



RELIABLE.  
NONPARTISAN.  
EMPOWERING.



[More Issues](#)

[About Us](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Teachers' Corner](#)



# Should Recreational Marijuana Be Legal?



Last updated on: 11/13/2018 | Author: [ProCon.org](#)

More than half of US adults, over 128 million people, have tried [marijuana](#), despite it being an illegal drug under federal law. Nearly 600,000 Americans are arrested for marijuana possession annually – more than one person per minute. Public support for legalizing marijuana went from 12% in 1969 to 66% today. Recreational marijuana, also known as adult-use marijuana, was [first legalized](#) in Colorado and Washington in 2012.

Proponents of legalizing recreational marijuana say it will add billions to the economy, create hundreds of thousands of jobs, free up scarce police resources, and stop the huge racial disparities in marijuana enforcement. They contend that regulating marijuana will lower street crime, take business away from the drug cartels, and make marijuana use safer through required testing, labeling, and child-proof packaging. They say marijuana is less harmful than alcohol, and that adults should have a right to use it if they wish.



[Recreational Marijuana – Home](#)



[Take Action](#)

Opponents of legalizing recreational marijuana say it will increase teen use and lead to more medical emergencies including traffic deaths from driving while high. They contend that revenue from legalization falls far short of the costs in increased hospital visits, addiction treatment, environmental damage, crime, workplace accidents, and lost productivity. They say that marijuana use harms the user physically and mentally, and that its use should be strongly discouraged, not legalized. [Read more background...](#)

## Pro & Con Arguments

### Pro 1

#### **Marijuana legalization boosts the economy.**

The marijuana industry (adult-use and medical) in the United States could exceed \$24 billion in revenue by 2025. [7] For every \$1.00 spent in the marijuana industry, between \$2.13 and \$2.40 in economic activity is generated. [1][2] Tourism, banking, food, real estate, construction, and transportation are a few of the industries that benefit from legal marijuana. [3]

The legal marijuana industry generated \$7.2 billion in economic activity in 2016, and added millions of dollars in federal taxes paid by cannabis businesses. [20] One study on adult-use marijuana in Nevada projected \$7.5 billion in economic activity over the first seven years of legalization, including \$1.7 billion in labor income. [4] A study by the University of California Agricultural

### Con 1

#### **Legalized marijuana creates steep costs for society and taxpayers that far outweigh its tax revenues.**

Marijuana use harms more than just the person using the drug. [129] Societal costs of marijuana use include paying for increased emergency room visits, medical care, and addiction treatment for the uninsured; more victims of drugged driving accidents; increased crime; and a negative impact on health from secondhand smoke. [78][102]

Annual societal costs from alcohol (\$223.5 billion) and tobacco (\$193 billion) far exceed the \$24 billion in tax revenues they raise. [128][128] [131][172] Money raised from legal marijuana taxes generally accounts for less than 1% of a state's tax revenue. [132][134]



### Pro & Con Quotes



### History of Recreational Marijuana

- 1 [Did You Know?](#)
- 2 [Legal Recreational Marijuana States and DC](#)
- 3 [Marijuana for Pets](#)
- 4 [Who is the author? How to cite this page.](#)
- 5 [Source Biographies](#)
- 6 [Site Map](#)

[Medical Marijuana Pros & Cons](#)

[READ MORE...](#)

[State Laws on Marijuana](#)

[READ MORE...](#)

[Lower the Drinking Age?](#)

[READ MORE...](#)

Issues Center estimated that the legal marijuana market in California could generate \$5 billion annually. [5][6]

In Colorado, marijuana brings in three times more tax revenue than alcohol. [15] The state raised \$78 million in the first fiscal year after starting retail sales, and \$129 million the second fiscal year. Washington collected a total of \$220 million in tax revenues in its second fiscal year of sales. [53][52]

