

# *Medical Marijuana*

Statewide Survey of 700  
Registered Voters in New Jersey

*presented to:*

**Drug Policy Alliance New Jersey**

*presented by:*

**the polling company™, inc.**

**JUNE 2006**

## Introduction and Methodology

the polling company™, inc./WomanTrend is pleased to present to **Drug Policy Alliance New Jersey** this analysis of findings from a recent statewide telephone survey of 700 registered voters in New Jersey.

Interviews were conducted over three consecutive nights at a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facility by telephone and with live callers. Respondents were randomly selected from a list of registered voters residing in New Jersey.

The survey was fielded May 23-25, 2006. The original instrument contained 24 questions, including 16 demographic inquiries, and was approved by an authorized representative of Drug Policy Alliance New Jersey prior to commencement of data collection.

The margin of error for the survey is  $\pm 3.7\%$  at a 95% confidence interval, meaning that the data obtained would not differ by any more than 3.7 percentage points in either direction had the entire population of registered voters in New Jersey been surveyed. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

## Analysis of Findings

### Top-of-Mind Associations with “Medical Marijuana” Show Positive Perceptions Dominate Negative Ones; A Plurality Link It To Curative Properties.

**When asked to spontaneously offer what they think of when they hear “medical marijuana,” voters in New Jersey tend to focus on the first half of the term.** A full one-third (34%) of New Jersey voters immediately thought of a treatment of disease or illness, including 23% who named specific uses for the drug, like helping cancer patients, pain management, and glaucoma.

Another 28% offered a non-specific positive assessment of medical marijuana, more than 2.5 times the number (11%) who responded negatively to the term. Another 17% offered no response at all, suggesting residual confusion or lack of clarity among some voters as to its true meaning, an information gap that could be narrowed through a voter education campaign and an increase in legislative activity.

### New Jersey Voters Believe in the Medical Benefits of Marijuana.

A majority (59%) of voters in New Jersey believe in the “medical benefits” of marijuana, a surprisingly high number given conflicting reports about the topic that have been published recently. Only 17% dismissed the premise that marijuana has intrinsic therapeutic properties.

Interestingly, a full 24% admitted they did not possess enough knowledge about the issue to render a judgment one way or the other.

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Marijuana has medical benefits”?*

**59% TOTAL AGREE (NET)**

30% STRONGLY AGREE

29% SOMEWHAT AGREE

**17% TOTAL DISAGREE (NET)**

7% SOMEWHAT DISAGREE

10% STRONGLY DISAGREE

24% DON'T KNOW/UNSURE (VOLUNTEERED)

\* REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)

**Whether or not a voter believed that marijuana had medical benefits had a direct, causal connection to the extent to which he or she supported allowing seriously ill patients access to marijuana with a doctor’s recommendation and guaranteeing that ability by passing new legislation.**

**New Jersey Voters Overwhelmingly Approve Allowing Ailing Patients Access to Medical Marijuana with a Doctor’s Nod.**

A majority of those surveyed said they believe in the medical benefits of marijuana, but these voters were even more convinced that “*seriously ill patients should have access to*

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Seriously ill patients should have access to marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it”?*

<b>86%</b>	<b>TOTAL AGREE (NET)</b>
63%	STRONGLY AGREE
23%	SOMEWHAT AGREE
<b>11%</b>	<b>TOTAL DISAGREE (NET)</b>
3%	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
8%	STRONGLY DISAGREE
3%	DON’T KNOW/UNSURE (VOLUNTEERED)
-	REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)

*marijuana for medical purposes if a physician recommends it.”* By a margin of nearly 8-to-1 (86%-11%), New Jerseyans agree with this position. Support was both broad and intense, as a sizeable majority (63%) “strongly” affirmed that marijuana should be a treatment option for the gravely ill.

**Agreement spanned demographic divides, with no less than three-quarters of every major demographic group studied, including members of all three political parties, endorsing access to medical marijuana with a doctor’s recommendation.**

Voters displayed similar support for medical marijuana when asked a separate, but related question pertaining specifically to allowing patients in New Jersey to use marijuana with a doctor’s approval. After learning that “*the use of marijuana, including for medical reasons, is illegal in New Jersey [but] about 11 other states now allow seriously ill patients to have medical marijuana with a doctor’s recommendation,*” more than 8-in-10 (83%) indicated that patients in their own state should have the same rights. Just 13% opposed the idea and a paltry 3% were unsure.

