Routine Immunizations in Canada Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada
and
19 to Zero
Summary

- Routine immunization rates remain well short of NACI-recommended targets.
- Over 5.3 million Canadians have missed or delayed a routine immunization during the pandemic, including 1.3 million school-aged children.
- 7 in 10 missed or delayed routine immunizations could have been avoided with improved provider access.
- Canadians value convenient, flexible, and accessible routine immunization sites.
- Canadians coast-to-coast desire more options to receive routine immunizations at pharmacies.
- Most Canadians trust pharmacists with their vaccination records and would take pharmacist-recommended routine vaccines, if offered, immediately.
Methodology

- 9,091 adult Canadian citizens surveyed online between August 30th and October 10th, 2021
- Opt-in non-probability sample provided by Dynata and Abacu
- Quotas set on gender, age (18-34, 35-54, 55+), language, region (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, West) to match 2016 census benchmarks
- Ranked weighting algorithm used to construct sample weights based on population benchmarks within region by age and gender
Respondent Characteristics

**PROVINCE**
- BC: n=1,103
- AB: n=1,032
- SK: n=263
- MB: n=428
- ON: n=3,532
- NL: n=157
- QC: n=2,088
- NB: n=168
- NS: n=279
- PEI: n=41
- NB: n=168
- NS: n=279
- NL: n=157
- PEI: n=41

**West Region:** n=2,826

**Atlantic Region:** n=645

**AGE**
- 18-24: 6%
- 25-34: 19%
- 35-44: 17%
- 45-54: 17%
- 55-64: 18%
- 65+: 23%

**GENDER**
- Male: 49%
- Female: 51%
- Other: <1%

**PARENT**
- Yes: 23%
- No: 77%

**Source:** University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021
n = 9,091
Routine Immunization Coverage
Routine immunization rates across the country fall short of NACI targets of 80%*

Insights

- Routine immunization rates for tetanus, shingles, and pneumococcal should be improved dramatically to reach NACI targets.
- Each region is on par with other regions for tetanus and pneumococcal coverage rates.
- Shingles vaccine coverage is highest in Ontario for the 65+ age group who have had access to publicly funded shingles vaccines.

Up to date immunizations by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Tetanus (18-49)</th>
<th>Shingles (50-64)</th>
<th>Shingles (65+)</th>
<th>Pneumococcal (65+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NACI targets for influenza and pneumococcal 65+

Note: only Ontario has enacted public reimbursement for shingles vaccines.

Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021
Total n = 9,091
>40% of those needing a routine vaccine are willing to be immunized, suggesting access as an uptake barrier

**Insights**

- Only a quarter of Canadians are unwilling to become up-to-date on their routine immunizations, suggesting other factors such as access may be limiting uptake.
- Among those who are not immunized, willingness to get vaccinated does not vary between products.
- About a third of Canadians who are not up-to-date with their routine vaccines are unsure about receiving them, suggesting an opportunity for healthcare providers to assist.

**Willingness to take a recommended vaccine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine Type</th>
<th>Willing</th>
<th>Unwilling</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tetanus (18-49)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingles (50-64)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingles (65+)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal (65+)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021

n=795-4,795

**Question:** Would you be willing to get this immunization in the next year?
Over 5.3 million Canadians have missed or delayed a routine immunization since the beginning of COVID-19

Insights
- 13% of adults and 23% of children adults missing or delaying immunizations is significant: Most Canadians were not due for a routine immunization over the past 18 months.
- Figure is likely an underestimate due to self-reporting: many Canadians are not aware of the need for a routine immunization unless informed by a healthcare provider.
- Many of those who are “unsure” may have missed immunizations for themselves or their child due to lack of awareness.

Question: Have you (or your child) missed or delayed a non-COVID routine immunization due to the pandemic?

