



SURVEY OF CANADIAN ADULTS:

BACK PAIN

DRAFT REPORT

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and
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May 2003

pn5360

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SURVEY METHODS

QUESTIONNAIRES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In April 2003, Environics Research Group Ltd. was retained by Veritas Communications Inc. to conduct a national public survey of adult Canadians on the subject of back pain for the Canadian Chiropractic Association (The CCA).

The research was needed, since there is no recent data on the incidence of back pain in the adult population.

The survey was conducted to examine the extent to which Canadians suffer from back pain, the actions that they take to relieve their suffering and levels of satisfaction with various therapies, including chiropractic care.

The topics examined in the survey include:

- The incidence of back pain in the Canadian adult population
- The duration of the back pain
- The severity of the back pain
- The main cause of the back pain
- The impact of the back pain, including time off work and other financial, recreational, social and mental health impacts
- Treatments used
- Cost barriers to seeking treatment
- Satisfaction with treatment, including chiropractic care
- Importance of back pain as a public health issue
- The seriousness of back pain compared to other health issues

The survey is based on a sample size of 1,500 Canadians aged 18 and over, including 1,062 adults who have experienced back pain within the past two years. It was conducted between April 23 and May 1, 2003.

A survey based on a sample of 1,500 has a margin of error of approximately +/-2.5 percentage points, 19 times in 20. The margins are wider for regional, demographic and attitudinal subsamples.

2.0 INCIDENCE OF BACK PAIN

Almost two-thirds of adult Canadians report experiencing back pain over the past year.

Almost two-thirds of adult Canadians (64%) report having experienced pain in their shoulders, upper or lower back, in the past year.

Incidence of back pain over the past year does not vary significantly across regional or demographic groups.

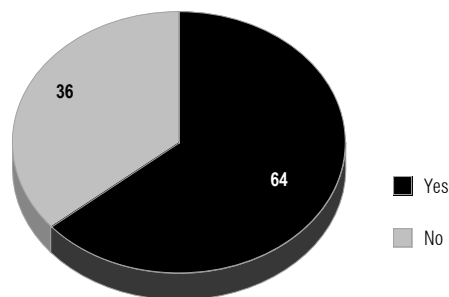
Those who have not experienced back pain in the past year (N=545) were asked if they have ever experienced pain in their shoulders, upper or lower back. Of these, 44 percent say they have.

Among those who have ever experienced back pain (N=241), 45 percent say they have experienced pain in their shoulders, upper or lower back between one and two years ago. Smaller proportions report experiencing this pain three to five years ago (25%), or more than five years ago (27%).

In total, 71 percent of adult Canadians (N=1,062) have experienced back pain within the past two years.

The following questions were asked to those 71 percent of Canadians (N=1062) who have experienced back pain within the past two years. From now on, this group will be referred to as recent back pain sufferers.

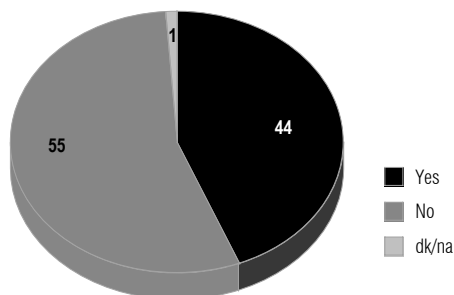
Experienced Back Pain Within Past Year



Q.1

Over the past year, have you experienced pain in your shoulders, upper or lower back?

Ever Experienced Back Pain?

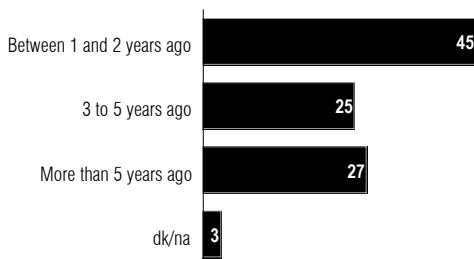


Q.2

Have you ever experienced pain in your shoulders, upper or lower back?

Subsample: Respondents who have not experienced back pain in the past year

When Back Pain was Experienced



Q.3

How long ago did you experience pain in your shoulders, upper or lower back ...?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain, but not in the past year

3.0 DURATION OF BACK PAIN

Six in ten recent back pain sufferers report that their last experience of back pain lasted for one week or less. However, almost three in ten say the pain lasted for more than one month, including almost two in ten who say it never went away.

