

Background: Facts About Marijuana

MARIJUANA IS ADDICTIVE

- 1 in 11 people who ever start using marijuana become addicted.ⁱ In adolescence, the addiction rates jump to 1 in 6.ⁱⁱ Increased use rates lead to higher addiction rates.
- More than two-thirds of treatment admissions involving those under the age of 18 cite marijuana as their primary substance of abuse, more than 15 times the rate for alcohol alone.ⁱⁱⁱ

AGE OF INITIATION IS CRITICAL

- Children who first smoke marijuana under the age of 14 are more than five times as likely to abuse drugs as adults, than those who first use marijuana at age 18.^{iv}
- In the 1970s, the average age of initiation for marijuana was 19. In 2011, the average age of initiation was 17.5.^v The age of initiation for marijuana use is moving in the wrong direction.

MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS IQ

- A recent study found that those who used marijuana heavily in their teens and continued through adulthood showed a permanent drop in IQ of 8 points. This held true when controlled for socioeconomic status.^{vi}
- A loss of 8 IQ points could drop a person of average intelligence into the lowest third of the intelligence range.

MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

- Youth with an average grade of D or below were more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as youth with an average grade of A.^{vii}
- High school students who use alcohol or other drugs are up to five times more likely to drop out of school.^{viii}

MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 66.1% of serious disciplinary actions in public high schools can be attributed to the distribution, possession or use of illegal drugs.^{ix}

MARIJUANA POTENCY IS INCREASING

- In the last 20 years (between 1983 and 2013), the average THC level has nearly tripled. Currently, the average level of THC in seized samples is 15.1%. This compares to an average of less than 4% in 1983.^x

MARIJUANA IS BEING MARKETED TO CHILDREN

- Despite the fact that all of the states that have approved “medical marijuana” initiatives or legalized marijuana have regulations restricting its use to those 18 and older, marijuana is clearly being marketed to children in the form of edibles. This is evidenced by the fact that products such as “Pot Tarts,” “Ring Pots,” “Orange Kush” soda; brownies, etc., are being sold – some even in vending machines.



MARIJUANA IS HARMFUL TO CHILDREN

- Between 2005 and 2009, none of poisonings in children under age 12 at the Children’s Hospital of Colorado involved marijuana. Since 2009, 2% of poisonings in children under 12 involved marijuana.^{xi}

MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS HIGHWAY SAFETY

- According to the Colorado Department of Transportation, drivers who tested positive for marijuana in fatal car crashes DOUBLED between 2006 and 2010 (after the dispensaries were opened) while all other fatal car crashes declined for the same time period.^{xii}
- 1 in 5 (or 19% of) teen drivers report that they have driven under the influence of marijuana. Only 13% of teen drivers report that they have driven under the influence of alcohol.^{xiii}

ⁱ Wagner, F.A. & Anthony, J.C. From first drug use to drug dependence; developmental periods of risk for dependence upon cannabis, cocaine, and alcohol. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 26, 479-488 (2002). Available: <http://www.nature.com/npp/journal/v26/n4/pdf/1395810a.pdf>

ⁱⁱ National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2011. *Topics in Brief: Marijuana*. Available: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/topics-in-brief/marijuana>

ⁱⁱⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2010. Office of Applied Studies. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS): 2009 Discharges from Substance Abuse Treatment Services, DASIS. Available: <http://www.dasis.samhsa.gov/webt/quicklink/US10.htm>

Also see Non-medical cannabis: Rite of passage or Russian roulette? 2011. Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University.

^{iv} The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) report. August 23, 2002. Available:

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k2/MJ&dependence/MJdependence.htm>

^v Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/mjinitiation/highlights.htm> and <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k11Results/NSDUHresults2011.htm>

^{vi} M.H. Meier, Avshalom Caspi, et al. 2012. “Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife.” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

^{vii} Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *SAMHSA’s National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report—Marijuana Use among Youths*. July 19, 2002. Available at www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm.

^{viii} Lane, J., Gerstein, D., Huang, L., & Wright, D., (1998) *Risk and protective factors for adolescent drug use: Findings from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. [Online]. Available at www.samhsa.gov/hhsurvey/hhsurvey.html; Bray, J.W., Zarkin, G.A., Ringwalt, C., & Qi, J. (2000). “The relationship between marijuana initiation and dropping out of high school.” *Health Economics*, 9(1), 9–18.

^{ix} U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009-10 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2010.

^x Potency Monitoring Program Quarterly Report Number 120, Reporting Period December 16, 2012 – March 15, 2013. Mahmoud ElSohly, Director, NIDA Marijuana Project. P.7.

^{xi} Wang G, Roosevelt G, Heard K. Pediatric Marijuana Exposures in a Medical Marijuana State. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013;{}:1-4. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.140. Available: <http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1691416>

^{xii} *Colorado Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)*. August 2011.

^{xiii} Hazy Logic: Liberty Mutual Insurance/SADD Study Finds Driving Under the Influence of Marijuana a Greater Threat to Teen Drivers Than Alcohol. Available: <http://www.sadd.org/press/presspdfs/Marijuana%20Teen%20Release.pdf>

