

Marijuana and School Performance, Job Performance, Driving and Crime:

School Performance: Research has shown that marijuana's negative effects on attention, memory, and learning can last for weeks after the acute effects of the drug wear off (Schweinsburg.) Consequently, someone who smokes marijuana daily may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time. Evidence suggests that, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school (Fergusson et al.) One of the most thorough studies to date found cannabis use to be associated consistently with reduced grades and chances of graduating (Macleod). Marijuana users themselves report poor outcomes on a variety of life satisfaction and achievement measures. One study compared current and former long-term heavy users of marijuana with a control group and despite similar education and income backgrounds, significant differences were found in educational attainment - fewer of the heavy users of cannabis completed college, and more had yearly household incomes under \$30,000. When asked how marijuana affected their cognitive abilities, careers, social lives, and physical or mental health, the majority of heavy users reported the drug had negative effects on all of these measures (NIDA).

Job Performance: In terms of employment, several studies have linked workers' marijuana smoking with increased absences, tardiness, accidents, workers' compensation claims, and job turnover. For example, a study among postal workers found that employees who tested positive for marijuana on a pre-employment urine drug test had 55 percent more industrial accidents, 85 percent more injuries, and a 75 percent increase in absenteeism compared with those who tested negative for marijuana use (NIDA Research Report.) Fergusson et al., also demonstrated a relationship between higher levels of cannabis use and greater welfare dependence, unemployment, and lower relationship and life satisfaction.

Driving: Because marijuana impairs judgment and motor coordination and slows reaction time, an intoxicated person has an increased chance of being involved in and being responsible for a driving accident (O'Malley and Johnston). In fact, "THC positives, particularly at higher doses, are about three to seven times more likely to be responsible for their crash as compared to drivers that had not used drugs or alcohol" (Ramaekers). Only alcohol impairs more drivers than marijuana (Penning, et. al.) According to a major study of motor vehicle collision victims in a regional Trauma Unit in Toronto, marijuana was the most commonly found drug in impaired drivers other than alcohol. (Addiction Research Foundation.)

Crime: In terms of crime and violence, according to a major study of ten metropolitan sites released by the National Office of Drug Control Policy in May of 2009, marijuana is the most commonly detected drug at the time of arrest (note: the arrests are for marijuana related crime - not simple possession.) Overall, the percentage of arrestees testing positive for marijuana ranges from about 33% to 50%. Additionally, it was found that arrestees use marijuana frequently - on average about every other day during the past month.

Pacula and Kilmer suggest that higher marijuana use is positively associated with property arrests and income-producing criminal arrests. One meta-analysis of 96 studies found that marijuana use had an effect on intimate partner violence (Moore et al.) The US National Research Council suggests that prolonged use of cannabis promotes violent or aggressive behavior because of changes in the nervous system. Marijuana may be associated more strongly with juvenile crime than alcohol use. In a study of 10,441 secondary students in Australia (Pacula et al.), cannabis users were two times more likely to participate in assault and malicious damage of property than others. Over 25% of convicted murderers admit to a marijuana habit at the time of the crime; marijuana users often commit income and property related crime for money; and it is often the drug of choice for people who claim gang membership.

RESOURCES: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Research Report Series Marijuana Abuse • Schweinsburg, A.D.; Brown, S.A.; and Tapert, S.F. The influence of marijuana use on neurocognitive functioning in adolescents. *Curr Drug Abuse Rev*, 2008 • Fergusson, D.M., and Boden, J.M. Cannabis use and later life outcomes. *Addiction*, 2008 • Macleod, J.; Oakes, R.; Copello, A.; Crome, I.; Egger, M.; Hickman, M.; Oppenkowski, T.; Stokes-Lampard, H.; and Davey Smith, G. Psychological and social sequelae of cannabis and other illicit drug use by young people, *Lancet* 2004 • Moore, T.M., Stuart, G.L., Meehan, J.C., Rhatigan, D.L., Hellmuth, J.C., & Keen, S.M. (2008). Drug abuse and aggression between intimate partners. *Clinical Psychology Review* • O'Malley, P.M., and Johnston, L.D. Drugs and driving by American high school seniors, *J Stud Alcohol Drugs*, 2007 • Penning, R., Veldstra, J. L., Daamen, A. P., Olivier, B., & Verster, J. C. (2010). Drugs of abuse, driving and traffic safety. *Current Drug Abuse Reviews*, • Ramaekers, J. G., Berghaus, G., van Laar, M., & Drummer, O. H. (2004). Dose related risk of motor vehicle crashes after cannabis use. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* • "New Study Reveals Scope of Drug and Crime Connection", May 28, 2009, National Office of Drug Control Policy • "Behind Bars II: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population", CASA at Columbia University, February 2010 • "Marijuana And Crime: Is There A Connection Beyond Prohibition?", R.L. Pacula, B. Kilmer, National Bureau Of Economic Research, October 2003.