

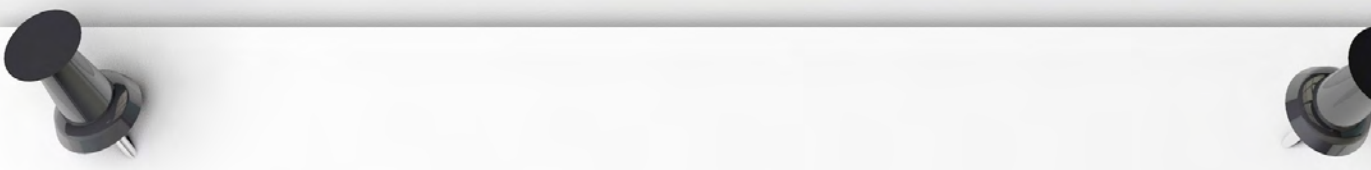
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Tom Brady on not being mastered by
your circumstances:

"If you're in a place in life you don't want to be, it's up to you to make it better. To reframe it by focusing on the positive, and approaching it with enthusiasm. In the end, your positivity and enthusiasm will contribute to creating the outcome you're after. Once you apply this mindset to all aspects of your life, you corner fear. Fear basically has nowhere to go."

From the Editor's Desk

As you turn the pages of this issue of Mavericks, you will encounter a remarkable range of ideas, reflections, and insights. From thoughtful explorations of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to discussions on business strategy, economic trends, and evolving geopolitical realities, this edition offers readers a rich and diverse landscape of perspectives. Each article carries the careful voice of inquiry and scholarly knowledge that we value deeply as a university alumnus.

In an age where information travels faster than reflection, the importance of fact-based knowledge has never been greater. The contributions in this issue remind us that meaningful understanding is built on evidence, critical thinking, and the guidance of scholars and practitioners who approach complex issues with integrity and intellectual rigor. The work shared here does more than inform, it invites us to pause, question, and engage with the world through a more thoughtful and informed lens.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our editorial team, whose dedication and quiet persistence shape each issue with care and precision. My gratitude also goes to the contributors who generously shared their insights and experiences, enriching this publication with depth and authenticity.

It is inspiring to witness how Mavericks continues to grow. With every issue, the magazine strengthens its role as a vibrant platform for dialogue, scholarly knowledge, and alumni connection.

May the pages ahead spark curiosity, reflection, and renewed pride in the collective spirit of our alumni community.

Editorial Team

Contributors

- Dr. Nancy Folbre- University of Massachusetts
- Dr. Philippe Le Billon-University of British Columbia
- Dr. Christian Yao-Victoria University NZ
- Dr. Michael von Massow-University of Guelph
- Dr. Jose' Castillo- Universitat de Valen'cia
- Dr. Farah N. Jan- University of Pennsylvania
- Dr. Meg A. Warren-Western Washington University
- Dr. Leda Stawnychko- Mount Royal University
- Dr. Osama Mansoor-Lund University
- Dr. Ioannis Kratsiotis- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Dr. Emmanuelle Vaast- McGill University
- Dr. Taylor McKee- Brock University
- Dr. Tim Swift- St. Joseph's University
- Dr. Ivana Vitanova- EM Lyon Business School
- Dr. Maxime Lefebvre-ESCP Business School
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- Dr. Taylor Snowden- University of Montreal
- Dr. Jeremy Wildeman- Carleton University
- Dr. Christy Zhou Koval-Queen's University
- Dr. Valerie L. Myers- University of Michigan
- Dr. Arne De Keyser- EDHEC Business School
- Dr. Dahlia Namian- University of Ottawa
- Dr. Mallory Terry- McMaster University
- Dr. David McMillan- University of Stirling
- Dr. Christine Ipsen- University of Denmark
- Dr. Emily Impett- University of Toronto
- Abdul Samim-Aston University
- Dr. Jing Wan- University of Guelph
- Dr. Julian Barling- Queens's University
- Dr. Katie Green- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Saqib Cheema 1992-94
- Shahid Ali 1972-74

When unpaid cooking, cleaning and childcare get a dollar value, income inequality in the US shrinks – but the gap has grown since 1965



Leila Gautham

Lecturer in Economics, University of Leeds



Nancy Folbre

Professor Emerita of Economics, UMass Amherst

When economists track inequality, they [typically focus on income and spending](#).

But a [significant share](#) of the services that families actually consume – meals cooked at home, child care, housecleaning and lawn mowing – is [produced by unpaid labor](#) that never appears in these conventional measures.

As economists who study [caregiving](#) and [inequality](#), we wanted to know whether accounting for unpaid work at home might change our understanding of inequality in [American living standards](#) – the gap between what richer and poorer Americans can actually afford to consume.

To find out, we conducted a study, [published in the March 2026 issue](#) of the Journal of Public Economics, in which we estimated the dollar value of unpaid housework and child care and added it to standard measures of income and spending for U.S. households from 1965 to 2018. Economists call these broader measures “[extended income](#)” and “[extended consumption](#).”

We found that unpaid work used to significantly cushion inequality through the provision of many services. But we also determined that this cushion has been thinning for 50 years. Our findings indicate that the inequality in living standards has grown more than standard data suggest.

Counting unpaid work reduces inequality

To visualize these findings, consider the financial situation faced by two families.

While both have two adults and two children, their income from their salaries and other cash flows – including everything from stock dividends to Social Security benefits – is different. One has two earners bringing in a total of US\$150,000. The other has a single breadwinner making \$110,000 and a stay-at-home spouse. The lower-income family gets 45 more hours per week of unpaid chores done.

If every hour of those chores were worth \$17, the [typical wage for a housekeeper](#), that unpaid work would be worth roughly \$39,780 a year. Factor it in, and the gap

between the two families shrinks from \$40,000 to just \$220.

Extended income, the economic term that includes not just what's in your paycheck but the value of doing the laundry, home repairs and other unpaid work yourself for your own benefit, tends to be [more equally distributed](#) than earned income.

The reason for this consistency is straightforward: Rich and poor families [generally devote about the same amount of time](#) to housework and child care.

A shrinking buffer

Because we valued everyone's unpaid hours at the same wage in our study, adding unpaid work to income narrowed the gap between the top and the bottom somewhat.

But we also found evidence that this equalizing effect is eroding.

Between 1965 and 2018, the average amount of time that Americans devoted to unpaid chores at home fell, driven by changes in what women did. Their average number of hours fell from 37 to 24 per week. Meanwhile, men increased the time they spent on unpaid chores a little: Their number of weekly unpaid hours of work rose from 12 in 1968 to 15 in 2018.

To be clear, we did not try to figure out why these hours of unpaid work fell. Among the many reasons for the change could be the [large increase in women's](#)

[employment](#) and the [growth of time-saving technology](#), such as dishwashers.



Lowest-income families hit hardest

We studied these shifts by combining three national datasets: time diary surveys from the [American Heritage Time Use Study](#), income data from the [Current Population Survey](#) and expenditure data from the [Consumer Expenditure Survey](#).

To put a dollar figure on unpaid work, we valued each hour at [what U.S. housekeepers typically earn](#) in a particular year.

The decline in unpaid work hit low-income households hardest – not because they cut more hours, but because unpaid work made up a much larger share of their total income.

We found that the income gap between households near the top and those near the bottom between 1965 and 2018 grew around 40% using conventional measures. Once we added unpaid work, this gap grew by 66%. For household spending, the contrast is similar:

conventional inequality barely budged – up 4%. When we incorporated the value of unpaid work at home, inequality grew by 18%.

Overall, we determined that a typical U.S. family’s extended income grew 40% from 1965 to 2018. That was a much slower pace than the 69% growth in the income they earned from their paid work and other cash flows over the same period.

Who lost the most

Conventional data suggest that the [gap between middle-income and poor households](#) was generally stable during this period. Once we accounted for unpaid work, however, that is no longer true: This gap grew substantially.

Single-parent families – [mostly headed by single mothers](#) – were hit especially hard. Their income from [paid employment rose sharply](#), but this came with large declines in the value of their unpaid work at home.

While they could afford to [spend more on purchased goods and services](#), once unpaid work is factored in, single parents saw no net improvement relative to married parents.



What it means

The [roughly 20-percentage-point increase](#) in the share of women working outside the home over the past six decades was driven by [expanded opportunity](#) and [economic necessity](#).

It has brought [enormous economic benefits](#) to those women and their families. But it has also meant that families – especially those with the least income – lost a cushion of services that women used to do in their own homes.

Our findings suggest that looking only at changes in income and spending can [exaggerate improvements](#) in living standards for the lowest-income Americans over the past five decades.

When you do fewer hours of chores that need to be done, you wind up paying other people to do them for you, and that costs money.

Otherwise, you have to make do with fewer services than you had before.

A regime change in Venezuela could have grim consequences for Canada's oil sector



Philippe Le Billon

Professor, Geography Department and School of Public Policy & Global Affairs, University of British Columbia

Following [Nicolás Maduro's capture in Caracas](#) by United States military forces, active [planning for political transition](#) in Venezuela has intensified in Washington, D.C.

For the U.S., [the prize is](#) the prospect of reviving one of the world's largest proven oil reserves and reshaping global energy markets in its favour.

But the ripple effects would extend well beyond Caracas and the U.S. A Venezuelan oil revival could also subtly increase American leverage over Canada — particularly Alberta — through its impact on oil prices, investment flows and longstanding debates about Canada's energy future.

At first glance, this may seem counterintuitive. Canada is traditionally a close American ally and its [largest foreign oil supplier](#). Yet Canada and Venezuela largely compete in the same heavy-oil regional and global markets, and shifts in

supply from Canada to Venezuela would widely reverberate across the Canadian economy and political landscape.

Heavy crude, lower prices and U.S. refineries

If [U.S. sanctions on Venezuela](#) are lifted and the country's oil sector is partially revived, even a modest increase in production could have outsized effects on prices — especially for heavy crude. American Gulf Coast refineries are specifically configured to process heavy crude, [historically sourced](#) from Venezuela, Mexico and Canada's oilsands.

More Venezuelan barrels on the market would increase competition for these refineries and possibly those in the American Midwest. This could push down the price premium currently enjoyed by Canadian heavy crude, such as [Western Canadian Select](#).

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For [U.S. refiners](#), cheaper crude is good news. For Canadian producers, it could squeeze margins already vulnerable to global price volatility and high production costs.

In this sense, Venezuela's return would not simply add supply; it would challenge Canada's niche in the U.S. oil import market.



Investment trade-offs and the oilsands dilemma

Oil markets are not just about barrels — they're about capital. Investors make choices about where to place long-term bets, and those choices are increasingly shaped by climate policies, energy transition expectations and geopolitical risk.

A perceived opening in Venezuela could redirect some international investments away from Alberta's oilsands. Even if Venezuela remains risky, the idea of accessing vast reserves at lower costs may appeal to investors looking for short-term gains in a declining oil market.

This shift could further undermine already fragile (and climate-threatening) prospects for [new oilsands expansion and make additional pipeline projects to Canada's West Coast](#) even harder to justify.

If global capital sees fewer long-term returns in high-cost, high-carbon oil, Alberta may find itself competing not just with renewables, but with other oil producers closer to U.S. markets. This could play [in favour of an additional pipeline to Canada's West Coast](#) to reach

China, which may not see so many shipments from Venezuela, especially if the U.S. pressures Caracas to privilege its own market and companies.



Economic pressure and the politics of separatism

Weaker oil revenues could also reshape Alberta politics. Much of the province's separatist rhetoric has historically rested on the idea that Ottawa "takes" Alberta's oil wealth through federal transfers and environmental regulations.

If oil revenues decline structurally due to lower prices and reduced investment, the economic foundation of this grievance weakens. A less oil-dependent Alberta may have fewer material incentives to push for sovereignty, even if political frustrations remain.

This doesn't mean discontent would disappear. But it suggests that long-term changes in global energy markets could quietly reduce the appeal of [resource-based nationalism](#) in Canada's West.

The urgent case for diversification

For Alberta and Canada more broadly, the lesson is clear: economic diversification is no longer optional; it's an urgent necessity. Betting on sustained high oil prices has always been risky; betting on them in a world of [messy energy transition](#) is increasingly untenable.

This means [doubling down on alternative export revenues](#), from clean technologies and critical minerals to advanced manufacturing, agri-food and knowledge-based services. It also means investing in workforce transitions, regional innovation and infrastructure that supports economic resilience beyond oil.

The prospect of Venezuela's return to oil markets underscores why Canada cannot rely indefinitely on being the "safe" oil supplier to the United States.



A Venezuelan oil boom remains unlikely

All of this, however, rests on a big "if." A rapid and large-scale revival of Venezuela's oil sector [is improbable](#). Years of mismanagement, underinvestment and sanctions have left infrastructure in poor condition.

[Production costs are high, oil quality is low and the carbon footprint of Venezuelan heavy crude is significant](#), a

growing liability in a [carbon-constrained world](#).

What's more, U.S. oil company interests [don't always align](#) with American energy security and geopolitical policy objectives, and [expectations of an oil surplus](#) in the coming decades dampen enthusiasm for massive new investments.

Political uncertainty remains acute, and even American firms like [Chevron operate under fragile arrangements](#) that could be reversed. Though it's unlikely, a more revolutionary, post-American intervention government in Venezuela might even seek retribution against the U.S. and other foreign companies seen as complicit in past pressure campaigns.

In short, Venezuela's oil is vast, but monetizing it at scale is another matter.

Lessons from past regime change efforts

History offers sobering lessons about past efforts to bring about regime change.

In [Iraq](#), [Iran](#) and [Libya](#), attempts to reshape energy sectors through regime change or coercive pressure often backfired. Production disruptions, political instability and nationalist backlash [frequently undermined](#) both investor confidence and geopolitical objectives.

There are some reasons to assume Venezuela would be different, including [ongoing negotiations](#) between U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and the regime in Caracas,

limited [economic](#) and [military](#) options for the former Maduro regime and a growing consensus among major powers that they can gain from a return to imperialist “[spheres of influence](#).”

But energy markets reward stability more than ideology, and regime change rarely delivers it quickly.



Who else loses from lower oil prices?

Finally, it's worth noting that lower oil prices would not hurt Canada alone. In the U.S., the first casualties would likely be [some oil producers](#), particularly smaller shale firms with high debt and thin margins. While a few large American oil companies might benefit from cheaper acquisitions and refinery gains through access to cheaper Venezuelan supply, many smaller U.S. producers could suffer.

This complicates the notion that the U.S. would unambiguously “win” in the event of a Venezuelan oil revival. Energy geopolitics creates winners and losers on all sides.

In the end, Venezuela's political future may matter less for Canada because of what happens in Caracas and more because it highlights a deeper reality: oil

no longer offers the geopolitical and fiscal certainty it once did. For Canada, adapting to that reality, rather than betting against it, may be the most strategic move of all.

AI makes measuring work performance a lot trickier. How do companies adapt?



Christian Yao

Senior Lecturer, School of Management, Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington

Let's be honest, even just writing this sentence has meant engaging with some very basic artificial intelligence (AI) as the computer checks my spelling and grammar.

Ultimately, the quality and integrity of the finished article are a human responsibility. But the questions this raises go well beyond everyday word processing.

Powerful AI is now changing what it means to be good at your work. The debate has moved from whether [robots are taking over our jobs](#) to who or what gets the credit for the work in a world of AI.

Three-quarters of global knowledge workers are [now using AI](#), but many are uncertain about it.

About half of all surveyed workers [feel uneasy about the future use of AI](#), and many say their organisations offer little guidance on responsible practice.

Workers even hide their use of AI to avoid "[AI shame](#)".

But for better or worse, we are learning to work with this powerful, fast and not always predictable new colleague.

HR logic breaks down

For decades, companies relied on one big idea: [people are their greatest asset](#).

Hire the best, train them well and results will follow. This thinking gave the human resources (HR) department its strategic role and made "talent" the key to success.

But this logic is starting to fail. When a junior lawyer uses AI to draft a contract in minutes, a task that once took a senior partner years to master, how do you measure skill?

The value is no longer in producing the first draft, but in the partner's judgement and ability to spot the one clause that could cause a problem.

Performance reviews that evaluate [individual productivity](#) or achieved targets can't see this kind of value. They miss the skills that now matter most: judgement, collaboration with machines, and ethical awareness.

If AI can outperform us in speed, accuracy and recall, what still makes humans valuable? It comes down to three things. [BS Detector](#).

Knowing when an AI's confident answer is completely wrong for the real world – for example, a doctor who realises the

system's diagnosis is technically correct but dangerously incomplete.

1. The [AI Whisperer](#). Treating AI like a brilliant but naive intern. You don't just accept its work, you guide it, question it and know when to step in.
2. The [Moral Compass](#). Having the courage to say "that's not right" even when the algorithm says it's the most efficient choice.

These are complex "[soft skills](#)" that blend technical awareness with human judgement, empathy and moral courage.

Reviewing the wrong things

Most workplaces are still grading people with outdated [scorecards](#). Employees are racing ahead with AI, but their organisations still evaluate them as if they are working alone.

A performance review that fits the AI age should ask different questions:

- How did you use AI to make a better decision?
- How did you spot a bias or mistake in its output?
- How did you make sure the final result made sense to people, not just machines?

Those questions get to the heart of the new workplace. Success now depends less on what individuals produce and more on how well they work in [partnership with AI](#).

HR systems have rested on one assumption: performance can be improved by developing individuals. Train people, motivate them and reward them, and productivity will rise. That made sense when most work depended on human effort.

But AI changes where capability resides. It spreads intelligence across humans and systems. Performance now depends on how effectively people and algorithms think together.

Humans still matter

AI doesn't just make us faster; it changes what "[star worker](#)" means.

The future of HR won't be about managing people alone. It will be about managing relationships between people and intelligent systems.

AI already helps [screen job applicants](#), [track performance](#) and [flag inefficiencies](#). Used well, it can make workplaces fairer and more consistent. Used blindly, it risks turning them into systems of surveillance and bias.

This is why human judgement still matters. People bring context, empathy and conscience. They make sure decisions that look efficient on paper actually work in a complicated, human world.

Machines can generate answers. Only people can make them meaningful. So when it comes to performance, maybe the question isn't "who gets the credit?" – it's "how well do we share the credit?"

Canada's new Grocery Code of Conduct is here, but don't expect any instant price drops



Michael von Massow

Professor, Food Economics, University of Guelph

Canada's [Grocery Code of Conduct](#) came into full effect as of Jan. 1, 2026. [Governed by an independent organization](#), the code sets out guidelines for dealings between retailers and suppliers.

It's intended to provide transparency and predictability in the relationship between food retailers and their suppliers. [All five of Canada's largest grocers](#) — Empire, Loblaw, Metro, Walmart Canada and Costco Canada — have registered with the code.

The code sets out specific objectives: to contribute to a “thriving and competitive grocery industry,” promote trust between grocery value chain stakeholders, allow for informed business decisions and provide an effective and fair dispute settlement mechanism.

That dispute resolution mechanism, administered by the [Office of the Grocery Sector Code of Conduct](#) (OGSCC), is intended as a last resort. The possibility of mediation may encourage parties to resolve disagreements informally before they escalate to formal adjudication.

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In addition, the OGSCC will publish an annual report highlighting key trends, challenges, recommendations for code improvements and anonymized case studies of disputes, without naming specific companies.

Was the code ever about food prices?

Public discussion of the code was often conflated with a desire to reduce food prices. While food price regulation is not part of the code, it has been raised in wider discussions about food price inflation.

Statistics Canada data shows that [food prices continued to rise across the country in 2025](#). Prices increased by 3.4 per cent across Canada's 10 provinces and three territories between May 2024 and May 2025.

Concerns about food price inflation have been longstanding. In 2023, the federal [Standing Committee on Agriculture](#) held a meeting to investigate the issue. Members questioned Walmart Canada CEO Gonzalo Gebara and Galen Weston, then president and CEO of Loblaws (and now chair of the board).



Liberal MP Heath MacDonal asked Gebara:

“What do you say to us when we’re seeing the hesitation of Walmart to sign on to the grocery code of conduct? How do we relay that message back to our constituents, who, over the past couple of years, due to all the items and many of the issues you talked about, have been facing a lot of challenges, including the price of groceries?”

While this question does not explicitly tie the code to food prices, many interpreted this, and other statements, [as suggesting the code might lower food prices](#).

Could the code raise prices?

