




High THC concentration cannabis: What are the risks and what Washington stakeholders want to do about it

Beatriz H Carlini, PhD, MPH

Presented at WA State House of Representatives
Commerce and Gaming Commission work session

December 2nd, 2022



This presentation focuses on high-THC products sold for non-medical use in the market regulated by the WSLCB.

The use of cannabis as a medicine should be decided by individuals and their health care providers.



High THC products: Health risks

Proviso update: WA Stakeholders

How we got them involved

What we asked/ Who participated

Results and implications

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High THC products: Health risks

2020: Report & Consensus Statement signed by 11 WA scientists



- Are high THC products more likely to cause addiction? (Cannabis Use Disorder)
- Who consume high THC products in WA?
- Can people adjust their own doses?
- THC potency and onset of psychotic disorders

Consensus:

The greater the potency of cannabis products the greater the likelihood of adverse health effects.

Increased risk particularly concerning for:

- Young users
- People with pre-existing mental health conditions

Harms are likely to disproportionately affect **marginalized populations** (low income, minorities)

High THC products: Health risks

2020: Report & Consensus Statement signed by 11 WA scientists



- Are high THC products more likely to cause addiction? (Cannabis Use Disorder)

YES

High THC products: Health risks

2020: Report & Consensus Statement signed by 11 WA scientists

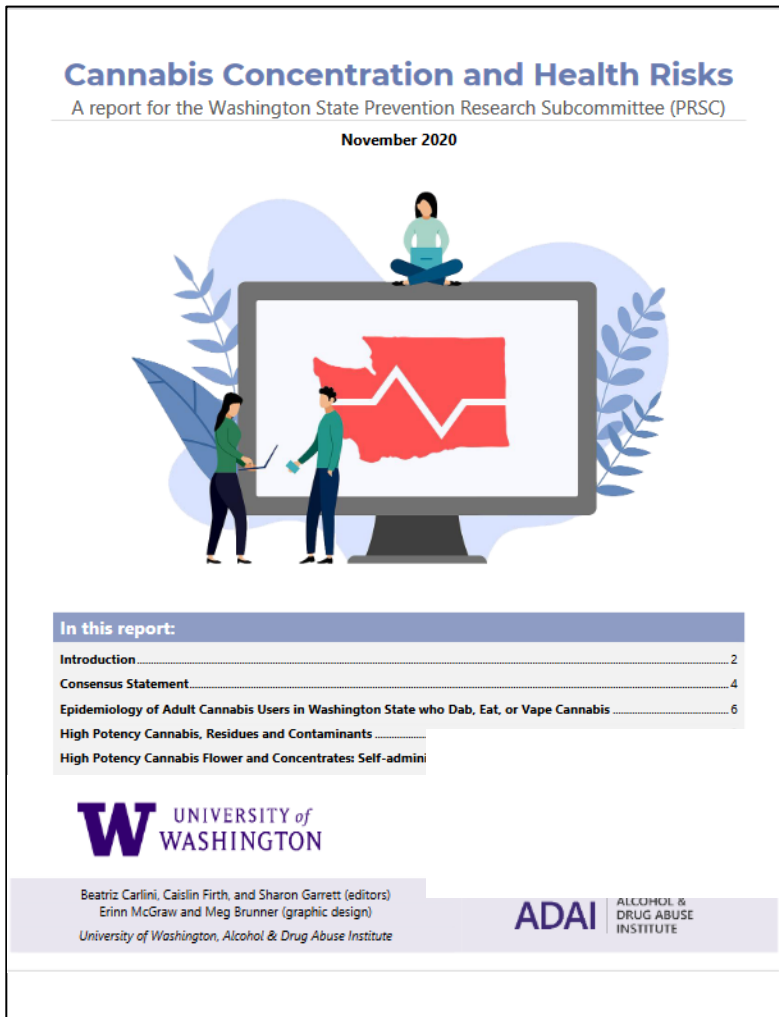


Who consume high THC products in WA?

Young adults
Male
People who report mental health challenges
Less schooling, lower income

High THC products: Health risks

2020: Report & Consensus Statement signed by 11 WA scientists



Can people adjust their own doses?

IT DEPENDS
Healthy people
Regular consumers

High THC products: Health risks

2020: Report & Consensus Statement signed by 11 WA scientists



THC potency and onset of psychotic disorders

The higher the intake of THC (concentration or potency) the more likely is that people will develop a psychotic disorder

2022: National and International Experts



The Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute's [Cannabis Education & Research Program](#) hosted this day-long hybrid (in-person and virtual) event on September 16, 2022.

The symposium was focused on the short and long-term risks of high-THC products, including conversations about policy-focused solutions and ways to increase awareness through education campaigns for providers, parents, and youth, and featured a range of international, national, and regional speakers, as well as local policymakers.

Symposium Resources

[Agenda](#)

[Speaker Bios](#)

[Full recording](#)

Cannabis and psychiatric outcomes, including psychotic disorders and potency



Deborah Hasin, Ph.D.
Columbia University
High THC-potency in legal markets
September 16, 2022

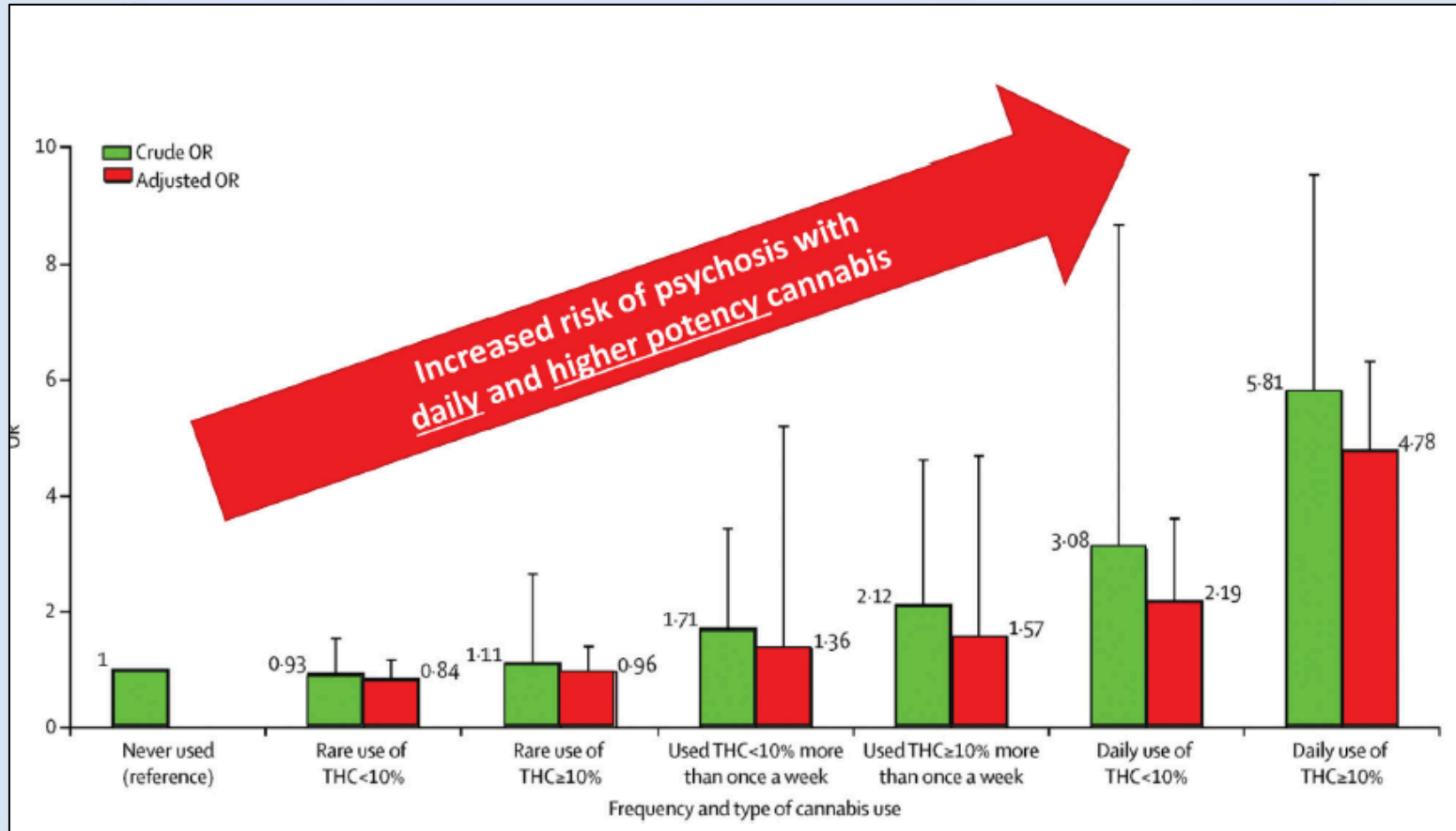


DEBORAH HASIN, PHD
Columbia University



CANNABIS EDUCATION
& RESEARCH PROGRAM

UW Medicine
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY
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CANNABIS EDUCATION & RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Summary and public policy implications

