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Most Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana for Medical, Recreational Use

Legalizing recreational marijuana viewed as good for local economies; mixed views of impact on drug use, community safety

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About Pew Research Center

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand the public's views about the legalization of marijuana in the United States. For this analysis, we surveyed 5,140 adults from Jan. 16 to Jan. 21, 2024. Everyone who took part in this survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. [Read more about the ATP's methodology.](#)

Here are the [questions used for the report](#) and its [methodology](#).

Most Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana for Medical, Recreational Use

Legalizing recreational marijuana viewed as good for local economies; mixed views of impact on drug use, community safety

As more states [pass laws legalizing marijuana for recreational use](#), Americans continue to favor legalization of both medical and recreational use of the drug.

An overwhelming share of U.S. adults (88%) say marijuana **should be legal for medical or recreational use**.

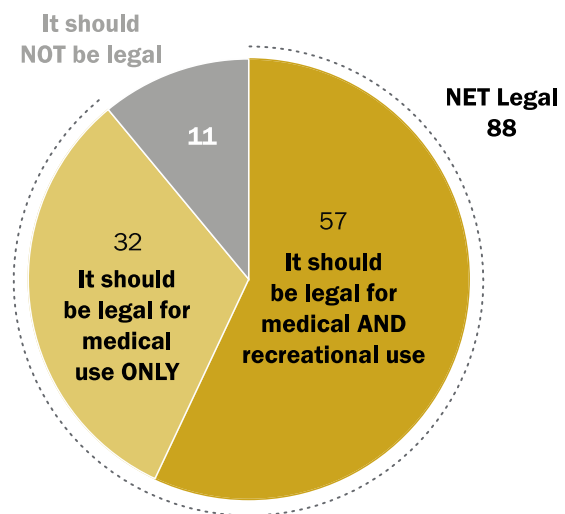
Nearly six-in-ten Americans (57%) say that marijuana should be legal for medical *and* recreational purposes, while roughly a third (32%) say that marijuana should be legal for medical use only.

Just 11% of Americans say that the drug **should not be legal at all**.

Opinions about marijuana legalization have changed little over the past five years, according to the Pew Research Center survey, conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024, among 5,140 adults.

Only about 1 in 10 U.S. adults say marijuana should not be legal at all

% of U.S. adults who say the following about marijuana



Note: Fewer than 1% of respondents did not answer the question.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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The impact of legalizing marijuana for recreational use

While a majority of Americans [continue to say marijuana should be legal](#), there are **varying views about the impacts of recreational legalization**.

About half of Americans (52%) say that legalizing the recreational use of marijuana is **good for local economies**; just 17% think it is bad and 29% say it has no impact.

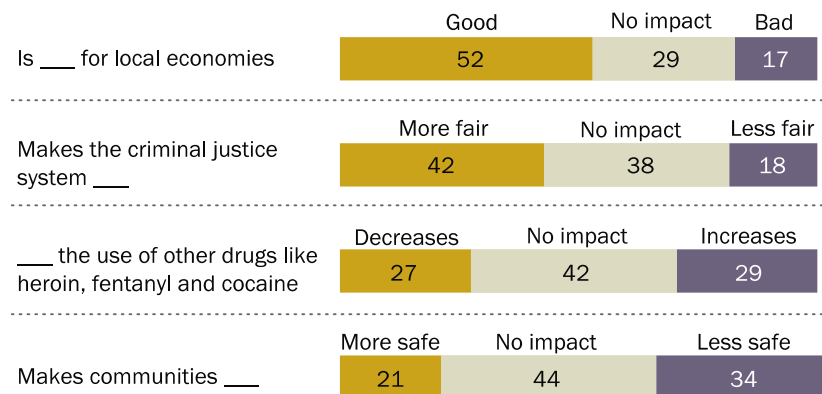
More adults also say legalizing marijuana for recreational use makes the **criminal justice system more fair** (42%) than less fair (18%); 38% say it has no impact.

However, Americans have mixed views on the impact of legalizing marijuana for recreational use on:

- **Use of other drugs:** About as many say it increases (29%) as say it decreases (27%) the use of other drugs, like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine (42% say it has no impact).
- **Community safety:** More Americans say legalizing recreational marijuana makes communities less safe (34%) than say it makes them safer (21%); 44% say it has no impact.

How Americans view the effects of legalizing recreational marijuana

% who say when marijuana is legal for recreational use, it ...



Note: No answer responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Partisan differences on impact of recreational use of marijuana

There are deep partisan divisions regarding the impact of marijuana legalization for recreational use.

Majorities of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say legalizing recreational marijuana is good for local economies (64% say this) and makes the criminal justice system fairer (58%).

