

# Work/Career Experience and Aspirations

A central theme of this study is to better understand Millennials' perspective on work and career, including their current experiences, their goals and aspirations, challenges, and sources of support. This section also examines the value of post-secondary education in achieving a fulfilling life.

## Current work experience

*Two-thirds of employed Millennials are satisfied with their current job. Job satisfaction is closely tied to household income — but social values also play a role, with Diverse Strivers among the most positive about their work. Many, but not most, feel their pay cheque and education/skills are commensurate with their jobs, and one-third is working in areas unrelated to what they have been trained to do.*

**Employment status.** Close to eight in ten Millennials report to be currently working, mostly full-time (57%), as well as part-time (14%) or self-employed (7%). One in ten (11%) is currently a full-time student, while one in five is either seeking employment (10%) or not looking for work at this time (11%) (totals exceed 100% because some individuals fit more than one category).

Employment status varies predictably by age across the Millennial cohort, as older individuals are more likely to be in the workforce and younger ones in school. Full-time employment is most common among men, ethnic Chinese and Bros & Brittanys, and least so among those who are Indigenous or have “other” ethnic backgrounds. Millennials not currently looking for work are most apt to be those without a high school diploma and Indigenous, and to a lesser extent women (e.g., likely at home with small children), as well as New Traditionalists and Lone Wolves.

## Employment status

By age sub-cohort

MARKER OF ADULTHOOD	21 TO 26 YEARS OF AGE	27 TO 31 YEARS OF AGE	32 TO 36 YEARS OF AGE
Employed full-time	42	61	66
Employed part-time	20	11	11
Self-employed	5	7	8
Student (full-time, part-time)	32	10	5
Looking for work	13	10	8
Not looking for work	10	10	11

**Current job satisfaction.** Among Millennials employed (full-time, part-time or self-employed), how satisfied are they with their current job? Two-thirds say they are very satisfied (23%) or satisfied (44%), compared with one in ten who is dissatisfied (9%) or very dissatisfied (3%). The remaining 20 percent do not have a clear opinion either way, indicating they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

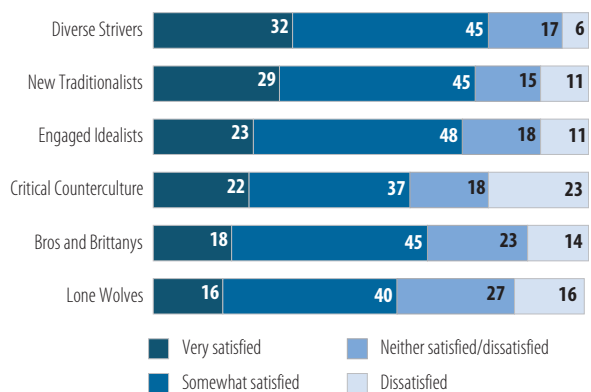
Job satisfaction is most closely linked to household income (and whether one’s income currently supports their desired lifestyle), but as a matter of degree: At all income levels, satisfaction outweighs dissatisfaction by a wide margin (even among those earning less than \$30K per year, 54% express satisfaction versus 17% who are dissatisfied). The effect of income on job satisfaction shows up with related factors, as satisfaction levels are also higher among Millennials who are employed full-time or self-employed, those with higher levels of education, and those with higher overall life satisfaction.

But social values also play a role. Diverse strivers are the most satisfied with their current work (77% satisfied, versus only 6% dissatisfied), despite having lower than average household incomes; their motivation to succeed may well give them comparatively greater satisfaction in their working life.

New Traditionalists (74% overall satisfaction) and Engaged Idealists (71%) also express higher than average levels of job satisfaction (these are the tribes with the highest average incomes), while it is Critical Counterculturists (59%) and Lone Wolves (57%) who are least apt to share this experience (these tribes have the lowest average incomes).

## Current job satisfaction

By social values tribe



**Matching income with education, training and skills.** The survey asked employed Millennials if they believe their current employment income is commensurate with their education, training and skills. Opinions are evenly divided between those who say their income is about right for their education/training/skills (44%) and those who believe it is lower than what they would expect (44%). Another one in ten (12%) reports earning more than he or she might have expected.

Responses to this question are most closely linked to current household income in a predictable pattern (a match is reported by 51% in the top income bracket, compared with 37% in the lowest bracket). Those most likely to say they are underpaid include immigrants and Millennials who are neither white nor Indigenous, women, and to a lesser extent New Traditionalists and Critical Counterculturists.

