



# Prevalence of Adults Who Are the Targets of Parental Alienating Behaviors and Their Impact:

## Results from Three National Polls

Jennifer J. Harman, PhD

Sadie Leder-Elder, PhD

Zeynep Biringen, PhD

Harman, J. J., Leder-Elder, S., & Biringen, Z. (in press). Prevalence of adults who are the targets of parental alienating behaviors and their impact: Results from three national polls. *Child & Youth Services Review*.

# Behaviors vs. Outcomes

- Parental alienating behaviors
  - Clusters of behaviors over time, with intent to harm the targeted parent and their relationship with their child(ren)
- Parental alienation
  - The child's rejection of a loving parent for untrue, illogical, or exaggerated reasons

# How common are parental alienating behaviors?

Previous estimates of parental alienating behaviors towards parents: 13.5% ~22 million adults in the U.S.

- No gender, race, education, or income differences



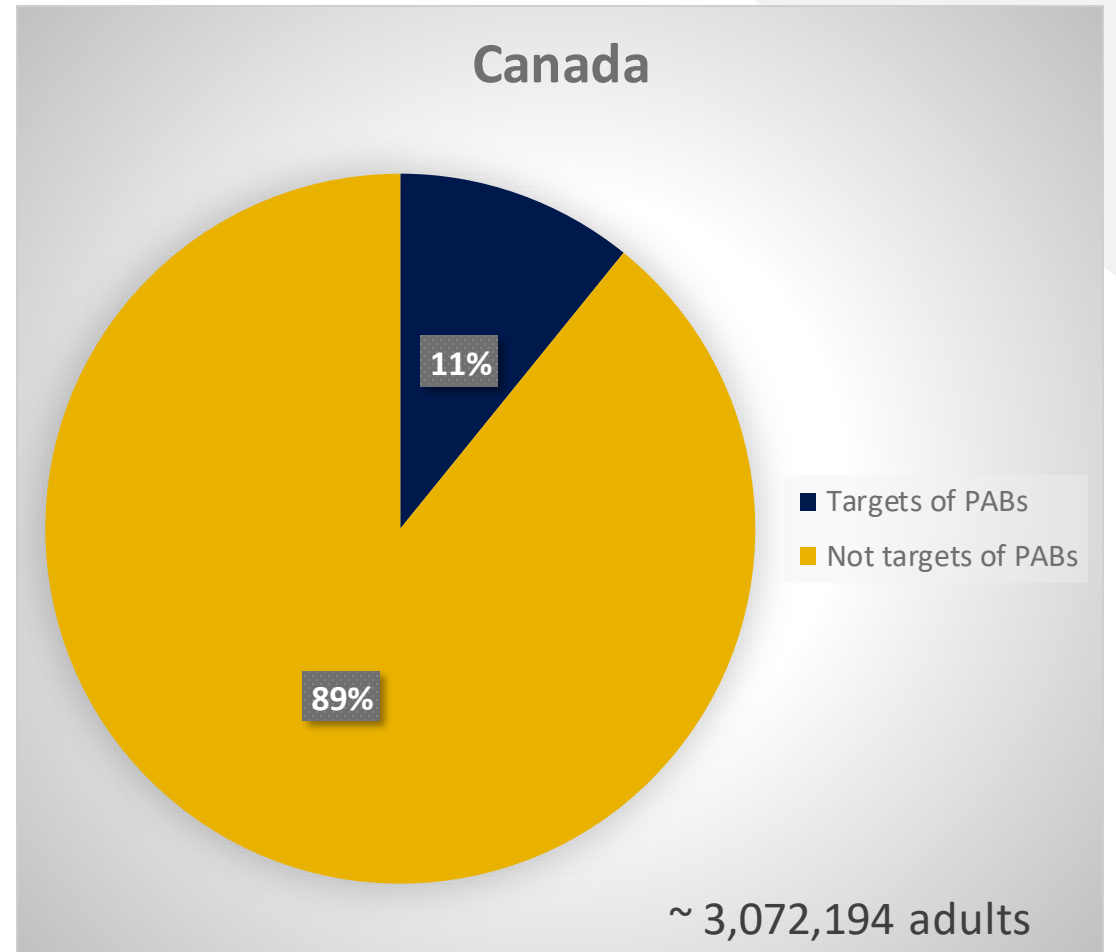
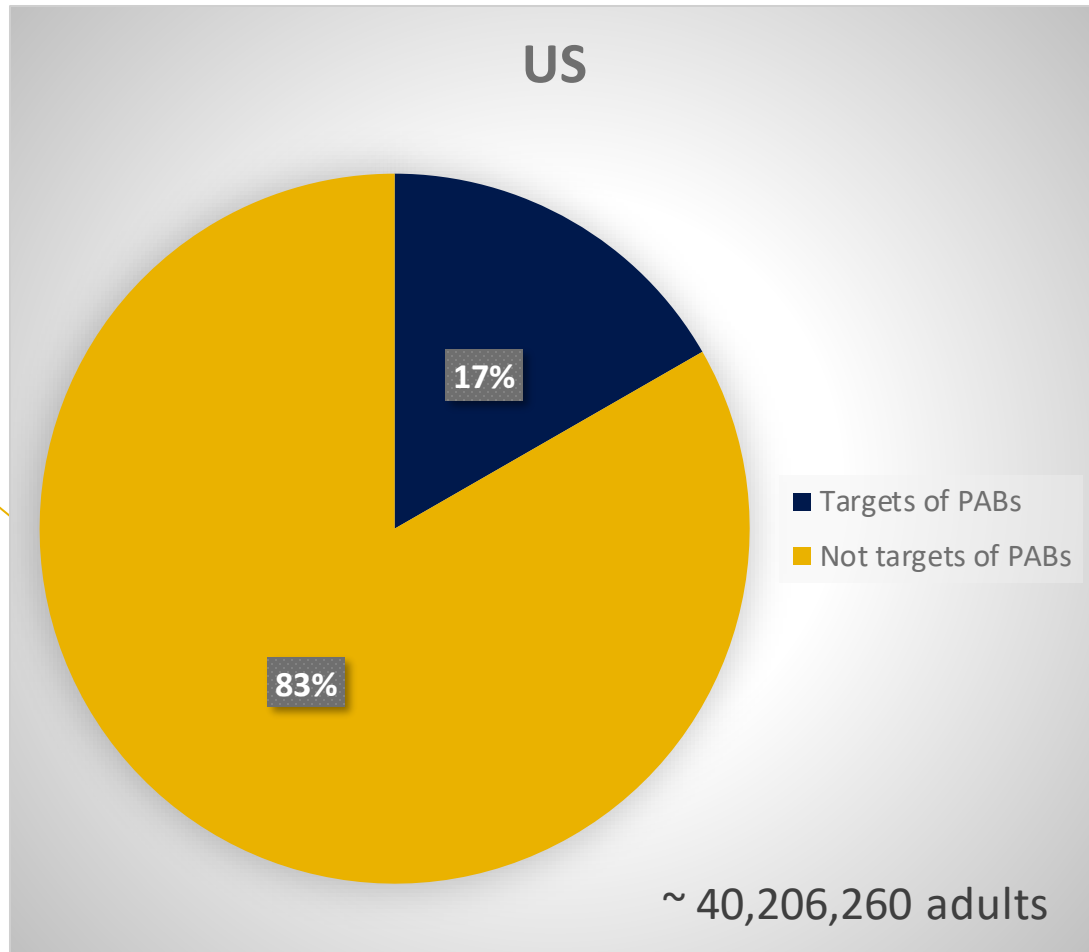
# Two national polls



