

Australia

2021 CANNABIS REPORT

OCTOBER 2022



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Forward

The International Cannabis Policy Study is an international research collaboration designed to examine cannabis policy and public health impact. The project started in 2018 and includes annual population-based surveys in Canada and the United States (since 2018), as well as Australia and New Zealand (since 2021).

The current report summarizes findings among respondents from Australia for the 2021 survey, with comparisons to USA, Canada, and New Zealand. Additional details are available upon request.

Visit the study website for more information:
www.cannabisproject.ca.



FUNDING

FUNDING FOR THIS STUDY WAS PROVIDED BY A CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (CIHR) PROJECT GRANT, A CIHR PARTNERSHIPS FOR CANNABIS POLICY EVALUATION TEAM GRANT, A UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND FOUNDATION RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD, A NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL INVESTIGATOR GRANT, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE, AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

ETHICS CLEARANCE

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY AND RECEIVED ETHICS CLEARANCE THROUGH A UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (ORE#31330).

SUGGESTED CITATION

HAMMOND D, CORSETTI D, IRANIPARAST M, DANH HONG D, BURKHALTER R, CHAN G, HALL, W. INTERNATIONAL CANNABIS POLICY STUDY – AUSTRALIA 2021 SUMMARY. OCTOBER 2022.

CONTACT

DAVID HAMMOND PhD
PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
DHAMMOND@UWATERLOO.CA
519 888 4567 EXT. 46462
WWW.CANNABISPROJECT.CA



Methods

OVERVIEW

The International Cannabis Policy Study is a repeat cross-sectional survey conducted annually in the United States and Canada (since 2018), as well as Australia and New Zealand (since 2021) to examine trends in cannabis. This report summarizes key indicators from the 2021 ICPS survey in Australia from September 14 to November 8, 2021.

SAMPLE

Respondents were aged 16–65 years and were recruited through the Nielsen Consumer Insights Global Panel. The analytic sample for 2021 comprised 52,938 respondents in Canada (n= 16,952), the United States (n= 30,081), Australia (2,925) and New Zealand (2,980). The current report focuses on the Australia subsample of 2,925 respondents who participated in the 2021 survey.

SURVEY

The survey covers the following content areas:

- prevalence and patterns of cannabis use;
- cannabis purchasing and price;
- cannabis consumption and modes of use;
- commercial retail environment;
- risk behaviours;
- cannabis knowledge, perceptions of risk and social norms;

- exposure to health warnings and public educational campaigns;
- exposure to cannabis marketing and branding;
- substance use and other risk behaviours; and
- socio-demographics and socio-economic status.

DATA ANALYSIS

Post-stratification survey weights were created using age-by-sex-by-state/territory, education and ethnicity-by-state/territory groups. All estimates in the current report are weighted.

TECHNICAL REPORT

The survey and technical report are available at:

www.cannabisproject.ca/methods.

The technical report includes detailed information on methodology and survey weighting.



Sample profile

	Total n=2,925
Sex	
Female	1,472
Male	1,453
Age group	
16-25	551
26-35	664
36-45	618
46-55	564
56-65	529
Primary language	
English only	2,213
Other	712
Country born	
Australia	2,379
Other	546
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	
No	2,432
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	467

	Total n=2,925
Education level	
<High school	498
High school	669
Some college	804
Bachelor's degree	924
Region	
New South Wales	190
Victoria	99
Queensland	1,045
South Australia	273
Western Australia	33
Tasmania	86
Australian Capital Territory	55
Northern Territory	167
Income adequacy	
Very difficult	174
Difficult	440
Neither easy nor difficult	1,023
Easy	788
Very easy	412



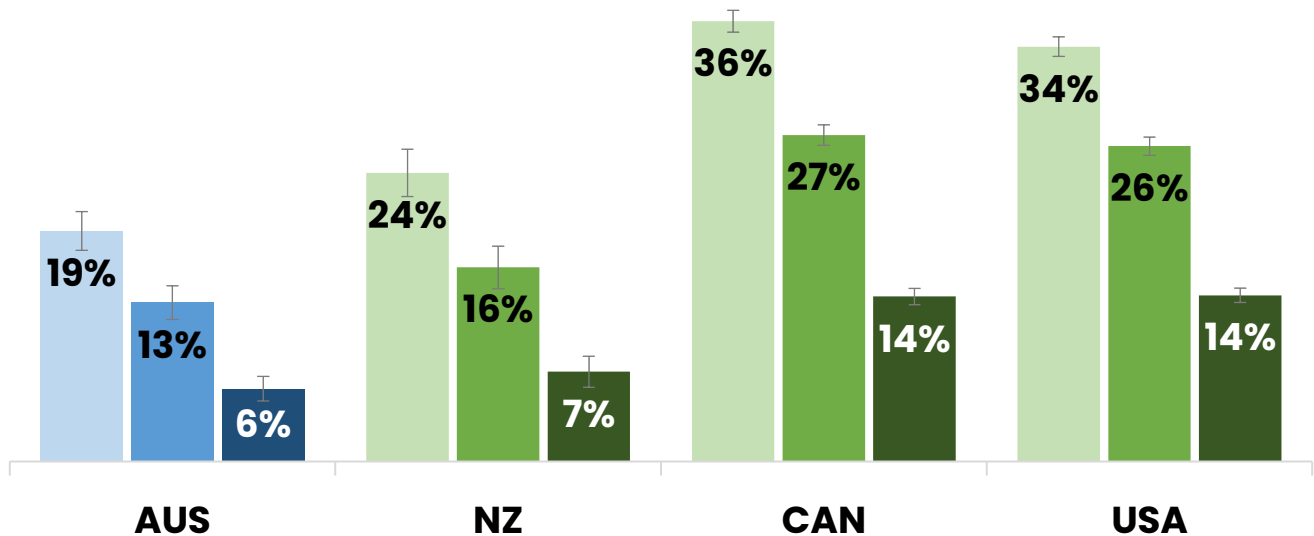
Cannabis prevalence

Almost one fifth of respondents in Australia used cannabis in the past 12 months, 13% used cannabis monthly, and 6% used cannabis daily.

Prevalence of cannabis use 2021

AUS N=2,925; NZ N=2,980; CAN N=16,952; USA N=30,081

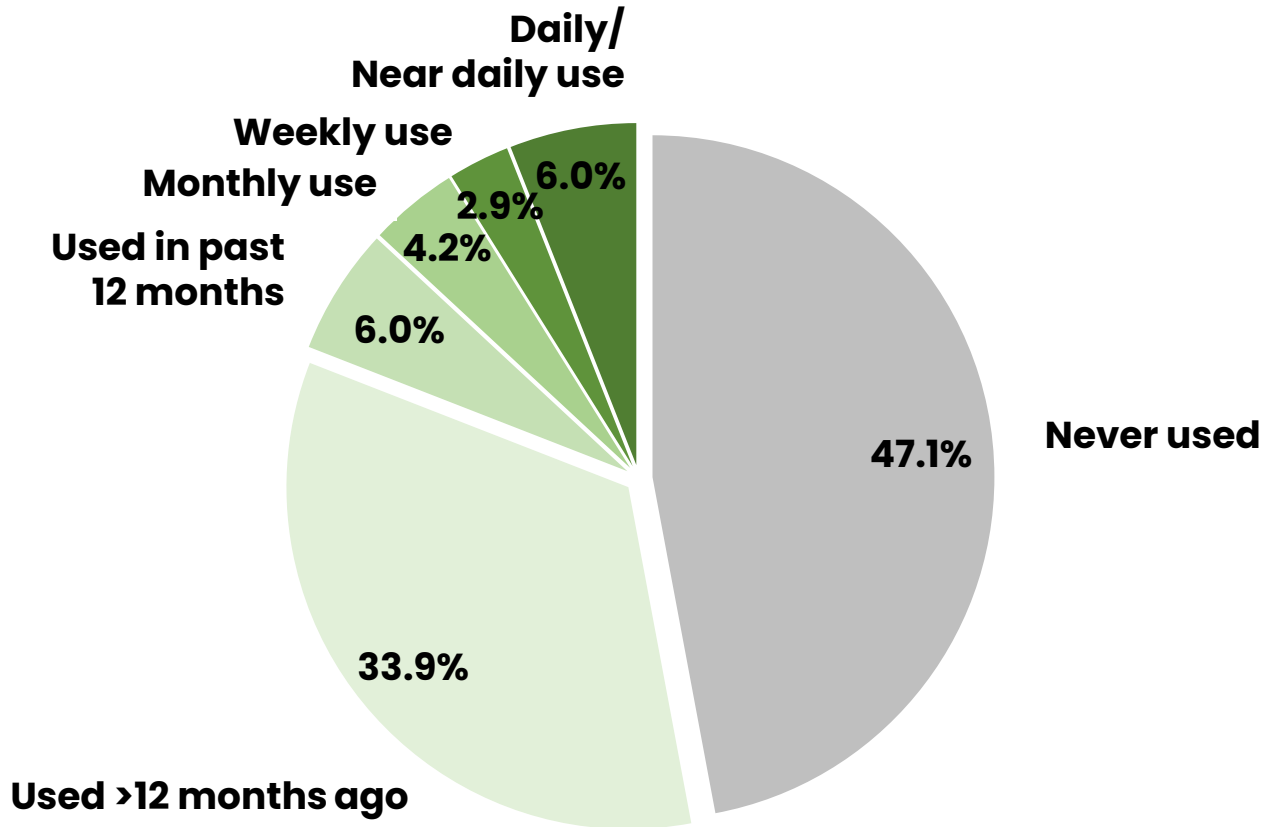
■ Past 12 months ■ Monthly ■ Daily / near daily



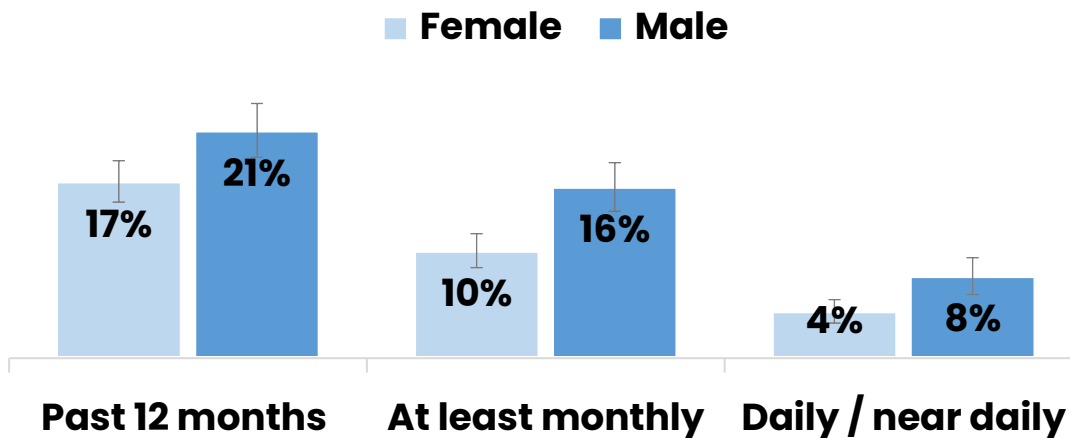


Cannabis prevalence

Australia 2021



By sex



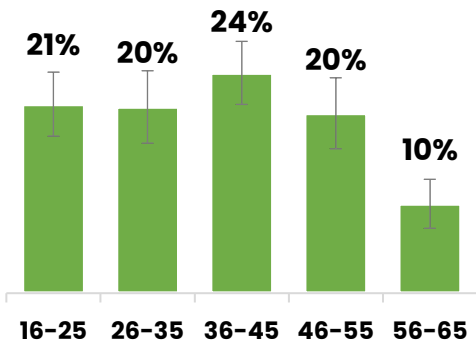
AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS (N=2,925). DAILY/NEAR DAILY USE ≥ 5 DAYS PER WEEK.

Cannabis prevalence

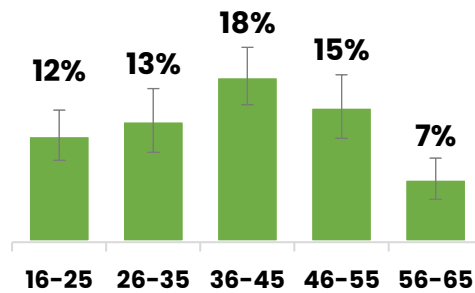
Australia 2021

By age

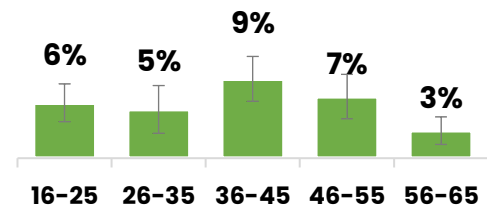
Past 12 months



Monthly

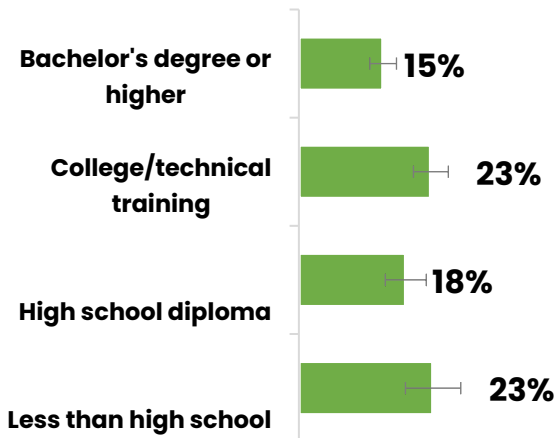


Daily/almost daily

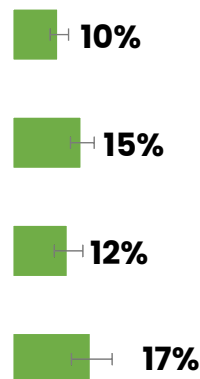


By education

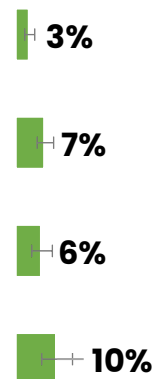
Past 12 months



Monthly



Daily/almost daily



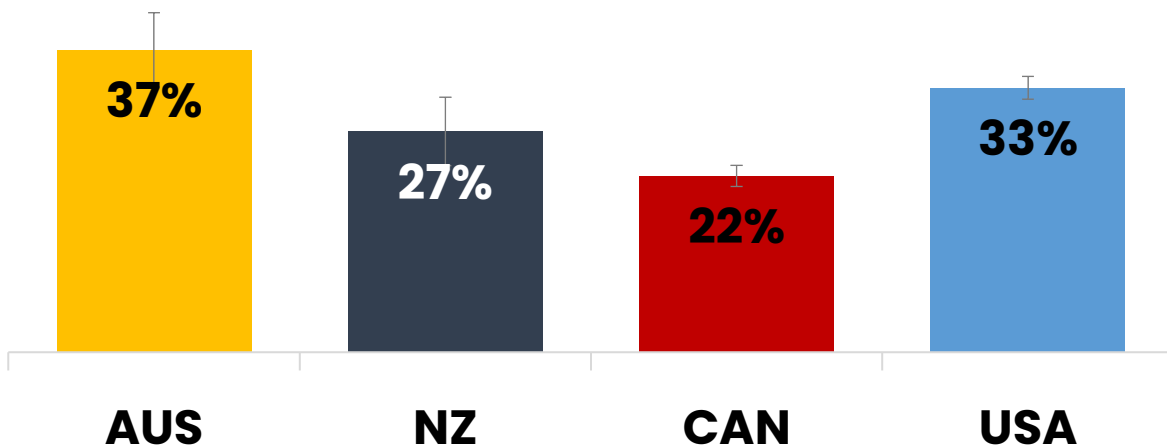
Medical authorization

In 2021, almost 4 in 10 past 12-month cannabis consumers in Australia reported that their cannabis consumption was exclusively for medical purposes, higher than New Zealand, Canada, and USA.

Percent of consumers who self-identify as a medical marijuana user only?

% 'YES', PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS

AUS N=534; NZ N=684; CAN N=5,900; USA N=10,361

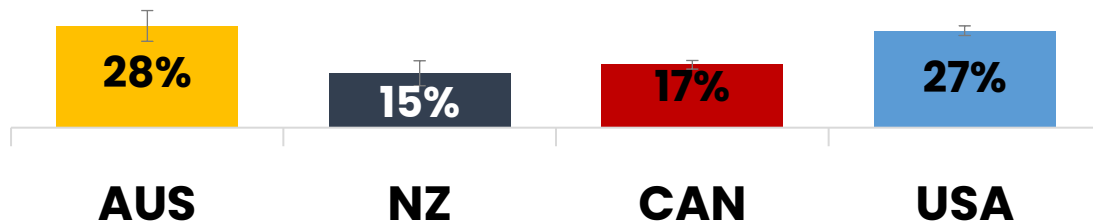


Medical authorization

Over 1 in 4 past 12-month cannabis consumers in Australia had 'ever' asked a health professional about a prescription for medical cannabis. Among those who had asked, over 3 in 5 had been refused.

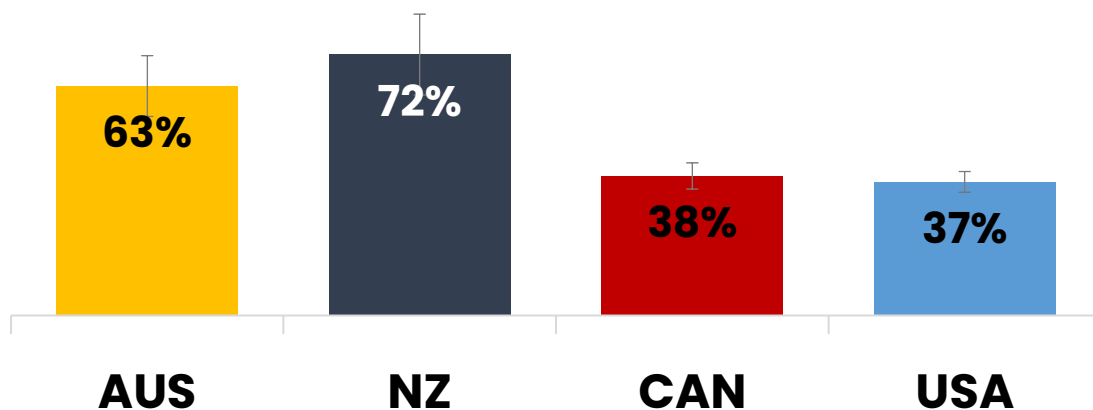
Have you ever asked a licensed health professional for a prescription to use medical marijuana?

% 'YES', AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS. 2021, AUS N=536; NZ N=685; CAN N=5,901; USA N=10,367



Have you ever been refused a prescription for medical marijuana?

% 'YES', PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS WHO HAVE SOUGHT APPROVAL. 2021, AUS N=154; NZ N=119; CAN N=1,090; USA N=2,703





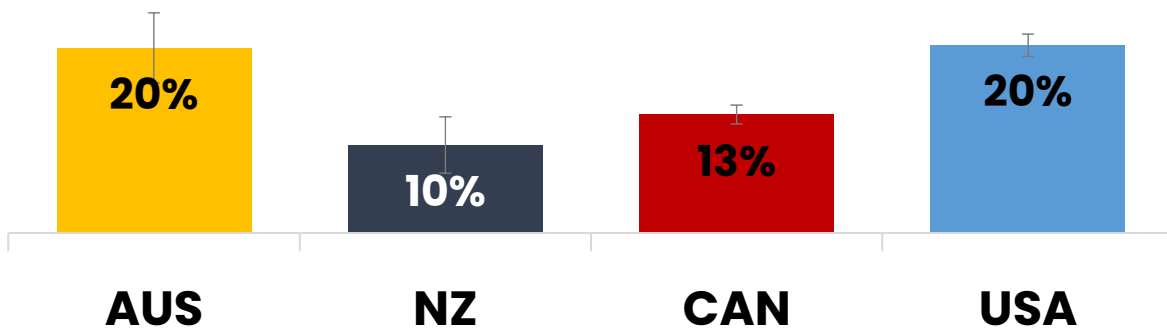
Medical authorization

In 2021, 1 in 5 past 12-month cannabis consumers in Australia reported 'ever' receiving approval for medical cannabis use, including 16% who reported they were approved for medical cannabis use in the past 12-months.

Have you ever received a prescription for medical marijuana?

% 'YES', PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS

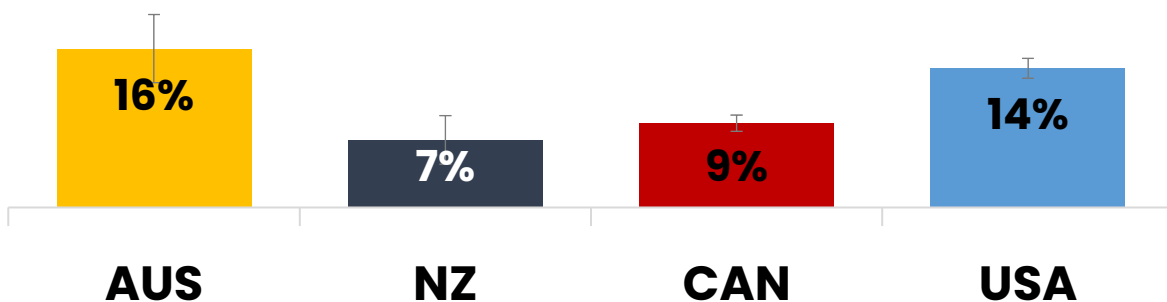
AUS N=544; NZ N=700; CAN N=5,935; USA N=10,472



Did you receive a prescription to use medical marijuana at any time in the past 12 months?

% 'YES', PAST 12 MONTH CONSUMERS,

AUS N=542; NZ N=700; CAN N=5932; USA N=10,468

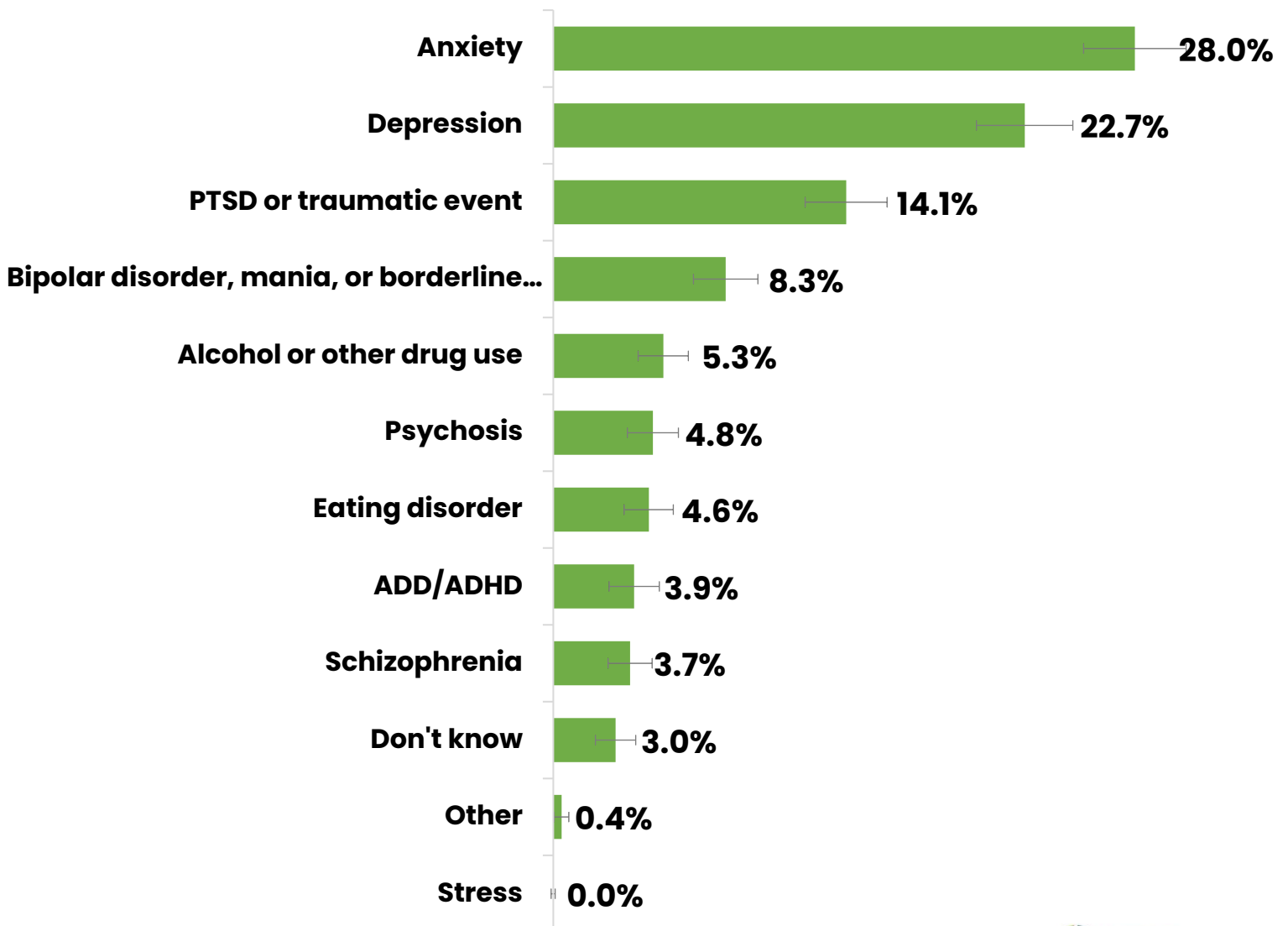


Cannabis use to manage or improve mental health

Overall, 43% of 'ever' cannabis consumers reported using cannabis to improve or manage at least one of the mental health issues shown below. Over one quarter of 'ever' cannabis consumers reported using cannabis to improve or manage anxiety, followed by depression and PTSD.

Have you ever used marijuana to improve or manage symptoms for any of the following?

% 'YES' AMONG 'EVER' CANNABIS CONSUMERS, 2021 N=1,532



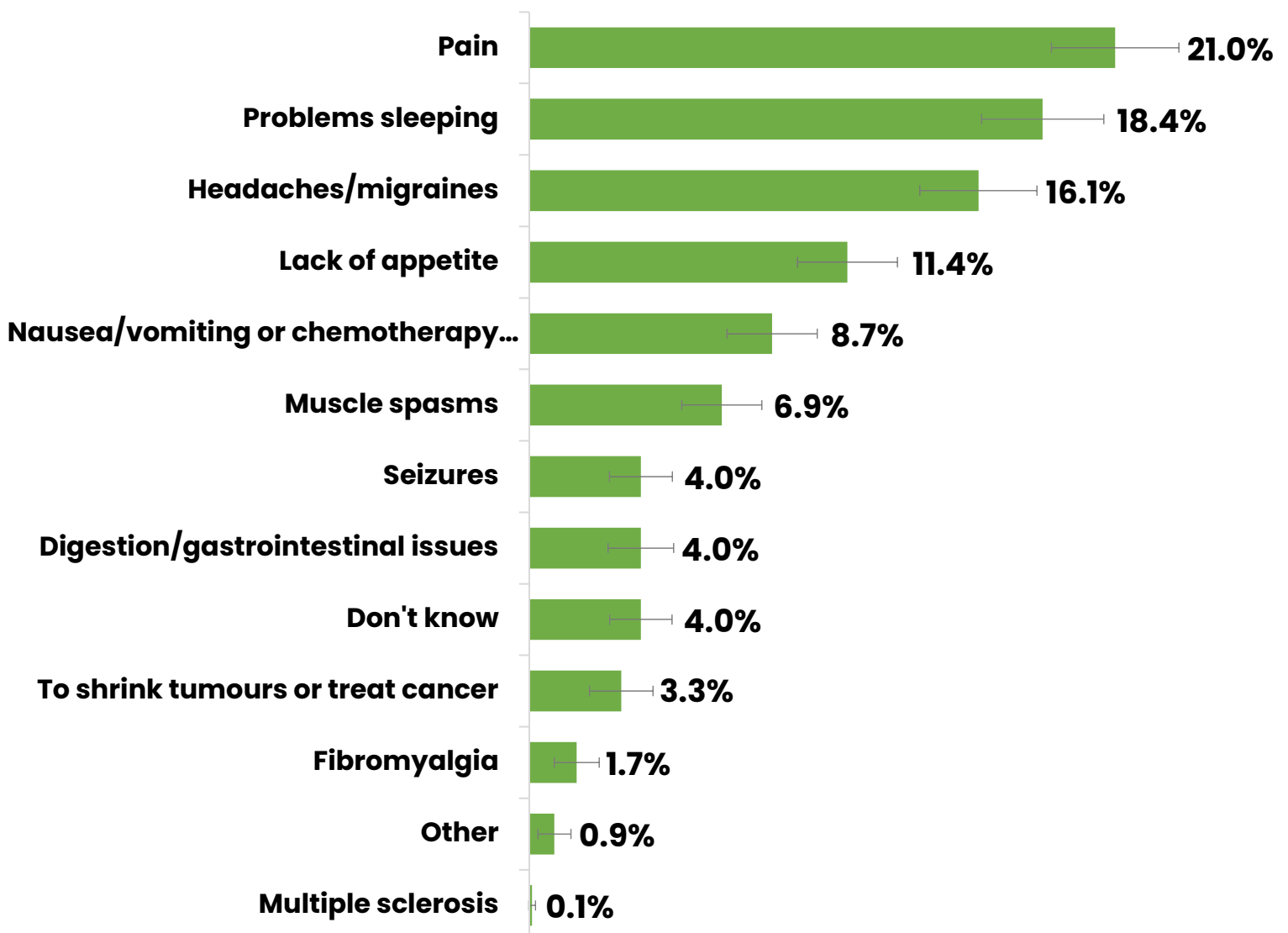


Cannabis use to manage or improve physical health

Overall, 45% of 'ever' cannabis consumers reported using cannabis to improve or manage at least one of the physical health issues shown below. 'Ever' cannabis consumers reported using cannabis to improve or manage a range of symptoms, including pain, sleeping problems and headaches/migraines.

