

REGIONALNI CENTAR ZA TALENTE VRANJE

SHOULD MARIJUANA BE LEGALIZED

Author:

PETAR IVKOVIĆ 3, Gimnazija „Stevan Jakovljević“

Mentor:

BILJANA PIPOVIĆ

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays we hear very often people talking about the usage of cannabis or as most of people simply call it marijuana. A considerable number of people use the subject just for making a dull conversation more interesting without even thinking about the bigger picture, while the road to marijuana addiction is more complex than it seems. To some this drug seems like a way to solve or avoid their problems, even for a short period of time, to others it is a way to spend time recreationally, and then there are the ones who use it to make profits. In America there is a great potential in the industry of legally selling marijuana but in our country people of different ages see it in a different way. This research will try to present the general view and opinion on the acceptance and the refusal of the drug and it will also try to answer the question "Should marijuana be legalized?"

Key words: *Marijuana, legalization, drug, effect, students*

U vremenu u kome živimo, skoro svaki dan u velikom broju razgovora čujemo o upotrebi biljke kanabis ili kako je većina ljudi jednostavno zove marihuana. Većina ljudi koristi ovu temu kako bi dosadan razgovor učinili zanimljivijim bez ikakvog razmišljanja o široj slici, dok je put zavisnosti od marihuane složeniji nego što se čini. Nekima ova droga služi kao način za rešavanje ili izbegavanje problema, bar na kratko, neki su povremeni korisnici, a onda ima nekih koji kojima je to način zarade. U Americi postoji industrija legalne prodaje marihuana sa ogromnim potencijalom, ali u našoj zemlji ljudi različitih uzrasta imaju različita razmišljanja po tom pitanju. Ovo istraživanje će pokušati da predstavi generalni pogled i mišljenje o prihvatanju ili odbijanju ove droge. I takodje će pokušati da odgovori na pitanje "Da li bi marihuana trebalo legalizovati?"

Ključne reči: *Marihuana, legalizacija, droga, efekat, učenici*

INTRODUCTION

Cannabis has been used by almost all Asian countries (mostly China, India, Nepal) and some European mainly for spiritual purposes and was later gradually exported to Europe for purposes that are similar to the ones we see today. It was used by shamans and spiritual leaders in Asia to exorcise evil out of a person or to enchant important places with protective spells. Later it was mostly used because of its psychoactive effect by people who could afford it.

Cannabis is indigenous to Central and South Asia. Evidence of the inhalation of cannabis smoke can be found in the 3rd millennium BCE, as indicated by charred cannabis seeds found in a ritual brazier at an ancient burial site in present day Romania. In 2003, a leather basket filled with cannabis leaf fragments and seeds were found next to a 2,500- to 2,800-year-old mummified shaman in the northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. Another evidence for the consumption of cannabis has also been found in Egyptian mummies dated about 950 BC. Cannabis is also known to have been used by the ancient Hindus of India and Nepal thousands of years ago. The herb was called *ganjika* in Sanskrit (*ganja* in modern Indo-Aryan languages). Some scholars suggest that the ancient drug soma, mentioned in the Vedas, was cannabis, although this theory is disputed. Cannabis was also known to the ancient Assyrians, who discovered its psychoactive properties through the Aryans. Using it in some religious ceremonies, they called it *qunubu* (meaning "way to produce smoke"), a probable origin of the modern word "cannabis". Cannabis was also introduced by the Aryans to the Scythians, Thracians and Dacians, whose shamans (the *kapnobatai*—"those who walk on smoke/clouds") burned cannabis flowers to induce a state of trance.

Cannabis was criminalized in various countries beginning in the early 20th century. In the United States, the first restrictions for sale of cannabis came in 1906 (in District of Columbia). It was outlawed in South Africa in 1911, in Jamaica (then a British colony) in 1913, and in the United Kingdom and New Zealand in the 1920s. Canada criminalized cannabis in the Opium and Drug Act of 1923, before any reports of use of the drug in Canada. In 1925 a compromise was made at an international conference in The Hague about the International Opium Convention that banned exportation of "Indian hemp" to countries that had prohibited its use, and requiring importing countries to issue certificates approving the importation and stating that the shipment was required "exclusively for medical or scientific purposes". It also required parties to "exercise an effective control of such a nature as to prevent the illicit international traffic in Indian hemp and especially in the resin.

In Serbia personal use of cannabis is forbidden although in some cities there are organizations which fight for legalization, while in some European countries there are numerous stores where you can buy medical marijuana, only if you have a prescription that is.

