

CENTER FOR ALCOHOL POLICY

APRIL 2021

# NATIONAL ALCOHOL REGULATION SENTIMENT SURVEY



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**PREPARED BY**

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY / CENTER FOR ALCOHOL POLICY

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# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ALCOHOL POLICY



## ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Alcohol Policy provides a thoughtful and respected voice to the conversation surrounding alcohol, its uniqueness and regulation. From law and policy debates to legal cases and educational programming, the Center promotes appropriate state-based regulation of alcohol and safe and responsible consumption, fights underage drinking and drunk driving, and informs key entities and the public about the effects of alcohol consumption.

# SURVEY BACKGROUND

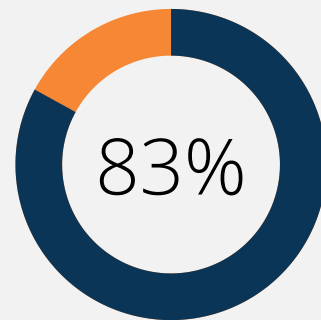
Biennially, the Center commissions a national survey on public opinion surrounding state alcohol regulations. These polls have consistently demonstrated that the long-standing alcohol regulatory system in the United States works and people like it; that Americans are satisfied with current alcohol regulations in their state; and that Americans want alcohol laws to prioritize health and safety. Further, this poll found that the public believes lawmakers should evaluate the impact of COVID-19 inspired deregulations before making them permanent.

The survey was conducted by New Bridge Strategy among 1,002 adults ages 21 and older throughout the nation [1]. The interviews were conducted online and distributed proportionally throughout the U.S. and are demographically representative of this age group. The survey was the latest look at core attitudes on a number of facets of alcohol regulation that have been tracked for more than a decade.

## WHAT AMERICANS THINK ABOUT ALCOHOL AND HOW IT'S REGULATED

The 2021 survey results show American adults are **in favor of a broad array of state-level alcohol regulations and the three-tier system**, which separates the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol; they are **satisfied with the consumer choice** fostered by the American system of alcohol distribution; and Americans want lawmakers to **prioritize public health and safety** over convenience and price when weighing changes to alcohol regulations.

*Support for individual states setting their own alcohol sales laws*



**SUPPORT REMAINS OVERWHELMING FOR INDIVIDUAL STATE REGULATION OF ALCOHOL.**

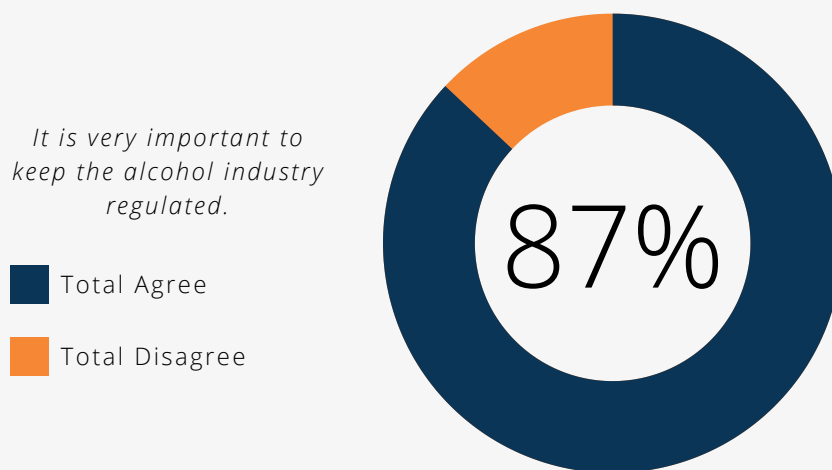
1. The confidence interval associated with this sample is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level; with varying confidence for population subgroups within the sample.

