

Federally Funded Survey: Teen Cannabis Use Reaches Historic Low

University of Michigan Survey Reveals Teen Cannabis Use Drops to 30-Year Low

A federally funded survey by the University of Michigan, part of the annual *Monitoring the Future* report, has revealed that marijuana use among teenagers has dropped significantly over the past decade, reaching historic lows. The data, consistent with previous reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), shows that cannabis use by young people is now at its lowest point in 30 years.

Key Findings of the Survey

According to the University of Michigan's survey, cannabis use among middle and high school students has seen a marked decline. In the past decade, during which 24 states legalized adult-use marijuana sales, the percentage of students reporting ever having used marijuana has decreased dramatically:

8th graders: 32% decline

10th graders: 37% decline

12th graders: 23% decline

The survey also found significant reductions in recent and monthly marijuana use:

The percentage of 8th graders who used cannabis in the past year dropped by 38%.

The percentage of 10th graders who used in the past year fell by 42%.

The percentage of 12th graders who reported using in the past year decreased by 26%.

Additionally, monthly use of marijuana among teens also dropped, with 8th graders, 10th graders, and 12th graders reporting declines of 34%, 43%, and 34%, respectively.

NORML's Response to Teen Cannabis Use Data

Paul Armentano, Deputy Director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), responded to the findings, highlighting the contrast between the survey results and previous claims. "Sensational claims that adult-use legalization laws are linked with greater marijuana use by teens are simply not backed by reliable data," Armentano said. "These findings ought to reassure lawmakers that cannabis access can be legally regulated in a manner that is safe, effective, and that does not inadvertently impact young people's habits."

Armentano's comments address a long-standing debate over whether the legalization of marijuana for adults leads to higher cannabis use among teenagers. For years, opponents of cannabis legalization have argued that making marijuana legally accessible to adults would result in an increase in adolescent use. However, the latest data shows a consistent trend in the opposite direction.

The Role of Legalization in Teen Marijuana Use Decline

The decade-long decline in teen cannabis use coincides with the legal adult-use marijuana market's growth, with 24 states having legalized cannabis for recreational use. Despite the rise of legal cannabis markets across the country, the survey data shows no correlation between adult-use legalization and higher marijuana consumption among teens.

NORML's earlier op-ed, published earlier this year, also reinforced this point. "Those wedded to the status quo of cannabis criminalization have long warned that legalizing the marijuana market will result in increased adolescent use," the op-ed stated. "But 10 years following the first states' decisions to legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis sales, data conclusively shows that this fear was unfounded."

The data presented in the *Monitoring the Future* report suggests that the concerns over adolescent marijuana use in legalized markets are largely unfounded. It also calls into question previous arguments used by opponents of legalization, asserting that the impact of cannabis legalization on teen use is not as significant as feared.

Impact of Legalization on Public Health and Education

While the decline in teen marijuana use may be seen as a positive development, it's important to consider the broader context of cannabis legalization. Advocates argue that legalizing marijuana creates a more regulated market that can prevent underage access, as products are sold through licensed dispensaries with age restrictions and quality controls. Furthermore, the tax revenue generated from cannabis sales can be reinvested into public health and education campaigns aimed at educating young people about the risks of substance use.

In the years following legalization, states have also implemented programs focused on preventing underage use and ensuring that young people understand the risks associated with marijuana consumption. These programs are part of a broader effort to regulate cannabis use while protecting public health, especially among minors.

What This Means for Future Cannabis Policy

The findings from the University of Michigan's *Monitoring the Future* report add to the growing body of evidence suggesting that cannabis legalization has not led to an increase in marijuana use among adolescents. Instead, the data shows a steady and significant decline in teen cannabis consumption, challenging the arguments of those who have long opposed legalization on the grounds of public safety.

As more states consider adult-use marijuana legislation, this new data could help inform future policy decisions. Lawmakers may be more confident in moving forward with legalization knowing that it does not appear to have a detrimental impact on youth marijuana use. Furthermore, the data underscores the importance of continued efforts to regulate the cannabis market and educate young people about responsible consumption.

Conclusion: A Shift in the Narrative on Teen Cannabis Use

The results of the University of Michigan's federally funded survey offer a strong counterpoint to the arguments against cannabis legalization based on teen use. The findings suggest that, rather than increasing marijuana use among teens, legalization has coincided with a significant decline in youth consumption, a trend that is consistent with other national surveys.

This evidence offers reassurance to lawmakers and advocates for cannabis reform, highlighting that marijuana legalization, when properly regulated, can coexist with efforts to protect young people and reduce teen cannabis use. As the cannabis landscape continues to evolve, the data reinforces the notion that responsible regulation and education, rather than criminalization, is the most effective approach for both public health and safety.

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