



What do stakeholders want? Mapping acceptable policies to curb high THC cannabis in Washington state.

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Prevention Research Sub-Committee Meeting

12.1.2022

Topics

Context

Approach: concept mapping

How we did it

Results

Policy implications

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Remember 2020??

*A Year We
Won't Forget*

Context: Report & Consensus Statement – PRSC/ HCA

RESEARCH BRIEF

November 2020 | A report for the WA State Prevention Research Subcommittee (PRSC)



Cannabis Concentration and Health Risks: Is High Potency associated with Adverse Health Effects?

The intent of this brief is to provide policy makers with a summary of the scientific evidence on topics of public health importance related to cannabis concentration.

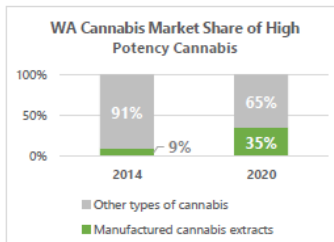
Current Context

Cannabis has been legalized for adult use in our state since 2012, and cultivation, processing, and sales are run by businesses focused on product development and marketing.

THC is the best-known psychoactive ingredient in the cannabis plant that causes people upon consumption to feel high. High potency manufactured cannabis concentrates, such as oils & butters, contain THC levels varying from 60-90%. These levels are a 6-to-9-fold increase over what was considered "high potent" cannabis back when the main method of use was smoking the cannabis plant.

These manufactured cannabis extracts now represent 35% of the Washington cannabis market, up from 9% in 2014. *But is high potency cannabis use safe?*

In an attempt to better understand the current scientific evidence of the health and behavioral risks of high potency cannabis use, a workgroup of researchers from the University of Washington and Washington State University spent six months reviewing the research on this subject.



The [resulting report](#) reveals both important public health information and important gaps in the research, both of which can help guide informed policy. These findings are related to non-medical use of cannabis only.

Report Findings

- **Young people are particularly vulnerable.** There is strong evidence of the detrimental impact of THC use during adolescence, and negative impacts may be exacerbated for those who use high potency cannabis or use more frequently.
- **The risk of developing cannabis use disorder or addiction,** particularly among adolescents, is higher with use of high potency cannabis products.

University of Washington | Washington State University | Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute

Joint UW & WSU Workgroup:

Beatriz Carlini, PhD, MPH, UW, Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute (Chair)
Celestina Barbosa-Leiker, PhD, WSU, Health Sciences
Carrie Cuttler, PhD, WSU, Department of Psychology
Julia Dilley, PhD, MES, Multnomah Co. Health Department & OR Public Health Division
Caislin Firth, PhD, MPH, UW, Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute
Kevin Haggerty, PhD, MSW, UW, School of Social Work
Jason Kilmer, PhD, UW, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Michael McDonell, PhD, MS, WSU, College of Medicine, Behavioral Health Innovations
Nephi Stella, PhD, UW, Depts of Pharmacology and Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Denise Walker, PhD, UW, Innovative Programs Research Group
Dale Willits, PhD, WSU, Criminal Justice & Criminology

With:

Sara Broschart, WA State Liquor and Cannabis Board
Trecia Ehrlich, WA State Liquor and Cannabis Board
Kristen Haley, WA State Department of Health
Christine Steele, WA HCA, Division of Behavioral Health & Recovery
Liz Wilhelm, Prevention WINS

Consensus:

NON-MEDICAL, COMMERCIAL REGULATED CANNABIS

THC content of cannabis products contributes to adverse health effects in a **dose-response** manner.

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)

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](#)

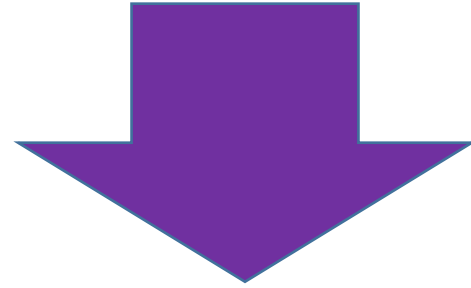
<https://adai.uw.edu/cerp/symposium-2022>

Proviso mandate

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



Context



North America Context

- Policies
- Initiatives
- Programs

Local Stakeholders

- **Concept mapping**
- Interviews

Research evidence

- Cannabis
- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Unhealthy foods

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Concept Mapping

Capture collective thinking to find policy solutions

Stakeholders: Voice their opinion

- Anonymous
- Equitable
- Online
- Two rounds of participation

Research team: Listen

- Synthesize data
- Find areas of common ground
- Make recommendations



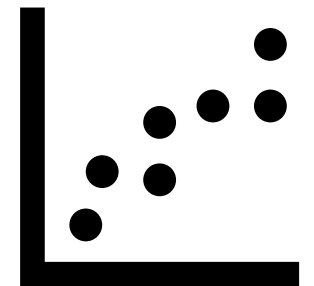
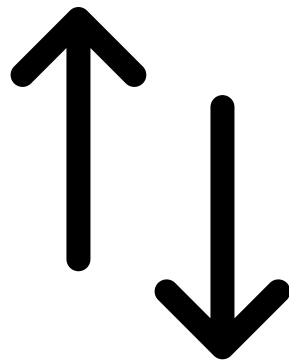
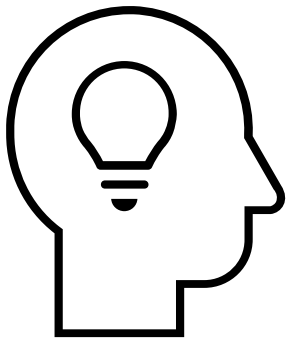
Concept Mapping: Process

Generation
of Ideas

Structuring of
policy ideas

Sorting and Rating

Analysis/
Interpretation



Topics

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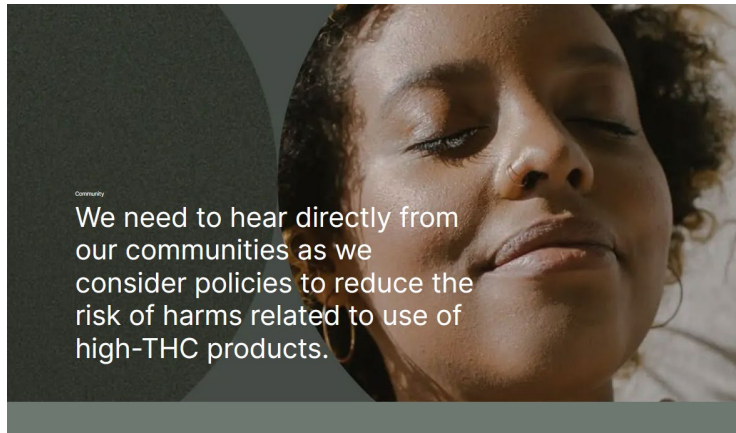
Strategic Dissemination/ Purposeful recruitment

