



Rising to the Occasion

Cannabis Consumer Trends for Occasion-Based Marketing



February 2021

What is Occasion-based Marketing?

Occasion-based marketing focuses on when and where consumers are using your product. This can help you develop a strong customer relationship by aligning messaging with what your consumers are doing while using the product.

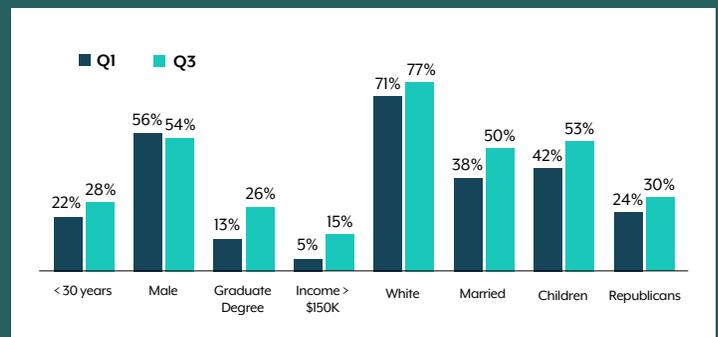
Cannabis is unique in that it can be used every part of the day. Consumers report using it first thing in the morning, right before bed, and every activity in between. Marketing for cannabis occasions can also include holidays like 420 or 710.

Because cannabis fits into so many occasions, it can be positioned and marketed to very different people for very different purposes. A product for the nightly joint smoker may not appeal to someone who microdoses flower during the workday and vice versa.

This report explores the occasions of cannabis use that have exploded during the pandemic and the opportunities brands have in being the perfect match for consumers during specific occasions.

2020 Demographic Changes:

2020 saw a shift towards younger consumers and a more equal gender balance. Compared to Q1 2020, in Q3 there were more highly educated and high income cannabis consumers, as well as an increase in white consumers. Lastly, we saw higher percentages of use among married consumers, those with children, and Republicans.



Top Cannabis Occasions

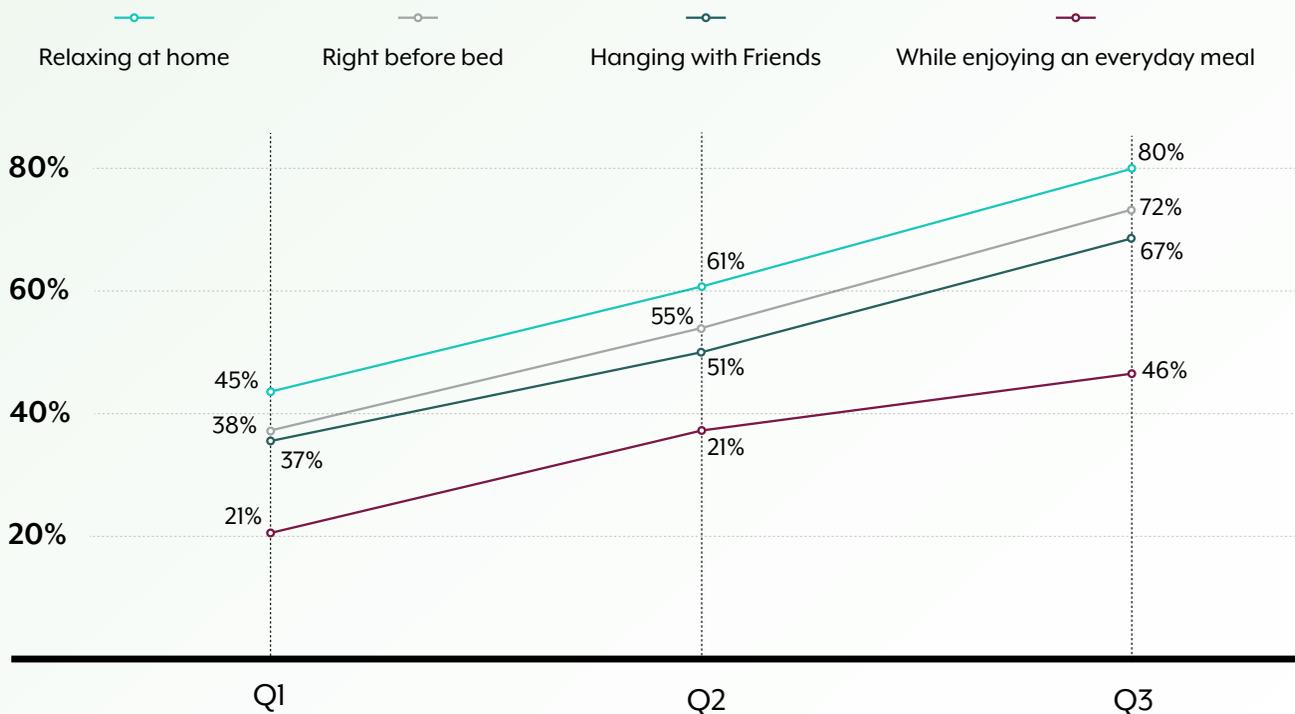
The top three occasions of cannabis use are relaxing at home, right before bed, and hanging out with friends at one of our homes. At the beginning of the year, no occasion of use was reported by over half of consumers. With the pandemic increasing both cannabis use and spend, 6 occasions of use are now reported by over half of cannabis consumers, and nearly all other occasions we track were reported by at least 40% of consumers.

