

**MAJORITY (55%) OF CANADIANS DON'T BELIEVE  
SMOKING MARIJUANA SHOULD BE A CRIMINAL  
OFFENCE – SUPPORT RISES TO TWO-THIRDS (63%)  
WHEN FINES, INSTEAD OF CRIMINAL CHARGES, ARE  
SUGGESTED FOR MARIJUANA POSSESSION FOR  
PERSONAL USE**

***However, Majority (53%) Feel Change Will Make Fighting Drug  
Dealers and Drug Trade Harder for Police***

***Half (51%) Believe Change Will Increase Number of Teenagers  
Smoking Pot***



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**Toronto, ONTARIO (Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003)** – Canadians appear to back the rumoured changes to marijuana possession laws recently floated by Justice Minister Martin Cauchon, according to a new Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll released today. When asked in general, a majority (55%) of those in the country believe that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence, while four in ten (42%) believe it should be. In comparison, when this question was last asked of Canadians in the fall of 1997, a slight majority (51%) held the view that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence, while 10 years previous (September 1987), just 39% held this position.

Asked directly about the rumoured changes to marijuana possession laws, two-thirds (63%) of Canadians say they would support the issuing of tickets and fines to those caught in possession of under 15 grams of marijuana instead of the charging them with a crime, which if convicted, results in a criminal record. In total 35% oppose such a change.



As for what effect this suggested change may have, Canadians appear to be split evenly. A majority (53%) feel that it will make the job of the police harder in fighting drug dealers and those in the drug trade, while half (51%) believe that as a result, more teenagers under the legal age will now take up smoking marijuana. As well, 51% say that this proposed change will cause an increase in demand for marijuana and will grow the drug trade and criminal activity, while 48% disagree with this view.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll conducted between May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,001 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.*

In general, a majority (55%) believe that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence, while four in ten (42%) believe it should be.

- Regionally, residents of Quebec (63%) are more likely to hold the view that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence than are residents of Alberta (50%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (50%) or Ontario (50%). Meanwhile, residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (49%), Ontario (47%) and Alberta (47%) are more likely than those in either British Columbia (36%) or Quebec (34%) to hold the view that it should be a criminal offence.
- Men (not a criminal offence 61% versus criminal offence 36%) are more likely to hold the view that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence, while women are split on the issue (not a criminal offence 49% versus criminal offence 47%).

- University graduates (61%) are more likely than are those without a university degree (53%) to believe that smoking marijuana should not be a criminal offence.

Two-thirds (63%) of Canadians would support the issuing of tickets and fines to those caught in possession of under 15 grams of marijuana instead of the charging them with a crime, which if convicted results in a criminal record. Three in ten (30%) strongly support, while an one-third (33%) somewhat support such a change. In total 35% oppose this proposal (strongly oppose 20%; somewhat oppose 20%).

- While a majority of all three age groups express support, younger (71%) adult Canadians are more likely than either their middle aged (63%) or older (55%) counterparts to support the proposal. Middle aged (34%) Canadians are more likely to strongly support the idea than are older (25%) Canadians.
- University graduates (70%) are more likely than either those who have high school diploma (56%) or do not have a high school diploma (55%) to support the suggested changes.
- There are no statistical differences between regions, between genders or household income groups.

As for what effect this suggested change may have, Canadians appear to be split. A majority (53%) feel that it will make the job of the police harder in fighting drug dealers and those in the drug trade, while 45% disagree.

- A majority of residents in Ontario (58%), Alberta (57%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (55%) and Atlantic Canada (55%) agree with this position, while slightly less than half of those in Quebec (49%) and British Columbia (46%) concur.

- Older (60%) Canadians are more likely to agree with this position than do younger adults (51%) or middle aged (49%) Canadians.
- Women (58%) are more likely to agree with this position than are men (49%).
- University graduates (56%) are more likely than those with some university or other post-secondary education (45%), a high school diploma (38%) or without a diploma (34%) to disagree with this view.

Half (51%) believe that as a result of this change in marijuana possession laws, more teenagers under the legal age will now take up smoking marijuana, while the other half (48%) disagrees. The intensity of position is also equally between those who hold their position strongly (strongly agree 29%; strongly disagree 28%) or just somewhat (somewhat agree 22%; somewhat disagree 20%).

- At least half of residents in Atlantic Canada (58%), Ontario (55%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (51%) and Alberta (51%) express agreement, while less than half of the residents of British Columbia (46%) and Quebec (44%) agree.
- There are no statistical differences in the views of age, gender, education, or household income groups.

As well, 51% say that this proposed change will cause an increase in demand for marijuana and will grow the drug trade and criminal activity, while 48% disagree with this view.

- This view is lead by those in Ontario (55%) where an outright majority express agreement, followed by those in Alberta (52%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (51%), Atlantic Canada (50%), Quebec (49%) and British Columbia (45%).



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- There appears to be a gender split on this subject, with women (56% versus 47% of men) more likely to agree that this will result, while men (53% versus 43% of women) are more likely to disagree.
- University graduates (58%) are more likely to disagree with this position than are those with some university or other post-secondary education (47%) and those with (41%) or without (41%) a high school diploma.

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