



**Pacific Southwest**

RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE REGIONAL CENTER

# New Intoxicating Cannabis Products: Marketing and Public Health Concerns

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School of Public Health



# Conflict of Interest

- None



# Where can you buy THC?

- Assuming you don't have a medical cannabis card...
  - In how many states can you buy intoxicating cannabis products (that can get you "high")?





= intoxicating cannabis products sold

In all **50 States**

D.C.

Puerto Rico

# Where can kids buy THC?

## Hemp Gummies Are Sending Hundreds of Kids to Hospitals

Surge of THC products, vapes has states struggling to regulate the booming market

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Products advertised as containing Delta-8 THC are sold at a smoke shop. GENE JOHNSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Dec. 18, 2023 5:30 am ET

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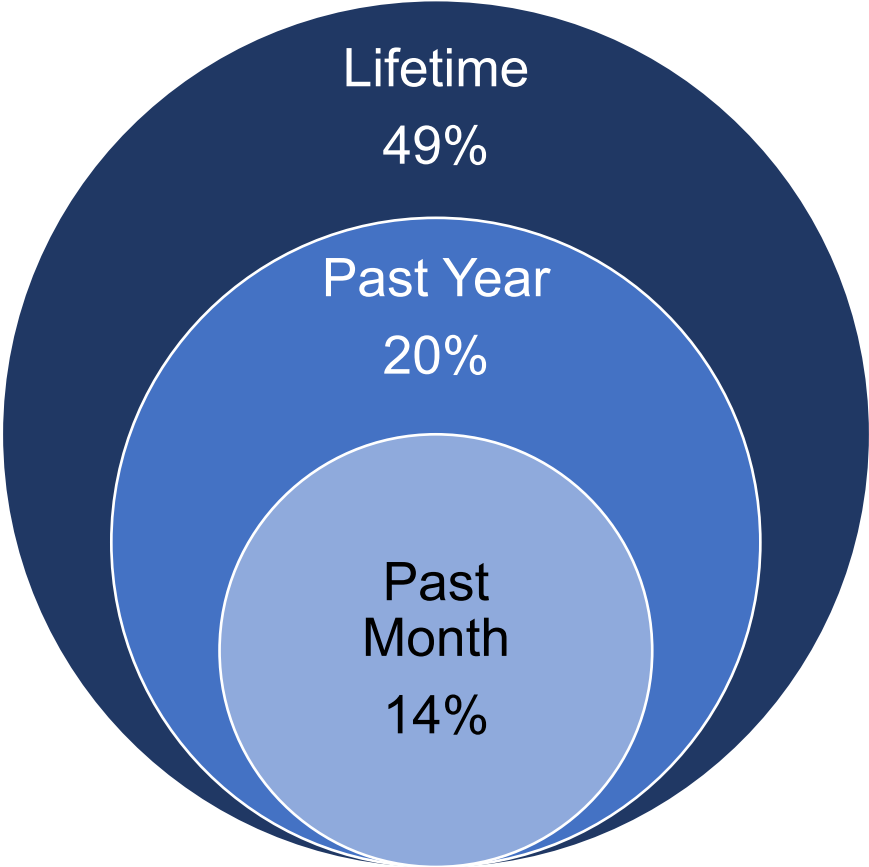
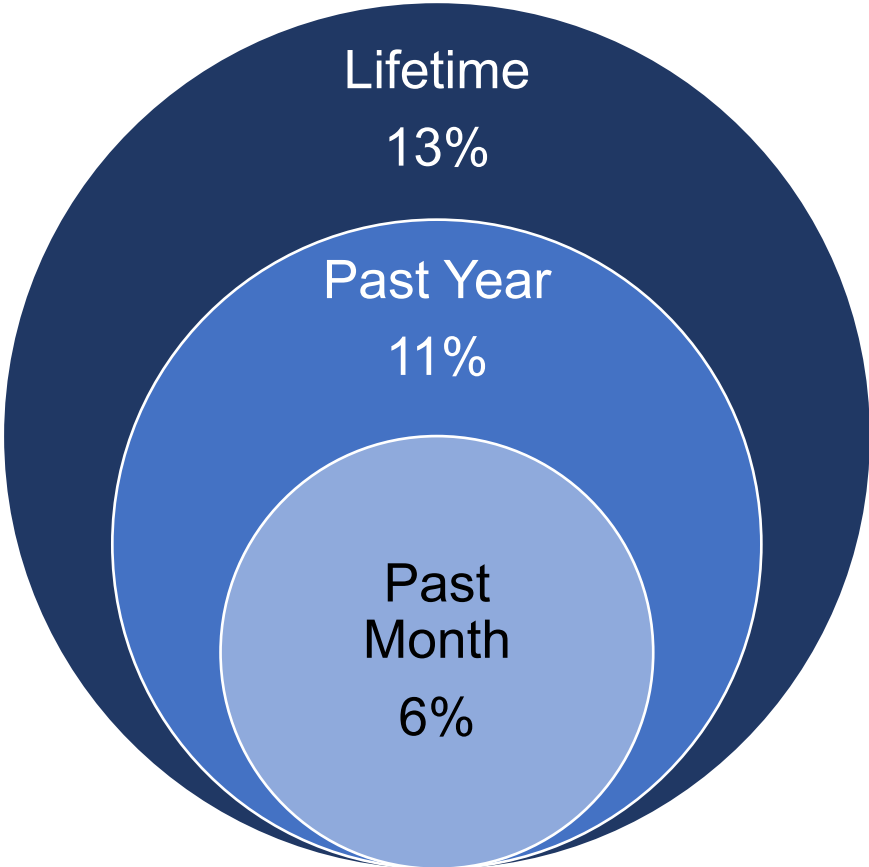
[ADD RESPONSES](#)

Jessica Harris's 15-year-old daughter was walking to her school bus in London, Ky., last