Have you ever used marijuana to improve or manage symptoms for any of the following?

% 'YES AMONG 'EVER' CANNABIS CONSUMERS, 2021 N=1,532

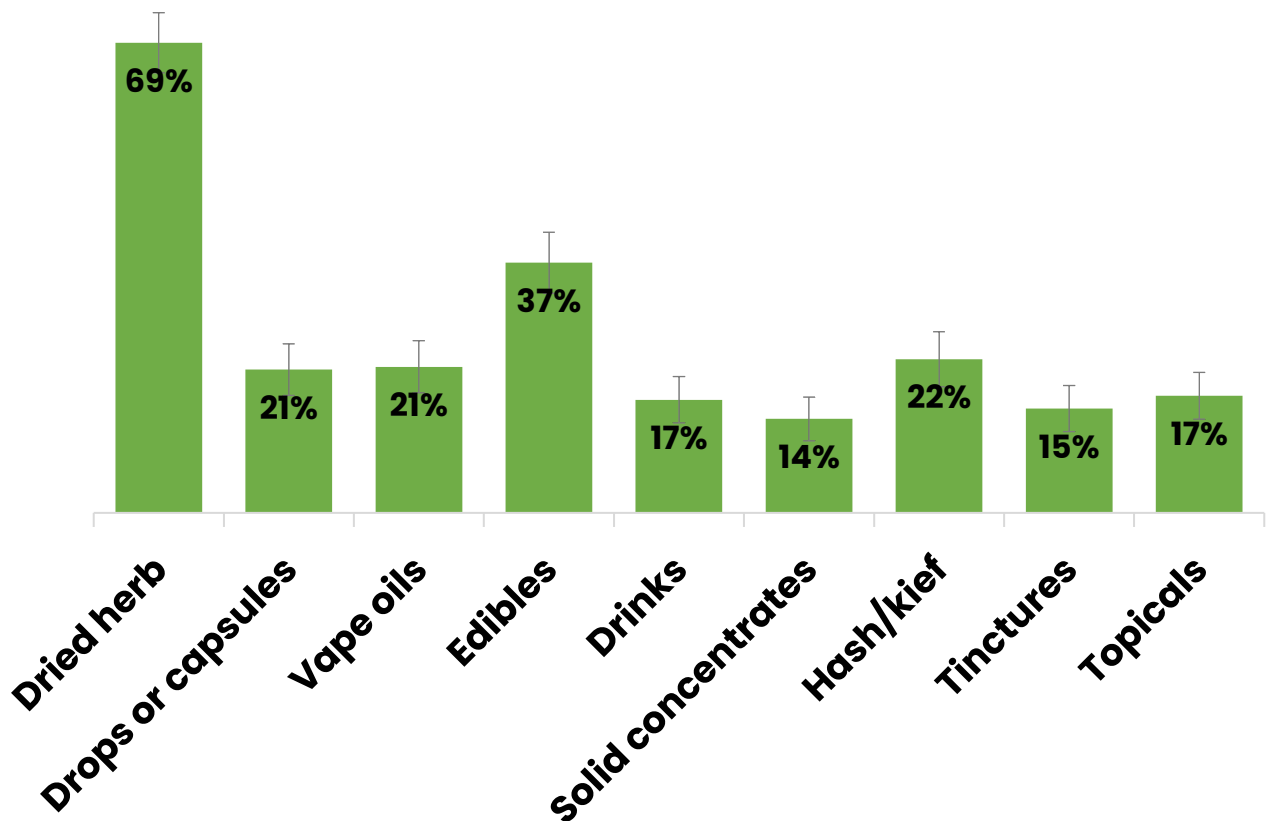


Types of cannabis products

Among past 12-month cannabis consumers, dried flower was the most commonly reported type of cannabis product used. Slightly more than one third of consumers reported using edibles, with just over one fifth reporting use of hash, oral oils, and vape oils.

Have you ever used marijuana in any of the following ways?

% 'YES' AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CANNABIS CONSUMERS, 2021 N=544

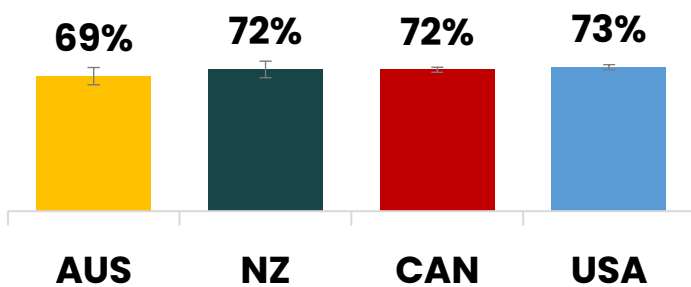


Types of cannabis products

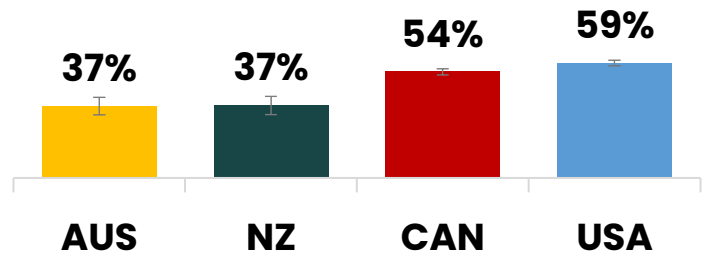
Use of dried flower among past 12-month consumers was similar across countries at around 70% in 2021. Use of edibles among Australia consumers was similar to New Zealand, but substantially less than Canada and the USA. Consumers in Australia also reported lower use of drops/capsules, as well as vape oils compared to Canada and the USA.



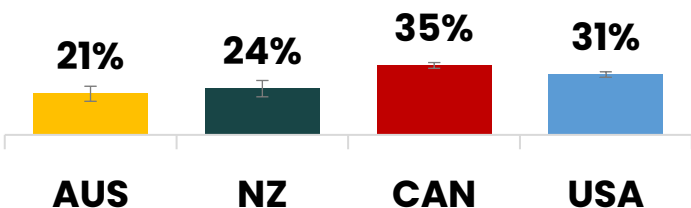
Dried flower



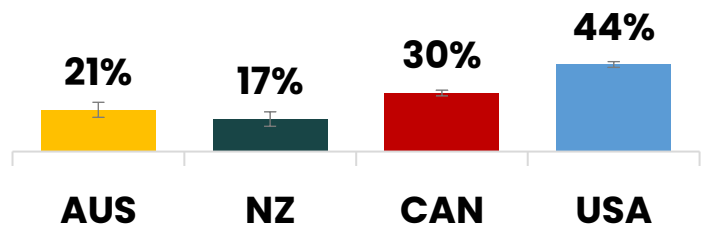
Edibles



Drops or capsules



Vape oils

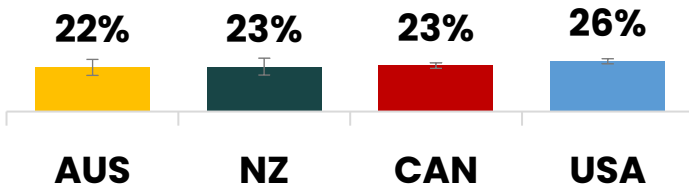


Types of cannabis products

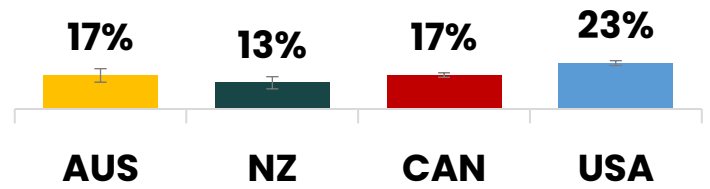
Cannabis consumers in Australia reported lower levels of use than consumers in USA for most cannabis extracts, with higher levels than New Zealand, and similar levels to Canada. Compared to New Zealand, Australian consumers reported notably higher levels of cannabis drinks.



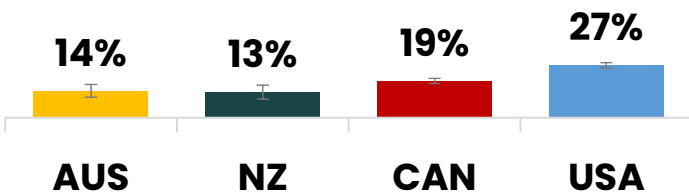
Hash



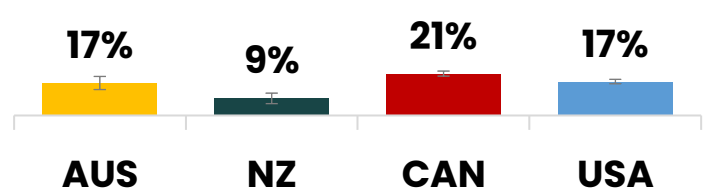
Topicals



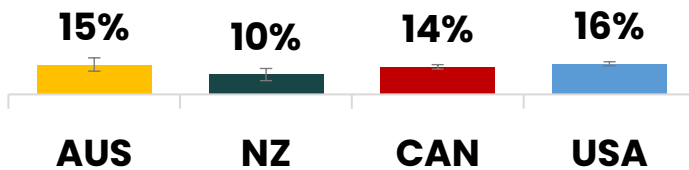
Solid concentrates



Drinks



Tinctures



AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CANNABIS CONSUMERS.

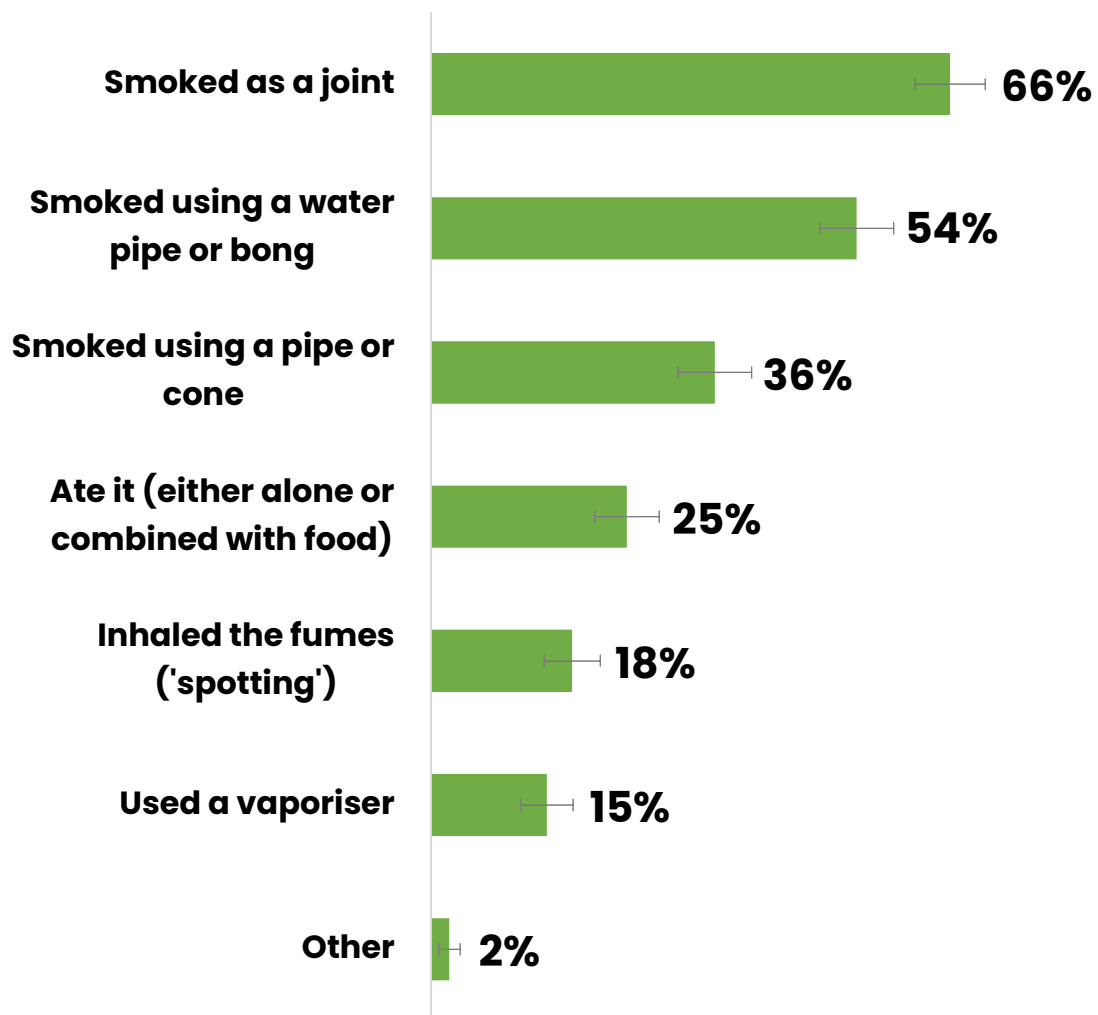


Modes of cannabis use

In 2021, past 12-month consumers in Australia reported using cannabis in a variety of ways including 'smoked as a joint', 'smoked using a water pipe or bong' and 'smoked using a pipe or cone'.

In the last 12 months, how have you used cannabis?

% AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS, 2021 N=544

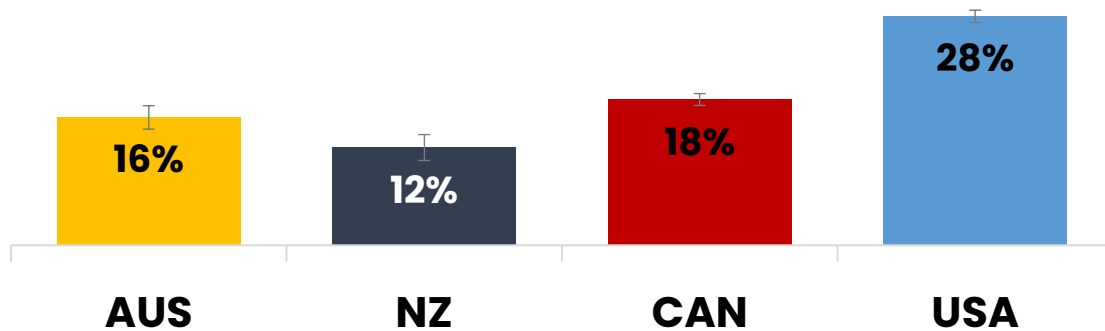


Use of 'non-THC' CBD products

In 2021, 16% of all respondents in Australia reported using “CBD-only products” (with no THC) in the past 12 months. The most common CBD product types were oil/liquid drops, oil/liquid capsules, and edibles.