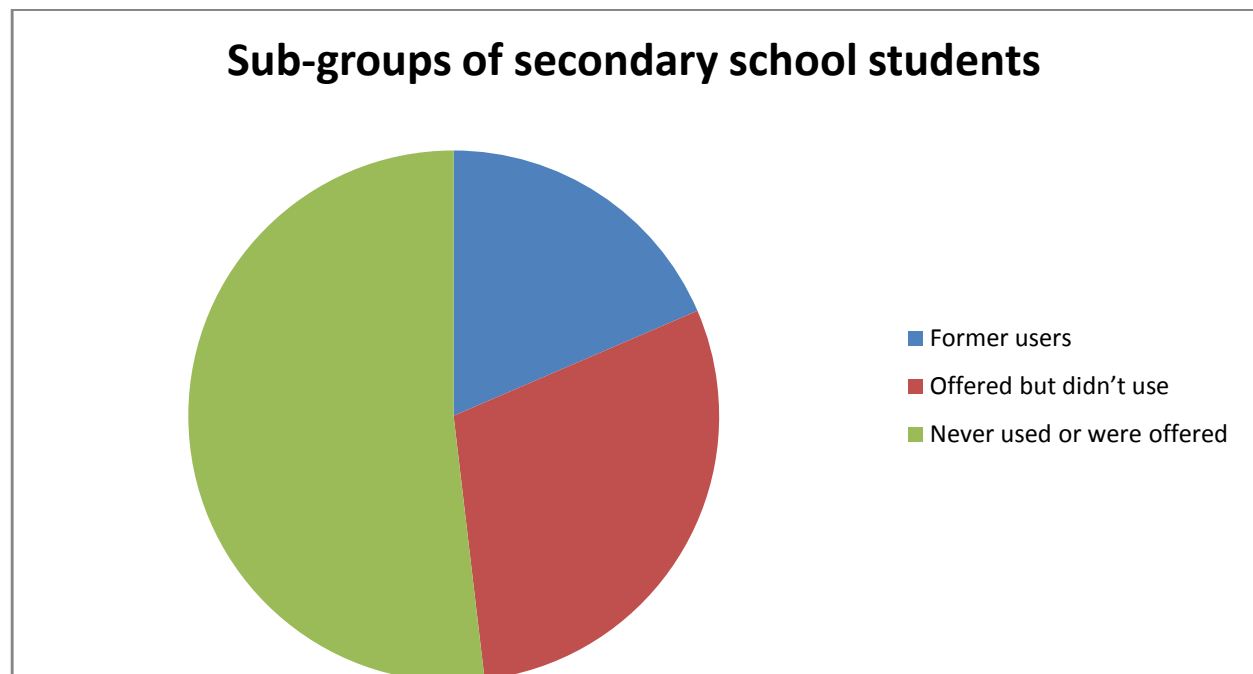
SURVEY

GENERAL DATA ABOUT THE SURVEY

The number of people interviewed in this survey is 27 students and 3 middle aged people who are divided into 2 groups (male and female). There will also be 2 categories (students and middle aged people) so we can differentiate the opinion of both. Each of the students answered a number of questions about the subject without third party interference. Their answers were carefully analyzed and were used to create a general opinion of the subject. As for middle age category, all of the examinees were asked different questions which can be found in the appendix because each of them has a profession that is connected (directly or indirectly) to the subject which makes them able to provide information which the other category could not.

15-17 SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

In this age group there were total of 27 students who participated in this pole (17 are male - 63% and 10 are female - 37%). To be more contrasted this age group was also split to those who were users, a total of 5 (18% all male), to those who have never used but were offered by their friends, a total of 8 (29%), and finally to those who never used or were offered cannabis, total of 14 (51%).



MALE (users)

This sub-group consists of 5 examinees (18% out of secondary school category) who all have been users (all of them say that they stopped using but there was no sure way to check that).