## Two Qualtrics panels

- 600 adults (18+) from each country
- Samples selected to be representative of the general population of each country
- Crowd sourced funded and direct donors

# Prevalence of Parents Experiencing PABs: Polls 1 and 2



# Third national poll



## Another Qualtrics panel

- 669 parents (18+ yr.) who have a child with someone they are no longer in a relationship with
- Sample selected to be representative of demographic characteristics of the US population
- Funded by an internal grant from the College of Natural Sciences and the Psychology Department at Colorado State University

# Assessment differences of PABs

## Polls 1 and 2

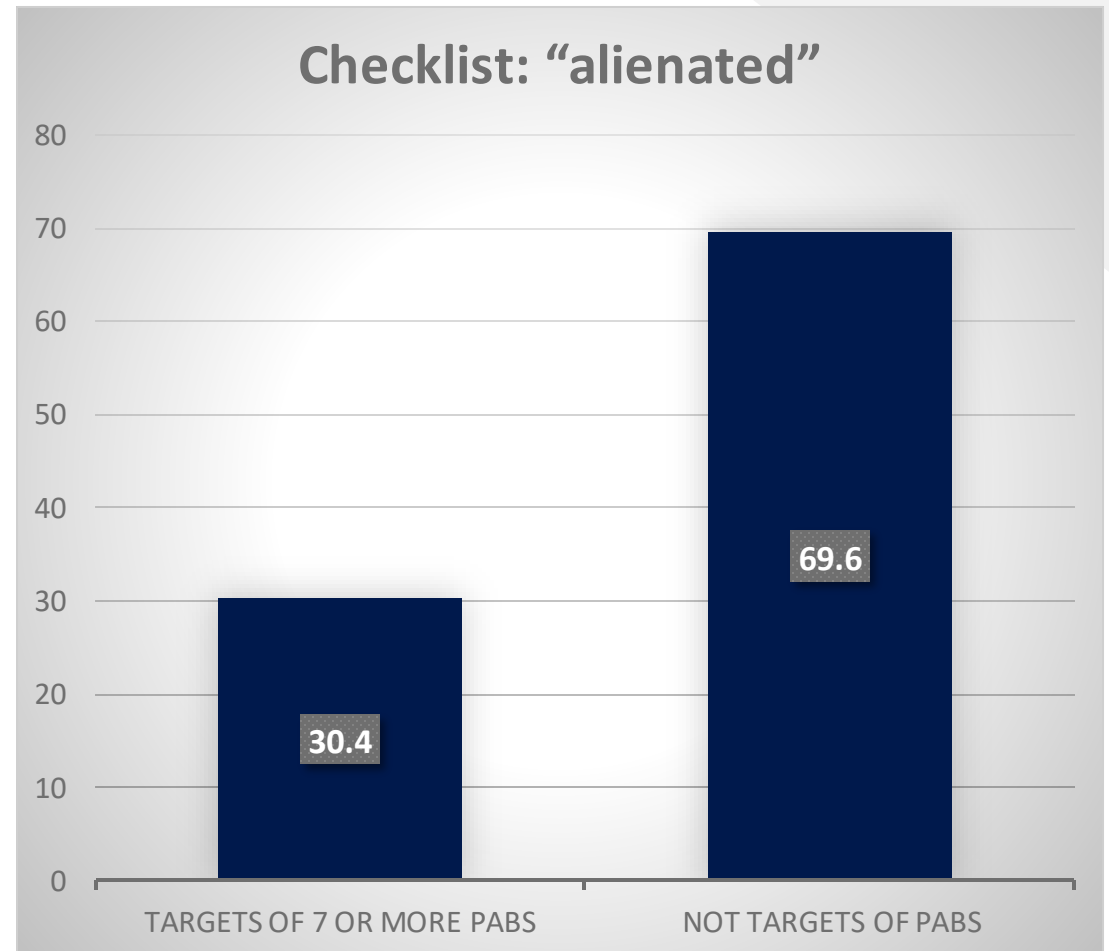
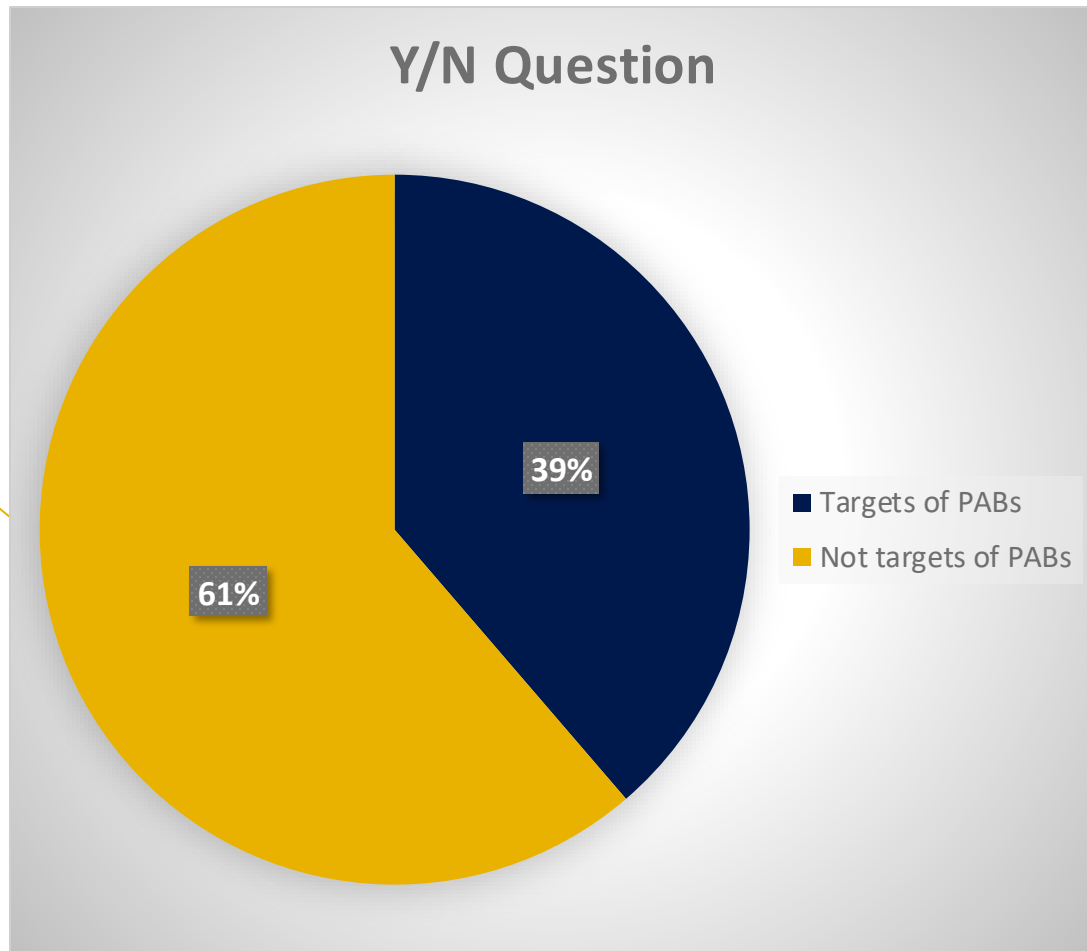
- One item:

