across the country say their parents probably belonged to more groups than they do. The inclination *not* to join groups is directly related to age: about 40% of younger adults say their parents’ group memberships exceeded theirs, followed by Boomers (33%) and older adults (28%).

Such subjective data are corroborated by group membership figures for a variety of groups spanning the years 1975 through 2005. Over the past three decades, the percentage of people who say they are members of groups has declined, with no notable exceptions. Significantly, 76% of

**Table 2.1. E-mail Enjoyment: 2000-2005**

% Indicating They Receive “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit” of Enjoyment from E-mail

		Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
2000	25%	23	15	36
2005	37	32	25	51



Canadians say they “prefer to engage in activities rather than actually join groups,” with little difference in such an inclination by age. Activities are in; joining is out.

### Community Involvement

Being actively involved in one’s community is also not very high on the priority list of most Canadians. Nationally, 15% say involvement in their communities is “very important,” a figure that pales in the face of 53% indicating that success in what they do has that kind of significance.

It’s also telling that Boomers and others differ little in the importance they give both to community involvement and success. The priorities of Boomers seemingly have become the priorities of much of the nation.

Many readers understandably may ask, “To what extent does the importance of community involvement vary with community size? Surely, people in smaller places place a high value on involvement in their communities.”


**Table 2.2.**  
**Group Membership: 1975-2005**

Averages for the Two Survey Years

	1975-80	2000-05
A religious group	50%	29
A sports group	25	22
A hobby-related club	22	16
A service club	22	12
A private club	***	12
A political group	12	7
A fraternity/sorority	11	8
A farm organization	7	2
A nationality group	6	4
Any other group	13	9

**Table 2.3. Personal Importance of Community Involvement: 2005**

% Indicating “Very Important”

	Community Involvement	Success in What You Do
	15%	53
Boomers (40-59)	14	53
Pre-Boomers (60+)	15	55
Post-Boomers (18-39)	17	52

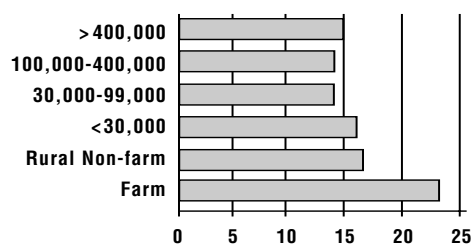
### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- In 1990, 37% of Canadians said they had changed residences in the past five years, including 61% under the age of 35.
- In 2005, the national figure was 36% and included an even higher percentage of people under 35 – 69%.

It’s true to some extent – but not very much. Some 23%, or about 1 in 4 people, living on Canadian farms say community involvement is “very important” to them. But after that, community size makes little difference, with the importance of involvement ranging from

**Figure 2.2. Importance of Community Involvement by Community Size: 2005**

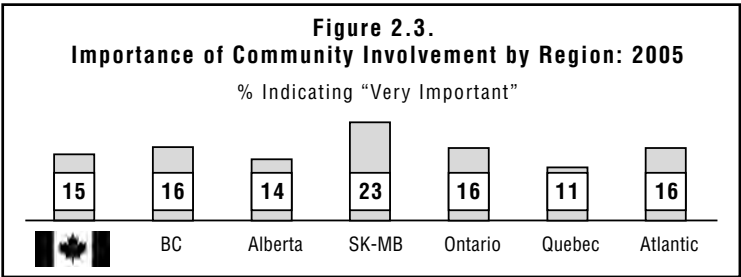
% Indicating “Very Important”





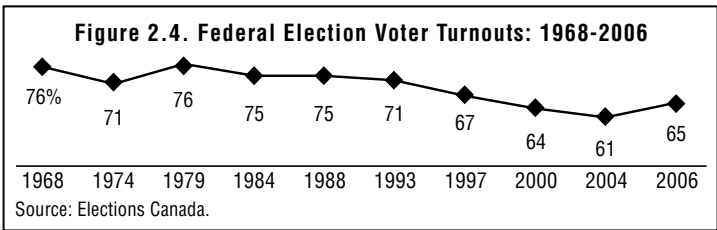
17% for people living in rural non-farm areas to 15% for those residing in cities of over 400,000.

Such relatively low levels would seem to represent a fairly sharp decline from the past. Regardless, they point to what amounts to a nation-wide problem: Most Canadians, many of whom are highly mobile geographically, do not place a particularly high value on involvement in their communities.



### Political Participation

There has been considerable concern in recent years over the decline in political interest on the part of Canadians. As we have just seen, the percentage of Canadians who say they are members of political groups



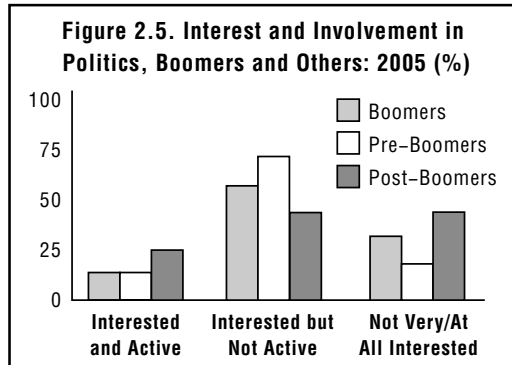
dropped from 12% to 7% over the past 25 years. Voter turnout in federal elections stood at around 75% from the mid-1950s to late 80s. However, in 1997, it fell to 67% and in 2004 dipped further to 61%, before rebounding slightly to 65% in 2006.

Interestingly, Boomers hit their adult life numerical peak between 1986 and 2001, comprising just over 50% of the pre-retirement adult population during that period. Their increased presence coincided with declining voter turnouts.

Were Boomers in large part responsible for the decline in election turnouts? The Project Canada survey findings suggest this may well have been the case. As of late 2005, Boomers showed no greater inclination than older adults or younger adults to be interested and active politically.

This would seem to suggest they had not exactly been leading the way in stimulating political participation during the years when they constituted the adult majority. In fact, the findings show that, if anything, adults who were younger than Boomers – as in 18 to 39 – were actually exhibiting higher levels of political interest and activity.

These findings point to the possibility that “the emerging adult generation” – variously referred to as Generation X and Generation Y – may include a larger segment of people who take politics seriously. Consistent with such an argument is the fact that, as noted earlier, the federal voting turnout in January 2006 increased four percentage points from June 2004.



### The Group-Freedom Balance

The surveys soundly document what we all know well: We continue to value family and friends. It’s just that we also place a high value on our freedom.

Consequently, the question is not, “Do we continue to pursue good ties with people?” Of course we do, regardless of our age or era. But *two important changes* seem to be occurring that are directly tied to era. *First, the ways in which we relate to the people we care about are increasing. Second, the range of people we care about is decreasing.* We’ll return to these issues shortly.

**Table 2.4. The Importance of Friends and Freedom: 1985-2005**  
% Indicating “Very Important”

	1985	1995	2005
<b>Freedom</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>90</b>
Boomers	89	86	92
Pre-Boomers	90	89	92
Post-Boomers	***	86	85
<b>Friendship</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>82</b>
Boomers	85	79	80
Pre-Boomers	82	76	81
Post-Boomers	***	79	84

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- 59% of daily e-mail users between the ages of 18 and 34 say they receive a high level of enjoyment from friendships, vs. 44% of those who use e-mail less often.
- 39% of daily users who are 18 to 34 say generosity is “very important to them,” compared with 49% who use e-mail less often.


**Relativism**

One of the ways that individualism manifests itself is defining morality and ethics in personal rather than external terms. Truth is not seen as absolute – something that exists apart from life itself – but rather is “relative” to people and places, circumstances and time. In practice, truth is highly subjective; it is largely, if not completely, in the eye of the beholder.

Relativism is a concept that is highly functional in pluralistic settings. Rather than truth in any way being limited to certain individuals and groups, it is viewed as relative to the people involved. What is true for one person or one group is not necessarily true for another. “It’s all relative.”

Since 1990, approximately 2 in 3 Canadians have agreed with the idea that “*Everything’s relative.*” The agreement level has risen from 65% to 70% in the last decade and a half. The endorsement levels of Baby Boomers and others have been very similar, suggesting that, on balance, the numerically dominant Boomers have been having a pro-relativism influence on both older and younger adults. Not surprisingly, the inclination to embrace relativism has added ambiguity to Canadians’ sense of morality. More than 70% of Boomers and younger adults, along with 85% of people who are older, acknowledge that “*what is right and wrong does not seem to be as clear-cut as it used to be.*”

In lieu of believing in and relying on absolutes, younger people, in particular, are inclined to base their moral decisions on highly personal and subjective criteria, such as values and feelings. “External factors,” notably religion, continue to be important to some 4 in 10 adults – even though many of them say they subscribe to relativism.

Table 2.5. Relativism: 1990 and 2005				
% Indicating Everything's Relative				
		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
2005	70%	70	67	72
1990	65	66	63	71

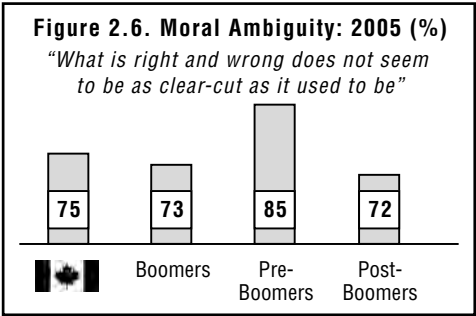
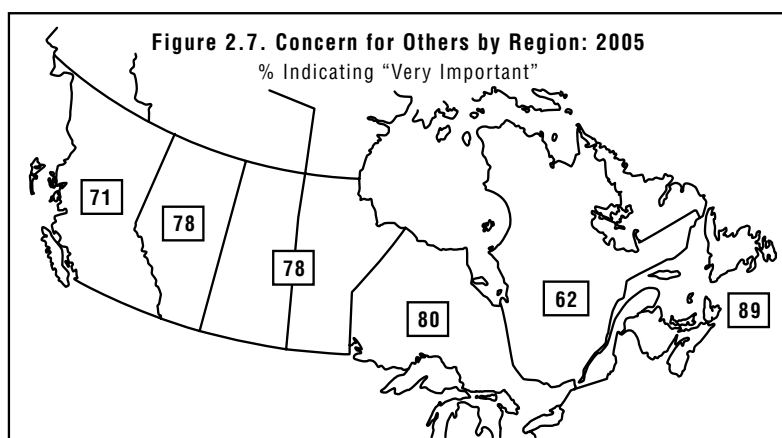


Table 2.6. Basis for Moral Decisions, Adults and Teenagers: 2000		
	Adults	Teens
Personal factors, including values	35%	49
External factors	42	28
Religion specifically	17	16
Other	6	7
Totals	100	100

Source: Bibby, Project Canada 2000 and Project Teen Canada 2000.



## Assessment

These findings point to something of an anomaly: Canadians continue to place a high level of importance on relationships. Noteworthy numbers across the country also express concern for other people. It's not as if we aspire to be "loners," indifferent to others.

That said, we are not joining groups to the extent that our parents and grandparents did. With so many of us on the move residentially, community involvement is not something that is either widely valued or always possible.

We continue to value social life. However, we tend to live it out in a highly selective manner. For many of us, our focus is family, friends, and colleagues. There's not an awful lot of time or energy or money left over for people we don't know or organizations that fail to touch our lives in significant ways.

Most of us also learned fairly early in our lives that the way to maximize our cherished personal freedom is to minimize our group involvement. Groups demand time and money; some have strong expectations as to how we should live our lives.

Consequently, when our frequent residential moves provide us with new social beginnings, increasing numbers of us are not bothering to pursue active involvement or formal membership in organizations, opting instead to draw from our numerous group options in à la carte fashion. Many of those organizations, in turn, are happy to settle for our occasional participation.

From the standpoint of lifestyle, our society has given us the green light to live out life pretty much as we see fit, this side of the law, without passing much judgment. And so it is that our sense of what is right or wrong, ethical or not so ethical, is no longer dependent on the declaration of an

authoritative body such as the church or an authoritative source such as the Bible or other scriptures. It lies with us – our feelings, our perceptions, and our readings of what seems to be appropriate in given situations. In case anyone hasn’t noticed, guilt is in scarce supply these days. The reason, according to social psychologists, is quite obvious. If they are right – that guilt is the result of our “internalizing” external standards – then our widespread abandonment of external standards has left little to be internalized.

By recognizing our high level of individualism – as well as contributing to it – technology has given us the means to relate to our increasingly narrow circle of valued people. It also has given us control over how we expand that circle.

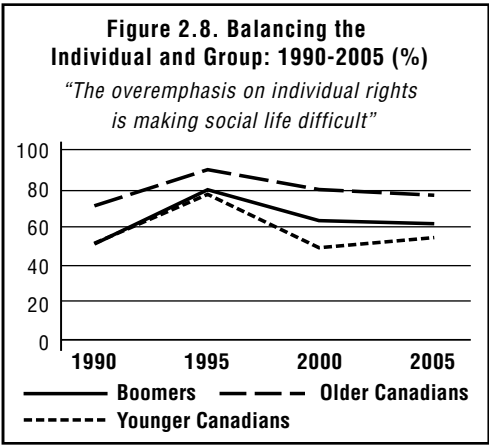
Technology has further made it possible for us to selectively consume what we want in the way of news, entertainment, sports, and other information. Broadcasting has evolved into narrowcasting, networks have given way to niches, specialization and individualization are everywhere.

It all adds up to a dramatic transformation of a society built on “we” to a society built on “me.”

As with pluralism, one can readily ask, “Is there a downside to all this freedom and emphasis on the individual?” The predictable, dogmatic response is, “Well, no and yes.”

On the “no” side, the survey findings remind us that there is nothing we value more than personal freedom. These days we are getting lots of it, and we could even enjoy our personal and social options more if we had the resources to access some of the technology that is so central to it all, including money and time.

On the “yes” side of the downside question, so much emphasis on “me” leaves us wondering what the implications are for social life at every level, starting with our immediate valued relationships. As we all know well, a good and enjoyable life with other people has always required finding a balance between me and we. To get top-heavy on either side is to see interpersonal life fail, be it a relationship at the marital, parental,



organizational, occupational, community, national, or global level. As I have been emphasizing from the outset, we have always had to find a balance between what is good for the individual and the group, the individual province and the country, a country and the international community.

Furthermore, if the “we” simply includes a small number of people who constitute “us” – summed up so well in the well-worn old prayer, “God bless me and my wife, my brother John and his wife, us four no more, amen” – that doesn’t work either. If that’s as far as “we” extends, people on the outside who need us, not to mention people on the inside whom we need, are going to find life difficult.

One more point: We need to relate to each other and reflect together in order to discover what things best enhance social and personal life. Relativism is a nice, politically correct way to avoid conflict. But to say all cultural features and all truth claims are of equal merit is like telling the kids who play basketball that they all are winners – no one player is better than another. The problem is, it just ain’t so. Some players *are* better than others. Some claims *are* more accurate than others; some are downright false. If we didn’t believe that, we wouldn’t engage in scientific research or argue about what went wrong with the weather forecast.

Relativism applied to anything being examined is, at best, an hypothesis. We need to exchange ideas and think hard together in order to explore the possibility that some ideas are more accurate than others, that some aspects of culture can elevate life better than others. That’s another important reason why we need to constantly interact with each other.

No, I am not delivering a message of doom. We don’t have a crisis on our hands at this point in our history. But social life, and, in turn, personal life across the country, could become considerably more difficult and definitely less enjoyable unless we continue to find ways to connect people and build communities in environments of all kinds. The winning poster depicting what is required to make life work in Canada will not be a blown-up photo of 10 people in an airport waiting area all talking on cell-phones to “their people,” and treating each other and those who are cell-less as if they are invisible.

In pursuing an optimal balance between the individual and the group, more is at stake than the interdependence essential to organizational productivity or civility for civility’s sake. As I reminded readers in discussing this issue in *Canada’s Teens*, sociologists have been among those who have long maintained that social ties are indispensable to human development.<sup>5</sup> Some of you may recall hearing professors cite Charles Horton

Cooley and George Herbert Mead in maintaining that we need other people if we are to emerge as healthy human beings, starting with the primary groups of family and friends – or hearing or reading psychiatrist William Glasser’s oft-cited line, “At all times in our lives we must have at least one person who cares about us and whom we care for ourselves.”<sup>6</sup> Highly regarded family expert James Garbarino of Cornell University writes, “Children need stable positive emotional relationships with at least one parent or other reference person.” For emphasis, he adds, “This is the single most important resource you can have to promote resilience in childhood: having someone who is crazy about you.”<sup>7</sup>

Harvard professor Robert Putnam has gone further. In his provocative book *Bowling Alone*, he maintains that social life generates “social capital,” resulting in healthier and happier individuals. “Social connectedness,” he writes, “is one of the most powerful determinants of our well-being.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, as in Canada, the formal involvement of Americans in groups has declined considerably in recent decades, so much so that, according to Putnam, there is an urgent need for social capital in the United States to be consciously restored.



People need people. As one of our teen survey participants, a 16-year-old female from Alberta, puts it, “All kids need love and support from someone or something.” The same is true of the rest of us.

So it is that a 31-year-old Laval woman with a preschooler sums things up succinctly: “I’d like to see the ‘us’ put back into society.” A 57-year-old father of two from a small town in British Columbia is even more pointed: “We need to start putting Canada first instead of being fixated on our individual interests.”

The strong emphasis on “me” is showing up in the expectations we are placing on others – the trend we turn to next.

## CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING

### Membership in Groups: 1975-2005

				
	1975-80	2000-05	1975	2004
A religious group	50%	29	40	32
A sports group	25	22	19	18
A hobby-related club	22	16	9	10
A service club	22	12	8	10
A private club		12		
A fraternity/sorority	11	8	15	10
A political group	12	7	4	4
A farm organization	7	2	4	3
A nationality group	6	4	2	3
Any other group	13	9	9	6

U.S. source: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago.



# 3

## From Deference to Discernment

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### *The Geometric Jump in Performance Expectations*

#### **Major players**

*pluralism, education, media,  
consumption, labour force*

- **Greater awareness**
- **Greater expectations**
- **Greater desire for input**
- **Greater pressure on everyone**

I first experienced it in a memorable way at York University in the mid-1970s. Fresh out of my Ph.D. program, I walked into the classroom that first day of the semester and things immediately seemed different from my teaching experiences as a graduate student in the state of Washington and in Alberta. In both places, I had felt like a professor, even without my Ph.D. in hand. As a graduate student, I had been accustomed to seeing fellow grad students – and, of course, undergraduates – show professors respect, and, in the case of some, a measure of adulation. For their part, many professors kept their distance from their students. More than a few expected to be addressed as “Dr.” or “Professor,” with first names restricted to one-on-one situations, if then.

As I entered the room at York, those Baby Boomer students collectively

looked up and then looked down, unsubtly communicating their detachment. As I went over the outline of the course, most seemed indifferent to my efforts at both pleasantries and humour. One berated me for not using the same outline as the individual I was replacing; I never saw her again. Throughout the two-semester course, the students treated me as an equal – on good days. They made lectures difficult, and exchanges often seemed more like confrontations. It was a relief to get that course behind me.

Apart from what I came to understand were some vagaries of both York and Toronto, the experience obviously was a fairly poignant one for me. It also opened my eyes to the reality that a large number of students in that particular course – and, to a lesser extent, in two other courses I taught – were not about to show me any particular respect just because I was a professor. I, like any of their other new professors, had to earn their respect, plain and simple.

## **The Demise of Deference**

When Canada's first Baby Boomers hit their early 20s, around 1965, the buzzword they had grown up with in relating to adults was "respect." Like generations before them, they were taught to respect their elders, respect their parents, respect their teachers, respect their ministers, respect their doctors, respect the police, respect the newspaper writer, respect pretty much everyone who was an adult. Why? Precisely because they *were* adults and occupied positions that, well, warranted respect.

But there were some unique characteristics about those Boomers at York and across the country pretty much from the word go. For one thing, they were attending universities and other post-secondary institutions in far larger numbers than their grandparents and parents had. Before the oldest among them had reached the age of 10, they were receiving unprecedented exposure to the country and the world through the new medium of television. They also seemed to be travelling a lot, often backpacking it across Europe. By the time the oldest had reached the age of 25, in 1970, the Boomers had been privy to at least four major American 50s and 60s movements – civil rights, the sexual revolution, women's liberation, and the counterculture revolution, what University of Toronto sociologist Robert Brym refers to as "the rights revolution."<sup>1</sup>

On the Canadian side of the border, the first-wave Boomers entered their early adult lives with bilingualism and multiculturalism in place, soon to be followed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the case of the younger, second-wave Boomers, born between 1956 and 1965, many

of these key developments in both the U.S. and Canada had taken place before some of them had even started school.


In Quebec, an additional liberating factor for large numbers of Boomers was the decline of the institutional influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Until the 1960s, the Catholic Church had been involved at the centre of such spheres as education, social services, and hospitals. As part of what some have referred to as the Quieter Revolution, the responsibility for most of these services was transferred to the provincial government. In the process, the church lost much of its authority over Quebecers' lives.

It is not surprising that Boomers, as a result of all these developments, were inclined to have a pluralistic and individualistic mindset. This freedom-minded generation could be expected to speak up and challenge prevalent norms and institutions to an extent perhaps never before seen in Canada.

They didn't disappoint.

In fact, Peter Newman has gone so far as to claim that, at some point between 1985 and 1995, nothing less than a revolution took place, one that involved a shift from deference to defiance. "There occurred a sudden bursting of those barriers between thought and feeling that had kept Canadians from asserting their individual sovereignties and had left them indentured to authority far beyond its worth." The catalyst, he says, was the antagonism that the country felt toward Brian Mulroney and his Conservative government in the early 1990s, with voters virtually wiping the party out in the 1993 federal election.

"It was only the beginning," Newman maintains. The ammunition for the revolution came in the form of saturation television coverage of real-time news events that "left politicians with no place to hide." By the end of the decade, television was supplanted by the computer, with the advent of the Internet guaranteeing "a full-scale rout of authority." Why? How? By providing unregulated access to unlimited, cheap information, and thereby empowering its users. These newly empowered "subjects of the once-peaceable kingdom," he says, "became cranky, spiteful and troublesome to govern." While their anger initially was directed at the politicians,

Table 3.1. Attitudes Toward Authority: 2005					
	% Agreeing		18-34	35-54	55+ Boomers
My parents taught me to respect people in authority	95%		93	95	95
I think that today people in authority have to earn our respect	86%		82	84	93


it soon extended to Canada's other institutions. Newman sees the new Canada as still in the process of defining itself. But one thing is certain: "Life in these northern latitudes will never be the same."<sup>2</sup>

## Some National Snapshots

### Our System

As of the mid-1970s, 75% of people 55 and over, along with close to 70% of those between the ages of 35 and 54, felt that "*the political and economic system we have in this country is about the best there is.*" Baby Boomers were not as enthusiastic, being almost split in their response with 55% agreeing and 45% disagreeing.

By 1990, disenchantment with life in Canada had dipped to the point that only 4 in 10 people were still applauding the virtues of our system, including just 3 in 10 Boomers. By 2005, the national endorsement figure increased to 55%. Perhaps reflecting the Baby Boomers' influence on Canadians over time, that 2005 level was the exactly the same as that of Boomers in both 1975 and 2005.

Table 3.2. Attitudes Toward the System and Input: 1975-2005						
% Agreeing						
	BEST POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM			DON'T HAVE ANY SAY IN WHAT THE GOV'T DOES		
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
	65%	40	55	45	52	60
18-34	54	31	48	45	55	58
35-54	68	41	52	45	48	61
55+	75	54	65	47	53	61
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>59</b>
Outside Quebec	56	34	55	46	56	56
Quebec	55	28	50	34	49	71

What's more, as increasing numbers of Boomers moved into adult roles between 1975 and 2005, they developed a growing sense that they didn't really "*have any say about what the government does.*" Such sentiments also came to be shared increasingly by both the older and younger people with whom they were working and living. The sense of political powerlessness was particularly pronounced among Boomers in Quebec, increasing from 34% in 1975 to 49% by 1990, and to a whopping 71% by 2005. In the words of one 43-year-old male Boomer from Montreal, "We don't often have the opportunity of expressing ourselves."

## PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

Around 1990, Canadian morale may well have been at an all-time low. The country seemed to be on the verge of breaking up. The economy was weak, the future bleak. The federal and provincial governments were preoccupied with unity and constitutional issues. Governments and average people seemed badly out of touch with each other. In 1990:

- Only 37% of Canadians regarded unity as a “very serious” problem; just 27% felt the same about constitutional issues.
- 57% saw the economic situation as “very serious,” and 45% said the same about unemployment.
- 53% maintained government incompetence represented a “very serious problem,” with just 13% expressing a high level of confidence in the federal government, and only 19% approving of the performance of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

In October 1993, the Progressive Conservative Party was removed from federal power – reduced to two seats from 169.

## Confidence in Leaders

In 1985, an average of close to 1 in 2 Canadians indicated they had high levels of confidence in the leadership of our major institutions. The highest levels of confidence were given to the police, followed by schools, religious organizations, and the court system.

By 1995, the 1 in 2 Canadians who, on average, were expressing a high level of confidence had dropped to 1 in 3. The biggest losers? The schools, the court system, religious groups, and the television industry.

As of 2005, high levels of confidence in our major institutions continued to be expressed by only about 1 in 3 people. There’s no doubt about it. We have become extremely demanding of our major institutions. A 64-year-old-male from Scarborough sums up the sentiment of a large number of Canadians this way: “Canada suffers from a lack of inspired leadership in almost all institutions.”

- Only the *police* and the *schools* currently are viewed with high levels of confidence by a majority of Canadians.

**Table 3.3. Confidence in Leadership: 1975-2005**

Have “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit” of Confidence vs. “Some” or “Little or None”

	1985	1995	2005
The police	75%	68	69
Schools	59	44	55
Newspapers	40	39	43
The court system	49	36	42
The computer industry	***	***	42
Radio	***	40	40
Financial institutions	***	40	38
Your local government	***	32	36
Religious organizations	51	36	34
Television	44	30	33
Major business	***	38	33
Your provincial government	31	22	27
Labour unions	21	19	27
The music industry	***	***	26
The movie industry	***	20	22
The federal government	30	25	21
HIGH RATING AVERAGE			
Boomers	46%	33	36
Pre-Boomers	48	36	39
Post-Boomers	***	37	36

- About 4 in 10 of us express high levels of confidence in ***newspapers, the court system, the computer industry, and radio.***
- The lowest levels of confidence are shown ***provincial governments*** and ***labour unions***, along with the ***music*** and ***movie*** industries – with the ***federal government*** at the bottom. The lack of confidence in government, federal and provincial, seems to be almost inherent. Despite obvious changes in governing parties and personnel, confidence levels have remained relatively low since we started probing the issue in 1985. In Quebec, confidence in the provincial government is particularly low (25%). A February 2006 Léger poll found that only 10% of Quebecers said they actually trusted politicians generally – leaving them in last place among occupations, some 5% behind people in car sales.<sup>3</sup>

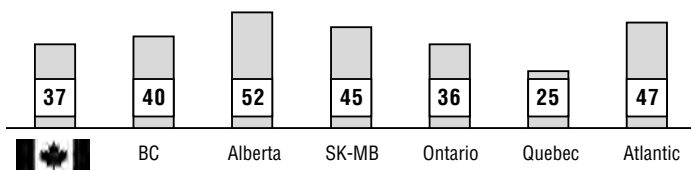
And where have the Baby Boomers been in all of this? In 1985, the institutions, together, received an average “high level of confidence” rating of 46% from Boomers. By 1995, the average had dropped to 33% and has remained around that level ever since. Not surprisingly, given the influence potential of the large Boomer cohort, confidence levels and trends for both older and younger Canadians have tended to mirror those of the Boomers.

#### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- Just over 1 in 2 Canadians express confidence in schools. However, the Project Canada 2000 survey found that 75% of Canadians maintain that “overall, public school teachers are very competent” – not bad in an era when teachers are being carefully scrutinized by an increasingly well-educated public.
- In 1950, Gallup found that 80% of the population felt “public school teachers are as capable as they should be.”

**Figure 3.1. Satisfaction with Provincial Government Performance by Region: 2005**

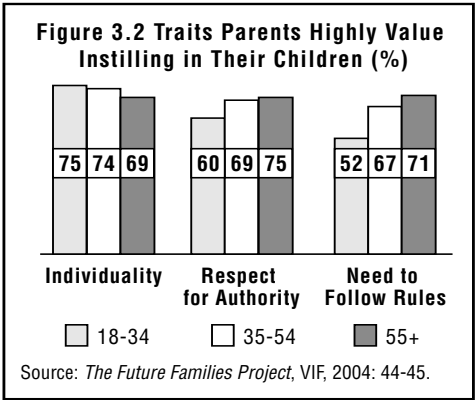
% Indicating “Very Satisfied” or “Fairly Satisfied”



**Valued Traits**

Illustrating the shift from deference to discernment has been the kind of traits that parents of different ages say they view as particularly important to instill in their children.

- Individuality is highly valued by 75% of **adults under 35**, well above respect for authority (60%) and the need to follow rules (52%).
- Virtually the same proportion of adults **35 to 54** – who include most of the Boomers – emphasize the importance of individuality. But they are slightly more likely than younger adults to want their children to have respect for authority, and a lot more likely to place importance on teaching children the need to follow rules.
- Reflecting the demise of a concern for a balance between individuals and groups, Canadians **55 and over** break with the Boomers and younger adults in placing high value on instilling both respect for authority and the need to follow rules, followed by individuality.



These findings clearly show that younger adults feel their children and other children should focus on being individuals first and on any need to respect authority or follow rules second. It’s little wonder, then, that the emerging generation of young adults and teenagers are following in the footsteps of their Boomer parents, not only in being highly critical of institutions but also in expecting to have the opportunity to interact with the people involved in those institutions. To be a leader who claims to have expertise, let alone authority, is to be a person who is subject to scrutiny and inquiry.

**Political Orientation Over Time**

We saw earlier that the social and sexual views of Boomers have not become more conservative as they have aged. In light of their critical views of institutions, it is worth examining the extent to which – in their minds – they have or haven’t become more politically conservative over the years.

Since 1975, we have been asking Canadians how they would rate their *political views* – “extremely liberal,” “liberal,” “moderate, middle of the road,” “conservative,” or “extremely conservative.”

	<b>BOOMERS</b>				<b>PRE-BOOMERS</b>			
	<b>1975</b>		<b>2005</b>		<b>1975</b>		<b>2005</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>W</b>
Extremely liberal	6%	3	5	5	5	3	4	6
Liberal	19	33	24	32	22	30	24	33
Moderate, middle of road	63	60	48	49	54	46	44	49
Conservative	11	4	21	12	16	20	25	10
Extremely conservative	<1	<1	2	2	3	1	3	2
TOTALS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

- In 1975, more **Boomer women** (36%) than men (25%) rated their views as liberal. The majority of Boomers saw themselves as moderates, and smaller numbers thought of themselves as politically conservative. As of 2005, the liberal figure for women has remained about the same as it was 30 years ago (37%), while there has been a slight increase in the percentage of **Boomer men** who see their political outlook as liberal (29%).
- What has changed over the past three decades is that around 10% of Boomer men and women who had described themselves as “moderates” now see themselves as having conservative political views.
- Among **Pre-Boomer men**, the self-described liberal figure is pretty much the same as it was in 1975. There likewise has been some shifting in self-identification from moderate to conservative. However, among **Pre-Boomer women**, shifting has tended to be in the liberal direction: fewer older women now describe themselves as conservative (12% in 2005 versus 21% in 1975), with increases in those seeing themselves as either moderate (up 3%) or liberal (up 6%).

In short, the proportion of Boomers and Post-Boomers who felt their political thinking was liberal in 1975 did not decline through 2005; if anything, it went up. Net increases for people holding a conservative political self-image were at the expense of net decreases for individuals in the moderate category.

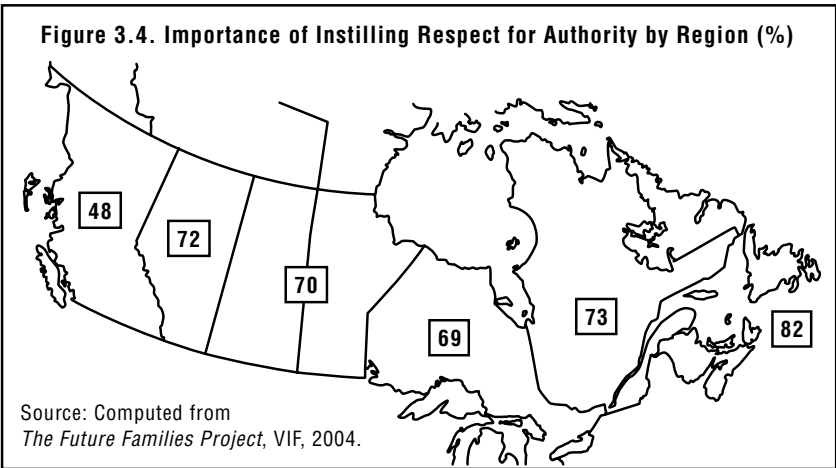
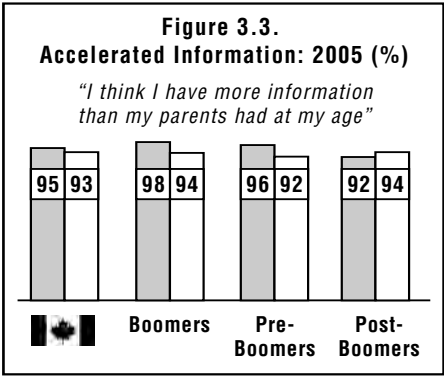
So much for the idea that Boomers have seen themselves as becoming “softer” politically as they have. Their political outlooks did not go the way of drugs, sex, and rock ’n’ roll.



### Unprecedented Information

Individualism and information have teamed up to undermine authority at both the institutional and individual levels. The computer- and Internet-led explosion of information in recent years has made it possible for individuals to know more than ever before about just about everything – or, at minimum, puts us in a position where *we think* we know more than ever before about just about everything.

So it is that the word of an expert – be that person a physician, professor, or lawyer; a news reporter, sports columnist, or weather forecaster; a contractor, a plumber, or an electrician; a real-estate agent, travel consultant, or retail specialist – is increasingly not taken as definitive. The adage that we need to seek “a second opinion” after receiving an unfavourable diagnosis from a doctor has spread from medicine to virtually every realm. One big difference, beyond the expanded range of those second opinions, is that this search appears to be increasingly pursued via the Internet – where it is possible to get second, and third, and sixth, and tenth opinions before we, ourselves, rather than an expert, make the judgment call.



## Assessment

The last few decades have been particularly tough for leaders in virtually every sector of Canadian society. Our exposure to improved information sources and larger amounts of information has done more than simply provide us with increased awareness about just about everything. It also has removed the mystique from people who previously were regarded as the individuals with expertise. That mystique particularly evaporates when we find, or our family and friends find, that an expert's take on things was inaccurate or unhelpful. It could have been an inaccurate diagnosis, an unnecessarily high airfare, a careless auto repair job, bad financial advice, a poorly taught course, a less than professional photo. Such imperfections and occasional displays of incompetence may have cost us unnecessary pain, money, time, or inconvenience, further fuelling our sense that some people aren't as wise or able as they claim to be.

Many of us had fathers or mothers who told us more than a few times, "If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself." I suspect that today we are practising that adage more extensively than ever before. Greater information has brought with it greater questioning of alleged expertise. Deference has given way to discernment.

Similarly, our institutional confidence has decreased in accordance with our concern about both the competence and the character of the people involved. We no longer stand in awe of newspaper writers just because they write for reputable papers. We have come to recognize the fact that religious leaders are fully human, complete with the same moral flaws as everyone else. We have all been students and now, as adults – equipped with considerably more information, confidence, and sheer power than we had in those days – are consequently protective of our children and recognize the mortality of their teachers and principals.

When we look at *politicians*, for example, 2 in 3 of us, led by Boomers, have felt for at least the last three decades that they have too much power, with such a sense peaking in 1990. Since the 1980s, Boomers have been increasingly inclined to think the *media* have too much power – sentiments that are becoming increas-

**Table 3.5. Perceptions of Power: 1975-2005**

Perception the Following Have "Too Much Power"

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
<b>Politicians</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>64</b>
Boomers	74	68	78	69	63	66
Older Canadians	68	63	75	58	58	64
Younger Canadians	***	***	70	64	65	61
<b>The Media</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>64</b>
Boomers	50	47	55	59	59	61
Older Canadians	57	59	61	59	55	58
Younger Canadians	***	***	58	61	64	70

ingly pronounced among younger, more vocal, and Internet-savvy Canadians.

So it is that this has become the age of interactivity. Organizations that have recognized our heightened desire for input have been responding. They have been inviting us to tell them what we think, by using e-mail, faxes, voicemail, or – if worst comes to worst – by writing a letter by hand. Our thoughts are solicited by *The National*; we are asked to offer our comments on almost every story that appears on the *Globe and Mail* website; we are invited to vote for the most outstanding player by the end of every televised NHL or CFL game; *Canadian Idol* asks us to wait until the end of the show and then vote as many times as we like for our favourite contender. Virtually every major organization in the country, as well as every federal and provincial department, provides us with “*How you can contact us*” information on their websites. E-mail addresses, fax numbers, and phone numbers for almost anyone involved in any organization or activity across the country can be found fairly quickly, thanks to a simple web search.

We want input. A young Baby Boomer from Three Hills, Alberta, claims that “it is a rare thing in the political arena today for me, as an average citizen, to be able to voice my views and have them heard.” Another young Boomer, from Woodstock, Ontario, thanks us for letting him “take part in the survey and making my voice count,” adding, “I appreciate being counted.” They are among a growing number of Canadians who likewise want their voices heard.

In response, organizations and individuals have opened their eyes and ears, inboxes and mailboxes. Interestingly, for all the apparent receptivity to the public, many, and perhaps most, stop short of letting us walk through their doors – or ask us to take a number or schedule an appointment or have someone on the inside vouch for our credibility before we are let in to see an actual person. But officially, at least, we are being given the opportunity to be heard.

The fact of the matter is that these days, organizations and individuals don’t have a lot of choice. Why? Because we won’t have it any other way. In the private sector, those individuals and organizations that are not receptive to our voices are bypassed, to their immediate or long-term detriment. In the public sector, those departments and people that don’t listen to what we say run the risk of hearing from us via their superiors.

Make no mistake about it. There has been a major shift from deference to discernment.

A fast footnote: Some professions and some businesses – notably banks, physicians, dentists, and lawyers – seem determined not to give in. They aren't inclined to let people get too close or too informal. Tipoffs include the number of people who inform their bank that they are going to go elsewhere for a loan or mortgage because the bank has not been sufficiently competitive; the number of people asking the receptionist at their medical clinic how long "Dr. So and So" will be; and, in the case of lawyers, the expectation that we will not dispute their fee statements. Despite massive changes in the industry, airlines are still inclined to expect a high level of deference. If you have any doubt, the next time you are informed that your plane is delayed, walk up to the agent at the desk and ask why.

One thing seems certain: The emerging generation will have increasing difficulty with such deferentially minded holdouts.

So, what about it? Is the shift a positive one? It *is*, to the extent that we attempt to become more informed and then expect people in positions of power or in positions requiring expertise to be both competent and accountable. Logically, if we are better informed and reasonable in our expectations, performances should be elevated and we all should benefit.

But there are few guarantees that things will necessarily work out logically. The negative side of the shift to discernment is that it also can be associated with uninformed and unreasonable expectations. People can feel they have the right to speak up, without necessarily having anything informative to say.

More information and an inflated sense of our own expertise also can lead to our having unrealistic expectations of leaders and experts, holding the belief that politicians and physicians, teachers and clergy, for example, should be perfect. Unfortunately, some of us have been known to apply similar tough standards when we are dealing with people like minor hockey coaches and officials. Those kinds of expectations, when placed on individuals for a short time, let alone a large part of their lifetimes, are enough to make life somewhere between unpleasant and downright unbearable for people who occupy the roles involved. Little wonder there is considerable turnover in occupations, or that volunteers are hard to keep.

Few of us want to see the return of a highly deferential society. But if we fail to find a balance between a measure of deference and a valuing of discernment, we may well find that our quality of life, in the end, is not all that much better than what our grandparents and their parents experienced – in those days when the dinosaurs of less information and more respect roamed this northern land.

## CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING

### Confidence in Institutions: 1985-2005

% Indicating They Have "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"

						
	1985	1995	2005	1985	1995	2005
The Police	75%	68	69		58	63
Schools	59	44	55	48	40	37
Newspapers	40	39	43	35	30	28
The court system/criminal-justice system	49	36	42	20	26	
Financial institutions/banks		40	38	51	43	49
Organized religion	51	36	34	66	57	53
Major business/big business		38	33	31	21	22
Labour unions/organized labour	21	19	27	28	26	24
The federal government/Congress	30	25	21	39	21	22

U.S. data source: "Confidence in Institutions," *The Gallup Poll*, June 2006.

# 4

## From Obligation to Gratification

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### *The Emergence of a Consumption Mindset*

#### **Major players**

*pluralism, market model, consumption, time*

- **Choices no longer based on tradition, loyalty, or duty**
- **Choices based on what has worth and significance for the individual**
- **Important impact on social life generally, institutions and groups specifically**

SCOBEEY HARTLEY died at 75 as I was writing this chapter. You say, “Who was Scobey Hartley?” The obituary in the *Globe and Mail* filled half a page, with his photo a quarter of the page. I knew him only briefly as a fellow board member of the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research. Turns out Scobey was originally a Texan with a geology degree who came to Canada and made a fortune in the oil and gas industry. In 1967, as their “centennial project,” Scobey and his wife, Sissy, took out Canadian citizenship. He was instrumental in the Calgary Homeless Foundation, the Calgary Stampede, the Alberta Ingenuity Fund, the Calgary Health Authority, and the city’s bid for the 1988 Winter Olympics. He also was a co-chair of Alberta’s Promise, created by the government to focus on the well-being of children.

Outgoing Alberta premier Ralph Klein, who knew him well, described Scobey this way: “He was just a wonderful, warm individual who would give the shirt off his back, literally, to help another person.” His executive assistant of 29 years, Linette Kelly, said, “He never said no. He couldn’t say no,” recalling the time he sent money to a young boy who had written to him asking for help in buying soccer uniforms. A *Calgary Herald* editorial headline read, “Oilman was great Albertan.” As the *Globe*’s Dawn Walton put it, “Scobey Hartley left an imprint here.”<sup>1</sup>

It remains to be seen how many Scobey Hartleys there will be in Canada’s future.

## **The Market Model and Consumer Outlook**

From the beginning of time, people have wondered what it takes to motivate people to make good decisions, not only for themselves but for others as well. Along the way, philosophers have made a living from debating the sources of ethics and morality.

Their theories are well known. Some maintain that what drives us is hedonism, where we pursue pleasure and avoid pain. Others argue that we are driven by utilitarianism, opting for things that seem to work well over things that do not. Both arguments point to everything we do as being driven by self-interest – a viewpoint known as egoism. Still others assert that there are times, however rare, when we are motivated by altruism – showing concern for other people with no self-serving strings attached.

The research findings suggest that an important correlate of accelerated individualism, relativism, and discernment is the inclination to base decisions on personal gratification versus group considerations. In the course of giving primary importance to “me” over “we,” our decision-making does not tend to involve much loyalty or sense of obligation. Altruism is frequently conspicuous by its absence. That’s why people like Scobey Hartley may become increasingly rare.

We can get a quick reading on where we stand on all this by reflecting on our immediate response to these cherished words from one of America’s most popular presidents: “*Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.*” Sound foreign, like from another world or another time? Probably. Yet, it was that kind of thinking that led a company like Petrocan to believe it was in touch with the times when, in the early 1980s, its advertising tag line was “*Pump your money back into Canada.*”

For some time now, such thinking has been obliterated by a market

model that has become the prototype for organizations in every segment of our society. That model stresses the importance of determining needs and then meeting them. Updating the president's words in 1990s terminology, bestselling author Faith Popcorn informed companies, "*Ask not what your consumer can do for you but what you can do for your consumer.*" Winning over consumers, she wrote, depends on how much extra you can deliver. The key is "product, plus, plus, plus."<sup>2</sup>

Corporations and our various institutions – at least those that are prospering – no longer emphasize themes such as loyalty or duty in attempting to get our attention and our resources. They emphasize what's in it for us. Moreover, given the magnitude of the stakes involved, they compete aggressively with each other to give us more for less.

Here again, Baby Boomers have played a central role in influencing our corporations and organizations to buy into the market model, as well as instilling in average Canadians a consumer mentality.

### **TREND TRACKS**

#### **Corporate Tag Line Appeals to the Individual**

##### **YOU**

"You deserve a break today" (McDonald's) ... "Have it your way" (Burger King) ... "Do what tastes right" (Wendy's) ... "We bring good things to life" (GE) ... "Challenge everything" (EA Games) ... "We report, you decide" (FOX News) ... "We get it" (Future Shop) ... "Be the first to know" (CNN) ... "News understood" (Global National) ... "Love the skin you're in" (Olay)

##### **VALUE**

"We sell for less, every day" (Wal-Mart) ... "Nobody beats the Brick." (The Brick) ... "Good life. Great price" (Sears) ... "There's no life like it" (Canadian Armed Forces)

##### **DEPENDABILITY**

"The most trusted name in news" (CNN) ... "The world's weather authority" (AccuWeather) ... "Prices you can trust always" (Real Canadian Superstore) ... "Always fresh. Always there" (Tim Horton's)

##### **TIME**

"Covering more ground faster than ever" (UPS) ... "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight" (FedEx) ... "The one-week difference" (Flomax) ... "Keeping it simple" (Bell) ... "You've always got time for Tim Horton's" (Tim Horton's)

##### **FAMILY-plus**

"Reach out and touch someone" (AT&T) ... "Connecting people" (Nokia) ... "The best place in the world is where your friends are" (Rogers Wireless) ... "A new kind of car for your kind of family" (Dodge) ... "Help is close to home" (Home Hardware)



# Some National Snapshots

## Loyalty

Many observers have the impression that their parents and their grandparents had certain kinds of loyalties to organizations and companies – that they felt they needed to support their local churches, for example. Legend has it that some people had car loyalties, sticking with Ford, Chevrolet, or GM as they updated or added to the number of their vehicles. Lines such as, “Are you going to buy a car or a Ford?” crept into the culture.


Speaking of legends, how can anyone who has had any exposure to all to Canada’s past not think of Eaton’s as the prime example of loyalty, including stories about the multiple uses of the store’s famous catalogues. Similarly, the Bay continues to be venerated by some people for its centrality to our history.