- Cannabis use is highly associated with increased risk for psychotic disorders and increased risk for relapse
- Most research on the effects of cannabis potency was conducted during years when “high”-potency cannabis was only 10%-14%, weak by today’s standards
- From a health and prevention standpoint, reasonable to conclude that today’s very high-potency cannabis products confer even greater risk for psychosis
- Although psychotic disorders are relatively rare in the general population, they are very debilitating and burdensome to patients and their families
- One public health reason (among many to) limit marketing of very-high potency cannabis products.
- Now that cannabis use is widely seen as harmless, some education for clinicians and the public also appears warranted



CANNABIS EDUCATION
& RESEARCH PROGRAM

UW Medicine
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY
AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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Proviso mandate

- Develop recommendations for state policies
- **Find common ground among stakeholders**
- Final report December 31, 2022



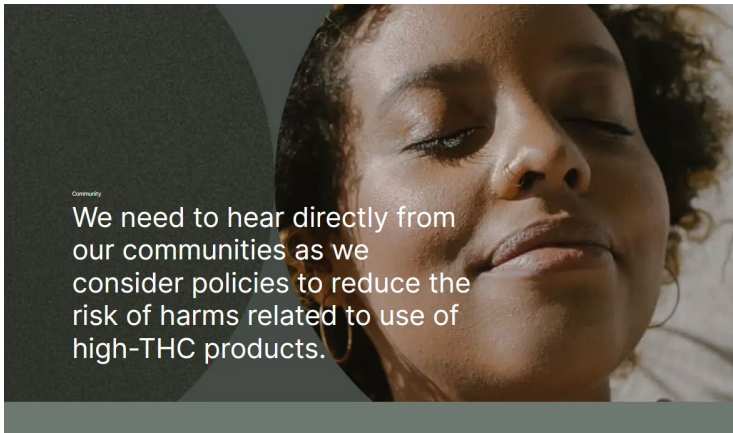
Strategic Dissemination

- 1000+ emails
- List servs
- Word of mouth
- Presentations in various forums
- Selected social media



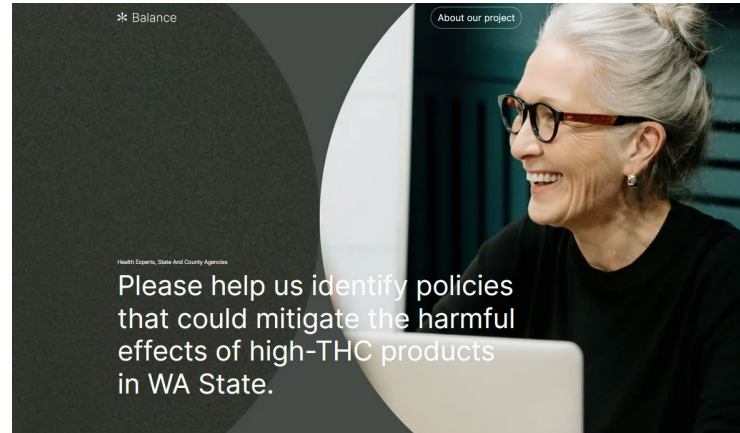
Stakeholders' groups

Community



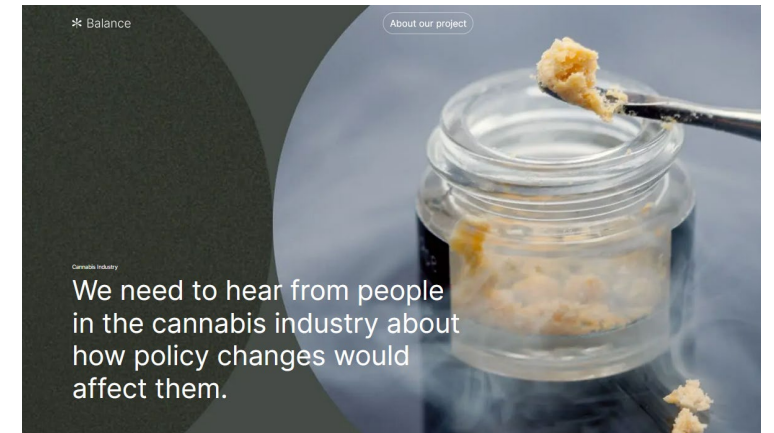
Prevention, social justice and youth-centered organizations, parents, educators and youth

Professionals



Health care providers, law enforcement, government agencies, researchers

Cannabis' advocates



Workers, representatives, press, consumers

Concept Mapping

First phase

Brainstorm

Capture collective thinking

Impactful?

**Second phase:
collective &
anonymous
rating**

Feasible?

Stakeholders inform the analysis

Equitable?

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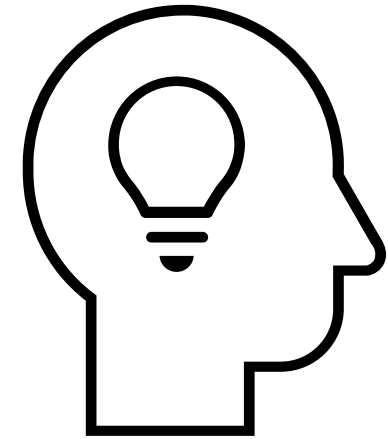
Brainstorm

In your opinion, how can our laws about high-THC cannabis products be strengthened in WA State to decrease risks to consumers?

1-

2-

3-



302 ideas



46 policy ideas

Sort and Rate

Sort ideas into groups

Limit products to only one serving per item.

Unsorted

Add to group

Maximum THC limits for each product category (e.g. 25% THC for flower, 75% THC for concentrates, etc.).

Unsorted

Add to group

New group



Unsorted

45 ideas

Age restriction

1 idea

Rating: impact and feasibility

Age restriction

1/1

Increase legal age for high THC products to 25 years old.

Less impactful

Very impactful



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

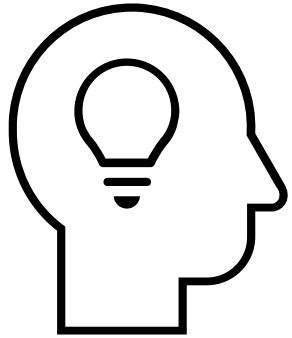
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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Participation

