

AAM-5030 – Strategic Brand Planning
Prof. Marilyn Cresswell

PACE

Pharmacists As Cannabis Educators

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Meet The Team



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Introduction

Consumers are unaware that pharmacists can provide credible, science-backed cannabis advice. Instead, they often turn to budtenders, who are more approachable but lack medical expertise.

The challenge is to shift consumer behavior, positioning PACE pharmacists as trusted, accessible experts for cannabis-related questions.

Pharmacists

Canada has **50,617 licensed pharmacists** with 95% of Canadians living within 5 kilometres of one.

Canadians visit their pharmacist **14 times a year** on average – far more than their general practitioner.

34.5% of pharmacists feel unprepared to counsel on cannabis, particularly for recreational use.



Strengths

Expert Medication Guidance: Pharmacists have extensive drug knowledge, making them well-suited for cannabis-related counseling.

High Accessibility: 95% of Canadians live within 5 km of a pharmacy.

Established Trust: 70% of Ontarians support pharmacist-led cannabis dispensing, and 75% believe pharmacists should provide counseling.

Weaknesses

Limited Cannabis Training: 34.5% of pharmacists feel unprepared for cannabis counseling; 65% lack formal training.

Low PACE Awareness: The program's potential is strong, but consumer recognition remains limited.

Opportunities

Education Initiatives: PACE offers accredited training and public education tools.

Evolving Consumption Trends: New cannabis formats create an opportunity for pharmacists to guide safe usage.

Legal Market Growth: Over two-thirds of Canadians buy from legal sources, increasing demand for trusted guidance.

Threats

Market Uncertainty: A 3.27% decline in cannabis revenue in 2024 signals shifting consumer preferences.

Stigma: Some consumers hesitate to discuss cannabis with healthcare professionals.

Budtender Influence: Consumers often rely on dispensary staff, who may lack medical expertise.

Adults 18+ in Canada, who use cannabis

An even split between women & men.

73% identify as white, 12.1% as indigenous, 8.4% south asian, 6.8% east asian

Higher consumption among those born in Canada vs. those not (29% vs. 15%).

Want to have fun and not be judged; open to guidance but may hesitate due to stigma

Curious and seek credible information – 70% say they have enough.

Self medicating amongst those with mood disorders.

Care most about beneficial information, drug interactions and side effects

1/10 adults aged 18-44 use daily

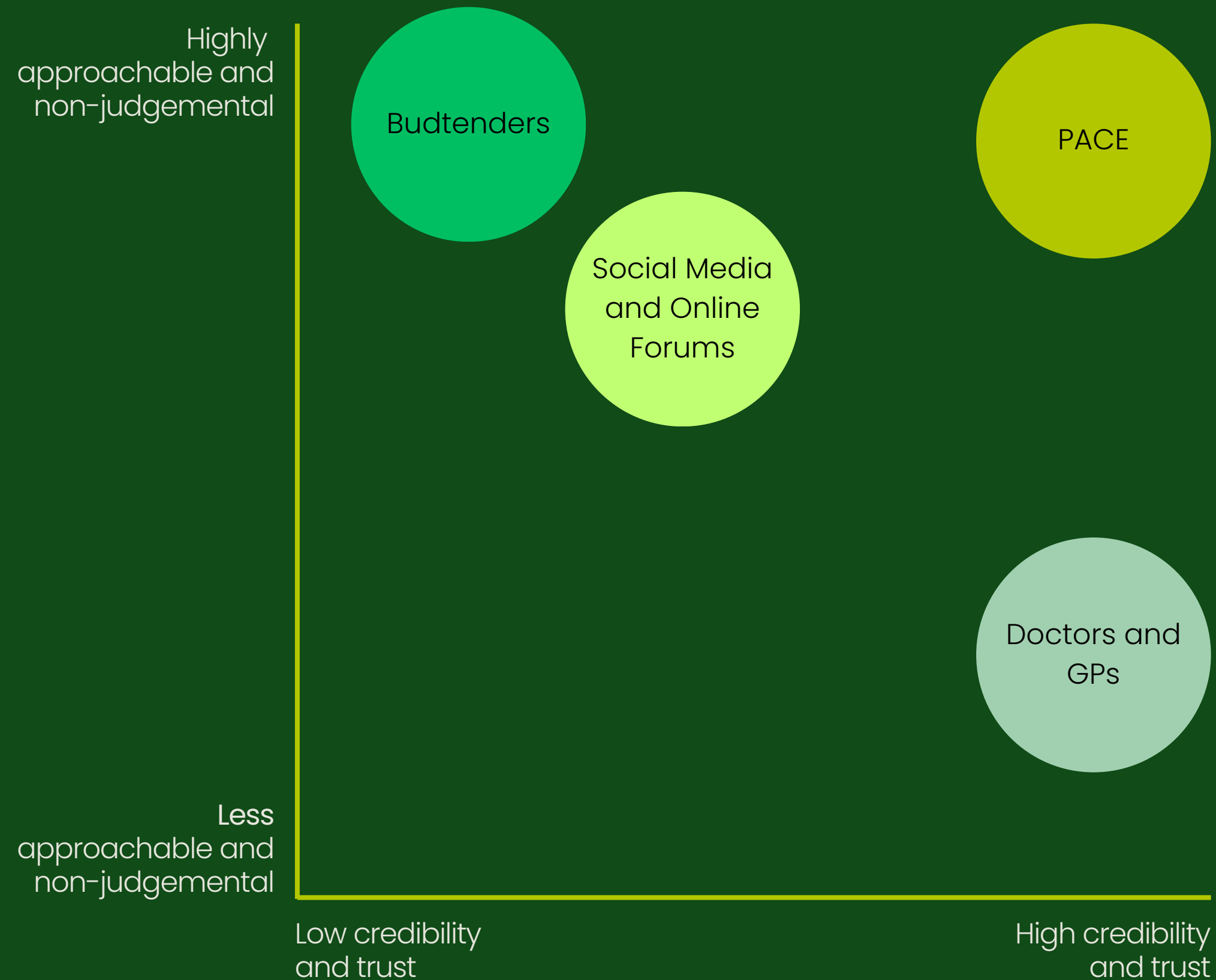
An even split between women & men.

