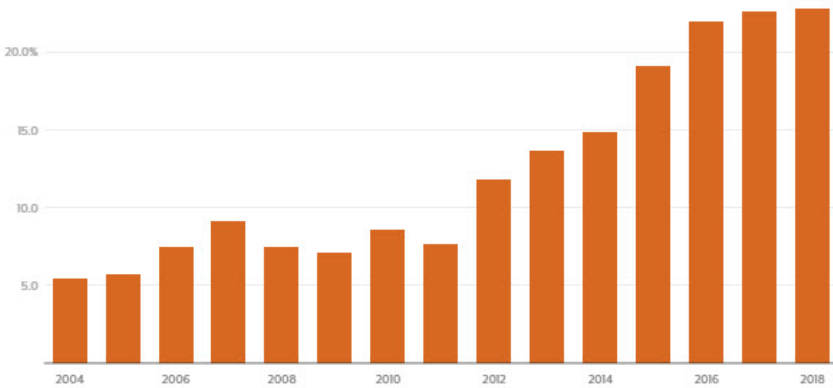


Substance Use Is a Risk Factor – And Numbers Among Colorado’s Young People Are Concerning

Substance use can be a risk factor for suicide. Alcohol has consistently been the top substance detected among suicide deaths in Colorado, but over the past five years, marijuana has become the second highest (20.4% of all deaths). Opiates and benzodiazepines are not far behind (18.9% and 16.6%, respectively).

Colorado’s Amendment 64, which passed in November 2012, allows for personal possession and growing of recreational marijuana in the state. Recreational and medical marijuana became fully regulated and commercialized in 2014.

Figure 5. Marijuana Presence In Suicide Deaths in Colorado



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

While marijuana presence in suicide deaths in Colorado had been rising since 2011 (see Figure 5), over the five years after commercialization, detection of marijuana in suicides increased for all Coloradans except those ages 10-14 compared to the five years prior (see Figure 6). This includes a notable increase among youth ages 15-19, who legally should not have access to marijuana.

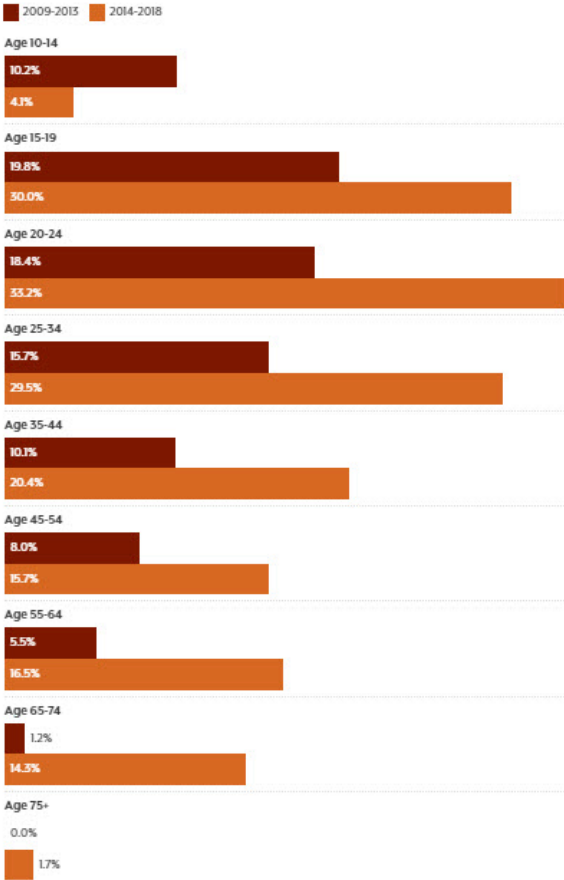
From 2014-2018, 30% of suicide deaths among youth ages 15-19 had marijuana present, an increase from 19.8% during 2009-2013. Alcohol was present in 12.1% of suicide deaths among 15- to 19-year-olds between 2014-2018, which is similar to past years, but still raises concerns over access to substances among youth (see Figure 7). The 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found that over half of Colorado students felt it would be easy or very easy to get marijuana and alcohol if they wanted.

FULL REPORT:

<https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/suicide-colorado>



Figure 6. Marijuana Present in Suicide Deaths by Age



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment