

Report – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONSUMER RESEARCH ON FRONT OF PACKAGE NUTRITION LABELING



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Prepared by
Leger

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CONSUMER RESEARCH ON FRONT OF PACKAGE NUTRITION LABELING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for HEALTH CANADA

Supplier Name: Léger

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This public opinion research report presents the results of an online consumer research conducted by Léger on behalf of Health Canada. The research was conducted with Canadian consumers in March 2018.

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Executive Summary

1.1 Background

One of the key goals under Health Canada's Healthy Eating Strategy is to improve food labelling to help make it easier for Canadians to make healthier food choices at the grocery store. To help achieve this, Health Canada has introduced proposed regulations for front-of-package (FOP) nutrition labelling to provide quick and easy guidance to help Canadians make informed food choices to reduce intakes of foods high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat.

1.2 Research Objectives

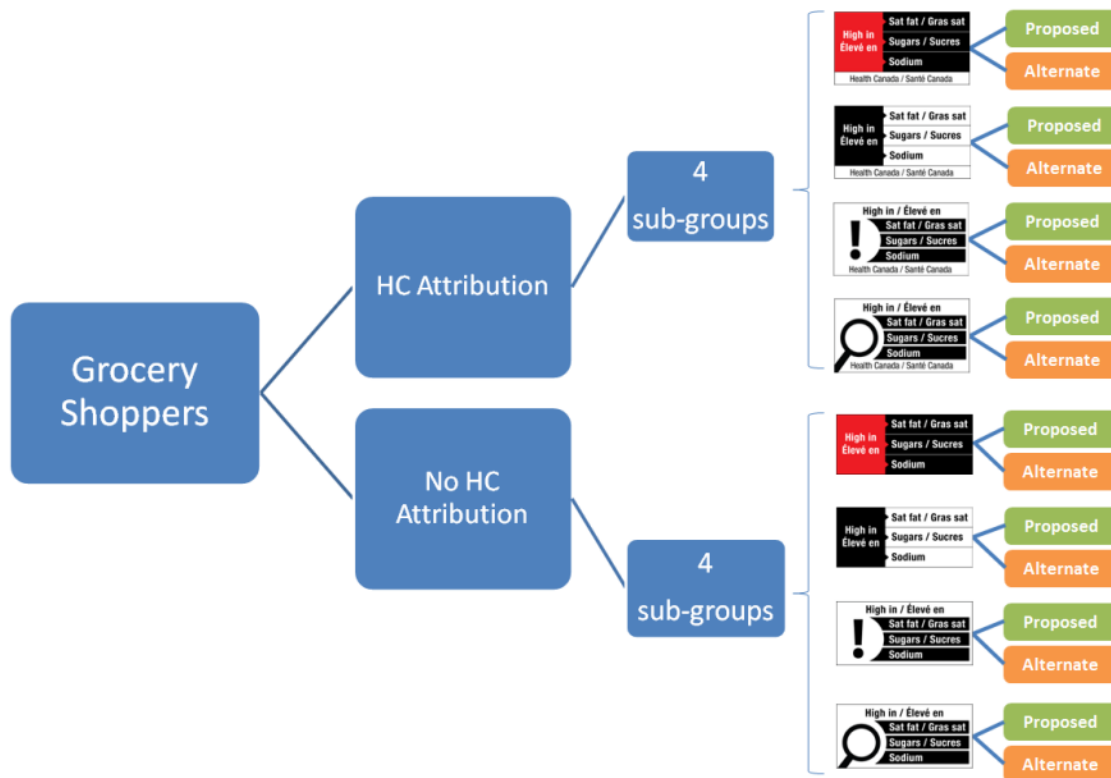
Health Canada commissioned Leger (Montreal, QC) to conduct online consumer research designed to simulate a food shopping experience. The objectives were: (1) to evaluate whether the proposed FOP labelling can help Canadians, especially vulnerable Canadians at risk of marginal health literacy (HL), quickly and easily identify foods high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat; and (2) to inform Health Canada's proposed FOP labelling regulatory specifications (e.g., FOP nutrition symbol size, location, Health Canada attribution, and restrictions to other nutrition information that will best facilitate consumer awareness, understanding, appraisal and use of the FOP nutrition symbol).

1.3 Design

A total of 4,049 adult participants of varying HL levels (59% marginal HL; 41% adequate HL) were recruited from Leger's Online Panel throughout March 2018. Participants were diverse in gender, age, geography across Canada, and language. Three quarters (74%) were responsible for all or most of their household grocery shopping and the vast majority of participants (90%) reported using nutrition labels on food packages to make some of their food choices.