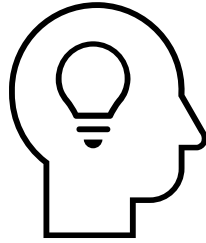


109 total participants



160 total participants

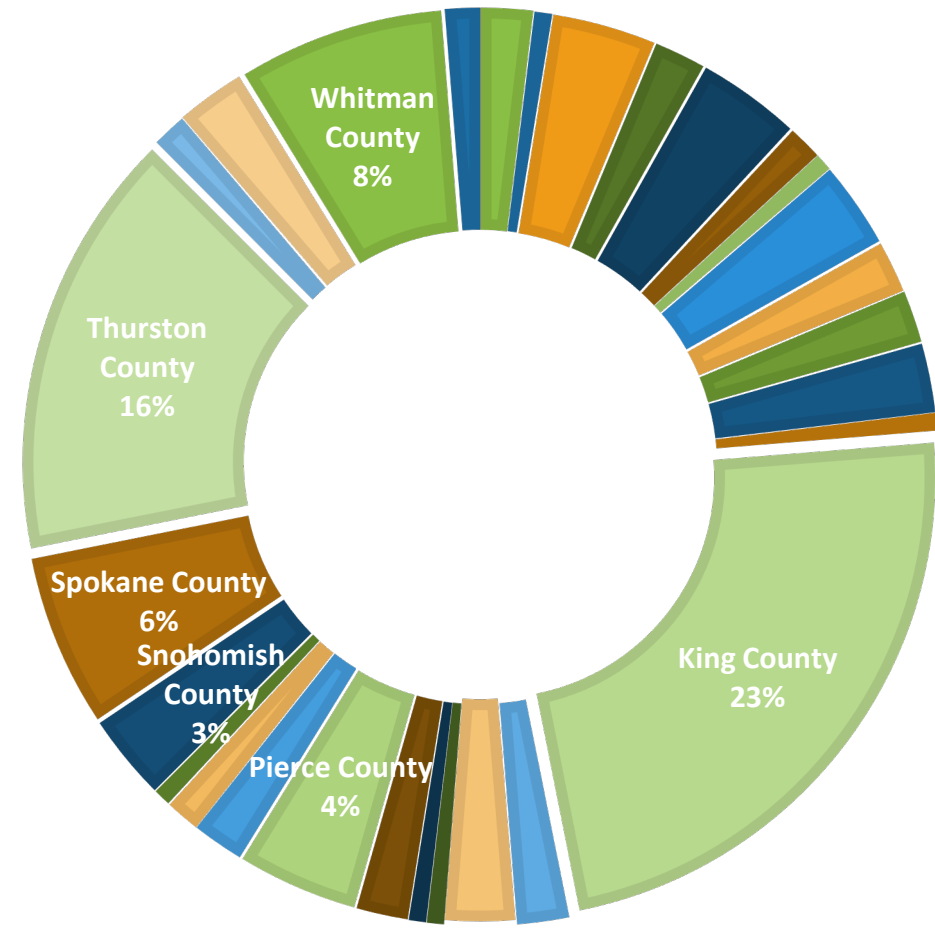
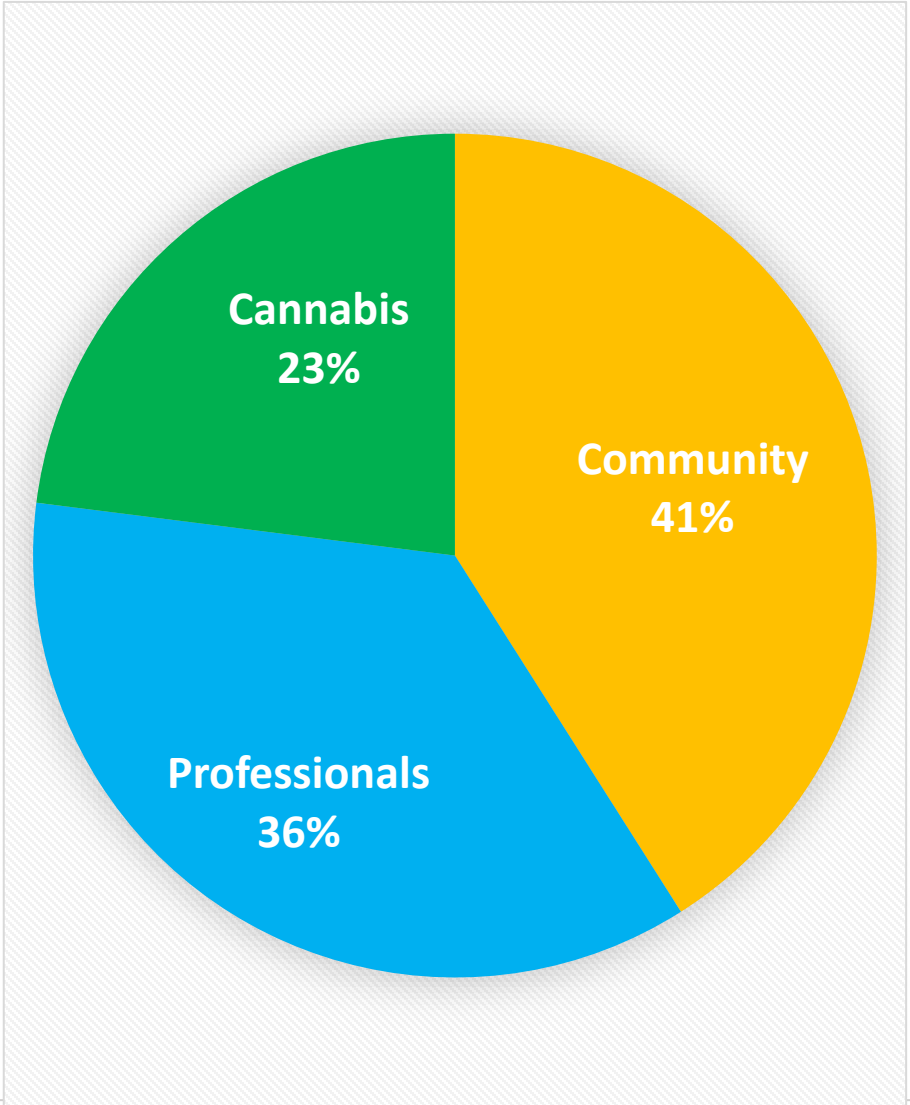
Demographics



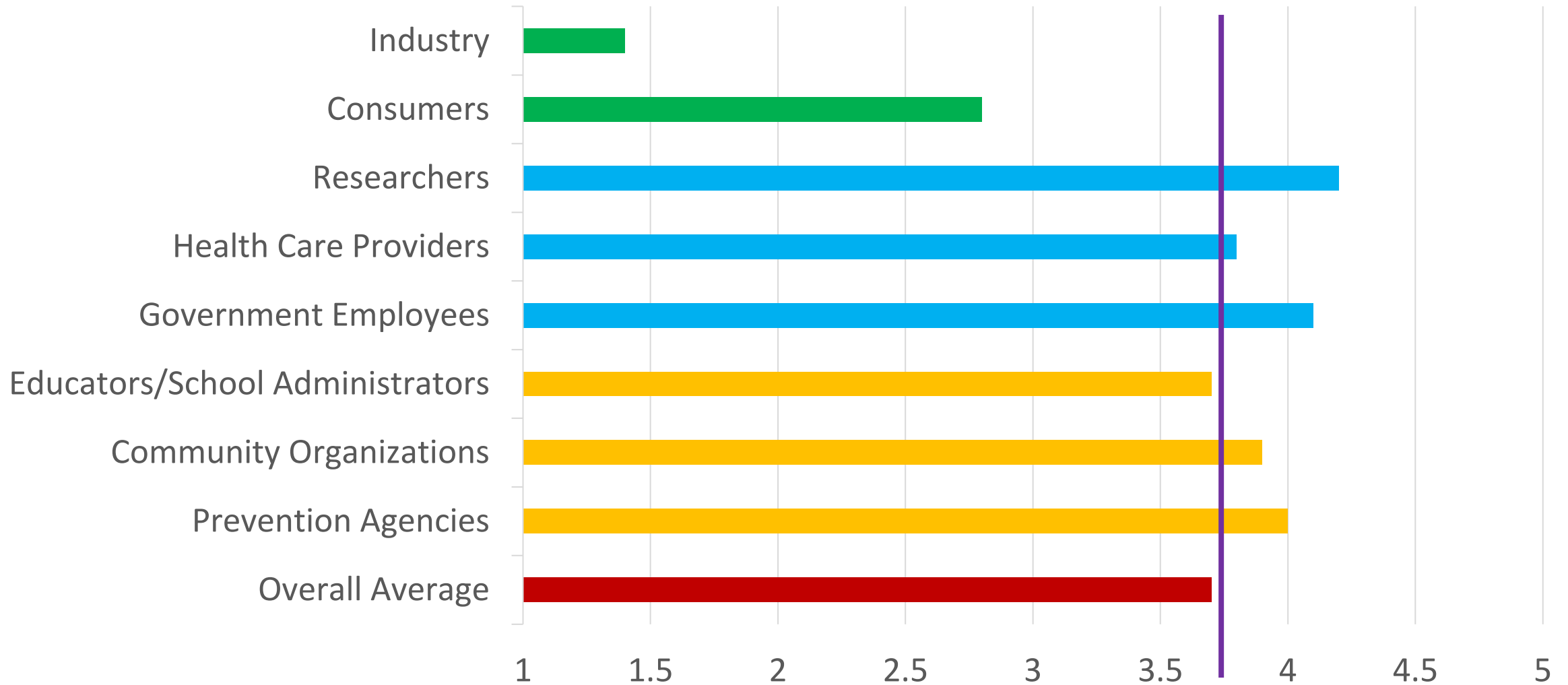
- 41% racial/ethnic minorities
- 54% Female
- 45% between 21-44 years

- 36% racial/ethnic minorities
- 54% Female
- 54% between 21-44 years

Participation by type of stakeholder and location



Concern Level for High THC



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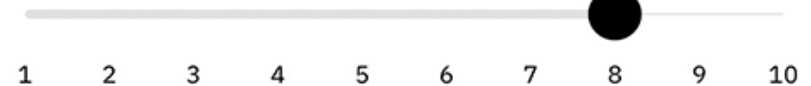
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1/1

Increase legal age for high THC products to 25 years old.

