

Status of State Cannabis Legalization: November 2022

This brief provides an update to the status of state cannabis laws in the United States, following the November 2022 election. Although cannabis remains illegal at the federal level, 37 states and the District of Columbia have now legalized medical cannabis use, with 22 of those jurisdictions also legalizing recreational cannabis use. Overall, almost 73% of U.S. residents now live in a state with legalized medical or recreational cannabis use.

FIGURE 1. STATUS OF STATE CANNABIS LEGALIZATION: NOVEMBER 2022

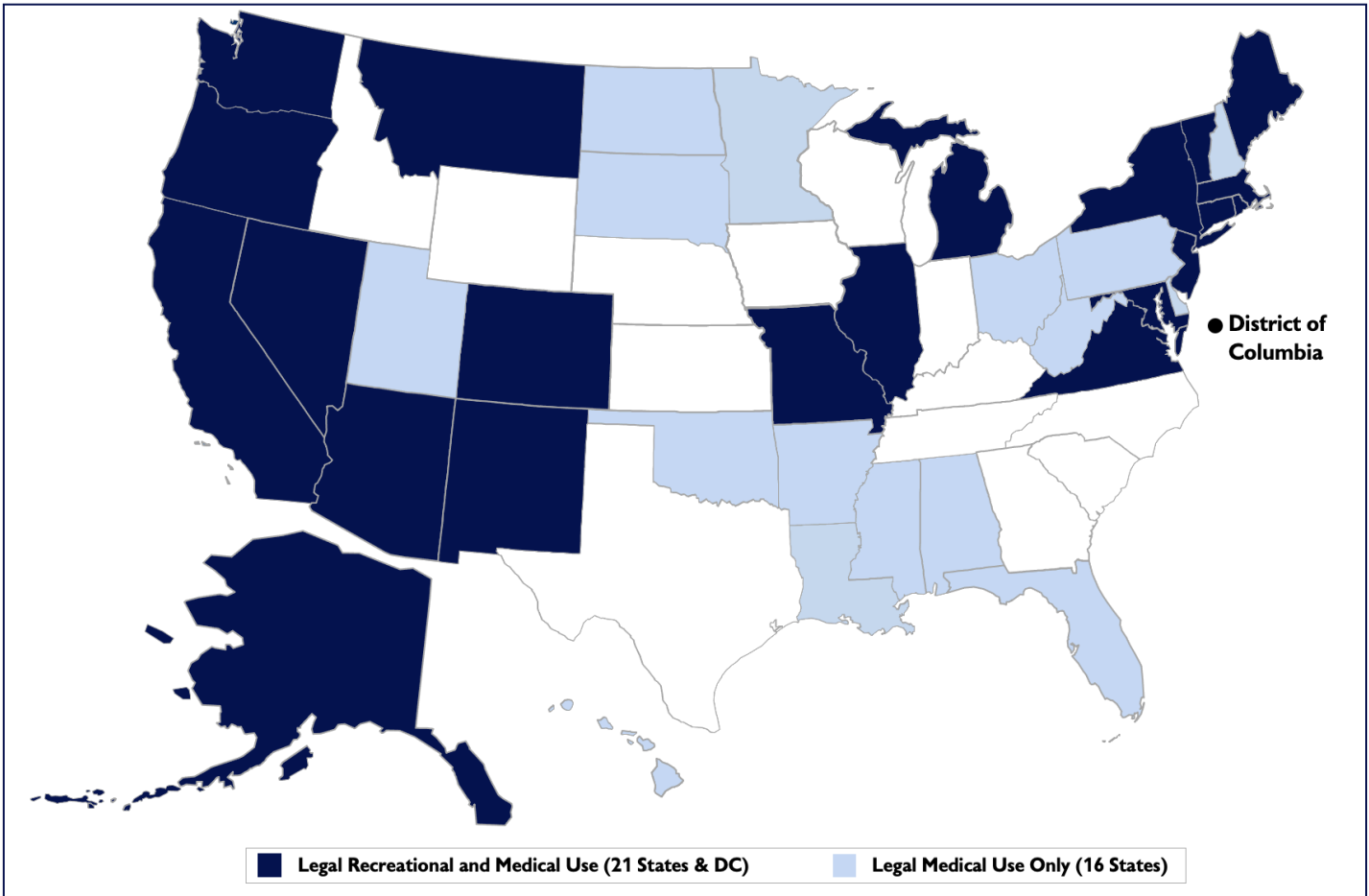
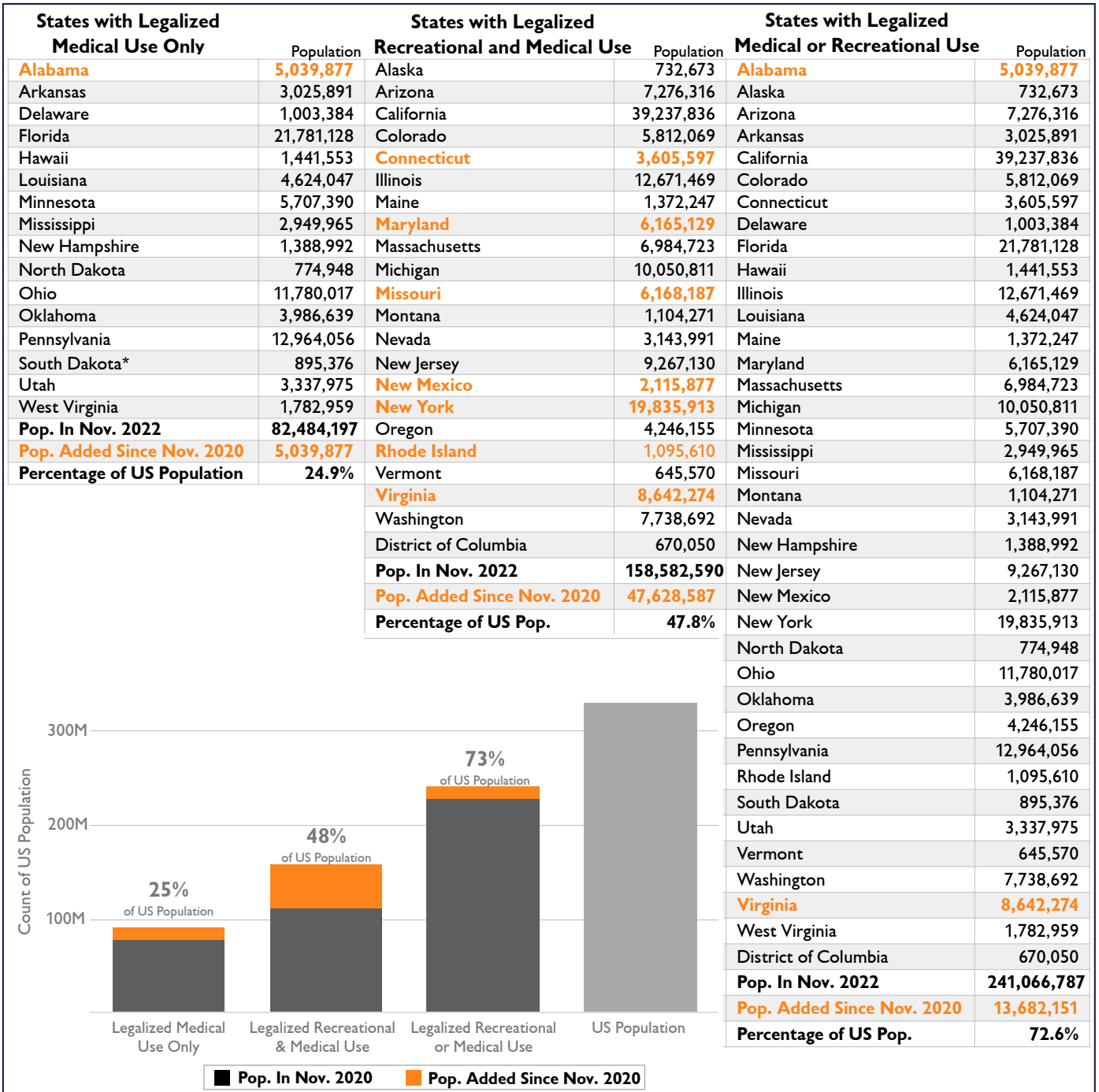


