

# **GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MEDICINAL CANNABIS MARKET IN PUERTO RICO**

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The introduction of laws that permit the use of cannabis for medical purposes has led to the emergence of a medical cannabis industry in some US states. In Puerto Rico, Governor García Padilla ordered the Department of Health in 2016, through EO-2015-10, to reclassify cannabis from classification 1 to classification 2, recognizing its medicinal value, and legalize its medical use. Given this, Regulation 8766 of the Department of Health was created to establish the rules that regulate the activities of medical cannabis on the island. On July 9, 2017, Act No. 42 also known as the Act to Manage the Study, Development, and Research of Cannabis for Innovation, Applicable Standards, and Limits (Medicinal Cannabis Act) became law.

Six years since the first effort to permit the use of cannabis for medical purposes in Puerto Rico, the level of development of the cannabis industry has reached a point of maturation. Some even argue that today the market is saturated. Despite this situation, no analysis from a geospatial standpoint have been done in this market. The use of geospatial technologies for business geography help understand the distribution of business in a geographic region, the relations and interactions created between them, possible business deserts and saturated regions. All of them combined help improve business decisions.

This study assessed the spatial distribution of medical cannabis industry, in special cannabis dispensaries, according to population indicators, cannabis dispensaries location and other demographic factors.