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NEW JERSEY SPLIT ON LEGALIZING POT

But most see alcohol and tobacco as bigger dangers

New Jerseyans are divided on whether marijuana should be legalized and are not convinced that a recent proposal in the state legislature is a good idea. The *Monmouth University/Asbury Park Press Poll* finds, though, that most state residents say alcohol and tobacco use pose greater dangers. This is the first Garden State poll on the topic since State Senator Nick Scutari introduced a marijuana legalization bill.

New Jersey residents are basically split down the middle on whether the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use should be made legal. Just under half (48%) support this and an almost identical number (47%) oppose it. These results are similar to a national ABC News/Washington Post Poll conducted in January, which found 49% in favor and 48% opposed.

Democrats – 49% support to 45% oppose – and independents – 51% support to 42% oppose – are slightly more in favor of legalizing marijuana. Republicans, though, are decidedly negative on the idea – 61% oppose it compared to 37% who support legalization.

There are also significant gender and age differences in support for marijuana legalization. Men (56%) are more likely than women (39%) to support it. Younger adults under the age of 35 are more likely to support legalizing marijuana (57%) when compared to New Jerseyans age 35 to 54 (45%) or 55 and older (43%).

A bill to legalize marijuana has recently been introduced in the state legislature. Among other things, it would allow people over the age of 21 to purchase small quantities of marijuana for their own use from businesses specially licensed by the state government. Just 36% of New Jersey residents think this is a good idea while just under half (45%) say it is a bad idea. Another 18% have no opinion.

“The marijuana debate has been engaged and neither side has the distinct advantage right now,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “There isn’t a lot of support for the Scutari proposal, but most people actually see alcohol and tobacco use as bigger dangers. Perhaps

some of the opposition may simply be a reaction against legalizing something that has been illicit for so long.”

When marijuana is compared to alcohol, most New Jerseyans (59%) say alcohol use is more dangerous than marijuana (18%), with another 19% volunteering that both are equally dangerous. The results are nearly identical for tobacco products. Most New Jerseyans (58%) say tobacco use is more dangerous than marijuana (21%), with another 18% volunteering that both are equally dangerous. Democrats, Republicans, and independents all agree that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than marijuana. The New Jersey numbers are also similar to findings from a national CNN/ORC poll taken in January – specifically, more dangerous substance: alcohol (73%), marijuana (12%), equal (14%); tobacco (64%), marijuana (23%), equal (12%).

Still, New Jerseyans are divided on how serious a problem marijuana use is today. Just over half say it is either a very (21%) or moderately (31%) serious problem while just under half say it either not too serious (26%) or not really a problem at all (20%). The 52% in New Jersey who think it is a very or moderately serious problem and the 46% who think it is less of a problem are similar national public opinion poll results of 51% and 49%, respectively, as measured by CNN/ORC in January.

Garden State Democrats are divided on whether marijuana use is a very or moderately serious problem (50%) or less of a problem (48%). Independents are less likely to think it is a very or moderately serious problem (45%) and somewhat more likely to think it isn't a significant problem (52%). Most Republicans, though, think marijuana use today is a very or moderately serious problem (68%), with few saying it is not a serious problem (32%).

The *Monmouth University/Asbury Park Press Poll* also examined a few aspects of the bill recently introduced in the state legislature. Public opinion of the proposal is not impacted by the fact that marijuana possession would still be illegal under federal law. Only 15% of those surveyed said knowing this makes them less likely to support legalization in New Jersey and, in fact, 9% would be more likely to support it. Overall, 75% say that the federal law has no impact on their opinion of legalizing marijuana in New Jersey.

The proposed legislation would use most of the taxes raised from marijuana sales for transportation projects. This has slightly more of a positive than negative impact, although 64% say this aspect of the bill doesn't change their mind. Among the rest, 24% say they are more likely to support legalizing marijuana in New Jersey if most of the proceeds went to transportation projects while 12% say this would make them less likely to support it.

On both of these aspects – federal law and transportation funding – there is very little impact on people who are undecided about the current legislative proposal. In most cases, these issues just serve to

strengthen the support of those already in favor of marijuana legalization and similarly strengthen the disapproval of those already opposed.

Just over one third (36%) of those polled say they have tried marijuana. Men (46%) are more likely than women (26%) to report this, but there are no significant differences by age or political party.

