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**Trends in Youth Marijuana Use: Comparison of Maine and National Data**

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### Background

- The implications of recent medical marijuana laws and their impact on youth are poorly understood.
- New research has shown that perceptions of marijuana’s harmfulness are at their lowest levels in 20 years.
- It is unclear if these shifting perceptions will result in increased usage.

### Purpose

To review trends in youth marijuana use among 9th grade students, by comparing U.S. with Maine averages over the past 20 years.

### Importance

As marijuana gains increased visibility and medical value, the need to monitor current trends and rates continues to grow.

### Teen culture & perceived risk of marijuana use

How has regarding marijuana as a medicine, rather than an illicit substance, changed the way youth perceive risk associated with usage?

### National View

National trends indicate that youth marijuana use has been in steady decline since a high point in 1997, followed by a slight increase in recent years. Can this recent increase be an effect of medical marijuana regulation?

**U.S. culture & attitude concerning medical marijuana**

Figure 3: Depiction of state marijuana regulations and national attitudes toward usage

### A Local View

How does Maine compare to the rest of the U.S.?

- Trends in Maine mirror national patterns.
- The most recent estimates of youth marijuana use in Maine (13.9%) were considerably lower than the national average (18.0%).
- Perceived risk of usage has declined in recent years, which has been met with an increase in youth usage rates.

**Usage rates**

Figure 5: Data collected from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (CDC-YRBS).

### Conclusions

- When states consider legislative proposals to allow the medical use of marijuana, a concern is increase in illicit marijuana use among youth.
- The CDC-YRBS data indicate marijuana use has increased among 9th grade students in Maine since the state enacted its medical marijuana law.
- Comparing marijuana usage rates in Maine with national trends reveals a different scenario.
- Since the enactment of medical marijuana legislation, Maine youth usage rates have fallen below the national averages.
- With the data currently available it is difficult to accurately quantify the true impact of medical marijuana legislation on youth usage rates.

### Moving Forward

- Accurate and transparent data are needed to measure medical marijuana’s impact on American youth usage rates.
- It is vitally important to closely monitor youth usage trends in states with reformed marijuana legislation, in order to gain a clear picture of how these changes are effecting our nation’s youth.
- In the interest of public health, safety regulations should evolve along with, if not ahead of, marijuana legislation.

**Figure References**

- Figure 1: Johnston, L.D., O'Malley, P.M., Bachman, J.G., & Schulenberg, J.E. (2013). Demographic subgroup trends among adolescents for forty-six classes of licit and illicit drugs. 1975-2012.
- Figure 2: The Monitoring the Future study, the University of Michigan, sponsored by the National Institute of Health.
- Figure 3: National Conference of State Legislatures, CNVDCP Pub Jan. 3-5 2014.
- Figure 4: Marijuana Policy in the States, 2014 Marijuana Policy Project (MPP).
- Figure 5: Data collected from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS) (2015).
- Figure 6: Perceptions of Great Risk of Smoking Marijuana Once a Month among Persons Aged 12 or Older in Maine, by Substate Region: Percentages, Annual Averages Based on 2008, 2009, and 2010 NSDUHs.

**Figure 1**: % of U.S. students reporting current marijuana use from 1973 to 2012

**Figure 2**: The Monitoring the Future study, the University of Michigan, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.