

# Impact of Cannabis Legalization on Traffic Safety



## The Growth of Cannabis Use in Canada



Canada has seen an overall increase of cannabis use since its legalization.

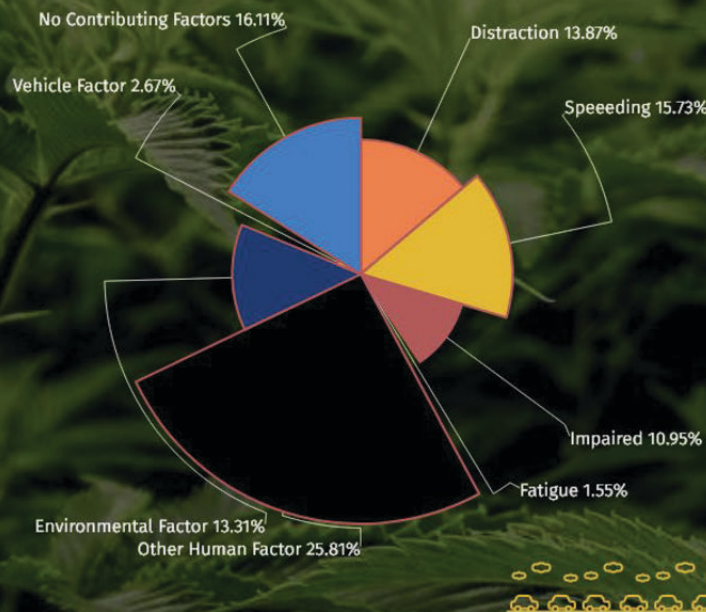
25% of Canadians aged 16 and older reported using cannabis.



Cannabis use in Canada has been gradually rising since the legalization of recreational cannabis in 2018. According to the Canadian Cannabis Survey, the percentage of Canadians aged 16 and older who reported using cannabis in the past 12 months increased from 25% in 2021 to 27% in 2022

## Contributing Factors in Fatal Collisions

Impaired driving, which refers to operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs, was the third most common contributing factor in fatal collisions in Canada in 2020. According to Transport Canada, 17.6% of fatal collisions involved impairment, resulting in 308 deaths and 1,383 serious injuries. Impaired driving still remains a serious threat to road safety especially since the legalization of cannabis, as it affects the driver's ability to react, judge, and control the vehicle.



To lower the risk of cannabis-impaired driving, some recommendations are to follow the Canada's lower-risk cannabis use on Canada.ca, which advise against driving for at least six hours after using cannabis; using alternative transportation options, such as public transit, taxis, or ride-sharing services; and supporting law enforcement efforts to detect and deter drug-impaired drivers. Additionally, more research and education are needed to raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of cannabis-impaired driving among the public, especially among younger age groups who are more likely to use cannabis and drive.

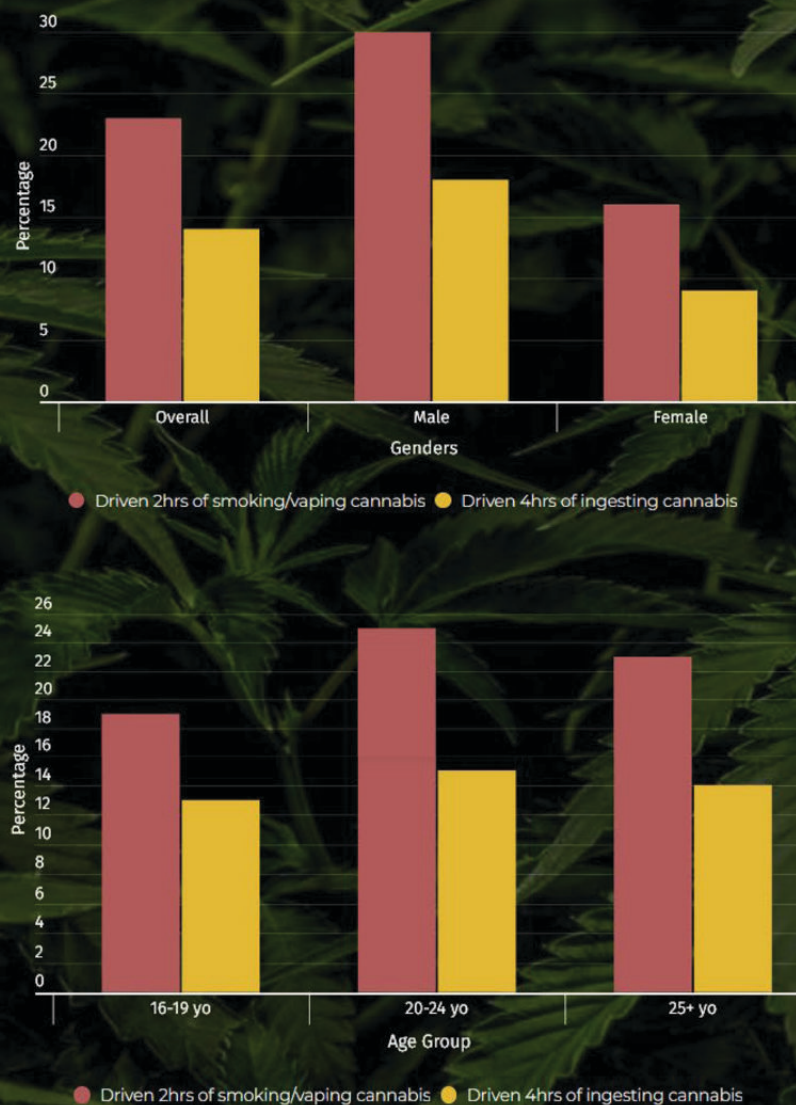
## Gender and Age Differences in Driving Under the Influence



