Texas Legislative Issues 2025

Gambling & Marijuana Legalization

Hobby School of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF **HOUSTON**

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The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texans age 18 and older to assess their preferences and opinions about legislation being considered by the Texas Legislature during the 2025 regular session along with other salient political issues. The survey was fielded between January 13-21 2025, in English and Spanish, via a YouGov panel of Texas adults. Representative of the Texas adult population, the analysis population of 1,200, with a margin of error of +/- 2.83%, was matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity and education.

The Texas Legislative Issues 2025 study includes six reports. The first report examined Texans' top priorities for using the state's $24 billion dollar budget surplus and their positions on Education Savings Account (ESA) and sales tax exemption legislation. The second report focused on Texans' attitudes on immigration and border security. This report examines the opinions of Texans on legislation which would legalize different forms of gambling and marijuana use in Texas. The remaining three reports will analyze Texans' opinions on proposed legislation in the policy areas of abortion, elections and gun control, as well as assess their attitudes on the 2024 presidential election and the 2026 Republican U.S. Senate primary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

73% of Texans support legalizing the construction and operation of destination resort casinos in Texas, including 74% of Democrats and 72% of Republicans.

60% of Texans support legalizing online sports betting in Texas, including 64% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans.

56% of Texans support legalizing the operation of sportsbooks in the stadiums and arenas of Texas professional sports teams, including 59% of Democrats and 55% of Republicans.

Significantly more Texans support the legalization of destination resort casinos (73%) than support the legalization of online sports betting (60%) and of sportsbooks at professional sports venues (56%).

79% of Texans support legislation that would legalize the sale and use of marijuana in Texas for a wide range of medical purposes with a doctor's prescription, including 86% of Democrats and 75% of Republicans.

69% of Texans support legislation that would decriminalize the possession of marijuana for personal use in Texas by those 21 and older (making the penalty similar to a ticket for a minor traffic violation), including 79% of Democrats and 61% of Republicans.

62% of Texans support legislation that would legalize the sale and use of marijuana for recreational purposes in Texas by those 21 and older, including 71% of Democrats and 53% of Republicans.

47% of Republicans oppose legislation that would legalize recreational marijuana in Texas, including 31% who strongly oppose the legislation.

56% of Born-Again Protestants oppose legislation that would legalize recreational marijuana in Texas, including 39% who strongly oppose the legislation.

55% of Texans support a proposed legislative ban on the sale of consumable THC in Texas (which currently is unregulated) by retail outlets that are presently taking advantage of a loophole in a 2019 agricultural law designed to boost the state's industrial hemp industry.

61% of Republicans support the ban on the sale of consumable THC compared to 48% of Democrats.

70% of the members of Generation Z support the ban on the sale of consumable THC compared to 46% of the members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort and 49% of Generation X.

SURVEY POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

White Texans account for 45% of this survey population, Latino Texans for 36%, Black Texans for 12%, and others for 7%. Women represent 51% of this population, and men 49%. Regarding generations, 26% of this population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 26% to Generation X (Gen-X) (1965-1980), 29% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation, and 19% to Generation Z (Gen-Z) (1997-2012). The highest level of educational attainment of 32% of the population is a four-year college degree or a post-graduate degree, of 28% of the population is a two-year college degree or some college, and of 40% of the population is a high school degree or less. The annual household income of 41% of the population is less than $50,000, that of 33% is between $50,000 and $100,000, and that of 26% of the population is greater than $100,000 (these numbers do not include the 12% of the population who declined to report their family income). Republicans account for 44% of this population, Democrats for 36% and Independents for 17%, with 3% unsure of their partisan identification.

