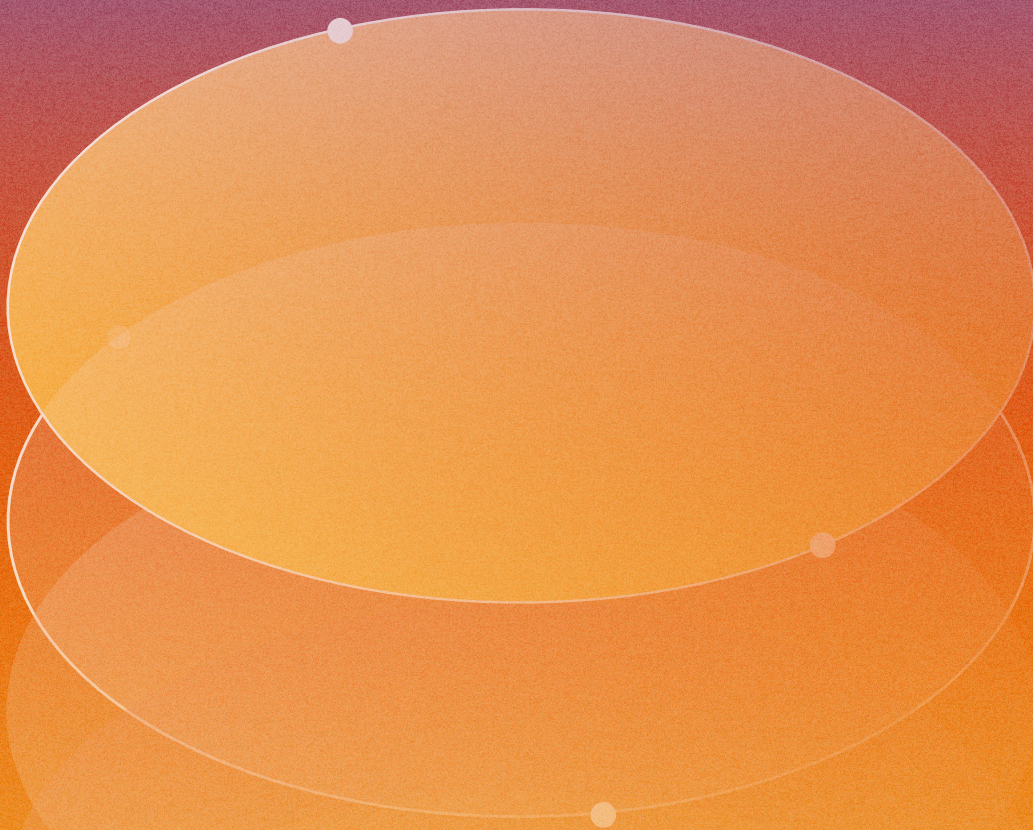


RESEARCH SNAPSHOT:

Perspectives of second-generation Canadians



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report summarizes the main findings from a public opinion research project from The Environics Institute looking at the perspectives of younger second-generation Canadians. This project was done in partnership with the Environics Institute for Survey Research, the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. Design support was provided by Sandbox Inc.



ABOUT CENTURY INITIATIVE

Century Initiative (CI) is a national, non-partisan charity with a mission to enhance Canada's long-term prosperity, resiliency, and global influence by responsibly growing the population of Canada to 100 million by 2100. As part of its mandate to improve understanding and identify solutions, CI supports an active research program that includes the flagship [Scorecard](#), as well as other focused [research reports](#) with expert partners.



ABOUT ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE FOR SURVEY RESEARCH

Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.



ABOUT THE DIVERSITY INSTITUTE

The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Their action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.



ABOUT THE FUTURE SKILLS CENTRE

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. It partners with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. It is founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.



Perspectives of second-generation Canadians is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Spotlight on the perspectives of second-generation Canadians

Canada's current and future population growth depends on immigration. At Century Initiative, our mandate is to support our ability to grow *well* through responsible planning and strategic population growth that builds sustainable and shared prosperity.

To ensure that Canada's ambitious immigration policies are succeeding and attracting talent in the face of global competition, we need to understand whether immigrants have the necessary conditions and supports to thrive. A major gap in our current understanding is in the experiences of second-generation Canadians — individuals born in Canada with at least one parent born outside of Canada.

Along with the experiences of newcomers themselves, understanding how the Canadian-born children of immigrants are faring helps us to assess the longer-term success of immigration and integration policies and identify other gaps and challenges. This research snapshot summarizes the [main findings from a public opinion research project](#) looking at the perspectives of younger (ages 18-40) second-generation Canadians.

