

German Study Shows Youth Cannabis Use Declined Post Legalization

Teen Cannabis Use in Germany Declined Following Recreational Legalization, Government Study Shows

A new federal study from Germany indicates that youth marijuana use has declined since the country legalized recreational cannabis in April 2024, challenging one of the most common arguments used by opponents of reform.

Study Findings: Youth Use Falls, Young Adult Use Edges Up

The Federal Institute for Public Health's **Drug Affinity Study**, released Tuesday, shows that cannabis use among adolescents aged 12–17 decreased in 2025. Past-year consumption dropped from 6.7% in 2023 to 6.1%, while more regular use defined as ten or more times annually fell from 1.3% to 1.1%.

By contrast, young adults between 18 and 25 reported slightly higher use. Past-year consumption rose from 23.3% to 25.6% over the same period, with the increase most pronounced among men.

The survey, conducted between April and July of 2025, collected responses from 7,001 adolescents and young adults across the country.

Legalization and Its Impact

Germany legalized adult-use cannabis in April 2024, allowing individuals to possess and cultivate limited amounts of marijuana while also permitting regulated cannabis social clubs to distribute products to members. Advocates argued that a legal, regulated framework would limit underage access by displacing illicit markets, a view reinforced by the new study's findings.

International Context: Consistent Trends Elsewhere

The German data aligns with research from other countries and U.S. states. In the United States, for instance, a July 2025 report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) found that youth cannabis use remained stable despite ongoing state-level legalization.

Similarly, a report by the Marijuana Policy Project found that teen marijuana use fell in 19 of 21 legal U.S. states, with an average 35% decline in early legalization states. In Canada, government reports have shown

that daily or near-daily cannabis use among both youth and adults has remained steady since nationwide legalization in 2018.

Political Outlook in Germany

Despite concerns that February's national election could jeopardize legalization, Germany's new coalition government has committed to conducting an "open-ended evaluation" of the reform rather than rolling it back. Public opinion has also shifted: support for legalization now stands at 59% of eligible voters, up significantly from just under 50% in previous years.

While CDU and CSU voters remain the only major blocs where majorities oppose legalization, the policy continues to enjoy broad political backing.

Next Steps: Pilot Programs and International Collaboration

Germany is also advancing **pilot programs** to study regulated cannabis sales more closely. The federal minister for food and agriculture approved research-focused commercial pilots last December, while cities such as Frankfurt and Hanford are planning their own multi-year trials to expand access.

Internationally, Germany has positioned itself as a hub for policy dialogue on cannabis regulation. Over the past three years, German officials have convened with leaders from Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland, as well as U.S. representatives, to exchange insights on legalization.

Conclusion: A Turning Point for European Cannabis Policy

The latest study provides early evidence that legalization may not only fail to increase youth cannabis use but could actually reduce it, a finding that strengthens the case for regulated markets across Europe.

As Germany continues to refine its policy and launch pilot programs, its experience is being closely watched by other nations exploring reform. For now, the data suggest that legalization's greatest critics may need to rethink one of their most enduring arguments.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

© Copyright 2025 Cannabis Risk Manager. All Rights Reserved