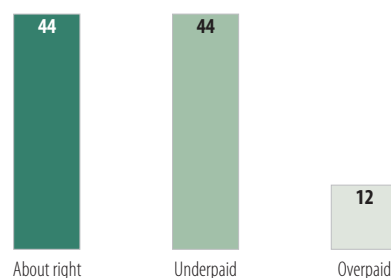
How much of a difference does a match between employment income and education/training make in overall job satisfaction? Results show it has little impact above and beyond household income. Those who report a good match are roughly as satisfied with their job as those in the upper income brackets, and those who say they are under-paid express the same level of job satisfaction as those in the lower income brackets. Being over-paid does little to boost one's job satisfaction.

**Matching education/training and skills with current job.** How well do employed Millennials feel their current education, training and skills match with their current job role and responsibilities? Half (49%) report a good match, while 13 percent believe they are overqualified for the work they do, and seven percent consider themselves to be underqualified (i.e., their education and skills are less than what their job calls for). Another one-third (32%) indicate they have chosen to take a job in an area in which their education, training and skills are not applicable.

Responses on this question are linked most clearly with household income and education. Millennials with a post-secondary degree are the most likely to say there is a good match between their education/training and their jobs, but are also among those most apt to believe they are overqualified. Having more income increases the probability of reporting a good match, versus taking on work unrelated to one's education and training, but is not related to feeling over- or underqualified.

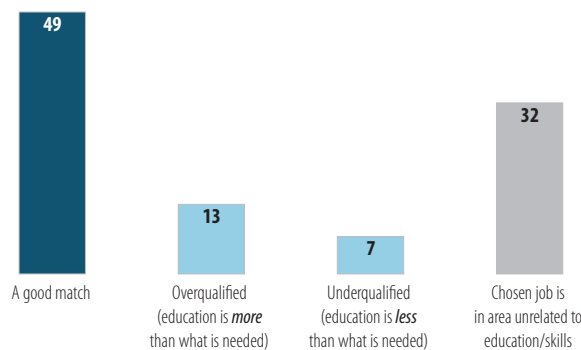
## Matching income with current job

How well does your current job's income match with education, training and skills?



## Matching education and skills with current job

How well do your education, training and skills match with your current job?



Across social values tribes, Diverse Strivers are the ones most apt to say they are under-trained for their work, while it is Lone Wolves who most likely to report having chosen jobs unrelated to their education and training. Finally, matching education, training and skills with one's current job has a marginally stronger impact on overall job satisfaction, than does a match with one's income.

## Career goals and aspirations

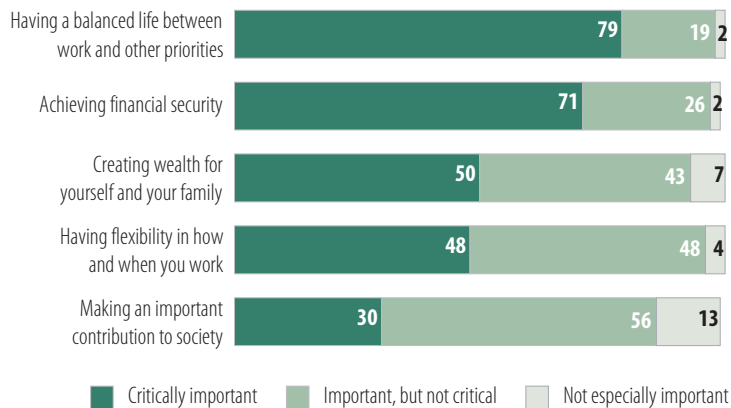
Millennials place the greatest career priority on achieving balance between work and personal life, ahead of financial security or creating wealth. The generation is divided on the relative importance of making money versus contributing to society, which is largely based on education, but also ethnic background and social values.

What do Millennials want most from their careers? Among five goals presented on the survey, the greatest priority is placed on **achieving balance between work and their personal life** (79% say this is critically important). This is ahead of **achieving financial security** (71%) and **creating wealth for oneself and one’s family** (50%).

The importance of work-life balance fits with the emphasis this generation places on family and relationships, as well as other life goals around travel, and health and wellness. It is also reflected in the importance placed on having a degree of autonomy in the workplace, with almost half (48%) placing critical importance on **having flexibility in how and when one works**.

In comparison, Millennials are less apt to place critical importance on **making an important contribution to society** (30%), although a majority says it is important, if not critical. This is a career aspiration that splits the generation, as reflected in the fact that opinions are evenly divided between those who would “like to make a lot of money in business” (50%) and those who would “prefer to do work that is in the public interest” (50%).

