

Research Snapshot

Knowledge and beliefs about how to deter driving after cannabis use among drivers in remedial program

What is this research about?

As Canadians adjust to new cannabis laws, policymakers are exploring strategies to prevent driving under the influence of cannabis (DUIC). The researchers took a new approach to this issue by interviewing people who had already been convicted or suspended for impaired driving for their opinions and beliefs about, and experiences with, DUIC.

This information is intended to provide new insights and information to policymakers and law enforcement officers to better design strategies and interventions to prevent and reduce potential harm from DUIC.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers conducted one-to-one interviews with 20 participants of Back on Track, a remedial program originally designed for drinking and driving. These participants were 18 years or older and had driven a motor vehicle one hour after using cannabis in the past year.

The researchers asked participants what they know about DUIC laws, their likelihood of getting caught for DUIC, their experiences with DUIC, and their views on four policies or programs being considered around the world (roadside spot-check programs, legal driving limits for cannabis, graduated licensing with zero tolerance for new drivers, and DUIC-specific remedial programs).

What you need to know

This study looked at the opinions, knowledge, and beliefs of participants in a remedial program for people previously convicted or suspended for impaired driving. When asked about different ways to deter driving under the influence of cannabis, most supported roadside spot-check programs and zero tolerance for novice drivers, but opinions were mixed about setting legal limits for cannabis and remedial programs.

What did the researchers find?

The themes that came from the study included the following:

- Many participants were unaware of Canada's updated cannabis and driving laws and believed they were the same laws as for drinking and driving.
- Most thought their chance of getting caught for driving high was very low. They thought getting caught for drunk driving is more likely because it is easier to detect.
- They believed that roadside spot-checks programs deter DUIC. Many were aware of the success of the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) program in Ontario and some felt this would be an effective way to deter people from driving high.



- Opinions were mixed on the benefits of setting legal blood cannabis levels. Most were not sure if this measure would deter people from driving high and some felt that blood cannabis levels may not accurately indicate whether a person is impaired.
- Most said having graduated licensing with zero-tolerance for cannabis use would help prevent DUIC for novice and inexperienced drivers.
- Participants were evenly split (or roughly 50/50) on the benefits of using DUIC-specific remedial programs to deter people from driving high.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Cannabis, impaired driving, laws, deterrence, countermeasures

Limitations and next steps

Given the interview method used in this study, some participants may have felt the need to give responses they thought the interviewer wanted to hear and/or may not have had accurate memory of their past behaviour. Also, since participants were in a remedial program for 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 DUIC. 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.

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