



Forum: The General Assembly

Issue: The Question of Legalization of Cannabis for Medical and Recreational Uses

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Position: Chair

Overview of the Issue

The history of Cannabis goes as far as 500 BCE when its mass cultivation was begun as an herbal medicine. The plant continued developing in Central Asia, and from there it was transported to Africa, Europe, and eventually the Americas. The primary use of Cannabis was to make clothing, rope, and ship sails out of its hemp fiber; its seeds were used as a source of food. The primary reason for this mass cultivation, apart from the various applications, was because it was easy to cultivate and fast-growing. These early strains of Cannabis had very-low levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is the psychoactive compound responsible for producing Cannabis' infamous hallucinatory effects. Its introduction to America was through early colonists, who needed easy to cultivate plants that could be used to decrease their reliability on imports from Europe. Widely grown throughout the colonial America and at Spanish Missions in the southwest, it was even a requirement for farmers to grow Cannabis during the early 1600s in the Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut colonies.

The earliest mass usage of Cannabis for recreational purposes can be traced back as far as 800 CE, mostly in the Middle East and Asia. Islam had a huge part to play in the rise of recreational use of Cannabis particularly in the Middle East. The rise of recreational use of Marihuana didn't begin until the early 1900s. Mexican immigrants who had entered the United States during the Mexican Revolution were the main cause. With the Great Depression causing massive unemployment and resentment against the immigrants, the fears of "evil weed" were stoked, and Cannabis was therefore placed among the many intoxicants banned during the Prohibition era, with 29 states having it outlawed in 1931.

The earliest Western applications of medical marijuana is in 1830s, when an Irish doctor studying in India: Sir William Brooke O'Shaughnessy discovered that ingested cannabis extracts helped lessen stomach pain and vomiting in those suffering from cholera. By late 1800s, cannabis extracts were being sold in

pharmacies and doctors' clinics throughout Europe and United States for treating stomach pain and other diseases.

The first major country to legalize Cannabis was Mexico 1920, decade after which the United States banned it in 1937 in the "Marijuana Tax Act". Later as part of "The War on Drugs", the Marijuana Act was repealed and replaced by "The Controlled Substances Act" signed into law by President Nixon in 1970. Since then Marijuana has remained a Schedule-1 drug (there are five schedules that drugs are divided into, Schedule 1 and 2 drugs have the most regulation where as schedule drugs have the least), grouped with the likes of heroin, LSD, ecstasy and etc. The only difference between Schedule-1 drugs and Schedule-5 drugs is if the drugs have medical value. Therefore it is much more sensible to split the scheduling system into two groups: medical and nonmedical. Schedule-1 drugs are the ones with nonmedical value, and Schedule-2 to 5 are the ones with medical value. From there on, they are ranked from most to least abusive.

From there on, the countries that first began to legalize marijuana were doing it for strict medicinal purposes only. Israel was the first to lead the MMJ (medical marijuana) wave, legalizing it in the 1990s. Next was Canada who had MMJ legalized in 2001. After more than a decade, Czech Republic had MMJ legalized in 2013, then Chile in 2014, then Colombia, Jamaica and Puerto Rico in 2015. Following that it was Australia, Macedonia, and Turkey in 2016. Uruguay then became the first country in the world to fully legalize Marijuana in 2013, following that it was Canada in 2018.

The main arguments for full legalization of Marijuana are:

- It creates jobs
- Saves lots of governmental money
- Promotes consumer safety
- & Creates new source of income for governments

It reduces creates jobs because legalization of marijuana means that not only will more people buy from legal sellers but also that a lot of other marijuana products will also be sold. Hemp is one such material that is responsible for the creation of many goods. Medical usage of Marijuana will also shoot up, as current research does point out that ingesting Marijuana is better than some of the opioid pain-relievers on the market. It saves governmental money because legalization of it would mean that governments could divert more money and resources to issues that could actually use it; stopping hardcore drugs such as Cocaine and Methamphetamine. It promotes consumer safety in a variety of ways. A good example of this is the Prohibition. When the Prohibition was in effect, people still had alcohol, but they just didn't have the option of drinking beer, they either had the option of hardcore alcohols or not alcohols at all. Marijuana users today face a similar situation, they could either take an after work 'beer' weed, or they could have 'hardcore' weed. Legalizing Marijuana presents consumers with less potent and safe options. A final reason is that since Marijuana will become legal,

governments will be able to tax it; therefore a new big source of money will be created for them. This is a major reason for third-world/LEDCs to consider legalization.