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- Some may argue that one reason many of us feel we have to look out for ourselves first and foremost is that it is not clear a “Plan B” is in place.
- Since 1975, we’ve put this statement to Canadians: “These days a person doesn’t really know who can be counted on.” Those agreeing? 1975: 56%, 1980: 53%, 1985: 55%, 1990: 52%, 1995: 62%, 2000: 59%, 2005: 51%.

For their part, a slight majority of Canadians buy into such generalizations. Close to 6 in 10 agree that their parents probably had more loyalty to organizations and companies than they do. But the fact that there is little difference in such perception by age also suggests what many of us know well – that such loyalties seemed to be waning as our parents were sharing in the modern consumption era. My mum, for example, liked Eaton’s and the Bay back in the 50s and 60s. But by the 1990s, this by then 80-something woman enjoyed hanging out regularly at Wal-Mart, readily trading in loyalty if she could save a looney or tooney.

Table 4.1. Some Choice Criteria: 2005

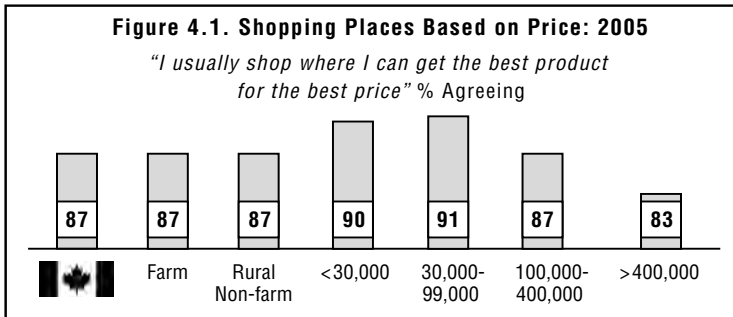
		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
My parents probably had more loyalties to organizations and companies than I do	57%	56	55	59
I usually shop where I can get the best product for the best price	87	85	92	86

My mum, for example, liked Eaton’s and the Bay back in the 50s and 60s. But by the 1990s, this by then 80-something woman enjoyed hanging out regularly at Wal-Mart, readily trading in loyalty if she could save a looney or tooney.

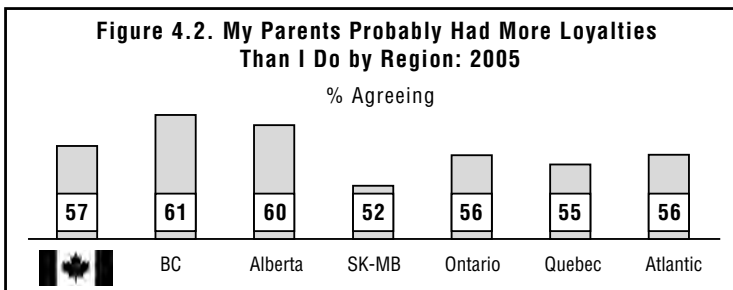
I don’t know that the documentation is needed. Nevertheless, to satisfy

any sceptics still out there, I asked Canadians in 2005 to respond to the statement, “*I usually shop where I can get the best product for the best price.*” Obviously I wanted to see how many people are bucking the consumer-first trend, and thereby showing some loyalty to local merchants, even when prices might be a shade higher.

There aren’t that many. Close to 90% of Canadians agree with the statement – with older adults leading the way.



Given those high levels, there isn’t a lot of room for variation by community size. For what it’s worth, though, people living on farms and in smaller communities differ little from people in larger communities in their inclination to be practically minded, “best buy” shoppers. In fact, residents of cities of over 400,000 are marginally *less likely* to say they opt for the best products at the best prices. But that slight difference may not be so much the result of loyalty as convenience: in larger cities, in particular, one frequently pays more in order to travel less (or not wait until morning) – the secret to the niche success of chains like Mac’s and 7-Eleven. Regionally, BC and Alberta residents are the most likely to say their parents had more loyalties than they do – people living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba the least likely.



**Interest in Pro Sports**

Surely, you sports nuts may be saying, there are some important cultural exceptions to the disloyalty rule. How about interest in the NHL? Doesn't loyalty persist regardless of the competition of other sports? After all, aren't we a hockey-mad country?

Well, not really – or at least not as hockey-mad as the sports types would have us believe. Let me confess that I myself am an avid sports fan. What's come as something of a surprise to me is to find out that I am in the minority – yes, even in the case of hockey.

Of course there are sports fans in Canada. After all, those TV ratings remind us that people are tuning in to enough sports to justify our currently having three cable sports networks. We also live with a daily diet of “news, weather, and sports,” thanks to television and newspapers, for media starters.

Yet, our surveys show that interest in the NHL has actually decreased since 1990, while interest in pro football has increased. The fan base for Major League Baseball has declined significantly, now matched by that of figure skating. Interest in the NBA has plateaued at a fairly low level after rising slightly with expansion of the sport to Toronto and Vancouver in the mid-90s.

More specifically, 30% of Canadians say they follow the NHL – unchanged from 2000, but a drop from just under 40% in the 1990s. Interest in professional football has increased modestly over the past 15 years, from 20% to 24%. Some 19% of Canadians report that they follow the CFL, compared with 13% for the NFL.

Particularly striking is the sharp drop in interest in Major League Baseball – from a little less than 30% during the glory days of the Blue Jays in the early 90s, to a current level of just 13%. Figure skating also has a fan base of 13%, down from 20% in 2000 and the era of high-profile performers that included Elvis Stojko.

- The decline in interest in the **NHL** has been most pronounced in Quebec and the Prairies – in part, it would seem, reflecting the departure of the Quebec Nordiques and Winnipeg Jets. Still, interest in the NHL is extremely high in Calgary and Edmonton (around 40%), and very high in Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa (over 30%


**Table 4.2. Canadian Interest in Sports: 1990-2005**

% Indicating Follow “Very Closely”  
or “Fairly Closely”

	2005	2000	1995	1990
NHL	30%	30	38	36
Pro Football	24	20	21	20
CFL	19	15	15	16
NFL	13	12	13	11
MLB	13	17	28	29
Figure Skating	13	20	***	***
NBA	7	8	6	4

each). Contrary to popular belief, the NHL’s fan base in Montreal is the lowest of any of Canada’s six NHL cities (about 20%).

- The growth of interest in **pro football** has been due primarily to a significant jump in the number of CFL fans in Quebec – from 4% in 1990 to a current level of 17%. Interest in both the NHL and CFL is particularly high in both Edmonton and Calgary.
- The decrease in interest in **Major League Baseball** since 1990 has been pronounced in Quebec (36% to 6%) and Ontario (36% to 16%). The loss of the Expos and the mediocrity of the Blue Jays would seem to be obvious contributing factors.
- Interest in **figure skating** is fairly uniform across the country.

		% Indicating Follow “Very Closely” or “Fairly Closely”											
				BC		Prairies		Ontario		Quebec		Atlantic	
		2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990
NHL		30%	36	31	28	36	47	31	34	21	37	36	30
Pro Football		24	20	23	22	40	34	26	22	19	10	13	17
CFL		19	16	19	21	37	33	16	14	17	4	7	13
NFL		13	11	10	10	15	9	14	15	11	8	10	8
MLB		13	29	10	19	16	25	16	36	6	36	19	33
Figure Skating		13	***	11	***	11	***	14	***	13	***	17	***
NBA		7	4	6	2	7	4	10	5	3	2	3	9

These findings suggest that interest in the NHL continues to be significant. About 3 in 10 Canadians follow hockey “very” or “fairly” closely – with about 1 in 15 Canadians comprising an average *Hockey Night in Canada* audience. Do such numbers warrant common media claims that Canada is “a hockey-mad country” or that hockey “brings the nation to cheers and tears”? You can draw your own conclusions.

The strength of the NHL’s support is suggested by the finding that the current level of interest is virtually the same as it was prior to the cancellation of the 2004-2005 season. The league’s solid support among younger adults points to an ongoing and solid fan base. One factor contributing to a plateauing of interest, however, may be the inability of many people in or near league cities to see games. One problem is the sheer unavailability of tickets. Another is the price of tickets, which is well beyond the reach of people who cannot count on a corporate write-off – especially in the case of season tickets.

The interest in pro football, especially the CFL, undoubtedly will continue to blindside some observers – just as it has since the first 1990 survey findings were released. The CFL has some intriguing staying

powers that often have been underestimated by media and supporters alike. In addition, tickets are still affordable.

Major League Baseball, now gone from Montreal, is looking at difficult days ahead. The demographics – declining interest in Ontario, declining interest among younger adults across the country – are not encouraging. The Blue Jays have been working hard to rekindle interest. It remains to be seen if the team and MLB can turn the nation around, beginning with Toronto.

The NBA arrived in Canada with considerable hype. In light of the failure of the Grizzlies in Vancouver, it is not clear whether pro basketball can grow beyond a southern Ontario niche sport highly dependent on corporate support. The fan base currently is stagnant. The NBA has found that it is difficult to export sports and sports leagues – one only has to think of hockey in the American south, pro soccer in North America, and the NFL in Europe.

Figure skating is easily the most underexposed and commercially underdeveloped sport among the major sports surveyed – given that it currently enjoys a following in Canada on a par with both Major League Baseball and the NFL. With the help of its international exposure, figure skating should experience ongoing growth, including a broadening of its gender and age demographics.

To return to the argument of this chapter, the survey findings indicate that the sport marketplace in Canada has two particularly prominent and permanent players – hockey and football. But these two sports and the leagues that house them are in intense struggles to retain and extend their market shares. A number of entries, notably the NFL, pro baseball, and pro basketball, are having to work even harder to keep their modest shares of the market, let alone extend them.

No one should be surprised. We have only so much time and money. The entertainment options in front of us are somewhere between extensive and endless, depending on where we live and our preference for viewing things in person or electronically. Sports – even hockey – doesn't get some magical exemption from the realities of our market-driven economy. Canadians may feel nostalgic about the NHL or CFL, but if either or both dropped off the face of the planet tomorrow, we quickly would give our attention and bucks to other things.

Sometimes people covering sports have little awareness of the selective-consumption, “take it or leave it” approach that Canadians are showing toward almost everything these days. As it became apparent that the NHL hockey strike was continuing deep into the 2004-2005 season, a number of

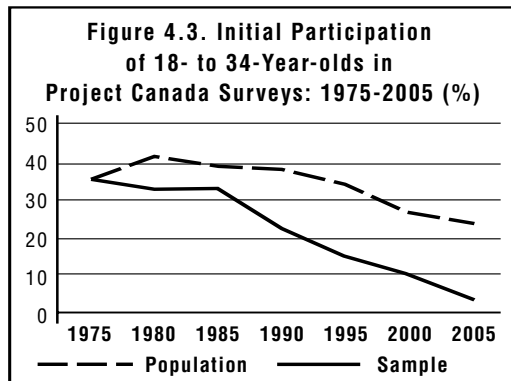
naïve sports reporters wondered aloud what Canadians would do on Saturday nights if the strike lasted for the whole season. The answer was simple: Something else.

## Survey Research

Shhhh. It's not widely publicized, but for some time now people carrying out surveys in Canada have been having a serious problem hearing from younger adults. Unlike people approximately 40 and over, these information-astute, increasingly well-educated young Canadians appear to have a fairly straightforward and not unreasonable response to giving their time to a telephone survey or filling out a questionnaire received in the mail: "What's in it for me?"

I have some good, concrete data to document my concern. We have been carrying out the Project Canada national adult surveys every five years since 1975 – seven in all through 2005.

- In 1975, about 40% of the population was 18 to 34. Our random mail-out of surveys resulted in our having an unadjusted return that included almost exactly 40% of young adults. In short, we mailed questionnaires to a representative number of people and had a representative response. Such was life in the mid-70s.
- In 1990, we targeted a population figure of 40% of 18- to 34-year-olds and found our sample comprised only 28% of young adults (thank "You Know Who" for a thing called weighting, which allows us to statistically correct for such imperfections).
- In 2005, the population called for a sample that included 29% of people 18 to 34; in the early stage of our data collection, we found ourselves with a sample that included a mere 13% of young adults. Needless to say, we had to scramble, get innovative, and combine our random sampling technique with some very careful quota



sampling that included providing contacts and respondents with some (gasp!) incentives.

It's not that younger adults are unreasonable. If the survey is being conducted for some kind of organization in which they participate, including their school or company or political party, obviously many, if not most, will oblige. But if the request is of the cold-call variety, where someone simply wants to pick their brains, an overwhelming majority – on a good day – say “no thanks.”

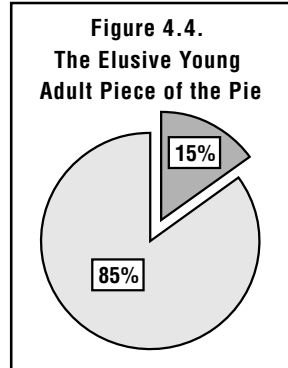
And so it is that we pollsters, in pursuing our quotas for people under 35, especially males, find ourselves making a large number of calls before locating someone willing to provide the required input. The practical, troubling question, of course, is this: If 20 or more calls have to be made before finding that acquiescent volunteer, how representative are they of that youthful cohort? The very fact they are willing to talk to the interviewer – when many others were not – points to a person who may be very different from the others.

Pollsters – including yours truly – who aspire to obtain good samples that genuinely reflect the characteristics of the population are not getting any more of an exemption from cultural realities than anyone else. We, too, are having to find ways to respond to the important cultural trend that is seeing people increasingly make choices based not on obligation, duty, or a touch of altruism, but on personal gratification.

### Marriage and Other Intimate Relationships

Our movement from obligation to gratification also can be seen in the way many people approach relationships.

We want them to last forever – even if the relationship is our second or third or fourth. But if they don't add very much to our lives, we follow the advice of the relationship gurus and discard them, “turn the page,” and move on. After all, if people don't enrich our lives, why should we bother with them? Who needs things like different interests and conflict over our careers and career demands?<sup>3</sup>



**Table 4.4. The Top 5 Reasons for Marital Break-up: 2003**

1. Different values and interests
2. Abuse: physical, emotional
3. Alcohol and drugs
4. Infidelity
5. Career-related conflict

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 66.

There is good reason to believe that, in the not-too-distant Canadian past, marriage, in particular, was seen as something that was entered into with a sense that it would last “for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health ... till death us do part.” It was a sacred bond, a life-long commitment. Apart from the longevity ideal, partners were expected to make a concerted effort to stay together, because – well, frankly, because they should.

Such thinking is hardly in touch with today’s culture. A good case can be made for the fact that healthy relationships are said to be relationships people enter into not because they need each other, but because they want each other. They bring out their mutual strengths and thereby add to each other’s lives. Healthy, strong individuals become healthier and stronger as partners. The assumption is that when people are self-sufficient and don’t need each other, that is precisely when they will be in a position to have healthy relationships. It comes down to good relationships involving healthy people relating to healthy people for further mutual enrichment.

As psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck put it in his classic work, *The Road Less Traveled*:

*Two people love each other only when they are quite capable of living without each other but choose to live with each other ... Again and again we tell our couples that a good marriage can exist only between two strong and independent people.<sup>4</sup>*

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

##### **The TWO Most Important Characteristics a Person Should Look for in a Partner Some Response Examples**

“... trustworthy ... loyalty ... friendship ... kindness ... same interests and goals ... autonomy ... ability to love ... family values ... character ... self-reliance ... maturity ... sexual attraction ... similar faith ... patience ... brains ... integrity ... friendship ... self-esteem ... being responsible ... communication ... caring ... health ... ability to provide security ... truthfulness ... education ... morals ... looks ... faithfulness ... dependability ... understanding ... independent outlook ... considerate ... honesty ... personality ... respect ... non-smoker ... consistency ... compassion ... love ... supportive ... compatibility ... similar values ... physical chemistry ... similar interests ... common goals ... sense of humour ... appearance ... common sense ... fidelity ... mental stability ... intelligence ... compatible ... ambition ... understanding ... financial stability ... similar values ... hard-working ... similar beliefs ... listening skills ...”

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 13.

In light of the pervasiveness of such a view of healthy relationships, the majority of us have become more relationally demanding than ever before. As sociologist Metta Spencer has written, people “will not tolerate a cold,



conflict-ridden, or unfulfilling family life,” in part because “real possibilities for family warmth exist that would have been inconceivable 300 years ago.”<sup>5</sup> Our surveys show we also are not about to tolerate a lot of financial dissatisfaction. We also are not going to put up for long with things like differences of opinion on whether we should have kids, or, once we have them, how they should be raised. Some of the idiosyncrasies of our partners also get on our nerves; so do some of the relatives. Who needs it?

The experts in our society tell us we should be able to experience the fullness of life and the fullness of who we are. Self-love, self-expression, self-development, and self-actualization are themes we hear all the time. Quite obviously, “self” is given central play. One leader at a seminar on personal growth I attended a number of years ago put it this way: “Love is a beautiful thing involving one person: *you*.”<sup>6</sup>

However, as I reminded readers in *Mosaic Madness* some two decades ago, relationally, there is a major problem with this kind of approach to intimate relationships. It doesn’t work. The giveaway as to why it fails lies in the answer to the central relational question the approach raises: “If I don’t need you, then why should I want you?”

The predictable answer? “You add something to my life.” But here things get highly conditional. At the point that you *don’t* bring me flowers anymore, and, even worse, begin to *subtract* from my expression and development, the relationship is history. Conditional relationships become highly disposable relationships. In the case of romance and marriage, we say, in effect, that we will be willing to love someone, provided that they love us the way we expect to be loved. The commitment is not to the relationship but to our own personal well-being.

Against the backdrop of the “obligation to gratification” trend, it may not be an exaggeration to say that marriage in Canada today frequently signals little more than the formal consummation of self-interest. As a result, when we reach the point where we are not sufficiently gratified, we terminate the relationship and try again. Little wonder that many relationships are short-lived.

**Table 4.5. The Top 10 Things People Say Add Tension to Marriage: 2003**

1. Finances	36%
2. Children	9
3. Sharing household duties	5
4. Lack of communication	5
5. Personal traits	5
6. Conflict	5
7. Personal differences	4
8. Anxiety about relationship	4
9. Careers	3
10. Extended family members	3

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 29.

**Table 4.6. The Top 5 Keys to a Happy and Lasting Relationship: 2003**

1. Honesty	23%
2. Communication	20
3. Love	12
4. Patience	10
5. Respect	8

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 29.

A central problem, of course, is that we all know that there are times when we, along with the person with whom we are involved, are not able to offer the other person “a win.” We don’t have much to bring, and, if anything, require some subsidizing. In the language of the theologian, during such times, the two of us need a little “grace” – receiving what we don’t deserve – and “mercy” – not receiving what we do deserve. If relationships are going to work, grace and mercy are sometimes desperately required. Maybe even a little love.

The old model of relationships that emphasized marriage as a life-long commitment, complete with loyalties and duties, may have resulted in longevity without freedom. But our current, prevalent approach to relationships can be expected to result in freedom without longevity.

### **Duty**

Okay, so department stores, sports, survey researchers, and even love and marriage don’t fare so well in today’s market-driven world. Still, some of you may say, there are some activities that Canadians are willing to engage in simply because they should, rather than because of self-interest ... It sounds like the classic debates between egoists and altruists ...

One activity that historically seems to have been characterized by a fair amount of duty and obligation is religious service attendance. I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that Roman Catholics, in particular, have been expected to show up for mass on a regular basis – that attendance is part of being “a good Catholic.” Similar expectations appear to have been common in many other religious group settings. “Being in church” was and is a widespread expectation.

But as the 20th century wore down, Canadians not only were feeling extremely busy; they also were feeling increasingly consumer-minded. They were giving their time to those people and those organizations they found to be significant. In addition, they were placing a very high level of importance on personal freedom.

Given such an emerging mindset of selective consumption and personal autonomy during the last quarter of the 20th century, the religious groups that were vulnerable to losing people were precisely those that relied heavily on tradition and obedience for participation – where individuals “came to church” because it was something they were supposed to do.

Conversely, to the extent that people found that involvement in groups touched their lives and the lives of their families, there was good reason to believe they would make time for them. Put bluntly, groups that relied on

compliance stood to lose; those that relied on responding to the interests and needs of people stood to win. In the late 1980s, historian John Webster Grant summed up a potential problem for Mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics this way:

*... traditional churches face several disadvantages. They have customarily associated religion with obligation and duty more than with personal fulfilment, while at the same time asking so little of their members as to suggest a low evaluation of their product.<sup>7</sup>*

Some 61% of Canadians report that their parents felt they were “supposed to” attend church. That sense of obligation ranges from about 70% for Pre-Boomers through about 65% for Boomers to a low of around 55% for Post-Boomers. Obviously the feeling of the need to attend out of duty or responsibility has been decreasing intergenerationally.

The overall national figure of 61% is interesting because we would have to go all the way back to the mid-1940s to find regular national attendance anywhere near that level. Obviously, many parents may have felt they should be in church but settled, instead, for guilt.

What’s intriguing is that such a sense of obligation is not endorsed by Canadians today. Close to 9 in 10 people of all ages agree that service attendance should not be the result of obligation but rather of finding it to be worthwhile.

The age where religious leaders could appeal to obligation and duty to get people into the pews is over.

But that’s the bad news. The good news for religious groups is that if they can do an improved job of making a difference in Canadian lives, so people find attendance and involvement to be worthwhile, there is every reason to believe greater numbers will respond.

The Project Canada 2005 survey has found that 62% of those people across the



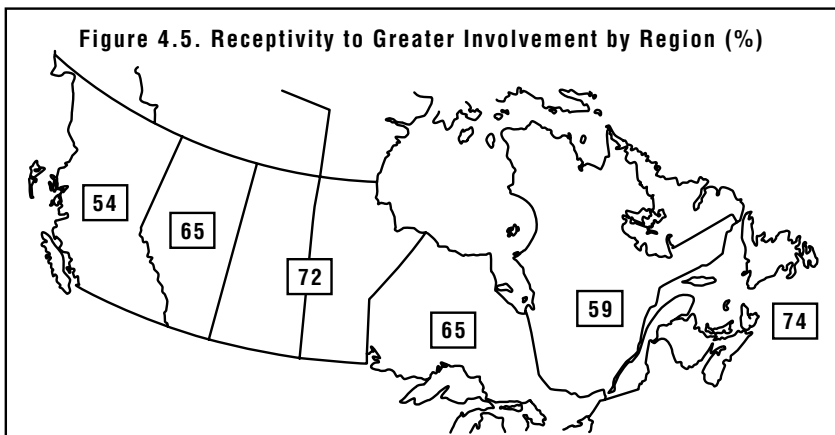
Table 4.7. Religious Service Criteria: 2005				
		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
My parents felt that they were "supposed to go to church"	61%	63	69	54
People who attend religious services should go not because they feel they have to but because they find it to be worthwhile	87	87	90	85

Table 4.8. Receptivity to Greater Religious Group Involvement: 2005	
If They Found It to Be Worthwhile	
Currently Attend Less Than Once a Month	
	62%
Boomers (40-59)	64
Post-Boomers (18-39)	64
Pre-Boomers (60+)	54
Women	65
Men	60
Both employed full time	63
Partner not employed full time	68

country who currently attend services less often than once a month say they would be willing “*to consider the possibility of being more involved in a religious group*” if they “*found it to be worthwhile*” for themselves or their families.

Receptivity is fairly even across age, gender, and employment categories. Regionally, levels of openness to greater participation range from 74% in the Atlantic region to 54% in British Columbia. Yet, a majority of people in every region who currently are not very involved indicate they are receptive. However, the “IF” needs to be emphasized: the key is that they have to find their involvement to be worthwhile. People who are market-minded should not be expected to give organized religion an exemption from their mindset. They expect to find their involvement to translate into some positives for themselves and their families. Otherwise, the majority of those who are inactive will continue with their current pattern of giving organized religion what they think it’s worth – by showing up every once in a while.



## Assessment

“So,” as one judge on a popular music show likes to say, “let’s check it out.”

We have a situation in Canada where we have been fostering pluralism, individualism, and discernment. Against that backdrop, our corporations and organizations increasingly have been adopting a market model where the consumer is king.

Canadians are saying they value freedom and relationships. But their two foremost concerns are lack of time and lack of money.

We consequently find ourselves, to resurrect the all-too-familiar cliché, “with so many choices and so little time – and money.” The result is that

we practise highly selective consumption. Of necessity, we have to opt for those products and those organizations that add to our lives. And the more they can add, the better. Companies and other groups in touch with our reality are responding aggressively. In fact, the ones that are succeeding are doing acrobatics to follow Popcorn's wise advice and giving us "product, plus, plus, plus."

Like it or not, the mentality of "What's in it for me?" or, often at best, "What's in it for us?" – as in our immediate circle of family and friends – rules. But let's not make it sound as if all this is bad. To operate in such a pragmatic time- and money-conscious manner is to be a good shopper who makes maximum use of one's resources.

So it is that various efforts to appeal to tradition, community spirit, citizen responsibility, nationalism, and so on typically fall on deaf ears. Most of us don't pay a lot of attention to fund-raising efforts that target us as school alumni or efforts to involve us in general community events or meetings. Such initiatives typically add little to our lives. Yes, we frequently do respond to a fund-raiser at the door, but it's telling that we invariably expect a tax receipt. Then again, there are so many people asking us for so many donations that we have to be selective about where we donate what.

From a distance, selective consumption based on what adds to our lives seems like anything but a bad thing. Who wants to return to any semblance of organizational or individual coercion? To be able to have choices and make them primarily on the basis of what is good for us is a positive and liberating development. If only we had a bit more money to access more things and more time to enjoy it all.

Here again, we owe a debt to Baby Boomers. They have occupied a majority of key positions in Canadian life during the acceleration of our market economy and the emergence of market-model-driven institutions – schools and universities, hospitals and social services, government departments, not-for-profit organizations. These institutions, in turn, have been contributing significantly to our societal shift from decision-making based on obligation to decision-making based on gratification.

The trend, of course, is not without potential downsides that are fairly self-evident. Societal life that requires a balance between the individual and the group, along with a balance between deference and discernment, also requires a balance between personal gratification and what is good for others.



We all are walking data. We know well that our valued relationships

with family and friends require us to find a balance between what we want and enjoy and what is important to them. Likewise, life in the workplace and marketplace requires not only take but give. Collective life at the organizational and community and civic levels receives very little if our primary motive is self-gratification.

This brings me back to Scobey. It's not at all clear that the dominant themes of Canadian life will produce large numbers of people who are driven by an altruistic sense that we need to give something to our communities and provinces and country – just because it is needed.

The emphasis on consumption and personal gratification somehow needs to be complemented by our giving some time to other people.

That, of course, is easier said than done. Time – that precious and elusive commodity – is something else that is playing a major role in reshaping how we live and relate to each other.

CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING						
						
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
Important for parents to teach children loyalty		21% <sup>1</sup>			17	
Closely follow/ NHL/Ice Hockey		36	30			18 <sup>2</sup>
A Fan (U.S.) Major League Baseball		29	13		39 <sup>3</sup>	36
NFL		11	13		45 <sup>4</sup>	50
Extramarital sex: approve of	21	16	14	14 <sup>5</sup>	8	6
Ever divorced	7	14	15	15	22	23 <sup>2</sup>
Switched jobs in last year		18	19 <sup>6</sup>			
"Very likely" will try new employer next year					14 <sup>7</sup>	
Very important to be a Canadian		61	60			
Extremely proud to be an American					47 <sup>7</sup>	61

<sup>1</sup>1982. <sup>2</sup>2004. <sup>3</sup>1993. <sup>4</sup>1998 <sup>5</sup>1974. <sup>6</sup>2000. <sup>7</sup>1998.  
 U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago. Additional U.S. sources: Parents to teach loyalty – World Values Survey. Sports – The Gallup Poll, "Sports," July, 2006. Proud to be an American – The Gallup Poll, July 3, 2006. Canadian sources unless otherwise specified: Project Canada Survey Series. Additional Canadian sources: Parents to teach loyalty – World Values Survey.

## From Tomorrow to Today

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### *The Remarkable Rise in Time Expectations*

#### **Major players**

*individualism, performance expectations,  
technology, market economy, labour force changes*

- **Technology allows us to do more, faster**
- **Production and turnaround expectations raised**
- **Personal access is potentially unlimited**
- **Unprecedented pressure, significant social consequences**

THERE'S an old Charlie Brown cartoon where the star character makes the observation, "There's no greater pressure than high expectations." Applied today, that line from creator Charles Schulz is particularly insightful. When it comes to performance, there probably has never been a time in history when people have expected more of each other. We want things done well. We also want them done quickly – not tomorrow but today, not this afternoon but this morning, not in an hour but right away.

The result is that we are all feeling a great deal of pressure.

#### **Sources of the Time Squeeze**

There's no mystery as to how we got into this. We only have to look at the trends and do the simple math: individuals who are looking out for number one + a highly critical view of job performances + a consumption mindset that demands satisfaction = considerable pressure for lots of people.

Now, it wouldn't be so bad if it ended there. In the face of such contemporary realities, we all could take a deep breath and realize that the times call for us to do what athletes claim they frequently have to do: raise our games to a higher level. Work a little harder, do a little better, keep up with expectations. Who can't do that?

The problem is that we have been blindsided by a would-be ally who wooed us, loved us, and betrayed us. I'm talking about technology.

You know the story. Technology was supposed to make life easier. In the post-1960s, new devices started to appear that were going to make what we did easier and, in the process, save us large amounts of time. Significantly, the marketing language of those early days frequently included the phrase "time-saving devices." Work, paid or otherwise, could be done more quickly than ever before. Electronic typewriters, photocopiers, and fax machines would save time in the workplace. Everything from dishwashers to microwaves to frozen dinners would save time in the kitchen. Electric mowers and blowers would save time in the yard. A whole lot of time-saving going on. Heavens, some observers worried about the impact all that saved time would have on the size of the labour force. Others envisioned shorter workweeks, shorter workdays, and shorter careers: three-day weeks, five-hour days, retirement at 50, here we come! The logic involved was very simple: if we could do the work in half the time, a lot of hours would be freed up.

With the 1980s and 90s, of course, came computers and the burgeoning number of computer-related devices, powered by intense global competition for chunks of the large, lucrative, and ever-expanding electronics market. Software has been making work of every conceivable kind easier. The Internet and cellphones have connected us worldwide and around the clock – a far cry from the difficulty and time involved in communicating and transferring information just a few short decades ago. We can save time when we are doing almost everything. Products are marketed not only to work well, but also to work quickly, and at the right price. Quality, speed, affordability – the three modern-day product virtues.

You also know where the story is at this point in time: tasks have become easier and faster, but time has never been in shorter supply. As family sociologist Kerry Daly of the University of Guelph comments, "In contrast with predictions made 30 years ago that we would be a leisure society, the culture of overwork has flourished ... The overall picture is that people are working more and playing less."<sup>1</sup> And the pressure we feel that was supposed to subside has become only more intense. As



Daly notes, “Technology gives rise to an intolerance for waiting and a desire for immediate results and gratification. High speed networks, beepers and cellular phones give rise to the expectation of an immediate response.”<sup>2</sup>

This takes us back to Charlie Brown. What many of us didn’t count on was the simple fact that technology would dramatically alter people’s expectations of us, namely the speed with which we could turn things around. Those high expectations, in turn, are adding a lot of pressure to our lives.

We need to be clear about something. It’s not merely a case that we don’t have enough time. We know well that many of our parents and grandparents lived very busy lives – that they, likewise, did not have a lot of extra time.

The difference is that there has been a major inflation in expectations about time. Culture, in the form of themes such as individualism, discernment, and consumption, has teamed up with technology in asking us to do much more than our parents and grandparents did in the same amount of time. It adds up to busy lives with considerable stress.

Another very important intergenerational difference. Technology has taken away our resting places and our hiding places. It has provided people with the means of invading our privacy in ways totally foreign to what our predecessors knew. Dad never had to worry about such things when we were off on a picnic or fishing at the lake – or when he was doing some banking or merely using the bathroom. That new dynamic duo, the cellphone and e-mail, can track us down anywhere, anytime.

Right away, some enlightened folk will say, “Only if you turn them on and answer those calls and messages.” I used to think like that – irritated one day when the guy a couple of spots ahead of me in a bank line took a cellphone call, irritated even more a few days later when someone took a call – and this is getting a bit personal – in an adjacent airport toilet cubicle. When I mentioned both incidents to a friend a short time later, he nodded and agreed that those kinds of calls are annoying. He then added an eye-opening comment: “I have a boss who has given me a cellphone and expects that I will be there whenever he calls. If I don’t take a call that turns out to be very important, I could lose my job – even if I am in a bank line or using the bathroom.”

Friends, that’s pressure that grandpa never knew.

Illustrative of the extent to which ongoing connections to bosses and work have been normalized is the current marketing campaign of a major

hotel chain. The ads attempt to lure customers by emphasizing that every room has free access to the Internet with two telling tag lines: “Stay connected to the office” and “The office is only a click away.” One of its tag lines just a few years back was, “Kids stay for free.”<sup>3</sup>

This leads to a very important correlate of all this time-related pressure. If it were just a matter of individuals being extremely busy, the time issue wouldn’t necessarily constitute a serious personal or social problem. The reason it is a concern for large numbers of Canadians is that they not only find themselves short of time, but physically short of breath, emotionally short of tranquility, and relationally short of the hours required to focus on the people most important to them.

The expectations that we do more in less time and have the lines open to the workplace have been stressful and disruptive for many people. But they have made life particularly difficult for large numbers of women.

In the post-1960s, unprecedented numbers of women entered the paid workforce in both Canada and the United States – a development described by highly regarded Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam as “the most portentous social change of the last half century.”<sup>4</sup> As noted in this book’s Opening Thoughts, between 1900 and 1930, the proportion of women in the Canadian labour force doubled from about 15% to 30%. That proportion doubled again between 1960 and 2000 to around 60%.<sup>5</sup>

What was different about the post-1960s, however, was that employed women were just about as likely to be married as single.<sup>6</sup> Employed women also were increasingly likely to be mothers of young children, women who often were returning to their jobs when those children were very young.<sup>7</sup>

Research carried out over the past four decades has pointed out consistently that younger parents who are employed outside the home have been more inclined than others to experience strain over not having enough time.<sup>8</sup> But the time squeeze is being felt by almost all families. As Kerry Daly observes, “Regardless of the type of family or their socioeconomic status, the reality is that most Canadian families are ‘time poor.’” He adds, “The net effect is the same: too many responsibilities and not enough time.”<sup>9</sup>

**Table 5.1. The Employed Labour Force: 1981 and 2001**

Full time (30+ Hours Weekly) and  
Part time (<30 Hours) Work

	1981	2001
<b>NATIONALLY</b>		
Full time	85%	82
Part time	15	18
<i>Average hours per week</i>	39	39
<b>Men: % of Employed</b>		
<b>Labour Force</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>
Full time	92	88
Part time	8	12
<i>Average hours per week</i>	42	42
<b>Women: % of Employed</b>		
<b>Labour Force</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>
Full time	74	74
Part time	26	26
<i>Average hours per week</i>	34	35

Source: Computed from Statistics Canada, 1981 Census and 2001 Census, Catalogue no. 97F0012XCB01005.

Such time pressures also have been having a serious impact on the amount of time that women – and men – can give to involvement in activities and organizations outside the home. People have had to be increasingly selective about how and where they spend their time.<sup>10</sup> When children are involved, time gets even tighter. As demographer and trend watcher David Foot has reminded us, “Children are great consumers of their parents’ time, energy, and money. Couples raising children have less time, less energy, and less money to go out on the town than they had when they were childless.”<sup>11</sup>

Research in the United States summarized by Putnam points to very similar personal and social consequences when two parents are employed. Looking at the U.S. in 2000, he offered the following estimates:

*Comparing two women of the same age, education, financial security and marital and parental status, full-time employment appears to cut home entertaining by roughly 10 percent and church attendance by roughly 15 percent, informal visiting with friends by 25 percent, and volunteering by more than 50 percent. Moreover, husbands of women who work full-time are, like their wives, less likely to attend church, volunteer, and entertain at home.*<sup>12</sup>

Putnam also makes the important point that because women traditionally have invested more time than men in organizations, their movement into the paid labour force has resulted in an important loss of human resources. The same could be said for many of their partners, along with their children.

One last point. Some people may say it all comes down to time management. We all have the same amount of time; the real issue is how we manage it. There obviously is some truth to that. But it hardly tells the whole story about time problems today.

We all initially may be “given” the same amount of time, but we definitely are not given the same volume of demands. Learning to say “no” is much easier when someone is very seldom asked to say “yes,” or sometimes is given little choice in the matter.

The math is simple.

- A woman who finds herself on her own with two young children and is holding down a full-time job obviously is going to have more to fit into her “allotted time” than the mother who can share the family workload with a partner.

- The father who spends long hours getting a successful plumbing business off the ground is not going to have the same amount of time for his two children as the father who works 9 to 5.
- A friend of mine who is literally in demand around the world as a prolific author, great speaker, and renowned administrator is going to face a lot more requests for his time than maybe 95% of the population.
- The woman who is heading out the door for a weekend vacation with her two young children is going to face a far greater squeeze when the boss calls to say she's needed immediately to deal with a crisis, than her counterpart who is not employed.
- If I do what I am supposed to do as a professor – pursue a research grant, do the research, and write a book that doesn't flop – I'm not going to have as much time along the way for family, friends, and tennis as a colleague who is unable to get his research project off the ground. In a real sense, many people "pay" a big-time bill for apparent success.

Ideally, any of those "extra" demands would be managed in the same time allotment as everyone else. What I find, however, along with countless other Canadians, is what the math shows: it just doesn't work that way. The result, to borrow a phrase of a friend of mine, is that too many of us are "pathologically overextended."

## Some National Snapshots

### The Scope of the Problem

How pervasive is the time-shortage problem? It currently is cited as a source of concern by more people than any other personal issue. More Canadians are concerned about not having enough time than about not having enough money. More people are troubled about the shortage of time than are troubled about their health.


The perception that we "never seem to have enough time" has been held by close to 1 in 2 for at least the past 20 years.

- It's a problem that's particularly expressed when people are younger, and especially by mothers of school-age children.

Table 5.2. Personal Concerns: 1985-2005		
% Bothered "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"		
	1985	2005
Never seem to have enough time	46%	47
Lack of money	48	39
Your health	33	37

- As Boomers have been getting older, they have been slightly less inclined to say they are short on time. That said, almost 1 in 2 of them still are feeling a time crunch.
- Pre-Boomer older Canadians are far less likely to report concern about time now that they have reached their 60s, 70s, and beyond. Still, insufficient time continues to trouble about 1 in 4 of the people in this age cohort.

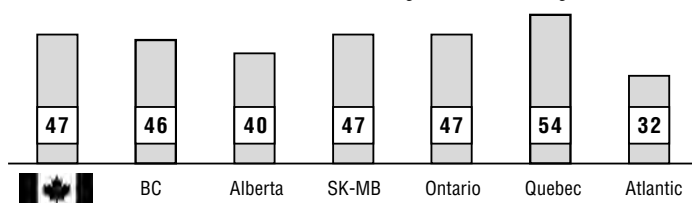
**Table 5.3. Concern About Insufficient Time by Gender and Age Cohort: 1985-2005**

% Indicating "Never Seem to Have Enough Time"			
	1985	1995	2005
Boomers	49	54	46
Women	51	58	48
Men	47	51	45
Pre-Boomers	43	39	28
Women	44	42	29
Men	42	36	27
Post-Boomers	***	55	59
Women	***	59	63
Men	***	49	56

- The lack of time is a concern for more than 1 in 2 Quebecers, but only 1 in 3 people in the Atlantic region; it is a personal issue for just under 1 in 2 Canadians living elsewhere.

**Figure 5.1 Concern About Time by Region (%)**

Concerned About Never Seeming to Have Enough Time



## PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

### Who Gets Six or Less Hours of Sleep a Night?

- 28% of Canadians overall
- 33% of Boomers, 27% of Pre-Boomers, 24% of Post-Boomers
- 29% of women and 28% of men
- 34% of Ontario residents, 32% of people in the Atlantic region, 27% of those living in BC, Alberta, and SK-MB, and 20% of Quebecers

## Time for the Things We Want?

The widespread folk wisdom is that people may be short on time, but they still have time for the things they want to do. Maybe, maybe not. For what it's worth, 2 in 3 Canadians are saying that, over the past decade, the actual time they had to do the things they wanted to do decreased. Post-Boomers, in particular, are finding such special time to be in shorter and shorter supply, led by no fewer than 80% of women and 73% of men.

Again, such findings are consistent with earlier research suggesting that many women are particularly pressed for time because they frequently are juggling jobs, children, and partners.

Some 67% of parents with school-age children who are employed full time report that they never seem to have enough time compared with, for example, 49% of mothers with school-age children who are not in the paid labour force.

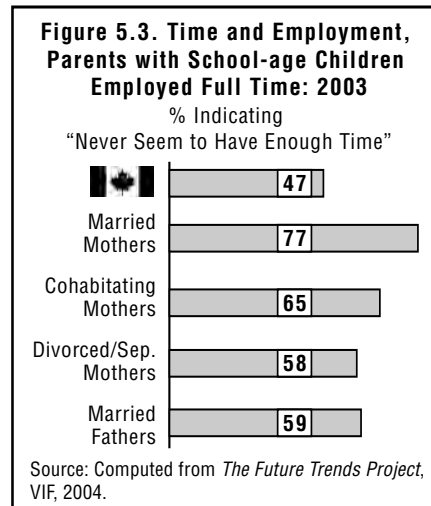
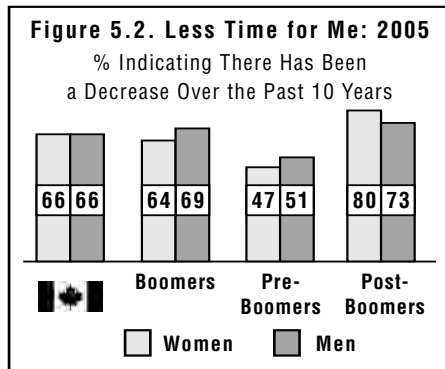
- Those in the 67% group are led by employed married women, followed by cohabiting mothers.
- Divorced and separated mothers, along with married fathers, are less inclined to report time shortages.

Employed mothers who are in relationships clearly pay a noteworthy price in time. One of the key reasons is not mysterious: many said they were not receiving enough help from the men in their lives.

The finding obviously is not news because it is new, but rather because it points to an old, well-documented problem that continues to exist.<sup>13</sup> A recent Statistics Canada study has found that the percentage of married men with children who do at least some housework every day increased from 54% in 1986 to 71% in 2005.<sup>14</sup> That's encouraging. But the downside of the finding is that it also tells us that some 30% of married mothers are still carrying an excessively heavy load.

## Great Expectations

I've been maintaining that the stress we feel about time is not due merely to the obvious fact that we feel we don't have enough time. What's making life different from what our grandparents and parents knew is that we are

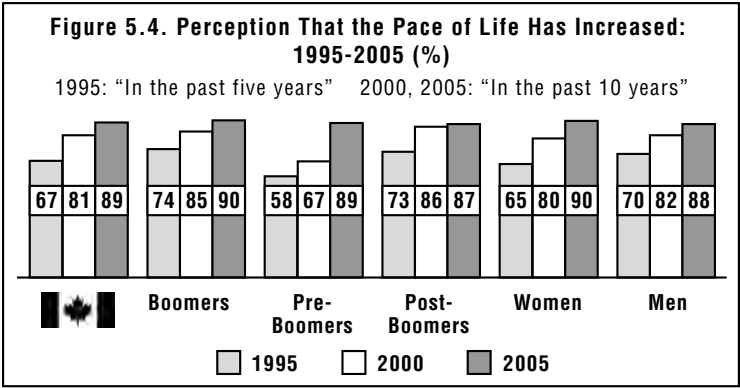


feeling pressure to do more things in the same amount of time, and do them quickly. We also are connected to people and workplaces and other places in ways unknown to previous generations. Together, these things give us a feeling that life is moving fast. It can make for a lot of stress.

The 2005 survey findings lend support to such thinking. Contrary to what many people may expect, only about half of us (52%) maintain that we are any busier than our parents were at our age. There are no significant differences in such a view by age cohort or gender, suggesting that, in the minds of large numbers of both women and men, there has not been a sudden change in the time demands that Canadians face.


However, the survey findings show that, since at least the 1990s, there has been a widespread sense that the sheer pace of life has been increasing. Such a view was held by 67% of Canadians in 1995 as they compared things at that time with 1990; by 81% as they compared the pace of life in 2000 with that of 1990; and by 89% as they looked at life in 2005 compared with about 1995.

Those 9 in 10 people in 2005 who felt the pace of life had increased over the decade include almost equal proportions of Boomers and people in the other two age cohorts, as well as women and men. In short, the perception that life has been moving increasingly fast is pervasive among Canadians. Of course many of us are feeling extremely busy. But what is more striking to almost all of us is the acceleration of it all. That pace has expectations written all over it.



### Pressures and Patience

What about the perception Canadians have of the time pressures they are placing on others? After all, if most of us are feeling pushed, most of us, in turn, must also be doing some of the pushing. The results of a recent

Table 5.4: Some Views of Time: 2005						
		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post Boomers	Women	Men
I don't think that when my parents were my age that they were as busy as I am	52%	55	48	50	50	53
I guess that when it comes to time demands, I am about as impatient with other people as they are with me	56	58	65	48	54	58


AP-Ipsos poll in the U.S. may be instructive. The poll found that, on average, people start to get on edge after being kept on hold on the phone for five minutes and waiting in a line for 15 minutes, with older people more impatient than younger people.<sup>15</sup>

So what about it? We put the question to our respondents in the 2005 survey. Just over half acknowledged they probably are about as impatient with other people as those people are with them. Here, such a confession tends to increase with age: Pre-Boomers (65%) and Boomers (58%) are more inclined than Post-Boomers (48%) to admit to being just as impatient as the people they encounter. Women and men, however, are almost equally likely to say that their impatience levels are similar to those of other people.

This leads us to a fairly obvious conclusion: Given the time pressures we experience and the time expectations we are placing on others, it would seem that one way of neutralizing some of that strain would be for our society – and for us as individuals – to cultivate an appreciation for patience.

Interestingly, 61% of Canadians say they personally place a very high level of importance on “patience.” There is very little difference by age cohort; this is not a generational value more characteristic of Pre-Boomers, for example, than others.

However, it is significant that women are far more likely than men to see patience as “very important” (72% versus 50%). What’s more, these gender differences in the valuing of patience persist across age.

