

Technical Report: *The Relationship Between Initiative 502 and Reported Substance Use*

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 reported cannabis and other substance use.

Background

Effective December 2012, I-502 legalized the possession, use, and commercial sales of non-medical cannabis for people ages 21 and older. Licensed commercial cannabis retail sales started in July 2014. This study explores changes in reported cannabis use for adolescents and adults before and after legalization and the start of retail sales.

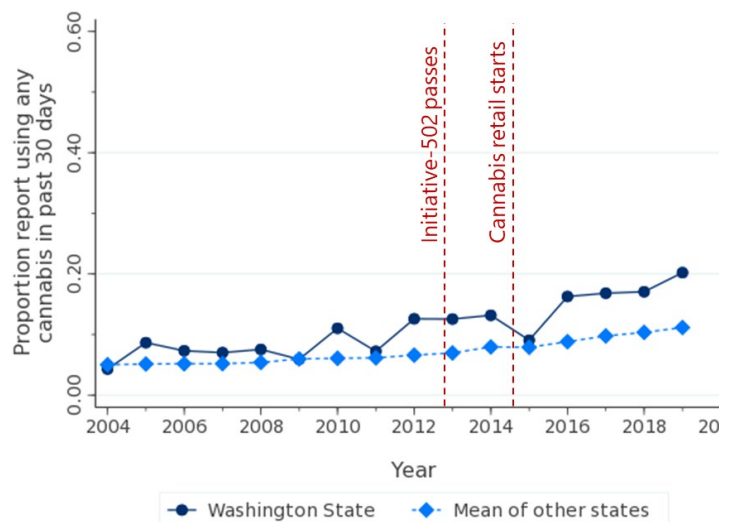
Findings

- We did not find significant changes in overall reported cannabis use in WA after I-502 went into effect *relative to comparable states*. Although we observe a steady upward trend in reported adult past-month cannabis use in Washington, we observe a similar pattern in comparison states.
- We did not find significant changes in alcohol and other substance use in WA after I-502 went into effect *relative to comparable states*.

Limitations

We use aggregated state-level data, which focuses on the overall average effect of any cannabis legalization statewide and, therefore, does not account for the separate impact of other components of I-502 or differences in the impact of retail sales across different regions of the state.

Proportion Legal-Aged Adults in WA Reporting Past-Month Cannabis Use, Ages 21 and older



Notes:

Figure created using National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) sampling weights, design variables, and methodology recommended by NSDUH documentation. Restricted state identifiers were required for this analysis because the analyses required restricted-use data. The data were accessed through the Research Data Center.

Assignment Details

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

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