*Do you feel that the other parent has engaged in parental alienating behaviors towards you to harm or damage your relationship with your child(ren)?*

## Poll 3

- Checklist of 18 behaviors (self and other parent)
- One item (as before)

# Prevalence and 'accuracy' of self-report PABs: Poll 3



~ 30,060,259 parents in US targets of 7 or more PABs





# Parental alienation of the child(ren)

# How common is parental alienation?

Estimation procedures: ~ 1% of children

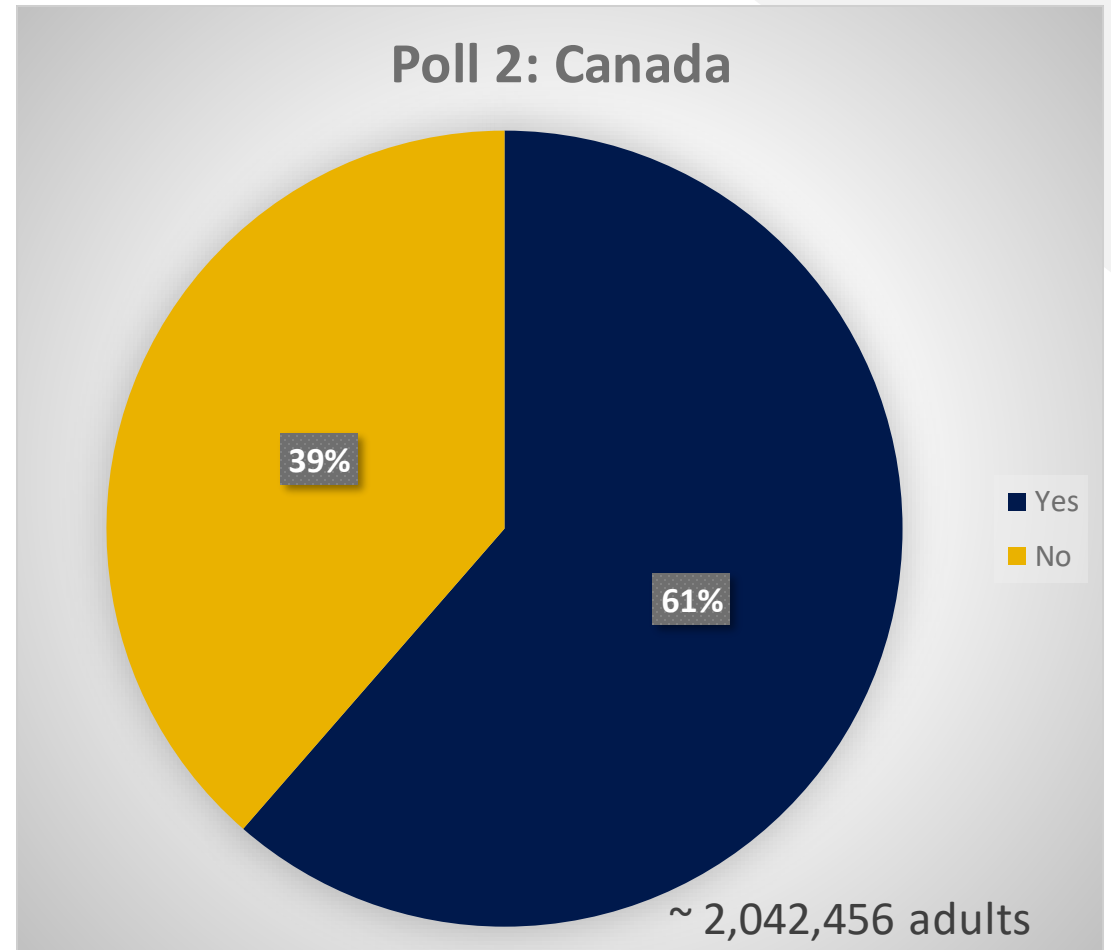
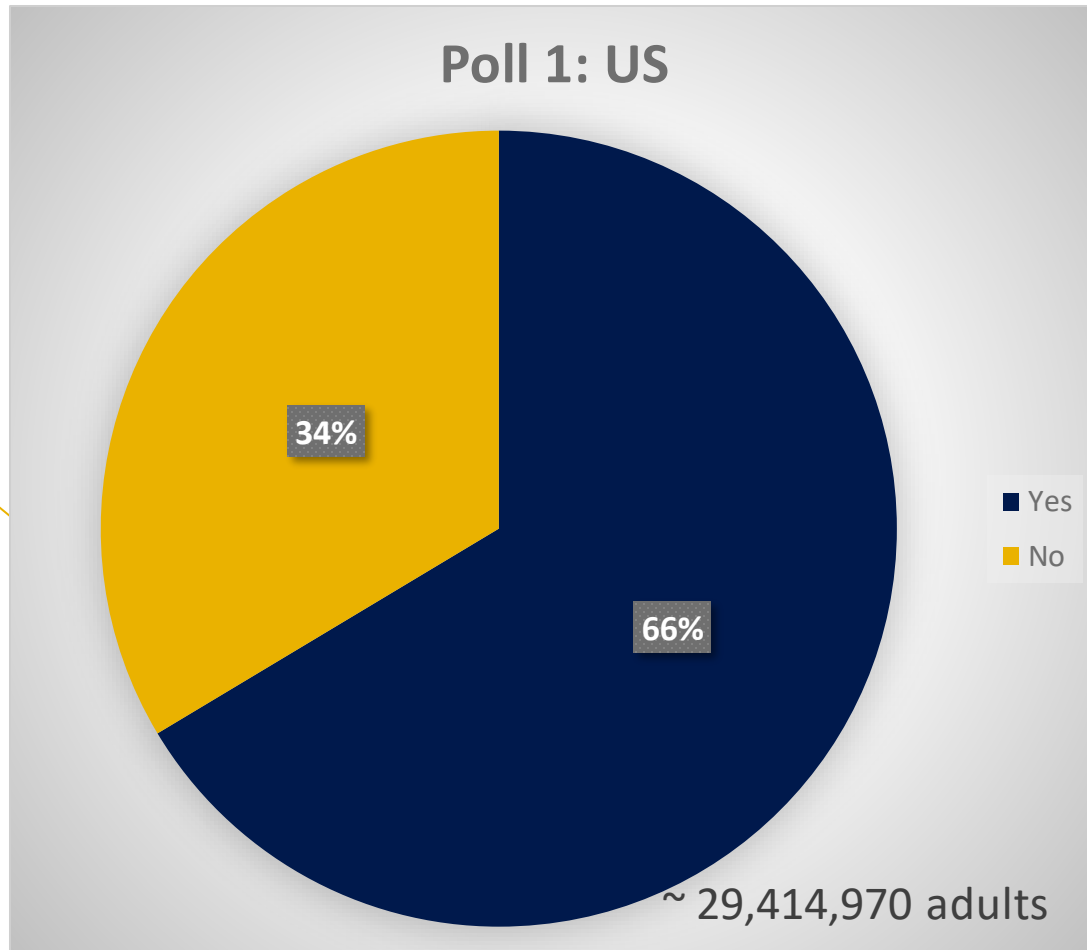


