

Newsletter

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Looking back; looking forward

For Canadian baseball fans, the autumn offered both unity and nostalgia. Three decades after Joe Carter's iconic home run, many hoped for a repeat of that 1993 magic, but we'll have to wait a little longer. Still, it's worth reflecting on how much the world has changed since then. In some ways, it's a "Back to the Future" moment: what if we could travel back 30 years and shape what was to come?

For many, it's hard to imagine life without a smartphone or internet access. Yet in 1993, the digital age was just beginning. The "World Wide Web" was unknown to most, with only 3 percent of the population ever online. Devices like the PalmPilot and software such as Windows 95 (without an internet browser!) were years away from release.¹ Just months later, in 1994, a young entrepreneur, Jeff Bezos, left his stable job to start Cadabra, an online bookstore run from his garage—a venture that would eventually become Amazon. Could anyone have imagined its trajectory then? In hindsight, it may seem obvious. At the time? Not at all.

The economic backdrop of that era carries echoes of today. In 1993, U.S. economic growth was steady and inflation relatively contained. Canada, however, faced steeper challenges: unemployment rose above 10 percent, and the Bank of Canada cut rates to stimulate activity. *The Wall Street Journal* derisively called our dollar the "northern peso," and branded Canada an "honorary member of the Third World."²

Fast-forward to today, and despite another strong year for equity markets in 2025, familiar challenges persist: lagging productivity, ongoing trade tensions and sluggish growth. While markets have advanced—in part, driven by a bifurcated "K-shaped" economy in which higher-income households supported overall activity—questions remain about what lies ahead. Yet history reminds us that progress is rarely linear. Markets and economies move in cycles, shaped by volatility and surprises; meaningful progress is often measured over decades, not years.

History also shows how unexpected shifts can be transformational. Canada's remarkable fiscal turnaround that began in 1995 bears repeating: Under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, debt shrank from 68 percent of GDP in 1995/96 to 29 percent by 2008/09, with 11 straight years of budget surpluses. Our fiscal standing in the G7 climbed from second worst to first, ushering in what was known as a "payoff decade" of investment, job creation and growth.²

Notably, after Carter's home run in 1993, the S&P/TSX Composite Index opened at 4,155.7—a time marked by considerable economic uncertainty. In 2025, it surpassed 30,000. While few would have had the foresight to join Bezos in his garage, an investor who placed \$200,000 in the market back then would see it grow to over \$1.4 million today, without reinvested dividends. It's a reminder that broad opportunities often exist alongside bold ideas.

Indeed, we don't need a time machine to make sound choices. As in the past, future success is likely to favour those who recognize the opportunities, stay disciplined and continue to participate. While no one can predict what the next 30 years will bring, the only way to miss out on the progress is to stay on the sidelines. Here's to a new year ahead filled with resilience, participation, prosperity—and the next 33 years to come!

¹ <https://fastcompany.com/3053055/1995-the-year-everything-changed>

² <https://financialpost.com/uncategorized/lessons-from-canadas-basket-case-moment>

You asked: Questions about lesser-known RRSP opportunities

Overall Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) participation has fallen since the start of the millennium, from 29.1 percent of taxpayers to 21.7 percent in 2022. The good news? Higher-income earners remain engaged: In 2023, 66 percent of taxpayers earning \$200,000 to \$500,000 contributed, often fully maximizing contribution room.

Many people understand the basics of RRSPs, but here are three questions that highlight some lesser-known RRSP opportunities:

1. Can I hold the RRSP and the RRIF at the same time?

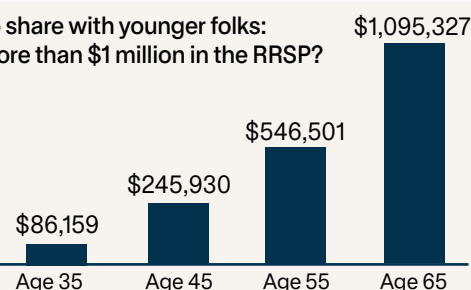
Yes. Investors typically convert funds to a Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF) on a tax-deferred basis once the RRSP needs to be wound down at age 71. However, there may be situations in which holding both makes sense. For example, if you want to generate pension income to take advantage of the federal pension income tax credit, you might open a small RRIF at age 65, while continuing to hold your RRSP until the end of the year in which you turn 71 to capture ongoing tax deductions.

