

CANADIAN PRESS / LEGER MARKETING

# The Attitudes of Canadians towards Infectious Diseases

Report

July 2003



## 1.0 Study Highlights

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- Seven out of ten Canadians believe that the virulence of infectious diseases in the world will increase in the coming years

Question: In your opinion, will the virulence (force) of infectious diseases in the world increase, stay the same or decrease in the coming years?

n = 1501	TOTAL
Increase	71%
Stay the same	15%
Decrease	8%
Don't know/Refusal	6%

- Half of Canadians expect an increase in infectious diseases in this country

Question: According to you, will Canada be more, as much or less threatened by international infectious diseases in the years to come?

n = 1501	TOTAL
More	49%
As much	28%
Less	17%
Don't know/Refusal	6%

- AIDS is the infectious disease that scares Canadians most

Question: Of the following viruses, which one scares you most? Is it...

n = 1501	TOTAL
... AIDS	25%
... SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)	22%
... the West Nile virus	20%
... mad cow disease	4%
All four equally	14%
None	13%
Don't know/Refusal	1%

- More than one in two Canadians feel that the Canadian and provincial governments are taking adequate preventative measure to avoid the spread of infectious diseases

Question: In your opinion, is the Canadian government taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases to Canada?

n = 1501 Canadian government	TOTAL
Yes	54%
No	36%
Don't know/Refusal	11%

Question: In your opinion, is your provincial government taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases in your province?

n = 1501 Provincial governments	TOTAL
Yes	51%
No	35%
Don't know/Refusal	14%

- The majority of Canadians would opt for a closing of the borders

Question: In your opinion, should Canada close its borders to any person, good or material originating from a country suffering from an epidemic?

n = 1501	TOTAL
Yes, under any circumstances	27%
Yes, if required by the World Health Organization	34%
No	33%
Don't know/Refusal	6%

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Seven out of ten Canadians believe that the virulence of infectious diseases in the world will increase in the coming years

More than seven out of ten Canadians (71%) feel that the virulence of infectious diseases in the world will increase in the years to come. 15% of the persons interviewed believe that the virulence of infectious diseases will stay the same and 8% that it will decrease in the years to come.

- ◆ There are proportionally more persons in the 55-64 age group (78%) and persons with an annual income of \$60 000 or more (75%) who believe that the virulence of infectious diseases in the world will increase in the coming years.
- ◆ In contrast, of those believe that the virulence of infectious diseases will decrease in years to come, there are persons who have completed elementary (16%) or secondary (12%) school, students (16%), persons with an annual income of less than \$20 000 (15%) and persons aged 65 years or more (13%) tend to.

Question: In your opinion, will the virulence (force) of infectious diseases in the world increase, stay the same or decrease in the coming years?

n=1501	Increase	Stay the same	Decrease	Don't know/Refusal
18-24 years	67%	20%	10%	3%
25-34 years	67%	18%	9%	6%
35-44 years	75%	15%	6%	4%
45-54 years	75%	14%	9%	2%
55-64 years	78%	10%	3%	9%
65 years or older	63%	12%	13%	11%
Elementary	56%	14%	16%	13%
Secondary	71%	12%	12%	5%
College	74%	16%	5%	5%
University	70%	18%	7%	5%
Canada	71%	15%	8%	6%

## 2.2 Half of Canadians expect an increase in infectious diseases in this country

Almost half of Canadians (49%) think that Canada will be more threatened by international infectious diseases in the years to come. 28% believe that the country is as threatened as before and 17% that it will be less threatened by infectious diseases in the coming years.

- ◆ Among the people who believe that the country is more threatened, one finds residents of Alberta (63%) and the Prairies (62%) as well as anglophones (55%).
- ◆ Among those who are of the opinion that Canada is as threatened as before, there are francophones (47%), Quebeckers (47%), persons in the 25-34 age bracket (36%), professionals (36%), persons who have completed university (36%) and office workers (35%).
- ◆ In contrast, according to students (36%), persons in the 18-24 age group (26%), persons aged 65 or more (23%) and those whose annual income is lower than \$20 000 (24%) the country is less threatened by infectious diseases.

