



**CHAYA**

Cannabis, Health, &  
Young Adolescents



**SCIENCE BRIEF**

**JUNE 2023**



# About

## Attitudes and Beliefs About Recreational Cannabis Legalization Among Cannabis-Using Young Adults in Los Angeles: Impact on Concurrent Cannabis Practices and Problematic Cannabis Use

Authors: Wong, C. F., Mendez, S., Conn, B. M., Iverson, E., & Lankenau, S. E. (2021).

### Recreational Legalization Laws

How has recreational cannabis legalization (RCL) impacted young adult cannabis users?

Changes in attitudes and social norms toward cannabis have been co-occurring alongside changes in implementation of cannabis laws. Cannabis-using young adults represent a subset of the populations particularly affected by changes in these policies due to the impact on accessing cannabis

### Purpose

What did your current research look at?

1. We explored individual groupings of users based on their attitudes and beliefs about cannabis-related behaviors in response to recreational cannabis legalization (RCL) in California in 2016.
2. We examined how these groups may differ based on socio-demographic and cannabis-related factors (e.g., age, current patient status, and orientation towards medicinal vs. recreational use).
3. We examined how these groups may be associated with current cannabis use practices and indicators of problematic use.

### Methods

How did you conduct the current research?

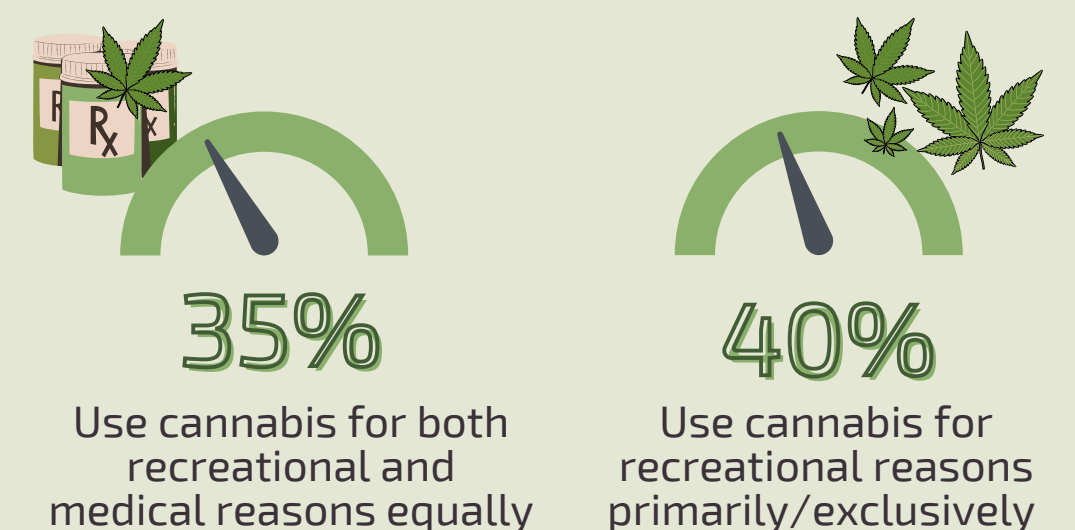
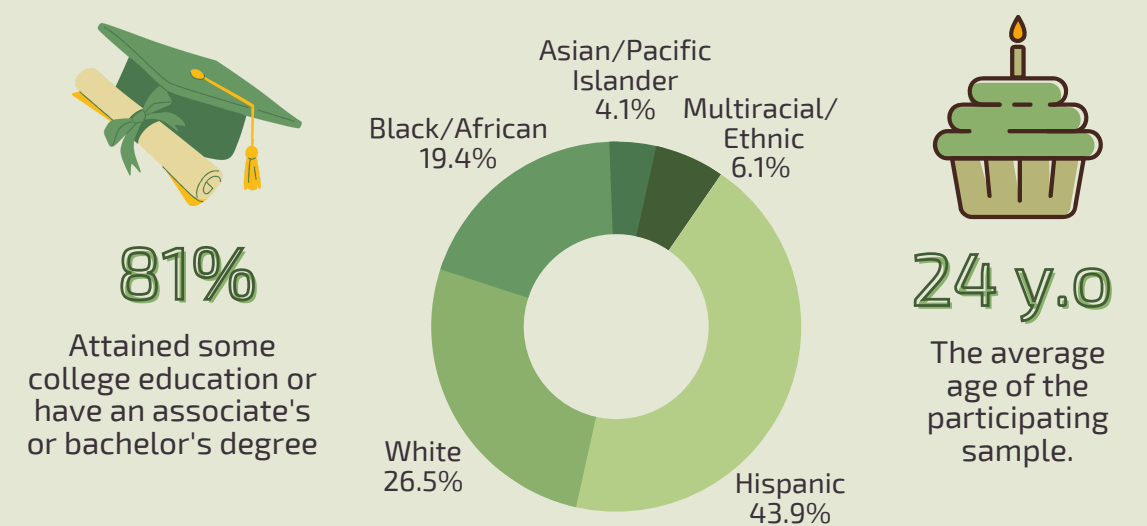
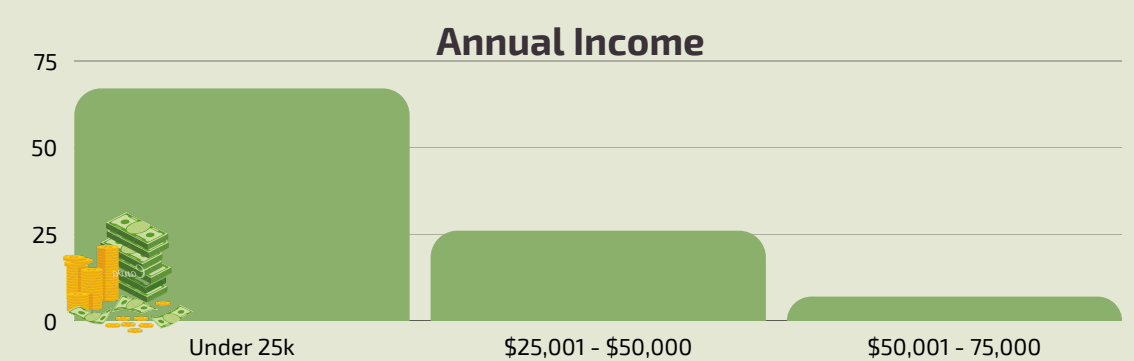
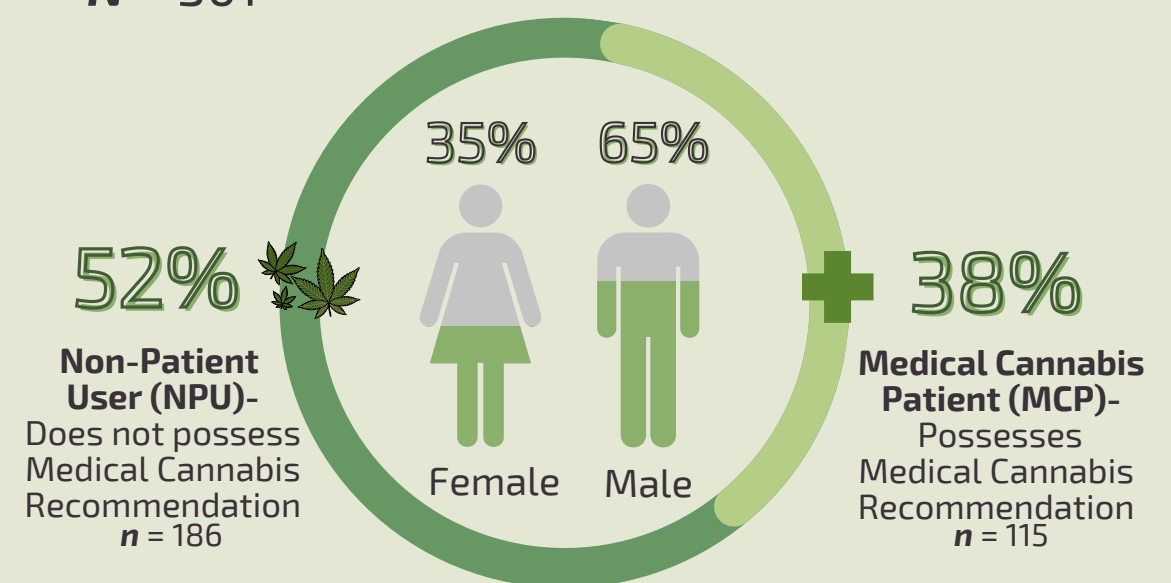
Young adult cannabis users were recruited and followed to complete annual survey questions starting in 2014. They were asked about the **impact of RCL on attitudes and beliefs about cannabis-related behaviors from 2016-2017.**

### Sample



Young adult marijuana users between 18-26 years old were recruited within Greater Los Angeles.

N = 301







# Findings

## [The Impact of Recreational Cannabis Laws (RCL) on Attitudes & Beliefs]

### Recreational Cannabis Law Impact

How did researchers assess the impact of RCL on young adults' attitudes and beliefs about their cannabis use?

We developed an 8-item questionnaire with response options - "agree", "neutral", "disagree" to assess how RCL might impact acceptability of use (i.e., attitudes) and how they thought it would impact their use behaviors (i.e., beliefs about use behaviors).

### Cannabis Attitudes & Beliefs

To what extent did young adults "agree" about how RCL impacted their attitudes and beliefs?

How has the change in the law (i. e., recreational cannabis legalization) impacted your beliefs and behaviors towards marijuana use in the following areas?

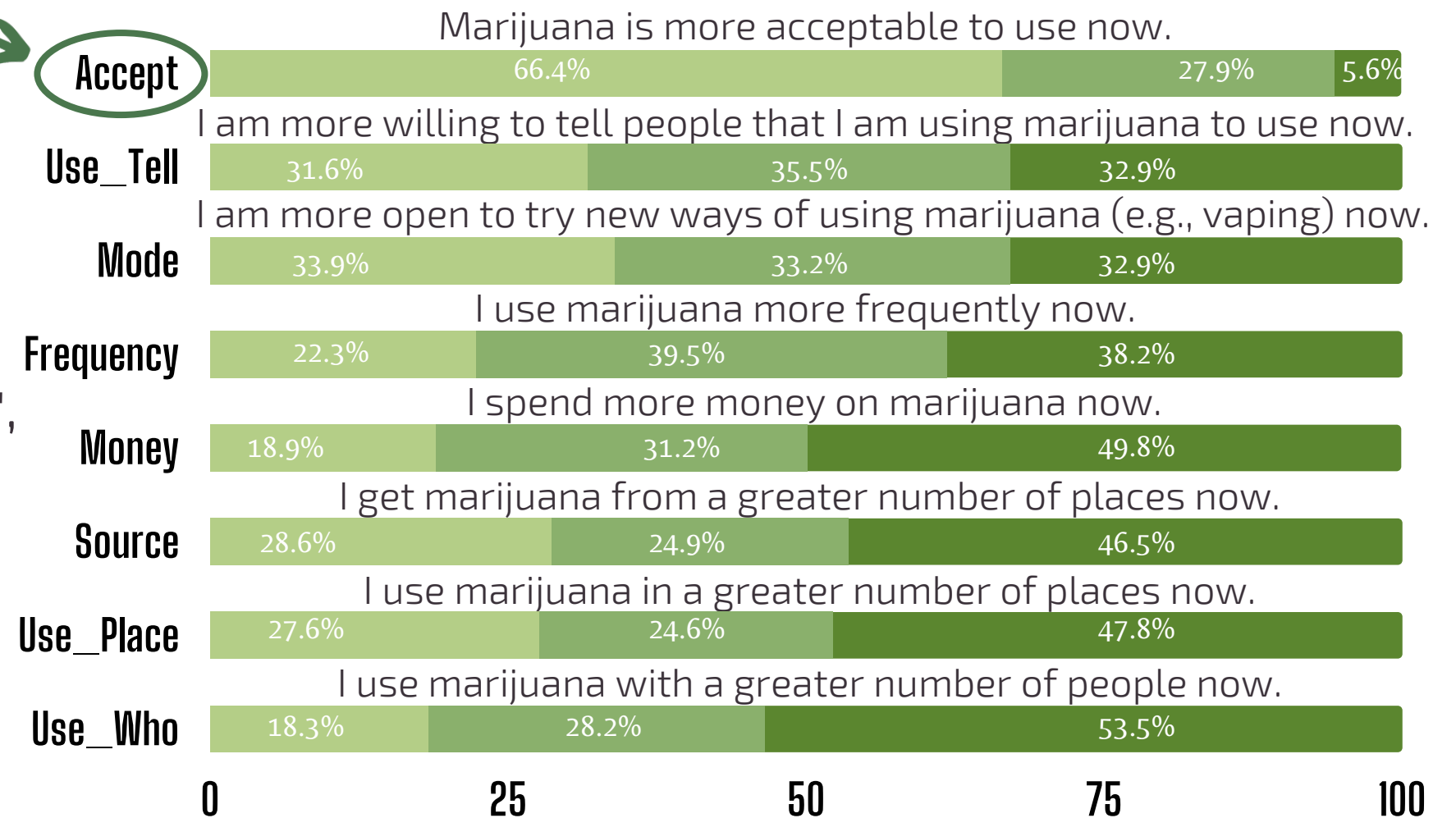
● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree

**Acceptance** of cannabis uses was the highest "agreed" upon item or attitude, indicating that most users in the total sample believed *RCL has increased their acceptability of cannabis use*.

### Impacted Groups

Were there groups of young adults that shared a common impact on their attitudes and beliefs post-RCL?

Based on responses ("agree", "neutral", "disagree"), there were three distinct groups that shared common attitudes and beliefs: **Impacted Individuals**, **Neutral Users**, and **Partially Impacted Users**.



