

Marijuana Use Amongst Young People Decreases in States with Medical Marijuana Laws

In states that have passed medical marijuana laws, available data compares marijuana use among teens prior to and following the passage of medical marijuana into law. This data comes from *Monitoring the Future*, contracted by U.S. National Institute of Drug Abuse, and individual surveys produced by each state. The findings show declining marijuana use among adolescents after the medical marijuana law was passed.

California (Passed medical marijuana in 1996)

- The first state to pass a medical marijuana law, California has provided the most detailed trends of teen use of marijuana post-medical marijuana legislation.
- In a study spanning pre- prop 215 (1995/1996) and post-prop 215 (2003/2004), California Student Survey, carried out by the state's Attorney General's office, discovered marijuana usage by 9th graders in a 6 month period decreased 45%.ⁱ
- Even though 63.5% of the participating ninth graders had knowledge of the medical marijuana law, known as Prop. 215, an independent study group showed no supporting evidence of medical marijuana sending the “wrong message” to young people.ⁱⁱ

Washington (Passed medical marijuana in 1998)

- In a six-year study between 1998 and 2004, the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors and Healthy Youth found a *decrease* 36% of marijuana use among tenth graders in a 30-day duration.ⁱⁱⁱ
- WSSAHB and HYC found 40% of tenth graders *decreased* lifetime marijuana usage since the passage of the 1998 medical marijuana law.^{iv}

Oregon (Passed medical marijuana in 1998)

- The national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), prior to the passage of the medical marijuana law (1997), found marijuana use amongst 11th graders was in decline. The Public Schools Drug Use Survey (OPSDUS), in 1998, determined that an eight percent *decrease* in lifetime marijuana use in 11th graders.^v
- As of 2005, the most significant changes are that of lifetime marijuana use in among eighth graders since the passage of the medical marijuana law in 1998, shows a 26% *decrease*.^{vi}
- In 2001, Oregon merged two surveys, Oregon Public Schools Drug Use Survey (OPSDUS) and the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), creating significant changes in survey methodology. This impacted the survey questions concerning marijuana use among adolescents. The conclusions, however, still illustrate a promising *decrease* in marijuana use.

Alaska (Passed medical marijuana in 1998)

- The only data demonstrating trends of medical marijuana and the impact the law has on adolescents was collected in 1995 and 2003 by the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveys.
- Ninth graders showed the most noteworthy *decrease* in lifetime marijuana use since 1995—a 31% decrease. Lifetime marijuana use amongst 12th graders declined by four percent.
- Since 1995, marijuana use by 9th graders in a in a 30-day period decreased 37% and decreased 21% amongst 12th graders.^{vii}

Maine (Passed medical marijuana in 1999)

- A survey produced by the state, Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Surveys, discovered that lifetime marijuana use saw a 12% *decrease* among 9th and 12th graders, respectively, since the passage of the medical marijuana law in 1999.^{viii}
- The national YRBS found marijuana use trends among 9th graders since 1997 decreased 33% in a 30 day period, and five percent decrease of marijuana use amongst 12th graders in the same 30 day period.^{ix}

Hawaii (Passed medical marijuana in 2000)

- A state-produced survey, Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Studies, demonstrated that use by 12th grade students, in a 30 day period, decreased by 19%, and 8th grade students decreased marijuana use, also in a 30-day period, by 26%, since 2000.^x
- The 2003 Hawaiian survey showed a 24% decrease of lifetime marijuana use among 8th grade students, and a three percent decrease among lifetime use among 12th grade students.^{xi}
- The national *Monitoring the Future* survey in 2004 found that lifetime marijuana use among 8th and 12th grade students decreased 14% and 6%, respectively.^{xii}

Nevada (Passed medical marijuana in 2000)

- The national YRBS surveys showed a lifetime decrease of marijuana use among all high school students to have decreased by six percent from 1999 - 2003, and marijuana use among all high school students in a 30 day period dropped 14%.^{xiii}

Studies in Vermont, Montana, and Colorado were not included here because the data from those states was not conclusive. Rhode Island is not included because its medical marijuana bill passed in 2006.

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ⁱ California Office of the Attorney General, "Eighth Biennial California Student Survey," Tables 5 and 9; California Office of the Attorney General, Tenth Biennial California Student Survey," Tables 2, 3, 4, 6, and 9.

ⁱⁱ Rodney Skager, Greg Austin and Mamie M. Wong, "Marijuana Use and the Response to Proposition 215 Among California Youth, a Special Study From the California Student Substance Use Survey (Grades 7, 9, and 11), 1997-98." Los Alamitos: *WestEd*, 1999.

ⁱⁱⁱ Washington State Department of Health, "Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors," Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10; Washington State Department of Health, "2004 Healthy Youth Survey," Questions D06 and D21.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services, "1998 Oregon Public Schools Drug Use Survey" p. 7; Oregon Department of Human Services, "Oregon Healthy Teens 2005".

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey" 1995; "Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003".

^{viii} Maine Office of Substance Abuse, "The 2004 Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey Technical Report"

^{ix} Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "1997 Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey"; and "2003 Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey".

^x Hawaii Department of Health, "2000 Hawai'i Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey Executive Summary," p. 10; Hawaii Department of Health, "The 2003 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey."

^{xi} Ibid

^{xii} Ibid

^{xiii} Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey 1999"; "Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003".