



**THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**For The People & The Press**

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**Modest Rise in Percentage Favoring General Legalization**  
**BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR LEGALIZING MEDICAL MARIJUANA**

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## **Modest Rise in Percentage Favoring General Legalization** **BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR LEGALIZING MEDICAL MARIJUANA**

With a growing number of states moving to legalize medical marijuana, nearly three-quarters of Americans (73%) say they favor their state allowing the sale and use of marijuana for medical purposes if it is prescribed by a doctor, while 23% are opposed. Support for legalizing medical marijuana spans all major political and demographic groups, and is equally high in states that have and have not already passed laws on this issue.

There are public concerns about legalizing medical marijuana. For example, 45% say they would be very or somewhat concerned if a store that sold medical marijuana opened near other stores in their area. And roughly the same percentage (46%) says allowing medical marijuana makes it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need – though just 26% of Americans say this is something that concerns them. These concerns are highest among opponents of legalizing medical marijuana, but are no higher or lower in states that already allow marijuana for medical purposes.

Far more Americans favor allowing marijuana for prescribed medical purposes than support a general legalization of marijuana. But the proportion who thinks the use of marijuana should be legal has continued to rise over the past two decades.

The most recent national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 10-14 among 1,500 adults on landlines and cell phones, finds that 41% of the public thinks the use of marijuana should be made legal while 52% do not. In 2008, 35% said it should be legal and 57% said the use of marijuana should not be legal, according to data from the General Social Survey. Twenty years ago, only 16% of the public said the use of marijuana should be legal and 81% said it should not be legal.

<b>Large Majority Favors Allowing Medical Marijuana in their State</b>		
<i>Your state allowing the sale and use of marijuana for medical purposes...</i>		March <u>2010</u>
		%
Favor		73
Oppose		23
Don't know		<u>4</u>
		100
<i>Should the use of marijuana be made legal?</i>	<u>2008*</u>	<u>2010</u>
Yes	35	41
No	57	52
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100
* 2008 data from the General Social Survey. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.		

## Seniors, Conservatives Less Supportive

Younger Americans are more likely than their older counterparts to favor legalizing marijuana for medical use, but a majority across all age groups supports this; 80% of those younger than 30 favor allowing medical marijuana compared with 63% who are ages 65 and older.

About six-in-ten (61%) Republicans favor permitting medical marijuana in their state compared with 76% of independents and 80% of Democrats. Conservative Republicans are the least likely to support legalization of medical marijuana; still, 54% favor this while 44% are opposed. At least three-fourths in all other partisan and ideological groups favor this.

People living in states where medical marijuana laws have not been passed are just as likely to favor the idea as those living in the 14 states where such laws have already been passed (72% vs. 74%).

An overwhelming percentage (95%) of those who support general legalization of marijuana favor the sale and use of medical marijuana in their state. Yet even a majority (55%) of those who do not favor general legalization of marijuana say that the sale and use of medical marijuana should be allowed.

### Widespread Support for Medical Marijuana

	Favor %	Oppose %	DK %	N
Total	73	23	4=100	1500
Men	74	22	4=100	727
Women	72	24	4=100	773
White, non-Hispanic	74	22	4=100	1106
Black, non-Hispanic	66	30	4=100	149
Hispanic	70	28	2=100	120
18-29	80	17	3=100	234
30-49	70	26	3=100	434
50-64	77	20	4=100	461
65+	63	30	7=100	337
College grad+	71	25	4=100	527
Some college	77	20	3=100	377
HS or less	72	24	4=100	576
Republican	61	37	2=100	356
Conservative Rep	54	44	2=100	253
Mod/Lib Rep	78	20	2=100	95
Democrat	80	17	3=100	464
Cons/Mod Dem	77	20	3=100	294
Liberal Dem	85	12	3=100	146
Independent	76	21	3=100	543
Total Protestant	68	28	4=100	800
White evangelical	64	31	5=100	316
White mainline	75	22	3=100	299
Total Catholic	73	23	5=100	306
White, non-Hispanic	75	21	4=100	227
Unaffiliated	84	12	4=100	256
<i>State law already allows medical marijuana*</i>				
Yes	74	23	3=100	396
No	72	24	4=100	1104
<i>Should use of marijuana be legal?</i>				
Yes	95	5	*=100	578
No	55	40	4=100	812

Q53. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

\* AK, CA, CO, DC, HI, ME, MI, MT, NJ, NM, NV, OR, RI, VT, WA; survey not conducted in AK, DC, HI.

