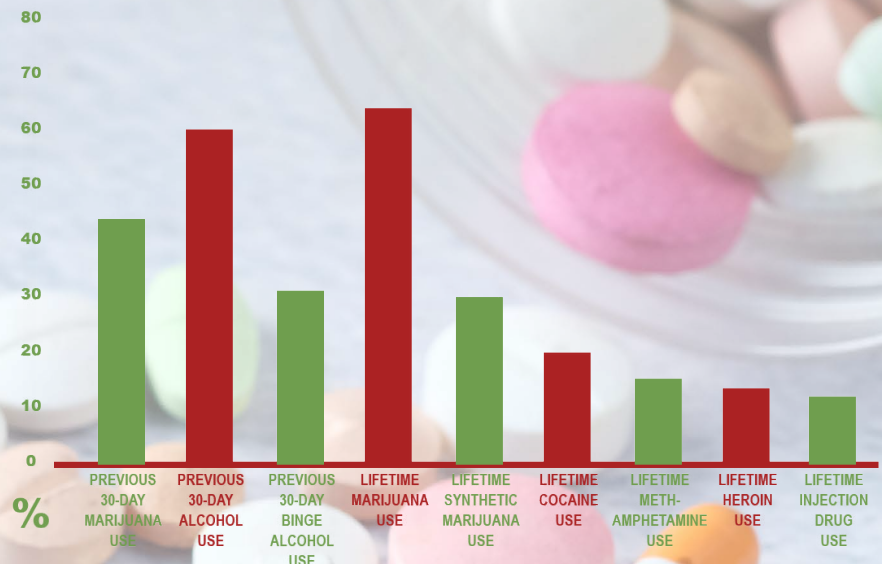


# Marijuana is the #1 Gateway Drug

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in their 2019 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, the #1 predictor that teens have abused opioids in the past 30 days is whether they *have ever used marijuana* in their lifetimes — it's an even better indicator than previous 30-day alcohol use. In other words, using marijuana leads to teen opioid abuse more than any other drug.

Because of this, we see that increased marijuana use contributes to the current opioid crisis. In another study:



In 2010, there were about **20,000** overdose deaths involving opioids.

In 2021, there were over **80,000** overdose deaths involving opioids.

Marijuana being a gateway drug doesn't mean if you use it, you'll definitely use harder drugs as well. But people who are using harder drugs most likely started with marijuana—that's what a gateway means. If you went to a party and had never used any substances before, and a friend suggested you shoot up with heroin, would you? Of course not! But if you have been using marijuana and your tolerance has built up so much you can't get the same high as before, you are more likely to move on to a harder substance.

Research: [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm)  
[www.nida.nih.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics-overdose-death-rates](http://www.nida.nih.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics-overdose-death-rates)

**QUESTION:** Looking at these two studies, how do you think the legalization of marijuana has contributed to the opioid epidemic?

REFLECT