In short, consumers are using cannabis during more occasions.

In our October 2020 [consumer update](#) on COVID, 81% of cannabis consumers agreed cannabis helps them deal with the stress of the pandemic. With the grand majority of consumers using to deal with stress and the pandemic continuing to ripple through daily life, it's no wonder we've seen cannabis use move to even the most mundane activities.

For example, the occasion that saw the biggest increase was while enjoying an everyday meal. From 21% in Q1 to 46% in Q3, using cannabis at mealtime is now as popular as “relaxing at home” was in Q1.

Occasions of Cannabis Use by Quarter
% of cannabis consumers that report use at occasion



Opportunistic Occasions

With all occasions of use increased, which have the most opportunities for brands?

Nightly Stoner – “Right before bed”

Cannabis use “right before bed” nearly doubled in 2020, increasing from 38% in Q1 2020 to 72% in Q3. Capturing nearly 3/4 of all consumers, the changes in consumers who use right before bed from Q1 to Q3 look a lot similar to the changes in all cannabis consumers highlighted on page 2.

At the same time, fewer cannabis consumers report using for insomnia: In Q3, only 15% reported using to treat insomnia compared to 19% in Q1. **Consumers using right before bed aren’t necessarily doing so because they must—they are doing so because they can.**

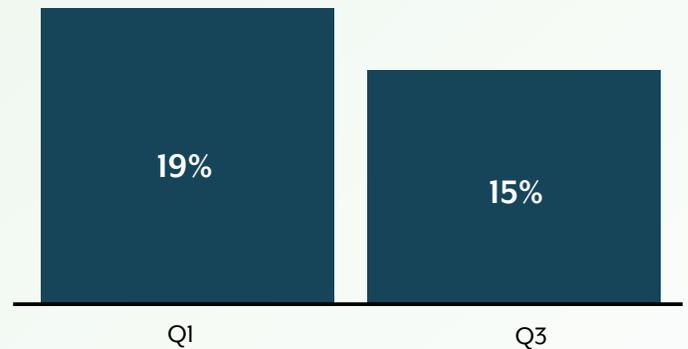
We have less activities to tire us out over the day and pandemic stressors lurking in the back of our minds as our head hits the pillow. Right before bed is the perfect time for an indica strain to help unwind from the day.



We see this occasion play out with brands that cast a wide net and sell products simply branded for sleep. An example is Cresco’s line of “Rest” cannabis in Illinois. Ideal for consumers entering a legal market for the first time, this line takes the guesswork out of which strain would be

Cannabis Use for Insomnia

% of cannabis consumers that report treating insomnia with cannabis



best for a nightly smoke. Instead of having a specific consumer in mind, the product is the perfect companion for that specific occasion—no matter if you’re a dad or a college student.

But with so many consumers using cannabis before bed, this occasion can also allow brands to find their niche. You can make a discreet night-time vape for parents, or a gold finished, indica-dominant vape in lavender packaging for more feminine, luxurious tokers. Either way, rising to the occasion of use is what will build a happy customer base of loyal nightly stoners.

CannaGamers – “Before/While Playing Video Games”

Cannabis use “before/while playing video games” increased 86% from Q1 to Q3. In Q3, 54% of consumers enjoyed cannabis during this occasion.

The topic “*video games*” was the 2nd fastest growing topic among cannabis consumers on social in the second half of 2020.

Cannabis products positioned for use with video games increased distribution at the end of 2020 and garnered increased social chatter, according to our Innovation Insights portal. Nearly all the products positioned for video games are inhalables—vapes, flower, and concentrates, with vapes taking up an impressive 81% of market share for this positioning.

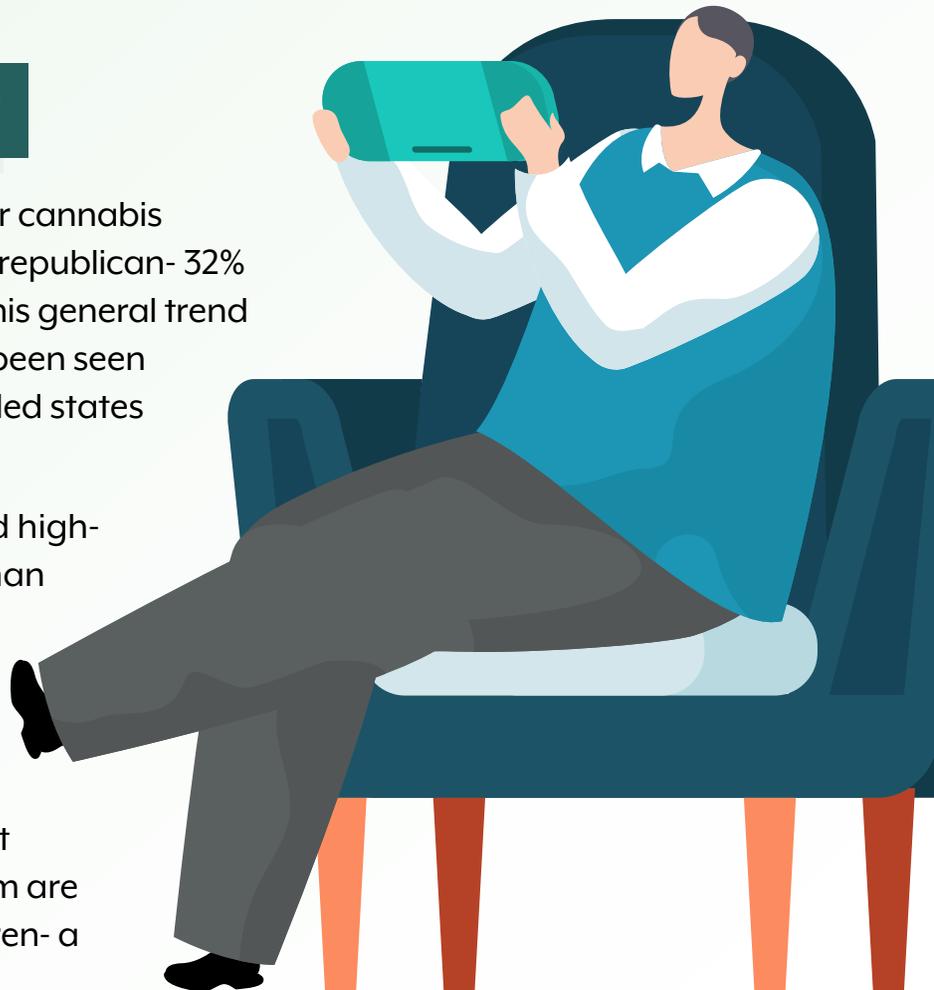
Despite the 54% of cannabis consumers using with video games, products positioned for playing video games capture a mere 0.2% of the US cannabis market. Even looking at just vape products, this positioning still has less than 1% share on dispensary shelves. Brands that sell inhalables have a great opportunity here to appeal to these CannaGamers with little competition in that positioning.

So who are the CannaGamers?

They follow similar trends to the wider cannabis consumer population, such as being republican- 32% of CannaGamers are Republicans. This general trend of republican cannabis use has also been seen on the national stage, as republican-led states legalize cannabis programs.

There are more highly-educated and high-income CannaGamers in Q3 2020 than Q1. With the pandemic sending many office employees home to work, they likely have more time to spend on video games.

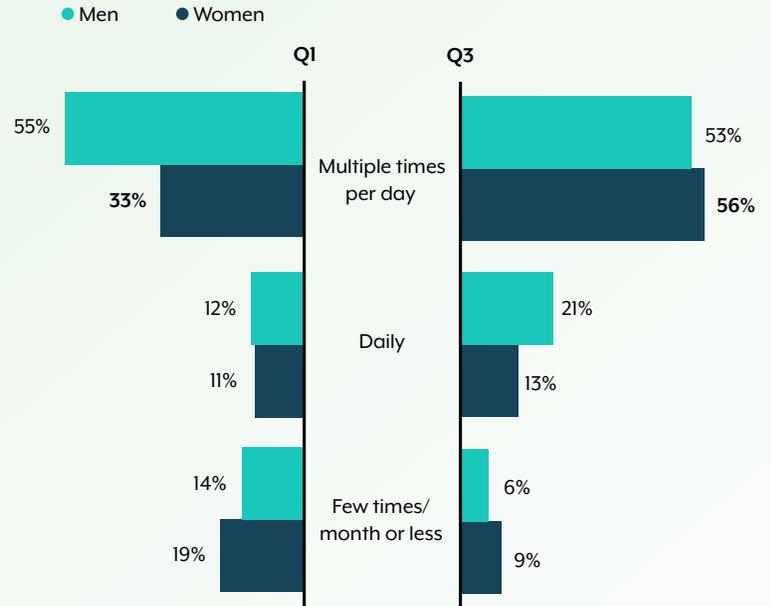
We also see more married and parent CannaGamers. Now, over half of them are married, and another 61% have children- a 30% increase from Q1 to Q3.



Unlike the general cannabis consumer population, the gender balance of the CannaGamers skews even more male in Q3 than it did in Q1. However, that's not the case for all generations.

Though only 39% of all CannaGamers are women, those under 30 tend to be women. 55% of Gen Z (21-23) and young millennial (24-29) CannaGamers are women. Over the pandemic, these CannaGaming young women have become heavier cannabis users—especially when compared to their male counterparts.

Young CannaGamers Usage Rate % using cannabis at frequency by quarter



Gen Z women in general saw this trend towards heavier use, but the CannaGamers even more so. In short, these “CannaGamer Girls” are young, heavier users of cannabis in a virtually untapped niche.

This is just one example of how digging into consumer, innovation, and social media trends can illuminate audiences your brand didn't even know existed.



Conclusion:

Whether from boredom or stress, the pandemic has led consumers to use more cannabis more often. But once it's over– or when we can agree on an “end” point of such a complex event– consumers won't suddenly stop using during these new occasions. Usage will ebb and flow by individual, but the market will continue to grow as cannabis legalization expands, medical cannabis becomes more available, and recreational use is normalized.

Brands will increasingly need to stand out as more markets open and become saturated. Occasion-based marketing can unlock many more opportunities to connect with the right consumers.

Being known as the brand for a specific occasion is a marketer's dream and will help you stand the test of time as consumer segments evolve.

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