

Study Links Legalized Marijuana and Car Crashes



Summary: A new study found that states, where marijuana is legalized, have more car crashes than other jurisdictions.

Driving is a dangerous activity, even when fully sober; so it's no surprise that driving while under the influence can lead to accidents. But what *is* surprising is the results from a new study from the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI). The study states that legalized pot smoking actually leads to *more* collisions, and this is the first time a group has found a link between being high and impaired driving.

HLDI found that states, where marijuana is legalized such as Colorado, Oregon, and Washington, had a 3% increase in car collision claims than states where pot is illegal. Drivers are now more open to admitting their ganja use because of the lack of stigma, and the study states that pot use is cropping up amongst people involved in crashes.

"Worries that legalized marijuana is increasing crash rates aren't misplaced," said David Zuby, chief research officer of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "The HLDI's findings on the early experience in Colorado, Oregon and Washington should give other states eyeing legalization pause."

HLDI studied Colorado, Oregon, and Washington and compared their auto claims with those filed in Nevada and Utah, two states where marijuana is illegal. Researchers saw Colorado had an increase in reported accidents by 14% while the combination of the three states saw an overall increase of 3%, according to HLDI Vice President Matt Moore.

Colorado legalized recreational marijuana in 2014, and Oregon and Washington legalized it in 2015. Other states, including California which allows medical marijuana, have looked to these states as models as to whether or not they should also file suit. Many states have considered legalizing recreational marijuana because of public opinion and because of its possible revenue generation.

However, legalizing marijuana is still met with hesitation by some in power such as Attorney General Jeff Sessions. On May 1, Sessions sent a letter out condemning the Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment that blocks the Department of Justice from spending money on medical marijuana cases.

"I believe it would be unwise for Congress to restrict the discretion of the Department to fund particular prosecutions, particularly in the midst of an historic drug epidemic and potentially long-term uptick in violent crime," Sessions said in the letter.

While the results from HLDI's study seems intuitive, this is actually the first time that researchers have been able to find a definitive connection between marijuana usage and crashes. Previous studies, even one from the federal government, have been unable to find anything conclusive.

However, it is worth noting that HLDI is affiliated with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, *CBS News* stated. IIHS is a nonprofit research organization that is funded by auto insurance companies. Those auto insurance companies are vested in not paying claims, and according to *CBS* "hold a bias against impaired driving of any kind."

- [Study finds link in marijuana stores with increased property crime](#)
- [Medical Marijuana Cruises Through Iowa Senate](#)
- [Will California Become a Sanctuary State for Marijuana?](#)
- [DC Still Figuring Out Proper Restrictions for Legal Marijuana](#)

Source: *CBS News*

What do you think of this study? Let us know in the comments below.