

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

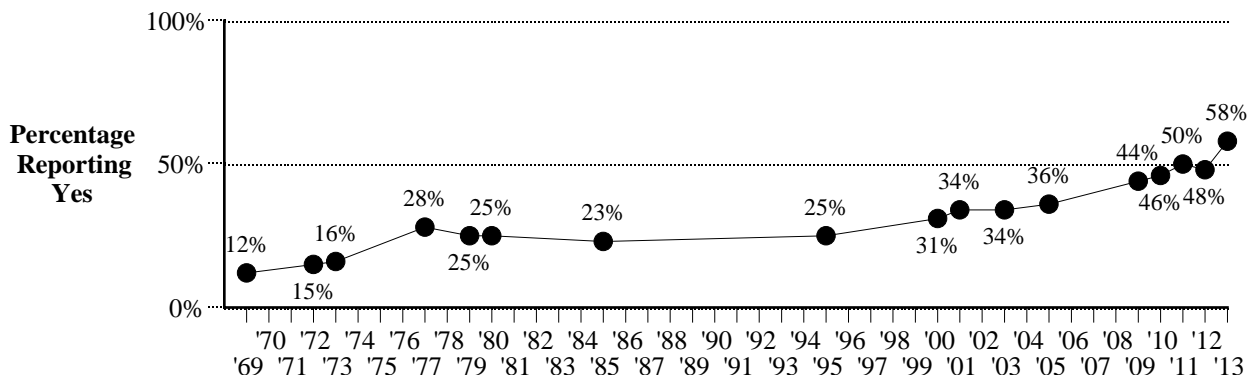
University of Maryland, College Park

2013 Gallup Poll Finds Majority of U.S. Residents Think Marijuana Use Should Be Legalized

More than one-half (58%) of U.S. adults believe that marijuana use should be legalized, according to a telephone poll conducted earlier this month by Gallup. When the question was first asked by this poll in 1969, only 12% reported that they supported the legalization of marijuana use. After doubling in the 1970s, the percentage plateaued during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, the support for legalizing marijuana use has steadily increased, reaching a record high of 58% in 2013. Other polls conducted this year found slightly lower rates of support (52%¹, 46%², and 45%³), and the General Social Survey, which has a larger sample size, found that 43% supported the legalization of marijuana use in 2012.

Editor's Note: The question asked in the Gallup poll (and two of the three other polls conducted this year) was about legalizing use of marijuana, as opposed to legalizing the production and sale of the drug. According to Kevin Sabet, Director of the University of Florida's Drug Policy Institute, "the recent votes in Colorado and Washington were primarily about sales and production. Being okay with adults using marijuana is vastly different from agreeing to the creation of a new Big Tobacco-like industry producing, promoting, and selling marijuana." ⁴ Drug policy expert Mark Kleiman agrees: "I promise you that if the question had been asked about "marijuana sales" rather than "marijuana use" the results would have been different, because one question focuses attention on the sympathetic pot-smoker, the other on the less-sympathetic seller." ⁵

"Do You Think the Use of Marijuana Should Be Made Legal?" U.S. Adults (ages 18 and older), 1969-2013



¹Pew Research Center, March 2013, "Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?"

²Fox News Poll, February 2013, "Do you favor or oppose legalizing marijuana?"

³Public Religion Research Institute, April 2013, "All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose making the use of marijuana legal?"

⁴"Marijuana Opinion Polling: Be Cautious Amidst the Hype," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-a-sabet-phd/marijuana-opinion-polling_b_4151840.html

⁵"Public Opinion on Cannabis: Is It 'Game Over'?" <http://www.samefacts.com/2013/10/drug-policy/public-opinion-on-cannabis-is-it-game-over/#comment-196631>

NOTES: Data in the figure are from the *Gallup Poll Social Series: Crime* survey, and are based on landline and cellular telephone interviews with a random sample of adults ages 18 and older living in the 50 U.S. States and the District of Columbia. The 2013 survey was conducted October 3-6, 2013 with a random sample of 1,028 adults. Samples are weighted and the margin of error for the 2013 survey was ± 4 percentage points.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Gallup, "For First Time, Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana," *Press Release*, October 22, 2013. Available online at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165539/first-time-americans-favor-legalizing-marijuana.aspx>.