# Cannabis Use Prevalence: 2021 NSDUH data

12-17 years

18+ years




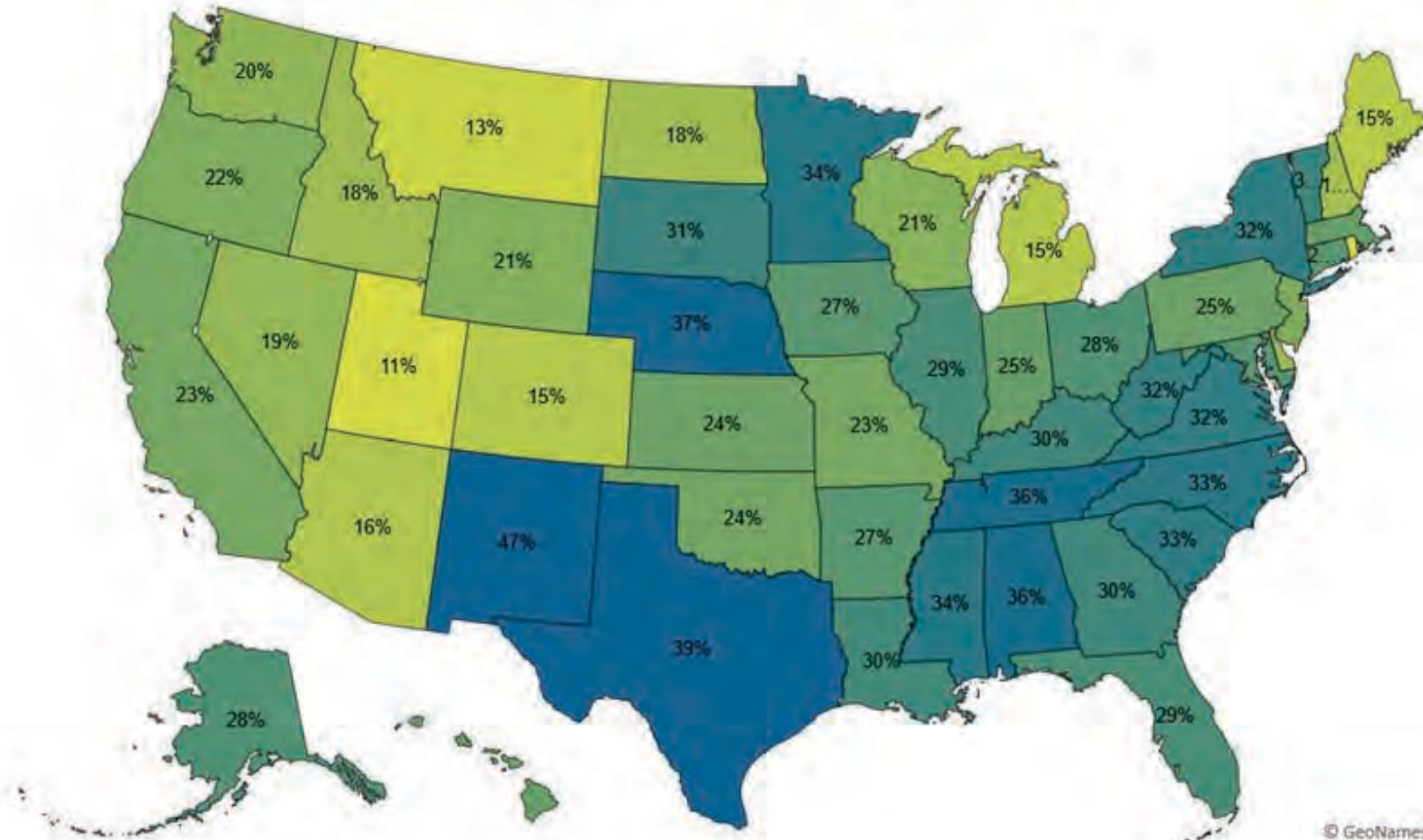
# Cannabis Use

- Known and Unknown risks



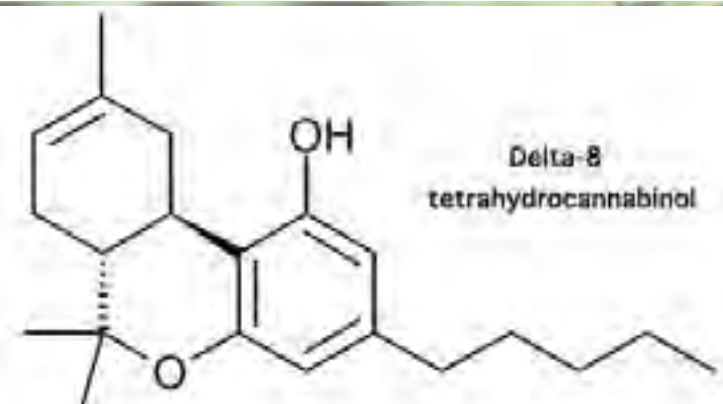
# March 2023 Regulatory Determinants of Cannabis Outcomes Survey (RDCOS)

% Past-Month Delta-8 Prevalence   
11% 38%





# Delta-8 THC vs. Delta-9 THC



# Delta-8 THC: Public Health Concerns

- Anecdotally, Delta-8 THC less potent than Delta-9 THC
- Scoping review (103 documents)
  - Most research largely anecdotal, not peer-reviewed and does not involve human subjects
  - No federal regulations on synthesis (resulting in products being contaminated and/or yielding inconsistent effects)
  - No federal age restriction for purchase/possession

