



Voting with their wallets:

How insurers can handle
the risks of inclusive coverage
for older travellers



Understanding how Canada's
55+ market chooses travel insurance
and why coverage for existing
medical conditions is key to
winning their business in a
changing risk landscape



Contents

- 03** Foreword
- 05** Key findings & methodology
- 06** Meet the 55+ Canadian traveller
- 09** Existing conditions: the barrier in the road
- 12** Inclusive underwriting to capture this market
- 14** Conclusion & recommendations

Foreword

By Dave Merrick, Business Development
at Verisk Life, Health and Travel



We're all familiar with the image: the active older travellers boarding a flight or piling into the car, passports in hand and ready to explore somewhere new. Some are snowbirds, escaping Canada's winter for extended stays in warmer climates. Others are squeezing getaways into their calendars, driven by curiosity, leisure or family abroad. Whatever their goals, for many Canadians aged 55 and older, travel is a frequent event. Unsurprisingly then, they are also regular buyers of travel insurance.

Yet, for all their enthusiasm and economic value, this segment remains underserved by the travel insurance industry, particularly when it comes to existing medical conditions. While nearly half (42%) of the Canadians over 55 we surveyed have an existing condition, many aren't confident that their insurer meets their medical needs. Some aren't even aware that coverage restrictions on these conditions often exist.

And most striking: 80% of those with an existing condition would consider switching providers if a competitor offered better coverage.

At stake is more than just competitiveness. The moment of claim typically coincides with a moment of real vulnerability for the traveller. Offering inclusive coverage is an opportunity for insurers to demonstrate true value, strengthening trust with customers when they need help the most.

However, older Canadians' high demand for inclusive coverage comes at a time when broader dynamics are intensifying pressure on insurers. Medical inflation remains high, with year-on-year double-digit increases.¹ At the same time, Canadian travellers are diverting away from the US, flocking to new destinations amid tariffs and political tension, with flight bookings to the country down by over 70% year-on-year.²

1 <https://www.aon.com/en/insights/reports/the-global-medical-trend-rates-report>

2 <https://www.oag.com/blog/canada-us-airline-capacity-aviation-market>



42%

of Canadians aged 55+ have
an existing condition

80%

of them would consider switching
insurers if a competitor offered
more inclusive coverage



Many are now venturing instead to Central America, Asia, Africa and beyond. These destinations bring less familiar medical systems, different risk profiles and potentially more complex claims management. At the same time, continued long stays and older demographics with more medical conditions can further amplify exposure.

Taken together, an ageing population, high medical inflation and the shift toward new and less predictable destinations present a challenging backdrop for Canadian travel insurers. The 55+ market represents a significant opportunity, but also a complex risk landscape that must be managed.

Verisk commissioned this research to understand the expectations and behaviours of Canadian travellers aged 55 and over, particularly in relation to existing medical conditions. The insights, coupled with interviews with industry experts, are intended to help insurers align their offerings with the needs of this valuable segment while mitigating the evolving risks of new traveller behaviours.

Canadian travel insurers have a timely opportunity. By pricing both inclusively and sustainably, they can gain a competitive edge in this important market. This report explores how to meet that opportunity while developing a more granular understanding of risk.

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Dave Merrick



Key findings and methodology

The research showcases a keen but underserved market: Canadians aged 55+ are frequent travellers, active consumers of travel insurance, and ready to walk away from providers that don't meet their needs.

Verisk's survey, conducted with Ipsos Canada in 2025, captured the views of 1,001 Canadians aged 55 and over, including 168 self-identified snowbirds.

This data was supplemented by qualitative interviews with industry experts to capture the market's point of view.

Together, their insights revealed...

Key findings



55+ year old travellers

- Are an active market: **85%** travel yearly, usually for short trips
- Tend to buy travel insurance, and quickly: **59%** purchase insurance, with **62%** doing so in less than 30 minutes
- Find existing conditions to be a barrier: **42%** have them, and **30%** are not confident in their medical coverage
- Are open to switching: among those with existing conditions, **80%** would consider switching insurers for better coverage

Snowbirds

- Travel more often and take longer trips: **23%** travel 3-4 times a year and **31%** buy annual coverage
- Are particularly well-informed buyers: **93%** know insurers often restrict cover for existing medical conditions
- Are even more willing to switch: among snowbirds with existing conditions, **92%** would consider switching insurers for better coverage

Meet the 55+ Canadian traveller

Forget the stereotype of retirement as a time to slow down. For many Canadians aged 55 and older, these are prime years for travel. This market is flush with both active travellers and active insurance buyers, making for a significant opportunity.

