

# Perceptions of Cannabis Consumption During Pregnancy and Lactation: A Patient-Informed Survey



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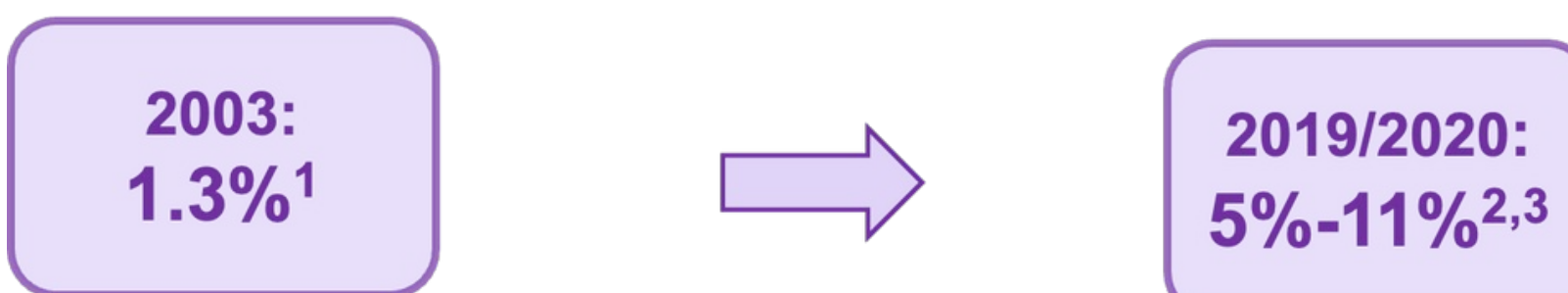
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CHERP  
CANNABIS HEALTH EVALUATION  
& RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

## Introduction

- Cannabis is one of the most frequently consumed substances during pregnancy and breastfeeding.<sup>1</sup>
- Prevalence of consumption in the perinatal period has increased drastically in recent years.



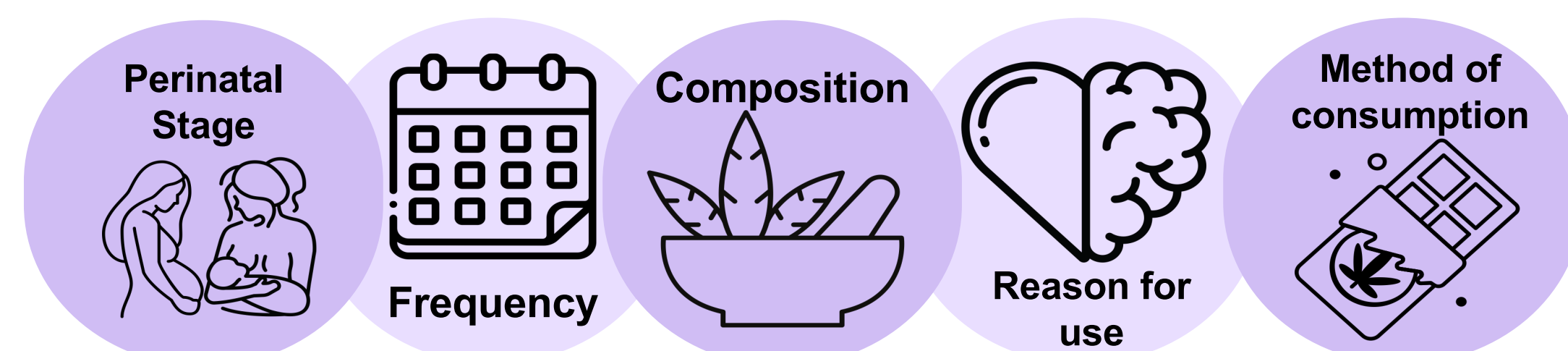
- Consuming cannabis during pregnancy may be associated with risks to the short- and long-term physical development, cognitive functioning, and emotional health of the developing fetus.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- There is limited research that examines risk perception of cannabis consumption in the perinatal period following legalization in Canada.

## Purpose

- To assess risk perception in Canadian birthing parents and their partners around cannabis consumption during pregnancy and lactation.

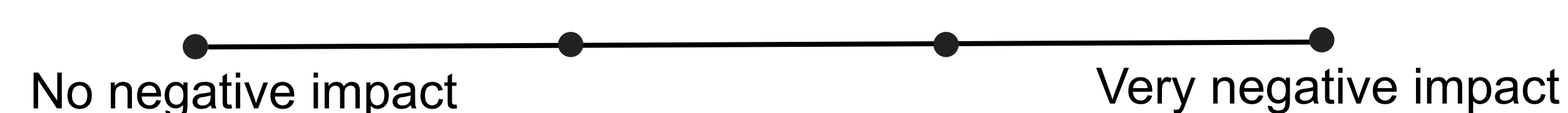
## Methods

- We used an experimental vignette design that was guided by the principles of patient-oriented research.
- A national sample was recruited using Angus Reid.
- The survey consisted of open- and closed-ended questions.
- Five sets of vignettes were developed for this study. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition from two of the five sets.



### Vignette example and sample question

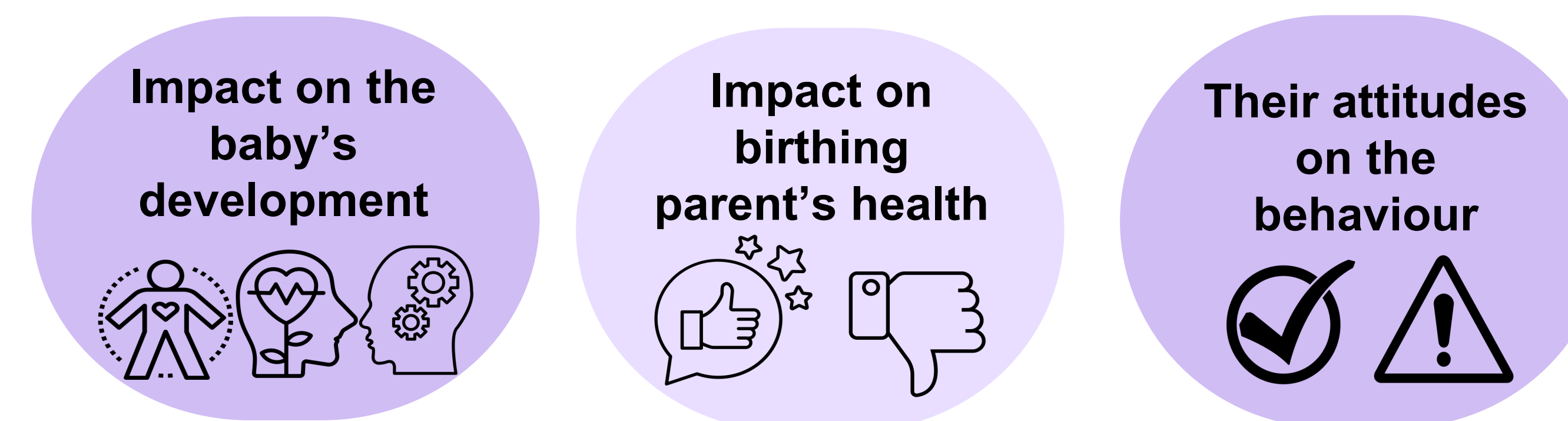
- Frequency variable: "Alex is currently in the first trimester of pregnancy. Over the past four months, they have been consuming cannabis with moderate amounts of THC and CBD (**once a month OR once a week OR four times a week OR daily**)."
- What impact do you believe Alex's cannabis use has on their baby's short-term physical development (e.g., weight gain)?



## Methods

### Risk Perception Questionnaire

- Following each vignette, participants were asked about their perceptions of the character's behaviour based on:

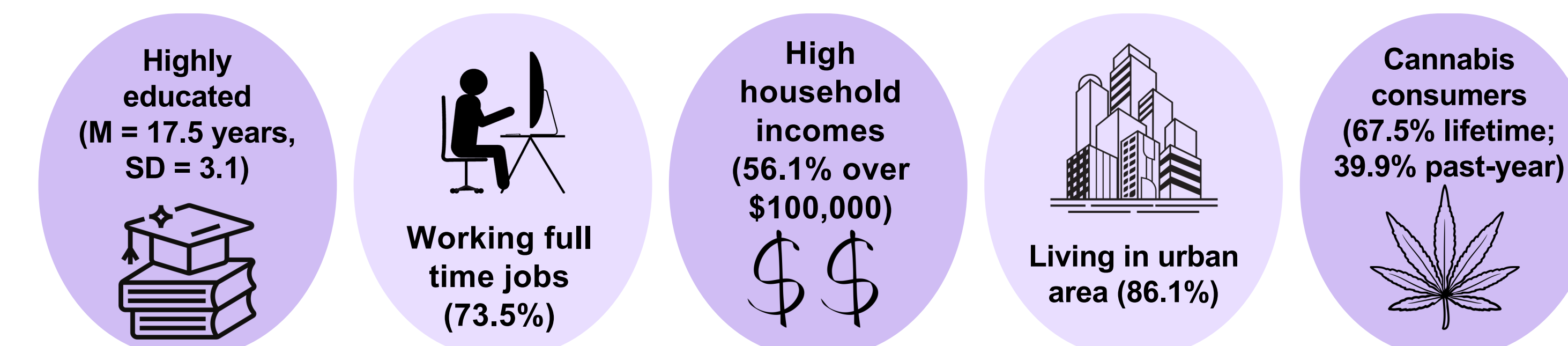


- Additional questions were asked to compare perinatal cannabis consumption to other substances and to indicate in a free text response the most impactful health effects of cannabis consumption.
- Data were characterized using descriptive statistics and analyzed through a series of ANOVAs and ANCOVAs.

## Results

### Participants

- A total of 821 participants who were either birthing parents ( $N = 417$ ), their partners ( $N = 393$ ), or both ( $N = 11$ ) completed the survey.



### Perinatal stage vignette

- Consuming cannabis **during pregnancy** was viewed as having **more risk of impact on the child across all domains**, having **more negative impact** on the birthing parent, and was **considered a bigger problem** compared to formula feeding.
- Consumption **during lactation** and while trying to get pregnant were both seen as having **more risk of impact on the child across all domains** compared to consuming while formula feeding.
- Consuming **while pregnant** was seen as having a **greater impact on the child's future emotional health** and **considered a bigger problem** compared to consuming while trying to get pregnant.

### Frequency, composition, and method of consumption vignettes

- Participants **did not perceive a difference** in the level of risk associated with consuming cannabis during pregnancy based on frequency, composition, or method of consumption.

## Results

### Reason for consumption vignette

- Participants perceived a **greater positive impact** for the birthing parent if they were consuming **for physical pain relief or to manage mental health** compared to consuming recreationally.

### Comparison to other substances

- During both pregnancy and lactation, most participants viewed cannabis consumption as **similarly harmful to consuming cigarettes (~56%) and alcohol (~49%)**, and **less harmful than unregulated substances (~63%)**.

## Conclusion

### Our sample



- Cannabis consumption during pregnancy and lactation is more likely to occur in individuals of lower socioeconomic status and with lower education levels.<sup>3,8</sup> Given the nature of our sample, we hypothesize that **we may not have adequately captured our population of interest**.

### Next steps

- **We plan to replicate this study with a community sample** and make special efforts to reach individuals who may be more likely to engage in perinatal cannabis consumption

## Acknowledgements

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