



Youth Vaping Prevention Campaign – Testing New Messages

Summary

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Prepared for Health Canada by Environics Research

September 2020

This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by Environics Research on behalf of Health Canada. The research was conducted between August 27 to September 4, 2020 with 869 young Canadians aged 13 to 18.

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Executive summary

A. Background and objectives

The Government of Canada is concerned with the rapid increase in vaping among Canadian youth. To this end, Health Canada launched the *Youth Vaping Prevention Campaign* in 2018 to raise awareness of the harms and risks of teen vaping. To supplement the ongoing campaign, Health Canada intends to develop additional creative material and new messages to ensure the campaign continues to educate, inform and resonate with Canadian youth.

The main objective of this research was to test new messages for a future iteration of a *Youth Vaping Prevention Marketing Campaign*. Environics used a “MaxDiff” methodology, a widely-used type of discrete choice model allowing for an efficient ranking of items by their perceived effectiveness in raising awareness about the harms and risks of teen vaping and encourage youth to not start vaping or quit if they have already started.

B. Methodology

An online survey was conducted with 869 young Canadians (aged 13 to 18 inclusive) from August 27 to September 4, 2020. Environics set quota targets for region, age group (13-15 and 16-18) and gender, and data were weighted based on the 2016 Census, to ensure the final sample is reflective of the target population.

The target audience for this research was all Canadians aged 13 to 18 years (inclusive), regardless of their vaping status. Given the difficulty of reaching youth by telephone for research purposes, recruiting respondents from an online panel was deemed the most efficient and cost-effective approach for this research project, and had previously been successfully applied in recent research on youth vapers for Health Canada. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have registered to participate in online surveys, with children in the target age group. The results of such surveys cannot be described as statistically projectable to the target population. The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of 13-to 18-year olds. Because this is not a random probability survey, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated.

More information about the methodology for this survey is included in Appendix A.

C. Contract value

The contract value was \$74,940.56 (HST included).

D. Use of findings of the research

The results of the research will enable Health Canada to develop additional campaign material that resonates with the target audiences, educates and informs them, and encourages them to take action. The research will ensure the marketing campaign will be supported by effective messaging and creative material, and that funding allocated towards public awareness and outreach will be spent responsibly and effectively.

E. Key findings

This research was designed to test new messages for a future iteration of a Youth Vaping Prevention Marketing Campaign. The main takeaway is the youth respond best to messaging themed around empowerment. They favour concise, memorable phrases that capture attention, convey accurate information, and do not sound preachy or condescending. The message “Don't be fooled into vaping. It's not harmless” scored well among both vapers and non-vapers, and in both English and French.

The key findings of the research are summarized below:

1. Vaping status and opportunity

- Three-quarters (74%) of youth age 13 to 18 (inclusive) have never tried vaping, while one quarter have ever vaped. Eight percent are regular vapers, meaning they vape at least monthly, although this increases with age (ranging from under one percent age 13 or 14 to one in ten age 15 or more).
- Among those who are not regular vapers, two in ten (22%) were offered an opportunity to vape in the past month. This is more common among older age groups, from 16 percent aged 13 or 14, up to 30 percent age 17 to 18.

2. Awareness of current campaign

- Close to four in ten (38%) recall seeing some aspect of the current youth prevention campaign. Recall is higher among older age groups, but is similar regardless of vaping status.
- Notably, recall of the existing ad campaign does not factor into perceptions of the vaping messages tested.

3. Ranking of vaping messages

- Of the 20 messages tested, empowerment-themed messages were ranked highest (of the four themes) for their perceived effectiveness at persuading youth to quit or not start vaping. Environment-themed messages were deemed least effective in convincing young people not to vape.
- The individual message youth believe would be most persuasive is “Don't be fooled into vaping. It's not harmless,” (8.4 percent share of preference), followed by “You'll never need to quit vaping, if you don't start,” (8.0%) and “You don't have to vape to fit in” (7.7%). These messages also scored well in Quebec, although the top French message, at 7.6 percent of share, is “You don't have to vape to fit in” (“Pas besoin de vapoter pour faire partie du groupe”).
- The highest scoring message in the Addiction theme is “Don't let nicotine control your life. Don't vape” (7.3%), and the highest scoring Cessation message is “Take charge of your future. Leave the vape behind.” (7.2%). However, both of these messages can also be interpreted as being about empowerment.
- “Don't be fooled into vaping. It's not harmless” is the top ranked message across most subgroups, including regular vapers. Their second choice is the Cessation message “Take charge of your future. Leave the vape behind” (7.2%) and third is the Addiction message “Don't let nicotine control your life. Don't vape” (7.0%).
- Preferences differ slightly among the youngest cohort (age 13-14, who are least likely to have vaped) who favour “You'll never need to quit vaping, if you don't start” (8.8%) and “You don't have to vape to fit in” (8.6%), with “Don't be fooled into vaping. It's not harmless” in third place.

4. Impressions of vaping messages

- Respondents were also invited to comment in greater detail about what they liked and/or disliked about two messages of their choice. Overall, young people made positive comments about the messages they selected to discuss. Consistent with the choice modelling exercise, messages ranking higher in terms of their perceived effectiveness in convincing youth to quit or not start vaping tend to receive the highest proportions of positive comments and the lowest proportions of negative comments.
- In general, youth liked messages for being informative, straightforward, clear and memorable, and emphasizing that they are in control of their lives and vaping decisions. This latter reason helps explain the overall popularity of the empowerment-related messages. Interestingly, by comparison to the other Empowerment messages, the top ranked message “Don’t be fooled into vaping. It’s not harmless” is most appreciated for alerting teens that vaping has risks.
- While negative comments are typically in the minority, messages were most often criticized for being overly long, preachy in tone, confusing or not universally applicable, or “stupid,” “cheesy” or “boring.”

F. Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as a senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. 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.



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