ADDRESSING THE CHANGE IN CANNABIS LEGISLATION IN CANADA: WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

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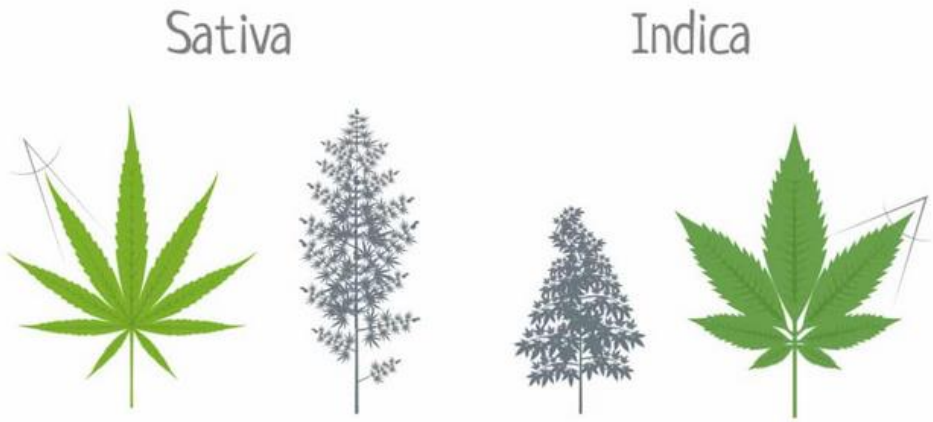
Cannabis

- Psychoactive ingredient:
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)

- Cannabidiol (CBD)
  - May block some THC effects



Cannabis: How many use it?

Cannabis (11%)

Alcohol misuse(16.1%)

Tobacco (19.6%)

- Canada Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey, 2013

Reasons for using

Recreational use

Euphoria

Calm

Sensory awareness

Therapeutic uses:

