Social Media Investigation: Cannabis in New York State

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Cannabis in New York
26 October 2018—1 November 2018

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Overview

New York citizens are demonstrating increased interest in cannabis use and legalization in their state through online conversations concerning its medical and recreational use and the long-term economic advantages of legalization. Further analysis of New Yorkers' online posts about cannabis revealed four key topics driving discussions: (1) the expansion of medical insurance coverage, (2) parole reform, (3) home delivery of medical cannabis, and (4) state-wide legalization. With an estimated $3.65 billion in cannabis sales in New York State by 2022, companies must understand New Yorkers' cannabis-related beliefs and desires in order to best integrate their product into the emerging market.

Findings: Topic Modeling

Four (4) key topics were identified in New Yorkers' online conversations about cannabis:

- **Medical Insurance**: 37% of online conversations discuss medical cannabis and demonstrate support for New York State Bill A11390 aimed to expand state health insurance to cover medical marijuana

- **Parole Reform**: 21% of discussions advocate parole reform and express opposition to the NYPD's arrests of parolees after a single infraction related to cannabis use

- **Home Delivery**: 19% of conversations referred to medical marijuana companies planning to make home deliveries in the Lower Hudson Valley and expand their delivery footprint throughout the state

- **Full Legalization:** 12% of discussions mention a recent poll by Quinnipiac University that indicates an overwhelming majority of New Yorkers support full legalization


Legend: Insurance Expansion · Parole Reform · Home Delivery · Full Legalization · Other
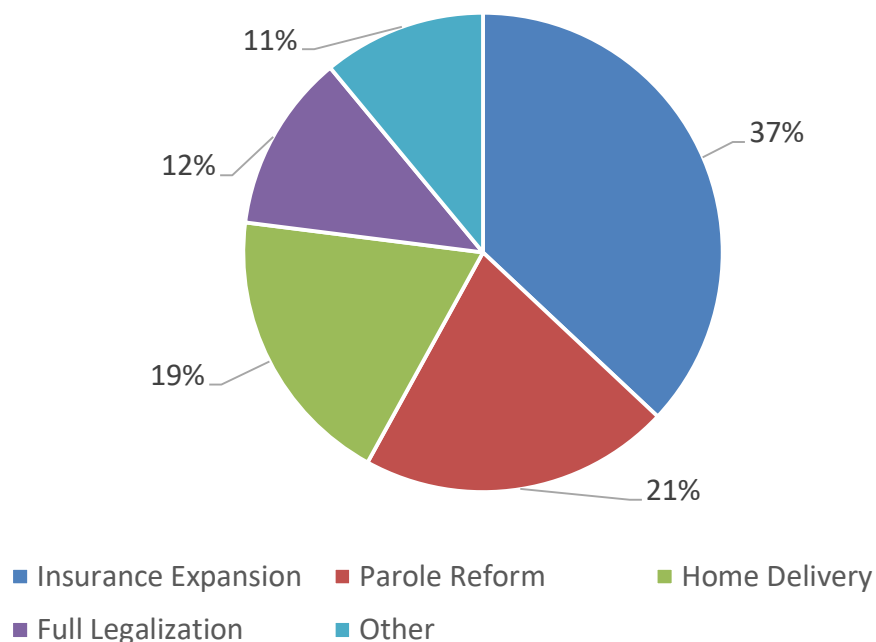
"How much $ is New York State losing every minute since Canada legalized marijuana? Anyone done the math?" *Barbara Gautreaux ([Tweet](#))*

Findings: Geographic Analysis

Geographic analysis of online conversations revealed differences in the concerns and beliefs of rural and urban citizens about the legalization and use of cannabis for various purposes (e.g., medical, recreational, and as a business venture)

- The majority of discussions (67%) emerged from metropolitan / urban areas (e.g. New York City)

  - 53% of discussions were associated with recreational cannabis use

  - 47% focused on entrepreneurial cannabis ventures

    - ❑ People perceive the recent [news](#) of Aurora Cannabis entering the New York Stock Exchange as an economic opportunity to invest in the cannabis industry

  - Discussions on Long Island, however, were concerned about the negative consequences of widespread cannabis usage among youth

- 33% of online discussions about cannabis in rural areas focused on the use of medical cannabis as an alternative to opioids

  - 87% of these discussions perceive cannabis as a solution to combat opioid addiction in rural areas of New York State

Geographical Distribution of Cannabis Discussions

33%

67%

■ Urban ■ Rural
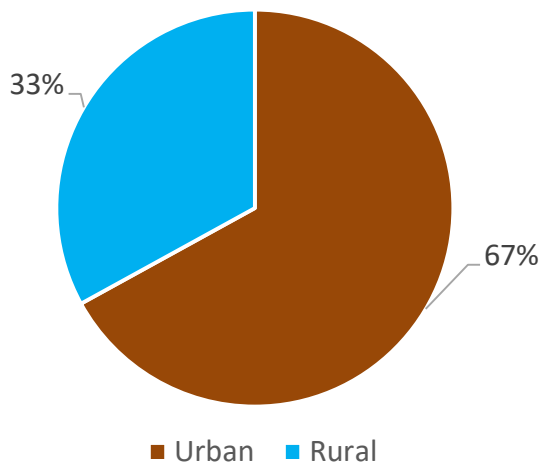
Participants in the World March for Cannabis legalization on May 5th, 2018, in Manhattan's Union Square. ([Source](#): Rolling Stone)

