



PUBLIC TRUST AND SOCIAL COHESION

This paper was prepared as background material to support dialogue at the fifth gathering of senior Canadian and Australian public servants under the Canada-Australia Public Policy Initiative (CAPPI)

Executive summary

Social cohesion is a broad and somewhat imprecise concept. It is associated with aspects such as inclusion, belonging, trust, shared values/symbols, and integration. For example, the OECD describes a cohesive society as one which "works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility." (OECD, 2011) In this sense, cohesion is more of an outcome than an instrument to an end, like inclusion and integration would be.

Australia, for example, takes a broad view of cohesion to reflect Australia's full demographic and diverse sociocultural characteristics such as age, ability/disability, ingenuity, gender, rural/urban, culture and religion. Cohesion is seen as a "whole of community matter" which requires a whole of government and whole of community response for the benefit of everyone in Australia. Similarly, in the Canadian context, any definition of cohesion would have to include a sense of mutual respect for difference rather than a monolithic sense of unity.

Canada and Australia both score relatively well, by international comparisons, on a range of social cohesion indicators. Despite relatively stable and healthy economies, Canadians and Australians acknowledge and share anxieties about inequality, exclusion and opportunities for a comparable future.

A population must consent to be bound to the "social contract" of its nation state for effective and efficient government. If trust in our public institutions diminishes, we question our obligations under the social contract, and the social, financial, and environmental costs of conducting government business increase.

While there are signs that public trust in four key institutions (government, media, businesses, and NGOs) is weakening at a different rate in each country, Canadians and Australians continue to feel proud of their respective countries and national identities, albeit the strength of their sense of belonging and civic participation is correlated with a range of socio-demographic factors. While both countries continue to be open to diversity and welcoming of immigrants, unfortunately, certain segments of society are experiencing higher levels of intolerance, racism, and discrimination. There are also segments experiencing anxiety about the pace of economic and social change.

While Canadian and Australian governments continue to put in place various and wide-ranging policies, programming and initiatives aimed at strengthening cohesion, inclusion and national identity, several common challenges have begun to emerge. These are partially driven by relatively elusive measurement frameworks and difficulty in framing action within a policy driven environment, in addition to challenges with addressing external and internal political forces, as well as increasing use of non-traditional means of interference by malicious actors to undermine democracies

In the current context of a rapidly changing world, with the rise of populist and fracturing sentiments internationally, the risk is significant if social cohesion is not addressed. Canada and Australia are well positioned to examine and embark upon a joint discussion of emerging trends undermining social cohesion, including challenges as well as opportunities for further government action drawing from existing strengths present in both societies.

Through this paper and further joint work and sharing, Canada and Australia compare the related and potentially disruptive trends they are facing, explore actions that they are already taking to understand and address social cohesion issues, and surface the challenges and opportunities that have come to the fore.

1. Introduction

Canada and Australia – at a glance

Despite geographic separation, Canada and Australia share a remarkable number of attributes — systems of government, demographic profiles, economic and cultural drivers, as well as similar attitudes among their citizens across a range of issues. Both Canada and Australia are stable and growing liberal democracies, with pluralist societies and resource-based economies that are significantly linked to open trading relationships. With a shared British colonial history, Canada and Australia are "settler societies" that have welcomed immigration while recognizing Indigenous populations and cultures.

From a socioeconomic standpoint, Canada and Australia share many demographic traits. These shared traits affect both country's experience with social cohesion. For details, refer to **Appendix A**.

In a world characterized by rapid change and disruption, including to systems of government and to public attitudes, Canada and Australia have demonstrated relative stability. Both have weathered recent economic downturns comparatively well and neither have experienced dramatic political upheaval in recent history.

Key issues and questions

People thrive in well-functioning communities. Communities provide support for people to improve their wellbeing, make the most of opportunities and government supports, and be resilient. Social cohesion is a particular aspect of well-functioning communities—whereby people share a sense of belonging, social divisions and tensions are minimized and people help each other to pursue opportunities and respond to challenges together. All governments—and all communities—have an interest in protecting and building this public good.

On general aspects of well-being, both Australia and Canada rank above the OECD average for household income, employment, quality of education, and life expectancy, taking third and fifth place respectively on the Better Life Index, with only Nordic countries (Norway (1st), Denmark (2nd) and Sweden (4th) slightly ahead (OECD, 2018).

However, the forces underlying the instability and fracturing social cohesion occurring globally in particular within liberal democracies, appear to be universal and not without expression in Canada and Australia. These forces include: growing polarization and populist movements; economic concerns related to inequality and job security (automation, globalization); reactions to demographics and change (ageing populations, changing role of women and change around diversity); and use of non-traditional means of interference to undermine democracies.

Evidence shows both Canada and Australia face real risks if the status quo remains, including:

- a decreased sense of belonging → leading to lower participation rates and increased marginalization
- an increase in fear of individuals and groups, discrimination and racism → resulting in more marginalized and segregated communities or 'enclaves'
- continued decline of trust in government and other institutions → resulting in lack of engagement in and with government and its services
- an increase in perceptions that some are deserving and some undeserving of government support → resulting in grievances, disputes and divisions in community.

