

Executive Summary

Purpose

Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) is tracking the impact of marijuana legalization in the state of Colorado. This report will utilize, whenever possible, a comparison of three different eras in Colorado's legalization history:

- **2006 – 2008:** Medical marijuana pre-commercialization era
- **2009 – Present:** Medical marijuana commercialization and expansion era
- **2013 – Present:** Recreational marijuana era

This is the fourth annual report on the impact of legalized marijuana in Colorado. It is divided into ten sections, each providing information on the impact of marijuana legalization. The sections are as follows:

Section 1 – Impaired Driving:

- Marijuana-related traffic deaths increased **48 percent** in the three-year average (2013-2015) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the three-year average (2010-2012) prior to legalization.
 - During the same time, all traffic deaths increased **11 percent**.
- Marijuana-related traffic deaths increased **62 percent** from 71 to 115 persons after recreational marijuana was legalized in 2013.
- In 2009, Colorado marijuana-related traffic deaths involving operators testing positive for marijuana represented **10 percent** of all traffic fatalities. By 2015, that number doubled to **21 percent**.

Section 2 – Youth Marijuana Use:

- Youth past month marijuana use **increased 20 percent** in the two year average (2013/2014) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the two-year average prior to legalization (2011/2012).
 - Nationally youth past month marijuana use **declined 4 percent** during the same time.
- The latest 2013/2014 results show Colorado youth ranked **#1** in the nation for past month marijuana use, up from **#4** in 2011/2012 and **#14** in 2005/2006.
- Colorado youth past month marijuana use for 2013/2014 was **74 percent higher** than the national average compared to **39 percent higher** in 2011/2012.

Section 3 – Adult Marijuana Use:

- College-age past month marijuana use increased **17 percent** in the two-year average (2013/2014) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the two-year average prior to legalization (2011/2012).
 - Nationally college-age past month marijuana use **increased 2 percent** during the same time.
- The latest 2013/2014 results show Colorado college age adults ranked **#1** in the nation for past month marijuana use, up from **#3** in 2011/2012 and **#8** in 2005/2006.
- Colorado college age past month marijuana use for 2013/2014 was **62 percent higher** than the national average compared to **42 percent higher** in 2011/2012.
- Adult past-month marijuana use **increased 63 percent** in the two year average (2013/2014) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the two-year average prior to legalization (2011/2012).
 - Nationally adult past month marijuana use **increased 21 percent** during the same time.
- The latest 2013/2014 results show Colorado adults ranked **#1** in the nation for past month marijuana use, up from **#7** in 2011/2012 and **#8** in 2005/2006.
- Colorado adult past month marijuana use for 2013/2014 was **104 percent higher** than the national average compared to **51 percent higher** in 2011/2012.

Section 4 – Emergency Department Marijuana and Hospital Marijuana-Related Admissions:

- Colorado Emergency Department visits per year related to marijuana:
 - 2013 – **14,148**
 - 2014 – **18,255**
- Emergency Department rates likely related to marijuana increased **49 percent** in the two-year average (2013-2014) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the two-year average prior to legalization (2011-2012).
- Number of hospitalizations related to marijuana:
 - 2011 – **6,305**
 - 2012 – **6,715**
 - 2013 – **8,272**
 - 2014 – **11,439**
- Hospital rates likely related to marijuana increased **32 percent** in the two-year average (2013-2014) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the two-year average prior to legalization (2011-2012).

Section 5 – Marijuana-Related Exposure:

- Marijuana-related exposures increased **100 percent** in the three-year average (2013-2015) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the three-year average (2010-2012) prior to legalization.
- Marijuana-only exposures increased **155 percent** in the three-year average (2013-2015) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the three-year average (2010-2012) prior to legalization.

Section 6 – Treatment:

- Marijuana treatment data from Colorado in years 2005 – 2015 does not appear to demonstrate a definitive trend. Colorado averages approximately **6,500** treatment admissions annually for marijuana abuse.
- Over the last ten years, the top three drugs involved in treatment admissions, in descending order, were alcohol (average **13,382**), marijuana (average **6,652**) and methamphetamine (average **5,298**).

Section 7 – Diversion of Colorado Marijuana:

- Highway patrol yearly interdiction seizures of Colorado marijuana increased **37 percent** from **288** to **394** (2013-2015), since recreational marijuana was legalized.
- Of the 394 seizures in 2015, there were **36 different states** destined to receive marijuana from Colorado. The most common destinations identified were Missouri, Illinois, Texas, Iowa, and Florida.

Section 8 – Diversion by Parcel:

- Seizures of Colorado marijuana in the U.S. mail has increased **427 percent** from an average of 70 parcels (2010-2012) to 369 parcels (2013-2015) in the three years that recreational marijuana has been legal.
- Seizures of Colorado marijuana in the U.S. mail has increased **471 percent** from an average of 129 pounds (2010-2012) to 736 pounds (2013-2015) in the three years that recreational marijuana has been legal.

Section 9 – Related Data:

- Crime in Denver and Colorado has increased from 2013 to 2015.
- Colorado annual tax revenue from the sale of recreational and medical marijuana was \$115,579,432 (CY2015) or about **0.5 percent** of Colorado’s total statewide budget (FY2016).
- “Denver is losing visitors and valuable convention business as a result of these overall safety (or perception of safety) issues...” – VISIT DENVER Report
- As of January 2016, there were **424 retail marijuana stores** in the state of Colorado compared to **322 Starbucks** and **202 McDonald’s**.
- **68 percent** of local jurisdictions have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.

Section 10 – Related Material:

- This section lists various studies and reports regarding marijuana.

THERE IS MUCH MORE DATA IN EACH OF THE TEN SECTIONS. THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE FOUND ON THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIDTA WEBSITE; GO TO WWW.RMHIDTA.ORG AND CLICK ON REPORTS.

State of Washington Data:

Washington legalized recreational marijuana at the same time as Colorado. The reader is encouraged to review data from Washington on the impact of legalization in that state. Many of the same trends in Colorado related to legal marijuana also are occurring in Washington. These trends include: impaired driving, traffic fatalities, use among teens and exposure (see Sections 1 and 10).