

MAJOR SURVEY

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# Medicinal Cannabis Law Reform

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DECEMBER 2018

COMMISSIONED BY  
HELIUS THERAPEUTICS

## Executive Summary

This report summarises the results of a nationwide online survey of 2,105 adults representing the 18+ population at the 2013 census, conducted between November 27 and December 6, 2018. Respondents were members of Horizon's nationwide research panels and an external research panel for source diversity.

Results are weighted by age, gender, education level, region and party voted for at the 2017 general election to provide a presentative population sample. At a 95% confidence level, the maximum margin of error is  $\pm 2.1\%$

### Aims

The survey aimed to measure support for reforming law relating to the use medicinal cannabis including the principal provisions of a private members bill in the name of National Party MP for Whangarei Dr Shane Reti.

### Background

Parliament is considering law governing access to medicinal cannabis. A Government bill is expected to reach its third reading stage in the week starting December 10, 2018.

This will allow the local production of medicinal cannabis-based products under carefully-controlled regulations. These products will be produced to consistent, medical-grade standards and will provide accurate dosing through familiar formats such as capsules and oils. Most medicinal cannabis products will not give a psychoactive 'high' effect when used.

At the time of the survey the Government's bill would, over time

- Introduce a medicinal cannabis scheme to enable access to quality medicinal cannabis products for those who can benefit from their therapeutic properties
- Allow cannabis types which are grown in New Zealand to be used in medicinal products
- In the meantime (while the regulations are being developed), introduce a statutory defence for people needing palliative relief to possess and use illicit cannabis
- Remove cannabidiol (known as CBD, the non-psycho-active oil in cannabis) from the schedule of controlled drugs.

It says, in time, this will result in a greater supply of quality, accessible medicinal cannabis, including products made in New Zealand.

National MP and medical doctor, Dr Shane Reti, has prepared a private member's bill which he says would result in medicinal cannabis being treated like any other medicine.

It proposes

- Licensing high quality domestic medicinal cannabis production
- Provide access to medicinal cannabis products through doctors
- Introduction of a medical cannabis card to streamline patient access



- Dispensing of products through pharmacists.

It is argued this will adequately regulate and improve availability and make quality medicinal cannabis products more affordable.

### Overwhelming support for more comprehensive reform

The survey finds New Zealanders overwhelmingly support

- Doctors deciding on a patient by patient basis who should access medicinal cannabis products
- That, in general, medicinal cannabis should be treated the same as any other medicine in New Zealand
- People should have access to medicinal cannabis through prescribing clinicians, like doctors and nurse practitioners who should also be able to
- Issue ‘medicinal cannabis cards’ so patients or their carers can access medicinal cannabis products from a pharmacist without having to renew regular prescriptions.

Large numbers also want medicinal cannabis to be available to treat a range of more than 20 conditions not just chronic pain.

