

The Impact of Cannabis Retail Availability on Cannabis and Mental Health Outcomes Among Medicaid Recipients in Washington State

This report is part of a larger legislative mandate to assess the long-term public health, safety, and economic impacts of Initiative 502 over a 20-year period. In this report, we specifically focus on outcomes related to cannabis and mental healthcare services utilization.

Background

Since the first licensed cannabis retailer opened in July 2014, the number of active operational retailers in Washington has grown to more than 450 in 2023. In this study, we explore the relationship between licensed cannabis retail availability in Washington and healthcare outcomes related to cannabis use disorder (CUD) and mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and psychosis.

Findings

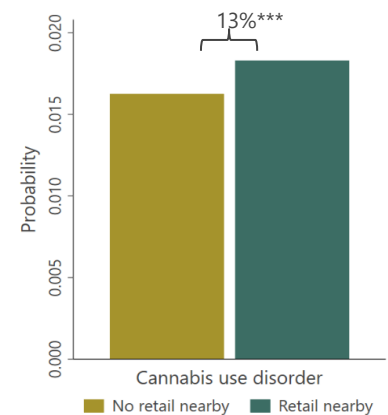
- Among Medicaid enrollees aged 12-20, residence near a retailer significantly predicts a 13% higher likelihood of CUD diagnosis, and among enrollees aged 21-64, it predicts a 7% higher likelihood.
- Among legal-aged adults, residence near a retailer predicts a higher likelihood of CUD-related hospitalization and substance use disorder treatment.
- Retail access predicts higher rates of co-occurring CUD and mental health disorder diagnoses, and an increase in the probability of having a mental health disorder diagnosis following a CUD diagnosis.
- Impacts are generally largest in neighborhoods with multiple active retailers nearby.

Limitations

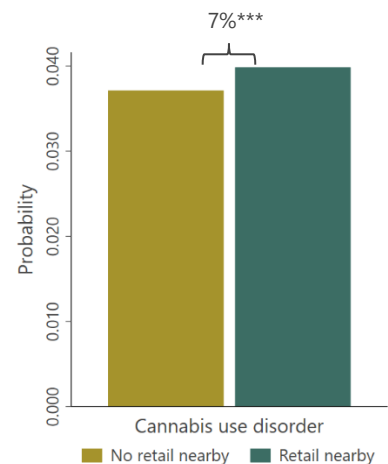
- Limited information about patients' healthcare history and claims data may underdiagnose outcomes.
- Results are not representative of individuals who are not covered by Medicaid and do not interact with the health care system.

Retail Access and Cannabis Use Disorder Diagnoses

Aged 12-20



Aged 21-64



Assignment Details

Assigned by initiative 502 in 2012
Full report available on [WSIPP's website](https://www.wsipp.wa.gov)

Project lead: Amani Rashid
amani.rashid@wsipp.wa.gov
360.664.9804