### Importance of work and career goals

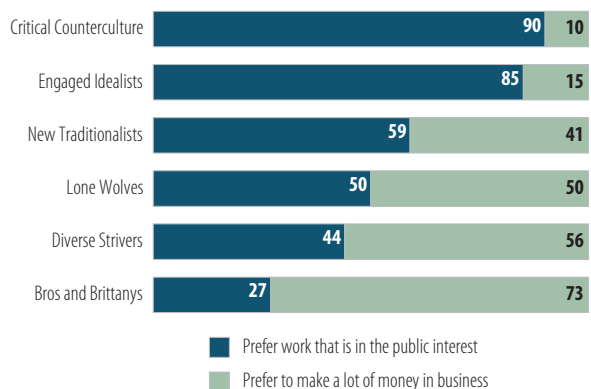


The relative importance placed on these career goals varies across the population:

- Having a balanced life between work and other priorities.** This career goal is the top priority across all groups, but increases along with education and household income, and is also more apt to be seen as critically important by women (83% versus 75% among men). Across social values tribes, achieving work-life balance is most widely prioritized among Engaged Idealists (89%) and New Traditionalists (87%) (the two most affluent tribes), and least so among Lone Wolves (67%; although only 5% of this group say it is not especially important).
- Achieving financial security.** The priority placed on this career goal is surprisingly consistent across the Millennial population, but is somewhat more evident in Alberta (77%), as well as among Bros & Brittanys (77%) and Diverse Strivers (75%).<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, the importance placed on financial security increases modestly along with household income (those most likely to have already achieved financial security are the ones most apt to focus on it as a career goal).
- Creating wealth for themselves and their family.** The importance placed on creating wealth is only weakly related to household income, and is more about ethnic background and social values. This priority is most widely considered to be critical among Millennials with a Chinese (62%) or South Asian (65%) background, as well as among Diverse Strivers (67%). It is least apt to be given this importance by Critical Counterculturists (24%), followed by Engaged Idealists (36%) and Lone Wolves (38%).
- Having flexibility in when and how you work.** Flexibility in the workplace is a top priority among roughly half of Millennials in every group, but is most prominent among those with a graduate degree, immigrants, those with a South Asian or “other” ethnic background, and Diverse Strivers. This view is least apt to be shared by Lone Wolves, although a majority of this group sees such flexibility as important if not critical.

- Making an important contribution to society.** The importance placed on making a contribution to society is most closely linked to education, both in terms of attainment and level of study among current students (51% of current graduate students say this is a critically important career goal). This goal is also most widely emphasized by South Asian immigrants (54%) and Diverse Strivers (44%; a group with the largest component of the South Asian population), as well as among Engaged Idealists (46%; one of two tribes with the most education).
- Making this type of contribution is least apt to be a critical career aspiration for Millennials without a high school diploma (19%), Indigenous individuals (25%) and Quebecers (23%), as well as Bros & Brittanys (18%) and Lone Wolves (15%).

### Preferred type of work By social values tribes



<sup>3</sup> Among Chinese Millennials, creating wealth is given more priority by immigrants than native-born Canadians; for South Asians it is the reverse.

The division among Millennials between building wealth and contributing to society is further revealed when they are asked to choose between doing “making a lot of money in business” and “doing work that is in the public interest.” Older Millennials (who are more established financially and career-wise) are more likely to tip on the side of choosing work that is in the public interest.

Immigrants may place an importance on doing work that makes a contribution, but when faced with a choice they are less likely to choose this option over making money. The greatest difference emerges among social values tribes: The vast majority of Critical Counterculturists and Engaged Idealists say they would choose working in the public interest over making a lot of money, while a majority of Bros & Brittans, and to a lesser extent Diverse Strivers, take the opposite view.