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



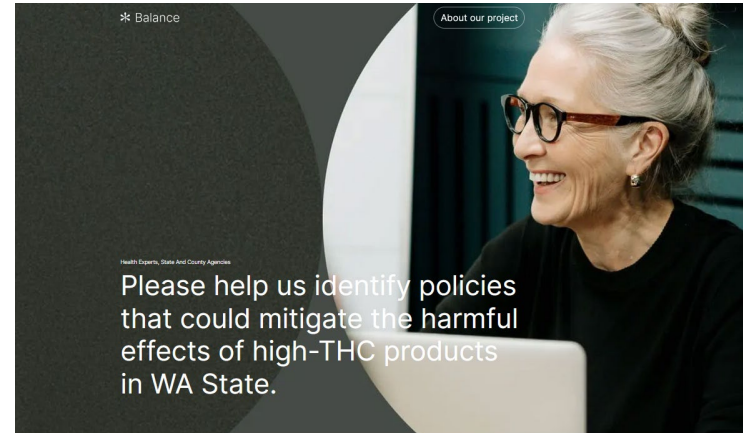
Stakeholders' groups

Community



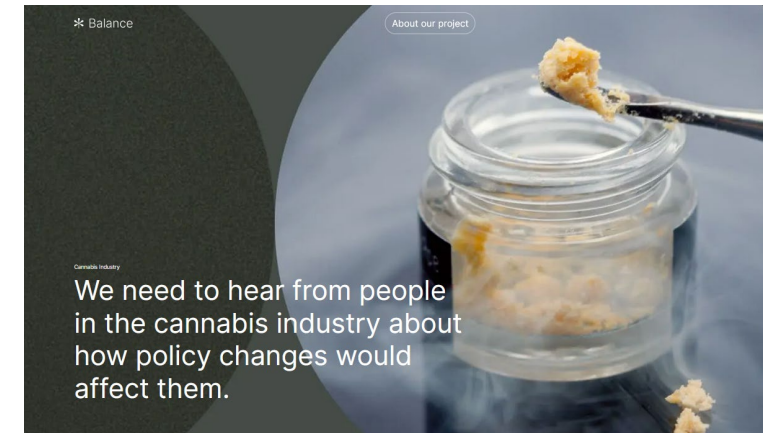
Prevention, social justice and youth-centered organizations, parents, educators and youth

Professionals



Health care providers, law enforcement, government agencies, researchers

Cannabis' advocates



Workers, representatives, press, consumers

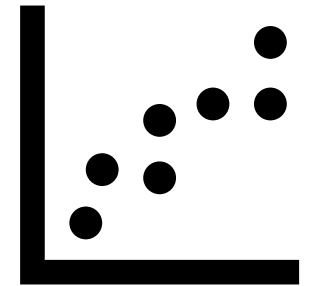
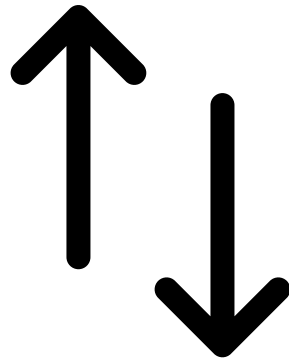
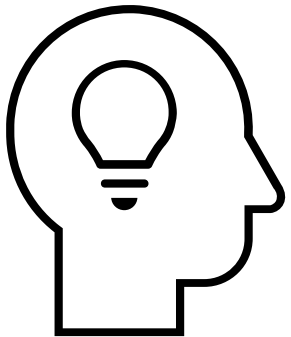
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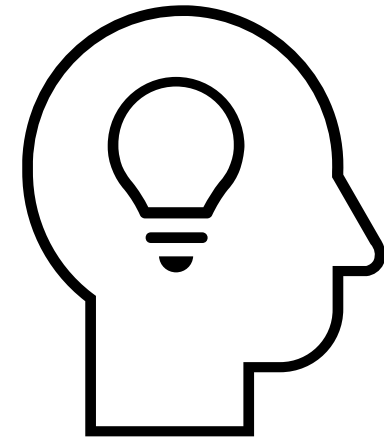
Ideas generation: Brainstorming

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

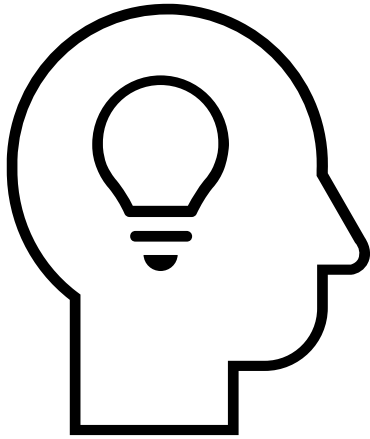
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2-

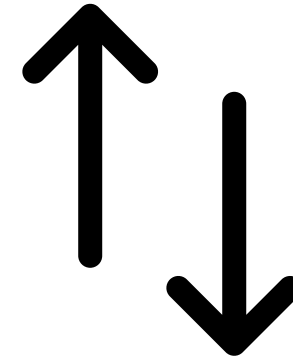
3-



Structuring/consolidating ideas



Redundancy,
Unrelated
comments



302 ideas



46 policy ideas

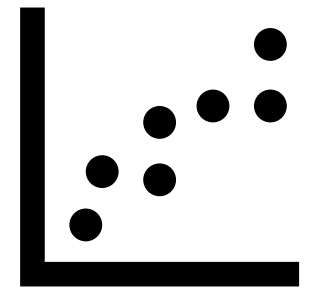
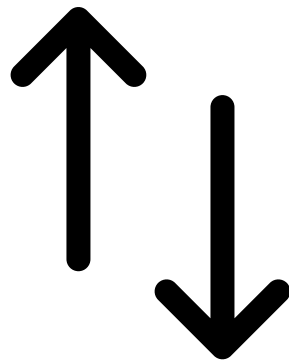
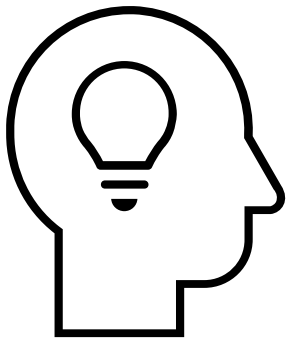
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1

Read the list of ideas

1/20

[Redacted text]

2/20

[Redacted text]



We will ask you to take a few minutes to read the ideas that have been presented in order to get a sense of all the 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