% Canadians who missed or delayed a routine immunization due to the pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADULTS (18+)

CHILDREN (AGES 4-17)

Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021
n = 9,078 (Adults); 1,805 (Children); Other Sources: Stats Canada
7 in 10 missed or delayed adult routine immunizations in Canada could have been avoided with improved provider access

**Insights**

- **Lack of access** to family doctors or public health directly accounted for about half of missed immunizations in Canada
- **Uncertainty** about the need for a vaccine or its availability caused about 20% of delays
- The vast majority of delays in routine immunizations (7 of 10) could have been avoided by improved access to healthcare providers

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**Reasons why Canadian adults missed or delayed a routine immunization**

- I did not want to visit a family doctor or public health office during COVID: 26%
- I am not interested in being immunized right now: 21%
- I couldn’t make an appointment with my family doctor: 23%
- I was unsure if the immunization would be available: 16%
- Other: 8%
- I did not know I was due for an immunization: 6%

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*Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021*  
*Total n = 1,173*
300,000 children missed or delayed routine immunizations due to cancelled school-based programs

**Insights**

- Provider access impacted children more than adults, with about 70% of delays caused by direct access barriers
- School-based cancellations were responsible for about a quarter of missed vaccines
- Unwillingness to vaccinate is considerably lower (<10%) for children than for adults

**Reasons why Canadian children missed or delayed a routine immunization**

- I couldn’t make an appointment with my family doctor: 26%
- My child’s in-school immunization program was not available: 23%
- I did not want to visit a family doctor or public health office during COVID: 20%
- I am not interested in immunizing my child right now: 9%
- I was unsure if the immunization would be available: 12%
- I did not know my child was due for an immunization: 6%
- Other: 4%

**Source:** University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021

**Question:** Why did your child miss or delay this immunization?
Pharmacies and Routine Immunizations
Canadians value timely, flexible, and convenient routine immunization appointments that are close to home.

**Insights**
- Canadians tend to favour flexible, community-based options for routine immunizations, suggesting pharmacies may be naturally advantaged as a vaccination site.
- Proximity to the vaccination site, and receiving a vaccine at the recommended age, is most important to Canadians.
- Receiving a vaccine at the recommended age is of particular importance to older Canadians, many of whom are more vulnerable to severe illness from vaccine-preventable disease.

**Question:** What factors are important when choosing a routine vaccination site?

**Source:** University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021

**n = 9,055**
Canadians coast-to-coast want more options to be immunized at pharmacies

Insights
- About 7 in 10 Canadians indicate that they favour having additional options to get routine immunizations at their community pharmacy
- Support for more options to get immunized at pharmacies is consistently high across the country

Canadians who want more options to receive routine immunizations at their local pharmacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Québec</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: Would you like to be able to receive more routine immunizations at your community pharmacy, in addition to your doctor’s office or a public health site?

Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021
n = 9,080
Canadians trust pharmacists with their vaccine records, and most would take a pharmacist-recommended vaccine

Insights

- Pharmacists are trusted with having access to vaccination records and recommending routine vaccinations based on those records.
- Pharmacists’ high frequency of patient touchpoints, and their ability to review, recommend, and administer routine immunizations, represents a potential opportunity to increase vaccine uptake.

Canadians comfortable with pharmacists accessing vaccination records

- Yes: 76%
- No: 13%
- Unsure: 11%

Canadians who would take a pharmacist-recommended vaccine after reviewing records

- Yes: 62%
- No: 14%
- Unsure: 24%

Source: University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021

n = 9,080

Questions: Are you comfortable with your pharmacist having access to your vaccination records? If your pharmacist reviewed your records and recommended a routine vaccine, would you take it?
56% of Canadians would accept a routine immunization if they were in a pharmacy for another reason and a pharmacist offered to administrate.

**Insights**

- Most Canadians would take a pharmacist-recommended vaccine immediately if in a pharmacy for another reason, such as picking up a household item or groceries.
- Many Canadians rely on their healthcare provider to recommend routine immunizations; pharmacists have many opportunities to interact with patients, making them well-suited to offer and administer “unplanned” immunizations.

**Questions:** Suppose you were in a pharmacy to pick up a prescription or a household item, and your pharmacist offered to administer a recommended immunization while you were there. Would you accept?

**Source:** University of Toronto & 19 to Zero National Vaccine Survey Fall 2021

n = 9,082