

# Researchers call for equity in cannabis research

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When marijuana was illegal across the United States, enforcement and penalties were disproportionately heaped upon communities of color. Today, cannabis remains federally illegal and unequal enforcement

continues, while profits from the "green rush" of state legalization are in many cases flowing to wealthy white men.

Renée Martin-Willett and an interdisciplinary team of colleagues propose a way forward for [cannabis](#) research that acknowledges this history of discrimination and misuse of institutional power and embraces equity and inclusion. The paper is [published](#) in the journal *PNAS Nexus*.

The authors propose actions including passing equity-focused legislation and policy, supporting the entry and retention of scientists of color into the field, engaging in ethical research practices, and implementing intentionally inclusive recruitment of research participants.

Despite continued barriers, including the bureaucratic regulations associated with federal criminalization, research on the benefits and risks of [marijuana](#) is increasing. Unfortunately, as is the norm across [biomedical research](#), many study participants are white males of high socioeconomic status.

The authors argue that cannabis research can learn from the field of community-engaged research, which frames a research project as a mutually respectful community-research partnership, and encourages researchers to go beyond simply communicating the outcome of research to the public to deeper integration, including aligning research goals with community goals before studies even begin.

**More information:** Renée Martin-Willett et al, Effects of historical inequity and institutional power on cannabis research: Moving toward equity and inclusion, *PNAS Nexus* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/pnasnexus/pgad383](#)

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