



San Diego County Marijuana Prevention Initiative 2020 REPORT



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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

California voters passed Proposition 64, The Adult Use of Marijuana Act, on November 4, 2016 legalizing the adult use and possession of marijuana. California is now one of eleven states that allows both medical and recreational sales.

The Marijuana Prevention Initiative (MPI) published an initial report in early 2016 that included local marijuana - related trends to assess baseline data and identify important public health issues to consider, based on information gleaned from states that had legalized recreational marijuana use. This report will explore the current landscape of marijuana use and document changes observed following legalization. Findings discussed in the report highlight trends related to youth marijuana use.

Overview of the San Diego County Marijuana Prevention Initiative

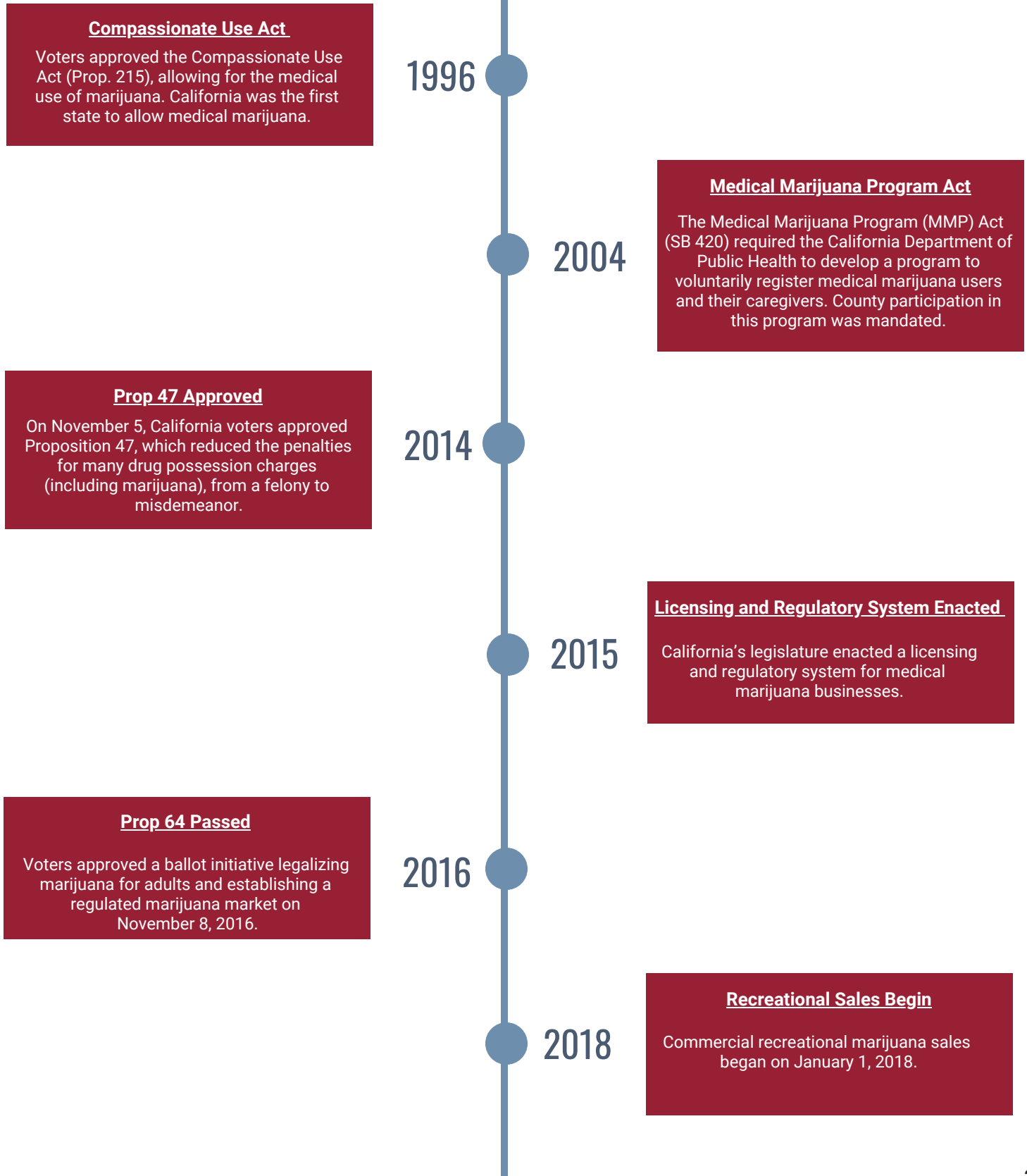
The County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) has funded the current Marijuana Prevention Initiative (MPI) since 2012 to reduce youth access to and use of marijuana. The MPI engages in science-based educational outreach in collaboration with the County's Regional Prevention Providers to inform the community of the harmful effects marijuana can have in our youth populations. The MPI's regional prevention strategies focus on educating and informing the public about the harms associated with adolescent marijuana use. The MPI staff continue to speak at forums, trainings and conferences both locally and nationally.

The MPI regularly collects local-level data to inform prevention practices and identify any emerging trends within the local landscape. These data are then shared with prevention providers, law enforcement partners, parents, educators and youth. Data are routinely collected from the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), San Diego County Community Survey, SANDAG, San Diego County drug treatment admissions, and other local sources. Additionally, the MPI reviews and compiles data from both the state and national level to identify trends and track changes in youth marijuana use over time.



Key Dates in Marijuana Legislation

The laws surrounding marijuana are complex, and continue to be modified. At the federal level, marijuana remains classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substance Act. However, the State of California passed Proposition 64 in 2016 allowing for recreational sales. The following timeline identifies several key dates in marijuana legislation.



