

# Differences in Marijuana Use, Consequences, and Motives based on Young Adults' Interest in Reducing their Marijuana Use or Consequences: May 2021 Data from a High-risk Community Sample



Anne M. Fairlie<sup>1</sup>, Christine M. Lee<sup>1</sup>, & Mary E. Larimer<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington



## Introduction

- Increasing young adults' readiness to change their marijuana use is an important target for brief motivational interventions.
- Young adults who are open to or thinking about reducing their marijuana use and its negative effects (e.g., in the contemplation stage) may benefit more from an intervention because they may be more motivated to change their behavior than young adults who are satisfied with their marijuana use.
- That said, it is important to understand the factors that may distinguish between young adults who are interested in reducing their marijuana use or consequences from those who are not as a way to understand important targets for intervention.

### Study Goal

- This exploratory study uses data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and compared high-risk young adults who indicated they were open to or thinking about changing their marijuana use to those who were satisfied with their marijuana use.
- The two groups were compared on biological sex, age, marijuana use, consequences, and 12 motives for marijuana use.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

- Data were part of a larger longitudinal study that recruited a community sample of young adults (N=409) from the Seattle WA area (ages 18-25 at recruitment).
- Eligibility criteria included being 18-25 years old, reporting simultaneous alcohol and marijuana use at least once in the past month, and reporting drinking alcohol at least 3x in the past month.
- Data presented here were collected in May 2021, the final follow-up assessment point (n=376 participants, 92% of original sample).
- Current analyses focus on 265 participants who reported using marijuana in the past month (50.6% females, 48.68% non-Hispanic/Latinx White, mean age = 24.58 (SD = 2.20)).

### Survey Measures

- Openness to changing marijuana use:** Participants were asked "Which statement best represents how you feel right now about your marijuana use?" Analyses compared groups (1) and (2 + 3).
  - I am satisfied with my use of marijuana.
  - I am open to changing my marijuana use by using less or by reducing marijuana's negative effects.
  - I'm currently thinking about changing my marijuana use by using less or by reducing marijuana's negative effects.
  - I'm currently seeking or in treatment for my marijuana use
- Hours high in a typical week:** Marijuana Diary Questionnaire (Lee et al., 2013) with 7 items asking number of hours high, on average, for each day of a typical week during the past month (sum score).
- Marijuana consequences:** Participants reported number of times in the past 30 days they experienced each of 26 consequences (Lee et al., 2019). Responses were coded to indicate 0 times versus 1+ times, and a sum score was used.
- Motives for marijuana use.** Comprehensive Marijuana Motives Questionnaire with 36 items (Lee et al., 2009). Means were calculated for the 12 subscales.

### Data Analyses

- Chi-square tests compared 2 groups on biological sex. T-tests compared 2 groups on age, marijuana use, consequences, and 12 motives.