*Briefly describe your ideal job or career, and what makes it attractive.*

My ideal job or career would be one that strikes a good work-life balance – one where I can succeed at both my job and the work that I do, but also having an adequate amount of time for my personal life. – New Traditionalist (female, 29, Ontario)

My ideal career is one in which I have a good work-life balance. I would like to go to work, work hard, feel good about what I’m doing at work, but then at the end of the day I like to go home from work, leave my work behind, and go and have time to myself or with my family or friends.  
– Bro & Brittany (female, 25, Saskatchewan)

One of the things I’ve always wanted to do is become a doctor. Right now I’m an accountant, I studied at school to become an accountant, and one of the things that I thought would be really nice is instead of focusing on finance, focusing on actually giving back to people and helping them through medicine.  
– Diverse Striver (male, 26, Ontario)

My passion is helping people achieve their goals – no matter what those are. The main goal we’re after in the end is happiness. I love watching people.  
– Engaged Idealist (female, 27, Alberta)

## Confidence, challenges and supports

Millennials are more likely than not to express confidence in eventually achieving their work and career goals. A weak economy is most broadly seen as the largest barrier to realizing their aspirations, but many also identify competing priorities and personal limitations. Family and friends are the most significant source of support.

**Confidence in attaining career goals.** How confident do Millennials feel today about achieving their current work and career goals over time? Overall, this generation is cautiously confident: Three in ten (29%) say they are very confident in achieving their goals, with more than half (54%) indicating they are “somewhat” confident. One in six is not very (14%) or not at all (3%) confident in this outcome.

What separates those who are very confident with those less sure? A post-secondary degree and higher incomes appear to make the most difference, although a clear majority of Millennials in all groups express some, if not strong, confidence in achieving their career aspirations.

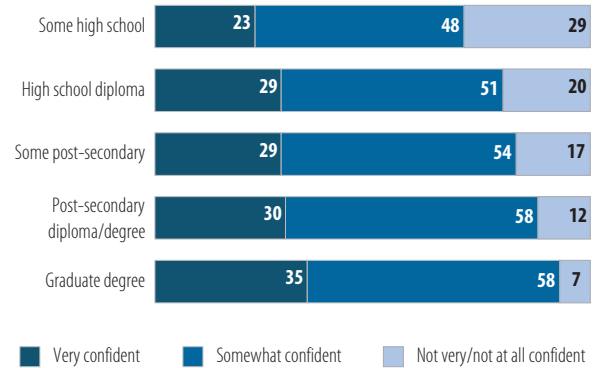
Those least apt to have such confidence include individuals without a high school diploma, those who are neither employed nor in school, those with the lowest incomes, and Indigenous Millennials. Among social values tribes, Diverse Strivers and Engaged Idealists are the most confident, with Lone Wolves and Critical Counterculturalists the least so (despite this latter group having the highest levels of educational attainment).

**Source of confidence.** When asked (unprompted) what gives them hope and confidence in achieving their work and career goals over time, Millennials are most likely to point to their hard work and determination (17%), with others emphasizing personal capabilities such as belief in themselves, their success so far, their experience and skills, and their education or training. Others emphasize the important support they receive from family or friends, their education and training, job security and a supportive work environment. Notably, almost four in ten (39%) could not identify anything in particular in responding to this question.

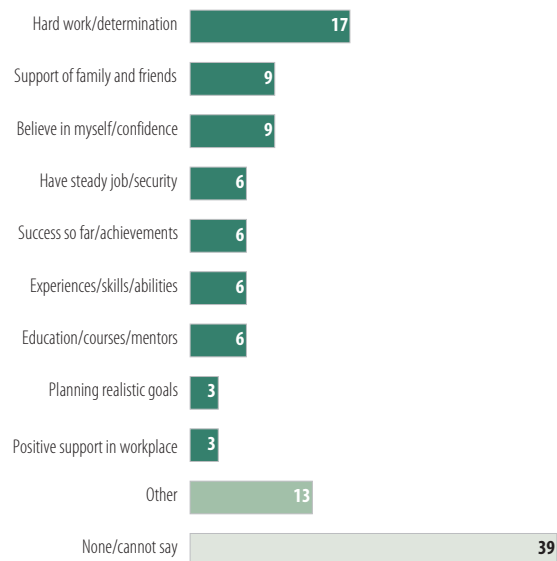
Responses to this question are largely similar across the Millennial generation. The theme of hard work and determination is somewhat more prominent among current students, Engaged Idealists and Diverse Strivers, while support from family and friends is most evident among women and Indigenous Millennials. Consistent with their

### Confidence in attaining career goals

By education levels



### What gives you confidence in attaining career goals?



low level of confidence, Lone Wolves are least able to identify any basis for hope and confidence in achieving their career aspirations.

**Biggest challenges.** When asked (again unprompted) to name the biggest challenges facing them in achieving their work and career goals, Millennials identify a range of themes. First and foremost is the **weak economy** (41%), including a challenging job market, low salaries, competition for scarce jobs, and the cost of living.