MPI Highlights

Furthering Policy and Education Surrounding Marijuana Prevention Efforts

The MPI's ongoing prevention strategy focuses on educating and informing the public about the harms associated with youth marijuana use. To this end, the MPI reviews data and indicators, collaborates with numerous partners across various sectors to move forward policy and prevention efforts to decrease the harms of marijuana amongst our adolescent population. As a subject matter expert, the MPI Program Manager was selected to serve on two newly created Advisory Boards: the SAMHSA Region 9 Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) and the Department of Health Care Services Proposition 64 Advisory Group. In addition to these advisory boards the MPI Program Manager is a frequent speaker at local, state and national level conferences.

The MPI, in partnership with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), National Marijuana Initiative (NMI), regional prevention providers, and local partners, hosted the 2019 Western States Marijuana Summit (WSMS) in San Diego. The summit brings together a wide range of experts from various disciplines to highlight current and emerging trends related to marijuana and strengthen policy efforts. The MPI Program Manager spoke on a panel of experts to discuss the current marijuana use trends seen at the local level.

Leading expert in marijuana prevention field

The MPI regularly develops media pieces to highlight health issues related to marijuana use. Most recently, the MPI's report documenting increases in marijuana-related emergency room visits was utilized at the national level during a meeting with the United States Surgeon General and Chief Medical Officer at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to bring attention to this alarming trend.

Additionally, a MPI media event discussing Cannabinoid Hyperemesis (CH) syndrome, an illness induced by the overuse of marijuana, attracted national attention when Dr. Roneet Lev described the hallmark signs of CH syndrome as "Scromiting" or screaming and vomiting.



Local Collaboration

The MPI's capacity is enhanced by its close collaboration with the six County-funded Regional Prevention Providers. Examples of effective collaborations include:

Amended Social Host Ordinance Language

Regional prevention providers have supported policy changes to reduce youth access to and use of marijuana. Recently, regional providers have worked with local officials and cities to update their social host ordinance (SHO) language to include marijuana and controlled substances. A SHO makes it unlawful for individuals (social hosts) to knowingly provide a place for underage drinking or drug use to occur on a premises under the host's control. Most cities in the County of San Diego have adopted the amended language.

Parent Education and Engagement

Several prevention providers hosted forums and parent nights in response to the 2019 outbreak of E-Cigarette Vaping Associated Lung Injury (EVALI) over the past year. Several regions hosted large events including a parent night in Vista to educate on the dangers of vaping. This event was well received by the community with over 200 people in attendance and attracted a large amount of media attention.

Proposition 64 Addendum

Developed a post Proposition 64 lease addendum in collaboration with SAY San Diego to address the issue of marijuana use in rental properties. The lease addendum was developed to address increasing marijuana use in multi-unit apartment complexes.

Advocating for Local Control

Local prevention providers continue to engage in policy advocacy pertaining to local public health and safety issues such as the marijuana outlet permitting process, party buses, deliveries and advertising near youth sensitive locations such as schools and local parks.

Drugged Driving Prevention and Awareness

To increase community awareness of the dangers of drugged driving the MPI and regional providers launched the "Put Drugged Driving on Your Radar" campaign in 2015. Local cities have since adopted drugged driving proclamations and continue to support DUI checkpoints and events that increase awareness of the issue. Campaigns continue to emphasize the need for trained Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) and support for local law enforcement.

Synthetic Drug Workgroup

The MPI and Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) co-facilitate the Synthetic Drug Workgroup that was originally formed to address a spike in Spice-related medical issues within the City of San Diego. The group continues to evolve and focuses on providing a coordinated response to emerging drug trends. Most recently, the group has been focusing on topics such as fentanyl and the increasing need for widespread naloxone availability throughout the County.

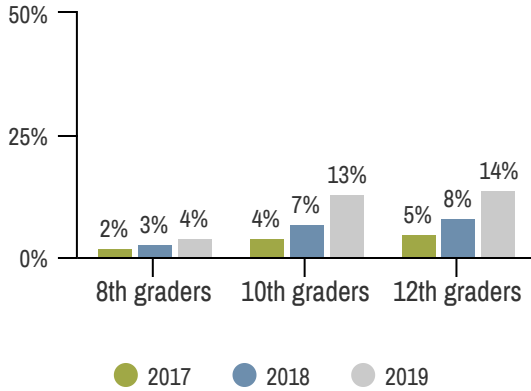
USE AND PERCEPTION DATA



National Data: Monitoring the Future Survey¹

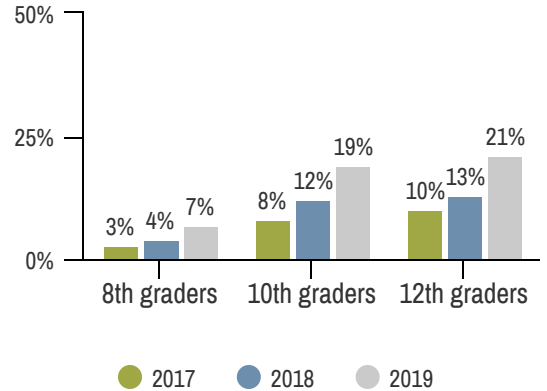
Monitoring the Future (MTF) is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of U.S. secondary school students, college students, and young adults on drug and alcohol use and related attitudes. MTF surveys a sample of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders selected to be a representative sample of their peers in public and private schools in the United States.

Past 30 Day Use: Vaping Marijuana



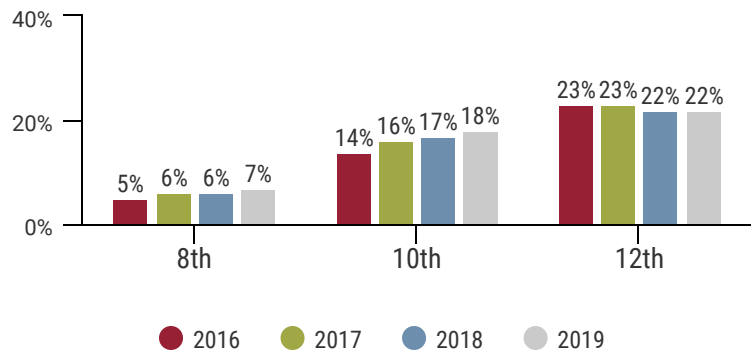
Increases in adolescent marijuana vaping from 2018 to 2019 ranked among the largest single-year increases ever observed by Monitoring the Future in the past 45 years among all outcomes ever measured.