Table 5.5. Patience by Age and Gender: 2005	
% Indicating “Very Important”	
	61%
Women	72
Men	50
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>61</b>
Women	71
Men	51
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>60</b>
Women	70
Men	51
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>61</b>
Women	74
Men	47

### Some Correlates of Time Pressure

To what extent does the lack of time affect the rest of one’s life? The surveys offer us a number of ways of doing some preliminary checking. One is to compare Canadians who seem to be short on time with those who are not and see to what extent people in the two groups have additional personal concerns.




Such an analysis yields a consistent result: To the extent that people say they are concerned about their lack of time, they are more likely than others to say they are troubled about their health, their marriages, their sex lives, their children, their jobs, and by a sense that they should be getting more out of life. Conversely, if the lack of time is not a concern for Canadians, they are considerably more inclined than others to not be troubled about their lives.

- The pattern holds without exception for Baby Boomers, Pre-Boomers, and Post-Boomers.

**Table 5.6. Concerns About One's Life by Concern About Never Having Enough Time: 2005**

% Indicating Bothered "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"

Troubled About Lack of Time			Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
Yes	Health	47%	54	59	37
No		29	26	36	25
Yes	Marriage	30	31	21	30
No		18	19	11	22
Yes	Sex Life	31	29	20	36
No		19	18	11	31
Yes	Children	44	47	49	36
No		28	29	27	28
Yes	Job	41	44	16	43
No		19	24	2	24
Yes	More Out of Life	41	44	37	41
No		21	20	13	32

## PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

### What Some People Have to Say About Time

#### *Families and Time*

"... families need more time on their hands to deal with their private relationships ... my husband and I have very busy work schedules and at times simply need to drop everything and spend family time together ... we need to have more time for fun and caring, doing things together and learning about each other ... I hope I will live to see the day when a Sunday picnic or drive with the family is the normal thing and not a special treat ..."

#### *Jobs and Time*

"... corporations need to ease up on people ... employers need to take more responsibility for the wellness of the family ... we have to get back on track and remember our jobs are to support our life and not vice-versa ... a big problem associated with kids today is the balance of work and family, when employers are not sensitive ..."

#### *Money and Time*

"... something needs to be done to provide younger couples with enough time and money to enjoy their children and not be so frantically pressured ... more time with children is essential, but family life has been degraded by the increased costs of living and reduced pay ... our society is in a headlong rush to either make ends meet or get ahead of the Joneses, with family life and our children paying the price ... I'd like to be able to raise my kids and be there for them, without having to work five days a week to avoid a financial crisis ..."

#### *Life and Time*

"... as an elder citizen, I find this is a fast-paced, changing world affecting all facets of life; we need to practise caution to ensure life benefits from the changes ... retirement has me very busy, but I have more time to do the things I want, unlike when I was working ..."

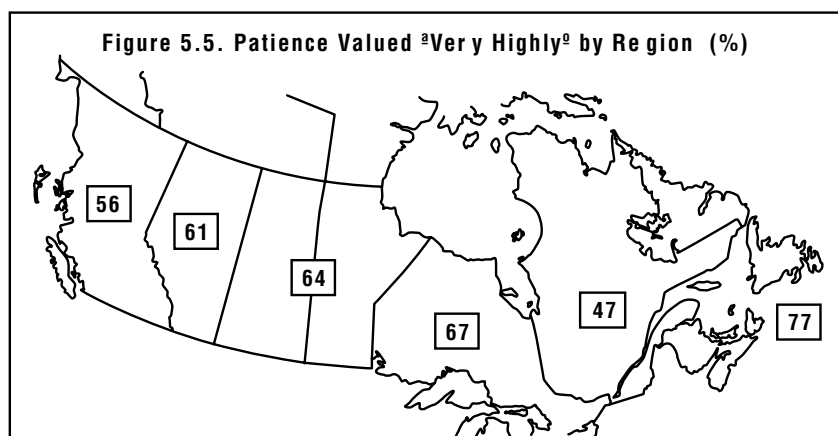
#### *And "the highlight of the night" goes to this 88-year-old Victoria woman who offered these thoughts:*

"Families don't seem to meet these days! Our family members were expected to be at dinner at 6:30 every night unless specifically excused for some reason. There we always told about 'our day' starting with the youngest. It was a get-together – always fun and made witty by father (who was a wit) and teenagers (who thought they were!)."

- What's more, in additional data runs not reported here, I have found that the pattern also holds, without exception, when one controls for variables such as gender and region of the country.

Obviously there are many factors that influence our lives beyond time-related stress. But this initial examination lends support to the argument that the shortage of time is one of those factors. These so-called hard numbers are consistent with what we, as “walking data,” know well: the strain we feel over not having enough time affects our personal well-being. But time-related strain spills over into the rest of life, affecting our relationships with our partners and our children, how we feel about our jobs, and any number of additional things.

That's why this is not an issue that should be dismissed simply as “being too busy” or “working too hard” or “being overcommitted.” The problem is widespread, resulting in personal and social losses that are enormous.



## Assessment

It's not just our imaginations. In concert with technology, individualism, high-performance expectations, and a consumption mindset have been combining to make the time demands on us greater than ever before. The growing presence of women in the paid work force in the post-1960s has only heightened such time pressures.

The new dimension to the problem of not having enough time is the additional strain that we are experiencing due to the two critical factors of *expectations* and *access*. Time saved is expected to be time filled, where we do more in the same time than the generations before us, complete with

fast turnaround times. We also have let people have greater access to us than ever before, providing them with voicemail, cell numbers, and e-mail addresses – sometimes because we have to, sometimes because we want to, sometimes because we are naïve about the consequences.

Access means we give up privacy and personal freedom, where people who often are strangers typically take up time, energy, and attention. Sometimes it's hard to keep up with it all. Such intrusions from any number of directions add to our sense that the pace of life is increasing significantly.

Presumably there was a time when business travellers actually relaxed in airport waiting areas, minus a laptop or cellphone ... when, after a day's work, at least some of them had a relaxing meal, went back to the hotel room, read a paper, sat in a whirlpool, and watched some television. There wasn't an early evening cellphone debriefing, a report to write up, the expectation that it would be sitting in someone's e-mail box when they arrived at work the next morning.

Somewhere along the way, a good number of us have got caught up in such a fast-paced world of relentless time expectations. We resonate well with that line about being pathologically overextended.

But as I said earlier, what is disconcerting is not simply that we are busy. Rather, it is the kind of toll that our overextensions take. There is the issue of our own health, where we are not getting the kind of sleep, meals, and relaxation we know we need and want.

There is also the issue of the impact our time pressures are having on our relationships. Alan Mirabelli, the highly respected executive director of the Vanier Institute of the Family, recently commented that "people work too hard because they're afraid they will lose their jobs if they don't." When they go home, many "take work home and link themselves to the office." And what do they bring to their partners? "Leftovers," he says. "Leftover time. Leftover energy and leftover commitment."<sup>16</sup> Often it is not enough.

Children get leftovers, too. Special occasions and events are sometimes missed, even forgotten. The time to focus on the development of loving and caring relationships often isn't there. "Quality time" can become a euphemism for "not much time."

In short, our effort to meet people's time expectations can lead to a serious erosion of our own lives and those of the people closest to us. Being overextended can wring the joy out of life.

Years ago, an American sociologist by the name of William Ogburn

coined the term “cultural lag” to describe the way a society’s cultural norms frequently tend to lag behind its technological developments. There is good reason to believe that in Canada, as in many other “highly developed” countries, we have embraced technology without carefully thinking through some of the important consequences for our quality of life, personally and collectively.

Technology, as always, is not the enemy. But clearly it always needs to serve us rather than the other way around. We have to determine our needs and wants and values, and draw on technology accordingly.

A practical example. Our surveys over the years have shown that Canadians are decisive in declaring that parents need to play the key role in enhancing the lives of their children. They maintain that it’s essential for parents to spend time with their children, in the process making the primary contribution to children feeling both loved and valued. Yet the surveys also reveal that large numbers of parents are having considerable difficulty realizing such expectations. Close to 1 in 2 employed parents – led by women – say they are troubled by the fact they are not spending enough time with their children, with close to the same number admitting that their children probably share the same view. But they tell us they have to work in order to make ends meet.

A logical deduction is that, as a society, we need to find ways to provide parents with more financial security, while making it possible for them to spend more time with their children. Governments, employers, communities, and individuals need to be involved. Obviously the solutions are not easily found. But given the stakes involved, they need to be vigorously pursued.

One wonders where our Boomer leaders have been as these time-related developments have been evolving over the past few decades. Beyond the Boomers, why have Post-Boomers and Pre-Boomers been so slow to initiate some adjustments to ease these pressures felt by so many Canadians and their families?

After all, it’s not as if the situation we have is some kind of inevitable product of irreversible trends and omnipotent technology. For the most part, we got ourselves into this. The good news is that we can also get ourselves out. The primary leadership, however, is going to have to come from the Post-Boomers.

## CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING



<b>Have enough time to do the things you want to do</b>	53%	50
<b>Experience stress frequently</b>	33	37
<b>Employed full time or part time:</b>		
work >44 hours in a week	30	38
<b>Employee flexibility of hours</b>	52	62
<b>Satisfaction:</b> vacation/holiday time	47	52
job security	40	54
<b>Took a vacation in the last year</b>	77	64
<b>Average number of hours of sleep</b>		
8 or more	37	31
7	34	29
6	22	26
5 or fewer	7	14

\*U.S. sources: The Gallup Poll – time, May 11, 2004; stress, March 30, 2006; employment and employee satisfaction, Oct. 5, 2004; vacation, Dec. 20, 2005; sleep, Dec. 27, 2004.  
Canadian sources unless otherwise specified: Project Canada Survey Series.  
The Gallup Poll – stress, March 30, 2006; employment and employee satisfaction, Oct. 5, 2004.

# 6

## From Knowing Too Little to Knowing Too Much

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*The Information Explosion and Its After-effects*

### **Major players**

*education, technology, Internet, corporations, consumption*

- **An information economy**
- **Issues and experts unlimited**
- **Television and the Internet**
- **Global information and consumption**

THERE is a country in the world where only 15% of the population has completed high school and just 5% have university degrees. Television sets are something of a rarity, cable is non-existent; programs are available for only a limited number of hours a day – in black and white. The total circulation of weekly newspapers comes in at about 20% of the population. There is only one national magazine. No one has access to the Internet. No one owns a cellphone. The best bets for information seem to be radio, libraries, and access to a few knowledgeable people.

The country? Canada. The year? 1960. What a difference a half-century makes!

## The Age of Information

In under 50 years, Canada has gone from being an information wasteland to a nation with almost unlimited means of accessing unlimited information. A high priority has been given to having a well-educated population. Our educational institutions have multiplied in both number and kind. Our formal educational levels have risen significantly.

But what we have been learning in our various schools, colleges, and universities has been supplemented in ways beyond our grandparents' wildest imaginations.

First there was television, a novel but mediocre medium when it appeared in the 1950s, in glorious black and white and on a small number of often fuzzy channels. It was criticized by many as providing little intellectual stimulation and getting in the way of more edifying things such as reading, exercise, and family life. It also seemed to offer relatively little to children.

Today, television is a highly specialized and indispensable source of information on everything, offering viewers as many channels as they like, complete with unprecedented high-quality picture and sound. The programming originates from around the world; anything that takes place anywhere on the planet is beamed into our living rooms and classrooms. There is at least one television set in every home in Canada, with some 90% of those homes hooked up to cable or satellite services.<sup>1</sup> Television has been increasingly co-opted by educators, who have come to recognize its obvious value, particularly as a source of current and, especially, late-breaking information.

Esteemed Oxford historian John Carey primarily had television in mind when he wrote, in 1988, "The advent of mass communications represents the greatest change in human consciousness that has taken place in recorded history." In a few short decades we have seen a shift from people around the world having little knowledge of how others were faring to feeling they must have "accurate reports about the doings of complete strangers." Carey maintains this "represents a revolution in mental activity which is incalculable in its effects."<sup>2</sup>

As if the tapping of some of television's potential were not enough, another major communications giant has emerged since the mid-90s. Its invention eventually may rank up there somewhere alongside the wheel and electricity as one of the most important in human history.

I'm talking, of course, about the Internet. In early 2006, at the grand

old age of 12, the Internet had just over one billion users worldwide.<sup>3</sup> They included some 75% of Canadians, almost 50% of whom were high-speed users.<sup>4</sup> Never before have people around the globe been so linked. Never before have more people in more places had more information at their fingertips. What would Carey say now!

Rather than being replaced, print and sound media have, like everything and everyone else, benefited enormously from television and the Internet, using them as both resources and means of dissemination.

We have watched as newspapers and magazines, for example, make themselves available online. Newsrooms keep their writers current via multiple television sets that dangle from ceilings, offering the latest updates from various Canadian and American news networks. The people who are working below those sets are typically on their computers, liberally drawing on “the Net” as they press toward deadlines. I laugh as I think of one prominent talk radio host, who tries to convey that he’s listening as I chat with people on his program – with one eye looking up at his TV set and the other looking down at his laptop, following different breaking stories on each.

The information explosion, of course, is hardly limited to formal education, television, the Internet, and additional media sources.

To begin with, the majority of our occupations now are based on providing information. There once was a time when most Canadians were employed in jobs that produced goods, notably jobs in agriculture and manufacturing. The end result of their labours was some kind of tangible product – whether wheat, beef, logs, fish, coal, gasoline, a car, or a radio. You get the picture.

By 1980, things had changed. More than half of employed Canadians were involved in occupations that provided services rather than goods. Today that’s true of 3 out of 4 of us. Our ranks include people performing very diverse jobs. But the thread running through them all is that they involve providing information for pay.

Some examples? Professors and teachers, receptionists and waiters, doctors and lawyers, social workers and consultants, administrators and clergy, pilots and real estate agents.

**Figure 6.1. The Two Main Employment Sectors**

- 1. Goods-Producing**  
Agriculture; Construction;  
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil and Gas;  
Manufacturing; Utilities
- 2. Services-Producing**  
Accommodation and Food Services;  
Auto Rental;  
Business and Support Services;  
Education; Health Care;  
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate;  
Information, Culture, Recreation;  
Professional, scientific, technical  
services;  
Public Administration;  
Social Assistance Services;  
Trade; Transportation, Warehousing

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada.



One of the more fascinating developments in our time has been the emergence of large numbers of information specialists. In an economy that increasingly is based on information, people have become well aware that if they can provide information, they can do more than simply make some part-time money. They can go on to earn a very good

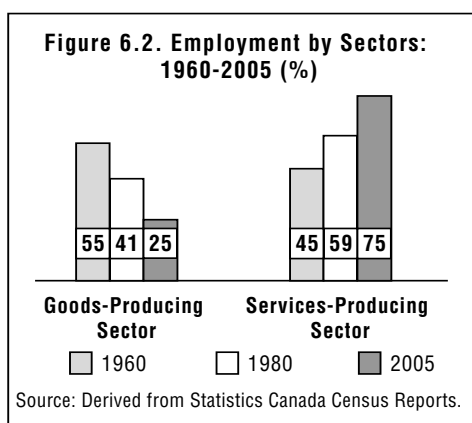
living, perhaps create a small business. Who knows, in time that business may evolve into a major corporation with branches not only across the province but across the nation – maybe even in some other parts of the world. In an information economy, there are jobs to be had and fortunes to be made.

The beauty of the information economy is that one doesn't have to come up with a tangible, physical product. One only has to come up with an idea, an information niche, and be able to persuade enough people that the information is something they need. To the extent that people can pull that off, they gain admission to "the information industry."

So it is that we never have had more people providing more information on more topics. Apart from long-established experts in fields like medicine, education, science, and religion, we now have people who claim expertise in almost anything and everything imaginable. Illustrations pale in the face of the amount and range of information expertise that allegedly exists – expertise that grows by the hour. Such specialists to date (more accurately, as of today) include management consultants, motivational speakers, fitness coaches, psychic detectives, image consultants, grief counsellors, personal trainers, strategic-planning facilitators, interior designers, sports psychologists, investment consultants, life-skill coaches, natural therapists, futurists, and spiritual advisors. Marketing gurus tell us that the key to being successful is to "determine a need and then provide it." Huge numbers of people are following their advice.

Consequently, there is virtually no limit to the specialties and specialists that can come into being. The only restraint? Economic viability.

Simultaneously, well-established professions, such as psychiatry, attempt to expand their domains, in part to fend off information-niche competitors. As respected American journalist Walter Kirn writes in a *Time*



magazine article, “There is still only one way to be sane – enjoy your friends, family, faith and job – but every year there are new ways to be crazy.” The American Psychiatric Association, he maintains, “now has an illness for almost every lifestyle.” Kirn is particularly upset that the APA has been considering officially recognizing a new category of mental illness: Relational Disorders. Kirn writes, “That people can make each other nuts is not a new discovery. Still, scientific protocol demands that whenever doctors set out to repackage a perennial human sorrow as a modern, billable disease, they have to act as if they are on to something big.” He adds, “How else would chronic sleepiness have become Primary Hypersomnia?”<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, some of us thought all this new information would help us resolve old problems. Instead, the information era has resulted in “the discovery” of an exponential number of new ones. The net result is that we have never had so many “problems” – and so many apparent “solutions.”

It’s all adding up to a lot of information.

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

Since at least the mid-1990s, personal development has been an information industry with a solid and stable market share.

- In 1995, 26% of Canadians said they had taken a personal-development course in the past year.
- The figure for 2000 was 23%.
- In 2005, it was 24%.

What many of us find dazzling are the increasing ways in which television and the Internet are being accessed. A valuable tipoff on current TV viewing options came in the form of an important announcement in June 2006 by Nielsen Media Research, the people who monitor television viewing worldwide and produce those all-important ratings.

For a number of years, the company has been basing its TV ratings on data collected by People Meters connected to the television sets of samples of viewers. Recognizing the need to “follow the video,” Nielsen unveiled plans to expand its coverage to include a wide range of so-called delivery platforms, including the Internet, cellphones, video iPods, and public places such as restaurants and bars. As a first step, Nielsen will be installing software on computers owned by people who already have People Meters by 2007, enabling the company to measure combined TV and Internet viewing. Its new initiative is called “Anytime Anywhere Media Measurement” (A2M2).<sup>6</sup>

One reason for such an adjustment is that television networks increasingly are “streaming” programs from television to computers via the Web, making a select number of programs available on their websites. ABC, for example, announced in August 2006 that it would be making a number of its prime-time programs available on ABC.com in the fall, following a successful trial run in the spring of a number of shows, including *Desperate Housewives*. Anne Sweeney, president of the Disney-ABC Television Group, offered a comment that suggests how ABC now views the function of its site: “The launch of ABC.com’s broadband player was a huge step forward for us as we strategically reposition our Web sites from marketing tools to rich entertainment platforms.”<sup>7</sup>

In Canada, CTV has also done some streaming of programs, while almost all of the networks make video clips available on their websites. But, as in the U.S., the dissemination possibilities don’t stop there. The children’s network, Treehouse, offered an illustration of the cross-promotion possibilities of television, the Internet, and mobile phones. It announced in June 2006 that its new *Emily Yeung* series, scheduled to debut in September, would be made available to wireless phone users three weeks ahead of its television premiere, and streamed to the program’s website one week before it aired.<sup>8</sup> That same month, CTV and Bell Canada, both owned by Bell Globemedia, Inc., announced the launch of two new “made for mobile” video news services (CTV News and Report on Business Television) that could be accessed by Bell Mobility customers. The programs would last about three minutes each and be updated hourly throughout the day.<sup>9</sup>

No wonder Nielsen has had to stop relying on those home television-set monitors.

This brief sketch provides only a few headlines of some of the more important developments that have been taking place in recent years that have contributed to the information explosion. Obviously, newspapers, magazines, and radio continue to be significant sources of information for many Canadians, as do books. Some quick facts, compliments of Statistics Canada, suggest that the book publishing industry, for example, is exhibiting some positive signs of health in the face of some formidable information competitors.<sup>10</sup>

- Revenue from book sales in Canada was \$1.4 billion in 2004; including sales outside, the total was \$2 billion. The latter figure was \$1.8 billion in 2000 and \$1.6 billion in 1998.

- Some 62% of the 330 publishers surveyed, including 19 that were foreign-owned, reported a profit, with the total industry profit \$235 million; the profit margin has remained at around 11% since 1998.
- A total of almost 17,000 new titles were published in 2004, up about 7% from 2000; reprinted books totalled just over 12,000 – up almost 20% from 2000.

We'll return shortly to an examination of the relationship of books and various media forms to both Internet and television.

## Some National Snapshots

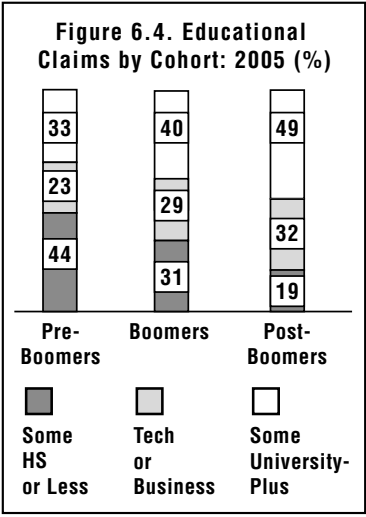
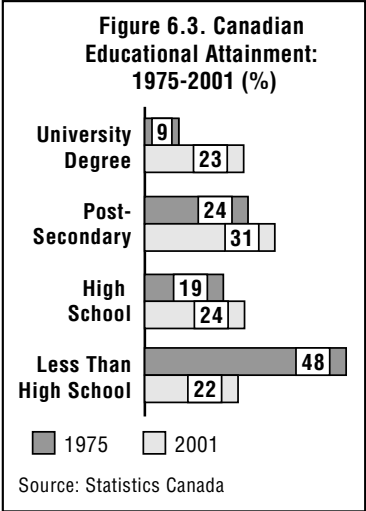
### Education

Since the 1960s, there has been a significant increase in our formal educational levels. In 1975, only about 10% of adults were university graduates and 1 in 2 had not completed high school. Today, some 25% have university degrees and another 30% have completed other post-secondary programs. Fewer than 1 in 4 have less than a high-school education.

Those attainment levels are reflected in the increasing levels of education of Boomers and Post-Boomers – all the more so when “some” involvement in post-secondary institutions and high school is taken into account. Higher levels of formal education obviously have had an important impact on how Boomers and younger Canadians have constructed Canada.

### Television

The emergence of the multi-channel television universe in the post-1960s seems to have contributed to an increase, in the 1980s and 90s, in the amount of television that people were watching.



Perhaps in large part because of the availability of new information and entertainment options – notably videos, DVDs, and the Internet – the amount of TV viewing has declined slightly since the mid-1990s. As of 2005, 26% of Boomers are watching more than 15 hours of television a week, as are 39% of older Canadians, and 20% of Post-Boomers.

<b>Table 6.1. Weekly Television Viewing: 1975-2005</b>				
	1975	1985	1995	2005
>30 hours	5%	7	3	6
16-30 hours	16	23	30	21
6-15 hours	47	47	48	49
5 hours or fewer	32	23	19	24

However, what is noteworthy is not so much the modest decline in television viewing as the ongoing importance of television in Canadian lives. Some 75% of us are watching at least six hours of TV each week – which is down only slightly from around 80% in 1995 and up from 68% in 1975.

Television, of course, has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Specialty channels, including 24/7 news channels and a wide offering of children’s programming, made the old characterization of television as “the boob tube” passé years ago.

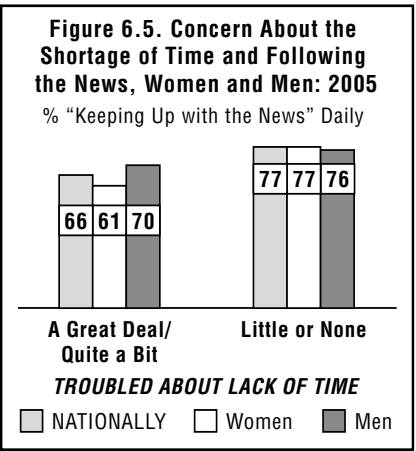
Beyond providing channels for just about everyone, television’s ability to provide live global coverage of major events and developments has solidified its place as an essential resource for anyone wanting to stay current with what’s happening in the world. In 1980, people who closely followed the news may or may not have watched a lot of television.

<b>Table 6.2. TV Viewing and Following the News*</b>			
	2005	1995	1980
Follow the News	68%	76	80
<b>Weekly TV Viewing</b>			
>30 Hours	79	85	80
16-30	74	83	85
11-15	73	73	80
6-10	64	77	88
1-5	63	70	69
Rarely or never	55	62	69

\*1995 and 2005: keep up with the news on a “daily” basis; 1980: watch or listen to the news “very often.”

Today, there is a direct relationship between the amount of TV people watch and their inclination to follow the news. Some 75% of Canadians who watch more than 10 hours of television a week say they follow the news every day, compared with 55% to 65% of those who watch TV less often.

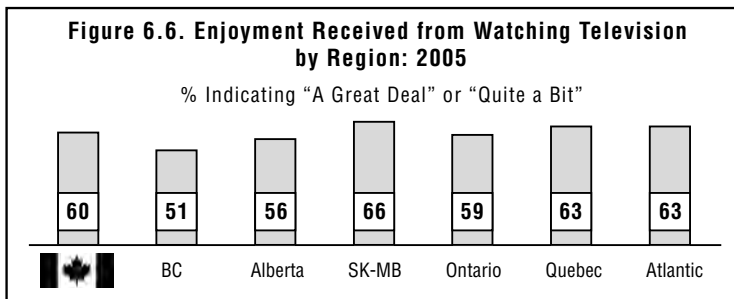
An interesting footnote to all this is that there actually has been a *decrease* over the past 25 years in the percentage of people who say



they are “keeping up with the news” on a daily basis, from 80% in 1980 to just under 70% now. A contributing factor appears to be lack of time: 66% of Canadians who are concerned about not having enough time are following the news every day, versus 77% for whom the shortage of time does not seem to be an issue. The relationship is particularly strong for women.

~

These findings indicate that, rather than being replaced by emerging alternatives, television continues to be a central player in the information age. For most of us, it is an essential day-to-day staple. So it is that only 5% of Canadians say they “rarely or never” watch television. Its growing alliances with the Internet and cellphones point not to its demise but rather to its evolution.



## The Internet

As indicated earlier, it is difficult to overstate the revolutionary contribution of the Internet in providing us with information. We can access information on almost anything anytime from almost anywhere.

Few people realize that it has only been public since about 1994. Yet, in under two decades, 7 in 10 Canadian households have come to have one or more people using the Internet, with more than half of those users able to log on from home.

- In general, Internet use and enjoyment are highest among Post-Boomers, with little difference between young women and men. They are followed in order by Boomers and Pre-Boomers. In the case of these two cohorts, men are more likely than women to enjoy going online.
- It’s important to note that there is a significant jump in Internet use and enjoyment for both male and female Boomers over the cohort

**Table 6.3. Internet Use: 1997-2003**


	From Home	From Anywhere
2003	55%	64
2001	49	60
1999	29	42
1997	16	29

Source: *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, July 15, 1999; July 26, 2002; July 8, 2004.

that preceded them. Noteworthy numbers of Boomers – more than 1 in 3 – literally have been embracing the Internet.

- That said, it is also important to take note of the fact that 1 in 5 Pre-Boomers, led by men, say that they enjoy the Internet. Here there is a considerable difference between older women and older men, which is perhaps in part a function of the fact that a lower proportion of women in that cohort were less likely than other people in general to be employed outside the home.

**Table 6.4. Enjoyment of the Internet by Age and Gender: 2005**

	High	Don't Use*
	39%	13
Women	35	16
Men	43	10
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>
Women	31	11
Men	41	7
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>
Women	17	47
Men	27	29
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2</b>
Women	51	3
Men	56	2

\*The % of people who said the item on Internet enjoyment did not apply to them.

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

An important development familiar to all of us has been the escalation of electronic commerce ("e-commerce"). The term is fairly broad, referring to the use of the Internet for business purposes, including the marketing and buying of products and services, banking, and the transfer of funds.

- In 2005, e-commerce sales in the United States were worth \$1.2 billion US, up 25% from 2004 – but representing just 2.3% of total sales.
- In Canada, electronic commerce sales for 2005 totalled \$39 million, an increase of 38% from 2004 – but just over 1% of total sales.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, April 20, 2006.

## The Global Dimension

Television and the Internet have radically increased our awareness of what is taking place around the world. It's not that Canadians have suddenly become aware of the rest of the world. Our long history of immigration and our involvement in the world wars along with the presence of radio, newspapers, and magazines, have meant that our predecessors had a grasp of many things that were happening "in the Old Country" along with other parts of the world. Many of us grew up hearing about such things. But obviously their grasp wasn't anywhere nearly as immediate or detailed or extensive as ours is today.

A fast personal illustration on the way to some survey data. In the early 1980s, I experienced something of what my grandparents from Wales must have experienced when they came to Canada some 70 years earlier. I had the opportunity to spend part of a sabbatical at Oxford with my two sons, who were 12 and 10 at the time. What struck all of us immediately upon our

arrival in England was how Canada suddenly just disappeared. BBC television and British newspapers provided little help. Our best hope for word on the Quebec referendum or even an occasional Stanley Cup score was one of the American international papers sometimes available in the university library. If it hadn't been for the telephone and the occasional letter ...

Today, such feelings of isolation for anyone far from home are a thing of the past. Family, friends, newspapers, workplaces, and pretty much anything we want to know or anyone we want to contact are all at our Internet fingertips, regardless of where on the globe we find ourselves. It would be much more enjoyable to be in Oxford now.

The Internet, combined with television, has made the entire world seem closer to home. The globe is there for the viewing – and the feeling. With a flip of our television remote we can see live pictures of a tsunami or the aftermath of a suicide bombing in Iraq. If a Canadian is injured in Afghanistan, or the prime minister visits Washington, we can get the details immediately on any number of television channels or Internet sites. If we want local news coverage for almost any part of the world, we need only locate regional newspaper, magazine, and radio websites.

Now here's the bottom line of all this. Our exposure to the rest of the world is doing more than simply increase our awareness of what is happening elsewhere. It also is provoking responses on the levels of both head and heart. Three Project Canada survey items spanning the last 15 years suggest that an important attitudinal shift has taken place with respect to how we view Canada's involvement with the rest of the world.

- In 1990, 58% of Canadians concurred with the idea that Canada needs to “take an active part in world affairs.”
- In 2000, that same spirit of involvement versus isolation could be seen in how a slightly higher number – 63% – disagreed with the assertion, “We need to worry about our own country and let the rest of the world take care of itself.”
- By 2005, in response to the same item as in 2000, a higher figure again – 73% – disagreed that we should “let the rest of the world” look after itself.


Those changes in attitudes are being accompanied by financial and emotional responses to what is happening elsewhere – the need to contribute to the victims of the 2004 tsunami, for example, and the need to be on the alert because of the growing amount of terrorism.



A good number of people who have come to Canada have known homelands where there was serious conflict, and, in some instances, terrorist activity.

However, as of late 2005, Canadians who were born outside Canada were actually slightly *less likely* than people born here to view terrorism as a “very serious” problem in Canada today. I would remind readers that the survey was completed before the alleged Toronto terrorist plot was uncovered in 2006.


These findings suggest that, on balance, concern about something like terrorism is actually higher – and certainly no less – among people who have never experienced it, versus many who have. Such is the power of the media, led by television and the Internet, to shape our minds and our emotions.

Table 6.5. Perception That Terrorism Is a Problem, Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Canadians: 2005					
	Very Serious	Fairly Serious	Not Very Serious	Not Serious at All	Totals
	26%	32	32	10	100
Born Outside Canada	21	33	32	14	100
Born in Canada	27	31	33	9	100

### More Informed Than Mom and Dad

There is no doubt in the minds of today’s Canadians that we have more information than our parents had when they were our age. It’s noteworthy that such perception does not vary much between the three age cohorts, standing at about 95% in each instance.

Simply put, almost everyone, regardless of age or gender, has been sharing in the information explosion for some time now. The sense that we have an unprecedented amount of information is pervasive.

Table 6.6. Accessed Information: 2005	
<i>“I think that I have more information than my parents had at my age”</i>	
	94%
Boomers	96
Pre-Boomers	94
Post-Boomers	93
Men	95
Women	93

### Impact on Other Information Sources

One of the most obvious questions raised by the popularity of the Internet and television is what the impact is on other media sources, including newspapers, magazines, and books. Fortunately our surveys have findings for the crucial period of the Internet’s emergence in 1994 until now – a period that has also seen television moving in a number of creative directions.

What we find is that newspaper, magazine, and book reading all dropped off fairly sharply between 1990 and 2000 but have levelled off in the past five years. In fact, book reading has made something of a comeback since

2000. It appears that online readership has helped to stop the newspaper readership slide.<sup>11</sup>

- The drop-off, levelling off pattern holds across all three age cohorts.
- Book reading has rebounded from 2000 for both Boomers and Post-Boomers. Yet, overall, the emerging generation of Post-Boomers is the least likely to be reading newspapers, magazines, and even books.

In light of the enjoyment they are receiving from the Internet, it could be that some of that reading time is being lost to the computer. Then again, it may be lost to shopping, or going to a play.

In August 2006, Statistics Canada released an analysis of Internet use, drawing on extensive new national data. The agency found heavy Internet use was not associated with lower levels of TV viewing, or lower levels of newspaper, magazine, or book reading – at least compared with people who were not using the Internet as often. The author of the report, Ben Veenhof, concludes that “Internet users were avid consumers of other media.”<sup>12</sup>

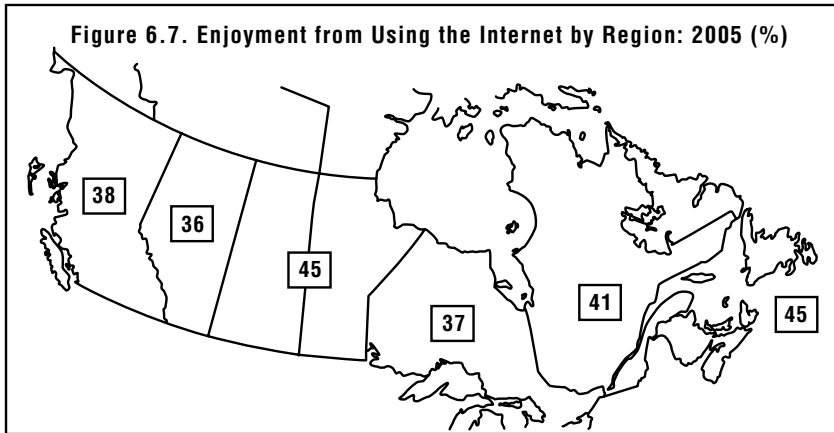
Our findings are consistent with that observation. But people can consume other media without consuming as much of it. Obviously, time spent on the Internet is time taken from somewhere else or maybe someone else. The fact that reading is down from 1990 suggests that time-pressed Canadians have been rearranging their time allotments.

Things are not the same, and may never be the same, as they were the day before the Internet arrived.

**Table 6.7. Reading of Newspapers, Magazines, and Books: 1990-2005**

	1990	1995	2000	2005
<b>A newspaper:</b>				
<b><i>several times a week+</i></b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>
Boomers	73	68	67	66
Pre-Boomers	85	84	81	80
Post-Boomers	66	60	49	47
<b>Magazines:</b>				
<b><i>weekly or more</i></b>	<b>73</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>
Boomers	70	60	59	59
Pre-Boomers	75	63	68	68
Post-Boomers	72	56	54	47
<b>Books:</b>				
<b><i>weekly or more*</i></b>	<b>67</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>55</b>
Boomers	64	57	50	56
Pre-Boomers	70	63	57	57
Post-Boomers	77	54	44	51

\*In 1990 and 1995, the item was “read books”; in 2000 and 2005, it was revised to “read books you want to read.”



## Assessment

Who can be troubled by the explosion of information and the marvellous computer-related means of accessing it? Not you, I suspect, and certainly not I. What a luxury, what a gift to be able to sit at a keyboard when one is feeling alive and well and proceed to access the world – past and present – via the Internet – with a television set on in the background. Higher levels of schooling, as well as traditional print and electronic media, are also making significant contributions to our knowledge base.

Yet it seems to me that three important questions need to be asked about the personal and collective consequences of the information explosion.

The first has been raised by many observers. Given that information is becoming increasingly specialized and custom-made, how do we ensure that Canadian society does not evolve into a myriad of information ghettos where our reading, viewing, listening, websites, and school systems function to isolate us from each other? How do we make it possible for Canadians to enjoy their subcultures of ideas and like-minded people, while at the same time ensuring that we interact with each other for the betterment both of our individual and collective lives?

The second question I have is to what extent are we matching our emphasis on acquiring information with an emphasis on encouraging people to think – to be able to reflect, evaluate, and synthesize. As a friend of mine once playfully observed, “You can lead people to data; but you can’t make them think.” Even in the pre-Internet days of the early 1980s, Rodney Stark, the renowned American sociologist, commented to a group of us in Lethbridge, “There’s no shortage of data. There’s a shortage of good ideas.”

From my first years in the classroom as a university professor, I have been well aware of the fact that one of the greatest challenges any teacher faces is trying to find ways to motivate students to go beyond a memorization mentality and enthusiastically take on ideas. The solution certainly doesn't lie with simply piling on more material, or having them extract more from the Internet.

The fact that we now have so much information available from both credible and questionable sources makes being able to think and critique and respond that much more important and urgent.

Those are my first two questions: How do we avoid information ghettos? How do we encourage people who are exposed to ever-growing amounts of information to think?

The third question – “Knowledge for what?” – is not a new question. But it's particularly important to raise it again in light of all the information at hand.


So we can access more information than any other living cohort of Canadians. So what? Is information no more than a virtuous end in itself? Put simply, what are we going to use it for?

In the midst of questionable celebrations of information for information's sake, there may be value in hearing the words of a favourite sage of mine from yesteryear, the writer of Ecclesiastes. To generously paraphrase one of his central thoughts, “I pursued knowledge and became the most informed person in the entire land. But in the end, I concluded that such an accomplishment was like chasing after the wind. It didn't add up to much. What's the value of sheer information?”

As we saw earlier, some 95% of Canadians claim they have more information than their parents did when they were at the same age. Yet, quite remarkably, only 41% think it is resulting in their being wiser than their grandparents. What's more, just 38% believe they are wiser than their parents. For a majority of people, vastly improved information is not translating into greater levels of wisdom. I think it is important to ask, “Why not?”

If we are unable to take our information and use it to enhance our personal lives and our collective life – locally, nationally, globally – there is little about the information age



**Table 6.8. Intergenerational Wisdom: 2005**

		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
With due respect, I think I am wiser than my grandparents	41%	35	43	45
To be honest, I think I am wiser than my parents	38	33	39	41

to celebrate. We simply will have gone from knowing too little to knowing too much.

It's a question that the Boomers are essentially leaving behind for everyone else to address. They may have contributed immensely to the explosion of information in Canada, but, I think it's fair to say, they have not clearly articulated what the information is all about – what it can mean to us, what we can do with it, the dreams and the hopes that can be realized as a result of it.

The next four trends may help to provide some important clues.

CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING		
		
University/college graduates: 25+	20%	28%
Daily newspapers	159 per 1,000 pop	213 per 1,000 pop
Television sets	700 per 1,000	835 per 1,000
Radios	1,047 per 1,000	2,117 per 1,000
Telephones	99%	98%
Cellphone owners	59%	68%
Internet users	68%	69%
High-speed Internet	43%	56%
Cable or satellite television	88%	86%
Average hours of TV watched per week	21	32
Travelled outside country in last year	48%	19%

Sources: newspapers, TV sets, radios – *Canadian Global Almanac*, 2004; figures for 2000 and 2001. U.S.: education, telephones, US Census Bureau; Internet users – The Gallup Poll, Dec. 2005; high-speed Internet, cable or satellite TV – The Gallup Poll, Aug. 2005; TV viewing – Nielsen News Release, Sept. 25, 2005; travel – The Gallup Poll, Dec. 20, 2005. Canada: education – computed from Statistics Canada census data; telephones – *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, April 5, 2006; cellphone owners, cable or satellite TV, high-speed Internet – *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, Dec. 12, 2005, reporting for 2004; Internet users – InternetWorldStats.com, July 2, 2006; TV viewing – *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, March 31, 2006, reporting for 2004.



# PART 2

## Four Major Continuities

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*The Boomers are leaving behind a society where the freedoms and rights of the individual are entrenched, the viewpoint of the individual is being heard, the basis for the choices and time expectations of the individual are being acknowledged, and the information available to the individual is greater than at any time in history. There's no doubt about it: Boomers will be remembered for how they have elevated the individual.*

*But those changes are only part of the story of what has been transpiring in the lives of Canadians since the 1960s. Trends involve not only changes, but also continuities. The surveys reveal that we haven't changed very much when it comes to four important areas of life. What these areas have in common is that they each serve to illustrate that Canadians are far from people who begin and end with individualism in pursuing fulfilling lives. We also long for the social – and beyond.*





# 7

## What People Want

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*Three Things Are Still Supreme*

### **Major players**

*family, friends, personal experience,  
the market economy, media, religion, education*

- **Freedom and relationships valued most**
- **A comfortable life also centrally valued**
- **Personal and social obstacles to overcome**
- **Fulfillment and happiness often elusive**

**I**T'S an old question. Seems innocent enough. The problem is that it's the wrong question.

Chances are pretty good that you were asked it on more than a few occasions when you were a child, again during your teens, and maybe even in your 20s.

It could be the key that unlocks the door to understanding why many Boomers are feeling the way they are about life these days.

*"What are you going to be when you grow up?"*

### **Who We Are Versus What We Want**

That simple question is important to understand because of its implicit assumptions. When we were asked it or ask it of other people, the blatant

part of the question *really* is, “What are you going to *do* when you grow up?” as in, “What kind of occupation do you want to have?” We fully expect to get an answer along the lines of, “A fireman,” “A nurse,” “A hockey player,” or “A teacher.” If we were to get replies such as “Nothing in particular” or “Whatever makes me happy” or “Anything that will allow me to live in Vancouver,” the quiz show buzzer – as in “wrong answer” – would go off in our heads.

But look at the question again, and notice the built-in assumption that what you *do* is what you are going to *be*. Your occupation is going to define who you are.

We should be asking children questions like, “How do you want to feel when you grow up?” or “What kind of things do you think will make you happy when you grow up?” or “Where do you want to live when you grow up?” But we don’t.

“*What are you going to be when you grow up?*” We are assuming that what one does is who one is. There is a related assumption: What someone does and how successful they are at doing it is the primary measure of the person. In sociological jargon, occupation and occupational performance provide the basis for assigning social status, with its accompanying levels of power, prestige, and privilege.

Put simply and succinctly, in our society, what we do is the measure of who we are. That’s why we word the question the way we do.

And so it is that when parents are visiting with people they haven’t seen for a while, the questions that tend to be asked about their children quickly turn to “What’s he doing now?” and “What’s Jessica up to?” – the difference in the two questions, incidentally, being that they unobtrusively convey a lingering double standard of role expectations for young men versus young women, which is interesting in itself.

In the days just after the dinosaurs, it was perfectly acceptable for a young girl to respond to “the question” with, “I’m going to get married and have three children.” Chances are good that, back then, her words would have been greeted with a smile, a pat on the head, and a “That a girl.” The measure of males required quite a different response, as in an emphasis on career and, perhaps secondarily, a reference to family intentions. Then again, come to think of it, a five-year-old who said, “I want to be a bartender and get married and have six kids” probably would have brought the chatter in the room to an abrupt halt!

Just as it was back then, doing defines us – as a young mother, as a successful career woman, as a successful or not so successful father or

bachelor. What's more, sociologists remind us that if we ourselves haven't done what is needed to receive high social status ("achieved status"), we benefit by way of association from the high status of our partners or our children, or maybe even some of our close friends ("ascribed status"). That's one reason – beyond genuine pride – that strangers will tell us what universities their children attended and what they are doing now, what their partner does for a living, or drop the name of a well-known friend. Conversely, that's why other people are quite relieved when you don't ask questions that are too pressing about their kids or their significant other.

There is an extremely important reason for going into all this. As we are going to see shortly, our examination of Canadian social trends reveals that we haven't changed much with respect to what we want out of life. But what most of us want is not what our culture has been telling us is primary, namely "what we do." We need more. In the end, we want more.

That is why some people heading into the latter years of their lives find themselves thinking, "This isn't what I started out looking for back then. Almost in spite of myself, life has turned out so well." There also are others who reach a similar point in their lives and find themselves thinking, "I worked hard to get here, but now that I have arrived, it's not as good as I thought it would be."

A disproportionately high number of Boomers are in this latter category. They did what they were supposed to do. They pursued more education than their parents. They got good jobs. They worked long hours. They have been successful. The problem is that, from the standpoint of what makes everybody feel happy and fulfilled, their energies have been partially misdirected. They've been climbing the wrong mountain.

## **Some National Snapshots**

For the last 20 years, I've been asking Canadian adults and teenagers what they value most. A number of consistent patterns are evident.

### **Premier Goals**

The 2005 Project Canada adult survey shows that "The Top 10 Wants" of Canadians include, from 10th to 7th, a rewarding career, success, being viewed positively by our children,<sup>1</sup> and a house or apartment.

Sound about right? If we are describing real life and real people, you should be able to recognize yourself in what we are finding. Now, let the countdown suspense continue ...

- No. 6 is a comfortable life.
- No. 5: privacy.
- No. 4: friendship.
- No. 3: being loved.
- No. 2: family life.
- And No. 1? Freedom!

Table 7.1. The Top 10 Wants: 2005	
% Viewing as "Very Important"	
10. A rewarding career	51%
9. Success	53
8. Viewed positively by my children	53
7. House or apartment	61
6. A comfortable life	68
5. Privacy	72
4. Friendship	82
3. Being loved	82
2. Family life	83
1. Freedom	90
*Item #8 literally read, "What my children think of me."	

Incidentally, it’s always comforting to learn that other researchers are coming up with findings consistent with one’s own, especially when one is taking some chances and knows that the potential critics won’t be lost for words. Highly respected Environics pollster Michael Adams, who has carried out extensive research over the past two decades on values, has corroborated our national survey findings on the importance of freedom. He writes, in his recent bestseller *Sex in the Snow*, “My reading of Canadian values tells me that none has become more important in this country than autonomy.”<sup>2</sup>

The “Top 6 Wants,” along with No. 8, are all centred on the two themes of freedom and relationships. No. 7 joins No. 6 in reflecting our material needs and desires – a comfortable life includes the physical place where we live. Nos. 9 and 10 – being successful at what we do and having rewarding careers – are more subjective, but are psychologically and emotionally important, not to mention of considerable practical significance.

