

Huron Health Report

INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION

May 2010



SUMMARY

- In 2008, over 40% of surveyed respondents in Huron County reported having a flu shot since September 2007.
- More females than males reported having a flu shot since September 2007.
- A higher proportion of seniors (≥65 years old) reported having a flu shot since September 2007 compared to the other age groups.
- Almost half of the persons who had a flu shot indicated getting their last flu shot at the doctor's office.
- The main reason given for getting the flu shot was as a preventative measure.
- The main reasons given by respondents for not getting the flu shot were: they don't need it or they don't get sick, and they don't believe in it.
- Majority of respondents agreed that doctors and hospital employees should make a serious effort to reduce the chance of spreading the flu to their patients.
- Nearly 70% of respondents indicated that they are concerned about the possible long-term negative effects of the free flu shot for children.

BACKGROUND

Influenza is a virus that spreads around the world in seasonal epidemics, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands worldwide annually, and millions in pandemic years.¹ The flu affects 10-25% of Canadians each year. While the majority who become sick will recover, the flu results in an average of 20,000 hospitalizations and 2,000 to 8,000 deaths in Canada each year.²

Immunization can be done through various techniques, most commonly vaccination. Combined with regular hand washing, the flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and others from the virus. Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) encourages all Canadians over age six months to get a flu shot. It is particularly important for health professionals to be immunized to protect themselves and their patients.²

This report provides current population-level information on the experience, perception and behaviour of Huron County residents, reported through the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS).

The RRFSS is a random-digit-dial telephone survey of adults 18 years and older, conducted by the Institute of Social Research (ISR) at York University on behalf of the Huron County Health Unit.³

The specific objectives of this report are:

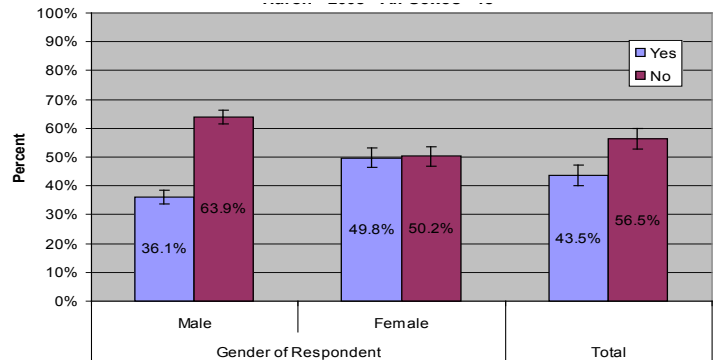
- **to assess the public's perception of the value of influenza immunization;**
- **to plan and coordinate resources for the Universal Influenza Program;**
- **to assess the public's perception of whether health professionals should be immunized against influenza.**

This analysis was done using data collected between January and December 2008. A total of 717 interviews were conducted in Huron County during that period, giving an overall response rate of 64%. Estimates are presented with 95% Confidence Intervals (CI). CIs are reported in brackets or presented as | in the graphs. The sample was weighted to correct for unequal probabilities of selection within households.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Percent of adults who reported getting a flu shot since September 2007- Huron - 2008 - by gender

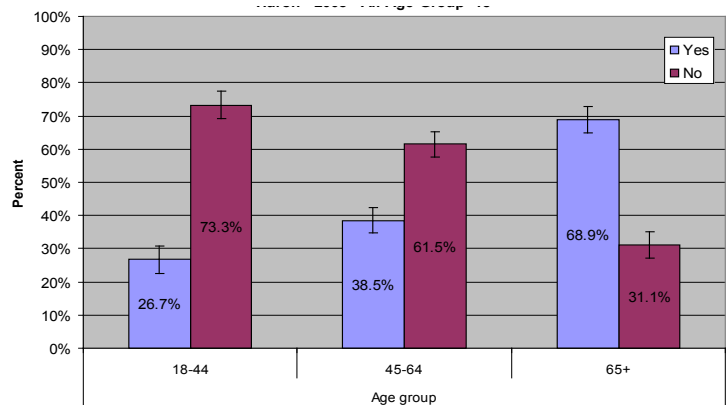
43.5% (38.7, 48.3) of respondents indicated that they had a flu shot since September 2007. The proportion of females that had a flu shot since September 2007 was significantly higher than males ($p=0.005$).



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)

Figure 2: Percent of adults who reported getting a flu shot since September 2007 Huron - 2008 - by age group

68.9% (61.1, 76.7) of respondents 65 years or older indicated they had a flu shot since September 2007. The proportion of seniors (65+) that had a flu shot since September 2007 was significantly higher than any other age group ($p<0.001$).

