



# **Medical Uses of Marijuana Opinions of U.S. Residents 45+**

**Conducted for *AARP the Magazine***

December 2004



# Medical Uses of Marijuana

## Opinions of U.S. Residents 45+

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Survey conducted by  
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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our website, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP Foundation is our affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY ..... 1**

**KEY FINDINGS ..... 2**

**OVERALL OPINIONS ..... 3**

**ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE ..... 10**

## Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather opinions regarding the medical uses of marijuana on behalf of *AARP The Magazine*. Results provide an overall picture of attitudes towards medical marijuana.

Seven questions were included on an omnibus survey in mid-November 2004. The omnibus survey, conducted by International Communications Research (ICR), is a bi-weekly national telephone survey of U.S. households. ICR conducted a stratified, random-digit-dialing sample of telephone households. The survey included demographic and lifestyle questions, as well as questions about medical marijuana use and other topics. The survey was conducted with 1,706 respondents age 45 and older and all responses were subsequently weighted to be nationally representative of the 45+ U.S. population, balanced by key demographics. The margin of error is +/- 2.37%.

## Key Findings

- The majority of respondents 45 and older (72%) agree that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.
- Other recent national surveys also found that the majority of American adults were in favor of legally using medical marijuana for medical purposes.<sup>1</sup>
- More than one-half of respondents believe that marijuana has medical benefits (59%) and that they would obtain marijuana for a suffering loved one (55%).
- One-third of respondents think that adults should be allowed to grow marijuana for medical purposes (33%) and one-quarter (23%) think that marijuana should be legalized.
- Three-quarters of respondents think that marijuana is addictive (74%) and almost one-third (30%) have smoked marijuana.
- The majority of respondents think that the decision to legalize marijuana is a federal issue (52%).
- There are many statistically significant differences in responses among respondents from different regions of the country; respondents from the west (in particular) and from the northeast consistently expressed more liberal views about marijuana use than those from the midwest and southwest. However, the percentage of respondents who believe all marijuana use should be legalized did not vary significantly across different regions.
- Younger respondents also responded more liberally to questions about marijuana use. However, while younger respondents agreed more frequently with four out of the five statements, there were no significant differences among respondents of different age groups in opinions about legally using marijuana for medical purposes.
- Younger respondents were more likely to have smoked marijuana (58% of those 45-49 have smoked marijuana), but marijuana use drops dramatically as age increases (only 8% of respondents age 70 and older have smoked marijuana).
- More men agree that adults should be allowed to grow marijuana and more men have smoked marijuana compared to women; women are more likely to think marijuana is addictive.

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<sup>1</sup> In a national poll conducted by Harris Interactive for Time Magazine in October 2002, 80% of adults favor legalization of medical uses of marijuana; in a national poll conducted by the Center for Substance Abuse Research in January 2002, 70% of adults favor allowing medical uses of marijuana.

