



WAVE 13 SURVEYS

THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF TOBACCO
AND HEALTH WARNING MESSAGES
ON CIGARETTE PACKAGES

SURVEY OF YOUTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Environics Research Group Limited was commissioned by Health Canada to conduct a survey of Canadian youth, including youth smokers and non-smokers. The main objective of the survey was to provide information to assist in the evaluation of the impact of health warning messages on tobacco packaging on youth knowledge and behaviours. These health warning messages began appearing on the major tobacco brands in Canada on approximately January 1, 2001 and on all brands by approximately June 30.

The survey assessed sources of information about the effects of tobacco, awareness and knowledge of the health effects of tobacco, the extent to which specific diseases are believed to be caused by tobacco and the number of deaths caused by smoking. As well, it looked at perceptions of the health effects of chemicals or toxic substances in cigarettes, particularly hydrogen cyanide. The survey also measured awareness and recall of the warning messages on both the exterior of the packages and on the package slides and inserts, their effect on knowledge and behaviours, including behaviours intended to avoid the labels. Finally, it examined awareness of chemicals or toxic substances present in cigarettes, and recall of the information on toxic chemicals printed on the side of cigarette packages.

A survey of adults and adult smokers, aged 18 years and over, was conducted separately and is discussed under separate cover.

One goal of these surveys, conducted in December of 2007, was to conduct the sampling and questionnaire design in such a manner as to allow comparison with 12 previous waves of surveys conducted by Environics: baseline surveys, which were conducted in November and December 2000 prior to the introduction of new health warning messages into the marketplace; surveys conducted in March and April 2001, a few months after new health warning messages were first introduced into the marketplace; surveys conducted in July 2001, after new labels

had appeared on all brands; and tracking surveys conducted in November and December 2001, July 2002, December 2002, July and August 2003, December 2003, November and December 2004, July and August 2005, February and March 2006, and December 2006.

The survey of youth aged 12 to 18 years, which included youth smokers and non-smokers, is based on a sample size of 1,004. This survey was conducted from December 4 to December 23, 2007. A survey based on a sample of 1,004 has a margin of error of approximately 3.1 percentage points, 19 times in 20.

This report summarizes the findings of the research. In the tables included in this report, we present results for the general population (GP), smokers (S) and potential smokers (PS). Potential smokers include non-smoking youth who say they have tried smoking, have seriously thought about smoking or think they might try smoking within the next month. The sample sizes of these groups are:

	N	Margin of Error (MOE)
General population:	1,004	±3.1
Smokers:	89	±10.4
Potential smokers:	208	±6.8

Appended to the report are copies of the English and French questionnaires and a description of the survey methods.

Among the findings of the survey are:

- About nine in ten youth (87%) think that cigarette smoking is a major health problem in Canada and 10 percent think it is a minor problem.
- When asked, top-of-mind, what specific human health effects or diseases can be caused by smoking cigarettes, youth are

most likely to mention lung cancer (61%) and cancer in general (33%). Smaller proportions mention lung disease (16%), heart attack/disease/angina (14%), oral cancer – tongue, lips, mouth, throat (10%), gum disease/tooth loss/mouth disease (8%), yellow teeth/fingers/effect on appearance (7%), respiratory problems/difficulty breathing/shortness of breath (6%), emphysema (5%) and asthma (5%).

- When asked where they have recently seen or heard information that talks about the health effects of smoking cigarettes, the largest proportions of youth mention school/university (57%) and television (39%). This is followed by mention of cigarette packages (19%), word-of-mouth/family/friends (12%), Internet/website (8%), magazines (7%), newspapers (6%) and billboards (6%).
- An overwhelming majority of youth strongly agree that lung cancer (95%) can be caused by smoking cigarettes. Large majorities strongly agree that smoking can cause gum or mouth diseases (76%), heart disease (73%), throat cancer (73%), asthma (72%), mouth cancer (71%) and premature death (67%). About one-half of youth strongly agree that smoking can cause smaller babies or reduced growth of babies during pregnancy (54%), wrinkles and premature aging (53%), stroke (51%) and chronic bronchitis (49%).
- Majorities of youth strongly agree that second-hand smoke can cause asthma attacks in children (69%) and lung cancer in non-smokers (64%). About one-half strongly agree it can cause chest infections (53%) and bronchitis (49%) in children.
- When asked, top-of-mind, a total of eight in ten youth mention no specific health effects or diseases that can be caused by hydrogen cyanide (61%), or say hydrogen cyanide does not cause any health effects or diseases (20%).

- An overwhelming number of youth (90%) say they have seen health warning messages on cigarette packages. Youth smokers (100%) express unanimous recall.
- Six percent of youth report that they look at or read health warning messages on cigarette packages several times a day and eight percent do this about once a day. Two-thirds (65%) look at or read these health warning messages less frequently, including 35 percent who say they do this less than once a week. Twenty-one percent say they never look at or read these health warning messages.
- Nine in ten youth agree that the health warning messages provide them with important information about the health effects of smoking cigarettes (92%) and that the messages are accurate (90%). Eight in ten youth agree that the health warning messages make smoking seem less attractive (82%).
- Eighty-one percent of youth smokers say the messages now on cigarette packages have been effective overall in informing them about the health effects of cigarette smoking; smaller proportions say they have been effective in increasing their desire to quit smoking (51%), getting them to try to quit smoking (49%), getting them to smoke less (45%) and getting them to smoke less around others than they used to

(44%). These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of youth smokers.

- When asked, top-of-mind, what specific health warning messages they can remember seeing on cigarette packages in Canada (without looking at a cigarette package), the largest proportion of youth recall the messages mentioning lung cancer (24%). Other recalled messages include harmful during pregnancies, harmful to fetus or low birth rate (10%), harmful to others/children (10%), lung disease (8%), cancer in general (8%), second-hand smoke is harmful/dangerous (7%), mouth or gum disease (7%), impotence (6%), heart disease (5%), and yellow fingers, gums or teeth (5%).
- When asked, top-of-mind, what pictures, images or graphics they can remember seeing on the health warning messages now on cigarette packages in Canada (without looking at a cigarette package), the largest proportion of youth recall lungs or diseased lungs (38%). Other recalled images include bad, rotten or big teeth (23%), pregnant women/with cigarettes (17%), children, kids or babies (15%), mouth or diseased mouth (11%), heart or diseased heart (9%), gums or diseased gums (6%), brain or diseased brain (6%), and pictures of kids watching (5%).

- When youth are asked, top-of-mind, what, if any, chemicals or toxic substances they can name that are in cigarettes or cigarette smoke, the largest proportions mention nicotine (41%) and tar (34%). Smaller proportions mention tobacco (11%), poison/rat poison/strychnine/cyanide (9%), carbon monoxide (4%) and formaldehyde (4%). Twenty-six percent mention other toxic substances and 11 percent say there are no chemicals or toxic substances (“none/nothing”). Seventeen percent offer no opinion.
- When asked what chemicals or substances in cigarettes, in tobacco or in smoking, if any, cause or can cause disease or harm to health, the largest proportions of youth mention nicotine (23%) and tar (18%). Ten percent say that all the chemicals cause harm, and 33 percent mention other specific substances; 13 percent say there are no chemicals that cause disease or harm (“none/nothing”). Thirty-nine percent offer no opinion.
- Two-thirds of youth (67%) think that chemicals are added to tobacco when cigarettes are being manufactured.

To obtain a PDF version of the complete report, please contact the Tobacco Control Programme:

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