



Medical and Adult-Use Cannabis Operations and Epidemiology in Rhode Island

November 3, 2023

Cannabis Control Commission Meeting



Using the Terms Cannabis versus Marijuana

It is important to recognize the history of racial and ethnic discrimination in which the term “marijuana” has been used, popularized, and connected to the War on Drugs.

This report uses the terms “**cannabis**” and “**marijuana**” to most accurately and clearly communicate the data.

The term, **cannabis**, is more scientifically accurate and racially and ethnically sensitive. It will be used throughout the presentation to refer to Rhode Island’s legislation legalizing adult use (i.e., The Rhode Island Cannabis Act) as well as in reference to other related topics.

The term, **marijuana**, will be used to reference the State’s program for medical use (i.e., Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program). It will also be used when reporting on standardized State and national surveys.

Rhode Island Cannabis Act

Adult-use cannabis was legalized in Rhode Island in May 2022. Retail sales began on December 1, 2022.

- Cannabis Control Commission and Cannabis Advisory Board
- Three positions were mandated by the legislature and funded through the State's cannabis sales tax:
 - ✓ BHDDH: Associate Administrator II (Sarah Hall)
 - ✓ RIDOH: Public Health Epidemiologist (Madison Rivard)
 - RIDOH: Communications Specialist (backfill currently in recruitment)





Overview of Cannabis Operations

Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental
Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH)

Cannabis Programming, Behavioral Health Division of BHDDH

Sarah Hall, MPA, Associate Administrator II

Cannabis Programming, Behavioral Health Division of BHDDH, focused on:

Substance Use Disorder Prevention for Adults and Youth, including:

- Education and Public Awareness Campaigns
- Treatment and Recovery Support Services
- Research, Data Collection, and Surveillance
- Enforcement - TBD

Cannabis Programming, Behavioral Health Division of BHDDH

Prevention Program Administration

- Evidence-Based Programs and Activities through Regional Prevention Coalitions, Municipal Task Forces, and Student Assistance Counselors (Middle and High Schools)

Treatment Services

- Surveillance- centralized incident reporting, response, and communication
- Administration of Programming in Rhode Island-Licensed Substance Use Treatment Facilities

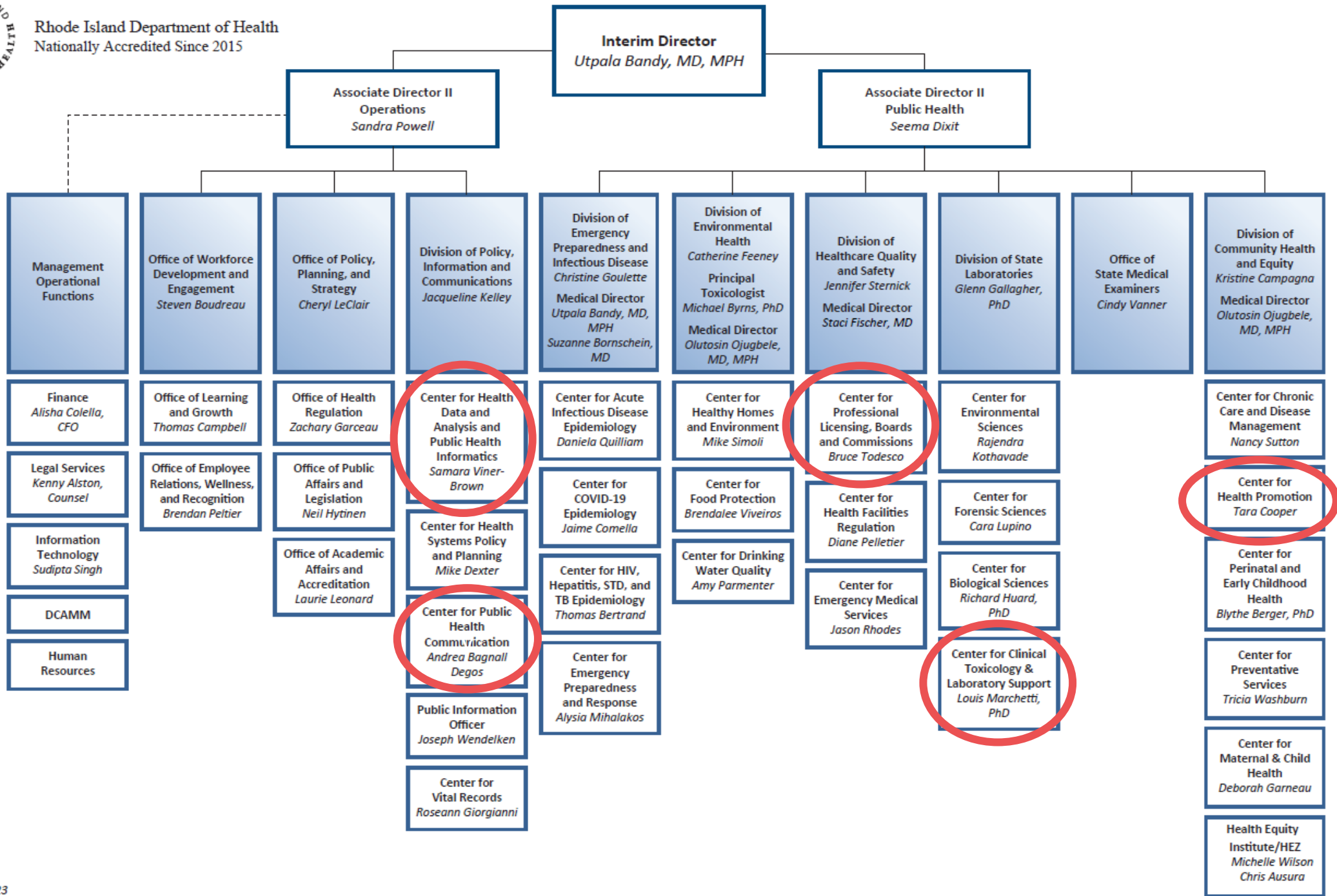
Recovery Services

- Recovery Community Centers
- Recovery Housing



Overview of Cannabis Operations

Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)



Overview: Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program

- Medical marijuana was legalized in Rhode Island in 2006.
- Eligible patients must also be Rhode Island residents.
- Patients have the option to designate one caregiver and one authorized purchaser.
- As of 2023, there is no fee for a Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Card and no taxes are collected at the point of sale.

