



Just Facts

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Research and Statistics Division

Cannabis crime statistics in Canada, 2016

This fact sheet is based on data from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) Juristat *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2016*.

More than half of drug offences were cannabis-related

Fifty-eight percent (55,000 of 95,400) of police-reported *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* offences were cannabis-related. The other 42% were for offences relating to the importation, exportation, trafficking, production and possession of drugs and narcotics such as cocaine, heroin, crystal meth, PCP, LSD and ecstasy.

Cannabis-related offences decreased nationally by 11% (includes possession, trafficking, production or distribution) from 2015 to 2016. This is the fifth consecutive year that the rate has declined. Decreased rates were reported in almost all provinces and territories (Table 1). The only exceptions were Prince Edward Island (+20%), New Brunswick (+5%), and Quebec (no change).

Majority of charges were for possession

The rate of persons charged with a cannabis-related offence declined 16% from 2015 and of those charges the majority (76%) were possession offences. The only provinces not reporting a decrease in cannabis-related charges were Newfoundland and Labrador (+28%) and Prince Edward Island (+10%).

Province or Territory	Number	Rate	Percent change in rate 2015 to 2016
Newfoundland and Labrador	648	122	-8
Prince Edward Island	188	126	20
Nova Scotia	1,896	200	-4
New Brunswick	1,127	149	5
Quebec	15,486	186	0
Ontario	14,870	106	-15
Manitoba	1,336	101	-17
Saskatchewan	1,732	151	-17
Alberta	5,146	121	-24
British Columbia	11,970	252	-13
Yukon	103	275	-18
Northwest Territories	250	562	-29
Nunavut	188	507	-32
Canada	54,940	151	-11

Table 1. Police-reported crime for selected offences, by province and territory - Cannabis¹

¹Cannabis offences include possession, trafficking, production or distribution.



Rates of possession and trafficking declined, importation and exportation increased

The rate of cannabis possession declined 12% nationally from 2015 to 2016. The lowest rates of possession were reported in Manitoba (66 per 100,000) and Prince Edward Island (77 per 100,000). Exceptions to the decline were reported in Prince Edward Island (+15%), New Brunswick (+7%) and Quebec (no change).

In total, rates of trafficking, production or distribution of cannabis decreased 4% in Canada. Incidents of trafficking of cannabis fell 8% and offences for the production of cannabis fell 2%. The rate of importation and exportation of cannabis increased 8%.

Police-reported youth drug crime decreased

The overall rate of youth (aged 12 to 17 years) accused of all drug-related crime declined 14% (from 544 per 100,000 in 2015 to 477 per 100,000 in 2016).² The greatest declines in the rates of total youth drug crime were reported in the Northwest Territories (-71%), Nunavut (-57%), Saskatchewan (-22%), and British Columbia (-22%). Newfoundland and Labrador (-2%) and Quebec (no change) reported the smallest declines.

Youth cannabis possession decreased

The rate of youth accused of cannabis possession decreased 15% and all other cannabis-related offence rates were lower or the same as in 2015. Nationally, the total rate of youth charged for cannabis trafficking, production or distribution declined 9%. The reported rates of youth charged with cannabis trafficking, production or distribution declined in the following provinces since 2015: Alberta (-35%), Nova Scotia (-31%), Manitoba (-23%), British Columbia (-17%), Ontario (-10%). Quebec and Nunavut's rates decreased minimally by -2% and -1%, respectively. The rate of youth charged increased in New Brunswick (64%), Newfoundland and Labrador (26%), and Saskatchewan (16%). There was not enough data to determine the rates of change in Prince Edward Island, Yukon, and Northwest Territories.

Drug impaired driving rates increased

The rate of drug impaired driving increased 11% (to 8.5 per 100,000).³ This rate remained low compared to the national rate of alcohol impaired driving (186 per 100,000).⁴ Between 2015 and 2016, the national rate of alcohol impaired driving decreased 4%.

Drug impaired driving offences increased in the following provinces and territories: Ontario (+38%), British Columbia (+29%), Quebec (+10%), Nunavut (+23%), Northwest Territories (+23%). All other provinces recorded decreases in their drug impaired offence rate, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador which remained stable. In 2016 there were 28 youth charges for drug impaired vehicle, vessel, or aircraft operation.

²This number remains above the national adult drug-related crime rate in 2016 (263 per 100,000).

³The low rate of drug impaired driving may be partially explained by the fact that it is harder to measure than alcohol impaired driving and test results are less reliable. As well, if a driver is impaired by both drug and alcohol use, it is more likely they will be reported for the latter because it is easier for law enforcement to lay charges.

⁴96% of police-reported impaired driving incidents in 2016 involved alcohol while 4% involved drugs.