The main arguments for criminalization of Marijuana are:

- It affects short-term memory
- Can impair cognitive ability
- Smoking anything can damage lung tissue
- & Carries a risk of abuse and addiction

It has been proven that consistent use of Marijuana (in any form) causes short-term memory loss among the users. Use of it also leads to users having poor decision making skills, and results in having IQ points reduced; this fact is extremely true in teenagers who indulge in Marijuana just as their brains are still developing. Now smoking (the most common form through which Marijuana is used) anything damages your lung tissue, but with Marijuana there are many more chemicals involved including carcinogens. Lastly, Marijuana is a gateway drug; meaning many of the people who first use Marijuana, go onto using harder drugs. It also carries a very high risk of addiction and abuse also increases with this drug. Amsterdam, a city where Cannabis is sold freely in coffee shops, is now reporting higher cases of students coming to school high, as they tend to roll up outside the grounds.

Key Terms

Cannabis: Cannabis is a psychoactive drug from the cannabis plant, typically used for medicinal or recreational purposes.

Weed: Colloquial term for Cannabis

Marijuana: Another term for Cannabis

THC: Tetrahydrocannabinol is one of the many 113 cannabinoids found in the cannabis drug. It is the main chemical compound responsible for producing Cannabis' mind-altering effects

Mexican Revolution: The Mexican revolution (also known as the Mexican Civil war) was national revolution that lasted from 1910 – 1920. It was responsible for ending dictatorship in Mexico and establishing democracy in the country.

The Great Depression: The Great Depression was a worldwide economic depression that took place during the 1930s, starting from the United States. It lasted until 1939 in some countries and began in 1929.



The Prohibition: The Prohibition was a national wide constitutional ban on the production, importation, transportation and sale of alcohol from 1920 to 1933.

The War on Drugs: It was a campaign against drugs in the United States, started and led by the US Federal Government. President Nixon was responsible for popularizing the term in several press conferences. It focused on military intervention and military aid in prohibition of drugs in the US.

Medical Marijuana: Medical Marijuana is essentially medical Cannabis or cannabis products, prescribed by doctors for patients.

Edibles: An edible is cannabis infused food product full of THC. An edible is normally eaten; a cannabis fused drink would be referred to as a drinkable.

Cannabis Oil: A concentrated extract obtained through the flowers or leaves of the cannabis flower. Purpose of CBD is to make the beneficial components of cannabis available in a concentrated form.

Carcinogen: Substance that is capable of causing cancer in organic tissue

Countries and Organizations Involved

United States: While Cannabis is still illegal under Federal law, only 14 states have criminalized Cannabis to its full extent. The rest vary from having legalized it fully (including recreational purposes) to having it just decriminalized. As of now many other states who are on the topic of legalization, are questioning the best methods of doing so, from full commercialization to having state-run monopoly.

United Nations CND (Commission on Narcotic Drugs): The Commission on Narcotic Drugs was established as a result of resolution 9(I) by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1946. It was established so to help ECOSOC in supervising the implementation of the various international drug treaties. In 1991, it was then expanded by the General Assembly, to become the governing body of United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC).

Czech Republic: As it stands, not only has the Czech Republic legalized Medical Marijuana but has also legalized the possession of up to 15 grams of dried cannabis or 5 cannabis plants.

Ecuador: Like Czech Republic, Ecuador too allows possession of small amount of dried Cannabis. There has been no legalization towards Medical Marijuana



however, and with a number of pardons to drug offenders, it is quite possible that drug policies will be relaxed further in the future.

Uruguay: It was the first country in the world to fully legalize Cannabis in all forms in 2015. Though the market is tightly regulated by the government on all fronts, it is still far cheaper to buy a gram (costing around \$0.87) in Uruguay than it is to buy in Colorado or California (costing from \$10 - \$30).

Canada: Canada recently legalized Cannabis fully, becoming the second country and the first major country in the world to do so. It was already growing some of the finest Cannabis in the world before its full legalization and will now continue to do so.

Jamaica: Though it may seem that this is a country where Cannabis would be without a doubt legal, it is in fact still illegal. Though it recently relaxed its law on possession and decriminalized it for many reasons including but not limited to religious ceremonies and medicinal use.

Netherlands: The city of Amsterdam has always been infamous for its Cannabis distribution through coffee shops. Though while technically illegal, coffee shops can get a permit for Cannabis, drug law in Netherlands is a messy affair. Authorities tend to turn a blind eye to any person carrying 5 grams or less and to growers who have 5 or less plants have a very small chance of being prosecuted by authorities.

