



Organ and Tissue Donation: Public Opinion Survey

Topline Summary Report

September 2005

1.0 Introduction

EnviroNics Research Group Limited was retained by Canadian Council for Donation and Transplantation to survey the general public on awareness, attitudes and behaviours related to organ and tissue donation, including the issue of donation after cardiac death. EnviroNics surveyed 1,505 Canadian adults by telephone from August 17 to September 7, 2005. The margin of error for samples of this size is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, 19 times in 20.

2.1 Awareness/Support/Behaviour

- 93% of Canadians have heard about organ and tissue donation.
- 96% of Canadians strongly (71%) or somewhat (25%) approve of organ and tissue donation
- 54% have signed an organ donor card and 17% have put their name on an organ and tissue registry (35% are aware of an organ and tissue registry in their province).
- The proportions who have decided to donate organs or tissues are:

	Decided to donate (%)	Decided NOT to donate (%)	Undecided (%)
Organs	55	8	37
Tissues	39	8	51

- Main reason for deciding NOT to donate:

Have a medical condition, can't donate	19
Religious/spiritual beliefs	11
Personal preference/beliefs/just don't want to	10
Age/I'm too old	8
Want to keep my organs/tissue/body intact	8
Don't know enough about it	5

- Main reason for not having made a decision:

Haven't thought about it/never occurred to me	24
Don't know enough about it/unaware of it	16
Put it off/don't like to think about it	6
Have a medical condition, can't donate/health reasons	5

- 74% of those who have made a decision have discussed it with the person who would act on their behalf in a medical emergency.

2.2 Beliefs/Perceptions

- 80% of Canadians say there is a great need for more organ donations in this country; 13% say there is some need.
- Importance of personal reasons for donating organs/tissues:

	Important (7-5)	Neutral (4)	Not Imp. (3-1)	Mean
You would be saving the life of a person who needs an organ or tissue transplant	92	4	3	6.51
You would be improving the quality of life of person who needs a transplant.	91	5	4	6.42
Your organs and tissues could help many people who need transplants	89	6	4	6.32
More organ donations are needed in this country today	85	9	5	6.15
You believe that donating is the right thing to do	82	11	6	6.07
Scientific research using your organ/tissue donation could lead to treatments and cures	79	12	8	5.87
You do not need your organs or tissues after death	78	10	10	5.88
Your loved ones would feel comforted by your donation	56	21	20	4.89
You were able to indicate that you want only specific organs or tissues donated	51	19	29	4.43
People would remember you as a good and caring person for making this donation	33	22	44	3.61

- Importance of personal reasons for not donating organs/tissues:

	Important (7-5)	Neutral (4)	Not Imp. (3-1)	Mean
Some people who receive organ transplants may not really deserve to receive them, since they have abused their own health	20	15	64	2.70
Donating your organs or tissues would make your death a more difficult experience for your loved ones	19	19	61	2.74
Death is too disturbing to think about	16	13	71	2.35
Because donation might delay or complicate the burial arrangements for your family	16	15	69	2.47
You don't believe in organ and tissue donation	14	10	74	2.22
Your family members' religious or spiritual beliefs do not support organ and tissue donation	14	10	75	2.19
Your family members' cultural beliefs and values do not support organ and tissue donation	14	11	75	2.19
Your religious or spiritual beliefs do not support organ and tissue donation	13	9	77	2.08
Your cultural beliefs and values do not support organ and tissue donation	13	10	77	2.09
The procedures used to remove organs and tissues are too intrusive on the donor's body	12	13	73	2.24

- Truth or falsity of statements:

	Definitely true	Probably true	Probably not true	Definitely not true
Doctors are committed to providing high quality care to dying patients and their families	56	34	6	2
Anyone at any age can become an organ and tissue donor	45	30	13	8
Rich people who need organ and tissue transplants are more likely to receive them in this country's hospitals than are poorer people who need transplants	17	30	28	20
Doctors may prematurely declare a person to be dead in order to get potential organ and tissue donations	7	13	35	43
The organ and tissue donation process could exploit people of colour, First Nations people, or other minority groups	6	14	36	41

2.3 Public Awareness

- Where Canadian have seen/heard/read about donation:

Television	45
Newspaper	30
Driver's licence/application	15
Magazines	15
Family and friends	13
Radio	9
Doctor's office	7

- Where Canadians would go for information about donation:

Internet sources	52
Doctors/health professionals	30
Hospital	6

2.4 Family/Legal Issues

- 58% of Canadians have discussed organ and tissue donation with close family members.
- 91% are very (64%) or somewhat (27%) confident that their views and intentions with regard to donation will be respected.
- When someone has signed a donor card/registered as a donor but the family does not wish donation to take place:

	What does happen?	What should happen?
Wishes of deceased are followed	64	29
Wishes of family are followed	29	9

- Likelihood of respondent giving consent for donation of a deceased loved one's organs/tissues:

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
If deceased signed organ donor card and discussed decision to donate	88	9	1	2
If deceased signed donor card but <u>did not</u> discuss decision to donate	71	20	4	5
If deceased <u>did not</u> sign donor card but did discuss decision to donate	59	26	7	7
If deceased <u>did not</u> sign donor card and <u>did not</u> discuss donation	22	27	18	31

2.5 Withdrawal of Life Support/Brain Death

- A total of 77% say it is acceptable to remove life support when family and doctors agree there is no realistic chance of survival; 13% are neutral and a total of 9% say it is unacceptable.
- Canadians' understanding of brain death: 29% say it means the patient is dead; 49% say it means the patient is in a coma with no realistic chance of survival; 8% say it means the patient is in a coma with some chance of survival and 10% say it means the patient is in a coma with a good chance of survival with serious brain impairment.

2.6 Donation after Cardiocirculatory Death

- Only 13% of Canadians had heard anything about DCD prior to the survey.
- 79% of Canadians think that the option of organ donation after cardiac death (DCD) should be available to Canadians and 9% say it depends.
- Acceptability of procedures related to DCD:

	Acceptable (7-5)	Neutral (4)	Not Acc. (3-1)	Mean
After families have agreed to remove life support they may also agree to organ donation after the patient dies a cardiac death	74	17	8	5.80
After it is agreed to withdraw life support and donate organs after death, the patient is moved to an operating room where life supports are withdrawn	71	18	9	5.61
The surgery to retrieve the organs might occur five minutes after the heart has stopped	64	18	16	5.25
In order for organ donation to occur under these circumstances the family would leave the dying patient within minutes after death	58	22	17	5.04
Technical procedures might be performed before death to help maintain a patient's organs	53	20	24	4.69
Medications might be used before death to help maintain a patient's organs even if those medications will not benefit the patient directly and might also have a small chance of causing harm	47	20	30	4.38

- Comfort with decisions about donation after cardiac death in Canadian hospitals:

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not very comfortable	Not at all comfortable
If DCD is offered in hospitals	42	43	8	6
If DCD is not offered in hospitals	8	34	32	23

- Public confidence with issues and practices surrounding DCD

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident
An organ donor could still have a normal funeral service in a normal time frame	60	33	3	2
A patient's dignity will be recognized at the time of death when organ or tissue donation follows	48	41	6	4
Doctors and health care staff will follow these strict ethical standards or practices	45	46	5	3
Strict standards will be put in place to guide all practices and ensure ethical conduct regarding donation after cardiac death	40	46	8	4
Doctors and health care staff will be motivated by the best interests of the dying patient and not the possibility of organ donation	40	46	9	4
The process of providing optimal end of life care will not be affected by the organ and tissue donation process	37	49	9	3