

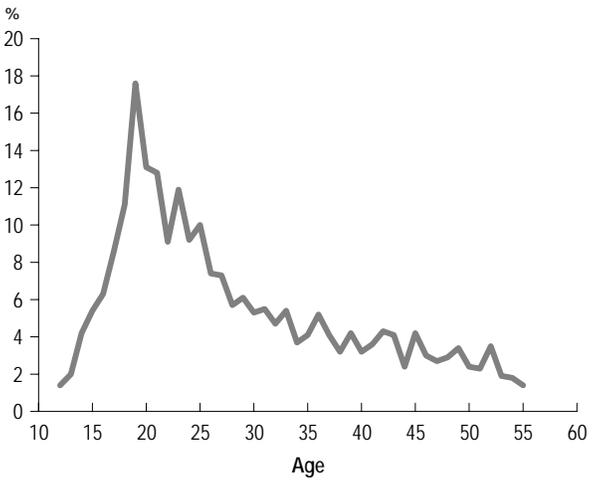
PASSENGERS OF INTOXICATED DRIVERS by Claudio E. Pérez

According to data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), in 2000/01, a relatively small proportion of Canadians reported being in a vehicle driven by someone who had had too much to drink. Just over 4% of people aged 12 or older in the six provinces for which data are available (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia) said they had been passengers of drivers whom they perceived as having had too much to drink. A slight majority of these passengers were male (57%) (data not shown). The likelihood of riding with an intoxicated driver was highest at ages 15 to 29, with the proportion peaking at 18% for respondents aged 19.

Reporting provinces

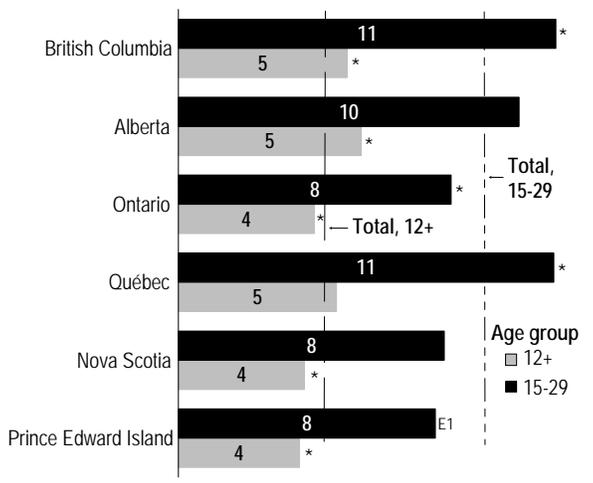
In British Columbia and Alberta, the percentages of people aged 12 or older who had been passengers of a drunk driver were significantly higher than the average of the six reporting provinces. Also, British Columbia and Québec stood

Percentage of people who had been passengers of drunk driver in past year—by age



Data source: 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia)

Percentage of people who had been passengers of drunk driver in past year—by province and age group



Data source: 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia)
 * Significantly different from average of six reporting provinces
 E1 Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 25.0%

out with higher-than-average proportions of young people aged 15 to 29 who had been in vehicles with a drunk driver. The result for British Columbia contrasts with other findings for the province, which generally has a healthy and low-risk profile. For example, smoking prevalence in BC is the lowest in the country, and physical activity rates are among the highest (data not shown).

Risky behaviours

Getting into a car with a driver who seems to be drunk can certainly be risky. Young people who did so were also likely to engage in other behaviours that carry health-related risks such as smoking, heavy drinking, or sex with multiple partners. People aged 15 to 29 were four times as likely (17% versus 4%) to drink an average of at least three alcoholic beverages a day if they reported having been a passenger of a drunk driver. They were also more likely to be smokers, and to have had four or more sexual partners in the last year.

The Questions

Information from the "drinking and driving module" of the 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) was used for this analysis. This module, which was optional, was chosen by all the health regions in the following provinces: Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. To identify *passengers of a drunk driver*, respondents in these provinces were asked, "In the past 12 months, have you been a passenger with a driver who had too much to drink?"

Several aspects of *risky behaviour* are available from the CCHS. All respondents were asked about drinking and smoking. Those who said they smoked cigarettes daily or occasionally were considered *smokers*. If respondents answered "yes" to "During the past 12 months, have you had a drink of beer, wine, liquor or any other alcoholic beverage?", average *daily alcohol consumption* was established. Those who said they had consumed alcohol were asked, "How often in the past 12 months have you had five or more drinks on one occasion?"

Respondents who reported consuming five or more drinks per occasion at least once a month during the past year were asked several other questions to determine *alcohol dependence*. "In the past 12 months, . . .

- have you ever been drunk or hung-over while at work or school or while taking care of children?"
- were you ever in a situation while drunk or hung-over that increased your chances of getting hurt? (For example, driving a boat, using guns, crossing against traffic, or during sports)"
- have you had any emotional or psychological problems because of alcohol use, such as feeling uninterested in things, depressed or suspicious of people?"
- have you had such a strong desire or urge to drink alcohol that you could not resist it or could not think of anything else?"
- have you had a period of a month or more when you spent a great deal of time getting drunk or being hung-over?"
- did you ever drink much more or for a longer period of time than you intended?"
- did you ever find that you had to drink more alcohol than usual to get the same effect or that the same amount of alcohol had less effect on you than usual?"

