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## *Pew Finds Economic Mobility Rates Differ for Canadians and Americans*

### *Citizens of Both Nations Share Similar Perceptions and Values About Economic Opportunity*

WASHINGTON—Canadians and Americans do not have the same likelihood of climbing the income ladder and experiencing economic mobility, but not because of different underlying values or societal goals, according to new data released today by Pew’s Economic Mobility Project. The report, *Chasing the Same Dream, Climbing Different Ladders: Economic Mobility in the United States and Canada*, examines the differences in mobility over a generation and analyzes the results in conjunction with public opinion polls commissioned in both nations by the Project. It looks at differences in public attitudes and cultural values to understand to what degree they can explain the disparity in economic mobility.

Sons born to Canadian fathers in the bottom third of the earnings distribution are more likely to make it to the top half of the distribution in adulthood than are sons of comparably low-earning American fathers. Of those who start in the bottom decile, for instance, nearly 40 percent of Canadian sons move to the top half of the distribution compared to 30 percent of American sons.

“These differences in mobility rates raise some provocative questions about the perceived uniqueness of the American Dream,” said John E. Morton, managing director of Pew’s Economic Policy Group. “What is particularly interesting is how the citizens of both nations view their own government’s policies as aiding or impeding economic mobility.”

Forty-six percent of Canadians feel their government does more to help than to hurt its citizens’ economic mobility, whereas only 36 percent of Americans feel this way. But Americans are more likely than Canadians to say that there are a range of measures the government could take to improve economic mobility.

While Project data show that Americans remain “stuck” at the bottom of the earnings ladder more often than Canadians, Americans actually are less likely than Canadians to think that parental income makes a difference in the ability of children to move up. Only 42 percent of Americans said that they believe one’s financial success is tied to parental income versus 57 percent of Canadians.

Still, despite the recession’s impact on both countries, Americans and Canadians feel strongly that individual characteristics, like a strong work ethic and ambition, are more influential for one’s economic mobility than outside factors, like the economy. And, respondents in both countries similarly define what it means to attain the American and “Canadian” Dreams.

“Americans and Canadians have similar attitudes and aspirations for themselves and their children. Both believe that everyone should have a fair chance of improving their economic standing. However, the report shows that Canadians who are born to the least advantaged parents are more likely than their American counterparts to reach the middle class,” said Miles Corak of the University of Ottawa and the report’s author.

#### Research Specifications:

The American mobility estimates are from economist Bhashkar Mazumder and rely on the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation, linked to earnings data from the Social Security Administration. The Canadian estimates are from researcher Miles Corak and based on Canadian income tax data. The research that produced both the American and Canadian estimates has been published in respected peer-reviewed economics journals.

The poll of Americans, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies, surveyed 2,119 adults, including oversamples of African Americans (517 total cases unweighted), Hispanics (520 total cases unweighted) and people under 40 (497 total cases unweighted). Given the growing phenomenon of young people without land-line telephones, all interviews in the under-40 oversample were conducted on cell phones. This survey was conducted between January 27 and February 8, 2009 and lasted approximately 22 minutes. The overall margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.4 at a 95 percent confidence interval.

The poll of Canadians, conducted by EKOS, surveyed 1,035 adults 18 and older between August 20 and September 14, 2009. This survey was also based upon a stratified random sample including both land line and cell phone households. The questionnaire was the same as that used in the American survey to the extent possible. Some questions were adapted, some added, and everything was also translated to French. It required an average of 29 minutes to complete. The 95 percent confidence interval for the survey is +/- 3.0 percentage points.

For the complete report and more information, please visit [www.economicmobility.org](http://www.economicmobility.org).

Comprised of a Principals' Group of experts from the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, the New America Foundation and the Urban Institute, with guidance from an Advisory Board of leading academics and economists, Pew's Economic Mobility Project seeks to investigate the health and status of the American Dream.

*The Pew Economic Policy Group is a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts and promotes policies and practices that strengthen the U.S. economy. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.*  
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