



## NATIONAL PARENT POLL:

### Summary of Differences between the Alberta Sample and the National Sample

#### I. Introduction

*Invest in Kids Foundation* fielded a national survey to better understand the context in which young children are being raised, by discovering how Canadian parents behave towards their children in the early years and by exploring a variety of parental factors that may contribute to their behaviour.

**Sample Size:** The size of the Alberta sample (160 parents) was selected to allow for relative security in analyzing the main variables, but not to support subgroup analysis. For example, the survey can attest to what Alberta parents think, feel and do, but not what subgroups of Alberta parents (such as mothers vs. fathers or married mothers vs. single mothers) report.

**Magnitude of Difference:** With a National sample size of 1,643, even a very small portion of the variance (1%) would reach statistical significance. Statisticians have suggested that, with such a large sample, statistical significance is less important than the magnitude of the effect (Cohen, 1990). Therefore, in the present study we have chosen not to report statistical significance, and to focus instead on group differences that we deem sufficiently large to be meaningful. Specifically, we have chosen to draw attention only to differences of 5% or greater between the National Results and the Alberta Results.

**Use of Alberta Summary:** The summary does not provide the rationale and explanations for the survey framework, nor the findings that emerge. This Alberta Summary is meant to be used in conjunction with the National Report, which will be published in June 2002.

#### II. Key Findings

1. **None of the conclusions of the national sample are reversed in the Alberta subgroup.**  
The Alberta subgroup follows the same pattern of findings as the rest of the country. There are differences in degree, but not in kind.
2. **Parenting Behaviour:** Like the rest of the country, there is plenty of room for improvement in parenting behaviour in Alberta, but one notable exception is that more Alberta parents used physical punishment with their children at least occasionally. (National = 51%; Alberta = 61%)

### 3. Overall Knowledge about the Importance of the Environment and Child Development:

Similar to the rest of Canada, Alberta parents know little about how infants and young children grow and development. But Alberta parents know a bit more, but are still not at levels we would want. (National = 36% average number of correct responses across the 12 knowledge statements; Alberta = 40%; National = 10% answered at least 75% of statements correctly; Alberta = 16%; National = 33% answered at least 50% of statements correctly; Alberta = 43%).

- **Knowledge about the importance of the environment:** Alberta parents, although still low in knowledge about the importance of the environment, were more than 5% above the rest of Canada in two of the six knowledge statements, and 5% lower in one statement. (National = 48% average correct responses overall; Alberta = 51%)
  - "Babies are learning from the moment they are born. (TRUE)" (National = 84% certain; Alberta = 79%)
  - "If a baby does not receive appropriate stimulation, his/her brain will not develop as well as the brain of a baby who does receive these kinds of stimulation. (TRUE)" (National = 47%; Alberta = 56%)
  - "The more stimulation a baby receives by holding and talking to them, the more you spoil them. (FALSE)" (National = 43%; Alberta = 54%)
- **Knowledge about child development:** Alberta parents, although still very low in knowledge about children's capabilities, were noticeably higher than the National sample. Alberta parents were more than 5% above the rest of Canada in five of the six knowledge statements about child development. (National = 23% average correct responses overall; Alberta = 30%)
  - "A baby can't communicate much until he or she is able to speak at least a few words. (FALSE)" (National = 41%; Alberta = 48%)
  - "The average one-year-old can say one or two words, but understands many more words and phrases. (TRUE)" (National = 30%; Alberta = 40%)
  - "By age one, a baby's brain is fully developed. (FALSE)" (National = 26%; Alberta = 36%)
  - "Infants as young as six months consciously know how to manipulate parents. (FALSE)" (National = 18%; Alberta = 26%)
  - "Intellectual development is the most important part of a child's being ready for school. (FALSE)" (National = 8%; Alberta = 13%)

4. **Confidence in their Knowledge:** Comparable to the rest of the country, Alberta parents were not confident about their knowledge of how children grow socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. However, Alberta parents are particularly less confident in their knowledge about social and emotional development.
  - Fewer Alberta parents express high confidence in their knowledge about social and emotional development. (National levels of high confidence in social development = 13%; Alberta = 7%. National levels of high confidence in emotional development = 13%; Alberta = 3%).
  - Fewer Alberta parents select emotional development as an area of most knowledge (National = 18%; Alberta = 7%)
  
5. **Knowledge/Influence Dilemma:** Alberta parents were similar to the National sample in reporting low knowledge and high influence in social and emotional development, versus high knowledge and low influence in physical development. However, the gap was much wider for physical development: Physical development as the area in which they had the most knowledge (National = 55%; Alberta = 64%), as the area in which they had the most influence (National = 6%; Alberta = 3%).
  
