

MERCK CANADA PULSE REPORT

Respiratory Illnesses &
Vaccine Literacy in Canada

July 2026



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Respiratory Illnesses | July 2026



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Context & Objectives

As part of the Ipsos × Merck Pulse Report Series, this second wave of research was conducted to better understand Canadians' awareness of respiratory illnesses and their prevention behaviours.

The survey focused on four vaccine-preventable respiratory illnesses: influenza (seasonal flu), COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and pneumococcal disease (PD).

The research aims to identify where education, proactive healthcare conversations and easier access points may support better prevention planning ahead of respiratory season.

Research Design



Methodology

Online survey – Ipsos iSay panel, mobile compatible, conducted in English and French.

Fielding:

Data collection from June 18th to 23rd, 2026

Questionnaire Length:

3 minutes average



Sample

1,000 respondents

Canadian population

Aged 25 to 75 years old



Data Processing

Data weighted to reflect the overall Canadian population in terms of gender, age and region.

Coloured numbers (xx%/xx%) and bubbles  indicates that this group is significantly **higher** or **lower** than other demographics within the same category/demographic.

Credibility Interval: The poll is accurate to within ± 3.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all respondents aged 25–75 been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moving Forward

The understanding of respiratory illnesses was generally high but needs improvement for pneumococcal disease and respiratory syncytial virus.

An assessment of respondents' familiarity with respiratory illnesses showed strong awareness of well-known illnesses such as influenza and COVID-19, with recognition in at least 98% of the surveyed population. However, awareness was less pronounced for illnesses such as pneumococcal disease (66%) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (71%).

Despite high awareness, respiratory illnesses had a low likelihood of being discussed with a healthcare professional in the coming months.

A little more than one-third of respondents said they were likely to proactively discuss respiratory illnesses and prevention strategies with a healthcare professional in the next six months. For about 4 out of 10 respondents, respiratory health was frequently or occasionally a topic of discussion with family or friends.

Respiratory illnesses had disrupted personal or professional plans of about one-third of respondents in the past, most commonly affecting social life and the need to use paid sick leave.

Awareness of vaccines available in Canada to help protect against respiratory illnesses was high.

Almost all respondents were familiar with influenza (98%) and COVID-19 (99%) vaccines, which were also the most common vaccines received from the list provided. Awareness for pneumococcal disease (83%)

and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (84%) vaccines was also high. Vaccination rates for these four respiratory vaccines were highest among older respondents.

Community protection and safeguarding family members were key motivations driving vaccine uptake, while concerns about safety and efficacy were the predominant barriers to vaccination.

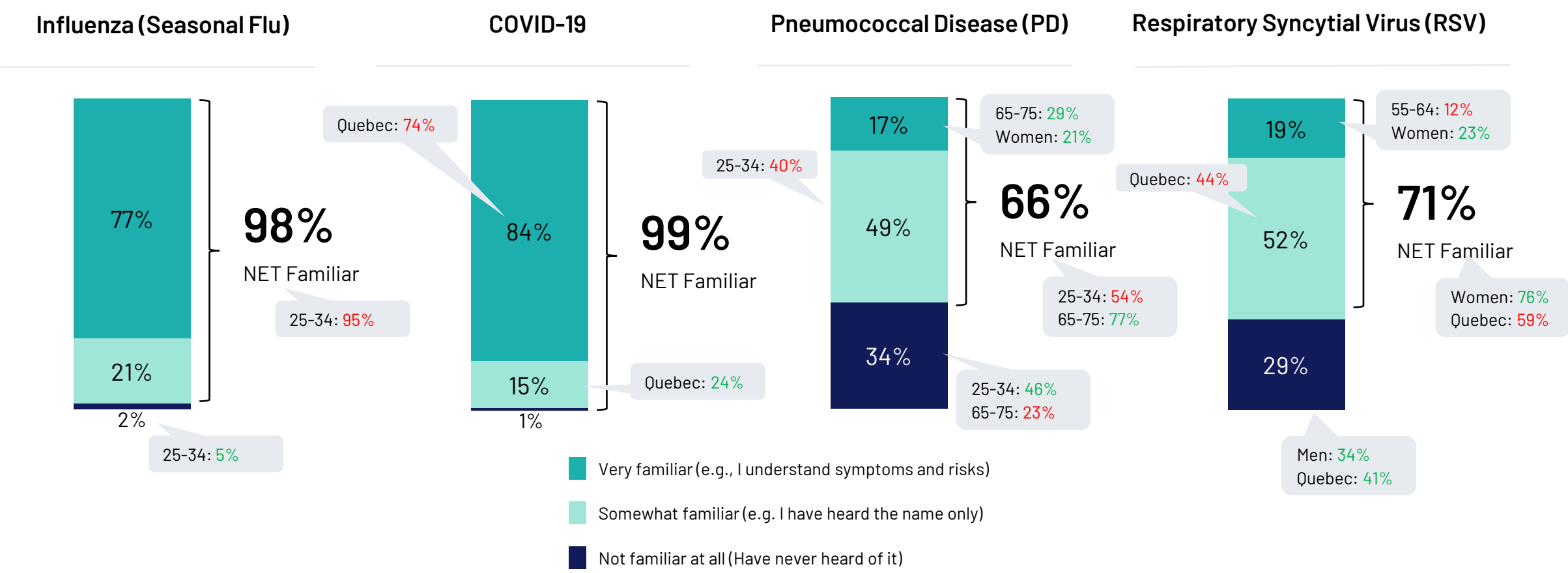
About 2 in 10 respondents reported that they have refused or delayed a vaccine when it was recommended by a healthcare provider. Family physicians, government health websites, and local pharmacists were identified as key sources of trusted information on respiratory vaccines and related health issues.

DETAILED RESULTS

RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

Familiarity with Respiratory Illnesses

Almost all respondents were familiar with influenza and COVID-19. As for pneumococcal disease (PD), two-thirds of respondents were familiar with it, while approximately 7 out of 10 respondents were familiar with the illness caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

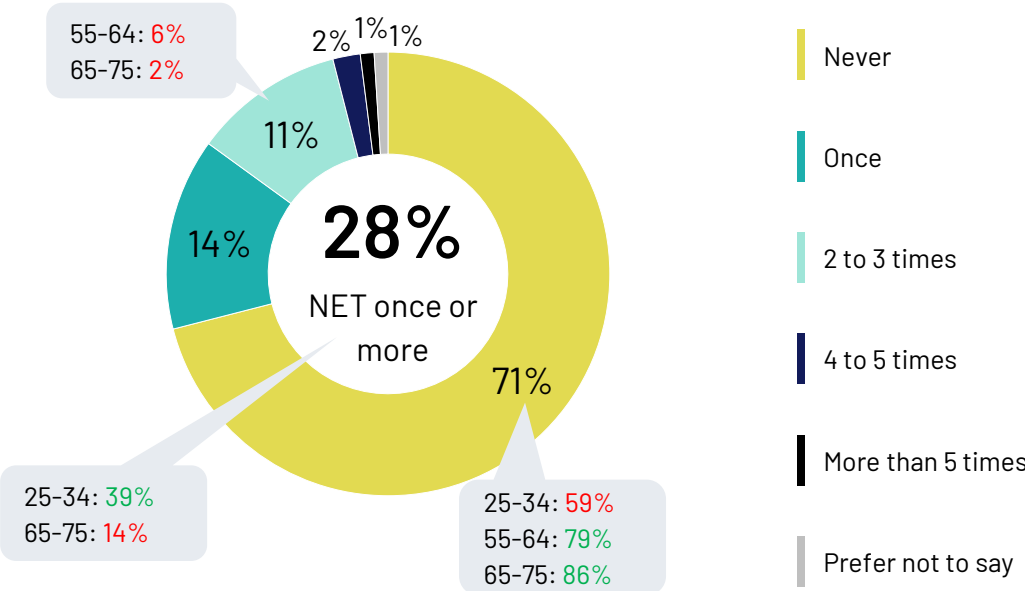


Q1. Before today, how familiar were you with each of the following respiratory illnesses?
Base: All respondents (n=1000)

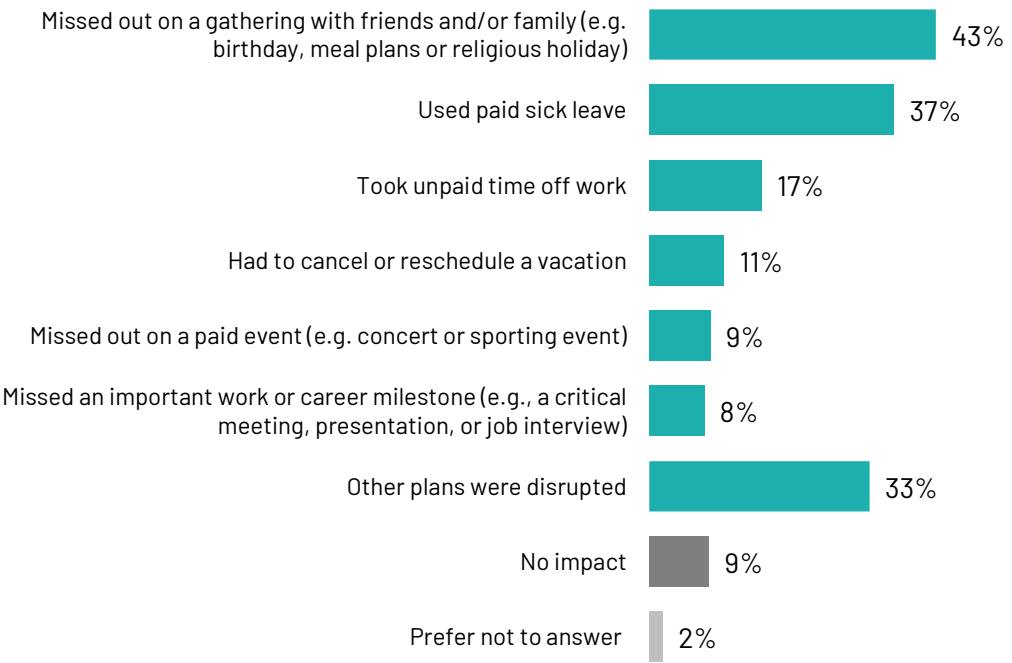
Disruptions Caused by Respiratory Illnesses

In the past year, approximately 3 out of 10 respondents reported that their plans have been cancelled one or more times due to a respiratory illness. Missing gatherings with friends and/or family and having to use paid sick leave were the two most commonly reported impacts among respondents.