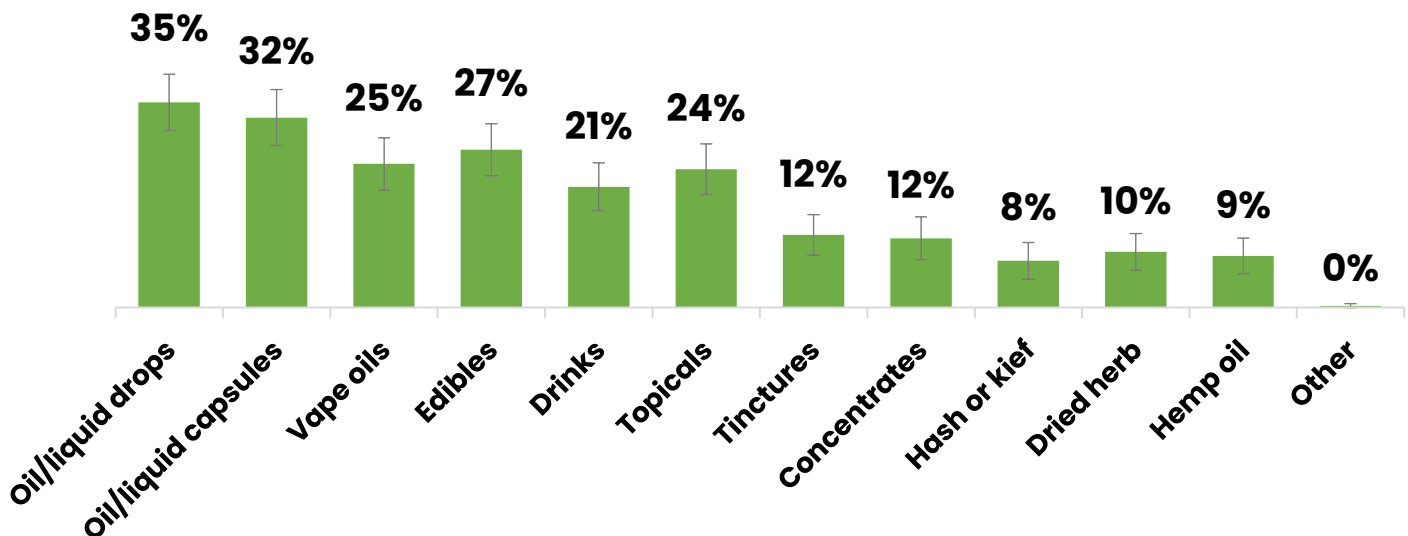
Use of CBD-only products in the past 12-months

AUS N=2,902; NZ N=2,958; CAN N=16,879; USA N=29,927



Type of CBD-only products used

AMONG THOSE WHO REPORTED CBD-ONLY PRODUCT USE; NEW ZEALAND ONLY; N=470

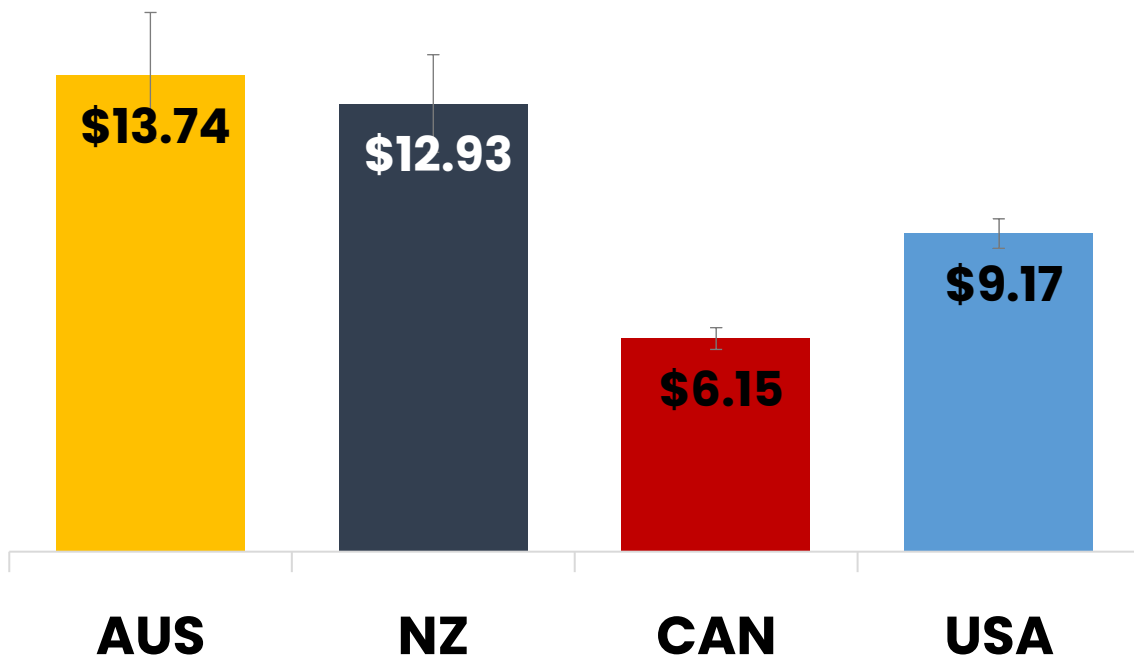


Price of dried cannabis

In 2021, Australia consumers reported paying \$13.74 per gram of dried flower. Dried flower prices in New Zealand were similar to Australia, but substantially higher than Canada and the USA.

Price paid for dried flower dried flower

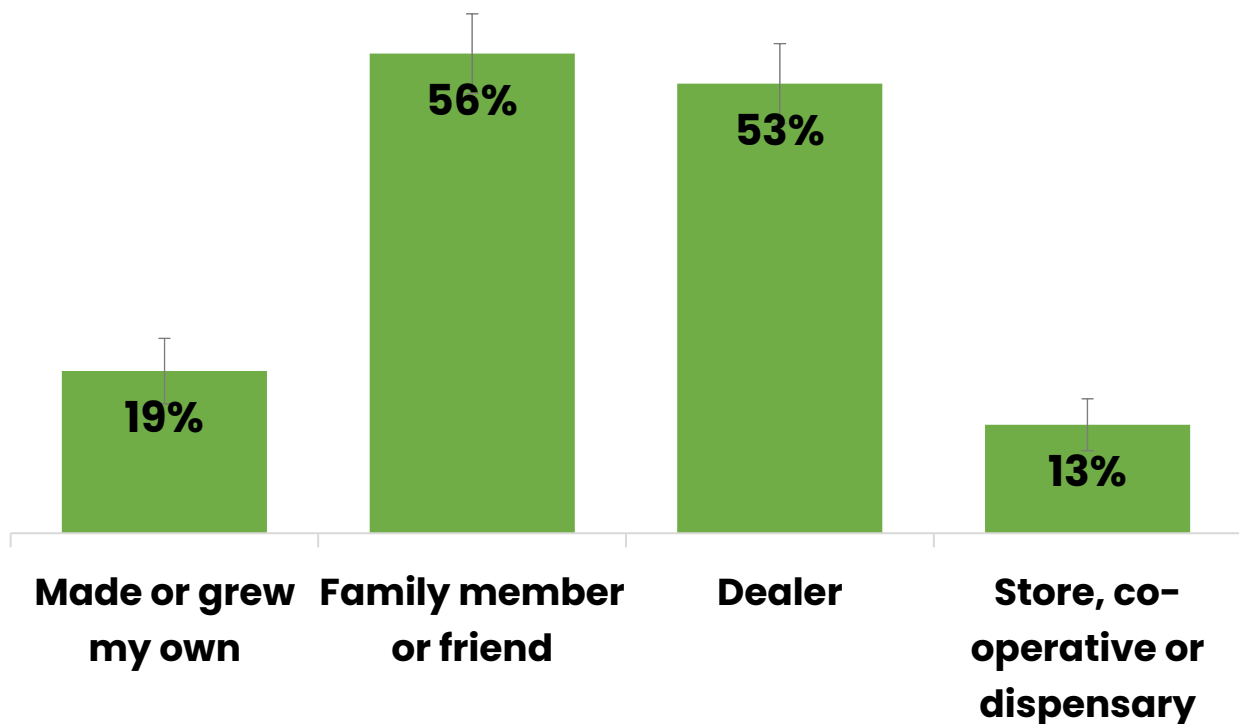
SALES WEIGHTED PRICE-PER-GRAM OF DRIED FLOWER AT LAST PURCHASE, 2021



Source of cannabis products

In 2021, almost 60% of consumers in Australia got their cannabis from a 'family member or friend', with over half reporting sourcing their cannabis from a 'dealer'. Less than a fifth reported making or growing their own cannabis, while 13% reported buying cannabis from a store or dispensary.

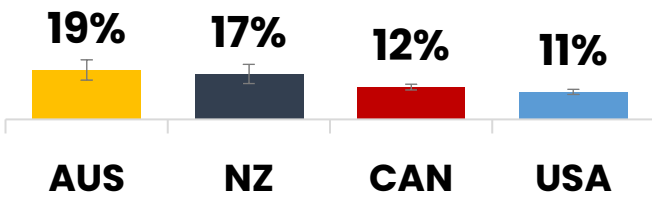
Cannabis sources in the past 12-months AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS



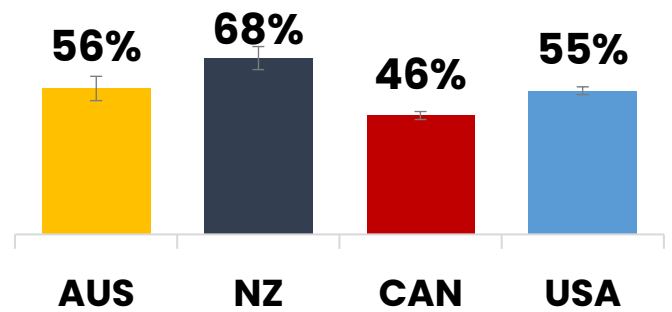
Source of cannabis products

Cannabis consumers in Australia and New Zealand reported similar sources of cannabis products. In contrast, consumers in Canada and the USA were less likely to source products from dealers and substantially more likely to purchase products from stores, co-ops and dispensaries.

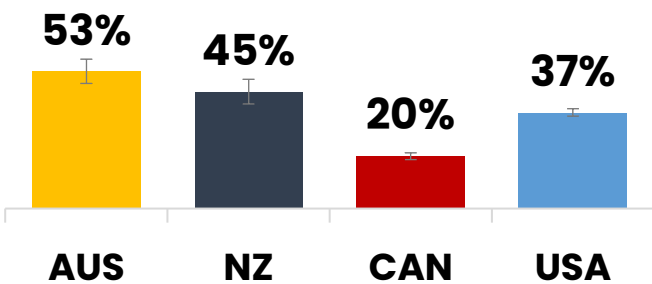
Made or grew my own



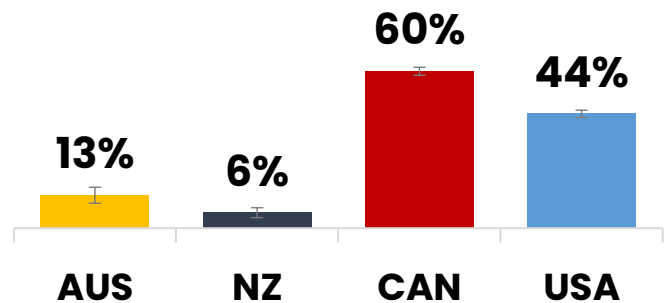
Family member or friend



Dealer

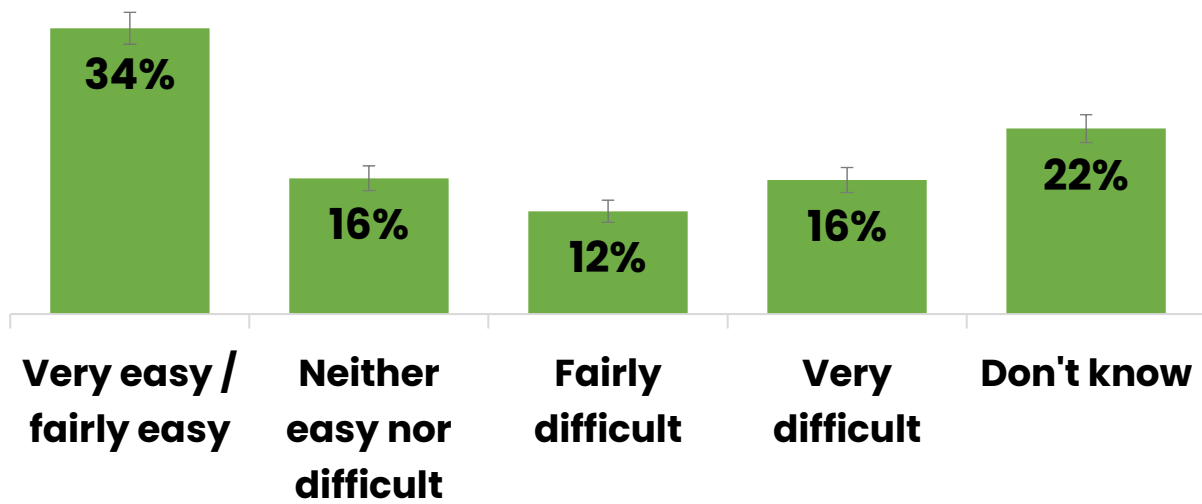


Store, co-op, or dispensary

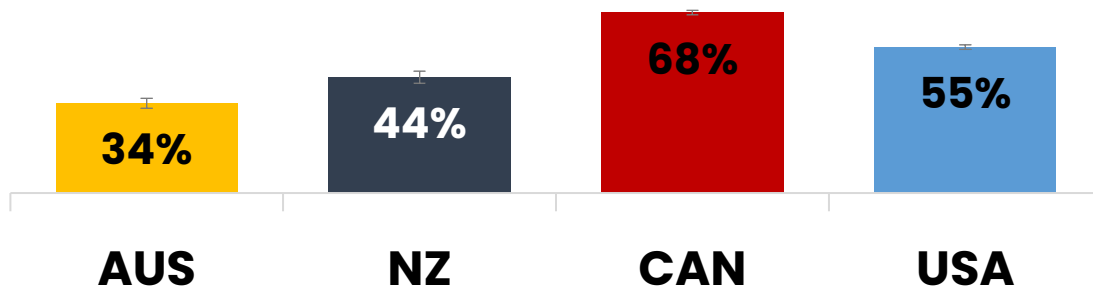


Perceptions of cannabis access

Overall, how easy or difficult is it/would it be for you to get marijuana?



