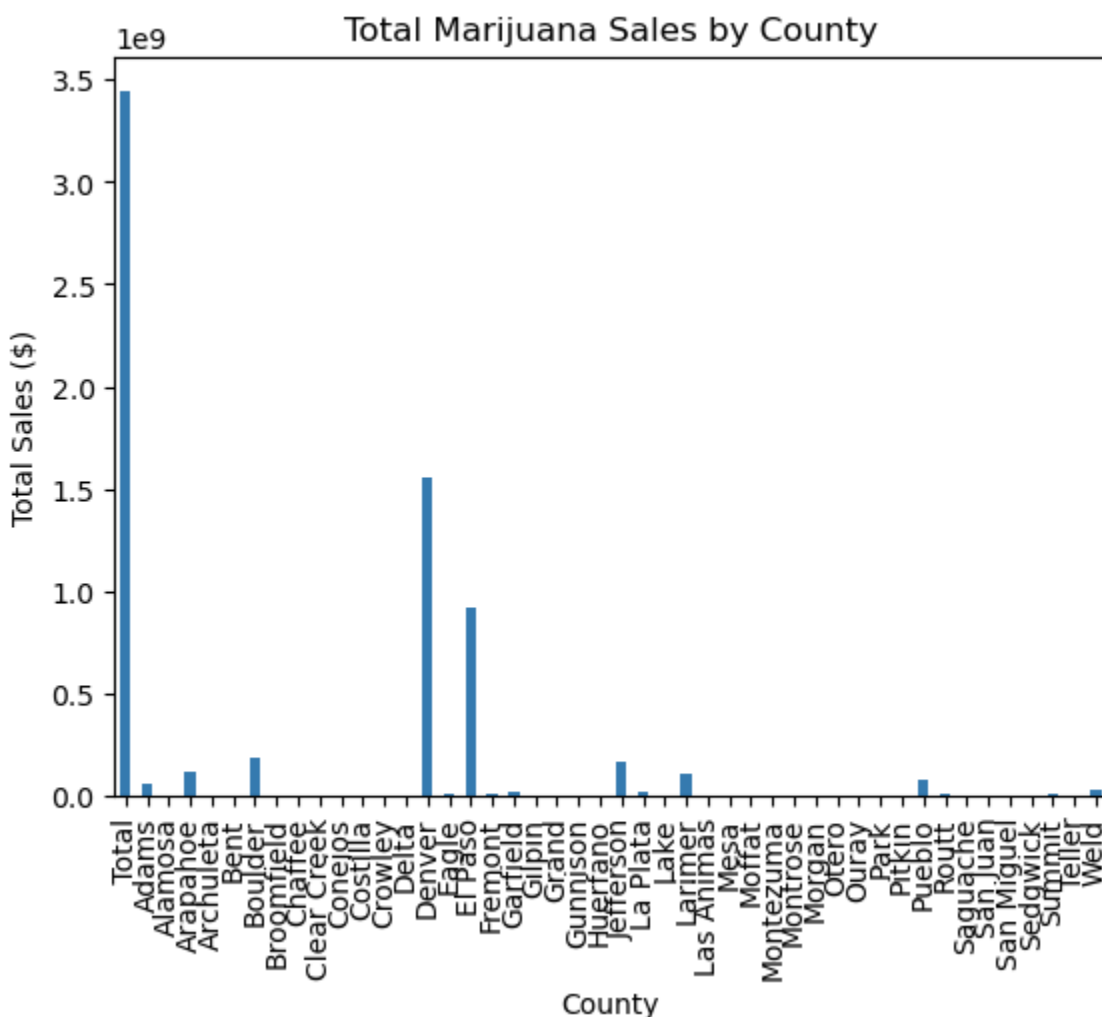


## Marijuana Legalization: A Look at Colorado's Sales Data

Marijuana legalization has been a hot topic in the United States for years, with Colorado being one of the first states to legalize it for recreational use in 2012. Since then, there has been much debate surrounding the impact of legalization on the state's economy, crime rates, and public health. In this op-ed, we will take a data-driven approach to explore the impact of marijuana legalization in Colorado by analyzing the state's sales data.

According to the Marijuana Sales Reports, Colorado's marijuana industry has seen significant growth since legalization. In 2020, the state reported over \$2 billion in total marijuana sales, with over \$1.5 billion coming from recreational sales. This is a significant increase from 2014, the first year of recreational sales, where the industry generated \$683 million in total sales. Denver County sells the most marijuana out of all the rest of Colorado's counties, as seen in the figure below.