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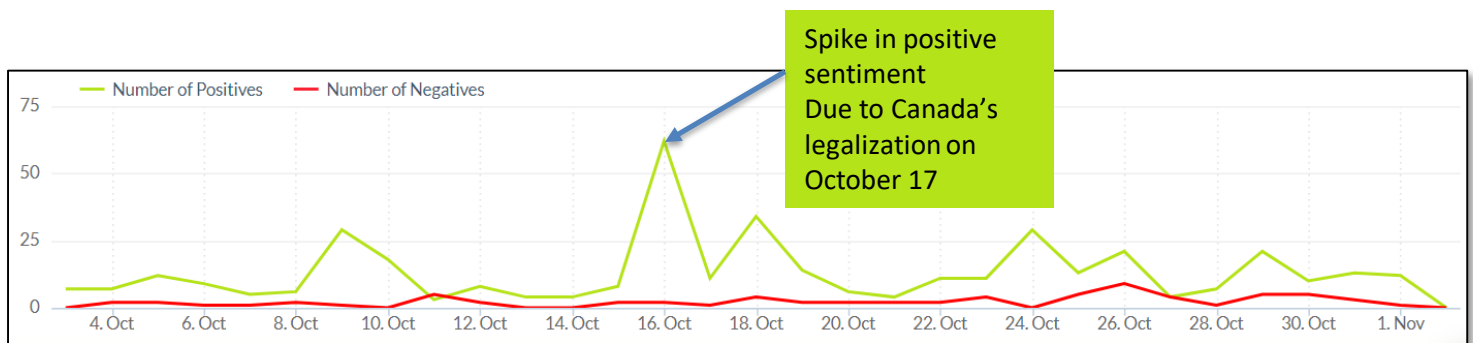ENODO
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"Wow! Medicaid and other publicly funded health insurance programs would be required to cover medical marijuana under this bill!" (Tom Angell ([Tweet](#)))
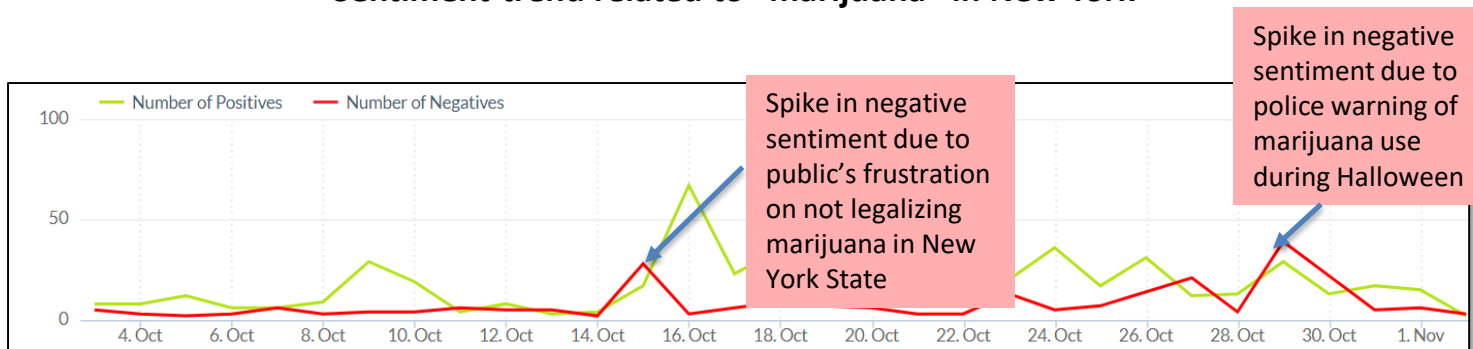
Findings: Comparative Analysis

Over a 30-day period, ENODO compared the sentiment of online conversations about "cannabis" to the sentiment of online conversations about "marijuana." Overall, the word "marijuana" carries more negative sentiment than "cannabis."

- Discussions pertaining to cannabis had very low negative sentiment (28%) compared to positive sentiment (72%)

    - Positive sentiment is due to the view that the medical and entrepreneurial use of cannabis represent positive benefits to New York's citizens

- "Marijuana" discussions express greater negative sentiment due to the association of "marijuana" with crime and police arrests

    - Negative sentiment toward "marijuana" spiked around Halloween (Oct. 31) due to New York police warnings for people to stay vigilant of marijuana-laced candies

Sentiment trend related to "cannabis" in New York

Spike in positive sentiment Due to Canada's legalization on October 17

Sentiment trend related to "marijuana" in New York

Spike in negative sentiment due to public's frustration on not legalizing marijuana in New York State

Spike in negative sentiment due to police warning of marijuana use during Halloween