Less feasible

Very feasible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Topics

Context

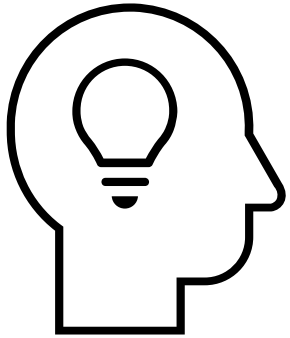
Approach: concept mapping

How we did it

Results

Lessons learned/ implications

Participation

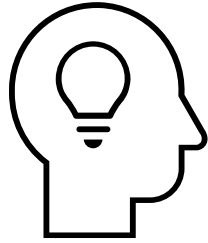


109 total participants



160 total participants

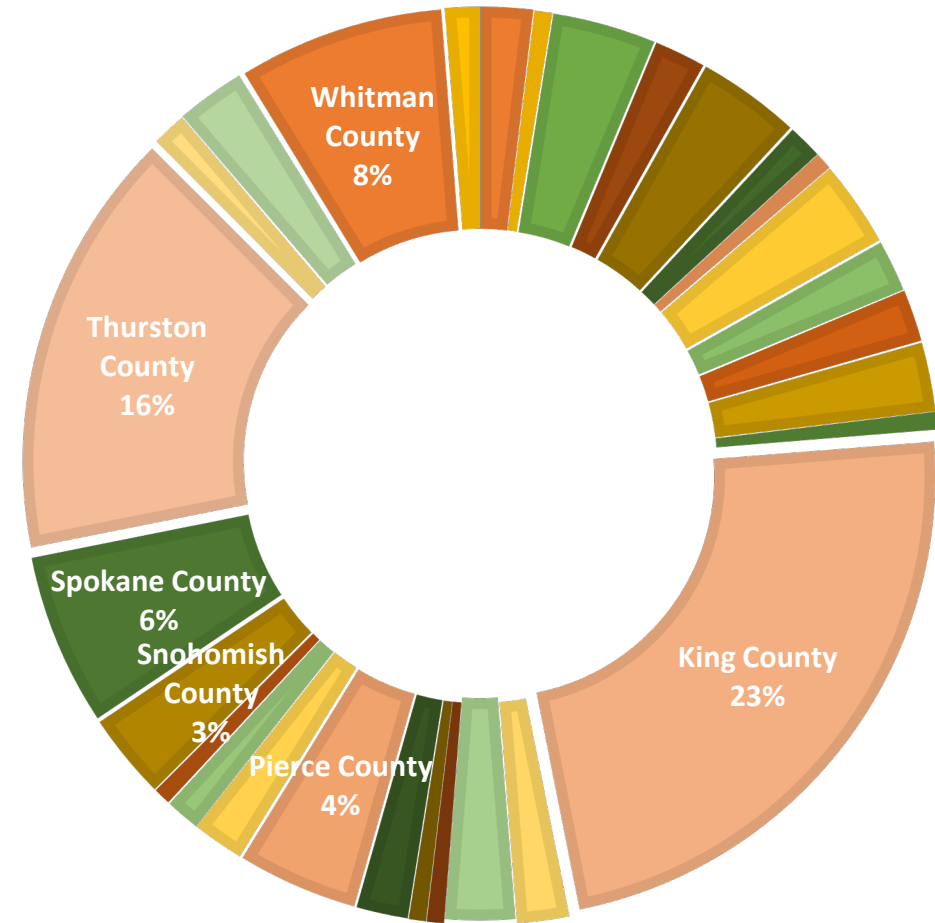
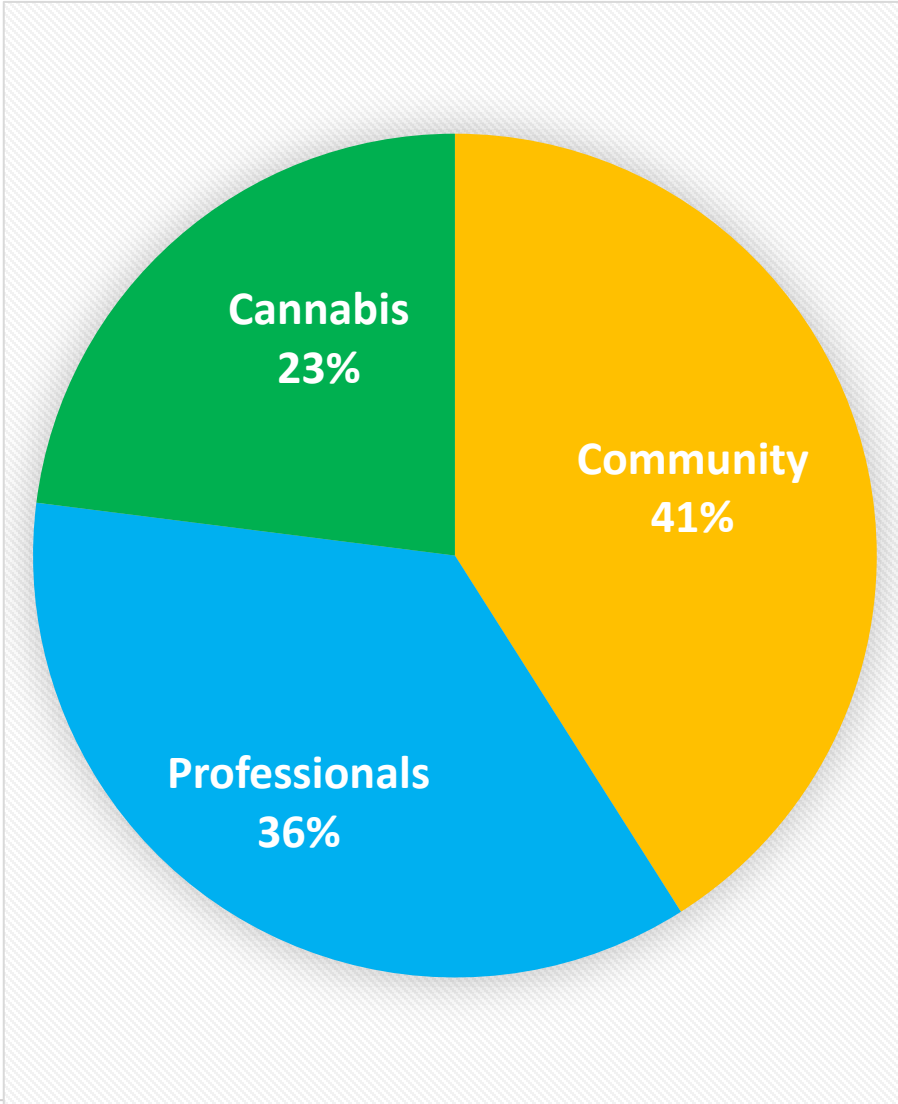
Demographics



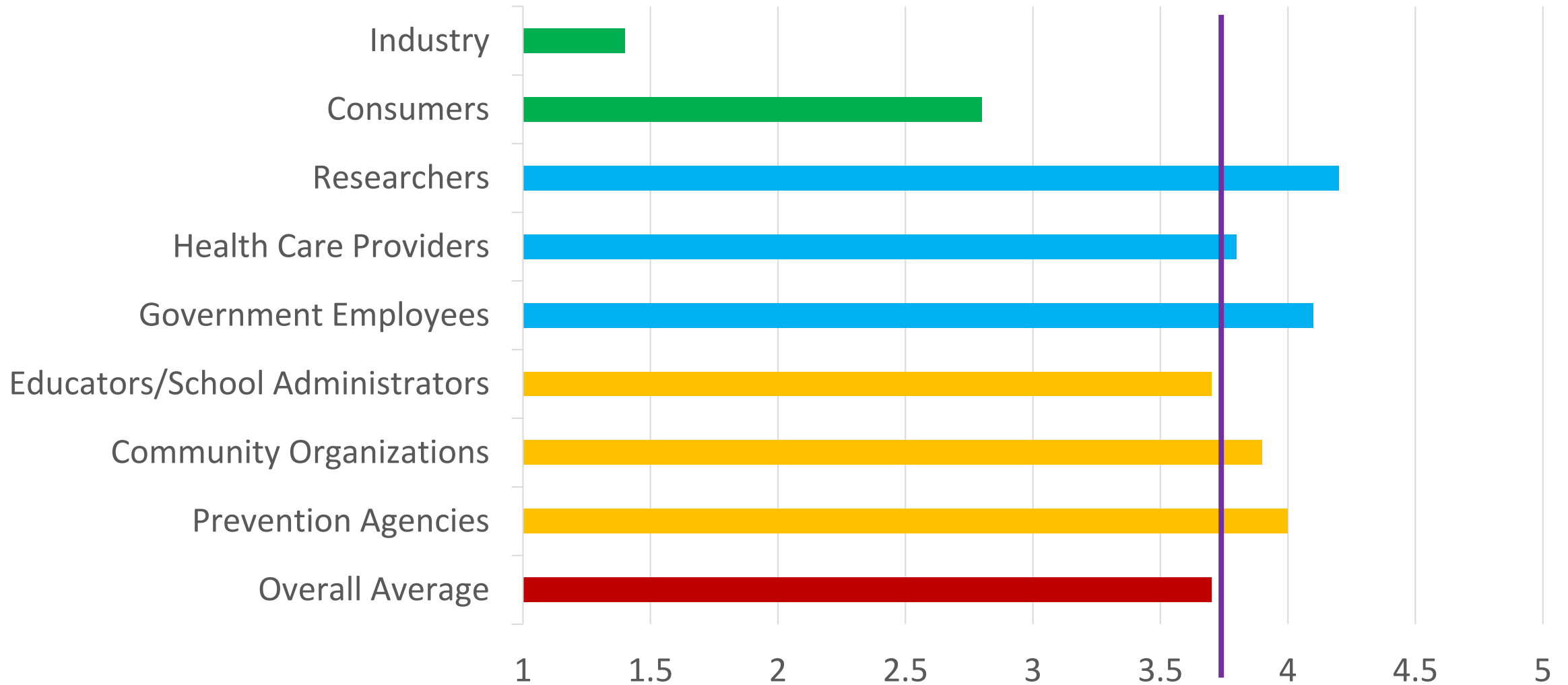
- 41% racial/ethnic minorities
- 54% Female
- 45% between 21-44 years

