

‘Unpacking Cannabis and Mental Health in Métis in Manitoba’

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Why did we do this study?

Research regarding cannabis and mental health has been growing since legalization in Canada.

Little has been done to examine differences in the physical, emotional, and social effects that cannabis has on the mental health of Red River Métis

Given the differing lived experiences of individuals from various ethnicities, genders, and social backgrounds it is important to identify how these differences can affect outcomes relating to cannabis and mental health.

Our Research Questions

“What has been the experience in the Métis community with cannabis?”

“Have there been changes in the mental health of Citizens since legalization?”

Methods

The study involved a community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology.

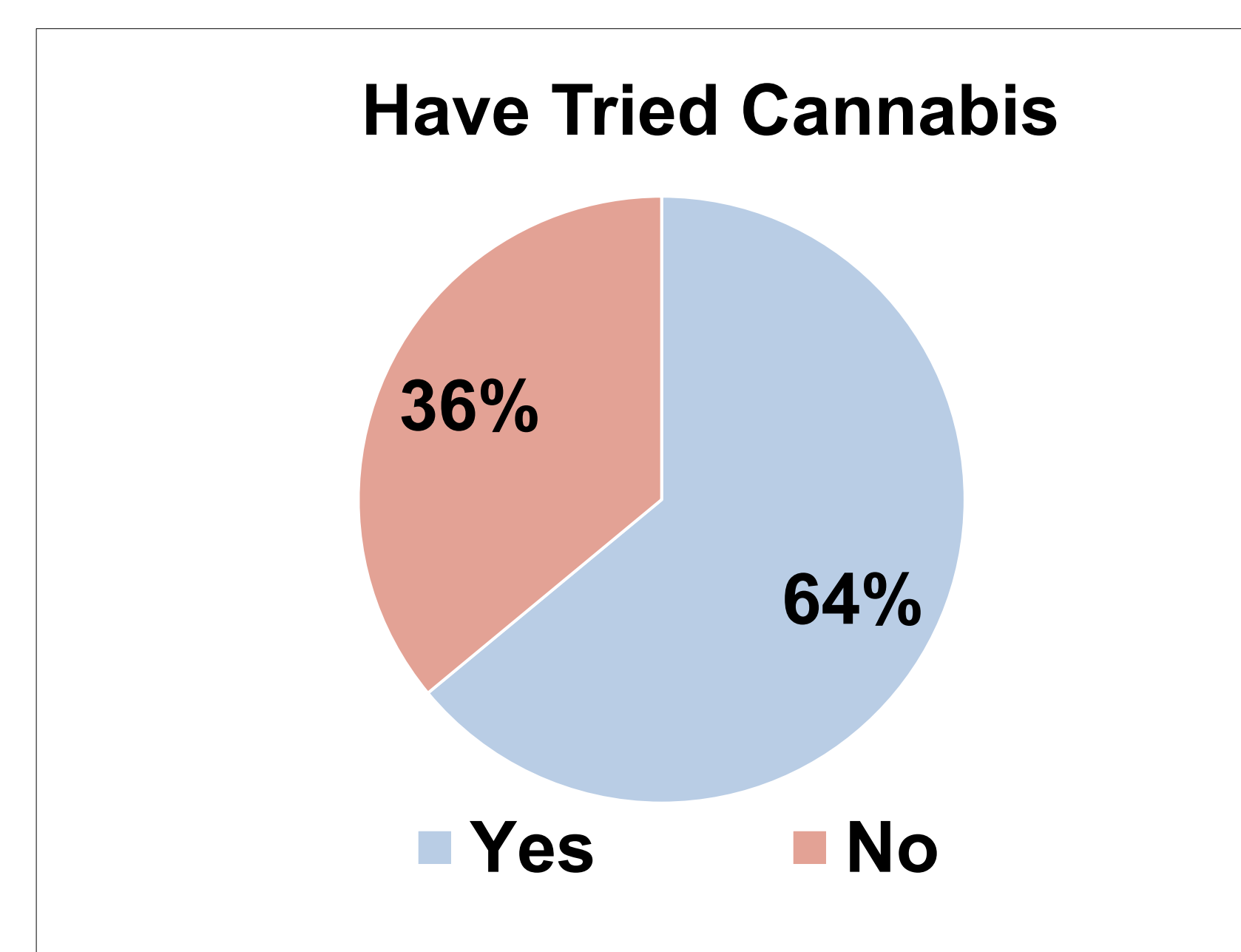
Focus groups were held with approximately 100 Red River Métis citizens. There was a hybrid approach to data collection with in-person and online formats.

Moderators asked a series of questions about the experiences and perceptions of Metis Citizens with legalized cannabis.

Transcripts were created from the discussion groups and analyzed using the Collective Consensual Data Analytic Process (CCDAP).



What We Found Out



Citizens welcomed the safety brought by regulation to using cannabis recreationally.

“The biggest benefit is the fact that it's safer. When you buy it, you know what you're getting”

Several citizens said they, or someone they knew, had used cannabis to help with chronic pain management, stress, or to help with socialization.

“For people in my family who have chronic illnesses it has been so beneficial to allow them to be mobile.”

“In terms of anxiety, my partner does use cannabis and it has helped immensely and being capable of reducing the anxiety.”

We heard that while Citizens of all ages use cannabis, there was concern for youth.

“I think in my community there is a lot of kids who are underage that are doing it.”

“Youth are getting a hold of cannabis and using it at a young age and giving it to other youth that are even younger than them.”

Citizens suggested that:

“We need to be very forward and aggressive in communicating to young people the adverse effects of using pretty much any kind of thing. And promote that in the schools as early as we can.”

Citizens were divided in their perceptions about its effects on the community.

“I think it's an improvement in the community. Because seeing our people incarcerated for marijuana use? I think that inflicts more harm.”

“I do think it's something that we need to be conscious of, how it's affecting our community and what the escalation over time is.”

Métis value the use of traditional medicine and believe cannabis has a legitimate place in a holistic view of medicine.

“It's been positive on the community because people have other alternatives for a more holistic natural type of medicine.”

“Traditional medicines, basically a lot of them came from the ground. And cannabis I think is one of those medicines.”

Discussion

Given how recently cannabis has been legalized it is important to examine how it has been received in the Métis community.

We found that there is support for cannabis as it has benefits for pain management, stress, and other psychological benefits.

The use of CBPR and CCDAP fostered building of respectful and reciprocal research relationships.

Conclusion

Outcomes of this project provided the space and place for Métis voices, built community capacity, and helped to direct future policy and program development.

Acknowledgements

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Métis Citizens in Manitoba who allow us to serve them in our vision of ‘A Well Metis Community.’