6. **Confidence in their parenting:** Alberta parents showed a similar pattern to the National sample, except Alberta had far fewer parents who reported being confident before the birth of their first child (National = 44%; Alberta = 32%). Both Alberta parents and National sample parents dropped in the percentage of those with confidence immediately after the birth (National and Alberta = 15%). However, the sample of Canadian parents' current confidence climbed back up to 44%, while the Alberta parents current confidence was 39%.
  
7. **Emotional well-being:** Alberta parents were similar to the national sample in levels of well-being. However, the Alberta sample had notable differences in conflict between spouses, time stress related to children and pressure from others about their parenting.
  - a. **Conflict between spouses:** Fewer Alberta parents were satisfied with their marriage or relationship with their partners. (National = 82%; Alberta = 77%)
  - b. **Time stress related to children:** Fewer Alberta parents reported that they spent less time than they wanted with their children. (National = 58%; Alberta = 51%), but more reported they spent about the right amount of time with their children. (National = 39%; Alberta = 45%)

c. **Pressure from others about their parenting:** As with many Canadian parents, Alberta parents feel under pressure to change how they parent. However, it is mixed with somewhat different levels of support in childcare:

- Fewer Alberta parents reported pressure about parenting from their own mothers (National = 34%; Alberta = 27%)
- More Alberta parents reported pressure from ethnic and religious groups. (National = 4%; Alberta = 10%)
- Although a sizeable portion of Alberta parents reported they rely regularly on their children's grandparents for childcare, it is a noticeably smaller fraction than the rest of the country, but those that do reported they are very satisfied with the arrangement.
- Fewer Alberta parents reported they relied on alternate childcare arrangements on a regular basis. (National = 55%; Alberta = 47%)
- Of Alberta parents who reported they did use alternate childcare arrangements on a regular basis:
  - Fewer reported they used family daycare (National = 46%; Alberta = 28%)
  - Fewer reported they used the child's grandparents (National = 45%; Alberta = 33%)
  - Fewer reported they used a non-relative coming to the home (National = 19%; Alberta = 13)
  - More reported they used licensed daycare (National = 35%; Alberta = 40%)
  - More reported they used other family members (National = 15%; Alberta = 25%)
- Alberta parents were more satisfied with their own relatives care:
  - Grandparents (National = 95%; Alberta = 100%)
  - Other family members (National = 79%; Alberta = 100%)

8. **Information-seeking** - Alberta parents had the same top three sources of information and advice as the National sample, but in a slightly different order.

- Fewer Alberta parents turned to their child's doctor for advice about parenting (National = 61%; Alberta = 54%)
- More Alberta parents turned to their spouses. (National = 58%; Alberta = 67%)
- More Alberta parents turned to friends. (National = 58%; Alberta = 63%)
- More Alberta parents "hardly ever" read magazines about parenting. (National = 30%; Alberta = 38%)

### III. Characteristics of the National and Alberta Samples

	Percentage of sample		Sample Size	
	Canada	Alberta	Canada	Alberta
Total (all parents with children aged newborn to five)	100%	100%	1,645	160
<b><u>Household Type</u></b>				
Married mothers	43%	42%	698	67
Married fathers	43%	46%	698	74
Single mothers	15%	12%	247	20
Mothers (married and single)	57%		945	
<b><u>Age of Youngest Child</u></b>				
0 to 35 months	50%	51%	817	82
36 to 71 months	50%	49%	826	78
<b><u>Number of Children</u></b>				
One	35%	30%	582	48
Two or more	65%	70%	1,061	112
<b><u>First Time Parents</u></b>				
Under 25 years	8%		128	
25 to 34 years	21%		339	
35+ years	7%		115	
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Under \$30,000	32%	28%	530	45
\$60,000 +	32%	34%	524	54
<b><u>Education</u></b>				
High school or less	35%	35%	569	56
College degree	37%	36%	601	57
<b><u>Mother's Employment Status</u></b>				
Part-Time	9%		147	
Full-Time	18%		295	
Stay-at-home	25%		414	
<b><u>Province</u></b>				
Atlantic	8%		138	
Quebec	25%		418	
Ontario	36%		582	
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	9%		142	
Alberta	10%		160	
British Columbia	12%		203	