

# Kids lacking confidence parents' biggest fear: Survey

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A lack of confidence, bullying and depression are the things Canadian parents fear most for their children, according to a new national survey.

Sixty-two per cent of parents see a lack of confidence as a threat to the long-term success of their children, says the survey, conducted by the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada.

Sixty per cent of parents fear what bullying would do to their children and 57 per cent worry about depression. Surprisingly, issues like drug and alcohol abuse and gang involvement were much lower down.

Although the survey only ranked parents' fears, and did not examine the extent to which these fears were realized, the concerns are legitimate, said Bruce MacDonald, president of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"We think they're pretty real," he said. "The fact that we have growing numbers of parents and schools coming to us with an increased demand for service suggests that kids need help, and clearly these are the kinds of things that parents are worried about their kids getting involved in."

The high percentage of parents who fear their children will lack confidence was somewhat surprising, MacDonald said.

"When you think about it intuitively, it makes sense," he said. "(Parents) want kids who have their own sense of self-respect and self-worth, so that when presented with choices, they have the opportunity . . . from a place of confidence, to be able to make one that's going to be good for them."

Of the parents surveyed, 97 per cent said they thought guidance from a volunteer adult mentor could help troubled teens and children.

"More and more parents and schools are reaching out and saying we need to find additional supports," MacDonald said. "I think society has changed over time . . . it's busier and parents might not necessarily have the time to spend one on one with the child that they used to have."

A total of 1,056 randomly selected parents were surveyed by phone between Jan. 19 and Feb. 25. The results of the survey are considered accurate within three per cent, 19 times out 20.

### **Top 10 Parent Fears**

1. Lack of confidence
2. Being bullied
3. Depression
4. Anger management
5. No interest in school
6. Drug use
7. Loneliness
8. Internet/video game addiction
9. Alcohol use
10. Gang/crime involvement

— *Marketing Research and Intelligence Association*