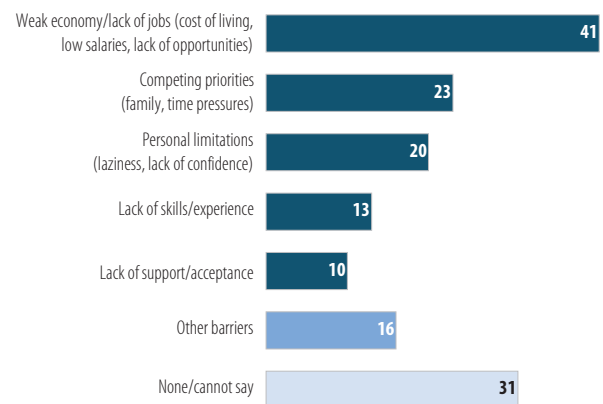
The next most mentioned theme is **competing priorities** (23%), which encompasses challenges related to the desire for work-life balance, time management pressures, and family or personal issues requiring attention (e.g., child care).

For some, the desire for work-life balance is seen as working against achieving other career goals, such as building wealth/getting ahead. Almost as prominent is **acknowledgement of personal limitations** (20%), such as procrastination, laziness and lack of energy or motivation, health or other disabilities, a lack of confidence, and not making good decisions.

Others identify constraints relating to a lack of skills or experience (13%) and an unsupportive work environment (from other people, employers, discrimination) (10%). Three in ten (31%) do not identify any specific challenges that stand in the way of their career and work aspirations (most apt to be the response among those with the least education).

A weak economy is the predominant theme across the generation, but increases with educational attainment, and is most prominently mentioned by Critical Counterculturists (the most educated tribe), as well as by residents of Atlantic Canada and Alberta. Competing priorities is most evident among college/technical school students, Indigenous Millennials, women, New Traditionalists and Engaged Idealists (who also are among the most likely to mention personal limitations). Lack of skills is linked to being younger in the generation and not having a post-secondary degree, while lack of workplace support is most apt to be emphasized by Millennials with higher levels of education and income.

## Biggest challenges facing work/career goals?



### *What stands in the way of achieving your ideal job or career?*

I feel like my friends and I are facing so much more instability economically, environmentally, socially than any other generation has faces in recent years, and those sort of things have been given to us by generations previous. – Diverse Striver (female, 27, Manitoba)

My dream job would be to film live concerts, but unfortunately that's not realistic because of the travel that would be involved now that I have a family. – Bro & Brittany (male, 35, Ontario)

I think the only thing that's really gotten in my way of trying to accomplish what I want job-wise is that I suffer from mental illness and anxiety problems, but I would say that probably that is more like a road block and a detour than actually stopping me from achieving what I want. – NewTraditionalist (male, 26, Ontario)



**Most important types of support.** Survey participants were also asked (unprompted) to name the single most important type of support they received in helping them toward their work and career goals.

The largest source of support for Millennials is from people close to them (40%), both family members and friends. Others identify support they have received from the workplace (10%) (e.g., management, mentors, co-workers), followed by smaller proportions mentioning financial support, self-confidence, and education/training. More than one-third (37%) do not identify any important sources of support in helping them in their work or career.

The support of family and friends is mentioned most often by younger Millennials, current students, women, those with at least some post-secondary education, and Engaged Idealists. Workplace support is more often mentioned by those with a post-secondary degree and those with higher incomes, and again Engaged Idealists (who are most likely to name multiple sources of support, versus Lone Wolves who are least apt to identify any).

**Use of occupational and labour trends information.** One potentially valuable resource for seeking employment and career direction is published information about occupational trends that identify where the best opportunities might be found in the short and longer term. Three in ten (30%) Millennials report having made use of this type of information in their search for work and/or career success. This is most apt to be reported by younger Millennials, as well as by current students and those looking for work (these groups overlap). Use of such information is marginally higher among immigrants than native-born, and more noticeable among those whose ethnic background is in the “other” category. Lone Wolves are least apt to report using such information (17%), while Bros & Brittanys fall somewhat below the average (26%).