The discussion provided in this paper explores these issues through the comparison of the current state of affairs within both countries and identifies possible areas for further government actions. The paper also identifies further questions around how to address them, including the role of national

government and other actors (individuals, communities, civil society, and businesses) in fostering social cohesion.

2. Public trust and perceptions

Despite being a concept that has waxed and waned in government, public policy and academic circles, social cohesion has defied the establishment of hard and consistent measurement frameworks. This is likely, in part, because it relies so heavily on public perceptions where there are myriad relevant indicators from which to draw across the various aspects of inclusion, public trust, belonging, shared values, integration, etc.

For Canada and Australia, there is much data that allow for interesting comparisons that again demonstrate the similarities between the countries and the trends they face in this area. In this section, we will explore respective public attitudes on questions of trust; economic security; diversity and immigration; discrimination; pride and national identity; and civic participation.

Public trust - current state of affairs

Canadians and Australians trust their Governments less, showing some fear and concern on issues such as corruption, globalization, eroding social values, immigration, and pace of innovation which are driving feelings of distrust. Nonetheless, Canadians and Australians remain committed to the concept of democracy.

Canada

- Data from the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer suggests that the trust Canadians have in key institutions (media, business, government, and non-government organizations) is on the decline.
- Canada is classified as a “distruster” state, meaning only 49% of the population trusts that its institutions will “do the right thing” by the people. Despite this, Canada still remains above the global average of 48% of respondents trusting institutions. (Edelman, 2018)
- Canadians are least likely to trust government and the media, though trust in these two institutions has increased from the 2017 survey. Nevertheless, 55% of respondents to an Ipsos survey strongly agreed or tended to agree that “traditional parties and politicians don’t care about people like me.” (Ipsos, 2018)

Australia

- Data from the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that the trust Australians have in key institutions is also in decline.
- Australia sits just four percentage points above the world’s least trusting country, Russia. (Edelman, 2018)
- Over the last decade, there has been a 10% drop in the amount of people who trust the federal government “to do the right thing for the Australian people” - 39% of people in 2007 compared to 30 % in 2018. (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)
- More than 70% of Australians think our system of government needs major reform. Many want to ‘take back control’ in a world where the direction and pace of change is not to their liking. Yet for unclear reasons, and unlike in Britain and the United States, this desire to regain control is not predominantly linked to immigration. (Grattan Institute, 2018)



Why is it important to address this issue?

Everyone, throughout their lives, interacts with public institutions. People expect public institutions to create the conditions for them to thrive and prosper and to be responsive to their needs, to support them in exceptional circumstances, and to be effective in how they perform their functions.

When institutions fail to meet these expectations (or are perceived as responding to the needs of a few powerful or well-connected people), their legitimacy is damaged, trust is lost and people's well-being suffers. The result is not only a worse life today but also a lower sense of collective purpose to address those critical challenges that communities may have to face in the future. When governance is failing and people lose trust in institutions, the whole community fails.

A population must consent to be bound to the "social contract" of its nation state for effective and efficient government. If trust in our public institutions diminishes or if these institutions lose their legitimacy, we question our obligations under the social contract, and the ties that bind society together have the potential to begin to unravel. When this occurs, people start to feel that it is more acceptable to say and do things that fracture society and as a result, the social, financial, and environmental costs of conducting government business increase.

Economic security – current state of affairs

Canada and Australia have recently experienced strong gains in economic growth and aggregate living standards. However, some people are losing confidence in the stability of their lifestyle. Resistance to, and perceived inability to keep up with the pace of change, is becoming more pronounced.

Canada

- The Canadian economy is forecast to be the 10th largest in the world, despite the fact that the country is home to only 0.48% of the world's population. (International Monetary Fund, 2018.) Yet more Canadians say the economy is in "poor shape" (57%), than in "good shape" (43%). (Abacus data, 2016)
- In 2017, 70% of Canadians felt the world was changing too fast. (Ipsos, May 2017)
- Only 46% of Canadians were confident that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to move easily in today's labour market. (Ekos, 2017)
- 58% of Canadians felt the next generation would have a lower standard of living than they presently do. (Ekos, October 2017)
- 88% of Canadians are concerned or somewhat concerned about the affordability of housing in Canada (Nanos, 2017).
- 62% of Canadians are confident that they will have enough to retire on at age 65 (Maclean's, 2017).

Australia

While there are some positive trends:

- The Australian economy is forecast to be the 13th largest in the world and the fifth largest in the Asian region in 2018, despite the fact the country is home to only 0.3% of the world's population. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018)
- Australia's income inequality has been largely unchanged over the past two decades (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018; HILDA, 2017)

Australians are becoming increasingly anxious about a comparable future and opportunities:

- 60% of Australians agree with the statement that “getting ahead is becoming harder”. (Building and Fostering Community Cohesion, 2017)
- In 2018, 14% “expected that their lives in three or four years would be worse” (11% in 2007). (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)
- By contrast, in 2018, 74% of Australians agreed with the notion that “Australia is a land of economic opportunity where hard work is rewarded” (81% in 2007). (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)



Why is it important to address this issue?

Anxieties over the economy or the future can result in the perception that people have to compete for limited resources (e.g. jobs, housing), particularly when those resources are perceived to be distributed to the advantage of one community or group over another.

