

March 4, 2022

*Release is effective immediately*

**CONTACT:**

Frederick J. Boehmke, co-director of the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab, 319-335-2342 (office), 716-866-9277 (cell), [frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu](mailto:frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu).

Hyein Ko, graduate research assistant of the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab, [hyein-ko@uiowa.edu](mailto:hyein-ko@uiowa.edu).

**Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab Poll: Majority of Iowans Support Change to Bottle Deposit Law**

According to a recent Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab Poll, a majority of Iowans would like to see changes to the state's Bottle Deposit Law, originally created in 1978. The online poll, designed by University of Iowa faculty and students as a research project, surveyed 883 voting-age Iowans between Feb. 10 and Feb. 25, 2022.

The strongest support was seen for expanding the types of containers covered to include, for example, those for juice and water beverages. A total of 46.1% of Iowans who were surveyed supported this expansion, compared to 29.8% who wanted to keep coverage the same and 13.7% who would like to see the law cover fewer beverages. In contrast, a plurality of respondents, 38.9%, indicated they prefer to keep the current deposit at 5 cents while 33.5% prefer to increase it, and 22.3% supported eliminating it.

Taken together, 26.1% of respondents supported increasing deposits and expanding containers whereas 10.4% supported eliminating the deposit and covering fewer beverages. A total of 18.2% preferred to keep both unchanged. Most respondents, then, prefer some form of change: in total, 70.1% of respondents indicated a preference for changing at least one of the two components; 51.0% supported increasing at least one component; and 22.5% supported decreasing at least one component. Finally, 3.4% of respondents supported increasing one while also decreasing the other.

Respondents were also asked where they prefer to return containers to redeem their deposit.

- 40.4% prefer to return containers to grocery stores and gas stations
- 48.9% prefer to return containers to community redemption centers
- 3.9% prefer some other location, with many volunteering that they prefer recycling centers or curbside recycling bins.

Lastly, respondents were asked if they had experienced any problems redeeming their deposit containers in the last year or so.

- 27.8% indicated their usual return site was temporarily closed
- 16.3% indicated it had permanently closed
- 36.4% indicated no problems redeeming their containers
- 14.4% do not return their bottles or cans

Responses varied most notably with respondent age and community type. Support for increasing the bottle deposit was greater among respondents aged 18-29 (35.7%) and 30-49 (36.9%) compared to those 50-64 (32.8%) and 65 and older (27.2%). Older respondents indicated they prefer to keep it the same, including 54.1% of those 65 and older and 39.1% of those aged 50-64. The largest support for eliminating the deposit came from the two middle groups, with 29.3% of

those aged 30-49 favoring this compared to 17.8% of those aged 18-29 and 14.1% of those 65 and older. Only modest differences were found by age for changing the bottle deposit amount.

Support for covering more beverages increased steadily with age.

- 39.6% of respondents aged 18 to 29 support covering more beverages
- 44.7% of those aged 30-49
- 47.3% of those aged 50-64
- 53.1% of those aged 65 and older.

By region, a majority of respondents who reported living in rural communities were most likely to support expanding coverage at 51.0%. In contrast, only 38.4% of urban residents favored expansion. However, 35.7% of urban residents indicated they want to keep covered beverages the same compared to 28.3% of suburban residents and 27.5% of rural residents.

In terms of return locations, grocery stores and gas stations were selected most often by younger respondents (58.9%) and urban respondents (49.7%). A majority of respondents in rural communities preferred community redemption centers (56.1%) compared to 41.2% of urban respondents and 47.7% of suburban respondents. While young respondents had a clear preference for grocery stores and gas stations over community redemption centers—58.9% to 31.8%—this nearly flipped among the three categories of older respondents, with just more than 55% of those aged 30-49 and 50-64 preferring community redemption centers and barely one-third preferring grocery stores and gas stations.

Modest differences were seen with redemption problems by age and community type. Yet for this question, sizeable differences emerged among men and women: 29.9% of female respondents reported no problem due to closures compared to 43.2% of male respondents. More women than men experienced either temporary closures, 29.7% to 25.8%, or permanent closures, 19.2% to 13.4%, at their return sites.

**Respondent Identification:** The Iowa Social Science Research Center (ISRC) contracted with a respected web panel vendor to field the survey to a demographically representative sample of up to 900 respondents. Respondents invited to complete the web survey were Iowa adults, aged 18-120 years, recruited for participation via web panel. To obtain a census-representative sample, quotas were set on the following demographics: sex, age, and urbanicity.

**Sample:** 883 voting-age resident in Iowa, margin of error +/-3.4%.

**Weighting:** Reported results are weighted by age, sex, and party identification.

### **About the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab**

The poll was designed by the Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab, comprised of University of Iowa faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. The Iowa Policy and Opinion Lab is co-directed by Frederick J. Boehmke, professor of political science and Kajsa Dalrymple, professor of journalism and mass communication. The poll is a teaching, research, and service project, and was implemented in collaboration with the Iowa Social Science Research Center directed by Frederick J. Boehmke. The University of Iowa Public Policy Center provided support for this poll as part of its student success mission, intended to expand experiential policy-relevant research for UI students.

Hyein Ko and Caleb McCullough assisted with the preparation of this release.

###