

# Survey on Health Research Priorities, 2019

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One-third of Canadians deemed disease prevention the most important type of health research, while about one-quarter identified research to improve health services as the priority. Another quarter identified laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease as the priority.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research commissioned Statistics Canada to collect information on the health research priorities of Canadians through the Survey on Health Research Priorities. Health research plays an important role in improving the health of Canadians, delivering more effective health services and strengthening the Canadian health care system.

## **Almost one-third of Canadians believe that disease prevention is the most important type of health research**

The prevention of disease was deemed the most important type of health research by almost one-third of Canadians (32%), while about one-quarter thought that either research to improve health care services (28%) or laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease (25%) was the priority.

Differences in which type of health research is deemed most important emerge across Canada. Canadians living in the Atlantic provinces were more likely to think that research to improve health care services was the top priority (40%), while Quebec residents were more likely to deem laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease the most important (35%).

Canadians with a university certificate, diploma or degree (36%) were more likely than others (29%) to identify the prevention of disease as the most important research priority. Conversely, improving health care services was the top health research priority for Canadians without a university certificate, degree or diploma (32%).

## **The mainstream media are the leading source of health information for Canadians, particularly older Canadians**

The type of health research most important to Canadians may be influenced by how they get their health information.

The three highest ranking sources of information on health research were mainstream media (56%), which include online and print media, the Internet (55%) and health professionals (48%). At 63%, residents of Quebec were more likely to turn to the mainstream media, such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines than residents of the western provinces of British Columbia (51%), Alberta (50%) and Saskatchewan (45%).

Age also plays a role in the way people stay informed of the latest health research. Canadians aged 35 and older were more likely than their younger counterparts to rely on mainstream media. For example, two-thirds of Canadians aged 65 and older (65%) and 57% of those aged 35 to 64 turned to television, radio, newspapers or magazines for health news. This compared with just under half of Canadians younger than 35 (48%) who said they used mainstream media to stay informed.

For young Canadians, the Internet, excluding mainstream media and social media, was the preferred information source, consistent with previous research. Almost 6 in 10 Canadians younger than 35 said that they used the Internet to keep up to date on health research news, compared with 56% of those aged 35 to 64 and less than half of seniors aged 65 and older (46%).

Canadians younger than 35 were also more likely to stay informed of health research through social networks, whether it was through social media (45%) or their friends and family (41%).



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## Few Canadians are very knowledgeable about health research

Few Canadians (5%) reported being very knowledgeable about health research and its role in improving the health of Canadians and the health care system. Most Canadians said that they were either somewhat (43%) or not very knowledgeable (43%) about health research.

Knowledge appears to be connected to Canadians' levels of satisfaction with the way health research is communicated. Canadians who reported being either very or somewhat knowledgeable said that they were generally satisfied with the way health research results are shared with Canadians (44%). This fell to 29% for Canadians who said that they were not very knowledgeable and to 18% for those who were not at all knowledgeable.

Most often, Canadians who reported lower levels of health research knowledge expressed the view that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the communication of health research results.

### **Note to readers**

*The Survey on Health Research Priorities (SHRP) was conducted by Statistics Canada on behalf of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The CIHR's mandate is to "excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health care system."*

*The SHRP falls under the 'Rapid Stats' program being offered by Statistics Canada's Centre for Social Data Integration and Development to quickly respond to pressing data needs.*

*The data were collected in the provinces in June and July 2019. The target population for this survey was the non-institutionalized population aged 18 or older, living in one of Canada's 10 provinces.*

*The survey response rate was 48.2%, which resulted in 4,453 respondents.*

*Survey sampling weights were applied to render the analyses representative of the Canadian population aged 18 and older.*

**Table 1**  
**Number and percentage of people reporting the type of health research most important to them, by highest level of education completed and region, household population aged 18 and older, Canada, 2019**

	People		95% confidence interval <sup>3</sup>	
	thousands	%	lower limit	upper limit
<b>Canada</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	7,489.5	25.4	23.8	27.0
Research to test drugs and medical devices	2,495.8	8.5	7.5	9.6
Research to improve health care services	8,316.4	28.2	26.6	29.8
Research into the prevention of disease	9,429.2	31.9	30.3	33.6
No opinion	1,782.8	6.0	5.2	6.9
<b>Highest level of education completed</b>				
<b>Less than high school, high school, trade certificate or diploma, college, CEGEP</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	4,242.3	24.7	22.6	26.9
Research to test drugs and medical devices	1,300.9	7.6	6.4	9.0
Research to improve health care services	5,510.5	32.1	29.9	34.3
Research into the prevention of disease	4,942.3	28.8	26.7	30.9
No opinion	1,176.9	6.9	5.7	8.2
<b>University certificate or diploma, bachelor's degree, university degree above bachelor's level</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	3,244.9	26.4	24.0	28.9
Research to test drugs and medical devices	1,192.7	9.7 <sup>1</sup>	8.1	11.5
Research to improve health care services	2,794.0	22.7 <sup>1</sup>	20.5	25.0
Research into the prevention of disease	4,480.8	36.4 <sup>1</sup>	33.8	39.1
No opinion	596.3	4.80 <sup>1</sup>	3.8	6.2
<b>Region</b>				
<b>Atlantic provinces</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	386.0	20.0 <sup>2</sup>	15.6	25.2
Research to test drugs and medical devices	82.9	4.3 <sup>2</sup>	2.4	7.6
Research to improve health care services	778.2	40.2 <sup>2</sup>	34.6	46.1
Research into the prevention of disease	583.1	30.2	25.4	35.4
No opinion	103.8	5.4	3.3	8.5
<b>Quebec</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	2,342.6	34.6 <sup>2</sup>	30.8	38.5
Research to test drugs and medical devices	557.6	8.2	6.2	10.8
Research to improve health care services	1,762.2	26.0	22.7	29.6
Research into the prevention of disease	1,896.4	28.0 <sup>2</sup>	24.8	31.4
No opinion	219.2	3.2 <sup>2</sup>	2.2	4.6
<b>Ontario</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	2,710.0	23.3 <sup>2</sup>	20.9	25.9
Research to test drugs and medical devices	997.4	8.6	7.0	10.5
Research to improve health care services	3,358.8	28.9	26.2	31.7
Research into the prevention of disease	3,779.3	32.5	29.8	35.2
No opinion	794.3	6.8	5.4	8.6
<b>Prairies</b>				
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	1,264.9	24.2	20.7	28.1
Research to test drugs and medical devices	473.6	9.1	7.1	11.5
Research to improve health care services	1,270.4	24.3	21.1	27.8
Research into the prevention of disease	1,855.6	35.5	31.8	39.4
No opinion	357.6	6.8	4.9	9.5
<b>British Columbia</b>				

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	thousands	%	lower limit	upper limit
Laboratory research to better understand the cause of disease	786.0	20.0	16.3	24.2
Research to test drugs and medical devices	384.1	9.8	7.4	12.8
Research to improve health care services	1,146.8	29.1	25.1	33.4
Research into the prevention of disease	1,314.7	33.4	28.8	38.3
No opinion	307.9	7.8	5.7	10.6

1. Significantly different from the corresponding category for those with education level less than high school, high school, trade certificate or diploma, college, CEGEP.

2. Significantly different compared to the estimate of the rest of Canada for the corresponding category.

3. Confidence intervals are used to express the precision of the estimate.

**Note(s):** Results are presented by region due to sample size.

**Source(s):** Survey on Health Research Priorities (5296).

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5296.**

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).