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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/racial-disparity-in-marijuana-policing-in-new-orleans>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

In national research, self-reported marijuana use is similar across races, but in New Orleans, black people are disproportionately arrested for marijuana offenses, including simple possession. In recent years, some states have legalized marijuana, while the consequences for marijuana possession in Louisiana remain severe under state law, repeated convictions for simple possession are punishable by multi-year prison sentences. This report illuminates through quantitative analysis the persistent racial disparities in marijuana policing from 2010 to 2015 and discusses the impacts of statutory and policy reforms the city has implemented to date. We are hopeful that these findings will guide state and local policymakers toward further improvements to lessen the harm even seemingly minor police encounters inflict on black communities, and inspire other jurisdictions to examine their own practices.

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