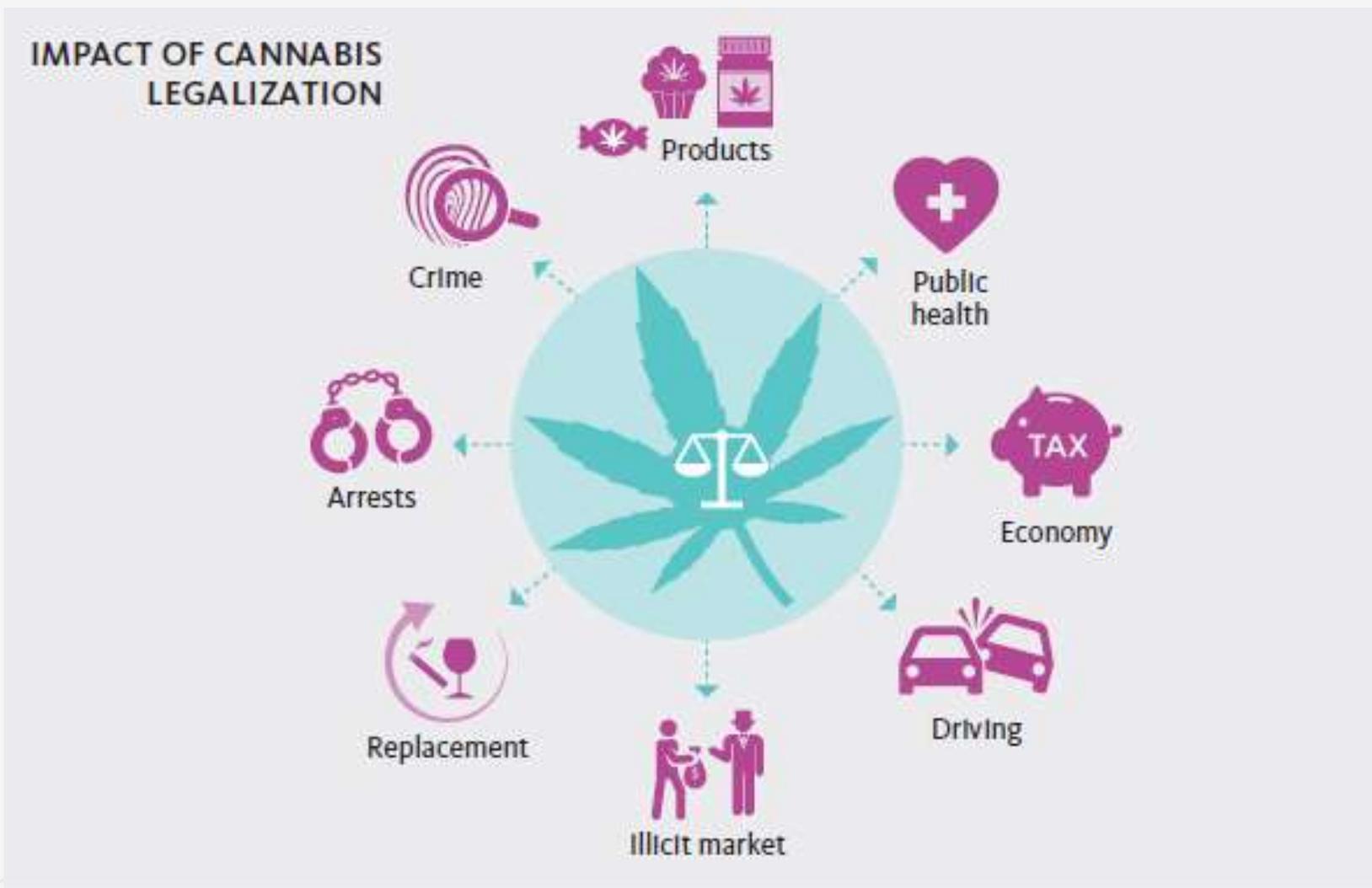


# World Drug Report 2022

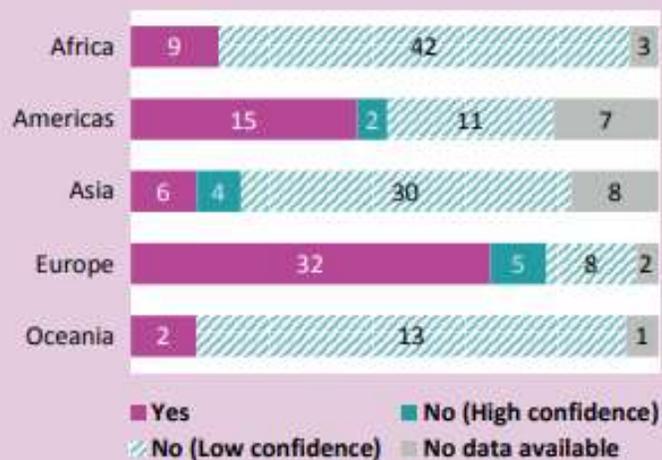


# Cannabis legalization



# Terminology is important

Number of countries having provisions for medical use of cannabis (cannabis herb and/or cannabinoid pharmaceutical preparations, 2021)



