



# Drug decriminalisation – exposing the mis/disinformation

Increased drug use elsewhere

**DRUG  
FREE**  
AUSTRALIA

# Less drugs, not more

- Other countries' attitudes to illicit drug use likely to be similar to Australia's

Table 9.7: Personal approval<sup>(a)</sup> of the regular use by an adult of selected drugs, people aged 14 and over, 2007 to 2019 (per cent)

Drug	Proportion														
	Males					Females					Persons				
	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
Alcohol	51.7	51.5	51.7	52.4	50.8	38.9	38.9	38.6	39.8	40.1	45.2	45.1	45.1	46.0	45.4
Tobacco	15.8	17.4	17.3	18.1	17.7	12.9	13.3	12.2	13.2	13.1	14.3	15.3	14.7	15.7	15.4
<b>Illicit drugs (excluding pharmaceuticals)</b>															
Marijuana/cannabis	8.7	11.0	12.6	17.8	23.6#	4.6	5.3	7.0	11.2	15.6#	6.6	8.1	9.8	14.5	19.6#
Ecstasy	2.5	3.0	3.3	3.9	5.3#	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.8	2.3#	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.9	3.8#
Meth/amphetamine <sup>(b)</sup>	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.2
Cocaine/crack	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.0	3.0#	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.7	2.3#
Hallucinogens	2.1	3.2	4.5	5.1	8.0#	1.2	1.6	1.7	2.4	3.2#	1.7	2.4	3.1	3.7	5.6#
Inhalants	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0
Heroin	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.5	0.7	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1
<b>Pharmaceuticals</b>															
Over-the-counter pain-killers/pain-relievers <sup>(b)</sup>	n.a.	14.4	14.8	19.5	n.a.	n.a.	14.3	14.2	18.7	n.a.	n.a.	14.3	14.5	19.1	n.a.
Prescription pain-killers/pain-relievers <sup>(b)</sup>	n.a.	13.4	13.0	13.2	13.3	n.a.	12.6	12.2	12.1	11.5	n.a.	13.0	12.6	12.7	12.4
Tranquilisers, sleeping pills <sup>(b)</sup>	4.8	7.2	9.5	10.1	10.1	3.4	5.7	6.8	8.5	8.5	4.1	6.4	8.2	9.3	9.3
Steroids <sup>(b)</sup>	2.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	0.9	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.6	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.4
Methadone or buprenorphine <sup>(b)</sup>	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.5

# Beginnings

- Cannabis decriminalisation - USA

- **Oregon - 18-29 year olds**

- Oregon decriminalised cannabis in 1973
- After 12 months cannabis use by 18 - 29 year olds was **up 12%** (use for all US States slightly decreased in 1973)

- **California - 18-29 year olds**

- California decriminalised cannabis on January 1, 1975
- After 10 months cannabis use by 18 - 29 year olds was **up 15%** (all US states increased less than 1%)

- **11 US States - all ages**

- By 1978 11 US States decriminalised cannabis, **with increased use of 8%**

December 2019 • Volume 46 • Issue 4

## Contemporary Drug Problems

An Interdisciplinary Quarterly



Cuskey, Berger, Richardson, The effect of marijuana decriminalization on drug use patterns – CDP 7(4) 491-532

# Comparison

Compare with all US States & success of Just Say No

Table 2.1. Trends in Prevalence of Lifetime and Last Year Marijuana Use by Age<sup>1</sup> (NHSDA 1974-1996)

