

Up in smoke: New study suggests it's time to ditch long-held stereotypes about stoners

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Stoners are not as lazy and unmotivated as stereotypes suggest, according to new U of T Scarborough research.

The study, [published](#) by the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, surveyed chronic cannabis users to see what effect getting high has on their everyday lives.

"There is a stereotype that chronic cannabis users are somehow lazy or unproductive," says Michael Inzlicht, a professor in the Department of Psychology at U of T Scarborough who led the study.

"We found that's not the case—their behaviors might change a bit in the moment while they're high, but our evidence shows they are not lazy or lacking [motivation](#) at all."

The researchers surveyed 260 chronic users (those who consume cannabis at least three times a week or more), who received regular messages through an app asking if they were high. The participants were then asked about their emotional state, levels of motivation, willingness to invest effort and [self-regulation](#).

Inzlicht says the most interesting finding relates to motivation.

The researchers studied the participants' willingness to exert effort in completing a task while high. They found participants were willing and motivated to exert the same amount of effort while high compared to when they are not.

Past research has shown mixed results when it comes to chronic cannabis

use and motivation. Inzlicht notes much of it relied on limited experimental designs that didn't account for differences between cannabis users and non-users, such as variations in personality, [mental health](#), or use of other psychoactive substances. He says this study instead looked at chronic cannabis use while participants were actively high, while also accounting for these pre-existing differences.

Emotions, self-regulation and 'weed hangover'

The researchers found that getting high did lead to lower levels of self-regulation, which is an important trait for being able to accomplish tasks. They found that when chronic users are high it does impact certain behaviors linked to self-regulation, such as being more impulsive, less thoughtful and less orderly.

"These things can detract someone from getting stuff done, but we didn't find it made them less hard-working, responsible or able to focus," says Inzlicht.

They also found that chronic cannabis users experience a boost in [positive emotions](#) such as awe and gratitude, and a reduction in some negative emotions such as fear and anxiety while high. However, the researchers found those who get high a lot, on the higher end of chronic use, experience more [negative emotions](#) while high and while sober.

The researchers found no evidence of "weed hangover," that is, chronic users didn't experience a decline in function (emotion or motivation) the day after being high.

New frontier for cannabis research

Studying the effects of daily cannabis use was difficult in the past given

its [legal status](#), and most research tended to focus only on the negative side in an effort to curb use. Now that cannabis is legal in Canada, he says it's much easier to study, and he expects there will be greater research focusing on the risks as well as the possible positive effects.

"The cannabis literature, historically, tended to focus a lot on the negative medical consequences of chronic use," says Inzlicht, who runs the Work and Play Lab, which does research on self-control, motivation and empathy as well as [social media](#), digital device and recreational cannabis use.

"Part of the motivation for this study is to take a neutral, clear-eyed approach to see how cannabis affects chronic users in their everyday lives."

Inzlicht says this study isn't an endorsement of heavy cannabis use, adding there is plenty of research highlighting the risks associated with heavy use, especially among adolescents.

Rather, he points to Statistics Canada data showing that nearly one in 10 adult Canadians are regular [cannabis users](#), and they come from all walks of life. Cannabis is also the fourth most used recreational drug after caffeine, alcohol and tobacco. But despite its increased legal and social acceptance, relatively little is known about the everyday experiences of regular users.

"Our data suggests that you can be hard-working, motivated and a chronic cannabis user at the same time."

More information: Michael Inzlicht et al, Chronic Cannabis Use in Everyday Life: Emotional, Motivational, and Self-Regulatory Effects of

Frequently Getting High, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/19485506241245744](https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506241245744)

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