

Canadian millennials think they have it tougher than past generations, and half of boomers agree

One-in-three say people living in their parents' homes longer is a bad thing; just one-in-five say it's good

July 20, 2016 – High housing costs, student loans, underemployment, wage stagnation – the reasons why an ever-increasing number of young people are living with their parents into their 20s and even 30s have been [exhaustively documented](#), but are more millennials living at home for longer ultimately a good thing or a bad thing for society?

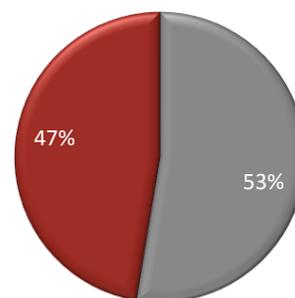
That's one of the questions answered in a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute, which finds Canadians more inclined to declare young people living at home into their mid-20s a net negative for society than a positive.

At the same time, however, most Canadians – including roughly half of those in their late 50s and older – believe young people starting out today have it harder than past generations.

Key Findings:

- More Canadians think the increasing number of people living with their parents into their mid-20s is a bad thing (36%) than think it's good (21%), but the largest group (43%) says the effect has been "neutral"
- A narrow majority (53%) think today's young people have it harder than previous generations – including those aged 55-64 (51%) and those 65-plus (52%) – but this belief varies significantly

Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?



- Young people starting out today have it harder than past generations
- Starting out has always been tough, young people today are soft

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 4 – 6, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,527 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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across age groups, with most Canadians between the ages of 35 and 54 saying today's young people are "soft" (58% do so)

- The one thing most Canadians say a person must do in order to be considered an adult is "achieve financial independence" – 53 per cent say this is a prerequisite for adulthood

Some have sympathy for millennials, others not so much

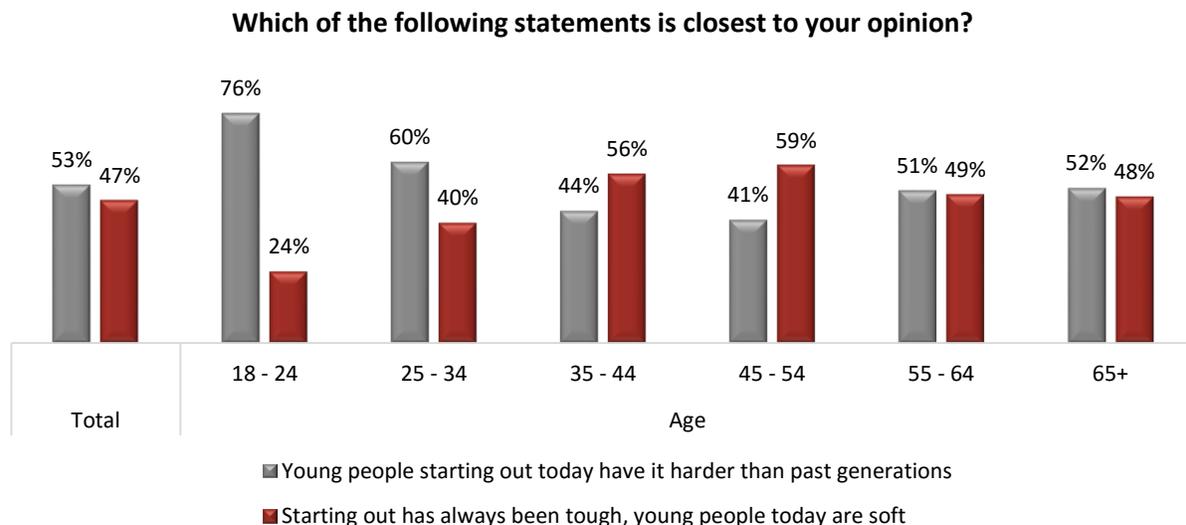
In terms of income and financial stability, members of the millennial generation really do have it harder than people their age did decades ago.

That said, the ways in which things are tougher for today's young adults are uneven. Higher education is more expensive, but also more readily attainable. House prices are much higher, but interest rates are much lower.

And so the debate rages on about whether millennial grievances are legitimate or merely indications that the generation is "too soft."

