

# Provincial Patterns and Trends in Cannabis Use among Youth: Nova Scotia

## Background: Cannabis Use in Canada

This factsheet presents recent patterns and trends of cannabis use among young people in Nova Scotia, including prevalence of use, perceptions of harm, cannabis use and driving, and dimensions of risk.

- In October 2018, the Government of Canada implemented the *Cannabis Act*, legalizing cannabis for non-medical use in Canada.
- The legislation prioritizes the health and safety of young Canadians by restricting youth access to cannabis through regulations on its production, sale and consumption.
- Canadian youth report the highest prevalence rates of non-medical cannabis use among developed countries.
- Patterns of non-medical cannabis use among Canadian youth vary by region.
- Some subgroups of youth, including Indigenous youth and youth belonging to gender-based minorities, demonstrate increased risk of experiencing cannabis-related harms.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of the risks and harms unique to Canadian youth can inform the development and implementation of cannabis public education efforts.

## Highlights

- In 2016–2017, students in Nova Scotia reported the highest prevalence of cannabis use in Canada, with almost 20% of students having used cannabis in the past 30 days.
- Students in grades 10–12 reported over 3.5 times greater prevalence of cannabis use in the past 12 months than students in grades 7–9 (44.6% vs 12.1%).
- Prevalence of past-year cannabis use was similar among males and females (30.1% and 28.3%).
- Among students in grades 7–12 who reported using cannabis in the past year, over one in three (35.7%) reported using it once or more per week.
- Among students in grades 7–12 who reported using cannabis in the past year, the majority reported smoking it (94%), followed by eating it in foods (41%) and vaping it (34%).
- Among youth aged 15–24 who reported using cannabis at least once in their lifetime, the mean age of initiation was 16.7 years for males and 16.8 years for females.
- Almost three-quarters of youth in grades 10–12 (74%) reported cannabis to be fairly easy or very easy to obtain. The usual ways of obtaining it were sharing among friends (41%), getting or buying it from someone else (25%), or getting or buying it from a friend or family member (14%).



## Data Sources

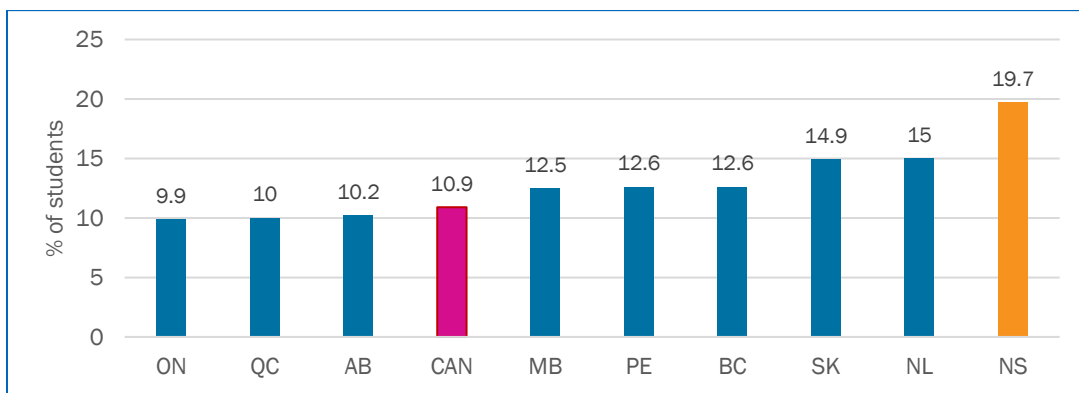
This report is based on the following sources of school and population-based survey data on cannabis use among youth.

- Canadian Student Tobacco Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CSTADS) is a biennial school-based survey of students in grades 7 to 12, conducted on behalf of Health Canada.
- Canadian Tobacco Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CTADS) is a telephone-based (including cell phones) survey of the Canadian population aged 15 and older, living outside of institutions and First Nations reserve communities, conducted by Statistics Canada.

