

## ECONOMIC VIEWPOINT

# From One Generation of Young Quebecers to Another (Part 2)

## It Is Hard to Pick a Winner When Weighing the Advantages and Drawbacks

In the Part 1 of this [Economic Viewpoint](#), we saw that, from the Baby Boomers to the Gen Zs,<sup>1</sup> the successive generations of Quebec youth finished school and entered adult life in economic, political and social contexts that differed in many respects.<sup>2</sup>

The following pages examine how, for them, these environments were expressed in terms of living conditions and lifestyles. At one point or another, each generation was able to benefit from progress in various areas. In that, it reaped the harvest that previous generations had sown, like a baton being passed in a relay race. However, each generation also made its own contribution: over the decades, participation and employment rates have increased among youth, and young women's participation in economic life has become increasingly important and recognized.

**Some study data dates from 2015, 2016 or 2018, as data was not published on a yearly or regular basis. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 changed the situation for some parameters and means that some conclusions must be nuanced.**

### Youth Living Conditions and Lifestyles from Generation to Generation

#### ► Economic and Financial Situation

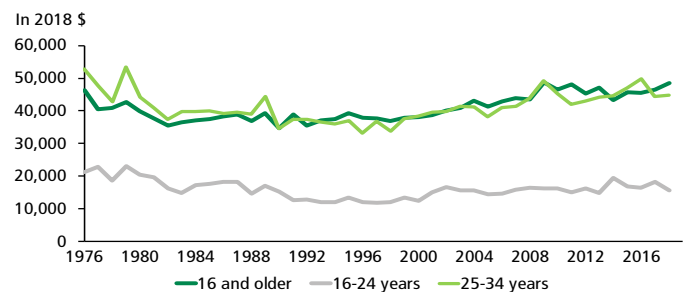
- Incomes

Graph 1 depicts the evolution of average real income for youth between 1976 and 2018, between the time that many Baby Boomers had reached adulthood, and the time Generation Z was reaching that stage of life.

A first observation is that young people's real income did not increase from the start to end of the four-decade period for which data is available. In 2018, Millennials and Gen Z aged 16 to 34 had an average real income that was lower than that of Baby Boomers their age, forty years earlier. The pullback is particularly steep for the 16- to 24-year-olds, which could be due to the increasing importance of student work (entry into the job market, part-time work, etc.), which increased the weight of low wages in the average income.

#### GRAPH 1

**Quebec: Gross real income did not increase for 16- to 24-year-olds and 25- to 34-year-olds between 1976 and 2018**



Sources: Statistics Canada and Desjardins, Economic Studies

Another, somewhat surprising finding is that, until the mid-1990s, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers in the 25- to 34-year-old age group drew average real incomes that were higher than that of all workers. After that, their income increased at the same pace as the general trend. This

<sup>1</sup> For the cut-off points between the different generations, see Appendix 1 on page 9.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is not the generation group's start date that matters, but rather when its first representatives became adults, about twenty years later. Because they reached maturity at the turn of the millennium, the generation following Generation X was named the Millennials (they were briefly tagged Generation Y).

observation could reflect the fact that Baby Boomers and the first Gen Xers entered the job market with much higher qualifications than previous generations, allowing them to earn better salaries more quickly after they got their first job. They also benefited from the substantial expansion to public and parapublic administrations, and the good-quality jobs they created. From the mid-1990s on, the education gaps between new arrivals and older workers were not as sharp, since the vast majority, all ages combined, had completed post-secondary education.

Lastly, although the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers aged 25 to 34 were, for about twenty years, able to earn above-average incomes, like everyone else, their real income dropped during this period, and they saw a bigger decline than did workers overall. The decline in real income was apparently due to the tough economic situation in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, a period marked by high unemployment and strong inflation. In addition, employees of Quebec's public service took major wage cuts in the wake of the 1982 recession.

Millennials and Generation Z started adulthood with a lower average real income than the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers did at that time of life, but unlike the latter, they benefited from an income uptrend, a trend which persisted as long as the previous decline. However, the increase in real income since the mid-1990s, after an extremely deep recession, did not materialize for 16- to 24-year-olds, apparently because the group largely comprised students working part time or youth who had left school without a diploma.

Table 1 confirms the growth by average real income between Generation X and the Millennials. In 2016, both youth aged 20 to 24 and those aged 25 to 29 on average received much higher real disposable income than the same age groups did twenty years earlier. The increase in disposable income from one generation of Quebec youth to another over the last twenty years is similar to that seen in all countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) over that period.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1 also shows how young Quebec women have caught up from generation to generation. In the 25- to 29-year-old subgroup, the increase puts women almost on par with men in terms of disposable income. The advance is much bigger than that for the population as a whole. Here, a major gap persisted between men's and women's after-tax income in 2016.

**TABLE 1**  
Average after-tax income of Quebec households based on the primary breadwinner

IN 2016 \$K	1996	2016
<b>All households</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>63.6</b>
Men	53.4	69.8
Women	37.2	54.7
<b>20-24 years</b>	<b>26.7 X</b>	<b>44.8 M</b>
Men	26.2	45.6
Women	27.1	43.7
<b>25-29 years</b>	<b>41.8 X</b>	<b>56.8 M</b>
Men	45.4	57.2
Women	35.4	56.3

X: Generation X; M: Millennials

Sources: Statistics Canada and Institut de la statistique du Québec

- Wealth

For Millennials and Generation Z, wealth as measured by the net worth of young households has increased in real terms, but more slowly than for the overall population (table 2).

**TABLE 2**  
Average debt and assets of Quebec family units

IN 2016 \$	1999	2016
<b>Debt</b>		
Population	36,000	81,300
Under 35	35,900	87,400
<b>Assets</b>		
Population	303,400	581,500
Under 35	120,900	201,100
<b>Net value</b>		
Population	267,400	500,200
Under 35	85,000	113,700

Sources: Statistics Canada and Institut de la statistique du Québec

Young people differ primarily in terms of the value of assets. In fact, in both 1999 and 2016, the average value of young families' debt was essentially equal to that of all Quebec families, whereas the value of their assets was about three times lower. This could be partially due to the fact that youth took out more debt than older groups to buy cars and appliances, to pay for their education, or to consume rather than purchase a home.

Table 3 on page 3 provides some detail on the breakdown of debts and assets for the same age categories. Note that, between 1999 and 2016, real estate property was the biggest item on young people's balance sheet, under both the debt (mortgage) and asset columns. This item's weight has increased in the meantime, likely as a result of the rise

<sup>3</sup> Finance & economics, « [Millennials are doing better than the baby-boomers did at their age](#) », *The Economist*, October 28, 2017.

in home prices. In contrast, the relative weight of car loans, student loans and consumer loans has decreased.

In terms of assets, table 3 shows that Millennials and Gen Zers had better private pension plans in 2016 than Gen Xers did in 1999. Apparently, the growing popularity of defined contribution plans over defined benefit plans did not hurt them. The radical drop in equity in business between 1999 and 2016 could indicate a decline in youth's propensity for starting their own business.

#### ► Work

##### • Participation and Employment Rates

As graph 2 on page 2 shows, Quebecers aged 15 to 24 were more present in the job market from the time Gen X entered in the mid-1980s. Could this change have occurred in favour of the emerging neoliberal values that privileged individual responsibility and personal enrichment, after the welfare state lost steam across Quebec? The idea remains to be explored.<sup>4</sup>

The surge in part-time work among students may also have contributed to increased youth participation in the employment market. This hypothesis proves to be founded between 1996 and 2016, when the employment rate among students aged 15 to 19, 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 increased substantially, and more so among women. However, the average number of hours worked per week stayed the same.<sup>5</sup>

A study of the employment market in the 1980s and 1990s suggests that the increase in school attendance may explain the greater incidence of part-time work. The same study also notes an increase in paid work among mothers with young children.<sup>6</sup> In other words, starting with Generation X, young Quebecers increased their participation rate, but also had to deal with a greater proportion of part-time jobs.

