



TO Interested Parties

FROM Lori Weigel & Kathryn Hahne / New Bridge Strategy

RE: Views of Alcohol Regulation in Florida

DATE January 31, 2020

New Bridge Strategy completed a survey of Florida voters age 21 and older in January 2020 regarding their views of alcohol regulation in their state on behalf of the Center for Alcohol Policy.¹ As was evident in a national survey conducted in March 2019, we find significant and bipartisan support for state regulation of the alcohol industry, as Floridians continue to be satisfied with alcohol regulations in their state. Once introduced to the three-tier system, voters say it is working well. Floridians want alcohol laws to prioritize public safety over all other aspects.

The specific key findings include:

¹ **Methodology:** From January 10-15, 2020, New Bridge Strategy completed 704 online interviews with registered voters age 21 and older throughout Florida. Interviews were drawn from online panels, and the sample was drawn proportionally throughout the state and is demographically representative of the registered voter population in this age group. The confidence interval associated with this sample is +/-4.22% at the 95% confidence level; with varying confidence for population subgroups within the sample. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%. Comparisons are made to a national survey of 1003 adults throughout the United States age 21 and older conducted March 12-18, 2019. The confidence interval associated with this sample is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level.

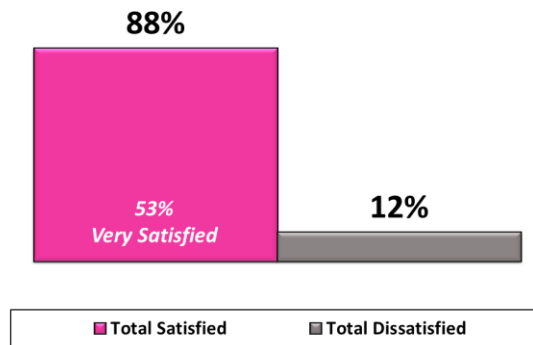
- **There is solid support across party lines for the regulation of alcohol.** More than 9 out of 10 Floridians agree that it is very important to keep the alcohol industry regulated – a higher rate than nationally.



While government regulation of any kind is often viewed through a partisan lens, we do not see this when it comes to regulation of alcohol. Support bridges the partisan gap with fully 91 percent of Republicans, 90 percent of Democrats, and 93 percent of independents expressing agreement with regulation of alcohol.

Moreover, Floridians say that getting rid of alcohol regulations could make problems worse. There is overwhelming agreement that “parents, police officers and retailers already have a difficult challenge keeping alcohol out of the hands of minors. Getting rid of alcohol rules, regulations and safeguards could make the problems worse.” Fully 81 percent of Florida voters agree, and 51 percent strongly agree with this statement. This is on par with the past national data.

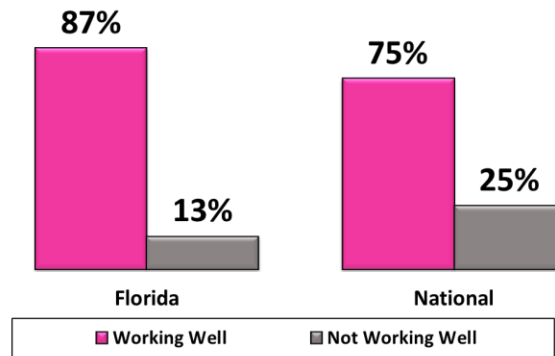
- **In part, this is due to the fact that alcohol is viewed as a unique product which requires oversight.** Four-in-five Florida voters (80 percent) agree that alcohol is different than other consumer goods and therefore needs stronger regulations. Almost seven-in-ten (68 percent) also agree that products with higher alcohol content levels should be more strictly controlled than lower alcohol content products.
- **More broadly, Floridians are satisfied with current alcohol regulations in the state.** In multiple questions throughout the survey, Florida voters express clear and overwhelming satisfaction with how alcohol is handled in their state, including...
 - 88 percent say they are very (53 percent) or somewhat (32 percent) satisfied with the “existing system for purchasing alcohol” in their state. Only 12 percent register dissatisfaction. Satisfaction is high across gender and ethnic lines, as well as across different communities when we compare urban, suburban and rural areas. Fully 82 percent nationally said they were satisfied with the current system in their state.



- Only eight percent view current alcohol regulations in their state as “too restrictive,” while the vast majority say they are “about right” (68 percent) or even “too lenient” (12 percent). Another one-in-ten say they do not know enough to register an opinion. Solid majorities across party lines say the system is “about right” (71 percent of Republicans, 68 percent of independents and 66 percent of Democrats). Again, this is very close to the responses from the national survey conducted less than a year ago.
- Nine-in-ten (90 percent) are satisfied with the variety of alcohol products available in their community with more than half (54 percent) saying they are “very” satisfied. This is true irrespective of what type of community (urban, suburban, rural) in which voters reside.
- Satisfaction is also high with the number of places alcohol can be purchased. More than seven-in-ten (73 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 8 percent say there are not enough.

