

Focus Testing on Cannabis Product Labelling and Promotion Control Measures (HC POR-19-19)

Final Report

Prepared for Health Canada

Prepared by Narrative Research
PSPC Contract Number: HT372-194071/001/CY
Contracted Value: \$150,425.60
Contract Date: January 14, 2020
Delivery Date: March 2020

POR number: 067-19

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

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Supplier Name: Narrative Research

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This public opinion research report presents the results of focus groups conducted by Narrative Research on behalf of Health Canada. The research study was done using qualitative focus groups. The research entailed a total of 24 in-person focus groups, namely, four (4) groups in each of Toronto (ON), Calgary (AB), Regina (SK), Vancouver (BC), Montreal (QC) and Halifax (NS). In each location, one group was conducted with each of four audiences: youth 15-17 years old; young adults 18-24 years old; adults 25-59 years old; and adults 60 years and older. In each group that included participants 18 years and older, a mix of gender, age, education, employment status, household income, and ethnicity were included. Each youth group included a mix of gender, age and ethnicity. The research was conducted between February 10th and 25th, 2020.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre :

Test de mise à l'essai sur l'étiquetage des produits du cannabis et les mesures de contrôle de promotion

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Catalogue Number:

H14-349/2020E-PDF

International Standard Book Number (ISBN):

978-0-660-34717-2

Related publications (registration number: POR-067-19):

Catalogue Number H14-349/2020F-PDF (Final Report, French)

ISBN 978-0-660-34720-2

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Executive Summary

Narrative Research Inc.

Contract Number: HT372-194071/001/CY

POR Registration Number: 067-19

Contract Award Date: January 14, 2020

Contracted Cost: \$150,425.60

Background and Research Methodology

Following the coming into force of the *Cannabis Act* (Act) on October 17, 2018, Health Canada continues to gather information as a means to assess the impact and effectiveness of control measures set out in the Act and associated *Cannabis Regulations*. These control measures include, among others, prohibited promotional activities, strict requirements related to packaging and labelling of cannabis products, and certain product restrictions. Control measures aim to protect public health and public safety, including protecting young persons and others from inducements to use cannabis and enhancing public awareness of the health risks associated with cannabis use.

In this context, Health Canada is interested in qualitative research to evaluate consumer perceptions of various types of imagery; to explore the key influencers on participants' perceptions and beliefs towards cannabis; to increase Health Canada's knowledge of cannabis marketing practices following legalization and the impact on the public's and consumers' perceptions; and to assess public and consumer understanding of mandatory information displayed on the labels and packaging of cannabis products and the relevance and effectiveness of the information.

Specific research objectives included:

- To evaluate consumers' reactions to various types of imagery that could be used in promotion.
- To explore factors (e.g., advertising, peer-influence) influencing consumers'/non-consumers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding cannabis.
- To explore participants' understanding and use of information displayed on various cannabis product labels and packages. Specifically, to determine if the information is:
 - comprehensive, relevant, and of value to participants to support informed decision making and responsible cannabis use;
 - visible, in plain language and clearly understood by participants;
 - the right size, font and located appropriately on the label;
 - effective in protecting youth and young adults by helping to reduce appeal or inducement to use cannabis;
 - effective in protecting public health by helping to inform and educate Canadians about the health risks and effects of cannabis use; and



- effective in protecting public health by helping to lower the risk of harms associated with cannabis use.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research approach was undertaken. This entailed a total of 24 in-person focus groups conducted from February 10th to 25th, 2020 across six locations (Toronto, Calgary, Regina, Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax). In each location, one focus group was conducted with each of the following four audiences: youth 15 to 17 years old; young adults 18 to 24 years old; adults 25 to 59 years old; and older adults who are at least 60 years of age. Within the young adult and adult groups (18 years or older) an effort was made to include a mix of gender, age (within range), education, employment status, household income, and ethnicity. Youth groups each sought to include a mix of age (within range), gender, and ethnicity.

Although this research study sought to recruit equal numbers of men and women, it did not ask respondents to disclose their sex or gender. The results therefore do not allow for sex- and gender-based analysis. However, given that gender-related factors can influence behaviours and attitudes, this could be an area for future research as it relates to cannabis.

Group discussions were held in English with the exception of those in Montreal which were conducted in French. Group discussions each lasted approximately 90 minutes with participants each receiving \$100 in appreciation of their time. A total of 12 participants were recruited per group (including 2 stand-by respondents). Across all groups, 234 participants attended the discussions, with an additional 28 participants incentivized as stand-by respondents who did not take part in the discussions.

All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada. Recruitment was conducted through qualitative panels stored on Canadian servers, with follow up calls to confirm the details provided and to ensure quotas were met. This report presents the findings from the study. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the results from this study, as qualitative research is directional only. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of confidence.

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Representative of Narrative Research that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada 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.

Signed 

Margaret Brigley, CEO & Partner | Narrative Research
Date: March 4, 2020



Key Findings and Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings and conclusions from the *Focus Testing on Cannabis Product Labelling and Promotion Control Measures* (POR-19-19) research study.

Image Assessment

When considering images and their potential implications for the promotion of cannabis, a review of imagery confirms that some images evoke a stronger emotional response than others and elicit a longing or desire to be in that place. By contrast, a generic image does not garner the same degree of emotional response, nor is it considered as compelling. Regardless of the focus group, findings suggest that when an image effectively establishes personal relevance, it has the potential to more strongly compel or engage the participants.

Influences on Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Cannabis

Findings show that for the most part, attitudes and beliefs about cannabis do not appear to have changed since its legalization and regulation, though greater public acceptance of cannabis and a general normalization of its use is evident. Across locations and audiences, results show great consistency in responses for each of the topics explored in the study.

Results show that most participants have not changed their attitudes or beliefs about cannabis since legal access for adults was permitted in 2018. This lack of change was generally driven by a pervasive attitude that cannabis should not be criminally prohibited, or by a continued lack of interest in using cannabis. In all locations, a considerable number of young adults and adults felt strongly that the legalization and regulation of cannabis was long overdue and generally considered cannabis to be a substance of lesser risk or harm in comparison to alcohol.

While comfort levels with the concept of cannabis varied, there was general agreement that increased conversations or public discussion on the topic has resulted in greater acceptance.

There is a general appreciation that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has resulted in a better product as a result of providing access to a strictly regulated and quality-controlled product supply. In particular, participants felt that legalizing cannabis has helped to eliminate reliance on illicit cannabis which presents an increased risk to cannabis users. Some felt that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has reduced the presence of the illicit market and helped to reduce the negative stigma associated with cannabis, although there is a perception that the high cost of legal cannabis has permitted the illegal market to continue to exist.

Overall, findings suggest that interest in, or intentions to use cannabis have changed minimally since legalization and regulation, although there appears to be a general attitude among adults that they would be open to use cannabis for medical purposes should health needs arise.

How people feel or think about cannabis is primarily influenced by family, friends and personal experiences. Personal experiences, be they positive, neutral or negative, have largely shaped beliefs and



opinions towards cannabis and far exceed any other competing influencing factors. That said, aside from family, friends and personal experiences, a number of other key influencing factors were evident, albeit to a lesser extent, including: school curriculum; online searches / news; celebrities; culture; religion, and public education campaigns. Of note, across groups there was no mention of advertising from cannabis licensed producers or retailers as influencing what participants believe about cannabis.

Review of Information on Cannabis Product Labels and Packaging

The packaging of twelve (12) different empty cannabis products was shared with focus group participants to test information that must be displayed on cannabis product labels and packages. The review of information confirmed that the bold yellow health warning message and the red cannabis symbol most effectively caught participants' attention. It also revealed that the sharp colour contrast between the health warning message and the package itself encouraged reading of the warning. Further, the use of bold font in the warning was considered especially effective at gaining attention, as was the use of capital letters for the word WARNING.

The red cannabis symbol was also easily identifiable and clearly denoted a cannabis product, adding legitimacy to the product. For most, the information on product labels and the plain packaging design clearly portray a regulated product and resemble a pharmaceutical product with its brand-free design. That said, the perceived volume of information on cannabis products was criticized for being illegible because of the small font size, and all audiences concurred that label font size should be enlarged, and the amount of text reduced.

Findings clearly show that additional information may be needed to help improve public understanding and comprehension of cannabis products. Indeed, some of the information displayed on cannabis product labels was difficult for participants to grasp. In examining the empty packages, both cannabis users and non-users were unable to easily identify the product type or its intended use. In addition, most participants were unsure how to interpret the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) content and were generally unable to put those numbers in context. There was a general lack of understanding of what the numbers indicated, and participants were unable to determine the potency of the product. In addition, many did not understand what the difference between THC and CBD content was in relation to the overall product experience. To increase understandability and comprehension, participants suggested that some type of guide, scale or legend should be considered to educate consumers on the strength or potency of the cannabis product.

In addition, the language presentation on some of the cannabis products proved problematic for many English participants. Those participants found it cumbersome and difficult to read all the information, and some stopped reading, when the information presented alternated between English and French sentences. The presentation of English and French information separately was the preferred format for most.

Across locations and audiences, the possession statement was consistently misunderstood, and no one associated it with an indication of the 30-gram public possession limit. Rather, this information was misinterpreted as either providing a guide of product strength or as a benchmark for easy cost comparison to determine the product's cost per gram.



Findings confirm that information presented on cannabis labels effectively communicates that there is a risk associated with using cannabis and a sense of caution is clearly implied. That said, there is some concern with the health warning messages being inconsistent across products, and a lack of clarity as to whether the warning messages are intended to apply to a specific product or cannabis generally. Some participants criticized the health warning messages for not being 100% truthful or accurate as presented. It was generally felt that consideration should be given to either applying health warning messages consistently across packages (i.e. all packages have the same warning messages) or alternatively, that messages closely align with the particular product itself. Across locations, participants sometimes felt that the health warning messages were presented as facts that had little to do with the specific product in the package.

When considering what information is the most essential on a cannabis product, results show that clearly displaying the product type, product strength, intended use, recommended dosage, and potential side effects are deemed the most important information. Inclusion of health warning messages are appreciated and desired, however it was felt that priority could be placed on warnings related to the specific product's immediate use (e.g. may cause drowsiness), rather than more long-term effects of cannabis use.

Finally, research findings show there is a general lack of understanding and familiarity with cannabis use. Across locations and audiences, participants would like access to more information on the safe use of cannabis to inform their opinions, as well as their decision to purchase. In particular, there was a perceived need for reliable information resources on cannabis (THC/CBD, strains, product types), how to use it, anticipated effects, potential benefits and risks. It was not felt appropriate that such information come from a licensed cannabis producer or retailer, given a perceived vested interest. It was suggested that the Government of Canada may want to consider the inclusion of a website URL on the cannabis product, whereby clear and easy to understand information on cannabis and its usage could be accessed. The use of a detailed pamphlet, a pullout reference on the product label itself or a QR code was also suggested. Although much of the information that participants mentioned is covered within Health Canada's cannabis Consumer Information sheet (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/laws-regulations/regulations-support-cannabis-act/consumer-information.html>), the content of that handout was not the focus of this POR.



Introduction

Following the coming into force of the *Cannabis Act* on October 17, 2018, Health Canada has continued to gather information to assess the impact and effectiveness of control measures set out in the *Cannabis Act* and *Cannabis Regulations*. These measures include prohibited promotional activities, strict packaging and labelling requirements, and product restrictions among other control measures. Control measures aim to protect public health and public safety, including protecting young persons and others from inducements to use cannabis and enhancing public awareness of the health risks associated with cannabis use.

In this context, Health Canada is interested in qualitative research to evaluate public and consumer perceptions of various types of imagery that could be included in promotions; to explore factors influencing consumers'/non-consumers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding cannabis; and to assess public and consumer understanding of mandatory information displayed on the labels and packages of cannabis products, and its effectiveness.

Objectives

Specific research objectives included:

- To evaluate consumers' reactions to various types of imagery that could be used in promotion.
- To explore factors (e.g., media, peer-influence) influencing consumers'/non-consumers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding cannabis.
- To explore participants' understanding and use of the information displayed on various cannabis product labels. Specifically, to determine if the information is:
 - comprehensive, relevant, and of value to participants to support informed decision-making and responsible cannabis use;
 - visible, in plain language, and clearly understood by participants;
 - the right size, font, and located appropriately on the label;
 - effective in protecting youth and young adults by helping to reduce appeal or inducement to use cannabis;
 - effective in helping to inform and educate Canadians about the health risks and effects of cannabis use; and
 - effective in protecting public health by helping to lower the risk of harms associated with cannabis use.

This report presents the findings of the research. It includes a high-level executive summary, the description of the detailed methodology used and the detailed findings of the focus group discussions, including recommendations made. The working documents are appended to the report, including the recruitment screener (Appendix A), the moderator's guide (Appendix B), and the materials tested (Appendix C).



Research Methodology

Target Audience

There were four target audiences for this study, namely:

- Youth (15-17 years old)
- Young adults (18 to 24 years old)
- Adults (25 to 59 years old)
- Older adults (60+ years old)

Research Approach

The study included a total of 24 in-person focus groups, specifically one group with each of the four audiences, in each of six locations. The following provides a breakdown of groups based on location, date, language and audience:

24 focus groups							
Location	Date (2020)	Language	Youth	Young Adults	Adults	Older Adults	Total
Toronto	February 10	English	1	1			4
	February 11				1	1	
Calgary	February 12	English	1	1			4
	February 13				1	1	
Regina	February 17	English	1	1			4
	February 18				1	1	
Vancouver	February 19	English	1	1			4
	February 20				1	1	
Montreal	February 19	French	1	1			4
	February 20				1	1	
Halifax	February 24	English	1	1			4
	February 25				1	1	
TOTAL # SESSIONS:			6	6	6	6	24

Each of the young adult and adult groups (those with participants who are 18 years or older) included a mix of age (within range), gender, education, employment status, and household income. Youth groups each included a mix of age (within range) and gender. The recruitment also sought to be reflective of the market's cultural composition.

Although this research study sought to recruit equal numbers of men and women, it did not ask respondents to disclose their sex or gender. The results therefore do not allow for sex- and gender-based analysis. However, given that gender-related factors can influence behaviours and attitudes, this could be an area for future research as it relates to cannabis.



All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada. Recruitment was conducted through qualitative panels stored on Canadian servers, with follow up calls to confirm the details provided and to ensure quotas were met. Those with current or past employment in sensitive occupations were excluded from the research, in addition to those who have others in the household in this situation. These sectors included marketing, marketing research, public relations, advertising, media, the federal, provincial or municipal government, organizations in the field of drug treatment, licensed cultivators, processors or sellers of cannabis, law enforcement, and legal or law firms. In addition, individuals who have been to at least five qualitative sessions in the past five years, those who have attended a session in the past six months, and those who have participated in group discussions related to cannabis, drugs, or government policy on drugs were excluded from the research.

Group discussions were held in English with the exception of those in Montreal which were conducted in French. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes with participants each receiving \$100 in appreciation of their time. A total of 12 participants were recruited per group (including 2 stand-by respondents). Across all groups, 234 participants attended the discussions, with an additional 28 participants incentivized as stand-by respondents who did not take part in the discussions.

Context of Qualitative Research

Qualitative discussions are intended as moderator-directed, informal, non-threatening discussions with participants whose characteristics, habits and attitudes are considered relevant to the topic of discussion. The primary benefits of individual or group qualitative discussions are that they allow for in-depth probing with qualifying participants on behavioural habits, usage patterns, perceptions and attitudes related to the subject matter. This type of discussion allows for flexibility in exploring other areas that may be pertinent to the investigation. Qualitative research allows for more complete understanding of the segment in that the thoughts or feelings are expressed in the participants' "own language" and at their "own levels of passion." Qualitative techniques are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. As such, results are directional only and cannot be projected to the overall population under study.



Research Findings

Image Assessment

This section of the report presents a summary of discussions that explored participants' perceptions and impressions of four distinct images, referred to for the purpose of the report as: wooden planks; concert stage; chairs at lake; and tent with mountains.

Overall, a review of imagery revealed that some images evoked a stronger emotional response than others and elicited a longing or desire to be in that place. By contrast, a generic image did not garner the same degree of emotional response, nor did it motivate action to the same extent. Findings clearly show that when an image effectively establishes personal relevance, it has the potential to be compelling.

Wooden Planks (this image was discussed in all groups)

When seeing this image, participants typically offered a minimal response. They associated the visual with nothing in particular, or being rustic, boring, plain, bland, old, or non-descript. Many associated the visual with an inanimate object such as an old barn/barn boards, fence, deck, siding or porch. Its colourless tone of grey, black and white did little to grab attention for most, regardless of age, and contributed to the somber, dark, and serious tone. For a number of adult participants in Regina, Calgary, Halifax, and to a lesser extent, Toronto, the image evoked nostalgia and a sense of longing, whereby they recalled childhood memories in rural communities with old farmhouses, barns or sheds. Indeed, some participants shared stories of countryside adventures during their youth, visits with grandparents, or family summer fun.

"I associate this with my childhood. It brings back many childhood memories." Adult 60+; Toronto

"It's a place I've seen in the past. It's heritage, memories from my mother's childhood." Adult 25-59; Halifax

While the image implied strength, durability, and lasting the test of time for some participants, others considered it to simply show something old and worn out.

"A sad depressed older person who's all cooped up." Youth 15-17; Vancouver

"Moi, je le trouve triste parce que c'est gris." (I find it sad because it's grey.) Adult 60+; Montreal

"C'est plus une barricade." (It's more of a barricade.) Adult 60+; Montreal

This image was primarily seen as targeting an older and more rural audience, or perhaps individuals who grew up in a rural community or had a rural connection in their past. It was considered to speak mainly to traditional, middle-aged males, or perhaps those with traditional values. In addition, in each location and in most groups, participants commented that barn wood is currently trendy in interior decorating and



renovations. Accordingly, workers in that sector (design, contracting, renovations), or individuals that are 'trendy', 'crafty' or artistic, were seen as audiences that would be potentially attracted to the image. It was envisioned that such individuals would contemplate what could be done with the wood, and what its artistic or decorative potential would be.

"Someone who wants to remember." Adult 60+; Toronto

"A practical person – someone who works with their hands as a carpenter or an artist. Maybe a photographer. They would see its potential." Adult 60+; Halifax

Across locations, this image did not evoke a strong emotional response for most, as it was seen as too generic to do so. That said, for others, especially among younger audiences, the image evoked a sad, depressed or dreary emotional response. Across most locations, a few participants noted a feeling of oppression or being trapped or blocked, given the close-up framing, the black and white colours, and the reference to a fence/barrier/wall. Regardless of audience and location, this image consistently did not elicit a desire for most participants to be in a location or experience, as it mainly represented an object rather than a setting.

To increase attraction or relevance to this image, participants consistently suggested the addition of elements such as vibrant colour, words or additional images to improve the mood, as well as providing increased context of the visual. Knowing what surrounds the visual was considered important to better elicit an emotional response and establish greater personal relevance.

"It's one dimensional. Something needs to be added to give it context." Youth 15-17; Calgary

"Some extra context would make this more interesting. Show more of the background or setting." Young Adult 18-24; Regina

"What's the bigger picture? I need to see more to feel anything." Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

"It's like unfinished business, it's not complete. I want to see the rest of it." Adult 60+; Halifax

Concert Stage (this image was discussed in the youth and young adult groups)

This image was consistently seen as depicting excitement, high energy, adrenaline and a stimulating partying scene. Music, loud noise, crowds and electronic dance music (EDM) were consistently associated with this image, as was an entertaining night out with friends. Many assumed that this place would likely include alcohol, smoking, large crowds and drugs. This image evoked a strong emotional response among youth and young adults, and across locations, most considered this highly appealing (particularly among youth 15-17 years old) and a place they would want to go. The kinds of individuals this image would target were perceived to be outgoing extroverts, social, high-energy younger people who enjoy spending time with others.



That said, it is important to note that in each location and across both youth and young adult audiences, a few participants consistently associated unfavourable perceptions and emotions with the image. Indeed, some described a sense of anxiousness or anxiety when reviewing the image, and found the notion of crowds, loud noise and a partying scene to be undesirable.

While many felt a sense of belonging and excitement with the possibility of attending this type of lively event, some participants did not feel compelled to be part of the experience, as they felt that the image showed the scene prior to the concert start, thus not providing the level of anticipation a concert might have when seeing musicians on the stage and people in the crowd. Showing an active scene that includes people and interaction would further accentuate a desire to be in the place. For others, including names or types of performers that closely aligned with their interests would increase personal relevance and interest.

“I was waiting for something to happen! I would really want to be there.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

“It shows a real social aspect. A night out with friends. Something cool and hip – a place you want to be.” Young Adults 18-24; Calgary

“It fills me with anticipation – and makes me anxious!” Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

“J’ai été très stimulé. Quand tu vas voir un show, il va y avoir de la lumière, il va y avoir le son, il va y avoir des personnes autour de toi, enfin tu vas être stimulé.” (I was very stimulated. When you go see a show, there will be lights, there will be sound, there will be people around you, you will be stimulated.) Young Adult 18-24; Montreal

Chairs at Lake (this image was discussed among adults 25-59 years old and older adults 60+)

Across locations and age groups this visual was strongly associated with a sense of relaxation, unwinding, and getting away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Descriptions of serenity, calmness, escape, romance and peacefulness were consistently provided. For many, this showed a place suitable for a weekend escape or vacation getaway with family, spouse / partner, or friends. It was often reminiscent of cottage getaways as a child or with their family, or a summer vacation.

This image elicited a strong emotional response from both adults and older adults. Its implied promise of relaxation, calmness and an escape from day-to-day busy lifestyles was especially appealing and depicted a place most would like to be. Some, however, felt the promise was unattainable to individuals in a lower socio-economic class.

“This conjures good memories of vacations. It shows an idyllic vacation. A perfect place for busy hardworking people to get away to. It speaks of romance too. A relaxing place to share with your partner and some red wine.” Adult 60+; Toronto

“This looks like a dream – a perfect place where you are at peace. It’s pure Canadiana, a place most people would want to be.” Adult 25-59; Toronto



"It's relaxation. Getting away from the hustle and bustle. A great place to kick back and relax." Adult 60+; Regina

The intended audience for this image, although often deemed applicable for all age groups, was especially aligned with older people (those approaching or in retirement), families with young children or teenagers, or couples looking to spend some time together. Activities associated with the image ranged from active leisure activities (swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, water sports), to more relaxing actions done in isolation or with the company of others, such as enjoying a drink, admiring the view, or reading a book.

Tent with Mountains (this image was discussed in all groups)

This visual clearly depicted a sense of adventure, beauty, serenity, isolation or remoteness that was especially appealing to many. This image also evoked a strong emotional reaction across audiences, and promised a getaway from typical daily pressures / city life, a place of reflection, and an escape from the daily grind. The image showed remote camping to most, and accordingly, it was seen as targeting a more able-bodied, outdoor enthusiast. Activities most often associated with a person attracted to this image included a wide range of outdoor actions (e.g., hiking, camping, rock climbing, fishing, hunting, skiing, photography).

