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Human Services: 2016 Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey

Summary Report

Submitted by:
Ipsos Public Affairs
700 6 Avenue SW, Suite 1950
Calgary, AB T2P 0T8

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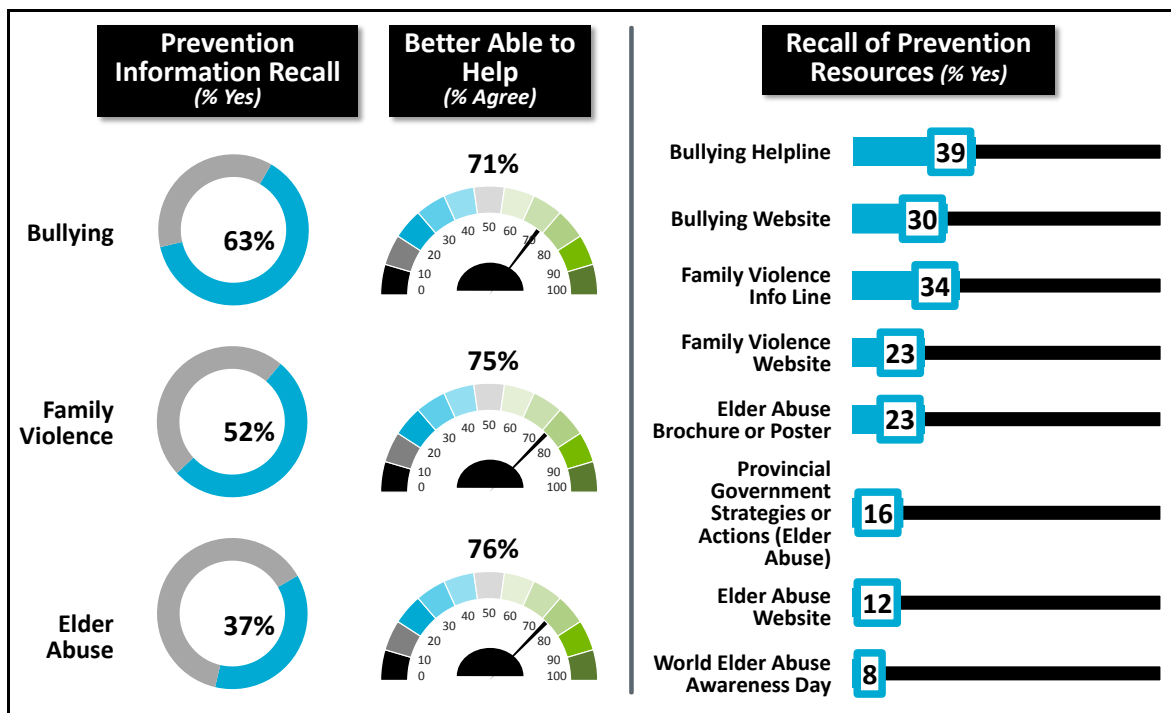
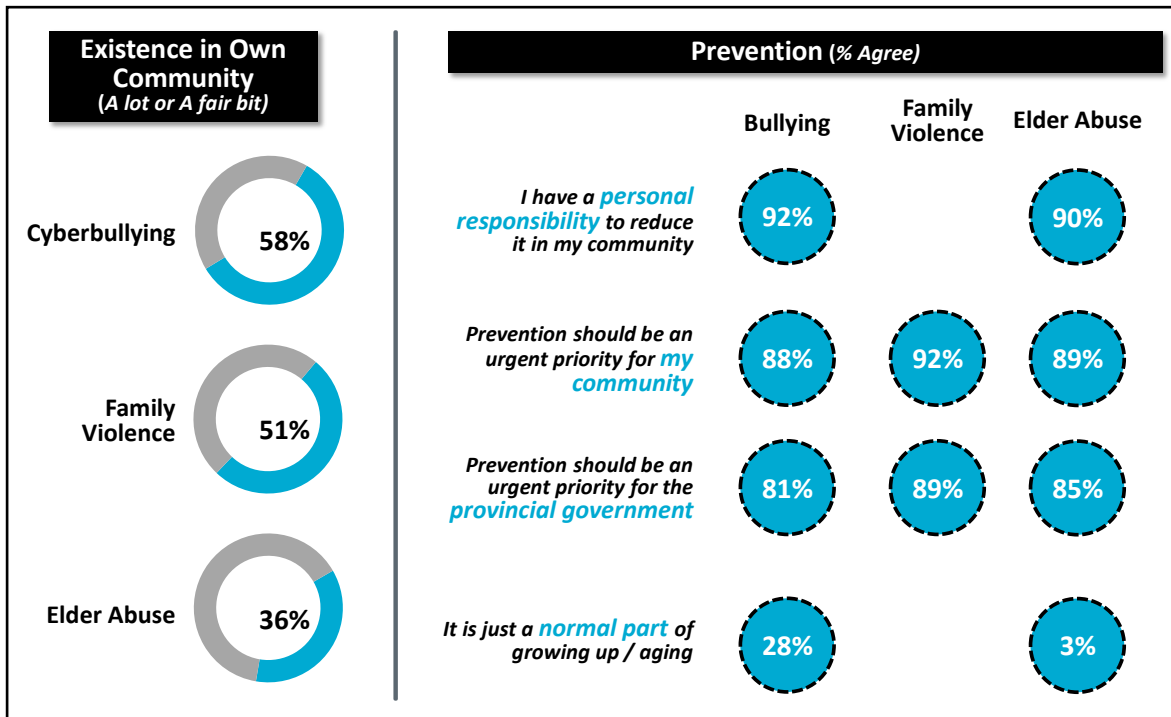
KEY FINDINGS

Ipsos conducted a total of 900 telephone interviews with Albertans aged 16 years and older between January 29th and February 11th, 2016. 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 2011 Federal Census data.

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

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

Highlights



BULLYING

Bullying Behaviours

The majority of Albertans recognize a range of bullying behaviours among children and youth.

- When asked to think about the types of behaviours that characterize bullying among children and youth, nearly two-thirds (65%) of Albertans identify various forms of verbal abuse while 62% mention various physical behaviours. It is noteworthy that 40% specify criminal physical acts as opposed to 38% who describe physical bullying.
- Nearly three-in-ten (29%) mention cyberbullying while 27% cite social bullying.
- Perceptions of bullying among children and youth this year have not significantly changed from 2014.

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

- Overall, 57% of Albertans identify verbal bullying as a type of bullying behaviour among adults, on par with 2014.
- Very few (14%) think of cyberbullying when talking about adult bullying.
- Mentions of harassment, death threats, hate crimes, or intimidation have increased significantly (up 4 percentage points) this year as compared to 2014.

Cyberbullying

While not yet top-of-mind, most Albertans are nonetheless aware of the issue of cyberbullying. Aided awareness has increased significantly from 2014. Furthermore, the majority continue to think cyberbullying exists in their community.

- On an aided basis, 92% of Albertans report being aware of the issue of cyberbullying, up a significant 6 percentage points from 2014.
- Overall, 58% of Albertans think cyberbullying occurs 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community, on par with 2014.

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 (92%) of Albertans agree that they 'have a personal responsibility to reduce bullying in their community'.
- Further, 88% agree that 'bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for their community' and 81% agree that 'bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government'.
- These results are not significantly different from 2014.

Though a minority, it is concerning that nearly three-in-ten (28%) Albertans agree that 'bullying is just a normal part of growing up'.

- Agreement has not significantly changed from 2014.
- Agreement is significantly higher among males (36% vs. 20% of females) and those living in North Central (46%, compared to 20% in Edmonton, 27% in Calgary, 29% in the South).

All (100%) parents agree that they 'encourage their children to be respectful of people who are different from themselves', up significantly from 2014.

- Agreement with this statement has increased a significant 2 percentage points from 2014.
- Further, 96% of parents agree that they 'talk to their children about bullying' (unchanged from 2014).

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Perceptions and Impacts

Albertans have a broad understanding of behaviours that constitute family violence. Attitudes towards dis-owning a family member for showing their sexuality in public as a form of family violence have dropped significantly this year.

- There is strong consensus among Albertans that 'having sex with a married partner when the person does not want to have sex' (94%), 'threatening to hurt a pet' (91%), 'taking a disabled relative's money, belongings or property without the person's knowledge and full consent' (89%), and 'failing to provide food, shelter, or medical attention to a family member' (88%) are types of family violence.
- Slightly lower levels of agreement are seen with respect to the following five behaviours, although the majority of Albertans still characterize these as family violence: 'threatening to commit suicide if their boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse leaves them' (80%), 'following an intimate partner around or parking close by and watching where they live or work' (78%), 'preventing women in the family from working outside the home' (77%), 'dis-owning a family member for showing their sexuality in public' (69%), and 'preventing an adult family member from knowing about or having access to family income of savings, even if they ask' (60%).
- These results are generally consistent with 2014. The one exception to this is regarding attitudes towards dis-owning a family member for showing their sexuality in public – the percentage of Albertans that consider this to be a form of family violence has dropped a significant 6 percentage points this year.

Signs of Unhealthy Family Relationships

Albertans recognize a range of factors that comprise unhealthy family relationships.

- When asked to describe signs of an unhealthy family relationship, six-in-ten (60%) Albertans mention 'hurtful or abusive comments or violent actions'.
- Other types of behaviours are mentioned much less often, and include things such as 'children are neglected, humiliated, shamed, put down, made fun of, sexually abused, or exposed to family violence' (16%), 'try to restrict or control each other' (13%), and 'feel afraid or unsafe' (10%).
- Results are not directly comparable to 2014 due to changes in the response list.

Barriers to Helping in a Family Violence Situation

Albertans point to a number of different reasons why someone might not help in a family violence situation. Concern over escalating the situation by involving the authorities has increased significantly since 2014.

- At least seven-in-ten Albertans say the following are 'always' or 'often' barriers to people helping in a family violence situation: 'people are unsure of exactly what action to take' (76%), 'people feel that it is a family matter and not their concern' (73%), 'people are afraid of being harmed themselves' (70%), and 'people are concerned that involving the authorities would make the situation worse' (70%).
- Concern over escalating the situation by involving the authorities has increased significantly since 2014 (up 6 percentage points).
- Relatively fewer (although still the majority) say 'people believe the situation to be an isolated incident' (58%) is 'always' or 'often' a barrier to helping in a family violence situation, on par with 2014.

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'.
- As with bullying prevention, there is strong consensus that family violence prevention should be an urgent priority at both the community (92% agree) and provincial government (89%) levels.
- Attitudes towards family violence have not significantly changed since 2014.

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

- Less than one-half (42%) of Albertans agree that 'most women could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to' (57% disagree).
- When it comes to men, however, more than six-in-ten (64%) Albertans agree that 'most men could leave an abusive relationship if they wanted to' (36% disagree).
- Again, these findings are consistent with 2014.

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.
- Perceptions of family violence in local communities are on par with 2014.

ELDER ABUSE

The section on Elder Abuse was added to the survey in 2016.

Elder Abuse Behaviours

Emotional, financial, and physical abuse are the most recognized types of elder abuse.

- When asked to think about the types of behaviours that characterize elder abuse, Albertans are most likely to mention emotional/psychological abuse (60%) and financial abuse (60%) as well as physical abuse (57%).
- A large minority (46%) also mention neglect.

Perceptions of Elder Abuse

The vast majority of Albertans consider all six behaviours assessed to constitute elder abuse.

- Virtually all (99%) Albertans consider 'a caregiver hitting or shoving a senior' to be a type of elder abuse.
- There is also strong consensus that the following behaviours are forms of elder abuse: 'a caregiver making unwanted sexually suggestive comments to their elderly client' (97%), 'a husband or wife isolating their senior spouse from friends or activities' (97%), 'a wife or husband humiliating or ridiculing their spouse who is a senior' (95%), 'a trusted person taking a senior's medication without him or her knowing' (94%), and 'a daughter or son taking household items from their elderly parent without his or her consent' (93%).

More than one-third of Albertans think elder abuse is a frequent occurrence in their community.

- Overall, 36% of Albertans think elder abuse exists 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' in their own community, markedly lower than what is reported for cyberbullying and family violence.

Elder Abuse Prevention

Albertans believe they have a personal responsibility to reduce elder abuse, and see elder abuse prevention as an urgent priority at both the community and provincial government levels.

- The vast majority (90%) of Albertans agree that they 'have a personal responsibility to reduce elder abuse in their community'.
- Further, 89% agree that 'elder abuse prevention should be an urgent priority for their community' and 85% agree that 'elder abuse prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government'.

