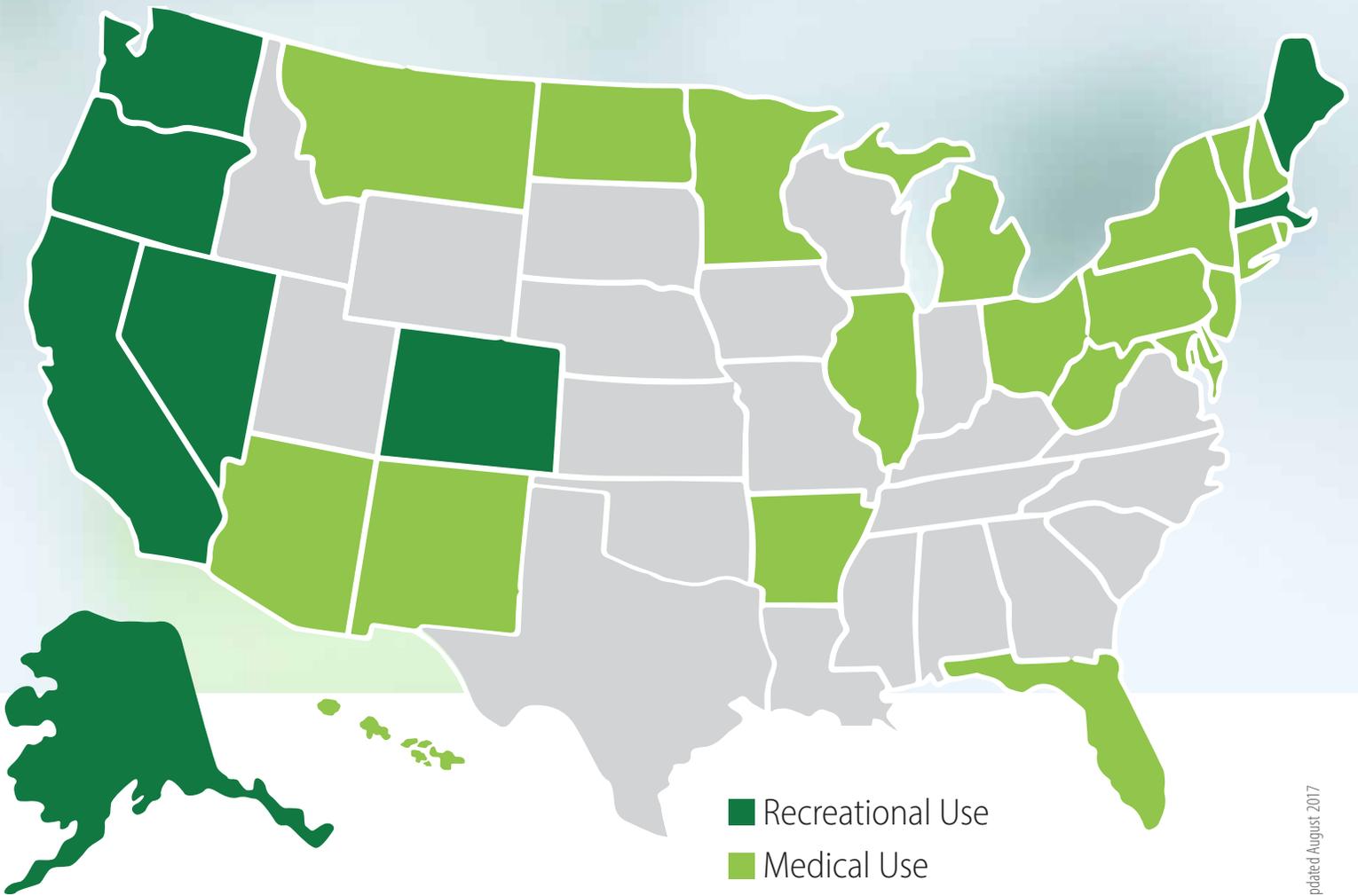


Marijuana Legalization

Research » to inform your policy

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Medical and recreational marijuana use are widespread, with the District of Columbia and more than half of U.S. states allowing legalized marijuana in some form. As a policymaker, you're faced with making challenging decisions about how your state will regulate marijuana. The policies you help shape could have profound impacts on the health and well-being of your state's citizens, as well as on the state economy.



By taking an evidence-based approach, RTI International can help you develop the insights you need to formulate sound policy related to legalized marijuana use. Regardless of where you are in the process—if your state is just starting to consider legalization, is considering legalization restricted to medical use, is transitioning from medical to recreational use, or is already post-legalization—we can help.

Research »



THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF LEGALIZATION »

Legalization of marijuana can lead to both potential harms and benefits. Potential harms include increased use among youth, lower academic achievement among youth users, increased incidence of impaired driving, accidental consumption, and unexpected highs. Potential benefits include greater product and source regulation, reduced reliance on opioids and other pain medications, and reductions in marijuana-related arrests and incarcerations. Positive or negative outcomes, intended or unintended consequences—we can help you better understand both sides of the issue and find out more about the potential impact specifically for your state.

to inform your policy



AN INFORMED PUBLIC » Marijuana legalization provides many new communication opportunities. How will you communicate with the public about changes in marijuana laws and how to avoid the adverse outcomes associated with using marijuana? How does legalization change the consumer demographic? How will you know that your messages resonate? How frequently are consumers exposed to health messages on the internet? Our public health communications experts can help you develop, test, and tailor effective messages to ensure your citizens know the facts—whether you are developing packaging standards, budtender certification requirements, or planning a public education campaign.



