



#GenerationFlux:

**Understanding the seismic shifts
that are shaking Canada's youth**

VitalSigns[®]

Community foundations taking the pulse of
Canadian communities.



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Prepared for Community Foundations of Canada
By Dominique O'Rourke, Accolade Communications

October, 2012

Introduction

Every year Community Foundations of Canada releases *Canada's Vital Signs*, a national snapshot of quality of life in Canadian communities. And every year issues concerning youth rise to the top of the agenda – ranging from unemployment to varying high school completion rates and the challenges posed by record levels of inactivity and obesity.

This year the national network, which connects more than 180 community foundations from coast to coast, concentrated solely on youth issues – collecting disparate research from many sources to create a more complete picture of Canada's young people. Under examination, the data told a story of massive economic, demographic and social shifts that have dramatically altered the landscape for Canadian youth.

The issue

We found the predictable trajectory that guided the lives of the current generation's parents is gone. Canada's youth are growing up in an era of complexity and uncertainty that has delayed, or even destroyed, the landmarks that once signaled a transition from one phase of life to another.

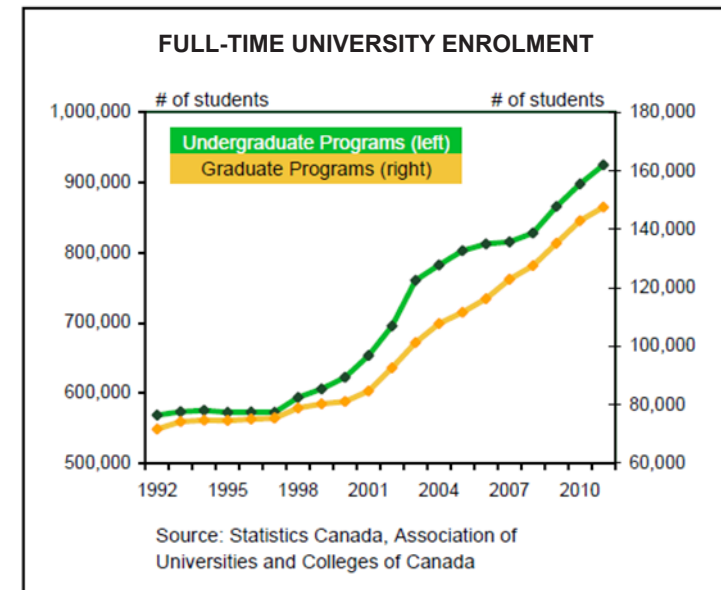
The call to action

To address the serious challenges of our time – from economic uncertainty to sustainability to support for an aging population – we need to ensure that Canada's young people are healthy, educated and fully engaged. Communities must work with youth to address their most pressing issues and to close the growing gap between those thriving in #GenerationFlux and more vulnerable youth. #GenerationFlux describes people who are flexible, comfortable in chaos, navigating complexity and challenging the status-quo. Still, even their extraordinary skill set is colliding with unprecedented economic, demographic and social conditions.

“Positive social and economic transitions by youth and young adults, including completion of school and beginning of employment careers, and the establishment of relationships and households, are critical for lifetime stocks of human, social, and economic capital. At the same time, these are ages of higher health and social risk.” —Guimond & Cooke, 2008

A diverse, urban, mobile and educated group

- Almost one in five Canadians aged 18-34 is foreign-born and one in six is a member of a visible minority¹
- The most mobile group in the population, young people are more likely to live in one of Canada's largest cities where education and job opportunities are more abundant.²
- They tend to be supporters of arts and recreation
- Many factors are improving for this generation: Education rates are up, smoking is down, many are very happy – but many are also at risk and the gap between those doing well and those who are marginalized is growing.
 - 15-year-old Canadians continue to be among the best in the world in reading, math and science according to the OECD.³
 - Full-time university enrollment is at an all-time high.⁴
 - Between 2000 and 2010, the proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (the equivalent of college and university completion) increased from 40% to 51% in Canada. At the same time, below upper secondary attainment (the equivalent of less than high school completion) decreased, from 19% to 12%.⁵



Impressive stats masking gaps

- While the high-school dropout rate fell in all provinces from the early 1990s – particularly in BC and the Atlantic provinces,⁷ one in 12 of 20- to 24-year-olds still had not obtained a high-school diploma in 2009/10⁸
- In low-income communities, drop-out rates can soar higher than 70% vs 6-11% in affluent neighbourhoods.⁹
- Young men, rural and aboriginal youth are particularly at risk.¹⁰ Rural dropout rates are double those of urban centres.¹¹
- Dropout rates in the territories are staggering: Yukon: 15.5% in 2007/10, NWT 30% in 2007/10 and Nunavut 50% in 2007/10¹²
- The C.D. Howe Institute calls Canada's high-school drop-out rate “The Achilles’ Heel of Canada’s High-School System”¹³
- Pathways to Education estimates that the collective lifetime loss of earning potential of high-school drop-outs in Canada totals \$307 billion.¹⁴
 - One in four dropouts were unemployed during the recent downturn and the gap between their unemployment rate and that of their counterparts who had completed high school widened.¹⁵
 - Dropouts who are employed have lower job quality and financial benefits than high school completers. They work more hours yet earn an average of \$70-\$97 less per week.

Postponing post-secondary

- The lag time lag between high-school completion and starting a post-secondary program is increasing and is much greater for males, off-reserve Aboriginal youth and Anglophones.¹⁶
 - Students, especially in rural communities, are returning for an additional year of high school to improve their grades for university admissions or to save for tuition.¹⁷
 - Aboriginal youth had, on average, median delay times of about 15 months compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts who waited only about 3 months to begin post-secondary studies.¹⁸
 - Students in Ontario and Western provinces had a median delay of 15 and 14 months respectively.¹⁹
 - Rural students had a delay of eight months versus a national lag of three months.²⁰
- Factors that can act as barriers to further education are numerous. Some are related to student and family-background characteristics, while others are related to the cost of attending post-secondary education or to other factors.²¹

Carrying a crippling debt-load

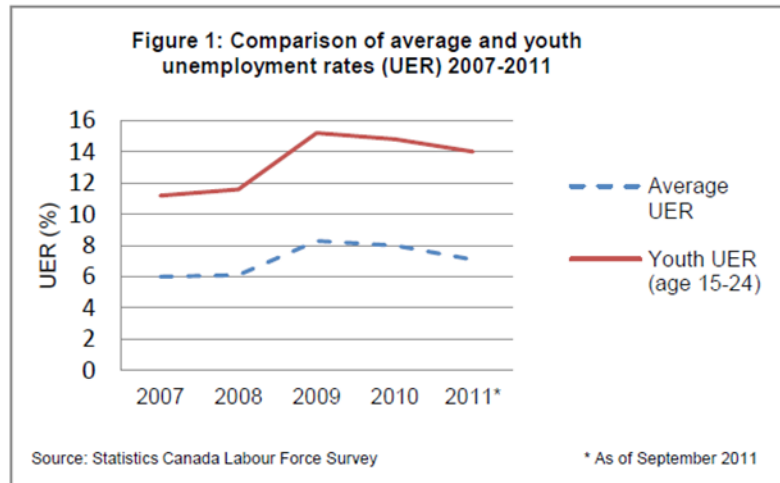
- Between 1991 and 2007, the cost of a year’s tuition in Ontario rose by more than 200%. In Alberta, it was 275%; 174% in British Columbia; 238% in Nova Scotia; 111% in Quebec.²²
- The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) reports that student debt skyrocketed between 1999 and 2004, from \$21,177 to over \$28,000 – an increase of more than 33% in just five years.²³
- The average debt load for Canadian students ranges between \$20,000–\$30,000 across Canada, except in Quebec, where it’s a much-lower \$14,000. In 2010, 57% of graduates had debt. It had been 49% only 10 years earlier. More than a quarter of those graduates had debt loads over \$25,000.²⁴
- According to the Canadian University Survey Consortium, the average university student debt for a four-year degree is \$27,747 at graduation – taking an average of 14 years to pay off; the average college student debt is \$10,889 at graduation, based on a two-year diploma – taking an average of 6 years to pay off.²⁵
- For students studying away from home – a given for most rural youth – the amounts are distressing.
- Total cost of a four-year university degree if not living at home: \$78,817 (including tuition for four years, books, housing, food and other expenses and interest), and over \$30,000 for a two-year college program.²⁶
- The extra costs associated with attending university away from home tend to reduce enrollment among lower-income students who would have had to relocate to attend.²⁷
- Income is certainly related to educational pursuits. According to research from Statistics Canada, “slightly more than one half (50.2%) of youth from families in the top quartile of the income distribution attend university by age 19, compared to less than a third of youth from families in the bottom quartile (31.0%).”²⁸
- Illustrating what the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has called ‘Eduflation’ between 1990 and 2011 the average increase in tuition fees and ancillary fees was 6.2% (ranging from 3.4% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 7.5% in Alberta) while inflation over roughly the same period was 2.1%.²⁹
- Debt loads have an important impact on post-secondary completion rates with high debt loads breaking or delaying the transition from education to employment. Statistics Canada’s Youth In Transition Survey (YITS), found that of those who cease their studies early, 36% cited financial reasons.³⁰

Still, post-secondary education is often a requirement for employment and is a key determinant for higher incomes.

