



Marijuana Legalization and Impact on the Workplace

Cannabis use is not positively associated with elevated rates of occupational accidents or injuries

"During the lead-up towards legalization, the main concern for workplaces was the potential impact on work outcomes, particularly on safety. ... To examine the relationship between cannabis use and subsequent risk of work-related injury, the IWH team focused on 2,745 individuals who had taken part in at least two adjacent surveys between 2018 and 2020. ... For workers who used cannabis in the past year but not before or at work, the injury risk was not statistically different from that of workers who did not use cannabis in the past year. ... These findings underscore the importance of distinguishing cannabis use at work from cannabis use off work. Rather than considering any cannabis use as an occupational safety risk, workplaces need to reframe their focus on use that is likely to lead to impairment at work and craft policies that centre on preventing and managing impairment, as well as fitness for duty."

[Institute for Work & Health briefing paper, Cannabis use by workers before and after legalization in Canada, 2024](#)

"This systematic review investigates the potential link between cannabis use and occupational injury. Consequently, it appraises all available current literature from five databases. ... The current body of evidence does not provide sufficient evidence to support the position that cannabis users are at increased risk of occupational injury."

[Systematic review of cannabis use and risk of occupational injury, Substance Use and Misuse, 2020](#)

"There is no or insufficient evidence to support ... a statistical association between cannabis use and ... occupational accidents or injuries."

[The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017](#)

Liberalized marijuana laws are associated greater labor participation, lower rates of absenteeism, and higher wages

"This study evaluated the impact of medical and recreational cannabis laws in the United States on health-related workplace absenteeism across different demographics, occupations, and industries. ... The findings indicate that medical cannabis decriminalization reduced the likelihood of health-related work absences by about 6.9%, with decriminalization having a larger quantitative effect and greater statistical significance than the commencement of regulated sales. ... The absenteeism-reducing effects of medical cannabis decriminalization were notable in occupations (e.g., manual laborers, machine operators) and industries (e.g., manufacturing, agriculture, construction) where conditions more predisposed to cannabis treatment (e.g., chronic pain associated with physical work) are prevalent."

[Cannabis laws and health-related workplace absenteeism in the United States, Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health, 2026](#)

"Despite dramatic increases in support for recreational marijuana legalization, research has only recently begun to explore the broader socioeconomic impacts of increases in access. This study is the first to explore the impacts of the adoption of RMLs on adults' wages and labor market outcomes. ... [W]e find little support for the hypothesis that RML adoption affects employment and wages among working-age individuals. For some demographic sub-groups, we find evidence of modest increases in employment or wages, particularly for individuals over age 30 (in the shorter-run), younger racial/ethnic minorities, and those working in the agriculture sector. These results are consistent with the opening of a new licit



industry for marijuana and (especially for older individuals) a substitution away from harder substances such as opioids."

[The effects of recreational marijuana legalization on employment and earnings, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022](#)

"We study the effect of state medical marijuana laws (MMLs) on workers' compensation (WC) claiming among adults. ... We use data on claiming drawn from the Annual Social and Economic supplement to the Current Population Survey over the period 1989 to 2012, coupled with a differences-in-differences design to provide the first evidence on this relationship. Our estimates show that, post MML, WC claiming declines, both the propensity to claim and the level of income from WC. These findings suggest that medical marijuana can allow workers to better manage symptoms associated with workplace injuries and illnesses and, in turn, reduce need for WC."

[Medical marijuana and workers' compensation claiming, Health Economics, 2020](#)

"Utilizing the Current Population Survey, the study identifies that absences due to sickness decline following the legalization of medical marijuana. ... The results of this paper therefore suggest that medical marijuana legalization would decrease costs for employers as it has reduced self-reported absence from work due to illness/medical issues."

[The Effect of Medical Marijuana on Sickness Absence, Health Economics, 2016](#)

The enactment of medical marijuana laws is associated with a "9.4 percent increase in the probability of employment and a 4.6 percent to 4.9 percent increase in hours worked per week" among those over the age of 50. "Medical marijuana law implementation leads to increases in labor supply among older adult men and women."

[The effect of medical marijuana laws on the labor supply and health of older adults: Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study, NBER Working Paper No. 22688, 2016](#)