Bernet, W. (Ed.). (2010). *Parental alienation, DSM-5, and ICD-11*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Warshak, R. A. (2015). Ten parental alienation fallacies that compromise decisions in court and in therapy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 46, 235– 249.

doi:10.1037/pro0000031

# Prevalence of Parents who believe their child has been alienated:



# Assessment differences of PA

## Polls 1 and 2

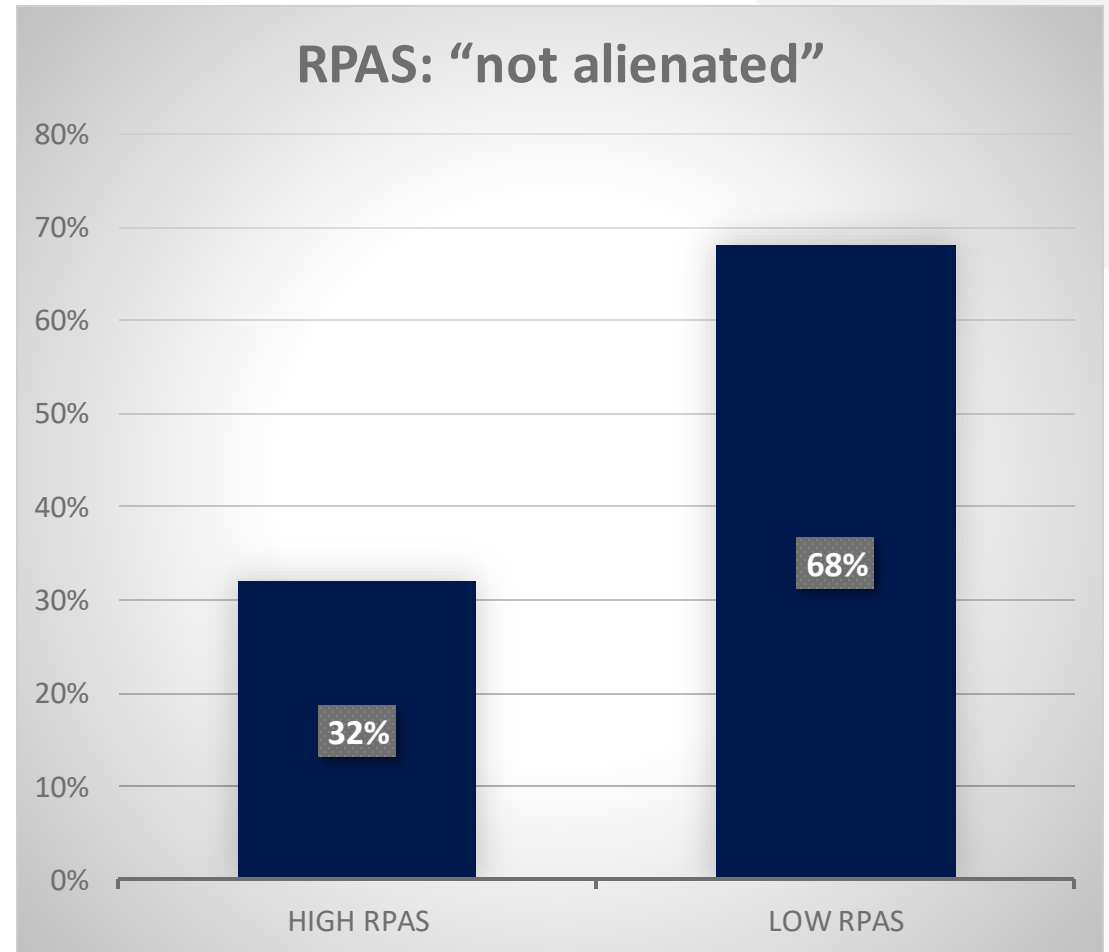
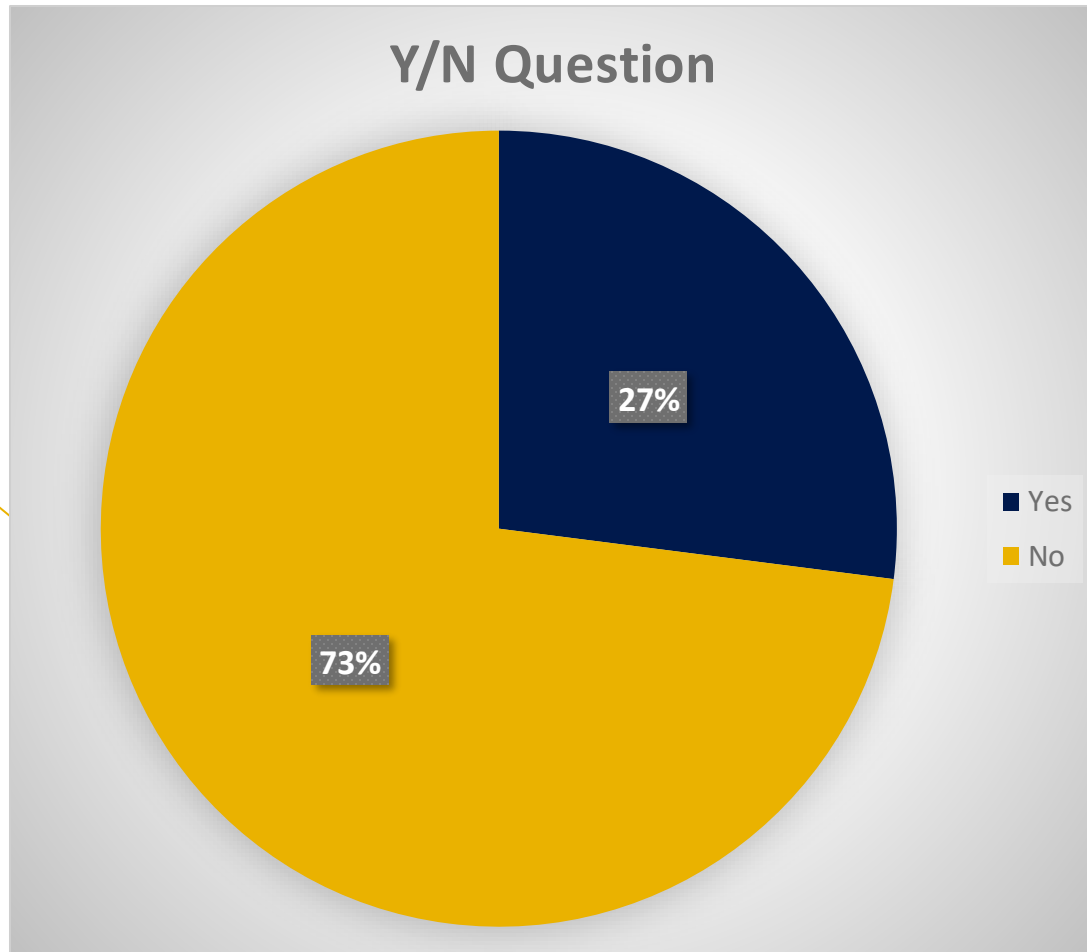
