

News Briefs

Continued Opposition to Uruguay Marijuana Law a Challenge for Govt

Details

Written by Camilo Mejia Giraldo

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Uruguay marijuana legalization supporters

Over 60 percent of people in Uruguay believe the country's marijuana law should be repealed, indicating continued widespread opposition to legalizing marijuana as the implementation process for the new legislation drags on.

In a recent survey (<http://www.cifra.com.uy/novedades.php?idNoticia=233>) conducted by pollster CIFRA, 64 percent of respondents were opposed to the law legalizing marijuana (see graph below) and 62 percent believed the legislation should be repealed as soon as possible, instead of waiting until it had been implemented to determine its impact.

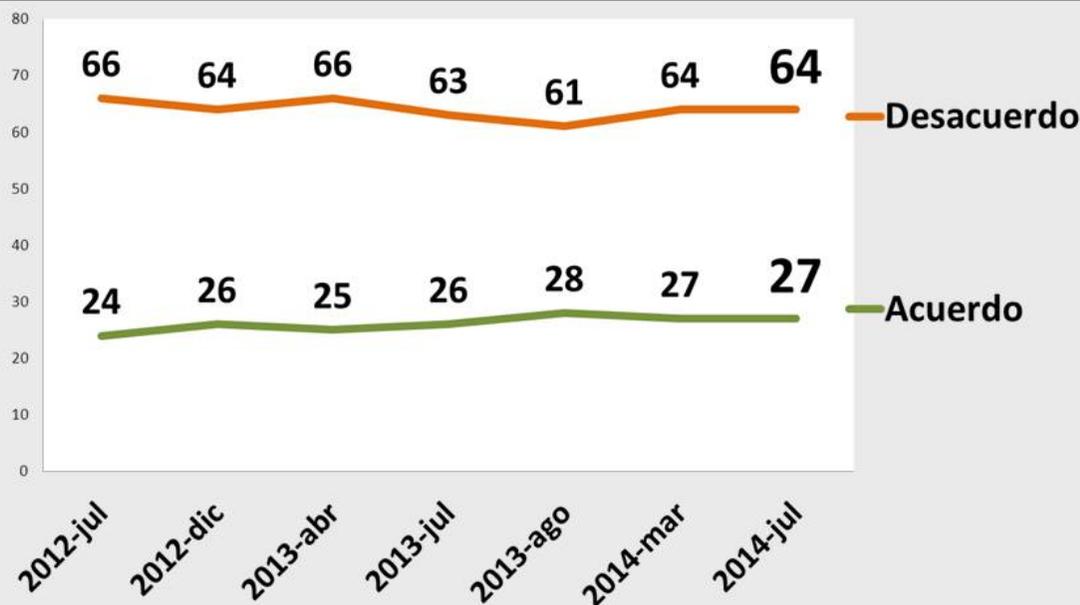
On the same day the results of the poll were released, President Jose Mujica told German television station Deutsche Welle

(http://www.montevideo.com.uy/notnoticias_240672_1.html) that the effects of the legislation would not be visible for at least two years because of the difficulties involved in regulating the existing marijuana market. "There are 150,000 consumers," the president said. "We want to bring them out of the shadow, out of hiding, to this market."

Weeks earlier, Mujica said legal marijuana sales -- which are one element of the law approved by the country's legislature in December 2013 -- would not begin until sometime in 2015

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/ultimas_noticias/2014/07/140709_ultnot_retraso_venta_marihuana_uruguay_bd.shtml) because of "practical obstacles."

1. ¿Está de acuerdo con la ley que regula el cultivo y consumo de marihuana?



Encuestas nacionales, 2012-14 www.cifra.com.uy

Insight Crime Analysis

Uruguay has become the first nation in the world to legalize and attempt to regulate all aspects of the market for marijuana consumed for recreational purposes – production, sales, and consumption. The new law, which Mujica has framed partly as a means of combatting drug trafficking (<http://www.infobae.com/2014/05/12/1563769-jose-mujica-la-cnn-no-legalizamos-la-marihuana-fue-una-medida-contr-el-trafico>), will allow the production of up to 22 tons of marijuana a year (<http://www.elspectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/seis-de-cada-diez-uruguayos-se-oponen-regulacion-de-mar-articulo-506216>) and the sale of the drug in pharmacies.

The most recent poll indicates that in spite of government efforts to build support, opposition to the legislation remains widespread. The percentage of survey respondents opposed to the marijuana law has remained relatively constant over the last two years, with 66 percent against the bill in July 2012 and 64 percent opposed in December that year, leading Mujica to call on legislators to halt the analysis of the bill (<http://www.lr21.com.uy/politica/1079566-marihuana-mujica-frena-el-proyecto-de-estatizar-el-mercado-de-cannabis-porque-la-sociedad-uruguaya-aun-no-esta-madura>) to allow more time for national debate.

SEE ALSO: Uruguay: Marijuana, Organized Crime, and the Politics of Drugs (<http://www.insightcrime.org/special-series/uruguay-marijuana-legalization>)

The high percentage of Uruguayans who want to repeal the law places a great deal of pressure on the government to demonstrate positive results after its implementation next year. Nearly 40 percent of respondents to a recent Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey saw the law as a tool to prevent crime (<http://www.thepanamericanpost.com/2014/06/uruguay-unclear-on-reasons-for.html>) and fight drug trafficking, meaning the government will likely need to show falling crime rates if the policy is to gain public support.

Nonetheless, the currently slim support may not be too much of an issue, as the ruling Frente Amplio party has proved able to push through unpopular legislation (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/poll-shows-slight-jump-in-support-for-uruguay-marijuana-bill>) in the past.