

Recreational marijuana legalization and co-use with alcohol among adolescents

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A new study from the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation finds that recreational marijuana legalization may increase the risk of alcohol and marijuana co-use among adolescents.

The study examined the association between recreational marijuana legalization in California in November 2016 and alcohol and marijuana co-use among underage youth. The study is based on data from 7th, 9th, and 11th graders who participated in the statewide California Healthy Kids Survey from 2010–2011 to 2018–2019 [school years](#).

Key findings include:

- Recreational marijuana legalization was associated with greater odds of past 30–day alcohol and marijuana co-use among adolescents after 2016-2017
- Legalization was more strongly associated with co-use among adolescents who reported past 30–day alcohol use and heavy drinking
- Legalization was inversely related to co-use among past 30–day marijuana users
- Among past 30–day co-users, there was a [positive association](#) between legalization and the frequency of marijuana use

Study co-author, Dr. Mallie J. Pachall, notes that their "study shows that [marijuana legalization](#) may increase the risk of alcohol and marijuana co-use among adolescents. To combat this negative public health effect, greater restrictions on the numbers of alcohol and marijuana retail outlets, hours of operation, advertising, as well as imposing [higher taxes](#) on alcohol and marijuana products may help reduce their availability to adolescents."

The study was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

More information: Mallie J. Paschall et al, Recreational Marijuana Legalization and Co-use With Alcohol Among Adolescents, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2021.06.003](#)

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