

Study Reveals Drop in Partner Violence Post-Cannabis Legalization

Analysis of Intimate Partner Violence and Cannabis Legalization

A new analysis has found that legalizing cannabis for adult use results in a substantial decrease in intimate partner violence (IPV). This research, conducted by Samantha Gene Baldwin, a master of public policy student at Georgetown University, reveals surprising correlations between recreational marijuana legalization (RML) and IPV rates.

Key Findings

Baldwin's study shows a significant drop in IPV incidents following cannabis legalization. Data from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for the years 2013-2019 indicates that RML results in 56.6 fewer IPV incidents per 100,000 people. This decrease may be attributed to a shift from alcohol to cannabis consumption, as alcohol is a stronger risk factor for IPV.

Alcohol Substitution and IPV Reduction

The research highlights that cannabis legalization might reduce heavy alcohol use, which in turn lowers IPV rates. Despite marijuana being a known risk factor for IPV, the substitution effect appears to mitigate the anticipated increase in violence. This finding is particularly significant, suggesting that the legalization of cannabis could indirectly reduce IPV by decreasing alcohol consumption, which is more strongly linked to violent behavior.

Implications for Policy and Further Research

Baldwin suggests that the relationship between cannabis policy and IPV is complex and requires further investigation. Future studies should explore the nuanced impacts of various marijuana policies and the accessibility of retail cannabis on violence rates. Understanding these dynamics can help policymakers design more effective interventions to reduce IPV and other forms of domestic violence.

Broader Context and Previous Research

This study aligns with previous research showing that cannabis legalization can reduce domestic violence and other major crimes. However, Baldwin notes that historical prohibition may have influenced behavior trends, necessitating more granular analysis within states. For instance, differences in state-level implementation of RML and variations in enforcement could impact the observed effects on IPV rates.

In addition to IPV, broader studies have indicated that cannabis legalization is associated with reductions in other types of violent crime and certain public health issues. These findings support the argument that

reforming cannabis policies could have wide-ranging social benefits, extending beyond the realm of criminal justice.

Samantha Gene Baldwin's research provides compelling evidence that legalizing cannabis for adult use is associated with a significant reduction in intimate partner violence. The potential substitution of cannabis for alcohol, a stronger risk factor for IPV, appears to play a critical role in this decrease. While the findings are promising, Baldwin emphasizes the need for further research to fully understand the complex relationship between cannabis policy and IPV. As more states consider cannabis legalization, these insights can inform policy decisions aimed at enhancing public safety and health.

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