IBA PU Alumni Canada

Mavericks

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Kobe Bryant on having the courage to look like a fool:

"if I wanted to implement something new into my game, I'd see it and try incorporating it immediately. I wasn't scared of missing, looking bad, or being embarrassed. That's because I always kept the end result, the long game, in my mind."

Mavericks Note

As we step into another year of *Mavericks*, it is truly inspiring to reflect on how our magazine has evolved over the past year. What started as a platform to share insights and perspectives has now grown into a recognized source of scholarly discourse, featuring thought-provoking articles from professors across Canadian universities and globally renowned institutions.

In this edition, we continue our commitment to intellectual exploration, fostering a free flow of knowledge and ideas. Each article embodies the spirit of academic excellence, bridging the gap between research and real-world application. Our contributors have provided in-depth analyses, critical reflections, and innovative perspectives that enrich our understanding of diverse subjects.

The inclusion of scholarly work from distinguished academics is a testament to the magazine's growing influence in facilitating meaningful conversations. Knowledge, when shared, becomes a powerful tool for progress, and *Mavericks* remains dedicated to ensuring that ideas and insights reach a wider audience. We believe in breaking barriers to information, promoting accessibility, and encouraging an open exchange of ideas that inspire thought and action.

As you delve into this edition, we invite you to engage with the diverse themes presented, challenge conventional narratives, and embrace the spirit of inquiry. We hope that *Mavericks* continues to be a source of enlightenment and inspiration for all our readers.

Here's to another year of exploration, innovation, and intellectual growth!

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Mavericks Quarterly Magazine

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Canada, the 51st state? Eliminating interprovincial trade barriers could ward off Donald Trump

Donald Trump is threatening to use "economic force" to make Canada the 51st American state. While his comments may be reckless, they are in part due to Canada's over-reliance on the United States market in terms of trade.

The benefits of international trade are undoubtedly positive. It's well-established that when countries can produce a product or service more cheaply than others, giving them what's known as a "comparative advantage," all other nations engaged will gain from that trade.

There are additional gains that come from economies of scale as companies get access to much larger markets than are available domestically. These include improvements in efficiency that arise through enhanced market competition, resulting in lower costs of production and reduced prices for consumers, and increases in the variety of goods and services available.

Canada has outgrown many of its protectionist roots and is now a trading nation. Despite having only 0.5 per cent of the world's population, Canada has 2.2 per cent of the total of world trade. Exports of goods support one out of every six Canadian jobs.

While the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and its predecessor, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), garner most of the headlines, Canada has a total of 15 free-trade agreements covering 61 per cent of world GDP, providing Canadian companies with access to 1.5 billion consumers worldwide.

And Canada is seeking even more free-trade agreements, given their demonstrated benefits.

Made-in-Canada solution?

But the key challenge Canadian policymakers face is an over-reliance on the U.S. as Canada's primary market, with 75 per cent of all Canadian exports headed south.

One of the first lessons in business is not to put "all of your eggs in one basket." Canada clearly needs to diversify its trading partners, which is no easy feat. But there is a "made-in-Canada" solution to potential clouds on the international trade horizon.

The U.S. makes for a natural trading partner, given its large market and close proximity to Canada. The two countries share similar cultural norms and legal systems, and the same time zones and existing infrastructure, including ports, railways and bridges.

There's also new infrastructure planned, including the Gordie Howe International Bridge connecting Windsor and Detroit that will facilitate cross-border trade when it opens later this year.

But the over-reliance of Canadian exports to the U.S. exposes Canada to significant risks that can result from unilateral American trade policies.

Canada's preferential access to the U.S. market can no longer be assured, as shown by the protectionism that came with Donald Trump's first term in office. In his book *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*, Edward Luce, an editor with the *Financial Times*, argued there would be no "snap back," meaning a return to the status quo before the first Trump presidency.

When Joe Biden became U.S. president in 2020, American protectionism not only remained, but intensified with aggressive new tariffs. With the return of Trump, who is promising even more tariffs on Canada, it seems Luce was right. There will be no snap back, and Canada can no longer take easy access to the U.S. market for granted.

Provincial trade obstacles

One of the ironies in Canada's quest for more free-trade deals around the world are interprovincial trade barriers that exist within Canada. A Canadian Senate report on Canada's free-trade agreement with Europe notes that "European companies have easier access to some Canadian markets than Canadian companies from another province."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) has said "it's easier to do business in the U.S. than in another part of Canada."

Bringing down inter-provincial trade barriers could result in countless benefits. One study estimates that the existence of such barriers have resulted in the price of consumer goods and services in Canada being higher on average by eight to 15 per cent than they would be in the absence of those barriers.

The study argues if interprovincial trade barriers were removed, there would be an improvement in Canadian productivity of between three and seven per cent. In dollar terms, that would add $50-$130 billion dollars to Canada's economy. The CFIB findings put the figure at $200 billion, or $5,100 per person.

There are further benefits. Bringing down barriers to trade across Canadian provinces would create conditions that could enable Canadian companies to be more competitive internationally, and beyond the U.S. market in particular.

Enhanced competitive forces that would flow from reduced inter-provincial trade barriers would allow Canadian firms to access a much larger share of the Canadian economy, thus allowing the most productive and innovative Canadian firms to grow.

These forces would result in increased business investment, productivity, spending on research and development and enhanced innovation. More innovative and productive companies in Canada would expand, improving Canadian productivity and prosperity. Incomes in Canada would rise. These changes would also make Canadian companies more competitive internationally.

Canada's abysmal productivity levels

I am currently conducting research with colleagues employed by the Government of Canada — Jianmin Tang of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Weimin Wang from Statistics Canada. We're finding that the best way for Canadian companies to compete in markets further away — that are different culturally, institutionally and in other ways — is to enhance their own productivity.

Companies with higher productivity rates are able to more successfully penetrate markets in Latin America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East — markets that would help Canada decrease its reliance on the U.S. market.

But Canada has a major productivity problem. Economic productivity is a measure of the rate at which the output of goods and services are produced per unit of

Dr. Walid Hejazi

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He has collaborated extensively with companies and governments on issues related to international trade, foreign investment, and strategic leadership, frequently testifying before parliamentary and senate committees. His current work includes a forthcoming book on mobilizing global capital for sustainable infrastructure projects in developing nations.

With a teaching portfolio spanning Rotman's MBA, EMBA, and executive programs, Dr. Hejazi has lectured in over 30 countries and is a sought-after media commentator. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from the University of Toronto and an HBA from the University of Western Ontario.

input (for example, labour, capital and raw materials). Simply put, Canada's productivity levels are atrocious.

The senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada described these challenges as an "emergency," which is generally not the kind of language used by conservative central bankers.

What does poor productivity performance mean for the average Canadian? Incomes and purchasing power suffer significantly.

There are many policy changes that are needed to reverse Canada's poor productivity performance. Dismantling inter-provincial trade barriers is a great place to start, and would help "trump" the rising obstacles to international trade.

Dr. Caroline Sirois (Laval University)

Taking too many medications can pose health risks. Here's how to avoid them

When we see an older family member handling a bulky box of medications sorted by day of the week, we might stop and wonder, is it too much? How do all those pills interact?

The fact is, as we get older we are more likely to develop different chronic illnesses that require us to take several different medications. This is known as polypharmacy. The concept applies to people taking five or more medications, but there are all sorts of definitions with different thresholds (for example, four, 10 or 15 medicines).

I'm a pharmacist and pharmacoepidemiologist interested in polypharmacy and its impact on the population. The research I carry out with my team at the Faculty of Pharmacy at Université Laval focuses on the appropriate use of medication by older family members. We have published this study on the perceptions of older adults, family carers and clinicians on the use of medication among persons over 65.

Polypharmacy among older adults

Polypharmacy is very common among older adults. In 2021, a quarter of persons over 65 in Canada were prescribed more than ten different classes of medication. In Québec, persons over 65 used an average of 8.7 different drugs in 2016, the latest year available for statistics.

Is it a good idea to take so many drugs?

According to our study, the vast majority of seniors and family caregivers would be willing to stop taking one or more medications if the doctor said it was possible, even though most are satisfied with their treatments, have confidence in their doctors and feel that their doctors are taking care of them to the best of their ability.

In the majority of cases, medicine prescribers are helping the person they are treating. Medications have a positive impact on health and are essential in many cases. But while the treatment of individual illnesses is often adequate, the whole package can sometimes become problematic.

The risks of polypharmacy: 5 points to consider

When we evaluate cases of polypharmacy, we find that the quality of treatment is often compromised when many medications are being taken.

1. Drug interactions: polypharmacy increases the risk of drugs interacting, which can lead to undesirable effects or reduce the effectiveness of treatments.
2. A drug that has a positive effect on one illness may have a negative effect on another: what should you do if someone has both illnesses?
3. The greater the number of drugs taken, the greater the risk of undesirable effects: for adults over 65, for example, there is an increased risk of confusion or falls,

which have significant consequences.

4. The more medications a person takes, the more likely they are to take a potentially inappropriate medication. For seniors, these drugs generally carry more risks than benefits. For example, benzodiazepines, medicine for anxiety or sleep, are the most frequently used class of medications. We want to reduce their use as much as possible to avoid negative impacts such as confusion and increased risk of falls and car accidents, not to mention the risk of dependence and death.
5. Finally, polypharmacy is associated with various adverse health effects, such as an increase in frailty, hospital admissions and emergency room visits. However, studies conducted to date have not always succeeded in isolating the effects specific to polypharmacy. As polypharmacy is more common among people with multiple illnesses, these illnesses may also contribute to the observed risks.

Polypharmacy is also a combination of medicines. There are almost as many as there are people. The risks of these different combinations can vary. For example, the risks associated with a combination of five potentially inappropriate drugs would certainly be different from those associated with blood pressure medication and vitamin supplements.

Polypharmacy is therefore complex. Our studies attempt to use artificial intelligence to manage this complexity and identify combinations associated with negative impacts. There is still a lot to learn about polypharmacy and its impact on health.

3 tips to avoid the risks associated with polypharmacy

What can we do as a patient, or as a caregiver?

1. Ask questions: when you or someone close to you is prescribed a new treatment, be curious. What are the benefits of the medication? What are the possible side effects? Does this fit in with my treatment goals and values? How long should this treatment last? Are there any circumstances in which discontinuing it should be considered ?
2. Keep your medicines up to date: make sure they are all still useful. Are there still any benefits to taking them? Are there any side effects? Are there any drug interactions? Would another treatment be better? Should the dose be reduced?
3. Think about de-prescribing: this is an increasingly common clinical practice that involves stopping or reducing the dose of an inappropriate drug after consulting

a health-care professional. It is a shared decision-making process that involves the patient, their family and health-care professionals. The Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network is a world leader in this practice. It has compiled a number of tools for patients and clinicians. You can find them on their website and subscribe to the newsletter.

Benefits should outweigh the risks

Medications are very useful for staying healthy. It's not uncommon for us to have to take more medications as we age, but this shouldn't be seen as a foregone conclusion.

Every medication we take must have direct or future benefits that outweigh the risks associated with them. As with many other issues, when it comes to polypharmacy, the saying, "everything in moderation," frequently applies.

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She has worked as a pharmacist in both community and hospital settings. She also served as a Scientific Officer at the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. She was a professor of nursing at UQAR and then a professor in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at Laval University. She is currently a full professor in the Faculty of Pharmacy at Laval University.

Dr. Anna Triandafyllidou-Toronto Metropolitan University

How Donald Trump's attacks on Canada are stoking a new Canadian nationalism

Is the threatened trade war between Canada and the United States igniting a new form of Canadian nationalism? Polls suggest Canadians are overwhelmingly opposed to any notion of becoming the 51st American state as the U.S. anthem is being roundly booed at sporting events in Canada.

If a new Canadian nationalism is emerging, what will it look like in a country that declared itself in 2015 the first post-national state, stoking envy around the world over Canada's inclusive nationalism?

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to launch 25 per cent tariffs on most Canadian exports in a month's time after weeks of persistently provoking both Canadian leaders and citizens with his repeated calls to make Canada the 51st state.

Such calls have led to significant outrage, prompting Canadian leaders that include Justin Trudeau, Chrystia Freeland and Doug Ford to respond that Canada is not for sale and that Canada is a country by choice.

Opposed to joining the U.S.

If there was any suggestion that being a "post-national" state would lead to an openness to join the U.S., recent polls show the opposite: 90 per cent of Canadians reject that scenario.

Two thirds of Canadians polled in 2021 felt that Canada is faring better than the U.S. on most counts, including quality of life, protection of rights, standards of living and opportunities to get ahead.

This percentage had significantly grown compared to the 1980s or 1990s.

So how does a feeling of being an inclusive, post-national state reconcile with a firm sentiment of patriotism that is growing stronger by the day? And what are the contradictory currents in Canadian identity today?

Contemporary Canadian identity

I have been studying nationalism for 30 years, with a special focus on how immigration, migration and national identity interact. My work suggests there are a few elements that buttress and support Canada's identity today.

National identity is not a closed container of cultural elements. It develops interactively. As we're seeing today, amid uncertainty, geopolitical competition as well as close socio-economic interdependence, national identity can emerge with a renewed force.

Diversity can lead either to a plural national identity that is open to change or a neo-tribal identity that is reactionary. Plural nationalism acknowledges the changing demographic or political circumstances of the nation, and through a process of tension, conflict and change, it creates something new.

This nationalism is plural not because it acknowledges diversity as a fact, but because it makes a commitment to engage with diversity.

But dealing with new challenges and increasing diversity may also lead to rejecting "the other." I use the term tribal to emphasize that this type of nationalism, regardless of whether the in-group is defined in territorial-civic or blood-and-belonging terms, is predicated on an organic, homogenous conception of the nation.

In this situation, the nation is represented as a compact unit that does not allow for variation or change. The only way to deal with challenges of mobility and diversity is to close rank, resist and reject it.

Neo-tribal nationalism is not static. It is dynamic and interactive too — although its reaction to new challenges and to diversity, from within or from outside, involves closure and rejection.

It is neo-tribal because it develops and thrives in a world that is ever more interconnected. Social media platforms play an important role here as their algorithms create neo-tribal digital ecochambers where everyone is closed within their digital bubble of like-minded people.

COVID-19 experiences

Challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, Canada faced important dilemmas. For instance, should temporary residents be encouraged to return home or stay when the pandemic broke out and borders closed around the world? Canada opted for the latter.

Unlike Australia — where temporary workers and international students were encouraged to go home — the Canadian government stated that temporary migrants whose "effective residence" was in the country would be supported to stay.

The term "effective residence" defined membership on the basis of habitual residence; where people lived, worked, sent their kids to school and paid taxes. Living together formed a sense of common fate, reinforcing an expansive and inclusive view of who is a Canadian.

In addition, recognizing the essential work performed by many temporary residents, such as asylum-seekers employed in senior care homes, Canada introduced special measures to facilitate their transition to permanent status.

In August 2020, Marco Mendicino, Canada's immigration minister at the time, announced a special path to permanent residency (now known as the Guardian Angels program), noting that "they demonstrated a uniquely Canadian quality …in that they were looking out for others, and so that is why today is so special."

Mendicino emphasized that the behaviour of these workers qualified them as Canadians; their important contribution in “caring for the other” was defined as a very special element in the national identity.

National unity bolstered by diversity

The Canadian patriotism that is emerging today in the face of Trump’s actions — and in the words of almost all Liberal, Conservative and NDP leaders — builds on solid ground.

Canadian nationalism has not just been about being polite, but rather builds on decades of positive confrontation with challenges.

A July 2024 Environics poll suggested Canadians do not feel they need to choose among their multiple identities or to exclude others in order to revitalize their sense of identity and belonging.

National unity is strengthened by internal diversity. The looming trade war and threats of annexation by Trump may be having a beneficial impact in reminding Canadians of the values that unite them and that Canada is indeed “a country by choice.”

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Dr. Triandafyllidou has been a Visiting Professor at the College of Europe (2002–2018) and serves as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies. *She also chairs the IMISCOE Editorial Committee for the IMISCOE Springer book series on Migration. Her contributions to migration research have been recognized with a PhD Honoris Causa from the University of Liège in 2021*.

Change management shows us how we all can become climate leaders

This the season for resolutions, and if yours are all about reducing your impact on the planet then you may find yourself at loggerheads this holiday season with friends whose 2025 goals are a bit less green.

If you are embracing under-consumption core while your friends remain Amazon and Temu evangelists, then is it a sign you should go your separate ways? It might be, but theories of change management can help us understand when cutting ties is premature.

Change management refers to the study, theory and practice of leading change in organizations. While change management as a discipline is organization-focused, its strategies are applicable to interpersonal challenges, such as navigating what appear to be irreconcilable differences in environmental responsibility between friends.

One framework, called ADKAR, asserts that change has five sequential phases: awareness, desire, knowledge, action and reinforcement. Employing an ADKAR approach — alongside important principles from the study of interpersonal communication — can help you keep your friendships intact while also gently nudging your friends along a more planet-friendly path.

Building awareness

When we make requests for change, we often expect to see action. But, ADKAR holds that action is the fourth step in any change journey, not the first. Thinking like change managers, we must first build awareness that there is an urgent need for change. And, we need to do this in a way that opens conversations, not forecloses them.

Let's return to our Amazon example. Amazon has been criticized as promoting hyperconsumption — with a questionable human equity record — at a time when environmental organizations from the United Nations to the David Suzuki Foundation remind us that we need to drastically limit the number of new items we buy every year.

Knowing this, you may spot an Amazon package on your friend's doorstep and be tempted to hand it over saying, "I'm surprised you shop at Amazon, given how bad it is."

A report on overconsumption produced by Bloomberg.

Such a comment, while perhaps well-meaning, is a dead end. Your friend is likely to reply with a simple red herring: "I could say the same about you and your car."

This kind of accusatory interaction will fail to bring change.

Instead, over dinner, with no Amazon packages in sight, you might say, "I have been thinking lately about how much I buy." An "I-statement" opener provides you the opportunity to offer careful, well-researched observations that build awareness about a broken status quo. Because the observations stem from self-reflection, not criticism, you stand a chance at avoiding a serpentine model of a deteriorating conversation.

Studies in change management report that the effort to build awareness and urgency should not be underestimated. While this first phase can be the most time-consuming and difficult, it is also the most important. Patience is a virtue.

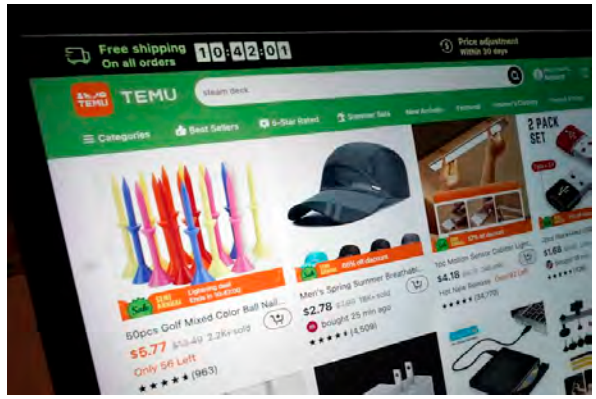
Laying the foundations

Let's say you have successfully made your friend aware of an issue. What's next?

Awareness is a prelude to desire, which means making a personal connection to an issue and committing to change. If building awareness is about making a case for the urgency and necessity of change, then building desire means helping people formulate their own reasons for getting on board.

There are no surefire ways to achieve desire, but ADKAR suggests that some strategies are more successful than others. Coalition is one such strategy.

While coalitions in organizations could include hundreds of people (think about a union requesting change from management), a coalition in this case might consist of just two: you and your friend. It might also begin with a simple question: "will you join me?" Asking this question not only demonstrates relationship-strengthening vulnerability but also provides your friend a personal reason for getting on board: honouring your friendship.



Assuming efforts to build awareness of the issue have been successful, and your friend has a desire to change, then the next important step is to develop knowledge about how to change.

In organizations, the knowledge phase is supported by communicators and change managers who prepare training guides including job aids, FAQs, helplines and town halls. Materials and events like these help employees adopt new behaviours by ensuring that the "new" way of doing things can be understood and that support is only a phone call away.

Returning to friendships, your efforts in the knowledge phase might not necessarily be writing job aids and FAQs, but the underlying principles are the same. As a change leader, you need to demonstrate that there are viable alternatives that can be readily practised. And, perhaps most importantly, you need to assure your friend that you will be there to support them along the way.

Keeping to the example of Amazon or Temu, actions might involve making and sharing a list of local vendors where your friend can get their favourite things. Or, it might mean a monthly thrift date. Even an agreement to text each other when you feel the urge to make impulsive online purchases can go a long way. What matters are tangible, practical plans.

Shepherding peers from climate antagonism to allyship requires significant time and effort. This can be frustrating because as climate advocates, we want others to be taking the same actions we do. However, it is important to remember that every climate activist on earth, including yourself, has arrived at that point as a result of a process of building an awareness and desire for change.

So, before you cut ties with your friends over their latest Temu haul, try speaking with them openly and honestly. In doing so, you could help them become a planet ally and deepen your friendship in the process.

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Social connection is crucial to well-being: New public health guidelines aim to build healthier lives and communities

You've probably heard that human beings are "social animals." That doesn't just mean we tend to interact with each other; it means that as a species, we need social connection to thrive, and isolation can be harmful to our health.

In scientific research, the term used for social animals is "eusocial," which means they live in co-operative groups characterized by overlapping generations, division of labour and co-operative care of offspring.

Sociability is a continuum across species, with other classes of animals being described as:

- Solitary (animals that live independently, such as most tigers or leafcutter bees),
- Subsocial (animals that provide care for their offspring but do not live in long-term co-operative groups, such as some beetles or alligators),
- Communal (animals that share a nesting site but rear their offspring independently, such as certain species of sweat bees), or
- Quasisocial (animals that share a nest and co-operate in brood care but lack division of reproductive roles, such as some orchid bees).

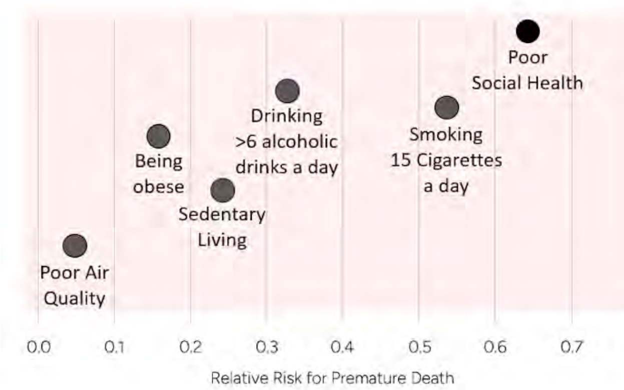
In this way, sociability is similar to describing some animals as carnivores (meaning they rely on only meat), others as herbivores (meaning they rely solely on plant-based diets) and others as omnivores (meaning they eat both). But while human beings can make choices about what they eat, we all have a universal need for social connection.

The consequence of social disconnection

Decades of research have shown that when humans lack social connection, they experience profound and adverse health impacts. This evidence dates back to the earliest human health studies among widows, war wives and bachelors, each of which show significantly shorter lifespans for those with reduced social connections.

In fact, the earliest piece of empirical sociology showed that our social worlds were a driving risk factor for suicide and contemporary research shows that among all the modifiable risk factors for depression, the most important one is having someone to confide in.

All this evidence tells us that loneliness is as harmful or even more harmful than many traditional risk factors for poor health, including poor air quality, sedentary living and obesity, binge drinking and smoking (the last of which is widely recognized as the leading cause of preventable death).



Loneliness is as harmful or even more harmful than many traditional risk factors for poor health. (Adapted from Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017), Author provided (no reuse)

Now, you might think if you're an introvert or somebody with social anxiety, you don't need social connection. You might have an incredible capacity for solitude. Maybe you even feel like you prefer to be alone and are immune to loneliness. However, while people certainly do vary in how much social connection we need, research suggests that social isolation itself, regardless of experiences of loneliness, is harmful.

Everyone needs social connection and research even shows that more introverted people experience worse health outcomes when they fail to have these needs met. This means people need social connection whether they like it or not.

Why social connection can be challenging

Most of us, however, have the opposite problem: we want more social connection than we're able to get. The need to belong is a universal desire.

It was only a few decades ago that we had large-scale social gatherings that ensured we all got time in our schedules together: religious services on weekends, community barbecues, date nights.

But social relationships have become more difficult in the fast-moving and fractured societies we now live in. We spend a lot of time in cars, cubicles and tiny apartments. These environments have been described by some researchers as "lonelygenic" which means they contribute to our feelings of loneliness.

Additionally, we are isolated because social connection can be intimidating. We've become more anxious, we worry too much about what others think of us and we're sensitive to social rejection — all of which are hallmarks of the social anxiety that keep us from getting the social connection we need.

Furthermore, our culture instils in us a fear of burdening others and we've become more and more individualistic and siloed. Our social muscles aren't getting the exercise they need.

Then there are the economic pressures and responsibilities that fill our schedules. The cost of living crisis, pandemics and the explosion of distracting technologies can make it more difficult to connect. A typical special occasion might be spent at home with food delivered and streaming TV instead of company.

These conditions are not meeting our needs. Children are experiencing record-breaking prevalence of mental health crises, health-care costs are skyrocketing while life expectancy is in a slump. Our society has never been more polarized, and many are losing faith in democracy.

We need to turn these trends around.

Recommendations for solving the problem

For all these reasons and more, three years ago I and my team of public health researchers, social scientists and social psychologists set out to develop new national public health guidelines for social connection. To do so, we convened approximately 100 of the world's leading experts on social connection and loneliness, summarized more than 4,500 academic research papers into 50 evidence briefs that would inform our guidelines, documented dozens of case studies illustrating what works and identified dozens of resources to support their implementation.

The guidelines are organized into two sets: six for individuals, similar to food and exercise guidelines, and six for policy and decision makers within organizations, communities and governments to guide them in leading the way to a healthier, more connected society.

Guidelines for individuals

Our individual guidelines emphasize that loneliness is like hunger and thirst: it's a neurobiological process designed to motivate us to get our essential social nutrients. However, unlike food guidelines, our recommendations do not prescribe how many or what types of friends you have. Rather, they provide essential advice to help you figure out what you need.

1. Make social connection a priority throughout your life
2. Cultivate social confidence in yourself and others
3. Build a strong social network with a variety of kinds of relationships
4. Invest in getting enough social connection
5. Maintain and deepen your relationships with others

6. Seek out face-to-face interactions and use technology wisely

Guidelines for communities

Accompanying our messages for individuals, the community guidelines emphasize that social connection takes two or more people. It's not something we can do alone. People face very really challenges to meeting their social connection. If we're going to overcome these challenges, the evidence is clear: we need to work together as communities.

1. Promote awareness of the importance of social connection
2. Foster healthy social and emotional development
3. Make social connection a priority in policies and practices
4. Design environments for connection and invest in social events, activities and programs
5. Improve accessibility and inclusion for all people
6. Measure and make progress towards improving social well-being

Toward a more connected future

These guidelines are intended as a critical component of the future of public health.

Like food and exercise guidelines, their goal is to promote investment in a critically under-appreciated determinant of our well-being.

Following these guidelines may not be easy, but evidence suggests they will make us healthier and happier — especially if we're not trying to do it alone.

Dr. Kiffer G. Card is an Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He received his training as a behavioural epidemiologist, social ecologist, and health services researcher from Brigham Young University (B.Sc.), Simon Fraser University (Ph.D.), and the University of Victoria (Post-doctoral Training). Dr. Card is the recipient of multiple highly prestigious awards, including The 2025 Blanche and Charlie Beckerman Public Health Innovation Scholar Award; The 2021 Michael Smith Health Research BC Scholar Award, the 2020 CIHR-IHSPR Rising Star Award, The 2018 CTN Postdoctoral Award, The 2018 MSFHR Award, and The 2018 CIHR Health Systems Impact Fellowship. Over the past six years, Dr. Card's work has been featured in more than 200 publications and over 100 presentations. Dr. Card's research program provides training to future scholars and raises awareness of key social reforms and policies that aim to help Canadian leaders build happier and healthier communities.

Remote work is a game-changer for addressing burnout in workers

Burnout continues to affect a significant portion of the Canadian workforce, with little progress made since 2023 when between one-quarter and one-third of Canadians reported experiencing it.

Recent research in various areas, including public health and health care, shows that burnout often stems from organizational practices and the pressures they impose, rather than individual failings. Factors like high job demands and emotional exhaustion are key contributors.

According to a June 2024 report from Boston Consulting Group, 52 per cent of Canadians are struggling with burnout. A separate report from Mental Health Research Canada provides further light on the matter, revealing that 24 per cent of Canadians feel burned out at work “most of the time” or “always” and 42 per cent “sometimes.” Only nine per cent report “never” feeling burned out.

The employment platform Glassdoor has also seen a significant rise in discussions about burnout. Until recently, employees writing reviews about employers rarely mentioned burnout. Now, there has been a 44 per cent increase in reviews mentioning burnout compared to 2020.

In the face of this ongoing issue, Canadians have been increasingly advocating for remote work to alleviate some causes of burnout. In August 2023, one in four employees wished they could work from home more often than they did.

Work-life balance benefits

Research indicates that remote work provides employees with greater autonomy, time savings and flexibility, enabling better work-life balance and contributing to addressing burnout.

One of the biggest advantages of working remotely is the time saved by avoiding commutes. Teleworkers save more than an hour per day on average, with specific savings of about 72 minutes per day in Toronto, 64 minutes in Montréal and 60 minutes in Vancouver.

Remote work also reduces time spent on getting ready for work, especially for women, who spend 24 minutes less on these activities compared to onsite workers.

The extra time gained through remote work allows employees to focus on other activities that improve their overall well-being, such as self-care, reading, playing sports or catching up on sleep. Compared to in-person workers, teleworkers sleep 23 minutes longer and spend 30 minutes more on leisure activities than those who work in-person.

Working remotely makes it easier for workers to care for themselves and others, which, in turn, improves health and reduces burnout. Employees who work remotely are 12 percentage points more satisfied than non-teleworkers.

Conversely, in-person employees experience more pressure, reporting less time spent with family and friends, reduced sleep and higher stress levels. Remote work helps alleviate these challenges, creating a more balanced and fulfilling work experience for many employees.

Easing caregiving responsibilities

For parents and caregivers, remote work provides the flexibility needed to better balance family responsibilities and reduce stress levels, which helps address burnout. On days when people work remotely, they spend 1.2 hours more caring for their children compared to in-person workdays.

One of remote work's greatest strengths is the autonomy it offers. Parents can structure their days to accommodate other responsibilities, such as picking kids up from school or other family needs, while completing work at times that best suit their personal schedules.

This flexibility is especially critical for women, who continue to bear a disproportionate share of caregiving duties and are nearly twice as likely as men to work part-time. Women are also more likely to work hybrid; as of February 2024, 27.8 per cent of women worked hybrid compared to 22.4 per cent of men.

In-person work, by contrast, often complicates caregiving by forcing parents to co-ordinate schedules and juggle responsibilities.

Improving equity

Flexible work arrangements also significantly benefit employees with disabilities. In 2022, 35.4 per cent of employed Canadians with disabilities required at least one workplace accommodation. However, a substantial portion of these needs remained unmet.

The top unmet accommodations included working from home (10.9 per cent) and modified working hours (16.3 per cent). Among those needing accommodations, about one in five employees with disabilities did not receive the necessary adjustments for working from home or modified working hours.

This lack of support has serious consequences. Many employees with disabilities experience burnout from the emotional exhaustion and cynicism as they navigate workplaces that fail to meet their needs. Addressing accommodations like flexible work hours and remote work is a necessary step to remedy this burnout.

Workplaces owned by individuals with disabilities are more likely to provide accommodations, including remote work, to employees, meaning inclusive leadership plays a key role in addressing these gaps.

A win-win solution

Remote work, especially in hybrid work arrangements, can be a win-win for both employees and employers by promoting employee health and preventing burnout while maintaining employers' bottom lines.

A study published in *Nature* found that hybrid work is just as productive as in-person work, while also improving employees' job satisfaction and contributing to them not quitting. These benefits were especially pronounced for women and those with long commutes.

Employers have responded — albeit gradually — to the growing demand for flexibility. The percentage of employees working hybrid more than tripled from 3.6 per cent in January 2022 to 11.4 per cent in February 2024, while an additional 13.5 per cent worked exclusively from home.

Workers are increasingly prioritizing jobs that offer autonomy and balance, and companies that are unwilling to adapt risk losing out on employees. As burnout continues to plague the workforce, remote and hybrid work arrangements represent a promising avenue for creating a healthier, more balanced future for Canadian employees.

Dr. Claudine Mangen was born and raised in Luxembourg and pursued her university education in Switzerland and the United States, earning a Bachelor's in Economics and a Master's in Banking and Finance from the University of Lausanne, followed by a Ph.D. in Business Administration from the University of Rochester.

Currently, she is a full professor and RBC Professor in Responsible Organizations at Concordia University, Montreal, specializing in organizational governance and its relationship to gender inequalities.

DEI needs to fix systems, not people

Google recently became the latest multinational to abandon its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) hiring mandates. This follows a broader trend among major corporations and a recent executive order by United States President Donald Trump.

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, rolled back its DEI policies last November after a five-year racial equity commitment. Other companies like Toyota, Target, Johnson & Johnson, and most recently, McDonald's, have also halted their DEI initiatives.

In Canada, however, some companies remain committed to DEI. For example, KPMG Canada conducted 50 DEI training sessions for its 35,000 employees in 2022 and plans to continue its DEI efforts into 2025.

But is this the best way forward?

As a PhD student researching implicit bias, I am examining how DEI training and programs can go awry. For example, one study suggests that while DEI programs can reduce prejudice in some cases, programs that exert control over people may backfire. This happens because they place responsibility for bias and discrimination on individuals when research suggests it is the biased systems that deserve more scrutiny.

Systems — comprising policies, practices and societal norms — are the primary culprits behind biases, which often lead to unfair behaviours toward minority groups.

Biases are systemic

We've all experienced a moment where we met someone and perhaps without thinking, felt a sense of threat or unfamiliarity. These spontaneous reactions are known as implicit biases. Over the years, researchers have linked these biases to unfair treatment of individuals who differ from us.

Historically, psychologists have considered bias intrinsic to oneself, similar to personality or IQ. However, newer approaches are challenging this view.

Personality tests such as the Big Five show reasonable forecasting ability for job outcomes. However, Implicit Association Tests — a common tool used to measure implicit biases — show only weak relevance to actual discriminatory behaviour. In other words, a white person who holds implicit biases against racialized immigrants, for example, might not necessarily act on those biases.

Recent studies now suggest that biases are better understood as environmental factors, not individual traits. For example, one study demonstrated that implicit biases correlate with behaviour. But this connection only holds when analyzing groups of people within a specific region. In regions where anti-Black biases are more prevalent among white residents, higher rates of police violence against Black individuals are observed.

This study highlights that biases aren't about individuals. They are part of broader societal structures and social norms.

Solutions to systemic bias

One key takeaway from implicit bias research is that interventions targeting individual biases often provide only temporary results because bias is embedded within systems.

So, what can organizations do to address systemic bias more effectively?

Let's look at hiring as an example.

Instead of requiring hiring managers to participate in diversity training, organizations could implement hiring criteria that minimize the influence of race and gender bias in the hiring process. Some research suggests tailoring job descriptions to appeal to underrepresented groups. For example, HR postings that increase the transparency of qualifications or focus on benefits can attract more women for roles in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Policing is another area where systemic change can mitigate bias. Studies show police officers are more likely to stop, question, arrest or use force against Black people than white people.

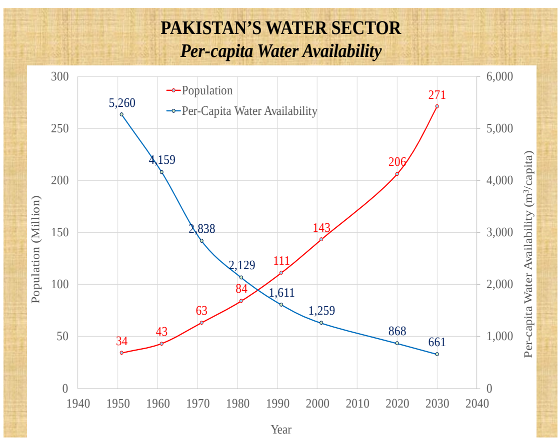
Rather than mandating police officers undergo diversity training to educate them about their biases — something that has only a fleeting effect — a restructuring of the policies and procedures around stops and frisks would reduce bias's impact.

For instance, policies to ensure the collection of race-based data in police stop and frisks and to encourage stricter accountability among police officers could go a long way to curb racial profiling.

As DEI programs face increasing scrutiny and skepticism, and many employees feel frustrated by ineffective and repetitive online training, there is a growing need to reframe DEI as systems-focused work. If diversity, equity and inclusion are truly the goals, the solution lies in rebuilding the systems that shape our society.

Pakistan's muddled response to India's Hydro wars

David Lilienthal, a renowned American hydro expert, wrote in 1951: *"No armies with bombs and shellfire could divest a land so thoroughly as Pakistan could be devastated by the simple expedient of India's permanently shutting up the source of water that keeps the field and the people of Pakistan green."* His words remain relevant today as **Pakistan faces an escalating water crisis** that threatens its national security, food security, and economic stability.



The rapid depletion of glaciers due to climate change is causing rivers to recede and groundwater reserves to diminish. Water availability per capita has dropped dramatically—from 5,000 cubic meters in 1947 to less than 800 cubic meters today—making Pakistan one of the most water-stressed countries in the world.

The Indus Water Treaty and India's Strategic Hydropower Expansion

The Indus Water Treaty (IWT), signed in 1960 under the World Bank's auspices, governs water-sharing between Pakistan and India. Annexure-D, Paragraph 15 (iii) of the treaty states that if Pakistan constructs a hydropower project on a Jhelum tributary, India cannot withdraw that quantum of water upstream. This principle is also upheld by international riparian laws, which recognize prior appropriation rights—meaning the state that first utilizes a water source secures its legal use.

However, following the Uri attacks in Indian-administered Kashmir, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi adopted a strategic policy to weaponize water. India has accelerated the construction of hydropower projects on the Indus and Jhelum rivers to establish prior usage rights. According to *The Economic Times* (July 26, 2017), India is rapidly advancing eight hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir with a total capacity of 6,352 MW at an estimated cost of $9 billion. The approval process for projects that had stalled for decades was suddenly expedited, underscoring India's geopolitical strategy to limit Pakistan's water access.

Pakistan's Failure to Secure Its Water Rights

To counter India's water strategy, Pakistan should have prioritized the development of hydropower projects in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Declaring these projects as "strategic" national security assets and classifying hydropower as renewable energy would have strengthened Pakistan's water rights under the IWT.

Unfortunately, no such policy decision was made by successive governments.

Despite Pakistan’s 60,000 MW hydropower potential, only 9,387 MW has been developed over 75 years. Hydropower projects in the private sector have struggled for decades to secure approvals. For instance:

- New Bong (84 MW) took 18 years to reach completion.
- Patrind (147 MW) took 14 years to become operational.
- Gulpur (102 MW) took 15 years to be completed.
  Meanwhile, 10 other private hydropower projects (totaling 4,000 MW) have been awaiting government clearances for over 20 years.

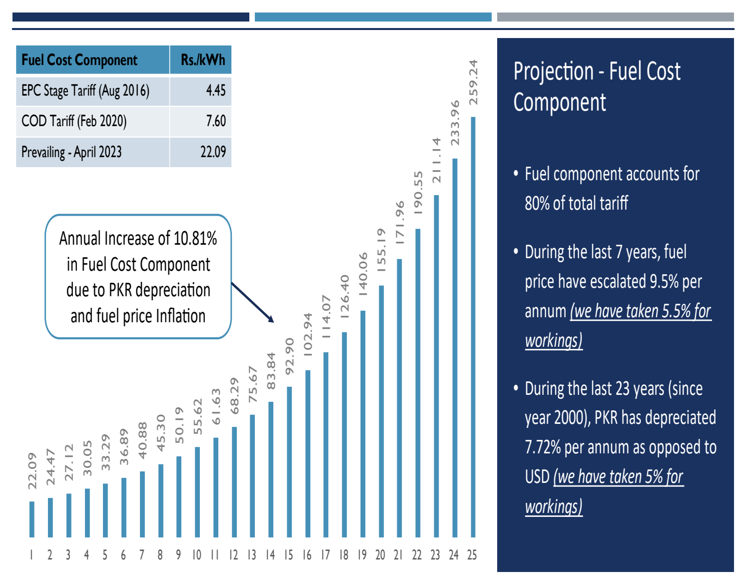
The situation worsened after India’s geo-spatial bill, which led multilateral financial institutions to withdraw funding for hydropower projects in AJ&K due to its disputed status. While Chinese-funded projects like Kohala and Azad Pattan under CPEC initially progressed, they too have stalled. Pakistan lost a historic opportunity to rapidly expand its hydropower infrastructure when Chinese banks were willing to provide financing.

Hydropower: The Key to Energy Security

Pakistan’s failure to prioritize hydropower has not only undermined its legal water rights under the IWT but has also resulted in higher electricity costs due to over-reliance on imported fossil fuels.

- In public hearings before NEPRA, the author of this article repeatedly presented data warning that thermal power plants would lead to unaffordable electricity tariffs.
- By the end of power purchase agreements, the fuel cost component alone is projected to exceed PKR 250/kWh—a staggering financial burden on consumers and industries.

Hydropower, by contrast, offers free fuel, a 100+ year lifespan, and reliable energy generation. While solar and wind energy should be encouraged, they are intermittent and cannot provide the voltage stability, frequency control, and quick-start capability that hydropower ensures. A balanced energy mix—combining hydropower, solar, and wind—is essential for grid stability and energy security.



A Call to Action: Recognizing Hydropower as Strategic

Pakistan must act urgently to classify hydropower as renewable energy and declare it a strategic national asset. This will ensure:

1. Accelerated development of hydropower projects to secure Pakistan's legal water rights under the Indus Water Treaty.
2. Cheaper and cleaner electricity, reducing reliance on costly thermal imports.
3. Enhanced energy security through a diversified, stable power grid.

By neglecting hydropower, Pakistan has jeopardized both its energy and water security. Without immediate policy action, the country risks further economic and geopolitical vulnerabilities—losing not only a cost-effective energy solution but also its long-term access to vital water resources.

Justin Trudeau quits: How his focus on social policy will be his legacy

Justin Trudeau has resigned after more than nine years as Canada's 23rd prime minister. Parliament will be prorogued and will resume sitting on March 24. Trudeau says he made his decision over the holidays after discussions with his family.

During his time in office, the federal government has been extraordinarily active on social policy. From legalizing cannabis, permitting medical aid in dying, introducing dental care, pharmacare and government-subsidized child care, Trudeau reimagined what Canadians can expect from their government.

The son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canada's 15th prime minister, leaves office never having tasted electoral defeat.

He was successful in his first run for elected office as a member of Parliament in 2008, at his run for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 2013 and in his first national election when he became prime minister in 2015.

IBA PU Alumni Canada

The 2015 election is one for the history books as the Liberal Party under Trudeau entered the race with just 36 seats and was widely expected to remain on the sidelines. But due in part to the "sunny ways" campaign that Trudeau ran, along with his energy and likeability, the party breezed to a massive majority with 184 seats.

Trudeau also earned worldwide praise for appointing a cabinet that was gender-balanced, a policy he continued throughout his years in office.

Minority governments, Donald Trump

Trudeau's Liberals were re-elected in 2019 and 2021, although both times to minority governments that required support in Parliament from the left-leaning New Democratic Party.

Trudeau dealt with three American presidents, most notably with Donald Trump during the president's first term in office when the North American Free Trade Agreement was renegotiated.

After Trump's re-election in November 2024, the president-elect has repeatedly mocked Trudeau, calling him governor of the 51st American state — comments that most Canadians find deeply offensive.

The COVID-19 pandemic transpired during Trudeau's time in office. As with other social policies, Trudeau's Liberals instituted a range of mandates to protect public health. Trudeau also invoked the Emergency Measures Act that allowed the federal government to exercise extraordinary powers to clear protesters that were blocking parts of Ottawa for weeks in February 2022.

Uphill battle

Trudeau's resignation comes after members of his own party lost faith during the past several months in his ability to win a fourth mandate as leader heading into the anticipated October 2025 election. But the Liberals, with or without Trudeau, face an uphill battle after nearly a decade in power.

Winning a fourth consecutive term is rare in Canada. Only two prime ministers — Wilfrid Laurier and John A. Macdonald — have done so, and both accomplished the feat more than a century ago when the political landscape had fewer parties.

By resigning now, rather than battling his own party and then enduring what appears will be certain defeat in the next election, Trudeau leaves political life on a relative high note despite his unpopularity in the polls and among some in his own party. The shock resignation of one of his closest cabinet colleagues, Chrystia Freeland, likely played a role in his decision.

Perhaps Trudeau took to heart the example of United States President Joe Biden, who sought to run for one additional term, only to be forced to withdraw at the last moment by his own party. Critics have argued Biden's efforts to hang on and his last-minute reversal contributed to the defeat of Kamala Harris and the loss of the White House to Donald Trump.

Personal toll

During Trudeau's time in office, his marriage ended — as his own parents' marriage did decades ago while Pierre Trudeau was in power. Two of his children are teenagers, while one is a pre-teen. Trudeau has in the past remarked: "The best days of my life are the ones I've spent outside with my kids."

He will now have more time with his family.

Still young at age 53, Trudeau could begin a second public life as the late U.S. president, Jimmy Carter, did following his four years in the Oval Office. Or he could largely withdraw from the public sphere and pursue a private sector career.

No matter what Trudeau's future holds, he leaves an indelible mark on Canada — especially on its social policies.

About Dr. Thomas Klassen
Dr. Thomas Klassen is a professor and researcher specializing in Canadian and comparative labour market and income security policies. His work focuses on labour market policies, pension and retirement systems in Canada, and the politics and welfare policies of South Korea. He also has a keen interest in East Asian studies and the intersection of politics and public policy.

Dr. Klassen is actively engaged in international education, including coordinating the North Korea Summer School: Inside North Korean Literature, Art and Film at York University and leading a study-abroad course to Seoul, South Korea, annually. Beyond academia, he serves as the Communications Officer for the York University Faculty Association and as a member of the Toronto Committee of Adjustment, an adjudicative tribunal appointed by the City of Toronto.

Dr. Klassen holds a PhD in Sociology and an MSc in Urban & Regional Planning from the University of Toronto, alongside other advanced degrees in public administration and sociology. His multidisciplinary expertise and commitment to fostering student success and cross-cultural understanding distinguish his work in research, teaching, and leadership.

Most adults will gain half a kilo this year – and every year. Here's how to stop 'weight creep'

As we enter a new year armed with resolutions to improve our lives, there's a good chance we'll also be carrying something less helpful: extra kilos. At least half a kilogram, to be precise.

"Weight creep" doesn't have to be inevitable. Here's what's behind this sneaky annual occurrence and some practical steps to prevent it.

Small gains add up

Adults tend to gain weight progressively as they age and typically gain an average of 0.5 to 1kg every year.

While this doesn't seem like much each year, it amounts to 5kg over a decade. The slow-but-steady nature of weight creep is why many of us won't notice the extra weight gained until we're in our fifties.

Why do we gain weight?

Subtle, gradual lifestyle shifts as we progress through life and age-related biological changes cause us to gain weight. Our:

- activity levels decline. Longer work hours and family commitments can see us become more sedentary and have less time for exercise, which means we burn fewer calories
- diets worsen. With frenetic work and family schedules, we sometimes turn to pre-packaged and fast foods. These processed and discretionary foods are loaded with hidden sugars, salts and unhealthy fats. A better financial position later in life can also result in more dining out, which is associated with a higher total energy intake
- sleep decreases. Busy lives and screen use can mean we don't get enough sleep. This disturbs our body's energy balance, increasing our feelings of hunger, triggering cravings and decreasing our energy
- stress increases. Financial, relationship and work-related stress increases our body's production of cortisol, triggering food cravings and promoting fat storage
- metabolism slows. Around the age of 40, our muscle mass naturally declines, and our body fat starts increasing. Muscle mass helps determine our metabolic rate, so when our muscle mass decreases, our bodies start to burn fewer calories at rest.

We also tend to gain a small amount of weight during festive periods – times filled with calorie-rich foods and drinks, when exercise and sleep are often overlooked. One study of Australian adults found participants gained 0.5

kilograms on average over the Christmas/New Year period and an average of 0.25 kilograms around Easter.

Why we need to prevent weight creep

It's important to prevent weight creep for two key reasons:

1. Weight creep resets our body's set point

Set-point theory suggests we each have a predetermined weight or set point. Our body works to keep our weight around this set point, adjusting our biological systems to regulate how much we eat, how we store fat and expend energy.

When we gain weight, our set point resets to the new, higher weight. Our body adapts to protect this new weight, making it challenging to lose the weight we've gained.

But it's also possible to lower your set point if you lose weight gradually and with an interval weight loss approach. Specifically, losing weight in small manageable chunks you can sustain – periods of weight loss, followed by periods of weight maintenance, and so on, until you achieve your goal weight.

2. Weight creep can lead to obesity and health issues

Undetected and unmanaged weight creep can result in obesity which can increase our risk of heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and several types of cancers (including breast, colorectal, oesophageal, kidney, gallbladder, uterine, pancreatic and liver).

A large study examined the link between weight gain from early to middle adulthood and health outcomes later in life, following people for around 15 years. It found those who gained 2.5 to 10kg over this period had an increased incidence of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, strokes, obesity-related cancer and death compared to participants who had maintained a stable weight.

Fortunately, there are steps we can take to build lasting habits that will make weight creep a thing of the past.

7 practical steps to prevent weight creep

1. Eat from big to small

Aim to consume most of your food earlier in the day and taper your meal sizes to ensure dinner is the smallest meal you eat.

A low-calorie or small breakfast leads to increased feelings of hunger, specifically appetite for sweets, across the course of the day.

We burn the calories from a meal 2.5 times more efficiently in the morning than in the evening. So emphasising breakfast over dinner is also good for weight management.

2. Use chopsticks, a teaspoon or an oyster fork

Sit at the table for dinner and use different utensils to encourage eating more slowly.

This gives your brain time to recognise and adapt to signals from your stomach telling you you're full.

3. Eat the full rainbow

Fill your plate with vegetables and fruits of different colours first to support eating a high-fibre, nutrient-dense diet that will keep you feeling full and satisfied.

Meals also need to be balanced and include a source of protein, wholegrain carbohydrates and healthy fat to meet our dietary needs – for example, eggs on wholegrain toast with avocado.

4. Reach for nature first

Retrain your brain to rely on nature's treats – fresh vegetables, fruit, honey, nuts and seeds. In their natural state, these foods release the same pleasure response in the brain as ultra-processed and fast foods, helping you avoid unnecessary calories, sugar, salt and unhealthy fats.

5. Choose to move

Look for ways to incorporate incidental activity into your daily routine – such as taking the stairs instead of the lift – and boost your exercise by challenging yourself to try a new activity.

Just be sure to include variety, as doing the same activities every day often results in boredom and avoidance.

Try new activities or sports to keep your interest up. Cottonbro Studio/Pexels

6. Prioritise sleep

Set yourself a goal of getting a minimum of seven hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, and help yourself achieve it by avoiding screens for an hour or two before bed.

7. Weigh yourself regularly

Getting into the habit of weighing yourself weekly is a guaranteed way to help avoid the kilos creeping up on us. Aim to weigh yourself on the same day, at the same time and in the same environment each week and use the best quality scales you can afford.

Dr. Nicholas Fuller
Dr. Nicholas Fuller is a distinguished clinical researcher, Associate Professor at the University of Sydney, and Clinical Trials Director in the Department of Endocrinology at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. With over 18 years of experience, Dr. Fuller is based at the Charles Perkins Centre, where he leads groundbreaking research on obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. His team provides end-to-end clinical analysis services, from study design and data analysis to publication and dissemination, working with esteemed organizations like Novo Nordisk, Pfizer, and the Australian Government.

*As the founder of **Interval Weight Loss**, Dr. Fuller has pioneered evidence-based approaches to prevent weight regain and authored three bestselling books. His innovative weight loss method is supported by an app available on Apple Store and Google Play.*

In addition to his academic achievements, Dr. Fuller is a former national athlete specializing in the 400m hurdles. His accolades include a bronze medal at the 2022 World Masters and recognition as Athletics NSW Master Athlete of the Year in 2023. Dr. Fuller holds a Ph.D. in Obesity Treatment, a Master's in Nutrition & Dietetics, and a Bachelor's in Human Movement, all of which reflect his commitment to improving health outcomes through research, education, and personal excellence

BlueTriton's exit from Ontario shows the effectiveness of bottled water opposition movements

BlueTriton — North America's biggest bottled water firm — recently announced it will close Canada's largest water bottling plant and its entire operations in Ontario.

While the company gave no reasons for the move, its retreat is a strong indication of the changing fortunes of the bottled water industry, both domestically and globally. It also illustrates the growing effectiveness of social movements that have challenged bottled water, weakening the industry's sales.

As an environmental sociologist, my research explores social conflicts over water commodification. My current work focuses on bottled water and asks what its rapid growth means for the human right to water.

Bottled water is the world's most-consumed packaged beverage. It has grown rapidly into a USD$340 billion global market led by major food and beverage corporations. However, bottled water also has a host of negative environmental and social impacts.

I am particularly interested in how the growth of the bottled water industry has generated diverse and surprisingly effective opposition movements.

These movements fall into two broad categories. On one hand are campaigns challenging the industry's groundwater extraction in specific places. On the other are efforts to reduce the consumption of single-use bottled water and increase access to public tap water.

The exit from Ontario by BlueTriton — a private equity consortium that purchased Nestlé's North American bottled water business in 2021 — is a clear victory for opponents that reflects the impact of both of these strands of opposition.

Opposing bottling

In 2000, the Swiss food and beverage giant Nestlé acquired a bottling plant in Aberfoyle, Ont. Included in the sale were two water wells and permits to extract 4.7 million litres of groundwater daily — the highest volume of water extraction rights of any bottler in the province.

In 2016, the firm bought another well that would have allowed it to expand to 6.2 million litres per day.

This part of Ontario is dependent on sub-surface groundwater for nearly all its water uses, including municipal water supply. Opposition to Nestlé's water extraction operations emerged when the grassroots advocacy group Water Watchers was established in 2007 and expanded when Save Our Water was founded in 2015. Their efforts were supported by national organizations including the Council of Canadians.

Droughts in 2012 and 2016 highlighted tensions over the region's finite groundwater.

While residential water use was curtailed, Nestlé continued to pump largely unrestricted. This contrast enabled Nestlé's opponents to effectively leverage the issue of water scarcity — and the prospect of future drinking water shortages — in their efforts. Nestlé countered that its water-taking volume was insignificant relative to total groundwater use.

More recently, water advocates have collaborated with Indigenous activists and the traditional leadership of Six Nations of the Grand River Haudenosaunee First Nation. Only 17 per cent of residents on the Six Nations reserve are connected to safe drinking water, and two-thirds need to rely on packaged water. In this case, activists have framed Nestlé's and BlueTriton's water extraction as an issue of human rights, water injustice and land sovereignty.

These campaigns attracted significant media attention, which — against the backdrop of the 2016 drought — made water bottling into a volatile political issue at the provincial level. An opinion poll (sponsored by opponents) found that 64 per cent of Ontario residents across party lines favoured ending groundwater extraction for commercial bottling entirely. Even Ontario's Premier Kathleen Wynne criticized the industry in 2016.

The result was substantial policy change. Ontario's government imposed a moratorium on new water-taking permits for commercial water bottlers and raised their extraction fees dramatically. These moves drew strong industry protest.

Even so, Doug Ford's Conservative government extended the moratorium until 2021, when it announced a major groundwater policy revision. Among the reforms was a local veto over new large water-bottling operations, which doomed BlueTriton's expansion to a third site.

Similar campaigns have also helped to stop water bottling by these companies elsewhere, including California and Oregon.

Reclaiming the tap

Meanwhile, another set of movements has challenged bottled water from the consumer end.

Initiatives to "reclaim the tap" involve municipalities, universities and other institutions banning bottled water sales on their premises. At the same time, activists have pressured local authorities to expand access to tap water by installing new filtered drinking fountains in public spaces, including airports.

This has taken place alongside efforts to educate the public about tap water quality.

These end-user strategies have also been energized by a growing awareness of the crisis of single-use plastic pollution. Roughly 600 billion single-use plastic beverage bottles are consumed and disposed of annually, of which packaged water represents the largest share.

Canada is the epicentre of this phenomenon. Since 2008, Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver and dozens of smaller communities have banned government purchases of bottled water and its sale on public property. Most have also installed refilling stations and promoted tap water consumption.

Hundreds of cities worldwide have followed suit. Similar policies have been passed in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Munich and South Delhi, India.

Some of these efforts are co-ordinated internationally. For example, the Blue Communities Project links more than 80 municipalities in eight countries that have enacted such policies.

These initiatives have substantial reach. I estimate that nearly 14 million Canadians, and more than 200 million people worldwide, live in jurisdictions that have banned or restricted bottled water and expanded tap water access.

Moreover, fewer Canadians are buying single-use bottled water and 85 per cent of households now frequently use refillable bottles. These shifting patterns are stoking demand for convenient places to fill those bottles, and initiatives including Refill and Blue W help users find the nearest free refill points.

Stalling growth

The cumulative impact of these governmental policies and the refilling movement is becoming apparent.

After more than four decades of steady growth, the volume of bottled water consumed per person is now stagnant or falling across the Global North, including Canada, the United States, Germany, France and the European Union.

Worldwide, per-capita consumption of packaged water is projected to flatline in coming years.

Industry market analyses have expressed deep concern about this sea change. A Nestlé sustainability manager recently stated that:

"The water bottle has in some ways become the mink coat or the pack of cigarettes. It's socially not very acceptable to the young folks, and that scares me."

These factors influenced Nestlé's 2021 decision to sell its North American bottled water business to BlueTriton. Its CEO attributed the move to falling sales and environmental opposition.

Now, BlueTriton too appears to have scaled back in closing its Ontario operations, as it faces increased costs, heightened regulation, falling demand and an inability to expand. All of these adverse conditions are due at least in part to the efforts of opposition movements.

This move, and the industry's flagging fortunes, provide strong evidence that organized opposition and the public backlash against single-use plastic bottled water are having a major impact.

Dr. Daniel Jaffee *is a Professor of Sociology at Portland State University and a leading expert in environmental and rural sociology. His research focuses on the social and environmental impacts of water commodification, including bottled water, and explores social movements advocating for water justice in both the global North and South. He also examines the international fair trade system, assessing its benefits and challenges for small-scale producers and its broader implications for food and agriculture movements.*

He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2006.

4 steps to building a healthier relationship with your phone

Being constantly connected to your electronic devices, and the social media they enable, may be bad for your health and well-being and working remotely only compounds these challenges.

Until very recently, I didn't have a smartphone. In 2018, I wrote an article outlining the benefits of not being connected to the world through a phone. I was perfectly content living a largely disconnected life.

However, since that time, things have changed.

It is increasingly difficult to manage life without a smartphone. I recently took my family to a baseball game and would have been unable to access the ballpark without a smartphone because the phone serves as your tickets. Without a phone, I might not be able to enter a concert I bought tickets for, and it is increasingly difficult to order takeout. Reluctantly, I now own a smartphone.

Working from home, or remotely, has only magnified these challenges. Being constantly electronically connected can make it difficult to separate work from home, leading you to being constantly "on call." This can further keep you in a perpetual state of activation.

In general, excessive smartphone use is associated with anxiety and depression and compromised sleep.

Further evidence suggests that being in contact with work when physically outside of the workplace can lead to higher levels of distress as opposed to those who leave the workplace behind them when they depart.

So how can you manage if your home is your remote workplace? These four tactics can help you establish a clear boundary between work and home.

1. Create physical boundaries

Use physical space or objects to create a separation between work and home. For example, closing or locking the door to a home office creates a physical and psychological barrier that keeps you away from your laptop and helps you split your work life from your home life.

If you do not have a home office, you may have a dedicated work area. Erecting a divider, such as a folding screen or even an unused bed sheet, can serve the same purpose.

To maintain a strict separation of work and home, consider getting a work phone to separate work from personal communications. Outside of work, consider leaving your phone at home when going out for leisure activities in the evening or on weekends to help you escape electronics completely — though be sure to let trusted individuals know where you will be if you plan on disconnecting for an extended period of time.

Simply put, keep your work space separate and view your phone as nothing more than a highly advanced landline of old, plugged into a specific area of your home and unable to be taken further.

2. Create temporal boundaries

Set boundaries around when you will address things, and how much time you will devote to work. It is more and more common to see messages in email signatures noting the days and hours during which people will respond to messages. This is a positive development.

You can also block out time in your schedule to address work and non-work issues. If you have a phone that you use exclusively for work, turn it off and charge it during the times you don't intend to be working. Protecting your time with such tactics is an effective way to promote work-life balance and maintain a healthy relationship with technology.

3. Create behavioural boundaries

Establish behaviours which help you separate work from home. Turning off the ringer and buzzer on your phone prevents you from being distracted and disturbed when enjoying leisure time.

If your work involves social media, then try using different social media platforms for work and non-work to help you avoid being inadvertently drawn into work-related matters when you are trying to enjoy personal time. Or, consider switching to one of the many new "dumbphones" entering the market.

You can also team up with others. In the same way that doctors in a clinic will schedule one partner to be on call at a time so that the other partners can fully escape from work after hours, you can join forces with others who do similar work and redirect calls on a rotating basis so you do not have to worry about always being contacted.

4. Create communication boundaries

Once these tactics have been established, you should communicate them. Establish expectations about when you will and won't be available. Note that this may require some negotiation.

If people contact you out of ignorance of your personal policy, simply advise them of it. If they intentionally violate your boundary, consider your relationship with the violator before addressing them. You don't want to rebuke your boss, but you should be firm in protecting your boundaries.

Stay in control

In the end, you need to ensure that you own your phone and not the other way around.

When used excessively, electronic devices can become a chain that shackles us, as opposed to a tool that enables us. Our phones can become an addiction. Like any other form of addiction, we lose control of our phones when they make demands of us that we feel compelled to answer.

