BIG BOWL VOTE
2020 Report
Prevention Action Alliance created the Big Bowl Vote to educate communities on the effects ads for alcohol have on young people, to empower educators and others who work with youth to promote critical thinking, and to advocate for community dialogues about advertisements for alcohol in your community.

Prevention Action Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit in Columbus, Ohio that is dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness.

Learn more at preventionactionalliance.org.
Every year about 100 million people, including millions of teenagers, watch the Super Bowl. They watch the teams battle it out, the halftime show, and, of course, lots of advertisements for everything from laundry detergent to snacks to products containing alcohol. This poses an important question: How do ads for alcohol products impact the millions of teens who watch the Super Bowl?

Research demonstrates that when young people see ads for alcohol products, they’re more likely drink more often and more heavily.¹ The Big Bowl Vote is an annual event by Prevention Action Alliance that tracks the popularity of alcohol ads among young people, reveals what young people like and remember about those ads, and lays bare the tactics that alcohol companies use to attract underage youth to their products. By giving young people the opportunity to vote on their favorite ads from the Super Bowl, we find just how popular ads for alcohol products are among youth. And by asking young people what they like about those ads, we can begin to show how those ads target young people.

In addition to demonstrating the influence of alcohol advertising on young people, the Big Bowl Vote gives those who work with young people an opportunity to counterbalance that influence. It’s a launching point and a teachable moment for media literacy, which is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they’re sending.² This launching point affords young people the ability to recognize how alcohol companies target them and overcome the influence of alcohol advertising.
What Does the Big Bowl Vote Tell Us?

Every year, the Big Bowl Vote measures the likability and recallability of ads for alcohol products that were aired during the Super Bowl. For years, it’s found that ads for products promoting alcohol are among young people’s favorite Super Bowl ads.

This year, the Big Bowl Vote revealed the power of casting celebrities popular with youth. Young people overwhelmingly chose an ad for Bud Light Seltzer that featured rapper Post Malone destroying a convenience store in a comical moment of indecision about whether to buy Bud Light or Bud Light Seltzer. While it was young people’s favorite ad, it performed less well with adults. The Bud Light ad took 15th place on USATODAY’s Ad Meter, which ranks Super Bowl ads by consumer rating.

If young people overwhelmingly liked an ad for an alcohol product and adults didn’t, what does that tell us? Our executive director, Marcie Seidel, pointed out that companies like Anheuser-Busch, which owns Bud Light, use celebrities like Post Malone to connect with young people. It’s a major reason why a fourth of high school students in the U.S. binge drink and why 7 in 10 of those students already have a favorite beer brand.³

“The bottom line is that this ad appealed more to youth than it did to people who are legally allowed to purchase it. That’s unacceptable.”

—Marcie Seidel
Executive Director, Prevention Action Alliance

Another thing the Big Bowl Vote tells us is why young people remember or like specific ads. This year, the Big Bowl Vote found that youth remembered the Bud Light Seltzer ad in large part because of the celebrity appearance by Post Malone. We found that even though students are not old enough to buy or consume alcoholic beverages, they’ve already determined which alcohol brands they like.

While the Big Bowl Vote doesn’t explain why youth already like alcohol brands, there is an easy explanation backed up by research: Alcohol companies intentionally or recklessly show ads for their products to underage youth, over time establishing their brand as the favorite. In turn, the young person buys that product for several years to come. Researchers have consistently found that 1) youth as young as 15 have a favorite brand of alcohol and 2) that youth like brands that spend money on advertising.³
Who Participated in the Big Bowl Vote?

1,217 students participated in the Big Bowl Vote from 12 states:

- Arkansas (185 students)
- California (20 students)
- Florida (1 student)
- Illinois (46 students)
- Massachusetts (16 students)
- Minnesota (45 students)
- New Jersey (56 students)
- New York (74 students)
- Ohio (604 students)
- Oregon (2 students)
- Pennsylvania (1 student)
- Wisconsin (167 students)

Of those 1,217 students, 774 watched the Super Bowl, 113 watched just the ads that ran during the Super Bowl, and 330 watched neither. That means that approximately three fourths (73%) of students watched the advertisements that ran during the Super Bowl, including ads for alcohol.

Big Bowl Voters picked up to three favorite ads. Their choices are below.

