



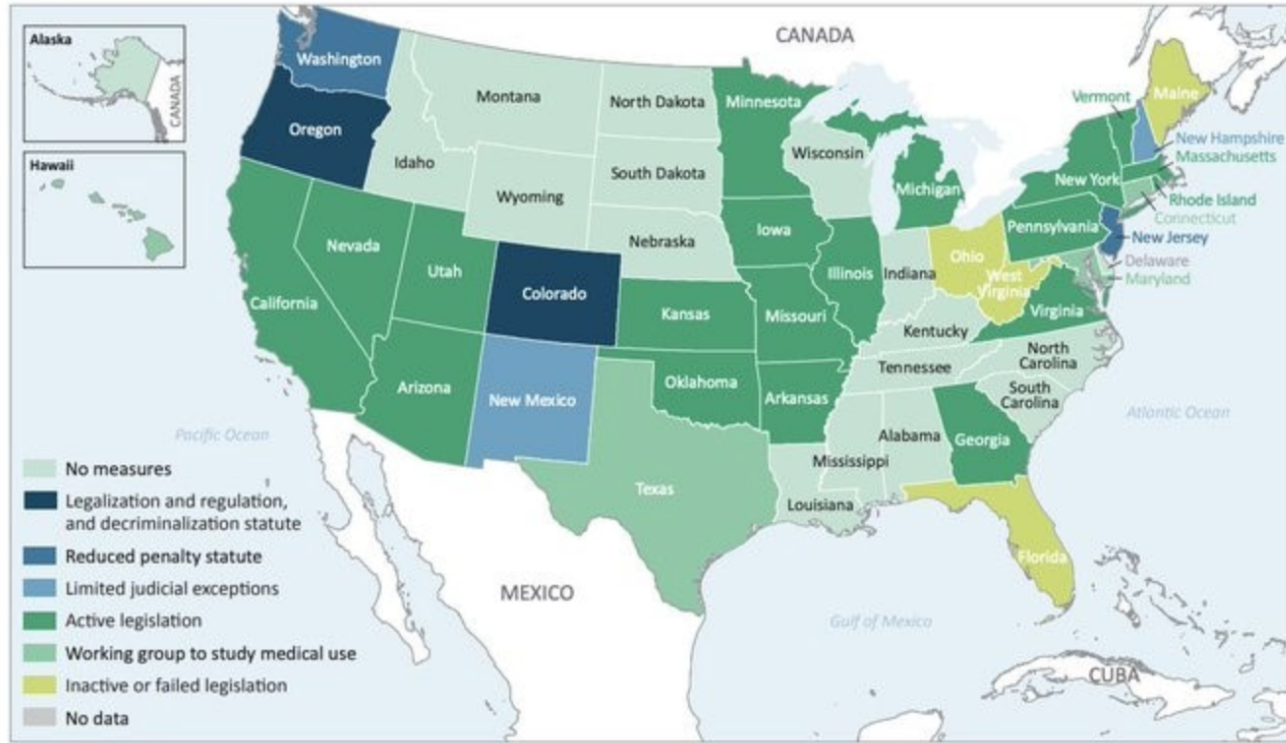
What is Decriminalize Nature Philadelphia?

Founded in 2020 by a Philly native, Decriminalize Nature Philadelphia (DNP) is the Philadelphia chapter of the national Decriminalize Nature movement. In 2023, DNP established itself as an IRS-registered 501(c)(4) lobbying organization to better advance its cause.

The Decriminalize Nature movement has succeeded in getting natural psychedelics/entheogens decriminalized in 25 cities and towns and two states across the country. Our chapter's mission is to educate Philadelphia policymakers and their constituents on the facts regarding entheogenic plants and fungi and get them decriminalized here.



MAP 1 Policy and regulatory developments related to psychedelics in the United States, 2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: Psychedelics Legalization and Decriminalization Tracker - Psychedelic Alpha.

Notes: The map shows regulatory developments as at 3 April 2023. At the federal level, the possession of psychedelics is illegal throughout the United States unless authorized to a properly licensed researcher, or for a purpose approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration, regardless of state-level programmes or initiatives purporting to authorize such use.