The findings highlight that in many critical ways such as financial security and civic engagement, second-generation Canadians report perspectives similar to — and in some cases more positively than — three-plus generation¹ Canadians in their age group. They also share similar concerns as other young Canadians, including housing affordability and economic uncertainty.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

In 2020, Environics Institute, a non-profit research organization, surveyed Millennial and Gen Z Canadians (ages 18-40) on a wide range of issues. The large and representative sample (5,264 Canadian respondents)² made it possible to compare results among first-generation, second-generation, and three-plus generation Canadians, in this age bracket.³

Immigration and integration outcomes are typically measured by economic data such as income, employment, and educational attainment. Using public opinion research allows us to compare those against perceptions and capture other dimensions like personal identity, life satisfaction, and civic engagement. As recent economic indicators have shown a sizable gap between how people see the economy and more macro indicators like unemployment levels, survey data helps to round out the understanding of experiences.

- 1 For the purposes of this research snapshot, we will refer to Canadians whose parents were both born in Canada as three-plus generation Canadians.
- 2 This survey sample included 1,084 first-generation immigrants and 1,319 second-generation Canadian respondents.
- 3 Second-generation Canadians are compared against other young, first-generation Canadians, not against their immigrant parents or grandparents.

Key findings

Overall, second-generation Canadians reported experiences and priorities that are distinct from the trends among first-generation counterparts or three-plus generation Canadians.



Second-generation Canadians are **more optimistic than others in their age group**, about their **financial security** and **career opportunities**.



Second-generation Canadians attach high importance to preserving their **ethnic and religious identities**.



While second-generation Canadians hold some critical views of Canada's democracy and institutions, they are **civically engaged** and **remain relatively interested in politics**.



Second-generation Canadians **value post-secondary education** but less so than first-generation newcomers.



Younger, second-generation Canadians share many of the same concerns of their age cohort regardless of immigration group — **not enough money** to make ends meet and having only **a moderate overall life satisfaction**.

Across many indicators, younger second-generation Canadians are faring similar to or even better than Canadians whose parents were both born in Canada. But their responses also suggest looming prosperity risks affecting younger Canadians across the board.

Career goals and financial security

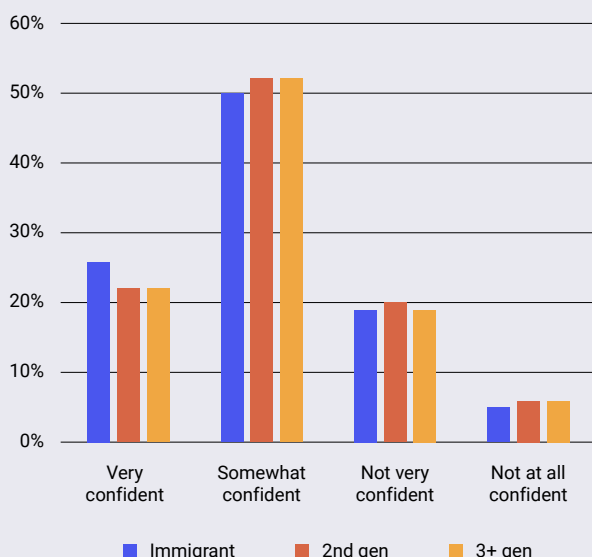
When asked about how confident respondents were about achieving career goals over time, **74% of second-generation Canadians responded they were somewhat confident or very confident about achieving their career goals over time.** This was consistent with the perspectives of their peers whose families have been in Canada longer.

Statistics Canada data shows positive outcomes in terms of income levels for second-generation Canadians,⁴ consistent with these survey findings.

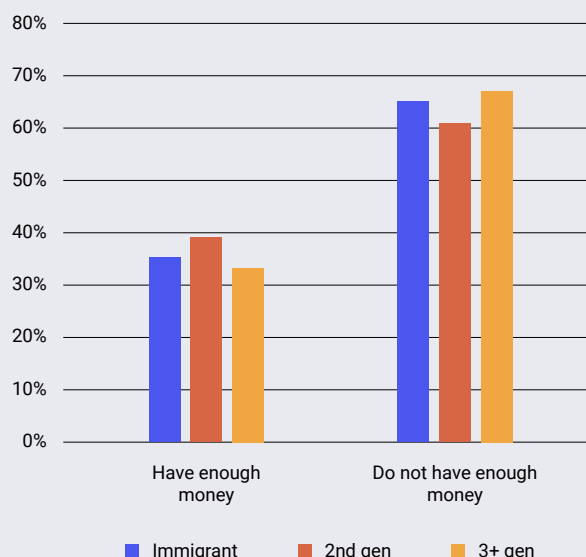
Optimism about longer-term career goals comes against concerns about near-term affordability. **Most young Canadians across all immigration groups said they did not have enough money to live their desired life.** This points to broader affordability concerns that Millennial and Gen Z Canadians are facing including housing affordability, high cost of living, and economic uncertainty.

