



Ipsos Reid



Alberta Children and Youth Services: Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2010

Summary Report

Submitted by:
IPSOS REID
600 – 635 Eighth Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T2P 3M3

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KEY FINDINGS

Ipsos Reid conducted a total of 977 telephone interviews with Albertans aged 16 years and older between January 6th and February 16th, 2010. Data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/gender composition reflects that of the actual population of Albertans aged 16 years and older according to 2006 Canadian Census data.

Key research objectives included examining issues related to public understanding and awareness of bullying and family violence, assessing public support for government involvement in family violence and bullying prevention, collecting data for Ministry and regional performance measures and informing future directions for the public awareness and education campaigns in the prevention of family violence and bullying.

What follows is a summary of key research findings and recommendations.

BULLYING

Behaviours, Warning Signals and Prevention

The majority of Albertans recognize a wide range of bullying behaviours, are generally well-equipped to identify a young person being bullied and would take appropriate actions if they had a young person in their household being bullied.

- Verbal and physical behaviours among children and youth are the most recognized types of bullying; cyberbullying is not top-of-mind for most Albertans. When asked to think about the types of behaviours that characterize bullying among children and youth, seven-in-ten Albertans identify various forms of verbal abuse (72%) and physical behaviours (72%). Social bullying is mentioned by one-quarter (24%) of Albertans, while cyberbullying is cited by only one-in-ten (10%).
- On an aided basis, however, 70% of Albertans say they are aware of the issue of cyberbullying and more than half (56%) think that cyberbullying occurs 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community.
- Withdrawal is the most recognized warning signal of bullying, followed by avoidance of activities or school, and sadness; many other physical and psychological consequences are also identified.
- The majority of Albertans would take appropriate actions if they had a young person in their household who was being bullied by others. Five-in-ten (49%) respondents say they would talk to someone in charge of the environment where the bullying is taking place, 37% say they would talk to the parents of the person or people doing the bullying, 32% say they would try to talk to the young person being bullied to find out what is happening and 29% say they would call the police.

Attitudes Regarding Bullying and Bullying Prevention

Albertans place extremely high priority on the prevention of bullying at the community level and, moreover, are willing to accept personal responsibility.

- The vast majority of Albertans agree that they have a personal responsibility to reduce bullying in their community (88%) and that bullying prevention should be an urgent priority of their community (87%). Four-in-five (79%) also agree bullying prevention should be an urgent priority at the provincial government level.
- Though levels of agreement remain very high, 2010 does see **statistically significant decreases in the percentage of Albertans who think bullying prevention should be an urgent priority at both the community and provincial government levels** (each down 4 percentage points from 2008).

Though a minority, it is concerning that one-quarter of Albertans (27%) agree that bullying is just a normal part of growing up.

- Agreement is significantly higher among males and young Albertans aged 16 to 34 years – in fact, it increases to 46% among 16 to 34 year-old males.

Community Engagement and Capacity: Bullying

While awareness or engagement in community initiatives dealing with bullying is quite low overall (17%), the majority (61%) of Albertans feel that their community is able to help them or others with bullying issues.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Perceptions and Impacts

Albertans have a broad understanding of behaviours that constitute family violence, are generally aware of the impacts of family violence and recognize the negative impacts on children.

- There is near universal acknowledgement among Albertans that sexual abuse (99%), physical abuse (97%), emotional abuse (96%) and withholding personal care (96%) are types of family violence. Verbal abuse, elder abuse, failing to provide necessities and needs, and threatening or harassment via the Internet are also understood as family violence by nine-in-ten or more Albertans. The one action that does not fall under the umbrella of family violence for many Albertans is preventing an adult family member from knowing about or having access to family income or savings – 33% maintain they do not consider it to be family violence.
- **2010 sees a significant increase in the percentage of Albertans who consider elder abuse to be family violence.** Misuse, loss or damage to an elderly person's income, savings or belongings is considered to be family violence by 93% of Albertans (vs. 90% in 2008), while taking an elderly person's money, belongings or property without the person's knowledge and consent is considered to be family violence by 92% of Albertans (vs. 89% in 2008).
- Negative psychological effects – including low self esteem or confidence and isolation or withdrawal – are the most frequently identified impacts of family violence.