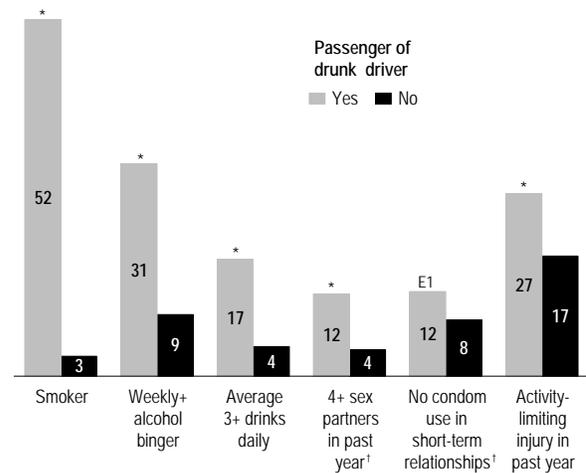
Respondents aged 15 to 59 in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and Alberta were asked about *sexual behaviour*, beginning with "Have you ever had sexual intercourse?" Those with more than two sexual partners in the past year were asked about the duration of the relationships and condom use. People who reported having a relationship of less than 12 months with one partner were also asked about frequency of condom use.

Respondents were asked if they had a valid driver's licence for a car, van, truck or motorcycle and, if so, if they ever go out with friends/family intending to consume alcohol themselves. They were then asked about arrangements for a *designated driver*.

Alcohol dependence

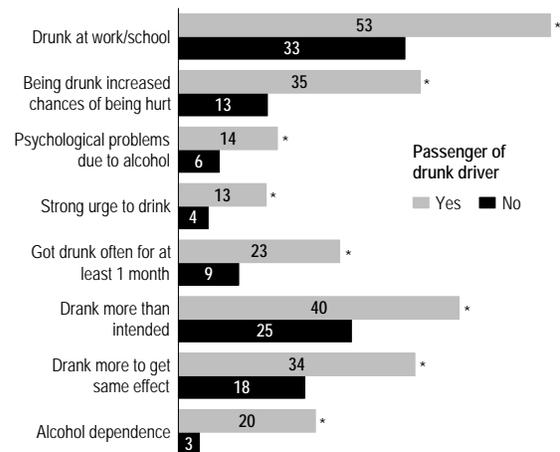
Over half (53%) of 15- to 19-year-olds who had been in a vehicle with an intoxicated driver had been

Percentage of 15- to 29-year-olds reporting selected behaviours



Data source: 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia)
 † Asked only in Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Alberta
 * Significantly different from estimate for "no" category ($p < 0.05$)
 E1 Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 25.0%

Percentage of 15- to 29-year-olds reporting selected alcohol-related behaviours and experiences



Data source: 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia)
 * Significantly different from estimate for "no" category ($p < 0.05$)

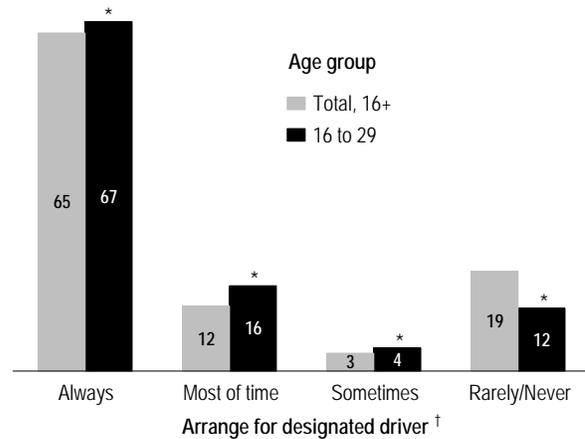
drunk or hung-over themselves while at work or school, and 40% had, on occasion, consumed more alcohol than they had originally intended. This compares with 33% and 25%, respectively, among those who did not report being in a vehicle with an intoxicated driver in the past year. The proportions indicating a probable alcohol dependence were 20% among those who had driven with a drunk driver and 3% among those who had not.

Designated drivers

Close to two-thirds (65%) of licensed drivers aged 16 or older reported “always” arranging for a designated driver when going out with family or friends to a place where alcohol would be consumed. Another 12% said “most of the time,” and 3% “sometimes.” However, 19% said they “rarely” or “never” have a designated driver.

At ages 16 to 29, 67% claimed to “always” arrange for a designated driver. This may partly reflect the obligation that some jurisdictions have placed on young drivers; for example, for a few years after obtaining a driver’s licence, they must have no more than a zero blood alcohol content while driving.¹

Percentage of people arranging for designated driver



Data source: 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey (data available for Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia)
 † Population who had driver’s licence and reported going out with plans to consume alcohol
 * Significantly different from estimate for total (p < 0.05)

Data source

The data are from the first cycle of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), conducted from September 2000 through October 2001.² All estimates are based on the most recent data available on passengers of drivers whom they perceived as having had too much to drink.

The CCHS is a general health survey that covers the household population aged 12 or older. It does not include residents of Indian reserves, Canadian Forces bases, and some remote areas. The overall response rate for cycle 1 was 85%; the total sample size was 131,535.

Variance on estimates, and on differences between estimates, was calculated using the bootstrap technique, which accounts for the complex sampling design of the survey.^{3,4}

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References

- 1 Government of Ontario. Graduating Licensing, Ministry of Transportation. Available at: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/gradu/index.html>. Accessed September 10, 2004.
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- 3 Rao JNK, Wu CFJ, Yue K. Some recent work on resampling methods for complex surveys. *Survey Methodology* (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 12-001) 1992; 18(2): 209-17.
- 4 Rust KF, Rao JNK. Variance estimation for complex surveys using replication techniques. *Statistical Methods in Medical Research* 1996; 5: 281-310.