## Pro 2

### **Legalizing marijuana results in decreased teen marijuana use.**

Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine found that “the rates of marijuana use by young people are falling despite the fact more US states are legalizing or decriminalizing marijuana use and the number of adults using the drug has increased.” [38] Marijuana use among 8th graders in Washington state decreased following legalization in 2012, from 9.8 percent to 7.3 percent in 2014/2016, according to a Dec. 2018 report from RAND. [254] A study from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that past-year marijuana use decreased by 17%, from 15.8% in 2002 to 13.1% in 2014, among US kids ages 12 to

Legalizing marijuana would put one more harmful substance in our society that costs more than the revenue it generates. [130] According to the Pew Research Center, “the most frequently mentioned reason why people oppose legalization is that marijuana generally hurts society.” [133]

## Con 2

### **Legalizing marijuana increases use by teens, with harmful results.**

The percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds using marijuana is higher in every legal marijuana state than the national average. For example, 16.21% of Colorado teens and 18.86% of teens in Alaska reported marijuana use in the past year, compared to an average of 12.29% for the United States overall in 2015-2016. [39] Colorado past-month teen marijuana use jumped 20% in the two-year average after marijuana was legalized for adults. [78]

Marijuana is especially dangerous for young people, because human brains are not fully developed until around age 25 (four years past the legal age in states that allow recreational marijuana). [79][80] The American Academy of Pediatrics said that adverse effects of teen marijuana use include “impaired

17. [37][41] Colorado teens between 12 and 17 years old reported a nearly 12% drop in marijuana use just two years after adult use was legalized, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. [39][40]

The Marijuana Policy Project, an organization that leads marijuana legalization campaigns, said, "Study after study has confirmed that marijuana policy reforms do not cause rates of youth marijuana use to increase... The most in-depth state surveys suggest modest decreases in rates of youth marijuana use in Colorado and Washington." [42] Even though retail marijuana shops opened in Colorado and Washington in 2014, past-year marijuana use among teens in those states was lower in 2015-2016 than in 2014-2015. [39]

short-term memory and decreased concentration, attention span, and problem solving, which clearly interfere with learning. Alterations in motor control, coordination, judgment, reaction time, and tracking ability have also been documented; these may contribute to unintentional deaths and injuries." [156] Studies show that students who use cannabis perform worse in school. [81]

## Con 3

### **Traffic accidents and deaths increase when marijuana is legalized.**

Marijuana-related traffic deaths rose 62% following the legalization of marijuana in Colorado. [78] Jim Leal, former Chief of Police of Newark, California, said of legalizing marijuana, "You are commercializing a product that is just going to put more impaired drivers on the road, worsening a problem that we already have. What officers are seeing with THC levels being very high is they are seeing impairment being far worse than they have ever seen in the past." [158]

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reported that fatal crashes involving marijuana doubled after legalization in Washington. Marshall Doney, President and CEO of AAA, said, "Marijuana can

## Pro 3

### **Traffic deaths and arrests for DUIs do not increase, and may decrease, when marijuana is legalized.**

Traffic deaths dropped 11% on average in states that legalized medical marijuana. [65] Arrests for driving under the influence have decreased in Washington and Colorado. [49] Benjamin Hansen, an economics professor at the University of Oregon at Eugene who studied traffic deaths post-medical marijuana legalization, stated that "Public safety doesn't decrease with increased access to marijuana, rather it improves." [65]

Studies show that drivers under the influence of marijuana tend to be more cautious and take fewer risks than drunk drivers, such as making fewer lane changes and reducing speed. [29][74] A fact sheet about marijuana's effects on drivers posted on the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration website stated that "Some drivers may actually be able to improve performance for brief periods by overcompensating for self-perceived impairment." [66]

affect driver safety by impairing vehicle control and judgment." [159]

The Highway Loss Data Institute found an increased crash risk in legal marijuana states and said collision claims in Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington increased 6% as compared to states that don't have legal marijuana. [83][84] [85][252] A meta-study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) concluded that "Cannabis use prior to driving increases the risk of being involved in a motor vehicle accident." [255]

