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GENQUAKE! THE LOOMING GENERATIONAL WAR

[Ottawa – December 9, 2014] If age was money, then Canada would be obscenely rich because we are getting really old. Some basic statistics underline just how vivid our aging has been. As we approach our sesquicentennial, it is worth noting that at our centennial, our median age was around 26. The current median age which demarcates older and younger Canada is 41 and rising.¹ Robert Stanfield most likely would have beat Pierre Trudeau in the photo-finish election of 1972 if they had competed in this political marketplace.

We are somewhat older than America and we had the biggest baby boom in the western world save Australia. As we have aged, the gaps across generations have widened and are producing new and unhealthy fault lines. Untended, these widening generational tensions will become critical, particularly as they connect to new widening fault lines across social class. The public themselves foresee growing generational and class conflicts on the horizon. In younger Canada, there is clear sense that the playing field is tilted to favour older Canada. This perception may be grounded in harsh realities about how the economy, democracy, and public institutions are performing. The hard political arithmetic is that young votes are increasingly irrelevant to winning elections and therefore political agendas tend to reflect the real and imagined issues and fears of older Canada. This in turn may be reinforcing more permanent political disengagement of the young as they see public institutions and democracy failing to address their salient concerns.

Let's review the major generations constituting Canadian society. Seniors are living longer and are healthier and wealthier than previous senior cohorts. They grew up in the aftermath of the Second World War and inculcated values which were much more conformist, deferential, and respectful of authority than those currently in force. They are much less educated and far more ethnically homogeneous than younger cohorts. They have also been avid supporters of conservative governments, and were the key to the majority of the current government in the last election. Even if the relatively diminished younger cohort had voted in rates that young cohorts voted twenty years ago, we would not have seen the majority and may well have seen an alternate government altogether.

Boomers are now beginning to disengage from labour markets but remain the critical economic and political force in Canadian society. While more educated and diverse than the seniors, they no longer show the radical countercultural values of their youth. "From Woodstock to oil stocks" probably captures this drift and the boomers tend to reveal the highest level of self-interest in most of our tests. They are an open political marketplace and critical to defining who will succeed in next year's election.

The Generation X bust generation continues to be caught between boom and echo boom and show a confused identity. They are much more diverse, educated and grew up digitally. They are highly progressive in social values but show the strains of being the first post-war generation that failed to benefit from the middle class bargain of intergenerational progress. They are entering their peak years of influence and raising families, but will never have the clout of the boomers that preceded them and will be shoved to the side by the larger echo boom of Gen Y and millennials that are now coming of age.

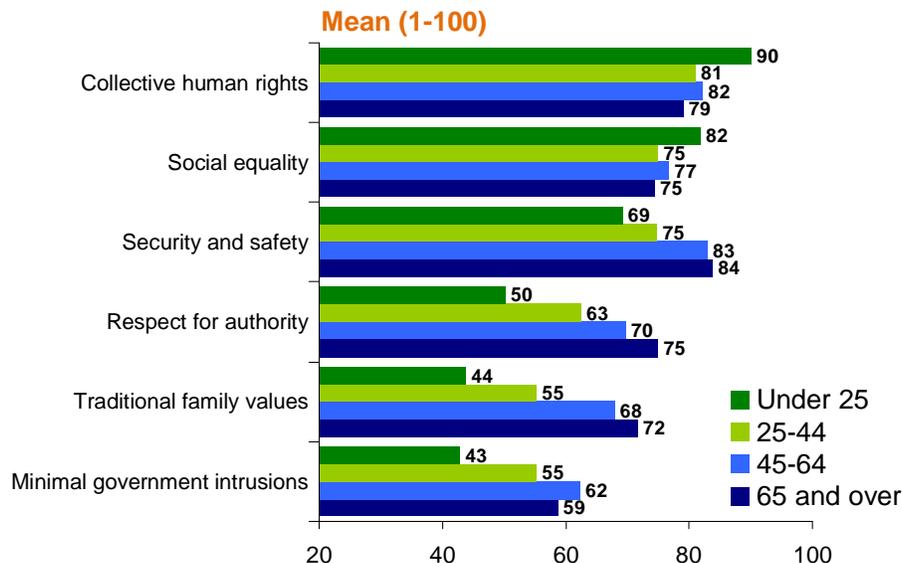
¹ Statistics Canada, "Population by broad age groups and sex, counts, including median age, 1921 to 2011 for both sexes – Canada", 2011 Data Products. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/ymhymC>

The millennials and Generation Y (with Generation Z on their heels) is a large and extremely diverse cohort who reveals the highest educational attainments and the most avid digital consumption patterns of all generations by far. They are extremely progressive in their social values and the small-c conservative values of hard work, self-reliance, traditional family values, and respect for authority are basically meaningless to this generation. They also have entered a much more stagnant and unequal economy and their futures look much less bright than those of their parents at this stage of life. They are deferring the rites of passage such as career entry, marriage, and family formation further and further. One notable difference between Canada youngest cohorts and those of Europe and America is this one rejects resoundingly the minimal government mantra and still favours collectivism. If the boomers have morphed into the “me” generation, this is curiously the “we” generation, which isn’t evident in other western societies.

Let’s simplify this further to the growing gaps across younger and older Canada. The evidence increasingly shows that the things that work for older Canada have actually worsening the plight of younger Canada. The broader shifts in the economy, democracy and values and ideology are far more vivid when scrutinised across the older/younger divide. This has always been the case but our longer time series suggests that the gap is larger and more corrosive to social cohesion and economic health than at previous times in our history.

Most important goals and values

Q. If you were to direct Canadian society, how important would you say each of the following goals and values should be?



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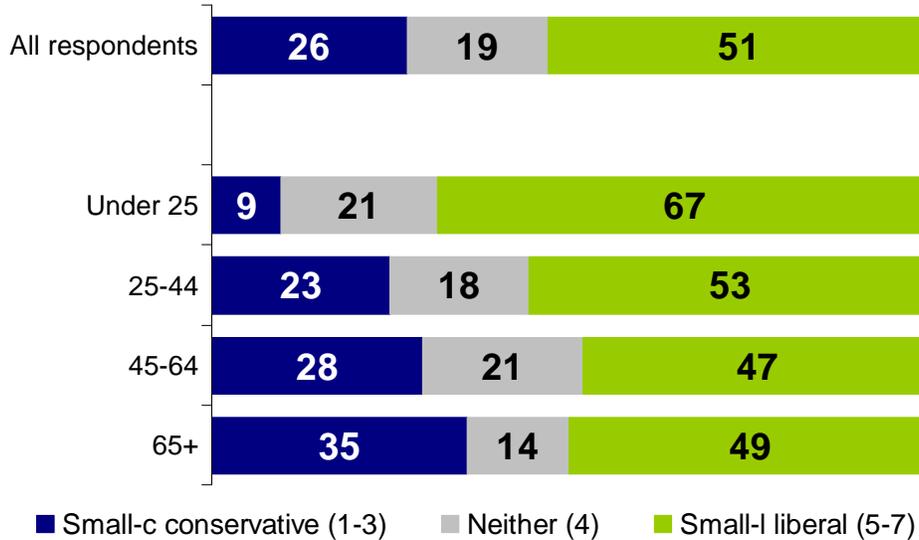
BASE: Canadians; November 20-29, 2012 (n=1,181), MOE +/- 2.9%, 19 times out of 20

In terms of values, socially conservative values are slowly losing connection to our broader society and are largely not relevant to younger Canada. What has been called the rhythms of post-materialism continues unabated and the traditional values of deference and respect are increasingly disconnected from younger Canada. We have also seen an acceleration of ideological fragmentation and a clear shift away from small-c conservatism, which is selected as an ideological home by less than ten percent of young Canada. This growing values tension is also expressed in various social issues including attitudes to crime and punishment, civil rights and

security, legalization of marijuana, and abortion rights. In short, younger half, or 'next' Canada is increasingly at odds with the values narrative of the federal government.

Ideology by age

Q. Forgetting about your current party choice, do you consider yourself a small "l" liberal or a small "c" conservative?

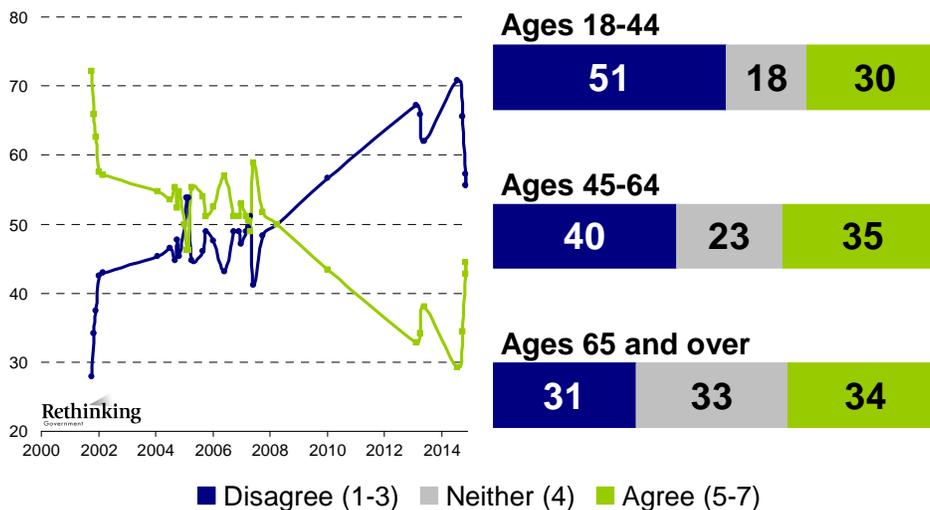


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BASE: Canadians; July 16-23, 2014 (n=2,620), MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

Additional powers for law enforcement

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: police and intelligence agencies should have more powers to ensure security even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy safeguards?

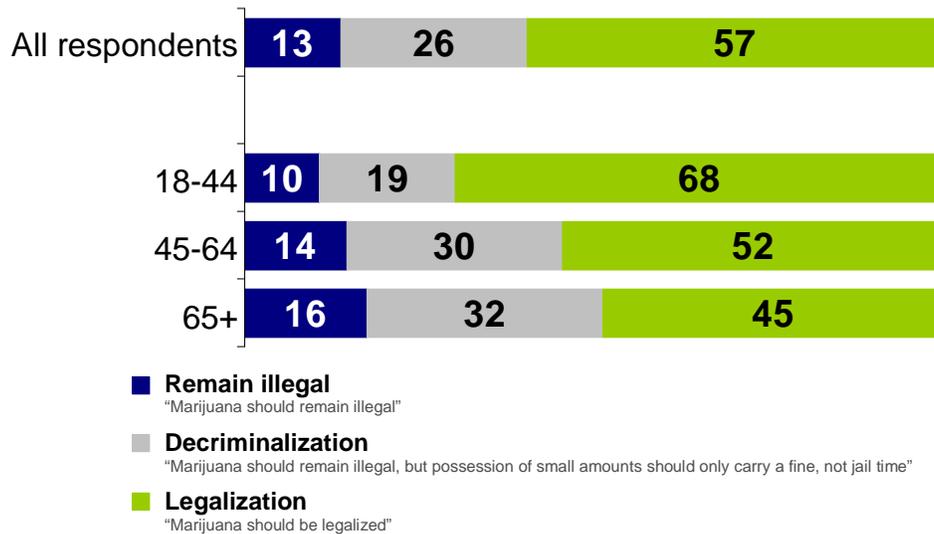


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BASE: Canadians; November 4-6, 2014 (n=1,561), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

Attitudes towards marijuana

Q. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view about the use of marijuana by adults?



