Cannabis Consumers Coalition: 2017 Report on Cannabis Consumer Demographics and Consumption Habits
Larisa E. Bolivar, M.A.
Cannabis Consumers Coalition
www.cannabisconsumer.org
Contents

Executive Summary........................................................................................................................................3
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................................6
Background ................................................................................................................................................6
Study ...........................................................................................................................................................7
Methods ......................................................................................................................................................8
Results .......................................................................................................................................................9
  Consumer Demographics ........................................................................................................................9
  Cannabis Consumer Behavior ..............................................................................................................12
  Edibles Consumption Data ....................................................................................................................16
Discussion ..................................................................................................................................................20
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................21
Executive Summary

Cannabis has been legalized for recreational or medical use in 28 states plus Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. In states like Colorado, Oregon and Washington have had a recreational marijuana market for over a couple of years now with sales surpassing a billion dollars in Colorado and Washington. Soon California, the sixth largest economy in the world, is going to be implementing a recreational program and there are already multiple states looking to legalize in one form or another during the next election cycle. Consumer data has never been more valuable, and up until this point, has been hard to collect because of self-reporting fears related to prohibition. To collect data we used an anonymous survey via internal lists and social media contacts, and also with the help of these organizations, BioTrackTHC, Marijuanomics, Humbolt’s Finest, Salar Media Group, Merry Jane, The Grow Division, The Daily Leaf and Magnetic Magazine, we were able to gather demographic and behavioral data from 537 consumers over two months with 72.85% living in states with a legal Cannabis program and 27.15% who live in prohibition states.

Yielding more information than from point-of-sale systems that do not collect demographic data and also reaching an audience that has up until recently refrained from self-reporting, we found a treasure trove of behavioral and demographic information that will be useful for policymakers, market analysts, and businesses when making important policy decisions and in business planning. We found that 63.52% have been consuming cannabis for over 10 years and that 84.28% of Cannabis consumers use cannabis daily. The three data points that we found most interesting were related to gender, cannabis spend and edibles preferences.

The most profound finding in our report was that that majority of respondents were women by over a 15% margin. When compared to other online behavior studies, we show in the report that men are more likely to participate in online surveys and that women are more active on social media. These factor into the reasons why there were more female respondents. Regardless, this It is well known that women make the majority of purchasing and family healthcare decisions also that women have a strong leadership presence in the new Cannabis industry. There are a multitude of reasons why there are more women respondents, which we cover in the report. Regardless, the fact that there are more women Cannabis consumers than previously thought shows that women are a force to be reckoned with in the new industry on a multitude of levels.
Combined, over 42% of cannabis consumers spend more than $200 per month on Cannabis. Economists are trying to determine the potential value of the Cannabis industry over the next decade and beyond. Some predict the industry will reach $50 billion by 2016.¹ Our data shows that Cannabis consumers, which currently make up 13% of the population,² spending $200 per month could yield $89 billion per year, while spending $300 per month could yield up to $149.2 billion in sales and potential of $8 billion to $14.9 billion in annual revenue if taxed at a rate of 10%. These numbers represent purchases and do not reflect the total value of the Cannabis industry when considering the ancillary market, which shows that the Cannabis industry has a potential to be well over $150 billion.

We also discovered that there is a large market for edibles that are 10 milligrams or less. Combined, almost 30% of Cannabis consumers prefer edibles that are up to 10 milligrams, followed by 25 milligrams at around 18%. Other data in the study shows that Cannabis consumers do not consume edibles as frequently as other products, which can contribute to lower tolerances. There is also a growing trend of microdosing cannabis edibles. Microdoses are also a safe and effective way of introducing Cannabis edibles to new Cannabis consumers.

All of the data in the report is very useful and paints a story of a Cannabis consumers as regular “everyday” people who are habitual consumers and use Cannabis for both medical and social reasons. The data tells us that Cannabis consumers are contributing members of society who now comprise the age groups of voters and household decision makers, the same age group that makes the majority of purchases who also happen to be women. The data also shows that many Cannabis consumers continue to purchase Cannabis on the black market, which is related to a variety of issues that can be solved by making Cannabis more easily accessible since the demand exists.