## Overall Opinions

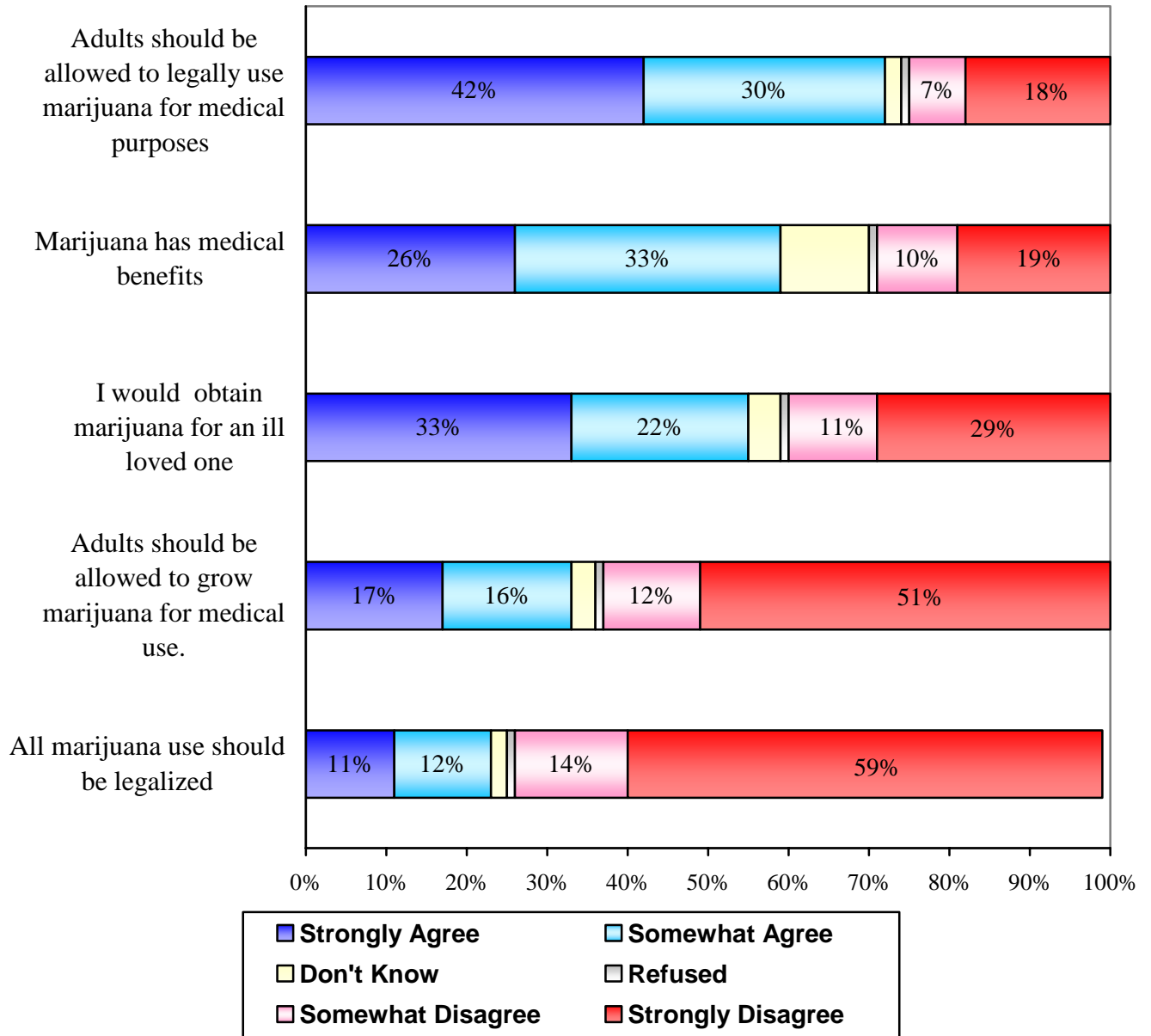
Respondents were read five statements and asked if they strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. See the table below for aggregate responses. Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it, and more respondents said they “strongly agree” with this statement (42%) than said they “somewhat agree” (30%).

More than one-half of respondents believe that marijuana has medical benefits (59%) and that they would obtain marijuana for a suffering loved one (55%). One-third of respondents think that adults should be allowed to grow marijuana for medical purposes (33%) and one-quarter (23%) think that marijuana should be legalized.

### Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use U.S. Adults 45+

	AGREE			DISAGREE			Don't know	Refused
	NET Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	NET Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	42%	30%	25%	7%	18%	2%	1%
I believe that marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	26%	33%	29%	10%	19%	11%	1%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	33%	22%	40%	11%	29%	4%	1%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	17%	16%	63%	12%	51%	3%	1%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	11%	12%	73%	14%	59%	2%	1%

**Figure 1.**  
**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use**  
**U.S. Adults 45+**





The majority of respondents think that the decision to legalize marijuana is a federal issue (52%). Three-quarters of respondents think that marijuana is addictive (74%) and almost one-third of respondents (30%) have smoked marijuana.

