

June 2019

# Substance Abuse and Alcohol-Related Problems in West Hollywood: Perspectives from #SIZZLE! Attendees

Learning Brief

The Institute for Public Strategies (IPS) engaged Harder+Company Community Research as a partner to analyze survey data collected from 1,146 West Hollywood #SIZZLE! attendees in 2014-2016 and 2018. This learning brief provides an overview of survey findings, as well as recommendations for LA Pride Organizers, West Hollywood City Council and West Hollywood City Staff.

In an effort to fully include individuals in substance abuse recovery program and to establish a new social norm for LA Pride in West Hollywood Pride, the West Hollywood Project in partnership with the Los Angeles LGBT Center and Christopher Street West hosts #SIZZLE!. #SIZZLE! is an alcohol-free zone at the annual Los Angeles Pride Festival in West Hollywood. This three day event within the festival features a live DJ, special performances, drawings, carnival-style games, prizes, and food. During #SIZZLE!, attendees were asked to complete a short survey on their attitudes towards substance abuse-related problems and actions to prevent substance abuse-related problems.

The following is a summary of the surveys from 1,146 #SIZZLE! attendees from the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018.

## Key Findings



West Hollywood residents identified alcohol abuse and underage drinking as the most prominent issues at the LA Pride Festival.



Many #SIZZLE! attendees supported actions and policies to contain alcohol consumption at LA Pride.



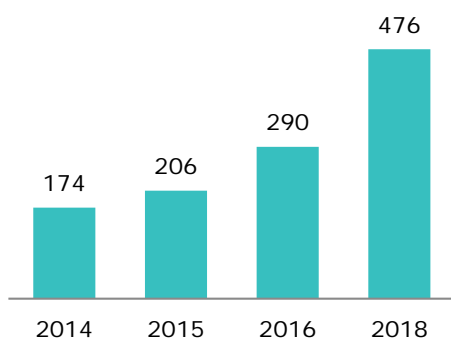
Respondents' support of actions to prevent alcohol abuse at LA Pride increased from 2014 to 2018.

## Characteristics of #SIZZLE! Attendees

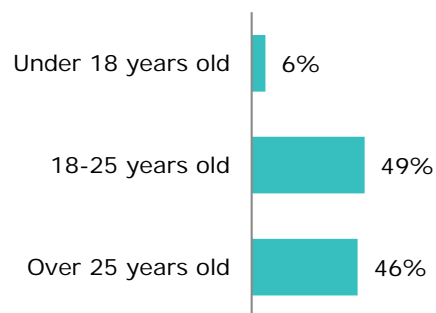
#SIZZLE! attendees were asked to share information about their age and residency status. Most attendees were surveyed in 2018 (42%), over 18 years old (94%) and did not live in West Hollywood (87%) (See exhibit 1). Respondent characteristics shifted in 2018. In previous years (2015-2016), about half of respondents were over 25 years old, compared to a third (37%) in 2018. Moreover, 2018 were more likely to be non-West Hollywood residents (92%) than in 2016 (83%) and 2015 (83%). The number of survey responses increased over time and change in respondents' characteristics suggests that either #SIZZLE!'s attendance and presence is growing or more attendees are willing to share their perspectives.