Overview: Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program

Approved qualifying medical conditions, include:

- Cancer or cancer treatment, including chemotherapy or radiation
- Glaucoma or glaucoma treatment
- Positive status for HIV or treatment for HIV
- AIDS or treatment for AIDS
- Hepatitis C or treatment for hepatitis C
- A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces one or more of the following:
 - Cachexia or wasting syndrome
 - Severe, debilitating, chronic pain
 - Severe nausea
 - Seizures, including but not limited to those characteristic of epilepsy
 - Severe and persistent muscle spasms, including but not limited to those characteristic of multiple sclerosis or Crohn's disease
 - Agitation related to Alzheimer's Disease



Cannabis Data Surveillance



Cannabis Data Surveillance





Cannabis Data Surveillance

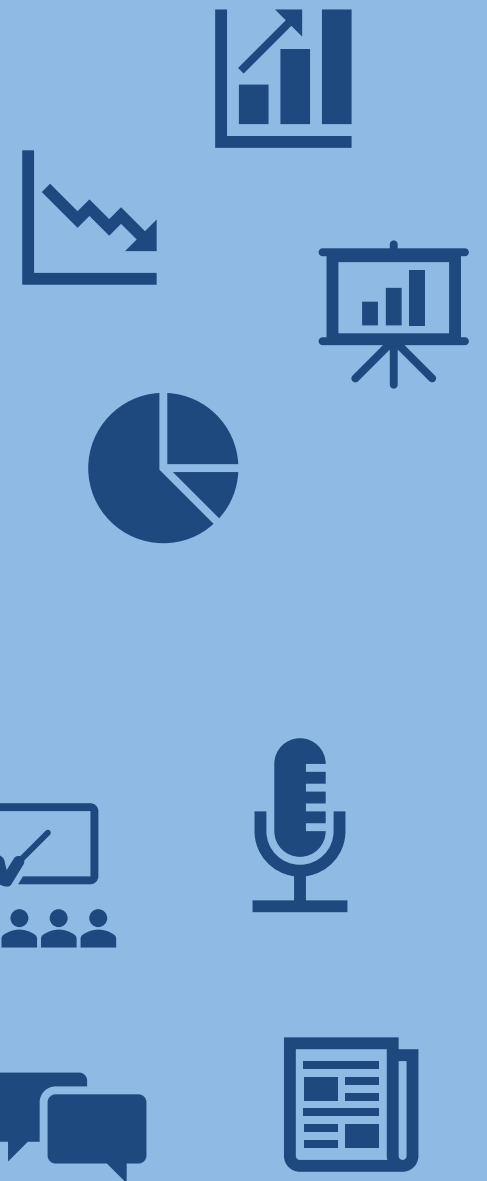
Surveillance is the ongoing systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of health-related data for use in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health practice





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Cannabis-Related Data Sources

Cannabis-Specific

- Point of Sale Data from the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation (DBR) and Metrc
- Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Program (MMP)

Surveys

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS)
- Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)
- Rhode Island Student Survey (RISS)
- Rhode Island Young Adult Survey (RIYAS)

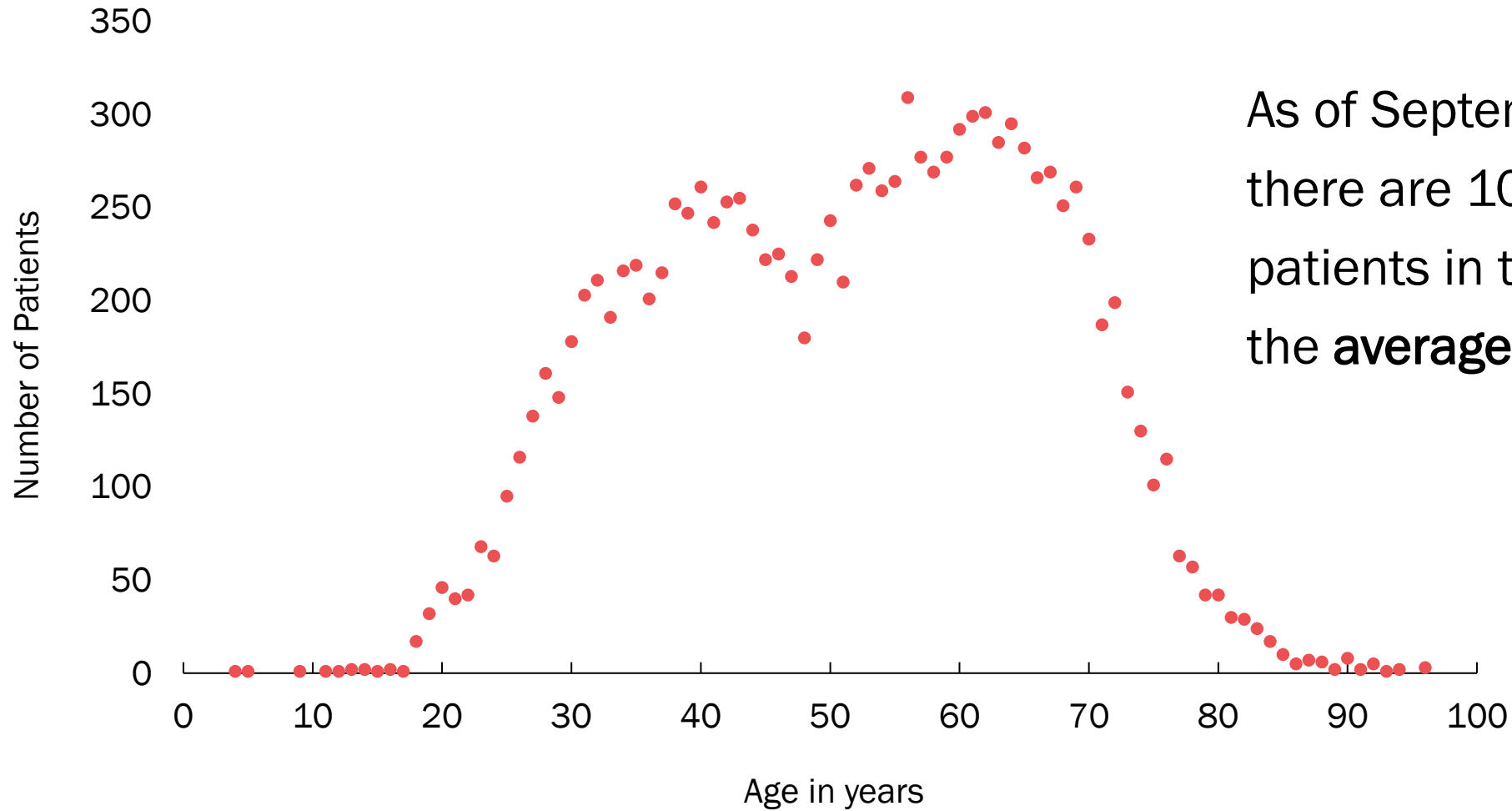
Healthcare

- ESSENCE
- National EMS Information System (NEMSIS)
- Hospital Discharge Data

Other

- Toxicology
- Vital Records
- State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System
- Office of the State Medical Examiners (OSME)
- Motor Vehicle Crash Data from NHTSA