2. What is the “forgotten” RRSP contribution at age 71?

In the year you turn 71, you must collapse your RRSP by December 31, after which no further contributions are allowed. Since contribution room is based on the previous year's earned income, working during the year may create additional room. Contributions made before year-end will create a temporary overcontribution, which may be offset by potential tax savings. For example, a \$20,000 overcontribution made in December will incur a 1 percent per month penalty, or \$200, but in January, it is no longer considered an overcontribution. At a 40 percent marginal tax rate, it could potentially provide \$8,000 in tax savings. **Don't forget: A lifetime \$2,000 overcontribution is permitted without penalty.**

RRSP perspectives to share with younger folks: Can you retire with more than \$1 million in the RRSP?

Consider the benefits of starting early: At age 25, Chris begins annual RRSP contributions of \$5,000.* Here's how Chris' RRSP grows at a 5.5 percent annual rate of return.



*Assumes RRSP contributions increase by 2.5% annually, in line with average inflation.

3. I plan to work past age 71. Should I consider a spousal RRSP?

If you have a spouse/common-law partner, a spousal RRSP allows you to contribute on behalf of your spouse while receiving a tax deduction based on your own RRSP limit. The spouse is the annuitant, so withdrawals are taxed as their income. This provides income-splitting opportunities if your spouse is in a lower tax bracket. If your spouse is younger and you work past 71, you can contribute until the end of the year they turn 71, allowing you to continue receiving tax deductions.

2026 Reminders: Tax-advantaged accounts

RRSP deadline — The deadline for RRSP contributions for the 2025 tax year is Monday, March 2, 2026.

2026 TFSA dollar limit — \$7,000, making the eligible lifetime contribution room \$109,000.

Wealth perspectives: Canadians have never been wealthier

Recent statistics show that Canadians are wealthier than ever, with average household net worth reaching \$1.047 million in Q2 2025. Since 2019, average household net worth has grown by over 30 percent, with Millennials (\$634,435) and Gen X (\$1.33 million) seeing increases of over 10 percent since the start of 2024.¹

Despite this, many of us don't feel wealthy. Wealth can be a slippery benchmark—it often feels like it's never quite enough. Rising living costs strain many, while constant connectivity makes some feel like they're falling behind the Joneses. Yet, it's worth remembering: being a millionaire puts you in the top 1.6 percent of global wealth holders.²

With that in mind, here are some perspectives on wealth creation:

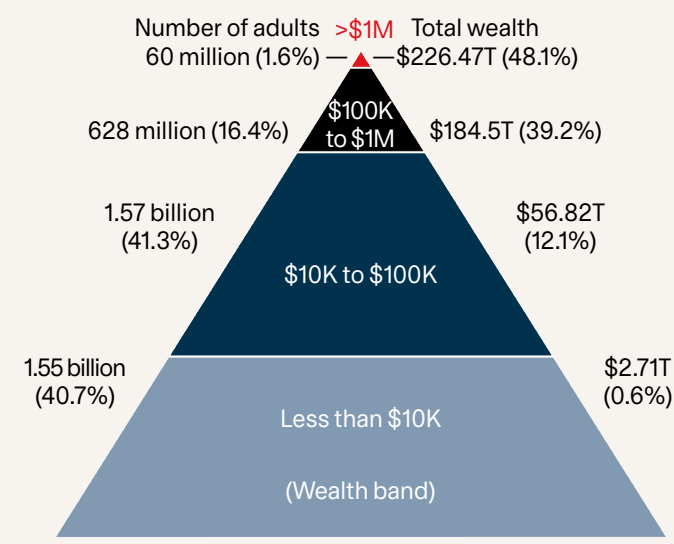
Building wealth has less to do with income and more to do with savings. Wealth is simply the accumulated difference between what you earn and what you spend. You don't need a high income to build wealth, but without a high savings rate, your chances are slim.

Wealth is relative to your needs. People require vastly different amounts to get by each month. A dollar saved means something very different depending on one's location, lifestyle and priorities.

Time is a great ally. Starting early can make a meaningful difference. Consider two investors earning an annual return of five percent. A 25-year-old who invests \$500 per month for 20 years (\$120,000 total) and then stops contributions could see their savings grow to roughly \$550,000 by age 65. A 45-year-old would need to invest \$1,350 per month—\$324,000 total, or 2.7 times more—to achieve a similar outcome by 65.

One of the lessons we've learned from our time in the industry is that the principles of successful wealth creation are timeless. Wealth comes from choices, not chances: choosing to save wisely and pay yourself first, living within your means and having a plan focused on quality, diversification and discipline—with the patience to let it work for you over the long run.

