FACTUM

Many Canadians Continue to Drive While Believing They Are Impaired

Toronto, ON, April 12, 2023 – A poll conducted in November and December 2022 by Ipsos on behalf of MADD Canada finds that many Canadians continue to choose to drive after consuming alcohol, cannabis or other drugs.

The survey indicates that a disturbing number of Canadians continue to drive impaired. These behaviours are elevated among men aged 18 to 34, which has been a consistent trend since the inaugural survey in May 2021.

The current survey also finds that young women aged 18 to 34 are beginning to be on par with their male counterparts when it comes to driving after consuming alcohol, cannabis and other drugs. Those with children under 18 living in the household also exhibit higher than average rates in many categories.

Some Canadians Across All Age Groups Continue to Drive Believing They Are Impaired

Among the 68% -3pts from May 2022) of Canadian drivers who used alcohol in the past 30 days, fewer than one in ten (6%) have driven believing they are impaired from alcohol at least once in the past 6 months, with a decreasing number, one-third (33%, -12pts), driving with passengers onboard. Among the 30% of drivers who used cannabis in the past 30 days, one in ten (12%) have driven believing they are impaired from cannabis at least once in the past 6 months, and a majority of these (61%, +6pts) driving with passengers onboard. Among the 12% of drivers who used an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high (top drugs mentioned: hallucinogen, depressant, stimulant, opioid, etc.) in the past 30 days, two in ten (19%) have driven while believing they are impaired from any of these substances at least once in the past 6 months, and a majority of these (60%) driving with passengers onboard.

Younger Women On Par With Younger Men In Consumption and Impaired Driving *

The Ipsos poll indicates that women aged 18 to 34 are becoming as likely as their male counterparts to consume alcohol, cannabis or an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high, and to engage in many impaired driving behaviours. Women aged 18 to 34, along with men aged 35 to 54, are more likely than average to have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days (72%, each), but among these, women 18 to 34 are more likely than average to have driven while believing they are impaired from alcohol at least once in the past 6 months (8%) and driving with passengers onboard (42%, and also higher among men aged 35 to 54 at 46%). Use of cannabis in the past 30 days is more pronounced among both men and women aged 18 to 34 (45% and 38%, respectively), and among these, both women and men aged 18 to 34 indicate higher rates of having driven believing they are impaired from cannabis at least once in the past 6 months (18% each), with majorities among both groups driving with passengers (56% and 60%, respectively). This latter behaviour is more pronounced among men aged 35 to 54 (67%). Both men and women aged 18 to 34 show elevated levels of consuming an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high (top drugs mentioned: hallucinogen, depressant, stimulant, opioid etc.) in the past 30 days (19%, each), with about two in ten having driven while thinking they are impaired from these substances at least once in the past 6 months (16% and 23%, respectively). This latter behaviour is more pronounced among men aged 35 to 54 (28%). Majorities of both men and women aged 18 to 34 have driven while believing they are impaired with passengers onboard (64% and 65%, respectively).

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**It should be noted that the reported figures for young males and females driving with passengers on board when they believed they were impaired by an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high are based on very small sample sizes. However, this pattern has been consistent for younger men for several waves of research. We will have to see if the pattern for younger women persists in future waves of research.*

Those with Children Below 18 Living in Household Continue to Display Elevated Rates of Impaired Driving Behaviour

The current research continues to find that drivers with children below 18 years old living in the household were more likely to engage in impaired driving behaviour. After four waves of research, we can now say with greater certainty say that the impact of COVID-19 on this group of parents, who may have turned to alcohol, cannabis and other drugs to cope with the stress and anxiety of having to take on multiple roles during the pandemic (working from home, playing the role of teacher and day care worker), is not going to be easily overcome in the post-pandemic world. The Ipsos poll indicates that those with children below 18 living in the household remain more likely than Canadians in general to drive while believing they are impaired by alcohol, cannabis or an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high. Among these respondents, one in ten (10%, vs. 6% among Canadian drivers in general) reported driving while they believed they were impaired by alcohol in the past six months. Higher proportions of this group reported consuming cannabis in the past 30 days (34% vs. 30%), driving while they believed they were impaired by cannabis within the past 6 months (18% vs. 12%), and driving with passengers onboard (69% vs. 61%). Those with children below 18 living in the household are also more likely to have consumed an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high (16% vs. 12%), have driven while believing they are impaired by these substances (30% vs. 19%), and driven with passengers onboard (74% vs. 60%).

Misconceptions About The Seriousness of Impaired Driving Persist

The results from the poll indicate that misconceptions about the seriousness of driving after consuming alcohol or cannabis continue.

- Three in ten (28%) Canadian drivers agree that there is a big difference between driving after consuming alcohol and driving after consuming cannabis. Although this proportion is down from May 2022, it is consistent with the figure recorded in the November 2021 survey.
- About one in ten drivers continue to say that driving after consuming a few drinks (13%), consuming cannabis (11%), or consuming an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high (9%, +2pts) is no big deal.

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The Reasons For Driving While Believing They Are Impaired Remain Consistent

Regardless of product consumed, the main reasons for driving while believing the amount of alcohol, cannabis or illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high has made them impaired are: they don't feel impaired, they thought they could drive carefully, or they don't have to drive far. In the case, of illicit drugs, one of the top reasons is that they did not think they would be caught by police or law enforcement. Looking at the proportions who mention these reasons by the product consumed:

- Among those who consumed alcohol in the past 30 days and drove believing that the amount of alcohol they consumed had made them impaired, the top reasons are: I did not feel impaired (52%), followed by I thought I could drive carefully (38%) and I did not have to drive very far (37%).
- Among those who consumed cannabis in the past 30 days and drove believing that the amount of cannabis they consumed had made them impaired, the top reasons are: I did not feel impaired (49%), followed by I thought I could drive carefully (44%) and I did not have to drive very far (32%).
- Among those who consumed an illicit drug, medication (prescribed or not) or other substance for recreational purposes or to get high in the past 30 days and drove believing that these substances made them impaired, the top reasons are: I did not feel impaired (34%), I thought I could drive carefully (32%), I did not believe I would be caught by police or law enforcement (31%), and I did not have to drive very far (28%).

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between November 24 and December 7, 2022 on behalf of MADD Canada. For this survey, a sample of 3000 Canadians aged 18-70 with a valid driver's licence was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting are employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population aged 18-70 of drinking age according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18-70 of drinking` age been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

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