

FACT SHEET

Flavored Alcoholic Beverages (FABs) and the Youth Market¹

FABs are designed for and popular with adolescent drinkers.

- FABs are alcoholic beverages designed and marketed for entry-level drinkers. The vast majority of entry level drinkers are under the legal drinking age of 21.²
- The alcohol taste in FABs is concealed by sweet, fruity flavors that serve as a bridge between nonalcoholic beverages such as soft drinks and the harsher tastes of traditional alcohol products. FABs are also called “alcopops” because of their similarity to soda pop in flavor and sweetness – soda pop laced with hard liquor.³
- FABs are popular with junior and senior high school students: in a 2007 survey, 12.2 percent of 8th graders, 21.8 percent of 10th graders, and 9.1 percent of 12th graders report consuming alcopops within the last 30 days. Girls are much more likely to consume FABs than boys.⁴
- The younger the drinker, the more likely he/she will consume alcopops. Among 8th grade drinkers, 78 percent report FAB consumption in the last 30 days compared to 59 percent of 19-20 year olds and 36 percent of 25-30 year olds.⁵
- Teenagers often refer to FABs as “girlie beer” or “cheerleader beer” because of their popularity with young, adolescent girls. Eighty-two percent of teen girls who have tried alcopops agree that they taste better than beer or other alcoholic drinks.⁶

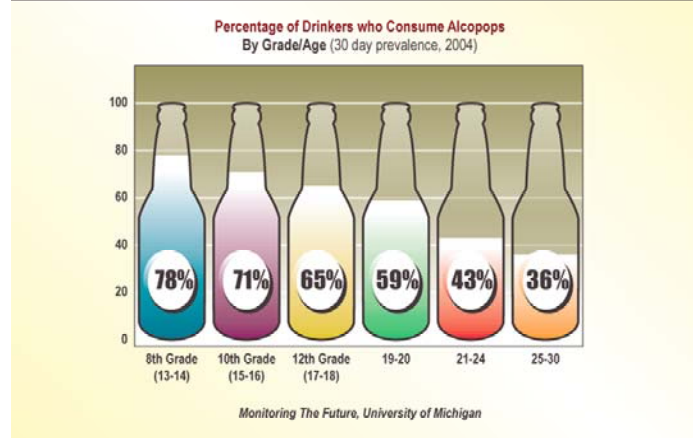
FAB advertising disproportionately targets underage youth.

- On a per capita basis, underage youth are far more likely to see FAB advertising on radio, television and magazines than adults.⁷
- Teen girls report having seen or heard more alcopop ads on TV, radio, billboards, online and in magazines than adult women.⁸

Distilled spirits companies are successfully using FABs to promote their brand names with youthful drinkers.

- Examples of FABs being marketed with distilled spirits brand names include Smirnoff Ice, Skyy Blue, Bacardi Breezer, and Jack Daniels Country Cocktails.
- The distillers’ FABs have similar packaging and advertising as their distilled spirit cousins, but with lower alcohol content and sweeter tastes (see attached illustration).
- By treating FABs as beer for regulatory purposes, distillers were able to market their brand names on network television, which is off limits to distilled spirits products.⁹
- FABs are therefore likely contributors to the increasing popularity of distilled spirits among 12th grade girls (the only grade for which data is available).¹⁰

Alcopops: A Starter Drink for Teens



Comparing Smirnoff Ice and Smirnoff Vodka Advertising



¹ Prepared by: James F. Mosher, JD, Alcohol Policy Consultations, July 2008.

² Industry groups themselves describe FABs in this manner. See, e.g., Sherer, M. Mad for malternatives: Sales of alternative malt beverages are exploding. Will the trend last? *Beverage Dynamics*. May-June 2002; 6-10. For discussion, see Mosher, J. and D. Johnson, "Flavored alcoholic beverages: An international marketing campaign that targets youth" *Journal of Public Health Policy* 26(3): 326-342 (2005).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. *Monitoring the Future National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of key findings, 2007* (NIH Publication No. 06-5882). Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse (2008).

⁵ Johnston, L., O'Malley, P., Bachman, J., Schulenberg, J. *Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-2004. Volume I: Secondary School Students*. National Institute of Health Publication No. 04-5507: Washington, DC (2005).

⁶ American Medical Association, *Teenage Drinking Survey Results*. Available at: http://www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net/alcoholpolicymd/press_room/girlie_drinks_release.htm.

⁷ Jernigan, D. Alcohol advertising and youth: a measured approach. *J Public Health Policy* 26(3): 3112-325 (2005).

⁸ AMA survey, *supra* n. 6.

⁹ Mosher & Johnson, *supra* n. 2.

¹⁰ The increased popularity of distilled spirits among 12th grade girls is documented in: Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Underage Drinking in the United States: A Status Report*. Washington, DC: CAMY (2006).