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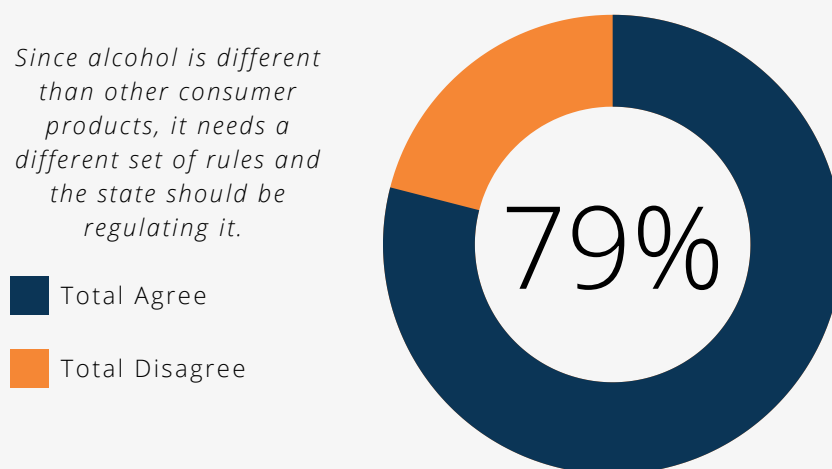
# THE SYSTEM WORKS AND AMERICANS LIKE IT

## AMERICANS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT STATE REGULATION OF ALCOHOL

87 percent of Americans agree that alcohol is a product that needs to be regulated.



About 8 in 10 (79 percent) Americans agree that alcohol is different than other products and therefore should be regulated differently.



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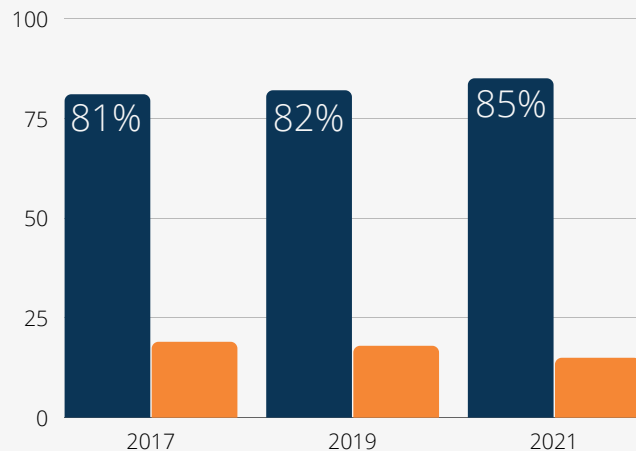
# SATISFACTION REMAINS HIGH

## AMERICANS ARE SATISFIED WITH ALCOHOL REGULATIONS IN THEIR STATE

A record-high 85 percent of Americans continue to be satisfied with the existing system for alcohol in their respective states, which has increased slightly in recent years.

*I'd like you to think about the existing system for purchasing alcohol in your state. How satisfied are you with the current system?*

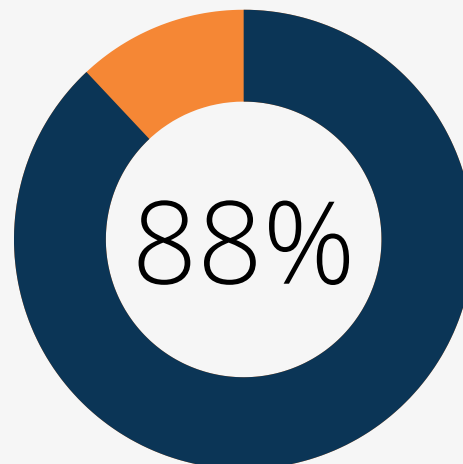
■ Total Satisfied  
■ Total Dissatisfied



Nearly 9 out of 10 Americans (88 percent) are satisfied with the variety of alcohol products available.