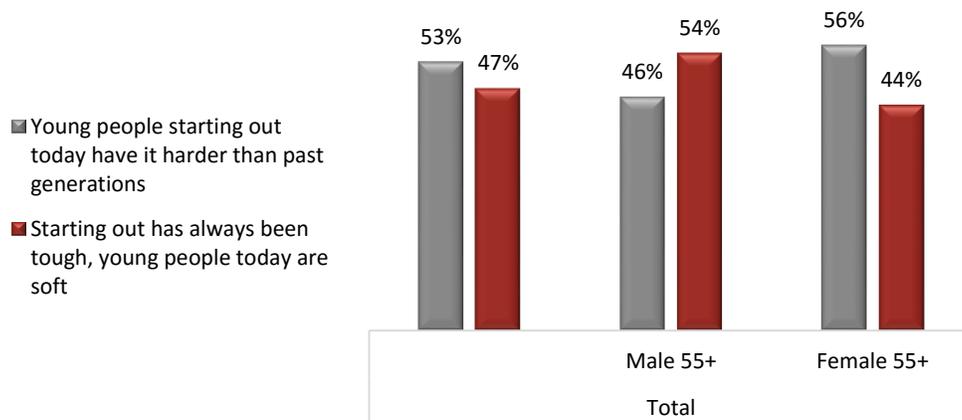
When asked to weigh in on this debate by choosing one of two opposing statements, Canadians are divided. A slight majority (53%) say "Young people starting out today have it harder than past generations," while the rest (47%) say "Starting out has always been tough, young people today are soft."

As previously mentioned, young Canadians are more likely to say they have it harder than previous generations. This includes three-quarters of those ages 18-24, as seen in the graph that follows:



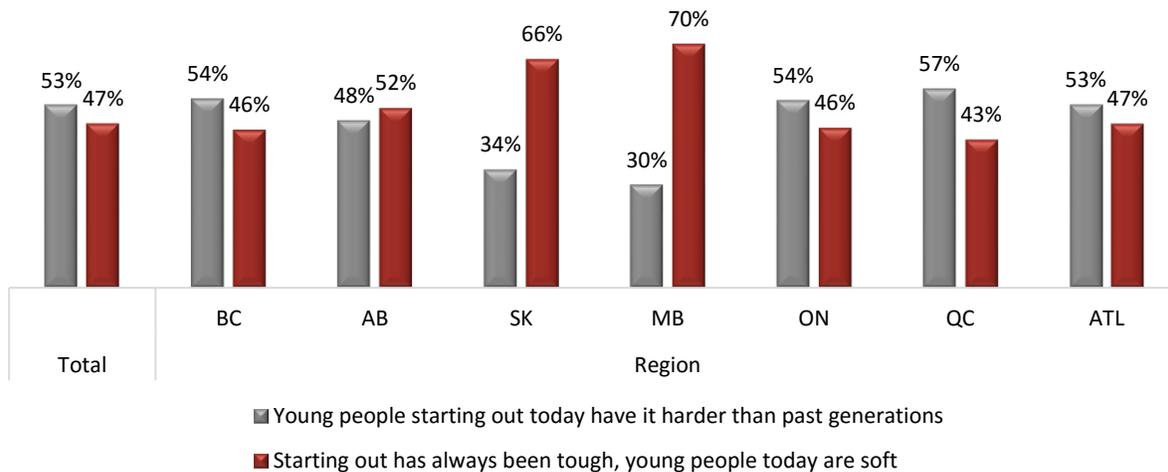
Interestingly, those ages 55 and older are split on this question along gender lines, with older men more likely to say the younger generation is “soft,” and older women more likely to be sympathetic to millennial plight:

Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?



