



CANNABIS MAY HELP REDUCE HARMS FOR SEXUAL MINORITY MEN WHO ENJOY COMBINING SEX WITH DRUGS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Often referred to as “chemsex” or “party n’ play”, the sexualized use of substances like crystal meth by gay, bi, and other men who have sex with men (“sexual minority men”) has been identified as a key driver of HIV, depression, anxiety, and suicide in this population.
- Despite years of research identifying harms associated with the sexualized use of substances, there remains no gold standard treatment for men looking to reduce or abstain from these activities. This is especially true for those seeking to minimize drug-related harms from stimulants like crystal meth.
- Between January to December 2018, 41 young sexual minority transgender and cisgender men who used cannabis were interviewed in Metro Vancouver to learn about their perceptions and experiences with using cannabis for sex.

QUICK FACT

For many, the sexualized use of drugs is motivated by the experience of perceived positive physical and psychological effects, including increased confidence, pleasure, and intensity of experience.

FINDINGS

- ***“[Cannabis] can make it feel better, you can last longer, or sometimes you can last way less, depending”***: Overall, young sexual minority men described deliberately using cannabis to increase sexual pleasure and lower inhibitions. This included using cannabis to decrease pain during receptive anal sex.
- ***“I used [cannabis] to be more relaxed [with guys] and stop judging”***: Participants also described intentionally using cannabis to overcome feelings of anxiety and shame around sexual encounters as well as to foster feelings of intimacy with sexual partners, particularly with those they were meeting for the first time.

IMPLICATIONS

- Our study found that the motivations for and contexts and patterns of cannabis use in sexual contexts frequently paralleled those associated with chemsex, such as deliberate use to achieve desired physiological (e.g. enhancing pleasure, decreasing pain) and psychoactive (e.g. reducing anxiety, fostering intimacy) sexual effects.
- Findings from this work suggest that cannabis may be used as a harm reduction measure in sexual contexts, specifically as a ‘safer’ alternative to substances typically associated with chemsex (e.g., crystal meth).

Parent, N., Ferlatte, O., Milloy, M-J., Fast, D., Knight, R. (2020). “The sexualised use of cannabis among young sexual minority men: “I’m actually enjoying this for the first time.” *Culture, Health, & Sexuality*. doi:10.1186/s12954-020-00365-4