

Canadian Cannabis Survey 2020: Summary

What is this Research About?

This survey examined how Canadian adults consumed and perceived cannabis in the past year. The primary goal of this survey was to examine and evaluate the impact of the Cannabis Act. The Cannabis Act is a national framework to control the production, distribution, sale and possession of cannabis in Canada. The legislation and accompanying regulations came into force on October 17, 2018. To evaluate the impact of the Cannabis Act, data are required to better understand how Canadians view and use cannabis. These data will also support development of policy and program initiatives, including public education and awareness activities. In order to obtain in-depth information, Health Canada developed and implemented the Canadian Cannabis Survey (CCS). The aim of the CCS is to obtain detailed information about the habits of people who use cannabis and behaviours relative to cannabis use. The CCS started in 2017 and is conducted annually. It examines patterns of use, such as the quantities of cannabis consumed and the use of cannabis for medical purposes; the cannabis market such as sources of cannabis and pricing; and issues of public safety such as impaired driving. Survey content is reviewed annually and modified to address any identified gaps in the data.



phone (land line or mobile) from lists of random telephone numbers. Respondents who passed a set of screening questions were then sent a link to an online survey, either by email or short message service (SMS) to their mobile phones. The survey results were based on responses from 10,822 respondents aged 16 years and older across all provinces and territories. As the survey was conducted from April to June, responses to questions about behaviours in the previous 30 days may be more directly impacted by the pandemic. Questions were added to the 2020 survey to understand the impact of COVID-19 on cannabis use. However, many of the CCS questions relate to cannabis use in the past 12 months, and survey responses would include use and behaviours prior to and during the pandemic.

What the Research Did

The survey was conducted between April 30 and June 22, 2020. Respondents were recruited by

What the Research Found?

The researchers found that the majority of people felt that the occasional use of alcohol or cannabis had no risk or slight risk. Those who used cannabis in the past 12 months reported a lower perception of risk from regular use of cannabis than of those who had not used cannabis. The researchers asked people about their opinions on cannabis impairment. Overall, 45% of people thought consuming cannabis products with lower levels of THC did not lead to greater impairment, while 13% thought it did, and 42% were not sure. Among people who reported using cannabis in the past 12 months, the majority (73%) felt products with lower levels of THC did not lead to greater impairment, while 5% thought it did and 22% were not sure. Canadians were asked about their cannabis use within the past 12 months. Twenty-seven percent of people reported having used cannabis in the past 12 months, an increase from 25% in the previous year. People between the ages of 16 to 24 years were nearly twice as likely to have reported cannabis use in the past year when compared to those 25 years and older. Although younger age groups are more likely to consume cannabis, the average age that people tried cannabis for the first time was 20 years old. Males reported a higher percentage of cannabis use in the past year than females, though cannabis use has been rising for males and females in recent years.

Frequency & Consumption Types

Canadians who reported using cannabis over the past 12 months were asked how frequently they used the substance. Over half (54%) reported using cannabis three days per month or less, and 18% reported daily cannabis use. Overall, a greater percentage of males (29%) reported daily or almost daily use compared to females (20%), whereas a greater percentage of females (40%) reported less

than monthly use compared to males (31%). People who had reported using cannabis in the past 12 months were asked about their methods of consumption. Smoking (79%) was the most common method of cannabis consumption reported by people who used cannabis in the past 12 months, a decrease from 2019 (84%). Other methods of consumption were: eating it in food (52%), an increase from 2019 (46%), vapourizing using a vape pen or e-cigarette (24%), a decrease from 2019 (27%), and vapourizing using a vapourizer (12%), a decrease from 2019 (15%).

Source & Cost

Canadians who used cannabis in the past 12 months who obtained cannabis from a legal/licensed source were asked to identify all sources used. People could select more than one source. Responses included using a regulated/authorized storefront (71%), a regulated/authorized online retailer (29%), and growing at home (6%). Thirty-five percent (35%) reported their source came from someone sharing, and 23% paid the person that shared with them. Seventy-two percent (72%) indicated that there was no change in access to legal/licensed cannabis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canadians who used cannabis in the past 12 months who obtained cannabis from an illegal/unlicensed source were asked to identify all sources used. People could select more than one source. Responses included buying from someone they knew (58%), an unregulated online retailer (22%), from a dealer (20%) and an unregulated storefront (19%). Seventy-eight percent (78%) indicated that there was no change in access to illegal/unlicensed cannabis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. People who had used cannabis in the past 12 months indicated typically spending close to \$67 on cannabis products each month, unchanged from 2019.

Impact of COVID-19

People who used cannabis in the past 12 months were asked if their cannabis use had changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifty-six percent (56%) reported using the same amount of cannabis, while 22% reported using more and 22% reported using less. The change in the amount of cannabis used due to COVID-19 seemed to primarily affect younger age groups. The majority (62%) of those 25 years or older reported using the same amount of cannabis. Only 19% of people 25 years and older reported using more cannabis, compared to 31% of those aged 16 to 19 years and 31% aged 20 to 24 years. At the same time, 19% of people aged 25 years and older reported using less cannabis, compared to 38% of those aged 16 to 19 and 29% of those aged 20 to 24 years. The most common reasons for an increase in cannabis use were to relax (73%), boredom (65%), stress (53%), and anxiety (53%). Interestingly, there were similar motives for decreased cannabis consumption including to relax (18%), that cannabis stores were closed/had reduced hours (16%), inability to socialize with others (14%) and anxiety (13%).

How You Can Use This Research

This research is helpful to inform various areas of public policy and academic research related to cannabis and the factors that contribute to cannabis consumption. Policy makers can better understand what groups might benefit from public education campaigns. Further, this research has developed insight into how cannabis is consumed, the frequency it is consumed, and the impact COVID-19 has had on consumption patterns all of which are important variables when making policy.

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What You Need to Know

There are many different cannabis products on the market and cannabis is consumed in many ways. It is important to remember that the product and how the product is consumed impacts how fast you feel effects and how long such effects will last. Cannabis is not used in the same manner by all of its users and perceptions on cannabis are not uniform. Cannabis consumption has slightly increased compared to last year (2019) and this research showed that COVID-19 has not significantly changed consumption patterns of cannabis. However, more research is required to determine all of the impacts related to cannabis consumption and COVID-19.

Citation

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Keywords

Cannabis, Canadian, Survey

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