
Report on Implementation of
the Missoula Marijuana Initiative
(Initiative 2)

Report #5

Covering July 1st through December 31st, 2009

Released December 2010

Available at www.co.missoula.mt.us/initiative2

Introduction:

In November 2006, Missoula County voters passed Initiative 2 by a vote of 55%. The initiative recommended that government officials treat adult marijuana offenses as the lowest priority, and established a Community Oversight Committee charged with publishing a semi-annual report evaluating the initiative's implementation.

In this, our fifth report, we reviewed government data on marijuana incidents in Missoula County that occurred from July 1st, 2009 through December 31st, 2009. Law enforcement officials again reported, on average, encountering an adult with marijuana every day in this time period.

In this report, due to time constraints, our volunteer committee will report solely on law enforcement encounters involving marijuana in Missoula County.

Information Sources:

We received three spreadsheets from local law enforcement officials:

- An automated export of public information from the Missoula County Sheriff's Department (MCS), containing time, location, demographic, and evidence information.
- An automated export of public information from the University of Montana's Office of Public Safety, containing time, location, and disposition information.
- A human-prepared spreadsheet based on automated export of public information from the Missoula Police Department (MPD), including time, location, demographic, and evidence information, as well as an indication of whether medical marijuana was involved, and the reason for initial officer contact. The Committee greatly appreciates the additional work that went into preparing these data.

What follows is a brief analysis of these data.

Findings:

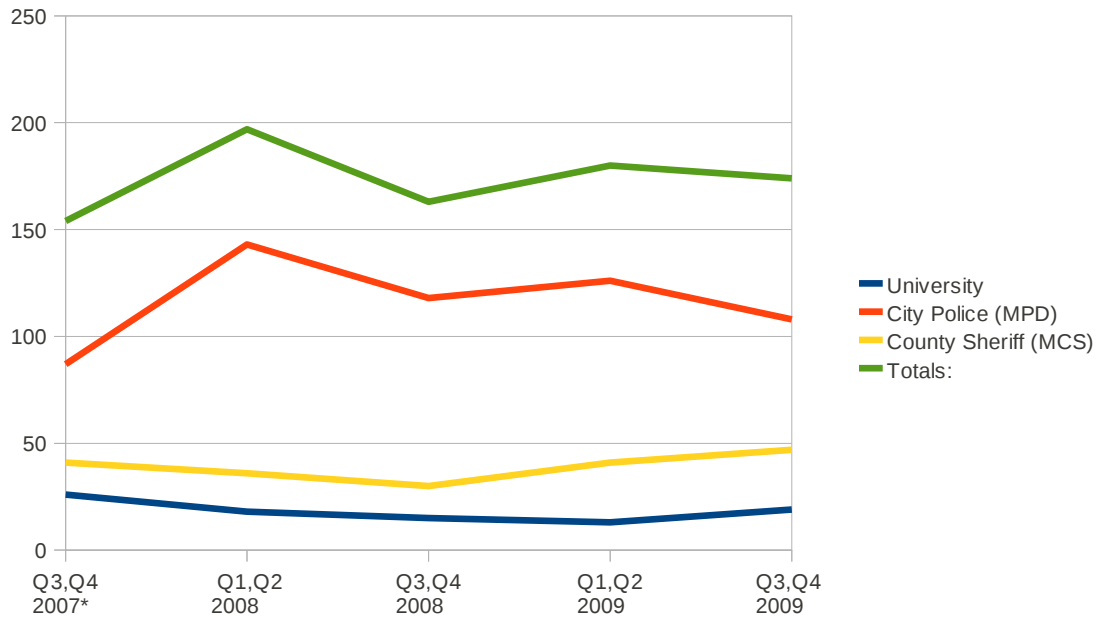
Overall, there was a 3% decline in marijuana citations in Missoula County between the first and second half of 2009, due to a 14% drop in incidents recorded by the Missoula Police Department. The Missoula County Sheriff's Department and University Office of Public Safety reported an increase in incidents.

Appending our new information to that which has been presented in our previous reports, marijuana incident trends are as follows:

Marijuana Incidents Reported by Missoula Law Enforcement

Entity/Dept	Q3,Q4 2007*	Q1,Q2 2008	Q3,Q4 2008	Q1,Q2 2009	Q3,Q4 2009
University	26	18	15	13	19
City Police (MPD)	87	143	118	126	108
County Sheriff (MCS)	41	36	30	41	47
Totals:	154	197	163	180	174

*2007 numbers are based on the annualized estimates provided in our 2007 report.



Other findings:

Median seizure weight in MPD incidents in which the weight of marijuana is recorded: 2.5 grams (down from 3.7 in previous reporting period).

Median age of individuals involved in both MPD and MCS incidents: 25 (up from 24 in the previous period).

Number of people involved in 108 MPD incidents in six months: 113

Number of people involved in 47 MCS incidents in six months: 57

13 city incidents cited marijuana as the primary reason for law enforcement contact. Most were HIDTA cases.

The most common reasons for marijuana to be encountered by the Missoula Police Department in the Jul-Dec 2009 period were:

1. Traffic Stop (14%)
2. Disturbance (12%)
3. DUI (11%)
4. Suspicious activity (9%)
5. High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area investigations (9%)

This Top 5 list is somewhat different than the previous period; traffic stops and DUI are still common reasons for police officers to encounter marijuana, but the HIDTA investigations are new to the list. This might be chance, or reflect a heightened interest on behalf of the Missoula HIDTA, an inter-agency organization that receives federal funding.

Reasons that occurred just one or two times among MPD cases included citizen complaints, criminal trespass, shoplifting, open container, being in a park after hours, camping in the city, failure to wear a helmet at the skate park, criminal mischief, partner/family member assault, welfare checks, disorderly conduct, soliciting from roadway, and theft. Some of these incidents also involved existing arrest warrants.

10.6% (12/113) of individuals involved in MPD marijuana incidents were of Native American/Indian ethnicity.

5% (3 of 57) of MCS marijuana incidents involved persons of Native American/Indian ethnicity.

According to the 2006 census, 2.6% of county residents are Native American/Indian.

21% of MCS incidents involved women, compared to 20% of MPD incidents.

MPD continues to be responsible for recording the majority (66%) of all marijuana incidents, 88% of which resulted in misdemeanor charges (down from 98% in previous period).

MPD recorded 5 incidents (up from 2 in the previous reporting period) involving legal medical marijuana.

Conclusion:

Patterns noted in previous reports continue. While marijuana incidents comprise a small proportion of law enforcement encounters, officials seize marijuana nearly every day in Missoula County. The vast majority of marijuana incidents involve young people with small amounts, and non-whites are disproportionately affected. Approximately 170 people were involved in marijuana incidents in Missoula County in the second half of 2009.

Receiving data from MPD concerning the reasons for each incident was particularly helpful and confirmed what was previously merely anecdotal: police are unlikely to encounter marijuana without having some other reason for contact, and traffic stops/DUI constitute a substantial portion (25%) of all marijuana incidents. Most of the other marijuana encounters resulted from investigations of other crimes, including HIDTA investigations.

Submitted respectfully this 17th day of December, 2010, by the Initiative 2 Community Oversight Committee:

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