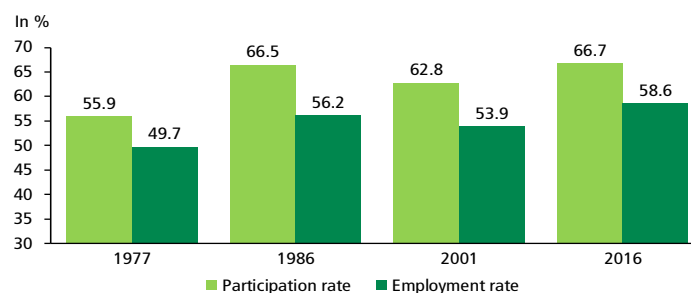
If we want to look at it from the perspective of job quality, the data published by the Institut de la statistique du Québec is available from 1998 on. It shows that the situation improved for Generation Z. In fact, between 1998 and 2018, the proportion of quality jobs among non-student workers

**TABLE 3**  
Breakdown of assets and debts of Quebec households whose primary breadwinner is under 35

IN %	1999	2016
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Private pension plans	12.9	17.4
Outside of private pension plans	7.7	7.3
Deposits at financial institutions	4.3	3.4
Mutual and investment funds	0.7	f
Share capital	f	f
Savings and other bonds	0.4	x
Tax-free savings accounts (TFSA)	n/a	2.4
Other financial assets	1.7	0.5
<b>Non-financial assets</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>71.5</b>
Primary residence	34.4	45.3
Other real estate assets	8.9	14.4
Vehicles	6.7	4.7
Other non-financial assets	11.3	7.0
Equity in a business	18.3	3.8
<b>Total debt</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Mortgages	73.4	83.9
Primary residence	64.6	67.4
Other real estate assets	f	f
Line of credit	2.4	2.4
Credit card and installment debt	2.7	2.4
Student loans	8.6	4.5
Car loans	8.8	6.1
Other debt	4.1	0.7

n/a: not available; f: unreliable; x: confidential  
Sources: Statistics Canada and Desjardins, Études économiques

**GRAPH 2**  
Quebec: The participation and employment rates of 15- to 24-year-olds have increased since 1977



Sources: Statistics Canada and Desjardins, Economic Studies

aged 15 to 29 increased substantially,<sup>7</sup> among both women and men.

<sup>4</sup> For some points to consider, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, *Le Québec et le monde 1975-2000 : mutations et enjeux*, Study no. 1, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – État et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans, 1996 à 2018*, February 2020, p. 153-154.

<sup>6</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *D'une génération à l'autre, évolution des conditions de vie*, volume 11, 1998, p 154.

<sup>7</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – État et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans, 1996 à 2018*, February 2020, p. 149-150.

• Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

Being one’s own boss by starting a business or freelancing is another way to participate in the employment market. Contrary to a widespread idea, young people are less inclined than older groups to opt for self-employment, even though a greater proportion has done so since Generation X (graph 3).

and abundance of job offers resulting from the retirement of many older workers factor in? These are avenues that researchers interested in entrepreneurship could explore in the years to come.

► Human Capital

A generation’s ability to take advantage of the opportunities open to them largely depends on the human capital available, primarily in terms of education level and health. Here, changes can be seen between the generations of young Quebecers.

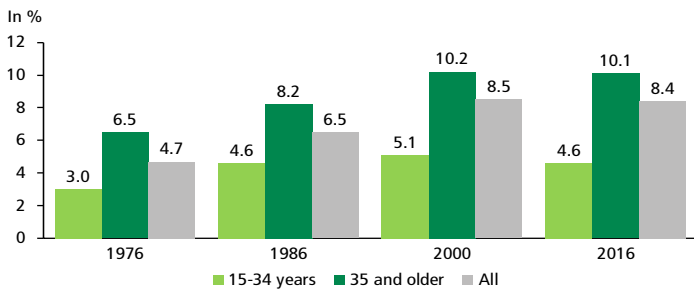
• Education

It is easy to see that young Quebecers’ education level has advanced by leaps and bounds since the Quiet Revolution. Graph 4 clearly shows that, among people aged 25 to 34, the post-secondary graduation rate more than doubled between the time the first Baby Boomers finished high school and the time when Generation Z was reaching adulthood. The same table shows that Generation Z (2018) is somewhat more qualified than the Millennials (1998); the difference is owing to strong growth in university education.

