



Legalising cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes

The issue:

Cannabis-based products can be used by some people to treat certain medical conditions. However, the large majority of these products are classified as Class B drugs and are therefore illegal to use unless prior approval has been received from the Ministry of Health. The exception to this is a mouth spray called Sativex, which can be prescribed by a medical specialist for multiple sclerosis.

A growing number of countries/states are passing laws that allow the use of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes. Support groups state that these legally-available products provide significant relief from nausea and pain associated with chronic illness.

The “Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill” was recently drawn from the ballot and will be debated in parliament. The bill seeks to lessen the restrictions on cannabis possession and alter the Misuse of Drugs Act so that with approval from a medical practitioner, people can gain access to cannabis-based products.

In order to gauge public opinion and support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, Research New Zealand conducted a poll between 17 May and 10 June 2017 with a nationally representative sample of adult New Zealanders.

The poll question:

- ◆ *Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?*



Key results:

The key results are as follows:

- ◆ Over three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) stated they **supported** legalising cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, while 16 percent stated that they did not support this and a further eight percent did not know or refused.
- ◆ These results have been analysed by a number of demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnicity, income, educational status and region.
- ◆ The only significant differences are as follows:
 - ◆ Respondents with tertiary qualifications (a bachelor's degree or higher) were significantly more likely than those with no qualifications to support legalising cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes (82 percent, compared with 65 percent).
 - ◆ Respondents in the Lower/Central North Island region were significantly more likely than those in the South Island to support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes (84 percent, compared with 70 percent).



Comment:

“It is clear from these results that the majority of New Zealanders support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes”, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

The Research New Zealand poll of 500 people aged 18 years and over was conducted by telephone between 17 May and 10 June 2017. The maximum margin of error is +/- 5.6 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of the general population of New Zealand. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand’s monthly survey of New Zealanders’ opinions about topical issues.

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TABULATIONS

Results by demographic sub-groups

Table 1: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by gender

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

	Base =	Total 500 %	Male 242 %	Female 258 %
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes		77	79	75
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is		16	16	15
Don't know		7	4	9
Refused		1	1	1
Total		100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by age

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

	Base =	Total 500 %	18-34 years 30 %	35 to 54 years 137 %	55 years and over 333 %
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes		77	73	79	76
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is		16	17	14	17
Don't know		7	10	5	7
Refused		1	0	1	1
Total		100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 3: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by ethnicity

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

Base =	New Zealand			
	Total	European	Māori/Pacific	Other/Refused
	500	399	52	73
	%	%	%	%
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes	77	76	71	78
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is	16	15	26	17
Don't know	7	7	3	4
Refused	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by income

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

Base =	Total	Income			
		Under \$40,000	At least \$40,000 but less than \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Don't know/refused
	500	155	111	164	70
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes	77	76	74	81	68
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is	16	18	17	13	16
Don't know	7	6	8	5	12
Refused	1	0	0	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 5: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by educational status

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

	Base =	Total	None/No qualifications	Secondary school qualification	Polytechnic or trade qualification	Bachelor's degree or higher
		500	68	134	123	170
		%	%	%	%	%
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes		77	65	75	75	82
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is		16	27	18	20	9
Don't know		7	5	7	5	7
Refused		1	3	0	0	2
Total		100	100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6: Support for the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, by region

Do you support the legalisation of cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes, or do you feel the law should stay as it is?

	Base =	Total	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
		500	217	158	123
		%	%	%	%
Yes, I support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes		77	75	84	70
No, I do not support legalising cannabis-based products for medical purposes/the law should stay as it is		16	18	12	17
Don't know		7	6	3	12
Refused		1	1	1	1
Total		100	100	100	100

The base numbers shown are unweighted counts.
Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.