Fewer Republicans and Republican leaners say legalization for recreational use has a positive effect on local economies (41%) and the criminal justice system (27%).

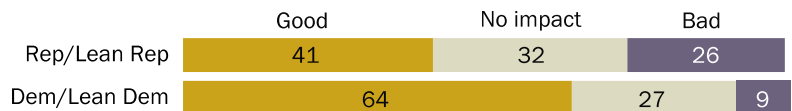
Republicans are more likely than Democrats to cite **downsides from legalizing recreational marijuana:**

- 42% of Republicans say it increases the use of other drugs, like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine, compared with just 17% of Democrats.
- 48% of Republicans say it makes communities less safe, more than double the share of Democrats (21%) who say this.

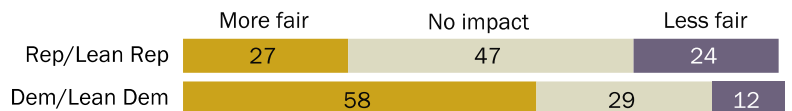
Democrats more positive than Republicans on impact of legalizing marijuana

% who say when *marijuana is legal for recreational use*, it ...

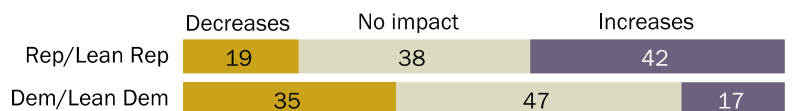
Is ___ for local economies



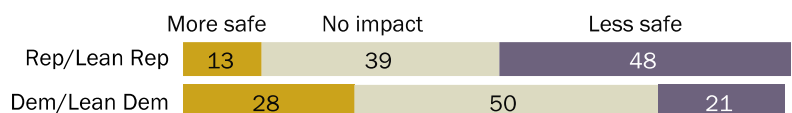
Makes the criminal justice system ___



___ the use of other drugs like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine



Makes communities ___



Note: No answer responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Demographic, partisan differences in views of marijuana legalization

Sizable age and partisan differences persist on the issue of marijuana legalization though **small shares of adults across demographic groups are completely opposed to it.**

Older adults are far less likely than younger adults to favor marijuana legalization.

This is particularly the case among adults ages 75 and older: 31% say marijuana should be legal for both medical and recreational use.

By comparison, half of adults between the ages of 65 and 74 say marijuana should be legal for medical and recreational use, and larger shares in younger age groups say the same.

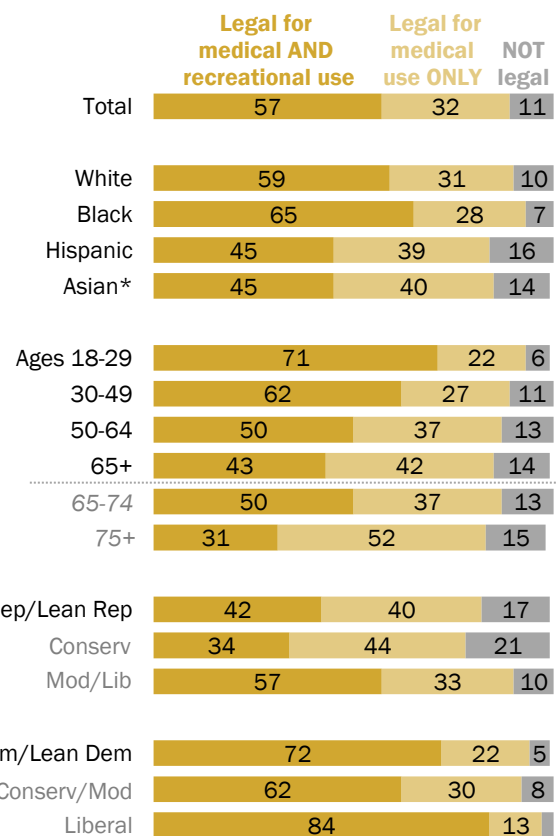
Republicans continue to be less supportive than Democrats of legalizing marijuana for both legal and recreational use: 42% of Republicans favor legalizing marijuana for both purposes, compared with 72% of Democrats.

There continue to be **ideological differences within each party:**

- 34% of conservative Republicans say marijuana should be legal for medical and recreational use, compared with a 57% majority of moderate and liberal Republicans.
- 62% of conservative and moderate Democrats say marijuana should be legal for medical and recreational use, while an overwhelming majority of liberal Democrats (84%) say this.

Views about legalizing marijuana differ by race and ethnicity, age, partisanship

% who say marijuana should be ...



* Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. No answer responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Views of marijuana legalization vary by age within both parties

Along with differences by party and age, there are also **age differences *within* each party** on the issue.

A 57% majority of Republicans ages 18 to 29 favor making marijuana legal for medical and recreational use, compared with 52% among those ages 30 to 49 and much smaller shares of older Republicans.

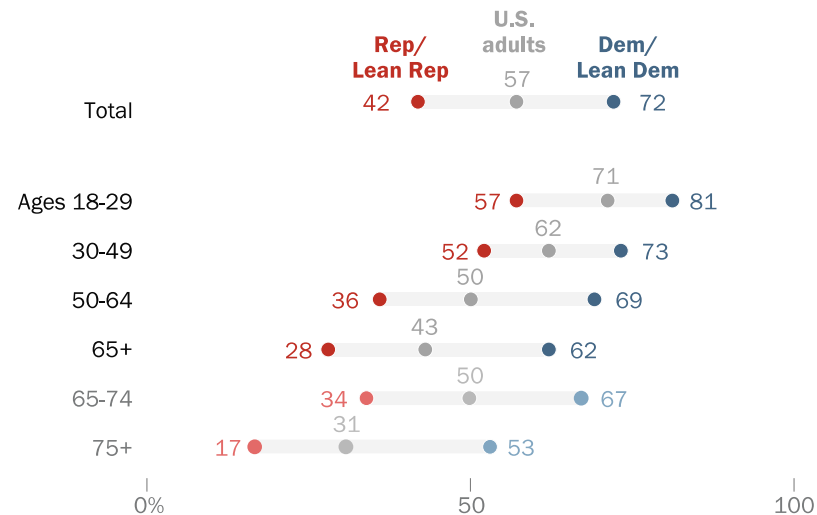
Still, wide majorities of Republicans in all age groups favor legalizing marijuana at least for medical use. Among those ages 65 and older, just 20% say marijuana should not be legal even for medical purposes.

While majorities of Democrats across all age groups support legalizing marijuana for medical and recreational use, older Democrats are less likely to say this.

About half of Democrats ages 75 and older (53%) say marijuana should be legal for both purposes, but much larger shares of younger Democrats say the same (including 81% of Democrats ages 18 to 29). Still, only 7% of Democrats ages 65 and older think marijuana should not be legalized even for medical use, similar to the share of all other Democrats who say this.

Large age differences in both parties in views of legalizing marijuana for medical and recreational use

% who say marijuana should be legal for medical AND recreational use



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Views of the effects of legalizing recreational marijuana among racial and ethnic groups

Substantial shares of Americans across racial and ethnic groups say when marijuana is legal for recreational use, it has a more positive than negative impact on the economy and criminal justice system.

Economy

About half of White (52%), Black (53%) and Hispanic (51%) adults say legalizing recreational marijuana is good for local economies. A slightly smaller share of Asian adults (46%) say the same.

Criminal justice

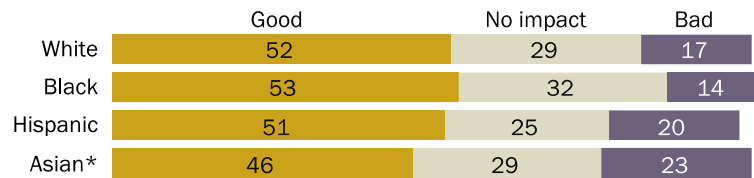
Across racial and ethnic groups, about four-in-ten say that recreational marijuana being legal makes the criminal justice system fairer, with smaller shares saying it would make it less fair.

However, there are wider racial differences on questions regarding the impact of recreational marijuana on the use of other drugs and the safety of communities.

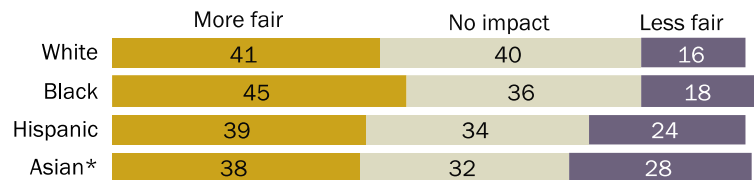
Hispanic and Asian adults more likely than Black and White adults to say legalizing recreational marijuana negatively impacts safety, use of other drugs

% who say when marijuana is legal for recreational use, it ...

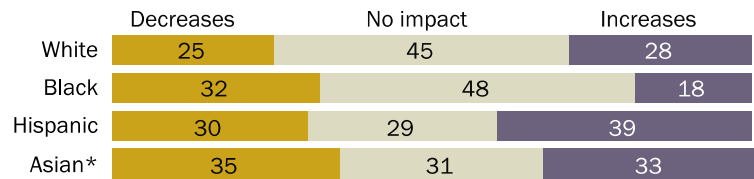
Is ___ for local economies



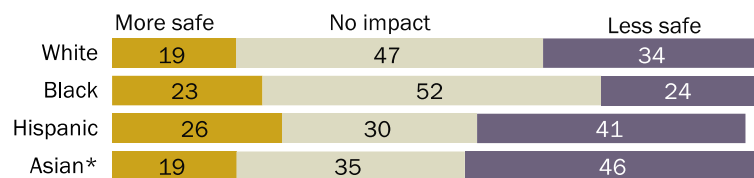
Makes the criminal justice system ___



___ the use of other drugs like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine



Makes communities ___



* Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. No answer responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Use of other drugs

Nearly half of Black adults (48%) say recreational marijuana legalization doesn't have an effect on the use of drugs like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine. Another 32% in this group say it *decreases* the use of these drugs and 18% say it increases their use.

In contrast, Hispanic adults are slightly more likely to say legal marijuana *increases* the use of these other drugs (39%) than to say it decreases this use (30%); 29% say it has no impact.

Among White adults, the balance of opinion is mixed: 28% say marijuana legalization increases the use of other drugs and 25% say it decreases their use (45% say it has no impact). Views among Asian adults are also mixed, though a smaller share (31%) say legalization has no impact on the use of other drugs.

Community safety

Hispanic and Asian adults also are more likely to say marijuana's legalization makes communities less safe: 41% of Hispanic adults and 46% of Asian adults say this, compared with 34% of White adults and 24% of Black adults.

Wide age gap on views of impact of legalizing recreational marijuana

Young Americans view the legalization of marijuana for recreational use in more positive terms compared with their older counterparts.

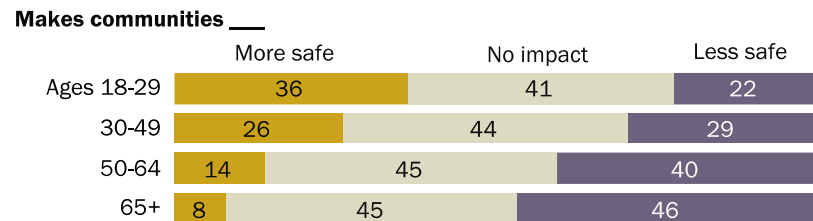
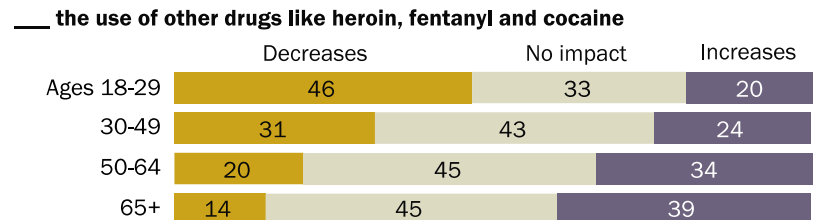
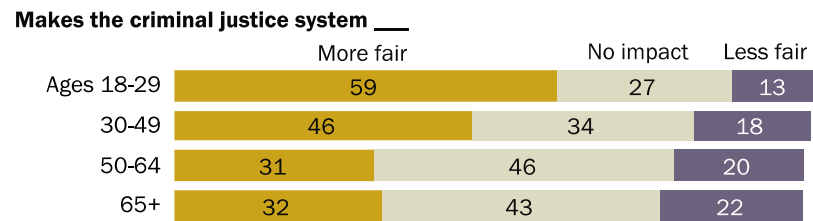
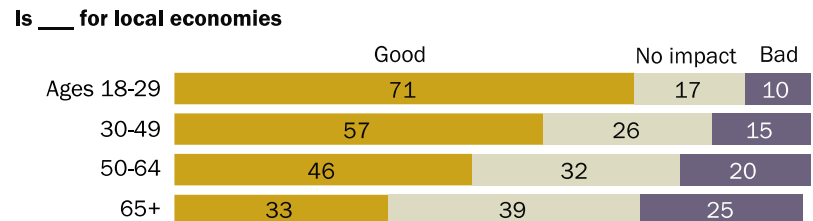
Clear majorities of adults under 30 say it is good for local economies (71%) and that it makes the criminal justice system fairer (59%).

By comparison, a third of Americans ages 65 and older say legalizing the recreational use of marijuana is good for local economies; about as many (32%) say it makes the criminal justice system more fair.

There also are sizable differences in opinion by age about how legalizing recreational marijuana affects the use of other drugs and the safety of communities.

