

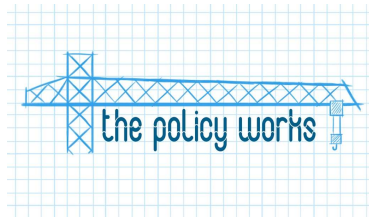
Young Canadians Research Project: Focus Groups Summary

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is conducting a research project investigating the views of young Canadian adults on contemporary political and economic issues. The initial step in this research was two focus groups with young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. These focus groups will be used to inform the development of a national poll, the results of which will inform a written report by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

Focus Group Background

The two focus group sessions were held on March 30th and March 31st 2022. The first session consisted of six young adults in Ontario, while the second consisted of four young adults in British Columbia. Each session lasted approximately two hours. The moderator asked the participants questions on the following topics:

- 1. Jobs/money:** Questions on employment, income and work satisfaction
- 2. Cost of living:** Questions on participants' views on their current financial circumstances and cost pressures
- 3. Future life choices:** Questions on participants' expectations regarding future careers and life milestones (e.g., getting married)
- 4. Education/skills:** Questions on previous schooling and plans for further education
- 5. Canada today:** Questions about participants' views on Canada post-COVID-19
- 6. Politics today:** Questions about engagement with Canadian politics
- 7. Making change:** Questions on how Canadians should engage (e.g., protests) and what they considered good policies



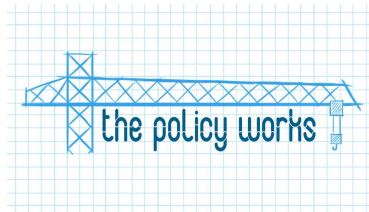
Overview of Participants

	Ontario Focus Group	British Columbia Focus Group
Gender	- Three men, three women	- One man, three women
Employment or Field of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal Government - Municipal Government - Auto-shop Co-op - Lab analyst - General Labourer - Law Student (full time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Media Specialist - Self-employed (child psychologist) - Health Clinic - Recent graduate (design certificate)
Living Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four lived with parents - One lived with her partner - One lived alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three live with parents - One lives alone

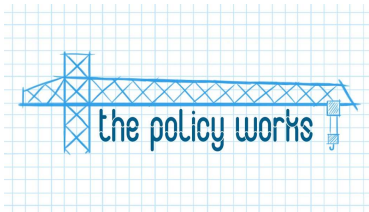
Focus Group Summary

The summary is divided into key topics that were discussed during the focus groups.

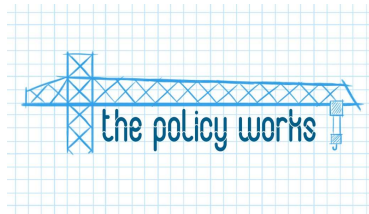
Housing	Marriage and Children
<p>Housing emerged as one of the most significant areas of concern for participants. Housing/rent costs were not a major cost pressure for most because they were yet to move out from the family home. Most were sceptical about their ability to afford housing in both the short and long term, and access to houses at a more realistic price point was pointed to as one of the key advantages enjoyed by older generations. In both sessions participants identified housing as an area that warranted policy intervention. Some were fatalistic that they would ever own a home, even though all had that aspiration if their resources allowed.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“In so many major cities in this country it is basically inconceivable for a young person to ever think they could own a home. And not</p>	<p>Tied into housing were the topics of marriage and children and when this would be affordable/desirable. Most participants anticipated getting married and having children later than their parents, with the cost of housing and marriage being cited as key reasons. Some female participants also cited the need to be more developed in their careers before going on maternity leave, especially those studying for health or legal qualifications where they were incurring more tuition debt. Some participants expressed their desire to have children earlier, either to ensure the health of their children or to avoid caring for children later in life and having a more youthful post-parenting life.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p>