Past Year Use: Vaping Marijuana

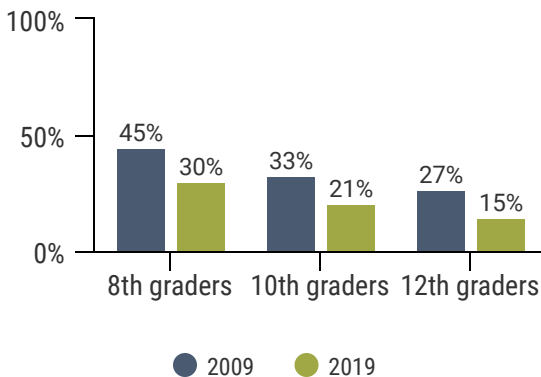


Past month, past year and lifetime marijuana use remained steady among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders.

Past 30 Day Marijuana Use



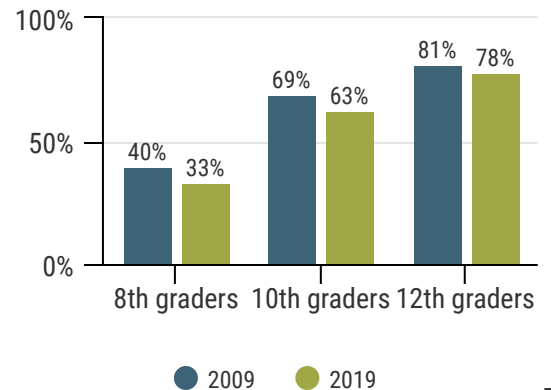
Percent of Students Reporting That People Risk Harming Themselves Greatly by Using Marijuana Occasionally



Trend: Decreasing Ease of Access

Trend: Decreasing Perception of Harm

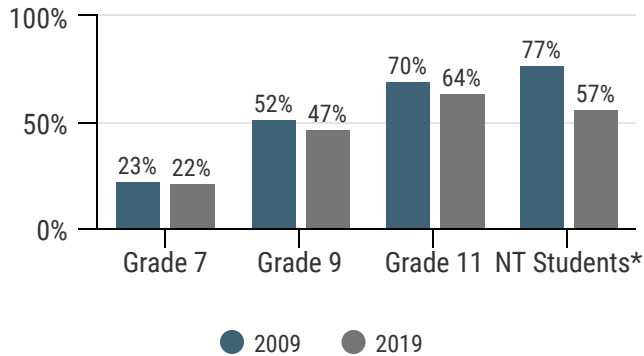
Percent of Students Reporting That Marijuana is Very Easy or Fairly to Obtain



Local Data: California Healthy Kids Survey ²

The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) is administered in most San Diego County school districts. It surveys middle and high school youth attending both traditional/mainstream and non-traditional/alternative schools (e.g., continuation schools). The MPI analyzes bi-annual San Diego County CHKS reports to track past 30-day use, daily use, perception of harm, and ease of access to marijuana.

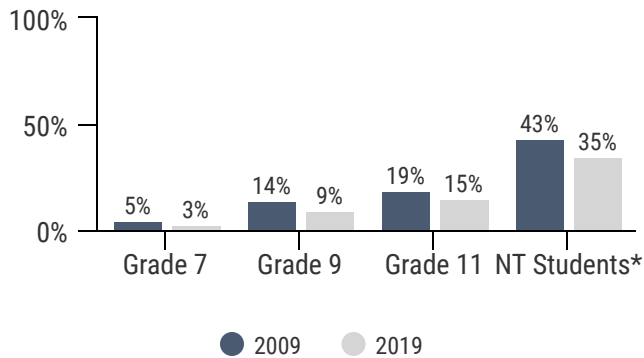
Percent of Students Reporting That Marijuana is Very Easy or Fairly Easy to Obtain



**Trend:
Decreasing Ease
of Access**

17%
of Non-Traditional
School Students
in 2019
report daily use of marijuana

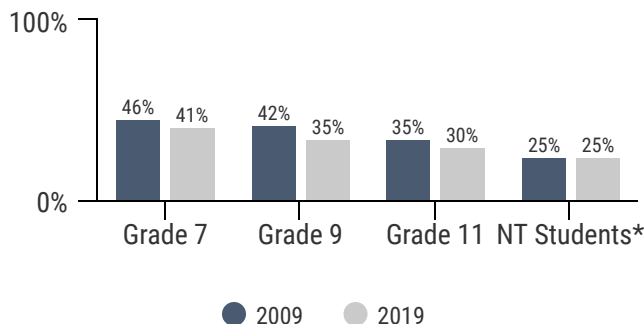
Percent of Students Reporting Past 30-Day Use of Marijuana



**Trend:
Decreasing Past 30
Day Use**

About **one in four (26%)** non-traditional school students reported **driving a car** after using marijuana or been driven by someone else who had been using marijuana.

Percent of Students Reporting That People Risk Harming Themselves Greatly by Using Marijuana Occasionally



**Trend:
Decreasing
Perception
of Harm**

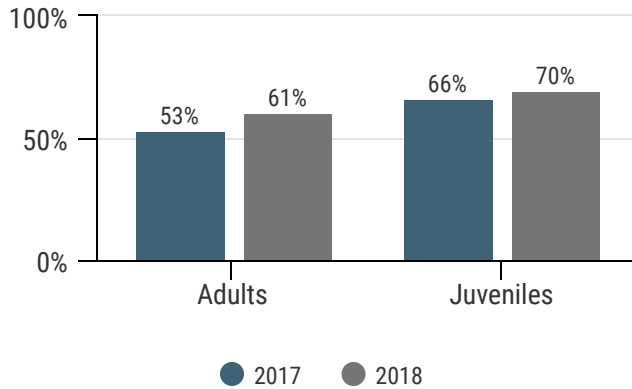
Among students who had reported using marijuana in 2019, they most commonly got it from a **friend, relative or family member.**

*Represents non-traditional students from continuation, community day, and other alternative school types.