*Thinking about the selection of alcohol products in your community, when it comes to the variety of alcohol products you have available to you, would you say that you are...*

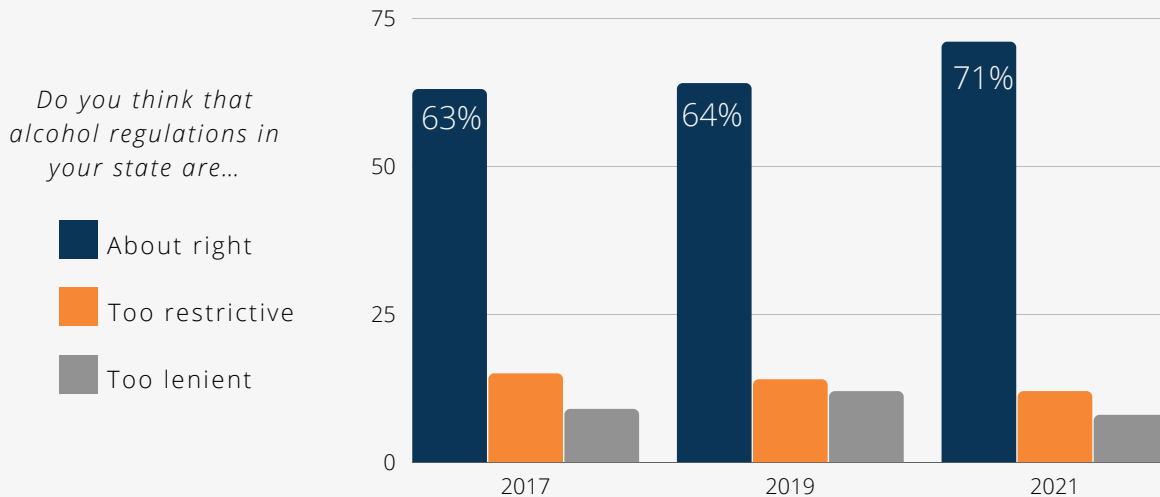
■ Total Satisfied  
■ Total Dissatisfied



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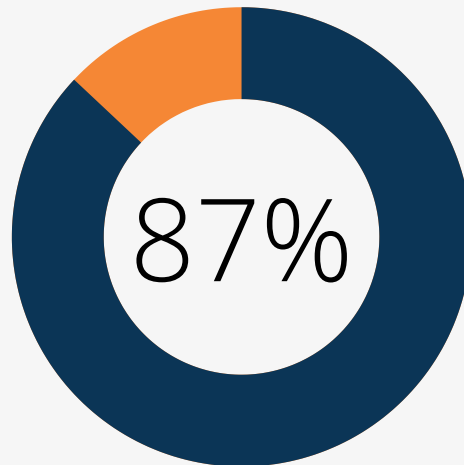
# SATISFACTION REMAINS HIGH

Seven-in-ten (71 percent) Americans say that their state's alcohol regulations are "just right", an increase of 8 percentage points since 2017.



There is continued confidence in the safety of alcohol products sold as well. 89 percent of adult Americans trust that what they consume is safe.

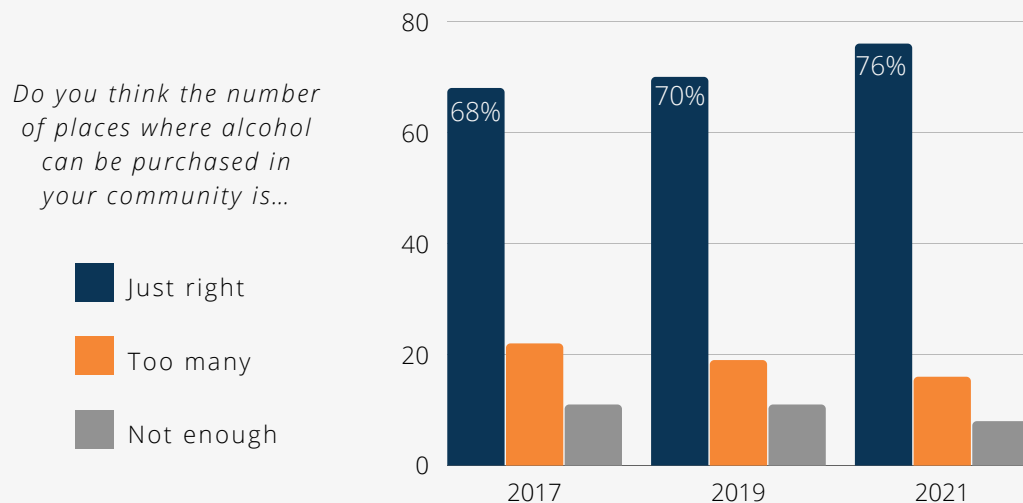
*I trust that alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine and liquor sold in stores and restaurants in my state can be consumed safely, meaning they are not tainted or counterfeit.*



