

Melting pot vs. mosaic

[Law](#), [Common Law](#)



Canada prides itself at home and abroad as a country made up of a cultural mosaic rather than a cultural melting pot. The mosaic is based on our belief that Canada as a whole becomes stronger by having immigrants bring with them their cultural diversity for all Canadians to learn from. The cultural melting pot, as adopted in the United States, tells immigrants that no matter who they have been in the past, upon landing on American shores, they are Americans and are expected to adopt and follow the American way.

----- At the heart of Canadian society is our legal system. Our legal system is based on the English Common Law model, which in turn is based on a value system that places a strict adherence to following procedural rules over the substantive matter before the Court. The Canadian model is based on precedence which means that Courts are loath to do anything that has not been done by some Court previously. This in turn makes Canadian courts very slow to adapt or adopt new ideas or social mores. From a cultural perspective, the Canadian legal system takes the 'melting pot' approach, which is to say that culturally unique methods of dispute resolution are not accepted by our legal system. Instead, our legal system imposes its values on all who come before it. For example, in the family separation cases the courts apply English or French legal systems, yet there are varied cultures and people in Canada with different notions of what a family separation should mean or entail and that is not always reflected in court decisions. The courts are not always obliged to take cultural values in account when decisions are made. The question about whether the policies of two host countries, melting pot or mosaic, have any effect on rates of assimilation, uses Canada and the USA for comparison. Usually assimilation

of migrants takes a similar pattern through generations, although the rate or speed of change may vary. The incoming or migrating generation struggles to survive in the new environment (especially if there is a difference in language), and retains many of the values and behaviour patterns of their society of origin. The second generation, being socialized at school as much as at home, tends to rebel against the home culture, and often over identifies with the host culture. This may continue into the third generation, or may be the beginning of a new set of values, which tends to romanticise the culture of origin and adapt values and behaviour which reflect that romanticization more than the real culture of the original society. That variation in rate appears to be more a function of the nature of the host culture, brought by the migrants, than the policies of the host culture. This is the conclusion of Stanford Lyman who studied the issue. Be aware that "melting pot" does not mean all immigrants unilaterally convert to some monolithic mainstream American society. When you mix the colours yellow and red, you get neither yellow nor red, but orange. A melting pot policy expected that mainstream American society itself would also change as a result of the melting of so many different cultures. Also, a "mosaic" policy did not mean the total keeping of everything cultural from societies of origin. It meant also immigrants needed to learn how to live and operate in the mainstream culture, and that meant learning one of the mainstream languages, and also to live according to the laws and customs of the host country when those varied from the laws and customs of the societies of origin. What has this got to do with variations in family life? We cannot say that families are the same or different in the USA and Canada, because in

both places there is no monolithic or orthodox family. There is a range of family composition and dynamics in both the USA and Canada. The nuclear family as an ideal, with women working at home and men working outside the home, is promoted by religious conservatives (of various theologies) in both places. Variations, including same sex partners, single parents, common law marriage, and others, appear in both places. Variations tend to be in rates or degrees (and are minor) rather than qualitative variations.

----- A family of new immigrants tends to be similar to what they were in their societies of origin, with variations from that in later generations, or after some time has passed in first generations.

Canada is internationally recognized as a culturally diverse nation that emphasizes the concept of "The Mosaic". No other country in the world encompasses inhabitants from so many different backgrounds who exhibit strong loyalty towards Canada, while still preserving their cultural heritage. This is contrasted to the American ideal of the "Melting Pot", which attempts to shape all of their citizens into a set mold. Canada's philosophy is believed to be more effective and respectful than that which is possessed by our American neighbours. The following will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, and analyze the impact of the structures on each country's society. Canada is world renown for being one of the most tolerant, welcoming, and democratic countries in the world - a dynamic mosaic of multiculturalism where people live and work together in harmony. Over the past 150 years, more than 14 million people have immigrated to Canada, with 16% of the 30 million citizens being first-generation immigrants. The Government of Canada is committed to a policy of diversity

designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians, while striving to achieve equality in the economic, social, cultural and political aspects of Canada. In 1991, the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship conducted a survey, which revealed high levels of Canadian values and identity. Six out of ten interviewees portrayed a "deep emotional attachment to Canada" and 95% believe they can be proud of being a citizen and of their ancestry simultaneously. As a nation, Canada is continually becoming more diverse in its practices, which requires residents to expand their knowledge and appreciate other cultures. Diversity can benefit a society in numerous ways, as is evidenced across Canada. The many cultures existing in Canada have created a rich cultural experience.