

NEWS

21 percent of Mass. residents used marijuana in the last 30 days, new study says

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One in five Massachusetts adults, or roughly 21 percent used marijuana in the last 30 days, according to a new study from the state's Department of Public Health.

Among marijuana users, 34.3 percent self-reported driving under the influence, and 7.2 percent of the adult population drove while under the influence of marijuana in the last 30 days.



About 11 percent of adults said they were in the vehicle with a marijuana-using driver in the last 30 days.

The highest proportion of marijuana use was among people 18 to 20 years of age (54.4 percent) and 21 to 25 years of age (49.1 percent), the study said.

Marijuana-related phone calls to the state's regional poison control center has steadily increased, the study reported.

"The calls include incidents of unintentional exposures among children, with the majority of calls related to 10-19 year old individuals, and/or exposure to dried marijuana flower," the study said. "The proportion of calls increased after medical marijuana was available in the Commonwealth."

Massachusetts voters approved marijuana for medical use in 2012, and in November 2016 broadly legalized recreational marijuana for adults ages 21 and over.

Broken down by region, Western Massachusetts saw the "highest prevalence" of marijuana use, according to the state Department of Public Health study.

"Among marijuana users living in Massachusetts, most are White, 70.8%, and many fewer are Hispanic, 12.0%, Black, 7.1%, other, 6.9%, or Asian, 3.2%," the study continued. "In statistical analysis of the data (which accounted for the



effect of other factors), race/ethnicity was not associated with marijuana use, suggesting that the likelihood of using marijuana is similar for each group (compared to Whites)."

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Marijuana users said they most commonly smoke the substance and more than half of adults believe using marijuana has a slight risk or no risk.

The study, meant to be used as a baseline before retail pot shops open, was mandated after state lawmakers rewrote portions of the 2016 marijuana legalization ballot question.

"It's helpful to have a baseline study in place as Massachusetts enters the full legalization era," Jim Borghesani, a marijuana industry consultant and a former spokesman for the ballot campaign, said in an email.



"If the coming experience here reflects that of states that have gone before us, we can anticipate data that puts to rest the reefer-madness fears and hysteria generated by legalization opponents," he added. "The primary outcomes in those states have been safer choices for consumers, diminution of illicit markets, and significant new revenues and jobs."

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