

# Ganja do without it?

By Liam Hannan, MYP for Scotland

Cannabis has been illegal in Britain since 1928, but around half the population have tried it. In an increasingly global society, when our security forces are stretched thinner every day, is it really possible to stop people using this controlled substance? And even if we could - should we? My answer to both is no.

Cannabis can be a "gateway drug", and can lead users onto serious substance abuse. That's the way the land lies and I'm not going to tell you it isn't true, I'm going to tell you why it is true. Dealers usually have access to more than one substance, and the more one buys, the more money they make. It's in their interest to get you wanting more drugs; which is where the line: "I've just got some new stuff in, wanna try it out?" comes into play. Yes, cannabis is a gateway drug, but that is because of the supply network that surrounds it. Were it to be decriminalised this problem would not exist. Most people don't sample drugs like children in a sweet shop, and taking one does not leave a wanting for others. If we sold it over the counter like any other substance then the problem of it being a "gateway drug" would disappear.

Why go to a shady dealer - with all the associated risks - when you can get it legally cheaper and be sure you're not being ripped off? Cannabis can be addictive. But to define

## Do you think cannabis should be made legal?

Yes - 82.5%  
No - 17.5%

Source: BBC website

that, one must understand the kind of addiction. There are two types; the first is chemical addiction. The second is emotional addiction. Chemical addictions are the kind where your body craves, absolutely must have, that definitive chemical. Examples of addictive substances are; nicotine, alcohol and serotonin. All of these are legal.

Emotional addiction is more difficult to define; it is not something one needs for survival, but something which one has formed a habit or

emotional attachment related to. For example, chocolate. You might say you're a chocoholic but you wouldn't seriously go into rehab to give up the habit; it would take some willpower, because you like the taste, the way it makes you feel - but you would not be chemically dependant on it for existence. Cannabis is one of the chemicals that would come under this umbrella of "casual addiction".

Did you know; between May and December 2007 the street value of cannabis went up 100% in resinous form and 150% in loose form?

Cannabis can be seriously bad for your health. No doubts about it. With continued use, it can cause dopamine deficiency, making one 40% more susceptible to paranoia and depression. It has a far higher tar content than pouch tobacco and can cause all the same respiratory disorders if smoked, and is exceptionally bad news for those among us with heart conditions. However, that is because it has an effect on the heart similar to exercise, and for those with heart conditions it can be no worse for the heart than a trip to the gym.

As for the respiratory problems - they exist with smoking, which is already legal, depression and schizophrenia are also brought on by alcohol, which is already legal, and smoking is not the only way - nor the most efficient way - to use the drug. The respiratory symptoms do not have to be incurred if one bakes the cannabis into a cake (or, as Bill Bailey once suggested, in Beef Stroganoff) or uses cannabis aerosols. And dopamine deficiency is caused by a recent mutation in the plants as a reaction to new methods of growing it. Decriminalisation and bringing production methods under the scrutiny of the law could all but eliminate this problem too.

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