85% of Canadians aged 55 and older travel, including 13% who travel three to four times annually. That frequent travel is even higher among snowbirds, at 23%. Affluence also plays a role: those with higher incomes in this age group are more likely to travel frequently.

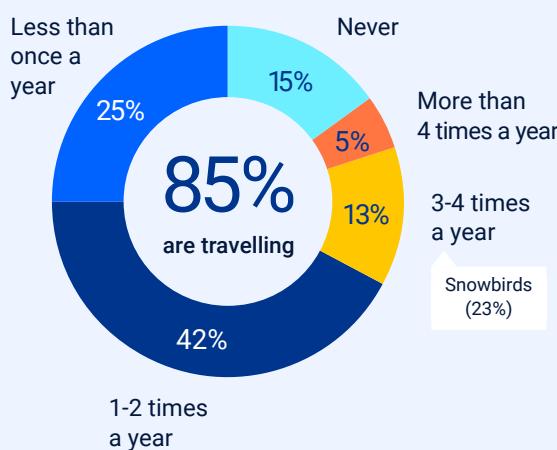
Most of these trips are short, with 59% of respondents saying a typical duration is a week or less. Snowbirds are more likely to travel for longer stretches, with one in 10 saying their average vacation lasts more than 22 days.

59%

of the 55+ market buys travel insurance

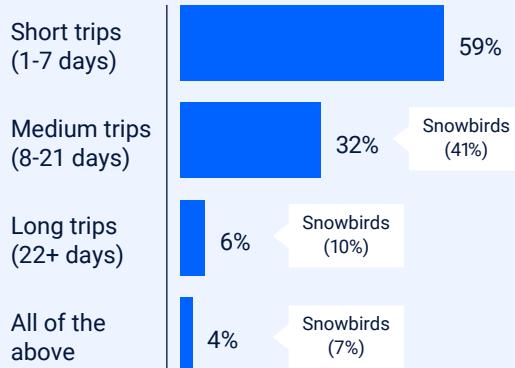


Frequency of travelling



Typical duration of travels

Among travellers



How affluence impacts travel frequency

Income	< \$50k	\$50-99k	\$100-149k	\$150k+
Never	25%	12%	7%	3%
Less than once a year	34%	23%	11%	14%
1-2 times a year	33%	46%	50%	46%
3-4 times a year	5%	16%	21%	26%
More than 4 times a year	3%	3%	11%	11%

As frequent travellers, Canadians aged 55 and over are also key buyers of travel insurance. Nearly three in five (59%) report purchasing travel insurance, often opting for single-trip policies. Snowbirds, however, are more inclined to buy annual coverage compared to the wider cohort, reflecting their longer and more frequent travel.

Importantly, a significant 42% of the 55+ market has an existing medical condition. It's no surprise then that coverage for medical emergencies is this market's top reason for buying medical insurance, cited by 40% of respondents. The vast majority (89%) believe adequate coverage for medical emergencies is very important.

42%

of Canadians aged 55+ have an existing medical condition

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There are opportunities in the 55+ market in terms of higher premiums, longer travel periods and snowbirds who offer a lot of potential repeat business.

The risk, however, is that an older demographic that has more medical conditions and travels for longer periods can increase the likelihood of a claim. Insurers must manage that risk appropriately.

Stephen Fine
President and Co-founder of Snowbird Advisor Insurance

Evidently, this is an active market with a real need for inclusive coverage, so how can insurers provide that inclusivity? The buying experience is an important consideration: 39% of travel insurance buyers purchase directly from an insurer, and they tend to do so quickly. Two in three (62%) make their purchase within 30 minutes.

"The buying habits of older travellers have changed, especially post-Covid," adds David Rivelis, President and CEO at Xodus Travel Insurance Services.

"This demographic is now looking for the same immediacy, clarity and technology as younger travellers, and many insurers have to catch up in the way they underwrite and sell to them."

This fast and direct decision-making indicates that, as insurers look to improve coverage and manage risks for existing conditions, they must find solutions that align with the purchasing expectations of this segment.

