



Millennial Concerns Serious – But Mostly Solvable

There is considerable anxiety being expressed by a wide range of adults about the large number of personal problems facing today's Millennials. Parents, academics, journalists, and health care professionals are among those who have been saying that today's youth are plagued by more problems that ever before. Those problems are particularly acute among some social and economic categories.

However, a comprehensive new study reminds us that such problems have always characterized Canadian young people. The good news is that, now as in the past, precisely because problems have been identified and addressed, with the passage of time they are resolved for the vast majority of young individuals.

In their new book, *The Millennial Mosaic*, sociologist Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge and colleagues Joel Thiessen and Monetta Bailey of Calgary's Ambrose University draw on a massive number of national surveys, present and past, to examine young people today compared to older Canadians both today and yesterday.

- They find that Millennials are more likely than older generations – Gen Xers, Boomers, and Pre-Boomers to indicate that they are troubled by things like the future, lack of money and time, so many things changing, their looks, depression, loneliness, and inferiority feelings. What's more, they also find that the concern levels of young people have been increasing from 1984 through 2000 to 2016. These trend data point to changes that are taking place, societally and culturally, versus changes that merely reflect life cycle as Canadians move from youth to early and middle adulthood. They also reflect an information society where more problems than ever before are being identified.
- However, when the three researchers looked at the levels for a variety of personal concerns of young people in the mid-1980s and compared those levels with what that same cohort reported some thirty years later in 2016, they found that, in every instance, the concern levels had decreased. The authors attribute such decreases to some basic positive realities – with the help of family, friends, professionals, and other resources, young people learn how to live life as they get older. **Where young people are now is not where they will be years from now.**

The authors' bottom lines: personal concerns among Millennials are pervasive. But if we collectively continue to address those concerns, many will be resolved as they have been in the past. Along the way, we also need to keep our eyes on the many positive features of emerging Millennials. For starters, some 83% say they are either "very happy" or "pretty happy" – close to the same level as that of Gen Xers (86%) and Baby Boomers (89%). And the majority believe that their futures are bright.

As we look at Millennials, **there's no need for panic**, the authors say, **but an ongoing need to accelerate what we have always done – to collectively problem-solve at both the individual and societal levels and do all that we can to elevate life.**

A Fast Cause for Pause Finding:

Loneliness is a concern for almost 1 in 2 younger Millennials; yet the percentage who say they receive a high level of enjoyment from **being alone** has jumped from 50% in 2000 to 76% today.

Illustrative Tables

Personal Concerns of Millennials and Other Adults

% Indicating Areas Concern Them Personally "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"

	ALL	Millennials 1986-plus (18-29)	Xers 1966-1985 (30-49)	Boomers 1946-65 (50-69)	Pre-Boomers 1945-earlier (70-plus)
The future	55	71	54	49	53
Health	48	43	49	49	47
Lack of money	47	64	54	40	28
Never seem enough time	44	63	53	31	25
Feeling should be getting more out of life	44	62	49	36	24
Your height or weight	35	40	37	32	29
The purpose of life	33	44	35	27	28
So many things changing	32	42	34	27	29
Your looks	32	46	33	25	25
Your sexual life	28	31	36	23	16
Depression	28	36	34	24	15
Loneliness	28	45	28	23	19
Boredom	25	35	25	21	20
Inferiority feelings	24	37	28	18	10

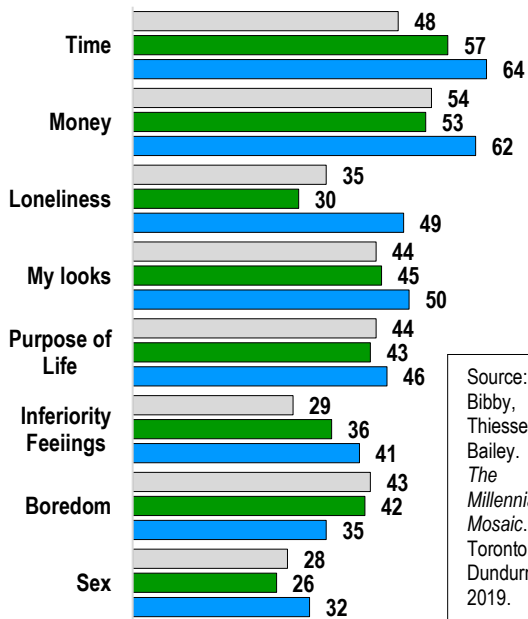
Source: Reginald W. Bibby, Joel Thiessen, and Monetta Bailey.
The Millennial Mosaic. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2019.

Select Personal Concerns:

Youth in 1984, 2000, 2016

% Concerned "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"

■ 1984: 15-19 ■ 2000: 15-19 ■ 2016: 18-23

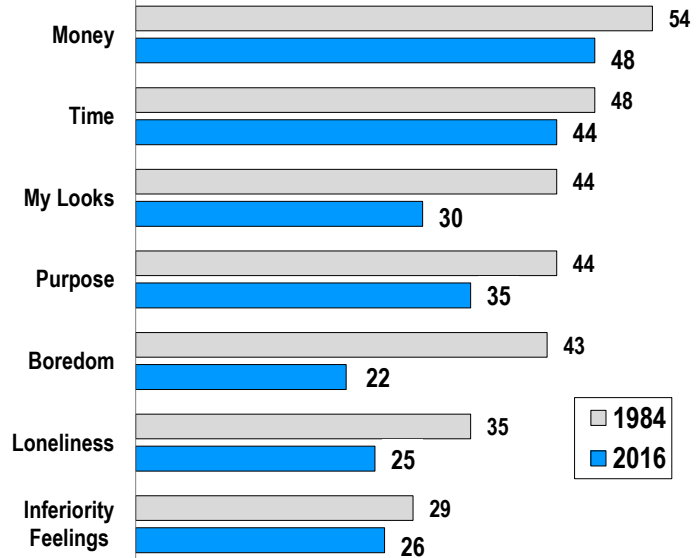


Source: Bibby, Thiessen, Bailey.
The Millennial Mosaic. Toronto: Dundurn, 2019.

Select Personal Concerns:

Teens 15-19 in 1984 as Adults 47-51 in 2016

% Concerned "A Great Deal" or "Quite a Bit"



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The Millennial Mosaic, Dundurn Press, 2019.

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