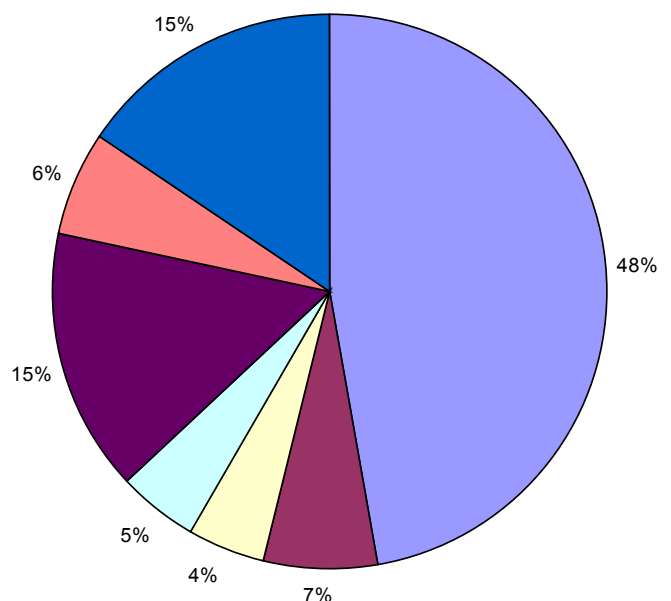


Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)

Figure 3: Where did you get your last flu shot (since September 2007)? Huron - 2008

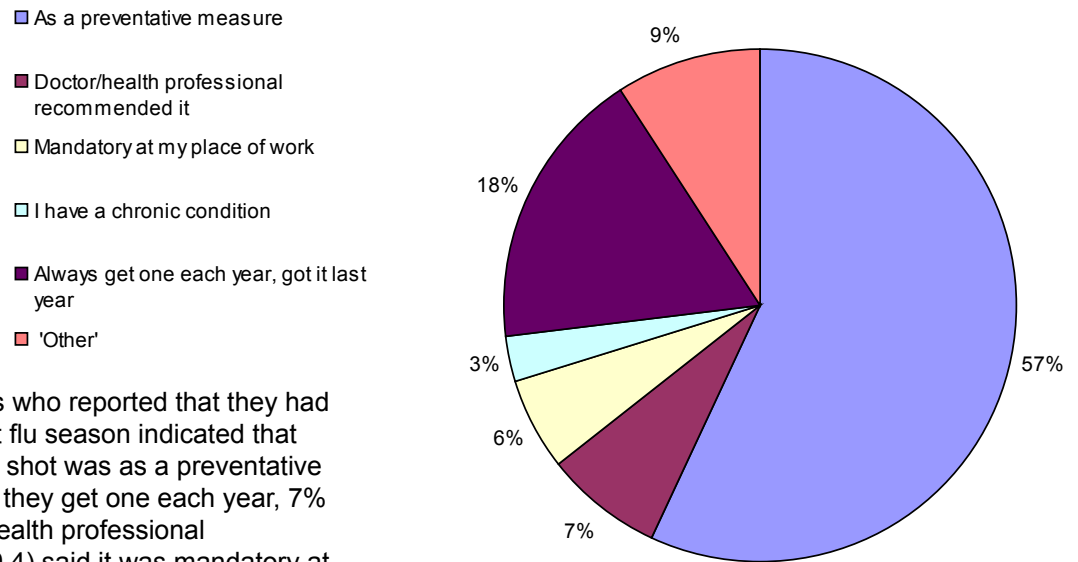
- Doctor's office
- Work
- School
- Community health centre
- Clinic sponsored by the public health unit
- Hospital
- Other [specify]

48% (40.8, 55.2) of respondents indicated they got their last flu shot at their doctor's office, 15% (9.8, 20.2) said they got it at a clinic sponsored by the public health unit, 7% (3.3, 10.7) got it at work, 6% (2.6, 9.4) got it in a hospital and 15% (9.8, 20.2) got it at other places.