Age Distribution of Medical Marijuana Patients in Rhode Island 2023



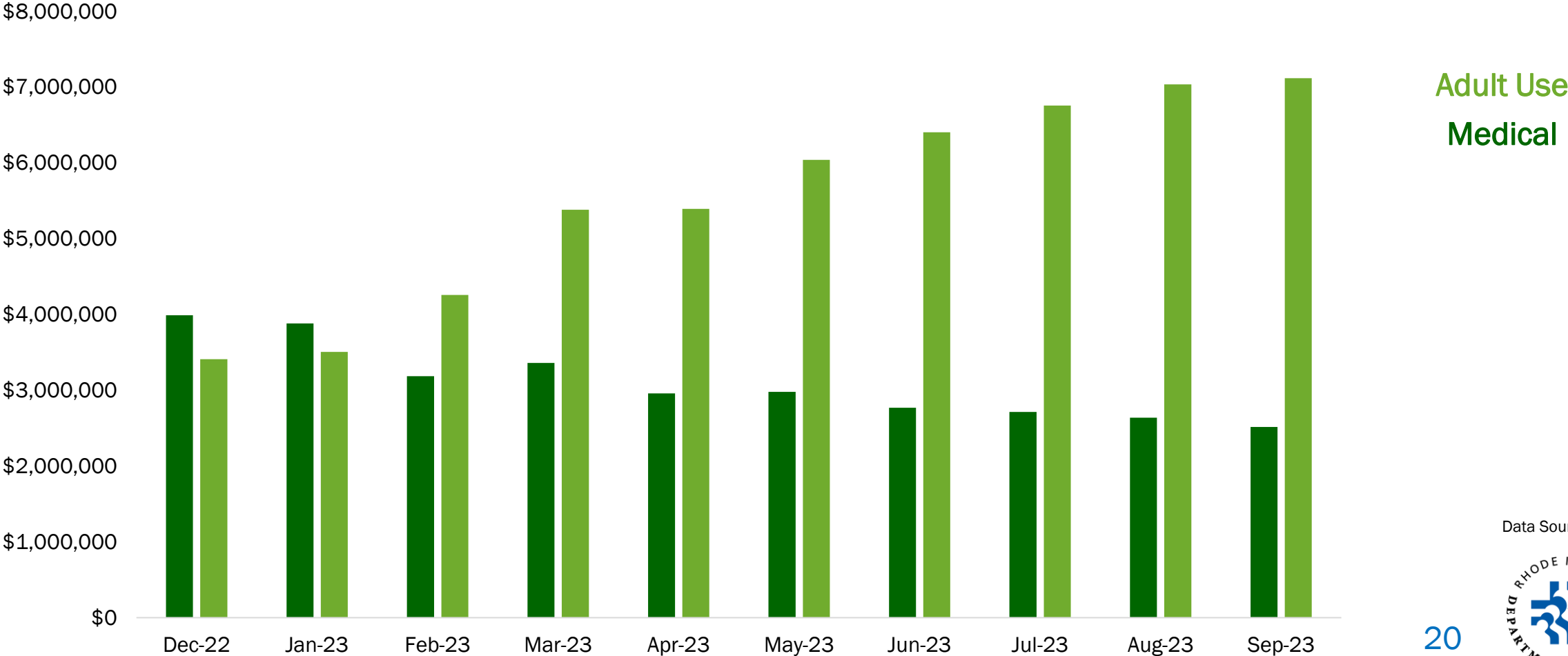
As of September 2023, there are 10,817 active patients in the MMP and the average age is **52**.

Data Source: RIDOH MMP



Medical versus Adult-Use Cannabis Sales in Rhode Island

Medical sales have continued to decrease while adult-use sales have steadily increased since adult-use legalization. Combined total sales in September 2023 were \$9,633,352.

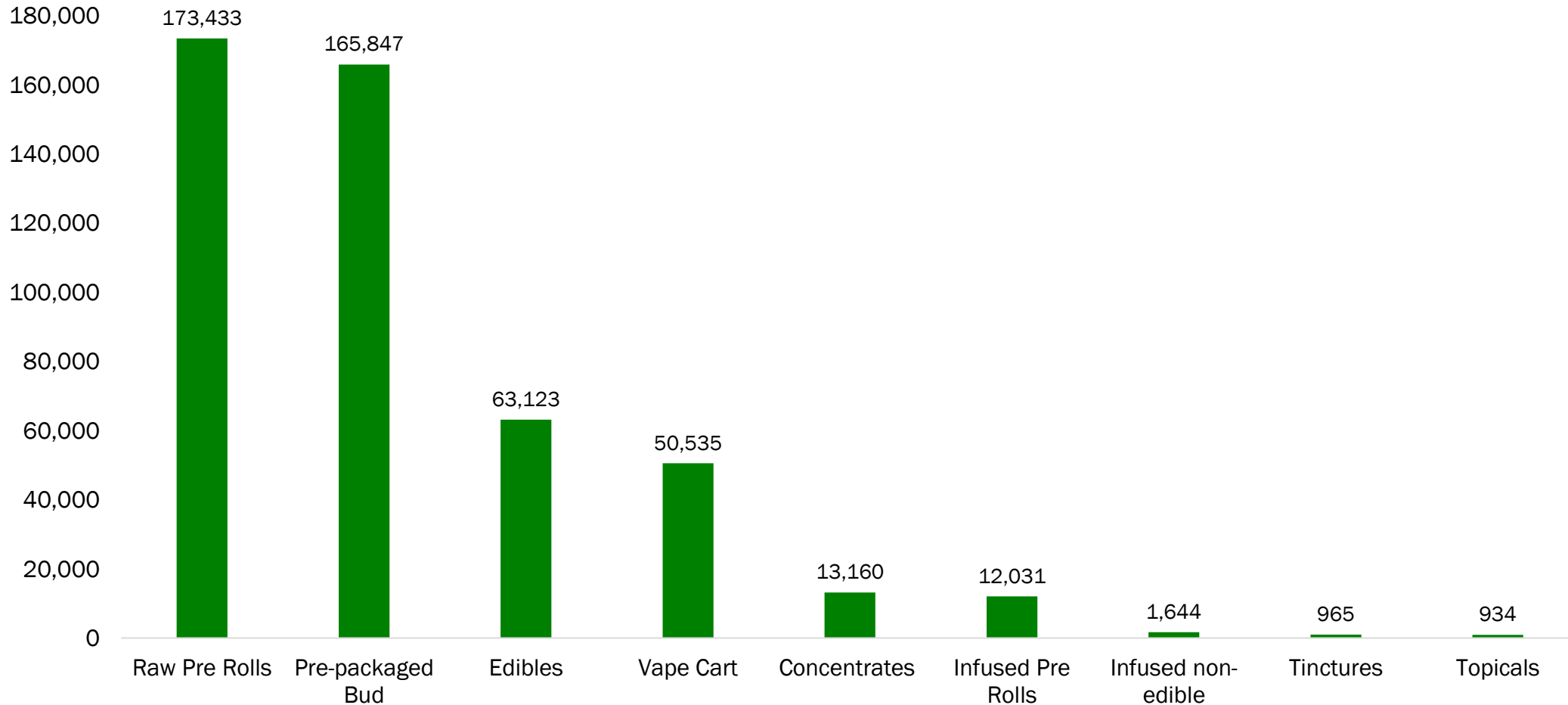


Data Source: DBR



Cannabis Sales by Product Type

Pre-packaged bud, raw pre-rolls, and edibles have been the most popular cannabis products sold at Rhode Island compassion and hybrid centers.



