

MARIJUANA USE

Among American Indian Youth in New Mexico



2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey



This fact sheet presents data from the 2021 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (NM YRRS) on marijuana use among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in grades 6 - 12. The overarching aim of the NM YRRS is to better characterize risk behaviors and protective factors among middle school (MS) and high school (HS) students in New Mexico (NM). Beginning in early 2020, the United States, along with the rest of the world, experienced the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic had various impacts on youth's daily lives that may be reflected throughout this fact sheet.

Marijuana (also known as cannabis, weed, pot, or dope) refers to dried flowers, stems, leaves, and seeds of the cannabis plant. It can contain more than 100 compounds, including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD)¹. Marijuana use among youth may impact brain functioning and is associated with issues related to^{2,3}:

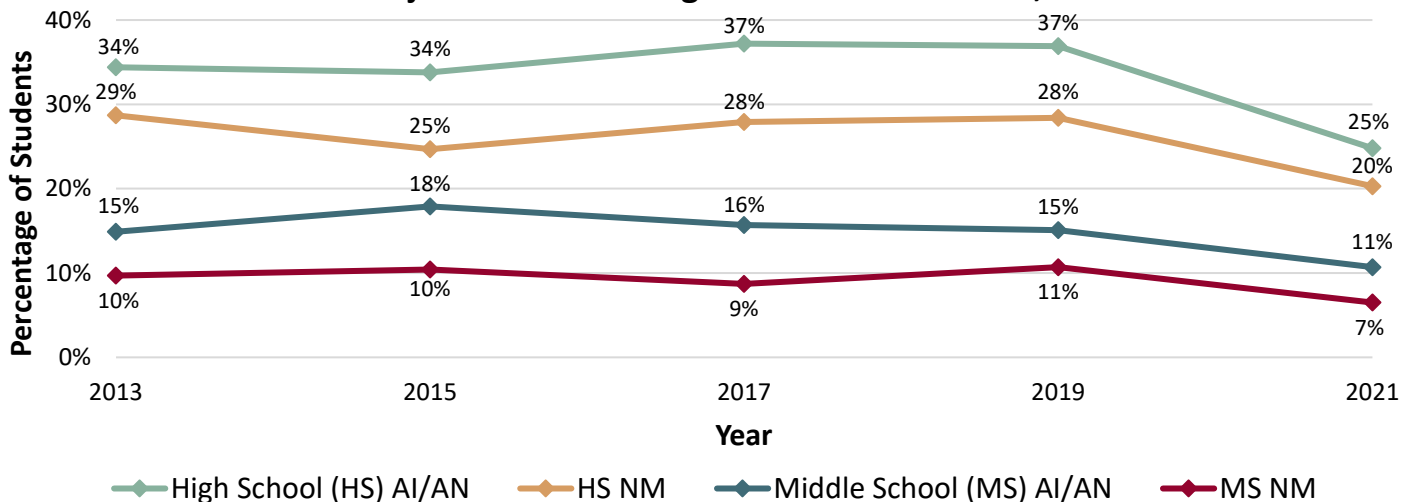
- ❖ Memory & learning
- ❖ Attention
- ❖ Decision making
- ❖ Coordination

This may contribute to other risky behaviors and health conditions such as impaired driving, mental health issues, and decreased academic motivation^{3,4}.

"The perception of the dangers of marijuana use is declining and, increasingly, young people today do not consider marijuana use a risky behavior... Additionally, the amount of THC in marijuana has steadily climbed; today's marijuana has three times the concentration of THC compared to 25 years ago, increasing the impact on the brain." – Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020⁵.



Trends in Marijuana Use* Among Youth in New Mexico, 2013 - 2021



*Used marijuana in the past 30 days

From 2013 to 2019, the rate of marijuana use among high school and middle school students in New Mexico remained relatively consistent. Rates of past 30-day marijuana use **decreased** across all groups of students in 2021, with **1 in 4 AI/AN HS** and **about 1 in 10 AI/AN MS** students reporting marijuana use in the past 30 days.

