

Marijuana Use – Data Brief

Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

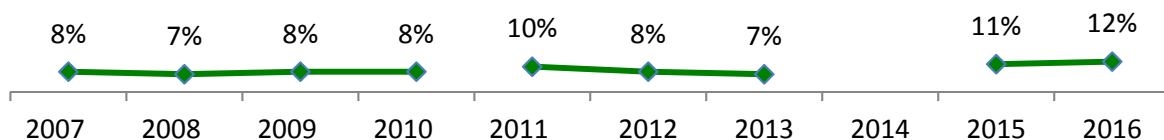
Background

Changes to Vermont marijuana laws in recent years, legalization of recreational marijuana use in other states, as well as the continued conversation around legalization in Vermont have resulted in significant interest in understanding the use of marijuana among Vermont adults. The Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, or BRFSS, has included questions on marijuana in each year since 2007 except 2014, allowing us to assess recent use, as well as changes over time.

Overall

After decreasing in 2012 and 2013, recent marijuana use (use occurring in the last 30 days) increased in 2015 and 2016. Twelve percent of Vermont adults recently used marijuana in 2016. While this is similar to the prevalence in 2015, it is significantly higher than reported use in 2011 through 2013. Due to BRFSS methodology changes in 2010, we cannot make statistical comparisons to data collected prior to 2011.

**Marijuana Use in Past 30 Days
Vermont Adults, 2007 - 2016**



Frequency of Use

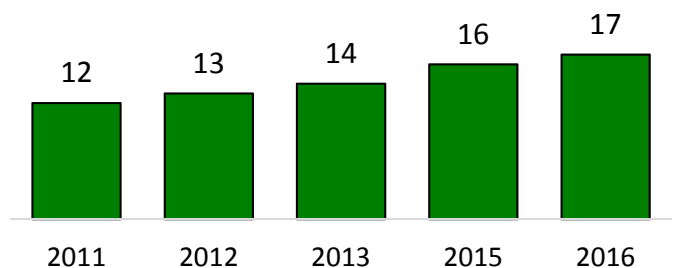
In 2016, recent marijuana users, on average, consumed the drug on 17 days in the last month. Average days of marijuana use has increased each year since 2011, the change over this time frame is statistically significant.

Among recent marijuana users, more than six in ten (63%) said they used marijuana regularly, on ten or more days in the last month (2016). Nearly one in five recent users used marijuana 1-2 days (18%) or 3-9 days (19%) in the past month.

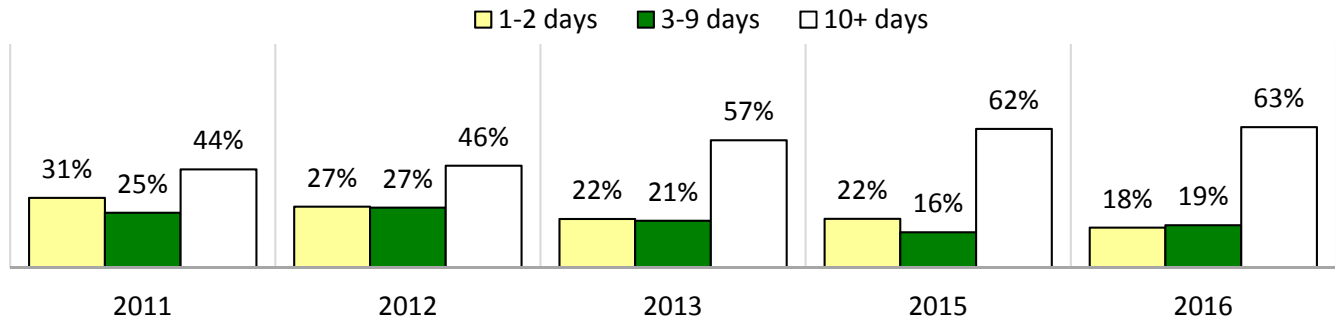
As with average days of use, the proportion of Vermont adults using marijuana regularly has increased each year since 2011. The increase in regular marijuana use over time, from 2011 to 2016, is statistically significant (44% to 63%). However, changes from 2013 to 2016 are not statistically significant (57% to 62%).

Use of marijuana on one or two days and three to nine days have both decreased since 2011, suggesting a general shift towards regular marijuana use instead of more casual use.

**Mean Days Used Marijuana in Last Month
Vermont Adults Recently Using
Marijuana, 2011 - 2016**



Frequency of Marijuana Use Vermont Adults Recently Using Marijuana, 2011-2016

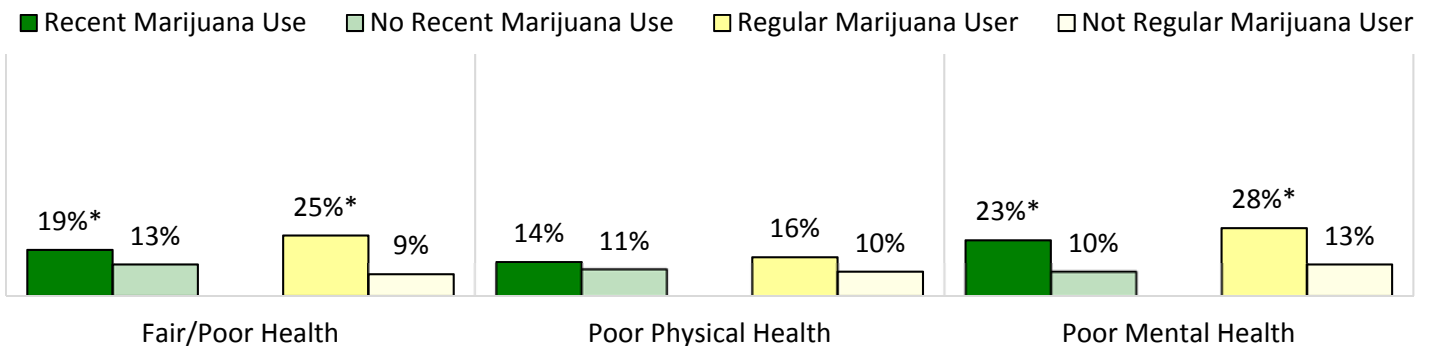


Health Status¹

Vermont adults who recently used marijuana are generally more likely to have poor health, compared with those who have not used marijuana. A similar pattern is seen when comparing regular marijuana users, and less frequent users. Particularly striking are differences in reported poor mental health between recent and non-recent marijuana users and regular and non-regular users. Recent and regular marijuana users are more than twice as likely to report poor mental health than their non/less frequent marijuana user counterparts. These differences are statistically significant and remain when age is accounted for.

At this time, the Vermont BRFSS does not include questions to distinguish between reasons for use (e.g., recreational vs. medicinal). This limits our ability to assess why adults are using marijuana in general, as well as to assess the relationship between poor health and reasons for using marijuana specifically. Due to how BRFSS data is collected it is not possible to determine whether poor health leads to marijuana use or vice versa. We can only say that the two are correlated. However, given the increased availability of medical marijuana in recent years, it is possible that some marijuana use is for medicinal and not recreational purposes.

Health Status by Marijuana Use Vermont Adults, 2016*



*Statistically significant difference.

For more information about the BRFSS or this data brief contact Jessie Hammond, MPH (jessie.hammond@vermont.gov).

¹ Poor physical/mental health defined as 14 or more days, out of last 30, with poor physical or mental health, respectively.