Almost one in five adults in New Jersey report having used marijuana. The latest New Jersey Poll, conducted by the Eagleton Institute of Rutgers University, finds 19 percent of the state's residents 18 years of age or older acknowledge having used marijuana at some time.

Based on these results, Stephen Chilton, Associate Director of the New Jersey Poll, estimates that of the approximately 5 million adults in the state almost one million have had some experience with marijuana.

Chilton reported that marijuana use is very widespread among the younger respondents to the Poll. Over 3 in 4—76 percent—of 18 to 20 year olds have tried marijuana while almost half—46 percent—of those 21-29 years old have tried it. Marijuana use declines to an almost insignificant 3 percent among those over 40.

"Not everyone who has tried marijuana," Chilton said, "has liked it." Only 65 percent of those who have used marijuana report they would consider using marijuana again if its use were legalized.

"On the other hand," Chilton continued, "if marijuana use were legalized it is unlikely that an epidemic of marijuana use would result." Only 4 percent of those who reported never having used the drug say they would consider its use if marijuana were legalized.

New Jerseyans, at present, are almost evenly divided on the question of eliminating penalties for marijuana use. By a 46-51 margin they oppose the decriminalization of marijuana by removing the penalties for the possession of a small amount of the drug.
Not surprisingly, previous users of marijuana overwhelmingly support its decriminalization by an 82-17 margin. Non-users of the drug oppose the removal of legal penalties for its use by 60 percent to 36 percent.

"One of the reasons for this opposition to decriminalization of marijuana may be fear of the consequences of marijuana use," Chilton said. By 63 percent to 20 percent the Poll's respondents agree that "people who use marijuana are likely to go on to use other illegal drugs."

"In addition," Chilton reported, "many see marijuana as a dangerous drug." By 49 percent to 34 percent, respondents reject the statement that "marijuana is no more harmful than alcohol."

In summing up the results of the Poll, Chilton observed that "the issue of the decriminalization of marijuana is a complex one. Some people support decriminalization even though they believe the drug is harmful while others oppose decriminalization despite their feelings that marijuana is relatively harmless."

"Adding to the urgency of the debate," Chilton concluded, "is the fact that even now, while penalties for marijuana remain in force, its acknowledged use is widespread."

The Thirteenth New Jersey Poll was conducted by telephone from the Eagleton Institute of Politics in New Brunswick, N.J. between Nov. 11 and 17. A scientifically selected random sample of 1005 N.J. residents 18 years of age or older were interviewed.

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TO: POLITICAL REPORTERS
FROM: STEPHEN SALMORE
SUBJECT: THE NEW JERSEY POLL, RELEASE # 13-7, MONDAY MORNING, DEC. 16, 1974

The questions used in this release are as follows.

"A topic that has been under discussion in New Jersey concerns the legalization of marijuana. I am going to read you a number of statements about this issue. For each one, could you tell me if you agree or disagree."

"Penalties for the use of marijuana should be reduced."

Agree          Disagree        Don't Know
45%           51%             4%

"Penalties for the possession of a small amount of marijuana should be eliminated."

46             51               3

"The sale and use of marijuana should be completely legalized."

23             73               4

"Marijuana is no more harmful than alcohol."

34             49               16

"People who use marijuana are likely to go on to use other illegal drugs."

63             30               7

"If marijuana were legalized would you consider using it?"

Yes    15%
No     82
Don't Know  2

"Have you ever used marijuana?"

Yes     19%
No      79
Don't Know  2