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)

**Figure 4: What are the main reasons you had your last flu shot?
Huron - 2008**



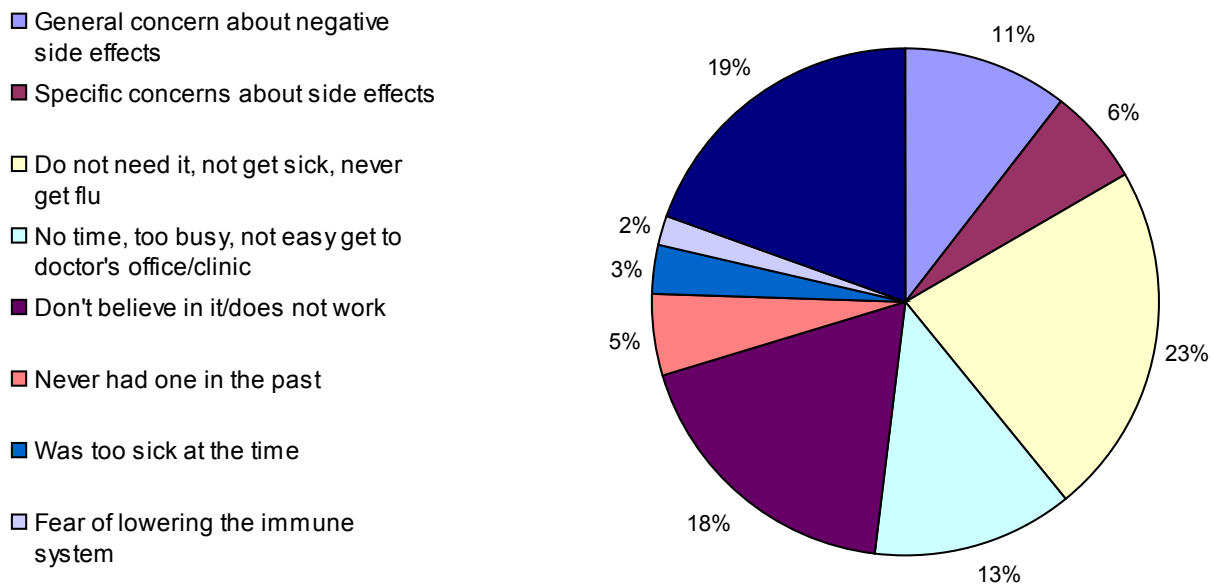
57% (49.9, 64.1) of respondents who reported that they had their flu shots in the most recent flu season indicated that the main reason for getting a flu shot was as a preventative measure, 18% (12.5, 23.5) said they get one each year, 7% (3.4, 10.6) said their doctor or health professional recommended it and 6% (2.6, 9.4) said it was mandatory at their places of work.

Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)

**Figure 5: What are the main reasons that you did not get your flu shot?
Huron - 2008**

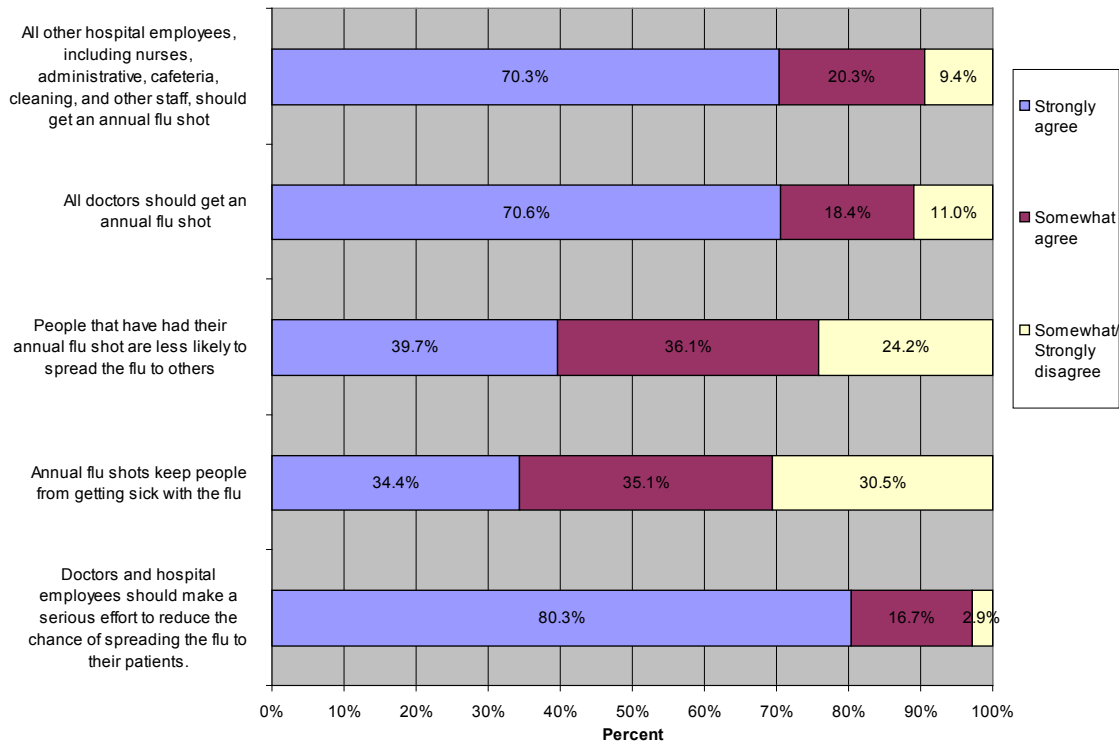
There were various reasons for people not getting a flu shot in this most recent flu season. 23% (17.5, 28.5) of respondents who reported not getting a flu shot in the most recent flu season said the main reason is that they do not get sick or they never get the flu, 18% (13.0, 23.0) said they don't believe in it or it does not work, 13% (8.6, 17.4)

said they were too busy to get their flu shots or it was not easy for them to get to doctor's office/clinic, 11% (6.9, 15.1) said they were concerned about negative side effects.



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)

**Figure 6: Respondents attitude towards flu immunization for health care workers
Huron - 2008**



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)
*Interpret with caution, high sampling variability

The majority of respondents (80.3% CI is 76.4, 84.2) strongly agreed that doctors and hospital employees should make a serious effort to reduce the chance of spreading the flu to their patients.

89.0% (85.8, 92.2) of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that all doctors should get an annual flu shot.

69.5% (65.1, 73.9) of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that annual flu shots keep people from getting sick with the flu.

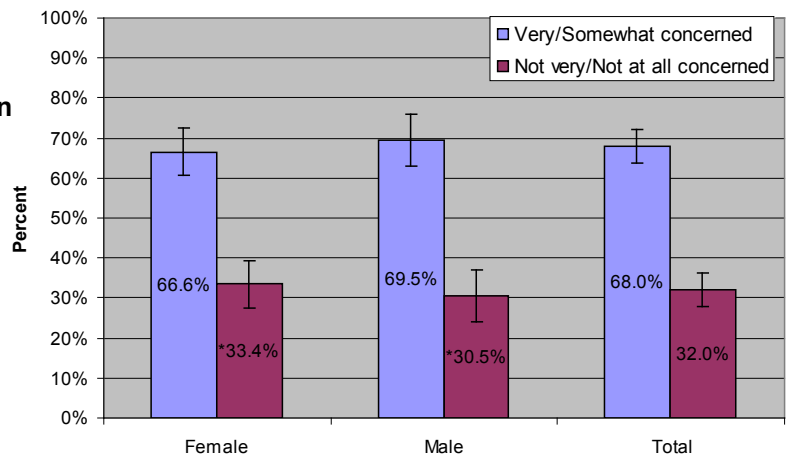
90.6% (87.6, 93.6) of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that all other hospital employees, including nurses, administrative, cafeteria, cleaning, and other staff, should get an annual flu shot.

75.8% (71.7, 79.9) of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that people who have had their annual flu shots are less likely to spread the flu to others.

There was no significant difference between genders in the response to the above statements (p-value >0.1)

**Figure 7: Respondents level of concern about possible long-term effects of the flu shot for children
Huron - 2008 - by gender**

68.0% (59.5, 76.5) of respondents indicated that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about the possible long-term negative effects of the free flu shot for children. There was no significant difference between genders (p-value=0.7696).



Data source: RRFSS (Extracted February 12, 2010)
*Interpret with caution, high sampling variability

LIMITATIONS

RRFSS results are based on respondents self-reporting and they may not necessarily have accurate recall. Households without telephones were excluded from the survey (about 3% of all Ontario households).

Thus the percentages may not represent the true estimates for the general population as respondents may have different characteristics than people that have not been included in the survey.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Jonathan Dushoff; Plotkin, JB; Viboud, C; Earn, DJ; Simonsen, L (2006). "Mortality due to Influenza in the United States — An Annualized Regression Approach Using Multiple-Cause Mortality Data". *American Journal of Epidemiology* 163 (2): 181–7. Retrieved Feb. 12, 2010.
- ² Influenza Immunization-"the flu shot". Public Health Agency of Canada, www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/iif-vcg/index-eng.php. Accessed February 12, 2010.
- ³ Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System. <http://www.rfss.on.ca>