

The Effect of Recreational Marijuana Law on Alcohol Consumption

Brandon Chang*

September 2025

Abstract

A growing literature has examined whether recreational marijuana laws (RMLs) have an association with health-related outcomes. However, it is still unclear whether RMLs is associated with alcohol consumption. In this paper, we study retail scanner data on alcoholic beverage purchases across US counties from 2006 to 2019 to investigate the relationship between RMLs and alcohol consumption. Using the variation in the timing of RML enactment across states, we identify a complementary effect between marijuana and alcohol. These results remain robust with different specifications for RMLs in treated states.

*Email Address: changbr@iu.edu.

I am especially grateful to Gustavo Torrens, Hsien-Chang Lin, and Michael Alexeev for their guidance and mentorship throughout this project. I also thank Jon Agley and Kit Elam for valuable feedback and suggestions. Scanner data calculated (or derived) based on data from The Nielsen Company (US), LLC and marketing databases provided by the Kilts Center for Marketing Data Center at The University of Chicago Booth School of Business.” Information about the data and access are available at research.chicagobooth.edu/nielsen/. The conclusions drawn from the Nielsen data are those of the researchers and do not reflect the views of Nielsen. Nielsen is not responsible for, had no role in, and was not involved in analyzing and preparing the results reported herein. All remaining errors are my own.