Two countries (Canada and Uruguay) and 21 jurisdictions in the US have legalized the full supply chain of cannabis

## Terminology used for the legal status of cannabis

### What do the conventions prescribe for cannabis?

The international drug conventions do not define the concepts of “depenalization”, “decriminalization”, and “legalization”, but these terms are often used in the drug debate, particularly in the context of cannabis. They nonetheless contain provisions “to address drug-related behaviours, including the commission of serious offences, the commission of offences of a lesser relative gravity and the commission of offences by persons who use drugs”<sup>i</sup>.

As a general obligation, the international drug control conventions of 1961 and 1971 require States parties to establish measures to limit the production, manufacture, export, import and distribution of, trade in, and possession of controlled drugs, exclusively to medical and scientific purposes, subject to the provisions of those conventions.<sup>ii</sup> As a substance subject to control under the 1961 Convention, these provisions also apply to cannabis.

Accordingly, any of the above-mentioned activities conducted for non-medical and non-scientific purposes are inconsistent with the legal obligations of the State parties to the conventions. The international drug control conventions do not require States parties to establish criminal offences for drug use. The INCB has recently clarified that “measures to decriminalize the personal use and possession of small quantities of drugs are consistent with the provisions of the drug control conventions”<sup>iii</sup>.

**Decriminalization** is defined by INCB as “the process through which an offence is reclassified from “criminal” to “non-criminal” through legislative action”; while the behaviour remains an offence, it may be addressed through other means than criminal law.<sup>iv</sup>

**Legalization** is frequently associated with the regulation and commercialization of controlled drugs, such as cannabis, for non-medical and non-scientific purposes entailing no penalty (whether criminal,

administrative, civil or otherwise) for production, manufacture, export, import and distribution of the drug.

Decriminalization and legalization are quite distinct concepts, as decriminalization in the context of minor drug offences is within the provisions of the international drug conventions, legalization is not.<sup>v</sup>

The term **depenalization** has been used in different contexts and languages with different meanings.<sup>vi</sup> According to INCB, a depenalization approach may include: “police diversion practices, conditional sentences and the widening of prosecutorial discretion as an alternative to criminal prosecution”. Depenalization differs from decriminalization since it refers to situations where certain conducts, for example cannabis possession and trade, remain criminal offences but with a reduction in the use of existing criminal sanctions. In contrast to decriminalization, depenalization may not require a change in the legal framework.

INCB highlights the flexibility afforded to States within the drug control conventions to make differentiated policy choices and adopt legal frameworks which avoid disproportionate responses to drug-related behaviours of a minor nature or when committed by people who use drugs,<sup>vii</sup> while ensuring effective responses to serious drug-related behaviours.

<sup>i</sup> See paragraph 371 in INCB, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021* (E/INCB/2021/1).

<sup>ii</sup> See article 4(c) of the 1961 Convention and article 5(2) of the 1971 Convention.

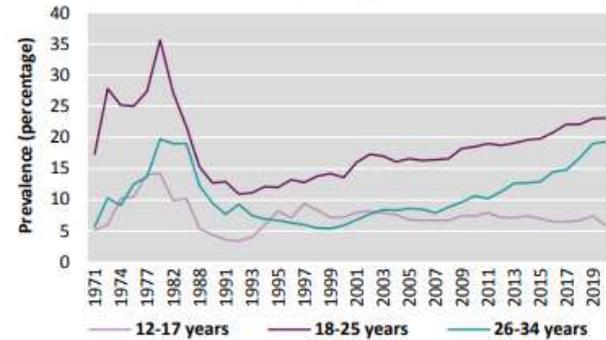
<sup>iii</sup> See paragraph 378 in INCB, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021* (E/INCB/2021/1).

<sup>iv</sup> See paragraphs 376 and 377 in INCB, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021* (E/INCB/2021/1).

<sup>v</sup> See paragraphs 380 and 381 in INCB, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021* (E/INCB/2021/1).

