

Under the influence of parents

Children of marijuana users are far more likely to use

Children of parents who have used marijuana are over three times more likely to use marijuana themselves. That's one of the key findings from a recent survey of young adults conducted by Q Market Research on behalf of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation's Center for Public Advocacy.* The survey results underscore the importance of family education and communication about alcohol and other drug use—especially marijuana use, says Hazelden clinician Amanda Klinger, PsyD, LP.

“Regardless of their own use history, it's important for parents to talk with their children about the potential risks of marijuana use as well as household rules, expectations, and consequences,” says Klinger, a clinical psychologist at Hazelden's adolescent and young adult center in Plymouth, Minnesota, part of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.

Designed to gain a better understanding of the influences, attitudes, and perceptions around marijuana use by young adults, the national survey polled 1,051 young men and women ages 18–25. The findings reveal important insights into young adults' attitudes and behaviors related to marijuana and other drug use.

Talk about it

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—Amanda Klinger, PsyD, LP
Mental Health Senior Clinician
Hazelden at Plymouth

1. Parents serve as role models when it comes to drug use.

Seventy-two percent of young adults surveyed who reported using marijuana said their parents are current or past marijuana users. Conversely, less than 20 percent of young adults who've used marijuana say their parents never used.

2. Marijuana use often begins long before early adulthood.

Half of young adults surveyed who use marijuana said they started using by age 16. Among the young adults who use marijuana, 15.1 percent started using before the age of 14, 34.9 percent started using between the ages of 14 and 16, and 36.3 percent started using between the ages of 17 and 19.

3. Young adults downplay the risks of marijuana use.

Despite scientific research about the effects of marijuana—specifically, findings that marijuana is an addictive substance that delays brain development in adolescents—young adults tend to underestimate the risks. Nearly two-thirds (60.5 percent) of young adults surveyed who use marijuana don't think it's addictive, and just as many (60.8 percent) don't think marijuana damages the brain. Compared with drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana is viewed to be safer among the young adults surveyed who use it: 79.9 percent said marijuana is safer than alcohol; 80.1 percent said marijuana is safer than tobacco.

Functional impairment associated with marijuana use includes difficulties in school or at work, conflict in relationships, and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, notes Klinger, who counsels young adults struggling with addiction to marijuana. “The perception that marijuana is not addictive is especially concerning because it can prevent a young person from getting the help he or she needs.”

4. Marijuana use corresponds with greater use of other drugs.

Young adults surveyed who use marijuana are significantly more likely to have tried alcohol and other drugs than their non-using counterparts. The chart below outlines the correlation, showing other drug use by young adults who’ve used marijuana compared with those who don’t use marijuana.

Type of Drug	% Marijuana Users Who Tried:	% Marijuana Non-Users Who Tried:
Alcohol	73.6	29.9
Prescription Drugs**	26.1	6.5
Ecstasy	17.8	0.5
Cocaine	15.8	1.0
Hallucinogens	15.8	0.7
Amphetamines	10.6	0.9
Heroin	4.1	1.0

**Prescription drugs not prescribed for them

The takeaway? Once a young person crosses the threshold into a risky behavior, he or she is more willing to engage in other risky behaviors.

5. What should parents do?

Regardless of their own use history, it is important for parents to have discussions about marijuana use with their children, including potential risks. Children benefit when parents send clear messages about the rules and expectations around marijuana use, as well as consequences should they be violated.

We know how to help. Hundreds of young people find freedom from addiction every year through Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation’s programs for adolescents and young adults, and parents often serve as powerful change agents in that process. But it’s not an easy road for parents, and the path isn’t always clear. That’s why the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation provides extensive help and support for parents and other family members. Learn more today by visiting hazelden.org/youth or by calling **855-348-7044**.

**Attitudes on Marijuana Survey: Young Adults Aged 18 to 25, conducted by Q Market Research, Eagan, Minnesota. Survey results are statistically valid at a 95 percent confidence level to within +/- 2.9 percent.*



Hazelden’s Adolescent and Young Adult Services

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Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, is a force of healing and hope for individuals, families, and communities affected by addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

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