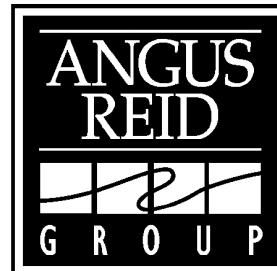


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## CTV/ANGUS REID GROUP POLL

- **USE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES AND PRACTICES -**
  - **User Profile, Reasons For Using Alternative Medicines and Practices, Health Care Responsibility -**
  - **DANGERS TO ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES AND PRACTICES -**
  - **Regulation, Long Term Negative Health Effects, Letting Experts Decide -**
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This Canada-wide poll was conducted by telephone between August 22nd and 24th, 1997, among a representative cross-section of 1,200 Canadian adults aged 18 years and older.

The data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With the Canadian-wide sample of 1,200, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 2.8$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within the various sub-groupings of the survey population.

## USE AND DANGERS OF ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES AND PRACTICES

One in five (19%) Canadians have started using alternative medicines and practices within the past five years according to the findings of recent CTV/Angus Reid Group poll. Further, of the 42% of Canadians currently embracing alternative medicines and practices, the three key reasons for doing so are that they "don't hurt you and may help a bit" (mentioned by 48% of the 42% who use it), that "regular medicines on their own aren't working for me" (reported by 34% of the 42% who use it), and that "alternative medicines and practices are more natural" (mentioned by 33% of the 42% of users). As well, over nine in ten (93%) Canadians affirm that while doctors give good advice, it is up to individuals to be responsible for their own health.

When assessing dangers to alternative medicines and practices, the majority (67%) of Canadians believe that alternative medicines and practices should be regulated to ensure public safety. In fact, the majority (56%) value opinions offered by health care professionals because they feel modern medicine is too complicated. And finally, Canadians are split as to the long term health effects of using alternative medicines and practices: almost one-half (49%) of Canadians do not express concern over the long term effects of alternative medicines and practices, although the remaining one-half (51%) question the outcome of using these treatments over long periods of time.

These are the highlights of the findings of the of the nation-wide poll of 1,200 Canadian adults aged 18 years and older conducted between August 22nd and 24th, 1997:

### ***User Profile***

Over four in ten (42%) Canadians use alternative medicines and practices. The majority (58%) of Canadians, however, have not. Those more likely to report using alternative medicines and practices include:

- ☐ Residents of British Columbia (56%);
- ☐ Females (46%, slightly more than 39% of males using it);
- ☐ Canadians aged 35 to 54 (49%); and,
- ☐ More affluent Canadians (52% among those with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more).

- ♦ Of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices, the majority (55%, which represents 23% of all Canadians) indicate that they have been using it for over five years.
  - Longer use of alternative medicines does not differ significantly between Canadian regions or gender, however, increases as does one's age: 40% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 started using alternative medicines over five years ago; increased to 57% among those between the ages of 35 and 54; and, further increased to 67% among Canadians aged 55 and older.
- Of the 42% using alternative medicines and practices, just under one-half (45% or 19% of all Canadians) mention that they started using it within the past five years (either between two and five years ago (24% or 10% of all Canadians), one to two years ago (13% or 6% of all Canadians) or within the past year (8% or 3% of all Canadians)).
- ♦ More recent users of alternative medicines beginning to use it within the past five years tend to be younger respondents (60%) and middle income earners (51% among those with annual household incomes of between \$30,000 and \$59,000).
- ♦ The overall *incidence* of using alternative medicines and practices among all Canadians has grown dramatically by 81% over the past five years. This means that 23% of Canadians aged 18 and older were using alternative medicines and practices five years ago, and this has risen to 42% today (almost double the amount of Canadians using it now than five years ago for an overall growth of 81%). Importantly, the growth in the incidence of using alternative medicines and practices differs among age groups, as follows:
  - An astounding 146% growth among Canadians aged 18 to 34 over the past five years. This means that 14% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 were using alternative medicines and practices 5 years ago, which has risen to 34% over the past five years;
  - 76% growth among Canadians aged 35 to 54 over the past five years. This means that 28% of Canadians aged 35 to 54 were using alternative medicines and practices five years ago, which has risen to 49% over the past five years; and,
  - 49% growth among Canadians aged 55 years and older over the past five years. This means that 28% of Canadians aged 55 years and older were using alternative medicines and practices five years ago, which has risen to

43% over the past five years.

