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The Canadian Cannabis Survey 2023

Executive Summary

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

Background

The use of cannabis is common in Canada. In 2019, Health Canada’s Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CADS) found that 21% of respondents 15 years of age and older reported using cannabis in the past year, with males reporting use more often than females. Canadians 15-24 years old were significantly more likely to use cannabis in the past 12 months than those 25 years of age and older. Cannabis use is also common among students, with 18% of students in grades 7-12 reporting past year use in the 2021/2022 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CSTADS). International data for cannabis from 2021 shows that the United States had a lifetime prevalence rate of 50.0%¹, while Canada had a prevalence rate of 41.7%². Prevalence rates for past year cannabis use were highest in North America (14.6%) when compared to other regions (Australia and New Zealand (10.6%); West and Central Africa (9.3%); Europe (5.4%); Asia (1.9%)) around the world³.

In the 2015 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada committed to legalizing, regulating, and restricting access to marijuana. In 2016, the Government’s Task Force on Marijuana Legalization and Regulation issued a discussion paper entitled “Toward the legalization, regulation and restriction of access to marijuana” that initiated wider consultations and dialogue regarding its intention in this area (see: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/health-system-systeme-sante/consultations/legalization-marijuana-legalisation/alt/legalization-marijuana-legalisation-eng.pdf> for more information). In 2017, Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, was introduced in the House of Commons. Implementation of the new *Cannabis Act* occurred in October 2018, creating a regulated legal market for non-medical cannabis for adults in Canada.

The legalization and regulation of cannabis in Canada has also prompted a policy and scientific requirement to collect new comprehensive data on cannabis use and non-use, including indicators in the areas of health, public safety, and markets. New research on cannabis use is helping the government to better evaluate the possible impacts associated with its legalization, regulation, and restriction. In May and June 2016, Health Canada conducted the *Baseline Survey on Awareness, Knowledge and Behaviour Associated with Recreational Use of Marijuana* (administered by Ekos Research Associates). This study examined knowledge, perceived acceptability and health risks, patterns of recreational use, and information-seeking behaviours. This study found that 58% of respondents reported cannabis use in their lifetime and 22% reported use in the past 12 months.

The Canadian Cannabis Survey (CCS) was first conducted in 2017 and is an annual cross-sectional survey completed online. The Canadian Cannabis Survey 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, in more depth than other substance use surveys. The CCS is reviewed each year to ensure content is up to date. In addition to its

¹ United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2021. Available from [2021 NSDUH Detailed Tables | CBHSQ Data \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k21/nsduh-2021-national-survey-on-drug-use-and-health). Accessed January 06, 2022.

² Health Canada. Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey: detailed tables for 2019. Available from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-alcohol-drugs-survey/2019-summary/detailed-tables.html#t4>. . Accessed December 31, 2021. The CADS is conducted on a biennial basis.

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2020: annual prevalence of the drugs by region and globally. Available from <https://data.unodc.org/data/drugs/Prevalence-general>. November 06, 2020.

original aims, the survey also gathers data on changes to willingness to publicly report cannabis use since legalization; exposure to education campaigns, public health or safety messages; respondents' usual source of cannabis products since the *Cannabis Act* came into effect; relative levels of THC and CBD in the cannabis products people use; exposure to second-hand cannabis smoke/vapour; home growing and the preparation of edibles in the home; more details on products and devices used when vapourizing cannabis; frequency of obtaining cannabis from legal and illegal sources; and changes in cannabis use due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, questions related to adverse reactions were also included. In addition, the survey was redesigned to integrate most questions that were repeated in both the non-medical and medical cannabis use sections of previous cycles to create single questions asked of all those who used cannabis. This was done to reduce response burden and get more fulsome data from those who use cannabis for medical purposes. Of the responses that were received, approximately 3,700 responses were from people who indicated that they had used cannabis in the past 12 months for either non-medical or medical purposes.

Achieving the research objectives will support Health Canada's ability to assess the health risks or harms of cannabis among individuals who use cannabis and/or the community (dependence, harms and risk factors among at-risk populations). The results will be used to support policy development and to evaluate the impacts of cannabis legalization and regulation in the post-legalization period.

Objectives of the Survey

The 2023 Canadian Cannabis Survey aimed to gather additional information to track changes in data collected from the 2017 through 2022 surveys. The objectives of the 2023 survey were to collect information on the following:

- Cannabis use for non-medical purposes and non-cannabis use in Canada;
- Measure patterns of cannabis use (e.g., age of initiation, frequency of use, and quantities and products used);
- Understand public concerns related to cannabis, including problematic use, drug-impaired driving, adverse reactions and accidental consumption;
- Assess perception of risk and normalization of cannabis use; and
- Measure cannabis use for medical purposes and characterize this use.

Methodology

The approach used was a two-step recruitment process where respondents were first recruited by telephone (both landline and mobile) using a short battery of screener questions approved by Health Canada, consistent with previous cycles. Respondents who completed the screener questions and qualified for the survey were then sent a link to the online survey, either by email or SMS, depending on their preference. Respondents were recruited from lists of random telephone numbers (RDD) that Advanis verified were in service. The average survey length for those who used cannabis in the past 12 months was 25 minutes, and 14 minutes on average for those who did not use cannabis in the past 12 months.

Data collection commenced May 2, 2023 and ended July 20, 2023, and was conducted by Advanis. Survey findings were weighted by region, age groups, and sex at birth. The results for 2023 are based on online

responses from 11,690 respondents aged 16 years and older across all provinces and territories. The CCS was designed to obtain a sufficient number of respondents from key sub-populations, and quotas were determined and met in order to ensure statistical relevance of results and representativeness.

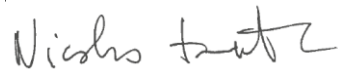
Total Expenditure

The total expenditure of this research was \$294,838.65 including taxes.

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Advanis that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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