

# A Check-up on the Habits and Values of North America's Young Adults (Part 1)

## *Lifestyles and Values among 18-34 Year-olds Differ When Crossing the 49th Parallel*

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**Ipsos Reid**

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## *Lifestyles and Values among 18-34 Year-olds Differ When Crossing the 49th Parallel*

**Calgary, AB** - When looking at the values and lifestyles of North American young adults ages 18-34, there is a clear line of division: the U.S.-Canada border. According to the latest study from Ipsos, there are marked differences between American and Canadian young adults when it comes to lifestyle decisions and values.

"As the emerging market moving forward in both the workforce and society, the values and attitudes of young adults ages 18-34 are critical points for marketers and decision makers to understand," says Paul Lauzon, Senior Vice President with Ipsos Reid. "This group is growing in their consumption, gaining in their economic value, and asserting their preferences regarding lifestyle and brand choices. Knowing how they think and act is an investment in the future."

When asked about the most important issues in their respective countries, health care, education and employment matters were rated as the top three issues in both countries. However, there were large discrepancies in the degree of importance placed on other issues. For example, 73% of Canadians ages 18-34 rated the environment as important compared to

61% of Americans ages 18-34. Additionally, 65% of Americans ages 18-34 rated terrorism as important compared to less than half of Canadians ages 18-34 (44%).

## Lifestyle Differences

“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,” says Samantha McAra, Senior Research Manager with Ipsos Reid. “American young adults are more likely to get married, to own their home, and travel closer to home. The comparable group in Canada, however, are less likely to be married, more likely to be in a domestic partnership type of relationship, less likely to own their home and more likely to travel abroad.”

In the United States, four-in-ten (39%) of the 18-34 year-old set are married compared to only a quarter (25%) in Canada. However, the number of domestic partnerships in Canada is significantly higher (18% vs. 7%). The Americans were also more likely to report “owning” their home (45%) compared to those living in Canada (35%). But when it comes to vacations, among 18-34 year olds who took a vacation of at least a week in the past year, Canadians were likely to leave the home base: only one-fifth of Americans (19%) traveled to a destination that was out of country compared to nearly half of Canadian respondents (48%).

And when it comes to paying for their daily lifestyle choices? Debit cards were found to be the most popular method of payment among this group in both countries, although Canadian respondents were more likely to report using it more often than their US counterparts (44% versus 37% respectively).

## Employment and Education

There is little difference in employment status among 18-34 year olds in both countries. Just over 6 in 10 respondents (64% in US versus 62% in Canada) reported being employed on a full-time or part-time basis or were self-employed.

Canadians in the age group, though, were slightly more 'academic'. The study found that three-quarters (76%) of Canadians between the ages of 18-34 have at least some college or post-secondary education compared to 68% of Americans in the same age range. And 17% of Canadians in the group reported being full-time students compared to 13% of Americans.

## Environment

On the environmental front, Canadians were also more likely than Americans in the age group to report participating in recycling programs and regularly taking transit where available:

- 88% of Canadians reported “actively participating in a recycling program” compared to 72% of their America counterparts
- 33% of Canadians reported using public transit once a week or more often, 20% in the US reported doing so.

“While these numbers demonstrate the cultural and value differences between young adults in the United States and Canada, they also highlight the fact that the younger generation is highly educated and engaged in the world,” concludes McAra. “Understanding the way they think and their values will also give marketers a clearer vision as to where and how they



spend. We've been tracking those habits as well and will feature highlights in a future news release."

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos study conducted online between May 20 to June 3, 2009 with respondents from both the United States and Canada. A national sample of 1,069 U.S. adults and 1177 Canadian adults aged 18-34 answered this online survey. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the U.S. 18-34 year old population and the Canadian 18-34 year old population according to census data in both countries. Results are considered accurate within 2.99 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, for the U.S. results, and within 2.85 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, for the Canadian results. U.S. respondents were interviewed in English, Canadian respondents in English and French.*

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**For more information on this news release, please contact:**

**Samantha McAra**  
**Senior Research Manager**  
**Ipsos Reid**  
[Samantha.McAra@ipsos.com](mailto:Samantha.McAra@ipsos.com)  
**(403) 237-0066**

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