

Alcohol advertising and youth - rare praise for US drinks industry

The effectiveness of voluntary codes of practice regarding the responsible advertising of alcoholic drinks in the US were firmly endorsed in August by the anti alcohol action group CAMY, The Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth.

Effective industry codes have been introduced, such as that of the Distilled Spirits Council of the US (DISCUS), who reviewed and updated its code in 2003 to include a 70% adult (21 years and older) demographic advertisement placement. DISCUS has also establishment an outside advisory board as part of its compliance and complaint process.

Beer Institute members adhere to a long standing code and similarly beer advertising and marketing materials are only placed in magazines, on television, or on radio where at least 70% of the audience is of legal drinking age. An external review board was established by the Beer Institute in January 2006.

As a result of strict compliance by association members to these codes, together with rigorous review of any advertisements receiving complaints by the associations' independent review panels, the number of 12 - 20 year olds being exposed to alcohol advertising in magazines fell by 49% according to CAMY's survey.

The analysis, which took in 16,635 advertisements to a value of US \$1.7bn, noted that alcohol industry trade associations had adopted a more restrictive standard for advertising placements by the Autumn of 2003. By 2005, nearly all alcohol advertisements in magazines were placed in magazines with youth audience compositions lower than the industry standard.

“Alcohol companies have made significant progress in reducing youth exposure to their advertising in national magazines,” the organisation said in the report. “Almost all of the 2,897 advertisement placements from 2005 analysed for this report were in publications that met the industry's voluntary standard of no more than 30% youth audiences.

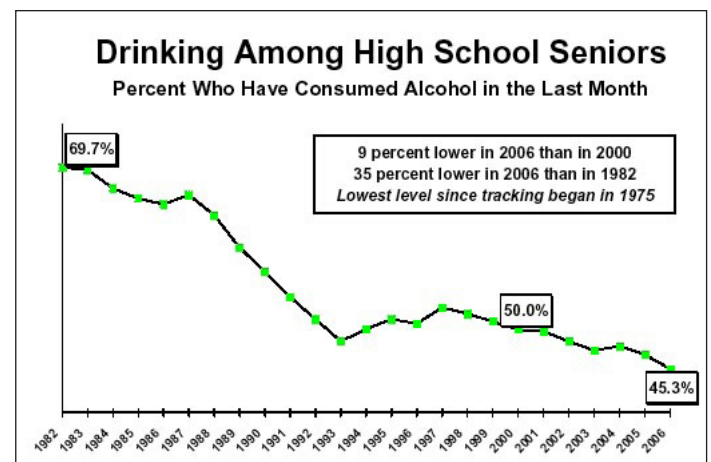
“Overall youth overexposure to alcohol advertising in magazines has fallen substantially in the wake of adoption in late 2003 of the industry's voluntary standard of 30% maximum youth audience composition”.

CAMY's findings reflect encouraging declining trends in the US in underage drinking and drink driving.

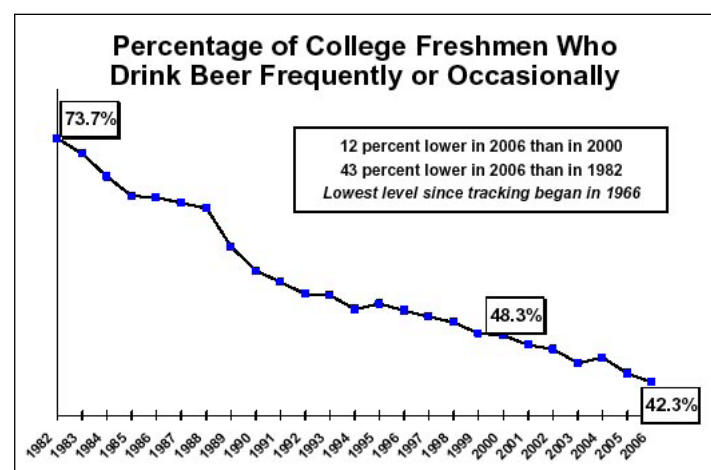
Underage Drinking - at all time low in US

According to data from the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Study 2006, underage drinking rates for 8th, 10th, and 12th graders are near or at their all-time lows for lifetime use, annual use, and 30-day use categories. Since data was available in 1991:

- 8th grade usage has declined by 31%;
- 10th grade usage has declined 21%;
- High school seniors drinking in the last month is at the lowest point since tracking began in 1975 and 35% lower than in 1982.



