

African-American Youth and Alcohol Fact Sheet



Prevalence and consequences of underage drinking among African-American youth:

- Alcohol is the drug most widely used by African-American youth.¹
- Although African-American youth drink less than other youth (according to the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 19.1 percent of African Americans between 12 and 20 used alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to 32.6 percent of whites, and 9.9 percent of African-American youth reported "binge" drinking, compared to 22.8 percent of whites),² there is evidence from public health research that, as they age, African-Americans suffer more from alcohol-related diseases than other groups in the population.
- The age-adjusted death rate from alcohol-related diseases for non-Hispanic African-Americans is 10 percent greater than for the general population.³
- National surveys have found that while frequent heavy drinking among white 18- to 29-year-old males dropped between 1984 and 1995, rates of heavy drinking and alcohol problems remained high among African-Americans in the same age group.⁴
- Alcohol use contributes to the three leading causes of death among African-American 12- to 20-year-olds: homicide, unintentional injuries (including car crashes), and suicide.⁵

Exposure of African-American young people to alcohol advertising in 2004:

In magazines:

- Twenty-seven percent of African-American teens ages 12-17 and 21 percent of African-Americans ages 18-20 are among the most frequent magazine readers, versus 18 percent and 13 percent of non-African-Americans in these age groups.⁶
- Youth exposure to alcohol advertising in national magazines has fallen substantially since 2001. However, in 2004, youth were still overexposed to magazine advertising relative to adults. In 2004 youth ages 12 to 20 saw 15 percent more advertising for beer and 10 percent more advertising for distilled spirits (the largest category of magazine alcohol advertising) per capita than adults age 21 and over.⁷ In this context of general overexposure, African-American youth saw even more advertising for these products in magazines in 2004 than youth in general.⁸
- African-American youth saw 34 percent more alcohol advertising in national magazines than did youth in general in 2004. Compared to the average for all youth, African-American youth saw 21 percent more advertising for beer and ale, 42 percent more advertising for distilled spirits, 6 percent less advertising for "alcopops"⁹ such as Smirnoff Ice and Mike's Hard Lemonade, and 3 percent less advertising for wine brands.¹⁰
- While 97 percent of all youth saw an average of 113 alcohol ads in magazines, 99 percent of African-American youth saw an average of 150 alcohol ads in national magazines in 2004.¹¹
- African-American youth also more advertising per capita for beer and ale, distilled spirits and alcopops than African-American adults: they saw 23 percent more beer and ale advertising, 7 percent more distilled spirits advertising, and 12 percent more advertising for alcopops than African-Americans age 21 and over.¹²

- In 2004, out of 211 alcohol brands advertising in national magazines, just 22 brands – including six cognac or brandy brands – accounted for more than half of African-American youth exposure but less than a third of total spending in magazines.¹³

- Alcohol advertisers concentrated the advertising that overexposed African-American youth in 14 magazines accounting for 75 percent of the exposure of African-American youth to alcohol advertising in 2004, including *Sports Illustrated*, *Vibe*, *Stuff*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Source*, *InStyle* and *Vogue*. All these magazines exposed African-American youth to alcohol ads more effectively than youth in general. They also exposed African-American youth more effectively than African-American adults.¹⁴

On the radio:

- African-American teens 12 to 17 listen to more than 17 hours of radio per week on average, compared to 13.25 hours for all teens.¹⁵

- In a sample of 67,404 occurrences of advertising airing in 104 markets for the 25 leading alcohol brands in June and July 2004, African-American youth heard 15 percent more alcohol advertising per capita than youth in general.¹⁶

- In 25 of 104 markets and in six of the top 10 markets—which contain approximately 27 percent of the total U.S. population but 34 percent of the African-American population—African-American youth heard more alcohol advertising on the radio per capita than youth in general. These six markets were New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston and Detroit.¹⁷

- Measured in gross impressions, a standard measure of advertising exposure that represent the total number of advertising exposures for a given population, a single brand, Colt 45 Malt Liquor, accounted for nearly a third of African-American youth exposure to alcohol advertising on the radio, while it and Hennessy Cognacs were the two brands that most disproportionately exposed African-American youth compared with all youth.¹⁸

On television:

- Thirty-nine percent of African-American teens 12 to 17 are among the most frequent viewers (the top quintile) of cable TV, a fast-growing medium for alcohol advertisers, versus 16 percent of non-African-American teens.¹⁹

- Alcohol advertisers spent nearly \$4.8 million in 2004 to place ads on all 15 of the programs most popular with African-American youth,²⁰ including *Girlfriends*, *Half & Half*, *CSI* and *Without a Trace*.²¹

- Three leading alcoholic beverage brands (Bud Light, Heineken and Miller Genuine Draft) accounted for more than half of the spending on this advertising.²²

- On BET (Black Entertainment Television), a cable television network targeting African-American audiences, overall alcohol spending as well as spending on the programs generating the greatest youth exposure to alcohol advertising increased from 2003 to 2004.²³

- In 2004, 72 percent of alcohol advertising spending on BET was on 10 programs that were more likely to be seen by youth than by adults. On these programs, as well as across all the BET programming containing alcohol advertising, young people 12 to 20 were more than twice as likely to be in the audience than adults 21 and older.²⁴