"It stirs your sense of adventure and suggests this is a place you can intentionally go to get away for peace of mind. A place to recharge – an escape." Adult 25-59; Toronto

"This is a place where you'd throw caution to the wind. I'm envious of youth that are able to go there." Adult 60+; Regina

"C'est pour les gens qui cherchent une vie moins compliquée. (It's for people who are searching for a less complicated life.) Adult 25-59; Montreal

"It is showing me an experience or a journey. It makes me want to get away from the day to day. But this is not really easily attainable to many people – it's expensive to get there and you need to have the gear." Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

Although deemed appealing across age groups, the campsite especially spoke to younger, active lifestyle individuals. Some felt it targeted those who have camped in the past or currently camp. Others considered the image beautiful but more reflective and reminiscent of days gone by given that they no longer see tenting or remote camping as an activity they would choose to undertake. Some described the image as undesirable because of its lack of comforts (i.e., no hotel / bed), a sense of insecurity or fear (due to bears or other wild animals) and perceived discomfort (bugs, physically challenging to get there).

"This is more for the naturist or nature lover. It would be someone youthful who likes the fresh air and is physically active." Adult 60+; Toronto

"It's an escape from reality - a place for the minimalist, someone who takes charge and likes solitary." Youth 15-17; Regina



Regardless of an individual's desire to visit this place, participants consistently described the setting or experience of escape, serenity, or sense of reflection as something desirable to most. Of note, it was mentioned that the presence of a tent and camping/hiking equipment suggested the presence of people, and thus provided a greater sense of connection. This was considered an important component to some in making the image relatable and compelling.

"Getting away from life – real freedom. It makes me a little jealous, showing an escape from it all." Young Adult 18-24; Calgary

"This represents an escape from life – a way to achieve a balance. It's calming and a place you can get back to yourself." Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

"I see this as a place I want to be. Where you can relax." Adult 25-59; Calgary



Influences on Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Cannabis

This section presents a summary of discussions related to the factors (e.g., media, peer-influence) influencing consumers' and non-consumers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding cannabis.

Attitudes / Beliefs Since Legalization

Across most locations and age groups, the majority of participants reported that their attitudes or beliefs about cannabis have generally not changed since legal access to cannabis for adults was permitted in 2018. This lack of change was generally driven by a pervasive attitude that cannabis should not be criminally prohibited, or by a continued lack of interest in consuming cannabis. In all locations, a considerable number of young adults and adults felt strongly that legalization and regulation of cannabis was long overdue and generally considered cannabis to be a drug of lesser risk or harm potential than alcohol and one that should not have been criminalized.

"Give three guys a bunch of liquor and they'll end up in a fight. Give three guys a bunch of cannabis and they'll form a band." Adult 25-59; Halifax

"Here in Vancouver, there has been a general acceptance of weed and a presence of it in the community for a long time. This should have been done a long time ago." Adult 25-59; Vancouver

"Cannabis has become more normalized. The stigma has changed." Adult 25-59; Calgary

"Since it's no longer illegal and not a criminal behaviour. I'm happy it's controlled. I like that we can talk about it openly." Adult 60+; Calgary

"Le fait que c'est légal, ça m'apparaît moins nocif." (The fact that it's legal, it seems less harmful.) Adult 25-59; Montreal

Regardless of location and audience, participants concurred that since legalization and regulation there has been greater public acceptance of cannabis, and a general normalization of cannabis usage. While comfort levels with the concept of cannabis varied, there was general agreement that increased conversation or public discussion on the topic has resulted in greater acceptance. In each location, a good proportion of participants indicated that they have become more accepting of cannabis use since legalization, despite their opinions of the product itself or personal cannabis usage having not changed. This increased acceptance was primarily attributed to the increased open conversation or dialogue on the topic (among family, friends and peers), and the fact that it is more widely accepted as an effective medical drug alternative for many. A number of young adults and adults commented that cannabis was an accepted topic of discussion with audiences (e.g., with their parents) that would have traditionally been opposed to using an illegal drug.

"It was a scary thing before it was legalized. Now, because of legalization, there is a lot more information available and we talk about it at home and at school." Youth 15-17; Calgary



“With legalization, there is more information available. It’s increased acceptance and become more socially acceptable. We’ve seen it become safer in our community. It’s now understood as an alternative to opioids for some conditions.” Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

“There is open communication. People have to accept the conversation now. It’s more normalized and people tend to be less judgmental. When you have conversations, you can make a more informed decision.” Young Adult 18-24; Regina

“In Vancouver, dispensaries were already here, so there wasn’t much change. It’s starting to lose a stigma though and become more acceptable. There is good conversation going on.” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

Across audiences, most appreciated that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has resulted in a regulated, quality-controlled product. In particular, some participants felt that providing legal access to cannabis has helped to eliminate reliance on illegal products that present an increased risk to cannabis users. The belief is that this was especially the case in larger urban centers, most notably in Vancouver and Toronto. Some felt that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has reduced the illegal market, and helped to reduce the negative stigma associated with cannabis.

“My opinion has changed. Before it was legalized, I didn’t know much (about it). You knew before that it was really dangerous, there was some laced with fentanyl. It’s safer now. Some youth used legalization as an excuse to use it.” Youth 15-17; Vancouver

“Public opinion has changed and that’s influenced my opinion. It (cannabis) became cleaner after legalization. Before it was an unsafe option, but now you don’t have to go to a shady place to get it – it’s safer. I know someone who bought marijuana laced with fentanyl before.” Young Adult 18-24; Calgary

“Nothing has really changed for me. Before it was legalized, I disregarded it and I still do. I worry a bit because of new peer pressures for youth, but nothing is different for me.” Adult 60+; Toronto

“Le gouvernement peut nous offrir un produit plus sécuritaire.” (The government can offer us a safer product.) Youth 15-17; Montreal

“It’s good to know that it’s a safer product and not laced with other drugs. People don’t have to find a street corner, shady drug dealer.” Young Adult 18-24; Regina

A good number of participants, especially older adults, also expressed their belief that legalization was introduced primarily as a revenue generator, ‘tax grab’ or ‘money grab’ for the federal government.

“I think the only reason it was legalized was for the revenue. It’s a money maker for the government.” Adult 25-59; Calgary

“I see this (legalization) as nothing but a tax grab.” Adult 60+; Regina



Regardless of location though, any changes in attitudes and beliefs towards cannabis were more likely to be positive than negative.

“Legalization takes away the mystery. There is less to hide. I didn’t realize that many of my friends were users! Now it’s something we can openly discuss. It sounds like a softer way to get help over opioids.” Adult 60+; Toronto

Regardless of their use, young adults, adults and older adult participants openly discussed an increased understanding and awareness of the various uses and perceived benefits of cannabis, and how it is perceived to be more widely accepted as an effective pain medication and as an aid to reduce anxiety and enhance sleeping. These opinions were largely attributed to real-life experience, conversations with other individuals who had real-life experiences, or information they had read or heard on various media (news, social media). Adults and older adults shared news stories or online articles that they had heard or read heralding the perceived successful use of cannabis for treating dementia, Parkinson’s, pain management, sleep apnea, and anxiety.

It warrants mention that across locations, few participants in each audience indicated that their attitudes or beliefs towards cannabis have changed for the worse. Those who did, generally opposed the concept of legalization, although they consistently qualified their response saying that they did not oppose anyone using it for medical reasons. Most attributed their change in opinion to an expressed frustration with what they described as an onslaught of pungent smoke in public places and a displeasure for the smell of smoked cannabis. For them, the smell of cannabis was now more prevalent than cigarette smoke, given what they perceived to be more accepted restrictions on smoking cigarettes in public places than for cannabis.

“It’s all I smell when I’m out. I avoid walking the sidewalks with my children because the smell is always there.” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

“I don’t like smelling weed at the bus station at 7 am on my way to work, or walking by a construction site at lunchtime and smelling pot.” Adult 25-59; Calgary

That said, it is important to note that a limited number of participants in some locations expressed concern with the legalization of cannabis, and believed that it was not a good decision. For some parents of young children, the fear of potential harm to their children caused concern, especially given the perceived high appeal of edibles, and a perception of drugs being more easily available. For others, concern was expressed for an apparent cavalier attitude toward cannabis in the workplace.

“I was shocked when it was legalized. I understood it to be a gateway drug – one that leads to use of harder drugs eventually. It doesn’t help people to become contributing members of society. Adult 25-59; Toronto

“You hear on the news that young kids are getting easier access to drugs. It worries me as a parent.” Adult 25-59; Halifax



"I find it bothersome to see and hear about a cavalier attitude toward cannabis in the workplace." Adult 60+; Regina

Across locations, some young adults and adults (most notably those with cannabis experience) expressed frustration that the high cost of legal cannabis has allowed the illegal market to continue to exist. It was perceived that the price point of legal cannabis was excessively high, resulting in many people continuing to rely on product supplied by the illegal market.

Interest in / Intentions of Using

For the most part, participants indicated that their interest in or intentions to use cannabis have changed minimally since legalization. Those who have used it in the past reported an increased comfort in openly discussing their usage, and appreciated having a variety of product options available. In particular, across locations participants indicated that having various products available would allow them to consider alternate methods of consuming cannabis.

"This has been more normalized. Having more options like edibles available has helped to change the stigma." Adult 25-59; Calgary

For many, smoking cannabis is not an appealing method of cannabis consumption, especially for those who have never smoked it in the past. Many adults, however, were open to the idea of edibles as an alternative, should they wish to consider consuming cannabis.

"Having options available so you don't have to smoke it is appealing to me. I'd rather not smoke it if there are other options." Adult 25-59; Vancouver

Participants generally concurred that within social settings, both at home and outside the home, cannabis is accepted as an alternative to alcohol. Across locations, a number of young adults and adults consistently voiced that they were surprised to discover that some people in their social circles had been using cannabis in secret.

Young adults, adults and older adults (all those 18 years or older) consistently expressed interest in considering cannabis as an option for pain relief or as a sleep aid, when or if required. In essence, they appreciated having an alternative to prescription drugs or opioids, should the need arise. This change was primarily attributed to an increased number of family or friends using cannabis for medical purposes and having been told that they experienced successful results.

"I've learned that there are lots of medicinal benefits to cannabis. If I need to look for something to help me with a condition, I'd likely talk to my doctor and consider it as an option." Adult 60+; Regina

Regardless of location, underage youth generally indicated that their intent or interest in using cannabis in the immediate future, has not changed. Most recognized that being underage, they would have to resort to purchasing cannabis on the illegal market which they believe does not necessarily provide a quality-controlled product. In addition, many cited that they have been told (in school, and by family) that



use of cannabis holds higher risk while their brain has not fully developed, and that their use of cannabis could make them more vulnerable for mental health issues.

“Personally, my level of interest in using cannabis hasn’t changed. It’s an awkward age – you can’t legitimately use the product, but you see it more and you see a little less negative stigma since it’s been decriminalized. There is less fear because it’s safer now and you wouldn’t need to worry about fentanyl if it was purchased through a retailer.”
Youth 15-17; Vancouver

Key Influencers

Across ages and locations, family, friends and personal experiences have most influenced how participants feel or think about cannabis. Consistently, participants openly discussed experiences they have had personally with cannabis, public debates, as well as what they had seen or heard from others close to them. These experiences, whether positive, neutral or negative, largely shaped beliefs and opinions towards cannabis and far exceeded any other competing influencing factors. Across locations, participants recalled varied stories of experience with cannabis ranging from their own personal (and perceived to be harmless) use of cannabis in their youth, to situations where they had witnessed excessive abuse and negative cannabis use outcomes. Further, across audiences, participants spoke of situations where they had seen or been told first hand of how cannabis had been used effectively for pain relief.