Young adults far more likely than older people to say legalizing recreational marijuana has positive impacts

% who say when marijuana is legal for recreational use, it ...



Note: No answer responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 140, conducted from Jan. 16 to Jan. 21, 2024, and includes an [oversample](#) of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black men, and Hispanic men in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of these smaller demographic subgroups. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population. A total of 5,140 panelists responded out of 5,604 who were sampled, for a response rate of 92%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is less than 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 5,140 respondents is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. ["AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."](#)

birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.²

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	1,393
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	831
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	405
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	3,850
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,388
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,441
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	731
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,457
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	435
	Total	43,580	30,859	11,931

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 11,931 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which Hispanic men, non-Hispanic Black men and non-Hispanic Asian adults were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the

² Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Jan. 16 to Jan. 21, 2024. Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset of sampled ATP panelists with a known residential address on Jan. 16.³

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Jan. 16. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Jan. 17.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

³ Postcards notifications are sent to 1) panelists who have been provided with a tablet to take ATP surveys, 2) panelists who were recruited within the last two years, and 3) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 140

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	Jan. 16, 2024	Jan. 17, 2024
First reminder	Jan. 18, 2024	Jan. 18, 2024
Final reminder	Jan. 20, 2024	Jan. 20, 2024

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Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center’s researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, four ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year. Finally, the weights are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Black (alone or in combination) x Hispanic	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	
Voter registration	2022 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	2023 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 2nd and 98th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. This trimming is performed separately among non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic and all other respondents. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 140

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	5,140		1.7 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	2,210	45	2.5 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	2,710	47	2.4 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black men, and Hispanic men. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 140

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	5,140
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	23
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	49
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	387
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	1
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.3	4
Screened out	4.7	0
Total panelists sampled for the survey		5,604
Completed interviews	I	5,140
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	459
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	O	4
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		5,604
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		92%

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Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 140

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 140	46%
Response rate to Wave 140 survey	92%
Cumulative response rate	3%

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**2024 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 140 JANUARY 2024
FINAL TOPLINE
JANUARY 16-21, 2024
N=5,140**

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

MARIJUANA3 Which comes closer to your view about the use of marijuana by adults?

Jan 16-21, <u>2024</u>		Oct 10-16, <u>2022</u>	Apr 5-11, <u>2021</u>	Sep 3-15, <u>2019</u>	Aug 16- Sep 12 <u>2016³</u>
57	It should be legal for medical AND recreational use	59	60	59	49
32	It should be legal for medical use ONLY	30	31	32	35
11	It should NOT be legal	10	8	8	15
*	No answer	1	1	*	1

ASK ALL:

MARIJ_STRICT Are marijuana laws in your state... **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1-2; ALWAYS ASK OPTIONS 3 AND 4 LAST]**

Jan 16-21, <u>2024</u>	
24	Too strict
19	Not strict enough
36	About right
21	Not sure
1	No answer

[RANDOMIZE MARIJ_CRIME, MARIJ_ECON, MARIJ_FAIR AND MARIJ_DRUG AND DISPLAY ON SAME PAGE; RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1-2 WITHIN ITEMS; ALWAYS ASK OPTION 3 LAST]

ASK ALL:

MARIJ_CRIME When marijuana is legal for recreational use, it...

Jan 16-21, <u>2024</u>	
21	Makes communities <u>more safe</u>
34	Makes communities <u>less safe</u>
44	Does not have much impact
1	No answer

³ In the survey conducted Aug. 16-Sept. 12, 2016, question wording asked about "medical and personal use" of marijuana.

ASK ALL:

MARIJ_ECON When marijuana is legal for recreational use, it...

Jan 16-21,
2024

- 52 Is good for local economies
- 17 Is bad for local economies
- 29 Does not have much impact
- 2 No answer

ASK ALL:

MARIJ_FAIR When marijuana is legal for recreational use, it...

Jan 16-21,
2024

- 42 Makes the criminal justice system more fair
- 18 Makes the criminal justice system less fair
- 38 Does not have much impact
- 2 No answer

ASK ALL:

MARIJ_DRUG When marijuana is legal for recreational use, it...

Jan 16-21,
2024

- 29 Increases the use of other drugs like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine
- 27 Decreases the use of other drugs like heroin, fentanyl and cocaine
- 42 Does not have much impact
- 2 No answer

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3 or 4) OR MISSING:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to...⁷

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Something else</u>	<u>No answer</u>	<i>Lean Rep</i>	<i>Lean Dem</i>
28	29	27	13	3	17	18

Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:

(U) Pew Research Center/USA Today polls

⁷ PARTY and PARTYLN asked in a prior survey.