## Prevalence of Cannabis Use among Youth across Canada

- Students in Nova Scotia had the highest prevalence of use in Canada in 2016–2017.
- Almost 20% of students in grades 7 to 12 had used cannabis in the past 30 days.

Past-30-day cannabis use among grade 7–12 students

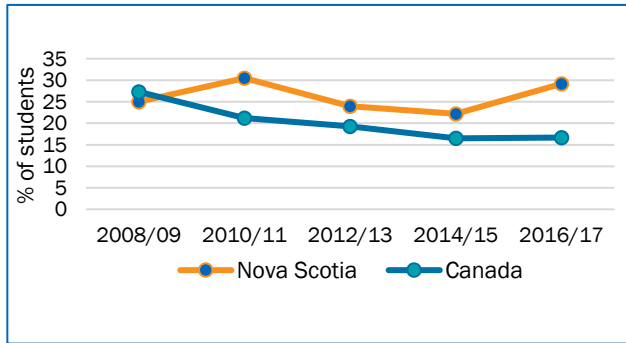


Source: CSTADS 2016–2017



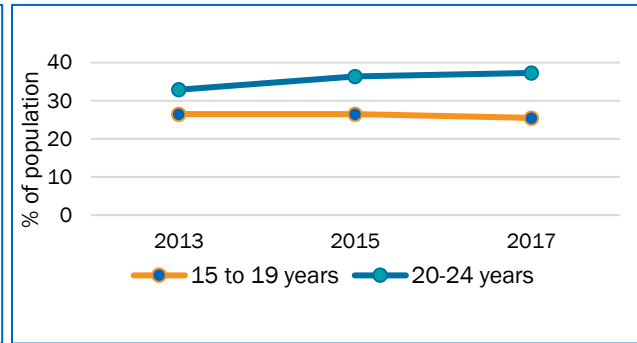
## Patterns of Cannabis Use among Youth in Nova Scotia

Past-12-month cannabis use by grade 7–12 students (2008–2009 to 2016–2017)



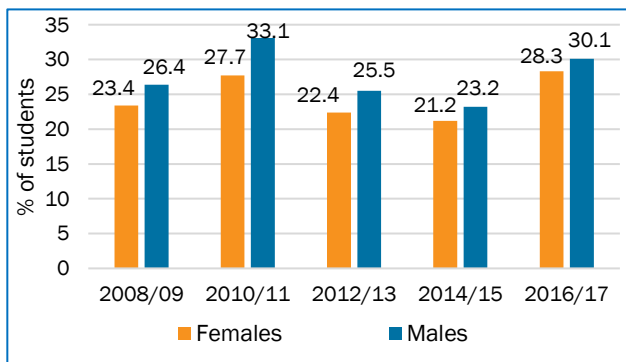
Source: CSTADS 2008–2009 to 2016–2017

Past-12-month cannabis use by youth aged 15–24 (2013 to 2017)



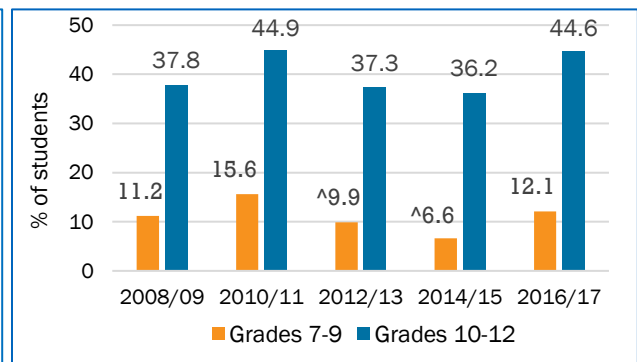
Source: CTADS 2013, 2015, 2017

Past-12-month cannabis use by sex (2008–2009 to 2016–2017)



Source: CSTADS 2008–2009 to 2016–2017

Past-12-month cannabis use by grade (2008–2009 to 2016–2017)