From 2019, the Decriminalize Nature national movement has inspired major political change regarding entheogens and psychedelics across the U.S.



Cities and States That Have Decriminalized Entheogens

<u>Denver, CO (51-49%)</u> May 2019	<u>Washington, DC (76-24%)</u> March 2021	<u>San Francisco, CA (11-0)</u> September 2022	<u>Eureka, CA (5-0)</u> October 2023
<u>Oakland, CA (6-0)</u> June 2019	<u>Washtenaw County, MI (Policy Directive)</u> June 2021	<u>Colorado (54-46%)</u> November 2022	<u>Provincetown, MA (3-1-1)</u> December 2023
<u>Santa Cruz, CA (7-0)</u> January 2020	<u>Arcata, CA (5-0)</u> October 2021	<u>Ferndale, MI (5-0)</u> February 2023	<u>Ypsilanti, MI (6-0)</u> January 2024
<u>Ann Arbor, MI (11-0)</u> September 2020	<u>Easthampton, MA (7-0-2)</u> October 2021	<u>Jefferson County, WA (3-0)</u> May 2023	
<u>Oregon (56-44%)*</u> November 2020	<u>Detroit, MI (61-39%)</u> November 2021	<u>Salem, MA (11-0)</u> May 2023	
<u>Somerville, MA (9-0)</u> January 2021	<u>Port Townsend, WA (7-0)</u> December 2021	<u>Berkeley, CA (8-0)</u> July 2023	
<u>Cambridge, MA (8-1)</u> February 2021	<u>Hazel Park, MI (4-0)</u> March 2022	<u>Minneapolis, MN (E.O.)</u> July 2023	
<u>Northampton, MA (9-0-1)</u> March 2021	<u>Seattle, WA (9-0)</u> May 2022	<u>Portland, ME (6-3)</u> October 2023	

*superseded by legislation recriminalizing all drugs in April 2024 but may be re-amended



Colorado Proposition 122

(passed November 8, 2022)

Decriminalized personal use and created natural medicine services program for supervised administration of dimethyltryptamine (DMT), ibogaine, mescaline, psilocybin; framework for regulating growth, distribution, and sale of such substances to permitted entities; created Natural Medicine Advisory Board.

	Vote %	Vote Count
Yes	53.64%	1,296,992
No	46.36%	1,121,114



National Public Opinion

- UC Berkeley Center for the Science of Psychedelics July 2023 [survey](#) of registered US voters:
 - 61% support legalizing regulated therapeutic access to psychedelics, including 35% who report “strong” support
 - 56% support obtaining FDA approval for psychedelics by prescription
 - 78% support making it easier for researchers to study psychedelic substances
 - 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 first-degree connection to someone who has had psychedelic experience vs. those who do.
 - 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.

