



Working to Reform Marijuana Laws

Racial Disparity In Marijuana Arrests

African Americans are arrested for violating marijuana possession laws at nearly four times the rates of whites, yet both ethnicities consume marijuana at roughly the same rates.

Specifically, the The American Civil Liberties Union report *The War on Marijuana In Black and White (2013)* concluded: "[O]n average, a Black person is 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person, even though Blacks and whites use marijuana at similar rates. Such racial disparities in marijuana possession arrests exist in all regions of the country, in counties large and small, urban and rural, wealthy and poor, and with large and small Black populations. Indeed, in over 96% of counties with more than 30,000 people in which at least 2% of the residents are Black, Blacks are arrested at higher rates than whites for marijuana possession."

A 2018 analysis of marijuana possession arrest data in Alabama for the years 2012-2016 reported, "black people were approximately four times as likely as white people to be arrested for marijuana possession (both misdemeanors and felonies) in 2016 – and five times as likely to be arrested for felony possession. These racial disparities exist[ed] despite robust evidence that white and black people use marijuana at roughly the same rate."

Alabama's War on Marijuana, 2018

A 2018 analysis of marijuana possession arrest data in Louisiana for the year 2016 reported "large racial disparities in arrest rates across the state that would be difficult to explain by different rates of crime commission alone. For example, in 2016, black people were 2.9 times as likely as white people to be arrested for marijuana possession in Louisiana, despite evidence that black people and white people use marijuana at similar rates. The disparities are much greater in some areas: A black person was six times as likely as a white person to be arrested by the Baton Rouge Police Department (BRPD) for marijuana possession in 2016."

Racial Profiling in Louisiana: Unconstitutional and Counterproductive, 2018

A 2017 analysis of low-level marijuana arrest data for the city of Buffalo for the years 2012 to 2016 reported that 86 percent of those arrested were people of color, but that African Americans and Hispanics constituted less than 50 percent of the city's population. In Erie county, African Americans comprised 71 percent of low level marijuana arrests, but only 13.5 percent of the population.

Partnership for the Public Good, Advancing Racial Equity and Public Health: Smarter Marijuana Laws in Western New York, 2017

A 2017 analysis of Pennsylvania arrest data found that Black adults were 8.2 times more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested for possessing marijuana – up from 6.5 percent in 2010.

American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, Cannabis Crackdown, 2017

A 2017 analysis of New York City arrest data found that Blacks and Latinos comprised 86 percent of those arrested for marijuana possession violations during the years 2014 to 2016.

Drug Policy Alliance, 60,000 Jim Crow Marijuana Arrests in Mayor de Blasio's New York, 2017

A 2017 analysis of New Jersey arrest data found that African Americans are three times more likely than whites to be arrested for violating marijuana possession laws.

The American Civil Liberties Union, Unequal & Unfair: NJ's War on Marijuana Users, 2017



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A 2017 analysis of Virginia arrest data determined that African Americans are three times as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession as compared to whites and that this disparity is increasing.
Capital News Service, The numbers behind racial disparities in marijuana arrests across Virginia

An analysis of Maryland arrest data determined that African Americans accounted for 58 percent of all marijuana possession arrested despite comprising only 30 percent of the state's population.
The American Civil Liberties Union, The Maryland War on Marijuana in Black and White, 2013

A 2016 analysis of California arrest figures concluded that police arrested blacks for marijuana offenses at three and half times the rate of whites.
Drug Policy Alliance, Nearly 500,000 Californians Arrested for Marijuana in Last Decade, 2016

Prior to the enactment of legalization, Colorado police arrested blacks for marijuana possession at 3.1 times the rate of whites.
Drug Policy Alliance, Marijuana Possession Arrests in Colorado: 1986-2010, 2012

Prior to the enactment of legalization, Washington police arrested blacks for marijuana possession at 2.9 times the rate of whites.
Drug Policy Alliance, Costs, Consequences, and Racial Disparities of Possession Arrests in Washington, 1986-2010, 2012

Prior to the enactment of decriminalization, an analysis of marijuana possession arrest data in Chicago by reported that the ratio of black to white arrests for cannabis possession violations is 15 to 1.
Chicago Reader, The Grass Gap

Prior to the enactment of a Washington, DC voter-initiated law depenalizing minor marijuana possession crimes, African Americans were eight times as likely as whites to be arrested for marijuana-related crimes.
Washington City Paper, Crime states show DC leads nation in per capita marijuana arrests