

Fact Sheet: *Tools for Debate: US Federal Government Data on Cannabis Prohibition*

Tools for Debate, a research report recently released by the ICSDP, reviews 20 years of data from US government funded surveillance systems on government drug control spending, cannabis seizures and cannabis arrests, in order to assess the impact of enforced cannabis prohibition on cannabis potency, price and availability. The report's findings highlight the clear failure of cannabis prohibition efforts by showing that as the United States has dramatically scaled up drug law enforcement, cannabis potency has nevertheless increased, prices have dropped, and cannabis remains widely available.

The report also outlines the evidence-base supporting the benefits of cannabis legalization and regulation. While California prepares to vote on the *Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis* proposition (Prop. 19), the debate has focused primarily on the legalization of cannabis, and has lacked a strong scientific voice outlining how the state can adopt licensing and regulatory mechanisms to help reduce cannabis-related harms.

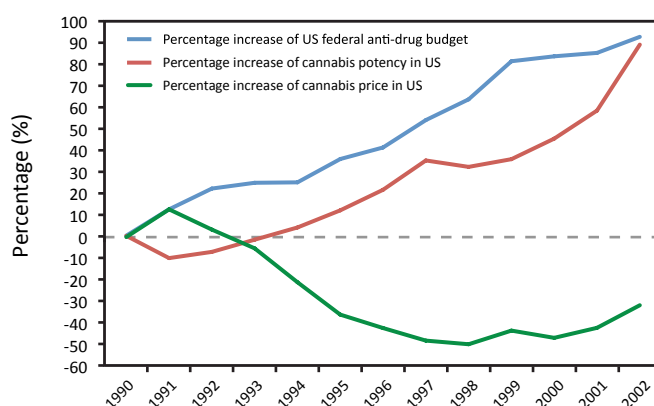
Increased funding for prohibition does not reduce cannabis potency, availability or accessibility

The annual overall budget for the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy has increased by more than **600%**, growing from approximately **\$1.5 billion in 1981** to over **\$18 billion in 2002**. This coincided with a 150% increase in cannabis-related arrests and an over 400% increase in cannabis seizures between 1990 and 2006.

Despite increased funding for drug law enforcement, surveillance systems funded by the US government show that cannabis potency has dramatically increased while the cost of cannabis has substantially decreased:

- Cannabis delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content **rose** by approximately 145% from 1990 to 2007
- The retail cost of cannabis **decreased** from \$37 per gram in 1990 to \$15 per gram in 2007
- Cannabis has remained almost “**universally available**” to American youth during the last 30 years of prohibition
- Cannabis use among U.S. grade 12 students **rose** from 27% in 1990 to 32% in 2008, while use among 19 to 28-year-olds **increased** from 26% in 1990 to 29% in 2008

Percentage change of drug enforcement budget, cannabis potency and cannabis price in the United States, 1990 - 2002



Scientific evidence shows California could benefit from implementing cannabis licensing, controls and regulations

According to *Tools for Debate*, the legalization of cannabis combined with the implementation of strict regulatory tools could help reduce cannabis-related harms, as research has demonstrated is successful in tobacco and alcohol control, when strictly enforced.

While a range of countries have decriminalized cannabis possession, under this model, the production and distribution is left in the hands of organized crime. A more effective way to reduce the crime and violence associated with cannabis prohibition involves legalization to strip organized crime of profits combined with the use of strict regulatory tools to limit cannabis-related harms.

Regulation Model	How California can implement it:
Prescriptions or permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue permits and prescriptions to select cannabis purchasers
Cannabis dispensary licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce conditional licenses and regulatory guidelines for dispensaries
Purchasing controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a tax on cannabis products
Sales restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit sales of cannabis to consumers of legal age
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulate days and hours of cannabis dispensaries and restrict bulk sales
Restrictions on use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate certain locations or circumstances for cannabis use
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit driving or operating machinery while under the influence
Regulated marketing and packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to a set of marketing, branding and advertising regulations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the use of tamper-proof packaging, standardized labeling and branding, and health warnings on all products

Potential benefits	
Cannabis availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations could control availability
Drug market violence and organized crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing the illegal market will reduce violence among suppliers and organized crime groups
Law enforcement resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legalizing cannabis will allow law enforcement to focus resources on other areas and result in substantial savings
Tax revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis taxes could provide government with a new source of revenue - estimated to be in the billions for California

To read the full report and learn more about the International Centre for Science and Drug Policy (ICS DP), visit www.icsdp.org

To learn more about the international scientific community's call for evidence based illicit drug policies visit www.viennadeclaration.com

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