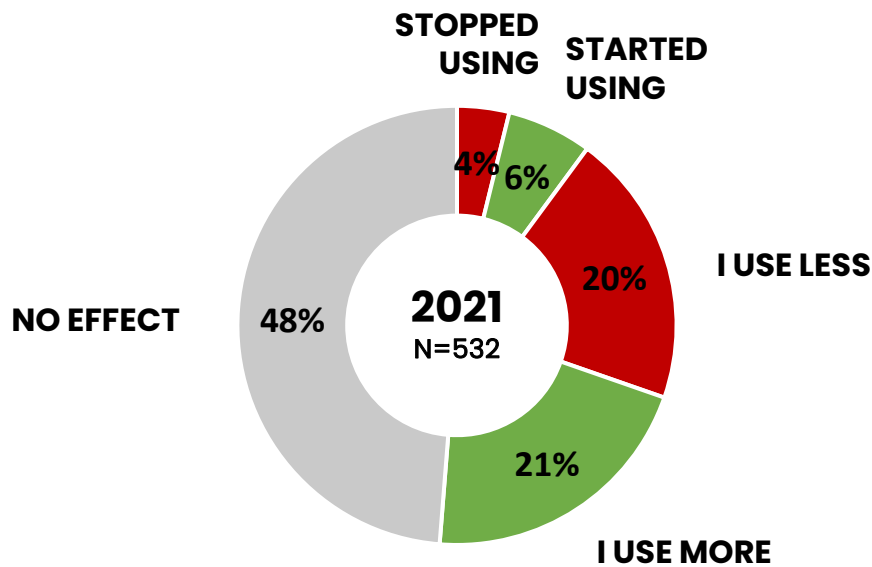
Getting cannabis is 'very' or 'fairly' easy



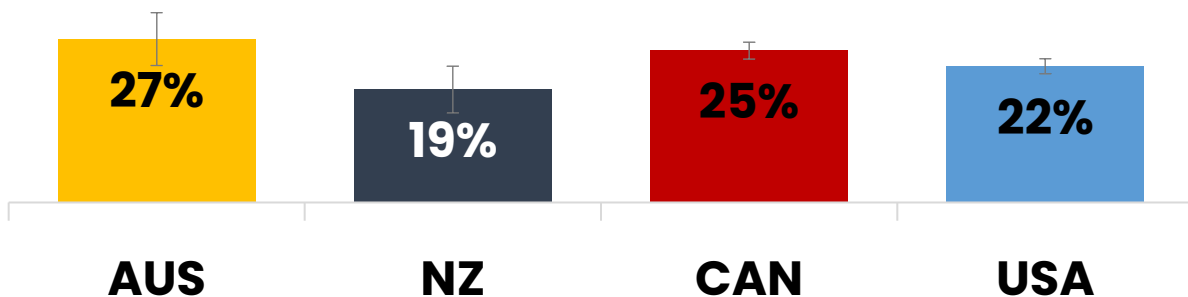
COVID-19 impact on consumption

Over half of past 12-month consumers in Australia reported that the COVID-19 pandemic changed their cannabis use, with about the same indicating increased and decreased consumption.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on cannabis use



Percent of consumers who 'used more' or 'started using' cannabis during the pandemic



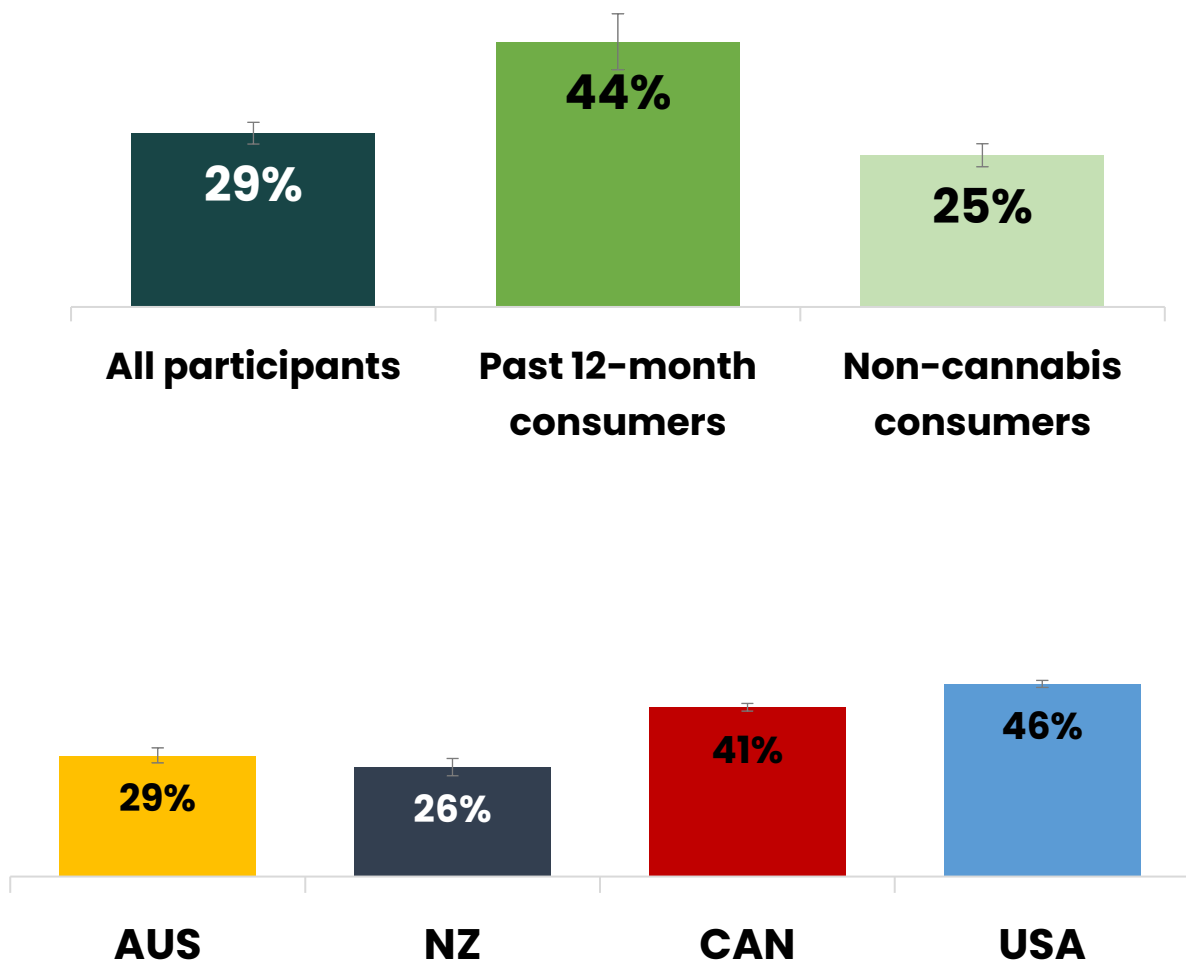


Cannabis advertising exposure

In 2021, almost 3 in 10 respondents reported noticing cannabis advertisements in at least one location in the past 12 months, with higher levels of exposure among consumers. Noticing cannabis advertising in Australia was similar to levels in New Zealand, but notably lower than in Canada or the USA.

Noticing any cannabis ads or promotions

% NOTICING AT LEAST ONE LOCATION IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS. PERCENT REPORTING SEEING MARIJUANA BEING ADVERTISED OR PROMOTED IN AT LEAST 1 LOCATION IN PAST 12 MONTHS.



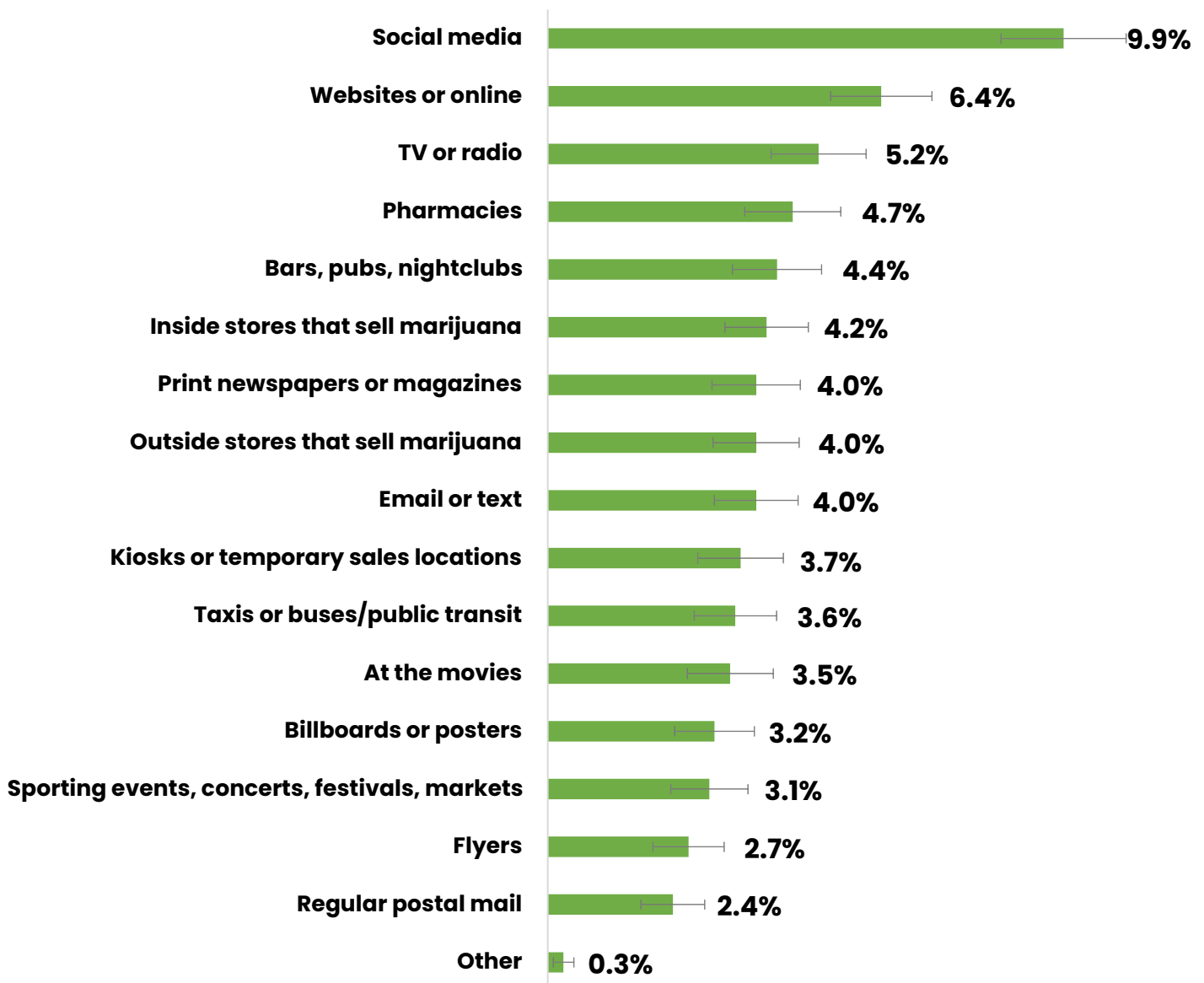
Cannabis advertising exposure

Australia – 2021

In 2021, Australian respondents were most likely to notice cannabis advertising on social media, followed by websites/online and TV/radio.

Noticing cannabis ads in the past 12-months

BY MARKETING CHANNEL 2021 N=2,925

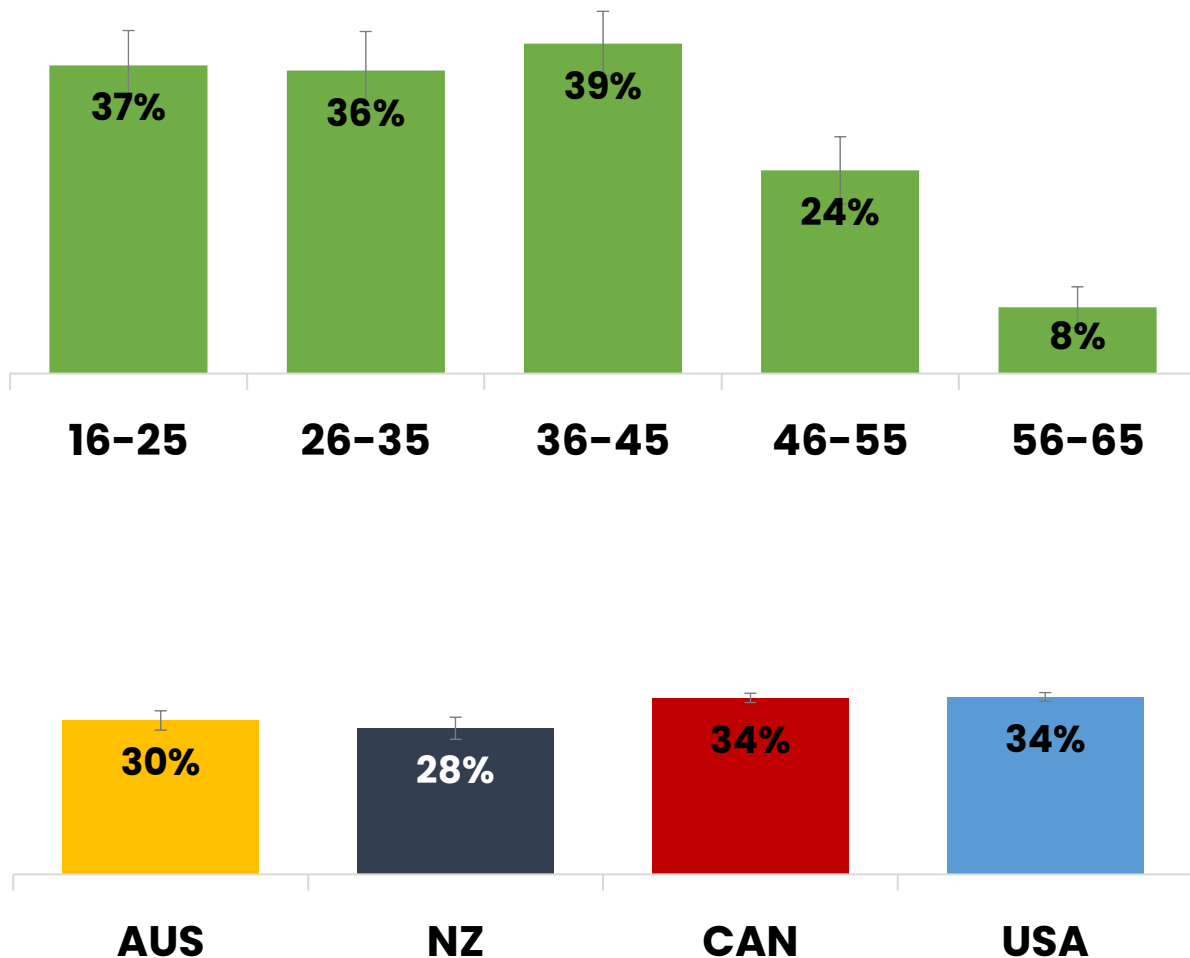


Education campaign exposure

Among Australian respondents, those aged 16-25, 26-35, and 36-45 reported more cannabis educational campaign exposure than older age groups. Australia respondents reported similar educational campaign exposure to New Zealand.