These are the things we want most.

The premier importance placed on freedom and relationships is something I personally have found intriguing. I used to think I was a bit of an eccentric. Like everybody else, I have valued good ties with people – my family, my friends, colleagues, strangers. I’ve always been fairly outgoing, and think I have the reputation of being pretty gregarious. Yet, for as long as I can remember, I’ve also enjoyed being by myself. Long before I took my first sociology course, I discovered that group involvement invariably came at the cost of personal freedom. Friends, school, church, and having a girlfriend – for all their pluses – exacted a price in the form of the freedom to think and act.

Sociology provided the language to interpret what was happening. Groups of any size establish norms to which its members are expected to

conform. If people break the rules, they are confronted with sanctions ranging from ridicule and stigma through ostracism to execution.

The law-like conclusion? There is an inverse relationship between freedom and group membership. The practical message? Any of us who value our individuality and want to be part of groups had better pick them very carefully.


Now if you see yourself in some of this, don't be surprised. In 1984, Don Posterski and I carried out a pioneering national survey of Canadian teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19, and published our findings in the book *The Emerging Generation*. The survey was novel in that we included a large number of items examining values, attitudes, and beliefs, something that few previous Canadian researchers had done.

What we found was that there was nothing more important to teenagers than friendship and being loved. However, rivalling those two characteristics was freedom – actually second to friendship for young males. In subsequent youth surveys in 1992 and 2000, we found much the same thing.

Some observers brushed off the freedom finding, stereotyping teenagers as irresponsible, immature child-adult hybrids who simply don't want anyone curbing their freedom. The problem with such interpretations is that they failed to account for an important finding that our Project Canada survey uncovered shortly after with adults: There was nothing more important to men and women across the country than relationships – that is, nothing except freedom.

An ongoing issue is how to achieve that delicate but necessary balance between the desire for freedom and the desire for the relational. One of our respondents, an 89-year-old widower from a Montreal suburb, offered these clear thoughts on how that “synthesis” might work: “A child who gains respect as an individual through love and support by a parent, friend or teacher is qualified to become a successful family partner.”

In the end, some people find such a freedom-relational balance; others do not. A survey participant from Vancouver, a 67-year-old retired woman with no children, expressed things this way: “Forty years ago, after I was divorced, my father said to me that one needed to have someone to sit with

Table 7.2. Teenage Values by Gender: 1984			
% Viewing as "Very Important"			
		Females	Males
Friendship	91%	94	88
Being loved	87	93	81
Freedom	84	82	86
Success	78	79	78
A comfortable life	75	75	75
Privacy	68	72	64
Family life	65	69	62
Excitement	58	56	61
Acceptance by God	41	40	41
Recognition	41	41	42
Being popular	21	16	27
Source: Project Teen Canada, 1984.			

in one's old age. I thought that was quite humorous. But now I realize it is the profound truth." A 62-year-old from rural New Brunswick speaks of some of the potential positives that relationships can bring: "My daughter and two sons accompanied my wife and me at my Mother's funeral last week. I experienced unconditional love all around and they functioned like my best man would at a wedding. I am very blessed."

## Persistent Wants

The surveys have found that the primary life goals of Canadians are not fleeting. The rank order of "The Top 6 Wants" has not changed over the past 20 years – and the two valued areas of freedom and relationships undoubtedly go back well before anyone started thinking about conducting formal polls. Three quick points of clarification:

- The ranking of "The Top 6 Wants" is the same for **Boomers**, **Pre-Boomers**, and **Post-Boomers**.
- As **Boomers** and **Pre-Boomers** have aged over the past 15 years, the relative importance they have given to such areas as family, a comfortable life, and a rewarding career has not changed very much – apart from slightly more people placing a high level of importance on a comfortable life, and Boomer males being less inclined to feel that way about rewarding careers.
- Since 1990, more **Post-Boomers** – who were only 18 to 24 at that time – have come to place a high level of importance on family life, with fewer giving that kind of rating to either rewarding careers or a comfortable life.


**Table 7.3. Top 6 Wants:  
1985 and 2005**

% Viewing as "Very Important"

	1985	2005
6. A comfortable life	66%	68
5. Privacy	76	72
4. Friendship	83	82
3. Being loved	83	82
2. Family life	84	83
1. Freedom	89	90

**Table 7.4. What's Valued by Age and Gender Over Time**

% Indicating "Very Important"

	Family Life		A Comfortable Life		A Rewarding Career	
	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005
	84%	83	66	68	53	51
<b>Boomers</b>	84	83	63	70	53	49
Women	87	86	63	69	54	52
Men	81	81	63	70	51	44
<b>Older adults</b>	88	85	62	71	45	42
<b>Younger adults</b>	57	82	72	64	70	59
Women	***	90	***	68	***	60
Men	***	73	***	60	***	57

\*\*\*Sample sizes insufficient to permit stable percentaging.

**Personal Concerns**

Seen through the eyes of the value we place on freedom, relationships, and a comfortable life, our primary personal concerns come into clearer focus.

- As we all know well, the lack of *time* and *money* precludes freedom and a comfortable life and frequently puts significant pressure on our relationships. If we have to worry about our *job*, the anxiety only increases. Pollsters Darrell Bricker and John Wright, in their book *What Canadians Think*, caution us to remember that, for most people, work takes priority over everything: “We complain that work is damaging our relationships, but seldom that our relationships are impinging on our work.”<sup>3</sup>
- The wise folks of old were right: if we don’t have our *health*, we don’t have much of anything. The funny thing – well, it’s not really all that funny – is that most of us take our health for granted until we don’t have it.
- Relationships bring joy; they also bring strain. So it is that as many as 1 in 4 Canadians worry about their *children*, *loneliness*, their *sex lives*, and *marriages*.
- The realization that it’s not all going to last means that about 1 in 4 people also are concerned about *aging* and their *looks*.
- And then there is “that big question” of meaning and significance that seems to persist – 30% of Canadians feel they *should be getting more out of life*, while close to 25% find themselves troubled about *the purpose of life* itself.

Our survey participants readily acknowledge that life is sometimes difficult. They also frequently speak of how relationships play a central role in helping them deal with the things they are going through – but not always. Here are a few brief examples.

**Table 7.5. Primary Personal Concerns: 1985-2005**

	% Bothered “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”	
	2005	1985
Never seem to have enough time	47%	46
Lack of money	39	48
My health	37	33
My children	35*	25*
Should be getting more out of life	30	31
My job	29	26
Loneliness	27	20
Aging	25	22
My sex life	25	21
Wondering about the purpose of life	24	23
My marriage or relationship	23	18
My looks	23	22

\*Including those with no children: 2005 = 28%, 1985 = 19%

- “I am 80 years old and my wife is 76. My father was killed when I was three. My mother died when I was 15. I am not happy, but content, but it took some rough years to get to this place.”*

— he was one of four children; his home is in eastern Canada
- “My father is an alcoholic, so is my Mom. Lots of suffering, exploded family, no news from them or any of my brothers and sisters for several years.”*

— a single 38-year-old from Quebec; she is currently in school and working part time
- “I was widowed a long time ago with one child to raise; it was a hardship at times, but well worth it. Being a single father to a wonderful daughter was a great experience and very rewarding.”*

— he lives in Guelph, where he is now retired
- “Due to cancer, it takes incredible energy to live, but when I’m with my kids I’m in 7th heaven.”*

— a 59-year-old male from Quebec who is married with three grown children; he works part time

### Social Concerns

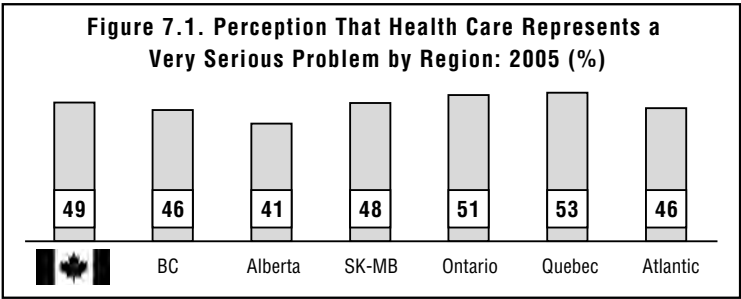
The societal issues that concern us the most at any point in time are those that appear to threaten our ability, and that of those closest to us, to stay alive and live well – as in being able to experience freedom, good relationships, and material well-being.

- The *staying alive issues* that currently top our list pertain to health care, the environment, drugs, crime, delinquency, and violence – including sexual assault and terrorism.
- The *living well issues* that trouble us the most include child abuse, poverty, and family breakdown.

Table 7.6. Primary Social Concerns: 2005*	
% Viewing as “Very Serious” Today	
1. Health care	50%
2. The environment	41
3. Drugs generally	41
4. Child abuse	37
5. Nursing home inadequacy	34
6. Crystal meth	34
7. Crime	33
8. Poverty	33
9. Sexual assault	31
10. Family breakdown	30
11. Violence	30
12. Terrorism	27
13. Juvenile delinquency	26
*Cited by more than 25% of respondents.	

In light of the acceleration of terrorism and general concern about world peace, it is interesting to see that, as of late 2005, fewer than 3 in 10 Canadians felt terrorism represented a “very serious problem” in Canada. Obviously, sentiments are going to change depending on events in Canada and other parts of the world. For example, a poll conducted by Allan





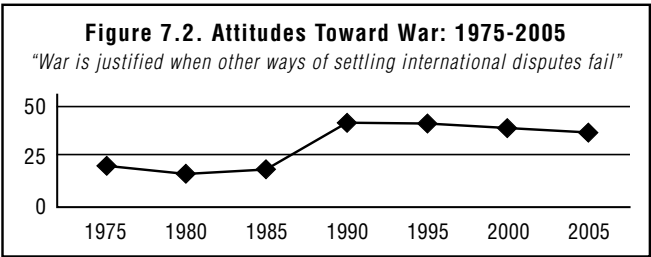
Gregg’s Strategic Counsel the week following the June 2006 arrests of the alleged terrorists in Toronto found that 71% felt it likely that an act of terrorism will take place in Canada within the next few years. Yet, the figure was not dramatically higher than the 62% Gregg had found a year before the Toronto incident. As he puts it, “It appears that Canadians have accepted the whole event in stride.”<sup>4</sup>

Apart from their thoughts about terrorism specifically, a strong majority of close to 80% of Canadians express the view that “the world is not as safe today” as it was when they were growing up. That high level of consensus is particularly worth noting, in view of the fact that people are not talking about now versus only 5 or 10 years ago. The lives covered by the survey span almost a century. Pre-Boomers and Boomers are more inclined than younger adults under 40 to see the world as less safe. About 1 in 2 people in all three age cohorts think another major world war is likely to take place within the next 25 years.

**Table 7.7. Some Choice Criteria: 2005**

		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
The world is not as safe a place today as it was when I was growing up	78%	84	85	66
There will likely be another world war within the next 25 years	48	49	44	49

One thing that’s very clear is that a growing number of people have become more open to the necessity of war, dating back to the Gulf War



period. While those who feel war is justified still constitute a minority, about 40%, that figure is approximately double the 20% levels of 1975 through 1985.

## Finances


Currently, only 22% of Canadians see the economy as representing a “very serious” problem. That figure is dramatically lower than the mid-50% levels from 1975 through 1995 – with a blip of 71% in 1980. If some readers have forgotten or never knew, that was the time when mortgage rates escalated to around 20%. I remember it well; that was when I had to renew mine.

<b>Table 7.8. Financial Satisfaction: 1975-2005</b>							
	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Economy: “A very serious problem”</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>
Income: average or better	***	79	76	76	75	76	78
Financial trend: same or better	89	81	80	75	70	76	76
Financially satisfied	84	85	74	70	72	71	64
Situation of average person getting worse	46	54	51	69	70	66	64

However, despite the current widespread belief that the national economy is healthy, the fact that 3 in 4 of us have maintained for some time that our own incomes are average or better, and the fact that things have not been getting worse for us financially, we nonetheless have been becoming *less satisfied* with our personal financial situations. In 1975, about 85% of us said we were “pretty well satisfied” or “more or less satisfied” with where things were financially. By 1990, the “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” reading stood at 70%; currently it is around 65%.

The wisdom that many of our parents and grandparents tried to impart to us may have deserved more than our groans and rollings of eyes. People in the past were much more satisfied with much less.

Between 1975 and around 1990, Boomers, in particular, became much less satisfied with their personal financial situations. In the 15 years since, the satisfaction levels of Boomers, older and younger, have not increased significantly despite the fairly prosperous times for the country as a whole. The financial satisfaction of Pre-Boomers also has declined in the past three decades, but not as severely as that of the Boomers. Younger Canadians following behind the

<b>Table 7.9. Financial Satisfaction by Age Cohort: 1975-2005</b>			
% Indicating “Very Satisfied” or “Fairly Satisfied”*			
	<b>1975</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>
1946-1955	81	68	63
1956-1965	***	61	65
Pre-Boomers	86	80	77
Post-Boomers	***	60	57

\*In 1975 and 2005, the corresponding options were “Pretty Well Satisfied” and “More or Less Satisfied.”

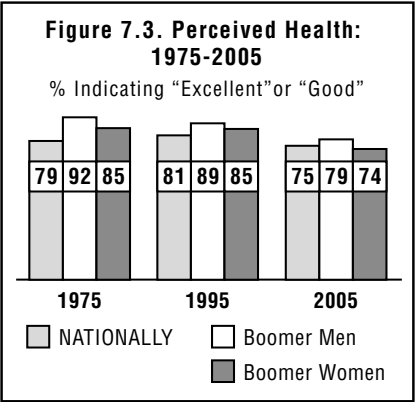
Boomers have expressed a considerably lower level of personal financial satisfaction than the two older cohorts.

Baby Boomers typically have been described as the most affluent generation in Canadian history. Ironically, they may also be one of the most financially dissatisfied generations our country has ever seen.

### Health

As the Canadian population ages, top-heavy with Boomers, we can expect that concern about health will be on the upswing. In 1975, 92% of Boomer men and 85% of Boomer women reported that they were in “excellent” or “good” health. As of 2005, those figures have fallen to 79% for men and 74% for women, which has brought the national level down somewhat from earlier years.

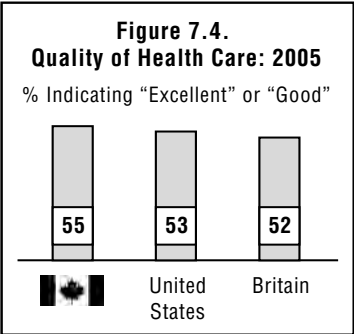
- Consistent with such self-reports about health, the proportion of Boomer males spending time in hospitals increased from 10% to 17% between 1995 and 2005, led by older Boomers males who, as of 2005, were between the ages of 50 and 59.
- “Time in hospital” obviously has been relatively high for younger women who were having children. What we see, as of 2005, is that hospital time for both older and younger Boomer women has levelled off at around 15% – considerably lower than the 23% level of older Boomer men.
- Health is also becoming a greater subjective concern for Boomers. In 1985, 29% said their health concerned them “a great deal” or “quite a bit.” As of 2005, the figure has risen to 39%. What perhaps is a bit surprising is how this concern about health also has risen significantly for



**Table 7.10. Boomers’ Concern About Health and Time Spent in Hospital**

	Spent Time in Hospital in the Last Year		Own Health Is a Concern	
	1995	2005	1985	2005
Women	18%	20	33	37
Men	20	20	34	37
	17	19	33	37
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>
Women	22	15	27	37
b. 1946-55	17	14	25	39
b. 1956-65	26	16	29	35
Men	10	17	31	40
b. 1946-55	7	23	29	39
b. 1956-65	13	11	33	42


Younger Boomers, particularly men. In part, this may reflect our information-driven society where people of all ages are “aware” of more health issues and problems than ever before – an example of our moving from knowing too little to knowing too much.



### Fitness

The Boomers are aging, and, despite their highly publicized efforts to stay young forever, they are starting to feel the physical effects of reaching their 40s, 50s, and beyond.

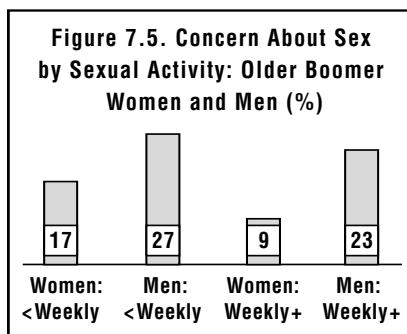
- Consistent with popular stereotypes – fed by images of Boomers like young Arkansas governor Bill Clinton jogging every day with a cheeseburger in hand – about 40% of older Boomer men and 30% of women said they

		<b>OLDER</b> 1946-55		<b>YOUNGER</b> 1956-65	
		<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>1980</b>					
Jog: often/sometimes	31%	39	30	***	***
Non-smoker	58	55	32	***	***
Drink: never	23	16	14	***	***
<b>1995</b>					
Exercise: weekly-plus	71	63	67	68	79
Non-smoker	71	70	70	62	65
Drink: never	17	14	14	10	11
Sex: weekly-plus	53	58	57	74	66
<b>2005</b>					
Do something to stay in shape: weekly-plus	69	64	68	71	69
Non-smoker	80	80	79	80	75
Drink: never	16	15	17	17	11
Sex: weekly-plus	46	59	39	61	61

were jogging back then, around 1980, as were larger numbers of Younger Boomers, who, at that time, were starting to hit 25. Some 55% of Boomer men and 30% of Boomer women were non-smokers. However, relatively few felt the need to abstain from alcohol. Such was the situation around 1980.

- Twenty-five years later, close to 70% of Boomers – both older and younger, male and female – are still doing things on a regular basis to stay in shape. A Boomer poll done for the *Globe and Mail* by the Strategic Counsel in the spring of 2006 found that Boomers think they are far more physically fit than their parents were at the same age. They also are inclined to see themselves as much younger than they really are.<sup>5</sup>

- The number of non-smokers now has reached about 80% among both men and women. But Boomers are still enjoying their alcohol: the inclination to abstain has not increased significantly since 1980.
- Weekly sexual activity levels for men have remained pretty much unchanged from 1995, but are down for women, particularly older Boomers. One is left with the obvious mathematical conclusion: Older Boomer men increasingly are having sex with women who are younger than they are.
- Interestingly, only about 17% of the older Boomer women who are not having weekly-plus sex are expressing concern about their sex lives, compared with 9% of those who are having sex at least once a week.



- In contrast, some 25% of older Boomer men acknowledge that their sex lives concern them “a great deal” or “quite a bit,” whether they are having sex at least once a week or not. Now let’s get this straight: Boomer men are having more sex than Boomer women, yet they are more troubled about their sex lives. Oh, oh – one possible deduction here? Put in blunt, but careful terms, these Boomer men who are 50 and over and frequently having sex with younger women, are feeling pressure to perform. As I said, that is only one possibility – but, between you and me, probably a safe bet.

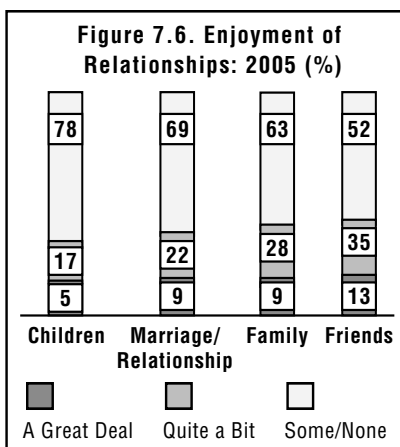
#### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- Weekly smoking levels among Boomers are about 17% in all regions of the country.
- Weekly consumption of alcohol is another story, with Boomer levels ranging from above 50% in Quebec, Ontario, and BC, through just under 50% in Alberta to about 35% in SK-MB and the Atlantic region.
- Weekly efforts on the part of Boomers to stay in shape range from around 80% in BC to 70% everywhere else in the country – with the sole exception of Quebec (55%).

## Relationships

Given the tremendous importance we are placing on good relationships, how are we doing?

- Almost 8 in 10 Canadians who have **children** maintain that their children are sources of “a great deal” of enjoyment.
- About 7 in 10 say the same thing about their **marriages** or ties with **partners**.
- Slightly over 6 in 10 indicate they are receiving “a great deal” of enjoyment from **family life** generally.
- About 5 in 10 people say they receive a high level of enjoyment from their **friendships**.




In most cases, people indicate that these four areas of their lives are a source of at least “quite a bit of enjoyment.” Those who say they receive “little or no enjoyment” come in at a mere 2% in the family and marriage/relationships instances, and only 1% in the case of children or friends.

Over the past 20 years, the enjoyment rank order of these relational areas has remained the same. Enjoyment of children and marriages/relationships has slipped somewhat among Boomer men, in large part, it would appear, because of divorce. Enjoyment of family life, in general, has remained steady. Friendships have become less important sources of

**Table 7.12. Enjoyment of Relationships: 1985-2005**

% Indicating Receive “A Great Deal” of Enjoyment

	Your Children		Marriage/Relationship		Family Life		Friendships	
	1985	2005	1985	2005	1985	2005	1985	2005
	84%	78	71	69	66	63	63	52
<b>Boomers</b>	84	77	71	66	61	64	62	46
Women	82	83	69	66	65	68	70	53
Men	86	72	74	65	58	60	53	39
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	80	71*	71	64*	71	63	63	43
Women	85	78	64	60	73	64	72	54
Men	77	64	77	66	70	63	54	33
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	***	87	***	76	***	62	***	64
Women	***	92	***	81	***	67	***	66
Men	***	81	***	70	***	57	***	62

\*Figures limited to those with children, and those with partners. If all respondents are included, the figures are 65% for children and 50% for marriage/relationship.

enjoyment as Boomers and Pre-Boomers have been getting older – casualties, in large part, it would appear, of everyone’s lack of time. Those friendships that were so important to us in our late teens and early 20s are tough to keep up when one is trying to juggle family, work, and other demands. It’s interesting to see that the amount of enjoyment Post-Boomers are receiving from friendships closely matches what Boomers reported two decades ago.

On the surface, a disturbing finding has to be the decline in enjoyment in all four relational areas for Canadians who are older than the Baby Boomers – people who were 60 and over as of 2005.

I took a closer look at this category, examining the extent to which they are expressing personal concerns, as well as the enjoyment they are receiving from other areas of life besides relationships. I further divided these older Canadians into those under 75 and those 75 and over.

Table 7.13. Concerns by Age Cohort: 2005			
	Pre-Boomers	Baby Boomers	Post-Boomers
<b>Concerned About</b>			
Loneliness	18%	18	24
Boredom	13	15	22
Depression	10	18	22
Aging	26	25	24
Dying	14	13	15
<b>Enjoyment From</b>			
House/apartment	49	38	29
Pets	25	29	27

Far from what I expected to find, these Pre-Boomers are amazingly content and resilient. They are actually *less likely* than Boomers and Post-Boomers to say they are troubled about being lonely, bored, or depressed, nor are they any more likely to say they are concerned about aging or dying.

Contrary to stereotypes that the media continue to perpetuate, they also are not getting quite as much joy from having dogs and cats around the house as people who are younger. One fairly obvious reason is not that they don’t like pets anymore but that growing numbers are living in places where they are not allowed to have them. They consequently have to settle for fish and canaries, or, even worse, electronic animals and simulated fish tanks. Who said life is fair!

Incidentally, my friend Eric Shackleton of Canadian Press recently did an article claiming that Baby Boomers also are turning to animals as an outlet for their affection now that their kids have fled the nest. The article appeared in our local paper with a CP photo of a female Boomer hugging a dog and the heading, “Pets fill the empty nest.”<sup>6</sup> Well, as you can see from the survey findings, pets are just about equally enjoyed by people in all three age cohorts – be they Boomers, Pre-Boomers, or Post-Boomers – and for reasons other than social deprivation.

However, Pre-Boomers do confess to differing in one important way: They are considerably more likely than everyone else to say they are getting a lot of enjoyment from their houses and apartments. Perhaps many of us have been confusing loneliness with tranquility.

An important qualifier. We need to keep in mind that our Project Canada samples – like almost all national survey samples – do not include older people who are living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. I, like many of you, saw my parents live out the last years of their lives in such settings. Frequently, life is far from optimal for all involved.

Yet, it is encouraging to see how large numbers of Canadians who not only are in their 60s and mid-70s, but also in their late 70s and beyond, are enjoying life just as much as everyone else – and in many instances more.

#### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- Some 85% of the parents of Boomers (40-59) are still living in their own houses or apartments, with much smaller numbers elsewhere at this point.
- About 5 in 10 of the parents of Post-Boomers (60-plus) are living in their own dwellings, about 3 in 10 are in seniors' residences, and 1 in 10 are in nursing homes or chronic care hospitals. Smaller numbers are living with respondents or other relatives.

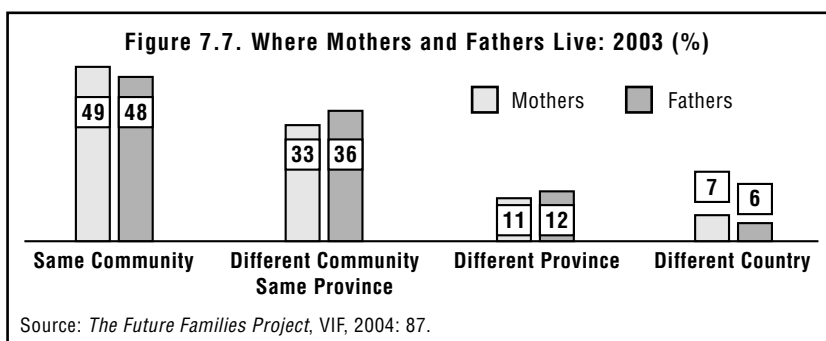
	Parents of	
	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Own house or apartment	85%	51
Seniors' residence	7	28
Nursing home/chronic care	2	11
With you	3	5
With another relative	3	5
With a friend	<1	<1
Totals	100	100
Source: Derived from <i>The Future Families Project</i> , VIF, 2004.		

A serious issue that needs to be highlighted is one factor that makes ties with family members particularly difficult for many older Canadians: geography. In the national survey I did with the Vanier Institute of the Family in 2003, we found that only about 5 in 10 of the parents of Canadian adults live in the same community. Another 3 in 10 live in the same province, but in different communities. A further 1 in 10 live in different provinces, while just under 1 in 10 actually live in different countries.

The consequences are fairly self-evident, and can be summed up in the words of a few of our respondents.



- *“Our children live in the U.S. and Australia and we don’t see them as often as we would like.”*  
— an early retiree, with three children; he and his wife live in Calgary
- *“I find it difficult to keep our family traditions and our closeness as our grandchildren live in far away centres for education and job purposes. We only see each other occasionally in a year. As grandparents we are losing out on seeing the grandchildren.”*  
— a 72-year-old married woman with three children who lives in Cornwall, Ontario
- *“We live a considerable distance away from some of our children and their families. It is not easy for us to be able to get together with them. If we could see each other more it would make our family life happier.”*  
— a male, 78, who resides with his wife in a rural area in BC; they have four children
- *“I very much like living where I live. Both my sons have successful careers and are living on their own in houses nearby. I am very fortunate and feel for friends and other parents whose children have to move away to find employment.”*  
— a 52-year-old male with two children; he and his wife live in a small city in Newfoundland



## Fulfillment

To get a succinct portrait of how Canadians feel about themselves, we pointedly asked them how fulfilled they feel about a number of aspects of their lives in comparison with their aspirations. We listed various areas and asked them to indicate whether they felt *“Very fulfilled,”* *“Fairly fulfilled,”* *“Not very fulfilled,”* or *“Not fulfilled at all.”*

What we found is that about 60% of Canadians say they feel “very fulfilled” with respect to their aspirations about **children**. Close to 50% say the same thing about **family life** generally along with their **marriage or relationship**.

- Beyond those three areas, fewer than 30% of Canadians indicate that they feel “very fulfilled” as they look at what they have achieved, versus what they had hoped to achieve, with respect to their **education** (29%), **career** (24%), and **finances** (13%).
- Some 35% maintain they feel fulfilled as they look at their **lives as a whole**, but only 21% say they feel “very fulfilled” relative to what they **want or wanted out of life**.

If we add “fairly fulfilled” – which, as I see it, means partially but not completely fulfilled – levels obviously go up on average by about 30 to 40 percentage points for family issues, and around 50 points for other areas, bringing overall fulfillment levels to around 75% to 90%. The exception is finances, which only reaches 63%.

Table 7.14. Fulfillment: 2005					
<i>“All of us start out in life with lots of hopes and dreams. How fulfilled do you feel with respect to your aspirations concerning ...”</i>					
“Your ...”	Very Fulfilled	Fairly Fulfilled	Not Very Fulfilled	Not Fulfilled at All	Totals
Children	59%	30	5	6	100
Family life generally	47	42	9	2	100
Marriage/relationship	47	32	12	9	100
Education	29	51	18	2	100
Career	24	51	20	5	100
Finances	13	50	29	8	100
Your life as a whole	35	55	9	1	100
What you want/wanted out of life	21	59	17	3	100


Assuming, then, that most Canadians indicate they are at least partially fulfilled, who is feeling pretty much “completely fulfilled,” and in what areas?

Things can be summed up fairly easily in three points:

1. Fulfillment differences between **women and men** differ very little overall.
2. **Boomers** consistently report *lower levels* of fulfillment than the people who have preceded them. Particularly striking are the large differences in feelings of fulfillment concerning marriage, career, finances, life as a whole, including what one wanted/wants out of life. These findings, incidentally, have been corroborated by the

Boomer survey I alluded to earlier that was carried out in the spring of 2006 for the *Globe and Mail*.<sup>7</sup> Differences between Boomer women and men in most of these areas are minor. The primary gender difference for Pre-Boomers lies in women being far less likely to say that their marriages or relationships have been “very” fulfilling.

3. The 18- to 39-year-old **Post-Boomers** are understandably still pursuing fulfillment in most of these areas. However, they already are matching Boomer levels of fulfillment with respect to children, family life, marriage, education, life as a whole, and even what they feel they have wanted out of life. Clearly, this sense of fulfillment will change for some of these women and men. But the youngest cohort of Canadians is off to a positive start, being very satisfied with many things very early.

Table 7.15. Fulfillment: 2005								
% Indicating “Very Fulfilled”								
	Children	Family Life	Marriage	Education	Career	Finances	Life as Whole	What Wanted
	59%	47	47	29	24	13	35	21
Women	62	48	45	30	22	12	33	20
Men	57	46	49	28	25	14	36	22
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>19</b>
Women	61	48	40	31	23	14	33	18
Men	56	44	47	27	23	12	31	19
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28</b>
Women	61	50	46	30	34	21	41	28
Men	59	53	61	35	41	26	44	29
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>

Overall Happiness

Academics continue to debate how we can determine how happy people really are. Recently, two Princeton professors, economist Alan Krueger and psychologist Daniel Kahneman, decided to find an improved way of measuring happiness, since they felt that people vastly exaggerate how happy they are.<sup>8</sup> Still, when all is said and done, there probably is not a better method than simply asking them. If people are convinced they are happy, that’s the outlook that will be real for them and affect how they approach life. Any alternatives to determining their state of mind at minimum have to be corroborated by what they say. Envision how absurd it would be for me to tell you that, courtesy of my slyly designed methods, I have determined that you are not really happy when you say you are, or – even worse – that you actually are really happy when you say you aren’t!

Dating back to 1975, we have found that 20% to 25% of Canadians, despite economic recession, the threat of the country breaking up, or other pressing issues, report they are “very happy” while another 65% to 70% say they are “pretty happy.” The remaining 10% or so indicate they are “not very happy.” The pattern appears to go back even farther. In 1960, Gallup found that a slightly higher percentage of Canadians, 95%, said they were either “very happy” or “pretty happy.”

Over time, there has been little difference in the tendency of women and men to express high levels of happiness. That persists across all three age cohorts. What stands out is the drop in the professed happiness level of Boomer males between 1975 and 1990 – a pattern similar to what we have seen with their dissatisfaction with institutions and finances.

As I have alluded to a number of times now, the economic and unity crises that emerged in Canada around 1990 seem to have had a particularly negative impact on Boomer men. In contrast, post-Boomer males, who were reaching their mid-20s at that time, have been developing increasingly positive outlooks.


**Table 7.16. Personal Happiness: 1975-2005**

*“Considering all things together, would you say you are...”*

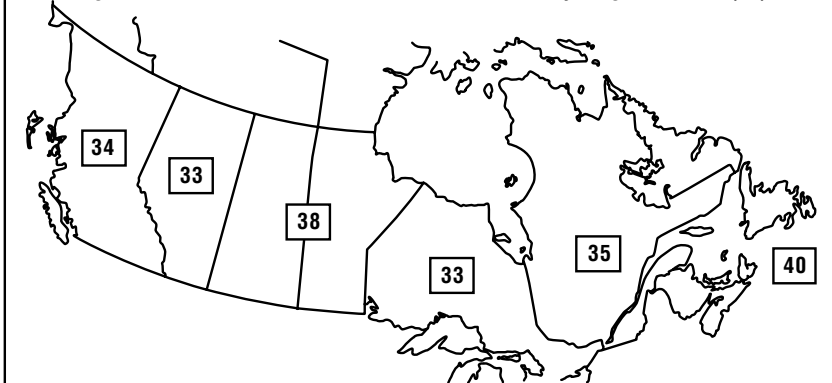
	Very Happy	Pretty Happy	Not Too Happy	Totals
1975	23%	65	12	100
1980	22	65	13	100
1985	26	66	8	100
1990	21	70	9	100
1995	22	70	8	100
2000	21	69	10	100
2005	25	68	7	100

**Table 7.17. Personal Happiness by Age Cohorts: 1975-2005**

% Indicating “Very Happy”

	1975	1990	2005
 <b>Women</b>	23	21	25
<b>Men</b>	21	21	26
<b>BOOMERS</b>	24	21	25
<b>Women</b>	26	18	22
<b>Men</b>	22	18	24
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	31	17	21
<b>Women</b>	21	25	24
<b>Men</b>	20	24	27
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	22	26	22
<b>Women</b>	***	18	30
<b>Men</b>	***	21	28
	***	15	32

**Figure 7.8. Fulfillment with Life as a Whole by Region: 2005 (%)**



# Assessment


We haven't changed very much when it comes to what we want from life. We supremely value freedom and relationships, along with a comfortable life. Consequently, in an ideal Canada, we would find that people would encourage us from an early age to find ways to achieve both, so that by the time we come to the end of our lives, we will find that what we want is what we are experiencing.

That takes me back to that simple, seemingly straightforward question that was asked of us and that we continue to ask children: "What are you going to be when you grow up?" What Canadians are saying is this: "When we grow up and as we grow old, we want to have sufficient personal freedom so we can think and act in ways that suit us. But we also want to experience good relationships. And we would like to know a comfortable life." Those are "the big three" things that Canadians want out of life. That's what they want to experience "when they grow up."

The problem is that those goals aren't necessarily reached by "doing" much of anything – as in pursuing an education or occupation or success. If those objectives are realized at the expense of freedom or the expense of relationships, well – as I suggested earlier – we will find ourselves alone at the top of the wrong mountain.

I, like many of you, have been on the planet long enough to see those realities not merely in survey numbers but in real life. Over the years, I have attended a good number of retirement parties for professors where we have been reminded of all that they accomplished within our fairly small and often insular world of academia. Fairly early on, as I looked at some of my retiring colleagues who now seemed much older, often tired, I found myself thinking, "The accomplishments are impressive. But in the midst of climbing up those academic mountains, I wonder if he ever had time to ski down some of our nearby Montana mountains – to enjoy and be enjoyed by his children as they grew up – to focus on his wife and her world – to have some time just to sit by himself in a small local coffee shop and read the sports pages or a novel that he always wanted to read."

What I didn't mention in the last chapter, when I drew on that wise

Table 7.18. Enjoyment from Being by Myself: 2005	
% Indicating "A Great Deal"	
	26%
Women	29
Men	22
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>25</b>
Women	29
Men	20
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>22</b>
Women	26
Men	18
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>29</b>
Women	31
Men	26

philosopher from another time, is that after realizing that almost everything involves chasing after the wind, his grand conclusion was that we should “eat, drink and be merry” – enjoy life to the full – because tomorrow it’s gone.

Boomers have worked hard and accomplished a lot. They have played a central role in building what amounts to “a new Canada” that is very different from the Canada of the pre-1960s. They have contributed much to the realizing of personal freedom that is valued so highly by Canadians. All that is very clear.

What is not as clear is the extent to which they, especially men, and especially those in positions of leadership and power within our major institutions, have understood the importance that Canadians also place on relationships, and the extent to which they have consciously attempted to find ways to endorse and enhance interpersonal life.

More seriously – at least for them – is the fact that many also have underestimated their own personal relational needs.

A cause for pause is that our examinations of Boomers reveal a surprising and important finding: Relative to the men and women who preceded them and those behind, they are not a happier and more fulfilled generation. On the contrary, they are expressing less happiness and less satisfaction with their lives.


How Boomers are feeling at this stage is obviously a reflection of where they have been directing their attention and resources over their lifetimes. If it’s true that happiness and fulfillment are tied to three things – freedom, relationships, and a comfortable life – then lives that have been consumed with getting ahead educationally, occupationally, and financially are going to come up one short. To edit the old Meatloaf song, “Two out of three ain’t bad” – but it doesn’t quite make it to good.

In the process of getting caught up in “being” someone, perhaps some Boomers – maybe significant numbers – have not given enough attention to what they and other Canadians readily acknowledge to be one of the three keys to happiness and gratification – relationships in the form of good family life, good friends.

During the recent World Cup of soccer in Germany, many of us saw a commercial that Rogers ran extensively on different programs. It featured some single and free Post-Boomers many marvelling at the sites in Europe that they were visiting in the course of attending the great sports event. As the commercial ends, the young male who is describing the trip offers an unexpected and poignant line about what he had learned on the memorable

trip: “I realized the best place in the world is wherever your friends are.”  
In a few years, he will probably add “family.”

It may be an insight that many Boomers have been slow to grasp.

CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING						
						
	1975	1995	2005	1975	1995	2004
<b>Satisfaction/Enjoyment</b>						
Family	73%	61	63	77	75 <sup>2</sup>	62 <sup>4</sup>
Friends	55	64	52	71	69 <sup>2</sup>	47 <sup>4</sup>
Quality of life as a whole			89			90 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Finances</b>						
Same or better	89	75	76	72	79	76
Satisfied with	84	70	64	73	73	76
<b>Health</b>						
Excellent-Good	78	81	75	73	78	81
Fair-Poor	22	19	25	27	22	19
<b>Health-care system</b>						
Excellent-Good			62			53 <sup>3</sup>
Fair-Poor			38			47 <sup>3</sup>
Smoke: Yes	42	29	20	42 <sup>1</sup>	35	30 <sup>3</sup>
Drink: Yes	77	83	84	72 <sup>1</sup>	71 <sup>2</sup>	69 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Happiness</b>						
Very happy	23	22	25	33	29 <sup>2</sup>	33
Pretty happy	65	70	68	54	59 <sup>2</sup>	55
Not too happy	12	8	7	13	12 <sup>2</sup>	12

<sup>1</sup>1977. <sup>2</sup>1994. <sup>3</sup>2005. <sup>4</sup>2003.  
U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, NORC, Chicago.  
Other U.S. sources: Family, friends – The Gallup Poll, March 16, 2004.<sup>1</sup> Quality of life, 2005 – The Harris Poll. Health-care system – The Gallup Poll, Jan. 10, 2006. Smoking, 1995, 2005, drinking 1995, 2005 – The Gallup Poll, Feb. 6, 2006.  
Canadian sources unless otherwise specified: Project Canada Survey Series. Family and friends – the Project Canada survey in 1975 asked about satisfaction received from family and friends, while those in 1995 and 2005 asked about enjoyment received from them.  
Other Canadian sources: Health-care system – The Gallup Poll, Jan. 10, 2006.

# 8

## Civility

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### *Good Social Interaction Is Still Valued*

#### **Major players**

*women, family, friends, personal experience, religion,  
education, media, government, market economy*

- **Widespread perception of growing incivility**
- **Largely a perception problem**
- **Good interpersonal life wanted and needed**
- **Women have been playing a major role**
- **Post-Boomers may deliver important upgrade**

THE cellphone has become a symbol of the perception that interpersonal life is not what it used to be. People talking loudly on their cells, acting as if the rest of us are invisible, or, even worse, knowing that we're there and it doesn't matter, pretty much sums up the widespread sense that times have changed for the worst. The adjectives in the media and on the streets that are used to describe such behaviour flow freely – rude, selfish, disrespectful, annoying, impolite, indifferent, and callous – to offer just a handful that come to mind.

To return to the cellphone example, a January 2006 ABC News poll found that 71% of Americans are bothered by annoying cellphone calls – including people receiving and even placing calls in mid-conversation.<sup>1</sup> Another recent survey, for a U.S. cellphone company, found that, over the



last few years, approval of cellphone use in restaurants and public wash-rooms has declined to around 20% and 40% respectively, while approval of using phones in grocery stores is up to about 70%.<sup>2</sup> Pittsburgh columnist Peter Leo comments that a 2005 survey for an advertising agency found that 15% of Americans have interrupted sex to answer a cellphone, adding that “0% have interrupted a cellphone call to have sex.”<sup>3</sup>

Canadians have shown similar impatience with what they regard as inappropriate cellphone use. As early as 2001, a Decima poll found that some 85% of people across the country supported the legal use of units that disable cellphones (“jammers”) in theatres and school classrooms, while 70% felt it should be legal to use them in restaurants.<sup>4</sup> Vancouver journalist Paula Brook recently referred to the inconsiderate use of cellphones, e-mail, and any number of portable devices as “the rude new world of upward electronic mobility, also known as downward civility.” In an interview with Brook, Vancouver-area MLA Gregor Robertson summed things up this way: “It’s disconcerting when you’re around all these BlackBerry zombies, with their heads down, thumbs rolling. Nobody’s in the present.”<sup>5</sup>

“The cell,” of course, is not the culprit. It’s just one mirror of some of the characteristics that have become prevalent in our two cultures.

It’s worth noting that concern about the decline of civility is hardly limited to North America. British author and journalist Lynne Truss, best known for her book on punctuation, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, has come out with a scathing indictment of developments in Britain. The title of her 2005 book is not particularly subtle: *Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door*.<sup>6</sup> Truss offers a personal take on ever-increasing incivility in what one reviewer has called, “a wall-to-wall wail about rudeness.”<sup>7</sup> In light of what we have been saying about the demise of deference in Canada, it is interesting to see Truss arguing that the end of deference in Britain and other countries is associated with an increase in rudeness. Ironically, it is unacceptable to look up to people, she says, but it is acceptable to look down on them.

## **The Case for the Decline of Civility**

Over the past 20 years, more than 1 in 2 Canadians have been expressing the view that “values have been changing for the worse.” Such a view peaked at just under 75% in 1995; in the past 10 years it has been held by close to 60% of people across the country.

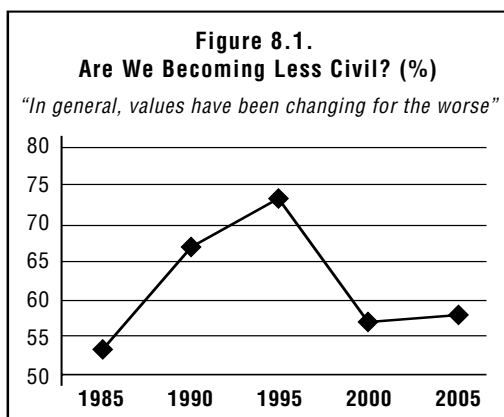
In my research on youth, I have often pointed out how observers of Canadian teenagers have tended to fear the worst. In the introduction to *Canada's Teens* (2001), for example, I noted that highly respected CROP pollster Alain Giguere had told an Ottawa gathering of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in late

2000 that he was reluctant to relay to the bishops the results of his surveys on youth because of the shocking findings. Giguere reported that today's young people love violence, are sexually permissive, pleasure seeking, get high on risk-taking, are weak on ethics and social concern, and devalue both religion and family. "We are dealing with a generation that has grown up on Hollywood," he said. "They are bombarded with sex and violence, and have no sense of responsibility." And then he added the knockout punch: "I tremble to see what kind of society they are going to produce in 20 to 25 years."<sup>8</sup>


In December of 2005, the *Globe and Mail* invited readers to express their thoughts "on the popular notion that, for today's young people, civility is a foreign concept." In publishing some of the responses a week later, the paper's brief preamble included the following: "Talk about dangling a red flag in front of a bull. You responded so, ah, energetically that we almost feel sorry for the little brutes." It added, "A word of warning to indulgent parents: You're in for a rough ride."<sup>9</sup>

Canadians generally are convinced that interpersonal life has been seriously deteriorating.

- Some 75% feel they have to look after themselves, since not all that many other people will.
- Only about 1 in 2 think people today are as kind as they used to be.
- Just over 1 in 3 think people today are as courteous as people were in the past.



**Table 8.1. Cynicism About Civility: 2005**

		
I find I have to look out for myself since not that many other people do	75%	
I think people today are just as kind as they used to be	55	
I think people today are just as courteous as they used to be	36	

In short, when all's said and done, large numbers of Canadians believe they are living in a country where there are not a lot of people who care about their well-being and where kindness and courtesy are on the decline.


- The sense that we pretty much have to **look after ourselves** is more common among Pre-Boomers and Boomers – especially men – than it is among younger Canadians.
- The beliefs that people today are **not as kind or courteous** as they were in the past are particularly pronounced among Boomers and Post-Boomers, especially women.
- Perhaps surprisingly, **the oldest cohort** of Canadians is the most likely to believe that people today are just as kind and courteous as people were in the past.

It also is telling that many Canadians are wary of people they don't know who act friendly toward them. Since 1990, we've been asking our survey participants to respond to the statement, "*A stranger who shows a person attention is probably up to something.*" The levels of agreement have been remarkably consistent – 22% in 1990 and 20% in 1995, 2000, and 2005.

- Over the 15-year period, Boomer women have become less inclined to feel such wariness. However, the number of Boomer men who feel that caution is warranted has risen slightly, from 18% to 23%, bringing their numbers up to the figures of older Pre-Boomers.
- Younger Canadians, especially women, have become less wary of friendly strangers over the past 15 years.

These initial findings point to our having a lot of reservations about the people living around us.


