

# Massage Therapy in Alberta

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Alberta Public Opinion Study – October 2017

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## Methodology

- **Population** The province of Alberta has a total population of 4,286,134 residents (Alberta Economic Dashboard) approximately 78% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of 3,343,200.
- **Sample** Data were collected by Lethbridge College students in the fall of 2017. Students interviewed 1,481 adult Alberta residents by telephone from September 30 to October 5, 2017 under the supervision of principal investigator Dr. Faron Ellis, Research Chair, Citizen Society Research Lab. Landline telephone numbers were selected from a sample drawn from InfoGroup directories and supplemented with a selection of mobile numbers from CSRL lists. We sincerely thank all participants who took time out of their day to respond to our inquiries. Further results from this study and results from past studies can be accessed by visiting the CSRL web pages at: [www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl](http://www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl)
- **Representativeness** Analysis of the demographic data indicates that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the adult population within the province of Alberta. The sample has been statistically weighted where necessary to even better reflect the demographic distribution of the population (gender and age).
- **Confidence** The weighted sample yields a margin of error  $\pm 2.55$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area  $\pm 5.1$  percentage points, North  $\pm 5.2$  percentage points, South  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points 19 times out of 20).
- **IB Commons Call Centre** Students conducted interviews using the facilities of the Lethbridge College IB Commons Call Centre. We thank members of Lethbridge College's ITS and AV teams for their support in helping maintain the IB Commons Call Center.
- **Sponsorship** These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Alberta residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at Lethbridge College. These questions were derived from student and faculty interest in the topics.

## Executive Summary: Massage Therapy in Alberta

As part of our ongoing analysis of public opinion in Alberta, the Citizen Society Research Lab at Lethbridge College incorporates items of community interest into our omnibus surveys of the adult Alberta population. In the fall of 2017 we included a series of questions of interest to our massage therapy students and faculty. Below is a brief, initial analysis of the results.

### Relaxation Massage

- Nearly three of ten adult Albertans (28.7%) received relaxation massage services in the past twelve months (over 900,000 Albertans). No significant regional differences are measured but several important demographic differences emerge with women, upper-income and middle-aged Albertans most likely to have received relaxation massage services.

### Therapeutic Massage

- More than one-third of Albertans (34.5%) received therapeutic massage services in the past twelve months (over one-million Albertans.) No significant regional variations are measured.
- Women, upper-income residents, and the middle-aged were considerably more likely to have received therapeutic massage services in the past twelve months than were men, lower-income residents, seniors or the youth.

### Awareness of Unregulated Professional Status of Massage Therapy Services in Alberta

- A substantial majority of Albertans (61.0%) were not aware of the unregulated professional status of the Alberta massage therapy industry.

### Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists

- The vast majority of Albertans (90.8%) support the establishment of an Alberta college of massage therapists.

## Relaxation Massage

### Received relaxation massage services in past 12 months

Nearly three of every ten adult Albertans (28.7%) received relaxation massage services in the past twelve months (over 900,000 Albertans). No significant differences are measured in the various regions of the province.

- Women (32.5%) were more likely than men (24.9%) to have received relaxation massage services in the past year.
- Upper income residents (39.9%) were more likely than middle (30.4%) and lower (21.4%) income residents to receive relaxation massage services in the past year. Seniors (18.2%) and those with the least amount of formal education (21.7%) were among the least likely to receive relaxation massage services.

Region of Alberta	North		Edmonton		Calgary		South		Alberta	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Yes	25.3	<b>25.9</b>	21.7	<b>28.7</b>	24.5	<b>29.0</b>	24.6	<b>30.6</b>	24.5	<b>28.7</b>
No	74.7	<b>74.1</b>	78.3	<b>71.3</b>	75.5	<b>71.0</b>	75.4	<b>69.4</b>	75.5	<b>71.3</b>

Gender* (2017)	Male	Female
Yes	24.9	32.5
No	75.1	67.5

Household Income* (2017)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	21.4	30.4	39.9
No	78.6	69.6	60.1

Religious Participation (2017)	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Yes	27.0	35.0	27.0
No	73.0	65.0	73.0

Education* (2017)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	21.7	29.0	28.6	33.0
No	78.3	71.0	71.4	67.0

Age* (2017)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	30.6	31.3	33.8	18.2
No	69.4	68.8	66.2	81.8

Provincial Vote (2017)	NDP	UCP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	25.1	27.0	35.0	31.5	30.7
No	74.9	73.0	65.0	68.5	69.3

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100; \* sig < 0.05

## Therapeutic Massage

### Received therapeutic massage services in past 12 months

More than one-third of Albertans (34.5%) received therapeutic massage services in the past twelve months (over one-million Albertans.) No significant regional variations are measured.

- Women (41.5%) are considerably more likely than men (27.5%) to have received therapeutic massage services.
- Likelihood of receiving therapeutic massage services increases with income. Nearly half (49.1%) of upper-income Albertans received therapeutic massage services last year, while one-quarter of lower-income residents (25.2%) received therapy.
- Middle-aged Albertans, particularly those aged 44 to 54 (43.6%) were more likely than are the youth (26.5%) and seniors (25.1%) to have received therapeutic massage services last year.

Region of Alberta	North		Edmonton		Calgary		South		Alberta	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Yes	35.8	<b>33.0</b>	27.3	<b>36.0</b>	35.9	<b>34.2</b>	33.2	<b>34.8</b>	33.0	<b>34.5</b>
No	64.2	<b>67.0</b>	72.7	<b>64.0</b>	64.1	<b>65.8</b>	66.8	<b>65.2</b>	67.0	<b>65.5</b>

Gender* (2017)	Male	Female
Yes	27.5	41.5
No	72.5	58.5

Household Income* (2017)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	25.2	38.2	49.1
No	74.8	61.8	50.9

Religious Participation (2017)	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Yes	35.4	30.8	35.1
No	64.6	69.2	64.9

Education* (2017)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	28.5	35.3	35.8	37.5
No	71.5	64.7	64.2	62.5

Age (2017)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	26.5	39.7	43.6	25.1
No	73.5	60.3	56.4	74.9

Provincial Vote (2017)	NDP	UCP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	34.4	33.5	33.8	41.1	35.6
No	65.6	66.5	66.3	58.9	64.4

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100; \* sig < 0.05

## Awareness of Unregulated Professional Status of Massage Therapy Services in Alberta

A substantial majority of Albertans (61.0%) are not aware of the unregulated professional status of massage therapy in Alberta.

- No significant differences in awareness are measured between the regions of the province, or between demographic groups.
- The most significant differences in awareness are between those who had received therapeutic massage services in the past year and those who had not, with those receiving both relaxation massage (43.7%) and therapeutic massage (45.7%) more aware than those who had not received relaxation (36.9%) or therapeutic massage (35.6%).

Region of Alberta	North		Edmonton		Calgary		South		Alberta	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Yes	39.7	<b>38.4</b>	38.6	<b>40.1</b>	39.7	<b>40.6</b>	33.3	<b>37.0</b>	37.7	<b>39.0</b>
No	60.3	<b>61.6</b>	61.4	<b>59.9</b>	60.3	<b>59.4</b>	66.7	<b>63.0</b>	62.3	<b>61.0</b>

Massage Services (2017) Received (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage*		Therapeutic Massage*	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yes	43.7	36.9	45.7	35.6
No	56.3	63.1	54.3	64.4

Gender (2017)	Male	Female
Yes	38.5	39.2
No	61.5	60.8

Household Income (2017)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	37.9	40.3	37.8
No	62.1	59.7	62.2

Religious Participation (2017)	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Yes	37.0	40.7	39.2
No	63.0	59.3	60.8

Education* (2017)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	32.2	36.8	40.6	44.1
No	67.8	63.2	59.4	55.9

Age* (2017)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	29.7	39.5	40.1	46.6
No	70.3	60.5	59.9	53.4

Provincial Vote (2017)	NDP	UCP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	39.6	40.8	37.8	41.4	33.9
No	60.4	59.2	62.2	58.6	66.1

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100; \* sig < 0.05

## Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists

It is clear from the data below, and the expanded tables on the following page, the vast majority of Albertans (90.8%) support the establishment of an Alberta college of massage therapists. Most of those, and a clear majority of all Albertans (58.2%) are strongly supportive, with the remainder (32.5%) somewhat supportive. Few Albertans are somewhat opposed (5.6%), and fewer still are strongly opposed (3.6%).

- No significant regional differences in support levels were measured.
- Women (95.0%) are more universally supportive than are men (86.9%).

Region of Alberta	North		Edmonton		Calgary		South		Alberta	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Yes	95.2	<b>90.5</b>	92.4	<b>90.9</b>	91.1	<b>89.8</b>	89.2	<b>91.6</b>	91.9	<b>90.8</b>
No	4.8	<b>9.5</b>	7.6	<b>9.1</b>	8.9	<b>10.2</b>	10.8	<b>8.4</b>	8.1	<b>9.2</b>

Massage Services (2017) Received (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage		Therapeutic Massage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	90.3	91.0	91.1	90.5
Oppose	9.7	9.0	8.9	9.5

Gender* (2017)	Male	Female
	Support	86.9
Oppose	13.1	5.0

Household Income (2017)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
	Support	89.7	92.7
Oppose	10.3	7.3	12.0

Education* (2017)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
	Support	88.0	88.8	92.6
Oppose	12.0	11.2	7.4	8.2

Age (2017)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
	Support	89.0	93.3	90.2
Oppose	11.0	6.7	9.8	8.7

Provincial Vote (2017)	NDP	UCP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
	Support	93.5	89.7	90.2	88.7
Oppose	6.5	10.3	9.8	11.3	6.0

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100; \* sig < 0.05

## Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists (2017)

Region of Alberta (2017)	North	Edmonton	Calgary	South	Alberta
Strongly support	60.2	57.2	56.7	58.9	58.2
Somewhat support	30.6	33.6	33.1	32.7	32.5
Somewhat oppose	4.9	3.8	7.4	5.9	5.6
Strongly oppose	4.3	5.3	2.8	2.4	3.6

Massage Services (2017) Received (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage*		Therapeutic Massage*	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Strongly support	63.5	56.2	64.2	54.7
Somewhat support	26.8	34.9	26.9	35.7
Somewhat oppose	5.6	5.5	5.9	5.6
Strongly oppose	4.1	3.5	3.0	4.0

Gender* (2017)	Male	Female
Strongly support	49.9	67.0
Somewhat support	36.9	28.1
Somewhat oppose	8.4	2.6
Oppose	4.8	2.3

Household Income (2017)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Strongly support	57.6	59.5	56.6
Somewhat support	32.0	33.3	31.4
Somewhat oppose	6.1	4.4	8.0
Strongly oppose	4.2	2.9	4.0

Education (2017)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Strongly support	56.2	56.6	60.6	58.5
Somewhat support	31.8	32.2	31.9	33.3
Somewhat oppose	6.6	7.5	5.4	4.0
Strongly oppose	5.4	3.7	2.0	4.2

Age (2017)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Strongly support	52.4	64.0	58.0	59.1
Somewhat support	36.7	29.3	31.9	32.2
Somewhat oppose	8.5	4.0	5.6	3.7
Strongly oppose	2.5	2.7	4.4	5.0

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100; \* sig < 0.05

## Demographics (%)

Area of Province		Gender		Income		Education		Age	
Calgary	26.2	Male	49.8	Under \$60,000	37.5	H-School/less	19.8	18-29	22.9
Edmonton	24.1	Female	49.5	\$60-\$120,000	39.1	Some P-Sec.	21.1	30-44	23.2
North	23.4	Other	0.7	Over \$120,000	23.5	Col-Tech-Grad	28.8	45-64	31.0
South	26.4					University Grad	30.3	65 or older	22.9

Mean age = 48 years old

### Religious Participation

2-3/month-more	26.1
Several/year	19.4
Rarely-never	54.5

Note: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%

## Questions

Thinking for a moment about massage therapy services in Alberta. Massage therapy is the manual manipulation of soft body tissues to enhance a person's health and well-being. While there are several types of massage, two general categories are *relaxation massage* and *therapeutic massage*. Relaxation Massage is most often practiced in settings like spas, wellness centers and resorts, Therapeutic Massage, also known as deep tissue, medical, or clinical massage, is practiced in settings like clinics, hospitals and chiropractic offices.

- Please tell me if you have received relaxation massage services in the past 12 months?
- Have you received therapeutic massage treatment in the past 12 months?

Massage Therapy is not a regulated profession in Alberta because there is no governing association that enforces standards of practices, codes of ethics, and training requirements, as do the 30 Alberta health professional regulatory bodies such as the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Alberta College of Dieticians, or the Alberta College of Physical Therapists.

- Please tell me if, before today, you were aware that massage therapy is not a regulate profession in Alberta?
- Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists that would govern the standards of practices, codes of ethics, and training requirements of massage therapists in Alberta.