## Results

### Descriptive Information

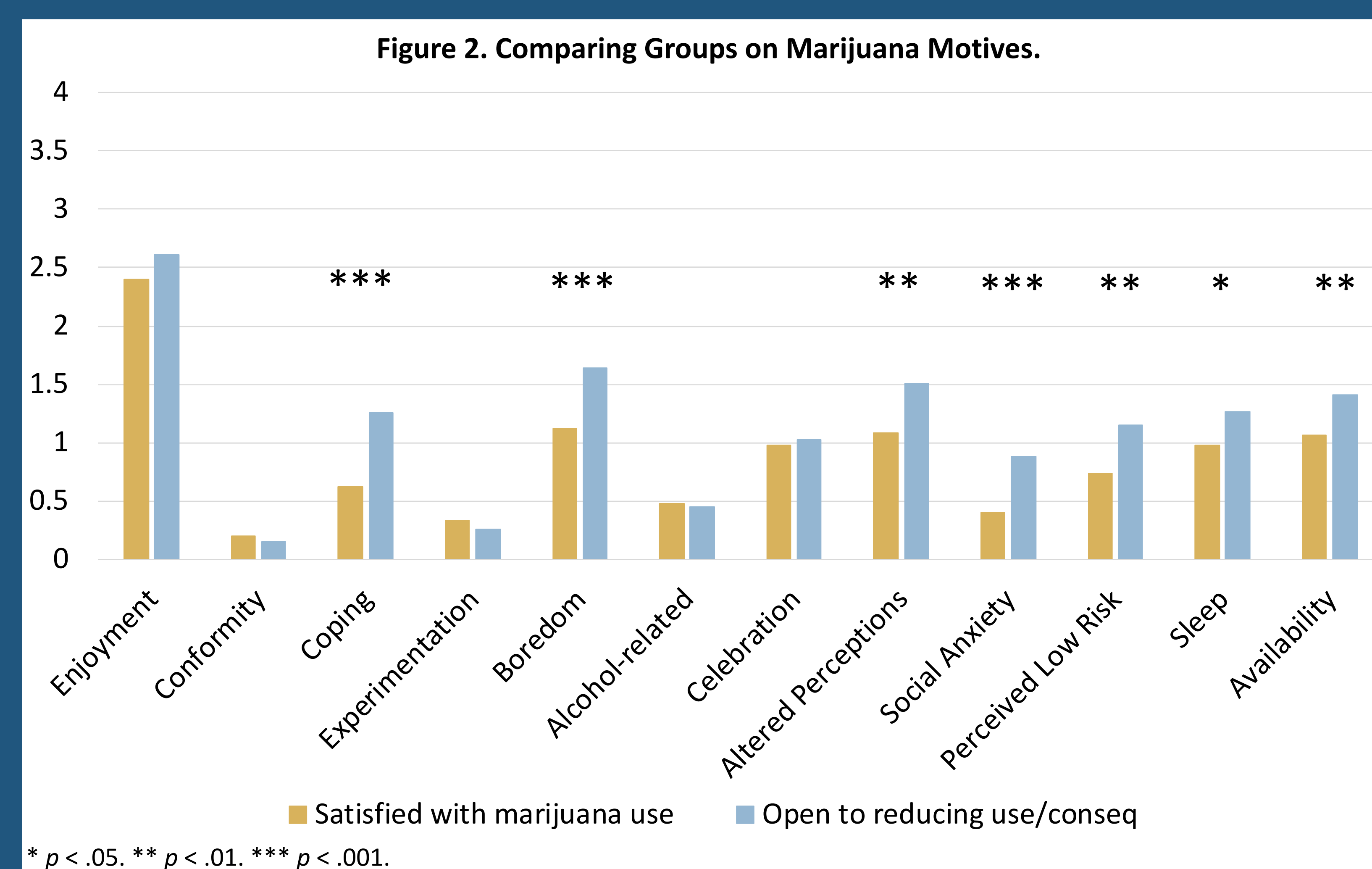
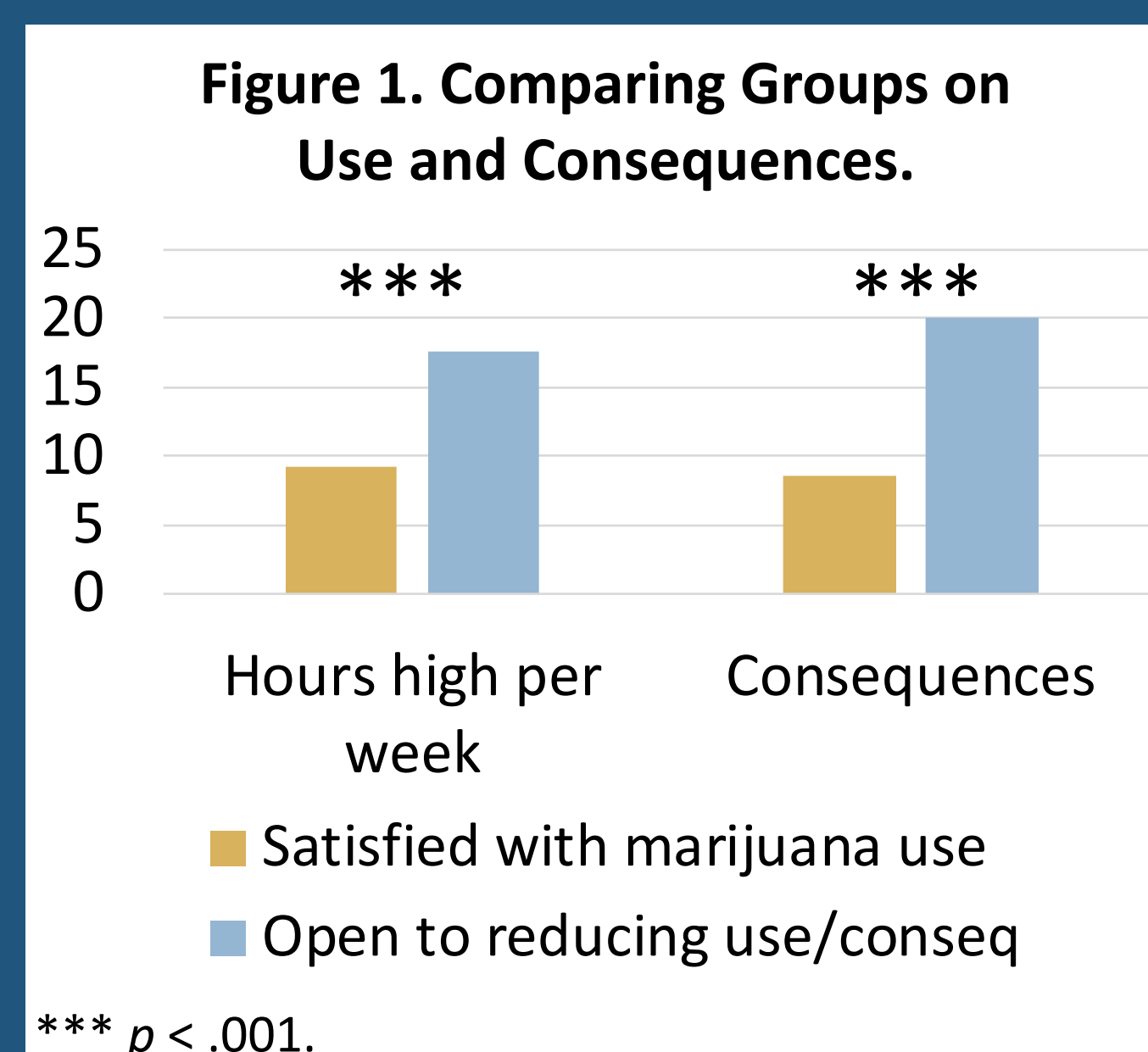
- Over one-third (37.7%, n = 100) of the sample indicated they were open to changing or currently thinking about changing their marijuana use by using less or by reducing marijuana's negative effects. Almost two-thirds (60.4%, n = 160) indicated that they were satisfied with their use of marijuana, 1.5% (n = 4) indicated they were currently seeking or in treatment for their marijuana use, and 0.4% (n = 1) did not provide a response.
- Subsequent analyses compared two groups: (1) high-risk young adults who indicated they were open to or thinking about changing their marijuana use and (2) high-risk young adults who were satisfied with their marijuana use.

