Matt Brown

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics	University of Connecticut	May 2027 (expected)
M.P.P.A. in Public Policy	University of Massachusetts Amherst	2018–2020
B.A. in Film & Media Culture	Middlebury College	

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Health Economics, Public Policy, Labor Economics, Applied Microeconomics, Economics Education

JOB MARKET PAPER

The Effect of Recreational Marijuana Laws on Schizophrenia & Psychotic Disorders
(*Revise and Re-submit at the* ***American Journal of Health Economics***)

Amid the ongoing liberalization of state recreational marijuana laws (RMLs), the National Institutes of Health has expressed concern that expanded marijuana access may elevate the prevalence of schizophrenia and psychotic disorders across the United States. This study presents one of the first causal estimates of the impact of RMLs on the incidence of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorder treatment cases observed in state-sponsored mental health systems. Leveraging a generalized difference-in-differences framework to exploit the staggered rollout of RMLs, I first document that the onset of legal recreational marijuana sales induces a 30-40% increase in the rate of prior-month marijuana use in treated states relative to controls. Next, I show that the opening of recreational dispensaries leads to a 15-20% increase across specifications in the incidence of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders at state-sponsored mental health facilities. These findings suggest that RMLs permitting dispensaries may have unintended adverse effects on the treatment burden of schizophrenia.

PUBLICATIONS

Recreational Marijuana Laws and Workplace Absence (*Health Economics*, 2026)

A near majority of states have now passed recreational marijuana laws (RMLs), but their impact on labor market behavior remains unclear. This study provides new causal evidence on the relationship between RMLs and workplace absence. Using a generalized difference-in-differences framework to exploit the staggered rollout of RMLs, I first document that the onset of legal recreational sales is accompanied by a 50% increase in the prevalence of prior-month adult marijuana use in treated states relative to control states. Next, I show that retail market access leads to a 14% increase in the incidence of prior-week workplace absence. Supplemental analyses of health outcomes suggest that part of the effect may be driven by increases in self-reported mental health problems following the opening of recreational dispensaries. These findings suggest that marijuana legalization may affect labor market outcomes along margins not typically captured by employment status alone.

WORKING PAPERS

The Effects of Cannabis Legalization on Substantiated Child Maltreatment (Working Paper)

As more states adopt recreational marijuana laws (RMLs), concerns remain about how expanded cannabis access may affect child welfare. This study presents new causal evidence on the relationship between RMLs and substantiated cases of child neglect. Leveraging a generalized difference-in-differences framework that exploits the staggered rollout of RMLs across states, I show that RML adoption with dispensary access leads to an increase of approximately two cases of substantiated child maltreatment per 1,000 children, primarily driven by increased neglect. Supplementary evidence from time-use data suggests that reductions in parental caregiving time may help explain this pattern. These findings suggest that increased child maltreatment among families exposed to expanded cannabis access may be an unintended consequence of marijuana legalization.

Recreational Marijuana Legalization and Human Capital Accumulation (with Michele Baggio and Alberto Chong) (Working Paper)

This paper examines the impact of recreational marijuana legalization (RML) on human capital accumulation in the United States. Exploiting the staggered adoption of RML across states from 2010 to 2023, we estimate its causal effect on two core educational outcomes, high school graduation and standardized test scores among middle school students. Using large-scale datasets and event-study difference-in-differences estimator we find that RML reduces high school graduation rates by 0.6–0.9 percentage points and lowers middle school test scores by approximately 14% of one standard deviation. These effects are mediated through declines in parental investment in human capital: RML increases adult marijuana use, reduces parental time with children, worsens the home environment, and raises substantiated cases of child maltreatment. The findings highlight an overlooked intergenerational consequence of marijuana liberalization policies and underscore the need to consider human capital externalities in evaluating their welfare impacts.

SELECTED WORK IN PROGRESS

Teaching Economics Majors Principles of Writing and Data Visualization (with Oskar Harmon)

Teaching Principles of Writing Using Generative AI in an Undergraduate Economics Course (with Oskar Harmon, Sijia Chen, Adam Patterson, Tara Grealis, and Paul Tomolonis)

The Effect of Psilocybin Decriminalization Laws on PTSD and Depression

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Connecticut (Instructor of Record)

Writing in Economics	Fall 2026
Intermediate Macroeconomics *(4.7/5 instructor eval)*	Spring 2026
Writing in Economics *(4.8/5 instructor eval)*	Fall 2025
Principles of Macroeconomics *(N/A)*	Summer 2025
Writing in Economics *(4.8/5 instructor eval)*	Spring 2025
Writing in Economics *(4.8/5 instructor eval)*	Fall 2024
Writing in Economics *(5.0/5 instructor eval)*	Spring 2024

University of Connecticut (Teaching Assistant)

Intermediate Microeconomics, Prof. Tianxu Chen	Spring 2023
Labor Economics, Prof. Tianxu Chen	Spring 2023
Contemporary Problems in Economics, Prof. Derek Johnson	Fall 2022
Introduction to Microeconomics, Prof. Derek Johnson	Spring 2022
Introduction to Microeconomics, Prof. Owen Svalestad	Fall 2021

University of Massachusetts, Amherst (Teaching Assistant)

Statistical Methods in Public Policy, Prof. Michael Ash	Spring 2020

INVITED SEMINARS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2027 American Economic Association ASSA Annual Meeting, Washington D.C.

2026 American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon) Annual Conference, Minneapolis
Presenting Author: Recreational Marijuana Laws and Human Capital Accumulation

2026 Applied Young Economists' Webinar (AYEW)
Presenting Author: Recreational Marijuana Laws and Workplace Absence

2026 American Economic Association ASSA Annual Meeting, Philadelphia
Presenting Author: Principles of Writing and Data Visualization

2025 Virtual Economics of Poverty and Policy Seminar (VEPPS)
Presenting Author: Recreational Marijuana Laws and Workplace Absence

2025 American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon) Annual Conference, Nashville
Presenting Author: The Effect of Recreational Marijuana Laws on Schizophrenia & Psychotic Disorders

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

2025	W. Harrison Carter Award for Excellence in Teaching, University of Connecticut
2023	W. Harrison Carter Award for Excellence in Teaching, University of Connecticut
2022-2026	Eleanor Bloom Summer Fellowship in Economics, University of Connecticut
2018	Commonwealth Policy Fellowship, School of Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Amherst

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Referee: Economic Inquiry

SKILLS

Coding:	Stata, MATLAB, Python, LaTeX
Language:	English (native)

OTHER

Citizenship:	United States

REFERENCES

Delia Furtado (Co-chair)
Department of Economics
University of Connecticut
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Bokyung Kim (Co-chair)
Department of Economics
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