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## THE END OF PROGRESS?

*BREWING GENERATIONAL TENSION?*

[Ottawa – March 9, 2012] – In the spirit of moving polling from the realm of the mercurial fluctuations of politics, we conclude this series with a long look backward and a long look forward. Using this generational lens, we will show how the rear view and future view are clouded and darkening, and that the gloomiest perspectives are centered in what are typically the most optimistic portions of society, the next generations. Using time series, we will chart how this backward and forward looking has changed over the past several years. Sadly, the picture is not at all pretty and we believe it demands clear recognition and a will to try and staunch and reverse a pattern of decline which appears to be spelling a belief in the end of progress.

For a very long time, members of advanced western societies have always had resolute belief in progress and a better future. Western civilizations have seen an astonishing rise in all indicators of human well being in those societies.

In the United States, the “American dream” produced a period of unrivalled economic and military dominance with incomes and life spans continuing to rise as racial prejudice and illiteracy declined. Canada claimed even more spectacular human outcomes and was rewarded with number one status on the Human Development Index on a number of occasions. In the seventies and even eighties, Canada and the United States were very near the top of the world in standard of living and material well being. In recent years there has been a growing recognition that this dominance and belief in the inevitability of progress, may not be something the next generation can count on. The ascendance of new economic powers, notably China, and the failures of western foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan have coincided with a cooling and retraction of both European and North American economic dominance.

These growing worries about the future viability of western civilisation may well be shattering some of the basic beliefs and motivations which underpinned its very success. In a period roughly coinciding with the new century and September 11<sup>th</sup>, we have seen a serious erosion of the notion of inevitable progress and dominance in the west.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Wellbeing of current generation compared to last generation:**
  - ☒ **34% better off**
  - ☒ **29% about the same**
  - ☒ **37% worse off**
- **Wellbeing of next generation compared to current generation:**
  - ☒ **14% better off**
  - ☒ **29% about the same**
  - ☒ **57% worse off**
- **Perceived focus of government policies:**
  - ☒ **24% focuses on those under 42**
  - ☒ **21% focuses on both groups equally**
  - ☒ **39% focuses on those over 42**
  - ☒ **16% DK/NR**

*Please note that the methodology is provided at the end of this document.*

In Canada, this longer term erosion of confidence in the inevitability of progress and a better future has been taking root. Looking back, one-third of Canadians believe they are better off than the last generation, compared to 37 per cent who say they are worse off. Looking forward, however, Canadians feel the next generation will be worse off by a margin of four to one.

It would seem that despite short term comfort in the fact that our banking system or somewhat less public debt and marginally lower unemployment rates, this foreboding sense of relative decline has not escaped the public. Not only is our rear view now more likely to be one of regret and decline our view of the longer term future is unremittingly grim. Worse, these negative views are most entrenched amongst the Gen X, Gen Y, and millennial cohorts who will shoulder both the responsibilities and fruits of the future. These outlooks have been getting worse not better over the last several years and the sense of up and down cycles may be giving way to one of a long term maelstrom.

To make matters even worse, the next generations are losing faith not only in the economy, but public institutions and democracy<sup>1</sup>. There is a sense that the political order and government favour the old over the young. If the engines of our success were values which favoured hard work, knowledge, and innovation, it is hard to see how a sense of inevitable and pervasive decline, coupled with a belief that what little progress exists is being pocketed by an increasingly narrow fraction at the top of society, will inspire motivation and confidence. Once such a vicious circle of despair takes hold it may well be part of a self fulfilling prophecy. So it may now be time to squarely confront the reality of a new generational tension rooted in a belief in the end of progress.

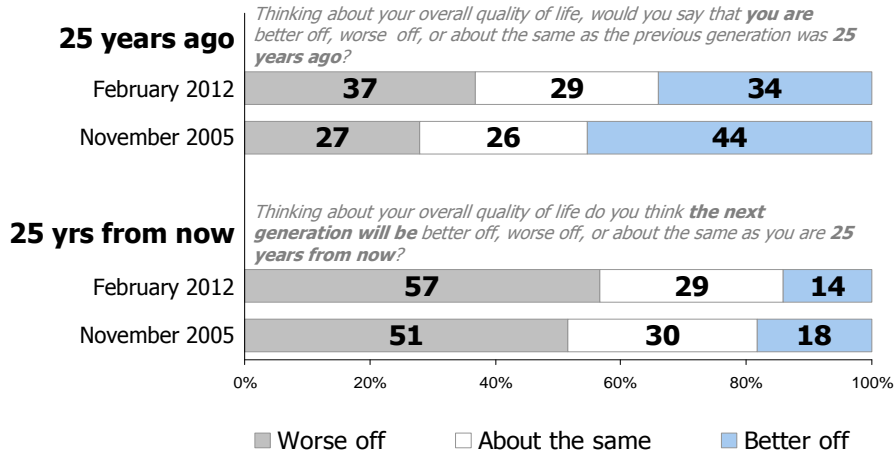
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<sup>1</sup> In our recent study titled "Beyond the Horserace", we found that democratic malaise was higher among younger Canadians. The full report is accessible online at:  
[http://www.ekospolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/beyond\\_the\\_horsrace\\_jan\\_14\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ekospolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/beyond_the_horsrace_jan_14_2012.pdf)



**Top Line Results:**

**Perceived changes in quality of life over time**



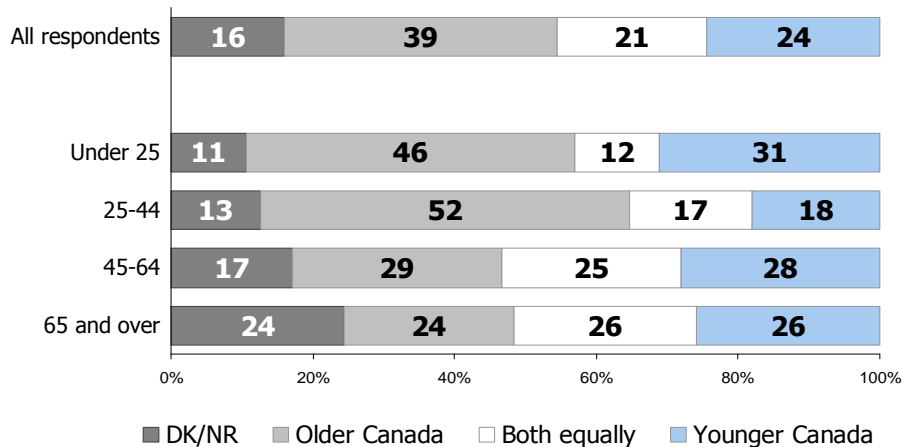
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BASE: Canadians; February 21-28, 2012 (n=3,699, half-sample each)

**Perceived treatment of older vs younger Canada**



*Q. About half of Canada's population, younger Canada, is under the age of 42, while the other half, older Canada, is over 42. Do you think the Government of Canada focuses more on the values and interests of younger Canada or older Canada?*



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BASE: Canadians; February 21-28, 2012 (n=3,699)

**Perceived changes in quality of life over time (25 years ago)**

*Q. Thinking about your overall quality of life, would you say that you are better off, worse off, or about the same as the previous generation was 25 years ago?*

	Better off	About the same	Worse off	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>1844</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	32%	28%	40%	319	5.5
Alberta	41%	28%	31%	229	6.5
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	40%	29%	31%	109	9.4
Ontario	34%	27%	38%	418	4.8
Quebec	29%	35%	36%	476	4.5
Atlantic Canada	38%	25%	37%	293	5.7
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	33%	28%	39%	880	3.3
Female	35%	31%	35%	964	3.2
<b>AGE</b>					
<25	37%	26%	37%	106	9.5
25-44	29%	26%	45%	450	4.6
45-64	35%	29%	37%	728	3.6
65+	41%	38%	21%	560	4.1
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	30%	32%	37%	611	4.0
College or CEGEP	33%	29%	38%	611	4.0
University or higher	38%	27%	35%	622	3.9
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Conservative Party of Canada	50%	28%	22%	562	4.1
Liberal Party of Canada	35%	30%	36%	342	5.3
NDP	29%	28%	43%	432	4.7
Green Party	15%	34%	51%	113	9.2
Bloc Quebecois	21%	42%	37%	88	10.5
Other	28%	24%	47%	48	14.1
Undecided	26%	29%	45%	223	6.6