Safety standards/quality control, dose, marketing, minimum age

# Delta-8 THC: Public Health Concerns

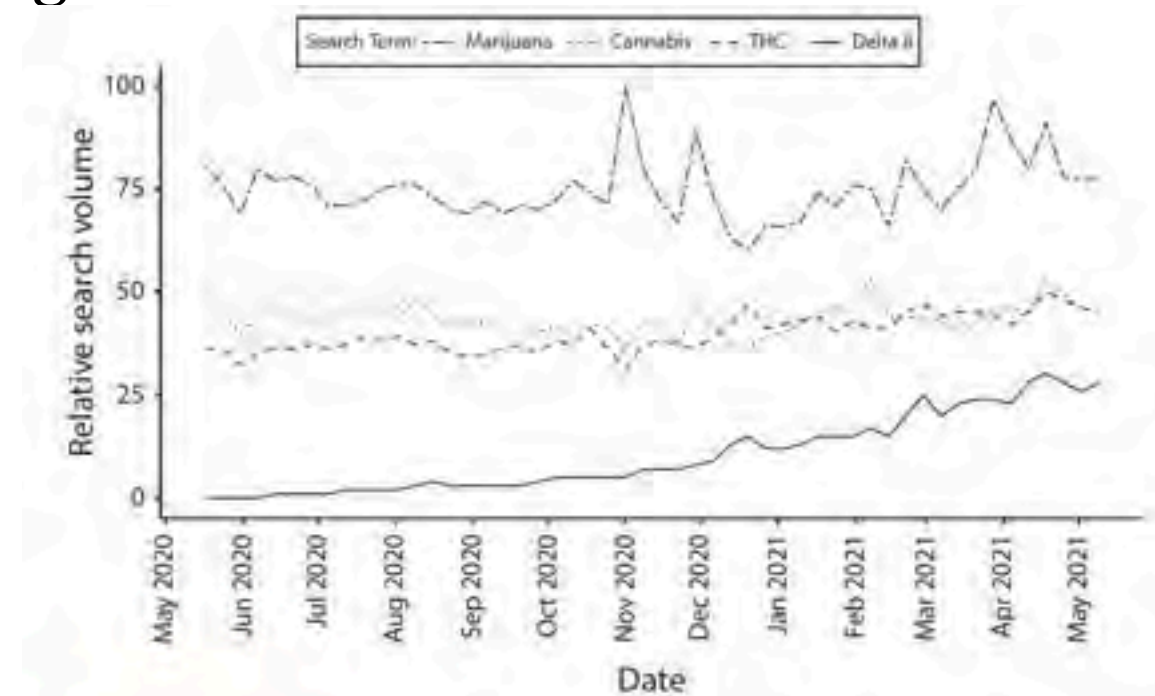
Jan 1, 2021-Feb 28, 2022

- 2,362 calls to U.S. Poison Control Centers
  - 41% involved pediatric patients younger than 18
- In addition to injuries and poisonings...
  - Delta-8 THC use associated with self-reported:
    - acute psychiatric
    - respiratory, thoracic, mediastinal, and gastrointestinal (lung, heart, and chest) disorders

# Delta-8 THC: Online Indicators



- Before data on use prevalence...
- Google searches as a proxy of interest/potential use
- Interest in Delta-8 THC increased starting June 2020
- By May 2021, for every 3 searches for “marijuana” there was 1 search for Delta-8 THC (35% search volume)
- Greater search volume for Delta-8 THC in states where recreational cannabis was illegal



**FIGURE 1—** The Relative Search Volume of Delta-8 THC Compared With Common Cannabis-Related Search Terms: United States, May 17, 2020–May 9, 2021

Note: Before May 2020, the relative search volumes for delta-8 THC were consistently < 1

Livingston, M.D., Walker, A., Cannell, M.B., & Rossheim, M.E. (2022). Popularity of Delta-8 THC on the Internet Across US States, 2021. *American Journal of Public Health*, 112(2), 296–299. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2021.306586.

# Delta-8 THC: Online Indicators



- Global rate of Delta-8 THC searches increased by 257% from 2019 to 2020 and 705.0% from 2020 to 2021
  - In 2021, the rate of Delta-8 THC searches in the U.S. was >10 times higher rates in other countries
- There were 22.3 million Delta-8 THC searches in the U.S. in the first 8 months of 2021 alone
  - Interest in Delta-8-THC greater in US states with stricter cannabis use policies

# Delta-8 THC: Online Indicators



Natural language processing on Twitter data (41,828 tweets)

Examine discussions using #Delta8 (Jan 1, 2020 to Sept 26, 2021)

## 1- Discussions exhibited a sustained increase in prevalence

- Original tweets rose from 9 to 149/day
  - This largely followed a high-engagement retailer promotion in June 2021

## 2- Communication about Delta-8 THC was mostly positive

- Sentiment classification support mostly positive communication: more “positive” (31%) and “trust” (14%) categorization, than “negative” classification (8%)

## 3- Online retailers playing a dominant role

- Appears to be a growing presence of retailer marketing and sales on social media

# Delta-8 THC: Online Indicators



Qualitative analysis 47 YouTube videos

- 3 had age restrictions; 23 promoted use, 20 discouraged use
- Some mentioned products may be mislabeled
- Some recommended not buying from gas stations and not driving after using
- Reasons given for using Delta-8 THC included **legality**, to help with **anxiety or pain**, and provide a **milder high**:
  - “[Delta-8] brought in a whole new wave of stoners who couldn't smoke because Delta-9 just did too much for them”
  - Effects described as psychoactive or euphoric, but without producing anxiety (“*work weed*”)

# Online Survey

- Driving under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, and Delta-8 THC
  - Among those with past year use of each, the proportion of those driving under the influence of Delta-8 THC was highest
    - Consistent with marketing as 'diet weed'



# Delta-8 THC: Use

- 2021 convenience sample of past 30-day cannabis users  
(not generalizable to U.S. population)
  - ≈ 17% of past 30-day cannabis users in their sample reported past 30-day use of Delta-8 THC
  - Most common method was vaping concentrated formulations of Delta-8 THC (41%)
  - Primary motivations for use: legal status and perceived therapeutic benefits
  - Males more likely than females to use (aOR = 1.4)
  - State restrictions on Delta-8 sales associated with lower odds of use (aOR = 0.7)

# Delta-8 THC: Retail Assessment

2021 Retail assessment: contacted 1,223 stores with alcohol, cannabidiol, and/or tobacco licenses in Fort Worth

- 131 stores selling  $\Delta 8$  THC: low retail prices
  - 96% sold vapes and/or “flower” (i.e., hemp leaves coated with Delta-8 THC distillate)
  - 76% sold edibles
- Edibles were available less expensive than flower/vapes
  - least expensive product was \$8.58 less on average
- Outlets that sold Delta-8 THC were located in areas with greater socioeconomic deprivation
- Most reported a minimum purchase age of 21
  - however, 4% reported 18 years or no minimum age

