

# FACTANK

NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

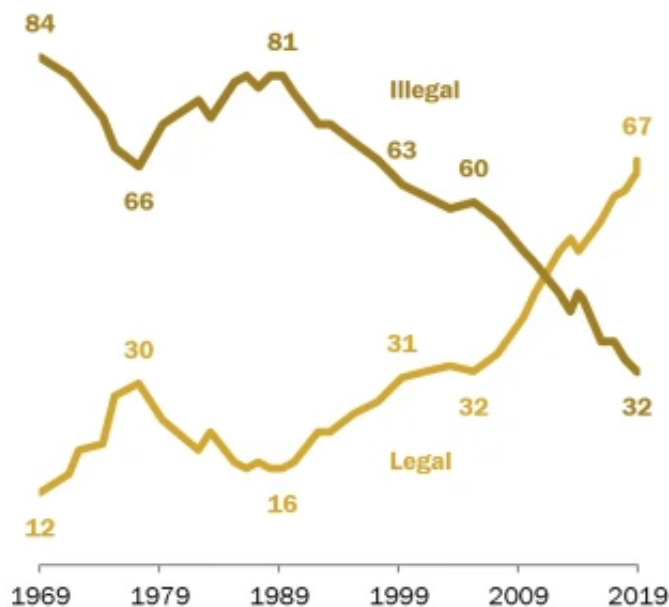
NOVEMBER 14, 2019

## Two-thirds of Americans support marijuana legalization

BY ANDREW DANILLER

### U.S. public opinion on legalizing marijuana, 1969-2019

*Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not? (%)*



Note: No answer responses not shown. 2019 data from Pew Research Center's online American Trends Panel; prior data from telephone surveys. Data from 1969-1972 from Gallup; data from 1973-2008 from General Social Surveys.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

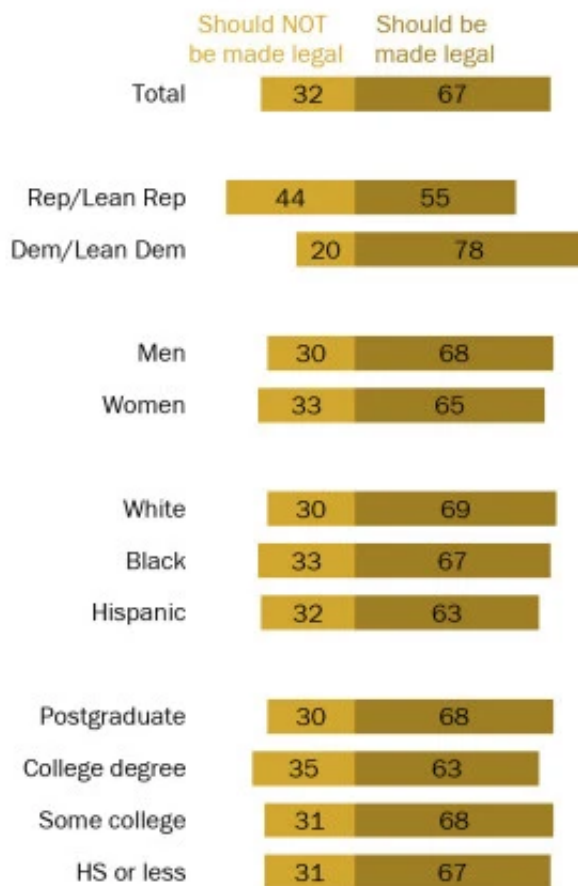
Two-thirds of Americans say the use of marijuana should be legal, reflecting a steady increase over the past decade, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. The share of U.S. adults who oppose legalization has fallen from 52% in 2010 to 32% today.

Meanwhile, an overwhelming majority of U.S. adults (91%) say marijuana should be legal either for medical *and* recreational use (59%) or that it should be legal just for medical use (32%). Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) prefer to keep marijuana illegal in all circumstances, according to the survey, conducted Sept. 3 to 15 on Pew Research Center’s **American Trends Panel**.

As in the past, there are wide partisan and generational differences in views of marijuana legalization. Nearly eight-in-ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (78%) say marijuana use should be legal.

### Wide partisan gap in opinions about legalizing marijuana use

% who say the use of marijuana ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

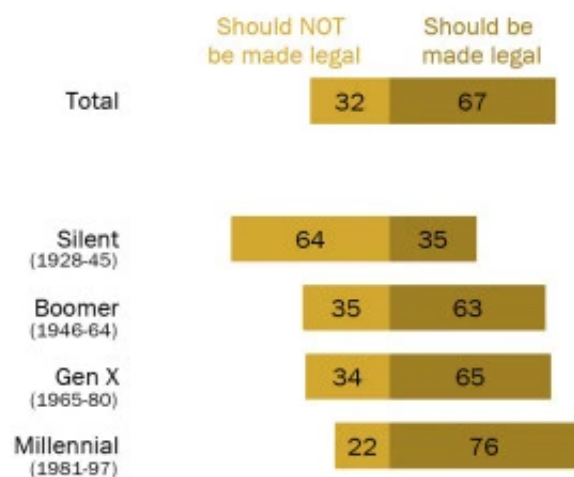
Republicans and Republican leaners are less supportive, with 55% in favor of legalization and 44% opposed.

Majorities of Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1997), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) say the use of marijuana should be legal. Members of the Silent Generation (born between 1928 and 1945) continue to be the least supportive of legalization: Only 35% favor legalizing marijuana, while 64% are opposed.

The generational divide in views of marijuana legalization exists within both party coalitions. Large majorities of Boomer (81%), Gen X (76%) and Millennial Democrats (78%) say the use of marijuana should be made legal, compared with 53% of Silent Generation Democrats who say this.

### Majorities across generations – except Silents – favor legalizing marijuana

% who say the use of marijuana ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Millennial Republicans also broadly favor legalizing marijuana use; in fact, Republicans in this generation are almost as supportive of legalization as Millennial Democrats (71% vs. 78%). Gen X and Boomer Republicans are more closely divided, with 55% of Gen X Republicans and 49% of Boomer Republicans favoring legalization. GOP members of the Silent Generation are the least likely to favor marijuana legalization: Just 21% say marijuana use should be legal, while three-quarters (76%) say it should not.

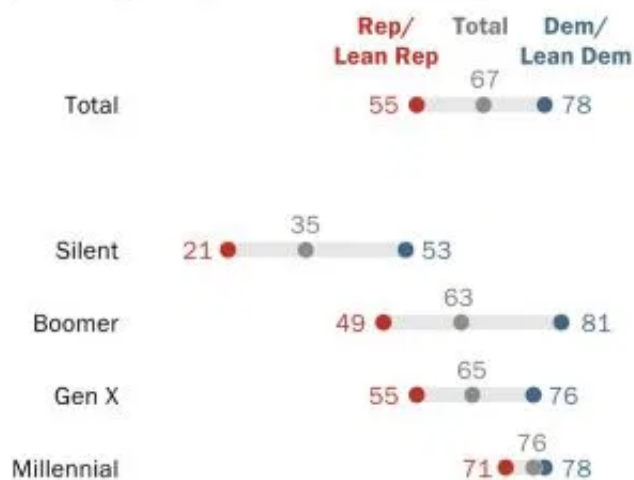
### Around nine-in-ten Americans favor legalization for recreational or medical purposes

In addition to asking respondents about whether marijuana use should be legal in general, the Center asked a separate group of respondents about legalizing marijuana for medical and recreational use. Nearly six-in-ten Americans (59%) favor legalizing marijuana for medical and recreational use, while another 32% say it should be legal for medical use only. Only 8% say it should not be legal.

About two-thirds of Democrats (68%) say marijuana should be legal for both medical and recreational use, compared with 49% of Republicans. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say it should be legal just for medical purposes (38% vs. 28%) or that it should not be legal at all (12% vs. 4%).

