

Half of Americans Continue to Support Legalizing Recreational Marijuana

NEW YORK, N.Y. – As of last month's elections, four more states voted to decriminalize marijuana for both medical and recreational use, bringing the grand total to 8 states that have legalized recreational marijuana (9, including Washington D.C.). The Harris Poll revisited the topic of legalized marijuana this month and found that, even with more states joining the legalization movement, American sentiments have largely remained the same since last observed in February 2015.

The recent poll revealed that about 8 in 10 adults support the legalization of marijuana for medical treatment (82% 2016; 81% 2015), while half of Americans support legalizing marijuana for recreational use (50%; 49% respectively). Just over 2 in 5 adults (42%) oppose the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, particularly those ages 65 and older (56% oppose).

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll® of 2,054 U.S. adults aged 18+ surveyed online between December 8 and 12, 2016.

Decisions, decisions

Whether or not you believe marijuana should be legalized for any reason, there is a larger question also at hand: who should decide whether or not to legalize the substance, the federal government on behalf of all states or state governments each for themselves? Just over a third of adults feel the decision should be made at the federal level (35% in 2016 and 2015), but the number who favor the states retaining the right to make this decision has increased from 44% in 2015 to 48% now.

Ch-ch-ch-changes

If marijuana were to be legalized, it has the potential to have implications far beyond a simple change of legality. About seven in ten adults believe that legalized marijuana will lead to increases in tax revenue (71%), the amount of marijuana used (71%), and the number of marijuana users (69%). Meanwhile, about six in ten expect increases in tourism to states where recreational marijuana usage is legal (64%) and greater consistency/standardization of the marijuana used (57%).

Alcohol consumption implications

When it comes to the potential impact of marijuana legalization on alcohol consumption, most regular drinkers (*adults ages 21+ who drink alcohol at least several times a year*), say that marijuana legalization would not impact their personal consumption of alcoholic beverages. 81% of regular beer and spirit drinkers and 85% of regular wine drinkers say that legalization of marijuana would not impact, or has not impacted (for those states where it has already been legalized), their consumption of alcohol. Of the balance, more say they will decrease their alcohol consumption than say they will increase their consumption.

However, according to Danny Brager, SVP of Nielsen's Beverage Alcohol Practice, "It is very noteworthy that some pockets of consumers – across various age groups, income groups, and gender – responded in much more significant numbers that their consumption of alcohol may be impacted by marijuana legalization. To the extent that some of these consumer demographics are very important to each adult beverage category, marijuana legalization may have some adverse impacts on alcohol consumption."



Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online, in English, within the United States between December 8 and 12, 2016 among 2,054 adults aged 18+, including 1,392 adults aged 21+ who drink alcohol at least several times a year (" *regular drinkers*"). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in our panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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