- One item:

*Do you feel that you have been alienated from one or more of your children by the other parent? In other words, have the alienating behaviors of the other parent been successful in harming your relationship with your child(ren)?*

## Poll 3

- Rowland's Parental Alienation Scale (RPAS; Rowlands, 2018)
  - 42 item scale of PA symptoms in the child
- One item (as before)

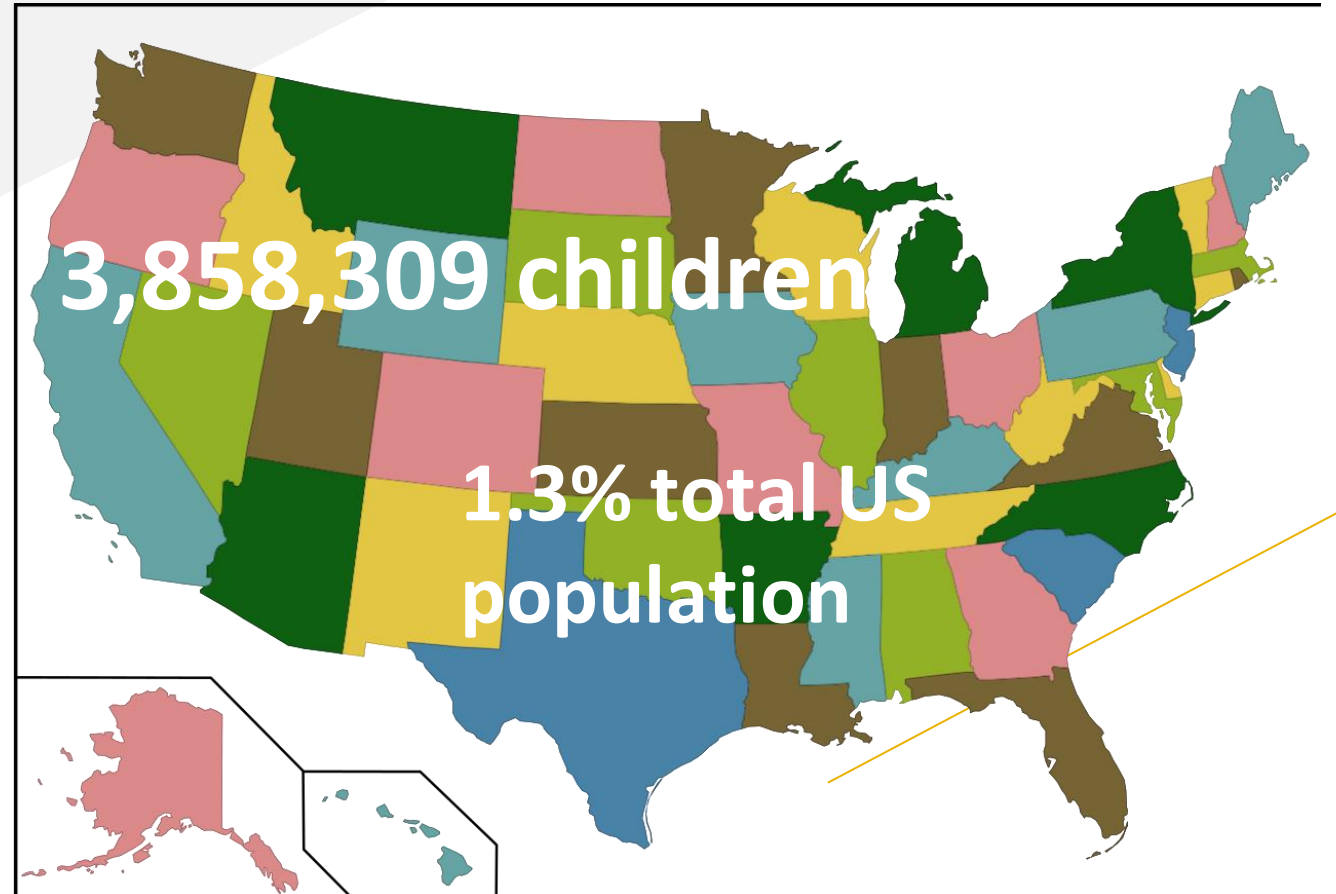
# Prevalence and 'accuracy' of parental alienation: Poll 3