### Exhibit 1. Characteristics of #SIZZLE! Respondents

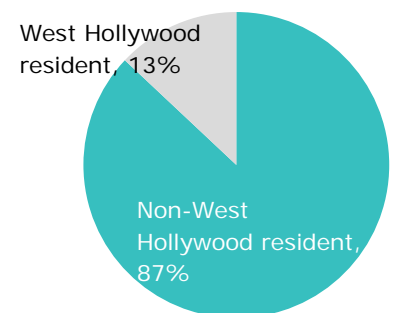
Number of #SIZZLE! attendees surveyed



Age



Residency



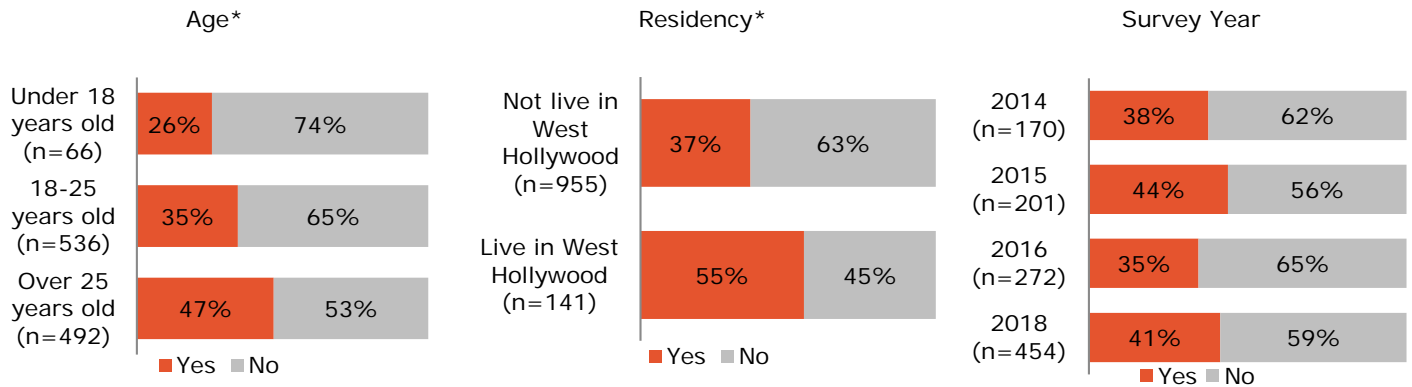
## Perception of the Alcohol and Drug Problem

In order to understand the perception of the alcohol and drug problem at the LA Pride Festival, #SIZZLE! attendees were asked to select the substance abuse-related problems that they believe are harming the community the most.

### Alcohol Abuse as a problem at the LA Pride Festival

Two-fifths of survey respondents agreed that alcohol abuse is a problem at the LA Pride Festival. However, the perception of the problem differed by attendees' age and residency status (see Exhibit 2). For example, over half of West Hollywood residents view alcohol abuse as a problem at the LA Pride Festival. Moreover, 47% of those over 25 years old view it as a problem compared to 26% of respondents under 18 years old. Interestingly, respondents' perception of alcohol abuse as a problem remained fairly consistent throughout the years, ranging from 35% in 2016 to 41% in 2018.

**Exhibit 2. Perception of alcohol abuse as a problem by...**

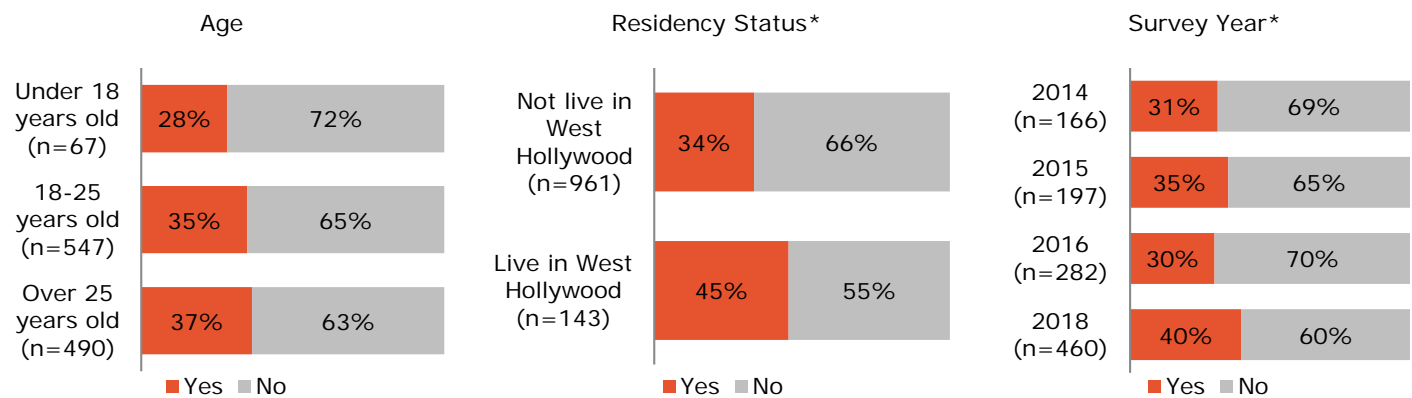


\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

**Underage Alcohol Consumption the LA Pride Festival**

About a third of attendees agreed serving alcohol to underage youth is a problem at the LA Pride Festival (See Exhibit 3). Further, respondents' perceptions of this problem increased over time, with 40% of respondents in 2018 reporting "yes", compared to 30% in 2016 and 31% in 2014. West Hollywood residents, in particular, are significantly more likely to view serving underage youth as a problem at LA Pride, with 45% of residents reporting it as a problem, compared to 34% of non-residents. Interestingly, only about a quarter of respondents under 18 years old reported this as a problem.

