

# 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...?

