



CLAIM **RESPONSE**

Regulation will not reduce drug crime.

- A commonly heard argument is that the regulation of cannabis markets will not reduce drug crime. However, there is a lack of scientific research on how much drug crime supposedly thrives under regulated markets, and it is still too early to adequately assess this effect in Colorado, Washington State, and Uruguay.
- It is worth recalling the high levels of drug crime and violence under prohibition. Plenty of scientific evidence has demonstrated the failure of prohibition in reducing the size of underground drug markets and trafficking or the violence associated with illegal drug markets (Werb et al., 2013; Werb et al., 2011). Given the inability of prohibition to reduce drug crime and violence, regulation remains a viable alternative.
- Regulated cannabis markets directly reduce some drug crime by removing the illegal nature of some forms of cannabis production, distribution, and consumption. Although illegal drug crime is still likely to continue under a regulated market (i.e., underage purchasing, continued supply from a criminal market, etc.), if regulatory laws are appropriately constructed, cannabis regulation will transfer the vast majority of demand for cannabis from the criminal market to the legal market. Cannabis regulation in Colorado, Washington State, and Uruguay has diverted a substantial proportion (and likely the vast majority) of revenue from cannabis sales from the criminal market to licit sellers, thereby decreasing the total share of the criminal market. Even a modest contraction in criminal opportunities and cartel profits can be viewed as a positive.

BOTTOM LINE: Given that the prohibition of cannabis has not been shown to reduce illegal supply, it is likely that cannabis regulation is more effective at minimizing criminal markets for cannabis, despite the fact that criminal markets will continue to represent a proportion of the total market.

REFERENCES:

Werb, D., Kerr, T., Nosyk, B., Strathdee, S., Montaner, J., Wood, E., 2013. The temporal relationship between drug supply indicators: An audit of international government surveillance systems. *BMJ Open* 3.
Werb, D., Rowell, G., Guyatt, G., Kerr, T., Montaner, J., Wood, E., 2011. Effect of drug law enforcement on drug market violence: A systematic review. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 22, 87-94.