Edibles and flowers most common across all ages

Sleep, anxiety and depression most common mental use case. Pain most common physical use case

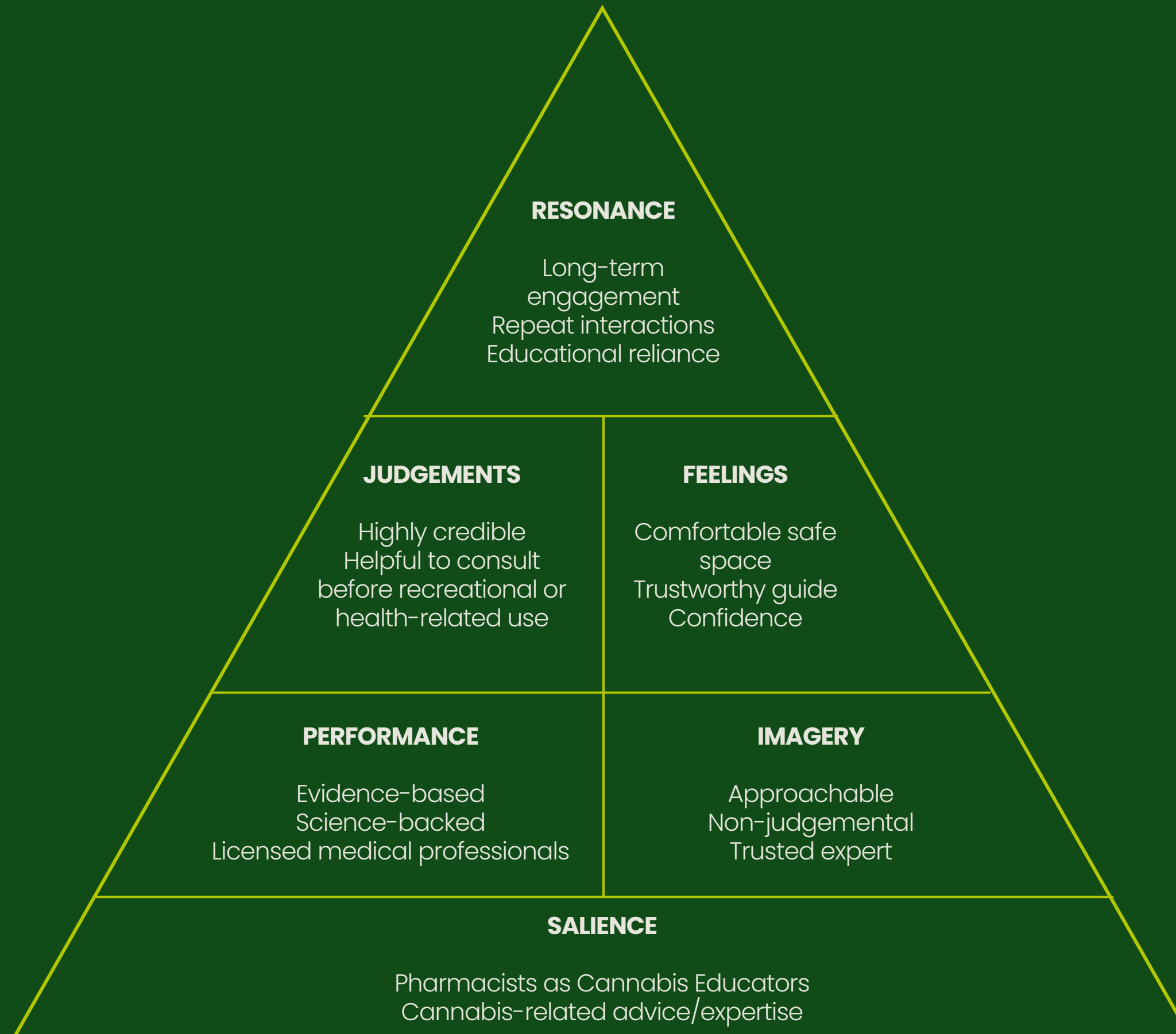
Cannabis Users





Positioning

For Canadian cannabis users seeking credible and judgment-free guidance, **PACE delivers trusted expertise**. Unlike budtenders, PACE pharmacists offer personalized, science-backed advice, ensuring safe and informed cannabis use.





Goal

Consumers are unaware that pharmacists can provide credible, science-backed cannabis advice. Instead, they often turn to budtenders, who are more approachable but lack medical expertise.

The challenge is to shift consumer behavior, **positioning PACE pharmacists as trusted, accessible and approachable experts** for cannabis-related questions.

Cannabis users often feel confident in their knowledge, but that confidence is often built on incomplete or second-hand information.

67.7% of people want to know the beneficial effects of cannabis, and they want this from credible sources.

Even though 70% of Canadians believe they have trustworthy information on cannabis risks, 30% still feel uncertain.

Even when people think they know enough, they're not always sure.



It's not just about knowing, it's about knowing you're right.

PACE's Weed Out Misinformation initiative
cleared away the myths.

But what's next?

Now that misinformation is out of the
way, how do consumers ensure what
they believe is actually right?



Cannabis users might feel informed,
but without confirmation from a
qualified source, doubt lingers.

People don't want to be wrong,
especially when it comes to their health.

Consumers already visit their
pharmacist far more than their GP. They
are the most accessible healthcare
professionals.

They are trained to provide personalized,
science-backed advice to help
consumers make informed choices.

It's not about dismissing what
consumers know, it's about validating
what they do know and filling in the gaps.



Because even when you're pretty sure,
it feels better to be absolutely sure

GET THE GREEN LIGHT

Because when it comes to cannabis, getting the green light means getting it right.

A simple, empowering
call to action.

It's not a correction, it's
a confirmation.

This isn't a challenge to
what you know - it's an
invitation to know
more.

*"You've done your
research. Now let's
make sure you're right."*

The tone is
empowering and
respectful, not critical.

It positions
pharmacists as allies,
not gatekeepers. The
most credible resource
for cannabis-related
guidance.

Encourages
consumers to feel
confident, informed,
and in control.

Key Brand elements

These are the pre-existing brands elements that will be leveraged in the campaign:

PACE Logo: Ensure the PACE logo is visible in all educational materials and communications.

Brand Name (PACE): Reinforce the PACE name in all outreach efforts to build brand recognition.



Brand Board



Aa Bb Cc
1234567890

CMYK: 86, 0, 51, 45
RGB: 84, 80, 71
Hex: #138c45

CMYK: 27,0,52,29
RGB: 52,71,32
Hex: #84b556

CMYK: 32,0,30,48
RGB: 36,52,36
Hex: #5b855d

0,0,0,100
0,0,0
#000000

CMYK: 0,5,15,16
RGB: 84, 80, 71
Hex: #d5cbb6

Aa Bb Cc
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CONSIDERING CANNABIS FOR CHRONIC PAIN?

Expert advice leads to better care.



**GET THE GREEN LIGHT.
TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST.**

Visit getthegreenlight.ca for more.



CANNABIS FOR BEDTIME BLISS?

Sleep easier with informed choices.



**GET THE GREEN LIGHT.
TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST.**

Visit getthegreenlight.ca for more.



Outside cannabis stores & drug stores



Wild postings around busy areas

CONSIDER CANNABIS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

Expert advice leads to better choices.