Figure 1 shows the current status of state cannabis laws. Two states legalized recreational use by referendum in the November 2022 election, and another five states legalized recreational use by legislative action in the past two years. Overall, the total share of U.S. residents living in a state with legalized recreational use now stands at almost 48%—up from roughly 34% in November 2020.

Figure 2 depicts the number of states that have legalized in each category, the population affected, and the changes in each area since November 2020. For legalized recreational use, Maryland and Missouri legalized via ballot referendum, whereas Connecticut, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia legalized via legislative action. For medical use, Virginia and Alabama both legalized via legislative action.

Public opinion polling and recent elections show ever-growing support for cannabis legalization. Regardless of the wisdom of legalization, the ballot initiatives, actions by state legislatures and governors, and polls indicate that recreational use legalization is likely to continue. Cannabis stakeholders should be equipped with the information and tools they need to ensure that states can optimize their approaches to protect public health and safety.

FIGURE 2. STATES AND POPULATION WITH LEGALIZED USE: NOVEMBER 2022^{1, 2, 3}



NOTES:

- ¹ Population figures were obtained from the US Census, Population Estimates July 1, 2021, American Community Survey.
- ² South Dakota voters approved a ballot referendum to legalize recreational use of cannabis in November 2020. However, a lawsuit overturned this referendum on state constitutional grounds. A similar ballot referendum was voted down in November 2022.
- ³ All states that have legalized recreational use have also prior legalized medical use.

This Info Brief is a publication of Carnevale Associates, LLC. Carnevale Associates brings strategic consulting solutions to governments, organizations, and communities as they confront the policy and program challenges of substance use, behavioral health, and criminal justice.

www.carnevaleassociates.com