# Prevalence of PA in the US: Poll 3

~ 12,784,248 feel they have been alienated from at least one child

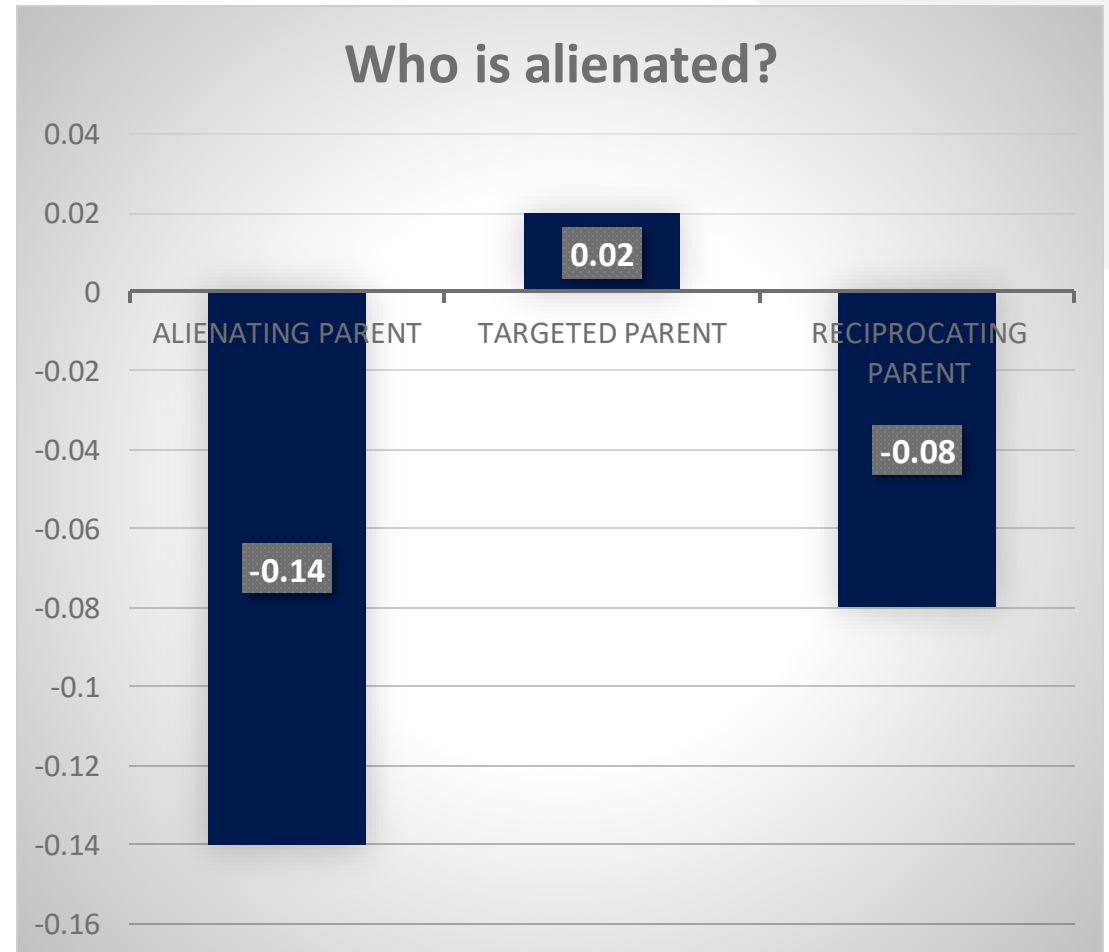
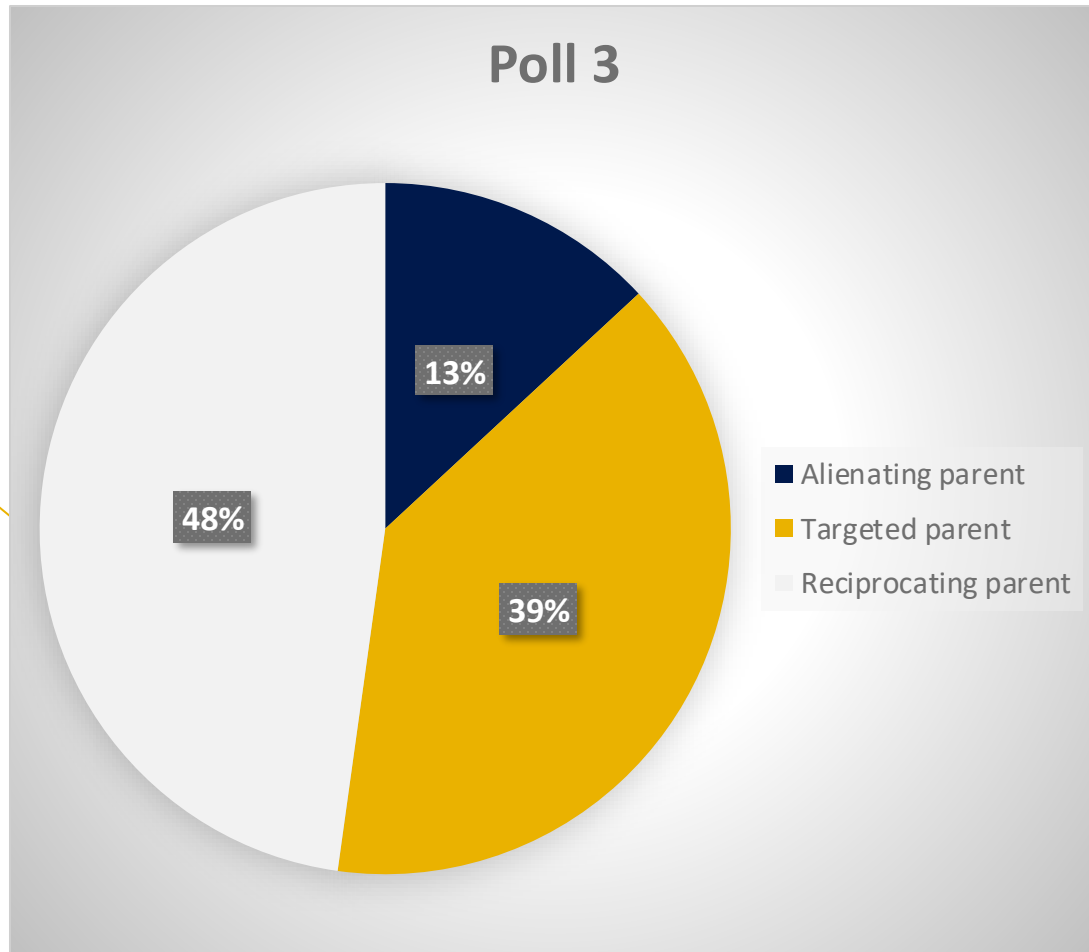
~6.7% of the sample were moderately to severely alienated from a child using the RPAS





