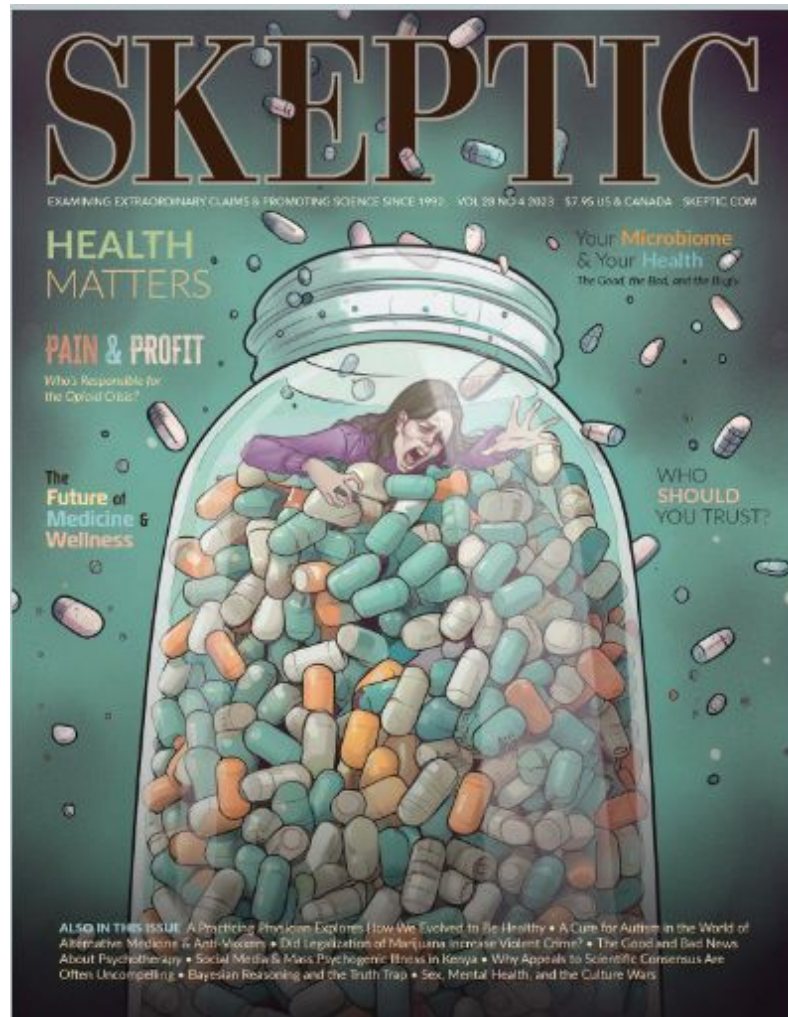


Did Grass Make Things Meaner?

Legalization of Marijuana and
Violent Crime in the Nicest
Place in America

by John D. Van Dyke



Topics

-Introduction

*-A brief reminder of Buchanan's
Nicest Place in America Designation*

-Buchanan in 2020

-Marijuana comes to Buchanan

*-Health and Economic arguments
against marijuana*

-My study

Publication in Skeptic Magazine



A refresher...



Buchanan in 2020

2020 was also a notable year for Buchanan, Michigan

- Our Memorial Day Parade was cancelled due to COVID concerns.
- Our local American Legion Post #51 collected hundreds of pictures of our veterans and displayed them on banners along Main Street.
- In response to George Floyd's murder, Deeja Lee organized a Black Lives Matter march. On June 8, hundreds of us met at Buchanan High School and marched to our local police station, where we knelt in solidarity for 8:14 with the Buchanan PD.

That fall, I heard a radio ad calling for nominations to be considered Reader's Digest's *Nicest Place in America*. I wrote about Buchanan's efforts to honor our veterans and the memory of George Floyd. We won.



Marijuana comes to Buchanan!

In 2020 we also fully implemented legal marijuana in Buchanan.

Michigan had passed a medical marijuana law in 2008, and we'd spent the previous 10 years respectfully debating whether or not to bring it to our small town. In the fall of 2019, the city adopted a plan for six dispensaries.



The image shows a screenshot of a news article from ABC 57. The header features the ABC 57 logo and the slogan "see the difference" with the locations "SOUTH BEND · ELKHART · ST. JOSEPH" listed below. A navigation menu includes links for HOME, NEWS, WEATHER, SPORTS, SWEEPSTAKES, and ABOUT. The main headline reads "Newest marijuana dispensary opens in Buchanan" in a large, bold font. Below the headline, the author is identified as "By: Roxie Elliott". At the bottom of the article preview, the posting date and time are given as "Posted: Jul 15, 2020 5:24 PM EST".

Health arguments against Marijuana

Correlation* between marijuana use has been found with:

- Neurophysical decline
- Cognitive impairment
- Highway deaths
- Lower educational attainment.
- Addiction

***Correlation \neq causation.**

Economic arguments against Marijuana legalization / adoption.

