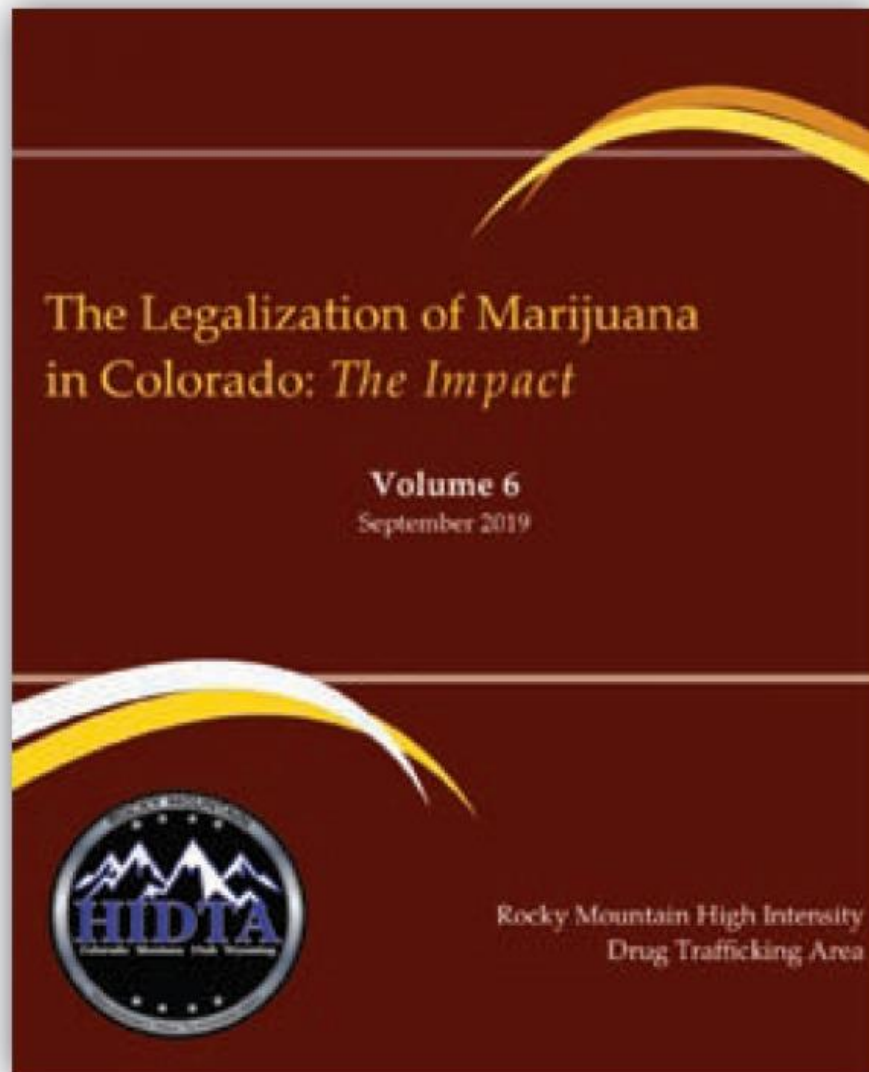


The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact

Volume 6, September 2019

Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program

Medical and recreational marijuana are destroying the health and social fabric of Colorado the Centennial State. Efforts are already underway to introduce recreational marijuana into law in Missouri via public referendum.



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[Executive Summary](#)

The Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) program has published annual reports every year since 2013 tracking the impact of legalizing recreational marijuana in Colorado. The purpose is to provide data and information so that policy makers and citizens can make informed decisions on the issue of marijuana legalization.[1](#)

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Section I: Traffic Fatalities & Impaired Driving

- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths in which drivers tested positive for marijuana increased 109 percent while all Colorado traffic deaths increased 31 percent.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana more than doubled from 55 in 2013 to 115 people killed in 2018.
- This equates to one person killed every 3 days in 2018 compared to one person killed every 6½ days in 2013.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, the percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths that were marijuana-related increased from 15 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2018.

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Section II: Marijuana Use

Since recreational marijuana was legalized:

- Past month marijuana use for ages 12 and older increased 58 percent and is 78 percent higher than the national average, currently ranked 4th in the nation.
- Adult marijuana use increased 94 percent and is 96 percent higher than the national average, currently ranked 4th in the nation.
- College age marijuana use increased 18 percent and is 48 percent higher than the national average, currently ranked 6th in the nation.
- Youth marijuana use decreased 14 percent and is 40 percent higher than the national average, currently ranked 6th in the nation.

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Section III: Public Health

- The yearly number of emergency department visits related to marijuana increased 54 percent after the legalization of recreational marijuana (2013 compared to 2017).
- The yearly number of marijuana-related hospitalizations increased 101 percent after the legalization of recreational marijuana (2013 compared to 2017).

- Marijuana-only exposures more than quadrupled in the six-year average (2013–2018) since recreational marijuana was legalized compared to the six-year average (2007–2012) prior to legalization.
- The percent of suicide incidents in which toxicology results were positive for marijuana has increased from 14 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2017.

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Section IV: Black Market

- RMHIDTA Colorado Drug Task Forces (10) conducted 257 investigations of black market marijuana in Colorado resulting in:
 - ○ 192 felony arrests
 - ○ 6.08 tons of marijuana seized
 - ○ 60,091 marijuana plants seized
 - ○ 25 different states the marijuana was destined
- Seizures of Colorado marijuana in the U.S. mail system has increased 1,042 percent from an average of 52 parcels (2009–2012) to an average of 594 parcels (2013–2017) during the time recreational marijuana has been legal.

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Section V: Societal Impact

- Marijuana tax revenue represent approximately nine-tenths of one percent of Colorado's FY 2018 budget.
- 64 percent of local jurisdictions in Colorado have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.

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References

1. <https://rmhidta.org/files/D2DF/FINAL-Volume6.pdf>