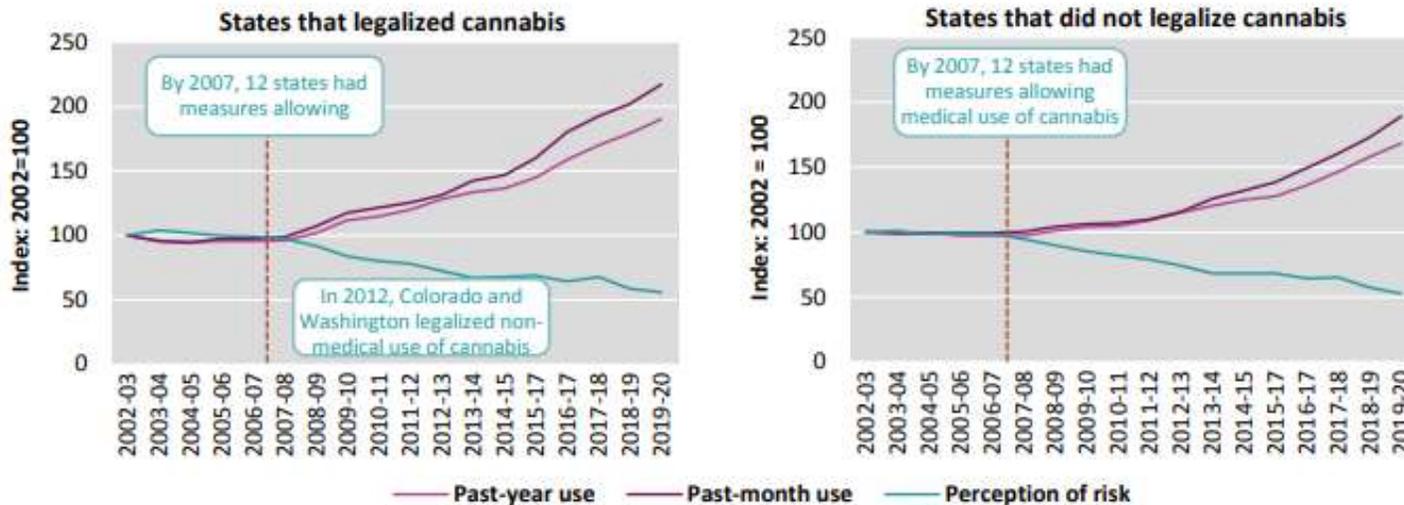
# Caveats in assessing the impact: legalization came when the cannabis market was expanding

FIG. 17 Long-term trends in past-month cannabis use in the United States, by age group, 1971–2020



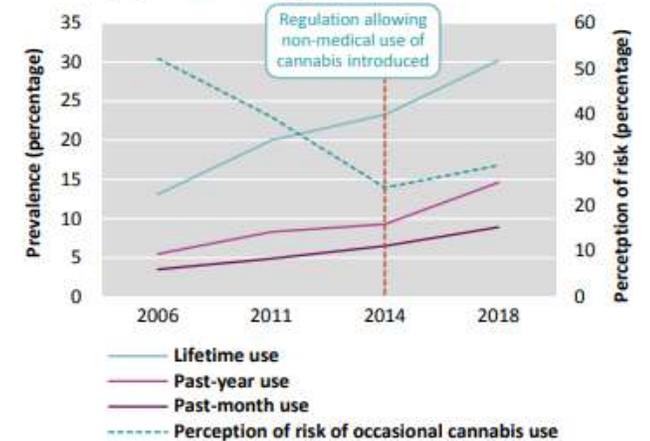
Source: "Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables" (Rockville, Maryland: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2020).

FIG. 18 Trends in cannabis use and perception of risk of harm among the population aged 18 and older, United States, 2002–2020



Source: "Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables" (Rockville, Maryland: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2020).

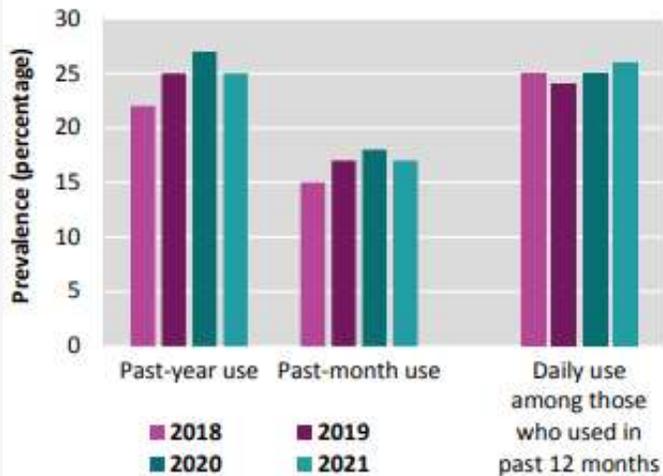
FIG. 22 Non-medical use of cannabis among the general population, Uruguay, 2001–2018



Source: "VII Encuesta Nacional Sobre Consumo De Drogas En Poblacion General" (Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas, Junta Nacional de Drogas (JND) - Uruguay, 2019).