However, compared to their peers, second-generation Canadians were more likely to say that they *do* have enough money to live their desired life.

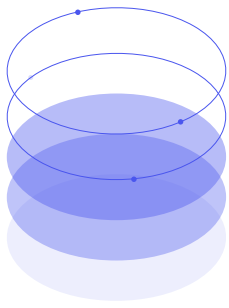
CONFIDENCE IN ACHIEVING CURRENT WORK AND CAREER GOALS OVER TIME



ENOUGH FUNDS TO LIVE DESIRED LIFE



4 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019006-eng.htm>



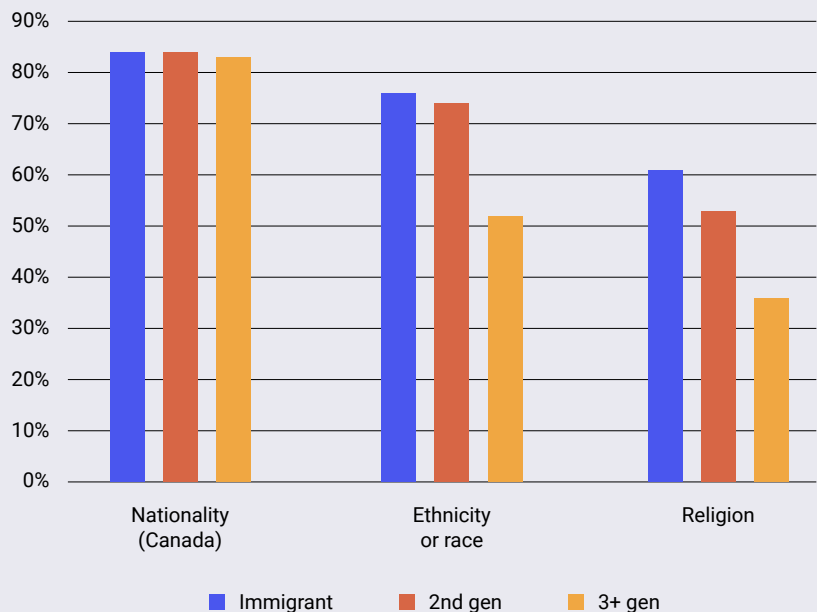
Personal identity

Second-generation Canadians value preserving aspects of their culture, ethnicity, and religion, viewing them as important contributors to their personal identity.

As expected, ethnicity and religion are very important contributors to the identity of immigrants. However, second-generation Canadians attach almost as much importance to their ethnicity and religion as components of their own sense of identity as their first-generation counterparts. People of their same age group whose families have lived in Canada for two or more generations report much lower levels of attachment to ethnicity, race, or religion in their identity.

It is worth noting that this aspect of personal identity comes in addition to, not in tension with, the importance they place on their national identity as Canadians. The importance of Canadian identity was important across all young people surveyed and **first- and second-generation Canadians place high value on their cultural identity and their Canadian identity simultaneously.**

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY



Respondents were asked to indicate whether each component was very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to their sense of identity. This graph depicts *net important* responses.

Democracy and civic engagement

This research survey asked Millennial and Gen Z Canadians to share their views on the state of democracy in Canada, their trust in major institutions, and their perspectives on how to make meaningful change for the betterment of society.

