



- Some groups of travellers are clearly viewed as being more vulnerable than others and, thus, may be more likely to find themselves in situations where they require assistance from Consular Services: younger, inexperienced travellers, the elderly, women and disabled people. At the same time, the general consensus is that all Canadian travellers should expect to receive the same level of service from Consular officials, although there may be a need to provide more targeted information to these vulnerable groups in order to make them more aware of and alert to risks.
- The Government of Canada and Consular Services are rated positively on key performance metrics. Just over half of respondents rated the government positively (51% gave a rating of 7-10 on a 10-point scale) in terms of the services and support Canadians receive from the Government when they are travelling abroad, although one-third (33%) did not know enough to be able to rate the Government in this regard. A similar proportion of travellers have reasonably high levels of confidence (57% gave a rating of 7-10 on a 10-point scale) that they would be able to quickly access a Consular official if needed.

D. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from the 2018 study underscore continued opportunities to inform and educate Canadians about safe and smart travel when they are planning a trip abroad. In particular, efforts should be made to raise awareness of the Government of Canada resources that exist, including travel advice and advisories, the Registration of Canadians Abroad database and the Travel Smart App. Overall, travellers and travel professionals are positively disposed to all of these tools or resources, but are simply unaware of their existence.

To the extent that more content and interactive tools can be made available as part of the Travel Smart Mobile App, and then promoted widely, there is likely to be reasonable uptake especially among the group of younger (and typically less experienced) travellers. Travellers want information and resources at their fingertips.

Social media channels in particular provide a more direct route to connect with and inform specific groups of travellers about safe travel tips and information, and data shows that penetration and use of these channels is likely to grow. Recent statistics indicate that, “by the end of 2017, approximately 22.7 million Canadians had a social media account, a number that has grown by 300,000 annually for the past 2 years ... 64% of Canadians have an account on a major social network (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube or Instagram) ... two-thirds of Canadian social media users use their accounts every day.”² Given these trends, the opportunities for public sector and government officials to engage with a broad spectrum of the public and various online communities, including travellers, has been and is likely to continue growing.

Any awareness-raising activities should keep in mind specific segments of travellers – younger, inexperienced, those travelling alone, the elderly and disabled persons, among other groups such as those travelling with minors – as well as the ways in which travellers and travel professionals are now undertaking much of their travel research, most of which is conducted online. Promotional strategies should incorporate a significant online component, targeting sites such as TripAdvisor and Expedia, and other online booking services.

Travellers are, in general, fairly self-sufficient, but this may lead to a sense of over-confidence. Few anticipate that they will find themselves in a situation where they may need assistance from the Government of Canada while they are travelling overseas and many believe that they could readily find and locate Consular Services if assistance was required. Travellers need to be reminded of the simple steps they can take to ensure their trips are safe. They also need to be reminded that the same steps apply regardless of the length of their trip, the purpose or the destination.

² Canadian Social Media Stats (Updated 2018). Posted Jan. 24, 2018 (<https://www.sherpamarketing.ca/canadian-social-media-stats-updated-2018-471>).