

IT CAN BE DONE: REDUCTIONS IN YOUTH EXPOSURE TO ALCOHOL ADVERTISING IN MAGAZINES, 2001–2005

I. Executive Summary

From 2001 to 2005, youth¹ exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines fell by 49%,² according to an analysis conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) of 16,635 advertisements costing nearly \$1.7 billion. The largest year-to-year drop occurred between 2004 and 2005, when youth exposure fell by more than a quarter. Alcohol industry trade associations adopted a more restrictive standard for advertising placements in the fall of 2003, and by 2005 nearly all alcohol advertisements in magazines were placed in magazines with youth audience compositions lower than the industry standard. Major findings of CAMY's analysis included:

- Alcohol advertising in magazines declined overall, but youth exposure fell substantially more than adult exposure. From 2001 to 2005, youth exposure fell by 49%, while the number of alcohol advertisements placed per year fell by 20%, and adult exposure dropped by 30%. These drops reflect the trend of alcohol advertisers moving from magazines to television.
- Youth overexposure³ to alcohol advertising in magazines also declined. For instance, youth overexposure to beer advertising peaked in 2002 when youth saw 57% more beer advertising in magazines than adults, but fell to only 7% more exposure in 2005. In 2005, youth also saw 19% more advertising for alcopops⁴ per capita than adults, and slightly less advertising for distilled spirits than adult readers.
- Less than 1% of alcohol advertisements and alcohol advertising dollars in 2005 were directed to magazines exceeding the alcohol industry's voluntary standard of 30% maximum youth audience composition.
- Forty-four percent of advertisements and 50% of spending in 2005 were in magazines with youth audience compositions that exceeded 15%—roughly the proportion of youth ages 12 to 20 in the general age-12-and-above population.

¹ In this report, unless otherwise noted, youth are defined as persons ages 12 to 20, and adults are defined as persons age 21 and over.
² Youth exposure and overexposure (as well as “more likely to be read by” and other comparisons of youth and adult exposure to alcohol advertising in this report) are based on “gross rating points,” which measure how much an audience segment is exposed to advertising per capita. Another way of measuring advertising exposure is “gross impressions” (the total number of times all members of a given audience are exposed to advertising). Had exposure been measured by gross impressions alone, youth exposure would have fallen by 47% from 2001 to 2005, and adult exposure would have fallen by 25%. The adult population will almost always receive far more gross impressions than youth because there are far more adults in the population than youth. Gross rating points are calculated by dividing gross impressions by the relevant population (e.g., persons age 21 and over) and multiplying by 100. See Appendix B for a glossary of terms.
³ Underage youth are more likely to see on a per capita basis, or be “overexposed” to, a magazine advertisement for alcohol when it is placed in a publication where the percentage of underage youth in the readership is greater than the percentage of underage youth in the general population. (In 2005, for example, this meant that youth were overexposed to advertisements in magazines where underage youth were more than 15.4% of the readership.)
⁴ “Alcopops” are also referred to as “low-alcohol refreshers,” “malternatives” or “flavored malt beverages.” Many of the brands in this category, including brands such as Mike’s Hard Lemonade and Smirnoff Ice, have alcohol contents of between 4% and 6%, similar to most traditional malt beverages. (Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau [TTB], “Notice No. 4—Flavored Malt Beverages and Related Proposals,” *Federal Register* [March 24, 2003]: 14293.) The alcohol industry treats these as a distinct category of alcoholic beverages. This report follows this industry convention.

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The Center on
Alcohol Marketing and *Youth*

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Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth
Georgetown University
Box 571444
3300 Whitehaven St. NW, Suite 5000
Washington, D.C. 20057
(202) 687-1019
www.camy.org

- In 2005, 81% of youth exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines came from advertisements placed in magazines with disproportionately large youth readerships.
- The majority of alcohol brands (127 out of 201 brands) had either all or more than half of their advertising in publications with youth readerships below 15%. However, 36 brands had all of their advertising and 38 brands had the majority of theirs in magazines read disproportionately by youth.
- More than half of youth exposure to

alcohol advertising in magazines came from 18 brands, 16 of which overexposed youth ages 12 to 20 relative to adults age 21 and over. These 18 brands accounted for approximately 36% of all alcohol advertising spending in magazines in 2005.