**Exhibit 3. Perception of underage youth being served alcohol by...**

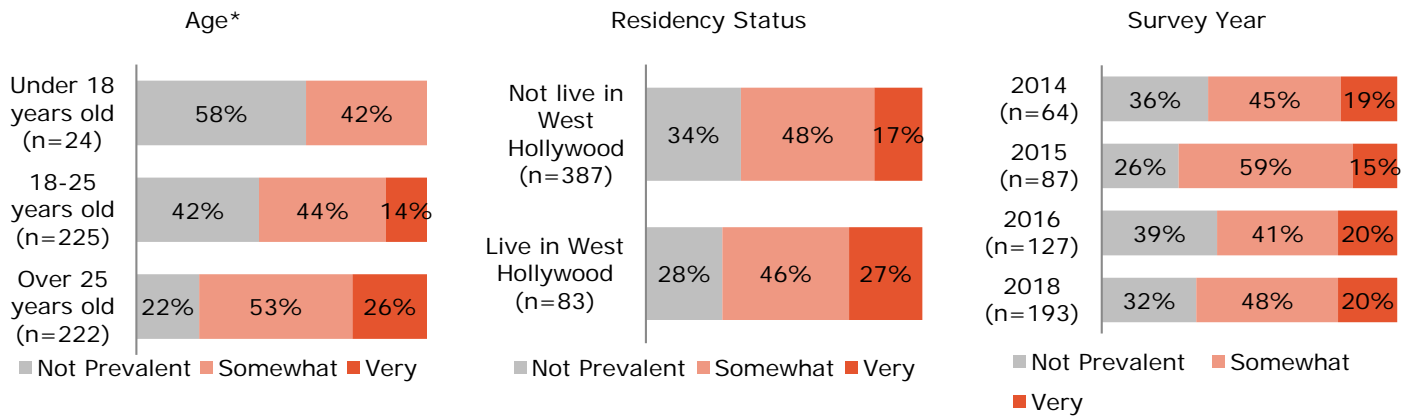


\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

**Prevalence of Meth use at the LA Pride Festival**

Across years, about two-thirds (67%) of attendees believe that meth use is "somewhat" or "very" prevalent at the LA Pride Festival (see Exhibit 4). Perceptions of meth use varied by respondent age. Attendees under 18 years of age feel meth use was less prevalent compared to attendees over 25 years old. West Hollywood residents are slightly more inclined to report meth use as prevalent, compared to non-residents.

**Exhibit 4. Perception of meth use at the LA Pride Festival by...**



\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

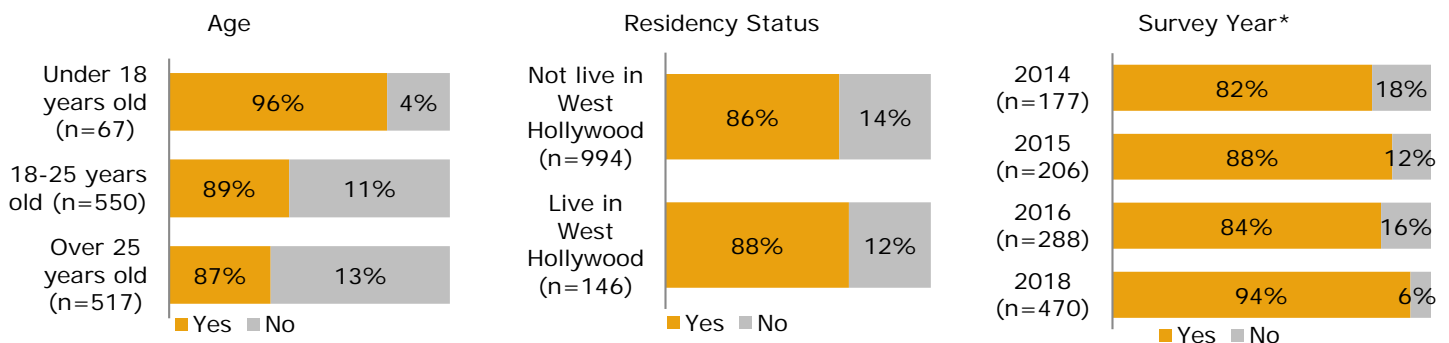
### Support for Alcohol and Drug-Related Policies

