

Russians in Favor of Harsher Drug Control Laws

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Seventeen percent of Russians know a close friend or a family member who has taken recreational drugs, and 8 percent acknowledge having done so themselves, a recent poll indicates.

But the country overwhelmingly supports tougher anti-drug laws, with 72 percent of Russians in favor of criminalizing drug use and introducing mandatory treatment for convicted addicts, according to a survey by the Levada Center pollster released Tuesday.

A total of 69 percent of respondents would like to see mandatory drug testing introduced in schools, and 67 percent of Russians are in favor of similar measures for job seekers and applicants to universities, the poll indicated.

Russians also take tough views on “light” drugs, such as marijuana, with 75 percent opposing legalization, while 12 percent are in favor, and another 9 percent are indifferent, the pollster

said in its report. The numbers have decreased slightly over the past decade — an overwhelming 85 percent of Russians opposed legalizing marijuana in June, 2006, according to Levada Center polls.

For comparison, support for marijuana legalization in the U.S. has been growing rapidly in recent decades and reached 53 percent this year, while 44 percent were opposed, according to Pew Research Center polls.

The majority of Russians are skeptical about the ability of individuals to kick a drug addiction without outside help — 75 percent saying it was unlikely or virtually impossible, while another 16 percent saying the possibility was to some degree probable, the poll indicated.

The Levada Center poll was conducted on May 22-25 among 800 adults in 134 cities and towns in 46 of Russia's region. It gave a margin of error within 4.1 percentage points.

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