



American vs. Canadian Youth: Lifestyles, Values Differ

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Though youth (ages 18-34) in the US and Canada both rate healthcare, education and employment as the top issues they are most concerned about, there are other marked differences between the two countries when it comes to media behaviors, lifestyle decisions and values, according to a study by Ipsos Reid.

For example, though young people in both countries like sports and the internet, Americans like football, MySpace, and text messaging, while Canadians prefer hockey, Facebook, and playing the lottery.

Findings from the study are detailed below.

Media Use

When asked about their leisure activity time, both Americans and Canadians have a clear affinity for the internet and TV:

- Young adults in both countries report nearly an identical amount of time spent on the internet each week: Americans report being “actively connected to the Internet” an average of 28 hours per week; Canadians reported being connected one hour less over the same time frame.
- Americans in the age group watch an average of about one hour more TV per day than Canadians. On weekdays, Americans watch an average of 5.9 hours per day, while Canadians watch 4.8 hours. On weekends, Americans watch an average of 5.5 hours, Canadians watch 4.6.
- Though youth in both countries are heavy users of mobile devices, there is a marked cultural difference in text messaging. Americans send and receive an average of 129.6 text messages per week, nearly double the Canadian average of 78.7.
- Both groups enjoy online social networking, but do so differently. Canadians gravitate to Facebook, with 81% having registered a profile, compared with only 57% in the US. At the time the study was conducted, Americans were more into MySpace, with 54% having registered, compared with 23% in Canada.

Lifestyle Differences

The study found that American young adults are more likely to get married, to own their home, and travel closer to home. Their counterparts in Canada, however, are less likely to wed, more likely to be in a domestic partnership, less likely to be homeowners and more likely to travel abroad:

- In the US, four-in-ten (39%) of the 18-34 year-old set are married compared with only one-fourth (25%) in Canada.
- The number of domestic partnerships in Canada is significantly higher (18% vs. 7%).
- Americans are more likely to report owning their home (45%), compared with those living in Canada (35%).
- When it comes to vacations, among those who took a vacation of at least a week in the past year, only one-fifth of Americans (19%) say they traveled to a destination outside of their country of residence, compared with nearly half of Canadians (48%).

“When we compare the lifestyles of young adults in the United States and Canada, one could describe the Americans as more ‘traditional’ and more ‘domestic’ in their values and focus, whereas Canadians are more of the ‘free-spirit’ type,” said Samantha McAra, senior research manager with Ipsos Reid.

Employment and Education

There is little difference in employment status among 18-34 year olds in both countries. Just more than six in 10 respondents (64% in US vs. 62% in Canada) report being employed on a full-time or part-time basis or were self-employed.

However, Canadians in the age group are slightly more ‘academic.’ Three-fourths (76%) of Canadians between ages 18 and 34 have at least some college or post-secondary education, compared with 68% of Americans, and 17% of Canadians reported being full-time students, compared with 13% of Americans.

Environmental Awareness

On the environmental front, Canadians are more likely than Americans to report participating in recycling programs and regularly taking public transportation where available:

- 88% of Canadians report “actively participating in a recycling program” compared with 72% of their American counterparts.
- 33% of Canadians report using public transportation once a week or more often, while only 20% in the US reported doing so.

Sports Preferences

In what should come as a surprise to no one, the sports differences between the two countries come down to turf and ice: Americans love football, Canadians love hockey:

- In the United States, NFL football is the most watched sport within the study group with 57% of respondents having reported watching a game in the past year. Major league baseball (44%) and college football (43%) are the second and third most watched sports.
- In Canada, NHL hockey dominated, capturing 58%. However, NFL football comes in second with 32%, edging out the home-grown CFL’s 29%, which landed in third.

Additional study findings:

- Debit cards are the most popular method of payment among 18-34-year-olds in both countries, though Canadian respondents are more likely to report using debit cards more often than their US counterparts (44% vs. 37%).
- Canadians are more apt to play the lottery than Americans, though Americans are more interested in playing lottery games on the internet than Canadians.
- Americans are more likely to play games online for real money - 28% vs. 20% in Canada, even though American young adults are more likely to perceive online gambling as illegal.

About the study: The study was conducted online May 20 - June 3, 2009 with respondents from both the US and Canada. A national sample of 1,069 US adults and 1,177 Canadian adults ages 18-34 the survey. Weighting was employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample’s composition reflects that of the US 18-34 year old population and the Canadian 18-34 year old population according to census data in both countries. US respondents were interviewed in English, Canadian respondents in English and French.