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The Social Impacts of Cannabis Legalization In Oregon: A Case Study

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The Social Impacts of Cannabis Legalization In Oregon:

A Case Study By Nickolas Hash
Abstract:

- Long held assumptions about various drugs or substances being unavoidably dangerous for society might not hold as true as once believed. Ulterior sources of input like personal morality or faith tend to inform these positions, resulting in policies that do not align with fact-based research. The aggregate of these policies make up what we often hear referred to as the “U.S. War on Drugs,” which many in the scholarly world have chalked up as a failed political crusade that disproportionately affects poor and minority communities. A growing body of work is now confirming that the dangers once associated with substances like cannabis were done-so under false pretenses and that the societal and economic benefits of legalization appear to largely outweigh the correlated consequences. Pattern of improvements in social factors such as violent crime rates and opioid abuse statistics are continuing to be observed and substantial economic gains within fully regulated markets are coinciding these community health impacts. More telling still, the states in which that have granted the greatest amount of freedoms surrounding cannabis are showing the strongest relationships to this pattern. The data being collected in the very first US recreational market cases, e.g. Colorado and Washington, appear to hold true to this mounting relationship as well, leading one to ask if this is ubiquitous in all state cases. Those that quickly followed, e.g. Oregon and Alaska, may offer results that help clarify or embolden what we are seeing, therefore this report examines the case of Oregon’s recreational market effects on the state against the flagship states’ and national trend relationships for similar policies changes. Conversely, we may discover our first outlier case that could help us more fully understand the true social and economic implications of progressive cannabis policies among the individual states and among the US as a whole.
Main Themes:

- Cannabis policy is not currently based on research. (For a number of reasons)
- What is fact and what is fiction?
- Available data tends to contradict classic theories on cannabis in the public sphere
- Data from medically legal and now recreationally legal states are backing these theories up
- Preliminary data and speculation: Oregon should fall right in line. (On the off chance it doesn’t, I get to explore why it’s an outlier)
States that legalized medical marijuana had 25% fewer opioid-related deaths.

October 2014 Medical Cannabis Laws & Opioid Analgesic Overdose Mortality in the United States, 1990-2010, Marcus A. Bachhuber et. al. (JAMA intern Med.)
Leading Sources and Data:

1. Maier, Mannes, & Koppenhofer - Found no increases in violent crime post-legalization. Small decreases. Found economics were much stronger correlations to higher crimes.

2. Friedman - Research showed that the US war on drugs was a failed moralistic crusade as early as 1991. (He wasn’t the first to say this by any stretch, just researched it very thoroughly)

3. Bachhuber, Saloner, Cunningham, Barry - Tracked opiate-death decreases of 25% in states that legalized medical marijuana and increased as time went on. (Weedmaps)

4. Marijuana Policy Group - Created report on early economic statistics for Cannabis in 2016. Reported OR, WA, CO, AL, adding 18,000 new jobs, $2.3b in new revenue, and having the second highest wealth creation rates for investment in the U.S. (Second to Government)
Methodology

Case Study

Statistics: are being derived directly from official public entities and then compared to the same stats over time as well as to other states, broken into a number of categories. I’m currently compiling heroin mortality rates, non-violent drug related incarceration rates by race, cannabis tax details, and violent crime rates statewide. If time permits before publication, I will disaggregate some of the data within Oregon for geographic analysis.

Mitigating Factors: A number of small events greater trends will be considered and corrected for, such as population increases or demographic shifts, as well as stints of political or otherwise atypical public violence. (i.e. Post-Trump Election Protests)
This is what I expect...

“Cannabis” states are green. “Not-cannabis” states are orange.

It’s clear that cannabis states are just better... every month of the year. Oregon will most likely show the pattern, if not exceed the norm in its individual case.
Thank you.


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