

# YOUTH EXPOSURE TO ALCOHOL ADS ON TELEVISION, 2002: FROM 2001 TO 2002, ALCOHOL'S ADLAND GREW VASTER

## Executive Summary

Television advertising for alcohol, and youth exposure to that advertising, grew substantially in 2002 from 2001, indicating the alcohol industry may need to significantly change its advertising practices in order to comply with the revised voluntary advertising codes announced in September 2003. The total number of alcohol ads increased from 2001 levels by 39%, to 289,381, and spending grew by 22%, to more than \$990 million. The largest percentage increases came in ads and spending for distilled spirits and "low-alcohol refresher" (LAR) or flavored malt beverage products<sup>1</sup> such as Bacardi Silver and Smirnoff Ice.

Youth<sup>2</sup> were more likely than adults on a per capita basis to see 66,218 of the alcohol ads in 2002, an increase of 30% over

2001.<sup>3</sup> In this universe of ads overexposing young people, total youth exposure was 80% higher than that of adults, up from 73% in 2001. In 2002, these 66,218 ads also reached youth viewers more effectively than the alcohol companies' often-stated target of 21-34, with youth 12-20 receiving 22% more exposure than young adults 21-34. Teen programming abounded with alcohol advertising; all 15 of the television shows most popular with teens aged 12-17 had alcohol ads.

Alcohol industry self-regulation is the primary means of regulating alcohol advertising's exposure to youth. In September 2003, the Beer Institute and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) announced changes in their voluntary codes, lower-

ing the maximum permissible youth audience composition for alcohol advertising from 50% to 30%. Had this threshold been in place in 2002, 34,016 ads—11.8% of ads, costing nearly \$47 million—would have exceeded it, suggesting ongoing independent monitoring will be critical to ensure compliance. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently recommended that the industry eventually move toward a threshold of 15% maximum youth audience composition. More than 21% of ads—61,741 ads, costing more than \$103 million—exceeded this threshold in 2002.<sup>4</sup>

These 61,741 ads accounted for more than 40% of youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television in 2002.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Most of the beverages in this category have alcohol content of between four and six percent, 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.

<sup>2</sup> For this report, unless otherwise noted, youth are defined as persons ages 12-20, and adults are defined as persons age 21 and over.

<sup>3</sup> "More likely to see" (as well as percentage measures of youth overexposure and other comparisons of adult and youth exposure to alcohol advertising in this report) is 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 the members of a given audience are exposed to advertising). The adult population will almost always receive far more "gross impressions" than youth, because there are far more adults in the population than youth.

<sup>4</sup> In its revised self-regulatory code announced in September 2003, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States specified the population basis for assessing audience composition for television advertising placements as 2+. Although previous CAMY reports on television advertising have used a 12+ population basis, because radio and magazine audience data are only available for the 12+ population, this report uses a 2+ basis in order to be consistent with the newly articulated industry standard for television.

<sup>5</sup> 10,737 of 25,348 youth gross rating points came from advertising that youth, because of their disproportionate presence in the viewing audience relative to their presence in the general population, were more likely to see per capita than adults 21 and above. Overexposing ads created 3,716,866,467 impressions out of total youth alcohol advertising impressions of 8,799,684,719.

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## Why the Concern

After substantial declines in the 1980s and early 1990s, youth alcohol use has remained flat and at high levels for the past 10 years.<sup>6</sup> In 2002, approximately 10.7 million 12- to 20-year-olds reported having had a drink in the past month, while 7.2 million reported binge drinking (defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion).<sup>7</sup> Every day, three teens die from drinking and driving, and six more

die of other alcohol-related causes, including homicide, suicide and drowning.<sup>8</sup>

