



TO Interested Parties

FROM Lori Weigel, New Bridge Strategy

RE: Americans' Views of Alcohol Regulation

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New Bridge Strategy completed a survey of Americans age 21 and older in March 2019 regarding their views of alcohol regulation in their state.¹ The study found that American adults continue to support state regulation of the alcohol industry and are satisfied with the regulations in their state. Once introduced to the three-tier system, they say it is working well. American adults want alcohol laws to prioritize public safety over all other aspects.

The specific key findings include:

- **There is overwhelming support for state regulation of alcohol.** Fully 83 percent of Americans indicate support for individual states setting “their own laws and regulations surrounding the sale of alcohol, meaning beer, wine and liquor.” Fully 40 percent strongly support this, while only 17 percent oppose the idea. This is incredibly consistent with past data going back to 2008. Moreover, support for state regulation is strong across the country and with all demographic sub-groups. Support bridges the partisan gap as well (85 percent of Republicans, 81 percent of Democrats, and 83 percent of independents express support for state regulation).
- **Specifically, there is strong support for residency requirements by the states.** There is strong support for a specific requirement that “those who sell or distribute beer, wine and alcohol be a resident of their state in order to obtain a license” (77 percent support, 38 percent strongly support). The state residency requirement has overwhelming support across party lines, with 76 percent of Republicans, 75 percent of Democrats and 78 percent of independents in support. Support exceeds two-thirds support in every region of the country and with every single demographic sub-group examined.

¹ **Methodology:** From March 12-18, 2019, New Bridge Strategy completed 1003 online interviews with adults age 21 and older throughout the United States. Interviews were drawn from online panels, and the sample was drawn proportionally throughout the country and is demographically representative of the adult population in this age group. The confidence interval associated with this sample is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level; with varying confidence for population subgroups within the sample (although they will be higher). Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

- **More broadly, Americans are satisfied with current alcohol regulations in the state.** In multiple questions throughout the survey, Americans express clear and overwhelming satisfaction with how alcohol is handled in their state, including...
 - 82 percent say they are very (38 percent) or somewhat (44 percent) satisfied with the “existing system for purchasing alcohol” in their state. Only 18 percent register dissatisfaction. This is within margin of error of responses two years ago on this exact question.
 - Only 14 percent view current alcohol regulations in their state as “too restrictive,” while the vast majority say they are “about right” (64 percent) or too lenient (12 percent). Another one-in-ten say they do not know enough to register an opinion. Again, this is very close to the responses we saw in 2017.
 - Nearly nine-of-ten are satisfied with the variety of alcohol products available in their community (87 percent) with almost half (49 percent) saying they are “very” satisfied.
 - Satisfaction is also high with the number of places alcohol can be purchased. Fully seven-in-ten (70 percent) say the number of places where alcohol can be purchased in their community is “about right,” while 19 percent feel there are too many. Only 11 percent say there are not enough.

- **The three-tier system is viewed positively.** Given that most adults are not completely familiar with the three-tier system, we provided a brief neutral explanation of it as follows: *“As you may know, most states in the U.S. have regulations requiring that producers of alcohol sell their products to licensed local independent distributors, who then sell the alcohol to individual retailers such as bars, grocery, liquor, and packaged goods stores.”* Fully three-quarters (75 percent) say that they view this system as “working well,” and an equal number of 75 percent support individual states regulating alcohol sales under this system. Support over the years has consistently been in the solid majority range, with greater than two-thirds support since 2010.

- **Americans want alcohol laws to prioritize safety.** In a number of key questions in the survey, the public expresses that alcohol-related problems are serious concerns and that health and safety should be at the forefront when lawmakers consider alcohol regulations.
 - Driving under the influence of alcohol is seen as the most serious problem we tested with nine-in-ten (90 percent) characterizing it as an extremely or very serious problem facing our country. It just eclipsed illegal drug abuse (88 percent) and prescription drug abuse (87 percent);
 - “High risk drinking on college campuses,” “binge drinking” and “underage drinking” are also all seen as extremely or very serious problems at nearly the same levels (78 percent, 74 percent and 71 percent, respectively);
 - Therefore, it should be no surprise that respondents want lawmakers to prioritize “reducing drunk driving” (78 rate it as very important), protecting health and public safety” (70 percent) and reducing underage drinking (64 percent) over all other factors. The factors which are least apt to be seen as very important are “giving consumers more choices” (36 percent), lowering prices (25 percent) and allowing more business to produce and sell alcoholic products (22 percent).