Local Data: SANDAG Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) Survey ³

The purpose of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) survey is to identify drug use trends among the adult and juvenile offender populations in order to develop appropriate strategies for the prevention of drug abuse. Biannually, SANDAG staff conduct interviews with a sample of adults and juveniles arrested and booked into the San Diego County detention facilities. The below data represent findings specific to marijuana use among juvenile and adult arrestees.

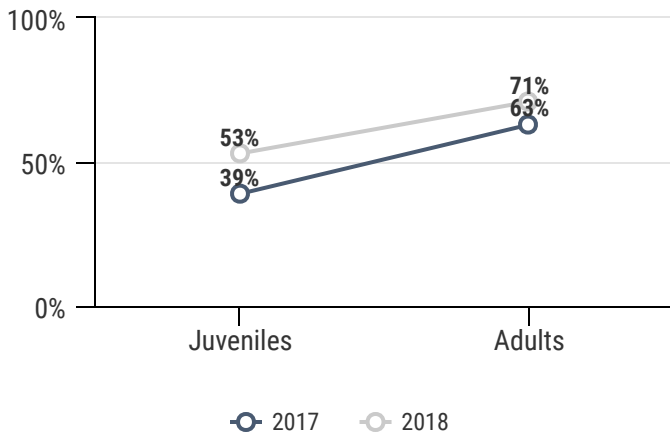
Ever Vaped THC



Trend:
Increases in Vaping

Almost **three in four (72%) juveniles** say they have ever **dabbed THC**, significantly more than adults (58%) in 2018. Dabbing is a **method of consuming concentrated cannabis** oil by dropping a small amount on a hot surface and allowing it to vaporize. Dabbing is of great concern due to the **higher concentration of the drug that is consumed** and how quickly the high can happen.

Think the potency of marijuana has increased since they started using it

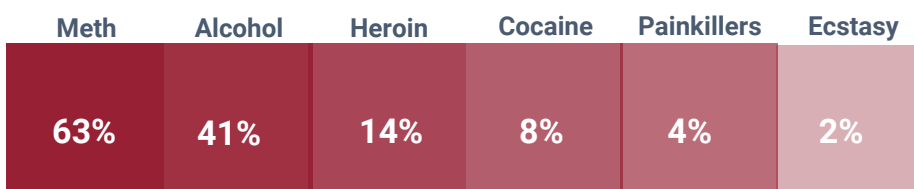


Trend:
Increasing Potency

Three in five (60%) juveniles do not think marijuana would impact someone's ability to drive.

Poly-Substance Use: Around 1 in 7 arrestees (15%; 17% of adults and 8% of juveniles) said they use marijuana with another drug, most often meth (63%).

Polysubstance Use Among Arrestees Using Marijuana



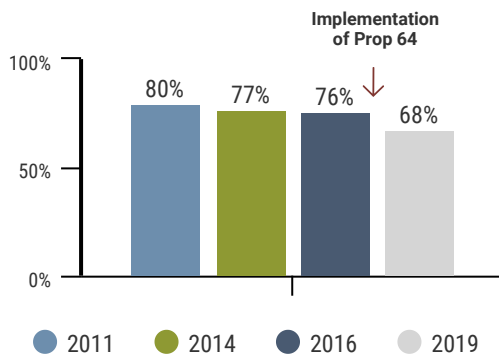
About **one in four (26%) juveniles** reported ever driving after consuming marijuana.

Local Data: Community Survey⁴

The San Diego County Community Survey was developed by the Center for Community Research (CCR) in close collaboration with members of the San Diego County Prevention System to systematically collect and assess alcohol and other drug-related (AOD) perceptions and opinions. The findings from the Community Surveys have allowed the Prevention System to monitor trends and track changes in community AOD-related perceptions and opinions over time and to identify emerging issues of concern.

Perception of Harm. Overall, perceptions related to the harmfulness of using marijuana have decreased since the first survey administration in 2011 for all marijuana-related items, except for use of marijuana under the age of 21. Historically, favorable policy changes towards substance use (i.e., recreational marijuana) lead to a decreased perception of harm.

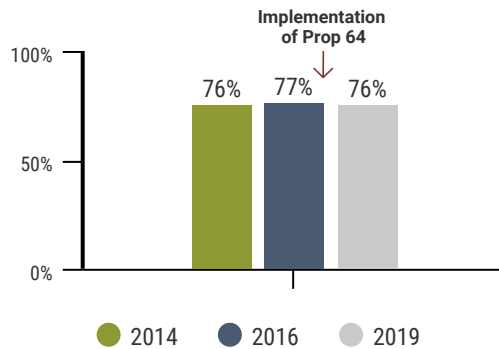
Respondents Reporting That Using Marijuana Every Day or Every Week is Harmful to Health



11%
decrease in perception of harm of using edible marijuana products among San Diegans following implementation of Prop 64.

*2019 Community Survey

Respondents Reporting Using Marijuana Under the Age of 21 is Harmful to Health

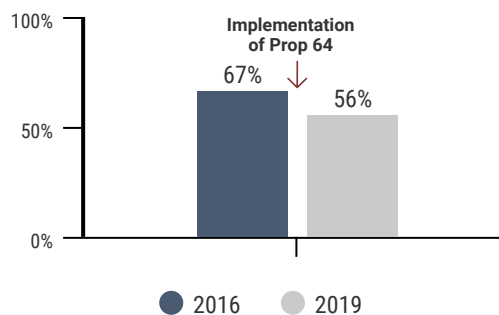


3 out of 4

San Diegans agree that using marijuana under the age of 21 is harmful to health.

