

## Cannabis Countdown: Anxiety lingers over impact on impaired driving, organized crime and use among minors

Half say their province isn't ready as October 17<sup>th</sup> deadline for legalization approaches

**September 25, 2018** – With less than a month until the legalization of recreational marijuana, a new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians are three times as likely to say that measures in the law will fail rather than succeed (57% versus 17%) at preventing minors from accessing cannabis after October 17, and twice as likely to say they lack confidence in the ability of their community police to assess and punish those driving under the influence of marijuana (60% to 32%).

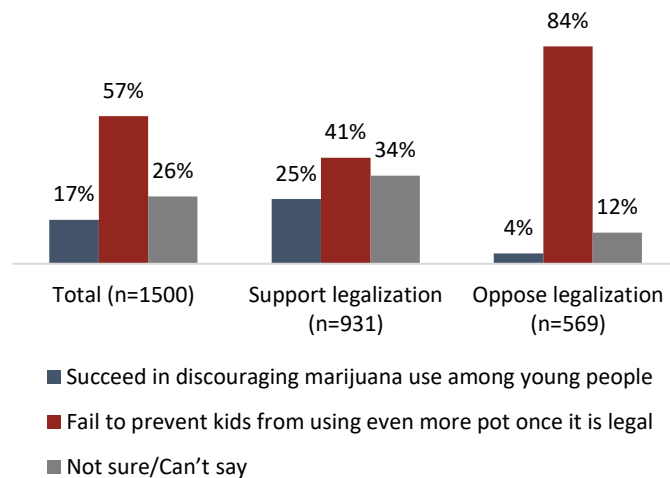
A majority (62 per cent) say they support legalization, but they are evenly divided about the ability of the government to weaken the earnings of organized crime in the near future. This, as [experts expect](#) legal pot to be more expensive and less available than illicit forms in the first years of implementation.

And while four-in-ten (40%) say they're ready to get on with a post-legalization Canada, half (51%) say they are worried that their province is yet ill-prepared for the deadline.

### More Key Findings:

- Even among supporters of legalization more Canadians say that the government will fail (41%) rather than succeed (25%) in its efforts to prevent kids from accessing marijuana. Those opposed are overwhelmingly negative on this question (84% to 4%)
- British Columbia is the only province where more residents say they are confident (48%) that their government is ready for legalization than not confident (40%). The second group outweighs the first in all other regions canvassed, with Ontario voicing the least confidence (36%).
- Six-in-ten Canadians (60%), and at least half across all ages and political affiliations, say they are not confident that their community police are ready to effectively manage these changes.

### Based on what you've heard so far, will legalization: By position on marijuana legalization



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Sept 4 – 7, 2018 among a representative randomized sample of 1500 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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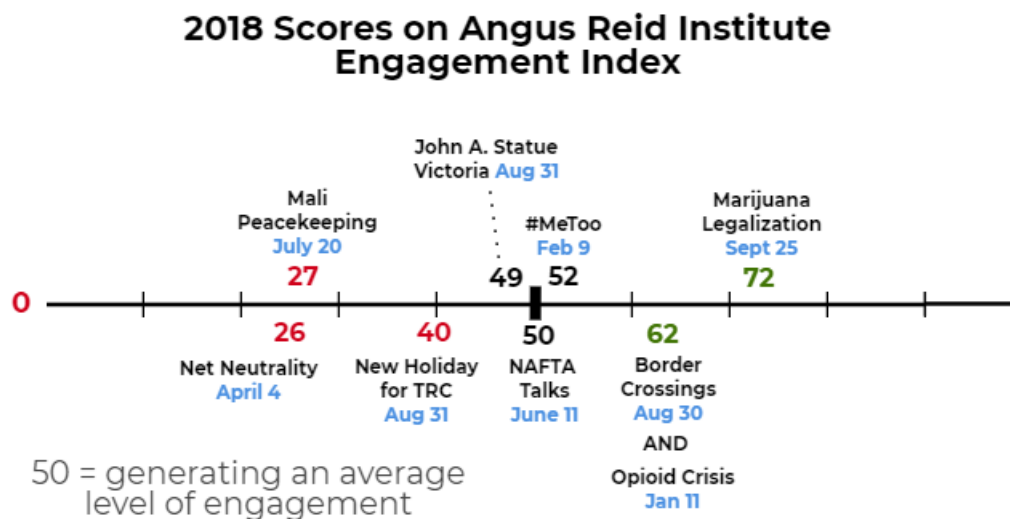
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**Part 1: Societal considerations ahead of legalization**

**Legalization generating attention**

According to the Angus Reid Institute's Awareness Index - which measures how strongly polling topics are registering with the public - marijuana legalization is one of the most watched policy issues in recent history. It scores a 72 on the index – 10 points higher than any other issue the institute has canvassed in 2018.



