

CANADA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: A REPORT CARD

Canadians See No Improvement In The Health Care System Since 2003 & Are Less Optimistic About Future Of Health Care

Survey Also Finds Canadians Overestimate How Well Our Health Care System Performs In OECD Ranking



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Toronto, ON – The fifth annual report card on the health care system in Canada, an Ipsos-Reid study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), finds that Canadians see no improvement in the health care system since 2003 and are less optimistic about its future. It also finds that Canadians overestimate how well the Canadian health care system performs in comparison to those of other developed countries.

As in years past, Canadians were asked to grade a number of aspects of the current health care system and rate their level of access to services. In this year's survey, Canadians were also asked to estimate how well Canada's health care system compares with other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

While this year's study is quite consistent with last year's in terms of Canadians' assessment of overall quality of the health care system, with six in ten (63%) Canadians giving the health care system a B grade or better, there has been a decline in optimism about the future of health care services, with half (50%) of Canadians saying that health care services in their community will get somewhat (36%) or much worse (14%) over the next two or three years. This is a 13-percentage point increase over the proportion that felt this way in 2003.



In terms of Canada's performance in relation to other developed countries, the study demonstrates that Canadians are unaware of Canada's underperformance across several key indicators. While Canadians are correct in thinking that Canada ranks 8th out of 30 countries in terms of life expectancy, Canadians overestimate Canada's ranking across most of the performance indicators, notably the proportion of the system that is funded by the public sector, out of pocket expenses incurred for health care, and the number of physicians per person.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Canadian Medical Association poll conducted from July 11th to July 15th, 2005. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,006 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.2 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 weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Overall, the Health Care System Receives a B Rating

Canadians continue to assign the overall quality of the health care system a mildly positive rating.

- Six in ten (63%) Canadians give the health care system a B grade or better in terms of overall quality; two in ten (18%) Canadians give an A rating and four in ten (45%) give a B rating. However, three in ten (29%) Canadians give the health care system a C and 8% give it an F.



- Two-thirds (67%) of Canadians grade their most recent experience with the health care system in their community as either an A or a B. While the overall proportion assigning a B grade or better remains fairly consistent with 2003 (71%), the proportion who offer an A has decreased from a third in 2003 to just over one in four (26%) in 2005.
- Since 2003, fewer Canadians give an A to Canadian governments on their performance in dealing with health care; the federal government (7% in 2003 to 5%), and their provincial government (11% in 2003 to 6%).

Canadians express more mixed views when asked to rate their ability to access specific health care services in their community. Since 2003, there has been an overall downward trend, with fewer Canadians rating their access to health care services in their community as an A across all measures:

- **Access to a family doctor in your community** - 32% give an A, down from 35% in 2003
- **Access to walk in clinics in your community** - 26% give an A, down from 28% in 2003
- **Access to emergency room services** - 19% give an A, down from 23% in 2003
- **Access to medical specialists** - 13% give an A, down from 16% in 2003
- **Access to health care services on evenings and weekends in your community** - 12% give an A, down from 14% in 2003
- **Access to modern diagnostic equipment such as MRIs and CT scans** - 11% give an A, down from 14% in 2003

Canadians Overestimate Canada's Performance on Health Care

When asked how Canada ranks when compared to the top 30 developed countries in the world, Canadians overestimate how well the Canadian health care system performs on a number of important indicators compared to the OECD ranking¹:

- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 11th out of 30 in terms of total health spending per person by Governments, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 10th out of 29.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 10th out of 30 in terms of the proportion of the system that is funded by the public sector, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 21st out of 29.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 12th out of 30 in terms of the amount of out of pocket spending by individuals for health care services, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 7th out of 24.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 13th out of 30 in terms of the number of physicians per person, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 26th out of 30.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 13th out of 30 in terms of access to health technology, specifically the number of MRI machines per person, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 15th out of 26.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 13th out of 30 in terms of the number of acute care hospital beds per person, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 17th out of 27.
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 10th out of 30 in terms of infant mortality (i.e. the death of infants in the first year of life, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 22nd out of 30².
- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 8th out of 30 in terms of life expectancy, the same ranking as the OECD.

¹ Source: OECD Health Data 2005. For some items, data were not available for all OECD countries.

² In the United States, Canada and some Nordic countries, very premature babies with a low chance of survival are registered as live births, which may not be the case in other countries.



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- The Canadian public gives Canada the rank of 9th out of 30 in terms of literacy, whereas the OECD ranks Canada 9th out of 18.³

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³ Source: OECD International Adult Literacy Survey 1994-1998

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- 5 -

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