



College Students' Perceptions and Use of Marijuana



Significance of Problem

- Marijuana is the most prevalent illicit drug used on college campuses (Johnston, O' Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012)
- Marijuana use has been increasing in recent years with young adults often initiating use during college (Suerken et al., 2014)
- Students who do not attend college are more likely to initiate use of marijuana in high school while students who attend college are more likely to initiate use during those years (Suerken et al., 2014)
- Marijuana use is associated with high risk behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes and increased use of alcohol (Caldeira et al., 2008)
- 19.4% of college students reported marijuana use within the last 30 days (Suerken et al., 2014)
- Consequences associated with marijuana use include enrollment disruptions and lower college completion rates (Fergusson & Boden, 2008)

Purpose

The main objectives of this study were to:

- Assess patterns of marijuana use among undergraduate students
- Assess perceptions of recreational and medicinal use of marijuana
- Identify aspects that are associated with marijuana use on the college campus
- Compare findings with those reported in the literature



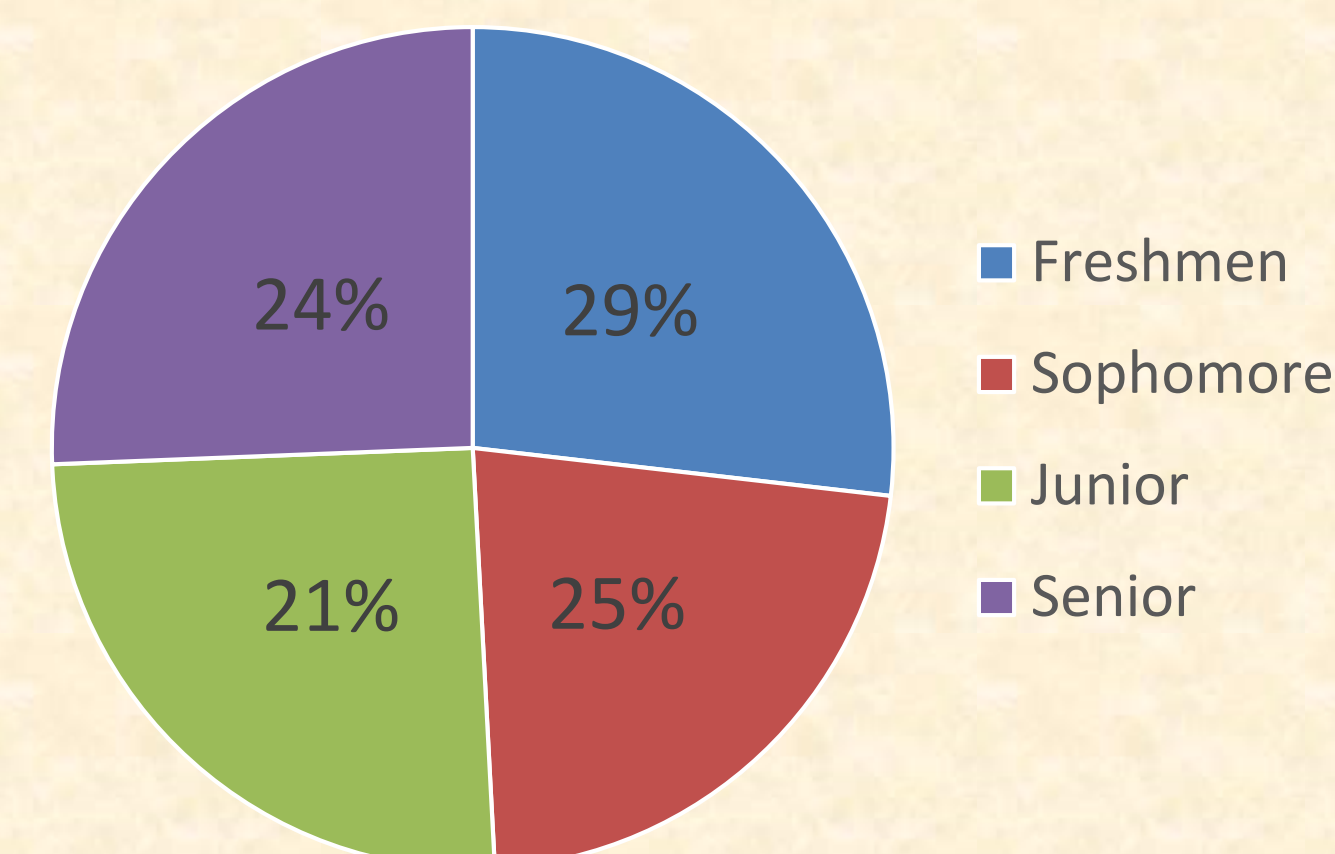
Methods

Approval: University IRB
Setting: Private, faith-based, Midwestern university
Design: Cross-sectional, descriptive
Sample: Undergraduate students
Fall 2016: $N = 3,269$, response rate 49%
Quantitative: Online investigator-developed survey via SurveyMonkey® adapted from the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey (Core Institute of Student Health Programs, 1994)
Analysis: Survey data were analyzed using SPSS for statistical significance

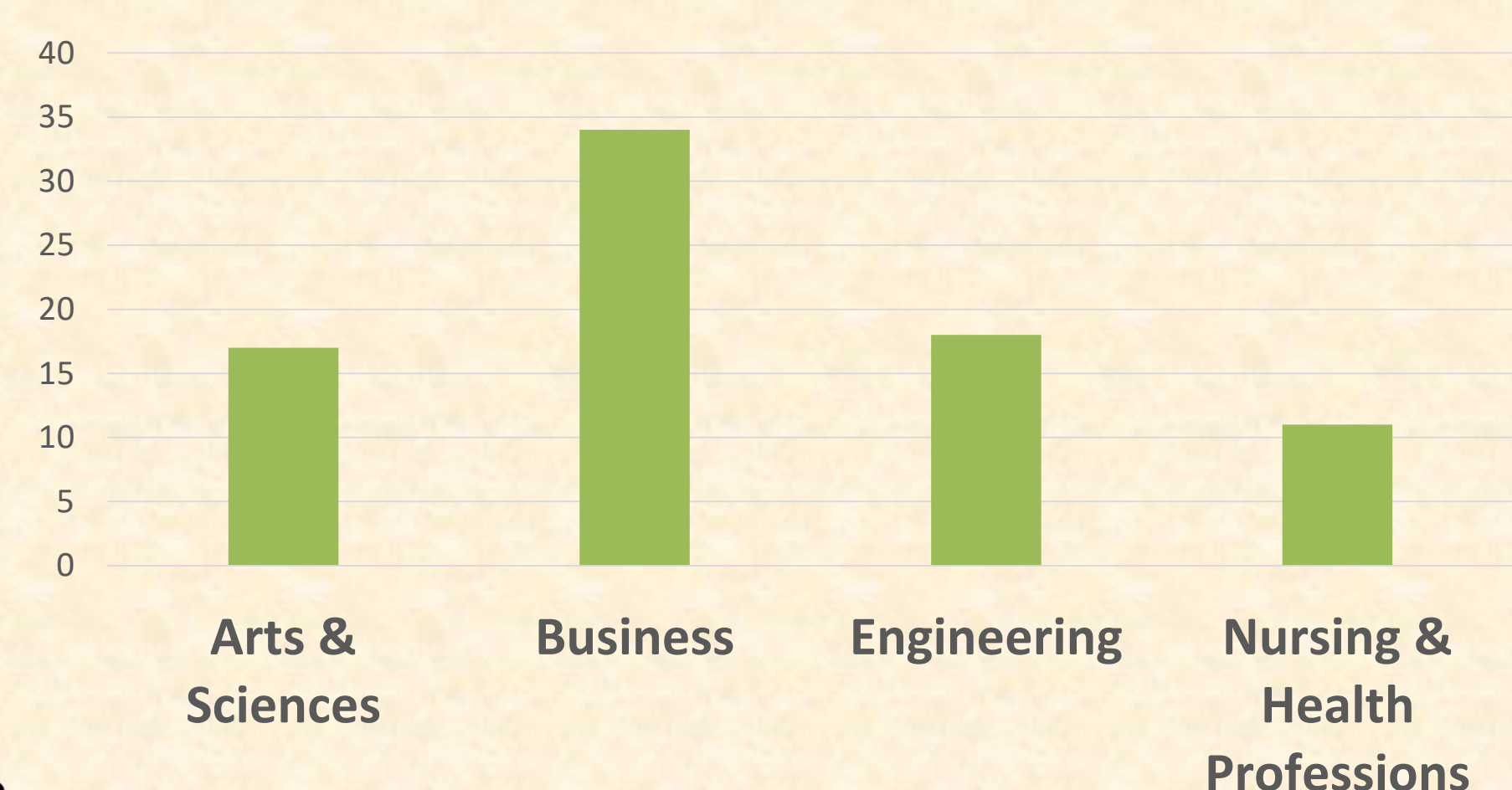
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Sample Characteristics ($n = 1,522$)

