

San Diego Public Opinion on Marketing and Youth Drinking

S.D. Countywide Project to Prevent Alcohol and Other Drug Problems • July, 2003

San Diegans believe that alcohol advertising and promotions are partly responsible for the consumption of alcohol by youth under 21 – which they consistently cite as a concern – according to a comprehensive telephone survey commissioned by the nonprofit Institute for Public Strategies (IPS).

Following up on a similar survey taken in 2001, the poll was designed to gauge public opinion on alcohol issues in San Diego and public support for some of the County's initiatives to prevent alcohol-related problems. The survey results in this fact sheet pertain to a set of questions about underage drinking and the promotional efforts of the alcohol industry.

Methodology

The poll of 554 county residents 18 years of age and older was conducted randomly by the Social Science Research Labs at San Diego State University between January 30 and February 21, 2003. The results are representative by ethnicity, age and gender. Respondents had the option to conduct the interview in English or Spanish. The survey sample's margin of error is 6.9% at the 95th percentile confidence interval. IPS commissioned the poll under contract with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Alcohol and Drug Services.

Summary of Findings

Confirming a trend that IPS documented in its 2001 San Diego Alcohol Survey, respondents to this poll said they are concerned about the problem of underage drinking in San Diego County, and they think the problem has increased in the past two years. They believe that certain types of alcohol marketing – such as spring break promotions and advertising near schools – contribute to underage drinking. In addition, they support policies to ban alcohol advertising near areas frequented by youth.

ASSESSMENT OF UNDERAGE DRINKING PROBLEMS

- More than 4 out of 5 respondents (83%) say they are *concerned* about underage drinking in San Diego County.
- More than half of residents polled (53%) think underage drinking in San Diego County has *increased* in the past two years.

PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL PROMOTIONS

- Nearly 3 out of 4 residents (74%) think that alcohol *advertising near schools* contributes to underage drinking, while more than 4 out of 5 residents (81%) say the same of "*beach-located promotions*" of alcohol.
- More than 2 out of 3 residents (68%) think that alcohol *sponsorships of street fairs and festivals* contribute to underage drinking.
- More than 2 out of 3 residents (69%) think that offering alcohol *promotional items and contests* contributes to underage drinking.
- 4 out of 5 residents (80%) agree that *advertisements in young people's magazines* contribute to underage drinking. The same number believe that *television beer ads* do so.

- More than 4 out of 5 residents (81%) think that *advertisements with sexual themes* contribute to underage drinking.
- More than 9 out of 10 residents (91%) think that *spring break promotions* contribute to underage drinking, including 4 out of 5 (77%) who say the promotions contribute “*a great deal.*”

ADS TARGETING SPECIFIC GROUPS

- Nearly 4 out of 5 residents (78%) think that alcohol advertisements target *minorities*. The same number say *African-Americans* are targeted, while slightly more (79%) say *Hispanics* are targeted.
- Nearly 4 out of 5 residents (78%) think that alcohol advertisements target people in *low-income neighborhoods*.
- More than 7 out of 10 residents (71%) think that alcohol advertisements target members of the *military*.
- More than 9 out of 10 residents (94%) think that alcohol advertisements target *young males*, while nearly 4 out of 5 (78%) believe *young females* are targeted.
- 7 out of 10 residents (70%) think that alcohol advertisements target *high school students*. According to more than 9 out of 10 residents (95%), alcohol advertisements target *college students*.

RESTRICTING ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

- More than 3 out of 4 residents (77%) favor banning alcohol advertising near *youth-frequented areas* such as playgrounds, recreation centers, schools and family housing.

Background on Underage Drinking

San Diegans' concerns about youth drinking are supported by health and safety data showing significant risks related to underage alcohol consumption.

For example, alcohol use plays a major role in all of the leading causes of death among youth, including motor-vehicle fatalities, drownings, suicides and homicides (American Medical Association). Of the 6,390 deaths of 15- to 20-year-olds in motor vehicle crashes in 2000, alcohol was involved 36.6% of the time (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

Almost 25 percent of sexually active young adults ages 18-24 in the U.S. say they've had sex because they were drinking or using drugs at the time (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University). In addition, Americans who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who wait until the age of 21 (Grant and Dawson, 1997, *Journal of Substance Abuse*).



This fact sheet was produced by the Institute for Public Strategies, a nonprofit organization advancing public health through changes in policy and community norms. For more information, call (619) 296-3311, e-mail info@publicstrategies.org or visit www.publicstrategies.org.

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