

Halving of alcohol-fueled car crashes since mid-1980s boosted US economy by \$20 billion

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The halving of alcohol-fuelled car crashes since the mid-1980s boosted US economic output by \$20 billion, increased national income by \$6.5 billion, and created 215,000 jobs in 2010, reveals an analysis of the economic impact of drink-driving, published online in the journal *Injury Prevention*.

In a bid to estimate the impact of alcohol-fuelled car crashes on the US economy in 2010, the researchers calculated the economic gains (and losses) resulting from the substantial fall in this type of road traffic collision since 1984-6 and the [monetary costs](#) directly incurred by employers and consumers in 2010.

These included medical, productivity, property damage, [emergency response](#), crash investigation, and legal services costs. In 2010, 12% of car crashes involved alcohol. This was half the rate of 1984-6—a reduction that was good for the US economy, but which was not associated with a major change in alcohol sales, say the researchers.

They calculated that it boosted national economic output in 2010 by \$20 billion, created 215,000 jobs, and increased national income by \$6.5 billion. And it raised Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—the monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within the US—by \$10 billion, their calculations show.

GDP gains included \$5.6 billion in wages, \$1.8 billion in tax revenues, and \$2.5 billion in profits. Those gains contributed 5% of the \$200

million compounded average annual growth in US GDP between 1985 and 2013, the analysis shows. Cutting the rate of alcohol-fuelled [car crashes](#) to zero would produce further similar [economic gains](#), say the researchers.

On average, each of the 25.5 billion miles Americans drove while under the influence in 2010 cost the economy 12 jobs and reduced national [economic output](#) by \$0.80 and GDP by \$0.40. "Those losses are preventable," they write. "Alcohol involved crashes drag down the US economy. Annually [impaired driving] reduces GDP by \$10 billion, depresses GDP by 5%, and costs 234,000 jobs," they add.

Over the past 30 years, a range of proven interventions, including legislation and extra safety features, have cut the toll of alcohol-fuelled road traffic accidents, they say.

Collision warning and avoidance systems; mandatory installation of ignition interlocks in cars driven by those with previous convictions for driving under the influence—already implemented in 10 states—and voluntary parental installation of interlocks in cars that teens drive are other worthwhile measures, they suggest.

More information: Economics of alcohol-involved traffic crashes in the USA: an input-output analysis, *Injury Prevention*, ip.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/..._juryprev-2014-041485

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