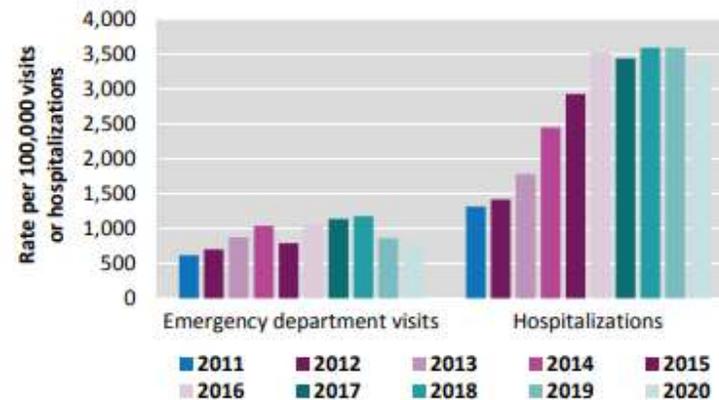
# Legalization has accelerated increase in frequency (and therefore harm) more than in number of users

FIG. 19 Cannabis use in the general population, Canada, 2018–2021



Source: 'Cannabis Use - Data Blog - Public Health Infobase', Health Canada, 2021.

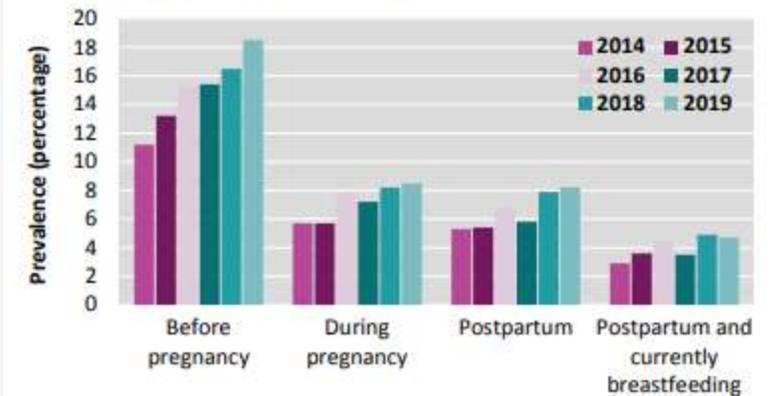
FIG. 27 Colorado: cannabis-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations, United States, 2011–2020



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, "Colorado Hospital Association data".

Notes: COVID-19 pandemic may have affected rates due to changes in health-care utilization. Caution is therefore required when using the rates given for 2020 for comparisons. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has three definitions of cannabis-related hospitalization and emergency department visits that include at least one cannabis-related billing code in up to 30 billing codes listed for each visit.

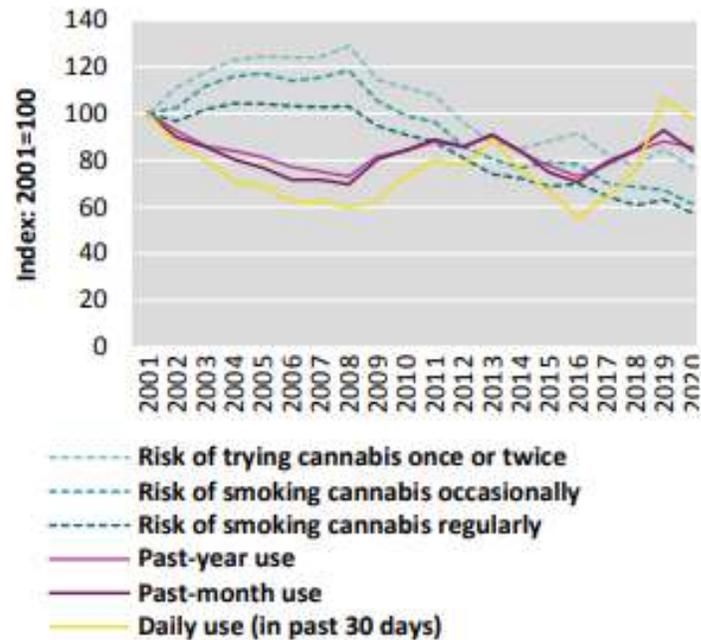
FIG. 26 Colorado: cannabis use among women before and during pregnancy and in the post-partum and breastfeeding stages, United States, 2014–2019



