

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Poll: Alcohol Promotions Prompt Youth to Drink

*San Diegans Concerned About Underage Drinking,  
Cite Alcohol Marketing Practices as Factor*

SAN DIEGO — Seventy percent of San Diegans say advertising, marketing and promotions by the alcohol industry influence people under the age of 21 to drink, according to a major telephone survey commissioned by the nonprofit Institute for Public Strategies (IPS). In addition, 73% agree that beer and liquor companies specifically target underage college students with their ads, while 78% say the companies place alcohol promotions at sports events to attract a young, male audience.

The poll of 750 residents of San Diego County, conducted in December of 2001 by the Washington, D.C.-based firm of Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, showed that 70% of San Diegans think beer and liquor companies advertise to youth under 21 rather than to adults only — despite the alcohol industry's statements to the contrary. And 61% say beer and liquor companies talk about "individual responsibility" because they want Americans to overlook the role they play in encouraging young people to drink.

The survey results are announced in the wake of news that the underage drinking epidemic remains a top public health concern, both in San Diego and across the country. According to the recent San Diego City Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 76% of San Diego high school students have tried alcohol, 41% drink alcohol at least once a month and 24% binge drink. The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reports that 36% of American youths under the age of 21 now begin drinking by the eighth grade or earlier, up from 27% in 1975.

San Diegans are worried about the problem, according to the IPS poll: 86% say underage drinking in the region is a serious concern.

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[*"Poll: Alcohol Promotions Prompt Youth to Drink," CONTINUED*]

Among the causes for risky drinking among youth, 72% of those polled said advertising, marketing and promotions by the alcohol industry are a factor in influencing people under 21 to drink excessively. San Diegans cited spring break promotions (47%), sponsorship of college related events (39%) and ads with sexual themes (38%) as examples.

"Telling youth not to drink — then sending them into environments crowded with pro-drinking messages — is confusing at best and downright cruel by our society at worst," said Judy Strang, Alcohol and Drug Chair for San Diego's 9th District PTA and Executive Director of the San Dieguito Alliance for Drug-Free Youth.

Other findings in the poll include:

- 73% of San Diegans say the alcohol industry targets specific groups with its ads, including minorities and people living in low-income neighborhoods. And 66% believe those groups are negatively affected as a result of being targeted by the alcohol industry.
- 69% of San Diegans agree that when beer companies talk about "responsible drinking," they're "just trying to avoid getting sued like the tobacco companies."
- 68% of San Diegans think it is not appropriate for politicians to accept donations from the alcohol industry, and 70 percent think such contributions affect the way politicians vote.

"San Diegans know that our youth are growing up in a culture of outdoor advertising, sponsorships and media — print, broadcast and electronic — that's drenched in alcohol messages," said James Baker, Executive Director of IPS. "This poll shows that people understand the link between alcohol marketing and public health where youth are concerned, but communities have a long way to go to reduce this problem together."

IPS commissioned the poll under contract with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Alcohol and Drug Services. The results are representative by age (18 years and older), ethnicity, gender, income and geography. Residents had the option to conduct the phone interview in English or Spanish. The margin of error is +/-3.5%.

For more information about the San Diego County Poll on Alcohol Promotions and Youth, call (619) 474-8844, e-mail [info@publicstrategies.org](mailto:info@publicstrategies.org) or visit [www.publicstrategies.org](http://www.publicstrategies.org).

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