Some industry leaders, however, have suggested the code could increase prices. For example, Weston says he was [hesitant to participate in the code](#) due to fears that prices would go up.

The mechanism of potential price inflation is relatively straightforward. The code discourages certain charges and states payment schedules should be negotiated. If grocers lose some benefits due to the limitations of the code, it will cost them money. In such a scenario, it is difficult to imagine that grocers would forgo money from consumers by lowering prices.

Walmart and Loblaws, who were originally resistant, eventually accepted the code after further negotiations. Loblaws’ new president, Per Bank, said [the company was content with the revised code and no longer felt it would raise prices](#). It is worth noting, however,

no one has said the code will *reduce* prices.

Some observers have suggested [the code could lower food prices over the longer term](#). But they were commenting about the benefits of lower charges to suppliers and the potential for investment and innovation in the Canadian food processing sector. These indeed may be long-term benefits, but they’re not written into the code and would take time to materialize.

Are there any benefits to consumers?

There will likely be some indirect consumer benefits. A more predictable and transparent relationship between retailers and their suppliers [could increase choice for consumers](#) by reducing the barriers to new product introduction.

Price stability and predictability make life easier on suppliers and could help sustain Canadian food processors. A loss of food processing capacity in Canada would lead to increased prices.

The code would also help smaller retailers with less bargaining power. By limiting the concessions large grocers can extract from suppliers, it narrows the gap between big and small chains and makes smaller grocers more viable. This is especially important in [under-served neighbourhoods where limited retail options restrict consumer choice](#).



What actually drives food prices?

Food price inflation is primarily driven by supply-side factors and, to a lesser extent, demand. Between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2025, [food prices rose by four per cent](#) — faster than the rate of general inflation. Much of that increase was driven by sharp price rises in beef (16.8 per cent), coffee (30.8 per cent), and sugar and confectionery (12.5 per cent).

Beef and coffee prices have been affected by the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. [Beef cow herds are at their lowest point in almost 40 years](#), due in part to drought in Western Canada and the midwestern United States. High beef prices have also [pushed consumers toward other proteins](#), such as pork and chicken, which saw smaller price increases. Turkey prices remain relatively flat, providing an option for those feeling protein price pressure.

Coffee prices tell a similar story. [Extreme weather and disease pressures have reduced yields](#) in producing regions and led to increased prices.

Sugar and confectionery prices increased largely [due to tariffs](#). The U.S. already had

protection for its sugar industry, but introduced significant new tariffs on Brazil, Argentina and Columbia, raising organic sugar prices and pulling conventional sugar prices up with them.

Canada responded with reciprocal tariffs, increasing prices here. [While some of the tariffs have been reduced](#), there remains considerable uncertainty. Notably, despite the 12.5 per cent annual increase in prices, prices for sugar and confectionery fell by 4.1 per cent in December 2025.

What comes next?

Canada has experienced significant food price inflation, but the drivers are largely external to and outside the scope of the Grocery Code of Conduct.

While the code may enhance transparency, fairness and competition in the grocery sector, it is not a tool for controlling or lowering grocery prices directly.

But there is room for optimism about grocery costs. The rate of food price increases will slow and we might see some price reductions. Beef cow herds are [expected to recover over time](#), which should ease prices. Beef prices went down marginally in December by 0.2 per cent. Weather remains unpredictable, but in the absence of new extreme events, supply issues should improve and prices should ease for those commodities.

These changes, however, will not be due to the Grocery Code of Conduct, though they will be welcome nonetheless.

Carb-loading' is a myth. But how much carbohydrate do athletes really need?



José Miguel Soriano del Castillo

Catedrático de Nutrición y Bromatología del Departamento de Medicina Preventiva y Salud Pública, Universitat de València

For many years, sports nutrition was rooted in a simple metaphor: the body is an engine, glycogen (the body's quick-release carbohydrate reserve) is its fuel, and fatigue occurs when the tank runs low.

Under this logic, nutrition strategy seemed quite obvious: eat lots of carbohydrates, fill the tank, and if possible, keep topping it up while exercising. More carbs = better performance.

But the physiology of exercise isn't really this simple. [A review](#) published in January 2026 looked at over 160 studies on the intake, metabolism and use of carbohydrates. It suggests that the "engine" approach doesn't add up. This doesn't mean carbohydrates are somehow useless, but it does mean their main role is not what we thought it was.

Muscles, energy and assumptions

The traditional model focuses almost exclusively on muscle, and [rests on three assumptions](#):

1. Muscles run on glycogen
2. When glycogen runs out, fatigue sets in
3. We therefore have to maximise glycogen reserves and carbohydrate intake.

This approach [became popular in the 1960s](#), when muscle biopsies allowed scientists to measure glycogen levels before and after exercise. They observed that athletes with higher levels could withstand longer periods of moderate to intense exertion, and thus the near-universal recommendation of "carb-loading" before exercise was born.

However, one detail was generally overlooked: what happened to blood glucose levels and the central nervous system when these athletes were nearing maximum capacity.

Blood, liver, brain

The new review shines the spotlight on something much smaller than a muscle, but much more important: the small reserve of glucose that circulates in the blood, and the role of the liver in keeping it stable.

At any given moment, the blood pumping through our veins contains just a few grams of glucose – more of a small puddle than a fuel tank. But this glucose is vitally

important because the brain depends on its continuous flow. When sustained physical exertion causes blood glucose levels to drop and the liver cannot produce enough to keep up, the body perceives a threat; if glucose levels keep dropping, there's a risk of hypoglycemia-induced brain damage.

The nervous system's response is to slam on the brakes. The brain recruits fewer motor neurons, lowers strength levels and forces us to slow down or stop, even when a muscle could theoretically keep on contracting.

Viewed in this way, fatigue isn't a case of an "empty fuel tank", but a protection system that limits performance to prevent accident or injury.

'Hitting the wall'

Anybody who has run a marathon or completed a similar endurance event will be familiar with "[the wall](#)". Traditionally, this phenomenon has been chalked up to a simple question of energy. The glycogen has run out, game over.

But more recent approaches have added nuance to this picture. Most studies that analyse carbohydrate intake and performance observe a pattern: in the group that doesn't take carbohydrates, blood glucose levels steadily fall to low levels. In the group that does take them, this fall slows or stops, and performance can be maintained for longer.

The benefit of carbohydrates therefore seems to lie less in "feeding the muscle", and more in keeping blood sugar levels within a safe range, protecting the

nervous system. "The wall" is, for the most part, the body activating its emergency brake.

There are strong arguments for this [interpretation](#), as when a muscle truly runs out of [ATP molecules](#) (the "molecular unit of currency" that allows cells to function), what we see is extreme stiffness, similar to rigor mortis. But this isn't how a tired athlete experiences it – what they feel is a gradual drop in performance, not a total mechanical failure.

How much carbohydrate do we really need?

If the main role of carbohydrates in exercise to keep glucose levels stable and avoid hypoglycemia, the question ceases to be "how much can we get?". Instead, we should be asking "what is the minimum amount that we need in any given situation?"

Many [older recommendations](#) have recently been called into question. It was previously thought that prolonged efforts tend to need high intakes of 60-90g of carbohydrates per hour (or even higher).

These amounts may still be useful in very specific contexts, such as very long competitions and elite sports, but current evidence shows something unexpected. In many situations, much smaller amounts produce similar effects.

In fact, the new review suggests that 15-30g per hour during prolonged exercise provides a performance boost comparable to much higher doses. The key difference is not so much the amount,

but avoiding a dangerous drop in blood glucose. Once that mission is accomplished, increasing the dose doesn't always do much to help.

This completely changes nutrition strategies. Instead of pursuing increasingly higher doses (which can lead to gastrointestinal discomfort, psychological dependence on carbohydrate gels and unnecessary expense), the practical approach becomes more refined. By finding the minimum point where glucose stabilises, performance can be sustained.

Furthermore, increasing the dose above certain ranges can have unexpected effects: it reduces fat oxidation, raises insulin and, in [some studies](#), depletes muscle glycogen instead of conserving it. These are all the exact opposite of what athletes want.

In short, carbohydrates act as a glucose buffer, not as an unlimited fuel source. If we have already slowed the decline, adding more does not yield a corresponding benefit.

Low-carb athletes

Something else that challenges the prevailing carbohydrate dogma is the performance of athletes who follow low-carb diets. Very high fat oxidation rates have been measured in these athletes, [remaining high even at significant intensities](#) (above 85% of maximum oxygen consumption or VO₂ max). In some contexts, their performance levels are similar to those of athletes on carbohydrate-rich diets.

This doesn't mean that fat is always better fuel, but it does mean that the body can adapt and use it even under intense exertion. The old mantra that "at high intensity, you only burn carbohydrates" is not as universal as previously thought.

The concept underpinning this new understanding is [metabolic flexibility](#), the ability to switch from one fuel to another depending on demand and availability. A chronically high-carbohydrate diet, without [periodisation](#), could reduce signals to use fat, promote a feeling of dependence on energy gel and make the metabolism less flexible.

The alternative is not zero-carb, but learning to periodise. That means using training that forces the body to use more fat, with carbohydrates as a momentary, strategic backup.

The cult of carbs

So what does all this mean for people who train or compete in athletic events?

First of all, it demystifies things. Carbohydrates should neither be worshipped nor shunned – they are a tool. Instead of "the more the better", we should be asking:

- What am I trying to achieve today? Is it immediate, maximum performance, or improving metabolic flexibility in the longer term?
- How will my body respond? Hunger, slumps, "hitting the wall", digestive discomfort and

dependency are all things to watch out for.

Second, it helps us understand that performance limits are not determined solely by muscle fibres. The brain, through its constant monitoring of glucose and other fuels, acts as a higher regulator, and when it senses an imbalance, it lowers power output. When used properly, carbohydrates can delay the activation of this brake, but this is mainly done by keeping glucose levels stable, not by endlessly refilling the tank.

And third, we have to remember that general recommendations are only a starting point. People with diabetes, a tendency towards hypoglycemia or who take medication need careful, tailored guidance, ideally supervised by a professional.

The future of sports nutrition does not lie in an increasing dependence on sugar, but in training metabolisms to use whatever is available at any given moment. Carbohydrates will continue to play an important role, but increasingly as a minimum effective dose for the brain, not an unquestionable source of “muscle fuel”.

Destruction is not the same as political success': US bombing of Iran shows little evidence of endgame strategy



Farah N. Jan

*Senior Lecturer in International Relations,
University of Pennsylvania*

Shortly after the opening salvo of U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran [on Feb. 28, 2026](#) – with missiles targeting cities across the country, some of which [killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) – President Donald Trump declared the objective was to [destroy Iran's military capabilities](#) and give [rise to a change in government](#).

Framing the operation as a war of liberation, Trump called on Iranians to [“take over your government.”](#)

In the first days alone, Israel dropped over [2,000 bombs on Iranian targets](#), equal to half the tonnage of the 12-day Israel-Iran conflict in June 2025. [Heavy U.S. bombing](#), meanwhile, has targeted Iran's Revolutionary Guard as well as ballistic missile and aerial defense sites.

The destruction is real. But, as [an international relations scholar](#), I know that destruction is not the same as political success. And the historical record of U.S. bombing campaigns aimed at regime change shows that the gap between the two – the point at

which [Afghanistan](#), [Iraq](#) and [Libya](#) campaigns all stalled – is where wars go to die.

Destruction is not strategy

Decades of scholarship dating back to World War I on [using air power](#) to force political change has established a consistent finding: Bombing can degrade military capacity and destroy infrastructure, but it does not produce governments more cooperative with the attacker.

Political outcomes require political processes – negotiation, institution-building, legitimate transitions of power.

Bombs cannot create any of these. Instead, what they reliably create is destruction, and destruction generates its own dynamics: rallying among the population, [power vacuums](#), [radicalization](#) and [cycles of retaliation](#).

The American record confirms this. In 2003, the George W. Bush administration launched [“Shock and Awe”](#) in Iraq with the explicit aim of regime change. The military objective was achieved in weeks. [The political objective](#) was never achieved at all.

The U.S. decision to [disband the Iraqi army](#) created a vacuum filled not by democratic reformers but by [sectarian militias](#) and eventually [ISIS](#). The regime that eventually emerged was not friendly to American interests. It was deeply [influenced by Iran](#).



In 2011, the Obama administration led a NATO air [campaign in Libya](#) that quickly expanded from civilian protection into regime change. Dictator [Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown and killed](#).

But there was no plan for political transition. [Chaos and political instability have endured since](#). Asked what his “worst mistake” was as president, [Barack Obama said](#), “Probably failing to plan for the day after, what I think was the right thing to do, in intervening in Libya.” [Libya remains a failed state today](#).

The intervention also sent a powerful signal to countries pursuing nuclear weapons: Gadhafi had [dismantled his nuclear program](#) in 2003. Eight years later, NATO destroyed his regime.

Even Kosovo, often cited as the [success story of coercive air power](#), undermines the case. Seventy-eight days of NATO bombing did not, by themselves, [compel Slobodan Milosevic](#), president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to withdraw.

What changed was the credible threat of a ground invasion combined with Russia’s

withdrawal of diplomatic support. The political outcome – contested statehood, ongoing ethnic tensions – is hardly the stable governance that air power advocates promise.

The pattern is consistent: The United States repeatedly confuses its unmatched capacity to destroy from the air with the ability to dictate political outcomes.

Why this war?

The recent U.S. attacks on Iran raise a fundamental question: Why is the United States fighting this war at all?

The administration has declared regime change as its objective, justifying the campaign on the grounds of [Iran’s nuclear program and missile capabilities](#).

But that nuclear program was being [actively negotiated](#) in Geneva days before the strikes. And Iran’s foreign minister [told NBC](#) the two sides were close to a deal. Then the bombs fell.

Iran did not attack America. And it currently does not have the capability to [threaten the American homeland](#). What Iran challenges is Israel’s regional military dominance, and I believe it is Israel’s objective of [neutralizing a rival](#) that is driving this operation.

[Israel targeted 30 senior Iranian leaders](#) in the opening strikes. [Israeli officials described it](#) as a preemptive attack to “remove threats to the State of Israel.” I see the strategic logic for these killings as Israel’s, and Americans are absorbing the costs.

[U.S. military bases](#) in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have taken Iranian missile fire. American service members are in harm's way – [three have already been killed](#) – not because Iran attacked them, but I believe because their president committed them to someone else's war without a clear endgame.



Each coercive step in this conflict – from the 2018 withdrawal [from the nuclear deal](#), to the 2020 [assassination of Qasem Soleimani](#), Iran's most powerful military commander, to the [June 2025 strikes](#) – was framed as restoring leverage.

Each produced the opposite, eliminating diplomatic off-ramps, accelerating the very threats it aimed to contain.

The regime is not one man

Decapitation strikes assume that removing a leader removes the obstacle to political change. But Iran's political system is institutional — the [Guardian Council](#), the [Assembly of Experts](#) and the [Revolutionary Guard](#) have survived for four decades.

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The system has [succession mechanisms](#), but they were designed for orderly transitions, not for active bombardment. The group most likely to fill the vacuum is the Revolutionary Guard, whose institutional interest lies in escalation, not accommodation.

There is a deeper irony. The [largest protests since 1979](#) swept Iran just weeks ago. A genuine domestic opposition was growing. The strikes have almost certainly destroyed that movement's prospects.

Decades of research on [rally-around-the-flag](#) effects – the tendency of populations to unite behind their government when attacked by a foreign power – confirms that external attacks fuse regime and nation, even when citizens despise their leaders.

Iranians who were chanting "[death to the dictator](#)" are now watching foreign bombs fall on their cities during Ramadan, hearing reports of over 100 children killed in [a strike on a girls school in Minab](#).

Trump's call for Iranians to "[seize control of your destiny](#)" echoes a familiar pattern. In 1953, the [CIA overthrew Iran's democratically elected prime minister](#) in the name of freedom.

That produced the Shah, the [Shah's brutal reign](#) led to the [Iranian Revolution in 1979](#), and the revolution produced the Islamic Republic now being bombed.

What comes next? And what guarantee is there that whatever emerges will be any friendlier to Israel or the United States?

What does success look like?

This is the question no one in Washington has answered. If the objective is regime change, who governs 92 million people after?

If the objective is stability, why are American bases across the Middle East [absorbing missile fire](#)?

There is no American theory of political endgame in Iran — only a theory of destruction. That theory has been tested in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya – and Iran itself over the preceding eight months. It has failed every time, not because of poor execution, but because the premise is flawed.

Air power can raze a government's infrastructure. It cannot build the political order that must replace it. Iran, with its sophisticated military, near-nuclear capability, proxy networks spanning the region and a regime now martyred by foreign attack, will likely not be the exception.

[U.S. law prohibits the assassination](#) of foreign leaders, and instead Israel killed Iran's supreme leader while American warplanes filled the skies overhead. Washington has called the result [freedom at hand](#), but it has not answered the only question that matters: What comes next?

Distrust and disempowerment, not apathy, keep employees from supporting marginalized colleagues



Meg A. Warren

Professor of Management, Western Washington University



Michael T. Warren

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Western Washington University

What really holds people back from stepping up as allies in support of their marginalized colleagues? For example, why don't more men say something when they see a colleague or a customer make a sexist remark about a female co-worker?

[Our research](#), published in the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, suggests that people often hesitate to intervene when co-workers are mistreated because they themselves feel disempowered in their organizations and experience distrust and polarization.

Our findings run counter to the [common assumption](#) that people don't step up to support marginalized colleagues because they don't care or are unmotivated. Not seeing much action against inequity and injustice can drive this cynical idea. It's built

into many diversity, equity and inclusion training programs that rely on motivational tactics of persuasion, guilt and shaming to get people to act.

[We are psychology researchers](#) interested in how people can use their strengths to effectively support others who are marginalized. We surveyed 778 employees in Michigan and 973 employees across all provinces of Canada, representative of urban and rural areas, working-class and professional jobs, and across all demographics, including gender, race and sexual orientation. We asked them, "What makes it hard for you to be an ally for underrepresented and marginalized people (e.g., people of color, women, persons with disability) in your organization?"

Low motivation represented just 8% of the barriers people cited. And lack of awareness that marginalized groups face inequities accounted for only 10% of the barriers people mentioned. Most diversity training money tends to be devoted to teaching employees about these topics – suggesting why many [diversity training programs fail](#).

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions.

About us

The most common barrier to allyship that our participants named was distrust and tension between people in their organization, which had them second-guessing themselves and self-censoring. People also reported feeling disempowered, like they didn't have the power, opportunity or resources to make a real difference for their colleagues.

Why it matters

Researchers, specialists and consultants alike approach issues of workplace inequity

with the assumption that to drive action they need to first unblock potential allies' deep-seated resistance to change. For example, specialists assume that people need to become more [motivated](#), more [courageous](#), less [biased](#) or better [informed](#) about existing inequities in order to act as allies.

In this study, we temporarily set aside all preexisting assumptions and directly asked people what made it hard for them to be an ally, in their own words. Our goal was to identify practical roadblocks at the top of people's minds that stop them from taking the first step, or the next logical step.

When popular messaging, like on [social media](#), and [organizational interventions](#) misunderstand the causes of people's inaction, they risk exacerbating frustration and tensions. Interventions need to account for their audience's true perspectives on what makes allyship difficult. Otherwise, they'll lack credibility, and people will likely be less receptive to program content.



What still isn't known

We'd like to further investigate the impacts of the specific barriers mentioned in our study. More insight could help workplaces focus interventions on addressing barriers that are

the worst pressure points and avoid overspending on interventions that can move the needle only so much.

More than a quarter of respondents said they experienced no barriers to standing up for colleagues. We'd like to investigate whether these respondents simply didn't want to engage with our question, are uncertain about the barriers, or are already engaging in some form of allyship. Our team's previous research has shown that even loud allies who publicly call out bias often also [engage in quiet allyship actions](#), such as privately checking in on how a victim of bias is doing and assisting in strategizing next steps.

What's next

Our research team is investigating whether programs designed with this study's findings in mind – starting with building trusting relationships and helping people feel empowered – can increase allyship action. When diversity programs built on inaccurate assumptions don't show the desired results, they risk having funding withdrawn or being halted altogether. Instead, as organizations take stock and pivot, evidence from our study and others can help them more effectively plan their next move.