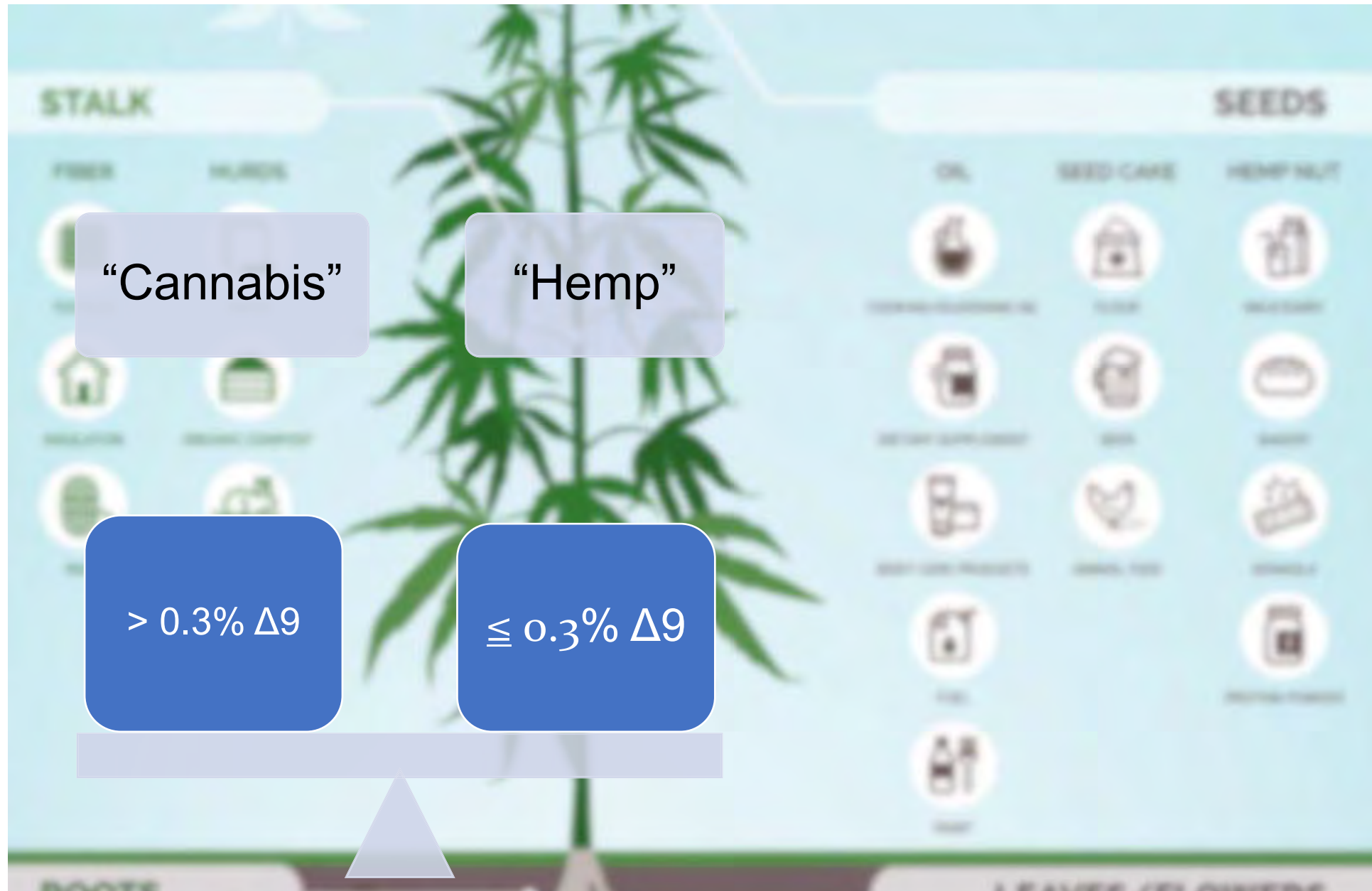
# Delta-8 THC: Online/Youth Access

- Online Purchases of Delta-8 THC (n=8)
  - Easily accessible online
  - Age verification methods are self-reported and easily circumvented
  - Contact with the customer was never requested at the point of home delivery
  - Policies and their enforcement are needed to prevent youth access from online sources
- 65 students in one Texas ISD caught with THC vapes 2022-2023 school year:
  - Some used Snapchat & cash apps

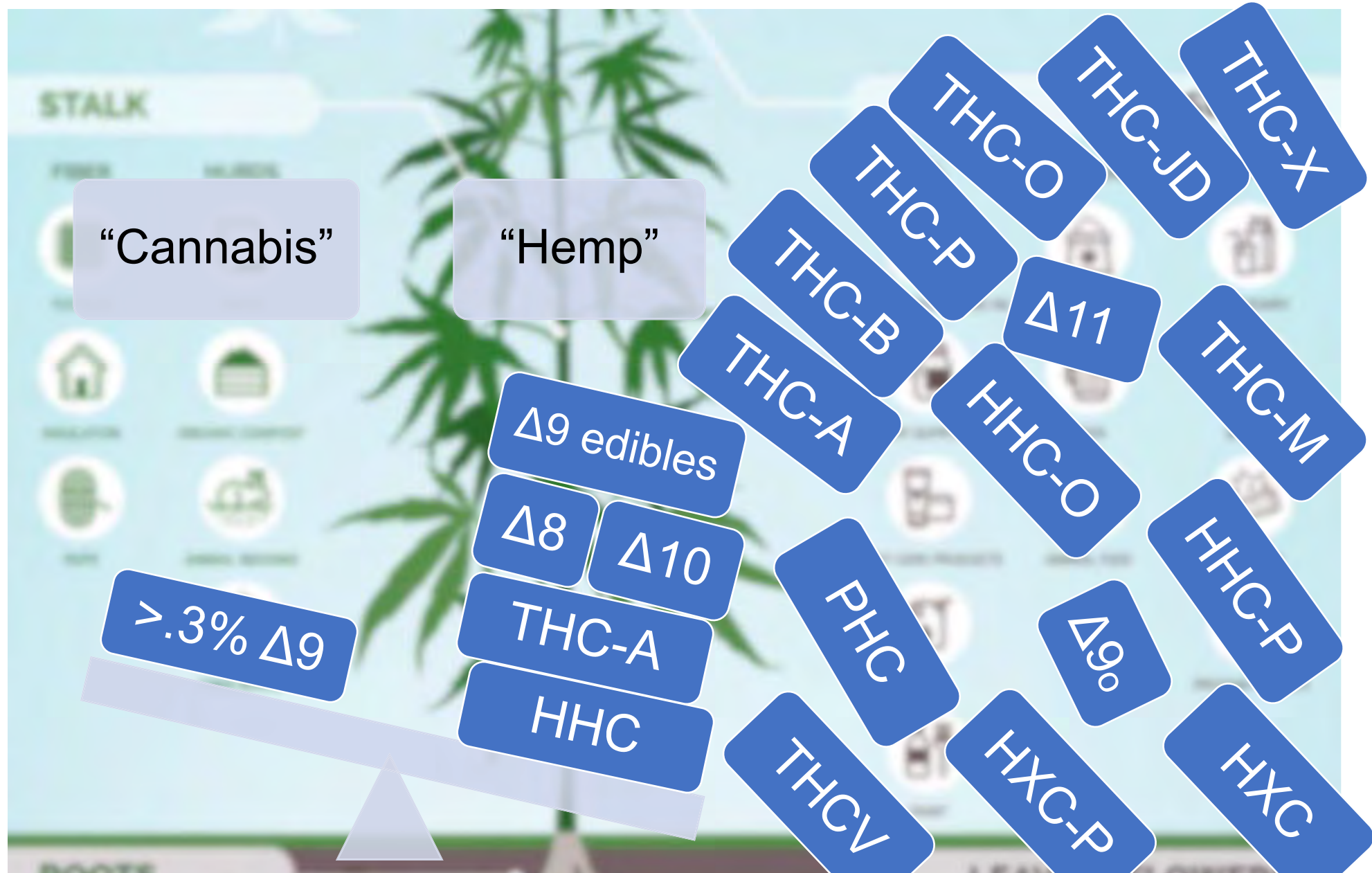
- Egan KL, Villani S, Soule EK. Absence of Age Verification for Online Purchases of Cannabidiol and Delta-8: Implications for Youth Access. J Adolesc Health. 2023 Mar 2:S1054-139X(23)00067-8. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.01.020.
- <https://www.cbs19.tv/article/news/local/65-students-charged-with-felony-for-bringing-thc-vape-tyler-isd-campuses/501-9bfbc945-6150-4f49-ad62-41114cef6db6>



# Federal Legality: 2018 Farm Bill

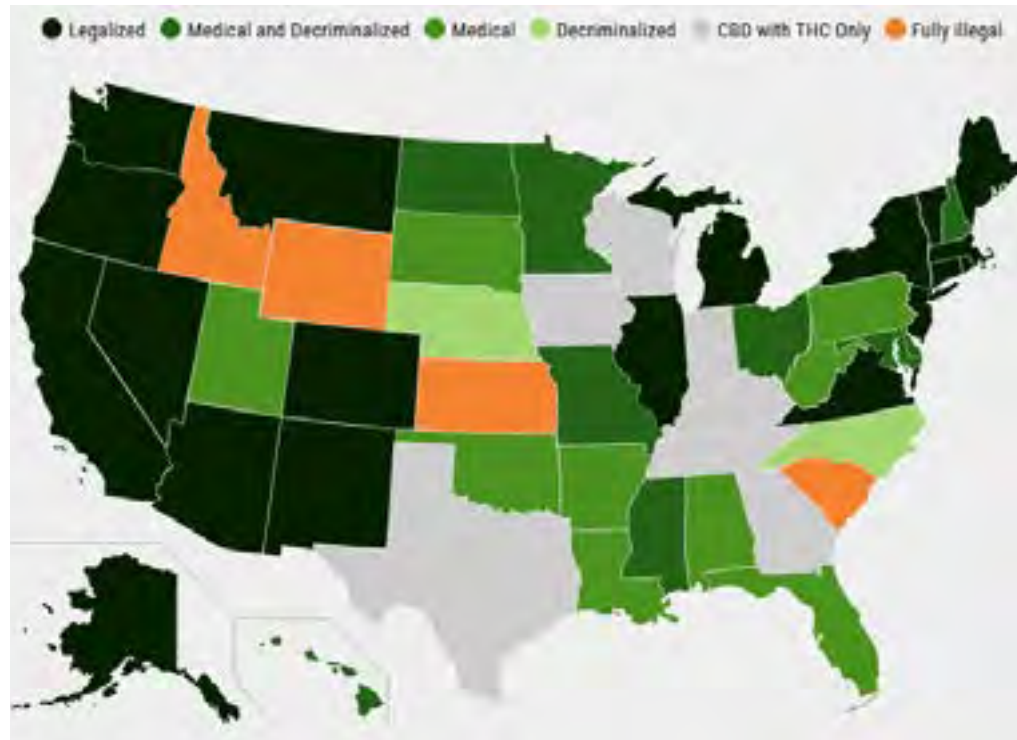


# Federal Legality: 2018 Farm Bill



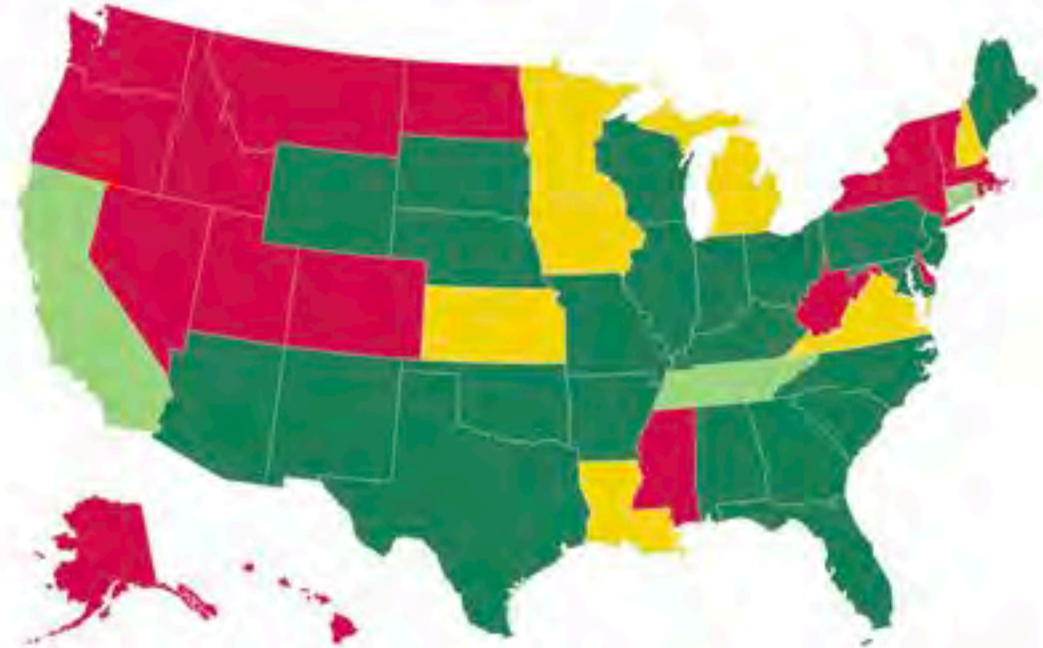
# State Laws

## Delta-9 THC



## Delta-8 THC Legal Status by State

Legend: ■ Banned ■ Legal ■ Restricted ■ Substantial Regulations



Last fact-checked on October 31, 2023, by Neil Wilner, co-chair of the RCCB law firm's cannabis group  
Source: CBD Grade • Get the data • Embed • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

## EDITORIAL

# Delta-8, Delta-10, HHC, THC-O, THCP, and THCv: What Should We Call These Products?

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**ABSTRACT.** The 2018 U.S. Federal Agriculture Improvement Act ("Farm Bill") resulted in what some have called a "legal loophole" in cannabis regulation. As different types of cannabis products proliferate, so has the terminology used to attempt to categorize them. This article presents a variety of potential descriptors to encourage dialogue about the language used to classify the multitude of psychoactive cannabinoid products that have grown in popularity since the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill. Our recommended term for these products is *derived psychoactive cannabis products*. The term *derived* helps distinguish these products from naturally grown cannabis products. *Psychoactive* makes

clear that these products can produce psychoactive effects. Finally, *cannabis products* balances accuracy and understandability regarding the substance while discouraging perpetuation of the word *marijuana* because of its racist inception. The resulting term, *derived psychoactive cannabis products*, is broad enough to encapsulate all related products while being specific enough to exclude other substances. Adopting accurate and consistent terminology will reduce confusion and help establish a more cohesive scientific literature base. (*J. Stud. Alcohol Drugs*, 84, 000–000, 2023)



# Derived Psychoactive Cannabis Products (DPCPs)

- **Derived**
  - ~~*Synthetic*~~
  - ~~*Semi-synthetic*~~
  - ~~*Chemically rearranged*~~
  - ~~*Manufactured*~~
  - ~~*Laboratory derived*~~
  - ~~*Cannabis derived*~~
  - ~~*Hemp Derived*~~
  - **Psychoactive**
  - ~~*Isomer*~~
  - ~~*New*~~
  - ~~*Novel*~~
  - **Cannabis Product**
  - ~~*THC*~~
  - ~~*Cannabinoids*~~
  - ~~*Marijuana*~~
- Balances accuracy and understandability

Delta-8 THC

Derived  
Psychoactive  
Cannabis  
Products

What do they look like?

# AI generate images: Delta-8 THC



# AI: Derived Psychoactive Cannabis Products



# Marketed to a younger adult demographic



More flavorful, colorful, cartoon like



# What do they actually look like?

- Any issues around product marketing?







