

Alcohol Marketing to Youth of Color

Youth of color disproportionately experience a variety of negative consequences of alcohol use, even though their consumption levels are often comparable with, or even lower than those of White youth. Due to the proliferation of outdoor advertising in minority neighborhoods, youth of color are exposed to images of alcohol and alcohol-related behaviors in their communities on a daily basis.¹

- Among youth ages 12 to 17, youth reporting “two or more races” had the highest rate of current alcohol use (defined as at least one drink in the past 30 days) at 16.7%.² Next were White youth at 16.1%, Hispanic youth at 15.2%, American Indian/Alaska Native youth at 11.9%, African American youth at 10.6%, and Asian-American youth at 6.5%.²
- Although African American and Hispanic youth are less likely than White youth to drink, one study of 7th to 12th grade students found that the average number of alcohol-related problems experienced among African American and Hispanic drinkers was higher than among White youth who drank.³

African Americans

- Alcohol is the most widely used drug among African-American youth⁴ and contributes to the three leading causes of death among African-American 12- to 20-year-olds: homicide, unintentional injuries (including car crashes), and suicide.⁵
- While African-American youth consume less alcohol than their White and ethnic minority peers, more than a third (37%) of African American high school students are regular drinkers (at least one drink in the past 30 days).⁶
- While frequent heavy drinking among White 18-29 year-old males dropped between 1984 and 1995, rates of heavy drinking and alcohol problems remained high among African Americans in the same age group.⁷
- Thirty-nine percent of African American teens ages 12 to 17 are among the most frequent viewers of cable TV, a fast-growing medium for alcohol advertisers, versus 16% of non-African-American teens.⁸
- African American youth saw 34% more alcohol advertising in national magazines than did youth in general in 2004.⁸

Hispanics

- Hispanic young people are more likely to drink and get drunk at an earlier age than non-Hispanic White or African American youth.⁹
- In 2003 and 2004, alcohol companies spent close to \$160 million advertising 10 different brands on Spanish-language television.¹⁰
- Alcohol advertising appeared on 14 of the 15 programs most popular with Hispanic youth in 2003 and 2004, up from 12 programs in 2002.¹⁰
- In 2004, Hispanic youth ages 12 to 20 saw 20% more alcohol advertising in English-language magazines than youth in general.¹⁰
- In the top 20 Hispanic media markets, three brands exposed Hispanic youth to significantly more radio advertising than youth in general during 2004. Hispanic youth heard 272% more radio advertising per capita for Beck’s Beer that year than did non-Hispanic youth, as well as 194% more for Coors Beer, and 78% more for Budweiser.¹⁰

continued on page 2

- Youth attending elementary and middle schools in Chicago with 20% or more Hispanic students were exposed to 6.5 times more alcohol advertising than students attending schools with less than 20% Hispanic students. The schools with greater Hispanic enrollment were also surrounded by more beer advertising and alcohol ads on bars and liquor stores.¹¹

American Indians/Alaska Natives

- Although excessive alcohol consumption is the number one leading cause of preventable death among American Indians and Alaska Natives,¹² the alcohol industry continues to market its products towards this group.
- Cultural symbols have been used by the alcohol industry to target Native Americans. A malt liquor product called "Crazy Horse," named after the spiritual and political leader of the Sioux Nation, is one example of such negative marketing towards Native Americans.¹³

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

- Studies have suggested that increasing prevalence of alcohol use among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders occurs as a result of social and cultural norms and targeted marketing by the alcohol industries.¹⁴
- In San Francisco, Anheuser-Busch has used Asian nightlife promoters to market to young Asian Americans.¹⁵
- According to the senior director of Asian marketing at Anheuser-Busch, "The Asian market is a marketer's dream," because of the significant growth of the Asian-American population in the United States.¹⁵

Bottom Line: Although there is a lack of data available about alcohol marketing towards Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders and American Indians/Alaska Natives, it's clear that ethnic minorities are targeted by the alcohol industry. More research is needed to explain both this phenomenon and the related disparities in alcohol-related harm.

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continued on page 3

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