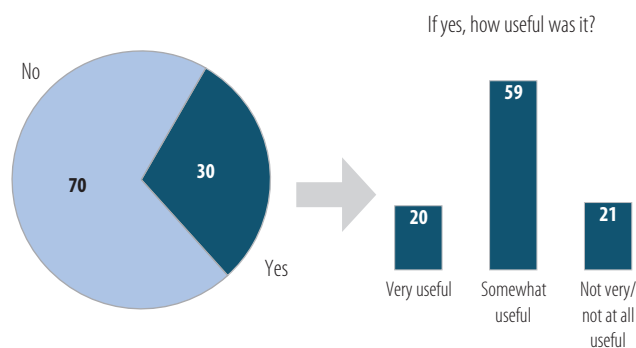
Among those who report using such information, one in five (20%) says it was very useful, with an equal proportion indicating it was not very (17%) or not all useful (3%). The majority (59%) rate the information somewhere in between.

This resource is most widely valued by Millennials with a South Asian or “other” ethnic background, and Diverse Strivers, with this least evident among those not employed nor in school, and Lone Wolves.

### Most important type of support you have received for your work/career



### Use of occupational trends/labour market data



## The value of post-secondary education

*Millennials have mixed views about the value of post-secondary education, with only three in ten believing it is essential to having a fulfilling life. Among those who now have a degree, fewer than half say it has been very helpful to them so far in their career, and this group is divided on whether they would get the same degree were they to do it over again.*

The conventional wisdom has long been that post-secondary education is an important, if not essential, foundation for both career and life success. The country has invested heavily in building and supporting an extensive network of publicly-funded colleges and universities, and Canada has one of the highest rates of post-secondary education in the world. To what extent do Millennials find post-secondary education to be the keystone for work and career success?

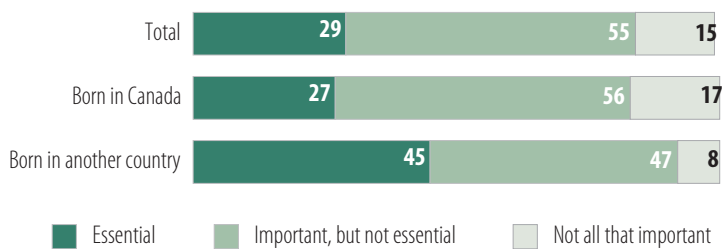
**How essential is having a post-secondary degree?** Most Millennials in Canada see clear value in post-secondary education, but relatively few are convinced of its necessity. Three in ten (29%) say having a post-secondary (college or university) degree is essential to having a fulfilling life, with a

majority (55%) maintaining it is important but not essential, while another 15 percent believe it is not that important.

The importance placed on a post-secondary degree varies noticeably across the population. Seeing it as essential increases (although not dramatically) along with educational attainment (27% among those without a high school diploma, to 42% among those with a graduate degree), but this is not the case with household income. As important as education is where one was born: Immigrants and Millennials with South Asian backgrounds are especially likely to say a post-secondary degree is essential to a fulfilling life (with no difference between native-born and immigrants). This view is least apt to be shared by Millennials who are self-employed and those who live in Alberta.

Across tribes, Diverse Strivers (with the most significant immigrant component) place the strongest value on post-secondary education (44%), with this view least evident among Lone Wolves (22%), along with Engaged Idealists (21%) and Critical Counterculturists (19%), but likely for very different reasons.

How important is a post-secondary degree to having a fulfilling life?



**Value of post-secondary degree in achieving life goals.** Another way to explore the value of post-secondary education is to ask Millennials who now have a degree (27% of the cohort) how valuable they have found it to be so far in terms of helping them achieve their life goals. Responses are positive if not strongly so.

Most Millennials are divided between those who say their post-secondary education or degree has been very helpful (41%) and those who believe it has been somewhat helpful (43%). The remainder believe it has been not very (12%) or not at all (3%) helpful to them so far in achieving their life goals.

This mixed assessment is evident across the generation, but with some variation. Millennials most positive about the value of their post-secondary education to date include those with a graduate degree (53% say very helpful), and those in the top income bracket, as well as Engaged Idealists, Diverse Strivers and Critical Counterculturists. This view is least apt to be shared by ethnic Chinese, B.C. residents and Lone Wolves (30% in this group say their education has not been helpful in their lives). Opinions on this question are notably similar across age sub-cohorts: Younger Millennials (ages 21 to 26) with a post-secondary degree are as likely as older ones to feel it has been helpful to them so far.