Feeling stuck at work as the New Year begins? It may be a sign of professional growth



Leda Stawnychko

Associate Professor of Strategy and Organizational Theory, Mount Royal University

As the new year starts, it's natural to feel torn between [gratitude](#) and [restlessness](#). December often disrupts routines: fewer meetings, quieter inboxes and a rare chance to take stock and reflect.

During this time, people may feel pride in [how far they have come](#), alongside a growing sense that the path they are on [no longer fits](#).

This discomfort is especially [common at stages of life when professionals expect to feel more settled, yet instead feel stagnant](#). It's easy to dismiss such feelings as impatience or a lack of commitment.

But research on [adult learning and development](#) suggests that feeling stuck is often a signal of growth. It's evidence that our internal development has outpaced our external circumstances.

In educational research, this tension is often described as a [disorienting dilemma](#): an experience that unsettles

our assumptions and highlights a mismatch between how we see ourselves and the contexts we are in.

While these moments are often uncomfortable, they act as necessary catalysts for meaningful learning and change, motivating people to [reassess their goals, values and direction](#). Seen this way, yearning for new beginnings is a rational response to growth.

Diagnosing the source of restlessness

If you're ready for change but unsure of where to begin, a useful first step is clarifying what is driving the sense of restlessness. Is it the [work itself](#), the [people you work with](#) or the broader [organizational culture](#)?

When organizations are [generally supportive](#), growth doesn't necessarily require leaving. Change may be possible within the same environment. In these cases, [conversations with supervisors](#) can reveal opportunities that are not immediately obvious, such as [stretch assignments](#), [special projects](#) or [support for further learning](#).



Research shows that people who stay with organizations over the long term

often do so because of strong relationships, a good fit with their broader lives and what scholars call “[job embeddedness](#)” — the financial, social and psychological benefits of the position that make leaving costly.

But when the cost of staying is stifling your growth, it’s worth exploring how you might either [renegotiate growth](#) where you are or thoughtfully prepare to move on.

Re-evaluating what matters now

Whether you’re considering a shift within your organization or beyond it, taking time to [reassess your needs, goals and values](#) is essential. What mattered to you earlier in your career may not matter in the same way now. Income, learning, flexibility, stability and meaning all rise and fall in importance across life stages.

Clarifying your values does not mean choosing one priority forever. It simply provides a clearer map for [evaluating opportunities](#).

Some people prioritize mentorship or employer-supported education. Others need predictable schedules, strong health benefits or flexibility to care for family members.

Understanding what matters most *now* helps narrow your options and reduces the paralysis that often accompanies big decisions.

Focusing on activities rather than titles

Another way to gain clarity is to [imagine your ideal role](#) without fixating on job titles.

[Titles can be misleading](#) and often mask the day-to-day reality of the work. Instead, [focus on activities](#). How will you spend most of your time? What skills will you be using day to day?

One useful question is what activities you would [gladly do without being paid](#). These often point to core strengths and motivations worth taking seriously. Organizational psychologists describe this as [intrinsic motivation](#) — the internal drive to engage in an activity because it is inherently satisfying.



For example, early in my career, I began to notice a pattern in my volunteer work. I was consistently drawn to supporting professionals through moments of career transition, conflict and change. Over time, that realization helped me recognize that mentoring and coaching were activities I already valued enough to do for free.

With that insight, I began targeting roles in my own career that rewarded those same activities, ensuring that my work consistently included elements that felt both [meaningful and energizing](#).

Preparing for the next step

Once priorities and interests are clearer, look closely at the qualifications and experiences the roles you are drawn to actually require and [begin developing them intentionally](#).

This can occur through low-risk avenues, including projects in your current job, entrepreneurial or [side work](#), volunteer roles or targeted learning opportunities.

Consistently taking small, purposeful steps can help you systematically bridge the gap between your current capabilities and the demands of your next chapter. By actively cultivating these skills, you transform a period of restlessness into a constructive phase of professional readiness.

As you consider what comes next, use your network strategically to learn and ask questions. New beginnings unfold through conversations, experiments and choices made over time.

Also pay attention to the [beliefs shaping your actions](#). Assumptions about what you can or cannot do can limit options more than skills ever do. Feeling stuck is an invitation to evolve and may mark the start of an exciting new chapter you can begin writing today.

Five ways that AI could be reshaping your relationship with money



Osama Mansour

Associate Professor in Information Systems, Lund University

The financial industry is entering a new era, with AI and new regulations on accessing data transforming how finance works. These changes are giving people more options to manage their money in new ways – taking us closer to totally cashless transactions.

Over the last century, banks implemented new technologies like ATMs, internet banking and smartphone apps to fundamentally change our relationship with money. Now, new regulations and initiatives around the world are forcing banks to allow fintech firms (companies that use technology to provide financial services) to access customers' banking data.

This includes regulations like the EU's revised [payment services directive](#) (PSD2), which aims to encourage innovation in financial products while protecting consumers'

data. In the UK, the [CMA9 order](#) serves a similar purpose. These regulatory changes are a game changer in the world of finance.

Accessing customer data allows for greater openness in the financial industry. It enables a shift from a closed banking model, where banks kept a tight hold of their customers' data, to an open banking ecosystem where people are free to share their financial data with third-party apps or websites.

For the first time, this shift is enabling customers themselves to benefit from the sharing of banking data as fintechs use it to enhance their experiences and offer them a wider range of services.

[My research](#) shows that the traditional role of banks is changing in profound ways. Banks are increasingly operating behind the scenes as infrastructure providers, facilitating secure data exchange with fintechs. These fintechs are more agile and tech-savvy than banks, focusing on specialised customer solutions and often offering superior customer experiences.

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[A 2025 report](#) found that open banking is becoming central to the global financial system. Fintechs, including digital-only

banks, payment services like Stripe and Trustly, buy-now-pay-later providers and crypto platforms, are emerging as major providers of alternative financial services.

With data central to innovation, AI is reshaping how we interact with money. As an example, the same report indicates that 80% of fintechs are implementing AI. Customers are beginning to experience these advances thanks to data-driven agents like chatbots and robo advisors. This technology can analyse customer behaviour to offer personalised services in ways that were previously not possible.

Here are five ways that AI could be reshaping your relationship with money.

1. Intelligent credit-scoring

AI-driven credit scoring uses open banking data instead of a customer's traditional bank credit history. It considers customers' context and behaviour – things like mobile phone and rent payments – to make fairer assessments. This can encourage responsible access to credit for people on low incomes, and promote financial inclusion.

2. Debt rehabilitation services

These services can be used to manage financial behaviour. People who are struggling financially can use these debt services to track their spending patterns in real time. Trusted individuals, maybe a friend or relative, can be alerted when their spending is irregular.

3. Automated savings trackers

Savings trackers use AI to advise customers on when and how much to save. They can also transfer funds into savings accounts automatically. This can help people to manage money shocks and build financial resilience.



4. Account aggregation services

Customers can connect accounts from different banks to get an aggregate view of their financial health. This can help them to make better decisions around their money, enhancing their sense of being in control and making them more resilient against financial shocks.

5. Predictive finance

Personalised services can assess financial behaviour by learning customers' habits and anticipating their future needs. Predictive finance can translate these assessments into practical, money-saving recommendations. People can use AI agents to plan and time a family trip. The AI agent can then autonomously make a

booking that best fits and alert the customer.

Fintechs are using customer data to develop services like these that make accessing and managing money simpler – potentially making it easier for everyone to participate in the financial system. Taken together, these innovations show the promise of AI for making finance more inclusive.

But risks are inevitable. In this new landscape, the traditional trust between bank and customer might be challenged, as the open nature of transactions can increase security risks. Automated profiling, data vulnerabilities and fraud can also erode trust, invade customers' privacy and violate their dignity. That's why transparent regulations are needed to protect customers and preserve their digital rights.

When traditional banks and fintechs work together, they must keep the customer's best interests in focus. After all, there is no doubt that the double-edged consequences of AI and data will continue to shape the evolving financial landscape.

Five ways to make your day at work feel better



Ioannis Kratsiotis

*Lecturer in Organisational Psychology,
Manchester Metropolitan University*

Most people know what a difficult day at work feels like. It can be tiring, draining and tense, leaving you unable to switch off. But there are also days when work feels lighter and more energising.

These good days are not necessarily defined by big wins or major achievements. In fact, they tend to come from harmonious experiences in the workplace that support our psychological needs.

[Research](#) I carried out with colleagues suggests that when people feel genuinely supported by the people around them, it helps to meet three basic needs: a sense of autonomy, a sense of competency and a sense of connection.

Meeting these needs is often what makes some days feel better than others. And workers can create these better days for themselves and for the people around them with these five simple suggestions.

1. Ask for help and offer it in return

Support does not need to be formal or time consuming. A brief check in, a quick question or an offer to share advice can make a real difference.

These small interactions help people feel connected and supported, which lifts mood and motivation throughout the day. Support works best when it goes both ways, so look for opportunities to both ask for help and offer it when you can.

2. Recognise the small wins

Feeling effective is one of the strongest [drivers of wellbeing](#), so take a moment to notice the small things that went well.

Perhaps you made progress on a task or finally completed something on your to do list that you'd been avoiding. Recognising these small wins builds a sense of competence that carries into the rest of the day and into life outside work.

3. Give people (and yourself) some space

A sense of freedom in how we approach our work plays an [important role](#) in how we feel each day. Give yourself permission to make small choices about how you complete your tasks and allow colleagues this same freedom when possible.

Showing trust in others can strengthen your relationships, while giving yourself space can help you [maintain focus and motivation](#).

4. Reach out before the end of the day

Short moments of genuine connection can change the tone of the entire day. A simple thank you, a message of appreciation or a short conversation with a colleague can lift your mood more than you might expect.

Reaching out to someone before you finish your day can help you leave work feeling lighter and more energised. Building positive workplace relationships not only feels good but also provides a reliable support network you can draw on when needed.

5. Stay balanced

Sometimes we feel drained because one of our basic needs is not being met. Perhaps we have had too little freedom in our work, too few moments of progress or not enough human connection.

Restoring balance matters more than maximising any one need, so taking a moment to notice what feels low is the first step towards bringing back a sense of equilibrium. The next step is to do one small thing to address it.



Choose the order of your upcoming tasks if you need a greater sense of autonomy,

complete a manageable task if you need a sense of progress and check in with a colleague if you feel isolated. Encouraging others to do the same helps build a team climate where balance and support are shared responsibilities. When this happens, good days become more common.

Small changes, big differences

The main message of our research is simple. Good days at work do not require major changes or perfect conditions. They are created through small everyday moments of support that help us feel free, capable and connected.

When these needs are in balance, people feel better during the workday and have more energy when they get home. Work will always have its difficult moments, but we have more influence over our daily experience than we sometimes realise.

By paying attention to the small moments that shape our day, and by supporting each other in simple but meaningful ways, we can create more days that leave us feeling fulfilled at work and refreshed at home.

From Anthropic to Iran: Who sets the limits on AI's use in war and surveillance?



Emmanuelle Vaast

Professor of Information Systems, McGill University

Anthropic, a leading AI company, recently refused to sign a Pentagon contract that would allow the United States military “unrestricted access” to its technology for “all lawful purposes.” To sign, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei required two clear exceptions: [no mass surveillance of Americans and no fully autonomous weapons without human oversight](#).

The very next day, the U.S. and Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Iran.

This leaves many wondering: how different would a war with fully autonomous weapons look? How important an ethical decision was it, when Amodei referred to fully autonomous weapons and mass surveillance as AI “red lines” that his company would not cross? What do these red lines mean for other nations?

The decision cost Anthropic immensely. U.S. President Donald Trump [ordered all American agencies to stop using](#)

[Anthropic’s AI family of advanced large language models \(LLMs\) and conversational chatbots, Claude](#). Pete Hegseth, U.S. defence secretary, designated Anthropic as a “[supply chain risk](#),” which could impact other contract possibilities for the company. And rival company [OpenAI swiftly struck a deal](#) with the Pentagon instead.

The risks of fully autonomous weapons

AI chatbots are typically not weapons on their own, but they can become part of weapons systems. They do not fire missiles or control drones, but they can be plugged into the larger military systems.

They can quickly summarize intelligence, generate target shortlists, rank high-priority threats and recommend strikes. A key risk is that of a process going from sensor data to AI interpretation, target selection and weapon activation with [minimal to no human control](#) or even awareness.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions.

About us

[Fully autonomous weapons](#) are military platforms that, once activated, independently conduct military operations without human intervention. They rely on sensors such as cameras, radars and AI algorithms to analyze the environment, search for, select and engage targets.

[Advanced helicopters](#), for instance, already operate with no human intervention. With fully autonomous weapons, human control and oversight disappear and AI makes final attack and battlefield decisions.

This is concerning, given recent research in which advanced AI models opted to use nuclear weapons in simulated war games in [95 per cent of cases](#).



The risks of mass surveillance

Frontier AI models can promptly summarize huge data sets and auto-generate patterns to look for signals of suspicious people and activity through even weak associations. In [his statement](#) on Anthropic's discussions with the Department of War, Amodei argued that "AI-driven mass surveillance presents serious, novel risks to our fundamental liberties."

They can analyze records, communications and metadata to scan across populations. They can produce [briefings and lists of people](#) that flag automatically who gets questioned,

denied entry into a country, refused a job, etc. These systems create [risks to privacy](#) because they can analyze data from multiple sources, such as social media accounts, and combine these with cameras and facial recognition to track people in real time.

AI models can also [make mistakes](#). Even a small erroneous association can scale up dangerously if the system is run over millions of people.

AI models are also opaque: how they analyze data and reach their conclusions cannot be fully comprehended, which adds to the difficulty of challenging the output.

'All lawful purposes'

The label "all lawful purposes" sounds like a safety limit. Yet, this language means that the government can use AI for all purposes that it deems legal, with few limits in the contract.

This matters because legality is a moving target, laws can change and are often ill-equipped to deal in real time with fast changing innovations, and interpretations can shift.

This is what made Anthropic, a company that was founded by former OpenAI employees with an explicit focus on [AI safety and ethics](#), argue that AI-enabled mass surveillance was a novel risk and that [lawful purposes could not provide stable guardrails](#).

Anthropic has famously developed an [internal lab](#) to understand how Claude works, interprets queries and makes

autonomous decisions. Given the opacity of LLMs as well as the speed with which their capacities develop, such efforts matter.

Project Maven with higher stakes?

In some ways, this story is familiar. Technology companies have long been at the forefront of innovation, with great promises of progress but also risks of misuse and negative consequences. The closest historical comparison is Google's [Project Maven](#) in 2018.

Google had a contract with the Pentagon for the company to help analyze drone surveillance footage. Four thousand Google employees protested the project, arguing that surveillance should not be part of the company's mission. Google announced it would not renew Maven and later issued AI principles that included commitments around weapons and surveillance.

The situation became a [landmark case](#) in the power of employee activism and public pressure.

The Project Maven example, however, also reminds us that company ethics and AI safety are fluctuating matters. In early 2025, [Google discreetly dropped its pledge not to use AI for weapons and surveillance](#) in an attempt to gain new lucrative defence contracts.

Anthropic's current situation is in some respects similar to Google's Project Maven one: it shows a company and its leaders trying to place limits on military uses of AI. It illustrates tensions that emerge when espoused corporate values

collide with governments and national security demands.

The Anthropic case is also distinct because generative AI in 2026 is much more powerful than it was just a few years ago. Project Maven was only about analyzing drone footage. Today's models can be used for many tasks, so the spillover risk is larger.

LLMs like Claude can [self-improve by learning from user corrections and refining actions through iterative feedback loops](#). What an unrestricted Claude and its client, the Pentagon, could have done is therefore worrisome.

Who sets the limits?

These events are neither about Anthropic being uniquely principled nor about the Pentagon being uniquely demanding. They are about a critical issue that will keep coming back as AI becomes more powerful: who sets the limits regarding AI use when national security is involved?

If "all lawful purposes" become the default, the guardrails will depend on politics and legal interpretation. For Canada and other nations, the safeguards matter. Ethics cannot be left to contract negotiations and corporate conscience.

These events illustrate the complexities of engaging in AI ethics in practice. AI ethics [principles and declarations](#) are important and abundant. At the same time, in practice, AI ethics are set through contracts, procurement rules, various parties' actual behaviour and oversight.

Canada's defence and public sectors are [building AI capacity](#) and Canada operates closely with the U.S. defence and intelligence. This means that procurement language and standards can travel. If "all lawful purposes" becomes the standard language in the U.S. national security market, this could put pressure on Canada and other nations to adopt similar terms.

The reassuring news is that Canada has governance tools in place it can strengthen and extend. The [Directive on Automated Decision-Making](#) is designed to ensure that systems are transparent, accountable and fair. It requires impact assessment and public reporting.

The [Algorithmic Impact Assessment](#) is a mandatory risk-assessment tool tied to the directive.

But Canadians should be mindful of ongoing developments to check that procurement standards name prohibited uses, to call for audits and for independent oversight so that safeguards do not depend only on particular governments and companies at the top.

Here are Canada's 2026 Winter Olympic medal hopefuls, from hockey to freestyle skiing



Taylor McKee

Assistant Professor, Sport Management, Brock University

[Game Plan. Best Ever '88. Own the Podium.](#) The messaging from the Canadian government's Olympic high-performance sport initiatives over the past 50 years makes the stakes clear: winning is important.

Gone are the days of Canadian athletes being satisfied with simply making it to the Olympics. An expectation of excellence now pervades the Olympic program. Athletes are considered ambassadors of their countries and symbols of national pride.

This year in Italy, that expectation will be front and centre amid recent geopolitical tensions. It's no wonder [the new slogan](#) is one that evokes unity and patriotism: "We Are All Team Canada."

While there is little doubt that all Olympic athletes are expected to play and perform under pressure, Canada's historical successes at the Winter Games have created heightened expectations. The country set a record for the most gold medals won by a host nation at a single

Winter Olympics [with 14 in Vancouver in 2010.](#)

When I ask my undergraduate students which Canadian athletes they believe feel the most pressure to win gold at the Olympics, most say hockey, though that may be too simple an answer.

Curling hopefuls

It is certainly true that Canadians expect strong results from men's and women's hockey teams, and for good reason. Canada is [the most successful ice hockey nation in Olympic history](#), with 23 medal wins.

Yet many Canadian hockey fans recognize the strength of other hockey nations. Canadians both love and loathe the Swedes, Finns, Slovaks, Czechs and Americans that play for their National Hockey League teams. A loss to those players and those teams is devastating, but explicable.



Curling presents a different story. Here, expectations are clear: gold medals. Casual Olympic viewers may not realize

that [Scots and Swiss make up the top-three men's curling rinks in the world](#), and the Swiss women have won two of the last four World Championships.

That said, Canada's teams are formidable. The men's rink, led by Brad Jacobs, won gold in 2014 in Sochi, and the women's rink, led by Rachel Homan, [is currently ranked No. 1 in the world](#). Far from a golden *fait accompli*, Canada's curlers are among the most heavily scrutinized athletes heading to Milan Cortina.

Speed skating hopefuls

Canada has realistic medal potential in both short-track and long-track speed skating. Laurent Dubreuil is a defending silver medallist in the 1000m and finished fourth in the 500m in Beijing 2022.

Ivanie Blondin and Isabelle Weidemann are [members of the defending gold medallist Team Pursuit team](#) and silver medallists in other distances. The Team Pursuit event is among the most exciting long-track events at the Olympics and certainly worth circling on the viewing calendar.



On short track, the location of some of the highest drama and most intense finishes at every Olympics, Canada has some serious medal potential with a full complement of 10 skaters headed to Milan.

[The women's team features four-time Olympic medallist Kim Boutin](#), who will compete at her third consecutive Olympic Winter Games. Boutin received medals in all three women's individual events at PyeongChang 2018 and later added bronze in the 500m at Beijing 2022. Over the past decade, she has earned 17 medals at the ISU World Short Track Championships and two more world titles at the 2025 Championships, winning gold in the women's 3000m relay and the mixed relay.

Freestyle skiing hopefuls

Many Canadians might assume speed skating has produced the most medals for Canada over the years. Speed skating accounts for 23 total events between short and long-track at this year's Olympics, and Canada [won their first speed skating medal in 1932](#).

However, despite it only being added as a full medal sport in 1992, Canada has won 30 total medals in a different sport, including the distinction of Canada's first home gold medal won by [Alexandre Bilodeau in 2010](#): freestyle skiing.



