

# **Health PEI**

## **Primary Health Care Survey Results**

March 2013

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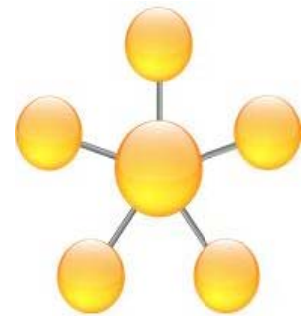
## Executive Summary

In the fall of 2011, Health PEI asked Islanders for their opinions and experiences with primary health care programs and services (Primary Care, Mental Health, Addictions and Public Health). 63,000 copies of the survey were mailed to households on PEI. With the survey, an information sheet about primary health care services on PEI was provided. People 18 years or older were asked to complete the survey. The survey was available in both English and French.

Filling out the survey was voluntary. Health PEI heard from almost 12,000 Islanders. This means about 19% of Islanders gave opinions of primary health care on PEI. Your feedback is important to Health PEI and it will be used to improve programs and services.

The survey results are now available and this report gives a snapshot of the findings. Questions were asked in five categories:

1. Community Health Services
2. Preventative Health
3. Sharing of Health Information
4. Management of Chronic Conditions
5. Personal Information.



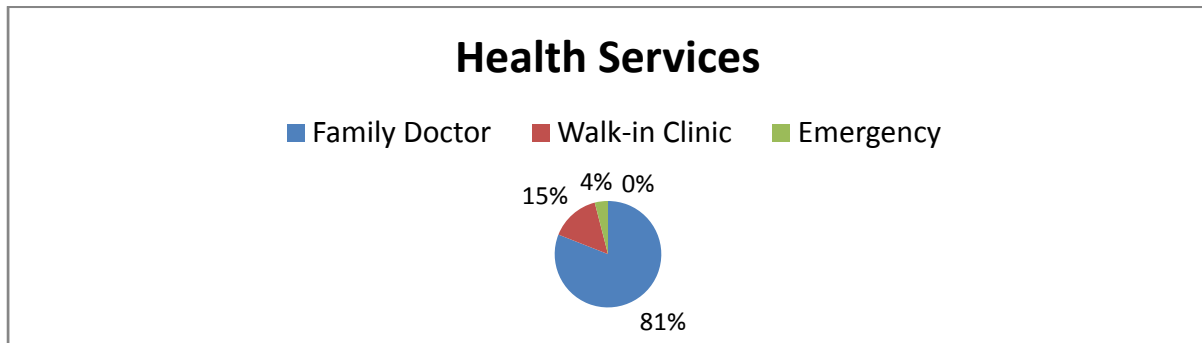
This report gives the percent of people who gave the same answers to questions. Analysis has been done to see if there are any strong differences in the needs of Islanders based on their gender, their age category, and whether they live in an urban or rural area of the province. People who responded in French had similar responses to those who responded in English.

Generally, the responses were positive. However, improvements were suggested in the areas of access (specifically to family doctors, mental health and addictions, and emergency services), education and prevention, and communication between programs and services.



## Community Health Services

When respondents need health services, they go to their family doctor’s office, walk-in clinics and emergency departments. These numbers were about the same for men and women.



Age is one factor that determines where Islanders go for service most often. People in the older age groups (60 years plus) were more likely to get service at their family doctor’s office (93%). Younger people (18-59 years) were more likely to get service at a walk-in clinic (36%).

Islanders living in a rural area are more likely to use the emergency department (5%) than those who live in an urban area (2.5%). This may be because urban areas tend to have more options for walk-in services.

About a third of Islanders of all ages who used the emergency department indicated that they went there because they required emergency services. About 12% of Islanders, and people in the older age range (70+ years), used the emergency department because they could not get an appointment with their family doctor. Younger respondents and those living in rural areas were concerned about needing service outside their doctor’s regular hours.

91% of Islanders report they do have a family doctor. 84% of younger people had a family doctor compared to people who were 80+ years (96% had a family doctor). 92% of people who live in an urban area said they have a family doctor. Slightly fewer (90%) of those living in a rural area said they have a family doctor.

Aside from Physician Services, Islanders Reported Services they Wanted to Access Locally:	
1.	Nurse Practitioner–27.3%
2.	Dietitian – 14.1%
3.	Nurse – 13.1%
3.	Public Health Nurse – 11.9%

Islanders felt some services were less relevant to them because of their age. For example, younger people (around 40 years of age) had less need for a diabetes educator but they were more interested in accessing a community mental health counselor.

