

Teen odds of using marijuana dip with recreational use laws

July 8 2019, by Lindsey Tanner



In this April 20, 2016, file photo, a man smokes a marijuana joint at a party celebrating weed in Seattle. Legalizing recreational marijuana for U.S. adults may have led to a slight decline in teen use. That's according to research published Monday, July 8, 2019, in JAMA Pediatrics. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)

New research suggests legalizing recreational marijuana for U.S. adults in some states may have slightly reduced teens' odds of using pot.

One reason may be that it's harder and costlier for teens to buy marijuana from licensed dispensaries than from dealers, said lead author Mark Anderson, a health economist at Montana State University.

The researchers analyzed national youth health and behavior surveys from 1993 through 2017 that included questions about marijuana use. Responses from 1.4 million [high school students](#) were included.

Thirty-three states have passed medical marijuana laws and 11 have legalized [recreational use](#)—generally for ages 21 and up, many during the study years. The researchers looked at overall changes nationwide, but not at individual states.

There was no change linked with medical marijuana legislation but odds of teen use declined almost 10% after [recreational marijuana](#) laws were enacted.

The study was published Monday in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Previous research has found no effect on teen use from [medical marijuana laws](#), and conflicting results from recreational marijuana laws. The new results echo a study showing a decline in teen use after sales of recreational pot began in 2014 in Washington state.

The results "should help to quell some concerns that use among teens will actually go up. This is an important piece when weighing the costs and benefits of legalization," Anderson said.

About 20% of U.S. high school students use marijuana, unchanged since 2015 after an earlier decline, according to the 2017 version of the

surveys used in the study. Rates ranged from 13% of 9th graders to 26% of [high school seniors](#), according to the survey data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Repeated [marijuana use](#) during adolescence may lead to long-lasting changes in brain function," authors of the new study wrote. In the short-term, it can cause impaired memory and attention problems lasting weeks. Frequent use starting in the early teens may lower IQ scores; some kids may be more vulnerable to pots' effects because of genetics or other factors.

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