

# Psychedelic Law: Balancing International Treaty Obligations and Clinical Innovation in Canada

## 01. Background Information

The purpose of this study is to highlight Canada's expansion of studying the medicinal benefits of psychedelics through funding clinical research. These trials utilize psychotropics, such as *psilocybin*, more commonly known as *magic mushrooms*, *MDMA*, and others controlled by the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

Canadian health organizations are beginning to more commonly study the aforementioned psychedelics' effectiveness in treating symptoms of *and* mental health disorders, such as *depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, under Section 56 exemptions to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

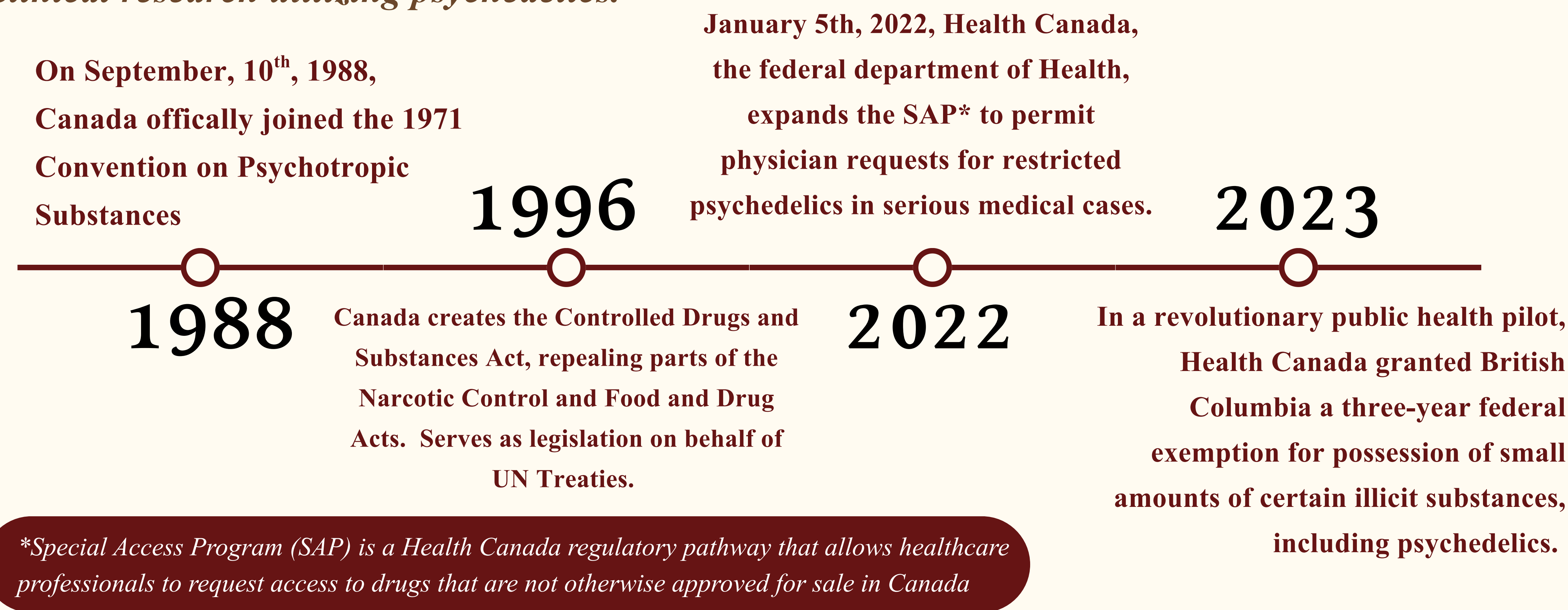
Specifically, analyzing how Canada has allowed psychedelic-assisted research and subsequent treatment, Canada has created pathways for controlled therapeutic access to substances that remain internationally scheduled.



**1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances**

## 02. Timeline

*To better understand how Canada's stance on international drug control has evolved, the following timeline demonstrates Canada's entrance into related treaties, as well as important milestones in clinical research utilizing psychedelics.*



## 03. Methodology

Conducted a literature review of primary legal sources...

- Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and other relevant Canadian legislature
- regulatory guidance from *Health Canada*
- International treaty text
- United Nations interpretive materials
- and secondary academic literature

Publicly available documentation of Canadian psilocybin and MDMA clinical trials were cross-analyzed to evaluate Canada's compliance with treaty obligations alongside its expansion of psychedelic-assisted research.