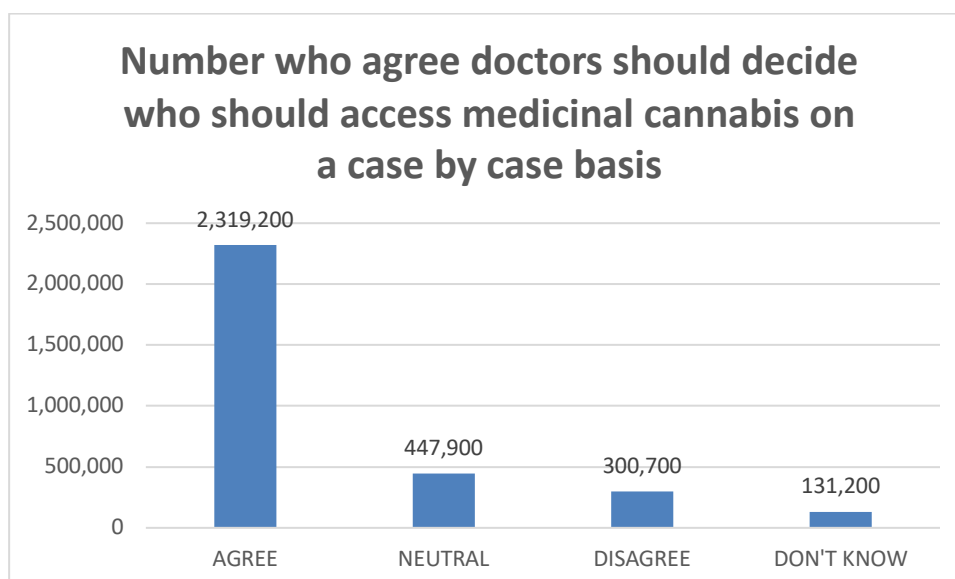
### Doctors deciding on access

72% of adults agree with the view that doctors should decide, on a patient by patient basis, who should access medicinal cannabis products.

10% disagree with this view.

14% are neutral.

This equates to around 2,319,200 adults agreeing, 447,900 disagreeing.



Support is overwhelming across all age groups and, by occupation, is at 76% among teachers, nurses, police and other trained service workers and 77% among those who are retired.

A majority of people who voted at the 2017 general election for all of the parties now in Parliament agree.

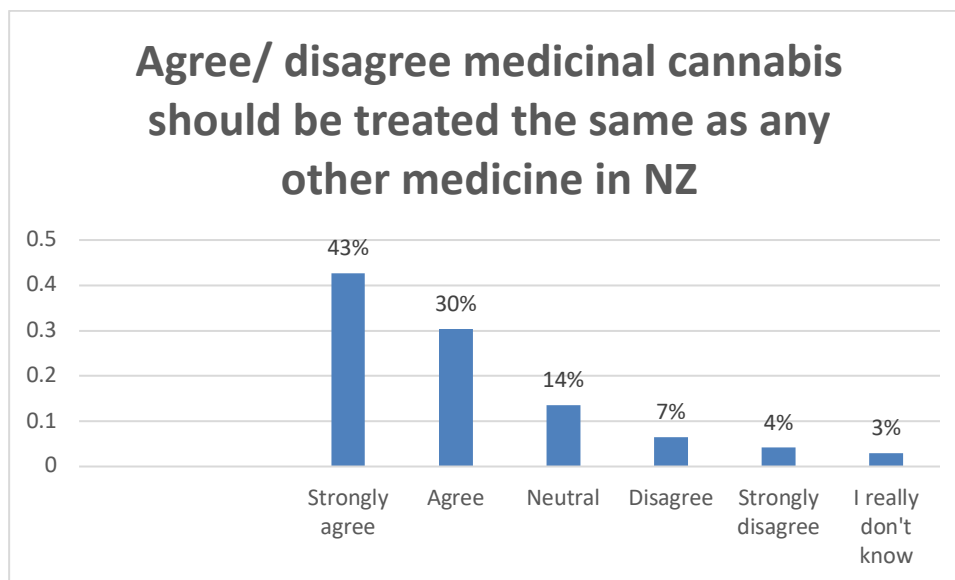
Levels of agreement/ disagreement are:

- ACT 55% agree/ 24% disagree
- Green 67%/ 19%
- Labour 72%/ 11%
- National 82% / 7%
- New Zealand First 65%/ 13%.

### Treating cannabis the same as any other medicine

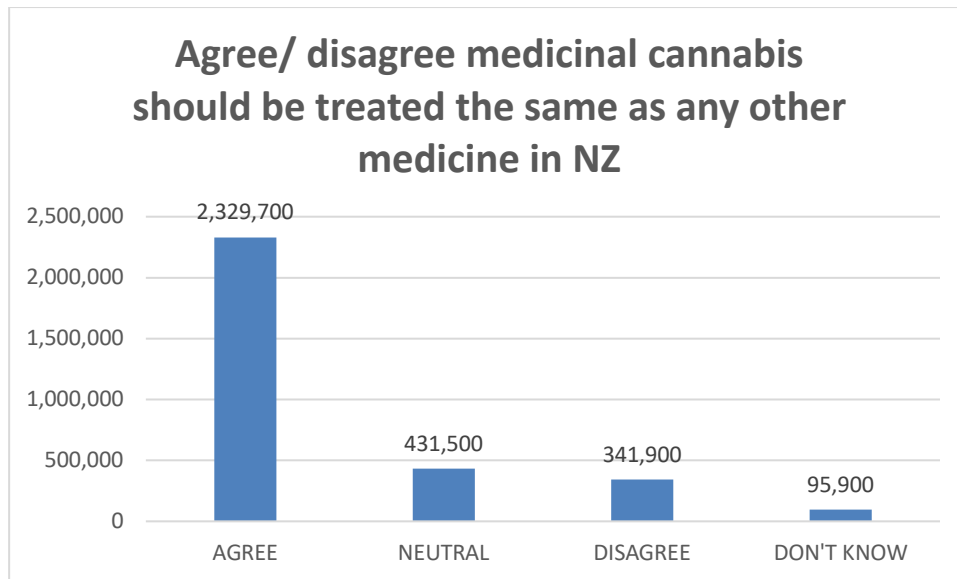
73% of adults agree with the view that medicinal cannabis should be treated the same as any other medicine.

