

Study: Pot may be even safer than previously thought

By Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post

Compared to other recreational drugs – including alcohol – marijuana may be even safer than previously thought. And researchers may be systematically underestimating risks associated with alcohol use.

Those are the topline findings of recent research published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, a subsidiary of *Nature*. Researchers sought to quantify the risk of death associated with the use of a variety of commonly-used substances. They found that at the level of individual use, alcohol was the deadliest substance, followed by heroin and cocaine.

And all the way at the bottom of the list? Weed – roughly 114 times less deadly than booze, according to the authors, who ran calculations that compared lethal doses of a given substance with the amount that a typical person uses. Marijuana is also the only drug studied that posed low mortality risk to its users.

These findings reinforce drug safety rankings developed 10 years ago under a slightly different methodology. So in that respect, the study is more of a reaffirmation of previous findings than anything else. But given the current national and international debates over the legal status of marijuana and the risks associated with its use, the study arrives at a good time.

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