



# MARIJUANA-IMPAIRED DRIVING

Driving under the influence of marijuana (DUI) is illegal and poses a significant public health concern.



Marijuana use is linked with an increased likelihood of car crashes, which are the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths in the U.S. Marijuana affects movement, coordination, and thinking which impacts critical tasks required for safe driving such as:<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

- Reaction time
- Road tracking
- Attention
- Executive functions

Marijuana-impaired driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving. After alcohol, marijuana is the most detected drug among drivers in motor vehicle accidents.<sup>5</sup>

- Drivers with a serum THC concentration of 1 ng/ml are just as likely to cause an accident as drivers with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08%.<sup>6</sup>
- Drivers impaired by both marijuana and alcohol are 25 times more likely to cause a fatal crash than non-impaired drivers.<sup>7</sup>

Marijuana legalization has flooded the market with potent THC products like edibles, posing a significant risk for impaired driving and road safety.<sup>8</sup> Edibles pose a greater risk because:

- Our bodies take longer to process the drug, leading to delayed and prolonged effects. This can also lead to excessive consumption.<sup>9</sup>
- They may resemble common food items and other goods not typically associated with marijuana, such as baked goods, candies, gummies, oils, beverages, and various others. This has led to an increase in accidental ingestion of these products, including 4000 cases of children under the age of 9 hospitalized between 2017 and 2019.<sup>9</sup>

## THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DUI HAS INCREASED, LIKELY ATTRIBUTED TO CHANGING MARIJUANA POLICIES MISLEADING PEOPLE TO THINK MARIJUANA IS SAFE, ACCEPTABLE, AND LESS DANGEROUS THAN ALCOHOL.<sup>10</sup>

- Twelve million people aged 16 and older report driving under the influence of marijuana, with the highest prevalence among young adults aged 21 to 25 followed by youth aged 16 to 20.<sup>11</sup>
- In 2014, 3.2% of youth aged 16 to 25 drove under the influence of marijuana. By 2018, this increased to 9.2% among youth aged 16 to 20 and 12.4% among young adults aged 21 to 25.<sup>11</sup>
- The number of weekend nighttime drivers testing positive for THC increased 48% between 1999 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- Since 2002, fewer Americans perceive marijuana use is risky. A study analyzing national data found that between 2002 and 2014, the perception that marijuana was low-risk and easy to obtain increased by 86%, with further increases observed between 2015 and 2018. These findings align with the trend of increasing marijuana legalization across states.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2014 following marijuana legalization, Oregon saw a 163% increase of driving under the influence of intoxicants (DUI) arrests. In 2020, 63.4% of DUI arrests tested positive for marijuana.<sup>13</sup>

## DUI IS MORE COMMON THAN DRINKING AND DRIVING AMONG TEENS.<sup>14</sup>

More than 1 in 8 teen drivers report driving after using marijuana and about half of teen drivers who use marijuana drive after using it.<sup>14</sup>



# MARIJUANA-RELATED TRAFFIC CRASHES AND DEATHS

A 2024 study using the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which tracks national vehicular fatal accidents, found that 33.4% of fatally injured drivers tested positive for marijuana. The FARS data also found fatalities increased:

- 38.2% in states with legalized recreational and medical marijuana,
- 32.8% in states with legalized medical use only, and
- 30.7% in states with no comprehensive legislation, meaning its use in any form is prohibited and penalized.<sup>15</sup>



Studies analyzing the impact of marijuana legalization and retail marijuana sales on traffic incidents found that:

- After marijuana was legalized and sold in stores, car accidents with injuries rose 5.8% and fatal crash rates increased 4.1%.<sup>16</sup>
- In Colorado, Washington, and Oregon, injury crash rates rose after legalization and again after retail sales began, with overall increases ranging from 8% to 18%.<sup>16</sup>
- Colorado saw a 138% increase in traffic fatalities with drivers testing positive after the legalization of recreational marijuana in 2013.<sup>17</sup>
- Between 2010 and 2021, emergency visits due to marijuana-related traffic incidents soared by 475% in Canada.<sup>18</sup>
  - 94% increase in 2018 following legalization, even while access was limited.<sup>17</sup>
  - 233% increase following widespread availability.<sup>18</sup>



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