GET THE
TALK TO YOUR
PHARMACIST.



IS CBD YOUR ANTIDOTE TO ANXIETY?

Better relief starts with expert guidance.

CANNABIS FOR BEDTIME BLISS?

Sleep easier with informed choices.

GET THE
TALK TO YOUR
PHARMACIST.





PACE partner sticker – outside & inside pharmacies and drug stores

**VAPING OR SMOKING: WHAT'S SAFER?
CLEAR THE AIR BEFORE YOU INHALE.**

**GET THE GREEN LIGHT.
TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST**



Visit getthegreenlight.ca for more.



Stickers on cannabis paraphernalia

**VAPING OR SMOKING: WHAT'S SAFER?
CLEAR THE AIR BEFORE YOU INHALE.**

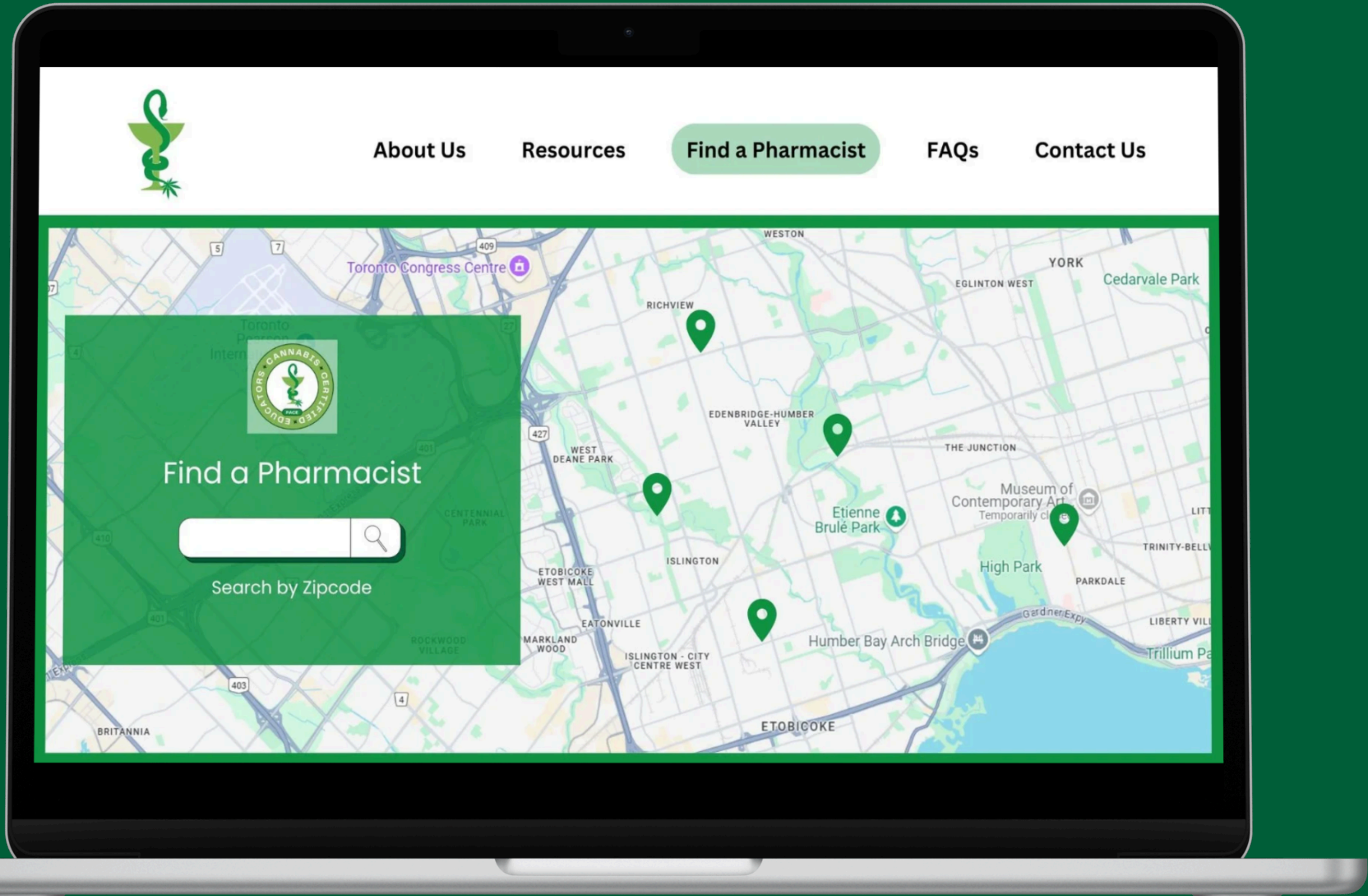
**GET THE GREEN LIGHT.
TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST**

Visit getthegreenlight.ca for more.



Stickers on cannabis paraphernalia

Website





Get the Green Light Podcast Series



15-minute, bite-sized episodes featuring a pharmacist discussing a specific cannabis-related topic.

Episodes examples: Cannabis and Your Meds, CBD vs. THC: What's the difference, Methods to Maximize Cannabenefits etc.

Filmed as a video podcast so that the series can live on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and on Youtube in order to capture older and younger audiences.

Campaign Timeline: May – June 2025

Channel	Price
<div>Social Media</div> <div>Instagram + Facebook</div>	\$3000
<div>Posters and Stickers</div> <div>Pharmacies + Drug stores</div> <div>Cannabis stores</div> <div>Cannabis packaging</div>	\$3500
<div>Website</div> <div>Standalone</div>	\$1000
<div>Podcast Series</div> <div>Spotify + Apple Podcasts + YouTube</div>	\$2500
Total	\$10,000

Bridges the gap

Empowers the 30% of uncertain Canadians to validate their cannabis knowledge with pharmacists.

Trusted experts

Uses pharmacist voices to build credibility online and offline.

