

## Voters Split on ‘War on Drugs’ Program D.A.R.E.

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions’s recent promotion of Drug Abuse Resistance Education unearthed arguments over the efficacy of the hallmark anti-drug program that began proliferating in K-12 schools over three decades ago.

“I believe that D.A.R.E. was instrumental to our success by educating children on the dangers of drug use,” Sessions said during his [July 11 remarks](#) at a D.A.R.E. training conference in Dallas, Texas.

“Whenever I ask adults around age 30 about prevention, they always mention the D.A.R.E. program,” he added.

Voters are split over the merits of the program, part of the broader “War on Drugs” made famous in the 1980s by then-first lady Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign. A recent [Morning Consult/POLITICO survey](#) shows 38 percent of registered voters said D.A.R.E. has been effective, while 35 percent disagreed. Twenty-seven percent said they didn’t know or had no opinion.

The survey shows there is some data to back up Sessions’s anecdote, even though respondents were generally lukewarm on D.A.R.E.’s success. Voters aged 30-44 were the most likely of any age group to have a positive view of D.A.R.E., with 45 percent of those voters backing the program and 34 percent calling it ineffective. By contrast, 33 percent of voters aged 55-64 said D.A.R.E. was effective and 40 percent said it wasn’t. Support for the program was even lower among voters aged 65 and older: Twenty-six percent of those voters said it was effective and 34 percent said it wasn’t.

Younger voters were the most likely to take a position on the program. Only 22 percent of voters aged 18-29 and 21 percent of voters aged 30-44 said they didn’t know or had no opinion, numbers which continued to rise among voters in older age groups, peaking at 39 percent among voters 65 and older. The youngest voters (aged 18-29) were also the most closely split on D.A.R.E.’s value, with 41 percent saying it was an effective program and 37 percent disagreeing.

There was little partisan divide on the topic, although independents (31 percent) were less likely than Democrats (41 percent) or Republicans (40 percent) to back the program.

While the voting public is split on its effectiveness, the experts are not: They firmly argue that the program has been a waste of government resources in combating drug abuse.

“There are multiple studies that have shown that D.A.R.E. has had no meaningful long-term impact on drug abuse of any kind, including on opioid use,” said Jonathan Blanks, a research associate at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute’s Project on Criminal Justice, in a Thursday phone interview.

A list compiled by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University contains various studies showing D.A.R.E.’s ineffectiveness over the past few decades. One 2009 study even found an increase in self-reported alcohol and cigarette use from D.A.R.E. participants.