- There is widespread agreement (98%) that children who see or hear family violence in their home are affected negatively, with 64% of Albertans saying they *strongly* agree. Over eight-in-ten (85%) also see a connection between family violence and bullying.

Family Violence Prevalence

In 2010, 53% of Albertans believe family violence occurs 'a lot' (10%) or 'a fair bit' (43%) in their own community – a significant 6 percentage point increase from 2008. Another 40% think it happens 'not very often' while just 4% think it does not happen at all.

- One should note that in 2010, community was defined as 'the group of people who live in your local area,' whereas in 2008, no definition was provided – this change may have contributed to the decrease in perceptions of the extent of family violence.

Attitudes Regarding the Prevention of Family Violence

Albertans clearly recognize family violence prevention as an urgent priority at both the community and provincial government levels, and accept personal responsibility. Prevention of family violence is considered to be a more urgent priority for the provincial government than bullying prevention, though both are deemed urgent priorities by most Albertans.

- There is strong consensus that family violence prevention should be an urgent priority at the community (90% agree) and provincial government (87% agree) levels. Just under nine-in-ten (86%) also agree that they have a personal responsibility to reduce family violence in their community.
- Though agreement remains very high, 2010 sees **significant decreases** from 2008 in the percentage of Albertans who think prevention of family violence should be an **urgent priority for their community** (down 4 percentage points) and an **urgent priority for the provincial government** (down 3 percentage points), as well a decrease in the percentage who accept **personal responsibility** (down 4 percentage points).

Attitudes Regarding Family Violence: Gender Distinctions

A marked gender distinction exists regarding the ability for men and women to leave an abusive relationship.

- Four-in-ten (41%) Albertans agree that most women could leave if they wanted to while 58% disagree. When it comes to men, however, more than six-in-ten (64%) agree that most men could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to, while just 35% disagree. Though there are no statistically significant changes from 2008, directionally, the percentage of Albertans who think both women and men could leave an abusive relationship has declined.
- Although not as striking a difference, there is a higher level of comfort talking to a female friend about abuse than a male friend. Eighty-nine percent of Albertans agree they could talk to a female friend who is being abused by a family member while 79% agree they could talk to a male friend about their abuse.

Recommended Resources for Victims of Family Violence

The vast majority of Albertans are able to suggest information sources or support services for someone experiencing family violence, with police and community services the most frequently suggested channels.

- If someone experiencing family violence asked them where to get information or where to go for support one-half (48%) of Albertans would suggest the police while one-third (33%) would suggest community services. A wide variety of other resources are also suggested, though none by more than 15% of respondents.

Barriers to Helping in a Family Violence Situation

On an unaided basis, fear of retaliation, repercussions or getting hurt is the biggest barrier to not helping in a family violence situation, followed by not wanting to get involved.

- When asked to provide reasons why people do not always help when they are aware of a family violence situation, fear (46%) and not wanting to get involved (40%) are the most frequent responses, followed distantly by people seeing it as none of their business (15%) and not knowing how to help or are not aware of resources to help (14%).

When asked to assess five specific barriers, being unsure of exactly what action to take emerges as the strongest barrier – somewhat incongruent with top-of-mind responses.

- Of the five reasons tested, the two biggest barriers to helping in a family violence situation are being unsure of exactly what action to take (80% say this happens 'always' or 'often') and feeling that it is a family matter and not their concern (79% say this happens 'always' or 'often'). These are followed by people afraid of being harmed themselves (70% say this happens 'always' or 'often') and people being concerned that involving the authorities would make the situation worse (70% say this happens 'always' or 'often'). Believing the situation to be an isolated incident is a less prominent barrier (57% say this happens 'always' or 'often'). Still, virtually all Albertans think all five reasons are barriers to helping at least once in a while.