Vomiting & weight loss

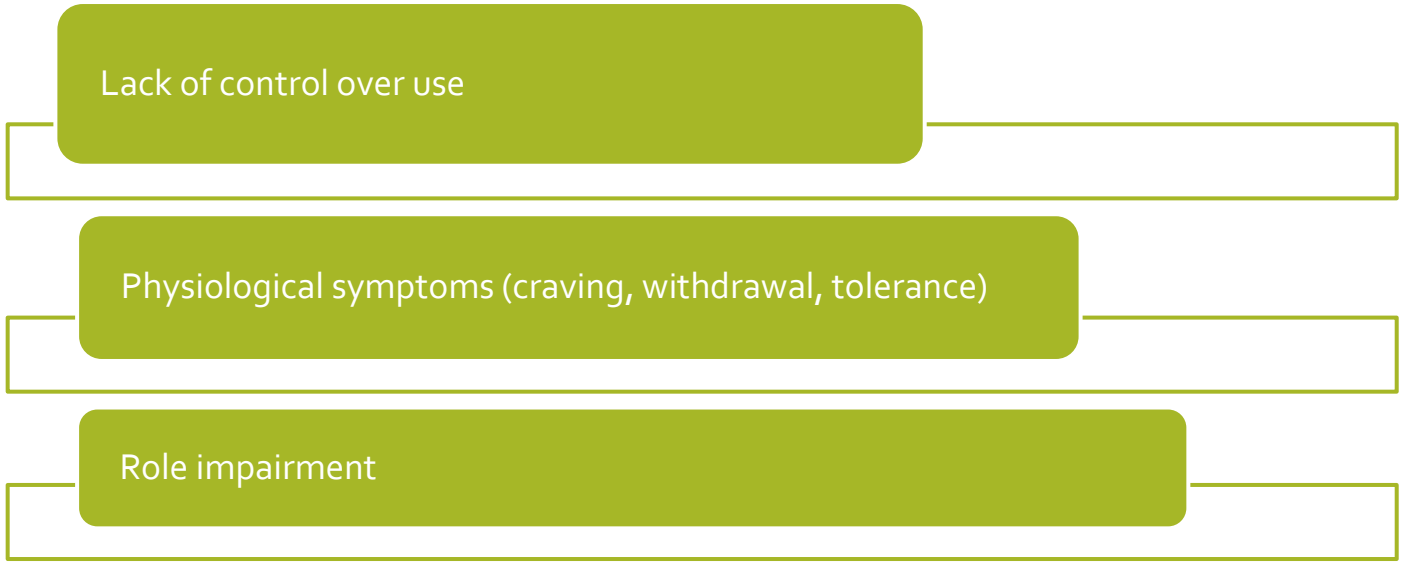
Muscle spams

Medical dispensaries

- ALASKAN THUNDER
- GIRL SCOUT COOKIES
- DIESEL FUEL
- CAT PISS

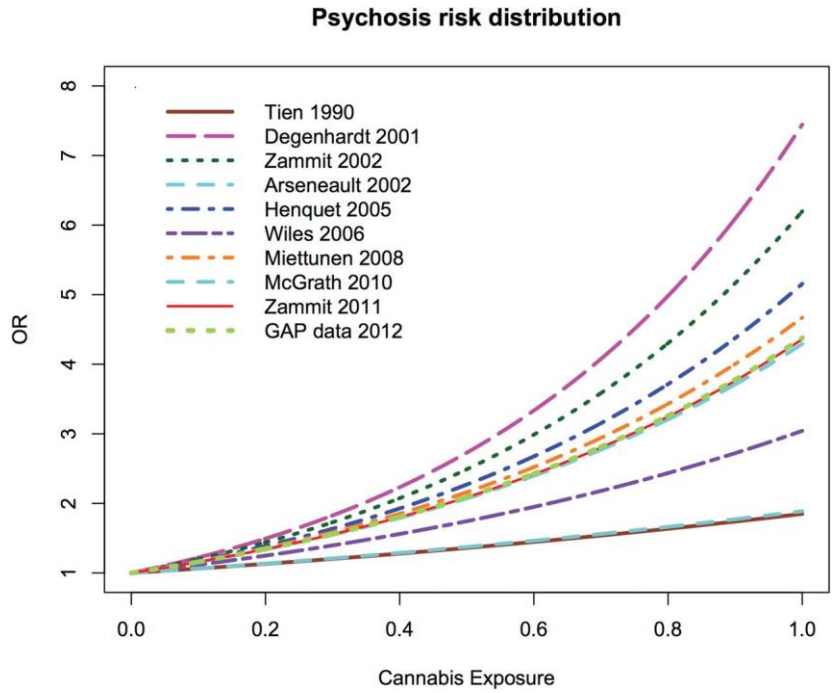
Problematic Cannabis Use

- 5.3% of New Brunswickers



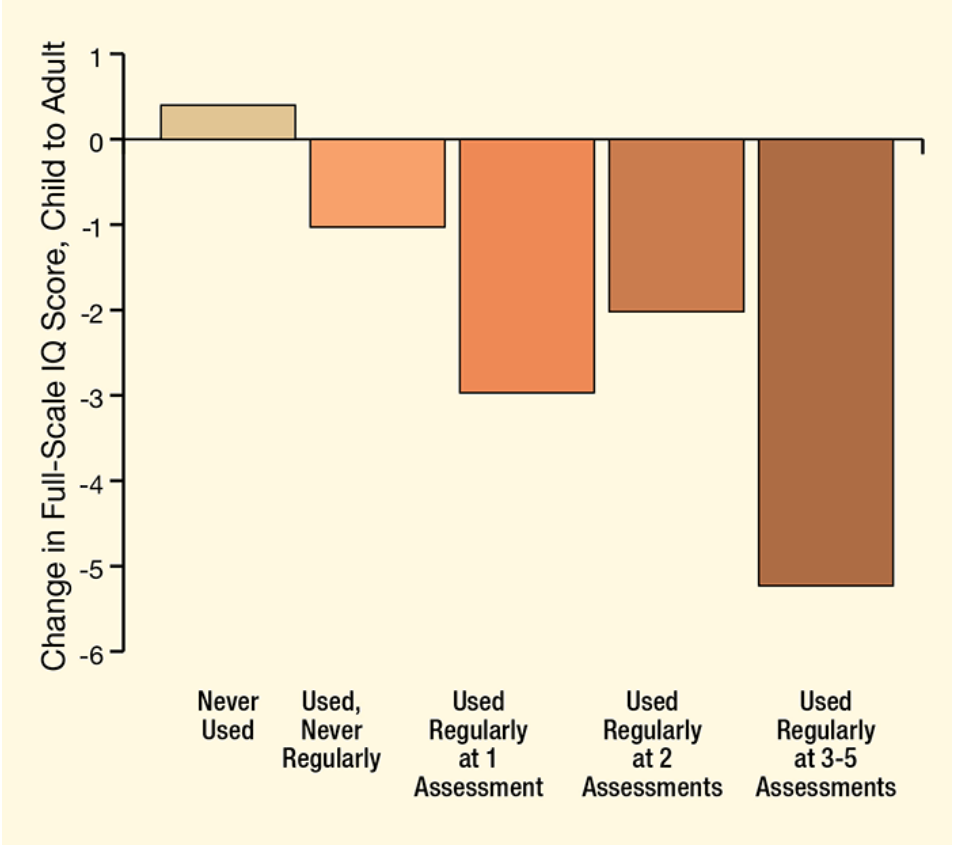
Some Established Risks of Cannabis Use

- Psychotic disorders
- Dose-response relationship
- Use before 16 is riskiest
- Family history of psychotic disorders



IQ (Dunedin study)

- Longitudinal study (N=1,037 participants)
- Drop of 8 IQ points in heaviest adolescent users
- IQ dropped only if adolescent onset of cannabis use
- Irreversible



Motor Vehicle Accidents

- Cannabis affects attention, decision-making, motor functioning

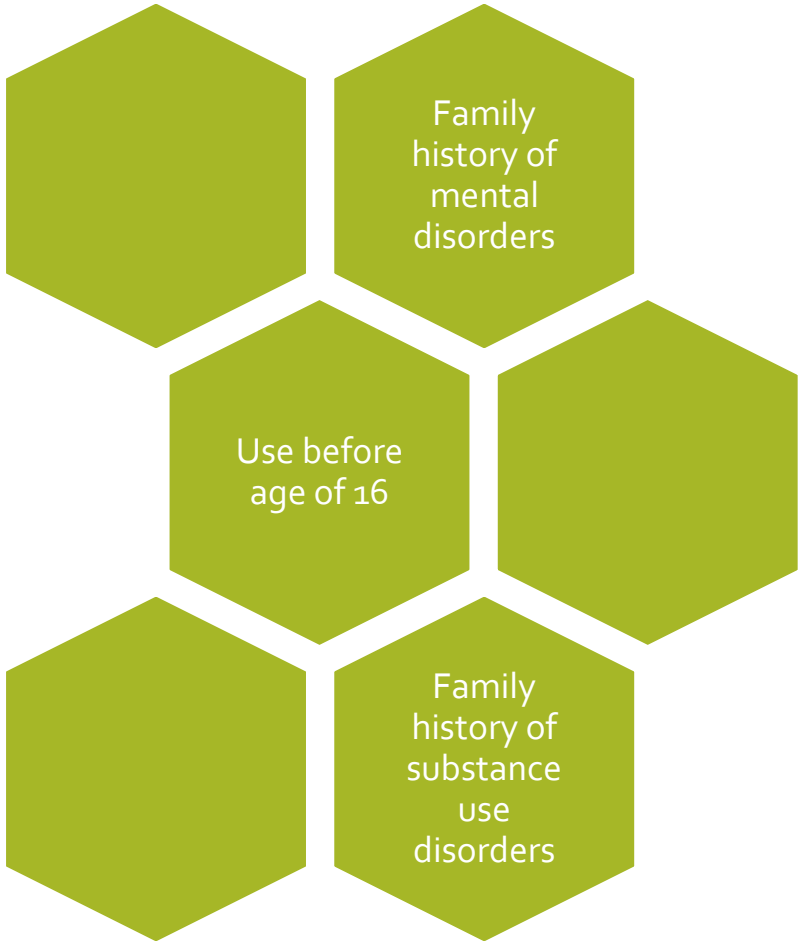
Impact on driving:

reaction time

road position

One 4%THC cigarette= 0.05% breath alcohol concentration

What Increases Risk of Averse Effects?



Conclusions: Legalization in Canada

- "Legalization is not a miracle but an imperfect solution" (Fischer et al., 2016)

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)

Recommendations

- Cannabis use has health risks best avoided by abstaining
- Delay taking up cannabis use until later in life
- Identify and choose lower-risk cannabis products
- Don't use synthetic cannabinoids
- Avoid smoking burnt cannabis—choose safer ways of using
- If you smoke cannabis, avoid harmful smoking practices
- Limit and reduce how often you use cannabis
- Don't use and drive, or operate other machinery
- Avoid cannabis use altogether if you are at risk for mental health problems or are pregnant
- Avoid combining these risks

The LRCUG are an evidence-based intervention project by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM).

Reference: *American Journal of Public Health*, 2017

The LRCUG have been endorsed by the following organizations:

Association Médicale Canadienne | Canadian Medical Association | CPHA • ACSP | CCSAM SMCA | camh

Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (in principle)

Purpose of the Study

- Ascertain an understanding of the current patterns of cannabis use in Canada
- Help determine the current perspectives surrounding cannabis and legalization
- Assess use intentions of Canadians following legalization