Regionally, residents of the Prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba take a much dimmer view of the challenges facing today’s young adults. Two-thirds (66%) in Saskatchewan and seven-in-ten Manitobans (70%) say young people are soft, while only one other region – Alberta – registers more than half of respondents offering this opinion:

Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

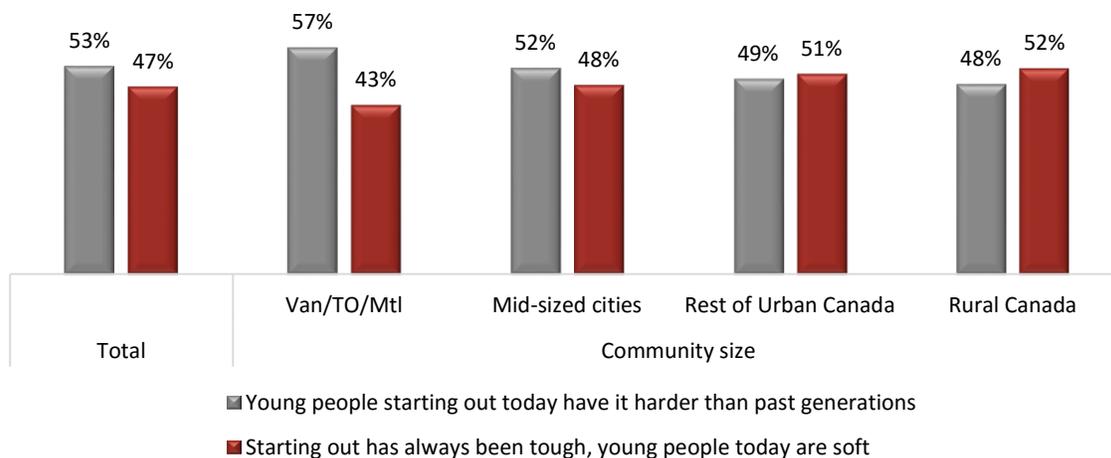


The belief that young people have it harder today than in past generations also tends to be stronger in Canada's three largest cities – a fact that may reflect the higher concentration of young people living in those areas, as well as the higher cost of housing there.

For example, [Vancouver Magazine recently declared](#) that city to be “Canada’s worst” for the young and educated, based on high housing costs, low median incomes for young people with degrees, high average student debt loads and high interest rates on such debts.

Most residents of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal (57%) say young people have it harder today, while residents of small cities and rural areas are more likely to say today's youth are soft:

Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?



More Canadians living with their parents

In May, Pew Research made waves with [an analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau](#) that showed more Americans ages 18-34 living with at least one of their parents than in any other housing arrangement – the first time in 130 years of data collection that this had been the case.

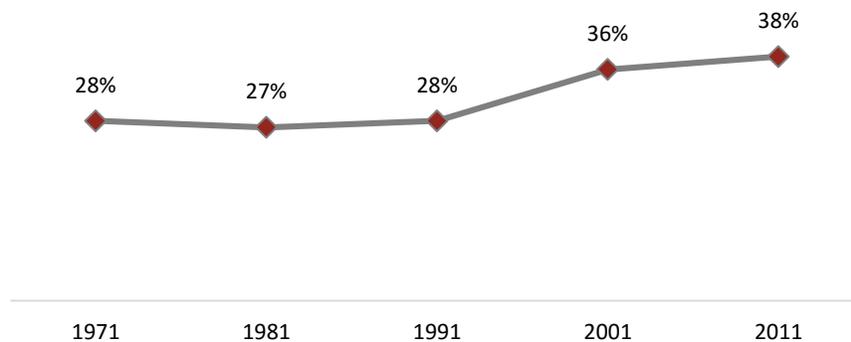
In Canada, [data from the 2011 census](#) shows that the number of 18-34-year-olds classified as living with at least one parent was higher than any other living arrangement that year, though differences in the way the two countries categorize young people as “living at home” make direct comparisons between Canada and the U.S. impossible.¹

¹ In the United States, university students living in dormitories are counted separately from their parental households, while in Canada, these students are counted as living with their parents if they spend their summers and breaks at home.

What is possible is to look at the trends in each country over time. The number of young people living at home into their 20s and 30s has been [increasing since the 1980s](#) on both sides of the border. The following graph shows this trend in Canada, while American data can be viewed [here](#).

