

# Craigslist linked to 15% increase in drug abuse facilities, 6% increase in overdose deaths

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New research in the INFORMS journal *Management Science* looks at the influence online platforms have on the rising illegal drug epidemic. This study shows drug abuse treatment admissions and overdose deaths have increased since the founding of Craigslist.

The paper, "Drug Abuse and the Internet: Evidence from Craigslist," written by Jiayi Liu and Anandhi Bharadwaj both of Emory University, looks at Craigslist rollout and drug abuse data from all counties in the United States from 1997 to 2008.

"From the national rollout of Craigslist, we find a 14.9% increase in drug abuse treatment admissions, a 5.7% increase in drug abuse violations and a 6% increase in drug overdose deaths after Craigslist got up and running," said Liu, a Ph.D. student in the Goizueta Business School.

The researchers point to a cloak of anonymity provided by [online platforms](#) such as Craigslist as the driving factor enabling new populations that were previously unaffected to enter the market.

Economic disadvantages such as unemployment, poverty and low education levels are thought to be associated with higher risk of drug [abuse](#), but this study finds lower risk groups like Caucasians or Asians, women, the elderly and those more educated are more likely to use drugs

after the entry of Craigslist.

"Online [drug](#) sales are likely to be more lucrative because the costs and risks of online transactions are lower than offline sales," said Bharadwaj, endowed chair in electronic commerce and professor of information systems and operations management at Goizueta Business School. "The entry of online platforms is likely to increase market participation by spurring both demand and supply of [illicit drugs](#)."

This study calls for additional law enforcement and healthcare resources to be proactively allocated in areas that were once unaffected by illicit drugs in anticipation of changes in [drug abuse](#) associated with online access.

"Meanwhile, providers of online services have a responsibility to anticipate and mitigate harms that their service might cause to users and society," continued Bharadwaj. "Many platforms like Google, Amazon, Facebook, YouTube, Uber and others have come under greater scrutiny in recent years. Our work adds to the growing chorus for stricter regulations and monitoring of online platforms."

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

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