Frequency of personal or professional plans being cancelled or disrupted



Types of disruptions that occurred due to them or a family member contracting influenza, COVID-19, PD or RSV



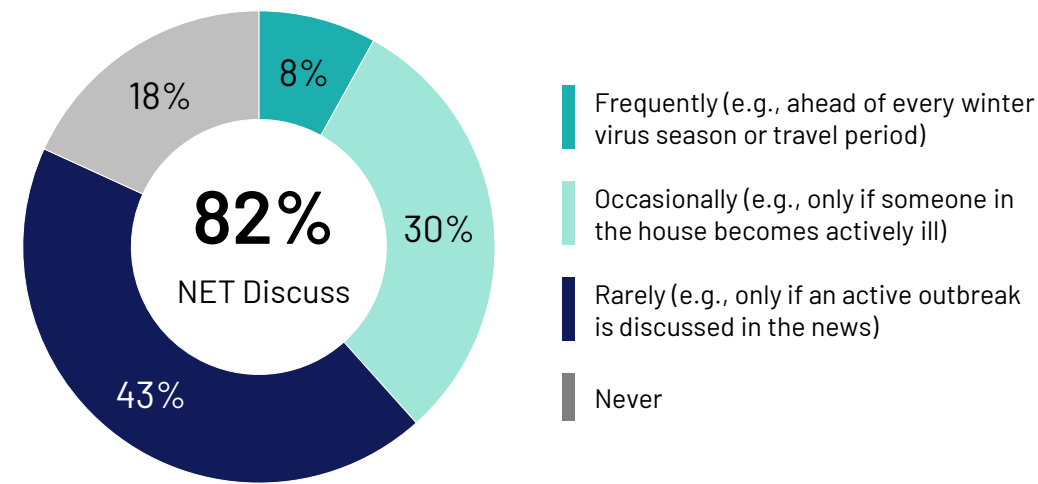
Q5. In the past year, how many times have personal or professional plans been cancelled or disrupted due to you or a family member experiencing one of the following illnesses: influenza, COVID-19, pneumococcal disease, respiratory syncytial virus?
Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Q6. Which of the following events occurred due to you or a family member experiencing one of the following illnesses: influenza, COVID-19, pneumococcal disease, respiratory syncytial virus? Select all that apply
Base: Among respondents who had plans cancelled or disrupted due to respiratory illnesses (n=275)

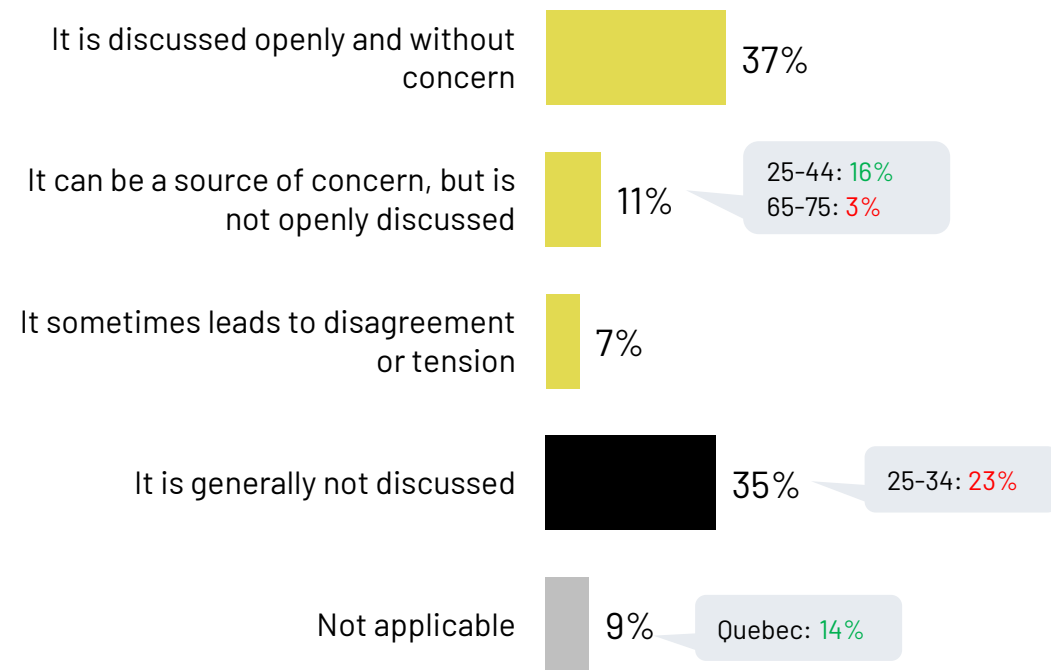
Discussions About Respiratory Health Within Social Circles

8 out of 10 respondents reported discussing respiratory health with family or friends, although half indicated that these conversation occurred rarely.

Frequency of respiratory health discussions with family or friends



How respiratory vaccination is discussed in respondents' social circles

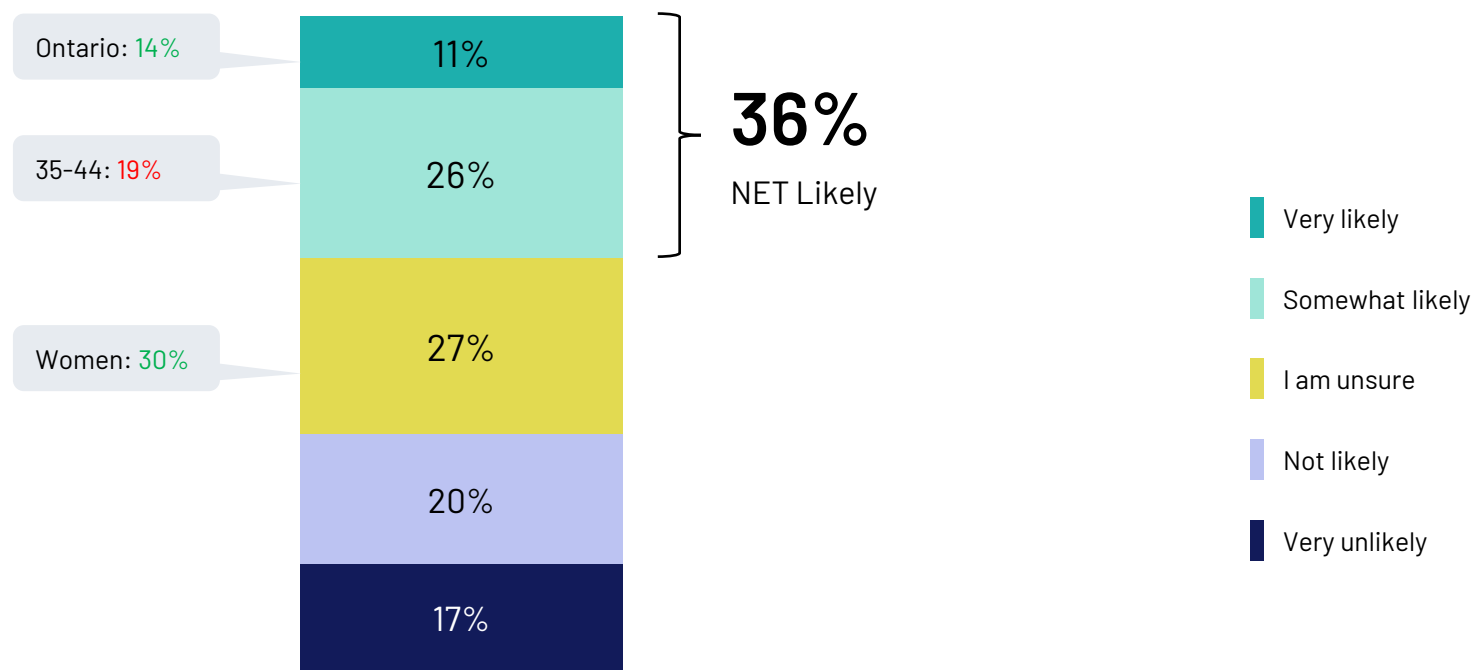


Q9. How often do you discuss respiratory health with family or friends?
Q10. Which best describes how respiratory vaccination is discussed in your social circle?
Base: All respondents (n=1000)



Likelihood of Seeking Guidance on Respiratory Illnesses and Prevention

A little more than one-third of respondents said they were likely to proactively discuss respiratory illnesses and prevention strategies with a healthcare professional in the next six months.



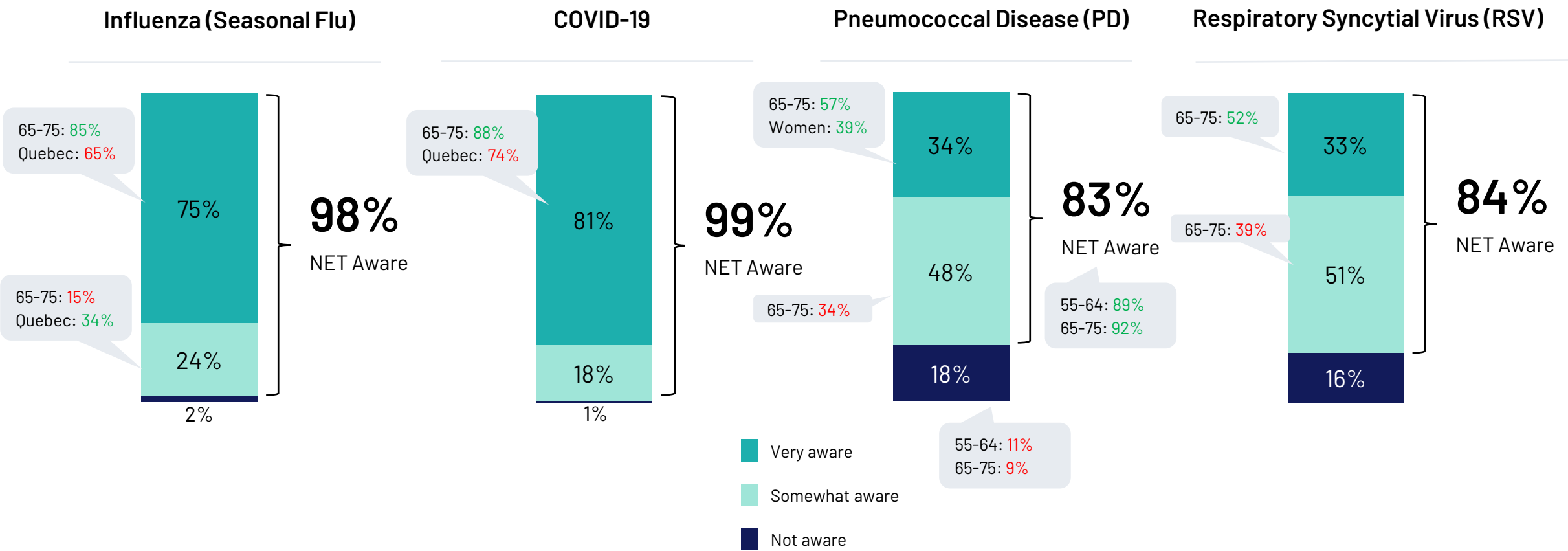
Q11. How likely are you to proactively speak with a healthcare professional about respiratory illness and prevention strategies in the next 6 months?