11% disagree.



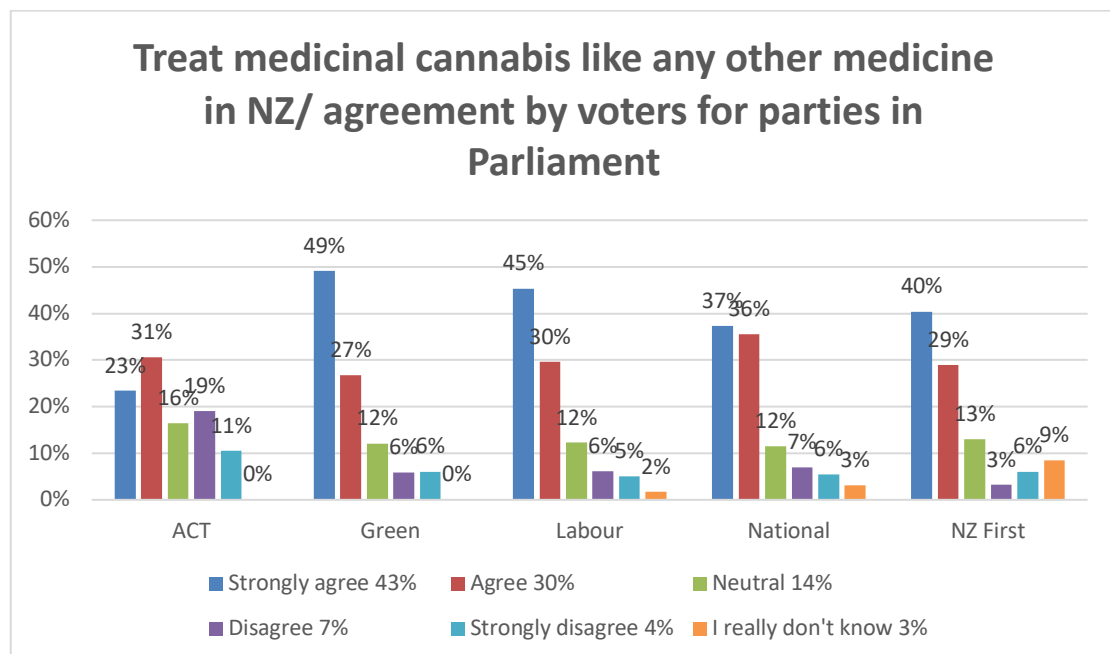
This equates to around 2,329,700 adults agreeing, 431,500 disagreeing.





A large majority of voters for parties now in the Parliament agree.

- ACT 54% agree/ 30% disagree
- Green 76%/ 12%
- Labour 75%/ 11%
- National 73%/ 13%
- New Zealand First 69%/ 19%.