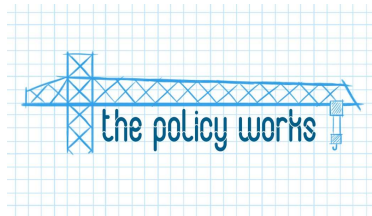
<p>only that, because we can't own a home, we must pay inflated rent prices. I think that is the biggest obstacle for young person in Canada right now."</p> <p>"I think [foreign home buyers] are a big problem... one thing that would make a lot of people happy if they could then afford a condo."</p> <p>"My dad bought a house when he was 30. In 95 nice houses weren't crazy expensive. That's kind of what I'm jealous of. I'd love to buy a house when I'm 30 but I don't see that happening any time soon."</p> <p>"I want to stay in BC but feel I'm in a naïve bubble hoping I'll be able to afford something."</p> <p>"My plan is to get hired at the place I'm doing my co-op but getting a house near there will be difficult."</p> <p>"I haven't really thought about home ownership given the city I live in, that doesn't feel like an achievable thing at this stage unless the market changes."</p> <p>"I am looking abroad for property in Turkey because its cheaper."</p>	<p>"When I finally have my first post-university job, I'll have \$80,000 in student debt and I don't know if I want to bring that into a partnership. I just want to focus on myself and paying down my debt before thinking about paying for a wedding or getting into a marriage.</p> <p>"I'll move out after I find someone [to share costs]"</p> <p>"For me starting a family is more of an emotional decision. However, I am fortunate enough to be able to say that because I'll have a job after I graduate and have saved a nest egg."</p> <p>"Ideally, we're engaged by 26, but that's the maximum deadline so maybe we'll be engaged in the next three years. But my boyfriend knows the plan, he has time."</p> <p>"I realize marriages are expensive... being married will depend on what our finances and lifestyle look like then."</p>
<p>Work and Finance</p>	<p>Impacts of COVID-19</p>
<p>Most participants seemed to be relatively stable financially. They seemed insulated from cost of living pressures like gas prices. The majority were both living with their parents and working. Some were saving for travel, a few were saving for masters, most were not currently saving for a down payment. Only one participant was clearly working as part of the gig economy via DoorDash. A couple of participants expressed the opinion that getting a good job required having the right connections. No one in the groups had been</p>	<p>None of the participants faced significant financial hardship because of the pandemic, and some said they had become better off. Most participants received some support through CERB or other programs. For the most part participants didn't feel like the pandemic had significantly altered their careers. One participant felt that the pandemic had been a blessing in disguise, boosting their grades and providing them with money. The main repercussions of the pandemic</p>



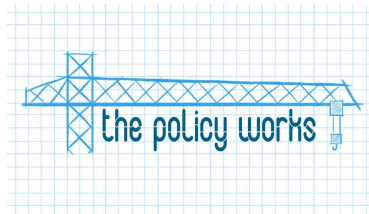
<p>getting income from trading or had invested in stocks/bonds or cryptocurrencies.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“I was really fortunate. In my first year of university, I got into the federal government and since the onset of the pandemic I have been working part time in the winter and full time in the summer.”</p> <p>“I work for the city. I felt like I hit the jackpot, I got a reference from my coach.”</p> <p>“On the side every now and then I do DoorDash, if I get out earlier, and on weekends.”</p> <p>“I sometimes sell things on the Facebook marketplace. I do a lot of impulse shopping where returns are impossible.”</p> <p>“Gas is so expensive. I’ve been going between Ottawa and London and every time my tiny car is draining me \$90.”</p> <p>“I thought I didn’t want the standard 9-5, but I realize my mental health is a lot better when I work set hours and with clear expectations in a routine.”</p> <p>“I feel that, unless you have connections, working for the city or government is close to impossible... whoever has a connection or way in will get those jobs.”</p> <p>“I drive to school. Once it gets warm, I’m going to bike to save on gas.”</p> <p>“I’ve noticed a jump in costs for food at the grocery store.”</p>	<p>seemed to be the impacts of studying online, for good or ill (see below).</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“Covid was blessing in disguise. You stay home, turn on your laptop, and wake up every two weeks with 2000 dollars in your bank account. I don’t know what anyone could ask for more than that. I wish COVID was one more year, let me graduate with COVID and I would be set.</p> <p>“I graduated in 2020 and had a research assistant position lined up but that fell through due to the pandemic. Suddenly I was at home and my LSAT books were looking pretty fun. I spent the summer studying and applied to Law School and I got in.</p> <p>“At the beginning I was kind of against the vaccines, but I ended up getting them. The only reason I got it was because if everyone’s getting the vaccines, I don’t want to be the last one left alive. If we die, we all die together.”</p> <p>“I feel it was a win-win situation. People focus on the dark side of everything, but you got to spend more time with your family, more time with your kids.”</p>
<p>Education (high school)</p>	<p>Education (post secondary)</p>



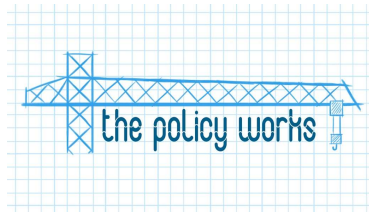
<p>When asked how high school had helped prepare them for the world today, participants expressed mixed opinions. Some wished that high school had taught more practical skills or had made them more aware of the diversity of employment options available.</p> <p>Extra curriculars became a focus of the discussion, with French Immersion, experience in student government, and computer class being cited as teaching new skills or opening access to employment opportunities (e.g. federal government jobs in Ottawa).</p> <p>Views on virtual education during the pandemic were primarily negative. Some noted that virtual education encouraged cheating and grade inflation, while others talked about how they found it much harder to focus.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“Studying from home was a gold mine. You could literally cheat and get all the answers. I personally think it was a blessing in disguise, my GPA leapt.”</p> <p>“It would have been nice to have more self-exploration courses. I felt like I just learned about lawyers, doctors, and nurses. I kind of felt ashamed I took a semester off, but it helped me figure out what I liked.”</p> <p>“There wasn’t really a scenario provided where I didn’t go to University.”</p> <p>“Pandemic wasn’t nice to learn in. I was cheating, everyone was cheating. My grades went way up, but future employers will know what was happening. It didn’t effect me too bad, but my learning was definitely affected.”</p>	<p>Opinions were similarly mixed about post-secondary education. Some participants liked their education virtual, while others did not. Many expressed that post-secondary was a path to higher income. One participant ventured that master’s degrees in her field (geometrics) were poor value, and she found much better opportunities by doing certificate programs.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“My sister was in university at the start of the pandemic. She went online, and I decided I didn’t want to do that – it would be so miserable, and I wouldn’t be able to focus. Instead, I did a co-op class.”</p> <p>“I like my program, I’m a computer student. I was so tired first year. With online school I have much more energy. I already knew I wasn’t going to get that university experience. I’ve been able to work more and save. My life got better if anything.”</p> <p>“When it was getting close to graduation, I still hadn’t chosen a program, so my parents just signed me up for a random program. I went to that program for two years before realizing there were so many other options.”</p>
<p>Boomers and the Pandemic</p>	<p>Intergenerational Conflict</p>



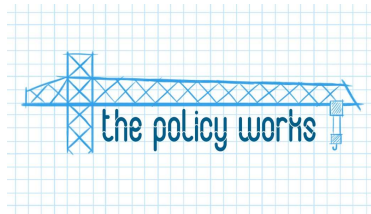
<p>One discussion that did prompt significant debate was the differences in how the pandemic impacted young adults compared to other generations, particularly baby boomers.</p> <p>Participants generally felt that older generations had their routines impacted less as older people were more likely to have established careers and to spend more time at home. Some participants felt that social media more directly exposed young adults to negative news stories, while others felt that young adults were more discerning and sceptical in their consumption of online news relative to older adults.</p> <p>It was generally agreed that seniors had received more support over the course of the pandemic, both financially and socially. Some participants noted that they felt they were more impacted by the closure of public entertainment than older Canadians.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“I saw the Ukraine crisis unfold on TikTok, my mother never saw wars unfold on her iPhone growing up.”</p> <p>“For older generations, it’s a lot more impactful because they don’t take news on social media with a grain of salt.”</p> <p>[On support for youth vs. seniors] “Suddenly our graduation was cancelled, our summer job offers were pulled back. We got CERB, but there wasn’t much else. We didn’t get much, and my friends and I felt really lost.”</p> <p>“One of my favorite things to do is go to sporting events or live entertainment. Having that taken away was very hard on me.”</p>	<p>It was generally agreed among participants that political systems favoured older generations (because they vote and because they are currently in government), and that boomers had gotten a relatively better deal over the course of their lifetime. One participant was particularly vocal about her anger at boomers, but a certain amount of resentment or envy was apparent in both groups.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“I’m kind of a boomer hater. They’re the people telling us to just walk in and hand in a resume... but they’re the people that could just walk into a business and they’d have a career for the rest of their life.”</p> <p>“The narrative was always pushed that we were the ones meeting up, we were the last to get vaccinated which I thought was unfair. The boomers had the easiest life in human history. Some people gave up half their high school experience so the older generation could live a few more years in their fully funded retirement. In school tuition wasn’t lowered, but seniors got an old age security bump. Young people were blamed as having sneaky parties but we weren’t receiving support or faster vaccines and we were the ones working on the front lines being yelled at by Karen’s. That made me really mad. Are we the heroes of the pandemic or the super spreaders because for some reason the narrative was that we were both.”</p> <p>“I feel it was a win-win situation [for younger and older generations]. People focus on the dark side of everything, but you got to spend more time with your family, more time with your kids.”</p>
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	<p>“My dad’s been with the same company for 20 years. For this generation it’s more common to jump around.”</p>
Trucker Convoy	Canadian Politics
<p>Although aware of the protests, participants were generally not supportive of the trucker convoy because of its politics and/or because of the methods employed. The only participant who was somewhat supportive of the goals of the convoy felt that it was employed too late and in a way that inhibited opportunities for others (e.g., blocking road access to the USA).</p> <p>One participant stated they were angrier about the poor police response than the protest itself.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“I felt it was a bunch of old white men feeling like they had no freedom. They were very entitled.”</p> <p>“I would have supported them if they did it earlier... they were messing up opportunities for other people.”</p> <p>“Protest went on for way too long, showed the incompetence of police. I am madder about that than the protest itself.”</p>	<p>Participants were somewhat neutral on Canadian politics. Some expressed the sentiment that Canadian politics are boring but stable compared to our neighbour to the south. One felt there was a lack of choice from our political parties, another felt that Canada is very slow to implement policy change.</p> <p>There was some disengagement generally - four of nine participants did not vote in the most recent Federal election.</p> <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“Trudeau says what we want to hear, but we don’t really get what we want. He was just saying words to make us feel better, though he had power to change things.”</p> <p>“I feel like Canada is the absolute worst in regard to the Paris Agreement – [Canada] gets less done... when there is a party in power [in the States] they get more done.”</p> <p>“I really dislike Doug Ford.”</p> <p>“I find Justin Trudeau very gentle. Very reactive instead of proactive.”</p> <p>“Change is slow for indigenous policies. There’s not enough indigenous voices, and even when there are it’s more for show.”</p>
Opportunities Abroad	Policies, Good and Bad
<p>When asked if Canada had better or worse opportunities than other countries, the general sentiment was that there were more</p>	<p>When participants were asked what policies they liked in Canada, answers included:</p>



