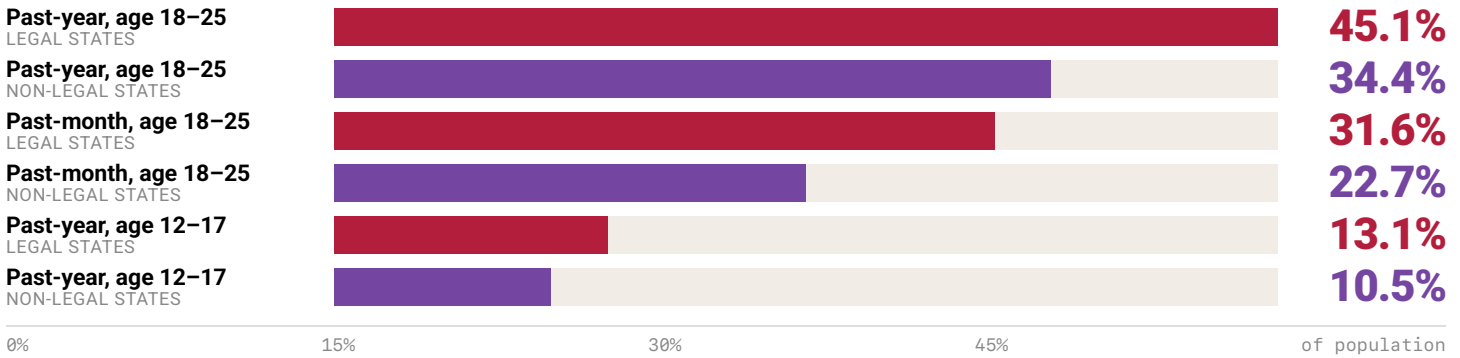


# Youth Marijuana Use

Overall teen prevalence has hit multi-decade lows — but the kids who do use are using **more potent products, more often**, and new evidence links adolescent use to **psychotic, bipolar, depressive, and anxiety disorders** by age 26.

NSDUH 2021-22 · ■ LEGAL · ■ NON-LEGAL

## In every age band and every window, youth marijuana use is higher in legal states than in non-legal states<sup>1</sup>



JAMA HEALTH FORUM · FEB 2026 · KAISER COHORT N=463,396<sup>2</sup>

### Adolescent use predicts psychiatric disorders by young adulthood

**463,396**

ADOLESCENTS UNIVERSALLY SCREENED, AGES 13-17

**4 disorders**

PSYCHOTIC, BIPOLAR, DEPRESSIVE, ANXIETY — ALL UP

Past-year cannabis use in adolescence was associated with a **significantly increased risk** of every disorder studied by age 26 — the largest cohort study of its kind.<sup>2</sup>

MONITORING THE FUTURE 2024 · DAILY-USE PREVALENCE<sup>3</sup>

### Daily marijuana use now exceeds daily cigarette use in every grade



A complete generational inversion: high-school seniors are **7x more likely** to be daily marijuana users than daily cigarette users.<sup>3</sup>

MTF 2024<sup>3</sup> · FIRST YEAR DELTA-8 MEASURED IN 8TH & 10TH GRADERS<sup>3</sup>

**12.3%**

### Of 12th graders used Delta-8 THC in the past year — an *unregulated* hemp-derived intoxicant

Delta-8 reached **7.9% of 10th graders** and **2.9% of 8th graders** in 2024, the first year it was measured in lower grades. Sold legally at gas stations and online, it bypasses every state-level age safeguard built into adult-use legalization.<sup>3</sup>

JAMA PSYCHIATRY · CERDÁ ET AL.<sup>4</sup>

**+25%**

### Cannabis Use Disorder rose in young people following state-level legalization

Among adolescents who first used cannabis at age 14 or younger, **10.7%** develop a substance-use disorder — **nearly 2x the rate** seen in adolescent users of nicotine, alcohol, or prescription drugs.<sup>5</sup>

## THE RISK PICTURE FOR YOUNG USERS KEEPS GETTING WORSE<sup>6,7,8</sup>

**36%**

Of 12th graders now view regular use as risky — **down from 58%** in 2000.<sup>6</sup>

**5x**

More likely to use marijuana if exposed to **cannabis marketing** on social media.<sup>7</sup>

**11.2%**

Of adolescents 12-17 reported **past-year use** in the most recent NSDUH wave.<sup>8</sup>

# Endnotes

All statistics in this brief are drawn from peer-reviewed studies and federally funded national surveys. Where a finding appears in multiple sources, the most rigorous primary source is named.