Finally, the data in the report also show that Cannabis consumers use Cannabis for both medicinal and recreational purposes. This underscores the policy quagmire of how to schedule or legalize and regulate cannabis, specifically as a medical or as a recreational substance. Cannabis consumers will continue to use the plant as both regardless of how policies are created, and Cannabis cannot be made to fit into one existing regulatory box. This report brings Cannabis consumers to the table as major stakeholders in all aspects of the emerging Cannabis industry and will have a major impact on business and policy decisions as the industry matures and standards are set in place.

---

Introduction

The Cannabis Consumers Coalition is a federally registered 501(c) (3) consumer advocacy and protection organization based out of Denver, CO. Established in 2014, our mission is to provide cannabis consumers with a voice in the cannabis industry and legislative process to ensure consumer rights and ethical behavior on behalf of cannabis related businesses. 28 eight states plus Washington, DC and Puerto have laws allowing medical Cannabis use, and eight states plus Washington, DC allow for recreational use. As these laws take effect, regulations will be created to support the new industry, and businesses will providing consumers with products and services.

This inaugural report provides data directly from Cannabis consumers to decision makers. Data was collected using an anonymous survey that was sent to Cannabis consumers in legal and prohibition states as well as other part of the globe, combines demographic and behavioral data via email and social media channels. We also had the assistance of the following businesses who used their social media channels and internal email lists to reach out to consumers: BioTrackTHC, Marijuanomics, Humbolt’s Finest, Salar Media Group, Merry Jane, The Grow Division, The Daily Leaf and Magnetic Magazine. This report provides data not collected at point of sale systems, such as combined household incomes or monthly cannabis spends.

As a Cannabis Consumers watchdog and advocacy organization, it is our goal to provide legislatures and businesses direct-from-consumer data when making legal, product, services, and marketing decisions. With legalization occurring across the United States, new technologies enable organizations to reach out to multiple consumers. The reduction of stigmas and fear on behalf of Cannabis consumers the previously keeping them from participating in surveys, gathering Cannabis consumer behavioral data is less challenging and yielding more accurate data. It is our goal to educate lawmakers and businesses, as well as Cannabis consumers, to ensure that consumer interests are a part of the political and industry decision making processes.

Background

Up until recently, the only Cannabis consumer demographic and behavior data was available through self-reporting surveys usually conducted by anti-drug researchers. As Cannabis becomes legalized and regulated across the nation, along with the implementation of seed-to-sale systems that track some consumer behavior at the point-of-sale, more information has become available to shed light on Cannabis consumer behavior to help lawmakers and businesses make better informed decisions. Utilizing our resources, which includes social media, internal Cannabis consumer contact lists, and collaboration with Cannabis related businesses, we collected basic demographic and consumer behavior information to produce a more granular view of Cannabis consumer behavior.

Data from the reports can sometimes vary, which is what we found during our research. For example, in a report by Headset, an industry data provider based on data gathered from cannabis loyalty programs, the average age of cannabis consumers was 37 years old, which correlates with our data. However, the gap between male and female shoppers between their findings and our findings was significant, with Headset reporting over 68% of cannabis consumers being males, giving a 2:1 ratio. A Gallup Poll

---

conducted in 2013 showed a closer gap with 8% of men and 6% of women reporting daily Cannabis consumption.

In our survey that reached Cannabis consumers directly via social media and email solicitations, we found that slightly over 53% of consumers were male, bringing that ratio much closer to 1:1. This may be related to gender-based online behavior. But, that does not explain what has otherwise been taken for granted, that most cannabis consumers are male. This is further explained in data and discussion sections below.

Overall, these disparities in reporting underscore the need for direct to consumer communication to achieve a better understanding of Cannabis consumer demographics and behavior. As the industry matures, more and more organizations will be adding to the data pool, and it is our mission to ensure that Cannabis consumers are being represented in business and policy initiatives. With more data, this helps us better advocate while providing stakeholders with valuable information. Being our first report, we decided to use a broad scope to give an overall snapshot of Cannabis consumer behavior.