- **Bud Light** (145)
- Doritos (128)
- Planters (112)
- Amazon (88)
- Google (80)
- Jeep (63)
- **Tide** (62)
- Hyundai (56)
- NFL (55)
- Mountain Dew (50)
- Sabra (47)
- Cheetos (45)
- **Budweiser** (37)
- **Michelob Ultra** (36)
- Pringles (34)
- Rocket Mortgage (32)
- Snickers (29)
- Pepsi (28)
- WeatherTech (24)
- Walmart (24)
- Procter & Gamble (19)
- Hulu (18)
- Coca-Cola (15)
- Disney Plus (12)
- State Farm (12)
- Avocados from Mexico (12)
- Porsche (11)
- **Michelob Gold** (10)

*Ads for products containing alcohol are in blue; ads with less than 10 votes have been excluded.*
What did young people like about their favorite ads?

Big Bowl Voters gave the following reasons why they liked their favorite ads:

- The ads were funny (657)
- They liked the celebrities featured in the ads (373)
- They liked the story the ads told (294)
- They liked the brand or product represented (219)
- They liked the music (195)
- They liked the ads’ special effects (169)
- Some other reason (12)

Overwhelmingly, youth were drawn to humor, however, many of them were also attracted by the celebrities featured in an ad. Of note, the Bud Light ad featuring rapper Post Malone running into shelves in a convenience store includes both of these elements. The proportion of youth who cited a celebrity as the reason they liked the ad was higher for the Bud Light ad (64 percent) than overall (19 percent).

How many ads for alcohol products did young people see?

Of the 887 students who watched the game and/or ads run during the Super Bowl:

- 161 saw no ads for alcohol products during the Super Bowl
- 134 saw one
- 200 saw two
- 164 saw three
- 79 saw four
- 45 saw five
- 104 saw six or more*

* The Super Bowl featured four ads for alcohol products and one Tide ad that featured Bud Knight, a fictional character created to promote Budweiser. Recognizing the likelihood that young people did not attempt to count alcohol ads during the Super Bowl itself, it is understandable that some may have overestimated this number.
What Can We Do Next?

The Big Bowl Vote creates an opportunity for us to have conversations with young people about the impacts of alcohol advertising and to build their media literacy skills. Young people do not like being manipulated by big companies, so helping them to understand why Anheuser-Busch chose to feature a celebrity popular with youth when they aren’t old enough to buy the product has the potential to counteract the influence of an ad that captured their attention.

We hope you’ll share the results of the Big Bowl Vote with other adults who care about young people as well as youth themselves. Talk to them about media advertising and its effect on their future purchasing decisions; help them to take back power over their thinking and decisions; build their media literacy skills and support their development. You can learn more about media literacy and how you can help young people in your life to build those skills by visiting CommonSense.org, or check out Decoded, the media literacy guide from Prevention Action Alliance that is available at PreventionActionAlliance.org/shop/. This guide features research on the link between advertising for products like alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana and youth use rates; as well as activities you can do at home or in the classroom to build your young people’s media literacy skills.

And keep an eye out for future Big Bowl Vote communications so you can participate in the 2021 Big Bowl Vote.
Appendix of Tables

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What did young people like about the alcohol ads they saw?

- The ads were funny (343)
- They liked the celebrity that was featured (230)
- They liked the story the ads told (160)
- They liked the special effects in the ads (122)
- They liked the music in the ads (121)
- They liked the brand/product (77)
- Some other reason (6)

What did young people remember about the alcohol ads they saw?

- The ads were funny (330)
- They liked the celebrity in the ad (253)
- They liked the story the ad told (172)
- They liked the music in the ad (160)
- They liked the ad’s special effects (141)
- They liked the brand or product (135)
- Some other reason (14)

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What did young people like about their favorite ads?
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- The liked the brand or product represented (219)
- They liked the music (195)
- They liked the ads special effects (169)
- Some other reason (12)

What did young people remember about their favorite ads?
- They thought the ad was funny (627)
- They liked the celebrity featured (343)
- They liked the story it told (280)
- They liked the brand/product (256)
- They liked the music (200)
- They liked the special effects (179)
- Some other reason (36)

What were young people’s favorite ads?
- **Bud Light (145)**
- Doritos (128)
- Planters (112)
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Works Cited & Notes


2. “What is media literacy, and why is it important?” Common Sense Media.


4. Most young people who took the Big Bowl Vote didn’t distinguish between which of the four Tide ads they liked. Thus, we’ve combined all of Tide’s ads into one category. One of those Tide ads featured Bud Knight, a cartoonish character created by Anheuser-Busch InBev to promote Budweiser products.
The Big Bowl Vote wouldn’t be possible without the participation of thousands of young people as well as their teachers, community leaders, and other adult allies who collect tallies, administer surveys, and lead important conversations about media literacy.

We at Prevention Action Alliance would like to take a moment to thank all of them for their participation. We know it can be difficult to make time for the Big Bowl Vote during class time, and we appreciate the efforts you’ve made to collect this data and help to build media literacy skills among your students. Thank you for playing your role for prevention.