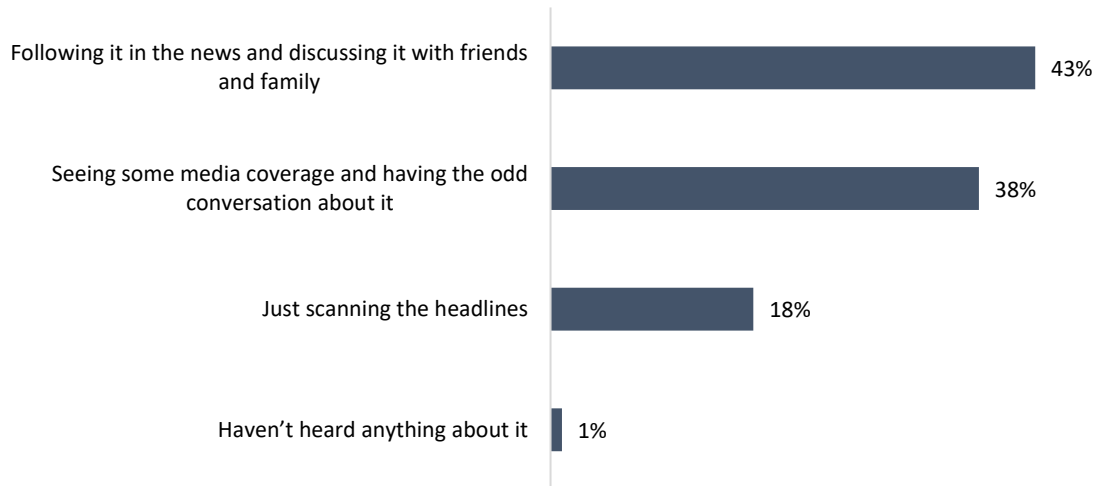
For more on the ARI Engagement Index, see notes on methodology at the end of this report.

Looking at this another way, the Angus Reid Institute finds that four-in-five Canadians (81%) are following the story with interest:

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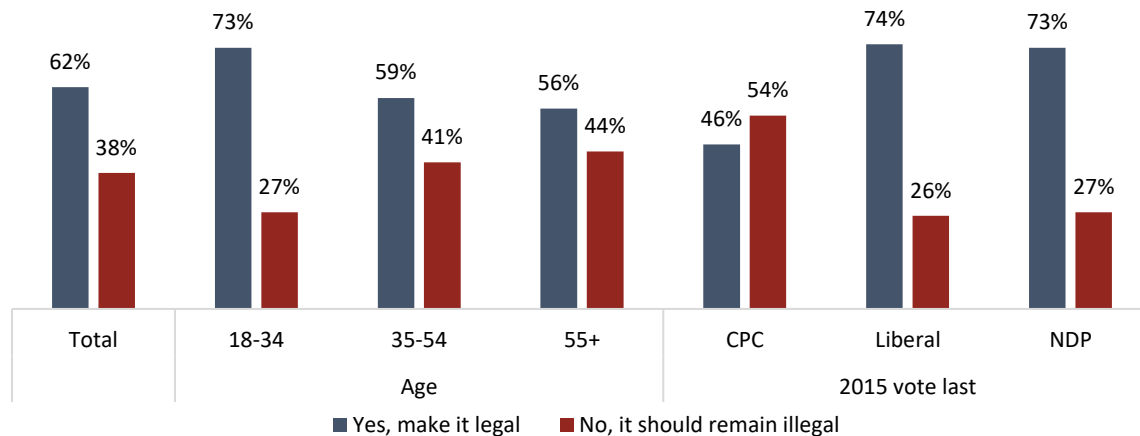
### Awareness of marijuana legalization news



### Kids and Marijuana

Support for marijuana legalization has topped six-in-ten over the past several years and remains stable in this most recent canvassing of public opinion on the matter. That said, the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians are a mix of enthusiasm about this policy change, and concern about the societal implications it may bring. As with many issues, age and political ideology are main opinion drivers:

### Opinion of marijuana legalization



While a majority of Canadians support the decision to legalize marijuana, they, along with public policy officials and health workers also voice concern about preventing children from accessing cannabis. Research is still developing, but studies suggest that marijuana [may disrupt brain development](#) when used frequently by adolescents. The Prime Minister noted the goal of preventing youth from accessing pot in a tweet after Bill C-45 passed the Senate.

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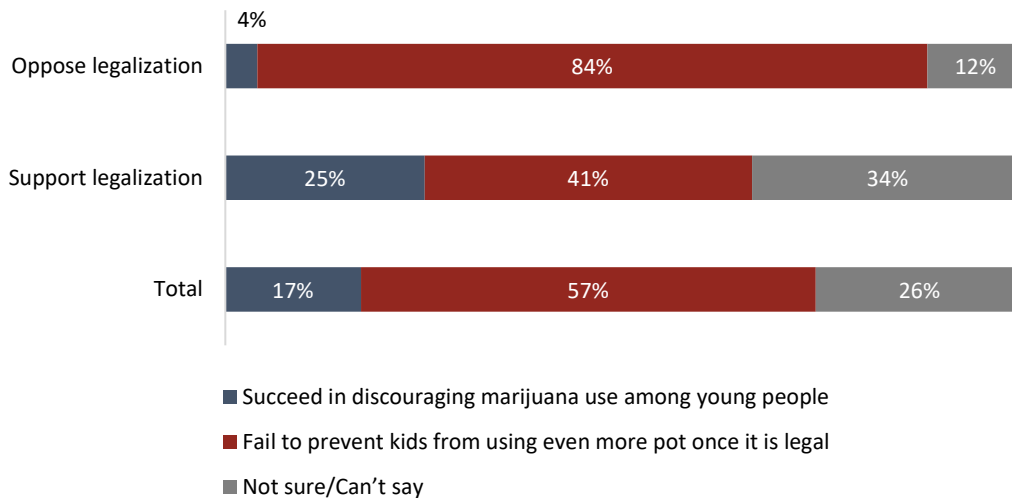