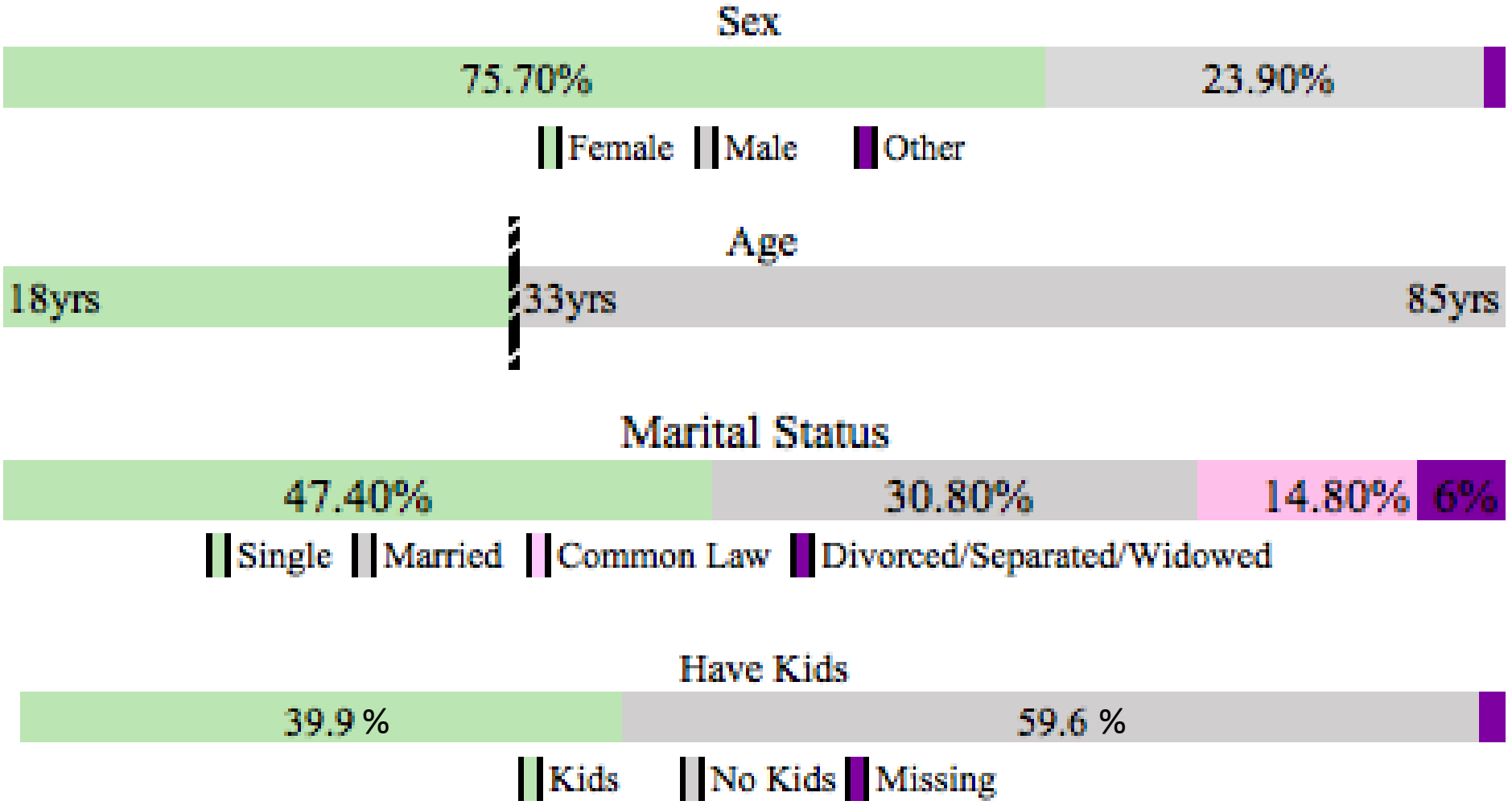
Methods

Questionnaires in the Study

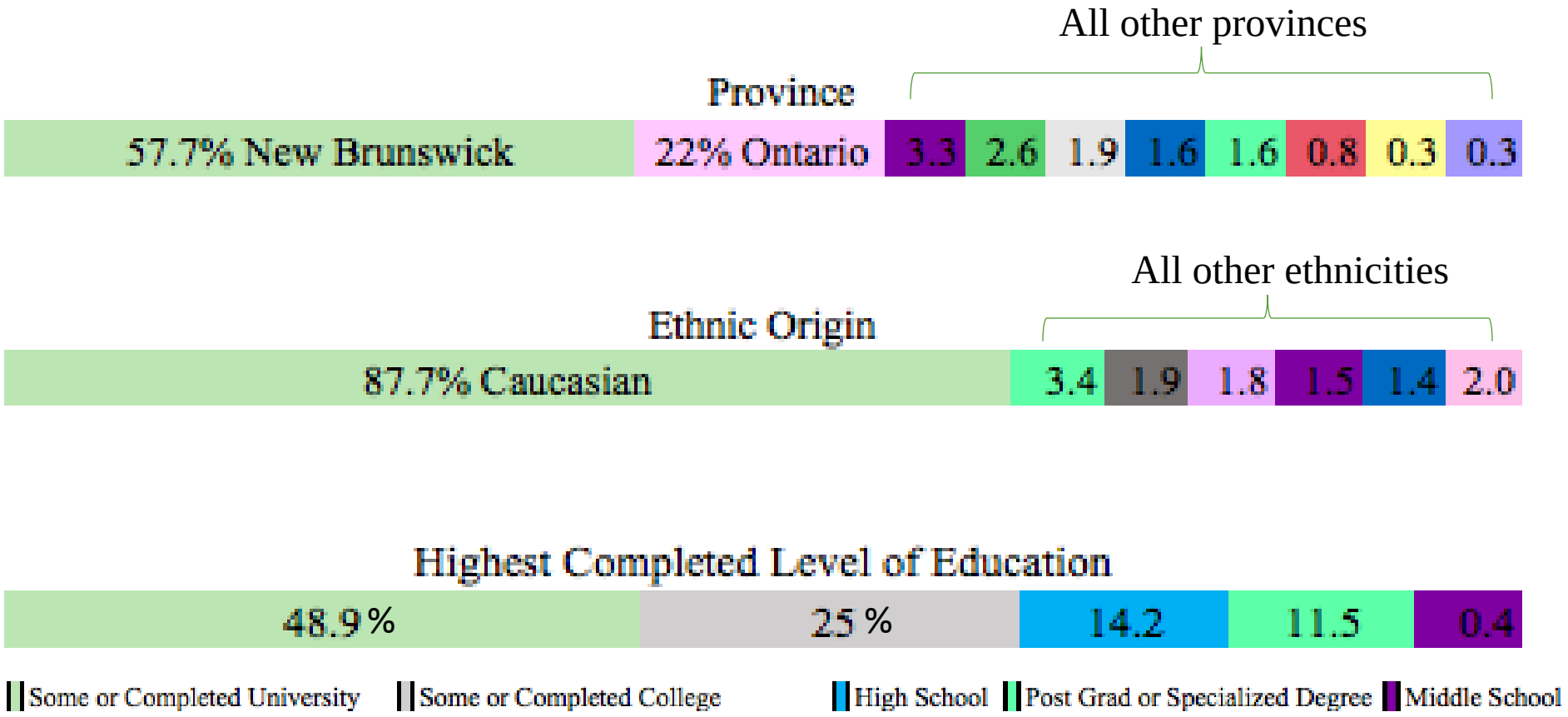
- Demographics Questionnaire
- Personality risk factors for substance misuse (SURPS)
- Cannabis Problems Questionnaire (CPQ)
- Self-Developed Cannabis Legalization Perspectives Questionnaire
- Self-Developed Current Cannabis Use Patterns and Beliefs About Cannabis Use Questionnaires

Participant Recruitment (Social Media Advertising etc) → Posted January 2018 - April 2018 → Total N= 795 Participants