The first part of this report covers Cannabis consumer demographics and behavior. In an effort to provide information to lawmakers and businesses that are currently developing regulations, and are considering edibles, we have included a section on Cannabis (in this case THC) infused edibles, known simply as “edible.” Edibles have been the center of contentious debates as the new industry, split between recreational and medical use, emerges from decades of prohibition. In 2016 in Colorado, strict regulations were enacted over the manufacturing and advertising of edibles. Edibles must be marked with a symbol showing that it contains THC, and can no longer be marketed as candy, the former being really costly for businesses to implement.5 Cannabis consumers bear the brunt of these changes in the form of higher costs as businesses adapt to new regulations.

The solution is not easy because it creates a conflict between Cannabis consumers and the concerns of parents, law enforcement, and physicians. The conflict over edibles stems from children being hospitalized for consuming edibles purchased at licensed stores with childproof packaging in 2014 and 2015.6 If too restricted, the black market will proliferate due to existing demand, and knowing that demand will help balance policy making efforts. This report will better assist lawmakers considers consumers’ needs when making tough decisions regarding edibles and help businesses develop products that meet Cannabis consumer demand.

**Study**

This report is a two party study on Cannabis consumer behavior. The first part was to obtain data to show overall Cannabis consumers habits and demographics. The study captures a broad snapshot of the United States cannabis consumers’ habits in states that allow for Cannabis consumption recreationally, medical, or both; including spending habits and consumption methods. The study provides data on demographics such as age, sex and combined annual incomes. This information will be helpful for states

---


that are in the process of considering or implementing regulations, as well as help Cannabis related businesses to develop marketing and business strategy plans.

This study was conducted nationally and was not restricted to legal states to provide a broader lens beyond consumer data at point-of-sale and seed-to-sale tracking systems that only log behavior in regulated markets, not demographic data such as gender and incomes. With this in mind, this report does not refer to the gray market, which is also sometimes referred to the unregulated caregiver market, and instead call it the black market to differentiate between regulated and unregulated markets. Gray market is a term given to transactions conducted outside the licensed and regulated market between caregivers and registered patients, or cooperatives between individuals growing their six to twelve plants.  

The second part was to obtain a granular view on cannabis consumers’ edibles habits. Over the next few years, lawmakers and regulators across the United States will be making important decisions on implementing regulations surrounding edibles to protect public safety. There is a significant demand for edibles; however, in some states like Colorado, edibles became severely restricted after instances of children being admitted into the hospital for cannabis intoxication and some people have adverse experiences, which in extreme cases have led to suicide and homicide when combined with other substances.

This provides a policy conundrum, and to consider Cannabis consumers in the edibles debate, as well as the business that manufacture edibles, we made the decision to add edibles to this inaugural report to better assist lawmakers as well as emerging and existing businesses. Our data shows that edibles, and in particular, edibles in the form of sweet snacks like cookies and brownies and hard candy are high in demand and are most preferred over tinctures. Meeting the demand of Cannabis consumers and the concerns of parents, physicians and lawmakers regarding edibles is a critical step in the policymaking process.

**Methods**

We conducted a simple survey using our internal Cannabis consumer contacts, social media, and though collaborating with cannabis related organizations. We began collecting data January 8, 2017 and closed the survey February 22, 2017, and obtained responses from 537 Cannabis consumers. The surveys were anonymous and data was analyzed using simple statistics to determine averages for demographics and behavior. Some respondents skipped answering questions; however, the majority of respondents answered all 15 questions.

The study reached a broad Cannabis consumer base in primarily legal states. With 28 states and Washington, DC allowing some form of legal cannabis, there is fortunately a larger pool to search for participants. Some of the survey questions asked for further information, such as specifying which legal state a respondent resided in, or why they preferred the amount of milligrams they selected in the survey. Over 400 respondents stated whether they lived in a legal medical or recreational use state, with 354 naming the state. To control bias or skewed results, we partnered with multiple organizations to create a variety of channels through which to disseminate the surveys.

---

Results

As mentioned earlier, this report combines two studies, one gathering demographic information and Cannabis consumer consumption habits, and the other gathering data specifically related to edibles. Demographic data reveals Cannabis consumers to be on average professional adults with combined family incomes well above the U.S. poverty lines. Cannabis consumer behavior habits show that most cannabis consumers are long term daily consumers spending over $100 per month on cannabis products. The results also show that Cannabis consumers are also regular consumers of edibles with the majority consuming edibles more than once a month. This section provides the survey results and analysis.

Consumer Demographics

Unless signed up with a rewards program, most point-of-sale systems do not collect consumer demographics. Even then, the data is limited to gender, residence, and average spending amounts. While useful for valuating businesses and the industry, it does not help lawmakers and marketers develop consumer-centric business and policy strategies. For businesses, this risks losing customers, weak overall growth for failing to capture new customers by not creating appropriate advertising and marketing strategies. For lawmakers, it means falling out of favor of key supporters for cannabis related initiatives if messaging is not geared towards the correct audience or simply out of touch with consumers’ needs. The value of consumer demographic data is almost priceless in terms of returns.

As the chart shows, the majority of respondents live in states where medical Cannabis, recreational Cannabis, or both, has been legalized. The survey question also included an option to provide the name of the state and whether it was legal for medical or recreational purposes. 406 respondents representing 36 states, plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, chose to disclose if they lived in a legal state or not, as well as 354 naming the state in which they currently live. There were also respondents from other countries, including Canada, South Africa and Holland. Most respondents were from Colorado, with California being second, followed by Oregon.
It should come as no surprise that the majority of respondents are between the ages of 21-35. What is significant is that a combined 32.52% of adults 45 years or older consume Cannabis. This signifies that Cannabis consumers are professional adults. What makes this significant is that the data suggests that Cannabis consumers are not those types that are stereotypically portrayed as misguided and unmotivated young adults. When adding in the 36-45 year old group, a total of 58.27% of cannabis consumers are in the age group of professional adults. This has major implications on policy issues outside of Cannabis consumption, such as employment where the majority of the workforce consumes cannabis. Lawmakers in particular should note that this also represent the age groups of voters who go to the polls, and 57% of voters have expressed support for Cannabis legalization.\(^8\)

An important thing to consider is that baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are reaching retirement age and by 2030, all of them will be over the age of 65.\(^9\) According to the chart above, combined, people between the ages of 46 – 65 make up 28.76% of Cannabis consumers. This demographic is already looking to alternative therapies to manage symptoms of the various age related ailments and diseases, including. In fact, baby boomers are the fastest growing Cannabis consumers with a NYU study reporting a 71% increase in usage by those over the age of 50 during 2006 – 2013.\(^10\)


As mentioned in the Background section, we found that there is a narrower gap between male and female cannabis consumers than previously reported. Although there is a disparity among reports of the gender of Cannabis consumers, the importance of female consumers is not negligible. In fact, it mirrors national trends and statistics in traditional markets, where women make the majority of purchasing decisions, including 80% of family healthcare decisions. Women also account for 36% of executives positions within the new Cannabis industry.

Cannabis is not something that is exclusive to a male majority, and marketing strategies typically used for the social consumption of alcohol that are highly sexualized or going to alienate consumers. With so many female Cannabis consumers and business leaders, businesses need to ensure that their marketing strategies appeal to women when developing both business-to-consumer and business-to-business marketing strategies.

---


Cannabis consumers encompass a broad stroke of individuals and classes within the United States. No longer exclusive to the counter-culture and urban youth, Cannabis consumption is common among all classes in the United States, with those in the lower-middle class consuming the most. 27.46%, just over a quarter of Cannabis consumers, have combined incomes of over $75,000, showing that cannabis consumers are professionals from all walks of life and not the stereotypical “couch potatoes” depicted in the media and in anti-Cannabis campaigns.

Those that comprise the majority and have combined household incomes of $26,000 - $55,000 correlate to the age group that comprise the majority of cannabis consumers. These are young professionals and millennials, who have been at the helm of major shifts in economic and political behavior. This is the demographic that businesses should focus on in their marketing strategy. They may not have the strongest purchasing power, yet, but they make up the majority of Cannabis consumers, and as shown further below, they spend a considerable amount of money on cannabis per month.

**Cannabis Consumer Behavior**

Understanding Cannabis consumer behavior has not been an exact science until states began legalizing and collecting data from point-of-sale systems in states with licensed Cannabis retail operations. Direct from consumer data provides a more granular view of shopping and spending data based on demographics that are typically not collected by these systems. Data further enables businesses the ability to tailor their marketing and sales strategy to a specific customer and demographic base. It is also helps lawmakers make decisions that include the interests of all parties involved in the regulatory process.

---

Nearly all of the Cannabis consumers responding to the survey are daily consumers. Different from any other substance regularly used for medicinal or social use, cannabis is used for both. This is because of the variety of cannabinoids and terpenes found in the plant that provide a variety of therapeutic effects as well as euphoria and relaxation. The latter is why it is sought after as something to use both therapeutically and socially. For example, Cannabis has been shown anecdotally to alleviate the symptoms of PTSD, which has promoted a study in the United States. Cannabis also provides an alternative to alcohol for those simply wanting to unwind for the day or relax and socialize at an event. It makes logical sense that people are using cannabis daily, and it also underscores the position that Cannabis consumers are normal and productive members of society.

This chart highlights the paradox of Cannabis being used for both medical and recreational purposes. Lawmakers at the local and federal level are arguing over decriminalization or moving Cannabis from a Schedule I narcotic on the Controlled Substances Act or removing it entirely from the list along with alcohol and tobacco. It is also considered a promising nutraceutical, with companies marketing products

16 Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies study, Marijuana for Symptoms of PTSD in U.S. Veterans. http://www.maps.org/research/mmj/marijuana-us
as nutraceuticals for holistic well-being, and cannabis business nutrition experts such as Michael Straumietis, who is the founder and owner of Advanced Nutrients, a plant nutrient line popular for growing cannabis, and industry expert. This may solve the policy conundrum presented by cannabis by offering Cannabis consumers the option to purchase a product that can be used for both health and wellness, even with the oft maligned euphoric side effects.

### Length of Cannabis Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>3.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>13.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>18.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>63.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cannabis consumers responding to the survey have been consuming cannabis habitually for a long time. The survey was sent to known Cannabis consumers, which is why there were more habitual consumers responding. When factoring in the Cannabis consumer demographic data, the above chart shows that habitual cannabis use does not impact a person’s ability to contribute to society.

---


Smoking Cannabis flower remains the preferred method of consumption by overwhelming margins. In fact, the most popular way of ingestion is via the lungs either through smoking or vaporization followed by edibles, which is the fastest delivery methods. For this question, respondents were allowed to choose multiple delivery methods because Cannabis consumers typically use multiple products because of the different effects they provide. Topicals, for example, can be a lotion or a time-released patch with a specific cannabinoid content. Tinctures can supplement edibles, and capsules and lozenges are considered edibles. Many people like to “dab,” a colloquial name for consuming hash oil in various forms that are extracted using a variety of methods.

The majority of Cannabis consumers spend $50 a month ($600 per year), followed by $200 ($2400 per year) on cannabis products, which is the equivalence of a couple eighths to a half ounce or ounce of cannabis a month depending on which state it is purchased from and level of legalization or decriminalization. Interestingly, 21.14% of consumers spend over $300 per month, or $3600 per year on cannabis products.
As mentioned in the Executive Summary, according to a Gallup Poll from 2016, 13% of the United States population disclosed that they currently consume Cannabis. This means that there are approximately 41,457,000 current cannabis consumers. Spending the minimum of $600 per year yields around $24.87 billion, whereas spending $3600 per year yields $149.2 billion. Spending an average of $200 per month, or $2400 per, could potentially yield $82.9 billion. This is with just five years into legalization. As cannabis use becomes more mainstream, there is a potential for more people admitting use or becoming new consumers. This perspective really shows the overall market potential for cannabis sales and does not even include the ancillary market businesses that will also contribute to the overall Cannabis economy.