## Does Medical Marijuana Lead to Broader Access?

The public is divided about whether legalizing marijuana for medical purposes inherently increases access to marijuana more generally: 46% say allowing medical marijuana makes it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need, while 48% think it doesn't make a difference. When those who believe it does make it easier are asked whether this concerns them or not, just over half – representing 26% of the total public – say they are very or somewhat concerned about this, while 20% of Americans think this might happen but are not concerned about it.

About seven-in-ten Americans (71%) who oppose allowing medical marijuana in their state say this makes it easier for others to get access, and 53% say they are very or somewhat concerned about this. By contrast, just 39% of those who favor legalizing medical marijuana believe it leads to easier access for non-medical purposes, and only 18% are concerned. People living in states that currently allow medical marijuana are no more or less likely to see the policy as making it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need. There also are no differences in levels of concern between those living in states that have legalized medical marijuana and those that have not.

<b>Concerns about Medical Marijuana</b>					
<i>Does legalizing medical marijuana make it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need?</i>	<u>Total</u>	<i>Medical marijuana</i>		<i>Live in state that allows*</i>	
		<u>Fa-</u> <u>vor</u> %	<u>Op-</u> <u>pose</u> %	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %
Yes, makes it easier	46	39	71	47	46
Very/Somewhat concerned	26	18	53	26	26
Not too/Not at all concerned	20	22	18	21	20
No, does not	48	56	27	46	49
Don't know	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>If a store that sold medical marijuana opened near other stores in your area, would you be...</i>					
Very concerned	27	16	59	24	29
Somewhat concerned	17	16	22	17	17
Not too/Not at all concerned	54	67	18	57	52
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
N	1500	1083	347	396	1104
Q54,55,56. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.					
* AK, CA, CO, DC, HI, ME, MI, MT, NJ, NM, NV, OR, RI, VT, WA; survey not conducted in AK, DC, HI.					

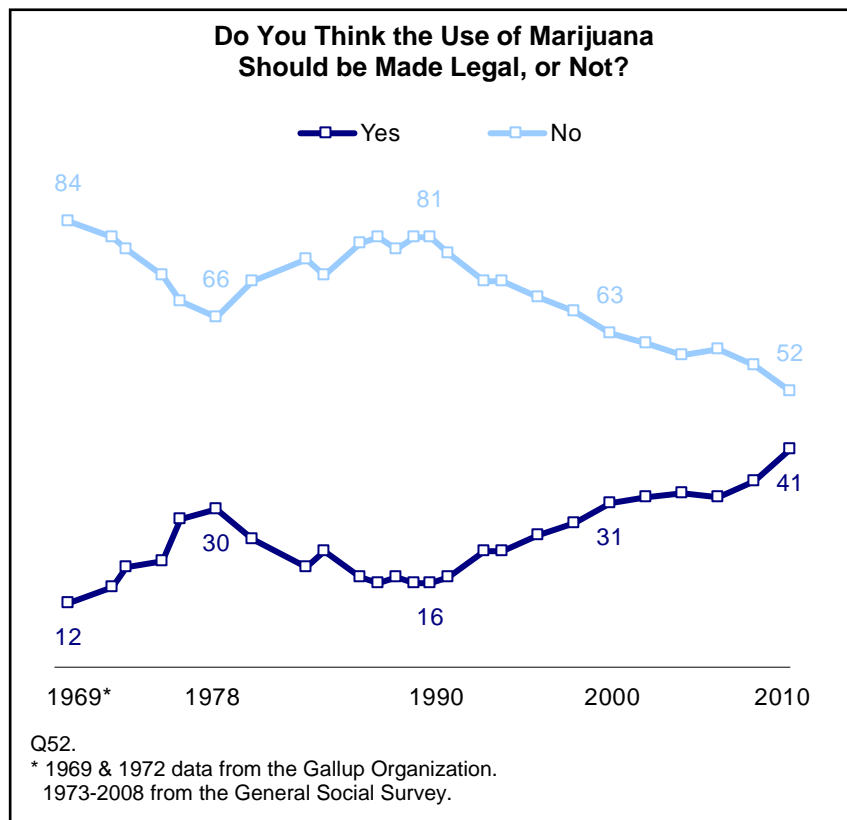
About a quarter (27%) of Americans say they would be very concerned if a store that sold medical marijuana opened up near other stores in their area, and 17% would be somewhat concerned. But a majority (54%) say they would be not too (20%) or not at all concerned (34%).

