

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.

San Diego County Data

Youth Marijuana Use

Increased
Trend

- The **percentage of 9th and 11th graders who reported using marijuana in their lifetime has been increasing since 2007** (CHKS, 1999-2011).

- In 2011, approximately **26% of 9th graders and 39% of 11th graders reported they had used or tried marijuana** sometime in their life (CHKS, 2009-11).

- Approximately **1 in 5 high school juniors reported using marijuana sometime in the past 30 days** (CHKS, 2009-11).

Increased
Trend

- The **percentage of 9th and 11th graders who reported smoking marijuana in the last 30 days has increased 50%** from 2007-2011 (CHKS).

- **Use among 7th graders has not changed substantially over the past 10 years.** On average, nearly 10% of 7th graders reported using marijuana sometime in their life, and approximately 5% reported using it in the past 30 days (CHKS, 1999-2011).

- Approximately **17% of high school students in the San Diego Unified School District reported that they are currently using marijuana**, and over 7% reported that they have used it on school property in the past 30 days (CHKS, 2012-13).

- Nearly **8.5% 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, 2013).

Access to Marijuana and Perception of Harm

- Approximately **70% of 11th graders in San Diego County reported that marijuana is "very easy" or "fairly easy" to get** (CHKS, 2009-11).

- **High school students** in San Diego County (9th and 11th graders) **perceive occasional marijuana smoking as less harmful than occasional cigarette smoking** (CHKS, 2009-11).

- From 2009-2011, **the percentage of students who believe that smoking marijuana is very harmful has declined** (CHKS).

- Approximately **half of San Diego County 7th, 9th, and 11th graders do not believe that people greatly risk harming themselves when smoking marijuana once or twice a week** (CHKS, 2009-11).

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- Although relatively few young people believe that smoking marijuana is harmful, **approximately 80% of San Diego County adult residents believe that smoking marijuana daily or weekly is harmful to one's health** (Community Perception Survey, 2011).
- Approximately **34% of San Diego County adult residents perceive recreational marijuana use to be a problem in their community** (Community Perception Survey, 2011).

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 **just over 3/4 (76%)** of adolescent admissions in FY 2012/13 (HHS ADS SanWITS, 2013).
- **Marijuana was the primary drug of choice for 81% of males (12-17)** admitted into treatment programs in FY 2012/13 (HHS ADS SanWITS, 2013).

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

Drugged Driving

- 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** (Brady and Li, 2014).
- **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).

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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