Recall of cannabis education campaigns

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, AUSTRALIA

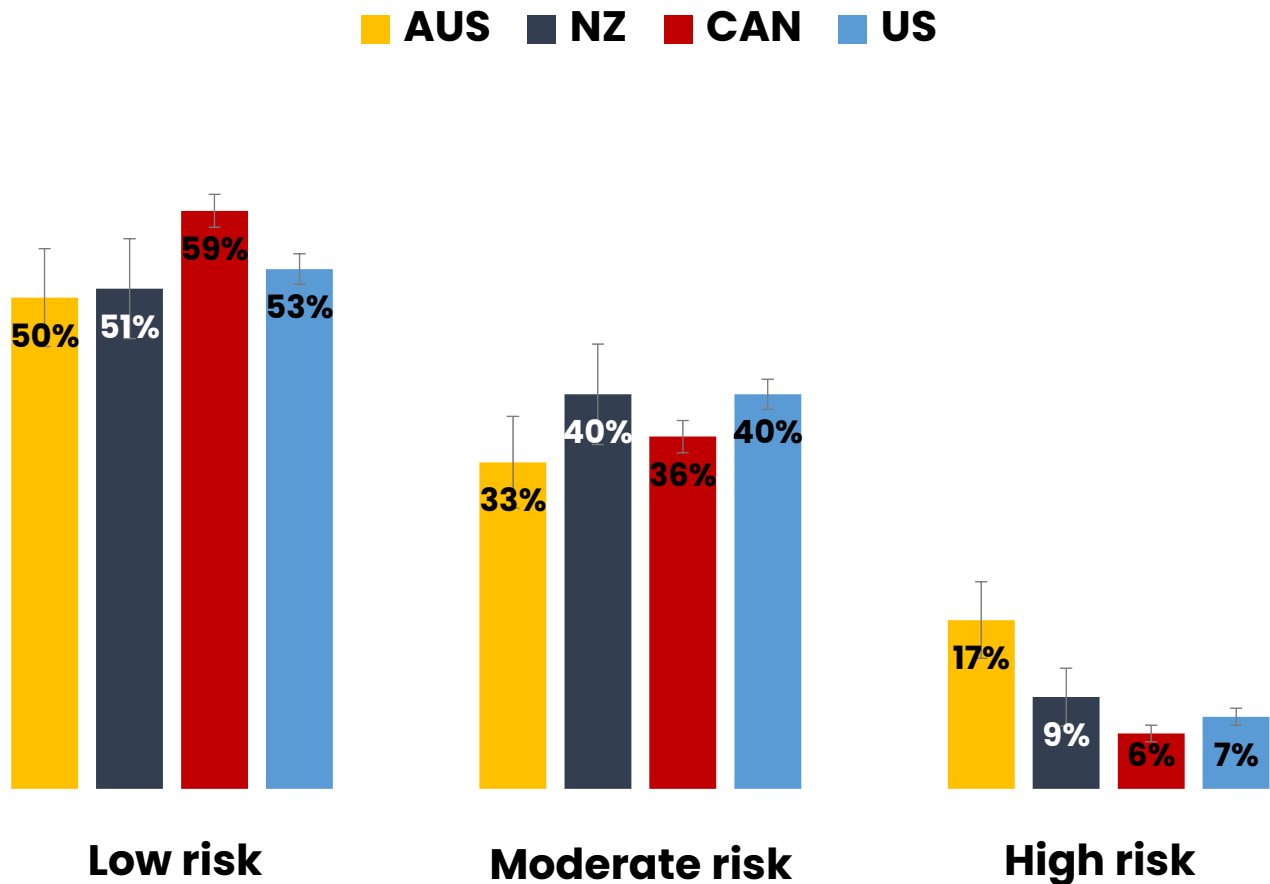


Problematic cannabis use

The World Health Organization's ASSIST tool assesses low, moderate or high risk of problematic cannabis use based on a variety of indicators. In Australia, 17% of past 12-month consumers were categorized as 'high risk' cannabis use. The proportion of consumers at 'high risk' in Australia was substantially higher than New Zealand, Canada, and the USA.

Risk of problematic cannabis use

WHO ASSIST SCORES, AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS,
AUS N=482; NZ N=609; CAN N=5,310; US N=9,327

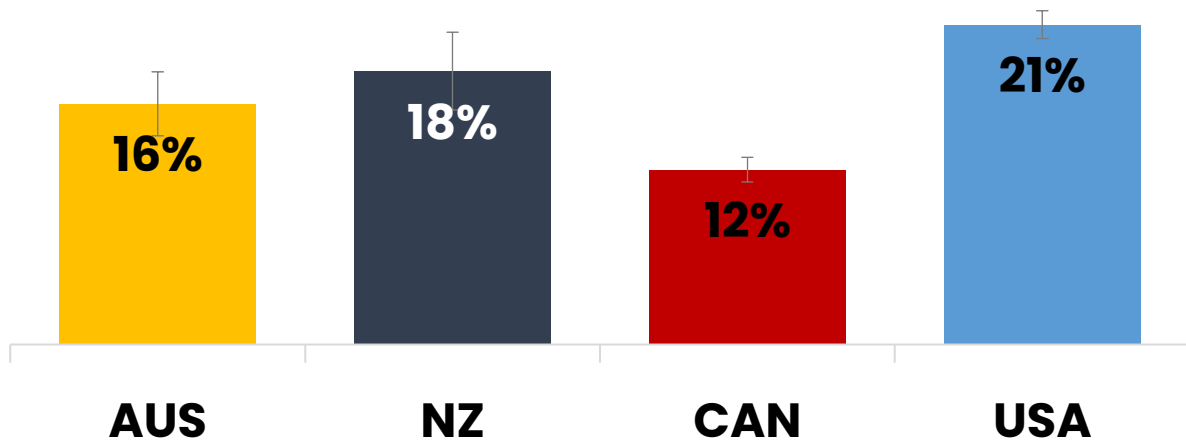


Driving after cannabis use

In 2021, 16% of ever-cannabis consumers in Australia with a driver's licence reported driving within 2 hours of cannabis use in the past year. Prevalence was highest in the USA and New Zealand.

Driving a vehicle within 2 hours of cannabis use

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS AMONG 'EVER' CANNABIS CONSUMERS

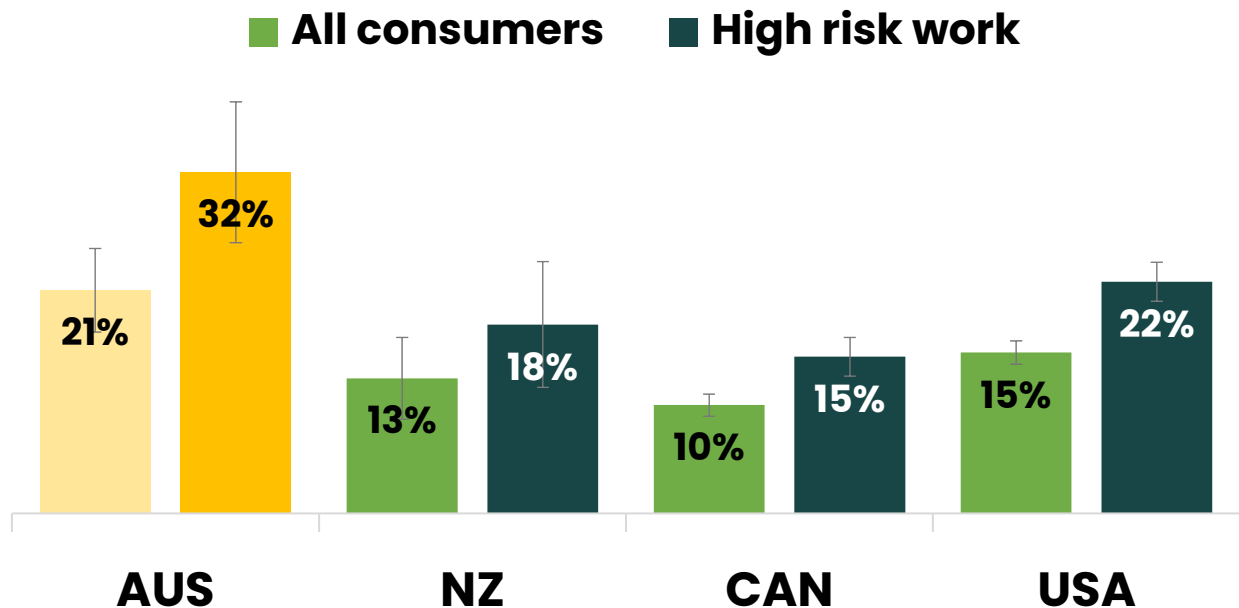


Cannabis use at work

In 2021, over 1 in 5 past 12-month cannabis consumers in Australia reported using cannabis within 2 hours of starting work. Prevalence of using cannabis at work was higher among consumers who reported working in hazardous jobs.

Cannabis use at work or within 2 hours of starting work in past 30 days

% YES, AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CANNABIS CONSUMERS



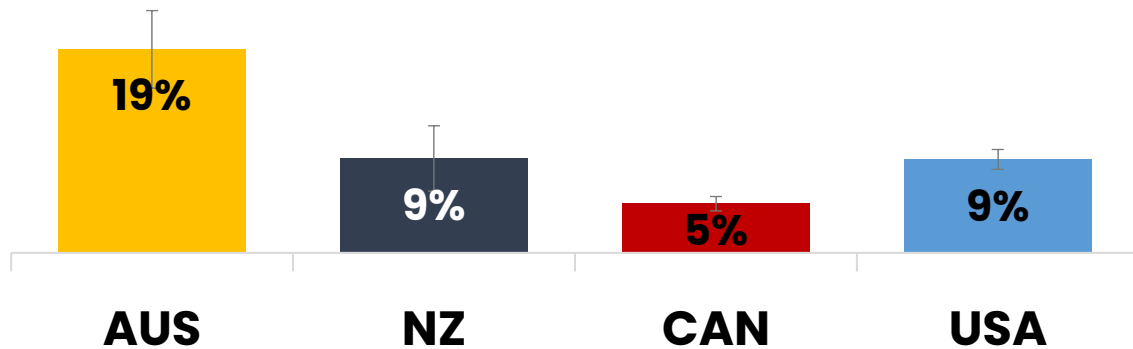
Adverse events from cannabis use

In 2021, approximately 19% of all past 12-month cannabis consumers in Australia reported seeking medical help for an adverse event from cannabis. Among those who sought medical help, emergency rooms and doctors/health professionals were the most common sources of help.

Percentage of consumers who sought medical help for adverse effects caused by cannabis use

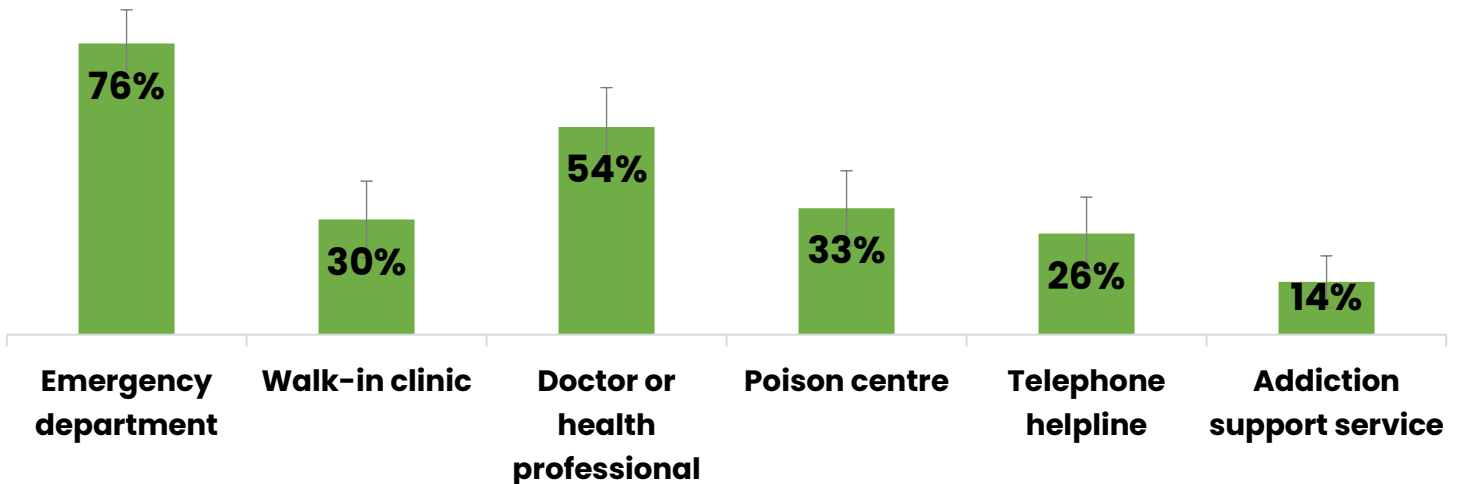
AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS, 2021

AUS N=530; NZ N=685; CAN N=5,864; USA N=10,346



Sources of assistance among consumers who sought medical help for adverse effects

AMONG THOSE WHO SOUGHT MEDICAL HELP; AUSTRALIA ONLY

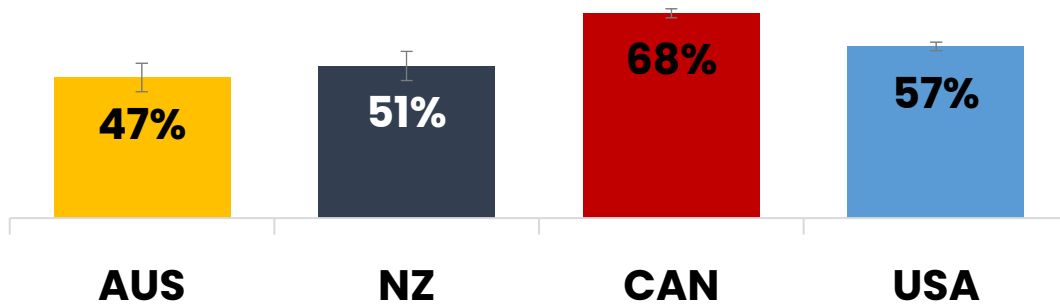


Storage of cannabis in home

Almost half of past 12-month consumers stored cannabis in the home in a variety of locations.

Do you currently keep any marijuana in or around your home?

