

# GET THE FACTS

## MARIJUANA

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States. In 2011 alone, more than 18 million Americans age 12 and older reported using the drug within the past month. Approximately 4.2 million people met the diagnostic criteria for abuse of or dependence on this drug. This is more than pain relievers, cocaine, tranquilizers, hallucinogens, and heroin combined.

There are very real consequences associated with marijuana use. In 2010, marijuana was involved in more than 461,000 emergency department visits nationwide. This is nearly 39 percent of all emergency department visits involving illicit drugs, and highlights the very real dangers that can accompany use of the drug.

And in 2011, approximately 872,000 Americans 12 or older reported receiving treatment for marijuana use, more than any other illicit drug. Despite some viewpoints that marijuana is harmless, these figures present a sobering picture of this drug's very real and serious harms.

Marijuana places a significant strain on our health care system, and poses considerable danger to the health and safety of the users themselves, their families, and our communities. Marijuana presents a major challenge for health care providers, public safety professionals, and leaders in communities and all levels of government seeking to reduce the drug use and its consequences throughout the country.

We know that marijuana use, particularly long-term, chronic use or use starting at a young age, can lead to dependence and addiction. Long-term marijuana use can lead to compulsive drug seeking and abuse despite the known harmful effects upon functioning in the context of family, school, work, and recreational activities.

Research finds that approximately 9 percent (1 in 11) of marijuana users become dependent. Research also indicates that the earlier young people start using marijuana, the more likely they are to become dependent on marijuana or other drugs later in life.

In 2011, approximately 4.2 million people met the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) diagnostic criteria for marijuana abuse or dependence. This is more than pain relievers, cocaine, tranquilizers, hallucinogens, and heroin combined. In 2011, approximately 872,000 Americans 12 or older reported receiving treatment for marijuana use, more than any other illicit drug.

The research is clear. Marijuana users can become addicted to the drug. It can lead to abuse and dependence, and other serious consequences.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/frequently-asked-questions-and-facts-about-marijuana>