Citizens’ aspirations and anxieties and the politics of inclusive prosperity

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Executive Director, Environics Institute

Inclusive Prosperity: Recoupling Growth, Equity and Social Integration

Queen’s International Institute on Social Policy
August 20-21, 2019
The Environics Institute for Survey Research

Established by Michael Adams in 2006 as a non-profit research institute

Promotes relevant public opinion & social research on important issues of public policy and social change

Conducts research to help us better understand Canada as it is today, how it is changing, and where it may be heading

Focuses on surveying individuals/groups not usually heard from, asking questions not normally asked
Three questions

1. How are public attitudes on economic security (or insecurity) and inequality evolving?
   - What is the current balance between optimism and anxiety and how has this changed?
   - How do these attitudes vary within the population?

2. How are public attitudes related to social integration evolving?
   - How do these attitudes vary within the population?

3. Are feelings about economic security and social integration generating political upheaval and polarization?

QIISP 2019
Public Opinion Research

- Public opinion research provides clues, not answers:
  
  “We’re building something here, Detective. All the pieces matter.”
  
  - Lester Freamon (“The Wire”)

- The joy of triangulation:

  Different results from different questions is a feature, not a bug.
Overview

➢ General economic outlook is (finally) improving

➢ The pattern is consistent across major demographic groups, but not regions

➢ But recognition of improved economic conditions appears to be co-existing with accentuated anxieties about:
  ○ Affordability
  ○ Job security
  ○ Fairness
  ○ Inter-generational mobility
The economy is no longer seen as the most important problem facing Canada

In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing CANADIANS today?

Source: Focus Canada

QIISP 2019
A growing proportion say that now a good time to find a job

Source: World Gallup Poll

Thinking about the job situation in the city or area where you live today, would you say that it is now a good time or a bad time to find a job?

QIISP 2019
Views on the economic situation are improving

2010-2019

% very good or good

The country’s economic situation

Your own economic situation

How would you describe the country’s economic situation?

How would you describe your overall economic situation?

Source: Americas Barometer

QIISP 2019
More say their household income is enough to get by on

How would you describe the country's economic situation?

Source: Americas Barometer

QIISP 2019
Views on the country's economic situation vary by region

2010-19

% very good or good

2010 2012 2014 2017 2019

Canada
Atlantic
Quebec
Ontario
MB/SK
AB
BC

How would you describe the country's economic situation?

Source: Americas Barometer

QIISP 2019
“X” marks the spot: on economic outlook, Quebec and Alberta have switched places

2010-19

How would you describe the country’s economic situation?

Source: Americas Barometer

QIISP 2019
There is a small but noticeable increase in the proportion seeing the cost of living as the most important problem facing CANADIANS today.

*Source: Focus Canada*
Satisfaction is high and stable in the case of health care and education, but declining in the case of housing

2006-2018

% satisfied

- Availability of quality health care
- Education system or schools
- Good, affordable housing

In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with …
- the availability of quality healthcare?
- the educational system or the schools?
- good, affordable housing?

Source: World Gallup Poll
Different cities, different priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Calgary-Edmonton (n=370)</th>
<th>Vancouver (n=271)</th>
<th>Toronto (n=529)</th>
<th>Montreal (n=595)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government / political representation</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>Affordable housing 8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy industry / oil / pipelines</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>Environmental issues / climate change / pollution 8.9%</td>
<td>Government / political representation 8.0%</td>
<td>Healthcare / mental health 9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs / unemployment</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>Cost of living / inflation 8.9%</td>
<td>Jobs / unemployment 7.4%</td>
<td>Economy 8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration / illegal immigration / refugees</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>Homelessness / income inequality / poverty 5.9%</td>
<td>Cost of living / inflation 5.9%</td>
<td>Government / political representation 7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare / mental health</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>Immigration / illegal immigration / refugees 5.9%</td>
<td>Immigration / illegal immigration / refugees 5.8%</td>
<td>Taxes / high taxes 3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues / climate change / pollution</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>Government / political representation 4.8%</td>
<td>Crime / drug crime 5.1%</td>
<td>Homelessness / income inequality / poverty 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes / high taxes</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>Healthcare / mental health 4.4%</td>
<td>Environmental issues / climate change / pollution 4.7%</td>
<td>Debt / finances / money problems 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living / inflation</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>Taxes / high taxes 3.0%</td>
<td>Taxes / high taxes 3.9%</td>
<td>Social issues / prejudice 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government spending / budget / deficit</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>Crime / drug crime 3.0%</td>
<td>Healthcare / mental health 3.7%</td>
<td>Cost of living / inflation 2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing CANADIANS today?

