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Novel Catalysts for Cannabis-related Change

Holidays, high-risk use events, and
temporary abstinence

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AKA
directions
I'm excited
about!



KEY TAKEAWAY

#1

April 20th (“4/20”) is an especially high-risk event for heavy cannabis use – both prevention and intervention efforts could be useful around this high-risk time.

4/20 is a cannabis-specific event in the United States as an unofficial “holiday” to celebrate cannabis and cannabis culture



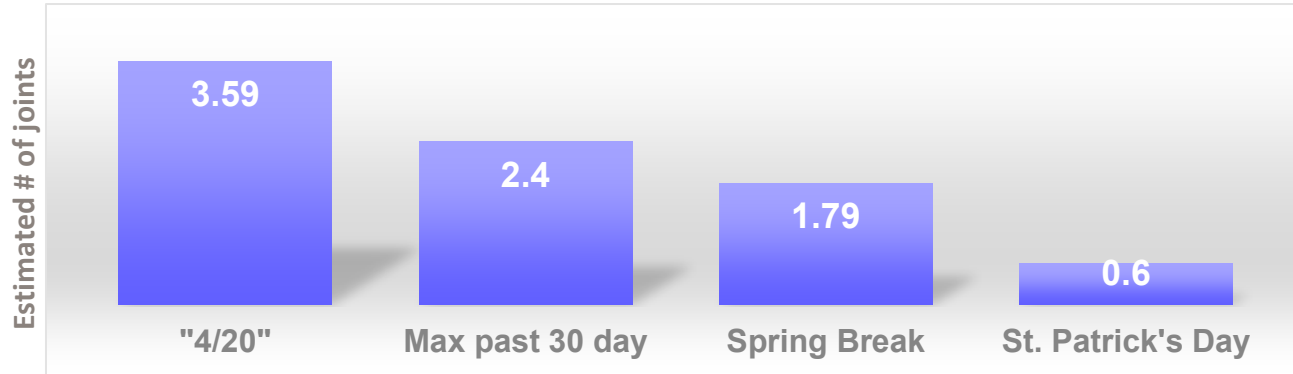
Do college students use cannabis on 4/20?

- Yes!
- 57.1% of college students who used cannabis in the past year reported using cannabis on 4/20, *even though a majority reported using cannabis infrequently in general*
- Most people attended at least 1 4/20 event, including “smoke-outs” specific to using cannabis



How much cannabis do students use on 4/20?

Students consumed more cannabis on 4/20 than all other high-risk events we assessed



Subjective intoxication: 54.5% as *high* or *very high* and 20.6% as *stoned*

...SO WHAT?

72.1%

Of students reported at least 1 negative consequence on 4/20

On average, students reported experiencing
5.8 negative consequences
related to their 4/20 cannabis use

*Average # of negative consequences in the past 3 months was 4.1!

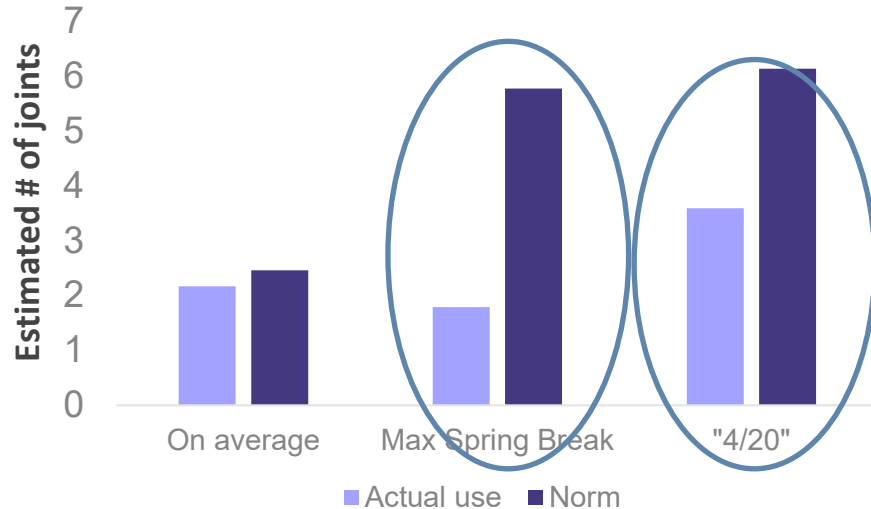


30.3%

Consumed alcohol on 4/20

~5 drinks/3 hrs on average

Next steps... How does this apply to cannabis prevention?



Actual use vs. Student normative beliefs

FOR CANNABIS SPECIFICALLY....

Decreases in use-related norms aren't necessarily related to decreases in use

We might need to do more than repurpose alcohol content for cannabis

E.g., Norms about the number and types of problems students experience may show more utility for decreasing problems related to use

Next steps... What about intervention?



Post 4/20 might be a prudent time to intervene, especially among young adults who experienced consequences

Consequence-focused interventions show promise among young adults who are distressed by the cannabis-related problems they experience



KEY TAKEAWAY

#2

Young adults who engage in heavy, regular cannabis are interested in change, even if temporary.

What's a T-break?

- An intentional and temporary period of abstinence from cannabis
- Often short and unplanned
- Variability in motivations
 - Reduce tolerance
 - Extrinsic: \$, relationship problems, school/work
 - Intrinsic: reevaluate one's "relationship with cannabis" and themselves



Can temporary change be a catalyst for longer term change?

- Brief 21-day T-break Guide has become very popular
 - Disseminated by 100+ colleges (Fontana; UVM)
- Showed initial promise in acceptability among young adults
- People who used the Guide “a lot” had better outcomes:
 - Still abstinent 1 mo later
 - More willing to take another break later on
- Not really enough research (yet) but temporary change could be a viable harm reduction option (a la Dry January/ “practice quit attempts” for tobacco/nicotine)

THANKS!

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