SUPPORT FOR & OPPOSITION TO PROPOSALS TO LEGALIZE THREE FORMS OF GAMBLING IN TEXAS

The survey respondents were provided with background on the current status of gambling in Texas, and then asked, in three separate questions, whether they supported or opposed legislative proposals to legalize three forms of gambling in Texas. The survey language used was as follows:

Currently, the principal forms of legal gambling in Texas include the Texas Lottery, charitable bingo, horse and greyhound racing, and three small casinos on tribal land offering only electronic bingo. The Texas Legislature is discussing policy proposals on gambling in Texas as a potential way to raise revenue to help pay for K-12 public education and property tax relief.
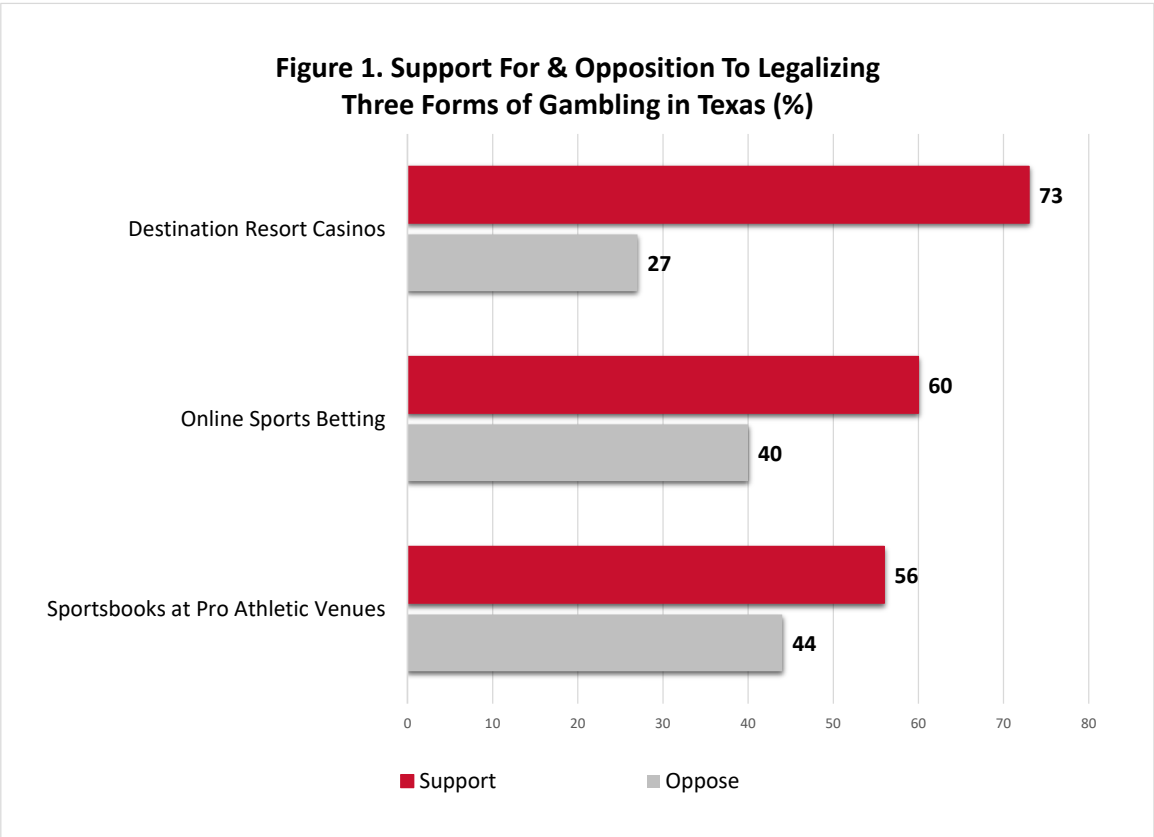
> *1. Do you support or oppose legislation which would allow for the construction and operation of either one or two Destination Resort Casinos in each of the following metro areas: Austin (1), Corpus Christi (1), Dallas-Fort Worth (2), Houston (2), San Antonio (1), the Rio Grande Valley (1)?*
>
> *2. Do you support or oppose legislation which would legalize online sports gambling in Texas?*
>
> *3. Do you support or oppose legislation which would authorize the operation of sportsbooks (on-site in-person sports betting sites) in the stadiums and arenas of professional sports teams in Texas?*

Table 1 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose the legislative proposals to legalize the three different forms of gambling in Texas, while Figure 1 summarizes the proportion of Texans supporting (strongly or somewhat) and opposing (strongly or somewhat) the legalization of each one of the forms of gambling.