38%  
IMPACTED  
INDIVIDUALS



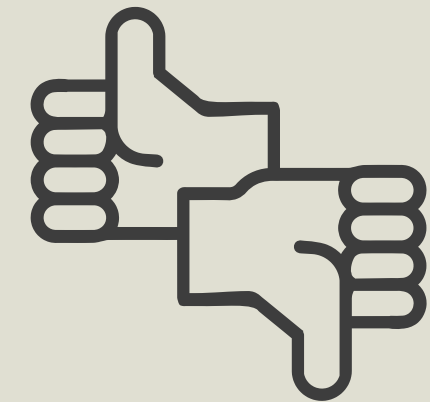
Mostly agreed that legalization impacted both their cannabis attitudes and beliefs about their cannabis use behaviors.

19%  
NEUTRAL  
USERS



Mostly neutral, neither agreed nor disagreed, that legalization impacted their attitudes and beliefs about their cannabis use behaviors.

43%  
PARTIALLY  
IMPACTED  
USERS



Agreed that legalization affected their cannabis use attitudes (i.e., acceptability), but disagreed that it would impact their beliefs about their use behaviors.



# Findings

## [ The Impact of Post-RCL Attitudes and Beliefs on Cannabis Use Practices ]

### High RCL Impact on Cannabis Use

Which attitudes group had the most impact on their cannabis use post-RCL?

**Impacted Individuals**, those that mostly agreed that legalization impacted both their cannabis attitudes and beliefs, reported the highest mean number of *hits of cannabis per day*, *days of use*, and *symptoms* for cannabis dependence (based on both **SDS** and **DSM-5**).

### Low RCL Impact on Cannabis Use

Which attitudes group had the least impact on their cannabis use post-RCL?

The **Partially Impacted Users** group reported the lowest mean number of *hits per day* and **DSM-5 symptoms of dependence** compared to the other two groups. Meanwhile, those in the **Neutral Users** group had the lowest mean *days of use* and **SDS score of cannabis dependence**.

### Comparing Groups

How do the different attitudes group compare to the other groups?

**Impacted individuals** reported a significantly higher mean number of *days of use* compared to the those in the **Neutral Users** group (~17 more days) and among the **Partially Impacted Users** group (13 more days). Additionally, **Impacted Individuals** reported having eleven more hits per day and one more cannabis dependence symptom than **Partially Impacted Users**.

## Group Membership Differentiations



### IMPACTED INDIVIDUALS

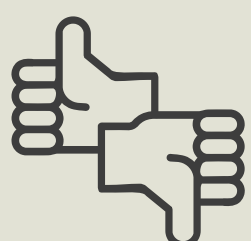
**Impacted Individuals** were 3x more likely to be **non-patient users** (NPU), indicating that non-patient users *endorsed more positive attitudes and increasing openness* about their use compared to medical cannabis patients.



### NEUTRAL USERS



**Neutral Users** were more likely to be **medical cannabis patients** (MCP) thus, were more likely to *express feeling neutral about the impact of RCL* compared to non-patient users.



### PARTIALLY IMPACTED USERS

**Partially Impacted Users** were more likely to have obtained a *higher education* compared to those in the **Impacted individuals** group.







# Conclusion

## Key Points

- Overall, most participants agreed that *cannabis use* was **more acceptable** post-recreational cannabis legalization (RCL).
- **Three distinct groups** emerged based on participants' *attitudes and beliefs* about their own cannabis use in response to RCL.
  - **Group membership** was significantly associated with *concurrent cannabis use practices* and *problematic cannabis use*.
- **Impacted Individuals** agreed that *RCL impacted their cannabis attitudes and beliefs* about cannabis use behaviors (i.e., increasing disclosure to others about use, openness about using different forms, and increasing use).
  - **Impacted individuals** were 3x more likely to be *non-patient users* compared to **Neutral Users** who were more likely to be *medical cannabis patients*.
  - Additionally, **impacted individuals** showed the highest risk in terms of their *cannabis practices* and *problematic use*.
- **Neutral Users** neither agreed nor disagreed that RCL had impacted their *attitudes and beliefs* about their cannabis use.
  - **Neutral users** were more likely to identify as current *medical cannabis patients*, which may indicate that MCP are less certain about how RCL would affect *access to cannabis* beyond their typical medical dispensary options in the early period after RCL.
- Finally, **Partially-Impacted Users** were more likely to agree that RCL affected their *belief about the acceptability* of cannabis use but disagreed that it affected their *cannabis-related behaviors*.
  - **Partially-Impacted Users** reported the lowest *cannabis use* and were among those with higher *education attainment*.
- Findings shed light on the impact of recreational cannabis legalization on public attitudes towards cannabis and cannabis use behaviors, while also taking into consideration the complex interplay between patient status which can be a proxy for access, medicinal/recreational use, and social norms.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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