

Higher minimum legal age (MLA) for Cannabis: Perks and Perils

Evidence from Quebec

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Background

Quebec has the highest cannabis MLA in any Canadian province

Different MLAs for cannabis (21+) and tobacco/alcohol (18+) in Quebec



1. Concerns of youths' cannabis use from illegal market
2. Concerns of increased use of tobacco and alcohol

1. Higher cannabis MLA was associated with a lower increase in youth cannabis use in Quebec compared with other Canadian provinces. *Nguyen et al., 2022*

2. Effects on other substances ????

Research questions

1. What are the effects of Quebec's higher cannabis MLA on alcohol drinking?
2. What are the effects of Quebec's higher cannabis MLA on cigarette smoking?
3. What are the effects of Quebec's higher cannabis MLA on the mental health conditions among youths in Quebec?

Methods



Design



Population:

15 to 20 years;
18 to 20 years

Outcomes:

Alcohol drinking prevalences:

1. Current drinking; 2. Regular drinking 3. Occasional drinking

Cigarette smoking prevalences:

1. Current smoking; 2. Daily smoking; 3. Occasional smoking

Mental health disorder prevalences:

1. Anxiety disorder; 2. Mood disorder



Quebec

vs.

other Canadian provinces



Data: Canadian
Community
Health Survey
(CCHS), 2003-
2020

Results

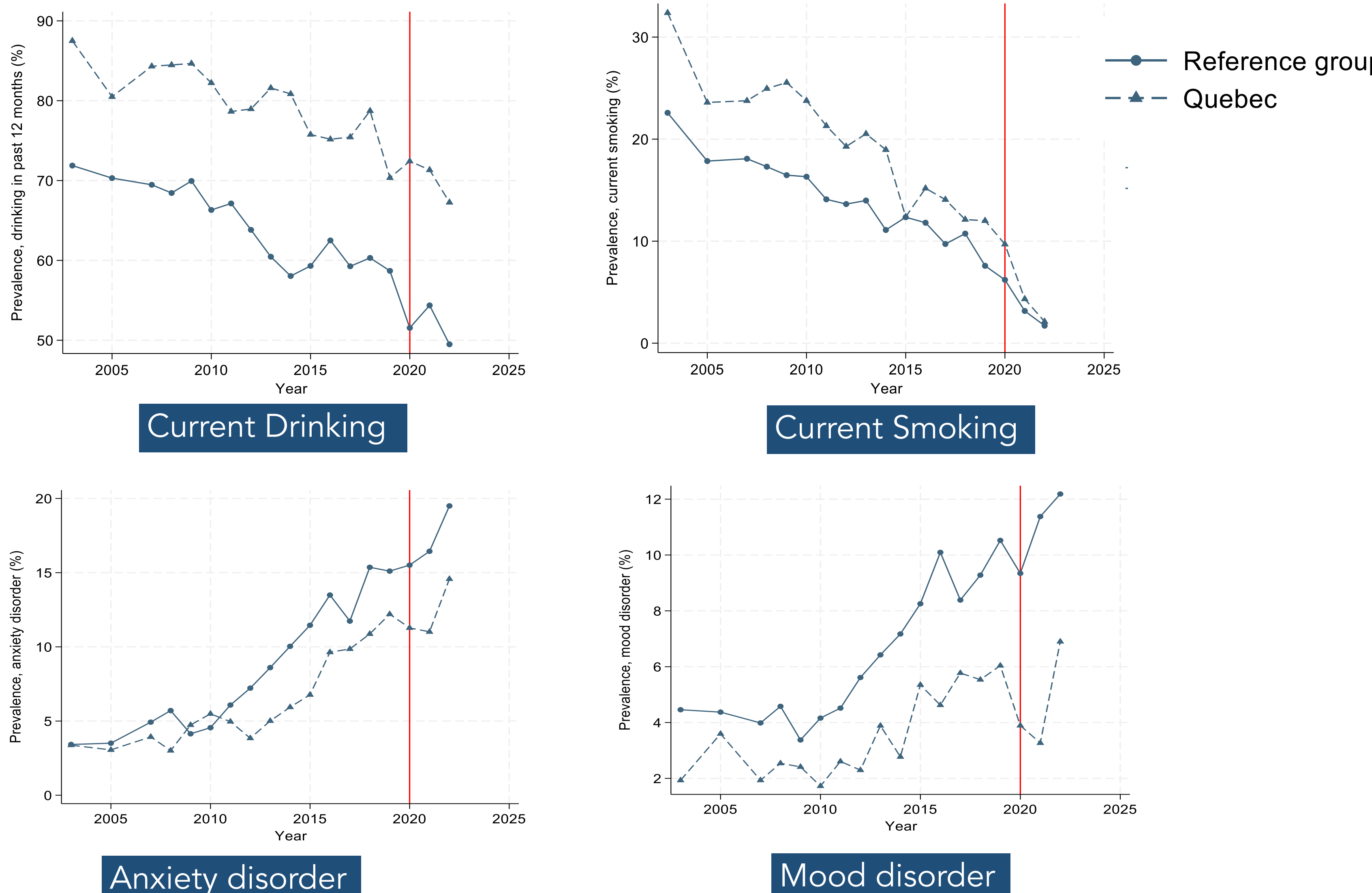


Figure: Unadjusted trends in the study outcomes

Table 1. Effects of a higher cannabis MLA policy on alcohol drinking

	All sample	18 to 20 years
Outcome: Prevalence of current drinking		
DiD analysis	0.030	0.051**
DiD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	0.011	0.015
Outcome: Prevalence of regular drinking		
DiD analysis	0.013	0.063***
DD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	0.006	0.042**
Outcome: Prevalence of occasional drinking		
DiD analysis	0.018	-0.011
DiD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	0.005	-0.027

Table 2. Effects of a higher cannabis MLA policy on cigarette smoking

	All sample	18 to 20 years
Outcome: Prevalence of current smoking		
DiD analysis	-0.031**	-0.022
DiD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	-0.002	0.003
Outcome: Prevalence of daily smoking		
DiD analysis	-0.014	-0.010
DiD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	0.008	0.010
Outcome: Prevalence of occasional smoking		
DiD analysis	-0.017**	-0.012
DiD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	-0.010	-0.006

Table 3. Effects of a higher cannabis MLA policy on alcohol drinking

	All sample	18 to 20 years
Outcome: Prevalence of anxiety disorder		
DD analysis	-0.026***	-0.034**
DD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	-0.008	-0.018
Outcome: Prevalence of mood disorder		
DD analysis	-0.025***	-0.034***
DD analysis (province-specific linear time trends)	-0.015***	-0.025**

Key findings

- Higher MLA was associated with a small increase (4.0-6.0 percentage points) in regular drinking among youths aged 18 to 20 years. No change in current drinking and occasional drinking.
- The policy was not associated with any appreciable changes in cigarette smoking among youths in Quebec.
- The policy resulted in a decline in the risks of mental health disorders among youths in Quebec compared with youths in other Canadian provinces.

Research implications

- No evidence of dramatic spillover effects of a higher cannabis MLA on the use of alcohol and cigarettes, while being associated with better mental health outcomes among youths in Quebec.
- This study can provide critical evidence to guide choices of MLA for cannabis use in other jurisdictions, contemplating setting a higher cannabis MLA.

Note:
MLA stands for minimum legal age
Level of significance: ** p<0.05; ***p<0.01