“Your mindset on something is determined by the crowd you hang out with – your peers. Your parents or family also have a big influence.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

“Vancouver has had a strong weed culture long before legalization. People have well established opinions and beliefs based on that. Legalization isn’t going to change that.”
Young Adult 25-59; Vancouver

“Mes amis qui fument. Ils sont les seules personnes avec qui je vais parler.” (I will only speak with my friends who smoke.) Young Adult 18-24; Montreal

Aside from family, friends and personal experiences, a number of other key influencing factors warrant mention.

- **School Curriculum:** Among youth, some participants commented that their school curriculum has helped to shape opinion on cannabis, with cannabis having been the topic of individual and group projects or in health / biology class discussions. In multiple provinces, and regardless of gender, participants indicated that schools have held general assemblies related to cannabis, with information being highlighted that related to the potential risks of using cannabis during the formative or brain-forming years.

“In biology class we talked about the impact cannabis can have on our brain’s development, and how it can cause big problems in the long-term. We’ve been assigned projects on it too.” Youth 15-17; Regina



That said, regardless of gender, some youth in larger urban centres (most notably in Vancouver and Toronto) noted that in recent months schools have placed more focus on other drugs and vaping than on cannabis.

“We’ve been talking more about vaping than cannabis in school lately, especially with all the media attention on what is happening with kids’ health from vaping.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

- **Online Searches / News:** For some participants who actively seek out information on the topic (notably young adults and adults), information from news stories (primarily traditional news including television and newspaper), online searches, and scientific studies have influenced their opinion.

“I search it out, mostly because I want to be informed. I look for studies, and balanced reports on information about cannabis.” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

Across multiple locations, some participants felt that media coverage has largely been negative towards cannabis, while a few others felt it often featured perceived benefits of cannabis, especially in relation to seniors and those with health conditions.

“You hear coverage on how it helps those with dementia, or offers pain relief for cancer patients.” Adult 25-59; Halifax

Among youth and young adults, what they saw or read on social media has also influenced perceptions and beliefs towards cannabis.

“Information on social media mentions how cannabis can be harmful to brain development. You don’t go looking for it, but it’s there.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

- **Celebrities / Perceived Endorsement:** Perceived endorsements of cannabis by various media shows or organizations, as well as personalities, has also influenced opinions. Celebrities’ use or public discussion of cannabis have resulted in some youth and young adults feeling more favourably towards cannabis and has enhanced its appeal. Some youth and young adults openly discussed how mainstream media has embraced the use of cannabis in some instances, including its usage in movies, television shows and in some video games. These actions were perceived as attributing to a normalization of attitudes and beliefs.

In addition, some young adults commented that the fitness community has also embraced cannabis as an effective alternative for pain management, which has influenced their perceptions.

“You see the fitness community talking about cannabis as an effective alternative for pain management, and one that includes less calories.” Young Adult 18-24; Regina

The type of celebrities mentioned varied depending on participants’ interests, gender and age. Among male youth, musicians (electronic digital music (EDM), rap, rock, pop), and professional



athletes were most often mentioned, while adults and young adults spoke of politicians, athletes, artists or business professionals.

“When you see someone like [influencer] smoking a joint during a live interview, that challenges the stereotype. He’s a smart, very successful guy!” Young Male Adult 18-24; Regina

“Professional athletes – hockey, basketball, whatever - are having open conversations about their use of cannabis for pain.” Male Adult, 25-59; Calgary

- **Legalization:** Legalization was an influencing factor for many participants, particularly among older adults. For them, it has favourably influenced perceptions, as it allowed them to consider it as a viable, more publicly accepted product for use, and one that is not as detrimental to their health as it may have been perceived to be. Most notably, having a more open public dialogue about the potential health benefits of cannabis has influenced how some perceive cannabis. Some young adults, adults and older adults perceived legalization as a government endorsement that the product is not that bad, leading them to more openly discuss the topic with others.

“Just the fact that it’s legal means you have to think about it differently.” Adult, 25-59; Regina

- **Culture and Religion:** Across each location, a few participants expressed that their culture or religion influenced how they think about or perceived cannabis.
- **Education campaigns:** Some participants across multiple locations mentioned seeing education campaigns (typically various provincial government campaigns) that communicated the risks associated with cannabis, including ‘don’t drive high’ or ‘can you tell the difference’. Such campaigns were most often recalled among youth, young adult and adult audiences, though mentioned across audiences. For the most part, such campaigns were seen online (social media, including YouTube, Facebook or Instagram) or on television. It was perceived that these campaigns have helped to educate them on the risks associated with cannabis usage and consumption.

In addition, some adults across locations referenced information from the Government of Canada as providing important information that has helped to educate them on the topic.

“The federal government has information online, including health facts, that is helpful.” Adult- 25-59; Toronto

- **Retailers/Advertising:** Since legalization, in some locations, cannabis retailers have influenced users’ understanding about cannabis. In most provinces, participants commented that the retailers and the staff who work there have generally demonstrated a specialized knowledge of the product, offering information and answers to consumers’ questions. Of note, no one cited promotion or advertising from producers or retailers as influencing what they believe about cannabis.



Review of Information on Cannabis Product Labels and Packaging

This section presents the findings from the discussions that explored participants' understanding and use of information displayed on various cannabis product labels and packaging among participants.

The packaging of twelve (12) different cannabis products was shared with the group. Participants were asked to read all of the information included on their respective cannabis product and encouraged to share and examine information on additional products. It is important to mention that the cannabis products were not included in the packages. The following discusses the reactions to the information displayed on product labels and packaging across a number of key themes.

Overall Reactions / Factors Grabbing Attention

Across locations and audiences, the yellow health warning message and the red cannabis symbol initially caught participants' attention. Consistently, the health warning message was identified as the first information read, primarily because of its bold colouring (yellow background) on the package or label design or sharp colour contrast. In addition, the red cannabis symbol was easily identifiable and clearly denoted a cannabis product, adding legitimacy to the label.

"The warning is the most prominent thing you see. The bold letters on the yellow suggests that it needs to be taken seriously." Young Adult 18-24; Regina

"Les mises en garde sont bien indiquées; on peut les lire clairement." (The warnings are well labelled; we can clearly read them.) Adult 60+; Montreal

"The bright yellow label stands out and it's the first thing I read." Adult 25-59; Regina

"The logo (referring to the standardized cannabis symbol) shows legitimacy." Adult 60+; Vancouver

Other initial reactions to cannabis product labels and packaging included the fact that they look regulated, and that their appearance likened a pharmaceutical product with its brand-free design. The illegibility of the text was noted given its perceived small font size, and the large amount of information displayed on a relatively small label.

"There is too much information – it lost my attention. I don't want to read a lot of information. With my ADHD you need to make it easier to read." Youth 15-17; Vancouver

"I didn't feel skeptical about the information on the label. It was credible as presented." Adult 60+; Calgary

It's a little intimidating with no branding on the package. It makes me feel like I'm doing something wrong." Young Adult 18-24; Calgary



“The labels as presented make the products seem more clinical. It suggests that you need to be wary of taking the products and take caution. I’m gratified to see that it’s clearly saying there’s risk.” Adult 60+; Calgary

“The first thing this label says is ‘warning’ – proceed with caution.” Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

“These labels are clinical in their approach and suggest that you should take care, use with caution or proceed with caution.” Adult 60+; Toronto

“It suggests a lot of words and lots of regulations. It’s not designed to get people to read it.” Adult 60+; Vancouver

Another initial reaction to the packages and labels was the lack of consistency with the health warning messages, namely the severity in messaging and the warnings being different across cannabis products. This concern will be discussed in further detail later in the report.

“There are no hard facts on this - it seems more scare tactics than necessary information.” Young Adult 8-24; Vancouver

“I can’t tell if the warnings are general information or if it is intended to be information specific to the product?” Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

Across locations, some participants questioned who the intended target of the labels was, namely the experienced cannabis user or those inexperienced with cannabis. Regardless, it was felt that the proposed labels fell short of meeting either audience’s needs.

It warrants mention that across locations and audiences, there was little to no mention of the company name or product brand names. Participants generally felt that the current label design did not create for an appealing or attractive product nor did it encourage sales. Rather, the packaging and label designs as presented, created a regulated and unattractive product.

Youth were asked which parts of the labels, if any, appealed to them. Consistently across locations, most youth participants indicated that aside from the bold yellow warning area on the label and the red cannabis logo which caught their attention, nothing was particularly appealing to them. However, across locations and audiences, a few participants were intrigued by the names of some products (e.g. banana split or chai) and questioned if such products would be flavoured. It was generally assumed that any name associated with a flavour would likely be indicative of the product’s taste, despite being unbelievable to some.

“Not quite sure how you can get dried cannabis to taste like a banana split, but that might be worth a try!?” Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

“I find it hard to believe that dried cannabis that you smoke is going to taste like banana split.” Adult 25-59; Halifax



“Is it really going to taste like that (chai) or is that just the name?” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

In addition, across multiple locations, participants felt that a lack of consistency in the type and location of information, across packages and product labels, made it difficult to easily reference information.

Legibility

Unaided, the font size on the labels was consistently mentioned as being too small and illegible for most. All age groups generally concurred that the font size needed to be enlarged, and the amount of text reduced. The use of bold font in the health warning message was considered especially effective at grabbing attention, as was the use of capital letters for the word WARNING.

Across groups, the font style was generally deemed effective as presented and easy to read. Further, participants appreciated the legibility of the colour contrast of the text (black text on white or black text on yellow). As presented, participants consistently concurred that the labels’ design created an appearance of being a regulated product, and did little to attract consumers.

Some participants believed the type of ink used on the labels could be problematic given that it appeared smudged in places, or easily worn off.

Intended Use and Purpose

Across groups and locations, participants found it difficult to quickly identify the product type or its intended use. For some products it was only after extensive searching or full reading of all the information that they were able to ascertain what either was. Those less familiar with the products (i.e., non-cannabis users), felt the labelling was designed with cannabis consumers in mind (i.e. those familiar with products), but cannabis consumers also expressed frustration and confusion as to what the product was and its intended use. Neither audience considered the information on the product label and package to clearly and consistently communicate the product type or intended use.

“It’s confusing. It’s ambiguous information. No one knows what it means. It should be more educational on what it does. You have to look hard just to figure out what it is. Using the word ‘units’ is not clear, and there is no clear direction.” Adult 25-59; Calgary

“This is not easy to understand. I couldn’t tell you with confidence what it is or how strong it is. There is no connection with the level of THC and the warnings either.” Youth 15-17; Vancouver

“There are a lot of words, and I’m not sure what the percentages mean. There is no measure of how strong it is and the words are confusing to me.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

“The organization of the information doesn’t really make sense. There is no instruction on how to take it, and the weights (THC) is hard to understand.” Adult 60+; Toronto

“How do you use it? There are no instructions or suggested dosage. What’s the product?” Young Adult 18-24; Calgary



“This is not at all consumer driven. It’s very confusing. There is nothing about how to use it and the THC/CBD numbers don’t tell me what it means.” Young Adult 18-24; Calgary

“Définir mieux le produit et ses conséquences - combien en consommer selon les personnes c’est à dire les dangers en nombre de grammes.” (Better explain the product and its consequences – how much to use based on each person; that is what dosage might be dangerous.) Adult 60+; Montreal

THC and CBD Content

Similarly, participants criticized the understandability of the required information on product labels and packaging. For the most part, participants were unsure how to interpret the THC and CBD content. While some appreciated that the percentage or numbers shown for each indicated the level of content in the product, participants were generally unable to put those numbers in context. In essence, regardless of cannabis experience, participants did not understand what the numbers indicated, and were not able to determine the potency of the product. Further, across locations, many did not understand what the difference between THC and CBD content was in relation to the overall product experience. It was felt by some that an explanation of the strain, and its intended outcome (e.g. to energize or relax) would be important to highlight.