Equal parts agility and artistry, freestyle skiing is definitely one of Games' most beguiling and exhilarating watches.

Comprised of eight separate disciplines, Canada has numerous medal threats, headlined by “[greatest mogul skier of all time](#)” Mikaël Kingsbury, fresh off of a Jan. 10 victory in men's moguls at Val St. Côme, marking a staggering 100 career World Cup victories for the skier.

And then, there's hockey.

Ice hockey hopefuls

The centre of the women's hockey is a [binary system](#): two stars bound together, their combined gravity ordering the remaining planets, paling in size and importance to their suns.

This year marks a new era, as professional women's players will compete for the first time at the Olympics, following the establishment of the Professional Women's Hockey League.

Since 1990, only one team other than Canada and the U.S. — [Finland in 2019](#) — has reached the Ice Hockey World Championships gold medal game. Canada won bronze that year.

Gold medallists in five of seven previous Olympics, the Canadian women's team enters as a slight [underdog this year](#), with [Team USA defending their World Champion title](#).

Given the storied history of these two teams and the heightened tension currently between the two nations, their matchup will assuredly be among the most exciting 60 minutes played this year.

On the men's side, [a long, protracted wait is over](#): NHL players return to the Olympics. Canadian captain Sidney Crosby will be [aiming for his third Olympic gold](#).



Alongside the return of pro talent comes a familiar source of tension for Canadian hockey fans: [consternation around goaltending](#).

Canada remains one of the tournament's favourites, [shimmering with a galaxy of superstars on forward and defence](#), yet persistent [concerns over net-minding continue to fuel doubt among some fans](#).

No shortage of Olympic hopefuls

There are many more medal hopefuls for Team Canada heading into Milan Cortina, from [alpine skiers and ski cross athletes](#) to [snowboarding, figure skating and freestyle skiing](#).

But simply taking in the Games when possible can be a rewarding experience in and of itself.

While cynicism and [skepticism towards the International Olympic Committee](#) and [Olympic movement](#) are certainly warranted, the Winter Olympics will provide the opportunity for Canadian athletes to achieve global sporting excellence.

While we know that pressure creates diamonds, these athletes may soon prove that it can produce gold, too.

How business students learn to make ethical decisions by studying a soup kitchen in one of America's toughest neighborhoods



Tim Swift

Professor of Management, St. Joseph's University

For the past decade I have volunteered at [St. Francis Inn](#), a soup kitchen in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Kensington, for those not from Philly, has long had a reputation for potent but affordable street drugs. Interstate 95 and the Market-Frankford elevated commuter train line provide easy access to the neighborhood for buyers and sellers, and abandoned buildings offer havens for drug use and other illicit activity.

[St. Francis Inn Ministries](#), which was [founded by two Franciscan friars in 1979](#), serves sit-down breakfast and dinner for thousands of people each year, many of whom suffer from poverty, homelessness and substance use disorder. It also runs [Marie's Closet](#), a charity that provides free used clothing and housewares.

These ministries are operated by a core team of nine full-time members, hundreds of volunteers from local high schools and colleges, and an ad hoc team of folks from many walks of life.

In the years I've been volunteering at St. Francis, significant changes have occurred in Kensington, including [gentrification](#), [soaring housing prices](#) and [increased police activity](#). Such changes can make it harder for people who suffer from poverty and homelessness to remain in the neighborhood.

Around 2018, the number of guests visiting St. Francis Inn was already dwindling noticeably. I heard volunteers speculate on whether St. Francis Inn should relocate further north in Philadelphia where there are more people in need. Others wondered whether St. Francis Inn should create a mobile unit that traveled to people in need wherever they may be.

As I listened, I realized that this was a business decision. As a [professor of management](#) at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, I decided to present this decision to the students in my Management Honors Capstone Seminar. In January 2026 I [published a business case study](#) titled "Dealing with Change in Kensington, Philadelphia: The Case of Saint Francis Inn."



An interesting business case

The capstone seminar I teach is the second of two strategic management courses that honors business students take in their senior year. Using the [Harvard case study method](#), students identify the critical issues embedded in a variety of cases and find the information needed to evaluate those issues using seminal theories in strategic management.

Students then propose a solution – a hypothesis they believe best addresses the situation. They test whether that solution works by building [a plan of action](#) – called a “proof” – that provides logic and evidence that their solution would work.

Part of what I believe makes this case study interesting is that it involves some of the most vulnerable people in Philadelphia. I felt it was important to give students the opportunity to consider important issues of social justice when applying their business decision-making skills.

Morally sound recommendations

Among other material, the course covers two different perspectives that students can use to make informed decisions and propose solutions for St. Francis Inn.

The first is the [resource-based view](#). Using this framework, students identify the unique resources and capabilities that a firm – in this case, St. Francis Inn – has built over the years. Then they determine how to use those resources and capabilities best to carry out the firm’s mission.

St. Francis Inn’s mission is to live among and serve the poor, following the example of [St. Francis of Assisi](#). The organization has built decades-long relationships with food companies – which share leftover meat, vegetables and other products with the inn – as well as with members of the community in Kensington. In addition, they have developed a network of hundreds of well-trained and motivated volunteer workers throughout Philadelphia and, indeed, the entire country.

The second framework that students are expected to use is “[formal moral theory](#),” which provides a set of different theories for determining moral rules. It enables us to make ethical decisions that are structured, rational and logical.

For example, using “[utilitarianism](#),” students quantify all of the costs and benefits of a decision and choose the option that provides the largest net benefit – or utility – to society. “[Rights theory](#)” requires students to make

decisions that respect the intrinsic dignity of all persons. Students can use these theories to make morally sound recommendations on how St. Francis Inn can best serve the stakeholders in its community.

Perhaps the most obvious people affected by St. Francis Inn are the people living in the neighborhood who struggle with homelessness and substance use disorder and receive food and other assistance there. Other groups of concern include longtime neighbors who have homes nearby but still live in poverty, new residents moving into the neighborhood, local property developers who generally want to see fewer homeless people in the neighborhood, and city officials who are responsible for various government functions. These include police and emergency medical services, city council members and social services organizations.



Students must answer a two-dimensional question: Given what St. Francis Inn does best, how can it best address the needs of its most important stakeholders?

Since they are business majors, many quickly gravitate to logical business

decisions that St. Francis Inn can make, such as continuing its operation where it is, relocating, or creating a mobile service. Without fail, there are students each semester who argue that regardless of what's "best" for St. Francis Inn, the interests of the various people of concern in the neighborhood must be respected. To be honest, I enjoy watching them grapple with this problem with sincerity and care.

Here, students must balance an organization's core competencies with the moral impact of its decisions, while prioritizing the rights and needs of diverse, nontraditional groups who have a stake in this decision. That's a valuable skill for any future – or, for that matter, current – business executive.

Is my boss a narcissist?' How researchers look and listen for clues



Ivana Vitanova

Associate professor, EM Lyon Business School

Between the public extravagances of today's business icons and the [recent trials of prominent CEOs](#), narcissistic managers have firmly taken the spotlight. In academia, the fascination with the potent mix of charisma and ego that defines narcissistic leaders has fuelled nearly two decades of [extensive research and analysis](#). Yet one of the central challenges of this work is measurement: *how can we identify and assess narcissism in managers outside a clinical setting?* Since it's rarely possible to administer traditional psychometric tests to top executives, management scholars have developed a range of clever, unobtrusive ways to identify narcissistic tendencies by observing behavior, language, and public presence.

Narcissism: its traditional measurement

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association, "narcissistic personality disorder is defined as a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (sense of superiority in

fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and occurring in a variety of contexts." In their [2020 article](#) in the Journal of Management, authors Ormonde Rhees Cragun, Kari Joseph Olsen and Patrick Michael Wright write that "despite its origin in clinical psychology, the DSM's definition is also widely accepted for defining narcissism in its nonclinical form".

Research in psychology traditionally assesses [narcissism](#) through [self-report](#) tests or third-party psychometric tests. As first outlined by [R. A. Emmons in 1984](#), the basic principle of these tests is to link simple statements to the components of narcissism. The most widely used and empirically validated are the 40-item [Narcissistic Personality Inventory](#) (NPI) and its shorter version, the [NPI-16](#). The NPI asks respondents to choose between paired statements such as "I really like to be the center of attention" versus "it makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention", and "I am much like everybody else" versus "I am an extraordinary person".

While a few studies have administered the NPI directly to top managers – or adapted it for third-party evaluations, asking employees or stakeholders to rate managers based on daily interactions – such approaches remain extremely rare due to limited access to suitable participants. Faced with these limitations, researchers in management and organizational studies have sought

alternative ways to detect narcissism in leaders. They began by identifying behavioral and linguistic cues in CEOs' official communications that could reflect one or more dimensions of narcissism. More recently, however, the rise of social media has provided researchers with new, more direct opportunities to observe and measure narcissistic behavior in real time.

Spotting narcissistic traits in interviews and official communications

One of the first studies to measure managerial narcissism was developed by [Arijit Chatterjee and Donald C. Hambrick in 2007](#). After consulting with corporate communication experts, they followed [Emmons' principle](#) and identified four potential signs of narcissism in CEOs' public behavior. These were the prominence of the CEO's photograph in a company's annual report; the CEO's prominence in a company's press releases; the CEO's use of first-person singular pronouns (eg I, me and my) in interviews; and the CEO's compensation divided by that of the second-highest paid executive in the firm.

[Later research](#) expanded this approach with new indicators, such as the number of lines in a CEO's official biography or the number of awards listed in their self-description. Other studies zoomed in on more specific linguistic cues – such as the ratio of singular pronouns to plural pronouns (eg we, us and ours) in CEOs' press releases.

Inspired by findings in psychology, some researchers have even used the size of [a CEO's signature](#) as a proxy for narcissism – a larger, more flamboyant signature being linked to a higher level of narcissism.

Importantly, many of these studies have validated their unobtrusive measures against traditional personality tests, finding strong correlations with established tools like the NPI. This evidence suggests that we can reliably spot narcissistic tendencies in leaders by observing their behavior and communication.

How social media reveals narcissistic traits in managers

In recent years, the rise of social media has given researchers unprecedented opportunities to observe how managers present themselves to the public – opening a new window into their narcissistic behavior. For instance, [a recent study](#) by Sebastian Junge, Lorenz Graf-Vlachy, Moritz Hagen and Franziska Schlichte analysed managers' LinkedIn profiles to develop a multidimensional index of narcissism. Building on the DSM's components of narcissism, the authors identified five features of a profile that may signal narcissistic tendencies: the number of pictures of the executive; the length of the "About" section; the number of listed professional experiences; the number of listed skills; and the number of listed credentials. They then combined these indicators to create an overall index of managerial narcissism.

Table 1
Mapping of Narcissism Indicators onto Emmons' (1984, 1987) Conceptual Elements of Narcissism by Way of Illustrative NPI Items

LinkedIn Indicator	Leadership / Authority	Self-Absorption / Self-Admiration	Superiority / Arrogance	Exploitativeness / Entitlement
1: Number of pictures of the executive	I really like to be the center of attention.	I like to look at myself in the mirror.		
2: "About" section's total word count		I am an extraordinary person.	Everybody likes to hear my stories.	I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.
3: Number of listed professional experiences			Everybody likes to hear my stories.	
4: Number of listed skills	I see myself as a good leader.	I am an extraordinary person.		
5: Number of listed credentials		I am an extraordinary person.	I am apt to show off if I get the chance.	I am more capable than other people.

Note: NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

Admittedly, research that only uses social media profiles may focus on the most narcissistic managers, since less narcissistic executives may not maintain, for example, a LinkedIn presence. Moreover, social psychology research suggests that social media itself encourages exaggeratedly narcissistic communication by encouraging self-promotion. To help address these concerns, Junge et al. assigned managers without LinkedIn profiles the lowest possible narcissism score and included them in their overall analysis. Their study found strong correlations between the LinkedIn-based measure and earlier, unobtrusive measures of narcissistic CEO behavior, as well as traditional psychometric tests such as the NPI.

The takeaway is encouraging: we don't always need a personality test to spot narcissistic leaders – their words, images and online profiles can reveal a great deal. These tools offer employees, investors and board members a way to better recognize narcissistic tendencies in managers and adjust their decisions and interactions accordingly. And there's still huge potential for being creative: building on psychologists' insights into narcissistic behaviors, we could explore psycholinguistic dictionaries of [narcissistic rhetoric](#) and even, more eccentrically, analyse facial features such as [eyebrow distinctiveness](#)

Minding the gap between the art of deal-making and the art of diplomacy, or how to handle



Maxime Lefebvre

Permanent Affiliate Professor, ESCP Business School

Since Donald Trump's return to the White House, his shock tactics and explosive actions have made waves on the world stage. There is no shortage of adjectives characterising Donald Trump's international *modus operandi*: narcissistic, transgressive, unpredictable and erratic, boastful, clumsy, even vulgar, dishonest, brutal... His tweets and curt sentence-based internal and external communications present leaders and diplomatic corps worldwide with a redoubtable challenge when for example, he shamelessly goes public about conversations that should have otherwise remained private and confidential ([as was recently the case regarding a text exchange with Emmanuel Macron](#)). Such disturbing behaviour would've caused a breadth of diplomatic havoc if it hadn't come from the leader of the world's biggest superpower, leaving partners of the United States with no choice but to

adapt accordingly and keep up appearances.

Diplomacy in relations between foreign leaders and Trump, is still necessary, in the same way that international law retains its intrinsic value in relations between nations. Despite multiple breaches, [including those by the current US President himself](#), diplomacy remains an art form in terms of communication, and compromise between parties that do not share the same perspective on the world, especially when they are in disagreement over a particular issue.

'The Art of the Deal' – A disruptive brand of foreign policy

The book [The Art of the Deal](#) (co-authored by Donald Trump and journalist Tony Schwartz) dates back to 1987, long before the businessman's foray into politics. In the book, the Real Estate mogul describes his disruptive negotiating method, which consists of thinking big, asking for a lot, and using the media to his advantage. It was at that time that he started to publicly demand that the US lay down *tariffs* (global duty collections on imported goods), amid a context characterised by [Japan's economic boom](#) and the widening of America's trade deficit.

<https://youtu.be/NX50kkrNJXA>

"Donald Trump is he a master negotiator or a bully?" ABC Australia, July 2025.

<https://youtu.be/MJMdzMk4M>

France 24, October 2025.

Donald Trump was unable to fully implement his policy during his first term because he was [ill-prepared and held back by his administration, for example, in his attempts to build closer ties with North Korea](#). His second term kicked off with a more thought-out and resolute policy: aggressive trade measures (the “salvo of tariffs” announced on “Liberation Day” on April 2); by threats to the sovereignty of Canada and Greenland; by demanding that Latin American states comply with its orders on immigration control, the fight against drug trafficking, and relations with China; by the withdrawal of the United States from certain multilateral organizations (already begun in 2017-2020); and by the heavy-handed negotiation of several peace agreements (notably in Gaza).

This attitude, while striking in comparison to previous administrations, is not entirely unprecedented in American tradition when it comes to relations with the rest of the world. Pressure on allies, unilateral sanctions, the extraterritoriality of American law, the unilateral use of force, and the rejection of certain multilateral norms (the US has never ratified the [Montego Bay Convention](#) on the law of the sea or the [Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court](#), and withdrew from UNESCO between 1984 and 2003) are not new practices. But Donald Trump adds his own brand of brutality, selfishness, and systematicity, [in the name of ideology: America First](#).

Practical limitations

The US president has said that he sets no limits other than those of his “[own morality](#)”. However, there are two practical limits that are evident in his actions, which may reassure his partners somewhat.

Firstly, he does not like military adventures. On the one hand, this is due to his temperament (he did not do military service and believes more in business than in war). On the other hand, it is because his electoral base rejects military engagements. He intends to guarantee “peace through strength,” but the goal is indeed peace. He has demonstrated a clear preference for targeted strikes and operations (in Syria in 2017 and 2018, in Iran and Nigeria in 2025, and in Venezuela in 2026) instead of prolonged engagements.

He thus confirms that the page of the ‘war on terror’, which is estimated to have cost [\\$8 trillion](#) (€6.75 trillion) in the US between 2001 and 2021, has come to an end, without abandoning the military strikes that have become, since Barack Obama’s two terms in office, the preferred means of action against terrorist groups. The operation in Venezuela is a good illustration of a policy that is economical in its objectives (in this case, Maduro’s ousting and the fight against drug trafficking and Chinese influence, rather than regime change) and in its means.

Secondly, Donald Trump has demonstrated his pragmatism on more than one occasion, not hesitating to back

down when he has gone too far. This is a corollary of his disruptive approach. The reactions of American public opinion and the stock market, as well as the limits imposed by his partners, ultimately influence an administration in which the president, surrounded by loyalists, does not ignore calls for caution. The tariffs enacted on 'Liberation Day' were immediately followed by a pause, largely due to the reaction of the markets, to the point that [the Wall Street Journal hailed it a 'Mitterrand moment'](#), drawing a parallel between Trump's reversal on this occasion and the famous [turn toward austerity](#) initiated by the French socialist president in 1983.

In the Russia/Ukraine dossier, the American president listened to the Europeans and shifted his position to one less favourable to Moscow, to the point of [accepting a form of American commitment](#) in future security guarantees for Ukraine. On Greenland, he backed down in Davos by renouncing the military option. On Iran, he distanced himself from certain attempts to overthrow the regime in order to focus on the goal of nuclear negotiations.

<https://youtu.be/2OgFFk0JVdA>

France 24, January 2026.

He has been criticised for these U-turns (the acronym TACO, "[Trump Always Chickens Out](#)" has been very successful on social media), and it is not certain that they will pay off with the American electorate at the time of the midterms. But they show that there is a place for diplomacy in the art of managing Trump.

The art of managing Trump

World leaders are unsettled and their nerves are being tested. Many have been on the receiving end of his mockery and whims, particularly Western leaders or those considered hostile, but not directly "strong" leaders such as Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. Some have not been afraid to make fools of themselves, such as [NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who reportedly called him 'Daddy'](#).

Nevertheless, the US administration's partners have managed over time to establish a working relationship with it and achieve results. Emmanuel Macron was the first to organise a meeting between Trump and Ukrainian President Zelensky, [at the Notre-Dame reopening ceremony in December 2024](#). The European Commission concluded a trade deal with the United States in July 2025, which was criticised in France in particular, but welcomed by many states that wanted, above all, to preserve economic and trade ties with Washington. The [NATO summit in The Hague](#) in June 2025 passed without a hitch, avoiding American disengagement.

As relations with Canada became strained due to mounting disputes (tariffs, land claims, relations with China), [Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum(<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2026-01-30/trump-mexico-sheinbaum>) demonstrated her skill in her relations with the American president]. Emmanuel Macron, until the recent confrontation over Greenland, had also managed to charm the White House

host, who acknowledged this in Davos (“I really like Emmanuel Macron”) while sending him several jibes.

This reveals a certain method in the art of dealing with the US head of state:

1. The need to keep a cool head. This should not become coldness, at least on the part of partners and allies. It is a matter of keeping calm, not getting drawn into verbal escalation, and countering whims with the authority of seriousness.
2. Dialogue and cooperation: talking, taking American demands seriously, trying to understand them, attempting to respond to them, accepting and even seeking dialogue, looking for and accepting compromises.
3. Firmness: setting and stating limits, reiterating positions of principle, acting or reacting with restraint, and strengthening one’s position by seeking allies.

The European approach

The way Europeans have dealt with Donald Trump so far has been [quite exemplary](#): accepting a tariff compromise that avoids a trade war ([the Turnberry agreement](#)); drawing red lines on digital regulation; diplomacy backed by tools of power in Ukraine (increased aid and the establishment of a ‘coalition of the willing’ to provide security guarantees to Kiev); firmness in the Greenland affair ([the statement of 6 January](#) and the dispatch of a military mission); postponement of the ratification of the

trade agreement. But the Europeans have always avoided entering into a futile confrontation, seeking, above all, to safeguard the future and preserve the transatlantic link, despite numerous calls (especially in France) for an uncompromising stance.

A different stance for the East

Relations with Russia and China appear more formal, colder and more egalitarian, as Trump treats them with greater deference. Xi Jinping appeared to use self-control to dominate his counterpart during their [meeting in Korea](#), even though some saw it as an attempt by Donald Trump to gain the upper hand. Chinese culture, which places great importance on appearances and not losing face, is undoubtedly difficult to reconcile with the American president’s eccentricities. A similar situation occurred during the [meeting with Vladimir Putin in Anchorage](#).