Data Source: DBR





Cannabis-Related ED Visits Data in Rhode Island



Cannabis Data Sources and Definition

- **Data Sources:** Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-Based Epidemics (ESSENCE) and electronic medical records from emergency department (ED) visits collected from 10 Rhode Island hospitals.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-defined definition of cannabis-related:

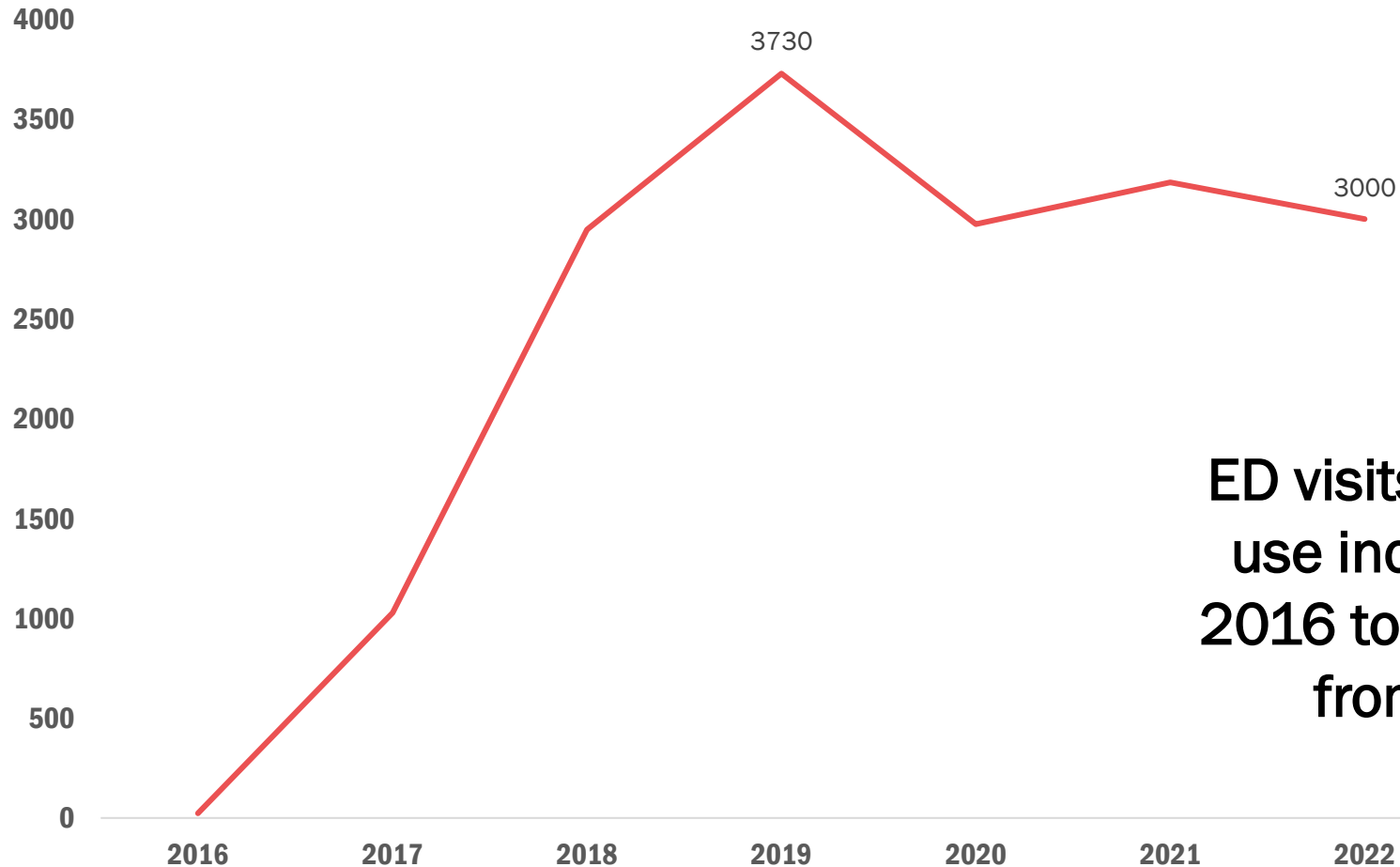
ICD-10 codes (F12.1, F12.2, F12.9, or T40.7)

OR

Chief complaint text:

- Marijuana
- Cannabis
- Mary Jane
- THC
- Smoke wet
- Smoke pot
- Ingest, edible, or smoke
- MJ
- Hash
- Weed
- Hashish
- Hemp
- Ganja
- Reefer
- Brownie
- Kush
- Blunt
- Joint