Table 4 on page 5 provides complementary information on a younger age group, 15- to 24-year-olds, in the 1980s and 1990s. All this census data covers a group in which not everyone has completed their education, the table does show the transformation in areas of education and growth in the level of education. Around 2000, trade school was attracting fewer young Millennials than it did Gen Xers two decades earlier. Moreover, the proportion of youth with no high school diploma regressed from generation to generation and, corollary to that, the percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds who earned a college or university diploma increased substantially.

All in all, while graph 4 and table 4 on page 5 deal with different age groups and years, they still demonstrate

**GRAPH 3**  
Quebec: The rate of self-employment loses steam in the 2010s



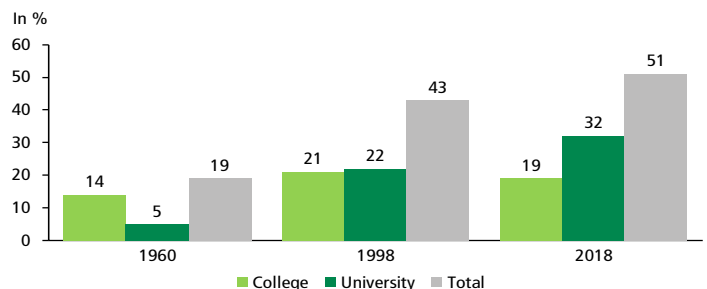
Sources: Statistics Canada and Desjardins, Economic Studies

In 2018, three times more Quebec Millennials were thinking about going into business than was the case in 2009, but intentions declined between 2016 and 2018.<sup>8</sup> In fact, interest in entrepreneurship seems to be down among the youngest Millennials and Gen Zs who are reaching adulthood, youth aged 18 to 24.<sup>9</sup>

Several hypotheses can be put forward, but have not yet been explored. Is it possible that, as of the Millennials’ generation, young people have been less inclined to go into business or freelance because they judged that their high level of education meant they could expect a permanent and well-paying job in the private or public sector rather than facing the risks inherent in business?

Could a part of the explanation lie in a change in societal values? Could it be that Generation X bought in fairly widely to the value placed on entrepreneurship and personal success that accompanied the rise in neoliberal values? For their part, could Millennials and Generation Z be more sensitive to maintaining good balance in their personal life and more interested in questions pertaining to the environment, equality and inclusion than in matters pertaining to income and personal wealth? Do the scarcity of labour

**GRAPH 4**  
Quebec: The highest level of education achieved by 25- to 34-year-olds has jumped since the 1960



Sources: Institut de la Statistique du Québec, Fortin and Desjardins, Economic Studies

<sup>8</sup> Selon la Fondation de l’entrepreneuriat, *Indice entrepreneurial québécois*, p. 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> According to the results of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor surveys reported in *Un engagement timide des jeunes dans l’entrepreneuriat au Québec*, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, June 17, 2020.

**TABLE 4**  
**Quebec: Breakdown of the population aged 15 to 24 by education level**

IN %	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
No high school diploma	40.8	37.2	36.2	37.0	34.1
High school diploma	32.7	33.1	34.1	33.9	33.5
Trade school certificate or diploma	10.2	10.1	8.3	6.2	7.7
College certificate or diploma	12.7	14.2	15.7	16.4	18.2
University certificate, diploma or degree	3.5	5.5	5.6	6.6	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec and Desjardins, Economic Studies

a strong advance in education level from generation to generation.

Education level does differ across the regions. In 2016, only the Montreal and Capitale Nationale regions had a university education rate that was above the average for Quebec among 25 to 34 year olds. Each of these regions has several universities. As for college diplomas, interregional differences were much smaller, with a graduation rate ranging from 14.4% (Nord du Québec) to 22.8% (Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean), for a Quebec average of 19.0% among 25 to 34 year olds.<sup>10</sup> There are approximately fifty public CEGEPs across Quebec.

