

Massage Therapy in Alberta

Alberta Public Opinion Study – October 2019

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Methodology

Population: The province of Alberta has a total population of 4,371,316 residents (Statistics Canada, 2019) approximately 78% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of 3,409,626.

Sample: Data were collected by Lethbridge College students in the fall of 2019. Students interviewed 953 adult Alberta residents by telephone from October 5 to 10, 2019 under the supervision of principal investigator Dr. Faron Ellis, Research Chair, Citizen Society Research Lab. Landline, hybrid and mobile telephone numbers were selected from a sample drawn from InfoGroup directories and supplemented by 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

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, area of province and age).

Confidence: The weighted sample yields a margin of error ± 3.17 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary ± 6.1 percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area ± 6.5 percentage points, North ± 6.6 percentage points, South ± 6.2 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 2016 we included a series of questions of interest to our massage therapy students and faculty. We repeated several of those questions in 2017, 2018 and again in the fall of 2019. Below is a brief, initial analysis of the results.

Relaxation Massage

- One of every three adult Albertans (30.0%) received relaxation massage services in the past twelve months (over one million Albertans), approximately the same proportion as 2018 (31.5%) but up considerable from only about one-quarter (24.5%) in 2016 and 28.7% in 2017. No significant regional differences are measured.

Therapeutic Massage

- More than one-third of Albertans (33.8%) received therapeutic massage services in the past twelve months (well over one-million Albertans), similar to what we have been measuring for the past four years. Again, no significant regional variations are measured.

Awareness of Unregulated Professional Status of Massage Therapy Services in Alberta

- A substantial majority of Albertans (60.1%) were not aware of the unregulated professional status of the Alberta massage therapy industry. Awareness has been consistent at these levels for the past four years.

Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists

- The vast majority of Albertans (93.9%) support the establishment of an Alberta college of massage therapists.

Support for Required Entrance to Practice Exam

- The vast majority of Albertans (91.9%) support requiring those intending to practice massage therapy to pass an entrance to practice exam.

Relaxation Massage

Received relaxation massage services in past 12 months

One of every three adult Albertans (30.0%) received relaxation massage services in the past twelve months (over one million Albertans), approximately the same proportion as in 2018 (31.5%), but up considerable from only about one-quarter (24.5%) in 2016 and 28.7% in 2017. No significant regional differences are measured.

- Women (31.5%) are slightly more likely than are men (28.5%) to have received a relaxation massage in the past year.
- Upper-income residents (38.7%) are considerably more likely to partake in relaxation massage than are lower-income Albertans (27.4%).
- Seniors (14.7%) are much less likely than are other age groups to have participated in relaxation massage in the past year.

Region	North				Edmonton				Calgary				South				Alberta			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Yes	25.3	25.9	31.3	32.2	21.7	28.7	25.4	26.9	24.5	29.0	37.1	29.4	24.6	30.6	32.2	32.4	24.5	28.7	31.5	30.0
No	74.7	74.1	68.7	67.8	78.3	71.3	74.6	73.1	75.5	71.0	62.9	70.6	75.4	69.4	67.8	67.6	75.5	71.3	68.5	70.0

Gender (2019)	Male	Female
Yes	28.5	31.5
No	71.5	68.5

Household Income* (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	27.4	32.3	38.7
No	72.6	67.7	61.3

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	32.1	25.0	30.6	31.5
No	67.9	75.0	69.4	68.5

Age* (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	35.2	40.6	31.2	14.7
No	64.8	59.4	68.8	85.3

Provincial Vote (2019)	UCP	NDP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	28.2	31.1	36.9	45.8	25.0
No	71.8	68.9	63.1	54.2	75.0

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

Therapeutic Massage

Received therapeutic massage services in past 12 months

Approximately one-third of Albertans (33.8%) received therapeutic massage services in the past twelve months (well over one-million Albertans.)

- Again, no significant regional variations are measured, however Edmontonians (40.1%) are slightly more likely than are other Albertans to have received therapeutic massage services in the past year.
- Women (37.3%) are considerably more likely than are men (30.4%) to receive therapeutic massage services.
- Likelihood of receiving therapeutic massage services increases with income. More than two of every five (43.3%) of upper-income Albertans received therapeutic massage services last year while considerably fewer lower-income residents (28.5%) did likewise.
- Middle-aged Albertans, particularly those aged 30 to 44 (39.9%) are more likely than are seniors (23.5%) to receive therapeutic massage services.

