

NEWS RELEASE

Marijuana Legalization Splits Canada

Economic potential more compelling than social impact

Vancouver, BC – March 14, 2017 – A new poll by NRG Research Group and Peak Communicators reveals that Canadians have mixed perceptions on the potential impact of legalized marijuana.

The legalization of marijuana is a contested topic in Canada as well as among our neighbours in the United States. Marijuana legalization was a notable component of the Liberal Party's [platform](#) during the 2015 federal election campaign. While a number of states have now voted to legalize and regulate marijuana for medical and recreational use, marijuana use remains against the law federally.

Our survey shows that one-half (51%) of Canadians are in favour of the legalization of marijuana in Canada. One-third (33%) are in opposition, while 14% neither support nor oppose at this time. Of note, Canadians aged 18-34 (60%) show the strongest support compared to older adults. Manitobans (59%) and British Columbians (57%) are particularly likely to show support for legalization, whereas Quebecers are the most likely to oppose legalization (37%). Perhaps not surprisingly, current marijuana users are much more likely than non-users to support legalization (83% versus 46% support).

"It appears Canadians have an economic perspective in mind as they consider the issue of legalizing marijuana in the country," says [Andrew Enns](#), President of NRG Research Group. "A majority (63%) of Canadians support a specific sales tax on marijuana if it were to be legalized." Support for a sales tax on marijuana is particularly strong in Western Canada, with 88% of Saskatchewan residents, 73% of Albertans, and 70% of BC residents in support of such a tax. Legalization is also anticipated to drive sales away from underground markets towards legal channels as one-half (51%) believe that the sale of marijuana by organized crime groups will decrease.

However, the public's perceptions of the social implications with legalization warrant consideration as policy makers approach this issue. Six in ten Canadians (59%) believe that the legalization of marijuana would increase use by minors; those who oppose legalization (85%) are particularly likely to espouse this view, as are those who do not currently use marijuana (62%). An overwhelming majority (87%) think that marijuana sales, if legalized, should be limited to adults in the same manner as alcohol and tobacco. Two-thirds (67%) believe that legalization would result in an increase of people driving under the influence of marijuana.

There is little consensus on the relative danger of using marijuana relative to that of drinking alcohol, for adults. One-third (32%) think that marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol, while 46% think that marijuana is no more dangerous than alcohol. Adults under 35 (56%) are more likely than older adults to perceive marijuana use as no more dangerous than drinking alcohol, as are those who support legalization (65%) relative to those who oppose or are undecided on the issue.

Interestingly, there is a very large gap in perceptions between people's own likelihood to increase their consumption of marijuana and people's assumptions about use in marijuana among other adults. Three-quarters (74%) of Canadians believe that the use of marijuana by adults for recreational purposes would

increase if marijuana were to be legalized. However, only 30% of current users would likely increase their consumption and 17% of current non-users would likely consider using marijuana in the future assuming that marijuana use were legalized in Canada.

These results are from a provincially-representative Canada-wide study of 1,000 online respondents conducted by NRG Research Group on February 23rd to 27th, 2017*. The poll was conducted in English and French. Results were weighted to reflect the actual age and gender distribution in each region. Margin of error is not provided for online polls or other non-probability samples.

Notes to editor:

*One thousand Canadians were asked the following questions:

1. "Do you personally support or oppose the legalization of marijuana in Canada?"
 - a. 51 percent say support, 33 percent say oppose, and 14 percent say neither support nor oppose (2 percent don't know or prefer not to answer)
 - b. 60 percent of those under 35 say support, compared with 49 percent of those 35-54 and 46 percent of those 55+
 - c. 51 percent of men as well as 51 percent of women say support; however, 36 percent of men say oppose while only 30 percent of women say oppose
2. "What impact do you believe the legalization of marijuana will have on each of the following issues?"
 - a. Use of marijuana by minors: 59 percent increase, 11 percent decrease, 25 percent no change
 - b. Sales of marijuana by criminal organizations: 27 percent increase, 51 percent decrease, 17 percent no change
 - c. Instances of people driving under the influence of marijuana: 67 percent increase, 8 percent decrease, 21 percent no change
 - d. Use of marijuana by adults for recreational purposes: 74 percent increase, 4 percent decrease, 20 percent no change
3. "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements."
 - a. If legalized, I would support a specific sales tax on marijuana (on top of GST and PST where applicable): 63 percent agree, 18 percent disagree, 13 percent neither agree nor disagree
 - b. If legalized, marijuana sales should be restricted to adults, similar to alcohol and tobacco: 87 percent agree, 5 percent disagree, 5 percent neither agree nor disagree
 - c. Marijuana use is no more dangerous than drinking alcohol for adults: 46 percent agree, 32 percent disagree, 17 percent neither agree nor disagree
4. "Do you currently use marijuana products, either for medicinal or recreational use?"
 - a. 4 percent say they currently use marijuana with a prescription, 9 percent say they use marijuana without a prescription, 84 percent say no, and 2 percent don't know or prefer not to answer
 - b. 16 percent of men currently use marijuana products (with or without a prescription), compared with 11 percent of women
 - c. 25 percent of adults under 35 currently use marijuana products, compared with 13 percent of those 35-54 and 6 percent of those aged 55 and older
5. "Do you think that your use of marijuana would increase, decrease, or stay the same in the future, if marijuana were legalized for recreational use in Canada?" (Among current users)
 - a. 30 percent say increase, 21 percent say decrease, 46 percent say stay the same
6. "How likely would you be to consider using marijuana in the future, if it were legalized for recreational use in Canada?" (Among current non-users)
 - a. 17 percent say likely, 69 percent say unlikely, 9 percent say neither likely nor unlikely
 - b. 26 percent of those under 35 say likely, compared with 16 percent of those 35-54 and 12 percent of those aged 55 or older

NRG Research Group is a leading Canadian public affairs and market research company, with offices in Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg.

Peak Communicators is a leading independent full-service public relations agency in Western Canada with a specialty in media relations, communication strategy, media training and digital media.

For more information, contact

Jayne Czarnocki, Senior Account Manager
Peak Communicators
604-689-5559
Jayne@peakco.com

Andrew Enns, President
NRG Research Group
204-989-8986
AEnns@nrgresearchgroup.com