Alcohol marketing and the African-American community:

- The marketing of alcohol products in African-American communities has, on occasion, stirred national controversy and met with fierce resistance from African-Americans and others. Charges of over-concentration of alcohol billboards in African-American neighborhoods have prompted protests and legislative fights in Chicago, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Los Angeles and elsewhere.²⁵
- Battles over the heavy marketing to the African-American community of malt liquor, a stronger-than-average beer, resulted in the banning of one new brand, PowerMaster, in the summer of 1991, and fines against the makers of another, St. Ides Malt Liquor, by New York and Oregon, for advertising practices that allegedly targeted youth and glamorized gang activity.²⁶
- African-American youth culture already abounds with alcohol products and imagery. A content analysis of 1,000 of the most popular songs from 1996 to 1997 found that references to alcohol were more frequent in rap (47% of songs had alcohol references) than other genres such as country-western (13%), top 40 (12%), alternative rock (10%), and heavy metal (4%); and that 48 percent of these rap songs had product placements or mentions of specific alcohol brand names.²⁷
- Rap music videos analyzed for a study published in 1997 contained the highest percentage of depictions of alcohol use of any music genre appearing on MTV, BET, CMT and VH-1.²⁸
- A recent study of alcohol mentions in rap music found that from 1979 to 1997 such references increased five-fold, with a particular increase in appearances of liquor and champagne brands after 1994. From 1994 to 1997, 71 percent of the rap songs that mentioned alcohol in this study's sample named a specific alcohol brand.²⁹

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¹J.M. Wallace Jr. et al., "The Epidemiology of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use among Black Youth," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 60 (1999): 800-809.

²Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, [Results from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings](#) (Rockville, MD: Office of Applied Studies, 2005), table H.25 (cited 9 Sept 2005).

³K.D. Kochanek et al., "[Deaths: Final Data for 2002](#)," *National Vital Statistics Reports* 53, no. 5 (2004): table 24. (cited 4 May 2006).

⁴R. Caetano and C.L. Clark, "Trends in alcohol consumption patterns among Whites, Blacks and Hispanics: 1984 and 1995," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 59 (1998): 659-668.

⁵National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, "[10 Leading Causes of Death, United States: 2002: Black, Non-Hispanic, Both Sexes](#)," in *WISQARS: Leading Causes of Death Reports, 1999-2003*. (cited 13 June 2006).

⁶Simmons Market Research Bureau Adult Fall 2004 and Teen 2004 National Consumer Surveys.

⁷Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising in Magazines: Good News, Bad News* (Washington, DC: Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2006), 5-6.

⁸Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Exposure of African-American Youth to Alcohol Advertising, 2003 to 2004* (Washington, DC: Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2006), 5-6.

⁹"Alcopops" are also referred to as "low-alcohol refreshers," "malternatives," "flavored malt beverages," or "ready-to-drink flavored alcoholic beverages." Many of the brands in this category, which includes 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.)

¹⁰Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Exposure of African-American Youth to Alcohol Advertising, 2003 to 2004*, 5.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 6.

¹²*Ibid.*, 6.

¹³*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵Radio Advertising Bureau, *Radio Marketing Guide and Factbook for Advertisers*, 2005-2006 ed. (New York: Radio Advertising Bureau, 2006), 8-9.

¹⁶Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Exposure of African-American Youth to Alcohol Advertising, 2003 to 2004*, 8-9.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸Ibid., 9-10..

¹⁹Simmons Market Research Bureau, Adult Fall 2004 and Teen 2004 National Consumer Surveys.

²⁰These are the fifteen prime time, regularly scheduled programs drawing the largest numbers of African-American youth ages 12 to 20 from November 1 to November 28, 2004.

²¹Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Exposure of African-American Youth to Alcohol Advertising, 2003 to 2004*, 11.

²²Ibid., 1-2.

²³Ibid., 12.

²⁴Ibid., 12-13.

²⁵See e.g., D. Jernigan and P. Wright, eds., *Making News, Changing Policy: Using Media Advocacy to Change Alcohol and Tobacco Policy* (Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1994); B. Gallegos, *Chasing the Frogs and Camels out of Los Angeles: The Movement to Limit Alcohol and Tobacco Billboards: A Case Study* (San Rafael, CA: The Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems, 1999).

²⁶See e.g., D. Jernigan and P. Wright, eds., *Making News, Changing Policy: Using Media Advocacy to Change Alcohol and Tobacco Policy* (Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1994).

²⁷D.F. Roberts et al., *Substance Use in Popular Movies and Music* (Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1999).

²⁸R.H. DuRant et al., "Tobacco and Alcohol Use Behaviors Portrayed in Music Videos: A Content Analysis," *American Journal of Public Health* 87, no. 7 (1997): 1131-1135.

²⁹D. Herd, "Changes in the Prevalence of Alcohol Use in Rap Song Lyrics, 1979-1997," *Addiction* 100 (2005): 1258-69.

This fact sheet was developed by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University (camy.org). The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University 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.