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# Drug Policy Research Center Hot Topic: Marijuana Legalization

The RAND Drug Policy Research Center is a non-partisan research center dedicated to providing objective analysis and research to decisionmakers. We do not have an official policy position on marijuana reform and more generally RAND does not advocate for or against legislation at any level of government.

But for more than 20 years, RAND researchers have published articles and studies that will be useful for those making decisions about marijuana policy. Here we summarize some of these studies and provide links to the publications (some journal articles may require subscription). This is not an exhaustive list of RAND's marijuana-related publications and we encourage readers to visit <http://dprc.rand.org> for more information.

## Featured Multimedia



Jan 21, 2015

# Insights About Marijuana Legalization in the United States

In this January 2015 Congressional Briefing, RAND researchers Beau Kilmer and Jonathan Caulkins present an overview of their new report, *Considering Marijuana Legalization: Insights for Vermont and Other Jurisdictions*.

## Commentary

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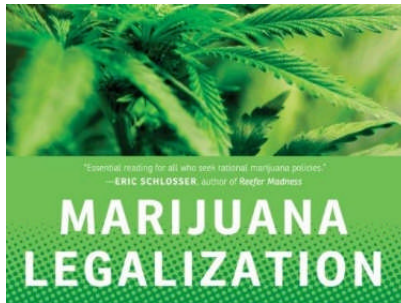
### Research categories:

- [Books](#)
- [Policy and Law](#)
- [Markets and Prices](#)



- Criminal Justice
- Outcomes
- Prevention and Interventions

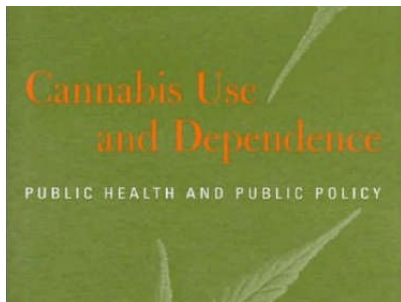
## Books



## **Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs to Know**

Jun 20, 2012

A crisp, clear, and comprehensive non-partisan primer, this book covers the risks and benefits of use, current laws, and the personal impacts of legalization. The authors discuss the likely costs and benefits of legalization as well as possible policy options.



## **Cannabis Use and Dependence: Public Health and Public Policy**

Jan 1, 2003

Exploring the relationship between health policy, public health and the law regarding the controversial use of cannabis, this study assesses the impact of illegality in drug use and compares it with the policies of the U.S., Europe and Australia as well as other developed societies. Written by two leading drug advisors, the analysis contributes to an important field of research.



## **Drug War Heresies: Learning From Other Vices, Times, & Places**

Aug 21, 2001

This book provides the first multidisciplinary and nonpartisan analysis of how the United States should decide on the legal status of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. It draws on data about the experiences of Western European nations with less punitive drug policies as well as new analyses of America's experience with legal cocaine and heroin a century ago.

## **Policy and Law**

## **Markets and Prices**

## **Criminal Justice**

## **Considering Marijuana Legalization: Insights for Vermont and Other Jurisdictions – 2015**

Marijuana legalization is a controversial and multifaceted issue. This report provides a foundation for thinking about the consequences of different marijuana policy options while being explicit about the uncertainties involved.

 [Full Document](#)  [Research Brief](#)

## **Policy Designs for Cannabis Legalization: Starting with the Eight Ps – 2014**

This paper does not address the question of whether cannabis should be legal; it instead focuses on the design considerations confronting jurisdictions that are pondering a change in cannabis policy.

 [Abstract](#)

## **Words Can Be Deceiving: A Review of Variation Among Legally Effective Medical Marijuana Laws in the United States – 2014**

This study seeks to clarify the characteristics of state medical marijuana laws (MMLs) in place since 1990 that are most relevant to consumers/patients and categorizes those aspects most likely to affect the prevalence of use, and consequently the intensity of public health and welfare effects.

 [Abstract](#)

## **Developing Public Health Regulations for Marijuana: Lessons from Alcohol and Tobacco – 2014**

Our goal is not to address whether marijuana legalization is a good or bad idea but, rather, to help policymakers understand the decisions they face and some lessons learned from research on public health approaches to regulating alcohol and tobacco over the past century.

 [Abstract](#)

## **Marijuana Liberalization Policies: Why We Can't Learn Much from Policy Still in Motion – 2014**

Much remains unanswered about the potential effects of marijuana liberalization policies because the most relevant questions have yet to be fully considered and addressed.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Multinational overview of cannabis production regimes – 2013**

This study provides a multinational overview of cannabis production regimes, with a special focus on identifying and describing official statements and/or legal decisions made about production regimes for non-medical and non-scientific purposes.

 [Full Document](#)

### **Design Considerations for Legalizing Cannabis: Lessons Inspired by Analysis of California's Proposition 19 – 2011**

How legalizing marijuana would affect consumption and tax revenues will depend on many design choices including tax level, incentives for a continued black market, whether advertising is restricted, and how the regulatory system is designed and adjusted.

 [Abstract](#)

### **How Might Marijuana Legalization in California Affect Drug Trafficking Revenues and Violence in Mexico? – 2010**

Discusses whether legalizing marijuana in California would reduce the revenues of Mexican drug trafficking organizations and related violence.

 [Research Brief](#)

### **Insights on the Effects of Marijuana Legalization on Prices and Consumption – 2010**

Testimony presented before the California State Assembly Public Safety Committee and California State Senate Public Safety Committee on September 21, 2010.

 [Testimony](#)

### **Altered State? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets – 2010**

Legalizing marijuana in California would lead to a substantial decline in price, but there is much uncertainty about legalization's effect on public budgets and consumption; even minor changes in assumptions lead to major differences in outcomes.

 [Full Document](#)  [Research Brief](#)

## **Legalizing Marijuana: Issues to Consider Before Reforming California State Law – 2009**

Testimony presented before the California State Assembly Public Safety Committee on October 28, 2009.

 [Testimony](#)

## **State Medical Marijuana Laws: Understanding the Laws and Their Limitations – 2002**

Attention has been given to the debate regarding allowances for medical marijuana use since the 1996 California and Arizona ballot initiatives.

 [Abstract](#)  [Research Brief](#)

## **Interpreting Dutch Cannabis Policy: Reasoning by Analogy in the Legalization Debate – 1997**

The Dutch depenalization and subsequent de facto legalization of cannabis since 1976 is used here to highlight the strengths and limitations of reasoning by analogy as a guide for projecting the effects of relaxing drug prohibitions.

 [Full Document](#)

## **How Big Is the U.S. Market for Illegal Drugs? – March 10, 2014**

Using data from 2000 to 2010, RAND researchers estimated the number of users, expenditures, and consumption for four illicit drugs: cocaine (including crack), heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine (meth).

 [Research Brief](#)

## **Why Changes in Price Matter When Thinking About Marijuana Policy: A Review of the Literature on the Elasticity of Demand – January 1, 2014**

Recent debates regarding liberalization of marijuana policies often rest on assumptions regarding the extent to which such policy changes would lead to a change in marijuana consumption and by whom.

 [Abstract](#)

## **Before the Grand Opening: Measuring Washington State's Marijuana Market in the Last Year Before Legalized Commercial Sales – December 18, 2013**

This report estimates the total weight of marijuana consumed in Washington state in 2013 -- the last year before legalized commercial sale of marijuana -- in order to provide decisionmakers with baseline information about the size of the state's market.

 [Full Document](#)

### **High Tax States: Options for Gleaning Revenue from Legal Cannabis** – January 1, 2013

This Article seeks to broaden the revenue discussion about marijuana legalization with respect to policy goals, types of taxes, and components of revenue.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Insights About Cannabis Production and Distribution Costs in the EU** – January 1, 2013

This report demonstrates how cannabis prices increase across the supply chain in the EU as distributors take additional mark ups to compensate themselves not only for shipping costs but also for the risks they assume.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Estimating the Size of the EU Cannabis Market** – January 1, 2013

This report generates estimates of retail cannabis expenditure in the EU using new data about cannabis consumption and expenditures from a web survey conducted in seven Member States.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Bringing Perspective to Illicit Markets: Estimating the Size of the U.S. Marijuana Market** – January 1, 2011

The authors review two general approaches to drug market estimation-- supply-side and demand-side--before turning to a more specific analysis of studies that measure the size of the U.S. marijuana market.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Risks and Prices: The Role of User Sanctions in Marijuana Markets** – January 1, 2010

Lowering the legal risks for marijuana users increases the demand for the drug, and consequently, increases prices and profits for drug dealers.



 [Abstract](#)

### **Estimating the size of the global drug market: A demand-side approach: Report 2** – April 21, 2009

The report generates country-level consumption and retail expenditure estimates for cannabis, heroin, cocaine, and amphetamine-type substances.

 [Full Document](#)

### **Marijuana Markets: Inferences from Reports by the Household Population** – January 1, 2006

There are 400 million retail marijuana purchases in the U.S. each year and the average purchase size is small, about six or seven joints.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Marijuana and Youth** – January 1, 2001

For the past 25 years, marijuana has been the most commonly used illicit drug among adolescents.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Criminal Justice Costs of Prohibiting Marijuana in California** – 2014

This chapter assesses these previous efforts and describes a bottom-up approach to estimate the criminal justice costs of prohibiting marijuana in California.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Heterogeneity in the Composition of Marijuana Seized in California** – 2011

The chemical compounds found in marijuana deserve more attention as efforts to regulate marijuana for medical and recreational use go forward.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Racial Differences in Marijuana-Users' Risk of Arrest in the United States** – 2006

A recent study of arrest data show that African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession offences than Whites.

 [Abstract](#)

## **Just Cause or Just Because? Prosecution and Plea-Bargaining Resulting in Prison Sentences on Low-Level Drug Charges in California and Arizona – 2005**

Examines the characteristics of California and Arizona offenders who ultimately ended up in prison on low-level drug charges.

 [Full Document](#)

## **Outcomes**

### **Cannabis Use and Antisocial Behavior Among Youth – 2014**

This paper examines a broad set of cannabis use patterns and multiple dimensions of antisocial behaviors and test the empirical importance of two prominent criminological theories -- general strain and social bond -- in explaining associations between cannabis use and antisocial behavior.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Natural Experiments in a Complex and Dynamic Environment: The Need for a Measured Assessment of the Evidence – 2014**

The shift from punitive prohibition to legalizing marijuana at the state (or federal) level may produce a net social benefit.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Epidemiological Model for Examining Marijuana Use Over the Life Course – 2012**

Trajectories of drug use are usually studied empirically by following over time persons sampled from either the general population (most often youth and young adults) or from heavy or problematic users (e.g., arrestees or those in treatment).

 [Abstract](#)

## **Prevention and Interventions**

### **Marijuana Use from Adolescence to Young Adulthood: Multiple Developmental Trajectories and Their Associated Outcomes – 2004**

This study used latent growth mixture modeling to identify discrete developmental patterns of marijuana use from early adolescence (age 13) to young adulthood (age 23) among a sample of 5,833 individuals.

 [Full Document](#)

### **Reassessing the Marijuana Gateway Effect – 2002**

The common-factor model has implications for evaluating marijuana control policies that differ significantly from those supported by the gateway model.

 [Abstract](#)  [Research Brief](#)

### **A Longitudinal Examination of Alcohol, Marijuana, and Cigarette Perceived Norms Among Middle School Adolescents – 2013**

We examined changes in perceived norms of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes over a two-year period among a large and diverse sample of 6th and 7th grade youth.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Peer Influence on Marijuana Use in Different Types of Friendships – 2013**

This study examines whether structural features of friendships moderate friends' influence on adolescent marijuana use over time.

 [Abstract](#)

### **Pilot Test of Project CHOICE: A Voluntary Afterschool Intervention for Middle School Youth – 2007**

The current study reports findings from a pilot evaluation of a voluntary alcohol and marijuana intervention for young teens.

 [Abstract](#)

### **New Inroads in Preventing Adolescent Drug Use: Results From a Large-Scale Trial of Project ALERT in Middle Schools – 2003**

School-based drug prevention programs can prevent occasional and more serious drug use, help low- to high-risk adolescents, and be effective in diverse school environments.

 [Full Document](#)  [Research Brief](#)

## **Project ALERT Plus May Leverage the Effect of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign – 2006**

This fact sheet reports lowered use of marijuana among ninth graders exposed to anti-drug messages from the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign along with Project ALERT Plus, a drug prevention curriculum for middle school students.

 [Research Brief](#)

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### **ABOUT**

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.



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