The legislation includes [the following measures](#), designed to prevent young people consuming pot:

- A prohibition against providing or selling cannabis to youth;
- The creation of a new offence of using a minor to commit an offence relating to the distribution, sale, import, export, or production of cannabis;
- Prohibiting the selling, packaging, and labelling of cannabis products that are considered appealing to youth;
- Prevent youth from being persuaded to use cannabis products by establishing many of the same advertising restrictions as exist for tobacco products;
- Prohibiting the sale of cannabis through a self-service display or vending machine; and
- Allowing the making of regulations that would require such things as childproof packaging and a universal THC symbol.

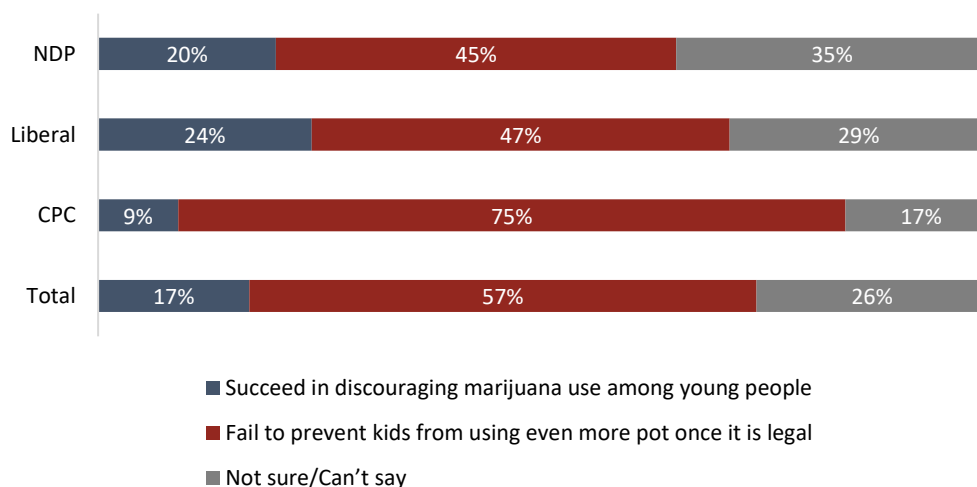
When asked, Canadians express doubt the government will be able to achieve its aims. Fewer than one-in-five (17%) say the legislation's measures will succeed in discouraging marijuana use among young people. Almost six-in-ten (57%) say measures will fail. Even among those who support legalization, the largest group (41%) lean toward pessimism:

**Based on what you've heard so far, will legalization:  
By position on marijuana legalization**



And while Justin Trudeau's promise of legalization was a key to his party's success at the ballot box among important voting segments in 2015, past Liberal party voters today are twice as likely to say these restricting access to children will ultimately fail. Past Conservative voters are even more pessimistic in their outlook on this question:

**Based on what you've heard so far, will legalization:  
By 2015 federal vote**

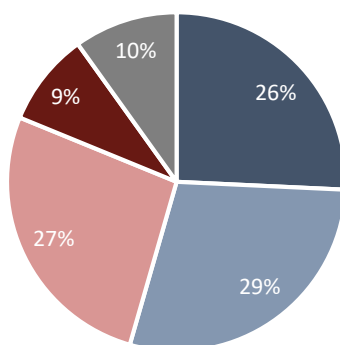


While Canadians are pessimistic about the ability of adults to keep pot out of the hands of minors, it is worth noting that they remain more worried about another substance that teens encounter to the chagrin of the parents – alcohol.

According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, [more than half of teenagers](#) engage in underage drinking. Now, caregivers have to contend with the prospect of underage cannabis consumption as well.

More than half of Canadians (55%) say they are more worried about kids engaging in drinking, rather than smoking pot. They are also three times as likely to *strongly agree* than *strongly disagree*:

**Agree or disagree: "I'm more worried about kids drinking alcohol than smoking pot"**



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Not sure/Can't say

**Confidence in police?**

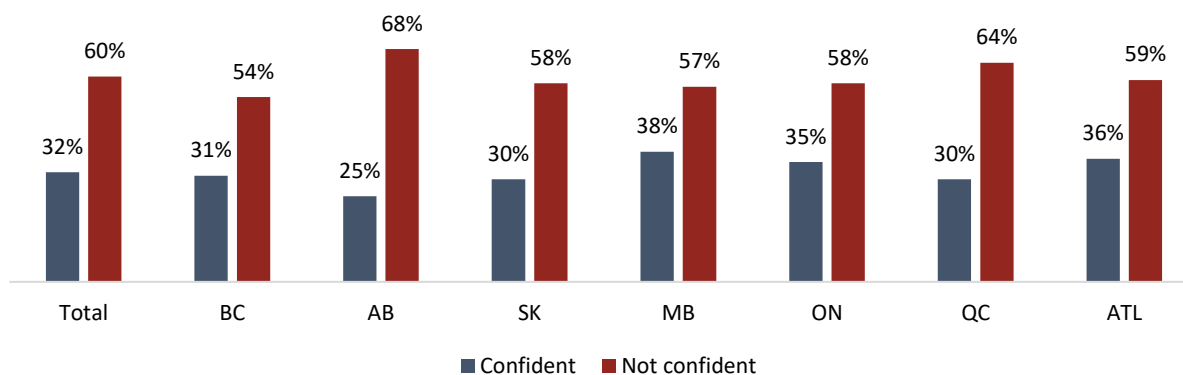
In addition to Bill C-45 – the legislation which allows for Canadians over the age of 18 to possess and use small amounts of cannabis for recreational purposes – the government passed legislation (Bill C-46) changing impaired driving laws to allow police to conduct [roadside intoxication tests](#) and sets legal limits for the [amount of marijuana](#) found in a driver's blood.

This has been a key concern for the government and for [critics of legalization](#). Indeed, officials from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police requested more time to prepare for these changes, and were one of the driving forces behind moving the timeline for legalization from July to October. A report from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation gives cause to this concern. From [2000 to 2014](#) the percentage of traffic related fatalities involving alcohol dropped from 35 per cent to 28 per cent. Meanwhile, the percentage of fatalities involving marijuana rose from 12 per cent to 19 per cent.

There have also been [concerns raised about the Dräger DrugTest 5000](#), a device set to be used by police in saliva testing. A [study](#) of the device in Norway found a propensity for incorrectly assessing intoxication, amid [other concerns](#) about the length of time the test takes to be administered, and the effect of Canada's cold climate on the Dräger.

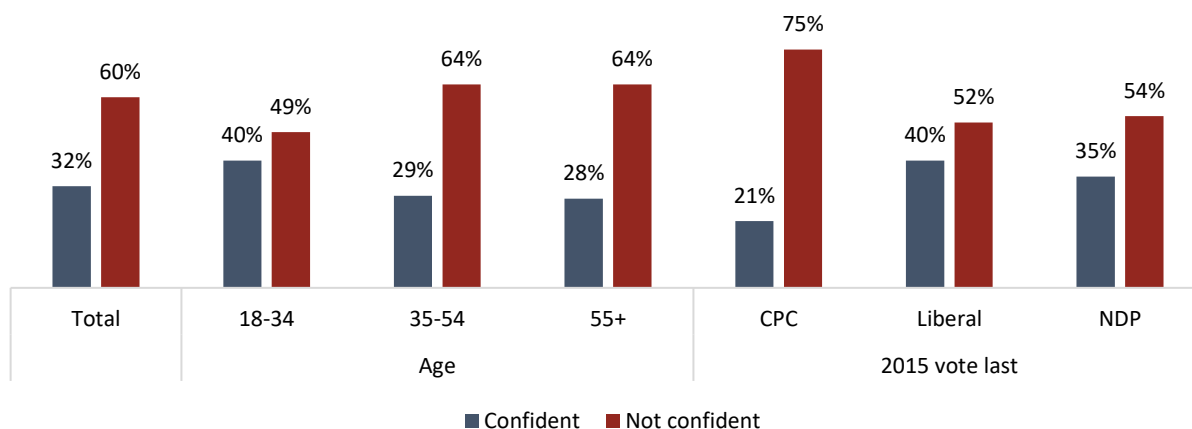
Now, with October 17<sup>th</sup> approaching, most Canadians worry police in their communities won't be prepared to spot those driving high:

**How confident are you that police in your community are prepared, and will be able to spot and enforce new penalties for drivers caught under the influence of marijuana:**



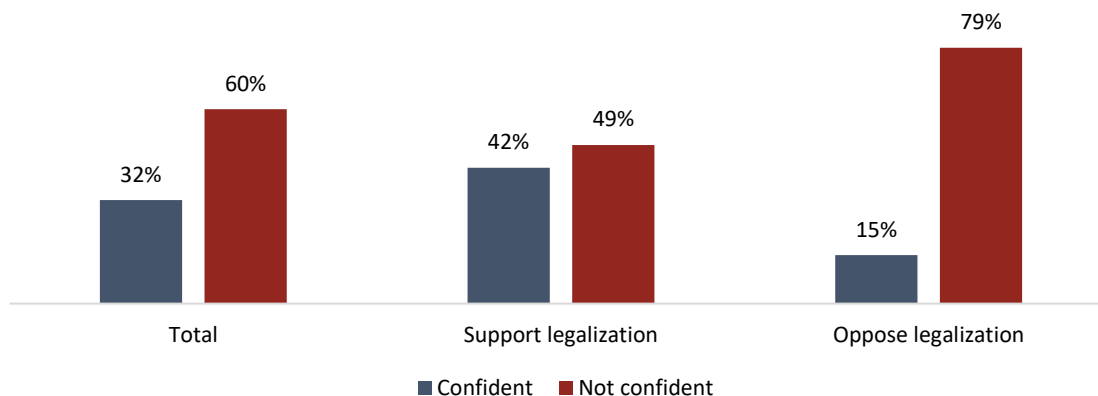
Age, political affiliation and support for legalization all play a significant role in determining confidence in their community police. Younger Canadians are more confident, though they are still more doubtful than not (40% to 49%), while past Conservatives are half as likely as Trudeau’s 2015 voters to feel confident:

