

Marijuana, Alcohol, and Violence

Advocates of preventing domestic and sexual violence should support ending marijuana prohibition because it would provide adults with a safer alternative to alcohol.

Alcohol use contributes to aggressive and violent behavior. Marijuana use does not. Studies have repeatedly shown that alcohol, unlike marijuana, contributes to the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior. According to research published in the journal, *Addictive Behaviors*, "Alcohol is clearly the drug with the most evidence to support a direct intoxication-violence relationship," whereas, "Cannabis reduces the likelihood of violence during intoxication."¹ Investigators at the Research Institute on Addictions also reported, "The use of alcohol... was associated with significant increases in the daily likelihood of male-to-female physical aggression," whereas the use of marijuana was "not significantly associated with an increased likelihood of male partner violence."²

Alcohol use is a major factor in violent crimes. Marijuana use is not. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 25% to 30% of violent crimes in the U.S. are linked to the use of alcohol.³ According to a report from the U.S. Department of Justice, that translates to nearly 5,000,000 alcohol-related violent crimes per year.⁴ By contrast, the government does not even track violent acts specifically related to marijuana use, as the use of marijuana has not been associated with violence.

Alcohol use contributes to the likelihood of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Marijuana use does not. Alcohol is a major contributing factor in the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault. This is not to say that alcohol causes these problems; rather, its use makes it more likely that an individual prone to such behavior will act on it.⁵ Specifically, the odds of abuse were eight times higher on days when men were drinking; the odds of severe abuse were 11 times higher. The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network' (RAINN) webpage dedicated to educating the public about "Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault" highlights alcohol as the "most commonly used chemical in crimes of sexual assault" and provides information on an array of other drugs that have been linked to sexual violence.⁶ The word "marijuana" does not appear anywhere on the page.

¹ Hoaken, P. & Stewart, S. (2003). Drugs of abuse and the elicitation of human aggressive behavior. *Addictive Behaviors* 28, 1533-1554.

² Fals-Stewart, F., Golden, J., & Schumacher, J. (2003). Intimate partner violence and substance use: A longitudinal day-to-day examination. *Addictive Behaviors* 28, 1555-1574.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *10th Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health*.

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2010). *Alcohol and Crime: Data from 2002 to 2008*. Washington, D.C.: Rand, M., Sabol, J., Sinclair, M., & Snyder, H.

⁵ Fals-Stewart, F., Golden, J., & Schumacher, J. (2003). Intimate partner violence and substance use: A longitudinal day-to-day examination. *Addictive Behaviors* 28, 1555-1574.

⁶ Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network. *Drug Facilitated Sexual Violence*. Retrieved August 21, 2014, from <https://rainn.org/get-information/types-of-sexual-assault/drug-facilitated-assault>