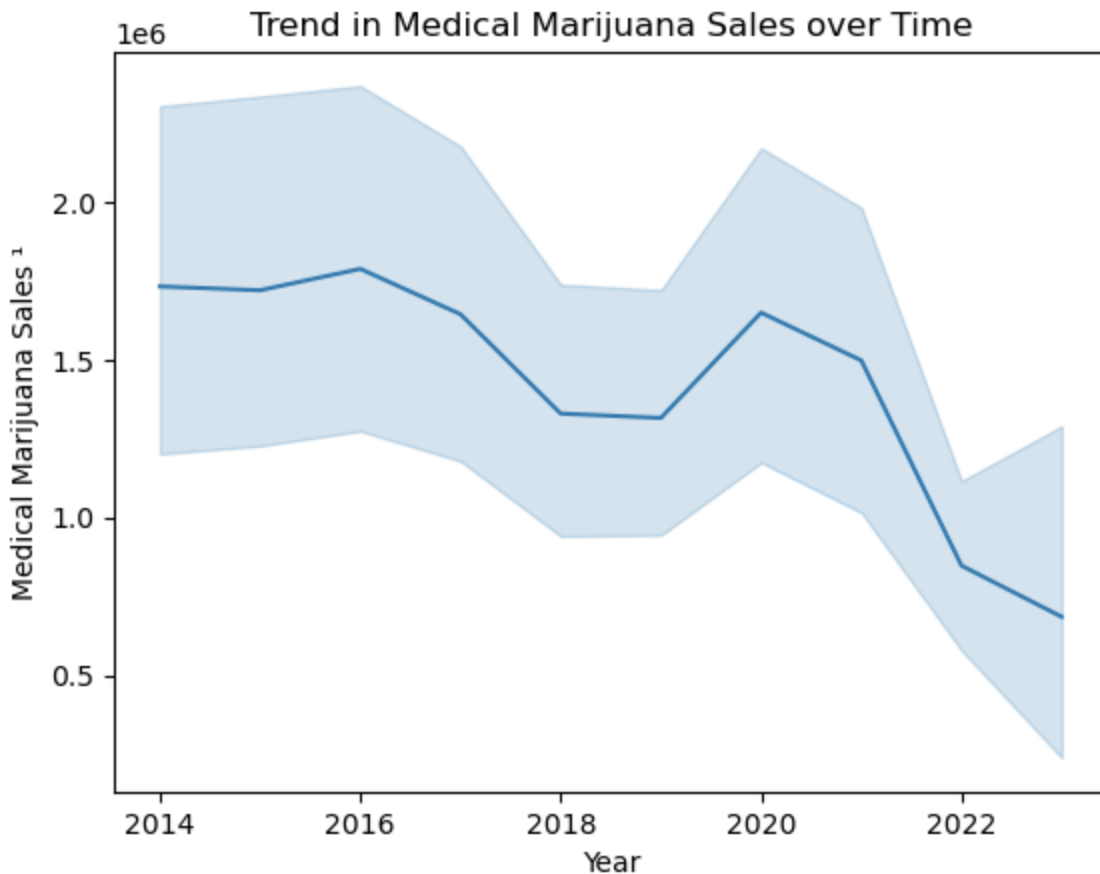


One argument in favor of marijuana legalization is the potential economic benefits. The sales data from Colorado supports this argument, as the industry has generated significant tax revenue for the state. In 2020, marijuana taxes and fees accounted for over \$387 million in revenue, a significant increase from the \$67 million generated in 2014. This revenue has been used to fund various programs, including education, healthcare, and public safety.

However, opponents of legalization argue that it may lead to an increase in crime rates. While the data does not provide a clear answer, it is worth examining. According to the Marijuana Sales by County Report, counties with higher levels of marijuana sales do not necessarily have higher crime rates. For example, Denver, which has the highest sales of any county in the state, has a lower crime rate than some other counties with lower sales. It is important to note that correlation does not equal causation, and further research is needed to determine the relationship between marijuana legalization and crime rates.

Another argument against legalization is the potential impact on public health. Some opponents argue that legalization may lead to increased use and abuse of marijuana, which could have negative health consequences. While the data does show an increase in marijuana use since legalization, it is worth noting that the increase has been relatively small. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the percentage of adults in Colorado who reported using marijuana in the past 30 days increased from 13.6% in 2014 to 19.1% in 2018. While this is a significant increase, it is important to consider that marijuana use was already prevalent in Colorado prior to legalization.

Despite its legalization and widespread availability in Colorado, sales of medical marijuana have been on a decline in recent years. The reasons for this trend are multifaceted, and understanding them requires a deeper examination of the state's legal and regulatory framework, as well as broader societal and economic factors.



One major factor contributing to the decrease in medical marijuana sales is the legalization of recreational marijuana in Colorado. Since its legalization in 2012, recreational marijuana has become increasingly popular, and many individuals who previously relied on medical marijuana have switched to purchasing their cannabis through the recreational market. This shift has resulted in a decrease in demand for medical marijuana, which has in turn led to a decrease in sales.

