

Myth: Marijuana today is much stronger, and therefore more dangerous, than it was before.

Fact: According to the federal Potency Monitoring Project, the average potency of marijuana has increased very little since the 1980s. The Project reports that in 1985, the average THC¹ content of commercial-grade marijuana² was 2.84%, and the average for high-grade sinsemilla³ in 1985 was 7.17%. In 1995, the potency of commercial-grade marijuana averaged 3.73%, while the potency of sinsemilla in 1995 averaged 7.51%. In 2001, commercial-grade marijuana averaged 4.72% THC, and the potency of sinsemilla in 2001 averaged 9.03%.

Source: Quarterly Report #76, Nov. 9, 2001-Feb. 8, 2002, Table 3, p. 8, University of Mississippi Potency Monitoring Project (Oxford, MS: National Center for the Development of Natural Products, Research Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, 2002), Mahmoud A. ElSohly, PhD, Director, NIDA Marijuana Project (NIDA Contract #N01DA-0-7707).

1. "THC" is an abbreviation of Delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol, the dominant active ingredient in marijuana. There are several other active ingredients. Each ingredient produces specific effects.
2. "Commercial grade" refers to field crops of marijuana which are not pruned and which often contain seeds as a result of leaving male plants to mature.
3. "Sinsemilla" is a term referring to marijuana that is carefully cultivated to produce the maximum number of unfertilized female flower buds, which provide the greatest concentration of active ingredients.