

The Legalization  
of Marijuana in  
Colorado:  
*The Impact*  
Volume 5

UPDATE

September 2018

Rocky Mountain  
High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



REPORT AVAILABLE AT:  
[www.RMHIDTA.org](http://www.RMHIDTA.org)  
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STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE UNIT  
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# Executive Summary

## Purpose of Report Update:

RMHIDTA 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. This year (2018) RMHIDTA elected to provide an update to the 2017 Volume 5 report rather than another detailed report.

## Section I: Traffic Fatalities & Impaired Driving

- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, marijuana related traffic deaths **increased 151 percent** while all Colorado traffic deaths **increased 35 percent**
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana **more than doubled** from 55 in 2013 to 138 people killed in 2017.
  - This equates to one person killed every 2 ½ days compared to one person killed every 6 ½ days.
- The percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths that were marijuana related **increased from 11.43 percent** in 2013 to **21.3 percent** in 2017.

## Section II: Marijuana Use

- Colorado past month marijuana use shows a **45 percent increase** in comparing the three-year average prior to recreational marijuana being legalized to the three years after legalization.
- Colorado past month marijuana use for ages 12 and older is ranked **3<sup>rd</sup>** in the nation and is **85 percent higher** than the national average.

### Section III: Public Health

- The yearly rate of emergency department visits related to marijuana **increased 52 percent** after the legalization of recreational marijuana. (2012 compared to 2016)
- The yearly rate of marijuana-related hospitalizations **increased 148 percent** after the legalization of recreational marijuana. (2012 compared to 2016)
- Marijuana only exposures more than tripled in the five-year average (2013-2017) since Colorado legalized recreational marijuana compared to the five-year average (2008-2012) prior to legalization.

### Section IV: Black Market

- RMHIDTA Colorado Task Forces (10) conducted **144 investigations** of black market marijuana in Colorado resulting in:
  - **239** felony arrests
  - **7.3 tons** of marijuana seized
  - **43,949** marijuana plants seized
  - **24** different states the marijuana was destined
- The number of highway seizures of Colorado marijuana **increased 39 percent** from an average of 242 seizures (2009-2012) to an average of 336 seizures (2013-2017) during the time recreational marijuana has been legal.
- Seizures of Colorado marijuana in the U.S. mail system has **increased 1,042 percent** from an average of 52 parcels (2009-2012) to an average of 594 parcels (2013-2017) during the time recreational marijuana has been legal.

### Section V: Societal Impact

- Marijuana tax revenue represent approximately **nine tenths of one percent** of Colorado's FY 2017 budget.
- Violent crime **increased 18.6 percent** and property crime **increased 8.3 percent** in Colorado since 2013.
- 65 percent of local jurisdictions in Colorado have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.

## Section IV: Marijuana Industry

- **According to the Marijuana Policy Group, *Market Size and Demand for Marijuana in Colorado 2017 Market Update*:**
  - “From 2014 through 2017, average annual adult use flower prices fell 62.0 percent, from \$14.05 to \$5.34 per gram weighted average.”
  - “Adult use concentrate prices fell 47.9 percent, from \$41.43 to \$21.57 per gram.”
  - “The average THC content of all tested flower in 2017 was 19.6 percent statewide compared to 17.4 percent in 2016, 16.6 percent in 2015 and 16.4 percent in 2014.”
  - “The average potency of concentrated extract products increased steadily from 56.6 percent THC content by weight in 2014 to 68.6 percent at the end of 2017.”
- As of June 2017, there were 491 retail marijuana stores in the state of Colorado compared to 392 Starbucks and 208 McDonald’s.