Sample Demographics



Sample Demographics



Current Cannabis Use Patterns

Current Cannabis Use Patterns

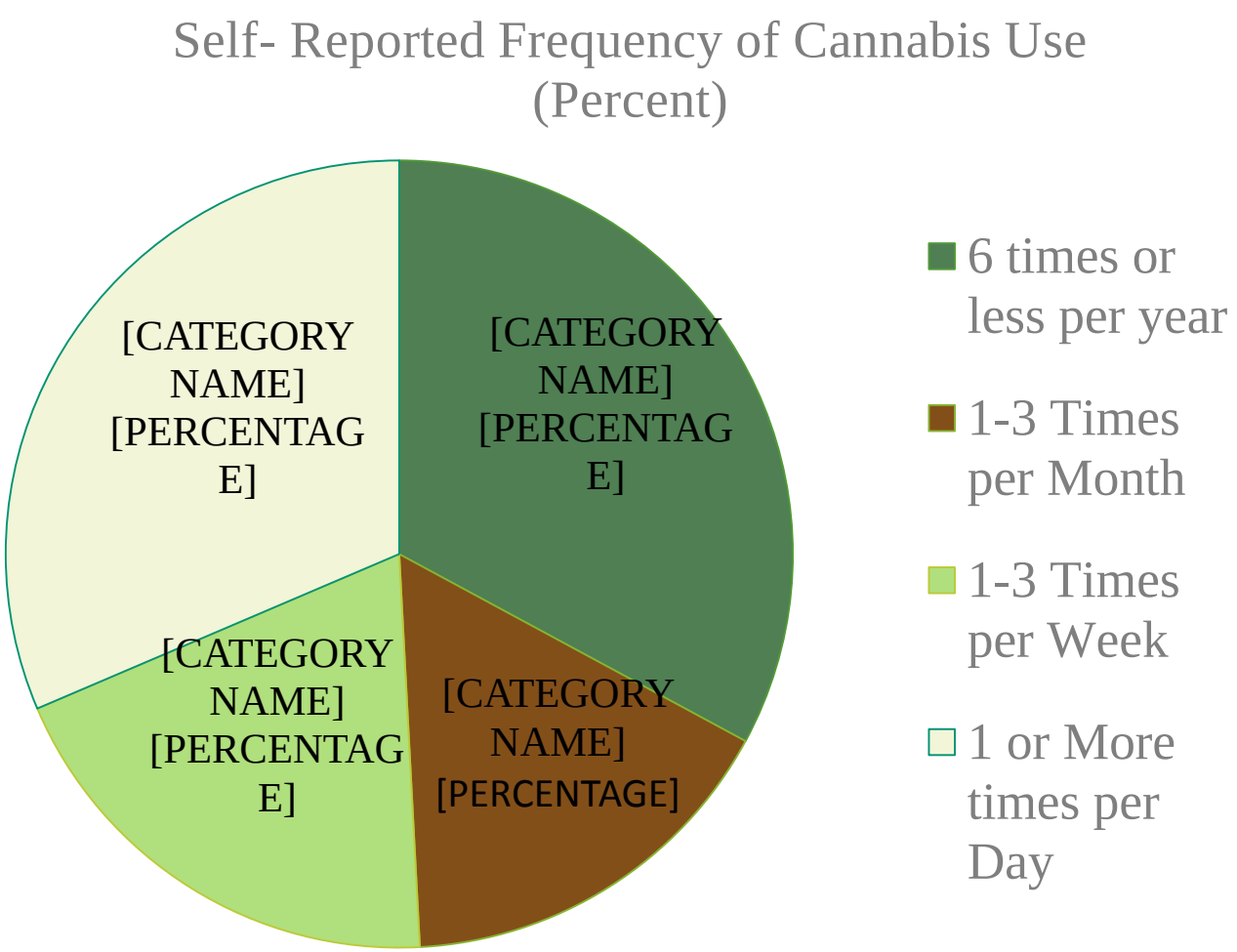
Ever Used Cannabis:
65.5% Yes 34.5% No

Age of First use of Cannabis:
17.48

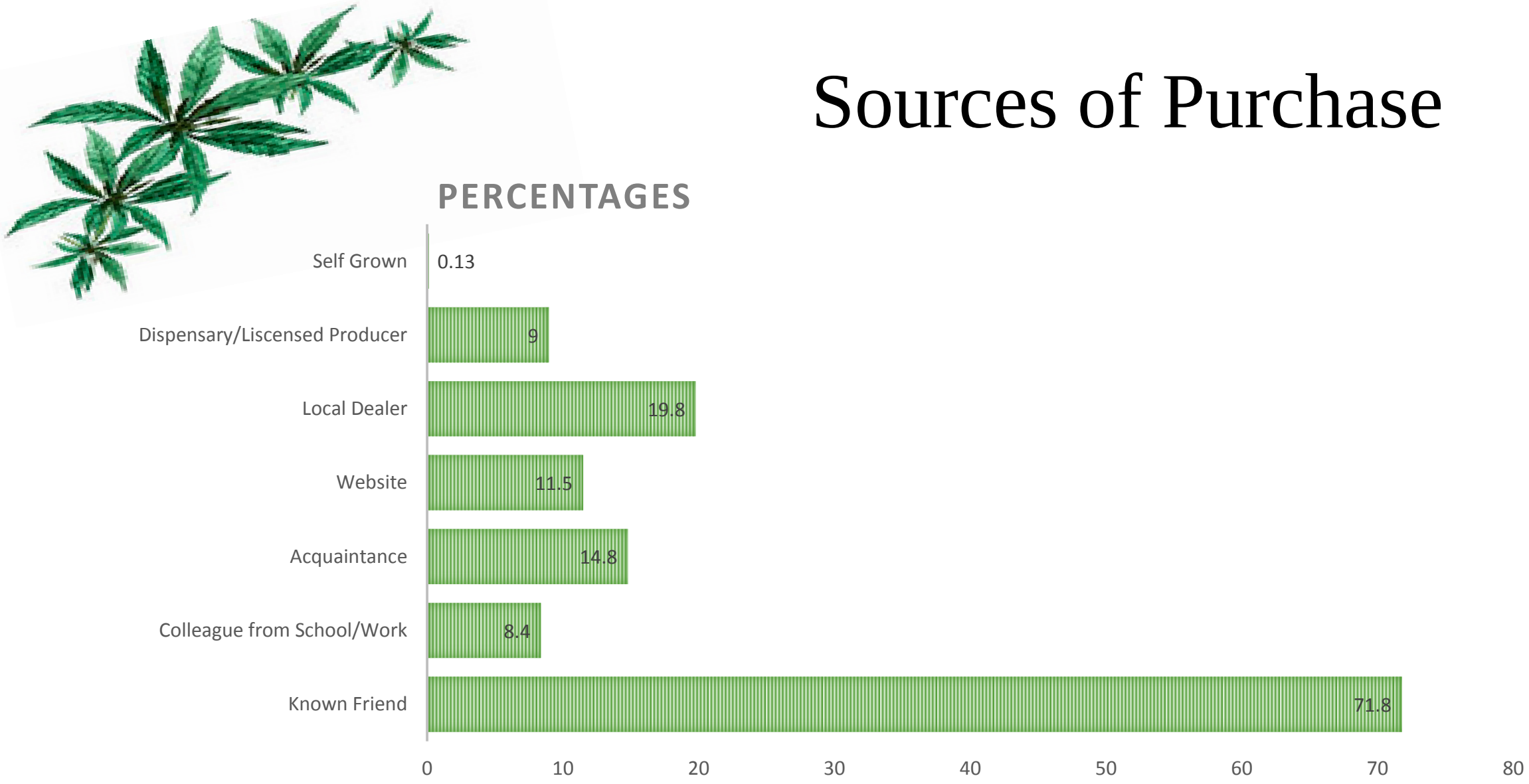
Currently Use Cannabis:
55.1% Yes 43.8% No

Used in Last 30 Days:
53.2% Yes 46.4% No

Average Change In Frequency of Use:
47.6% report Decrease to Significant Decrease in Use