## Preventative Health

86% of men and 89% of women reported they had an appointment with a health care provider in the last three years. This was about the same regardless of age or where people live. Islanders of all ages, regardless of where they live, had the same top three services or tests in the past three years:

1. Blood pressure checks (89%)
2. Cholesterol tests (67%)
3. Flu shots (64%)



There are differences in where people with children under the age of six are most likely to get information about their children's health. In order of preference, men and people age 50 years and up get information from their family doctor, public health nurse and the internet. In order of preference, women and people ages 18 to 49 years get information from a public health nurse, a family doctor and the internet. Regardless of where Islanders live, a public health nurse was the first choice.



People said they thought it was important to eat healthy meals, eat foods low in fat and foods low in salt. Only 27% of men and 30% of women said they eat 7-10 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Those aged 50-80 plus years reported eating the highest number of servings per day. The youngest (18-29 years) eat the least number of fruits and vegetables per day.

Top reasons given for not eating more fruits and vegetables:
7-10 servings are too many – 36.5%
The cost is too high – 23.3%
Time to prepare them – 10.7%
Don't like some fruits and vegetables – 9.0%

Almost all Islanders (97%) rated their mental health as positive. This number was the same for men and women, regardless of age or where they live. While the vast majority felt it was easy to talk to their health care provider about their alcohol or drug use, about 8% of Islanders found it difficult. 15% of the people who found it difficult were in the youngest age group (18-29 years). About 15% of Islanders found it difficult to talk specifically about depression or anxiety.

People who received care for mental health or substance use in the past three years (Islanders of all ages), accessed:

1. Counseling and/or treatment from their family doctor
2. Counseling and/or treatment from a psychiatrist in the community

3. Counseling from a community mental health care provider

## Sharing Health Information

People were asked how they prefer to get information about their health. The top four choices were the same for men and women, for people of all ages across the province. They were:

1. Their health care provider
2. Their pharmacist
3. The internet (men’s third choice)
4. Pamphlets or handouts (women’s third choice)

How easy was it to get an appointment?	
Services that were easiest to access:	Services that were difficult to access:
✓ Public Health Nursing	➤ Speech Language Pathology
✓ Provincial Diabetes Program	➤ Addiction Services
✓ Family Doctor’s Office	➤ Community Mental Health
✓ Community Nutrition (dietitians)	

For some people, their age or where they live means other services may be more difficult to access including public health nursing, community nutrition, a family doctor, or the provincial diabetes program.



About 15% of men who answered the survey and 12% of women who answered the survey stayed overnight in a PEI hospital in the last year. People in the 80 years and older category had the most overnight stays.

In the past twelve months, 31% of respondents had been a patient in a hospital. Of those, 64% had a follow-up appointment to their hospital stay and about half (54%) stated that their doctor was aware of the follow-up.

## Management of Chronic Conditions

Chronic conditions include such things as asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, depression and anxiety. Of the people who replied to the survey and said they have a chronic condition, about 82% of Islanders said they were confident they can manage their health. 78% of Islanders were confident that they can keep their chronic condition from interfering with everyday things they want to do. This was about the same for all age groups and regardless of where people live.



About half of the people with a chronic condition (49% of men and 56% of women) believe they are best able to manage their chronic conditions. On the other hand, 42% of men and 36% of women believe their family doctor is best to manage their chronic conditions. This was an area where age played a role in answering the question. Younger people (18 – 69) believe they are best able to manage their chronic condition. Older people (70 years +) believe their family doctor is best to manage their health.

When Islanders receive care for their chronic conditions: (‘most of the time’ or ‘always’)	
76%	Were aware of what they had to do to follow-up
72%	Were able to participate in making a plan for their care
70%	Were satisfied that their care was well organized
67%	Were asked about their health concerns
61%	Were asked about any problems they were having with their medications or their effects
59%	Were told that what they do on a daily basis influences their condition
51%	Were given options to think about for their treatment
42%	Were offered help to set specific goals to improve their eating or exercise
24%	Were encouraged to go to a specific group or class to help them cope with their chronic conditions

However, Islanders receiving care for their chronic conditions also said:	
63%	Were not always given a copy of their care plan
46%	Were not always asked for their ideas when making a treatment plan

## Personal Information

As part of the survey, Health PEI asked for some personal information. This is important information to help understand who needs what types of primary health care services.

### Who answered the survey?

Most people (99%) responded in English; 92% mailed their replies back. About 8% did the survey on-line.