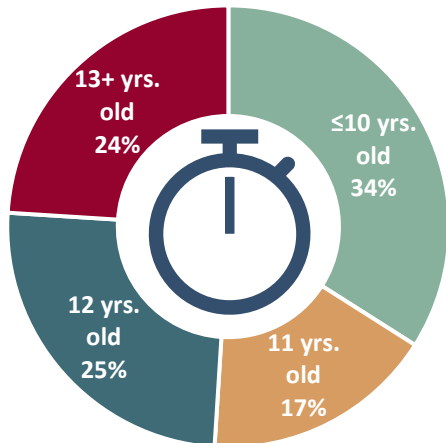
MARIJUANA USE

Among American Indian Youth in New Mexico

2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey



Age of Marijuana Use Initiation among AI/AN MS Students*



*Used marijuana in the past 30 days

Among the 11% of AI/AN MS students who used marijuana in the past 30 days, **34%** began use before age 11. Early substance use initiation is associated with an increased risk of substance use disorders later in life⁶, as well as suicidal ideation and related behaviors⁷.

Among AI/AN MS students who...

First used marijuana < age 11, **about 53%** reported having ever had suicidal thoughts.

VS

First used marijuana ≥ age 11, **about 29%** reported having ever had suicidal thoughts.

Among AI/AN HS students who **currently use*** marijuana and...

Initiated use < age 13, **about 63%** reported driving after using marijuana in the past 30 days.

VS

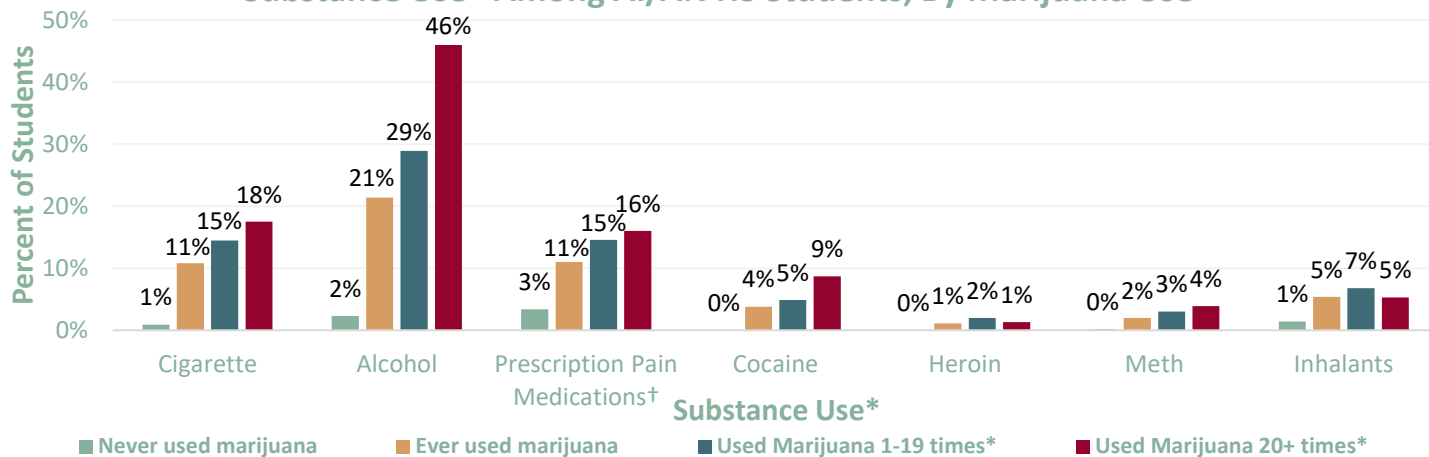
Initiated use ≥ age 13, **about 47%** reported driving after using marijuana in the past 30 days.

about 42% reported using marijuana 20+ times in the past 30 days.

about 26% reported using marijuana 20+ times in the past 30 days.

*Used marijuana in the past 30 days

Substance Use* Among AI/AN HS Students, By Marijuana Use



Higher rates of cigarette, alcohol, prescription pain medication, and cocaine use are reported among AI/AN HS students who report frequent marijuana use in the past 30 days. This pattern of association is not as clearly established among students who report heroin, methamphetamines (meth), or inhalant use in the past 30 days.

*Past 30 days; [†]Use of prescription pain medications without a doctor's prescription or differently than instructed

MARIJUANA USE

Among American Indian Youth in New Mexico

2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey



Students who feel supported and/or have stable environments (examples listed below) have **DECREASED** odds of marijuana use*:



Parents know where I am & who I'm with



Part of community group activities



<3 hours of non-school screen time per day

Certain factors, such as having a supportive family environment and engaging in school and community, protect adolescents from using marijuana by diminishing the effects of risk factors⁸, such as the examples below.

Students who report difficult behavioral and/or environmental experiences (such as those listed below) have **INCREASED** odds of marijuana use*:



Bullied on school property



Experienced homelessness (lacked a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence)



Frequent mental health distress

Individuals going through stressful or traumatic situations may use marijuana as a coping mechanism⁹.

