

HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

Nine in Ten (88%) Think the Mapping of the Human Genome Will Lead to Discoveries that Will Greatly Increase our Quality of Life and Health

Two Thirds (64%) Would Want to Know if They Were At Risk of Developing a Hereditary Disease

But 62% Fear What Will Happen if People Start To Conduct Thorough Genetic Testing on Fetuses

Canadians Overwhelmingly Believe that Employers (93%) Governments (87%) or Insurance Companies (83%) Should NOT Have Access to Genetic Information

ANGUS REID WORLD WIDE

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Toronto, Ontario – The results of an Angus Reid/Globe and Mail/CTV poll reveal that nine in ten Canadians (88%) think that "the mapping of the human genome will lead to discoveries that will greatly enhance our quality of life and health". Moreover, two thirds (64%) say they would want to know if they were at risk of developing a hereditary disease. While Canadians clearly see benefit in the mapping of the genome, more than six in ten (62%) fear what will happen if people start to conduct thorough genetic testing on fetuses. Canadians overwhelmingly say that employers (93%), governments (87%) and insurance companies (83%) should not have access to genetic information.

These are the findings of an Angus Reid poll conducted between August 3 and August 12, 2000. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1500 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. 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.

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Nine in Ten (88%) Think the Mapping of the Human Genome Will Lead to Discoveries that Will Greatly Increase our Quality of Life and Health

Canadians appear to be convinced of the benefits of the mapping of the human genome. A large majority (88%) of Canadians agree that "the mapping of the human genome will lead to discoveries that will greatly increase our quality of life and health". This includes 56% who "strongly agree" and 32% who "moderately agree". Meanwhile, only 11% disagree with this statement (7% "moderately", 4% "strongly").

Similarly, two thirds (65%) of Canadians disagree (30% "moderately", 35% "strongly") with the statement "I think genetic testing will have more negative effects than positive ones"

- Higher income Canadians (71%) are more likely to disagree with this statement than those with middle (66%) or lower (58%) incomes.

Two Thirds (64%) Would Want to Know if They Were At Risk of Developing a Hereditary Disease

Most Canadians (64%) say they would want to know if they were at risk of developing a hereditary disease. In contrast, only 35% agreed with the statement "I don't think I would want to know if I was at risk of developing a hereditary disease".

In addition, 60% of Canadians say they would be likely to get tested to determine whether they were at risk of developing a hereditary disease and 69% would be likely to get tested to aid in the diagnosis of a disease or condition. Meanwhile six in ten (59%) would get tested to determine what medication to take.

But 62% Fear What Will Happen if People Start To Conduct Thorough Genetic Testing on Fetuses



Although Canadians see the benefits in genetic testing, six in ten (62%) agree with the statement "I fear what will happen if people start to conduct thorough genetic testing on fetuses". Nearly four in ten (37%) "strongly agree" with this statement while a quarter (24%) "moderately agree".

- ? Women (65%) are more likely than men (58%) to agree they fear what will happen if genetic testing on fetuses occurs.
- ? Younger (66%) and middle aged (64%) Canadians are more likely than older Canadians (54%) to agree with the statement.

In addition, most Canadians (62%) disagree (42% "strongly", 19% "moderately") that "once the technology is perfected, all Canadians should be genetically tested".

- ? Middle aged Canadians (67%) are most likely to disagree followed by younger (62%) and then older (53%) Canadians.
- ? Disagreement increases with income from 53% of low income households to two-thirds (66%) of high income households.

Canadians Overwhelmingly Believe that Employers (93%) Governments (87%) or Insurance Companies (83%) Should NOT Have Access to Genetic Information

Canadians are clear on the issue of who should have access to genetic information. They overwhelmingly say that employers (93%), the provincial or federal government (87%) and insurance companies (83%) should not have access to this information.

In contrast, there is almost universal agreement (96%) that a person's doctor should have access to their genetic make-up and Canadians are divided but a slim majority say that pharmacists (56%) and nurses (51%) should have access to this information.

With regard to parents having access to the results of genetic testing of their children, Canadians are much more likely to say that parents should have access to the results of their

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children under 16 years of age (83%) than they are to having the results of their unborn fetuses (68%).

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