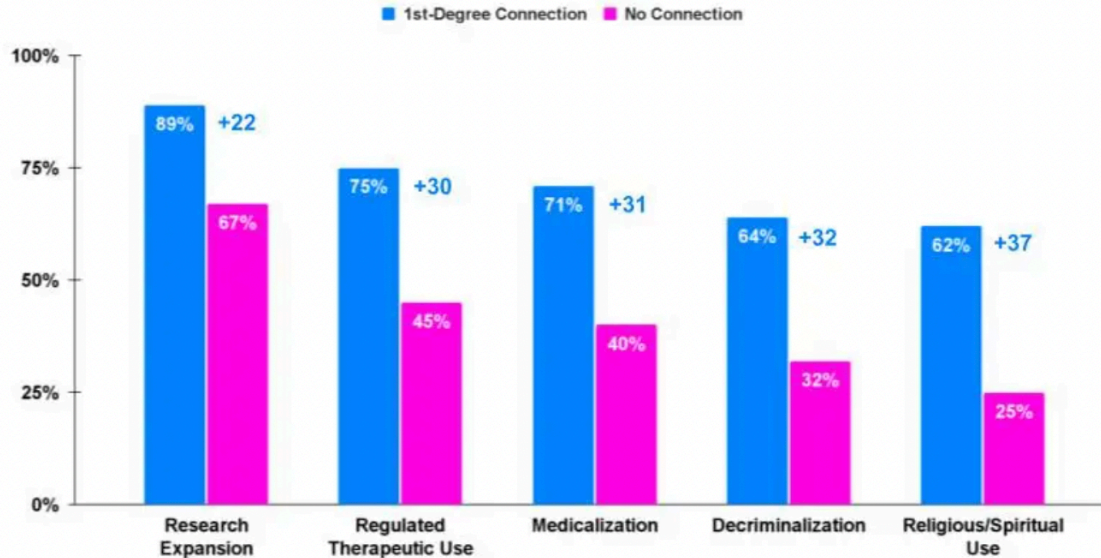


National Public Opinion

- Increase in familiarity correlates strongly with increase in public support for decriminalization and religious/spiritual use

Support for Policy Reform Mapped by 'First-Degree Connection' to Use

Research expansion is the only policy reform supported by a majority of those with no connection to use





**What are psychedelics/entheogens
and which do we want decriminalized?**



Psychedelics/Entheogens

- The term 'psychedelic' was [invented](#) by psychiatrist Humphrey Osmond in the 1950s. It combines two Greek words ('psyche' (i.e. soul or mind (depending on one's ontological disposition) and 'deloun' (to reveal). In a letter to fellow psychonaut Aldous Huxley, who he introduced to mescaline, he mused,

"To fathom Hell or soar angelic
Just take a pinch of psychedelic"

- The term 'entheogen' was invented as a substitute for the more (post-1960s) culturally baggaged word 'psychedelic' by Carl Ruck, professor of Classical Studies at Boston University and expert on the rituals of ancient Greece involving psychedelic/entheogenic plants/fungi. It means essentially the same thing but can perhaps best be translated as generating or manifesting or realizing one's divine inner nature. The intent is ennobling rather than ego inflating—i.e. we are far more than purposeless compositions of conscious matter. It is also reflective of several of the world's major belief systems, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, et al.





Psilocybe Mushrooms

- Respected as sacred medicine for millennia throughout the world (Asia, Europe, Central America, and other regions)
- Beneficial for depression, anxiety, treatment of addiction, PTSD, recidivism, spiritual growth, neuroplasticity, creativity, and more
- Multiple varieties found in Philly area, specifically *Panaeolus cinctulus*, *gymnopilus* sp, *Ovoidiocystidiata*
- **2006 Johns Hopkins study: 67% considered their psilocybin experience as most meaningful or among top 5 most meaningful experiences in their lives; 33% as most meaningful *spiritual* experience of their lives**
- UCLA and NYU are studying psilocybin as treatment for end-of-life anxiety
- Canadian federal government has recently granted medical exemptions for four end-of-life patients to be able to use psilocybin

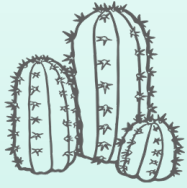




Ayahuasca

- Over 70 recognized Indigenous groups in the Amazonian basin respect ayahuasca as sacred "plant teachers"
- Beneficial for depression, addiction, anxiety, and PTSD, neurodivergence, and more
- Ayahuasca treatment in Brazilian prison population reduces recidivism
- Beneficial in terms of spiritual growth, cognitive flexibility, and creativity
- Two syncretic churches originating in Brazil and with branches in US—Santo Daime and UDV—are permitted under Religious Freedom Restoration Act to serve ayahuasca as sacrament in their services





Mescaline Cacti

- Honored as a sacred plant for thousands of years throughout the Americas in many different traditions
- Central to traditional religious and healing practices
- Beneficial for the treatment of alcoholism, anxiety, and addiction
- US-based Native American Church right to serve mescaline-containing peyote cactus is recognized under federal law