## Con 4

### **Marijuana is addictive, and dependence on the drug will increase with legalization.**

Heavy users who stop using marijuana may suffer withdrawal symptoms such as insomnia, depression, anxiety, nausea, chills,

and stomach pain. [91][95]  
According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, as many as four million Americans meet the diagnostic criteria for a marijuana use disorder, such as abuse, dependence, or addiction. [95][96]  
[97] Dr. Drew Pinsky, a board-certified internist and addiction medicine specialist, said, "I've been treating cannabis addiction for 20 years. When people are addicted to cannabis, cocaine and alcohol the drug they have the most difficult time giving up is the cannabis." [93]

A study in the *Journal of Drug Issues* found that the number of US daily marijuana users has risen dramatically since 2002 and now 68% of users report daily or near-daily use. [98] Kevin Sabet, director of Smart Approaches to Marijuana, wrote, "The scientific verdict is that marijuana can be addictive and dangerous... Many baby boomers have a hard time understanding this simply because today's marijuana can be so much stronger than the marijuana of the past." [160]

## Pro 4

### **Legal marijuana is regulated for consumer safety.**

People buying marijuana on the street have no way of knowing if what they're ingesting is covered with mold, fungus, pesticides, or other harmful substances. [8][9] Once marijuana is legalized, the government is able to enforce laboratory testing and regulations to ensure that marijuana is free of toxins. [10] For example, Washington law requires health warnings, quality assurance, labeling for the concentration of THC, and other important regulations for consumers. [11]

Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska all passed regulations to prevent kids' exposure to marijuana, including child-resistant packaging. [12] Legalization allows the government to set age restrictions on buyers and to license and regulate the entire supply chain of marijuana, including growers, distributors, retailers, and testing laboratories. [13] California regulations include limitations on the serving sizes for edible marijuana products, seed-to-sale testing and tracking, and 24-hour video surveillance at retail stores. [14]

## Con 5

### **The black market and organized crime benefit from marijuana legalization.**

Law enforcement says that legal marijuana has actually enhanced opportunities for the black market. [134] Prices charged by state-licensed sellers can easily be undercut by cartels. [173] A drug dealer told *Vice News*, "Right now with the way the tax structure is in Washington, the black market is going to thrive." [135]

In Colorado, a sharp increase in marijuana-related charges filed under the state's *Organized Crime Control Act* coincided with the legalization of marijuana, indicating a rise in organized crime. [102] The Colorado Attorney General's office stated that legalization "has inadvertently helped fuel the business of Mexican drug cartels... cartels are now trading drugs like heroin for marijuana, and the trade has since opened the door to drug and human trafficking." [134] Local officials said that Mexican cartels were growing marijuana under the cover of legal operations in Colorado and using that to fuel the black market in other states. [134] [174]

## Pro 5

### **Legalization of marijuana is phasing out black markets and taking money away from drug cartels, organized crime, and street gangs.**

Data from the US Border Patrol show that marijuana seizures have decreased by millions of pounds and are at their lowest levels in over a decade, indicating that legal domestic production is decreasing demand for marijuana smuggled in from Mexico. [17][18] A Mexican cannabis farmer told NPR, "If the US continues to legalize pot, they'll run us into the ground." [19]

According to the ACLU, legalization in Colorado and Washington has cost Mexican drug cartels an estimated \$2.7 billion in profits. [21]

Stephen Downing, a retired deputy chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, said, "There's no question that ending today's prohibition on drugs – starting with marijuana – would do more to hurt the cartels than any level of law enforcement skill or dedication ever can." [62] By the year 2020, an estimated 90% of the marijuana market in Colorado will be supplied by licensed and taxed vendors, demonstrating that the black market can be replaced by legal, regulated sales. [15][16][22]