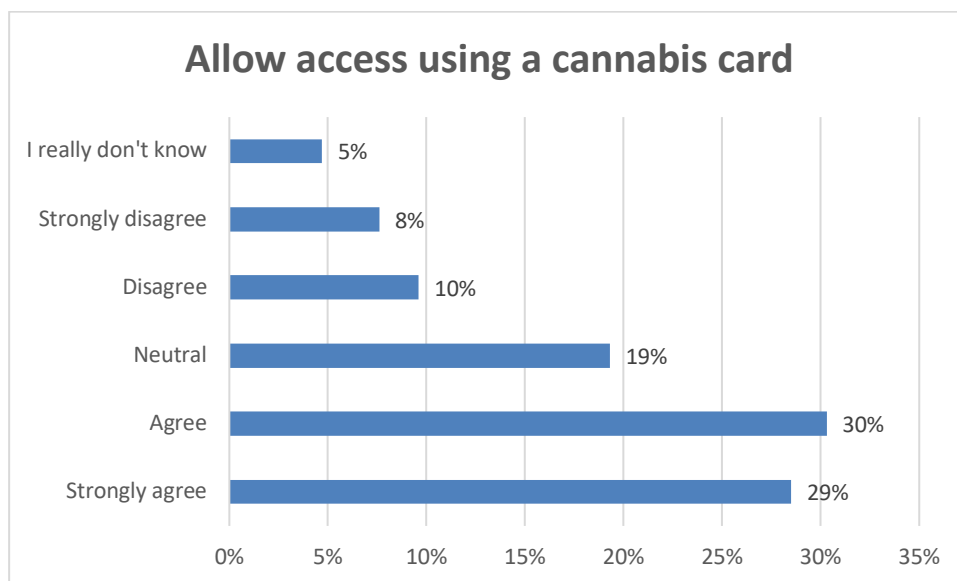


### Accessing with a cannabis card

59% agree with a provision of Dr Reti’s bill which would allow prescribing health professionals, like doctors and nurse practitioners, to issue a ‘medicinal cannabis card’ so patients or their carers can access licensed medicinal cannabis products from a pharmacist without having to renew regular prescriptions.

18% disagree.

This equates to around 1,881,000 New Zealand adults agreeing, 550,200 disagreeing while 617,400 are neutral and 150,400 don’t know.



Among voters for the parties now in Parliament

- ACT 61% agree/ 29% disagree
- Green 60%/ 11%
- Labour 59% / 16%
- National 57% / 21%
- NZ First 57% / 38%

### Access options

Only 14% of adults think access to medicinal cannabis should be restricted only to those with a terminal illness.

26% think any adult should be allowed to buy medicinal cannabis products over-the-counter without a prescription through licensed dispensaries (other than pharmacies).

22% think any adult with a prescription to purchase medicinal cannabis products online should have access through licensed digital dispensaries.