Iboga

- From Central Africa through Gabon, iboga is revered for initiatory rites of passage
- Efficacy for treatment-resistant opiate and methamphetamine addiction
- There is a thriving iboga addiction recovery industry in Mexico that caters to more affluent addicts from the U.S. but is not practically or financially accessible to many of those addicted in Philly.
- Reports of relatively higher cardiac arrhythmia risks but these can be mitigated by qualified medical personnel
- **A single ibogaine treatment reduced opioid withdrawal symptoms to statistically significant levels and achieved opioid cessation, or, sustained reduced use in dependent individuals as measured over 12 months. (15)**



History & Recent Developments

- Natural entheogens have been an integral part of the spiritual practice of many cultures for millennia, from what is now known as the Americas to Africa to the ancient Mediterranean to ancient India and beyond.
- *“For it appears to me that among the many exceptional and divine things your Athens has produced and contributed to human life, nothing is better than those Mysteries. For by means of them, we have been transformed from a rough and savage way of life to the state of humanity and have been civilized. Just as they are called initiations, so in actual fact we have learn from them the fundamentals of life and have grasped the basis not only for living with joy but also for dying with a better hope.”*
—Cicero, referring to the Eleusinian Mysteries
- Active area of research for American scientists since 1920s, peaking in 1950s-1960s before Nixon’s war on drugs
- Re-emerged from government prohibition era of 1970s-1980s in early 1990s.
- Numerous psychedelic science research centers in some of most highly credentialed institutions in US (and abroad), including Johns Hopkins University, NYU, MAPS, Columbia University, University of Texas at Austin, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, University of California at Berkeley, Heffter Research Institute (Santa Fe, NM), California Institute of Integral Studies, Naropa University, et al.



The Science - Mechanisms

- Classic psychedelic entheogens are those that mediate their primary effects via a certain type of serotonin receptor, 5-HT_{2A}. Serotonin and these entheogens are classes of chemicals based upon the amino acid Tryptamine.
- The most studied include:
 - psilocybin/psilocin (“magic mushrooms”)
 - mescaline (various cacti including “San Pedro” and peyote)
 - DMT & ayahuasca (various plants)
- Their short-term effects are mediated by increase in communications between several brain areas related to cognition and perception. This results in increase in neuroplasticity which is thought to influence long-term effects.^{(2) (14)}
- Entheogens increase structural neuroplasticity, which allows for cognitive flexibility to allow people to develop better coping skills when dealing with stressful situations, may allow for positive reframing of negative life experiences, situations, etc., and increases the ability for unhealthy ingrained patterns to be changed.



The Science - Safety

- No statistically significant association has been found between lifetime use and an increase in mental health problems (with caveat that it is important to treat entheogens with reverence and respect; to understand proper dosage, as with any other medicine; and to have safe container for having such experiences (set and setting)).⁽³⁾
- Entheogens are considered physiologically safe (with caveats for those with certain health conditions)⁽⁴⁾
- Entheogens do not lead to dependence and are not prone to abuse ⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾
- [Nearly 70% of psychiatrist survey respondents support decriminalization of psychedelics](#)



The Science - Efficacy

- **Depression**

- Psilocybin has been found to rapidly improve depression symptoms.⁽⁷⁾
(12)
- Ayahuasca reduces depression symptoms in treatment-resistant depression and PTSD.⁽¹⁰⁾

- **Anxiety & addiction**

- Entheogens are effective treatments for anxiety and addiction.⁽⁸⁾ (9)(10)

- **PTSD**

- Studies are underway using entheogens for the treatment of PTSD.⁽¹³⁾

- **Enhancement of creativity and sense of well-being**

- Enhancement of emotional and cognitive processes after administration of psilocybin and ayahuasca, in social setting, lasting up to 4 weeks after experience.⁽¹¹⁾



Efficacy of Existing Treatments for Depression

- [2021 Lancet medical journal study:](#)
 - 11% of US population taking antidepressants
 - 60% of patients not benefitting from first antidepressant 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%.