Behind the negotiations and diplomatic twists and turns, what is at stake involving global power relations and the future of the Western camp and its values is obviously far deeper. But whatever developments lie ahead, diplomacy will remain more necessary than ever for ensuring global stability. While diplomacy must still bend and shape itself around power relations, on the bright side, it is still producing results.

Moon sighting is a key part of Muslim life – how the lunar cycle determines the start of Ramadan and Eid



Imad Ahmed

PhD Candidate, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge



Emma L Alexander

Research Fellow in Astrophysics, School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Leeds

Each year as Ramadan approaches, more than 2 billion Muslims around the world prepare for a month of fasting, prayer and communality. But Ramadan does not begin on the same day everywhere in the world.

This year, some countries commence the month of fasting on Thursday, February 19, whereas others begin it a day earlier. Similarly, at the end of Ramadan, different communities will celebrate Eid on different dates.

The reason for this lies in the nature of the lunar visibility calendar – the new crescent Moon is not always visible

everywhere on the same date. The prophet Muhammad is [reported to have said](#): “Observe fast on sighting it [the crescent] and break fast on sighting it [the next crescent] – but if the sky is cloudy for you, then complete the number [30 days].”

In modern times, some countries such as [Turkey](#) have implemented calendar reforms, removing the act of monthly visual sightings of the crescent. They rely instead on pre-determined calculations.

Nevertheless, the visual sighting of the Moon to determine the start of the month remains the majority practice of Muslims across the world. Most believe this has to be done with the naked eye.

Cloud cover can therefore affect when the month begins in different locations, making it an unpredictable calendar. This imbues Moon sighting occasions with a sense of communal wonder – but it can also make the issue [surprisingly contentious](#).

A very British problem

When Muslim migrants arriving in the UK in the middle of the 20th century tried to sight the new crescent Moon, they would often struggle – in part due to a very British problem: the cloudy weather.

As a result, various mosques and communities would outsource their Moon sightings to different countries. Some followed Morocco, others Turkey or Saudi Arabia. As each country might confirm a first sighting on different days, it meant

UK mosques could end up with divided dates for Ramadan and Eid.

This has been a source of pain for some people in the British Muslim community. For me (Imad) growing up in London, it meant my school friends might start celebrating Eid on a different date to me and my family. This felt pretty sad – but I just assumed it had to be like this.

That changed when I witnessed the communal practice of Moon sighting during a family holiday to Cape Town in South Africa. When I saw thousands of Muslims gathering on the beach to celebrate seeing the new crescent Moon, I asked myself: “Why can’t we do this in the UK?”

When I returned from Cape Town, I founded a Muslim calendar lunar observation astronomy club called the [New Crescent Society](#). Our aim is to find a way of celebrating Moon sighting communally throughout the UK – and to develop a viable lunar Islamic calendar here, like they have in other parts of the world.

Sometimes you can see the Moon in Cardiff but not in Cambridge. Sometimes the sky is clear in London but cloudy in Manchester. Our UK-wide astronomy education programme, [Moonsighters Academy](#), now supports Muslims to lead their own lunar observation groups in their communities.



The first nine days of the lunar cycle.

The astronomy of lunar visibility

Every month, the Moon goes from a thin crescent, waxing each night to become [gibbous](#) (more than half full) and then full, before waning back down to a crescent and disappearing again. This cycle occurs due to the Moon’s orbit around the Earth, and takes 29 and a half days.

The Moon does not create its own light. What we see is reflected sunlight – and the same side of the Moon is always facing towards us. It rotates on its axis at the same rate it orbits the Earth, a phenomenon called [tidal locking](#).

The precise moment at which some amount of lunar illumination is first visible from Earth each month depends on geometrical physics. At this point, the crescent is so thin that even cameras struggle to determine it.

But as the Moon moves further away from the Sun in the sky, the crescent slowly becomes thicker as the angle of separation increases. There is now a longer “lag” between sunset and moonset, which also makes the new crescent more visible. The best time to view a young crescent is approximately halfway between sunset and moonset, balancing sky brightness with lunar altitude.

Astronomers relish the challenge of spotting a very thin crescent Moon when it is less than 24 hours old. But just how young a Moon can people see [with the naked eye](#)? One established landmark of 15 hours 32 minutes was set by the astronomer Stephen James O'Meara, who is also known for [first spotting Halley's comet](#) on its return in 1985.

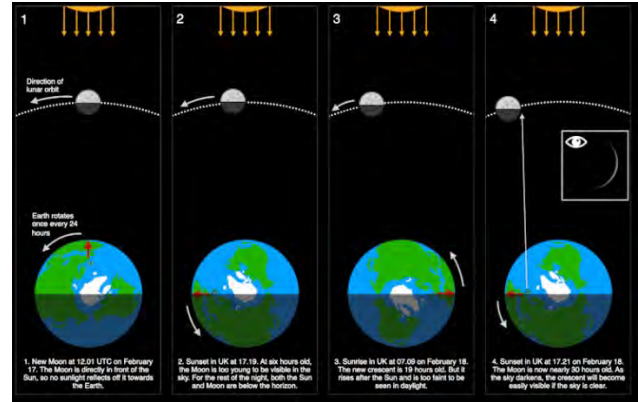
When you introduce optical aids like binoculars, even younger and thinner crescents can be seen. With the right conditions and technology, you can even image the Moon at the moment of conjunction, with an age of exactly zero hours. This was [first achieved by astrophotographer Thierry Legault](#) in July 2013, using an infrared filter on a telescope that had been “baffled” to block out the precariously nearby Sun.

So when do Ramadan and Eid start?

This depends on where you are in the world. In Saudi Arabia, the new crescent Moon was [declared on Tuesday, February 17](#), despite only being around three hours old at the time of sunset. So for Muslims there (and those who follow the Saudi lead), Ramadan starts on [Wednesday, February 18](#).

In the UK, Europe and North Africa, we are likely to have positive new Moon sightings a day later and commence fasting on Thursday, February 19. Countries further east, such as Australia, will probably see the Moon a day later still, and thus have their first fast on Friday, February 20.

When the new Moon will be visible from the UK (Feb 17-18):



The following month, on [Thursday, March 19](#), the Moon will be between 17 and 18 hours old at sunset, so difficult – but not impossible – to see in the UK, Europe and North Africa. So we expect communities following these sightings to start celebrating Eid on [Saturday, March 21](#). Mosques following Saudi Arabia are likely to celebrate Eid a day earlier.

However, this is not just a story about calendars. When people gather to search the horizon for the new crescent Moon, they are participating in a practice that links them to the most ancient of human practices: observing and connecting with the natural world around them. In Britain, we hope our work can help make this an even more unified celebration.

No, your brain doesn't suddenly 'fully develop' at 25. Here's what the neuroscience actually shows



Taylor Snowden

Post-Doctoral Fellow, Neuroscience, Université de Montréal

If you scroll through TikTok or Instagram long enough, you'll inevitably stumble across the line: "Your frontal lobe isn't fully developed yet." It's become neuroscience's go-to explanation for bad decisions, like ordering an extra drink at the bar or texting an ex you swore not to.

The [frontal lobe](#) plays a central role in higher level functions like planning, decision-making and judgment.

It's easy to find comfort in the idea that there's a biological excuse for why we sometimes feel unstable, impulsive or like a work in progress. Life in your 20s and early 30s is unpredictable, and the idea that your brain simply isn't done developing can be oddly reassuring.

But the idea that the brain, particularly the frontal lobe, stops developing at 25 is a pervasive misconception in psychology and neuroscience. Like many myths, the "age 25" idea is rooted in real scientific findings, but it's an oversimplification of a much longer and more complex process.

In reality, [new research suggests](#) this development actually extends into our 30s. This new understanding changes how we view adulthood and suggests that 25 was never meant to be the finish line in the first place.

Where did the 'age 25' myth come from?

The magic number stems from brain imaging studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In [one 1999 study](#), researchers tracked brain changes through repeated scans in children and teens. They analyzed [grey matter](#), which consists of cell bodies and can be thought of as the "thinking" component of the brain.

Researchers found that during the teenage years, grey matter goes through a [process called pruning](#). Early in life, the brain builds an enormous number of neural connections. As we age, it gradually trims back the ones that are used less often, strengthening those that remain.

This early work highlighted that grey matter volume growth and loss is key for brain development.



In influential [follow-up work](#) led by neuroscientist Nitin Gogtay, participants as young as four had their brains scanned every two years. The researchers found that within the frontal lobe, regions mature from back to front.

More primal regions, like areas responsible for voluntary muscle movement, develop first, while more advanced regions that are important for decision-making, emotional regulation and social behaviour had not fully matured by the final brain scans around age 20.

Since the data stopped at age 20, researchers couldn't say precisely when development finished. The age of 25 became the best estimation for the assumed endpoint and eventually became enshrined in the cultural consciousness.

What newer research reveals

Since those early studies, neuroscience has moved on considerably. Rather than looking at individual regions in isolation, researchers now study how efficiently different parts of the brain communicate with one another.

A [recent major study](#) assessed efficiency of brain networks, essentially how the brain is wired, through [white matter](#) topology. White matter is made up of long nerve fibres that link different parts of the brain and spinal cord, allowing electrical signals to travel back and forth.

Researchers analyzed scans from more than 4,200 people from infancy to 90

years old and found [several key periods of development](#) including one from age nine to 32, which they coined the “adolescent” period.

For anyone well into adulthood, it may feel jarring to be told that your brain is still an “adolescent,” but this term really just signifies that your brain is in a stage of key changes.



Based on this study, it seems that during brain adolescence, the brain is balancing two key processes: segregation and integration. Segregation involves building neighbourhoods of related thoughts. Integration involves building highways to connect those neighbourhoods. The research suggests this construction doesn't stabilize into an “adult” pattern until the early 30s.

The study also found that “small worldness” (a measure of network efficiency) was the largest predictor for identifying brain age in this group. Think of this like a transit system. Some routes require stops and transfers. Increasing “small worldness” is like adding express lanes. Essentially, more complex thoughts now have more efficient paths throughout the brain.

However, this construction doesn't last forever. After around the age of 32, there is a literal turning point where these developmental trends switch directions. The brain stops prioritizing these "expressways" and shifts back to segregation to lock in the pathways our brains use most.

In other words, your teens and 20s are spent connecting the brain, and your 30s are about settling down and maintaining your most used routes.

Making the most of a brain under construction

If our brains are still under construction throughout our 20s, how do we make sure we are building the best possible structure? One answer lies in boosting [neuroplasticity](#) — the brain's ability to rewire itself.

While the brain remains changeable throughout life, the window from age nine to 32 represents a prime opportunity for structural growth. Research suggests there are many ways to [support neuroplasticity](#).

High-intensity [aerobic exercise](#), [learning new languages](#) and taking on [cognitively demanding hobbies like chess](#) can bolster your brain's neuroplastic abilities, while things like [chronic stress can hinder it](#). If you want a high-performance brain in your 30s, it helps to challenge it in your 20s, but it's never too late to start.

There is no magical switch that turns on at age 25, or even 32 for that matter. Like your brain, you're in a decades-long construction project. Stop waiting for the

moment you become an adult and start making active choices about how to support this project. Make mistakes, but know that the concrete hasn't set quite yet.

Respecting international law depends on who breaks it: Why Canada backed the war against Iran



Jeremy Wildeman

Adjunct assistant professor, Carleton University

When Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney recently warned at the World Economic Forum in Davos that “middle powers must act together because if we’re not at the table, we’re on the menu,” many saw this as a defence of international law and the multilateral order. That earned him global accolades.

At the time, Canada and Denmark were under pressure from the Donald Trump administration to surrender territory to the United States: [Greenland from Denmark](#), and [either the entirety or parts of Canada](#).

Trump’s demands came as a shock to a western leaders who maintain a deeply optimistic interpretation of American intentions and the immutability of their relationships. It also caused significant alarm among U.S. allies in the West, who have spent decades under the American security umbrella.

It’s likely because western countries were in disarray and unable to push back forcefully against Trump’s bullying that Carney’s [speech](#) was so well-received.

He appeared to put words into immediate action, rebuilding Canada’s fraught

relationships with key Global South powers such as China and India while providing leadership on a major trade alliance among Canada, the European Union (EU) and the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) states to mitigate the impact of Trump’s aggressive use of tariffs.

Many observers thought Canada was turning to a principled foreign policy, championing universal liberal values such as democracy, justice, human rights and the rule of law. It seemed as though Canada was coming to the defence of a rules-based order, and this was helping it regain significant international prestige.

So it [came as a shock](#) when Carney [offered immediate support](#) to an [illegal U.S.-Israel war](#) of aggression against Iran on Feb. 28.

The liberal and rules-based orders

Within days Carney was equivocating about the war and his initial statement of support. He seemed to be attempting to balance his stated support for international law with being an American ally. He has said that he supports the U.S. and Israeli war “[with regret](#)” and that Canada will stand by its allies “[when it makes sense](#).”



What seems like hypocrisy by Carney is in fact consistent with contemporary Canadian foreign policy and its interpretation of international law.

This can be understood by exploring Canada's participation in [two international systems](#) established by the U.S. after the Second World War: the liberal international order and the rules-based order.

The liberal international order expresses some of the highest principles of liberal internationalism: anti-racism, democracy and the right to self-governance, free trade and economic interdependence, multilateral co-operation and respect for international law.

While the rules-based order draws on the liberal international order's rules and norms, it selectively interprets them for U.S. and western interests. Whereas international law is [a set of rules that govern relations between states](#) and are enforced by institutions such as the International Court of Justice, the rules-based order is a deliberately opaque concept. Its rules are vague and ill-defined, and it is unclear who has the right to define or generate them.

Crucially, the post-war international order was meant to prohibit or restrict war, as laid out in the United Nations Charter. [Article 2, paragraph 4, of the charter](#) has been a cornerstone of international law and the liberal international order, which the U.S. helped establish after the Second World War. It explicitly prohibits states from threatening or using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other state.

Selective enforcement of international law

The U.S. appears to invoke these rules primarily when confronting geopolitical rivals such as Russia or China, or when imposing its will on the rest of the world.

The U.S. and other western powers began shifting their rhetorical support from the liberal toward the rules-based order in the 2000s in response to the rise of Global South powers like China. In many ways, the rules-based order is an inequitable, colour-coded system that reinforces western power, and Canada has been a strong supporter of it.

Carney acknowledged this in Davos by saying the rules-based order was never fair because the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient, trade rules were enforced asymmetrically and international law applied with varying rigour depending on the identity of the accused or the victim.

This is on vivid display when comparing Canada's strong response against [Russia's illegal 2022 invasion of Ukraine](#) compared to its support for the U.S.-Israel illegal 2026 war against Iran, its reluctance in early January to condemn [the U.S. government's illegal abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro](#) and its de facto support for Israel's illegal occupation and war crimes in Palestine.



Trump and the unraveling of the western order

What changed in 2025 is the Trump government's hostility to the rules-based order, which it considers a costly obstacle to consolidating power around the world.

Its strategic approach has included an explicit disavowal of liberal internationalism's

values, [including multilateralism](#) and international law. It has threatened to seize western allied territory and resources while imposing tariffs on them and pressuring them to substantially [increase U.S. arms purchases](#).

Carney noted that western states had been fine with the inequities of the rules-based order so long as they benefited from it at the expense of the rest of the world. Their problem was when the U.S. started to treat them like it treats the Global South, through a neo-imperialism built on principles that “might makes right” and the strong should dominate the weak.

Another important factor that may have encouraged some in western capitals to accept the U.S. war against Iran was Secretary of State [Marco Rubio's recent Munich Security Conference speech](#). He lauded Europe's colonial past and encouraged them to join the U.S. in a renewed global domination, [plundering the rest of the world like they did in the past](#).

Canada's decision to back the war with Iran was likely also based on the Carney government's [courting of Jewish and Iranian diasporic constituencies](#) and a [longstanding institutional reliance on U.S. leadership](#). But Rubio's speech created conditions favourable for Carney to support the war under the logic of the rules-based order.

At the same time, Canada will have weakened its moral standing if the U.S. turns to territorial expansion in the Americas. The war is also [deeply unpopular among Liberal voters](#), and support for it undermined the prestige Carney gained from Davos, causing him to begin [equivocating on his initial position](#).

Self-control is a strength, but being too good at discipline can backfire



Christy Zhou Koval

Professor, Smith School of Business, Queen's University, Ontario

Self-control has long been regarded as one of the strongest predictors of success. Most of us can picture that colleague who never misses a deadline, volunteers for extra projects and keeps everything running smoothly.

[Research shows](#) individuals who can resist short-term temptations in pursuit of long-term goals tend to fare better across nearly every aspect of life.

As a researcher who has spent years studying workplace dynamics, I set out to examine what happens to these highly disciplined individuals. [What I found](#) was surprising: the very trait that makes them valuable — their high levels of self-control — can also come with hidden costs.

Self-control as a social signal

[My colleagues and I conducted six studies](#) examining how people treat others based on their perceived self-control. We defined perceived self-control as a person's beliefs about

someone else's level of self-control, such as resisting temptations, staying focused and persisting in the pursuit of goals.

Across our studies, self-control functioned as a powerful social signal.

In one study, participants read about a student who either resisted the temptation to purchase music online (demonstrating self-control) or gave in to it, then imagined working with this student on a group project. Participants expected substantially higher performance from the student who had demonstrated self-control, even though resisting an impulse to buy music had nothing to do with academic ability.

We replicated this pattern in a workplace context. Participants read about an employee who either stuck to a savings goal or struggled with it. Even though saving money has nothing to do with job performance, participants expected the self-controlled employee to have an accuracy rate roughly 15 per cent higher than the employee who showed less self-control.

In another experiment, we asked people to delegate proofreading work among student volunteers. Participants consistently assigned about 30 per cent more essays to volunteers they believed had high self-control, compared to those with moderate or low self-control, even when all volunteers were described as academically qualified.

The hidden costs of high self-control

A particularly revealing set of findings suggests that observers typically underestimate the cost of self-control.

In one study, we asked participants to complete a demanding typing task requiring a high degree of self-control. Observers who were told that someone had high self-control estimated the task required less effort. But those actually doing the work found it equally draining regardless of their self-control levels. This perceptual gap is problematic because it demonstrates that exerting self-control is physically costly.

[Recent research](#) shows people will pay money to avoid having to exercise self-control. In experiments where dieters could pay to remove tempting food from their presence, most did; and they paid more when stressed or when temptation was stronger.



High self-control individuals are doing more cognitively demanding work than their peers. They are exercising self-control more frequently. And because they do it well, observers don't see the effort required. [Research suggests](#) that

people with high self-control are perceived as more robot-like, as if their discipline means they don't struggle like everyone else.

In one of our studies using 360-degree feedback data, we analyzed archival survey data collected from MBA students and their coworkers and supervisors.

Employees who were higher in self-control reported making more personal sacrifices and feeling more burdened by coworkers' reliance. Their colleagues, however, did not recognize this burden. While they acknowledged the sacrifices these individuals made, they did not perceive the strain they were under.

The spillover into home life

The more capable you seem, the more you're asked to carry. For high self-control individuals, that reputation can become a fast track to burnout in the office and at home.

In an experiment with romantic couples, participants with high self-control reported feeling more burdened by their partners' reliance on them. This sense of burden reduced their overall relationship satisfaction.

When people high in self-control are overwhelmed at home because partners assume they can handle everything, that exhaustion can carry over into work. Similarly, when high self-control individuals are overburdened at work, it can diminish their energy and presence in their personal relationships.

This creates a vicious cycle in which highly self-controlled individuals are asked to do more at both work and at home, and the cumulative demands can result in burnout.

Burnout is a widespread issue in the workplace. A [Deloitte survey](#) found that 77 per cent of professionals have experienced burnout at their current job.

Breaking the cycle

Our findings revealed a problematic cycle: the more self-control individuals were perceived to have, the more others expected of them and the more responsibility they were assigned.

For people with high self-control, our findings underscore the importance of setting boundaries in the workplace. Saying yes to everything is unsustainable. Because disciplined employees often make demanding tasks appear effortless, colleagues and loved ones may underestimate how much they are asking of them.

For managers, our findings suggest the importance of distributing responsibilities fairly and checking in with employees about workload. Managers should ask explicitly about their employees' capacity rather than inferring it from past performance.

