



Polling Institute

400 Cedar Avenue
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
(732) 263-5860
www.monmouth.edu/polling

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TO: Rich Levesque
Executive Director
Retailers for Responsible Liquor Licensing

FR: Patrick Murray
Thomas Lamatsch
Monmouth University Polling Institute

RE: New Jersey State Poll on Supermarket Alcohol Sales

The Monmouth University Polling Institute conducted a survey of New Jersey residents in April 2010 on behalf of the Retailers for Responsible Liquor Licensing to assess public opinion on allowing alcohol sales in supermarkets.

Summary results:

- The majority of New Jerseyans (56%) favor allowing supermarkets to sell alcoholic beverages, compared to 38% of Garden State residents who oppose it. Among those who purchase alcohol on a regular basis, 76% are in favor. Support stands at 51% among occasional shoppers and drops to 29% among those who never purchase alcohol.
- Among those in favor of allowing the sale of alcohol in supermarkets, convenience is the most important argument (50%). Among those against allowing such sales, the top concern is minors having easier access to alcohol (33%).
- More than 4-in-10 (44%) New Jerseyans who buy alcohol would continue purchasing alcohol at a liquor store as often as they do now if supermarkets sold alcohol. A similar number (47%) say they would go less often.

Detailed results:

The majority of New Jerseyans (56%) favor allowing supermarkets to sell alcoholic beverages. About 4-in-10 (38%) are against it. Those in favor include 25% who strongly favor the idea and 31% who favor it somewhat. In the opposition camp, 27% oppose the move strongly and 11% say they are moderately opposed.

Current purchasing behavior is a strong driver for how a person feels about changing liquor laws. Among regular purchasers, 76% would like to see supermarkets sell alcohol, compared to 51% of occasional shoppers and just 29% of those who never shop for alcohol.

Younger people are more likely to favor alcohol sales in supermarkets, with 65% of those between the ages of 21 and 34 favoring it, compared to 57% of 35 to 54 year olds and only 49% of those 55 and older. The poll suggests that younger people might simply see alcohol restrictions as outdated. The proportion of young people saying that there is “just no reason not to” is about twice as high as for other age groups.

In other poll findings, only 1-in-3 suburbanites oppose the change, but just over half of the urban population are against supermarkets selling alcohol, with most of them (42%) being strongly opposed. When asked for reasons for their strong opposition, many urban residents state that they are opposed to drinking in general and they fear an increase in underage drinking.

While protecting children is prominently mentioned by those who oppose supermarket alcohol sales, being the parent of a child has little correlation to opinion on the issue. Support levels of parents (56%) and people without children (56%) are identical.

The poll also asked participants why they either favor or oppose this change in alcohol licensing. Those in favor of allowing supermarket alcohol sales mention convenience (50%) as the most important argument. This is followed by the notion that “other states do it” (15%) and the feeling that there is just no good reason for limiting the sale of alcohol to liquor stores (14%). Other reasons include free market economy arguments (9%) and the expectation that liquor would become less expensive (6%).

Those against allowing the sale of alcohol in supermarkets are mostly concerned with minors having easier access to alcohol (33%). Other reasons include alcohol being too accessible in New Jersey since there are too many liquor stores already (15%) or that there are already enough liquor stores (7%). Another 14% feel that they or their children should not be exposed to alcohol in a supermarket environment. Additionally, 7% think Mom & Pop stores would be hurt by such a move, 6% are opposed to drinking in general, and 4% of respondents state that they themselves do not drink at all.

More than 4 out of 10 (44%) New Jerseyans who purchase alcohol state that expanding sales to supermarkets would not change their alcohol purchasing behavior at all. A similar number (47%) state they would go to the liquor store less often. About 1-in-4 each would go a little less often (24%) or a lot less often (23%). Among regular shoppers 38% will purchase from local liquor stores as often as before while occasional shoppers are less likely to change their behavior (49%).

In conclusion, the majority of Garden State residents would like alcohol to be available in supermarkets. The poll results, however, suggest that some of the opposition could be vocal about any changes to the status quo. The group of strong supporters (25%) and strong opponents (27%) is almost equal in number. Strong opponents, however, use highly emotional arguments such as:

- "...too easy for teens to get it..."
- "I want to limit the proliferation of alcohol"
- "People go shopping with kids and I don't want drunks to come in and buy beer"
- "It [alcohol] takes people's lives"

Supporters, on the other hand, mostly offer practical arguments, such as "convenience" or the fact that "other states do it". This suggests that some of those who oppose changes in licensing laws have an emotional and potentially strong reaction

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you favor or oppose allowing New Jersey supermarkets to sell alcohol, such as beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages?

Favor strongly	Favor somewhat	Oppose somewhat	Oppose strongly	(VOL) Don't Know
25%	31%	11%	27%	7%

2. Why do you feel that way? (Multiple responses were accepted)

If "FAVOR": [n=476, moe= \pm 4.5%]

Convenience	Other states do it	No good reason not to	Free country/ free market	Less expensive	Extra tax revenue	Other reason	(VOL) Don't Know
50%	15%	14%	9%	6%	2%	11%	4%

If "OPPOSE": [n=257, moe= \pm 6.1%]

Potential underage sales	Too many liquor stores already	Don't want to see alcohol	Hurt small stores	Enough liquor stores already	Opposed to drinking	Do not drink	Other reason	(VOL) Don't Know
33%	15%	14%	7%	7%	6%	4%	15%	3%

3. How often do you personally purchase alcoholic beverages at a liquor store or wine shop – at least once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, about once a year, less often, or never?

Weekly Or more	At least monthly	Few times A year	Once A year	Less often	Never	(VOL) Don't Know
10%	29%	24%	10%	5%	21%	1%

[THE FOLLOWING QUESTION WAS ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO PURCHASE ALCOHOL: n=645, moe= \pm 3.9%].

4. If some supermarkets in New Jersey sold alcoholic beverages, do you think you would continue to go to your local liquor store or wine shop about as often as you do now or would you go less often? [IF "LESS OFTEN", ASK: Would that be a lot or just a little less often?]

As often	A little less	A lot less	(VOL) Don't Know
44%	24%	23%	9%

5. Where do you think it would be harder for people under the legal drinking age of 21 to obtain alcoholic beverages – at a supermarket or at a liquor store, or would there be no difference?

Supermarket	Liquor store	No difference	(VOL) Don't Know
12%	35%	51%	1%

This telephone survey was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on April 7-11, 2010 with a statewide random sample of 787 residents age 21 and older. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted sample)

40% Dem	47% Male	24% 21-34	67% White
38% Ind	53% Female	45% 35-54	13% Black
22% Rep		31% 55+	13% Hispanic
		8% Asian/Other	