The *Monmouth University/Asbury Park Press Poll* was conducted by telephone with 803 New Jersey adults from March 30 to April 1, 2014. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Asbury Park Press and its sister publications (Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, and Home News Tribune).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Overall, do you support or oppose legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Support	48%	48%	46%	49%	51%	37%	56%	39%	57%	45%	43%	46%	48%	66%	36%
Oppose	47%	47%	46%	45%	42%	61%	39%	54%	39%	48%	51%	48%	47%	28%	59%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	5%	8%	6%	7%	2%	5%	6%	4%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%

2. There is currently a proposal in New Jersey to allow anyone over the age of 21 to purchase small quantities of marijuana for their own use from businesses that have been licensed by the state government to sell marijuana. Do you think this is a good idea or bad idea, or do you have no opinion on it?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Good idea	36%	36%	36%	37%	43%	24%	46%	27%	48%	33%	31%	37%	36%	53%	26%
Bad idea	45%	46%	41%	43%	40%	62%	37%	53%	33%	46%	55%	44%	46%	31%	55%
No opinion	18%	17%	23%	19%	17%	14%	17%	19%	19%	21%	15%	19%	18%	16%	19%

[QUESTIONS 3 & 4 WERE ROTATED]

3. Under the proposal, most of the taxes raised from the sale of marijuana will be used to fund transportation projects in the state. Does this make you more likely or less likely to support legalizing marijuana in New Jersey, or doesn't this change your opinion?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
More likely	24%	23%	28%	26%	28%	15%	29%	20%	37%	19%	20%	21%	25%	32%	20%
Less likely	12%	12%	13%	10%	12%	19%	12%	13%	10%	14%	12%	15%	12%	9%	15%
Does not change opinion	64%	65%	59%	64%	61%	66%	59%	67%	53%	67%	68%	64%	63%	59%	65%

4. Even if New Jersey legalizes the use of small quantities of marijuana, it would still be illegal under federal law. Does this make you more likely or less likely to support legalizing marijuana in New Jersey, or doesn't this change your opinion?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
More likely	9%	8%	13%	10%	8%	8%	9%	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	10%	8%
Less likely	15%	15%	16%	14%	16%	16%	14%	16%	15%	12%	19%	12%	17%	9%	19%
Does not change opinion	75%	77%	71%	76%	76%	76%	77%	75%	75%	80%	72%	79%	74%	81%	72%

5. Would you say the use of marijuana is a very serious problem in the country today, a moderately serious problem, not too serious, or not really a problem at all?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Very serious	21%	21%	19%	20%	19%	23%	17%	25%	15%	20%	27%	21%	21%	13%	26%
Moderately serious	31%	31%	29%	30%	26%	45%	24%	38%	25%	29%	38%	32%	30%	25%	35%
Not too serious	26%	26%	28%	29%	29%	18%	30%	23%	31%	29%	19%	27%	26%	30%	24%
Not really a problem	20%	19%	22%	19%	23%	14%	27%	12%	28%	20%	12%	19%	20%	31%	12%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	4%	1%	3%	1%	3%

[QUESTIONS 6 & 7 WERE ROTATED]

6. Which of the following do you think is more dangerous for people in this country to use: marijuana or alcohol?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marijuana	18%	18%	17%	19%	12%	29%	19%	17%	15%	19%	20%	20%	17%	11%	22%
Alcohol	59%	59%	61%	59%	65%	51%	64%	55%	75%	58%	47%	56%	61%	75%	50%
(VOL) Both equally	19%	20%	19%	18%	20%	17%	13%	25%	9%	18%	30%	19%	19%	12%	24%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%	1%	5%	3%	5%	3%	2%	4%

7. Which of the following do you think is more dangerous for people in this country to use: marijuana or tobacco products such as cigarettes or cigars?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marijuana	21%	22%	18%	18%	21%	33%	21%	22%	19%	22%	23%	23%	21%	15%	26%
Tobacco	58%	57%	59%	64%	60%	47%	64%	52%	75%	55%	47%	57%	58%	70%	50%
(VOL) Both equally	18%	18%	19%	15%	17%	17%	12%	23%	6%	19%	25%	18%	17%	11%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	0%	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%	3%

8. Keeping in mind that all your answers in this survey are confidential, have you yourself ever happened to try marijuana?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER		AGE			HAVE CHILDREN	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No
Yes	36%	38%	26%	35%	39%	34%	46%	26%	39%	36%	33%	39%	35%
No	61%	60%	69%	63%	58%	64%	51%	71%	60%	60%	65%	58%	63%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	2%	5%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	1%	4%	2%	3%	2%

The *Monmouth University/Asbury Park Press Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from March 30 to April 1, 2014 with a statewide random sample of 803 adult residents, including 601 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 202 via live interview on a cell phone. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

<i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i>			
38% Dem	49% Male	28% 18-34	63% White
43% Ind	51% Female	40% 35-54	13% Black
19% Rep		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other
<i>Registered Voter Sample (weighted)</i>			
38% Dem	49% Male	22% 18-34	68% White
41% Ind	51% Female	42% 35-54	12% Black
21% Rep		36% 55+	15% Hispanic
			5% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			GENDER			AGE			HAVE CHILDREN		TRIED MARIJUANA	
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Unweighted N	803	690	113	285	329	163	387	416	139	298	361	222	573	300	477	
moe	3.5%	3.7%	9.2%	5.8%	5.4%	7.7%	5.0%	4.8%	8.3%	5.7%	5.2%	6.6%	4.1%	5.7%	4.5%	

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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