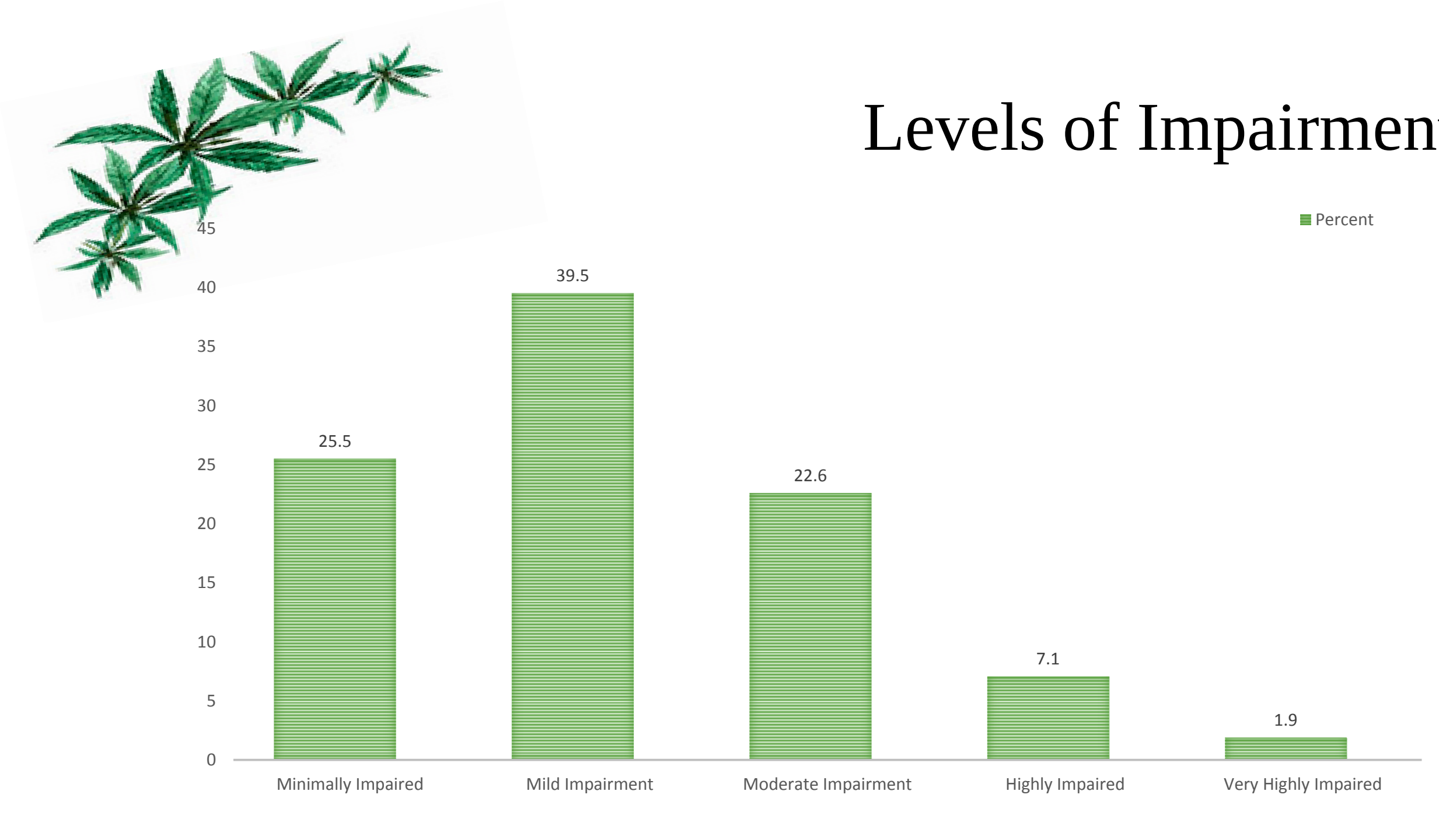


Sources of Purchase

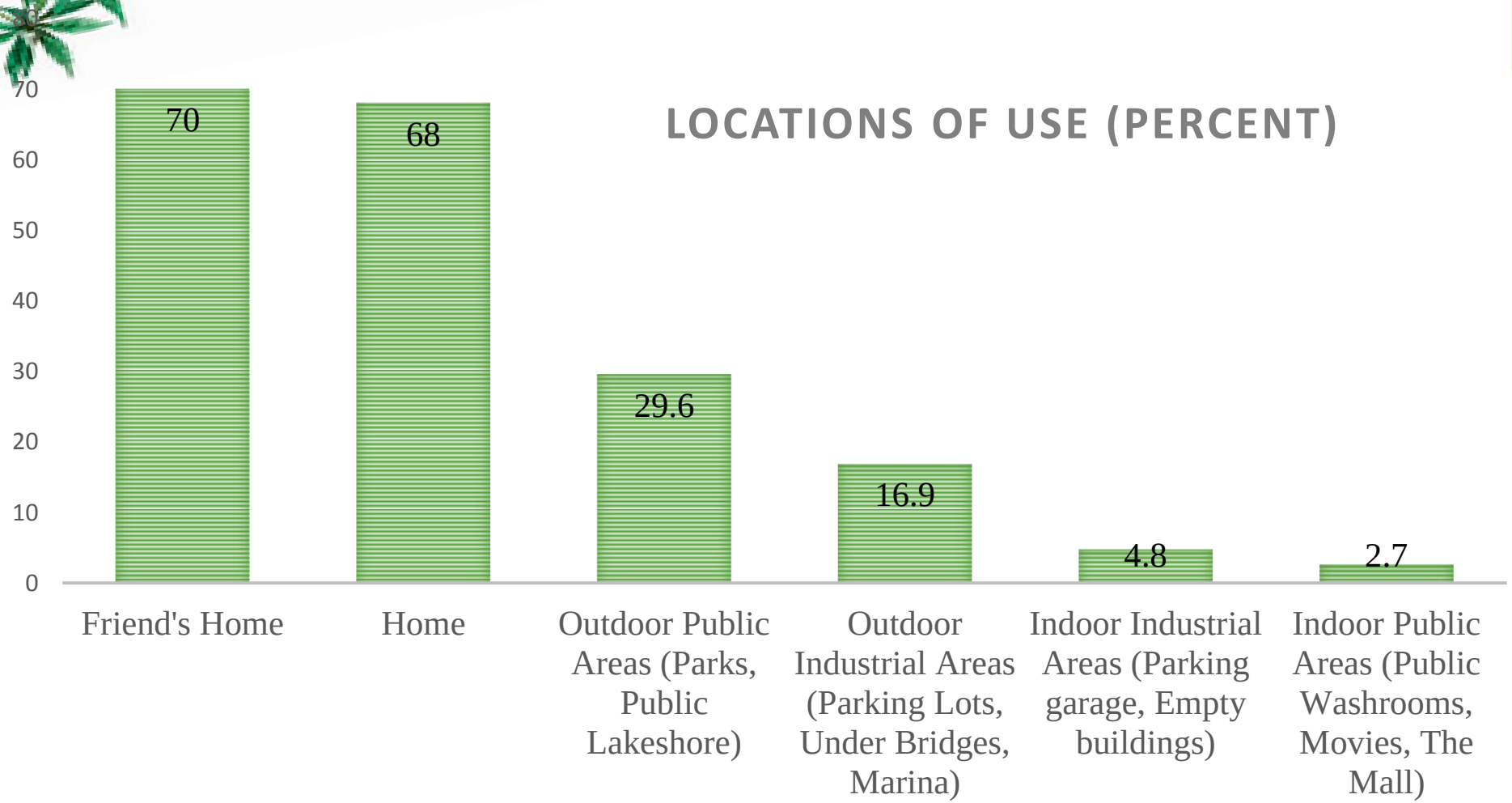


**Note: Percentages do not add to 100, as many purchase from multiple sources.

Levels of Impairment



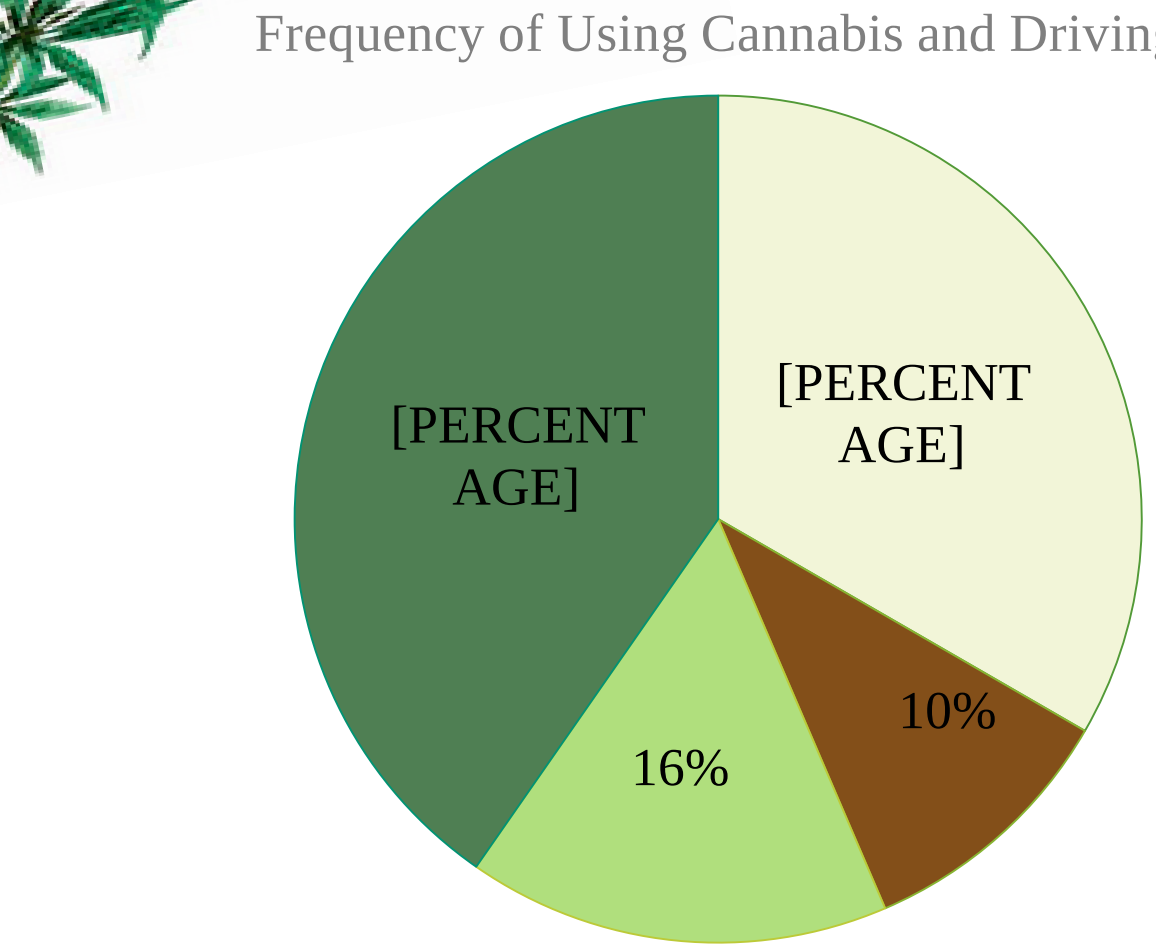
Methods and Locations of Use



Preferred Method of Use

- 39.3% Joints
- 20.5% Bongs & Pipes
- 14.2% Edibles
- 13.1% Vaporizers

Cannabis and Driving



Use Cannabis in PARKED car:

20% Yes 80% No

