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New Research Shows That Teen Marijuana Use Is Declining

Posted by Johnny Green at 7:15 AM on August 3, 2015

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By Jerry Otero

As laws prohibiting marijuana become less punitive, the question, “What about the kids?” becomes more pressing to parents and other adults.

We at the [Drug Policy Alliance](#) urge young people to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. We avoid the exaggerations, misinformation and scare tactics of the past. We believe that honesty is the best way to engage youth and the most empowering way to help them make responsible, informed decisions.

Some critics of drug policy reform exploit parents’ worries that legal access to marijuana for adults will make young people more likely to use it. They proclaim that these reforms send the wrong message to kids. They also threaten that adjusting our response to youthful experimentation will inevitably lead

teenagers down a path of problematic use

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and toward more dangerous drugs.

As a result, the prospect of legalization, decriminalization or the availability of medical marijuana sends many parents into a panic. What's a parent to believe or do?

As a father, there is nothing I care about more than the well-being of my child, and I'll do anything to keep him safe. I am sure you feel the same. Given the myriad reasons why marijuana policy reform is urgently needed, I am forced to question the predictions that regulatory changes will lead to increased use of the drug among teens.

As Marsha Rosenbaum, Ph.D., has noted in her seminal publication, [Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens and Drugs](#), "...predictions aside, the most reliable information ultimately will come from large scientific surveys of actual substance use, rather than speculation. But since sound research takes years to complete, it has been too early to determine actual prevalence in states that have already legalized. The closest approximation for predicting the impact of legalization, has been the hard data available on teen marijuana use since medical marijuana laws were passed."

So, what does the research tell us? [One recent study](#) published in June in The Lancet Psychiatry Journal, is an analysis of 24 years of data detailing the prevalence of

marijuana use among teens. It actually showed no significant difference in adolescent marijuana use in the 21 states that adopted medical marijuana laws.

Parents take note. According to the most comprehensive research yet on teens and marijuana, the sky hasn't fallen despite significant changes in marijuana laws over many years.

Driving the point even further, the study supports the [2013 report](#) from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment finding that high school marijuana use decreased since the Centennial State became the first to legalize marijuana. This data was collected before recreational marijuana sales to adults started, but it demonstrates that medical marijuana laws and openly discussing full legalization did not send the message that it was okay for young people to use it.

These studies are encouraging to parents everywhere. Last week came more reassuring news – this time from the [Partnership at Drugfree Kids](#) who reported on [anew study](#) based on questionnaires from about 500,000 teens, finding that marijuana use among young people is on the decline.

Parents and other adults who care about the health and well-being of children are increasingly understanding that ending marijuana prohibition and promoting more honest and effective drug education are not

honest and effective drug education are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are part of the same conversation.

As a parent, it is a comfort to know that as we move toward a saner, more compassionate drug policy, teen marijuana use continues to be on the decline.

Jerry Otero is the youth policy manager for the Drug Policy Alliance.

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Source: *Drug Policy Alliance – make a donation*

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About Johnny Green

Johnny Green is a marijuana activist from Oregon. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Public Policy. *Follow Johnny Green on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Also, feel free to [email](#) any concerns.*

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skoallio · 6 days ago

First of all, if teen marijuana use is declining we have to know WHERE! If teen marijuana use is declining in most of the country but rising in Colorado and Washington, all that would do is give people like Kevin Sabet more ammo to say legalization is a failure. This article is irrelevant unless its declining in Colorado and Washington.

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Miles Monroe → skoallio · 6 days ago

Didn't even read the article, did you ...

"... the study supports the 2013 report from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment finding that high school marijuana use *decreased* since the Centennial State became the first to legalize marijuana." [emphasis added]

Or maybe comprehension is the problem?

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Frank Wank → Miles Monroe · 6 days ago

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