

## *Marijuana Facts from Drug War Facts*

**How many people in the U.S. currently use marijuana?** In 2009, approximately 17 million people or 7% of the population were considered “current” users by consuming marijuana least once per month. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2010.* <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9ResultsP.pdf>

**Is marijuana use increasing?** From 2002 to 2009, the number of “current” (monthly) marijuana increased grew by +11.7%. In contrast, user counts for otherwise legal Pain Relievers and Alcohol increased respectively by +20% and +9% during that same time frame. *SAMHSA, 2010.* <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/tabs/Sect7peTabs1to37.htm#Tab7.1A>

**Do people use marijuana more in legal or decriminalized states?** “California, the state with the largest and longest-running medical marijuana program, ranked 34th in the percentage of persons age 12-17 reporting marijuana use in the past month during the period 2002-2003.” *Congressional Research Service, 2010.* <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33211.pdf>

“The available evidence suggests that removal of the prohibition against possession itself (decriminalization) does not increase cannabis use.” *British Journal of Psychiatry, 2001.* <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/cgi/reprint/178/2/123.pdf>

**Are people arrested for possessing marijuana?** An estimated 758,593 people were arrested for marijuana possession (not trafficking or sales) in 2009. Arrests for marijuana possession have risen from about a third to about a half of all drug abuse violation arrests over the fifteen year 1995-2009 period. *FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1970-2009.* [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table\\_29.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table_29.html) and <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/arrests/index.html>

“We observe that the annual risk of misdemeanor arrest for those 12–17 (6.6 percent) is more than twice the rate for the full population (3.0 percent).” *RAND Corporation, 2010.* [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2010/RAND\\_OP315.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP315.pdf)

**Do criminal penalties deter marijuana use?** “Our findings do not support claims that criminalization reduces cannabis use and that decriminalization increases cannabis use.” *American Journal of Public Health, 2004.* <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/94/5/836>

Despite a federal ban and criminal penalties that vary among the 50 states, 104 million Americans are estimated to have tried marijuana at least once according to 2009 data, up by +10% from 95 million in 2002. *SAMSHA, 2010.* <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/tabs/Sect1peTabs1to10.pdf>

**What is the cost to enforce marijuana laws and how much revenue would its taxation raise?** “[L]egalizing drugs would save roughly \$41.3 billion per year in government expenditure on enforcement of prohibition. Of these savings, \$25.7 billion would accrue to state and local governments, while \$15.6 billion would accrue to the federal government. Approximately \$8.7 billion of the savings would result from legalization of marijuana ... The report also estimates that drug legalization would yield tax revenue of \$46.7 billion annually, assuming legal drugs were taxed at rates comparable to those on alcohol and tobacco. Approximately \$8.7 billion of this revenue would result from legalization of marijuana.” *Cato Institute, 2010.* <http://www.cato.org/pubs/wtpapers/DrugProhibitionWP.pdf>

**Does marijuana increase healthcare costs?** “[D]irect alcohol-related health care costs (\$3,306.2 million in Canada) are over 45 times higher than the direct health care costs of cannabis (\$73 million).” *Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2007.* <http://www.ccsa.ca/2007%20CCSA%20Documents/ccsa-011350-2007.pdf>

“The public health burden of cannabis use is probably modest compared with that of alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drugs. ... cannabis use caused 0.2% of total disease burden in Australia—a country with one of the highest reported rates of cannabis use.” *The Lancet, 2009.* <http://science.iowamedicalmarijuana.org/pdfs/misc/cannabis.pdf>

**Is marijuana treatment voluntary?** More than half (58 percent) of primary marijuana admissions were referred to treatment through the criminal justice system. *SAMSHA, 2005.* <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k5/MJreferrals/MJreferrals.pdf>

**Is today’s marijuana more potent?** “Statements in the popular media that the potency of cannabis has increased by ten times or more in recent decades are not supported by the data from either the USA or Europe.” *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2004.* [http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att\\_33985\\_EN\\_Insight6.pdf](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att_33985_EN_Insight6.pdf)

The three-year average annual percentage change in cannabis potency from 2005 to 2008 was +3.9% for ‘commercial ‘marijuana’ and -1.3% for ‘sensimilla.’ The average potency values for this same time frame were 5.8% THC for commercial ‘marijuana’ and 11.2% THC for ‘sensimilla.’ *University of Mississippi Potency Monitoring Project, 2009.* [http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/mpmp\\_report\\_104.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/mpmp_report_104.pdf)