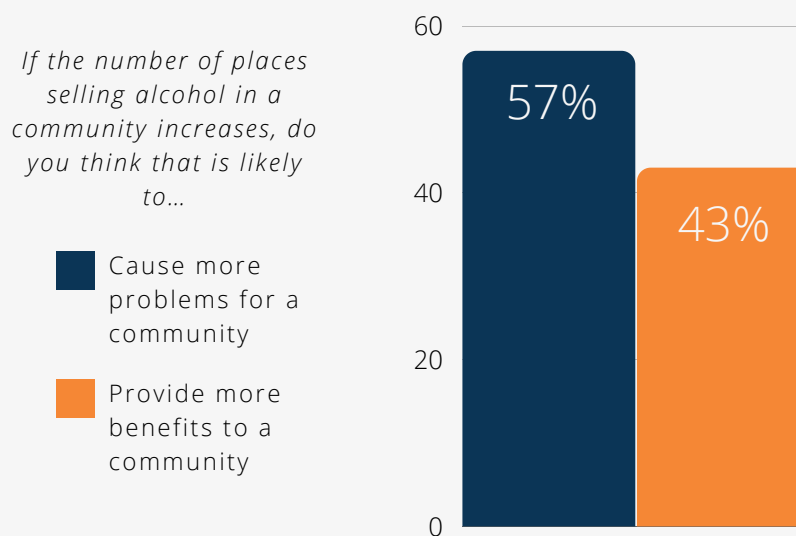
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# SATISFACTION REMAINS HIGH

Americans satisfied with the number of places where alcohol can be purchased in their community continues to rise at 76 percent (up 8 percentage points since 2017).



57 percent of Americans say increasing the number of outlets would cause more problems for a community.



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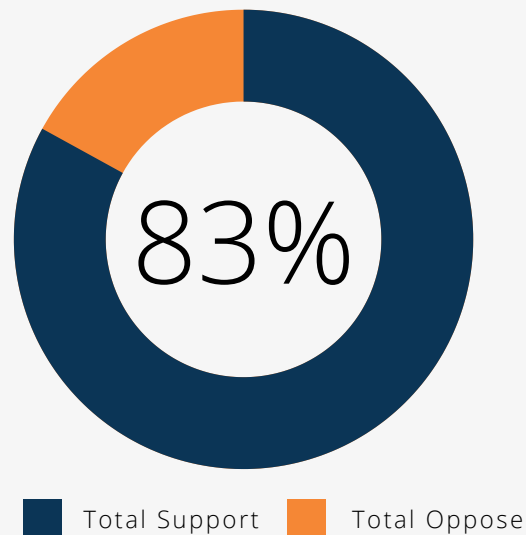
# THE 3-TIER SYSTEM WORKS WELL

## THE THREE-TIER SYSTEM IS VIEWED POSITIVELY

We provided a brief explanation of the current three-tier alcohol regulation system, and then asked about individual states regulating alcohol. 83 percent of Americans support states setting their own alcohol laws and regulations.

