



Marijuana as Medicine – Experience in States

- A major study published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* by researchers at Columbia University looked at two separate data sets and found that residents of states with medical marijuana had marijuana abuse/dependence rates almost twice as high as states without such laws.ⁱ
- An additional study in the September 2011 issue of *Annals of Epidemiology* found that, among youths age 12-17, marijuana use rates were higher in states with medical marijuana laws (8.6%) compared with those without such laws (6.9%).ⁱⁱ
- A study published in the *Harm Reduction Journal* (not exactly an anti---drug mouthpiece), analyzing more than 3,000 “medical marijuana users in California, found that an overwhelming majority (87.9%) of those queried about the details of their marijuana initiation had tried it before the age of 19, and the average user was a 32--year--old, white male. 74% of the Caucasians in the sample had used cocaine, and more than 50% had used methamphetamine in their lifetime.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The average user in California was a 32---year old white male with a history of alcohol and substance abuse and no history of life---threatening illness.
- In Colorado, according to the Department of Health, only 2% of users reported cancer, and less than 1% reported HIV/AIDS as their reason for marijuana. The vast majority (94%) reported “severe pain.”^{iv}
- In Oregon, there are reports that only 10 physicians made the majority all recommendations for “medical” marijuana, and agitation, seizures, cancer,

HIV/AIDS, cachexia, and glaucoma were the last six reasons people utilized marijuana for “medical” purposes.^v

- Since certain states began permitting dispensing of medical marijuana, adolescents’ perceptions of the harmful effects of marijuana have decreased and marijuana use has increased significantly.^{vii}

ⁱ Cerdá, M., Wall, M., Keyes, K. M., Galea, S., & Hasin, D. (2012). Medical marijuana laws in 50 states: Investigating the relationship between state legalization of medical marijuana and marijuana use, abuse, and dependence. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 120(1---3): 22---27.

ⁱⁱ Wall, M. et al (2011). Adolescent Marijuana Use from 2002 to 2008: Higher in States with Medical Marijuana Laws, Cause Still Unclear, *Annals of epidemiology*, Vol 21 issue 9 Pages 714---716.

ⁱⁱⁱ O’Connell, T. J., & Bou---Matar, C. B. (2007). Long---term marijuana users seeking medical cannabis in California (2001---2007): Demographics, social characteristics, patterns of cannabis and other drug use of 4117 applicants. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 4(16).

^{iv} See Colorado Department of Public Health,
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/medicalmarijuana/statistics.html>

^v See for example, Danko, D. (2005). Oregon Medical Marijuana Cards Abound, *The Oregonian*, January 23, 2005. Also see Oregon Medical Marijuana, Protect the Patients & Treat it Like Medicine, http://www.oregon.gov/Pharmacy/Imports/Marijuana/Public/ORStatePolice_OMMALegPP.pdf?ga= t and Oregon Medical Marijuana Program Statistics, <http://public.health.oregon.gov/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/CHRONICDISEASE/MEDICALMARIJUANAPROGRAM/Pages/data.aspx>

^{vi} Johnston, L. D., O’Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 14, 2011). “Marijuana use continues to rise among U.S. teens, while alcohol use hits historic lows.” University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, MI. Retrieved January 2, 2012, from <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org>

^{vii} Wall, M. M., Poh, E., Cerda, M., Keyes, K. M., Galea, S., & Hasin, D. S. (2011). Adolescent marijuana use from 2002 to 2008: higher in states with medical marijuana laws, cause still unclear. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 21(9), 714---716.