Opponents of legalizing medical marijuana are far more likely to be at least somewhat concerned about this (81%) than supporters (32%). But again, there is no greater or less concern about medical marijuana stores in states that have legalized medical marijuana compared with states that have not.

### Support for Legalization of Marijuana Continues to Grow

In terms of the public’s views about the general legalization of marijuana, 41% think the use of marijuana should be made legal while 52% don’t think it should be legal. These findings are similar to a Gallup Survey conducted in October 2009 that found 44% saying the use of marijuana should be made legal and 54% saying it should not be legal. Support for legalizing marijuana is the highest it has been in 40 years of polling on this issue.

In 1969, only 12% said the use of marijuana should be made legal. Support grew to a peak of 30% in 1978, and then declined over the course of the 1980s to a low of 16% by 1987. Since that time, the proportion of Americans who think marijuana should be made legal has been steadily increasing, to 31% in 2000 and 41% today.



## Young People, Liberals Most Likely to Support Legalization

There are substantial demographic differences in opinions about the legalization of marijuana. A majority (58%) of those younger than 30 think that the use of marijuana should be made legal. That compares with 42% of those ages 30 to 49, 40% of those 50 to 64, and just 22% of those 65 and older.

While men are evenly divided over whether the use of marijuana should be legal (45% yes, 47% no), most women (57%) oppose legalization.

Fully 71% of Republicans – including 77% of conservative Republicans – oppose the legalization of marijuana. By contrast, Democrats are evenly divided, with a majority of liberal Democrats (57%) in favor of legalizing the use of marijuana. About half of independents (49%) favor legalizing the use of marijuana while 44% are opposed.

People living in states where medical marijuana laws already have been passed are more likely than those living in other states to support a more general legalization of marijuana (48% vs. 39%). Those who have tried marijuana are more than twice as likely as those who have not to favor legalization (64% vs. 25%).

