



Considerations for Assessing the Risks and Benefits of Decriminalizing Natural Entheogens/Psychedelics in Philadelphia

Public Health and Safety Risks/Benefits

- According to most comprehensive modern study known to date, out of the four cities in California that have decriminalized since 2019, representing ~1.5 million people, **less than 0.3%** have had emergency room visit or needed to be hospitalized for adverse psychedelic experience, respectively. This includes MDMA and ketamine, which we are not focused on working to get decriminalized since they are not natural entheogens/psychedelics. Improved risk reduction education could further decrease such incidents.
- In another recent study, of 608 survey respondents who reported an adverse experience, **83% agreed or strongly agreed that the psycho-spiritual benefits outweighed the risks.**
- “Nearly two years after Denver made history as the nation’s first (major) city to decriminalize hallucinogenic mushrooms for personal use, the nightmare of rampant abuse and public intoxication feared by opponents has failed to materialize.”
- “There has been no effect that has been apparent to law enforcement.” —Denver Police Division Chief Joseph Montoya
- Two and a half years after Denver decriminalized mushrooms in May 2019, review panel comprised of district attorney, law enforcement officials, policy advocates, and mental health professionals issued a report in November 2021 in which it **“unanimously agreed that decriminalizing psilocybin mushrooms in Denver has not since presented any significant public health or safety risk in the city.”**
- 2006 Johns Hopkins Study: 67% considered their psilocybin experience as most meaningful or among the top five most meaningful experiences of their lives; 33% as the most meaningful *spiritual* experience of their lives. **This is First Amendment religious liberty issue.**
- Diagnosed depressive disorder in adults fluctuated between 19-24% between 2011-2020. (Philadelphia Department of Public Health)
- 2021 Lancet medical journal study:
 - 11% of US population were taking antidepressants
 - 60% of patients were not benefitting from first antidepressant they were prescribed, which can take months to sufficiently experiment with before repeating process with another prescription
 - Among 15 most common antidepressant medications on market, best had remission rate of 49% and worst, 3%.



Political Risks/Benefits

US Policy Developments at Municipal and State Level Over Last Five Years

Natural psychedelics have been decriminalized in [25 cities and 2 states in the US](#) beginning nearly five years ago, including several major cities:

Denver	P.R.: 51-49%
Washington D.C.	P.R.: 76-24%
Detroit	P.R.: 61-39%
Oakland	C.C: 6-0
Seattle	C.C.: 9-0
San Francisco	C.C.: 11-0
Portland	C.C: 6-3
Minneapolis	Mayoral executive order

P.R. = Public referendum outcome

C.C = City Council vote

Although Philadelphia would be among the more boldly innovative cities on this, it would not be an outlier, as **five years of data collection appears to strongly indicate**. Addressing implicit bias, Detroit has more daunting socioeconomic challenges than Philadelphia and thus far no news of adverse events have emerged since entheogens were decriminalized there.

Expert Opinion

“In 2016...54.2 percent of therapists surveyed said [psychedelics] “should be illegal to possess or use recreationally/non-medically.” Among respondents in 2022 and 2023, that proportion had dropped to **30.5 percent**.”

National Public Opinion

UC Berkeley Center for Science of Psychedelics July 2023 survey of registered voters:

- 49% support removing criminal penalties for personal use and possession
- 44% support spiritual/religious use
- Support for decriminalization increases from 32% to 64% among registered voters who do not have a first-degree connection to someone who has had a psychedelic experience vs.



those who do. Likewise, support for religious/spiritual use increases from 25% to 62%. This could be attributed to the humanization of what otherwise is a more abstract policy issue complicated by decades of fear-conjuring mis- and disinformation. Relatability to the issue is enhanced by observation of the improvements in well-being of people that have had psychedelic experiences.