



COALITION FOR
**RESPONSIBLE
CELEBRATION**

CELEBRATION INDUSTRY BALLOON POLICY TOOLKIT

CELEBRATING BALLOONS



Dear Elected Officials and Stakeholders,

The Coalition for Responsible Celebration, as an active partner to consumers, elected officials and local governments, has created this toolkit as a resource to educate the public about responsible balloon use and disposal. Balloons bring happiness to millions and make it easy to create unforgettable memories. Whether celebrating a birthday, graduation, wedding, the opening of a new business – or comforting someone when they are sick, balloons are ubiquitous tokens of affection that create smiles and joy like no other product can.

Despite the popularity of celebration balloons, **misinformation and misperceptions about our industry persist**. There are groups that seek an outright ban on the sale and distribution of balloons. These groups often make a wide variety of claims regarding balloons, including that they are a leading contributor to ocean litter and that they endanger wildlife. This toolkit includes objective data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as well as International Coastal Clean-up (ICC), both highly respected independent organizations. Their impartial data clearly show that balloons are neither a major threat to sea life nor a leading contributor to beach litter.

While the data makes clear that balloons are an infinitesimal contributor to oceanic and other waste, there are a number of sensible approaches state and local governments have taken to reduce balloon waste and increase responsible use and disposal practices. Examples of these are bans on release, weighting and stabilization requirements, public education and outreach campaigns, and enhanced recycling options – all of which the CRC is on record advocating for and supporting. There is one approach however that does not achieve these goals and only serves to make balloons less accessible to responsible users.

Responsible balloon use and disposal practices are directly linked to sustainability. The CRC is leading the way on policies, initiatives, and new technologies that support sustainability and minimize environmental impacts.

- **WE ARE EDUCATING** consumers about responsible balloon use and disposal to keep balloons out of the environment.
- **WE ARE LEADING** pilot recycling programs to recapture and safely dispose of used balloons.
- **WE ARE PUSHING** for all retailers to sell balloons with weights to prevent them from floating away.
- **WE SUPPORT** education and efforts to eliminate the intentional outdoor release of balloons.
- **WE ARE INNOVATING** non-conductive and biodegradable product materials.

The Celebration Industry and balloons have a clear and distinct value to both the public and local economy. We thank you for preserving special, affordable celebrations by helping to educate the public on smart balloon practices and responsible enjoyment. We look forward to working with you in the future.

MARIA STOCKHAM
Executive Director
The Coalition for Responsible Celebration

MOST COMMON BEACH LITTER ITEMS

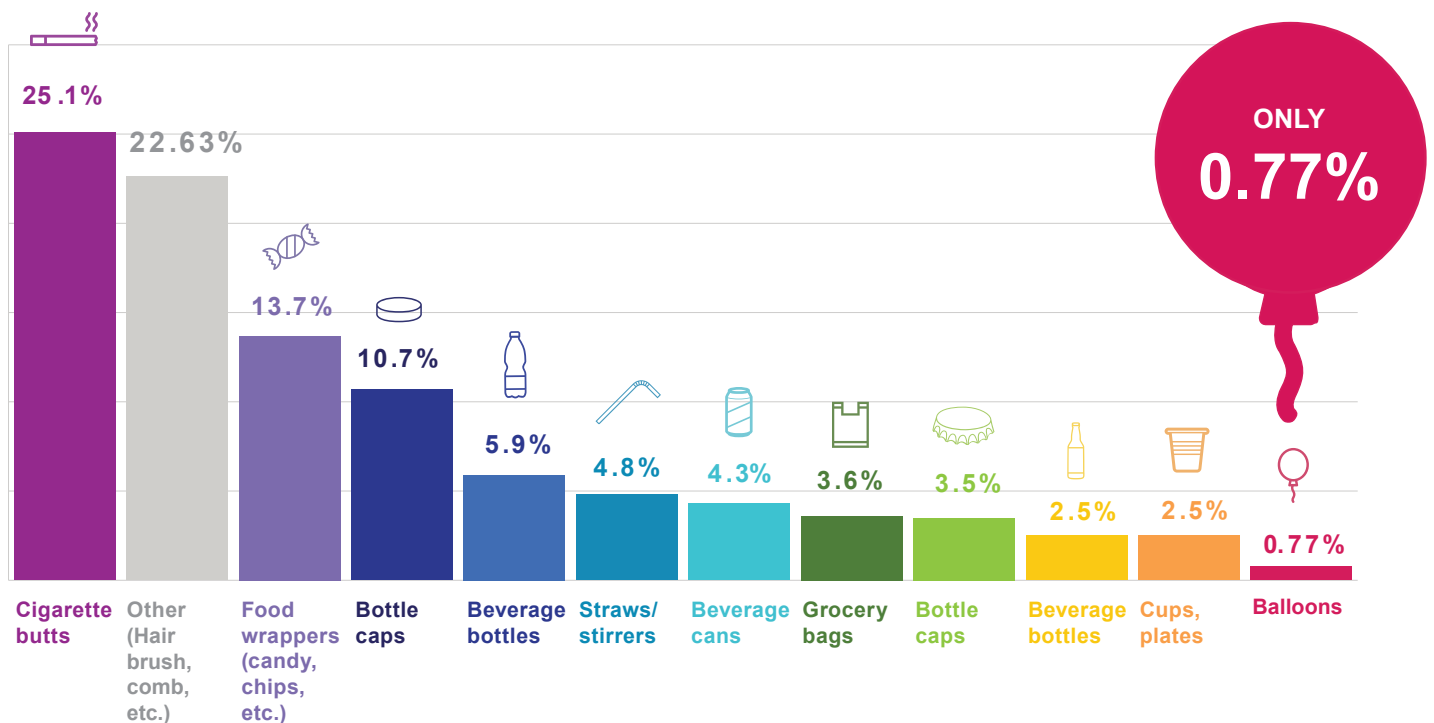
The Celebration Industry has long advocated for the widespread education of consumers to protect the environment and ensure proper use and disposal of balloons and celebration products. Our efforts are having an impact: according to data from the International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC), **balloons account for less than 1% of all debris found during beach cleanups in the U.S. since 2015.**

