

News Release

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Girls More Likely Than Boys to Be Overexposed to Alcohol Advertising in Magazines

Study published in the "Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine" documents girls' overexposure

Washington, DC - Underage youth saw more alcohol advertising than adults, on a per capita basis, in magazines in 2002, [a new study has found](#), and girls were even more overexposed to this advertising than boys. This overexposure of underage girls to alcohol advertising comes at a time when public health surveys have found for the first time that teenage girls are drinking more than teenage boys.

The research on the exposure of underage youth to alcohol advertising was conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University and was published today in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

"Given the latest public health data on the closing of the gender gap in underage drinking, parents have even more reason to worry. Their daughters are being overwhelmed with alcohol ads portraying drinking as glamorous and fashionable," said David H. Jernigan, lead author of the study and the Center's research director.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, in 2002 eighth- and 10th-grade girls surpassed boys for the first time as current drinkers, i.e., having had a drink in the past 30 days. In 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that in addition to more ninth-grade girls consuming alcohol than ninth-grade boys - 38.5% of girls and 33.9% of boys reported drinking in the past month - more of the girls reported binge drinking (i.e. having five or more drinks on one or more occasion in the past month) than boys: 20.9% of girls and 18.8% of boys reported binge drinking.

The Center's study looked at \$590.4 million in spending on 6,239 alcohol ads in 2001 and 2002, with a special focus on differences in exposure between underage girls and women and between underage boys and men in 2002. Key findings from the study include:

Both boys and girls were more likely to see magazine advertising than adults. While the total amount of magazine advertising for beer and distilled spirits reaching underage youth declined

between 2001 and 2002 by 8% and 19% respectively, the overexposure of underage youth to alcohol advertising continued. In 2002, underage youth saw 45% more beer advertising than legal-age adults, per capita. For distilled spirits, underage youth saw 12% more advertising than legal-age adults, per capita. For "malternatives," the usually sweet-tasting alcohol drinks that are sometimes produced as joint ventures of beer and distilled spirits companies such as Smirnoff Ice and Bacardi Silver, the total amount of advertising reaching underage youth increased by 109%, and underage youth saw 65% more of this advertising than legal-age adults on a per capita basis.

Girls were significantly more likely than boys to be overexposed to alcohol advertising in magazines. Underage girls saw 68% more beer advertising than women, ages 21 and over, on a per capita basis. In contrast, underage boys saw only 29% more beer advertising than legal-age men on a per capita basis. While boys generally had greater exposure to alcohol advertising, girls' overexposure was much greater. The difference in overexposure was most striking for ads for malternatives: girls saw 95% more advertising than legal-age women on a per capita basis. On the other hand, boys saw 37% more malternative advertising than men, ages 21 and over, on a per capita basis.

Underage girls saw more alcohol advertising than young women above the legal drinking age. Girls aged 12-20 were slightly more likely per capita to be exposed to advertising for beer and malternatives than young women aged 21-34, an age group often identified as the target audience for alcohol advertising. However, boys aged 12-20 were substantially less likely to be exposed to alcohol advertising than men aged 21-34. Since some in the alcohol industry have indicated a target audience as narrow as 21- to 24-year-olds, the study examined the media weight received by this narrow target audience compared to 18- to 20-year-olds. All of the brands delivering the greatest exposure to underage girls more effectively exposed 18-to 20-year-olds to their advertising than 21- to 24-year-olds. By comparison, less than half of the brands that delivered the most exposure to underage boys exposed 18- to 20-year-olds more effectively than 21- to 24-year-olds.

Wine advertising was still "the exception." Unlike advertising for beer, distilled spirits and malternatives, advertising for wine continued to reach adults more effectively than underage youth. Underage youth saw 69% less advertising for wine than legal-age adults, on a per capita basis, and the wine advertising that reached underage youth declined from 2001 levels by 14%.

The Center's findings come ten months after the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (IOM) published recommendations on reducing underage drinking, including a call for a national media campaign targeted at adults and designed to "animate and sustain a broad, deep, societal commitment to reduce underage drinking."

"The high levels of exposure to alcohol advertising for youth in general, and for girls in particular, are cause for concern," said Jim O'Hara, executive director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth and an author of the study. "There is an urgent need for a national strategy to prevent and reduce underage drinking as recommended by the Institute of

Medicine, and this strategy needs to take into account the increase in girls' alcohol consumption."

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