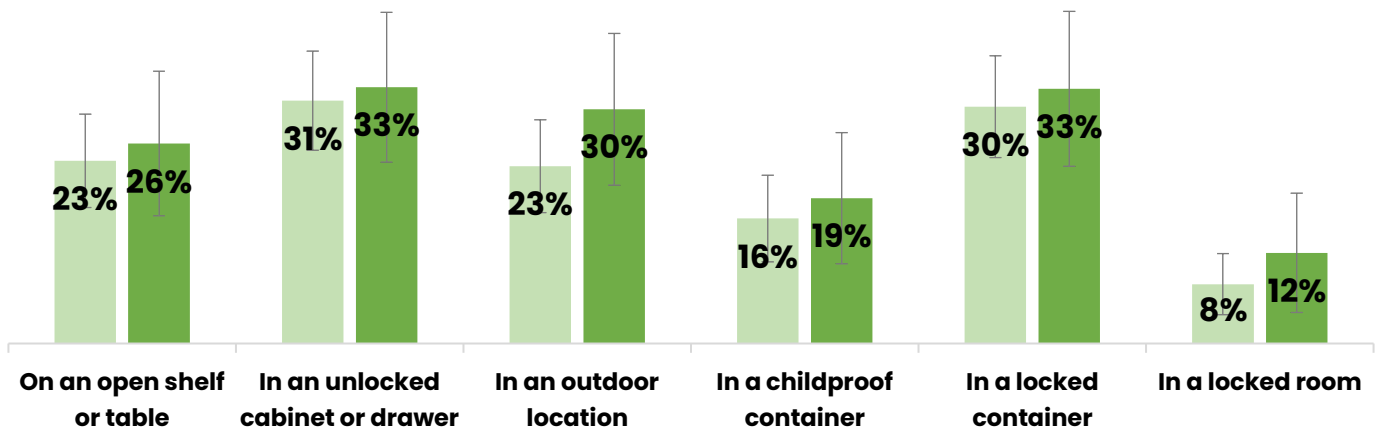
% 'YES' PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS, 2021
 AUS N=529; NZ N=672; CAN N=5,845; USA N=10,154



Where is the marijuana in your home stored?

PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS WHO STORED CANNABIS IN HOME, 2021 N=246

■ All past 12 months consumers ■ Parents of children < 17

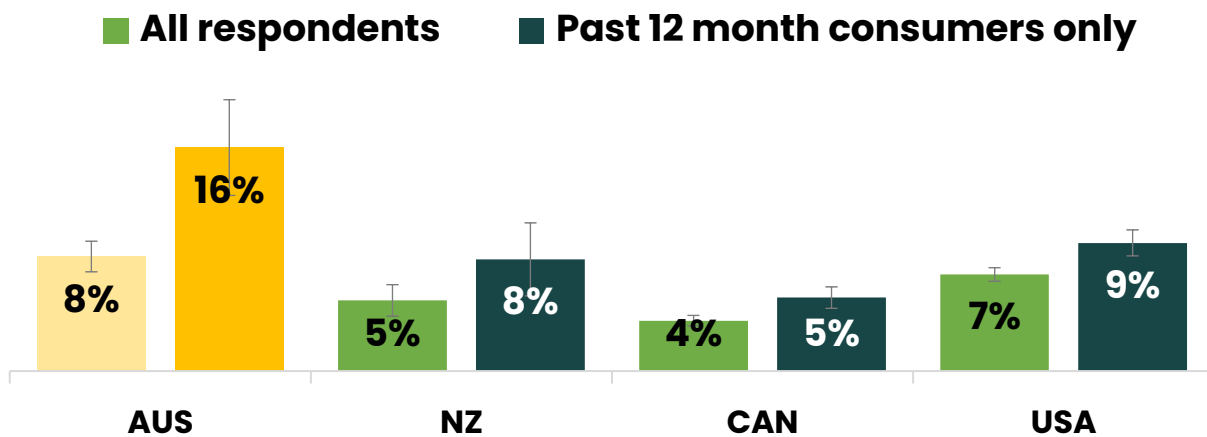


Accidental ingestion

In 2021, 8% of past 12-month consumers reported at least one case of accidental cannabis consumption in the home. Accidental consumption was most commonly reported for an adult, but included youth, children, and pets.

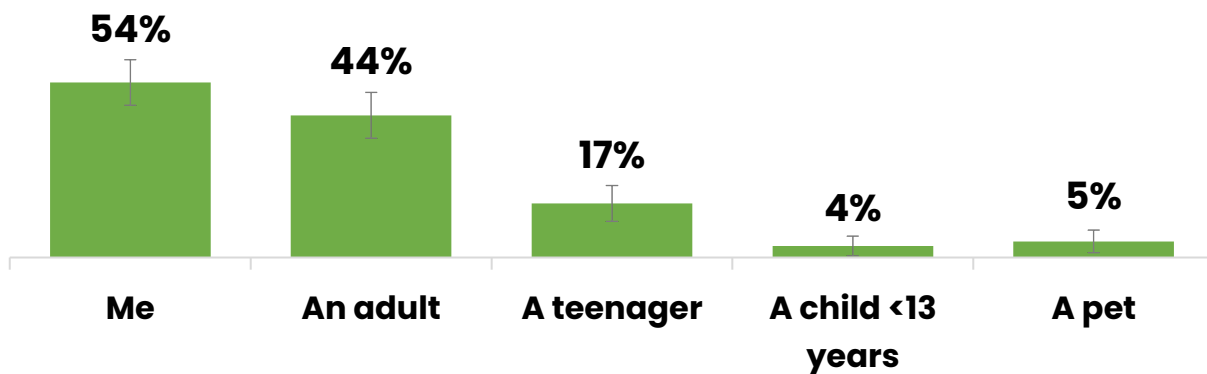
In the past 12 months, has anyone in your household accidentally consumed marijuana?

% 'YES', AMONG PAST 12-MONTH CONSUMERS



Who was it that accidentally consumed marijuana?

% 'AMONG RESPONDENTS REPORTING ACCIDENTAL INGESTION IN HOME, 2021

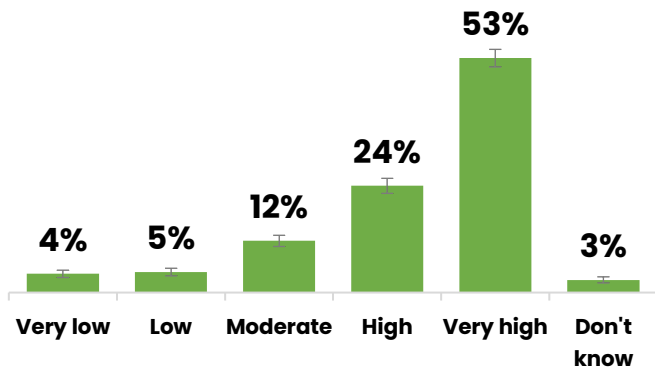


Cannabis risk perceptions

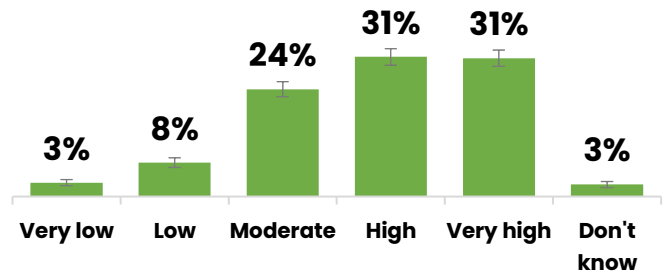
Risk perceptions of smoking tobacco cigarettes were highest, followed by alcohol and vaping cannabis. Risk perceptions were slightly lower for smoking cannabis.

In your opinion, what is the level of health risk from...

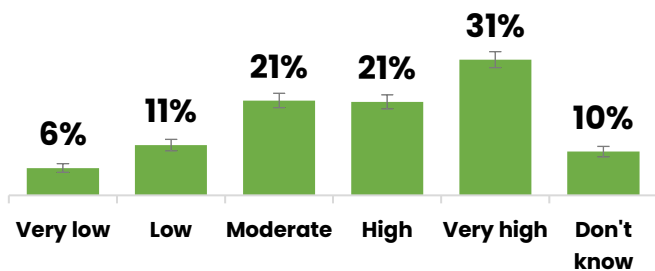
Smoking cigarettes daily



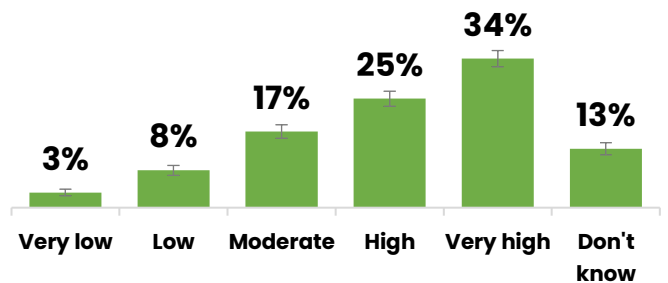
Drinking alcohol daily



Smoking marijuana daily



Vaping marijuana daily

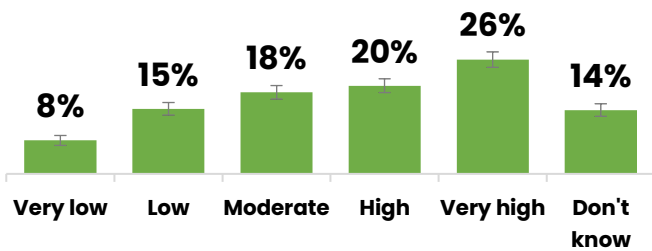


Cannabis risk perceptions

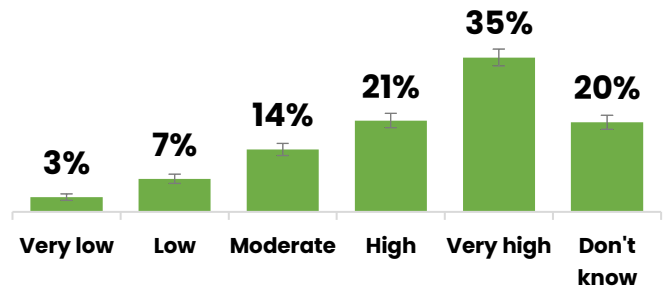
Among cannabis products, use of high-potency concentrates was perceived as highest risk, followed by synthetic products. Lower risk perceptions were reported for using edibles and exposure to second-hand cannabis smoke.

In your opinion, what is the level of health risk from...

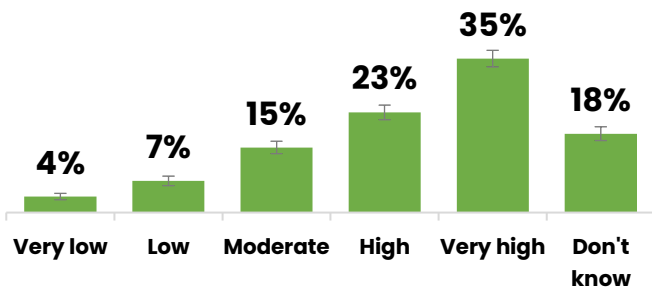
Consuming edibles daily



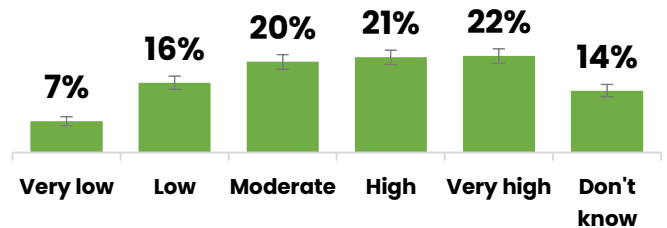
Using synthetic marijuana daily



Using high-potency concentrates daily



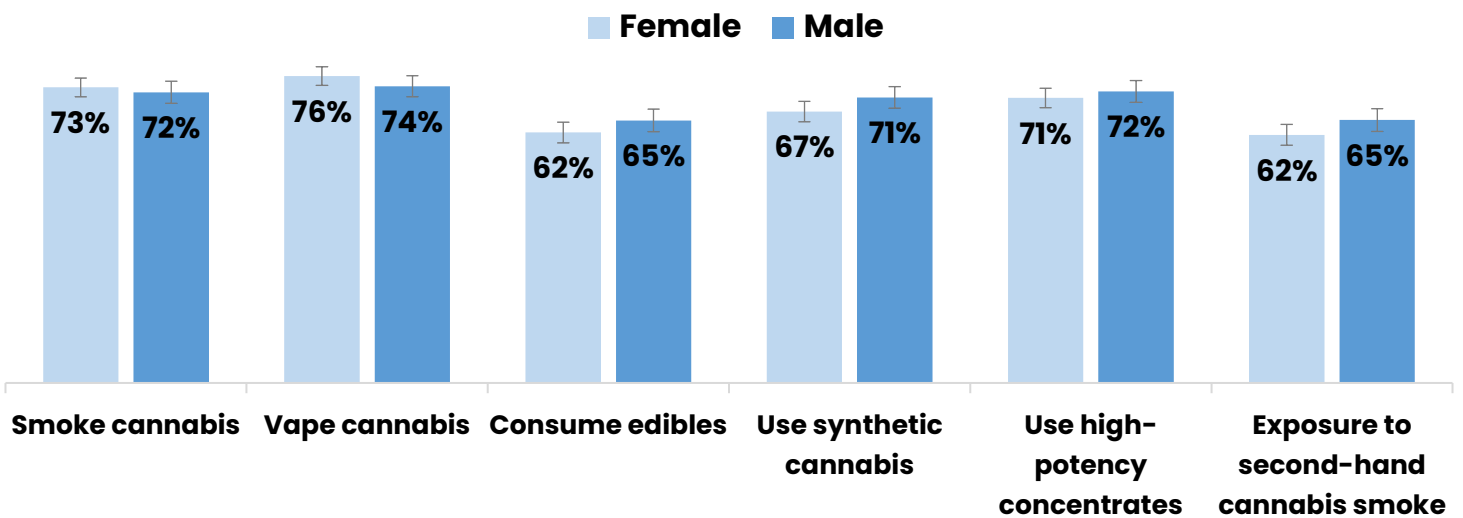
Exposure to second-hand marijuana smoke daily



