

Phase I Formative Research Findings

Cannabis Use in California

Background:

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) launched a statewide cannabis public health information campaign on September 1, 2017 to address the provisions of the Control, Regulate, and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act of 2016. As specified in the law, CDPH is to describe the penalties for providing access to cannabis and cannabis products to persons under the age of 21 years, to provide the scientific basis for restricting access of cannabis to persons under the age of 21 years, and to inform pregnant or breastfeeding women and the general public of the potential harms of use or overuse of cannabis and cannabis products.

Research Goal and Objectives:

Focus groups and surveys were conducted to investigate cannabis use in California to inform the CDPH cannabis public health information campaign. The objectives were to examine behaviors and attitudes associated with cannabis use, assess current knowledge of the law, identify health messages that potentially motivate each audience (described below) to abstain from and/or reduce cannabis use, and to gauge public receptivity to the potential CDPH campaign brand and preexisting education campaigns from other states that have legalized adult cannabis use.

Methods:

There were four primary audiences: 1) parents 18 years and older with children aged 12-17; 2) women 18 years and over who are pregnant or breastfeeding and have used cannabis in the past year; 3) youth of 16-20 years who have used cannabis in the past 30 days; and 4) adults between 21-30 years who have used cannabis in the past 30 days.

The in-person focus groups were conducted in Los Angeles, California in August 2017 in order to take advantage of its diverse race, ethnic, and socioeconomic populations and to efficiently meet the legislatively required September 1, 2017 deadline. In addition, local health department partners administered surveys to individuals living in select counties (El Dorado County, Nevada County and Plumas County) to gather input from a rural perspective on the potential brand and key messages. Screening criteria for both the focus groups and surveys were based on recent cannabis use, as well as age, educational attainment, and perceptions of risk of cannabis use.



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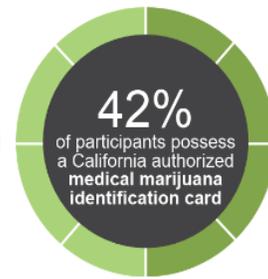
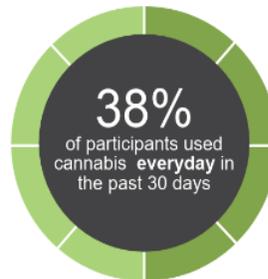
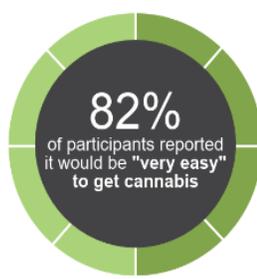
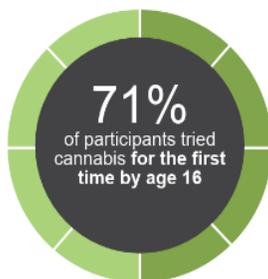
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Results:

A total of 38 youth and adults participated in four focus groups. Nine adults completed surveys among rural community partners, including five pregnant or breastfeeding women and four adult cannabis users.

Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Age	
Female	53%	White	39%	16-20 years	26%
Male	47%	Hispanic or Latino	19%	21-25 years	23%
		Black/African-American	17%	26-30 years	19%
		More than one race	15%	31-35 years	9%
		American Indian or Alaska Native	6%	36-40 years	17%
		Asian	4%	41-45 years	6%
Audience		Education		Sexual Orientation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult users (33%) Youth users (26%) Parents of teens (15%) Pregnant or breastfeeding (26%) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some high school (15%) GED or high school (23%) Some college (39%) Bachelor's degree or higher (23%) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heterosexual (84%) Gay or lesbian (8%) Bisexual (8%) 	



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Common Themes Across all Four Groups:

- **Cannabis is not perceived as a high-risk substance.** As long as it is used in moderation and individuals felt they knew their limits, it is not perceived as harmful to yourself or your child.
- **There is some distrust of government agencies as sources of information.** Industry (dispensaries, brands, etc.) and other pro-cannabis website organizations were perceived to be more trustworthy sources of information on the health impacts of cannabis use.
- **Low perceptions of risk of driving while high.** Especially not a concern for regular users because they felt they knew their limits with cannabis. Participants said it makes them more focused, alert, and careful of surroundings.
- **Overuse or addiction is possible.** Participants said it is possible to overuse or be addicted to cannabis and described this as when an individual can no longer function in their daily life without being high, or when it starts to affect their motivation, school or job performance, appetite, or sleep.
- **There are both social and medicinal reasons for use.** The adult groups (parents and pregnant or breastfeeding women) tended to emphasize medicinal uses and the younger groups (youth and young adult users) tended to emphasize the social uses.

PARENTS OF TEENS	PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING	YOUTH USERS	ADULT USERS
To relax or calm nerves	To relax or calm nerves	To get high	To relax or calm nerves
To get to sleep	To get to sleep	To have a good time	To have a good time
To relieve chronic pain	To relieve chronic pain	To relax or calm nerves	To get high
To get high	To get through the day	To get to sleep	To get to sleep
To seek deeper insights or understanding	Because of anger or frustration	To seek deeper insights or understanding	To seek deeper insights or understanding



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Key Findings among Parents of Teens:

- Reported low perceptions of risk of a teenager using cannabis daily or almost daily
- Showed skepticism of how regular cannabis use can affect brain development
- Were more motivated by messages with supportive communication with their children, the benefits of discipline and house rules, and safe storage within the house

Key Findings among Pregnant or Breastfeeding Women:

- Reported low perceptions of risk using cannabis while pregnant or breastfeeding
- Believe there is a lack of scientific research in the area
- Showed skepticism of information provided by government agencies and medical organizations
- Least likely of the four groups to be motivated by key messages to discontinue cannabis use while pregnant or breastfeeding

Key Findings among Youth:

- Believe that cannabis use is more harmful to brain development for younger users (those under 16)
- Few key messages were found to motivate youth to not use cannabis
- Were generally defensive as to whether cannabis was harmful

Key Findings among Adult Users:

- Very few adults were motivated to use less cannabis by the key messages presented
- Were generally not interested in finding out more information, did not feel that it was relevant to them



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