



- Less planning is generally involved for those travelling to the U.S., Mexico or the Caribbean and, in particular, there appears to be less concern about safety and security issues with the exception of those travellers who are accompanied by younger children. Focus group participants were of the view that, should an issue arise, they could more readily return to Canada from these destinations. The same approach or mindset exists for those travelling to destinations where they have friends or family or where there are no significant language barriers.

### 3. Awareness, Use and Interpretation of Travel Advisories and Other Government Services for Those Travelling Abroad

- As noted above, the Internet, and specifically Google, is the predominant source for information on safety and security when travellers are considering a destination with which they are less familiar. Many are generally, although not specifically, aware of **travel advisories**. However, in focus groups, it was clear that many travellers are less likely to seek out this information than they are to rely on what they hear in the news about destinations where events (i.e., political or civil unrest, criminal activity, natural disasters) may preclude their travelling to a particular country or region. Travel professionals refer to the travel advisories more regularly and some have signed up for alerts.
- Some degree of confusion exists with regards to the source of travel advisories – while the majority believe these are produced by the Government of Canada, a significant proportion of travellers (about two-in-five) believe that these advisories are put out by the destination country, travel agents, tour operators and travel guides, among other sources.
- Findings from the survey and focus groups are consistent in terms of the impact of travel advisories on travellers' plans. Very few have changed their plans or say they would be likely to change their plans, especially once they have booked. Additional feedback in focus groups underscored that many feel it is in the Government's interest to take a more conservative or cautious approach when it comes to assessing risk. This is not necessarily a serious criticism of Government as most focus group participants believe the Government should highlight minor as well as major risks for Canadians travelling abroad. Nevertheless, the tendency is to view the information provided in travel advisories with some degree of skepticism and to take additional steps to gather more information about the nature and extent of any risk.
- At the same time, travellers do interpret the term 'travel advisory' as meaning *strong guidance or a recommendation to avoid travel to certain locations*, although about one-quarter of those surveyed took it merely as *advice*. That being said, when participants in focus groups were given an opportunity to review a sample travel advisory (i.e., Lebanon), the ensuing discussion did ultimately generate more mixed views regarding the interpretation of the risk assessment and the impact of a travel advisory. While many would seek additional information from other sources (i.e., people in the region, others who have travelled to the destination), there was a greater tendency to rethink travel plans based on a risk assessment indicating travellers should either exercise a high degree of caution or avoid all travel.
- With respect to the content and format of travel advisories, focus group participants had a number of suggestions to offer. In general, many feel that government websites tend to be cluttered and text-heavy, although, at the same time, they appreciate the extent of information and coverage of various topics. Nevertheless, incorporating more visual cues or icons would help the user to more quickly sort through the information and find what is relevant. A strong recommendation to include a map of the region/country was put forward as many find it difficult to understand to what extent an advisory applies to part or all of the region, especially when it is a country or region they have little knowledge of.