
Youth Exposure to Alcohol Product Advertising on Local Radio in 75 U.S. Markets, 2009



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alcohol is the number one drug problem among youth, causing 4,600 deaths among persons under 21 every year. At least 13 longitudinal studies have found a strong association between youth exposure to alcohol marketing and underage drinking. The alcohol industry observes a voluntary 30 percent limit on the size of the underage audience for its advertising. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 24 state attorneys general and the Federal Trade Commission have all encouraged the industry to adopt a more restrictive standard.

Radio continues to be a vibrant medium among youth, despite the proliferation and innovation of digital media. For this report, the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health analyzed alcohol advertisements placed on radio in the 75 local markets in the United States in 2009 for which full-year data from a consistent survey methodology were available. These markets represent approximately 46.5 percent of the U.S. population age 12 and above. Key findings from the report include:

- Approximately 9 percent of all alcohol product advertisements aired on programming with underage audiences in violation of the industry's 30 percent standard. These advertisements generated 18 percent of youth exposure to alcohol advertising.
- Three brands (Bud Light, Coors Light, and Miller Lite) placed close to half of the noncompliant ads.
- Close to one-third (32%) of advertising placements occurred when proportionately more youth were listening than adults age 21 and above.
- These overexposing ads generated more than half of youth exposure to radio advertising for alcohol in 2009.
- In the majority of markets measured by Arbitron's new Portable People Meter™ technology in 2009, girls ages 12 to 20 were more likely than boys in the same age group to be exposed to alcohol advertising for alcopops, distilled spirits, and wine.

The alcohol industry's current standard covers all people below the age of 21; however, more than two-thirds of underage exposure to alcohol advertising on the radio went to young people between the ages of 12 and 20. Protecting this age group, which is less than 15 percent of the population, from undue exposure to alcohol advertising is the reason why the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine and 24 state attorneys general have called for the industry to adopt a new standard limiting alcohol advertising to programming where they are less than 15 percent of the audience.

In summary, this report finds that alcohol advertisers frequently violate a relatively weak voluntary standard, resulting in substantial undue youth exposure and overexposure to alcohol advertising.
