

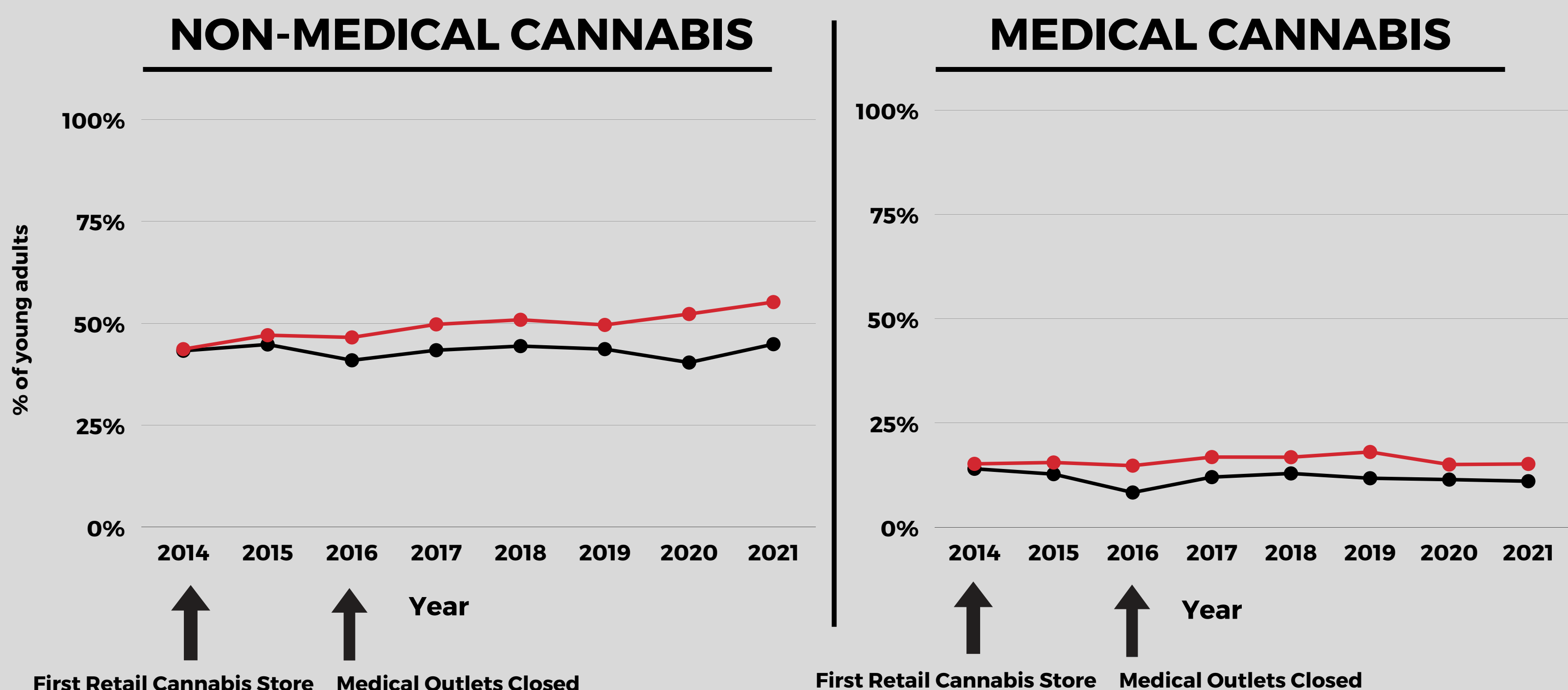
# How often do Washington young adults use cannabis?

## BACKGROUND

Washington state legalized non-medical use of cannabis for those over the age of 21 in 2012, and the first non-medical/retail store opened in Summer of 2014. With the opening of non-medical/retail stores, **researchers were interested in how this would impact how much young adults use cannabis**, as they are an at-risk age group for increased substance use ([White et al., 2019](#)). Other research shows that after cannabis legalization, there has been a significant increase in past year use, at least monthly use, at least weekly use, and daily use ([Kilmer et al., 2022](#)). This research brief analyzes 8 years of data between 2014-2021 from the **Washington Young Adult Health Survey (WYAHS)** to look at changes in cannabis use further (more info [here](#)).