The Celebration Industry is dedicating resources to improve biodegradable product options. In combination with these efforts, the industry is also investing in consumer education as well as recapture and recycling programs so that all products are properly used and disposed.

Of the 5,088,482 items collected in ICC-sanctioned beach debris studies in 2021, **the top 10 items made up more than 75% of all beach debris collected. None of which included balloons.**

These did, however, include:

BEACH LITTER ITEMS



Source: International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Data (2015 - 2021)
 *Average rank and statistics of balloons as a percentage of total beach debris were calculated using the ICC's available data from 2015 through 2021.

BALLOONS ARE UNCOMMON BEACH DEBRIS

The amount of balloons actually found in the ocean and on beaches is insignificant when looking at overall marine debris. Recent local proposals to ban the sale of balloons are a disproportionate response to address an uncommon problem.

Loving balloons and the environment are not mutually exclusive. While misinformation permeates on the topic and is often spread by proponents of bans on balloons, consumers and elected officials can be assured by verified information from objective third parties like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) that balloons are not significant sources of ocean or beach pollution. And with industry education efforts, fewer balloons will be found in future clean-ups.



BALLOONS MAKE UP LESS THAN HALF OF 1% OF ALL WASTE FOUND IN THE OCEAN AND ON BEACHES GLOBALLY.

Between July 2012 and May 2021, 85% of the debris was plastic, of which only 0.32% were balloons.¹ From September 2016 to April 2022, 23,722 large items were recorded, of which only 0.4% were balloons. Considering the millions of balloons sold, this means that well over 99% of the balloons sold do not end up in the ocean.

NOAA Marine Debris Accumulation Survey Data, July 2012 – May 2021



BALLOONS AVERAGE LESS THAN 0.77% OF LITTER COLLECTED ON BEACHES.

Over the last six years, 17 million volunteers have collected more than 438 million pounds of trash, yet balloons have never been one of the top 20 most commonly found items. Although more than 19 million pieces of litter were collected, balloons only accounted for an average of 0.77%.²

International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) Data 2016 - 2021

Continue Public Education: The celebration industry has been actively promoting consumer education to eliminate the intentional release of balloons. As evidenced above, balloons continue to present themselves as a statistically insignificant and uncommon source of ocean and beach debris. Continued investment in educating the public about how to use and dispose of balloons responsibly is an effective, reasonable, and practical approach that allows people to continue to responsibly enjoy celebration balloons without necessitating sales bans.

[1] <https://mdmap.orr.noaa.gov/visualize>

[2] <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/>

PROMOTING INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY



The Coalition for Responsible Celebration (CRC) believes that sustainability is integral to the success of the industry. The adoption and promotion of responsible celebration practices is a core focus for all coalition members, including manufacturers, retailers, distributors, and the like.

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The CRC is focused on employing cutting-edge technologies to create better, more sustainable alternatives for celebrations and evolving balloon manufacturing processes to align with our values around environmental responsibility and product quality.

In 2021, Anagram – a leading manufacturer of foil balloons – partnered with SDG&E®, a California energy company, to incorporate their non-conductive technology into the development of a new balloon film. The ultimate goal is to offer a product that has more neutral interactivity in the event of contact with overhead infrastructure.