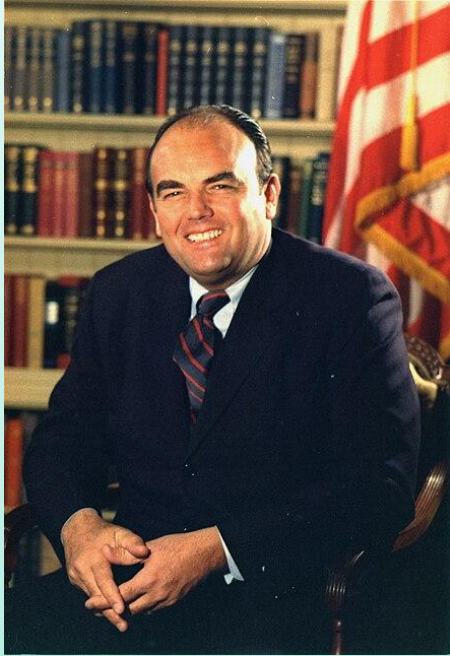


The Science - Summary

- In general, it has been demonstrated that entheogens are physiologically safe and produce increases in psychological flexibility by temporarily increasing neuroplasticity and changing connectivity patterns in the brain- which can enable individuals to make supportive changes in their life.
- They can positively affect certain “default” neural pathways or psychological ruts, allowing people the opportunity to reprocess and reframe thoughts or behaviors.
- These changes alleviate mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, addiction and result in improvements in quality of life.



Why did the U.S. Criminalize Psychedelics in the 1970s Under the Nixon Administration?



John Ehrlichman

American political aide who served as
the White House Counsel and
Assistant to the President for
Domestic Affairs under President
Richard Nixon

“You want to know what this was really all about?

The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people.

You understand what I’m saying?

We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.” ([Dan Baum, Harper’s, April 2016](#))



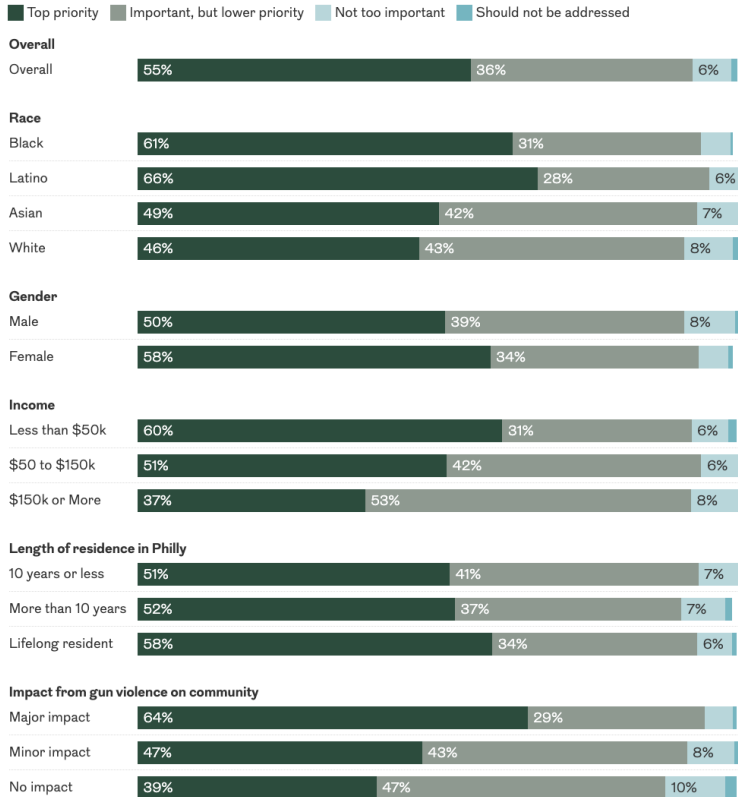
Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics

- 22.8% in poverty: income less than \$14,800 annually ([US Census](#))
- Diagnosed depressive disorder in adults: 21% ([Philadelphia Department of Public Health](#))
- Many Philadelphians navigating effects of structural racism and generational trauma
- Philadelphia averaged 1,194 overdose deaths 2017-2021, 85% involving opioids ([Philadelphia Department of Public Health](#))
- 2,326 shootings in 2021; 28% increase in robberies with firearm from 2021-2022; homicides/year doubled from 2013-2021 ([Pew, April 2022](#))
- 270 veterans committed suicide in Pennsylvania in 2019, ~235 in 2020 ([Veterans Administration](#))
- Pennsylvania suicide rate, 2020: 16.2 per 100,000
- Pennsylvania veteran suicide rate, 2020: 30.1 per 100,000 ([VA](#))



Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics

How much of a priority should **opioid use** be for Philadelphia's mayor and elected officials to address in the next two years?