*2019 Community Survey

Respondents Reporting That Eating Edible Marijuana Food Products is Harmful to Health



8%

decrease in perception of harm of using marijuana every day or every week among San Diegans following implementation of Prop 64.

*2019 Community Survey

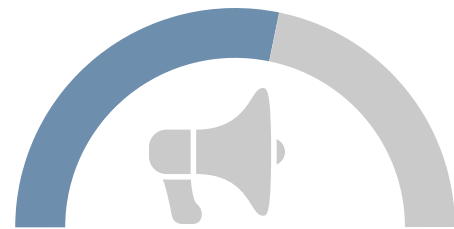
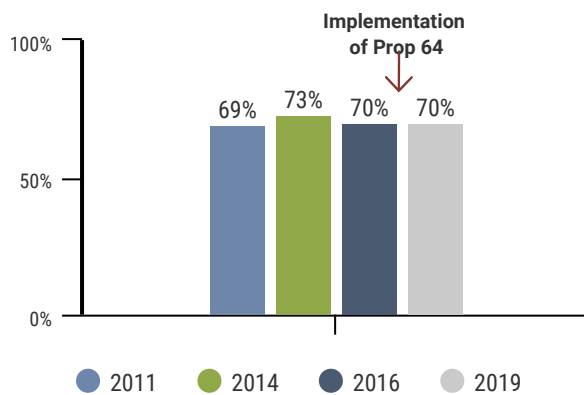
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Support for Policy. Overall, support for local laws regulating marijuana businesses has remained high since the first survey administration in 2011; however support for local bans on marijuana businesses has decreased significantly following implementation of Prop 64 in 2016.

Support for Local Laws Regulating Marijuana Businesses

Respondents Indicating Support for Local Laws Regulating Marijuana Businesses

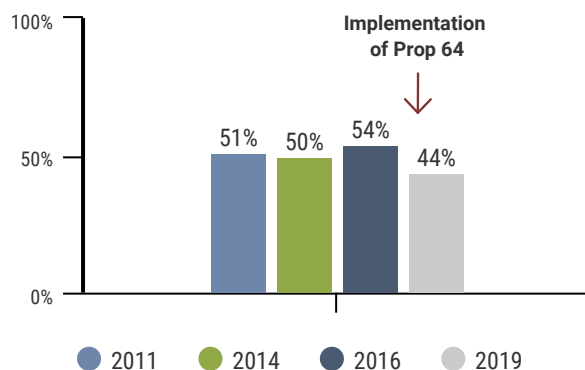


70% of San Diegans indicated support for local laws regulating marijuana businesses

*2019 Community Survey

Support for Local Ban on Marijuana Businesses

Respondents Indicating Support for a Local Ban on Marijuana Businesses



10% decrease in support of a local ban on marijuana businesses among San Diegans following implementation of Prop 64.

*2019 Community Survey

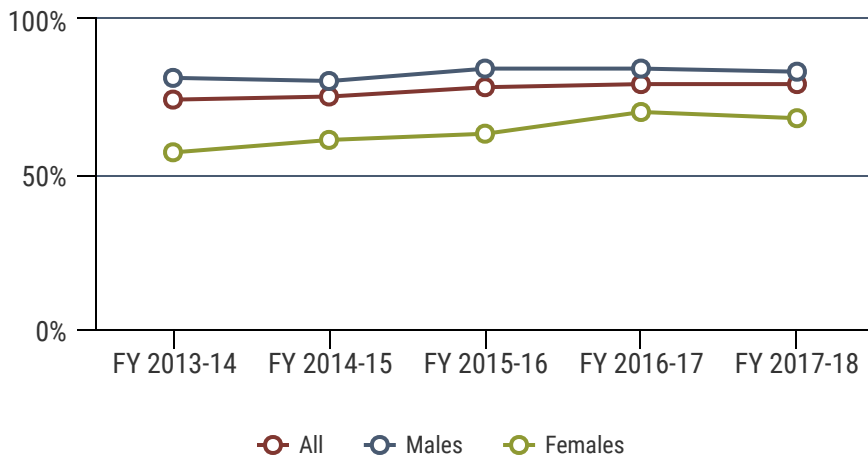
PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS



San Diego County Treatment Admissions Data⁵

Each fiscal year, the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services develops a report detailing the number of clients admitted to County-funded treatment facilities for substance use disorders. The MPI tracks several indicators provided in these annual reports to gauge the scope and scale of marijuana use among San Diego County adolescents (≤ 17).

San Diego County-Funded Treatment Facilities Admissions:
Adolescents (≤ 17) Reporting Marijuana as Their Primary Drug of Choice by Fiscal Year



	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
All	74%	75%	78%	79%	79%
Males	81%	80%	84%	84%	83%
Females	57%	61%	63%	70%	68%

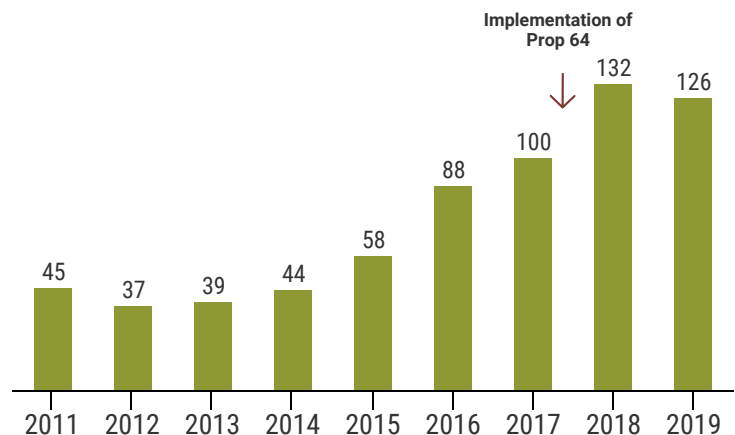
Marijuana remains the primary drug of choice for adolescents (≤ 17) entering County-Funded Treatment Facilities.