**Do alienated parents  
reciprocate PABs?**

# Reciprocity and PA?



~22,286,054 non-reciprocating parents of PABS are the targets of them

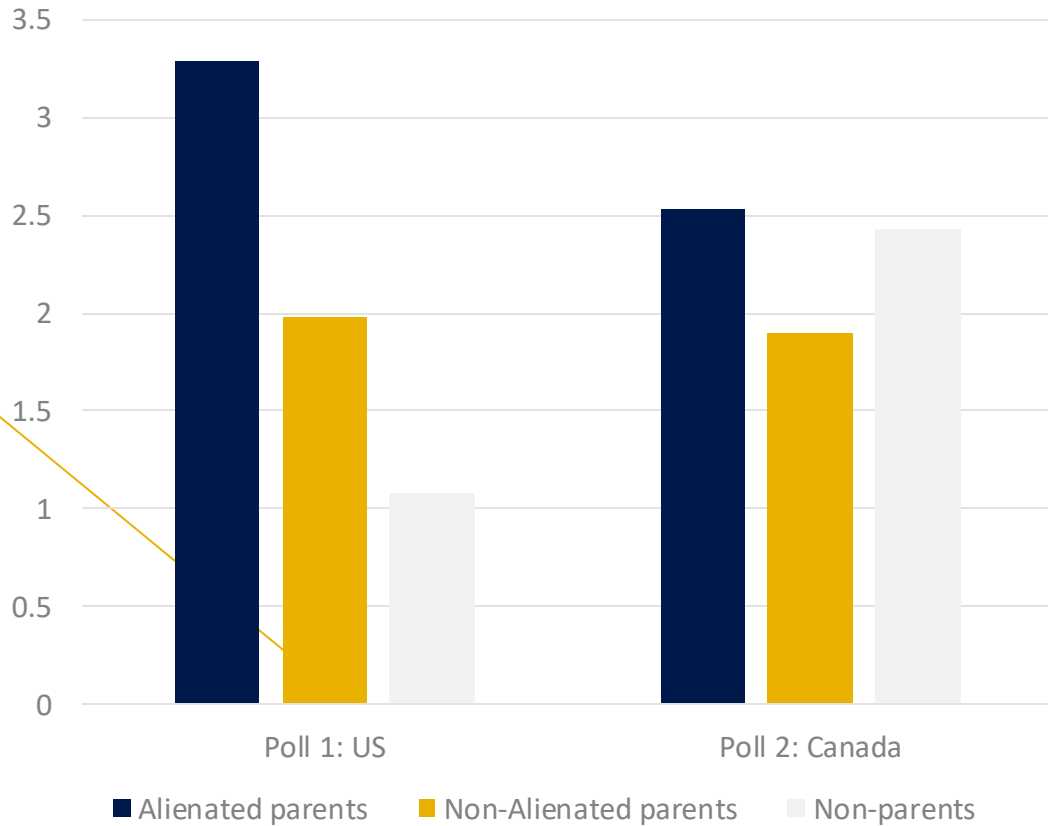




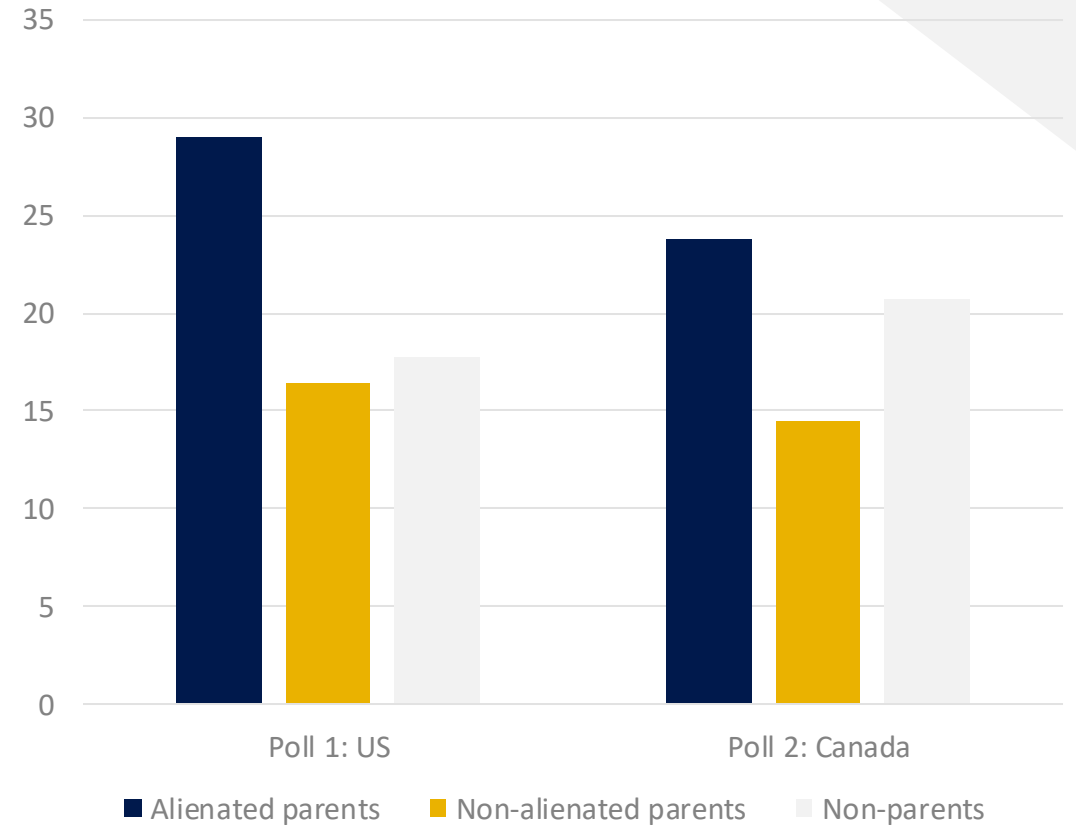
**What impacts are there for targeted parents?**

# Mental Health Outcomes

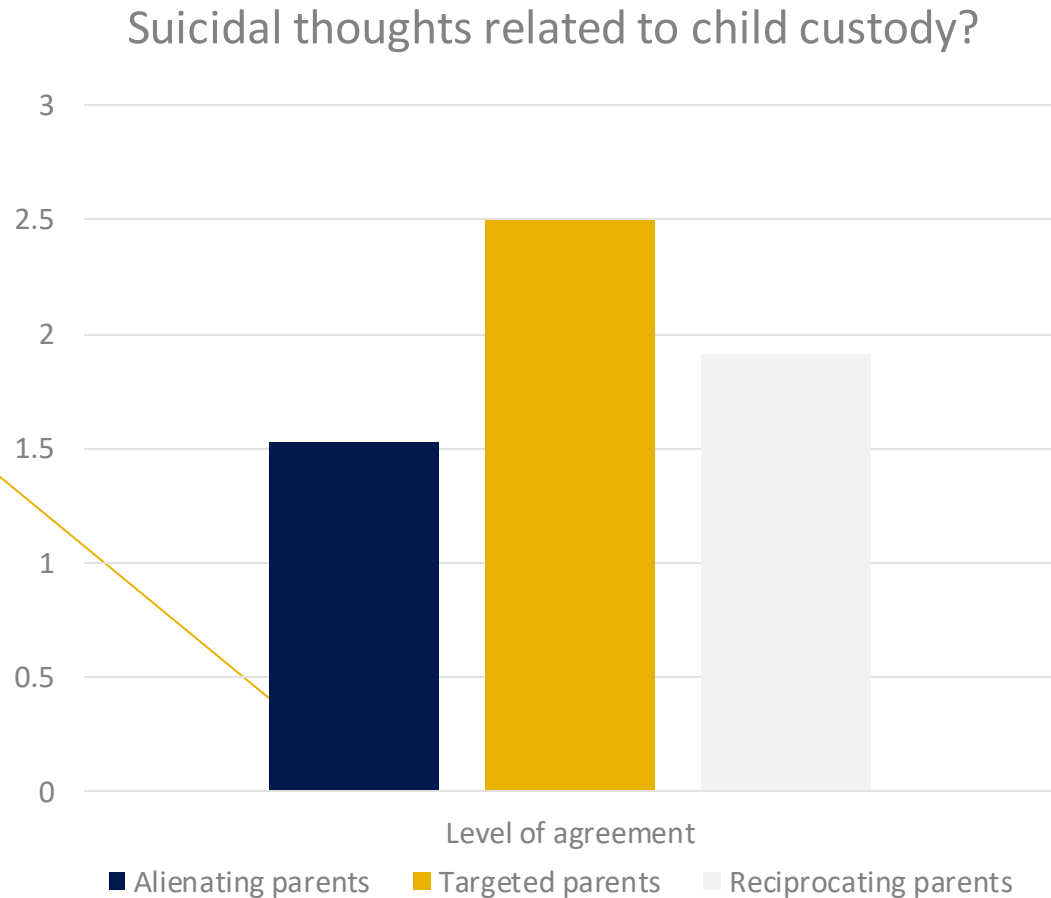
## PTSD Symptoms



## Depression



# Suicidality



- The more alienated a parent was from a child, the more likely they were to have considered suicide in the last year
  - $\beta = 0.19, p < .001, CIs 0.50 \text{ to } 1.17.$
- **47.72%** of moderately to severely alienated parents suicidal in last year.
  - Of these, 19.9% knew someone who had killed themselves over a child custody issue or conflict with an ex

# Discussion

## Prevalence

- Over 22 million parents in the US who do not reciprocate PABs are the targets of them (replication of 2016 study).
- Almost 4 million children are moderately to severely alienated from a parent in the US
- NO demographic differences



# Discussion

## Reciprocity and mental health

- Alienated parents not likely to be reciprocating PABs
- Targets of PABs and alienated parents high PTSD symptoms, depression and suicidality





# Thank You.



Jennifer J. Harman, PhD



970-491-1529



[jjharman@colostate.edu](mailto:jjharman@colostate.edu)



[www.jenniferjillharman.com](http://www.jenniferjillharman.com)