

# Canadian Parents Concerned About Safety in Backyard Pools

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**Ipsos Reid**

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## Canadian Parents Concerned About Safety in Backyard Pools

*Seven in ten Canadian parents (70%) say they would be concerned about their children playing in a backyard that has a pool – even if their children know how to swim*

**Toronto, ON** – Water safety in backyard swimming pools is a concern for Canadian parents, even when their children are able to swim. Seven in ten Canadian parents (70%) would be concerned (22% very/48% somewhat) with their children playing in a backyard that has a pool, even if their children know how to swim. Even if the child was at least ten years old, eight in ten Canadian parents (82%) agree they would be concerned (38% very/44% somewhat) with them playing in a backyard that has a pool. Having an adult present made parents less concerned, but even then half of Canadian parents (48%) agree (18% strongly/30% somewhat) that they would be concerned.

When asked what age ‘a child should be allowed to be in or around a pool unsupervised’, four in ten (40%) say that it should be ‘when they know how to swim’. Those who give specific answers are most likely to say by age 12 (17%), by age 10 (8%), or by age 14 (8%).

A third of Canadians (36%) have access to a backyard pool including 12% who have their own, and 26% who use backyard pools at the homes of their friends and neighbours.

To make the pool area safer, Canadians who have a pool are most likely to ‘not allow children under 10 to be alone in the pool area’ (51%) or to ‘install 4-sided fencing’ (36%) and a ‘self-closing gate on the fence in the pool area’ (33%). Other options used include ‘3-sided

fencing, using the house for the 4<sup>th</sup> side' (28%), 'Childproof safety locks on doors beyond reach of a child leading to the pool area' (27%), a 'Pool covered with an impenetrable cover when not in use' (14%) and a 'Pool alarm for when something has entered the pool during non supervised time' (4%).

When asked about safety at **their friends and neighbours pool**, the most commonly employed safety measures for children are that they 'do not allow children under 10 to be alone in the pool area' (48%), that they have a 'self-closing gate on the fence in the pool area' (42%), use '3-sided fencing, using the house for the 4<sup>th</sup> side' (40%) or '4-sided fencing the pool' (38%). Other options that friends and neighbours used include, 'Childproof safety locks on doors beyond reach of a child leading to the pool area' (32%), a 'Pool covered with an impenetrable cover when not in use' (22%) and a 'Pool alarm for when something has entered the pool during non supervised time' (7%).

Attitudes are more relaxed when it comes to Canadians boating habits. Less than half (47%) of Canadians who use boats say they and other adult passengers always wear a lifejacket when out boating. Although a further quarter (23%) say adults wear lifejackets most of the time, one in twelve (8%) never wear lifejackets and one in five (22%) say this only happens sometimes. British Columbians boaters are most relaxed about lifejacket use. Only six in ten (59%) say that adults would be wearing lifejackets most of the time or always, compared to eight in ten (81%) of their neighbours in Alberta. A large number of Canadians spend time in boats, including one in nine who actually own a boat themselves (11%), 16% who 'don't own a boat but do go boating once a year or more', and 17% who 'don't own a but do go boating less than once a year'. Six in ten (57%) don't go boating or own a boat.

A quarter of those who don't always wear a lifejacket (24%) do so because they know how to swim, while one in five (20%) don't wear lifejackets because they are uncomfortable to wear.

Other reasons for not wearing a lifejacket are that people 'always keep them in the boat' (14%), that they have no reason to wear a lifejacket (13%), because of the size of the boat (11%) or out of bad habits (10%). Less common reasons for not wearing a lifejacket all the time are when the 'boat is moving slow' (5%), and when the boat is 'docked, anchored or not moving' (4%), or in shallow water (3%). One in twenty say they 'do not think it will happen to us' (5%), while other mentions include 'not enough lifejackets' (3%), 'too much hassle to wear them' (3%), 'not far enough from the shore' (3%), 'feel safe' (3%), 'depends on the condition' (3%) or that people 'forget or don't think about it' (2%). Finally - one in fifty (2%) say they don't always wear a lifejacket because they would just prefer to get some sun or a tan.

When it comes to children and lifejackets - Canadian boaters are more cautious. Almost all (99%) parents who boat say that when they go out boating, their children are wearing a lifejacket always (93%) or most of the time (6%). Only one in a hundred (1%) say that children would only be wearing a lifejacket 'sometimes', and none say that children would never wear a lifejacket (0%).

Amongst those who do not own a boat or go boating, eight in ten (82%) think that the statement 'everyone on board must wear a lifejacket' best reflects boating regulations when it comes to wearing a lifejacket. One in six (17%) think that the statement 'there should be one lifejacket for each person on board the boat' best reflects boating regulations, while only one in a hundred (1%) believes that the statement 'at least one person in the boat has to know how to swim' best reflects boating regulations.

Three quarters of Canadians (73%) know how to swim, even though less than half (44%) have had formal lessons. Quebecers (77%), Ontarians (73%) and British Columbians (76%) are



more likely to know how to swim compared to Albertans (66%), those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (65%) and Atlantic Canadians (64%).

When asked about how to determine competency at swimming, four in ten (37%) think that a person who can swim 50 metres should be considered a good swimmer. One in six (17%) believe that a swimmer who can reach 25 metres can be considered a good swimmer, whilst one in twenty (4%) think that even someone who can swim 10 metres can be considered a good swimmer.

One in five (18%) Canadians who swim believe they can swim for more than 30 minutes continuously, without touching the bottom or using a flotation device in a lake, large river or the ocean. Four in ten (44%) think they can swim up to 30 minutes in these circumstances, and the remaining four in ten (37%) don't know.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between December 12 to 19, 2011, on behalf of the Red Cross of Canada. For this survey, a sample of 1,997 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and political composition to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

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