

# Do American adolescents approve of marijuana?

September 17 2015

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Groundbreaking research published in the *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* suggests that adolescents have become less likely to approve of and use marijuana over the last decade when compared to young adults. This is coming during a time where a majority of Americans support the full legalization of marijuana, according to a 2013 Gallup poll. The study, *Trends in the Disapproval and Use of Marijuana among Adolescents and Young Adults in the United States: 2002–2013*, is free to read in the newest issue of the journal online.

"With respect to drug use, we are in a unique historical moment – American adults are changing in the way that we think about marijuana and lots of changes in policy are underway in terms of the decriminalization, medicalization, and legalization of marijuana use in

cities and states across the country," explained Dr. Christopher Salas-Wright and his colleagues. "Given this context, we were interested in understanding how such changes might be impacting the way young people are thinking and behaving with regards to marijuana."

Using survey data collected from the nationally representative National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) conducted between 2002 through 2013, the researchers broke the sample into three subgroups based upon age: younger adolescents (aged 12–14), older adolescents (aged 15–17), and young adults (aged 18–25). In breaking the sample into subgroups, distinct trends emerged within each category.

The findings pertaining to younger (12-14 years) and older (15-17 years) adolescents suggests that [adolescents](#) have not become more permissive in their views on marijuana and have progressively decreased their use over the past decade. The opposite was the case for young adults aged 18-25. The survey results indicate a decreased amount of young adults who disapprove of marijuana use. Despite the downward trend of disapproval among [young adults](#), actual marijuana use did not increase.

"Study findings point to the importance of examining changes in the perception and use of marijuana with an appreciation for developmental differences," concluded Dr. Salas-Wright and the team. "Changes are certainly underway in terms of the perception and use of [marijuana](#) among American youth."

**More information:** "Trends in the disapproval and use of marijuana among adolescents and young adults in the United States: 2002–2013." *Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse*. 2015 Sep;41(5):392-404. [DOI: 10.3109/00952990.2015.1049493](#)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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