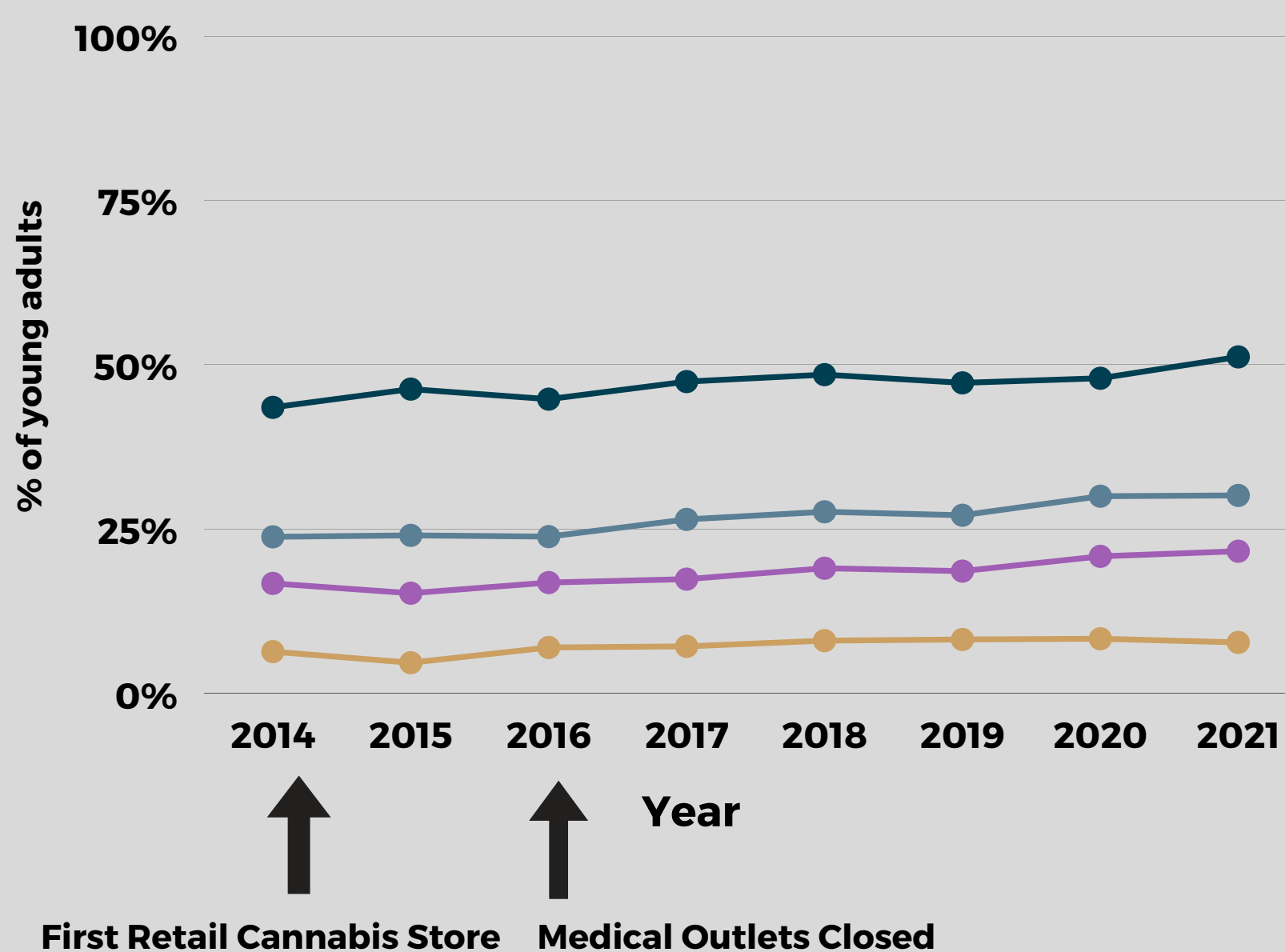
## RESULTS

At least yearly use | ● 18-20 years old ● 21-25 years old

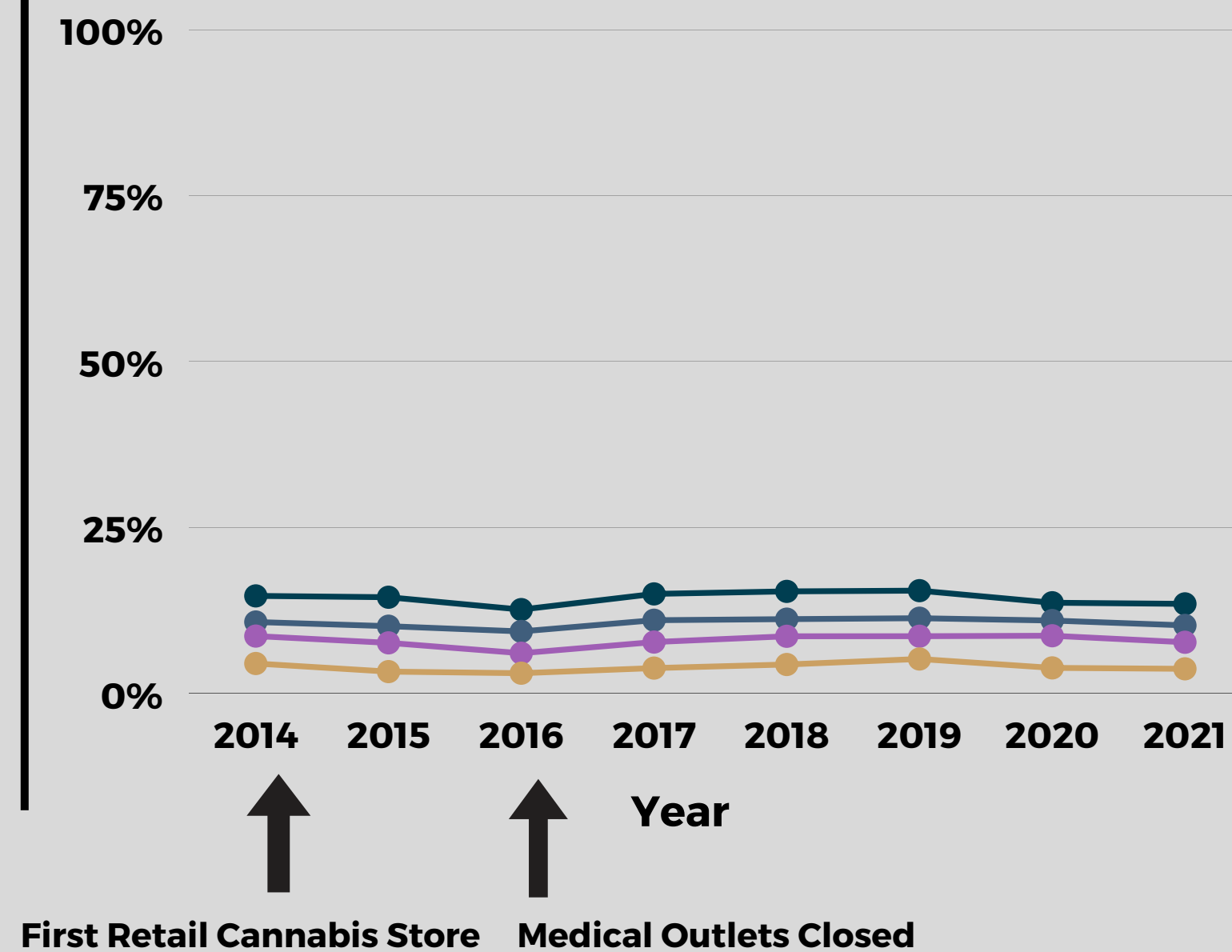


● At least yearly use     ● At least monthly use     |     18-25 years old  
● At least weekly use     ● At least daily use

## NON-MEDICAL CANNABIS



## MEDICAL CANNABIS



## MAIN POINTS

Non-medical cannabis use has increased since legalization, with a 7.68% increase in at least yearly use from 2014-2021 for 18-25 year olds.

Findings by age highlight that significant increases in cannabis use over time are largely a result of those with legal access to cannabis (21 to 25 year olds).

The work of public health professionals and educators should be recognized in protecting 18-20 year olds from that same increase, despite the still high rates of 18-20 year old use.

Published research using WYAHs data shows an increase over time in signs of being addicted to cannabis (or “cannabis use disorder”) ([Kilmer et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, there are not just more people using cannabis, but those who are using are using at an increased frequency with more health impacts.

## HOW CAN I USE THIS INFORMATION?

### YOUNG ADULTS

Cannabis affects every person differently, and young adults should consult with their doctor to better understand their health and cannabis use. Young adults should educate themselves on the [effects](#) of cannabis use to make informed decisions about their health. Given the rise of cannabis use disorder, young adults should monitor their cannabis use for signs and symptoms of cannabis use disorder - learn more [here](#).

### POLICY MAKERS

### EDUCATORS

Given the increase in cannabis use for 21-25 year olds, policy makers and educators could consider ways to support this older-group of young adults who are in the late-stages of education or the early years of their career and might need additional support.

To ensure data were as representative as possible, post-stratification weights were applied to data, and unweighted findings were similar to weighted findings. The **Washington Young Adult Health Survey** is funded by the **Division of Behavioral Health & Recovery** in **Washington's Health Care Authority**.

White, H. R., Kilmer, J. R., Fossos-Wong, N., Hayes, K., Sokolovsky, A. W., & Jackson, K. M. (2019). Simultaneous Alcohol and Marijuana Use Among College Students: Patterns, Correlates, Norms, and Consequences. *Alcoholism*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14072>

Kilmer, J. R., Rhew, I. C., Guttmanova, K., Fleming, C. B., Hultgren, B. A., Gilson, M. S., Cooper, R. L., Dilley, J., & Larimer, M. E. (2022). Cannabis Use Among Young Adults in Washington State After Legalization of Nonmedical Cannabis. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2021.306641>

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