	1974	1976	1977	1979	1982	1985	1988	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Lifetime</b>														
12-17 years	23.0	22.4	28.0	26.7	23.2	20.1	15.0	12.7	11.1	9.1	9.9	13.6	16.2	16.8
18-25 years	52.7	52.9	59.9	66.1	61.3	57.6	54.6	50.4	48.8	46.6	45.7	41.9	41.4	44.0
26-34 years	-	-	-	45.0	51.5	54.1	57.6	56.5	55.2	54.3	54.9	52.7	51.8	50.5
26 + years	9.9	12.9	15.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 + years	-	-	-	9.0	10.4	13.9	17.6	19.6	21.1	22.2	23.8	25.4	25.3	27.0
<b>Last Year</b>														
12-17 years	18.5	18.4	22.3	21.3	17.7	16.7	10.7	9.6	8.5	6.9	8.5	11.4	14.2	13.0
18-25 years	34.2	35.0	38.7	44.2	37.4	34.0	26.1	23.0	22.9	21.2	21.4	21.4	21.8	23.8
26-34 years	-	-	-	20.5	21.4	20.2	14.2	14.4	11.6	11.5	11.1	11.5	11.8	11.3
26+ years	3.8	5.4	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 + years	-	-	-	4.3	6.2	4.3	3.7	4.2	4.6	3.8	4.6	4.1	3.4	3.8

OFFICE OF APPLIED STUDIES

Parental Influences on Adolescent Marijuana Use and the Baby Boom Generation: Findings from the 1979-1996 National Household Surveys on Drug Abuse

by

Denise B. Kandel, Ph.D.  
 Pamela C. Griesler, Ph.D.  
 Gang Lee, Ph.D.  
 Mark Davies, M.Ph.  
 Christine Schaffan, M.A.

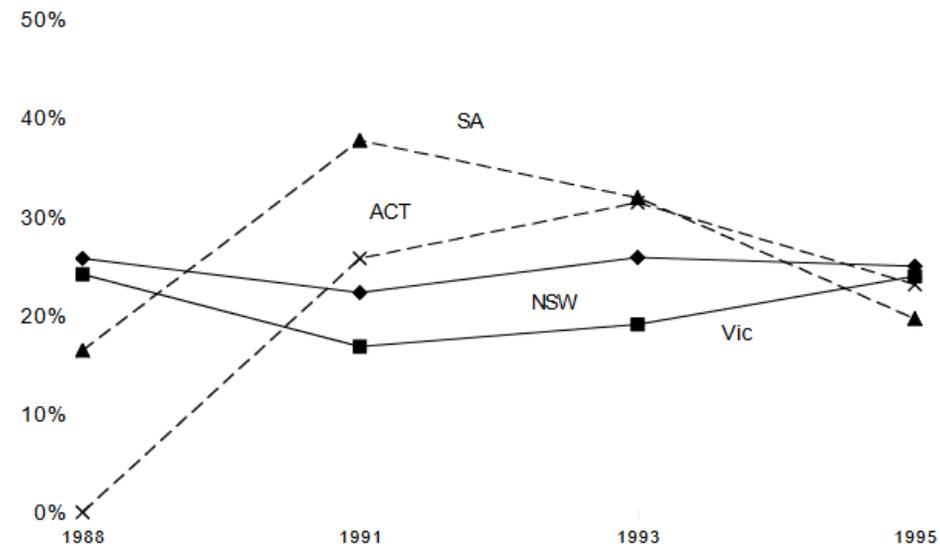
Columbia University and the New York Psychiatric Institute

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Parental-Influences-on-Adolescent-Marijuana-Use-and-Kandel-Griesler/46afde866d28a098c1f305df4b5b08d424b3ba85>

# Beginnings

- Cannabis decriminalisation in Australia – SA & ACT

Figure 4.2: Use marijuana monthly or more often for four jurisdictions, 1988–1996



Source: NDS 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995; those who have never tried marijuana are excluded

National Drug Strategy

## Marijuana in Australia: patterns and attitudes

Monograph Series No 31

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Australian Institute of Criminology  
Canberra

Ian McAllister  
Department of Politics  
University of New South Wales

Commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family  
Services for the National Drug Strategy

# Beginnings

- Cannabis decriminalisation - UK

Jonathan Owen • Sunday 18 March 2007 01:00 GMT • [Comments](#)



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Record numbers of teenagers are requiring drug treatment as a result of smoking skunk, the highly potent cannabis strain that is 25 times stronger than resin sold a decade ago.