**How confident are you that police in your community are prepared, and will be able to spot and enforce new penalties for drivers caught under the influence of marijuana:**



There is also a considerable disparity in opinion between those who support and oppose legalization. Four-in-ten supporters say they are confident, compared to half who say they are not. Those who are opposed to the government’s decision lean heavily toward doubt – four-in-five (79%) do so:

**Confidence in police preparation ahead of legalization of marijuana on October 17:**

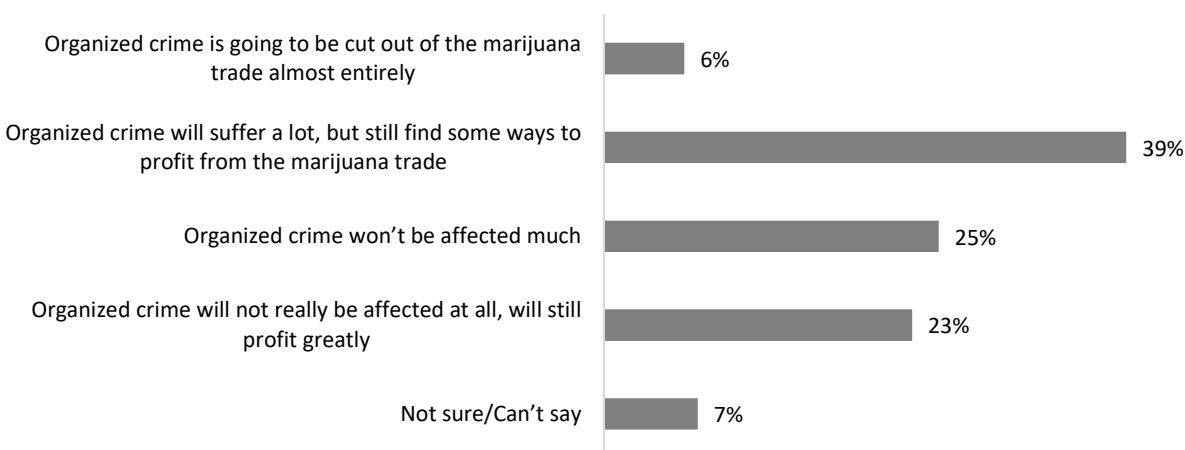


Another criminal consideration in legalizing marijuana is the place of the illicit trade. The government noted the [hindrance to organized crime](#) as a motivating factor in pursuing legalization. In the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime World Drug Report, released in 2017, Canada was ranked as having the world's [eighth-largest](#) illegal marijuana crop.

That said, observers have also noted that major crime organizations do not rely heavily on marijuana profits, due to their approach of allowing lower level players to traffic the drug, instead focusing on [higher margin endeavours](#).

Canadians are divided about how organized crime will be affected post-legalization. Very few say gangsters will be removed from the equation entirely, while the largest group, four-in-ten (39%) say they expect a significant hinderance to the big players. However, one-in-four (23%) say they don't expect any impact at all:

**Personally, how effective do you feel legalization will be at cutting organized crime out of the marijuana trade. Do: you think**



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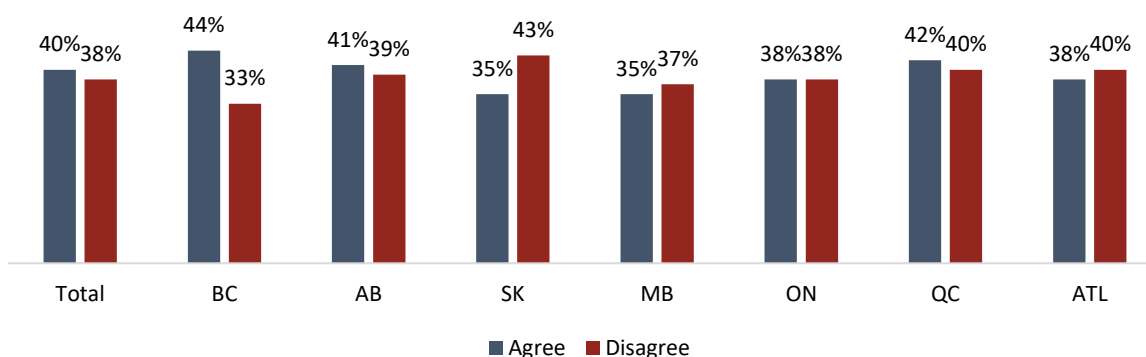


### Perception over economic benefits is mixed

With marijuana legalized, there is undoubtedly money to be made. Much of the distribution of these funds depends on the mode of sale a province chooses, private or public, and how effectively the market functions in the first years of operation. While estimates vary, the industry will immediately be worth billions in the Canadian economy.