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BASE: Canadians; September 21-25, 2014 (n=1,549), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

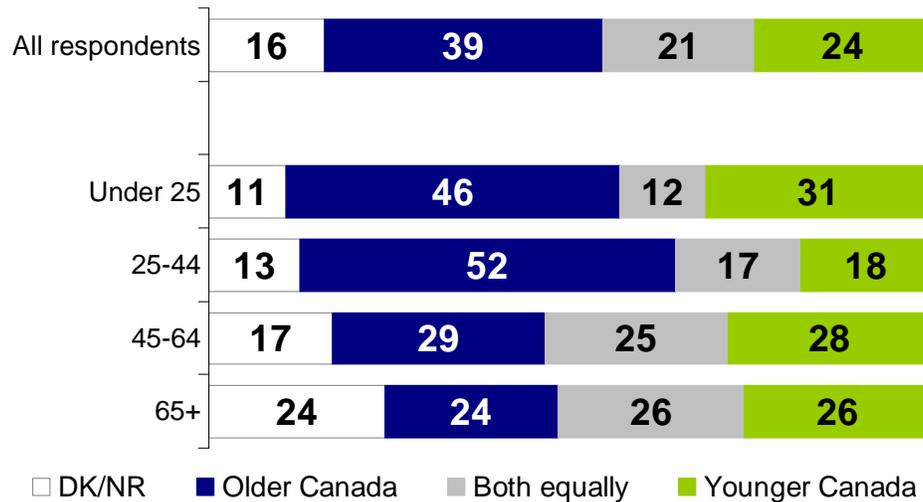
In the economy, the things which are buffering the relative stagnation for older Canada are worsening things for younger Canada. Steeply rising housing prices have provided a source of ready equity to make houses the new ATMs for older Canadian home owners. For younger Canada, home ownership has become elusive and they are left to find rental housing artificially inflated by home prices which have risen three times faster than the economy has grown.

In labour markets, the allure of Freedom 55 has been displaced by the colder reality of Freedom 65, 75, and beyond. While this part of the grey tsunami has a silver lining, as older workers are enjoying their protracted careers and filling critical skill shortage, it has the reverse effect of cluttering a labour market that younger workers are finding difficult to enter, let alone move ahead.

Turning to democracy and politics, older Canada has unprecedented clout as their newfound numerical prominence is linked to a steep decline in voting rates in the now relatively smaller young electoral market. This has led to a situation where most young voters don't vote and the political agenda is increasingly becoming a sclerotic gerontocracy.

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), MOE +/- 1.6%, 19 times out of 20

These new strains are large, growing, and unhealthy. Ideally, we would want even greater recruitment of the dynamism and ebullience of young Canada to offset our new senior skew. However, young Canada is increasingly sitting on the sidelines. It may well be that some of the democratic malaise and economic stagnation that we are encountering in this new century are directly linked to this new and insidious generational schism which, uncorrected, can only augur poorly for future societal and economic well being of Canada.

Conclusions

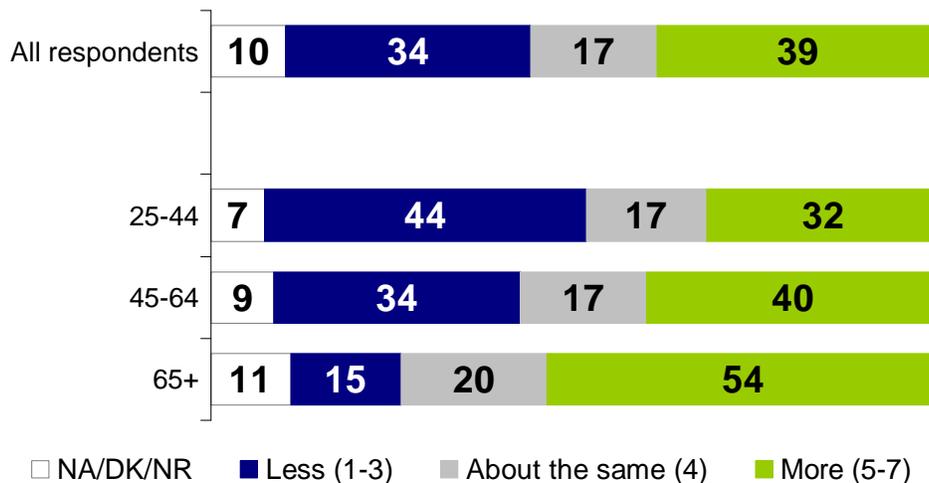
What can be done to address this serious problem? As labour markets seem incapable of providing sufficient quality jobs for younger workers with the current levels of growth propelled by private investment, and with public sectors shrinking dramatically, perhaps we should consider major 'smart' infrastructure programs which would create meaningful youth employment. Perhaps it's time to consider the high speed rail networks which are commonplace in most other parts of the developed world and which would provide an immediate innovation and post-carbon strategy for Canada. A major new national home care program linked to advances in technology and with much higher skill levels could see Canada as a source of innovation and jobs to improve our health care and become a center of excellence to market to a rapidly aging world. It is unlikely that national agenda will amply reflect the values and interests of next Canada as long as they are so seriously underrepresented politically. Borrowing a page from successful models in Australia and a growing number of countries we should implement mandatory voting. This would reset democracy and get young voters back to the democratic table.

