

**Should Marijuana be legalized nation wide?**

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02/13/2023

Our country for a very long time has had a very strong opinion about marijuana and marijuana consumption; it has been labeled the gateway drug by many.

However in recent years public opinion has changed and people are more accepting of medical and recreational use of marijuana; Several states including our own have made the use of and purchasing of marijuana legal. Twenty two states in the united states have legalized the use of marijuana recreationally. Sixteen states have made it legal for medical use only and eleven states have not legalized marijuana for neither medical or recreational use. So the question is should our country legalize marijuana use nation wide?

Most Americans would say yes, according to a survey conducted by The Pew Research Center on October 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> 2021; eighty eight percent of Americans collectively say that marijuana should be legal. Fifty nine percent say that it should be legal for both recreational and medical use and thirty percent say that it should just be legal for medical use only. There is only ten percent that say that its shouldn't be legal at all. (Green, 2022) Interestingly enough the survey also found that within those that are in favor of marijuana use older adults are far less likely than younger ones to favor legalizing it for recreational purposes. It is obvious that there is still a negative connotation with the use of marijuana outside of medical purposes; as the benefits for the medical use of marijuana are well documented and proven. So for sake of being thorough, we'll list the conditions that marijuana has been proven to treat. Crohn's disease Epilepsy, Multiple sclerosis, Migraines Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),Cancer Problems due to chemotherapy, Chronic pain, Anxiety,

Inflammation Psychosis, Insomnia, Loss of appetite, Nausea, Seizures Nervous system degeneration, High blood sugar, Psoriasis and Bacterial growth. So what are the some of positives outside of the well documented medical benefits to legalizing marijuana nation wide. Legalizing marijuana recreationally would help regulate marijuana making it a safe drug to use. When people purchase marijuana on the street they have no idea what they are getting and what other additives are present. When recreational use is legalized it would create quality control for the product(marijuana) being used. Also legalization would result in other safety measures such as child-resistant packaging and allow the government to put age requirements on buyers to limit underage usage. It would also them to license and regulate the entire supply chain of marijuana, including growers, distributors, retailers, and testing laboratories. (Staggs, 2017) Another positive is that marijuana use is less harmful in comparison to alcohol and tobacco use, both of which are legal even though alcohol and tobacco are know to cause cancer, liver damage and heart failure. According to the CDC six people die from alcohol poisoning everyday eighty eight thousand people die yearly from excessive alcohol use. There isn't any record of death due to marijuana overdoses. Another positive would be that legalizing recreational use of marijuana would end of the enforcement of marijuana law. Laws that have been disproportionately targeting black and brown minorities. Statistics show a significant racial disparity in the enforcement of marijuana laws, even though white and black people use marijuana at roughly the same rate, a black person in the US is three time more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession on average. In Iowa, the state with the highest inequity,

black folk are eight times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people. New York City, fifteen percent of marijuana possession cases involving white people result in conviction, compared to thirty two percent involving black people and thirty percent involving Latin X people. Being arrested and convicted for marijuana possession impacts these black and brown people's ability to get housing, get loans and jobs. (Cheney) New York City has realized this disparity and has moved to make sure that those who minorities that have previous convictions related to marijuana possession be some the first to get permits to sell marijuana recreationally legally. Already there are two black men in Manhattan that have benefitted from this and have opened up their own dispensaries. The final and possibly the biggest positive for legalizing marijuana recreationally is the boost in the economy from creating tax revenue and job opportunities. As of March 2022, states reported a combined total of eleven billion dollars in tax revenue from legal, adult-use cannabis sales. In 2021 alone, legalization states generated more than three billion dollars in cannabis tax revenue from adult-use sales. In addition to creating tax revenue, legalizing recreational marijuana creates jobs. As of January 2022, the legal marijuana industry had created four hundred and twenty eight thousand jobs, with one hundred and seven thousand jobs in 2021 alone. According to the Leafly Job Report jobs increased thirty three percent from 2020 to 2021 or in other words approximately two hundred new jobs per day. (Whitney, 2022)

After discussing all the positives of legalizing recreational marijuana use we have to list the negatives effects of it will have on the country as well. The

first con is that marijuana is an addictive drug, while not as addictive as harder drugs such as cocaine or meth it can still be addictive. Also excessive use of marijuana or ingesting (edibles) more than the recommended dosage could lead to other complications, such as anxiety attacks and psychotic like episodes. Health experts do not believe that recreational marijuana use should be legal, especially smoking it; smoking marijuana can damage lung tissues and cause breathing problems. According to research, smoking one marijuana joint is as harmful to your lungs as five tobacco cigarettes. Marijuana may also contain five times as much carbon monoxide concentration and three times as much tar as tobacco. People who smoke marijuana within a few hours are at higher risk of heart attacks and strokes. Also, another issue that has been discussed is vaping, vaping is dangerous due to toxic ammonia that is ingested; which result in lung irritation and asthma attacks. (Ferguson) Another negative that I didn't give much thought to was that fact that growing marijuana in excess is bad for the environment. According to a report, both indoor and outdoor cannabis growing is water intensive. The high water demands lead to water pollution and diversion, which could negatively affect the ecosystem. Studies show that cannabis plants emit a significant amount of biogenic volatile compounds which can cause indoor quality issues. (Wilt, 2017) Also Cannabis plants need almost twice the amount of water required to grow grapes and tomatoes. According to Rosamond Naylor, a senior fellow at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment taking water directly from rivers and streams in the summer to grow marijuana not only reduces the water for cultivation but it also endangers the wildlife. (Thompson et al., 1970)

In conclusion, before doing this assignment I was for the legalization for marijuana nation wide mainly because, (if I'm being honest with myself) of the opportunity for black and brown people that were harshly convicted for marijuana possession to open their own dispensaries and get back some of what they lost. However after doing the research, I'm now on the fence after learning about the negative effects.

## References

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