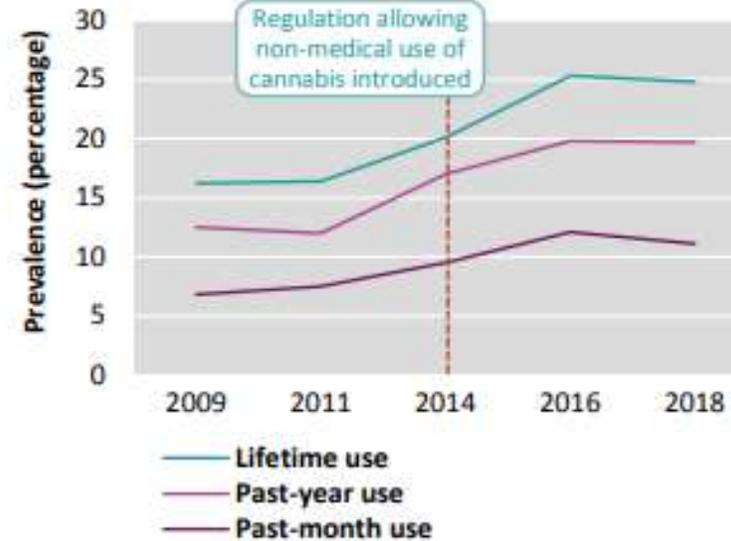
Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, "Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)", data 2014–2019.

# Legalization has accelerated increase among adults, not much among adolescents

**FIG. 23** Cannabis use and perception of risk among grade 10 students in the United States, 2001–2020



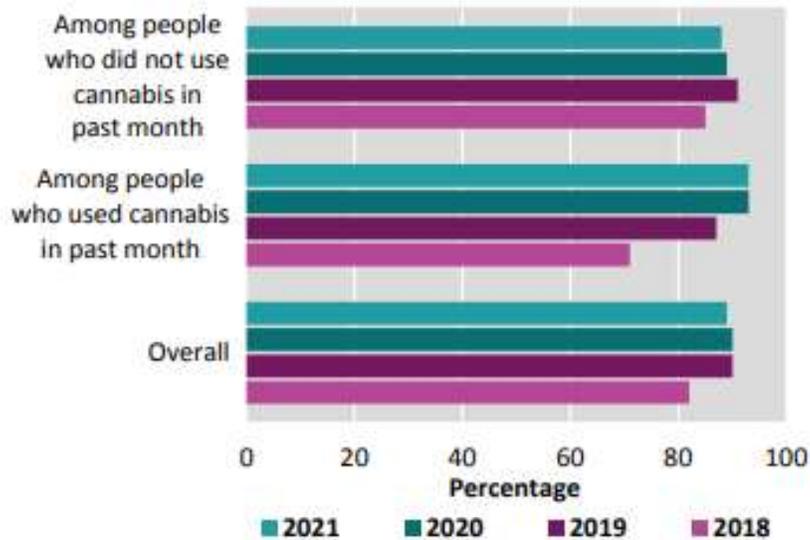
**FIG. 24** Trend in cannabis use among secondary school students aged 13–17, Uruguay, 2009–2018



Source: 'VIII Encuesta Nacional Sobre Consumo De Drogas En Estudiantes de Enseñanza Media' (Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas, Presidente Junta Nacional de Drogas, 2020)

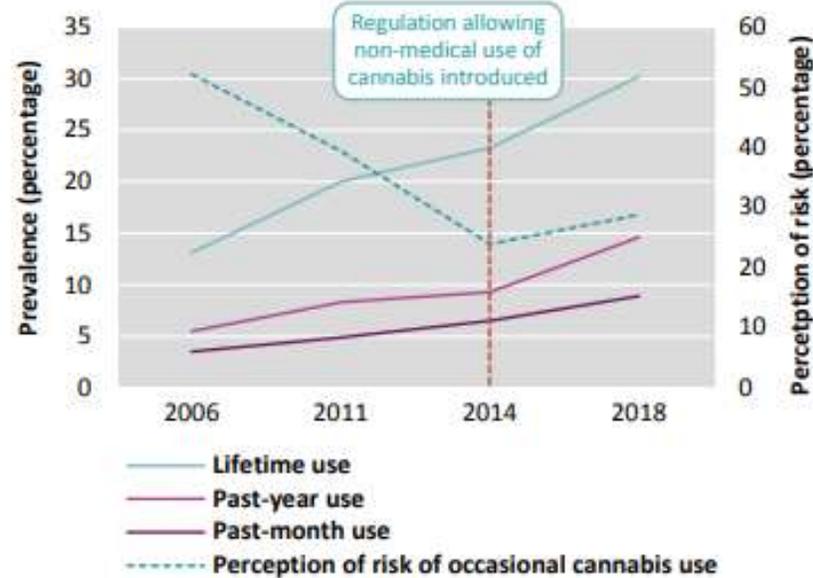
# Risk perception down in the US and up in Canada

**FIG. 20** Proportion of people in Canada who considered cannabis use to be “habit-forming” (addictive), 2018–2021



Source: “Cannabis Use - Data Blog - Public Health Infobase”.