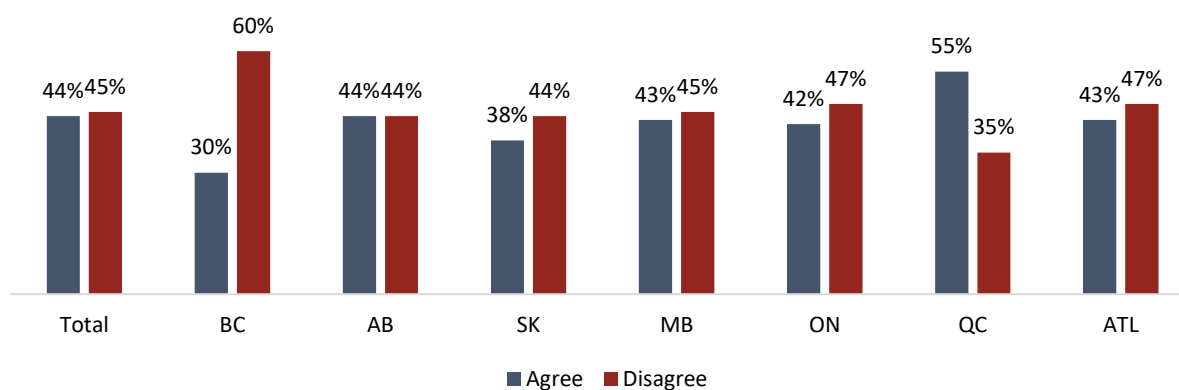
Canadians, for their part, are mixed about how their communities will be affected at an economic level. Across each of the regions canvassed, most are divided:

Agree or disagree: "My community is going to be positively affected economically by legalization"



Overall, Canadians are equally as likely to say that marijuana legalization will do more harm than good in their community, though responses in Quebec and B.C. are notable. British Columbians are twice as likely to disagree, leading them to perceive more benefit than risk for legalization. Quebec, meanwhile, is the only province where a significantly higher number of respondents agree that more harm will be done than good, mirroring their government's conservative approach to legalization:

Agree or disagree: "Marijuana legalization will do more harm than good in my community"

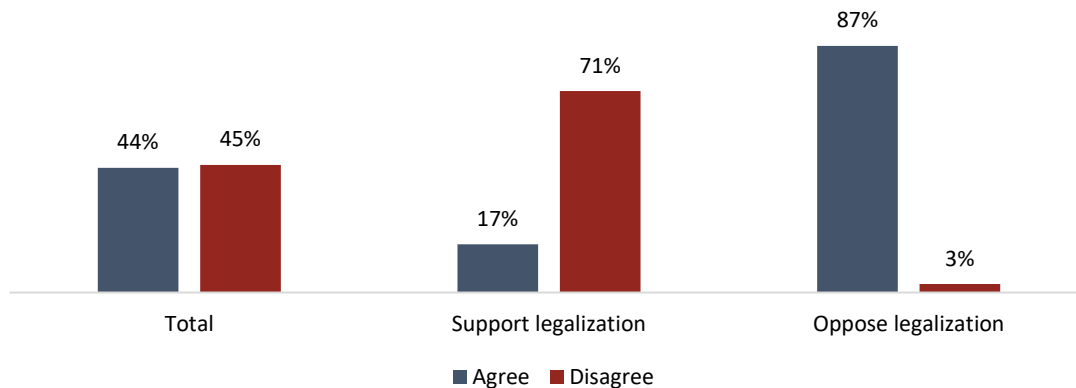


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While age and political affiliation are factors in disagreements on this statement ([see comprehensive tables](#)), almost all those who say they oppose legalization also say it will do more harm and good, while supporters are four times as likely to say that it will do more good than harm:

**Agree or disagree: "Marijuana legalization will do more harm than good in my community"**



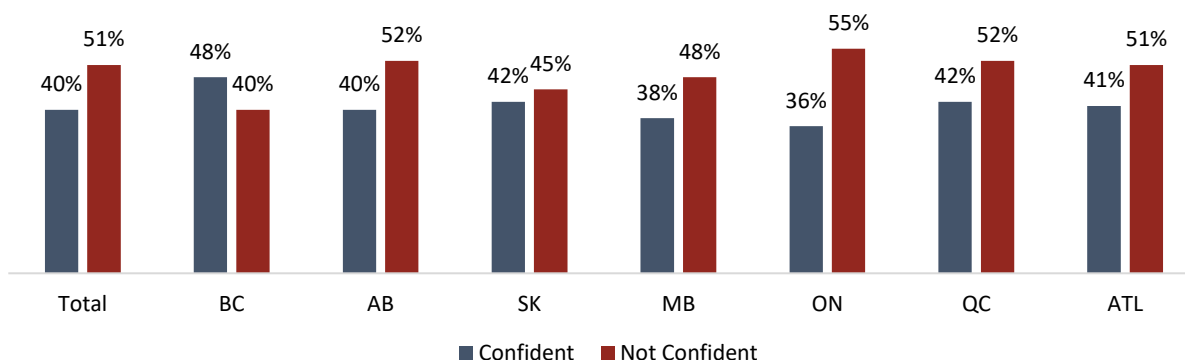
**Part 2: Is Canada prepared?**

When legalization day arrives on October 17, the situation on the ground in municipalities is unlikely to be uniform or consistent. A “[patchwork](#)” of laws and regulations means that only some will have public dispensaries up and running on day one, ready to serve consumers.

In B.C. [only one licensed marijuana store](#), located in Kamloops, will be ready to go. In Ontario, after the new Progressive Conservative government reversed course on the former Liberal government’s planned model of public sale, private businesses will not be ready in a brick and mortar capacity [until next April](#). Consumers will have to buy online until then.

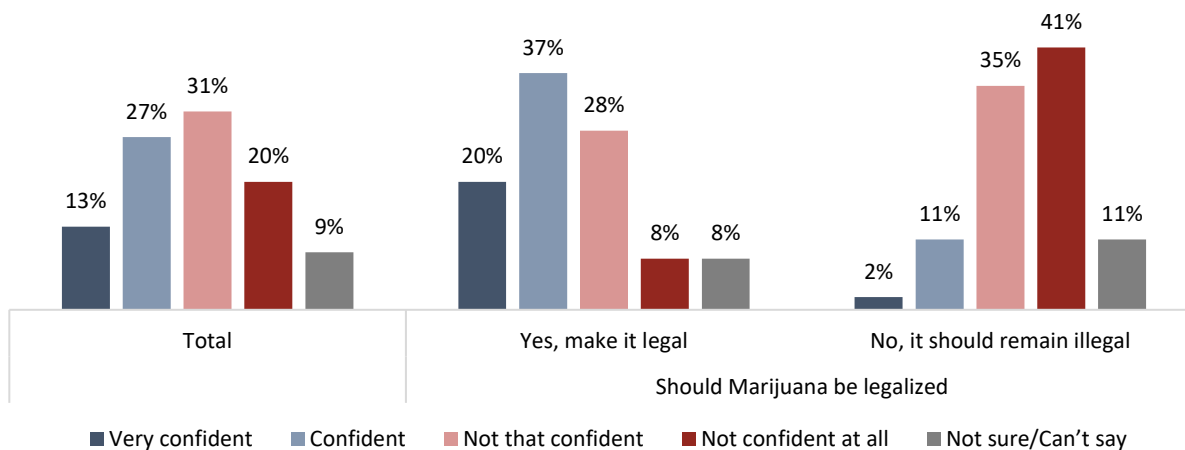
Perception in the public reflects some of this uncertainty, particularly in in Ontario. Residents in this province voice the least confidence in their provincial government’s readiness for deadline day. Meanwhile, despite the lag in the production set to come from physical stores, B.C. residents, perhaps more familiar with the industry given the [billion dollar industry](#) that already exists on the west coast, are most confident that their province has things under control:

**How confident would you say you are in your province's ability to have a plan in place by October 17, 2018 to regulate the sale and distribution of marijuana?**



Confidence is largely dependent on how a person feels about marijuana legalization. More than half of supporters (57%) say they have confidence, with one-in-five (20%) saying they are very confident. That said, among those opposed, three-quarters (76%) say they are not confident, with two-in-five (41%) saying they have no confidence at all:

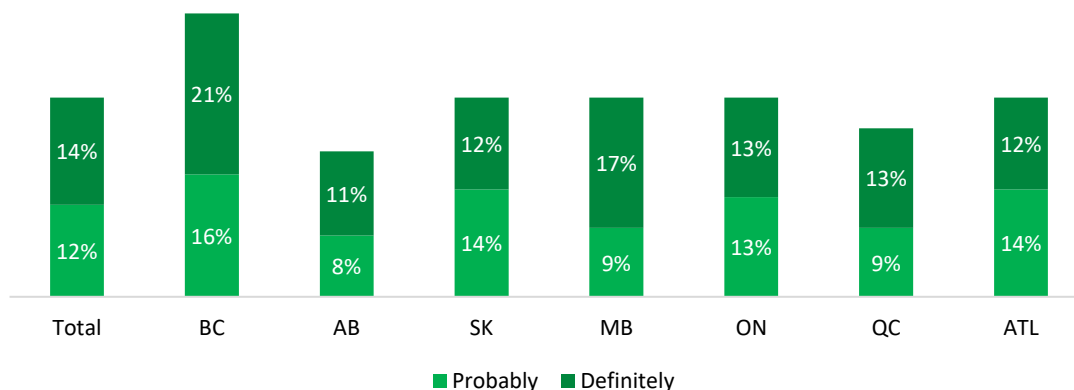
**How confident would you say you are in your province's ability to have a plan in place by October 17, 2018 to regulate the sale and distribution of marijuana?**



