

REGULATING CANNABIS

A comparative perspective on policy rollouts and unintended consequences in the United States and Canada (lessons from 6 case studies)

ASTRACAN research group
STRAtegic Analysis of regulatory CANnabis policies

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BACKGROUND

Cannabis legalization has undergone dynamic developments in North America in the last 10 years. Subsequently, the range of cannabis regulation policy options has dramatically widened, raising research interest for the variety of the implementation issues policy-makers are confronted with. This research explores the diversity of the cannabis regulatory models experimented so far, the current implementation challenges and the related outcomes from a public health perspective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Empirical research focusing on 6 jurisdictions investigated in 2021-2022 :

- 3 in the United States (« Pacific Coast States »): Washington State (7,7 M inhab.), Oregon (4,2 M), California (39,2 M)
- 3 in Canada : Ontario (14,6 M inhab.), Quebec (8,5 M), British Columbia (5,1 M)

Materials:

- 110 semi-structured interviews (minimum 10 per jurisdiction): regulatory authorities, public health and law enforcement officials, business operators, researchers, etc.
- Direct on-site observations (retail shops, cultivation and manufacturing sites, regulatory inspections...)
- Review of policy documents, quantitative official data, internal regulatory discussions, impact reports...

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

1. The ongoing setup of regulation frameworks

- Strict regulations for legitimacy purposes
- Regulatory requirements disadvantage small players (compliance) and foster a concentration dynamics
- Industry voicing over-regulation claims, permanent adjustments
- Time matters

2. Implementation issues

- Multi-level policy-making (federal ban & local bans in the US, conflicts of jurisdictions in Canada)
- Discrepancy of resources between industry and enforcement
- Oversupply and price drop

3. Public health concerns

- Consequences of product diversification (concentrates, edibles, vaping & dabbing...)
- Misuse (overconsumption, impaired driving, accidental ingestion, intoxications, drug interactions...)
- Associated hazards (contaminants & pesticides, persistence of smoking habits...)
- Public visibility and availability (marketing, advertising, physical accessibility/store location, storefront aspect, packaging...)

4. Emerging conversations

- Social equity
- Environment
- Research and data collection