**FIG. 22** Non-medical use of cannabis among the general population, Uruguay, 2001–2018

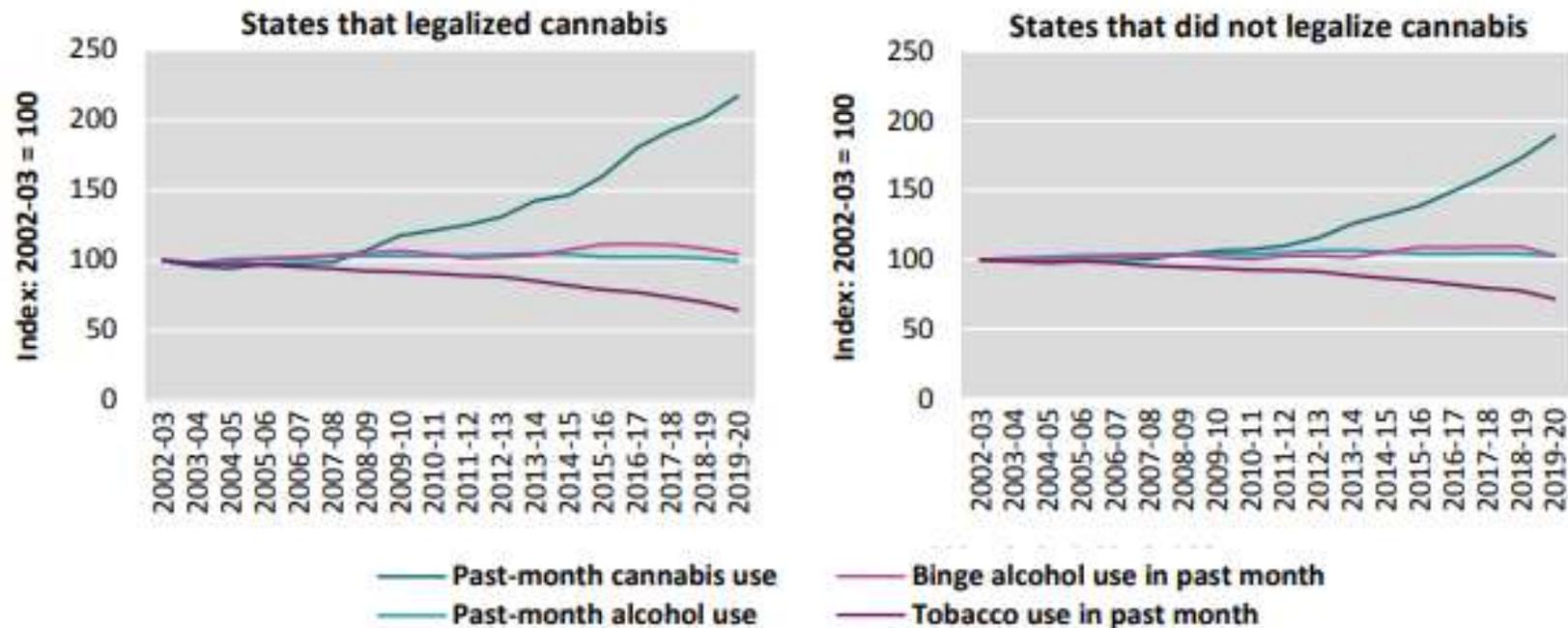


Source: “VII Encuesta Nacional Sobre Consumo De Drogas En Poblacion General” (Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas, Junta Nacional de Drogas (JND) - Uruguay, 2019).

The role of the emerging private sector!

# Impact on health harm: mixed evidence on substitution with alcohol

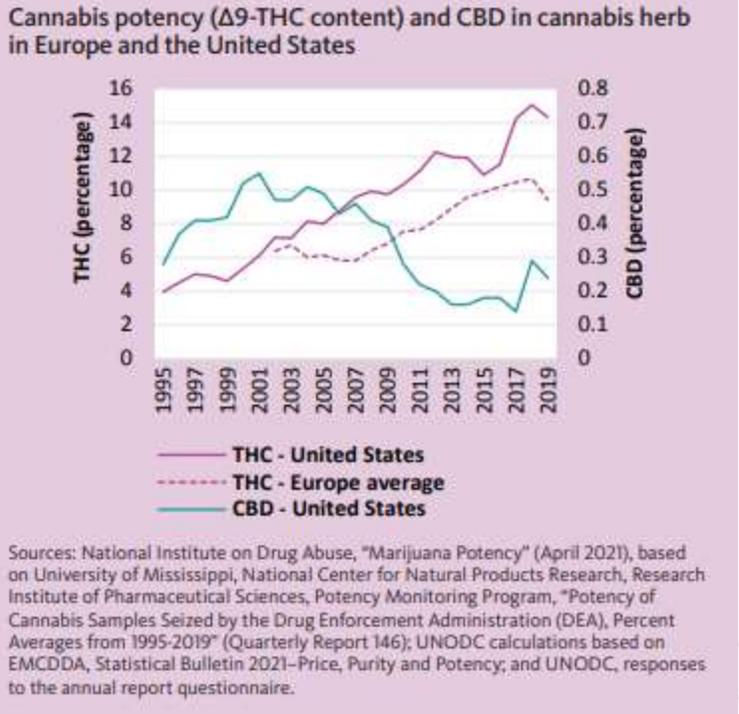
**FIG. 29** Trends in past-month use of cannabis, alcohol, binge drinking and tobacco among the population 18 years and older in the United States, from 2002/03 to 2019/20



