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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 teen 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.

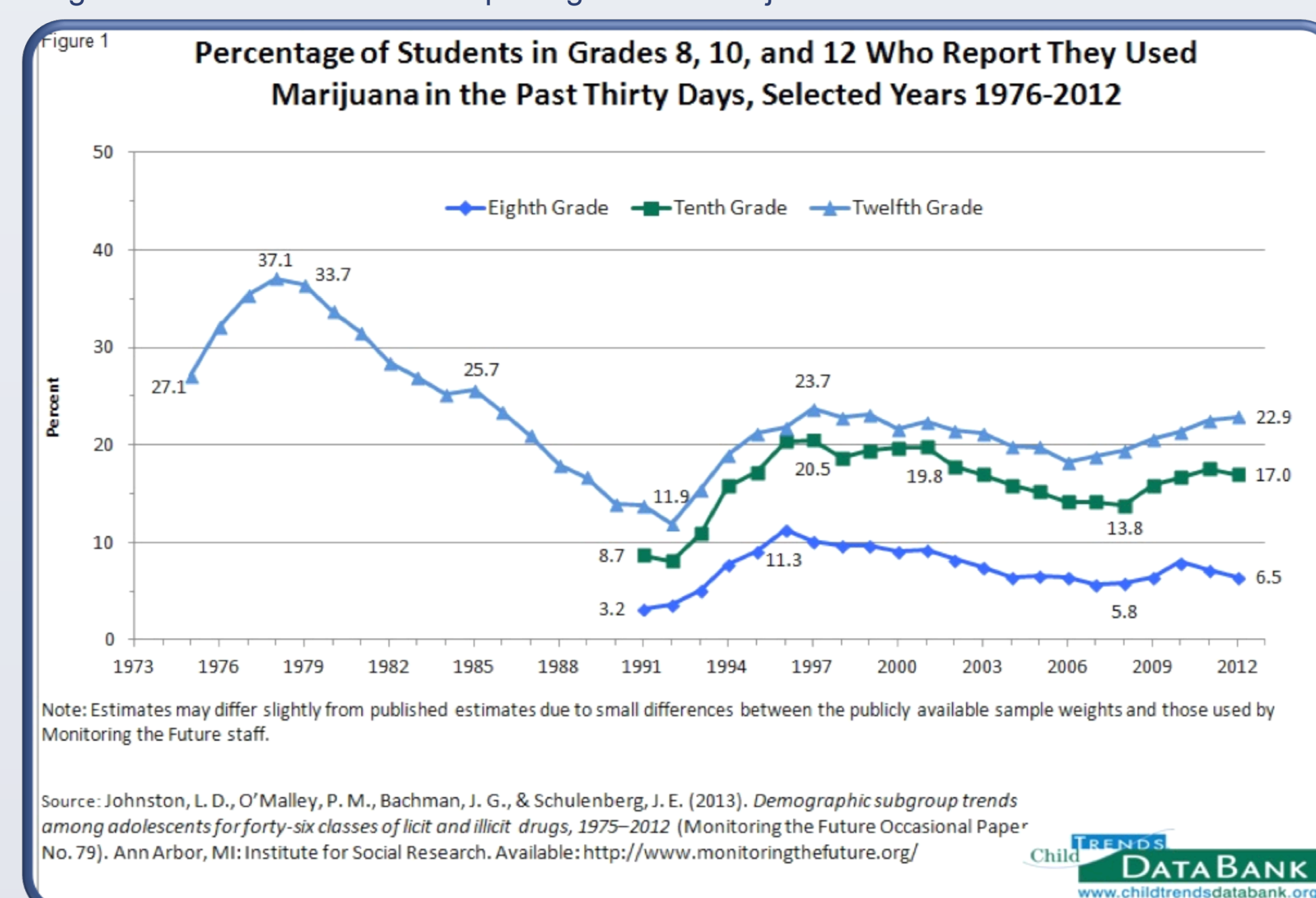
Purpose

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.

