

# Prevalence and factors associated with suicidal ideation, cannabis, and alcohol misuse during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan: findings from a joint-effect modeling

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## INTRODUCTION

- Pandemics such as COVID-19 take an enormous toll on people's lives.
- As the pandemic extends into the second year, growing attention has been paid to the multiple adverse mental health and behavioral issues, such as suicidal ideation and substance misuse.
- Understanding interplay of suicidality and substance misuse during the pandemic has been limited.

## OBJECTIVE

To investigate the prevalence of co-occurrence of suicide ideation, alcohol and cannabis misuse, and the factors that are associated with these co-occurrences in the Saskatchewan adult population during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## METHODS

We performed a multivariable trivariate probit regression on a sample of 666 Saskatchewan adolescents and adults (16 years or older), drawn from the cycle 10 data collection (March 2022) of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (MHCC-CCSA) dataset.

## RESULTS

### 1. Prevalence of suicidal ideation, problematic cannabis, problematic alcohol use and their co-occurrences

**6.2%** said that they had contemplated **suicide** since the onset of the pandemic.



**12.9%** said they had problematic **alcohol** consumption.



**7.2%** said they had problematic **cannabis** use.

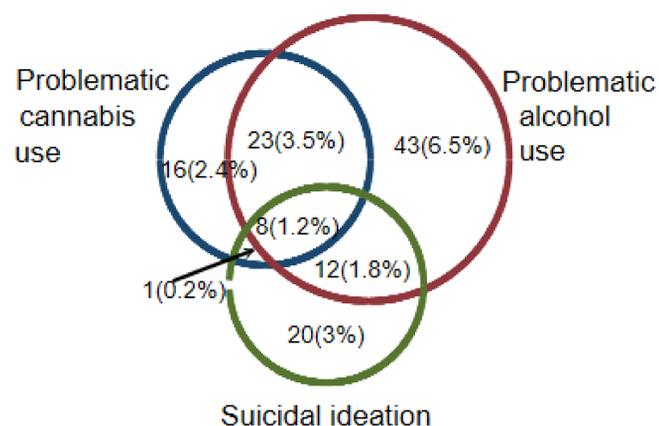


**4.7%** was the prevalence of **dual-problematic use, cannabis and alcohol**

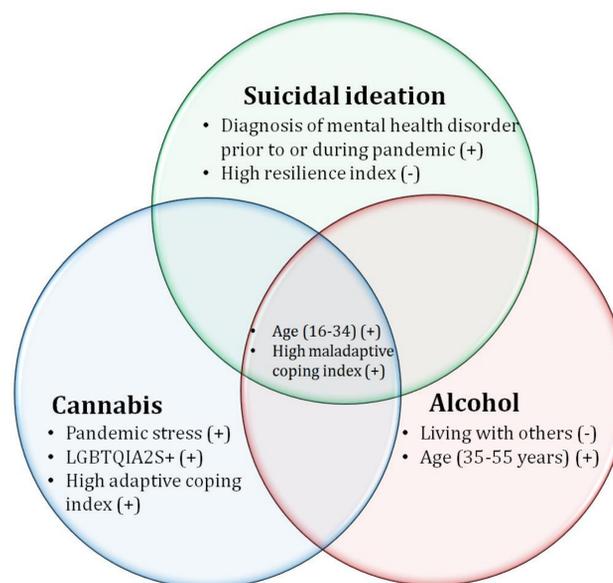


## RESULTS

### 2. Intersectionality of suicidal ideation, problematic cannabis use and problematic alcohol use during COVID-19 pandemic.



### 3. Summary factors significantly associated with suicidal ideation, problematic cannabis use and alcohol use during COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan, March 2022



- The prevalence of suicidal ideation was higher among respondents who reported both problematic cannabis and alcohol use (25.8%) than single users of alcohol (23.2%) and cannabis (18.7%).
- **Younger respondents (16–34 years)** and those who reported other **copied behaviors that were not particularly adaptive or helpful** were independent factors that were positively associated with the common experience of suicide ideation, problematic cannabis, and alcohol use.
- Having a **diagnosis of mental health disorders** either before or during the pandemic, and the perceived inability to bounce back after the pandemic (**low resilience**) are positively associated with suicidal ideation.
- **Those who lived alone, between 35 and 55 years of age** were more likely to report problematic alcohol use.
- Those who reported **copied strategies that were deemed more adaptive**, who reported **pandemic stress**, and **declared a LGBTQIA2S + identity** had higher probability of problematic cannabis use.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Suicidality among Saskatchewan adults is not occurring in isolation but occur simultaneously with alcohol misuse. This finding suggests that recognition of early warning signs and treatment of individuals with problematic alcohol use are important for suicide prevention.
- Also, those who reported problematic alcohol use are more likely to experience problematic cannabis use, although cannabis use did not have an independent association with suicide ideation.
- This study provides a motivation for implementing age-responsive interventions and public education on coping strategies because these factors are shared among people living with suicide ideation, problematic alcohol, and cannabis use.
- As the pandemic persists, improving access to interventions that prevents suicide and substance use especially for the vulnerable groups identified in this study may be impactful.

## REFERENCES

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