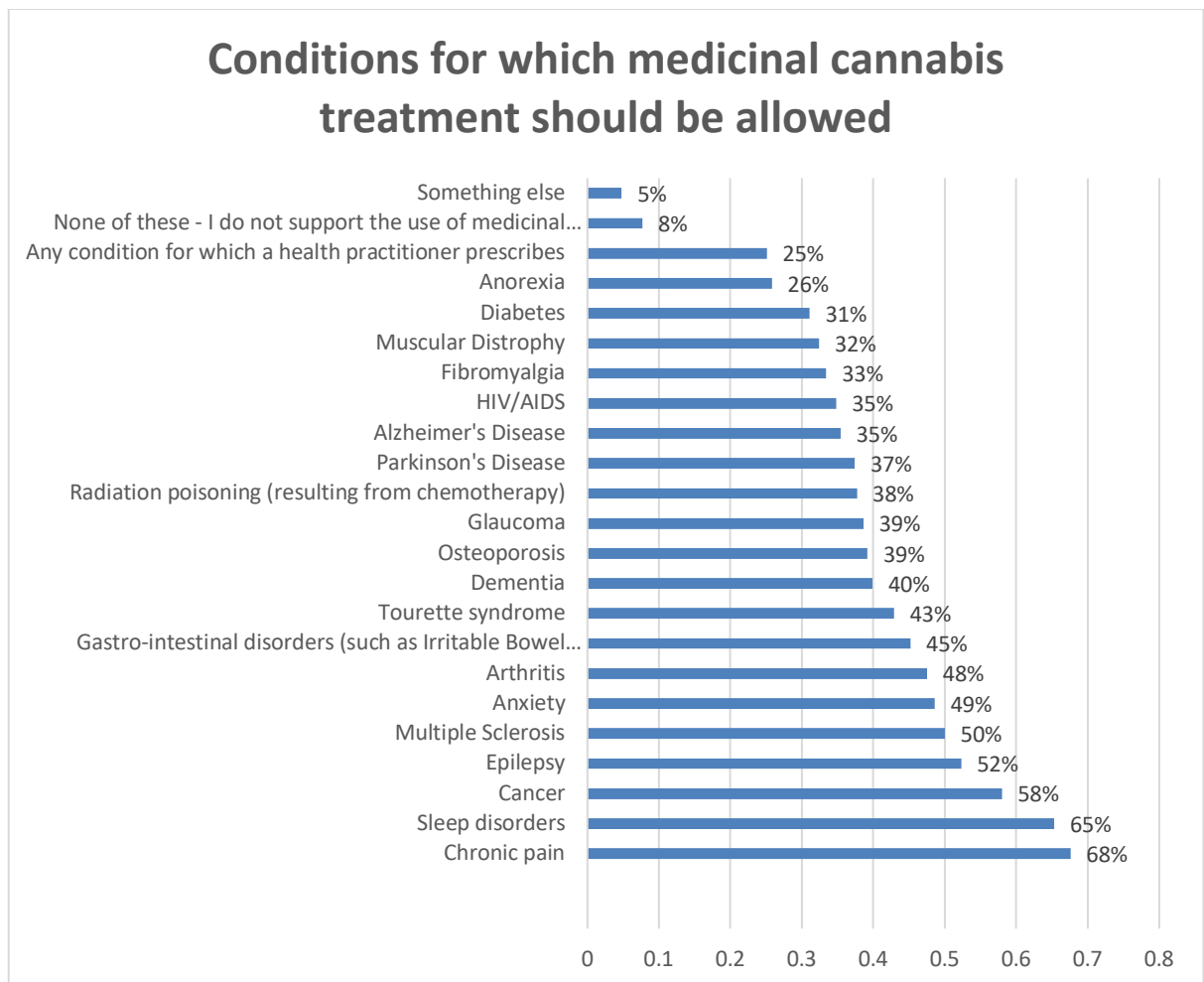
70% think the law should allow prescribing clinicians, like doctors and nurse practitioners, to prescribe licensed medicinal cannabis products.

### What conditions should be treated

While the current bill before Parliament allows for chronic pain treatment for the terminally ill and for officials to determine who should have access in a future scheme, New Zealanders think medicinal cannabis should be allowed for a large range of conditions.

Among those attracting highest agreement for us are

- Chronic pain 68%
- Sleep disorders 65%
- Cancer 58%
- Epilepsy 52%
- Multiple sclerosis 50%
- Anxiety 49%
- Arthritis 48%.



## Who would use medicinal cannabis – for what conditions

Respondents were also asked, if medicinal cannabis were made available tomorrow, which conditions they would use it for, if they had the health need.

38%, or around 1,218,800 adult New Zealanders, would use it for chronic pain.

The numbers who say they would use it for various listed conditions are:

<b>1,218,800</b>	<b>Chronic pain</b>
<b>726,200</b>	<b>Sleep disorders</b>
<b>806,100</b>	<b>Cancer</b>
<b>380,700</b>	<b>Epilepsy</b>
406,300	Multiple Sclerosis
662,200	Anxiety
633,400	Arthritis
348,700	Gastro-intestinal disorders (such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome [IBS] and Crohn's Disease)
281,500	Tourette syndrome
294,300	Dementia
383,900	Osteoporosis
268,700	Glaucoma
396,700	Radiation poisoning (resulting from chemotherapy)
396,700	Parkinson's Disease
339,100	Alzheimer's Disease
284,700	HIV/AIDS
396,700	Fibromyalgia
364,700	Muscular Dystrophy
214,300	Diabetes
188,700	Anorexia
982,100	Any condition for which a health practitioner prescribes
863,700	None of these - I do not support the use of medicinal cannabis
156,800	Something else

The research profiles those who would use medicinal cannabis, for each listed condition, according to multiple demographic criteria. This includes the party they voted for in 2017.