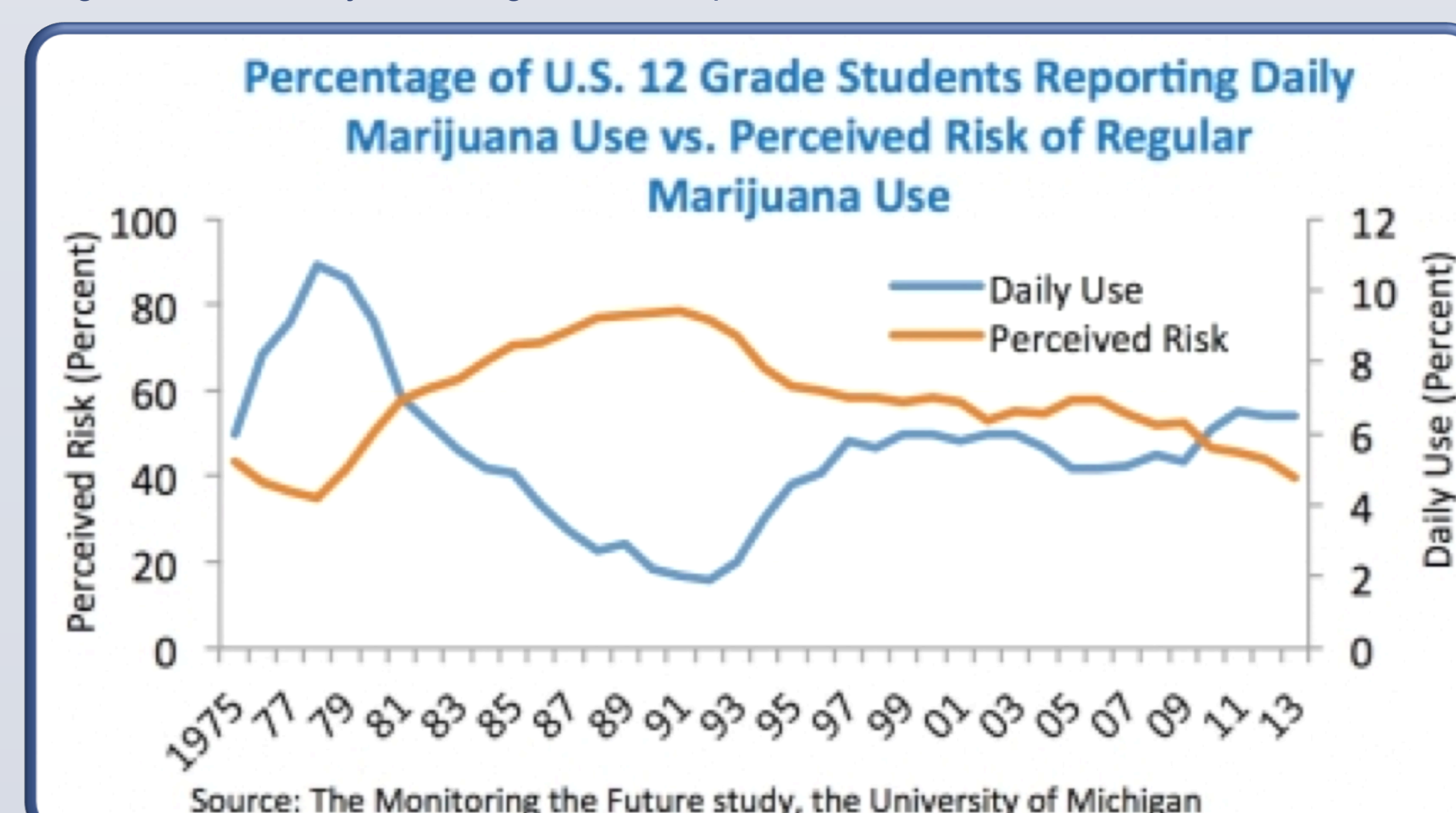
Figure 1: % of U.S. students reporting current marijuana use from 1973 to 2012



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?

