

In states where marijuana is “legal,” retail and medical licenses outnumber popular food chains. For example, in Colorado, marijuana retail locations outnumber all McDonald’s and Starbucks locations in the state combined (MJBiz Daily, 2019). In 2019, there were 1,016 registered retail and medical locations combined (Colorado Department of Revenue, 2020) compared with 392 Starbucks and 208 McDonald’s (as of 2018). The sheer commonplace numbers of these stores promote and normalize marijuana use.

Adding to the danger of marijuana commercialization is the increasing market demand for high-potency products created by the combination of aggressive promotion and ever-increasing tolerance by heavy users. With innovation, the industry responded to meet the demand it had created, modifying marijuana to increase its potency. The commonly conceived “Woodstock weed” had only 1–3% THC, the psychoactive intoxicant responsible for the high. According to recent studies, today’s average marijuana flower—touted by industry advocates as a harmless plant—contains around 17.1% THC, though independent studies in “legal” states found the percentage to be even higher. Concentrates and edibles pack a more potent punch, containing an average of 55.7% THC (Chandra et al., 2019). But these products can be even more potent than that. Many marijuana retailers promote, and profit from, products containing up to 95–99% THC (Prince & Conner, 2019).

Not Only Potency, But Consumption Levels: What Do Users Look Like Today?



(Caulkins, 2018)

The change in marijuana potency today (daily users) versus 20 years ago (average weekend user) is akin to the caffeine change from one 20 oz cola a day, to thirty-three 16 oz cappuccinos a day.

- Reference: <https://learnaboutsam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-Impact-Report1.pdf>

2020-Impact-Report1 Lessons Learned from State Marijuana Legalization 2020-21

Smart Approaches to Marijuana

- **My Comment:** the graphic only addresses the change in consumption and potency levels of THC in the past decades, but it does not address the very real difference between caffeine's effect on the body and brain, as opposed to THC's effect. THC is a psychoactive (mind-altering) drug, which can impact mental health and cause psychotic symptoms such as schizophrenia. It is also more impactful for the developing brain in those under 26 years old.