

# Most Ontarians (76%) want pharmacists to prescribe HPV vaccines, *but barriers persist.*

New data reveals Ontarians' views on vaccine access and awareness.

## Overview

To support advocacy for expanding Ontario pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing authority for all vaccines, the Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) conducted a national bilingual survey. The survey explored Canadians' awareness, attitudes, and access to vaccines, with a focus on the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

In Ontario, most adults cannot access the HPV vaccine for free, creating financial and logistical barriers<sup>1</sup>. These challenges are compounded by the need for a prescription to receive coverage through private insurance, limiting timely access and contributing to low uptake<sup>2</sup>.

The findings reveal persistent confusion around pharmacy access, low HPV vaccine uptake compared to other vaccines, and strong public support for expanded access and pharmacist prescribing authority.

## Key Survey Findings

### Confusion around pharmacy access persists

Nearly **1 in 3 Ontarians (32%)** are unsure how adults can access the HPV vaccine at all, highlighting a **significant gap in public awareness**. Slightly lower than national figures at 37%.

In Ontario, fewer than **1 in 8 adults (12%)** believe the HPV vaccine is available at pharmacies **without a doctor's note**.

Even **when a doctor's note is involved**, just **13% of Ontarians** think the vaccine is accessible through pharmacies.



## Support for pharmacists' prescribing authority

Seventy-six (76%) per cent of Ontarians agree pharmacists should be able to prescribe all vaccines, compared to 81% nationally.

Close to half (40%) of Ontarians strongly agree, trailing the national figure of 49%.

## HPV vaccine uptake lags behind other vaccines in Ontario

Only 24% of Ontarians report having received the HPV vaccine, compared to:

- 92% for COVID-19
- 85% for MMR
- 78% for flu/influenza
- 40% for pneumococcal
- 39% for meningitis
- 37% for shingles
- 17% for RSV

## HPV vaccine attitudes: A worrying gap in awareness

Despite its importance, more than half of Ontarians (53%) say they haven't received the HPV vaccine—and nearly 1 in 4 (23%) aren't sure if they have.

Among the unvaccinated, nearly 7 in 10 Ontarians (69%) say they haven't gotten the vaccine because they don't think they need it—a troubling misconception given that 75% of sexually active Canadians will have at least one HPV infection in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>.

Across Canada, this belief is most entrenched among unvaccinated Boomers (75%) but still affects younger generations, with over half (51%) of unvaccinated Gen Z and Millennials expressing the same view.

## Ontarians want better access to the HPV vaccine

Eighty-six (86%) per cent of Ontarians believe the HPV vaccine should be offered to adults for free (85% nationally).

Seventy-nine (79%) per cent support making it available to people of any biological sex (80% nationally), and 77% agree it should be offered to adults of any age (80% nationally).

Seventy-six (76%) per cent want it accessible at pharmacies without a doctor's prescription (78% nationally).

## Methodology

These findings are from a survey conducted by the Federation of Medical Women of Canada from August 21st to August 25th, 2025, among a representative sample of 1507 online adult Canadians who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. The survey was conducted in English and French. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/-2.53 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.



## About FMWC

The Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) is a national organization recognized for its leadership and advocacy for women's evolving health. We are committed to promoting the well-being and health of women and women-identifying individuals both within the medical profession and society at large. The FMWC has a 100-year history in Canada, is a member of the non-governmental organization (NGO) section of the Department of Global Affairs at the United Nations (UN) and is a member of the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), making us a part of the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSO).

For more information,  
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**CANADA** *vs* **HPV**

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Immunization Advisory Committee. Recommendations for an Expanded Human Papillomavirus Immunization Program. Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/H/25/oiaac-report-expanded-human-papillomavirus-immunization-program-recommendations.pdf>. Published April 2025. Accessed September 1, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. Ontario: HPV Vaccine Access. <https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/topics/hpv-vaccine-access-2022/ontario/>. Updated 2022. Accessed September 1, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Government of Canada. Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines: Canadian Immunization Guide. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-9-human-papillomavirus-vaccine.html>. Updated July 17, 2007. Accessed September 1, 2025.