Very few Albertans agree that 'elder abuse is just a normal part of aging'.

- Only 3% of Albertans agree with this statement; the vast majority (97%) disagrees that 'elder abuse is just a normal part of aging'.

Albertans are most likely to turn to the police for help in an elder abuse situation.

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Albertans say they might ask the police for help in an elder abuse situation.
- All other potential elder abuse resources are mentioned much less often, and include other family members (28%), social workers (15%), and doctors/medical professionals (12%).

The Internet is the most popular source of elder abuse information or services.

- When looking for information or services to help in an elder abuse situation, nearly half (45%) of Albertans say they would look on the Internet while another two-in-ten (19%) say they would conduct a Google/Internet search.
- In total, 20% say they would consult a government resource, including Alberta Seniors/Government of Alberta (10%), government website (4%), Health Link Alberta (4%), government (local, provincial, federal) (3%), and Alberta Health/Alberta Health Services (2%).

RECALL OF INFORMATION ON BULLYING, FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION

Bullying

More than six-in-ten Albertans recall being exposed to bullying prevention information in the past 12 months, down significantly from 2014.

- Overall, 63% of Albertans recall reading, seeing or hearing information about the prevention of bullying in the past 12 months.
- Recall of bullying prevention information has dropped a significant 9 percentage points from 2014.
- Among those able to recall bullying prevention information, 71% say they are now better able to help in a bullying situation, on par with 2014.

In the past three months, four-in-ten Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing about a bullying helpline. Three-in-ten recall a bullying website.

- Four-in-ten (39%) Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing about a bullying helpline in the past three months.
- Recall of a bullying website is slightly lower (30%).
- This question was not asked in previous years.

Family Violence

Just over one-half recall being exposed to information about the prevention of family violence in the past 12 months, down significantly from 2014.

- Past 12 months recall about the prevention of family violence information stands at 52% – notably lower than bullying prevention recall and also down significantly from 2014 (down 7 percentage points).
- Among those able to recall information about the prevention of family violence, 75% say they are now better able to help in a family violence situation (on par with bullying and also consistent with 2014).

In the past three months, one-third of Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing about a family violence info line, while one-quarter recall information about a family violence website.

- 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 (23%).
- These findings are not significantly different from 2014.

Elder Abuse

More than one-third of Albertans recall being exposed to information about elder abuse in the past 12 months.

- Overall, 37% of Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing information about the prevention of elder abuse in the past 12 months, notably lower than both bullying prevention and family violence prevention information.
- Among these respondents, 76% say they are now better able to help in an elder abuse situation.

In the past three months, one-quarter recall reading, seeing, or hearing about an elder abuse brochure or poster. Recall of other elder abuse prevention resources is lower.

- Overall, 23% of Albertans recall reading, seeing, or hearing about an elder abuse brochure or poster in the past three months.
- Albertans are less likely to recall information about provincial government strategies or actions (16%), an elder abuse website (12%), and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (8%).

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM 2014

For the most part, this year's results are consistent with what was seen in 2014. Notable exceptions to this are summarized below.

- Aided awareness of cyberbullying has grown over the past two years, increasing a significant 6 percentage points this year to stand at 92% (up from 86% in 2014).
- The percentage of parents that say they 'encourage their children to be respectful of people who are different from themselves' has increased a significant 2 percentage points this year (100%) as compared to 2014 (98%).
- Significantly fewer Albertans this year recognize 'dis-owning a family member for showing their sexuality in public' as a form of family violence (69%, down 6 percentage points from 75% in 2014).
- There has been a significant increase in the percentage of Albertans who say 'people are concerned that involving the authorities would make the situation worse' as a barrier to helping in a family violence situation (70%, up 6 percentage points from 64% in 2014).
- Recall of bullying prevention information is down a significant 9 percentage points this year (63%, compared to 72% in 2014).
- Similarly, there has also been a significant 7 percentage point decrease in recall of family violence prevention information (52%, down from 59% in 2014).

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 (especially older males) as well as those living in the North Central Region 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.
- Educate Albertans about elder abuse and the resources available to help in elder abuse situations.
- Explore why prevention information recall has dropped and, if necessary, modify or increase public awareness and education campaigns. Further, continue tracking recall of these campaigns.
- Maintain or increase efforts to increase awareness of prevention resources for bullying, family violence, and elder abuse.