- 1.** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2024). **Results from the 2021–2022 NSDUH State Estimates of Substance Use and Mental Disorders.** Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. State-by-state averages computed across recreational-legal jurisdictions (CO, WA, OR, AK, NV, CA, MA, IL, ME, MI, VT) vs. non-legal states for past-month and past-year use, ages 12–17 and 18–25.  
[samhsa.gov/data/report/2021-2022-nsduh-state-prevalence-estimates](https://samhsa.gov/data/report/2021-2022-nsduh-state-prevalence-estimates)
- 2.** Young-Wolff, K. C., Cortez, C. A., Alexeeff, S. E., Silver, L. D., Pacula, R. L., Slama, N. E., Padon, A. A., Satre, D. D., Campbell, C. I., Koshy, M. T., Does, M. B., & Sterling, S. A. (2026). **Adolescent Cannabis Use and Risk of Psychotic, Bipolar, Depressive, and Anxiety Disorders.** *JAMA Health Forum*, published online Feb. 20, 2026. doi:10.1001/jamahealthforum.2025.6839. Kaiser Permanente Northern California cohort of 463,396 adolescents aged 13–17 universally screened for cannabis use; past-year cannabis use was associated with significantly elevated incidence of psychotic, bipolar, depressive, and anxiety disorders by age 26.  
[jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2833900](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2833900)
- 3.** Miech, R. A., Johnston, L. D., Patrick, M. E., & O'Malley, P. M. (2025). **Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2024: Overview and Detailed Results for Secondary School Students.** Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Daily-use prevalence (past 30 days): 12th grade MJ 5.6% vs. cigarettes 0.8%; 10th grade MJ 3.1% vs. cigarettes 0.3%; 8th grade MJ 0.9% vs. cigarettes 0.2%. Delta-8 THC past-12-month use first measured among 8th and 10th graders in 2024: 2.9% / 7.9% / 12.3%.  
[monitoringthefuture.org/results/annual-reports](https://monitoringthefuture.org/results/annual-reports)
- 4.** Cerdá, M., Mauro, C., Hamilton, A., Levy, N. S., Santaella-Tenorio, J., Hasin, D., Wall, M. M., Keyes, K. M., & Martins, S. S. (2020). **Association Between Recreational Marijuana Legalization in the United States and Changes in Marijuana Use and Cannabis Use Disorder from 2008 to 2016.** *JAMA Psychiatry*, 77(2), 165. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.3254. Found a ~25% increase in CUD prevalence among young people following state legalization for recreational use.  
[jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2755276](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2755276)
- 5.** Volkow, N. D., Han, B., Einstein, E. B., & Compton, W. M. (2021). **Prevalence of Substance Use Disorders by Time Since First Substance Use Among Young People in the US.** *JAMA Pediatrics*, published online March 29, 2021. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.6981. SUD prevalence in 12–17-year-old marijuana users is roughly double the rate seen among adolescent users of nicotine, alcohol, or prescription drugs.  
[jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2777817](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2777817)
- 6.** Drug Abuse Statistics / Monitoring the Future (2024). **Perceived Harmfulness of Marijuana Use Among 12th Graders, 2000–2024.** The share of high-school seniors who view regular marijuana use as dangerous fell from 58% (2000) to 36% (2024); 8th graders remain 111.8% more likely than 12th graders to perceive occasional use as risky.  
[drugabusestatistics.org/marijuana-addiction](https://drugabusestatistics.org/marijuana-addiction)
- 7.** Trangenstein, P. J., Whitehill, J. M., Jenkins, M. C., Jernigan, D. H., & Moreno, M. A. (2019). **Active Cannabis Marketing and Adolescent Past-Year Cannabis Use.** *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 204, 107548. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107548. Adolescents exposed to active cannabis marketing on social-media platforms were approximately 5x more likely to report past-year cannabis use.  
[doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107548](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107548)
- 8.** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2024). **Results from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables.** Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Past-year cannabis use among adolescents aged 12–17 was 11.2% in the most recent NSDUH wave; an estimated **10.1 million people aged 12–25** used marijuana in the past month in 2023, indicative of frequent use.  
[samhsa.gov/data/release/2023-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases](https://samhsa.gov/data/release/2023-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases)
- 9.** Orr, C., Spechler, P., Cao, Z., Albaugh, M., Charani, B., Mackey, S., D'Souza, D., ... Garavan, H. (2019). **Grey Matter Volume Differences Associated with Extremely Low Levels of Cannabis Use in Adolescence.** *Journal of Neuroscience*, 39(10), 1817–1827. doi:10.1523/JNEUROSCI.3375-17.2018. Use produces detectable changes in adolescent gray-matter volume – suggesting marijuana exposure may affect brain development even at low exposure levels.  
[doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.3375-17.2018](https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.3375-17.2018)
- 10.** Power, E., Sabherwal, S., Healy, C., O'Neill, A., Cotter, D., & Cannon, M. (2021). **Intelligence Quotient Decline Following Frequent or Dependent Cannabis Use in Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies.** *Psychological Medicine*, 51(2), 194–200. doi:10.1017/S0033291720005036. Frequent or dependent cannabis use in youth is associated with measurable IQ decline; chronic adolescent use is further associated with reduced educational performance and outcomes.  
[doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720005036](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291720005036)