

STASH, Vol. 10(10) - College student reports of driving under the influence

September 10, 2014

Driving under the influence (DUI) of intoxicants is an ongoing public health issue. Although most attention focuses on alcohol-related DUI, public health stakeholders recently have directed more attention toward DUI of other drugs. Reports suggest that cannabis use, for example, doubles one's risk for a motor vehicle crash (Asbridge et al., 2012). This week, as part of our [Special Series on Addiction and College Students](#), STASH reports on a recent study of college student cannabis- and alcohol-related DUI (Whitehill et al., 2014).

Method

- Participants were 315 college students (56% female, ages 18-20 years) participating in an ongoing longitudinal study that began at the start of the 2011 academic year.
 - Members of the longitudinal student sample (recruitment rate = 53%) were randomly selected from incoming first year students.
- At the end of their first year of college, participants completed a survey that assessed a range of risky behaviors, including DUI-related behavior for alcohol and other drugs.

Results

- Almost 30% of male and about 13% of female students reported marijuana use during the past 28 days.
- About 67% of males and 64% of females reported alcohol use during the past 28 days.
- Overall, students were as likely to report driving after marijuana use, as they were to report driving after alcohol use. Likewise, students were as likely to report riding with someone after they used marijuana, as they were to report riding with someone after they used alcohol (Figure 1).
 - Males were more likely than females to report driving after marijuana use, driving after alcohol use, and riding with a driver

who used marijuana.

- Multivariate analysis suggested that past-28 day marijuana use was a better predictor of DUI than past-28 day alcohol use.

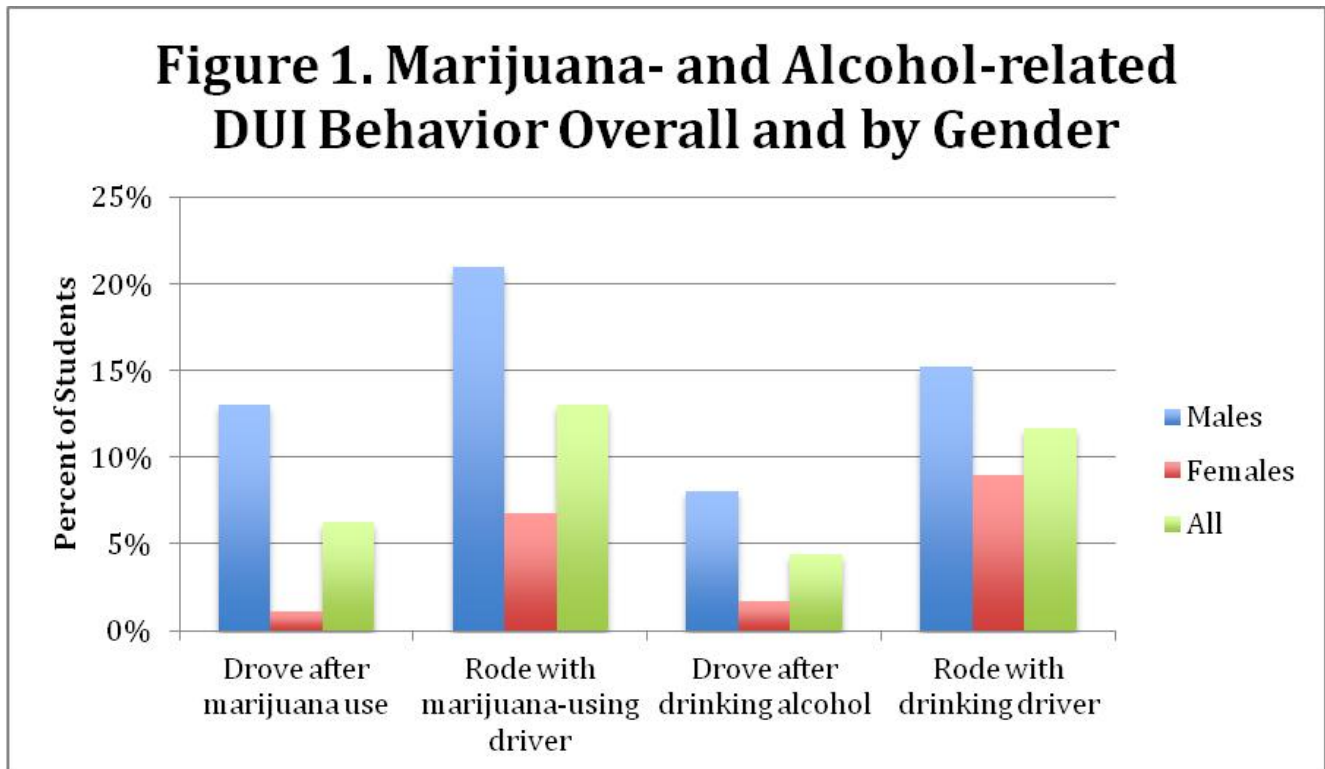


Figure. Click image to enlarge.

Limitations

- The recruitment rate for this student was low, limiting the generalizability of the study.
- Likewise, the researchers recruited student from only two schools, further limiting the generalizability.
- The study utilized a retrospective self-report design, which could be vulnerable to memory errors and self-presentation biases.

Conclusion

Marijuana-related DUI behavior is as common as alcohol-related DUI behavior among college students. Although we have much to learn about the public health implications of marijuana consumption, positive and negative, with respect to traffic safety a conservative approach would suggest the need to develop effective drugged driving prevention efforts in anticipation of additional legalization.

- Debi LaPlante

What do you think? Please use the comment link below to provide feedback on this article.

References

Asbridge M., Hayden J.A., Cartwright J.L. (2012). Acute cannabis consumption and motor vehicle collision risk: systematic review of observational studies and meta-analysis. *British Medical Journal*; 344:e536. doi:10.1136/bmj.e536.

Whitehill, J M., Rivara, F.P., Moreno, M.A. (2014). Marijuana-Using Drivers, Alcohol-Using Drivers, and Their Passengers Prevalence and Risk Factors Among Underage College Students. *Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatric*. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5300