**Iowa Alcohol Consumption Data Expectations**

Based on prior studies of alcohol consumption patterns in the United States, we have some general expectations for what the results from the Iowa alcohol data will show. Intuitively, counties with the highest population will also most likely have the highest amount of alcohol consumption and a greater amount of liquor stores. The five biggest cities in Iowa are Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Sioux City, and Iowa City, so we can expect those associated counties to have more alcohol consumption than more rural areas of Iowa. There are also several large universities in Iowa located in Ames, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Cedar Falls, and Davenport. The higher concentration of young people in university areas might result in more alcohol consumption in those areas. We anticipate that university sessions will have a large impact on alcohol consumption, with alcohol consumption decreasing by a significant amount during the summer when students are not on campus.

Based on the literature review, there is an indication that areas with a higher population of registered Democrats tend towards more alcohol consumption compared to Republicans. Historically, Iowa has had a higher concentration of registered democrats in the more urban areas of central and eastern Iowa. However, the majority of Iowa is rural with a higher proportion of republican support.

There are several major events that we expect to have an impact on alcohol consumption in Iowa. Alcohol is often used during celebratory events, so we expect increased levels of alcohol sales around major holidays celebrated in Iowa, specifically New Years, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. There are also celebratory events that could increase alcohol consumption levels, such as the Iowa State Fair, Old Thresher’s Festival, and university football games. The Iowa State Fair is held in Des Moines and takes place over a span of 11 days in August. It also doubles as a political event, as many presidential candidates use the fair to gather support for their campaigns. Old Thresher’s Festival is held in Mt. Pleasant over several days in September and brings in people from around the state to celebrate the start of harvest. Tailgates for Iowa State and University of Iowa football games also represent major cultural events that are often associated with increased alcohol consumption.

We expect that alcohol sales will spike around major holidays and cultural events and will crash when universities are out of session (May-August). Around major political events, we expect alcohol consumption for certain demographics to increase or decrease based on outcome. Specific political events that we believe may impact alcohol consumption are the Iowa caucus (February 1), the general election debates (September 26, October 9, October 19), and election day (November 8).

**Description of Dataset**

The dataset was published by the Alcoholic Beverages Division and provided by the Iowa Department of Commerce and is part of an ongoing series of public alcohol consumption datasets provided by the Iowa state government. The dataset contains over 3 million data descriptors of individual alcohol purchases occurring in Iowa between January 1st, 2014 and October 1st, 2017. Each data point lists the date of the purchase, the name of the store selling the purchase, store address, city, county, product brand, item description, bottle volume in milliliters, cost of the alcohol, cost of alcohol including tax, number of bottles sold, total purchase cost, and volume sold in liters and gallons.

This data is available through the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division (ABD). Iowa established a monopolistic ‘control’ system in 1934 after the repeal of 18th Amendment. Today, the ABD is the sole wholesaler of alcoholic liquor to in the state and is responsible for regulating and licensing private establishments that sell alcohol. Iowa code required the ABD to markup liquor by 50 percent. In order to track funds and taxes required to be collected for the various state funds supported by alcohol sales in Iowa, the ABD is required to keep stringent records as to the volume, values, and types of liquors sold within each county. All liquor in the state is distributed through a singular central warehouse in Ankeny (Polk County). Polk County had the largest number of liquor retailers at 201, with Linn, Scott, Johnson, and Black Hawk counties also in the top 5. The Iowa ABD saw A 4% growth in sales outlets and a 3.8% growth in off-premises sales (compared to 2.4% overall) from FY2015-FY2016, and a -.7% overall growth from FY16-FY17.

**Presidential Politics: The Iowa Caucus**

We considered the relationship between politics and liquor sales specifically because of the role Iowa played in the 2016 presidential election. Iowa is home to the first contest in the presidential election and is usually the ‘kickoff’ of the election season, with candidates devoting substantial facetime and resources to the region in hopes of building momentum for their national campaigns. The caucus is not structured like a traditional primary vote: citizens ‘vote’ at local gatherings by physically dividing into candidate groups. Because the vote is physical, it is not secret. This traditionally invites discussion and debate as voters make the case for their candidate and attempt to enjoin their neighbors to switch their loyalties. Any candidate under 15% support in the initial tallying of ‘votes’ is considered ‘unviable’ and participants must either choose another candidate or rally others to join them to reach the threshold. The supported candidates are then assigned pledged delegates at the state level. More than half of Iowa caucus winners since 1972 have gone on to win their party’s nomination to the presidency. The stigma of being branded ‘unviable’ is not attractive to any presidential hopeful, so it is typically viewed as politically advantageous to generate as much discussion and support in Iowa as possible. Candidates inundate the state in the months before the caucus with a series of townhalls, forums, debates, rallies, and the infamous pork tent at the Iowa State Fair (also complete with a corn-kernel voting system, The Presidential Soapbox, and plenty of turkey-leg photo ops) in hopes of generating sound bites and airtime.

The 2016 Iowa Presidential Caucus was held on February 1, 2020. 186, 932 votes were cast in the Republican caucus. Ted Cruz won the Republican caucus with 27.6% of support and leading runner-up Donald Trump by only one delegate. 12 candidates were viable for contest. The Republican Party sponsored several large events in Iowa leading up to the vote: the Presidential Family Forum was held in Des Moines on November 20, 2015 and hosted a debate on January 28, 2016 (also in Des Moines). In the Democratic caucus, Hillary Clinton defeated Bernie Sanders by the closest margin in caucus history (less than one-quarter of a percentage point). 171, 517 votes were cast in the Democratic caucus. The Democratic party hosted a debate in Des Moines on November 14, 2015, and a second on January 11, 2016 (also in Des Moines).

“Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Commission Annual Report FY2017.” *Abd.iowa.gov*, State of Iowa, abd.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/file/2020-09/annual\_report\_fy17.pdf.