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

Participation by type of stakeholder and WA County



Concern Level for High THC



Sort and Rate

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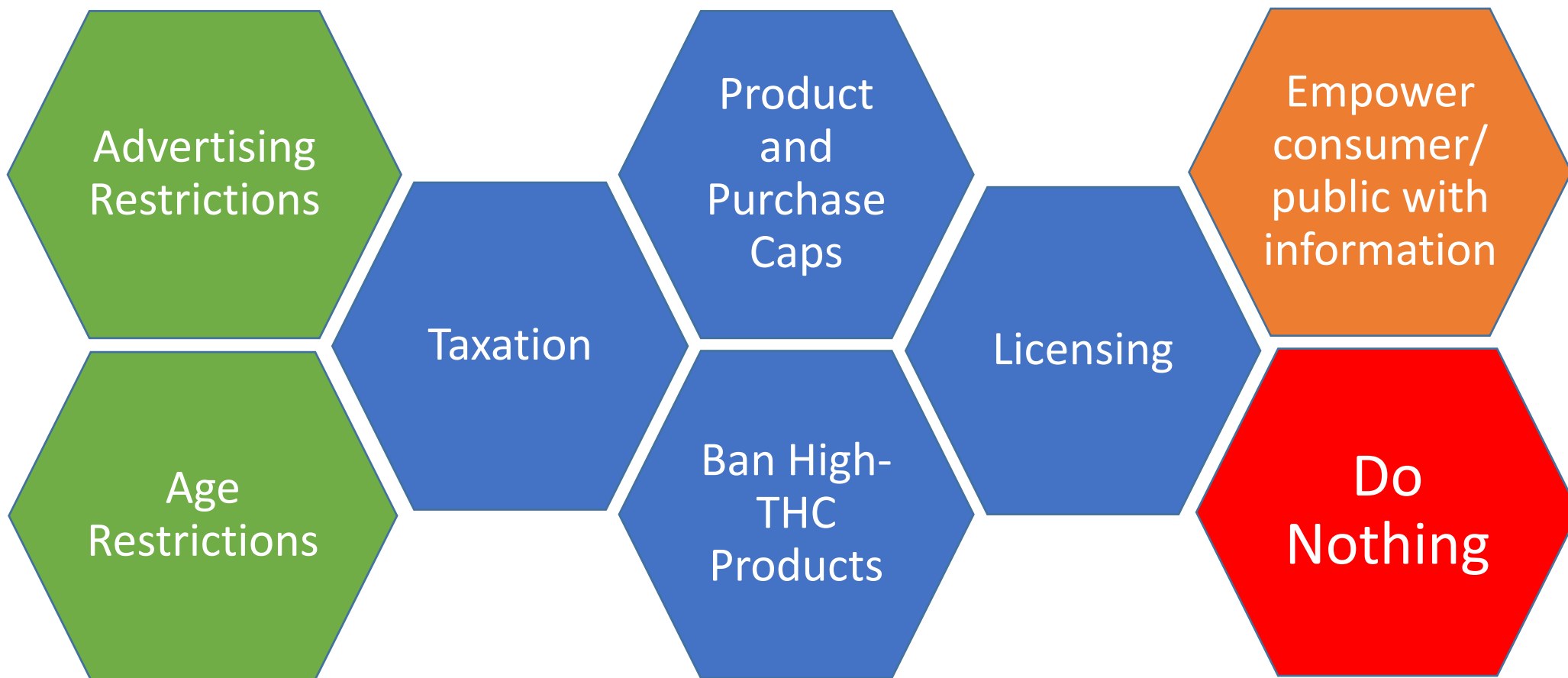
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Less feasible

Very feasible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

46 policy options were grouped into 7 Areas



Sort and Rate

Sort ideas into groups

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Unsorted

Add to group

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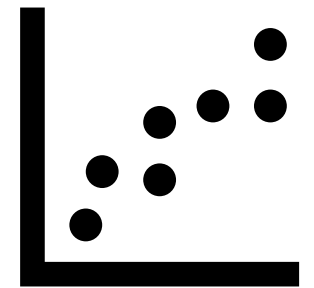
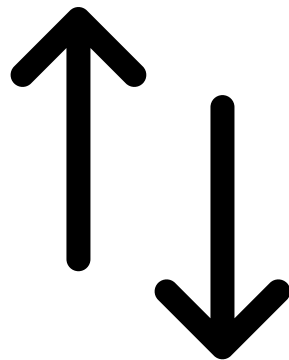
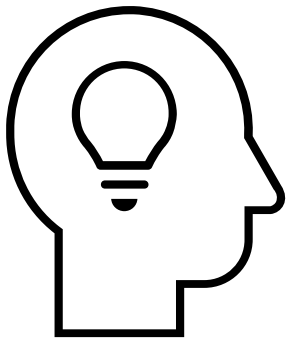
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Low Priority
Feasible but not
perceived as
important

