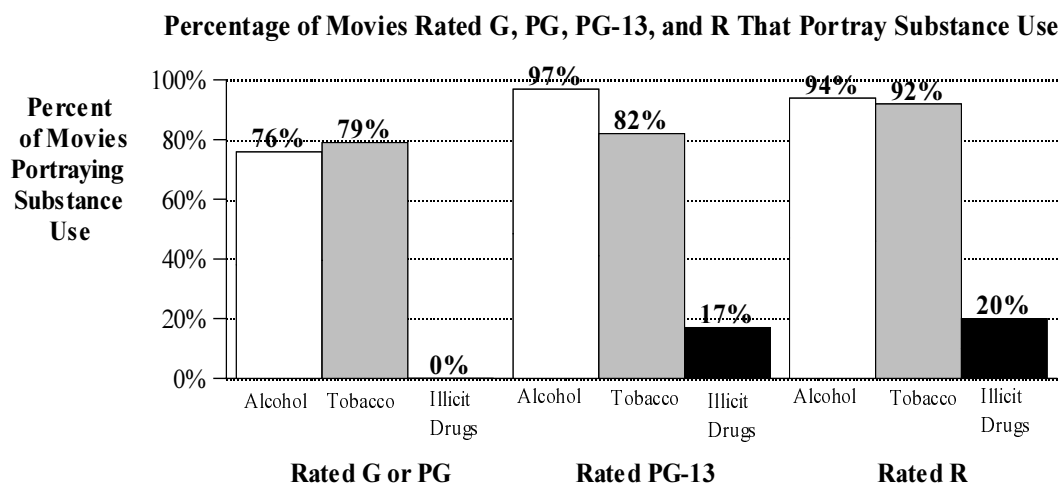


A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Majority of Popular Movies Portray Alcohol and Tobacco Use; Illicit Drug Use Appears in One-Fifth or Fewer Movies

Alcohol and tobacco use appeared in the majority of the most popular movies rented in 1996 and 1997, while illicit drug use appeared in one-fifth or fewer of the movies. The study tabulated the number of times that alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use appeared in G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies*. Alcohol use was portrayed in nearly three-quarters of G or PG movies and nearly all PG-13 and R-rated features. Tobacco use was depicted in four of five movies rated G, PG, or PG-13 and more than nine of ten R-rated movies. In contrast, the portrayal of illicit drug use was significantly lower in all movies. These findings raise questions about why alcohol and tobacco use are so commonly portrayed in movies, regardless of rating.



*The movies reviewed were selected from the Video Software Dealers Association list of the 200 most popular movie rentals in 1996 and 1997. Substance use included explicit portrayals of consumption (drinking alcohol, lighting up or puffing on a cigarette, snorting cocaine, injecting drugs, swallowing pills) and depictions that implied consumption, such as ordering, accepting, or possessing alcohol, tobacco, or other substances.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Donald F. Roberts, Lisa Henriksen, and Peter G. Christenson, "Substance Use in Popular Movies and Music," April 1999. Sponsored by Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The study is accessible online at www.health.org/mediastudy/new.htm#_Toc447073447.

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