**Table 8.2. Civility Cynicism by Age Cohort and Gender: 2005**

	Have to Look Out for Myself	People as Kind	People as Courteous
	<b>75%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>36</b>
Women	73	52	33
Men	77	57	39
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>34</b>
Women	76	47	30
Men	82	57	39
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>42</b>
Women	79	71	43
Men	84	64	41
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>33</b>
Women	66	46	29
Men	65	52	37

**Table 8.3. Suspicion About Friendly Strangers: 1990-2005**

*"A stranger who shows a person attention is probably up to something"*

% Agreeing

	1990	2005
	<b>22%</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>
Women	21	13
Men	18	23
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>
Women	23	23
Men	23	23
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>
Women	32	20
Men	26	20

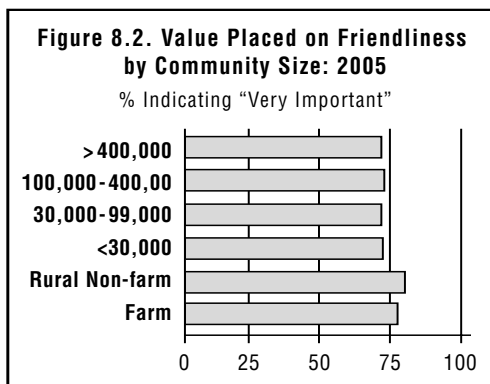
However, apart from these impressions and generalizations, what are “they” *really* like?

## Some National Snapshots

We have already seen that the vast majority of Canadians want the same things – freedom, good relationships, a comfortable life. They also want to know that they and their loved ones are safe from harm, including harm from other people. The facts of the matter indicate that we have more in common with each other than many of us realize.

### Friendliness

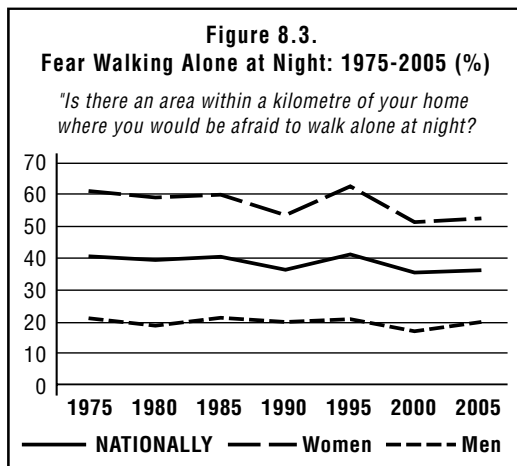
I think it’s highly significant that 73% of Canadians say “friendliness” is something “very important” to them, while just about everyone else (26%) say it is “some-what important.” There are some predictable variations by community size – but not much.



Even the majority of the 20% of Canadians who are wary of friendly strangers place a high value on friendliness (70%). That tells us that, for most people, caution around strangers has little to do with an unwillingness to respond to genuine friendliness. Rather, they are cautious because they do not know whether or not the friendly stranger is a *safe* friendly stranger.

### Fear

We also know we have to be careful to avoid putting ourselves in physically risky situations. Since 1975, I’ve been asking Canadians if there is an area within a kilometre of their homes where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. What we have found is that a fairly consistent figure of about

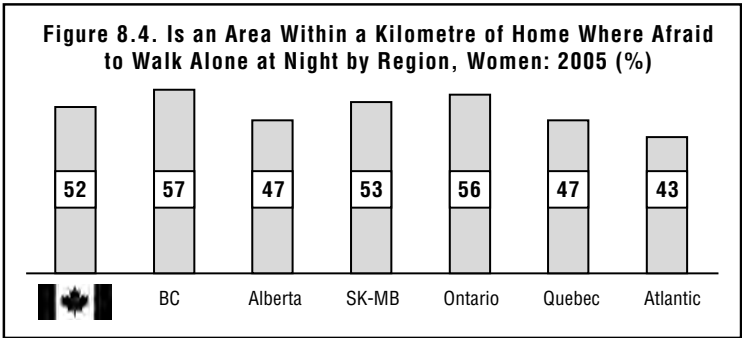


40% of people across the country acknowledge that such places exist in their cities and communities. It is important to note that the anxiety levels for women over the years have readily exceeded those of men.

- From the mid-1970s through the mid-90s, around 60% of women expressed anxiety about the existence of proximate dangerous areas.
- Since 1995, the figure for women has declined to approximately 50%, while the level for men has remained about the same (20%).

These findings underline a fact that we men often don't understand very well – that women live with far more anxiety than we do when it comes to personal safety. A male often will not give much thought to walking alone at night down a portion of Robson Street or Jasper Avenue, Portage Avenue or Yonge Street, Ste-Catherine or Barrington Street. We answer doors without worrying about who is on the other side; we don't give a lot of thought to who gets on an elevator with us; we don't worry much about leaving a window open at night to get some fresh air; we seldom have to deal with unwanted advances. We're not women. We have lots of freedom.

Apart from having to deal with annoying intrusions, occasional harassment, and irritating overtures, 1 in 5 Canadian women say they have been sexually assaulted. The figure for men appears to be around 1 in 20. Most sexual assaults, the research shows, involve people known to the victims, rather than strangers – something most of us wouldn't know from the typical television and movie depictions. Little wonder that women often feel unsafe.



We saw earlier that about 30% of Canadians think crime and violence represent “very serious” problems in the country today. Many are speaking from experience.

- Since the mid-1970s, more than 5% to 10% of people have reported that someone broke into their house or apartment in a previous year.

- Some 2% to 3% have said they were robbed by someone using force in the past 12 months.
- While it hasn't happened often, around 6% say they were threatened with a gun or shot at in Canada at some point in their lives.

These kinds of personal experiences, when given media attention, along with other assaults and homicides – real or fictional – are what fuel anxiety, fear, suspicion, and caution as we Canadians relate to each other. The sentiments that 70% of the people across the country expressed in 1990 still seem widespread: *“One cannot be too careful in dealing with people.”*

Table 8.4. Victimization: 1975-2005					
Break-in Past Year	Robbed Past Year	Gun: Canada	Sexually Assaulted		
			Women	Men	
1975	9%	2	5	***	***
1980	9	2	5	***	***
1985	8	4	6	***	***
1990	8	3	8	***	***
1995	6	3	5	19	3
2000	5	2	7	21	7
2005	5	2	6	21	4

The specific items: “During [previous year], did anyone illegally enter your apartment or home?”  
 “During [previous year], did anyone take something from you by using force – such as a stick-up, mugging, or threat?”  
 “Have you ever been threatened with a gun or shot at in Canada?”  
 “Have you ever been sexually assaulted?”

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

For some time now we have wanted tougher courts but are divided on the death penalty.

- “In general the courts do not deal harshly enough with criminals”  
 1975: 83% 1980: 86% 1985: 83% 1990: 83% 1995: 87% 2000: 81% 2005: 81%
- “The death penalty should be exercised in some instances”  
 1975: 79% 1980: 83% 1985: 84% 1990: 78% 1995: 82% 2000: 74% 2005: 66%
- The drop in support for the death penalty reflects major age cohort differences:  
 Baby Boomers: 73%, Pre-Boomers: 70%, Post-Boomers: 55% (2005).

### Perception of Others’ Values

In a number of the Project Canada national surveys, I have asked respondents for their perception of how important they think certain traits are “to Canadians in general.” I then have compared the results with the actual importance that people place on those same traits. The findings are intriguing.

For example, in the 2000

Table 8.5. Perceived and Actual Values		
	Perceived Importance	Actual Importance
A comfortable life	64%	63
Honesty	49	92
Family life	45	85
Being a Canadian	39	58
Concern for others	25	71
Cultural group background	13	17
Spirituality	12	34

survey, Canadians were closely in touch with the value people place on “a comfortable life” and cultural group background. But that’s about it. They tended to dramatically underestimate the importance their Canadian counterparts were giving to traits such as honesty and concern for others, family life, being a Canadian, and spirituality.

- A similar comparison of perceived and actual values, this time comparing teenagers and adults, reveals a similar pattern. Adults grossly underestimate the importance teens give to honesty, family life, concern for others, and spirituality.
- For their part, teens return the favour by assuming those same traits are not valued all that much by adults.

Talk about a generation gap!

One final illustration. Canada allegedly was in disarray by mid-1990 due to the failure in June to ratify the Meech Lake Accord, which had been three years in the making. The media that had provided us with detailed, daily images of a prime minister huddling into the night with premiers and declaring that Canada was in crisis, warned us that the country needed to brace both for Quebec’s abrupt separation and economic disaster. Neither, of course, took place.


The primary reason was fairly simple: The crisis was largely manufactured by politicians, the media, academics, pollsters, lawyers, and other people centrally involved in “the constitutional industry.” The reason the Canadian sky didn’t fall was that most people in Quebec and the rest of the country had limited interest in the unity and constitutional debates. The “real problems” in the minds of people in Quebec and elsewhere were “staying alive and living well”

**Table 8.6. The Values Intergenerational Gap**  
 % Indicating They Think These Values Are “Very Important”

	TEENS		ADULTS	
	Perceived	Actual	Perceived	Actual
Honesty	21%	73	37	92
Family life	13	59	47	85
Concern for others	12	62	30	71
Spirituality	5	29	15	34

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *Canada’s Teens*, 2001: 228.

**Table 8.7. Social Concerns, Quebec and the Rest of Canada: 1990**  
 % Viewing as “Very Important”

		Quebec	Rest of Canada
The economy	57%	54	58
The environment	55	56	54
Government incompetence	53	45	55
The GST	53	45	55
Child abuse	51	57	48
Drugs	50	54	48
AIDS	48	54	46
Lack of leadership	48	33	54
Unemployment	45	52	43
Crime	41	43	41
Violence	40	53	36
Unity	37	41	36
French-English relations	28	32	27
Constitutional agreement	27	37	23
Native-White relations	23	19	25

issues, beginning with the economy. The message to politicians was clear: Resolve the economic issues and there will be no need for anyone to pursue the radical option of separation.

I had the opportunity in the fall of 1991 – when yet another constitutional package was being presented – to speak to three Canadian Clubs in Quebec, as well as to do some of my usual speaking in the West, including Alberta. Part of my message in both settings was the same: “There’s a province that is concerned, not so much with unity and constitutional issues, as with our having a sound economy. Do you know what province I’m talking about?” In Quebec, I paused and then said, “Alberta!” In Alberta, the pause was followed with, “Quebec!” In both settings I then added, “If the situation I am describing ‘there’ sounds similar to how you are feeling ‘here,’ don’t be surprised. Those are the priorities of people across the country. The tragedy of the so-called unity crisis is that we have far more in common with each other than we realize. It’s time we got the news out!”

It’s true. When it comes to what we want from life, so many of the things that we value, and our desire to experience optimal individual and social life, we Canadians have much more in common than we realize. It’s time people heard the news.

## Interpersonal Values

In exploring the kinds of values that make for good interpersonal life, the surveys have included explicit value items since 1985. Building on the well-known work of social psychologist Milton Rokeach, we’ve been looking at what we want out of life – what Rokeach refers to as “terminal values.” We’ve also included items allowing us to examine some of the values that are important both individually and socially as we pursue those goals – what Rokeach calls “instrumental values.”<sup>10</sup> When people are talking about the demise of values, they usually have this latter category in mind.

For all the talk about values getting worse, the surveys show that key interpersonal qualities such as **honesty, compassion, politeness, and forgiveness** have continued to be solidly endorsed by Canadians over the past two decades.

**Table 8.8. Importance of Select Interpersonal Traits: 1985-2005**

% Indicating “Very Important”\*

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Honesty	96%	89	89	92	92
Kindness	***	75	79	81	83
Concern for others	***	63	68	71	75
Politeness	70	62	67	76	75
Forgiveness	75	55	57	70	75
Generosity	***	51	57	47	55

\*The other response options: “Somewhat Important,” “Not Very Important,” and “Not Important at All.”



- The valuing of **kindness** and **concern for others** actually has been on the rise since at least 1990.
- The importance placed on both **politeness** and **forgiveness** has made something of a comeback after taking a turn downward in the early 1990s.
- **Generosity** is not as widely embraced as the other interpersonal values, but nonetheless is seen by a slight majority of people as “very important.”


These findings indicate that key interpersonal characteristics – led by honesty and kindness – continue to be embraced by a solid majority of Canadians.

However, an extremely important finding emerges when we look at three illustrative values – honesty, politeness, and generosity – by both gender and age cohort.

- While there are hardly any significant differences by age group in the endorsement of these interpersonal traits, *without a single exception, women are more inclined than men to place a high level of importance on all three.*
- Even the youngest Post-Boomer women are just as likely as their older female counterparts to value these characteristics – differing to a considerable extent from Post-Boomer males in doing so.


This important gender difference finding is also readily evident when we look at the perception of social problems. Women are consistently more likely than men to see any issue that has a clear-cut “human face” on it as “very serious.”

**Table 8.9. Importance of Interpersonal Traits by Age Cohort and Gender: 2005**

	Honesty	Politeness	Generosity
	92%	75	55
Women	95	80	64
Men	89	69	46
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>54</b>
Women	95	80	65
Men	90	71	43
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>53</b>
Women	96	84	61
Men	94	75	45
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>
Women	95	78	65
Men	83	62	49

**Table 8.10. Illustrative Social Concerns by Gender: 2005**

% Viewing as “Very Important”

	Women	Men
Health care	49%	56
Child abuse	37	28
Poverty	32	23
Violence generally	31	24
Bullying	23	17
Alcoholism	22	15
Government incompetence	42	42
American influence	23	22
Lack of unity	19	19
Sexual assault	31	24
Sexual harassment	24	18
Unequal treatment of women	15	11

So it is that larger numbers of women than men view issues such as health care, poverty, and bullying, for example, as “very serious.” When the human face on the issue is not quite as explicit, the issue is a bit more abstract – government incompetence, lack of unity – the gender difference tends to disappear. Obviously women are also more likely than men to view gender-specific issues as “very serious,” notably the unequal treatment of women, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. These findings, incidentally, are consistent with what we have found for teenagers as well.<sup>11</sup>

Two American Gallup Poll writers, Lydia Saad and Linda Lyons, made a similar observation recently. They say one consistent finding on American domestic issues, even as levels of concern change from year to year, is that women tend to express higher levels of concern than men. They ask, “Are women more troubled by societal problems, more prone to anxiety in general, or simply more comfortable admitting they worry?” Their conclusions are indecisive. Our findings suggest that, yes, women – both as adults and well before – are more troubled about “personal” societal problems than men. Given that the pattern can be observed by the teen years, if not before, the key factor is neither anxiety nor greater openness, but values. The tougher question is, “Why the pronounced value differences?”

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

##### **Where There Are Laughs There's Life**

- An even 70% of Boomers, Pre-Boomers, and Post-Boomers say humour is “very important” to them personally.
- Some 67% further say humour is something they regard as “very important” to instill in their children.
- Perhaps surprising to some of us – given that men typically initiate humour – more women (75%) than men (65%) place a high value on humour, with those figures very similar within the Boomer and older and younger Canadian ranks.

#### **Valued Performance Traits**

Anyone who has ever written a letter of reference knows only too well that, in addition to discussing “integrity issues,” such as honesty and trustworthiness, one is expected to discuss intelligence, dependability, work ethic, and so on. Our national surveys over the years have allowed us to take a reading on the relative importance Canadians give to such performance traits.

- For some time now, some 8 in 10 people have said they place a very high level of importance on **reliability**.


- **Hard work, cleanliness, and intelligence** consistently have been given a “very important” rating by about 6 in 10 people over the past 20 years.
- An appreciation of **creativity** has been increasing steadily since around 1990, rising from an endorsement level of only 38% in 1990 to 54% as of 2005. There also appears to be a bit more room for **imagination**.

**Table 8.11. Importance of Select Performance Traits: 1985-2005**

	% Indicating “Very Important”				
	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Reliability	88%	80	82	82	81
Working hard	67	58	65	59	62
Cleanliness	75	69	66	67	61
Intelligence	61	58	57	55	57
Creativity	***	38	45	50	54
Imagination	41	42	45	***	***

In the case of performance traits such as **reliability, hard work, and creativity**, women again are slightly more inclined than men to place a high level of importance on each. But the differences are small. More striking is how **Boomer women** stand out in placing a high level of importance on creativity – with their level far above those of Boomer men and older men (65% versus

**Table 8.12. Important of Performance Traits by Age Cohort and Gender: 2005**

	Reliability	Hard Work	Creativity
	81%	62	54
Women	85	64	57
Men	78	60	53
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>55</b>
Women	86	67	65
Men	79	59	43
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>
Women	90	58	52
Men	85	61	41
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>58</b>
Women	81	65	58
Men	70	62	58

around 43%) – and how free-spirited **younger-generation men** are less inclined than everyone else to place a high value on reliability, even though they are just as likely as others to place importance on both hard work and creativity. Try writing that up in your reference letter.

Overall, these performance characteristics clearly do not know the level of consensus of either valued goals or valued interpersonal traits. Our emphasis on individuality appears to be showing in this area, with interesting and – to use the overused word just once in the entire book – “challenging” times for people who are hoping for good performances. There simply are considerable variations in the importance given to traits such as working hard, intelligence, and (gasp!) even cleanliness.

## Hopes for Greater Civility

I think we can get a fairly clear portrait of the kind of individuals and society we are aspiring to create by asking ourselves a simple question: “How important do we think it is to instill certain traits in our children?” By further comparing what people of different age cohorts say, we can get

a sense as well of the extent to which these values have or haven't been changing over time.


We put such a question to Canadians in a comprehensive national survey of family aspirations that I carried out with the Vanier Institute of the Family in 2003. The core of the sample was composed of people who have been participating in our Project Canada surveys, providing an additional survey opportunity to chart change over time.

What we found is that almost everyone thinks it is extremely important for parents to instill **honesty** in their children. About 85% say the same about **politeness** and **forgiveness**. Some 80% feel that **concern for others** is a very important trait for their children to possess, while a slightly smaller number (77%) express similar sentiments about **generosity**.

- Consistent with what we found for personal values, **women** are consistently more inclined than **men** to place a high level of importance on all five of these interpersonal traits. That pattern holds nationally as well as within the three age cohorts.

**Table 8.13. Importance of Parents Instilling Interpersonal Traits by Cohort and Gender: 2003**

% Indicating "Very Important"

	Honesty	Politeness	Forgiveness	Concern for Others	Generosity
	<b>98%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>
Women	98	87	85	83	82
Men	97	83	81	73	72
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>79</b>
Women	99	85	87	84	86
Men	97	88	83	70	73
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>71</b>
Women	98	91	84	89	75
Men	97	83	78	71	68
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>79</b>
Women	97	86	83	90	84
Men	98	76	81	76	74


Source: Computed from Bibby, *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

- A finding of particular interest to our "change" question is that ***no significant age group differences exist in the importance assigned to these traits***. People in the youngest Post-Boomer cohort are at least as likely as Boomers and Pre-Boomers to maintain that it's very important to instill honesty and generosity; only slightly less likely (because of a lower male level) to stress the importance of politeness; and even more inclined than older adults to emphasize the importance of their children developing concern for other people.

These overall survey results do not suggest reason for gloom and doom as we contemplate the impact that the Post-Boomers, in concert with

Boomers, will have on Canadian interpersonal life. In fact, further findings suggest that the newest emerging generation may, if anything, provide an interpersonal improvement on the Boomers.

They are just as likely as people in the Boomer and Post-Boomer cohorts to express the importance of instilling the themes of **responsibility**, **environment**, and **legacy**, more likely to emphasize the importance of instilling **friendliness**, and far more inclined to see acceptance of **diversity** as traits their children need to adopt.

Table 8.14. Importance of Parents Instilling Further Civility Traits by Cohort and Gender: 2003					
% Indicating "Very Important"					
	Responsibility for Actions	Respect for the Environment	Friendliness	Accept of Diversity	Leaving World in Better Shape
	92%	73	73	69	67
Women	95	80	78	76	71
Men	89	77	63	61	62
<b>BOOMERS</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>68</b>
Women	95	77	75	73	74
Men	86	64	65	55	61
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>
Women	94	80	76	69	73
Men	90	70	66	53	63
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>66</b>
Women	96	78	83	85	69
Men	92	69	72	75	63

Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

In the case of each of these five values, the gender difference persists. More women than men, nationally as well as within each age cohort, place high value on their children appropriating such traits.

PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS						
Over the years, Canadians have shown very strong support for people in need to have access to adequate medical care and incomes.						
• "People who cannot afford it have a right to medical care"						
1975: 97%	1980: 98%	1985: 96%	1990: 97%	1995: 97%	2000: 96%	2005: 98%
• "People who cannot afford it have a right to an income adequate to live on"						
1975: 90%	1980: 90%	1985: 89%	1990: 90%	1995: 85%	2000: 88%	2005: 88%

**Generalizations Revisited**

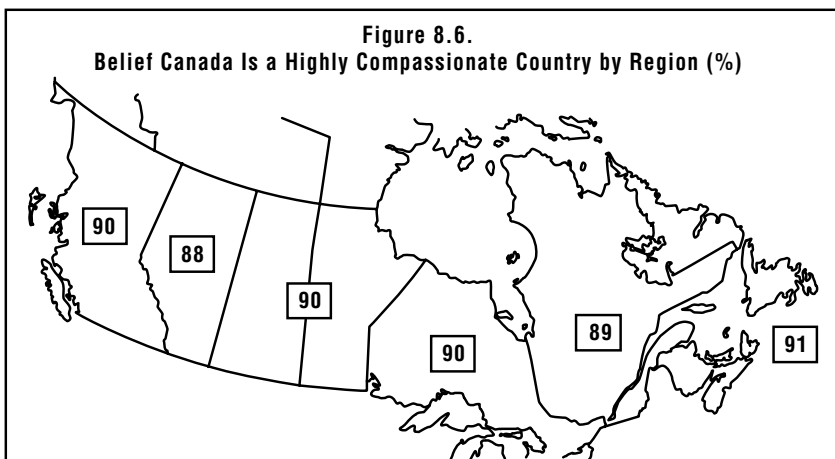
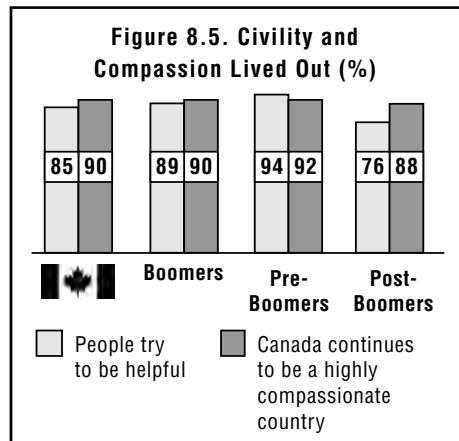
Earlier in this chapter we saw that some 75% of Canadians think they have to look out for themselves since few other people do. Only about half say they think people are as kind as they used to be, while just 1 in 3 feel people are as courteous as they were in the past.

Yet we've just seen that the vast majority of Canadians actually place a high value on kindness and courtesy. So, beyond generalizing about ourselves and our sense of how the present stacks up against the past, let's get a bit more specific and personal. What has been your own experience in your encounters with people? Do you find, for example, that, for the most part, the people you deal with try to be helpful when you need their help? If our findings on values are accurate, the answer should tend to be yes.

Put in those terms, that's what happens. Some 85% of people across the country say they find that "most of the time, people try to be helpful."

And what about social compassion? As we live out life in Canada, do we, on balance, have a sense that "we continue to be a highly compassionate country"? The answer given by 90% of Canadians is "yes."

For all our general impressions and cynicism about the deterioration of interpersonal life in Canada, we continue to value it and aspire to experience it.



## Assessment

Our grandparents used to do it. Our parents did it. We are doing it. And our kids will do it. So will theirs. Every generation will tell the next one that things are not as good as they were in the past. Nowhere is such an inclination more prevalent than when we look at how people are treating each other, starting with how they treat us. We've already seen the scepticism that exists about values today. In 1982, national polls in Canada and the U.S. found that 70% of Canadians and 74% of Americans maintained that people at that point were "less willing to help each other" than they were in the early 1970s.<sup>12</sup> If polls in the 1970s had asked the same question, you know what people would have said about the early 1960s.

We just have to have some kids make us wait while they walk across the street on a red light ... or see that young driver in the pickup truck – without "the sticker" – pull up into the handicapped parking stall ... or hear someone bark out their order at a fast food restaurant with no semblance of a "please" or "thank you" ... and many of us will begin mumbling something along the lines of, "Can you believe it? What's with people today?"

It seems there are at least three components to the problem. The first is our short-term memories. The second is that we don't know how to analyze data: the things we don't like obviously stick out, and we proceed to confuse the exceptions with the norm. The third is that we don't talk enough to each other. If we talked and listened more, we would find – as our surveys do – that we have far more in common with each other than we realize.

Take the examples of walking through a red light, the guy in the handicapped stall, and the social-skill-challenged person ordering (a good word here) his meal in the restaurant. I had the opportunity in our national survey of teens in 2000 to ask 15- to 19-year-olds how they felt about each of these situations. Some 75% said they disapproved of what people were doing in all three instances. If you are among the many of us who feel some guilt upon hearing the revelation, you should. Some 3 out of 4 teens who are innocent have been getting indicted because of the one – and he may not even have been a teen – who did the red-light, handicapped-parking, or meal-ordering thing.

Canadians are much more civil and friendly and compassionate than we all realize. We would like to be able to have more positive interaction with each other, however fleeting and superficial that interaction might be. We don't want to feel anxious or fearful. We don't particularly enjoy conflict.

Being treated as if we don't matter by people who blatantly detach themselves from us adds nothing, and, on occasion, takes something away.

We are social beings. No, our lives won't rise or fall on the basis of how people we don't know or deal with only occasionally or don't regard as "close" relate to us. We only have so much time to give to the people who particularly matter – family members, friends, colleagues, and a few others.

But life seems better, a bit more enjoyable, definitely more uplifting, when those superficial and brief encounters with people we don't know well or don't see often are pleasant and positive – when they treat us as if we matter, energize us with some unexpected humour, offer us a closing encouraging remark and maybe even a half wave and a smile.

All right, let's not get overly melodramatic – maybe that's too much to expect from everyone. But our findings do suggest that the potential is there for far more positive interaction with people from coast to coast than many of us realize.

So let's be honest. The information we have looked at in this chapter shows us that Boomers – specifically Boomer men – have not been out there in front of everyone else when it comes to cultivating civility. If anything, they have been a bit more likely than just about everyone else to think we have to look out for ourselves, be suspicious of friendly strangers, downplay the importance of politeness, and not place high value on either generosity or creativity. Further, along with older males, they have been less inclined than anybody to endorse the importance of friendliness, acceptance of diversity, and, this one's a biggie, concern for others.

Before you Boomer males aim this book at your nearest garbage can, let me rush to add that obviously we are talking about patterns. The differences between Boomer men and other people in endorsing many of these traits tend to be small.

But my primary point here is that Boomer males, over the past two decades or so, during a time when they have been particularly well positioned to have a major positive influence on interpersonal life in Canada, have not been at the forefront in embracing and cultivating key interpersonal values.

And now for the radical, good news finding: Women, led by Boomer women, have been leading the way in attempting to transform interpersonal life in Canada. For reasons known only to the gods, women consistently have demonstrated that they care about people of all ages – their personal concerns, their hopes and dreams.



The result is that Canadian society has become a more compassionate society as increasingly large numbers of women have moved outside the home and into rank-and-file positions, as well as positions of leadership and influence – as teachers, professors, lawyers, physicians, journalists, clergy and lay leaders, government bureaucrats, corporate board members and heads. Women have helped to sensitize us to problems we scarcely knew existed: child abuse, violence in schools, bullying, sexual assault and harassment, inadequate long-term care facilities, discrimination against gays and lesbians, fetal alcohol disorders. They also have added new urgency to the need to deal effectively with many “old” problems, including poverty, changing family structures, and the need for equality in all of our institutions.


We haven’t changed very much when it comes to aspiring to know good interpersonal life. Contrary to common belief, we also haven’t been experiencing a decline in civility or an impoverishment of interpersonal values – thanks, in large part, to women.

What the Boomer men are leaving behind in this case is a reminder that the interpersonal sphere needs greater attention as we pursue the rest of life. What the Boomer women are leaving behind is a renewed – and in many ways *new* – emphasis on the importance of people and how they relate to each other. The Boomers are also leaving behind *a new generation* of men and women who have been touched by their dual influence on things interpersonal.

The result, on balance, is that the current emerging generation, working in turn alongside the last of the Boomers and younger people, has the potential to bring a significant “upgrade” to civility in Canada. The Post-Boomers also will be in a position to play a major role in helping Canadians realize some family aspirations that haven’t changed anywhere close to as much as people think.

That’s the important trend we want to look at next.

## CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING

						
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
Values are getting worse		68	58			77
Crime is increasing		83	71		84	67
Crime: "extremely" or "very" serious	57	41	34			49
Area within a km/mile afraid walk at night	40	36	36	451	41	38
Important to instill in children ...						
Good manners		75	79 <sup>2</sup>		73	
Hard work		35	76 <sup>2</sup>		53	
Imagination		23			27	
Unselfishness		42			36	
Euthanasia: in some situations, physician-administered		76 <sup>3</sup>	71	62 <sup>4</sup>	72	67 <sup>5</sup>
Capital punishment						
Canada: in some situations	79	78	76			
U.S.: for convicted murderers				64	79	69 <sup>5</sup>
Would like to see immigration increase			20			7

<sup>1</sup>1974. <sup>2</sup>2003. <sup>3</sup>1995. <sup>4</sup>1977. <sup>5</sup>2004.

U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago. U.S. sources: Values getting worse – The Gallup Poll, May 25, 2006. Crime increasing 1990, 2005 – The Gallup Poll, June 16, 2006. Instilled traits, 1990 – World Values Survey. Proud to be an American – The Gallup Poll, July 3, 2006.

Canadian sources unless otherwise specified: Project Canada Survey Series. Instilled traits, 1990 – World Values Survey. Instilled traits 2003: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 44-45.

# 9

## Family Aspirations

*The Hopes and Dreams Are Still Alive*

### Major players

*religion, family, friends, personal experience*

- **Family life has been changing**
- **Family continues to be cherished**
- **Long-standing aspirations persist**
- **Major gap between aspirations and reality**
- **That gap requires our attention**

**O**N October 22, 2002, the word came down from Statistics Canada regarding the 2001 Census findings on the makeup of the country's families. A release by the agency's publication, *The Daily*, included the following:

*A family portrait taken by the census at the outset of the 21st century shows that changes in the makeup of Canadian families during the past two decades are continuing. The proportion of "traditional" families – mom, dad and the kids – continues to decline, whereas families with no children at home are increasing.*

*Married or common-law couples with children aged 24 and under living at home represented only 44% of all families. These accounted for 49% of all families in 1991, and represented more than one-half in 1981 (55%).*

*Couples who had no children under 25 living at home accounted for 41% of all families in 2001, up from 38% in 1991. In 1981, this family type accounted for barely 34%.*

*The 2001 Census showed that an increasing proportion of couples are living common-law. Married couples accounted for 70% of all families in 2001, down from 83% in 1981. At the same time, the proportion of common-law couples rose from 6% to 14%.*

*In 2001, the census counted 5,901,400 married couples, 1,158,400 common-law couples and 1,311,200 lone-parent families.<sup>1</sup>*

Within a day, announcements of the traditional family’s demise were everywhere.

**The Death of the Traditional Family**

Tom Arnold of the *National Post* wrote, “The institution known as Canada’s traditional family – a married mother and father with children – is crumbling.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Canadian Press, in a widely distributed story, declared, “‘Traditional’ no longer describes the universal ideal for family in Canada. Modern Canadians are not content to simply find a mate, hit the altar and live happily ever after.”<sup>3</sup> The *Globe and Mail*’s Erin Anderssen summed things succinctly: “Canada is a place of loners and shrinking families, where the lovers have increasingly lost interest in a walk down the aisle.”<sup>4</sup> Two subsequent articles in *Maclean’s* asserted that increasing numbers of women are no longer waiting for men before having children on their own, and that, for many adults, friends have taken the place of family.<sup>5</sup> Over a decade ago, in 1994, declared by the United Nations the International Year of the Family, a major national poll conducted for the magazine led to the conclusion that “the 1950s-style family, though not quite extinct, is on the endangered list.” Still, the poll acknowledged that the family was showing “enduring strength.”<sup>6</sup>

Wow! Was there much left to say? Well, actually, quite a lot.


Table 9.1. The Growing Diversity of Families in Canada: 1931-2001					
	1931	1951	1971	1991	2001
Married couples with children at home	55%	58	60	48	42
Married couples without children at home	31	32	31	29	29
Common-law couples with children at home	***	***	***	4	6
Common-law couples without children at home	***	***	***	6	7
Lone parents	14	10	9	13	16

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, Census Family Time Series. *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 93.

Yes, it's very clear that the structure of Canadian families has changed significantly in the post-1960s era of Baby Boomer influence.

- Divorce has been on the rise, contributing to the growth in the number of single-parent and blended families, and children who have had to cope with many new situations.
- As documented by the StatsCan data, growing numbers of people are choosing not to marry, variously opting to live common-law or remain single.
- Regardless of one's relational choice, the decision not to have children or have children has become more and more socially acceptable.
- And, of course, subsequent to the census, same-sex marriage became legal in Canada, further expanding our "family mosaic."

As we all know well, the increasing variations in the structure of Canadian families have been met with mixed reviews. Many observers applaud the expansion of the family concept, led by a large number of social scientists, members of the media, politicians, and many individuals working directly with families in providing social services. Such people maintain that the recognition of family diversity is both long overdue and absolutely necessary to ensure that Canadians who find themselves in these various configurations experience the best in family life possible. Age-wise, the strongest support for a pluralistic view of the family is found among younger adults, followed by Boomers.

Table 9.2. Views of What Constitutes a Family by Age				
	% Indicating "Yes"			
		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
A married man and woman with at least one child	96%	96	96	97
An unmarried man and woman with at least one child	68	69	46	83
A divorced or separated person with at least one child	68	69	49	81
An unmarried person with at least one child	61	63	38	77
A married man and woman with no children	56	54	48	65
Two people of the same sex with at least one child	46	42	22	69
An unmarried man and woman with no children	33	34	25	37
Two people of the same sex with no children	24	22	13	34
One single person with no children	9	10	9	8


Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

In contrast, there are others – notably significant numbers of Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants, as well as people involved in a number of the other major world faiths – who openly decry such pluralism

as a relativistic view of the traditional family. They maintain that families ideally should be of the nuclear variety, consisting of a man and woman with one or more children. Their chagrin over the realities of sex outside of marriage, divorce, abortion, cohabitation, and unmarried people having children has only been aggravated in recent years by the emergence of legalized same-sex marriage. Age-wise, the greatest support of such a singular, traditional view of marriage and the family tends to come from older Pre-Boomers and, to a lesser extent, Boomers.

However, there's a critical point that people who take polar positions on "the traditional family" – or, less polemically, what may be referred to as "the conventional family" – frequently seem to miss. The family situations in which people find themselves are not necessarily a reflection of what they want. Statistics Canada releases, for example, only provide us with photographs of where things are. They say nothing about family aspirations.

Yet, a good many family pluralists *applaud* the latest StatsCan releases documenting what appears to be family diversity. They seem to assume that variations from the conventional family norm are typically volitional – becoming separated or divorced, remaining single, not having children, raising children without a partner, being gay. For their part, "family absolutists" similarly *denounce* family diversity as if the people involved are choosing to deviate from the conventional family norm – seldom acknowledging the complexities that have led to single parenthood, cohabitation, remarriage, or a second divorce.

PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS							
Believe the Traditional Family Will Lose Influence "by 2000 ..."						"... by 2050"	
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
	38%	51	42	42	44	61	71
Boomers	40	54	41	40	43	62	73
Quebec	60	58	31	27	32	50	63

The traditional family survived many radical predictions of its demise in the 1970s. But as of 2000, large numbers of Canadians again were seeing it as in big trouble as they looked ahead to 2050. The legalization of gay marriage in 2005 presumably has been a key factor influencing their outlook.

## Some National Snapshots

In the midst of these debates between interest groups, there is a need to hear from average Canadians, to get some clarity as to what they have in mind when they think of "family" and what they themselves want from family life.

In 2003, I was part of a project attempting to do just that. The highly respected Vanier Institute of the Family in Ottawa, a non-partisan organization that works to promote the well-being of Canadian families, approached me to head up a national survey that addressed the question, “What do Canadians want from family life?” In the midst of change and debate, what are the actual family aspirations of people across the country?

The survey, carrying the name, *The Future Families Project*, was conducted by mail over approximately a five-month period spanning March 15 to August 15, 2003. A total of 2,093 adults 18 and over participated, consisting of about 900 Project Canada “alumni” and 1,200 new respondents. With appropriate weighting, the sample is highly representative of Canadian adults, permitting accurate generalizations to the national population within approximately 2.5 percentage points, 19 times in 20.\*

To my mind, this is an extremely important survey, providing a unique reading on the family aspirations of Canadians. It benefited immensely from the expertise of well-known Vanier co-executive directors Robert Glossop and Alan Mirabelli.

Here are some of the highlights of what we found.<sup>7</sup>

## **What Canadians Want from Family Life**

At least four central findings stand out.

**First**, the family continues to be of paramount importance to Canadians. It obviously is experienced in a wide variety of ways. Nonetheless, the family is seen by almost everyone as an indispensable resource as they live out their lives.

**Second**, family hopes and dreams of Canadians are, for the most part, fairly traditional.

**Third**, the family realities that many people find themselves experiencing are anything but traditional.

**Fourth**, some individuals choose to experience family life in ways that are not traditional.

### **1. The Importance of Family**

The first point should not surprise anyone. In the course of looking at trends, we have seen that there is hardly anything – with the possible exception of freedom – that is valued more highly by Canadians than their families.

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\*Complete methodological details are found in the summary report, *The Future Families Project: A Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams*, available in hard copy or online from the Vanier Institute of the Family ([vifamily.ca](http://vifamily.ca)).

No one needs a survey to realize that. You and I, after all, are “walking data.” We need only look at our own lives to realize the importance of partners, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, and any number of other relatives – past and present. Their value is underlined when they no longer are with us. Few obituaries are not centred on family members, followed, of course, by close friends. Family is simply at the heart of our lives.

## 2. The Hopes and Dreams Are Fairly Traditional

The second point initially troubles some: What people would like to experience in the way of family life tends to be fairly traditional. To make such a statement is to sound like a right-wing traditional family advocate, harking back to days of yore and a world that no longer exists and perhaps never really existed beyond our imaginations.

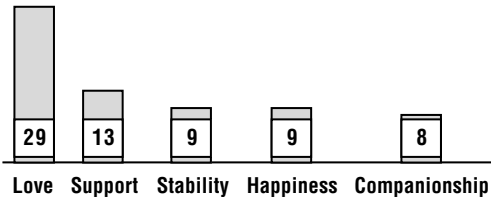
Let me elaborate. What I mean is that the vast majority of Canadians aspire to marry, to have children who are

**Table 9.3. Importance of Families**

“They are essential to ...”	
Personal well-being	97%
The instilling of values required for interpersonal life	97
Healthy communities	95
A healthy nation	95


Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 7.

**Figure 9.1. The Single Most Important Thing My Family Adds to My Life (%)**



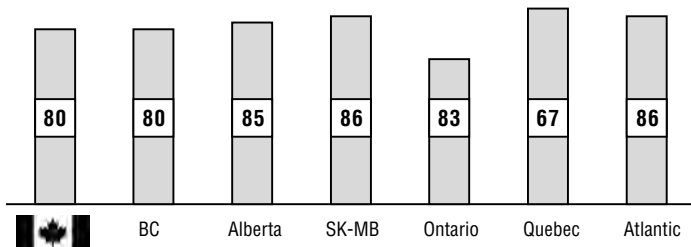
Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 7.

**Table 9.4. Importance of Select Family Characteristics**

		Quebec	Rest of Canada
<b><i>“Very” or “Somewhat Important”</i></b>			
Having children	87	91	86
Getting married	80	67	83
<b><i>“Agree”</i></b>			
Ideally, marriage should last a lifetime	95	93	96
I expect my marriage/relationship last rest of my life	91	90	92
As a teen expected to stay with same partner for life	82	87	80

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 27, 30, 40, 59.

**Figure 9.2. The Importance of Marrying by Region (%)**





happy and healthy, to be good parents, to have lasting relationships, to care for aging parents, and, in their later years – if necessary – to be cared for themselves.

Critics of the traditional family can criticize it all they want. But the facts of the matter point to the traditional family remaining an ideal, one that is highly pervasive in Canada in these early years of the new century.<sup>8</sup>

**3. The Family Realities Are Often Far from Traditional**

But, for most people, the traditional family is just that – an ideal. No, it’s not that the majority of people don’t want most of the things associated with it. If we need a quick reminder of traditional aspirations, we only have to listen to teenagers who, regardless of their own home experiences, are telling us – 90% strong – that they plan to marry, have children, and stay with the same partner for the rest of their lives.<sup>9</sup> It’s just that as life unfolds, things don’t always work out the way everyone planned. Life is dynamic. People change; people disappear; circumstances change. Along the way, what seemed readily attainable becomes highly elusive. It’s not necessarily anyone’s fault. It’s just the way life is.

Table 9.5. Parents' Marital Status When Respondent Was 16: 2005			
	Baby Boomers	Pre- Boomers	Post- Boomers
Married: each other	88%	88	73
Divorced/separated	8	5	21
Only one alive	3	5	2
Adopted	1	1	1
Never married	<1	<1	1
Single parent	<1	<1	1
Other	<1	<1	<1
TOTALS	100	100	100

You can think of illustrations just as readily as I can.

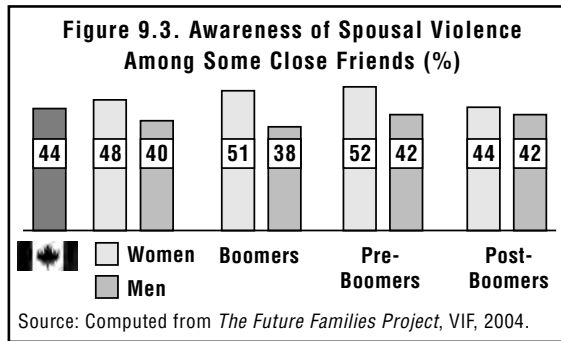
- My friend, Lee, was in her mid-20s, married to Dave, the person of her dreams, and expecting their first child. The condominium was being built and was paid for. Everything seemed perfect. And then one stormy morning, Dave was killed in a single-plane crash. That’s how some single mothers come into being.
- My own mother had vibrant young parents in their early 30s who had come to Canada from rural Wales. One day, with no warning, her father died of mushroom poisoning, leaving a single mother with four little children. A few years later, her mother remarried an older family friend. That’s how some step-parents come into being.
- Every one of us can think of a married couple who seemed to have it all, yet who a few years later was alienated and demoralized. That’s how some divorces come into being, leading to the emergence of single parents, who, in turn, remarry and contribute to any number of new family configurations.

- And who would have thought that the person who seemed so loving and responsible one day would become the alcoholic father who would beat

his wife and make his young children afraid to come home? Or that the perfect wife, so devoted to her husband and kids, eventually would pick up and relocate across the country, leaving family behind?

People do not always get what they want. As a friend of mine succinctly put it, lots of us find ourselves having to turn to Plan B. A sprinkling of comments from our survey participants illustrates something of the diversity and complexity of Canadian family arrangements.

- *“I am a divorced man living with my divorced sister, her child and my niece. Consequently I have a parental role on a daily basis raising my niece. Legally I have no children but emotionally I feel that I have one.”*
- *“For the questions regarding children, it would be helpful for you to know that I am a birth mother and that my child’s parents are generous enough to include me in her life and I can see her whenever I need or want to – which is about once every two years.”*
- *“My family consists of two younger gay men (both fully employed), three dogs and two cats.”*
- *“I have an ongoing relationship with a woman, but we do not live together. We cohabit on vacations, but not on an everyday basis. She has grown children, as do I, living at home. We do not have plans to marry as that would complicate our estates.”*
- *“If some answers seem inconsistent, I am separated, but still co-habiting with my spouse.”*



### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- In the Project Canada 2005 survey, 96% of Canadians indicated that they are heterosexual and 2% that they are gay or lesbian; a further 1% said they are bisexual. Other responses totalled under 1%.
- Our Future Families Project found the heterosexual figure in 2003 to be 97%, the gay-lesbian total 2%, with an additional 0.5% of respondents reporting they are bisexual. The “other” responses were under 1%.
- These numbers are almost identical to what Statistics Canada found in its first survey that asked Canadians about their sexual orientation, carried out in 2003. StatsCan found the gay-lesbian figure to be 2% and the bisexual total 0.7%.
- Their sample consisted of people between the ages of 18 and 59 (*The Daily*, Statistics Canada, June 15, 2004).

## 4. Not Everyone Opts for the Traditional

To the extent that Canadians have a choice in the matter, some, of course, do not have traditional or conventional aspirations. They include those who opt for marriage but do not wish to have children; many who prefer to cohabit with or without children rather than marry; those who decide to remain single; some who want children but do not want marriage or even a relationship. Among them is a 64-year-old survey participant from Toronto who has never married or had children. She comments, “I am an advocate for teaching others that choosing to be single, never married, with no children, is one of life’s choices up there with any other option.”

About 2% to 3% of Canadians acknowledge that they are gay or lesbian. Obviously, not unlike heterosexuals, they may or may not be in relationships, and, now that the marital possibility exists in Canada, may or may not wish to marry a partner.

In addition, a relatively small number of people may wish to distance themselves from family members in favour of friends.

The traditional family is not always possible, not always desired.

## What About Common-law Relationships?

On the surface, the growth in common-law relationships would seem to reflect the increasing rejection of the conventional family ideal of “a married man and woman with at least once child.” We are not talking about small numbers. Couples living in such unions represented 13% of all families in

**Table 9.6. Reasons for Not Having Children**

Health factors	16%
Not being married	16
Other priorities	9
Age	8
Not important	8
Would be poor parents	7
Condition of the world	7
Finances	6
Career issues	4
No one main reason	8
Other	11
Total	100


Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 40.

2001, versus fewer than 1% around 1970. As of 2005, 12% of Canadian adults reported that they were cohabiting, led by Quebecers at 24%. The second highest figure was in British Columbia (14%), followed in order by the Prairies (7%), Ontario (6%), and the Atlantic provinces (5%).<sup>10</sup>

The problem with using single statistical photographs at given points in time, such as 1971 and 2001, is that they don't tell us very much about what is actually happening. In order to understand the impact of common-law ties on marriage, we have to include marriage in the photos over time. When we do that, it becomes readily apparent that common-law relationships are an important *complement* to marriage, not a *substitute* for marriage.

