

# 60% of Americans Support Legalization? Not Even Close

By Bridget Klotz  
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On Tuesday, February 7, the *Providence Journal* ran this headline: “3 out of 5 [60%] in R.I. Support Legalized Recreational Marijuana, Poll Says.” This story continued the pro-legalization narrative a Gallup poll began last October that concluded 60% of American adults over 18 want recreational marijuana legalized.

However, the results of the elections in November 2016 directly contradict those poll numbers. In fact, the defeat of legalized recreational marijuana in Arizona refutes the idea that so many Americans are eager to see this happen.

Not only do the election numbers NOT support legalization proponents' narrative, but they tell a shockingly different story: a very small percentage of people in any given state are legalizing for the vast majority who will live with the consequences.

California, with just over 39 million people, saw just under 8 million of its 19.2 million registered voters say yes to legalization, which totals a mere 41% approval. Factoring in adults over 18, the sample Gallup used in its poll, sees the number of adults approving legal pot in California plummet to 27%--less than half of the alleged 60% asserted by proponents.

Even more startling, this means that just under 8 million voters decided that 31 million other Californians will deal with the consequences of legalized marijuana. Twenty percent of the population made the choice for the other 80%.

Some 38% of Maine's registered voters approved legal pot, a full 22% below the mythical 60% number. When the over 18 population of Maine is considered, that approval drops to 35%. Maine saw 28% making the decision for the whole state.

Massachusetts also saw 38% of its registered voters approve, but, when the entire population over 18 is totaled, the approval number drops to 32%. Neither number approaches 60%. But the 26% of Massachusetts citizens that said yes made the choice for 74% who will live with it.

Nevada had 36% of registered voters say yes; adjusted for adults over 18, the support for legal pot drops to 27%, another state with less than half of the publicized 60%. Twenty-one percent of Nevada voters made the choice that 79% who didn't approve will endure.

Why the discrepancy? Legalization proponents know numbers breed numbers. If the public believes legalization is inevitable, people are more likely to throw their support behind it. However, the November election results show legalization is far from inevitable, and the tide could be turning.