

New research highlights differing awareness levels and knowledge of the human papillomavirus (HPV) across Europe

- **An extensive, multi-national market research study on the HPV virus amongst 15,000 Europeans in 10 countries**
- **One in three respondents have never heard of HPV and only 3% who had heard of HPV were aware that most people will contract HPV in their lifetime**
- **Just over half of all respondents that were aware of HPV (51%) didn't agree or didn't know that HPV could cause cancer in males**
- **Research undertaken by Ipsos, the global market research firm, on behalf of MSD**

A large-scale Ipsos market research study taking place in 10 European countries, demonstrated substantial knowledge and awareness differences around the human papillomavirus (HPV). 15,000 men and women in 10 European countries took part in this significant study conducted by global market research firm Ipsos, on behalf of MSD.

Nearly all cervical cancers (99.7%) are caused by infection with a high-risk type of HPV. It is the fourth-most frequent cancer in women and has a high mortality rate globally, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). In addition, HPV infections are responsible for a range of non-cervical diseases in both men and women that have serious morbidity and contribute to a substantial healthcare burden.

Highlights from this comprehensive study included:

Mixed awareness of HPV across Europe

- **Less than two in three people are aware of HPV across the 10 countries surveyed, despite most people contracting HPV at some point in their life.**
- **In three of the countries surveyed, namely Austria, Switzerland and Germany, more than half of those surveyed were unaware of HPV, at 54%, 52% and 60% respectively. Six in 10 Germans were not aware of HPV.**
- **Spain led the countries surveyed for awareness with an impressive 87% of respondents aware of HPV.**

Misunderstanding about how common the HPV virus is

- **Only 3% of respondents who were aware of HPV recognised that it is extremely common and that 75% of the population will be infected in their lifetime.**
- **54% of respondents who had heard of HPV, viewed it as quite rare or extremely rare.**
- **Looking across the 10 surveyed countries, one in five respondents believe it is impossible for them to be infected with HPV**

Many respondents were not aware that men are at risk of contracting HPV and HPV-related cancers

- **Over half of respondents who had heard of HPV, (51%) did not agree or did not know that HPV can cause cancer in males and the percentages jump to 63% in France and 64% in Switzerland.**
- **Portuguese respondents were most likely to agree at 40% (strongly agree), that HPV causes cancer in males.**

Helen Cox, senior director, Ipsos Healthcare, added,

“This market research is a comprehensive study into the awareness and perceptions of the human papillomavirus (HPV) including 15,000 adults (16-60 years) across 10 countries in Europe. This survey provides robust benchmarks of levels of awareness and knowledge of HPV across the 10 European countries and perhaps, more significantly, an understanding of how this differs between these countries”.

In addition to cervical cancer, HPV infections are responsible for a range of non-cervical diseases in both sexes that have serious morbidity and contribute to a substantial healthcare burden.

Technical Note

What is the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)?

- HPV is the name given to a common group of viruses; there are more than 100 types of HPV
- Most people - regardless of gender - will have been exposed to HPV in their lifetime and for most people the virus goes away naturally.
- In the vast majority of cases, there will be no symptoms and the infection will clear on its own, but in some cases persistent infection can lead to HPV-related cancers and diseases.
- Some types of HPV are high risk because they are linked to the development of some cancers
- Other lower risk HPV types can lead to genital warts
- Nearly all cervical cancers (99.7%) are caused by infection from a high risk HPV

Source: NHS Choices (UK)

About the research

This study has been initiated and funded by MSD and is managed and owned by MSD. MSD has had full editorial control and approval of the research results.

On behalf of MSD, Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 15,000 adults across Europe (Austria 1,000, Belgium 1,000, France 2,000, Germany 2,000, Greece 1,000, Italy 2,000, Portugal 1,000, Spain 2,000, Switzerland 1,000 and UK 2,000) aged 16 to 60 years. Surveys were conducted online between 7th and 21st January 2019. The sample obtained is based on quotas in terms of gender, age, region and working status at a country level and survey data were subsequently weighted to the known population proportions of this audience.

For any further information on this study, please contact Helen Cox at Ipsos, helen.cox@ipsos.com, Emma Middleton at Ipsos, emma.middleton@ipsos.com.