

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL STATEWIDE SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION
ESTABLISHED AND OPERATED BY FIELD RESEARCH CORPORATION SINCE 1946

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PUBLIC REACTS NEGATIVELY TO PROPOSITION 19, MARIJUANA INITIATIVE

by Mervin D. Field

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Although the California public has become more tolerant of the use of marijuana in recent years, a substantial majority react negatively to Proposition 19. This is the ballot measure which would remove criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of marijuana by persons 18 years and over.

Proposition 19 would also allow for licensed cultivation of marijuana for personal consumption. However, transportation and possession of marijuana for sale would remain criminal offenses if the measure were approved by voters.

The California Poll completed a survey last month which found that sentiment was running about two to one against the marijuana ballot proposition.

To measure sentiment on the issue, the Poll asked a representative sample of potential voters to react to the wording of the proposition as it will appear on the November ballot. Overall, almost two persons in three (62%) said they would respond negatively if they were voting at the time of the survey, while 33% said they would vote affirmatively. Just 5% could not vote either Yes or No in this test.

Proposition 19 qualified for the November ballot when its proponents obtained more than the necessary 326,000 signatures earlier this year. The group sponsoring the measure argue that Proposition 19 could not legalize, but would "decriminalize" marijuana possession and use by an individual.

By this they intend that an individual has the right to grow and consume marijuana for his own personal use but that the sale or other commercial use of marijuana would remain illegal. Earlier this year a national commission on marijuana and drug abuse, headed by Pennsylvania Governor Raymond Shafer urged such a national policy. It recommended that the nation pick a path between the present social and legal attitude of total marijuana prohibition on one hand, and legalization on the other.

(MORE)

The California Poll was founded in 1946 as a medium for promoting public opinion research. The California Poll is completely independent of all political parties and candidates. Its sole purpose is to report public opinion accurately and objectively. Financial support for the Poll comes from newspapers and television stations that have exclusive rights within the city of publication. The Poll utilizes accepted scientific sampling and questioning procedures in obtaining the data reported in its releases. Representative samples of adults are interviewed at periodic intervals on election issues and other socially important questions of the day. Proportionate numbers of people of both sexes, from all parts of the state, from different sized communities, and of all age, economic, political, and occupation groups are included in the samples. Major surveys are made with samples of 1,000 or more respondents. Interim surveys sometimes are made with smaller samples of not less than 600 interviews.

President Nixon, however, has not supported the Commission's recommendations, and has stated that he is opposed to any steps which would legalize the use of marijuana.

Many state and national officials, including many law enforcement officials, have attacked the concept of the decriminalization provisions of Proposition 19. They feel that decriminalization by allowing personal cultivation and use of marijuana, would inevitably lead to an increase in illegal sales.

Los Angeles District Attorney Joseph Busch points out that decriminalization would "establish a schizophrenic legal situation in which the use is legal, but the sale illegal. The user will be socially acceptable and the seller will be labelled antisocial. Users will be drawn into an even deeper contact with the counterculture forces."

Other critics point out that medical research into the habitual use of marijuana is inconclusive and that more information is needed before marijuana use is encouraged by the legislature. However, a number of medical people are supporting Proposition 19, including Dr. Todd Mikurija, former director of drug research at the National Institute of Mental Health, and Dr. Joel Fort, an expert in the field who is now head of a San Francisco drug clinic.

Another medical expert, Dr. George Chun of Long Beach, has urged that marijuana be considered on a par with stronger drugs because he believes that when young people hear what they believe are lies about the effects of marijuana they stop listening also when the truth is told about more dangerous drugs.

As an early 1971 survey, The California Poll found that while a majority of people in this state oppose liberalization of marijuana laws, the size of the majority was somewhat smaller than it was in 1969. In addition, it found growing acceptance of the idea that marijuana is not in the same class as heroin and other "hard" drugs. It can be expected that considerable publicity will be given to Proposition 19 during the next two months, and The California Poll will be charting any shifts in public feeling on this measure.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SURVEY

