

How likely are Ohioans to support legalizing marijuana? It depends how old they are

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—A new Baldwin Wallace University survey finds that 57% of Ohio voters favor Issue 2, a proposed law to legalize recreational marijuana in the state. But a closer look shows that older Ohioans are far less likely to support the Nov. 7 ballot measure than younger voters.

The poll, released Wednesday, found that Issue 2 had majority support among nearly every demographic group measured, including political party, gender, age, race, religion and education level.

One exception, though, was Ohio voters 65 or older – only 34% of those voters polled favor Issue 2, according to Tom Sutton, director of the university's Community Research Institute, which conducted the survey.

By contrast, 70% of Ohio voters between the ages of 18 and 34 support the legalized marijuana proposal, as do 73% of voters between 35 and 49 years old, the survey found. That support drops to 56% among Ohio voters between 50 and 64 years old.

That means that more than 71% of voters between the ages of 18 and 49 support Issue 2; voters age 50 or older also support it, but by the much narrower margin of 46.8% in support and 45% opposed.

Sutton said that the margin of error for those subsets is much higher than for the poll itself, which had a +/- 4.5% margin of error. But even so, he said, the survey shows that support for marijuana legalization varies by generation, with Baby Boomers significantly less supportive of the idea than voters from Generation X, millennials, or Generation Z.

While that may not seem surprising – younger people have historically been more in favor of relaxing drug laws than older ones – it comes as [a national survey shows](#) that Americans age 18-34 have become significantly more suspicious of even moderate alcohol consumption in recent years.

Sutton, in an interview, said that in his experience working with students, he's found that younger people in Ohio are comparatively more reluctant to call for restrictions on what other people can do, even on things that they personally disagree with.

"Quite frankly, I think it's a reaction to all the (political) polarization they've grown up with," Sutton said. "Students are literally gun shy of getting into discussions about political issues that are divisive. It's very difficult to get them to do that, because they've either directly or indirectly experienced losing friendships, having seen conflicts in families as a result of these kinds of discussions. And so they tend to shy away from it."

Marijuana isn't as polarizing of a topic as, say, the 2024 presidential election. But, Sutton said, "I do think that (young people) tend to be more accepting, even if they're opposed to it becoming legal."

In addition, last year saw record highs in marijuana use among adults ages 19-30, and among adults 35-50, [according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) – roughly the same age groups most supportive of Issue 2.

Another potential factor, Sutton said, is that medicinal marijuana has been legal in Ohio since 2016, and recreational marijuana is legal in several states, including nearby Michigan.

"It doesn't have the stigma, and as a result doesn't have the legal restrictions that it had up until about 15-20 years ago," Sutton said.

However, another historic trend among young people is they usually don't turn out to vote in the same way that older people do. In Ohio's 2022 midterm general election, turnout rates were 25.3% for voters between 18 and 29 years old, 43% for 30-to-44-year-olds, 53.6% for voters ages 45 to 64, and 63.3% for voters 65 or older, [according to the Brookings Institution](#), a Washington, D.C., think tank.