

Research Snapshot

Reasons for driving under the influence of cannabis according to drivers in a remedial program

What is this research about?

Studies show that the use of cannabis before driving may increase the risk of traffic collisions. Given the legalization of cannabis in Canada, it's important to understand all the reasons why people drive after using cannabis. In this study, researchers aimed to understand the motivations and perspectives behind DUIC. The information provided is intended to inform service providers to help design effective education and prevention initiatives.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers interviewed 20 adults who had engaged in DUIC in the past year and were participating in a remedial program for impaired driving called Back on Track. They asked participants about their driving records, substance use, and drug-driving and drink-driving behaviours. They also asked a series of questions around most recent DUIC experience, availability of other transportation options, who drivers were with at the time, and perceived feelings of getting high.

What did the researchers find?

The researchers identified the following themes from participant responses:

- DUIC is an ordinary experience: DUIC experiences were often described as ordinary and common occurrences. Many participants said they use cannabis

What you need to know

The majority of people who participated in a remedial program said they felt only slightly high after using cannabis and believed that cannabis did not affect their ability to drive. Some said they drove high to prevent someone else from drinking and driving and/or to save cost and time. About half of the participants said they used a variety of techniques to compensate for the effects of cannabis, such as eating food or waiting 30 minutes before driving. By looking at qualitative data from people who often engage in driving under the influence of cannabis (DUIC), the researchers were able to understand key reasons behind DUIC and describe common features of such experiences.

before getting to and from work, and to get to social gatherings and leisure activities. Many stated they would often drive others such as friends. Those who said they were recreational cannabis users reported often engaging in DUIC after socializing with others.

- DUIC is convenient and cost effective: Most participants said that other transportation methods were available, but they often engaged in DUIC out of convenience, as well as to save time and money.



- Not too high to drive: While most participants said they felt mildly to moderately high while driving, they felt capable of driving since they were more relaxed, focused and anxious. Several said they chose to drive because others were more intoxicated than themselves.
- Drivers generally did not feel the need to compensate for their impairment. Some said they would do things such as drink water, eat food to feel sober, wait at least 30 minutes prior to driving, and drive with more caution (e.g., follow or drive slower than speed limits; greater awareness of surroundings, sidewalks and other cars).

About the researchers

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Keywords

Cannabis, driving, interviews, motivations

Limitations and next steps

The researchers used an interview-based method that can sometimes result in participants reporting what they think the researchers want to hear and inaccurate memories of past behaviour. Such bias may have been possible with this study since participants were recruited from a remedial program that they were required to take in order to reinstate their driver's licenses. Additionally, since the participants had firsthand experience with impaired driving, their responses may be different from those of the general population.

How can you use this research?

This study may be useful when planning interventions to prevent the public from engaging in DUI. The perspectives and themes that the researchers identified can be used when designing education and awareness campaigns and initiatives to help change people's attitudes and beliefs.

This *Research Snapshot* was written by Neetu Shukla, based on the article, "Just a Habit: Driving Under the Influence of Cannabis as Ordinary, Convenient, and Controllable Experiences According to Drivers in a Remedial Program," which was published in *Journal of Drug Issues* in 2019. DOI: 10.1177/0022042619842375.