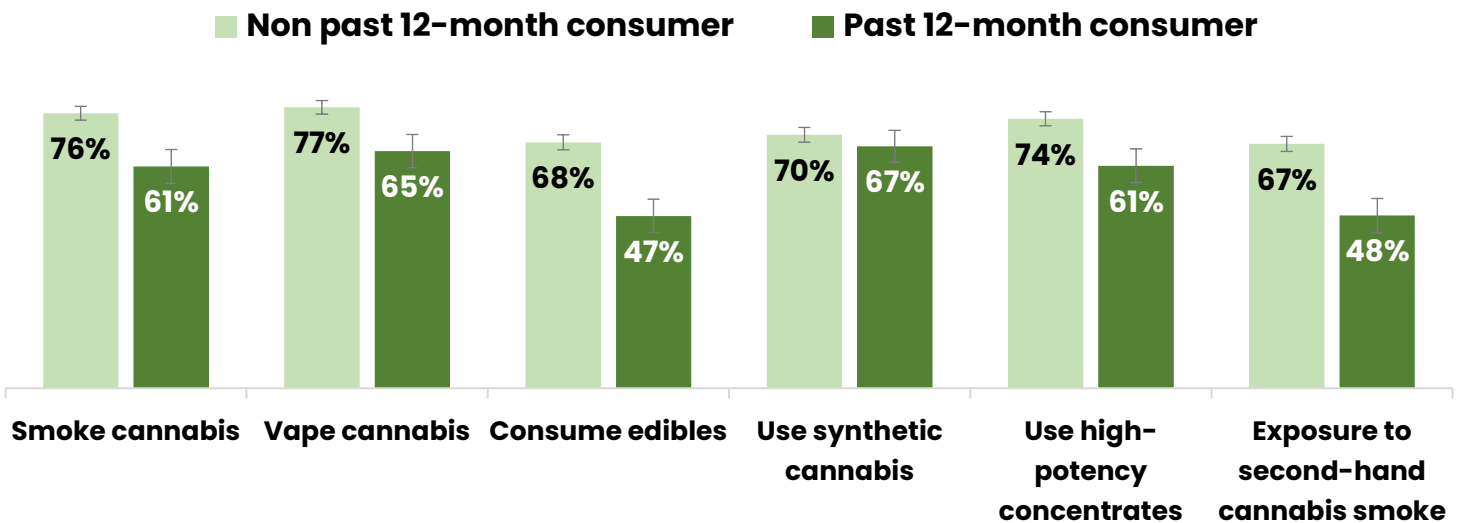
Risk perceptions – By sex & use

In your opinion, what is the level of health risk from...
% Moderate – High risk

By sex



By cannabis use

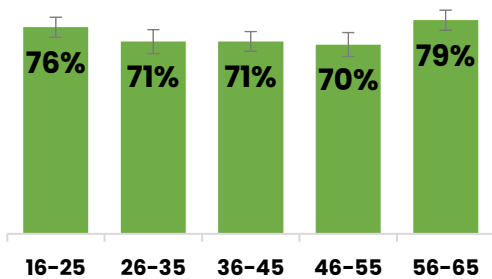


Risk perceptions – By age

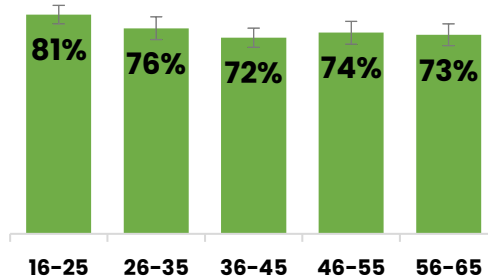
**In your opinion, what is the level of health risk from...
% Moderate – High risk**

By age

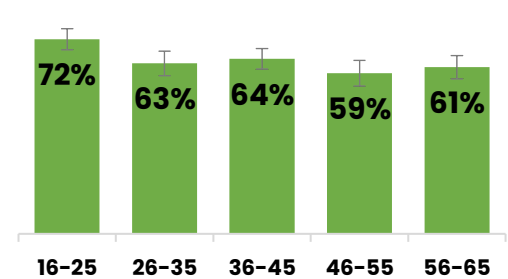
Smoke cannabis



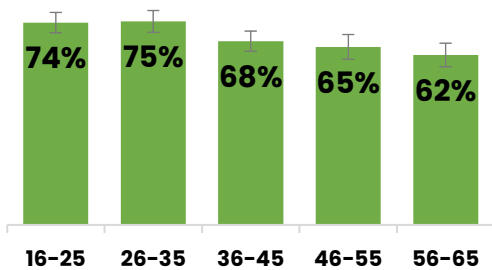
Vape cannabis



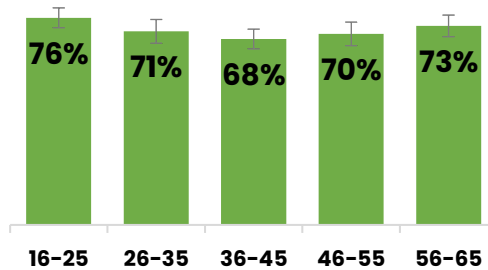
Consume edibles



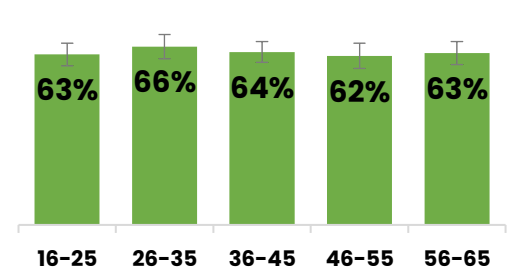
Use synthetic cannabis



Use high-potency concentrates



Exposure to second-hand cannabis smoke

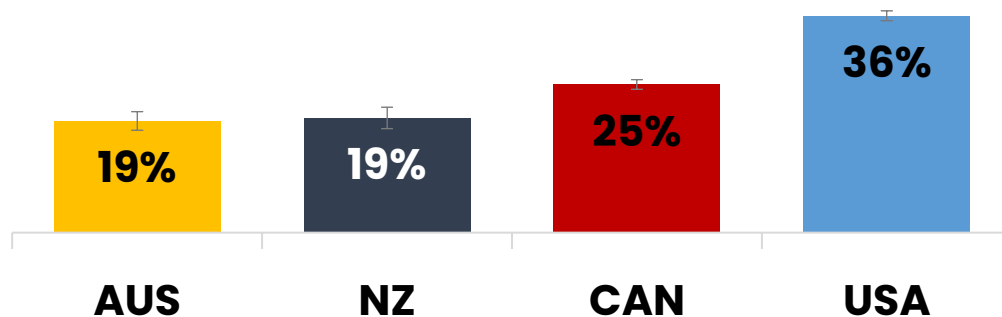
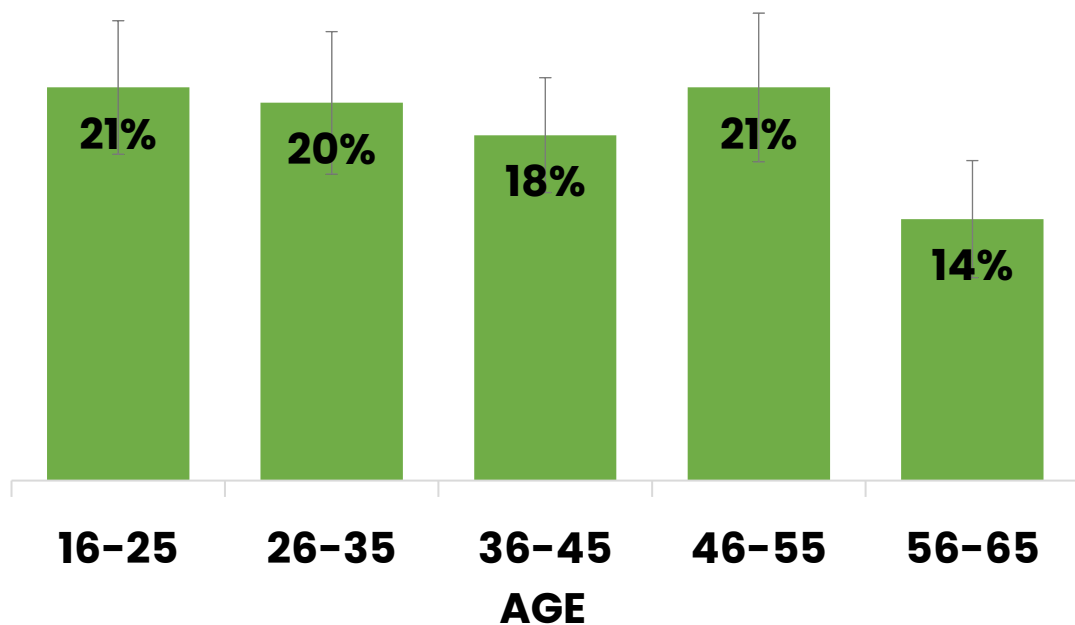


Social acceptability of cannabis

One fifth of Australia respondents perceived general 'approval' for cannabis in 2021, similar to New Zealand, but less than Canada and the USA.

In your opinion, do people generally approve or disapprove of marijuana?

% 'APPROVE' OR 'STRONGLY APPROVE', AUSTRALIA

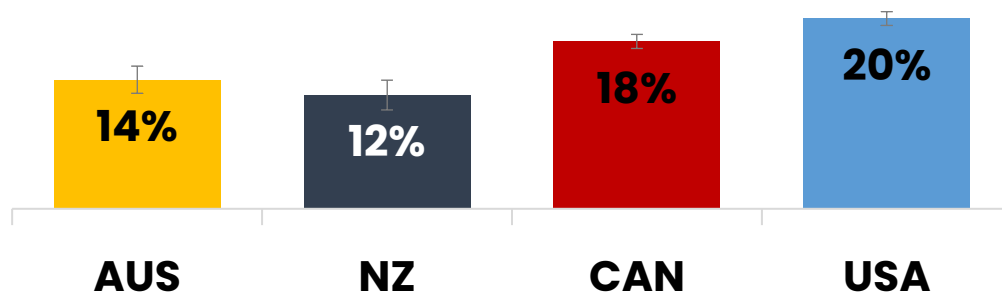
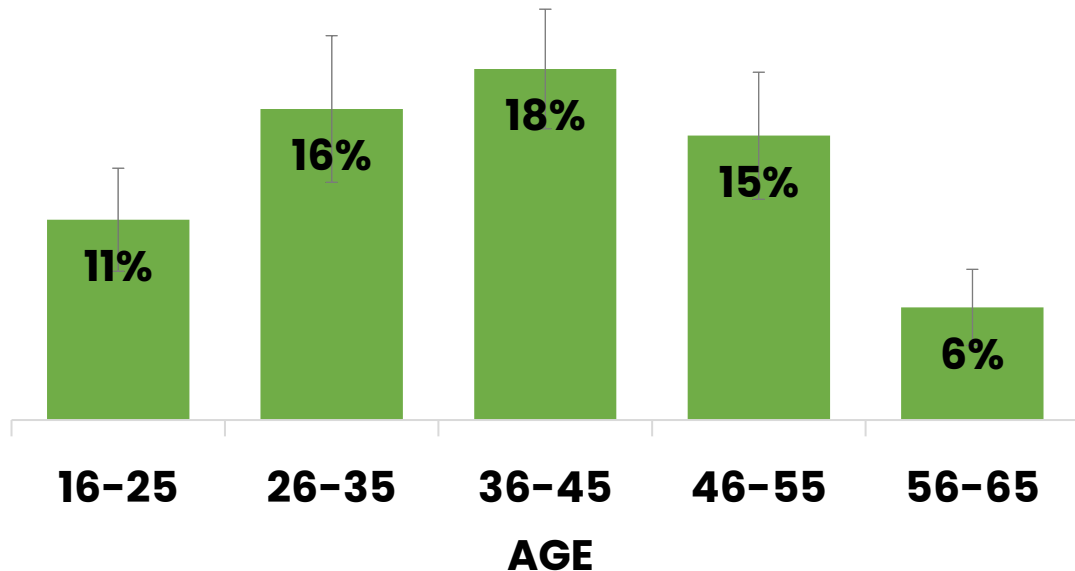


Social acceptability of cannabis

Over one in 10 respondents in Australia would feel comfortable using cannabis in public. Levels of social acceptability in Australia were similar to New Zealand, but lower than Canada and the USA.

How comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel openly using marijuana in public?

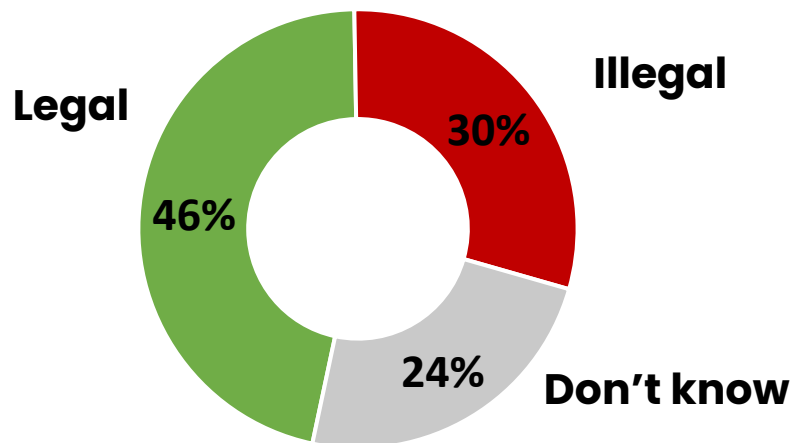
% 'COMFORTABLE' OR 'VERY COMFORTABLE', AUSTRALIA



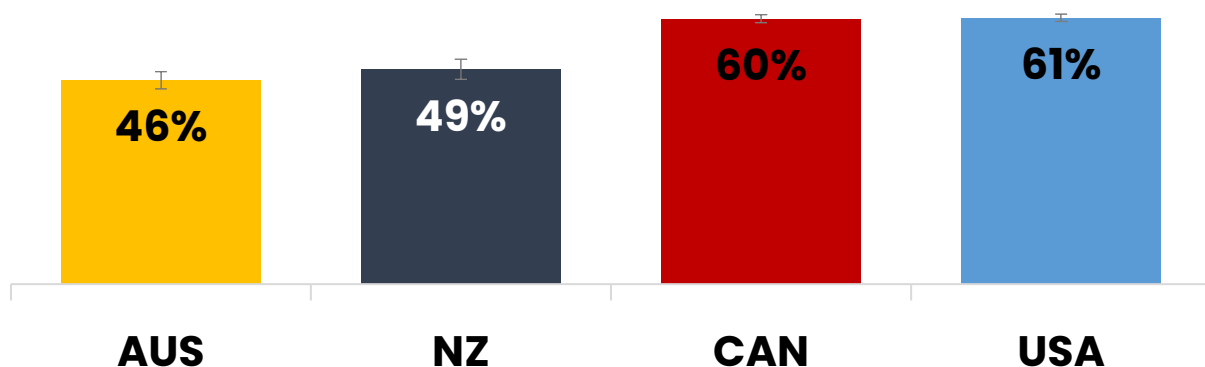
Support for cannabis legalization

In 2021, just under half of respondents in Australia supported legalization of non-medical cannabis, with just under one third opposed. Levels of support for legalization were moderately lower than Australia and substantially less than Canada and the USA.

Recreational (non-medical) marijuana should be... AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS



Recreational (non-medical) marijuana be 'legal' % 'YES' AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS, 2021





Visit the study website for more information: www.cannabisproject.ca.

CONTACT

DAVID HAMMOND PhD
PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
DHAMMOND@UWATERLOO.CA



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

School of Public
Health Sciences

