

Pro-pot arguments fly higher with likely voters

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Four states legalized recreational marijuana in November, nearly doubling the number of states where recreational pot is legal. As more states consider joining them, a range of arguments for and against legalization is swirling around the national conversation.

But which of these arguments resonate most strongly with Americans? It's the arguments that support legalization, according to a new study co-authored by Jeff Niederdeppe, associate professor of communication in Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

More than 60 percent of people surveyed in the study said they supported legalization because they agreed with arguments saying it would increase [tax revenues](#), create a profitable new industry, reduce prison crowding and lower the cost of law enforcement.

In contrast, fewer people in the study agreed with anti-legalization arguments emphasizing the damage the policy would have on public health. These reasons included that legalization would increase car accidents, hurt youth's health, expand the marijuana industry, increase crime and threaten moral values.

"The pro arguments are really practical: 'Give us money and jobs. Keep our prison from being overcrowded, make [law enforcement](#)'s job easier,'" said Niederdeppe. "And the con arguments are a little more ideological: 'This is going to lead to big industry and crime and undermine the fundamental values that make America great.'"

Niederdeppe emphasized that he and his colleagues are advocating neither for nor against legalization. Rather, their research offers a snapshot of public opinion at a time when legalization debates are in the air, he said.

"We'd better understand where the public stands on this issue if we want to develop policies that are responsive to democratic values and what people are concerned about," he said. "Understanding where the public sees benefit and where it is nervous can help regulators emphasize those things people agree are important."

More information: Emma E. McGinty et al, Public perceptions of arguments supporting and opposing recreational marijuana legalization, *Preventive Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.01.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.01.024)

Provided by Cornell University

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