**Source of Cannabis**

The breakdown of sources for Cannabis is really revealing. Nearly 86% of people responding to this survey live in states with legal medical or recreational Cannabis, yet 45.71%, almost half of the respondents, are purchasing Cannabis products on the black market. There could be a multitude of reasons for this, including price gaps between “street” and regulated Cannabis, which can be attributed to taxes and regulatory costs making Cannabis from licensed stores more expensive than Cannabis on the black market. For example, some people paying over 30% in sales and excise taxes in legal states. Other reasons for black market activity can be attributed to prohibition in surrounding states and municipalities and slow adaptation of regulations and business ramp-up time.

**Edibles Consumption Data**

Because of the market demand that already exists for edibles, and the concern that the issue will present itself again in multiple states, and perhaps even federally, we decided to include survey results conducted from a national survey of our contacts lists and social media to obtain a snapshot of Cannabis consumer edibles consumption habits. As Cannabis becomes more mainstream across the country, the demand for edibles will grow. As our data has shown, Cannabis consumers prefer edibles second to consuming Cannabis flower, the number one method of ingestion.

The largest concern over edibles stems from the number of incidents of children taken to the hospital for ingesting a cannabis infused product. This presents another policy conundrum and has led to
restrictions on edibles in states like Colorado, risking a flood of black market activity because The alarm over children consuming cannabis is legitimate; however, the responsibility is of keeping Cannabis edibles out of the hand of children, especially young vulnerable children who cannot read, is to keep edibles that are not immediately eaten locked away. The allure is obvious, edibles are made from things that taste good, versus alcohol, which is an acquired taste. With the exception of tinctures, lozenges and oral sprays, Cannabis edibles are consumed primarily as snack foods, and the data shows that adults prefer these methods of ingesting suggesting a strong market for these types of infused products. The negative consequence is that they will also be inconsistent and untested, creating a public health hazard.

We asked cannabis consumers across the country about their edibles habits to capture an overall picture of edibles consumption habits. There is a strong market for Cannabis edibles and the demand will be met on the black market if consumers are not offered a broad product line. The edibles data in this report is useful for lawmakers, as well as business owners in developing product and marketing strategies, and to also provide a granular view into Cannabis consumer preferences and habits.

Source of Edibles

A surprising amount of Cannabis consumers continue to make their own edibles and below in the Edibles section we show that Cannabis consumers prefer that the cannabis they use to make edibles are grown organically and without pesticides. Only 2.74% of respondents source their Cannabis from caregivers, and 10.79% are still obtaining cannabis from the black market. The latter could be due to some states not allowing for the manufacturing of edibles, new restrictions places on edibles, and the remoteness of certain areas within legal states, especially states with municipalities who have banned medical and/or recreational Cannabis businesses.
Cookies or brownies and hard candy are the most preferred method of ingesting Cannabis edibles, followed by infusion in oil or butter. Chocolate alone has a large percentage of the market share, yet it is surpassed by the preference for Cannabis infused gummies. Gummies also rank high on preferred consumption methods. As in gelatin or chewable vitamins, gummies are a convenient way to consume cannabis with a relatively quick absorption rate. Hard candy and lozenges are not as convenient as gummies as they take longer to dissolve and are not chewable, which could account for the reason that more than double the amount of those that prefer hard candy prefer gummies instead.

Edibles consumption varies on a broad scale with the majority consuming edibles once a month. There is literally almost a 20% spread between the frequency of edibles consumption showing how vastly different the consumption of edibles is from other forms. Also, edibles covers everything from tinctures and lozenges to brownies and cupcakes. As shown earlier, the preferred method of ingestion is through burning flower, followed by vaporization. Edibles can be said to be more of a commitment because the effects are longer lasting, which could explain why Cannabis consumers use them often. Smoking,
vaporizing and sprays are the quickest methods of delivery as well as edibles can take up to two hours to take effect.

**Amount of Milligrams of THC in Edibles Consumed at One Time**

![Chart showing the distribution of milligrams of THC in edibles consumed at one time.]

Just as broad as the frequency of use, accurately dosing edibles to meet consumer needs while making a profit is a challenge. Edibles have received negative attention lately. THC is metabolized differently by each individual, which means that some people naturally have higher tolerances, while others can feel the effect of a five to ten milligram edible. Also, most consumers prefer edibles as a desert, so they do not want to eat just one bite of a 100 mg cupcake. It makes sense to make edibles available in multiple dosage amounts. People who use cannabis medicinally need higher milligrams, but account for less than 16% of edibles consumption according to the above chart, which is still not a negligible number considering that respondents reported such a broad frequency of edibles consumption. The majority of respondents who answered why either use edibles to help them sleep, manage pain and microdosing throughout the day without feeling “high.” Those that use stronger doses reported doing so for pain management.

Cannabis edibles are also very potent. A ten milligram edible can affect someone new to consuming Cannabis edibles, so it is responsible to have products that have less than 10 milligrams for those consumers who do not want to have a strong effect and would like an easy way to titrate their dosage until they reach a desired effect. Micro-dosing is also growing in popularity, and as the chart shows, combined, almost 30% of respondents consume ten or less milligrams at a time. When asked why Cannabis consumers preferred the milligrams that they typically consumed, the majority of the respondents answered pain relief, high tolerances, and to help them sleep. Those that use lower doses mentioned that they prefer micro-dosing.

For the above answers, we asked that respondents select all that apply. Cannabis consumers simply prefer cannabis that is natural and organic when it is used as an ingredient in edibles.

**Discussion**

As Cannabis use becomes more mainstream, more and more Cannabis consumers are becoming comfortable with reporting personal information along with history of Cannabis use. From this study, Cannabis consumers are more than the stereotypical members of the counter-culture, they are and are in actuality very opposite of what has traditionally been depicted in the media and in anti-Cannabis campaigns. Cannabis consumers are professional adults who vote, and have considerable power with their dollars to impact business revenue. Prohibition made it so people were afraid to discuss their Cannabis use; however it is much more common and mainstream. Prior to 1937, when the process of Cannabis prohibition began, Cannabis was commonly used for a multitude of reasons, but primarily medicinally. Once legalized or decriminalized nationally, it stands to reason that Cannabis use will become more common.

Unfortunately, a large number of Cannabis consumers continue to purchase their Cannabis products from the black market. To eliminate the purchases on the back market, cannabis will have to be legalized or decriminalized federally to remove the element of risk and inflated costs. Prohibition creates a considerable risk that artificially inflates prices and as Cannabis becomes legal around the United States, prices continue to rapidly drop as the risk is removed. Cannabis is going to be an economy of scale and production costs are dropping significantly as cultivators find more innovative and efficient ways to grow. Also, more and more Cannabis is being grown outdoors, as it should, which will also drop the prices considerably and further remove the risk.

Perhaps surprising to some, there were more women respondents than male respondents. That believe contradicts the well-known fact that woman make the majority of purchasing decisions. This could be related to online behavior related to gender. For example, a study conducted by students on faculty
members found that men were more likely to answer online surveys.\(^{20}\) Studies also show that women use social media more than men, but only by 7%.\(^{21}\) This means that there are far more women cannabis consumers than previously believed. As mentioned earlier, businesses need to develop marketing strategies that appeal to women buyers. The days of marketing to a “Cheech and Chong” stoner-type are long gone as the industry becomes more sophisticated with women making the majority of purchasing decisions.

As mentioned under Edibles Consumption Data, there still remains a large demand for Cannabis edibles that are more like snacks. As noted, more Cannabis consumers prefer gummies over chocolate. This conflicts with the desires of lawmakers, law enforcement and hospital workers to restrict edibles to lozenges, tinctures and sprays. This also underscores the policy quagmire of trying to create both recreational and medical Cannabis markets. Cannabis infuses well with a variety of foods and desserts, and the market demand for variety will either be met in licensed stores with products that are labeled with ingredients and cannabinoid profile produced under strict regulatory controls, or on the black market where there is no homogeneity with regards to dosage or quality control, putting Cannabis consumers at risk.

**Conclusion**

Cannabis use is becoming more mainstream. States with a legal Cannabis programs are now the majority, and the majority of Americans now support Cannabis legalization (add in poll data). Many people consume Cannabis regularly and demographics show that these people are contributing members of society and are not negligible. With so many benefits, especially with regard for therapeutic use and the overall safety of Cannabis consumption over other substances, Cannabis is an appealing alternative to pills, hard drugs, and alcohol, the latter being the reason that recreational use is passing in multiple states. Also, Cannabis consumption has existed for a long time, which is why black market marijuana was valued at $38.5 billion in 2006.\(^{22}\) Estimates for a regulated market are between $100 and $150 billion dollars (cite article), meaning that the developing industry will be a large contributor to the Nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while giving states much needed revenue for infrastructure projects.

The Cannabis Consumers Coalition will continue to provide cannabis consumer related reports to track the growing industry and provide valuable data to businesses and lawmakers. As a consumer watchdog organization, it is our interest to ensure that decision makers have data available to them directly from the consumer. Currently, the developing industry has a large impact on decisions being made that impact consumers, when it is the consumer that is ultimately impacted. Therefore, by providing consumer reports, important decisions impacting Cannabis consumers will be made with them in mind and bring about consumer-centric laws while helping businesses develop products and services that Cannabis consumers really want and therefore contribute to revenue growth.

---


About the author:

Larisa E. Bolivar, M.A. has 16 years of cannabis related experience and is a recognized trailblazer and pioneer in the cannabis industry. Noted by the Washington Post as “one of the city’s [Denver] most well-known proponents of decriminalizing marijuana nationally,” Ms. Bolivar has a long history in the cannabis movement. In 2004, she founded the Colorado Compassion Club, which became the first dispensary in Denver, CO. Prior to that, she volunteered as an Americans for Safe Access (ASA) organizer and founded Caregivers for Safe Access, a coalition of patients and caregivers who taught people how to become registered patients and caregivers within the Colorado medical marijuana program. She also discovered and promoted one of the first doctors to publicly sign recommendations for hundreds of patients in Colorado. Through the years she has accumulated a of substantial Cannabis related experience in the area of advocacy, policy, market and behavioral analysis, public relations, communications, strategy and business development.

Currently, Ms. Bolivar is founder and principal of Bolivar Consulting, a business development and management company specializing in Cannabis with a roster of well-known clients in multiple industry verticals. She is the founder and executive director of the Cannabis Consumers Coalition, a Cannabis consumer watchdog organization known for pushing for standards and laws regarding issues as pesticides use and consumer safety. She is a board member of Colorado NORML and on the planning committee for Mother’s High Tea, an annual event in Denver honoring women in Cannabis. She holds a B.S. Psychology from the University of Phoenix and a M.A. in Public Policy from Regis University. She concentrated her studies for her masters on cannabis policy reform, utilizing Regis’s liberal arts program to design her own curriculum. Her master’s thesis is entitled “Enduring racial disparity after Cannabis legalization,” where she highlights the lack of minority leadership representation in the emerging Cannabis industry, discusses the reason for the disparities and provides policy solutions.

Ms. Bolivar has a broad level of expertise in the emerging Cannabis industry. She is highly a sought after public speaker in the emerging Cannabis, and has spoken and moderated panels on a variety of topics including diversity, the evolution of the Cannabis arena from movement to industry, public relations and marketing, women as entrepreneurs, hemp as a consumer good, pesticides use, travel and tourism and Cannabis for therapeutic use. The events she has spoken were produced by highly esteemed organizations, including the Drug Policy Alliance, Indo Expo, Cannabis Cultural Association and Viridian Capital Advisors.