## Con 6

### **Legalizing marijuana leads to more marijuana-related medical emergencies.**

After retail marijuana stores opened in Colorado, emergency room visits related to marijuana shot up nearly 30% and hospitalizations related to marijuana rose 200%. [78][171][100][102] "The emergency department has seen increased visits for primary care needs, breathing problems related to inhalation of marijuana, including asthma, bronchitis, upper respiratory tract infections, as well as psychiatric needs, accidental or intentional overdoses and, unfortunately, increased pediatric patients with issues related to marijuana," said Dr. Karen Randall, an emergency room physician in Colorado. [78]

People are used to the idea that a candy bar is a single serving size, but a candy bar with marijuana could have four or more times the recommended dose of THC, depending on the state's regulations. [104] People end up in the ER with anxiety attacks or psychotic-like symptoms from eating sweets infused with more marijuana than they were expecting—or, in some cases, not expecting at all. [105]

## Pro 6

### **The enforcement of marijuana prohibition is racist because people of color are disproportionately impacted.**

Statistics show a significant racial disparity in the enforcement of marijuana laws: even though white and black people use marijuana at roughly the same rate, a black person in the United States is 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession on average. [24] In Iowa, the state with the highest inequity, black people are 8.3 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people. [21] In New York City, 15.8% of marijuana possession cases involving white people result in conviction, compared to 32.3% involving black people and 30% involving Hispanic people. [27]

Marijuana possession convictions can impact people's ability to get public housing, financial aid for school, loans, and jobs. [21] Over the past ten years, drug sentences for black men have been 9% to 13% longer than those received by white men. [28] Margaret Dooley-Sammuli, Criminal Justice and Drug Policy director for the ACLU of California, stated, "Racial disparities in marijuana enforcement are widespread and

Poison-control marijuana exposure cases for kids ages 9 and under increased more than five-fold in Colorado after legalization. [12] NAS found "increased risk of unintentional cannabis overdose injuries among children" in legal marijuana states. [255] The University of Colorado burn center reported a "substantial increase" in the number of marijuana-related burns after legalization. [161]

longstanding.” [26] Legalizing marijuana would help correct the disparity.

## Pro 7

### **Crime goes down when marijuana is legalized.**

Studies show that medical marijuana dispensaries decreased crime in their neighborhoods because of an increased security presence and more people walking around the area. [30]

Research indicates that people drink less and alcohol sales drop in places where marijuana is legalized. [36][35][23] The amount of crime and violence caused by alcohol use is ten times higher than by marijuana use and alcohol is a factor in around 40% of violent crimes. [33][32] A shift from drinking to cannabis use will decrease crimes associated with alcohol, such as domestic violence and assault. According to FBI

## Con 7

### **Marijuana use harms the brain, and legalization will increase mental health problems.**

Cannabis use may increase the risk of developing schizophrenia, depression, and other psychiatric disorders. [108][109] Researchers at Harvard and Northwestern found that recreational marijuana smokers showed abnormalities in the shape, volume, and density of certain areas of the brain. [107][110]

Dr. Hans Breiter, a psychiatrist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital who co-authored the study, said, “People think a little marijuana shouldn’t cause a problem if someone is doing O.K. with work or school. Our data directly says this is not so.” [111] A *British Journal of Psychiatry* study stated, “There is good evidence that taking cannabis leads to acute adverse mental effects in a high proportion of regular users.” [112]

A survey published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* journal reported that 22% of marijuana users experienced “acute anxiety or panic attacks following cannabis use,” and 15% had psychotic symptoms following use. [113]

crime statistics, violent crime in Washington decreased in the years after legalization (295.6 violent offenses reported per 100,000 Washington residents in 2011 vs. 284.4 violent offenses per 100,000 people in 2015). [31]

Taylor West, former deputy director for the National Cannabis Industry Association, said, "We're not seeing any increase in crime rates through marijuana – we're seeing lower crime rates, and there are good rational reasons for that: We're really beginning to cripple the criminal market, which is where violence actually occurs." [71]

## Pro 8

### **Legalizing marijuana would end the costly enforcement of marijuana laws and free up police resources.**

Arresting people for marijuana possession costs the United States between \$1.19 billion and \$6.03 billion annually. [24][21] These costs include police, judicial, legal, and corrections expenses. Incarcerating marijuana offenders costs the United States an estimated \$600 million per year. [63] Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron has estimated that

## Con 8

### **Marijuana harms the health of users and people around them.**

Smoking marijuana can damage lung tissues and cause respiratory problems; secondhand marijuana smoke is also dangerous. [134][114][115] Research shows that smoking one marijuana joint is as damaging to the lungs as five tobacco cigarettes. [116][164] Marijuana may contain five times as much carbon monoxide concentration and three times as much tar as tobacco. [115] There is a higher risk of heart attacks and strokes in the hours immediately after smoking cannabis. [162]

A study found that using a vaporization device "likely leads to enhanced ingestion of toxic ammonia known to result in neurobehavioral impairment." [119][118] Ammonia ingested while vaping can result in lung irritation, nervous system effects, and asthma attacks. [120]

marijuana legalization would save between \$7.7 billion and \$13.7 billion annually. [60][61]

Instead of arresting people for marijuana, police officers could focus on serious crimes including rape, assault, and homicide. [62]

For example, marijuana legalization in Washington significantly freed up law enforcement resources; marijuana possession arrests dropped from 5,531 the year before legalization to 120 the year after. [64]

Howard Wooldridge, a former police detective from Michigan who co-founded LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition), said, "Marijuana prohibition is a horrible waste of good police time. Every hour spent looking for pot reduces public safety." [169]

## Con 9

### **Commercialized marijuana will create a "Big Marijuana" industry that exploits people for profit and targets children.**

"Big Marijuana" is already using similar tactics to "Big Tobacco," which marketed cigarettes using ads that appealed to kids, including the Joe Camel cartoon character. [129][149] Marijuana food products that are colorful, sweet, or branded with cartoons are most likely to attract children. [103] Marijuana is available in kid-friendly forms such as gummy bears and lollipops, and products sometimes resemble familiar brands, such as "Buddahfinger" or "KeefKat" in wrappers that look like a Butterfinger or KitKat candy bar. [167][134]

Mark A. R. Kleiman, a drug policy expert, said, "[I]f you're in the [for-profit] cannabis business, casual users aren't much use to you while heavy users are your best customers, accounting for the bulk of your sales... the commercial interest demands maximizing problem use." [147] Rosalie Liccardo Pacula, senior economist at RAND Corporation, said heavy marijuana users account for the "vast majority of the total amount sold and/or consumed." [148]

## Pro 9

### **Marijuana is less harmful than alcohol and tobacco, which are already legal.**

Alcohol and tobacco are legal, yet they are known to cause cancer, heart failure, liver damage, and more. According to the CDC, six people die from alcohol poisoning every day and 88,000 people die annually due to excessive alcohol use in the United States. [45][168]

There are no recorded cases of death from marijuana overdose. [46][47]

Three to four times as many Americans are dependent on alcohol as on marijuana. [33] A study in the *Lancet* ranking the harmfulness of drugs put alcohol first as the most harmful, tobacco as sixth, and cannabis eighth. [48] A national poll found that people view tobacco as a greater threat to health than marijuana by a margin of four to one (76% vs. 18%), and 72% of people surveyed believed that regular use of alcohol was more dangerous than marijuana use. [43]

“In several respects, even sugar poses more of a threat to our nation’s health than pot,” said Dr. David L. Nathan, a clinical psychiatrist and president of Doctors for Cannabis Regulation. [44]

## Con 10

### **Legalizing marijuana hurts businesses by causing preventable accidents and lost productivity.**

Workplace incidents involving employees under the influence of marijuana increased from 6% to 20% the year after legalization in Colorado. [134][124] Employees who screened positive for marijuana use had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries, and absenteeism rates 75% higher than those who tested negative, according to a study done on postal workers. [125][126] Paul L. Bittner, partner and vice chair of the Labor and Employment Group at Ice Miller law firm, said, “You not only lose productivity, but the bigger concern for employers is potential liability if there’s an accident and someone gets hurt or killed.” [122]

Researchers found that using marijuana even just once a week

can impact the parts of the brain that are linked to motivation, sometimes in irreversible ways. [165] Long-term marijuana users produce less dopamine, a neurochemical considered crucial to summoning motivation. [166] People who smoked marijuana in the previous year reported less dedication to their jobs than non-marijuana users, according to a study in the journal *Addiction*. [127]

## Pro 10

### **Taxes collected from the legal sale of marijuana support important public programs.**

Tax revenues in legal marijuana states provide funding to the police, drug treatment and mental health centers, and housing programs, along with school programs such as anti-bullying campaigns, youth mentoring, and public school grants. [49][73] “The impact is really felt at the local level. Some counties have done 20 years of infrastructure work in just one year’s time. They’ve provided lunch for kids who need it,” said Brian Vicente, partner at Vicente Sederberg LLC, a law firm specializing in the marijuana industry. [50]

In Colorado, \$40 million of marijuana tax revenue went to public school construction, while \$105 million went to housing programs, mental health programs in jails, and health programs in middle schools in 2016-2017. [51] [52]

## Con 11

### **The United States has signed international treaties that prevent us from legalizing marijuana.**

Three United Nations treaties set worldwide drug controls. [137][138] As a party to the treaties, the United States has agreed to limit the use of marijuana “exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.” [139] The move by some US states to legalize adult-use marijuana has upset the UN monitoring organization, which stated that legalization “cannot be reconciled with the legal obligation” to uphold the Single Convention treaty. [136]

Legalizing marijuana puts the United States in a position of weakness when we need to hold other nations accountable to legal agreements. [139] “It is a path the United States—with its strong interest in international institutions and the rule of law—should tread with great caution,” wrote Wells Bennett, a Fellow in National Security Law at the Brookings Institution, and John Walsh, Senior Associate at the Washington Office on Latin America. [139]

## Pro 11

### **Legalizing marijuana creates thousands of needed jobs.**

There were an estimated 122,814 legal full-time marijuana jobs in the United States as of Jan. 2017.

[54] A report from New Frontier Data found that the cannabis industry could create a quarter of a million new jobs by 2020. [55][56] [57] An economic impact estimate from the Marijuana Policy Group forecast the creation of more than 130,000 jobs in California following legalization. [15][59]

Within a few years of legalization, approximately 18,000 additional full-time jobs were created in Colorado annually, both in the actual marijuana business as well as in related fields such as security and real estate. [15] Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) stated that the cannabis industry in the United States “is expected to produce nearly 300,000 jobs by 2020 and grow to \$24 billion by 2025.” [20]

## Con 12

### **Legalizing marijuana is opposed by major public health organizations.**

Some of the public health associations that oppose legalizing marijuana for recreational use include the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. [151][94][152][153][154]

“Legalization campaigns that imply that marijuana is a benign substance present a significant challenge for educating the public about its known risks and adverse effects,” the American Academy of Pediatrics said. [156] The ASAM “does not support the legalization of marijuana and recommends that jurisdictions that have not acted to legalize marijuana be most cautious and not adopt a policy of legalization until more can be learned.” [94] The AMA “believes that (1) cannabis is a dangerous drug and as such is a public health concern; (2) sale of cannabis should not be legalized.” [157]