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

RESPIRATORY VACCINES

Awareness of Available Vaccines in Canada

Almost all respondents reported being aware of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. Slightly more than 8 out of 10 respondents were familiar with pneumococcal disease (PD) vaccine, with awareness levels higher among those aged 55+. Awareness of the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine was also high, with just over 8 in 10 respondents reporting familiarity with it.



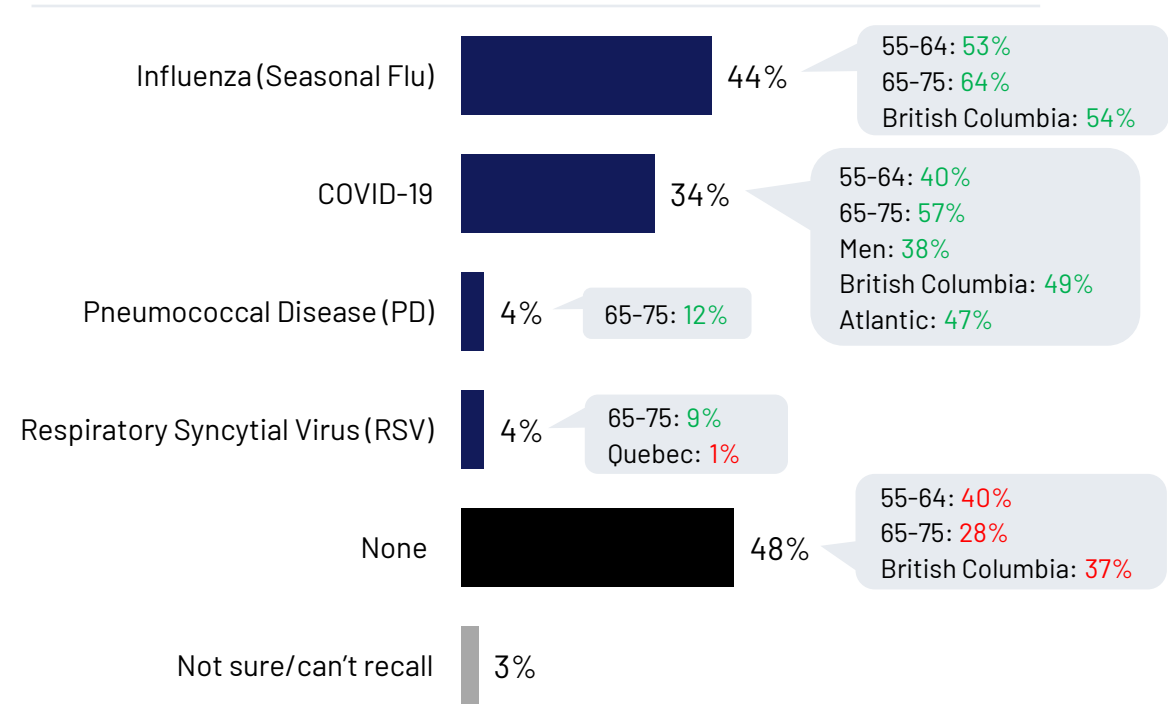
Q2. How aware are you of vaccines available in Canada to help protect against the following illnesses?
Base: Among respondents who are familiar with the respiratory illnesses (Influenza n=980 / COVID-19 n=990 / Pneumococcal Disease (PD) n=657 / Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) n= 710)



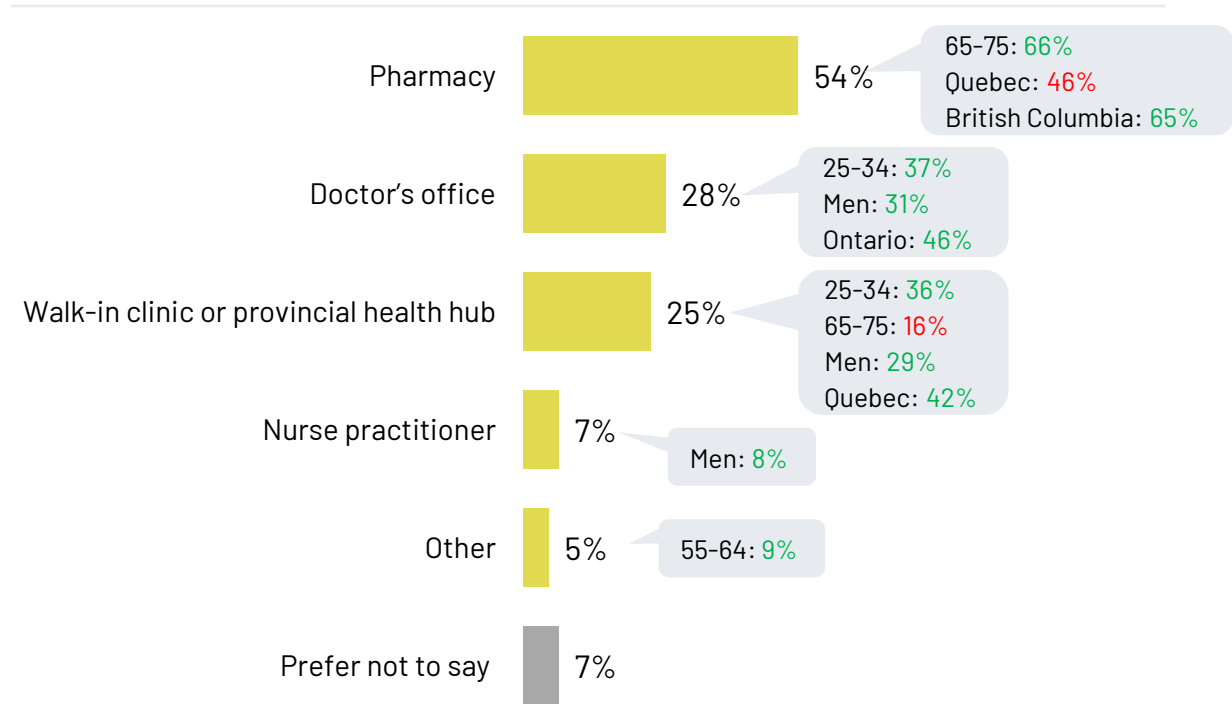
Respiratory Vaccine Uptake and Preferred Vaccination Sites