Varied reach

Reaches older consumers through outdoor and younger consumers through website, social and podcasts. Stickers on paraphernalia meet them at the point of purchase,

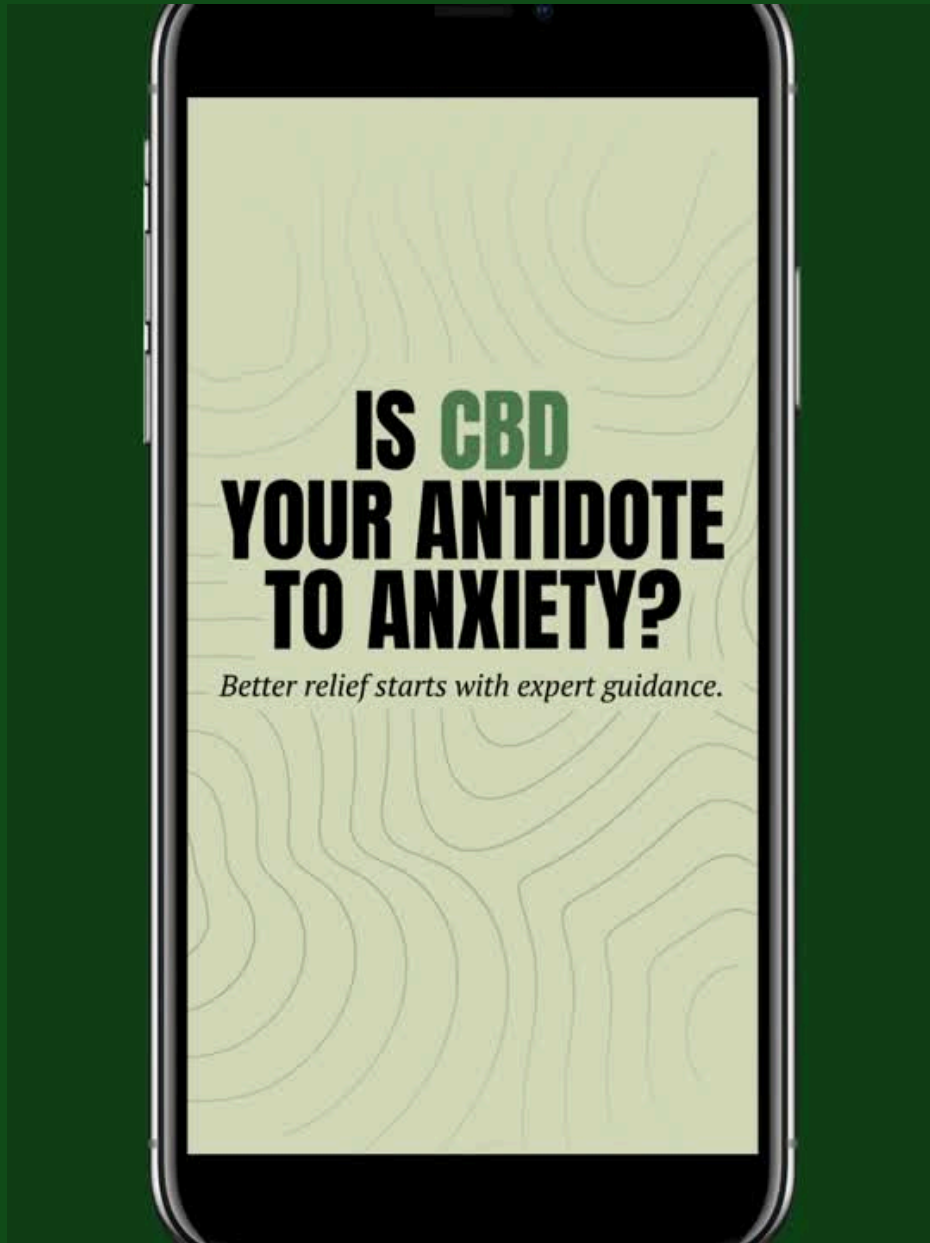
Continued journey

Following Weed Out Misinformation, the campaign provides the next step: moving from debunking myths to confirming facts with pharmacists.

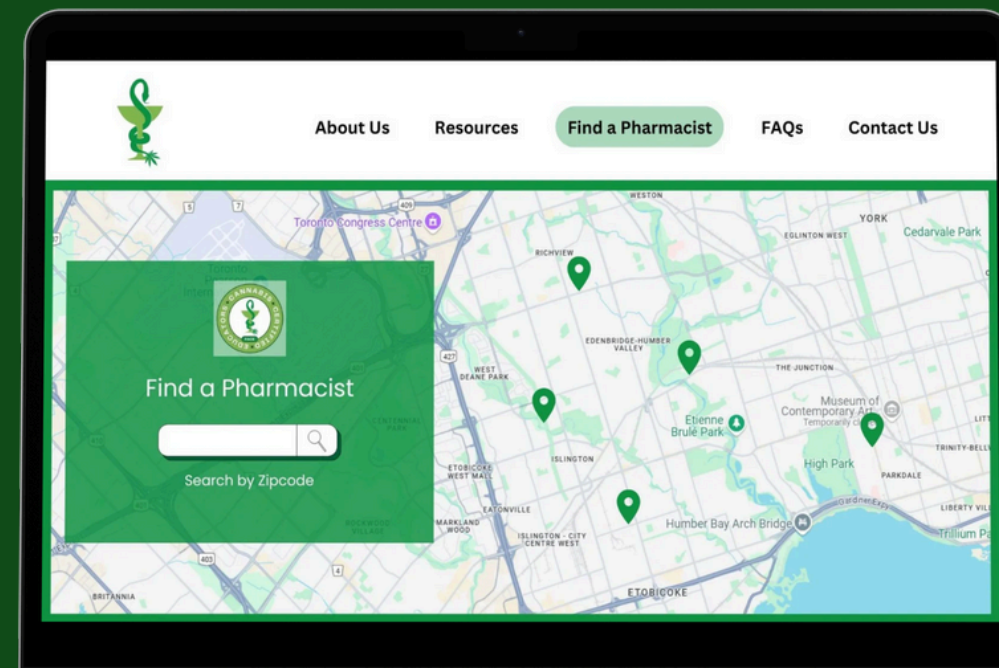
Why it works

Non judgemental

By validating knowledge rather than correcting it, the campaign builds confidence and encourages informed decisions without stigma.