Progress has also been made in recent years on the dropout rate, i.e. leaving the education system without a high school diploma. The dropout rate went from 21.9% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2017.<sup>11</sup> Did the performance improve as a result of the emphasis that the education network, private business and community organizations have been putting on staying in school for many years now? It's hard to say: there has not yet been a formal evaluation of the different efforts made to achieve this.

The very positive change in education level has a downside, however, insofar as it may have resulted in an overabundance of graduates in certain disciplines, relatively speaking. Today, it could be harder for a youth to find a job that matches their skills than it was for their parents or grandparents.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – État et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans, 1996 à 2018*, February 2020, p. 96.

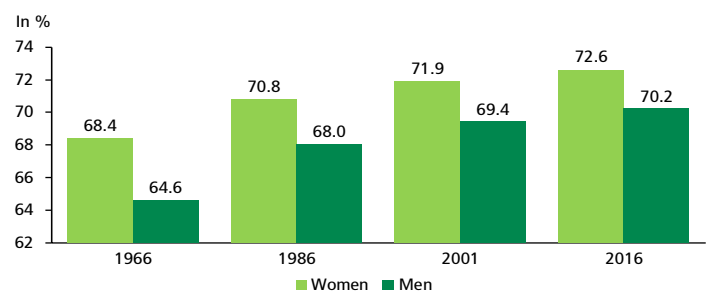
<sup>11</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Regard statistique sur la jeunesse – État et évolution de la situation des Québécois âgés de 15 à 29 ans, 1996 à 2018*, February 2020, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Finance & economics, « *Can too many brainy people be a dangerous thing?* », *The Economist*, October 22, 2020.

- Health

Life expectancy at age 20 gives a limited view of a population's health at the time a new generation is finishing school and gradually moving into adulthood. Graph 5 shows that the number of years of life remaining has increased continuously between the years in which the first Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials and Gen Z turned twenty. Between 1966 and 2016, the number of years of life that 20-year-old women could expect to have left increased by more than 4 years, going from 68.4 to 72.6 years. Men that age gained even more, 5.6 years.

**GRAPH 5**  
**Quebec: Life expectancy at age 20 has increased over the decades**



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec and Desjardins, Economic Studies

The gains are due to numerous factors: better nutrition, better lifestyle habits, medical advances, improvement in health and job security, etc. Some of these factors are apparent in table 5. Thus, except for the incidence of tumours among women, all other causes of mortality were on the decline between 2000 and 2010 among male and female Quebecers aged 15 to 29.

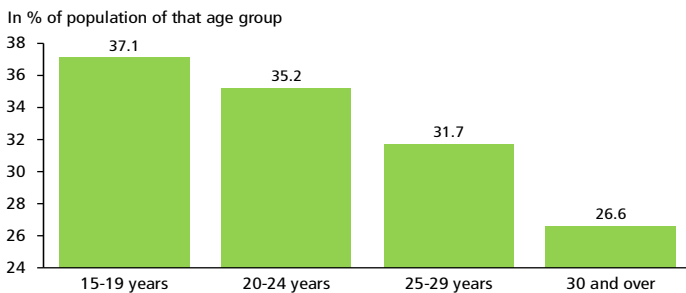
**TABLE 5**  
**Mortality rate of Quebecers aged 15 to 29 by cause**

CAUSE PER 100,000	2004/2006		2014/2016	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Self-inflicted injuries (suicide)	22.7	6.1	15.4	5.7
Motor vehicle accidents	24.4	8.9	9.2	3.4
Other external causes	11.7	3.6	11.0	3.4
Tumours	4.9	3.6	3.6	4.2
Other	10.2	8.2	8.1	6.3

