



How Well Is Cannabis Legalization Curtailing the Illegal Market?

CRDCN & Hathaway, Andrew D. "How Well Is Cannabis Legalization Curtailing the Illegal Market?"
CRDCN research-policy snapshots. July 2022 <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27723>

What the researcher(s) did

The researchers assess how the legalization of cannabis in Canada has affected its use and distribution patterns, with a focus on the illicit market. Using data from the National Cannabis Survey, the researchers compare data from before and after legalization to examine how the primary supply source has changed across the provinces since legalization.

What the researcher(s) found

The researchers found that legalization reduced the probability of users purchasing from "dealers" by approximately one third (37%). Higher-level users are still more likely to report buying cannabis from dealers than low-level users. A cross-province comparison shows that respondents in Quebec and Ontario were more likely to continue sourcing from dealers, while BC respondents were the least likely.

RDC Datasets used

National Cannabis Survey (NCS) 2018 and 2019

Policy areas this research can inform

- Crime and justice
- Health
- Population and demography
- Statistical methods

Policy implications of this research

Two of the key objectives in the policy decision to legalize cannabis were to safeguard public health and divert purchasing/profits from the illicit market. The findings of this study help to further the understanding of factors that determine the extent to which legalization is successful at competing with the illegal cannabis market. This analysis outlines price and access as significant factors in predicting the supply source. "Dealers" remain a key source for cannabis, especially among those who use it most. While appealing to consumer preferences toward safe, reliable and clean options with knowledgeable staff, support legal retail options, factors such as stigma and the pre-eminence of cost over safety and quality continue to support illicit sourcing. These are important considerations in next steps for legal retail options.

Read the full article

Hathaway, A. D., Cullen, G. & Walters, D. (2021). How Well Is Cannabis Legalization Curtailing the Illegal Market? A Multi-wave Analysis of Canada's National Cannabis Survey. *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue D'Études Canadiennes*, 55(2), 307-336. doi:10.3138/jcs-2020-0056.

