

# Pennsylvania Leads U.S. in Daily Cannabis Possession Arrests

## Pennsylvania Police Arrest an Average of 32 People Daily for Cannabis Possession, Highlighting the Need for Reform

New data reveals that over 12,000 people were arrested for cannabis possession in Pennsylvania in 2023, with police making an average of 32 arrests per day. This growing number has intensified calls for marijuana reform as state lawmakers prepare to reconvene next week under increasing pressure to act on legalization.

### Cannabis Arrests in 2023: The Numbers

According to data compiled from the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)** and the **Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCRS)**, Pennsylvania law enforcement arrested 10,463 adults and 1,578 juveniles in 2023 for possessing up to 30 grams of cannabis.

These arrest figures, averaging 32 per day, underscore the pressing need for reform in Pennsylvania's cannabis laws, particularly as the state lags behind neighboring states that have already legalized adult-use cannabis.

### Unequal Enforcement and Local Decriminalization Efforts

“Pennsylvania stands out as having some of the most arrests of any state in America at this point,” said Goldstein, highlighting the stark contrast between Pennsylvania and its neighboring states like [Ohio](#), [Delaware](#), [Maryland](#), [New Jersey](#), and New York, all of which have enacted adult-use cannabis legalization.

While over 80 cities across Pennsylvania have implemented local decriminalization measures or reduced penalties for simple cannabis possession, the state as a whole remains an outlier in the region. These efforts have not been enough to protect residents from arrest, particularly as enforcement varies widely across jurisdictions.

Goldstein's data also reveals troubling disparities in enforcement. **Black residents**, who make up only 12% of Pennsylvania's population, accounted for **40% of cannabis possession arrests**. This disproportionate impact highlights the systemic racial inequalities in the state's enforcement of cannabis laws.

### Cannabis Reform and the 2024 Election

As Pennsylvania faces mounting calls for marijuana reform, the push for cannabis legalization is increasingly becoming a hot-button issue. With Pennsylvania being a critical swing state in national elections, cannabis reform could play a significant role in shaping the political landscape ahead of the 2024 election.

Recent polling indicates that a strong majority of voters in five key Pennsylvania districts support cannabis legalization, further emphasizing the political momentum behind the issue. However, despite growing public support, legislative progress remains uncertain.

“There are plenty of Democrats and Republicans who’ve offered well-thought-out bills over the years, but GOP leadership has blocked them from moving forward,” said Goldstein, expressing skepticism about the likelihood of reform in the upcoming session.

## **The Road Ahead**

As lawmakers prepare to reconvene, the data on cannabis arrests adds to the pressure on Pennsylvania’s government to address the issue of marijuana reform. Whether state lawmakers will take action in the face of mounting public demand remains to be seen, but the clock is ticking for Pennsylvania to catch up with its neighbors on this key issue.

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