Question: According to you, will Canada be more, as much or less threatened by international infectious diseases in the years to come?

n=1501	More	As much	Less	Don't know
Atlantic Provinces	58%	24%	12%	6%
Quebec	29%	47%	21%	4%
Ontario	52%	24%	17%	7%
Prairies	62%	20%	12%	6%
Alberta	63%	19%	11%	7%
British Columbia	55%	21%	17%	6%
Canada	49%	28%	17%	6%

## 2.3 AIDS is the infectious disease that scares Canadians most

Although a quarter of Canadians (25%) see AIDS as the virus they fear most, another 22% are troubled by the thought of SARS, 20% by the West Nile virus and 4% by mad cow disease. Furthermore, 14% of the persons interviewed admitted that they feared all four infectious diseases mentioned equally. Finally, 13% of the respondents said that none of the viruses mentioned scared them.

- ◆ There are proportionally more persons in the 18-24 (41%) and the 25-34 age group (31%), students (41%) and men (28%) who stated that AIDS scared them more than any other virus.
- ◆ Persons with a university-level education (25%) and Quebecers (24%) are more scared of the West Nile virus.

Question : Of the following viruses, which one scares you most? Is it...

n=1501	Canada	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years or older
... AIDS	25%	41%	31%	23%	24%	20%	14%
... SARS	22%	24%	19%	25%	17%	26%	24%
... the West Nile virus	20%	12%	18%	24%	22%	20%	18%
...mad cow disease	4%	6%	4%	4%	6%	3%	3%
All four equally	14%	8%	12%	13%	14%	18%	19%
None	13%	7%	14%	11%	15%	12%	19%
Don't know/Refusal	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%

## 2.4 More than one in two Canadians feel that the Canadian and provincial governments are taking adequate preventative measure to avoid the spread of infectious diseases

More than half of Canadians (54%) are of the opinion that the Canadian government is taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases to Canada. 36% believe the reverse, that is, that the Canadian government is not taking adequate preventative measures.

- ◆ Among the persons who feel that the Canadian government is taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases, there are students (71%), persons in the 18-24 age bracket (66%), francophones (60%), Quebecers (60%) and persons who have completed university (59%).
- ◆ In contrast, persons in the 45-54 age group (43%) and Ontarians (42%) are proportionally more in believing that the Canadian government is not taking adequate preventive measures against infectious diseases.

Question: In your opinion, is the Canadian government taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases to Canada?

n=1501	Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Alberta	British Columbia
Yes	54%	55%	60%	49%	49%	56%	55%
No	36%	32%	35%	42%	32%	27%	30%
Don't know/Refusal	11%	13%	5%	9%	18%	17%	15%

More than half of Canadians (51%) believe that the provincial governments, like the federal government, are taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases. However, 35% of the persons interviewed think that provincial governments are not taking enough preventative measures against the spread of infectious diseases.

- ◆ Students (68%) and persons in the 18-24 age group (60%) are proportionally higher in believing that the provincial governments are taking adequate measures in the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases.

Question: In your opinion, is your provincial government taking adequate preventative measures to avoid the spread of international infectious diseases in your province?

n=1501	Canada	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years or older
Yes	51%	60%	55%	53%	47%	48%	43%
No	35%	27%	31%	35%	39%	38%	39%
Don't know/Refusal	14%	13%	14%	12%	14%	14%	18%

## 2.5 The majority of Canadians would opt for a closing of the borders

More than six in ten persons interviewed are of the opinion that Canada should close its borders to any person, good or material originating from a country suffering from an epidemic, under any circumstances (27%) or when required by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) (34%). In contrast, 33% of the respondents believe that Canada should not close its borders in such a situation.

- ◆ There are more persons in the 55-64 age group (35%) and Ontarians (32%) who believe that Canada should close its borders under any circumstances.
- ◆ Among the persons who are of the opinion that Canada should close its border if required by the W.H.O., there are persons who have completed elementary school (47%), persons in the 65 years or older age bracket (44%), francophones (39%), retired people (45%) and women (37%).
- ◆ Finally, students (50%), persons in the 18-24 age group (45%), persons who have completed university (45%), professionals (42%) and men (37%) are proportionally more in believing the contrary, that is, that Canada should not close its borders to any person, good or material originating from a country suffering from an epidemic.

Question: In your opinion, should Canada close its borders to any person, good or material originating from a country suffering from an epidemic?

N=1501	Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Alberta	British Columbia
Yes, under any circumstances	27%	24%	25%	32%	29%	21%	18%
Yes, if required by the World Health Organization	34%	32%	37%	30%	35%	40%	38%
No	33%	36%	36%	31%	28%	32%	36%
Don't know/Refusal	6%	7%	2%	7%	8%	7%	8%

### 3.0 Methodology

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This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1501 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres between July 2 and July 6, 2003. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to region, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1501 respondents is of  $\pm 2.5\%$ , 19 times out of 20.