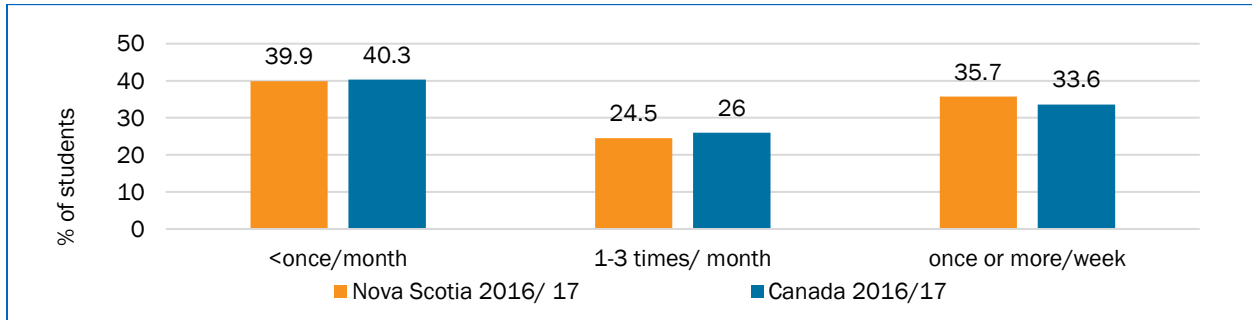
^ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution. Source: CSTADS 2008–2009 to 2016–2017

- Past 12-month cannabis use among youth in grades 7–12 has increased in Nova Scotia since 2012–2013, for all grades and among females.
- Grade 7–9 use has increased from 2014–2015 to 2016–2017. Grade 10–12 use has increased since 2008–2009.
- Past 12-month cannabis use among 15–19 year olds has remained relatively steady since 2013; and has increased slightly among 20–24 year olds.



## Frequency of Cannabis Use among Students in Nova Scotia

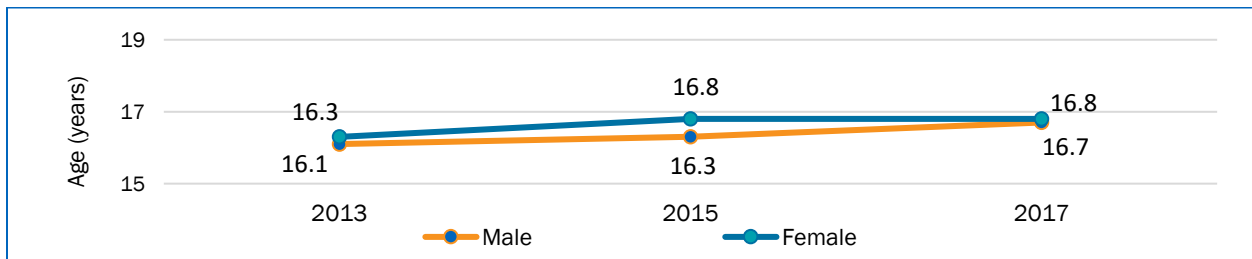
Frequency of cannabis use in past 12 months among students who have used cannabis



Source: CSTADS 2016–2017

## Age of First Cannabis Use among Youth in Nova Scotia

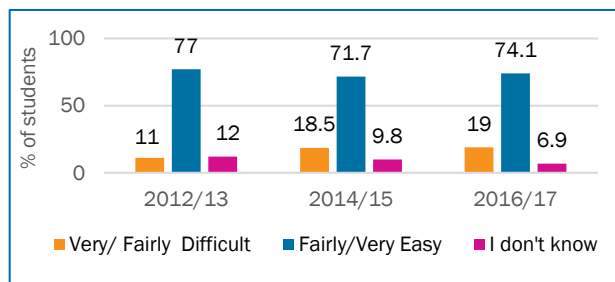
Mean age for initiating cannabis use among youth aged 15–24



