

#44 Marijuana: Hope or Dope (Stats & Facts)

***Episode Description** Some people feel like medicinal marijuana is great relief for sick people while others believe it is simply a way for people to legally abuse drugs. What are your thoughts?*

Focus of Research

Number of people using marijuana in the US

Number of people using marijuana for medical purposes

States where marijuana use is legalized

Arrests for possession of marijuana and sales

Who's Using?

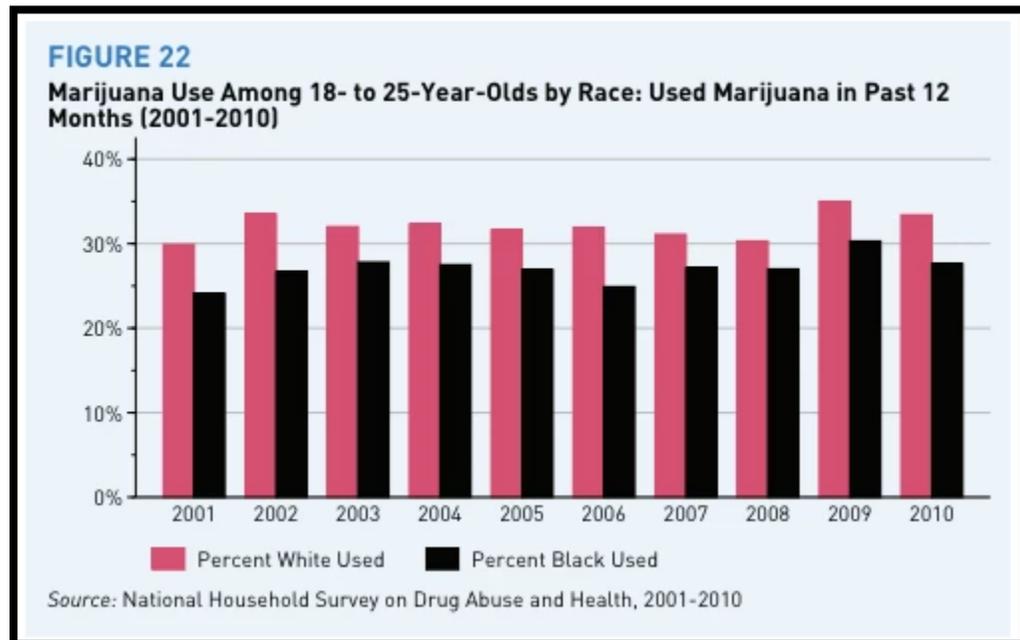
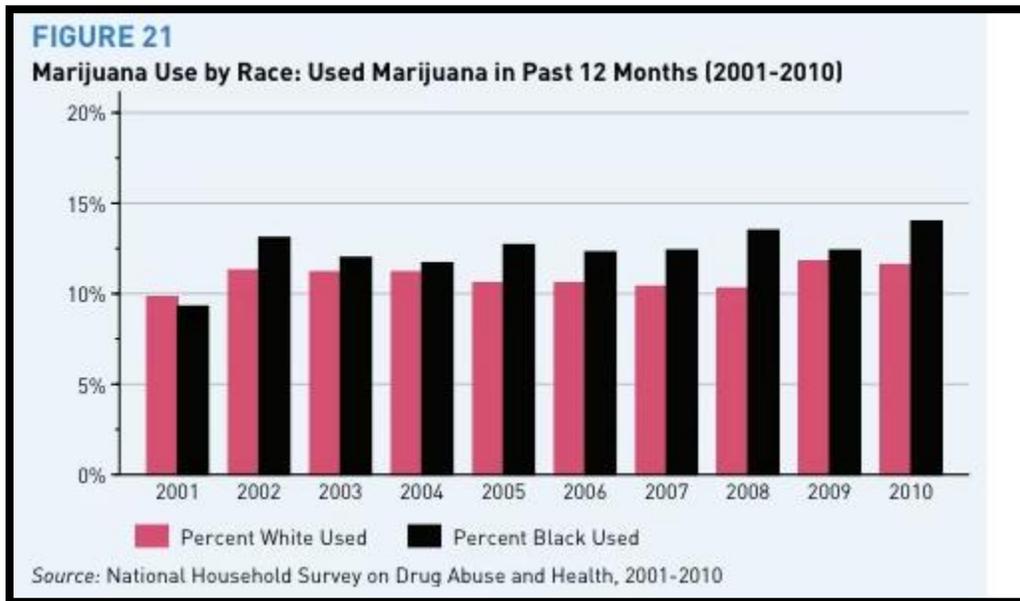
According to [research gathered by Pew Research Center](#), “nearly half (47%) of Americans say they [have tried marijuana](#), and 11% in the past year, which the [2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) says is the most commonly-used illicit drug in the U.S. The government survey showed that 18.9 million Americans 12 or older (7.3%) had used marijuana in the prior month (at the time survey was conducted).”