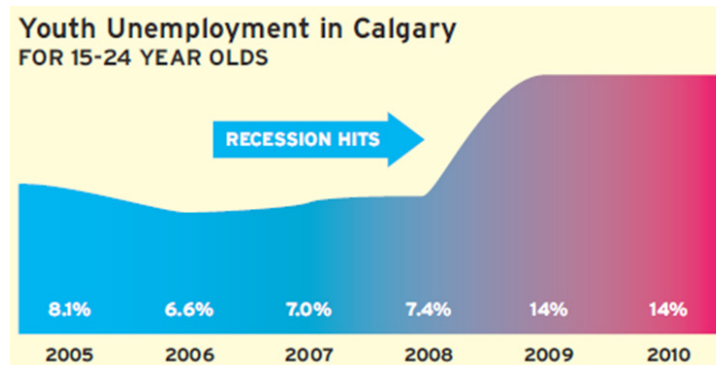
- In 2009, Canada's employment rate for adults aged 25-64 who had not completed secondary education was 55%. The rate for graduates of college and university programs was 82%.³¹
- Moreover, earnings of university graduates were 70% higher on average than graduates of high school or trade/vocational programs in Canada.³²

Unable to find work

- Youth unemployment is consistently double the national average.³³ In June 2012, 14.8% vs the national average of 7.2%.³⁴
- And it's not for lack of trying. In 2011, 55 000 youth had been looking for a job for more than 6 months, representing 1% of all youth and 14% of unemployed youth.³⁵



- Available jobs are often part-time or a series of piecemeal jobs that do not provide benefits or career prospects.^{36 37}
- Even in Calgary, one of the best labour markets in the country, youth unemployment has risen dramatically.³⁸



- Canada has relatively low long-term youth unemployment compared to other OECD countries. However, of the long-term unemployed in their 20s, 66% are men. 54% have a high-school diploma or less, again highlighting the reality that those with lower levels of education have fewer employment opportunities and higher rates of unemployment.³⁹
- One out of three 25- to 29-year-olds with a college or university diploma moved into low-skilled occupations after graduation.⁴⁰
- Others “boomerang” back to school for more or different education, debt and delay.⁴¹

“The whole process of trying to get to where you wanted to be when you got out of university takes years longer than it used to. Taking a lower wage than you were initially expecting has significant repercussions for your long-term career.”
—Francis Fong, TD Bank Economist ⁴²

Facing stiffer competition than ever

- Boomers are working into their 60s or 70s or “retiring” from full-time jobs only to go back on contract as term employees, mentors or consultants.⁴³
- Those aged 55+ hold 37% of all part-time jobs held by those aged 15-24 and 55+, up from 25% in 1997.⁴⁴
- Nationally 229,500 jobs disappeared among youth aged 15-24 during the downturn = more than half of all jobs lost. At the same time, employment among those aged 55+ actually increased by 83,100 during this time.⁴⁵ The demographic crunch is very real.

Faring better than their global counterparts

Young people continue to bear the brunt of the jobs crisis, with nearly 11 million 15- to 24-year-olds out of work in OECD countries in early 2012.⁴⁶

- More than one in five young people in the labour market in France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Poland, Ireland and Italy are out of work.⁴⁷
- One in two young people in South Africa is unemployed.⁴⁸
- OECD statistics show that 16% of people aged 15 to 29 are neither in school nor working.

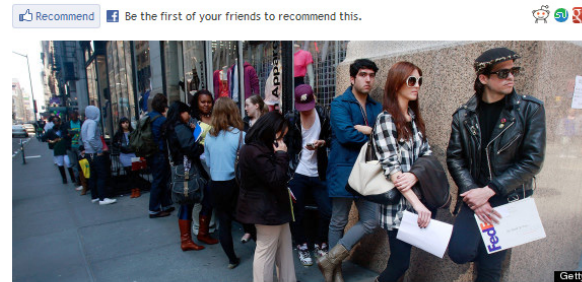
The rate of young Canadians who are NEET (neither employed nor in education) is much lower than in other OECD and G7 countries.

Across the OECD countries, the NEET rate rose 1% between 2008 and 2011 to 16.4%. Whereas the Canadian NEET rate was 13% in 2011 and has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years – ranging between 12-14% over the past decade, a rate that is relatively low among the G7 countries.⁵⁰

- The fear is these young people are not maintaining or improving skills that employers will value and that will enable them to contribute in the work force.

Youth Unemployment: OECD Report Sees Bleak Future For The Young In Many Nations

CP | By Lori Hinnant, The Associated Press
Posted: 09/11/2012 7:19 am Updated: 09/11/2012 10:05 am



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Still hardest hit by the recession

- While only 16% of the labour market, Canadians ages 15–24 accounted for 50% of job losses during the recession.⁵¹
- Youth employment still stands some 250,000 jobs below the pre-recession peak.⁵²
- 2012 summer jobs were at their lowest level since data became available in 1977⁵³ – making it almost impossible to save for tuition, pay down debt or afford housing.

And facing a decade of after-shocks

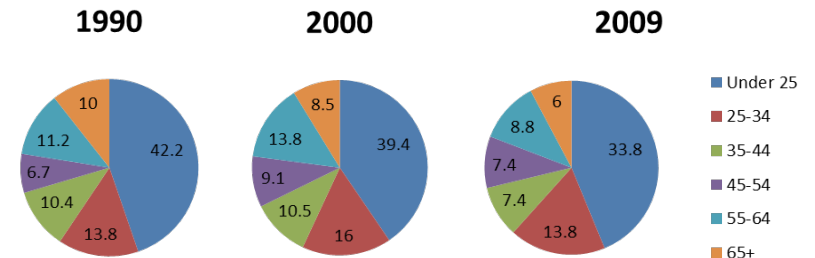
“The whole process of trying to get to where you wanted to be when you got out of university takes years longer than it used to. Taking a lower wage than you were initially expecting has significant repercussions for your long-term career.”
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- A 1 percentage point increase in the unemployment rate equates to an initial wage loss of 6–7%. It can take anywhere from 10 to more than 15 years to close that gap.⁵⁵

Debt, unemployment, lower wages, historically high housing costs, and poverty delay important life transitions like getting married, buying a home, starting a family, putting down roots in a community.

Poverty

- Canada’s 2nd highest poverty rates in 2009 were in households where the major income earner was under the age of 25 (33.8%).⁵⁶
- Youth poverty rates are consistent for over a decade.⁵⁷



- The Canadian Pediatric Society believes that “ending child and youth poverty should receive the same focus as stimulating economic growth.”⁵⁸

Poverty is a public health issue

- High-income youth have lower diabetes and asthma rates, are more likely to be physically active and to have a regular medical doctor, and are more often satisfied with health care services received.⁵⁹

High housing costs put basic necessities, like shelter, out of reach for many

- Research from The Vanier Institute showed that in 2011, the actual cost of housing was 35% above what might be expected based on incomes alone and *The Economist* suggests that Canadian housing prices are over-evaluated by 29% relative to their measure of income.

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OECD warns of 'scarring effect' of youth unemployment
ORA MORISON
The Globe and Mail
Published Tuesday, Jul. 10 2012, 5:00 AM EDT
Last updated Tuesday, Jul. 10 2012, 11:52 AM EDT

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Long-term unemployment linked to the weak economic recovery could scar young workers for the rest of their lives and contribute to higher levels of structural unemployment, warns a report released Tuesday by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
For young people, the economic recovery has been a bit of a misnomer. Across OECD countries, the percentage of employed youth relative to older age groups has continued to deteriorate since 2008, as more of the available work went to workers aged 55 or older, according to the

PHOTO: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/oecd-warns-of-long-term-pain-for-jobless-youth/article4402044/>

- The rental market, traditional refuge for the young, is also inhospitable in many parts of the country. In the past year,
 - Rents in Regina rose by an average of 5.2% with the lowest vacancy rates in the country at 1.1%.
 - Rents in Calgary rose by an average of 5% with vacancy rates of 2.5%
 - Winnipeg rents rose an average of 5.4% with vacancy rates of 1.5%
 - And we've come to expect that the highest rents in the country will be in major urban centres. Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa-Gatineau, Victoria & Edmonton, respectively.⁶⁰

Speed of life takes a toll

- While still the majority, “Excellent” or “Very Good Health” is in decline. Only 68% of 12- to 19-year-olds reported excellent or very good health in 2009, down from over 80.5% in 1998.⁶¹
- Canadian teenagers have surpassed adults in the 20–44 age groups in terms of functional health problems.⁶² These are issues with vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity, feelings, cognition and pain.⁶³
- Constant interactions with technology contribute to unprecedented physical and mental health issues like inactivity, stress and bullying.
 - While the rate of bullying behaviours (29% of students report having been bullied) remained the same since the first time it was measured in 2003, cyber-bullying, a new measure in CAMH's 2011 survey, was reported by one in five students. This represents an estimated 217,000 students in Ontario alone!⁶⁴



An inactivity/obesity epidemic

- 70-79% of Canadian boys aged 13–15 are inactive, and so are 80-89% of girls the same age.⁶⁵
- Each day, Canadian children and youth spend an average of 8.6 hours (62%) in sedentary pursuits.⁶⁶
- For teens, internet social networking represents the #1 group activity for females and the #2 group activity – behind sports – for males.⁶⁷
- Sport participation rates in Canadian youth aged 15–18 declined from 77% in 1992 to 59% in 2005.⁶⁸

- Somewhat encouraging is the finding by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing that showed an increase in the average monthly frequency of participation in physical activity across all age groups but particularly among 20- to 30-year-olds since 1994.⁶⁹
- While 74% of Canadian children and youth are of a healthy weight, 1.6 million children and youth are overweight or obese.⁷⁰
- Overweight rates have doubled in the past 25 years and obesity rates have tripled.⁷¹
- If the trend continues, in 20 years we can expect 70% of the 35- to 44-year-olds in Canada to be overweight or obese vs. 57% currently.⁷²

