



PHAC Media Lines

PHAC rapid stakeholder survey on COVID-19 vaccine program strategies

Issue: PHAC is conducting a rapid survey of stakeholders on potential COVID-19 vaccine program strategies. The survey asks stakeholders to rank various vaccine program strategies in order of importance under different pandemic scenarios. The strategies are:

- Protect those who are most vulnerable to severe illness and death from COVID-19
- Minimize transmission of COVID-19 disease (i.e., reduce total number of cases)
- Protect critical infrastructure
- Protect healthcare capacity
- Other (please specify)

PHAC will distribute the survey to expert groups (such as the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Task Group), health professional associations (such as the Canadian Paediatric Society), other governmental departments, as well as patient and community advocacy representatives and expert members of the CanCOVID Network.

Media attention is possible.

Key messages:

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is consulting a wide range of stakeholders to determine the most effective strategy to dispense the vaccine for COVID-19, when it becomes available.
- It will not be feasible to vaccinate all Canadians immediately when a vaccine becomes available because supplies will be limited at first. We need to design a targeted vaccine program that achieves our outbreak response goals as efficiently, effectively and equitably as possible.
- Our over-arching public health goals in this outbreak are to minimize serious illness and overall deaths (due to all causes), and to minimize social disruption, including reducing the burden on health care resources.
- PHAC is seeking input from:
 - scientific and medical experts
 - federal, provincial and territorial public health experts
 - health professional associations
 - other governmental departments
 - patient and community advocacy representatives and experts
- The results of the consultation will inform the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's (NACI) recommendations to the PHAC on target groups for early COVID-19 vaccination when the first doses of an authorised pandemic vaccine become available in Canada.



- NACI's decision-making process will include a review of the ethics, equity, feasibility and acceptability of any given course of action.

Questions and Answers:

Q1: We know some people are more vulnerable than others to severe illness or death if infected by COVID-19. Why wouldn't you vaccinate them first?

Unfortunately, some of the populations that are most vulnerable to severe outcomes from COVID-19, such as older adults, may be less responsive to a vaccine. If clinical trials show us that the vaccine doesn't work well in certain populations, they may not be targeted for early vaccine programs. If vaccine resources are limited, targeting populations that have a robust immune response to the vaccine may be the most effective way to limit the spread of COVID-19 overall, thereby protecting vulnerable populations too.

Q2: Many of the stakeholder groups represent health professional associations. Isn't that likely to skew the results towards vaccinating health professionals first?

PHAC is consulting a wide range of stakeholder groups for the purposes of this survey, including patient and community advocacy representatives. In addition, NACI's decision-making process includes a review of the ethics, equity, feasibility and acceptability of any given course of action. The findings of the survey will be validated through a CIHR-funded survey of the general public on COVID-19 vaccine acceptability and by federal, provincial and territorial public health experts.

Q3: This survey assumes there will not be enough vaccine to go around. What is the Government of Canada doing to ensure access to a vaccine for as many Canadians as possible, as soon as possible?

Through [investments of more than \\$1 billion in medical research](#), the federal government is supporting multiple organizations working to develop candidate vaccines. There are currently more than 120 vaccine candidates globally that are at different stages of development, including at least 12 in Canada. The Government's support for vaccine development will better position Canada to rapidly access a vaccine once it does become available.

Q4: What percentage of the overall population would need to be vaccinated to bring the outbreak under control?

Until we know more about the vaccine characteristics of the candidates, and how well they work in different populations, it is impossible to determine how many Canadians would need to be vaccinated to have a meaningful impact on the outbreak. That is why clinical trials of these vaccines are so important to public health planning. We are also still learning about the disease transmission patterns of this new virus, and that will help inform the vaccine coverage targets.



Q5: The pandemic is more prevalent in some jurisdictions than others. There is no mention of this in the survey. Will that be taken into account in deciding the vaccine program strategy?

The findings of the survey will facilitate the assessment of options on target groups for early COVID-19 vaccination when it may not be feasible to vaccinate all Canadians immediately. Provinces and territories will need to consider these options in their own local contexts to decide on a pan-Canadian approach to pandemic vaccine use and prioritization.

Q6: When will the survey be complete and will the results be made public?

We are expecting to have the survey results completed by late-July. NACI will use the results to inform the next steps of its guidance development process. NACI will publish the aggregated survey results later this summer in its advisory statement on target groups for early COVID-19 vaccination.

Q7: How will the Immunity Task Force support the vaccine strategy?

On April 23, the Government of Canada launched the COVID-19 [Immunity Task Force](#) to lead a Canada-wide unified effort to test blood samples for signs of COVID-19 infections. The task force catalyses, supports, and harmonizes the design and rapid implementation of population-based studies that generate reliable first estimates of SARS-CoV-2 antibody positivity, overall and in priority populations across Canada. Serological surveys can also help guide important public health decisions once a vaccine becomes available