Get the
Green Light
Podcast
Series



Appendix

Research

About PACE

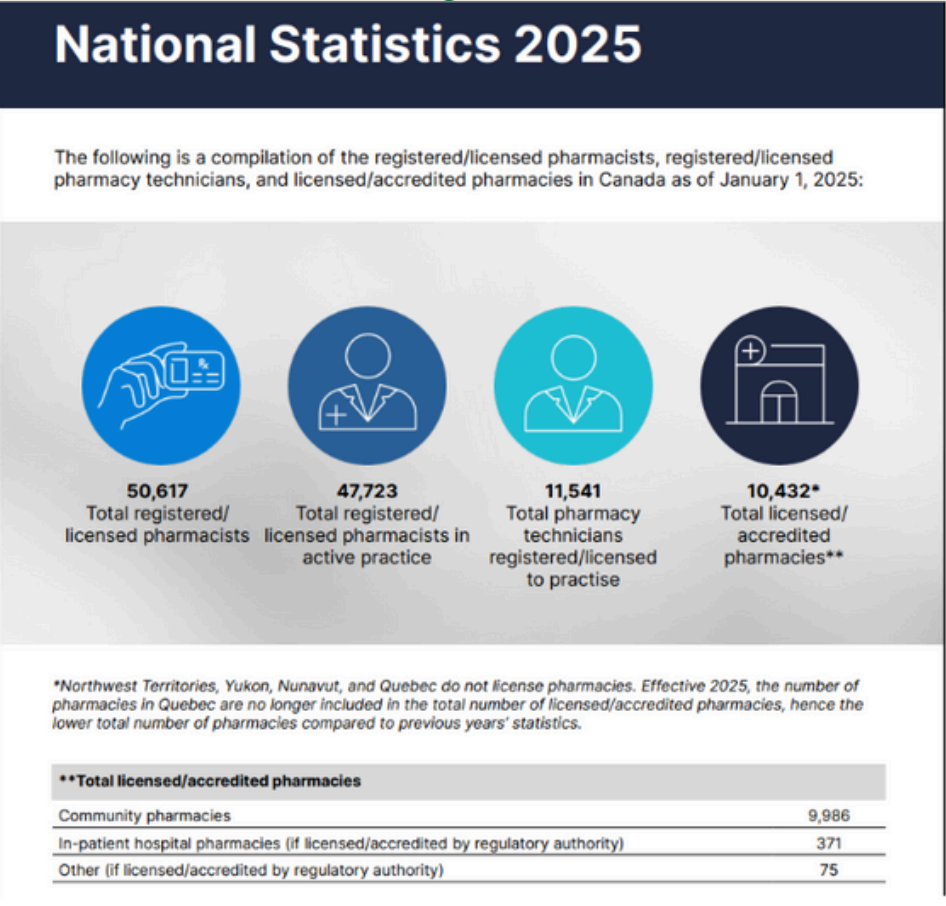
The Pharmacists as Cannabis Educators (PACE) project, led by the cannabis research team at Humber College in Toronto, aims to integrate pharmacists into the evolving landscape of cannabis consumption. Recognizing pharmacists' expertise in medication management and their pivotal role in harm reduction for opioid use, PACE seeks to extend this role to cannabis education. The project explores the perspectives, barriers, and challenges faced by both pharmacists and cannabis consumers. Insights from this research will inform the development of educational materials, ensuring accessible and reliable information for consumers and enhancing pharmacists' roles in cannabis knowledge and practice.

To contribute to this initiative, pharmacists are encouraged to participate in a survey assessing their ability to engage and support individuals who consume cannabis. Additionally, the PACE project offers resources such as letters to pharmacists and consumers, posters, and newsletters to promote awareness and participation (Cannabis education research, n.d.).

Pharmacists in Canada

As of 2025, Canada has 50,617 registered and licensed pharmacists, with 47,723 actively practicing. Additionally, there are 11,541 registered pharmacy technicians and 10,432 licensed or accredited pharmacies across the country (National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Association, 2025).

Among the 10,432 licensed pharmacies, 9,986 are community pharmacies, 371 are in-patient hospital pharmacies, and 75 fall into other licensed categories.



Canadian pharmacists play an important role as medication management specialists in the healthcare system. They work together with patients, their families, and other health professionals to optimize health outcomes. Their functions have expanded beyond the traditional dispensing to services such as medication review, disease management, immunization, and wellness programs. Furthermore, a number of provinces allow pharmacists to prescribe drugs within scopes of practice, making prescription refills easier, reducing delays in treatment adjustments, and promoting collaborative care with physicians (Canadian Pharmacists Association, 2025).

Canadians visit their pharmacist 14 times a year on average. That is five to seven times as frequently as they see their general practitioner.

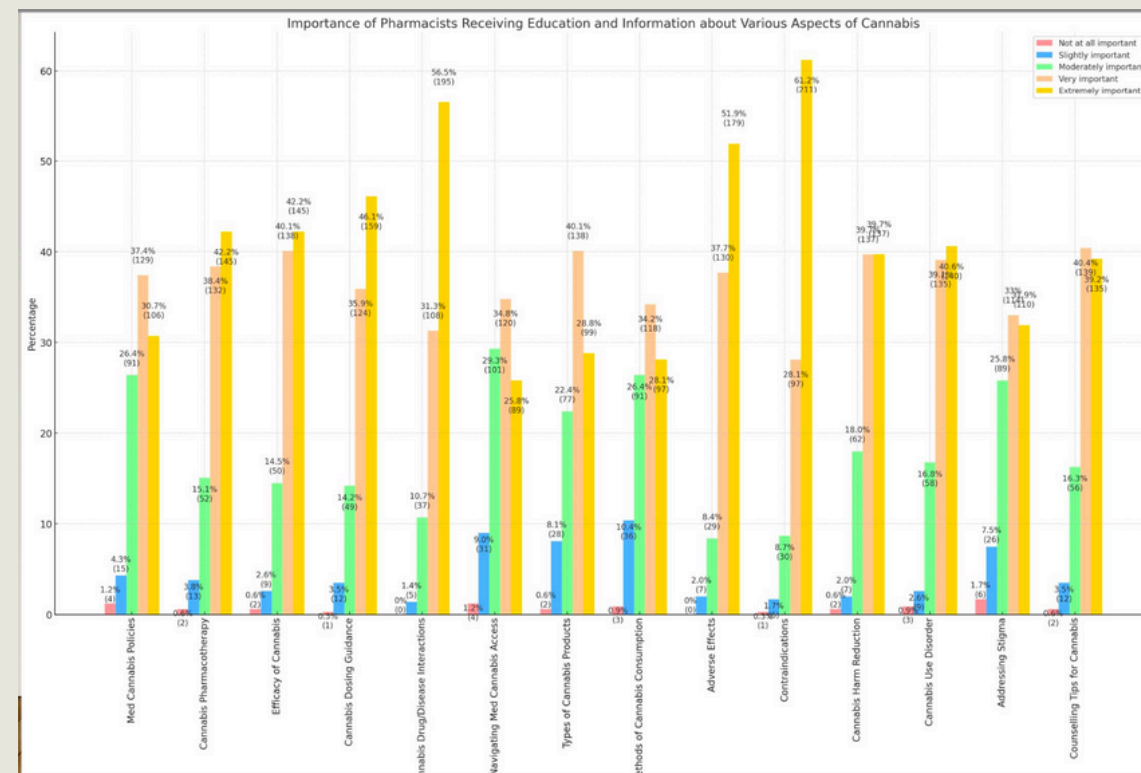
Why?

Since 95% of Canadians live five kilometers or less from a community pharmacy, pharmacists are the most easily available medical professionals in the nation (Medavie Blue Cross, 2022).