Table 1. Support For & Opposition To Legalizing Three Forms of Gambling in Texas (%)

Form of Gambling	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Destination Resort Casinos	34	39	15	12
Online Sports Betting	25	35	21	19
Sportsbooks at Pro Athletic Venues	18	38	24	20

**Figure 1. Support For & Opposition To Legalizing
Three Forms of Gambling in Texas (%)**

Almost three out of four (73%) Texans support (34% strongly) legalizing the construction and operation of destination resort casinos in Texas, a proportion that is significantly greater than the proportion supporting the legalization of online sports betting (60%, 25% strongly) and the legalization of the operation of sportsbooks in the stadiums and arenas of professional sports teams in the state (56%, 18% strongly).

Table 2 provides the proportion of Texans who support legalizing each of the three forms of gambling, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, religion, and partisanship.

Table 2. Support for Legalizing Three Forms of Gambling in Texas Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Destination Resort Casinos	Online Sports Betting	Sportsbooks at Pro Athletic Venues
Overall		73	60	56
Gender	Women	72	57	54
	Men	75	62	57
Ethnciity/Race	White	73	59	54
	Latino	77	65	60
	Black	74	56	56
Generation	Silent/Boomer	65	46	35
	Generation X	77	67	63
	Millennial	79	65	67
	Generation Z	74	61	59
Education	High School	76	61	57
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	73	60	53
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	70	57	57
Income	Lower Income	73	58	57
	Middle Income	76	63	56
	Higher Income	73	63	59
Religion	Born-Again Protestant	62	46	43
	Other Protestant	78	55	52
	Roman Catholic	75	72	58
	Nonreligious	72	59	55
Partisanship	Democratic	74	64	59
	Independent	74	51	47
	Republican	72	59	55

With two minor exceptions, there are not any noteworthy differences in sub-group support for legalizing destination resort casinos in Texas, with little in the way of gender, ethnic/racial, education, income, or partisan differences. For instance, the legalization of destination resort casinos is supported by 74% of Democrats, 74% of Independents and 72% of Republicans.

Noteworthy sub-group differences in support for the legalization of destination resort casinos revolve around generation and religion. Members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (65%) are significantly less likely to support the legalization of destination resort casinos than are Millennials (79%), and Born-Again Protestants (62%) are significantly less likely than other Protestants (78%) and Roman Catholics (75%) to favor the establishment of destination resort casinos. It is important to note however, that among even the sub-group which is least likely to support this legislation (Born-Again Protestants), more than three-fifths back the legislation, compared to two-fifths who are opposed.

Notable sub-group differences in support for the legalization of online sports gambling also revolve around generation and religion, with salient gender, ethnic/racial, education, income and partisan differences absent. Members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (46%) are significantly less likely to support online sports gambling than are members of all of the three other generational groups, with the gap separating the three latter generational groups from their elders ranging from a high of 21 percentage points for Generation X (67%) to a low of 15 percentage points for Generation Z (61%). Born-Again Protestants (46%) are significantly less likely than nonreligious Texans (59%), and, especially, Roman Catholics (72%), to support the legalization of online sports betting in Texas.

Finally, sub-group differences in support for the legalization of sportsbooks at professional sports venues also revolve around generation and religion. Members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (35%) are much less likely to support allowing professional sports teams in Texas to open and operate sportsbooks in their stadiums/arenas than are members of all of the three other generational groups, with the gap separating these latter three groups from their elders ranging from a high of 32 percentage points for Millennials (67%) to a low of 24 percentage points for Gen-Z (59%). Born-Again Protestants (43%) are significantly less likely than Roman Catholics (58%) to support the legalization of sportsbooks at the stadiums and arenas of Texas's professional sports teams.

