

Key Data: Marijuana Prevention Points of Consideration

The Marijuana Prevention Initiative (MPI) works with partners in each of San Diego County's six regions to reduce youth marijuana use and increase knowledge of its harmful effects. This document provides selected county, state, and national data regarding youth marijuana use and related health and community impacts. These data points provide relevant marijuana use/perception statistics to help inform marijuana prevention efforts currently underway across San Diego County. It is important to note that data trends can be impacted by a number of variables (e.g., cultural, fiscal, and local factors).

San Diego County Data

Youth Marijuana Use

- **One in four 9th graders and 37% of 11th graders reported they had used or tried marijuana** sometime in their life (CHKS, 2013).
- **Current marijuana use** (i.e., used sometime in the past 30 days) was reported by **13% of 9th graders and 18% of 11th graders** (CHKS, 2013).
- Marijuana **use among 7th graders has remained fairly consistent since 1999**, ranging between 7% and 10% for lifetime use, and between 4% and 6% for past 30 day use (CHKS, 1999-2013).
- Among San Diego Unified School District students, **14% of 9th graders and 19% of 11th graders reported current marijuana use**, and 7% of 9th graders and 6% of 11th graders reported that they have used it on school property in the past 30 days (CHKS, 2013).
- Nearly **9% of high school students in the San Diego Unified School District reported trying marijuana for the first time before they were 13** years-old (CDC, 2014).

Access to Marijuana and Perception of Harm

- **Just over half (51%) of 9th graders and 68% of 11th graders in San Diego County reported that marijuana is "very easy" or "fairly easy" to get** (CHKS, 2013).
- **High school students** in San Diego County (9th and 11th graders) **perceive occasional marijuana smoking as less harmful than occasional cigarette smoking** (CHKS, 2013).
- Among 7th, 9th, and 11th graders approximately **1 in 3 students believes using marijuana once or twice a week is only slightly harmful or not harmful** (CHKS, 2013).
- The percentage of 9th and 11th grade **students who believe that smoking marijuana once or twice a week is very harmful has decreased since 2009** (CHKS 2009 & 2013).

Marijuana Prevention Initiative

- **Among adult San Diego County residents surveyed, 77% believed that smoking marijuana daily or weekly is harmful to one's health** (CCR, Community Survey, 2014).
- **Among adult San Diego County residents surveyed, 31% perceived recreational marijuana use as a problem in their community** (CCR, Community Survey, 2014).

Treatment Admissions Data

- The average **potency of marijuana has increased six fold since 1978, which may contribute to higher rates of youth addiction** (NIDA, 2009).
- **Marijuana/hashish is overwhelmingly the drug of choice for adolescents (12-17) admitted into drug treatment programs**, accounting for **nearly 3/4 (74%)** of adolescent admissions in FY 2013/14 (HHS ADS SanWITS, 2014).
- **Marijuana was the primary drug of choice for 81% of males (12-17)** admitted into treatment programs in FY 2013/14 (HHS ADS SanWITS, 2014).

Increased
Potency



Implications of Marijuana Use Across California and the U.S. ¹

Drugged Driving

Increased
Trend



- Drugs play an increasingly prevalent role in fatal crashes. In a study of 23,500 drivers from six different states, **drugged driving accounted for more than 28 percent of traffic deaths in 2010, up from more than 16 percent in 1999**. → **Marijuana** was the main drug involved in the increase, **contributing to 12 percent of 2010 crashes compared with 4 percent in 1999** (Brady and Li, 2014).
- Only **11% of people who tested positive for THC** (the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana) **in the California Roadside Survey believe that driving under the influence of marijuana is harmful** (OTS, 2012).
- **Cases involving driving under the influence of marijuana are more likely to settle, not be charged, or be dismissed than those involving alcohol** (Tashima and Hanson, 2011).

Driving Under the Combined Influence of Alcohol and Marijuana

- The risk of a fatal crash to a driver under the influence of alcohol is 13 times higher than the risk of the driver who is not under the influence of alcohol. **For the driver who is under the influence of both alcohol and marijuana, their risk increases to 24 times that of a sober person** (Brady and Li, 2014).
- California **drivers are as likely to test positive for THC as alcohol** (OTS, 2012).
- Approximately **25% of persons testing positive for THC in the California Roadside Survey also tested positive for alcohol or another drug** (OTS, 2012).
- **Severe marijuana-induced driving impairment is observed with high doses, chronic use and in combination with low doses of alcohol** (Couper and Logan, 2004).

Implications of Drugged Driving

- Driving under the influence of THC is associated with (Couper and Logan, 2004):
 - *Decreased car handling performance*
 - *Increased reaction times*
 - *Inability to maintain headway*
 - *Subjective sleepiness*
 - *Motor incoordination*
 - *Impaired time and distance estimation*
 - *Increased lateral travel*

Academic Achievement¹

- Among adolescents, *marijuana use is associated with attention and memory problems, slower brain processing, and difficulty with problem-solving* – all of which may affect academic performance (Medina et al., 2007).
- *Heavy marijuana use is associated with higher rates of skipping class, lower GPAs, and failure to complete college* (Arria et al., 2013; Hunt et al., 2010).
- Adolescents who *have smoked marijuana more than 100 times are less likely to enter college or earn a college degree* and are *more likely to drop out of college* than their peers who have not (Fergusson et al., 2003).
- Middle and high school *students (ages 12-17) with an average grade of “D” or lower reported significantly higher rates of current marijuana use in the past month* compared to those with an average grade of “C” or higher (SAMHSA, 2009).
- *Young adults (ages 18-23) who did not complete high school reported significantly higher rates of current marijuana use* than those who completed high school (SAMHSA, 2009).

Impact on the Developing Brain¹

- *Smoking marijuana is significantly associated with the onset of psychotic disorders*, particularly schizophrenia (Large et al., 2011; Moore et al., 2007; Semple et al., 2005).
- *Children and adolescents can become addicted to marijuana more often and more rapidly than adults* because their brains are still developing (CSAM, 2012).
- The *combination of marijuana and alcohol is more addictive in adolescents than in adults* (Muoio, 2012).

★ For more information regarding the MPI visit our website at www.mpisdcounty.net

¹ The following data derive from national research studies and may be of great relevance to regional prevention providers in San Diego County.

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