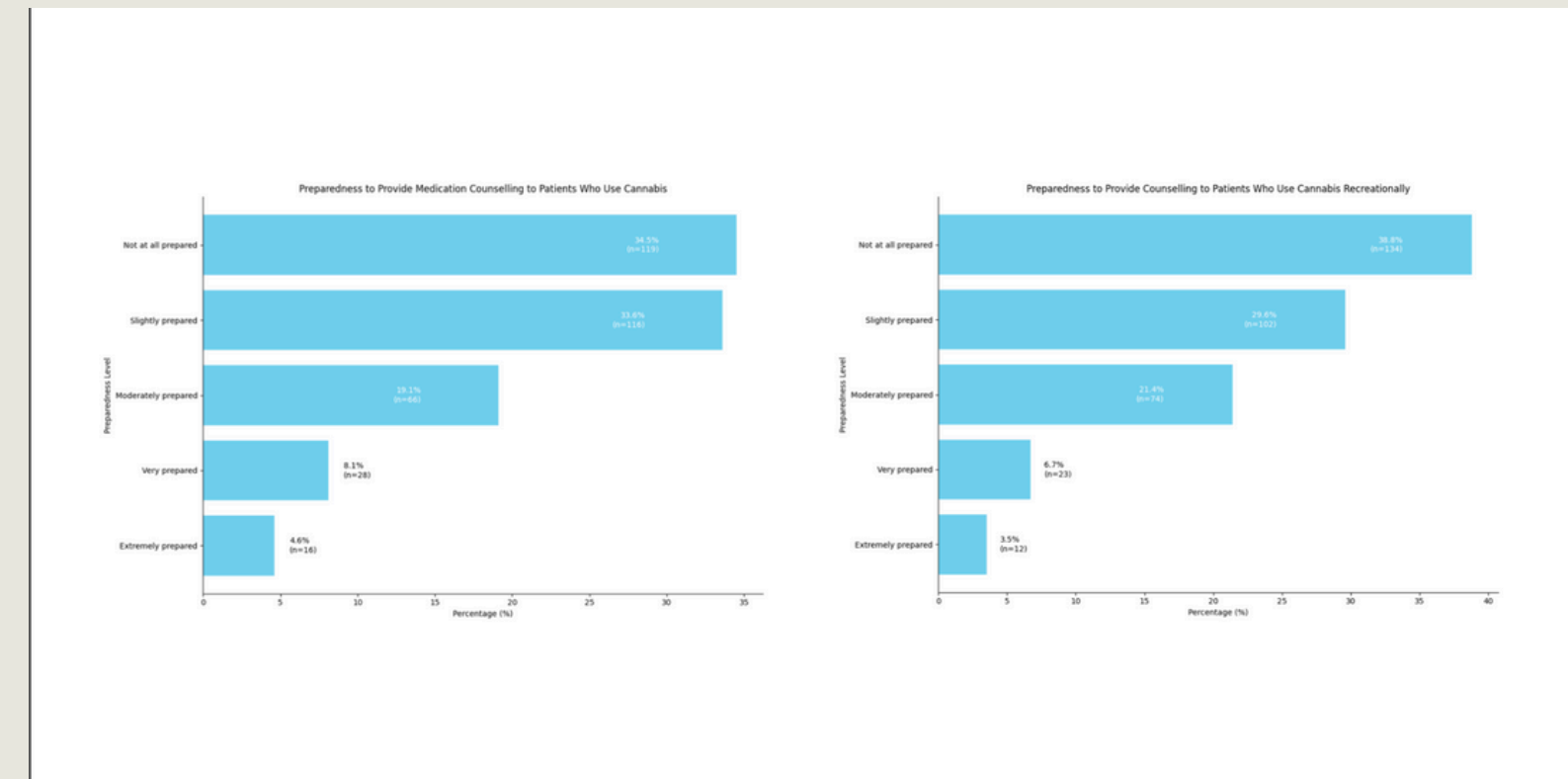
Hospital emergency rooms are quite crowded and have long wait times (Madzarac, 2023).

Pharmacists in Canada

Pharmacists believe that education on cannabis is very important, particularly in areas related to counseling, safety, and adverse effects (PACE Brief).



- The strongest demand for education lies in pharmacological aspects (interactions, dosing, contraindications) and patient counseling.
- There is also a high demand for safety-related knowledge, particularly on adverse effects and consumption methods.
- While topics like stigma and harm reduction are acknowledged, they are not prioritized as highly as clinical and practical knowledge.