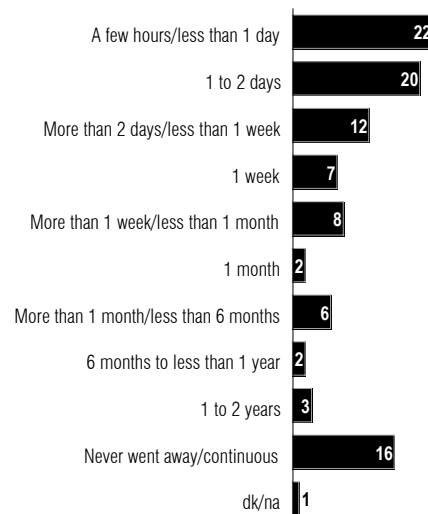
When recent back pain sufferers were asked about the duration of their most recent back pain, a total of six in ten (61%) report that this pain lasted for one week or less, including those who say a few hours/less than a day (22%), one to two days (20%), more than two days, but less than a week (12%) or one week (7%).

A total of ten percent mention more than one week, but less than a month (8%) or one month (2%). A total of 27 percent say the pain lasted for more than one month, including those who say more than one month, but less than six months (6%), six months to less than a year (2%), one to two years (3%) and never went away/continuous (16%).

Older back pain sufferers, particularly those aged 60 and older, are more likely than others to report that the back pain never went away. Younger back pain sufferers, particularly those aged 18 to 29, are more likely to say the pain lasted for two days or less.

Those who report that their back pain was severe are more likely than others to report that their back pain never went away.

How Long Back Pain Lasted



Q.4

Thinking about the last time you suffered this kind of pain, how long did it last?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

4.0 SEVERITY OF BACK PAIN

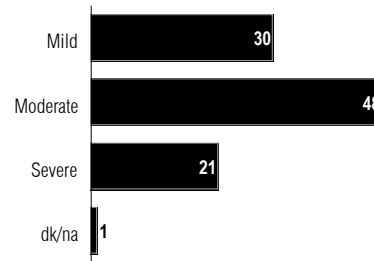
Seven in ten recent back pain sufferers describe their pain as moderate (48%) or severe (21%).

When recent back pain sufferers were asked whether they would describe their pain as mild, moderate or severe, three in ten (30%) describe their back pain as mild. However, seven in ten describe their pain as moderate (48%), or severe (21%).

Older back pain sufferers are more likely than their younger counterparts to describe their back pain as severe. Younger back pain sufferers are more likely than their older counterparts to describe their pain as mild. Less educated and less affluent back pain sufferers are more likely than others to describe their pain as severe.

Canadians who rate back pain as a very important public health issue are also more likely to describe their back pain as severe.

Severity of Back Pain



Q.5

Would you describe this pain as mild, moderate or severe?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

5.0 MAIN CAUSE OF BACK PAIN

Health conditions such as fibromyalgia, pregnancy, surgery, etc., and work-related injuries are most likely to be mentioned as the main cause of their back pain.

When recent back pain sufferers are asked what they think was the main cause of their pain, the largest proportion mention health conditions such as fibromyalgia, pregnancy, surgery, etc. (22%). A total of 15 percent mention work-related injuries, including injuries caused by computer/data entry (3%), plant/factory-related (2%), poorly designed equipment (1%) and other work-related injuries (9%). Smaller proportions mention poor posture (10%), sports injuries (9%), improper lifting (8%), carrying heavy articles such as a handbag, briefcase, backpack (6%), emotional stress (6%), car accident (5%), accidental falling/slipping (4%) and yard work/gardening (3%). Three percent mention some other cause and eight percent are unable to mention the main cause of their back pain.

Female back pain sufferers are somewhat more likely than their male counterparts to cite health conditions as the main cause of their back pain. Male back pain sufferers are somewhat more likely than their female counterparts to mention sports injuries and work-related injuries in general. Older back pain sufferers, particularly those aged 60 and older, are more likely than others to mention a health condition. Younger back pain sufferers, particularly those aged 18 to 29, are more likely to cite poor posture and sports injuries. Less affluent back pain sufferers are more likely to mention health conditions. Quebecers are more likely than others to cite poor posture.