One way to include marriage in the snapshot is to ask people what's been taking place over their lifetimes. We did just that in our *Future Families Project* survey. What we found is that, over the course of their lives to date, about 4 in 10 Canadians have lived with a "non-marital sexual partner."

- For most people, cohabitation has been a *premarital* experience (31%).<sup>11</sup>
- For the remainder, it either *followed* a marriage (6%), or took place both *before and after* a marriage (5%).

Table 9.7. Cohabitation by Select Variables					
"Have you ever lived together with a non-marital sexual partner?"					
	Yes Prior	Yes After	Yes Both	No	Totals
	31%	6	5	58	100
BC	41	4	7	48	100
Quebec	34	11	7	48	100
Prairies	30	4	3	63	100
Ontario	28	5	4	63	100
Atlantic	26	2	2	70	100
<b>Boomers (38-57)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	34	7	8	51	100
Men	34	7	7	52	100
<b>Pre-Boomers (58+)</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	8	11	3	78	100
Men	11	8	1	80	100
<b>Post-Boomers (18-37)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100</b>
Women	50	2	4	44	100
Men	40	<1	2	58	100

Source: Derived from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 20.

The findings add up to a situation where cohabitation is on the rise, but marriage is still centrally involved in the picture.

- **Regionally**, the experience of cohabitation has been most common among people who currently live in BC and Quebec, followed by the Prairies and Ontario, and then Atlantic Canada.
- Five in 10 **Boomers** – both female and male – have lived with a non-marital sexual partner, with more than 3 in 10 of these experiences being pre-marital.
- Only 2 in 10 **Pre-Boomers** have cohabited in their lifetimes.

- Among **Post-Boomers**, some 6 in 10 women and 4 in 10 men have lived common-law – the gender difference again pointing to the tendency of many younger women to be involved with older men.

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

- Cohabiting couples in our Vanier sample had been together for an average of five years, ranging from a month or so to 33 years (let's hope the partner in that latter relationship has not been waiting to send out wedding invitations).
- Some 93% of those cohabiting describe themselves as having “committed” rather than “casual” relationships. About the same percentage maintain that their partners view the relationship the same way.

When we focus on the 4 in 10 Canadians who have cohabited at some point in their lives, versus the 6 in 10 who have not, some important patterns are evident.\*

- To begin with, most of the individuals who have lived common-law have not given up on the idea of marriage: 75% indicate that it has been important for them to get married in their lifetimes – compared with 84% for people who have not lived common-law.
- As of 2003, 67% of those who had cohabited went on to marry – although their marriage partner obviously was not necessarily the individual or individuals with whom they had previously lived.<sup>12</sup> About 14% had subsequently divorced or separated.
- Among those individuals who had not cohabited, about the same percentage (69%) proceeded to get married. However, only about 7% had divorced or separated as of 2003.

As for the marital plans of the **current cohort of cohabiting couples**:

- About 40% told us they expect to eventually marry their current partner.


**Table 9.8. Current Marital Status by Cohabitation History**

<b>PREVIOUSLY HAVE COHABITED</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Have Married</b>	<b>67</b>
Have not divorced or separated	57
Widowed	4
Remarried	16
Divorced	10
Cohabiting	9
Separated	4
Total	100
<b>HAVE NEVER COHABITED</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Have Married</b>	<b>69</b>
Have not divorced or separated	77
Widowed	10
Remarried	6
Divorced	5
Separated	2
Total	100

Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

\*This sub-sample consists of 816 people, providing us with a level of accuracy of about +/- 4 percentage points, 19 times in 20.

- Five percent indicated they expect to marry but are unsure who the person will be.
- Some 20% told us that “perhaps” they will marry eventually.
- And the remaining 35% or so said they don’t plan to marry – including, by the way, that person who has been living common-law for 33 years!

Table 9.9. Marital Plans of People Currently Cohabiting			
		Quebec	BC
<b>WILL EVENTUALLY MARRY</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>57</b>
Current partner	39	31	41
Unsure who it will be	5	<1	16
<b>PERHAPS WILL MARRY</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>NOT PLANNING TO MARRY</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Source: Computed from <i>The Future Families Project</i> , VIF, 2004.			

Incidentally, 45% of cohabiting Quebeckers say they do not intend to get married; yet, in BC, where common-law unions flourish, only 37% of those in such relationships maintain that cohabitation will be lifelong.<sup>13</sup> The flipside, which should not be overlooked, is that majorities in both provinces do, in fact, plan to eventually marry.

The reason for going into so much detail is that the stakes are high on this topic: cohabitation is typically seen by many as seriously endangering marriage. What should be very clear from all this data is that it just isn’t so.

Living common-law does not function as an alternative to marriage for most people. On the contrary, such unions tend to be premarital, intermarital, and post-marital in nature. As evident in each of those words, cohabitation tends to be strongly linked to marriage.

### The Postponement of Marriage

In the case of younger adults, what is particularly significant about the rising level of cohabitation is not that it represents an alternative to marriage but that many Canadians – particularly those who are younger – are postponing marriage. In 1975, the average age for first-marriage brides was 22.0, and 24.4 for grooms. As of 2001, the averages had increased to 28.2 and 30.1 respectively.<sup>14</sup>

A look at the marital composition of 18- to 34-year-olds who participated in our Project Canada surveys in 1975, 1990, and 2005 illustrates the magnitude of the changes in marital choices.

Table 9.10. Marital Composition of 18- to 34-Year-olds: 1975, 1990, and 2005					
	Married	Never Married	Divorced/Separated	Cohabiting	Totals
1975	61%	33	5	1	100
1990	48	36	3	13	100
2005	30	49	1	20	100


- These three surveys show that the percentage of young adults who are married has dropped from about 60% to 30% over the past three decades.
- There have been corresponding increases in the proportion who have never married or are living common-law.

These findings could lead us to assume that young adults are saying goodbye to marriage, when obviously they are not. This is precisely why we need the photo album. When it comes to understanding marriage patterns, the old cliché is particularly apropos: where things start is not where they end – or even where they go next.

### Church Bells Still Are Ringing

A quick but relevant note on the alleged decline in “church weddings.” In light of the prevalence of nonmarital sex and cohabitation, it is widely assumed that more and more of the 75% or so Canadians who are not active in religious groups are opting for civil rather than religious wedding ceremonies. That assumption is false.

- The *Future Families* survey found that 87% of *first marriages* have been accompanied by religious rather than civil ceremonies.

Table 9.11. Religious Weddings			
% Indicating Had/Want a Religious Ceremony			
	First Wedding	Second Wedding	Future Wedding
	87%	56	63
55+	93	***	***
35-54	83	48	52
18-34	82	64	66

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 26.

- The drop has come with *second marriages*, yet, even here, a slight majority of 56% of weddings have been religious in nature.<sup>15</sup>
- As for *the future*, 63% of those who say they plan to marry indicate they want to have a religious ceremony. There is good reason to believe that may be a modest projection, given that many of these respondents are younger and at a point in the life cycle when religious involvement is typically fairly low.

Clearly the demand for religious rites of passage remains very high. If you need any further convincing, listen to this: My Project Teen Canada national survey of 15- to 19-year-olds in 2000 found that just over 20% were regular, weekly attenders. However, asked if they anticipated having a religious wedding, 89% said “yes.” Those expecting to have a religious, birth-related ceremony came in at 70%, and, for a funeral, 86%.<sup>16</sup>

Depending on the religious leader involved, such news is very good – or not so good, an issue we will return to in the next chapter.

### Why People Marry

Marriage continues to be highly valued by most Canadians. Some 8 in 10 people say getting married in their lifetime is something that either is “very important” or “somewhat important.” Fewer than 1 in 10 indicate it is “not important at all.”

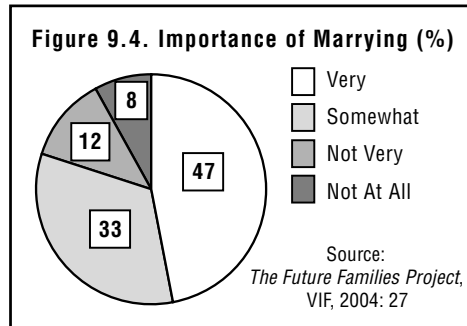
Consistent with Statistics Canada findings, some 60% of our *Future Families Project* participants told us they have been married once. Another 7% said they have been married more than once, and around 1% three times or more. The remaining 32% of

Canadians, mostly younger adults, have not married – at least not yet.<sup>17</sup> The intriguing question, given that marriage in Canada and elsewhere certainly has had its collective ups and downs for a long time, is why people want to get married. And why do those who have had their marriages end in divorce want to get married *again*?

We put the question to the 80% of Canadians who place importance on getting married at some stage in their lives. They point to three primary reasons: the belief that marriage signifies **commitment**, their **moral values**, and the **belief that children should have married parents**. There is little difference in the ranking of these three motives for marrying by either gender or age. But the third factor – believing children should have married parents – is not as important to Quebecers as it is to people in the rest of the country (63% versus 81%).

Somewhat smaller majorities of about 6 in 10 Canadians say that marriage was or is “**just the natural thing to do**,” that **financial security** is an important consideration, and that **religious beliefs** have been a motivating factor.<sup>18</sup>

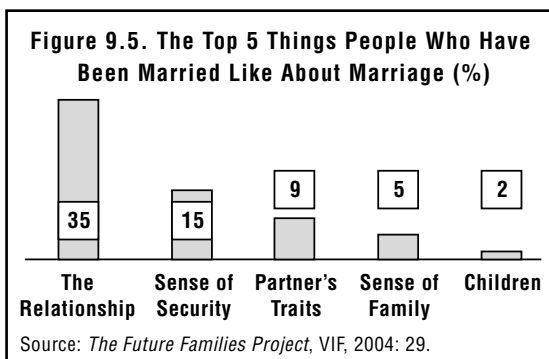
Of course, there are some very clear emotional and psychological reasons why we marry that go beyond our being quite as rational about marriage as the reasons we’ve just looked at imply. When we gave Canadians an opportunity, in open-ended fashion, to simply tell us “one thing” they like about marriage, what they had to say was revealing and important.





Five main factors were mentioned.

- First and easily foremost, **the relationship itself**, complete with characteristics such as companionship, acceptance, love, and support.
- Second, a sense of **security** that also brings stability to one's life.
- Third, the unique characteristics of one's **partner**, including such traits as commitment, trust, reliability, and humour.
- Fourth, the sense of **family** one experiences, versus being individuals only.
- Fifth, **children** – valuing them and feeling that everyone is enriched by their presence.



Back in the early 1970s, on the heels of the sexual revolution, there were a fair number of family experts who wondered aloud whether marriage had any future. These days, the future of marriage is not in doubt. The only question for most Canadians is who and when – or when and who.

### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

#### “One thing I like about marriage ...” – Some Response Examples

... my partner ... you are never lonely ... security ... feeling special for someone ... my spouse is my best friend ... stability ... two people who complete each other ... compatibility ... lifelong friendship and support ... being together ... the possibility of building together ... mutual effort ... comfort ... I am trusted and respected ... loyalty ... being able to share ... fidelity ... sharing life together ... laughter ... lifestyle ... raising our children together ... intimacy ... happiness ... having someone there for me ... lovingness ... companionship ... working together ... knowing I am accepted for myself ... sex ... not being alone ... nothing ... togetherness ... family life ... partnership ... life bond ...

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 26.

## Children

Based on all the data we have on families, it is hard to overestimate the importance that Canadians place on children. Most people see children as indispensable to family life. No fewer than 87% acknowledge that it is or

has been “very important” (61%) or “somewhat important” (26%) for them to have children in their lifetimes. The level in Quebec is 91%, and 86% in the rest of the country.<sup>19</sup>

When individuals do not have children, it frequently is because they have little choice in the matter. Some 79% of parents report that their children are sources of considerable enjoyment and “very little strain”; another 20% acknowledge that they experience a measure of strain, but also high levels of enjoyment.

In light of the importance Canadians place on children, they feel that people need to take parenthood very seriously. They report that it is “very important” for would-be parents to make sure they have enough time for children (73%), and recognize the responsibilities involved in being a parent (80%). In addition, would-be parents need to have strong relationships themselves (72%). Perhaps a bit surprising is the fact that neither finances (40%) nor family planning (37%) is seen by a majority of people as being highly important factors – even though a couple’s financial situation, for example, is obviously a key determinant of having enough time and having strong relationships.

In terms of themselves, the main criteria for determining how many children they have had or plan to have are the strength of their relationships, finances, health, and a sense that a given number is the right number. The majority of Canadians do not see any specific age as ideal for people to become parents. What is more important in their minds is that people exhibit appropriate parental traits.

More than anything else, we want our children to be happy. We vary, of course, on how we think such happiness is achieved. But, overall, Canadians want their children to experience physical, emo-

**Table 9.12. The Importance of Having Children by Region and Gender**

*“How important was or is it for you yourself to have children in your lifetime?”*

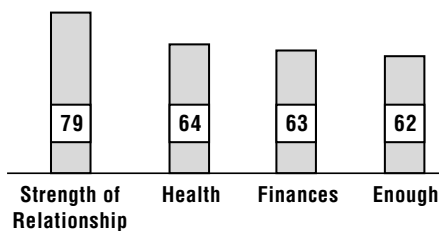
% Indicating “Very Important” or “Fairly Important”

	Very NB	Fairly NB	Not NB*	Totals
Nationally	61%	26	13	100
Quebec	68	23	9	100
Atlantic	67	17	16	100
Prairies	63	27	10	100
Ontario	60	27	13	100
BC	50	29	21	100
Women	65	22	13	100
Men	57	30	13	100

\*“Not very important” or “Not important at all.”

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 26.

**Figure 9.6. Key Determinants of the Number of Children Canadians Have**



Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 39.

tional, and material well-being, with many people emphasizing their spiritual well-being as well. As we saw in our examination of the traits people want to instill in their children, we also want our children to be able to relate well to others – family, friends, and people in general.

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

- The 2005 survey found that 80% of Canadians agreed with the statement, “Discipline in most homes is not strict enough.” Gallup’s figure for the same item in 1955 – 81%.
- Think we are getting harder on young people? In 2005, 54% of people across the country maintained that we need to have “a curfew in this community for young people under the age of 16, unless they are out with their parents.” Gallup’s figure for 1955 – also 81%.

### **Parenting**

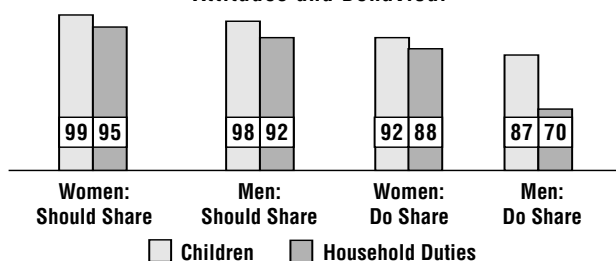
It’s somewhat amazing how positive we Canadians are about how our parents raised us. For all the apparent ups and downs that many people experienced before leaving home, 95% say that, all things considered, their parents did a good job of bringing them up. This includes 91% of the growing number who have been raised by their mothers. Some 88% say that home “was always a safe place.” However, the importance of the presence of at least one parent is underlined by a related finding: In situations where children were not raised by at least one of their parents, such a sense of safety was missing by an equal number of females and males in 1 in 4 cases.

If we are generous in assessing Mom and Dad’s performance in raising us, we are even more generous in assessing how we ourselves have been performing as mothers and fathers. An astounding 99% of Canadians maintain that we did or are doing a good job of raising our own children.

Yet, when we get into some specifics, we find that all is not quite as perfect as the 99% figure would imply.

- The figure slips a bit to around 8 in 10 for mothers and fathers who are employed full time who think they have found a pretty good balance between their jobs and their children.
- Three in 10 of those employed mothers and 4 in 10 fathers admit that their children probably don’t think they are spending enough time with them. In the case of employed married and cohabiting mothers, the reason is simple: Almost 80% say they never seem to have enough time. As we saw earlier, one reason is that household work and the raising of children are not always being shared by their male partners.

**Figure 9.7. Sharing Child and Household Duties: Attitudes and Behaviour**



- Women and men both agree that couples should share equally in raising their children (over 90% in each instance) and carrying out household duties.
- However, women are not as likely as men to give their partners high grades for actual performance, especially in the case of household work.

Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004

In a perfect world where money is not an issue, most Canadian parents – both female and male – say they would, at most, work part time rather than full time so they could focus more attention on raising their children. A sceptic may rightfully suggest that most people – with or without children – would be more than happy to stay home if someone else paid the bills.

What seems to be important here, however, is that most mothers and fathers are working outside the home, versus possibly working from home, because of financial necessity. The fact of the matter is that 90% believe it is preferable for one parent to stay home and take primary responsibility for raising children when they are preschoolers. But in many cases, that's an impossible dream.

**Table 9.13. Varied Views on Parenting**

	% Agreeing	Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers		Post-Boomers	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
All in all, I think my parents did a good job of raising me	95%	89	94	97	97	96	97
Overall, I think I did/am doing a good job of raising my children	99	99	99	99	97	99	98
I've found a pretty good balance between my job and my children	85	80	85	90	87	88	77
My children probably think I don't spend enough time with them	36	28	41	31	46	28	39
I'd work part time and raise my children if I could afford to	88	91	84	86	78	95	91
I'd stay home and raise my children if I could afford to	81	80	79	80	75	82	89
I don't spend as much time with my parents as I would like to	60	62	65	54	57	55	61
I'd be willing to look after my parent(s) if they needed me to do so	89	84	92	88	92	90	91


Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

Confronted as they are by the financial realities of family life today, many Canadians see the establishment of formal child-care settings as necessary. The Project Canada 2005 survey shows, however, that such settings – whether based in homes or elsewhere – are not the top choices of most Canadian parents.

- If employed parents could have a choice of caregiver for their children, their number-one selection would be their partner, followed secondly by one of their parents, and third by another relative. Unfortunately, the world is not perfect. Consequently, that kind of rank order is, in many instances, little more than a dream.<sup>20</sup>
- Aware that many people maintain that a preschool child’s development may be enhanced by a measure of professional child care, 51% of Canadians maintain that an ideal arrangement would be a combination of professional child care and the child’s being cared for by a parent. Another 38% feel that the ideal is for the child to be cared for by a parent only. Only 3% feel that care exclusively in a professional-care setting is ideal. About 8% admit they “don’t really know.” Perhaps surprisingly, there are only slight differences in opinion by age. It seems that people, young and old, have their own takes on the topic. It is not merely a function of era.

**Table 9.14. Child-care Preferences**

*“If you and your partner were/are employed outside the home or in school and you had these choices for the care of your preschool children, which would be your TOP 5 choices?”*


		Rank Order of Average Scores					
		Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers		Post-Boomers	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Partner	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Parent(s)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Another relative	3	3	3	4	4	3	3
A daycare centre	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
A home daycare	5	5	5	5	5	5	6
Friends	6	6	7	7	7	6	5
A sitter	7	7	6	6	6	7	7

**PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

- Our 2005 survey found 89% of Canadians agreeing that “in the past, most Canadian parents did a good job of raising their children.”
- However, only 60% felt that “today, most Canadian parents are doing a good job of raising their children.”
- There were virtually no differences in the two responses by age cohort.

## Parents

You know the story. Mothers and fathers begin by caring for their children and very often, in later years, require care from their children. The survey findings concerning aging parents confirm what demographers have been telling us for years. The needs of elderly Canadians are extensive and are only going to be more evident as this older segment of the population increases with the aging of the Boomers. Some 6 in 10 Pre-Boomers have parents who need care. At this point, just over 2 in 10 Boomers also have parents in need of care. More specifically, the *Globe and Mail's* Boomer poll in early 2006 found that 1 in 5 Boomers have at least one parent who requires their assistance “on a regular basis.”<sup>21</sup>

		Baby Boomers	Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
<b>Mother requires:</b>				
Much care	5%	7	21	<1
Some care	13	20	38	3
Much of my time and energy	9	12	25	5
Fair amount of my money	4	5	9	1
<b>Father requires:</b>				
Much care	4	5	***	2
Some care	9	17	***	3
Much of my time and energy	5	8	***	2
Fair amount of my money	2	4	***	<1
***Insufficient sample size to permit stable percentaging.				
Source: Computed from <i>The Future Families Project</i> , VIF, 2004.				

But as many readers know well, providing that help can be difficult sometimes. One of our respondents, a single 49-year-old woman from central Ontario, comments, “There is no financial help for adult children who look after aging parents to keep them out of nursing homes, as I am doing. Having no income for years, I know I face a bleak financial future if I outlive my mother. It is not easy.” A 40-year-old mother of two from southern Alberta offers this observation: “With our aging population, there should be tax breaks for people to care for their elderly parents. The tax breaks would more than be made up by reduced health-care costs.”

Still, 9 in 10 people say that they would be willing to look after their parents “if they needed me to do so.” This would seem to be an extremely important finding, suggesting that solutions may, in part, be found by tapping into the willingness of children to provide care for their parents. But if this sentiment is to serve as a resource in solving the “elder-care crisis,” the children of these aging parents will need some tangible support from the rest of us.

**Divorce**

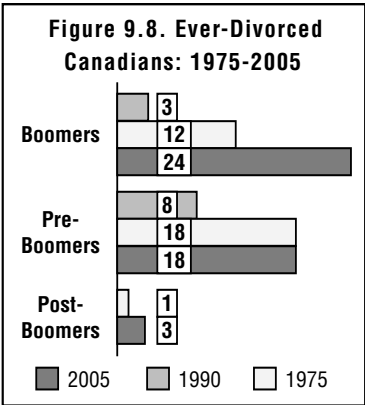
The survey findings over the years remind us that divorce is hardly a Canadian aspiration. No one *plans* to get a divorce. Yet it is a reality that has been experienced by approximately 1 in 4 people who have married. That’s nowhere near the widely cited 2 in 4 figure. But it’s still relatively high, given what couples have in mind on their wedding day, when more than 9 in 10 people say they expect to stay with their partner for life – even when that partner is their second or third.

Nationally, the percentage of Canadians who say they have been divorced rose from 7% in 1975 to 14% in 1990 to 15% in 2005. Baby Boomers have been leading the way. By 2005, 1 in 4 had been divorced, compared with 1 in 5 people from the Pre-Boomer era.

The frequency of divorce appears to have done little to minimize its impact on everyone involved. It is true that Canadians have been more accepting of divorce in light of its growing incidence since the 1950s era. Indicative of those changing cultural views, younger adults whose parents have divorced report less stigma, fewer problems with self-esteem, and less difficulty with finances and educational aspirations than their older counterparts. They are also less inclined to say that the experience of their parents has dulled their inclination to enter into new relationships.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, the differences are relative. The survey shows that, among Post-Boomers, 5 in 10 say that as a result of their parents’ divorce, they didn’t have enough money. Four in 10 say they felt inferior to kids whose parents were together. Three in 10 report that the divorce affected their performance at school. Close to the same proportion say the divorce has had a negative effect on their own relationships. And, to be sure, those numbers represent a lot of children.

As for divorcing adults, most admit that it has been hard on them emotionally and financially. They also report that their divorce was difficult for their parents and particularly for their children. Close to 1 in 2 acknowledge that their performance at work was or is currently being affected.



**Table 9.16. The Top 5 Reasons for Marital Break-up**


1. Different values and interests
2. Abuse: physical, emotional
3. Alcohol and drugs
4. Infidelity
5. Career-related conflict

Source: *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 66.

**Table 9.17. Some Human Consequences of Divorce and Separation**

*"How well do the following describe you?"*

% Indicating "Very Well" or "Fairly Well"

		Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers	Post-Boomers
		Women	Men		
<b>ADULTS</b>					
The divorce/separation was hard on me emotionally	80%	86	71	78	78
The divorce/separation was hard on my children	76	78	70	77	71
The divorce/separation was hard on me financially	65	72	49	64	72
The divorce/separation was hard on my parents	54	64	40	48	62
The divorce/separation affected my performance at work	46	49	42	47	47
My subsequent relationship was much happier than my first	78	72	79	83	75
<b>CHILDREN</b>					
Life was harder for us because of my parents' divorce/separation	68	72	62	66	67
As a result of the divorce/separation, we didn't have enough money	58	63	57	70	52
I sometimes felt inferior to kids whose parents were together	45	66	39	48	44
The divorce/separation affected my performance at school	36	56	29	39	34
I find it has had a negative effect on my own relationships	34	60	34	33	27
I have been all the more determined to have a lasting relationship	79	68	83	79	81

Source: Computed from *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004.

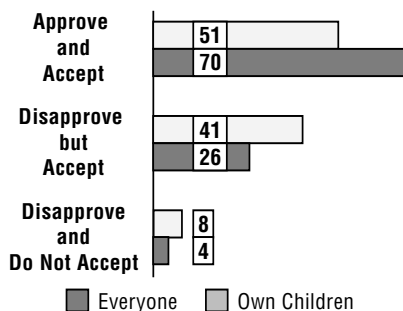
Remarriage is often a solution – but not always. In about 1 in 4 cases, people find that their new relationship is not happier than their previous one. In some 1 in 5 instances, partners don't adjust particularly well to their partner's children. Not surprisingly, in a similar number of cases, the children's feelings are reciprocal.

To the extent that Canadians aspire to have a society in which adults and children experience optimal living, these findings are decisive and the reality needs to be stated clearly: Marriages need to be strengthened in order to reduce the proportion that end in divorce.

Let's not mince words. These results serve to remind us that divorce carries with it enormous personal, interpersonal, and societal costs. Of course there are a large number of situations where new beginnings are necessary and hopefully life-giving. But now that divorce laws have been liberalized, making it easier for people who require a divorce to obtain one, more liberal legisla-

tion is not what most Canadians need or want. I'm not exaggerating. In 1985, 45% of the nation said, *"Divorce in this country should be easier to obtain than it is now."* As of 2005, the figure has fallen to 31%.<sup>23</sup>

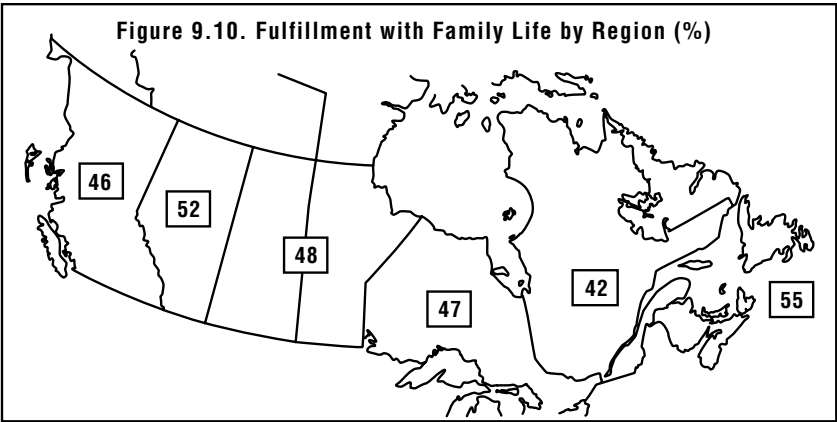
**Figure 9.9. Response to Divorce: Everyone vs. One's Children**



Sources: everyone ± Project Canada 2005; own children ± *The Future Families Project*, VIF, 2004: 67



The survey results suggest that what Canadians young and old want is to have relationships that last. They aspire to avoid finding themselves in situations that call for divorce. But many need some help in realizing those dreams.



### Assessment

These findings document what we all know personally – that family life continues to be of utmost importance to people across the country. At a time when the name of the family game in the minds of many is change and diversity, these findings tell a different story. When we look not at realities but at family aspirations, we find that the overwhelming majority of Canadians continue to want to marry and have children. They want their marriages to last, and they want their children to be happy. In short, their family thinking is highly conventional.

What the surveys also tell us is that, despite such pervasive aspirations, the family dreams of millions of Canadians are not being fully realized. Relationships break down. Children are not always happy and healthy. People die. Life is sometimes tough, and money and time both short. Our families are affected by it all, and things don't always land perfectly. Dreams that once seemed there for the taking now seem to be beyond our reach.

In the midst of the pursuit of conventional marriage and parenthood, many people opt for the less conventional. They don't choose to marry; perhaps they do not want to have children. In some cases, they choose partners of the same sex. Friends may take the place of family, sometimes out of choice, sometimes out of necessity.

But through it all, what is apparent is that we, who love our personal freedom, also are longing for the social. We want to be able to have

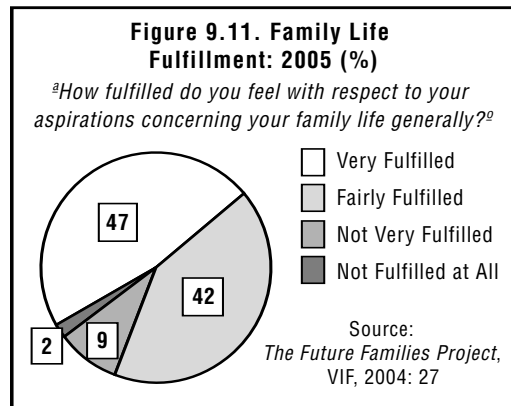
intimate physical and emotional ties with people, starting with the parents who brought us into the world and extending to the families that we ourselves bring into being.

Many of the findings that we have looked at suggest that Boomers – particularly males – have not been particularly good role models for those who would like to see their family aspirations realized.

- Boomers think they have found a good balance between their careers and their families. Yet, they seem be busier than ever. About 40% of male Boomers acknowledge that their children probably think they don't spend enough time with them, while many partners say they often are not sharing the workload at home.
- In the process, Boomer men have not improved much on the male generation that preceded them – despite being more affluent and being exposed to endless social exhortations to take time for family and pull their weight at home.
- Boomers, as a whole, have gone through more divorce than any other generation in Canadian history. As we have seen, those divorces have left a lot of people trying to pick up a lot of pieces. Part of the legacy for many Boomers, especially men, has been less than optimal ties with their children.

In the end, the Boomer generation, led by males, is collectively expressing a lower level of fulfillment with their family and life as a whole than the generation that came before them and the generation that is following behind them. For all that they have achieved educationally and occupationally and financially, Boomers are not a happier and more fulfilled generation. One is left with the conclusion that, for all their opportunities and successes, the Boomers collectively have come up short in terms of understanding and pursuing those things in life that make for happiness and fulfillment.

Now let's not get excessively morose and rhetorical. Of course there are



many Boomers, male and female, who have enjoyed family life immensely and are bringing much to their partners, children, and other family members. After all, almost 1 in 2 Boomers, both female and male, maintain that they are feeling “very fulfilled” when it comes to family life.

But the fact that so many Canadians report that their family dreams have not been realized points to two conclusions. First, the emerging generation needs to improve on Boomers when it comes to realizing their own personal family aspirations. Second, as they come to play an increasing number of leadership roles throughout Canadian society, Post-Boomers – together with aging Boomers and the next generation of younger adults – need to find ways to help more people elevate their family experiences.

To the extent that Canadians aspire to have fairly traditional kinds of family life, we need to respond, not with derision and cynicism, but by doing everything we can to help them better understand and realize their hopes and dreams.


Insofar as large numbers of people, for very diverse reasons, have not been able to realize some of their family aspirations, we as a society need to do all we can to help them to optimize their family situations, whatever they may be. There are numerous financial, emotional, and social costs associated with marriages breaking down, partners dying young, people trying to combine careers with parenting, individuals attempting to remarry and blend families, and grandparents trying to cope with it all. Lots of people are in need of help.

And in a society that aspires to combine choice with compassion, we need to ensure that we make room for those who do not opt for conventional forms of family life. Along the way, it’s essential that Canadians be given the opportunity to reflect on the family options available in order to make informed choices that serve them and social life best.

In early June 2006, the Vatican issued a statement reaffirming the Catholic Church’s position on a number of sexual and marital issues, declaring that the traditional family has never been so threatened as it is today.<sup>24</sup> Many evangelical groups similarly speak frequently about the traditional family being under siege.

Our survey findings suggest that much of the alarm is not warranted. In Canada, the future of the traditional family is secure. Despite where they finish, the vast majority of Canadians start out with dreams of experiencing highly conventional family life. What is needed and needed badly are groups – religious and otherwise – that give their resources not so much to defending the traditional family as to helping people experience it.

Contrary to widespread thinking, religious groups are positioned to make a significant contribution to family life in Canada, and to our personal and collective life more generally. That brings us to our 10th and final trend.

<b>CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING</b>						
						
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
Family: very important		83	83		95	97
Friends: very important		78	82			70
Ideal age to marry Males			26*			27 <sup>1</sup>
Females			25*			25 <sup>1</sup>
Extramarital sex: approve of	21	16	14	14	8	7 <sup>2</sup>
Same-sex marriage: approve of			51 <sup>2</sup>			39 <sup>2</sup>
Pornography: laws forbidding all ages	34	34	40	41	41	38 <sup>2</sup>
Availability of Mother endangered	94	95	92	91	92	85 <sup>2</sup>
Legal Abortion Rape involved	86	90	86	84	85	76
Defect in fetus	85	88	84	83	81	72
Low income	58	55	57	53	48	41
Want no more children	46	49	53	46	45	42
Any reason	37 <sup>3</sup>	38	43	41 <sup>4</sup>	43	40
Sexual activity Weekly or more			47			45 <sup>2</sup>
1-3 times month			26			30
Hardly ever			10			7
Never			17			18

<sup>1</sup>2006. <sup>2</sup>2004. <sup>3</sup>1980. <sup>4</sup>1985. \*2003. U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago.  
Sources: Ideal age to marry – The Gallup Poll, June 22, 2006. Importance family – 1995 World Values Survey; 2005 The Gallup Poll, Dec. 5-8, 2005. Importance of friends – 1995 World Values Survey. Same-sex marriage: The Gallup Poll, May 24, 2005.

# 10

## Religion and Spirituality

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*The Gods and the Churches Are Still with Us*

### **Major players**

*religion, family, friends,  
media, the God factor*

- **Its superficial dismissal**
- **Longing for the sacred**
- **Open to the social**
- **What needs to happen next**

THERE was something moving and mystical about what happened that weekday afternoon. A mother was kneeling in a small nook in the cavernous cathedral, a candle before her, reflecting and reaching out to the One who had brought them all to this hour. A father cradled a three-week-old baby girl in his arms and walked slowly around the massive and majestic structure, looking, thinking, being. There was a remarkable calm in that place, and for a few short minutes before they would return to the world waiting on the other side of the doors, it was as if nothing else really mattered.

He began to quietly hum, and then whisper-sing – in tones he himself could barely hear – a hymn poignant with memories: “O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder / Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made ...” And then it happened. As if she knew the song well, the beautiful

little three-week-old started cooing along with him, becoming even more earnest as he reached that chorus: “Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee ...” As he came to the end – “How great Thou art, how great Thou art” – her sounds tapered off. After all, the song was over.

For a few minutes, it was as if life was marvellously connected – three people with each other, three people with something more.

I know exactly how that father felt. You see, I was the person cradling the baby.

Now let me take you to a scene about 18 months later. We are driving past a library in the city where we live. Sahara, that same little girl, stretches in her car seat as something outside the window catches her eye. She begins to smile and clap and for good reason. Her mother has taken her often to that place, where she has met other toddlers and sung songs, played games, heard stories, and had good times.

We drive on a few blocks and pass a church where she has been taken on Sundays on a fairly regular basis. There’s no response from the attentive girl in the back seat. She looks at the building and remains expressionless. It’s not that she is negative – there’s no scowl, there’s no crying. It’s just that somehow that church has not succeeded in touching her life so that she associates it with joy, or, for that matter, with much of anything.

My research over the past three decades suggests that her experience is a lot like that of thousands – no, millions – of Canadians. They long not only for the social but also for the sacred. They readily acknowledge that they frequently feel “something” is missing from their lives. They openly disclose the fact that they have spiritual needs.

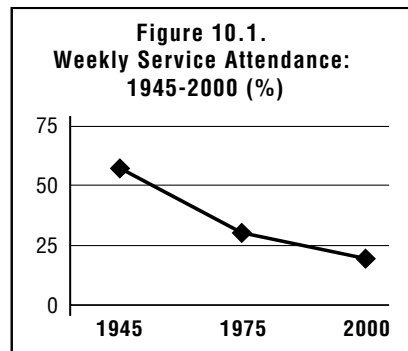
But large numbers also have limited involvement with the country’s religious groups. They frequently feel that the churches are not in touch with who they are, what they want, and what they need. To be fair, many of those people are not necessarily sure themselves what those needs are – sort of like being hungry but not knowing what one wants to eat. What many sense, though, is that whatever it is that would fill that gap does not lie with the kinds of religious groups they have known, off and on, from when they were growing up. The filling of that gap also does not seem, for many, to lie with any number of those “other” groups, who frankly seem “different,” seem foreign. Yet, perhaps in large part because they don’t feel comfortable with the alternatives, large numbers of Canadians are not closed to giving “their” religious groups an occasional try. That’s what spiritual longings seem to do to some people.

## The Secularization Myth

Proponents of secularization dating back to such European luminaries as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Sigmund Freud, along with prominent 20th-century religion-watchers in North America, including Harvey Cox, Peter Berger, and our own Pierre Berton, saw religion as increasingly a thing of the past.<sup>1</sup> People in advanced societies, so the thinking went, move on to more realistic and worthy matters. They focus on life and recognize their mortality. Unlike their predecessors, they cease to long for the presence and sustenance of imaginary gods and the hope of life beyond the grave. Their dismissal of the gods accordingly is accompanied by the dismissal of organized religion.

This “secularization thesis,” whereby religion inevitably declines in importance as societies experience high levels of development, is generally believed to provide a fairly accurate depiction of religious developments in much of Protestant Europe. For example, weekly attendance at worship services stands at around 10% in England, 8% in Germany, 5% in Sweden, and 3% in Denmark.<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that, in the past, attendance levels were considerably higher.

Observers who tried to make sense of the Canadian religious scene from the 1960s through the end of the 1990s invariably bought into the applicability of the secularization argument. On the surface, the movement away from religion seemed self-evident. The first national survey that I have been able to uncover – a Gallup poll conducted in 1945 – found that some 60% of Canadians were attending services on a close to weekly basis – a level that Gallup at the time said was higher than that of the United States. By the mid-1970s, that 60% figure had fallen to around 30%. By 2000, it was down to about 20%.



Participation declines were particularly pronounced among Roman Catholics, especially in Quebec, along with Mainline Protestants – the United, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran denominations.<sup>3</sup>

It is very important to note, however, that the country that unquestionably has more influence on Canada than any other, the United States, did not experience such a downturn. Gallup surveys over the same 50-year period

found that American attendance, rather than reflecting the European situation, remained at virtually the same level as in 1945 – around 45%.<sup>4</sup> Quite frankly, the secularization argument that most of us assumed was describing Canada had limited application to the American religious situation.

The question, looking back, is why we thought it should apply to Canada.

In light of the cultural interaction between Canada and the United States, why on earth would we take our cultural cues on religion and spirituality from the Europeans rather than the Americans? When we look at virtually any area of life – entertainment, education, the valuing of democracy and capitalism, how we look and how we think – do we really believe we can learn more about ourselves by looking at London, Berlin, and Stockholm rather than New York, Dallas, and Los Angeles? Why, then, were we looking across the Atlantic instead of across the border?

The answer, I think, is quite simple. European-trained and European-influenced social scientists of the post-1960s were reading Canada through secularization glasses. Often without good data in hand, they were jamming on the glass slipper, largely unaware of some hints that it didn't really fit. People exposed to such academics in university, and, I would add, in theological and seminary classes, predictably came away wearing similar sets of glasses. As they moved into positions of influence as educators, journalists, lawyers, politicians, and clergy, they assumed that Canadians were becoming more and more secular.<sup>5</sup> In the minds of most, spirituality and organized religion largely were things of the past for all but a dying generation of older folks. Those leaders, lest you need to be reminded, were top-heavy with Baby Boomers.

Fortunately for both the gods and the churches, a lot of people were wrong.

## **Some National Snapshots of the Gods**

### **Something's Missing**

Much of the popular thinking on Baby Boomers would have us believe that their cohort, in general, has known considerable educational and material success, has worked hard to stay young, remains sexually active – pretty much has it all.

As we have seen, a number of those assumptions are pretty precarious. While their levels of educational attainment have been impressive and their standard of living has improved significantly over that of their parents, Boomers, especially men, are not as financially satisfied as we would have




expected. They also aren't feeling particularly fulfilled – especially compared with those still living who preceded them – as they reflect on family life, marriage, career, and life as a whole. And their mortality is showing. As they move into their 60s, Boomers' increasing weight and decreasing activity have led some experts to suggest they may make history as the first generation to not have the same life expectancy as previous generations.<sup>6</sup>

Well-known Catholic author Ron Rolheiser has written that all of us have “a fundamental dis-ease,” a desire that leaves us “forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and aching.” Such a desire, he maintains, “lies at the center of our lives, in the marrow of our bones, and in the deep recesses of the soul.” The likes of Plato, says Rolheiser, recognized that, because our souls come from beyond, that beyond uses such restlessness and longing to try to draw us back toward itself.<sup>7</sup>

There are indications that a noteworthy number of Canadians, including Boomers, are feeling a certain void. Our surveys show that, over the past 20 years, a consistent 7 in 10 people have not felt that anything in particular is missing from their lives. However, 3 in 10 have expressed the feeling that they “should be getting more out of life.” Women are slightly more likely than men to express such sentiments.

- One would think such a feeling of “something missing” would decrease with time as people find ways to resolve the issue. That hasn't happened with Baby Boomers. In 1985, when Boomers ranged in age from 20 to 39, 32% said they were troubled about needing to get more from life. Two decades later, the figure is 31%.
- In contrast, over the past 20 years, the proportion of Pre-Boomers who have acknowledged the existence of such a vacuum in their lives has declined sharply – from about 30% to 20%, led by women.
- Among Post-Boomers, the expected trend has taken place. As the oldest members of this youthful age cohort reached 39, in 2005,

**Table 10.1. Feeling One Should Be Getting More Out of Life by Age Cohort and Gender: 1985-2005\***

	% Indicating Bothered “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”		
	1985	1995	2005
	31%	35	30
Women	32	37	31
Men	29	33	29
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>
Women	32	37	33
Men	32	33	29
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>
Women	31	24	17
Men	26	22	21
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>37</b>
Women	***	55	38
Men	***	57	36

\* The lead-in to this questionnaire item, as well as the purpose item in Table 10.2, reads: “How often do these common problems bother you?” The option for the item summarized here reads, “Feeling you should be getting more out of life”; for purpose, “Wondering about the purpose of life.”

concern over the “more out of life” issue declined over the previous 10 years from roughly 55% to 35%.

Perhaps this feeling is largely just a function of age. Perhaps as we get older and life is winding down, we simply realize it’s something that’s not worth worrying about much longer. Who can afford the luxury of pining about the need to get more out of life when life itself is becoming a luxury?

Still, about 1 in 3 Boomers continued to feel they should be getting more out of life during the cohort’s prime years – 20 to 39 in 1985 and 40 to 59 in 2005. There has been very little “improvement” over time, in contrast to people both older and younger. That finding suggests that life hasn’t been adding up to everything it should for a sizable number.

Surely you and I should not have to wait until we get into our 50s, 60s, and beyond before we can tell the pollster we no longer feel “we should be getting more out of life.” Yet, that’s precisely what 1 in 3 of our allegedly self-sufficient Boomers are still saying.

Such a finding, at minimum, points to what people are acknowledging – that their lives feel incomplete, that something is missing. I am not being presumptuous here. Obviously that sense does not necessarily signal a longing for the gods. But in some cases, maybe it does.

### **Is There Any Point to Life?**

We’ve also been charting the extent to which Canadians have been concerned about the issue of “the purpose of life.” Our surveys over the years have found that more than 90% of people across the country say they raise the question.

What we also have found, going back to the mid-80s, is that a consistent 1 in 4 Canadians have been indicating that the question of life’s purpose troubles them a fair amount.

Here again we would expect that the purpose question would be resolved with the passage of time. People would be expected either to pose some answer that satisfies them or conclude that no single “absolute” answer exists.

- Yet, since at least the mid-1980s, when we first asked the question, a core of about 20% of Boomers have continued to be bothered about life’s purpose. Concern levels have gone down a bit for men, but overall have remained remarkably similar for both women and men. Following the anticipated pattern, the purpose question has become less of a concern for the Pre-Boomers as

they have been getting older – much like the pattern that was expected with the “getting more out of life” issue.

- Similarly, over the past decade, concern about life’s purpose has come down for Post-Boomer women, but still remains relatively high and slightly above the level for young males (34% versus 31%).

To sum up, there are two interesting and potentially important findings.

First, lots of people continue to ask lots of questions – in the 90%-plus vicinity when it


comes to purpose and meaning. At any point in time, sizable numbers are troubled about not finding the answers. Particularly disconcerting for about 1 in 3 people is their sense they should be getting more out of life. Life’s big questions are not going away. Second, the emerging adult generation is showing signs that it

is actually more inclined than Boomers to raise such issues. For example, when Boomers were under 40, 32% felt they should be getting more out of life, compared with 37% of Post-Boomers at the same age today. Purpose was a concern for 23% of Boomers when they were under 40, whereas the figure is 33% for today’s under-40 cohort. Canadians’ quest for meaning has not gone down; if anything, it’s on the rise.

## Spirituality

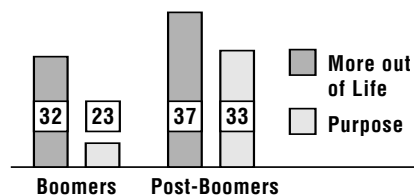
We all know well that, since the early 1990s, spirituality has received a tremendous amount of exposure from the American and Canadian media. Magazines including *Time* and *Newsweek* in the U.S., and *Maclean’s* and *Time* in Canada, have given major attention to the widespread interest in spirituality. That interest has been evident in the popularity of books such as *The Celestine Prophecy*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *The Purpose-Driven Life*, as well as the response to a movie like *The Passion of the Christ*.

**Table 10.2. Concern About the Purpose of Life by Age Cohort and Gender: 1985-2005**

% Indicating Bothered “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”				
	1985	1995	2005	
	23%	24	24	
Women	23	26	25	
Men	23	22	22	
<b>Boomers</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	
Women	22	23	22	
Men	24	23	19	
<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	
Women	23	22	14	
Men	22	16	14	
<b>Post-Boomers</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	
Women	***	43	34	
Men	***	28	31	

**Figure 10.2. More and Purpose: Boomers and Pre-Boomers at 40**

% Indicating Concerned  
“A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”



Important analyses of the nature and sources of spirituality have been produced by academics and journalists including Ron Graham, David Lyon, and Peter Emberley in Canada, and Wade Clark Roof, Robert Wuthnow, and Ronald Rolheiser in the United States.

#### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS


- In 1975, 30% of Baby Boomers – then under the age of 30 – were “very certain” or “somewhat certain” they had found the answer to the meaning of life. So were 38% of the Pre-Boomers, then 30 and older. Some 43% in both age categories said they didn’t think “there is an answer to such a question.” The rest were “rather uncertain.”
- Thirty years later, in 2005, 37% of Boomers were “very” or “somewhat certain” they had found the answer, as were 36% of Pre-Boomers, now 60 and older. By this point, 39% of Boomers and 45% of older Canadians felt the question did not have an answer.
- In 2005, the Post-Boomer cohort had a 37% certainty level; just 33% said there is no answer to the question. Many of the remaining 30% who are uncertain will keep on searching. What remains to be seen is whether they eventually will join those who believe they have the answer, or conclude there is no “real” answer to the question.

Since 1995, I have been trying to get a reading on the extent to which Canadians feel they have spiritual needs, and what they have in mind when they use the term “spiritual.”

The surveys have found that approximately 3 in 4 people across the country acknowledge that they have spiritual needs.

- Indicative of the pervasiveness of such needs is the fact that they are expressed by almost equal proportions of people of all ages – 71% of Boomers and Pre-Boomers, 74% of Post-Boomers.
- What does stand out, however, is that women are more likely than men to indicate spiritual needs, regardless of age (78% versus 66%).
- Still, gender differences aside, solid majorities of 2 in 3 males in each of the three age cohorts say they have spiritual needs.

**Table 10.3. Spiritual Needs and Salience by Age Cohort and Gender: 1995-2005**


		Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers		Post-Boomers	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Have Spiritual Needs</b>							
2005	72%	77	65	77	66	80	67
2000	73	82	66	81	67	78	62
<b>Spirituality: “Very Important to Me”</b>							
2005	38	42	27	50	28	41	42
1995	36	40	27	50	34	30	31

Apart from acknowledging needs, some 38% of Canadians tell us that spirituality is “very important” to them – almost the same as a decade ago

(36%). Another 32% indicate it as “somewhat important.” A further 21% indicate spirituality is “not very important,” and 9% inform us it is “not important at all.” Among Boomers and Pre-Boomers, women are much more inclined than men to assign a high level importance to spirituality. The exception? The Post-Boomer category, where young men are just as likely as women to say spirituality is “very important” to them.

Have Canadians become more interested in spirituality since the early 1990s, when spirituality seemed to “go public” with all that media attention? We put the question to our respondents in both 1995 and 2005, asking them whether their interest in spirituality had “increased,” “decreased,” or “stayed about the same in recent years.”

- In 1995, as people looked back to about 1990, most reported no change, while the “net increase” in interest level was some 11 percentage points. Increases in interest were higher for women and younger men than for others.

Table 10.4. Interest in Spirituality Trends by Age Cohort and Gender: 1995-2005							
Interest in Spirituality		Baby Boomers		Pre-Boomers		Post-Boomers	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>2005: last 10 years</b>							
Has increased	31	31	23	32	20	39	41
Has decreased	20	17	17	13	21	24	25
No change	49	52	60	55	59	37	34
<b>1995: last 5 years</b>							
Has increased	22	25	16	24	15	36	30
Has decreased	11	7	10	12	7	13	23
No change	67	68	74	64	78	51	47

- In 2005, as they looked back to about 1995, most Canadians again indicated no change in their interest in spirituality. Over the decade, the net increase again was 11 percentage points. Once more, increases in interest were highest among women in all three age cohorts, along with younger men. Boomer males reported a small net increase in spiritual interest, and Pre-Boomer males no increase.

Such self-reports support the idea that interest in spirituality has been going up since the early 1990s. Clearly, interest ebbs and flows in individual lives, but the overall trend points upward.

While we can quantify the extent of spiritual needs fairly readily, what’s far more complex is getting a clear sense of what people actually mean when they speak of “spirituality.” In both 1995 and 2000, we asked Canadians what they mean by the term, giving them an open-ended opportunity to tell us in their own words.

What we have found is that, to put it mildly, people have a wide array of ideas in mind. We have done extensive cataloguing of their responses and can offer the following succinct summary:

1. Just over half (53%) have fairly **conventional** ideas in mind, using such terms as “God,” “prayer,” “religion,” and “a power beyond” in telling us what they mean by the term.
2. Just under half (47%) have **less conventional** thoughts about spirituality. Here things get extremely individualistic and subjective. Words such as “inner self,” “oneness,” “force,” and “soul,” are frequently used.
3. Women are considerably more likely than men to offer less conventional conceptions of spirituality.
4. The conventional/less conventional balance is fairly similar for both Boomers and Post-Boomers, in sharp contrast to the conventional-minded tendencies of older Canadians.<sup>8</sup>

#### PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS

##### What People Mean by “Spiritual” When They Speak of Spiritual Needs

###### **Conventional**

“... believing in God and the Bible ... that God is there for us, hears our prayers and answers them ... need to know there is a power greater than me ... building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ ... nourishing our souls so we can be closer to God ... the need to reconnect with my religion ... to be a good Christian ... to pray and commune with my heavenly Father ... Christianity ... a belief in a presence beyond our bodily beings ... knowing there is a God and a guardian angel that looks after us ... the need to attend mass more often ...”

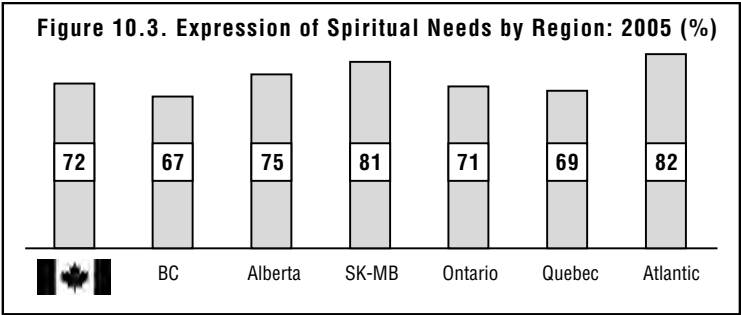
###### **Less Conventional**

“... a matter relating to our inner self or soul ... peace of mind ... a feeling of oneness with the earth and with all that is within me ... the existence of an immortal soul that has to be cared for ... positive thinking and excitement ... the beauty of nature and the love of family and friends ... a feeling that a force controls the universe ... searching for meaning ... recognition and nurturing the needs of the soul ... a feeling of being whole and at peace with my experiences in life ... inner awareness ... feeling there is something more to life than the obvious here and now ...”

Source: Adapted from Bibby, *Restless Gods*, 2002: 198.

These findings clearly show that large numbers of Canadians believe they have spiritual needs. Significant numbers also say spirituality is important to them. The fact that spiritual needs and interests run so evenly across all age categories, including Baby Boomers, suggests that the desire to have them met is not going to go away in the foreseeable future.

The additional findings that (a) the spiritual realm is acknowledged by more women than men and (b) spirituality is almost equally divided between conventional and less conventional conceptions have extremely important implications for how spiritual interests and needs are addressed – a topic we will return to shortly.



### Beliefs

During the post-1960s, when religion was supposedly on the wane in Canada, large numbers of Canadians “kept on believing.” Through 2005:

- **God** has continued to do well in the polls. Belief in God has stayed fairly steady at 82%; the remaining 18% are leaning toward either agnosticism (11%) or atheism (7%).
- Belief that “**miraculous healing** sometimes occurs” continues to be endorsed by more than 70% of Canadians.
- A number of ideas – including belief in **life after death, heaven, and the divinity of Jesus** – have slipped a bit from 1975 levels. **Angels**, on the other hand, seem to have made a comeback – although that’s just a hunch since we don’t have “hard data” earlier than 1990.
- A surprising 65% of people across Canada say they believe in **the Devil** but obviously have varying conceptions of what that means, since just over 40% believe in **hell**. There presumably was a time

**Table 10.5. Religious Beliefs: 1975-2005**

*“Do you believe...?”*

% Indicating, “Yes, I definitely do” or “Yes, I think I do”

	1975	1990	2005
God or a higher power exists	86	82	82
In miraculous healing	***	74*	72
In life after death	73	68	67
Jesus was the Divine Son of God	71	75	66
In the Devil	***	***	65 <sup>2</sup>
In heaven	70 <sup>1</sup>	70	62
In angels	***	61*	62
In hell	40 <sup>1</sup>	46	48

\*1995.  
Sources: <sup>1</sup>Heaven, hell: The Gallup, Jan. 18, 1969. <sup>2</sup>The Gallup Poll, Nov. 16, 2004.

when the two sort of went together. No more. Evil is still in; fire and brimstone are out.

Large numbers of Canadians also continue to hold a wide variety of “less conventional” beliefs. Generally speaking, current levels are fairly similar to what they have been for some 20 years.

- Seven in 10 people say they believe in **near-death experiences**.
- More than 5 in 10 say they believe in **ESP** and that “some people have **psychic powers** enabling them to predict events.” What’s more, some 50% also maintain they “personally have experienced an event before it happened (**precognition**).”
- Just under 50% of Canadians think it is possible for us to “have contact with the **spirit world**,” with about 3 in 10 believing we actually can **communicate with the dead**. This latter figure is up from about 2 in 10 in 1985.
- For some time now, more than 3 in 10 Canadians have indicated they believe in **astrology**. Almost the same proportion say they read their horoscopes at least once a month; in fact, only 35% inform us that they “never” take at least an occasional peek at them.

**Table 10.6. Less Conventional Beliefs: 1985-2005**

*“Do you believe...?”*

% Indicating, “Yes, I definitely do” or “Yes, I think I do”

	1985	1995	2005
In near-death experiences	***	74	70
In ESP (extrasensory perception)	60	57	57
Some people have psychic powers	63 <sup>1</sup>	57	55
You have experienced precognition	55 <sup>1</sup>	50	52
We can have contact with spirit world	***	42	46
In astrology	35	34	33
We can communicate with the dead	21	25	31

<sup>1</sup>In 1980 the figure for precognition was 59%, for psychic powers 60%.

As I have been reminding people for some time now, these kinds of findings illustrate the reality that Canadians have not exactly gone the rational route that some wise men of old, led by the likes of Sigmund Freud, anticipated. We continue to supplement so-called rational explanations with explanations that are anything but scientific in nature.

It should not come as a surprise. Science, often billed as all-powerful and all-knowing, faces two major limitations when it attempts to account for everything we experience. First, it doesn’t move quickly enough to provide us with all the explanations we want. If science comes up short, we look to alternatives.<sup>9</sup> When we do, we quickly discover we have lots of options. There is an entire shopping mall of additional explanations avail-



able to us, competing for our attention and acceptance.<sup>10</sup> They include old religions and new religions, psychics and channellers, astrologists and numerologists, art healers and crystal healers, yoga groups and human potential groups. Second, by limiting itself to examining only those things that the five senses can observe, science forces us to scramble on our own to try to understand some of the great mysteries of life, led by the universal reality that calls out for answers: death.

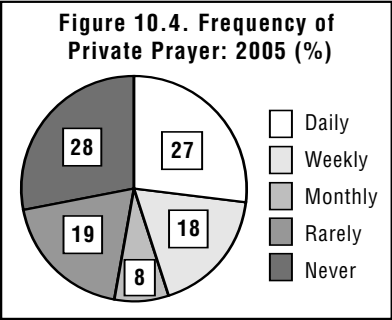
So it is that Canadians, like people pretty much everywhere, continue to hold a wide variety of beliefs that find their origins in places other than science. The alternative is to live without answers.

That's pretty hard for curious people to do, especially when there are so many explanations to choose from. Do you remember the fast-food-chain commercial – the one along the lines of “Everyone loves choices. So come to Wendy’s and do what tastes right”? Well, when it comes to making sense of life, the tag line is pretty similar – “try out the explanations, and select what seems right.” A colleague and friend, Wade Clark Roof, has done considerable work on Baby Boomer religion in the United States. Roof maintains that increasing numbers of Boomers shop in spiritual marketplaces, customizing religion and spirituality in ways that “seem right” to them.<sup>11</sup>

**The Persistence of God**

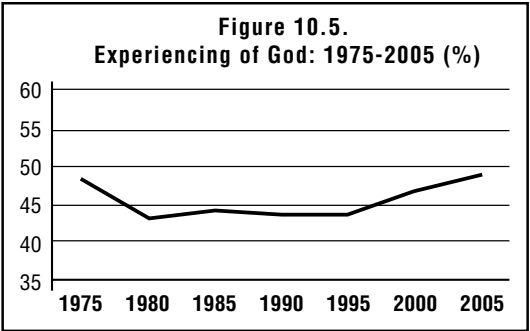
Our findings regarding God warrant a bit of expansion. Beyond simply expressing belief in God, our respondents have been making a number of other claims for some time that need to be noted.

- For one thing, 65% of Canadians say they believe “God or a higher power **cares about [them] personally.**” That works out to a lot of people who not only believe in God but also think such a God actually cares about them as individuals. Quite an assumption.
- Beyond cognitive belief in God and what some would say is a pretty high hope about how they rate in God’s eyes, almost 30% tell us they **pray privately** every day. Close to an additional 20% say they pray privately at least once a week. In fact, only 28% of



Canadians indicate “never” engaging in private prayer. So now we have a situation where large numbers of people not only believe in God and think God cares about them, but also report they are having conversations with God on a fairly regular basis.

- There’s more. Dating back to our first survey in 1975, a fairly consistent proportion of Canadians – ranging from 43% to 49% – have acknowledged they “definitely” have or “think” they have “**experienced God’s presence.**” That again translates into a lot of people – something like 10 million adults.




As I said at the outset of this section on beliefs, the polls tell us that no one has to worry much about the future of God.

### Some Trend and Generational Findings

We have seen that there are very few striking changes over the past few decades in the extent to which Canadians endorse a variety of conventional and less conventional beliefs. There also have been few significant changes or variations by age cohort.

- Take **belief in God**, for example. While there have been some minor fluctuations within the Boomer, Pre-Boomer, and Post-Boomer ranks, belief levels in each category have currently levelled off at around 80%.
- In the case of **ESP**, the “flower generation” – otherwise known as Baby Boomers – was exposed in the 1970s to Eastern thought and an array of new religions. Since that time, Boomers have been more inclined than

		<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Pre-Boomers</b>	<b>Post-Boomers</b>
<b>Belief in God</b>				
2005	82	82	83	81
1990	82	81	85	71
1975	86	79	89	***
<b>Belief in ESP</b>				
2005	57	62	51	56
1995	57	63	49	58
1985	60	67	52	***
<b>Experience of God</b>				
2005	49	50	48	48
1990	43	41	48	35
1975	48	42	49	***

others to express belief in extrasensory perception. It's interesting to note that the relatively high level of Boomer belief has remained fairly steady over the past 20 years. Their influence undoubtedly has been one main reason that belief in ESP is higher among Post-Boomers than older Pre-Boomers.

- The belief that one has **experienced God's presence** has risen somewhat over the past 15 years among people in the two younger age cohorts (41% to 50% for Boomers, 35% to 48% for Post-Boomers). That finding is not surprising. Earlier research I carried out on what happens to claims of religious experience over time may be helpful here. When people believe they have experienced God, that alleged experience tends to stick. People may and do change their beliefs on topics such as life after death and the divinity of Jesus as they move from childhood into different stages of adulthood. But the sense that one has experienced the presence of God has significant staying power.<sup>12</sup> If that's the case, the level of religious experience being reported in any kind of category should increase over time. That's what we find here.

Incidentally, I have also checked the role gender plays in the holding of beliefs, along with religious experience. The pattern is clear. In almost all cohort and age instances, slightly more women than men say they believe in God and ESP and have experienced the presence of God. But again, that said, the levels for males are all relatively high.

All of this should serve to remind everyone that, contrary to persistent rumours, we are still pursuing the gods. Then again, maybe it's more a case of the gods pursuing us.

## **Some National Snapshots of the Churches**

A bigger surprise to many is that the churches are still with us.\* After all, didn't organized religion in Canada experience a major drop-off in participation in the post-1960s? Hasn't the Roman Catholic Church seen its active membership plummet, especially in Quebec? What about all those membership losses for the United, Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian denominations? "Oh," you add, "I know that some of those evangelical churches are growing, but they're on the fringe of Canadian life. And the other major world religions have fairly small numbers here, made up

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\*Here I am using the term "churches" in a sociological sense to refer to religious groups generally, including, of course, synagogues, temples, mosques, etc.

mostly of immigrants.” You then throw niceties to the wind: “Organized religion in Canada has pretty much had it.”

It has taken me most of my career to figure things out. But as the following data snapshots will show, anyone who thinks that organized religion in Canada has “had it” would be wise to think again.

### Starting at the End

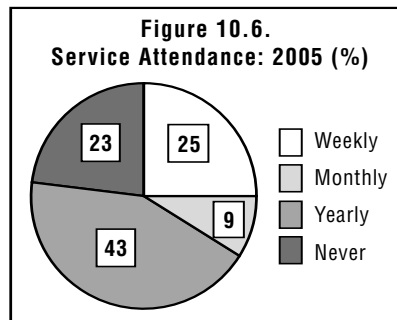
When people – including yours truly – are trying to provide an overview of religious trends in Canada, the usual starting place is to talk about where we were versus where we are. That lends itself to a neat and tidy argument about decline that fits well for someone wearing a pair of secularization glasses. The problem is that it becomes like a straw argument where the conclusion is never really in doubt.

So let me shake things up a bit by starting where we appear to be now and working backwards.

We currently have a situation where approximately 25% of Canadians are attending religious services on close to a weekly basis. By this I mean that our measures are a shade precarious here and always have been. Who really is in church *every* week for, say, an entire year? But if our measure is generous enough to allow for people missing every once in a while, so that it basically works out to “almost every week or more,” that’s how we arrive at 25%.

Now some groups like Muslims expect people to worship several times a week. Roman Catholics think the faithful should attend mass at least once a week. But other groups are not as demanding. My informal polls of clergy at events over the years have made me realize that many Anglicans and Lutherans, for example, would be quite happy to see people in services three, two, or even – if it is regular – once a month. If we expand our attendance measure so it is in touch with people involved in such groups, a reasonable gauge of the active religious core of Canadians perhaps would be monthly-plus attendance. Using that measure, the current “active” core comes in around 10 percentage points higher – at about 35%.

Let me add another snapshot to the mix. In August 2005, the Gallup Organization, based in Princeton, New Jersey, working with its Canadian



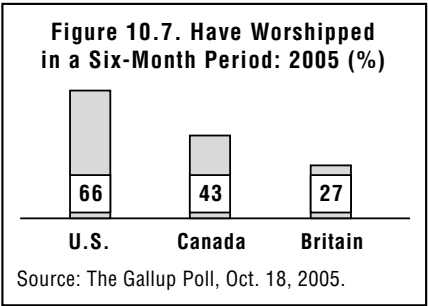
and British affiliates, carried out an interesting poll on service attendance. Gallup asked respondents in each of the three settings, “*Have you attended a religious service in the past six months, excluding weddings, funerals, or special holidays?*” As you can see, this was a fairly demanding item. Go back six months from August and cut out all those people who showed up only for Easter services, and, well, the results may not be pretty in a place like Canada, let alone Britain.

The participation rank order that Gallup found was not surprising. The U.S. came in first, Canada second, and Britain third. But look at the numbers: 66% of Americans, 43% of Canadians, and 27% of Brits.

A third snapshot, provided by Statistics Canada. In 2004, the agency released a report on “social engagement” based on the findings of its annual General Social Survey, conducted in 2003. This survey, involving close to 25,000 people, gathered comprehensive information on a wide range of activities in which Canadians are engaged. If we allow monthly-plus service attendance to count as an indicator of social engagement,<sup>13</sup> then there is no single activity in which more Canadians are involved. Religious group involvement is marginally ahead of participation in sports and recreational groups, followed by union or professional group activities. Involvement in school, service, and political groups lags far behind.<sup>14</sup>

A fourth and final snapshot, also provided by Statistics Canada. In 2003, the agency carried out a survey, not of individuals but of non-profit and voluntary organizations – some 13,000 in all. The sample was intended to permit generalizations to the population of all non-profit and voluntary organizations – some 160,000 in all.

The survey found that, by far, “the two



**Table 10.8. Organizations in Which Canadians Are Involved: 2003**

Religious	30%
Sports or recreation	29
Union or professional	25
Cultural, education, or hobby	18
School, community, etc.	17
Service club or fraternal org.	8
Political party or group	5

**Table 10.9. Areas of Primary Activity of Non-Profit and Voluntary Organizations: 2003**

Sports and recreation	21%
Religion	19
Social services	12
Grant and fundraising related	10
Arts and culture	9
Development and housing	8
Business/professional/union	5
Education and research	5
Health/hospitals	4
Environment	3
Law, advocacy, and politics	2
Universities and colleges	<1
Other	2
TOTAL	100

largest groups of organizations operate in the area of sports and recreation (21%) and religion (19%).”<sup>15</sup> Arts and culture groups, for example, make up only 9% of all organizations, health and hospitals just 4%.

Projecting these figures to the total number of non-profit and voluntary organizations in Canada means that something in the vicinity of 30,000 religious organizations are operating across the country.

Viewing these four snapshots in an objective manner, how should we see the Canadian religious situation today?

- There are some 30,000 religious organizations in place – second by a small margin only to the sports and recreation sector.
- These organizations have more participants than any other kind of organization – pushing even sports and recreation into second place.
- They have a core of 25% of the national population attending their services every week, 35% every month, and about 45% in a six-month period.

In addition to all this, the 2001 census reminds these religious organizations that 84% of the population continues to identify with the traditions they represent.

If that adds up to a bleak situation, one has to wonder what the Golden Age of religion in Canada must have looked like.

**Table 10.10. Canada's 10 Largest Religious Groups: 2001**

1. Roman Catholic	12,793,125	43%
2. United Church	2,839,125	10
3. Anglican	2,035,495	7
4. Christian (unspecified)	780,450	3
5. Baptist	729,475	3
6. Lutheran	606,590	2
7. Muslim	579,640	2
8. Presbyterian	409,830	1
9. Pentecostal	369,475	1
10. Jewish	329,995	1

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

## Roman Catholicism

If Canada ever really had such an age, it had to include Roman Catholics. The reason is simple. From the time of our first census in 1871 through the census of 2001, Catholics have made up just under 50% of the national population.

Today, Roman Catholics number 12.5 million in all. Some six million live in Quebec – the so-called “French-speaking” part of the church. The numerical strength of the “English-speaking” part of the church is in Ontario, which is home to some four million Catholics. About one million live in the Atlantic region, with the remaining one and a half million spread fairly evenly across Manitoba/Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

With that bit of demographic background behind us, let’s get right to

my central point. The primary reason Canada experienced a national downturn in religious participation in the post-1960s was because Roman Catholic participation declined, particularly in Quebec.

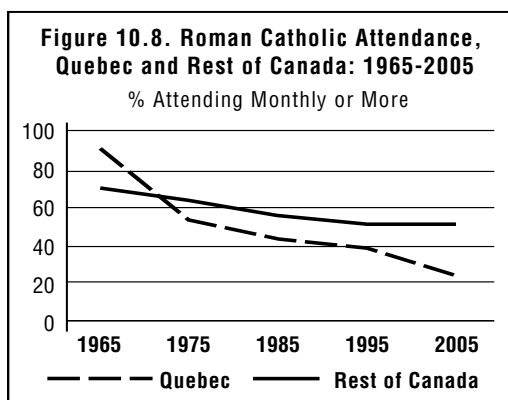
Because Catholics comprise such a large part of the population, as Catholic participation trends go, so go the trends of the nation as a whole. In under two decades, Quebec's long-standing religious Golden Era vanished. The national situation was made even worse by participation declines among Roman Catholics living elsewhere in the country.

In Quebec, that era of maximum religious involvement and maximum church influence probably would be seen by many observers as stretching as far back as the Quebec Act in 1774 and on through the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. For much of that period, the Catholic Church dominated life in the province. Social organizations and social institutions were fused with the church. Journalist and author Ron Graham has gone so far as to say that the province's priests told people how to vote and how many children they could have.<sup>16</sup>

But when the Liberal Party came to power in 1960, the alliance of church and state began to dissolve. The Quiet Revolution brought with it the end of Catholic trade unions, and the revision of labour, health, and welfare laws. Institutions previously under the control of the church – including education, social welfare, and health – gradually were taken over by the provincial government.<sup>17</sup>

The arrival of the Quiet Revolution and the decline in the Catholic Church's authority were associated with an immediate and rapid decline in attendance at mass. One poll in 1965 claimed that some 90% of Quebec Catholics were attending services at least once a month.<sup>18</sup> By 1975, that figure had dropped to 51% – a decline of some 40 percentage points in one decade! Since that time, the decline in monthly-plus attendance has continued steadily downward, reaching 24% as of 2005. It is not yet clear when, and at what figure, the bottoming out will take place.

In the rest of the country, Roman Catholics continued to benefit immensely from heavy immigration from



Catholic European countries – notably some 300,000 people from Italy between 1951 and 1971. That served to stimulate attendance, particularly in Ontario.

By the mid-1960s, monthly-plus attendance was running at over 70%. It may not have been exactly a Golden Age for the Catholic Church outside Quebec. But it was an involvement level that may have been about as good as it gets.

What we do know is that participation declined steadily from about 1970 through the end of the century. During those three decades, monthly-plus attendance dropped to about 60% in 1975 and 55% by 1985. However, by the 1990s, things began to level off at just over 50%. As of 2005, monthly-plus attendance stands at 53%. One source of new life in recent decades has been ongoing immigration, with large numbers of new Catholics arriving primarily from Asia, but also from Europe, South America, and Africa.

The participation problems in Quebec obviously had a significant impact on national figures. However, the attendance drop-off for Catholics outside Quebec does not appear to have been as great as people have assumed. Of particular importance, Catholic service attendance in the rest of the country has been fairly steady since about 1985.

As the Catholic Church has known a measure of success in steadying things, specifically outside Quebec, the line on the attendance graph for the entire country has stopped heading downward.

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

- Suggestive of the pervasiveness of Catholicism in Quebec in the earlier part of the 20th century, 89% of Pre-Boomers and 82% of Boomers say they attended religious services close to every week when they were growing up. The figure for Post-Boomers? 48%.
- In the rest of the country, the corresponding figures are 75% for Pre-Boomers, 67% for Boomers, and 55% for Post-Boomers.

And where have the Catholic Baby Boomers been in all this?

In **Quebec**, the post-1960s decline in participation has been largely a Baby Boomer and Post-Boomer phenomenon.

- For the past three decades, the attendance level of older Pre-Boomers has remained steady, at just under 60%.
- However, attendance among Quebec's Boomers steadily dropped off from about 30% in 1975 to around 20% in 1990 to just above 10% as of 2005.



- In turn, the attendance levels of Post-Boomers, largely because of Boomer influence, have mirrored those of Boomers closely. There are signs, however, that their participation level now may be exceeding that of Boomers.

Likewise, in the **rest of Canada**, the Boomers have been the key factor in determining Catholic attendance levels.

<b>Table 10.11. RC Attendance by Age Cohort, Quebec and Elsewhere: 1975-2005</b>		
% Indicating Monthly or More		
	<b>Quebec</b>	<b>Rest of Canada</b>
<b>1975</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>62</b>
Boomers	31	47
Pre-Boomers	59	68
Post-Boomers	***	***
<b>1990</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>
Boomers	23	40
Pre-Boomers	58	60
Post-Boomers	23	42
<b>2005</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>53</b>
Boomers	12	47
Pre-Boomers	53	66
Post-Boomers	16	52

- Pre-Boomer attendance has remained fairly stable over the past three decades.
- However, the percentage of Boomers who have been involved actively dating back to the mid-70s has been about 20 percentage points below that of older Catholics.
- The Post-Boomer pattern is similar to what is happening in Quebec: their attendance level mirrors that of Boomers but in recent years appears to be slightly higher than that of Boomers.
- In general, it has been important to see that Roman Catholic attendance outside Quebec has increased slightly among all three age cohorts in the last decade or so. Assuming that Catholics have been there all along, the upturn suggests that the Catholic Church has been doing an improved job of responding to the interests and needs of its people.

#### **PROJECT CANADA FAST FACTS**

- High levels of religious self-identification mean that, as of 2001, 84% of Canadians have “never left home,” in a psychological and emotional sense. They may not be actively involved or even moderately involved in the groups with which they identify. Nonetheless, they still think they are “Catholic” or “United” or “Baptist” or “Jewish.”
- It’s fascinating that the overwhelming majority of such inactive “affiliates” are not interested in the slightest in pursuing alternatives to their identification groups. In 2000, when we asked Canadians who attend services less than once a week through never if they are open to switching to another religious tradition, 80% said no.

### **What About Protestants?**

The alleged Golden Age for Protestants is usually seen as the 1960s. During that decade of expansion, membership peaked, new churches could

not be built fast enough, finances were solid, and the future looked bright.

Outside Quebec, the primary fodder for the perception that organized religion has been in decline since the 1960s has been the numerical problems of **Mainline Protestants**. To

refresh memories, when we speak of “Mainliners,” we are talking about the United, Anglican Lutheran, and Presbyterian denominations.

There has been considerable confusion here over the difference between the size of the “affiliate pools” of these groups – the number of people who identify with them – and the level of involvement of such affiliates. In 1931, six years after the formation of the United Church, Mainline Protestants made up almost 50% of the national population. From the standpoint of sheer affiliates, *this* was the Mainliners’ Golden Age.

Over the ensuing seven decades of the 20th century, that figure dropped dramatically, to a 2001 level of 20%. The assumption of many observers has been that the United Church, for example, has been losing all kinds of people, primarily to the evangelical groups.

In reality, the primary reason Mainliners saw their share of the population drop so significantly is that – are you ready for this – they weren’t having enough kids and their immigration pipeline was going dry. Their birth rates did not match those of other groups, notably Catholics and evangelicals. Decreasing immigration in the post-1960s from Europe and increasing immigration from Asia, in particular, meant that this major source of previous growth was reduced to a trickle. Other groups, of course, benefited from the switch in immigration patterns.


Still, even with the large decreases in their composition of the overall population, these four Protestant denominations have continued to have sizable affiliate pools, due to the overall increase in the size of the Canadian population. For example, 48% of the 1931 population worked out to about five million people; 37% in 1971 to more than eight million; 20% in 2001 to over six million.

**Table 10.12. Identification with Mainline Protestants: 1931-2001**

	% of the Canadian Population				
	TOTAL	United	Anglican	Presbyterian	Lutheran
1931	48%	20	16	8	4
1941	45	19	15	7	4
1951	45	21	15	6	3
1961	41	20	13	4	4
1971	37	18	12	4	3
1981	32	16	10	3	3
1991	23	11	8	2	2
2001	20	10	7	1	2

Source: Statistics Canada.

**Table 10.13. Monthly-Plus Attendance by Religion and Region: 1975-2005**

	1975	1985	1995	2005
<b>Protestants</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>
Conservative	37	37	35	40
Mainline	55	67*	70	73
<b>Catholics</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>
Outside Quebec	56	49	45	40
Quebec	62	55	53	53
	51	43	39	24

\*Combined with 1980 due to unstable sample size.

Yet, in all four denominations, membership and attendance levels continued downward through the mid-90s. Ironically, precisely because their affiliate pools have been declining in size, their lower levels of participation have had a decreasing impact on the national participation trends more generally.

But there is no inherent reason why these well-established Mainline groups should not be able to turn things around, at least in terms of doing an improved job of ministering to their own affiliates. Since the mid-1990s, these groups have had a renewed sense of their need to minister better to their people, beginning with their youth. As of 2005, the Mainliners have experienced a collective increase in monthly-plus attendance since 1995, from 26% to 31%.

Over the years, as Mainline Protestants in both the United States and Canada saw their congregations shrink, some observers tried to dismiss such declines as a reflection of social and cultural conditions making participation losses inevitable. The problem with such an explanation was that “not everyone was losing.” In fact, one “religious family” was actually growing, leaving many of the so-called experts perplexed if not frustrated.

That group was the evangelicals – or, in sociological parlance, “**Conservative Protestants**.” Evangelicals include Baptist, Pentecostal, Alliance, Mennonite, Wesleyan, and Nazarene denominations, as well as many independent congregations with no official denominational ties. Their central commonality lies in their emphasis on people becoming Christians through making a personal, explicit decision to do so. Dating back to the first census in 1871, and through 2001, evangelicals have made up a consistent 8% of the Canadian population. While that may not sound like growth, simply being able to stay up with the population and retain their “market share” has been quite an accomplishment. Obviously, all smaller religious groups face the prospect of being obliterated through assimilation as their children mix with and marry the numerically dominant Catholics and Mainline Protestants.

In absolute numbers, the Conservative Protestant gains have been significant. In something like the way inflation works, 8% in 1871 may have only meant 300,000 people but in 1951 translated into over one million people and in 2001 into a relatively hefty two and a half million people.

There is not much evidence to support the thesis that evangelicals are particularly successful in reaching people outside their boundaries. However, collectively, they appear to do a very effective job of retaining

their children, as well as their people as they move from place to place – two problematic areas for Mainline Protestants in particular.<sup>19</sup> The secret to their retention success seems to be their emphasis on solid ministries to families, from nurseries and Sunday schools at the beginning and on to teenage and young-adult programs and then to activities for seniors. The net result is that evangelical groups readily have a much higher level of affiliate participation than Mainline Protestants or Catholics.

If they were asked when they experienced their Golden Age, I suspect most would say they are experiencing it right now.

### Other Major World Faiths

Religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Islam, of course, have never experienced anything resembling a Golden Age in Canada. For most of the country's history, they have, at best, been fringe players numerically. From 1891 through 2001, Jews, for example, grew from 0.1% of the population to 1.1%. As of 1991, fewer than 1% of Canadians identified with any single one of the other four major world faiths.

They may not have experienced a Golden Age, but these five religions also have *not* contributed to religion's demise. The Jewish community always has been regarded as vibrant. As the numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Muslims doubled through immigration in the 1990s, these "other" four major faiths have increased the profile of religion and added to the number of Canadians who are religiously committed.<sup>20</sup>

### The Religious Nones

In making a case for the fall of religion in Canada, many observers invariably point to the increasing number of people who say they have "no" religion – these are the individuals the sociologists refer to as "Religious Nones." On the surface, the argument sounds compelling. The percentage of Canadians who say they have no religion has grown from under 1% through 1961, to 4% in 1971, 7% in 1981, and 12% in 1991. They now make up 16% of the population.

**Table 10.14. Enjoyment Received from Involvement by Religious Group: 1985-2000**

% of Monthly-Plus Attenders Who Indicate They Receive "A Great Deal" of Enjoyment from Their Religious Groups

	1985	1995	2005
<b>Protestants</b>			
Conservative	58% *	57	59
Mainline	42	38	42
<b>Roman Catholics</b>			
Outside Quebec	28	23	21
Quebec	22	27	26

\*Combined with 1990 due to unstable sample size.

**Table 10.15. Religious Identification of Canadians: 1871-2001**

Identification	1871	1951	2001
Roman Catholic	42%	43	43
Mainline Protestants	41	44	20
Conservative Protestants	8	8	8
Other World Faiths	2	3	6
Other/Unspecified	7	2	7
No Religion	<1	<1	16

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada census data.

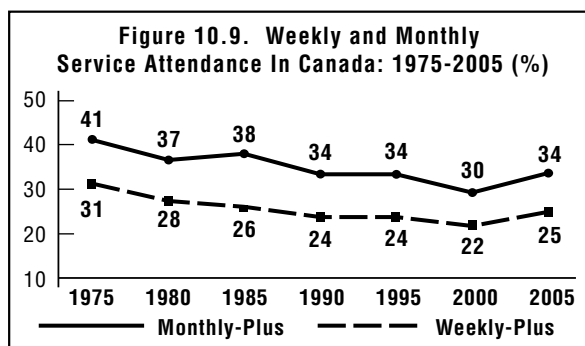
However, one-shot readings can be deceiving. People who say they have “no religion” tend to be disproportionately young. About 1 in 3 have come from homes where their parents, likewise, did not identify with any group or tradition. Another 1 in 3 have had Roman Catholic parents, while most of the remainder have Protestant backgrounds, led by Mainliners.

If we keep the camera on them and follow them over time, we find that, within any given five-year period, about 1 in 3 of them re-identify with their parents’ religion; within 10 years, the figure increases to 2 in 3. The key motive? The desire for religious rites of passage relating to marriage, birth, and death. It is sometimes tough for a lapsed Roman Catholic to not have a baby baptized, or for a latent Lutheran to not have the funeral carried out by a Lutheran pastor.

Things get complicated for people who have no religion when they befriend or marry people who have a religion. When that happens, the research shows, the long-term pattern is for the Religious Nones to become “religious somethings.” If they don’t, then the pattern is for their children to be raised in the religion of their partner.

Of course there are exceptions. Of course there are Canadians who do not subscribe to any religion, with a predictable range of reasons and emotions. Nevertheless, for better or worse, they constitute a minority.

It consequently is precarious to base arguments for the growing secularization of Canada on those single census and survey snapshots that include a sizable portion of people with “no religion.” In the majority of cases, the self-designation tends to be short-lived.



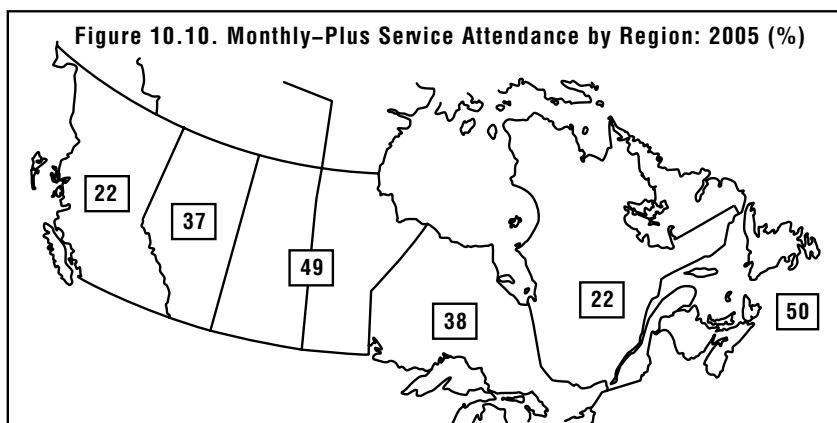
### A Renaissance of Religion in Canada?

The net result of developments over the past decade or so is that, nationally, religious attendance is no longer spiralling downward. In the early years of the new millennium, the numerical decline has stopped. Moreover, there are some signs that attendance is increasing modestly.

Does this signal the beginnings of a major turn back to organized religion, or is it just a blip on the participation screen? Who knows for sure?

What is clear is that there is widespread need and extensive receptivity.

What happens over the next few decades therefore will depend not so much on Canadians but on the willingness and ability of religious groups to respond.



## Assessment

The surveys and additional available sources of information point to a decisive if somewhat surprising finding: Organized religion is not in the state of decline that most of us have taken to be self-evident. There are significant participation problems among Quebec Catholics. There also have been participation problems within the Protestant Mainline.


But these difficulties increasingly have been offset by a recovery within the Catholic Church outside Quebec. Evangelical Protestants and members of other major world faiths also have been contributing to organized religion's overall vitality. The result is that, nationally, attendance trends have come out of their nosedive. At minimum, things have levelled off and are showing some signs of starting to edge upward.

The current situation, in my mind, provides religious groups with a tremendous opportunity – and responsibility. We saw earlier that a large number of Canadians who identify with the country's religious groups, but are not very active, say they are receptive to greater involvement.

But they also tell us the key is that they have to find groups that

**Table 10.16. Receptivity to Greater Involvement by Select Variables: 2005**

Among People Attending Services Less Than Monthly

	NAT	RCOQ	RCQ	PROT	NONE
	62%	75	63	71	37
Boomers	64	77	68	74	33
Pre-Boomers	54	60	58	61	29
Post-Boomers	64	77	55	85	43
Women	65	77	65	76	42
Men	60	72	60	72	33

touch their lives and the lives of their families in significant ways. Given what we have learned about Canadian “wants,” is there any mystery as to what people see as “significant” and “worthwhile”?

- They put supreme value on their families. If religious groups want to touch Canadians, they need to touch their families – all ages, from the toddler to the parent to the grandparent in the nursing home.
- They readily acknowledge the importance of God, their spiritual needs, and the desire find fulfilment. Groups that want to touch Canadians must be able to speak clearly and listen carefully as people reach out for the sacred.
- Many people could use some support in coping with life, and sometimes some support in enjoying life. Religious groups that can be there when we are struggling, but also when life is good, are the groups that many Canadians are open to embracing.

The Boomers have been on the centre stage of Canadian life during these somewhat turbulent decades for religious groups. Many of them went a different direction than their parents and grandparents in opting for less involvement in the church in Quebec, and in Mainline Protestant churches across the country. In the late 80s and early 90s, they also were less inclined to show up for Catholic services.<sup>21</sup>

Their reduced levels of involvement often were accompanied by their writing religion off as irrelevant and passé in their positions as journalists, professors, school teachers, counsellors, lawyers, politicians, board members, and so on. Take ex-Catholic Michael Adams, for example, the influential Boomer pollster. In 1997, he wrote, “Increasingly, Canadians are giving up on traditional religious dogma in favour of a less guilt-ridden spirituality.” Adams links the demise of deference that we discussed in Chapter 3 to the fact that Boomers “killed” off God and the Devil. After that, “the slaying of lesser gods – including any once-questioned authorities – became much less intimidating, if not inevitable.” Similarly, journalist Michael Valpy routinely has portrayed organized religion as being in free-fall.<sup>22</sup>

In the process of taking such positions on religion, Boomers sometimes have contributed to the creation of environments that have made ministry more difficult. Such an outlook on religion also has demoralized more than a few leaders and laity, who, in the words of one Presbyterian leader,

“have had difficulty escaping the psychological shackles of a secularization mentality.”

But there was and is an additional casualty. As Boomers move into their 60s, many are faced with a dilemma. Having frequently chosen to take a pass on organized religion, they nonetheless readily acknowledge spiritual needs. Maybe some of them have discovered along with Ron Rolheiser that, when it comes to religion and spirituality, the pluralism of our day, which they have championed, “is rich in everything, except clarity.”<sup>23</sup> We’ve seen how Boomers also are not feeling as fulfilled in many aspects of their lives as the generation before them and the one following behind. Some undoubtedly are looking for more.

However, the story may not be over quite yet. The latest survey shows that some 7 in 10 Boomers, even at this point in their lives, are receptive to greater involvement in churches – including some 6 in 10 Boomers in Quebec. Maybe, in part, it’s because some have found themselves wedged in a kind of “religiousless void” between Pre-Boomers, many of whom have stayed with the churches throughout their lives, and Post-Boomers who seem to be finding meaning in church life. It’s one thing to have grandma go to church without you; it’s another to have your son and his family go to church without you. At that point, it is not clear who is on the right track and who is on the wrong track – especially when you concluded some time ago that there really is no track at all. To repeat a poignant line from that Rhodes scholar turned country music poet, Kris Kristofferson, it’s enough to make one think more than a little about that “something that I lost somehow, somewhere along the way.”<sup>24</sup>



Wade Clark Roof’s observation of American Boomers may accurately describe their Canadian counterparts:

*Beneath all the rhetoric of distrust and distance rests another, far quieter rhetoric – that of the soul. In innermost beings, the “children of the sixties” know that religion, for all its institutional limitations, holds a vision of life’s unity and meaningfulness, and for that reason will continue to have a place in their narrative. In a very basic sense, religion itself was never the problem, only social forms of religion that stifle the human spirit. The sacred lives on and is real to those who can access it.*<sup>25</sup>

Margaret Wentz states the spirituality situation with Canadian Boomers in blunt terms: “I think the longing for God – call it soul hunger – is universal, and hard-wired into our genes.” Reflecting on the surge of interest



in spirituality, she continues, “I’ve always suspected that history was just lying in wait to take its exquisite revenge on us boomers who sought meaning in sex, drugs, rock ’n’ roll and the entire menu of Eastern mysticism. And so it has. The ’60s are finally over, folks. Time to move on.”<sup>26</sup>

CANADIAN-AMERICAN TREND TRACKING						
						
	1975	1990	2005	1975	1990	2005
Identify with a religion	96%	93	84	95	91	90
Religion: very important		26	25	52 <sup>1</sup>	59 <sup>2</sup>	59
Pray privately weekly or more	37	49	45	76 <sup>3</sup>	75	79
Read Bible/scriptures: monthly or more	23 <sup>*</sup>	23	25	56 <sup>4</sup>	54	48 <sup>5</sup>
Consider self to be a spiritual person			62 <sup>10</sup>			58 <sup>5</sup>
Attend services weekly or more	31	24	25	36	35	33 <sup>6</sup>
Attend services monthly or more	41	34	34			56
Attended worship service last six months			43			66
The Bible is the literal Word of God			34 <sup>6</sup>		33 <sup>7</sup>	33
Believe in ... God or a Higher Power	86	82	82	94 <sup>4</sup>	88 <sup>7</sup>	90
Heaven	70 <sup>8</sup>	70	62	89 <sup>4</sup>	86 <sup>7</sup>	81
Life after death	73	68	67	75	78	82 <sup>6</sup>
Angels		61 <sup>9</sup>	62	56 <sup>1</sup>	72 <sup>10</sup>	78
Hell	40 <sup>8</sup>	46	42	69 <sup>10</sup>	71 <sup>7</sup>	70
The Devil			37 <sup>6</sup>	63 <sup>10</sup>	65 <sup>7</sup>	70

<sup>1</sup>1978. <sup>2</sup>1989. <sup>3</sup>1983. <sup>4</sup>1978. <sup>5</sup>2000. <sup>6</sup>2004. <sup>7</sup>1991. <sup>8</sup>1969. <sup>9</sup>1995. <sup>10</sup>1968.  
 U.S. source unless otherwise specified: General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago. Additional U.S. sources: Religion's importance – 1995 World Values Survey; 2005 – The Gallup Poll, Jan. 20, 2006. Identify – The Gallup Poll, Dec. 6, 2005. Bible reading – Gallup archives. Last six months – The Gallup Poll, Oct. 18, 2005. Bible literal – The Gallup Poll, Nov. 21-24, 1991 and May 2-5, 2005. Beliefs 2005 – The Gallup Poll, May 25, Nov. 9, and Nov. 16, 2004; God 2005 – The Gallup Poll, Dec. 13, 2005. Earlier = Gallup archives.  
 Canadian sources unless otherwise specified: Project Canada Survey Series.  
 Additional Canadian sources: Identify – Census data for 1971, 1991, and 2001. Last six months – The Gallup Poll, Oct. 18, 2005. Bible literal – The Gallup Poll, Jan. 4, 2005. Devil – The Gallup Poll, Nov. 16, 2004. Heaven, hell – The Gallup Poll, Jan. 18, 1969.  
<sup>\*</sup>Bible-reading for 1975: estimated by taking weekly-plus readers (7%) and treating the next category of “sometimes” (32%) as comprised evenly of monthly-readers and less than monthlys.