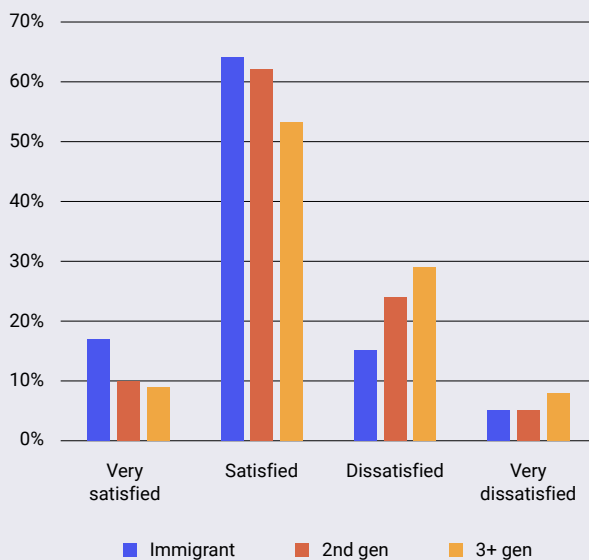
Generally, **second-generation Canadians had more positive views on democracy and government than three-plus generation Canadians, but less positive views than first-generation immigrants.** These views are likely influenced by the fact that first-generation Canadians are more likely to have lived in authoritarian or semi-democratic countries.

When asked about the performance of Canada's major institutions, second-generation Canadians' views were more mixed – more optimistic than three-plus generation

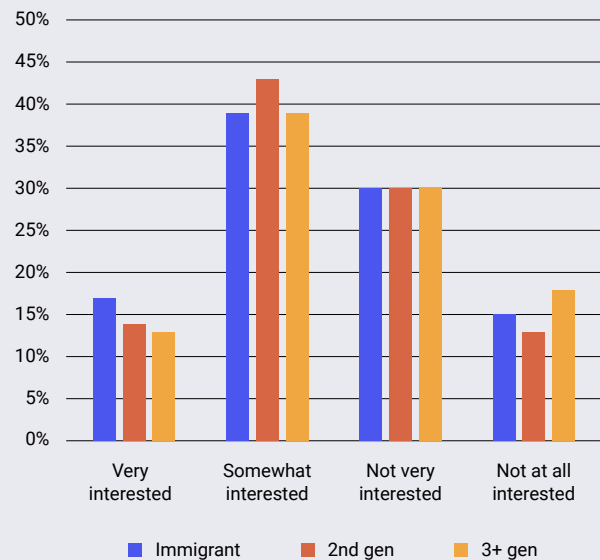
Canadians but less optimistic than first-generation immigrants. Interestingly, when second-generation Canadians were asked specifically about their level of confidence in post-secondary institutions and major non-profit organizations, they held more critical views than both of their counterparts.

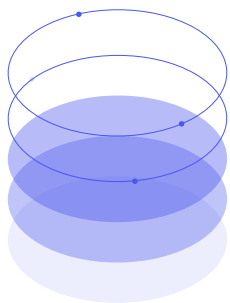
Even with this skepticism about Canada's institutions, **second-generation Canadians remain civically engaged and interested in politics.** In fact, second-generation Canadians were more likely than three-plus generation Canadians to be interested in politics. Second-generation Canadians were also significantly more likely than other immigration groups to view elected officials and community activists as being the most impactful career paths for creating positive change in the world.

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRACY IN CANADA



LEVEL OF INTEREST IN POLITICS





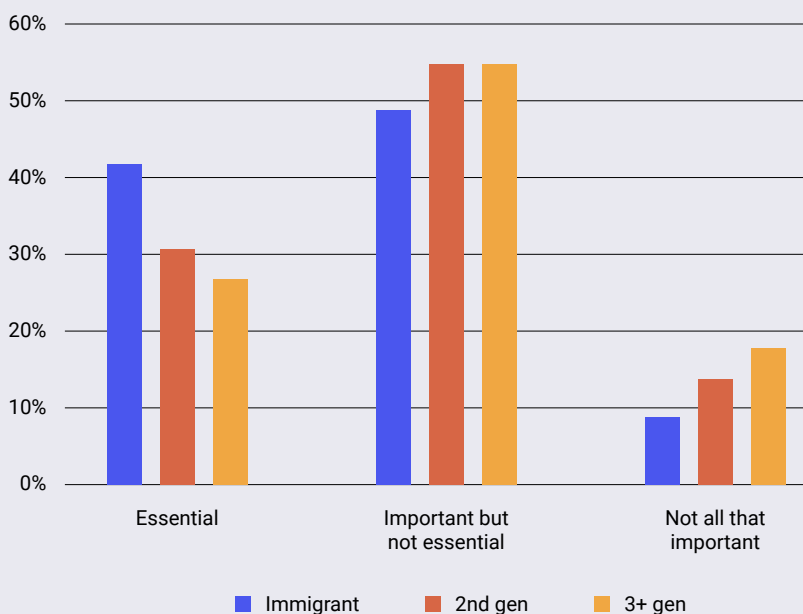
Post-secondary attainment and achievement

Second-generation Canadians value post-secondary education and believe that it is important to living a fulfilling life.

