

# Marijuana legalization reduces opioid deaths

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A new *Economic Inquiry* study finds that marijuana access leads to reductions in opioid-related deaths.

The study examined how the changing legal status of marijuana has impacted mortality in the United States over the past two decades.

Investigators found that legalization and access to [recreational marijuana](#) reduced annual opioid mortality in the range of 20% to 35%, with particularly pronounced effects for synthetic opioids.

The research extends prior findings that medical marijuana laws reduce opioid mortality rates. The findings are timely given the scale of the opioid epidemic in the United States and growing calls for marijuana legalization throughout North America.

"Recreational marijuana laws affect a much larger population than [medical marijuana laws](#), yet we know relatively little about their effects." said co-author Nathan W. Chan, Ph.D., of University of Massachusetts Amherst. "Focusing on the recent wave of recreational marijuana laws in the U.S., we find that opioid mortality rates drop when recreational marijuana becomes widely available via dispensaries."

**More information:** Nathan W. Chan et al, THE EFFECTS OF RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION AND DISPENSING ON OPIOID MORTALITY, *Economic Inquiry* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/ecin.12819](https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.12819)

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