
New Survey Shows HPV Awareness Isn't Keeping Pace with Certain HPV-Related Cancer Trends in Canada

KIRKLAND, QC., April 15 – Merck (NYSE: MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, has released new data examining Canadians' knowledge of human papillomavirus (HPV) across age, gender, and regional groups. The survey revealed notable gaps in awareness—particularly among men and younger adults—even as rates of certain HPV-related cancers continue to rise across the country.

Key Survey Findings:

- Among younger adult respondents aged 18-24, fewer than half (49%) recognized HPV as a sexually transmitted infection, and about one-third (34%) of the same group reported not knowing what HPV is.
- Nearly one-third of men (31%) reported not knowing what HPV is, and close to half of all men (45%) were not aware of any potential consequences of a persistent HPV infection.
- Awareness that the rate of certain HPV-related head and neck cancers, such as throat cancer, are increasing among men, was limited across age groups, with 53% of all respondents (both men and women) unaware of this trend.
- Men were less likely than women to believe they played a role in helping reduce their risk of contracting or spreading an HPV infection (57% vs. 74%).

For more insights, refer to the [HPV Awareness Factsheet](#).

Understanding the Growing Burden of Certain HPV-Related Cancers

While HPV is most often associated with cervical cancer, throat (oropharyngeal) cancer is now the most common HPV-related cancer in Canada, affecting more men than women. Despite this shift, men appeared more likely to believe that HPV is not a concern to them (16% vs 12%) and were more likely to report not knowing which types of cancers and diseases the infection can cause compared to the overall surveyed population (45% vs. 37%). These knowledge gaps may contribute to lower engagement and reduced health-seeking behaviours.

The survey also explored how Canadians approached conversations about HPV and the barriers that may hold them back. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of adult respondents identified at least one obstacle to speaking with a healthcare professional, including lack of awareness or information and feelings of embarrassment. These factors may make it more difficult to ask questions or clarify misconceptions.

“The survey’s findings reinforce the importance of HPV disease awareness,” said Matthew Thornhill, Executive Director, Vaccines Business Unit at Merck Canada. “We’re seeing trends showing that men are less informed about HPV than their female counterparts, along with other findings suggesting they may feel less concerned or inclined to seek information about HPV.⁴ Strengthening awareness, particularly among low-awareness groups, is an important step toward encouraging more informed action against HPV.”

Overall, the findings highlight opportunities to strengthen public health education in Canada. Clear, accessible information could help Canadians break the stigma around HPV and close persistent knowledge gaps.

While Head & Neck Cancer Awareness Month offers an important opportunity to elevate these conversations, HPV-related risks extend far beyond a single cancer type, or a single month. Sustained, year-round education is essential to ensure Canadians understand the broader health implications of HPV and feel empowered to have informed discussions with a healthcare provider.

To learn more, visit knowhpv.ca and speak to a healthcare provider.

About the Survey

This online survey was conducted by Ipsos on behalf of Merck Canada to assess awareness, perceptions, and understanding of human papillomavirus (HPV) among Canadian adults. The survey was fielded March 6 to March 11, 2026. A total of n=1000 Canadians aged 18 to 47 participated in the survey which was conducted via the Ipsos’ panel. Quotas and weighting were used to ensure the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. This survey has a credibility interval of +/- 3.8 per cent 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all Canadians aged 18+ been surveyed. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population.

About Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted infection that can spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact in the genital area or during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. About 75% of sexually active people will contract at least one HPV infection in their lifetime, often without symptoms. While most infections clear on their own, persistent infection with high-risk strains could lead to certain types of cancer. HPV is responsible for approximately 100% of cervical cancers, 90% of anal cancers, 60% to 73% of throat (oropharyngeal) cancers, 40% of vaginal and vulvar cancers, and 40% to 50% of penile cancers.

About Merck

At Merck, known as MSD, outside of the United States and Canada, we are unified around our purpose: We use the power of leading-edge science to save and improve lives around the world. For more than 130 years, we have brought hope to humanity through the development of important medicines and vaccines. We aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world – and today, we are at the forefront of research to deliver innovative health solutions that advance the prevention and treatment of

diseases in people and animals. We foster a diverse and inclusive global workforce and operate responsibly every day to enable a safe, sustainable, and healthy future for all people and communities. For more information about our operations in Canada, visit www.merck.ca and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) @MerckCanada.

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