**Would they get the same post-secondary education again?**

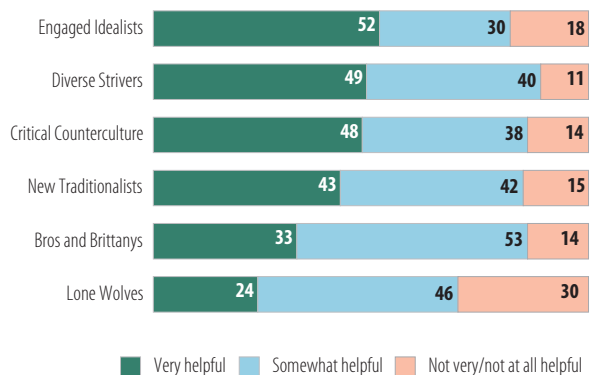
Millennials with a post-secondary degree were also asked, if they could do it over again, would they have gotten the same degree or done something else instead. Again the response is mixed. Of this group, just under half (47%) say they would in fact have gotten the same post-secondary education they completed. A slightly higher proportion indicate they would have followed a different path, either pursuing a different type of post-secondary education (45%) or doing something else instead of getting a degree (7%).

Perspectives on this retrospective question are generally similar across the cohort, with some variation. Satisfaction with the chosen educational path is most evident among younger Millennials, those with a graduate degree, those in the top income bracket, those who identify ethnically as white, Quebecers and those with a high level of life satisfaction.

Millennials most likely to say they would have pursued a different educational degree include women and ethnic Chinese. Doing something other than post-secondary

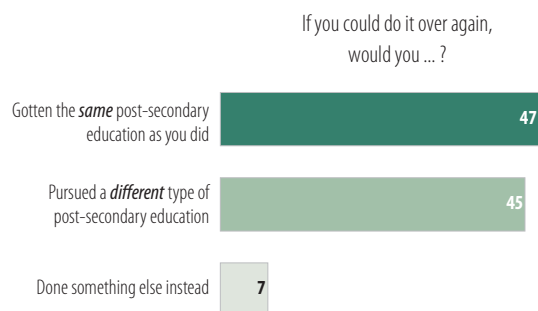
**How valuable has your post-education been?**

By social values tribe



**Was your post-secondary degree the right decision?**

Those with a post-secondary degree



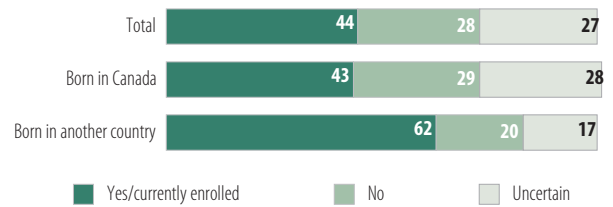
education is the least identified option across the generation, but is most evident among those who are self-employed, lower income Millennials, men, residents of Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, those with low life satisfaction and Lone Wolves.

**Plans for further post-secondary education.** Millennials who do not yet have a university degree were asked if they have plans for, or are considering, getting further education at the college, university or post-graduate level (this group comprises 44% of the Millennial cohort). More than four in ten in this group say they do have such plans (33%) or are already enrolled in a post-secondary or graduate degree program (11%). The balance are divided between those who say they have no such plans (28%) and those who are currently uncertain (27%).

Those most likely to be planning further education/already enrolled include immigrants, and Millennials with South Asian or other ethnic backgrounds. This is also more apt to be the case for younger Millennials and those who already have some post-secondary education. Such plans are least evident among those without a high school diploma (32%), Quebecers, Lone Wolves and Bros & Brittanys.

### Plan to get further post-secondary education

Those without a post-secondary degree, by place of birth



## Institutional support and confidence

*Most Millennials do not believe the needs and aspirations of their generation have been well-supported by the country's major institutions. They are most likely to express general confidence in non-profit and public sector institutions, and least apt to trust the Canadian media and major corporations.*

Younger generations in Canada today are confronted with a variety of challenges in getting established that were not faced by their parents, in such areas as employment, financial stability, affordable housing, education and child care. In many respects, these are collective problems resulting from economic, structural and political conditions, and can only be addressed by the country's major institutions, including governments, colleges and universities, and the private sector.

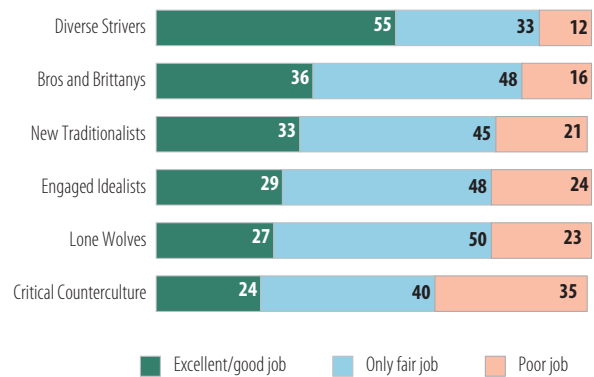
Millennials in Canada are not especially impressed with how the country's major institutions are supporting their generation. Only one in three believes these institutions are doing an excellent (6%) or good (31%) job of supporting the needs and aspirations of people in their generation. Two-thirds say the support provided has been only fair (45%) or poor (19%).