### Republicans in Silent Generation least likely to favor legalizing marijuana use

% who say marijuana should be made legal



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

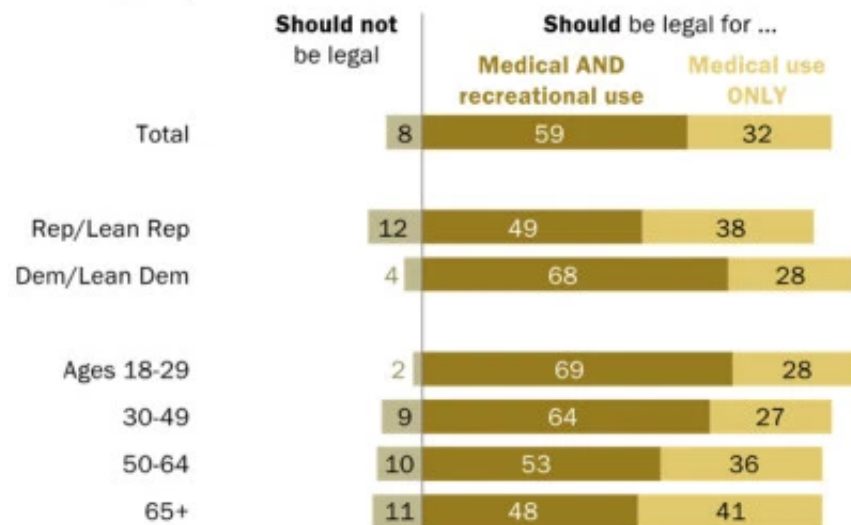
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Younger adults are somewhat more likely than older adults to say that marijuana use should be legal for both medical and recreational use. About two-thirds (69%) of those ages 18 to 29 say it should be legal for both types of use, compared with 48% of those ages 65 and older. Most adults 65 and over nonetheless favor legalization in some form.

The growth in public support for legal marijuana has come as a growing number of jurisdictions have legalized marijuana for medical or recreational purposes.

## Only about one-in-ten Americans oppose marijuana legalization for medical or recreational uses

% who say marijuana ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Eleven states and the District of Columbia [have legalized the drug for recreational purposes](#).

Meanwhile, 33 states – plus the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands – [have legalized the drug for medical purposes](#), according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Marijuana remains illegal under U.S. federal law. However, several Democratic candidates for president have proposals to [legalize or decriminalize marijuana use](#).

*Note: This is an update of a post originally published Oct. 8, 2018. See [full topline results and methodology](#).*

Topics [Drugs](#), [Political Attitudes and Values](#)

Andrew Daniller *is a research associate focusing on politics at Pew Research Center.*

[POSTS](#) | [BIO](#) | [EMAIL](#)

**SIGN UP FOR OUR ELECTION 2020 NEWSLETTER**



**SIGN UP**



**MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT OUR WORK**

**DONATE**

**RELATED**

FACT TANK | NOVEMBER 22, 2019

## 6 facts about marijuana

FACT TANK | OCTOBER 12, 2016

## Support for marijuana legalization continues to rise

FACT TANK | APRIL 9, 2010

## Making Pot Legal

FACT TANK | JANUARY 22, 2020

## Four-in-ten U.S. drug arrests in 2018 were for marijuana offenses – mostly possession

FACT TANK | FEBRUARY 27, 2015

## 63% of Republican Millennials favor marijuana legalization

**POPULAR ON FACT TANK**

FACT TANK | JANUARY 17, 2019

## Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z

---

# begins

---

FACT TANK | SEPTEMBER 6, 2018

## Are you in the American middle class? Find out with our income calculator

---

FACT TANK | NOVEMBER 28, 2018

## 5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.

---

FACT TANK | NOVEMBER 30, 2018

## Key findings about U.S. immigrants

---

FACT TANK | APRIL 5, 2017

## Christians remain world's largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe