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RESEARCH BULLETIN

Kentuckians Say "No" to Drugs

A survey of Kentucky residents conducted between July and December, 1987, found that nearly two thirds (63.6%) of those surveyed considered smoking marijuana to be a serious offense and 90 percent of the respondents felt that using cocaine should be considered a serious offense.

Several questions addressing public attitudes toward drug use and law enforcement were included as part of the ongoing Kentucky Crime Estimation (CREST) program operated by the Kentucky Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center. Data were collected from 453 respondents and weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the residents of Kentucky.

Over half of those surveyed (54.3%) felt that trying marijuana once or twice in one's lifetime is very dangerous and nine of ten (89.8%) felt that trying cocaine once or twice in one's lifetime was very dangerous.

A total of just over 80 percent (81%) of those surveyed considered smoking marijuana to be very dangerous. Of that total, 16 percent considered smoking marijuana weekly or more frequently to be very dangerous, 11 percent considered marijuana occasionally to

be very dangerous, and 54 percent considered it to be very dangerous once or twice in one's lifetime.

It was assumed that a respondent who considered smoking marijuana once in one's lifetime considered smoking marijuana occasionally or frequently to be very dangerously.

Public Opinion in Kentucky on Legalizing Use of Marijuana

When contrasted with the results of a national survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in 1986, the results of the CREST survey suggest that Kentuckians may be somewhat more conservative in their attitude toward marijuana use.

Less than one out of ten Kentuckians (8.7%) thought that marijuana should be legalized either generally or for persons over 18 years of age. In the NORC survey, 18 percent thought that use of marijuana should be made legal. It should be noted, however, that annual surveys conducted nationally both by NORC and Gallup have indicated steadily declining support for legalizing marijuana use since the mid-1970's when nearly three out of ten (28-30%) Americans thought that use of marijuana should be legal.

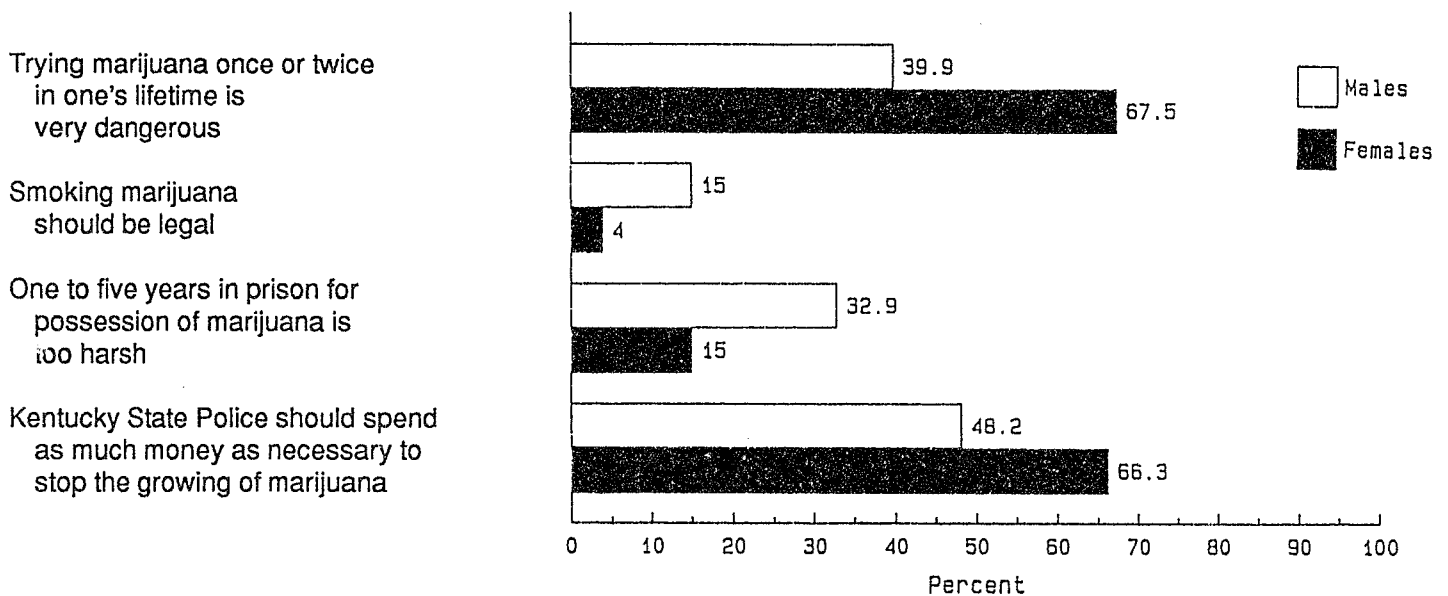
"There has been a great deal of public debate about whether marijuana should be legalized. Which of the following policies would you be likely to support?"