EDIBLES: SAME INGREDIENTS, DIFFERENT TASTES »

It might come from the same plant, but edibles are different from inhaled forms of marijuana. How do the effects and duration of the high compare to inhaled forms, and do the dosages differ? Are edibles healthier than inhaled forms? Consuming edibles is more discreet than smoking marijuana, so what does that mean for when, where, and how often people are likely to use them? What are the risks for accidental consumption, especially with edibles that resemble candy? We can help answer these questions and more, including the types of edibles that consumers prefer, how often they purchase edibles from dispensaries, and whether dispensary staff members provide accurate advice on intended usage.

WHAT'S IN A LABEL? » Like other controlled substances—such as alcohol, cigarettes, and pharmaceutical products—you should consider the needs for, and implications of, marijuana product labels. What information should be included on product labels? Should you consider different things for different forms of marijuana, such as edibles? Are the labels effective and do people understand them? Because no national regulation of marijuana product labeling exists, we can help you develop the evidence you need to make sound labeling rules.





MARIJUANA, OPIOIDS, AND ALCOHOL USE—THE RELATIONSHIPS » Evidence shows that

legalizing recreational marijuana will likely affect use of other substances, such as opioids and alcohol. For example, research suggests that greater availability of marijuana may reduce reliance on opioids and other pain medications. Given America’s current opioid crisis, could legalizing marijuana be part of the solution? The relationship between marijuana and alcohol is more complex; studies suggest that marijuana functions as a substitute for alcohol in some contexts and as a complement in others. Our researchers continue to investigate these relationships. As you develop policies to control and regulate marijuana, it may be helpful to consider the ways these policies may also affect use of alcohol and co-use of alcohol and marijuana.

ALL ABOUT THE ECONOMY » Legalizing marijuana could have a substantial effect on your state's economy, with the potential for job creation as well as sales and tax revenues. But to what extent? And what might be the impacts on the health care system, criminal justice system, tourism, agriculture, the overall job market, or other economic drivers? Our experts can help you understand the complexities and model likely outcomes based on the decisions you could make.





DISPENSARIES—PART PHARMACY, PART COFFEE SHOP? »

Moving marijuana sales from a street corner to a store front on Main Street presents further questions to consider. What kinds of organizations will be allowed to sell and/or produce marijuana? Where will they be allowed to sell and advertise marijuana—online, billboards, newspapers? What about home delivery? Will customer identity be kept private? What kinds of products will be sold? And what about nearby businesses and other organizations—should a dispensary be allowed to open near a school, a place of worship, or in a neighborhood? These point-of-sale policy decisions are complex. We can help you gather the data you need to inform seller and buyer transaction rules.

SELECT PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS » RTI's marijuana project experience includes public health policy research, surveillance, program evaluation, and the development of analytic tools and innovative reporting formats.

- » Conducted the **National Survey on Drug Use and Health** since 1988 to collect data on marijuana use, which can be linked to states for policy-wide analysis.
- » Studied consumers' use and understanding of **labeling features for edibles**, which revealed that improvements are needed so that edibles are safely consumed, and to prevent unintentional exposure.
- » Measured **co-use of marijuana and nonmedical prescription pain relievers**. Higher levels of marijuana use were consistently associated with more frequent consumption of prescription pain relievers.
- » Assessed the effects of **marijuana and opioids co-use**. Findings suggest that people who inject drugs use marijuana to reduce their pain and/or their nonmedical use of opioids.
- » Conducted a **national survey** of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding marijuana.
- » Compared **polysubstance use** among medical and recreational marijuana users. Prevalence rates of hazardous drinking and nonmedical stimulant use were significantly lower among medical marijuana users.
- » Evaluated a **public health campaign to prevent driving high** and studied the effects of being high on perceptions about the safety of driving high. Respondents who were high were more likely to believe they could safely drive under the influence of both marijuana and alcohol.
- » Developed a **social media analysis tool** to better inform clinical and policy decision making. The data show public perception of the efforts to legalize marijuana and help stakeholders understand medical marijuana use in people with chronic pain.
- » Conducted a **social network analysis of marijuana dispensaries** to understand how common Twitter behaviors influence the formation of communities around the marketing of marijuana products and the larger industry.
- » Conducted a **survey of budtenders** to measure shared decision-making processes between dispensary staff members and consumers.
- » Developed a novel tool for policymakers and clinicians to **measure marijuana consumption practices**.
- » Produced a series of **interactive reports on marijuana, opioid, and synthetic drug use** in workplaces for audiences such as employee assistance programs and occupational physicians.
- » Documented the **relationship between trying new marijuana products and edibles** with experiencing an unexpected high, and outcomes of unexpected highs.



OUR TEAM » RTI's expertise in marijuana-related research makes us an ideal partner. Our multidisciplinary research team can help you gain the data-driven insights you need to create comprehensive and effective policies. We offer a wide range of experience in areas such as:

- » Economic modeling
- » Program evaluation
- » Epidemiology and surveillance
- » Policy analysis
- » Survey research
- » Advanced statistics and data science
- » Public health communication

CONTACT US

The journey toward legalization is one with strong points of view on both sides of the debate. Let's move beyond opinions and work together to uncover the data you need to create sound, evidence-based strategies. » www.rti.org/marijuana

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