Detailed Results

Income relative to father*

* Lower female labour force participation rate and historical gender inequality confound mother comparison

Q. Thinking about your current annual income and comparing that to what your father earned at the same age as you are now, would you say that, using inflation-adjusted dollars, you earn more, less, or about the same as your father?

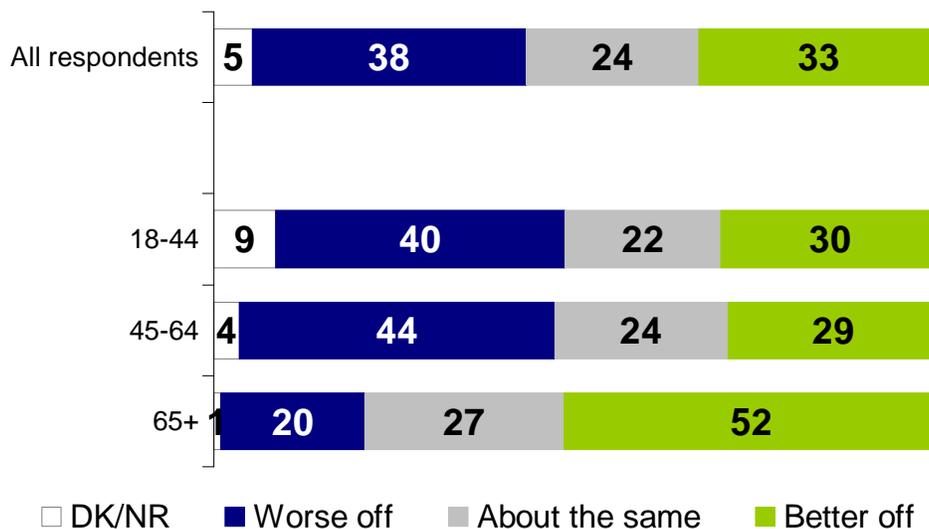


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BASE: Canadians; December 12-20, 2013 (n=1,531), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

Changes in quality of life over last 25 years

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?



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BASE: Canadians (half-sample); September 21-25, 2014 (n=1,549), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

Methodology

This article draws on data collected from six separate surveys. Two of these surveys used 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.

- The field dates for the first survey are November 20 – December 3, 2012. In total, a random sample of 3,699 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error of +/- 1.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- The field dates for the second survey are November 4-6, 2014. In total, a random sample of 1,561 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error +/-2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The four remaining surveys were conducted using EKOS' unique, hybrid online/telephone research panel, *Probit*. Our panel offers exhaustive coverage of the Canadian population (i.e., Internet, phone, cell phone), random recruitment (in other words, participants are recruited randomly, they do not opt themselves into our panel), and equal probability sampling. All respondents to our panel are recruited by telephone using random digit dialling and are confirmed by live interviewers. Unlike opt-in online panels, *Probit* supports margin of error estimates. We believe this to be the only probability-based online panel in Canada.

- The field dates for the third survey are November 20-29, 2012. In total, 1,181 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error of +/-2.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- The field dates for the fourth survey are December 12-20, 2013. In total, 1,531 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- The field dates for the fifth survey are July 16-23, 2014. In total, 2,620 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error of +/-1.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- The field dates for the remaining survey are September 21-25, 2014. In total, 1,549 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey, yielding a margin of error of +/- 2.5 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.