



# THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA IN COLORADO: *THE IMPACT*

**Volume 7**

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Rocky Mountain High Intensity  
Drug Trafficking Area



REPORT AVAILABLE AT:  
[www.RMHIDTA.org](http://www.RMHIDTA.org)

**PREPARED BY THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIDTA  
TRAINING AND INFORMATION CENTER  
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# Executive Summary

The Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA) program has published annual reports every year since 2013 tracking the impact of legalizing recreational marijuana in Colorado. The purpose is to provide data and information so that policy makers and citizens can make informed decisions on the issue of marijuana legalization.

## Section I: Traffic Fatalities & Impaired Driving

- Since recreational marijuana was legalized in 2013, traffic deaths in which drivers tested positive for marijuana **increased 135%** while all Colorado traffic deaths **increased 24%**.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana **more than doubled** from 55 in 2013 to 129 people killed in 2019.
  - This equates to one person killed every 3 1/2 days in 2019 compared to one person killed every 6 1/2 days in 2013.
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, the percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths that were marijuana related **increased from 15% in 2013 to 25% in 2019**.

## Section II: Marijuana Use

Since recreational marijuana was legalized in 2013:

- Past month marijuana use (ages 12 and older) **increased 30%** and is **76% higher** than the national average, currently ranked **3<sup>rd</sup>** in the nation.
- Past month adult marijuana use (ages 18 and older) **increased 19%** and is **73% higher** than the national average, currently ranked **3<sup>rd</sup>** in the nation.
- Past month college age marijuana (ages 18-25) use **increased 6%** and is **50% higher** than the national average, currently ranked **3<sup>rd</sup>** in the nation.
- Past month youth marijuana (ages 12-17) use **decreased 25%** and is **43% higher** than the national average, currently ranked **7<sup>th</sup>** in the nation.



### Section III: Public Health

- Marijuana *only* exposures more than **quadrupled** in the seven-year average (2013-2019) since recreational marijuana was legalized compared to the seven-year average (2006-2012) prior to legalization.
- Treatment for marijuana use for all ages **decreased 21%** from 2009 to 2019.
- The percent of suicide incidents in which toxicology results were positive for marijuana has **increased** from **14%** in 2013 to **23%** in 2018.

### Section IV: Black Market

- RMHIDTA Colorado Drug Task Forces (10) conducted **278 investigations** of black-market marijuana in Colorado resulting in:
  - 237 felony arrests
  - 7.49 tons of marijuana seized
  - 68,600 marijuana plants seized
  - 29 different states the marijuana was destined
- Seizures of marijuana reported to the El Paso Intelligence Center in Colorado **increased 17%** from an average of 242 parcels (2009-2012) to an average of 283 parcels (2013-2019) during the time recreational marijuana has been commercialized.

### Section V: Societal Impact

- Marijuana tax revenue represent approximately **0.85%** of Colorado's FY 2019 budget.
- **67%** of local jurisdictions in Colorado have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.