**Perceived changes in quality of life over time (25 years from now)**

*Q. Thinking about your overall quality of life do you think the next generation will be better off, worse off, or about the same as you are 25 years from now?*

	Better off	About the same	Worse off	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>1855</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	14%	24%	63%	359	5.2
Alberta	11%	29%	60%	232	6.4
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	16%	32%	52%	120	9.0
Ontario	15%	27%	57%	403	4.9
Quebec	13%	35%	52%	484	4.5
Atlantic Canada	14%	28%	58%	257	6.1
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	16%	30%	54%	870	3.3
Female	13%	29%	59%	985	3.1
<b>AGE</b>					
<25	20%	21%	59%	101	9.8
25-44	14%	27%	59%	482	4.5
45-64	13%	29%	58%	736	3.6
65+	12%	40%	48%	536	4.2
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	16%	31%	53%	577	4.1
College or CEGEP	14%	25%	60%	642	3.9
University or higher	12%	32%	56%	636	3.9
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Conservative Party of Canada	19%	36%	45%	507	4.4
Liberal Party of Canada	16%	29%	56%	352	5.2
NDP	11%	26%	62%	484	4.5
Green Party	11%	20%	69%	107	9.5
Bloc Quebecois	5%	27%	67%	108	9.4
Other	18%	12%	70%	46	14.5
Undecided	8%	30%	62%	209	6.8



### **Perceived Treatment of Older versus Younger Canada**

*Q. About half of Canada's population, younger Canada, is under the age of 42, while the other half, older Canada, is over 42. Do you think the Government of Canada focuses more on the values and interests of younger Canada or older Canada?*

	Those under the age of 42	Those 42 and over	Both are treated equally	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>3699</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>REGION</b>						
British Columbia	20%	40%	20%	20%	678	3.8
Alberta	24%	39%	21%	16%	461	4.6
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	30%	34%	19%	17%	229	6.5
Ontario	27%	38%	21%	13%	821	3.4
Quebec	20%	41%	22%	17%	960	3.2
Atlantic Canada	30%	35%	16%	19%	550	4.2
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male	22%	41%	23%	13%	1750	2.3
Female	26%	36%	19%	18%	1949	2.2
<b>AGE</b>						
<25	31%	46%	12%	11%	207	6.8
25-44	18%	52%	17%	13%	932	3.2
45-64	28%	29%	25%	17%	1464	2.6
65+	26%	24%	26%	24%	1096	3.0
<b>EDUCATION</b>						
High school or less	29%	31%	20%	19%	1188	2.8
College or CEGEP	26%	37%	21%	16%	1253	2.8
University or higher	18%	47%	22%	13%	1258	2.8
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>						
Conservative Party of Canada	26%	31%	29%	14%	1069	3.0
Liberal Party of Canada	21%	49%	18%	12%	694	3.7
NDP	25%	42%	17%	16%	916	3.2
Green Party	21%	50%	17%	12%	220	6.6
Bloc Quebecois	23%	43%	16%	18%	196	7.0
Other	34%	33%	20%	13%	94	10.1
Undecided	21%	30%	20%	29%	432	4.7

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## Methodology:

EKOS' weekly tracking polls are conducted using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator.

In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual landline/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households. This dual frame yields a near perfect unweighted distribution on age group and gender, something almost never seen with traditional landline RDD sample or interviewer-administered surveys. This methodology is not to be confused with the increasing proliferation of non-probability opt-in online panels which have recently been incorrectly reported in major national media with inappropriate margin of error estimates.<sup>2</sup>

The field dates for this survey are February 21-28, 2012. In total, a random sample of 3,699 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-1.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted to ensure the samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.

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<sup>2</sup> For further reading, please see "AAPOR Report on Online Panels" by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, accessible online at:  
[http://www.aapor.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=AAPOR\\_Committee\\_and\\_Task\\_Force\\_Reports&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2223](http://www.aapor.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=AAPOR_Committee_and_Task_Force_Reports&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2223)