



Research Brief: Sunday Alcohol Package Sales

Introduction:

Much of the public dialogue around Sunday alcohol package sales has been focused around issues of economics, morality and fairness. Terms such as ‘business friendly’ and ‘consumer friendly’ dominate the conversation as reported by the media. However, the impact of Sunday alcohol package sales on public health and safety has received little attention, despite available research. And, it looks like Sunday alcohol package sales is coming to many local Georgia communities soon and some others still await results from ballot initiatives.

Cobb Alcohol Taskforce is suggesting more attention be given to the impact Sunday alcohol package sales will have on public health and safety. To that end, herein we’ve highlighted available research and identified some research gaps. The big question still lingers for Sunday alcohol package sales in Georgia; ‘will the costs to communities outweigh the economic benefits to businesses?’

Cobb Alcohol Taskforce takes no official public position on this issue. However, our organization does support and encourage:

- Local governments’ authority to establish local alcohol control policies
- Citizen engagement in setting local alcohol control policies
- Community dialogue re: the impact of Sunday alcohol package sales
- Government studies, cost/benefit analysis, of Sunday alcohol package sales

What About Public Health and Safety?:

- According to recent research, repeal of limits on days of sale in off-premise settings is associated with increases in excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.¹
- Excessive alcohol consumption in the U.S. is responsible for approximately 79,000 deaths per year, making it the third-leading cause of preventable death.²
- Approximately 15% of U.S. population aged ≥ 18 years and approximately 29% of high school students in the U.S. report binge drinking.^{3,4}
- Cobb County students report higher rates of weekend binge drinking than all Georgia students.⁵
- Convenience and grocery stores are reported as easiest places for youth to purchase alcohol.⁶
- Alcohol was involved in fifty percent (50%) of criminal cases in the juvenile justice system; theft, assault, fraud, vandalism, rape, traffic, etc.⁷
- Fifty percent (50%) of alcohol related traffic fatalities, deaths are persons other than the drinking driver.⁸
- Reducing excessive alcohol consumption by minors and adults alike is thus a matter of major public health, safety and economic interest; this objective is a central goal in the U.S. public health agenda.⁹

What About Economic Impact?:

- Direct and indirect economic costs of excessive drinking in the U.S. was reported at \$223.5 billion, in 2006.¹⁰
- Excessive alcohol consumption inflicts enormous costs on both individuals and on society in general.¹⁰
 - Research analyzed national data to estimate excessive alcohol consumption costs for year 2006 (most recent year for which data was generally available)
 - \$94.2 billion (42%) in total costs were borne by federal, state and local governments

- \$92.9 billion (41.5%) in total costs were borne by excessive drinkers and their family members
 - Government agencies paid (61%) most of the healthcare expenses
 - Excessive drinkers and their families bore (55%) most of the cost of lost productivity, primarily in the form of lower household income
- The cost of underage drinking alone, cost Georgia citizens \$1.4 billion, and Cobb citizens \$3.1 million, in 2010.¹¹
- Increases in business revenue generated from increased alcohol sales is anticipated, however specific revenue projections are currently unavailable.
- Increases in government revenue generated from additional taxes/fees collected from increased alcohol sales is anticipated, however specific revenue projections are currently unavailable.
- Increases in government costs for additional regulatory, enforcement and public safety services from repeal of Sunday alcohol package sales is anticipated, however specific cost projections are currently unavailable.

What About Research Gaps?:

- Research conducted on Sunday alcohol sales in the U.S. was primarily at the state level and additional research is needed to assess the effectiveness of local restrictions on days of sale in preventing excessive alcohol consumption and related harms.¹
- It would be useful to better understand the effect of differential policies regarding days of sale across neighboring jurisdictions. Does more ready access in a neighboring region lead to increased travel to this region, allowing the possibility of motor vehicle crashes, especially with intoxicated drivers?
- Additional research would be useful in determining cost/benefit analysis, such as; intervention costs, reductions in fatal and nonfatal injuries, crime, and violence, gains in safety and public order, loss in sales and tax revenues and employment, and averted loss of household and workplace productivity.

1 Taskforce on Community Prevention Services, *Effectiveness of policies maintaining or restricting days of alcohol sales on excessive alcohol consumption and related harms*, Am J Prev Med 2010 Middleton et al; 39(6):575-89

2 CDC. Alcohol-attributable deaths and years of potential life lost—U.S., 2001. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2004;53(37):866–70.

3 National Center for Health Statistics. Health, U.S., 2005 with chartbook on trends in the health of America. 2005. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/has/has05.pdf.

4 Miller JW, Naimi TS, Brewer RD, Jones SE. Binge drinking and associated health risk behaviors among high school students. Pediatrics 2007;119(1):76–85.

5 Georgia Student Health Survey, 2010

6 Sources of alcohol for underage drinkers. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 1996;57(3):325-333

7 U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2003 and Cobb County Juvenile Court Annual Report, 2006

8 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2003

9 USDHHS. Healthy people 2010. www.healthypeople.gov/. 2001.

10 *Economic Costs of Excessive Alcohol Consumption in the U.S., 2006*, Am J Prev Med 2011 CDC and Lewin Group www.ajpmonline.org

11 Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, September 2011 - for the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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