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"On shitty chronic pain days like today, I just want to strangle New York State for having the shittiest medical marijuana program." Emily G (**Tweet**)

Findings: Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment Analysis on Key Topics revealed variations in public sentiment in relation to specific uses of cannabis:

- **Medical Insurance**: A majority (82%) of discussions concerning the expansion of New York state's insurance to cover cannabis were positive

- **Parole Reform**: Despite being a trending topic, public sentiment toward marijuana-related parole reform remains largely neutral (56%)

- **Home Delivery**: An overwhelming (91%) positive sentiment toward home delivery of medical cannabis was related to public discussions about the benefits to the elderly, disabled, and remote/rural users of medical cannabis

- **Full legalization:** A majority (78%) of discussions about the full legalization of cannabis across the state were positive – there was a 12% spike in positive sentiment soon after the October 17th Cannabis Act in Canada
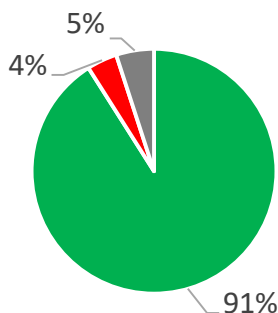
Medical Insurance Sentiment

7%
11%
82%
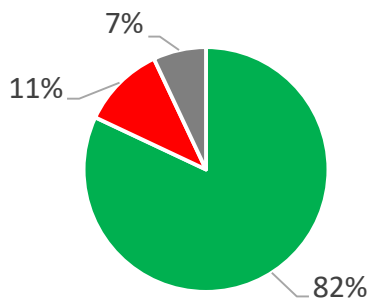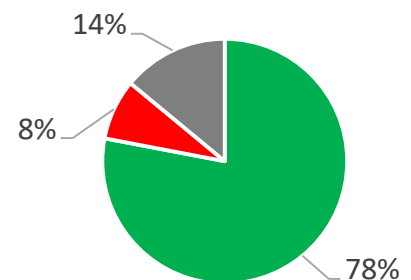
■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Neutral

Parole Reform Sentiment

27%
56%
17%
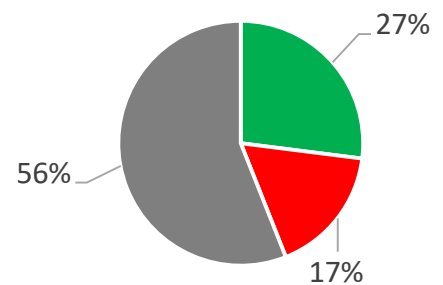
■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Neutral

Home Delivery Sentiment

5%
4%
91%

■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Neutral

Full Legalization Sentiment

14%
8%
78%

■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Neutral

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"NYS is so far behind its neighbors in its medical cannabis program it's laughable" *Barbara Clarke,* online blog

Findings: Key Influencers

Online influencers on cannabis-related topics vary from cannabis activists to entrepreneurs, and from cannabis news groups to blogs on recreational use. ENODO's analysts identified the top five (5) influencers currently shaping online public opinions, which were classified based on their social media reach (i.e. number of online users engaged).

Influence Rank [1= Highest, 5= Lowest]	Influencer	Online platform	Link to Online Profile
1	CannabisBizNews	Twitter	@CannabisBizNews
2	CannaFunds	Twitter	@CannaFunds
3	Fortune420Group	Twitter	@Fortune420Group
4	beardbros_pharms	Instagram	@beardbros_pharms
5	gbf_howl	Twitter	@gbf_howl

Findings: Impact of Key Influencers

The online influencers identified were further analyzed to uncover the extent of their influence on online conversations about specific topics related to cannabis.

Influence Rank [1= Highest, 5= Lowest]	Influencer	Topics Influenced	Impact Score [0 = Low Impact, 1 = High Impact]
1	CannabisBizNews	Legalization, Insurance	0.85
2	CannaFunds	Insurance	0.65
3	Fortune420Group	Parole, Insurance	0.57
4	beardbros_pharms	Home Delivery, Insurance	0.32
5	gbf_howl	Legalization	0.27

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"It's sad that medical marijuana in NY is not only inaccessible but overpriced." Howard Mucker, *mjbizdaily.com*

Recommendations

Conduct additional analysis to uncover deeper insights into public sentiment and perceptions about cannabis and related topics. Develop a Specialized Analysis to:

- Design a communication strategy and engagement activities for cannabis companies to engage potential consumers, influencers, state legislators, and the general public

- Perform additional Topic Modeling, Sentiment Analysis, and Demographic Analysis on key topics to guide company decisions (e.g., potential products, marketing ads, and corporate social responsibility initiatives)

- Conduct Social Network Analysis to investigate the relationship of key influencers to various cannabis communities in New York State

- Perform real-time Social Listening to measure public sentiment during key events (e.g. passage of New York State Bill A11390) and respond accordingly

Data Analytics

ENODO collected 45,983 Tweets, 32,312 Facebook posts, 23,091 Instagram posts, 12,987 YouTube comments, 8,198 news websites, 5,331 blogs within New York State using a blend of ENODO's proprietary R-language platform and third-party data vendors.

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