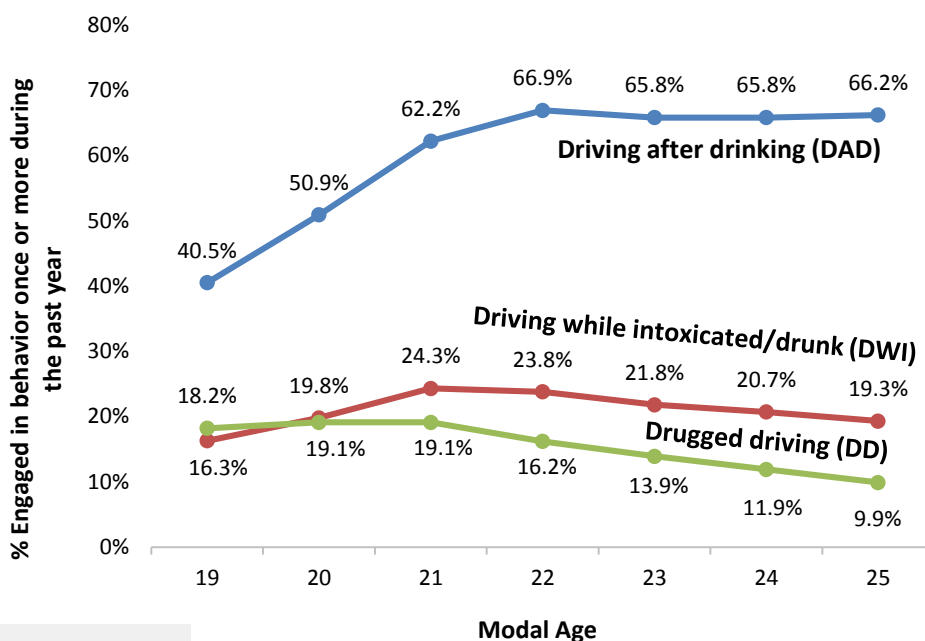# Continuity of drunk and drugged driving behaviors four years post-college

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Alcohol-impaired driving accounts for nearly one-third of all traffic-related deaths in the US,[1] and driving while under the influence of drugs other than alcohol accounts for about 16% of motor vehicle crashes.[2] Substance-involved driving is more common among college graduates than those with lower levels of education,[3] with almost one-quarter of college students driving while intoxicated.[4] Few studies have examined the extent to which this behavior declines among college students after college.

The current study described trends in alcohol and other drug (AOD)-involved driving both during and after college as well as examined whether changes in AOD-involved driving corresponded with changes in alcohol and drug use. Data were collected as part of a longitudinal study of young adults from their first year of college until several years after graduation. Beginning in the second year of study (modal age 19), 1,194 participants were asked annually how often they drove while drunk/intoxicated (DWI), drove after drinking any amount of alcohol (DAD), and/or drove while under the influence of other drugs (DD).

Alcohol and other drug-involved driving among college students

Among college students who had access to a car, DWI and DD were reported by 24% and 19% of students, respectively, when participants were at modal age 21. DAD was far more prevalent than DWI or DD throughout the study, increasing from 41% at modal age 19 to 67% at modal age 22 and then remaining stable through modal age 25.

Of major interest to:

☑ **College Administrators**

☑ **Parents**

☑ **Educators**

☑ **Health Professionals**

☑ **Students**

☐ **Law and Policy Makers**

Between 61% and 89% of students who engaged in AOD-involved driving in any given year did so again during the subsequent year. Whereas DWI and DD declined after college graduation, DAD was stable during the post-college period. Despite the general decline in DWI after college, the prevalence of DWI remained high among young adults who continued to drink heavily after graduation (between 33% and 41% among heavy episodic drinkers). Although DWI was slightly more prevalent than DD throughout the study, the likelihood of DD among marijuana-using participants remained consistently higher than the likelihood of DWI among participants who drank alcohol heavily during all years of the study.

Practice and Policy Suggestions: There is a need for effective interventions targeting college-educated young adults' attitudes and behaviors regarding AOD-involved driving. Heavy drinkers and young adults who use marijuana are especially critical targets because a substantial proportion will drive under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or both. Prevention during college is ideal because AOD-involved driving tends to persist among college students, rather than just be a one-time behavior.

References:

[1] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2015). Alcohol-impaired driving. Washington, DC: US Department of Transportation.

[2] Compton, R.P., Berning, A. (2015). Drug and alcohol crash risk. Traffic Safety Facts: Research Note. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

[3] Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2015). 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

[4] Beck, K.H., Kasperski, S.J., Caldeira, K.M., Vincent, K.B., O'Grady, K.E., Arria, A.M. (2010). Trends in alcohol-related traffic risk behaviors among college students. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, 34*(8), 1472-1478. doi:10.1111/j.1530-0277.2010.01232.x

About the College Life Study (CLS)

The CLS is a longitudinal study of 1,253 college students at a large, public, mid-Atlantic university. This study is one of the first large-scale scientific investigations that aims to discover the impact of health-related behaviors during the college experience. Any first-time, first-year student between 17 and 19 years old at the university in the fall of 2004 was eligible to participate in a screening survey. The researchers then selected students to participate in the longitudinal study, which consisted of two-hour personal interviews administered annually, beginning with their first year of college. A full description of the methods used is available.[1,2] Inherent to all self-reporting research methods is the possibility for response bias. Because the sample is from one large university, the ability to generalize the findings elsewhere is uncertain. However, response rates have been excellent and attrition bias has been minimal.

For more information about the study, please visit www.cls.umd.edu or contact Amelia M. Arria at the University of Maryland School of Public Health at aarria@umd.edu.

[1] Arria, A.M., Caldeira, K.M., O'Grady, K.E., Vincent, K.B., Fitzelle, D.B., Johnson, E.P., Wish, E.D. (2008). Drug exposure opportunities and use patterns among college students: Results of a longitudinal prospective cohort study. *Substance Abuse, 29*(4), 19-38. doi:10.1080/08897070802418451; PMC2614283

[2] Vincent, K.B., Kasperski, S.J., Caldeira, K.M., Garnier-Dykstra, L.M., Pinchevsky, G.M., O'Grady, K.E., Arria, A.M. (2012). Maintaining superior follow-up rates in a longitudinal study: Experiences from the College Life Study. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches, 6*(1), 56-72. doi:10.5172/mra.2012.6.1.56; PMC3255097

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