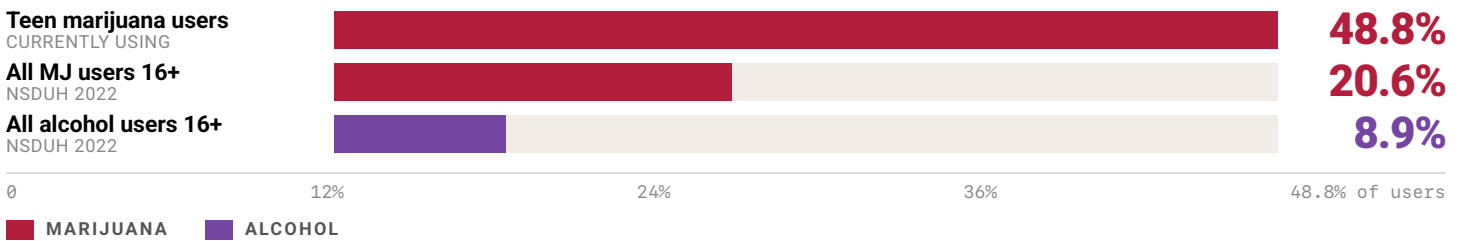


Marijuana & Driving

Legalization was pitched as a safer alternative behind the wheel. The data contradict the pitch: the share of U.S. traffic deaths involving marijuana **more than doubled from 9.0% in 2000 to 21.5% in 2018**, marijuana users drive impaired at **more than twice the rate of alcohol users**, and most users still believe marijuana makes them “safer” drivers — a myth the road-toll has already disproven.

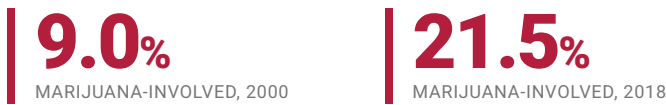
SHARE OF PAST-YEAR USERS WHO DROVE UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Marijuana users drive impaired at more than twice the rate of alcohol users^{1,3}



U.S. TRAFFIC FATALITIES · AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH⁴

The share of U.S. road deaths involving marijuana more than doubled



Marijuana-and-alcohol-combined deaths also more than doubled — **4.8% to 10.3%**. Today, roughly **1 in 5 U.S. automotive deaths** involves marijuana.⁴

AAA FOUNDATION · 2024 TRAFFIC SAFETY CULTURE INDEX⁵

Drivers severely misjudge marijuana's risk



Share of drivers who call each behavior very or extremely dangerous. Among **19–24-year-olds** the gap widens — 100% rate drunk-driving dangerous; only 63% say the same of marijuana.

WASHINGTON · AAA FOUNDATION FATAL-CRASH ANALYSIS⁶



The share of fatally-involved drivers testing positive for marijuana doubled after legalization

Pre-legalization, **8.8%** of drivers in Washington fatal crashes tested THC-positive. Post-legalization, the share jumped to **~18%**. Colorado DUI-THC convicts were in crashes **~10x more often** than sober drivers.⁷

VIRGINIA · 2024 CANNABIS CONTROL AUTHORITY SURVEY²



Of past-3-month marijuana users still believed it makes people safer drivers

Down only modestly from 68% in 2022 — and the **behavior is getting worse**: 35% of recent users now drive under the influence at least weekly (up from 26%); 22% of all Virginia drivers admit driving high (up from 14%).²

THE TOLL ON THE ROAD — WHAT LEGALIZATION HAS BOUGHT, AND WHAT NATIONWIDE LEGALIZATION WOULD COST^{4,9,10}

1 in 5

U.S. automotive deaths now involves marijuana.⁴

6,800+

projected **excess U.S. traffic fatalities** per year if marijuana were federally legalized.⁹

~85%

of cannabis users **drove the same day they consumed** — 53% within an hour.¹⁰

Endnotes

All statistics in this brief are drawn from federal surveys (SAMHSA / NSDUH 2022), peer-reviewed studies, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2024 Traffic Safety Culture Index), and SAM's *Lessons Learned from State Marijuana Legalization – Impact Report 2026–2027*. Where a finding appears in multiple cited sources, the most rigorous primary source is named.

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<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health/national-releases/2022>
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4. Lira, M. C., Heeren, T. C., Buczek, M., et al. (2021). **Trends in cannabis involvement and risk of alcohol involvement in motor vehicle crash fatalities in the United States, 2000–2018**. *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(11), 1976–1985. Share of U.S. traffic fatalities involving marijuana rose from 9.0% to 21.5% (2000→2018); MJ+alcohol from 4.8% to 10.3%; ~1 in 5 deaths.
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<https://www.nts.gov/safety/safety-studies/Pages/default.aspx>