

6 IN 10 CANADIANS CONCERNED WITH POTENTIAL BIRD FLU OUTBREAK

While Most Take “Wait And See” Approach (69%), 1 Million (4%) Admit To Stocking Up On Cash, Food, Water and Medicine In Anticipation of Outbreak – 27% Thinking About Doing So

Almost Unanimous Support For Hard Measures To Prevent Spread



Ipsos Reid

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Toronto, ON – With most experts predicting that the Avian Flu virus (H5N1) could hit North America by this fall, and with the Quebec government actually urging its citizens to start “stocking up” provisions in advance of a potential pandemic, a new survey by Ipsos Reid for CanWest Global indicates that 6 in 10 (60%) Canadians are concerned about the virus and approximately 1,000,000 are already stock-piling such items as cash, food, water and medicine as a precaution and another 27% are thinking about doing so. Most (69%) however indicate that they’ll wait until a Bird Flu epidemic actually happens to decide what to do. In the interim, Canadians show almost unanimous views that preventive measures as applied to business’, humans and pets be put in place—including court ordered quarantines and criminal charges for violation, relaxed business sick leave provisions for employees and the destruction of pets that may be exposed to the virus.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted from March 17 to 20, 2006 via a regionally representative online Canadian sample of 1,621 adults. With a sample of this size, the results can be considered accurate 95% of the time with a ± 2.5 margin of error, of what it would have been had this entire population been surveyed. 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 latest Census data.

Concern Levels Over Avian Flu Highest Among Older Canadians...

Six in 10 (60%) Canadians indicate that they are concerned (15% very/45% somewhat) with Avian Flu in Canada: half (49%) of those aged 18–34 say they are concerned compared to 6 in 10 (62%) aged 35–54, and 7 in 10 (68%) aged 55 and older. Further, there is a pronounced gender concern gap: more women (67%) than men (52%) are concerned about the virus.

Regionally, on the heels of explicit warnings from their provincial government to be vigilant, residents of Quebec appear much less likely to be concerned (49%) about Avian Flu than Canadians in the rest of the country (62%)—with those in Ontario (64%), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (64%) Atlantic Canada (63%), British Columbia (63%) and Alberta (57%) showing comparable levels of concern.

So, Are Canadians Concerned Enough To Prepare? 1 Million Have Already Started...

While almost two thirds of the population in almost every province indicates a significant level of concern about the potential arrival of the virus that some predict could spark a pandemic and have far ranging effects on all dimensions of North American society, full majority of Canadians (69%) say they will wait until a Bird Flu epidemic actually happens (if it happens) to decide what to do.

But almost three in 10 (27%) Canadians have been thinking about stocking up on supplies to be ready for a Bird Flu outbreak (but haven't done anything yet) and a sizable 4% (or approximately 1,000,000 adult Canadians) admit to having actually started to stock-pile cash, food, water and medicine in order to be ready should an epidemic occur.

Levels of preparedness differ across regions and demographic groups:

- British Columbians (9%) are the most likely to have already begun to stock up on supplies in order to be ready for a Bird Flu epidemic—perhaps ironically, Quebec residents are the lowest in the country at 2%.
- Residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (77%) are the most likely to say they will wait until a Bird Flu epidemic actually happens to decide what to do.
- More men (74%) than women (65%) say they'll wait until a Bird Flu epidemic actually happens to decide what to do.

Strong Majority of Canadians Support Mandatory, Court-ordered Quarantines for People in Canada with Bird Flu Virus or Exposed to it...

Nine in ten Canadians (91%) support court-ordered quarantines for people in Canada with Bird Flu or exposed to it, with half (50%) *strongly* supporting this measure. A mere 2% say they *strongly oppose* this measure.

The level of support for mandatory quarantines is similar across all regions of Canada and demographic groups.

Canadians also support the idea that individuals who are quarantined due to Bird Flu and violate their quarantine should face a criminal charge, with just under 9 in 10 Canadians (86%) supporting this measure—4 in 10 (39%) strongly support this measure.

Virtually All Canadians Support Mandatory Waiving of Sick Leave Restrictions for Employees Affected by Bird Flu...

Almost all Canadians (97%) support the idea that businesses should be required to waive their sick leave restrictions to ensure that potentially contagious employees stay home, with three-quarters (72%) who support this measure “strongly.”



This almost unanimous support extends across all regions of the country and demographic groups, meaning businesses' bottom line could be hit hard in the event of a Bird Flu epidemic. With sick leave restrictions removed, businesses could well face disastrous productivity problems and drops in revenue with potentially contagious employees staying home for extended periods.

Canadians Also Support Measures to Put Down Household Pets Infected With H5N1 Virus...

Just over 8 in 10 Canadians (84%) support the measure to have pets, such as cats and dogs, infected with the H5N1 virus destroyed in order to prevent transmission of the virus to humans, with half (48%) supporting this measure "strongly."

Residents of Quebec are much more likely than those in the rest of Canada to "strongly support" putting down pets infected with the H5N1 virus destroyed to prevent transmission of the virus to humans — 62% in Quebec versus 45% in the rest of Canada.

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