

Controlling cannabis will protect young people



We all want our young people to be **healthy**, to thrive, and to **not use harmful drugs**.

But realistically, many young people will experiment at some point in their lives. Around a third of high school students have used cannabis once by the time they leave school.

Luckily, most suffer no harm from this. Those whose drug use does lead to harm need help and compassion, not a conviction they will carry for the rest of their life.



high school students have used cannabis at least once by the time they leave school

Source: Youth 2000 series

Legalising cannabis can lead to **decreased use** by young people

The most authoritative research on legalisation and its effect on young people comes from a recent meta-analysis of 1.4 million US high school students. This showed legalising cannabis led to an 8% decrease in the likelihood they had used cannabis in the past 30 days, and a 9% decrease in frequent cannabis use.

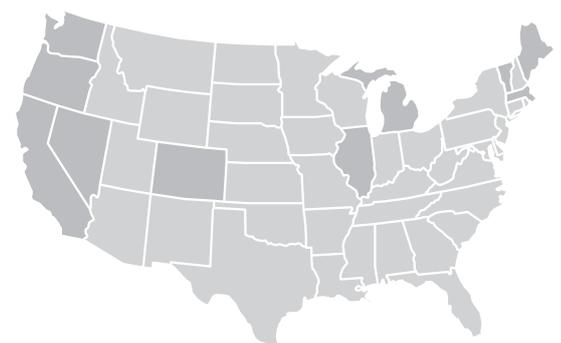
It's not 100% clear what has caused this decrease in cannabis use but the most likely reasons are that it's harder for young people to access cannabis in a legal market, or legalisation may have been accompanied by an increase in education campaigns targeting young people. Some US commentators have suggested that cannabis becomes less 'cool' when it's legal.

Whatever the reason, it's very unlikely that youth use rates will go up as a result of legal regulation in New Zealand, especially if we regulate to ensure this doesn't happen.

Early reports of legal cannabis increasing youth use were **incorrect**

Some news organisations previously reported cannabis legalisation causes more young people to use it.

While some early data out of Washington State found an increase in use in young people, more recent findings indicate rates have declined post legalisation.



In US states where cannabis has been legalised, youth are



Source: Anderson et al. (2019) JAMA Pediatrics

Responsible regulations can help to protect young people from harm



WE CAN:

Limit access to young people

Young people under 20 will not be able to enter cannabis retail stores or buy products.



Require child-proof packaging and information

And put health warnings on packs.



Collect taxes

That will be put toward better health care for young people and others who struggle with their drug use.



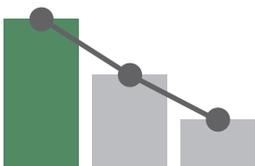
Set minimum pricing

To help limit consumption by young people.



Prohibit advertising

And the development of products that might appeal more to young people, such as confectionary.



Set portion size and potency levels

So that young people who do use despite the law know how much is too much.

The Government have already proposed **regulations** that will help **protect** young people from **cannabis harm**.

A draft Bill indicating what we will be voting on in the referendum will be released in 2020. A Cabinet paper released in May 2019 sets out a framework for the regulations.