Source: Confederation of Tomorrow
There is growing concern about job security

2002 / 2019

2019: How concerned are you about yourself or a member of your immediate family finding or keeping a stable, full-time job? 2002: Are you very, somewhat, not very or not at all worried about you or a member of your immediate family finding or keeping a stable, full-time job?

Source: CRIC (Charter, 2002); Confederation of Tomorrow, 2019
There is growing concern about job security, particularly among younger Canadians.

2002 / 2019

% very or somewhat concerned

2019: How concerned are you about yourself or a member of your immediate family finding or keeping a stable, full-time job? 2002: Are you very, somewhat, not very or not at all worried about you or a member of your immediate family finding or keeping a stable, full-time job?

Source: CRIC (Charter, 2002); Confederation of Tomorrow, 2019
Concern about job security has grown more steeply in Ontario and Alberta

2002 / 2017 / 2019

How concerned are you about yourself or a member of your immediate family finding or keeping a stable, full-time job?

Source: CRIC (Charter, 2002); Mowat Centre (Portraits, 2017) Confederation of Tomorrow, 2019
More Ontarians agree that whom you know counts more than how hard your work.

2003 / 2017

Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It has been said that what counts today is not what you can do, or how hard working you are, but whom you know and how much influence you have. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree.

Source: CRIC (New Canada, 2003); Mowat Centre (Portraits, 2017)
Most now say that young Canadians will be worse off than their parents

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view? (a) When they get older, today’s young Canadians will have a BETTER standard of living; (b) When they get older, today’s young Canadians will have a WORSE standard of living; (c) When they get older, today’s young Canadians will have the SAME standard of living

Ontario

Better: 2003 (33), 2017 (17)
Same: 2003 (32), 2017 (16)
Worse: 2003 (34), 2017 (59)

Source: CRIC (New Canada, 2003); Mowat Centre (Portraits, 2017)
Part 1b: Inequality

Overview

- Concern about inequality is long-standing, but not necessarily increasing
- The extent to which reducing inequality is a priority varies (depending on how the question is asked)
- While those with lower incomes are certainly more supportive of redistribution, the situation is more one of consensus than of cleavage
Should the government reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor?

1996 - 2011

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that governments in Canada should actively find ways to reduce the gap between wealthy people and those less fortunate?

QIISP 2019

Source: Focus Canada
The Canadian government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor.

*QIISP 2019*
No sustained increase in the proportion saying that inequality is the most important problem facing Canada

In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing CANADIANS today?

Source: Focus Canada

QIISP 2019
## Reducing inequality among top three priorities
(\% saying item is high priority for making the country work better)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Ontario %</th>
<th>Quebec %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending more on health care</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being economically competitive</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce inequality rich-poor</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing climate change</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending more on education/training</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting taxes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New international trade agreements</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciling with Indigenous peoples</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Canada/US relations</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferring power to provinces</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending more on military</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving more to big cities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Mowat Centre (Portraits, 2017)*

*When it comes to helping the country work better, how much of a priority do you think each of the following should be?*
Part 2: Social integration

Overview

- Overall, Canadians’ views about immigrants and refugees have become much more welcoming over the long term, and held remarkably steady over the short term.

- While views on some questions remain divided, this is nothing new.
  - There is no evidence of a “hardening” of attitudes.

- Attitudes to immigration are consistently related to region, age, education and income.
Today a majority of Canadians disagree that there is too much immigration, reflecting a sea change in opinions from the past 1977 - 2019

Agree or disagree: “There is too much immigration in Canada.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Canada (2019)
Most Canadians view immigrants as helping rather than hurting the economy.

Chart showing the percentage of Canadians who agree or disagree with the statement: "The economic impact of immigrants is positive." The chart shows a trend from 1993 to 2019, with the percentage of agreement increasing over time, reaching 76% in 2019. The percentage of disagreement decreases over the same period, with 17% in 2019.
A growing plurality now reject the idea that many refugee claimants are not legitimate
Canadians’ view of their country’s global contribution is shifting from peacekeeping and foreign aid, to being a place for immigrants.

What is the most important contribution that Canada makes to the world today?

- Multiculturalism/welcome immigrants: 25 mentions in 2018
- Peacekeeping: 19 mentions in 2018
- Foreign aid: 9 mentions in 2018
- Role model for the world: 8 mentions in 2018
Very few say that immigration is the most important problem facing Canada

In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing CANADIANS today?

Source: Focus Canada

QIISP 2019
Americans are 9 times more likely than Canadians to say that immigration is the most important problem facing their country today.

