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**Assessment of Seasonal Influenza Immunization Coverage in the Canadian Population, 2016-17**



Executive Summary

**Submitted to**

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**Ce résumé est aussi disponible en français.**

**POR 104-16**

**Contract Number 6D034-164442/001/CY**

**Awarded 2017-01-30**

**Project 15181-003**

**2017-03-31**

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**Executive Summary**

Leger is pleased to present the Public Health Agency of Canada with this report on findings from a quantitative survey aimed to evaluate seasonal influenza immunization coverage within the Canadian population.

This report was prepared by Leger who was contracted by the Public Health Agency of Canada (contract number 6D034-164442/001/CY awarded January 30, 2017).

**1.1 Background and Objectives**

The main objective of the study is to evaluate seasonal influenza immunization coverage within the Canadian population. The following topics are covered among Canadian households participating in the survey.

* Seasonal flu vaccination before September 1, 2016 and since September 1, 2016 inclusively (for the adult respondent and each minor children, if applicable)
* Reasons for taking or not taking the vaccine this year (for the adult respondent and each minor children, if applicable)
* Form of flu vaccine received (shot or nasal spray)
* Date (month) and place of vaccination
* Number, gender and age of minor children in the household
* Number of doses received by children between 6 months and 9 years of age, receiving the vaccine for the first time
* Reasons for not receiving two doses, if applicable
* Health care and alternative care providers seen in the last year
* Flu incidence among population (respondent and friend or family member)
* Sources of information and most trusted resource for the flu shot
* Promoters and detractors of the flu vaccine
* Exposure to messages promoting the flu vaccine
* Demographic profile of adult respondents and identification of any chronic health condition considered as high risk for influenza-related complications

**1.2 Methodology - Quantitative Research**

The quantitative research was conducted by telephone, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. This approach is the most appropriate to assess seasonal influenza immunization coverage among different subgroups of the Canadian population, while ensuring a high level of representativeness. To achieve data reliability in all subgroups, a sample of 2,024 adult Canadians were surveyed. Only one adult respondent was surveyed within each household.

Fieldwork for the survey was conducted from February 14 to March 5, 2017. The national response rate for the survey was 20.3%. Complete call dispositions are presented in Appendix A. A pre-test of 30 interviews, 15 in each official language, was completed on February 14, 2017 (in English) and on February 16, 2017 (in French). Survey interviews lasted 7 minutes on average.

Telephone interviewing was conducted using Leger’s Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. Leger’s CATI system handles sampling electronically, randomly selecting and dialing the phone number to call. To ensure perfect coverage of a population, the sample consisted of residential phone numbers located in all Canadian provinces and territories, as well as cell phone numbers of Canadians who do not have a residential landline phone number (i.e. pre-validated cell-only numbers). Based on the Communications Monitoring Report 2016 published by the CRTC in 2016, which revealed that 23.7% of Canadian households were using a cell phone exclusively, Leger made sure that 23.7% of the final sample was derived from cell-only numbers.

Landline phone numbers were generated and cell-only numbers were purchased according to a stratified regional sampling approach. Regional quotas were applied to ensure that a sufficient number of interviews within each region of Canada and within each type of phone number (residential (1,527) and cell phone (497)). In addition to these regional quotas, fieldwork was conducted to ensure a good distribution of respondents in terms of gender (men and women) and language (English and French-speaking Canadians), using soft quotas.

A total of 2,024 adult Canadians were interviewed in all regions of the country. The national margin of error for the survey is +/- 2.18%, 19 times out of 20.

Based on data from Statistics Canada’s 2011 national census, Leger weighted the results of this survey by age, gender, region and language (mother tongue). Results were also weighted based on the presence of minor children in the household (yes or no), since this question was asked and is important for this study. Moreover, the weight of respondents reached via the cell-only sample was also controlled to match the expected 23.7% after weighting.

As a Certified Gold-Seal MRIA Member, Leger adheres to the most stringent guidelines for quantitative research. The survey has been registered with the MRIA in accordance with Government of Canada requirements for quantitative research, including the MRIA Code of Conduct and Standards of the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Series D – Quantitative Research.

Respondents were assured of the voluntary and confidentiality aspect of the approach and of the anonymity of their responses. As with all research conducted by Léger, all information that could allow for the identification of participants was removed from the data, in accordance with the Privacy Act of Canada.

The details of the methodology procedure and more information on Leger’s quality control mechanisms are presented in Appendix A.

The French and English questionnaires (the same questionnaire was used for both languages of the study) are available in Appendix B.

Details regarding the weighting procedures can be found in Appendix A and detailed statistical tables of results can be found in Appendix C.

**1.3 Overview of Quantitative Findings**

* Since September 1st, 2016, more than a third of the Canadian population (36%) received the seasonal influenza vaccine. Those 65 years of age or older (69%), respondents from the Maritimes (50%), women (39%) and those between the ages of 18 and 64 with a chronic condition (37%), are proportionally more inclined to have been vaccinated against the flu in the past year. Nearly six out of ten respondents (59%) said that they had received the seasonal flu vaccine in the past (before September 1st, 2016).
* Prevention / not wanting to get sick (44%) is the most important motivation for getting the flu vaccine. On the other hand, the main reasons provided by respondents for not getting the flu vaccine are not needing it / not being a person at risk / not recommended for them (47%), skepticism in its effectiveness (19%) and lack of time (15%). For parents, the main reasons for not getting their children vaccinated is also the belief that they don’t need it (36%) or skepticism in its effectiveness (24%).
* Almost all Canadians (99%) were vaccinated with a flu shot and few (1%) were vaccinated by nasal spray. Most Canadians received the flu vaccine in October (38%) or in November 2016 (37%). A third of Canadians received the flu vaccine at the doctor's office or a health clinic (33%) and more than one-quarter at the pharmacy (28%).
* Almost one-quarter of Canadian children (23%) received the flu vaccine this year and more than a third of them (36%) received it for the first time. Nearly six out of ten children between 6 months and 9 years of age (58%) received one dose, while 28 percent received the two recommended doses. Eighteen percent (18%) of parents did not have enough information about the second dose and 16 percent did not know there was a second dose.
* Two out of ten respondents (22%) say they had the flu within the past 12 months, mostly with mild symptoms (19%), and more than half of respondents (56%) have seen their friends or family members suffer from severe (13%) or mild (47%) flu symptoms.
* The vast majority of respondents (93%) have seen a health care provider in the last year. Family doctors (76%), dentists (64%) and pharmacists (58%) were the most visited professionals. Nearly one-quarter of respondents have seen an alternative care provider (23%) or another care provider (22%).
* Nearly half of respondents (47%) state that when they want to know more about the flu shot, they would look for information in a public health setting, health clinic or pharmacy. To a lesser extent, the Internet is also a legitimate source of information about the flu shot; 18 percent said that they do an online search and 13 percent will refer to a government website.
* The most trusted resource about the flu shot is the family doctor with two-thirds of respondents (64%) saying that they trust him/her the most on this topic.
* Four out of ten respondents (40%) say that someone advised them to get the flu vaccine within the last 12 months, while 14 percent of respondents say that someone told them the opposite. Nearly four out of ten of those who were advised to get the flu vaccine were advised to do so by their family doctor (38%). Family members also play a role in getting the flu vaccine for two out of ten respondents (21%). Conversely, friends (50%) and family members (30%) also played a major role in advising respondents not to get the flu vaccine.
* More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) state that they have seen, read or heard messages promoting the flu vaccine in the last 12 months. More than six out of ten of those who have seen, read or heard messages promoting the flu vaccine have seen or heard them on radio, or seen TV ads or advertisements (62%), and more than one-quarter have also seen messages about the flu vaccine when visiting the pharmacy, doctor’s office or hospital (27%).

**1.4 Notes on Interpretation of Research Findings**

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of the Public Health Agency of Canada. This report was compiled by Leger based on the research conducted specifically for this project. This research is probabilistic; the results can be inferred to the general population of Canada. The design of the research was built with this objective in mind.

**1.5 Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information**

Leger certifies that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada’s political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

**Additional information**

Supplier name: Leger

PWGSC Contract Number: 6D034-164442/001/CY

Contract Award Date: January 30th, 2017

The expenditure for this project is $74,664.75 (including HST).

To obtain more information on this study, please email POR-ROP@hc-sc.gc.ca