<p>opportunities in countries like the USA, but that these may come at the expense of worse benefits and longer hours. Most participants intended to remain in Canada. One planned to leave for cheaper housing, while another was considering leaving to further their career in the USA.</p> <p><i>Quotes</i></p> <p>“I look at the lifestyle [in the USA], its like you see on TV, its pretty much better than ours.”</p> <p>“There’s more opportunity, but the benefits and hours may not be as good. There’s a trade-off.”</p> <p>“Living here is expensive. To live here for the next 10 years would be a challenge I think.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannabis legalization - CERB - Optometry coverage (since reversed) - Grants for low-income students (since reversed) <p>When asked what policies should be implemented, answers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable housing initiatives and policies to deter/tax foreign homebuyers - Education grants - Dental coverage <p><i>Quotes:</i></p> <p>“I thought CERB was ground-breaking [compared to other countries], and too many people took advantage of it and not enough appreciated it.”</p> <p>“I think Cannabis legalization was a positive thing.”</p> <p>“[I support] expanding career opportunities for youth in Canada, especially since a lot of my friends have to leave Vancouver [for career opportunities].”</p> <p>“I think cannabis legalization was a positive change. I always thought it was very unfair to people who were fined or given jail time for possession of a relatively harmless substance.”</p> <p>“I think the ban on firearms was a good move, though there is still quite a way to go.”</p> <p>“I think removing the interest on student loans has been very helpful.”</p>
<p>News and Sources of Influence</p>	



Almost all participants primarily got their news through social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.). They did not watch TV news or subscribe to a newspaper.

Parents and friends played an important role in opinion formation, though a couple expressed the importance of doing one's own research.

When asked, no participants identified any public figures as key sources of news and opinions, though several participants said they paid attention to controversial figures even if they didn't agree with them (e.g., Jason Kenny, Jordan Peterson).

Jordan Peterson was a Canadian celebrity / opinion-former some, but not all, had heard of. They knew who Joe Rogan, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos were, but did not have strong opinions on them. They did not name Canadian politicians they liked/disliked apart from Trudeau, Ford and Kenney.

Quotes:

"I like to form my own opinions and do my own breakdown of everything. I have different views from some of my family members so I'm not that influenced by their opinions. I also take media sources with a grain of salt."

[On whom they find interesting to listen to]: "Jordan Peterson, I find him very intriguing though I don't always agree with him."