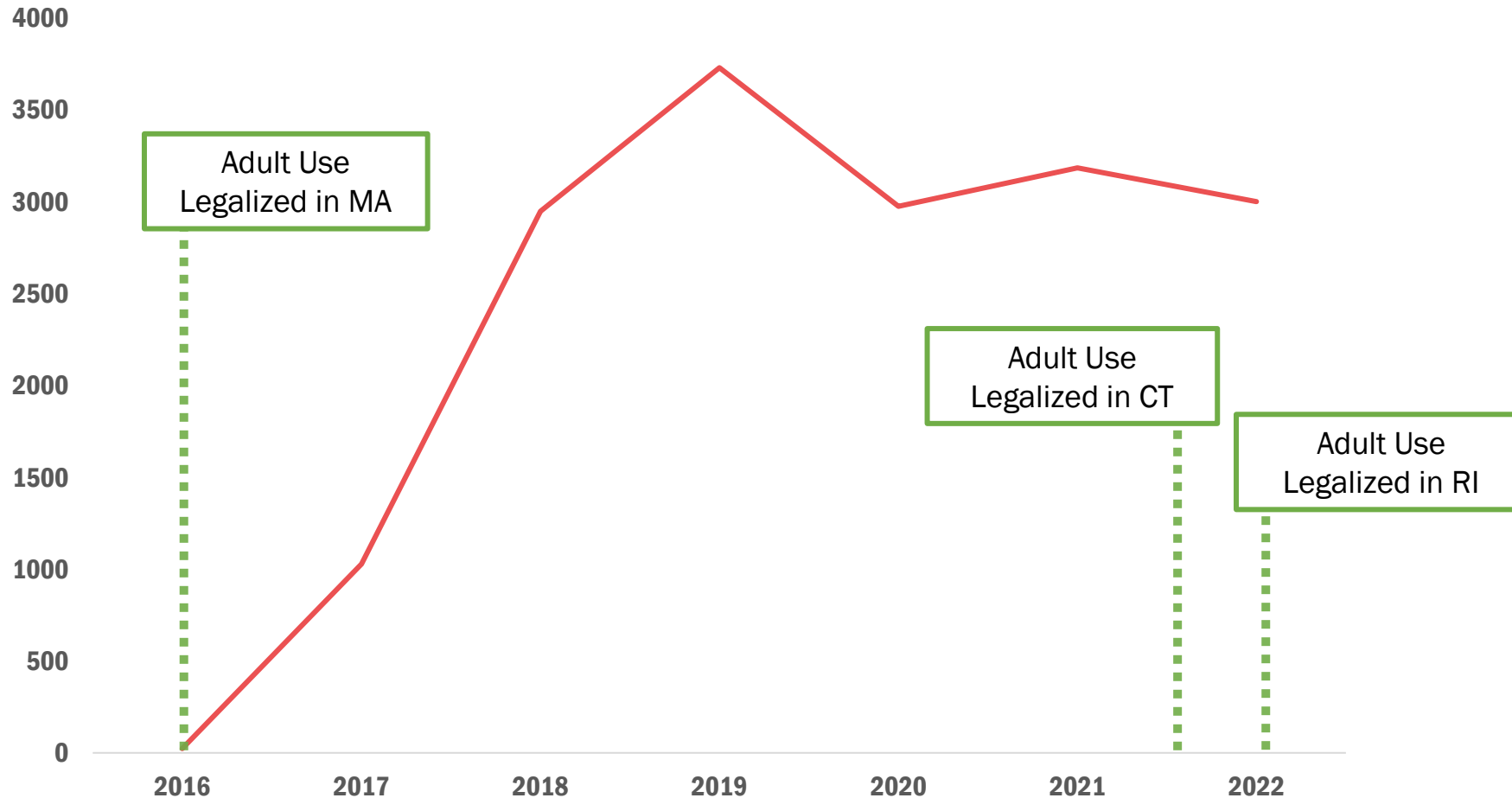
All Cannabis-Related ED Visits, 2016–2023



ED visits related to cannabis use increased rapidly from 2016 to 2019, with a decline from 2019 to 2022.

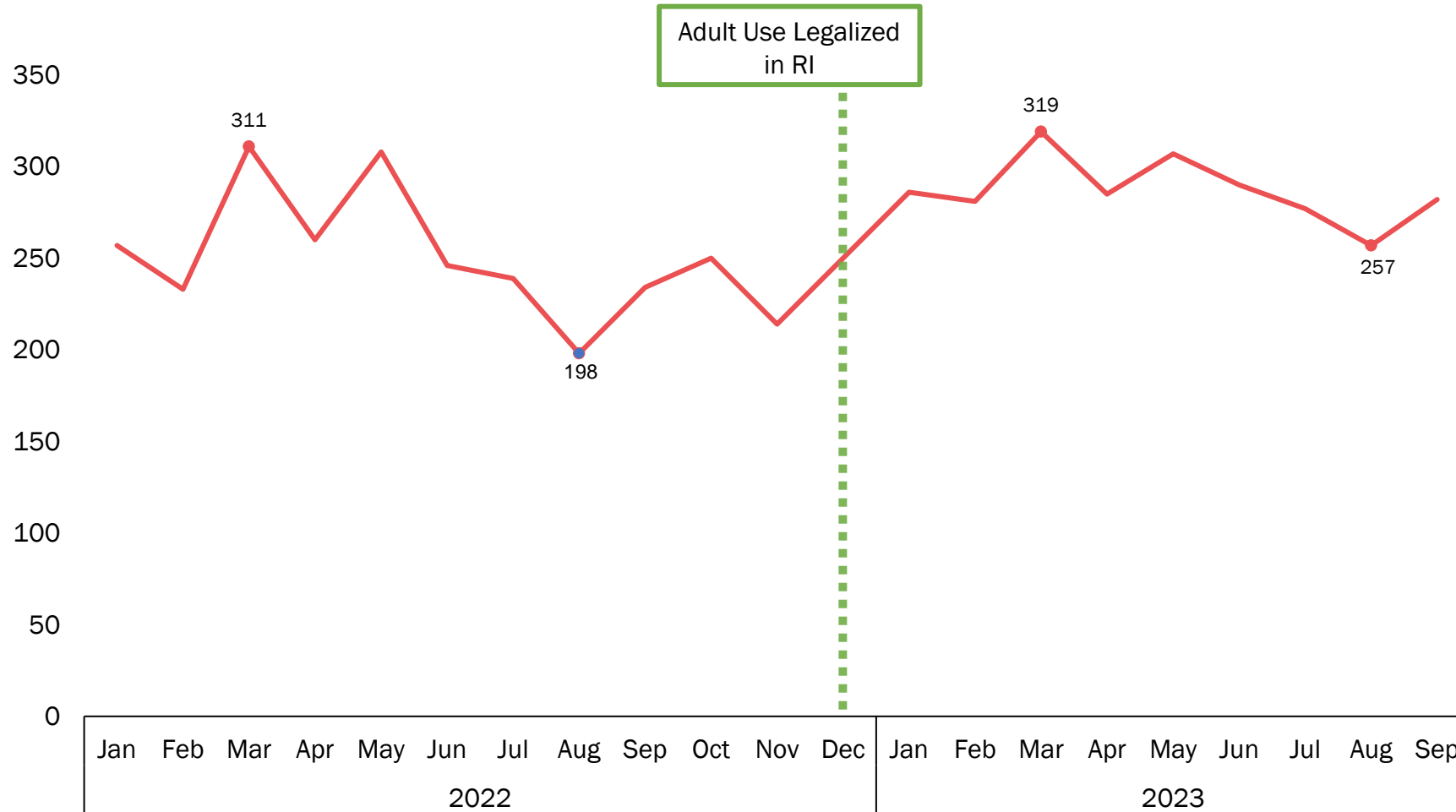
Data Source: ESSENCE

All Cannabis-Related ED Visits, 2016–2023



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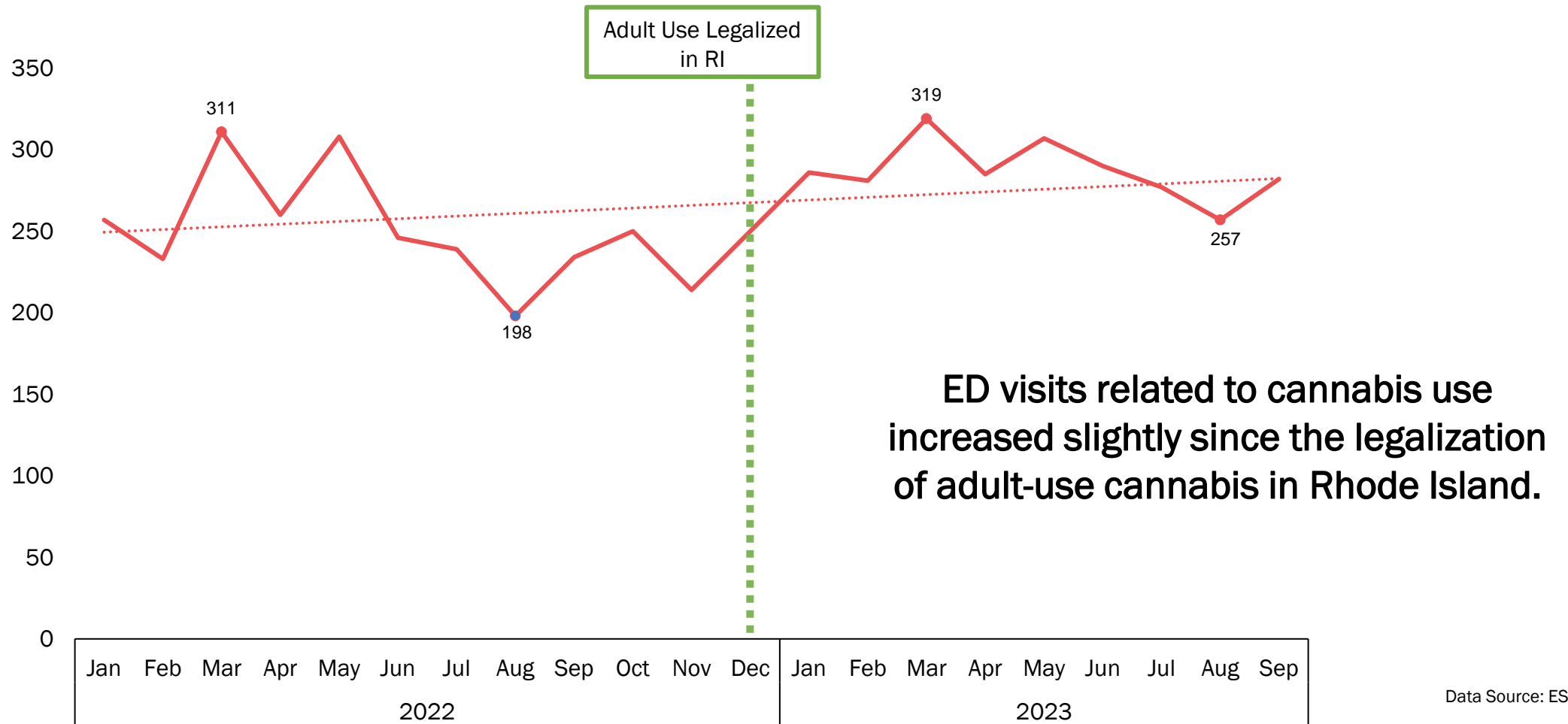
All Cannabis-Related ED Visits, 2022-2023



Data Source: ESSENCE



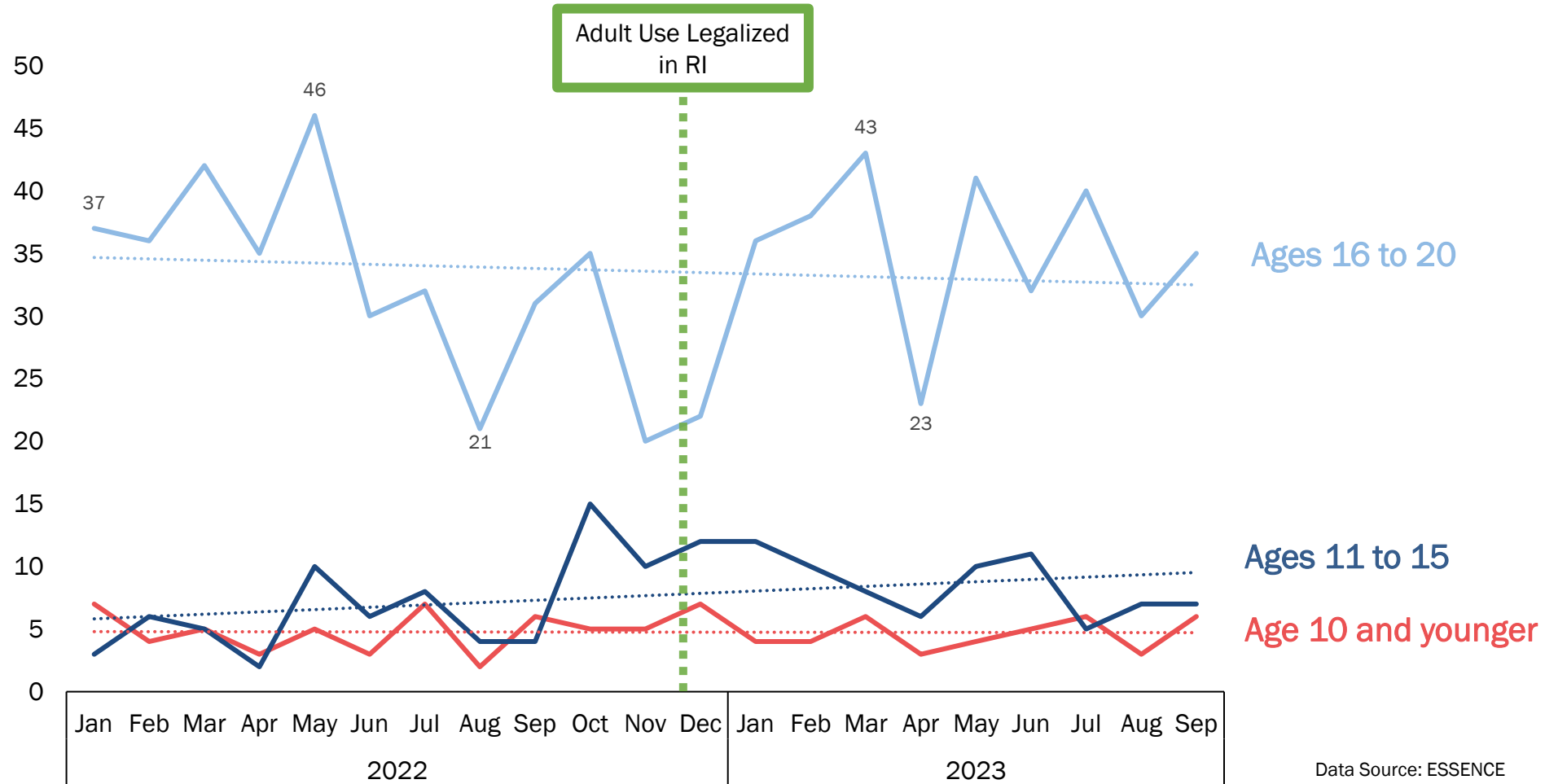
All Cannabis-Related ED Visits, 2022-2023