Ever Driven Under the Influence:

38.2% Yes 57.8% No

Average Number of Times Driven Under the Influence of Cannabis:

10-20 Times

Cannabis Use WHILE driving:

6% Yes 94% No

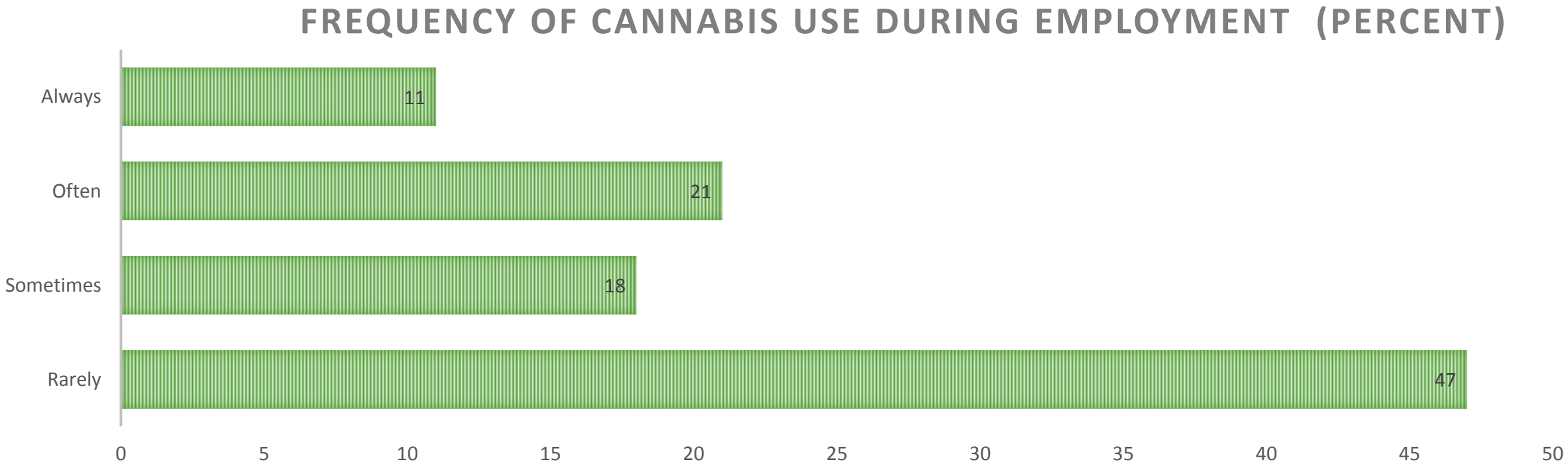
Cannabis and Employment

Ever Used Cannabis During Employment Activities?

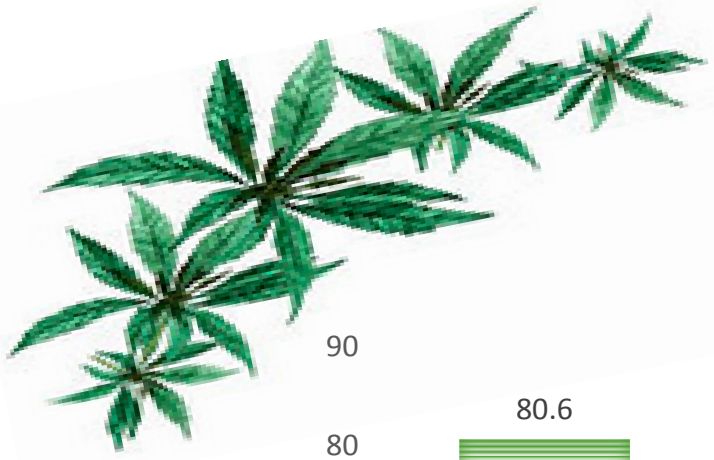
17.5% Yes 82.5% No

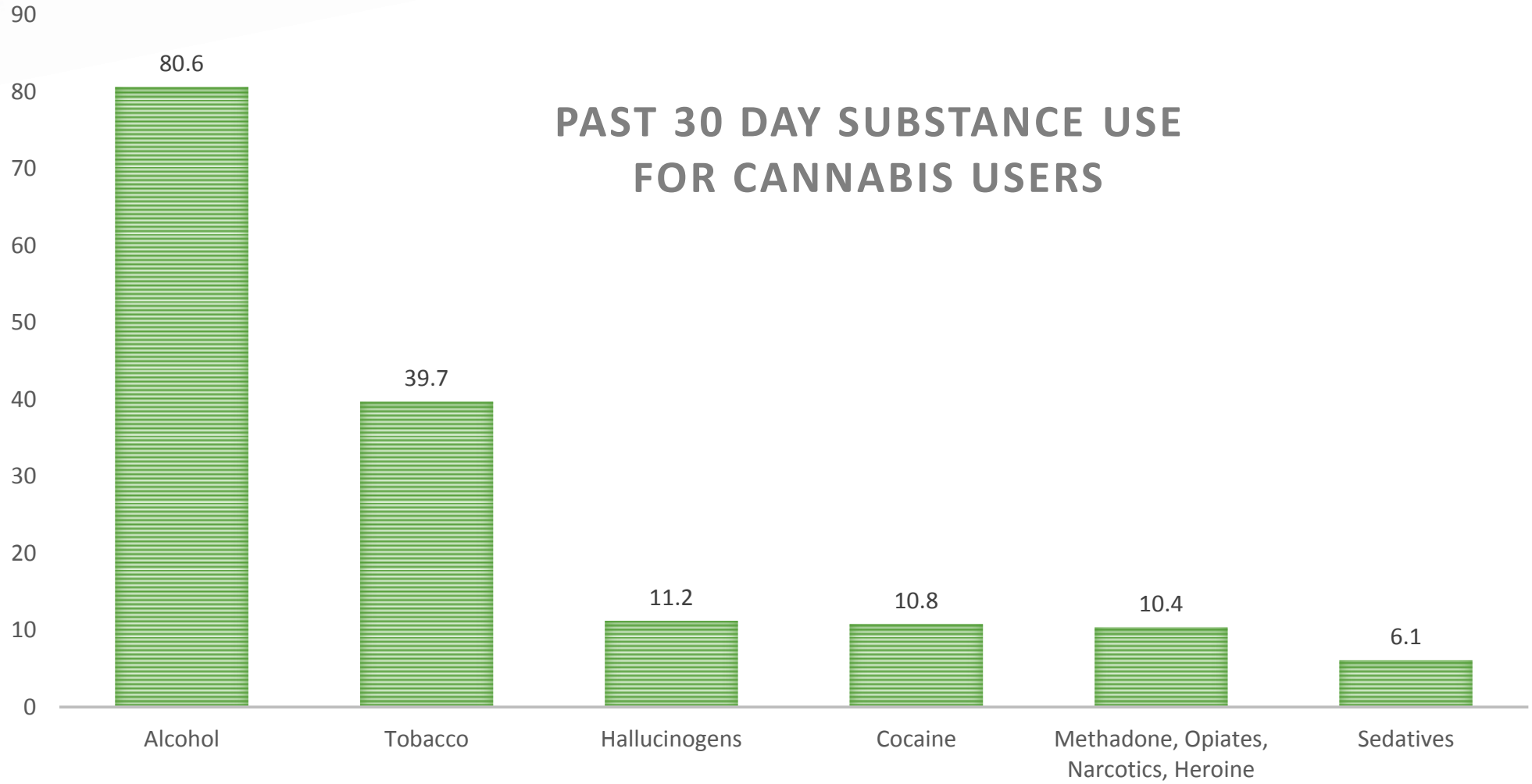
Use Cannabis AT your Place of Employment?