Their answer to the first question was completely positive although the answer was not as detailed as someone would expect. They only described the most known effects such as reddening of the eyes, losing a portion of motor skills and short term hallucinations. For the second question 4 of them knew only one way of preparation, the way which is also the most common. Only one knew 3 ways of preparation which include making an edible marijuana cookie and using oil of the plant for more potent experience. Of course, the answer to the third question was positive. The reason for that is because most of the users usually smoke in groups so they could share the joint, avoiding paying more money for each having their own. But only 2 of them actually saw the dealer in person, the reason being most of the dealers do not meet up with groups of people so they could avoid having their face being seen by a large number of people. In both cases it was not someone who they knew. The answer to the fourth question was mostly positive (4 out of 5 said *yes*) because all of them said that when using marijuana a person can feel happy no matter how depressed that same person was prior to the usage. So their conclusion was that marijuana can be used as a cure to depression. Only one of the examinees answered negatively because of his experience while being on a “bad trip”. He said he had a streak of bad hallucinations and was haunted by them for days. He also said that he felt hungry all the time even when he was full, which is one of the many side effects of cannabis usage. For the fifth question most of the answers were negative. Only one out of 5 examinees approves the personal usage of marijuana mainly because he had no bad experience while using. He also says that marijuana sometimes even helped him to solve some of his personal issues. The answer to the sixth question is as expected positive. There was a lot of confusion about the seventh question because it was hard for the examinees who answered the question positively to explain how it can help. When they finally fully answered the question, their answers were mainly based on depression and cure for it. Some of them wrote that they used weed only when they were feeling overly stressed. The one who answered the question negatively wrote that it may effect the user in many ways, for example, ‘when a person has been using it for a long time they become addicted and the effect of the drug is not as potent as the prior times.’ This can sometimes lead to over using the drug, with the effects being bad hallucinations or “bad trips”. For the eighth and ninth question they all agree that marijuana should be legalized but only in medical purposes because if it is completely legalized it can become a gateway to other addictions. As for the final question they all but one said yes, mainly because they want to try it legally. The one who would not try it says that he had enough of it in his life.

MALE (offered but never used)

This sub-category consists of 8 examinees (29%) who have been offered cannabis by their friends and acquaintances but they declined.

Their answer to the first question was also positive; all of them knew what marijuana is and knew the most known effects. As for the second question it was somewhat similar to the answer of the users. They only knew one way, but one examinee knew some of the lesser known ways of preparation, he listed oil preparation, hashish preparation and tincture preparation, which he described in admirable details. The third question was also completely positive. Most of them described the situation when they were hanging out with their friends and some of them started smoking, an interesting thing is that most of them were not surprised because they already had doubts. There were a lot of negative answers to the fourth question (6 out of 8 said **NO**). The reason for the answer being negative is that they think marijuana use, both medical and personal, can lead to addiction or a gateway to other heavier drugs that can become life threatening. The minority that said *yes* think that marijuana can sometimes help a person overcome emotional issues. As for the fifth question their answer was negative, all of them think that marijuana, if used in large quantities can cause addiction and can lead as gateway to addiction to other drugs. The answer to the sixth question was negative. But some of them say (3 out of 8) that they are attracted in some way, not just because their friends smoke but because they think it can help them in some way. The seventh question also had mixed answers most of them said *yes* (5), but only when being used with a prescription. Others, who answered negatively, explained that they do not think it is a smart thing to use things such as drugs to try to overcome emotional issues because there are a lot of other ways such as talking, finding a hobby or getting a pet. The answer to the eight question was the same as the answer to the seventh, the same five said *yes* and the same three said *no*, the reasons being the same as above. To the ninth question the answers slightly changed (5 said **NO**, 3 said **YES**). The reasons for saying *no* is that they do not want legalization of drugs in a country that already has enough problems already. As for the final question, the answers were mostly negative (6 said **NO**, 2 said **YES**). The ones who answered negatively said that there was no reason for them to try it and that they do not want to risk. The ones who answered positively said that they would try it just out of curiosity.

MALE (never used and were never offered)

This sub-category consists of examinees who have never been offered any kind of cannabis and have never tried. It is a total of 4 examinees.

Their answer to the first question was positive but they could not exactly name any kind of effects of the drug. They mostly said that it gets a person high and it sometimes feels nice sometimes it does not. As for the second question they could not name any way; they only said that you just roll the dried plant in a roll of paper. Their answer to the third question was

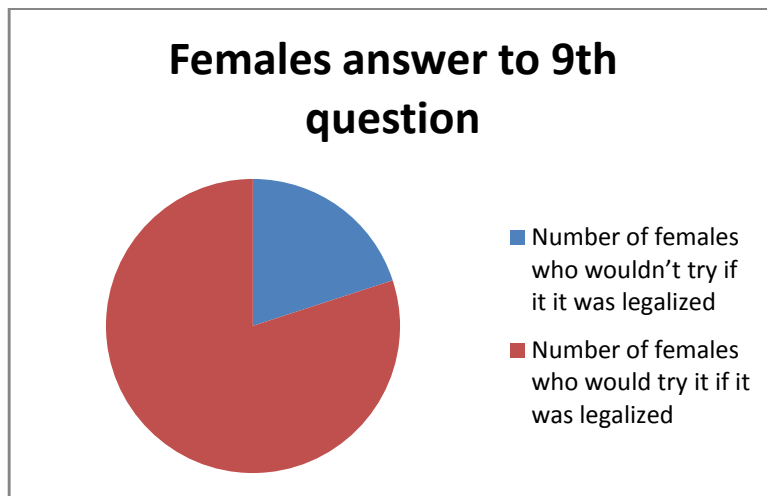
negative, none of them has ever seen any of their friends or acquaintances using. Only one of the examinees wrote that he thinks that he saw a man dealing something which he suspected was marijuana or some other drug; it was not anyone who he knew. The fifth question was answered negatively by all of the examinees. Their explanations were similar. Their reason for saying no is that some people cannot set measurements and once they start doing something they lose any kind of direction of where that is leading them. They think if those kinds of things are legalized they should be dealt with precise measurement and caution. The sixth question was answered negatively, but some of them say that they have been attracted to look for marijuana but quickly changed their mind for their own reasons. Only two of them think marijuana can help to overcome personal and emotional issues, but only when used with caution. Their thoughts on the legalization of marijuana in some countries are split, two of them think it was a good idea, and two of them think it is a bad idea. First two think it is a good idea because it can make a good investment for some people and a solution to others. The second duo thinks that it is a bad idea because it encourages people to do drugs which can lead to a number of bad things. However, only one of them thinks it is a good idea to legalize it in Serbia, the other three disagree because they think that youth nowadays cannot really tell the right from wrong and the legalization will lead to a darker future. And the final question was answered positively only by one of the examinees - he also said that he would try it out of sheer curiosity.

FEMALE

This category consists of 10 female examinees who have answered the questions in the pole, there will be no sub-categories for this group, the reason being **no** female examinee who have ever been offered or have ever used marijuana.

All of them knew what marijuana is and four of them knew more than one way of preparation but again were not able to describe it with a higher amount of detail, as for the effects of using marijuana minority of them listed the most known effect and most of them could not think of more than one, and even that one they listed was not as accurate as male non-users listed. Majority of them wrote that they have never seen anyone dealing drugs as far as they know. Only one of them wrote that she suspected a person she knew but she could not tell for sure. Her reason to suspect that person is that she saw him going away and saying that he has to give something to someone. Later she saw that same person talking to some shady people but did not pay much attention. As for the fourth question most of them do not approve (7 out of 10) saying that it will just make matters worse and people will find the way to misuse the prescriptions given to them just as they misuse prescriptions for medicine. The ones that approve say that it may help some people who have medical issues and marijuana is the most potent cure. Almost none of them approve personal use of marijuana (9 out of 10) saying that some people just cannot set up boundaries for themselves and the results may be lethal not just to the users but for the people close to them. One, who wrote that she approves the personal use, wrote “legalize everything and let Darwin do his work” (which is a quote of a famous comedian regarding the usage of drugs). None of them used marijuana, but minority (2 out of 10) is attracted to try it just

to see how it feels. Three of them think that the moderate and controlled use of marijuana can help a person to overcome personal issues, but if it leads to addiction it should be stopped immediately. The ones who do not approve had similar answers as the male non users; they also said that it would lead to bigger problems not solutions. The same number of them disagrees with the decision of some countries to legalize it because it encourages people to use it not just as a way to solve a problem but also for recreation which according to them is unacceptable. Majority of them think that not just marijuana but any kind of drugs **should not be legalized** in our country because of the nature of its residents. One of them says that an average Serbian cannot do most of the things he does in moderation including smoking, drinking and doing drugs. And finally only two of them would try marijuana if it was legalized saying that if they felt depressed they would use it just to heighten their mood, only if it is within the boundaries of the law.



MIDDLE AGE CATEGORY (28-46)

This category consists of three people of different professions who were asked a different kind of questions regarding their experience. One of them is a policeman, second a nurse, and the third one is a part time bouncer in a discotheque.

Policeman

His answer to the first question was positive. He wrote that he did use marijuana in few occasions but stopped when he graduated. He started because one of his friends offered him, when he was in his third year in secondary school. He said that he would rather not write about it. He is a policeman so he encounters users almost weekly, mostly at night while he is on duty. He says that once someone inexperienced gets high he almost stops caring if someone sees him

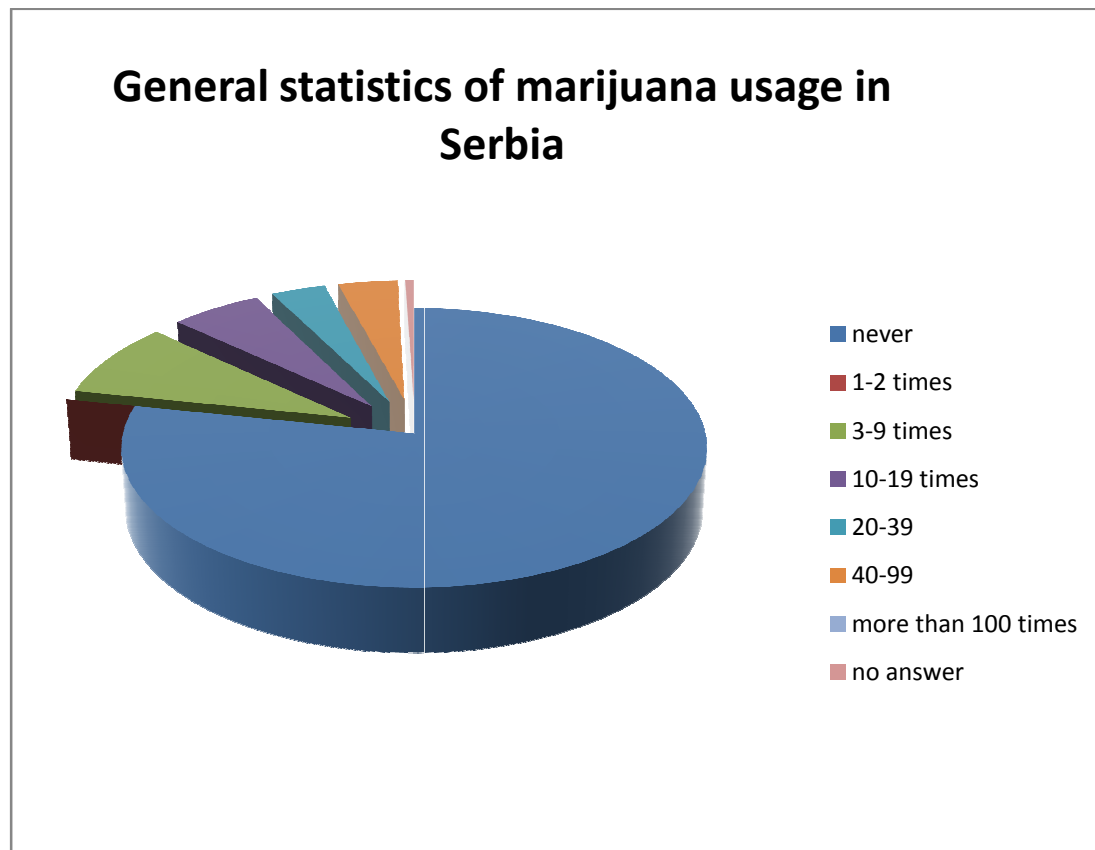
so they stroll on the street and sometimes they just lay down on a bench at late hours and sit there motionless. If the patrol finds some amount of drugs on them they are transferred to the station. There was an encounter that was not his but his colleague told him about it. There was a girl who got high with her friends and her boyfriend. When they saw the patrol getting near them they started running away. Most of them got away but that girl because she was in a worse condition than everyone else. When they apprehended her they found a spare joint in her pocket so they had to take her to the station. When she was interviewed they asked her the usual questions; where she got the drug, how long she had been using. Instead of answering the questions she began to tell the story about how she had lost her virginity which went on for hours. After her parents had showed up and after a long and loud talk about drugs, they went home. Tomorrow the whole town knew the story and she is still teased because of it. The story was also the answer to the next question, he knew the girl, and personally he would never expect her to be a drug user. He wrote that the most common age of users he sees are between 16 and 25 although there are some cases in which he encounters middle aged people using and selling. He thinks that the most efficient way to treat addiction is rehabilitation, if it goes out of control of course. But one time users should be treated differently, he says that there is not much to do except talk, if they want to listen they will if not they will have to learn the hard way. He completely negates the fact that marijuana can help in solving personal issues and **should not be legalized** - not only in our country but in every other. He explains that it poisons the minds of the youth in many ways and it makes them do things that are not logical.