Marijuana Human Exposure Cases for San Diego County⁶

This graph reflects the number of unduplicated cases handled by the California Poison Control Center for calls related to marijuana exposure from persons living in San Diego County. Each year displayed includes all persons (of any age) and dispositions/outcomes for the cases, including cases “resolved on-site” (i.e., from the location of the call), “treated/released from health care facility,” and “admitted to health care facility.” **There has been a 43% increase since the implementation of Prop 64 in 2016 (from 88 in 2016 to 126 in 2019).**

180%
increase in marijuana exposure cases in San Diego County handled by the California Poison Control Center since 2011.

Number of Marijuana Human Exposure Cases for San Diego County, 2011-2019

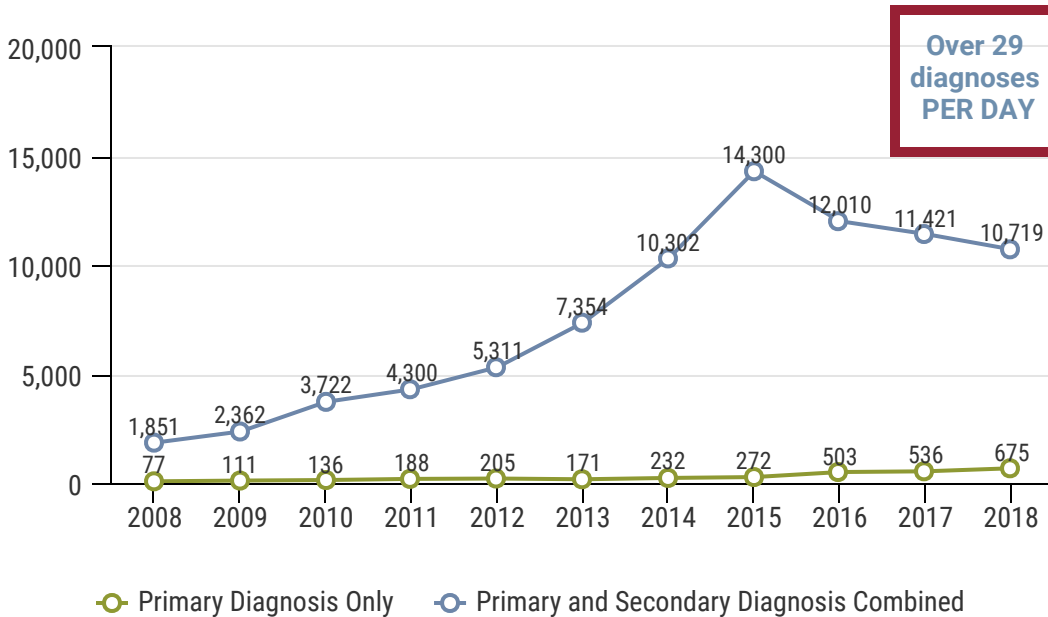


Public Health Impacts (continued)

Emergency Department Discharge Data⁷

Local emergency department discharge data also points to an increased trend in marijuana related harms. The most recent available data show a 170% increase in the number of people who were discharged from emergency departments with cannabis listed as the primary diagnosis.

Number of Emergency Department Discharges for Cannabis-related Diagnoses in San Diego County, 2006-2018



Between 2008 and 2018, the number of persons discharged from Emergency Departments in San Diego County with cannabis listed as a **primary diagnosis** increased 776%, from 77 in 2008 to 675 in 2018. The number of persons discharged from San Diego County Emergency Departments with cannabis as a **primary or secondary diagnosis combined** increased 479%, from 1,851 in 2008 to 10,719 in 2018.

Drugged Driving Across California and the United States

Unlike driving under the influence of alcohol, limited research is available about the risks of driving under the influence of marijuana and other drugs and the involvement of drugs in vehicle crashes.

National Drugged Driving Facts

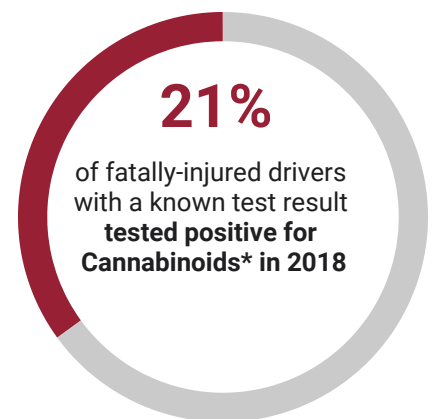
After alcohol, **marijuana** is the **most common found drug** in the blood of **drivers involved in crashes**.⁸

The best **overall estimate of marijuana's effect on crash risk** in general is an **increase of 25-35%**.⁸

According to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2018, **12.6 million people aged 16 or older** drove under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year.¹⁰

It's hard to measure how many crashes are **caused by drugged driving**, but estimates show that **almost 44 percent of drivers in fatal car crashes tested positive for drugs**.¹⁰

California Data⁹



*Cannabinoids: Delta 9, Hashish, Marijuana/Marijuana, Marinol, and Tetrahydrocannabinols (THC).

EMERGING TRENDS & CONTINUED CONCERNS



Emerging Trends & Continued Concerns

Increasing Potency

Between 1995 and 2014, the potency of federally seized and tested marijuana increased by 200% from approximately 4% to 12%.¹¹ More recent samples between 2008 and 2017 show an increase in potency from an average of 8.9% to 17.1%, which is an increase of more than 300% from the 1995 data.¹² Additionally, the concentrates within oils, waxes, and edibles may be as high as 99%.¹⁸ Edible forms of marijuana have been known to have unpredictable side-effects due to the oftentimes varying dosage of the psychoactive chemical THC.