Despite Canada and Australia’s relatively strong economic situations, some people within each country are feeling left behind and forgotten. Real and/or perceived exclusion from social and economic opportunities can set the stage for disconnection, disengagement, and fracturing; forces of which have the potential to weaken social cohesion and threaten collective prosperity. Feelings of exclusion can persist across generations, and result in a perpetuating cycle of poverty.

Diversity and immigration – current state of affairs

Canada and Australia are at similar points in their cultural development as nations. Because of high levels of immigration, both countries have more diverse populations than ever. Public support for the value of immigration and the importance of diversity remain strong.

Canada

Modern Canada has never been more diverse, with a population representing various religious, ethno-cultural, gender, and linguistic backgrounds. One in five Canadians are foreign-born – the highest foreign-born proportion of the population in G7 countries. In Canada’s 12 largest cities, two in five Canadians are first or second generation. This figure jumps to 80% when looking at Toronto specifically (Canada Census, 2016). Future population growth is projected to largely derive from immigration and Canada’s Indigenous population. Canada’s Indigenous population is growing at more than four times the rate of the non-Indigenous population.

Canadians generally hold positive attitudes toward diversity and immigration (EnviroNics Institute, 2018):

- In 2017, 60% of Canadians disagreed with the statement that “overall, there is too much immigration in Canada.”
- 80% of Canadians believe that immigration is good for the country’s economy, and this view is most widespread among younger Canadians, those with a university education, higher income earners, and among immigrants.
- 45% of Canadians continue to disagree with the statement that “most people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.”
- 70% of Canadians agree that Canada has a responsibility to do its part in accepting refugees. (Ekos, August 2017)
- When asked how many refugees should Canada accept in the next two years, 41% felt Canada should continue to accept the same number as before (21% say to increase; 30% to reduce; and 7% say it depends). (EnviroNics, 2017)

- 92% of Canadians say the city or area where they live is “a good place” to live for immigrants from other countries (well above the average of 65% for all other 34 OECD countries).
- Gallup’s “migrant acceptance index”, which measures the public’s level of comfort and tolerance of people who come to live in their country from abroad, ranked Canada third (8.14) among OECD countries, close behind Iceland (8.26) and New Zealand (8.25), and followed by Australia (7.98).

Emerging negative trends:

While Canadians broadly support immigration, diversity, and multiculturalism, some in-groups are starting to feel marginalized by rising immigration, and social changes related to increased diversity:

- 63% of Canadians believe that Canada is divided (Ipsos, 2018), and 76% of Canadians say they prefer to live with “like-minded people.” (Ipsos, May 2017)
- Canadians remain largely divided in their opinion of Islam, and a plurality (45%) think that Muslims immigrating to Canada want to be distinct from the larger society rather than adopt Canadian customs.
- 54% of Canadians agree “there are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values” (EnviroNics, 2017)



Australia

Australia is also at its most culturally diverse point in its history. Almost half of Australia’s current population was either born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas. Australia is growing at a faster rate than the global average, with net overseas migration a primary contributor to this. Cities are the most heavily impacted - in 2016, 83% of the overseas-population were living in capital cities and as of 31 December 2016, there were around two million temporary migrants in Australia (Scanlon Foundation, 2017), concentrated in cities where Australia’s industry, labour market and tertiary institutions are based.

Australians are generally ‘centrist’ in their views on immigration and cultural diversity.

- Australians continue to show strong agreement that multiculturalism has been good for Australia, with agreement in the range from 83% - 86% (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)
- 66% of Australians believe that “accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger” (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)
- About four in five Australians disagree that it should be possible to reject applicants purely on the basis of their race, ethnicity or religion (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)

Emerging negative trends:

However, there is increasing doubt as to whether Australia is able to maintain the migration and social cohesion success of the past decades.

- The geographical concentration of the overseas-born populations, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, raises questions about whether past patterns of integration are continuing. (Scanlon Foundation, 2017)
- There has been a recent resurgence in anti-multicultural and anti-immigration rhetoric amongst certain community and political groups. For the first time, the Lowy Institute Poll has found that a majority (54%) of Australians oppose the current rate of immigration to Australia, up 17 points since the polling of this question started in 2014. (Lowy Institute, 2018)
- Australians also appear to be questioning if Australia is too open to people from all over the world and therefore, at risk of losing Australia’s identity as a nation. Australians are more divided on this issue than Americans, where only 29% in late 2017 agreed that the nation is too open to people from all over the world (as opposed to 41% of Australians) (Lowy Institute, 2018).

- Over the course of the last eight Scanlon Foundation surveys, negative opinion towards Muslims has been relatively high in the range 22%-25%, compared to 3%-5% negative attitude towards Christians and Buddhists. (Scanlon Foundation, 2018).



Why is it important to address this issue?

At a time of growing global tensions and rising uncertainty, Australia and Canada remain examples of countries committed to high levels of immigration, appreciation of diversity and recognition of the significant contribution of migrant communities.

However, there are indications that some segments of the population feel marginalized and public attitudes toward refugees and migrants are volatile. These point to the importance of integration programs and support to help foster a sense of belonging and build connection amongst and between communities that could otherwise feel marginalized.

Discrimination – current state of affairs

Canada and Australia have worked to become inclusive societies where all residents and citizens feel valued and welcomed. However, despite Government efforts, many Canadians and Australians report that they have faced discrimination.

Canada

- Approximately one in five visible minority respondents reported feeling discrimination or unfair treatment. (General Social Survey, 2014)
- Most Canadians believe there is on-going discrimination in Canada against ethnic and racial groups (especially Muslims and Indigenous Peoples, and to a lesser extent Black people, South Asians, Jews, and Chinese people). (Environics Institute, 2018)
- Across the seven groups, Canadians continue to be most likely to say that Muslims experience discrimination either often (50%) or sometimes (34%).
- 63% of visible minority respondents believed their experience was based on their race or skin colour, while 21% of visible minority females reported being a victim of discrimination (in contrast to 13% of their non-visible minority counterparts) (General Social Survey, 2014).
- In the fourth consecutive year of increases, the number of reported hate crimes rose 47% in 2017 to more than 2000 incidents (Statistics Canada, 2018).
- In 2016-2017, Indigenous people represented 26.4% of the federal prison population, yet comprised only 4% of the Canadian population (General Social Survey, 2014).

Australia

Recent research has found that a growing number of Australians have experienced discrimination:

- The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion surveys found that the proportion of respondents indicating experience of discrimination because of skin colour, ethnicity or religion has more than doubled, from 9% in 2007 to 19% in 2018.
- In a recently conducted survey by the Flinders University, 22% of respondents said they have been discriminated against because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion. (Ziersch et al., 2017)
- Almost 1 in 12 people with disability experienced discrimination in 2015, with around one quarter of them saying the source was an employer (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience racism in systemic and institutional ways. In 2016, 46% of Indigenous respondents reported experiencing prejudice in the previous six months, compared to 39 % for the same period two years before. 37% reported experiencing racial prejudice in the form of verbal abuse, and 17 % reported physical violence. (Reconciliation Australia, 2016)
- In 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners accounted for just over a quarter (27% or of the total Australian prisoner population, yet represented 2.8% of the total population (2016 Census)

Furthermore, research has also indicated that those from non-European backgrounds experience more significant barriers from discrimination.

- The five groups that experienced the highest level of racial discrimination were those born in South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia and those who identified as Indigenous. Those born in China, India, Vietnam and Iran also experienced significantly higher levels of racial discrimination compared to those born in the United Kingdom (Scanlon Foundation, 2015).
- The most common place where discrimination was experienced was on public transport, within neighbourhoods and in employment. (Ziersch et al., 2017)
- The most commonly described incidents were in relation to aspects of physical appearance (i.e. skin colour, headscarf) and in response to identifying as Muslim. Muslim Australians experienced discrimination at three times the rate of people from other backgrounds, with more than half of survey respondents claiming they had experienced racism, some on a daily basis. (Dunn et al., 2018)



Why is it important to address this issue?

Discrimination runs against the most fundamental values of a modern society. In fact, it is a threat to democracy, which is predicated on the idea of a society in which arbitrary hierarchies and preferences based on, for example gender, ethnic origin, and wealth should not limit rights or opportunities.

It is estimated that racial discrimination has cost the Australian economy an estimated \$44.9 billion (or 3.6% of GDP), each year in the decade from 2001-11 (Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, 2016). In Canada, advancing women's equality has the potential to add \$150 billion in incremental GDP by 2026, or a 0.6% increase to annual GDP growth (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017).

Discrimination not only poses a threat to the society, but also to the individual who is subjected to such an adverse treatment as it is a direct denial of the equal worth of the victim. The consequences of discrimination are linked to exclusion and decreasing psychological well-being.

Pride and national identity – current state of affairs

Both Canada and Australia are fortunate to be countries rich in expressions of national pride, sense of belonging, and participation rates. It is the shared values that unite citizens and create social bonds and form the foundation of a community.

Canada

Pride and sense of belonging

- 87% of Canadians aged 15 years and older are proud to be Canadians and 90% feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada. The main sources of pride are: Canadian history; the Canadian Armed Forces; and the health care system. (Canada 150 surveys)

- In January 2018, 72% of Canadians responded that they are “very attached” to Canada. (Canada 150 surveys)
- 65% of Canadians name Canada as a “positive force” in the world today. (Environics Institute, March 2018)

National symbols

- Canada’s diverse and multicultural character is a commonly shared value. A 2015 survey found that 54% of respondents identified multiculturalism as one of the most important symbols of the country’s national identity. (Environics Institute, 2015)
- When asked “What makes Canada unique”, the leading unprompted answer, at 43%, is “multiculturalism/diversity” (coming in next at 17% is “land/geography”) (Tides Canada, 2016).
- Key federal institutions like Medicare and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms remain highly valued national symbols (Environics Institute, 2015).