Back pain sufferers who see a physician for an annual check-up are more likely to cite health conditions as the main cause of their back pain. Those who describe their back pain as severe are also more likely to mention health conditions. Those who describe their back pain as mild or moderate are more likely to cite poor posture and sports injuries.

Main Cause of Back Pain

Health condition, eg. fibromyalgia, pregnancy, surgery, etc.	22
Work-related injuries	15
Poor posture	10
Sports injuries	9
Improper lifting	8
Carrying heavy articles such as handbag/briefcase/backpack	6
Emotional stress	6
Car accident	5
Accidental falling/slipping	4
Yard work/gardening	3
Weather	1
Other	2
dk/na	8

Q.6

What do you think was the main cause of your pain?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

6.0 IMPACT OF BACK PAIN

A Time off Work Due to Back Pain

Although three-quarters of recent back pain sufferers say they did not take time off work at the time they were experiencing their pain, 15 percent did take time off, and more than one-half of this group lost a month or more of work.

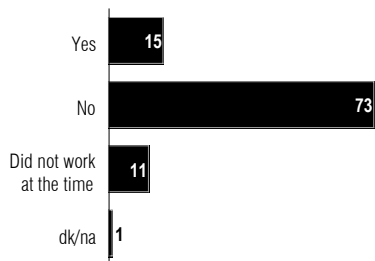
When recent back pain sufferers were asked if they took time off work at the time they were experiencing their pain, three-quarters (73%) say they did not. Fifteen percent say they did take time off work, and another 11 percent say they did not work at the time.

Male back pain sufferers are slightly more likely than their female counterparts to say they took time off work at the time they were experiencing their back pain. Older back pain sufferers are less likely to report taking time off work and are much more likely to say they were not working at the time.

Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as severe are more than twice as likely than average to report taking time off work.

Among recent back pain sufferers who took time off work (N=163), more than one-half (53%) lost a month or more in work days as a direct result of this back pain, including 20 percent who lost one or more years. Another 21 percent lost between one week and less than a month off work. A total of 25 percent lost less than a week off work, including 18 percent who lost only one or two days.

Took Time Off Work Due To Back Pain



Q.7a

At the time you were experiencing this pain, did you take time off work?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

Work Days Lost Due To Back Pain



Q.7b

How many work days did you lose as a direct result of this pain?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years, and have missed work days due to back pain

B. Other Impacts of Back Pain

A majority of recent back pain sufferers report having to limit physical activity as a result of their pain (56%), and a significant minority report having trouble concentrating (40%). Smaller, but significant proportions say that their back pain caused them to spend less time with their family and friends or to experience depression.

In these questions, recent back pain sufferers were asked whether they experienced specific financial, recreational, social and mental health impacts as a result of this back pain.

Almost six in ten (56%) say they had to limit sports or other physical activity that they normally engaged in. Among these, 41 percent say they had to give up this activity.

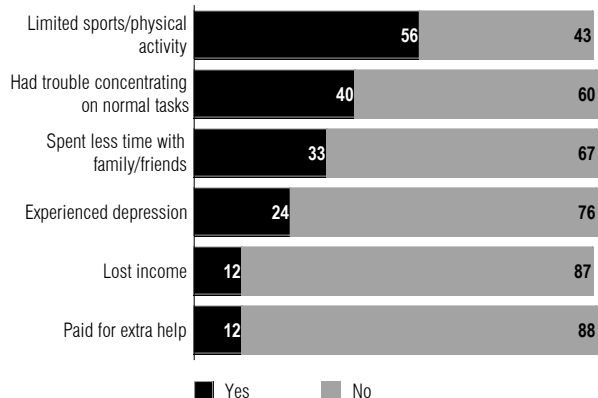
Four in ten (40%) say they had problems concentrating on tasks that they normally do. More than three in ten (33%) say they spent less time socializing with family or friends. About one-quarter (24%) say they got depressed as a result of this pain.

Recent back pain sufferers were much less likely to report financial impacts. One in ten each say they lost income (12%) or had to pay for extra help to do the things they would have done for themselves (12%).

Less affluent back pain sufferers are more likely than others to report having lost income, having to pay for extra help to do the things they would have done for themselves, having spent less time socializing with family or friends and getting depressed. Older back pain sufferers are more likely to report getting depressed. Those aged 60 and older are also more likely to report having to pay for extra help. Less educated back pain sufferers are more likely to report getting depressed.

Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as severe are far more likely than others to report that they have been impacted in all these ways. Back pain sufferers who exercise regularly and those who try to eat a healthy diet are more likely to report having to limit sports or other physical activity that they normally engage in. Back

Other Impacts of Back Pain



Q.8a-f

As a result of this pain, did you ...?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

pain sufferers who use herbal supplements to enhance their health are more likely to report having problems concentrating on tasks that they normally do. Back pain sufferers who see a physician for an annual check-up are more likely to report spending less time socializing with family or friends and getting depressed.

7.0 TREATMENTS USED FOR BACK PAIN

Over-the-counter medication is the most likely treatment used by recent back pain sufferers.

When recent back pain sufferers are asked, top-of-mind, what they did for their pain, the largest proportion (37%) mention using over-the-counter medication. About two in ten each mention using prescription medication (17%) or home treatment, such as a heating pad or cold compress (17%). Smaller proportions cite going to the chiropractor (14%), exercise/stretching (10%), going to the physiotherapist (9%), getting rest (9%), going to a massage therapist (8%) and going to their family doctor (6%). Thirteen percent mention some other treatment. Fourteen percent say they did nothing for their pain.

Female back pain sufferers are more likely than their male counterparts to report using over-the-counter medications and home treatment. Male back pain sufferers are more likely than their female counterparts to report doing nothing. Older back pain sufferers are more likely than others to report using prescription medications. The least affluent back pain sufferers are more likely to report doing nothing.

Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as severe are far more likely to report using prescription medication. Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as mild and those who do not try to eat a healthy diet are more likely than others to report doing nothing for their pain.

Treatments Used for Back Pain

Used over-the-counter medication	37
Used prescription medication	17
Home treatment, e.g. heating pad/cold compress	17
Went to chiropractor	14
Exercise/stretching	10
Rest	9
Went to physiotherapist	9
Went to massage therapist	8
Went to family doctor	6
Went for psychotherapy/counselling	2
Bath/shower	2
Ointment/rubbing	2
Got acupuncture	1
Had surgery	1
Visited a pain clinic	1
Other	4
Nothing	14
dk/na	*

* Less than one percent

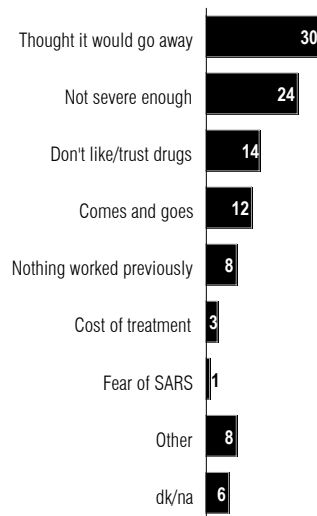
Q.9a

What did you do for your pain? Anything else?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

Among recent back pain sufferers who report doing nothing for their pain (N=145), the largest proportions say they did nothing because they thought the pain would go away on its own (30%) or because the pain was not severe enough (24%). Smaller proportions mention they don't trust/like drugs (14%), the pain comes and goes (12%), nothing has worked on previous occasions (8%), cost of treatment/affordability (3%) and fear of SARS (1%). Eight percent mention some other reason, and six percent are unable to provide a reason for doing nothing for their back pain.

Why Nothing Done to Address Back Pain



Q.9b

Why did you do nothing to address your back pain?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years, and did nothing to address their back pain

8.0 COST BARRIER TO SEEKING TREATMENT

Four in ten recent back pain sufferers say cost is at least a moderate barrier in their seeking treatment for their back pain. Four in ten say cost is not a barrier at all.

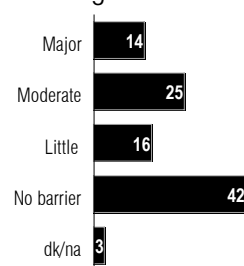
When recent back pain sufferers are asked to what extent cost is a barrier in their seeking treatment for their back pain, four in ten (39%) say it is a major (14%) or moderate (25%) barrier. Fewer than two in ten (16%) say it is a little barrier to their seeking treatment. Four in ten (42%) say cost is not a barrier at all.

The least affluent back pain sufferers are more likely than others to say cost is a major barrier to seeking treatment. Quebecers are somewhat more likely than average to say cost is a major barrier. Back pain sufferers aged 18 to 29 are more likely than others to say cost is at least a moderate barrier. More affluent back pain sufferers, particularly those with household incomes above \$80,000, and those who are better educated are more likely to say cost is not a barrier at all.

Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as severe are more likely than others to say cost is a major barrier to seeking treatment. Back pain sufferers who use herbal supplements to enhance their health are more likely to say cost is at least a moderate barrier. Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as mild and those who do not use herbal supplements to enhance their health are more likely than others to say that cost is not a barrier at all.

Among recent back pain sufferers who say cost is a major or moderate barrier (N=402), the most common reason given is that they are not covered for the cost of the treatment, including those who say they are not covered by a provincial health insurance plan (18%), not covered by an employee benefits plan (10%), not covered by Workers' Compensation (5%) and not covered in general (55%). Smaller proportions mention that the pain isn't severe enough to pay for treatment (6%), waiting time in hospitals/clinics (3%) and sceptical of results (3%). Five percent mention some other reason and seven percent are unable to offer a reason.

Extent That Cost is a Barrier to Treating Back Pain

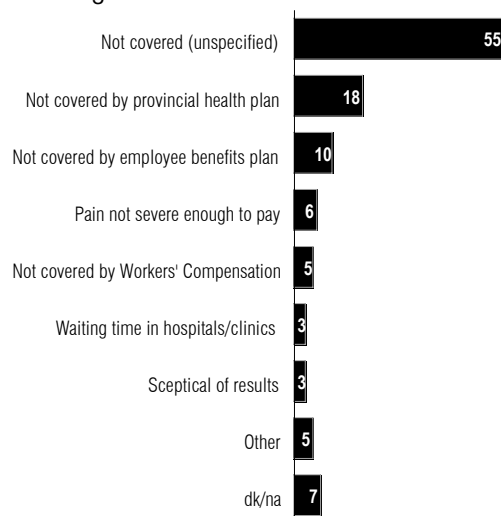


10a

For you personally, to what extent is cost a barrier to seeking treatment? Is it a ...?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years

Reason Cost is a Barrier to Treating Back Pain



Q.10b

Why do you say that? Anything else?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years, and for whom cost was a major/moderate barrier

9.0 SATISFACTION WITH TREATMENTS FOR BACK PAIN

Among users, chiropractic treatment elicits the highest levels of satisfaction.

In this set of questions, recent back pain sufferers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the treatments they used for their back pain.

Among recent back pain sufferers who went to a chiropractor (N=155), an overwhelming majority of nine in ten (92%) were very (69%) or somewhat (23%) satisfied with this treatment. Only seven percent were not very (4%) or not at all (3%) satisfied. Two percent offer no opinion.

Among recent back pain sufferers who went to a massage therapist (N=89*), a large majority of more than eight in ten (83%) were very (62%) or somewhat (21%) satisfied with this treatment. Only four percent were not very satisfied. Thirteen percent offer no opinion.

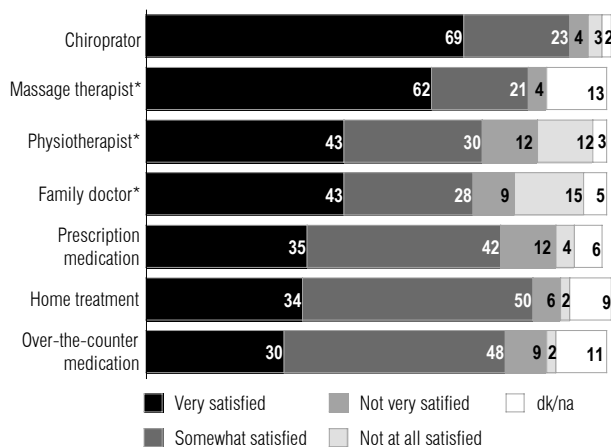
Among recent back pain sufferers who went to a physiotherapist (N=97*),¹ a large majority of almost three-quarters (73%) were very (43%) or somewhat (30%) satisfied with this treatment. One-quarter (24%) were not very (12%) or not at all (12%) satisfied. Three percent offer no opinion.

Among recent back pain sufferers who went to their family doctor (N=72*), a large majority of seven in ten (71%) were very (43%) or somewhat (28%) satisfied with this treatment. One-quarter (24%) were not very (9%) or not at all (15%) satisfied. Five percent offer no opinion.