Figure 2: How marijuana usage relates to perceived risk



A 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

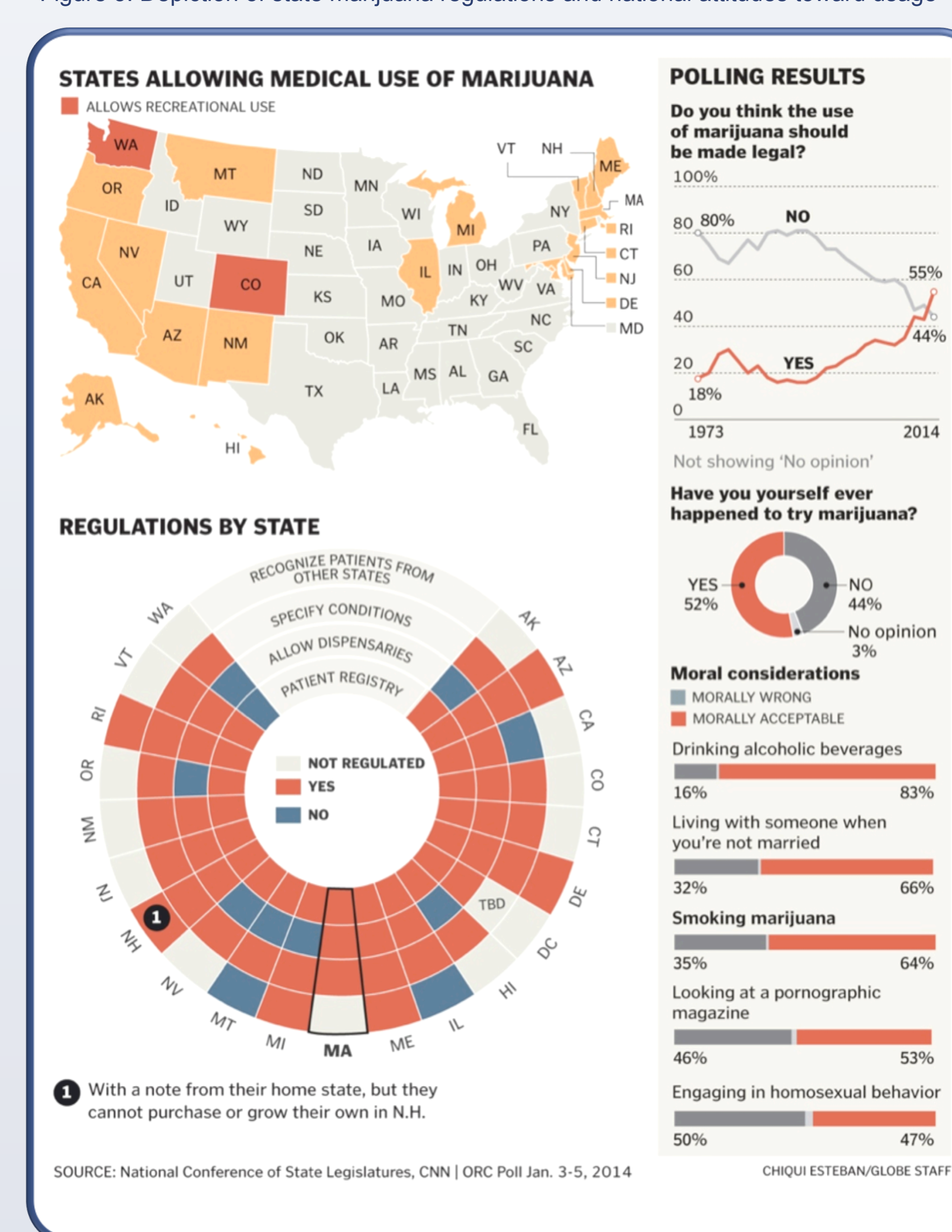
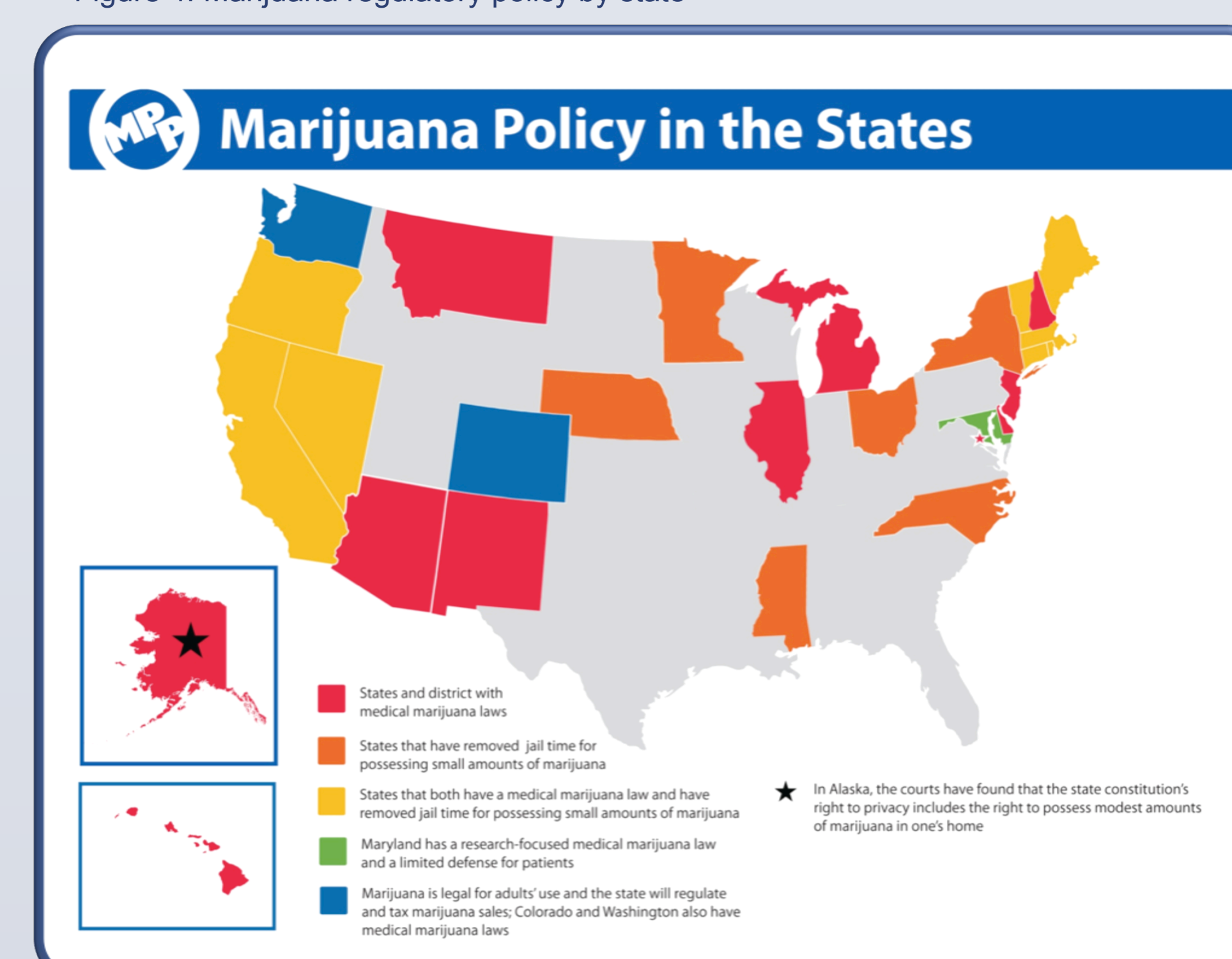


