

Should marijuana be legalized nationally?

Introduction

Marijuana has been a hot topic for Americans for the last decade since the push for legalization in the early ten from states such as Oregon, California, Washington, and Colorado. These states are the ones that started the big push for marijuana legalization and were the first ones to do it in the country. There are many reasons for both sides of the argument for and against marijuana legalization in America. Hemp is not the same as marijuana. They are both the same species. Hemp is derived from marijuana but does not have a factor to get you high. I believe in the national legalization of marijuana. However, it seems like a great idea; it can only hurt our country and bring us, as a nation, to ask for more and legalize other drugs that may be more fatal for the nation's people. I will propose my argument and the opposing argument in the following few pages. I believe that marijuana, which was always stated as a gateway drug, will lead our nation into other avenues that will be harmful to the people of the nation, especially those that struggle with addiction.

The history of marijuana can be traced back to central Asia or Western China, 2800 BC, which was used for medical purposes. In America, before the arrival of the Puritans, the First Nations people were cultivating hemp. Hemp was used for its fibers in clothing, paper, and even hemp food (*Hemp history in America*). So, the puritans brought hemp in the early colonies in 1645. The hemp industry flourished from 1840-1860 due to the US navy. The Hemp industry took a hit due to the cotton gin stopping the hemp industry in its tracks. In 1937, Congress passed the Marijuana Tax Act, which placed all Cannabis culture under the regulatory control of the

U.S. Treasury Department. The Act required the registration and licensing of all hemp growers with the Federal Government to restrict the production of marijuana in the United States (Dempsey; Rawson, 1992; Ehrensing). So, during the early American experience, hemp was an industry cash crop that helped bolster the economy and start up America as a world power. Flash forward to 2020, and many states legalized marijuana and have maintained their economy, though not legal on a national level; states have decided to make moves into legalizing marijuana and other hard drugs like Oregon's Measure 110 in 2020.

America today seems to be a very fragmented and divided nation; due to the research and statistics from [pew research.org](http://pewresearch.org), most Americans across racial lines agree with marijuana legalization. Only the 75 and older age group does not agree with national legalization. Legalizers of marijuana believe in the drug's medical characteristics or free up law enforcement to focus on more critical criminal activity. In this, you can have police focus on more significant crimes than worry about minor drug offenses.

I agree with the opposing states that marijuana is a gateway drug and increases in Marijuana use cause more traffic incidents and court legal matters. Drug overdoses are their problem in America and have become the new pandemic; drug overdose deaths have increased dramatically over the past 15 years, increasing by 137% between 2000 and 2014 (Rudd et al., 2016), and are now the leading cause of death from injuries in the United States, exceeding deaths from suicide, gunshots, and motor vehicle accidents (Murphy et al., 2013). The drug and especially opioid epidemic in the nation has reached an all time high and needs to be addressed. I do not believe we should encourage certain behaviors like safe injection sites and others to

propel the use of opioids. On the other hand, what happens to a person that builds a tolerance to marijuana or marijuana is not getting the person “high” anymore; there is a possibility the person could go to opiates. There is no proof to this argument, but, My personal beliefs from the area I am from would support this. Here are some fast facts from the CDC about Marijuana being the most commonly used federally illegal drug in the United States; 48.2 million people, or about 18% of Americans, used it at least once in 2019.

Recent research estimated that approximately 3 in 10 people who use marijuana have marijuana use disorder. For people who begin using marijuana before age 18, the risk of developing marijuana use disorder is even greater. Marijuana use directly affects the brain, specifically the parts of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention, *decision-making*, coordination, emotion, and reaction time. Infants, children, and teens (who still have developing brains) are especially susceptible to the adverse effects of marijuana. Long-term or frequent marijuana use has been linked to an increased risk of psychosis or schizophrenia in some users.

Using marijuana during pregnancy may increase the person’s risk for pregnancy complications. Pregnant and breastfeeding persons should avoid marijuana.

