

## Marijuana and Medical Marijuana

by Fred Backus  
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According a recent CBS News poll from the end of October, a slim majority of 51% continues to think that marijuana use should be illegal. But support for specifically allowing doctors to prescribe marijuana for serious medical conditions – or legalized “medical” marijuana - is far stronger: 77% Americans think it should be allowed. Still, even though most Americans support this, just three in 10 believe that the marijuana currently being bought in this country under state-authorized medical marijuana programs is being used in the way it has been authorized: for alleviating suffering from serious medical conditions.

### Legalizing Marijuana

A recent CBS News Poll conducted nationwide finds 40% of Americans think the use of marijuana should be legal, while 51% think it should not. The percentage that favors legalizing marijuana use has been steady for the past two years, but it is larger than it was when CBS News first asked the question back in 1979.

		Should Marijuana Use be...?			
	Now	3/2010	7/2009	1/2009	7/1979
Legal	40%	44%	41%	41%	27%
Not legal	51	51	52	52	69

Not all demographic groups view this issue the same, however:

- Younger Americans support legalizing marijuana more than older Americans. Slightly more than half of those under thirty favor legalizing the substance (52%), while Americans between 30 and 44 are divided. Older Americans tend to oppose legalizing marijuana, particularly those 65 and older (62%).
- Most women (54%) oppose legalizing marijuana, but men are divided: 46% of men favor legalizing it, while 47% oppose.
- Regionally, support for legalizing marijuana is strongest in the West, a region that includes 10 of the 16 states that have some form of legalized medical marijuana use. 48% of Americans in western states think marijuana use should be legal compared to 45% who think it should not be.
- There are differences in terms of both party affiliation and political philosophy. Seven in 10 Republicans oppose legalizing marijuana, while Democrats are divided and independents lean towards legalizing it. Two in three liberals think marijuana should be legal while two in three conservatives think it should not be, and moderates are divided.

### Should Marijuana Use be...?

	Legal	Not legal
Total	40%	51
Age:		
18-29	52%	44
30-44	42%	45
45-64	37%	53
65+	28%	62
Men	46%	47
Women	35%	54
Northeast	41%	52
Midwest	43%	48
South	33%	55
West	48%	45
Republicans	23%	71
Democrats	45%	44
Independents	48%	42
Liberals	66%	26
Moderates	45%	47
Conservatives	25%	65

### Medical Marijuana

While a slight majority of Americans oppose the idea of legalizing marijuana in general, more than three in four think that doctors should be allowed to prescribe small amounts of marijuana for patients suffering from serious illnesses – the conditions for use that are set up in all of the states that have legalized medical marijuana programs. Support for this cuts across age, gender, region, and political affiliation.

### Should Doctors Be Allowed to Prescribe Marijuana For Serious Illnesses?

Allowed	77%
Not allowed	17

But Americans are skeptical that most of the marijuana purchased in the U.S. through state authorized medical marijuana programs is being used in the way it has been sanctioned. Just 31% of Americans think marijuana purchased under such programs is being used to alleviate suffering from serious medical illnesses. More than half – 52% - think it is being used for other reasons, including four in 10 of those who think marijuana should be legal in general.

### Most Medical Marijuana is Used For...

Serious medical illnesses	31%
Something else	52

CBS News Poll  
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q15 Do you think that the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Mar10c
	%	%	%	%	%
Legal	40	23	45	48	44
Not legal	51	71	44	42	51
DK/NA	9	6	11	10	5

q16 Do you think doctors should be allowed to prescribe small amounts of marijuana for patients suffering from serious illnesses, or not?

Allowed	77	66	81	81
Not allowed	17	29	14	11
DK/NA	6	5	5	8

q17 Do you think most of the marijuana that is purchased in this country through state authorized medical marijuana programs is being used to alleviate suffering from serious medical illnesses, or do you think most of it is being used for other reasons?

For serious medical illness	31	22	36	32
For other reasons	52	62	44	51
DK/NA	17	16	20	17

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This poll was conducted by telephone from 28-31, 2011 among 1,033 adults nationwide. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.