

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 barriers¹. These challenges are compounded by the need for a prescription to receive coverage through private insurance, limiting timely access and contributing to low uptake².

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%)** know the HPV vaccine is available at pharmacies **without a doctor's prescription**.

Even **with a doctor's prescription**, only **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.

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 polled (53%) say they haven't received the HPV vaccine—and nearly 1 in 4 (23%) polled 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 lifetime¹.

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 to reduce existing barriers (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 (ages 18-55+) 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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¹ 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.

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

³ 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.