

Question 4 Myths and Facts

MYTH: Legalizing marijuana will make minors more likely to try it.

FACT: The number of teens who tried marijuana for the first time in Colorado has not increased since the legalization of marijuana in 2012.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health, teen rates of marijuana use [remain unchanged](#) since 2012. Similarly, since Massachusetts decriminalized possession of an ounce or less of marijuana in 2008, marijuana use among [high school students is down](#).

MYTH: Legal marijuana providers will market to minors.

FACT: Question 4 forbids marketing to minors. It requires restrictions on marketing and packaging that will stop marijuana-based products from being designed to appeal to kids.

Currently in Massachusetts there are *no* restrictions on how marijuana products are marketed or packaged on the black market. Question 4 will establish a regulated market in which marijuana products are marketed and packaged for adults only. The initiative forbids marketing towards children.

MYTH: Marijuana is a gateway to hard drugs.

FACT: Most marijuana users do not proceed to harder drugs. [Individual and environmental factors](#), not preceding use of a specific drug, determine if someone will proceed to harder drugs.

There is no direct cause-and-effect relationship between the use of marijuana and the use of other drugs. However, purchasing marijuana *illegally* does put buyers in contact with drug dealers, many of whom also sell hard drugs. By obtaining marijuana *legally* from a regulated, controlled, safe provider, a buyer in Massachusetts won't be exposed to hard drugs at all.

MYTH: The initiative will create "Big Marijuana" which will market to children like "Big Tobacco" has in the past.

FACT: The government failed to control Big Tobacco early on because it wasn't regulated enough, just like the massive black market for marijuana isn't regulated now. Question 4 will ensure that the marijuana market is closely regulated, providing control and accountability.

The current underground market for marijuana brings in a lot of money and creates powerful players, none of which we regulate. That's a recipe for disaster, whether we're talking about tobacco or marijuana. Question 4 allows us to control marijuana use the same way that we control tobacco use: by creating a regulated market in which revenues go toward education and prevention. Control and accountability place limits on businesses, and Question 4 creates just this type of system, paving the way for a safe and regulated industry.

MYTH: There's no money to enact Question 4, so it will just be an expensive burden on Massachusetts.

FACT: Question 4 will easily pay for itself. Last year, after accounting for expenses related to their regulatory system, Colorado still had [\\$100 million](#) dollars to spend on their schools, roads, and social services.

The legislature will determine how tax revenue will be used in Massachusetts. Question 4 also creates a Cannabis Control Commission which will be charged with making recommendations to the legislature about changes in the tax rate for marijuana sales.

MYTH: No one in Massachusetts is being arrested for possession of marijuana anymore, so Question 4 is pointless.

FACT: In 2014, 616 people were arrested for possession of marijuana in Massachusetts. Black people are arrested at three times the rate of whites even though rates of marijuana use are the same across races.

Black people are arrested at 3.3 times the rate of white people overall, and in some counties, they are arrested at more than *10 times* the rate of white people. Youth are also disproportionately targeted, representing 14% of the adult population but 63% of those arrested for marijuana possession.

Even when marijuana arrests don't lead to incarceration, they create barriers to employment, housing, and education. Question 4 will mean less people in handcuffs, less criminal records, and stronger communities.

MYTH: Young people of color are still being arrested for possession of marijuana at a higher rate than young white people in Colorado, so legalization for adults will just lead to more racial discrimination among youth in Massachusetts.

FACT: The problem in Colorado is that possession of marijuana remains a crime for people under 21. Question 4 will not criminalize possession of marijuana for young people in Massachusetts, so neither youth of color nor white youth will be arrested for this civil offense.

Legalization in Massachusetts won't work the same way as in Colorado because we have learned from observing them. In our state, young people who possess marijuana will continue to be punished by a civil citation and parental notification, allowing families to handle disciplinary matters instead of the government. Voting yes on Question 4 is the first step to dismantling the racist policies of the War on Drugs and creating a criminal justice system that works for all of us.

MYTH: Legalizing marijuana will make the increasingly fatal opioid epidemic even worse.

FACT: Rates of fatal opioid overdoses have been significantly lower in states in which medical marijuana is legally available, suggesting that marijuana will reduce opioid overdoses in Massachusetts.

Marijuana can help people avoid addiction to other, more harmful substances, both in terms of medical and recreational use. By voting yes on Question 4, you are pushing back against the rising tide of opioid-related deaths.

MYTH: People who really need marijuana for medical reasons can already obtain it, so voting yes on Question 4 will only benefit "druggies."

FACT: Many patients who need medical marijuana still don't have safe, legal access to their medicine because there are currently only eight dispensaries in the state, and not all are accessible to people with disabilities.

While driving to a faraway dispensary is an option for some patients, many have difficulty traveling because of their symptoms, medication side effects, and need for accessible accommodations. Voting yes on Question 4 will help build more dispensaries so that these patients can finally have safe, legal, reliable access to the medication that they need to live a normal life.