

KEEP IOWA BEAUTIFUL 2002 LITTER ATTITUDINAL SURVEY RESULTS

In collaboration with Keep Iowa Beautiful, Inc. (KIB), the Iowa Department of Transportation (IaDOT) conducted a mail survey in March 2001. IaDOT asked Iowans to express their opinions about littering behavior, litter in their communities and litter along Iowa roadways. Of all the surveys delivered, 46.75 percent of them were returned. This unusually high response rate reflects tremendous public interest in ensuring clean communities and an attractive state. The collected information was intended to help the IaDOT, KIB and others create and support programs and policies aimed at reducing litter across Iowa. The following is a summary of the findings.

Roadside Questions—Actions

Respondents indicated that they had engaged in or seen these behaviors:

- 46%** Noticed trash falling from a vehicle they were in.
- 43%** Threw out a candy wrapper, lottery ticket or other small item.
- 38%** Someone they were with threw out a can or bottle.
- 26%** Someone they were with threw out trash in an already littered area.
- 19%** They or someone with them threw out an alcohol container.
- 5%** Left car-related debris on the roadside.
- 2%** They or someone with them got a ticket or warning for littering.

Roadside Questions—Litter Problem

Fast food containers and wrappers were perceived by Iowans as the most serious problems along Iowa roadways. Respondents rated paper, diapers/plastics and construction as second, third and fourth, respectively. Food and organic material were rated as being the least serious.

Behavior Questions—Likelihood to Litter

Iowans believe that younger adults, males, pickup truck drivers and visitors to Iowa are most likely to litter.

Behavior Questions—Impact on Reducing Litter

Respondents rated things that carried a "consequence" as having the most impact. The top three items were

- "increasing penalties for littering"
- "increasing the enforcement of anti-litter laws"
- "reminding people there is a fine for littering."

The lowest-rated items were "telling people not littering was the right thing to do" and "having celebrities speaking out against littering."

Behavior Questions—Littering Behavior

The highest reported occurrence of littering in the past two years was food/organic material. Next were papers and other food/candy wrappers.

Community Questions—Primary Sources of Litter

Motorists littering from vehicles were rated highest as sources of litter. Uncovered vehicles/trucks and loitering of teenagers were rated close together as the second and third most common sources of litter. Businesses and local waste facilities were next in line. Loading docks were rated as least common sources of litter.

Community Questions—Litter and Dumping

Almost 60 percent of respondents said that litter along the roadways entering their communities was a problem to some extent. A total of 52 percent said that illegal dumping was a problem in their communities, and 57 percent said litter was a problem in their communities. However, 56 percent said that litter was not a problem in their immediate neighborhoods.

A total of 97 percent of respondents agreed it's important to maintain a clean environment, while 46 percent said they were involved in cleanup efforts.

The top activity for reducing littering and dumping in their communities was increasing enforcement of rules and regulations, followed closely by providing better access to disposal sites.