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Marijuana Decisions a State or Federal Issue  
U.S. Adults 45+**

	<b>State Issue</b>	<b>Federal Issue</b>	<b>Don't Know/No Opinion</b>	<b>Refusal</b>
Do you believe the decision to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes should be a state issue or a federal issue?	38%	52%	9%	1%

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Is Marijuana Addictive  
U.S. Adults 45+<sup>2</sup>**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know/ No Opinion</b>	<b>Refusal</b>
Do you believe that marijuana is addictive?	74%	17%	8%	*

**Have Smoked Marijuana  
U.S. Adults 45+**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refusal</b>
Have you ever smoked marijuana?	30%	68%	*	2%

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<sup>2</sup> The symbol \* indicates responses totaling less than 1 percent.

Not surprisingly, respondents who have smoked marijuana think differently than respondents who have not smoked marijuana. As shown in the table below, respondents who have smoked marijuana were more likely to agree with all five statements regarding marijuana use compared to those who have not smoked marijuana.

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Differences in Marijuana Experience  
U.S. Adults 45+<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Total Agree = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Have smoked marijuana</b>	<b>Have not smoked marijuana</b>
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	84%	67%
I believe marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	75%	52%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	57%	23%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	74%	47%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	44%	14%

Respondents who do NOT think marijuana is addictive were also more likely to agree with all five statements about marijuana use compared to those who do think marijuana is addictive.

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Differences in Attitude about Marijuana Addiction  
U.S. Adults 45+**

<b>Total Agree = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Marijuana is NOT addictive</b>	<b>Marijuana is addictive</b>
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	93%	67%
I believe marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	87%	53%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	71%	24%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	79%	49%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	60%	15%

<sup>3</sup> All statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence level) are shaded.

There were some differences in responses based on gender and age. Younger respondents (45-49) were more likely to agree that marijuana has medical benefits (70%) and that they would obtain marijuana for a suffering loved one (63%) compared to older respondents.

Men were more likely (40%) than women (28%) to agree that adults should be allowed to grow marijuana for medical purposes and younger respondents (49% of those 45-49) were also more likely than older respondents to agree adults should be allowed to grow marijuana.

Younger respondents (34% of those 45-49) were more likely to think all marijuana use should be legalized compared to older respondents. Not surprisingly, younger respondents (58% of those 45-49) were more likely to have smoked marijuana. Marijuana use drops dramatically as age increases; only 8% of respondents age 70 and older have smoked marijuana.

More women (78%) than men (68%) said they thought marijuana was addictive and more men (39%) than women (21%) said they have smoked marijuana. Older respondents (60+) are far more likely to think marijuana is addictive compared to younger respondents (percentage who think marijuana addictive: 61% of 45-49; 69% of 50-59; 82% of 60-69; 83% of 70+).

Interestingly, while younger respondents agreed more frequently with four out of the five statements, there were no significant differences in opinions about legally using marijuana for medical purposes among respondents of different age groups.

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Differences in Gender and Age  
U.S. Adults 45+**

<b>Total Agree = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Gender</b>		<b>Age</b>			
		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-59</b>	<b>60-69</b>	<b>70+</b>
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	70%	74%	77%	72%	72%	69%
I believe marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	59%	59%	70%	59%	59%	47%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	40%	28%	49%	35%	26%	25%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	57%	53%	63%	52%	52%	55%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	26%	21%	34%	25%	20%	15%
Decision to legalize marijuana should be a state issue.	38%	41%	36%	38%	37%	42%	36%
Marijuana is addictive.	74%	68%	78%	61%	69%	82%	83%
Have smoked marijuana.	30%	39%	21%	58%	37%	15%	8%

There were many differences in responses among respondents from different regions in the country. Generally, respondents from the north east and from the west agreed more frequently with most of the statements about marijuana use.

More respondents from the north east (79%) and west (82%) agreed that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes compared to respondents from other areas of the country. Respondents from the west (69%) were more likely to agree that marijuana has medical benefits compared to their counterparts.

More respondents from the north east (60%), and from the west (62%) said they would obtain marijuana for a suffering loved one. Respondents from the west (41%) were also more likely to agree adults should be allowed to grow marijuana for medical purposes compared to their counterparts.

The percentage of respondents who believe all marijuana use should be legalized did not vary significantly across different areas of the country. However, respondents from the west (49%) were more likely to think the decision to legalize marijuana should be a state issue compared to other respondents (38% overall).