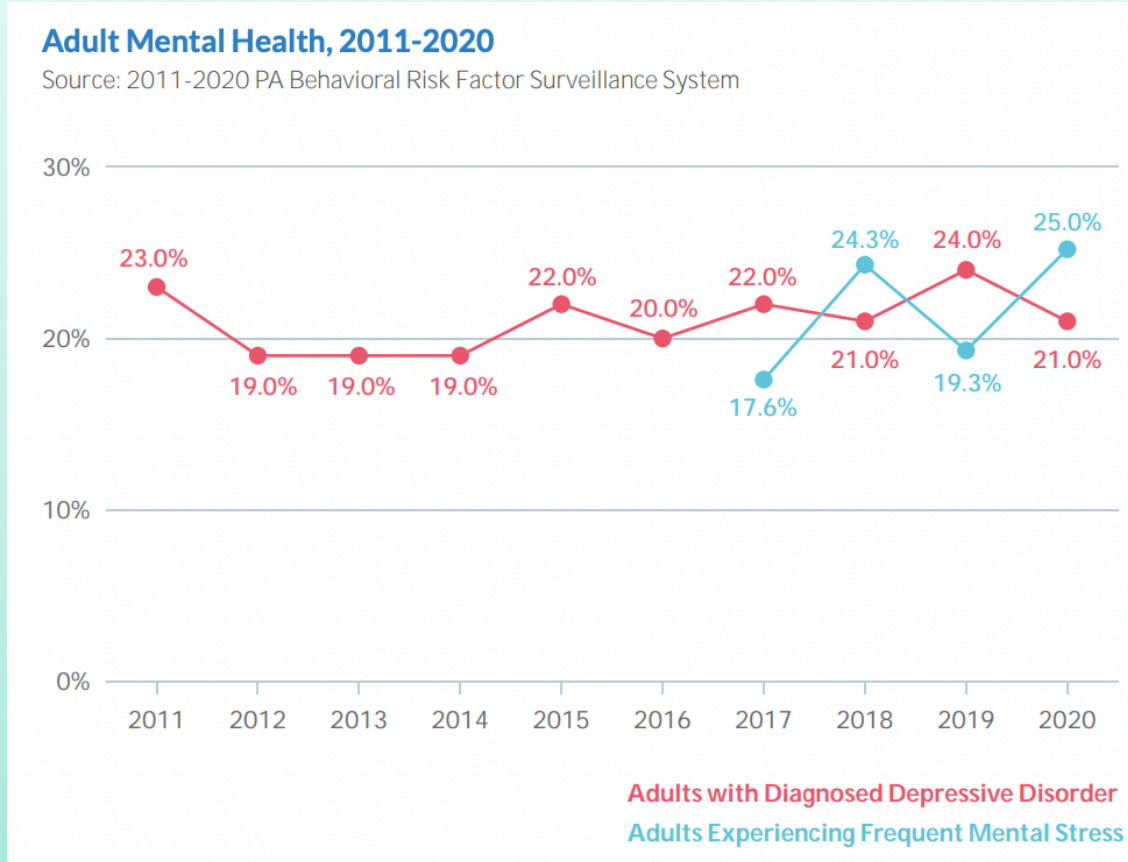
55% of Philadelphia residents see the opioid crisis as being a top priority to address

This increases to 64% among those who also see a major impact from gun violence on their community