### Comparing Two Groups on Biological Sex, Age, Marijuana Use, and Consequences (Figure 1)

- More men (44.60%) than women (32.30%) indicated that they were open to changing or currently thinking about changing their marijuana use by using less or by reducing marijuana's negative effects. The two groups did not significantly differ by age.
- Young adults who indicated they were open to or thinking about changing their use reported significantly more hours high in a typical week and more marijuana consequences than those who were satisfied with their use of marijuana (Figure 1).

### Comparing Two Groups on Motives for Marijuana Use (Figure 2)

- Young adults who indicated they were open to or thinking about changing their use reported significantly higher scores for the following seven marijuana motives: coping, boredom, altered perceptions, social anxiety, perceived low risk, sleep, and availability.
- No differences were found for five marijuana motives: enjoyment, conformity, experimentation, alcohol-related, and celebration.



## Discussion

- Current findings underscore the potential role of negative consequences as a motivator for young adults' interest in reducing their marijuana use.
- Findings also suggest that it may be especially important to target the following motives for marijuana use: coping, boredom, altered perceptions, social anxiety, perceived low risk, sleep, and availability.
- Counselors or facilitators could explore the processes by which these motives play a role in creating or strengthening young adults' self-motivation to change and facilitating the change process.
- It is worth noting that the cross-sectional nature of the data do not allow us to consider temporal precedence or causation. For instance, did an increase in use, consequences, or motives precede a greater openness to reducing marijuana use and its negative effects or vice versa?
- Future longitudinal research could examine the extent to which changes in these constructs occur concurrently or precede one another.

## Grant Information

- Data collection and analyses were supported by grant R01AA025037 (MPI Drs. Lee and Patrick) from National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Data analyses were also supported by grant R21DA050131 (PI Fairlie) from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Poster content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIAAA, NIDA, or the National Institutes of Health.
- Please send correspondence to Anne M. Fairlie at [afairlie@uw.edu](mailto:afairlie@uw.edu).