The CDC’s facts about marijuana are interesting. I would focus on decision-making and psychosis. Now, this may not be everyone that uses marijuana, but there are some. The decision-making process for someone impaired could have them make decisions they would not usually make. I want to say that people that drink alcohol do not get in cars and drive. Whether one drink or 10, people still do. How much more for marijuana that you could dismiss as a cigarette?

I do not believe that marijuana will increase violent crimes, but I believe that though marijuana is legal, there are still ways to be justice involved. You can still get tickets for specific situations of marijuana use and quantity. I do believe that when things become legal that were presently illegal, there is a purpose of a reason for these decisions. Policy in most states says that marijuana is legal in small quantities. To have a policy in place has hurt criminal justice in the way that most incarcerated individuals for marijuana or minor drug offenses are being released. The states that are having this happen are seeing less funding for the justice systems in prison or jail. States have made decent revenue from the sale of marijuana. Now, where can the state make up for the loss of income for the justice system?

The house's law and public safety answer are DUIs and traffic offenses. A Boston University article states that Researchers analyzed 19 years of data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, a national database of fatal crashes on public roads. They found that from 2000 to 2018, the percentage of crash deaths involving cannabis increased from 9 percent to 21.5 percent, and the rate of fatalities involving cannabis and alcohol also more than doubled, from 4.8 percent to 10.3 percent. Their results also show that cannabis-involved car crashes are more likely to affect the deaths of passengers and individuals younger than 35 than crash deaths not involving cannabis. I believe time will tell about marijuana; I know one thing someone will always be making money off marijuana, whether illegally or legally. I do not believe anything that alters the mind besides GOD is good for human beings. I think marijuana legalization benefits those with medical issues, but the recreational side is not beneficial. The people who will help will be the state-run addiction services and clinics to funnel more money into the system. There is not too much data on people with Marijuana use disorder utilizing these

services. As Social workers, we need to understand the Person in the environment but also why addiction exists; then, we can help understand why we need substance like this to alter our mindsets.

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(Office of National Drug Control Policy , *Marijuana legalization: A bad idea*)

Author links open overlay panelNeil K.Mathur1Christopher J.Ruhm(onceptualization)2PersonEnvelope, K.Mathur1, N., 1, J.Ruhm(onceptualization)2PersonEnvelope, C., 2, AbstractMany states have legalized marijuana over the last two decades, Wen, H., Sun, L., Ruhm, C. J., Powell, D., McMichael, B. J., Kelly, E., Goodman-Bacon, A., Callaway, B., Abouk, R., Ahmad, F. B., Ali, M. M., Angrist, J. D., Aran, A., ... Chu, Y.-W. L. (2023, January 6). *Marijuana Legalization and opioid deaths*. Journal of Health Economics. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S016762962300005X>

(Neil K.Mathur,Christopher J.Ruhm et al., *Marijuana Legalization and opioid deaths* 2023)

Author links open overlay panelDavidPowellaPersonEnvelopeRosalie LiccardoPaculaabMireilleJacobsonbc, DavidPowellaPersonEnvelope, a, LiccardoPaculaab, R., b, MireilleJacobsonbc, c, AbstractRecent work finds that medical marijuana laws reduce the daily doses filled for opioid analgesics among Medicare Part-D and Medicaid enrollees, Wen, H., Shi, Y., Sevigny, E. L., Rudd, R. A., Paulozzi, L. J., Freisthler, B., Davis, J. M., Chu, Y. W. L., Anderson, D. M., Bachhuber, M. A., Borgelt, L. M., ... Hall, W. (2018, February 3). *Do medical marijuana laws reduce addictions and deaths related to pain killers?* Journal of Health Economics. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167629617311852>

(David Powell, Rosalie Liccardo Mireille, Jacobson et al., *Do medical marijuana laws reduce addictions and deaths related to pain killers?* 2018)