

New research uncovers the downside of ridesharing and alcohol consumption

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Ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, which keep drunk drivers off the road, are also likely to increase excessive levels of alcohol consumption according to new research by economists at the University of Louisville and Georgia State University.

In their study, "Do Ridesharing Services Increase Alcohol

Consumption?," Georgia State's Keith Teltser and colleagues Jacob Burgdorf and Conor Lennon of the University of Louisville are the first to uncover this relationship.

"Other studies have examined the more [positive effects](#) of ridesharing, such as reduction in drunk driving levels. However, the long- and short-term health effects of drinking, such as mortality, disease and risky sexual behavior, haven't been considered when ridesharing has been examined from a policy perspective," said Teltser. "We plan to look further at these [health outcomes](#) that no one seems to be talking about to better understand the potential consequences of ridesharing.

"Because drinking is a [social activity](#), the amount and frequency of drinking that ridesharing encourages could increase these kinds of health issues for both users and non-users of these services."

To examine the effect on drinking, the authors estimated changes in self-reported [alcohol consumption](#) before and after UberX, Uber's taxi-like service, arrived in cities across the U.S. Their results showed:

- a 3.1 percent increase in the average number of drinks consumed per day
- a 2.8 percent increase in the number of drinking days per month
- a 4.9 percent increase in the maximum number of drinks consumed on one occasion
- a 9 percent increase in the prevalence of heavy drinking

"Additionally, instances of binge drinking increased up to 21.8 percent in areas with fewer public transit options, where people rely more on ridesharing services to take them safely home," said Teltser.

The researchers also found ridesharing associated with increases in employment and earnings at bars but not at restaurants, an additional

indication that ridesharing increases alcohol consumption in a [social setting](#). Ultimately, they suggested that the overall social impact of [ridesharing](#) is complex, warranting additional research into its impact on social and health outcomes.

More information: Jacob Burgdorf et al. Do Ridesharing Services Increase Alcohol Consumption?, *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2019). [DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3484845](#)

Provided by Georgia State University

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