“They have made it too complicated. I can’t relate to what this product is going to do.” Adult 25-59; Calgary

Participants consistently questioned if the information displayed on product labels and packages were intended for experienced cannabis consumers or non-users. Regardless, the information was deemed unclear by both.

“These labels must be designed for an informed consumer. There is no context as to what the information means.” Young Adult 18-24; Regina

“The numbers confuse me. What do they mean? When I look at this, I don’t know what I’m looking at.” Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

“Unless you are educated on what your usage should be, this is a complete unknown. I don’t use cannabis. This label is all Greek to me.” Adult 25-59; Regina

Across locations, participants felt that some type of guide, scale or legend is warranted to educate consumers on the strength or potency of the product. Many likened it to alcohol, coffee, craft beer or spicy food, whereby they need to understand, in a simplistic manner, the intensity (e.g., whether the content of the product would equate to a ‘mild, medium or strong’ experience). A visual scale (e.g., a dial), word scale, or colour coding, were all suggested to help guide consumers’ decision-making process.

“You don’t know what you are getting. There is no benchmark shown for me to understand what the figures or the levels in this package mean. There is nothing



standardized. The whole package itself seems to be hiding what it is. I'd have to ask my friend – this means nothing.” Adult 60+; Vancouver

“If this had a dial (visual icon) where I could see how weak or strong it is that would be helpful. Just saying the THC / CBD content doesn't give me the information I need.”

Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

Also related to understandability, participants questioned how the product would be used, what the recommended dosage should be and what effect should be expected. Many likened the anticipated effect to information they are used to seeing on medications (e.g., may cause drowsiness, excitement, racing heart, etc.) and something they would like to know prior to consuming or using a cannabis product. Some adult participants also felt there may be merit in publishing definitions of terminology used on the labels so there are standardized terms used.

“It's confusing. There is so much information on the label – but not enough! I don't know what the strength is, how much I should take or how often! What are the directions? And why are the warnings so inconsistent from package to package?” Adult 60+; Calgary

“I need scale and perspective. They need to put emphasis on the information that really matters. I need to know how it should be taken – what's the recommended starting dosage - and what is going to happen to me if I do? What will be the immediate effects?” Young Adult 18-24; Halifax

“Faire des feuillets explicatifs, à part ou dans les emballages, qui expliqueraient les recommandations par jour pour homme, femme - comme pour l'alcool, et qui explique ce qu'est une teneur élevée ou faible en THC.” (Insert information on a separate sheet or inside packages that would explain the recommended usage per day for men, women – like for alcohol. And that would explain what constitutes a high or low level of THC.) Young Adult 18-24; Montreal

Nutrition Facts Table

When considering information in the nutrition facts table, participants generally agreed that this type of information/table should be required for all edible cannabis products. While some questioned the relevance for a cannabis product, many believed that such a table is necessary for any individual with dietary needs.

“I like the nutritional guide. It's not something that everyone would need, but if you have specific medical or dietary needs, it's good to have that information included.”

Adult 25-59; Toronto

Language Presentation

In most English locations, participants found it cumbersome and difficult to read information displayed on product labels when the information was presented in alternating English and French text. This was



considered problematic and inconsistent with the format they are used to reading on other consumer products (all English, and all French paragraphs). It was felt that information would be missed as presented, since readers would stop reading when a sentence switched language. This concern was not raised in the French groups. In addition, across languages the fact that the THC/CBD content was presented the same in both languages resulted in unnecessary duplication and excessive words on the label.

“Alternating the text by language on some of the packages [Eng / Fr / Eng/ Fr] adds unnecessary words to an already crowded label. I’m used to reading English and then French. As soon as I got to the first French mention I just stopped reading, assuming it was the end.” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

“THC / CBD content on some labels is shown as the same in both languages, but repeated anyway. Less words are better. If it’s the same in both languages, it shouldn’t be repeated.” Adult 15-59; Calgary

Cannabis Possession Statement

While many participants were generally aware that there is a limit for the amount of cannabis for non-medical purposes that an adult can possess in public, very few were aware of what that limit actually is, with estimates ranging from 10 to 30 grams.

“What is the permissible limit? I have no idea how much I can carry around.” Adult 25-59; Toronto

Across locations and audiences, the cannabis possession statement presented on the label was consistently misunderstood, and no one associated it with the 30-gram public possession limit. Rather, this information (e.g., ‘this package contains the equivalent of .5 grams of dried cannabis’) was interpreted as having one of two meanings. For the most part, participants assumed such information was a guide or benchmark of product strength, providing a comparison to a more generally understood measure of one gram of dry cannabis. Others felt it was intended to indicate a benchmark for easy cost comparison, allowing a consumer to quickly determine the product’s cost per gram.

“It’s intended to give you an idea of how much you are paying – the price per gram.” Adult 25-59; Calgary

“It doesn’t relate to anything for me. I guess it could help the experienced buyer to compare it with the strength of what a gram would include? Or maybe in relation to the price per gram?” Young Adult 18-24; Vancouver

Some cannabis users, however, took exception to this perceived comparison, describing it as inappropriate and inaccurate.

“One joint is not equal to a bong hit, which is not equal to a chocolate bar. It’s comparing apples to oranges.” Adult 25-59; Regina



Effectively Communicating Risk

Across locations and audiences, most participants agreed that the labels effectively communicate that there is a risk associated with using cannabis. Further, as mentioned, for many the health warning messages were consistently recognized as the first thing they noticed and the first thing they would typically read on the label. For most, the health warnings were appreciated and successfully shared credible facts that made readers contemplate the risk associated with cannabis use.

“It seems like a medical product the way it’s labelled. They are trying to ward off purchasers. It talks about the consequences more than what it is and how to use it.”
Youth 15-17; Vancouver

“It clearly says take it at your own risk.” Youth 15-17; Calgary

“The warnings promote fear and makes it less attractive. They need to make it less technical though. Include a ratings system, like a colour scheme or a potency scale (like mild, medium or strong).” Adult 60+; Calgary

“These labels and packages suggest that they are a regulated product and that if misused it is harmful.” Adult 25-59; Vancouver

Across audiences, the warnings were considered both effective and paramount to have positioned on the front of the label. The bright yellow colour and bold WARNING headline grabbed attention and presented information that was both new and fearful to many.

“Putting the mental health risks there are really important.” Adult 60+; Halifax

“It tells me there are some really serious risks that I didn’t know about. I worry for the kids.” Adult 25-59; Regina

That said, as mentioned, participants voiced concern that the health warning messages were inconsistent across cannabis products, in that the messages were different on each package, and some felt the warnings were not 100% truthful or accurate as presented. For instance, the statement that cannabis use could cause schizophrenia was considered to be only partially true as it was perceived true only if an individual is predisposed to mental health issues. Accordingly, it was felt that some warnings were fear mongering.

In some instances, it was believed that the warnings were too generic and did not specifically identify the severity of potential health effects or the specific risks encountered. It was also not clear to some participants if the risks were dependent on the quantity of cannabis consumed. Participants felt if different warnings are presented, they should closely align or have particular relevance to the product. In some instances, participants sometimes felt the health warning messages were presented as random facts that had little to do with the specific product in the package. Participants were not aware of the rotational nature of the health warning messages (i.e. that there are eight messages which are rotated equally amongst products).



“It’s a Russian Roulette of warnings. They are inconsistent and seem mismatched between what the product is and what the warning is. Mixing a vanilla chai flavour with ‘don’t use heavy equipment’ seems silly.” Youth 15-17; Vancouver

In addition, it was perceived that the health warning message were felt to be inconsistent in their severity across products, with some presenting facts of usage or effect (e.g., delayed effect) and others stating a clear long-term health risk. Across locations, a few participants were left with the impression that the warnings should be specific to the product on which they were presented. This was deemed a logical explanation for having different messages across products. Others, however, felt it was important to provide the full spectrum of warnings on each package.

“What are these trying to communicate? Are they meant to present long-term risks, or warnings of using that product, that day?” Adult 25-59; Halifax

“There are too many hazards thrown at the package. I think it’s overkill.” Youth 15-17; Toronto

Further, it was felt the label should present an accurate and complete picture by also stating the recognized benefits of usage, rather than only including a health warning message.

“They need to clearly communicate the facts, but I question the accuracy of some of the information presented.” Adult 25-59; Halifax

What should be on the label?

Across adult groups, participants were asked what information is needed on a label to help them make an informed decision about cannabis use. Across adult audiences, participants consistently indicated that they want to easily identify the **product type** (i.e., not the brand name, but what the product actually is); the **strength of the product** (i.e., ideally through some kind of visual icon or colour coding scale); **how to use the product** (i.e., recommended dosage) and what its **side effects are** (i.e., how will it affect the person and for what length of time).

When considering the actual layout of information on the label, across groups and locations participants generally believed that the most important or valuable information should be clearly displayed on the product label and package. In particular, the basic layout of the presented labels was generally endorsed with the bold warning information, the cannabis logo and the product type (i.e. what it is), being positioned on the front of the label. Giving greater prominence or enlarged font size to the product type was consistently suggested. Also, participants felt it important to include the THC and CBD content on the front of the label, although as mentioned, they would prefer greater clarity on what the content percentages or numbers actually mean.

When asked what information on the label was unnecessary, participants often had difficulty distinguishing information that was not needed. Given that many were unclear as to what some of the information was that they were reading, they were sometimes unable to determine its necessity. For most, there was a general desire for access to more information rather than less. Despite a criticism of



small type face on a small label, most did not readily identify information that could or should be removed.

Inclusion of health warning messages are appreciated and desired, although many felt priority should be placed on including health warning messages related to the specific product's use (i.e., time 'before impact', do not drive, etc.), rather than more long-term effects of usage. Many likened it with what they have come to expect on medication labels, whereby they are told the direct potential effects of the product (e.g. may cause drowsiness, should not drive motorized vehicles, etc.).

"What it is (the product)? The product name / type is not large enough on the package. It's like it's an afterthought!" Young Adult 18-24; Toronto

"What is relevant to me is the type of marijuana, not the dosage. Is it Sativa or Indica?" Adult 25-59; Regina

"Don't show unsubstantiated risks or warnings. It loses credibility and creates fear mongering." Adult 25-59; Halifax

Given the small size of many packages and their labels, and the extensive relevant information, many participants across audiences and locations indicated that it would be helpful to have more detailed information readily available for review. A variety of information formats were suggested including a URL on the label, an expanding label which pulls out to include more information, or printed pamphlets with any purchased product. Some younger participants also suggested inclusion of a QR code where they could easily access more information.

"There needs to be a third-party website where I can get credible information, like from the Government. It can't be the producer who is trying to sell the product. It should be educational – we need to be informed." Adult 60+; Calgary

"Rediriger les gens vers un site sur lequel ils pourront y trouver des informations supplémentaires." (Redirect people to a site where they can find additional information.) Youth 15-17; Montreal

What's Missing?

