

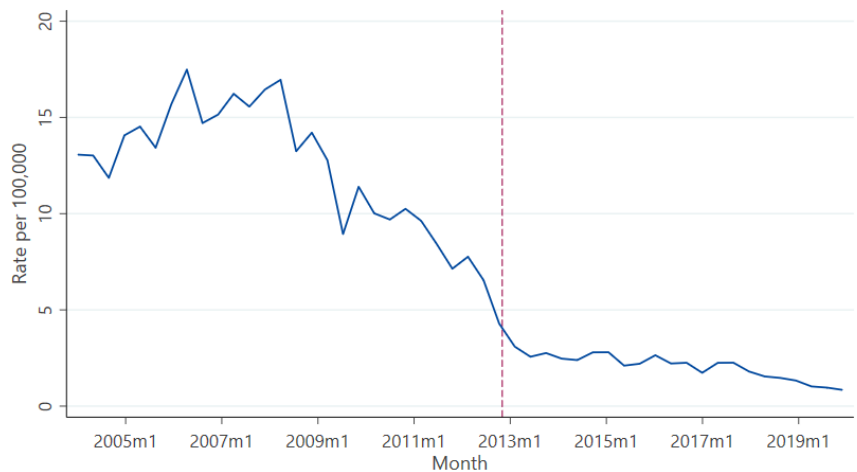
## Technical Report: Initiative 502 and Cannabis-Related Convictions

This report is part of a larger mandate to evaluate the long-term consequences of non-medical cannabis (NMC) legalization in Washington over a 20-year period (ending in 2032). In this report, we specifically focus on outcomes related to cannabis possession conviction outcomes.

### Background

After Initiative 502 (I-502) went into effect in December 2012, possession of up to one ounce of cannabis for personal use was legalized for individuals ages 21 and older. Proponents of I-502 argued for its potential to reduce crime and correctional populations. Specifically, arrests and convictions for cannabis possession and sales were expected to drop after I-502 was enacted.

**Population Rate (per 100,000) of Cannabis Possession Misdemeanor Convictions in Washington State—Ages 12-85**



**Notes:**

Data come from WSIPP's Criminal History Database, 2005-2019. The dashed line denotes the month I-502 went into effect (December 2012).

### Findings

- Although cannabis possession conviction rates were already declining in the years prior, we still observed a large decrease in monthly conviction rates in the immediate aftermath of I-502. Among legal-aged adults, rates drop to almost zero.
- Among underaged populations, especially those ages 18-20, conviction rates substantively declined after I-502 went into effect, although not as dramatically as for legal-aged adults.
- Declines in conviction rates after NMC legalization were shared across racial categories.

### Limitations

More extensive and detailed data are required to rigorously examine the relationship between I-502 and other criminal offenses and the local impacts of retail operations within the state.

#### Assignment Details

Assigned by Initiative 502 in 2012  
[Full report available on WSIPP's website](#)

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