NORML: National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) is a non-profit organization that lobbies for the legalization of cannabis in the US. Founded in 1970, it is one of the oldest organizations with a goal of reforming laws at the state and federal level so Cannabis can be legalized for recreational uses.

ENCOD: European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies formally referred to, as European NGO Council on Drugs is a network of European NGOs who effectively focus on ending the War on Drugs. It was created in 1993 at the request of the European Commission and acts as a platform for citizens and companies, often voicing their opinions at bigger platforms such as the UN and EU.

Marijuana Policy Project: Founded in 1995, Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) is the biggest organization in the US that lobbies for Cannabis. Their goal is to legalize Cannabis and to regulate it like alcohol.

CALM: Citizens Against Legalizing Marijuana is an NGO that lobbies for criminalizing Cannabis in California again, and to keep it or criminalize Cannabis both at state level and federally.



Parents Opposed to Pot: It is a similar NGO to CALM and its primary goal is to advocate and lobby against Cannabis in the US. They operate primarily in California, Colorado, Washington, Oregon and many other states.

Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

CND Resolution 52/5

The resolution talks about the usage of Cannabis seeds for unlawful purposes

https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2000-2009/2009/CND_Res-52-5.pdf

CND Resolution 51/2

Efforts are focused on the education, prevention and treatment efforts for young people addicted to Cannabis

https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2000-2009/2008/CND_Res-2008-2e.pdf

ECOSOC Resolution [E/RES/1959/730(XXVIII) F]

A resolution requesting more over medical benefits of Cannabis by ordering the creation of report

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/Resolutions/resolution_1959-07-30_5.html

Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

It is the final report of a very important UN conference on Narcotics. It took place in 1961 and was hugely responsible for a lot of countries' views and laws on Cannabis and products related to it. It contains many resolutions that the UN has and resolutions that are still affecting nations' policy making on Cannabis a good read for anyone who wants to exploit or use this document full of resolutions to their motive. It's a big read though.

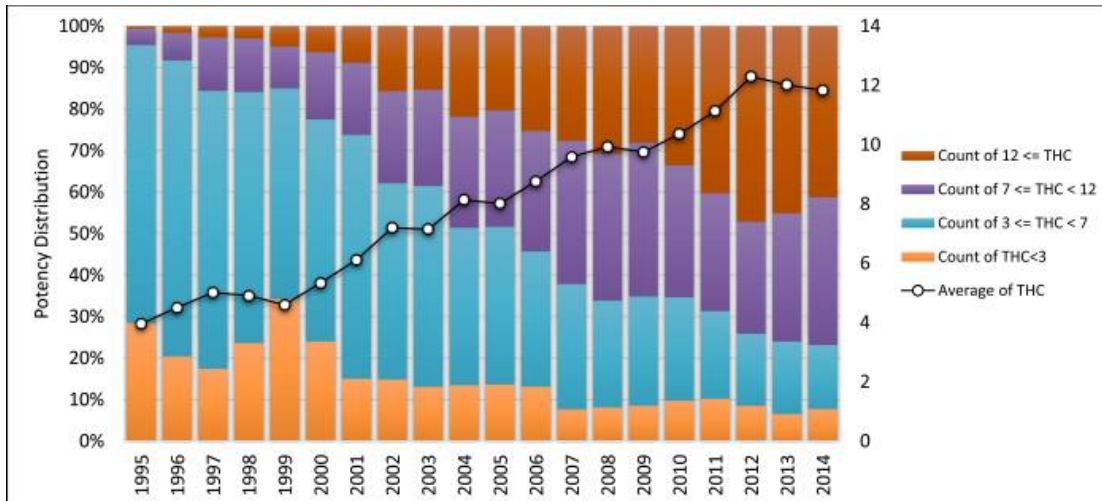
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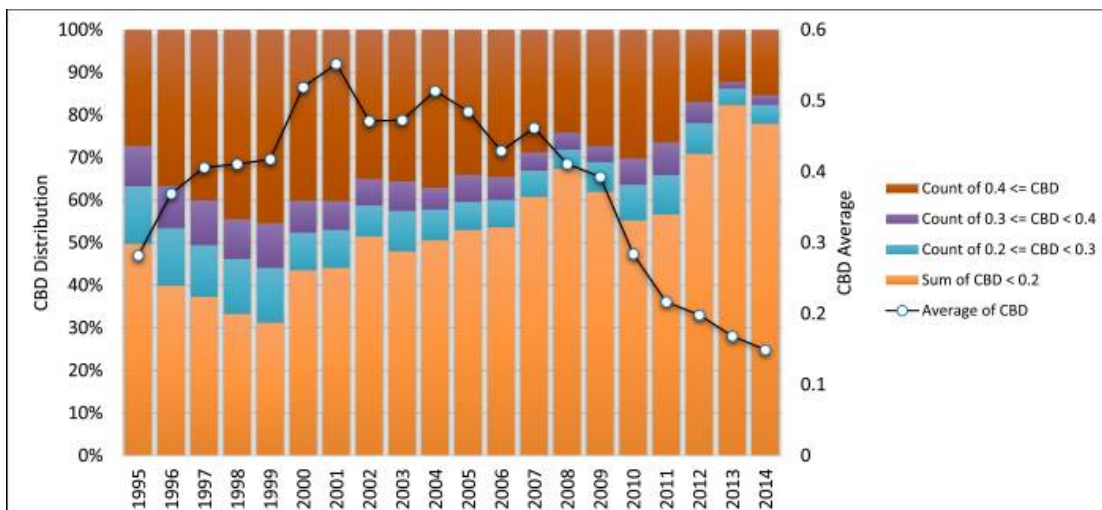
Appendix

