

# Marijuana Use in North Carolina: Current Research

## Overview

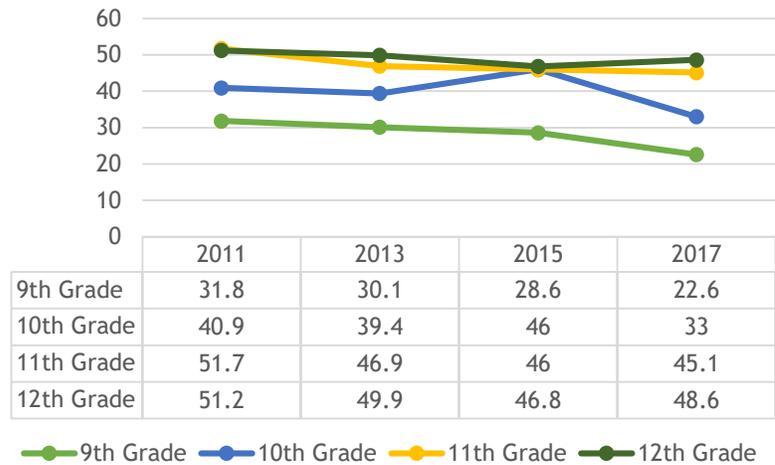
Marijuana, or Cannabis Sativa, is a cannabinoid and it is extremely prevalent in North Carolina. It is commonly smoked or eaten in a variety of ways to achieve a high. When marijuana is smoked the THC inside of the dried flower is transferred to the lungs where it is absorbed through the capillaries into the bloodstream. The effects of marijuana use on the brain begins almost immediately, disrupting the parts of the brain that affect balance, coordination and attention.

## Teen Use Rates in North Carolina

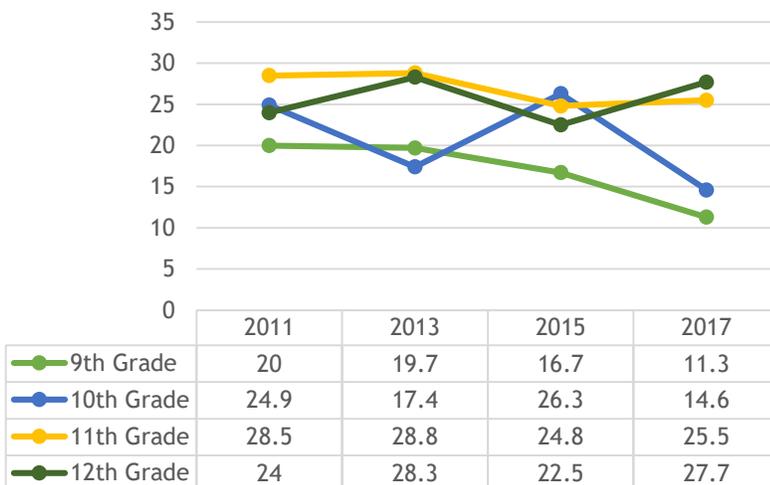
The 2017 NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides lifetime and prior 30-day use rates for North Carolina students from 2011 – 2017.

North Carolina youth in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade had the highest percent of lifetime marijuana use and past 30-day use. Overall, lifetime marijuana use rates are declining for grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> between 2011 - 2017.

### Lifetime Marijuana Use



### Past 30 Day Marijuana Use



North Carolina youth in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade had a 5.2% increase between 2015 – 2017. 10<sup>th</sup> graders had an 8.9% increase during that time. between 2011 - 2017.

## **Teen Marijuana use in States with Legalized Marijuana**

North Carolina has the benefit of examining the impact of legalization on perception of harm and use rates for young people. Legalization increases the acceptance of marijuana use, teenagers then begin to see it as not being harmful to their health, and use rates rise. Not surprisingly, among states that have legalized marijuana, the same trends in youth use rates are unfolding. This is similar to use rates seen with tobacco and alcohol.

## **Tips for Parents and Prevention Professionals**

- Focus on making sure that children are educated from a young age. Delaying the age of initiating marijuana use lowers the percentage of youth smoking marijuana as the years go by. It also decreases the longer-term impacts on the brain.
- Parents should make their child feel that they can be approached with questions about marijuana and provide them with clear answers to ensure their child is educated properly.
- Parents should start to think about drug and alcohol prevention as early as 12 years old which is a key time for substance abuse prevention.
- Prevention programs should start as early as elementary school to teach children self-control, emotional awareness, communication, and social problem solving.
- It is important that parents reinforce the drug education programs that are taught in schools to ensure students retain the information being presented to them.
- Prevention programs should be interactive to allow the youth to actively participate in learning about drug use.
- The bedrock of prevention is how the issue is treated within the family. Policies on drug and alcohol use should be developed, discussed and enforced consistently throughout the family. This avoids any confusion over the rules on drugs and alcohol.

Parents and prevention professionals should monitor local marijuana perception of harm rates and use rates in their local area closely. Survey data and use rates often change before state survey data is reported. With the ever-changing landscape of marijuana use, legalization, and mechanisms to ingest the substance, it is more important than ever to know what is happening within your own community.

*As a statewide agency, The North Carolina Training and Technical Assistance (NCTTA) Center provides workforce development, training, and technical assistance opportunities to substance abuse prevention stakeholders. Funding for the NCTTA is provided by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services with funding from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. To learn more visit [ncpreventiontta.org](http://ncpreventiontta.org)*

## References

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