“It’s not so much a question of BMI but of how we engage in our modern world, this age of plenty that is acquired with little exertion”

—Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine, Canadian Index of Wellbeing

On a positive note: Health trends can be reversed i.e., teens are butting out

- Since statistics were first recorded in 1999, the number of young smokers in Canada has dropped by over half (53%). The smoking rate among teens (15-19) dropped to about 13% in 2009, down from 15% between 2006 and 2008.⁷³
 - Ontario experienced the most significant annual reduction and has the lowest percentage of youth smoking in Canada, dropping from 13% in 2008 to 9% in 2009. Youth in Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan continue to smoke more than the rest of the country, at 18%.⁷⁴

But hold the applause,

- 25% of Aboriginal youth in grades 9 through 12 living off-reserve reported smoking in 2008, versus 10% of non-Aboriginal youth.⁷⁵
- One in five teens in the lowest income families (under \$20,000) smoked, compared to around one in 12 teens in the highest income families (above \$80,000) as reported in 2007-08.⁷⁶
- Youth in Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan continue to smoke more than the rest of the country, at 18%.⁷⁷

The “at-risk” are on their own

- Fewer youth rate their emotional wellbeing positively. In 2005, 79% of youth said they were “happy and interested in life,” down from 83% in 1996.⁷⁸
- A recent CAMH study of Ontario students also found that “the rate of students reporting psychological distress has risen to 43%, up from 36% in the 1999 survey.”⁷⁹

- Girls seem to be particularly at risk.
 - In CAMH's Ontario study, 43% of girls in grades 7–12 reported distress, up from 36% in 1999 and significantly above the 24% of boys who reported these feelings.⁸⁰
 - In a national longitudinal study, the same trend was identified with 11–15 year old girls reporting higher levels of emotional problems and lower levels of emotional well-being and life satisfaction than boys.⁸¹
- Surpassed only by injuries, mental disorders in youth are ranked as the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada.⁸²
- 3.2 million Canadian 12- to 19-year-olds are at risk for developing depression.⁸³
- Canada's youth suicide rate is the third highest in the industrialized world⁸⁴ with suicide attempts at their peak among 15- to 19-year-olds⁸⁵
- Yet, three out of four children and youth who need specialized treatment services do not receive them.⁸⁶ (CMHA says 4 out of 5)⁸⁷
- An estimated 70% of adults living with mental health problems had their symptoms develop during childhood or adolescence.⁸⁸
- Children and youth of low-income families are especially at risk.⁸⁹ So too are girls and young people in certain aboriginal communities.
 - In Ontario, girls report both contemplating (14%) and attempting suicide (4%) at twice the rate as the boys surveyed.⁹⁰
 - In 2005, one in 5 First Nations youth had a close friend or family member commit suicide in the past year.⁹¹
 - By age 12, 10% of First Nations youth have thought about suicide at least once. 30% by age 17. *(First Nations Information Governance Committee et al, 2005 a)*⁹²

Mental health care is a youth and community issue because

- Lack of early mental-health treatment can result in higher drop-out rates, unemployment, poverty, homelessness and arrested or delayed life transitions – all at great expense for the individual and the community.

“Depression is now the fourth leading contributor to the global burden of disease (as measured by disability adjusted life years), and it is expected to reach second place by 2020.”⁹³ —Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2010

“While its human costs may be nearly incalculable, estimates of the economic cost of mental illness range from \$14 billion to \$51 billion a year when lost productivity is included.” —Canadian Pediatric Society, 2012⁹⁴

- According to the Canadian Pediatric Society, “Preemptive measures result in better health outcomes, improved school attendance and achievement, positive contributions to society and the workforce, and cost-savings on health care, justice and social services.”⁹⁵
- Everyone has a role to play according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. “Interpersonal relationships matter. No matter how mental health is measured and no matter what interpersonal relationship is concerned, adolescents with positive interpersonal relationships tend to fare better in terms of mental health.”⁹⁶

Disconnected, disempowered and disengaged from formal institutions

Declining attachment & feeling welcome in their community

- Only 58.1% of 20- to 34-year-olds report a high level of “being attached to the community” down from 75.1% for youth aged 12–19.⁹⁷
- In Metro Vancouver, 33% of 20- to 34-year-olds report feeling alone more than they would like, feel less welcome in their neighbourhood and are less likely to feel they belong there than other age groups.⁹⁸
- Volunteer rates drop suddenly after age 24 and have declined overall in the past decade.
 - In 1997, 25- to 34-year-olds volunteered an average of 55 hours each year for culture & recreation events. It fell to less than half of that in by 2004.⁹⁹
- The Canadian Index of Wellbeing's Report on Leisure and Culture found a significant decline in total time spent in social leisure activities,¹⁰⁰ which is a critical component in building strong social capital.

