

White young adults more likely to DUI

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White young adults were 50 percent more likely than their Black, Hispanic or Asian peers to self-report driving after drinking at age 21, finds a new study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

While most studies of driving-under-the-influence (DUI) have concerned adults, this one focused on adolescents and looked at a fairly long list of [risk factors](#), explained its lead author Chris Delcher, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida's College of Medicine. The risk of DUI and dying in an alcohol-related crash rises sharply during adolescence and keeps rising into the mid-20s, when the rate of past-year DUI is higher than any other age group, the researchers report "The goal of this research," said Delcher "is to find factors that can help identify kids who are likely to drive under the influence so we can use that

information to improve national DUI prevention efforts."

The researchers used data from 10,271 teenagers who participated in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Those teens joined the study in 1994-95, at the age of 15 or 16 years old, and subsequently reported their DUI behaviors around age 21.

"We found that DUI risk was highest for Whites, followed by Hispanics, Asians and then Blacks," stated Delcher. He stated that this was consistent with many other national studies among adults. The team also found that adolescents who reported engaging in other high-[risk behaviors](#), such as [binge drinking](#), [smoking marijuana](#) and driving other peoples' cars without permission, were at higher risk for DUI.

Another key finding, Delcher explained, was that a young person's perception that they had easy access to alcohol at home was a common risk factor for Whites, Hispanics and Asians but not for Black youth.

Raul Caetano, M.D., Ph.D., Dean of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center's School of Health Professions, suggests that many Black Americans belong to Protestant denominations that reject the use of alcohol so such beverages may be less commonly accessible in Black homes. The research team observed that males, teens from higher-income families and teens who owned cars of all races/ethnicities were at higher DUI risk than females, less affluent youth and those not owning cars. The authors hope that a clearer understanding of risk factors for youthful DUI will contribute to the development of more effective screening and interventions to reduce DUI in the high risk years of youth.

More information: Driving After Drinking Among Young Adults of Different Race/Ethnicities in the United States: Unique Risk Factors in Early Adolescence? *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

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