



Making the Link

Underage Drinking and Public Opinion

Adults express concerns about underage drinking.

- According to a national survey of adults, 98 percent were concerned about drunk driving and 96 percent were concerned about underage drinking.¹
- Respondents were more concerned about the age a youth got drunk versus the age a youth started drinking. Sixty-seven percent indicated that there is no age at which it is acceptable to get drunk, while 12 percent indicated that there is no acceptable age for initiation of the consumption of alcohol.²

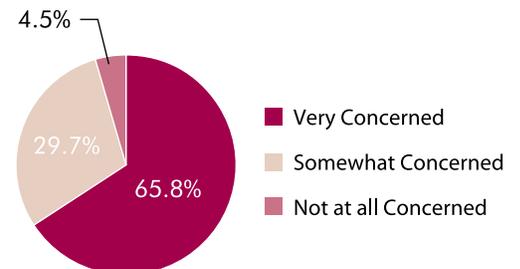
A majority of adults support measures that would help prevent underage drinking.

- In this same national survey, 93 percent of the respondents approved restrictions on drinking in city streets and 88 percent approved restrictions on drinking on college campuses.³
- The respondents also favored regulations on access to alcohol. Eighty percent supported the minimum legal drinking age of 21, 87 percent believed there should be penalties for adult providers of alcohol to youth, 70 percent supported compliance checks, and 81 percent supported higher alcohol taxes.⁴
- A majority of the respondents supported restrictions on advertising and the marketing of alcohol: 67 percent supported bans on liquor ads on TV; 59 percent supported bans on beer and wine ads on TV; 61 percent supported bans on billboard alcohol ads; and 62 percent supported bans on sports promotion.⁵

Young people have concerns about underage drinking too.

- According to a national study, 82 percent of 8th graders, 72 percent of 10th graders and 67 percent of 12th graders say they disapprove of people having five or more drinks once or twice each weekend.⁶
- Young people feel they are targeted by advertisers. More than 7 in 10 teens believe that beer and liquor companies advertise not only to get young people to start drinking (74 percent), but also to drink more (78 percent) so they will be hooked on their products (73 percent).⁷

When asked how they felt about the problem of teenage drinking, 96 percent of respondents expressed concern.



Source: Youth Access to Alcohol Survey, University of Minnesota, 2002.

¹ Wagenaar AC, Harwood E, Bernat D. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2001 Youth Access To Alcohol Survey: Summary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Alcohol Epidemiology Program, 2002.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Johnston LD, O'Malley PM, Bachman JG. 2003. Monitoring the Future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings, 2002. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.
⁷ "What Teens and Adults are Saying about 'Alcopops'." National opinion polls conducted during April 2001 by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (Washington, DC) for the Center for Science in the Public Interest; released May 9, 2001.

Initiative Partners

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Office of Research on Women's Health (NIH)

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT)