

Alcohol and malt liquor availability and promotion higher in African American inner cities

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It appears that living in a poor neighborhood with a high concentration of African Americans is associated with greater alcohol availability and promotion – especially malt liquor – according to a recent study by University of Minnesota researchers.

The study found that poor neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans had higher homicide rates and significantly greater numbers of off-premise alcohol outlets, 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor in coolers, and storefront ads promoting malt liquor than other neighborhoods. Researchers also found that the average price of a 40-ounce bottle of malt liquor was \$1.87, or less than a gallon of milk.

Malt liquor is a concern in inner cities because of its cheap price, high alcohol content, association with heavier drinking, and its link to aggressive behavior that can result in public safety issues, said Rhonda Jones-Webb, Ph.D., associate professor in the School of Public Health and principal investigator of the study. The cheap price of malt liquor also makes it especially available to inner-city youth, she added.

The findings were published in a recent issue of the Journal of Substance Use and Misuse.

“We wanted to know the extent to which the alcohol environment in African American neighborhoods — high concentration of alcohol

outlets and high availability and promotion of malt liquor – contributes to high homicide rates in those communities,” Jones-Webb said.

Among non-Hispanic males 15 years and older in the United States in 2003, African American males were 12 times more likely than Caucasian males to be victims of homicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The study targeted low-income neighborhoods in 10 cities (Oakland, San Francisco, Santa Ana, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri) across the country in 2003. Each city had also been selected to receive federal grants from the government for economic development activities.

Researchers then collected information on homicides in the neighborhoods, compiled information on alcohol licenses, and linked them with the addresses of homicides. Observations were also conducted of the availability and promotion of alcohol and malt liquor in off-premise alcohol outlets in the neighborhoods.

“We need to ask ourselves why high alcohol content beverages, such as malt liquor, are more readily available and highly promoted in poor and minority neighborhoods, and how we can mobilize communities to implement effective policies to restrict their sale and promotion,” Jones-Webb said.

Source: University of Minnesota

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