



The Underage Drinking Prevention and Social Marketing Project

Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws through a Statewide Marketing Campaign

TELEVISION, ALCOHOL ADS AND YOUTH

As shown in the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth's December 2006 report, [Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001–2005](#), alcohol companies spent \$4.7 billion to place 1.4 million advertisements for alcoholic beverages on television from 2001 to 2005.

Alcohol advertising on television—and youth exposure to it—grew dramatically between 2001 and 2005:

- Teens aged 12 to 19 ranked ads for Bud Light as number one and Budweiser as number four when asked to choose their favorite television commercial in a spring 2005 study. Among the other brands ranked behind Budweiser in popularity in teens' top 10 were GEICO, Six Flags, Pepsi and Quiznos ads.¹
- Everyone is seeing more alcohol ads on television. From 2001 to 2005, youth (ages 12 to 20) exposure to those ads increased by 41%, compared to a 39% increase in exposure to young adults (ages 21 to 34), and a 48% increase in adult (age 21+) exposure.²
- The number of alcohol ads placed on programming more likely to be seen by youth ages 12 to 20 than adults age 21+ has trended downwards over the past five years, but remains above 2001 levels. As a percentage of alcohol product advertising on television, the number of such ads fell from 25% (56,852 ads) in 2001 to 20% (60,811 ads) in 2005.^{3,4}
- Driving the increases in alcohol advertising on television from 2001 to 2005 was the historic increase in ads for distilled spirits on national cable networks—from 1,973 in 2001 to 46,854 in 2005. Spending on distilled spirits advertising on television grew from \$5 million in 2001 to \$122 million in 2005.⁵

Teens' favorite television programs had alcohol advertising:

- Programming popular with teens is filled with alcohol advertising. Since 2001, alcohol ads have appeared every year on 13 or more of the 15 programs most popular with teens ages 12 to 17.⁶
- Throughout 2005, alcohol companies placed more than 1,300 ads on 14 of the 15 programs most popular with teen audiences, including *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Monday Night Football* and *CSI*, at a cost of nearly \$38 million.⁷
- Youth overexposure to alcohol advertising is most likely to occur on cable television. In 2001, 60% of youth overexposure was on cable television, while in 2005, 93% of overexposure was on cable. On three cable networks – Comedy Central, VH1 and BET – youth were consistently overexposed to alcohol advertising every year from 2001 to 2005. In 2005, youth were more likely to see alcohol advertisements on these networks than young adults ages 21 to 34, a group often mentioned as the industry's target audience.⁸

¹Teenage Research Unlimited, Spring 2005, Wave 45, 75-86.

²Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005* (Washington, DC: Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2006), 1.

³More likely to see" or "more popular among" (as well as percentage measures of youth overexposure and other comparisons of adult and youth exposure to alcohol advertising in this report) are based on "gross rating points," an industry-standard measure of 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). 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 multiplying by 100, thereby leveling the measurement playing field for differently-sized population segments.

⁴Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005*, 2, 11.

⁵Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005*, 11.

⁶"Most popular" refers to the regularly scheduled programs with the largest teen audiences during a single representative week in each year. See report for methodology. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005*, 16-17.

⁷Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005*, 17.

⁸Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Still Growing After All These Years: Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2005*, 13, 15-16.