Female: 60%
White, Non-Hispanic: 81%
Greek-affiliated: 25%
Student athlete: 13%
Used marijuana: 18%
(Last 30 days)



Percent of Marijuana Use by College



Since coming to college

- 42% of students increased marijuana use
- 33% of students continued the same use
- 26% of students decreased marijuana use

$\chi^2(3) = 43.694, p < .001$

Description of Marijuana Use

Most Common Times of Use

Time of Use	Percentage
Weekends	78.6%
Spring break	51.2%
End of the semester	45.2%

Most Common Places of Use

Place of Use	Percentage
Off-campus housing	73.0%
In a car	67.3%
On campus grounds	35.0%

Characteristics of Marijuana Users

- 26% of males use compared to 13% of females ($\chi^2 = 37.026, p = .001$)
- 31% of fraternity members use compared to 17% of non-members ($\chi^2 = 21.073, p = .001$)
- 13% of sorority members use compared to 19% of non-members ($\chi^2 = 0.522, p > .05$)
- 20% of athletes use compared to 18% of non-athletes ($\chi^2 = 0.308, p > .05$)
- Marijuana users smoke cigarettes significantly more ($M = 5.81$ days/mo., $SD = 9.68$) than those who don't use marijuana ($M = 0.87, SD = 4.29$) ($t = 13.03, p < .000$)
- Marijuana users drink alcohol significantly more ($M = 6.56$ days/mo., $SD = 5.38$) than those who don't use marijuana ($M = 2.96, SD = 3.98$) ($t = 33.79, p < .000$)

Reasons and Correlations

Reasons for Use

Reason for Use	Percentage
"have fun"	67%
"decrease stress"	64%
"experiment"	43%

Reasons for Not Using

Reason for Not Using	Percentage
"illegal"	51%
"too expensive"	23%
"health effects"	22%

Correlates of Marijuana Use

Increased days of use in past month was significantly correlated ($p < .000$) with:

- Driving a car while high ($r = .57$)
- Missing classes ($r = .38$)
- Neglecting responsibilities ($r = .28$)
- Changes in memory/attention span ($r = .26$)
- Getting in trouble with college authorities ($r = .26$)

Opinions About Marijuana Use

- 87% believed marijuana use has become more popular recently, although 88% indicated it does not make individuals more popular to their peers
- 86% believed marijuana does not cause more health problems than alcohol
- 60% believed marijuana should be legalized for recreational purposes
- 90% believed marijuana should be legalized for medicinal purposes

Conclusions

- Marijuana use at Valpo mirrors the national rate
- Males, especially those in fraternities, reported higher rates of marijuana use
- Marijuana users reported higher use of tobacco and alcohol compared to non-users
- Students reported the highest use while classes are not in session, such as weekends and breaks
- Marijuana use differed significantly by college
- The majority believed marijuana is safe and should be legalized for recreational and medicinal use
- Marijuana use was associated with negative outcomes, e.g., driving while high and missing class

Recommendations

- At Valpo, collaborate with the Office of Alcohol and Drug Education to inform students of the health effects and consequences of marijuana use
- More research is needed about the long-term effects of marijuana use
- Nurses are well-suited to provide health promotion and education about marijuana use