Cannabis/Marijuana is Not a Gateway Drug

According to Psychology Today “science shows overwhelmingly that for most people, cannabis is not a gateway drug.” Actually the reverse is true. The main gateway to drug addiction is the mental state of the user including escape of reality and problems.\(^1\) The RAND Corporation found in a national study that the use of cocaine dropped 50 percent as cannabis use increased 30 percent.\(^2\)

Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) data discovered that cannabis use among youths declined after legalization (December 2012) among 8th and 10th graders. “The new study found that the prevalence of marijuana use generally fell among Washington adolescents during 2014 and 2016 as compared to 2010 and 2012. Among 10th graders, use fell from 19.8 percent to 17.8 percent.”\(^3\)

In January 2012, the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) asked RAND to generate national estimates regarding users, total expenditures, and total consumption regarding four illicit drugs from 2000 to 2010: cocaine (including crack), heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. Drug users in the United States spent an estimated $100 billion annually on these drugs (in 2010 dollars). From 2006 to 2010, an estimated amount of cannabis consumption increased more than 30 percent, while the amount of cocaine consumed in the United States decreased by approximately 50 percent. These figures are consistent with supply-side indicators, such as seizures and production estimates.\(^4\)

According to the Cato Institute, North Carolina spent ~ $263.3 million in state and local dollars to enforce cannabis laws in 2016.\(^5\) However, “a large national sample of arrestees that testing positive for illegal drug use [cannabis, cocaine, or opiate] is negatively associated with aggressive crime and that, in contrast, self-reported use of alcohol has strong and robust positive effects.”\(^6\) These results raise significant questions about the merits of policies focused on criminalizing cannabis use.

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