Among recent back pain sufferers who used prescription medication (N=184), a large majority of about eight in ten (77%) were very (35%) or somewhat (42%) satisfied with this treatment. Only 16 percent were not very (12%) or not at all (4%) satisfied. Six percent offer no opinion.

Back pain sufferers who do not use herbal supplements to enhance their health are more likely than others to be very satisfied with the prescription medication they took for their back pain.

Satisfaction with Treatments for Back Pain



Q.11

How satisfied were you with the treatment(s) you received when you [treatment mentioned in Q.9a]? Were you ...?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years, and sought treatment for it from these various sources

** The numbers with an asterisk represent small sample sizes (an N below 100). Hence, caution should be used in the interpretation of these results.*

Among recent back pain sufferers who used home treatment such as a heating pad, cold compress (N=175), a large majority of more than eight in ten (84%) say they were very (34%) or somewhat (50%) satisfied with this treatment. Only eight percent say they were not very (6%) or not at all (2%) satisfied. Nine percent offer no opinion.

Among recent back pain sufferers who used over-the-counter medication (N=393), a large majority of eight in ten (78%) were very (30%) or somewhat (48%) satisfied with this treatment. Only one in ten (11%) were not very (9%) or not at all (2%) satisfied. Eleven percent offer no opinion.

Female back pain sufferers who used over-the-counter medication were more likely than their male counterparts to say they were very satisfied with this treatment. Back pain sufferers who describe their pain as mild are also more likely than others to be very satisfied with over-the-counter medication.

Among the very small samples who went for psychotherapy or counselling (N=20*), got acupuncture (N=14*), had surgery (N=14*) or visited a pain clinic (N=9*), the data suggest that most were satisfied with these treatments.

1 The numbers with an asterisk represent small sample sizes (an N below 100). Hence, caution should be used in the interpretation of these results.

10.0 SATISFACTION WITH CHIROPRACTIC CARE

In total, 60 percent of Canadians report seeking chiropractic care. Among these, a large majority say they were at least somewhat satisfied with their most recent chiropractic treatment.

As we know from a previous question, 14 percent of recent back pain sufferers sought out chiropractic care. In addition, all respondents, except recent back pain sufferers who had mentioned, top-of-mind, that they had gone to a chiropractor for their back pain (N=1,196), were asked if they ever sought chiropractic care. One-half of this group (49%) say they have sought chiropractic care. In total then, 60 percent of Canadians have sought chiropractic care.

Canadians who have sought chiropractic care, except recent back pain sufferers who had mentioned, top-of-mind, that they had gone to a chiropractor for their back pain (N=603), were asked how satisfied they were with their most recent chiropractic treatment. A large majority of three-quarters (74%) say they were very (47%) or somewhat (27%) satisfied with their most recent chiropractic treatment. One-quarter (23%) say they were not very (10%) or not at all (13%) satisfied. Two percent offer no opinion.

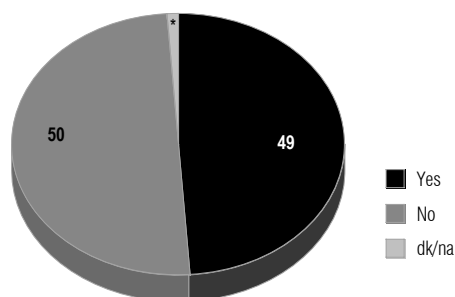
Demographic analysis of the large sample of people (N=1,196) who sometime in their life sought chiropractic care is as follows.

The least affluent Canadians and those aged 18 to 29 are less likely to have ever sought chiropractic care.

Canadians who use herbal supplements to enhance their health, those who see a physician for an annual check-up and those who try to eat a healthy diet are more likely than others to say they have sought chiropractic care. Those who describe their back pain as severe are also more likely to have used chiropractic services.

Among the same sample of people (N=1,196) who have sought chiropractic care, women are more likely than men to say they were very satisfied. Canadians who use herbal supplements to enhance their health and those who try to eat a healthy diet are also more likely to say they were very satisfied with their most recent chiropractic treatment.

Have Sought Chiropractic Care



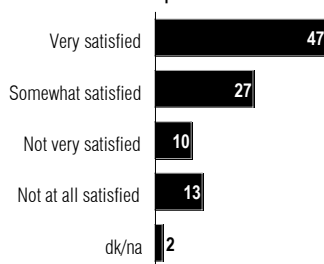
* Less than one percent

Q.12

Have you ever sought chiropractic care?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years, and sought treatment for it, but did not mention a chiropractor in Q.9a

Satisfaction With Treatment at Most Recent Chiropractic Visit



Q.13

Thinking about your most recent visit, how satisfied were you with your chiropractic treatment? Were you ...?

Subsample: Respondents who have experienced back pain in the past two years (except for those who mentioned chiropractor in Q.9a), and sought chiropractic care for it

11.0 BACK PAIN AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

A. Importance of Back Pain as a Public Health Issue

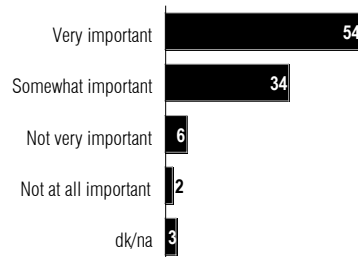
Nine in ten Canadians rate back pain as an important public health issue. Moreover, more than one-half rate it as very important.

An overwhelming majority of nine in ten Canadians (88%) rate back pain as a very (54%) or somewhat (34%) important public health issue in Canada. Only eight percent say it is a not very (6%) or not at all (2%) important issue. Three percent offer no opinion.

Overwhelming majorities in all regional and demographic groups rate back pain as an important public health issue in Canada. However, women are more likely than men to rate it as very important. Older Canadians are also more likely to rate it as a very important public health issue.

Canadians who see a physician for an annual check-up and those who describe their back pain as severe are more likely than others to rate back pain as a very important public health issue.

Importance of Back Pain as Public Health Issue



Q.14

In your opinion, how important is back pain as a public health issue in Canada? Is it ... ?

B Seriousness of Back Pain Compared to Other Health Issues

Although back pain is seen as a less serious threat to overall public health in Canada than are a number of other ailments, a large majority of more than eight in ten Canadians see it as at least a somewhat serious threat to public health.

Canadians were asked to rate the seriousness of a number of different ailments to overall public health in Canada.

Overwhelming majorities of Canadians rate all of these ailments as at least a somewhat serious threat to overall public health.

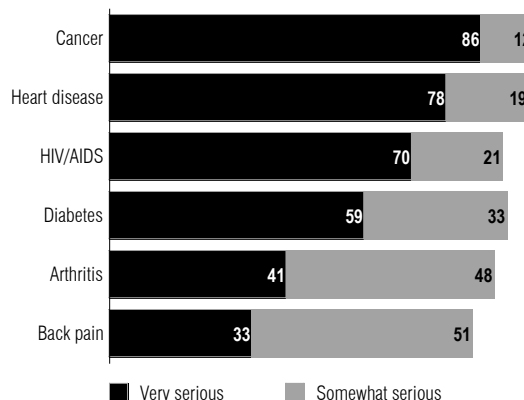
When we look specifically at the proportions who rate these ailments as a very serious threat to overall public health, we see a much clearer ranking.

Almost nine in ten Canadians (86%) say cancer is a very serious threat to overall public health in Canada. Large majorities also say the same of heart disease (78%) and HIV/AIDS (70%). A majority (59%) also rate diabetes as a very serious threat to public health. Smaller proportions say the same about arthritis (41%) and back pain (33%).

Women are more likely than men to rate nearly all of these ailments, including back pain, as a very serious threat to overall public health in Canada. Older Canadians are more likely to rate back pain and arthritis as a very serious threat. Canadians aged 18 to 29 are more likely than others to rate HIV/AIDS as a very serious threat. Atlantic Canadians are more likely to rate diabetes and arthritis as a very serious threat to public health.

Canadians who describe their back pain as severe, those who rate back pain as a very important public health issue, those who use herbal supplements to enhance their health, those who see a physician for an annual check-up and those who try to eat a healthy diet are more likely than others to say back pain is a very serious threat to overall public health in Canada. Canadians who see a

Seriousness of Ailments to Public Health



Q.15a-f

Thinking now about a number of different ailments, would you say each of the following is a very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious or not at all serious threat, to overall public health in Canada ...?

physician for an annual check-up and those who try to eat a healthy diet are also more likely to rate heart disease, diabetes and arthritis as very serious threats to public health. Those who use herbal supplements to enhance their health are also more likely to rate arthritis as a very serious threat to public health.