Source: UNODC elaboration of the state-level data reported in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health in the United States, from 2002/03 to 2019/20.

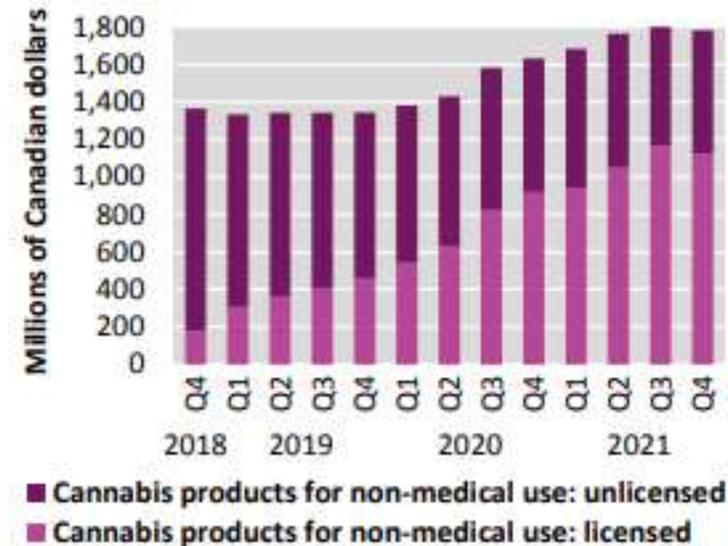
# Market changes

Increased THC content (similar trend than in Europe), but in the US with proliferation of high THC-content products (70%)



Illegal market: decreasing in Canada while still high (3/4) in California and 1/2 in Uruguay

FIG. 44 Household expenditure on cannabis products for non-medical use, Canada, 2018-2021



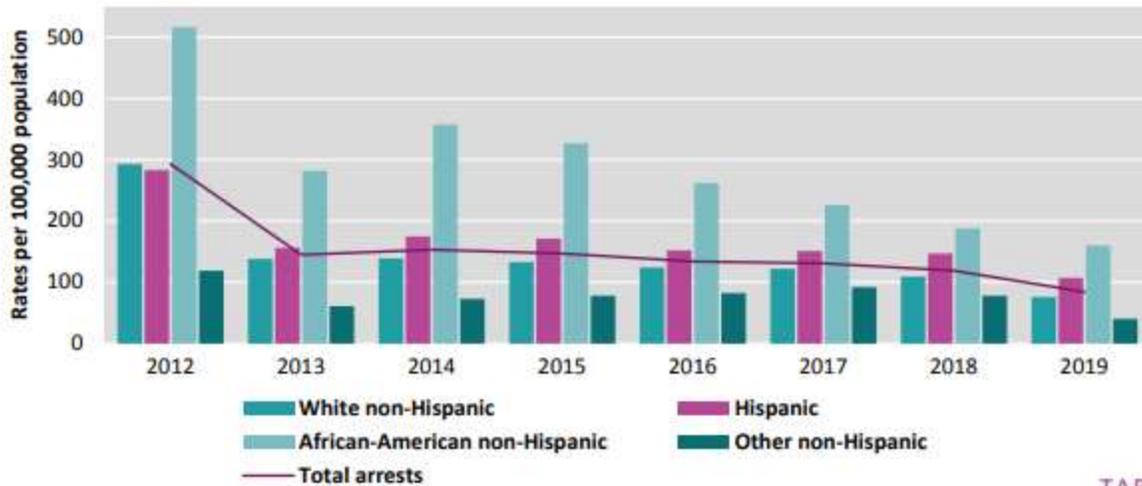
Source: Statistics Canada, table 36-10-0124-01 (Detailed household final consumption expenditure), Canada, quarterly.

No high THC-content products in Uruguay

# Trend in criminal justice

## Clear decline in arrests

FIG. 33 Arrests for cannabis possession by race in Colorado, 2012–2019



Source: Jack K Reed, 'Impact of Marijuana Legalization in Colorado' (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, July 2021).

