

Green Entrepreneur

All Those Fears About Marijuana Legalization Never Materialized

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On the contrary, new research shows that legalization has been great for creating jobs and boosting state budgets.

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A new survey of recent research into the impact of marijuana legalization shows that many of the fears used to argue against legalization never happened. For example, concerns about increased crime, more traffic accidents, and more people missing work? None have come to pass. In fact, legalization may have helped reduce claims on state workers' compensation programs by giving older workers a way to manage pain better.

The new-look on these issues came from Planet Money, the National Public Radio program that focuses on economic and financial matters. It involved review of a number of studies, some of which have been reported on by Green Entrepreneur.

The study findings contradicted some of the worst fears of opponents.

In states where voters have approved the legalization of marijuana, the arguments against legalization have often focused on the potentially dangerous impact of allowing people to access adult-use, legal cannabis.

Among those concerns was an anticipated increase in crime. However, a recently updated study from the Cato Institute found that legalizing cannabis has neither increased nor lowered crime rates. The institute noted that while police chiefs, governors, and some policymakers spoke out against legalization because of "its purported links to crime," the violent crime rate in legal states "has neither soared nor plummeted."

The same is true of fatal car accidents. Several studies have looked at this issue and seen no increase in traffic fatalities with legalization. Some have even found a reduction in traffic accidents.

The Cato Institute study also found that while many had hoped legalization would decrease cannabis prices, they have risen slightly on average. For example, the study found the price of marijuana in California has gone from \$250 per ounce to \$260 per ounce.

On the other hand, marijuana has become a huge job creator.

Planet Money noted what has been apparent in the past several years: the cannabis industry is employing a rapidly increasing number of people. A new study from Whitney Economics and

Leafly reports that the cannabis industry added about 77,000 jobs in 2020 alone, a year where other industries lost many jobs because of the coronavirus pandemic.

There are now an estimated 321,000 people working in the cannabis industry. California employs the most people in the industry at 57,970, while Colorado is second at 35,539. Florida, where only medical marijuana is legal, has the third most cannabis workers at 31,444.

Legalization also has poured money into state coffers, where it goes to fund everything from education programs and school construction to early literacy programs and stop bullying campaigns. California now collects about \$50 million a month in marijuana taxes, while Colorado collects about \$20 million a month.