Tax revenue received from the legal sale of other vices (alcohol and tobacco) pales in comparison to the costs of healthcare for the individuals who consume them. Detractors extrapolate that the high costs of healthcare for marijuana users will outweigh the revenue.

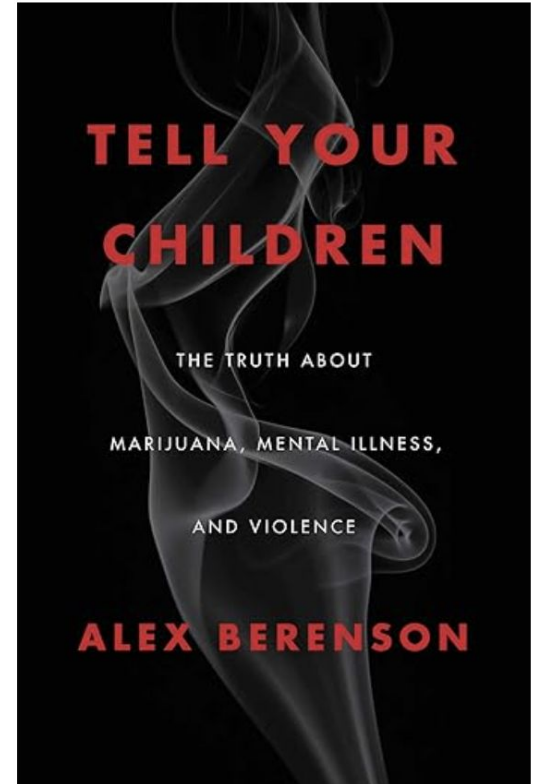


Berenson's Tell Your Children...

In 2019 the argument against legalization was taken significantly further. Alex Berenson of *The New York Times* published *Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence*.

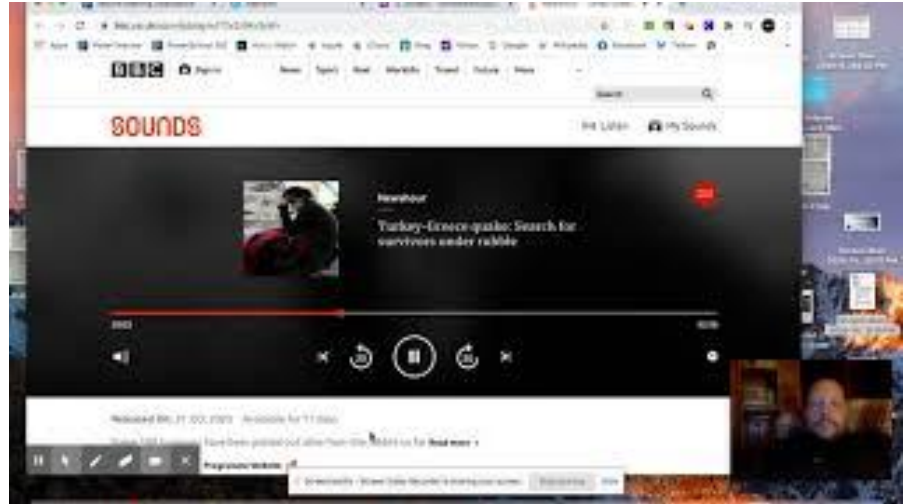
The author claims psychosis brings violence, and cannabis-linked violence is spreading. In the four states that first legalized, murders have risen 25 percent since legalization, even more than the recent national increase.

That same year Anjelica Rice challenged the Department's claims, examining the rates of violent crime in states that had legalized medical and recreational marijuana. Rice found that legalization not failed to increase violent crime rates.



Marijuana thrives in Buchanan!

At this writing, there is one legal dispensary for every 860 residents, one of the highest per capita ratios in the state. We even have a local marijuana ambassador, Freddie “The Stoner” Miller, as seen on Jimmy Kimmel LIVE! I even composed an album about our town and the city is sponsoring a promotional tour throughout Michigan for the band I perform in with my father, The Van Dyke Revue.



I wanted to find out if Buchanan, the *Nicest Place in America*, saw an increase in violent crime rates in the years following its adoption of recreational marijuana.



I started by looking up the demographics of Buchanan. I found that, in many ways, Buchanan is a microcosm of America.

POPULATION: 4,270

83.2% White

38% African American

Hispanic (.445%),

Asian (.445%)

11% Biracial

We suffer a poverty rate of 7.85% and a median household income of \$43,668.

Then I asked our Chief of Police, Tim Ganus and our Mayor Sean Denison, Each said they hadn't seen a rise in violent crime since 2020.



E.O.I.A.



There were a total of 855 adult arrests between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2022. Of these, there were a total of 105 (12.2%) arrests deemed “violent.” These offenses included non-aggravated assault, aggravated felonious assault, sexual assault, parental kidnapping, and robbery

In 2016, there were 29 arrests, one for parental kidnapping, one for sexual assault, 21 non-aggravated (misdemeanor level) assaults, and six aggravated (felonious) assaults.