Participants were first randomized into one of two arms - with or without Health Canada attribution included in the design of the FOP nutrition symbol. Within each arm, participants were further randomized into one of four FOP nutrition symbol groups, and then further randomized into proposed regulatory labelling specifications or alternate labelling subgroups. Those in the proposed specifications group saw food packages with the FOP nutrition symbol in the proposed size or proposed location (top 25% or right 25% of package) or proposed placement of nutrition claims (away from the FOP

nutrition symbol). Participants in the alternate group saw food packages with the FOP nutrition symbol in a smaller size or alternate location (bottom 65% of package or inconsistent locations across packages) or with nutrition claims beside the FOP nutrition symbol. Given that the objectives of this research were to inform regulatory requirements related to the FOP nutrition symbol design and its ability to enable consumers to quickly and easily identify foods high in sugars, sodium and/or saturated fat, participants only saw the front of the package of the foods.



Participants completed a range of timed food tasks designed to measure awareness and understanding of the FOP nutrition symbols in different motivational scenarios. For example, participants were asked to find the FOP nutrition symbol on different food packages, identify the nutrients the food is high in, and distinguish products high in specific nutrients from others. General (non-specific) and nutrient-specific shopping tasks explored the use of the FOP nutrition symbol relative to other front of package label information in making food choices. Multiple choice questions were used to examine participants' awareness, understanding, appraisal and use of the FOP nutrition symbol when making their food choices.

Successful choices and the time to make the choices were analyzed quantitatively. Pooling of the results from the 4 symbol design arms was conducted and results were compared across proposed and alternate labelling subgroups to assess differences due to FOP nutrition symbol size, location, Health Canada attribution, and proximity of claims.

1. Key Findings

The FOP nutrition symbol is a helpful consumer tool (Objective 1)

Upon exposure to the FOP nutrition symbols on foods participants were more likely to choose a food without a FOP nutrition symbol. Almost all participants stated that the FOP nutrition symbol helped them to easily see which foods were high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat. Perceptions about foods carrying a FOP nutrition symbol included food behaviours such as limiting how much and how frequently these foods should be eaten.

A Health Canada attribution increases trust and credibility (Objective 2)

The presence of the Health Canada attribution resulted in higher trust and credibility for the FOP nutrition symbol.

Size and location of the FOP nutrition symbol is important (Objective 2)

While most participants noticed the FOP nutrition symbol regardless of its size or location, significantly more participants understood it faster when its size was larger and it was in the proposed location. While participants with adequate HL performed better and faster at noticing and understanding the FOP nutrition symbol, most participants at risk of marginal HL also noticed and understood the FOP nutrition symbol.

Proximity of other nutrition information had little impact on the use of FOP nutrition symbols (Objective 2)

Overall, the proximity of other nutrition information to the FOP nutrition symbol had little impact on the time or success in making food choices from amongst a variety of options. However, participants used other nutrition information, such as the “no added sugars” claim and Food Stars rating, more frequently than the FOP nutrition symbol when choosing from among beverages with a high in sugars FOP nutrition symbol. Marginal HL participants consistently relied on the FOP nutrition symbol more frequently than adequate HL consumers when making beverage choices. However, when participants made unsuccessful food choices, participants tended to rely on other nutrition information on the front of the package.

1.5 Conclusion

The proposed labelling approach, including format requirements related to size, location, and Health Canada attribution, was shown to be effective in providing participants of varying HL levels with quick and easy guidance on foods that are high in sugars, sodium and/or saturated fat. The proximity of other nutrition information had little effect on consumers' understanding and use of the FOP nutrition symbol. However, the presence of other nutrition information can impact the use of the FOP nutrition symbol, such that it may not be the primary source of information on the front of the package used when making a food choice.

1.6 Note for Reading the Report

In this report, results are presented in the form of crosstabs. The "total" column presents the results for the whole sample. Then, results for sub-groups of the sample are presented at the right of the "total" column. The total column represents the results for the overall sample.

1.7 Notes on Research Findings

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of Health Canada. This report was compiled by Leger based on the research conducted specifically for this project. The findings cannot be inferred to the general population of Canada.

1.8 Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information

This report was prepared by Leger who was contracted by Health Canada (contract number HT372-173890/001/CY awarded January 5, 2018).

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Leger that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada's political neutrality requirements outlined in the Directive on the Management of Communications.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christian Bourque". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christian" and last name "Bourque" clearly distinguishable.

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Additional information

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