

Researchers find religious involvement deters recreational and medical marijuana use

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Although marijuana use for medical and recreational purposes is at an all-time high in the United States, a team of researchers led by a Florida State University professor has found those who hold strong religious beliefs are choosing to stay away from weed.

FSU Associate Professor Amy Burdette and her team found that individuals who regularly attend church and report that religion is very important in their daily decision making are less likely to use [marijuana](#) recreationally and medically. The study was recently published in the Journal of Drug Issues.

"Our study confirms previous studies of recreational marijuana use," Burdette said. "However, I believe ours is the first to examine the association between religiosity and [medical marijuana](#) use."

The study used data from 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a random sample of the U.S. adult population. Although many studies have focused on the association between religion and substance use in adolescence and young adulthood, few studies have focused on marijuana use in adulthood.

"We know various forms of substance use have increased among older adults as well, Burdette said. "So, we need to know what's going on among people in their 30s, 40s and 50s in terms of their substance use."

In the study, researchers examined three focal variables—religious

salience, religious service attendance and self-rated health.

Levels of religious attendance ranged from never attending services to attending more than once a week. Researchers found with every level of increased attendance the odds of being a recreational marijuana user reduced by 13 percent. The study found the likelihood of [recreational marijuana](#) use decreased by 20 percent as religious salience levels increased.

Researchers also examined the association between [religious involvement](#) and marijuana use of adults in [poor health](#). They found that religious involvement was less effective in deterring marijuana use among sickly adults whether recreational or medically prescribed.

"You have two big institutions coming against each other when you're suffering and in poor health," Burdette said. "You might have your pastor highly stigmatizing its use, saying 'it's bad, it's a drug, you shouldn't do this.' While your doctor says, 'try this, it could help your pain and suffering.'"

With the impact of religion in society starting to decline, Burdette said perhaps more people are deferring to a medical authority.

Researchers said further study could include personality types and the religious affiliation of individuals. They also noted that the data is based on self-reports and people were potentially more likely to avoid reporting socially undesirable behaviors.

More information: Amy M. Burdette et al, Religious Involvement and Marijuana Use for Medical and Recreational Purposes, *Journal of Drug Issues* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0022042618770393](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022042618770393)

Provided by Florida State University

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