

## Natural health products (NHPs) in alcohol, tobacco, and other 'recreational' substance use: pre-testing a data collection tool

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**Introduction:** Certain NHPs are promoted to alleviate symptoms associated with substance use, and others are marketed to manage and prevent harms from substance use. Prehistorically, some natural substances have been used recreationally for their psychoactive effects. However, little is known about their contemporary patterns and prevalence of use in these contexts. This study aimed to develop and test a questionnaire to collect information on the prevalence of use of NHPs in relation to alcohol, tobacco, and other recreational substance use, and as recreational substances themselves.

**Method:** A questionnaire was designed based on literature review findings and expert panel feedback. The study comprised two phases. Phase 1 involved participants (consumers of alcohol, tobacco and/or other recreational substances) completing the online questionnaire and providing feedback through probing questions included in the questionnaire. In phase 2, selected participants were interviewed to gain further insights into questionnaire design issues identified in phase 1.

**Results:** Overall, 79 and 22 participants completed phases 1 and 2, respectively. Problematic questions related to calculating the number of standard drinks consumed and the cost of NHPs. Interviews highlighted issues with understanding the full scope of the terms 'NHPs' and 'psychoactive effects'. Feedback indicated the need to rephrase and simplify certain questions. Several participants suggested the inclusion of electronic cigarettes and vaping.

**Discussions and conclusions:** The findings identified potential areas for improvement in the questionnaire in the exploration of these forms of consumption. The data collected were mostly complete and provided some preliminary prevalence of use results to inform future study design. The questionnaire requires pilot testing among a large, nationally representative sample.

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