

What Americans Need  
To Know About  
**MARIJUANA**



*Important facts about our nation's  
most misunderstood illegal drug*

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

What Americans Need  
to Know About

# MARIJUANA

*Important facts about our nation's  
most misunderstood illegal drug*

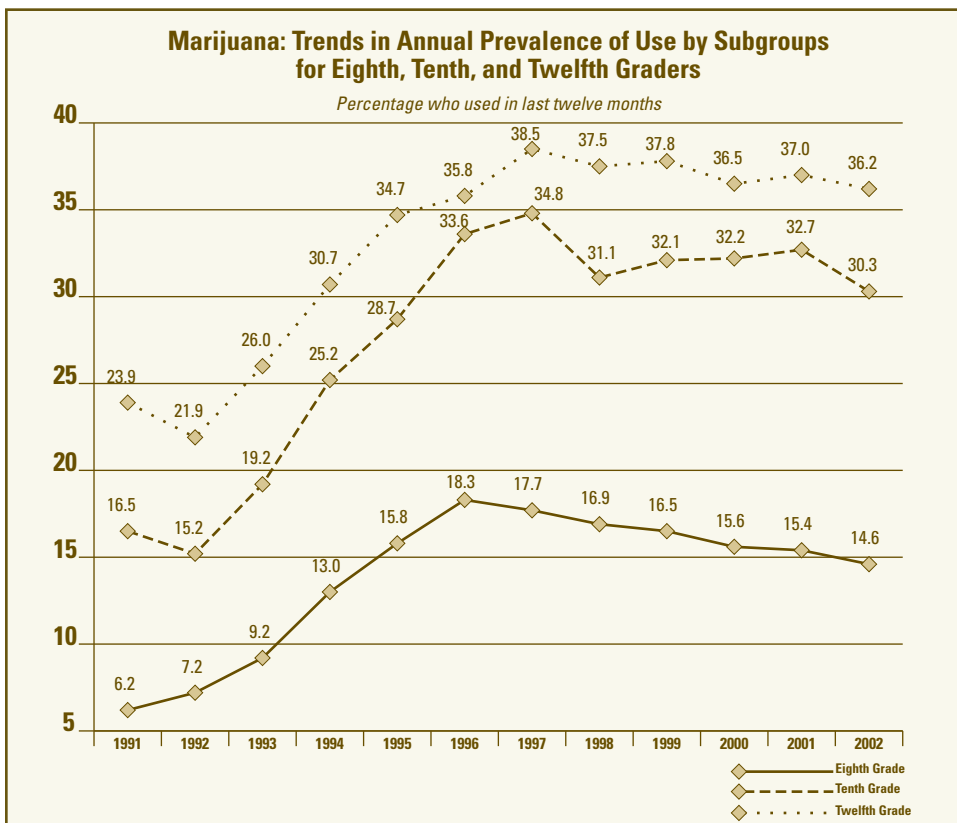


OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

# I. There is a serious drug problem in this country, and marijuana is a much bigger part of the problem than most people realize.

- Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug in America. Of the nearly 20 million current illicit drug users, 14.6 million (about 75 percent) are using marijuana.<sup>1</sup>
- Of the 7.1 million Americans suffering from illegal drug dependence or abuse, 60 percent abuse or are dependent on marijuana.<sup>2</sup>
- Of all youth age 12-17 in drug treatment in 2000, nearly 62 percent had a primary marijuana diagnosis.<sup>4</sup> Approximately half were referred to treatment through the criminal justice system and half through other sources, including self-referral.<sup>5</sup>
- The average age of initiation for marijuana use generally has been getting younger.<sup>6</sup>
- Along with the bad news, however, come signs of improvement (see graph, below):
  - Among 10th graders, past-year and past-month use of marijuana or hashish decreased from 2001 to 2002, as did daily use in the past month.<sup>7</sup>
  - There has been slow but steady progress toward reduced marijuana use rates among 8th graders. Their past-year marijuana-use rate of 14.6 percent in 2002 is the lowest since 1994, and well below their recent peak of 18.3 percent in 1996.<sup>8</sup>

More young people are now in treatment for marijuana dependency than for alcohol or for all other illegal drugs combined.<sup>3</sup>



- At 30.3 percent for past-year marijuana use, 10th graders are at their lowest level since 1995 and somewhat below their recent peak of 34.8 percent in 1997. The past-year use rate for 12th graders is down, albeit only modestly, from 38.5 percent in their recent peak year (1997) to 36.2 percent in 2002.<sup>9</sup>

Monitoring the Future, National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-2002