3.1% Yes 96.9% No



Combined Substance Use

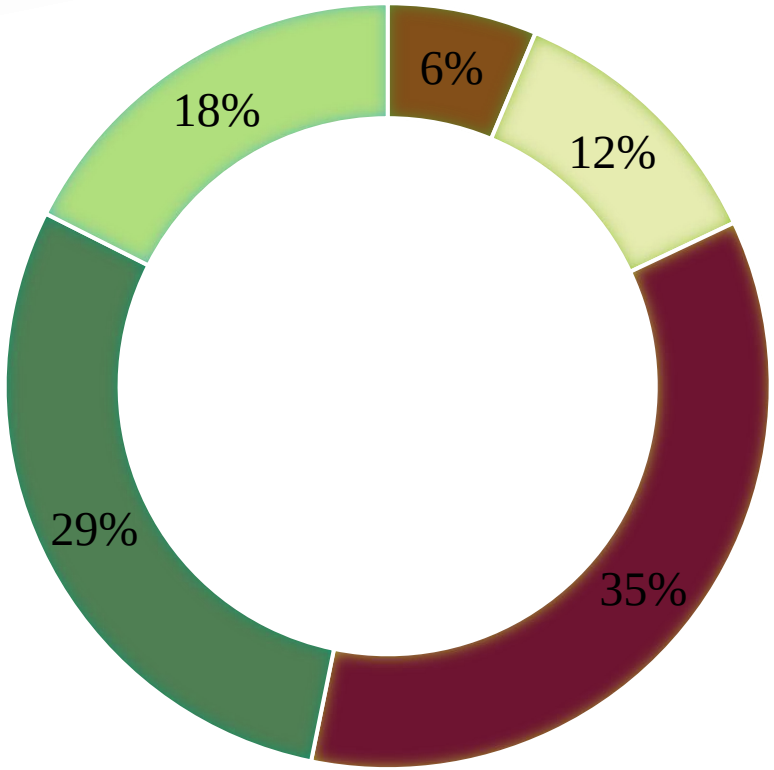




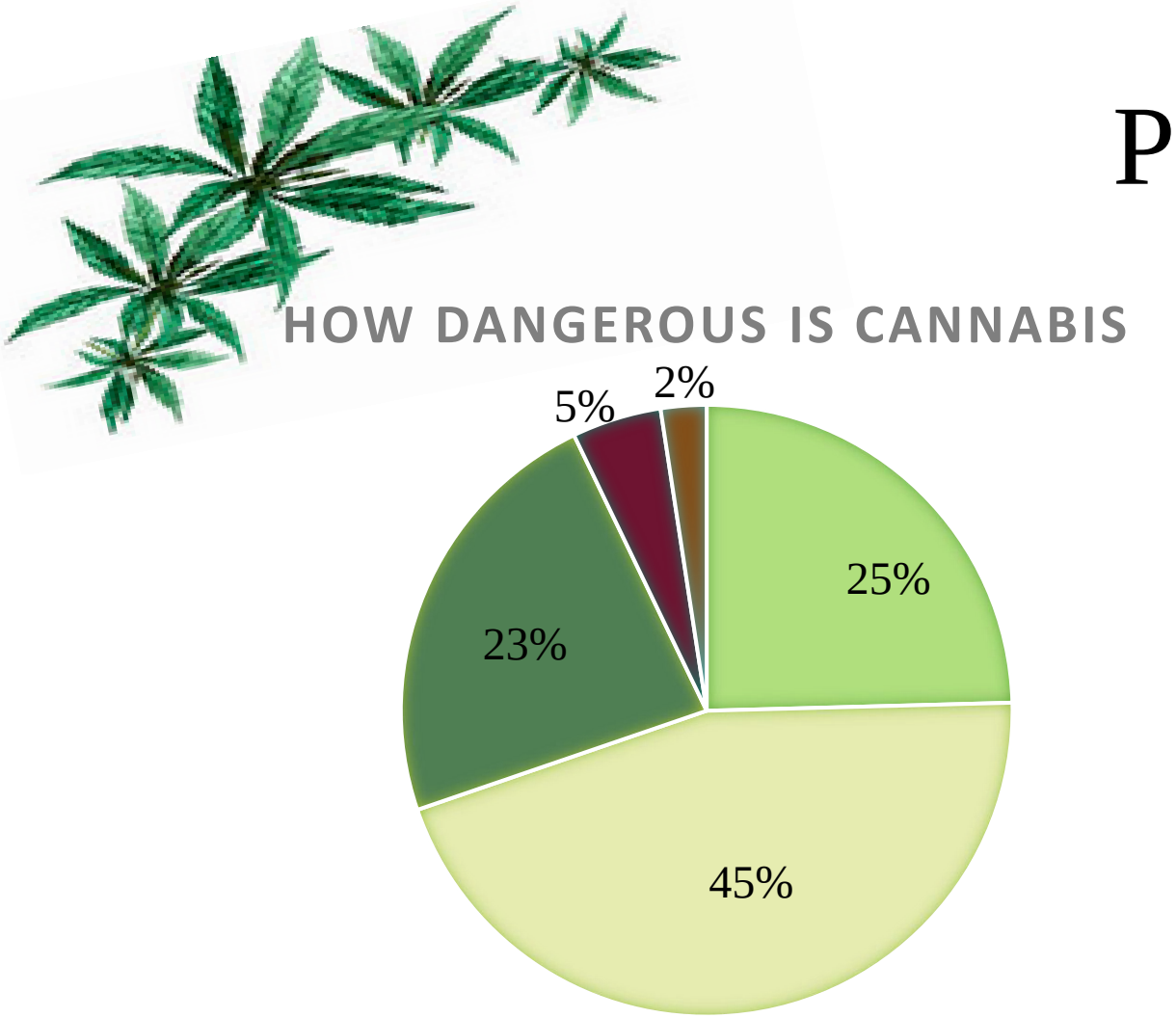
Current Perceptions of Cannabis

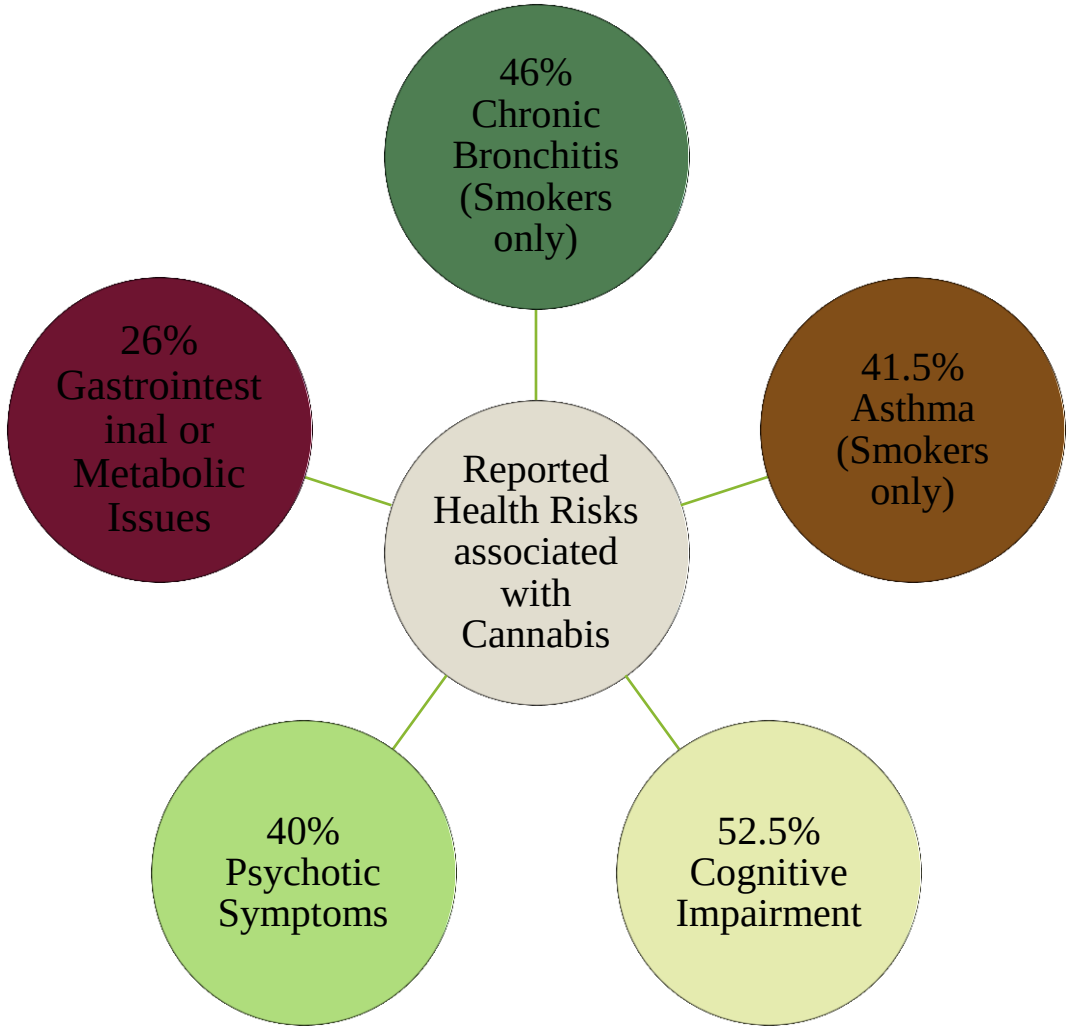
Overall Perception of Cannabis

* Includes Users and Nonusers

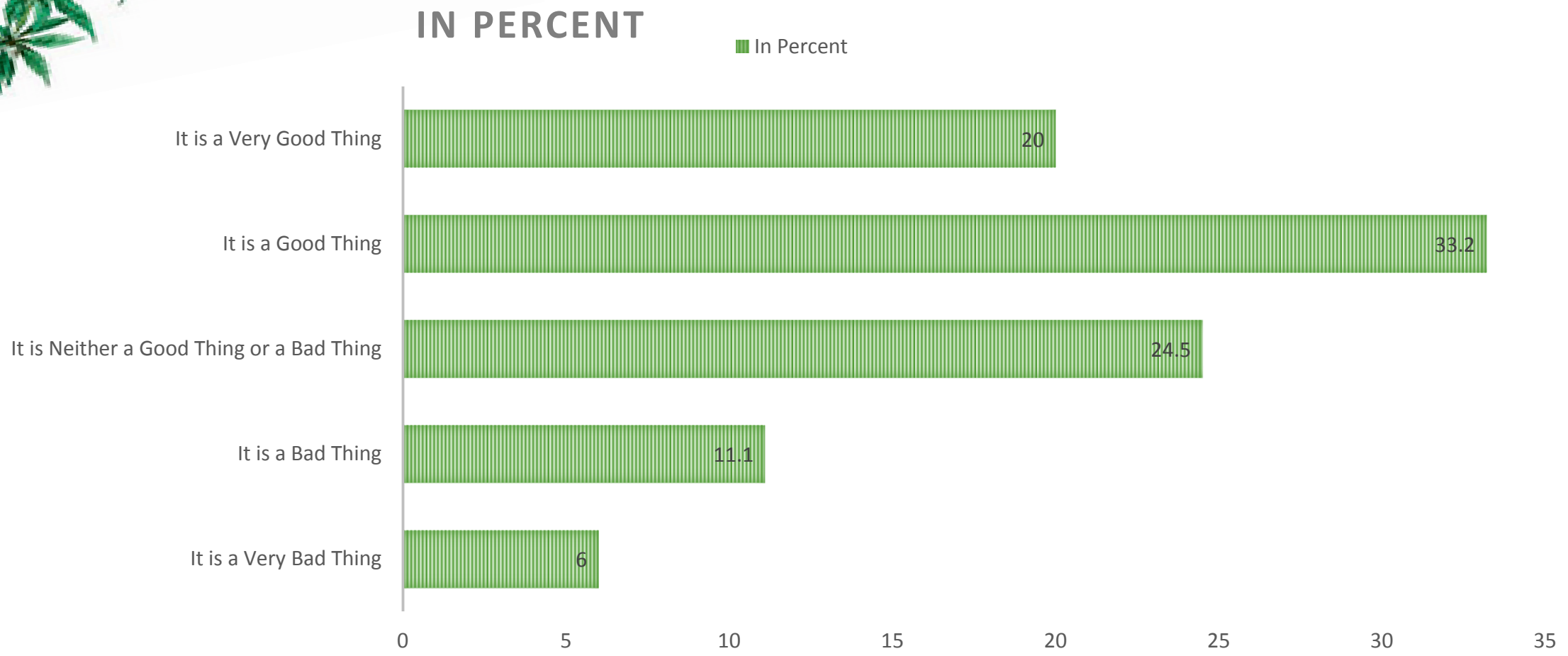


Perception of Cannabis





Perspectives on the Legalization of Cannabis



Perspectives on Legalization

How do you think legalization will impact your frequency of use? (1=Not a user, 5=Use much more frequently)

45.4% Do not and Will not Use 44% Same frequency of use 10.6% Increase Use

How comfortable would you be in public areas where there are individuals under the influence of cannabis? (1- Very Uncomfortable and 4 – Very Comfortable)

Mean=2.8 Neutral – Comfortable

Once Cannabis is legal, would you feel comfortable purchasing Cannabis from a dispensary?

42% Will Not Purchase 41.5% Yes 11.4% Neutral 5% No

Perspectives on Legalization

Do you agree with setting the legal age of purchase and consumption at 19? (same as the legal age of alcohol in most provinces)

75.2% Yes 18.2% No

Do you think individuals under the age of 19 should be allowed to consume cannabis? (Excluding special medical cases)

8.4% Yes 85.3% No

Once legal, would you feel comfortable purchasing cannabis FOR youth under the legal age?

8.2% Yes 88.7% No

Once Cannabis is legal, would you feel comfortable using cannabis around children?

8.2% Yes 11.3% Neutral 80.5% No

Reasons For Legalization

- 53.1% - ‘I believe controlled substances are safer (decreased likelihood of lacing)
- 53.6% - 'I believe cannabis sales profits could be put towards social programs and help society’
- 63.1% - ‘I believe it provides safer methods of purchase’
- 63.3% - 'I believe it is a good tool for symptom improvement in some patients with medical conditions'

Reasons Against Legalization

- 19% - 'I believe over-use of cannabis will result in a burden on our healthcare system in the future'
- 24.8% - 'I believe cannabis is harmful to the brains of individuals who suffer from mental health symptoms'
- 29.2% - 'I believe legalization of cannabis will make more kids choose to use cannabis'
- 35.1% - 'I believe legalization and making cannabis more accessible will increase cannabis use'
- 50.4% - 'I believe cannabis is harmful to the developing brain of youth'

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?