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Canadians aged 55 and over are frequent travellers and frequent insurance buyers, and medical coverage is at the front of their minds. There is an opportunity here for insurers to meet these customers with inclusive solutions that reflect both their medical needs and the buying journey.

Dave Merrick



Existing conditions: the barrier in the road

For older Canadians, existing medical conditions are a major hurdle, preventing them from booking trips and preventing insurers from serving the market effectively.

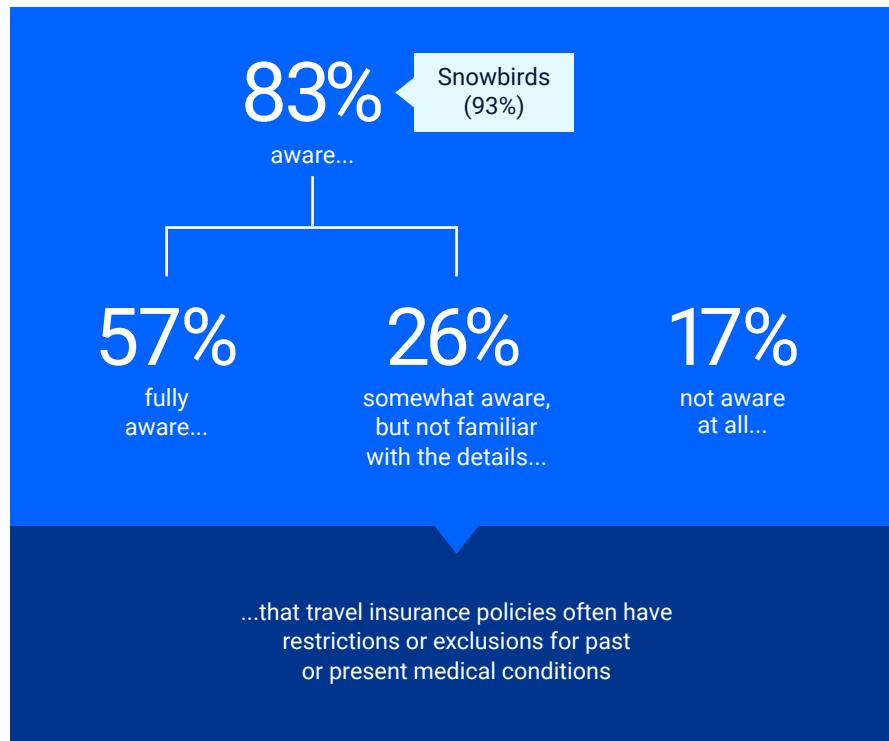
These travellers are broadly knowledgeable. Most (83%) know that travel insurance policies often have restrictions or exclusions for existing medical conditions – a figure that's even higher among snowbirds, at 93%. Many older travellers actively pursue inclusive coverage: 43% seek out policies that cover existing conditions, rising to 68% among snowbirds.

Despite their high awareness, there are knowledge gaps. Worryingly, 17% of those with an existing condition were completely unaware that restrictions on these conditions often exist, exposing them to denied claims. Additionally, one in five travellers (21%) assume they are covered for existing conditions without checking the details.

"We need to get consumers more interested in travel insurance because they don't necessarily understand their coverage, terms and conditions, exclusions and limitations," Fine explains.

"Education is the number one tool – not just on its own, but integrated into the buying process. Specific medical information is needed, but it needs to be collected in a consumer-friendly way."

Rivelis adds: "Most Canadians are truthful and accurate based on what they know. When there's non-disclosure, it's often not malicious; it's confusion or a lack of knowledge. As insurers, we need to do a better job of helping them understand what truth and accuracy look like."



Specific medical information is needed, but it needs to be collected in a consumer-friendly way



Insurers that can educate customers and simplify the handling of existing conditions through inclusive products stand to win consumer favour.

Dave Merrick



Among respondents with existing conditions – perhaps the most vulnerable of this group – there were some especially worrying findings:

- **53% aren't sure how their insurer addresses existing conditions**
- **30% aren't confident that their travel insurance covers their medical needs while travelling**
- **Only 40% always read or confirm the specifics of their policy. A further 23% do so only sometimes, while 37% do so rarely or never**

"Consumers are broadly aware that travel insurance policies restrict cover for existing health conditions, but many don't understand how those conditions are actually handled," says Dave Merrick.

"Insurers that can educate customers and simplify the handling of existing conditions through inclusive products stand to win consumer favour."