	%
<i>Smoking marijuana should be legal</i>	2.2
<i>Smoking marijuana should be legal for persons over 18 years of age</i>	6.5
<i>Smoking marijuana should be a minor violation like public intoxication</i>	21.6
<i>Smoking marijuana should be a serious offense</i>	63.6
<i>Don't know</i>	6.1

A comparison of the findings by age of respondents revealed that the age groups most likely to oppose legalization of marijuana and to consider smoking marijuana a serious offense were those under 25 and those over 40 years of age.

The CREST survey found that persons between the ages of 25 and 29 were most likely to favor legalizing marijuana use with 3 percent indicating that smoking marijuana should be legal in general and an additional 19 percent indicating that it should be legal for persons over the age of 18.

An interesting finding of the CREST survey that is supported by data



Attitudes toward drugs by sex of respondent

from national surveys is that females tend to be somewhat more conservative in their attitudes toward drug use and drug enforcement. Less than half of the male respondents (39.9%) thought that trying marijuana once or twice in one's lifetime was very dangerous, while more than two thirds (67.5%) of the female respondents thought it was very dangerous. Males were three times as likely as females to think that trying marijuana once or twice in one's lifetime was not dangerous at all.

Female respondents also expressed somewhat more conservative attitudes toward criminalization of marijuana use. Only 4 percent of all female respondents thought that smoking marijuana should be legal compared to 15 percent of the males. Nearly half of the males (48.9 percent) thought smoking marijuana should be a serious offense compared to three fourths of the females (74.6%).

Males were more likely (32.9%) to think that the penalty of one to five years in prison for possession of marijuana is too harsh compared to only 15 percent of the female respondents who thought so. When asked about whether the Kentucky

State Police should spend as much money as necessary to stop the growing of marijuana, 66.3 percent of the females responded affirmatively as compared with 48.2 percent of the males.

Kentuckians Support Strong Measures to Combat Cocaine Use and Trafficking

Kentuckians very clearly advocate a "get tough" approach to cocaine users and dealers. Three out of four respondents thought that the Kentucky State Police should spend as much money as necessary to stop the flow of cocaine into the state.

As with all of the issues related to cocaine use and trafficking, the difference between male and female attitudes on this issue was not as great as the differences in attitudes toward marijuana use, with 82 percent of the males indicating that they thought as much money as necessary should be spent to stop the flow of cocaine compared to 98.6 percent of the females who supported that idea.

Over half of the respondents (58.8%) strongly support a policy to seize the property and money of convicted drug dealers as a means of punishing

them and another 23.4 percent somewhat support that policy.

"The courts have started to seize the property and money of convicted drug dealers as a means of punishing them. Do you . . ."

	%
<i>Strongly support this policy</i>	58.8
<i>Somewhat support this policy</i>	23.4
<i>Not support this policy</i>	5.8
<i>Have no opinion about this policy</i>	11.8

Nearly eight of ten respondents (78%) either somewhat or strongly agree that law enforcement agents should attempt to buy drugs from drug dealers as a means of gathering evidence.

When asked whether the penalty of one to five years in prison for possession of cocaine was too harsh, too lenient, or generally fair, 41 percent of the respondents said they thought the penalty was generally fair; however, 37 percent thought it was too lenient and 4 percent thought it was too harsh. Another 19 percent of those surveyed did not know how they felt about this issue.

By contrast, respondents were asked if the penalty of one to five years in prison for possession of marijuana

was too harsh, too lenient or generally fair. Nearly half (48%) thought that one to five years in prison was generally fair, 23 percent thought it was too harsh and 11 percent thought it was too lenient. Again, 18 percent of those surveyed did not know how to answer.

