

**California Voter Survey
Cannabis Retail Licensing
Conducted February 15th to 19th, 2020**



David Binder Research

Topline Findings

This survey examined voter opinions on cannabis and asked whether cities and counties should be required to allow cannabis dispensaries if voters approved Proposition 64. Six in ten voters support this idea, including 2 in 3 Democrats and Independents, and majorities across regions and age groups.

The survey finds Prop 64 voters overwhelmingly expected that the measure would lead to legal cannabis in their own community. Support for legalized cannabis has increased since Prop 64 passed in 2016—today, nearly 3 in 4 voters say the use of cannabis should be legal in California. Large majorities see several benefits of legal cannabis, including safer products, improved community safety, and increased job opportunities.

Top voter priorities on cannabis licensing are safety, giving voters decision-making power, and increasing access. Most agree that increasing access will increase safety, while prohibiting dispensaries threatens safety and goes against the will of voters.

A ballot measure requiring cannabis retail licensing in areas where voters approved Prop 64 gets majority support, and voters give high ratings to the measure’s consumer safety and voter control provisions.

1. Six in ten voters want cannabis dispensaries allowed in cities and counties where a majority approved Proposition 64.

Voters were told that some city and county governments in California have prohibited cannabis dispensaries within their borders.

By a nearly 2 to 1 margin, voters say that if a majority of voters in a city or county approved Prop 64 to legalize cannabis, the area should be required to allow retail cannabis dispensaries (61%). About 3 in 10 voters say that elected officials in a city or county have a right to prohibit cannabis dispensaries in their areas.

An overwhelming majority of voters who say they voted YES on Prop 64 want cannabis dispensaries allowed where voters approved that measure (78%). Majorities across region hold this view, as do voters across age group. Around 2 in 3 Democrats (65%) and Independents (68%) say cannabis dispensaries should be allowed in these areas, along with 46% of Republicans.

<i>If a majority of voters in a city or county approved Prop 64 to legalize cannabis, the area should be required to allow at least one cannabis dispensary</i>	
All Voters	61
Democrat	65
Republican	46
Independent	68
Under 45	68
Age 45+	57
Sacramento Area	68
Bay Area	63
Central Valley	51
Los Angeles	59
San Diego	73
Voted YES on Prop 64	78

2. Eight in ten Prop 64 voters expected a YES vote meant cannabis would be sold in the area where they live.

Voters in this survey were asked whether they voted on Proposition 64, The Adult Use of Marijuana Act, which legalized the recreational use of marijuana in California.

Regardless of how they voted, 81% of Prop 64 voters say they expected a YES vote meant recreational marijuana would be sold in the area where they live. At least 7 in 10 Prop 64 voters across party, ideology, age, race, and region expected the measure meant cannabis would be sold in their area.

3. Support for legalized cannabis has increased since Prop 64 passed in 2016, and strong majorities say legalized cannabis increases safety and provides job opportunities.

Nearly 3 in 4 voters (73%) say the use of marijuana should be legal in California. That’s a substantial increase over the 57% of likely voters who said marijuana should be legal in a September 2016 Public Policy Institute of California survey.

Strong majorities of voters agree that legal cannabis has several positive effects. Eight in ten say it creates safer options for people to purchase cannabis products, and 74% say it allows law enforcement to focus on more important priorities. Seven in ten say it provides job opportunities in local communities.

A majority (55%) disagree with the statement that legal cannabis puts children in danger.

<i>Effects of Legal Cannabis</i>	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
It creates safer options for people to purchase cannabis products.	79	16	4
It allows law enforcement to focus on more important priorities.	74	20	4
It provides job opportunities in local communities.	69	23	8
It makes our criminal justice system more fair.	59	26	14
It provides funding for things you care about.	46	31	22
It puts children in danger.	39	55	6

4. A ballot measure requiring cannabis retail licensing where voters approved Prop 64 gets majority support.

Voters in this survey were presented with a mock title and summary for a ballot measure. The measure would require local jurisdictions to issue at least one retail cannabis license for every 15 pharmacies if a majority of the jurisdiction’s voters approved Prop 64. It also would allow local jurisdictions to reduce the number of licenses through an ordinance approved by voters, and it would provide for increased consumer safety testing of legal cannabis products.

The measure gets support from 55% of voters; 31% say they would vote NO, and 12% are undecided. After hearing arguments on both sides, the YES vote increases to 61%, with 29% voting NO and 8% undecided.

<i>Cannabis Licensing Measure</i>
Regulates Local Licensing of Retail Commercial Cannabis Activity. Initiative Statute.
Requires local jurisdictions to issue at least one license authorizing retail cannabis activity for every 15 pharmacies within the jurisdiction if more than 50% of the jurisdiction’s voters approved the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (Prop. 64), which legalized adult-use marijuana in California.
Authorizes local jurisdictions to impose a fee on cannabis businesses to cover licensing costs.
Allows local jurisdictions to reduce the number of licenses through an ordinance approved by a majority of the voters in the jurisdiction.
Provides for increased consumer safety testing of legal cannabis products.