Self-control remains one of the most valuable traits a person can have. But when we assume it comes effortlessly to those who demonstrate it, we risk burning out the people we depend on most.

Acknowledging the hidden burden is necessary if we want capable people to thrive.

Taming the moral menace at capitalism's core



Valerie L. Myers

Organizational Psychologist and Lecturer in Management and Organizations, University of Michigan

Digital disruption and the climate crisis are often framed as economic or social challenges. But they force crucial moral questions. Who will be held accountable for the human cost? What will it take to transform business culture so that those costs are not treated as inevitable and acceptable?

In my view, the answers will shape not only technology's impact on humanity and the planet but the moral foundations of democracy itself.

As a [management professor](#) who studies the [calling ethic](#) – the idea that work can be guided by principles and moral duty – I think this moment is best understood as a contest between two recurring leadership patterns.

One pattern rationalizes exploitation and disguises harm as the price of progress. Drawing on Yale law professor James Whitman's use of the phrase "[moral menace](#)," I use it here to name this recurring force.

In contrast, some leaders show how it's possible to pursue principles and profits together. I call such people "moral muses": leaders whose care and fairness promote flourishing.

The contrast is stark: Menaces dominate. Muses cultivate.

I contend the menace often wins not because it's right, but because its practices have hardened into [management orthodoxy](#) about how to treat people. Yet its dominance can be disrupted by tracing the menace's ancient roots and, like muses throughout history, learning how to tame it.

The menace: Normalized callousness

The menace isn't just about greed. It's a system of cruelty rooted in ancient [Roman property law](#), in which wives, children, enslaved people and animals were treated as possessions and subject to abuses, including violence at the owner's will. Whitman traces how this legal foundation evolved into a broader [moral menace](#) that became a durable template in Western capitalism that was repeatedly reproduced.

Building on that concept, I would argue that the menace adapted and became normalized in business management – from institutional alliances to empire, to everyday practices.

A pivotal development in institutionalized commercial cruelty began in the [15th century](#), when papal decrees gave religious sanction to menacing conquests

– campaigns of land seizure, enslavement and labor theft. Contemporary accounts speak to the cruelty and exploitation that were pillars of economies of the time.

By the 17th century, [Dutch traders](#) [outpaced their Spanish rivals](#) in turning [menace into efficiency](#). The richest 1% [sent sailors on deadly voyages](#) to amass fortunes, while leaving their fellow [citizens among the poorest in Europe](#). Researchers studying this period, sometimes known as the Dutch Golden Age, [wrote](#), “We did not expect to find the ‘pioneers of capitalism’ in the cradle of civil society to have been so stingy.”

Abroad, traders pioneered accounting, logistics and labor-control methods that maximized profit by brutalizing enslaved workers. Historian Caitlin Rosenthal shows how [plantation owners refined these methods](#), the British perfected them, and Americans institutionalized them.

Once normalized, inhumanity – recast as efficiency – arguably became the defining logic of modern management: [extracting ever more output](#) to enrich owners, regardless of the human toll. Financial journalists have called this the “[dark side of efficiency](#).” Yet the menace has a cultural halo: Popular TV series like “Billions” and “Yellowstone” valorize exploitation, dominance and dark tetrad tendencies like Machiavellianism.

[Studies show](#) that this celebrated style produces [lackluster results](#). Is it any wonder that only 31% of employees report [feeling engaged at work](#)?

Even so, the menace has never gone unchallenged. At every stage of its advance, muses have resisted – insisting that fairness and care prevail.

The muse: Transforming institutions of menace

Throughout history, muses have done more than resist the menace; they’ve sought to transform the very institutions that sustained it. Driven by principle, their disruptive actions bent institutions toward more humane and ethical practices – even as the menace adapted to survive.

One early muse-like figure is [Martin Luther](#), who in 1524 sparked a revolution by challenging the church’s influence on commerce. In “[Trade and Usury](#)” he condemned “unneighborly” and deceptive business practices, insisting that trade must be guided by law and conscience rather than greed. (In time, of course, Protestants themselves used religion to justify slavery and domination – a reminder that the menace reinvents itself when challenged.)

In the 18th century, American founder and businessman Gouverneur Morris advanced the muse struggle by reimagining power in the new nation. At the Constitutional Convention, [he warned that](#) “the rich will strive to establish their dominion and enslave the rest” unless restrained by law. He enshrined limits on elite domination and elevated civic principles in the [preamble to the Constitution](#): justice, union, tranquility and general welfare. Over the centuries,

other business and policy leaders advanced the ethic.

More recently, Marriott International illustrates how profitable firms operate by muse principles without sacrificing profits. Since its 1927 founding, Marriott valued “[putting people first](#).” In 2010, Chief Global Human Resources Officer David Rodriguez institutionalized this value with the Take Care initiative. In response to the 2020 global pandemic response, under the stewardship of the late Arne Sorenson, it expanded to “[Project We Care](#).” Due in part to its commitments, Marriott had less than half the losses of U.S. peers Hilton and Hyatt.

Empirical studies [confirm what Marriott’s leaders modeled](#): Servant leaders generate stronger employee commitment and performance than charismatic or transformational leaders.

Notably, muse leaders typically aim at intermediate targets – reforming institutions and governance to constrain the menace. But since management itself is built on menace foundations, transformation at scale will require a critical mass of moral muses in business.

Mobilizing moral muses

One-off reforms like family-friendly policies, ESG targets and civility pledges are useful, but they cannot uproot centuries of menace. What’s required is a critical mass of moral muses who refuse to rationalize harm as progress and who lead a culture reset in guiding business logic.

That means uprooting institutionalized callousness and redefining what counts as efficiency, innovation and value. It also means enacting civic principles of care and common good, as Morris envisioned, and amplifying leaders who prove that compassion and profitability can reinforce each other.

History shows that muses are not anomalies, and their stories are instructive for us now. Across eras, they have demonstrated that prioritizing human dignity fosters trust, prosperity and social vitality. But their stories are too often buried or ignored – not by accident, but because they threaten those who profit from menace. Without sustained institutional redesign, the menace reliably reasserts itself under new moral guises.

Reclaiming and amplifying muse stories is essential for transformation. They aren’t just anecdotes of resistance; they are blueprints for a more humane and sustainable capitalism.

The circular economy may not be taking off: Here are six ways stakeholders can make it happen



Arne De Keyser

Professor of Marketing, EDHEC Business School



Katrien Verleye

Associate Professor of Service Innovation, Ghent University

Around the world, governments and businesses are talking more and more about the need to move from today's "take, make, waste" economy to a circular one, where products are designed to last, materials stay in use, and waste is dramatically reduced. On paper, the case is compelling: recent assessments show that shifting to a circular economy offers both a major climate opportunity and a significant economic one. A study from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre finds that "reduction, reuse and recovery" measures could cut Europe's heavy industrial emissions by [up to 231 million tonnes of CO₂ each year](#), and global analyses estimate that circular models could generate [around \\$4.5 trillion in value by 2030](#)).

Yet progress may be stalling. The latest [Circularity Gap Report](#) shows that

the share of secondary materials in the global economy fell from 9.1% in 2015 to 6.9% in 2021. Instead of becoming more circular, the world, in a recent timeframe, became less so.

What would actually help stakeholders such as consumers, companies and governments embrace circular models? In our recent [research project](#), we reviewed more than 130 studies on circular business models to understand this very question. What we found is simple but often overlooked: circularity is not just a design or engineering challenge, it is also an engagement one. If consumers hesitate, or companies delay investments, or policymakers fail to create the right conditions, the circular shift stalls.

Our work identifies 6 practices that can boost [circular economy](#) engagement. They fall into 3 areas: helping stakeholders feel motivated, giving them opportunities, and ensuring they are able to act. Understanding these levers is key to accelerating the transition to a circular economy.

Motivation: making the case for going circular

For circular behaviour to emerge, stakeholders first need a clear reason to care. Motivation is about creating the desire to act by explaining why circular options matter, how they are beneficial and why they are worth choosing over familiar linear habits.

A first part of this involves strategic signalling: making the benefits of circular

models visible, concrete and easy to grasp. Many companies now deliberately make a point of doing this. [Mud Jeans](#), for example, communicates the exact water and CO₂ savings associated with its “Lease A Jeans” model, helping customers immediately see the environmental value of extending product life. [Fairphone](#) similarly signals the impact of modular design by showing how repairable smartphones reduce e-waste and keep devices in use for longer.

But motivation also depends on convincing stakeholders that circular options are safe, reliable and worthwhile. Even when people like the idea of circularity, they may still worry about the quality or convenience of second-hand or refurbished products. Companies are responding by offering guarantees, services and financial incentives that lower perceived risks. Decathlon, for instance, promotes its [repair services](#) and spare-part availability, reassuring customers that products can be kept in good condition for longer.

Opportunity: making circularity possible and socially acceptable

Even highly motivated stakeholders cannot engage in circular behaviour if the environment around them makes it difficult or uncommon. Opportunity is about creating the partnerships, norms and systems that make circular actions feasible, convenient and socially accepted.

“Matching” is a key part of this, in other words connecting the right stakeholders so that circular solutions can function.

Few organisations can operate reuse, repair or recycling systems single-handedly; they need logistics partners, refurbishment specialists and intermediaries that help keep materials in circulation. We are witnessing more and more of these typically well-thought out matches. The fashion platform [Vestiaire Collective](#), for example, collaborates with brands to authenticate and resell pre-owned items, creating a trusted ecosystem that individual firms would struggle to build alone. Cities such as Amsterdam foster [circular procurement](#) networks that bring together suppliers, waste operators, innovators, and citizens to jointly develop reuse and refurbishment pathways.

Opportunity also depends on legitimising circular practices, which makes them appear commonplace, expected and in line with broader societal rules. Governments play a central role here through standards and regulations. The European Union’s [Right to Repair](#) legislation, for instance, requires manufacturers to make spare parts and repair information available for many household products. This reinforces the idea that repairing rather than replacing is the default. Companies contribute to legitimising as well. When global brands like Apple promote [refurbished devices](#) as high-quality options and expand their certified repair networks, they help shift expectations about what counts as new or desirable.

Ability: giving stakeholders the capacity to act

“Closing the loop” also requires skills, knowledge and resources. Ability is about ensuring that stakeholders are equipped with the funding, infrastructure, education or practical support that make circular actions realistic in everyday life.

A first part of this involves supporting stakeholders with the resources they need. Many organisations and individuals want to engage in circular behaviour but simply lack the means. Companies may need finance to redesign products or set up reverse logistics. Households may need convenient places to return used goods. Cities may require infrastructure that enables citizens and organisations to share goods and materials. Increasingly, these needs are being addressed.

The [European Investment Bank](#), for example, has issued dedicated circular economy loans that help firms invest in recycling capacities, keep goods and materials in use, and design out waste. Startups such as [Too Good To Go](#) provide digital infrastructure that connects retailers with customers to reduce food waste, making it easier for small businesses to participate in circular practices without building new systems from scratch.

Ability also depends on empowering stakeholders with knowledge and skills to navigate circular models. Circularity requires understanding how products can be repaired, how materials flow through a system and how to be renters, sharers or repairers rather than one-time users.

Education and training help build this understanding. [Repair cafés](#), which have grown across Europe, offer hands-on opportunities for people to learn how to fix household items alongside volunteers. Many universities now provide [open-access courses](#) on circular design principles, giving students and professionals the tools to rethink production and consumption. These initiatives can help shift circularity from a niche practice to an accessible, everyday one.

A systemic shift requires all 6 practices – not just one

What becomes clear from our research is that isolated efforts rarely work. The studies we reviewed suggest that clear communication about the benefits of circular options may have little impact if people are not reassured that these options are reliable and worthwhile. Incentives or guarantees alone may fall short when companies lack the partners needed to run repair, reuse or return systems. Even well-designed collaborations may struggle to gain traction when circular behaviour is not supported by social norms or policy signals that make it feel like the normal thing to do. And investments in new infrastructure or funding may have limited effect if stakeholders do not have the knowledge or confidence to use circular services in practice. Progress is most likely to occur when all of these elements reinforce one another.

For all stakeholders, the key is to reflect on what is needed to make circular

practices part of everyday life. This includes asking questions such as:

- How do we help those we interact with understand the value of circular choices?
- How can we collaborate to create systems that make it workable to share, repair and reuse?
- Do we, and those around us, have the infrastructure, resources and knowledge to participate in the circular transition with confidence?

Recognising these shared responsibilities and needs helps ensure that consumers, companies and governments move forward together, rather than in isolation, which is essential for a successful circular transition.

The Epstein revelations have exposed how ‘Boy’s Club’ elites avoid accountability



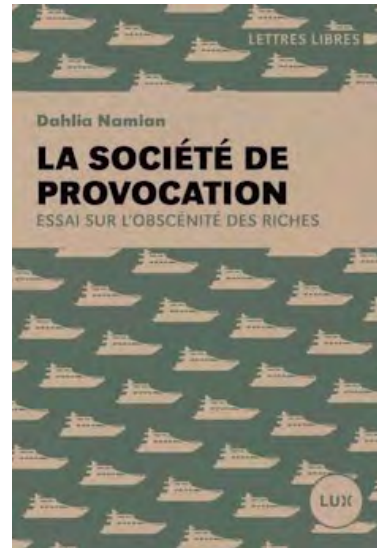
Dahlia Namian

Sociologue et professeure à l'École de service social de l'Université d'Ottawa, L'Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa

The Jeffrey Epstein case is not an exception. Like the #MeToo movement, it is part of a wider continuum of violence committed by men in power, made possible by a persistent culture of impunity.

The Epstein files reveal not only sexual crimes but also a [tightly interconnected](#) social world where capital, prestige, influence and dependency circulate freely.

The idea of the “Epstein class” can make this social structure visible, but it also risks personalizing the problem, reducing it to the story of a single manipulative individual. This carries a significant analytical risk: it obscures the deeper structural dynamics of class power. The Epstein case is not about an unusual individual; it is about the normalization of a social order where extreme wealth and male dominance are closely linked.



In [my book](#) *La société de provocation: essai sur l'obscénité des riches* (*The Society of Provocation: An Essay on the Obscenity of the Rich*), I argue that this social order is anchored in a long-lasting alliance between economic and political elites, whose interests converge around the preservation of their privileges.

This alliance manifests in an economy of excess and overabundance — the so-called “[wealthporn](#)” or “pornopulence” — created for the ostentatious enjoyment of a small, protected elite. The Epstein case is only the tip of the iceberg. It reveals a global system that treats bodies, land and resources as things to exploit and discard for profit.

The Epstein revelations also compel us to examine this socially organized and institutionally protected class. Its power goes far beyond individual behaviour and rests on three inter-related social mechanisms: co-optation, insularization and neutralization.

Co-optation: The male-only network

Co-optation describes an organized system of male networks at the top of power structures. This is a boys' club as described by [Québec professor and writer Martine Delvaux](#): a closed world governed by unwritten rules of loyalty, discretion and mutual protection.

The Epstein files show that this club encompasses individuals from diverse positions — political leaders, heirs, royalty, traders, tech entrepreneurs, renowned scientists and media personalities.

The list of names — among the richest and most powerful people on the planet— speaks to the reach of this network. But the club's power derives less from wealth alone than from the convertibility of status into social capital.

Even less wealthy members are “richly connected” — they leverage their contacts, expertise and privileged access to decision-making circles. Their networks constitute highly convertible transnational social capital, to be deployed strategically: by sharing sensitive information, facilitating tax optimization or avoidance, gaining access to influential professionals (doctors, lawyers, judges), and participating in selective social spaces (private clubs, exclusive events, yachts, gated estates).

Within this system, women are treated as objects for transaction, distinction and pleasure. Co-optation therefore functions as both a political and sexual socialization of privilege.

Insularization of the wealthy

This relational system is reinforced by a process of elite insularization, in which the wealthiest gradually withdraw from the broader world so they can live by their own rules. Extreme concentration of wealth does more than deepen inequality; it allows the privileged to retreat into “[zones of secession](#)” — spaces removed from common rules and ordinary societal constraints.

The Epstein files reveal a mobile, transnational over-class, entrenched in exceptional enclaves where social, fiscal and political obligations are minimal: private islands, gated neighborhoods, offshore tax regimes, private cities and multiple residences.

Little St. James, [now called “Epstein Island”](#), exemplifies this logic. This 75-acre private island in the U.S. Virgin Islands featured a helicopter landing pad and multiple hidden villas. According [to testimony from numerous witnesses](#), it was also where Epstein allegedly delivered victims to some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful men for sexual exploitation.



The pornopulent class does not only retreat into privatized spaces; it also seizes shared, historically public spaces, turning them into showcases of power, as seen in Jeff Bezos's ostentatious wedding in Venice.

But the insularization of the rich isn't just spatial or fiscal. It also entails a social and political withdrawal of elites from democratic life. Support from several figures linked to the Epstein files from authoritarian, libertarian and reactionary movements — such as Donald Trump, Elon Musk and Peter Thiel — fits into this pattern, [as recently highlighted by Oxfam](#).

Neutralization of dissent

Finally, the Epstein case shows how complaints and dissent are neutralized, reinforcing class power. Despite repeated allegations and investigations, institutions meant to protect victims were circumvented, weakened or instrumentalized, while only a few people were punished. This reveals a familiar asymmetry: the more unequal a society, the more “justice” functions as protection for elites.

Neutralization relies first on unequal access to institutional resources. Specialized law firms, influence networks, PR firms and reputation industries favour confidential settlements, delay proceedings and exhaust victims.

It also relies on the close intertwining of political and media power. In the U.S., figures like Musk, Bezos, Larry Ellison and Mark Zuckerberg control media that's

increasingly aligned with Trump's agenda in exchange for economic and regulatory benefits. By financing, acquiring or influencing media and digital platforms, the ruling elite narrows public debate and criticism.

Together, co-optation, insularization, and neutralization enable a class power that extends far beyond a single manipulative individual. They sustain a regime of predatory accumulation, in which economic and sexual violence reinforce each other for the benefit of a minority that enjoys, transgresses and flaunts with complete impunity.

Meanwhile, victims are silenced, contained by a dense network of legal, media and political protections for the elite even when some speak publicly, like the late [Virginia Giuffre](#), without truly being heard. The Epstein case exposes a dangerous class whose power threatens not only women but the very foundations of democratic life.

The mental edge that separates elite athletes from the rest



Mallory Terry

Postdoctoral Fellow, Faculty of Science,
McMaster University

Elite sport often looks like a test of speed, strength and technical skill. Yet some of the most decisive moments in high-level competition unfold too quickly to be explained by physical ability alone.

Consider Canadian hockey superstar [Connor McDavid's overtime goal at the 4 Nations Face-Off against the United States](#) last February. The puck was on his stick for only a fraction of a second, the other team's defenders were closing in and he still somehow found the one opening no one else saw.

As [professional hockey players return to the ice](#) at the Milan-Cortina Olympics, Canadians can expect more moments like this. Increasingly, research suggests these moments are better understood not as just physical feats, but also as cognitive ones.

A [growing body of research](#) suggests a group of abilities known as [perceptual-cognitive skills](#) are key differentiators. This is the mental capacity to turn a blur of sights, sounds and movements into split-second decisions.

These skills allow elite athletes to scan a chaotic scene, pick out the right cues and act before anyone else sees the opportunity. In short, they don't just move faster, but they also see smarter.

<https://youtu.be/iGPdb7uOfow>

Connor McDavid Wins 4 Nations Face-Off For Canada In Overtime

How athletes manage visual chaos

One way researchers study these abilities is through a task known as [multiple-object tracking](#), which involves keeping tabs on a handful of moving dots on a screen while ignoring the rest. Multiple-object tracking is a core method I use in my own research on [visual attention](#) and [visual-motor co-ordination](#).

Multiple-object tracking taxes attention, working memory and the ability to suppress distractions. These are the same cognitive processes athletes rely on to read plays and anticipate movement in real time.

Unsurprisingly, [elite athletes reliably outperform non-athletes on this task](#).

After all, reading plays, tracking players and anticipating movement all depend on managing visual chaos.

There is, however, an important caveat. Excelling at multiple-object tracking will not suddenly enable someone to anticipate a play like McDavid or burst past a defender like Marie-Philip Poulin, captain of the Canadian women's hockey team. Mastering one narrow skill doesn't always transfer to real-world

performance. Researchers often describe this limitation as the “[curse of specificity](#).”