The global wealth pyramid (in USD)²



¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610066001>

² In USD. <https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html>

Financial resolutions: Safeguard your estate planning documents

As a new year begins, many focus on financial resolutions like saving more or reducing debt. This year, why not consider making estate planning a priority, starting by safeguarding your estate planning documents?

A recent *Globe & Mail* article highlighted an often-overlooked estate planning risk: the lost will. In *Finsant Estate (2024)*,¹ a will prepared in 2001 named the deceased's grand-niece as the sole beneficiary. When it could not be located, the beneficiary sought court enforcement, while the estate's administrator claimed the deceased had died without a will.

In most provinces, the original will is required to administer an estate; copies, even if notarized, are usually insufficient. If a will is known to exist but is lost, "clear and convincing evidence" is required to validate it. Otherwise, it may be presumed deliberately destroyed. In this case, the court declared the estate "intestate," meaning it was treated as if no will existed, and assets were distributed according to provincial law. This underscores the importance of safely storing estate planning documents—and ensuring trusted individuals know where to find them. A will only serves its purpose if it can be located after death.

How documents get lost

Years can pass between drafting a will and needing it. Home moves, relocation to another province/country or changes in legal counsel can result in misplacement or accidental destruction.

Pitfalls with common storage locations

Here are common locations where estate planning documentation is held, each with its own considerations:

Lawyer's office — Professional file retention generally ensures safekeeping, but access may be complicated if the lawyer retires or changes practice.

Safety deposit box — While secure and protected against loss or damage, access often requires probate, which in turn typically requires the original will—creating a potential catch-22.

Home Safe — Convenient access for an executor, but vulnerable to fire, flood, theft or misplacement during moves.

Why the power of attorney deserves special attention

A power of attorney (POA)² takes effect while you are alive, often in an emergency. Timely access is often critical—delays can cause confusion, legal hurdles or unnecessary expenses. Because POAs can grant authority over finances, healthcare or other personal matters, consider whether your attorney(s) can quickly locate them during a sudden illness, hospitalization or while you are abroad. If access is limited to a home safe or a lawyer's office, establish contingencies.

For 2026: Resolve to regularly review & communicate

Regularly reviewing estate planning documents is important, but equally critical is communicating to loved ones where documents are stored. Taking proactive steps today to organize, store and review documents can prevent complications when they are needed most.

¹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/personal-finance/taxes/article-will-testament-inheritance-family-estate-planning/>

² Generally, there are two types: for property and personal care (the names/terms vary by province/territory, such as mandate, personal directive or living will for POA for personal care).

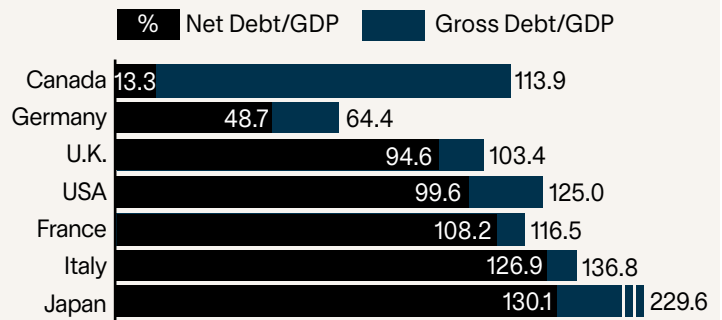
In brief: Highlights from the 2025 federal budget

Delivered in November instead of the spring, this year's federal budget, described as "generational," projects a \$78.3 billion deficit in 2025-26, falling to \$57.9 billion by 2028-29, and adding \$322 billion of debt over the period. The increase comes from \$450 billion in new spending, directed toward infrastructure, competitiveness and defense. Public debt charges are expected to rise by \$22.7 billion. By 2030, Canada will spend an estimated \$1.46 billion per week on interest payments.¹

No changes were made to federal personal or corporate tax rates. The budget confirms the middle-class tax cut, reducing the lowest personal income tax rate from 15 percent to 14.5 percent in 2025, and 14 percent thereafter. Here are notable proposed personal income tax measures:

- **Top-up tax credit.** This effectively maintains the 15 percent rate for non-refundable tax credits claimed on amounts in excess of the first tax bracket threshold to prevent taxpayers from facing higher tax liability under the lower bracket rate for 2025 to 2030 tax years.
- **Personal support worker (PSW) tax credit.** Introduces a temporary five-year refundable tax credit for eligible PSWs working in approved facilities equal to 5 percent of eligible earnings, up to \$1,100 annually (not including workers in BC, NWT, NFLD, as separate bilateral agreements exist).
- **Trusts & 21-year rule.** Broadens anti-avoidance provisions for certain transactions involving trusts that aim to sidestep the 21-year deemed disposition rules.
- **Bare trust reporting deferral.** Defers bare trust reporting requirements to taxation years ending after December 30, 2026.