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

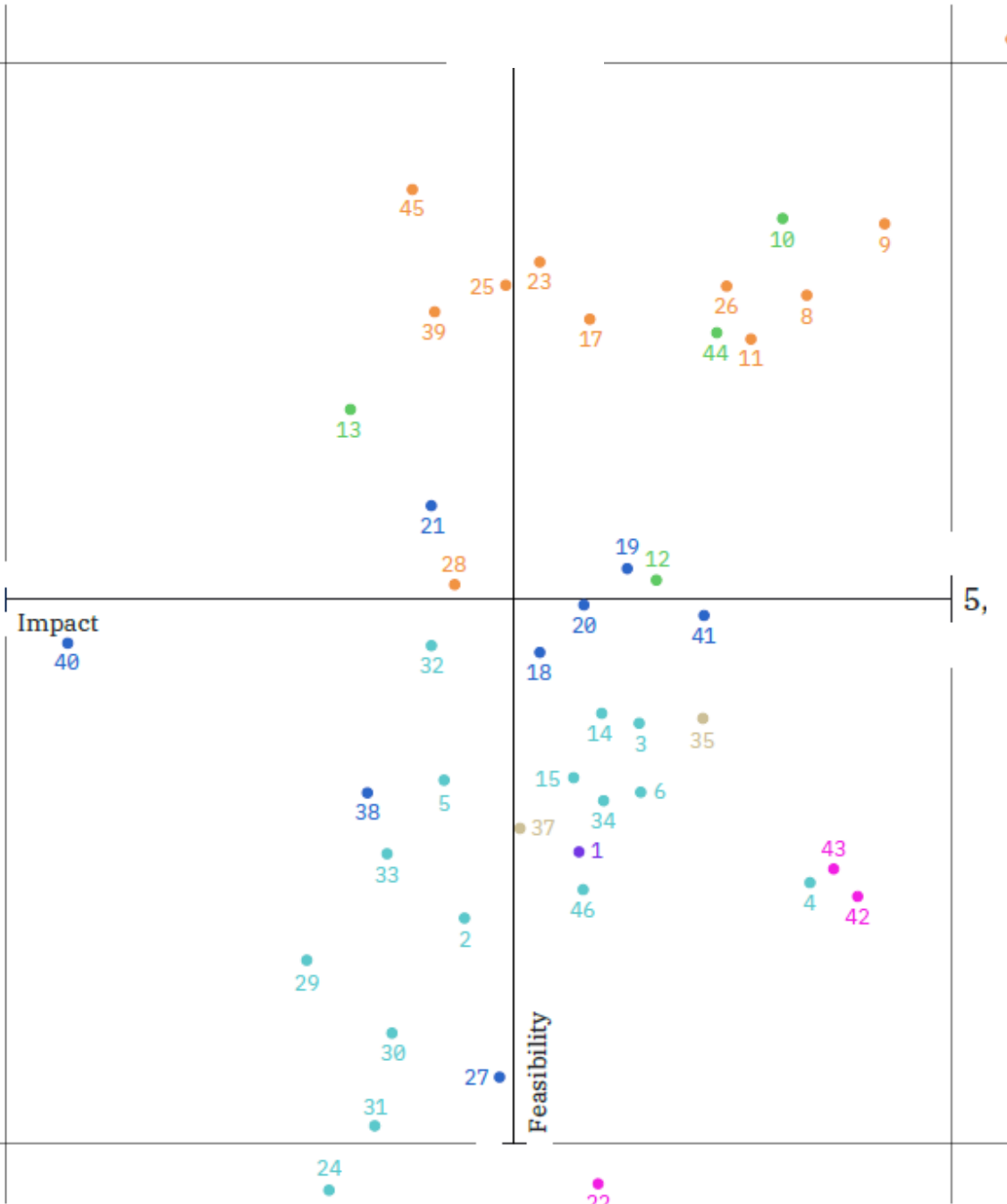
GoZone

16 •

3

•7

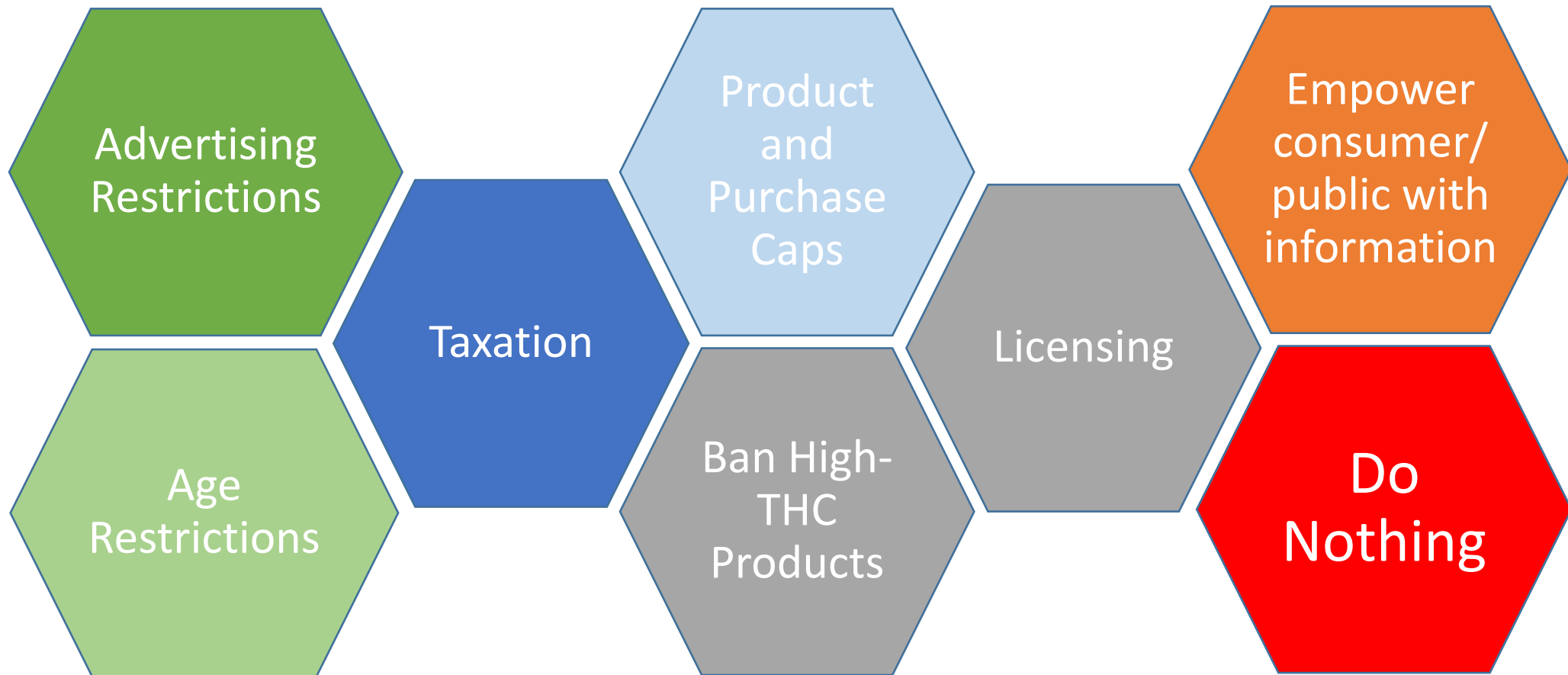
1



4

2

46 policy options were grouped into 7 Areas



Advertising Restrictions

Cannabis industry
& Consumers

44 Ban high-THC ads
on billboards

10 Restrict where
advertising of high-
