

Stockton Poll: 57% of New Jerseyans smell marijuana in public, but most are OK with it

For immediate release

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Galloway, N.J. — More than one year after the legalization of recreational marijuana, New Jersey residents say the smell of weed has permeated public spaces and even their homes, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

But few said they are bothered by the smell and most seem reluctant to criticize others for using legal weed, the findings show.

A majority of 57% of New Jersey adults reported smelling marijuana in public spaces often (28%) or sometimes (29%). One-third (32%) smell cannabis rarely, and only 9% said they have never smelled weed in public settings.

The scent of weed has infiltrated some residents' homes. About 29% have caught a whiff coming from a neighboring house or apartment often (14%) or sometimes (15%), while 21% said they rarely smell it at home and 49% said they never do.

While a majority (52%) of New Jersey adults are not bothered by the smell, one in five (19%) said it bothers them a great deal and 28% said it bothers them slightly. Nonusers were much more likely to be bothered by the smell, the poll found.

The poll of nearly 600 residents was released by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University and has a margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points.

When asked which right they believe to be more important — the right to use legal marijuana in your own home or the right to not have to smell marijuana being used by a neighbor — a plurality of residents (46%) said both rights are equally valid. Even 45% of those bothered a great deal by the smell saw both rights as equal.

Nearly one-third (31%) believe that the right to smoke legal weed in your own home should take precedence, while 16% said residents not having to smell it from neighbors is most important.

“Not much thought was given to the issue of the smell of marijuana becoming part of the public landscape in New Jersey,” said John Froonjian, director of the Hughes Center. “There are hardly any places to legally consume these products, so people are lighting up in parks, at festivals, in parking lots and on the street.”

The N.J. Cannabis Regulatory Commission has approved rules to allow cannabis consumption lounges, but few have opened. The rules call for the lounges to be connected to weed dispensary sites, and food and alcohol sales will be prohibited, potentially limiting their accessibility and appeal.

When it comes to cannabis use and driving, 39% said they know someone who has driven while high on marijuana and 56% said they do not. But fewer residents consider driving under the influence of weed to be extremely dangerous (51%) compared to 90% who said driving drunk is extremely perilous. Thirty-six percent said driving while high is somewhat dangerous, while 9% said the same of driving under the influence of alcohol.

“Driving while intoxicated by any substance is a bad idea that causes accidents. Responsible users must avoid driving while high on weed,” Froomjian said.

Though existing tests can detect the level of THC in a driver’s system, no test currently exists to determine if those levels are impacting their ability to drive.

According to the poll, 73% said it is either very important (46%) or somewhat important (27%) to them to have a roadside test that can determine a person’s level of impairment from marijuana. Nearly one in four said it is either not very important (10%) or not at all important (13%) to develop such a test.

A higher rate of Republicans viewed this as a pressing issue, with 62% saying that having such a test is very important to them versus 42% of Democrats and 45% of independents who say the same.

Answers on nearly every measure differed depending on whether a resident consumes any cannabis products. Those who have within the past year were less bothered by the smell of weed and more likely to advocate for residents’ right to smoke at home, said Research Associate Alyssa Maurice.

	Has consumed cannabis products in the past year	Has not consumed cannabis products in the past year
Bothered by the smell of marijuana	12%	54%
The right to use legal marijuana in your home supersedes a neighbor’s right to not have to smell it in theirs	55%	21%
Driving while high on marijuana is dangerous	75%	91%
Important to have a roadside test to determine a driver’s level of impairment from marijuana	52%	81%

[Click here for the full poll results.](#)

Stockton University offers an interdisciplinary minor in Cannabis Studies that gives students a foundation for understanding the cannabis industry. An online Cannabis Studies Certificate gives those interested in the industry the fundamental skills they need to be successful. Stockton’s Cannabis & Hemp Initiative researches hemp cultivation and develop lab testing.

Methodology

The poll of New Jersey adult residents was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy from September 16-26, 2023. Stockton University students texted cell phones with invitations to take the survey online and Opinion Services supplemented the dialing portion of the fieldwork, which consisted of cell and landline telephone calls. Overall, 92% of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 8% on landline phones. In terms of mode, 83% were reached via dialing and 17% were reached via text-to-web. A total of 592 New Jersey adult residents were interviewed. Both cell and landline samples consisted of random digit dialing (RDD) sample from MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2021 data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, education level, and sex. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets.

About the Hughes Center

The [William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy](#) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on [YouTube](#), and can be followed on Facebook [@StocktonHughesCenter](#), X [@hughescenter](#) and Instagram [@stockton_hughes_center](#).

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Stockton University

Stockton University is [ranked](#) among the top public universities in the nation. Our more than 9,000 students can choose to live and learn on the 1,600-acre wooded main campus in the Pinelands National Reserve in South Jersey and at our coastal residential campus just steps from the beach and Boardwalk in Atlantic City. The university offers more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs. Learn more at stockton.edu.

