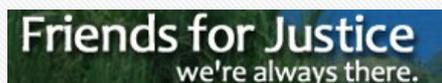


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# America's One Million Legalized Marijuana Users

12:00 pm

By Russ Belville, NORML Outreach Coordinator

**At Least 1 – 1.5 Million Americans are Legal Medical Marijuana Patients**

*Market for these patients in sixteen states and D.C. estimated at between \$2 – \$6 billion annually*

MAY 31, 2011 - We don't know his or her name, but somewhere in one of sixteen states and the District of Columbia is **America's 1,000,000th legal medical marijuana patient**. We estimate the United States reached the million-patients mark sometime between the beginning of the year to when **Arizona began issuing patient registry identification cards online in April 2011**.



Between one to one-and-a-half million people are legally authorized by their state to use marijuana in the United States, according to data compiled by NORML from state medical marijuana registries and patient estimates. Assuming usage of one-half to one gram of cannabis medicine per day per patient and an **average retail price of \$320 per ounce, these legal consumers represent a \$2.3 to \$6.2 billion**

**dollar market annually.**

Based on state medical marijuana laws, the amounts of cannabis these legal marijuana users are entitled to possess means there is between 566 – 803 million pounds of legal usable cannabis in America. These patients are allowed to cultivate between 17 – 24 million legal cannabis plants. There may possibly be more, as California and New Mexico "limits" may be exceeded with doctor's permission and some California counties explicitly allow greater amounts, so **there may be as much as one billion pounds of state-legal cannabis cultivated in America.**

<b>Active Medical Marijuana State</b> (Total population of sixteen medical marijuana states + D.C. = over 90 million. D.C., Delaware, and New Jersey programs are not yet active.)	# Legal Medical Marijuana Patients (% of state population)
<b>California</b> (1996) - No central state registry, 2% – 3% of overall population estimate by Dale Gieringer at California NORML by comparing rates in Colorado & Montana.	<b>~750,000</b> (2.00%)
<b>Washington</b> (1998) - No registry, 1% – 1.5% of overall population estimate by Russ Belville at NORML by comparing rates in Oregon & Colorado.	<b>~1,125,000</b> (3.00%)
<b>Washington</b> (1998) - No registry, 1% – 1.5% of overall population estimate by Russ Belville at NORML by comparing rates in Oregon & Colorado.	<b>~67,000</b> (1.00%)
<b>Oregon</b> (1998) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>~100,000</b> (1.50%)
<b>Oregon</b> (1998) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>39,774</b> (1.04%)
<b>Alaska</b> (1998) - No data online, verified by author's call to Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.	<b>380</b> (0.05%)
<b>Maine</b> (1999) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>796</b> (0.06%)
<b>Nevada</b> (2000) - 2008 figures from ProCon.org, awaiting return call from state for official number.	<b>860</b> (0.03%)
<b>Hawaii</b> (2000) - Estimate from Pam Lichty of Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii; program is run by law enforcement who are reluctant to release data.	<b>~8,000</b> (0.59%)

CONTRIBUTORS

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<b>Colorado</b> (2000) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>123,890</b> (2.46%)
<b>Vermont</b> (2004) - No data online, verified by author's call to Vermont Criminal Information Center.	<b>349</b> (0.06%)
<b>Montana</b> (2004) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>30,609</b> (3.09%)
<b>Rhode Island</b> (2006) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>3,069</b> (0.29%)
<b>New Mexico</b> (2007) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>3,615</b> (0.18%)
<b>Michigan</b> (2008) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>75,521</b> (0.76%)
<b>Arizona</b> (2010) - Centralized state registry data published online.	<b>3,696</b> (0.06%)
	<b>~1,100,000</b> (1.22%)
<b>TOTAL US LEGAL MARIJUANA USERS</b>	<b>~1,500,000</b> (1.67%)

Yet after fifteen years, one million patients, and half-a-billion pounds of legal marijuana, few if any of the dire predictions by opponents of medical marijuana have come to fruition. Medical marijuana states like Oregon are experiencing their **lowest-ever rates of workplace fatalities, injuries, and accidents**. States like Colorado are experiencing their **lowest rates in three decades of fatal crashes per million miles driven**. In **medical marijuana states for which we have data** (through Michigan in 2008), use by minor teenagers is down in all but Maine and down by at least 10% in states with the greatest proportion of their population using medical cannabis.

Medical Marijuana State	Age 12-17 Monthly Use When Passed	Age 12-17 Monthly Use in 2008	Highway Fatalities When Passed	Highway Fatalities in 2009	Workplace Injuries / Illness When Passed	Workplace Injuries / Illness in 2009
<b>California</b> (1996)	7.70%	6.86%	3,989	3,081	7.1%	4.2%
<b>Washington</b> (1996)	9.90%	7.17%	662	492	9.2%	5.3%
<b>Oregon</b> (1998)	9.60%	8.22%	538	377	6.8%	4.5%
<b>Alaska</b> (1998)	10.40%	8.03%	70	64	7.4%	4.6%
<b>Maine</b> (1999)	7.20%	9.06%	181	159	8.8%	5.6%
<b>Nevada</b> (2000)	9.54%	7.52%	323	243	7.2%	4.4%
<b>Hawaii</b> (2000)	8.72%	7.07%	132	109	6.2%	4.2%
<b>Colorado</b> (2000)	10.80%	9.10%	681	465	n/a	n/a
<b>Vermont</b> (2004)	11.11%	10.86%	98	74	5.6%	5.1%
<b>Montana</b> (2004)	10.00%	8.60%	229	221	7.2%	5.3%
<b>Rhode Island</b> (2006)	9.74%	9.46%	81	83	5.2%	n/a
<b>New Mexico</b> (2007)	8.73%	8.19%	413	361	5.0%	4.8%
<b>Michigan</b> (2008)	n/a	7.36%	980	871	4.5%	4.2%

