

MARIJUANA (CANNABIS)

Use

Fifteen percent of Toronto adults responding to the 2003 CAMH Monitor reported marijuana, or cannabis, use within the past year. This finding is close to the highest reported level on record, 17% in 1984.²

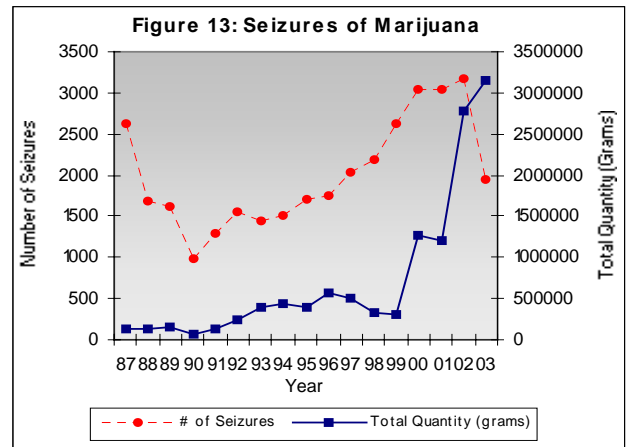
According to the most recent OSDUS survey, 23% of students reported past year cannabis use. This is not statistically significantly different from the 22% found in the previous year, however, it is higher than rates found in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁷ In fact, the 2003 rate is the highest on record since 1977, when data collection began.

Marijuana and alcohol are clearly the most popular drugs used by street youth. According to the March, 2004 survey from Youthlink, 84% and 83% respectively of these youth report marijuana and alcohol use at least monthly.⁷⁷ Looking at the SHOUT clinic street youth study from 1999, 31% of over three hundred subjects interviewed reported daily marijuana use, while 18% reported use several times per week.⁷⁸

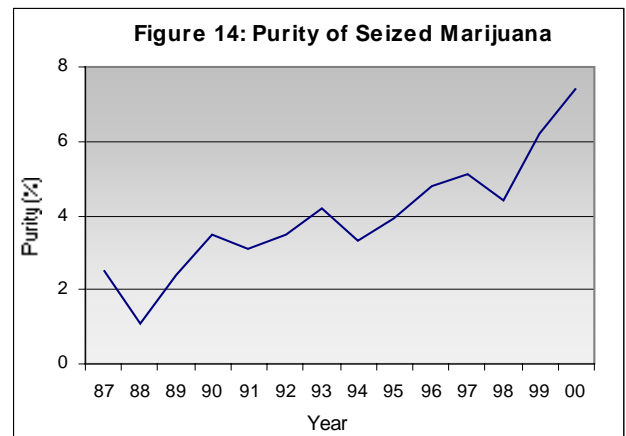
Enforcement Data

The number of marijuana seizures in Toronto increased between 1996 and 2002 to just over 3,100 seizures, but decreased in 2003 to 1,947. Marijuana accounted for 43% of all drug seizures in 2003.

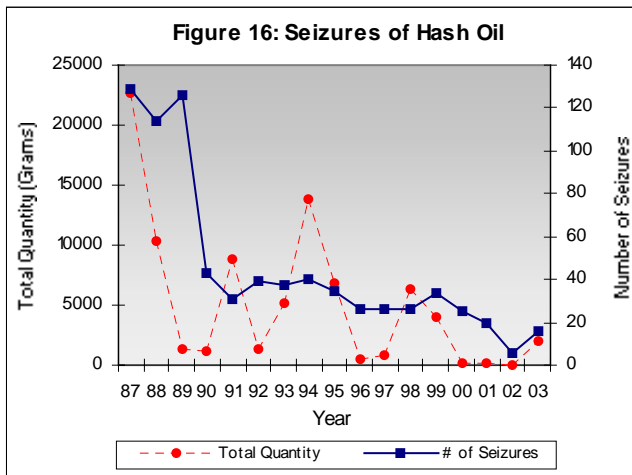
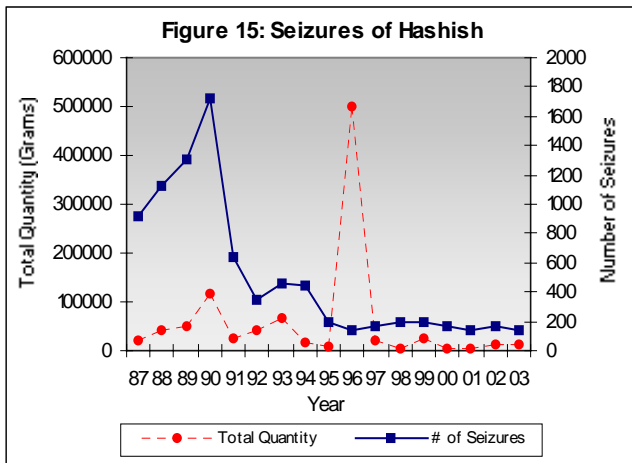
Although the number of seizures declined in 2003, the total quantity of marijuana seized increased substantially compared to 2002 (3,149 kg vs. 2,770 kg, respectively). In fact, the total quantity of marijuana seized in 2003 is the largest since data collection began in 1987. This is likely attributable to a small number of very large seizures during last year. Nonetheless, there has been a generally increasing trend in both the numbers of marijuana seizures and quantities seized since the early 1990s.



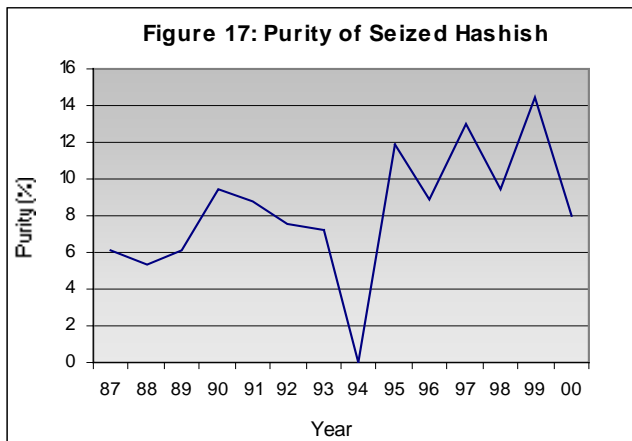
On average, the purity of marijuana seized in 2000 did not change substantially from 1999 levels (7.4% vs. 6.2%, respectively). However, it should be noted that the 2000 estimate is the highest purity level on record.



The numbers of seizures of both hash and hash oil have been on a general decline since 1995. In 2003, hash seizures accounted for about 3% of all drug enforcement activity, while hash oil seizures accounted for less than 1%. The quantity of hash seized in 2003 increased slightly compared to 2002 (13 kg vs. 11 kg, respectively). However, there was a large spike in the quantity of hash oil seized in 2003 (about 2 kg compared to 64 grams in 2002). Overall, the amounts of hash and hash oil seized have fluctuated dramatically over the past decade. These appear in the figures on the next page.



On average, the purity of hash seized in 2000 was about 8%, a slight decrease from the 1999 estimate of 12%. In 2000, the average purity level of tested samples of seized hash oil was 23.3%.



From Earlywine. Mitch and Bruce Mirken, Drug Sense Weekly, "THE POTENT POT MYTH," July, 2004, www.alternet.org

"Recently the media have repeated dire warnings about alleged "Super pot" in an attempt to frighten parents who may have dabbled in their day; the [U.S.] government claims that new strains of potent marijuana are far more dangerous than the innocuous grass of the 1960s or 70s.

Many media reports repeat these claims uncritically. For example, a July 19, [2004] Reuters story warned, 'Pot is no longer the gentle weed of the 1960s and may pose a greater threat than cocaine or even heroin.

Such claims are utter nonsense, and may create more harm than good.

First, high potency marijuana has always existed. The average potency has increased slightly, but only because higher potency marijuana has become a little more common. It is not a new phenomenon.