G7: General Government Net & Gross Debt-to-GDP Ratio, 2025



The budget highlighted Canada as having the lowest net-debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Gross debt tells a different story. Net debt subtracts government assets like cash reserves, foreign exchange funds and the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans, with assets over \$700 billion, though assets belong to contributors, not the government.

- **Canadian entrepreneurs' incentive: Cancelled.** Confirms that this incentive, announced as part of Budget 2024, will not proceed.
- **Luxury tax changes.** Eliminates the luxury tax on aircraft and boats after November 4, 2025, but retains the tax on automobiles.
- **Underused housing tax: Repealed.** Effective calendar year 2025.
- **Registered plans: Small business investments.** Starting in 2027, extends certain investments in specified small businesses to RDSPs; investments in shares of eligible corporations and interests in small business investment limited partnerships/investment trusts will no longer be qualified investments for registered plans.

For more information, please see: <https://budget.canada.ca/>

¹ <https://financialpost.com/news/good-bad-and-ugly-canada-budget-2025> - Please note: At the time of writing, these measures have not been enacted into law.



Ways to live a longer life — The importance of connection

In the longest-running study on happiness, the **Harvard Study of Adult Development** found that social connections are the strongest predictor of happiness and health, which in turn may contribute to greater longevity.¹

Retirement planning is more than a “number.” Of course, my role is to support your wealth management so you have the means to live the life you envision in retirement and beyond. Yet often overlooked is how we’ll maintain life satisfaction as we age.

We live in an era of unprecedented global wealth, with a standard of living that is at its highest in history. Yet, levels of unhappiness are also at record highs. Social disconnection has become such a recognized issue that the UK and Japan have appointed government “Ministers of Loneliness,” and in 2023, the U.S. surgeon general declared loneliness an “epidemic.”² A recent media headline even suggested that Gen Z may avoid the proverbial ‘midlife crisis’ not because they are happier, but because unhappiness has become so common much earlier in life.³ In the past, happiness tended to follow a “U-shaped” curve across the lifespan. Today, this may have shifted to an upward-sloping line, with young adults now the least happy and older adults still reporting the greatest happiness.

Why this change is happening may be linked to various factors—the effects of job and housing prospects, the lasting impact of the pandemic, growing wealth inequality and, of course, the rise in social media and smartphones that have created a broader connectivity ecosystem inundating us with negative news and comparative envy.

This kind of connectivity, however, does not sustain us. A thriving human experience is fuelled by face-to-face interactions, which foster self-expression, creativity, optimism—and ultimately happiness.⁴ In fact, these interactions can help rewire our brains and change how we perceive the world in a more positive

way. Neuroscience shows that in-person interactions engage the brain in beneficial ways that text messages or video calls cannot replicate.⁵

Is there evidence to support connectivity as a predictor of longevity? One study following nearly 1,500 older adults over a decade found that those with large networks of friends outlived those with fewer friends by more than 20 percent.² Conversely, social disconnection is linked to higher risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, depression, dementia and premature death. One study showed that loneliness increased the risk of early mortality by 26 percent and social isolation by 29 percent.⁶

The longevity benefits of giving to others

Importantly, connectivity is not only about how many physical friends we have, but also about how we engage with others. Those who participate in “prosocial” behaviours—acts intended to help or benefit others—tend to enjoy better health themselves. This can include volunteering or even making a charitable donation. For instance, seniors who spent about 15 hours per week tutoring and mentoring young children experienced measurable improvements in both cognitive and physical health. Volunteering has been linked to longer life spans.⁷ Acts of giving can lower blood pressure, reduce stress and even decrease cortisol levels (the stress hormone), while boosting feel-good brain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin.⁸

As we enter a new year, this may be worth reflection: By giving our time, resources or attention to others, we not only make an impact on others, but may also enhance our own happiness, health and longevity. Staying connected—not just financially, but also emotionally and socially—can help us live fuller, more satisfying lives as we plan for retirement and beyond.