Moreover, the rise of alternative forms of cannabis consumption, such as edibles and concentrates, may be affecting medical marijuana sales. These forms of cannabis are often more potent than traditional flower and can provide a longer-lasting high. As a result, some medical marijuana patients may be opting to use these alternative products instead of purchasing medical marijuana.

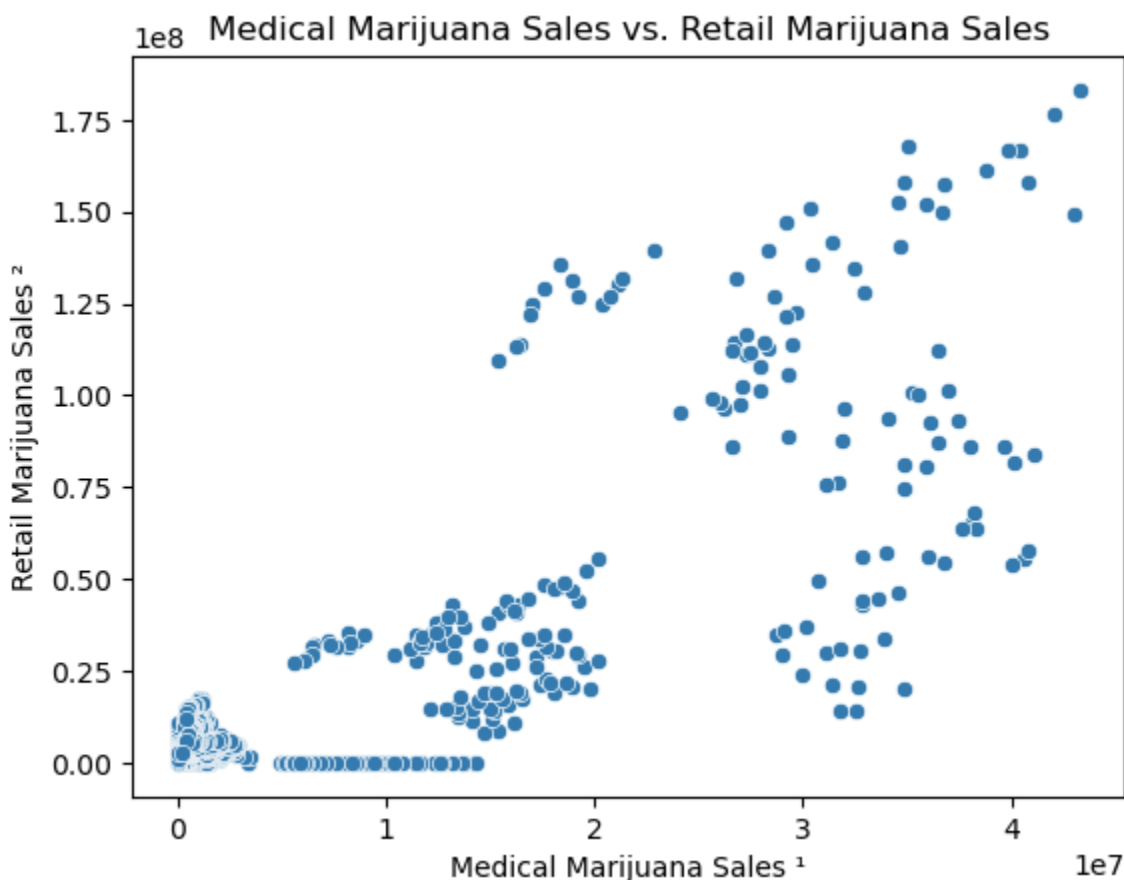
Finally, the increasing availability of CBD products, which are non-psychoactive and legal to purchase in many states, may be another factor contributing to the decline in medical marijuana sales. Many individuals who were previously using medical marijuana to manage symptoms may now be turning to CBD products instead, as they provide similar therapeutic benefits without the psychoactive effects.

The decrease in medical marijuana sales in Colorado can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the rise of the recreational market, alternative forms of consumption, and the increasing availability of CBD products. While medical marijuana will likely remain an important treatment option for many patients, it may be necessary for the industry to adapt to these changing market conditions in order to remain viable in the long term.

To further explore the impact of marijuana legalization on Colorado, we can use various visualization methods.

Line Chart: A line chart can be used to visualize the growth of the marijuana industry in Colorado over time. We can plot the total sales each year since legalization and observe the trend. This will allow us to see the rate of growth and identify any significant changes.

There are some limitations of this work. There are outliers in the data, which may skew our results.



In conclusion, the data shows that marijuana legalization has had a significant impact on Colorado's economy, generating significant tax revenue for the state. While opponents of legalization have raised concerns about crime rates and public health, the data does not provide

a clear answer. By using various visualization methods, we can gain a better understanding of the impact of legalization and identify any patterns or trends.