

Study: Teens Saw More Alcohol Ads in 2002  
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1. WASHINGTON (AP) -- The alcohol industry poured money into advertising in 2002, with many of the ads reaching young people not old enough to drink, a university study says.

The report by Georgetown University's Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, released Wednesday, said the overall number of ads on network, local and cable television increased to 289,381 in 2002 -- a 39 percent jump from the previous year. Industry spending on ads grew by 22 percent to more than \$990 million.

The study found that significant ad increases for distilled spirits and low-alcohol refreshers such as Smirnoff Ice and Skyy Blue accounted for much of the ad jump.

Teens were more likely on a per capita basis than adults to have seen 66,218 of the ads, a 30 percent increase since 2001, according to the study.

Some of the biggest spenders on such ads were beer companies, led by Heineken and Miller Lite. All 15 of the shows most popular among teens included alcohol ads, according to the study. "Survivor," "Fear Factor" and "That '70s Show" were among those with the most ads.

"This dramatic increase in alcohol ads seen by our children in 2002 suggests the problem got worse," said Jim O'Hara, executive director of the center. "The data demonstrate that the alcohol industry needs to make major changes in its advertising."

The Washington-based Distilled Spirits Council disagreed, saying the "vast majority of alcohol ads are viewed by adults and that self-regulation is working." It noted the center's own report found teens on average represented just 10 percent of the total audience for shows with alcohol advertising.

"To make further progress on underage drinking, we must focus on science-based solutions. Study after study shows that parents and other adults are the primary influence over a youth's decision regarding drinking, not advertising," said Peter Cressy, president of the spirits council.

Under guidelines announced last September, the alcohol industry said it would voluntarily regulate advertising if a television show's youth audience composition was 30 percent or more. The center said that threshold might be too high since teens on average represent just 13.3 percent of the national TV viewing audience.

It urged a more protective threshold of 15 percent, as recommended by the Institute of Medicine. That guideline would allow 77 percent of total television programming to be eligible for alcohol advertising while forcing advertisers to pull a substantial number of ads on programs aimed at youth, the center said.