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Differences in Region  
U.S. Adults 45+**

<b>Total Agree = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Region</b>				
		<b>NE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>MW</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>West</b>
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	79%	70%	67%	65%	82%
I believe marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	62%	57%	55%	52%	69%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	32%	36%	29%	30%	41%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	60%	56%	50%	48%	62%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	23%	26%	21%	21%	28%
Decision to legalize marijuana should be a state issue.	38%	40%	34%	38%	33%	49%
Marijuana is addictive.	74%	75%	70%	77%	75%	70%
Have smoked marijuana.	30%	29%	31%	26%	31%	32%

The sample was divided into states that have legalized marijuana use when prescribed by a doctor (AK, CA, CO, HI, ME, MT, NV, OR, VT, WA) and states that have not legalized marijuana use. Respondents in legalized states were more likely to agree with four of the five statements. However, this difference was not strong enough to have an effect on the overall nationwide perspective. In other words, when respondents in legalized states are excluded, the overall responses remain about the same as when they are included (no statistically significant differences).

Respondents in legalized and non-legalized states were the same in their thoughts about legalizing all marijuana use. Interestingly, respondents in legalized and non-legalized states were also the same in their thoughts about whether legalizing marijuana is a federal or state issue and whether marijuana is addictive.

**Opinions Regarding Marijuana Use:  
Differences in State’s Legalization of Marijuana for Medical Purposes  
U.S. Adults 45+**

<b>Total Agree = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	States that have legalized medical marijuana	States that have NOT legalized medical marijuana
I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.	72%	81%	72%
I believe marijuana has medical benefits.	59%	72%	58%
I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use.	33%	40%	33%
If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her.	55%	62%	55%
I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized.	23%	24%	23%
Decision to legalize marijuana should be a state issue.	38%	36%	38%
Marijuana is addictive.	74%	74%	74%
Have smoked marijuana.	30%	24%	30%

## Annotated Questionnaire

Weighted sample of 1,706 adults, age 45+

MM-1. I am going to read you a list of statements. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. How about (INSERT)?

a. I think that adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it

42 Strongly agree  
30 Somewhat agree  
7 Somewhat disagree  
18 Strongly disagree  
2 Don't know  
1 Refused

b. I believe that marijuana has medical benefits

26 Strongly agree  
32 Somewhat agree  
11 Somewhat disagree  
19 Strongly disagree  
11 Don't know  
1 Refused

c. I think that adults should be allowed to grow small amounts of marijuana for medical use

17 Strongly agree  
16 Somewhat agree  
12 Somewhat disagree  
51 Strongly disagree  
3 Don't know  
1 Refused

d. If a loved one was ill or suffering and marijuana eased their pain or condition, I would obtain marijuana for him or her

33 Strongly agree  
22 Somewhat agree  
11 Somewhat disagree  
29 Strongly disagree  
4 Don't know  
1 Refused

e. I believe that all marijuana use should be legalized

11 Strongly agree  
12 Somewhat agree  
14 Somewhat disagree  
59 Strongly disagree  
2 Don't know  
1 Refused

MM-2. Do you believe the decision to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes should be a state issue or a federal issue?

38 State issue  
52 Federal issue  
9 Don't know/No Opinion  
1 Refused

MM-3. Do you believe that marijuana is addictive?

74 Yes  
17 No  
8 Don't know/No Opinion  
\* Refused

MM-4. Have you ever smoked marijuana?

30 Yes  
68 No  
\* Don't know/No Opinion  
2 Refused

Gender

46 Male  
54 Female

Age

20 45-49  
34 50-59  
24 60-69  
22 70+

## Household Income

30	<\$25K
24	\$25K-\$49.9K
13	\$50K-\$74.9K
18	\$75K+

## Region

21	NE (CT, DE, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
19	Southeast (AL, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV)
24	Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)
20	Southwest (AR, CO, KS, LA, MO, MS, NM, OK, TN, TX)
16	West (AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

## Education

51	HS Less
25	Some college
24	College Post

## Race

79	White
9	Hispanic
8	Black
1	Asian
3	Other

## Metro Status

78	Metro
22	Non Metro