FACTUM

One in three Ontarians report longer specialist waits. Many households affected by chronic conditions report waiting months for their first specialist appointment, and some report emergency department or walk-in clinic visits because of specialist waits.

Toronto, ON, November 2, 2026 - Access to specialist care remains a challenge for Ontarians. One in three (34%) report longer waits to see a specialist over the past year, compared with 7% who report shorter waits. Another 34% report no change, while 25% say they have not seen a specialist during this period.

Reported changes in specialist wait times over the past year

Response	Ontario overall
My experience has been shorter wait times	7%
My experience has been longer wait times	34%
No change	34%
I have not seen a specialist in the past year	25%

Base: All Ontario respondents. Unweighted n=1,156; weighted base=1,156. Percentages are weighted.

Northern Ontarians rate access to specialist care poorly

Across Ontario, 26% rate access to specialist care in their community as poor or very poor. In Northern Ontario, nearly half select one of these ratings: 28% select “Poor” and 21% “Very poor”.

Rating of access to specialist care in the community

Response	Ontario overall	Northern Ontario
Very good	6%	2%
Good	28%	13%
Neither good nor poor	32%	30%
Poor	16%	28%
Very poor	10%	21%
Don’t know / Not sure	8%	6%

Base: All respondents. Ontario overall: unweighted n=1,156; weighted base=1,156. Northern Ontario: unweighted n=106; weighted base=64. Percentages are weighted.

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GAME CHANGERS

FACTUM

Households affected by chronic conditions face lengthy specialist waits

Among Ontario respondents reporting a chronic condition affecting themselves or a household member, about four in ten report a wait of three months or longer following their most recent specialist referral for a chronic condition. This includes 18% reporting a wait of three to less than six months and 22% reporting six months or longer.

Among Northern Ontario respondents reporting a personal or household chronic condition, 36% report waiting six months or longer following their most recent specialist referral for a chronic condition.

Wait from the most recent referral to the first specialist appointment for a chronic condition

Response	Ontario overall	Northern Ontario
Less than 1 month	12%	11%
1 month to less than 3 months	23%	21%
3 months to less than 6 months	18%	19%
6 months or longer	22%	36%
The appointment has not yet taken place	8%	6%
Not applicable	9%	3%
Don’t know / Not sure	8%	3%

Base: Respondents reporting a personal or household chronic condition. Ontario overall: unweighted n=632; weighted base=603. Northern Ontario: unweighted n=67; weighted base=39. Percentages are weighted. Northern referral results are based on a small subgroup and should be interpreted with caution.

Specialist waits lead some households to emergency departments or walk-in clinics

Among respondents asked about their most recent specialist referral for a chronic condition affecting themselves or a household member, more than one in three (35%) say the wait led them or their household member to visit a walk-in clinic or emergency department. Overall, 17% report a walk-in clinic visit and 21% an emergency department visit. Some selected both settings.

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Whether the wait for that specialist appointment led to a visit elsewhere

Response	Ontario overall
Yes, at a walk-in clinic	17%
Yes, at an emergency department	21%
No	61%
Don’t know	4%

Base: Respondents reporting a personal or household chronic condition, excluding those who selected “Not applicable” at the referral wait-time question. Unweighted n=569; weighted base=546. Percentages are weighted. Multiple responses permitted for the two “Yes” options. The 35% combined proportion counts each respondent once.

Ontario wait times prompt some households to consider specialist care abroad

Across Ontario, 14% report that they or someone in their household considered seeking specialist care outside Canada, in the United States or elsewhere, because of wait times for care in Ontario during the past five years. 80% say they have not considered this, while 6% are unsure. This question measures consideration of care abroad, rather than whether treatment was received outside Canada.

Consideration of specialist care outside Canada in the past five years because of Ontario wait times

Response	Ontario overall
Yes	14%
No	80%
Don’t know / Not sure	6%

Base: All Ontario respondents. Unweighted n=1,156; weighted base=1,156. Percentages are weighted. This question was not restricted to respondents reporting a personal or household chronic condition.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos survey conducted from October 13 to 19, 2026, on behalf of the Ontario Medical Association. For this survey, a sample of 1,156 Ontario residents aged 18 and older was interviewed online via the Ipsos Omnibus panel. Quota sampling and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online surveys is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the overall survey is accurate to within ±3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Ontario adults been surveyed. The credibility interval is wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to, coverage error and measurement error.

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