Civic and social participation

- In 2013, 65% of Canadians were members or participants in a group, organization, or association. (General Social Survey, 2013)
- Six in ten Canadians aged 15 years and older have volunteered for a charity or non-profit organization or group. (General Social Survey, 2013)
- 7.2 million Canadians (26% of the population) aged 15 and older participated regularly in sport. (General Social Survey, 2010)
- Over half of youth aged 15 to 24 indicated that they were at least somewhat interested in politics in 2013.
- The 2015 Federal election saw a rise in voter turnout, to 68.5% – the highest in decades.



Australia

Pride and sense of belonging

- Only 13% of Australians believe it is very important for a person to be born in Australia to be considered a true national. (Pew Research Centre, 2017)
- In the past decade, sense of belonging, identification with Australia and happiness continued to remain high, averaging 85%. (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)

National symbols

- Australia holds shared values of:
 - freedom – of thought, speech, religion, enterprise and association
 - equality – of men and women, before the law and opportunity
 - respect – for the liberty and dignity of all Australians.
- Our shared Australian values are the cornerstone of our economic prosperity as well as our socially cohesive society. (Australian Multicultural Statement 2017)

Civic and social participation

- While voter turnout has remained over 90% for many decades, it has been on a slow downward trend in recent years. Voter turnout at the 2016 Australian federal election was 91%, the lowest recorded since the introduction of compulsory voting in 1925. (Australian Electoral Commission, 2016)
- Other indicators of political participation have increased (i.e. signing a petition [52%]; joining a boycott of a product or a company [18%]; and attending a protest [11%]). (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)
- Australians report high involvement in other aspects of civic participation, such as voluntary work (3.6 million Australians) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016) and undertaking some form of community activity (three in four). (Scanlon Foundation, 2018)



Why is it important to address this issue?

Canada and Australia's success as multicultural societies with shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and equality of opportunity stand in marked contrast to other definitions of nationality. While these values formulate our national identities there are those that still feel left behind and unheard.

People become members of, and participate in, groups and organizations to cultivate new relationships, to contribute to community wellbeing, or to enjoy a sport or artistic activity. Participation in community life, alongside others, is important in building social cohesion. It helps forge and strengthen networks of supportive relationships and the shared sense of belonging that are necessary for a cohesive community. Participation in the community is especially important for people most vulnerable to disadvantage and marginalisation, as it provides them with opportunities to bond with other people – and sometimes helps in overcoming, particularly cultural, barriers.

3. Social cohesion

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of social cohesion. Social cohesion has often been associated with aspects such as inclusion, belonging, trust, shared values and symbols, and bound up with multiculturalism and national security issues. Australia, for example, takes a broad view of cohesion to reflect Australia's full demographic and diverse sociocultural characteristics such as age, ability/disability, ingenuity, gender, rural/urban, culture and religion. Cohesion is seen as a "whole of community matter" which requires a whole of government and whole of community response for the benefit of everyone in Australia. Similarly, as a country characterized by immigrants and immigration, a process that started with First Peoples helping British and French settlers, a Canadian view of cohesion would have to include a sense of mutual respect for difference, shared values, inclusion, and integration rather than a monolithic sense of unity.

Social cohesion cuts across many areas of government activity and far beyond, into the purview of sub-national and local governments and, in particular, civil society and communities (virtual or otherwise). Canada and Australia each have foundational policies, programs, and frameworks that can be said to facilitate social cohesion and have also begun exploring opportunities for future action to address challenges in this area.

One area of likely fertile ground is better understanding the various attitudinal segments of a country's population and the kinds of concerns these groups have and how they respond to messages that can either bring them closer together with others in society or push them deeper into their groupings. Australia has conducted some of this analysis already. Elsewhere, *More in Common*, a UK-based organization has conducted work on this in several European countries and in the US. A key observation by *More in Common* is that policies and communications that use empathy and can build

connections across difference are the most likely to be successful at reaching the “conflicted middle”. This “conflicted middle” refers to those not in segments at polarized ends of a spectrum and who might otherwise be the most susceptible to the use of strong language from the poles of a debate.

Actions underway

Canada

Canada’s origin narrative and some of its founding constructs likely facilitate social cohesion and the bonding and bridging attributes associated with it. For example, the *British North America Act* of 1867 created a federal state and included provisions for non-uniform language and religious rights and legal systems. This suggests a premise of compromise and accommodation and a recognition that difference need not be a threat to unity.

Key legislative milestones and institutional frameworks since then, not uncontested at the time or since, have added important pieces to the cohesion fabric that have gained broad acceptance (e.g., Official Bilingualism; *Multiculturalism Act*; *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and early legal recognition of same-sex marriage).

Recent priority initiatives

Addressing concerns related to equality:

- A sustained focus on Gender Based Analysis Plus, the launch of a Gender Results Framework and gender-budgeting in all government decision-making in the context of demonstrating “feminist government”. Responsibility: Whole of government, started in 2015.
- The introduction of legislation in 2018 to make Status of Women Canada an official Government department, renamed the Department for Women and Gender Equality dedicated to advancing equality for all Canadians with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. Responsibility: Status of Women Canada and Privy Council Office
- The prioritization of a reconciliation agenda with Indigenous peoples, including a rights recognition framework and advancing other recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report on the legacy of residential schools. Responsibility: Whole of government, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released their report in 2015.
- Taking steps to address the historical injustices experienced by LGBTQ2 federal public servants, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Canadian Armed Forces members. Responsibility: Privy Council Office, started in 2017.
- The creation of the Prime Minister’s Youth Council in 2016 and launch of a national dialogue with youth in February 2018 to shape Canada’s first-ever Youth Policy to create a vision to ensure that youth are supported and their voices are heard and respected on issues of importance to them and to all Canadians. Responsibility: Privy Council Office.
- A renewed Action Plan on Official Languages 2018-2023 to promote bilingualism and linguistic duality within Canada, promoting and funding community organizations, cultural and heritage activities, French and English-language minority radio stations and newspapers, and minority official language schools. Responsibility: Canadian Heritage, started in 2018.

Addressing concerns related to accessibility:

- The *Accessible Canada Act* is legislation (currently before Parliament) which is intended to extend the existing rights and protections for people with disabilities, lead to more consistent accessibility in areas within federal jurisdiction, and ensure that the Government of Canada leads by example internationally. Responsibility: Employment and Social Development Canada, started in 2016.

- The Investing in Canada Infrastructure program will be delivered over the next decade. As part of these projects, infrastructure must meet the highest published applicable accessibility standards. Responsibility: Infrastructure Canada, launched in 2018.

Addressing concerns related to racism and discrimination:

- A new Federal Anti-Racism Strategy, with consultations exploring issues of racism in relation to employment and income supports, social participation, and justice. Responsibility: Canadian Heritage, started in 2018.
- The Community Resilience Fund supports organizations at the local level to counter radicalization to violence in Canada. Responsibility: Public Safety, started in 2016.

Addressing concerns related to economic security:

- The Poverty Reduction Strategy launched in 2018, building upon the vision that all Canadians deserve to live in dignity, to be treated fairly, and to have the means and ability to fully participate in their communities. Responsibility: Employment and Social Development Canada.
- The National Housing Strategy, presented in January 2018, is a 10-year, \$40 billion investment that will aim to remove families from housing need and reduce chronic homelessness by 50%. Responsibility: Employment and Social Development Canada.
- The Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits provides financial assistance to CPP-eligible contributors who are not able to work regularly due to a severe or prolonged disability.



Australia

Australia's approach to social cohesion, and multiculturalism in general, shares similar traits with the Canadian approach by: reflecting Australia's demographic reality; articulating Australia's ideal of a just and diverse society; and identifying Australia's social contract of interacting values and norms, built on Australia's democratic institutions.

This view reflects Australia's full diversity, such as age, ability/disability, indigeneity, gender, rural/urban, culture and religion. Cohesion is seen as a whole of community matter, which requires a whole of government and whole of community response for the benefit of everyone in Australia.

Recent priority initiatives

Addressing reactions to declining trust in institutions / pride and national identity

- Introducing a range of reforms (subject to passage of enabling legislation) to strengthen the requirements for Australian residency and citizenship to support social cohesion. Responsibility: Department of Home Affairs; started in April 2017.
- Shaping a national narrative around Australian values, civics, citizenship and democratic traditions, a long-term activity that received renewed focus following the establishment of the Department of Home Affairs in December 2017.

Addressing the lack of strategic and coordinated (whole of government) approach

- Building a robust evidence base and considering options for a national framework on Community Cohesion. The draft framework identifies five key priorities: belonging, identity and shared values; participation; respecting diversity; partnership; and leadership. Also developing a benchmark to track community cohesion efforts. Responsibility: Department of Social Services with collaboration with other Commonwealth agencies; started in January 2017.

- The establishment of the Department and Portfolio of Home Affairs brought together Australia's federal law enforcement, national and transport security, criminal justice, emergency management, multicultural affairs and immigration and border-related functions, allowing for a strategic and coordinated whole-of-government approach to these issues. Responsibility: Department of Home Affairs (within the Home Affairs Portfolio); established in December 2017.
- The establishment of the Countering Violent Extremism Centre strengthened efforts to counter violent extremism by focusing on supporting families, schools, youth and communities impacted by violent extremism and helping young people to avoid the risk of online engagement with violent extremists. Responsibility: Department of Home Affairs; March 2016.

Addressing racism and discrimination

- As articulated in Australia's current multicultural statement, Australians "are defined not by race, religion or culture, but by our shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and equality of opportunity – a 'fair go' (*Multicultural Australia, United, Strong, Successful*, Australia's multicultural statement, 2017)". Social cohesion objectives are also supported through anti-discrimination legislation, such as the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. Responsibility: Department of Social Services (now in Home Affairs), launched in March 2017.
- The National Anti-Racism Partnership Strategy, was designed to provide a clear understanding of what racism is and how it can be prevented and reduced. The Strategy has produced the widely recognised *Racism. It Stops with Me.* campaign and a series of strategic projects including information and tools to empower individuals, bystanders and organisations to make a stand against racism, and materials specifically for youth. Responsibility: Human Rights Commission (in partnership with a number of Commonwealth Departments); launched in 2012.

Addressing concerns related to economic security and disadvantage

- *Closing the Gap* initiative aims to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Australians. The strategy recognised that closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage would require long-term, generational commitment, with effort to be directed across a range of priority areas: early childhood; schooling; health; economic participation; healthy homes; safe communities; and governance and leadership. Responsibility: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Ten years after the launch in 2008, the Australian Government continues to work with state and territories and Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda.