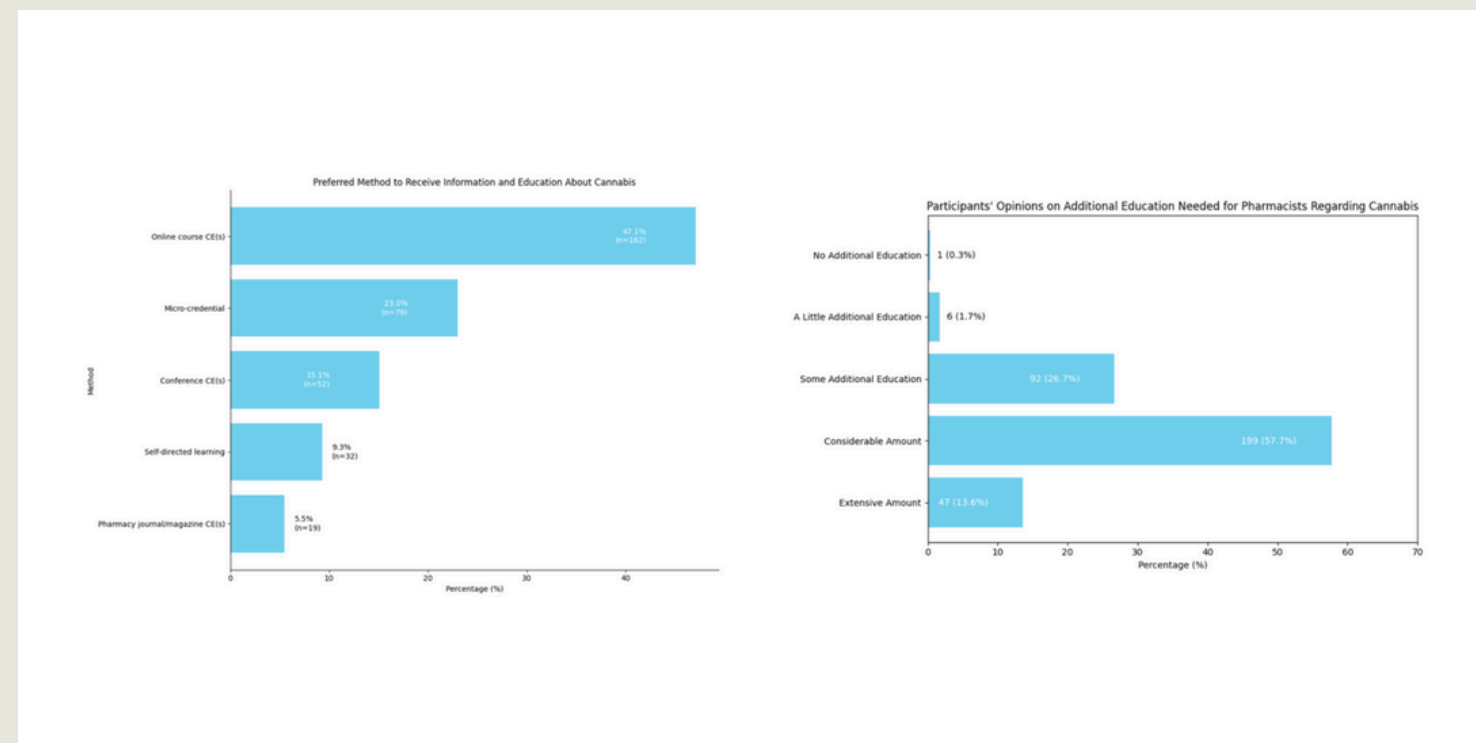


Pharmacists generally feel unprepared to counsel patients on cannabis, particularly recreational use (PACE Brief).

- 34.5% reported being not at all prepared to provide medication counseling for cannabis users.
- For recreational cannabis users, 38.8% felt not at all prepared to provide counseling.
- More pharmacists reported being moderately prepared for medicinal cannabis counseling vs. recreational cannabis counseling
- There might be a perceived distinction between medical and recreational cannabis when it comes to professional guidance.

Pharmacists in Canada

Pharmacists strongly believe that additional education is necessary, with many advocating for considerable or extensive training. Online CE courses are the most preferred way to receive education on cannabis (PACE Brief).



- 57.7% believe a considerable amount of additional education is needed for pharmacists regarding cannabis.
- Another 26.7% feel that at least some additional education is required.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Pharmacists possess extensive knowledge of drug interactions and therapeutic effects, making them well-suited to provide accurate cannabis-related guidance.
- With 95% of Canadians living within 5 kilometers of a community pharmacy, pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals (Medavie Blue Cross, 2022).
- A majority of Ontarians (70%) agree that medicinal cannabis should be dispensed by pharmacists, and 75% believe patients should receive counseling and advice from pharmacists when obtaining medicinal cannabis (Salazar, 2017).

Weaknesses

- Many pharmacists feel unprepared to counsel patients on cannabis, especially for recreational use. 34.5% feel “not at all prepared” to provide cannabis-related counseling (PACE Brief). Another research shows that 65% reported no formal training in this area, and only 17.2% considered themselves knowledgeable about marijuana for medical purposes (Mitchell et al., 2016).
- Despite its potential, the PACE program may not be widely recognized among consumers, limiting its immediate impact.

Opportunities

- PACE aims to provide pharmacists with purpose-built public education resources and access to accredited, free continuing education courses, enhancing their ability to engage with consumers.
- The growing trend towards diverse cannabis consumption methods presents an opportunity for pharmacists to educate consumers on safe usage.
- With over two-thirds of Canadians purchasing cannabis from legal sources, pharmacists can play a pivotal role in ensuring safe and regulated access to cannabis products.

Threats

- Despite legalization, some consumers may still perceive a stigma associated with discussing cannabis use with healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, potentially hindering open conversations.
- Many cannabis consumers seek advice from dispensary budtenders, who may lack formal medical training. This can lead to misinformation or recommendations that do not consider individual health or medication interactions, making it harder for pharmacists to establish themselves as the primary credible source for cannabis education.

Target Market

Demographics

Age

- Canadians above the age of 18, who are new or existing users of Cannabis.
- In 2023, more than one-third of adults aged 18 to 24 years (38.4%) and 25 to 44 years (34.5%) reported having used cannabis in the previous 12 months, compared with 15.5% of adults aged 45 years and older (National Cannabis Survey, 2023).
- A significant proportion of cannabis consumers aged 55–65, particularly women, consume cannabis to manage a physical or mental health condition. Targeted public health and clinical messaging might be beneficial for older adults, particularly around the efficacy of cannabis products for managing mental and physical health conditions as well as possible interactions with other medications. (Wadsworth et al., 2023)
- The number of people 65 and older visiting Ontario emergency departments with cannabis poisoning tripled between 2015 and 2022. (Stall et al., 2024).

Demographics

Gender

- Male and female.
- 50.8% of users in a Canadian survey identified as female, with the rest being male (PACE Brief). An even split indicates equal distribution.

Ethnicity

- 73% identify as White, 12.1% as Indigenous, 8.4% South Asian, 6.8% East Asian (PACE Brief).

Geographics

- The proportion of people consuming cannabis in the past 12 months was higher among people who were born in Canada (29%), compared to people who were not born in Canada (15%) (Canadian Cannabis Survey, 2024)..

Target Market

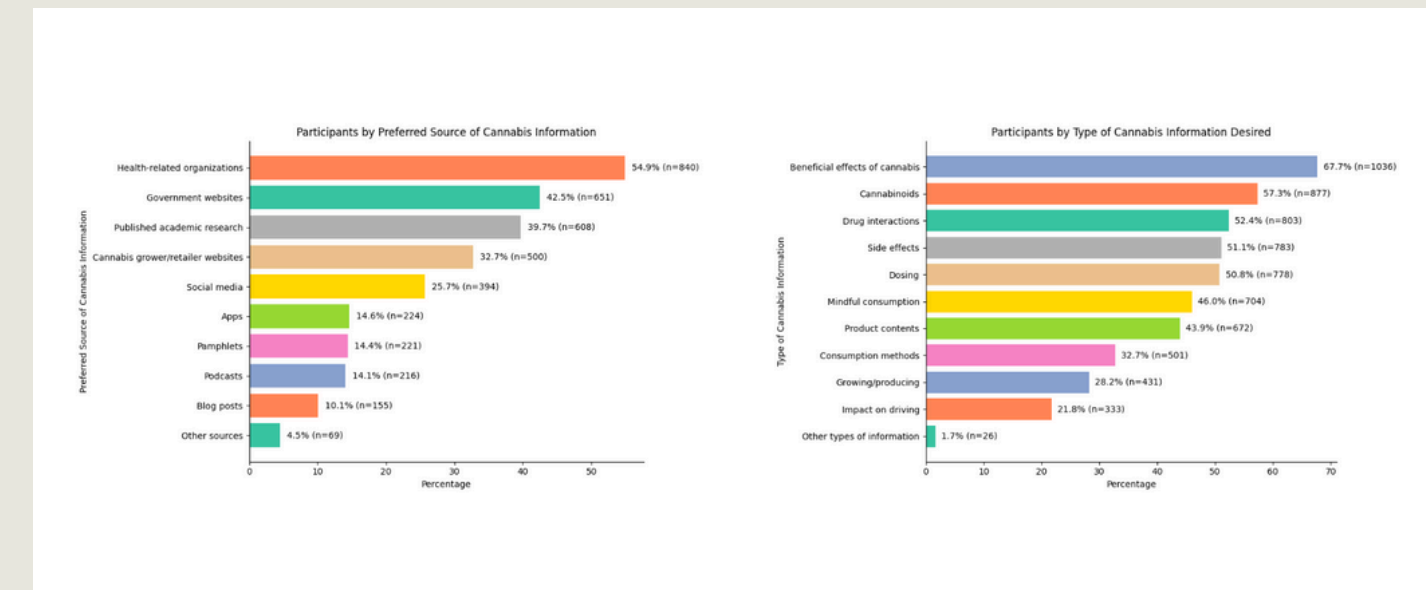
Psychographics

– Want to have fun and not be judged and are also looking to a health care provider (pharmacists) for their information (PACE Brief).

