

Washington State Young Adult Health Survey

Overview

The Washington State Young Adult Health Survey measures marijuana and other substance use, perceptions of harm, risk factors, and consequences among young adults (18 to 25 years old) living in Washington State. Motivated by the passage of Initiative 502 in 2012, the survey began in 2014 before recreational marijuana stores opened their doors.

A total of 14,608 eligible young adults participated in the 2020 survey from six cohorts. The survey is administered annually in summer/fall.

Survey data are used for:

- Implementing new rules required by Initiative 502, which legalized the recreational use of marijuana for adults 21 and older
- Monitoring trends in marijuana use patterns and consequences among young adults
- Assessing the impact of Initiative 502
- Surveillance, and to guide strategic planning of prevention and intervention programs

Key findings from the survey are:

- Almost half (48%) of young adults in 2019 reported they used marijuana for non-medical personal use during the past 12 months. This rate has been significantly increasing since 2014 (44%). Young adults ages 21-25 are driving this increase.
- In 2020, 35% of young adults aged 18-25 who used marijuana in the past 30 days reported having driven within three hours of use. Driving after marijuana has decreased over time, yet still remains high.
- In 2020, among young adults that reported any use in the past year, 47% reported simultaneous use of alcohol and marijuana.

- The most commonly reported source of marijuana for young adults was from friends until 2016, when respondents 21 and older reported more frequently obtaining marijuana from retail stores.
- Since 2014, there have been substantial declines in the perceived physical risk of regular marijuana use, as well as in perceived emotional/psychological risk of regular marijuana use.
- Among respondents to the survey in 2020, perceptions of marijuana use among young adults is higher than the number of their peers who actually use.

Eligibility requirements

Participants must be residents of Washington State and between the ages of 18 and 25. Respondents were recruited using a combination of direct mail advertising to a random sample of 18- to 25-year-olds registered with the Department of Licensing and online advertising, including social media. Eligibility is confirmed via telephone interviews with potential survey respondents.

Authority

Initiative 502 Section 28 authorizes the use of revenue to pay for the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey and an expansion to include the young adult population (the Young Adult Health Survey). The surveys are managed by the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery within the Washington State Health Care Authority.

2021-23 budget

\$400,000 Designated Marijuana Account Funds for annual surveys in state fiscal years 2021-2023.

Key partners

The survey is conducted collaboratively by DBHR and its contractor, the University of Washington. The State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup member agencies and partners advise survey development and implementation.



For More information:

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