

High Times in the USA: A Look at Sociodemographic Factors Connected To Legalizing Marijuana

Derek Blair

Fairmount College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Abstract: Marijuana has long been considered a fringe policy issue, with most individuals historically being against any sort of legalization. Recent pushes for legalization in states such as Colorado and Washington merit wondering if changes in public opinion on a national scale are taking place. In addition to determining the extent of support for the legalization of marijuana for medical use in 2013, my research seeks to understand why some Americans are in favor of legalization while others are not. An extensive literature review showed that scant research has been done on this issue.

Using the most recent raw data available from a Gallup survey in 2013, I found that 52% of Americans support the legalization of marijuana for medical use. I ran a multiple regression test to determine which sociodemographic variables are correlated to the support for legalization. Those variables are age, gender, religiosity, education, and political ideology.

My results showed that variables such as gender and education are not correlated with favoring legalization, but that ideology, church attendance (religiosity), and age show that Americans with more liberal views, who are younger and less religious are more likely to have a favorable opinion about the legalization of marijuana.

My research concluded that there seems to be an important national shift on the issue of legalization and that sociodemographic variables play a key role in this change.