Data Source: ESSENCE



Cannabis-Related ED Visits, Patients Younger than 21 2022 – 2023

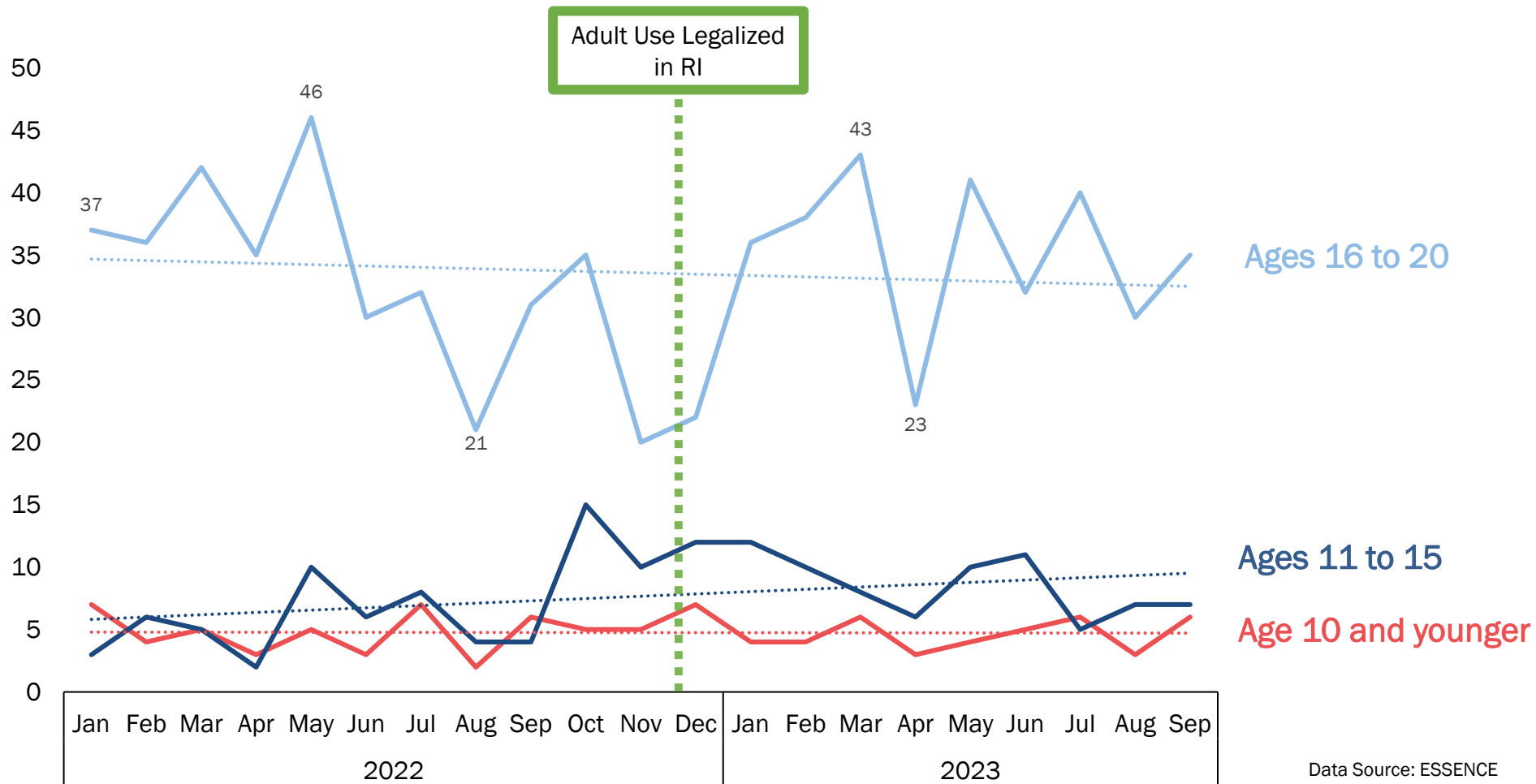


Cannabis-Related ED Visits, Patients Younger than 21 2022 – 2023

ED visits related to cannabis use were most prevalent among individuals ages 16 to 20.

There was a decrease in cannabis-related ED visits among youth ages 16 to 20.

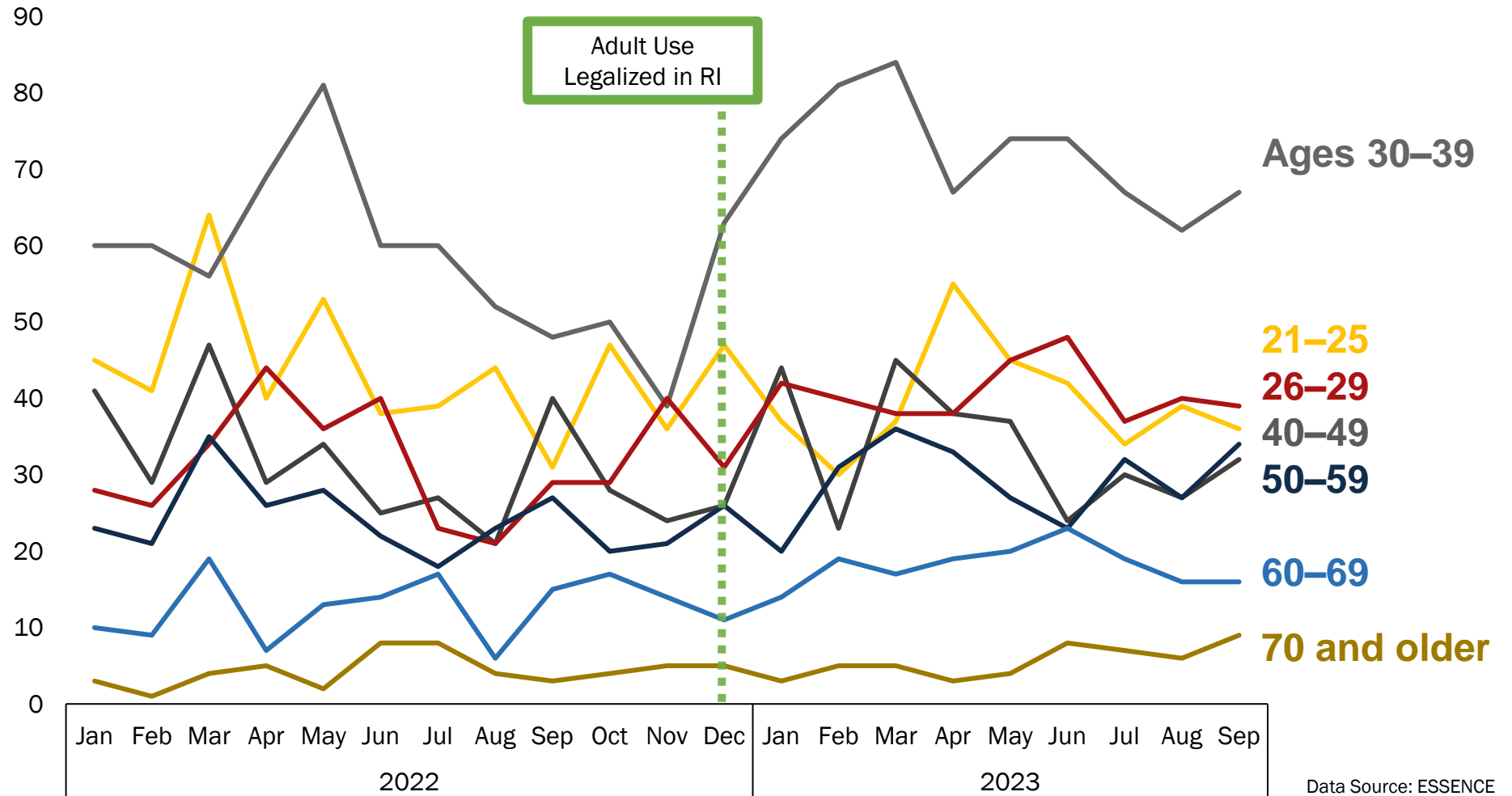
There was a slight increase in cannabis-related ED visits among individuals ages 11 to 15.



Data Source: ESSENCE

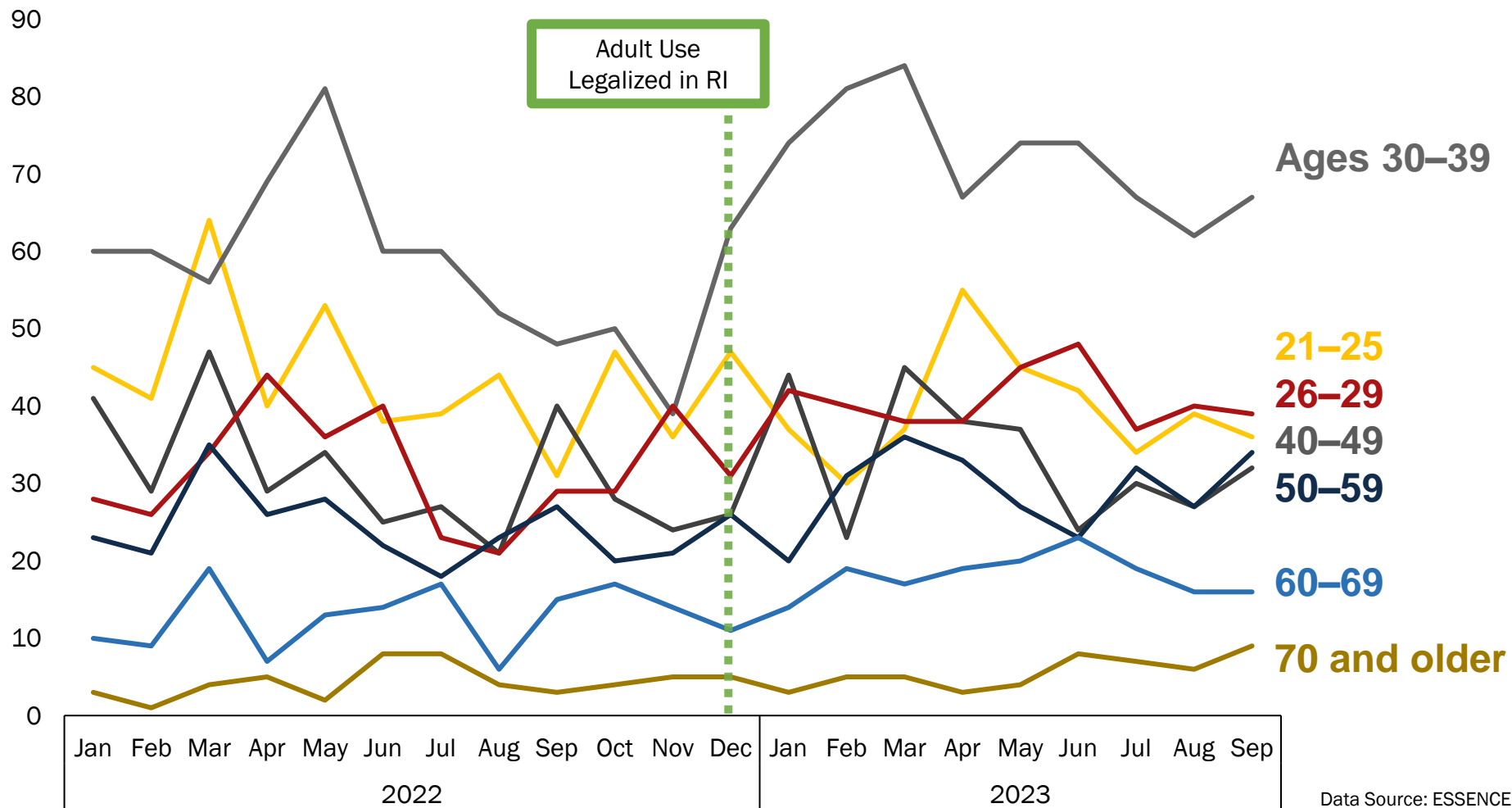


Cannabis-Related ED Visits, Patients Older than 21 2022 – 2023



Cannabis-Related ED Visits, Patients Older than 21 2022 – 2023

Emergency department visits related to cannabis use were most prevalent in 30 – 39 year age group.



Next Steps

Subpopulation analyses

- Rhode Islanders younger than 21
- Variance of use among Rhode Islanders ages 30 to 39
- Primary/secondary impression of ED visits

Emergency Medical Services data
(NEMESIS)

Linking databases

Surveys on reported use for vulnerable
populations



Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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