

Exploring Stigma towards Cannabis Consumption in Canada with Consideration of Age and Gender Differences

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Introduction

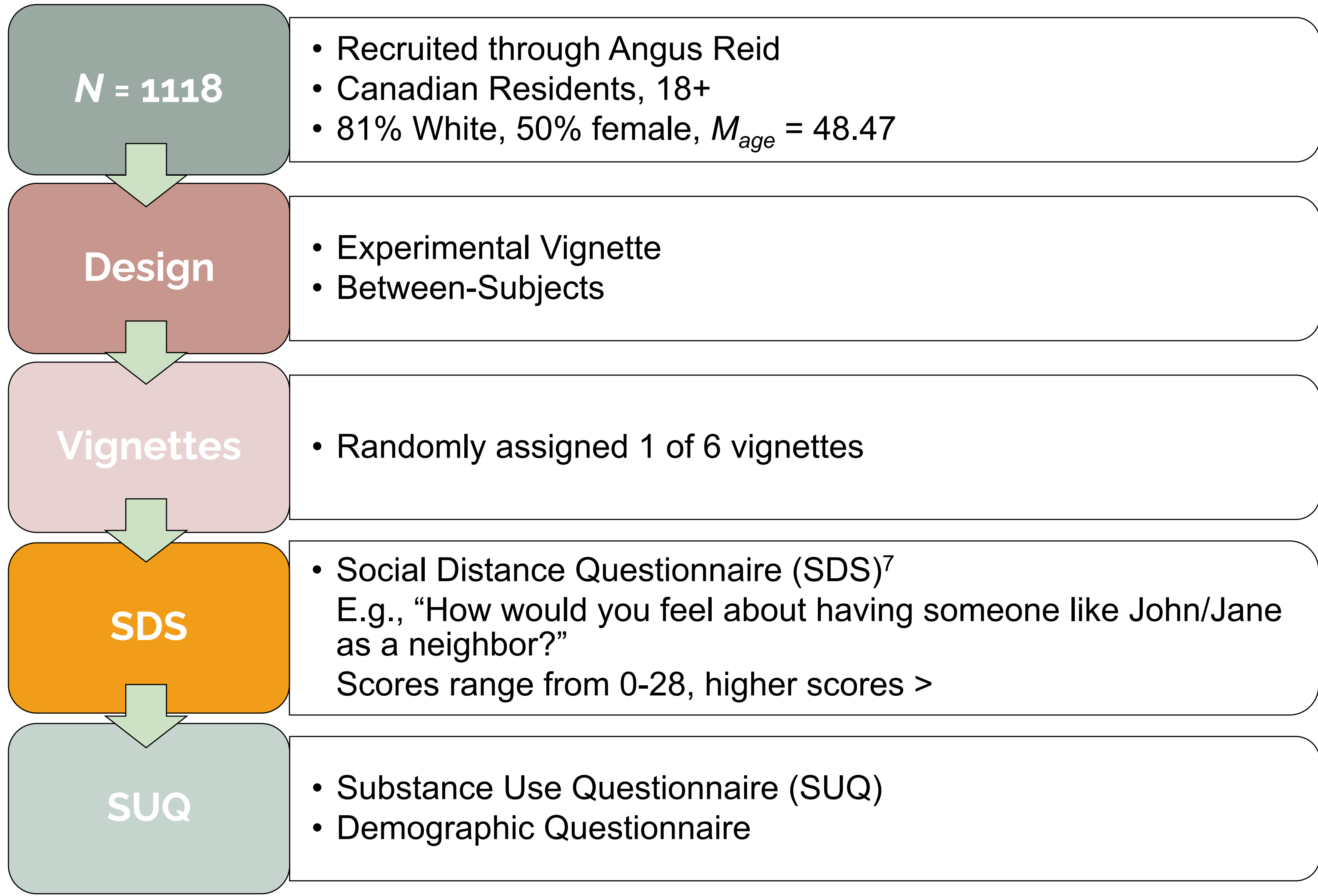
- Although cannabis is becoming a more normalized substance, stereotypes of cannabis consumers persist.^{1,2}
- Public stigma generates **discrimination** against people who use substances, causing **shame, isolation, and devaluation** that perpetuate **inequities**.³
- As cannabis use escalates, stigma often acts as a barrier to seeking help.⁴
- Different factors associated with cannabis use may contribute to increased stigma depending on the **context** and **perceptions of harm**, for example:
 - Previous research suggests that **younger, female, and frequent** consumers may endure more stigma due to perceptions that cannabis is **more harmful**.^{5,6,7}
- The purpose of this research was to understand how sex and age of cannabis consumers are associated with levels of stigma in order to better understand who is at risk for heightened stigma from cannabis use.

Objectives

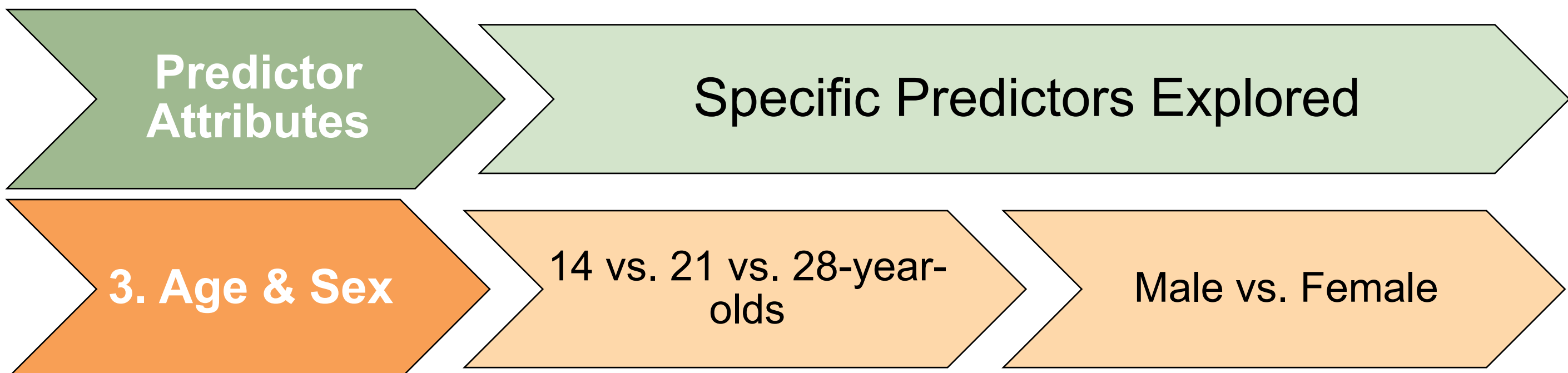
Primary: To examine how stigma towards a young cannabis consumer differs by age (i.e., 14-year-old, 21-year-old, 28-year-old), and sex (i.e., male, female).

Secondary: To explore impacts of the participants' age and gender identity on their perceptions of stigma.

Methods and Procedure

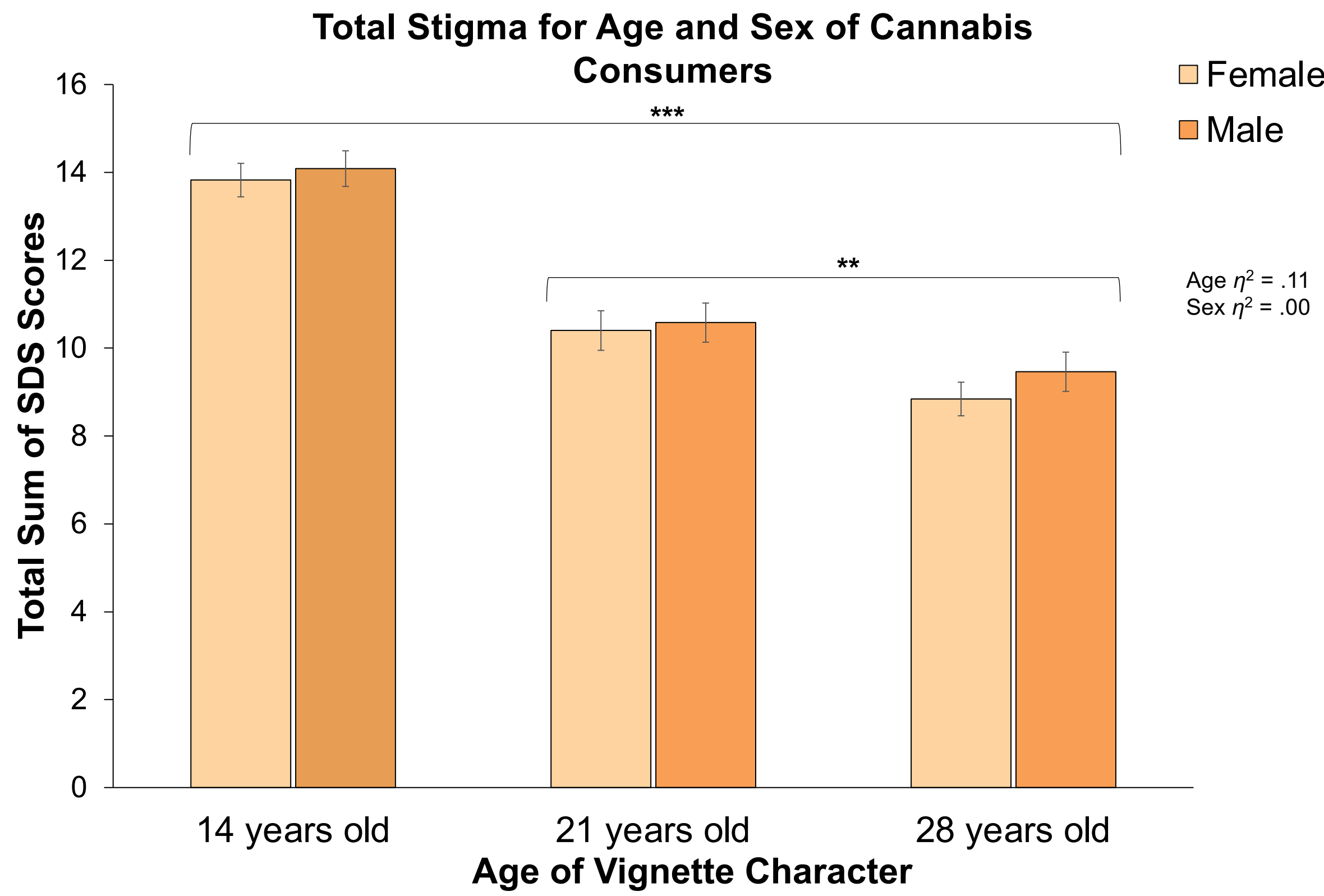


Vignettes

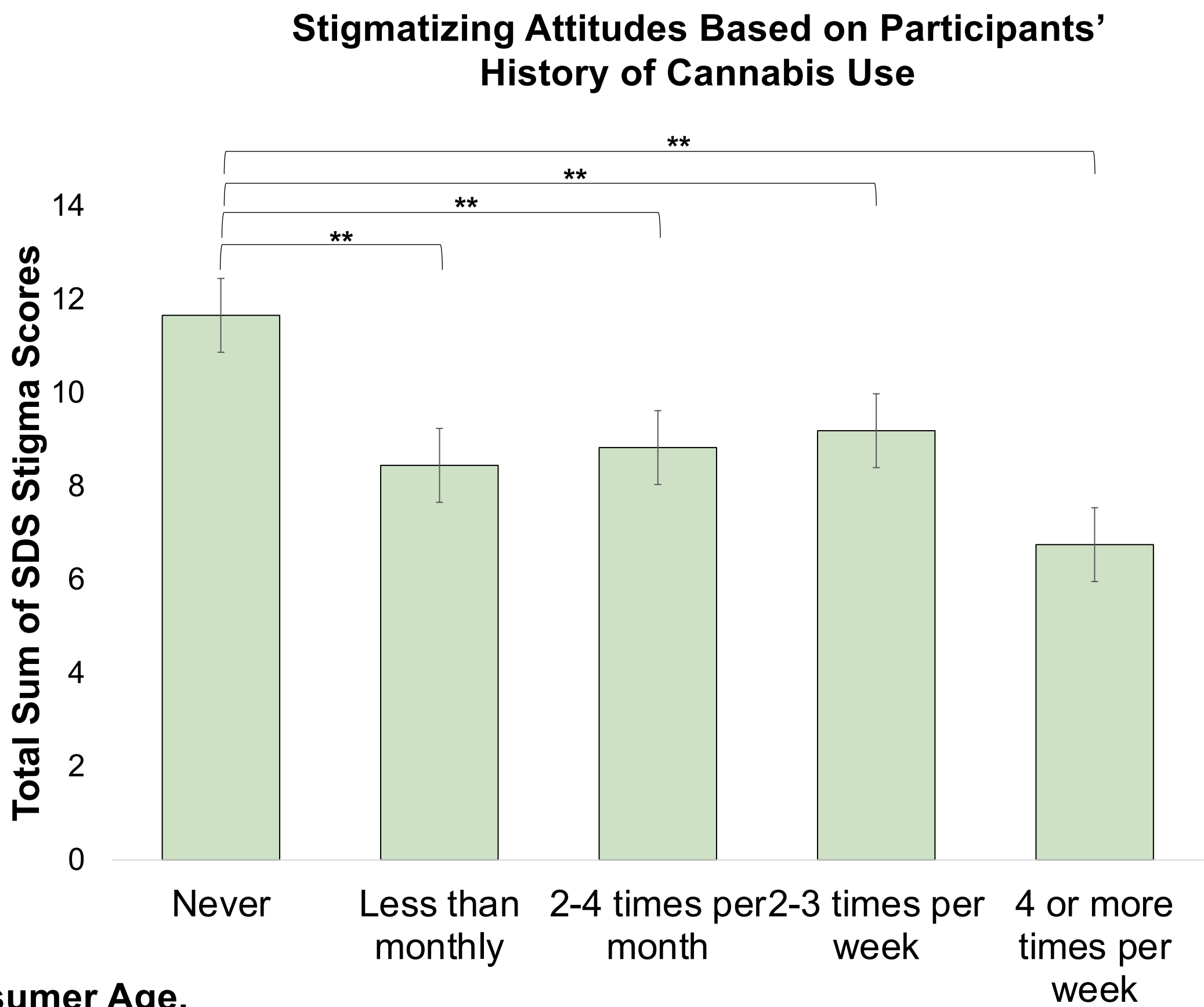


“ [Jane OR John] is a [28, 21, OR, 14]-year old [woman, man, girl, OR, boy] who uses cannabis recreationally. [She OR He] consumes cannabis almost daily in [her OR his] free time. ”

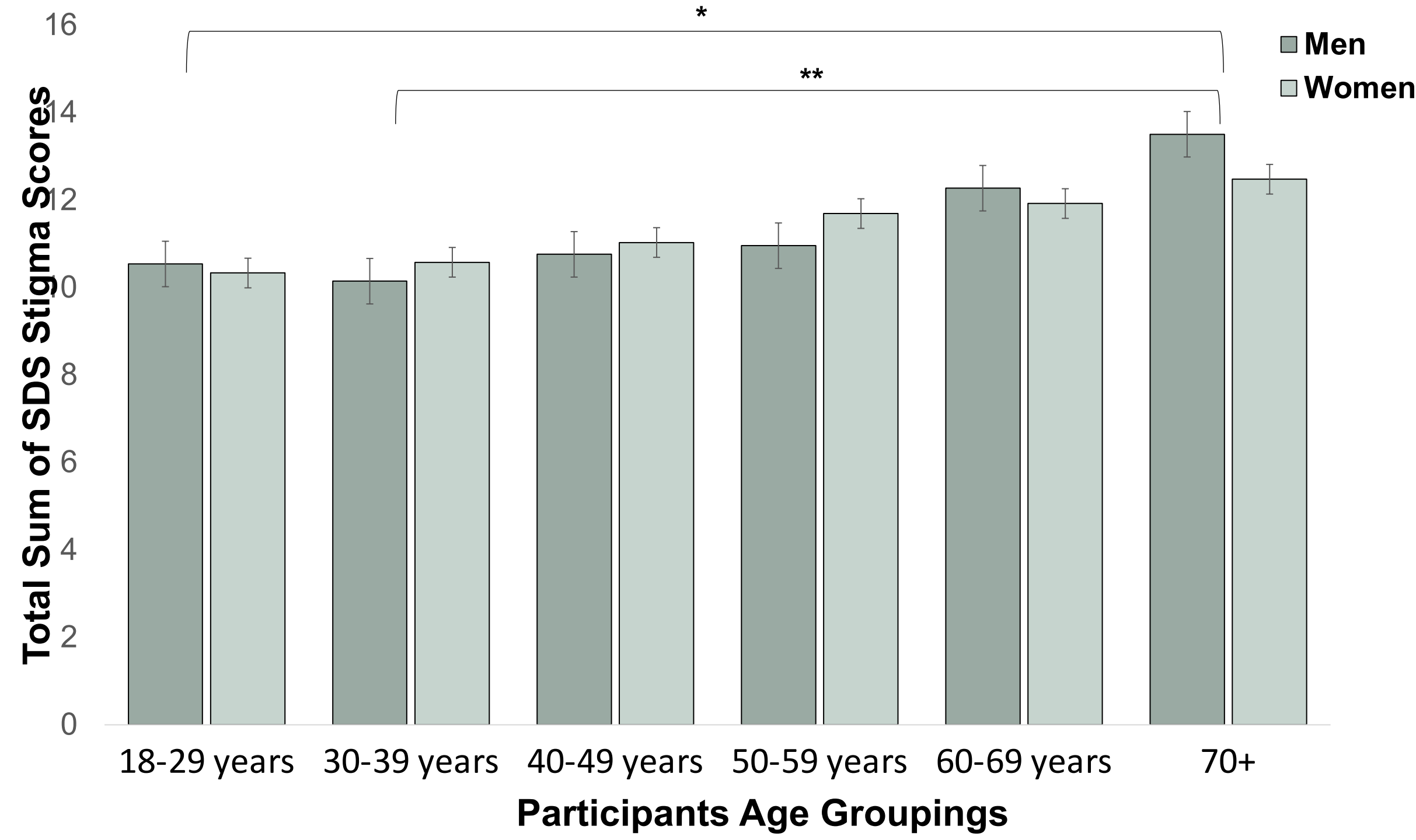
Results



Note. There were no significant differences toward male and female cannabis consumers.



Stigmatizing Attitudes Based on Consumer Age, and Participant Age and Gender



Note. There were no significant differences between males and females.

*** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$



Cannabis Consumption is stigmatized



Younger Cannabis Consumers the most stigmatized group



No gender differences in stigmatizing attitudes



Traditional Perspectives have higher stigmatizing attitudes



Non consumers have more stigmatizing attitudes

Main Findings

Discussion and Limitations

- Our findings indicate that **stigma remains a concern**, particularly toward **younger consumers**. This is a concern as younger ages of initiation have been linked to **adverse outcomes** such as the development of a cannabis use disorder.^{8,9}
- Our results revealed a **generational difference** in stigmatizing attitudes toward cannabis consumers, possibly because of cannabis prohibitions which instilled negative perceptions about cannabis.
- There were no differences between stigma toward males and females, indicating that the gender gap is potentially narrowing.
- We were not able to explore how stigma potentially differs for cannabis consuming gender minorities due to design limitations.
- These findings have potential to **reduce barriers to treatment-seeking, decrease shame** towards cannabis consumption, and **increase knowledge** around **safer-use** for at-risk populations by better understanding stigma in the community.

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