Adult participants were asked what information was missing on the product labels and packaging that were presented. Across locations and audiences, participants perceived a number of elements to be missing, including:

- Clear and consistent labelling of the **product type** (i.e. what it is, such as dried cannabis, oil, chocolate, gummies, etc.) and its **intended use** (e.g. inhalation, edible) on the front of the package;
- **Recommended dosage**;
- A **scale** to show potency and inform usage;
- **Explanation / clarity** on THC and CBD % or #s;



- **Expiry date;**
- **Where to find more information.** As mentioned, participants voiced a clear need for a reliable source for more information on cannabis (THC / CBD, strains, product types), how to use it, anticipated effects, benefits and risks. They would like a website or detailed pamphlet that they can review at their leisure, or a pullout reference on the product itself.
- **Age limit / legal age of consumption;**
- **Strain:** clarity on what cannabis strain a product includes;
- **Effects of usage / side effects;**
- **Warnings about effects** – the time it will take for effect and how long will it last; and
- **Government of Canada** as warning sponsor– name the information source of the facts.

Participants' Final Suggestions / Advice:

At the end of the group discussions, participants were asked to share final recommendations or advice for the Government of Canada related to cannabis. The following summarizes final suggestions offered by participants.

Across all groups similar recommendations were suggested, with the most popular recommendation being to **enlarge the font size** on the labels and packaging. Others included better **outlining the risks, side effects and warnings associated with a specific product** on cannabis product packaging and labelling. A majority of participants across groups highlighted the importance of having a clearly **recommended dosage** and **product type** along with the intended use on the labels, especially for first time users. Many participants mentioned using **visual warnings** (as on cigarette boxes) rather than only text for warnings, which was considered less impactful.

Participants also recommended including an explanation on the **difference between THC and CBD** and how the effects are different. Across all groups another suggestion was to **provide more information** about cannabis, either by providing a pamphlet, or including a website URL or QR code on the package or label for reference. Such a tool would provide easy access to more information regarding the product; how to use it, appropriate dosage, potential side effects, what to do or who to call in case of an emergency.

Some participants also recommended using **less material for the packaging** to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable. Adults and older adult participants emphasized the use of more **standardized packaging and health warning messages**, and would like to see the **English text separated from the French text** for ease of reading. Those audiences also showed more concern for safe packaging to protect children, and cautioned that any colouring should be careful not to attract children's attention.



Conclusions

The following provides broad conclusions from the summary of research findings.

- ***Some images more effectively evoke emotional responses, eliciting a longing or desire to be in that place and alignment of imagery with personal relevance is most compelling.***

Overall, a review of imagery confirms that some images evoke a stronger emotional response than others and elicit a longing or desire to be in that place. By contrast, a generic image does not garner the same degree of emotional response, nor is it compelling to the same extent. Regardless of audience, findings show that when an image effectively establishes personal relevance, it has the potential to be compelling.

- ***For the most part, attitudes and beliefs about cannabis have not changed since its legalization, though greater public acceptance of cannabis and a general normalization of its use is evident.***

Across locations and audiences, most participants have not changed their attitudes or beliefs about cannabis since it became legal for adults in 2018. This lack of change was generally driven by a pervasive attitude that cannabis should have been legal, or by a continued lack of interest in consuming cannabis. In all locations, a considerable number of young adults and adults felt strongly that legalization of cannabis was long overdue and generally considered cannabis to be a drug of lesser risk or harm potential than alcohol.

Regardless of location and audience, participants concurred that since legalization there has been greater public acceptance of cannabis, and a general normalization of cannabis usage. While comfort levels with the concept of cannabis varied, there was general agreement that increased conversation or public discussion on the topic has resulted in greater acceptance.

There is a general appreciation that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has resulted in a quality-controlled product. In particular, it was felt that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has helped to eliminate reliance on illegal product that could be laced with another substance, presenting a serious risk to users. Some felt that the legalization and regulation of cannabis has reduced the illegal market, and helped to reduce the negative stigma associated with cannabis, although there is a perception that the high cost of legal cannabis has allowed the illegal market to continue to exist.

Overall, findings suggest the interest in or intentions to use cannabis have changed minimally since legalization, although there appears to be a general attitude among adults that they would be open to use cannabis for medical purposes should the need arise.



- ***How people feel or think about cannabis is primarily influenced by family, friends and personal experiences.***

Across ages and locations, family, friends and personal experiences have most influenced how participants feel or think about cannabis. Personal experiences, be them positive, neutral or negative, largely shaped beliefs and opinions towards cannabis and far exceed any other competing influencing factors. Aside from family, friends and personal experiences, a number of other key influencing factors were evident, albeit to a lesser extent, including: school curriculum; online searches / news; celebrities; legalization; culture, religion, and public education campaigns. Of note, across groups there was no mention of advertising from producers or retailers as influencing what participants believe about cannabis.

- ***The yellow health warning message and red cannabis symbol on cannabis products garner attention, but many participants found information on labels difficult to read due to the small font size.***

Consistently, the bold yellow health warning message and the red cannabis symbol effectively grabbed attention and the sharp colour contrast on the package design encouraged reading of the warning label. The use of bold font in the warning was considered especially effective at grabbing attention, as was the use of capital letters for the word WARNING. The red cannabis symbol was easily identifiable and clearly denoted a cannabis product, adding legitimacy to the label.

The information on cannabis product labels and the plain packaging design clearly portrays a regulated product and for some likened a medical product with its brand-free design. That said, the perceived extensive text on the label was criticized for being illegible because of the small font size, and all age groups generally concurred that the label font size needed to be enlarged, and the amount of text reduced.

- ***Information on cannabis product labels and packaging proved challenging for participant comprehension and understandability.***

Most notably, regardless of whether cannabis users or non-users, participants were not able to easily identify the product type, its intended use or what the appropriate dosage would be. In addition, most participants were unsure how to interpret the THC / CBD content and were generally unable to put those numbers in context. Regardless of cannabis experience, participants did not understand what the numbers indicated, and were not able to determine the potency of the product. In addition, many did not understand what the difference between THC and CBD content was in relation to the overall product experience.

To increase understandability and comprehension, it was suggested that some type of guide, scale or legend could be considered to educate consumers on the strength or potency of the product.

In addition, the language presentation on some product labels proved cumbersome and problematic when language statements were rotated. To increase clarity, presentation of English and French information separately was the preferred format.



- ***The possession statement presented on the label was consistently misunderstood.***

Across locations and audiences, the possession statement presented on the label was consistently misunderstood, and no one associated it with an indication of the legal public possession limit. Rather, this information was consistently misinterpreted as either providing a guide or benchmark of product strength, (i.e. a comparison to a more generic measure of one gram of dry cannabis), or as a benchmark for easy cost comparison to quickly determine the product's cost per gram.

- ***The product labels and packages effectively communicate that there is a risk associated with using cannabis.***

Participants generally agreed that as presented, the information of cannabis product labels and packages clearly communicate a health risk associated with using cannabis and indicate that it should be used with caution. That said, there is some concern that health warning messages are inconsistent across products, and there is a lack of clarity as to whether the warning is intended to apply to the specific product or to cannabis more generally. Some participants criticized the warnings for not being 100% truthful or accurate as presented, based on their perceptions. Across locations, participants sometimes felt the warnings were presented as random facts that had little to do with the specific product in the package.

- ***The information considered to be most important on a cannabis product is the product type, strength of product, recommended dosage / usage and potential side effects.***

Regardless of location and audience, participants believe the most important information should be clearly presented on a cannabis product. In particular, results suggest that the package or label could prominently include the **product type**, a visual representation of the **strength of the product**; directions on recommended dosage, and what its potential **side effects are**. Inclusion of health warning messages are appreciated and desired, however it was felt priority could be placed on including warnings related to the specific product's use, rather than more long-term effects of usage. For the most part, this information was considered to be lacking on the current label and package design.

- ***The request for more information on the use of cannabis was a common theme.***

Although this POR was focused on gaining participant's feedback on the information present on cannabis product labels and packaging, it was clear that participants would like more information in general about cannabis use to inform their purchase considerations. In particular, they voiced a clear need for a reliable source for more information on cannabis (THC / CBD, strains, product types), how to use it, anticipated effects, potential benefits and risks. Participants suggested consideration be given to inclusion of a government website URL on the cannabis product, a detailed pamphlet, or a pullout reference on the product label itself. While much of this information can be found in the cannabis Consumer Information sheet, which is to accompany cannabis purchases in Canada and is available online on Health Canada's website (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/laws-regulations/regulations-support-cannabis-act/consumer-information.html>), it was not mentioned by participants and thus could suggest a greater need to promote the presence of this information to Canadians.

Appendix A:
Recruitment Screener

**Focus Testing on Cannabis Products Labelling and Promotion Control Measures
Recruitment Screener – FINAL**

Name: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Toronto, ON (ENGLISH)

Date:	February 10, 2020	Location:	CRC Toronto (Midtown)
Time:	Group 1 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		1867 Yonge Street
	Group 2 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		Suite 200
Date:	February 11, 2020		
Time:	Group 3 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 4 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Calgary, AB (ENGLISH)

Date:	February 12, 2020	Location:	Qualitative Coordination
Time:	Group 5 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		707 – 10 Avenue SW
	Group 6 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		Suite 120
Date:	February 13, 2020		
Time:	Group 7 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 8 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Regina, SK (ENGLISH)

Date:	February 17, 2020	Location:	Canwest Opinion Research
Time:	Group 9 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		1840 McIntyre Street
	Group 10 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		Lower Level
Date:	February 18, 2020		
Time:	Group 11 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 12 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Vancouver, BC (ENGLISH)

Date:	February 19, 2020	Location:	CRC Vancouver
Time:	Group 13 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		1398 West 7 th Avenue
	Group 14 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		
Date:	February 20, 2020		
Time:	Group 15 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 16 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Montreal, QC (FRENCH)

Date:	February 19, 2020	Location:	AdHoc Research
Time:	Group 17 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		400 de Maisonneuve West
	Group 18 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		Suite 1200
Date:	February 20, 2020		
Time:	Group 19 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 20 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Halifax, NS (ENGLISH)

Date:	February 24, 2020	Location:	Narrative Research Halifax
Time:	Group 21 – 5:30pm – Youth 15-17		7071 Bayers Road
	Group 22 – 7:30pm – Young adults 18-24		Suite 5001
Date:	February 25, 2020		
Time:	Group 23 – 5:30pm – Older adults 60+		
	Group 24 – 7:30pm – Adults 25-59		

Specification Summary

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twenty-four (24) in-person focus groups in total: Four (4) English groups in each of Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Regina, and Calgary Four (4) French groups in Montreal In each location, one (1) group per audience No parents and youth from same household will be recruited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In each Young Adults, Adults, and Older Adults groups, mix of gender, age, education, employment status, household income, and ethnicity. In each Youth group, mix of gender, age and ethnicity. All have lived in their respective market for at least two years Incentive: \$100 per participant 12 recruited per group Group discussion lasts up to 90 minutes |
|--|--|

RECRUITER NOTE: WHEN TERMINATING AN INTERVIEW, SAY: “Thank you very much for your cooperation. We are unable to invite you to participate because we have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours.”

Hello, my name is _____ and I’m calling on behalf of _____, a national public opinion research firm. We are organizing a series of discussion groups on issues of importance to Canadians, on behalf of the Government of Canada. We are looking for people who would be willing to participate in a discussion group. Participants will receive an honorarium for their participation. May I continue?

- Yes.....1
 No.....2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Would you prefer that I continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en français ou anglais?