A positive view about institutional support for Millennials is most evident among Millennials with a graduate degree (45% say excellent or good), immigrants, those with a South Asian background (53%), and men, while poor ratings are most apt to be given by those who are ethnically white (20%) or Indigenous (27%). Across social values tribes, Diverse Strivers are the most positive (55% say excellent or good), while Critical Counterculturists (despite their higher levels of education) are less than half as likely to share this view (24%).

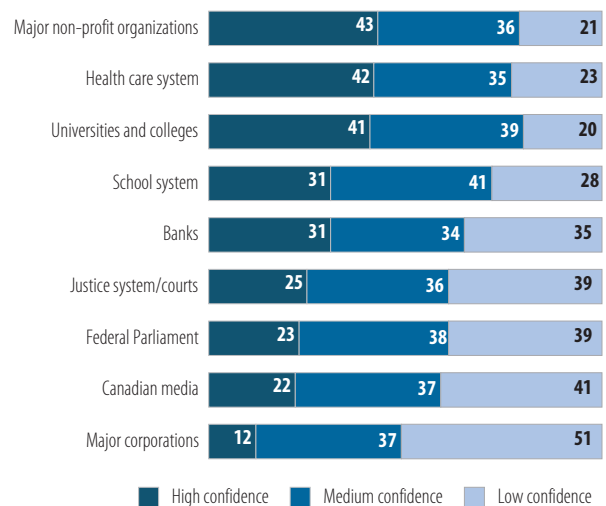
**Confidence in major institutions.** Millennials were also asked to rate their level of general confidence in each of nine major Canadian institutions or sectors. None receive strong marks by as many as half of this generation, but there is considerable variation across the list. A high level of confidence (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) is most likely to be given to major non-profit organizations (such as the YMCA or United Way) (43%), the country's health care system (42%), and universities and colleges (41%); in each case, no more than half as many express low confidence.

### How well are major institutions supporting needs/ aspirations of millennials?

By social values tribe



### Confidence in Canadian institutions



Three in ten Millennials say they have a high level of confidence in the school system (31%) and the country's banks (31%), with roughly the same proportion expressing low confidence (ratings of 1 or 2). One in four expresses strong confidence in the justice system and courts (25%), Federal Parliament (23%) and Canadian media (22%). Finally, just over one in ten (12%) has a high level of confidence in major corporations, compared with half (51%) who have low confidence.

How does confidence in institutions vary across the generation? Positive ratings are more widely given by those with higher incomes and those born outside Canada (and especially those with Chinese or South Asian backgrounds). There are also notable differences across social values Tribes: Diverse Strivers are by far the most positive in their trust of the country's institutions (consistent with their view that they are doing a good job of supporting their generation), while Lone Wolves are at the least trusting (consistent with their general sense of disconnection with society).

Critical Counterculturists are more selective: they are particularly critical of banks and major corporations, but comparatively positive about major non-profit organizations, universities/colleges, and the Federal Parliament. Their Engaged Idealist colleagues exhibit a similar profile, with higher than average ratings of major non-profit organizations and the health care system, and notably lower confidence in banks, the justice system/courts, Canadian media and major corporations.

New Traditionalists (who tend to have higher incomes and were born outside Canada) are more likely than average to express confidence in major non-profit organizations, but less so when it comes to universities/colleges and the school system, and they are the most critical of all tribes when it comes to Canadian media.

## Benchmark Comparisons

How does confidence in major institutions among Millennials compare with the view of Canadian Gen-Xers and Boomers?

General Social Survey (2013). This survey conducted by Statistics Canada used the same question with some of the same institutions, but conducted by telephone versus online surveys. The degree of confidence is notably similar across the three generations. Millennials are somewhat more confident in the federal Parliament, and less so when it comes to Canadian media. There is no difference when it comes to the school system, banks and major corporations.

AmericasBarometer 2014. This survey was conducted in Canada (online) and across most of the western hemisphere, and included a similar question about trust in institutions. In this study, Millennials were somewhat less trusting of Parliament, the justice system and mass media in comparison with older generations.