



NATIONAL SURVEY OF PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: Summary of Differences between the British Columbia 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 British Columbia sample (203 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 British Columbia parents think, feel and do, but not what subgroups of British Columbia 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 British Columbia results.

Use of British Columbia Summary: The summary does not provide the rationale and explanations for the survey framework, nor the findings that emerge. This British Columbia Summary is meant to be used in conjunction with the national report, *The National Survey of Parents of Young Children*, which was published in January 2003.

II. Key Findings

1. **None of the conclusions of the national sample are reversed in the British Columbia subgroup.** The British Columbia subgroup follows the same pattern of findings as the rest of the country. There are differences in degree, but not in kind.

Parenting Behaviour: Like the rest of the country, there is plenty of room for improvement in parenting behaviour in British Columbia. Their rates of effective parenting, and angry/punitive parenting are in the same ranges as the rest of the country. Similarly, there were no differences between British Columbia sample of parents and the National sample on the use of physical punishment. About 50% of both sets of parents never use it, and about 50% use it at least rarely.

However, the good news is that more British Columbia parents reported frequent positive/warm interactions with their young children (National = 64%; B.C. = 71%).

2. **Importance of the first five years and the influence of parents:** Similar to the rest of Canada, British Columbia parents strongly agree that the early years are important, and the influence of parents is absolutely critical. Interestingly, more British Columbia parents felt that the **father's** influence was critical. (73% of the National sample strongly agreed, while 78% of the British Columbia sample strongly agreed.)
3. **Overall Knowledge about Child Development based on the Knowledge Quiz:** Similar to the rest of Canada, British Columbia parents know little about how infants and young children grow and development. (National = 36% average number of correct responses across the 12 knowledge statements; B.C. = 37%; National = 10% answered at least 75% of statements correctly; B.C. = 12%; National = 33% answered at least 50% of statements correctly; B.C. = 35%).
 - **Knowledge about the importance of the environment:** British Columbia parents were as low as the rest of Canada in knowledge about the importance of the environment (National = correct responses averaged 48%; B.C. = 49%). The differences of note on specific questions:
 - "Parents' emotional closeness with their baby can strongly influence that child's intellectual development." (TRUE)" (National = 52% certain; B.C. = 47%)
 - "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%; B.C. = 52%)
 - **Knowledge about child development:** British Columbia parents were not noticeably higher than the rest of Canada in any of the six knowledge statements about child development. (National = 23% average correct responses overall; B.C. = 25%)
4. **Confidence in their Knowledge:** Compared to the rest of the country, British Columbia parents were more confident about their knowledge of how children grow socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.
 - More British Columbia parents express high confidence in their knowledge about physical development (National = 29%; B.C. = 35%); social development (National = 13%; B.C. = 23%); and emotional development (National = 13%; B.C. = 18%)
 - Fewer British Columbia parents express low confidence in their knowledge about social development (National = 25%; B.C. = 19%); emotional development (National = 28%; B.C. = 21%); and intellectual development (National = 23%; B.C. = 17%)
5. **Knowledge/Influence Dilemma:** British Columbia 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, fewer British Columbia parents reported that physical health was the area where they had the most knowledge (National = 55%; B.C. = 48%).

6. **Confidence in their parenting:** British Columbia parents showed an interesting variation on the high-low-high pattern of confidence pre-natally, postnatally and currently. British Columbia had notably fewer parents who reported being confident before the birth of their first child (National = 44%; B.C. = 36%), but comparatively more parents who reported being confident after their first baby was born (National = 15%; B.C. = 25%). However, the sample of Canadian parents' current confidence climbed back up to 44%, similar to the British Columbia parents current confidence of 45%.
7. **Emotional well-being:** British Columbia parents were similar to the national sample in levels of well-being. However, the British Columbia sample had notable differences in depression, disagreement about parenting, time stress and pressure from others about their parenting.
- a. **Depression:** Notably more British Columbia parents reported elevated depressive symptoms at the time of the survey (34%), compared to the National sample (27%).
 - b. **Disagreement about parenting:** Fewer British Columbia parents feel pressure from their spouse/partner to change how they parent their children (National = 40% felt pressure; B.C. = 35%)
 - c. **Time stress related to children:** Fewer British Columbia parents reported that they feel stress generally or specifically as related to their children.
 - Fewer British Columbia parents reported feeling constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than they can handle. (National = 48% strongly agreed; B.C. = 43%)
 - Fewer British Columbia parents reported spending less time than they wanted with their children. (National = 58%; B.C. = 50%)
 - Fewer British Columbia parents reported they were unable to spend as much quality time with their children as they would like to. (National = 68%; B.C. = 61%)
 - d. **Pressure from others about their parenting:** As with many Canadian parents, British Columbia parents feel under pressure to change how they parent. However, it is mixed with somewhat different levels of support in childcare:
 - More British Columbia parents reported pressure to change how they parent from their own mothers (National = 34%; B.C. = 39%) and from their neighbours (National = 7%; B.C. = 12%).
 - However, fewer parents reported pressure to change how they parent from their in-laws. (National = 32%; B.C. = 25%), and from their child's doctor/pediatrician (National = 11%; B.C. = 6%).

- e. **Alternate Childcare:** Fewer British Columbia parents reported they relied on alternate childcare arrangements on a regular basis. (National = 55%; B.C. = 50%)
- Of British Columbia parents who reported they did use alternate childcare arrangements on a regular basis:
 - Fewer reported they used family daycare (National = 46%; B.C. = 32%)
 - Fewer reported they used the child's grandparents (National = 45%; B.C. = 35%)
 - Fewer reported they used licensed daycare centre (National = 35%; B.C. = 30%)
 - Fewer reported they used a non-relative coming to the home (National = 19%; B.C. = 8%)
 - More reported they used other family members (National = 15%; B.C. = 23%)
 - Of the 50% of British Columbia who reported using alternate childcare on a regular basis, British Columbia parents were more satisfied with the following arrangements:
 - Family home daycare: (National = 89% very satisfied; B.C. = 98%)
 - Licensed daycare centre: (National = 89% very satisfied; B.C. = 99%)
 - JK/SK: (National = 87% very satisfied; B.C. = 100%)
 - Other family members (National = 79%; B.C. = 92%)

British Columbia parents were equally satisfied with care provided by the child's grandparents (National = 95%; B.C. = 96%). However, British Columbia parents were much less satisfied with care provided by non-relatives coming to the home (National = 77%; B.C. = 68%)

8. Information-seeking - .

- The top source of information and advice for British Columbia parents are "friends." (National = 58%; B.C. = 67%). NOTE: this is one of the largest differences found between B.C. parents and parents in the national sample.
- The second top source was books (National = 56%; B.C. = 64%). However, of the 64% of parents who reported using books, only 32% reported turning to them "Very" or "Fairly regularly." The remaining two-thirds only turn to books "Once in a while" or "Hardly Ever."
- British Columbia parents turned to their child's doctor for advice about parenting at the same rate as the National parents (National = 61%; B.C. = 60%); likewise for turning to their spouse/partners (National = 58%; B.C. = 60%).
- Fewer British Columbia parents turn to their "own mother" for information and advice (National = 57%; B.C. = 50%).

9. Support for parenting: in British Columbia, after the birth of their first child:

- Fewer parents felt they received enough emotional support (National = 55%; B.C. = 50%).
- However, fewer parents felt they received enough practical support (National = 55%; B.C. = 49%).

10. Perceived National Support: similar to the National sample, only a minority of parents strongly agreed with the statement, "I think Canada values its young children." (National = 42%; B.C. = 39%).