



Press Release

Road Safety Concerns Prompt Calls for Public Education on Marijuana-Impaired Driving in Ontario

Two in Three Ontario Drivers (66%) Think Impaired Driving will be More Frequent After Marijuana Legalization in Canada

Toronto, Ontario, December 7, 2017 — With less than a year to go before marijuana legalization becomes a Canadian reality, many drivers in Ontario are concerned about marijuana-impaired driving and think public education on the topic is important. According to a new Ipsos poll for CAA South Central Ontario, three in four Ontario drivers (74%) say that when it comes to the safe use of marijuana, public education information on marijuana-impaired driving laws and penalties is important to them. A majority also find public education information on health risks (68%), specific health risks for children and youth under 25 (68%), and responsible marijuana use (58%) to be important.

Public education tops the list when Ontario drivers think about impaired driving prevention. Nearly two in ten (17%) – rising to 27% among current marijuana users – say that education and public awareness is the best way to prevent marijuana-impaired driving, ahead of stricter/stronger penalties (14%), large fines (10%), education on effects/use/health risks (7%), and suspension or loss of license (7%).

Safety Concerns and Support for Stricter Penalties

The general perception among Ontario drivers (72%) is that a driver under the influence of marijuana will drive worse than a sober driver (only 14% think marijuana-impaired drivers drive the same than sober ones, and just 3% think they drive better). Indeed, a majority think that marijuana-impaired driving is just as dangerous as driving under the influence of:

- Alcohol (71%)
- Distracted driving (71%)
- Narcotics/opioids (65%)

With this in mind, it's little wonder that most Ontario drivers (77%) say they're concerned (42% very/36% somewhat) about their personal safety on the road once marijuana is legalized in Canada. Specifically, they expect legalization will spark a rise in frequency of marijuana-impaired driving:

- Two in three (66%) think that once marijuana is legalized in Canada, marijuana-impaired driving will occur more often (35% much more/31% somewhat more) than it does today.
- Eight in ten also think that after legalization, there will be at least as many collisions due to marijuana-impaired driving than is currently the case due to alcohol-impaired (79%; 43% the same/37% more) or distracted driving (77%; 44% the same/33% more).

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Support for stricter fines or penalties for marijuana-impaired driving is, consequently, quite strong: three in four Ontario drivers (75%) say they would support (48% strongly/27% somewhat) the Ontario government in putting stricter penalties – such as increased fines or longer license suspensions – in place for marijuana-impaired driving than those covered by the Cannabis Act.

Driving Under the Influence: Who are Ontario’s Current Marijuana Users?

The survey finds that more than four in five Ontario drivers (45%) have tried marijuana at some point in their lives. Of these, three in ten (29%) can be described as lapsed users, meaning they haven’t used in at least four months. This leaves 16% who qualify as current users, who have used marijuana within the past three months.

Among this group, two in ten (18%) admit to having driven a car too soon after smoking or ingesting marijuana.

Current users are more likely to be men (53%) than women (47%). While they are represented across all age groups, current users are more prevalent among Ontario drivers aged 19 to 44 (72%) than among those aged 45 to 70 (29%). A majority (79%) hold a G license, compared to 14% who hold a G2 and 7% who are G1 license holders.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 3 and August 9, 2017, on behalf of CAA South Central Ontario. For this survey, a sample of 1,001 licensed Ontario drivers aged 18+ was interviewed. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of Ontario's adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all licensed Ontario drivers been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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