Notably, the type of alcohol that residents have purchased bears no relationship to their views of the number of alcohol outlets, although those who have not purchased alcohol in the past year are far more likely to say there are too many outlets for alcohol (38 percent too many, 58 percent about right and only four percent 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.”* Compared to the national data, Floridians are more likely to view this system as “working well.” 87 percent of Floridians say this system is working well versus three-quarters (75 percent) nationally. Voters in every area of the state, of every ethnic background, and political affiliation express the view that the three-tier system is working well in Florida.



Again, support is evident across party lines, with 88 percent of Republicans, 85 percent of independents and 88 percent of Democrats supporting states regulating alcohol through this three-tier system.

- **After hearing two different opinion of the three-tier system, the vast majority of voters are more likely to side with those who want to uphold the three-tier system.** Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly side with proponents of the three-tier system. Fully 66 percent of Republicans, 55 percent of Independents, and 66 percent of Democrats are more likely to side with the statement from those who support the tiered system.

Some people say that having a system that separates producers, distributors, and retailers is good because it prevents big companies from creating a monopoly, limiting choices for consumers, and pushing out smaller craft brewers or wineries, and it ensures there are strong safeguards over how alcoholic beverages are handled at every step in the system.

64%

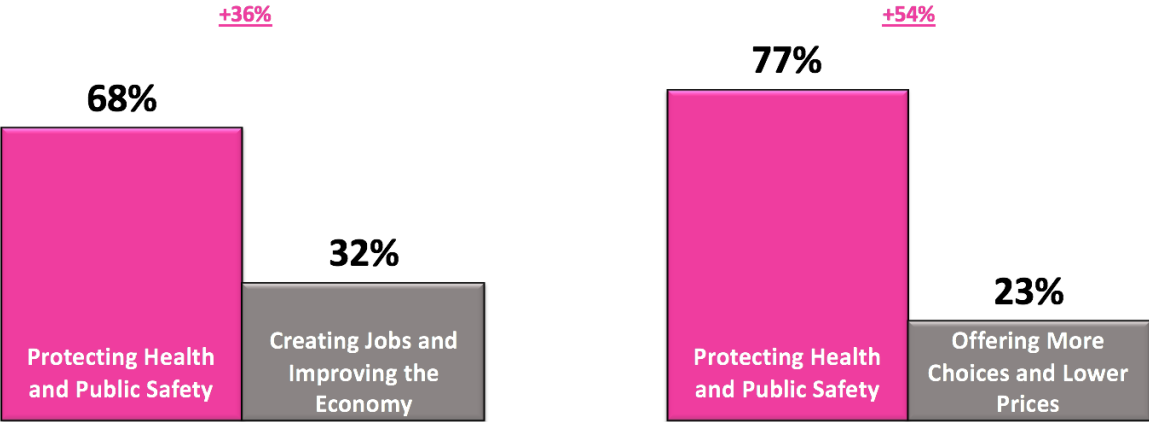
Other people say that having a system that separates producers, distributors, and retailers is an outdated system set up after prohibition. In an internet age, brewers, vineyards and distillers do not need middle men, and this keeps alcohol prices higher than they would be if there were more direct sales.

36%

Moreover, nine-in-ten Florida voters say that they “trust that alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine and liquor sold in stores and restaurants in my state can be consumed safely, meaning they are not tainted or counterfeit.” This is on par with what we saw nationally (87 percent of adults nationally also agree).

- **Florida voters want alcohol regulations to prioritize safety.** When asked what are the most important factors that lawmakers should consider when contemplating changes, the public overwhelmingly backs health and safety considerations. As the following graph illustrates, Americans say lawmakers should prioritize “protecting health and public safety” over “creating jobs and improving the economy” or “offering more choices and lower prices.” This support for protecting health and public safety traverses the partisan spectrum.

As you may know, states do regulate alcohol by creating rules that are unique to their state. Which of the following should be more important to state legislators in Florida when setting alcohol regulations?



- **The survey also finds overwhelming support for a host of regulations and laws on alcohol sales, including...**
 - Keeping 21 as the minimum age in Florida to purchase alcohol (86 percent support, 65 percent strong support), similar to support levels nationally;
 - Ensuring that stores which sell alcohol are licensed and owners undergo background checks (94 percent support, 66 percent strong support), higher than support nationally (88 percent); and
 - Maintaining “regulations which help prevent an abundance of cheap alcohol being available in your community” (75 percent support, 38% percent strong support).

In addition, a majority (55 percent) of Florida voters say that “promotion of alcohol in liquor, grocery and convenience stores – such as selling products below cost or offering free merchandise” should be kept as it currently is, with another 29 percent wanting those regulations to be stricter and only 16 percent looser. Parents are more likely to want to see stricter regulation of promotion of alcohol (36 percent) than are those without children in their household.