



Rare Under-40 Poll: What's worse — marijuana or alcohol?

[Matt Purple](#)

September 18, 2014 Young people believe that alcohol is a more destructive substance than either marijuana or tobacco, according to a new poll conducted for Rare.

Given the choice, 47 percent of young voters believe that alcohol does the most harm to society, while 27 percent said tobacco and only 13 percent selected marijuana. Thirteen percent were unsure.

The question was asked as part of a first-of-its-kind Rare poll that surveyed only respondents under 40. The questions were tailored to chart trends in the opinions of younger voters.

A gender gap emerged in the results over alcohol and tobacco. While 51 percent of women thought alcohol was the most destructive, only 42 percent of men blamed booze. Conversely, 25 percent of women were most concerned about tobacco while 30 percent of men were.

Jeffrey Miron of the libertarian Cato Institute said that all three substances could be used in moderation while all three could also be used harmfully. Still he said alcohol wouldn't have topped his list.

“From most harmful to least, I would have said: tobacco, alcohol, marijuana,” Miron told Rare.

The data suggests a shake-up of social taboos, which have long presented alcohol as an acceptable drug while demonizing smoking. After decades of public health campaigns against cigarettes, alcohol has displaced tobacco as the public's primary substance-abuse concern.

Sixty-four percent of Americans drink and the average American consumes about four alcoholic beverages per week, according to a [Gallup survey](#). But the United States also has one of the lowest rates of alcohol consumption in the developed world.

America also has a long history of tobacco cultivation and consumption, though its rate of tobacco use greatly declined in the second half of the twentieth century.

[According to](#) the National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws, “Marijuana is the third most popular recreational drug in America (behind only alcohol and tobacco), and has been used by nearly 100 million Americans.”

Marijuana legalization has been on the rise as several states have passed legislation allowing for medicinal or recreation purposes.

The Rare survey was conducted by nonpartisan Gravis Marketing between August 11 and August 18. A total of 556 respondents under age 40 were interviewed over the phone and using Internet panels. Overall, the poll has a margin of error of 5 percent.