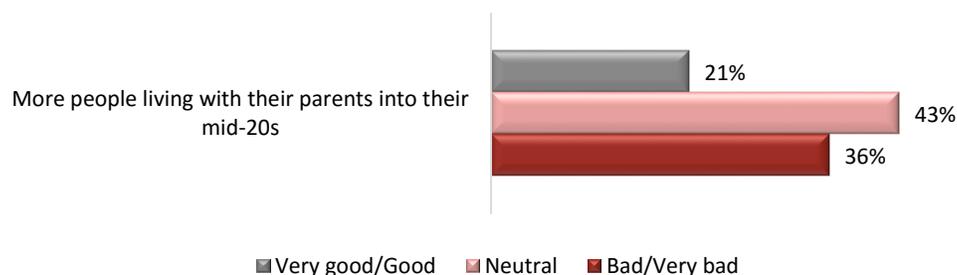
Percentage of Canadians age 18-34 living with parents

Source: StatsCan



Asked whether this trend is good, bad, or neutral for society, the largest number of respondents to this ARI poll (43%) say it's neutral, as seen in the following graph:

In your opinion, is each of the following good, bad, or neutral for Canadian society as a whole?

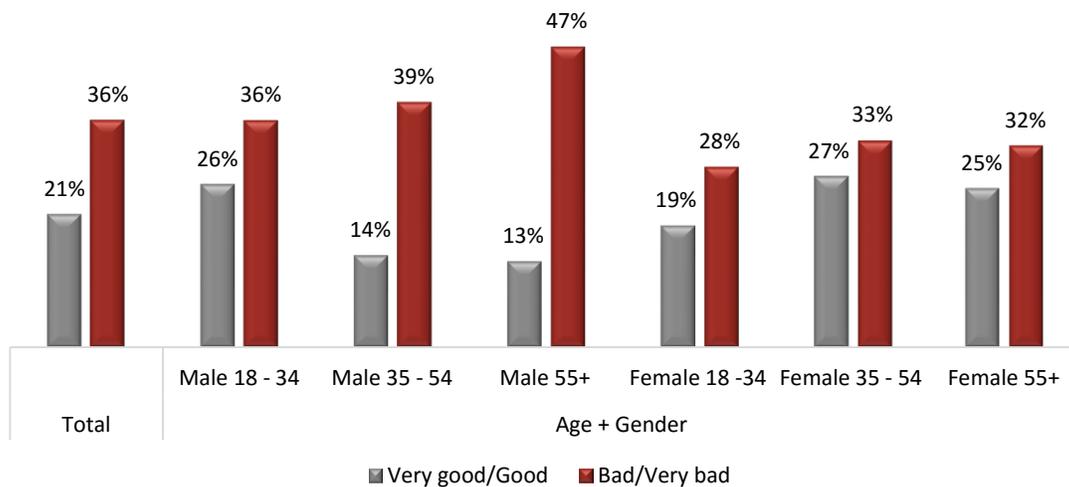


Perhaps surprisingly, there are no statistically significant differences in opinion on this question across age groups. Canadians of all ages are more likely to say people living with their parents into their mid-20s is a bad thing than to say it's a good one – though the gap between the total choose each option ranges from just 5 percentage points among those ages 18-24 (26% good; 31% bad) to 23 points among those ages 55-64 (16% good; 39% bad; [see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

There are, however, significant differences across gender lines, with young men and women 35 and older considerably more likely to say this trend is good for society, while men 35 and older – and especially men in the 55-plus age group – are much more likely to say it's bad, as seen in the graph that follows.

Not shown in the graph is the fact that the majority (52%) of young women say the effect of young people living at home is neutral.

In your opinion, is the fact that more people are living with their parents into their mid-20s good, bad, or neutral for society as a whole?