PREFERENCES & OPINIONS ON MARIJUANA-RELATED POLICY LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The survey respondents were provided with background information on Texas law governing the sale and use of marijuana in Texas and then asked two questions. First, they were asked whether they support or oppose three different marijuana-related legislative proposals. Then, they received a follow-up question asking which one of the three-different options came closest to their preferred policy for Texas, or if they preferred to maintain the current Texas policy vis-à-vis marijuana. The language used was as follows:

Currently it is a crime (felony or misdemeanor) in Texas to cultivate, sell or possess marijuana/cannabis. For a small number of patients low THC oil preparations, but not marijuana or other cannabis-based products, are legal with a prescription.

1. The Texas Legislature will consider several pieces of proposed legislation related to marijuana/cannabis. Do you support or oppose legislation which would:

- *Legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana for personal consumption by those 21 and older.*

- *Decriminalize the possession of marijuana so that the penalty for possession of marijuana for personal consumption by those 21 and older would be treated like a minor traffic violation.*

- *Legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana for a wide range of medical purposes with a doctor's prescription.*

2. Independent of your responses to the prior question, which of the following policies comes closest to your preferred policy for the regulation and use of marijuana/cannabis in Texas.
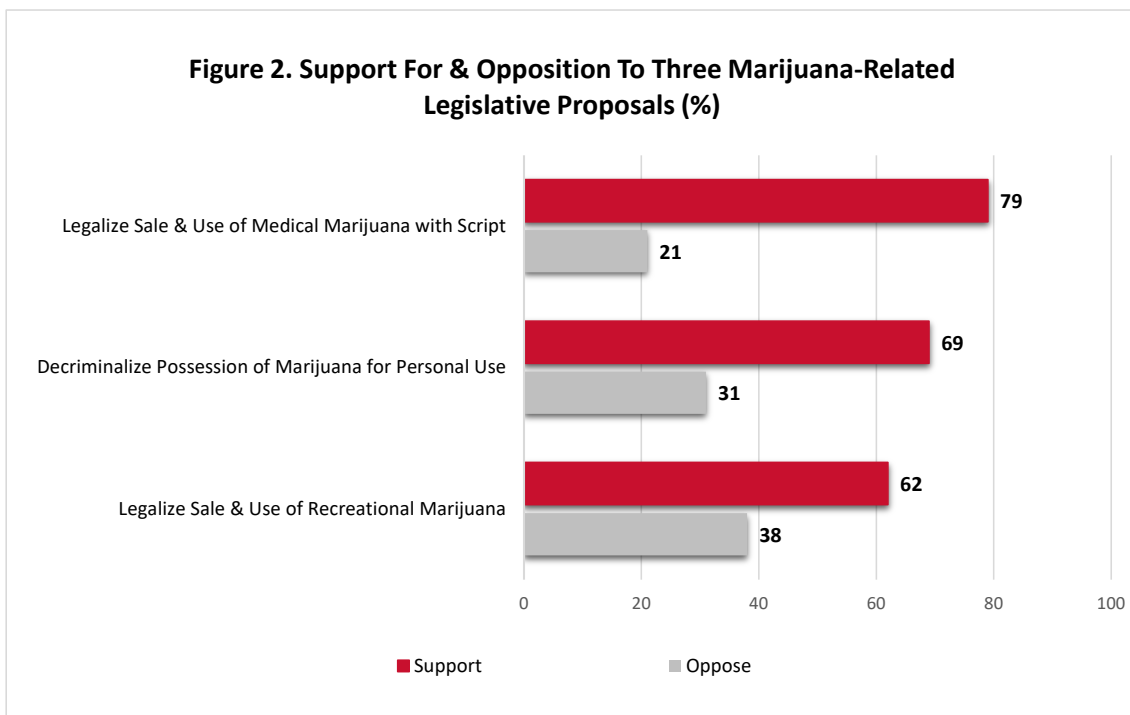
Note: the four policies were randomly rotated.

- *Legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana for personal consumption by those 21 and older.*

- *Decriminalize the possession of marijuana so that the penalty for possession of marijuana for personal consumption by those 21 and older would be treated like a minor traffic violation.*

- *Legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana for a wide range of medical purposes with a doctor's prescription.*

- *Maintain the current Texas policy of the cultivation, sale and use of marijuana being a felony or misdemeanor.*

Table 3 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose the three marijuana-related legislative proposals, while Figure 2 summarizes the proportion of Texans supporting (strongly or somewhat) and opposing (strongly or somewhat) each one of the three proposals.

Table 3. Support For Three Marijuana-Related Legislative Proposals (%)

Policy Proposal	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Legalize Sale & Use of Medical Marijuana with Script	45	34	10	11
Decriminalize Possession of Marijuana for Personal Use	39	30	14	17
Legalize Sale & Use of Recreational Marijuana	35	27	15	23

Figure 2. Support For & Opposition To Three Marijuana-Related Legislative Proposals (%)

More than three-quarters (79%) of Texans support legislation that would legalize the sale and use of medical marijuana (with a doctor's prescription) in Texas, with 45% strongly supporting this policy proposal. More than two-thirds (69%) of Texans support the decriminalization of the possession of marijuana by those age 21 and older in Texas (39% strongly), while more than three-fifths (62%) of Texans support the legalization of the sale and use of marijuana for personal consumption in Texas by those 21 and older (35% strongly). A little less than two-fifths (38%) of Texans oppose the legalization of recreational marijuana in Texas, with a little more than one-fifth (22%) strongly opposing this legislation.

Table 4 provides the proportion of Texans who support each one of the three marijuana-related legislative proposals, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, religion, and partisanship.

Table 4. Support for Three Marijuana-Related Legislative Proposals Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Legalize Medical Marijuana	Decriminalize Possession of Marijuana	Legalize Sale & Use of Marijuana
Overall		79	69	62
Gender	Women	77	67	62
	Men	80	70	62
Ethnicity/Race	White	77	66	59
	Latino	83	75	70
	Black	79	65	61
Generation	Silent/Boomer	78	66	58
	Generation X	78	71	66
	Millennial	78	69	63
	Generation Z	81	68	60
Education	High School	82	76	67
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	79	70	64
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	75	59	54
Income	Lower Income	83	74	65
	Middle Income	77	73	64
	Higher Income	79	60	58
Religion	Born-Again Protestant	70	54	44
	Other Protestant	81	66	60
	Roman Catholic	78	69	59
	Nonreligious	88	81	81
Partisanship	Democratic	86	79	71
	Independent	73	67	63
	Republican	75	61	53

Overall, there is a strong consensus among Texans, with only two noteworthy socio-demographic sub-group differences, in support of legalizing medical marijuana in Texas. The two sub-group differences are tied to religion and partisanship. Nonreligious Texans (88%) are significantly more likely than Born-Again Protestants (70%) to support the passage of medical marijuana legislation and 86% of Democrats, compared to 75% of Republicans, favor this policy, with, nevertheless, three out of four Republicans supporting a policy which would allow Texans to legally purchase and use marijuana (with a doctor's prescription) to treat a medical condition.

While there are no noteworthy gender, ethnic/racial or generational differences in support of the decriminalization of the possession of marijuana in Texas, there are salient sub-group differences revolving around education, income, religion, and partisanship. Texans whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school degree or less (76%) are significantly more likely than Texans with a four-year college or advanced degree (59%) to favor the passage of decriminalization legislation. Lower (74%) and middle (73%) Income Texans are also significantly more likely than higher income

(60%) Texans to support the decriminalization of marijuana for personal use. Nonreligious Texans (81%) and Roman Catholics (69%) are significantly more likely than Born-Again Protestants (54%) to support decriminalization, just as Democrats (79%) are significantly more likely than Republicans (61%) to support this legislation, with, nevertheless, more than three-fifths of Republicans in favor of this reform.

While there are not any noteworthy gender, generational or income differences in support for the legalization of recreational marijuana in Texas, there are salient sub-group differences revolving around ethnicity/race, education, income, religion and partisanship. Latino Texans (70%) are significantly more likely than white Texans (59%) to support the legalization of recreational marijuana in Texas. Similarly, Texans whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school degree (67%) are significantly more likely than Texans with a four-year college or advanced degree (54%) to want to see Texas legalize the sale and personal use of marijuana. More than four out of five (81%) nonreligious Texans support legislation which would make it legal to grow, sell and possess marijuana for personal use in Texas, as do 59% of Roman Catholics, compared to 44% of Born-Again Protestants. And, while more than seven in ten Democrats (71%) favor the legalization of recreational marijuana in Texas, the same is only true for a little more than one-half of Republicans (53%), 31% of whom strongly oppose this legalization.

After having provided their stand-alone evaluations of these three policy proposals, Texans were asked which one of the three policies was closest to their own personal preference, with a fourth option of maintaining the current Texas policies and regulations governing marijuana use in the Lone Star State. When forced to pick one of the four policy options (see Figure 3), 32% of Texans opted for the legalization of recreational marijuana, 29% for the legalization of medical marijuana and 17% for the decriminalization of the possession of marijuana, with 22% preferring the maintenance of the status quo in Texas under which the sale and use of marijuana is illegal.

Figure 3. Preference Among Four Options for Marijuana Policy in Texas (%)

Legend:
- Legalize Sale & Use of Recreational Marijuana
- Decriminalize Possession of Marijuana for Personal Use
- Legalize Sale & Use of Medical Marijuana with Script
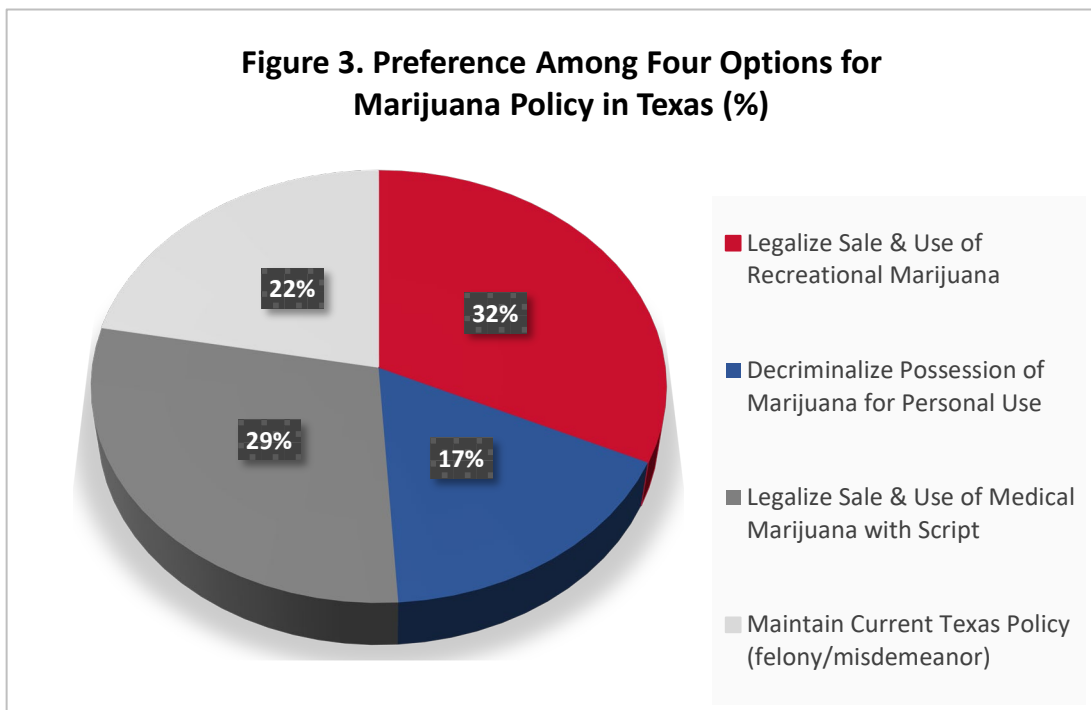- Maintain Current Texas Policy (felony/misdemeanor)

Table 5 provides the proportion selecting each of these four policies broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, religion, and partisanship. Because of the relatively small numbers of cases in each of the four policy categories, the precision of the sub-group analysis is reduced compared to that in prior tables, and as a result, only two sub-group differences merit comment here. First, Born-Again Protestants (18%) and Roman Catholics (24%) are much less likely than nonreligious Texans (49%) to select the legalization of recreational marijuana from among these four policy options. Second, Republicans (31%) are notably more likely than Democrats (14%) to reject all three legislative proposals and, instead, stick with the maintenance of the state's current marijuana policies and regulations.