### Wide Age and Political Differences in Opinions about Legalizing Marijuana

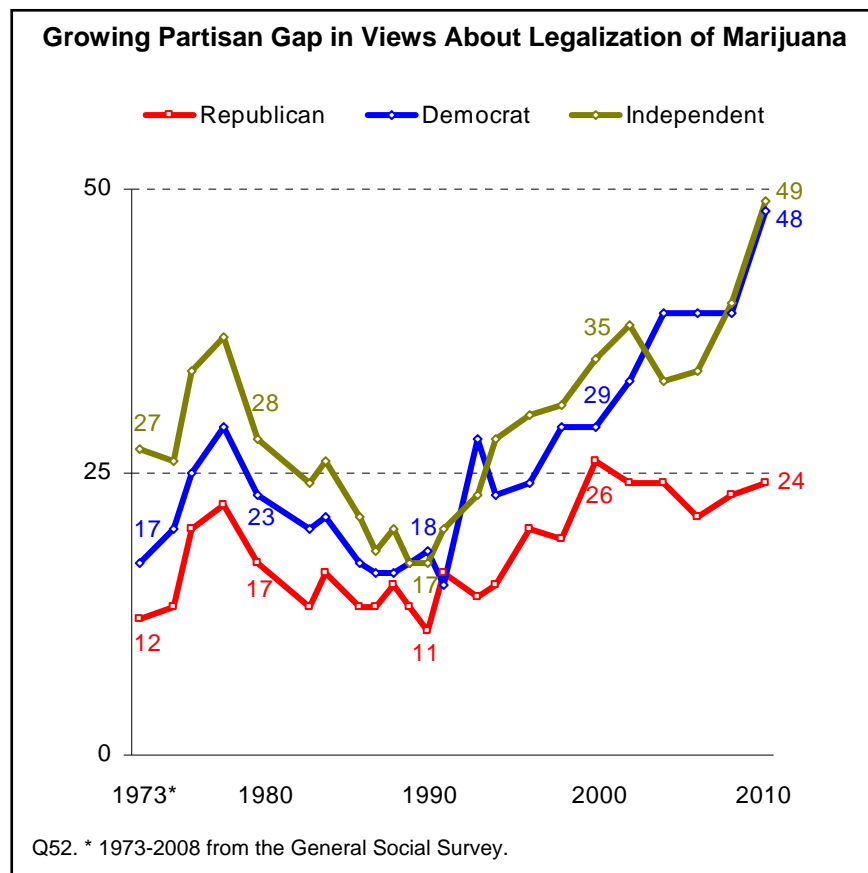
	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>DK</u> %	<u>N</u>
Total	41	52	7=100	1500
Men	45	47	9=100	727
Women	38	57	5=100	773
White, non-Hispanic	42	50	8=100	1106
Black, non-Hispanic	41	56	4=100	149
Hispanic	35	61	4=100	120
18-29	58	39	4=100	234
30-49	42	53	5=100	434
50-64	40	49	11=100	461
65+	22	69	8=100	337
Republican	24	71	6=100	356
Conservative Rep	20	77	3=100	253
Mod/Lib Rep	36	56	8=100	95
Democrat	48	47	5=100	464
Cons/Mod Dem	44	51	6=100	294
Liberal Dem	57	39	4=100	146
Independent	49	44	8=100	543
Total Protestant	33	59	8=100	800
White evangelical	25	67	9=100	316
White mainline	42	49	8=100	299
Total Catholic	39	54	7=100	306
White, non-Hispanic	42	51	7=100	227
Unaffiliated	64	31	5=100	256
<i>State law already allows medical marijuana*</i>				
Yes	48	46	7=100	396
No	39	54	7=100	1104
<i>Ever tried marijuana?</i>				
Yes	64	31	5=100	541
No	25	67	8=100	916

Q52. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## Increased Support for Legalization Among Democrats and Independents

Although independents and Democrats have generally been more likely than Republicans to support legalization of marijuana over the past 40 years, the partisan gap on this issue has increased substantially since 2000. Democrats and independents are far more likely to say that marijuana should be made legal than they were 10 years ago while the views of Republicans are virtually unchanged.

Nearly half of Democrats (48%) and independents (49%) now support the legalization of marijuana. In 2000, 29% of Democrats and 35% of independents said the use of marijuana should be made legal. By comparison, 24% of Republicans support legalization now, similar to the 26% who favored this a decade ago.



## Who Has Tried Marijuana?

Four-in-ten Americans say they have ever tried marijuana while 58% have not. Men are more likely than women to have tried marijuana – nearly half (48%) of men have tried marijuana compared with only 31% of women.

There also are substantial age differences. About half (49%) of young people admit to having tried marijuana, as do 47% of those ages 30 to 49 and 42% ages 50 to 64. By comparison, only 11% of people age 65 and older say they have ever tried marijuana.

Fewer Republicans than Democrats and independents say they have ever tried marijuana. About a third (32%) of Republicans admit to having tried marijuana compared with 41% of Democrats and 44% of independents. Conservative Republicans are the least likely to report trying marijuana (26%), compared with at least four-in-ten in all other partisan and ideological groups.