In 2017, there were 17 arrests, one for robbery, 12 for non-aggravated (misdemeanor level) assaults, and four for aggravated felonious assault.

In 2018, there were 23 arrests, one for robbery, 17 for non-aggravated assault, and five for aggravated felonious assault.

In 2019, there were 21 arrests, two for sexual assault, 17 for non-aggravated assault, and two for aggravated felonious assault.

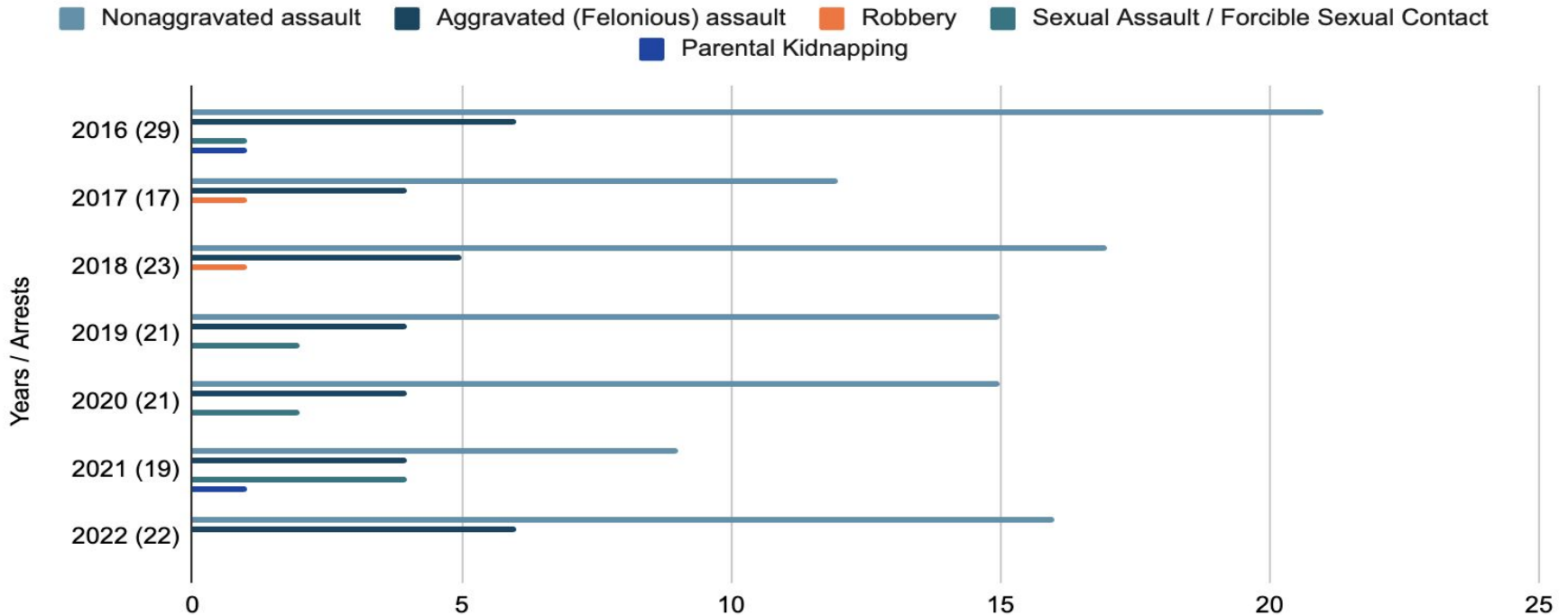
In 2020, the first full year of implementation, there were 21 arrests, two for sexual assault, 15 for non-aggravated assault, and four for aggravated felonious assault.*

In 2021, the second year of implementation, there were 19 arrests, one for parental kidnapping, three for sexual assault, one for forcible sexual contact, nine for non-aggravated assault, and four for aggravated felonious assault.

In 2022, the third year of the implementation, there were 22 arrests, 16 for non-aggravated assault and six for aggravated felonious assault.

Year	Nonaggravated assault	Aggravated (Felonious) assault	Robbery	Sexual Assault / Forcible Sexual Contact	Parental Kidnapping
2016 (29)	21	6		1	1
2017 (17)	12	4	1		
2018 (23)	17	5	1		
2019 (21)	15	4		2	
2020 (21)	15	4		2	
2021 (19)	9	4		4	1
2022 (22)	16	6			

Violent Crime Arrests in Buchanan, MI (2016-2022)



***2020's data may well be anomalous, as this was also the year of mandatory quarantines throughout the state due to COVID concerns.**

Did an increase in violent crime rates in the years following our adoption of recreational marijuana occur?

Thankfully, no.

In *The Nicest Place in America*, fears of increased violent crime due to legalization are unwarranted.

We can keep our title.