[ProCon.org](#) lists the official estimated number of medical marijuana patients (those who hold identification cards with mandatory registration). The possibility is acknowledged that “not all medical marijuana users register for identification cards and not all of the people registered have valid medical uses for the marijuana.”

How Many Legal Medical Marijuana Patients Are There in the United States?			
State	Medical marijuana patients	State population	# of patients per 1,000 state residents
1. Alaska	1,857	735,132	2.5
2. Arizona	55,440	6,626,624	8.4
3. California ¹	572,762	38,332,521	14.9
4. Colorado	111,804	5,268,367	21.2
5. Connecticut	2,326	3,596,080	0.6
6. DC	1,181	646,449	1.8
7. Delaware	133	925,749	0.1
8. Hawaii	13,833	1,404,054	9.9
9. Illinois ²	2,000	12,882,135	0.2
10. Maine ¹	17,274	1,328,302	13.0
11. Maryland ³	Not open	5,928,814	--
12. Massachusetts ⁴	Not available	6,692,824	--
13. Michigan	146,811	9,895,622	14.8
14. Minnesota ³	Not open	5,420,380	--
15. Montana	8,470	1,015,165	8.3
16. Nevada	6,500	2,790,136	2.3
17. New Hampshire ³	Not open	1,323,459	--
18. New Jersey	1,670	8,899,339	0.2
19. New Mexico	11,547	2,085,287	5.5
20. New York ³	Not open	19,651,127	--
21. Oregon	69,429	3,930,065	17.7
22. Rhode Island	9,298	1,051,511	8.8
23. Vermont	1,290	626,630	2.1
24. Washington ¹	103,444	6,971,406	14.8
Legal Medical Marijuana Patients:	1,137,069		Average: 7.7
<small>total medical marijuana users in 19 (out of 23) states and DC with legal medical marijuana (as of Oct. 2014)</small>			
<small>Estimated number of users if medical marijuana were legal throughout all 50 US states and DC (based on avg. of 7.7 patients per 1,000)⁵</small>	2,434,192	316,128,839	

According to an [article](#) on WebMD, pain is the main reason people ask for medical marijuana. Other ailments for which medical marijuana is requested as treatment include muscle spasms caused by multiple sclerosis, nausea from cancer chemotherapy, and poor appetite and weight loss caused by chronic illness like HIV.