*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.*

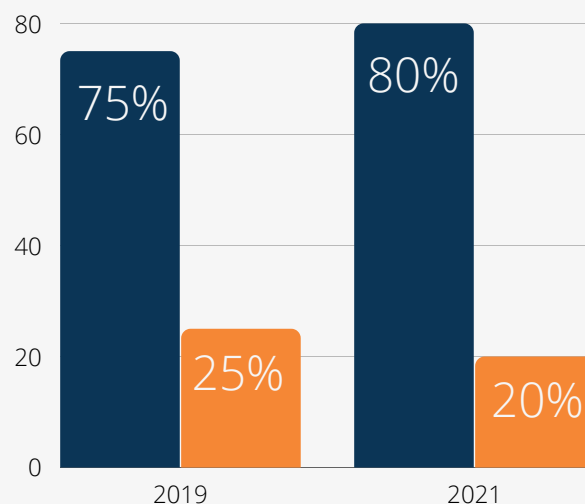
*Thinking about this, do you support or oppose the rights of individual states to set their own laws and regulations that require alcohol to be sold under this system?*



Four-fifths of Americans (80 percent) agree that the three-tier system works well, an increase of 5 percentage points since 2019.

*Would you say that this system is generally...*

■ Working well  
■ Not working well





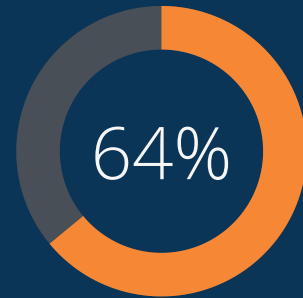
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# THE 3-TIER SYSTEM WORKS WELL

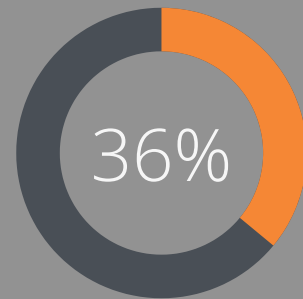
About two-thirds of Americans (64 percent) agree with the reasoning behind the three-tier system.

*Which of the following statements do you agree with more? Please choose one even if neither matches exactly what you think.*

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



*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 shouldn't need middle men, and this keeps alcohol prices higher than they would be if there were more direct sales.*



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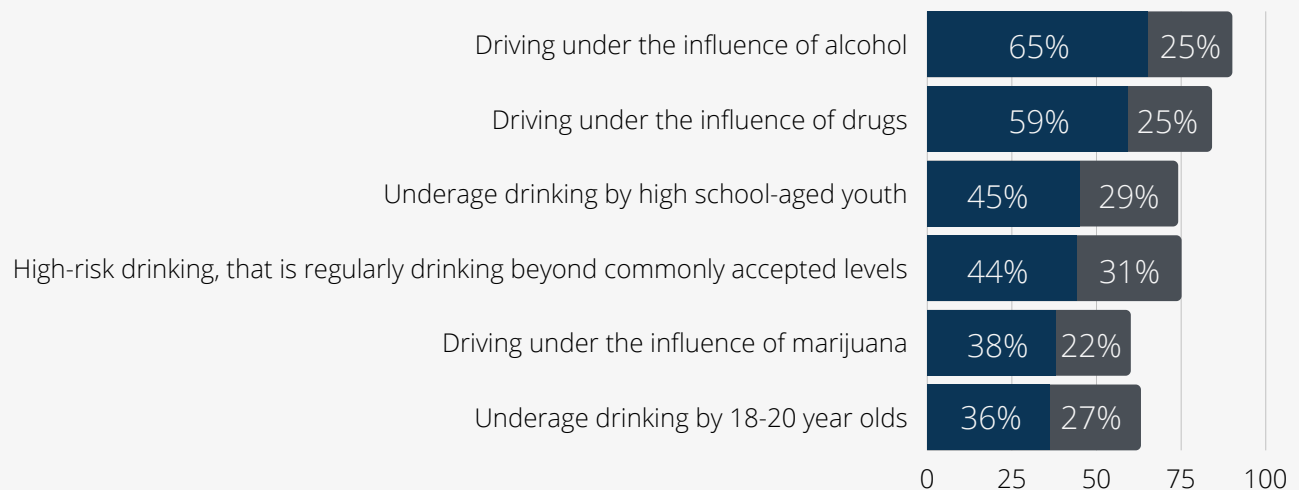
# PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

## AMERICANS WANT ALCOHOL LAWS TO PRIORITIZE PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Drunk driving is seen as the most serious alcohol-related problem by 90 percent of Americans.