#SIZZLE! attendees were also asked to indicate which actions to prevent alcohol and drug-related problems they support. This section explores some of the actions participants were most likely to support.

#### Support of Pride Becoming Alcohol-Free

Nearly all of respondents (88%) reported that they would spend time at #SIZZLE! if the space was alcohol-free. Not surprisingly, almost all respondents under 18 years old (96%) said they would still spend time at #SIZZLE! during LA Pride if alcohol was not allowed at the event. In addition, survey responses by year suggest that support for an alcohol free space increased over time (see Exhibit 4). For example, 94% of attendees in 2018 would spend time at #SIZZLE! if alcohol was not allowed compared to 82% in 2014 and 88% in 2015.

**Exhibit 5. Attendees would spend time at #SIZZLE!! if alcohol was not allowed by...**



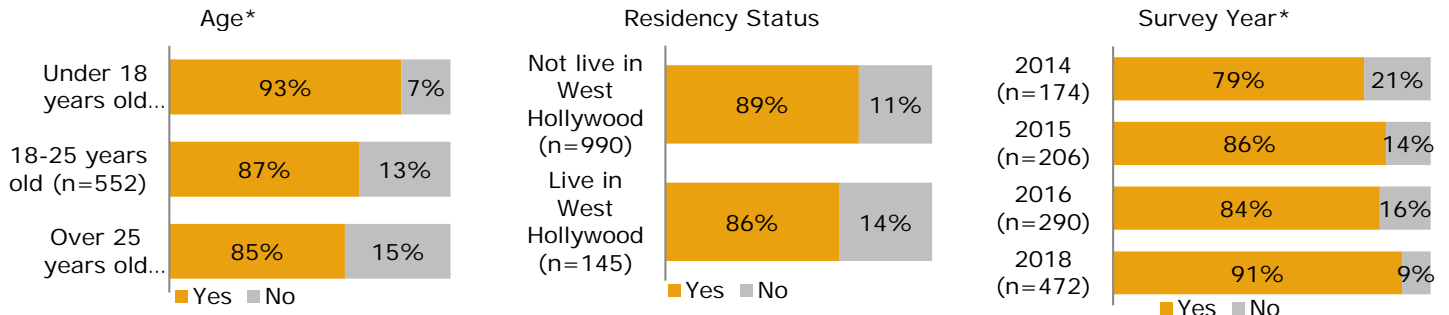
\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

#### Support for Designated Alcohol-Free Spaces at LA Pride

Similarly, many attendees (86%) reported that it is a good idea to have part of the LA Pride Festival designated as alcohol-free. Nearly all respondents (93%) under 18 years old supported having part of LA Pride as alcohol-free. Moreover, attendees' overall support has increased over the years. For example, about four-

fifths (79%) of attendees from 2014 supported having designated alcohol-free zone at LA Pride, which increased to 91% in 2018. These results suggest that the younger generation and more recent #SIZZLE! attendees are more likely to support designated alcohol-free spaces at LA Pride (see Exhibit 6).

