

THE LUNAR JIM PARENT STUDY

Canadian Parents On Kids & Science



Ipsos Reid



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Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos Reid/Alliance Atlantis survey of parents of children 2-5 years of age finds that four in ten (39%) parents hope their child works in Sciences when he/she grows up and 22% believe their child has science-related aspirations as well.

Moreover, many parents cite science-related books and TV programs as their child's favourites: Two-thirds of kids like books/TV about animals or characters/adventures best (66% each); half (48%) choose trains, planes, cars and other forms of transportation; four in ten (40%) prefer dinosaurs; and 20% report that their children are most interested in books and shows about space, astronauts and rockets.

Thinking back to when they were young, 77% of parents say they performed well in science class and 59% were enthusiastic about it. But, that's not to say they'll have the answers to all of their children's scientific queries; in fact, only 3% of parents say they know the answer to everything. Others will be asked questions that they can't easily answer and when asked "Why?" to something they don't know, two-thirds (64%) of parents will look for the answer, along with their kids, using toys, books, and/or TV.

Finally, survey results indicate that parents think the best way to encourage kids to be interested in science is by encouraging them to be curious, ask questions and find solutions (35%) or by encouraging them to play and explore their environments both indoors and outside (33%).



These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid/Alliance Atlantis online survey conducted from February 23 to February 26, 2007. For this study, a representative randomly selected sample of 1096 adult Canadian parents with children between the ages of 2-5 was surveyed. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had this entire population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted according to Census data.

Career Aspirations & Children's Interests, Sciences Top The List

The most popular career aspiration cited by Canadians parents for their child 2-5 is in the Sciences (39%). Specifically, 22% would like to see their child in medicine, 7% as an engineer, 5% as a veterinarian, 3% as a scientist, and 2% as an astronaut. Others would prefer their child be a business professional (8%), a performing artist (6%), a builder/architect (4%), a teacher (4%), or a lawyer (4%). Another 22% simply say that they want their children to be what they choose for themselves. All other professions were cited by 3% of parents or less.

- Parents with boys between the ages of 2 and 5 were more likely to want their child to be an engineer than parents with female children (12% vs. 3%). The opposite was true in the case of veterinary medicine: 8% of parents with a 2-5 year old daughter indicate that they want her to be a veterinarian compared to only 2% of parents with boys.

When it comes to their child's own ambitions, Science still rules; 22% of parents believe their child 2-5 would like to work in a science-related field when he/she grows up. One in ten (9%) think their child wants to be a medical professional, 5% say a veterinarian, 3% an engineer, 2% an astronaut, and 2% a scientist. Coming in second is the performing arts (13%)



and fire-fighting (11%). Other aspirations include a police officer (6%), a teacher (6%), and a builder/architect (5%). All other professions were cited by 3% of parents or less.

- Parents of girls are more likely than those with boys to say that their child wants to be a medical professional (14% vs. 6%) or a veterinarian (9% vs. 2%), while those with boys are more likely to say an engineer (4% vs. 1%) or a scientist (3% vs. 1%).

Two-thirds of parents of children aged 2-5 years old rate books and television programs to do with characters and their adventures (66%) and animals (66%) as their children's favourites; half (48%) report that their children are most fascinated by books and TV shows about trains, planes, cars and other forms of transportation; four in ten cite books and television about dinosaurs (40%) or fairies and princesses (39%); one-third (34%) say their kids prefer books or TV programs about superheroes; and 20% report that their children are most interested in books and shows about space, astronauts and rockets.

- Parents with boys aged 2-5 were more likely than parents with daughters to report that their child is most interested in books and TV shows about trains, planes, cars and other forms of transportation (73% vs. 20%); dinosaurs (56% vs. 21%); superheroes (51% vs. 14%); and space astronauts and rockets (29% vs. 8%). As one might expect, girls are more interested than boys in books/TV programs about fairies and princesses (76% vs. 8%).

Parents Say They Did Well In Science Class & Were Enthusiastic About The Subject

Most Canadian parents of children 2-5 years of age think that they performed well in science class (77%) and a majority says they were enthusiastic about the subject (59%). Specifically, 48% say they performed well and were enthusiastic; 29% performed well but were not enthusiastic, 12% performed poorly and were not enthusiastic, and 11% performed poorly but were enthusiastic about science.

- Parents 30 and older are most likely to have performed well (79% vs. 70% of younger parents). Feelings of enthusiasm towards science are stable across the different age groups.
- Dads are more likely than moms to report performing well in science class (82% vs. 73%) and being enthusiastic about the subject (67% vs. 51%).

But What Do You Say When Your Child Asks “Why” To Something You Don’t Know?

When asked "Why?" to a question they don't know the answer to, two-thirds of Canadian parents (64%) answer the infamous question by telling their 2-5 year old that they don't know the answer and then they try to find it together with their children using toys, books, and/or TV. Others simply tell their children that they don't know (14%); tell them that they don't know the answer and then try to find out on their own (12%); or make up an answer (4%).

Another 3% say they never encounter this problem because they know the answer to everything!

- Moms are more likely than Dads to try to figure out the answer together with their child (69% vs. 59%). Dads are more likely to say they know everything (4% vs. 1%)!
- Parents from Saskatchewan/Manitoba are most likely to answer that they don't know, and leave it at that (29%).

Parents' Recommendations For Encouraging Their Children To Be Interested In Science

The most popular way parents recommend encouraging children 2-5 to be interested in science is by encouraging them to be curious, ask questions and find solutions (35%) or by encouraging them to play and explore their environments both indoors and outside (33%). This compares to 11% of parents who think that the best way to do so is by going to museums; 8% of parents who cite reading age-appropriate stories or magazines with scientific themes; 6% who point to spending time playing with science sets and games; and 5% of parents who report watching TV programs on scientific topics.

- Quebec parents are most likely to think that the best way to encourage children 2-5 years of age to be interested in science is by encouraging them to be curious, ask questions and find solutions (45%).



- Moms are more likely than Dads to recommend encouraging kids to pay and explore (39% vs. 27%), while Dads are more likely than Moms to recommend reading age-appropriate stories (12% vs. 5%).

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