Addressing reactions to demographics and change

- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* is a piece of legislation that provides for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Act aims to give effect to Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia. The NDIS is a government-funded scheme to support Australians with disability to live 'ordinary lives', through helping Australians with disabilities afford disability-related expenses they may have. Responsibility: Department of Social Services; launched in July 2013, currently being rolled out across the country.
- *Towards 2025: An Australian Government strategy to boost women's workforce participation*, lays out the Australian Government's roadmap to meet its target of reducing the gap in participation rates between women and men (aged 15–64) by 25% by 2025. Responsibility: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; launched in July 2017.

The above list is by no means exclusive. Australia is currently undertaking a review of Commonwealth programs that contribute to cohesion, which should identify any potential gaps.

4. Challenges and opportunities

Despite an assessment that Canada and Australia have relatively healthy and resilient structures and institutionalized approaches, as well as many positive indicators of continued cohesion and openness to diversity and change, the issues of public trust and social cohesion/fracturing merit careful attention

in both countries at this time. This is because many of the underlying forces of division and fracturing internationally are strong and have started to gain some footing in both Australia and Canada.

Canada

Canada understands the important role of diversity and inclusion in facilitating social cohesion, but remains at early stages of developing a Government response to social fracturing. As Canada refines the scope of its work in this area, a number of challenges and opportunities outlined below need to be better understood.

- New non-traditional parties, particularly at the provincial level, have achieved modest success.
- The trend towards social media as the source of information is opening new channels for non-state actors to push opinions towards polarizing and “wedge” issues.
- Canada has many initiatives aimed at inclusion (e.g. feminist government, Indigenous reconciliation, anti-Black racism consultations) that may generate reaction that generates fracturing (i.e., “whose version of inclusion?”).
- To date, there is no coordinated and established baseline from which to measure social cohesion.
- Ownership and implementation of social cohesion actions cut across federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, which is a key consideration in the possible development of a social cohesion framework or action plan.
 - Likewise, approaches to addressing social cohesion are susceptible to being “owned” or “rejected” by one political grouping or another
- External forces and actors have significant influence to polarize perceptions, undermine trust in institutions, and generally increase fear and anxiety.

Australia

Over the last 12 months, the Australian Government has been working on building an evidence base to understand issues around cohesion and the role of government and other sectors. This work has uncovered challenges and opportunities, many of which are similar to those identified by Canada above. As a result, Australia is currently working on addressing these challenges:

- The breadth of the concept makes it difficult to focus action (i.e., policy, program, and communication responses).
 - Australian Government is working on defining cohesion in Australian context.
- Strong and consistent measurement frameworks have been elusive.
 - Australia is developing a measurement framework which will define success and measure efforts in cohesion.
- Cohesion initiatives across all tiers of government are “program rich and policy poor,” and despite significant investment, Australia does not yet have a strategic, coordinated national framework, and there is little cross-government coordination in place. This can potentially lead to misspent government investment, duplication, missed opportunities and at worst inadvertent negative cohesion impacts.
 - Australia is currently developing a national policy framework on community cohesion that will not fix one ‘problem’ but rather aim to better connect current work.
 - Australia is also leveraging opportunities to strengthen national promotion of Australian values, civics and our democratic traditions.
- Disinformation and cyberattacks are being used in addition to more traditional means of interference to undermine democracies around the world. Disinformation’s reach and penetration have grown due

to high levels of internet connectivity, the increasing ease of falsifying plausible material, and the diversification of information sources that individuals view as credible.

- Australia is taking action to bring transparency to foreign influence, as well as counteract foreign interference (which is defined as activities carried out by or on behalf of a foreign actor that are coercive, deceptive, or clandestine). Australia is also taking action against the spread of disinformation and cyberattacks.



5. Areas for government action

Based on the above report of issues of social cohesion – broadly in terms of underlying forces warranting attention, but also in the specific Canadian and Australian contexts – some clear areas for further government action emerge in relation to better assessing and tracking common measures of social cohesion to fully understand the challenges and opportunities. Both countries may face real risks if forces underlying instability and fracturing are not addressed.

Firstly, work, which has already begun in both countries, needs to be viewed as a whole-of-community matter. Government does not “own” social cohesion, nor can it solve all the issues or take credit for all success stories.

Secondly, to be effective, government action in this area needs to be considered in a comprehensive fashion, as a whole-of-government response. A focus on new (boutique) programming would be insufficient. Rather, governments will have to think as much or more about broader policy, and especially approaches to communication of measures that, while they may address a specific gap or need, also strengthen the whole.

Thirdly, engagement and partnership inside and outside of government is particularly important as measures or campaigns perceived to be imposed “from on high” would undermine the cohesion objectives. As government outcomes and community outcomes are not necessarily the same, evidence shows that there is a great value of collaborative government, civil society, businesses, philanthropic and community initiatives for enhancing social cohesion.

Fourthly, as social cohesion is a “process and not an outcome”, developing effective social cohesion is about investing for the long-term. Community development is a long-term process, but more likely to achieve long-term outcomes such as stronger and more cohesive communities, evidenced by changes in social capital, civic engagement, community cohesion, community safety and improved health.