5. The measure’s consumer safety provision gets overwhelming support, and majorities support the measure’s voter control provisions.

Voters were also asked about each of the measure’s components separately.

Eight in ten support the provision that would provide for increased consumer safety testing. Majorities also support components that give voters authority over cannabis licensing: 55% support the provision stating retail cannabis must be allowed where voters passed Prop 64, and 54% support the provision stating the number of licenses can be reduced by a majority of voters.

<i>Cannabis Licensing Measure Components</i>	Support	Oppose	Don’t know
Requires local jurisdictions to issue at least one license authorizing retail cannabis activity for every 15 pharmacies within the jurisdiction if more than 50% of the jurisdiction’s voters approved the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (Prop. 64), which legalized adult-use marijuana in California.	55	28	17
Authorizes local jurisdictions to impose a fee on cannabis businesses to cover licensing costs.	66	24	10
Allows local jurisdictions to reduce the number of licenses through an ordinance approved by a majority of the voters in the jurisdiction.	54	32	14
Provides for increased consumer safety testing of legal cannabis products.	79	13	8

6. Solid majorities say arguments about safety, voter choice, and access are convincing reasons to support the measure.

Voters were presented with a series of arguments for and against the ballot measure. Each supporter message is convincing to a majority of voters, and top-rated messages are convincing to over 2 in 3 voters. The top message ratings are consistent with voters’ prioritization of safety, voter choice, and access that we find throughout the survey.

One top message says voters should decide whether legal cannabis is available in their communities, not politicians. This argument is convincing to 68% of voters, including 74% of Democrats, 70% of Independents and 58% of Republicans. It is convincing to at least 6 in 10 voters across regions of the state.

Another top message says when cities prohibit cannabis sales, people buy it from illegal sources, and the safer alternative is increasing access to legal cannabis. This argument is convincing to 67% of voters, including majorities across party (73% Democrats, 68% Independents, 58% Republicans) and at least 6 in 10 across region.

Other messages are convincing to over 6 in 10 voters. These say access to legal cannabis reduces crime and allows law enforcement to focus on serious dangers, and that increasing the number of cannabis retailers will increase access for medical patients.

<i>Top Supporter Messages (% convincing)</i>	All voters	Dem	Rep	Ind
Voters should decide whether legal cannabis is available in their communities— not politicians. If a majority of voters supported legalization on the ballot, then elected officials should not overrule them with local bans.	68	74	58	70
When cities prohibit cannabis sales, people buy it from illegal sources. And illegal products can be dangerous, like the untested vaping products that were responsible for multiple deaths in California last year. The safer alternative is increasing access to legal cannabis, which is strictly regulated in California and would face additional safety testing under this measure.	67	73	58	68
Access to legal cannabis reduces crime because it discourages illegal sales and cuts out the role of drug dealers. It also allows law enforcement to focus its resources on serious dangers, rather than wasting time and money on arrests for cannabis possession.	63	69	50	62
Patients deserve every treatment option available to help curb the opioid crisis, and scientific journals say access to safe cannabis reduces the risk of addiction to opioids. Increasing the number of cannabis retailers will increase access for medical patients, especially in rural areas.	63	71	50	59

7. Fewer than half say any opposition message tested is convincing.

Each supporter message gets higher ratings than any opposition message, and no opposition message is convincing to more than 43% of voters.

In contrast to the majority support for voter decision-making on cannabis licensing, a message saying this measure would take away local communities’ control is convincing to only 43% of voters. That includes about 4 in 10 Democrats and Independents, and 55% of Republicans. It is convincing to fewer than half across region.

A message saying marijuana poses risks to kids is also convincing to fewer than half. This is consistent with our finding that most voters disagree that legal cannabis puts children in danger.

<i>Top Opponent Messages (% convincing)</i>	All voters	Dem	Rep	Ind
Prop 64 promised that local communities could decide whether they want marijuana retailers operating in their communities. But now that communities are making decisions politicians and big marijuana businesses don’t like, they want to change the rules and take away local control.	43	41	55	39
Marijuana poses real risks to kids, and studies show that it can be a gateway drug that leads to use of cocaine, meth, and heroin. Communities should have the option of protecting their kids from marijuana and keep away the marijuana gummy bears and lollypops that get more and more young people addicted to marijuana.	42	36	57	39
Proponents of Prop 64 promised that new tax revenues would pay the social costs of legal marijuana, but that tax money hasn’t come in. Now they’re promising that same money again if we expand legalization. All we know is that costs to society will increase, but we can’t trust that we’ll get the tax money they promise.	42	35	56	40

Methodology

David Binder Research conducted a survey of 1,000 likely November 2020 voters in California, from February 15th to 19th, 2020. Sample quotas and weights were used to obtain a sample with demographic characteristics representative of the expected November 2020 electorate. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Interviews were conducted by telephone and online, with respondents recruited using phone numbers and email addresses from the state voter file and from an online survey panel. The margin of error for the full sample is ±3.1% and larger for subgroups.