

Washington State Young Adult Health Survey

Overview

The Washington State Young Adult Health Survey tracks cannabis and other substance use, perceptions of harm, risk factors, and consequences among young adults (18 to 25 years old) residing in Washington State. The survey was initiated in response to the passage of Initiative 502 in 2012, with the first survey conducted in 2014 before the opening of recreational cannabis stores. Currently, the primary statutes for cannabis are now codified in RCW 69.50.

A total of 18,711 eligible young adults participated in the 2023 survey from eight cohorts. The survey is administered annually during late summer and fall.

Survey data are used for:

- Implementing cannabis statutes as outlined in RCW 69.50
- Monitoring trends in cannabis use patterns and consequences among young adults
- Assessing the impact of Initiative 502
- Conducting surveillance and guiding strategic planning of prevention and intervention programs

Key findings from the 2023 survey include:

- Cannabis is the second most used substance behind alcohol use with 46% of young adults in 2023 reporting use for non-medical purposes in the past year.
- The rate of cannabis use among 21-25 year olds has been significantly increasing since 2014 (44% in 2014 to 52% in 2023).
- In 2023, of those reporting cannabis use in the past 30 days, nearly one-quarter (20%) reported driving in the past month while still feeling high and nearly one-third (31%) reporting driving in the past month within 3 hours of cannabis use. Driving after cannabis use has decreased over time yet remains high.
- In 2023, among young adults that reported any use in the past 30 days, 51% reported

simultaneous use (cross-fading) of alcohol and cannabis.

- The highest reported source of cannabis for young adults 18-20 years is from friends (58%), followed by giving money to someone to buy it for them (33%), and getting it with permission from their parents (16%). Respondents 21 and older report obtaining cannabis from retail stores (72%).
- In 2023, 10% reported using recreational cannabis on a daily basis. This is the highest it's has been since data collection began in 2014.
- Since 2014, there have been substantial declines in the perceived physical risk of regular cannabis use, as well as in perceived emotional/psychological risk of regular cannabis use relative to other substances.
- Among respondents to the survey in 2023, perceptions of cannabis use among young adults is higher than the number of their peers who actually use. In 2023, 21% use at least weekly, yet 69% think the typical person their age uses weekly.
- Of those reporting any lifetime cannabis use, about one-fifth (14%) reported that their use caused emotional or mental health problems and over one-third (36%) reported that cannabis had less effect than it used to.

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

The dedicated cannabis account (RCW 69.50.540) authorizes the use of revenue to pay for the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey and an expansion to include the young adult population (the Washington Young Adult Health Survey). The surveys are managed by the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery within the Washington State Health Care Authority.

Budget for SFY 25

\$200,000 dedicated cannabis account funds for annual survey in state fiscal year 2025. An additional \$20,000 of Mental Health Block Group funds was added in order to incorporate additional mental health elements into the survey. A one time \$150,000 of state funds were received from the Department of Health to include additional tobacco and cannabis questions, reintroduction of past cohorts, and to increase incentives for survey participants.

Partners

The survey is conducted collaboratively by the Washington State Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery and its contractor, the University of Washington. The State Epidemiological Outcomes work group member agencies and partners advise survey development and implementation.

For more information

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<https://sites.uw.edu/uwwyahs/>

<https://theathenaforum.org/washington-young-adult-health-survey>