THE ECONOMIST, How does Colorado's marijuana market work?

ON JANUARY 1st, 420 days after the citizens of Colorado voted to legalise marijuana, around [37](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_24818592/colorado-marijuana-shops-planning-open-new-years-day) pot shops across the state opened their doors to all-comers. Stoners in Denver and other cities braved freezing temperatures and two-hour queues to be part of this historic moment, for Colorado has become the first jurisdiction anywhere in the world to oversee a legal, regulated market for recreational marijuana (20 states plus Washington, DC, allow patients with doctors' recommendations to buy the stuff). Some customers were turned away, some shops have been forced temporarily to close while they replenish stocks, but "Green Wednesday", as it was inevitably dubbed, was generally considered a big success. How exactly does Colorado's marijuana market function?

[Amendment 64](http://www.leg.state.co.us/LCS/Initiative%20Referendum/1112initrefr.nsf/c63bddd6b9678de787257799006bd391/cfa3bae60c8b4949872579c7006fa7ee/$FILE/Amendment%2064%20-%20Use%20&%20Regulation%20of%20Marijuana.pdf), the measure approved by 55% of voters in November 2012, set certain parameters for Colorado's marijuana regime, including maximum tax rates and the rights of cities and counties to exclude pot shops from their jurisdictions. But the details were worked out by officials and legislators over the course of 2013. Unlike many states (including Washington, which has also legalised marijuana but not yet licensed recreational outlets) Colorado's medical-marijuana system is well regulated; not only did that make full legalisation an easier sell to voters, it provided a foundation for the recreational industry. Until October only licensed medical outlets "in good standing" can serve recreational customers, which is why lots of the [shops that opened on January 1st](http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2013/12/marijuana_denver_recreational.php) have names like Citi-Med and Medicine Man. Colorado's system of "vertical integration", under which retailers must cultivate most of the stuff they sell themselves, will also remain in place until October; this makes monitoring easier for the state, even if one irritated observer likens it to a supermarket owning apple orchards.

One challenge is to set prices at what Mark Kleiman, an analyst, calls the "Goldilocks point": too low and you encourage excessive consumption and out-of-state exports; too high and you leave room for illicit dealers. The market has not settled in yet, but prices for recreational marijuana, currently around $250-$300 for an ounce of good weed, will be significantly higher than the medical stuff, thanks to hefty taxes: a 15% excise tax levied on "average market rate" and a special 10% sales tax (the state's general 2.9% sales tax will also apply). Only those aged over 21 may buy, possess and use marijuana in Colorado; they may consume it only on private property with the consent of the property-owner, and they may not transfer it across state lines. Residents may purchase up to an ounce at a time; out-of-staters are limited to a quarter-ounce, and, if buying weed rather than edibles, face the extra challenge of finding somewhere to smoke it: Amsterdam-style "coffee shops" are banned. Locals can grow up to six plants at home, and give away (but not sell) the proceeds.

Implementing all this will be hard enough. But Colorado's officials must also keep the federal government happy. Marijuana remains illegal under the 1970 Controlled Substances Act, and the feds have been more than willing to crack down on some medical-marijuana operators in recent years. In August James Cole, the deputy attorney-general, issued a suggesting that the federal government will allow the experiments in Colorado and Washington to proceed so long as they do not impede eight "enforcement priorities", including the diversion of marijuana to minors and to other states. But that is not a foregone conclusion: Colorado-sourced medical marijuana has been [turning up](http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_24008061/more-colorado-pot-is-flowing-neighboring-states) in neighbouring states. The American public is beginning to [reject](http://www.gallup.com/poll/1657/illegal-drugs.aspx) prohibition and its attendant [injustices](https://www.aclu.org/criminal-law-reform/new-aclu-report-finds-overwhelming-racial-bias-marijuana-arrests). If Colorado and Washington manage not to screw things up, more states will surely follow them in legalising—including California, probably in 2016. But if it all goes wrong, as it may, the whole thing could go up in smoke.

This article is included into the English journal The Economist. It explains the problem of legalizing marijuana in the United States. It is considered a social and also an economical problem in the nation.

The information giving in this article are addressed to young and old people because it is a problem that affect a big part of the population of the whole world. There are many debates in legalizing weed or not. The contestants that organize debates are both common people both politicians, economists, doctors and judges. A big part of this participants have different ideas about the problem that improve over the time.

The reader could be interested in "legalize it" arguments about how pot is less dangerous than alcohol or tobacco and how legalization would save taxpayers on enforcing the prohibition. So the example of Colorado can maintain this purpose: Colorado became the first state in America to open recreational pot stores and became the first place in the world where marijuana will be regulated from seed to sale. Pot is the third most popular recreational drug in the world, after alcohol and tobacco.

If the reader is someone who doesn’t agree with legalizing weed. For example they think that a substance considered unhealthy cannot be produced and distributed with the help of the state, because the goal of the state is to protect citizens’ health and not to expose them to risk. The easy availability of drugs would create new consumers rather than rescuing current ones. Moreover legalizing drugs will send a message to children that drug use is acceptable.

But this article presents many points that could change their minds. This is possible using polls and percentages. Over 100 million Americans have tried and used marijuana including most rock musicians, Hollywood celebrities, many high school and college students and quite a few police officers and judges who now enforce laws against marijuana.  A recent poll revealed that 43% of Americans say that marijuana should be legalized.

Young adults are the majority in favor legalization. Elder Americans are the only age group that still opposes legalizing marijuana. In contrast, 67% of Americans aged 18 to 29 back legalization. Clear majorities of Americans aged 30 to 64 also approve legalization.

There are many point in favor of legalizing pot: it is less dangerous than alcohol and tobacco, it has medical benefits and the prohibition costs too much.

For years governments has been wasting billions of tax dollars on a bizarre propaganda scare campaign against marijuana a relatively harmless drug.  Some state that in a strictly regulated market by removing the marketing activities of the illegal drug industry. Pot is substantially less harmful than alcohol and tobacco that are legal drugs many people enjoy whose dangers are well established, substantial, and undeniable. Alcohol is associated with alcoholism, and violent behavior. And cigarette smoking is causes deadly diseases such as lung cancer. heart disease and stroke.  While no deaths are attributed to marijuana use. Government hostility to marijuana has stifled research and objective discussion in the U.S..

Marijuana can provide relief to people suffering from various cancers, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, and other physical and mental conditions.  It is a strong argument for “medical marijuana.” Legalize marijuana and reduce health care costs by reducing the probability of overdoses and accidental ingestion. Recreational drug has no clear and obvious harmful effect on anyone besides the user (who chooses to accept those risks).

Prohibition of alcohol didn’t stop Americans from drinking but it did waste a lot of dollars and lives. Besides huge taxpayer expense, criminalizing alcohol created a black market run by violent criminals. Legalization would get the police out of this ugly business of needlessly hurting people. It would also remove marijuana users from coercive drug courts. Legal prohibition does not stop consumers from consuming drugs, it does not stop trafficants from producing and selling it. It makes no sense to punish non-violent marijuana users at all – let alone by controlling the content of their urine or incarcerating them in dangerous. Moreover Countries who have experimented with legalization have had positive results.

I think that with Americans support for legalization it is clear that interest in this drug and these issues will remain elevated in the foreseeable future.