“Participation in leisure and culture throughout one's lifetime promotes higher levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing into later life. There is also emerging evidence that leisure and culture can play an even greater role in improving the quality of life for marginalized groups, such as lower income groups, children and older adults living with disabilities, and minority populations.” —Canadian Index of Wellbeing¹⁰¹

Declining participation in democracy

- Asked “Do you feel like you are fully a good citizen?,” only 62% of respondents aged 18–29 replied “yes” versus 82% of those 60+.¹⁰²
- Youth feel disempowered, “stretched to their limit with school and extracurricular activities,” intimidated at the size and complexity of societal issues and that issues are irrelevant to youth culture.¹⁰³

- In May 2011, only 38.8% of eligible Canadian youth cast a vote up, although that was up from 37.4% in 2008.¹⁰⁴
- In the 1960s, about 70% of the members of a new cohort would vote in the first election in which they were eligible to participate; by 2004 it was only slightly over 30%.¹⁰⁵

The problem is: Youth who don't vote when they first become eligible are likely to stay unengaged throughout their lives.¹⁰⁶

Alarming Trends

We need to acknowledge that the economic climate and austerity measures have slowed employment growth; resulted in cuts to summer jobs programs that provide money and experience and negatively impacted job creation programs.

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YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Human Resources Minister quietly axes student job centres

GLORIA GALLOWAY

OTTAWA — The Globe and Mail
Published Wednesday, Feb. 29 2012, 7:44 AM EST
Last updated Thursday, Mar. 01 2012, 11:41 AM EST

820 comments

The employment centres for students that have opened every spring for more than four decades in communities across Canada have been cancelled by the federal Human Resources department, which says it can offer the same services online.

PHOTO: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/human-resources-minister-quietly-axes-student-job-centres/article2353731/>

STORY/PHOTO GALLERY: Changes to aboriginal youth programs spark protest in Vancouver

March celebrates National Aboriginal Day

BY MIKE HOWELL, STAFF WRITER JUNE 21, 2012



PHOTO: Vancouver Courier <http://www.vancourier.com/news/STORY+PHOTO+GALLERY+Changes+aboriginal+youth+programs+spark+protest+Vancouver/6820948/story.html>

What makes this unique

Other generations have faced challenges: The Great Depression, World Wars and the social change of the 1960s. However, the requirement for post-secondary, the high cost of education and housing, the debt-load, demographic shift, prevalence of technology and all its implications for physical and mental health, and the delays in life transitions are unprecedented. They are also occurring at a time when Canada needs to increase future productivity to support an aging population and to compete in a global economy.

The OECD Canada report underscores the critical importance of closing the gap between the GenerationFlux and our most vulnerable youth:

“A shrinking youth population implies that growth in the supply of skilled labour will require encouraging participation for currently under-represented groups such as those from low-income families with no history of higher education, mature students and Aboriginal students.”

—OECD, *Canada Report*, 2012

Amazing opportunities for aboriginal youth

Indeed, Aboriginal youth deserve particular attention. Not only because, as the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates states: “[t]o be an Indigenous child in Canada correlates with poverty-related barriers, including income, education and culture, employment, health, housing, being taken into care and justice”¹⁰⁸ but because their population growth represents so much opportunity for all Canadians.

- The Aboriginal population is growing almost twice as fast as the Canadian population. By 2026, the median age of the Aboriginal population is projected to be 31.0 years compared to 43.3 years for the Canadian population.¹⁰⁹
 - On reserve population is expected to increase by 69% by 2026; urban Aboriginal population is expected to increase by 42% and the rural population by 22% with growth particularly strong in the Prairie and Northern regions.¹¹⁰
 - In Saskatchewan by 2026, 36% of the labour force is expected to be Aboriginal; 28% in Manitoba and 9% in Alberta.¹¹¹

“Hundreds of thousands of young Aboriginal people will enter the work force over the coming years. If their educational levels remain at current levels, however, many will not find a place in the labour market... Any success that can be achieved in improving Aboriginal educational levels will pay dividends to the Canadian economy by improving the availability of skilled labour and reducing labour shortages.”

—Hull, 2008

- Post-secondary educational levels of the Aboriginal population have risen in the past decade and gaps are closing with respect to life expectancy and literacy. However, the “high school education gap” relative to other Canadian youth shows little improvement and there is a persistent gap in university completion between Registered Indians and other Canadians.¹¹²

Registered Indian youth of today are doing much better than their parents at the same age, but they remain near the bottom of the well-being scale relative to other Canadian youth.¹¹³ In short, aboriginal youth represent a critical leverage point.

Are youth equipped to face Canada's most daunting challenges?

This generation has new skills & strengths

Undeniably, the challenges are considerable but so are some of the new skills and strengths of this generation.

A highly educated generation

- 15-year-old Canadians continue to be among the best in the world in reading, math and science according to the OECD.¹¹⁴
- The most educated generation in our history will positively impact future literacy rates, educational attainment, income levels and health.
- Educational attainment leads to: higher labour force participation; lower unemployment; decreased reliance on income support programs; higher earnings and higher job satisfaction.¹¹⁵

Maximizing diversity & abandoning old prejudice

- Almost one in five Canadians aged 18–34 is foreign-born and one in 6 is a member of a visible minority.¹¹⁶
- The Project Canada research conducted by sociologist Reginald Bibby found that 13% of pre-boomers (born before 1946) felt that interracial dating was common when they were teenagers; and 21% of boomers (1946–1965); but the issue is irrelevant to today's teenagers.¹¹⁷
- 51% of Caucasian teens have at least one friend who is not white – with the figure reaching 91% in Vancouver and 79% in Toronto. 68% of non-Caucasians have at least one friend who is white.¹¹⁸

Wired, aware & collaborative

Comfortable with rapidly changing technology, global virtual networks and on-line collaboration like wikis and crowd sourcing, youth aren't constrained to traditional silos and quickly plug into emerging global issues.

Driven by values and relationships

- More than 8 in 10 teens say trust and honesty are “very important” to them.¹¹⁹
- Relationships with their parents are generally positive¹²⁰ and more so than in the past. In fact, cross-national and longitudinal research by the Public Health

Agency of Canada found a substantial increase in the proportions of 11- to 15-year-olds feeling understood by their parents today relative to the early years of the survey.¹²¹

- Whenever possible, today's young people want their workplace to reflect their values.
 - 40% of North American MBA graduates rated corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an “extremely” or “very” important measure of a company's reputation.¹²²
 - A 2003 Stanford University study *Corporate Social Responsibility Reputation Effects on MBA Job Choice* found that MBA graduates would sacrifice an average of \$13,700 in salary to work for a socially responsible company.¹²³

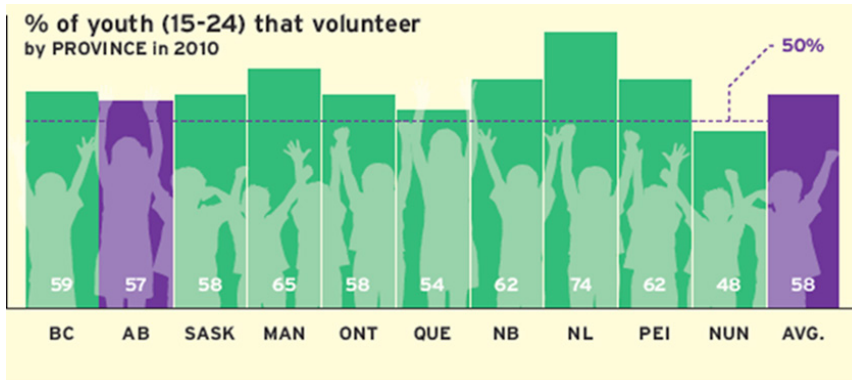
Expressing passion and politics differently



Young Canadians care about what is happening in their communities and around the world. In the past year, we have seen hundreds of thousands of Canadian youth join protests and demonstrations like Occupy, Kony and student marches. This clear interest in public policy through direct action is seen by youth as more likely to have an impact than joining a political party.¹²⁴ They are engaged in looser networks, and projects are replacing structured organizations. There is also evidence that when youth are involved in petitions, boycotts and manifestations, this actually boosts their voting behaviour, which is positive for Canadian democracy.¹²⁵

Demonstrating community commitment

- 75.1% of 12- 19-year-olds report the highest level of attachment to community according to the Canadian Index of Well Being.¹²⁶
- And while the rates drop off for the 20+ crowd, 58% of 15- 24-year-olds volunteered over 341 million hours in 2010 – far above the national average of 47%.¹²⁷ That is a significant community contribution.
- Whether the contribution is time or cash, youth aged 25–34 support the community in their leisure time by maintaining the highest percentage of household expenditures on all aspects of culture and recreation.¹²⁸

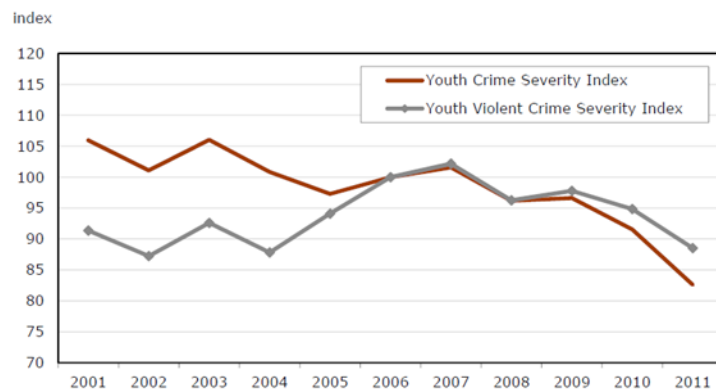


Safer than ever

Despite sensational media stories and localized gang crime, youth crime has been on the decline for over a decade.