Figure 4: Marijuana regulatory policy by state



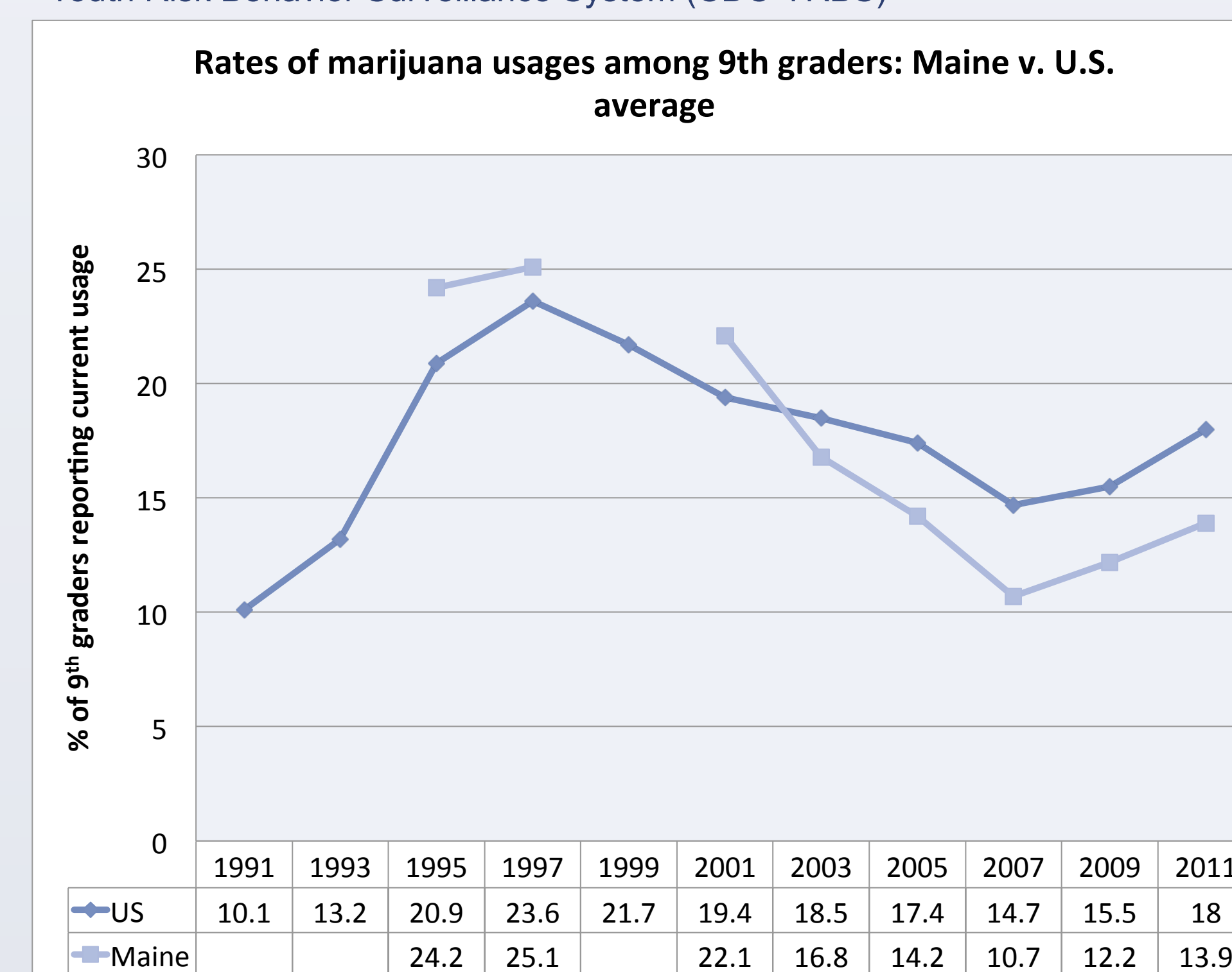
A Local View

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 rates 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.

