



October 2017 Newsletter

Americans say public safety first for alcohol regulation!

By Pamela Erickson

Americans are not looking for additional convenience, lower prices or more places to shop when it comes to alcohol regulation. Instead, they want a focus on public safety and better law enforcement. Those are some of the key messages from a recent national poll, commissioned by the Center for Alcohol Policy (CAP).

Why? First, the public is very supportive of alcohol regulation understanding that alcohol is not an ordinary commodity and that reducing regulations could make problems worse. Sixty-three percent said they thought alcohol regulations are "about right" in their state; only 15% said they are too restrictive and 9% said they are too lenient. Second, a sizeable portion of the public has been personally harmed by alcohol. In the CAP poll, 24% said they have experienced a "personal tragedy" because of it. In a 2017 poll conducted by the Gallup organization, 33% said that drinking had been a cause of trouble in their family. Also, 88% say they are satisfied with the "variety of alcohol products available" and 78% say they disagree with the idea that "there are not enough places in my community to buy alcohol." In fact, 62% say increasing outlets would cause more problems. And, 54% disagree with the statement that the "price of alcohol in my community is too high."

So why would lawmakers be eager to loosen alcohol regulations, add alcohol outlets, create new licenses and fail to increase funding for enforcement? The disconnect may be due to the fact that leaders rarely hear from the general public or the public health community on this issue, but they do hear from industry representatives---especially large, national corporations that have substantial funds to pay for lobbyists and to make campaign contributions. They hear that our regulations are "antiquated". They hear that alcohol should not be treated any different from other products. They hear that customers are crying for "better prices" and greater convenience. These things are just not true.

Here are some key results from the poll:

1. Most important consideration for lawmakers in crafting alcohol regulations:

- 77% Reducing drunk driving
- 70% Protecting health and public safety
- 62% Reducing underage drinking
- 52% Encouraging moderation
- 48% Creating more jobs
- 42% Increasing economic development
- 28% Giving consumers more choices
- 22% Lowering prices
- 19% Allowing more businesses to produce and sell alcoholic products

2. A high percentage of Americans say they are satisfied with the existing system for purchasing alcohol in their state. This is true for all parts of the country, both genders and all age groups:

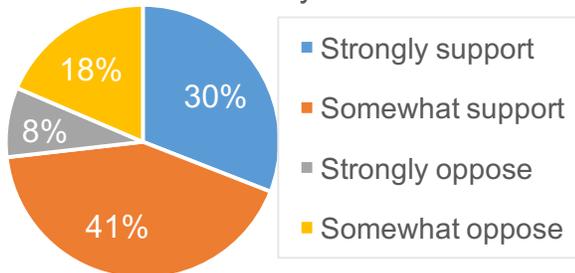
Percentage satisfied	
Men	79%
Women	82%
Ages 21-34	78%
Ages 35-44	78%
Ages 45-54	76%
Ages 55-64	87%
Ages 65+	86%
Northeast	75%
Midwest	85%
South	81%
West	82%

3. People don't want a lot of "cheap" alcohol in their community and there is majority support for stronger controls on products of high alcohol content. Fifty-five percent oppose "bargain tactics" such as free merchandise, alcohol giveaways or selling some products below cost. And, 64% indicate support for stricter controls on higher alcohol content products.

For more information, see www.healthyalcoholmarket.com

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Total support for maintaining regulations which help prevent an abundance of cheap alcohol being available in your community is 71%.



A copy of key findings in an easy-to-read format can be found on the Center for Alcohol Policy's website. (See below)

Sources:

Center for Alcohol Policy, "American's Views of Alcohol Regulations, Key Findings from a National Survey, July 2017," Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies available at <http://www.centerforalcoholpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017-National-Survey-Results.pdf>

Gallup historical polls:
<http://news.gallup.com/poll/1582/Alcohol-Drinking.aspx>

4. Support for a state-based regulatory system is very high and has increased from 62% in 2008 to 81% in 2017. Additionally, 81% say they support the three-tiered license system and 75% say it is working well.

5. So, what should lawmakers do?

- The first priority is to examine alcohol related public safety issues and identify ways to prevent further "personal tragedies" or family problems.
- Consider whether the current enforcement of regulations and laws is sufficient and, if not, find ways to improve.
- When confronted with proposals to change regulations, consider inviting comments from law enforcement and public health about the risks and costs of such change. Resist change unless it is clear there will be no adverse impact to the current system or public health and safety.
- When proponents indicate that increased jobs, business opportunities and tax revenue will flow from regulatory change, seek more detail: Are the jobs high paying or minimum wage? Will the new businesses replace current businesses? Will the additional revenue come at the cost of increased alcohol consumption? Will the change weaken or damage our current alcohol regulatory system? Will the change just replace small, local businesses with large, national businesses?