Region	North				Edmonton				Calgary				South				Alberta			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Yes	35.8	33.0	37.0	30.0	27.3	36.0	33.4	40.1	35.9	34.2	37.7	29.7	33.2	34.8	33.2	34.8	33.0	34.5	35.4	33.8
No	64.2	67.0	63.0	70.0	72.7	64.0	66.6	59.9	64.1	65.8	62.3	70.3	66.8	65.2	66.8	65.2	67.0	65.5	64.6	66.2

Gender* (2019)	Male	Female
Yes	30.4	37.3
No	69.6	62.7

Household Income* (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	28.5	35.9	43.3
No	71.5	64.1	56.7

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	34.4	30.6	35.3	34.9
No	65.6	69.4	64.7	65.1

Age* (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	35.2	39.9	37.1	23.5
No	64.8	60.1	62.9	76.5

Provincial Vote (2019)	UCP	NDP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	34.8	30.4	29.7	47.9	38.2
No	65.2	69.6	70.3	52.1	61.8

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 (60.1%) are not aware of the unregulated professional status of massage therapy in Alberta.

- No significant regional differences in awareness are measured, nor are many significant demographic differences apparent, although younger Albertans (27.4%) were significantly less likely to have received therapeutic massage treatment in the past year than were other age groups. Awareness has also not been increasing over time, with approximately the same proportion of Albertans reporting awareness in each of the four years we have measured this item.
- Awareness differences are measured between those who had received massage services in the past year and those who had not. Those who received both relaxation massage (44.3%) and therapeutic massage (42.1%) are slightly more aware than those who had not received relaxation (37.8%) or therapeutic massage services (38.7%).

Region	North				Edmonton				Calgary				South				Alberta			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Yes	39.7	38.4	43.3	39.2	38.6	40.1	38.2	39.3	39.7	40.6	39.3	43.8	33.3	37.0	31.5	36.1	37.7	39.0	38.1	39.9
No	60.3	61.6	56.7	60.8	61.4	59.9	61.8	60.7	60.3	59.4	60.7	56.2	66.7	63.0	68.5	63.9	62.3	61.0	61.9	60.1

Received Massage Services (2019) (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage		Therapeutic Massage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yes	44.3	37.8	42.1	38.7
No	55.7	62.2	57.9	61.3

Gender (2019)	Male	Female
Yes	37.5	42.3
No	62.5	57.7

Household Income (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Yes	36.1	41.9	43.9
No	63.9	58.1	56.1

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Yes	33.5	39.7	40.7	42.1
No	66.5	60.3	59.3	57.9

Age* (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Yes	27.4	42.6	43.0	45.0
No	72.6	57.4	57.0	55.0

Provincial Vote (2019)	UCP	NDP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Yes	40.1	44.0	33.9	36.2	33.3
No	59.9	56.0	66.1	63.8	66.7

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

Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists

As is clear from the data below and the expanded tables on the following page, the vast majority of Albertans (93.9%) support the establishment of an Alberta college of massage therapists. Most of those, and a clear majority of all Albertans (57.4%) are strongly supportive with the remainder (36.5%) somewhat supportive. Few Albertans are somewhat opposed (4.0%), and fewer still are strongly opposed (2.2%).

- No significant regional differences in support levels are apparent. Nor are there significant differences in opinion between those who have or have not received massage services in the past year.
- Women (94.8%) are slightly more universally supportive than are men (92.9%).

Region	North				Edmonton				Calgary				South				Alberta			
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Support	95.2	90.5	92.0	94.8	92.4	90.9	93.9	92.7	91.1	89.8	91.4	96.1	89.2	91.6	91.6	91.3	91.9	90.8	92.1	93.9
Oppose	4.8	9.5	8.0	5.2	7.6	9.1	6.1	7.3	8.9	10.2	8.6	3.9	10.8	8.4	8.4	8.7	8.1	9.2	7.9	6.1

Received Massage Services (2019) (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage		Therapeutic Massage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	95.7	93.3	95.9	93.0
Oppose	4.3	6.7	4.1	7.0

Gender (2019)	Male	Female
Support	92.9	94.8
Oppose	7.1	5.2

Household Income (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Support	94.6	94.1	93.6
Oppose	5.4	5.9	6.4

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Support	90.8	94.4	96.9	93.0
Oppose	9.2	5.6	3.1	7.0

Age (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Support	93.9	93.4	93.4	95.5
Oppose	6.1	6.6	6.6	4.5

Provincial Vote (2019)	UCP	NDP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Support	92.2	93.4	98.4	93.5	98.7
Oppose	7.8	6.6	1.6	6.5	1.3

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

Support for the Establishment of an Alberta College of Massage Therapists (2019)

Region of Alberta (2019)	North	Edmonton	Calgary	South	Alberta
Strongly support	57.9	58.1	58.0	54.9	57.4
Somewhat support	36.9	34.3	38.1	36.4	36.5
Somewhat oppose	2.1	6.0	1.9	6.2	4.0
Strongly oppose	3.1	1.6	1.9	2.6	2.2

Received Massage Services (2019) (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage*		Therapeutic Massage*	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Strongly support	64.9	54.3	64.6	53.7
Somewhat support	30.8	39.1	31.3	39.4
Somewhat oppose	1.8	4.8	1.9	4.9
Strongly oppose	2.5	1.8	2.2	2.1

Gender (2019)	Male	Female
Strongly support	57.0	57.8
Somewhat support	35.9	37.1
Somewhat oppose	5.1	2.9
Oppose	2.0	2.2

