



## Top 10 Reasons to Legalize and Regulate Cannabis

### **1. A country that values liberty should not be punishing adults for using cannabis.**

Cannabis is far safer than alcohol, tobacco, and many medications. In a nation dedicated to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” the government should not be tearing families apart over a plant that is safer than alcohol.

### **2. Prohibition wastes public resources, while legalizing and taxing cannabis brings in much-needed revenue.**

An estimate by the Congressional Research Service projected that replacing cannabis prohibition with taxation and regulation could yield \$6.8 billion in excise taxes alone. In Washington State, taxes on cannabis sales brought in \$600 million in 2020.

**3. Arresting cannabis offenders prevents police from focusing on real crime.** In 2019, the FBI reported 663,367 cannabis arrests and citations — more arrests than for all violent crimes combined. Meanwhile, FBI data showed that police only cleared 33 percent of rapes, 31 percent of robberies, and 14 percent of burglaries by making an arrest. Data published in *Police Quarterly* showed a higher percentage of some crimes were solved after legalization in both Colorado and Washington.

**4. Prohibition sends an incredible number of Americans through the criminal justice system, ruining countless lives.** According to the FBI, there have been more than 15 million cannabis arrests in the U.S. since 1995. While cannabis consumers who were not convicted have gone on to be president or Supreme Court justice, a criminal conviction can stand in the way of securing a job, getting housing, or receiving a professional license, student loan, food assistance, driver’s license, or firearms permit.

**5. Cannabis laws are disproportionately enforced.** According to the ACLU, Black individuals are more than 3.5 times as likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than white individuals nationwide, despite similar rates of use.

**6. Replacing prohibition with regulation creates barriers to teens accessing cannabis.** A 2012 survey by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found 40% of high schoolers reported knowing a student who sells cannabis at school — while under 1% know a peer who sells alcohol. Regulated cannabis businesses check IDs and aren’t allowed to sell to or employ minors.

**7. Cannabis prohibition breeds violence.** As was the case during alcohol prohibition, driving this lucrative market underground results in violence. Both buyers and sellers are vulnerable to assault.

**8. Only regulation allows for control.** Prohibition guarantees that cannabis will not be tested for purity and potency, creating the risk of contamination by dangerous pesticides, molds, bacteria, or even lacing.

**9. Prohibition is bad for the environment.** Illicit cannabis growers sometimes use banned

pesticides, divert waterways, and leave hazardous waste in state and national parks. Regulated cannabis businesses are monitored to ensure compliance with zoning and environmental laws.

**10. Cannabis is safer than alcohol.** Researchers have consistently concluded that cannabis is less toxic than alcohol, it has less potential for addiction, and it is less likely to contribute to serious medical problems. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that every year more than 50,000 Americans die from the health impacts of chronic alcohol consumption, with 2,200 additional deaths from acute overdose. Cannabis has not been shown to increase mortality, and there has never been a verified cannabis overdose death in history. It makes no sense for the law to steer consumers to the more dangerous substance.

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