

Competition in the Tooth Fairy world gets pricey

By Chris Taylor, Reuters

Kelly Bird Pierre knew the world had changed when she heard what the Tooth Fairy was giving out these days.

The 39-year-old educator from South Orange, New Jersey used to get a quarter whenever she lost one of her own baby teeth. But when her daughter Oona and son Jacques went through the same phase, reports from their schoolyard buddies swiftly got back to her: \$3, \$5, even \$10 a tooth.

Pierre was shocked. "A dollar still seems reasonable to me," she said.

Pierre and her parental peers had better get used to tooth inflation, because a new survey shows just how dear a baby tooth has become. The national average is now \$3.70 per tooth, up 23 percent in a single year and 42 percent in just two years, according to a study that credit-card company Visa will release today.

"Tooth Fairy inflation clearly is surging," marvels Jason Alderman, Visa's senior director of global financial education. "It is due to a combination of things: one is a reflection of an improving economy, and that parents feel they can afford to be generous in small areas.

"The other real driver is parental angst. It is very hard for us to say 'no' to our kids."

Apparently so: For a full set of 20 baby teeth, at the going rate, that works out to \$74. Especially for a young child, that is a serious sum.

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