More than 22,000 people were treated last year for cannabis addiction - and almost half of those affected were under 18. With doctors and drugs experts warning that skunk can be as damaging as cocaine and heroin, leading to mental health problems and psychosis for thousands of teenagers, *The Independent on Sunday* has today reversed its landmark campaign for cannabis use to be decriminalised.

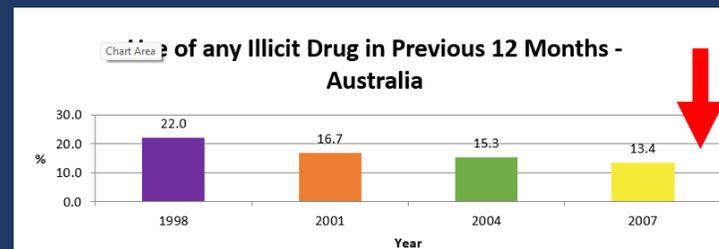
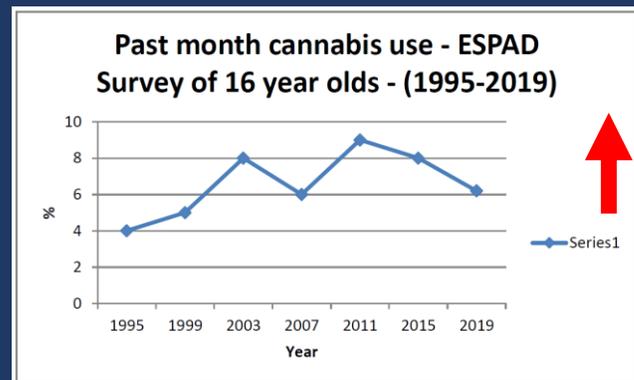
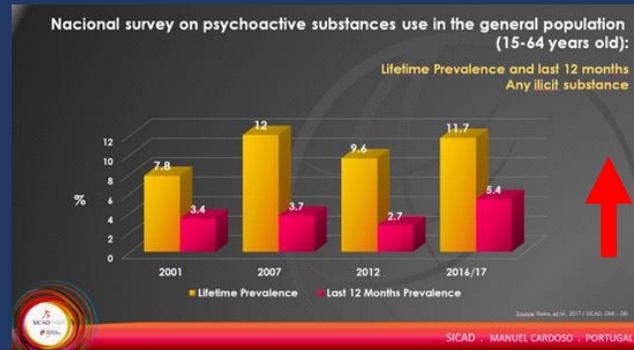
A decade after this newspaper's stance culminated in a 16,000-strong pro-cannabis march to London's Hyde Park - and was credited with forcing the Government to downgrade the legal status of cannabis to class C - an IoS editorial states that there is growing proof that skunk causes mental illness and psychosis.



<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/cannabis-an-apology-5332409.html>

# Portugal

- Decriminalised 2001



# California

- California decriminalised all drug use in 2015
- From the centrist Forbes magazine:
  - “California is home to some of the world’s toughest environmental and public health laws, but skyrocketing homelessness has created an environmental and public health disaster. The 44,000 people living, eating, and defecating on the streets of L.A. have brought rats and medieval diseases including typhus. Garbage is everywhere. Experts fear the return of cholera and leprosy.”
  - “According to Bales and other experts, California made homelessness worse by making perfect housing the enemy of good housing, **by liberalizing drug laws, and by opposing mandatory treatment for mental illness and drug addiction.**”
  - “Homelessness experts and advocates disagree. “I’ve rarely seen a normal able-bodied able-minded non-drug-using homeless person who’s just down on their luck,” L.A. street doctor Susan Partovi told me. “Of the thousands of people I’ve worked with over 16 years, it’s like one or two people a year. And they’re the easiest to deal with.” Rev. Bales agrees. “One hundred percent of the people on the streets are mentally impacted, on drugs, or both,” he said.”
  - “**Most of the time what people mean by the homelessness problem is really a drug problem and a mental illness problem.**”

## Forbes

### Why California Keeps Making Homelessness Worse

Michael Shellenberger Contributor @  
I write about energy and the environment.

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Sep 12, 2019, 10:26am EDT

This article is more than 4 years old.



What happened in California isn't the first time that we progressives let our idealism get the... [1]  
GETTY

Click here to read Part I of this series: "Why California Must Declare A State Of Emergency On Homelessness -- Or Get A Governor Who Will"

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelshellenberger/2019/09/12/why-california-keeps-making-homelessness-worse/?sh=5dabdaaf5a61>

# California

- So many leaving, California will lose seat in Congress
  - “California will lose one seat in Congress **for the first time in state history**, while Texas and Florida are among the states that will see their representation increase, according to population data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Monday that give the first glimpse of the coming decade’s congressional landscape.”



<https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-04-26/census-data-redistricting-declay>

# Oregon

- Decriminalisation blamed for 341% increase in opioid deaths
- “In 2019, 280 people died of a drug overdose in Oregon. Fatalities rose every year after, more than tripling by 2022, when 956 died. And last year, even more people died, according to preliminary data. Each month the number has been higher than the previous year, reaching 628 in June. The state is still compiling data for 2023, **but if the trends continue, the total would reach 1,250 deaths from an overdose.**”

In The News Oregon's legislative session Copco Lake Steiner Church Blood donation 'The Evergreen' podcast

HEALTH

## Latest data show overdoses continue to skyrocket in Oregon

By Lynne Terry (Oregon Capital Chronicle)  
Jan 29, 2024 1 a.m.



An authentic 30mg oxycodone pill, left, compared to a counterfeit pill containing fentanyl, in this image from the DEA's 'One Pill Can Kill' campaign. Courtesy of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

DEA

As lawmakers prepare to tackle the state's addiction crisis, new data from the Oregon Health Authority shows how dire the addiction crisis has become.

In 2019, 280 people died of a drug overdose in Oregon. Fatalities rose every year after, more than tripling by 2022, when 956 died. And last year, even more people died, according to preliminary data. Each month the number has been higher than the previous year, reaching 628 in June. The state is still compiling data for 2023, but if the trends continue, the total would reach 1,250 deaths from an overdose.

The number of patients seeking help in emergency departments and urgent care centers also rose last year to more than 300.

The overdose trend is expected to continue this year.

<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/01/28/data-show-overdoses-deaths-rising-in-oregon/>

# Oregon

- 56% of Oregon residents want repeal of decriminalisation

By [Noelle Crombie](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

A majority of Oregonians support repealing the state's landmark law that [decriminalized small amounts of street drugs](#) and funneled hundreds of millions of tax dollars into treatment programs and services, a new poll found.

## LOSING POPULATION: More People Left the State of Oregon Than Arrived Last Year

By [Mike LaChance](#) | Sep. 15, 2023 10:20 pm | 275 Comments

<https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2023/09/losing-population-more-people-left-state-oregon-than/>

The screenshot shows a news article on the OregonLive website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the OregonLive logo and the text 'The Oregonian'. Below the navigation bar is an advertisement for 'Burdon Legal & Consulting' with the headline 'Drink or Drug Driving Offences' and subtext 'Minimise your licence suspension and other serious penalties'. The main article headline is 'Oregon voters souring on Measure 110, with many in favor of a complete repeal, new poll finds'. Below the headline is a 'SUBSCRIBE' button and a small image of a person's hands holding a piece of crumpled aluminum foil. To the right of the main article is another advertisement for 'Seniors Born Before 1962 Can Get Health Cover From \$26/Week' with a 'Learn More' button. The article's update and publication dates are listed as 'Updated: Aug. 23, 2023, 4:24 p.m.' and 'Published: Aug. 23, 2023, 3:47 p.m.'.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2023/08/oregon-voters-souring-on-measure-110-with-many-in-favor-of-a-complete-repeal-new-poll-find.html>



# Next episode

- In this series
  - The truth about Portugal
  - Increased drug use elsewhere
  - Fact-checking the Uniting Church's position
    - part 1
    - **part 2**
    - part 3
  - Why decriminalisation fails
  - Whose agenda is it?
  - More successful alternatives