BALLOON WASTE AND RECYCLING PROGRAMS

The industry is investigating biodegradability options and investing in consumer education and collection and recapture programs so that balloons are properly used and disposed.



BALLOON EDUCATION

CRC members are engaging in comprehensive consumer education programs that begin at the point of sale with proper labeling, responsible use, disposal tips, distributing balloon care cards, and providing free balloon weights with every purchase.



BALLOON RECAPTURE

Balloon recapture programs are being tested across the industry allowing consumers to return deflated balloons to retail stores. As the industry scales these programs, we know they will make a difference in sustainability initiatives.



BALLOON RECYCLING

Recycling programs are already common with balloon retailers. In 2021, a global business in the Celebration Industry launched a foil and latex balloon waste pilot program in multiple states focused on retail and manufacturing balloon waste for a more effective solution. The CRC will research and identify additional efficiencies to develop industry-wide recycling policies and recommendations.

SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIES



Balloons and the Celebration Industry play an important role in the economic fabric of our local communities. Often lost in translation are the real-world effects policies such as balloon bans have on customers, entrepreneurs, and communities at large. Whether it be a local florist, a corner store owner, or a traveling balloon decorator, the Celebration Industry consists of a diverse array of stakeholders bringing joy into everyday life.

Balloon bans are ineffective environmental policies that harm businesses and remove affordable options for families commemorating any occasion. Further, these bans threaten the jobs and economic activity that the Celebration Industry supports. Balloons don't only bring joy, they provide real career options for many, including working-class entrepreneurs and young workers, due to the low barriers to entry.

IMPACTED LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Balloon bans fail to consider the impact on the livelihoods and opportunities of the following small businesses and community members:



PRICE CONSCIOUS CUSTOMERS

Balloons have always been an affordable option for family parties and events. Bans on balloons hurt price-conscious consumers disproportionately. While for some, driving to neighboring towns for balloons may be feasible, not all consumers have that option.



LOCAL GROCERIES STORES

Community grocery stores sell balloons as part of their celebration item offerings. Whether it be balloons, cake and dessert, or candles, customers rely on grocers as a one-stop shop for all their event needs. Balloon bans hurt the local grocery store owner and diminish their value to the community.



CREATIVES & PERFORMERS

Balloon artists and event entertainment personalities, such as clowns, magicians, and others, can use balloons to enhance any gathering while still being environmentally responsible. These artists rely on balloons to support their livelihoods.



MAIN STREET BUSINESSES

Local florists, greeting card makers, and independent toy stores offer balloons to enhance their products which make their ways to homes, schools, offices, and hospitals. These entrepreneurs rely on balloons to engage customers and sustain their businesses.



EVENT PLANNERS & DECORATORS

Decorations are the first impressions of an event or party. Charged with the responsibility to bring joy to their customers, local event planners and decorators use balloon arrangements to create unique masterpieces that set the mood for any gathering.



YOUNG WORKERS

Whether it be a summer job or a post-high school profession, workers can turn to the Celebration Industry for careers because of the ease and affordability of getting started. These jobs are great incubators for people to acquire interpersonal and management skills.

SMALL BUSINESSES RELY ON BALLOONS

These small business owners express the fears and varying impacts that balloon bans have on their livelihoods:



SANDRA F.
(Founder of Hampton
Balloons, NY)

“Education is the best way to make a change for the environment and to make a positive change in the industry...Unfortunately, I would be out of business. If you passed the [balloon ban]... It would be 60% of my sales.”

Southampton Town Council Meeting
5/11/2021



BILL G.
(Founder of Rainbow
Balloons, MA)

“I started my company 30 years ago and we have 30 full-time employees...Passing this [balloon ban] would also probably put my company out of business.”

Massachusetts Joint Committee on
Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture 6/22/2021



AMANDA A.
(Owner of Top Hat
Balloon Werks, CA)

“As far as income, it would be devastating for us if coastal cities started to all ban balloons because then we’ll go out of business.”

Laguna Beach City Council Meeting
6/21/2022



NEGATIVE IMPACT OF BALLOON BANS

'Ban on sale' balloon policies negatively impact consumers and the Celebration Industry at-large, including manufacturers, designers, distributors, retailers, grocery stores, florists, local vendors, and small business party stores. The following data is based on industry estimates.

DECREASE IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & CONSUMER CHOICE

Balloon sale bans have caused local party stores, vendors, and retailers to lose sales, and could lead to **future decreases in economic activity** across impacted municipalities, cities, and states. Further, these bans unjustly limit, or strictly remove the right of consumer choice without consideration for everyday family budgets.

- 70 million balloons are sold in California (CA), annually.
- Post sales ban, local Encinitas, CA, businesses lost \$700,000 in annual sales.

