

# Impact of COVID-19 on Cannabis Use and Practices among Medical vs. Recreational Users

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## Introduction

- Medical cannabis users (MCUs) and recreational users indicate differing frequency, quantity, motives, and characteristics of use (Sznitman, 2017; Sznitman and Room, 2018).
- COVID-19 impacted rates of substance use and mental health (Czeisler et al., 2020).
- This study examined changes in cannabis use patterns among MCUs, recreational users, or both during the pandemic.

## Method

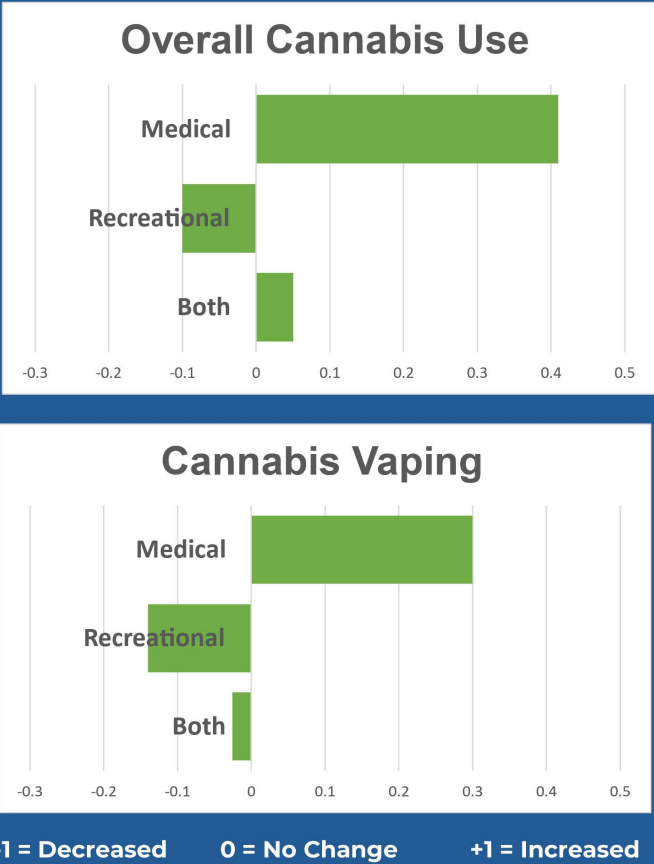
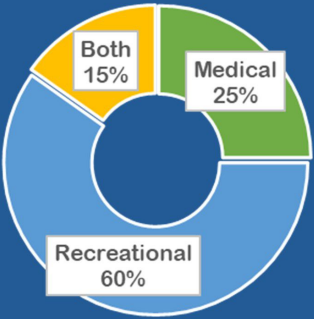
- 241 self-identified, cannabis users from MTurk who reported recent use.
- Online survey measured use patterns, motives, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Survey included items related to COVID-19 and health.

## Demographics

Age	21 – 70 years (M = 35.75, SD = 9.99)
Race/ Ethnicity	77% - Caucasian/European 9% - Black/African 8% - Latinx/Hispanic 6% - Other
Gender Identity	62% - Male 36% - Female 1% - Transgender <1% - Genderqueer

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical cannabis users reported increased vaping and overall cannabis use compared to recreational users or both.

## Cannabis User Type



- Recreational users who changed cannabis use patterns were more likely to endorse respiratory or lung health concerns, compared to medical users or both.

## Results

- Medical, recreational, and those who use both recreationally and medically, differ in overall cannabis use [ $F(2,238) = 5.83, p < .00$ ] and vaped cannabis use [ $F(2,238) = 4.37, p < .00$ ] during the pandemic.
- MCUs ( $M = .41, SD = .70$ ) increased overall cannabis use compared to recreational users ( $M = -.10, SD = .74$ ) and individuals who used for both ( $M = .05, SD = .79$ ).
- MCUs ( $M = .30, SD = .74$ ) increased cannabis vaping compared to strictly recreational users ( $M = -.14, SD = .73$ ), but not compared to those who used for both reasons.
- Recreational users were most likely to report changing use due to respiratory or lung health concerns compared to medical and both [ $\chi^2(2, N = 241) = 6.50, p = .039$ ].

## Conclusions

- Frequency of use during the pandemic differed by self-identified user type.
- Medical users of cannabis may be more prone to problematic use during the pandemic.
- Recreational users may be more likely to reduce use due to health-related stressors.
- Understanding client motives for medical vs. recreational cannabis use could be helpful for clinicians.
- Our findings correspond to non-pandemic use patterns, suggesting that medical use is associated with higher quantity/frequency and a greater risk of problematic cannabis use compared to recreational use (Turna et al., 2020)