DFAA
Drug Free Action Alliance

Marijuana: Public Safety and Law Enforcement

Public Safety

- Marijuana is the most prevalent illegal drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured drivers, and motor vehicle crash victims.[1]

- Columbia University did a meta-analysis of nine epidemiologic studies and found that drivers who test positive for marijuana or who report using marijuana are more than twice as likely as other drivers to be involved in motor vehicle crashes.[2]

- 1 in 10 people who try marijuana become addicted to it, developing a dependence that produces withdrawal and cravings. If marijuana use starts in adolescence, the chances of addiction are 1 in 6.[3]

- 28% of driver fatalities and more than 11% of the general driver population tested positive for non-alcohol drugs, with marijuana being the most commonly detected substance.[4]

- Nationally, fatal car crashes involving marijuana tripled from 1999 to 2010.[5]

- Marijuana impairs motor coordination and reaction time and is the second most prevalent drug (after alcohol) implicated in automobile accidents.[6]

- In the U.S., cannabis emergency rates have been rising sharply for cannabis-related admissions. Visits to hospital emergency departments because of cannabis use have risen from an estimated 16,251 visits in 1991 to more than 374,000 in 2008.[7]

Crime

- In total, one tenth of one percent (0.1 percent) of all state prisoners were marijuana-possession offenders with no prior sentences.[8]

- Alcohol — not cocaine, heroin or marijuana — is responsible for 2.6 million arrests every year. That is 1 million more arrests than for all illegal drugs combined.[9]

- The legalization of marijuana in Colorado hasn't solved the racial disparities in marijuana enforcement that were promised, with blacks still far more likely than whites to be charged with pot-related crimes.[10]

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1 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Drug Involvement of Fatally Injured Drivers. November 2010. U.S. Department of Transportation Report No. DOT HS 811 415. www.nhtsa.gov

2 Mu-Chen L., Brady J., et. al, "Marijuana Use and Motor Vehicle Crashes," Oxford Journals, July 18, 2011.

3 Wagner, F.A. & Anthony, J.C. From first drug use to drug dependence; developmental periods of risk for dependence upon cannabis, cocaine, and alcohol. Neuropsychopharmacology 26, 479-488 (2002).

4 Ibid

5 Li G, Brady J, "Trends in Alcohol and Other Drugs Detected in Fatally Injured Drivers in the United States, 1999–2010", American Journal of Epidemiology, Volume 179, Issue 6, Dec., 2013, pp. 692-699.

6 National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). Drugged Driving: A White Paper. 2011. www.stopdruggeddriving.org

7 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2011). Drug Abuse Warning Network, 2008: National Estimates of Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits. HHS Publication No. SMA 11-4618. Rockville, MD.

8 ibid

9 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011.

10 http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/25/colorado-marijuana-legalization-racial-disparity-drug-arrests