Have You Ever Happened to Try Marijuana?			
	Yes	No	DK
	%	%	%
Total	40	58	2=100
Men	48	50	2=100
18-49	55	44	1=100
50+	39	59	2=100
Women	31	66	3=100
18-49	40	58	2=100
50+	21	77	2=100
18-29	49	49	2=100
30-49	47	52	2=100
50-64	42	56	2=100
65+	11	87	2=100
White, non-Hispanic	42	57	2=100
Black, non-Hispanic	41	57	2=100
Hispanic	35	65	*=100
College grad+	35	63	2=100
Some college	44	55	1=100
HS or less	41	57	2=100
<i>Family income</i>			
\$75,000 or more	43	52	4=100
\$30,000-74,999	43	56	*=100
Less than \$30,000	40	59	1=100
Northeast	40	59	1=100
Midwest	43	55	2=100
South	37	60	3=100
West	41	57	2=100
Republican	32	67	1=100
Conservative Rep	26	73	*=100
Mod/Lib Rep	46	53	1=100
Democrat	41	57	2=100
Cons/Mod Dem	40	59	*=100
Liberal Dem	45	50	5=100
Independent	44	54	2=100
Total Protestant	32	65	2=100
White evangelical	28	71	1=100
White mainline	37	60	3=100
Total Catholic	41	58	2=100
White, non-Hispanic	45	53	2=100
Unaffiliated	59	39	2=100

Q57. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.



## ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of ABT/SRBI Inc. among a national sample of 1,500 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from March 10-14, 2010 (1,000 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 500 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 198 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,500	3.0 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## ABOUT THE CENTER

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**MARCH 2010 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**March 10-14, 2010**  
**N=1,500**

**QUESTIONS 1-5, 9-11, 14-16, 19-20, 22-27, 31-32, 36-39, 44-46, 49-50 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTIONS 6-8, 12-13, 17-18, 21, 28-30, 33-35, 40-43, 47-48**

**QCEN.1-QCEN.15 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

Now thinking about another topic...

Q.52 Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?

	<u>Yes, legal</u>	<u>No, illegal</u>	<u>(VOL.)</u> <u>DK/Ref</u>
Mar 10-14, 2010	41	52	7
<b>Gallup</b>			
October, 2009	44	54	2
October 2005	36	60	4
November, 2003	34	64	2
August, 2001	34	62	4
August, 2000	31	64	5
August, 1995	25	73	2
May, 1985	23	73	4
June, 1980	25	70	5
May, 1979	25	70	5
April, 1977	28	66	6
January, 1973	16	78	6
March, 1972	15	81	4
October, 1969	12	84	4
<b>General Social Survey</b>			
2008	35	57	8
2006	32	60	7
2004	33	59	9
2002	32	61	6
2000	31	63	6
1998	27	67	6
1996	25	70	5
1994	22	73	5
1993	22	73	5
1991	17	78	5
1990	16	81	3
1989	16	81	3
1988	17	79	4
1987	16	81	3
1986	17	80	2
1984	22	74	4
1983	19	77	3
1980	24	73	3
1978	30	66	4

**Q.52 CONTINUED ...**

	<u>Yes, legal</u>	<u>No, illegal</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
1976	28	69	3
1975	20	74	5
1973	19	79	2

**ASK ALL:**

Q.53 Do you favor or oppose your state allowing the sale and use of marijuana for medical purposes if it is prescribed by a doctor?

Mar 10-14

<u>2010</u>	
73	Favor
23	Oppose
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**FOR COMPARISON ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST:**

Regardless of what you think about the personal non-medical use of marijuana, do you think doctors should or should not be allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients?

	<u>Jan 2010</u>	<u>May 1997</u>
Should	81	69
Should not	18	27
No opinion (VOL.)	1	4

**FOR COMPARISON NBC NEWS/WALL STREET JOURNAL:**

Do you think adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if their doctor prescribes it or do you think that marijuana should remain illegal even for medical purposes?

	<u>Oct 2009</u>
Allow medical use	73
Illegal even for medical purposes	23
Not sure (VOL.)	4

**ASK ALL:**

Q.54 Do you think that allowing medical marijuana makes it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need, or doesn't it make a difference?