¹ <https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/>

² <https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/the-importance-of-connections-ways-to-live-a-longer-healthier-life/>

³ <https://www.newsweek.com/gen-z-midlife-crises-happiness-mental-health-2120019>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2024/05/28/in-person-friendships-health-benefits/>

⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053811922007984>; <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-52587-2>

⁶ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25910392/>

⁷ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1359105305057310>

⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16905215/>; <https://lifestylemedicine.stanford.edu/how-social-connection-supports-longevity/>

Equity market perspectives: Will AI be different?

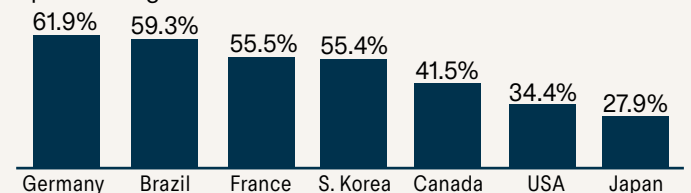
Mega-cap tech companies led the market higher in 2025, fuelled by significant capital expenditures—reportedly over \$1.2 trillion by S&P 500 companies.¹ Nvidia became the first company to reach a \$5 trillion market capitalization—worth more than the GDP of every country except the U.S. and China, according to World Bank data. This has prompted many to ask: “Can AI deliver on its potential?”

The current enthusiasm reflects AI’s potential to boost efficiency and productivity across industries. History shows how transformative technology can be: over the past 35 years, advances in computing, the internet, mobile devices, apps and software have driven productivity gains. The chart (top) compares revenue per employee for select sectors in 1991 and today (inflation-adjusted). AI is also viewed as a platform for innovation. Unlike earlier technologies that improved efficiency in isolated areas, AI is enabling new ways to create, design and drive advances across many sectors.

While the mega-tech firms now account for more than one-third of total S&P 500 market capitalization, this concentration has left some investors nervous. Yet, equity market concentration is not unusual; it’s been a recurring feature throughout time. Globally,

Comparing concentration risk around the globe

Top 10 holdings’ share as % of the Index

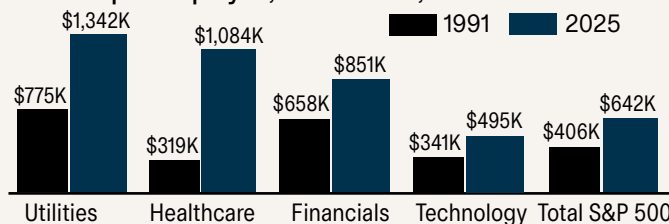


FactSet & MSCI indices (USD), 5/8/25; www.bny.com/investments/fi/en/institutional/news-and-insights/chart-of-the-week/comparing-concentration-risk-around-the-globe.html

the largest companies command a significant share of the index, and the U.S. is no exception. In fact, markets worldwide—including Canada—show an even higher concentration of top 10 holdings than the U.S.

Some have compared the current tech rally to the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s. However, it’s worth remembering that today’s

Revenue per employee, 1991 & 2025, select S&P 500 Sectors²



large tech firms are very different from the internet darlings of that era. They continue to deliver substantial earnings growth, generate significant cash flow and are well diversified, having acquired more than 800 companies while expanding across multiple industries. In many ways, they function as modern conglomerates of advanced technology—growing organically but supported by multiple engines of innovation.

As Bloomberg suggested: “They go by the Magnificent Seven, but act more like the Magnificent Seventy. Viewed this way, as dozens of companies within each, concerns about their record weighting in the S&P 500 miss the point: the index may still be as diversified as ever.”³

What does this mean for equity markets going forward? Taken together, the investment, innovation potential and diversification of today’s mega-caps may help put into perspective their elevated concentration—and the investor enthusiasm they continue to attract.

Select magnificent seven companies’ acquisitions³

	IPO Year	# Acquisitions	Select Acquisitions
Amazon	1997	105	Whole Foods, MGM
Google	2004	270	YouTube, Wiz
Microsoft	1986	250	Activision, LinkedIn
Apple	1980	100	Siri, Beats
Meta	2012	95	Instagram, WhatsApp
Nvidia	1999	20	Mellanox, Bright Computing
Tesla	2010	6	Maxwell, Perbix

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/buybacks-take-backseat-ai-drives-record-us-capex-spending-2025-10-27/>

² <https://ritholtz.com/2025/08/the-magnificent-493/>

³ <https://blinks.bloomberg.com/news/stories/ToMDB8GQ1YPV>

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