Most Cannabis Users Expect Federal Legalization Before 2028

New National Survey Shows Most Cannabis Consumers Expect Federal Legalization by 2028

A recent poll conducted by medical cannabis telehealth provider NuggMD reveals that a slim majority of marijuana consumers in the United States expect federal legalization to occur before the next presidential election in 2028. This finding is especially significant given the currently stalled marijuana rescheduling process and ongoing political uncertainty at the federal level.

The survey, conducted in early August, suggests cautious optimism among cannabis users about a future in which federal prohibition comes to an end possibly even under a returning Trump administration. Respondents were asked directly whether they believed federal legalization would occur in the next three years, and 54 percent responded affirmatively, while 46 percent said no.

Majority Belief in Imminent Legalization Signals Shift in Public Sentiment

The NuggMD poll surveyed 390 cannabis consumers living in state-legal markets between July 31 and August 2. It carries a margin of error of ±4.96 percentage points, offering a reasonably accurate reflection of consumer sentiment within a key demographic.

This majority belief among users reflects a larger cultural and political shift in how Americans view cannabis. Despite the federal government's inaction, users increasingly expect policy to catch up with public opinion and state-level progress.

Consumers Drive the Cannabis Legalization Conversation Forward

With approximately 50 million Americans using cannabis, consumers are no longer a silent demographic. They represent a growing share of the electorate, economic participants, and health care recipients—and they are taking a more active role in shaping the conversation around legalization.

Industry insiders note that this trend underscores the importance of recognizing consumer voices in legislative and regulatory discussions. The cannabis industry, which spans agriculture, retail, health, and technology, increasingly aligns with the economic and social interests of a mainstream voter base.

Rescheduling of Marijuana Remains Stalled Despite Prior Promises and Recommendations

While the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommended rescheduling marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III nearly a year ago, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has yet to act on the proposal.

Newly appointed DEA Administrator Terrence Cole has signaled interest in reviewing the issue but has not included cannabis rescheduling among the agency's top strategic priorities. Instead, DEA focus areas remain tied to fentanyl, cartel enforcement, and cybercrime leaving cannabis reform in limbo.

Former Federal Officials Warn of Growing Legal Discrepancy Between States and the DEA

A former acting administrator of the DEA recently stated that the federal government needs to resolve the policy conflict between state legalization and federal prohibition. Without clearer alignment, the existing confusion only worsens for businesses, patients, and law enforcement.

The lack of progress has led many advocates and professionals in the cannabis space to call for urgent administrative action—not just symbolic support or incremental movement.

Republicans Show Growing Support for Cannabis Reform Ahead of 2026 and 2028 Elections

Despite cannabis reform often being labeled a Democratic priority, multiple polls including one conducted by Fabrizio, Lee & Associates, a firm linked to former President Donald Trump reveal broad Republican support for cannabis policy change. A majority of Republican respondents in that poll supported rescheduling cannabis, and many showed stronger backing for state autonomy on legalization than the general population.

This indicates that cannabis reform may no longer be a partisan issue but rather a politically strategic opportunity that candidates across the aisle can leverage in upcoming elections.

Pew Research and CPEAR Surveys Corroborate Rising National Support for Legalization

NuggMD's latest survey is consistent with other recent polling from credible institutions. The Pew Research Center reported that nearly 90 percent of Americans support legal cannabis in some form—whether for medical or adult use.

Similarly, a survey from the Coalition for Cannabis Policy, Education, and Regulation (CPEAR) showed that seven in ten voters want to see federal marijuana prohibition come to an end. Remarkably, nearly half of respondents said they would view a second Trump administration more favorably if it actively pursued cannabis reform.

Trump Administration Criticized for Past Inaction, But Opportunities Remain Open

While many marijuana consumers currently disapprove of the Trump administration's cannabis policies to date, NuggMD's June poll showed that a large portion would reconsider their stance if Trump were to support federal legalization or rescheduling.

This flexible position among cannabis users reflects a policy driven voter mindset, not rigid party loyalty. For candidates in 2026 and 2028, cannabis reform could offer a rare bipartisan win if acted upon decisively.

Federal Legalization Could Have Wide-Ranging Economic and Social Impacts

Beyond the political calculus, federal legalization would carry significant implications for the American economy, justice system, and public health infrastructure. Businesses currently face burdensome tax regulations under IRS Code 280E, limited access to banking, and legal risk due to federal non-alignment.

Legalization could open the door to safe banking, equitable investment, research opportunities, and interstate commerce, creating ripple effects across multiple industries. Consumers are aware of these potential benefits, and their expectations for legalization reflect a growing understanding of the broader impacts.

Cannabis Use Linked to Positive Career Outcomes According to New Consumer Data

NuggMD also released a complementary survey last month, revealing that a majority of cannabis users believe their marijuana use has positively impacted their careers. This insight pushes back against lingering stigma and indicates that cannabis normalization is not just a cultural trend but an evolving workplace reality.

Employees who use cannabis are increasingly confident in their ability to remain productive, innovative, and healthy and they want legislation that reflects those values.

State Level Progress Adds Pressure on Federal Lawmakers to Act

Meanwhile, states continue to advance legalization initiatives on their own terms. With nearly half the U.S. population living in states where cannabis is fully legal, the inconsistency between state and federal laws is becoming increasingly untenable.

Efforts are underway in Florida, Nebraska, South Dakota, and others to bring adult-use cannabis to the ballot in 2026. As more states pursue legalization through voter-driven initiatives, the pressure will only grow for Congress and federal agencies to act.

Federal Legalization May Be Slow, But Consumer Optimism Remains Strong

The data from NuggMD adds to the growing body of evidence that federal marijuana legalization is not just possible, it is expected by a majority of users. This consumer optimism, while not yet matched by definitive action from federal agencies or Congress, represents a powerful signal to policymakers.

As the 2026 midterms and 2028 presidential election draw nearer, marijuana policy could emerge as a deciding issue, especially among younger, independent, and economically driven voters.

Whether through rescheduling, Congressional reform, or executive action, the window for federal cannabis legalization is rapidly approaching, and millions of Americans are watching closely.