Cannabis use can impair driving ability by affecting reaction time, attention, coordination, and decision making, which can last up to 24 hours.

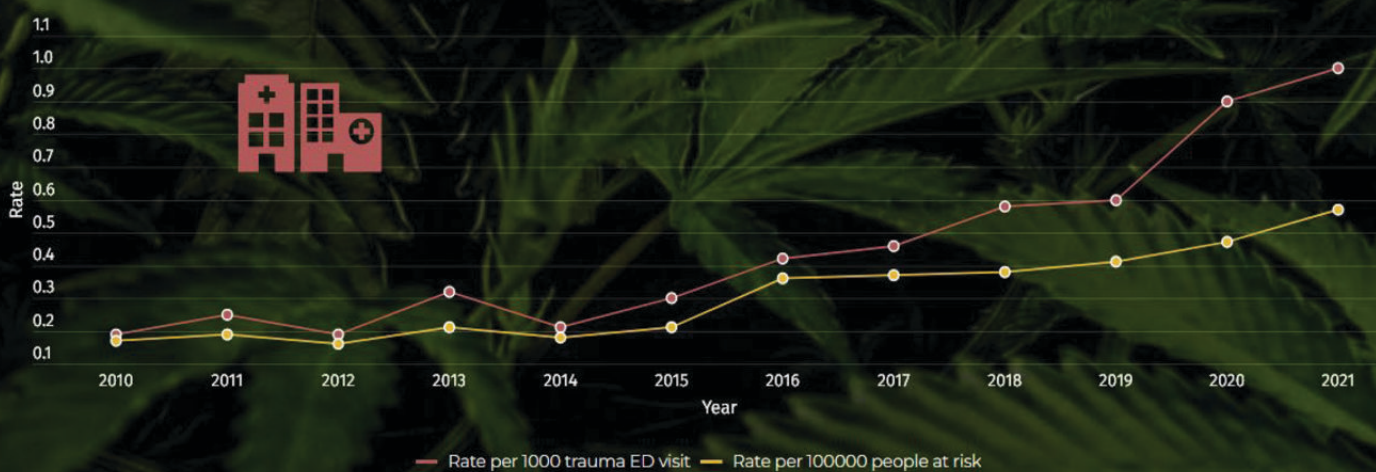


Adolescents and young adults are more likely to drive under the influence of cannabis than other age groups, and often underestimate the risks and consequences of doing so.



Gender differences in driving under the influence of cannabis (DUIC) have been observed in various studies and surveys. Generally, males are more likely to engage in DUIC than females, and also more likely to perceive it as less risky and more socially acceptable. However, some research suggests that females may be more susceptible to the impairing effects of cannabis on driving performance than males, due to biological and pharmacological factors. Moreover, younger age groups (16-19 and 20-24) are more likely to use cannabis and drive than older age groups, and also more likely to report driving within two hours of using cannabis. Therefore, all genders and age groups face significant challenges and risks related to DUIC.

## Cannabis and Driving: Trauma ED Visits and Risk Factors



Cannabis is one of the most prevalent substances implicated in car crashes, contributing to 20% of fatal driving under the influence incidents.

Cannabis and driving is a serious public health issue, as cannabis can impair the cognitive and motor abilities necessary to operate a vehicle and increase the risk of collisions. A sharper spike of cannabis-related traffic injuries, especially among young and novice drivers, can be seen since the legalization of cannabis. To prevent and reduce this problem, drivers should follow Canada's lower-risk cannabis use guidelines or consider using alternative transportation options.