There are times when work or urgent situations require us to be electronically available. However, outside of the times you must be available, any time you feel your phone making a demand of you, turn it off.

Now that I have a smartphone, some things in life are easier and more pleasant. I can avoid traffic jams when driving. My wife and I can discuss purchases before buying, and I can play games on my phone while waiting for a friend to arrive at a restaurant. But I don't allow the phone to dictate how I live.

Acquaintances of mine will sometimes get upset when they text me. Because I don't keep my phone on my hip, I usually don't respond right away. If they voice their displeasure, I'm secretly pleased; it reminds me that I have a healthy relationship with my phone. I'm in command of it. It's not in command of me.

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What is AI

The AI discourse delves into the critical impact of machines on the course of human development, charting the progression from elementary implements like wheels and screws to advanced, AI-driven technologies. This exploration examines the nuanced and often contradictory emotions that humans experience towards machines, ranging from admiration to anxiety. This ambivalence becomes particularly pronounced when considering the potential of machines to achieve self-awareness, a concept that both intrigues and alarms many in equal measure. The AI narrative not only acknowledges the indispensable contributions of machinery throughout history but also highlights the evolving relationship between humans and machines, marked by both dependency and a cautious wariness of their growing intelligence and capabilities.

The essential function that Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays in contemporary society underscores the widespread presence of AI in everyday technology, manifesting in forms such as voice-activated assistants and automated chatbots. This particularly spotlights the remarkable ability of AI to mimic key aspects of human cognition, encompassing activities like learning, solving complex problems, and engaging in creative thought processes. It illustrates how AI is not just a tool for computational tasks but has evolved to emulate sophisticated human mental operations, thereby becoming an integral and often seamless part of our daily interactions and decision-making processes.

The AI also scrutinizes advancements in computational capabilities, with particular attention given to the concept of exascale computing. This form of computing represents a milestone in processing power, achieving a level of performance that vastly surpasses human capabilities. The key focus is not only on the raw speed and efficiency of computing advancements but also on the progressive development of AI and computing systems. These systems are increasingly capable of adopting abilities and perceptions that were once considered unique to humans. It underscores how modern computing has moved beyond mere number-crunching to encompass complex tasks such as learning, recognizing patterns, and making informed decisions, thereby narrowing the gap between artificial and human intelligence.

Within the context of the business world, the capabilities and advantages of applied Artificial Intelligence (AI) are becoming important. AI can be a powerful tool in enhancing operational efficiency and increasing profit margins for businesses. The real worth of AI in a corporate setting lies in its ability to work in harmony with human expertise and skills. This synergistic relationship between AI and human input is crucial, advocating for a business environment where trust and transparency are paramount in the deployment and use of AI technologies. By fostering such an environment, businesses can effectively leverage AI to complement human talents, leading to more innovative solutions, better decision-making, and overall improved performance.

The machine learning presents itself as a critical component of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This aspect is characterized by the use of algorithms that learn from data, enabling to identify patterns and assist in making informed decisions. The deep learning is specialized subset of machine learning. Deep learning utilizes complex structures known as neural networks to analyze a wide array of data types. A notable feature of deep learning is its ability to operate with limited human guidance, enhancing the efficiency and scope of AI applications. This section underscores how these technologies represent a significant leap in the AI field, equipping machines with the capability to autonomously interpret and learn from the vast amounts of data they process, thereby mirroring some aspects of human cognitive functions.

The concept of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), like ChatGPT and DALL-E ,illustrate this technology. The generative AI can be utilized in various business contexts, offering innovative solutions across different industries. It emphasizes the transformative potential of generative AI in creating content and generating new ideas. However, it also brings attention to the need for awareness regarding the inherent limitations of generative AI. Key among these are the risks of producing biased outputs and the possibility of inaccuracies in the generated content. It highlights the importance of understanding and mitigating these limitations to ensure responsible and effective use of generative AI in business applications, underlining that while generative AI holds immense potential, it also requires careful management and oversight to fully harness its benefits.

The potential pitfalls of AI models raise a cautionary note about the risk of generating biased or incorrect data. To counter these risks, there several proactive strategies. It is recommended to select data judiciously for AI training, ensure that it is as unbiased and representative as possible. For ongoing human oversight and intervention in AI operations, human judgment remains crucial in monitoring and guiding AI systems. Always have the prudent reliance on AI, especially when it comes to making critical decisions. This approach suggests balancing the efficiency and insights offered by AI with the nuanced understanding and ethical considerations that human decision-makers bring, thereby creating a more reliable and responsible AI ecosystem.

The roadmap for effectively expanding the use of AI within business environments is the approach of fostering collaboration across various disciplines, breaking down silos to enable a more integrated and comprehensive application of AI. This strategy encourages diverse perspectives and expertise to converge, leading to more innovative and effective AI solutions.

The importance of data-driven decision-making across all tiers of an organization. By empowering employees at every level to make informed decisions based on AI-generated insights, businesses can enhance their responsiveness and adaptability.

There is need for an agile mindset in leveraging AI technologies. This involves being flexible, open to experimentation, and quick to adapt, allowing businesses to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. By adopting this agile approach, companies can not only maximize the potential benefits of AI but also remain resilient and competitive in a digital-first world.

CHANEL is in search of a creative revival. Is Mathieu Blazy the right person for the job?

For several months, Chanel, one of the most iconic luxury houses, has found itself at a crossroads. Following the death of Karl Lagerfeld in 2019, Virginie Viard, his long-time right hand, stepped into the role of creative director. However, Viard announced her departure for June 2024, signalling a pivotal moment for Chanel as the search begins for a new artistic leader. The next creative director faces high expectations: to usher in a new chapter for Chanel, redefining its aesthetic while honouring its storied heritage.

The challenge is monumental. Karl Lagerfeld, who led Chanel's artistic vision for over three decades, left an indelible mark on the fashion world. Known for his signature ponytail and witty remarks, Lagerfeld masterfully balanced the house's legacy – shaped by founder Coco Chanel – with his own visionary creativity. His impact was so profound that imagining Chanel without him seemed almost impossible.

Brand dynasties

Understanding the stakes of a successful leadership transition requires viewing a fashion house as akin to a dynasty. Much like monarchies where successive rulers embody power in their unique ways, artistic directors at fashion houses reinterpret a brand's legacy while making it their own. Since Christian Dior's death in 1957, for example, six creative directors – from Yves Saint Laurent, Marc Bohan, Gianfranco Ferre to John Galliano, Raf Simons, and Maria Grazia Chiuri – have each left their imprint on Dior's identity.

When a new artistic director joins a house, they delve into its heritage: the founder's vision, iconic designs, symbols, and associated locations. They decide which elements to emphasise and reinterpret, sometimes reviving lesser-known aspects to refresh the brand's image. Lagerfeld excelled at this for Chanel, building its legacy around materials such as tweed and quilted leather, black and white colours, and symbols such as the camellia and double C logo. Over 25 years, he continuously reimagined these codes while introducing new ones, such as the lion, an homage to Coco Chanel's zodiac sign, which became a jewellery icon.

The fragility of transitions

Leadership transitions are notoriously tricky for fashion houses. The departure of a creative director can be devastating. Lanvin, for instance, never recovered after Alber Elbaz – once dubbed the darling of fashion – left the brand. A revolving door of successors failed to reignite the magic he brought. Similarly, Gucci's sales plummeted after Alessandro Michele's departure.

On the other hand, a new director can breathe fresh life into a brand. Hedi Slimane's tenures at Saint Laurent and later Celine brought both creative reinvention and soaring revenue. His work revitalised the brands, satisfying customers, the press, and shareholders alike. This underscores the critical nature of selecting the right successor – a decision fraught with strategic implications.

The risk of stagnation

Some directors lean heavily on a brand's legacy to reinforce its identity. Virginie Viard, for example, drew extensively from Chanel's heritage, incorporating iconic elements like tweed, two-tone ballet flats, and floral chiffon.

However, this approach can risk "mummifying" the brand, where collections become repetitive and lack innovation, leading to audience fatigue. Chanel's recent years have shown signs of this stagnation. Viard's exit marks the end of a cycle and a pressing need to redefine Chanel's creative vision.

The danger of clinging too tightly to the past lies in missing market trends. Fashion has evolved with the rise of athleisure – a blend of sportswear and everyday clothing – sustainable fashion, understated luxury, and the influence of new designers.

The perils of breaking away

Some creative directors tend to distance themselves from a brand's heritage. While this approach can bring fresh energy, it risks destabilising the brand's legacy if taken too far – a potential flashpoint for backlash. For instance, when Heidi Slimane joined Yves Saint Laurent, he rebranded the house by dropping "Yves" from the name, sparking a wave of criticism from loyal fans on social media.

Slimane further broke from the brand's heritage by introducing a highly personal aesthetic that diverged sharply from its history. He employed a similar strategy at Céline, revitalising sales for both labels with his distinct vision. However, this approach often complicates the task for his successors, who struggle to establish aesthetic continuity. Successive shifts in style can confuse the market and erode the brand's identity and legacy.

The success of a new artistic director also depends on how cultural intermediaries – journalists, influencers, and celebrities – perceive their work. Fashion houses strive to secure endorsement from these tastemakers by showcasing the director's creativity and decoding their vision for the public.

A crucial turning point for Chanel

Chanel now faces a defining moment: the need to reinvent itself with caution and creativity. While respecting its heritage remains paramount, bold decisions may be necessary to ensure Chanel retains its place among the great fashion houses. This delicate transition offers an opportunity for the brand to write a new chapter, one that remains faithful to its past while embracing the challenges of the future.

About Dr. Delphine Dion:

Dr. Delphine Dion is a Full Professor at ESSEC Business School, specializing in market dynamics and environmental issues, with a focus on second-hand markets, materials, and post-

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She has received several awards for her contributions to research and teaching, including the 2018 ESSEC Foundation Research Award and the 2023 Special Jury Teaching Award. Currently, she holds the LVMH Chaired Professorship (2022–2025) and serves on the Editorial Review Board of five major journals.

Delphine holds a PhD in Management Sciences (1999) and an HDR (2012) from Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with prior academic roles at Université Paris 1 and ESSEC Business School.

The Canada Carbon Rebate is still widely misunderstood — here's why

As Canada's federal parties gear up for the upcoming federal election, one of the key issues on the campaign trail will be how Canada will meet its climate policy targets.

Several strategies exist to meet these targets, including: a border charge on imports, a border rebate for exports, a domestic output-based subsidy or a consumer-based carbon rebate like the Canada Carbon Rebate (CCR).

The CCR, introduced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration to curb carbon emissions, is designed to offset the costs of carbon pricing by providing rebates to households.

However, both leading candidates for Liberal Party leadership, Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland, have said they will drop the CCR if elected. Carney has proposed replacing it with a green incentive program, while Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre has been a vocal opponent of the CCR altogether.

The debate surrounding the CCR is crucial, as carbon pricing is the most effective measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when paired with accompanying measures. Yet, despite its effectiveness, Canada's major political parties are willing to scrap it because it's not politically rewarding.

CCR is widely misunderstood

The CCR is widely misunderstood in Canada, leading to misleading narratives about its economic and environmental impacts.

A recent report from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) argues that industries facing pollution charges could become less competitive because of the CCR, potentially increasing Canada's federal budget deficit by $4 billion by 2030, and making Canadians worse off.

Similarly, a Fraser Institute report argues Canada's global emission footprint is too small for the CCR to make a difference, even if environmental benefits are accounted for.

However, these reports fail to fully assess the impacts of carbon pricing and risk distorting the debate and influencing policy in ways that could weaken Canada's climate strategy.

Yet an overlooked crucial fact in the debate on the CCR is that 80 per cent of Canadian families received more in rebates than they paid in pollution pricing in 2024 because major polluters bear the highest costs under the system.

The missing perspective in assessments

While the PBO's report may be valid from a business standpoint, the report didn't run a full cost-benefit analysis, which would have weighed both the economic costs and the social benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In climate policy, the social perspective is much more important than the business one. Without this context, reports like the PBO's risk being misinterpreted, particularly by politicians opposed to climate action. This could have significant negative consequences for environmental policy in Canada.

A major issue in economic assessments is that the benefits of greenhouse gas reduction are typically excluded because they extend beyond national borders. As a result, emissions reduction can appear to be a poor investment, when in reality, its global and long-term benefits far outweigh the initial expenses.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's cost-benefit guide acknowledges this issue. Under normal circumstances, global benefits should be excluded in cost-benefit analysis. However, given the nature of climate change, the guide states that the costs and benefits of greenhouse gas reductions — calculated using the social cost of greenhouse gas — are appropriate to include in cost-benefit analysis.

A recent UN report supports this approach, estimating that while global carbon policy measures could cost more than US$1 trillion annually, the economic benefits will be far greater. Shifting to a green economy could yield US$26 trillion by 2030, compared to maintaining business as usual.

Carbon leakage challenge

A major challenge for Canada's carbon pricing strategy is that many of its key trading partners don't impose similar emissions pricing on consumers.

For example, the United States and China don't, even though they are the world's two biggest polluters. While some jurisdictions, like California's Cap-and-Trade Program and China's national emissions trading system, have introduced emissions regulations, these programs are not as widespread as Canada's.

This imbalance puts Canadian producers at a competitive disadvantage. In response, some businesses may choose to move their production operations to countries with weaker environmental regulations to avoid higher carbon pricing in Canada — a phenomenon known as "carbon leakage."

Instead of reducing emissions, this carbon leakage simply shifts emissions elsewhere, undermining global efforts to address climate change. To counter this, there has been a growing interest in policies designed to prevent this from happening, such as border carbon adjustments.

This issue is critical to Canada's ability to meet its climate policy targets. Without effective measures to prevent carbon leakage, the country could face higher costs and less impact on global emissions reduction efforts.

Can Canada still compete?

Given the U.S. President Donald Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris Accord, one might wonder whether Canada should continue pursuing the CCR program.

Ideally, Canada would not have to choose between strong climate policy and economic competitiveness. However, without a co-ordinated global approach to carbon policy, Canada faces difficult trade-offs.

International organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) could step up by actively promoting carbon tariffs similar to the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

At the heart of this debate is the "polluter-pays principle," which holds that those who pollute must bear the costs of their actions. This principle is central to climate justice.

Carbon pricing is the only abatement instrument that can implement the polluter-pays principle, but additional policies — such as border charges on imports, border rebates for exports or domestic output-based subsidies — are required to make it more efficient and politically viable.

Currently, 75 carbon taxes and emissions trading systems are in operation worldwide, covering approximately 24 per cent of global emissions.

Canada is considering its own CBAM, but challenges remain. Implementing such a policy could lead to heightened trade tensions with the U.S. or even provoke retaliatory actions.

Need for international co-operation

To make carbon pricing and border adjustments work, international organizations must help close the knowledge and information gaps. One way to do this is by providing more accurate data on embedded carbon prices to improve the calculation of carbon prices down the road.

Further research is also needed to understand how domestic climate policies impact other nations and how to ensure CBAM's interoperability with other climate measures. Such work will contribute to the optimization of climate policies for the benefit of all.

In the meantime, Canada's climate policy must strive to integrate CBAM in a way that aligns with global trade systems like the WTO. Some trade law experts have expressed concerns that CBAM may not be compatible with the WTO General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and this must be addressed.

If Canada were to keep the CCR, this integration would be especially important as Canada navigates future trade relations with the U.S. under Trump's unpredictable administration. Canada doesn't want to fall behind in its climate action efforts.

Canadians would like the country to lead on climate action while staying competitive. A public consultation on this matter would be a good move from any elected political leader.

Dr. Ruolz holds a PhD from Laval University (Quebec, Canada) and is a seasoned expert in health economics, labour economics, and public policy evaluation. He has worked with the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and is affiliated with Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO).

With a strong research background, Dr. Ruolz has published around 20 scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals and has presented his work at major national and international conferences.

He has contributed to the Scientific Committees of leading conferences, including iHEA, EuHEA, and CAHSPR, and serves as a reviewer for prestigious journals such as Health Economics, Canadian Medical Association Journal, and Health Policy, among others.

Simon Blanchette- Concordia University

Businesses must stop caving to political pressure and abandoning their EDI commitments

Over the past year, several major corporations have scaled back their equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives amid shifting political pressures. Walmart is one of the latest major corporations to reduce its EDI programs following conservative backlash and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's re-election.

Ford Motor Company, Lowe's and Nissan have all announced plans to change their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies. In the entertainment sector, Hollywood's commitment to EDI has waned, with several studios and networks reducing or eliminating diversity programs.

This growing trend reflects a broader corporate retreat from EDI commitments, as businesses navigate the complexities of the current political landscape. So far, many have chosen to respond by negating their commitment to inclusion and diversity.

Given the close economic and cultural ties between the United States and Canada, this troubling shift could spill over into Canada. It would undermine years of progress towards achieving genuine workplace equity. Ultimately, no one will benefit in the long run — not even the people opposed to it — as they will miss out on the benefits of a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

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Walmart: From EDI commitment to rollback

As the largest private employer in the world with over two million employees, Walmart has long been at the centre of debates about labour practices, workplace diversity and corporate responsibility.

For years, the company championed EDI principles. In 2019, Walmart made a public commitment to boost diversity, pledging to increase the percentage of women and racialized people in managerial roles.

Walmart also introduced initiatives to support underrepresented groups in the workforce, including diversity and inclusion training, the Women's Resource Community, the OneTen Coalition program and partnerships to recruit people with disabilities.

Walmart also tracked workforce representation by gender and ethnicity. Its 2023 report revealed that 20 per cent of promotions from hourly to management position were Black and racialized women. Over 86,000 employees completed race and inclusion training, and nearly 800 participated in Walmart's Culture, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Institute.

However, amid a political climate marked by renewed attacks on corporate diversity initiatives and so-called "wokeness," Walmart started rolling back its EDI policies and diversity training programs.

For instance, the company has decided not to extend its racial equity centre, a five-year initiative that was launched in 2020. Additionally, it will discontinue the use of terms such as “LatinX” and “DEI” in official communications, opting instead to use the word “belonging.” But who truly belongs if, at the same time, they are cancelling EDI initiatives?

Understand what EDI means

This rollback of EDI initiatives reflects a growing trend within big business to selectively adopt social justice agendas when they are advantageous, then scale them back when the political climate changes. This “diversitywashing” mirrors greenwashing where companies claim to support social or environmental causes but retreat when faced with political or public pressure.

At its core, EDI is about ensuring that all employees, customers and stakeholders have equitable access to work opportunities, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or socio-economic background.

EDI policies and practices are essential for supporting equity-deserving groups — such as women, Black and racialized people, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ communities — who have historically faced systemic barriers to opportunity.

Arguing for a meritocracy without first establishing equity is like trying to lift a sloped playing field instead of leveling it, while ignoring that one side is a mountain and the other is a canyon. It leaves existing barriers and inequities intact on the road to merit, telling people that hard work alone will lead to rewards, while ignoring that they need to work that much harder to achieve the same.

The idea that we must create an even playing field first should not be controversial, and yet it is.

The fear that EDI programs compromise competency is both common and unfounded; embracing diversity is about dismantling barriers that have unfairly limited opportunities for talented individuals, not lowering standards.

Why corporations must commit to EDI

EDI initiatives should never be reduced to political tools or marketing gimmicks. The true purpose of these policies is to foster an environment where people of all backgrounds can thrive.

Organizations greatly benefit from the creativity, problem-solving and innovation that come with diversity.

When corporations roll back these initiatives in response to political pressures, it signals to the world their commitment to EDI was merely a strategic move to improve their brand image during a period when social justice was a trending topic.

This can damage a corporation’s reputation in the eyes of both employees and consumers, particularly those from equity-deserving groups who expect representation, as well as those who value diversity and inclusivity.

It is essential for large corporations to recognize that adopting EDI policies is not just a moral imperative, but also a sound business strategy. The data is clear: diverse companies perform better, including from a profitability standpoint.

Diversity related advantages create a competitive edge that drives growth. A McKinsey report revealed that companies with more diverse executive teams were 36 per cent more likely to have above-average profitability. Giving that up is simply bad business.

As both a scholar and a practising strategy and organizational change consultant, I have never encountered a well-designed and effectively implemented EDI program that did not yield positive results for the organization.

EDI is good for business and good business: it is both the ethical choice and the smart business decision.

Walking the talk

The way forward is clear: corporations, especially large ones, must make a genuine commitment to EDI — not just because it is the morally right thing to do, but because it is the key to long-term business success. Diversity fosters innovation, and innovation drives profitability.

However, for employees of diverse backgrounds to truly thrive in their workplaces, organizations must go beyond surface-level representation and tokenism. They must build inclusive workplaces where diversity is genuinely respected, supported and embraced unconditionally and independent of political trends.

By doing so, companies will not only contribute to a more equitable society, but also position themselves for success in an increasingly diverse global marketplace. Achieving this requires leaders who are courageous and prioritize long-term strategic goals over short-term political gains.

