

2007 Report Card on the Health Care System in Canada: Health of One in Four Canadians Hurt by the Environment

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2007 Report Card on the Health Care System in Canada: Health of One in Four Canadians Hurt by the Environment

Toronto, ON – The seventh annual Report Card on the Health Care System in Canada, an Ipsos Reid study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Medical Association, finds that most Canadians remain positive about the quality, accessibility, and choice of health care services in their country.

In addition to tracking the performance of the health care system, the 2007 survey asked Canadians to assess a number of environmental factors, their impacts on health, and their own efforts, as well as those of professionals, organizations, and federal and provincial governments in mitigating these impacts.

Public Health and the Environment...

- Over one in four (27%) Canadians say they, or someone in their family has experienced an environment-related health condition. More than a third of these individuals say that the condition was asthma (39%), and more than one in five (23%) say the problem was allergies.
- Two out of three (65%) Canadians have taken action to protect their health from the environment, with use of sunscreen/avoiding sun exposure being the most frequently reported action (39%).

- More than eight out of 10 (83%) Canadians have changed their lifestyle to lessen their impact on the environment, with recycling being the most frequently reported change (41%).
- Canadians think that neither the provincial nor the federal level of government is doing enough to address health and the environmental concerns. Just below half (46%) gave provincial government efforts an A or B grade, while just over one-third (36%) assigned A or B grades to federal government efforts.

In terms of top-of-mind environmental issues, Canadians surveyed said they are either very or somewhat concerned about...

- Environmental standards in other countries and impact on imported fruits and vegetables – 87%
- Climate change and its impact on health – 82%
- Potential for climate change to encourage spread of disease – 82%
- Air pollution – 79%
- Heat and sun exposure – 76%
- Use of herbicides and pesticides – 75%
- Effects of soil contamination on local fruits and vegetables – 74%
- Water quality – 70%

Quality of and Access to Health Care...

The 7th Annual CMA Report Card also shows that public opinion towards the health care system is down slightly compared to last year. In 2007, three in five (62%) of Canadians gave the system an A or a B grade for overall quality of the health care services available. Last year 67% of those asked graded the system with either an A or a B.

As was the case in past years, Canadians who have a family physician held more positive views about their most recent experience with the health care system compared to those who do not (34% vs. 21% assigned an A grade for the quality of care they received from the system). This carried through for feelings about access to emergency room services (19% vs. 12%), overall quality of the system (23% vs. 12%) and access to specialist care (14% vs. 89%).

Government Performance...

In the 2007 Report Card Canadians' perceptions of the actions of governments fell with 35% assigning either an A or B grade to the performance of their provincial government and 31% assigning either an A or B grade to the federal government. Last year those figures sat at 43% and 38% respectively. This translates into a decrease in the percentage of Canadians' who are optimistic that health care services will get better in their communities – 49% said they thought services would get “much” or “somewhat” better. Last year, 56% of those asked shared that view.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Canadian Medical Association poll conducted between June 19th and 29th, 2007 among 1,001 adult Canadians. 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 populations 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.

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