
CANADIANS SAY GOVERNMENT FUNDING CUTS – NOT THE FLU – RESPONSIBLE FOR ER OVERCROWDING, BUT FLU SHOTS AND MEDICATIONS WOULD HELP

- 59 Percent Blame Federal and Provincial Cuts for Recent ER Difficulties –***
 - 89 Percent Say Increased Government Funding Will Improve ER Situation –***
 - 75 Percent Support Provincial Coverage for Flu Shots; 73 Percent Believe Flu Shots Will Be Effective In Improving ER Conditions –***
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This Angus Reid Group poll was conducted by telephone between January 13th and 20th, 2000 among a representative cross-section of 1,500 Canadians, aged 18 and older.

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

With a national sample of 1500 one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be much larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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Canadians blame government funding cuts (59%) rather than patient misuse (39%) for overcrowding in emergency rooms across Canada. Furthermore, Canadians do not expect that the end of flu season will mean an end to ER overcrowding (65% disagree). What will help? Increased funding (89%) and encouraging longer business hours at walk-in clinics (89%) are the favoured solutions.

While not being the main cause of the problem, Canadians clearly recognize the impact flu season has had on emergency room services across the country. Three-quarters (75%) feel the provinces should cover flu shots, and another seven in ten (73%) say free flu shots will improve ER difficulties. Further, two-thirds (67%) feel the provinces should cover the cost of new flu medications, and as many (67%) feel that such funding will be effective for improving the ER situation.

These are the findings from an Angus Reid Group survey of 1,500 adult Canadians (aged 18 and older) conducted between January 13th and 20th, 2000. With a national sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be much larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

Government Cutbacks Blamed for ER Difficulties

Six in Ten Blame Government Cutbacks for ER Difficulties

The majority (59%) believe that federal and provincial funding cuts to healthcare services are mainly to blame for recent difficulties in emergency rooms in Canada. Four in ten (39%), on the other hand, say the fault lies mainly with people who go to the ER for minor problems that do not require urgent attention. Most likely to blame cuts to government funding are British Columbians (67%) and university graduates (64%). Most likely to say misuse of ER rooms is to blame are Albertans (45%), and those aged 55 and older (46%).

Only One-Third Think ER Overcrowding Will Disappear When Flu Season Ends

The majority (65%) *disagree* (38% strongly, 27% somewhat) with the notion that emergency room overcrowding will disappear when flu season ends. One-third (34%), on the other hand, agree with this statement (12% strongly, 22% somewhat). *Least* likely to believe the end of the flu season will also mean the end of ER overcrowding are British Columbians (81%), Atlantic Canadians (69%), women (69%) and university graduates (69%).

Are Emergency Rooms Providing Services in a Reasonable Amount of Time? Canadians Split

Half (47%) of Canadians agree (18% strongly, 30% somewhat) that their local hospital emergency room provides services in a reasonable amount of time. The other half (48%) disagree – notably, 30 percent *strongly* disagree. According to the survey results, hospital ER's in Alberta (60%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (66%) are most likely to provide services in a reasonable amount of time, whereas respondents living in Quebec (61%) or the Atlantic provinces (54%) are more likely to give their hospital ER's a negative response.

Responses also vary according to age and affluence: agreement that ER's are providing services in a reasonable amount of time varies from 39 percent among 18 to 34 year-olds to 56 percent among respondents aged 55 and older. Similarly, at 42 percent less affluent respondents (annual household income of less than \$30K) are less likely to rate ER services favourably than those from more affluent households (52% among those with an annual household income of at least \$60K).

Responses among those who have either been to an emergency room themselves for treatment in the last six months, or who have had a family member visit an ER do not vary from those who have not visited an emergency room (46% and 48% agree, respectively).

89 Percent Say Increased Government Funding Will Improve ER Situation

Nine in ten Canadians feel that an increase to government funding for emergency room services would be either very (53%) or somewhat effective (36%) as a means of improving the situation in hospital ER's. Responses do not vary significantly along any regional or demographic lines.

89 Percent Support Longer Business Hours at Walk-In Clinics

Nine in ten Canadians feel that encouraging medical walk-in clinics to stay open with longer business hours would be either very (57%) or somewhat effective (33%) in improving the situation in hospital ER's. Responses do not vary significantly along any regional or demographic lines.

80 Percent Say Discouraging People From Going to ER with Only Minor Problems Will Improve ER Situation

Eight in ten Canadians feel that discouraging people from going to emergency rooms for only minor medical problems would be either very (48%) or somewhat effective (33%) as a means of improving the situation in hospital ER's. This option is most likely to be deemed effective by Albertans (87%).

ER Patients Satisfied With Service

45 Percent Have Visited an ER in Past Six Months...

Almost half of Canadians have had experience with a hospital emergency room in the last six months – one in four (26%) say a family member has been to an ER, one in seven (15) say they themselves have been, and another 4 percent report that they, as well as another family member, have been to an ER.

69 Percent Were Satisfied With the Service They Received

Of those who have had an experience with a hospital ER in the past six months, seven in ten report that, overall, they were either very (32%) or somewhat (37%) satisfied with the service they received in the hospital emergency room. Satisfaction was highest among those in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (80%) and Alberta (76%), those aged 55 and older (81%), those who do not have a high school diploma (77%) and university graduates (77%).

Most Say ER Visit Could Not Have Been Handled Elsewhere

Almost six in ten (57%) say their visit to the emergency room could not have been handled at a walk-in clinic or through a visit to a family doctor. The remaining four in ten (42%) admit that their visit could perhaps have been handled elsewhere.

Canadians Recognize Impact of Flu Season

75 Percent Say Provincial Health Insurance Plans Should Cover Cost of Flu Shot

Three-quarters of Canadians agree (49% strongly, 26% somewhat) that provincial health insurance plans should pay for the cost of getting a flu shot. Only one-quarter disagree (15% somewhat, 10%

strongly). There is no significant variation in results according to region. The highest levels of support for flu shot coverage are found among respondents aged 55 and older (79%), those without a high school diploma (83%) and the least affluent (80%).

67 Percent Say Provincial Health Insurance Plans Should Cover Cost of New Flu Medications

Two-thirds of Canadians agree (39% strongly, 28% somewhat) that provincial health insurance plans should pay for the cost of recently approved prescription medications to treat the flu. One-third disagree (19% somewhat, 13% strongly). Support for coverage is highest among residents of Alberta (72%) and those who do not have a high school diploma (80%). University graduates (37%) and the most affluent (38%) show the highest levels of opposition for provincial coverage.

73 Percent Say Free Flu Shots Will Improve ER Situation

Three-quarters of Canadians feel that providing free flu shots for anyone who wants one would be either very (36%) or somewhat effective (38%) as a means of improving the situation in hospital ER's. This option is most likely to be deemed effective by Albertans (80%) and those who do not have a high school diploma (83%).

67 Percent Say Funding For Flu Medications Will be Effective for Improving ER Situation

Two-thirds feel that providing provincial funding for prescription medications to treat the flu would be either very (23%) or somewhat effective (44%) as a means of improving the situation in hospital ER's. This option is most likely to be deemed effective by residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (72%) or the Atlantic provinces (72%), 18 to 34 year olds (72%), those without a high school diploma (81%) and the least affluent (75%).

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