THC products is
allowed

12 Eliminate
ALL advertising
of high-THC
products

13

12

44

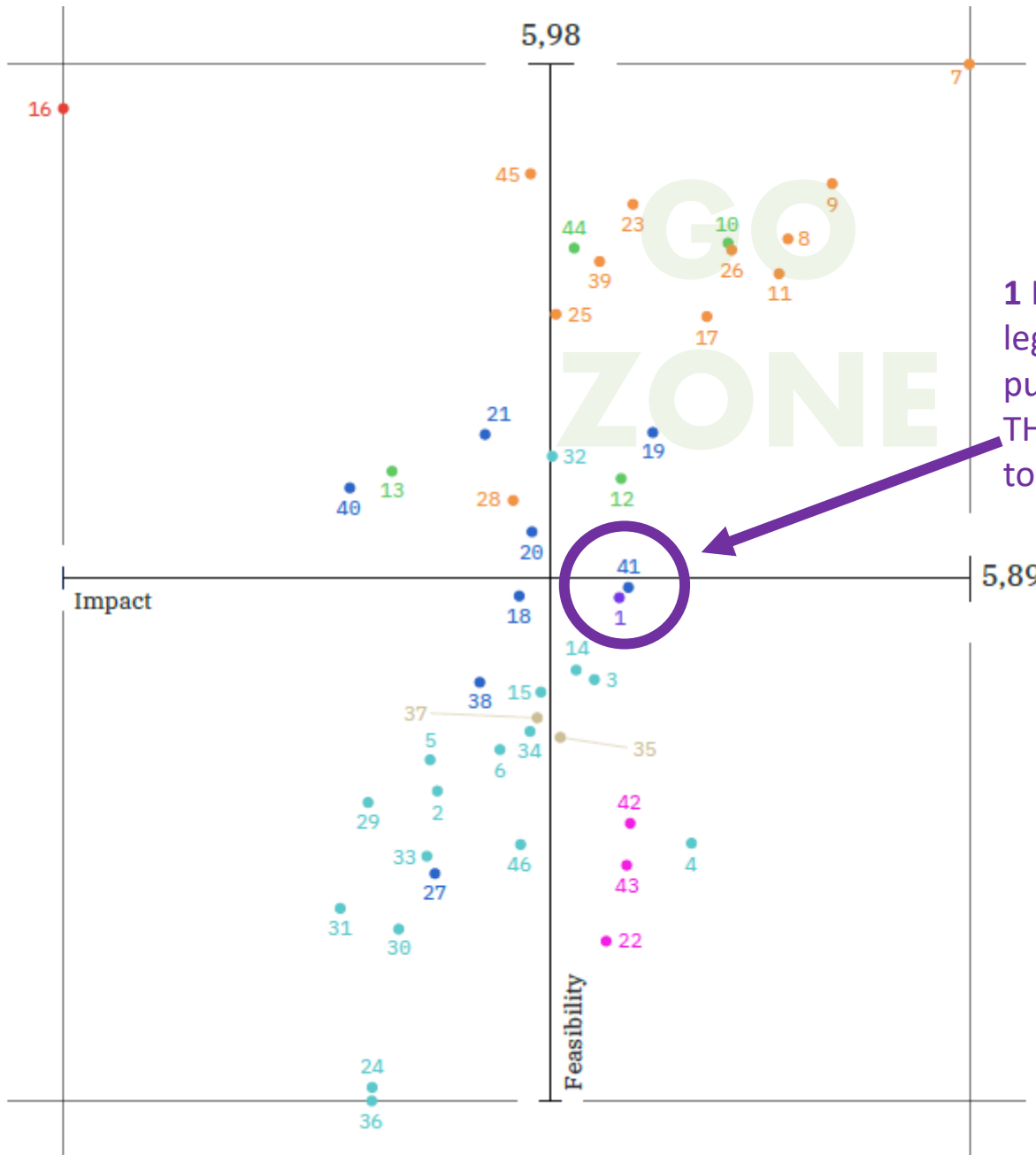
10

Impact

Feasibility

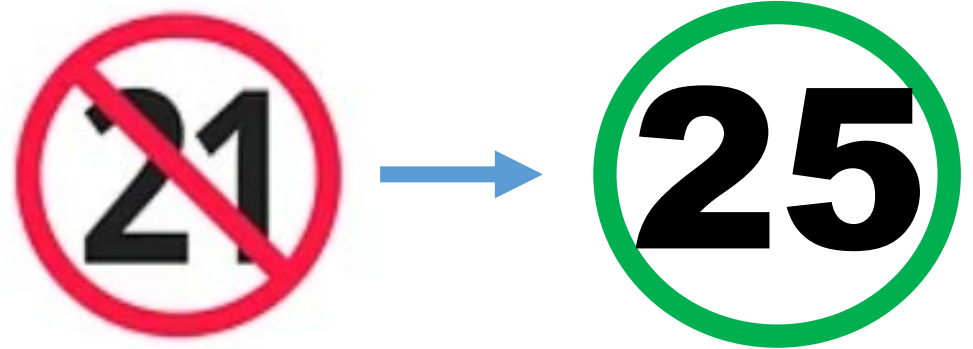


3



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

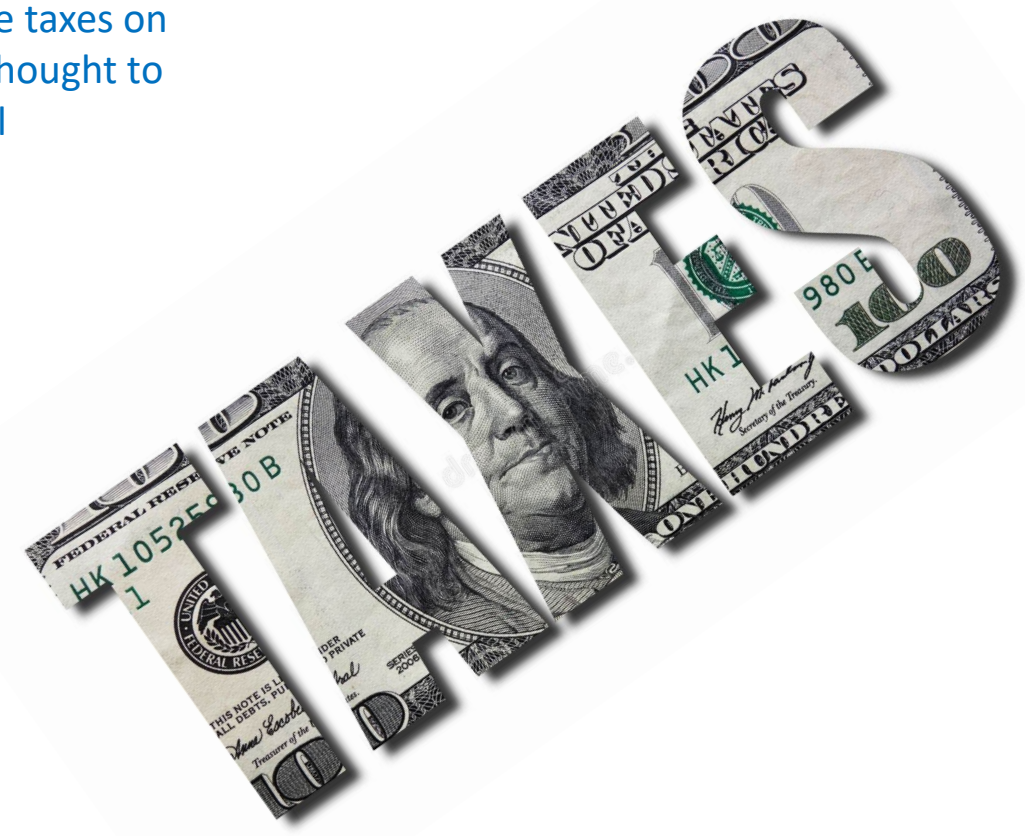
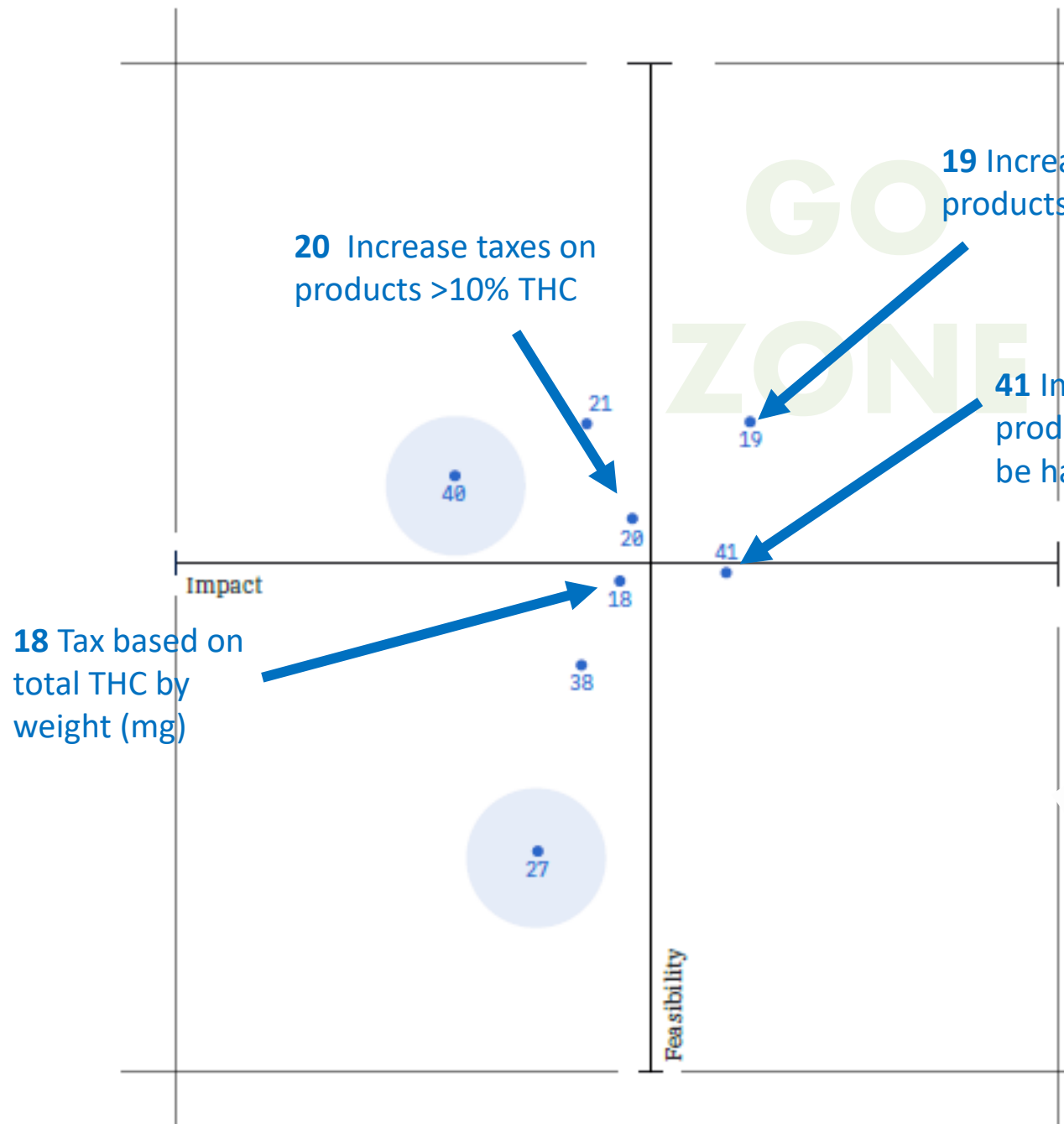
Age Restriction



