

**News Release**

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## **Television Alcohol Ads Bombarding Teens Continue to Rise**

*Ads for alcohol up by 90,000 over two years*

*High levels of underage drinking matched by high levels of alcohol advertising*

*Advertising Data for 100 Local Markets and B-Roll Available*

**Washington, DC** - Alcohol industry advertising on television maintained a steady path of growth between 2001 and 2003, driven in part by an explosion of distilled spirits ads on cable television. These findings, released in a [new study](#) from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University, demonstrate how little the national debate about alcohol advertising and underage drinking has led the alcohol industry to change its practices through 2003.

The Center found that nearly 90,000 more alcohol ads aired on television in 2003 than two years earlier, with the greatest increase occurring between 2001 and 2002. The same was true for the number of ads that underage youth were more likely to see on a per capita basis than adults-ads that "overexposed" youth. In 2001, 51,084 ads were more likely to be seen by youth, ages 12 to 20, than by legal-age adults; this number jumped to 69,054 by 2003.

"Every single day, 7,000 kids under age 16 take their first drink, and \$6 billion of alcohol advertising and marketing each year isn't helping," said Jim O'Hara, the Center's executive director, citing a federal survey released in September that showed no change in high underage drinking levels. "More of the same is not progress, and this report shows that that is what we are seeing from the alcohol industry."

**Key findings from the study include:**

- **Alcohol advertising on television continued to grow from 2001 through 2003.** While spending on advertising decreased by 11% between 2002 and 2003, the number of alcohol ads that aired continued to rise, reaching 298,054 in 2003.
- **Underage youth continue to see high levels of alcohol advertising on television.** The number of alcohol ads overexposing youth rose each year between 2001 and 2003, from 51,084 to 66,218 to 69,054 in 2003. More than 23% of the alcohol ads that aired on television in 2003 were more likely to be seen by youth than adults on a per capita basis, a level similar to 2001 and 2002 levels.

The average underage person saw two beer ads for every three seen by the average adult on television in 2003. Three "alcopop" ads were seen by the average underage person for every four seen by the average adult.

- **Top 15 teen programs remain popular with alcohol advertisers.** All 15 of the television shows most popular with teens had alcohol ads in 2003. The alcohol industry spent more than \$30 million in 2003 to place 2,608 ads on these programs, including *Fear Factor*, *Friends*, *Smallville* and *According to Jim*.
- **Distilled spirits ads and spending exploded between 2001 and 2003.** Driving the increase in alcohol advertising on television from 2001 to 2003 was the explosion of ads for distilled spirits on national cable networks - from 513 in 2001 to 33,126 in 2003. Spending on distilled spirits advertising on television increased by 148% between 2002 and 2003. Beer still accounts for 84.6% of alcohol ad dollars spent on television, but distilled spirits surpassed alcopops in 2003 to become the second most-advertised alcohol product type on television.
- **Industry reform is slow to happen.** The Center's analyses of alcohol advertising from 2001 to 2003 show an increase each year in the number of alcohol ads aired on programs with a 30% or greater underage audience. These ads accounted for around 12% of total alcohol advertising on television in each of the three years. Beer and distilled spirits industry groups announced in September 2003 that they would codify a 30% underage threshold for their members' advertising. Yet the Center's analysis shows that this change will require a major shift in course: 11.6% of the alcohol advertising that appeared on television between January and June 2004 was still on programming with more than 30% underage youth.

"As recommended by the Institute of Medicine, the alcohol industry needs to fully accept its responsibility to change the advertising environment surrounding our youth," said David Jernigan, the Center's research director. "Advertising where underage youth are nearly a third of the audience is too small a step in reducing youth exposure and, as CAMY's report shows, changes to meet even this lax limit have been too slow to come."

**About this report:** CAMY commissioned Virtual Media Resources (VMR) of Natick, Massachusetts to analyze all of the alcohol product advertising on television in 2003. This report is based on industry-standard data sources and methods that are available to ad agencies and advertisers as they make decisions about where to place their advertising. Advertising occurrence and expenditure data came from TNS Media Intelligence/CMR (formerly known as CMR or Competitive Media Reporting). Audience data came from Nielsen Media Research, the industry-standard source for television ratings.

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