Nurse

Her answer to the first question was negative; she wrote that she had had no prior experience in using. She also has a large amount of encounters with marijuana users, mostly when she works on night shifts, sometimes even at day, when someone decides that he should get high while still at school. There was one special time which she remembers in great detail. There was a boy who was carried in by his friends who were thinking he had a bad reaction to the drug. They were all very scared so they just left their friend in the waiting room and ran out. Their friend just sat there looking at the wall with a faint smile on his face. She went to him and asked him why they had brought him to hospital. He just looked at her with reddened eyes, almost fully closed and said "I saw a bunch of rats so I started running". In fact he had a bad trip, which is simply cured with a warm shower but his friends did not know that so they just left him there. And she had a lot of other encounters with kids who she knew and with some middle aged people but whenever she could hide their mistakes she did. She never reported anyone who came there. Her experience is mostly with teenagers between 15 and 22 although she has also had the experience with people older than 30. The most efficient way to treat addiction, according to her, is a good long talk about the consequences and risks they take. She thinks that marijuana **should not be legalized** because it will only increase the number of users and it can lead to addiction of worse drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine etc.

Bouncer

The bouncer who was interviewed is the youngest in this age group which is the reason for him having more experience than most of the professions. He has had the experience regarding trying marijuana when he was in secondary school. He continued for a few years but after he was warned for the third time by the police he stopped and started working part time jobs. Because of the nature of his current job he has the largest number of encounters with the users and he has also had awkward experiences with his acquaintances on a few occasions. He wrote that once he had to kick out a bunch of drugged up kids, he says that they must have been about 16 years old, and that they walked like “they had their legs beaten up by someone”. There was also one time he had to walk his friend out of a bathroom where he sat still for about an hour. Most of the users he encountered are teenagers from 15, 16 to 20. He said that he did not really know a way someone else except the person himself can help in treating addiction. When the person strongly decides that he or she wants to stop that is the first step. He says that even if someone may think it helps to overcome issues, he says that it does not and that a man should always find a clean way to end their problems. He also thinks that marijuana **should not be legalized** in any kind of way and in any country. He believes that it is a bad decision to encourage people to take drugs in any way, legal or illegal.



Conclusion

Marijuana is a drug, and that is a fact, but what makes it so different from any kind of modern medicine an average man takes? There was no clear answer to this question but there was a certain contrast between people who think it should be legalized and the ones who do not approve of it. But there was one thing in common to almost all of the examinees who participated in this research - they all have something dragging them towards trying the drug, some out of sheer curiosity whereas some think it may solve something. The answer is still not clear enough to be taken seriously though, but the subject of legalizing this drug should be because not only does it affect the user, but it also affects the people around him/her more than we can see or tell. It is a growing industry which has the potential to grow faster than any other and eventually it will come to us. When the time comes to make a decision, it will greatly affect not only current generation but the future generations, too. The influence of weed is growing with each passing day, there is only a choice to be made, and that choice will have to be made by everyone.



APPENDIX

Secondary school questions

1. Do you know what marijuana is and what its effects are?
2. Can you name some of the ways of marijuana preparation?
3. Have you ever seen someone using or dealing any type of marijuana?
 - 3.1 If the answer is *yes*, was it a person who you knew and/or the person closed to?
4. Do you approve of the usage of marijuana for medical purposes?
5. Do you approve of the personal usage of marijuana?
 - 5.1 If the answer is YES why?
 - 5.2 If the answer is NO why?
6. Have you ever used marijuana?
 - 6.1 If the answer to your question is *yes*, how did you feel?
 - 6.2 If the answer is NO, are you attracted to ever try it?
7. Do you think marijuana can help a person to overcome personal/emotional issues?
8. What do you think about the decision to legalize marijuana some countries have made?
9. Do you think marijuana should be legalized in Serbia?
10. If marijuana was legalized in the near future, would you try it?

Middle age group questions

1. Do you have any experience regarding using marijuana and have you ever used it yourself?
- 2 Does your job have a large amount of encounters with the users of the drug?
 - 2.1 If yes, can you recall the encounter that was the most interesting to you?
3. Have you ever seen someone you know or a child of someone you know using marijuana?
 - 3.1 Did you report them to police? If not, why?
4. How old are most of the users you see in your profession?
5. What are the most efficient ways to treat addiction according to you?
6. Do you think marijuana or any kind of drug can help overcome personal issues?
7. Do you think marijuana should be legalized?
 - 7.1 If yes why? If not, why?

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<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana>

www.drugs.com/

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