Table 5. Preferences Among Four Options For Marijuana Policy in Texas Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Legalize Sale & Use of Marijuana	Legalize Medical Marijuana	Maintain Current Policy	Decriminalize Possession of Marijuana
Overall		32	29	22	17
Gender	Women	30	28	23	19
	Men	33	29	22	16
Ethnicity/Race	White	34	24	26	16
	Latino	34	32	16	18
	Black	25	34	24	17
Generation	Silent/Boomer	32	32	22	14
	Generation X	39	23	21	17
	Millennial	30	29	21	20
	Generation Z	24	30	27	19
Education	High School	34	32	16	18
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	36	23	24	17
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	27	29	28	16
Income	Lower Income	36	30	16	18
	Middle Income	31	27	24	18
	Higher Income	28	31	24	17
Religion	Born-Again Protestant	18	38	30	14
	Other Protestant	40	24	22	14
	Roman Catholic	24	33	25	18
	Nonreligious	49	22	12	17
Partisanship	Democratic	37	27	14	22
	Independent	34	26	21	19
	Republican	25	31	31	13

Finally, the survey respondents were asked the following question related to proposed legislation in the Texas Legislature governing the sale of THC consumables:

In 2019 Texas legalized the sale of hemp containing non-intoxicating trace amounts of THC with the goal of boosting the state's hemp industry. Since then, thousands of retail outlets have opened to take advantage of a loophole in this agricultural law which allows them to sell unregulated products (gummies, vapes, drinks, buds), often containing high levels of THC (the intoxicating part of the cannabis plant). Do you support or oppose legislation which would ban the sale of all forms of consumable THC in Texas?

Table 6 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose the legislation which would ban the sale of comsumable THC in Texas. Overall, the Texas population is split between those who support (55%) and oppose (45%) this legislation, with relatively equal proportions strongly supporting (24%) and opposing (25%) the bill.

Table 6. Support For & Opposition To Legislation Banning the Sale of All Forms of Consumable THC in Texas (%)

Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
24	31	20	25

Table 7 provides the proportion supporting and opposing this legislation which would ban the sale of consumable THC in Texas, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, religion, and partisanship. There are not any noteworthy sub-group differences in support for this legislation based on gender, ethnicity/race, education or income. However, there are noteworthy differences tied to the respondents' generation, religion, and partisanship.

Table 7. Support For & Opposition To Banning the Sale of Consumable THC in Texas (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Support	Oppose
Overall		55	45
Gender	Women	56	44
	Men	54	46
Ethnicity/Race	White	55	45
	Latino	54	46
	Black	56	44
Generation	Silent/Boomer	46	54
	Generation X	49	51
	Millennial	57	43
	Generation Z	70	30
Education	High School	53	47
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	52	48
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	59	41
Income	Lower Income	56	44
	Middle Income	61	39
	Higher Income	54	46
Religion	Born-Again Protestant	59	41
	Other Protestant	40	60
	Roman Catholic	64	36
	Nonreligious	46	54
Partisanship	Democratic	48	52
	Independent	55	45
	Republican	61	39

Members of Generation Z (70%) are significantly more likely to support this legislation banning the sale of consumable THC in Texas than are the oldest Texans belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (46%) and to Generation X (49%). Roman Catholic (64%) and Born-Again Protestant (59%) Texans are significantly more likely than nonreligious (46%) and other Protestant (40%) Texans to support banning the sale of consumable THC in Texas. Finally, Republicans (61%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (48%) to favor this ban. However, it is worthy of note that nearly half of Democrats (48%) support the ban, just as nearly two-fifths of Republicans (39%) oppose this proposed ban on the sale of consumable THC in Texas.

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