In 2003, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine recommended that alcohol companies move their advertising toward magazines with a maximum of 15% youth audiences, a figure roughly proportionate to the pres-

ence of persons ages 12 to 20 in the population age 12 and above.⁵ The U.S. Surgeon General recently called on alcohol companies to ensure that “the placement of alcohol advertising, promotions, and other means of marketing do not disproportionately expose youth to messages about alcohol.”⁶ While the majority of alcohol brands do not disproportionately expose youth to their advertising, the placement practices of a relatively small number of brands need to change for further progress to be made in reducing youth exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines.

II. Why the Concern

Alcohol is the leading drug problem among America’s youth. It is closely associated with the three leading causes of death among youth—motor vehicle crashes, homicide and suicide.⁷ The Surgeon General has termed the short- and long-term consequences of underage alcohol consumption “...astounding in their range and magnitude, affecting adolescents, the people around them, and society as a whole.”⁸ Each year, approximately 5,000 people under age 21 die from alcohol-related injuries involving underage drinking.⁹ In 2005, 45% of high school students reported drinking alcohol in the past month, and 29% reported binge drinking—typically defined as consuming five or more

drinks on an occasion. Young binge drinkers were far more likely than other youth to engage in other risky behaviors, such as riding with a driver who had been drinking, being currently sexually active, smoking cigarettes or cigars, being a victim of dating violence, attempting suicide, and using illicit drugs.¹⁰

Recent research has found a significant relationship between exposure to alcohol marketing in various forms and youth drinking behavior. A national longitudinal study published in 2006 found that for every additional alcohol advertisement to which youth were exposed (above an average of 23 per month), they drank 1% more, and for every additional

dollar per capita spent on alcohol advertising in a media market (above an average of \$6.80), youth in that market drank 3% more on average, even when researchers controlled for level of alcohol sales in that market.¹¹ Other studies have found links between youth drinking and other forms of alcohol marketing, such as exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines or at beer concession stands at sporting or musical events,¹² exposure to alcohol brands in movies,¹³ and ownership of alcohol-branded merchandise.¹⁴

In recognition of the importance of monitoring alcohol marketing’s potential influence on youth, the Federal Trade Commission has issued two

⁵ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, R.J. Bonnie and M.E. O’Connell, eds. (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004), 138.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 44.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, “10 Leading Causes of Death, United States: 2003, All Races, Both Sexes,” in the WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Reports, 1999–2003. Available at <http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/lead-caus10.html> (accessed November 28, 2006); and National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, R.J. Bonnie and M.E. O’Connell, eds. (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004), 60–61.

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 10.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ J.W. Miller, T.S. Naimi, R.D. Brewer, S.E. Jones, “Binge Drinking and Associated Health Risk Behaviors Among High School Students,” *Pediatrics* 119, no. 1 (2007): 76–85.

¹¹ L. Snyder, F. Milici, M. Slater, H. Sun, Y. Strizhakova, “Effects of Alcohol Advertising Exposure on Drinking among Youth,” *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 160, no. 1 (2006): 18–24.

¹² P.L. Ellickson, R.L. Collins, K. Hambarsoomians, D.F. McCaffrey, “Does Alcohol Advertising Promote Adolescent Drinking? Results from a Longitudinal Assessment,” *Addiction* 100, no. 2 (2005): 235–46.

¹³ J.D. Sargent, T.A. Willis, M. Stoolmiller, J. Gibson, F.X. Gibbons, “Alcohol Use in Motion Pictures and Its Relation with Early-Onset Teen Drinking,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 67, no. 1 (2006): 54–65.

¹⁴ A.C. McClure, S. Dal Cin, J. Gibson, J. Sargent, “Ownership of Alcohol-branded Merchandise and Initiation of Teen Drinking,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 30, no. 4 (2006): 277–83.

reports on the subject in the past eight years and has announced plans to issue a third in the summer or fall of 2007. Its

first report, issued in 1999, concluded, “While many factors influence an underage person’s drinking decisions, includ-

ing among other things parents, peers, and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising also plays a role.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Federal Trade Commission, *Self-Regulation in the Alcohol Industry: A Review of Industry Efforts to Avoid Promoting Alcohol to Underage Consumers* (Washington, D.C., 1999), 4.