

Severe psychological distress and daily cannabis use: Implications for mental health?

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Daily cannabis use increased significantly from 2008 to 2016 among those with and without past-month serious psychological distress (SPD) and use among those with SPD was persistently higher compared to those without SPD. Research at Columbia Mailman School and CUNY shows that in 2016, past-month daily cannabis use was about three times

higher for SPD (8%) compared to those without SPD (2.7%). The findings are online in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

"Our research found that persons with SPD reported higher daily cannabis prevalence each study year," said senior author Renee Goodwin, Ph.D., Department of Epidemiology. "Therefore, it is important to consider potential consequences of this increased use for those with mental health vulnerabilities."

Data were drawn from adults age 18 and older in the 2008-2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a sample of 356,413 and measured by the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale.

Non-Hispanic Black respondents were the only demographic group where daily cannabis use did not significantly differ among persons with and without SPD.

"With the rapid legalization of medicinal and recreational use of cannabis in the U.S. and liberalization of social norms, more research is needed to understand the impact of these changes on [vulnerable groups](#)," said Goodwin. "A better understanding of whether some subgroups need tailored clinical efforts to reduce (daily and/or heavy) cannabis use, especially among those with SPD, will also provide a clearer picture of what is needed next."

Andrea Weinberger, Albert Einstein College of Medicine was first author.

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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