

Americans' Views of Mercury in Flu Shots

Submitted to:
put **children** first.org

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Table of Contents

Subject	Page
I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics	2
II. Narrative Analysis	4

Tables	
1. Agreement with Statements	5
3. Likelihood of Getting Flu Shot	6

I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International conducted online interviews of 9,204 adults. Panelists who have agreed to participate in Zogby polls online were invited to participate in the survey. The online poll ran from 10/27/06 through 10/30/06. The margin of error is +/- 1.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, and gender to more accurately reflect the population.

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	9,204	100
East	2,106	23
South	2,381	26
Central/Great Lakes	2,838	31
West	1,831	20
Did not answer region	48	--
18-29	1,835	20
30-49	3,669	40
50-64	2,110	23
65+	1,559	17
Did not answer age	31	--
White	6,815	75
Hispanic	909	10
African American	1,000	11
Asian/Pacific	182	2
Other/mixed	182	2
Did not answer race	117	--
Live in large city	3,383	37
Live in small city	1,896	21
Live in suburbs	2,334	26
Live in rural area	1,525	17
Did not answer where live	42	--
Roman Catholic	2,428	27
Protestant	4,496	50
Jewish	270	3
Other (religion)	1,798	20

Sample Characteristics (continued)	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Did not answer religion	212	--
Parent of child under 17	2,430	27
Not parent of child under 17	6,735	74
Less than \$25,000	774	10
\$25,000-\$34,999	725	9
\$35,000-\$49,999	1,104	14
\$50,000-\$74,999	1,865	23
\$75,000-\$99,999	1,349	17
\$100,000 or more	2,178	27
Did not answer income	1,208	--
Male	4,411	48
Female	4,741	52
Did not answer gender	52	--

* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

II. Narrative Analysis

1. How likely is it that you will get a flu shot this year?

Very likely	37%		
Somewhat likely	12	Likely	49%
Somewhat unlikely	11		
Very unlikely	39	Unlikely	50
Not sure	1		

One-half of adults (49%) are likely to get a flu shot this year, and half (50%) are unlikely to do so. Representing the bulk of each of these groups are people who are either very likely (37%) or very unlikely (39%) to get a shot.

2. Which of the following percentages best describes your belief on how many flu shots contain mercury, a known neurotoxin?

None of them	17%
10%	7
35%	4
60%	3
75%	2
90%	3
All of them	7
Not sure	59

Three-fifths of adults (59%) have no idea how many flu shots contain mercury. One in six (17%) does not think that any flu shots contain mercury. Otherwise, 7% of people say 10% of shots are tainted; 4% of people think 35% of shots are tainted; 3% of people say that 60% of shots are tainted; 2% of people say 75% of shots are tainted; 3% of adults believe 90% of shots are tainted; and 7% of people think that every flu shot contains mercury.

3. Do you agree or disagree that our government should warn pregnant women not to get a flu shot containing mercury?

Agree	73%
Disagree	6
Not sure	21

A vast majority of nearly three in four Americans (73%) – and 82 percent of parents – agree that the government should warn pregnant women not to get a flu shot containing mercury. Only 6% disagree, while one in five (21%) is not sure.

4 – 8. For the following series of statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each.

Table 1. Agreement with Statements (ranked by % agree)

	Agree*	Disagree	Not sure
Mercury should not be an ingredient in flu shots or other vaccines, especially those given to pregnant women or children	77	3	20
Congress should take action to make sure that mercury and other toxins are not in flu shots and other vaccines	72	16	12
The doctors who administer flu vaccines are responsible for the safety of the vaccines they give to children and pregnant women	72	24	4
Professional organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics are responsible for the safety of vaccines they give to children and pregnant women	71	23	6
Mercury in childhood vaccines has played a role in the current autism epidemic	31	17	52

(*Agree and disagree each combine “strongly” and “somewhat.”)

Large majorities from seven-in-ten to three-in-four agree with each of these statements, with the sole exception of whether mercury in childhood vaccines has played a role in the current autism epidemic. With this statement, people are still almost twice as likely to agree than disagree, but a majority is unsure.

9 – 12. Now I am going to read to you a series of statements. For each, please tell me if you would be much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to get a flu shot after you hear each.

Table 2. Likelihood of Getting a Flu Shot (ranked by % less likely)

	More likely*	Less likely	Not sure
If you knew that mercury was a neurotoxin that disrupts development in children (get a flu shot for your child)	5	86	10
If you knew that seven years ago, the Centers for Disease Control warned that mercury in vaccines was dangerous and that it should be taken out of all vaccines	9	77	13
If you knew that mercury is an ingredient in over 90% of flu shots	8	74	19
If you knew that there are warnings for pregnant women and children to avoid eating tuna and other seafood because of the high level of mercury in them	9	69	23

(*More likely and less likely each combine “much” and “somewhat.”)

Each of these four statements turns off large majorities of respondents from getting a flu shot. From 69% to 86% of adults are less likely to get a flu shot after knowing this information. And 86% of parents say they are unlikely to get a flu shot for their own child now.

13. How willing would you be to pay a few dollars more for a flu shot that did not contain mercury?

Very willing	54%		
Somewhat willing	26	Willing	80%
Somewhat unwilling	4		
Very unwilling	7	Unwilling	11
Not sure	9		

Four-fifths of Americans (80%) are willing to pay a few dollars more to get a flu shot that did not contain mercury. This includes a majority overall (54%) who is very willing to do so. More than 82 percent of parents are willing to pay more. One in nine of total respondents (11%) are unwilling to pay more.

14. Certain groups have been warned to avoid eating fish and tuna because of high levels of mercury. Which one of the following groups, if any, do you know who has been warned not to eat fish and tuna? (**Choose only ONE.**)

Pregnant women and children	69%
Everyone	9
People with chronic diseases or those who are ill	3

The elderly	1
Teens and pre-teens	1
Other	1
Not sure	17

A seven-in-ten majority (69%) says they know that pregnant women and children have been warned not to eat fish and tuna due to high levels of mercury. Nine percent say they know that everyone has been warned; 3% say that people with chronic diseases or those who are ill have been warned; and 1% each says that the elderly and teens/pre-teens have been warned. One in six (17%) is not sure.