## 04. Current Research and Projected Results

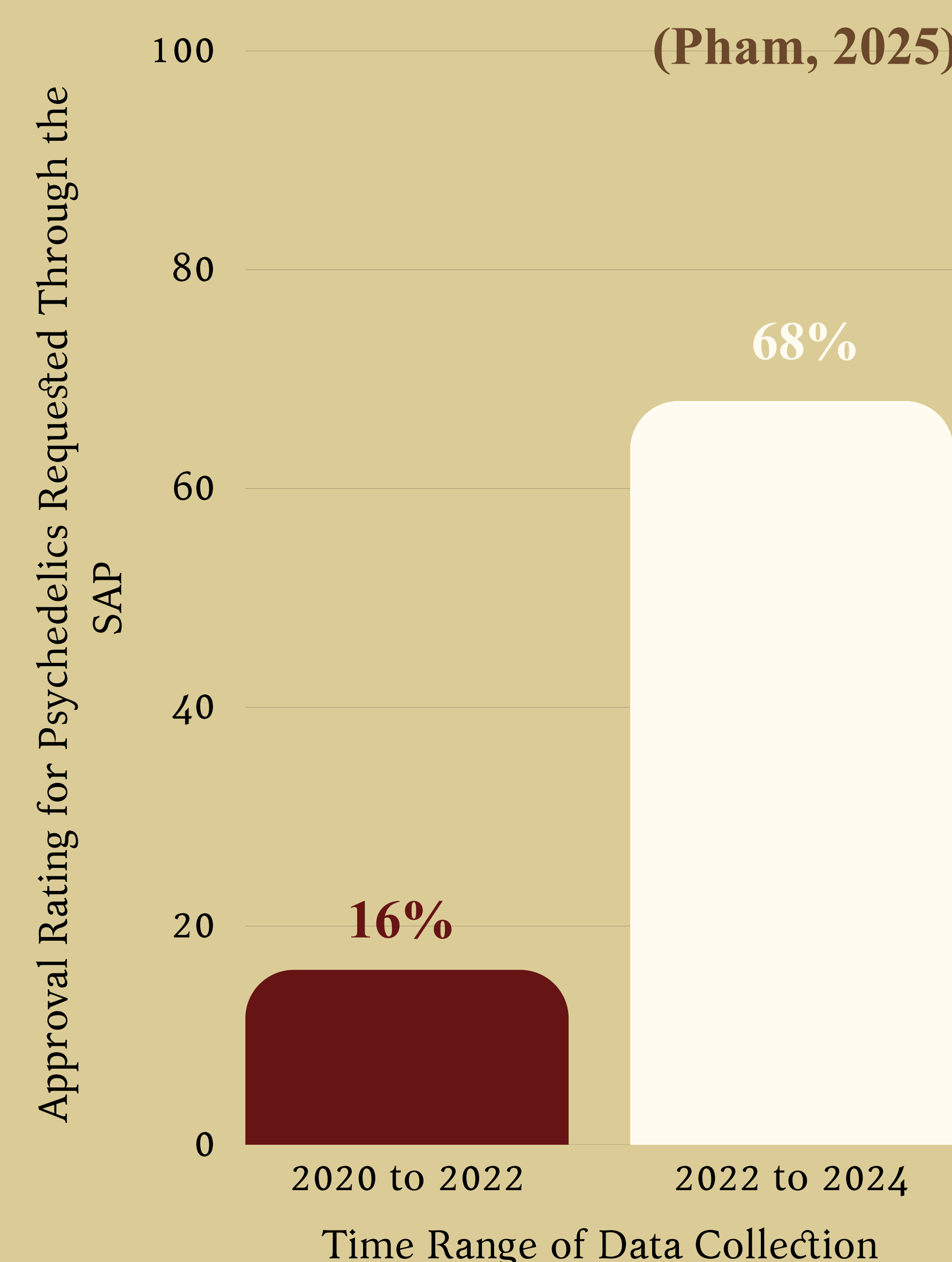
- On **July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022**, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) was awarded Canada's first federal grant to study *psilocybin* (*SEE RIGHT*)

The CAMH was also Canada's only site that was a part of the *COMP360 psilocybin therapy for treatment-resistant depression*. (CAMH, 2022).

- Silocybin-assisted therapy may be a promising treatment option for individuals who have not responded to traditional antidepressants.
- Nearly a quarter of participants reported positive results after just 12 weeks (COMP360 Psilocybin Therapy for Treatment-Resistant Depression Phase IIb Topline Data, 2021).

As of January 2023, there were **10 active or pending studies** of *MDMA* or *psilocybin* as a treatment option for seven different conditions (Brandt, 2023).

By the end of 2024, there were collectively **over 30 clinical trials** using either *ketamine* or *psilocybin* (Pham, 2025).



## REFERENCES

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## 05. Limitations

Recent clinical research furthers the acceptability of psychedelic-assisted therapies in Canada, yet limitations remain...

- The regulatory approval process is very complex, creating barriers for both researchers *and* patients seeking treatment.
- Psychedelic use is still highly restricted and largely limited to clinical trials or special exemptions (Pham, 2025).

Early clinical results are promising, but to further the scope of such evidence, and strengthen the evidence base surrounding psychedelic-assisted therapies, researchers should...

- Design large-scale studies
- Larger and more diverse populations