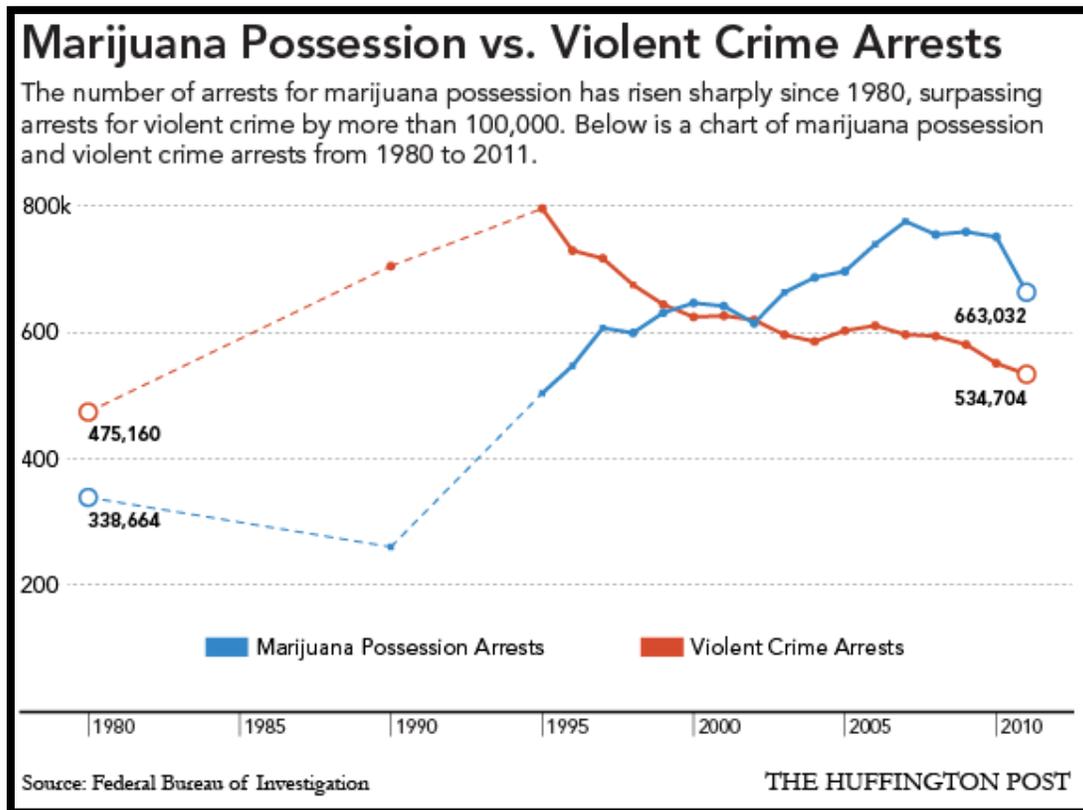
A 2013 [report](#) by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) found that marijuana use was roughly the same for blacks and whites.



Arrest Rates for Marijuana Possession, Sales, etc.

DrugWarFacts.org: (Total Annual Arrests by Year and Category) Although the intent of a 'War on Drugs' may have been to target drug smugglers and 'King Pins,' according to the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reports, of the 1,552,432 arrests for drug law violations in 2012, 82.2% (1,276,099) were for mere possession of a controlled substance. Only 17.8% (276,333) were for the sale or manufacturing of a drug. Further, **nearly half (48.3%) of drug arrests in 2012 were for marijuana -- a total of 749,825**. Of those, an estimated 658,231 arrests (42.4% of all drug arrests) were for marijuana possession alone.

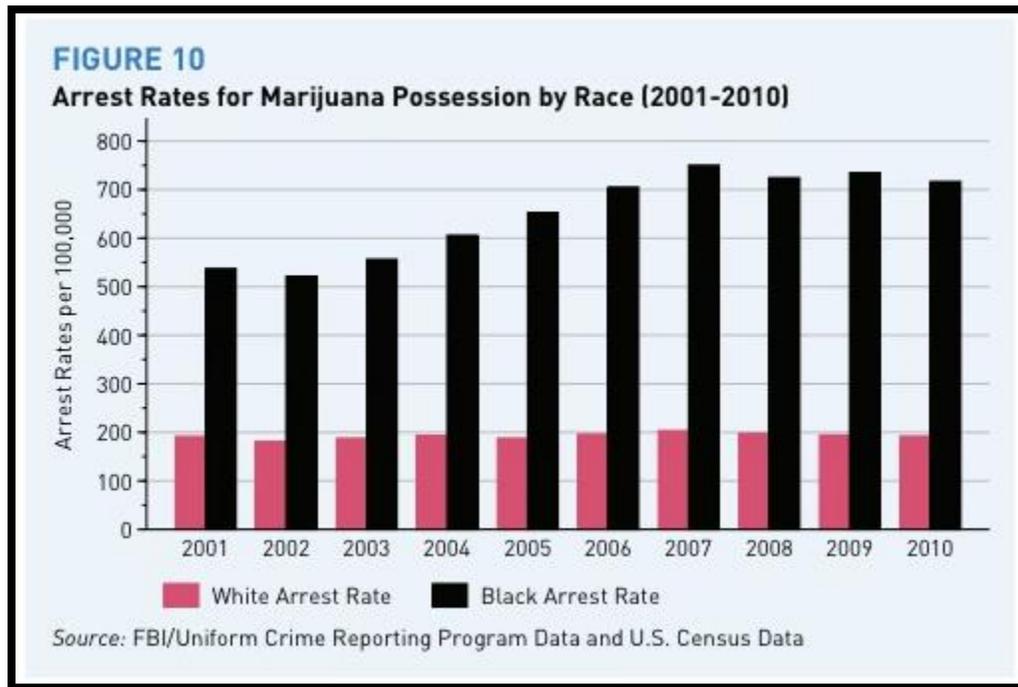
Looking at the arrest rate in a [general sense](#):