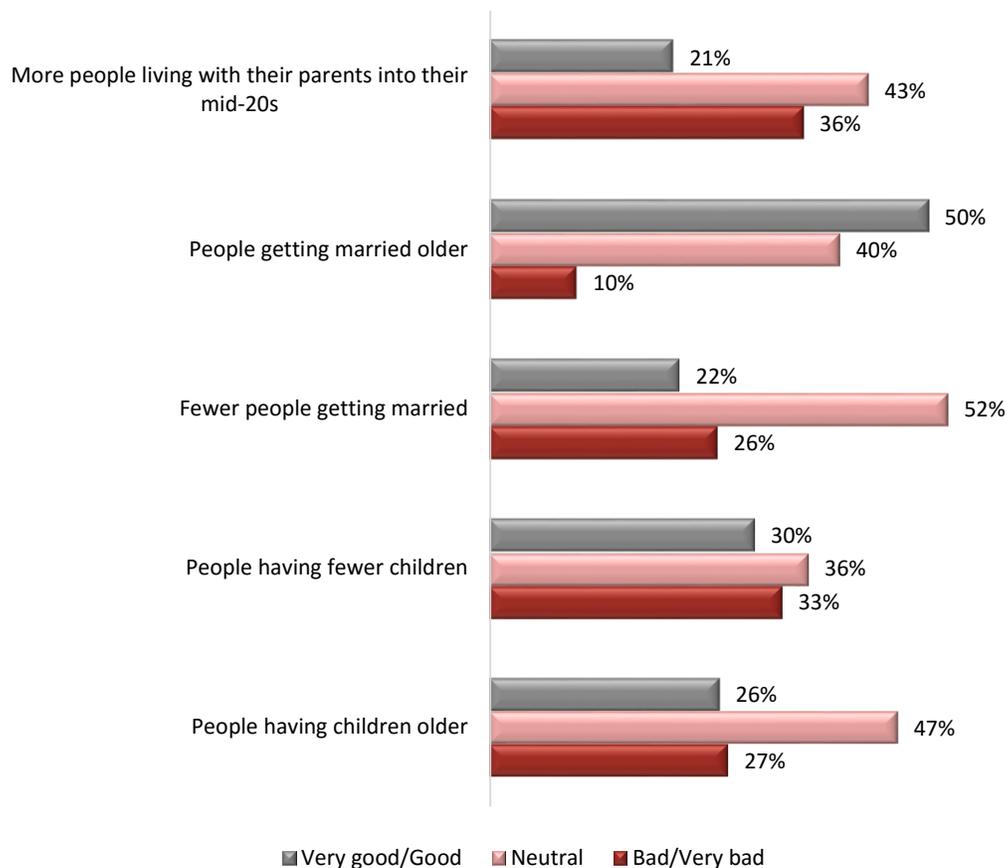
Opinion on other social trends

In addition to living with their parents longer, millennials are also getting married later and waiting longer to have children than previous generations did. Indeed, some have suggested that these trends are, themselves, partly responsible for the increase in young people living at home.

This ARI survey also canvassed public opinion on these related social trends, and it finds Canadians significantly more positive on people waiting to get married than on anything else.

As seen in the following graph, “neutral” tends to be the predominant view on these issues, though it rarely rises to the majority view:

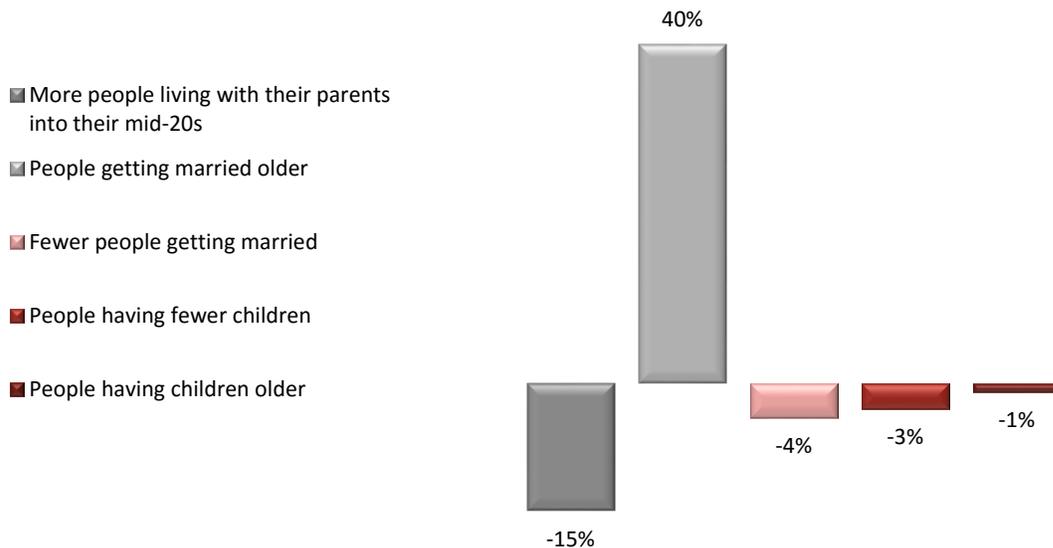
In your opinion, is each of the following good, bad, or neutral for Canadian society as a whole?