JOB LOSS

Recent sales bans on balloons have already cost workers their jobs and many more could be on the line if new bans are enacted.

- Local retailers expect 45 jobs to be eliminated in Encinitas, CA, due to a city-wide ban on balloon sales.
- Approximately 27,000 CA jobs are dependent on balloon sales and are at risk as a result of a ban.

LOSS OF TAX REVENUE

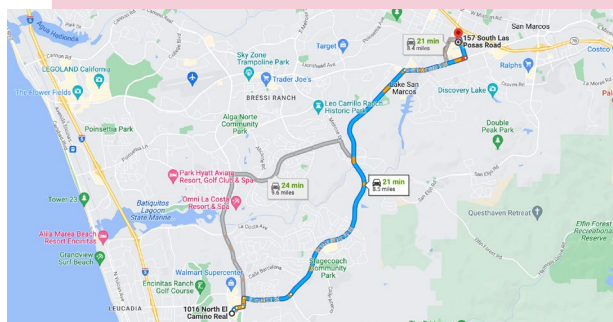
Bans on sale have devastating impacts on the local cities and municipalities where they are enacted. The loss of tax revenue from balloon sales deprives communities of critical funds needed to support vital city services like fire and emergency response, trash and recycling collection, and road maintenance.

- In Encinitas, CA, local retail sales of balloons amount to nearly \$1 million a year. The city lost \$55,000 in annual tax revenue from one major retailer alone after the ban was passed.
- Globally, direct and indirect sales from balloons is estimated to be nearly \$125.1 billion, translating into more than \$125 million in tax revenues annually.

CONSUMERS CHANGE BEHAVIOR

While party stores in impacted areas received less foot traffic, party stores in nearby municipalities recorded more customers and sales. This indicates that consumers were not dissuaded by the balloon ban, and instead traveled to other stores close by to purchase balloons.

Data included on this page is based on industry estimates.



NEGATIVE IMPACT OF BALLOON BANS



The Celebration Industry strongly supports and advocates for environmental policies combating the improper use and disposal of balloons and celebration products, including bans on release. Outright sale and use bans do not work to achieve the goals of reduced balloon waste and instead only serve to negatively affect communities in very real economic and personal ways.

**Reduce Tax
Revenue**

Eliminate Jobs

**Threaten Mom
and Pop Shops**

**Reduce Economic
Activity**

**Limit Affordable
Decoration Options**

Perhaps most importantly, balloon bans do not result in a reduction of purchasing and use, but rather result only in consumers being redirected to retailers outside of the sale ban boundaries for their balloon purchasing needs. According to a nationwide online survey of 1,500 U.S. consumers conducted by an independent market research firm on behalf of the CRC:

- 65% of Americans hold a **positive view towards balloons**.
- 71% of Americans say they **ARE likely to purchase balloons** in the next 12 months.
- 3 in 4 Americans do **NOT** favor limits on the sale or use of balloons.
- **69% of Americans OPPOSE local bans** on the sale of all balloons in their community. Only 14% of Americans support these bans.



METHODOLOGY: Bold Decision National Consumer Survey (Dec 17-22, 2022) The overall margin of error for US consumer findings (N=1,500) is +/- 2.53% at the 95% confidence interval and higher for subgroups. Some findings may total more or less than 100% due to rounding.

FULL QUESTION WORDING & RESPONSES

VIEW TOWARDS BALLOONS: "Though it might not be something you've ever thought much about, would you say you generally have a positive or negative view towards balloons, or are you neutral / have no opinion?" (65% positive | 28% neutral / no opinion | 7% negative)

PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD: "How likely are you to purchase balloons in the next 12 months?" (29% definitely will purchase | 22% very likely | 21% somewhat likely | 17% not very likely | 12% not at all likely)

LIMITS ON SALE: "In recent years, some states and municipalities have implemented regulations or restrictions on balloons (for example, regulations or restrictions regarding the retail sale and/ or consumer use of balloons). Generally speaking, would you favor or oppose limits on the sale or use of balloons?" (25% favor | 46% oppose | 28% don't know / not sure)

LOCAL BAN ON SALE: "How strongly would you favor or oppose the following idea: Local ban on the sale of all balloons IN YOUR COMMUNITY" (14% favor | 69% oppose | 17% no opinion)

OUR MISSION



The mission of the Coalition for Responsible Celebration (CRC) is to position balloons and celebration products as special and affordable ways to celebrate by promoting safe environmental product practices, driving sustainable solutions with responsible product stewardship, and making them available for all.

Our work focuses on education, innovation and maintaining access to celebration balloons through advocacy.



Education



Innovation



Advocacy



For more information, scan the QR Code or visit,
<http://www.coalitionforresponsiblecelebration.org/>