Source: CTADS 2013, 2015, 2017

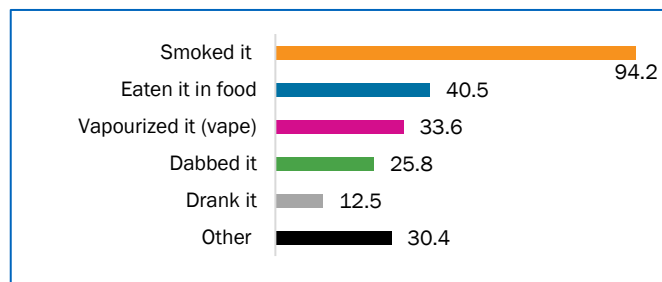
## Mode of Use and Ease of Access to Cannabis

Perceived ease of access among grade 10–12 students



Source: CSTADS 2012–2013, 2015–2016, 2016–2017

Mode of cannabis use in the past 12 months in grade 7–12 students



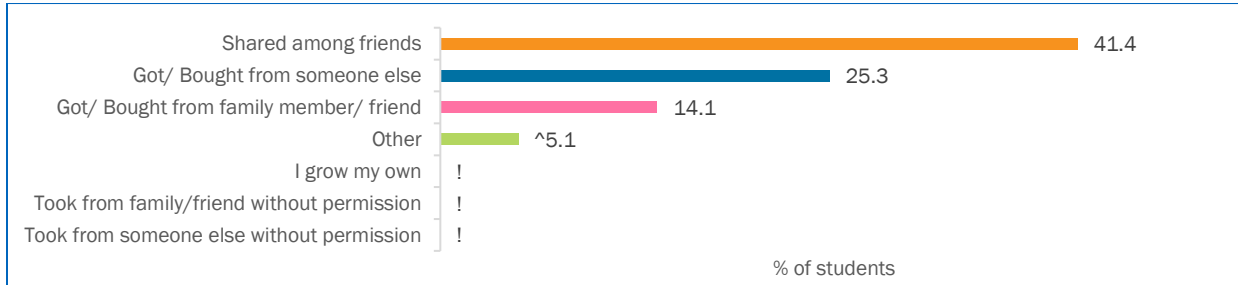
Source: CSTADS 2016–2017

- Among students who have used cannabis in the last 12 months, about 40% use less than once per month.
- Age of initiating cannabis use among males and females has not changed significantly between 2013 and 2017.
- Among students who have used cannabis in the past 12 months, the large majority have smoked it.
- The perceived ease of access to cannabis among grade 10–12 students has remained relatively unchanged between 2012–2013 and 2016–2017, with almost three-quarters finding it fairly or very easily accessible.



## Usual Source of Cannabis

Usual source of cannabis among grade 7–12 students who have ever tried cannabis (2016–2017)



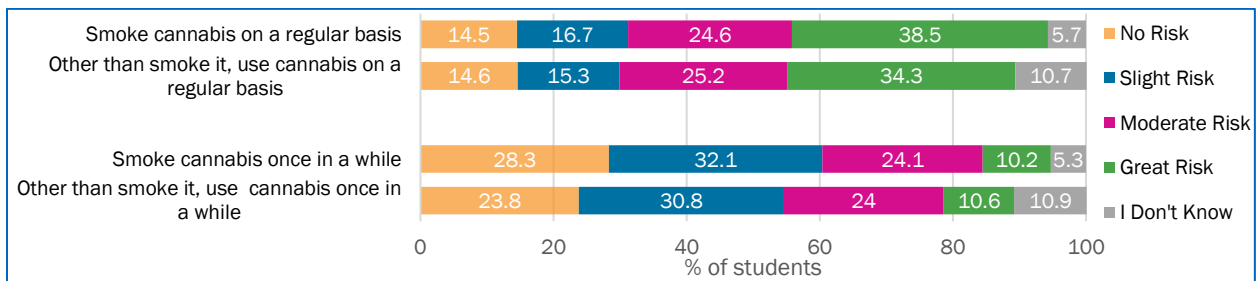
Source: CSTADS 2016–2017

^ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution.

! Due to low sample size and/or large coefficients of variation, the quality of these estimates is low.