Public health research has found that youth exposure to alcohol advertising increases awareness of that advertising,<sup>9</sup> which in turn influences young people's beliefs about drinking, intentions to drink, and drinking behavior.<sup>10</sup> Brain imaging has revealed that, when shown alcoholic beverage advertisements, teens with alcohol use disorders have greater

activity in areas of the brain previously linked to reward, desire, positive affect and episodic recall, with the degree of brain response highest in youths who consumed more drinks per month and reported greater desires to drink.<sup>11</sup> The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has noted that, "While many factors may influence an underage person's drinking decisions, including among other things parents, peers, and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising also plays a role."<sup>12</sup>

## About This Report

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University ([www.camy.org](http://www.camy.org)) monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth. Reducing high rates of underage alcohol consumption and the suffering caused by alcohol-related injuries and deaths among young people requires using the public health strategies of limiting the access to and the appeal of alcohol to underage persons. The Center is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Georgetown University.

CAMY commissioned Virtual Media Resources (VMR) of Natick, Massachusetts to analyze all of the alcohol product advertising on television in 2002. Virtual Media Resources is a media research, planning, market analysis and consulting firm based in Natick, Massachusetts, serving communications organizations and marketers in a wide variety of market segments

and media. VMR was established in 1992 to provide an independent research firm serving advertising agencies, and has grown to service over 100 clients across the United States and Canada, including retail, publishing, financial, automotive, public health and other fields.

This report is based on industry-standard data sources and methods that are available to ad agencies and advertisers as they make their 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.

This report does not include alcohol product advertising bought directly on local cable systems or cable interconnects; such advertising may appear on cable channels and on broadcast channels that are delivered via cable television.

Because distilled spirits advertisers, faced with a voluntary ban on their advertising by the four major broadcast networks, have made particular use of these channels, this report understates their presence on television. The report also does not include advertising data from Hispanic television networks such as Univision and Telemundo. The standard industry sources used for this report do not include data for either Hispanic networks or for locally purchased cable advertising.

The measures in this report are standard to the advertising research field but may not be familiar to the general reader. When an individual sees an advertisement, that is called an "impression," and total impressions for a series of ads or an ad campaign are called "gross impressions," because they include multiple exposures to some or all of the people reached by the advertising. "Reach" refers to the number or percentage of a target population that has the potential to see an ad or a campaign through exposure to selected media.

<sup>6</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, R.J. Bonnie and M.E. O'Connell, eds. (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003), 37-8.

<sup>7</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *Results from the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Rockville, MD: Office of Applied Studies, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts 2002*, Early ed. (Washington, DC: National Center for Statistics and Analysis, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003), 114; D.T. Levy, T.R. Miller, K. Stewart, R. Spicer, *Underage Drinking: Immediate Consequences and their Costs* (Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, July 1999).

<sup>9</sup> R.L. Collins et al., "Predictors of beer advertising awareness among eighth graders," *Addiction* 98 (2003): 1297-1306.

<sup>10</sup> S.E. Martin et al., "Alcohol Advertising and Youth," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 26 (2002): 900-906.

<sup>11</sup> S.F. Tapert et al., "Neural response to alcohol stimuli in adolescents with alcohol use disorder," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 60 (2003): 727-735.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Trade Commission, *Self-Regulation in the Alcohol Industry: A Review of Industry Efforts to Avoid Promoting Alcohol to Underage Consumers* (Washington, DC: Federal Trade Commission, 1999), 4.

“Frequency” indicates the number of times individuals are exposed to an ad or campaign, and is most often expressed as an average number of exposures. “Gross rating points,” or “GRPs,” measure how much advertising exposure is going to a particular population on a per capita basis. For example, 100 GRPs indicate that the population received an average of one exposure per person (although this could have come from 50% of the population seeing the advertising two times). GRPs are the product of reach and frequency: if the reach is 80% and the average frequency is 2.5, then the GRPs total 200. GRPs thus provide a comparative measure of per capita advertising exposure. They incorporate both

how much advertising exposure exists and how much of a particular population was likely to have viewed that exposure. Further information on sources and methodology used may be found in Appendix A. Appendix B provides a more detailed glossary of advertising research terminology.

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