Nearly half of respondents reported not receiving a respiratory vaccine in the past 12 months. Influenza and COVID-19 were the most commonly received respiratory vaccines, particularly among respondents aged 55 and older and those in British Columbia. Pharmacies were the preferred vaccination location, especially among respondents aged 65–75 and those living in British Columbia.

Respiratory vaccines received in the last 12 months



Intended location for receiving respiratory vaccines this year

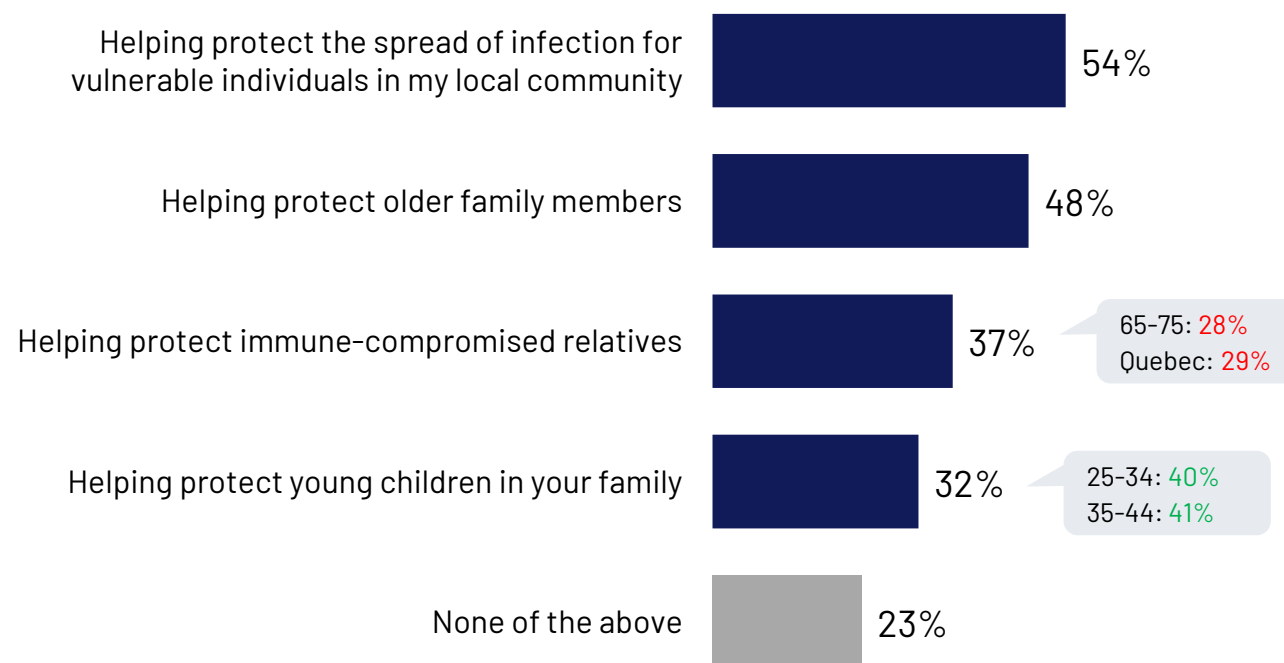


Q3. In the last 12 months, which of the following respiratory vaccines did you receive? Select all that apply
Q4. If you plan to get one or more respiratory vaccines this year, where do you intend to go? Select all that apply
Base: Among respondents who are aware of at least one respiratory illness (n=991)



Factors Influencing Respiratory Vaccine Uptake

Helping protect vulnerable individuals in the community was the leading driver of respiratory vaccine uptake among respondents. Helping protect older family members was the second most frequently cited motivator, reported by approximately half of respondents.



