

Recreational marijuana availability in Oregon and use among adolescents

January 21 2020



Credit: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

New research from the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation suggests that legalization and greater retail availability of recreational marijuana is positively associated with marijuana use among adolescents.

The researchers investigated whether [legalization](#) of recreational [marijuana](#) sales in 2015 and retail availability of marijuana in Oregon counties were associated with higher levels of adolescent [marijuana use](#) and related beliefs.

Using [survey data](#) gathered every other year from 2010 to 2018 from 6th, 8th and 11th graders 35 Oregon counties, this study assessed changes in past-30-day marijuana use and beliefs, including:

- perceived availability of marijuana,
- perceived parent approval of marijuana use, and
- lower levels of perceived risk of marijuana use.

Comparisons were made in counties that allowed recreational marijuana sales compared to counties that did not.

The results of the study show that:

- Higher rates of past-30-day marijuana use and more favorable beliefs were found in counties that allow recreational marijuana sales both before and after legalization;
- Prevalence of past-30-day marijuana use increased after legalization both in counties that did and did not allow sales;
- The relationship between allowing recreational marijuana sales and [adolescent](#) marijuana use was accounted for by greater retail marijuana availability and favorable beliefs.

Overall, this study shows that there was a statewide increase in the prevalence of marijuana use among Oregon adolescents after legalization in 2015, and that greater retail availability of marijuana in counties that permit recreational marijuana sales is positively associated with both marijuana use and beliefs favorable toward its use among adolescents.

Said lead author, Dr. Paschall, "Our study indicates that statewide legalization of recreational marijuana use and greater retail availability of marijuana in Oregon communities may be contributing to an increase in marijuana use among adolescents. Greater local restrictions on numbers of licensed marijuana retail outlets, hours of operation and

advertising, and [higher taxes](#) on marijuana products may help to reduce both retail and social availability of marijuana."

More information: Mallie J. Paschall et al, Recreational Marijuana Availability in Oregon and Use Among Adolescents, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2019.09.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2019.09.020)

Provided by Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

Citation: Recreational marijuana availability in Oregon and use among adolescents (2020, January 21) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-01-recreational-marijuana-availability-oregon-adolescents.html>

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