



Sex, Gender &
Cannabis Hub

BULLETIN 1

How do men and women report patterns of use?

May 2021

In this bulletin we analyze data on Canadian respondents to Wave 1 of the International Cannabis Policy Study (ICPS) collected in 2018.

KEY MESSAGES

1. More men than women reported using cannabis and used it more often.
2. More than 4 in 10 respondents reported never using cannabis, with more women reporting never use than men.
3. Almost 9% of respondents reported daily or almost daily cannabis use, with no significant difference between women and men.
4. Men were more often weekly or monthly cannabis users compared to women.
5. Men from Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia reported significantly higher rates of cannabis use than women in the past year.
6. Women initiated cannabis use at a slightly older age than men.

This bulletin is part of a larger research and knowledge translation project about sex, gender and cannabis use led by the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and funded by Health Canada. Information about the overall project is available on the [Sex, Gender and Cannabis Hub](#). The bulletins report on sex and gender based analyses of surveys and other data to sharpen our understanding of whether and how sex and gender affect cannabis use.

PATTERNS OF CANNABIS USE

Across all age groups, men report a higher prevalence of lifetime cannabis use compared to women [1, 2]. An analysis of US longitudinal trends in adolescent cannabis use from 1999 to 2009 revealed higher prevalence of lifetime use for boys in all years [2]. Men also report using cannabis more frequently than women [3, 4]. However, the gender gap has been narrowing over time; in 1999, 51% of boys and 43.4% of girls reported lifetime cannabis use whereas in 2013, 42.1% of boys and 39.2% of girls reported lifetime cannabis use [2].

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THIS BULLETIN?

In this bulletin we report on our analysis of sex and gender differences in selected variables on cannabis use among Canadian respondents ($n = 10,057$) from Wave 1 (2018) of the International Cannabis Policy Study (ICPS), funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Future bulletins will analyze subsequent Waves of the ICPS. For a full description of the survey and methods for the ICPS see: <http://cannabisproject.ca/methods>. For a description of our approach to analyzing sex and gender in the ICPS data, see the [Methodology on the Sex, Gender, and Cannabis Hub](#).

In this bulletin we focus on several ICPS cannabis use variables:

- » Cannabis use status: never used; used more than 12 months ago (but not more recently); within past 12-months (but not more recent use); monthly (but not more frequent user); weekly (but not more frequent use); daily/almost daily user
- » Age of initiation
- » Average number of days of cannabis use per year and per month
- » Average number of days of cannabis use per year in each age group
- » Past 12-month use (including daily, weekly, monthly use) by province and age group

Weighted chi-square and Student's t-tests were used to conduct a sex and gender based analysis for cannabis outcomes and compare results between men and women. Analyses were conducted using SAS Version 9.4. A threshold of $p \leq 0.05$ was used to denote statistical significance.

CANNABIS USE STATUS AMONG CANADIAN ICPS RESPONDENTS

Never used:

43.5% of ICPS survey respondents had never used cannabis. Among never users, there were significantly more women than men (52.2% vs. 47.8%).

Of the 56.5% of respondents who had used cannabis, there were different levels of use:

Used more than 12 months ago (but not more recently):

- » 29% of respondents reported last using cannabis more than 12 months ago,
- » Among those who used more than 12 months ago, there was no significant difference in the proportion of women and men (50.7% vs. 49.3%).

Within past 12-months (but not more recent) use:

- » 8.6% of the respondents reported cannabis use within the past 12 months,
- » Among past 12-month users, there was no significant difference in the proportion of women and men (53.6% vs. 46.4%).

Monthly (but not more frequent) user:

- » 4.9% reported monthly use,
- » Among monthly users, there were significantly more men than women (64.9% vs. 35.1%).

Weekly (but not more frequent) user:

- » 5.2% of respondents reported weekly use,
- » Among weekly users, there were significantly more men than women (63.4% vs. 36.6%).

Daily/almost daily user:

- » 8.9% of respondents reported daily/almost daily cannabis use,
- » Among daily/almost daily users, there was no significant difference in the proportion of men and women (52.5% and 47.5%).

Men were more often
weekly or monthly
cannabis users
compared to women.



Age of initiation

- » Among those who had ever used cannabis, women were significantly older than men when they first used cannabis (19.7 vs. 18.9 years old).

Average # of days of cannabis use per year

- » There was no significant difference in the number of days of cannabis use per year among women and men who had used cannabis in the past 12 months (148.8 vs. 149.2 days per year, respectively).

Average # of days of cannabis use per month

- » Among those who reported at least monthly use, men used cannabis significantly more days per month than women (19.4 vs. 16.7 days per month).

Average # of days of cannabis use per year across different age groups

- » Men aged 26–35 years used cannabis significantly more often than women (180.4 vs. 138.7 days per year, respectively).
- » Women aged 36–45 years used cannabis significantly more often than men (166 vs. 117.4 days per year, respectively).
- » There were no significant differences between men and women aged 16–25 (118.5 vs. 111.5 days per year, respectively), 46–55 (158.7 vs. 185.1 days per year, respectively) or 56–65 (159.2 vs. 154.9 days per year, respectively).

Past 12-month use (including daily, weekly, monthly use) by province and age group

Overall, 27.5% of respondents reported cannabis use in the past 12 months.

Province:

- » Men in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia reported a higher prevalence of cannabis use in the past year compared to women (Ontario: 28.7% vs. 24.3%; Quebec: 28.6% vs. 18.9%; Nova Scotia: 35.7% vs. 27.2%). No significant differences were observed in other provinces.

Age groups:

- » Among men and women aged 26–35 years a significantly greater proportion of men reported cannabis use in the past 12 months, compared to women (44.6% and 32.9%).
- » Among men and women aged 56–65 years a significantly greater proportion of men reported cannabis use in the past 12 months, compared to women (23.1% and 15.1%).
- » There were no significant differences between men and women in the following age groups: 16–25 years (30.3% and 29.3%), 36–45 years (31.5% and 26.1%), and 46–55 years (20.5% and 21.7%) respectively.

Among those who report using cannabis,
women aged **36–45** use cannabis on
average **166** days per year.

CONCLUSION

In 2018, immediately prior to non-medical cannabis legalization in Canada, almost half of Canadian ICPS respondents (43.5%) reported never having used cannabis. However, as with most substances, men used cannabis more than women, started at a younger age, and used more frequently. Among people who did use cannabis, there were few sex or gender differences in average number of cannabis use days per year. Trends in use by sex or gender are important to examine and follow over time, as are regional variations in Canada.

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