– 70% people in Canada reported ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly’ agreeing that they had enough trustworthy information about the health risks of cannabis use to make informed decisions (Canadian Cannabis Survey, 2024).

– Ottawa residents who self-report a mood or anxiety disorder were just over twice as likely to have used cannabis in the past 12 months compared to those not reporting such a disorder: 27% versus 12%. This does not imply causation, but that a group that may be vulnerable appears to be using cannabis (Statistics Canada, 2016).

– Starting in 2020, those who saw or heard education campaigns or public health messages around cannabis were asked if the information was credible or believable. Of those who saw or heard these messages, 68% reported that the information was credible or believable, a decrease since 2020 (73%) (Canadian Cannabis Survey, 2024).



67.7% people want to know about the beneficial effects of cannabis, and a majority want this from credible sources.

Target Market

Behavioural

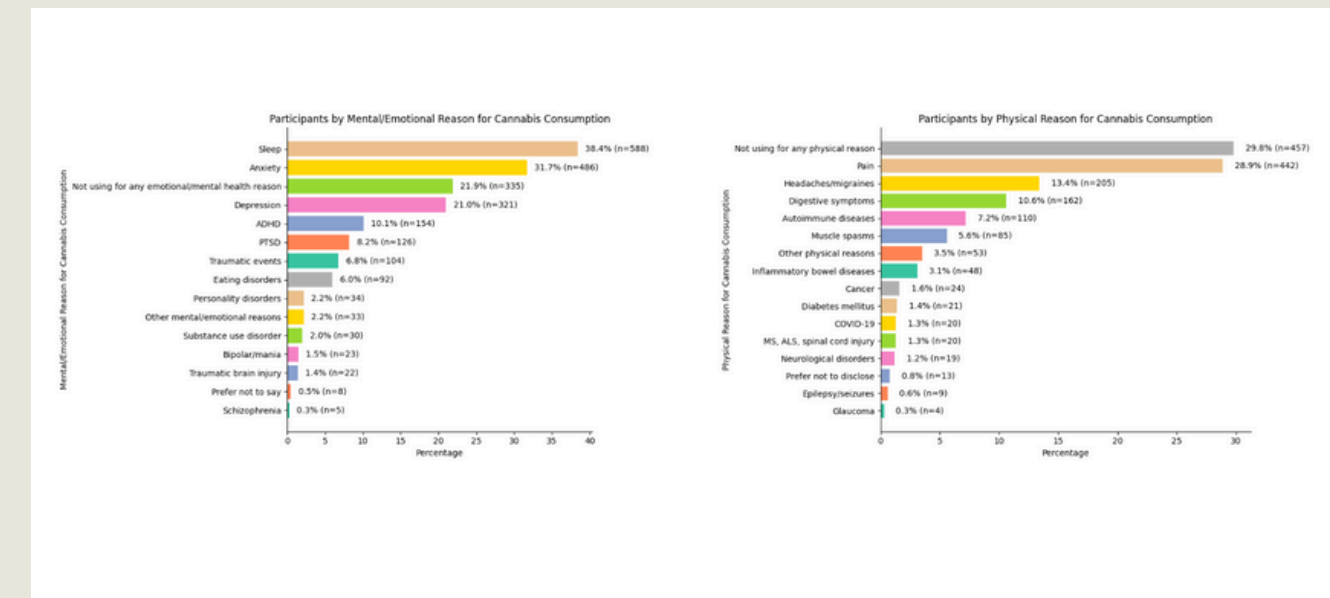
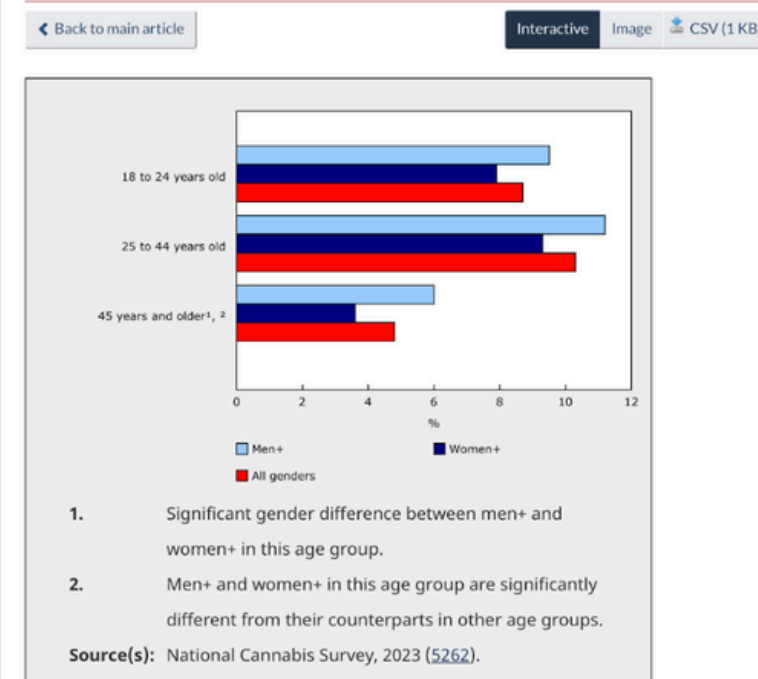
– About 1 in 10 adults between 18–44 reported having used cannabis daily or almost daily

– 1 in 7 adults 45 or older had used cannabis in the past year

– Edibles and dried leaf flower are most commonly used cannabis products across age groups.

– Older consumers more likely to use topicals and oral oils, while younger ones more likely to use vape pens, edibles, beverages, dried leaf or flower (National Cannabis Survey, 2023).

Prevalence of daily cannabis use among all Canadians by age group and gender, 2023



– Sleep, anxiety and depression are the top reasons for cannabis consumption when it comes to mental or emotional reasons. Many said they don't use it for a mental reason.

– Pain is the top physical reason. Actually, most admitted they do not use it for a physical reason.

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