

CDUHR FACT SHEET

Alcohol & Marijuana Use— Adverse Psychosocial Outcomes and Impact of Marijuana Legalization Among High School Seniors

Purpose of the studies

Substance use has been associated with adverse outcomes among youth, including increases in risky behaviors. Studying substance use among high school students can identify trends to help plan strategies to reduce risks. This may be especially important in light of increasing support for legalization and rapidly changing state-level policy.

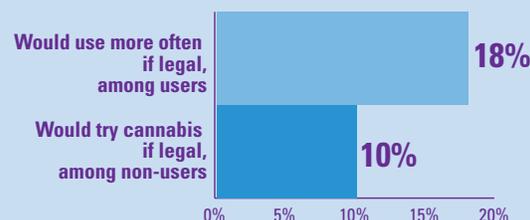
How were the studies conducted and who was involved?

Monitoring the Future (MTF) is an ongoing study that surveys approximately 50,000 U.S. high school students every year, investigating both legal and illicit drug use among youth and their peers. Many manuscripts on MTF data have been published. In this fact sheet we focus on recent analyses of MTF data by CDUHR-Affiliated Investigators on alcohol and marijuana use among high school seniors. The studies compared adverse psychosocial outcomes of alcohol and marijuana and the possible impact of marijuana legalization on use.

What were some of the findings of the study?

- Overall, adverse outcomes associated with alcohol and marijuana use tended to increase as the frequency of use increased, and there were differences by sex, race, and ethnicity
- Comparisons of alcohol and marijuana users:
 - Marijuana users were more likely to report no adverse psychosocial outcomes
 - Adverse outcomes that were more prevalent among marijuana users:
 - Compromised relationships with authority figures (e.g., teachers, supervisors)
 - Less energy or interest and lower school or job performance
 - Adverse outcomes that were more prevalent among alcohol users:
 - Increased unsafe driving
 - Engagement in regretful behavior (especially for females)
 - Compromised relationships with friends and significant others
- Intentions to use marijuana if it were legal:
 - Of those who never used marijuana, 10% said they would initiate use
 - Of those who had ever used marijuana, 18% said they would use it more often

Intention to use marijuana if legalized, by prior marijuana use



What might this mean for policy makers and funders who plan HIV prevention efforts?

- The public health community should continue to educate users of alcohol and marijuana about the differences in potential adverse consequences of use of these substances.
- Further research is needed to determine how rates of use change in light of rapidly changing policies, and research is also needed to determine how HIV-related risk behavior may change as policies become more liberal.

Where can you find more information about these findings?

Palamar JJ, Fenstermaker M, Kamboukos D, Ompad DC, Cleland CM, & Weitzman M (2014) Adverse psychosocial outcomes associated with drug use among US high school seniors: a comparison of alcohol and marijuana. *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, doi: 10.3109/00952990.2014.943371.

Palamar JJ, Ompad DC, & Petkova E (2014) Correlates of intentions to use cannabis among US high school seniors in the case of cannabis legalization. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 25, 424-435.

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