

I WILL IF YOU DO: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, DRINK DRIVING PREVALENCE AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

Author(s): Amanda Stephens ¹, Sara Liu ¹, Caitlin Bishop ¹, Michael Fitzharris ¹

Institution(s) ¹ MUARC - Monash University Accident Research Centre (21 Alliance Way Clayton Campus 3800 VIC Australia)

BACKGROUND: Approximately 30% of all serious injury crashes on Australian roads can be attributed to drink-driving. While the majority of drivers perceive drink-driving as irresponsible, there remains a significant number of individuals who not only continue this behaviour, but find it socially acceptable to do so. **AIMS:** To examine attitudes towards drink-driving behaviour as a function of alcohol consumption patterns and self-reported drink-driving. **METHODS:** Data were gathered through a cross-sectional survey and a stratified sampling procedure used to ensure the age and gender distributions of the sample were representative of the Australian adult population. Comparison of the final sample (N = 2,994) with population distributions reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) confirmed the representativeness of the sample. Respondents provided information about their own alcohol consumption patterns (using the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test: AUDIT), drink-driving frequency over the past two years as well as attitudes towards drink-driving. Attitudinal questions related to social acceptability of the behaviour, drink-driving behaviours of significant others and types of concerns about drink-driving consequences. **RESULTS:** Almost one-quarter (23%) of the sample reported drink-driving in the previous two year period. The frequency of drink-driving was higher with increasing risky alcohol consumption patterns, with 86% of low risk drinkers reporting they never drink-drive compared to only 24% of high risk drinkers reporting they never drink-drive. Overall, drink-drivers were more likely to have family and friends who also engaged in this behaviour and did so frequently. Drink-drivers were also more likely to express concerns relating to the legal ramifications of drink-driving (such as prosecution, loss of licence or demerit points and/or receiving fines) while non-drink-drivers were more focussed on the potential for injury (crash risk and potential for injuring oneself or others). Self-reported drink-drivers displayed less concern over negative outcomes of drink-driving such as involvement in crashes and being caught and this was exacerbated for drink-drivers with high risk alcohol consumption patterns. **CONCLUSIONS:** These results suggest that the drink-driving behaviour of some drivers may be emblematic of broader social issues related to social acceptability of the behaviour and at-risk levels of alcohol consumption.