## Perceived Harms of Cannabis Use

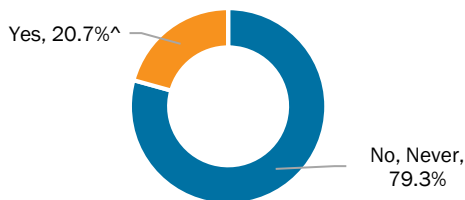
Responses to "How much do people risk harming themselves when they do each of the following activities?" among grade 7–12 students (2016–2017)



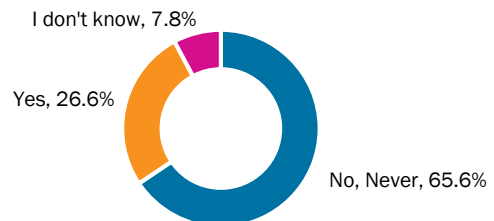
Source: CSTADS 2016–2017

## Cannabis Use and Driving

Grade 11–12 students who reported having driven a motor vehicle within two hours of using cannabis (2016–2017)



Grade 7–12 students who reported being a passenger in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had used cannabis in previous two hours (2016–2017)



^ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution.

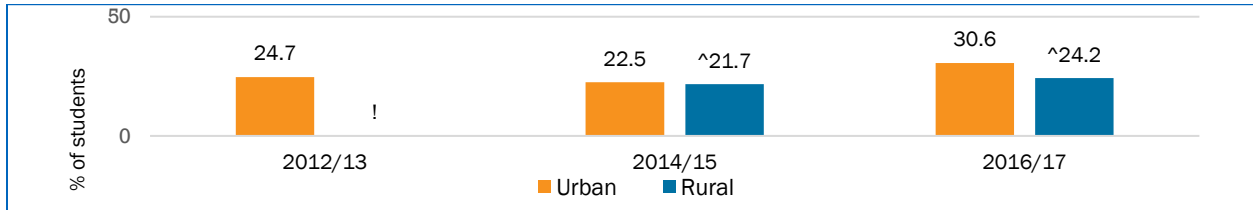
\*Motor vehicles include a broad range: cars, motorcycles, off-road vehicles (including agricultural machinery), light trucks and regular trucks.

- Before legalization, four in ten students reported that they shared cannabis among friends and one in four reported that they purchased it from someone else.
- Many students feel that using cannabis on a regular basis is a risk.
- The majority of students reported they had not driven a motor vehicle within two hours of using cannabis; fewer reported they had not been a passenger in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had used cannabis within the last two hours.



## Dimensions of Risk for Cannabis Use among Nova Scotia Youth

Past 12-month use among grade 7–12 students attending urban and rural schools



^ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution.

! Due to low sample size and/or large coefficients of variation, the quality of these estimates is low.

Source: CSTADS 2012–2013, 2014–2015, 2016–2017

- Since 2012–2013, the prevalence of cannabis use among students attending school in an urban setting was similar to students attending school in a rural setting.