Less than 2 percent of those surveyed thought that the use of cocaine should be legalized for any age.

Nearly three fourths of the respondents (73.2%) strongly support a policy that requires convicted drug offenders to participate in drug treatment programs as part of their sentence; another 17 percent somewhat support that policy.

An issue that has gained a significant amount of publicity in recent months is the suggestion that government employees should be tested for illegal use of drugs. According to the CREST survey, most Kentuckians support this policy with 50.1 percent indicating that they are in strong support and another 22 percent indicating that they somewhat support this policy.

Public Contact with Criminal Justice System Officials and Services

One objective of the **Crime Estimation Program** has been to continuously monitor the amount of contact the general population of Kentucky has with criminal justice officials and the perceptions of the quality of that contact. A series of questions was asked of respondents about contact with various kinds of criminal justice officials and services and how they would rate these contacts.

Overall, less than five percent of the Kentucky households surveyed reported that someone in the household had contact during the previous six months either with prosecutors, judges, private

attorneys or other criminal justice officials. Nearly one out of four (23.8%) of those surveyed responded that someone in the household had some contact with the police with two thirds of those indicating that the contact related to a crime.

According to the CREST survey, most Kentuckians generally seem to feel positive toward criminal justice officials. Police received the highest rating with nearly three out of ten people (29%) indicating very positive feelings toward the police and another 64 percent expressing somewhat positive feelings. About one in ten respondents expressed feelings that are not positive toward any one of the criminal justice groups.

A comparison of the findings by sex suggested that male respondents (26.0%) were slightly more likely than females (16.8%) to report that a household member had contact with the police during the previous six months.

More than nine out of ten people (92.2%) interviewed said that they would contact criminal justice officials in the future if they had a problem and the same number said they would advise a victim or witness to a crime to contact the criminal justice authorities.

Use of Victim Assistance Services

Actual use of victim assistance services among Kentuckians continues to be low. Only one percent of all Kentucky households use any victim assistance programs. Spouse Abuse Centers, Legal Aid and other crisis counseling centers were mentioned most often.

A consistent pattern emerged when respondents were asked how likely they would be to contact victim assistance services if they had a problem. For each service, close to

two out of three respondents said they probably would contact the service, and nearly one in three said they definitely would contact the service. For each service, less than three percent of the respondents said they would not use the service.

Crime-Prevention Strategies

The CREST survey has also monitored the use of crime-prevention measures by Kentucky citizens. The 1987 findings do not suggest any major changes since 1986 in the crime-prevention strategies employed.

Locking and deadbolting doors continue to be the most commonly used home security devices. The most frequently mentioned crime prevention tactics are having neighbors keep an eye on each other's home and having mail picked up by friends or delivery stopped while away.

An analysis of the 1987 CREST data suggests that use of specific crime prevention strategies varies somewhat between males and females. Females are somewhat more likely to lock doors, have mail delivery stopped or picked up by friends, and almost twice as likely to ask for identification from service repairman than are males.

These findings suggest that crime prevention education programs should consider targeting certain age and sex groups who may underutilize certain types of crime-prevention tactics. The results of an analysis of the effectiveness of crime-prevention precautions in reducing fear of crime among victims as compared with nonvictims are presented in a separate research bulletin: *Promoting Crime Prevention Measures among Victims as an Effective Fear-Reducing Strategy*.

Crime Prevention Strategies

<u>Home Security Devices</u>	<u>%</u>
Use locks on doors of home	64.9
Use deadbolt on doors of home	56.3
Have antiburglary decals on windows of home	10.9
Have burglar alarm in home	7.4
<u>Crime Prevention Tactics Utilized</u>	
Ask neighbors/friends to keep an eye on home	83.4
Leave lights on when going out at night	73.4
Ask neighbors/friends to pick up mail while away	65.1
Sought home security advice from professional	1.0
Requests identification from repairmen	50.4
Lock car doors	53.3
<u>Sources of Crime Prevention Tactics</u>	
Antiburglary decals from Operation Identification	7.0
Engraved valuables through Operation Identification	12.9
Sought professional advice from Home Security Survey	.6
Participate in police-sponsored Neighborhood Watch	8.7

(*The number of respondents varied on questions.)

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