This limitation raises a deeper question about where athletes’ mental edge actually comes from. Are people with exceptional perceptual-cognitive abilities drawn to fast-paced sports, or do years of experience sharpen it over time?

Evidence suggests the answer is likely both.

Born with it or trained over time?

[Elite athletes](#), [radar operators](#) and even [action video game players](#) — all groups that routinely track dynamic, rapidly changing scenes — consistently outperform novices on perceptual-cognitive tasks.

At the same time, they also tend to learn these tasks faster, pointing to the potential role of experience in refining these abilities.



What seems to distinguish elite performers is not necessarily that they take in more information, but that they [extract the most relevant information faster](#). This efficiency may ease their mental load, allowing them to make smarter, faster decisions under pressure.

[My research at McMaster University](#) seeks to solve this puzzle by understanding the perceptual-cognitive skills that are key differentiators in sport, and how to best enhance them.

This uncertainty around how to best improve perceptual-cognitive skills is also why we should be cautious about so-called “[brain training](#)” programs that promise to boost focus, awareness or reaction time.

The marketing is often compelling, but [the evidence for broad, real-world benefits is far less clear](#). The value of perceptual-cognitive training hasn’t been disproven, but it hasn’t been tested rigorously enough in real athletic settings to provide compelling evidence. To date, though, tasks that include a perceptual element such as multiple-object tracking show the most promise.

Training perceptual-cognitive skills

Researchers and practitioners still lack clear answers about the best ways to train perceptual-cognitive skills, or how to ensure that gains in one context carry over to another. This doesn’t mean cognitive training is futile, but it does mean we need to be precise and evidence-driven about how we approach it.

Research does, however, point to several factors that increase the likelihood of real-world transfer.

[Training is more effective when it combines high cognitive and motor demands](#), requiring rapid decisions under physical pressure, rather than isolated

mental drills. Exposure to diverse stimuli matters as well, as it results in a brain that can adapt, not just repeat. Finally, training environments that closely resemble the game itself [are more likely to produce skills that persist beyond the training session](#).

The challenge now is translating these insights from the laboratory into practical training environments. Before investing heavily in new perceptual-cognitive training tools, coaches and athletes need to understand what's genuinely effective and what's just a high-tech placebo.

For now, this means treating perceptual-cognitive training as a complement to sport-specific training, not as a substitute. Insights will also come from closer collaborations between researchers, athletes and coaches.

There is however, support for incorporating perceptual-cognitive tasks as an assessment of “game sense” to [inform scouting decisions](#).

The real secret to seeing the game differently, then, is not just bigger muscles or faster reflexes. It's a sharper mind and understanding how it works could change how we think about performance, both on and off the ice.

The rise and fall (and rise again) of gold prices – what’s going on?



David McMillan

Professor in Finance, University of Stirling

In late January, the gold price reached an all-time peak of around US\$5,500 (£4,025). January 30 saw one of the largest one-day falls in prices, which sank by nearly 10% after hitting a record high only the day before.

This was a dramatic about-turn, from a bullish gold market that rose by [more than 300%](#) in the last decade, over 150% in the last five years and (perhaps more pertinently) by 75% since US president Donald Trump’s “liberation day” tariffs announcement. To make sense of it, we need to understand some of the factors that led to the rise.

The reasons broadly break down into two categories. The first concerns market uncertainty and gold in its “safe haven” role. As a financial asset, gold offers no income, unlike shares (which might provide dividends) or bonds (which offer coupon payments). So during good times, gold is eschewed for the former and during periods of high interest rates for the latter.

However, during periods of heightened risk and uncertainty, the tangibility of gold

gives it value. This was seen during the financial (and subsequent sovereign debt) crisis and at the beginning of the COVID period. Here both share prices and [interest rates](#) were low (interest rates historically so) and gold became the favoured asset because it offered the chance of greater returns relative to risk.

These crisis periods can often be geopolitical in nature, and that is the case now with the war in Ukraine following the Russian invasion, as well as ongoing tensions in the Middle East.

But at the moment, what is providing a further boost to the gold price is the uncertainty created by Trump’s tariffs. This is not only about international trade and growth but also its implications for the global financial system. The US dollar is used as a vehicle currency and means of payment for international trade and the currency in which commodities are priced.

The use of tariffs in this way undermines confidence in the dollar, especially where tariffs are threatened as a punishment – as Trump recently did against European countries for opposing his desire to annex Greenland.



And further buoyed by the weak US dollar, which has fallen by [10% in the last year](#), there has been significant gold-buying, [including by central banks](#) as part of their reserves.

As an important aside, while a lot has been said about central banks replacing the US dollar as a reserve currency, overseas holdings of treasuries (US government bonds) are at [a record high](#), countering that view.

The level of debt that countries are building up shows no sign of abating. For example, Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which outlines tax cuts and increases to border security and defence spending among many other budget measures, is expected to add [several trillion dollars](#) to US debt.

The second reason for the long-term increase in the gold price is its greater use in investor portfolios for speculative purposes. The "safe-haven" role of gold implies a negative correlation between stocks and gold. That is to say, when one rises the other falls – and vice versa.

However, with the S&P500 (the index tracking the top 500 companies listed in the US) also reaching [record highs](#), stocks and gold have instead been moving in the same direction. This indicates that investors are buying both asset types.

A major component in the growth of gold as an investment asset (as opposed to only a safe haven) is the rise of [gold ETFs](#) (exchange-traded funds) that make it easier for non-professional investors to purchase gold.

So why the fall?

Rather than a single event, there has been an accumulation of small changes, combined with the usual sways in investor sentiment. Geopolitical risk remains high, both in Ukraine and the Middle East (while the situation in Israel and Gaza is calmer, that is not the case with Iran). But there are some positive signs.

Trump's on-off use of tariffs as a means of political negotiation (this time regarding Greenland) also contributed to a rise and fall in the gold price. And the nomination of [Kevin Warsh](#) as the new governor of the US Federal Reserve is expected to lessen economic risk.

While Warsh generally supports Trump's preference for lower interest rates now (although investors are expressing concerns that this could fuel inflation), Warsh also has an equal desire to reduce the size of the Fed's balance sheet. So it would be unlikely to be an unreserved [loosening of monetary policy](#).

But there is also the investor side. Profit is only realised when the asset is sold. Part of what we have seen is investors selling gold in a high (arguably [over-priced](#)) market to make a profit. The price fall associated with these trades then arguably led to further selling.

This included stop-loss trading (when assets are automatically sold when they dip below a certain price) and sales by the likes of hedge funds and other institutional traders. These investors need

to unwind positions to prevent major losses.

After the huge fall on January 30, gold prices [surged back](#) a couple of days later in the biggest one-day rise [since 2008](#).

There are always corrections, and in fact current movements are likely to be over-corrections. But it's safe to assume that after this, the market will stabilise and most likely resume an upward trajectory albeit at a slower pace than immediately before the fall.

The workplace wasn't designed for humans – and it shows



Christine Ipsen

*Professor in Technology Implementation,
Technical University of Denmark*



Maria Karanika-Murray

*Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology,
University of Leicester*

Input. Output. Targets met. Value created. Performance delivered. Strip work down to its essentials and for many people, this is what remains: a machine-like focus on producing, performing and optimising.

The system keeps moving – often with little concern for the human energy, attention and resilience required to keep it running. Over time, this can lead to stress, ill-health, disengagement and burnout. Almost half of employees worldwide [say they're currently burned out](#) and nearly three-quarters of US workers report that [workplace stress affects their mental health](#).

But exhaustion isn't a personal failing – it's built into the system. Indeed, this way of organising work is not accidental. It has deep

roots in how modern workplaces were designed.

Much of this thinking dates back to the late 19th century and the work of [Frederick Taylor](#), a US engineer whose ideas helped shape modern management. Taylor was widely known for his methods to improve industrial efficiency, by treating workers as parts of a machine – measured, paced and optimised.

Obviously, a lot has changed since Frederick Taylor's time – we understand far more about mental health and people's capacity for work. Yet, many workplaces still operate in this way – with a strict focus on performance and goals.

A new way of viewing work

These high levels of stress, ill-health and burnout made us reflect. As concern grows about [exhausting natural resources in the name of profit](#), we began to question whether workplaces are doing the same to people – using them up for productivity, with little thought for the long-term cost.

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While organisational psychology highlights [motivation, engagement and well-being](#) as drivers of performance, it often overlooks a crucial issue: what happens to people's time, energy, skills and relationships [once they are spent at work?](#)

Many models of work assume these human resources are limitless, focusing on outputs rather than what is left behind. But without opportunities to recover and regenerate, this

way of working leads to [depletion](#), [disengagement](#) and [ultimately burnout](#).



But what if work didn't have to use people up to get results? What if productivity and well-being weren't in competition, but part of the same system?

Drawing on ideas from the circular economy, along with management theory and organisational psychology, we propose a different way of thinking about work. We call it [circular work](#).

Circular work flips the usual logic. Instead of treating people's time, energy and skills as resources to be consumed, it sees work as a cycle – where effort is matched with recovery, learning and renewal. The goal isn't just short-term output, but work that people can sustain without burning out.

At its core, circular work connects [employee well-being and organisational performance](#) and is built around four simple ideas:

- all human work resources are connected – energy, skills, knowledge and relationships affect each other
- it's possible to recover and regenerate spent work resources – rest, support, and learning help employees bounce back
- work can build or drain resources – how work is designed determines whether people thrive or are thwarted
- sustainable work grows from protected and renewed resources – investing in well-being and development helps to sustain people and organisations.

Humans not machines

The idea of [renewing people's energy and skills](#) can sound radical in today's target-driven work culture.

But renewal isn't a luxury. It starts with a simple truth: people are not infinite or endlessly replaceable. Work can drain our energy, attention and health –sometimes in ways that take years to undo. Designing work as though this doesn't matter comes at a real cost.

In practice, regeneration shows up in everyday management. Decisions about workload, autonomy, recovery time, recognition and support determines whether work depletes people or helps them recover and grow. Put simply, human needs and well-being have to sit at the centre of how work is organised.



[Psychological safety](#) is part of this. Regenerative workplaces are those where people can speak up, raise concerns and take reasonable risks without fear of blame.

This is where [leadership really matters](#). Organisations need to ask hard questions about the true impact of management practices: do they [drive absence](#), presenteeism and turnover – or do they enable learning, growth and renewal? Rewarding managers and teams who protect well-being reduces stress, retains talent and makes organisations places people want to work.

The bottom line is, as long as work is designed like a machine to maximise output, burnout will remain its most predictable outcome. But sustainable performance is possible. It just means actually [designing workplaces that protect](#) — and renew — the people working in them.

When Valentine's Day forces a relationship reckoning



Emily Impett

Professor of Psychology, University of Toronto

For people who have been quietly struggling with doubts about their relationship, the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day can feel fraught. As Feb. 14 approaches, questions that were once easy to sidestep often become harder to ignore.

[In a study that tracked romantic couples](#) over a year, relationships were about 2.5 times more likely to end during the two weeks surrounding Valentine's Day than during the fall or spring. When researchers accounted for relationship length, prior relationship history and gender, the odds of a breakup during this window were more than five times higher.

At first glance, this timing may seem strange. Why would couples break up just before a holiday devoted to love, connection and commitment?

Other findings from this study reveal that the increase in breakups appeared only among couples who were already struggling, not among those who were stable or getting stronger.

A psychological turning point

These findings suggest that Valentine's Day functions less like a wrecking ball and more like a spotlight.

For couples who have been struggling for months, Valentine's Day can bring those feelings into sharper focus, forcing people to confront questions they may have been postponing: Are we happy? Are we moving forward? Is this relationship something I want to celebrate?

Psychologists refer to moments like Valentine's Day as [temporal landmarks](#): points that divide time into a psychological before and after. They prompt people to take stock of their lives and make decisions they have been postponing. Romantic relationships are no exception.

Rather than creating doubt, these dates tend to accelerate decisions that were already unfolding, turning private uncertainty into a sense that change is overdue.

The pressure to perform

Not all temporal landmarks carry the same emotional weight, however. Valentine's Day is an unusually ritualized and commercialized landmark. [Consumer research shows that the holiday](#) tends to evoke polarized reactions — people are far more likely to either love or loathe Valentine's Day than to feel neutral about it.



Participating in Valentine's Day sends a message — not privately, but visibly — that a relationship is intact and future-oriented. And that pressure might just be too much for some couples.

[In the weeks](#) leading up to the holiday, advertising, store displays and social media amplify expectations about what counts as love: gifts, effort, public displays and visible commitment. Taking part in the ritual signals commitment and investment in a shared future; opting out can invite questions or disappointment.

In this sense, Valentine's Day does not just invite reflection — it demands a performance.

This helps explain why breakups often happen before Valentine's Day rather than after. Ending a relationship afterward can feel deceptive, especially if gifts were exchanged or plans were made. Many people would rather leave than perform romance they no longer feel, or accept gestures that imply a level of commitment they are unsure they can sustain.

That timing reflects a broader tendency to delay difficult decisions around holidays. Ending a relationship is emotionally uncomfortable at the best of times, [and](#)

[research shows](#) people sometimes delay breakups to spare their partner pain. Holidays can intensify that hesitation.

In a [nationally representative survey](#), 22 per cent of American adults said they ended relationships before Valentine's Day because they did not want their partner to buy them gifts or spend money when they already knew the relationship was ending.

Uncertainty becomes impossible to ignore

The sense of being torn — wanting to avoid hurting a partner while also feeling unable to keep pretending — reflects [a state psychologists call ambivalence](#).

Ambivalence is not indifference; it is the uncomfortable experience of holding competing motivations and emotions at the same time. Many people feel ambivalent long before a relationship ends, even in relationships that look stable from the outside. [Research shows that this kind of internal conflict](#) predicts lower satisfaction and greater instability over time.

Valentine's Day intensifies ambivalence because it transforms private uncertainty into public signalling. Participating in the holiday sends a message that a relationship is intact and future-oriented. Dinner reservations, office flower deliveries and social media posts all carry symbolic weight.

Social comparison can add fuel to the fire. Valentine's Day makes other people's relationships unusually visible, often in idealized form. Couples appear

everywhere — online and offline — celebrating love with carefully curated gestures. [Decades of relationship research show that commitment](#) is shaped not only by how satisfying a relationship is, but by how it compares to expectations and perceived alternatives.

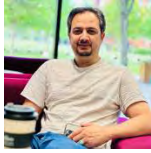


When Valentine’s Day raises the bar for what love is supposed to look like, a relationship already marked by ambivalence can suddenly feel inadequate by contrast.

Not everyone experiences this pressure in the same way. [Research shows that people who are uncomfortable](#) with emotional closeness or public displays of romance often find Valentine’s Day especially stressful, which can amplify dissatisfaction and make withdrawal more likely.

Valentine’s Day rarely ends relationships on its own, of course. But it can make months of uncertainty suddenly very real, turning private doubts into decisions that feel urgent and unavoidable.

Why Islamic finance could provide an ethical model for funding the green transition



Abdul Wase Samim

PhD Candidate, Aston University

In recent years, green finance has become a key policy in developed countries. The term refers to the loans and investments that fund the transition to a low-carbon economy. But one of the main challenges in this area is the gap between environmental claims and realities – so-called “greenwashing”.

Because of this, alternative [finance](#) models that emphasise a direct link between capital and [actual economic activities](#) have been receiving more attention. The Islamic financial system is one such alternative. In this system, financing (in other words, lending) is legitimate when it is linked to real economic activities that benefit people and society.

Islamic finance, with its core values of fairness and social responsibility, could be a means of enhancing credibility and transparency within green finance. In other words, its principles could be seen as more than just an ideological or faith alternative to the conventional system.

Unlike other models, Islamic finance emphasises a direct link between

financing and [actual assets or activities](#). Profits must come from work – simply lending money to make a profit is not permitted. This allows for a clearer definition of green projects, helping to ensure that resources are spent on activities with a specific economic and social purpose.

The requirement for transparency, the prohibition on excessive uncertainty, speculation, and the emphasis on social responsibility mean that the “green” claim must be linked to observable and [measurable financial activities](#).

Green finance and green sukuk

One of the most tangible links between Islamic finance and green finance is green sukuk (Islamic bonds). Conventional bonds are based on a debt commitment – the investor provides money and receives regular fixed interest payments before the debt is repaid. But sukuk represent real ownership or a real interest in an asset or project.

In simple terms, sukuk’s investors will focus on real economic activities rather than an abstract financial contract. [For example](#), the invested capital could be directed into projects like renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, solar power plants, wind energy initiatives, water treatment facilities or clean technology. This means earning profit from a tangible work in real financial projects.

Conversely, with a conventional bond, a significant part of the invested capital

might go into “non-real” projects. For example, a stakeholder might use the invested capital to buy shares. They might expect the shares to increase in value and they could then sell them for a profit. The earnings here would come from the fluctuations in the share price, not from real economic activities like industries, production or entrepreneurship.

Through [green sukuk](#), assets and economic activities must be environmentally focused – things like solar power plants, wind projects or clean transport initiatives. This makes the project’s greenness an intrinsic part of the financial instrument.

ESG ([environmental, social and governance](#)) sukuk is expected to surpass US\$70 billion (£52 billion) globally this year. Green sukuk could play a bridging role in the UK – the country is a [global hub](#) for both green and Islamic finance.

The UK’s green sukuk market would not have to replace the green bond market. But it could complement it, particularly for investors (both Muslim and non-Muslim) who value transparency and a direct link between capital and environmental impact.



Islamic fintech (financial technology) also has a role. [Fintech](#) is not just about digitising financial services; by using technology to make transactions cheaper, more convenient and more secure, it changes how finance products are accessed, monitored and trusted. Islamic fintech operates in accordance with Islamic finance principles and values.

In green finance, Islamic fintech allows crowdfunding, asset tokenisation (turning real assets into digital currency), and rapid information sharing with investors. This can cut costs and increase transparency, and provide a foundation for individual investors and small institutions such as credit unions to access investment opportunities.

Islamic fintech’s main difference lies in its ethical framework. Conventional fintech mainly focuses on speed, scalability and profitability. But from the outset, Islamic fintech is shaped by ethical limitations – things like avoiding speculation, emphasising transparency and linking crowdfunding to projects that make profits from real economic activities.

[The UK](#) has strong fintech infrastructure, flexible and supportive financial regulation and a prominent place in Islamic finance. This environment gives the country a unique opportunity to test ethical finance in a modern and secular context. This in turn could create more opportunities for green finance projects.

Measuring, monitoring and verifying the environmental impact of projects over time are significant challenges. Initially, most [green financial commitments](#) are

clear, but determining whether a project reduces carbon and improves sustainability is time consuming and costly.

In these situations, AI can also play a role. Ethical AI in this context means that algorithms are used for analysis and accountability within green projects. Machine-learning algorithms, for instance, can continuously analyse the environmental data for projects financed through green sukuk and identify deviations between goals and results. This reduces the risk of greenwashing and can increase investor confidence.

To comply with Islamic finance, the use of AI must serve specific ethical purposes. This means AI decision-making should not compromise transparency, justice or accountability. This view is consistent with emerging UK approaches to [AI regulation](#), which emphasise trustworthy AI aligned with the public interest.

Applying Islamic finance does not have to be an identity or political project. Rather, it can be a practical and ethical framework for financing the green transition. In short, it can complement current financial systems to address some of humanity's most pressing economic and environmental challenges.

Why people say they care about ethical shopping but often buy differently



Mehak Bharti

Assistant Professor of Marketing, Toronto Metropolitan University



Jing Wan

Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Guelph

Many Canadians [say they care about ethical products](#). They want coffee that supports farmers, chocolate made without child labour and everyday goods that are better for the environment.

Many also say they are willing to pay more for ethically produced goods. Yet those values [often fade once people are standing in front of a shelf](#) of seemingly identical products.

This gap between what consumers say they value and what they actually buy is [often described as hypocrisy](#). That explanation is tempting, but it misses something important. In most shopping situations, people are not choosing between right and wrong — they are choosing between prices.

That tension has become harder to ignore as [food prices in Canada have risen sharply](#), squeezing household budgets and [making cost the dominant concern in everyday decisions](#).

At the same time, [Canadians continue to express concern for sustainability and ethical production](#). Caring has not disappeared. Acting on it simply feels harder now.

