

# Perceptions of cannabis use risk to mental health among youth in Canada, England, and the United States from 2017 to 2021

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## Abstract

**Background:** There is little research examining perceptions of cannabis use risk to mental health in countries with differing cannabis regulations. This study therefore examines such perceptions among youth between 2017 and 2021 in Canada (non-medical cannabis legalized in October 2018), England (highly-restricted medical cannabis legalized November 2018), and the US (non-medical cannabis legal in some states).

**Methods:** Seven repeat cross-sectional online surveys were conducted between July 2017 to August 2021 among youth aged 16-19 in Canada (N=29,420), England (N=28,155), and the US (N=32,974). Logistic regression models, stratified by country, were used to examine perceptions of cannabis use risk to mental health over time, adjusting for age group, sex, race/ethnicity, cannabis use and, for the US only, state-level cannabis legalization.

**Results:** Perceptions that cannabis use posed “no risk” to mental health decreased between July 2017 and August 2021 in Canada (6.1% to 4.4%; AOR=0.64, 95% CI=0.52-0.78) and the US (14.0% to 11.3%; AOR=0.74, 0.65-0.84) but not England (3.7% to 4.5%; AOR=1.21, 0.97-1.52). No significant changes were observed from immediately before (August 2018) to after (August 2019) legalization of non-medical cannabis in Canada (AOR=0.99, 0.83-1.20) or highly-restricted medical cannabis in England (AOR=0.90, 0.70-1.17). In the US, perceptions of “no risk” were more likely in states where cannabis use was illegal (15.0%) compared with legal non-medical (12.2%) (AOR=0.68, 0.63-0.74).

**Conclusion:** There were modest decreases in perceptions that cannabis use poses no risk to mental health in Canada and the US between 2017 and 2021 but no clear association with cannabis legalization status.

## Recommended Citation

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