For some respondents, a lack of coverage for existing conditions halts travel plans altogether: 14% of the 55+ market say they've avoided travelling due to this concern, rising to 19% among snowbirds.

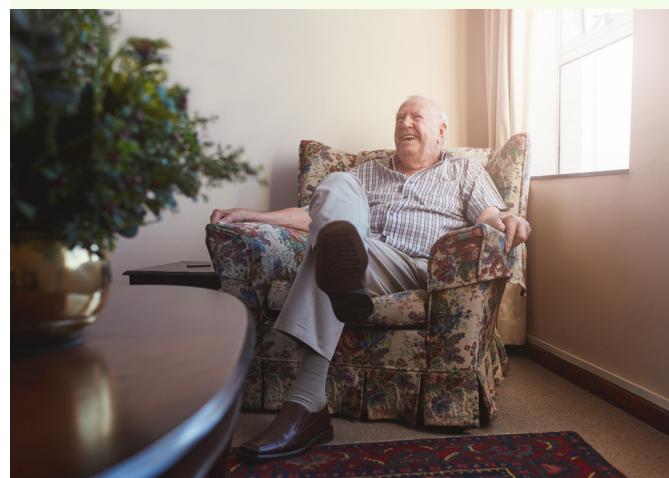
"Insurance exists to protect customers, yet too often a lack of coverage for existing conditions forces people to put their travel plans on hold," Merrick adds.

"For the vast majority, automated underwriting can give them access to inclusive products and allow them to travel with peace of mind."

The risk for consumers is that existing conditions can lead to denied medical claims. Given the high cost associated with medical care abroad, these instances can amount to life-altering financial events. Insurers have an opportunity to limit the impact on customers when they need help most.

14%

of Canadians aged 55+ have avoided travelling due to a lack of coverage for existing conditions



When asked what they find most limiting about their travel insurance policy's treatment of existing conditions, 56% of travellers with a condition selected at least one issue.

Their top challenges are:



Higher premiums for full coverage make it unaffordable (31%)



The lack of clear information makes it hard to understand what's covered (28%)



Exclusions of certain conditions leave them unprotected (20%)



Solutions that offer clarity and inclusivity are evidently in high demand and, as the next section shows, many of these Canadians are ready to switch insurers as a result.

Dave Merrick



Despite being a broadly informed market, many older travellers hit stumbling blocks when it comes to coverage for existing conditions – including those who live with one.



Inclusive underwriting to capture this market

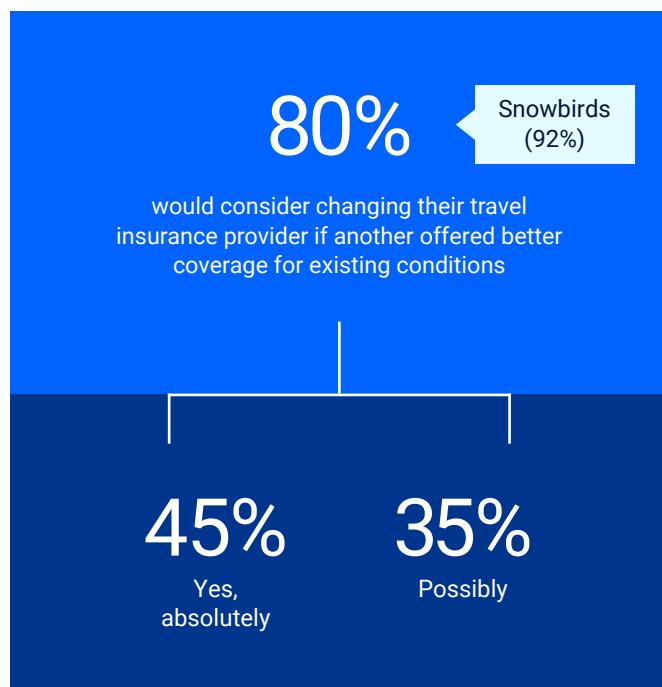
Given older Canadians' appetite for travelling and their high prevalence of existing medical conditions, it may be unsurprising that this group is ready to switch providers to achieve the coverage that gives them the confidence to travel. However, the extent of their readiness is truly striking.

Among those with existing medical conditions – again, 42% of the 55+ market – four in five (80%) would consider changing travel insurance providers if a competitor offered better coverage for these conditions. That number climbs to an overwhelming 92% among snowbirds.