*The following list is issues some people say are problems in the country. For each one, please indicate how big a problem you think it is.*

■ Extremely serious  
■ Very serious



**LAWMAKERS SHOULD PRIORITIZE  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY WHEN  
CONSIDERING REGULATORY  
CHANGES**

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# PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

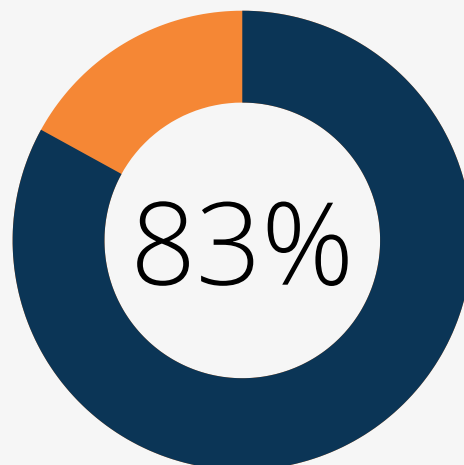
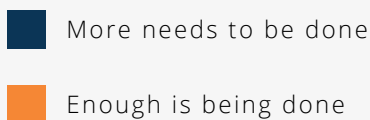
Voters want to see lawmakers address drunk driving.

*As you may know, states do regulate alcohol by crafting rules that are unique to their state. Sometimes changes are considered. The following is a list of concerns some people say lawmakers should consider when setting alcohol regulations. Using a scale of 0 to 10, please indicate how important each of these considerations should be when deciding alcohol regulations: 10 is very important, 0 is not at all important and 5 is a neutral rating.*



About two-thirds of Americans (64 percent) say that more needs to be done to reduce the potential harm caused by alcohol.

*Generally, do you believe that more needs to be done to reduce the potential harm caused by alcohol, or do you think enough is being done now?*



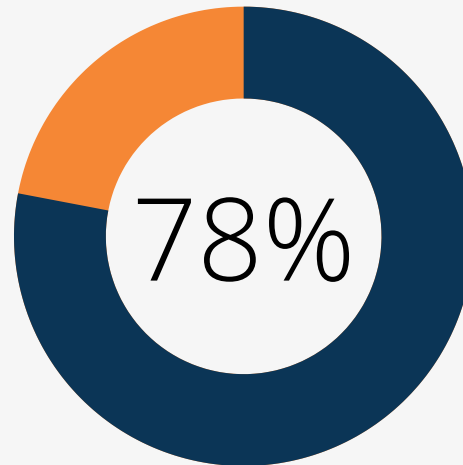
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# PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

Americans believe that loosening regulations will make underage drinking problems worse.

*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.*

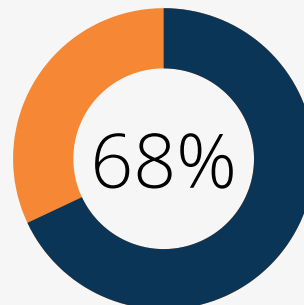
■ Total Agree  
■ Total Disagree



Americans view higher alcohol content products differently than products with a lower alcohol content.

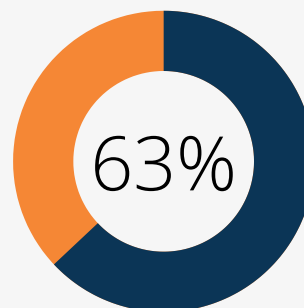
*The higher alcohol content of liquor poses a greater health risk than beer or wine.*

■ Total Agree  
■ Total Disagree



*Alcoholic products with higher alcohol content levels should be more strictly controlled than lower alcohol content products.*

■ Total Agree  
■ Total Disagree

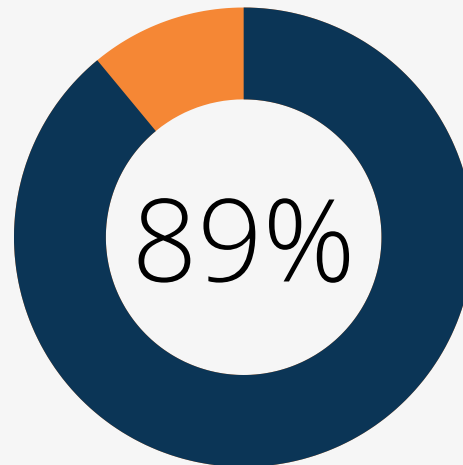


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# PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

Support remains very high for background checks of licensed alcohol stores and owner.