**Majority Would Get Marijuana for a Loved One in Need.**

If a close friend or family member was suffering from a condition that could be eased by marijuana, more than half (59%) of New Jersey voters would defy current law to obtain the drug for him or her. A decisive 31% said they would not, and another 10% felt unsure about what they would do in that situation.

Intensity was notable on both sides of the issue: those convinced of their decision to obtain marijuana for a sick friend or family member outnumbered those who would just probably do so by 25 points (42%-17%); similarly, the number of voters positive they would *not* take that course of action were double those less certain of their refusal (21%-10%).

## To Each His Own: Medical Marijuana an Issue for the States.

A slim majority (52%) of New Jersey voters rejected centralizing power within Washington, DC and instead declared the decision on “*whether to allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes*” one for each state government to decide independently. By a 22-point margin, state governments were preferred to the feds (30%) as the arbiter of medical marijuana law. Another 6% felt “both” bodies should have a say, while only 6% said “neither,” underscoring opinions expressed elsewhere in the survey that the use of marijuana must be regulated, even if legalized.

*Do you think the decision on whether to allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes should be decided by each state government or the by the federal government?*

<b>52%</b>	<b>STATE GOVERNMENT</b>
<b>30%</b>	<b>FEDERAL GOVERNMENT</b>
6%	BOTH (VOLUNTEERED)
6%	NEITHER (VOLUNTEERED)
6%	DON'T KNOW/UNSURE (VOLUNTEERED)
-	REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)

## Clear Backing for Legislation Allowing Physician-Sanctioned Medical Marijuana.

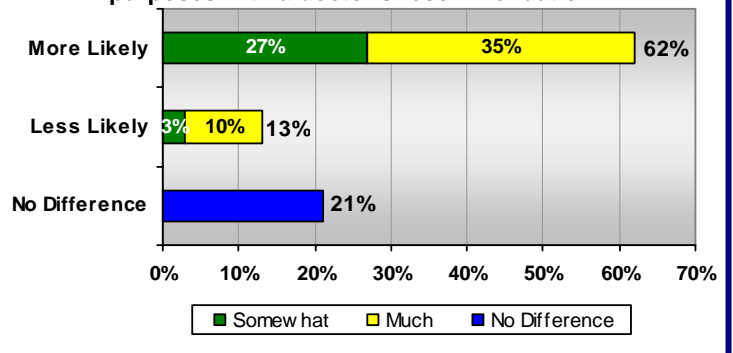
The belief among New Jersey voters that seriously ill patients should be allowed access to medical marijuana is not a hypothetical one; rather, they support guaranteeing that right by law. Seven-in-ten (71%) respondents were in agreement with the New Jersey state legislature passing a bill that would permit patients to possess “*one ounce of marijuana and six marijuana plants for medical purposes if they have a recommendation from a doctor,*” and 47% did so “strongly.”

By comparison, 26% of voters opposed this legislation (19% of them with intensity). Just 3% remained undecided.

## Pro-Medical Marijuana Platform 49-point Net Positive for NJ Candidate.

A candidate who spoke in favor of allowing ailing patients access to medical marijuana upon the advice and consent of a physician would find strong support among New Jersey voters. In fact, votes were nearly five times as likely to vote for him or her based on this position alone (62%-13%). An additional one-in-five remained unmoved by this alone; 21% who said it would “make no difference.”

**Would you be more or less likely to vote for a candidate for elected office in New Jersey if he or she “allowed seriously ill patients access to marijuana for medical purposes with a doctor’s recommendation?”**



While some regard medical marijuana as a “controversial” issue, it appears, on the contrary, to be quite mainstream in its acceptance. Political leaders have little excuse for delaying passage of a “compassionate use” law in New Jersey and should be urged that doing so will actually improve their standing in the eyes of many viewers.