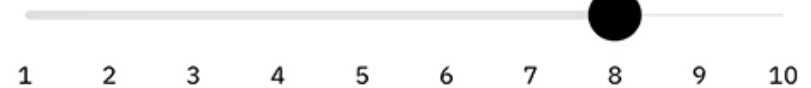
Less impactful

Very impactful

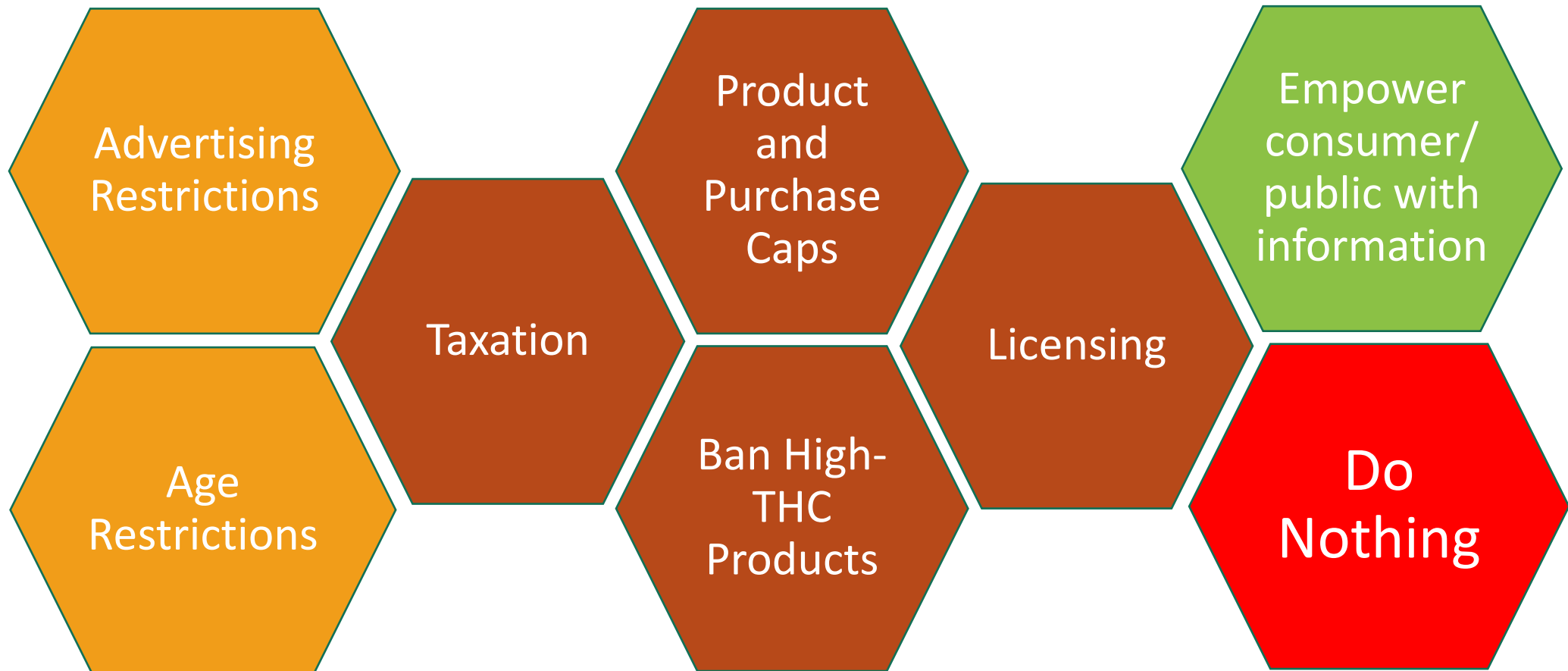


Less feasible

Very feasible



46 policy options were grouped into 7 Areas



Sort and Rate

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Less feasible

Very feasible



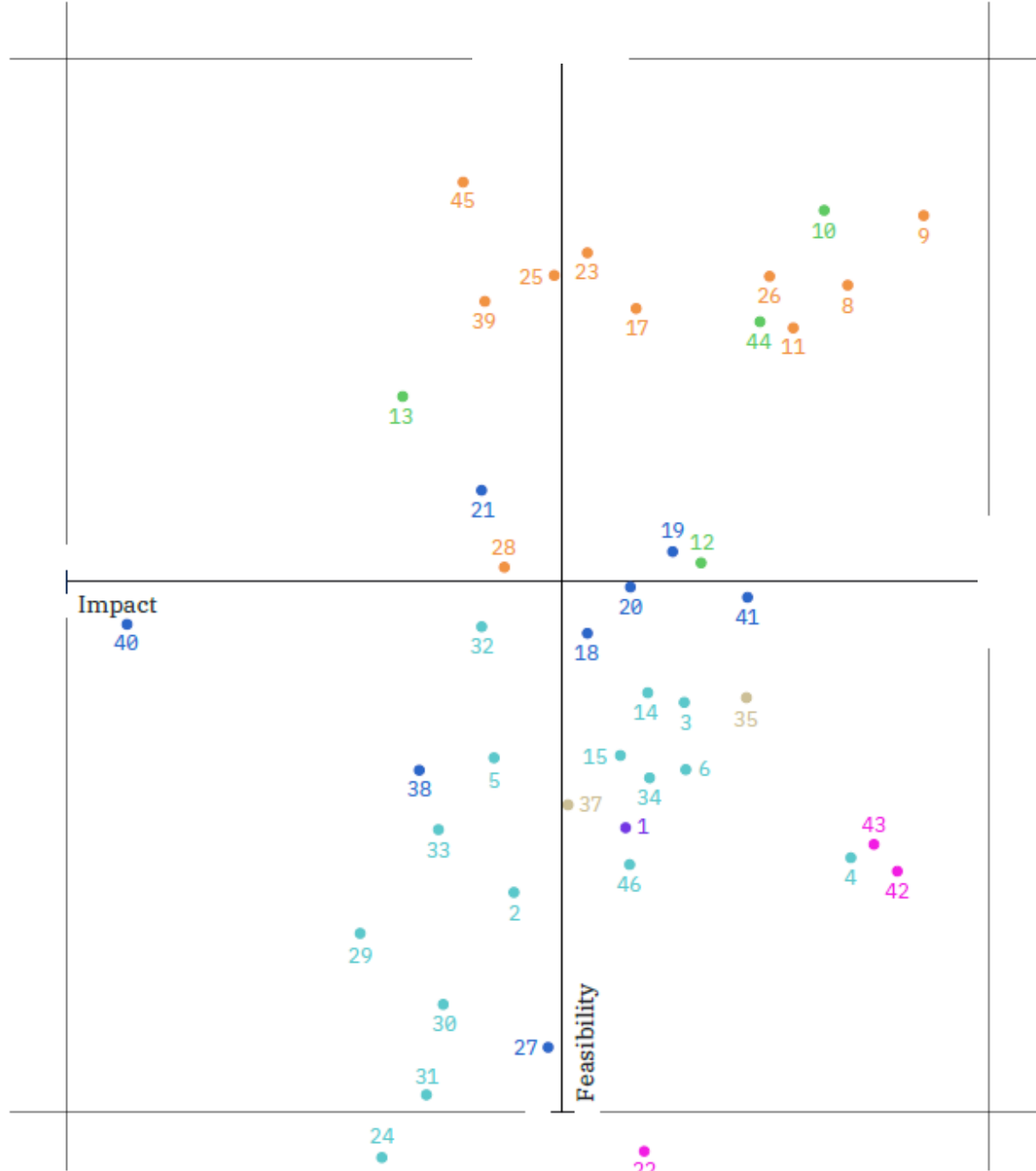
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



16 ●

3

1



4

2



Low Priority
Feasible but not
perceived as
important

Go Zone!
IMPACTFUL AND
FEASIBLE

**Stakeholders’
perceptions**
Ideas are plotted
on the go-zone
chart based on
the average
impact and
feasibility score
from all
participants

