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Law Enforcement Made 1.5 Million Arrests for Drug Abuse Violations in 2012

Police made more than 1.5 million arrests last year for drug abuse violations, according to data released Monday by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Marijuana offenses accounted for 48.3 percent of drug arrests, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Most of those arrests were for possession of the drug.

A marijuana-related arrest occurred every 42 seconds, the article notes.

In 2012, police made 1,552,432 arrests for drug abuse violations, a slight increase from the 1,531,251 such arrests made the previous year. Overall, law enforcement made more than 12 million arrests in 2012. Drug abuse violations accounted for the highest percentage of arrests, followed by driving under the influence and larceny-theft (almost 1.3 million arrests each).

"Instead of punishing and stigmatizing responsible adult marijuana users, we should be focusing on serious crime," Dan Riffle, Director of Federal Policies for the advocacy group the Marijuana Policy Project, said in a statement. "As a former prosecuting attorney myself, I believe it is irresponsible to squander our limited law enforcement resources on this disastrous public policy failure. That is especially true when so many violent crimes remain unsolved. Every second spent arresting and prosecuting adults for marijuana is time that could have been spent preventing and solving real crimes."

Neill Franklin, Executive Director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, an organization of former and current law-enforcers who want to dampen drug prohibition, noted in a statement, "Each one of those arrests is the story of someone who may suffer a variety of adverse effects from their interaction with the justice system. Commit a murder or a robbery and the government will still give you a student loan. Get convicted for smoking a joint and you're likely to lose it."

Next year, marijuana arrests may decrease, since recreational use of the drug is now legal for adults in Washington state and Colorado.