Leading through fear is not leadership; it reflects a failure in strategic foresight. Talent is the defining competitive advantage of this century, and business leaders cannot afford to waste it.

Simon Blanchette is an academic and industry expert, recognized for his interdisciplinary approach to business education.

He lectures in Organizational Behaviour, Marketing, and Strategic Management at two of Canada's leading institutions: McGill University's Desautels Faculty of Management and Concordia University's John Molson School of Business

AI dating is about data, not love: How to resist the tech takeover of romance

As in-person dating activities make a comeback and the allure of dating apps fade, platforms like Tinder, Bumble and Hinge are becoming passé for millennials and Gen Z.

But while the era of dating apps is on the decline, people aren't ditching the search for love altogether. There's enough heart-shaped chocolates, red lingerie and silicone toys to keep us going for decades. The real question is: who or what is filling the void left by the dating app industry?

The answer is artificial intelligence.

Tech companies have woven AI into everything from facial recognition software to voice-activated assistants and sexbots. Now, it's being inserted into online dating. As an anthropologist who writes about sexuality, dating and technology, this generates a lot of questions for me.

For instance, what are some of the ethical dilemmas this technology raises in terms of privacy and safety? What can we do instead of giving ourselves over to artificial intelligence when it comes to love and romance? As we navigate the complexities of love in the digital age, these questions demand thoughtful answers.

The spectrum of AI dating

AI has been quietly reshaping the dating landscape for years. Marketed as a hyper-efficient solution to securing optimum matches in record time, it's easy to see how AI is more appealing than traditional apps. Who wouldn't want to avoid the monotony of endless swiping or the possibility of ghosting?

AI tools like ChatGPT can also generate dating conversations and optimize user profiles. However, the results can be hit-or-miss. One writer said ChatGPT made her "sound like someone's 50-year-old uncle on Facebook."

Then there's Meeno, a relationship advice app founded by former Tinder CEO Renate Nyborg. It uses generative AI and is designed to address loneliness among young people, especially men, who are statistically less likely to access help-seeking resources.

The most popular AI dating assistant at the moment is Rizz, an app that had more than 20,000 daily downloads in 2024. Rizz analyzes screenshots of conversations on other platforms and crafts reply suggestions.

AI's role in the dating world extends far beyond tools designed to help people connect — some users are forging actual relationships with AI chatbots.

Interestingly, men are twice as likely as women to consider an AI partner. This trend may be driven by differences in how men and women engage with technology, differences in societal expectations or a greater curiosity among men about combining AI with relationships.

Introduced in 2017, Replika was one of the first generative AI dating chatbots. Marketed as "an AI companion who is eager to learn and would love to see the world through your eyes," Replika quickly gained a reputation for its explicit content.

When the company removed its adult content in 2023, users revolted so vehemently the functions were partially reinstated.

AI dating research

Security issues and data privacy are common concerns when it comes to AI, including romance scams and the sharing or selling of personal information. Equally scary is the prospect of queer folks being criminalized for using these dating tools in countries where being gay is illegal.

In terms of gender, the trends in this domain mirror those on dating apps — men are the prime users and designers of these platforms.

Given the pronounced gender inequities already present in our society and the rise in sexual violence perpetrated by men against women through technology, AI dating platforms risk deepening these systemic inequities.

AI's impact on how young people learn about sex and dating is another important topic. A recent scoping review highlighted the dangers of AI resources that reflect conservative and unscientific worldviews about sex and romance. When exposed to such views, youth become at risk of developing internalized shame for being curious about sex, dating and cybersexual activities.

Another troubling aspect of AI in dating is the proliferation of fraudulent dating apps that employ chatbots. These apps lure users into installing a dating app and paying subscription fees to chat with existing users. However, the sole purpose of these apps is to cheat new users into paying money to fake accounts that are managed by chatbots.

Getting more groove in our hearts

More technology doesn't necessarily mean better lives. If anything, it can actually contribute to the current "loneliness pandemic" that's caused, in part, by our over-reliance on devices.

Selective doses of AI can be helpful to bounce ideas off of, or to help work through an unrequited crush, but if we permit AI to take over this vital aspect of life, our hearts could become lined with hollow connections. That's the last thing we all need.

The good news is that young people are hungry for more in-person experiences and they're leading the resistance against the dating app industry. Nostalgia for previous eras, especially the 1990s and early 2000s, reflects a desire to experience a time when life was less stressful and more carefree. Analogue technology and other forms of physical media are coming back in a big way.

Vintage thrifting, cooking, game nights and do-it-yourself art projects are effective and fun ways to resist the AI creep, whether in dating or in daily life.

However, creating these options isn't something you should have to do alone. Community organizers, cultural leaders and thoughtful influencers also have roles to play in AI-free activities and opportunities that foster connection. Think old school cultural events tailored towards niche demographic groups, like queer, gender-diverse and women-only spaces.

By creating and participating in these kinds of activities, you can cultivate experiences that help you make decisions about love and life on your own terms, versus being directed by what aggressive capitalist corporations want you to do.

Dr. Treena Orchard is an anthropologist, author, and activist focused on sexuality, gender, and health. An Associate Professor at Western University, she has spent over 20 years researching vulnerable communities, including sex workers, people with HIV/AIDS, and Indigenous populations.

A leading voice in sex work studies, her work spans body mapping, sexuality and disability, and male survivor experiences. Passionate about public scholarship, she is writing a memoir on swipe culture and dating apps with University of Toronto Press (AEVO). She holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Manitoba and is a Faculty Scholar at Western University

Decluttering can be stressful – a clinical psychologist explains how personal values can make it easier

I recently helped my mom sort through boxes she inherited when my grandparents passed away. One box was labeled – either ironically or genuinely – "toothpick holders and other treasures." Inside were many keepsakes from moments now lost to history – although we found no toothpick holders.

My favorite of the items we sorted through was a solitary puzzle piece, an artifact reflecting my late grandmother's penchant for hiding the final piece to a jigsaw puzzle just to swoop in at the last moment and finish it.

After several hours of reminiscing, my mom and I threw away 90% of what we had sorted.

"Why did I keep this?" is a question I hear frequently, both from my family and friends and from patients. I am a licensed clinical psychologist whose research focuses on the characterization, assessment and treatment of hoarding disorder, particularly for adults 60 years of age or older. As such, I spend a great deal of my time thinking about this question.

What drives the need to keep stuff?

Hoarding disorder is a psychiatric condition defined by urges to save items and difficulty discarding current possessions. For adults with "clinically severe" hoarding disorder, this leads to a level of household clutter that impairs daily functioning and can even create a fire hazard. In my professional experience, however, many adults struggle with clutter even if they do not meet the clinical criteria for hoarding disorder.

Holding on to things that have sentimental value or could be useful in the future is a natural part of growing older. For some people, though, this tendency to hold on to objects grows over time, to the point that they eventually do meet criteria for hoarding disorder. Age-related changes in executive function may help explain the increase in prevalence of hoarding disorder as we get older; increasing difficulty with decision-making in general also affects decisions around household clutter.

The traditional model behind hoarding disorder suggests that difficulty with discarding comes from distress during decision-making. However, my research shows that this may be less true of older adults.

When I was a graduate student, I conducted a study in which we asked adults with hoarding disorder to spend 15 minutes making decisions about whether to keep or discard various items brought from their home. Participants could sort whatever items they wanted. Most chose to sort paper items such as old mail, cards or notes.

We found that age was associated with lower levels of distress during the task, such that participants who were older tended to feel less stressed when making the decision about what to keep and what to discard. We also found that many participants, particularly those who were older, actually reported positive emotions while sorting their items.

In new research publishing soon, my current team replicated this finding using a home-based version of the task. This suggests that fear of making the wrong decision isn't a universal driver of our urge to save items.

In fact, a study my team published in August 2024 with adults over 50 with hoarding disorder suggests that altruism, a personality trait of wanting to help others, may explain why some people keep items that others might discard. My colleagues and I compared our participants' personality profiles with that of adults in the general population of the same gender and age group. Compared with the general population, participants with hoarding disorder scored almost universally high on altruism.

Altruism also comes up frequently in my clinical work with older adults who struggle with clutter. People in our studies often tell me that they have held onto something out of a sense of responsibility, either for the item itself or to the environment.

"I need it to go to a good home" and "my grandmother gave this to me" are sentiments we commonly hear. Thus, people may keep things not out of fear of losing them but because saving them is consistent with their values.

Your values can help guide which possessions should stay in your life and which ones should go.

Leaning into values

In a 2024 study, my team demonstrated that taking a values-based approach to decluttering helps older adults to decrease household clutter and increases their positive affect, a state of mind characterized by feelings such as joy and contentment. Clinicians visited the homes of older adults with hoarding disorder for one hour per week for six weeks. At each visit, the clinicians used a technique called motivational interviewing to help participants talk through their decisions while they sorted household clutter.

We found that having participants start with identifying their values allowed them to maintain focus on their long-term goals. Too often, people focus on the immediate ability of an object to "spark joy" and forget to consider whether an object has greater meaning and purpose. Values are the abstract beliefs that we humans use to create our goals. Values are whatever drives us and can include family, faith or frivolity.

Because values are subjective, what people identify as important to keep is also subjective. For example, the dress I wore to my sister's wedding reminded me of a wonderful day. However, when it no longer fit I gave it away because doing so was more consistent with my values of utility and helpfulness: I wanted the dress to go to someone who needed it and would use it. Someone who more strongly valued family and beauty might have prioritized keeping the dress because of the aesthetics and its link to a family event.

Additionally, we found that instead of challenging the reasons a person might have for keeping an item, it is helpful to instead focus on eliciting their reasons for discarding it and the goals they have for their home and their life.

Tips for sweeping away the old

My research on using motivational interviewing for decluttering and my observations from a current clinical trial on the approach point to some practical steps people can take to declutter their home. Although my work has been primarily with older adults, these tips should be helpful for people of all ages.

Start with writing out your values. Every object in your home should feel value-consistent for you. For example, if tradition and faith are important values for you, you might be more inclined to hold onto a cookbook that was made by the elders at your church and more able to let go of a cookbook you picked up on a whim at a bookstore.

If, instead, health and creativity are your core values, it might be more important to hold onto a cookbook of novel ways to sneak more vegetables into your diet.

Defining value-consistent goals for using your space can help to maintain motivation as you declutter. Are you clearing off your desk so you can work more efficiently? Making space on kitchen counters to bake cookies with your grandchildren?

Remember that sometimes your values will conflict. At those moments, it may help to reflect on whether keeping or discarding an object will bring you closer to your goals for the space.

Similarly, remember that values are subjective. If you are helping a loved one declutter, maintain a curious, nonjudgmental attitude. Where you might see a box filled with junk, your grandmother might see something filled with "toothpick holders and other treasures."

Dr. Mary Dozier is a clinical psychologist specializing in evidence-based assessment and treatment of psychopathology across the lifespan. She earned her B.A. in Psychology and Philosophy from Rice University in 2011, followed by an M.S. in Clinical Psychology (2015) and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology (2019) from the San Diego State University/UC San Diego Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology. She completed her doctoral internship with a Geropsychology emphasis at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in 2019.

'Aliens' and 'animals' – language of hate used by Trump and others can be part of a violent design

"Animals," "aliens" and "people with bad genes" – President Donald Trump and his supporters often use this kind of dehumanizing language to describe immigrants.

In the 2024 presidential debate between Trump and Democratic candidate Kamala Harris, Trump falsely referred to Haitian refugees in Springfield, Ohio, as "eating the pets of the people that live there." And in his Jan. 20, 2025, inaugural address, Trump spoke of "dangerous criminals, many from prisons and mental institutions," who have illegally entered the U.S. "from all over the world."

Using hateful, polarizing language to gain a political advantage or make an argument against a group of people, like immigrants, is not unique to the U.S.

The use of this language is associated with populist shifts in many parts of the world.

I am a scholar of international human rights who has studied the language associated with mass atrocities. I have also written about how social media can amplify misinformation and hate speech.

Some observers and analysts who follow Trump dismiss his hateful language against immigrants as empty bluster or performance art.

The implication is that Trump will not act on his most extreme promises and follow through on what he has called "the largest domestic deportation operation in American history."

In the first few days of the new Trump administration, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers began raids to detain immigrants living in the U.S. illegally and increased their number of arrests and deportations of immigrants, including those without violent criminal records.

Tom Homan, the U.S. border czar, has said that the government's mass immigration deportation plans – which he said could include raids on schools, churches and other places previously considered havens – is "all for the good of this nation."

My hate speech research shows that, as the world has seen to its horror again and again, words that slander and strip people of their voices and humanity are often a first step toward discriminatory and violent policies. At its most extreme, speaking of people as dirty and polluting and saying they lack humanity makes it easier to kill them.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents handcuff a detained immigrant in Maryland on Jan. 25, 2025.

Echoes from the fascist past

There is nothing new about the hateful political rhetoric that has become common today.

In the lead-up to and during World War II, fascist leaders in Europe targeted Jews, Roma, gay people and other groups as sources of "social pollution," as beyond being human, while describing themselves as noble and decent, embodying a pure, uncorrupted nation.

"Dehumanization by Design: When Political Rhetoric Becomes a Tool for Oppression."

In 1920, well before the German Nazi Party came to power in 1933, its platform declared that "Only someone of German blood, regardless of faith, can be a citizen."

Viktor Klemperer, a literary scholar who was a close observer of Nazism, wrote in a diary published posthumously in 1995 that the Third Reich's demonizing language against Jews and other marginalized groups helped create its culture and justify its mass killings. Nazis consequently assumed the mantle of liberators as they killed those whom they saw as corrupting the "pure race," in accordance with ideas of "racial hygiene."

The Nazis murdered more than 12 million people.

The Nazis' hateful language was not limited to Europe. Fritz Kuhn, a German Nazi activist, served in the late 1930s and early 1940s as leader of the German American Bund, an organization of ethnic Germans and Nazi sympathizers living in the U.S. He addressed a Nazi rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1939.

Kuhn said during his speech that American citizens with American ideals are "determined to protect ourselves, our homes, our wives and children against the slimy conspirators who would change this glorious republic into the inferno of a Bolshevik paradise."

The U.S. government stripped Kuhn of his U.S. citizenship in 1943 and deported him to Germany in 1945 because of his pro-Nazi allegiance.

Italy's far right shifts from words to violence

Italy offers another example of how hateful speech can lead to discriminatory or violent policies. Right-wing politicians and policies have grown more popular and powerful in the past few years in Italy.

In 2018, Matteo Salvini, then the deputy prime minister who now holds the same position, denounced the Roma people, an ethnic minority. He called for their removal through a "mass cleansing street by street, piazza by piazza, neighborhood by neighborhood."

These were not empty words.

Salvini's call was accompanied by mob violence, mass evictions and demolition of Roma informal camps set up in the streets. The Roma people continue to face discrimination and racial profiling.

Salvini has directed his most virulent language, however, toward the tens of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, mostly from Africa, who attempt to reach Italy via the Mediterranean Sea.

Salvini has frequently called the arrival of migrants a "flood" or "surge". This kind of dehumanizing language makes it easier to provoke alarm about an abstract, unwanted mass of people.

The claims behind Salvini's alarmism, however, are not borne out by facts. Since the peak of migrant sea crossings, when a few hundred thousand migrants entered Italy from 2014 through 2017, the country's crime rate has fallen significantly.

Salvini, perhaps more than any other populist leader in the world, has turned his hateful language and use of misinformation into action. Italian authorities under Salvini's direction have detained ships working to help rescue migrants who are in danger at sea, preventing them from carrying out those rescues.

This obstruction violates European Union law, which ensures the legal right to help anyone found in distress at sea.

In September 2024, an Italian prosecutor requested a six-year jail term for Salvini, accusing him of kidnapping 147 migrants by preventing them from landing at a port in Italy for several weeks.

Salvini said he was defending Italian borders by keeping the migrants aboard a Spanish migrant rescue ship.

Salvini was acquitted of kidnapping and dereliction of duty charges in December 2024.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt speaks during a press briefing on Jan. 28, 2025, alongside an image of an alleged criminal detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

What to expect

We can't be certain at this point what Trump's and his supporters' hateful language against immigrants, minorities and political opponents will yield.

Judging by Italy's example and other instances, it's possible that laws will be broken in implementing Trump's immigration and asylum policies.

A federal judge temporarily halted Trump's Jan. 20 executive order that told federal agencies to not process identification documents for babies born to parents who are living in the country illegally, among other scenarios.

It's not clear how these policies will continue to unfold. What is clear is that words of hate have been used in many times and places as a justification for illegal arrests and, in some cases, as a prelude to state-sanctioned mass violence.

Dr. Ronald Niezen is a Professor of Practice in Sociology at the University of San Diego and an anthropologist specializing in Indigenous rights movements, digital security, surveillance, and human rights. He has conducted fieldwork in Mali, Namibia, and northern Canada and has published ten nonfiction books on these topics. His most recent work, The Memory Seeker *(2023), is a novel about war crimes investigation.*

Dr. Niezen has held distinguished positions at McGill University, Harvard University, and Åbo Akademi University and was the Pearson Chair in Law and Anthropology at McGill. His current research employs open-source investigation techniques, with training from the Human Rights Center at Berkeley, Bellingcat, and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations in The Hague. He earned his PhD in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University in 1987.

How narrow views of romance inform which marriages are seen as legitimate

Valentine's Day is sold to us as a moment to celebrate romance: we should buy cards, roses and chocolates. Go for fancy, dimly lit dinners with our significant others. Make loving declarations.

Romance can enhance our lives. Studies have shown the benefits of romance, from companionship to improving our physical, sexual and mental health.

However, romance can also be mobilized to judge and surveil relationships, and determine which are valid and which are not. Numerous countries, including Canada, have laws against what they deem as fraudulent marriages.
To consider the impact of these laws, and to study the colonial legacies within them, I conducted a study of the marriage (and for many, migration) experiences of people of Algerian origin in three contexts: Ghazaouet and Tizi Ouzou in Algeria, a Parisian suburb called Petit-Nanterre and in Montréal from 2011 to 2019. My findings drew on almost 200 personal interviews focused on the marriage partner preferences and ceremonies of my participants.

I was particularly interested in a comparison between France and Canada, where monitoring romance has served as a way to gauge the sincerity of marriages among migrants for whom citizenship is at stake.

Laws targeting fraudulent marriage

In an effort to curb a seeming rise in fraudulent marriages in immigration family sponsorship requests, governments in France and Canada introduced legislation in the 2000s to promote greater surveillance of and penalties for marriage fraud.

In France, this began in 2008 with a law to curb "love fraud with a migratory aim." Passed in the same year, Canada's law centred on impeding "bad faith" marriages.

Such legislation often comes with penalties. In France, if one is found guilty of being party to a fraudulent marriage, the penalty can be annulment, five to 10 years in prison, fines or deportation. The impetus for such laws is the unquantified sense that a growing number of foreign nationals take advantage of family unification immigration pathways through disingenuous relationships.

The state's involvement in France is more acute because the burden of assessment falls primarily on marriage officiants and immigration officers. Civil marriages there must take place in a municipal office and prior to a religious marriage.

A 2010 directive to French marriage officiants is especially revelatory of this surveillance. Evidence of financial and sexual intimacies act as evidence of a sincere marriage. Romance is seen as a reflection of a spontaneous and uncalculated relationship.

Of course, there is no evidence that expressions of romance in an early marriage are signs of success; divorce occurs for almost half of marrying couples, whether couples are transnational or not. Figures in Canada indicate a slightly higher divorce rate than in France.

In Montréal, one can be married outside of a municipal office. Still, my participants in that city shared similar stories of pressures to perform specific sexual politics in the presence of state officials.

One man whose wife wore a hijab was interrogated by first responders about the husband's involvement when she fainted, while pregnant, outside a grocery store. Bewildered by the situation, he answered their questions about whether theirs was a forced marriage (it was not). In retrospect, he said he would have declined this line of questioning and focused their attention on his wife.

Arranged marriages

One of my notable findings is that many marriages in my sample were quasi-arranged — organized with the assistance of family members (often mothers). Yet, these types of marriages often fall outside idealized ideas of romance, rendering these couples more vulnerable to being accused of fraud.

I also found that potential scrutiny from immigration officials did not impede interest in a transnational marriage partner. Many of my interviewees liked the idea of a partner of the same religion or culture, and who spoke Arabic or Tamazight. In addition, for many, a cosmopolitan transnational life linking Algeria with France or Québec was appealing.

Depending on their gender, social class, religiosity, families and personalities, individuals grapple with these politics differently. The social contexts of a Parisian suburb and Montréal further shaped a participant's sense of longing and belonging. Fewer Algerian women in Montréal were interested in such arrangements. Invariably, however, individuals of Algerian origin in both contexts knew that transnational unions were highly scrutinized.

Despite the attention granted to curbing marriage fraud, the data suggest that few marriages are annulled. The spectre of this surveillance is greater than its enforcement.