Canada has among the highest rates of post-secondary attainment and Canadians broadly view post-secondary education as important.

However, first-generation immigrants hold stronger views than both second-generation and three-plus generation Canadians on the importance of post-secondary attainment. This may be attributed to the fact that many newcomers see Canada's ability to provide high-quality post-secondary education as an important factor in their decision to immigrate to Canada, and that increasingly first-generation Canadians may have originally arrived as international students.

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



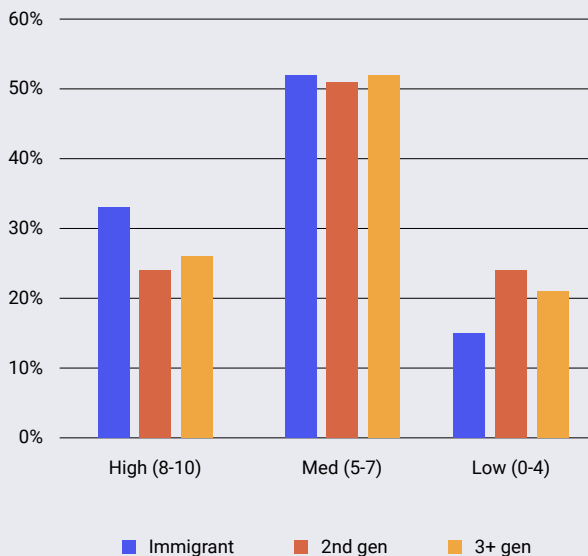
Life satisfaction

When asked about their overall life satisfaction, second-generation Canadians responded that they were **only moderately satisfied**. These findings are not encouraging and indicate that there is an opportunity to improve overall life satisfaction for second-generation Canadians.

In fact, **most young Canadians across all immigration groups indicated only a medium level of life satisfaction.**

These responses suggest that level of life satisfaction is likely driven by common challenges for Canadians aged 18-40, especially related to the housing market. Millennials and Gen Z in Canada continue to be disproportionately impacted by the effects of economic uncertainty, affordability challenges, and at the time of this survey, the global events of 2020.

LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION



Respondents were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with their life on a scale from 0-10. This graph categorized the responses as low (0-4), medium (5-7), and high (8-10).

CONNECTING TO CENTURY INITIATIVE'S NATIONAL SCORECARD

Century Initiative's [National Scorecard on Growth and Prosperity](#) provides a holistic look across 39 indicators on Canada's progress to grow well with shared and sustainable prosperity. This research snapshot provides additional context on some of the trends highlighted in the most recent scorecard.

Housing affordability

Direction Canada is trending:

Falling behind

This survey showed that younger Canadians reported modest levels of life satisfaction and concerns about the ability to afford their desired life. Canada's acute housing affordability challenges are most likely to affect this group who are least likely to be homeowners.

Migrant integration policy

Direction Canada is trending:

On track

Across a range of indicators, second-generation Canadians reported outcomes similar to or better than peers whose families have been in Canada longer. This reflects a number of successful efforts in migrant integration policy.

Post-secondary attainment

Direction Canada is trending:

Leading

The responses in this study reflect that the value that newcomers and their children place on post-secondary education is an important contributor to Canada's strengths in post-secondary attainment.

Conclusion

Overall, second-generation Canadians have positive views on many aspects of their lives including their career aspirations, level of civic engagement, and preservation of their cultural identity. Younger, second-generation Canadians reported positive outcomes equivalent to or better than three-plus generation Canadians across many indicators. These findings point to that fact that in many important dimensions, second-generation Canadians are closing the gap that newcomers experience when immigrating to Canada.

On the other hand, this research highlights that younger Canadians across the board face challenging headwinds, made more challenging by intersecting identities and experiences. Millennial and Gen Z Canadians continue to face affordability concerns like the high cost of living and housing and continue to struggle with global and economic uncertainty. Young Canadians perceive their level of life satisfaction as only moderate, suggesting that there are opportunities to improve conditions for young Canadians to thrive.

Although this research provides some early insights into better understanding the experiences of second-generation Canadians in Canada, there is more work to be done. This research shares the self-reported results from a survey in 2020, likely coloured by the context of the global pandemic.

FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

To further shed light on the experiences of second-generation Canadians, future research opportunities could include:

- Understanding the perspectives of second-generation Canadians across racial and religious identities.
- Understanding the perspectives of second-generation Canadians over 40.
- Repeating the same study in 2024, outside of the context of a global pandemic.