

Texans back easing state restrictions on marijuana

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The survey's strongest calls for easing marijuana laws came on behalf of medicinal users. But recreational use is favored, too, in a wide sweep across generations, partisan divides, and racial and ethnic lines. Among all survey participants, 30% believed legalization of marijuana would keep people away from other drugs, while another 30% believed the opposite, that legalization would encourage more drug use – leaving 40% who predicted no effect at all.

Credit: Pexels

Texans overwhelmingly support proposals to ease state restrictions on both the medical and recreational use of marijuana, with 82% supportive of legislation that would legalize marijuana for a wide range of medical treatments.

Two-thirds (67%) approve legalizing marijuana for recreational use by people 21 and older, while 81% say possession of small amounts of marijuana should be punishable only by citation and a fine, similar to a traffic ticket.

The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston released its latest report on [public attitudes](#) about marijuana as the Legislature considers several proposals to reduce penalties or legalize the use of marijuana for adults, as well as to expand the state's provisions for medical cannabis.

"Attitudes about the use of marijuana have been evolving over the past few decades, and we found especially strong support for expanding the use of [medical marijuana](#)," said Renée Cross, senior executive director and researcher at the Hobby School. "But a majority of Texans across-the-board—across partisan, generational and racial and ethnic lines—also said they support legalization for recreational use."

That support also included born-again Christians, a group traditionally opposed to easing drug laws. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of born-again Christians support medical marijuana, for example, while 62% support decriminalization and 52% support legalization.

Texas currently allows the use of [medical cannabis](#) containing 1% or less

THC by weight for a narrowly defined list of medical conditions.

Mark P. Jones, senior research fellow at the Hobby School and political science fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, noted that 21 states have legalized recreational use of marijuana, and 37 allow medical use.

"While we found strong support for proposed legislation to ease regulations around marijuana, a significant minority of Texans, especially those who identify as Republican, Independent and born-again Christian, say they personally do not favor easing state regulations," Jones said. "Almost one out of five Texans, or 18%, said they would prefer no change to the state's current marijuana laws."

Still, 73% of Republicans said they support proposals expanding the use of medical marijuana, and 55% of Republicans support making marijuana legal for any purpose for people 21 and older, according to the Hobby School survey. That compares to 93% of Democrats and 79% of Independents who support medical marijuana, and 80% of Democrats and 66% of Independents who support legalizing [recreational use](#) for adults.

Among the survey's other findings:

- 81% of Texans support making possession of a small amount of marijuana punishable only by a citation and a fine of \$250. That includes 84% of Latino, 79% of white and 78% of Black Texans.
- Legalizing marijuana use for any purpose by adults 21 and older drew similar support across racial and ethnic lines, with 73% of Latino, 66% of Black and 62% of white Texans supporting the proposal.
- 66% said legalizing marijuana would be good for state and local government revenue, compared to 16% who believe it would be

bad and 18% who said it would have no effect.

- 40% said legalization would increase the use of marijuana by those under the age of 21, compared to 15% who said it would decrease underage [marijuana](#) use, and 45% who said it would have no effect.
- 30% said legalization would make people more likely to use other [illegal drugs](#), 30% said it would make people less likely to use other illegal drugs, and 40% said it would have no effect.

More information: Results: www.uh.edu/hobby/tx2023/marijuana.pdf

Provided by University of Houston

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