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**Have people died from marijuana?** “There are no confirmed cases of human deaths from cannabis poisoning in the world medical literature.” *World Health Organization, 1998.* <http://www.druglibrary.net/schaffer/hemp/general/who-probable.htm>

Drug Abuse Warning Network data show no emergency room marijuana deaths from 2004-2008. *SAMHSA, 2010.* [https://dawninfo.samhsa.gov/data/ed/Nation/Nation\\_2008\\_Illicit.xls](https://dawninfo.samhsa.gov/data/ed/Nation/Nation_2008_Illicit.xls)

**Is marijuana safe?** “In strict medical terms marijuana is far safer than many foods we commonly consume. ... it is physically impossible to eat enough marijuana to induce death. Marijuana in its natural form is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man.” *Francis J. Young, In the Matter of Marijuana Rescheduling Petition, 1988.*

<http://www.iowamedicalmarijuana.org/pdfs/young.pdf>

“A review of the literature suggests that the majority of cannabis users, who use the drug occasionally rather than on a daily basis, will not suffer any lasting physical or mental harm.” *Current Opinion in Pharmacology, 2005.*

<http://www.safeaccessnow.org/downloads/long%20term%20cannabis%20effects.pdf>

**Does marijuana affect cognition?** “[O]ur meta-analysis of [marijuana] studies that have attempted to address the question of longer term neurocognitive disturbance in moderate and heavy cannabis users has failed to demonstrate a substantial, systematic, and detrimental effect of cannabis use on neuropsychological performance.” *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society, 2003.* <http://www.csdp.org/research/348art2003.pdf>

“We conclude that marijuana does not have a long-term negative impact on global intelligence.” *Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2002.* <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC100921/pdf/20020402s00015p887.pdf>

**Does marijuana induce psychosis?** “This study does not therefore support the specific causal link between cannabis use and the incidence of psychotic disorders ... This concurs with other reports indicating that increases in population cannabis use have not been followed by increases in psychotic incidence.” *Schizophrenia Research, 2009.*

[http://www.ukcia.org/research/keele\\_study/Assessing-the-impact-of-cannabis.pdf](http://www.ukcia.org/research/keele_study/Assessing-the-impact-of-cannabis.pdf)

**Does marijuana affect driving?** “We found only limited evidence to support the claim that cannabis use increases accident risk. Participants who had driven under the influence of cannabis in the previous year appeared to be no more likely than drug-free drivers to report that they had had an accident in the previous 12 months.” *Crime and Justice Bulletin, 2005.*

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll\\_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB87.pdf/\\$file/CJB87.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB87.pdf/$file/CJB87.pdf)

“Both Australian studies suggest cannabis may actually reduce the responsibility rate and lower crash risk. Put another way, cannabis consumption either increases driving ability or, more likely, drivers who use cannabis make adjustments in driving style to compensate for any loss of skill.” *Journal of Drug Issues, 2004.* <http://www2.criminology.fsu.edu/~jdi/34n4.htm>

**Does marijuana cause cancer?** “[W]e found no positive associations between marijuana use and lung or UAT cancers ... Despite several lines of evidence suggesting the biological plausibility of marijuana use being carcinogenic, it is possible that marijuana use does not increase cancer risk ...” *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention, 2006.*

<http://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/15/10/1829.full.pdf>

“We found that moderate marijuana use was significantly associated with reduced risk of HNSCC [head and neck squamous cell carcinoma] ... Further, we observed that marijuana use modified the interaction between alcohol and cigarette smoking, resulting in a decreased HNSCC risk among moderate smokers and light drinkers, and attenuated risk among the heaviest smokers and drinkers.” *Cancer Research Prevention, 2009*

<http://cancerpreventionresearch.aacrjournals.org/content/early/2009/07/28/1940-6207.CAPR-09-0048.full.pdf>

**Does marijuana lead to hard drugs?** “Evidence supporting causal linkages between stages, as specified by the gateway hypothesis, was not obtained. Nor were specific risk factors identified that were related to consumption of each drug.” *American Journal of Psychiatry, 2006.* <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/reprint/163/12/2134.pdf>

“These data suggest that rather than acting as a gateway to other drugs, ...cannabis has been exerting a beneficial influence on most.” *Harm Reduction Journal, 2007.* <http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/pdf/1477-7517-4-16.pdf>

These Facts and more can be found in the “Marijuana,” “Drug Usage,” “Economics,” and “Gateway Theory” Chapters of *Drug War Facts* at <http://www.drugwarfacts.org>. *Drug War Facts* is a project of Common Sense for Drug Policy <http://www.csdp.org>.