Source: Every Voice Every Vote, Philadelphia Inquirer. 2023



Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics



Source: 2021 Health of the City report, Philadelphia Department of Public Health



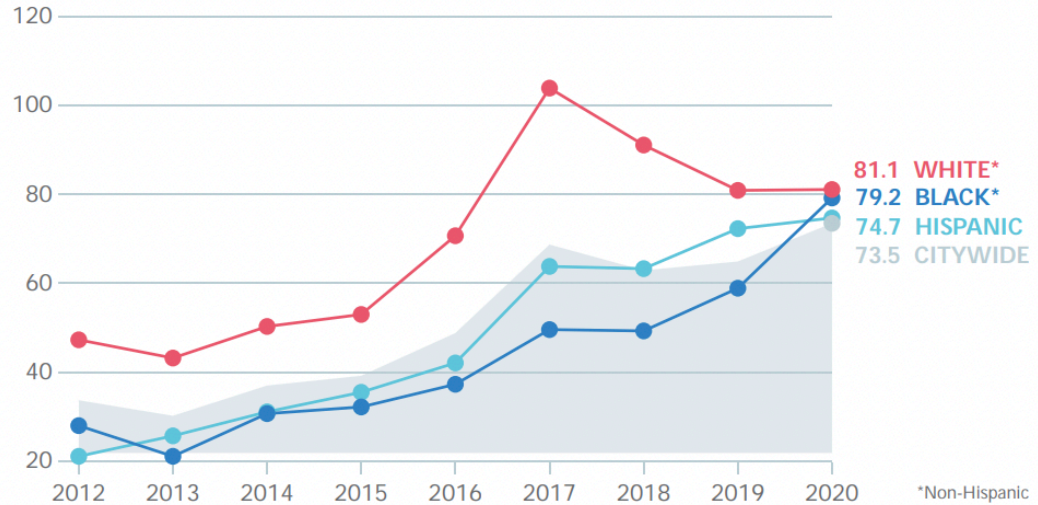
Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics

SUBSTANCE USE

Drug overdoses in Philadelphia are still primarily opioid related including prescription opioids, heroin and/or fentanyl. The demographic of overdoses in Philadelphia has changed over recent years with increasing rates among Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic residents.*

Substance Use-Related Mortality Rate per 100,000 People, 2012-2020

Source: 2012-2020 Vital Statistics (2020 Provisional), PDPH



Source: 2021 Health of the City report, Philadelphia Department of Public Health

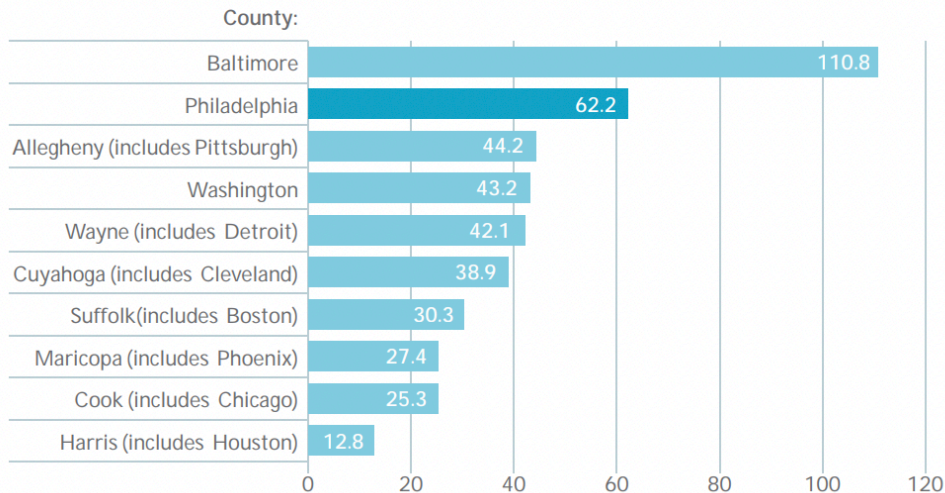


Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics

Philadelphia has one of the highest drug overdose mortality rates compared to other large US cities.

Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Residents, 2019

Source: 2019 CDC Wonder



Source: 2021 Health of the City report, Philadelphia Department of Public Health

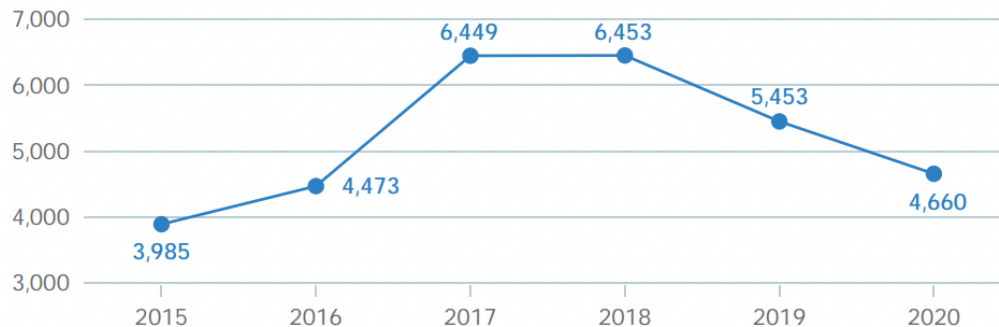


Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Statistics

Emergency rooms have seen large increases of non-fatal drug overdoses in recent years. In 2020, emergency room visits for drug overdoses in Philadelphia decreased to 4,660. Overall emergency room visits declined by 35% in 2020. Also increasing availability of Narcan allows for more drug overdoses to be reversed in community settings.

Emergency Department Visits for Drug Overdoses, 2015-2020

Source: 2015 – 2020 Syndromic Surveillance, PDPH



Source: 2021 Health of the City report, Philadelphia Department of Public Health



Why Decriminalization vs. Legalization?

- Many of those who are in greatest need can least afford treatment at legalized facilities
 - Cost estimate in Oregon: \$2,800-\$3,500 ([Psychedelic Spotlight](#))
 - Ceremonies led by equally or more credentialed community leaders can be substantially more affordable and can include greater long-term community support
- Honors individuals who use these tools for spiritual faith, tradition, or ceremony, in accordance with First Amendment and Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)
- These experiences are best had in nature and people should generally (within reason) have the right to choose setting they feel most at ease and safe in. For some this may be a clinic with some intention hopefully put into creating a warm and relaxing ambiance. Others prefer natural, traditional, ceremonial setting.



What Has Happened So Far, Post-Decriminalization?

“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 [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.”*

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%](#) of this population has had an emergency room visit or needed to be hospitalized for an adverse psychedelic experience. This includes MDMA and ketamine, which we are not focused on. 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](#)**.





Our Ask



1. (Co-)sponsor public hearing(s)
2. (Co-)sponsor our resolution decriminalizing entheogens and encourage your colleagues to do the same





Questions?



Decriminalize Nature Philadelphia

www.decriminalizenaturephilly.org
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The Science - References

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15. Ibogaine treatment outcomes for opioid dependence from a twelve-month follow-up observational study [Geoffrey E. Noller](#) , PhD, [Chris M. Frampton](#) , PhD & [Berra Yazar-Klosinski](#) , PhD Pages 37-46 | Received 23 Jun 2016, Accepted 20 Mar 2017, Published online: 12 Apr 2017



Anecdotal Evidence

- [Decriminalize Nature Atlanta public testimony, September 23, 2022](#)
- [Marcus Capone: former US Navy SEAL and co-founder of Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions \(VETS\), July 23, 2020](#)
- [Nick Norris, 10-year Navy SEAL veteran, October 20, 2021](#)
- [“From Shock to Awe”](#)
- [“Can Psychedelics Cure?” PBS NOVA, October 19, 2022.](#)
- [How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence](#)
- [Decriminalize Nature Eureka, CA public testimony, October 17, 2023 \(begins 1:24:30\)](#)
- [88-Year-Old Oregonian Turns to Psilocybin to Heal from Decades-Old Trauma; Dave Miller, Oregon Public Broadcasting; September 19, 2023](#)