# Concluding Thoughts

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THE Baby Boomer generation has received a lot of ink. Much of it has been due to their sheer numbers, and the impact of those numbers on areas such as family life, education, the workforce, and the health system as the cohort has moved forward. But that's only part of it. Canadian life has changed significantly as a result of social and cultural developments during the Boomer era. Those changes did not take place in a human vacuum, nor were they simply the products of uncontested globalization or Americanization.<sup>1</sup> Boomers, together with older and younger Canadians, have interacted with demographic, technological, and global realities in transforming their country in the post-1960s.

## **Beyond War and Depression**

The fact that Boomers were born in the first two decades after the Second World War meant that they found themselves in a context replete with a sense of new beginnings and new possibilities. The dark cloud of the Cold War and a possible Third World War hovered over western societies in the late 1940s and 1950s. Still, for many Canadians, it was a time when husbands and fathers were reunited with wives and children after being away in the forces, a time when, for now, at least, war was over and life could be lived again.

I knew something of the mood of that day. My father had been away for much of my first two years, serving in the air force. He was stationed in Canada and never went overseas. Still, for a little boy with a sister who was not much older, Dad had been far away, someone whose voice I heard on the phone telling me he would be home soon with “maple buds.” Now he was home to stay, and all of us could do things together. That was the relatively normal world into which my brother arrived three weeks before

the end of the war, joined by four Boomer sisters between 1948 and 1963. None of them ever knew how war had affected our family.

The late 1950s and early 60s have been dubbed “Happy Days,” and they were happy times in Canada and the U.S., in large part because there was no war – a time when adults and children could turn most of their attention to living life and exploring its possibilities. Serious thinkers sometimes malign the shallowness of the times – when some of the more popular songs, for example, included such heavy lyrics as, “See you later alligator / After ’while crocodile” and “You ain’t nothin’ but a hound dog / Cryin’ all the time.” In reality, these kinds of songs spoke volumes about the need of Canadians and Americans to be “playfully mindless,” to find relief from the heaviness of the wars that had spanned the years 1917 to 1920 and 1939 to 1945, with a major economic depression spliced between. They knew how to think; they also needed to find ways not to think.

### **A World Without Limits**

By the mid-1960s, the first Boomers were leaving school, some through graduation, others deciding to quit at 16 and go out to work, as many of their parents had done. The difference was in the number of new opportunities they had.

It was all a bit overwhelming. Those who ventured on to university found themselves part of a tiny minority, entering a world that was foreign to most of them. Others enrolled in one of the growing number of tech schools, sometimes with the idea of pursuing trades, in other instances to get formal credentials for work they were doing already. There was a newness to it all – new buildings and new campuses that symbolized a new national emphasis on education and training.

Looking back, the occupational possibilities were probably almost endless; in reality, the narrow worlds from which most Boomers were emerging made the choices far more limited. Something is not an option when we are not aware of it.

There was also a whole lot of new thinking going on. Michael Adams writes that postwar prosperity allowed Boomers to feel that their basic survival could be taken for granted, “an assumption in which their parents had not been able to indulge. Freed from care regarding physical security and daily survival, the Boomers had the opportunity to turn their attention to quality of life issues.”<sup>2</sup>

Young people growing up in the 1950s and 1960s were exposed to new ideas about personal freedom. Discrimination on the basis of colour or cul-

tural background was in the process of being condemned. A Royal Commission launched in 1963 signalled that the federal government recognized the need for women to know more freedom and equality. The arrival of the Pill, around 1965, symbolized sexual emancipation for both women and men and helped usher in the Sexual Revolution. Homosexuality was decriminalized in Canada in 1967. The Divorce Act of 1968 liberalized the grounds for marital dissolution beyond adultery. The growing emphasis on individual rights was accompanied by a widening acceptance of relativism – the belief that morality and a general sense of “right and wrong” exist in some absolute sense but are “relative” to the person and situation involved.

The new freedoms were associated as well with a more critical posture toward existing institutions, notably the family, religion, government, education, media, big business, and the criminal-justice system. For example, by the late 1960s, serious doubts were being expressed about the future of conventional marriage. In part because of people openly questioning the necessity of religious involvement, church attendance began to fall. In addition, government, big business, the media, and the justice system all came under heavy scrutiny, with academics often leading the way.<sup>3</sup>

## **What the Boomers Are Leaving Behind**

The Boomers, of course, were hardly one monolithic group. They began to disperse in high school, going in many different directions and ending up in any number of different places. It wouldn't be until they held high-school reunions 10 or 25 years later that they themselves would begin to grasp the tremendous diversity of their cohort.

Still, they could not help but put a collective stamp on Canadian life. The first Boomers who left high school invariably were “the young people” in any setting in which they found themselves – be it work, a neighbourhood, an organization, a university, or a tech school. To be among the youngest meant they typically had little authority, power, or influence. But that soon changed. As we saw earlier, after comprising only 20% of adults between the ages of 20 and 64 in 1971, their presence jumped to 34% just five years later, reaching 48% by 1981. From about 1985 to just after 2000, Boomers made up more than 50% of Canada's total 20- to 64-year-old population.

During those peak years of numerical strength, Boomers were positioned to have a profound influence on Canadian life. And it was precisely during those years that Canada experienced the six major shifts we have

discussed. Not every Boomer was a leader and not every Boomer was in sync with the new emphases. Still, in concert with older Canadians and younger Canadians, Boomers were centrally involved in the dissemination and adoption of these themes in their various roles as politicians and constituents, teachers and students, journalists and readers, employers and employees, business leaders and customers, clergy and laity. The result was that these themes became increasingly pervasive throughout Canadian society in the post-1960s.

In short, Baby Boomers have been the key players in bringing about the major cultural shifts I have identified – from *Dominance to Diversity*, *We to Me*, *Deference to Discernment*, and *Obligation to Gratification*. They also have led the way in shifting time expectations from *Tomorrow to Today*, as well as being champions of the information age that has contributed to our moving from *Knowing Too Little to Knowing Too Much*.

Their legacy is extremely significant. But in a number of instances, that legacy has some very important *To Do* stickers attached to it. Along the way, I have been drawing attention to some of them. Let's pull it all together.

### **1. The Endorsement and Expansion of Pluralism**

Building on the groundwork laid by the federal government, Boomers have been extremely effective in spreading the message that Canada is a pluralistic country with generous boundaries.

Boomers are leaving us, however, with a tough assignment: figuring out how to build a well-integrated country out of our pluralistic parts. We can herald diversity all we want, but if all we have in common is our diversity, we really don't have anything in common at all. At best, we will have a fragmented society; at worst, the parts will bring down the whole.

### **2. The Acceptance and Acceleration of Individualism**

With the Charter in place, Boomers have helped create a pervasive mindset of individual freedom. Technology has contributed to individualism and responded to it. We can control and customize our social spheres. As we do, the ways in which we relate to the people we care about increase, but the range of people we care about appears to decrease.

The age-old question the Boomers are leaving behind is how the Post-Boomers and others will find that difficult balance between an emphasis on the individual and on the group, between ensuring that individuals have rights, freedoms, and privacy and that social life is both possible and enjoyable at the relational, community, national, and global levels.

### **3. The Geometric Jump in Performance Expectations**

The days of deference are dead. We know more and expect more than ever before, and have been encouraged by the Boomers to keep a critical eye on the performance of our institutions and individuals.

We want input. Organizations and individuals have responded, bringing in an era of unprecedented interactivity.

Having heightened our expectations of institutions and individuals, Boomers are leaving us another tough task – this time one of striking a balance between providing informed critiques of leaders and experts and having realistic expectations of them. Of course the expectations need to be there. But carried to excess, our critical outlooks will make life difficult for anyone who plays a leadership role. In the process, we will cripple our institutions, fail to benefit from legitimate expertise, and wring the joy out of life for many people.

### **4. The Emergence of a Consumption Mindset**

Duty has joined deference in the graveyard of Canadian culture. Today, as we pursue the things we want in life, we have followed the lead of Boomers in basing our decisions primarily on what has personal worth and significance. In the process, we have become highly selective consumers. Words like duty and loyalty, tradition and commitment sound strangely old-fashioned.

Here again, Boomers are leaving us with a difficult assignment. Our valued relationships with family and friends, along with good interpersonal ties more generally, require us to find a balance between what we enjoy and want and what other people value and need. The emphasis on consumption and personal gratification may make such a balancing act an increasingly elusive goal.

### **5. The Remarkable Rise in Time Expectations**

The emphasis on the individual, combined with performance expectations and a consumption mindset, has resulted in our joining with Boomers in expecting each other to do good work quickly. These mutual expectations have become all the more intense with technological advances that have made it possible to do things faster, while stripping us of our resting and hiding places. It is adding up to a lot of strain, emotionally, physically, and relationally.

Boomers are leaving behind the tough task of finding ways to reduce the time expectations we are placing on each other. Until we find some solutions, ideally collectively but at minimum personally, such time pressures will continue to take a serious individual, relational, and societal toll.

## **6. The Information Explosion and Its After-effects**

Our levels of formal education have never been higher, and the Internet has joined television, other media, and a burgeoning number of information entrepreneurs in giving us access to an unprecedented amount of information. Our entire economy is now information-driven. Gone is the day when we knew too little.

The explosion of information, however, brings with it at least three important questions: the extent to which we will avoid information ghettos, encourage people to think, and use new information to elevate personal and collective life.

There is good reason to believe that the information explosion has been treated by many Boomers and others as a virtue in and of itself. The issues of ghettoization, “thinking,” and “knowledge for what?” largely have been left to younger generations of Canadians to address.

To look at each of these six Boomer-era social trends is to see the prominence of the individual and individual freedom. There’s no doubt about it: Boomers will be remembered for some of the significant ways in which they have elevated the individual.

Four additional post-1960s trends defy the cliché that the only constant is change. They involve four important areas where the news is continuity, not change. It’s not at all clear that Boomers deserve much credit for the persistence of these themes. In fact, it may be that they have persisted to a large extent *in spite of* Boomers and their values, priorities, and initiatives.

## **7. What We Want from Life**

Canadians continue to want three things most: freedom, good relationships, and a comfortable life. To their credit, Boomers have given considerable attention to freedom. They also have emphasized the importance of education as the key to experiencing a comfortable life. And lest anyone needs to be reminded, Boomer-run corporations – on a scale never seen before – have used every available means to market their products as centrally important attributes of that much-sought-after comfortable life.

What Boomers have not given comparable attention to is the importance of relationships – beginning with their own lives and own homes and extending outward. The *To Do* sticker here is one that, for the most part, will be read by Post-Boomers.

## **8. Civility**

For all our scepticism and cautiousness in dealing with people we don’t know well or don’t know at all, we would like our ties to them to be civil



and positive. More than that, at our best, we aspire to be compassionate and helpful.

The Boomers obviously have given much attention to improving inter-group and interpersonal relations. They also have made the reduction of crime and violence a priority, along with enhancing the safety of Canadians, notably women and children.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, during their time of numerical and leadership dominance, suspicion and distrust have been high between regions, age groups, and women and men. We have been slow to grasp that we have far more in common than we realize. Consciously or unconsciously, the media and politicians have been among those information leaders who have kept us apart. One positive in all this is that we have been making progress toward greater civility as women have come to occupy more positions of leadership and influence.

The Boomers are leaving much of the task of creating a more trusting, less fearful, and more caring Canada to the emerging generation.

## **9. Family Aspirations**

Despite the fact that family hopes and dreams frequently do not turn out as planned, the vast majority of us – including our teenagers – continue to have fairly conventional family aspirations. We plan to marry; our marriages – first, second, or third – are expected to last forever; we plan to have children; we want to have good ties with our partners, our kids, our parents, others in the family – even when things don’t always work out that way.

Here, as elsewhere, we need to be fair to Boomers. Contrary to the excessive criticism levelled at them, they have not abdicated responsibility for enhancing family life. As politicians, for example, they have attempted to put legislation, infrastructures, and tangible services in place to make life easier and better for families. All provinces have ministries that focus on the needs of families. In recent years, Ontario (2000) and Alberta (2003) initiated “Promise” programs patterned after “America’s Promise,” which was launched by the U.S. government in 1997. The programs emphasize “five promises”: a healthy start, ongoing relationships with caring adults, safe places outside the home to play and grow, marketable skills through effective education, and an opportunity to give back to the community.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that such efforts supplement government programs and services, they need to be applauded.<sup>5</sup>

All this said, the Boomer era will not go down in Canadian history as a

Golden Age for family life. Boomers have given considerable time and energy to their pursuit of education, careers, and success. They have tried to find ways to juggle families and careers. In many instances, family life has suffered and suffered severely. As we noted earlier, Boomers have the highest level of divorce of any cohort in Canadian history. Some 25% of them have experienced marital break-ups – and that’s only so far; keep in mind that the youngest Boomers have just reached their early 40s. Large numbers of children and other people have struggled to adapt. Not surprisingly, many Boomers – especially males – are reporting less than optimal levels of happiness and fulfillment when it comes to their family lives.

Somehow we need to do a better job of giving families – our partners, our children – the priority and attention that good and gratifying relationships require. What’s needed, in order for that to happen, is a collective response – one that starts with us but includes the support of our institutions, notably schools, employers, governments, big business, churches, and the media.

Here again, Post-Boomers are faced with succeeding in an area where Boomers have been having only limited success. They have to take family aspirations seriously and do all they can to help Canadians, including aging Boomers, realize them.

### **10. Religion and Spirituality**

Contrary to ideas propagated by many Boomer academics and journalists in particular, the inclination of Canadians to reach beyond themselves continues to extend to the gods. Spiritual needs are widely acknowledged. Traditional beliefs about gods who care and life after death remain intact, while levels of prayer and religious experience remain high. The extent of participation in organized religion has been grossly underestimated and patterns of involvement badly misunderstood. Most Canadians continue to identify with religious groups. A majority are open to greater involvement. In recent years, participation levels have been increasing. Groups, at their best, continue to have much to bring to individuals and society.<sup>6</sup>

Boomers who jumped on the bandwagon of secularization and left the churches now find themselves on a parade route with a withering number of cheering spectators, including fewer of their younger family members. It’s safe to say that neither religion nor spirituality received the attention they warranted until the 1990s – and even then, spirituality was played up and religion was played down.

The rediscovery of the ongoing vitality of religion and its importance in

Canadian lives and Canadian life lies primarily with Post-Boomers. The task of reawakening and revitalizing religious groups, enabling them to respond to the need and opportunity at hand, is also largely theirs.

## **Beyond the Boomers**

A number of years ago, a friend of mine said to me, as her marriage came to an end, “I’ve learned a lot from him about what I want in a man, and I’ve learned a lot from him about what I don’t want in a man.” These sentiments pretty much sum up how Post-Boomers are feeling about Boomers and Pre-Boomers. When I look at the survey findings, and put some under-40 faces and biographies on the numbers, the dominant pattern is clear: Post-Boomers are extracting some of the best features and discarding some of the worst features of both the Pre-Boomer and Boomer eras.

If you are over the age of 40, don’t worry about the up-and-coming generation of adults. Compared with what those of us over 40 have known, young Post-Boomers are positioned to experience a significant upgrade in the quality of their personal and collective lives.

## **Privileged Post-Boomers**

A little perspective is required. Immediately after the Second World War, Pre-Boomers and Boomers gave much attention to education and jobs, along with freedom and equality issues. Schooling was often intimidating in those days, since many young Boomer and Pre-Boomer children had parents who had not even finished high school. I remember my grade 11 biology teacher looking out at our class of 30 students one afternoon in 1960 and proclaiming, sarcastically, “Only about four of you kids will ever get to university.” He was right. School was tough; university was shrouded in mystique.

A lot of additional hurdles had to be cleared as men and women pursued careers that typically were different from those of their parents. Many males had little comprehension of the obstacles that females were facing. When I went to my Edmonton high-school reunion in 1999, I was intrigued to learn how many of our best female students had become school principals and head nurses – a reality that spoke volumes about the limited career opportunities available in the 1960s to outstanding Pre-Boomer women. Things were not much better for that first wave of outstanding Boomer women born between 1946 and 1955, though presumably they were a little better for the second wave born in the following decade.<sup>7</sup> Adams comments that the early Boomer women were like supporting

actresses to husbands; by the 1970s and early 80s, they began to invade traditional male bastions such as law, medicine, and business administration. But it wouldn't be until the late 80s and 90s that women – Post-Boomer women – would come of age and outnumber and outperform men in professional schools.<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, the children born after the Boomer cohort from 1966 onward have been an extremely privileged generation. These Post-Boomers, who were under 40 as of 2005, have grown up in a very different time from the Boomers and Pre-Boomers.

- They have never known a Canada at war.
- Through their parents, they collectively have experienced a higher standard of living than any generation before them.
- Post-secondary education has been seen by most as both essential and normative: as teenagers in the 1980s and 90s, approximately 9 in 10 of them said they expected to pursue an education beyond high school.<sup>9</sup> Most of them have.
- Education, media, the Internet, and life experiences have given them unprecedented exposure to their wide selection of career and lifestyle possibilities. Gone is the day when sociologists could draw fairly simple intergenerational career path lines like farmer → farmer for father and son, or teacher → teacher for mother and daughter. Still further, how one wants to live life is a relatively new variable added to the aspirations equation.
- And freedom, equality, and opportunity are pretty much givens; after all, this is Canada, isn't it?

Unlike many of their parents and certainly many of their grandparents, many Post-Boomers have had the luxury of being able to delay their careers, their schooling, and most definitely marriage and parenthood.<sup>10</sup> The relative affluence of their parents has provided a good number of them – the so-called boomerang kids – with the option, if necessary, of staying home longer before leaving home,<sup>11</sup> and also of returning home for periods of time before resuming life on their own.<sup>12</sup> This has contributed, in some cases, to Boomers being the filling in the infamous “sandwich generation,” squeezed between looking after their grown children and their parents.<sup>13</sup> Boomers' financial stability also has provided many Post-Boomers with a psychological, and sometimes literal, cushion in times of need. The *Globe and Mail's* June 2006 poll found, for example, that 30% of all Boomers

are giving some kind of financial support to offspring 18 and over.<sup>14</sup> According to our Project Canada 2005 survey, almost 50% of Boomers say they plan to retire before 65. Something is about to give, kids!

Think of the intergenerational difference: Pre-Boomers and older Boomers frequently lived lives that seemed to be predetermined by the need to rush off to war, drop out of school, find a job, marry young. It was as if life simply unfolded for people.

### **Reflective Post-Boomers**

Post-Boomers are in a position to do much of the unfolding themselves. Perhaps to a greater extent than any previous Canadian generation, they have been able to have the time to assess what kind of lives they want to live. With no excessive pressure to finish school, find work, get married, have children, and so on, many have had the freedom to be able to explore educational, career, and relational possibilities, and maybe take a year or two out to travel, not feeling that the future has to be greeted at high speed.

This brings me to my main point. As they have been assembling their lives, Post-Boomers have been able to take a good look at how their grandparents, and their parents, have lived. Many grew up in homes where dads and moms, frankly, were experimenting with how to combine education, careers, raising kids, and marriages. The Post-Boomers saw how things turned out.

Such a vantage point has provided the emerging adult generation with a unique opportunity to learn from the Pre-Boomer and Boomer cohorts and extract the best and delete the worst from both. The preliminary evidence suggests that many younger adults are doing just that. They, like the Boomers, have moved away from the racist and sexist tendencies of many older Canadians, to an extent that is readily exceeding that of Boomers. They also have recovered and restored some valuable Pre-Boomer “files” that Boomers had tended either to use infrequently or delete – what people want most, the importance of family life, civility, and religion.

They have drawn on the Boomers’ strong emphases on education, discernment, and information. But they are determined to do a better job of harmonizing such themes with their desire for good relationships, time to focus on their children, social compassion, spiritual fulfillment, and the opportunity to simply enjoy life. And so far, at least, they are reporting levels of happiness and fulfillment that match those of Pre-Boomers and exceed those of Boomers.

Some very quick Post-Boomer case examples from a fairly extensive and varied “Bibby file” on young adults spanning the past few decades. Let’s start with Rick and Garry.

- Rick is 39. He was extremely close to his grandparents and over the years loved to make the trip from Winnipeg to Thunder Bay to spend time with his large extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins. He didn’t have much in common with how his grandparents put the world together, wincing at their references to “going down to the corner and getting a loaf of bread from the Chinaman” or the derogatory comments the family as a whole occasionally made about homosexuals. Rick also recognized that his beloved grandma was very traditional, waiting on his granddad at every turn. His own dual-career parents divorced when he was in grade 4, yet continued to raise him and his two brothers; neither remarried until Rick was in his 20s.

At 29, Rick moved to Vancouver with his girlfriend and four years later they moved to Edmonton. They now have three preschool children, and Rick wants to have a fourth child soon. He has never married and has felt no need to do so – noting how many of his friends have already married and divorced. He is a self-employed developer and loves his freedom and the idea of having a big family. So far, his partner, Natalie, has “stayed home” and taken the primary responsibility of caring for their children. Consistent with his marital choices, Rick is a free spirit who, for as long as he can remember, has not been troubled about issues like sexual orientation, racial intermarriage, or women doing whatever they want to do with their lives. He is interested in spirituality and fascinated by the realm of the supernatural but has little interest in organized religion.

- Garry is close to 40. He came out of a family where his father worked two jobs, feeling this was the best way to get ahead. His parents have had what they view as a long and happy marriage. Garry loves ideas and spent three years at university but never completed his degree. He moved to Vancouver from southern Alberta when he was in his mid-20s, in part because he was drawn there by the diversity of people and lifestyles. Garry worked two jobs himself and for a while toyed with the possibility of going back to school and finishing his degree. Today he works a four-day

week, still loves ideas, and loves the coast – but has concluded he wants time to simply enjoy life. So far he hasn't married but loves children and deeply values his friends – and is known to their children as Uncle Garry. He describes himself as a spiritual person.

For Rick and Garry, diversity is a given and simply not an issue. They live their lives and let others live theirs, without worrying about the differences in people's choices. There is little stigma, little gossip, as long as people are content with how they are choosing to live.

It carries through to occupations. When Rick, Garry, and their friends get together for a visit in Vancouver or Alberta, the focus is not on what they do but how they are doing, not on what they are accomplishing but the enjoyment they are receiving from what they are accomplishing. Whether they work for an insurance company, a grocery chain, or the post office, or are self-employed, doesn't matter a lot. The intergenerational difference becomes blatant when the person who joins them over lunch or coffee is a Pre-Boomer or Boomer – and occasionally a Post-Boomer. They invariably want to know what they're doing now, and how well they're doing it, perhaps probing unsubtly for an update on their respective marital statuses.

Rick and Garry break with earlier generations in having a diversity mindset; but they have particular affinity with their respective grandparents in the value they place on family and friends. They have appreciated the importance that their parents gave to education, hard work, and success. But they have concluded that there is more to life than all three. They also enjoy reflecting together on spirituality and religion – seemingly dusting off a theme of importance to their grandparents.

- Wayne is a dentist in his late 30s. He is married with two young children. For just over 10 years he has had his own practice in southern Ontario. Recently, his younger sister obtained her degree from a prestigious American dental school and joined Wayne as a partner. Their parents had come to Canada from China, operating a small grocery store on the site where the dental clinic now stands. Wayne feels he has retained some of the values of his parents, notably the importance of working hard and family life. But he also is well aware that he thinks quite differently from them about a variety of social, moral, and religious matters. Unlike his parents, who worked long hours with little time for leisure, he consciously makes sure that he sets time aside each week for his family and

blocks off a number of weeks each year for holidays with them away from home.

- Saida's family came to Canada from India when she was a preschooler. She was raised a Muslim but from an early age found herself valuing freedom to think and act according to how she felt – an inclination that was a source of tension between her and her parents. In her early 20s, she decided to quit her job as a retail clerk and go to university. From there she proceeded to go to law school in Toronto. In her second year in the city, Saida alienated herself from her family by marrying Doug, an older, divorced Caucasian with a United Church background. She articulated with a firm in Montreal. I last visited with her five years ago when she was 33. Her relationship with her parents continued to be strained. Yet, she said she didn't regret her marital decision.

These two Post-Boomer children of immigrants share their parents' appreciation for hard work, education, and occupational attainment. Wayne knows that some of his values and many of his views are very different from those of his parents. Where he particularly differs is in wanting his successful practice to be a means to good family life, rather than having it – out of necessity or choice – consume his time and energy at his family's expense. Saida was always well aware of the values of her parents and grandparents. Nonetheless, she felt compelled to follow her own conscience and needs. She, parallel to Wayne, has drawn selectively on some key family values but has chosen to supplement those values in ways that make life fulfilling for her.

- Alisha is 29. She was raised a Mormon and regards her relationship with God as important. Her parents separated when she was six and she was raised by her much-loved grandmother, and to a lesser extent by her father. A bright and vibrant individual, Alisha approaches life with a combination of inquisitiveness and scepticism that frequently has left her struggling to maintain her faith. Her views about life generally and issues like premarital sex and homosexuality specifically are not those of her church, with the differences becoming increasingly apparent by the time she graduated from university with a degree in psychology. She often is labelled as "different." Alisha defied considerable odds by going into law enforcement and finds her thinking typically foreign to those of her colleagues. Presently she is cohabiting with her



boyfriend in Saskatoon, but she hopes to eventually marry and have children, while continuing her career in policing.

- André is 28 and lives in Montreal, where he is doing graduate work in religious studies and working part time. He came from a fairly devout Roman Catholic home, with grandparents and parents who placed a high value on faith, family, and education. However, by the end of his teens, André grew disenchanted with Catholicism, in part because of his increasingly liberal views on morality and family life. For a short time, through a friend, he attended a United Church. Since he turned 25, he has been living with a woman who is Buddhist and he regularly attends Buddhist services with her – enjoying, he says, the serenity the services bring. André points out that he expects to eventually marry, and when he does, it probably will be in the Catholic Church; he also wants his children to be baptized Catholic.
- Gayle is 32 and gay. Her brother married at 22 and had a son about two years later. It was assumed that she eventually would follow suit. Gayle was a conscientious student, who, following her graduation from an Ontario technical institute, has had a successful career in the hospitality industry that has taken her across Canada. She was low-key about her sexual orientation through the end of her 20s, well aware of the consternation its disclosure would create in her parents and grandparents. Her isolation within the greater family was reduced considerably by her aunt coming out a year or two before she did. Around the same time, her brother's marriage came to an end. For their part, her parents have been very accepting of Gayle and her partner. So have other family members – in sharp contrast to the sentiments they had expressed about gays and lesbians in the past.

Alisha, André, and Gayle are all individualists. They haven't come off conventional assembly lines. As Post-Boomers, they respect a number of the family and work-related values of their grandparents and parents and have extrapolated traits like hard work and determination. Alisha and André have also valued faith, and continue to do so. At the same time, all three have needed to have the freedom to be who they are. In that regard, the accelerated emphasis Boomers have placed on individual expression and rights and freedoms has been emancipating, although André and Alisha are not sure where their religious situations are going to land.

Incidentally, the “acceptance if not approval” posture of Gayle’s family members illustrates what our surveys have shown – that Canadians of all ages have become more tolerant of “different” lifestyles and individuals over time.

Two final illustrations. Not every Post-Boomer, of course, makes a dramatic break from their Pre-Boomer and Boomer roots. But most break at least a little. And by most of our standards, the break is for the better.

- Katherine and Jon, now in their early 30s, both grew up in devout evangelical homes with non-divorced parents and married while they were still in university. Both were highly motivated students. Katherine obtained a master’s degree and Jon a law degree – in the process exceeding their parents’ levels of education. Jon is a successful lawyer. Katherine recently took time out of her career to have a child. They value their faith and involvement in their local Calgary church. They hold what they regard as fairly reasonable if not overly liberal views on most social issues. Although they do not approve of same-sex marriage, they are willing to accept it. Katherine and Jon have had particularly close ties with her parents and with her much-loved grandmother. If pressed, they will admit that their views are somewhat more liberal than those of their parents and grandma.
- Darryl and his wife are both in their late 20s. They have been married for five years and have a young child. Darryl’s family was fairly conservative socially. They were a bit surprised, at first, when he introduced them to his girlfriend and wife-to-be some seven years ago. Tierra’s roots are Central American, and Darryl’s grandparents in particular previously had expressed some apprehension about “mixed marriages.” When Darryl obtained his B.A., he was an immediate family anomaly as a university graduate. He recently completed his master’s degree at a school in Nova Scotia and is currently working on his Ph.D. at a highly regarded American school. He and his wife have continued to value their religious faith but acknowledge that their views of life have changed a fair amount since they both left home.

Katherine and Jon, along with Darryl and Tierra, mirror many of the values of their parents. Still, these Post-Boomers have travelled further educationally than their older family members and have developed attitudes that are more pluralistic. The differences are not for the worse.

To look at these Post-Boomers is to see a fairly consistent, and, I think, positive pattern. They are taking some of the best features of earlier generational cohorts, including Boomers, and putting together lives that in many ways are more balanced than those of their parents and grandparents. The potential is there for that to translate into extremely gratifying living.

But there's more. The Post-Boomers' unprecedented respect for diversity, along with their inclination to draw wisely on what has gone before, is providing them with the potential to work together and collectively pursue the best in life possible for everyone.

Building on the legacies of both Pre-Boomers and Boomers, the emerging generation has much to bring to an evolving Canada.

Of course it won't be a solo effort. It never is. One generation doesn't simply "take over," as some of our teen survey respondents over the years claim they are going to do "one day." Rather, over time, newer generations get phased in as the existing generations get older and smaller – and over time, the cycle repeats itself. It really comes down to a matter of proportions. The adult world is always an intergenerational world.<sup>15</sup>

So it was that numerically dominant Boomers worked alongside key Pre-Boomers and smaller numbers of Post-Boomers in the course of bringing in a more just society in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>16</sup> David Foot's reminder of a few years ago – that the Boomers aren't dead yet – still holds.<sup>17</sup> As of 2006, they are between the ages of 41 and 60 and still have an important role to play. But their days of numerical dominance are over. The key to the kind of country we are going to have in the next few decades increasingly lies with Post-Boomers, working together with Boomers and other Canadians who are both older and younger. In this "New Canada," as Erin Anderssen and Michael Valpy have described it, leadership will come from a generation that, in their words, is driven not so much by "corporate success or material gain, so much as the goal of a balanced life" – who will live "what their parents had to learn."<sup>18</sup>

As they say in sports, "Records are made to be broken." If the Post-Boomers live up to their potential, then you know what? The Boomer designation as "Canada's most famous generation" is going to be short-lived.



# Endnotes

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## Preface

- 1 On the positive side, besides this book (!), see Leonard Steinhorn (2006), who points to the legacy of American Baby Boomers in challenging Tom Brokaw's (1999) claim that the Second World War generation of Pre-Boomers was the greatest generation, and Marc Freedman's (1999) argument that Boomers will bring their vitality into retirement and change old notions about later life.
- 2 Some examples of consternation include the loss of tax revenue and a decrease in health-care spending (Fortin, 2006), tough economic times for Post-Boomers (Kamenetz, 2006), and a corporate leadership gap (Mathieu, 2006).

## Opening Thoughts

- 1 Foot, 1996: 18.
- 2 Each of the seven adult surveys has had samples of approximately 1,500 people, weighted down to about 1,200 cases to minimize the use of large weight factors. Conducted by mail with return rates of roughly 65%, they have yielded high-quality data. The samples are highly representative of the Canadian adult population and are of sufficient size to be accurate within about 3 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times in 20. The latest survey, Project Canada 2005, was carried out between the end of July and the end of November 2005. A total of 2,400 people participated, including a special Centennial Year oversample of some 500 extra Albertans, providing a total weighted sample of 625 people. For purposes of national analyses, the sample has been weighted down to a highly representative national sample of 1,600 cases, permitting generalizations to the Canadian population that are accurate within about 2.5 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times in 20. The 2005 survey has the following sample sizes for key variables: Baby Boomers 663, Pre-Boomers 378, Post-Boomers 559; women 806, men 784; BC 211, AB 160, SK-MB 109, ON 621, QC 378, AT 116, North 5. All samples for previous surveys are, of course, representative of the national population.

More detailed descriptions of the methodology used in the surveys may be found in Bibby, 2002: 249-254, 2001: 327-332, and 1995: 143-146.

- 3 Bibby, 1990: 68; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (www.aucc.ca), 2006, July.
- 4 Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.
- 5 Connelly, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2001 Census. According to the 2001 Census, 66% of women under the age of 25 with marital or common-law partners were employed, as were 75% of those in such relationships who were between the ages of 25 and 44. Those under 25 with no children had an employment rate of 79%, compared with 51% for those with one child, 40% for those with two, and 30% for those with three (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: catalogue no. 95F0379XCB01003).
- 6 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2004b, April 19.

## **1 From Dominance to Diversity**

- 1 Trudeau, Pierre. 1971, October 8. Statement made in the House of Commons.
- 2 Cited in Christiano, 1989: 19-20.
- 3 Trudeau, Pierre. 1971, October 8. Statement made in the House of Commons.
- 4 The Citizens' Forum, 1991, July 1: 3-4.
- 5 Government of Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982: Section 15.2.
- 6 Cited in Johnston, 1990: 46.
- 7 George, 2006: 35.
- 8 Quoted in Deveau, 2006, June 7.
- 9 Quoted in Mickleburgh, June 20, 2006: A1.
- 10 Bibby in Brym, 2007.

## **2 From We to Me**

- 1 See, for example, Bibby, 1990: 90-97.
- 2 Trudeau, 1968: xxii.
- 3 Lipset, 1989: 116.
- 4 Siemiatycki, 2006, Summer: 14.
- 5 The following section draws heavily on Bibby, 2001: 49-50.
- 6 Glasser, 1965: 7.
- 7 Gabarino, 1995: 158.
- 8 Putnam, 2000: 326.

## **3 From Deference to Discernment**

- 1 Brym, 2004: 67.
- 2 Newman, 1995: xix-xxii.

3 Moore, 2006b: A01.

#### **4 From Obligation to Gratification**

1 Walton, 2006: R5.

2 Popcorn, 1991: 143.

3 Portions of the material that follows are based in part on Bibby, 1990: 62-64 and 119-122.

4 Peck, 1978: 98, 104.

5 Spencer, 1990: 327.

6 Context Training Seminar, Edmonton, 1988, December.

7 Grant, 1988: 241.

#### **5 From Tomorrow to Today**

1 Daly, 2000.

2 Daly, 2000.

3 *Holiday Inn* television ads, 2006, Summer.

4 Putnam, 2000: 194.

5 Connelly, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

6 Lavoie and Oderkirk, 2000: 4.

7 By 2000, women in the paid labour force included 65% of mothers with children under six and 60% of mothers with children under two (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, 2004b).

8 One Statistics Canada survey in 1998, for example, found that time-stress levels were highest for married women and men between 25 and 44 who were employed full time with children at home. Some 38% of women and 26% of men in this group reported being time-stressed (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 1999, November 9). Longitudinal research spanning 1994 to 2001 has documented similar time-stress patterns (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2004a, January 21).

9 Daly, 2000.

10 An excellent, detailed analysis of family time pressures is offered by Daly, 2000. See also Corbeil, 2000, and Sauvé, 2002: Trend 41.

11 Foot, 1996: 190.

12 Putnam, 2000: 195.

13 Bibby, 2004b: 54, 63. See also, for example, Luxton, 1980; Hoschild, 1989; Marshall, 1994; Fox, 1997; Daly, 2000; Fast and Frederick, 2000; Bowen, 2004: 131-132; Sauvé, 2002.

14 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2006d, July 19.

15 *USA Today*, 2006, May 28.

16 Quoted in Righton, 2006, July 1: 40-41.

## **6 From Knowing Too Little to Knowing Too Much**

- 1 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2005b, December 12.
- 2 Carey, 1988: xxxiv. Cited also in Bibby, 1990: 79.
- 3 Drawn from the article *Internet* (www.wikipedia.org), 2006, August.
- 4 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2005b, December 12;  
www.InternetWorldStats.com, 2006, July 2.
- 5 Kirn, 2002, September 16.
- 6 Consoli, 2006, June 14. This was also a widely circulated wire story.
- 7 Shields, 2006, August 3.
- 8 Shackleton, 2006, July 19.
- 9 CTV.ca news release, 2006, June 5.
- 10 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2006c, June 30.
- 11 These newspaper readership patterns seem to be similar to what has been experienced in the United States, as well. See, for example, Lester, 2006, July 31.
- 12 See Veenhof, 2006: 15-16.

## **7 What People Want**

- 1 In case you wondered, if we calculate the children item for parents only versus the population as a whole, it rises to 72% and a share of fifth place.
- 2 Adams, 2003: 144.
- 3 Bricker and Wright, 2005: 33.
- 4 Laghi, 2006, June 10.
- 5 See Globe Focus section, *Globe and Mail*, June 24, 2006: F1-F18 and PowerPoint slide 18.
- 6 Shackleton, 2006, July 19.
- 7 See Globe Focus section, *Globe and Mail*, June 24, 2006: F1-F18 and PowerPoint slides 4-7.
- 8 Gandhi, 2006, June 30.

## **8 Civility**

- 1 Cohen and Langer, 2006, February 3.
- 2 Kim, 2006, February 27.
- 3 Leo, 2006, March 28.
- 4 Decima Reports Inc., 2001, April 10.
- 5 Brook, 2006, July 23.
- 6 Truss, 2005.
- 7 Garnett, 2005, November 19: D5.
- 8 Harvey, 2005, October 14. Also cited in Bibby, 2001: 1-2.



- 9 *Globe and Mail*, 2005, December 1.
- 10 See Rokeach, 1973. The surveys have posed many of the value examples used by Rokeach in his work, adding others that have seemed pertinent to the Canadian context.
- 11 See Bibby, 2001: 42.
- 12 World Values Survey data for Canada and the United States ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)), 1982.

## 9 Family Aspirations

- 1 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2002b, October 22.
- 2 Arnold, 2002, October 23: A1.
- 3 This story was widely circulated by CP on October 22, 2002. I first noticed it, for example, in the *Lethbridge Herald*, October 23, carrying the headline, "Canadian families growing less traditional."
- 4 Anderssen, 2002, October 23: A1.
- 5 Cameron, 2002, December 23: 42-43, and 2003, January 12: 44-45.
- 6 Nemeth, 1994, June 20.
- 7 Sections of what follows are excerpted from Bibby, 2004b: 92ff.
- 8 For complete methodological details, see Bibby, 2004a.
- 9 Sections of what follows are excerpted from Bibby, 2004b: 92ff.
- 10 Some observers write as if current preferred family forms are essentially up for grabs. American sociologist Judith Stacey (1999: 647), for example, writes, "No longer is there a single culturally dominant family pattern." She maintains that the postmodern family stands for a variety of contemporary family cultures, such as families of colour, single-parent families, same-sex couples, and extended families.
- 11 Bibby, 2001: 142-146.
- 12 The 2001 Census found that, among Canadians 15 and older, 8% were in common-law relationships, with the figure for Quebec at 17%. Our 2005 survey figures of 12% and 24%, respectively, do not appear to be out of line, given that our sample is composed of Canadians 18 and over and that there probably has been a slight increase in such relationships since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: catalogue no. 95F0487XCB01001).
- 13 Of those indicating that cohabitation was a premarital event, 85% went on to marry.
- 14 In its release of 2001 census findings on the family, entitled *Profile of Canadian Families and Households* (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001003), Statistics Canada noted that although a growing number of young adults are likely to "start their conjugal life through a common-law relationship," some 75% can be expected to marry, should current trends continue.

- 15 A Statistics Canada release, summarizing some key findings on common-law relationships from the 2001 General Social Survey, expressed things this way: “Common-law relationships have different meanings for different generations. Among the young, it is a prelude to, or substitute for, a first marriage; among older people, common-law unions are generally a prelude to, or substitute for, remarriage” (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2002, July 11).
- 16 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2003, November 20.
- 17 A Statistics Canada General Social Survey in 2001 found that 82% of adults had been married by religious clergy in the case of first marriages, with the figure slipping to 66% for remarriages (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2003, November 20).
- 18 Bibby, 2001: 118.
- 19 A Statistics Canada report based on 2001 data similarly found that 89% of people 25 and over who were married had been married once, 10% twice, and under 1% more than twice (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2006b, June 28).
- 20 For details, see Bibby, 2004b: 28.
- 21 In this section, I draw heavily from Bibby, 2004b: 49.
- 22 Our Vanier survey found the same pattern (Bibby, 2004b: 54-55). But the less-than-perfect world reality needs to be kept in mind in interpreting the results, as Vanier president Allan MacKay expressed in a letter to the *Globe and Mail*, 2006, January 9.
- 23 See Globe Focus section, *Globe and Mail*, 2006, June 24: F1-F18 and PowerPoint slide 4.
- 24 Additional details, beyond the data presented here, are available in Bibby, 2004b: 67-69.
- 25 It is interesting that when Gallup ran the same item in 1943, the mood of the times was such that only 29% of Canadians agreed.
- 26 Widely distributed by news services, including Associated Press, 2006, June 6.

## **10 Religion and Spirituality**

- 1 Some material in this section is drawn from Bibby, 2006.
- 2 For documentation, see Manchin, 2004, September 21.
- 3 For a superb overview of secularization thinking, including the effort to apply it to Canada, see Bowen, 2004: 3-22.
- 4 The Gallup Organization, 2006b.
- 5 Such an opinion about the spreading of the secularization thesis through the social sciences and humanities in the western world has been offered briefly by Berger, 1999: 10.
- 6 Pearce, 2006, June 24: F4.
- 7 Rolheiser, 1999: 3-5.
- 8 For further details, see Bibby, 2002/2004a: 190-202, and 2004b: 85-91.

- 9 See Bibby, 1987: 147.
- 10 This, of course, was what sociologist Emile Durkheim (1965: 431) pointed out would continue to happen.
- 11 Roof, 1999.
- 12 Bibby, 2001: 283-284.
- 13 In tabulating its results, StatsCan limited religious involvement to those who were participating in “specific affiliated groups such as a choir or youth group” and did *not* “include membership in the respondent’s church or religion” (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2004c). Yet, in computing the percentage of Canadians involved in other organizations, being part of a recreational hockey league or a member of a golf club counted, as did being a member of a union or professional association. In spite of these methodology choices, involvement in religious groups came in fourth, at 17%. To be fair, obviously some people show up to services as spectators. But to totally discount the reality of extensive social interaction is not, to my mind, to read the data accurately.
- 14 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2004c, July 6.
- 15 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2004d, September 20.
- 16 Graham, 1990: 104ff. These actual lines come from his CBC series on the book, when dealing with Quebec.
- 17 Bibby, 1987: 20-21, and 2001: 15-19.
- 18 Mol, 1976: The actual figure was 88% for people attending twice a month or more. I am assuming it is conservative to say that the monthly figure was around 90%. Although Gallup began probing attendance in 1945, the item used asked about attendance in the previous seven days. Unfortunately, the item makes it difficult to extrapolate in determining attendance levels beyond that seven-day time frame.
- 19 For details, see Bibby, 2004a: 39-41.
- 20 Full details are available in the 2001 Census. An introduction to the findings is found in Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 2003, May 13.
- 21 General corroboration of these patterns is found in the 2006 Strategic Counsel Boomer survey for the *Globe and Mail*, mentioned earlier. See Globe Focus section, *Globe and Mail*, 2006, June 24: F1-F18, and, in particular, slides 20 and 22.
- 22 Adams, 1997: 25ff. See also, Adams, 2005. Michael Valpy examples include Anderssen and Valpy, 2003: F1, and Valpy, 2004a: A8 and 2004b: A6.
- 23 Rolheiser, 1999: ix.
- 24 Kristofferson. *Sunday Mornin’ Comin’ Down*.
- 25 Roof, 1993: 261-262.
- 26 Wente, 2004, November 6: A25.

## Concluding Thoughts

- 1 British historian Alex MacGillivray (2006: 10) recently has written that “globalization is a jerky process of conflict between the local and the universal.” It hardly has simply swept Canada. As for Americanization, Michael Adams (2003) is among those who have recognized that U.S. values and Canadian values are hardly identical. Over the years, of course, there has been considerable resistance to outside influence generally, and to American influence specifically (see, for example, Grant, 1965; Barlow, 1991; Hurtig, 1991).
- 2 Adams, 2003: 131.
- 3 Sociologist John Porter, for example, stimulated considerable reflection on the nature of power in Canada with his book *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), a widely used resource in university social science courses.
- 4 See, for example, the respective websites for Ontario ([www.gov.on.ca](http://www.gov.on.ca)), Alberta ([www.albertaspromise.org](http://www.albertaspromise.org)), and the United States ([www.amercaspromise.org](http://www.amercaspromise.org)).
- 5 Some critics fear such initiatives will become a substitute for government involvement in the provision of services and programs. See, for example, Friendly, 2000.
- 6 For some good data and some interesting reflections on the contributions of religious groups and devout individuals to charities, see Bowen, 2004: 140-181, and Goar, 2006.
- 7 For an overview of past and current patterns of the kinds of employment for women, see Cook-Reynolds and Zukewich, 2004.
- 8 Adams, 2003: 135.
- 9 Bibby, 2001: 198.
- 10 University of Western Ontario sociologist Roderic Beaujot (2004), for example, maintains that over the past four decades, all the major transitions of the younger years have been occurring later – when people finish school, start to work full time, leave home, marry, and have children. He maintains that greater societal investments are needed in areas including post-secondary education, the school-to-work transition, and having and raising children.
- 11 For recent national data, see Beaupré, Turcotte, Milan, and Crompton, 2006.
- 12 For recent national data, see Turcotte, 2006.
- 13 See Williams, 2005.
- 14 See Globe Focus section, *Globe and Mail*, 2006, June 24: F1-F18 and PowerPoint slide 4.
- 15 Bibby, 2001: 5.
- 16 See Adams, 1997: 28, for example, regarding some particularly important Pre-Boomers.
- 17 Cited in Constantineau, 2002.
- 18 Anderssen and Valpy, 2003, July 6: F1.

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