

# Economic Downturn Has Negative Impact on The Health of Canadians, Says 9th Annual Report Card On Health Care System



**Ipsos Reid**

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# **Economic Downturn Has Negative Impact on The Health of Canadians, Says 9th Annual Report Card On Health Care System**

**Toronto, ON** – The ninth annual Report Card on the Health Care system in Canada finds that the health of many Canadians has been adversely affected by the economic recession of this past year. The Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Medical Association has revealed that one quarter of Canadians (23%) say they have spent less time, energy, and money maintaining their health as a result of the economic downturn. Furthermore, three in ten (32%) are spending less on food, one quarter (25%) have cancelled a dentist appointment and one in ten (10%) have cancelled a doctor appointment due to financial concerns that have been exacerbated by the struggling economy.

In addition gauging the effect to which the economic slowdown has impacted the health of Canadians, the survey asked Canadians to assess their own health situation, in addition to grading the performance of the health care system.

## ***Impact of Recession on Families...***

One quarter of Canadians (23%) say that they have spent less time, energy and money maintaining their health due to the economic downturn. Canadians feeling the pinch the most appear to be those in the lower income and education brackets:

- Over one in ten (14%) Canadians say they stopped/delayed buying prescription drugs due to the recent economic downturn, and the difference between those earning less than \$30k a year (22%) and those earning more than \$90k (7%) is significant.
- One in ten Canadians (10%) say they have delayed or cancelled a doctor's appointment due to the economic downturn. Only 7% of those earning \$90k or more were likely to do this compared with 17% of those earning less than \$30k.
- Three in ten (32%) Canadians are spending less on food now due to the financial downturn. Among those earning \$30k or less, the figure is 44%.

### ***Health and Physical Activity...***

Overall, a majority (52%) of Canadians are worried about their health, only slightly less than the proportion who is worried about their financial security (57%), and twice the number of Canadians that is worried about losing their job (27%).

Four in ten (40%) Canadians say that they are stressed and overwhelmed due to financial concerns, the proportion of whom grows to 51% among those whose family earns less than \$30,000 a year. One quarter (23%) are losing sleep over the economy. Shockingly, two in ten (16%) Canadians have say that financial concerns have led them to skip meals, a figure that rises to 28% among those who earn less than \$30,000 a year.

There are also notable differences in reported health and wellness levels among those with gaps in income and education:

- Half of those earning \$90k or more (51%) said they are in excellent/good health while only three in ten (30%) of those in the \$30k or less bracket say the same.
- Half of university grads (54%) reported they were in good health, compared with only three in ten who do not have a high school diploma (29%).

Interestingly, those with more education and higher incomes are also more likely to engage in physical activity than those in lower education and income brackets.

- Only two in ten Canadians (19%) are likely to engage in an active indoor activity with some degree of regularity, and there is a marked difference between those earning less than \$30k (14%) and those earning more than \$90k (26%).
- One quarter of university grads (27%) are likely to report engaging in indoor activity on a regular basis compared with 16% of those with less than High School
- Those earning more than \$90k were also more likely to engage in weight lifting (23%) than those earning less than \$30k (13%) while the national average was 17%.

## ***RATING THE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE IN CANADA...***

When it comes to the overall quality of health care in Canada, a slightly higher proportion of Canadians than last year gave the system good grades of either an “A” or a “B. The detailed findings are as follows:

- Seven in ten (68%) Canadians gave their most recent health care experience an “A” or a “B,” a proportion identical to the 2008 figures. Furthermore, six in ten (60%)

provided an “A” or “B” rating when asked about the choice of health services in their community, a figure slightly higher than in 2008 (58%).

- Three in ten (30%) gave a “A” ranking to access to walk in clinics in their community, compared with just one quarter (25%) last year; one quarter (24%) gave an “A” ranking when asked about access to emergency room services, compared with one in five (20%) last year; and one in five (18%) gave an “A” ranking to access to modern diagnostic equipment such as MRIs and CT scans, compared with 14% last year.
- Other aspects of health care also showed signs of improvement. The percentage of “A” rankings increased in the following categories
- Access to health care services for children in your community (24% in 2009, 23% in 2008)
- Access to health care services for seniors in your community (21% in 2009, 19% in 2008)
- Access to health care services on evenings and weekends in your community (16% in 2009, 13% in 2008)
- Access to medical specialists (15% in 2009, 13% in 2008)
- Access to home health care service (15% in 2009, 13% in 2008)
- Access to mental health care services in your community (13% in 2009, 11% in 2008)

## Government Performance...

Canadians were also more likely this year than last year to hold a favourable view of the government performance with respect to health care. Four in ten (39%) give the federal government either an “A” or a “B”, compared with 34% last year. On the provincial front, 43% gave an “A” or a “B” to health care performance, compared with 40% in 2008.

While virtually all Canadians give the health care system passing grades, the system is by no means passing with flying colours. Moreover, Canadians were divided on the direction of health care in the next 2-3 years, with 51% suggesting they think the state of health care will improve and 46% indicating they think it will get worse in the coming years.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Medical Association. The Report Card tracking data was collected via a representative randomly selected sample of 1,002 adult Canadians by telephone from June 7 to 9, 2009. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.2$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada been polled. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.*

*The data relating to economic impacts on health was conducted between June 25 and July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009. For this survey, a national sample of 3,223 adults aged 18 and older from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of  $\pm 1.7$  percentage*



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*points 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire adult population been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

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