Fourteen of the seventeen medical marijuana jurisdictions have mandatory registries while two (California and Colorado) offer optional registries and one (Washington) has no registry system. Estimating California's patient numbers is hampered by its registry system being on a county-by-county basis. California NORML's Dale Gieringer estimates between 2% – 3% of the state's population are holding medical marijuana recommendations – meaning possibly **over one million medical marijuana patients in California alone.**

California's patient population can be estimated from data from other medical marijuana states where patients are required to register, shown in the table below. The top two of these are Colorado and Montana, which, like California, have a well developed network of cannabis clinics and dispensaries, and which report usage rates of 2.5% and 3.0%, respectively. Other states, where medical marijuana is less developed, report lower rates of 1% and less. However, **California is likely to be on the high side because it has the oldest and most liberal law in the nation.** Significantly, California is the only state that permits marijuana to be used for any condition for which it provides relief – in particular, psychiatric disorders, such as PTSD, bipolar disorder, ADD, anxiety and depression, which account for some 20%-25% of the total patient population. Adjusting for this, usage in California could be as much as 25% to 33% higher than in Colorado and Montana, which would put it well over 3% of the population (1,125,000).

A 2%+ patient population estimate is supported by data from the **Oakland Patient ID Center**, which has been issuing patient identification cards to its members since 1996. The OPIDC serves patients from all over the state, but especially the greater Oakland-East Bay area of Northern California, where its cards are honored by law enforcement. As of 2010, the OPIDC had issued ID's to 19,805 members from five East Bay cities (**Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Hayward and Richmond**), **amounting to 2.4% of the local population.** Because the cards were issued over a period of 14 years, they include numerous patients who have lapsed, moved, or deceased. On the other hand, they do not include many other local patients who have current recommendations but never registered with the OPIDC.

We have made a similar estimate for Washington State's patients, who are the only ones in the nation with no registry system in place (Gov. Gregoire recently signed a bill that initiates a voluntary registry). With a law very similar to Oregon's concerning qualifying conditions, **applying Oregon's 1.04% patient population figure gives us about 69,000 patients in Washington.** However, Washington State's larger urban centers (Seattle and Spokane), combined with a more liberal law than Oregon's regarding who can sign recommendations (osteopaths, naturopaths, and nurse practitioners can recommend in Washington) and the lack of a state registry's burden to patient compliance with the program suggests a higher estimate of 1.5% – 2% may be appropriate. Numbers like Colorado's 2.5% and Montana's 3% are improbable as Washington lacks the greater patient access to dispensaries seen in those states.

Delaware, New Jersey, and D.C.'s programs are not operational yet, so they are not shown in our data table. Most of the other state's programs produce reports of patient registry numbers. With Arizona signing up over 3,600 patients since mid-April, when it's online-only registration went into effect, **Arizona is on track to register over 30,000 patients this year.**

#### **Quick Facts about Medical Marijuana States:**

- The 1.1 – 1.5 million estimated and registered medical marijuana patients in America are legally entitled to cultivate 17 – 24 million cannabis plants and possess 283 – 402 tons of harvested buds.
- The seventeen jurisdictions with medical marijuana encompass over 90 million Americans and 162 votes in the **2012 Electoral College.**
- Patients make up over 3% of the population of Montana, almost 2.5% of Colorado, over 2% of California, and over 1% of Oregon, and Washington.
- After Michigan at 0.76% of population, every other medical marijuana state has less than 3 in 1,000 (0.3%) patients in its population.
- California, Colorado, Washington, Michigan, Oregon, and Montana comprise over 98% of the legal medical marijuana patients in America.
- More than 3 out of 4 (77% – 83%) of all medical marijuana patients live on the West Coast.

- Rhode Island and Vermont, two states where over 10% of the adult population uses marijuana monthly, have patient populations of 0.29% and 0.05%, respectively.
- Monthly teen use of marijuana is down in every medical marijuana state except Maine.
- Annual highway fatalities are down in every medical marijuana state except Rhode Island.
- Incidents of workplace injuries and illnesses are down in every medical marijuana state.

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man, I hope it was me 😊 Legal in AZ and fightin to stay that way folks!! Show us some love!!!

- *Anonymous*

Petition to “Change the Schedule of Cannabis, Cannabis Laws, and Drug Czar Laws”. Read and sign the petition at

<http://www.change.org/petitions/change-the-schedule-of-cannabis-cannabis-laws-and-drug-czar-laws>

You can easily recruit signatures by sending emails to your friendlies, sharing on facebook, or sending a tweet from the petition page on change.org

- *Grampa*

My guess is that for every medical marijuana user there are around 85 to 110 recreational users that are at risk of being locked up if caught... In spite of this, the world has not come to an end, and crime (other than the black market for said product) has not gone up dramatically! Isn't it time we stopped busting people for something that is an amazingly safe alternative to alcohol???

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