The perspectives students hold may impact their marijuana usage:

Among middle school students who believe...

Their friends feel smoking marijuana is wrong/very wrong

94% did not use marijuana*

Smoking marijuana 1-2x a week may be harmful (physically/otherwise)

91% did not use marijuana*

Their parents feel smoking marijuana is wrong/very wrong

91% did not use marijuana*

Among high school students who...

Have an adult in the community who tells them "good job"

79% did not use marijuana*

Plan to go to college or some other school after high school

78% did not use marijuana*

Have an adult at home who believes they will be a success

77% did not use marijuana*

Have a teacher or adult at school who listens to them

77% did not use marijuana*

Have a friend their age who helps them when having a hard time

76% did not use marijuana*

*Used marijuana in the past 30 days

MARIJUANA USE

Among American Indian Youth in New Mexico

2021 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey



HOW YOU CAN HELP:



Families: Have an open and honest conversation with youth about marijuana at an early age. When youth can ask families for help and know their family's feelings about marijuana, they are less likely to use marijuana¹⁰. Scan the QR code to read more.



Schools: Be a resource to students by actively listening and guiding them through difficult situations, and providing factual information on the harms of underage substance use¹¹. Substance use can be a coping mechanism for stressful or traumatic situations⁸. Aim to be a caring adult who students and their families can go to for support, guidance, and information. Scan the QR code to read more.



Communities: Provide a trusting and responsive space for youth to develop intergenerational relationships with elders and adults through listening and using non-stigmatizing language around marijuana use. Encourage youth to engage in recreational and extracurricular activities in the community, like dance, and cultural healing practices, like smudging, to reconnect spiritually to their identity. Focus on their strengths and areas of growth to encourage healing and holistic wellness¹². Scan the QR code to read more.

References:

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cannabis Health Effects. cdc.gov. Updated February 16, 2024. Accessed March 4, 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/>.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cannabis and Teens. cdc.gov. Updated February 15, 2024. Accessed March 4, 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-and-teens.html>.

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About Cannabis. cdc.gov. Updated February 15, 2024. Accessed March 4, 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/about/index.html>.

⁴Pacheco-Colón I, Limia JM, Gonzalez R. Non-Acute Effects of Cannabis Use on Motivation and Reward Sensitivity in Humans: A Systematic Review. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2018 Aug; 32(5): 497-507. doi: [10.1037/adb0000380](https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000380).

⁵American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Suicide in Children and Teens. aacap.org. Updated June 2021. Accessed March 4, 2024.

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Teen-Suicide-010.aspx.

⁶Hawke LD, Wilkins L, Henderson J. Early cannabis initiation: Substance use and mental health profiles of service-seeking youth. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2020 Aug 5; 83:112-121. doi: [10.1016/j.adolescence.2020.06.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2020.06.004).

⁷Ahuja M, Awasthi M, Gim S, Records K, Cimilla J, Al-Ksir K, Tremblay J, Doshi RP, Sathiyasaleen T, Fernandopulle P. Early Age of Cannabis Initiation and Its Association With Suicidal Behaviors. *Substance Use: Research and Treatment*. 2022 Aug 10; 16:11782218221116731. doi: [10.1177/11782218221116731](https://doi.org/10.1177/11782218221116731).

⁸Risk and Protective Factors. youth.gov. Accessed March 4, 2024. https://youth.gov/youth-topics/risk-and-protective-factors#_ftn.

⁹Gomez R, Thompson SJ, Barczyk AN. Factors associated with substance use among homeless young adults. *Substance Use & Addiction Journal*. 2010 Jan; 31(1): 24-34. doi: [10.1080/08897070903442566](https://doi.org/10.1080/08897070903442566).

¹⁰American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Marijuana and Teens. aacap.org. Updated September 2023. Accessed March 4, 2024.

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Marijuana-and-Teens-106.aspx.

¹¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Talk. They Hear You: What Educators Can Do to Help Prevent Underage Drinking and Other Drug Use Fact Sheet](#). samhsa.gov. Published June 2019. Accessed March 5, 2024.

https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/factsheet_educator_what_educators_can_do.pdf.

¹²The National Council for Mental Wellbeing. Providing Harm Reduction Services in Native Communities: Key Considerations from a Facilitated Discussion.

Thenationalcouncil.org. Published 2022. Accessed March 5, 2024. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Providing-Harm-Reduction-Services-in-Native-Communities.pdf>.