Participation in the Massachusetts (MA) Adult-Use Cannabis Industry by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Across Job Titles

Samantha M. Doonan, BA1 and Julie K. Johnson, PhD1
1Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Cannabis Control Commission

Background
- U.S. states are increasingly legalizing cannabis for recreational purposes (adult-use) through privately-run establishments.
- Legalization has partially emerged in response to inequitable prohibition enforcement which disproportionately harmed Black and Hispanic/Latino communities and cohorts.
- The extent to which people from communities and cohorts that were most affected are included in the legal industry is unknown.

MA Legislative Provisions for Equity
- Legislative mandate to promote equity
- Positive Impact Plans
- Diversity Plans
- Areas of Disproportionate Impact
- Economic Empowerment Certification
- Social Equity Program
- Prohibition on excluding someone from industry based on cannabis conviction (excluding distribution to minors)
- Cap on number of businesses a person or entity may own or control
- Reinvestment of tax revenue into disproportionately harmed communities
- Ability to expunge cannabis records
- Research requirement

Methods
- First, we extracted MA adult-use industry agent registrations (10/15/18-4/28/20). We used a unique identifier to merge data for people with multiple registrations.
- Next, we created binary variables for each race and ethnicity most affected are included in the legal industry is unknown.
- Descriptive statistics show agents by demographic characteristics. Agent data is also shown stratified by two levels: (1) white/non-white, and (2) male/female.
- Chi-square tests tested differences between the demographic makeup of people in less-senior job titles compared to those in senior job titles.

Results

Participation in the Massachusetts adult-use cannabis industry skews white and male, and this trend is pronounced in senior job titles.

Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Vary By Job Seniority***

Less-senior positions (n=4,166)*
Employees, Managers

Senior positions (n=394)**
Owners, Executives, Board members

Conclusion
Findings suggest continued and greater investment in equity is needed to increase diversity within the Massachusetts adult-use industry. Future work should stratify by intersectional identities, including race, ethnicity, and gender in order to more fully understand participation.

*Data may not sum to 100% as more than one race/ethnicity can be selected. Data is rounded to the nearest percent. Race/ethnicity & gender are typically reported by a supervisor, not self-reported, representing a limitation.
**Percent shown is among agents with non-missing race/ethnicity & gender data (n=4,560). Agents that selected ‘White’ and another race/ethnicity (n=103) are included in white cohorts, representing a limitation.

***Differences between the racial and gender makeup of less-senior compared to senior positions were significant at the level of p<.001.