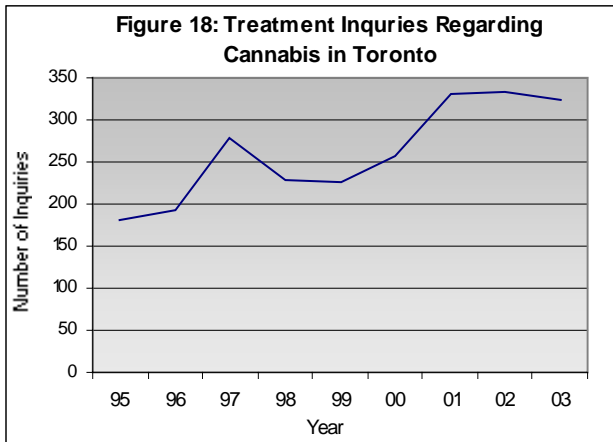
Second, there is precisely zero evidence that marijuana with a higher level of THC is more dangerous. Indeed, a close look at the news accounts shows that official warnings about 'super pot' often accompany claims based upon speculation piled on top of conjecture.

To put this into perspective, the average potency of marijuana that has fuelled this fire is seven percent THC. This is the marijuana that White House Drug Czar John Walters warns is horribly dangerous because of its super-strength. In contrast, Dutch government standards require medical marijuana sold in pharmacies in the Netherlands to be twice that strong. According to the U.S. government's own statistics, most teens in marijuana treatment are there because they were arrested, not because of actual evidence of abuse or dependence."

Treatment Data

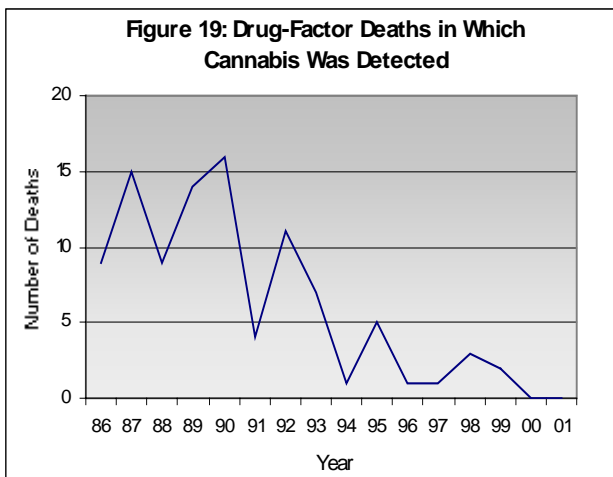
The percentage of treatment inquiries regarding problematic marijuana use remained steady in Toronto over the past two years. For the periods

1999-2000 and 2000-2001, 9% and 10% of total inquiries respectively concerned cannabis. This compares with a figure of 10% of treatment inquiries in 1998-1999. Outside of Toronto, requests for marijuana treatment represented 12% of all calls, slightly fewer than those in the recent past.



D Drug-Related Deaths

Cannabis is generally not considered a lethal drug. Previous editions of Drug Use in Toronto showed a total of 49 drug-related deaths between 1986 and 1998 in Toronto in which cannabis was determined to be present, however, cannabis was not the sole cause of death in any of these cases. Two additional drug-related deaths with positive findings for cannabis occurred in the period 1999-2001; in both of these cases, cannabis was excluded as a cause of death.



From www.arrivealive.vi.gov.au, a website of the Australian government:

The legislation enabling Victoria police to test drivers for the recent consumption of THC (the active component of cannabis) and methamphetamine (speed) was passed in December, 2003.

Any driver in Victoria may be required to undertake a saliva test for the recent consumption of THC and methamphetamine. In the same way that tests for drunk driving are random, drug driving tests are random and target all motorists on Victoria roads.

Drug driving is a major cause of road deaths in Victoria. In 2003, 31% of drivers killed in Victoria tested positive to drugs other than alcohol.

For more information on Marijuana in this report, see also:

- **Update on Marijuana Legislation, and**
- **Driving under the Influence of Marijuana and Other Drugs**