Due to the lack of research and uniform testing standards on high-THC containing products, consumers have little information and knowledge of the long-term health impacts from use. However, the increasing potency poses a higher risk of Cannabis Use Disorder, particularly among adolescents in states that allow for recreational sales.

Butane Hash Oil Labs

Black market manufacturing of butane hash oil poses a public safety issue due to the hazardous chemicals involved in production. Over recent years the process for manufacturing butane hash oil has become more sophisticated and dangerous. Additionally, the size and scale of these operations have increased the demand on first responders' resources when responding to labs that have exploded or resulted in other injuries.

Throughout 2019, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) identified and removed thirty butane hash oil labs in San Diego County, four of which resulted in fires and/or explosions. Previously, thirty-one butane hash oil labs were discovered and removed in 2018 and twenty-seven in 2017.¹⁴

Vaping

Vaping marijuana produces a greater psychological and physiological effect compared to traditional smoking methods. A recent study by John Hopkins found that THC levels in blood samples after vaping are much greater compared to levels found after smoking.¹³ This raises concerns related to the potential health impacts vaping may have, especially among our adolescent populations. As with many of the potent marijuana products, there is still no uniform testing standards or research findings to determine the long-term health effects from vaping.

Findings from the nationally representative Monitoring the Future (MTF) study shows that vaping among the adolescent population is on the rise for both marijuana and nicotine-containing products. The most recent MTF study findings show the largest single-year increases ever observed in adolescent marijuana vaping from 2018 to 2019.¹

In response to the outbreak of vaping-related deaths and illnesses, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) started accepting electronic vaping devices and cartridges during annual "National Prescription Drug Take Back Day" events. The annual event allows people to anonymously dispose of expired, unused, or unwanted prescription medications and vaping devices.

Fentanyl Found in Vape Pens

In 2019, a drug overdose case was found to involve fentanyl in a vape cartridge. Although this is the first known case of vape pens being used to ingest fentanyl in San Diego County, it is cause for concern.

E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI) Outbreak¹⁵

EVALI in San Diego County

As of February 2020, there have been **46 confirmed and probable EVALI cases reported among San Diego County residents.**

What is EVALI?

EVALI results in lung injuries among people who have a history of vaping. Most individuals with EVALI have reported using vaping products that contain THC.

What causes EVALI?

Health officials believe EVALI is caused by the additive vitamin E acetate found in some THC-containing e-cigarettes. Currently, research is still ongoing to identify additional causes of the lung illness.

Emerging Trends & Continued Concerns (continued)

Projected Tax Revenue & Impact on Black Market

Among the arguments in favor of Proposition 64, the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, included a predicted reduction in black market sales and increased tax revenue following the legalization of recreational marijuana use. Two years into recreational sales, revenue from the black market continue to outpace recreational sales resulting in far less tax revenue than projections indicated during the citizen initiative legalization process.

A report published by the California Department of Food and Agriculture found that the state produced 15.5 million pounds of marijuana but only consumed 2.5 million pounds in 2018.^{16,17} There are many potential reasons for why legal production is far greater than legal consumption. It is likely that the excess from legally produced marijuana is diverted and sold for much higher prices on the black market, either within the state or diverted to states that have yet to legalize recreational use.

Regarding tax revenue, Governor Gavin Newsom reduced the administration's cannabis tax prediction by \$223 million through 2020.¹⁶ This is likely due to the fact consumers choose to purchase marijuana from the black market in order to avoid the high taxes in place at recreational marijuana businesses.

Lack of Local Control

Local control is the ability of local governments to make decisions outside of centralized government. Throughout the legalization process, local control was promised to communities to ease fears that the legalization of recreational sales would negatively impact public health and safety. Local control allows cities and counties to have the authority to regulate the sales of recreational marijuana businesses within their jurisdictions, including the ability to completely ban marijuana-related businesses regardless of state-imposed regulations.

Following the passage of Proposition 64, the majority of California jurisdictions (80%) enacted local control and currently prohibit recreational marijuana sales. Despite the complete ban throughout the majority of California, cities continue to be pressured to allow for increased access.

One of the major threats to local control is the use of marijuana delivery services. Delivery services are allowed to operate anywhere in the state of California, including areas with a complete ban making local control null in many cases.¹⁸

Most recently, twenty-five California cities have filed a lawsuit to ban deliveries in areas that currently have a complete ban on recreational sales. It is currently unknown if this will be successful, but the final decision should be heard sometime in April 2020.¹⁹

Use in Bars and Clubs

In the City San Diego, proposals have been considered for marijuana lounges, cafes, and other on-site consumption facilities. Similar consumption lounges already exist throughout California. Allowing on-site consumption raises many public safety concerns surrounding the risk of increased drugged driving. Further, the majority of marijuana businesses do not have access to regular banking services which requires them to remain a cash business, which may attract increased risks for criminal activity, such as robberies. Of note, the selling of alcohol and marijuana at the same location is strictly prohibited per the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (Prop 64).

One potential solution to mitigate some risks associated with these types of businesses would be through the use of Conditional Use Permits (CUP) similar to the alcohol licensing process.

Advertisements and Youth Sensitive Locations

The majority of planning groups and local ordinances include requirements that marijuana outlets and advertisements cannot be displayed or located within 1,000 feet of a youth sensitive location, such as a school or park. Despite these outlined requirements, marijuana businesses and advocates have challenged the definition of youth sensitive locations to avoid the restrictions, and in some instances, looked over the outlined standards. This raises many concerns from community members and organizations of youth increased risk of exposure of marijuana.

Another frequently used website to locate marijuana dispensaries, Weedmaps, continues to defy state requests to discontinue all advertisements promoting illegally operating marijuana shops.

