

News Release

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New Study Shows Underage Youth a Target of Alcohol Marketing

Youth are more likely to see alcohol advertising than adults

Washington, DC - Alcohol companies are spending millions of dollars in magazine advertising and reaching America's youth more effectively than adults, according to a [report released today](#) by a new public health group set up to monitor and analyze the industry's marketing and its impact on youth.

The report by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University analyzed alcohol advertising in national magazines in 2001. Youth between the ages of 12 and 20 saw 45% more beer ads, 27% more distilled spirit ads, and 60% more "malternative" ads in magazines than adults over 21. The study also found the alcohol industry advertised in magazines with high youth readership, spending almost a third of its magazine advertising dollars in 10 magazines with at least 25% youth readership. "America's parents should be disturbed by these findings," said Jim O'Hara, the Center's executive director. "They aren't seeing these ads but their children are because that's where the industry is putting them - in the magazines their kids read."

"When more than 16% of eighth-graders report having been drunk at least once in the past year, and almost 40% of tenth-graders say they've been drunk, they don't need to be bombarded with the industry's good-time party ads," O'Hara said.

The Federal Trade Commission reviewed alcohol industry advertising and marketing practices in 1999 and issued a report that recommended several "best practices" for the alcohol industry aimed at reducing children's exposure to alcohol advertising. The Center's study reveals that alcohol companies have fallen short of following these "best practices" and continue to make underage youth a target:

Other key findings from the study include:

- **More beer, distilled spirits, and "malternative" ads:** Marketers of beer and distilled spirits brands delivered more product advertising to youth than to adults in magazines.

- **Fewer wine ads:** For wine, the second leading alcohol advertising category in magazines, youth saw 58% less advertising than adults.
- **Only young adults see more ads than underage youth:** Underage youth saw nearly as much advertising as young adults ages 21-34. Adults ages 35+, who make up the largest share of the adult population, were a distant third audience.
- **Alcohol ad dollars follow youth audiences:** More than half of the money spent on alcohol magazine advertising was in 24 magazines with youth audiences that exceed 15.8%, the percentage of youth in the U.S. population age 12 and over.

The Center was established to provide reliable data on alcohol companies' marketing practices by using standard advertising data and practices to analyze advertising and other promotional tactics. Future reports will focus on areas like television and radio advertising, Internet ads and promotion, event sponsorship, film and television placement.

"Despite the FTC's call on the alcohol industry to avoid marketing to youth audiences, the companies' advertising practices fall short of the reforms recommended by the commission," says the Center's research director David Jernigan. "We have submitted this data to the FTC and have asked for a new and rigorous review of the companies' practices," he said.

The Center's study analyzes \$320 million spent in alcohol product advertising in magazines during 2001. According to O'Hara, by "reverse engineering" the actual alcohol advertising in magazines in 2001, this analysis sheds light on the information that is available to the alcohol industry when it makes decisions about where and how to spend its advertising dollars. The study employs the same tools, syndicated data sources, and procedures that are utilized by media planners and buyers to carry out advertising campaigns. Audience data for all of the advertising analyzed in this report is tracked by Mediamark Research Inc. (MRI), which is the industry standard for magazine audience measurement.

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