But for minors the change is not significant

TABLE 2 Changes in rates of arrest per 100,000 population in states that had decriminalized cannabis possession and use and those that had legalized cannabis, 2000–2016

Population	States with decriminalization (Rates per 100,000 (95% Confidence Interval))	States with legalization (Rates per 100,000 (95% Confidence Interval))
Youths (<18 y)	-59.16 (-75.91 to -42.41)	-7.48 (-30.46 to 15.49)
Adults (≥18 y)	-131.28 (-154.21 to -106.23)	-168.50 (-229.65 to -158.64)

Source: Andrew D. Plunk et al., 'Youth and Adult Arrests for Cannabis Possession After Decriminalization and Legalization of Cannabis', *JAMA Pediatrics* 173, no. 8 (1 August 2019): 763.

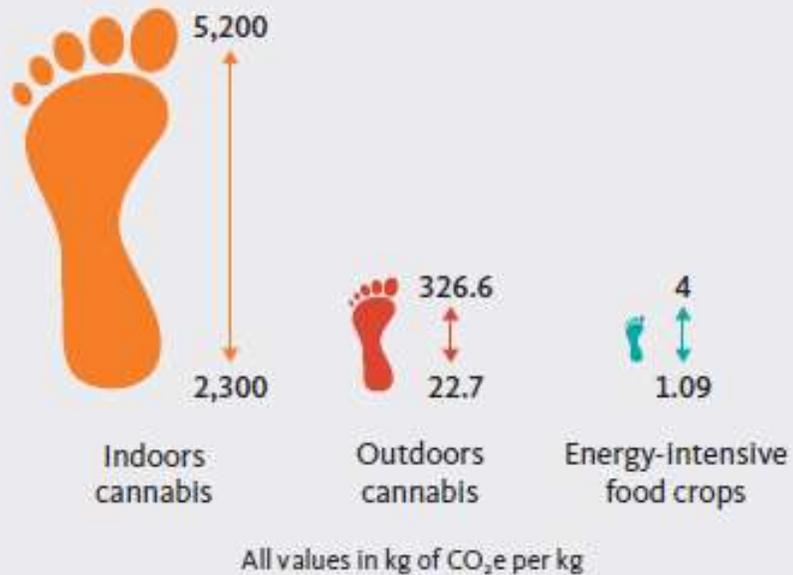
## Trend in harm to society

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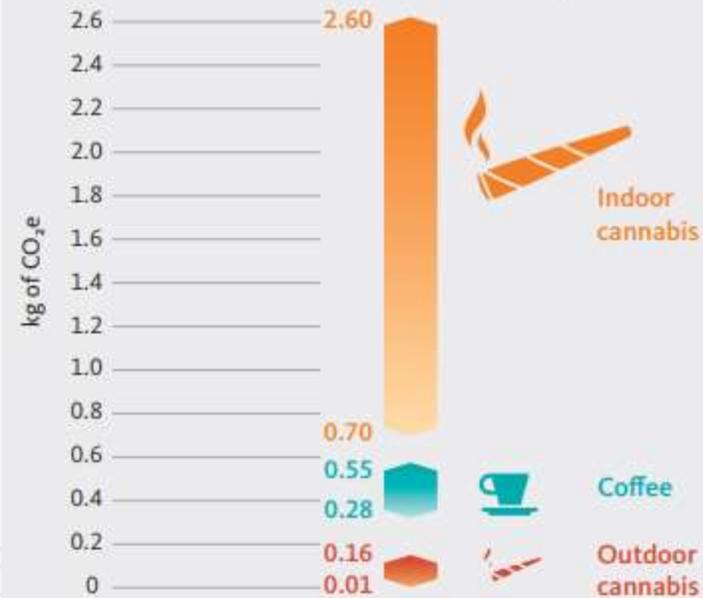
- No clear association between legalization and driving under the influence
- School disciplines: cannabis related infractions still related to school expulsions
- Trend in violent and property crime not related to legalization (small scale research point to some violence around dispensaries)

# Carbon footprint of cannabis

## COMPARISON OF THE CARBON FOOTPRINTS OF CANNABIS PRODUCED INDOORS AND OUTDOORS AND OF SELECTED FOOD CROPS



## CARBON FOOTPRINT COMPARISON OF A CUP OF COFFEE AND A JOINT (kg of CO<sub>2</sub>e per "joint"/cup)



Sources: Carmen Nab and Mark Maslin, 'Life Cycle Assessment Synthesis of the Carbon Footprint of Arabica Coffee: Case Study of Brazil and Vietnam Conventional and Sustainable Coffee Production and Export to the United Kingdom', *Geo: Geography and Environment* 7, no. 2 (July 2020); Hailey M. Summers, Evan Sproul, and Jason C. Quinn, 'The Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Indoor Cannabis Production in the United States', *Nature Sustainability* 4, no. 7 (July 2021).

# Carbon footprint of cannabis

