

2SLGBTQI+ Campaign on Commercial Tobacco Use and Its Culture

Overview

This is a research project and social marketing campaign to better understand relationships with commercial tobacco and its culture among young adults who identify as 2SLGBTI+ in Thunder Bay, Toronto, and Montreal.

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit at the University of Toronto and the Canadian Cancer Society are leading this project with extensive input from and collaboration with an advisory committee, 2SLGBTI+ young adults, lead community partners, and collaborative working groups from each city.

This project has been funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada from October 2019 until September 2023.

Project Objectives

1. To join ongoing conversations around health and awareness of the root causes of higher commercial tobacco use among young adults who identify as 2SLGBTI+
2. To provide young adults with easy-to-access, affirming and tailored, evidence-based services for those who choose to reduce or begin the journey of quitting smoking

Campaign Elements

This campaign will make use of social media, traditional media, experiential events and 2SLGBTI+safe services. The details of how we will connect with young adults and the services provided will be determined through ongoing research with individuals and communities in the three pilot cities.

Ongoing Research

The project team is conducting multiple rounds of focus groups and a longitudinal online survey to better understand the unique experiences and journeys that 2SLGBTI+ young adults have with smoking, and how these experiences are impacted by other factors such as social connectivity, mental health as well as a range of intersectional factors including systemic barriers, race, class, income, age, ability, immigration status, cultural influences, geography etc.

Findings from the focus groups and online survey will be used to develop the campaign, create accessible space for community, and safe services for those looking to reduce or stop smoking. This research will also fill gaps in the existing literature on 2SLGBTI+ commercial tobacco use.

Brief Rationale

Research has shown that those who identify as 2SLGBTI+ continue to have higher rates of commercial tobacco use while other populations have either remained the same or decreased. The prevalence of cigarette smoking was 35% for gender and sexually diverse young adults aged 18 to 24 compared to just 23% for the same aged cisgender straight individuals in Canada in 2014.¹

Some of the reasons cited for increased smoking rates among 2SLGBTI+ young adults include stressors of discrimination and violence, as well as family rejection, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia.² In contrast, sources of resilience such as pride in identity, social supports, and connections to 2SLGBTI+ communities help mitigate these risks.³

Contact Information

The temporary website for the project is <https://www.otru.org/studies/lgbtqtobacco.html>. As soon as we have branding, logos and messaging, we will be updating our website and social media presence. The project team can be reached at smokingproject.dlsph@utoronto.ca.

¹ Health Statistics Division, Statistics Canada. Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) Annual Component 2013-2014 Microdata file. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada; 2015.

² Meyer, I. H. Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 2003; 129, 674-697. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674

³ Lee JGL, Shook-Sa, BE, Gilbert J, Ranney LM, Goldstein AO, Boynton, MH. Risk, Resilience, and Smoking in a National, Probability Sample of Sexual and Gender Minority Adults, 2017, USA. *Health Education & Behavior* 2020, v47 n2 p272-283.

Depending on the market analysis, the main components of the project may include:

Paid Marketing Campaign:

The project will have a strong social media strategy using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube depending on input from 2SLGBTI+ young adults. Social media will serve as the primary communication platform for the program. It may include messaging and calls to action about: the burden of smoking in 2SLGBTI+ communities; root causes of smoking; the relationship among stigma, stress and smoking; increasing intentions to quit and tips on overcoming barriers to accessing quit smoking supports.

Experiential Events:

Opportunities to promote the social marketing campaign at existing local events will be identified by connecting with 2SLGBTI+ partner agencies, networks and event organizers. Opportunities may include PRIDE events, film festivals, concerts, etc. Materials developed for the events may include branded event assets and giveaways that drive people to the project website and social media channels.

Website:

The website will focus on improving 2SLGBTI+ young adults' knowledge on smoking burden; the relationship among stigma, stress and smoking; changing the social climate; and increasing intentions to quit smoking (and possibly vaping). Shaped by market analysis findings, the website may use relevant design, images, videos of personal testimonies and social influencers among other elements. Based on the previous success with other cessation initiatives, a quit and win contest will be developed and housed on the website.

2SLGBTI+ Safe Cessation Services:

The project team, together with 2SLGBTI+ young adults and organizations, will develop 2SLGBTI+ safe cessation services using for example, the Canadian Cancer Society's Smoker's Helpline (SHL) infrastructure, the final makeup of which will be determined by the market analysis. Tentative options for 2SLGBTI+ safe cessation services include a combination of adapted SHL services, and custom 2SLGBTI+ safe digital cessation resources. If a custom tool is determined to be needed by features that will be explored include (but are not limited to): a login portal for tracking cessation progress, customized quit plans, and an interactive online chat/forum feature.

Free NRT:

Free two-week introductory packs of NRT may be distributed through experiential events and as part of quit contest prizes throughout the campaign. Additional means of distributing NRT will be explored through the market research phase of the project.