

# Legalizing marijuana in the united states

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## I. Introduction

Marijuana has been one of the most researched drugs in the history of pharmacology, and there is still considerable disagreement about its short-term and long-term effects. It was made an illicit drug in the United States, and many states have established harsh penalties for those convicted of possession of even small amounts. In the recent years, there has been a move toward decriminalization of marijuana (Bock, 2000).

Marijuana is the name given in the United States to the drug produced from the hemp plant *Cannabis sativa*. The use of cannabis derivatives under such names as hashish, charas, bhang, and ganja is widespread throughout the world. The most active ingredient of the plant derivative is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). The potency of this chemical is indicated by the fact that the average street sample of marijuana contains less than . 5% THC (Weisheit, 1992).

Some samples are considerably higher in THC content; thus, effects from the drug vary according to its quality, meaning its THC content. The flowering parts of the plant contain the greatest amounts of THC (Goode, Pp. 567-575). These are usually dried and smoked, but they may be made into a drink somewhat like tea or blended into various cooking recipes. Somehow, marijuana has been used for some medications but it is not a valid ground to legalize it because it has negative effects to human bodies.

Moreover, marijuana is still illegal in most places. Under federal law a person can be sentenced to up to one year in jail or a \$5000 fine, or both, for simple

possession of marijuana. Every year about 400, 000 people are arrested for possession; about 80 percent are under age 26.

## II. Background

### A. Why should it be legalized?

I personally agree that marijuana should be legalized because it is being used as legal medical therapy for several conditions. Careful studies have shown that it is effective in treating severe nausea in cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy. Older patients seem to respond less well than younger patients and complain more about side-effects, including feeling “stoned.” Researchers are continuing studies of marijuana’s possible usefulness in reducing pressure within the eye in glaucoma and in treating muscle spasticity (Earleywine, 2002).

Most people use marijuana for the altered states it produces. These states are a little easier to control than those produced by other hallucinogenic drugs, unless the dosage is very high. At low to moderate dosages, hallucinations are not present. Instead, the person typically reports of calmness, increased sensory awareness, changes in space and time, and increased appetite, often with a craving for sweets.

In addition, marijuana has been used for thousands of years, both as a medicine and for its intoxicating effects. In the form of tablets, marijuana is frequently prescribed to relieve the nausea and vomiting that often accompany chemotherapy. Moreover, most people use marijuana for the altered states it produces (Kreit, 2003). These states are a little easier to

control than those produced by other hallucinogenic drugs, unless the dosage is very high. At low to moderate dosages, hallucinations are not present. Instead, the person typically reports of calmness, increased sensory awareness, changes in space and time, and increased appetite, often with a craving for sweets. Many researchers too have concluded that smoking marijuana is no more dangerous, and perhaps even less so, than smoking cigarettes or using alcohol (Nadelmann, 2004).

## B. Pros and Cons

Many perceptual and emotional effects follow marijuana smoking. Sensory experience may become more intense; smells are richer, textures feel more sensuous, objects are seen as more beautiful, sounds are more brilliant, and ideas flow more freely, although they may be disjointed. The person may experience an emotional high in which he or she feels joyful, tranquil, and happy. The effects of marijuana, however, are like those of other drugs; they very much depend on the person and the setting. Taken in a pleasant, relaxed social situation, marijuana can be quite unpleasant (Earleywine, pp. 123-156). Also, people who are naturally paranoid, suspicious, or aggressive may become more so under the influence of marijuana; the calm, better-adjusted users are more apt to experience a euphoric high.

Its non-medical use, however, is illegal in the United States and most other countries. The penalties for possessing or using marijuana are, in many states, as severe as those imposed for the possession or use of much more potent drugs (Goode, 2000). Many argue that marijuana is no more harmful than cigarettes and liquor and should be legalized.

The growing consensus of research on marijuana would suggest that it is not a safe drug. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any drug taken frequently by choice is advisable. The issue, though, is frequency of use. The literature on chronic users of marijuana—that is, people who use it a lot and over a long period of time—suggests rather strongly that there are serious deficits in some cognitive abilities such as memory. In addition, heavier users experience some undesirable personality changes, problems with sleep, deficits in psychomotor abilities such as driving, and changes in motivational levels that produce apathy and a lack of striving for achievement (Schlosser, 1994).

Finally, there are a number of factors that influence the effect of a particular drug. There are factors associated with the drug, including its purity and the method of its administration. Subject variables that are important include body weight, metabolic rate, whether or not the person has eaten, general state of health, and previous experience with the drug. In trying to predict how any one person will react to a drug, these factors, and many others, must be taken into account.

But there is another important variable that plays a major role in drug reactions, and too often its effects are overlooked (Souder, 1998). That variable is the user's expectation of the drug's effect. Research has shown that the experience many drug users will have is not just a result of the physiological and biochemical changes produced by the drug, but also depends on how they think they are supposed to respond, or how they see

others around them responding. These factors must also be considered when evaluating the reasons for altered states of consciousness through drug use.

a.) Respiratory effects: Because marijuana smoke is deeply inhaled, retained in the lungs, and contains many of the same harmful ingredients as tobacco smoke, users show signs of impaired lung functioning when compared to nonusers. Like tobacco smoke, marijuana smoke contains carcinogenic agents, but since many pot smokers also tobacco, it has been hard to isolate marijuana's impact on lung cancer. At this point, the evidence is merely suggestive (Earleywine, 2002).

b.) Immune system: Animal studies have suggested that marijuana can dampen the body's resistance to disease, but no studies have been done to confirm or refute this danger in human beings (Earleywine, 2002).

c.) Mental effects: While there is no evidence that marijuana causes the brain to shrink, it can lead to amotivational syndrome, which researchers define as a mental dulling, emotional blunting, and loss of drive and goal-directedness (Earleywine, 2002).

### III. Conclusion

In conclusion, in the last decade marijuana dealing has become a multibillion-dollar business, ranking right behind General Motors and Exxon. Throughout the world, marijuana seems to be the fourth most popular mind-altering drug, following caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. However, marijuana use seems to be on the decline nationally, especially among young people in high school and college.

At low moderate doses, marijuana acts somewhat like alcohol and some tranquilizers, and like alcohol, the drug takes effects within minutes. Unlike alcohol, marijuana at low doses does not dull sensation but may cause slight alterations in perception, so that it is unsafe to drive a car for as long as 4 to 6 hours after a single joint.

After the thorough studies, I therefore conclude that marijuana should be legalized because it has positive effects if properly used. On the other hand, the use of marijuana should be case to case basis and should only be used for medications.

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