### 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Canada (April 2019)</th>
<th>US (July 2019)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor government leadership / scandals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race relations / racism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment / climate change</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National unity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy / recession</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty / inequality / social program cuts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral / religious issues / decline</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of respect for each other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation / cost of Living / gas prices</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War / terrorism / conflict</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Focus Canada / Gallup

QIISP 2019
Attitudes to immigration are consistently related to region, age, education and income

Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada

Source: Focus Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Higher support for immigration</th>
<th>Lower support for immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Atlantic / BC</td>
<td>Alberta / Prairies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>Older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>HS or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Higher income</td>
<td>Lower income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: Polarization

Overview

➢ There is some evidence of polarization, including polarization along partisan lines

➢ It is doubtful that this is related to heightened economic anxiety

➢ Attitudes towards tolerance and economic security have always been linked, but it is not clear that this is what has been changing
  o Not clear that economic concerns are “generating” polarization

➢ The “fault-lines” may lie elsewhere
  o The proposition that “feelings about social integration are generating polarization” is possibly backwards – keeping in mind that feelings are on the whole more welcoming

QIISP 2019
In Canada there is growing political polarization around the number of immigrants being accepted each year. By political party support from 1996 to 2019:

Agree or disagree: “There is too much immigration in Canada”

- Liberal
- Conservative
- NDP

Environics Institute: Focus Canada (April 2019)
Public concerns about illegitimate refugees are declining across the population, but less so among Conservatives

Agree or disagree: “Too many refugee claimants are not legitimate”

1993 - 2019  By political party support

Environics Institute: Focus Canada (April 2019)
Views on immigration and household income are linked

2019

- Immigration has a positive impact on the economy: 83% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 77% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 59% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 58% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 51% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 33% Not enough for you and you are stretched, 26% Not enough for you and you are having a hard time.

- Refugees are imposing a severe strain on our welfare system: 39% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 46% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 46% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 58% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 64% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 44% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 51% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 64% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 58% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 46% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 46% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 58% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 64% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 51% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 33% Not enough for you and you are stretched, 26% Not enough for you and you are having a hard time.

- Immigrants make Canada a better place: 51% Good enough for you and you can save from it, 44% Just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems, 33% Not enough for you and you are stretched, 26% Not enough for you and you are having a hard time.

Source: Focus Canada
1. Agreement that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values is related to **age and education**

**Demographic Factors**

- **Gender**
  - Women: 64
  - Men: 67

- **Age**
  - Age 18-34: 55
  - Age 55+: 72

- **Education**
  - University: 56
  - HS or less: 72

- **Immigration**
  - Recent immigrants: 55
  - 3rd gen +: 68

- **Big cities**
  - Cites of 1M+: 65
  - Rest of Canada: 66

**Agree: There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values**

Environics Institute: Confederation of Tomorrow 2019
2. Agreement that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values is not as strongly related to *economic concerns*

---

*Agree: There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values*

*Environics Institute: Confederation of Tomorrow 2019*
3. Agreement that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values is very strongly related to political views

Agree: There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values

Environics Institute: Confederation of Tomorrow 2019
Views on immigration, by choice of most important problem facing Canada

2019

- Immigration has a positive impact on the economy: 66%
- Refugees are imposing a severe strain on our welfare system: 49%
- Immigrants make Canada a better place: 45%
- Poor govt / leadership: 30%
- Health care: 169%
- Cost of living: 142%
- Unemployment: 110%
- Economy / recession: 236%
- Environment: 278%

Source: Focus Canada
Recap
Recap

- Improved general economic outlook is co-existing with accentuated anxieties (affordability, job security, inter-generational mobility)
- The main “cleavage” in the country in terms of economic outlook is regional
- The urban / rural divide is not really a thing
- Concern about inequality is long-standing, but not necessarily increasing
- Views on immigration and refugees are becoming more and not less positive, but political polarization around the issue is increasing its visibility (salience)
- Attitudes towards tolerance and economic security have always been linked, but it is not clear that this is the most relevant fault-line

QIISP 2019
Data presented in this survey

Details of Environics Institute projects and surveys, including reports, tables, and notes on methodology, can be found on our website at https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects

The following Institute surveys are cited in this presentation:

- **Americas Barometer**
  - Multi-country public opinion survey on democracy, governance and political engagement
  - 2019 data for Canada (n=1,508) conducted between June 27 – July 10, 2019

- **World Gallup Poll**
  - Conducted annually in 140 countries.
  - Canadian survey data collected by Gallup in August 2018 (n=1,009)

- **Focus Canada**
  - Focus Canada is an ongoing public opinion research program that provides a credible, independent and sustained source of Canadian public opinion data on important issues facing the country. The most recent Focus Canada survey of 2,000 Canadians was conducted between April 1 and 10, 2019

- **Confederation of Tomorrow 2019 survey of Canadians**
  - The Confederation of Tomorrow 2019 survey of Canadians was conducted online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the Territories) with a sample of 5,732 Canadians (age 18 and over) between December 14, 2018 and January 16, 2019.
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