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COHABITATION DELAYS ADULTHOOD

Starting work, leaving home, having children and getting married are four traditional markers of becoming an adult. Fewer Canadians are choosing marriage today

December 9, 2010 (Ottawa) – Today the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada is releasing ***Growing up then and now: Cohabitation marks the key difference***. This paper examines four traditional markers of becoming an adult: Starting work, leaving home, having children and getting married and compares and contrasts between today, the last four decades and then further back to the early 1900s in Canadian history.

Researcher Derek Miedema finds that in some ways, there is nothing new under the sun. “Canadians born between 1966 and 1970 actually left home a bit earlier than their counterparts in the early 1900s,” says Miedema. “Starting work has been pushed back by about three years,” he adds, saying that the changing workforce is clearly placing more education requirements on young people today.

Even fertility can be viewed as a long line of decline, starting in the early 1900s, with the baby boom of the mid to late 1950s providing a brief increase.

The one major area of change is that Canadians are choosing to marry less and cohabit more. “This means that one of the major markers of adulthood is either being delayed or avoided altogether,” says Miedema. “The research shows that marriage and cohabitation do not have the same outcomes, neither is cohabitation good preparation for marriage. In fact, some social scientists call cohabitation good preparation for divorce,” he adds.

The paper examines the trends in how our children are growing up today. While some of the changes in the age of starting work or leaving home are more easily explained, others are more difficult, such as the greater tendency to engage in cohabitation preceding or instead of marriage. “If young people knew the social science behind that decision, it’s unlikely they would choose it,” concludes Miedema.

Growing up then and now: Cohabitation marks the key difference can be read in full, [here](#).