RECRUITER NOTE: FOR ENGLISH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN FRENCH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH: "Malheureusement, nous recherchons des gens qui parlent anglais pour participer à ces groupes de discussion. Nous vous remercions de votre intérêt."

Participation is voluntary. We are interested in hearing your opinions; no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a ‘round table’ discussion led by a research professional. All opinions expressed will remain anonymous and views will be grouped together to ensure no particular individual can be identified. The information collected will be used for research purposes only and handled according the Privacy Act of Canada.* But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix and variety of people. May I ask you a few questions?

- Yes1
 No2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

**IF ASKED: The personal information you provide is protected in accordance with the Privacy Act and is being collected under the authority of section 4 of the Department of Health Act. The information you provide will not be linked with your name on any document including the consent form or the discussion form. In addition to protecting your personal information, the Privacy Act gives you the right to request access to and correction of your personal information. You also have the right to file a complaint with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner if you feel your personal information has been handled improperly. For more information about these rights, or about our privacy practices, please contact Health Canada's Privacy Coordinator at 613-948-1219 or hc.privacy-vie.privee.sc@canada.ca.*

1. Do you or any member of your household work for...? **[READ LIST – ROTATE ORDER]**

- ...a marketing research, public relations, or advertising firm?1
- ...the media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc.)?2
- ...an online media company or as a blog writer?3
- ...the federal, provincial, or municipal government?.....4
- ...an organization in the field of drug treatment?.....5
- ...a licensed cultivator, processor or seller of cannabis?6
- ...law enforcement?7
- ...a legal or law firm?8

IF YES TO ANY, THANK & TERMINATE

2. **DO NOT ASK – NOTE GENDER BY OBSERVATION**

- Male1 **RECRUIT 6 PER GROUP**
- Female.....2 **RECRUIT 6 PER GROUP**

3. We are looking to include people of various ages in the group discussion. May I have your age please?

RECORD AGE: _____

AGE	GROUP	AGE GROUPS	RECRUITMENT SPECIFICATIONS
18-24	YOUNG ADULT GROUPS	18-19 20-21 22-24	RECRUIT 4 PER AGE CATEGORY
25-59	ADULT GROUPS	25-29 30-34 35-44 45-59	RECRUIT MIN 2 AND MAX 4 PER AGE CATEGORY
60+	OLDER ADULT GROUPS	60-64 65-69 70-74 75+	RECRUIT MIN 2 AND MAX 4 PER AGE CATEGORY

FOR THOSE UNDER 18, ASK TO SPEAK TO PARENT OR GUARDIAN AND ONCE ADULT IS ON THE LINE, GO BACK TO INTRODUCTION

4. How long have you lived in **[INSERT CITY]**?

- Less than 2 years1 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
- At least two years or more.....2

5. What is your current employment status?

- Working full-time1
- Working part-time.....2
- Self-employed3
- Retired.....4
- Unemployed.....5

Student.....	6
Other	7
DK/NR.....	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

RECRUIT MIX FOR ADULT 25+ GROUPS (3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24)

6. Which of the following categories best describes your total household income? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes? **[READ LIST IN ORDER]**

Under \$20,000.....	1
\$20,000 to under \$40,000.....	2
\$40,000 to under \$60,000.....	3
\$60,000 to under \$80,000.....	4
\$80,000 to under \$100,000.....	5
\$100,000 to under \$150,000.....	6
\$150,000 or more.....	7
DK/NR.....	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

RECRUIT MIX FOR ADULT 25+ GROUPS (3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24)

7. What is the last level of education that you have completed?

Some high school only	1
Completed high school.....	2
Some college/university.....	3
Completed college/university	4
Post-graduate studies	5
DK/NR.....	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

RECRUIT MIX FOR ADULT 25+ GROUPS (3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24)

8. **[ASK TO 30+ YEARS OLD ONLY]** Are you a parent or guardian of a child 15 to 17 years of age who lives with you at least half of the time?

Yes	1 SEE NOTE BELOW
No	2 GO TO R1 FOR ADULT 25+ GROUPS

NOTE - TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN 15-17:

IF RECRUITING CHILD FOR YOUTH GROUPS (15-17): CONTINUE

IF RECRUITING PARENT (FOR YOUNG ADULTS, ADULTS, AND OLDER ADULTS GROUPS – 18+): **SKIP TO R1**

NOTE: DO NOT RECRUIT CHILD(REN) OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS AND/OR PARENTS FROM SAME HOUSEHOLD

YOUTH GROUPS SCREENING QUESTIONS

9. As part of this study, we are conducting a series of discussions with youth between the ages of 15 and 17. With your permission, we would like to invite your child to attend a discussion on **[INSERT DATE]** at **[TIME]**? It will last 90 minutes and your child will receive \$100 for their time.

These groups are being conducted on behalf of Health Canada to help them explore the topic of cannabis. Please note, while it is not our intention to ask any questions about your child's own possible drug use, that subject may come up. The discussion will focus on how teenagers perceive cannabis products and what influences their perceptions, including marketing, advertising and product packaging. Health Canada will use this information to guide the development of labelling guidelines and public education campaigns to minimize the appeal of these products to young people. Your written consent for your child to participate in the discussion will be required upon arrival.

Would your child be available to attend on **[INSERT DATE]** at **[TIME]**?

- Yes1 **GO TO Q11**
 No2

10. **[IF NO]** In that case, would you be able to participate yourself in another group discussion?

- Yes1 **GO TO R1**
 No2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

11. Is the child who would be participating a male or a female or prefers not to identify as either male or female?

- Male1 **RECRUIT MIX OF GENDER IN EACH GROUP**
 Female.....2
 Prefer not to identify as either male or female ...3 **NO MINIMUM FOR THIS GROUP**

12. What is the age of the child who would be participating?

- 15.....1 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**
 16.....2 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**
 17.....3 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**

13. In order to ensure we have a mix of participants in the room, we need to ask them some qualifying questions. May we speak with your child if it is convenient to speak with them now?

- Yes1 **WAIT TO SPEAK TO CHILD**
 Yes, but they are not available now.....2 **RESCHEDULE**
 No3 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

[IF YES] Note that I may need to speak with you to finalize a few details once I have spoken to your child.

[FOR SESSIONS 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21] TO YOUTH (15-17):

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling on behalf of **[RECRUITER]**, a national public opinion research firm. We are organizing a series of small group discussion on issues related to youth and drugs on behalf of Health Canada. Up to 10 adolescents will be taking part and for their time, participants will each receive \$100. We would like to invite you to attend, but before we do so, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix/variety of people. May I continue?

- Yes1
 No2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Participation is voluntary. We are interested in hearing your opinions; no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a 'round table' discussion led by a research professional. All opinions expressed will remain anonymous and views will be grouped together to ensure no particular individual can be identified. It is important that you understand that all of your answers will be kept confidential, including from your parents. Your answers will be used for research purposes only and will help ensure we have a mix of participants in the room.

14. For this project, we are only looking for young people. Could you tell me how old you are?

- Less than 15.....1 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 15.....2 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**
 16.....3 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**
 17.....4 **RECRUIT 4 PER GROUP**
 18 years or older5 **THANK AND ASK TO SPEAK TO PARENT:
 SCREEN FOR GROUPS 18+ IF RELEVANT**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR ALL SESSIONS:

R1. Have you participated in a discussion or focus group before? A discussion group brings together a few people in order to know their opinion about a specific topic.

- Yes1
 No2 **SKIP TO R5**
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

R2. When was the last time you attended a discussion or focus group?

- Within the last 6 months.....1 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 More than 6 months ago2
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

R3. How many of these sessions have you attended in the last five years?

- 1 to 41
 5 or more.....2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

R4. And what was/were the main topic(s) of discussion in those groups?

**IF RELATED TO CANNABIS (OR ANY OTHER RELATED NAMES, MARIJUANA, POT, WEED, ETC.)
 DRUGS, GOVERNMENT POLICY ON DRUGS, THANK AND TERMINATE**

- R5. Participants in discussion groups are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts. How comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you...? **[READ LIST IN ORDER]**
- Very comfortable1 **MINIMUM 4 PER GROUP**
 Somewhat comfortable.....2
 Not very comfortable3 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 Not at all comfortable4 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
- R6. Sometimes participants are asked to read text and/or review images during the discussion. Are you able to take part in these activities on your own, without assistance?
- Yes1
 No2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
- R7. The discussion group will take place on **[INSERT DATE]** at **[TIME]** for about 90 minutes and participants will receive \$100 for their time after the session. Would you like to attend?
- Yes1 **RECRUIT**
 No2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
 DK/NR.....9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Now I have a few questions that relate to privacy, your personal information and the research process. We will need your consent on a few issues that allows us to conduct our research. As I run through these questions, please feel free to ask me any questions you would like clarified.

- P1. First, we will be providing the hosting facility and session moderator with a list of respondents' names and profiles (screener responses) so that they can sign you into the group. The information you provide in this questionnaire will not be shared with Health Canada or any other Government of Canada department. Do we have your permission to do this?
- Yes1 **GO TO P3**
 No2
- P2. We need to provide the facility hosting the session and the moderator with the names and background of the people attending the focus group because only the individuals invited are allowed in the session and the facility and moderator must have this information for identification verification purposes. Please be assured that this information will be kept strictly confidential. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission to provide your name and profile to the facility?
- Yes1
 No2 **THANK & TERMINATE**
- P3. An audio and/or video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed. Do you agree to be audio and/or video taped for research purposes only?

Yes1 **GO TO P5**
 No2

P4. It is necessary for the research process for us to audio/video tape the session as the researcher needs this material to complete the report. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for audio/video taping?

Yes1
 No2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

P5. Employees from Health Canada and/or the Government of Canada may be onsite to observe the groups in-person from behind a one-way mirror or they may observe the session remotely through a secure website. Do you agree to be observed by Government of Canada employees?

Yes1 **THANK & GO TO INVITATION**
 No2

P6. It is standard qualitative procedure to invite clients, in this case, Government of Canada employees, to observe the groups in person. They will be seated in a separate room and observe from behind a one-way mirror or they will be viewing the session online via a secure website. They will be there simply to hear your opinions first hand although they may take their own notes and confer with the moderator on occasion to discuss whether there are any additional questions to ask the group. Do you agree to be observed by Government of Canada employees?

Yes1 **THANK & GO TO INVITATION**
 No2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

INVITATION:

Wonderful, you qualify to participate in one of our discussion sessions. As I mentioned earlier, the group discussion will take place on **[DATE]** at **[TIME]** for about 90 minutes.

Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the group will be held? It will be held at **[PROVIDE ADDRESS SPECIFIED IN SCHEDULE]**

We ask that you arrive fifteen minutes early to be sure you find parking, locate the facility and have time to check-in with the hosts. The hosts may be checking respondents' identification prior to the group, so please be sure to bring some personal identification with you (for example, a health card, a student card, or a driver's license). If you require glasses for reading make sure you bring them with you as well. **Note that if you are late, you will not be able to take part in the discussion and you will not be paid the \$100 incentive.**

As we are only inviting a small number of people, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us so that we may get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]** at our office. Please ask for **[NAME]**. Someone will call you in the days leading up to the discussion to remind you.

So that we can call you to remind you about the discussion group or contact you should there be any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

PARTICIPANT CONTACT INFO:

First name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email: _____

Daytime phone number: _____

Evening phone number: _____

IF THE RESPONDENT REFUSES TO GIVE HIS/HER FIRST OR LAST NAME OR PHONE NUMBER PLEASE ASSURE THEM THAT THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRIVACY LAW AND THAT IT IS USED STRICTLY TO CONTACT THEM TO CONFIRM THEIR ATTENDANCE AND TO INFORM THEM OF ANY CHANGES TO THE DISCUSSION GROUP. IF THEY STILL REFUSE, THANK AND TERMINATE.