When good intentions meet the checkout

Consumer research has long documented a gap between stated preferences and actual behaviour. In surveys, [people tend to express stronger ethical intentions](#) than they act on in real shopping situations. That does not mean those values are insincere, but that values are pushed aside when everyday constraints take over.

This gap shows up most clearly in routine purchases like groceries, coffee and chocolate. These are items people buy often, and even small price differences add up quickly. In those moments, price becomes the easiest decision shortcut, especially as [food costs continue to rise in Canada](#).



[Ethical products usually cost more](#) because they support higher wages, safer working conditions and lower environmental harm. While those benefits matter socially, they don't directly benefit the person paying at the checkout.

As [household budgets tighten](#), choosing the ethical option can start to feel less like a moral decision and more like a financial burden.

Rethinking the ethical premium

Much of the debate around ethical consumption assumes that supporting better practices necessarily requires paying more. Ethical products are often framed as “premium” goods, with higher prices justified by their social or environmental benefits.

In our recent research study, [we asked whether the ethical premium always had to be paid in money](#). Instead of focusing on higher prices, we examined whether consumers would respond differently if ethical products were offered at the same price as conventional ones, but in smaller quantities.

To explore this, we ran a series of experiments with more than 2,300 participants in Canada, the United States and Europe. Participants were asked to choose between ethical options (such as Fair Trade or sustainably produced goods) and conventional alternatives for everyday products like coffee and soap.

Participants were then randomly assigned to conditions that framed the ethical premium either through price or quantity. In the price-premium condition,

participants chose between a higher-priced ethical option and a conventional alternative of the same quantity. In the quantity-premium condition, the ethical option was offered at the same price as the conventional alternative, but in a smaller quantity.

Across our experiments, consumers were consistently more likely to choose ethical products when the premium was framed as giving up quantity rather than paying a higher price.

Choosing less instead of paying more

Across our experiments, people reacted more strongly to price increases than to size changes. Consumers are more sensitive to price information than quantity information.

When ethical products cost the same as conventional ones, consumers no longer feel financially penalized for acting on their values. Rather, paying the premium with quantity makes the ethical product feels more affordable.



Importantly, this approach is not the same as [shrinkflation](#), where companies quietly reduce package sizes over time without informing consumers. In our studies, the smaller size was explicitly

visible, and consumers knew exactly what they were choosing.

Making ethical choices affordable

[With grocery prices remaining high in Canada](#), expecting consumers to close the ethical gap by paying more money may be unrealistic. Ethical consumption does not fail because consumers are indifferent or hypocrites.

It fails because ethical choices are often presented in ways that make them feel financially out of reach.

Rethinking how the ethical premium is paid will not solve the problem overnight. Structural issues, such as supply chains, corporate practices and regulation, still matter deeply. But our findings suggest that design choices and pricing strategies can make a meaningful difference in whether consumers are able to act on their values.

If ethical consumption is to become more than an aspiration, it may need to be integrated into everyday affordability rather than positioned as an added cost. How we ask consumers to support ethical practices matters more than we often assume.

Why the burden of leadership is really about managing relationships



Julian Barling

Distinguished Professor and Borden Chair of Leadership, Smith School of Business, Queen's University, Ontario



Kaylee Somerville

PhD Candidate, Smith School of Business, Queen's University

Management is often painted as a discipline of strategy, efficiency and resource allocation. Leadership, in this view, is largely about positioning people effectively — much like moving pieces on a chessboard — and success is won by promotions and annual bonuses.

This understanding is also reflected in how leadership roles are typically described and evaluated. Job status and responsibility are often inferred from the number of direct reports a manager oversees, with larger teams signalling greater prestige and organizational importance.

More than three decades ago, however, [management scholar Henry](#)

[Mintzberg challenged](#) the main conceptions of managerial work. He argued that the role of managers goes beyond planning and control, and instead involves dealing with information, making decisions and managing relationships.

Despite this longstanding critique, the image of management and leadership as a largely technical and hierarchical activity remains influential, particularly as organizations undergo changes. One such change is “delaying” — a flattening of organizational structures by removing layers of middle management.

[In 2025 alone, approximately 41 per cent of organizations reduced their middle management.](#) This places more burden on leaders to manage larger and more complex teams.

While these changes may reduce administrative costs, doing so leaves little to no time for leaders to foster complex relationships among employees or their own peers.

Leading relationships, not people

As it turns out, leading relationships, not people, is more complex than we first think.

Consider a simple example of a leader who oversees eight employees. This leader is not merely supervising eight units of work but is overseeing up to 28 different dyadic relationships — relationships between two employees, or between a leader and an employee.

The nature of dyadic relationships dramatically increases the cognitive and

emotional complexity and workload inherent in leadership roles.

Once the broader network of workplace relationships — including coalitions and alliances — is considered, the complexity moves far beyond leader-employee pairs. [Leaders manage interpersonal relationships and political dynamics](#), not just individuals, along with the provision of resources and task co-ordination.



Leaders should encourage friends at work

Workplace relationship complexity is further intensified by what are known as “multiplex relationships.” These are relationships in which people share both instrumental and emotional ties with each other.

These relationships involve co-workers who support each other professionally while also serving as sources of genuine friendship and support. Such relationships are [widespread in organizations](#) and have been shown to be associated with [higher work performance](#) than either instrumental or [social relationships](#) alone.

These relationships are beneficial because employees are more willing to

share complex and important information with peers who they trust.

An important caveat remains: the maximum number of multiplex ties for enhanced organizational performance is between [five and seven](#). Beyond this point, the competing demands that make up emotional and instrumental relationships place further emotional and cognitive burdens on managers leading these relationships.

Leaders themselves can have multiplex ties with their employees, which is [especially useful for team performance among teams that don't get along](#).

Rethinking leadership

Given their prevalence and potential benefits for employee job performance, leaders need to pay more, not less, attention to relationships between employees. Leaders can play a role in shaping positive workplace dynamics within teams and across organizations.

Leaders who are better at fostering relationships inside and outside of organizations are more likely to [improve their reputations and improve group performance](#) than those who micromanage interactions within and between teams.



This requires a change in mindset. Management has long been framed as the act of managing people. Increasingly, it needs to be better understood as the work of leading relationships.

Ironically, delayering provides an opportunity to rethink and replace “management” with “leadership.” But leaders will only encourage and build multiplex relationships among their teams when they have received the training and resources to succeed in this new environment.

Yet, organizations have traditionally failed their leaders when it comes to training and development. Far too many people still get placed in leadership positions before they receive the training and development to [enable them to succeed](#).

The new workplace reality demands that organizations support leaders not only to manage environments that reward individual performance, but in settings where complex and often messy relationships are central to leadership effectiveness.

Why mid-career is such a dangerous time for burnout and workplace stress



Katie Green

Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Leadership Development, Manchester Metropolitan University

Everyone recognises the trope of the stressed-out senior manager who's always close to breaking point. But, in fact, mid-career is one of the most vulnerable periods for burnout and stress in a worker's life. At this stage, many people have extra responsibilities outside work at the same time as their employer increases expectations around performance, availability and leadership.

Mid-career is often where this double load increases the risk of burnout. [Research has found](#) that these professionals experienced particularly high levels of burnout, worked longer hours and reported lower job satisfaction compared to other age groups. A key driver was the ongoing tension between meeting the demands of their job and maintaining a work-life balance.

Importantly, burnout is now [widely recognised](#) not as an individual failing, but as a workplace problem. The condition is characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and lower productivity, [with](#)

[research](#) showing that it is shaped primarily by organisational structures, cultures and leadership practices rather than a worker's weakness or a lack of coping skills.

Burnout does not affect all groups equally. Women, for example, report [higher levels](#) of both personal and work-related burnout than men, particularly in mid-career. This could reflect women taking on more of a family's caring responsibilities as well as expectations about availability and emotional labour.

The COVID pandemic intensified these dynamics. Many mid-career professionals had to juggle work and family responsibilities at the same time as their social interactions were curtailed and their workloads and working hours stretched. Since the height of the pandemic, all sectors and roles have seen increases in burnout rates, with health and [social care organisations](#) being hit particularly hard.

Absorbing the pressure

Stress and burnout come at a cost to employers through lost working days, absenteeism and "leavism" (people working while on leave). Mid-career professionals are especially exposed because they are often expected to absorb pressure without showing strain. This could be, for instance, leading a team through organisational change at the same time as meeting their own

performance targets and supporting junior colleagues.

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In many organisations, chronic overload and constant busyness are normalised and even rewarded. Permanent availability becomes a marker of competence rather than a warning sign.

Despite this, there remains an assumption that mid-career professionals are inherently resilient. However, prolonged exposure to high levels of stress can make them less resilient. Experience does not necessarily protect against burnout; in many cases it just conceals it.

Symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia and anxiety are frequently minimised or ignored until stress reaches a breaking point. Those known for their ability to “power through” often suppress warning signs to maintain a professional identity. These workers often delay asking for help, in part because things commonly associated with burnout (long hours, constant responsiveness and chronic overwork, for example) are often normalised.

While short-term stress can sometimes enhance performance, so-called “good stress” sits close to a tipping point. When pressure becomes chronic and recovery time is limited or absent, stress becomes a direct pathway to burnout.

My research looking at [line managers’ development](#) highlights these risks.

Middle leaders and mid-career professionals were consistently described as overloaded and under-trained for their management responsibilities. Many had entered leadership roles with little or no formal preparation, and had to learn how to manage people on the job.

Promotions often brought significant increases in responsibility without corresponding investment in training. And where there were opportunities for development, they were frequently ad hoc and inconsistent. This combination fuelled anxiety and self-doubt – well-established precursors to burnout.



As part of [the project](#), we interviewed more than 150 line managers from both the public and private sectors. Our findings strongly suggest that burnout is shaped by workplace systems, norms and expectations. Organisational practices and processes, along with culture and leadership patterns, play an important role. Unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring and a culture of long hours

amplify stress. And leadership practices that prioritise constant performance pressure actively increase burnout risk.

Work climate matters more than hours alone – risk factors include bullying, sexual harassment and toxic leadership styles. Notably, burnout is closely linked to engagement from leaders, or the absence of it. For example, [one study](#) found that mid-career professionals, particularly women, suffer burnout when their effort goes unrecognised by managers.

Leaders who listen, acknowledge effort and offer recognition can significantly reduce the risk of burnout. Essentially, feeling that your work matters and is valued makes a measurable difference.

Leaders can design work for sustainability rather than endurance. This includes making sure workloads and targets are realistic, as well as stamping out cultures where constant availability is prized.

Mid-career leadership roles must be properly supported, and workers should be given protected time for training and development rather than being expected to learn through trial and error. Their managers should try to create a safe environment – listening seriously, responding early to concerns and intervening before stress escalates into burnout.

Finally, strong team working and a sense of community at work provide meaning that buffers against burnout. In mid-career, when pressures converge from multiple directions, connection is not a

luxury but a necessity. The importance of joy at work is often overlooked.

Opportunities to create meaning, connection and enjoyment are not indulgent extras; they protect against chronic stress and burnout.

The Punjab University Alumni Office

How the legal and institutional position of the Punjab University Alumni Office (PUAO) within the statutory framework of the University of the Punjab contrasts with the legal status of departmental alumni associations?

While departmental alumni bodies often function as voluntary social networks registered under general society laws, the central alumni office operates as an administrative organ embedded within the university's statutory structure. The distinction is not merely administrative; it affects governance authority, institutional continuity, alumni identity, brand stewardship, and legal accountability. To recognize and strengthen the statutory role of a central alumni office is essential for long-term institutional coherence, international alumni coordination, and protection of the university's legal and reputational interests.

Modern universities increasingly rely on structured alumni engagement for institutional development, global reputation, and philanthropic support. However, alumni networks often emerge in two different forms: centralized statutory alumni offices embedded within university governance, and decentralized departmental associations that operate primarily as social or professional networks.

The University itself is a statutory corporation established under the

University of the Punjab Act, 1973, possessing perpetual succession and legal personality, including the ability to sue and be sued in its own name. This statutory character shapes the legal environment within which alumni engagement occurs. The Punjab University Alumni Office (PUAO), although not itself an independent corporation, [functions as an administrative arm](#) of the University created to coordinate alumni activity across all faculties and departments.

The PUAO represents an institutional mechanism of statutory coherence, whereas departmental alumni bodies remain legally separate entities whose existence arises from private registration and voluntary association, not from the University's founding statute.

The University as a Statutory Corporation

The University of the Punjab is not merely an educational institution; it is a body corporate created by statute. The *Punjab University Act, 1973* establishes the University as a legal [entity with perpetual succession](#). This statutory status has several consequences:

- the University holds property in its own name.
- it enters contracts.
- it maintains governance organs created by statute.
- its authority flows from legislation rather than private agreement.

Any administrative office created within this structure, including the alumni office, derives its legitimacy from the University's statutory framework and internal governance [resolutions](#), the importance of this distinction cannot be overstated: statutory institutions exist in public law space, whereas voluntary alumni associations exist in private law space.

Legal Nature of Departmental Alumni Associations

Departmental alumni associations typically register under the *Societies Registration Act, 1860*. Registration gives them a separate legal identity capable of holding bank accounts, entering contracts, and managing property. However, their legal personality is independent of the University.

These associations:

- are not created by the Punjab University Act.
- are not statutory organs of the University.
- derive authority from their own constitutions.
- operate as voluntary networks.

Recognition by the central alumni office does not transform them into statutory bodies. They remain autonomous private associations whose legitimacy flows from society law, not from university statute. This is why they are best understood as social or professional networks affiliated with, but not legally embedded in, the University's governance structure.

Institutional Role of the Punjab University Alumni Office

The PUAO is an administrative office established under the authority of the Vice Chancellor and the Syndicate. Its function is coordinative rather than corporate. It is not a separate legal person, but an institutional bridge linking the University and its alumni ecosystem.

Its responsibilities include:

- maintaining a central alumni database.
- providing online alumni registration.
- coordinating departmental alumni engagement.
- managing official branding and institutional representation.
- [aligning alumni activity with university-wide strategy](#).

This centralized architecture creates a unified alumni identity that transcends departmental fragmentation. Without such an office, alumni activity would devolve into disconnected micro-networks lacking institutional coherence.

Limits of Authority and Governance Balance

The PUAO does not override departmental autonomy. It cannot unilaterally dissolve associations or amend their constitutions. This balance is

deliberate. The central office coordinates: departmental bodies self-govern.

However, when alumni activity involves:

- university branding,
- university venues,
- university financial systems,
- or official representation,

[the central alumni office acts as the institutional guardian of statutory authority](#). This function protects the University's legal and reputational interests in ways that decentralized associations cannot.

International Chapters and Legal Fragmentation

Overseas alumni chapters add another layer of complexity. Approval by the University or a parent alumni association does not automatically grant legal status in foreign jurisdictions. Each chapter's legal standing depends on host-country law. [A central alumni office becomes critical in maintaining continuity, brand protection, and institutional legitimacy across borders.](#)

Without central coordination, overseas alumni bodies risk fragmentation, inconsistent representation, and legal ambiguity.

Why Central Alumni Governance Matters

Departmental alumni associations serve valuable social functions. They foster friendships, professional networks, and identity at the micro level. But they

cannot substitute for a central alumni institution that:

- protects institutional brand and legal integrity,
- maintains unified alumni records,
- ensures policy consistency,
- represents the University globally,
- and sustains long-term strategic alumni engagement.

The distinction mirrors the difference between a federation and a collection of clubs. The University requires an alumni institution, not merely alumni social circles.

The statutory position of the Punjab University Alumni Office is not symbolic; it is structural. It anchors alumni engagement within the University's legal framework while allowing departmental associations to flourish as voluntary networks. Recognizing this distinction is essential for governance clarity, institutional continuity, and global alumni coordination.

» Departmental alumni associations are social ecosystems; The central alumni office is institutional infrastructure »

Confusing the two risks weakening both.

Shahid Ali- 1972-74

“A PIONEERING EFFORT”

*Shahid Ali (Pioneer Batch 1972-74)
(IBA PU Alumni, Canada)*

The Making of Institute of Business Administration at Punjab University
It was early 1971, one of the most difficult chapters in Pakistan’s history, as it was an aftermath of war and ultimate dismemberment of one part of our dear country, we call “The East Pakistan Debacle”.

However, at the same time a quiet but important turning point took shape in Lahore. While the nation faced uncertainty, we, a small group of commerce students began pushing for something that did not yet exist in Punjab- Establishment of an institution for a formal higher learning in Business Administration.

Our batch mate Abdul Hayee’s message in January or February of 2023 inviting a few friends from the first batch 1972-74 of IBA, Punjab University to share memories of those early days prompted me to share the moments of how the events of establishing a Department of Business Administration under auspices of Punjab University got unfolded. It was also a reminder that even in sad national times, determination and hope can produce lasting institutions. Abdul Hayee’s message from the platform of IBA PU Alumni was circulated ahead of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of IBA-PU in March 2023.

For me personally this invite was also a nostalgic reopening of a story that had long remained very personal and close to

my heart. Whereas it might be a story of personal achievement but speaks of volumes of collective urgency requiring some action and extraordinary vision of a group of dedicated individuals and great teachers of the time.

The time in reference is I believe late 1971. I was pursuing my Bachelor of Commerce at Hailey College. Like many young students, I was driven by a passion and desire to pursue professional excellence in the field of Business Administration- a relatively new discipline in Pakistan at that time. Till then the only recognized MBA program in the country was administered at IBA of Karachi University. I wrote to them requesting an admission form for admission in the class of MBA for the year 1972. However, to my dismay, their reply was quite disappointing and said that since I belonged to a province other than Sind, I will be required to pay a Nonrefundable Capitulation Fee of Rs 20,000 before my application could even be considered and that also with no commitment for admission as I have to appear for an admission test subsequently. Now for a student of modest means, this was impossible. The door seemed closed. Same period one afternoon, while walking with a few fellow Hailey College students toward Old Anarkali to catch the university bus, our frustration resurfaced in conversation. Almost jokingly at first, we decided to approach the Vice Chancellor of Punjab University. We entered the old campus office, nervous and unprepared, and were unexpectedly admitted to meet the then Vice Chancellor, Allama Alauddin Siddiqui. I while narrating my recent experience with

IBA Karachi explained that commerce graduates in Punjab had no way to pursue Business Administration courses and something must be done for that by our university. Allama Sahib listened gently and with kindness. He spoke about patience and practicality, explaining that creating such a program on short notice was impossible. He treated us like a father would his children and even offered a cup of tea. We left resigned and disappointed, believing the matter was finished.

To our surprise within a week, we saw a news in the press that Allama Sahib was retiring and Dr. Mohammad Ajmal from the Punjab University's Psychology Department would become the new Vice Chancellor. Encouraged by youthful optimism, we the same few friends returned to present our case of the need for initiating MBA classes in Punjab to the new Vice Chancellor. Dr Ajmal listened in silence, reflecting deeply throughout our appeal. When he finally spoke, he surprised us. He did not dismiss the request. Instead, he said he respected the passion behind it and would work toward a solution.

Exactly eight days later, newspapers carried an advertisement announcing the establishment of the Department of Administrative Sciences under Dr. Mohammad Afzal's Department of Administrative Sciences. Consequently, admission tests were conducted by the Institute of Education and Research, attracting thousands of applicants from Punjab and other provinces. What had seemed impossible suddenly became a reality. As we all know, the department later grew into the Institute of Business

Administration, serving the nation with distinction for decades.

This recollection is not meant to claim credit. Many students would have acted the same way. The real tribute belongs to educators like Dr. Mohammad Ajmal, whose dedication and foresight created opportunity for generations. They were teachers simple in manner yet tall in stature. Their belief in young people shaped professional lives across Pakistan and beyond.

Abdul Hayee's call for penning memories reminds us that institutions are built not only through policy but through courage, dialogue, and persistence. A collected volume documenting these formative years would honor the spirit of those beginnings.

Every great institution starts modestly with one or two motivated individuals who have the willingness and strength to take the initiative and have firm belief that what they are doing is for the common good. The struggles, uncertainty, and resolve of a handful of students and visionary teachers created a legacy that continues to transform ambition into opportunity. Preserving these memories is not nostalgia. It is gratitude to an institution that changed lives and strengthened the nation.

We'd love to hear from you!

Your thoughts and reflections are what keep this publication meaningful and evolving. Please share your feedback, suggestions, or ideas with us



ibapuac@gmail.com