4

2

Taxation

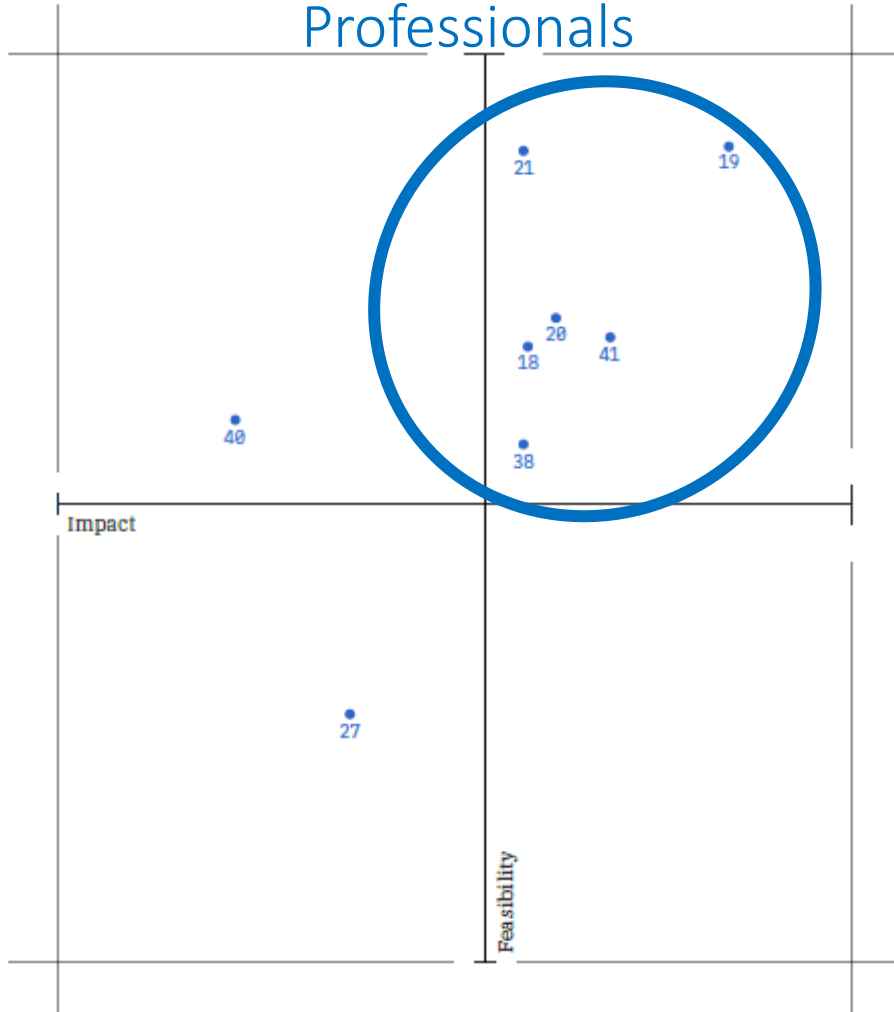


Taxation

Cannabis Industry & Consumers

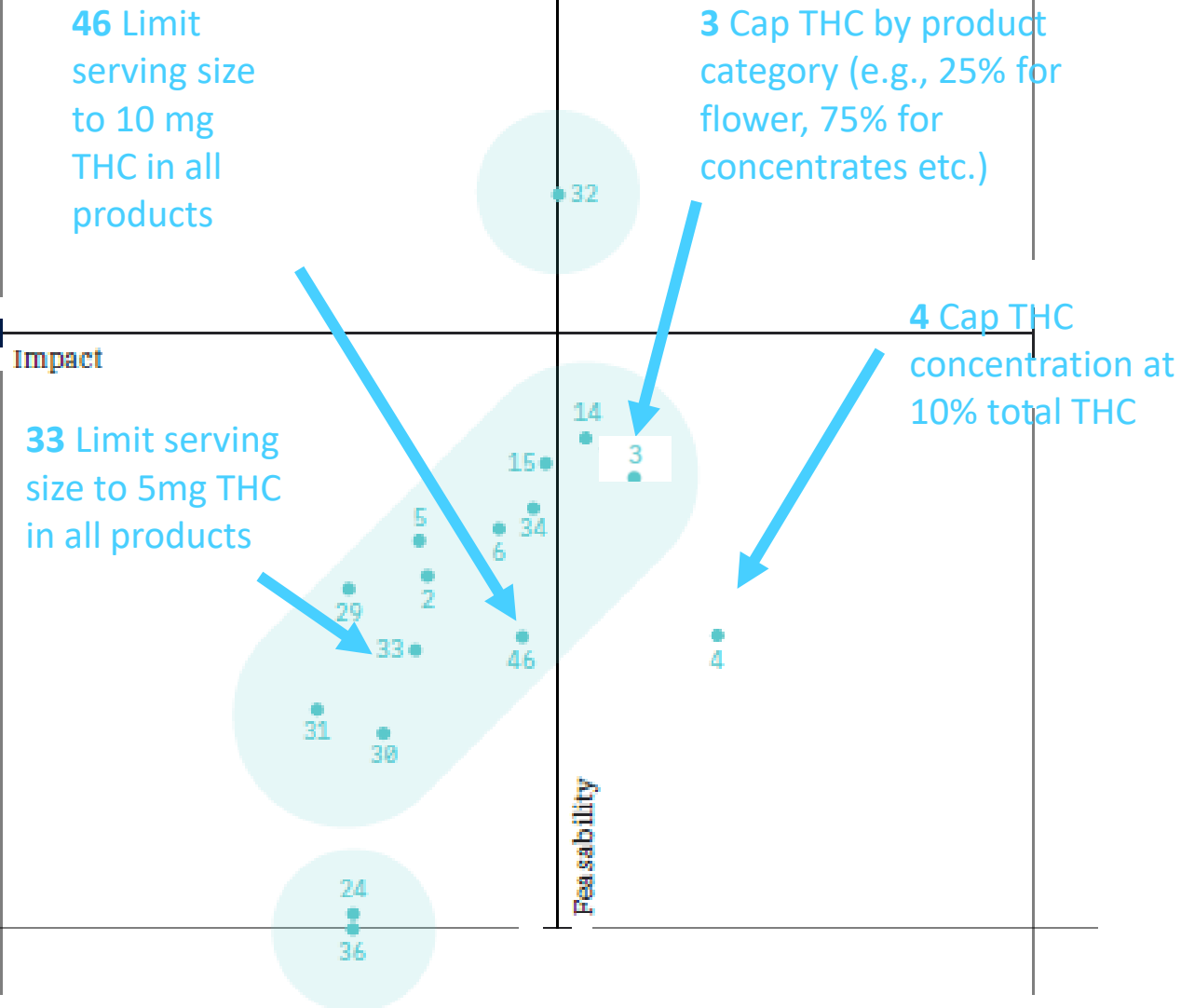


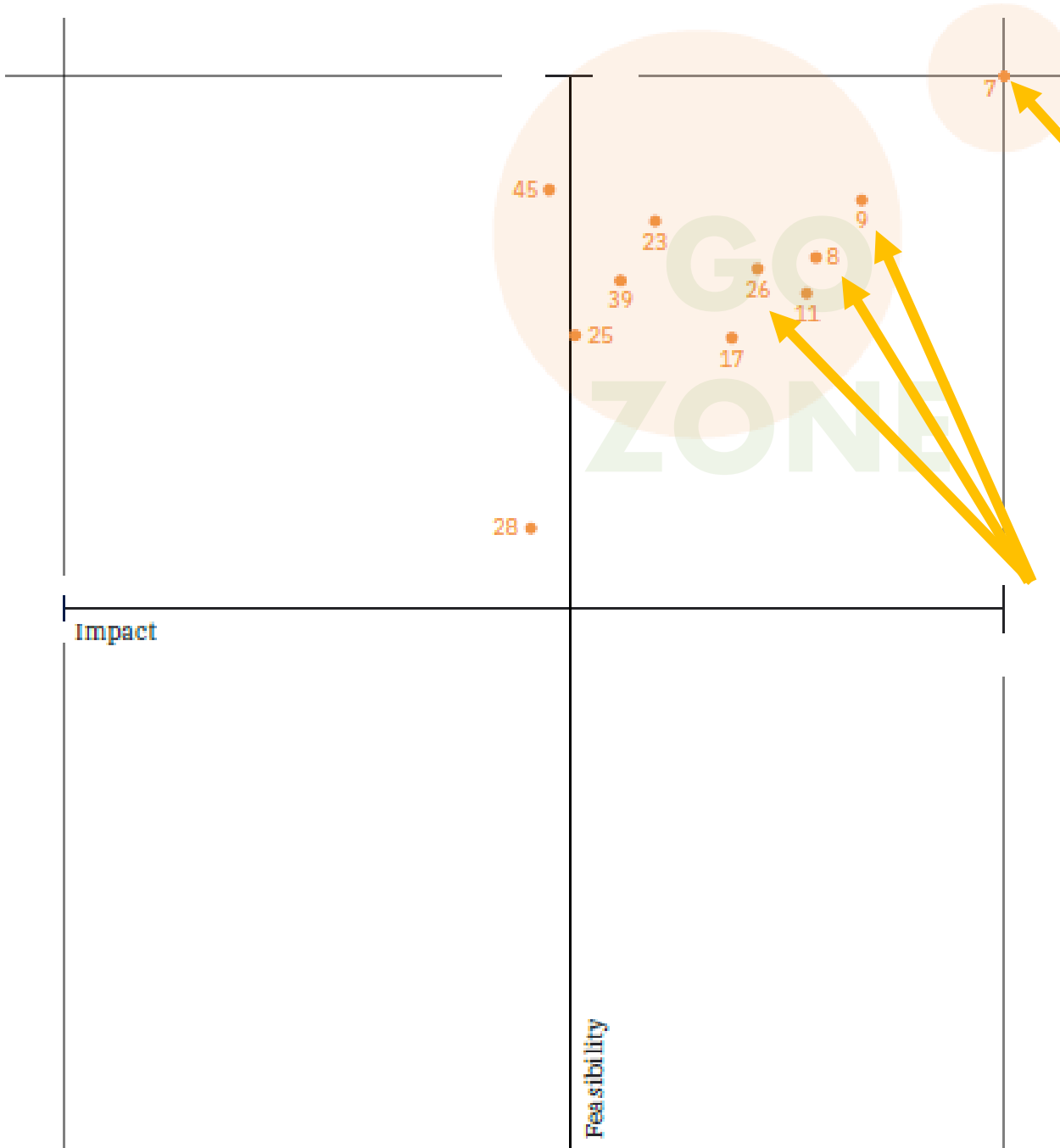
Professionals



Purchase & Product Caps

Professionals



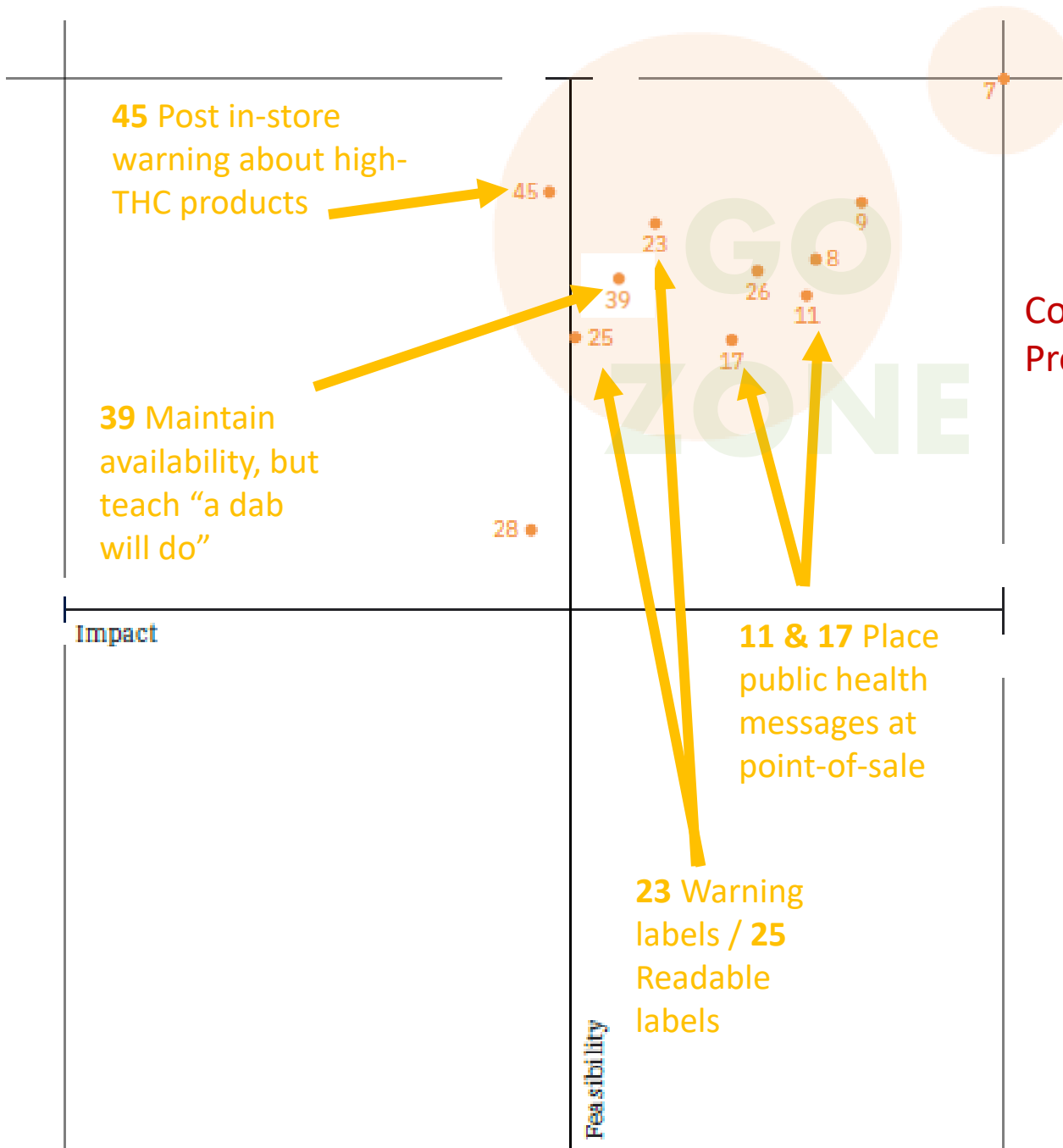


7 Education in schools and community centers (e.g., health class in school)

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

Empower the general public with information





Community & Professionals

Empower consumers with information



Cannabis
Industry &
Consumers

Impact

Feasibility

Do Nothing

Topics

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Policy Implications

Stakeholders in WA

- Are concerned with High THC products for non-medical use
- Support policy changes
- Cannabis advocates – unique perspective

Policies supported include options that are backed by science and research

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

Acknowledgments

- ✓ Study participants
- ✓ Lexi Nims
- ✓ DBHR/ Health Care Authority (HCA)
- ✓ Rep. Lauren Davis
- ✓ Polygon Inc.
- ✓ Caislin Firth, PhD
- ✓ Project advisory group members



Thanks!

Questions?

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