To facilitate comparisons, the following graph shows a net “score” for each item on the list. This score is calculated by subtracting the percentage who say a given trend is bad for society from the percentage who say it is good. Negative values indicate more people think an item is bad than think it’s good, positive values mean the opposite.

As mentioned, Canadians feel very positively about the trend toward later marriages, but moderately negatively toward all of the other trends canvassed:

In your opinion, is each of the following good, bad, or neutral for Canadian society as a whole? (Total saying "good" minus total saying "bad")



Is it necessary to leave home to be “an adult”?

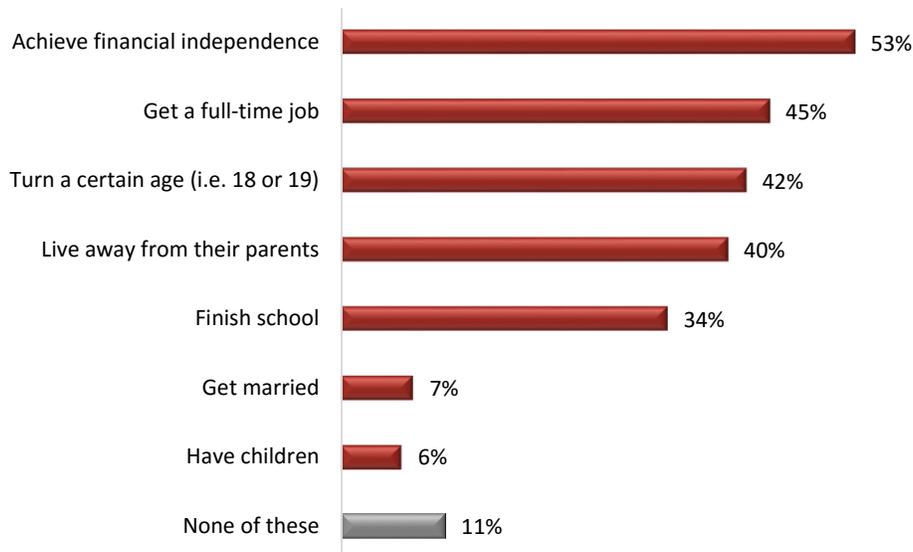
This phenomenon of young Canadians living with their parents for longer than previous generations – and other social trends such as waiting longer to get married, having fewer children, and having them at an older age – upends some of the traditional hallmarks of adulthood in Canada.

Two-in-five Canadians (40%) say a person isn't an adult until they live away from their parents – a total that implies the remaining 60 per cent believe living away from one's parents is not a requirement of adulthood.

More important than striking out on one's own, according to Canadians, is achieving financial independence – 53 per cent say a person must do this to be considered an adult – getting a full-time job (45%) and turning a certain age (42%).

Other milestones that have long been considered key steps on the path to adulthood – such as getting married and having children – register as necessary with much smaller numbers of Canadians, as seen in the following graph:

A person is not an adult until they ...



Notably, one-in-ten (11%) Canadians believe none of the items canvassed are prerequisites for adulthood.

Among those just entering their adult lives (those ages 18-24), achieving financial independence is of even greater importance. Fully two-thirds (68%) of this group say it's necessary to achieve financial independence in order to be considered an adult – nearly twice as many as say the same about living away from home (36%).

Even among older age-groups, leaving the parental home is not considered a requirement for being an adult by more than 44 per cent of respondents ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

In the end, though many Canadians believe that living with parents into one's mid-20s is more of a bad thing than a good thing, that might be more of a lament for the necessity of doing so than an admonishment for Canada's youngest generation.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1527)	Community Size			
		Van/TO/Mtl (503)	Mid-sized Cities (283)	Rest of Canada Urban (504)	Rest of Canada Rural (222)
Young people starting out today have it harder than past generations	53%	57%	52%	49%	48%
Starting out has always been tough, young people today are soft	47%	43%	48%	51%	52%