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec

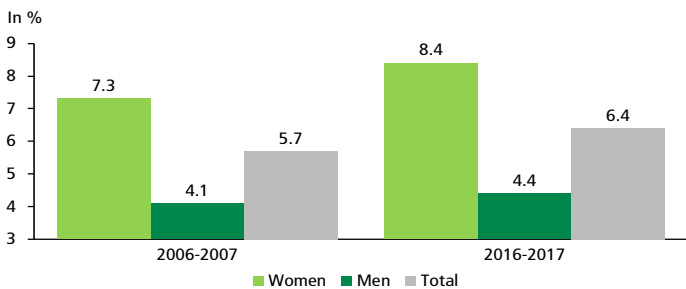
In contrast to this encouraging table, one third of Millennials and Gen Zers must cope with a high level of psychological distress (graph 6). With anxio-depressive disorders, young women are much more affected than young men (graph 7). At the time of writing, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures on health have not been fully captured. Clearly, some conclusions may differ once it is possible to take stock.

**GRAPH 6**  
According to the 2014-2015 EQSP, the level of psychological distress is higher for youth than for those aged 30 and older



EQSP: Enquête québécoise sur la santé de la population  
Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec and Desjardins, Economic Studies

**GRAPH 7**  
The prevalence of anxio-depressive disorders diagnosed in Quebecers aged 15 to 29 has increased over ten years



Sources: Institut national de la santé publique du Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec and Desjardins, Economic Studies

► Lifestyles

Influenced by various factors such as income, education level and cultural trends, lifestyle preferences change from generation to generation. Here, we are referring to habits and customs in areas such as consumption, housing, cohabitation and family. These practices show how young people want to leverage their personal resources and the opportunities provided by the economy and, in general, the predominant cultural values. Some indicators provide a glimpse of how lifestyles change from one generation to another.

- Housing

Table 6 indicates some growth in homeownership during the years in which Gen X and the Millennials were reaching an age when it was starting to be possible for them to make such an investment. The trend is not very clear and it was marked by some pullbacks over the twenty-five years between 1991 and 2016. However, note that young Quebecers benefit from conditions for becoming a homeowner that are overall better than the conditions prevailing in most OECD nations.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, they have benefited from the affordability index's<sup>14</sup> stability in the 2010s. Moreover, the situation has become more favourable for youth in the last two decades than it was in the previous 20 years. From 1976 to 1996, among 25 to 34 year olds, homeownership rates in fact declined slightly, going from 42.4% to 41.3% in Quebec.<sup>15</sup>

**TABLE 6**  
Quebec homeownership rate by age of the household's primary breadwinner

IN %	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
25-29 years	30.4 X	30.1 X	34.5 X	38.5 M	35.9 M
30 and older	60.9	62.3	64.1	64.6	64.7

X: Generation X; M: Millennials  
Sources: Statistics Canada and Institut de la statistique du Québec

- Modes of Transport

When they were becoming adults, Millennials and Gen Zers were using more public transit and active transportation than older groups. This is unsurprising for people who are generally in better physical shape and have less in the way of financial means. However, these two modes of more environmentally respectful transport declined somewhat among 15- to 24-year-olds between 2006 and 2016 (table 7 on page 7). This observation is consistent with the increase in ownership of a car or light truck among 15- to 29-year-olds between 2001 and 2016 (table 8 on page 7). However, this data conflicts with the environmental concerns that seem very present in youth. The data could be partially due to factors such as the increase in young people's disposable income and the growing spatial dispersal of the places where they live, study, work, and engage in recreation and consumption.

<sup>13</sup> Finance & economics, « [Home ownership is in decline](#) », *The Economist*, January 16, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> *From One Generation of Young Quebecers to Another (Part 1)*, Desjardins, Economic Studies, *Economic Viewpoint*, January 28, 2021, Graph 7, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Yves NOBERT and Al., « [L'accès à la propriété résidentielle selon les générations](#) », Bureau de la Statistique du Québec, *Données sociodémographiques en bref*, vol. 2, n° 2, February 1998, p. 7.

**TABLE 7**  
**Quebec: Public transit and active transportation**

IN %	PUBLIC TRANSIT			ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION		
	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016
15-24 years	21 M	19 M	19 Z	14 M	11 M	11 Z
Entire population	13	13	14	8	7	7

M: Millennials; Z: Generation Z

Sources: Statistics Canada and Institut de la statistique du Québec

**TABLE 8**  
**Registration rate of cars and light trucks in Quebec**

IN %	2001	2006	2011	2016
16-19 years	15.6 M	20.4 M	22.9 M	21.2 Z
20-24 years	41.9 M	45.3 M	48.5 M	50.3 M
25-29 years	56.7 X	58.7 X	60.1 M	63.8 M
30-64 years	68.1	71.5	74.2	76.4

X: Generation X; M: Millennials; Z: Generation Z

Source: Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec

- International Travel

Since the millennium, international travel has become much more frequent among youth aged 15 to 34. Given that some individuals may take several trips abroad in a given year while others stay in the country, the number of trips abroad per individual per year provides an overall reflection of the growing popularity of international travel among the young generation. The average number of trips outside Canada per person by young Quebecers aged 15 to 34 went from 0.4 in 2001 to 0.6 in just fifteen years. That is a 50% increase (table 9).

**TABLE 9**  
**Average number of trips outside Canada by Quebecers aged 15 to 34**

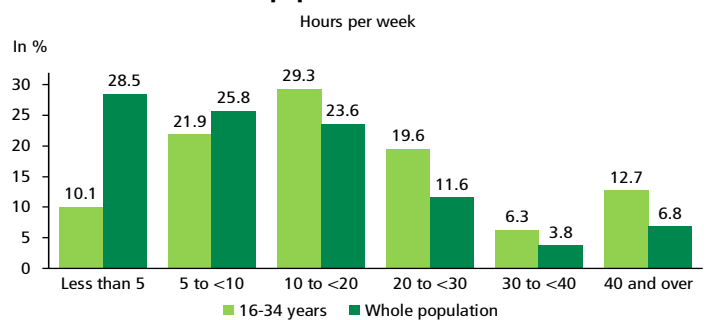
	2001	2016
Trips	783,000	1,200,000
Population	1,959,786	2,000,067
Trips/Population	0.4	0.6

Sources: Statistique Canada and Desjardins, Economic Studies

- Internet and Social Networks

Millennials and Generation Z grew up at a time when computers and electronic communications were a part of their daily environment. Their familiarity with the digital universe prompts them to spend much more time online than other generations. Thus, in 2016, over two thirds (67.9%) of 16 to 34 year olds spent over ten hours a week on the Internet, compared with less than half (45.8%) for the population as a whole (graph 8).

**GRAPH 8**  
**Quebec: Youth aged 16 to 34 were spending more time on the Internet than the entire population in 2016**



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec and Desjardins, Economic Studies

### To Sum Up

In several respects, the living conditions of young Quebecers seem to have improved since the moment the first Baby Boomers were becoming adults. Gains can be noted in critical fields such as education, health and homeownership. It has also become easier for young generations to own a car and travel abroad.

In exchange, young people are now working more than the Baby Boomers did, but despite the remarkable extension of life expectancy, the incidence of disorders like anxiety and depression are up sharply among youth.

However, this vision, which is positive overall, conceals major fluctuations over time for some of the variables observed. This is true for the average income of youth aged 25 to 34, which fell continuously in the first half of the last five decades, to then come up just as steadily. For 16- to 24-year-olds, average income has been stagnant since the mid-1990s.

Lastly, the data available only provides for a partial analysis of how living conditions and lifestyles have evolved from one generation of youth to another. Taking other factors into consideration might lead to different assessments. Nothing is absolute, and there is room for a lot of nuance.