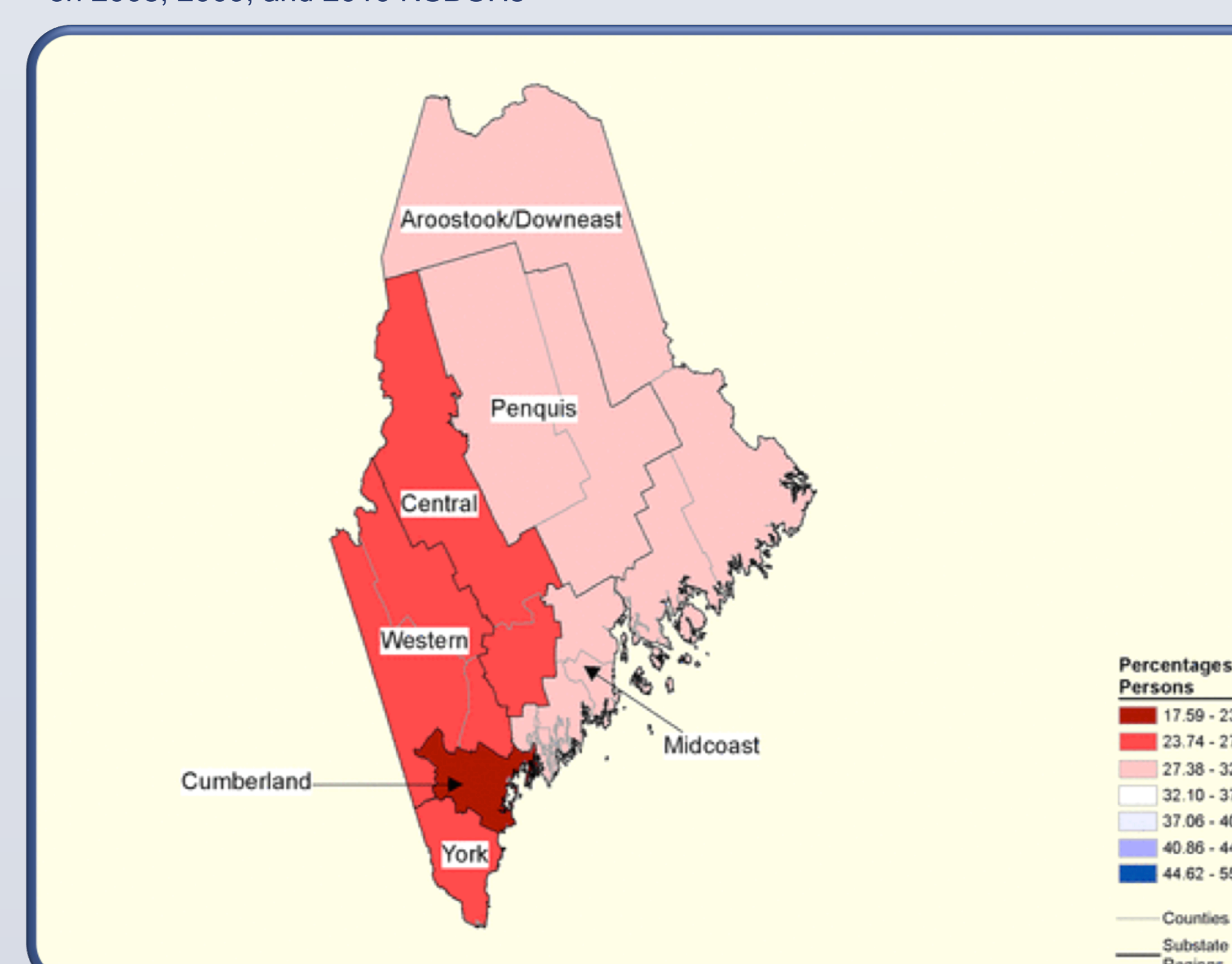
Usage rates

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



Perceived Risk

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



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., & Sculenberg, 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 Institutes of Health.
- Figure 3: National Conference of State Legislatures, CNN/ORC Poll 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) (2011).
- 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.