More Recent Data:

US Arrests As Reported By FBI UCR Program							
Year	Total Arrests	Total Drug Arrests	Total Marijuana Arrests	Marijuana Trafficking/Sale Arrests	Marijuana Possession Arrests	Total Violent Crime Arrests	Total Property Crime Arrests
2012	12,196,959	1,552,432	749,825	91,593	658,231	521,196	1,646,212
2011	12,408,899	1,531,251	757,969	94,937	663,032	534,704	1,639,883

A gaping disparity in arrest rates between races

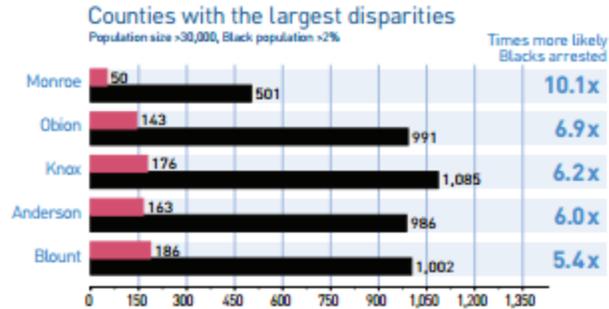


ACLU notes a problem in the data reporting: “[t]his report’s sole focus on Black-white racial disparities is the result of the fact that the FBI/UCR arrest data does not identify Latinos as a distinct racial group and thus does not distinguish between white and Latino arrests... classifying Latinos as whites for the purposes of reporting arrest data to the FBI/UCR Program can inflate the ‘true’ white arrest rate and, in turn, deflate the ‘true’ racial disparity in arrest rates between whites and Blacks.”

Tennessee

Blacks are **4.0** times more likely than whites to be arrested for marijuana possession

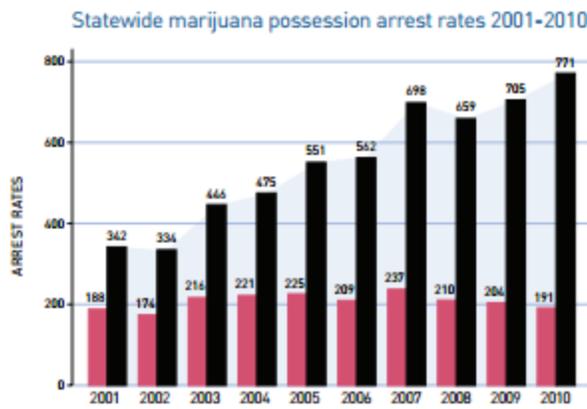
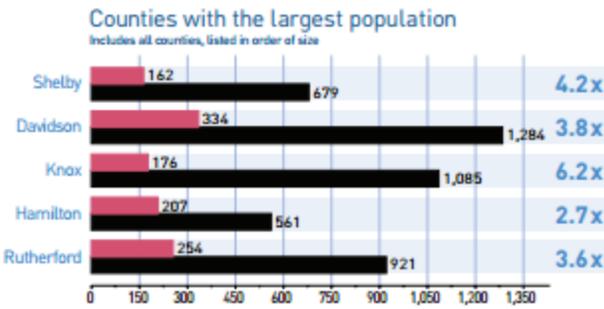
Racial Disparities In Marijuana Possession Arrest Rates*



Arrest Rates



All counties with racial disparities above the national average (3.73)



White arrest rate
Black arrest rate
Source: FBI / Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data and U.S. Census Data
*All arrest rates are per 100,000 and based on 2010 data

Cost

Money spent enforcing marijuana possession laws in 2010: **\$42,948,820**

Drug Arrests by Offense in 2010

Offense	Percentage
Marijuana possession	42.2%
All other drug offenses	57.8%

States that have Legalized Marijuana Use

Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and the District of Columbia have passed measures to legalize marijuana use. 14 additional states have [decriminalized](#) certain amounts of marijuana possession according to the [Pew Research Center](#). Including the five aforementioned locations, nearly half of US states allow medical marijuana.



Additional Resources

[In Legalizing Marijuana, End the Racial Bias](#)