Unfairly penalizing migrants

Legislation and scrutiny of marriages seen as fraudulent subtly position romance as a proxy to assess narrow liberal ideals. Some scholars have called this phenomenon a push for a "sexual democracy," where women's bodies are subtly expected to remain visible and sexually available as signs of their putative equality.

Perhaps unexpectedly, niqab bans in both France and Québec further reflect these values. Full-face veils are, tellingly, depicted as lacking sexual agency and individualism, and impeding a cisgender woman's ability to attract men.

Narrow views of what kind of romance should be legitimized and celebrated are not limited to governments. Such views also manifest in consumer culture and in the wedding industry, and are desired and performed by many of us, including among my research participants in arranged marriages. Romance's pervasiveness, desirability and seeming spontaneity mask its politics.

As we enjoy romantic gestures on Valentine's Day, we should also consider the cultural specificity of these tropes and their potentially exclusionary politics in determining whose relationships are deemed legitimate. Entrenchments of patriarchal chivalry, monogamy, consumerism and narrow gender roles can run in tandem.

*Dr. Jennifer Selby is a Professor and Graduate Coordinator in the Department of Religious Studies **at** Memorial University, cross-appointed to Political Science and affiliated with Gender Studies. Her research explores the politics of secularism, particularly its role in regulating religion, sexuality, and public policy in France and Canada.*

An ethnographer by training, Dr. Selby examines Sharia, Islam, gender, and secularism's impact on everyday life. She serves as co-chair of the Anthropology of Religion section for the American Academy of Religion and is on the executive of the Canadian Corporation for the Study of Religion.

She holds a BA (University of Winnipeg), MA (Queen's University), PhD (McMaster University), and a Postdoctoral Fellowship from Harvard University.

People who are good at reading have different brains

The number of people who read for fun appears to be steadily dropping. Fifty percent of UK adults say they don't read regularly (up from 42% in 2015) and almost one in four young people aged 16-24 say they've never been readers, according to research by The Reading Agency.

But what are the implications? Will people's preference for video over text affect our brains or our evolution as a species? What kind of brain structure do good readers actually have? My new study, published in Neuroimage, has found out.

I analysed open-source data from more than 1,000 participants to discover that readers of varying abilities had distinct traits in brain anatomy.

The structure of two regions in the left hemisphere, which are crucial for language, were different in people who were good at reading.

One was the anterior part of the temporal lobe. The left temporal pole helps associate and categorise different types of meaningful information. To assemble the meaning of a word such as *leg*, this brain region associates the visual, sensory and motor information conveying how legs look, feel and move.

The other was Heschl's gyrus, a fold on the upper temporal lobe which hosts the auditory cortex (the cortex is the outermost layer of the brain). Better reading ability was linked to a larger anterior part of the temporal lobe in the left hemisphere compared to the right. It makes sense that having a larger brain area dedicated to meaning makes it easier to understand words and, therefore, to read.

What might seem less intuitive is that the auditory cortex would be related to reading. Isn't reading mainly a visual skill? Not only. To pair letters with speech sounds, we first need to be aware of the sounds of the language. This *phonological awareness* is a well-established precursor to children's reading development.

A thinner left Heschl's gyrus has previously been related to dyslexia, which involves severe reading difficulties. My research shows that this variation in cortical thickness does not draw a simple dividing line between people with or without dyslexia. Instead, it spans the larger population, in which a thicker auditory cortex correlates with more adept reading.

Why size matters

Is thicker always better? When it comes to cortical structure, no, not necessarily. We know the auditory cortex has more myelin in the left hemisphere of most people. Myelin is a fatty substance that acts as an insulator for nerve fibres. It increases neural communication speed and can also insulate columns of brain cells from each other. Neural columns are believed to function as small processing units.

Their increased isolation and rapid communication in the left hemisphere can be thought to enable the fast, categorical processing necessary for language. We need to know if a speaker uses the category *d* or *t* when saying *dear* or *tear* rather than detecting the exact point where the vocal folds start vibrating.

According to the "balloon model" of cortical growth, the larger amount of myelin squeezes out left-hemispheric cortical areas, making them flatter but more extended. So while the left auditory cortex may be thicker in good readers, it is still thinner (but much more extended) than the corresponding right cortex.

This hypothesis was corroborated in the recent research. The left hemisphere had generally larger but thinner cortical areas with a higher degree of myelin.

So is thinner better, then? Again, the answer is no, not necessarily. Complex abilities that require integrating information tend to benefit from a thicker cortex. The anterior temporal lobe with its complex way of integrating information is indeed the thickest structure of all cortical areas. An underlying mechanism might be the existence of more overlapping, interacting neurons which process information more holistically.

Phonology is a highly complex skill, where different sound and motor features are integrated into speech sounds. It appears to correlate with a thicker cortex in an area near the left Heschl's gyrus. While it is unclear to what extent phonology is processed in Heschl's gyrus, the fact that phoneticians often have multiple left Heschl's gyri suggests it is linked to speech sounds.

The temporal lobe is involved in reading.

Clearly, brain structure can tell us a lot about reading skills. Importantly, though, the brain is malleable — it changes when we learn a new skill or practice an already acquired one.

For instance, young adults who studied language intensively increased their cortical thickness in language areas. Similarly, reading is likely to shape the structure of the left Heschl's gyrus and temporal pole. So, if you want to keep your Heschl's thick and thriving, pick up a good book and start reading.

Finally, it's worth considering what might happen to us as a species if skills like reading become less prioritised. Our capacity to interpret the world around us and understand the minds of others would surely diminish. In other words, that cosy moment with a book in your armchair isn't just personal – it's a service to humanity.

Dr. Mikael Roll *is a Professor of Neurolinguistics at Lund University, specializing in how the brain processes speech. As a Wallenberg Academy Fellow, Dr. Roll has led innovative projects on how speech melody predicts and facilitates grammatical structure, including developing aids for second language learners to understand the melody-grammar relationship.*

Dr. Roll's earlier work includes exploring the impact of time-based decay of word forms in short-term memory on sentence processing and employing Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) to examine how word abstractness influences associations in individuals with Broca's aphasia. His research contributes to advancing our understanding of the neural mechanisms underlying language processing and learning.

Preserving muscle with GLP-1 weight loss drugs: Big deal or nothing to worry about?

On the surface, the formula for weight loss seems simple: eat less and move more.

But giving that advice to someone with obesity is like telling someone with depression to cheer up.

Weight loss isn't easy, or we wouldn't be facing a crisis in overweight and obesity.

Our biology drives us to eat more food when it's available, and our bodies have helped prepare us for times when we can't find food by storing excess energy as fat.

Today, inexpensive, calorie-rich food is more abundant than in our hunter-gatherer past, and many of us consume as many calories as we like.

As a result, the fat that may have once helped us to survive has now become a threat — one we are only beginning to manage.

This change in food abundance has all happened in the last 100 years or so — an evolutionary blink of an eye.

Helpful medications

It is unlikely humans will ever adapt for us not to gain weight, so when a class of drugs makes it possible to lose weight and keep it off, it's a welcome and helpful development.

Though we are now seeing several new iterations of the class of drugs known scientifically as Glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor (GLP-1R) agonists (you may know them under such names as Ozempic, Wegovy, Saxenda or Zepbound), these types of drugs have actually been around for about 20 years, having started their useful life as treatments for Type 2 diabetes.

Claiming *Science* magazine's breakthrough of the year in 2023, these drugs are an absolute revelation: they give you long-lasting weight loss as long as you continue taking them.

The drugs aren't quite as effective as bariatric surgery, but they're not far off, and they do the job without surgery. These drugs may become as good as bariatric surgery at controlling weight long-term.

Such drugs have proven to be so popular — even as injectables and at a price that makes them challenging for some users to afford — that there have been shortages as manufacturers try to expand production to meet growing demand.

All of this, at least superficially, is welcome news since overweight and obesity increase the risk of many other health issues, including certain cancers and cardiovascular disease.

People using these drugs are reporting not only losing weight but also having more energy and greater mobility, which, again, are welcome outcomes.

That said, it's important to exercise caution and prudence about what else this first generation of GLP-1R agonists might mean for our bodies over time.

Fat loss and muscle loss

Losing weight by dieting (restricting energy) includes, along with fat loss, losing lean mass, about half of which is typically muscle. The general rule is that three-quarters of what we lose is fat and the rest is lean tissue.

My research focuses on the positive health outcomes of maintaining muscle, especially as we age and become more susceptible to sarcopenia, the steady age-related loss of muscle mass.

In our research work, my colleagues and I use our findings to encourage everyone to exercise, and particularly to include resistance training — load-bearing exercise with the aim of gaining or at least maintaining muscle mass and strength.

Losing muscle can have a significant, direct effect on our quality of life. We need strength to reduce the risk of falls and muscle to reduce the risk of metabolic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, which in older age can have severe outcomes.

So, while losing weight is an excellent way to improve our health, it should bear the caveat of not losing muscle, especially in older persons.

Without deliberate efforts to exercise for strength and to increase protein intake to retain muscle, older adults in particular may experience muscle loss.

Exercise and protein

There is no doubt this newly recognized class of weight-loss drugs is a watershed discovery and could improve lives for generations to come.

If, as we see from early clinical trials, these drugs promote the loss of lean mass together with the loss of fat, it will be important for users to be aware and for pharmaceutical companies to adjust future generations of these drugs.

Without deliberate efforts to exercise for strength and to increase their protein intake to retain muscle, there could be consequences.

The body starts losing muscle after about age 40 to 45. By the time we're in our 60s, 70s and 80s, these losses are noticeable.

Let's look at a hypothetical example featuring a 60-year-old person who is obese with 45 per cent body fat and weighs 100 kilograms (220 pounds). If that person loses 20 kilograms (44 pounds) in one year while taking a GLP-1R agonist — which is not unreasonable while taking such drugs — then somewhere between 2.5 and three kilograms (5.5 to 6.5 pounds) could be muscle.

Such a loss may be consequential, especially when we consider that the same 60-year-old would lose, due to aging, about 0.3 kilograms (less than one pound) of muscle in one year.

Does the good of the weight loss outweigh the “bad” of the muscle loss? It’s still too early to know if muscle loss while taking GLP-1R agonists will be problematic in the long run, but I think it’s important to proceed with caution, especially in older persons, until trial results are available.

Dr. Stuart Phillips
Dr. Stuart Phillips is a Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster University and a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Skeletal Muscle Health. He is the Director of the Physical Activity Centre of Excellence (PACE) and the McMaster Centre for Nutrition, Exercise, and Health Research, as well as the Lab Lead for the Exercise Metabolism Research Group.

Dr. Phillips’ research focuses on the interplay between nutrition, exercise, and skeletal muscle health, with a particular interest in diet- and exercise-induced changes in body composition. Passionate about promoting physical activity, especially among older adults, he emphasizes that even small amounts of exercise can yield significant health benefits.

A globally recognized expert, Dr. Phillips has authored over 400 scientific papers and reviews, garnering more than 31,000 citations throughout his career. He is also a member of the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) and the Centre for Metabolism, Obesity, and Diabetes Research (MODR). Dr. Phillips earned his BSc and MSc from McMaster University and his PhD from the University of Waterloo.

The power of language: Rethinking food labels to expand our plant-based choices

"Vegan," "vegetarian," "meatless," "plant-based," "plant-rich," "plant-forward," "animal-free": these are all terms used to describe foods or diets that are mostly or completely made of non-animal sources.

This list can go on and, although these terms are to some extent related, they're not the same. For example, the term "vegan," coined in 1944 by The Vegan Society, is used to define products that contain no animal-based ingredients.

According to Canada's Food Guide, "vegetarian diets are those that exclude some or all animal products," whereas a plant-based diet is defined as one that "puts more emphasis on eating plant foods such as vegetables and fruits, whole-grains and legumes (beans) and less emphasis on eating animal foods."

In another definition, The British Dietetic Association describes a plant-based diet as "based on foods that come from plants with few or no ingredients that come from animals."

Why does this matter? Because regardless of the label, evidence supports that diets that contain fewer animal-based products such as meat are proven to be better for your health and the natural environment.

Adoption of plant-based diets remains low

Even with the growing public interest around plant-rich diets, the number of people adopting these diets remains low, particularly in Canada.

For many, plant-based foods are often perceived as an unfamiliar option that lacks in taste or does not align with their cultural food norms.
Many consumers are also confused about the true meaning of these terms, which makes choosing food more complicated.

From a legislative perspective, many of these terms do not have unique legal definitions in in most markets, including Canada.

What is the result of all this confusion and perceived barriers? Even though there are a variety of plant-based food options available in stores, and various restaurants offering vegan/vegetarian dishes or full menus, plant-based foods are not many people's choice.

A recent report by Globe Scan, an international insights and advisory firm, showed that "although 68 per cent of people worldwide express interest in consuming more plant-based foods, only 20 per cent do so regularly, down from 23 per cent in 2023."

The report noted that with rising food costs, many consumers have returned to "cheaper, familiar foods" rather than plant-based alternatives. Therefore, there is a growing need for more population-level support and interventions to help consumers navigate their food choices.

The responsibility and pressure to make the "right" choice should not be solely on the consumer. They cannot be expected to make radical and sudden changes to their eating habits such as entirely eliminating meat. However, small modifications, such as gradually reducing animal-based food (instaed of complete elimiation) and moving towards plant-rich diets, is a promising solution.

So, what does this mean for food producers, restaurant owners and decision-makers who want to promote their products? They should use appealing language and framing to describe food, whether it's the description on a menu or labels on a package. It's important to avoid using labels that create more confusion or reinforce the feeling of unfamiliarity.

Here are four low-cost tips and recommendations that could help positively influence consumer choices:

1) Leverage the halo effect

The halo effect is a cognitive bias where one positive characteristic or impression of a product influences the overall perception. In terms of food labelling, this means people might be more likely to purchase food if the name is appealing to them.

Research shows labelling food vegan can decrease consumers' taste expectations and, in turn, their purchasing intentions. On the contrary, labels and names that use appealing language that promotes delicious, high-quality food, evokes enjoyment and increases positive reactions is a strategy that has proven effective in altering consumer choices.

2) Emphasize the role of sensory appeal

A study by The Good Food Institute found that consumers responded more favourably to plant-based burgers described with indulgent terms compared to those labelled with health-focused or restrictive language.

Why? Because using descriptive language that highlights the taste, texture and overall eating experience attracts a broader audience. Terms such as savoury, juicy or spicy can enhance the appeal of plant-based dishes. Think about "Juicy American Burger" versus a plant-based alternative that might be described simply as "Vegan Burger."

3) Refrain from using terms with negative connotation

Steer clear of labels that may imply restriction, compromise or carry unintended negative connotations. Instead focus on terminology that implies inclusivity and offers complementary choices. The terms vegan and vegetarian are shown to be associated with negative stereotypes and feelings among some consumers, particularly the term vegan.

Labelling food as vegan/vegetarian does make food easily identifiable for consumers who are seeking plant-based options. However, using variants of "plant-based" instead of vegan/vegetarian has been proven to increase mainstream consumer purchasing intent.

A further recommendation is to avoid labels such as plant-based milk "substitute" (for example for oat milk) or "veggie burger," which can imply a replacement for existing choice and create an unnecessary competition between the choices.

4) Highlight provenance and culinary tradition

Plant-rich diets are not a new invention. Many food cultures around the globe have been plant-based for many years. Therefore, there is no need to reinvent the wheel to come up with labels and names. Take falafel, for example: it is essentially a veggie burger with a different name, yet it is popular among consumers.

Research also demonstrates highlighting food origins (also known as the country-of-origin effect) and including geographic references makes foods more appealing; for example, Panera Bread had a boost is soup sales by changing the name of one dish from "Low Fat Vegetarian Black Bean Soup" to "Cuban Black Bean Soup."

Adopting a plant-rich diet is considered healthy and can be budget-friendly. Using language that appeals to consumers, instead of unfamiliar terms that may have negative associations for many people, can help encourage these dietary choices among a broader group of consumers.

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Why should humanities education persist in an AI age? Self-development, to start

Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots has become rampant among students in higher education.

While some might be ambivalent about the impact of generative AI on higher education, many instructors in the humanities scramble to adapt their classes to the new reality and have declared a crisis of their teaching model.

Professors and students alike argue that unrestricted use of generative AI threatens the purpose of an education in disciplines like philosophy, history or literature. They say that, as a society, we should care about this loss of intellectual competencies.

But why is it important that traditional learning not become obsolete — as some predict?

Today, when corrupt leaders promote AI development, AI reflects repressive political biases. There are serious concerns about AI disinformation, so it's critical to consider the original purpose of modern universities.

I consider this question as a historian of philosophy who has examined how modern ideas have intersected with democratic and fascist societies.

It's important to consider the original purpose of modern universities. Graduates listen at Northwestern University's commencement ceremony in June 2024 in Chicago.

Ideas informing the modern university

The idea of the modern university emerged amid the European Enlightenment. Inspired by a new ideal of humanity focused on an individual's independence from authorities and traditions, philosophers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel introduced education as the proper path to self-development.

The German term *Bildung* captures this broad understanding of the educational process, denoting the activity of shaping yourself according to your inner purpose. For the philosophers of *Bildung*, self-development couldn't take place in isolation but required a community of equals where mutual recognition and critical engagement with each other unlocked everyone's potential.
They envisioned the university as a community of learners where teachers facilitate the self-development of students by supporting their critical faculties instead of adapting them to fulfil predetermined roles for society. They

believed education should prepare for lifelong learning about the self and world.

Concern about concentration of power

It was Humboldt who turned these lofty ideals into concrete reforms, laying the groundwork for the modern university and its research-led teaching model. For Humboldt, the realm of *Bildung* had political significance.
Living under Prussian absolutism, he feared the paternalism of the state that turned its citizens into loyal subjects under the pretence of furthering their spiritual and material welfare.

He was critical of the attempt of Frederick the Great, the Prussian king, to regulate economic life and to control private consumption. Humboldt saw such a concentration of power as a despotic tendency that all forms of government could succumb to, including oligarchy and democracy. He therefore insisted on spaces for individual expression and free association. Literary salons were the initial community space for *Bildung*, and were a model for the modern idea of universities.

A drawing by Georg Melchior Kraus depicts the salon of Duchess Anna Amalia, showing, among others, writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in discussion.

Women, Black philosophers shape ideals

Yet, as critical thinkers such as Germaine de Staël have noted from early on, the Enlightenment betrayed the universal aspiration of its ideals by restricting their application mostly to a certain class of white and male Europeans.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen from 1789 restricted active citizenship to male property owners and did not abolish slavery. Advocacy for applying equal rights to all was soon taken up by members of oppressed groups to justify their emancipatory pursuits.

Anna Julia Cooper in a photograph taken sometime around 1901-03.

Early feminists in late 19th-century Germany, such as the philosopher and writer Hedwig Dohm, demanded access to educational institutions so that women could also "become who they are."

We find a similar battle cry in the United States, where writer and educator Anna Julia Cooper regarded the higher education of Black women as a key step to social change.

Both point to thinkers outside the European canon of male authors that helped shape the idea of *Bildung*. Its emancipatory appeal should not surprise us, since a plausible definition of the main harm of oppression is that it deprives individuals of the capacity to self-develop and to express shared experiences collectively. The opportunity to develop one's capacities in accordance with one's true values is a key characteristic of a just society.

Understanding as a collaborative process

I believe that the idea of *Bildung* still captures the value of humanities education. In-depth engagement with the complex manifestation of human cultures seen in philosophical ideas, forms of knowledge or literary texts fosters important skills necessary for self-development.
Students learn critical thinking, enabling them to question authorities and discern their own convictions from received values. They experience thinking as a process which takes time and demands the exploration of different points of view — similar to democratic decision-making.

Methods to understand others are therefore an important subject of the humanities. The humanities nurture the ability to connect and to develop solidarity with each other.

The classroom itself is a space where students experience understanding as a collaborative process by discussing with their peers and the instructor.

Instructors must actualize high-level pedagogical goals by creating concrete exercises through which intellectual skills can be learned and practised.

Assessing claims, justifying evaluations

Writing an essay has been the pinnacle of traditional humanities education, since it demands employing the full set of interpretative tools such as identifying sources, analyzing arguments, assessing claims and justifying evaluations independently. It also demands expressing oneself intellectually.

Basic analytic skills such as formulating an argument or giving an objection can be taught in class. But in-class assignments cannot replace pondering an issue over some time and expressing one's interpretation of it.

The important exercise of individual study is deprived of its value when students use technological shortcuts to complete writing tasks. AI-driven chatbots undermine a key part of the learning process through which students improve their critical thinking. This happens through sustained engagement with complex issues, through which students grow by overcoming challenges and practising habits of thinking.

Relying on AI can undermine processes through which students improve their critical thinking.

Dangers of 'cognitive offloading'

Empirical studies show the negative impact of delegating cognitive tasks to external aids, also called cognitive offloading, on critical thinking skills. Cognitive offloading can have dire political consequences. While we do not live under absolutism anymore, the ugly head of despotism raises its head again.