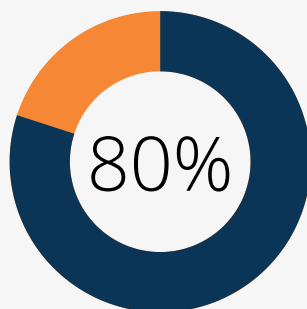
*There are a number of proposals in state legislatures to address how alcohol could be regulated: Do you support or oppose ensuring that stores which sell alcohol are licensed and owners undergo background checks?*



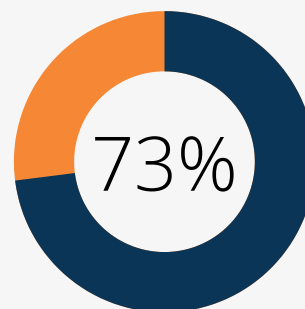
## ALCOHOL POLICY AND COVID-19

There is overwhelming support for holding companies and their employees that deliver alcohol to the same standards as traditional venues.

*Holding companies that deliver alcohol to the same standards as bars, restaurants, and stores that sell alcohol*



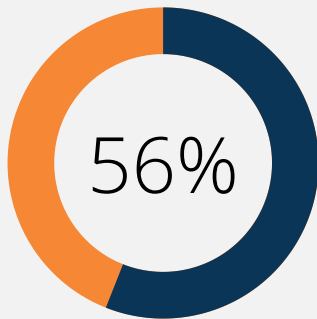
*Holding any person delivering alcohol to the same standards as a bartender and store clerk who sells alcohol*



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# PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

In June of 2020, the Center for Alcohol Policy published a report titled, "**Crisis De-Regulations: Should They Stay or Should They Go?**", authored by Patrick Maroney, the former director of the Colorado Liquor Enforcement Division. The report addresses the response by state government officials relaxing certain key alcohol regulations to relieve the financial burden experienced by on-premise retailers due to the spread of Covid-19, Maroney concluded that although states had to react quickly at the onset of the pandemic, **a cautious approach should be taken** when contemplating permanent changes to current alcohol laws and regulations as states begin to recover. Similarly, according to the Center's 2021 Sentiment Survey, **a majority (56 percent) of Americans agree.**



A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS AGREE THAT STATES SHOULD EVALUATE IMPACTS ON THEIR COMMUNITIES BEFORE MAKING ANY ALCOHOL LAW CHANGES PERMANENT.

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# CONCLUSION



Ultimately, the Center's 2021 Sentiment survey found that despite some changing behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic, attitudes among adult Americans remain the same: **the long-standing alcohol regulatory system in the U.S. works, and people like it.** The results show – as they have repeatedly in the past – that there is **solid support across the country for state regulation of alcohol.** In part, this is because alcohol is viewed as a unique product that requires oversight, and a solid majority of Americans reject the idea that alcohol is just like other consumer goods such as toilet paper and tin foil. More broadly, Americans are **satisfied with current alcohol regulations in their state.** In multiple questions throughout the survey, Americans express clear and overwhelming satisfaction with how their state handles alcohol distribution. Most significant, Americans want alcohol laws to **prioritize safety.** The public strongly believes that alcohol-related problems are serious concerns, and that health and safety should be at the forefront when lawmakers consider alcohol regulations. Lastly, most Americans agree that states should **evaluate impacts on their communities** before making any alcohol law changes permanent, in line with what the Center expressed in its most recent white paper, "Crisis De-Regulations: Should They Stay or Should They Go?"



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