

Sociodemographic trends in the frequency of cannabis use in Australia

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Conflicts of interest: None.

Introduction

Previous research found that frequent cannabis use declined among higher socioeconomic groups while remaining stable among lower socioeconomic groups, by examining the 2001-2013 Australian National Drug Strategy Household Surveys (NDSHS).

This study provides updated examinations to determine whether these disparities persisted between 2016-2023, a period of policy and societal attitudes changes.

Method

Design: Repeated cross-sectional analyses

Data source

NDSHS surveys:
2016 (N=23,749)
2019 (N=22,015)
2022-2023 (N=21,663)



Outcomes

Past 12 months cannabis use frequency

Socio-demographic factors

Year, sex, age, area of residence, marital status, employment status, education, SEIFA quintile

Analysis

Multinomial regression

Daily cannabis use in Australia increased from 1.4% to 2.2% between 2016 and 2022/23

Significant socio-demographic disparities remained

Prevalence of use



Daily cannabis use in Australia increased from 1.4% [1.2%-1.7%] in 2016 to 2.2% [1.9%-2.4%] in 2022/23, while weekly and less frequent use remained stable.

Socio-demographic correlates

Significant sociodemographic disparities remained, with regular cannabis use more common among males, young adults, people in outer regional/rural areas, unpartnered individuals, the unemployed, those with lower education, and those from more disadvantaged areas.

Year interactions

Year-by-age: trend of weakening association between younger age and cannabis use.

Year by socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA): socioeconomic differences in occasional cannabis use reduced over time in recent years.

Conclusion

Daily cannabis use increased between 2016 and 2022-23 in all groups. There were persistent sociodemographic disparities in daily cannabis use.

Public health interventions to address daily cannabis use are warranted.



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