

*The*  
**DEBATE ON  
MARIJUANA  
VS.  
ALCHOHOL**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Alcohol vs. Marijuana: Why It Matters

People have argued for years about which substance is “better” or “worse.” Both are used to unwind, celebrate, or cope, but their effects, risks, and social reactions are very different. I chose this topic because I’ve seen both substances impact people in good and bad ways.

### Key Terms

- **Intoxication:** When a substance changes how your brain functions.
- **THC:** The main psychoactive chemical in marijuana.
- **Addiction:** When a person becomes dependent on a substance.
- **Tolerance:** When your body needs more of a substance to feel the same effect.

# HISTORY OF ALCOHOL

3000 B.C. —

Alcohol in Ancient Cultures  
Egyptians, Greeks, and Mesopotamians use alcohol in religion, medicine, and celebrations.

1700s–1800s —  
Alcohol Becomes Widespread  
Bars, taverns, and saloons become central to social life, especially in America.

Modern Day Alcohol is socially accepted worldwide, heavily advertised, and part of major social events, despite major health risks.

7000 B.C. —  
Earliest Fermentation  
Ancient civilizations in China and the Middle East begin brewing early forms of beer and wine.

Middle Ages (500–1500)  
Distillation spreads across Europe, leading to stronger spirits like whiskey and brandy.

1920–1933 —  
Prohibition  
The U.S. bans alcohol sales and production, causing speakeasies, bootlegging, and the rise of organized crime.

# HISTORY OF MARIJUANA

2700 BC- Chinese Emperor Shen Nung started to prescribe it to people to help with different ailments like malaria and gout.

1910–1930s: The big freak-out begins Mexican immigrants bring recreational marijuana after their revolution. Americans panic, blame “marihuana” for crim and sin.

1996–2025: The comeback California legalizes medical weed in 1996. By 2025 over half the states have full adult-use legalization, billions in tax money roll in, and most people now say “the old scare stories were total BS.”

5000–8000 years ago: Earliest use ever  
People in ancient China and Central Asia start smoking and eating cannabis. They use it as medicine, make rope from hemp, and even burn it in religious ceremonies.

800s–early 1900s:  
Weed is totally normal in the U.S.  
Doctors sell cannabis tinctures in pharmacies for headaches, cramps, and sleep problems. It's in tons of medicines and nobody thinks it's evil.

1937: Nationwide ban in the U.S.  
After crazy propaganda (like the movie Reeler Madness in 1936), the government passes the Marijuana Tax Act. Weed basically becomes illegal for everyone

## CULTURAL PERCEPTION

### Alcohol

- Widely accepted worldwide
- Associated with partying and social bonding
- Advertised openly
- Some cultures incorporate it in religious ceremonies/practices

### Marijuana

- Historically stigmatized because of criminalization
- Seen as more natural or medicinal
- Increasing in acceptance
- Associated with creativity relaxation and pain relief

## HEALTH IMPACTS

### Alcohol

- Kills about 140,000 Americans every year (drunk driving, liver disease, alcohol poisoning, cancer, violence).
- Super addictive—millions of people struggle with alcoholism.
- Long-term heavy use = brain damage, heart problems, wrecked liver.

### Marijuana

- Zero recorded overdose deaths ever.
- Addictive in a way, and can be seen as a “gateway drug”
- Heavy use (especially as a teen) can mess with memory and motivation; smoking it hurts lungs, but edibles don't.

# 7 LEGAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

## Alcohol

- Totally legal everywhere for 21+, sold in every gas station, grocery store, and bar. Massive advertising allowed

- Brings in billions in tax money every year + huge private companies

You can make your own beer or wine at home, no problem.

## Marijuana

- Still federally illegal in the U.S. (Schedule I drug). Only legal in about half the states, and even there you can't buy it at Walmart—gotta go to special dispensaries.

- Legal states make billions too (Colorado alone has passed \$4 billion in tax revenue since 2014), but banks often won't touch the money because it's still "illegal" to the feds.

- Growing your own is only okay in some states, and the feds can still bust you.

# 8 MEDIA INFLUENCE

When weed first showed up big-time, everybody lost their minds (but not in a good way). Newspapers and cops started yelling that smoking pot made people go crazy, kill folks, or tu into total losers. This one guy, Harry Anslinger, who ran the drug cops, kept saying it was mostly Mexicans and Black people smoking it, and that made it extra "dangerous." Total rac junk, but people believed him.

Then Hollywood made this super dumb movie called Reefer Madness in 1936. It showed kid smoking one joint and then bam—they're screaming, stabbing people, or jumping out windo Pure lies, but it scared the crap out of parents, so weed got labeled as evil.

Now look at booze. Yeah, alcohol caused tons of real problems (fights, wrecked families, dru idiots everywhere), so America banned it from 1920 to 1933. People called it "demon rum" al acted like it was the devil.

But even when drinking was illegal, it still seemed kinda cool. Secret bars, jazz music, gangste pretty girls in sparkly dresses—everybody thought breaking the booze rules was fun and badass. So when the ban ended, alcohol came right back like a rockstar. Ads, parties, beer a ballgames; drinking just became normal again.

Weed never got that comeback.

Booze got forgiven and turned into a buddy. Weed stayed the scary monster because of all th old lies. That's why, even today, tons of people still think alcohol is fine but weed is the end the world, even though science says they're way more alike than different.



## GENERATIONAL VIEWS

Younger  
Generations  
(Gen Z &  
Millennials)

- Alcohol - More people are seeing it as a health risk. As a collective they are starting to stray away from casual drinking.
- Marijuana - It is seen as the "healthier" option. It is also more accessible than ever due to the increase in state legalization

Older  
Generations  
(Gen X & Baby  
Boomers)

- Alcohol - They see it as more socially accepted, as it was very common to drink in their youth.
- Marijuana - Most of them consider it a drug just like any other and even think that it is more harmful than alcohol (this is likely due to the large amount of propaganda they've encountered in their youth). Although some of them are starting to use it for its medicinal properties.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

Creating this zine made me think a lot about how alcohol and marijuana show up in people's daily lives. My friends, family, and the media have told me their opinions on each. However, upon closer examination of the history, culture, and science, I realized how differently these two substances are perceived.

What surprises me a lot is how much just the people around us, or in other words, our culture, shapes our ideas. Alcohol is something that is almost everywhere, from sports events to family gatherings; nobody even questions it. But, on the other hand, Marijuana is rare to see in public and is looked at negatively.

Putting this zine together helped me see that neither substance is really what the world says it is, and neither "good" or "bad", but it is just how people use them.

VS.

