

Poll Finds Two-thirds of Parents and High-Priority Adults Who Tried to Get H1N1 Vaccine Were Unable to Get It

Most Who Tried and Didn't Get It Say They Will Try Again

For immediate release: Friday, November 6, 2009

Boston, MA— A new national poll from Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) researchers found that a majority of adults who tried to get the H1N1 vaccine for themselves or their children have been unable to do so. The poll, which examines the American public's response to the H1N1 vaccine shortage, is the fifth in a series of surveys of public views concerning the H1N1 flu outbreak undertaken by the Harvard Opinion Research Program at HSPH. The polling was done October 30 to November 1, 2009.

For the complete poll and charts associated with this press release, go to:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/horp/project-on-the-public-response-to-h1n1/>

Challenges to Getting H1N1 Vaccine

Since the H1N1 flu vaccine became available in October, 17% of American adults, 41% of parents, and 21% of high-priority adults have tried to get it. Among adults who tried to get it for themselves, 30% were able to get the vaccine and 70% were unable to get it. Among parents who tried to get the H1N1 vaccine for their children, 34% were able to get it and 66% were unable to get it. Among high priority adults who tried to get the H1N1 vaccine, 34% were able to get it and 66% were unable to get it.

Parents in this poll include those with children 6 months to less than 18 years. High-priority adults include adults who live with or care for a child less than 6 months of age, pregnant women, health care and emergency health personnel, and adults 25-64 with health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza, such as asthma or heart disease.

The poll also shows that some people were not able to find information about the location of available H1N1 flu vaccine. Approximately half who tried to find such information (49%) were unable to find it.

“These findings suggest that the nationwide H1N1 vaccine shortage is presenting a real challenge for those who have tried to get the vaccine,” said Robert J. Blendon, Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis at HSPH, who co-directed the poll.

Personal Reactions to the Experience of Trying to Get H1N1 Vaccination

The poll suggests that nearly a third (29%) of those who have tried and could not get the vaccine (either for themselves or for their children) are very frustrated. That said, most who have tried and not been able to get it yet (91%) say they will try again this year to get the vaccine for themselves, their children or both.

“Public health officials who are encouraging H1N1 vaccination may be relieved to see that most people who have so far been unable to get the vaccine say they will try again,” said Blendon.

Response to H1N1 Vaccine Shortage Overall

Looking more broadly at the issue of vaccine shortages, most Americans (82%) believe there is a shortage of H1N1 vaccine in the United States, and approximately 4 in 10 (41%) believe this is a major problem for the country. More than half of adults (60%) believe there is a shortage of H1N1 vaccine in their community.

Forty percent believe there will still not be enough H1N1 flu vaccine by the end of November for everyone in their community who wants it. Nearly a quarter (24%) say it will be a very serious problem for them and their immediate family if the H1N1 vaccine is not available by then.

This is the fifth in a series of surveys of public views concerning the H1N1 flu outbreak undertaken by the Harvard Opinion Research Program (HORP) at HSPH. See below:

“Survey Finds Nearly Half of Americans Concerned They Or Their Family May Get Sick from Swine Flu,” May 1, 2009.

“Survey Finds Many Americans Have Taken Steps to Protect Themselves Against H1N1,” May 8, 2009.

“National Survey Finds Six in Ten Americans Believe Serious Outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1) Likely in Fall/Winter,” July 15, 2009.

“Survey Finds Just 40% of Adults Absolutely Certain They Will Get H1N1 Vaccine,” October 2, 2009.

Another survey from HORP looked at business preparedness:

“Four-Fifths of Businesses Foresee Severe Problems Maintaining Operations If Significant H1N1 Flu Outbreak,” September 9, 2009.

Methodology

This poll is part of an on-going series of surveys focused on the public and biological security by the Harvard Opinion Research Program (HORP) at Harvard School of Public Health. The study was designed and analyzed by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). The project director is Robert J. Blendon of the Harvard School of Public Health. The research team also includes Gillian K. SteelFisher, John M. Benson, and Mark M. Bekheit of the Harvard School of Public Health, and Melissa J. Herrmann of SSRS/ICR. Fieldwork was conducted via telephone (including both landline and cell phone) for HORP by SSRS/ICR of Media (PA) October 30-November 1, 2009.

The survey was conducted with a representative national sample of 1,073 adults age 18 and over, including oversamples of non-Hispanic African Americans and Hispanics. Altogether, 107 non-

Hispanic African Americans and 141 Hispanics were interviewed. In the overall results, these groups were weighted to their actual proportion of the total adult population.

The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases, sample data are weighted to the most recent Census data available from the Current Population Survey for gender, age, race, education, region, and number of adults in the household. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

Funding

This Harvard School of Public Health series is funded under a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The award enables HORP to provide technical assistance to the CDC as well as to other national and state government health officials in order to support two critical goals: (1) to better understand the general public's response to public health emergencies, including biological threats and natural disasters; and (2) to improve related public health communications.