Mar 10-14

<u>2010</u>	
46	Yes, makes it easier
48	Doesn't make a difference
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF EASIER (Q.54=1) [N=712]:**

Q.55 Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this?  
**[READ] [REPEAT IF NECESSARY: That allowing medical marijuana makes it easier for people to get marijuana even if they don't have a real medical need?]**

**BASED ON TOTAL:**

Mar 10-14  
2010  
 12 Very concerned  
 14 Somewhat concerned  
 11 Not too concerned  
 9 Not at all concerned  
 \* Don't know/Refused (VOL.)  
 54 *Doesn't make a difference/Don't know/Refused in Q54*

**ASK ALL:**

Q.56 How concerned, if at all, would you be if a store that sold medical marijuana opened up near other stores in your area? **[READ]**

Mar 10-14  
2010  
 27 Very concerned  
 17 Somewhat concerned  
 20 Not too concerned  
 34 Not at all concerned  
 2 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

Q.57 Keeping in mind that all of your answers in this survey are confidential, have you, yourself, ever happened to try marijuana?

		----- Gallup -----							
Mar 10-14		June	Feb	Sept	May	April	Jan	Mar	Oct
<u>2010</u>		<u>2003</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1969</u>
40	Yes	38	38	34	33	24	12	11	4
58	No	61	60	66	67	76	88	89	94
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	2	*	0	0	*	0	2

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

**IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Mar 10-14, 2010	22	33	37	6	*	3	14	13
Feb 3-9, 2010	26	31	37	3	*	3	14	17
Jan 6-10, 2010	22	33	42	2	1	2	17	16
Dec 9-13, 2009	25	32	38	2	*	2	14	15
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	27	35	32	3	*	2	13	13
Sep 30-Oct 4, 2009	23	34	37	3	1	3	16	14
Sep 10-15, 2009	23	34	34	4	*	5	13	17
Aug 20-27, 2009	26	32	36	3	*	3	14	16
Aug 11-17, 2009	23	33	38	3	*	3	16	15

**PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED ...**

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	DK/Ref	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				preference	party			
Jul 22-26, 2009	22	34	37	5	*	2	15	14
Jun 10-14, 2009	25	34	34	3	*	3	11	16
Apr 28-May 12, 2009	23	39	29	4	*	4	9	14
Mar 31-Apr 21, 2009	22	33	39	3	*	3	13	18
Mar 9-12, 2009	24	34	35	5	*	2	12	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.3	35.8	31.7	3.8	.3	3.1	10.5	15.4
2007	25.4	32.9	33.7	4.6	.4	3.1	10.7	16.7
2006	27.6	32.8	30.3	5.0	.4	3.9	10.2	14.5
2005	29.2	32.8	30.3	4.5	.3	2.8	10.2	14.9
2004	29.7	33.4	29.8	3.9	.4	2.9	11.7	13.4
2003	29.8	31.4	31.2	4.7	.5	2.5	12.1	13.0
2002	30.3	31.2	30.1	5.1	.7	2.7	12.6	11.6
2001	29.2	33.6	28.9	5.1	.5	2.7	11.7	11.4
<i>2001 Post-Sept 11</i>	<i>30.9</i>	<i>31.8</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>.6</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>9.4</i>
<i>2001 Pre-Sept 11</i>	<i>28.2</i>	<i>34.6</i>	<i>29.5</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>.5</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>12.5</i>
2000	27.5	32.5	29.5	5.9	.5	4.0	11.6	11.6
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.5	33.2	31.9	4.6	.4	2.4	11.8	13.5
1997	28.2	33.3	31.9	4.0	.4	2.3	12.3	13.8
1996	29.2	32.7	33.0	5.2	--	--	12.7	15.6
1995	31.4	29.7	33.4	5.4	--	--	14.4	12.9
1994	29.8	31.8	33.8	4.6	--	--	14.3	12.6
1993	27.4	33.8	34.0	4.8	--	--	11.8	14.7
1992	27.7	32.7	35.7	3.9	--	--	13.8	15.8
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	4.5	--	--	14.6	10.8
1990	31.0	33.1	29.1	6.8	--	--	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--