

Recidivist drink drivers among Indigenous people in Queensland, Australia: Who are they and what are the risk factors of repeat drink driving?

Michelle Fitts¹, Gavan Palk¹, Alan Clough², Alexia Lennon²

¹Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety- Queensland, Queensland University of Technology; ²School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine and Rehabilitation Sciences, James Cook University (Cairns Campus)

Email: michelle.fitts@qut.edu.au

Abstract

Many reports identify drink driving as one of the leading contributors to high arrest rates among indigenous Australians. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics and risk factors with Indigenous drink drivers who relapse after the first offence.

De-identified records were examined of all drink driving convictions by Indigenous offenders dealt with by Queensland courts between 2006 and 2010. Probabilistic linkage was used to distinguish individuals with more than one conviction from those with just one conviction. In univariate analyses, first time and repeat offenders were compared by gender, age, court location and region based on the accessibility/remoteness index of Australia (ARIA), blood alcohol content (BAC) and prosecution outcome. A multivariate logistic regression adjusted for confounding variables.

The univariate analyses revealed repeat offenders were more likely to be in regional and remote areas with the association strongest in the 'very remote' region (OR=2.75, 2.06-3.76, $p < .0001$). Offenders aged between 15-24 years were demonstrated to be at greater risk of repeat drink driving in comparison to those over 40 years (OR=.685, .542-.867, $p = .0002$). Gender ($p = .139$), outcome ($p = .659$) and all BAC levels were not significantly associated with repeat drink driving offending when the confounding effects of all available variables were considered. Overall, the results indicated that the initial twelve months following court determination for the first offence was a high risk period for drink drivers committing another driving offence.

Contrary to the general population, Indigenous repeat drink drivers are more likely to be aged between 15-24 years. High levels of repeat drink driving in remote areas reflect the broader alcohol-related health burden experienced by Indigenous Australians in isolated areas. Further research should explore the interaction of alcohol consumption levels with legal, social and psychological factors that may describe and explain drink driving relapse among this population.

Full paper not submitted