- ♦ Of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices, they mention using chiropractics (59%, which represents 25% of all Canadians) more often than any other alternative medicine or practice (especially among more affluent Canadians -- 71% with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more), followed by herbology (23% or 10% of all Canadians), acupuncture (22% or 9% of all Canadians) and homeopathy (18% or 8% of all Canadians).
  - Other types (24% of the 42% using alternative medicines and practices mention additional treatments) of alternative medicines and practices being used include: massage therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology, hypnosis, vitamin therapy, health foods, energetic healing, reiki, yoga, Native American Medicine, osteopathy and physiotherapy.
- Of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices, eight in ten (80%) feel that these treatments or practices are either "very" (32%) or "somewhat" (48%) important to their own personal health.
- Of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices, nine in ten (90%) are either "very" (48%) or "somewhat" (42%) satisfied with the alternative medicines or practices that they have used.

### ***Reasons For Using Alternative Medicines and Practices***

The reasons reported by the 42% of those using alternative medicines and practices for doing so are:

- Almost half (48%) of the 42% using alternative medicines and practices explain that they use it because *"alternative medicines and practices don't hurt you and may help a bit"*, which is reasoning offered more often by users in Quebec (60%) and among younger users aged 18 to 34 years (57%).
  - In addition, approximately one-third (34%) of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices report using it because *"regular medicines on their*

*own aren't working for me"* (34%) or because *"alternative medicines and practices are more natural"* (33%).

- ☐ Just under one-quarter (23%) of the 42% of alternative medicine users mention using alternative medicine because they're *"worried about doctor prescribed medicines and practices"* and even fewer users choose to use alternative medicine because they *"get better service from alternative medicine providers than from the regular health care system"* (17% of the 42% who use alternative medicines and practices).
- ☐ Only six percent (6%) of the 42% of Canadians using alternative medicine indicate that one of their main reasons for utilizing alternative medicine is because they *"don't trust modern medicine and practices"*.

### ***Health Care Responsibility***

Canadians acknowledge that they are in control of their own health profile as opposed to chance, and that it is their personal responsibility to maintain good health.

- ♦ An overwhelming majority (93%) of Canadians either "strongly" (71%) or "somewhat" (22%) agree that *"Doctors can give advice, but people have the main responsibility to look after their own health"*, in comparison to a small minority (6%) who either "strongly" (3%) or "somewhat" (3%) disagree with this statement. One percent are undecided.
- Over three-quarters (77%) of Canadians either "strongly" (58%) or "somewhat" (19%) disagree with the statement, *"My health is like the weather, there's not much I can do about it"*, compared to over two in ten (23%) who either "strongly" (11%) or "somewhat" (22%) agree.
  - ☐ Residents of Alberta (85%), younger Canadians aged 18 to 34 (86%) and more affluent Canadians with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more (89%) express the strongest levels of disagreement with this statement.

### ***Regulating Alternative Medicines and Practices***

The majority (67%) of Canadians feel that *"the government should regulate alternative medicines and practices in the same way that they regulate other drugs and practices to make sure they are safe and really do what it is they claimed they will do"*. Conversely, three in ten (30%) Canadians believe that if people *"want regulated medicines and practices, they'll use the regular medical system, and that governments should not try to control alternative medicines and practices"*.

- More affluent Canadians (74% with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more), residents of Quebec (72%) and younger Canadians aged 18 to 34 (71%) are disproportionately more likely to feel that the government should regulate alternative medicines and practices.
- On the other hand, older Canadians aged 55 and older (35%) are more prone to feel that alternative medicines and practices should not be regulated.

### ***Long Term Negative Effects***

Canadians are split as to the long term health effects of using alternative medicines and practices: although one-half (49%) of Canadians do not express concern over the long term effects of alternative medicines and practices, the remaining one-half (51%) express reservations about long term effects of using these treatments.

- One-half (49%) of Canadians *disagree* either "strongly" (17%) or "somewhat" (32%) that *"many alternative medicines and practices may have long term negative effects on the health of people who use them"*, in comparison to just over one-third (35%) who either "strongly" (10%) or "somewhat" (25%) agree, and to just over one in six (16%) Canadians who are unsure.
- Interestingly, those most likely to discard views that alternative medicines and practices may have negative long term health effects (i.e. residents in British Columbia and the most affluent) are also those who are most likely to use alternative medicines and practices.
  - ☐ Residents of British Columbia (62%) and the most affluent (59%) are more likely to report that they disagree that "alternative medicines and practices may have long term negative health effects".

- ☐ On the other hand, the least affluent Canadians (41% among those with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000) and older respondents aged 55 and older (39%) are more likely to agree that alternative medicines and practices may have long term negative health effects.

### ***Letting Experts Decide***

- The majority (56%) of Canadians polled either "strongly" (24%) or "somewhat" (32%) *agree* that *"modern medicine is so complicated that it's better to let the experts decide what is to be done"*. Just over four in ten (41%) Canadians either "strongly" (18%) or "somewhat" (23%) disagree with this statement and three percent are undecided.
- ☐ Agreement with this statement is disproportionately higher among Atlantic Canadians (67%), older Canadians (64% aged 55 years and older) and among the least affluent (63% among those with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000).

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