- Dates of interviewing:** July 31 - August 6, 1972
- Population covered by this survey:** Representative cross-section of California adult public interviewed face-to-face
- Number of interviews:** This report is based on opinions of a sample of 471 persons.
- Sample design:** The survey interviews are selected in accordance with a probability sample design which provides for random (i.e., non-judgmental) selection of households. Assignments in a particular place are done in clusters with randomly drawn addresses as starting points for each cluster of interviews. For this survey, 240 clusters throughout the state were selected. Each cluster consisted of a set of consecutive households beginning with the designated starting household. Interviewers made up to three calls on every listed address in an attempt to complete an interview. One adult per household was selected for interview on a systematic basis to provide a balance by sex and age. Interviewing was conducted during late afternoon and evening on weekdays and all day on the weekend. The sample is designed to be self-weighted on all variables of interest, such as area of state, degree of urbanization, political party affiliation, and socio-economic status. Whenever imbalances in key variables occur in the sample due to sampling variability or other factors, corrective weights are applied during the data processing stage to return the sample to proper proportions.
- Wording of the questions on which this report is based:** "On this card is a summarization of the marijuana proposition which will appear on the November ballot. This will give you a general idea of how the proposition will be worded. If you were voting now, would you be inclined to favor or oppose this proposition?"

MARIJUANA. INITIATIVE.

Removes state penalties for personal use. Proposes a statute which would provide that no person eighteen or older shall be punished criminally or denied any right or privilege because of his planting, cultivating, harvesting, drying, processing, otherwise preparing, transporting, possessing or using marijuana. Does not repeal existing, or limit future, legislation prohibiting persons under the influence of marijuana from engaging in conduct that endangers others.

[See reverse side for answers to some typical questions about the Poll]

NOTE TO EDITORS: Following are answers to some questions frequently asked about The California Poll. These may be helpful for your own background or to answer questions put to you about The Poll. Any or all of this may be published at your option.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA POLL

- Q. Who runs The California Poll ?
- A. The California Poll is owned and operated by Field Research Corporation, an independent national public opinion and marketing research agency with headquarters in San Francisco. The Poll was founded in 1946 and has been published continuously since that time. The Poll is non-partisan.
- Q. Who pays for the surveys conducted by The California Poll ?
- A. The cost of operating The California Poll is underwritten by 13 newspapers and four television stations in California. Each one pays an annual fee for exclusive publication or broadcast rights in its area. The Poll does not accept fees from any candidates, political parties, or individuals who have any interest in the data being published. Its sole purpose is to report public opinion objectively and accurately.
- Q. How are The California Poll's surveys conducted ?
- A. The surveys are made by means of personal interviews conducted by trained interviewers using printed questionnaires. Survey respondents are selected by scientific methods to assure that an accurate cross section of adults in all walks of life throughout the state and representing all shades of political belief are included in their proper proportion in the sample.
- Q. Are the same people interviewed in each survey ?
- A. No. Fresh samples of respondents are drawn for each survey. (Panels of respondents re-interviewed at intervals are also a valid and valuable research technique for certain special purposes, but they are seldom used for surveys of the type conducted by The California Poll.)
- Q. How are the samples selected and how many people are interviewed ?
- A. Samples are drawn by probability sampling methods which give each household in the state an equal chance of being called on for an interview. Within households, the interviewers select adult respondents to fit sex and age quotas to match the state population as a whole. Samples vary in size between 500 and 1000 respondents per survey.
- Q. Do people give honest answers to surveys of this type ?
- A. In countless surveys of this type we have found that people are remarkably candid in talking to our interviewers, and wherever we have an opportunity to test the validity of their answers (for example, in an election) there is good evidence that they have actually given us their true opinions. We recognize that without public confidence surveys of this kind would be impossible and so we guarantee each respondent complete anonymity. After a percentage of the interviews have been validated by supervisors, the data are compiled only as statistical summaries. Names of survey respondents are never released for sales or political use.
- Q. Are sample surveys of this type accurate ?
- A. Time after time it has been demonstrated that carefully designed samples of this size are very reliable. Wherever the results can be checked against known data, they have proved to be accurate with relatively narrow tolerance limits. For example, a survey of 1000 respondents typically will be accurate within plus or minus approximately 4.5 percentage points, and a survey of 500 respondents has a tolerance range of about 6.7 percentage points. Thousands of such surveys are done each year for business and government and great reliance is put on their findings.

[See reverse side for specific information about the current survey.]