Community Engagement and Capacity: Family Violence

Similar to community initiatives dealing with bullying, awareness or engagement in community initiatives dealing with family violence is quite low (15%); however, the majority (67%) of Albertans feel that their community is able to help them or others with family violence issues.

RECALL OF INFORMATION ON BULLYING AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Media exposure to the issues of bullying prevention and family violence prevention is moderate and the majority of Albertans exposed feel the information is useful.

- Six-in-ten (57%) Albertans recall reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of bullying in the past 12 months – **this represents a significant 13 percentage point decrease** from 2008 (70%). Recall is highest among women aged 35 to 54 years (73%).
- Among Albertans who report reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of bullying in the past 12 months, 65% agree they are now better able to help in a bullying situation (unchanged from 2008).
- Past 12 months recall about the prevention of family violence stands at 54% – on par with bullying prevention recall and consistent with 2008 levels (58%). Recall of information about the prevention of family violence is also highest among women aged 35 to 54 years (71%).
- Among Albertans who report reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of family violence in the past 12 months, 73% agree they are now better able to help in a family violence situation – **up a significant 7 percentage points** from 2008 (66%).

Awareness of the family violence information line sees a significant increase.

- In 2010, three-in-ten (31%) Albertans recall hearing about a family violence information line – a significant 5 percentage point increase from 2008 (26%).

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM 2008

The percentage of Albertans who think bullying prevention and family violence prevention should be an urgent priority for their community and for the provincial government has decreased significantly from 2008 – it is important to note, however, that eight-in-ten or more Albertans continue to agree that these should be urgent priorities.

- The percentage of Albertans who agree that *bullying* prevention should be an urgent priority for the **provincial government** has decreased by 4 percentage points (79% 2010 vs. 83% 2008).
- The percentage of Albertans who agree that *bullying* prevention should be an urgent priority for their **community** has also decreased by 4 percentage points (87% 2010 vs. 91% 2008).
- The percentage of Albertans who agree that *family violence* prevention should be an urgent priority for the **provincial government** has decreased by 3 percentage points (87% 2010 vs. 90% 2008).
- The percentage of Albertans who agree that *family violence* prevention should be an urgent priority for their **community** has decreased by 4 percentage points (90% 2010 vs. 94% 2008).
- The percentage of Albertans who agree that they have a **personal responsibility** to reduce *family violence* in their community has also decreased by 4 percentage points (86% 2010 vs. 90% 2008).

The percentage of Albertans who consider elder abuse to be family violence has increased significantly.

- The percentage of Albertans who consider misuse, loss or damage to an elderly person's income, savings or belongings is up 3 percentage points (93% 2010 vs. 90% 2008).
- The percentage of Albertans who think taking an elderly person's money, belongings or property without the person's knowledge and full consent has also increased by 3 percentage points (92% 2010 vs. 89% 2008).

Significantly fewer Albertans think that family violence exists in their own community.

- Just over half (53%) of Albertans think family violence occurs 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their community – down 6 percentage points from 2008 (59%). One should note that in 2010, community was defined as 'the group of people who live in your local area,' whereas in 2008, no definition was provided. This change may have contributed to the decrease in perceptions of the extent of family violence at the community level.

Past 12 months recall of information about the prevention of bullying is down significantly.

- Six-in-ten (57%) Albertans recall reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of bullying in the past 12 months – a 13 percentage point decrease from 2008 (70%).

There is a significant increase in the perceived impact of information about the prevention of family violence.

- Among Albertans who report reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of family violence in the past 12 months, 73% agree they are now better able to help in a family violence situation – up 7 percentage points from 2008 (66%).

Awareness of the family violence information line sees a significant increase.

- In 2010, three-in-ten (31%) Albertans recall hearing about a family violence information line – a significant 5 percentage point increase from 2008 (26%).