Source: The University of Michigan Monitoring the Future Study, sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

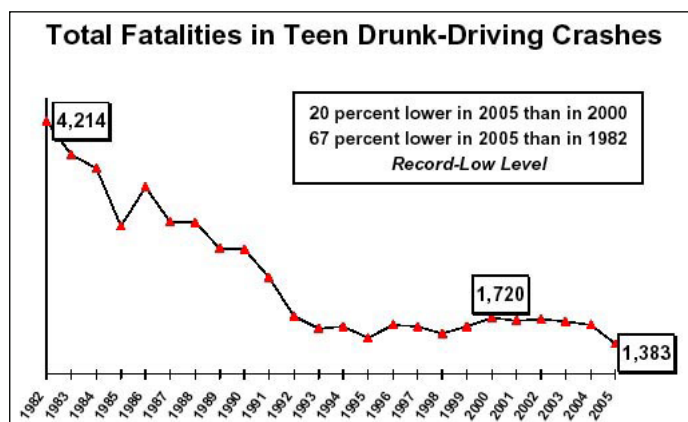


Source: The American Freshman Survey, sponsored by UCLA and the American Council on Education and conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

The Monitoring the Future study also reports that the proportion of college students reporting daily drinking declined 43% between 1980 and 2004; and drinking in the preceding thirty days declined by nearly 17.2% during the same period.

According to the latest data from SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use & Health, the percentage of 12-17 year-olds reporting monthly alcohol use has declined by 50% since 1982.

Fewer young drivers are drinking and are involved in fatal accidents, killing either themselves or others. In its 2001 report, "Determine Why There Are Fewer Young Alcohol-Impaired Drivers" the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) describes the progress in reducing youth drinking and driving as "spectacular". This is reflected in a reduction in the number of drunk teen driving fatalities per thousand licensed teen drivers in 2005 of 67% since 1982 and 20% lower than it was in 2000 to an all time low of 1383 deaths. According to NHTSA, total alcohol-related fatalities for youth under 21 has declined 62%, going from 6,512 in 1982 to 2,449 in 2005.



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation.

Total fatalities involved in drink drive crashes have fallen 39% since 1982 (21,113 deaths) to 12,945 deaths in 2005. There is much work to be done, but all the trends are in the right direction.

The UK and Europe - pressure on alcohol advertising

August has also seen calls from Alcohol Concern in the UK and Cheshire's chief constable, Peter Fahy to introduce a 9pm watershed for alcohol advertising in the UK. At present, advertising can only be shown when 75% of the audience is of legal drinking age and advertising rules, (toughened two years ago) ban adverts from appealing to under-18s.

However, Alcohol Concern found that the number of alcohol commercials increased dramatically between 3pm and 5pm - when children return from school.

The charity states "it is impossible for parents to predict when drink commercials will be broadcast and so a watershed ban is the only way to give parents the peace of mind of knowing that their children can be kept safe from the influence of advertising." The Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) have responded by ruling out a pre-9pm ban, saying: "At this time BCAP is not considering a change to its alcohol codes, including the rules on where and when in the schedules alcohol ads may appear."

The Department of Health is investigating whether the existing restrictions on alcohol advertising do enough to protect children and young people, and whether there should be controls on discounting and other forms of promotion. There is also a House of Commons petition, or Early Day Motion, calling for a 9pm watershed on alcohol ads, and a ban on advertising alcohol in cinemas for films with a certificate below 18.

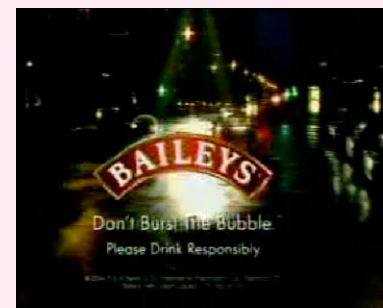
This follows the rejection of an amendment to the Audiovisual Directive (which governs advertising of alcohol on TV in the EU) in December 2006 at the

Responsibility Advertising

DISCUS has launched a new area of its website, featuring social responsibility advertisement clips. The clips include advertisements from Baileys, Jim Beam, Jack Daniels and

Smirnoff, and centre around moderate drinking and drink drive messages.

Please visit <http://www.discus.org/responsibility/videos.asp> to view the clips.



European parliament, of Amendment 169 to adopt a ban on alcohol advertising before 9.00 pm throughout Europe. The motion was defeated by 428 MEP's versus 185 MEPs. Hence, the focus moves back to the Member States.

Director of public affairs at the Advertising Association, Sue Eustace, commented on the moves for a watershed: "Calls for a watershed ban are a classic case of a quick-fix solution to a complex problem... levels of advertising and levels of drinking are entirely uncorrelated. It is much more apparent that societal factors such as dysfunctional families, lifestyle trends and peer pressure among young people are the causes of binge drinking."

The Advertising Association research shows that while advertising spend per litre of alcohol consumed has decreased, consumption has increased. It contends that alcohol advertising is used to differentiate brands rather than increase consumption.

EU alcohol advertising regulations

Alcohol advertising is addressed in a number of ways, particularly in relation to the protection of children and minors. There are voluntary codes developed by the advertising self-regulatory organisations. The TV without Frontiers Directive also has a special article setting out certain limitations for alcohol advertising.

Specifically, Article 15 states:

The advertising for alcoholic beverages shall comply with the following criteria:

- it may not be aimed at minors or depict minors consuming these beverages;
- it shall not link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving;
- it shall not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes towards social or sexual success;
- it shall not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving personal conflicts;
- it shall not encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light;
- it shall not place emphasis on high alcoholic content as being a positive quality of the beverages.