



MARIJUANA PREVENTION AMONG HISPANIC AND LATINO ADULTS

July, 2022

OVERVIEW OF ADULT MARIJUANA USE IN THE UNITED STATES

Across the United States, marijuana is one of the most used substances. About 48.2 million Americans (18% of the US population), reported marijuana use at least once in 2019.¹ It is estimated that about thirty percent of those who use marijuana have a marijuana use disorder.

One of the largest and fastest growing subpopulations in the United States is the Hispanic and Latino community, which represents 18.7% of the U.S. population, or about 62 million people.² This number is projected to grow to 28.6%, or 119 million people, by the year 2060.³ As one of the United States' largest subpopulations, it is important to understand how the impact of marijuana use differs from that of the general population. When looking at marijuana-use data by race and ethnicity, there is not a statistically significant difference in use. In 2015, African American and Hispanic and Latino individuals reported slightly lower lifetime use and slightly higher past year and past month use than their White counterparts.⁴ Unfortunately, there is not a wealth of data available by race and ethnicity, making it difficult to adequately measure the prevalence of this issue in communities of color.

WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

Contrary to widely held belief, marijuana use is detrimental to the development of the human brain, is addictive, and contributes to lack of motivation. Marijuana use directly affects the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision-making, and emotion.¹ Research has also shown that long term use may be associated with mental illness, including schizophrenia.¹ Withdrawal symptoms of marijuana include irritability, anxiety, respiratory challenges, and cognitive issues such as confusion, memory loss, and thinking difficulties.

HOW DOES MARIJUANA USE IMPACT HISPANIC AND LATINO COMMUNITIES?

The "War on Drugs" in the U.S. has contributed to the over-criminalization of people of color, and the mass incarceration of the Hispanic and Latino population. Due to the implementation of racially motivated policies and legislation, 50% of federal drug charges occur among those of Hispanic and Latino ethnicity.⁵ The "War on Drugs" has also contributed to barriers in successfully maintaining legal U.S.

residency status, as marijuana possession accounts for the 4th highest cause of deportation.

Beyond the justice system, the Hispanic and Latino community has also experienced poor health outcomes due to the impacts of the "War on Drugs." According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 7.0% (2.9 million) of Hispanic and Latino adults aged 18 and older, experienced a substance use disorder.⁶ According to this same survey, marijuana use increased in Hispanic and Latino adults ages 26 years and older between 2016 and 2019.⁶ Across all age groups, more than 4.5 million Hispanic and Latino individuals reported the use of marijuana in the past thirty days prior to the survey.⁶

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN HISPANIC AND LATINO COMMUNITIES

According to Healthy People 2030, the social determinants of health are "the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."⁷ Some ways in which the social determinants of health show up in the issue of substance misuse among the Hispanic and Latino community include a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate treatment options for both mental health and substance use and discriminatory treatment of the Hispanic and Latino community.³

Even when treatment is available, Hispanic and Latino individuals often wait longer to access treatment than their non-Hispanic and non-Latino counterparts.⁸

HOW DOES SUBSTANCE USE RELATE TO MENTAL HEALTH?

According to American Addiction Centers, more than 8 million Americans report that they suffer from both mental health issues and substance use disorder.⁹ This report also states that individuals use substances to treat other symptoms of mental illness. For example, alcohol may be used to treat stress and anxiety.⁹ While there are many drugs that individuals may use to address mental illness, the most commonly used substances to meet this need are marijuana, heroin, and alcohol.⁹ While community stigma may inhibit discussion around this issue, mental illness and substance use do impact the Hispanic and Latino community.

References

1. [Marijuana and Public Health](#)
2. [US Census data](#)
3. [Latinx/Hispanic Communities and Mental Health](#)
4. [Prevalence of Marijuana Use in the US by Race/Ethnicity](#)
5. [Latinx and the War on Drugs ~ Drug Policy Alliance](#)
6. [2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Hispanic SAMSHA](#)



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According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 3.4% of Hispanic and Latino adults (1.4 million), experienced both substance use disorder and mental illness.⁶ Hispanic and Latino individuals with mental illness use substances at greater rates, including marijuana.³

HOW TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS TO CREATE HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES?

Targeted strategies and interventions have the potential to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors, just like other mental disorders. One way this can be done is through partnerships with religious and community organizations.⁸ Many times these institutions are trusted in the community and can provide support and services that may be difficult to access. While there are many universal risk factors associated with substance misuse, there are also risk factors specific to the Hispanic and Latino community. While many risk factors have been identified specifically for youth, some of those same risk factors may be applied to adults.

For example, a lack of community or family cohesiveness and a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services may also put Hispanic and Latino adults at a higher risk for marijuana use, just as they may for youth.

While there is often discussion surrounding the risk factors associated with marijuana use, there are also protective factors that help to prevent marijuana use among Hispanic and Latino individuals. The strength of the family unit, including the extended family, also known as Familismo, can become a preventive network of safety and support. The family unit can help create “social and environmental” systems to establish and reinforce positive support.¹⁰ Other cultural values, such as respeto, can be used to encourage attitudes that are protective against substance use.¹ Faith is also a strong protective factor against substance use in the Hispanic and Latino community.¹¹

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[SAMHSA](#)

[Drug Enforcement Administration](#)

[PTTC Network](#)

Click here to visit our website to access more information

[National Hispanic and Latino Prevention Technology Transfer Center](#)

Also, you can visit the following websites for additional information.

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365)
Treatment Referral Information Service
in English and Español)
Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll Free: 1-800-985-5990 (español e inglés)
Text in Spanish: Envíe “Háblanos” al 66746
Text in English: “TalkWithUs” al 66746
(TTY): 1-800-846-8517
English:
<http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>
Spanish:
<https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll Free: 1-888-628-9454
English: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
(TTY): 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)
Spanish:
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol/>
English:
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator Sitio

Web: <https://findtreatment.gov>

Marijuana Anonymous

<https://marijuana-anonymous.org/find-a-meeting/>

References

7. [Healthy People 2030](#)
8. [Alcohol & Drug Abuse Among the Hispanic Population](#)
9. [The Intersection of Mental Health and Substance Abuse](#)
10. [Hispanic and Latino Youth and Marijuana](#)
11. [Mobilizing the Hispano/Latino Faith Community in Substance Abuse Prevention](#)

National Latino Behavioral Health Association **NLBHA**

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration