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Uruguayans skeptical as government takes control of marijuana market

by Jim Patterson (<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/author/patterjm/>) | Posted on Tuesday, Mar. 31, 2015 — 11:43 AM

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As Uruguay embarks in a historic direction to control and regulate its marijuana industry, nearly six out of 10 of its citizens disagree with the policy according to the [Latin American Opinion Project \(LAPOP\)](#)

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php> at Vanderbilt University.

Law 19.172, passed in December 2013, made the small Latin American country the first in the world to take over all activities related to the marijuana market, including growing, distributing and selling cannabis and all its byproducts. While the measure has earned Uruguay kudos in some quarters for creativity, parts of law 19.172 violate treaties that comprise the International Drug Control Regime.

In addition, according to 2014 data from the AmericasBarometer survey in Uruguay, [much of the Uruguayan](#)

public is against the idea (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo20en.pdf>) and believes marijuana is a gateway drug and harmful to health ([click here for the report in Spanish](#))

(<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo20es.pdf>).

Nearly six in 10 (59.9 percent) Uruguayans surveyed said they “strongly disagreed” (33.6 percent) or “disagreed” (26.3 percent) with the marijuana regulation law. A total of 33.5 percent “strongly agreed” (9.7 percent) or “agreed” (23.8 percent).

Scored on a scale of 0-100 where 0 represents that the respondent does not agree “at all” and 100 means the respondent agrees “a lot,” the statement “marijuana is harmful to health” scored 71.8 and “marijuana is a gateway drug” scored 71.7.

The statement “marijuana users are a threat to society” scored 48.5.

“Beliefs about and experiences with marijuana are closely related to rates of approval of the new law,” write the three authors of the report, Maria Fernanda Boidi, Rosario Queirolo and José Miguel Cruz.

“Among those who do not believe marijuana is a gateway drug, 72 percent approve of the law. At the other end, only 13 percent of those who agree ‘a lot’ with the idea that marijuana is a gateway drug support the law.”



(<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/files/MariaFernandaBoidi.jpg>)

Maria Fernanda Boidi (LAPOP)

Familiarity with the drug also softened resistance to the law, the surveyors found.

“A quarter (25.7 percent) of those who have never tried marijuana support the law, while 62.7 percent of those who tried at least once in their lifetime approve it,” the authors write. “Similarly, 22.2 percent of the Uruguayans who do not know anyone who uses marijuana approve of the law, while approval more than doubles among those who do know someone who uses it (46.4 percent).”

LAPOP develops, implements and analyzes the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. Since the 1970s, LAPOP has gathered a treasure trove of opinion data containing political perspectives from Latin American and Caribbean citizens. LAPOP data and reports are available to interested researchers at the [LAPOP website](#).

(<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php>)

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