Developing and collaborating on appropriate social cohesion frameworks will help address many of the challenges identified above and shape long-term policy direction - ensuring a social cohesion “lens” on various proposals emerging elsewhere, in much the same way as a gender analysis lens, or environmental sustainability lens is used now.

Lastly, Canada and Australia are also well-positioned to collaboratively encourage discussions in international fora on emerging trends undermining social cohesion, including challenges and opportunities for further government action.

6. Questions for discussion

- 1. What is the role of the national government in fostering social cohesion (as opposed to sub-national governments and other actors)? What is the role of other actors such as individuals, business, philanthropy, civil society in building social cohesion and how do we talk about it?**

2. **Could there be more focus on the role for public sector professionals in improving the trust relationship with citizens, for example, in the delivery of services?**
 - This is because it is not just policy outcomes that drives trust but the process of how we do what we do and engage/interact with citizens.
3. **How might countries further collaborate with each other (beyond exchanging assessments and experiences)?**
4. **What steps can be taken to formulate a bias-free social cohesion evidence base?**

7. Interesting reading material

Australia

Scanlon Foundation: Mapping Social Cohesion 2018: <https://scanlonfoundation.org.au/report2018/>

Department of Social Services (2017) Building a New Life in Australia: The longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-services-publications/building-a-new-life-in-australia-bnla-the-longitudinal-study-of-humanitarian-migrants>

Melbourne Institute - The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey – a household-based longitudinal study (since 2001). <https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/hilda> Latest release which includes Waves (1-16)

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Migration Policy Initiative (2018) Applying Behavioral Insights to Support Immigrant Integration and Social Cohesion

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/BehaviouralInsightsIntegration-Final.pdf>

Eurofund (2018) Social cohesion and well-being in Europe Executive Summary

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18035en_1.pdf and full report

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Public Perspectives: Understanding Canadians, Ipsos, May 2017, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/knowledge/society/public-perspectives-understanding-canadians>.

Through A Lens Darkly, Ekos, October 2017, <https://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2017/10/through-a-lens-darkly/>.

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Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (2016) - “Measuring the Economic Costs of Racial Discrimination in Australia”

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census <http://www.abs.gov.au/>

Australian Electoral Commission, Voter turnout House of Representatives and Senate Elections, 2016 https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/research/files/voter-turnout-2016.pdf

Department of Social Services (Australian Government), “Strong and Resilient Communities,” 2017, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/communities-and-vulnerable-people/strong-and-resilient-communities>.

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9. Appendix A– Demographic indicators

Demographic Indicator	CANADA (based on 2016 Census)		AUSTRALIA (based on 2016 Census)	
Population	- 35.1 million		- 23.4 million	
Life Expectancy	- Men: 79 years - Women: 83 years - Aboriginal Men: 64 years - Aboriginal Women: 73 years		- Men: 80 years - Women: 85 years - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (based on reference period 2010-2012): Men: 69 years Women: 74 years	
Indigenous Population	- More than 1.6 million - Average age is 32 years (10 years less than Canadian average) - 6.2% of Canadians have Aboriginal ancestry		- 649,171 - 2.8% of Australians identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin - Median age is 23 years	
Immigration Rate	- 0.9 % of Canada's population		- Net Overseas Migration contributed 56% to population growth (1996-2016)	
Ethnic Diversity	- Top ten ethnic backgrounds are: Canadian, English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Chinese, Italian, First Nations, East Indian, Ukrainian, Dutch, Polish and Filipino - Over 250 ethnic diversities in Canada - 22.3% of Canada's population is a visible minority (South Asians, Chinese and Blacks are the three largest)		- Top ten ancestries are: English, Australian, Irish, Scottish, Chinese, Italian, German, Indian, Greek and Dutch - Over 300 ancestries were separately identified - 28% of Australia's population were born overseas, while an additional 21% have at least one overseas-born parent	
Official Languages	- 57% of Canadians identify English as their mother tongue, while 22% identify French as their mother tongue		- Although not legislated, English is the national language	
Foreign Languages	- 22% declared a language other than English or French as mother tongue, representing over 130 immigrant languages		- 21% declared using a language other than English at home, representing over 300 separately identified languages	
Economy	- Canada's 2017 GDP (in current \$B): 2,145.2 - 2017 GDP per capita: \$58,440 (US\$) - Real GDP growth is 3%		- Australia's 2017 GDP (in current US\$B): 1,246.5 - 2017 GDP per capita: (US\$ PPP) \$50,334 - 2017 real GDP growth was 2.3%	
Age	- 66% is aged 15-64 years old		- 65.9% is aged 15-64 years old	

	- One in four Canadians are 65 or older	- One in six Australians are 65 and over
Education	- 54% of Canadians aged 24-65 have college or university degrees	- 56% of Australians aged 15 years and over have a post-school qualification
Household Income	- Median household income: \$70,336 (CAD) / \$73,671.99 (AUS)	- Median household income: \$79,244 (AUS) / \$75,725.57 (CAD)
	- 14.2% of Canadians are in the low income bracket	- 9.3% of Australians live in low-income households