## Pro 12

### **A majority of Americans support legalizing marijuana.**

A 2018 Gallup poll found a record-high 66% support for legalizing marijuana, up from 12% in 1969, the first year the polling company asked about marijuana. [249] The poll first surpassed 50% support in 2011. According to Gallup, “the transformation in public attitudes about marijuana over the past half-century has mirrored the liberalization of public attitudes about gay rights and the same-sex-marriage movement.” [67] While Democrats (72%) and Independents (67%) have been more likely to back legalization, a majority of Republicans (51%) now agree. [67] Polls by CBS News and the AP both found that 61% of Americans favor legalizing marijuana. [68][170]

The public clearly supports changing our failed anti-marijuana policies. [69] More than half of US states have legalized medical marijuana, and 40 states took some action to relax their drug laws (such as decriminalizing or lowering penalties for possession) between 2009 and 2013. [70]

## Con 13

### **Growing marijuana harms the environment.**

Marijuana cultivation results in deforestation, soil erosion, habitat destruction, and river diversion. [142][140] Cannabis plants require nearly double the amount of water needed to grow grapes or tomatoes. [144][145] Rosamond Naylor, Senior Fellow at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, said, “Taking water directly from rivers and streams in the summer [to grow marijuana] not only reduces the water available for agriculture but also threatens wildlife species... Regardless of the legal status of marijuana, the way we are currently managing its impacts on water and wildlife in California just doesn’t work.” [142]

Legal indoor growing requires a lot of electricity for lighting, heating, and ventilation. This produces an amount of greenhouse gas emissions equal to that of three million cars each year, and places a burden on public utilities. [141]

## Pro 13

**The government doesn't have the right to tell adults what they can put in their own bodies.**

David Boaz, Executive Vice President of the Cato Institute, said, "people have the right to live their lives in any way they choose so long as they don't violate the equal rights of others. What right could be more basic, more inherent in human nature, than the right to choose what substances to put in one's own body?" [72]

More than 3,500 people die from drowning every year in the United States, but the government wouldn't arrest people for owning swimming pools. [76] Over 30,000 people are killed annually in car accidents, but the government doesn't outlaw driving. [92] Adults should be allowed to make adult decisions about how they choose to relax or have fun without government interference, especially when they're not hurting anyone. [75]

US Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) said, "There is no doubt in my mind that the federal government should not be in the marijuana prohibition business... From every perspective—a libertarian perspective, fiscal conservative's perspective, Christian evangelical perspective, progressive perspective—marijuana prohibition is just wrong." [77]

## Did You Know?

1. The English language has more than one thousand slang words for marijuana, including pot, weed, ganja, and Mary Jane. A 1943 article in *TIME* magazine called it muggles, mooter, and bambalacha, and referred to marijuana cigarettes as goof-butts and giggle-smokes. [88]

[90]

2. A 2018 Gallup poll found a record-high 66% support for legalizing marijuana, up from 12% in 1969, the first year the polling company asked about marijuana. [249]

3. Smoking one marijuana joint is as damaging to the lungs as five tobacco cigarettes, and marijuana may contain five times as much carbon monoxide concentration and three times as much tar as tobacco. [116] [164]

4. Marijuana legalization in Colorado and Washington has cost Mexican drug cartels an estimated \$2.7 billion in profits. [21]

5. 68% of marijuana users report daily or near-daily use. [98]



History



Pro & Con  
Quotes



Pro & Con  
Arguments

People who view this page may also  
like:

1. [Should the drinking age be lowered from 21 to a younger age](#)
2. [State Laws on Recreational and Medical Marijuana](#)
3. [History of Marijuana as Medicine, 2900 BC to the Present](#)
4. [Should people become vegetarian? Pros & Cons](#)
5. [Are social networking sites good for our society? Pros & Cons](#)

## Popular in the Community

AdChoices 

Sponsored

## Conversation 32 Comments

 Log In

What do you think?



Sort by **Best** 

D



**drewinut**



**David Greenberg** > drewinut  
1 January, 2021

---

Q I suffered a severe brain injury and was prescribed Cannabis for my Seizures and Mental Acuity.  
It helps me tremendously!

Reply  21  1

2 April, 2021

## QJUPITER

thats medical there's a difference between medical marijuana and, recreational marijuana.

Reply  8  8

---

**B**



**bigcockkoster**  
3 December, 2020

c



Golden rule: too much of anything can be bad for you. If you don't abuse it is not bad. People need

to stop focusing on the bad and more on the good...there is people feeling relief from pain, insomnia, eating disorders, etc. Personally it has helped me with so much and I am so grateful for that. Hopefully tomorrow it is decriminalized federally!! :)

Reply  28  5

6 Feb 2020 [basmit24](#)  [bigcockkoster](#)

God gave us weed smoke up my friend




Reply  208  30

2 February 2021  
**Adrian Meacham** > bigcockkoster

---

God gave us options to do bad things, you just have to choose what type of person you want to be.

**c** Reply  23  6



19 January, 2021

**curtishinn**

Amen

Reply  15  2

---

J



**joshwill79**  
29 March, 2021

---

I think that this argument can go in favor of either side in many ways. As some of the cons say There are so many risks and medical dangers of this drug being legalized, in how people can use to much or

get severely sick. But also I feel like if it was legalized people wouldn't get the urge to use it as much, especially teens. Though some teens who try it or use it regularly would have access to it whenever they want. I think it's a big industry and could help America's economy though as it says on the pros.

Reply  1 

3 March, 2020

**Benjamin Nichols**

Hello they need to make it legal at a federal level honestly I would rather see teens smoke a little pot and live to see another day. Instead of getting pills from dumass doctors who hand it out like candy and killing all these teens *(Edited)*

---

**M** Reply  86  24



23 March, 2021

**maier2612**

even though marijuana is good for the economy and the marijuana industry would blow up It is very bad for people it causes damage lung tissues and cause respiratory problems; secondhand marijuana smoke is also dangerous.

Reply  4  9

12 November, 2020

**jalenwargo**

---

weed is awesome and god did give us weed and fire to get higher then the empire state building

Reply  37  12



5 December, 2019

**Kevin Montoya Quinteros**

it is good

Reply  71  17



**David Jones** > Kevin Montoya Quinteros  
25 October, 2019

---

i thinks its a good thing about this because it will tell you about what will happen if you do it aswell  
and whatare the side affects

Reply  50  11

10 November, 2020

**John Dennison**

Nice, finally an unbiased person.

Reply  10  2



David James & John Bennett

David Jones / John Dennison  
8 November, 2020

Show 1 more reply

If marijuana is legalized in all 50 states, what drug would be legalized next? Spice/K2 (Synthetic Cannabinoids)? Crack Cocaine/Purr... Meth or even LSD? Where do we set the limit? In Oregon, they've also al... mushrooms! *(Edited)*

Show More Comments

Reply 12 37

Powered by OpenWeb

Terms | Privacy | Feedback

## Our Latest Updates (archived after 30 days)



### Connecticut Legalizes Recreational Marijuana

6/22/2021 - Connecticut joins 17 states and DC in legalizing the substance for adult use.

[Archived Notices](#) (archived after 30 days)

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[CITE  
THIS  
PAGE](#)

[REPRINTING  
POLICY](#)

[PRIVACY  
POLICY](#)

[DISCLAIMER](#)

[DO  
NOT  
SELL  
MY  
INFO](#)

**Contact us**

ProCon/Encyclopaedia Britannica,  
Inc.

325 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 200  
Chicago, Illinois 60654 USA

312.347.7491

[procon@eb.com](mailto:procon@eb.com)

© 2020 Encyclopaedia Britannica,  
Inc.

All rights reserved

Psychedelic mushrooms are safer than crack, heroin, meth, and even Spice/K2 (which comes from bio-engineered weed)

Reply  37  4