	Total Returned	By Mail	Electronically
English	11,801	10,860	941
French	130	111	19
Total	11,931	10,971	960

Most of the replies came from women (75%).

Based on responses, almost half of the people live in urban areas (47%) and half live in rural areas (53%).

Half of the people were between the ages of 18 and 59, and the other half were between the ages of 60 and 80 plus years.



89% of respondents report that they have no children under age 6 living with them, so 11% have children under the age of 6.

17.8% of respondents report having children between the ages of 6 to 17 years living with them.

97% of the people who replied to the survey were Caucasian (White); the other 3% of respondents were from all the other ethnic groups combined. The largest groups represented were South Asian and Aboriginal.

95% prefer to receive health services in English.



## What Else You Had to Say



Of almost 12,000 people who replied to the survey, more than 3,600 people took the time to offer additional comments. Some provided input and opinion about government policy and programs that are not part of primary health care. These comments will be passed along to the appropriate department or division. People provided a mix of praise for staff and services, as well as suggestions for how services could be improved. These comments can be divided into three categories.

### Access

Most people who answered the survey do have a family doctor. However there were comments about the issues people have seeing their family doctor because of long wait times, limited office hours or no after-hours clinics. Concern was expressed by the people who do not have a family doctor and have been on the Patient Registry for a long time. People rely on walk-in clinics and emergency departments because they cannot get timely appointments. Many people felt more doctors need to be hired especially for the eastern and western parts of the Island. People also commented they felt some health needs could be met by hiring more nurses, nurse practitioners, naturopathic medicine practitioners, midwives, birth doulas and specialists.

Islanders expressed concern over access to mental health services. This was a general comment with few specific suggestions offered to improve the service. People commented that more services need to be made available across the province. Wait times for appointments and the cost of service was of concern. (Important to note that there is no cost to Islanders for Health PEI Mental Health Services). People requested more mental health support for youth across the province.



Respondents also indicated that they want more addiction services across PEI and for improvements to the services that are available. Again, few specific examples for improvements were provided. Wait times and services targeted to youth were noted.

### Education, Awareness and Prevention

Respondents noted a need for more prevention including screening tests, continuing health living programs, and healthy lifestyle groups. Emphasizing education, awareness and prevention was said to be important especially to reduce the stigma of mental health and addiction issues. People with chronic care conditions said they are not always being included in their care planning.

### Communication and Information

When there are changes (a doctor retires or moves, changes at clinics and so on) people felt there was not always good communication between Health PEI and them as the public. About half of

patients who had been in hospital, said their doctor was aware of the follow-up needs. This was identified as one area where consistent communication between services could be improved.

### **What Will Happen Next?**

Health PEI wants to serve you better! The information you provided will be used to improve and enhance programs in primary health care. Work has already begun to find ways to make improvements.



### **Access**

The Provincial Registry which is used to support all Islanders to have a family doctor has been reorganized. The Registry is continually working to improve coordination.

Allied health providers are working together with family physicians and nurse practitioners are working to their full scope of practice. Health PEI is recruiting more nurse practitioners and family physicians. Work is also underway to improve the mental health supports to people accessing Primary Care services.

Health Centres are using new scheduling methods to support same day or next day appointments. The intent is to help more people see their physician in a timely manner.

### **Education, Awareness and Prevention**

Screening programs are being offered for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, as well as, blood pressure. Improved screening for mental health conditions will also soon be offered. Specialized work is leading to better support for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes and high blood pressure in particular.

Public Health Nursing has implemented a new developmental screening tool – the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3™* which assists in early identification of developmental issues and in referrals to the appropriate health provider.

The Department of Health & Wellness offers *Living a Healthy Life* which is a self-management program for people with on-going health problems, their caregivers or loved ones, and anyone ready to make lifestyle changes to improve their health. For more information go to [www.peihealthyliving.ca](http://www.peihealthyliving.ca) or call 1-888-854-7244 (toll free).

## **Communication and Information**

The Passport to Health is a paper tool created for patients to track and monitor their own health.

For a copy of your Passport to Health, go to

<http://www.healthpei.ca/index.php3?number=publications&dept=&id=1862>.

Health PEI communicates with the public regularly by issuing news releases and advisories, writing a monthly Talking Health column for the Guardian, responding to media inquiries in a timely manner and maintaining up-to-date information on its website.

### **For further information or questions:**

Visit our website at [www.healthpei.ca](http://www.healthpei.ca) , watch our videos on YouTube or follow us on Twitter.