Appendix 1. "THC potency distribution of cannabis samples from DEA Specimens and average THC by year, 1995 – 2014"



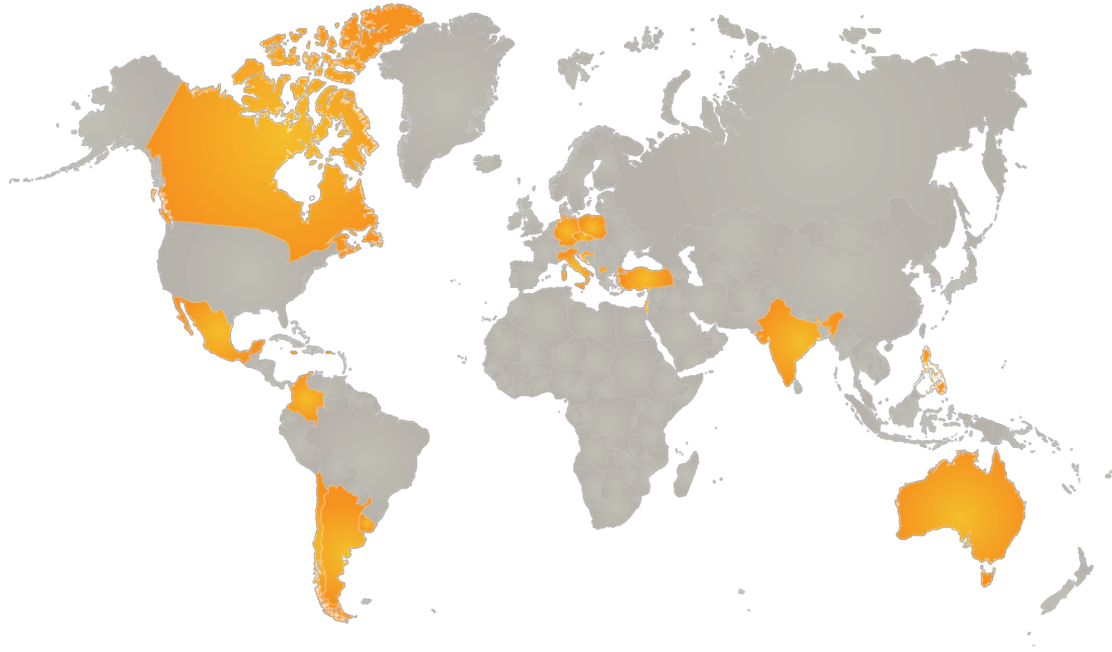
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Appendix 2. "CBD concentration distribution in Cannabis samples confiscated by Dea and average CBD by year, 1995 – 2014."



ElSohly, Mahmoud A., et al. "CBD Concentration Distribution in Cannabis samples confiscated by DEA and average CBD by year 1995 – 2014." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, 19 Jan. 2016, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4987131/.

Appendix 3. World Map Depicting Nations Where Cannabis is Legal to Some Extent



Mclaver, Brian. "World Map Depicting Nations Where Cannabis Is Legal to Some Extent." *Cannabis Business Times*, 29 June 2017, www.cannabisbusinesstimes.com/article/cannabis-legalization-world-map/.