[FOR YOUNG ADULTS AND ADULT GROUPS – 18+] Thank you, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts during the group discussion.

FOR YOUTH GROUPS – 15-17 YEARS OLD

In the next few days, we will be sending your parent or legal guardian a letter by email. The letter will have instructions on what you need to do for the discussion group, as well as a consent form that your parent or guardian must sign and return to us in advance of the group. Now I need to talk to your parent/guardian again. Would you please put **[HER/HIM]** back on the phone?

[TO PARENT/GUARDIAN] Thank you for allowing me to speak with **[INSERT NAME OF CHILD]**. **[SHE/HE]** would like to participate in the study. Here are a few other details about the group discussion:

- The discussion will about 90 minutes, starting at: **[INSERT TIME]** on **[DATE]**.
- We ask that participants arrives 15 minutes early, that is by **[INSERT TIME]**.
- Following their participation, **[INSERT NAME OF CHILD]** will be given \$100.
- The discussion group will be held at: **[FACILITY NAME + ADDRESS]**

In the next few days, we would like to send you a letter by email. The letter will have instructions on what your child needs to do for the discussion group, as well as a consent form that you must sign and return to us in advance of the group. Note that your child will NOT be able to take part in the focus group without the consent form signed by you. To send the letter and the consent form, may we please have your contact information?

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFO:

First name: _____

Last Name: _____

Daytime phone number: _____

Evening phone number: _____

Email: _____

One last thing. Someone from our company will call your child the day before to remind **[HIM/HER]** about the session.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing your child's opinions during the group discussion.

Attention Recruiters

1. Recruit 12 per group
2. CHECK QUOTAS
3. Ensure participant has a good speaking (overall responses) ability-If in doubt, DO NOT INVITE
4. Do not put names on profile sheet unless you have a firm commitment.
5. Repeat the date, time and location before hanging up.

Confirming – DAY BEFORE GROUP

1. Confirm in person with the participant the day prior to the group– do not leave a message unless necessary
2. Confirm all key qualifying questions
3. Verify time location (ask if they are familiar)
4. Remind them to arrive 15 minutes before the start
5. Ask them to bring reading glasses or anything else they need to read and/or take part in the discussion (such as hearing aid)

Appendix B:
Moderator's Guide

Moderator's Guide – FINAL

Focus Testing on Cannabis Product Labelling and Promotion Control Measures (POR19-19)

Study Objectives (do not share with participants)

- To explore participants' perceptions of promotional marketing activities as it relates to cannabis.
- To explore factors (e.g., advertising, peer-influence) influencing consumers'/non-consumers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding cannabis.
- To explore the understanding and use of information displayed on various cannabis product labels among participants.

Introduction

10 minutes

- **Welcome:** Introduce self & research firm & role as moderator (keep on time/on topic)
- **Sponsor:** Groups on behalf of the Government of Canada
- **Length:** Our discussion should last about 1.5 hours, excuse yourself if needed during the session
- **Topic:** Marketing activities, how we make choices as consumers and product packaging and labelling
- **Your Role:** Share your opinions freely and honestly; no prep needed; not testing your knowledge
- **Process:** All opinions are important; looking to understand minority/majority of opinions; talk one at a time; interested in hearing from everyone; participation is voluntary
- **Logistic:** Audio/video taping for reporting; observation from government officials (mirror/video feed)
- **Confidentiality:** Your comments are anonymous; no names in reports; answers will not affect dealings with Government of Canada; once finalized, the report can be accessed through the Library and Archives Canada.
- **Participant Introduction:** First name; and favourite hobby

Exploration on Promotional Marketing Activities

30 minutes

EXERCISE 1: IMAGE REVIEW

THERE ARE TWO SETS OF IMAGES, ONE SET PROVIDED TO THE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS GROUP; AND ONE SET PROVIDED TO THE ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS GROUP. THE PARTICIPANTS WILL DO THE WRITTEN EXERCISE FOR ALL THREE IMAGES AT THE SAME TIME, THEN DISCUSS EACH INDIVIDUALLY. THE IMAGES ARE GROUPED AS FOLLOWS:

Youth (ages 15-17) and Young Adults (ages 18-24) Group Images:

- Wood plank (neutral)*
- Mountain with tent*
- Music festival stage

Adults (ages 25-59) and Older Adults (ages 60+) Group Images:

- Wood plank (neutral)*
- Mountain with tent*
- Chairs at the lake

*Wood plank and the Mountain with tent images will be used in both groups.

MODERATOR DISTRIBUTES SHEET THAT INCLUDES ALL IMAGES

EXERCISE 1:

I'd like to begin by showing you a number of images. Before we discuss this together, take a moment to jot down your initial reactions to each of the images:

- 1) What words come to mind when you look at each image? It could be anything; a feeling, a thought, a memory, or something else. Don't overthink it and write anything that crosses your mind without trying to understand why. There are no right or wrong answers and it's normal for people to think or feel differently about what is shown.
- 2) Indicate on the continuum where your opinion falls between:
 - a. This image stirs my emotions vs. This image does not make me feel any emotions
 - b. This image clearly tells a story vs. This image just shows objects or settings
 - c. This image makes me dream of having this or being there vs. The image does not give me the desire to have this or be there

Again, there are no right or wrong answers.

- 3) If the image elicits emotions, jot down which ones.

For each image, ask:

- What words or thoughts came to mind when you first saw this image? Why those?
- Overall, what is the story behind this image; what does it represent?
- How does the image make you feel? What emotions, if any did you feel?
 - If aspirational – what does the image make people aspire or dream of?
- What, if anything, do you associate with this image?
- Who do you think this image is targeting? What kind of person would they be? What kind of activities do they enjoy?

After the 3 images are reviewed:

- **IF ANY IMAGE IS NOT INSPIRATIONAL/DOES NOT TRIGGER A RESPONSE:**
What changes would need to be made to this image to make it speak to you?

Influencing Factors

20 minutes

As you may be aware, cannabis was legalized for adults in Canada in 2018. There have been lots of discussions out there as a result and I would like to understand your reactions.

Group discussion:

- Has your attitude or beliefs about cannabis changed since it was legalized in 2018?
 - If so, what changed? If not, why not?
 - [IF SO] Could you please describe what made you think differently about cannabis? **PROBE:** For example, it may be something you saw or heard from someone (family, friend, colleague, stranger), from the media (TV, radio) or online (social media, website).
- Has your level of interest in using cannabis or your intentions to use it changed since it was legalized? Why/why not?
 - If yes, what changed? What contributed to that change?

- If not, why not?
- Who or what influences, or has influenced, how you feel or think about cannabis? Anything / anyone else?
PROBE FOR: people you know; advertisement; public education on the risks and harms; social media; retailers; news media.
- Of those, what / who has the **greatest influence** on how you feel or think about cannabis?
- What would be the top three influencers?

Labelling Review

30 minutes

Now I would like to show you some packages and labels for different cannabis products and we will look at the information that is printed on those. Note that some of the information that is included on the packages and labels is required as per the Cannabis Act and Cannabis Regulations such as, the THC and CBD content, the standardized cannabis symbol and the net weight or net volume of the cannabis.

I have 12 different product packages, but in the interest of time, each of you will only be looking at 1 or 2 of them. I want you to really read the information and the words on the labels as that is what we will be talking about. Please feel free to open the packages and inspect the container as well. The containers are empty and do not contain any cannabis.

MODERATOR DISTRIBUTES A SAMPLE PRODUCT PACKAGE TO PARTICIPANTS — PRESENT ALL PACKAGES/LABELS TOGETHER

Please take a moment and review the information on the package/ label you've been given.

[AFTER A MINUTE, ASK PARTICIPANTS TO PASS THEIR PRODUCT TO THE PERSON NEXT TO THEM] Now take another moment, and review the information on the second package / label.

EXERCISE 2: Before we discuss the labelling as a group, please take a moment and complete a short exercise (#2): - just answer yes or no based on the packages / labels you've reviewed.

Group discussion

Part 1 – for all groups

- What first catches your attention? Why? What else stands out?
- How do you feel about the type of information that is included on the packaging? **PROBE (if respondents have a hard time responding):** is the information relevant to you, credible, clear?
- Is the information easy to understand? Anything confusing or unclear? **PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED:** THC/CBD content, possession statement, standardized cannabis symbol, identity of product form (e.g., pre-roll, edible), intended use (e.g., inhalation, ingestion), nutrition facts table and list of ingredients.
- **Probe when discussing the possession statement:** Why do you think this information is provided on the label? Did you know there's a limit to how much cannabis for recreational purposes an **adult** can have on them in public? Do you know what that limit is?
- What does the information suggest about the product overall?
 - Does it clearly communicate health effects and risks of consuming cannabis? Why/why not? How so?

Part 2 – for all groups except Youth

- What information would you need on the label to make an informed decision about cannabis use?

- Were you able to find this information on the label shown?
- What information is not helpful? Why?
- Does any of the information impact your perception or usage of cannabis products?
- How do you think the information presented can be improved? Is there any information missing on the labels or product packaging? If so, what?
 - What difference would it make on your perception or usage of cannabis products?

Ask all:

Let's talk about the format of the information displayed

- What do you think about where and how the information is positioned on the label or package?
- Any comments about the choice of font type, font size and colours?

Part 3 – for Youth only (in lieu of Part 2)

- Is there anything on the package or label that appeals to you? If so, what is it that appeals to you and why?

EXERCISE 3: To finish up, I would like you to take a moment and jot down any final recommendations you have for the Government of Canada on what we've discussed today. I'll give you a few minutes to do so.

MODERATOR CHECKS IN WITH BACKROOM

In the interest of time, I will review your comments on my own later.

Thanks & Closure

That concludes our discussion. On behalf of the Government of Canada, thank you for your time and input.

First Name: _____

EXERCISE 1 – IMAGE A

1. What words come to mind?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Place an "X" on the line to represent your opinion.

This image stirs my emotions	----- ----- ----- -----	This image does not make me feel any emotions
This image clearly tells a story	----- ----- ----- -----	This image just shows objects or settings
This image makes me dream of having this or being there	----- ----- ----- -----	The image does not give me the desire to have this or be there

3. If the image stirs emotions in you, please describe which ones.

EXERCISE 1 – IMAGE B

1. What words come to mind?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Place an "X" on the line to represent your opinion.

This image stirs my emotions	----- ----- ----- ----- -----	This image does not make me feel any emotions
This image clearly tells a story	----- ----- ----- ----- -----	This image just shows objects or settings
This image makes me dream of having this or being there	----- ----- ----- ----- -----	The image does not give me the desire to have this or be there

3. If the image stirs emotions in you, please describe which ones.

EXERCISE 1 – IMAGE C

1. What words come to mind?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Place an "X" on the line to represent your opinion.

This image stirs my emotions	----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----	This image does not make me feel any emotions
This image clearly tells a story	----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----	This image just shows objects or settings
This image makes me dream of having this or being there	----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----	The image does not give me the desire to have this or be there

3. If the image stirs emotions in you, please describe which ones.

EXERCISE 2

	YES	NO
These labels are easy to read		
These labels are easy to understand		
These labels clearly communicate the risks of using cannabis		
These labels help me make an informed decision on cannabis use		

EXERCISE 3

Appendix C:
Materials Tested

Images presented to youth 15-17 years old and young adults 18-24 years old



Images presented to adults 25-59 years old and adults 60 years or older