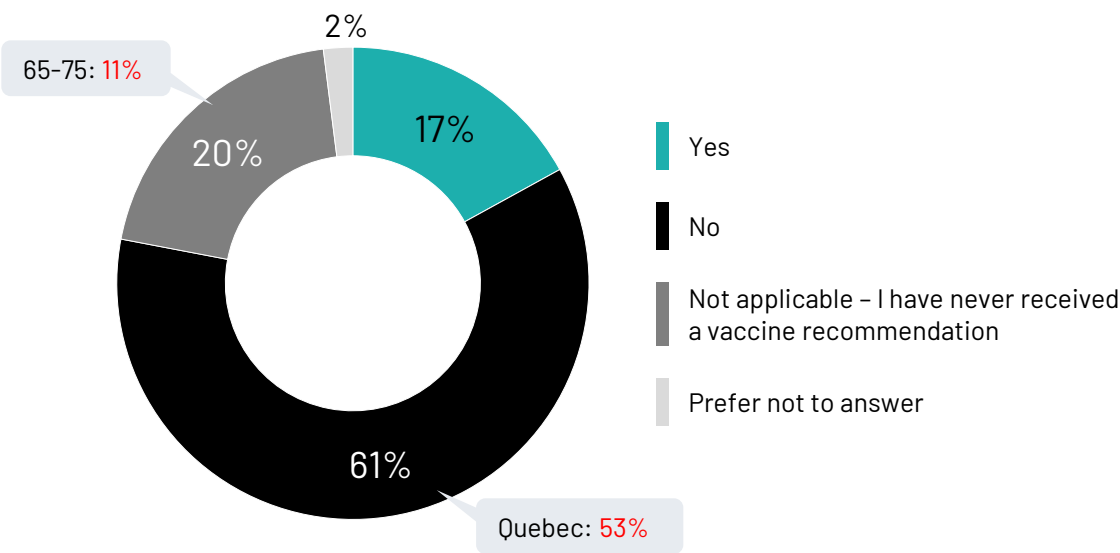
Q7. Which of the following factors have an influence on your decision to receive recommended respiratory vaccinations? Select all that apply

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Factors Influencing Decisions to Decline or Delay a Recommended Respiratory Vaccine

About 2 out of 10 respondents reported having refused or delayed a respiratory vaccine recommended by a healthcare provider while 2 out of 10 respondents reported never having received any vaccine recommendation. Concerns about vaccine safety and effectiveness were the primary reasons cited for these decisions.

Declined or Delayed Respiratory Vaccines Recommended by a Healthcare Provider



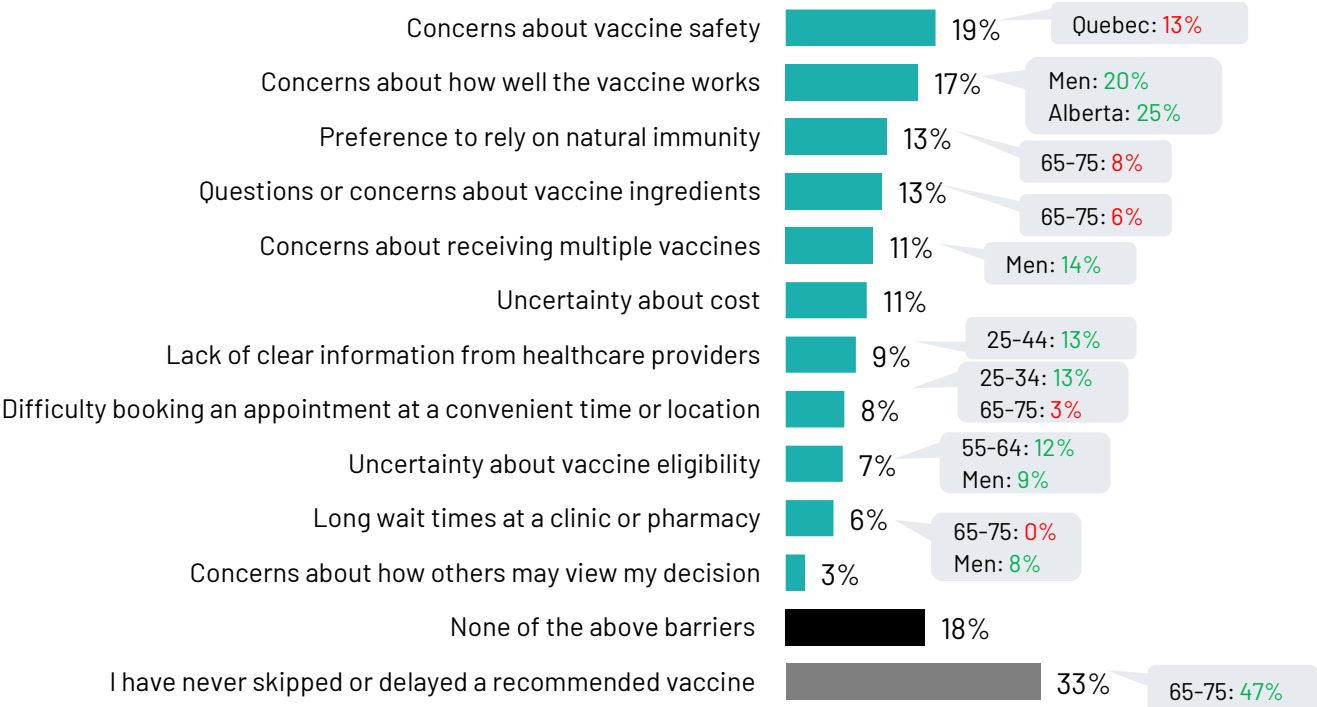
Q12. Has a healthcare provider ever recommended a respiratory vaccine for you or a dependent that you chose to decline or delay?

