

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

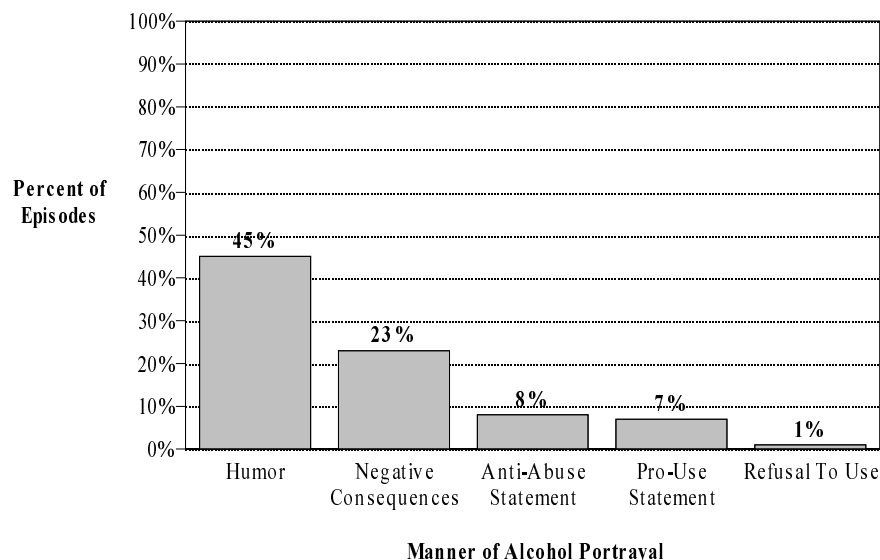
University of Maryland, College Park

Top Television Shows Fail to Portray Negative Consequences of Alcohol Use

According to an Office of National Drug Control Policy study, the adverse consequences of alcohol use are rarely portrayed in popular television shows. Alcohol was mentioned or shown in 119 of the 168 episodes of top-rated, prime-time television situation comedies and dramas. Of these episodes, only 23% showed any adverse consequences of alcohol use, and just 8% had any anti-use messages. Alcohol use was mentioned or portrayed humorously in 45% of the 119 episodes. These findings are particularly alarming, given that alcohol use was portrayed in a majority (75%) of the episodes popular with teens.

Percentage of Top-Rated Television Episodes Portraying Alcohol Use in Various Manners, Fall 1998-99

(N=119 episodes portraying alcohol use)



NOTE: The study sample was comprised of four consecutive episodes of 42 top-rated comedies and dramas as rated by Nielson Media Research, including the top 20 programs for five audience groups: African-American teens (ages 12-17), Hispanic teens (ages 12-17), white teens (ages 12-17), all teens (ages 12-17), and all adults (ages 25-54).

SOURCE: Christenson P.G., Henrikson L., Roberts D.F., Kelly M., Carbone S., Wilson A.B., *Substance Use in Popular Prime-Time Television*, January 2000. Available online at <http://www.mediascope.org/pubs/supptt.pdf>

• 301-403-8329 (voice) • 301-403-8342 (fax) • CESAR@cesar.umd.edu • www.cesar.umd.edu •

CESAR FAX is supported by a grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention.
CESAR FAX may be copied without permission. Please cite CESAR as the source.