# Youth exposure to alcohol ads on TV growing faster than adults

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Youth exposure to alcohol advertising on U.S. television increased 71 percent between 2001 and 2009, according to a report released today by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Despite efforts by alcohol companies to strengthen their self-regulatory standards, the average number of ads seen by youth watching television increased from 217 in 2001 to 366 in 2009, or one alcohol ad per day.

“One a day is great for vitamins but not for young people being exposed to alcohol advertising,” said David H. Jernigan, PhD, CAMY director. “This is a significant and troubling escalation, and shows the ineffectiveness of the industry’s current voluntary standards.”

In 2003, the trade associations representing beer and distilled spirits companies joined the wine industry in committing to place ads only when the underage audience composition is 30 percent or less. Their previous threshold had been 50 percent.

The report, which is available at www.camy.org, shows that the rise of distilled spirits advertising on cable television is driving the increase. Youth exposure to distilled spirits advertising grew by nearly 3,000 percent from 2001 to 2009, primarily on cable. The majority of youth exposure to alcoholic beverage advertising on cable occurred on programming that youth ages 12 to 20 were more likely to be watching than adults 21 and above.

Virtual Media Resources (VMR), an advertising research firm with more than 25 years of experience, analyzed for CAMY nearly 2.7 million product advertisements placed by alcohol companies between 2001 and 2009. The industry , purchased this advertising at an estimated cost of more than $8 billion. Other key findings of the report include:

• In 2009, while 13 percent of youth exposure came from advertising placed above the industry's voluntary 30 percent threshold, a total of 44 percent came from advertising that overexposed youth—meaning youth were more likely to see the ad on a per capita basis than an adult—compared to persons of legal purchase age 21 and above.

• From 2004, the first full calendar year after the industry implemented its 30 percent standard, to 2009, youth exposure to distilled spirits ads on cable television doubled. In that same period, exposure to beer ads on cable TV grew by nearly a third -- a faster rate than the exposure of adults ages 21 and above or young adults ages 21 to 34.

• In 2009, five cable networks were more likely to expose youth per capita to alcohol advertising than adults 21 and above: Comedy Central, BET, E1, FX and Spike. Two of these—Comedy Central and BET—delivered more exposure to youth than to young adults ages 21-34.

• In 2009, 12 brands generated half of youth overexposure: Miller Lite, Coors Light, Captain Morgan Rums, Bud Light, Samuel Adams Boston Lager, Miller Genuine Draft Light Beer, Crown Royal Whiskey, Corona Extra Beer, Disaronno Originale Amaretto, Smirnoff Vodkas, Miller Chill, and Labatt Blue Light Beer.

• From 2001 to 2009, youth were 22 times more likely to see an alcohol product ad than an alcohol company-sponsored "responsibility" ad warning against underage drinking or drinking and driving.

Alcohol is the leading drug problem among youth, and is responsible for at least 4,600 deaths per year among persons under 21. In 2009, 10.4 million (27.5 percent) of U.S. young people ages 12 to 20 reported drinking in the past month, and 6.9 million (18.1 percent) reported binge drinking (defined as five or more drinks at one sitting, usually within two hours). Numerous long-term studies have determined that exposure to alcohol advertising and marketing increases the likelihood that young people will start drinking, or that they will drink more if they are already consuming alcohol.

Since 2003, industry-wide voluntary codes of good marketing practice have set a maximum for underage audiences of their advertising at 30 percent under age 21. However, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine—as well as 20 state attorneys general—have advocated for a 15 percent standard. The alcohol industry trade press has reported that the Federal Trade Commission recently asked the industry to move from 30 to 25 percent, and that the industry has refused to do so. CAMY's analysis uses the same methodology that the FTC's Bureau of Economics has used to measure the exposure of children to food advertising.

The Federal Trade Commission and CAMY have developed similar methodologies for measuring exposure to television advertising. In measuring children's exposure to food advertising on television, the FTC matches occurrence data for individual ad placements with audience data specific to each occurrence, and then aggregates audience data for various demographics to show relative per-capita exposure. This is what CAMY has done to measure youth exposure to alcohol advertising since 2002. The difference is that the FTC sampled four so-called "sweeps" weeks, and extrapolated exposure data from these weeks to an entire year. By comparison, CAMY does a "census" of all monitored advertising throughout the year.

"Alcohol companies have stepped up their advertising efforts on television—particularly on cable networks—and the result is an alarming hike in youth exposure," said Jernigan. "Industry sta

Provided by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health