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Q13. Which of the following, if any, have contributed to you delaying or not receiving a recommended respiratory vaccine for yourself or a family member? Select all that apply

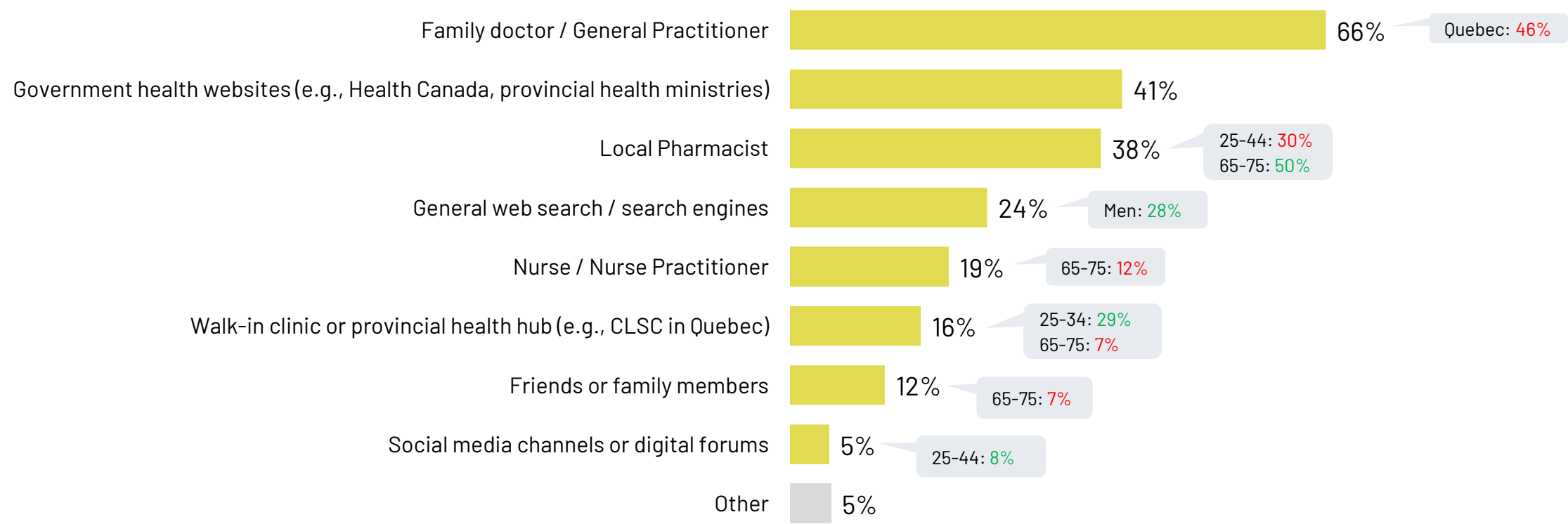
Base: Among respondents who are aware of at least one respiratory illness (n=991)

Reasons for Delaying or Declining Recommended Respiratory Vaccines for themselves or a family member



Sources of Trusted Information on Respiratory Illnesses and Vaccination

Family physicians/general practitioners were reported as the most trusted source of information on respiratory illnesses, including vaccine recommendations and eligibility. Government health websites and local pharmacists were reported as the second and third most trusted sources among respondents.

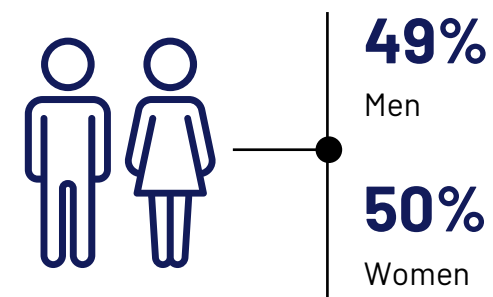


Q8. Where do you typically go for trusted information about respiratory illness, including vaccine recommendations and eligibility? Select all that apply
Base: All respondents (n=1000)

DEMOGRAPHICS

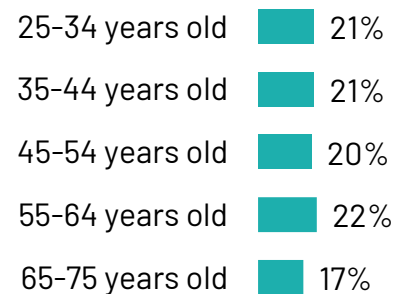
Respondents Profile

Gender

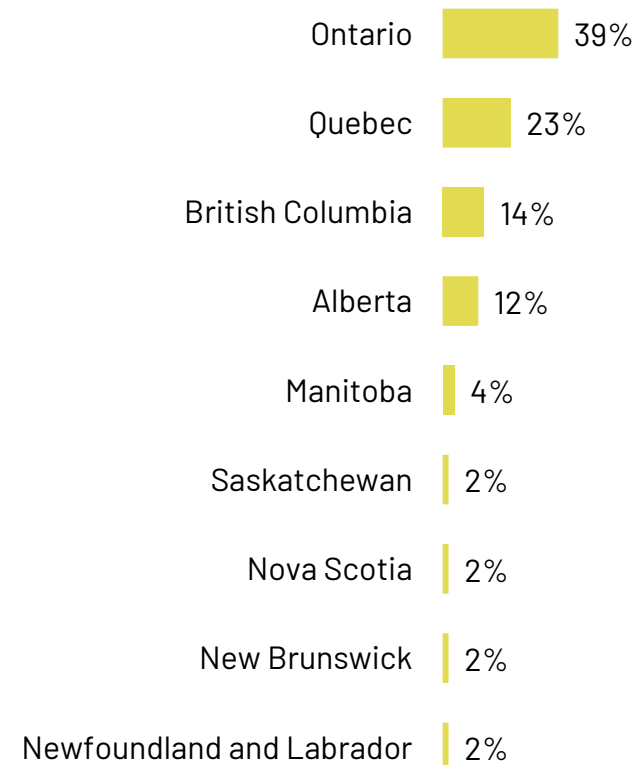


Another gender: 1%

Age



Region



Base: All respondents (n=1000)