



Cannabis Legalization, Crash Incidence, and Injury Severity in Illinois

Using unique data that combines vehicle crash and hospitalization data, this study examines cannabis legalization's impact on Illinois road safety (2016-2022), noting increased cannabis-positive crash rates, elevated hospital charges and severity in 2020.



A small yet significant rise was seen in cannabis-related crashes, with each extra crash per billion vehicle miles traveled correlating to a 0.033% higher chance of occurrence.

Higher levels of injuries were seen in cannabis-related crashes. The injury rating for cannabis-positive drivers increased from 1.32 pre-legalization to 1.72 post-legalization.



Pre-legalization, females represented 28% of cannabis-positive crashed drivers. Post-legalization, that share increased to just over 32%.

Evidence shows increased crashes with drivers under the influence of cannabis. Common risky behaviors in cannabis-related crashes included speeding and distracted driving.



While COVID-19 saw driving decrease by 13% and fewer crashes, fatal crashes rose from 0.139% to 0.218%. This suggests stress may have led to riskier driving, including under cannabis influence.



Post legalization, the share of Black road users involved in cannabis-positive crashes was approximately 3 to 5 percentage points higher than expected.



The involvement of Hispanic road users initially decreased slightly below expectations in 2020 before rising again in 2021 and 2022.