# Delta-8 THC



# Delta-9 THC



# Delta-10 THC



# HHC



# Blends



LIVE  
RESIN



# Smoke Shop Retailers:

*“We basically sell the whole darn alphabet”*

*“We have more blends than stuff on its own”*

# Alleged strength compared to $\Delta$ -9

## Weaker

- Delta-6 THC
- Delta-8 THC
- Delta-10 THC

## Stronger

- PHC
- THC-O
- Delta-11 THC
- THC-H
- THC-JD
- THC-P
- HHC-P

# Blends



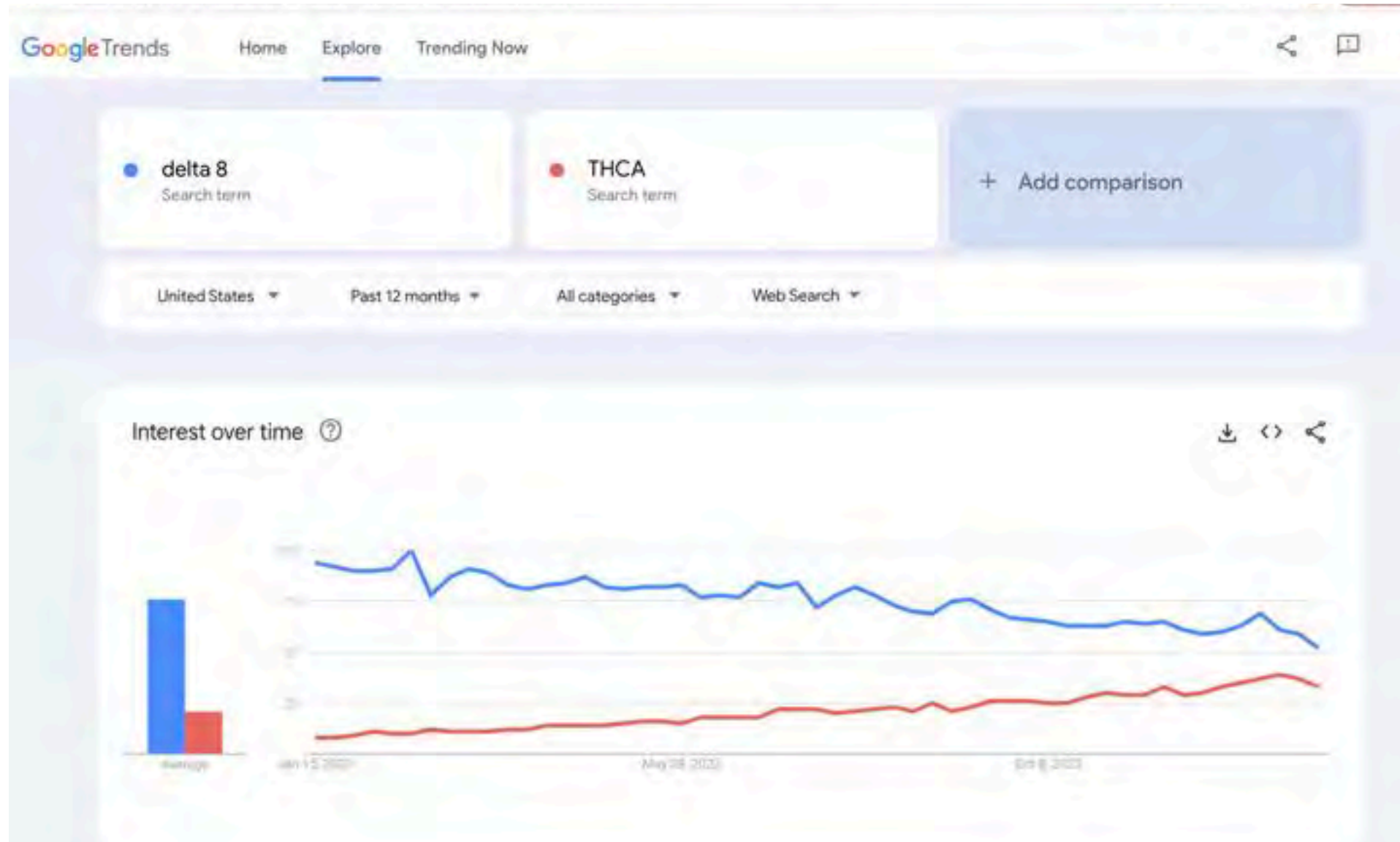




# Blends



# THCA said to be closest to $\Delta 9$





### Limited Time 10% off

Save on your first order and get more offers when you join.

Submit



Accessories

## Buy One, Get One Free:

### Delta 8 and Gourmet Chocolate Bars

Restock your stash of delight! Gourmet and Delta 8 chocolates. No discount code needed.



Limited Time Offer:  
Free THC Gummies!



## Want 15% Off?

Become an insider

Be the first to know what we're dropping next and save some \$\$\$.

Get 15% Off

No Thanks

### Get 20% off!

your next purchase when you subscribe to our wellness community.

Get my discount



# Mother's Day SALE

## 20% OFF

Use code: **CBD4MOM**

\*Offer not valid on wholesale orders. Excludes Storz & Bickel and Purlo products. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Expires 5/15/23. Subject to change without notice.

## Mother's Day Sale

**\$15 OFF \$125+**  
CODE: **MOM15**

**\$30 OFF \$175+**  
CODE: **MOM30**

Expires 5/14/23. Cannot be combined with other offers. Void where prohibited.

[SHOP](#)

## Mother's Day SPECIAL SALE

Get up to 55% OFF our exclusive Mother's Day collection.

Find Offers Moms Love >

Code: **MOTHERSDAY** for 15% OFF + Free Lowdose Gummies

HOME PRODUCTS LEARN BLOG LOGIN

Experience The possibilities of Hemp

35% OFF STOREWIDE HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Click the savings gift and give Mom the gift of relaxation.

[Shop Now](#)

Excludes certain products. Offer not valid on wholesale orders. Excludes Storz & Bickel and Purlo products. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Expires 5/15/23. Subject to change without notice.

MOTHER'S DAY GIFT

**FREE 300MG WATERMELON GUMMIES**

ON ALL ORDERS OVER \$60

USE CODE: **MOMMY**

SHOP LEARN MORE LAB RESULTS WHOLESALE BLOG EARN \$30 LOGIN / REGISTER CART / \$0.00

## TOP-SHELF THC-A DIAMOND INFUSED PREROLLS

**1.5** GRAMS PER PREROLL

BLAZED WITH LEMON GUMMIES

MADE WITH PREMIUM HEMP

ROLLED AND POINTED BY HAND

INFUSED WITH THCA GUMMIES

NEVER SPEAKS

**DOUBLE DOINKS**

BERRY

# Online Retail Assessment

## Methods

- Google “buy delta thc” in incognito mode
- Downloaded top 100 results using resultstoexcel.com
- Used SimilarWeb to compare web traffic: top 3 sites

# Online Retail Assessment

## Results

- 26 distinct intoxicating compounds
  - Are these actually distinct compounds or just marketing?
- Overall, most products (54%) were blends, containing 2 to 8 different intoxicating compounds in a single product
  - There were **185 different combinations** of intoxicating compounds contained within these 804 products
  - There is little understanding of the health effects from using these compounds in these various combinations.

# Online Retail Assessment

## Results

- 26 distinct intoxicating compounds including:
  - Delta-8 THC
  - THC-P
  - Delta-9 THC
  - HHC
  - THC-A
  - Delta-10 THC
  - THC-H
  - THC-B
  - THC-JD
  - THC-X
  - HHC-P
  - Delta-11 THC

There were **185 different combinations of intoxicating compounds** contained within these 804 products.

# Online Retail Assessment

## Results

- Modalities included
  - disposable vapes (43%)
  - edibles (29%)
  - vape carts (18%)
  - pre-rolls (7%)
  - flower (2%)
  - dabs (1%)
  - vape pods (<1%)



# Online Retail Assessment

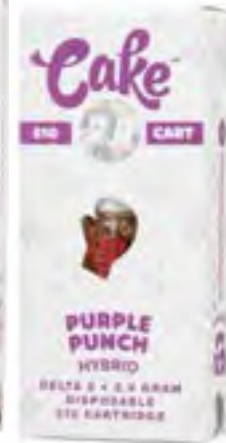
## Results

- Among the 118 brands, the most common were:
  - Exhale
  - Delta Extrax
  - Cake
  - URB
  - Looper
  - TRE House















INDICA  
LOOPER XL  
LIFTED SERIES  
FORBIDDEN FRUIT  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
11-HYDROXY-THC  
THC-H-THC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG

INDICA  
LOOPER XL  
LIFTED SERIES  
LAVA CAKE  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
THC-A • THC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG

SATIVA  
LOOPER XL  
LIFTED SERIES  
JET FUEL  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
THC-A  
11-HYDROXY-THC • THC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG

SATIVA  
LOOPER XL  
MELTED SERIES  
SOUR KUSH  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
11-HYDROXY-THC  
THC-H-THC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG

SATIVA  
LOOPER XL  
MELTED SERIES  
LIMONCELLO  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
THC-A • THC-JD  
THC-P • HHC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG

INDICA  
LOOPER XL  
MELTED SERIES  
PURPLE PUNCH  
3 GRAMS  
LIVE RESIN  
DISPOSABLE VAPE  
THC-JD  
THC-H-THC-P  
MILD STRONG  
3 GRAM • 3000 MG









# Who's the Target Demographic?

- For vaping Tre House brand Ice Cream Cake flavor?
  - Is this what you imagine?



# Effective Regulations?

- Can we effectively regulate these products?
  - How if we don't know all the harms?
    - From each compound individually as well as in multitude of combinations sold

# 2024 Farm Bill

- Opportunity to address the unintended consequences of the 2018 Farm bill
  - What's going to happen in each state???

# Research Publications

**Rossheim, M.E.,** Tillett, K.K., Vasilev, V., LoParco, C.R., Berg, C.J., Trangenstein, P.J., Yockey, R.A., Sussman, S.Y., Siegel, M., & Jernigan, D.H. (in press). Types and Brands of Derived Psychoactive Cannabis Products: An Online Retail Assessment, 2023. *Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research*.

**Rossheim, M.E.,** LoParco, C., Henry, D., Trangenstein, P.J., & Walters, S.T. (2023). Delta-8, Delta-10, HHC, THC-O, THCP, and THCV: What should we call these products? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*. doi: 10.15288/jsad.23-00008

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LoParco, C.R., Olsson, S., Sekhon, V., McDonald, K.K., Yockey, R.A., Livingston, M.D., Trangenstein, P.J., & Rossheim, M.E. (2023). Associations between Delta-8 THC and Four Loko retail availability in Fort Worth, Texas. *Health Behavior Research*.



# An Overlooked Threat to Public Safety

## What are Derived Psychoactive Cannabis Products (DPCPs)?

DPCPs have psychoactive properties similar to cannabis, but they are chemically derived, not grown.

Because of a loophole created by the 2018 Farm Bill (i.e., Agriculture Improvement Act), these compounds are regulated as "hemp" despite their psychoactive properties (because they have < 0.3%  $\Delta$ -9 by weight).<sup>1,2</sup> This loophole also legalizes  $\Delta$ -9 THC edibles, as the product weight allows for a high dose of THC.<sup>3</sup>

One in six past-month cannabis users (17%) used  $\Delta$ -8 THC, the first DPCP to enter the market.<sup>4</sup>

## DPCPs carry risk of harm, especially to young people.<sup>1,3-7</sup>

Most states do not require testing for chemical contaminants, even though DPCPs are commonly synthesized using harsh solvents known to be hazardous to human health.<sup>8</sup> Potency limits are rare, despite conclusive evidence that more potent products carry higher risk of harms.<sup>9</sup> Research supports that DPCP use is associated with acute psychiatric, lung, chest and heart disorders, as well as injuries and poisonings.<sup>1</sup>

DPCPs are also very new, so we don't know all the short- and long-term risks from use.<sup>1</sup> DPCPs are consumed accidentally by children, as evidenced by the large number of calls to Poison Control Centers involving minors because of poor labeling and a lack of child-proof containers.<sup>10</sup>

These products are marketed to young people. Some DPCP product packaging mimics well-known food brands that appeal to children, including Cap'n Crunch, Cocoa Puffs, Froot Loops, Nerds Ropes, Starbursts and Sour Patch Kids, among others.<sup>11</sup>



## Availability and Access

DPCPs are available in every state, including those that have banned certain DPCPs such as  $\Delta$ -8 THC.<sup>1,2</sup> This is because the loophole allows for the continuous engineering of new types of DPCPs, including  $\Delta$ -6 THC,  $\Delta$ -10 THC,  $\Delta$ -11 THC, THC-A, THC-O, THC-P, THC-V, THC-JD, PHC, HHC, HHC-P and HXC.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these new DPCPs are marketed as being far more potent than cannabis. DPCPs are easy to buy online; age verification measures are rarely used and easily circumvented.<sup>12</sup> In many states, there are no age laws, so it is up to the retailers whether to sell DPCPs to children.<sup>13</sup>

DPCPs are marketed in ways that are extremely likely to attract children, such as added in candy, chips and chocolates. DPCPs are inexpensive (sometimes < \$5), and stores are disproportionately located in low-income areas.<sup>14</sup>

**No psychoactive drug should be sold as "hemp."**

The 2023 Farm Bill should close the loophole that helps kids access unregulated, psychoactive candy.

Questions or concerns? Please contact: [Matthew.Rosenthal@umich.edu](mailto:Matthew.Rosenthal@umich.edu)

1. HHS. (2023). *Delta-8 THC and other synthetic cannabinoids: A public health concern*. <https://www.hhs.gov/od/ceo/2023/03/23/delta-8-thc-and-other-synthetic-cannabinoids-a-public-health-concern>.  
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# Questions

- The 2024 Farm Bill and state laws should help reduce availability of these products. In the interim:
  - How prevalent is the use of each DPCP?
    - Are our cannabis-related survey instruments and biological tests valid for assessing the use of these various DPCPs?
  - How do the effects of these various DPCPs (and their combinations) compare to traditional THC products in terms of their potency, as well as their mental and physical health effects (short- and long-term)?
    - In addition to young people, are there specific patient populations that should be particularly cautious about using DPCPs?
    - What strategies should public health advocates/healthcare providers employ to inform communities/patients about related risks?



## Questions?

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