**Exhibit 6. Attendees' support of designated alcohol-free spaces by...**

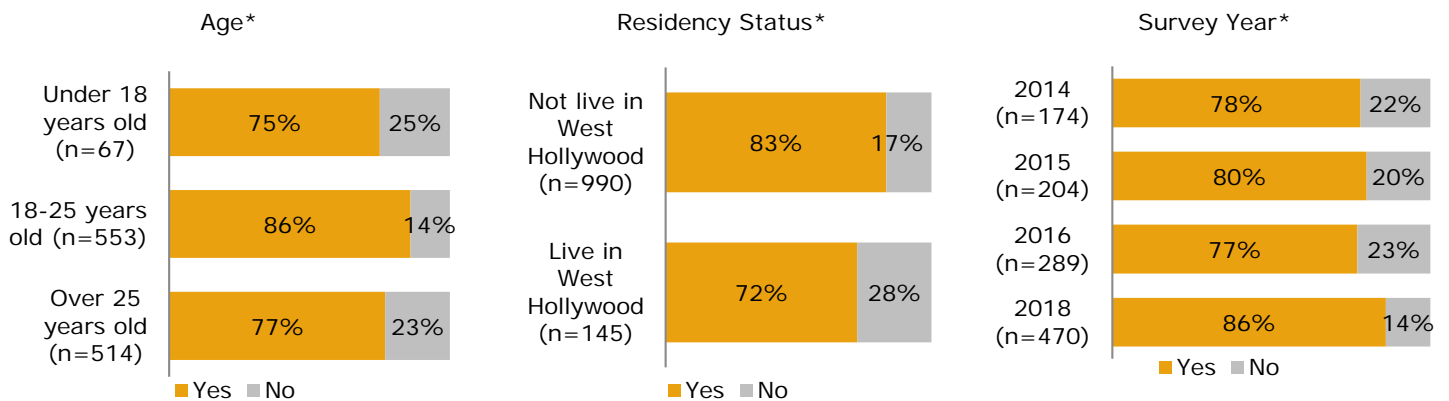


\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

**Support for Beer Gardens to Control Alcohol Consumption**

The vast majority of SIZZLE! attendees (81%) support containing alcohol sales and consumption to beer gardens. Differences in amount of support were found by age, residency status and survey year (see Exhibit 7). Similar to the other proposed solutions, attendees support increased over time. In 2018, nearly 90% respondents supported containing the alcohol sales and consumption to beer gardens at LA Pride, compared to about 75% in previous years. Moreover, there were also differences in support by age groups. Unlike previous patterns of the younger generation (under 18 years old) supporting the proposed policies more, attendees 18 to 25 years old had the highest percentage of support (86%) in terms of age. Interestingly, non-residents are more likely to support beer gardens than residents (72%). Overall, many attendees support limiting alcohol sales and consumption to beer gardens, which will help alleviate alcohol abuse at LA Pride.

**Exhibit 7. Attendees' support for containing alcohol sales and consumption to beer gardens by...**



\*Significant when  $p < .05$ .

## Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this assessment, along with best practices informed by other research LA Pride organizers (Christopher Street West), West Hollywood City Council and West Hollywood City Staff offer the following recommendations.

### **Restrict Alcohol Sales to Designated, Enclosed Areas, AKA 'Beer Gardens'**

Limiting alcohol sales to enclosed areas with monitored entrances, age verification for all entrants, secure perimeters, and physical barriers that effectively contain drinkers and alcoholic beverages can reduce binge and underage drinking rates at LA Pride.

### **Limit Alcohol Sponsorships at LA Pride**

An increasing body of research indicates that alcohol sponsorships at festivals encourage greater consumption, and further, that Pride festivals have an inordinate percentage of 'big brand' alcohol sponsorships. Seeking different avenues for corporate sponsorship for LA Pride would facilitate an important social norms shift around alcohol consumption at the event.

### **Impose Mandatory Trainings for All Servers at LA Pride**

Mandatory Responsible Beverage Service training for all alcohol servers at LA Pride would provide the knowledge and skills necessary to dispense alcohol responsibly, thereby reducing "over-service" (providing alcohol to already intoxicated patrons) and sales to minors.

### **Multiple Re-enforcing Prevention Interventions to Reduce Meth Problems**

The reality that a number of intermediate variables interact to affect methamphetamine use and harms suggests that multiple re-enforcing prevention interventions may have the greatest effectiveness potential.<sup>1</sup> Such strategies include: community mobilization and targeted education to increase local support for prevention efforts; partnerships between treatment professionals, law enforcement, health educators, the media and community members; and coalitions that foster broad-based participation, input, and ownership in addressing meth-related problems.

*This material was made possible by funds from the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Substance Abuse Prevention and Control.*

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<sup>1</sup> Birckmayer, J., Fisher, D.A., Holder, H.D., & Yacoubian, G.S. (2008). Prevention of methamphetamine abuse: can existing evidence inform community prevention? *Journal of Drug Education*, 38, 147-165.