

Health Canada's People with Lived and Living Experience Survey (PWLLES) Photovoice Project, 2026-2027

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: What is Photovoice?

A: Photovoice is a form of research that is community/participant-led and involves participants capturing photos that represent specific themes, and using their words/stories to describe the meaning and significance of these images. The goal is to give greater emphasis to the participant's viewpoint and experience, to promote empowerment, and to shift the power imbalance between participants and researchers.

Q2: What is this Photovoice project about?

A: The Photovoice project seeks to better understand substance use trends and experiences among racialized and Indigenous youth in Canada. Youth who use substances will be recruited to participate and share their lived and living experiences with substance use through photos and captions.

Q3: Who is eligible for the Photovoice project and what types of substances are of interest?

A: To be eligible for the Photovoice project, participants must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Be between the ages of 14 and 25;
- 2) Self-identify as racialized and/or Indigenous; and
- 3) Have used any of the following substances in the past 12 months:
 - any street drugs/illegal substances (e.g., methamphetamine, MDMA, ketamine),
 - any hallucinogens (e.g., acid, shrooms),
 - any use of the following either without a prescription in your name or in different ways than what it was prescribed for (e.g., in larger or more frequent doses):
 - opioid painkillers (e.g., Percocet),
 - prescription stimulants (e.g., Adderall),
 - prescription sedatives (e.g., Xanax), and/or
 - any other opioid painkillers such as low-dose codeine products, used in different ways than what they were intended for

However, you may also choose to share about your experiences with other substances, such as alcohol and cannabis.



Q4: Who is running the Photovoice project and where can I participate?

A: The PWLLES Photovoice project is a Health Canada project. Health Canada has hired Malatest, an independent Canadian research and evaluation company, to help with carrying out the project (you can learn more about Malatest at their website <http://www.malatest.com/>). Health Canada and Malatest have partnered with community-based organizations from across Canada who run youth programs and provide services to youth to share this opportunity with eligible youth. Youth who are interested and eligible will receive support and guidance from their recruitment site to complete the Photovoice project. If you are interested in participating in the Photovoice project and do not know where to go to participate, please contact Malatest (s.perhar@malatest.com) to receive a list of sites participating in the project.

Q5: How do I complete the Photovoice project and how long do I have?

A: You will review the Photovoice guide and the consent form in-person with a staff member at the site. They will address any questions or concerns that you have. You will then complete the project independently and submit 1 to 5 photos and captions to a secure online portal. How long this takes will differ for each participant. Depending on your approach, it could be completed in 30-minutes, or completed over a few hours over one or more days if you need more time to reflect. However, participants have up to 30 days to complete their Photovoice submission on the online portal. It is okay if you need more time, but please let the site staff know if that is the case.

Q6: Will I be paid for completing the Photovoice project?

A: You will receive a \$50 gift card for completing the Photovoice project. You will have the ability to select from several different retail gift card options from Giftbit.

Q7: Do I have to complete the Photovoice project?

A: You are under no obligation to participate in the Photovoice project. If you do not want to participate you do not have to. Your decision to not participate in the Photovoice project will not affect any of the services you receive from the site you were recruited from, or from Health Canada. You will have the opportunity to consent to the project and the use of your data before completing it.

Q8: Why are there so many guidelines of what to avoid in photos?

A: The “What to Avoid” guidelines are in place to protect your privacy and that of others. They are not intended to limit your creativity and expression. You can edit your photos to obscure these details, if desired.

Q9: What if the Photovoice project upsets me?

A: At any point, you can stop the project. You may skip any prompt that does not feel comfortable or safe. Staff at the site that recruited you can provide you with support or link you to support services if any of the content in the Photovoice project upsets you. You will also be provided with educational and support resources to use at your discretion.



Q10: How will the photos and captions I provide in the Photovoice project be protected?

A: The information you provide is governed in accordance with the Privacy Act. The data is stored on secure data servers in Canada hosted by the survey firm Malatest, which adhere to the highest standards of protection of privacy, including following all provincial and federal laws concerning the protection of information. Visit this website to learn more about Malatest's Privacy Policy: <https://www.malatest.com/privacy-policy>. The photos and captions will be given to Health Canada for analysis and reporting purposes. If you consent, the photos and captions may also be given to the site that recruited you for local activities and initiatives (such as exhibits or showcases).

Q11: How will the photos and captions I provide in the Photovoice project be used?

A: Your photos and captions will be used by the Health Canada research team to identify themes (common thoughts, feelings, stories, experiences) that emerge from all participants in the Photovoice project. You will have the option to agree to allow Health Canada to use your exact photos and captions, and to choose how Health Canada uses this content. You will also have the option to decide whether Health Canada can share your photos and captions with the site that recruited you to be shared publicly in local initiatives or activities (such as exhibits or showcases). More details on the use and sharing of data will be provided in the Photovoice consent form, and you will be able to select the options that you are most comfortable with when submitting each photo and caption.

Q12: Does the Photovoice project follow best practices surrounding ethical collection of data and informed consent?

A: The Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada Research Ethics Board has reviewed and approved the Photovoice project and methodology. Additionally, a Youth Engagement Committee made up of youth with lived and living experience, has reviewed the Photovoice project and process. Their feedback was incorporated into the project and the approaches used. You will be asked to review an informed consent form with a staff member at the site prior to starting the Photovoice project. They will explain the form and all the terms to you before you can decide to consent to taking part in the Photovoice project.