NEXT STEPS FOR PREVENTION



Next Steps for Prevention

Continued Education and Dissemination of Evidence-Based Prevention Practices

As marijuana-related attitudes shift at the national, state, and local level, prevention and treatment resources will need to increasingly target younger youth. It is known that delaying marijuana use decreases the risk of developing substance use disorders later on in life. Treatment data show that marijuana continues to be the number one drug of choice for youth ages 12 through 17, indicating early onset of marijuana use. Therefore, prevention efforts need to begin before youth reach the middle school level. Outreach efforts are also particularly important for students at non-traditional schools, for whom marijuana use is more prevalent, with the typical age of onset being twelve years old in this population. Additionally, as perceptions of marijuana's harm have been declining, more work is needed to address marijuana's health implications.

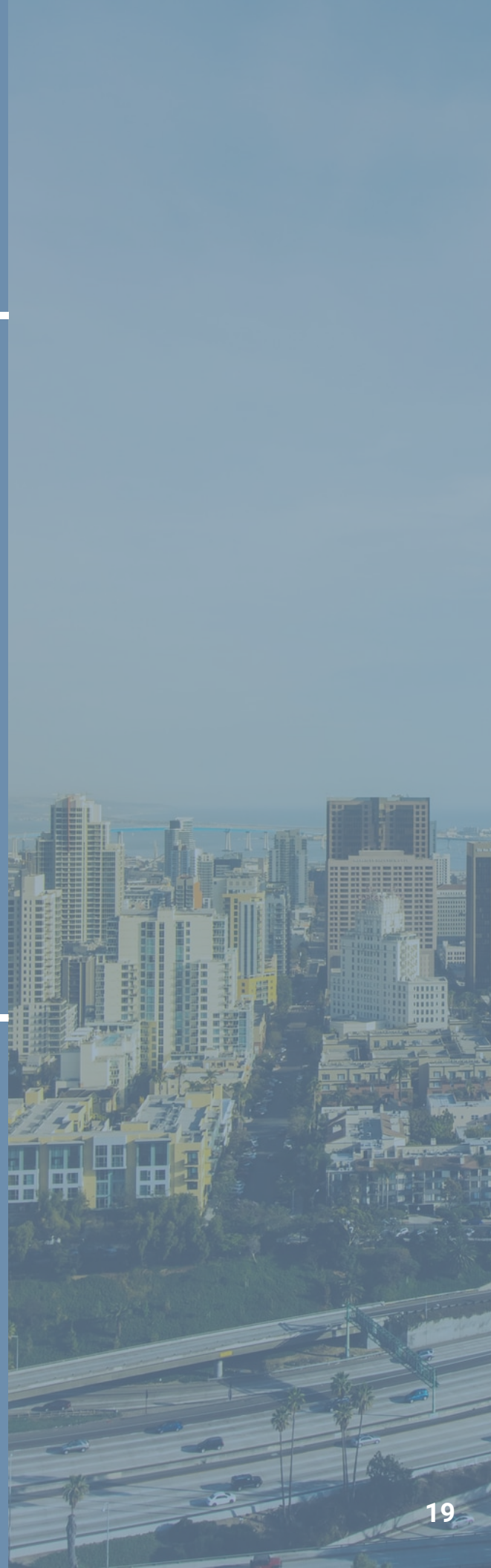
Prevention Recommendations

- Continue to disseminate evidence-based and accurate educational materials for youth with a focus on providing alternative healthy options to marijuana use.
- Utilize social media platforms that relate to the priority population to provide public health education for adolescents, young adults, and parents and caregivers.
- Promote awareness, access, and availability of available treatment resources and options for cannabis use disorder.

Increased Access to Real-Time Data

In order to develop effective and timely prevention education and interventions, accessing real-time and accurate data is critical to the success of these efforts. Enhanced data collection efforts are needed in the following areas:

- School incidents related to marijuana use
- Marijuana-related car accidents, including levels for THC
- Marijuana-outlet density
- Emergency department discharges for marijuana-related visits
- Prevalence of cannabis use disorder among adolescents and young adults
- Continue data collection efforts to monitor changes in perception from both local, state, and national level data sources
- Incidence of injuries caused by electronic smoking devices and hash oil extraction explosions



Next Steps for Prevention

Continue Advocacy Efforts for Local Control

As the State continues to pressure local governments to ease access for marijuana businesses local efforts must continue to work towards adopting policies to maintain local control. Increased community engagement in local planning groups may offer opportunities to advocate for local control measures such as:

- Placing distance and advertising restrictions on marijuana outlets to reduce exposure at youth sensitive locations
- Increased access to local crime data to better monitor concentration of marijuana outlets
- Increased opportunities for local feedback when reviewing requests for new licenses

National City recently voted in favor of allowing marijuana consumption lounges and it is likely that similar sites will be proposed throughout San Diego County in the future. Marijuana consumption lounges are public spaces where people can buy and use marijuana. Since Proposition 64 passed in 2016, they have opened in the Bay Area and Los Angeles. These locations raise concerns that there will be increases in drugged driving incidents from individuals leaving these sites. Further, consumption lounges threaten smoke free policies that have been in place to reduce exposure to secondhand cigarette smoke. Local municipalities may need to consider the use of Conditional Use Permits (CUP) to implement higher operating standards and compliance activities from sites.

Enhanced Drugged Driving Prevention and Enforcement

To prevent marijuana-impaired driving there needs to be continued and enhanced DUI education to the public on risks of marijuana-related impairment (e.g., driving, biking and other safety sensitive activities), including riding with others who have recently used marijuana. Additionally, education on the increased risk of driving after using marijuana in combination with alcohol or other substances needs to remain a prevention priority.

The State of California should continue to use trained Drug Recognition Experts to determine possible impairment and engage in aggressive prosecution (e.g., enhanced use of vertical prosecution teams) of drugged drivers. Finally, the State should continue and enhance any current educational awareness campaigns to inform the public about the hazards of drugged driving.



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