## Conclusions

**Some study data dates from 2015, 2016 or 2018, as data was not published on a yearly or regular basis. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 changed the situation for some parameters and means that some conclusions must be nuanced.**

Since World War II, Quebec's succeeding generations reached adulthood in economic and societal contexts that were quite different in a number of respects. While the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers had to cope with a shortage of jobs, Millennials and representatives from Generation Z can benefit from a scarcity of labour in several categories of trades and professions. Similarly, while the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers grew up in the context of the Cold War, Millennials and Generation Z are faced with environmental threats that result from greenhouse gas emissions. As for Generation Z youth, they will also have to go from school to work in a society and economy marked by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Baby Boomers were the first generation of youth to benefit from streamlined access to college and university education. The first Baby Boomers also benefited from the economy's rapid growth and expanding public service management. They were carried along by optimism and thought they could change the world. However, they then quickly learned that their numbers put them in competition with each other for the best jobs, and they also helped push up prices for homes and a whole array of capital goods and consumer items.

The last Baby Boomers and first Gen Xers reached adulthood in a difficult economic situation. Their seniors had taken the best jobs available, unemployment and inflation were high, government budgets were less generous, and real income was declining. They entered adulthood feeling that they had been left with crumbs and could only rely on their own means. Fate was kinder to the last Generation X arrivals, as they reached age twenty-five at a time when the economy was seeing sustained growth, real income had started to climb, and homes were more affordable than ever.

For their part, Millennials entered the labour force at a time when anything seemed possible because of thriving globalization and the boom in new information and communications technologies. However, the 2008 financial crisis disrupted the economy's momentum, prompting governments to trigger austerity measures that limited job opportunities. Many went back to school while waiting for better days.

The first Generation Z representatives are finishing their education at a time when many activity sectors are grappling with a labour shortage. As with Gen X, the future seems threatening because of climate disruption. However, they can count on their high education level and familiarity with new

technologies to succeed in the new economy that will emerge subsequent to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To sum up, each generation has had to face major challenges at the time when they were finishing school and had to join the workforce. The finding made twenty years ago by experts in Quebec sociodemographic studies remains true, that is:

It is hard to do a global assessment of the situation of youth from generation to generation. On some points, the youth of recent generations benefit from clear progress [...] In other ways, they experience more difficult living conditions [...].<sup>16</sup>

**While we have to give up on determining which generation--young Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials or Generation Z--had the best or worst of it, it is clear that, over the decades, substantial progress has been made in terms of standard of living and quality of life. Today's youth can rely on a higher level of education, better health, higher income, better material and institutional infrastructures, and public programs and services that are larger and more diversified than they were half a century ago.**

At one point or another, each generation has benefited from progress in various areas. In that, it reaped the harvest that previous generations had sown, like a baton being passed in a relay race. However, each generation also made its own contribution: over the decades, participation and employment rates have increased among youth, and young women's participation in economic life has become increasingly important and recognized.

<sup>16</sup> H. GAUTHIER et al., *Les jeunes d'une génération à l'autre : résultats tirés d'une nouvelle étude du BSQ*, Données sociographiques en bref, vol. 3, n° 1, BSQ, October 1998, p. 4.



# Appendix I

## Cut-Off Points between the Different Generations

To reflect the interrelationships between youth and the era in which they were born and grew up, marketing agencies and the media have gotten into the habit of tagging the successive generations with labels that are supposed to represent what characterizes them, and what differentiates them from other generations. This notion of generation refers to a group of people who are broadly in the same age group and who, for that reason, were born and grew up during the same political, economic and cultural events.

The distinctions between these sociodemographic generations are arbitrary, particularly with respect to their start and end dates, as are their names, but many publications consider that four generational groups can be identified since the end of the last world war. The following breakdown is used in this study for Quebec's most recent sociodemographic generations:

- a) Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1965)
- b) Generation X (1966-1980)
- c) Millennials (1981-1995)
- d) Generation Z (born after 1995)

Note that this breakdown is partly based on random phenomena, such as the cycle of births or economic cycles: the length of a generation not uniform. The length ranges from 15 years for Generation X and the Millennials to 25 years (so far) for Generation Z.

For the purpose of this study, it is not the generation group's start date that matters, but rather when its first representatives became adults, about twenty years later. Because they reached maturity at the turn of the millennium, the generation following Generation X was named the Millennials (they were briefly tagged Generation Y).

## Appendix 2

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