Gap Years A tool for Recruitment and Retention

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What is the Canadian Gap Year Association?

Research | Education & Advocacy | Resources



What is a gap year?

- CanGap Definition: intentional time away from normal routine, for one to experience personal growth through reflection, volunteerism, travel and/or work with the express purpose of figuring out:
 - Who you are
 - Who you want to be
 - What steps to take get to where and who you want to be.



- Traditionally, gap years are taken after high school; however, we have noticed that a Canadian gap year is anytime between launching a post-secondary career through to post-graduation. It can be a full year, or a semester.
- Approximately 50% prior to entering post-secondary, 50% mid-postsecondary break



Profile of a gapper

- **High achievers** they are burnt out and need to care for their mental and physical well being before taking next steps
- **Explorers** people who feel they need to understand more about the world before embarking on next steps and taking on debt
- With Obstacles young people who are overcoming other obstacles (ex. loss of a family member, eating disorder, social anxiety, etc.)



Profile of a gapper

- **Career Seeker** those who don't know what career they want to get into and seek more time to explore options
- **Financial Need** young people who need to earn some money prior to their next financial commitment.
- Plan B people who did not get into a program of interest and are taking some time to come up with a new plan or strengthen their application for future years





Relevant responses to why they took a gap year:

- 92% to gain experiences, personal growth
- 81% wanted a break from academic track
- 52% wanted to explore academic pursuis
- 44% wanted to explore careers
- 7% not admitted to college



Why are gap years gaining traction in Canada?

External Factors

- The "Malia Effect"
- Support from Ivy League US Universities (Harvard/Stanford)
- Stronger understanding of the value of experiential learning
- Changes in the pattern of postsecondary-to-job pathways
- Focus on Skill Development





How do Gappers perform?



What will they gain?

- AGA (2015) found:
 - Students return to post-secondary and demonstrate a higher GPA than peers that did not take a gap year
 - More engaged on the campus and achieve meaningful leadership opportunities
- Our gappers report:
 - More independence, more confidence, greater maturity
 - Stronger inter-cultural understanding
 - Stronger connection to the value of further study in a specific field
 - More clarity
 - More "in control" of their personal lives and mental and physical health



What will they gain? Continued.

• AGA:

JOBS

88% believe the gap year experience increased their employability.



SKILLS

84% say their gap year helped them acquire skills to be successful in their career.



CAREER

60% Say their gap year helped define their current career path.



Canadian Studies...

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- We are working on securing funding and academic supports.
- Canadian Council of Learning:
 - Gappers were 8% more likely to be employed than their non-gapping peers
- One study out of University of Calgary found that people who didn't take a gap year didn't see value in them but those who did, raved about them.
- StatsCan... Compelling, but out of date (20 years old)



Proportion starting PSE by month

	Median number of months between high school graduation and start of first postsecondary education program
	number
Gender	
Male	8
Female	3
Aboriginal status	
Non-Aboriginal	4
Aboriginal	15
Mother tongue	
English	14
French	3
Neither English nor French	3
Province of high school graduation	
Atlantic provinces	3
Quebec	3
Ontario	15
Western provinces	13
Community type	
Rural	8
Population centre	3
Source: Statistics Canada. Youth in Transition Survey. Cohort B. Cycle	2 5.

Variable	Time 1: 1 to 2 years		Time 2: 5 to 6 years		Change between T1 and T2	
	Percent employed	Average	Percent employed	Average	Percentage change in	Percentage change in
	full-year	earnings	full-year	earnings	employment	earnings
	percent	dollars	percent	dollars	percent	
Sample size	3,592	3,042	3,592	3,042		
No post-secondary education						
High school droppers	58.60	11,448.34	74.64	21,279.51	27.37	85.87
High school only	71.37	14,587.20	75.70	22,708.62	6.07	55.67
2nd chance at high school, no post- secondary education	55.06	11,193.63	64.67	21,448.29	17.45	91.61
Direct route to post-secondary education	on	1		1		
Non-gappers-post-secondary leavers	72.52	16,848.22	88.20	26,561.02	21.62	57.65
Non-gappers-trade / other	71.77	23,369.80	84.30	33,379.59	17.46	42.83
Non-gappers-college	82.57	23,223.04	87.92	32,057.93	6.48	38.04
Non-gappers-college-university	90.21	26,678.15	89.77	38,349.62	-0.49	43.75
Non-gappers-university	80.44	25,177.35	88.54	43,958.44	10.07	74.60
All non-gappers	79.71	22,398.52	87.88	33,299.24	10.25	48.67
Indirect route to post-secondary educat	tion					
2nd chance at high school, some post- secondary education	59.14	14,332.72	82.84	24,698.55	40.07	72.32
Gappers-post-secondary leavers	67.92	17,616.65	86.97	30,378.79	28.05	72.44
Gappers-trade / other	73.18	21,484.78	86.89	27,883.77	18.73	29.78
Gappers-college	76.93	20,183.08	83.39	29,563.63	8.40	46.48
Gappers-university ¹	84.51	22,532.18	95.90	42,399.85	13.48	88.17
All gappers	74.27	19,835.51	86.14	30,524.96	15.98	53.89
Total	72.21	17,787.87	82.15	28,008.69	13.77	57.46

... not applicable 1. Includes gapper-college-university as well.

Optimizing the Gap Year Pathway for your Institution



Discussion Questions

- What are you doing?
- What could you be doing?
- How will this benefit your institution?
- How can CanGap better support you?

- Suggested topics:
 - Deferral policies
 - Delayed start for at-risk students
 - Gap Year Scholarships
 - Credits for experiential learning
 - Redirect program
 - Required/Suggested break from studies



How CanGap can help

- Membership Opportunities
- Developing a network
- Connecting Gap students with schools
- Promotion of scholarships
- Consulting on policy development
- Co-designing gap year/experiential semester learning programs
- Supporting researchers interested in this field of study
- Developing a "certified gap year" framework to ensure that the year is productive and developmental
- What else do you need from us?





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