**Part 3: How many will consume cannabis?**

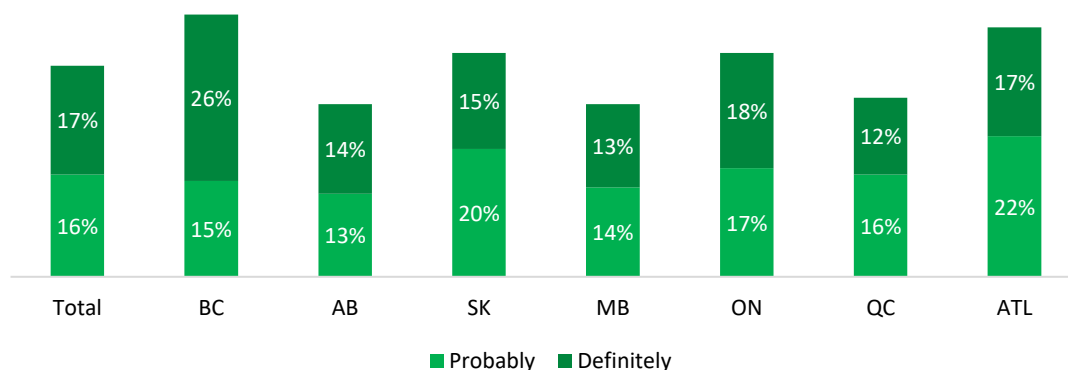
When cannabis is legal for recreational use, British Columbia residents are significantly more likely than those in other areas of the country to say they will consume the substance itself. In that province, more than three-in-ten (37%) say that they will probably or definitely use it, compared to a national average of one-in-four (26%). Albertans are much less likely to say that they are going to use:

**Likelihood of using cannabis for recreational purposes after October 17:**



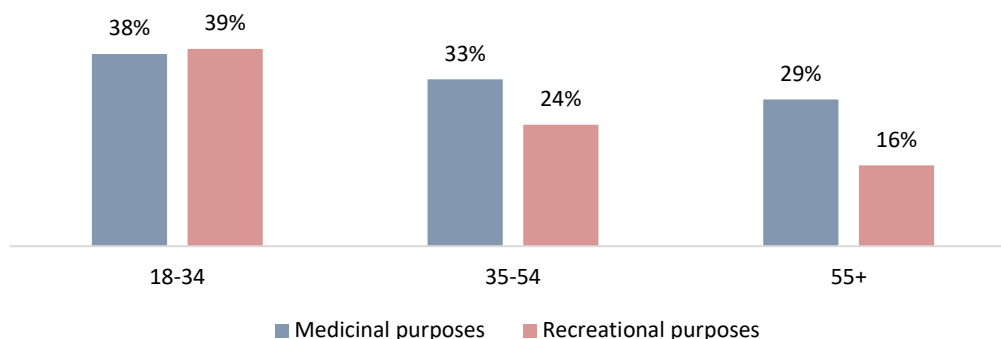
Notable in Canadian responses to this question is the difference between recreational and medicinal use. This data suggests that while marijuana will be available for recreational use, Canadians are more likely to use products for medicinal purposes. The total who say they will use cannabis for medicinal purposes jumps to 33 per cent, with four regions breaching the three-in-ten mark on this aspect of use:

**Likelihood of using cannabis for medicinal purposes after October 17:**



Perhaps most interesting on this question are the responses from Canadians over the age of 55. While younger Canadians are equally likely to use cannabis for medicinal and recreational purposes, older Canadians are evidently much more interested in the therapeutic potential of the substance. This group is almost twice as likely to say they will use it for medicinal reasons:

**Percentage who say they will probably or definitely use marijuana for each purpose:**



**Notes on Methodology**

Since early 2015, the Angus Reid Institute has been asking Canadians a standardized question about how closely they are following the topics of ARI polls. To facilitate easy comparisons across disparate topics, ARI researchers have developed an Engagement Index based on respondents’ answers.

For each issue, respondents are asked to say whether they are “following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family,” “seeing some media coverage and having the odd conversation,” “just scanning the headlines,” or not seeing or hearing anything about the issue.

The index is based on the average response to this question over the years, with greater weight given to the highest level of engagement on the scale, and lesser weight given to the “having the odd conversation” and “just scanning headlines” responses. An “average” issue scores a 50 on the index, with scores higher than 50 representing above-average engagement and scores lower than 50 representing below-average engagement.

On this particular topic of marijuana legalization, more than four-in-ten (43%) say they are “following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family.” Another 38 per cent are “seeing some media coverage and having the odd conversation.” One-in-five (18%) are “just scanning the headlines,” and just 1 per cent haven’t seen or heard anything about this story.

Responses on this topic equate to a score of 72 on the ARI Engagement Index, which is the highest score recorded so far in 2018, and tied for the fifth-highest score of all time.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

**For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here.](#)**  
**For detailed results by support/oppose legalization [click here.](#)**

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