## Appendix: Data Table and Confidence Intervals

Series	Year	Percent- age	95% Confi- dence Limits
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, NS	2016–2017	29.2	[26.1-32.3]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, NS	2014–2015	22.2	[20.3-24.1]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, NS	2012–2013	24.0	[20.6-27.3]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, NS	2010–2011	30.5	[28.1-32.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, NS	2008–2009	25.0	[23.4-26.5]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, Canada	2016–2017	16.7	[15.0-18.3]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, Canada	2014–2015	16.5	[15.3-17.8]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, Canada	2012–2013	19.3	[17.1-21.5]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, Canada	2010–2011	21.2	[19.7-22.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–12, Canada	2008–2009	27.3	[25.7-29.0]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–9	2016–2017	12.1	[9.6-14.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–9	2014–2015	6.6	[3.4-9.8]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–9	2012–2013	9.9	[5.0-14.8]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–9	2010–2011	15.6	[12.2-19.0]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 7–9	2008–2009	11.2	[9.0-13.4]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 10-12	2016–2017	44.6	[40.4-48.8]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 10-12	2014–2015	36.2	[34.8-37.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 10-12	2012–2013	37.3	[33.1-41.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 10-12	2010–2011	44.9	[41.7-48.1]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, grades 10-12	2008–2009	37.8	[35.8-39.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, male	2016–2017	30.1	[25.8-34.5]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, male	2014–2015	23.2	[21.4-25.1]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, male	2012–2013	25.5	[22.2-28.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, male	2010–2011	33.1	[29.7-36.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, male	2008–2009	26.4	[24.0-28.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, female	2016–2017	28.3	[25.6-30.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, female	2014–2015	21.2	[18.8-23.5]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, female	2012–2013	22.4	[18.1-26.6]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, female	2010–2011	27.7	[25.5-29.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, female	2008–2009	23.4	[21.8-25.1]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 15–19	2017	25.5	[17.5-33.4]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 15–19	2015	26.5	[20.1-32.9]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 15–19	2013	26.5	[21.1-31.8]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 20–24	2017	37.3	[28.4-46.2]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 20–24	2015	36.4	[29.4-43.5]
Cannabis use, past 12 months, age 20–24	2013	32.9	[27.1-38.7]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, <once/month, NS	2016–2017	39.9	[36.9-42.8]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, 1–3 times/month, NS	2016–2017	24.5	[21.5-27.5]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, once/week or more, NS	2016–2017	35.7	[32.6-38.7]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, <once/month, Canada	2016–2017	40.3	[37.9-42.8]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, 1–3 times/ month, Canada	2016–2017	26.0	[24.5-27.6]
Past 12 month, frequency of use, once /week or more, Canada	2016–2017	33.6	[31.6-35.7]
Age at Initiation, female	2017	16.8	[16.3-17.3]
Age at Initiation, female	2015	16.8	[16.1-17.5]
Age at Initiation, female	2013	16.3	[15.8-16.8]
Age at Initiation, male	2017	16.7	[16.1-17.2]
Age at Initiation, male	2015	16.3	[15.7-16.8]
Age at Initiation, male	2013	16.1	[15.7-16.6]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, smoke	2016–2017	94.2	[91.3-97.2]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, eaten in food	2016–2017	40.5	[35.3-45.7]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, drank	2016–2017	12.5	[10.4-14.6]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, vaped	2016–2017	33.6	[28.3-38.9]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, dabbed	2016–2017	25.8	[22.5-29.1]
Past 12 months mode of cannabis use, other	2016–2017	30.4	[25.1-35.6]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly easy	2016–2017	74.1	[69.2-78.9]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly difficult	2016–2017	19.0	[15.1-23.0]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, do not know	2016–2017	6.9	[5.6-8.2]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly easy	2014–2015	71.7	[67.4-76.0]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly difficult	2014–2015	18.5	[14.9-22.1]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, do not know	2014–2015	9.8	[8.4-11.2]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly easy	2012–2013	77.0	[73.2-80.7]



Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, very/fairly difficult	2012–2013	11.0	[8.5-13.6]
Perceived ease of access, grade 10–12, I do not know	2012–2013	12.0	[10.3-13.7]
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, shared among friends	2016–2017	41.4	[38.3-44.5]
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, got/bought from friend/family	2016–2017	14.1	[11.4-16.9]
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, got/bought from someone else	2016–2017	25.3	[21.5-29.1]
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, took it from family member/ friend without permission	2016–2017	!	!
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, took it from someone else, without permission	2016–2017	!	!
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, grow my own	2016–2017	!	!
Usual source of cannabis, last 12 months, other	2016–2017	5.1	[3.2-7.0]
Smoke cannabis on a regular basis: No risk	2016–2017	14.5	[12.2-16.9]
Smoke cannabis on a regular basis: slight risk	2016–2017	16.7	[14.6-18.8]
Smoke cannabis on a regular basis: moderate risk	2016–2017	24.6	[23.1-26.2]
Smoke cannabis on a regular basis: great risk	2016–2017	38.5	[35.1-41.9]
Smoke cannabis on a regular basis: I do not know	2016–2017	5.7	[4.8-6.5]
Smoke cannabis once in a while: No risk	2016–2017	28.3	[24.7-32.0]
Smoke cannabis once in a while: slight risk	2016–2017	32.1	[29.5-34.7]
Smoke cannabis once in a while: moderate risk	2016–2017	24.1	[22.5-25.7]
Smoke cannabis once in a while: great risk	2016–2017	10.2	[8.7-11.7]
Smoke cannabis once in a while: I do not know	2016–2017	5.3	[4.6-6.0]
Other than smoke, use on a regular basis: no risk	2016–2017	14.6	[12.0-17.2]
Other than smoke, use on a regular basis: slight risk	2016–2017	15.3	[13.2-17.4]
Other than smoke, use on a regular basis: moderate	2016–2017	25.2	[23.7-26.6]
Other than smoke, use on a regular basis: great risk	2016–2017	34.3	[31.4-37.1]
Other than smoke, use on a regular basis: I do not know	2016–2017	10.7	[9.5-11.8]
Other than smoke, use once in a while: no risk	2016–2017	23.8	[20.6-27.0]
Other than smoke, use once in a while: slight risk	2016–2017	30.8	[29.0-32.6]
Other than smoke, use once in a while: moderate	2016–2017	24.0	[22.0-25.9]
Other than smoke, use once in a while: great risk	2016–2017	10.6	[9.1-12.0]
Other than smoke, use once in a while: I do not know	2016–2017	10.9	[9.4-12.3]
Driven a vehicle within 2 hours of using cannabis, yes	2016–2017	20.7	[17.1-24.3]
Passenger within 2 hours of driver using cannabis, yes	2016–2017	26.6	[24.0-29.2]
Passenger within 2 hours of driver using cannabis, no	2016–2017	65.6	[63.2-68.0]
Passenger within 2 hours of driver using cannabis, I don't know	2016–2017	7.8	[7.1-8.5]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Saskatchewan	2016–2017	14.9	[10.5-19.4]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Ontario	2016–2017	9.9	[7.4-12.4]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, British Columbia	2016–2017	12.6	[9.5-15.7]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Alberta	2016–2017	10.2	[8.4-12.0]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Manitoba	2016–2017	12.5	[10.1-14.8]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Prince Edward Island	2016–2017	12.6	[10.1-15.0]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Nova Scotia	2016–2017	19.7	[17.6-21.8]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Quebec	2016–2017	10.0	[9.0-10.9]
Cannabis use, past 30 days, Newfoundland and Labrador	2016–2017	15.0	[13.4-16.7]
Past 12-month cannabis use in urban youth, grades 7–12	2016–2017	30.6	[25.6-35.7]
Past 12-month Cannabis use in rural youth, grades 7–12	2016–2017	24.2	[13.7-34.7]
Past 12-month Cannabis use in urban youth, grades 7–12	2014–2015	22.5	[16.4-28.5]
Past 12-month Cannabis use in rural youth, grades 7–12	2014–2015	21.7	[12.6-30.8]
Past 12-month Cannabis use in urban youth, grades 7–12	2012–2013	24.7	[19.6-29.8]
Past 12-month Cannabis use in rural youth, grades 7–12	2012–2013	!	!

Suggested citation: Cooke, M., Milicic, S., MacDonald, J.A., Asbridge, M., Guindon, E., Muhajarine, N., MacDonald, M., Wild, C., Elton-Marshall, T., Mancuso, M., Montreuil, A., Hammond, D., Grootendorst, P., Porath, A., Konefal, S., Douglas, O., Tariq, U., Burkhalter, R. Propel Centre for Population Health Impact. *Provincial patterns and trends in cannabis use: Nova Scotia*. (2020). Waterloo, Ont.: University of Waterloo and Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction.

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