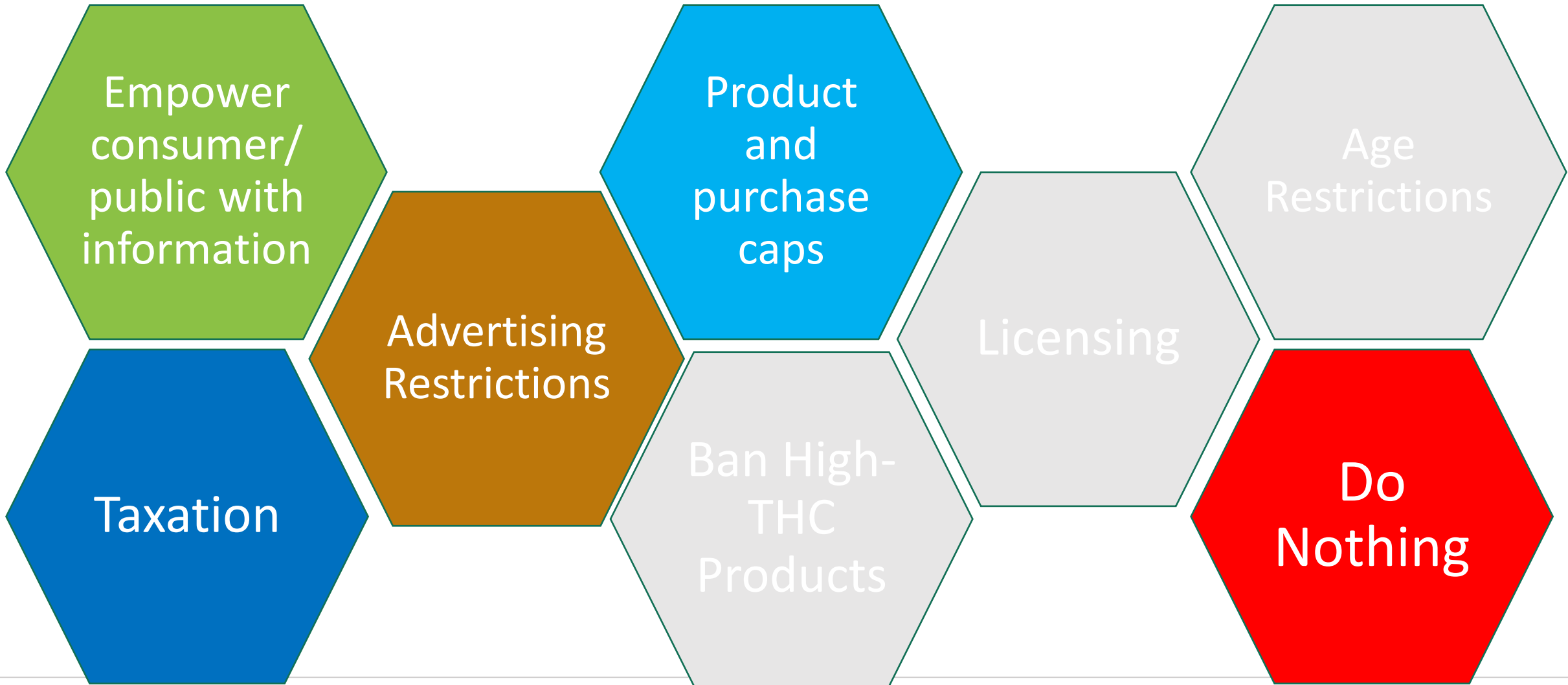
Impact

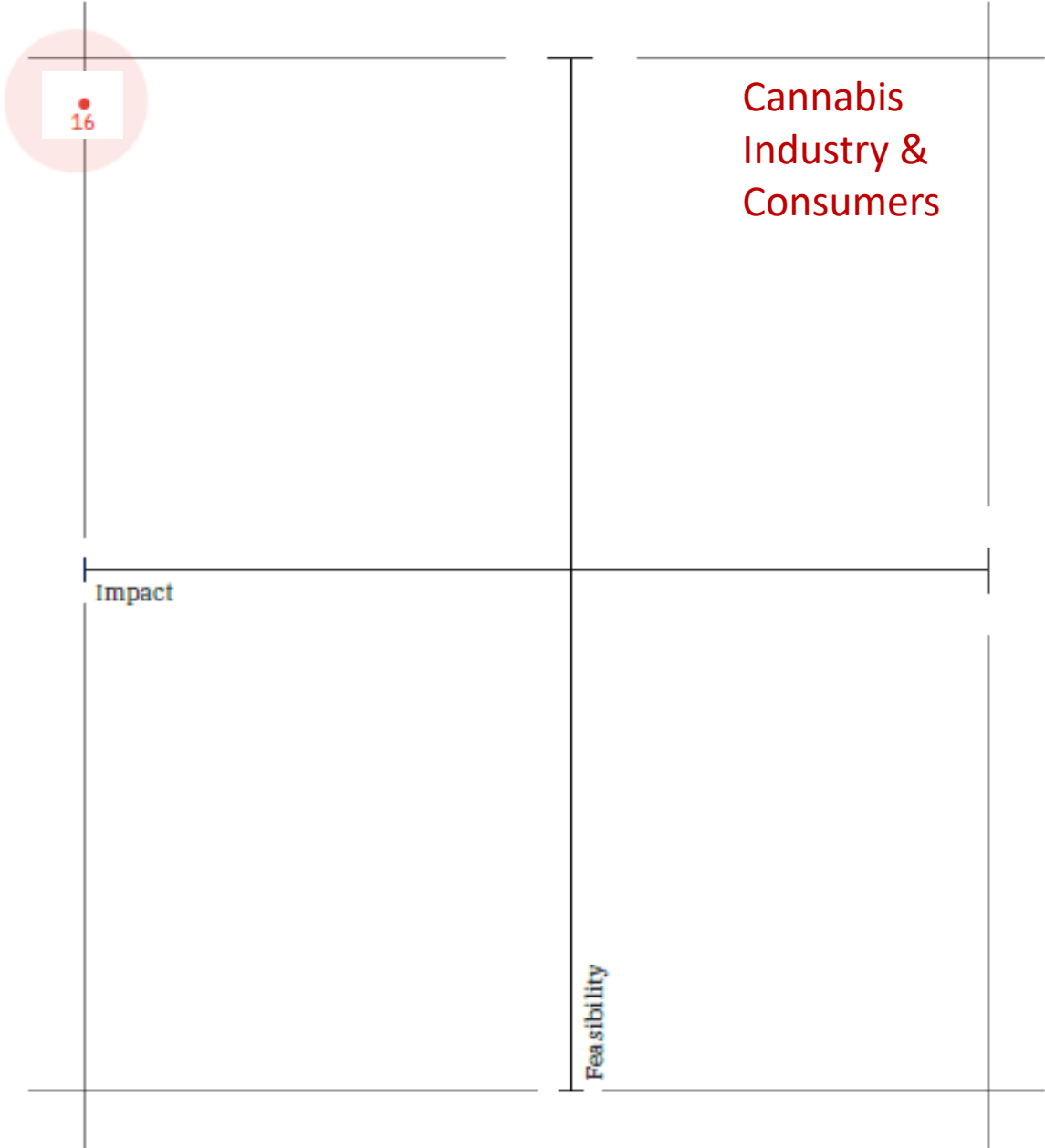
REMOVE
Low impact,
not feasible

To Explore
Impactful ideas
perceived as difficult
to implement

Feasibility

46 policy options were grouped into 7 Policy Areas

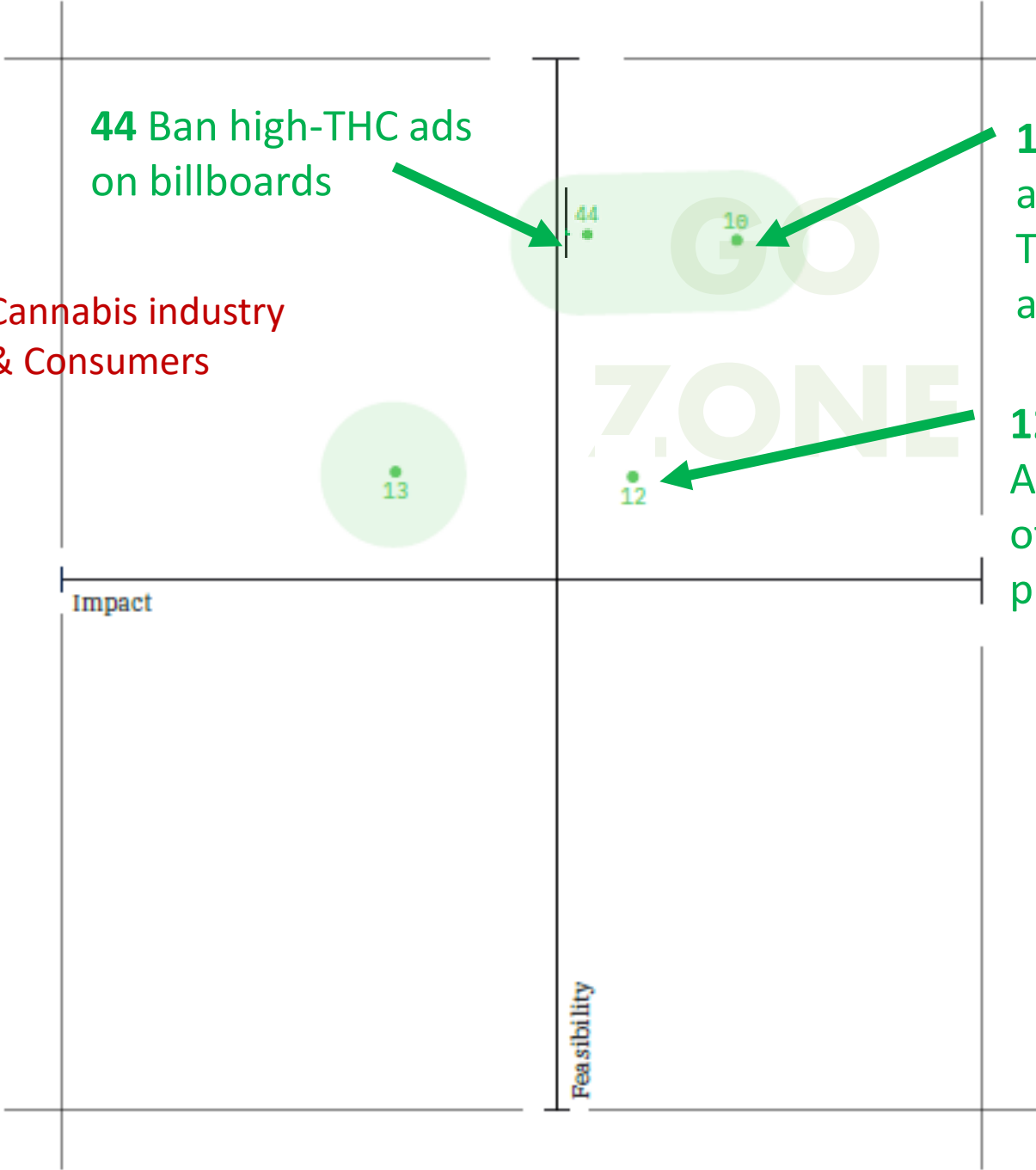




Do Nothing

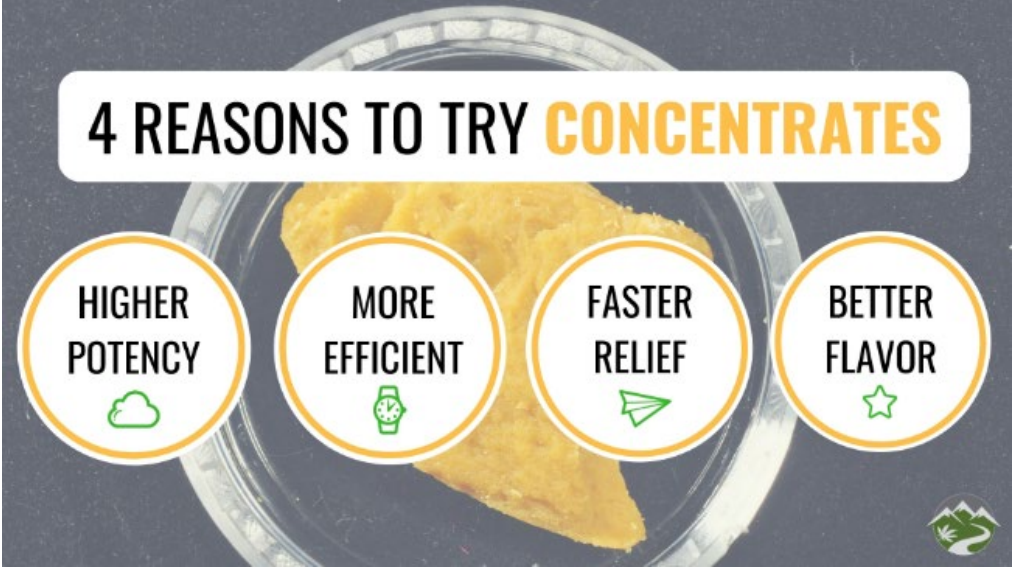
Advertising Restrictions

