



Ipsos Reid



Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2014

Alberta Human Services

Summary Report

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KEY FINDINGS

Ipsos Reid conducted a total of 900 telephone interviews with Albertans aged 16 years and older between January 8th and 21st, 2014. 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 2013 Population Estimates (based on Alberta Health Card data) provided by Alberta Human Services.

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

Bullying Behaviours

The majority of Albertans recognize a range of bullying behaviours among children and youth. While not yet top-of-mind, unaided awareness of cyberbullying continues to grow.

- When asked to think about the types of behaviours that characterize bullying among children and youth, more than six-in-ten (62%) Albertans identify various forms of verbal abuse while 60% mention various physical behaviours. It is noteworthy that 35% specify criminal physical acts as opposed to 38% who describe physical bullying.
- Nearly three-in-ten (29%) mention cyberbullying while 28% cite social bullying.
- Mentions of cyberbullying have been steadily increasing since 2008 and are up 10 percentage points this year as compared to 2012. Changes in awareness of verbal bullying (down 10 percentage points) and social bullying (up 6 percentage points) are also seen this year, although this may in part be due to a change in how these categories are defined.

Verbal bullying is the most recognized type of bullying among adults.

- Just over one-half (53%) of Albertans identify verbal bullying as a type of bullying behaviour among adults.
- Very few (11%) think of cyberbullying when talking about adult bullying.

Cyberbullying

While not yet top-of-mind, most Albertans are nonetheless aware of the issue of cyberbullying. Furthermore, the majority think cyberbullying exists in their community.

- On an aided basis, 86% of Albertans report being aware of the issue of cyberbullying. While aided awareness of cyberbullying has not significantly changed from 2012, it is up a significant 16 percentage points from 2010.
- Overall, 57% of Albertans think cyberbullying occurs 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community. These results are not significantly different from what was reported in 2012.

Attitudes Regarding Bullying and Bullying Prevention

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

- The vast majority (91%) of Albertans agree that they 'have a personal responsibility to reduce bullying in their community'.
- Further, 89% agree that 'bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for their community' and 84% agree that 'bullying prevention should be an urgent priority at the provincial government level'.
- These results are not significantly different from 2012.

Though a minority, it is concerning that nearly one-third (32%) of Albertans agree that 'bullying is just a normal part of growing up'.

- Agreement with this statement has increased a significant 6 percentage points from 2012.
- Agreement is significantly higher among males than females (38% vs. 27%) and those who are between 16 and 34 years of age (40%, compared to a low of 27% among 35 to 54 year olds).

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Perceptions and Impacts

Albertans have a broad understanding of behaviours that constitute family violence.

- There is strong consensus among Albertans that 'having sex with a married partner when the person does not want to have sex' (92%), 'threatening to hurt a pet' (91%), 'taking an elderly or disabled relative's money, belongings or property without the person's knowledge and full consent' (90%), and 'failing to provide food, shelter, or medical attention to a family member' (89%) are types of family violence.
- Slightly lower levels of agreement are seen with respect to the following four behaviours, although the vast majority of Albertans still consider these to be a form of family violence: 'preventing women in the family from working outside the home' (80%), 'following an intimate partner around or parking close by and watching where they live or work' (79%), 'threatening to commit suicide if their boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse leaves them' (78%), and 'dis-owning a family member for showing their sexuality in public' (75%).
- Comparatively fewer Albertans think 'preventing an adult family member from knowing about or having access to family income or savings' (59%) is a form of family violence.
- These results are generally consistent with what was reported in 2012 (note that tracking data is not available for statements that were assessed for the first time in 2014). The one exception to this is attitudes towards preventing an adult family member from knowing about or having access to family income or savings – the percentage of Albertans that consider this to be a form of family violence has dropped 11 percentage points this year.

Signs of Unhealthy and Healthy Relationships

Albertans recognize a range of factors that comprise both unhealthy and healthy relationships.

- When asked to describe signs of an unhealthy family relationship, nearly one-half (48%) of Albertans mention 'hurtful or abusive comments or violent actions'. Other types of behaviours are mentioned much less often, and include things such as 'changes in behaviour leading to relationship breakdown' (16%), 'try to restrict or control each other' (15%), 'children are neglected, humiliated, shamed, put down, made fun of, sexually abused, or exposed to family violence' (13%), and 'lack of respect' (11%).
- More than four-in-ten (41%) say 'open communication' is a quality of a healthy intimate partner relationship. Other qualities include 'support and encouragement' (30%), 'mutual respect' (27%), 'love' (25%), and 'trust' (22%).
- No tracking data is available for these questions as they were added to the survey in 2014. The information collected in 2014 will become the baseline for future surveys.

Barriers to Helping in a Family Violence Situation

The two biggest barriers to helping in a family violence situation are feeling it is a family matter/not their concern and being unsure of exactly what action to take.

- More than three-quarters of Albertans say 'people feel that it is a family matter and not their concern' (77%) and 'people are unsure of exactly what action to take' (76%) are 'always' or 'often' barriers to helping in a family violence situation.
- Less prominent barriers include 'people are afraid of being harmed themselves' (66%), 'people are concerned that involving the authorities would make the situation worse' (64%), and 'people believe the situation to be an isolated incident' (60%). Still, the majority of Albertans think all five reasons are barriers to helping at least once in a while.
- These results are not significantly different from what was reported in 2012.

Attitudes towards Family Violence

Albertans believe abusive behaviours that start young often continue into adulthood, and see family violence prevention as an urgent priority at both the community and provincial government levels.

- More than nine-in-ten (92%) Albertans agree that 'young people who are abusive to their partners while dating will carry this behaviour into their intimate partner relationships later in life'. No tracking data is available for this question as it is new to the survey in 2014.
- As with bullying prevention, there is strong consensus that family violence prevention should be an urgent priority at both the community (91% agree) and provincial government (89%) levels, consistent with 2012.

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

- Less than one-half (43%) of Albertans agree that 'most women could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to' (56% disagree).
- When it comes to men, however, more than six-in-ten (62%) Albertans agree that 'most men could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to' (37% disagree).
- Again, these findings are consistent with what was seen in 2012.

One-half of Albertans think family violence is a frequent occurrence in their own community.

- Overall, 51% of Albertans think family violence exists 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community.
- While this is statistically unchanged from 2012, it does represent a stop to the downward trend in numbers seen over the past few years.

RECALL OF INFORMATION ON BULLYING AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Nearly three-quarters of Albertans recall being exposed to bullying prevention information in the past 12 months.

- Overall, 72% of Albertans recall reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of bullying in the past 12 months. Among these respondents, 70% say they are now better able to help in a bullying situation. These results are not significantly different from what was reported in 2012.
- Past 12 months recall about the prevention of family violence stands at 59% – notably lower than bullying prevention recall, but consistent with 2012 findings. Among these respondents, 69% agree they are now better able to help in a family violence situation (on par with bullying and also consistent with 2012).

Less than one-half of Albertans recall hearing about a family violence info line or website in the past three months.

- In total, 34% of Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing about a family violence info line in the past three months.
- Recall of a family violence website is slightly lower (24%).
- These findings are not significantly different from what was reported in 2012.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM 2012

For the most part, this year's results are consistent with what was seen in 2012. Notable exceptions to this are summarized below.

- Unaided awareness of cyberbullying continues to grow, increasing a significant 10 percentage points this year to stand at 29% (up from 19% in 2012, 10% in 2010, and 7% in 2008).
- While aided awareness of cyberbullying this year (86%) is not significantly different from 2012 (83%), it is up a significant 16 percentage points from 2010 (70%).
- The belief that 'bullying is just a normal part of growing up' increased a significant 6 percentage points this year (32%) as compared to 2012 (26%).
- Significantly fewer Albertans this year recognize 'preventing an adult family member from knowing about or having access to family income or savings, even if they ask' as a form of family violence (59%, down 11 percentage points from 70% in 2012).
- While the percentage of Albertans that think family violence exists 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community has not significantly changed this year as compared to 2012, there has been a stop to the downward trend in numbers seen over the past few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

- Educate Albertans about the distinction between physical forms of bullying and physical criminal acts – many consider criminal acts to be types of bullying.
- Continue to educate Albertans about cyberbullying – what it is, and the negative impacts on youth. While Albertans are aware of cyberbullying, it is not top-of-mind. This is particularly important given that *Alberta's Strategy for Promoting Healthy Relationships and Preventing Bullying* identifies cyberbullying as an evolving and serious issue.
- Continue to emphasize messaging that bullying is not a normal part of growing up – bullying is wrong. Target this messaging at males and younger Albertans (between 16 and 34 years of age) in particular.
- Continue to educate the public about various forms of family violence – particularly financial abuse – as it is the least recognized form of family violence.
- Develop messaging aimed at helping Albertans identify signs of unhealthy family relationships.
- Develop messaging aimed at breaking down key barriers to helping in a family violence situation.
- Maintain or increase efforts to increase awareness of the Family Violence Info Line and website as well as the Bullying Help Line and website. Further, continue tracking awareness of these bullying prevention resources.
- Given that analysis and tracking by Child and Family Services Authorities regions is important, increase the survey sample size to the degree possible given budgetary constraints.