

Just Facts

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Research and Statistics Division

Cannabis crime statistics in Canada, 2017

This fact sheet is based on data from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) Juristat *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2017*. It is an update to a similar JustFacts published in 2017 that was based on 2016 data.

More than half of drug offences were cannabis-related

Fifty-three percent (47,992 of 90,625) of police-reported *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* offences were cannabis-related. The other 47% were for offences relating to the importation, exportation, trafficking, production and possession of other drugs and narcotics such as cocaine, heroin, crystal meth, Phencyclidine (PCP, also known as angel dust), Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD, also known as acid), and ecstasy.

Rates of cannabis-related incidents are decreasing

The rate of cannabis-related incidents per 100,000 population decreased nationally by 15% (includes possession, trafficking, production or distribution) from 2016 to 2017. This is the seventh consecutive year that the rate has declined. Rates decreased in all provinces and territories (Table 1). Concerning the number of adults charged with a cannabis-related offence, the rate per 100,000 declined 21% from 2016.

Cannabis (includes possession, trafficking, production or distribution)			
Province or Territory	Number	Rate per 100,000 population	Percentage change in rate 2016 to 2017
Newfoundland and Labrador	604	114	-8
Prince Edward Island	141	93	-29
Nova Scotia	1,712	179	-12
New Brunswick	1,069	141	-8
Quebec	14,457	172	-9
Ontario	12,619	89	-17
Manitoba	1,130	84	-18
Saskatchewan	1,418	122	-20
Alberta	4,322	101	-18
British Columbia	10,114	210	-18
Yukon	77	200	-28
Northwest Territories	199	447	-20
Nunavut	130	342	-32
Canada	47,992	131	-15

Table 1. Police-reported crime for selected offences, by province and territory, 2017

Allen, Mary. 23 July 2018. "Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2017." Table 7, page 42. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54974-eng.pdf?st=TGkMDJgN>

The majority of charges were for possession

The majority of charges for cannabis-related offences (74%) were for possession.

Rates of possession and trafficking declined, importation and exportation increased

The lowest rates of possession per 100,000 adults charged were reported in Newfoundland and Labrador (11), Prince Edward Island (14) and Manitoba (24).

Police-reported incidents of trafficking, production or distribution of cannabis fell 12% and police-reported offences for the production of cannabis fell 22%. However, the rate of importation and exportation of cannabis according to police-reported data increased 8%.

Police-reported data show a decline in youth drug crime

The overall rate of youth (aged 12 to 17 years) accused of all drug-related crime declined 9% (from 483 per 100,000 in 2016 to 440 per 100,000 in 2017). The greatest declines in the rates of total youth drug crime were reported in Nunavut (-51%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-30%), Nova Scotia (-29%), and Prince Edward Island (-25%). The Northwest Territories (+82%) and Yukon (+141%) reported increases.

Youth possession of cannabis decreased

The rate of youth accused of cannabis possession decreased 11% and all other cannabis-related offence rates were lower or the same as in 2016. Nationally, the total rate per 100,000 youth charged for cannabis trafficking, production or distribution declined 22%. In 2016, three jurisdictions, Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island did not charge any youth for cannabis-related offences. In other provinces and territories, the reported rates of youth charged with cannabis trafficking, production or distribution declined: New Brunswick (-60%), Nova Scotia (-59%), Saskatchewan (-46%), British Columbia (-43%), Ontario (-28%), Alberta (-23%) and Manitoba (-10%). Nunavut's rates decreased minimally by -1%. The rate of youth charged increased in Quebec (+6%). There was not enough data to determine the rate of change in the Northwest Territories.

Drug impaired driving rates increased

The rate of police-reported incidents of drug-impaired driving increased 9.7% (to 9.3 per 100,000). This rate remains low compared to the national rate of alcohol-impaired driving (167 per 100,000). Between 2016 and 2017, the national rate of alcohol-impaired driving decreased 5%.

Drug-impaired driving offences increased in twelve provinces and territories: Yukon (+56%), the Northwest Territories (+53%), New Brunswick (+48%), Saskatchewan (+46%), Nunavut (+45%), Alberta (+18%), Newfoundland and Labrador (+15%), Quebec (+9%), Manitoba (+5%), Ontario (+5%), Prince Edward Island (+3%) and British Columbia (+3%). Only Nova Scotia recorded a decrease in its drug-impaired offence rate (-11). In 2017 there were 33 charges against youth for operating a vehicle, vessel, or aircraft while drug impaired.