A similar number (81%) would consider switching if another insurer offered comprehensive coverage for existing conditions at a competitive rate. The similarity between these two figures could indicate that inclusivity is the pertinent issue, not cost.

"Risk and price should be inextricably linked within the application process," says Rivelis.

"When there are gaps in the underwriting process, Canadians with existing conditions can stumble into them in search of cheaper coverage. We need to clearly articulate what applicants are covered for and ask concise questions so they understand the risk and reward of travel insurance."



Among the potential switchers, nearly two in three (61%) are actively looking for policies that cover existing conditions. This group, in particular, looks very ready to switch.

For others, the decision appears to be held back by a lack of the right alternative. 15% of those whose current insurer doesn't provide full coverage for existing conditions say they've stayed put simply because they haven't found a better option. Some (5%) weren't aware of their insurer's restrictions until after the purchase.

For these groups, the right offering and clearer coverage terms could be enough to prompt a change.

"These findings show a clear demand for inclusive coverage of existing conditions among Canadians over 55, and a real opportunity for insurers," says Merrick. "If offered better, more inclusive coverage, many are ready to switch providers."



If offered better, more inclusive coverage, many consumers are ready to switch providers.

Dave Merrick



Older travellers are waiting for a better solution to cover their existing conditions. Some are actively searching; others are held back by a lack of suitable options. However, their willingness to switch is unmistakable. Insurers that take steps to offer inclusive, transparent coverage – ideally without hindering the buying journey – have a clear opportunity to win new business, improve the customer experience and better understand risk.



Conclusion & recommendations

Evidently, Canadians aged 55+ want to travel – and they want their medical needs covered so they can do so with confidence. Existing conditions are particularly relevant for this group, but the challenge is not just the coverage gap. Many of these travellers also face a knowledge gap regarding their coverage, which leaves them exposed.

These dynamics make for a market that is overwhelmingly ready to switch providers in search of fuller coverage and clearer terms. Insurers that invest in tools that enable accurate and inclusive underwriting at the point of sale may be positioned to win these switchers and retain their custom into the future.

Verisk's Travel Risk Rating Tool is designed to meet these challenges for both insurers and travellers.



Inclusive underwriting:

By supporting more inclusive underwriting for existing conditions, insurers can cater to the 42% of 55+ travellers with an existing health condition for an increased market share. Rapid and accurate medical risk scores help insurers underwrite these conditions while reflecting their risk appetite.



Automated assessment of existing conditions:

The tool automates the medical assessment process, making it easier for insurers to provide coverage for existing conditions. This is particularly beneficial for the 43% of the market that is actively seeking policies that cover these conditions.



Clear information and confidence:

Customers know exactly what is covered as underwriting is performed at point of sale rather than at point of claim. This addresses the 53% that aren't sure how their insurer handles existing conditions and the 30% who are not confident in their coverage.



Streamlined underwriting and claims process:

The tool integrates seamlessly with sales processes, allowing for quick and efficient underwriting at sale. This simplifies both underwriting and claims processes and supports travellers who prioritise an efficient customer journey.



Enhanced customer experience:

Automated assessments and real-time coverage decisions can improve the overall customer experience, supporting higher satisfaction among those who are confused by or dissatisfied with their travel insurance experience.



Expanding offerings:

As 80% of travellers with existing conditions are willing to switch providers for better coverage, insurers can use the tool to expand their offerings and attract new customers while aligning decisions with their approach to risk.

In short, the Travel Risk Rating Tool supports insurers to bridge the coverage, knowledge and risk gaps in Canada's 55+ market, delivering the inclusive and efficient travel insurance experience expected by this valuable demographic.



About Verisk

Verisk is a global provider of data, analytics, and software to the insurance and energy industries.

Verisk Life, Health, and Travel helps insurers turn inclusivity from a cost burden to a profitable growth strategy. Our Risk Rating Tool is an automated medical risk rating system used worldwide, delivering instant, consistent quantification of risk associated with existing medical conditions.

With offices in more than 30 countries, Verisk consistently earns certification by Great Place to Work® and fosters an inclusive culture where all team members feel they belong.

Verisk is traded on the Nasdaq exchange and is a part of the S&P 500 Index and the Nasdaq-100 Index.

verisk.com/en-ca/products/travel-risk-rating-tool/