

Canadian Attitudes toward Science Education – Survey Results

A recent national Angus Reid Vision Critical survey, commissioned by Let's Talk Science and Amgen Canada Inc, asked 1,516 Canadian adults who have children between the ages of seven and 18 their belief in the importance of post-secondary science education, scientific study as well as the role of science in their everyday lives. The survey revealed statistics about Canadian's perspective on science literacy.

A companion Angus Reid omnibus survey asked more than 1,500 Canadian children between the ages of seven to 18 their experience and perceptions of science today, and their intentions for future study.

- **Survey says...** The vast majority of parents polled (84 per cent) believe that science education is highly important for Canada's youth. This is especially true for parents with a university degree or higher (91 per cent). Eighty-four per cent of respondents also agree that strong science knowledge is a key for success in any career.
- **Science is the future!** Thanks to critical factors like the environment, the job sector and aging demographics for Canadians, almost half of respondents think science education is more important today than it was for previous generations. In fact, more than six-in-ten (62 per cent) believe jobs and careers in the next 15 years will require more science training and education than they do today.
- **Note to parents: "raise your voice".** The survey results made it clear that parents recognize the importance of science education for their children, yet there is a glaring disconnect between attitudes and behaviours – only 23 per cent of parents responded that they take the time to discuss their children's education goals.
- **What about teachers?** While parents often stay mum when it comes to their children's future, it turns out that students want their parents to talk to them about education and careers. Sixty-three per cent of students polled said their parents have had the greatest influence on their education to date. Teachers stand at a distant second place, with only 26 per cent of students listing their teacher as a top influencer.
- **Teach your children well ...** While the majority parents may not talk to their children about their educational goals, most of them try to interest their kids in science. The two most cited ways of doing so are watching science-focused TV shows (55 per cent) and taking children to local science centres or zoos (52 per cent).

- **I get by with a little help from my...parents...** More than six-in-ten students surveyed regularly ask their parents for help with science-related homework or school projects. Only ten per cent of parents polled say they don't feel comfortable at all helping their children with science-related homework – that's ninety per cent of parents who can save money on a tutor.
- **Dear Google: what makes the sky blue?** Forty-three per cent of parents surveyed help their children with science homework at least once a week. A large majority of these parents use the Internet (88 per cent) as a resource.
- **A high number of parents underestimate the use of science in day-to-day activities.** Fewer than half of parents surveyed think that a basic understanding of science is needed for daily activities such as cooking dinner (38 per cent), listening to the weather forecast (32 per cent), or driving a car (29 per cent). However, 84 per cent say a basic understanding of math and science is useful to them in their own career or job.
- **Many Canadians hold archaic views about science in the workplace.** Chemist (97 per cent), lab technician (96 per cent), doctor (94 per cent), and engineer (90 per cent) top the list of careers that respondents think require science. Less than three-in-ten respondents think policy makers (29 per cent), journalists (21 per cent), lawyers (20 per cent), marketers (19 per cent), or writers (17 per cent) need a science background.

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