Cannabis industry
& Consumers

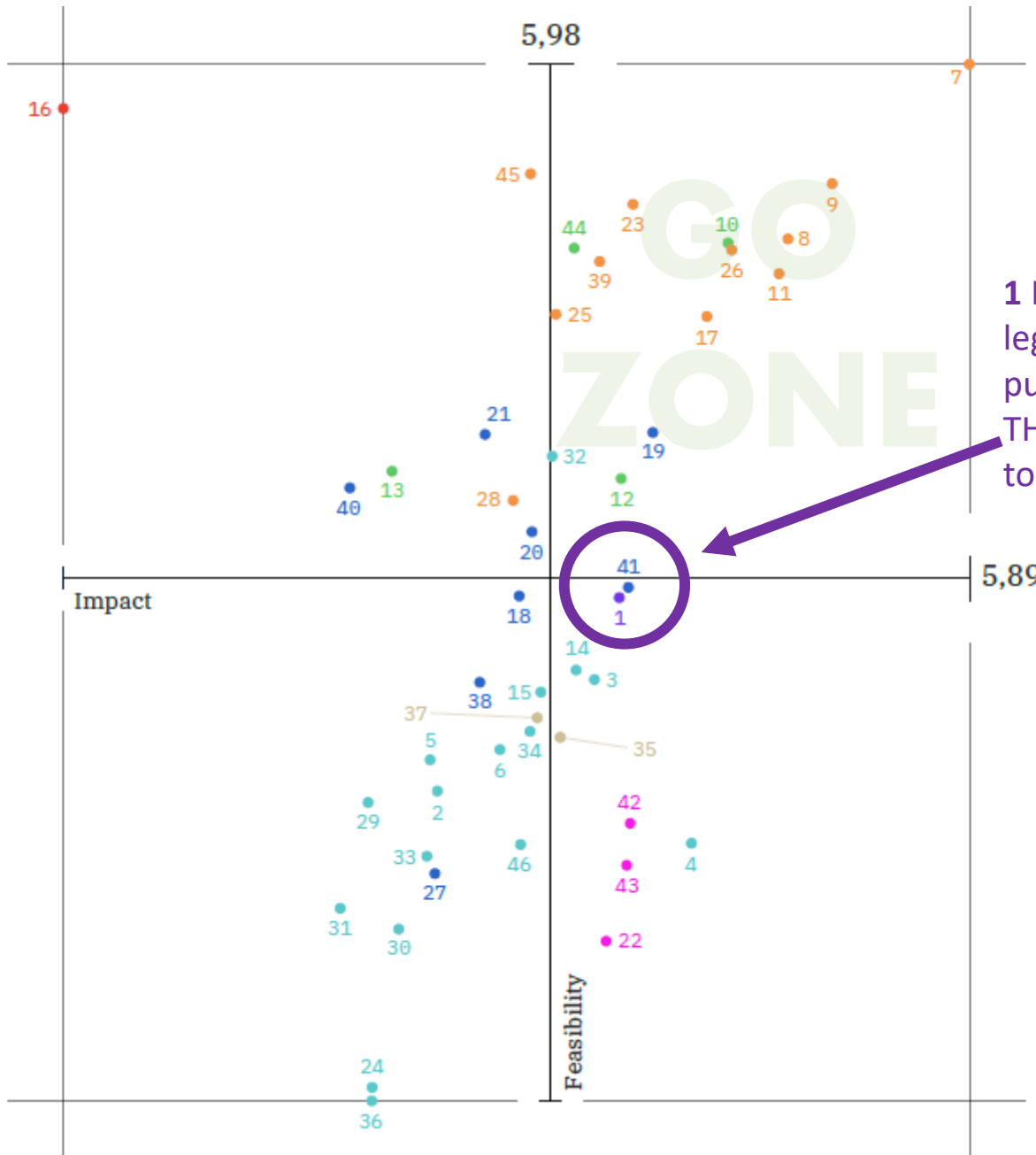


10 Restrict where advertising of high-THC products is allowed

12 Eliminate ALL advertising of high-THC products



3



1 Increase legal age to purchase high-THC products to 25

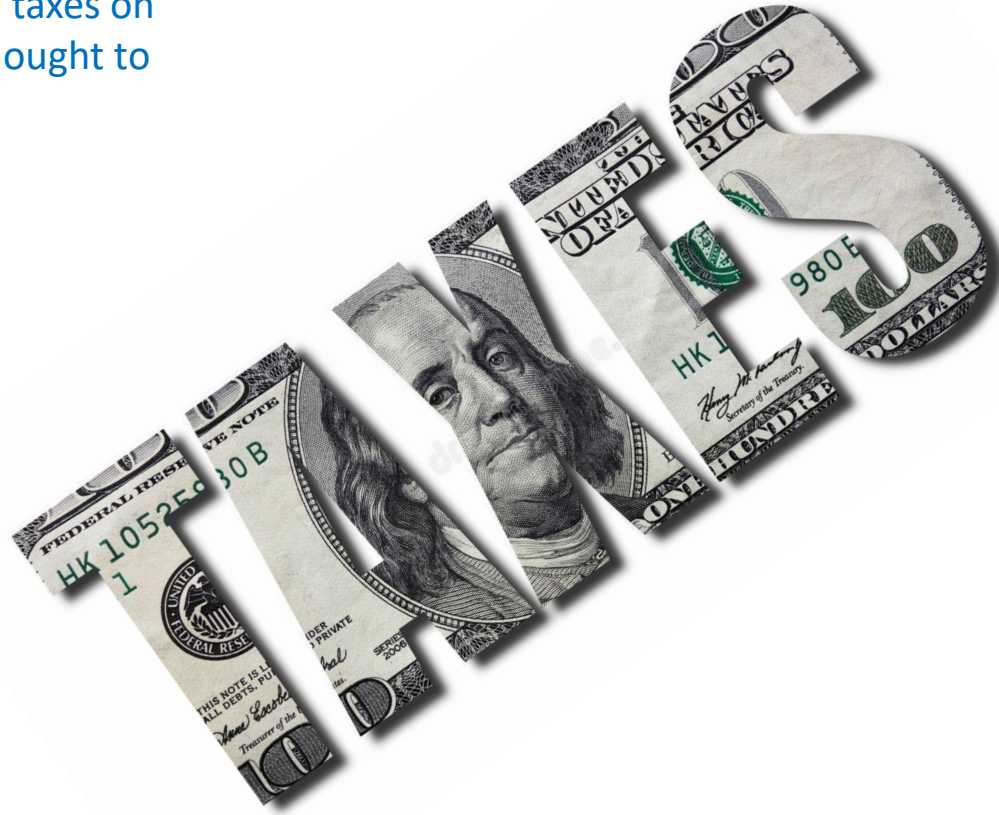
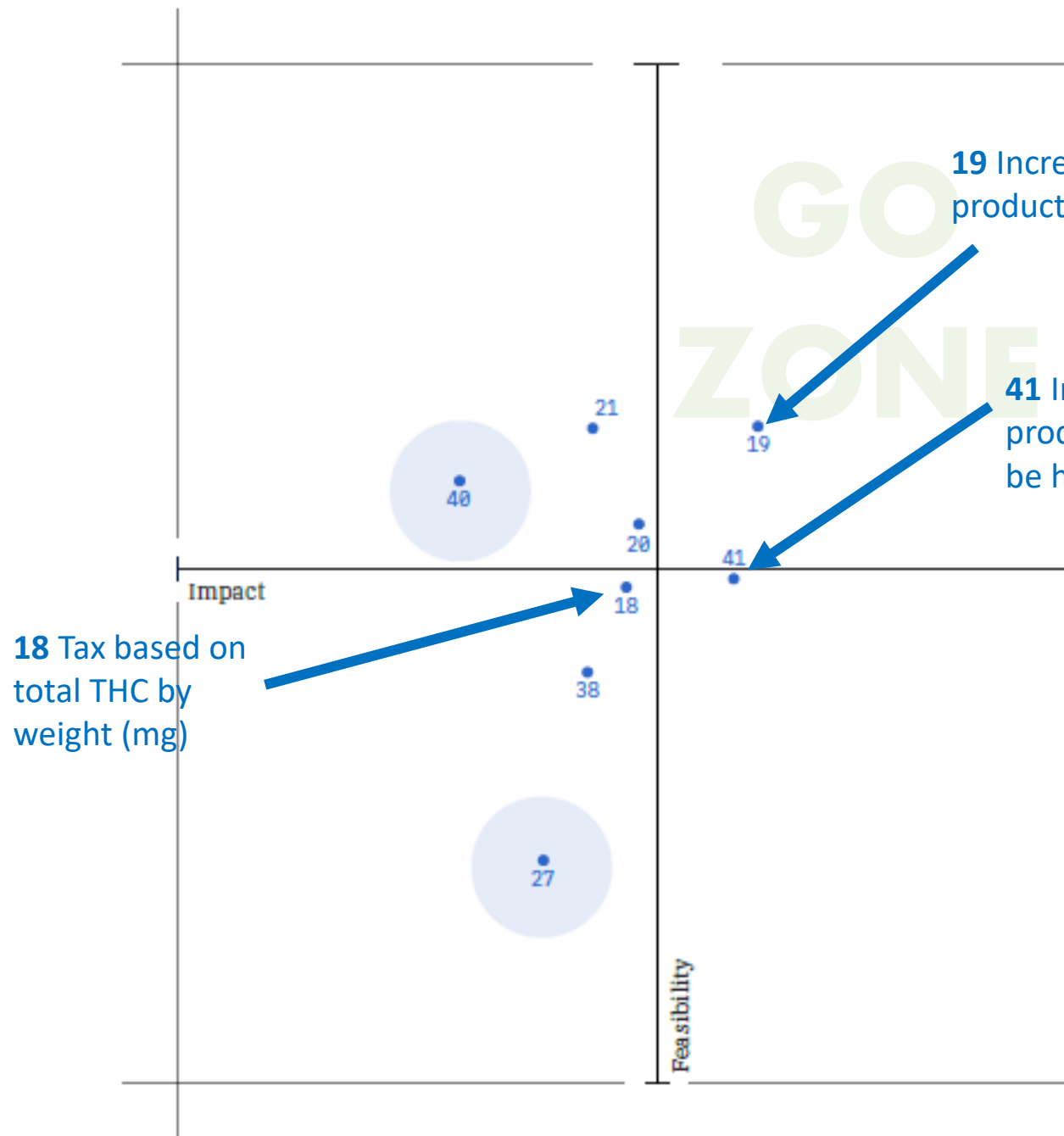
Age Restriction



4

2

Taxation

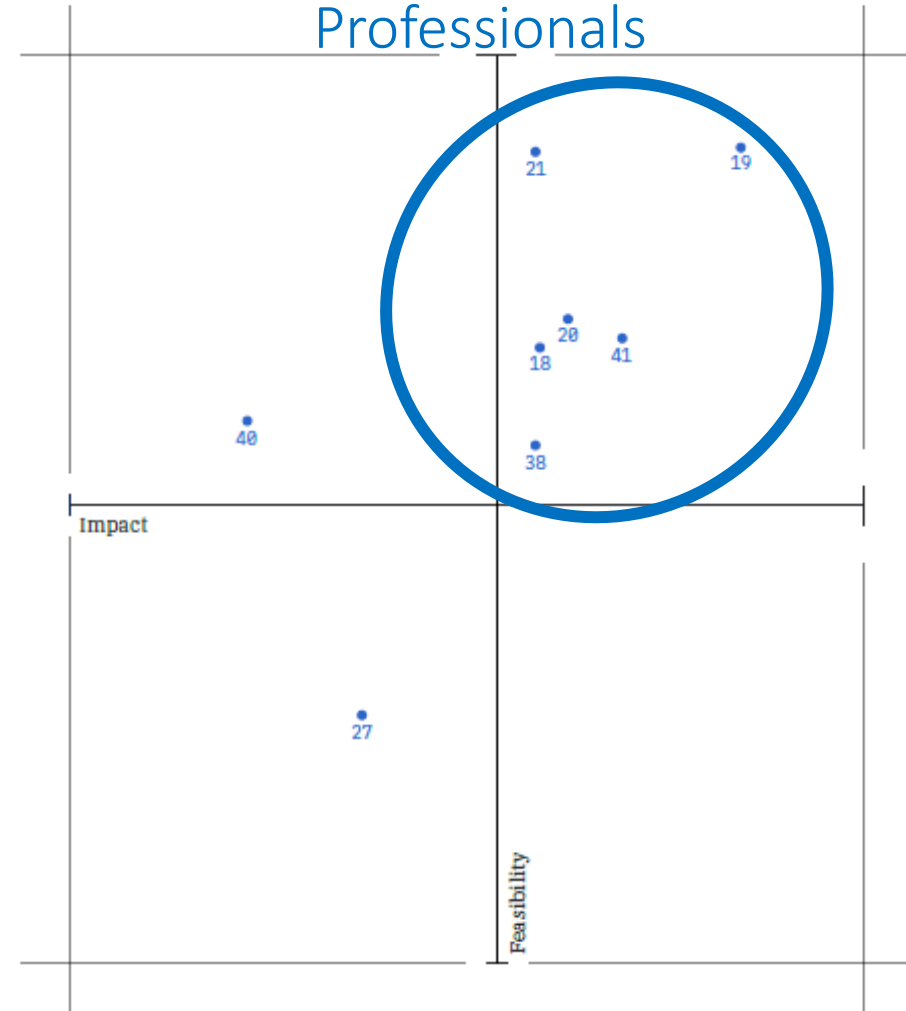


Taxation

Cannabis Industry & Consumers

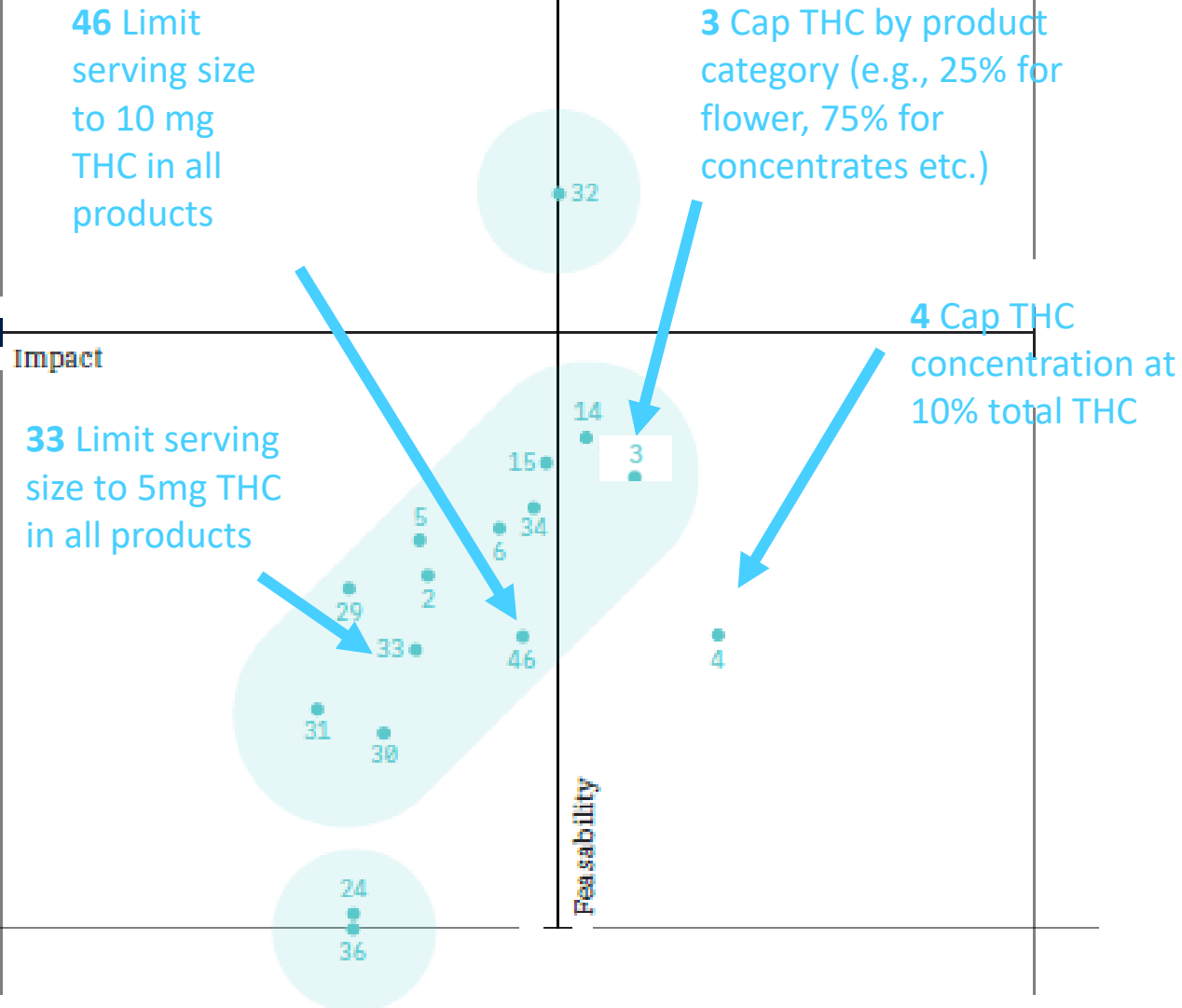


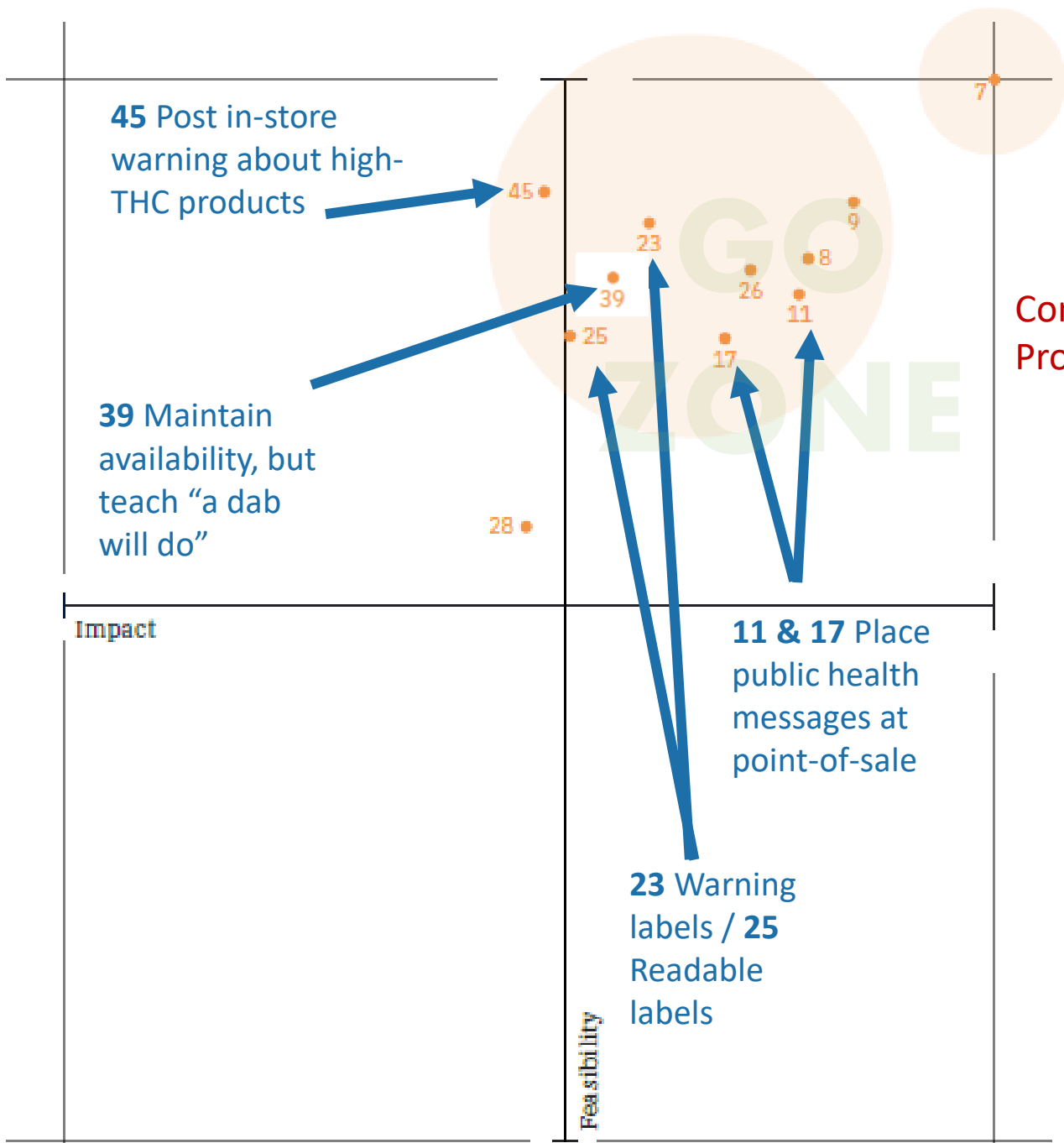
Professionals



Purchase & Product Caps

Professionals

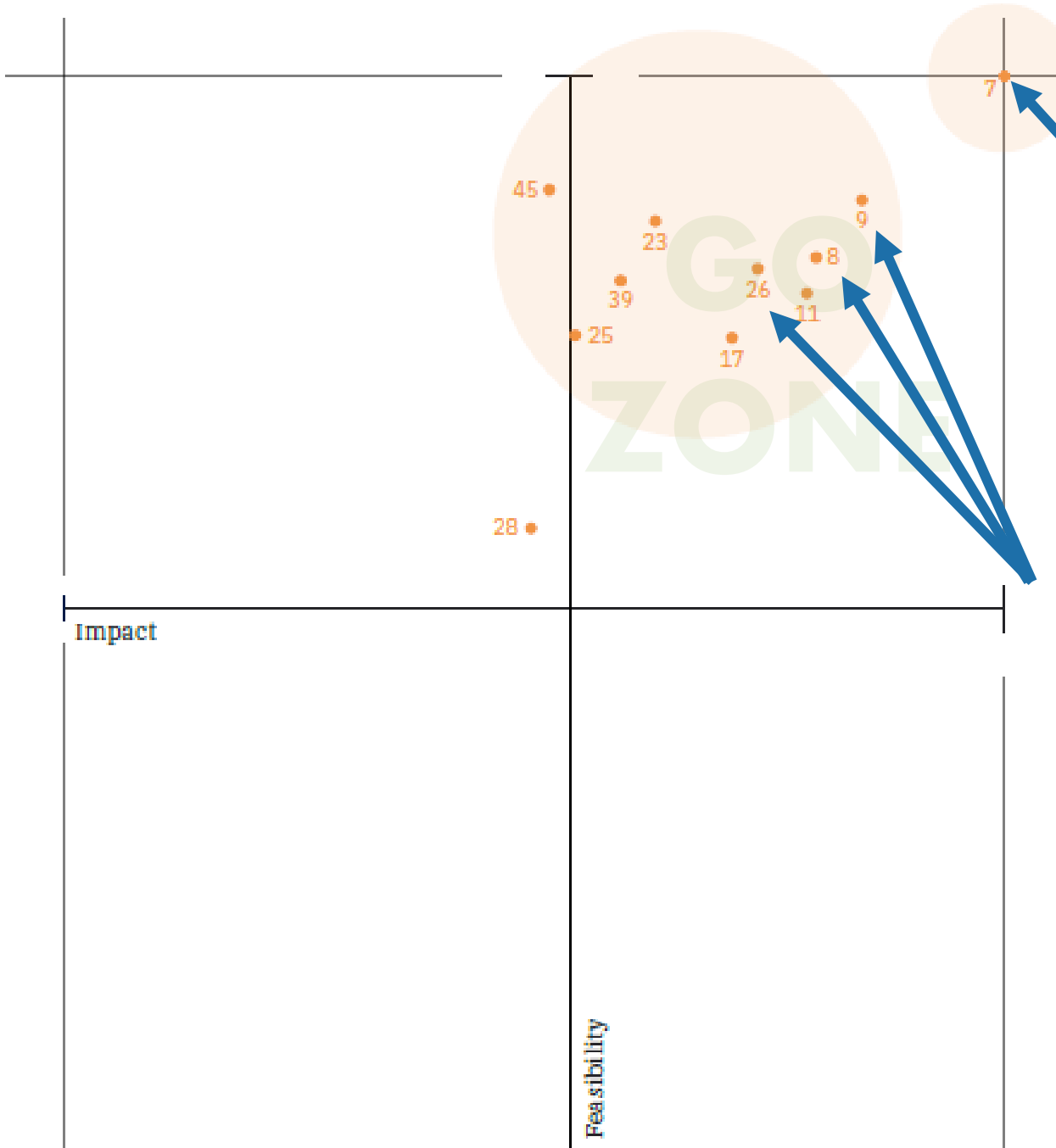




Community & Professionals

Empower consumers with information





7 Education in schools and community centers (e.g., health class in school)

8, 9 & 26 Earmark cannabis tax for PSAs/ads and social media campaign explaining risks

Empower the general public with information



Policy Implications

Stakeholders in WA

- Are concerned with High THC products for non-medical use
- Support policy changes

Policies supported include options that are backed by science and research

- Consumer empowerment - Health warning labels, readable labels
- Advertising Ban
- Age gating
- Tax increase proportional to THC content/concentration for non-medical use

Acknowledgments

Study participants

ADAI team

Project advisory group members

Polygon Inc.

Caislin Firth, PhD

Thanks!

bia@uw.edu