Household Income (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Strongly support	56.8	61.2	57.2
Somewhat support	37.5	32.9	36.4
Somewhat oppose	3.5	4.6	3.2
Strongly oppose	2.3	1.3	3.2

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Strongly support	58.8	56.2	61.4	55.0
Somewhat support	32.0	38.2	35.1	37.7
Somewhat oppose	4.6	3.4	3.1	4.9
Strongly oppose	4.6	2.2	0.4	2.4

Age (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Strongly support	55.6	59.6	57.4	58.8
Somewhat support	38.3	33.8	36.0	36.7
Somewhat oppose	3.6	4.5	4.8	3.0
Strongly oppose	2.6	2.0	1.8	1.5

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

Support for Required Entrance to Practice Exams

It is clear from the data below and the expanded tables on the following page that the vast majority of Albertans (91.9%) support requiring those wishing to practice massage therapy to pass an entrance to practice exam. Most of those, and nearly two-thirds of all Albertans (65.9%) are strongly supportive with the remainder (26.0%) somewhat supportive. Few Albertans are somewhat opposed (3.9%) and or strongly opposed (4.2%).

- No significant regional differences in support levels are measured. Nor are there significant differences in opinion between those who have or have not received massage services in the past year.
- Women (94.8%) are only slightly more universally supportive than are men (92.9%).

Region	North		Edmonton		Calgary		South		Alberta	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Support	91.3	94.8	93.7	92.7	92.3	96.1	89.1	91.3	91.8	91.9
Oppose	8.7	5.2	6.3	7.3	7.7	3.9	10.9	8.7	8.2	8.1

Massage Services (2019) Received (past 12 months)	Relaxation Massage		Therapeutic Massage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	95.7	93.3	95.9	93.0
Oppose	4.3	6.7	4.1	7.0

Gender (2019)	Male	Female
Support	92.9	94.8
Oppose	7.1	5.2

Household Income (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Support	94.6	94.1	93.6
Oppose	5.4	5.9	6.4

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Support	90.8	94.4	96.9	93.0
Oppose	9.2	5.6	3.1	7.0

Age (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Support	93.9	93.4	93.4	95.5
Oppose	6.1	6.6	6.6	4.5

Provincial Vote (2019)	UCP	NDP	Liberal	AB Party	Undecided
Support	92.2	93.4	98.4	93.5	98.7
Oppose	7.8	6.6	1.6	6.5	1.3

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

Support for Required Entrance to Practice Exams (2019)

Region of Alberta (2019)	North	Edmonton	Calgary	South	Alberta
Strongly support	67.0	66.4	65.1	65.0	65.9
Somewhat support	25.5	25.1	27.8	25.4	26.0
Somewhat oppose	4.5	3.6	2.4	5.6	3.9
Strongly oppose	3.0	4.9	4.8	4.1	4.2

Massage Services (2019)	Relaxation Massage*		Therapeutic Massage*	
Received (past 12 months)	Yes	No	Yes	No
Strongly support	66.1	66.1	68.6	64.6
Somewhat support	24.2	26.4	23.3	27.1
Somewhat oppose	4.0	3.9	3.6	4.1
Strongly oppose	5.8	3.6	4.5	4.1

Gender* (2019)	Male	Female
Strongly support	61.3	70.9
Somewhat support	30.5	21.1
Somewhat oppose	5.3	2.5
Oppose	2.9	5.5

Household Income (2019)	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Strongly support	63.9	72.6	60.4
Somewhat support	25.9	20.1	34.2
Somewhat oppose	4.9	3.6	2.7
Strongly oppose	5.3	3.6	2.7

Education (2019)	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Strongly support	68.2	62.4	68.2	65.1
Somewhat support	24.7	26.5	25.0	26.9
Somewhat oppose	4.5	5.5	4.1	2.7
Strongly oppose	2.6	5.5	2.7	5.4

Age* (2019)	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Strongly support	53.2	65.6	67.3	77.6
Somewhat support	32.2	27.1	25.7	18.0
Somewhat oppose	6.3	4.2	3.3	2.9
Strongly oppose	8.3	3.1	3.7	1.5

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

Demographics (%)

Area of Province		Gender		Income		Education		Age	
Calgary	28.1	Male	50.3	Under \$60,000	35.2	H-School/less	17.2	18-29	23.4
Edmonton	28.2	Female	49.3	\$60-\$120,000	40.0	Some P-Sec.	20.7	30-44	22.2
North	22.0	Other	0.4	Over \$120,000	24.8	Col-Tech-Grad	24.8	45-64	30.7
South	21.7					University Grad	37.2	65 or older	23.7

Mean age = 48 years

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 Dietitians, 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.

Because massage therapy is not a regulated profession, massage therapists are not required to take and pass an entrance exam prior to practicing massage therapy (often called entrance to practice exam or professional standards exam)

- Please tell me how much you support or oppose massage therapists being required to take an entrance to practice exam?