

Public Opinion Research on Tobacco, Nicotine, and Vaping: Diary Research



YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY... OUR PRIORITY.

I have no affiliation (financial or otherwise) with a pharmaceutical, medical device or communications organization.

Public opinion research (POR) helps Health Canada better understand the needs and expectations of Canadians.

Via POR, we can assess how well messages, policies, programs and services are understood and used by Canadians.

Working hypothesis:

It is widely assumed that smoking is an important part of a smokers' identity and life, and is therefore salient. To test this hypothesis, we designed a study where we purposely did not prompt individuals about smoking, to see how it would be raised in the context of someone's day-to-day life (if at all).

How we did the project



- Online survey with 510 adult smokers
- Participants were not “primed” to talk about smoking.

Conducted March 7 to 15, 2019



- Follow-up week long independent journal with 80 participants
- Smoking behaviour was only prompted on the last day of the diary.

Conducted March 14 to 20, 2019

Synopsis of diary exercise

Day 01

- Personality description
- Image selection
- A day in the life

Day 02

- Image selection
- A day in the life

Day 03

- Image selection
- A day in the life
- Prompts on different activities and feelings

Day 04

- A day in the life
- Characteristics that capture lifestyle and changes

Day 05

- A day in the life
- Current and future challenges
- Successes

Day 06

- A day in the life
- Prompts on different activities and feelings
- Stress reactions
- Goals and health aspirations

Day 07

- Image selection
- Reflection of past week
- Thoughts on why smoking not raised
- Health-related behaviours

Engrained behaviour...

Smoking as a behaviour has little salience; high degree of openness sharing personal details

“It is so embedded in my routine that I have not even thought about mentioning it, I never mentioned going to washroom either as those things to me are sort of same kind.”

“It is such an integral part of my life...such a routine and regularity that it just was never something that I thought about.”

“Smoking is so automatic to me, almost like eating or drinking that I don't really think about it when I do it.”

But also stigmatizing for some

The narrative changes when cued about why not discussed throughout the week

“It is a socially and morally unacceptable thing to do. It is a waste of money. I feel the necessity to hide it. If I didn't do it I would be a better person.”

“I did not bring it up in the diary because it is not something that I am proud of. In fact, it is a habit that I actually hide from my children. I really do not want them to emulate me in this respect.”

“To be entirely honest, I did not mention smoking in my diary as it is something I am actually ashamed of. I know all of the risk factors concerning smoking but I still persist with this dirty habit.”

Smoking fills a number of roles

Three main ways in which participants say smoking fits in: crutch, social, and pleasure

“Smoking is my comfort spot. Whenever I’m feeling overwhelmed or any kind of feeling I turn to smoking to calm my nerves. To make me relax and feel okay. It helps me unwind. I use it as a crutch though and I need to find a different way of coping because all these smokes are doing is killing me.”

“It is a buffer for me to take that mental break outdoors for several times each day where I usually enjoy the company of a co-worker.”

“I smoke at work during breaks and at home few times in the evening to a total of about 11-12 cigarettes per day, never indoors, never with or in the front of my son. It is small pleasure that I allow myself to have disregarding for now any potential health risks.”

Comfortable talking about other substances

Findings indicate a relatively high degree of comfort with other substances

Alcohol...

“Something to enjoy a few times a week. I find this to be a social activity and I enjoy a drink now and then to relax and unwind.”

Cannabis...

“With friends downtown or when having a good time in a safe environment at a friend's place. Festivals and fairs and parties are also where I tend to use it a lot now that I think about it.”

Vaping...

“As a side activity when I'm looking to change things up.”

What is next...?

