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# Marijuana Industry Says Seniors Are The Next Budding Market

Baby boomers return to weed after many years away from it.



By David Moye

Legalized pot is an idea Americans are warming up to — almost two-thirds, [64 percent, approve of it](#), according to a Gallup poll from last October.

But while pot smokers are typically portrayed as young hipsters, oldsters may actually be the fastest growing weed-using demographic, many marijuana industry insiders tell HuffPost.

Turns out, all those senior citizens who tried pot in their hippie days are now toking, er, taking advantage of changing cannabis laws and better quality control of marijuana.

John Sudderth, the director of inventory at [Lightshade Dispensary](#), a Colorado-based dispensary with six locations, said senior citizens are the next budding market.

However, baby boomers have changed their pot habits since the Woodstock era, Sudderth said.

“We believe this demographic consumes less frequently than average. They like to take smaller doses, also,” he said.

Many people who smoked back in the day gave it up, partially because they feared legal consequences. But legalization, as well as pot strains bred for “consistent and repeatable effects” means oldsters are now less hesitant to try cannabis, Sudderth said.

His dispensary is helping spur sales by coordinating with Colorado-area senior living centers to help spread awareness of pot’s effectiveness in relieving some chronic pain.

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—San Francisco-based chiropractor Andrew Kerklaan

Nine states plus the District of Columbia have so far legalized marijuana for recreational use and medical purposes. In 20 other states, it’s been approved only for medicinal purposes. Pot remains illegal at the federal level, though President [Donald Trump](#) reportedly recently assured Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) that his administration will [allow states to pursue marijuana laws](#) as they see fit.

[Andrew Kerklaan](#), a chiropractor marketing his own line of cannabis-infused topical creams, sprays and sticks, joins those predicting the baby boomer market will have a large impact on the burgeoning pot industry, especially on the medical side.

“The oldsters have seen it before, haven’t done it in decades and will be open to it again,” he said. “Plus, the health focus of baby boomers will drive medical use for years to come.”

Because many potential pot users don’t want to put smoke in their lungs, industry insiders say other forms of ingestion should gain a foothold in coming years.

Linda Gilbert, the director of consumer insights at [BDS Analytics](#), which studies the cannabis market, predicts increased sales for edibles containing “micro-doses” of THC —

marijuana’s psychoactive component. She also expects a rise in interest in dissolvable THC products, such as skin patches.

And Gilbert foresees marijuana products becoming big in the cosmetics industry.

“We will continue to see more sophisticated products come to market,” she told HuffPost. “Eventually, cannabis topicals and beauty products will be part of a daily hygiene regimen, and we will see dispensaries have as many beauty options as a department store or drugstore.”

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—Shareef El-Sissi, chief financial officer of Eden Extracts

Shareef El-Sissi, chief financial officer of [Eden Extracts](#), a Hayward, California-based company that creates cannabis products, said vape pens containing cannabis oil cartridges are becoming a heavy hitter in the pot market.

“They represent 25 percent of sales in some dispensaries, which demonstrates that customers want something easy to consume,” he said. “A vape pen does not leave the same lingering smoke a joint does. As we see more working professionals and soccer moms as cannabis consumers, the market for vape pens will continue to grow.”

But old school pot smokers shouldn’t get out of joint just yet.

Punit Seth, the CEO of [Toast](#), a company that markets a cannabis pre-roll designed like a traditional tobacco cigarette, says vapes will not eliminate smoking entirely.

“We expect smoking to remain a dominant segment of the overall market,” he said. “We expect a portion of the decline in flower sales to move toward consumer packaged pre-rolls.”

Although THC gets the most interest from many pot smokers, many industry insiders believe the non-psychoactive cannabinoid CBD is the ticket to getting mainstream acceptance for marijuana.

Studies suggest CBD can [help treat epilepsy, depression and nausea](#), among other ailments. Derek Riedle, who runs [Civilized](#), a website that focuses on cannabis culture, said the compound deserves more intensive research.

“If people can get over their hangups with cannabis, they’re going to realize that there are almost universal benefits to CBD,” he said. “One entry point, I think is pet care. Pet owners are really starting to embrace CBD to treat their animals.

Mason Walker, the CEO of [East Fork Cultivars](#), an Oregon craft cannabis farm, terms CBD “the fad health supplement of the moment.” But he added that believes “it will have more staying power than açai berry or turmeric powder as it helps regulate a core part of the body — the endocannabinoid system — that researchers suggest may be compromised in large swaths of the population.”

[Emma Chasen](#), who has a degree in medicinal plant research, said she still believes cannabis flowers (or buds) with both THC and CBD provides the most benefits, medicinally and recreationally, for consumers.

“Cannabis flower has the full range of secondary compounds present within its matrix,” the Portland, Oregon, resident said. “Therefore ... cannabis flower is one of the more medicinal products on the market.”