In the U.S., as seen recently in Donald Trump's second presidential inauguration, the economic elite dominates the political system. Tech oligarchs have found a president who is using his vast powers to further their interests and is prepared to do so without checks and balances.

More than ever, we need citizens who have learned to think for themselves and developed capacities for paying attention to and caring about complex challenges in our ever-changing world.

At their best, the humanities are a laboratory to cultivate essential skills for critically assessing the status quo and imagining better alternatives in both political and economic life.

Dr. Johannes Steizinger is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at McMaster University specializing in 19th- and early 20th-century European philosophy, particularly within the German tradition. His research explores political, social, cultural, and aesthetic issues, with a focus on identitarian ideology, dehumanization, Nazi ideology, relativism, and the concept of life.

Dr. Steizinger also investigates how 19th-century philosophical economic theories can contribute to reimagining a fairer economic order. He earned his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Vienna in 2012.

Canadian immigrants are overqualified and underemployed — reforms must address this

Recent immigration reforms in Canada have cut international student and temporary resident numbers, restricted work permits for them and their spouses and aim to reduce permanent resident admissions by 21 per cent in 2025, with further cuts ahead.

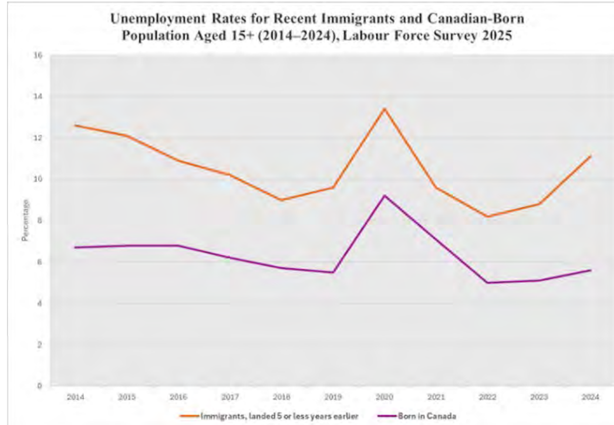
Such changes are aimed to avoid competition with local unemployed Canadians at a time of rising unemployment. However, these changes may eventually intensify dysfunctions in the Canadian labour market.

With an overall unemployment rate of 6.6 per cent and a youth unemployment rate of 13.6 per cent alongside a worsening housing crisis, these policies reflect growing pressures.

However, blaming newcomers — particularly international students and their spouses — for job shortages overlooks deeper structural issues in the labour market. Canada's labour market struggles are not caused by the number of newcomers, but by systemic issues such as underemployment and skills-job mismatches.

Unemployment and underemployment

While rising unemployment is affecting everyone, newcomers have been hit especially hard. In 2024, the unemployment rate for immigrants hit 11 per cent — more than double the 5.6 per cent rate for Canadian-born workers.



Unemployment rates for recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population aged 15 and up from 2014 to 2024. (Statistics Canada), Author provided (no reuse)

Underemployment is also a persistent issue for immigrants. In 2021, only 44 per cent of immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the previous decade were employed in jobs matching their education level, compared to 64 per cent of Canadian-born workers aged 25 to 34.

News that cuts through the noise in an election year.

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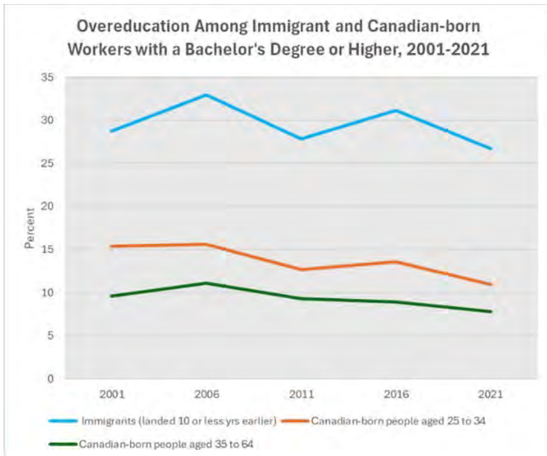
The over-education rate — the proportion of university graduates working in jobs for which they are over-qualified despite holding a bachelor's degree or higher — was 26.7 per cent for immigrants, more than double the 10.9 per cent rate for Canadian-born workers in 2021.

Immigrants, particularly those with foreign credentials, are significantly more likely to experience these job-education mismatches compared to Canadian-born workers.



Over-education among immigrant workers and Canadian-born workers with a bachelor's degree or higher from 2011 to 2021. (Statistics Canada), Author provided (no reuse)

Approximately two thirds of recent immigrants held a degree from a foreign institution. The over-education rate for these immigrants was 24 per cent higher than that of younger Canadian-born workers.

Under-employment experienced by many newcomers is largely driven by employers favouring Canadian experience — despite such preferences being illegal in Ontario — and relying on referral networks, which often disadvantage newcomers.

Hiring managers frequently undervalue international credentials, even when assessed by organizations like World Education Services. Many employers struggle to assess foreign work experience. Some also perceive a lack of familiarity with Canadian workplace norms as a hiring risk.

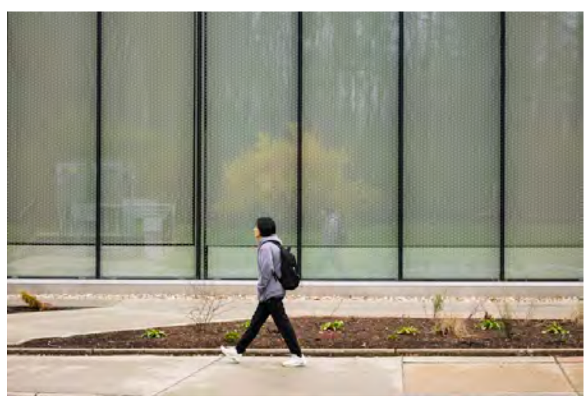
Ultimately, hiring managers tend to choose the less risky option, as a bad hire can reflect poorly on them. An exceptional hire, on the other hand, doesn't necessarily bring them equivalent rewards.

International experience is undervalued

International graduates with Canadian degrees generally achieve better labour market outcomes than those educated entirely overseas, experiencing higher earnings and improved job matches.

However, many still face significant barriers, primarily due to employers' preference for specific Canadian experience and biases in assessing their skills.

Although many international students (277,400 in 2018) gain Canadian work experience during their studies and develop soft skills — often in low-paying, customer-facing roles such as accommodation and food services, retail, hospitality or tourism — this experience is often dismissed as irrelevant to professional roles.



This creates a paradox: employers require Canadian experience for entry-level positions in their field, yet without prior experience, graduates struggle to get hired in the first place.

In addition, employers often lack clarity about international graduates' visa statuses, work permit durations and future stays in Canada. Constantly changing policies exacerbate this confusion, deterring employers from hiring.

A path forward

Canada's long-term competitiveness is hindered not by immigration, but by systemic labour market discrimination and inefficiencies that prevent skilled newcomers from fully contributing to the economy.

Eliminating biases related to Canadian work experience and soft skills is key to ensuring newcomers can find fair work. The lack of recognition of foreign talent has a detrimental effect on the Canadian economy by under-utilizing valuable human capital.

To build a more inclusive labour market, a credential recognition system should support employers in assessing transferable skills and experience to mitigate perceived hiring risks related to immigrants.

For international students, enhanced career services at educational institutions are critical. Strengthening partnerships between universities, colleges and employers can expand internships, co-op placements and mentorship programs, providing students with relevant Canadian work experience before graduation.

Such collaboration is also key to implementing employer education initiatives that address misconceptions about hiring international graduates and highlight their contributions to the workforce.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can also play a role in reducing hiring biases and improving job matching for new immigrants and international graduates. Our recent report, which gathered insight from civil society, the private sector and academia, highlights the following AI-driven solutions:

- Tools like Toronto Metropolitan University's AI resume builder, Mogul AI, and Knockri can help match skills to roles, neutralize hiring bias and promote equity.
- Wage subsidies and AI tools can encourage equitable hiring, while AI-powered programs can help human resources recognize and reduce biases.
- Tools like the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council Mentoring Partnership, can connect newcomers with mentors, track their skills and match them to employer needs.

Harnessing AI-driven solutions, alongside policy reforms and stronger employer engagement, can help break down hiring barriers so Canada can fully benefit from the skills and expertise of its immigrant workforce.

Effective Study Strategies for High School Success

Sumbel Malik is a dedicated Psychoeducational Consultant with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), where she plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic and personal development. She holds a Master's Degree in Psychology, complemented by a Graduate Certificate in Psychometric Testing from York University. Her expertise in psychological assessment and educational support has positioned her as a valuable resource for students, educators, and families navigating the complexities of learning and cognitive development.

With extensive experience working with diverse children and youth, Sumbel Malik specializes in identifying and addressing a wide range of academic and psychological needs. Her work encompasses learning strategies, executive functioning, study habits, and student well-being, ensuring that each student has the tools and support they need to succeed in their academic journey. Her professional background allows her to bridge the gap between psychological principles and educational practices, helping students develop effective learning techniques that align with their individual needs and strengths.

She has prepared one page document that provides practical study strategies to help students prepare for high school exams effectively. Given her deep understanding of cognitive processing, memory retention, and effective learning techniques, Sumbel shares essential tips that are both research-based and adaptable for students of various learning styles. These strategies include time management, note-taking techniques, active studying approaches, and self-care tips, all designed to enhance student performance and reduce academic stress.

By incorporating scientifically backed study methods such as the Pomodoro technique, active recall, and structured organization, this guide serves as a comprehensive resource for students aiming to optimize their learning and retention process. Whether through agenda planning, meaningful note-taking, or strategic study breaks, Sumbel's insights empower students to develop sustainable study habits that will benefit them not only in high school but also in future academic and professional pursuits.

This one-page document is a practical and insightful guide for students looking to improve their study habits and maximize their academic potential.

STUDY TIPS
TO PREPARE FOR HIGH SCHOOL EXAMS

By: Sumbel Malik, M.Psy.

Have an Agenda Handy.

An agenda (either digital or physical) is helpful when it comes to organizing your tasks. Write down the names of classes you have each day, any extra-curricular activities you are involved in, family commitments, etc. You can incorporate study time in the blocks of time you see on your agenda.

Study in Small 'Chunks'.

Studying too much information at once can be overwhelming. It is important to break down the material into chunks (small, manageable parts) so that your brain has more time to absorb the information. The 'pomodoro technique' is a widely used strategy that helps increase focus when studying. It involves breaking your study sessions down into timed, 25 minute chunks with a 5 minute break in between each session to stretch, check your phone, or grab a drink or snack.

Don't Forget to Recharge.

It is important to give yourself breaks, time to relax, and time to recharge your brain. Keeping yourself motivated through praise, positive reinforcement, or even tangible rewards is a great idea.

Take Meaningful Notes.

During class lessons, take detailed notes on important points. Try to review your notes before class so that the lessons can connect with new information you learn. Use highlighters for key points and use sticky notes to write down any questions you may have.

Be Prepared.

It is helpful to read the material before class so that you can understand the material in an in-depth manner. This will be helpful especially during class lessons. When the teacher is teaching the same material, you will be able to make connections and learn in a comprehensive manner. When it comes time to studying, you will already have much of the information down in your head and that will help make studying easier.

Wikipedia has a huge gender equality problem – here's why it matters

Wikipedia is one of the world's most influential knowledge platforms. Ranking among the top ten most-visited websites globally – just after Google and YouTube – it attracts over six billion monthly visits, and offers content in nearly 300 languages.

Often perceived as a democratic space where anyone can edit and contribute, Wikipedia remains a battleground for ideological debates. Despite right-wing criticism of its "woke" agenda, a persistent gender gap has shaped its content and participation for over a decade.

While its mission is to be the "sum of all human knowledge", my research shows that only 19% of its biographies feature women, and just 10-15% of its editors are female. This disparity distorts the historical record and reinforces the invisibility of women's contributions across fields such as science, politics, literature, and activism.

Now more than ever, it is crucial for Wikipedia to be unbiased. Beyond providing information to billions of people, it is also one of the most widely used sources for training AI systems like ChatGPT. Any biases in its content risk being amplified and perpetuated, further entrenching systemic inequalities as these technologies develop.

As we mark International Women's Day, it's high time we examined the barriers that keep Wikipedia from achieving true equity, and the efforts being made to close this digital divide.

A systemic issue

Recent research, including a scoping review conducted by the Women&Wikipedia project at the University of Barcelona, highlights three interconnected explanations for Wikipedia's gender gap:

1. **The "Women's Problem" Hypothesis:** This theory suggests that women are less likely to contribute due to lack of time. This is often because of family caregiving responsibilities, or a lack of confidence or interest in digital collaboration. However, taken alone, this perspective places the blame solely on women, and ignores structural barriers.

2. **The "Mirror Effect" Hypothesis:** Wikipedia reflects the inequalities present in society at large. The underrepresentation of women in mainstream media and academia means fewer notable women are written about and cited. However, Wikipedia's decision-making community processes also amplify gender bias.

3. **The "Systemic Problem" Hypothesis:** Wikipedia's culture, policies, and power dynamics

These factors contribute to the persistence of gender bias on the platform. The study found that women's biographies are more frequently nominated for deletion, often with claims that they lack "notability": a requirement that is more difficult for women to meet due to their historical exclusion from traditional sources of recognition.

Moreover, women face greater hurdles to appearing in the media, which is the primary source of information for Wikipedia articles. New Wikipedia entries cannot be created from scratch – they have to be based on what is already reported in external sources.

Wikipedia's main page: who gets featured?

The Cover Women project – another ongoing study by the same University of Barcelona research group, funded by the Wikimedia Foundation's Research Grant – analyses the representation of women and other marginalised groups on the main page of Wikipedia across seven language editions.

Over a ten-year period, the research analysed 22,924 biographies featured on the English and Spanish Wikipedia front page. It found alarming disparities, not only in gender but also in ethnicity, religion, language, profession, and race. The project's key findings in each of these areas were:

- **Gender:** Women accounted for only 29% of featured biographies on the English Wikipedia, and an even lower 18% on the Spanish Wikipedia. Non-binary individuals were virtually absent.
- **Ethnicity and race:** Most individuals featured on Wikipedia's front page were white. Racial labels were inconsistently applied – white individuals were rarely categorised by race, while black individuals were explicitly identified as such. This reveals an underlying bias in how race is perceived and labelled by Wikipedia editors.
- **Religion:** Christian figures dominated the front page, with significantly fewer representations of Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist individuals.
- **Native Language:** English-speaking individuals were overwhelmingly featured, further emphasising a Western-centric bias in content selection.
- **Profession:** Politicians, scientists, and writers were the most commonly featured professions, while fields traditionally associated with women, such as nursing or caregiving, were nearly absent. Interestingly, while one of the most common professions for women with Wikipedia articles is actress – including many from the adult film industry – this profession does not appear on the main page.

Complex guidelines

Wikipedia's main page is curated by a small team of volunteer editors who follow community-driven guidelines to ensure quality and relevance. However, these guidelines can be difficult for new editors to navigate, as they are filled with acronyms and specialised terminology.

The selection process is largely shaped by the experience level of contributors, and only those with specific roles and sufficient expertise can actively participate in decision-making. In some cases, structured voting systems allow community involvement, but these too are often restricted to seasoned editors who meet certain criteria.

While certain sections actively attempt to counteract bias by promoting diversity and underrepresented topics, the final content ultimately reflects the interests and priorities of the most active editors, whose contributions shape the visibility of information on the platform. The biases and discrimination found by the Cover Women project show that current efforts to make content selection neutral are falling short overall.

A more equitable Wikipedia

Wikipedia's gender gap is not just a reflection of existing inequalities – it is a site where these inequalities are either reinforced or challenged. If Wikipedia aspires to be the sum of all human knowledge, then it must address the systemic barriers that exclude women's voices.

Achieving gender balance will require:

- More female editors and general diversity among contributors.
- Better documentation of women's achievements in mainstream media.
- Structural reforms in Wikipedia's editing culture and policies. This would mean making its editorial guidelines more accessible, welcoming and encouraging new editors, and enabling greater community participation in choosing which articles to spotlight on the main page.

Despite its faults, Wikipedia is a huge achievement. It is the world's largest and most widely accessed knowledge platform, and it belongs freely to nobody and everybody. It is therefore within everybody's power to make it a place that reflects the diversity of human experience, where all voices are heard and valued.

Núria Ferran-Ferrer is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information and Audiovisual Media at Universitat de Barcelona (UB). She serves as the PhD Programme Director of Information and Communication and is the Delegate of the Rector for the Unit of Equality at UB.

Curing Alzheimer’s disease: Magic bullet or magic shotgun blast?

Why are researchers still fumbling in the quest to cure what is arguably one of the most important diseases confronting humankind — Alzheimer’s disease? Despite decades of research, there is still no curative treatment for Alzheimer’s – no “magic bullet” that stops this devastating degenerative brain disease in its tracks.

Not surprisingly, finding the magic bullet has become the holy grail for Alzheimer’s researchers. But it’s proving to be an immense challenge. A magic bullet is a drug that completely cures a disease, doing so with few if any side-effects.

Penicillin is a great example of a magic bullet. Penicillin kills bacteria, leading to cures for infectious diseases like strep throat, while causing minimal side-effects. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), on the other hand, is definitely not a magic bullet. It is a symptomatic agent reducing fever and pain in diseases like strep throat, but fails to actually cure the underlying disease.

Alzheimer’s needs a magic bullet, not an aspirin-like agent.

Two doctors in Frankfurt in 1907

The Nobel Prize-winning idea that scientists could invent magic bullets was first put forth in 1907 by Paul Ehrlich, a physician studying infectious illnesses at the Institute of Experimental Therapy in Frankfurt, Germany.

At the same time Ehrlich was developing his theory, Auguste Deter was a patient in a Frankfurt hospital just a short distance from his laboratory. She had been admitted under the care of neurologist Alois Alzheimer for evaluation of her undiagnosed cognitive decline.

In the same year as Ehrlich’s breakthrough publication, Alzheimer published Deter’s autopsy findings and case history, describing the new disease that now bears his name. There is no evidence that Ehrlich or Alzheimer ever met. More than a century later, their legacies have yet to cross paths, and we still do not have a magic bullet for AD.

It has not been for lack of effort. In the 1980s, AAlzheimer’s was thought to be caused by a deficiency of a brain chemical messenger called acetylcholine. This theory, called the “cholinergic hypothesis,” inspired extensive research resulting in several drugs being introduced in the late 1990s, namely donepezil, rivastigmine and galantamine. Regrettably, these three agents offer only limited symptomatic effects, temporarily improving memory and cognition but doing nothing to address the underlying disease processes. They are “aspirins.”

Theories of Alzheimer’s disease

And so, over the past 25 years, the search for the magic bullet for Alzheimer’s has intensified.

Disappointingly, since 2010, more than 200 magic bullet discovery programs have failed. Although these unsuccessful drugs targeted a variety of different approaches to Alzheimer's, a large number of them were designed to prevent the folding and aggregation of beta-amyloid protein.

This is the so-called "amyloid hypothesis," which conjectures that Alzheimer's is caused by the aberrant production of a protein called beta-amyloid that twists itself into an abnormal shape to form disease causing brain toxic clumps.

Though most amyloid-targeting drugs based have failed, two recent therapeutics, lecanemab and donanemab, have shown limited success, but demonstrate significant side-effects and definitely are not cures. The search continues.

Why are we struggling to find the magic bullet for Alzheimer's disease? Brain complexity is a major factor.

The brain is the most complex structure in the human body and Alzheimer's is arguably one of the most complex diseases of the brain. Finding a drug to fix such a complicated network is daunting.

For years, scientists have been so focused on devising treatments to block brain-damaging amyloid clumps that we have fallen into an intellectual rut, sometimes neglecting other worthwhile explanations. And there is a wealth of viable alternatives.

For example, a growing number of scientists think Alzheimer's is caused by inflammation, like arthritis of the brain. Similarly, others regard it as an autoimmune disorder of the brain. Some maintain it's the end-result of a brain infection, with bacteria from the mouth as the potential culprit.

Other scientists believe that Alzheimer's is primarily a disease of miniscule cellular structures called mitochondria — the energy factories that convert glucose from our food and oxygen from the air into the energy required for thinking and remembering. Still others suggest that the disease may arise from the brain's mishandling of metals, possibly copper or iron.

This diverse range of mechanisms reflects our still evolving but currently inadequate understanding of the complex causes of Alzheimer's. To make matters worse, these multiple disease processes — amyloid clumping, inflammation, diseased mitochondria — probably begin 20 to 30 years before the afflicted person becomes symptomatic. Such complexity is defeating magic bullet discovery efforts.

The 'shotgun' approach

Perhaps it's naive to think we can ever devise a magic bullet for Alzheimer's.

Consider another common medical disorder, high blood pressure. There is no single magic bullet for treating hypertension. No such drug exists. Rather, there are many different drugs, working through different mechanisms to reduce blood pressure, and these drugs are often used in combination.

If we cannot find a magic bullet for hypertension, which is mechanistically trivial compared to Alzheimer's, what makes us think we can find one such a complex brain disease?

However, all is not hopeless. Diseases like hypertension or cancer in which multiple complementary drugs are successfully co-administered may provide a valuable clue. The answer to Alzheimer's may lie in modifying Ehrlich's magic bullet into a magic shotgun blast. Like a person trying in vain to shoot a tin can off a fence with a single shot, sometimes it's simpler to use a shotgun blast. Shotgun shells, after all, usually contain multiple small shot pellets that hit a broader area than a single bullet.

In Alzheimer's, a strong case exists for concurrently using multiple drugs hitting multiple targets — a combination therapy shotgun blast hitting beta-amyloid, inflammation and mitochondria targets (or others) all at once. This would seem to offer a better shot at a cure.

However, this will require new ways of doing clinical trials and significant changes in the established regulatory, statistical and operational procedures of clinical research.

But we must make these changes, whether we like it or not. Passionate scientists with polarized points of view may need to accommodate different perspectives and competitors may need to collaborate.

We may already have curative drugs, we just haven't used them in the right combination. For the millions of people living with Alzheimer's, we need to be more innovative and less dogmatic, discovering the path that will finally enable Ehrlich and Alzheimer to meet.

Dr. Donald Weaver is a Professor of Neurology and Chemistry at the University of Toronto. Previously, he held professorships at Dalhousie University (2001–2013) and Queen's University (1988–2001). He earned his MD (1981) and PhD in Theoretical Organic Chemistry (1986) from Queen's University, followed by an FRCP(C) in Clinical Neurology from Dalhousie University (1989).

A distinguished researcher in Alzheimer's disease and drug design, Dr. Weaver has received numerous honors, including the Oskar Fischer Prize in Alzheimer's Research, Prix Galien Canada, Harrington Innovator-Scholar Award, and Jonas Salk Award. His contributions to medicinal and organic chemistry have also been recognized with the Bantrel, Heinz Lehman, Bernard Belleau, and Merck Frosst Awards, as well as being named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40.

Canadians can't afford to relax barriers to foreign entry in their banking system

United States President Donald Trump has made calls to ease Canadian regulatory barriers on foreign-owned banks. His criticism highlights a recurring, but often overlooked, threat to Canada: monetary sovereignty.

Alongside his material threats to use economic force to annex Canada, Trump's repeated grievance raises concerns about Canada's ability to maintain control over its financial system at a time when such control is crucial.

U.S. pressure on Canada's banks

Over the past 50 years, Canada has maintained an exceptionally domesticated financial sector, despite repeated attempts by U.S. banks to weaken its regulatory barriers. Canada's longstanding rule prohibiting foreign ownership of large Canadian banks is one rooted in concerns about U.S. corporate takeovers amid growing economic integration between the two countries.

Since the 1980s, American pressure to remove these barriers has led to several regulatory breaks modelled after U.S. banking laws. In one notable instance, pressure from the U.S. Treasury resulted in Canada lowering federal restrictions on foreign bank subsidiaries.

U.S. negotiators have since pushed for full branching rights, which would allow American banks to operate in Canada with less effective regulatory control on their Canadian market operations than is currently the case. Some critics view this as an attempt to impose U.S. banking laws on Canadian soil.

Unlike subsidiaries, a foreign branch's parent company retains administrative control over cross-border investment decisions. In today's geopolitical climate, relaxing these restrictions could lead to the de facto takeover of Canada's financial system by U.S. entities, with significant implications for the country's economic policy.

Canada's financial stability at risk

Canada's chartered banks are key issuers of Canadian dollars; their privileges depend on government regulatory approval. A sudden increase in foreign ownership risks upsetting the regulatory balance needed to manage the creation of Canadian dollars, with potential knock-on effects for financial stability.

By way of comparison, Canada could look to Mexico, where the creation of Peso Credit occurs mainly through U.S.

banks. Research suggests this has reduced the effectiveness of monetary policy with corollary risks for financial stability. Similarly, evidence suggests the effectiveness of South Korea's monetary policy response to the 2008 financial crisis was undermined by the presence of U.S. multinational banks.

Under normal circumstances, any takeover of a Canadian-owned bank must be approved by Canada's finance minister, which reduces such risks. However, Canada's streamlined regulatory system could become a target for American lobbying efforts aimed at foreign bank acquisitions.

If U.S. banks gain a greater foothold, the impact it could have on Canada's financial regulatory system is concerning, especially with an enlarged American market share. Reducing foreign banking restrictions seems unjustifiably short-sighted, particularly in an era of increasingly frequent financial crises.

Additional risks also exist in the non-bank financial sector, where "shadow banks" issue unregulated money without oversight. Canada's domesticated banking system and conservative regulatory approach allowed it to weather the 2008 crisis without relying on risky new asset classes like unregulated asset-backed commercial papers.

However, capitulating to U.S. pressure could push Canada toward a more deregulated financial environment, leading to an increase in shadow banking and heightened risks of financial crises and costly public bailouts.

A threat to Canada's autonomy

If these regulatory barriers did come down, it could hamstring Canada's ability to implement additional regulatory restrictions — sometimes called financial repression — on the financial system at large in the event of a major crisis.

Financial repression refers to regulatory policies that seek to direct domestic savings in order to finance government spending — often for the sake of deficit reduction, but also for managing the economy during systemic global crises.

This measure could be warranted in situations like runaway climate change, wars or other crises. However, it can only be effectively implemented if a country has effective control of its financial system.

Lifting these regulatory barriers could similarly undermine efforts to forge a more integrated economic union amid the spectre of U.S. expansionism.

Since regulatory authority for the repurchase agreement market — a core national funding market — is shared between levels of government, it would be immensely risky to compromise another key pillar of our credit system.

Capitulating to U.S. demands could lead to a significant loss of Canada's monetary and economic sovereignty, at a time when the U.S. is prioritizing its national interests over global co-operation.

Banking concentration in Canada

There are certainly downsides to Canada maintaining its barriers to foreign bank branching. The most notable one is the role these restrictions play in supporting a banking system that is both concentrated and under-competitive. Today, Canada's biggest six banks control 90 per cent of the banking market.

This dominance is largely because the global banking trend over the past 40 years has been more about creating large universal banks for a globalized marketplace, rather than freeing markets and increasing consumer choice. In aligning Canada's regulations with this model, federal regulators moved away from the previous era's trend toward greater domestic competitiveness.

If Canada truly wants to address its lack of banking competition, it should seek to revitalize it from below — not from above and outside. Among the proposals by Canada's Competition Bureau are calls to enhance small- and medium-bank access to brokered deposits and various anti-monopoly measures.

Regardless of whether one agrees with the merits of a concentrated banking system, the property rights that underpin it are a vital part of the public-private partnership that support Canada's monetary sovereignty. This means that the present regulatory arrangement leaves the terms and conditions of that partnership firmly in Canadian hands.

As the U.S. pushes for greater access to Canada's banking market, Canadians must weigh the steep political costs of allowing a stronger American banking presence.

Japanese Techniques for Personal Development

IKIGAI:

The Ikigai technique is a Japanese concept that means "reason for being." It's a framework used to find personal fulfillment and purpose by balancing four key areas of life:

1. What you love (Passion)
2. What you are good at (Vocation)
3. What the world needs (Mission)
4. What you can be paid for (Profession)

How to Apply the Ikigai Technique

To find your Ikigai, follow these steps:

Step 1: Reflect on the Four Quadrants

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do you love? (Things that bring you joy and fulfillment)
- What are you good at? (Your skills, talents, and expertise)
- What does the world need? (Problems you can solve, ways to contribute)
- What can you be paid for? (Sustainable income sources)

Step 2: Identify Overlaps

Where these areas intersect, they form different career and life possibilities:

- Passion = What you love + What you're good at
- Mission = What you love + What the world needs
- Vocation = What you're good at + What you can be paid for
- Profession = What the world needs + What you can be paid for

Step 3: Find Your Ikigai (The Sweet Spot)

Your Ikigai is at the center—where all four areas overlap. This is where you feel fulfilled, make an impact, and earn a living.

KAIZEN:

The Kaizen technique is a Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement that focuses on small, consistent changes over time to enhance efficiency, productivity, and personal development.

Key Principles of Kaizen

1. Continuous Improvement – Small, daily improvements lead to long-term success.
2. Eliminate Waste (Muda) – Identify and remove inefficiencies in processes.
3. Empower Individuals – Everyone in an organization or personal growth journey contributes to improvement.
4. Standardization – Once a better method is found, it should become the new standard.
5. Focus on Process – Improving the process naturally improves results.

How to Apply the Kaizen Technique

1. Identify Areas for Improvement

- Ask: "What small changes can I make to improve?"
- Look for inefficiencies, waste, or areas where things feel difficult.

2. Make Small, Incremental Changes

- Instead of massive overhauls, start small.
- Example: If you want to improve productivity, start by organizing your workspace or adjusting your daily schedule slightly.

3. Analyze and Measure Progress

- Track progress through metrics, observations, or feedback.
- Example: If improving fitness, track daily step count rather than aiming for a drastic change overnight.

4. Standardize and Sustain Improvements

- Once an improvement works, make it a habit or new standard.
- Example: If daily journaling boosts clarity, integrate it into your morning routine permanently.

5. Involve Others & Seek Feedback

- Collaboration enhances improvements (use team feedback or peer support).
- Example: In a business setting, encourage employees to suggest small ways to improve daily workflow.

SHOSHIN:

The Shoshin technique comes from Zen Buddhism and refers to "beginner's mind." It is the practice of approaching learning, challenges, and experiences with an open, eager, and humble mindset, free from preconceptions.

Key Principles of Shoshin

1. Stay Open-Minded – Assume you have something new to learn, even in areas where you're experienced.
2. Let Go of Ego – Avoid arrogance and embrace the perspective of a student.
3. Ask More Questions – Be curious and challenge assumptions rather than assuming you already know.
4. Embrace Uncertainty – Be comfortable with "not knowing" and see it as an opportunity for growth.
5. See Mistakes as Learning – Instead of fearing failure, view mistakes as part of the learning process.

How to Apply the Shoshin Technique in Life

1. Adopt a Learning Mindset in Every Situation

- Instead of thinking "I already know this," ask "What can I learn from this?"
- Example: A seasoned business leader might still read beginner-level books to gain fresh insights.

2. Question Your Assumptions

- Challenge what you think you know by exploring alternative perspectives.
- Example: Instead of assuming your method is best, ask peers or newcomers for their approaches.

3. Practice Active Listening

- Listen with curiosity rather than preparing your response while the other person is talking.
- Example: In meetings, focus on understanding rather than just waiting to speak.

4. Experiment and Try New Things

- Be open to new techniques, methods, or experiences.
- Example: A fitness enthusiast might try a new type of training instead of sticking to the same routine.

5. Accept Failure as a Learning Tool

- Instead of seeing failure as an endpoint, treat it as data for improvement.
- Example: If a project fails, analyze what went wrong and what can be learned instead of dwelling on mistakes.

HARA HACHI BU:

Hara Hachi Bu is a Japanese eating principle from Okinawa, where people live some of the longest, healthiest lives in the world. It means "Eat until you are 80% full." This mindful eating habit helps promote longevity, weight control, and digestive health.

Key Principles of Hara Hachi Bu

1. Stop Eating at 80% Full – Avoid overeating by stopping before you feel completely full.
2. Eat Slowly & Mindfully – Give your body time to register satiety (takes ~20 minutes for the brain to recognize fullness).
3. Portion Control – Serve smaller amounts rather than overfilling your plate.
4. Focus on Nutrient-Dense Foods – Eat whole, natural foods that provide sustained energy and health benefits.
5. Be Aware of Hunger vs. Habit – Recognize the difference between true hunger and emotional/boredom eating.

How to Apply Hara Hachi Bu in Daily Life

1. Eat Slowly & Mindfully

- Take smaller bites and chew thoroughly.
- Use chopsticks or a smaller spoon to slow down eating.
- Put your utensils down between bites.

2. Stop Before Feeling Completely Full

- Listen to your body's hunger signals—if you feel satisfied but not stuffed, stop eating.
- Use a "pause" rule: Take a break after eating 80% of your usual portion, then assess if you're still hungry.

3. Serve Smaller Portions

- Use smaller plates and bowls to naturally reduce portion sizes.
- Avoid eating straight from large containers—pre-portion your meals.

4. Avoid Distractions While Eating

- No TV, phone, or multitasking—focus on enjoying your meal.
- Being distracted leads to overeating because you don't register how much you've eaten.

5. Eat Nutrient-Rich Foods

- Prioritize vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats to feel fuller with fewer calories.
- Minimize processed and calorie-dense foods that don't provide long-term satiety.

Hara Hachi Bu and Longevity

- Okinawa, Japan, where Hara Hachi Bu is practiced, has one of the highest populations of centenarians (people living 100+ years).
- Reducing caloric intake while maintaining proper nutrition lowers disease risk and enhances longevity.

SHINRIN-YOKU:

Shinrin-Yoku translates to "forest bathing" and is a Japanese practice that involves immersing yourself in nature to promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It is not about exercise but rather about mindful presence in the natural environment.

Key Principles of Shinrin-Yoku

1. Slow Down & Be Present – Move through the forest at a relaxed pace, focusing on the sights, sounds, and scents.
2. Engage the Senses – Listen to birds, feel the breeze, observe tree patterns, smell the fresh air, and touch the bark.
3. Disconnect from Technology – No phones, no distractions—allow nature to fully engage your mind.
4. Breathe Deeply & Meditate – Take deep breaths, inhale the forest's fresh air, and practice mindful breathing.
5. No Goal, Just Experience – Shinrin-Yoku is about being, not doing—simply immerse yourself in the moment.

How to Practice Shinrin-Yoku

1. Choose a Natural Setting

- A forest is ideal, but any park, garden, or quiet nature spot works.
- The key is to be surrounded by trees, plants, and natural sounds.

2. Walk Slowly & Mindfully

- Unlike hiking, there's no rush.

- Move intentionally and observe your surroundings.
- Focus on breathing deeply and staying relaxed.

3. Engage All Five Senses

- See: Notice tree patterns, sunlight through leaves, and colors of plants.
- Hear: Listen to birds, rustling leaves, or a flowing stream.
- Smell: Take in the fresh air, flowers, or damp earth.
- Touch: Feel tree bark, soft moss, or cool water.
- Taste: If safe, drink fresh spring water or taste edible wild plants.

4. Sit & Absorb the Atmosphere

- Find a peaceful spot to sit, meditate, or just be.
- Close your eyes and tune in to the subtle rhythms of nature.

5. Reflect & Feel Gratitude

- Before leaving, take a moment to reflect on how you feel.
- Express gratitude for nature's beauty and its effect on your well-being.

Benefits of Shinrin-Yoku

- Reduces stress & anxiety (lowers cortisol levels)
- Boosts mood & mental clarity
- Enhances creativity & focus
- Improves immune function (trees release phytoncides that strengthen immunity)
- Lowers blood pressure & heart rate
- Encourages mindfulness & deep relaxation

WABI-SABI:

Wabi-Sabi is a Japanese philosophy that finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and simplicity. It encourages us to accept flaws, appreciate the natural cycle of life, and live in harmony with change.

Key Principles of Wabi-Sabi

1. Imperfection (Wabi) – Embrace flaws, asymmetry, and uniqueness rather than striving for perfection.
2. Impermanence (Sabi) – Accept that everything changes, ages, and evolves over time.
3. Simplicity & Minimalism – Focus on the essence of things rather than excess or perfectionism.
4. Natural Beauty – Appreciate the weathered, aged, and rustic aspects of life.
5. Mindfulness & Gratitude – Be present in the moment and find joy in simplicity.

How to Apply Wabi-Sabi in Life

1. Accept Imperfection in Yourself & Others

- Let go of perfectionism—flaws and quirks make people and experiences unique.
- Celebrate the "beauty of the imperfect" in your personal growth, work, and relationships.

- Example: If a project isn't perfect but still meaningful, embrace its value rather than its flaws.

2. Appreciate Impermanence & Change

- Everything in life is temporary, including success, struggles, and relationships.
- Instead of fearing change, embrace it as part of the natural flow of life.
- Example: A withering flower or an aging object can be beautiful because of its journey, not despite it.

3. Find Beauty in Simplicity

- Reduce clutter in your home, schedule, and mind—less is more.
- Find joy in the simple, natural, and unpolished.
- Example: A handmade ceramic bowl with uneven edges is more charming than a factory-made one.

4. Use Wabi-Sabi in Relationships

- Accept imperfections in loved ones instead of expecting them to be flawless.
- Cherish moments of togetherness rather than worrying about ideal outcomes.
- Example: A casual, laughter-filled meal with family is more valuable than a perfectly arranged dinner.

5. Incorporate Wabi-Sabi in Your Home & Environment

- Use natural materials like wood, stone, and handmade items.
- Appreciate aged and worn objects (e.g., an old leather journal, a weathered wooden table).
- Decorate with minimal, simple, and meaningful pieces.
- Example: A cracked teacup repaired with gold (Kintsugi) embodies Wabi-Sabi, showing that broken things can still be beautiful.

GANBARU:

Ganbaru is a Japanese concept that means "to persist, to do one's best, to never give up." It embodies grit, determination, and resilience, emphasizing effort over immediate success.

Unlike simply working hard, Ganbaru is about maintaining effort through challenges, setbacks, and long-term goals.

Key Principles of Ganbaru

1. Unwavering Effort – Give your best effort, even when facing difficulties.
2. Endurance & Resilience – Push through obstacles instead of quitting.
3. Self-Discipline – Stay committed to goals without seeking shortcuts.
4. Continuous Improvement – Focus on progress, not perfection.
5. Mental Fortitude – Develop a mindset that embraces struggle as part of growth.

6. Long-Term Persistence – Success comes not from talent alone but from consistent effort over time.

How to Apply Ganbaru in Life

1. Develop a Strong Work Ethic

- Put in consistent effort rather than relying on motivation.
- Show up every day, even when you don't feel like it.
- Example: Writers who publish daily improve more than those waiting for "perfect inspiration."

2. Persevere Through Challenges

- When facing setbacks, adjust but don't quit.
- Reframe failure as part of the process rather than an endpoint.
- Example: Entrepreneurs with a Ganbaru mindset pivot and persist rather than giving up.

3. Focus on Effort, Not Just Outcomes

- Detach from immediate results—focus on mastery and persistence.
- Example: A student struggling in math should keep practicing daily, rather than assuming they "aren't good at it."

4. Set Long-Term Goals & Stay Committed

- Define a clear purpose and break it into smaller steps.
- Maintain momentum, even if progress is slow.
- Example: An athlete trains every day for years to reach peak performance.

5. Cultivate Mental Toughness & Self-Discipline

- Embrace discomfort as a tool for growth.
- Use positive self-talk: Instead of saying, *"I can't do this,"* say *"I haven't mastered this yet."*
- Example: Samurai warriors practiced Ganbaru, enduring tough training to develop an unbreakable spirit.

GARMAN:

Gaman is a Japanese philosophy that emphasizes perseverance, patience, and quiet strength in the face of adversity. It encourages individuals to endure difficulties with dignity, self-control, and resilience.

The word Gaman translates to "enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity." It is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, where individuals are taught to maintain composure, self-discipline, and humility even during hardships.

Key Principles of Gaman

1. Endure Hardships with Grace – Stay strong and composed even in tough situations.
2. Develop Inner Strength – Rely on mental resilience rather than external validation.
3. Practice Patience & Self-Control – Avoid reacting impulsively;

instead, breathe, reflect, and endure.

4. Maintain Dignity & Humility – Face challenges without complaining or seeking sympathy.
5. Turn Struggles into Strength – View difficulties as opportunities to grow and build character.

How to Apply Gaman in Life

1. Stay Calm in Difficult Situations

- Instead of reacting emotionally, pause and practice self-restraint.
- Example: When facing criticism, listen calmly instead of reacting defensively.

2. Develop Mental Toughness & Emotional Control

- Accept that challenges are a part of life and must be faced with resilience.
- Example: Athletes train through pain and exhaustion, knowing it will make them stronger.

3. Be Patient in the Face of Adversity

- Life is full of delays, setbacks, and struggles—Gaman teaches us to wait patiently without frustration.
- Example: A student failing an exam can either give up or persist and study harder for the next one.

4. Endure Without Complaining

- Avoid seeking sympathy or venting negativity—instead, develop an inner sense of strength.
- Example: In Japanese culture, people affected by disasters often display remarkable calmness and resilience instead of panic.

5. Turn Hardships into Growth

- Every challenge strengthens character, patience, and resilience.
- Example: Samurai warriors embodied Gaman by remaining composed even in life-threatening situations.

Don’t forget to give feedback at: ibapuac@gmail.com