- Since 2001, the youth Crime Severity Index (CSI) fell by 22%. However, the decline in youth violent crime severity over the past decade has been more modest, down 3%.¹²⁹
- The youth crime rate and the youth CSI decreased 10% nationally in 2011 but remain persistently highest for 15-to 22-year-olds, peaking with 18-year-olds.¹³⁰

Police-reported youth crime severity indexes, Canada, 2001 to 2011



Note: Indexes have been standardized to a base year of 2006 which is equal to 100.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

One statistic that piqued our interest? Youth are most likely to commit crimes in the late afternoon after school and before supper-time¹³¹ which may underscore the importance of youth spaces and programming in the community.

Our smart and caring communities must:

- Maximize the use of young people's skills and contributions
- Create employment opportunities
- Ensure continued health and well-being
- Increase young people's sense of community, of civic engagement and connection
- Close the gap between those with, and without, opportunity.

Successfully walking the path involves

Policy changes, funding, community and individual support can help smooth life transitions in large and small ways.

- According to the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, youth who feel nurtured by their parents and engaged in their school and in their community report better health outcomes (higher self-rated health and self-worth, and lower anxiety levels).¹³²
- 11- to 15-year-old boys who report being in a school with a positive (high) school climate also report levels of emotional well-being that are twice as high as those boys who report being in a school with a negative (low) school climate. The results are even more dramatic for girls in which the differences are almost three times higher.¹³³

Community supports are needed for all socio-economic and demographic profiles.

“Spaces to congregate with peers, take a break from having to meet external expectations, share experience and gather information are critical to the evolution of identity whether youth are university students, budding athletes, street youth, recovering addicts, or ex-offenders.”

—Hope or Heartbreak

While this is not an exhaustive list of successful approaches to youth engagement, our research identified the following as critical factors for the success and engagement of young people:

<p>Personal Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to learning¹³⁴ • Positive values, social competencies and positive identity¹³⁵ • Opportunities to be useful to others¹³⁶ • Feeling valued in the community¹³⁷ 	<p>Interpersonal Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support and positive communication¹³⁸ • Access to decision makers¹³⁹ • Positive relationships with adult role models¹⁴⁰ • Access to support systems¹⁴¹ • Conversations about education¹⁴² and democracy in the home and at school
<p>Community Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative activities and youth programs¹⁴³ • Sports & recreation to promote leadership qualities & an ethic of community service involvement of youth¹⁴⁴ • Youth driven granting¹⁴⁵ • Community youth partnerships¹⁴⁶ • Youth-friendly spaces¹⁴⁷ • Safety at home, school and in the neighbourhood¹⁴⁸ 	<p>Organizational Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive school and communities • Civics education, information¹⁴⁹ and conversations lead to increased voting, so does asking young people to be involved. • Hiring young people and setting them up for success¹⁵⁰ • Entrepreneurial opportunities • Youth role in decision-making¹⁵¹

How will your community support youth on the path?

Ask yourself:

- Which issue resonates most in our community?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What other factors are at play? Do they help or hinder progress?
- What's the most critical lever for success?
- What community resources do we have? Do we need?
- What does success look like?

Conclusion

The goal of Vital Youth and Vital Youth Dialogue is to be a catalyst for community conversations. We'd like to hear from you.

On October 3, 2012, CFC will host its first *Vital Youth Dialogue* in Ottawa, moving beyond reporting on national youth issues to engaging youth in a creative, forward-thinking conversation.

Convened with the support of Deloitte, the *Vital Youth Dialogue* is a day for local and national youth and youth advocates to share and build on a variety of perspectives and strategies on sustainability, entrepreneurship, employment, physical and mental health, accessibility, immigration, engagement, inclusion and more.

The highly-interactive, solutions-focused day will serve as a prototype for similar discussions at the **CFC 2013 Conference** in Winnipeg next June and in communities nationally.

About Vital Signs®

Vital Signs® is an annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada. It provides a comprehensive, reader-friendly look at how our communities are faring in key quality-of-life areas such as learning, health, housing and the environment.

In 2012, community foundations in 14 communities across Canada will release their Vital Signs® reports as a means of documenting issues so communities can make critical decisions about their future. More than 30 communities are now involved in Vital Signs®, either producing reports or acting on the findings of previous reports.

Canada's Vital Signs® is a national snapshot of key indicators that are of interest to all Canadians, produced annually by Community Foundations of Canada, the national network for Canada's more than 180 community foundations, which aim to help build strong and resilient places to live, work, and play.

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