

# Legalization of Marijuana in Kansas: A Data-Driven Approach to Democratic Decision-Making

## Introduction:

The national conversation surrounding marijuana legalization has evolved significantly over the past decade. As more states adopt progressive stances on this issue, Kansas finds itself at a pivotal moment. Drawing from recent data and public sentiment, this white paper presents a compelling case for why the legalization of marijuana should be a top priority for Kansans.

## 1. The Evolution of Public Opinion:

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs has consistently tracked the opinions of Kansans on the topic of marijuana legalization:

- **Fall 2018:** 52% support<sup>1</sup>.
- **Fall 2019:** 63.1% support<sup>2</sup>.
- **Fall 2020:** 66.9% support<sup>3</sup>.
- **Fall 2021:** 70.8% support<sup>4</sup>.

This consistent upward trajectory underscores a significant shift in public sentiment. Such overwhelming support from the majority cannot be ignored in a democratic society. The increasing percentages year after year indicate that the public's understanding and acceptance of marijuana are growing. This shift can be attributed to increased awareness, education, and exposure to the benefits of marijuana legalization.

## 2. Economic Benefits:

Beyond the societal implications, the economic benefits of marijuana legalization are manifold. States that have legalized marijuana have seen a surge in tax revenues, job creation, and business opportunities. By tapping into this potential revenue stream, Kansas can address budgetary constraints, fund public services, and stimulate local economies. The potential for job creation in cultivation, distribution, retail, and ancillary services can significantly boost the state's economy.

## 3. National Alignment:

As of 2021, numerous states have fully legalized marijuana, with many others decriminalizing or allowing medical use. By legalizing marijuana, Kansas aligns itself with a broader national trend, ensuring it doesn't lag in economic and social advancements. This alignment also ensures that Kansas residents don't migrate to neighboring states for access, keeping potential revenue within the state.

## 4. Criminal Justice Reform:

The war on drugs has disproportionately affected communities of color and led to the incarceration of countless individuals for minor drug offenses. Legalizing marijuana would not only reduce the strain on the criminal justice system but also rectify past injustices. Funds and resources could be redirected to combat more severe crimes, enhancing public safety.

## 5. Quality Control and Public Health:

Regulation ensures that marijuana products are safe, consistent, and free from harmful additives. This stands in stark contrast to the unregulated black market, where product quality is uncertain, and users

are at risk. Legalization would also pave the way for more research into the medicinal benefits of marijuana, potentially leading to breakthroughs in healthcare.

#### **6. Addressing Opposition:**

While the majority supports legalization, a significant minority remains opposed. It's crucial to address their concerns through public awareness campaigns, stringent regulations, and community engagement. Ensuring that the transition to legalization is smooth and considers all viewpoints is essential for its long-term success. Open dialogues, town hall meetings, and educational seminars can be instrumental in addressing concerns and misconceptions.

#### **7. The Democratic Imperative:**

In a democratic society, policies should reflect the will of the majority. With the consistent increase in support for marijuana legalization, it's evident that Kansans are ready for change. Ignoring this majority sentiment would be a disservice to the principles of democracy.

#### **8. Future Implications:**

Looking ahead, the legalization of marijuana in Kansas could set a precedent for other progressive policies in the state. It could lead to a more inclusive, diverse, and economically prosperous Kansas, setting the stage for further growth and development.

#### **Conclusion:**

The data-driven approach paints a clear picture: Kansans are ready for marijuana legalization. The economic, social, and democratic reasons for this shift are compelling. As the nation evolves on this issue, it's time for Kansas to prioritize the legalization of marijuana, reflecting the will of its people and reaping the myriad benefits that come with it.

This expanded version should provide a more in-depth analysis and closer to the 5-page single-spaced requirement. If you need further expansion or specific sections elaborated upon, please let me know!

#### **Footnotes**

1. The Docking Institute of Public Affairs: Kansas Speaks Fall 2018. Page 342. [↵](#)
2. The Docking Institute of Public Affairs: Kansas Speaks Fall 2019. Page 306. [↵](#)
3. The Docking Institute of Public Affairs: Kansas Speaks Fall 2020. Page 255
4. The Docking Institute of Public Affairs: Kansas Speaks Fall 2021. Page 186