Half of Teen, Young Adult Car Crash Deaths Involve Pot or Alcohol

By Stephanie Pappas, Live Science Contributor, January 13, 2015

http://www.livescience.com/49428-car-crash-deaths-pot-alcohol.html

Half of the teen and young adult drivers who die in car crashes are under the influence of either pot, alcohol, or both, suggests a new study done in states where toxicology screening for accident victims is routine.

What's more, the increasing legalization and availability of marijuana does not seem likely to push alcohol use aside, the researchers said. The crash victims in the study who were over age 21 (and of legal drinking age) were more likely than younger victims to have used both marijuana and alcohol prior to their crash.

"Given the rapid changes currently underway in marijuana availability and permissibility in the U.S., understanding the effects of drug control policies on substance use behavior and adverse health outcomes, such as fatal motor vehicle crashes, has never been more important," study researcher Katherine Keyes, of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, said in a statement.

Under the Influence

Car crashes are the leading cause of death of 18- to 25-year-olds in the U.S., and driving under the influence is a major cause of accidents. Not every state conducts routine toxicology tests on car crash victims right after the accident, but those that do have come up with alarming results. For example, a 2012 study in the journal Addiction found that 57.3 percent of the drivers in this age group who died were on some kind of mind-altering substance, usually alcohol. [The History of 8 Hallucinogens]

Keyes and her colleagues pulled data on 16- to 25-year-olds from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a federal database of fatal crashes. They focused on California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington and West Virginia, because each of these states tests at least 85 percent of its fatal car crash victims for drugs and alcohol within an hour of the accident.

The researchers found that half (50.3 percent) of the young drivers who died were drunk or high at the time of their fatal crashes. In total, 36.8 percent tested positive for alcohol alone, while 5.9 percent tested positive for marijuana alone and 7.6 percent had been using both.

Mixing alcohol and marijuana

Next, the researchers wanted to know whether at-risk youth were using pot and alcohol as substitutes for one another; if so, the results might suggest specific policy changes. For example, they wrote in the open-access journal Injury Epidemiology, a large coalition of university presidents recently recommended lowering the legal drinking age to 18 in the hopes that access to alcohol would make other illegal drugs less appealing to 18- to 21-year-olds. That policy would only work, though, if young people tend to drop one drug in favor of another, rather than just double up.

Looking at the 16- to 25-year-old age range enabled the researchers to see how drug use changed in accident fatalities at the 21-year mark — the turning point when alcohol becomes legal. They found that at age 21, the likelihood of finding alcohol alone in the crash victims' systems went up 14 percent. At the same time, the likelihood of finding pot alone went down 24 percent.

But there was a catch: In victims over age 21, the chances of finding both alcohol and marijuana in the victims was 22 percent higher than in those under age 21. Ultimately, the researchers concluded, the availability of alcohol has little effect on young people's use of marijuana.

It's possible that young people who tend to use only one substance do switch from marijuana to alcohol at age 21, they wrote. But for others, who tend use more than one substance, the legality of alcohol seemed to actually increase the use of marijuana, as well.

"Taken together, we found no significant substitution effect between alcohol and marijuana," study researcher Guohua Li, director of Columbia University's Center for Injury Epidemiology and Prevention, said in a statement. "Rather, increased availability seems to increase the prevalence of concurrent use of alcohol and marijuana."

Protecting our future through information sharing

In This Issue

Schools Across Region Fall Victim to Cyber Attack (Oregon)

Hermiston Herald by Maegan Murray, January 9, 2015

http://www.hermistonherald.com/hh/local-news/20150109/schools-across-region-fall-victim-to-cyber-attack

Schools across the region were without Internet for 30 minutes after their systems were suspect to a hack.

(Oregon) - Schools across the region found themselves without Internet for about 30 minutes this week after they experienced a sweeping cyberattack that ran county-wide.

In a press release, the InterMountain Education Service District reported that the attack, known as a Distributed Denial of Service attack, targeted area schools' networks by flooding them with data. The attack used such a large amount of bandwidth that it shut down the Internet signal, according to the press release.

The attack originally only affected the Umatilla School District. Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the district has had issues with attacks to its service since September 2014.

"Every so often, the Internet would go down," Sipe said during the Umatilla School Board meeting Thursday night. "There is a group called Nero, which does all of our security. Every time it would go down, they could go in and get it fixed."

Sipe said the company originally thought that it would be able to narrow the attack down by locating an IP address of the attacker. When it looked into the matter, however, representatives learned the attack was coming from 2,000 different sites across the world.

"So then we knew this was a little bit larger," she said.

This week, however, the attacks spread county-wide across the government network that is utilized by many government-funded agencies in the region. Sipe said it is utilized by Blue Mountain Community College and other neighboring school districts.

"Anyone who used this same government agency Internet hub lost (their Internet)," she said. "It grows to a whole new level of concern now."

Sipe said the attack did not penetrate any of the networks, it just blocked their Internet signals by overloading it with information. She said the attackers did not get into any systems, nor were they able to access any data.

"The example I gave is if a thousand people called 9-1-1 all at once, the system wouldn't be able to handle it," she said. "It would shut the entire system down. That is exactly what happened with our Internet ... They are sending all of these devices."

Sipe said the information technology department at the IMESD was able to get the signal back up in less than 40 minutes, which was an amazing feat considering all that was required to disrupt the signal.

"When you consider everything that was going on, it is pretty incredible," she said.

Sipe said it is just frustrating that someone would want to create that kind of a problem for anyone.

"You are working along and then all of the sudden you are just crippled," she said. "It is pretty frustrating. It happened again (Thursday) for about 10 minutes."

Sipe said her son, Caden Sipe, read an article in the last few days that talked about how there is an app that people can download, where, for a certain fee per month, people can pick what they want to target and it performs denial service attacks.

"It could be as simple as a randomly selected IP (address) that is one of ours," she said.

Sipe said the district was renaming all of its IP addresses Thursday night so that if it is just a random attack, then it will stop happening. She said the FBI has since gotten involved because the attacks are considered a federal crime.

"So we are trying to get to the bottom of it," she said. "It is pretty wild what is out there. It is just sad that someone can be so malicious."

The attacks aren't only targeting smaller agencies and networks, either.

During the winter break, Sony and Xbox also found themselves victims of the same type of attack. A hacking group called Lizard Squad took credit for flooding the two companies' networks with the same type of attack that left both systems down Dec. 25 and Dec. 26. The systems are now back up and running.

Clemson University Considers Banning Anonymous App Yik Yak

Greenville Online, by Nathaniel Cary, January 8, 2015

http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/education/2015/01/08/clemson-considers-yik-yak-anonymous-app-ban/21463007/

Clemson University's Chief Diversity Officer Leon Wiles said the school's leadership has discussed banning the anonymous social media messaging application Yik Yak from the campus wireless network after students posted numerous racially insensitive posts on the app that he said is exacerbating racial tensions on campus.

Students recommended banning the app when the coalition of mostly black students met with school leaders on the library bridge late last semester, Wiles said.

Wiles said a potential ban is "under consideration."

"Some of the comments I've seen on Yik Yak have been rather offensive, but I don't think that is unique to Clemson," Wiles said.

Representatives with Yik Yak couldn't immediately be reached for comment Thursday afternoon.

Students who marched to Sikes Hall at Clemson on January 7, 2015 to present a list of grievances to administrators said that members of under-represented communities are targets of insensitive, ignorant, alienating and even criminal or predatory comments on Yik Yak.

The students asked President Jim Clements to apologize on behalf of the university for hateful speech made on social media, including Yik Yak, Twitter and Facebook.

The students — a loosely formed group called A Coalition of Concerned Students — asked for a public commitment by the Clemson administration to prosecute criminal or predatory behavior and defamatory speech committed by those in the Clemson community, including comments facilitated by social media.

The group of about 80 students read a list of seven grievances and demands at the protest. Among them were requests to rename Tillman Hall, hire more minority faculty and administrators, build a multi-cultural center for minorities to gather, provide more funds for campus minority organizations, provide incentives for diversity training and adding "diversity" to Clemson's list of core values.

Clemson's administration plans to issue a formal response to the students' demands before the next university Board of Trustee's meeting, scheduled for Feb. 5-6, said Almeda Jacks, interim vice president of student affairs.

Other colleges and universities have taken action to ban or limit access to Yik Yak, which has become popular on college campuses and has spread rapidly since two Furman University graduates founded the app in 2013.

The app recently raised $62 million in funding from a venture capital firm and is valued between $300 million to $400 million dollars, the Wall Street Journal reported.

While it's generally filled with posts about social life, classes or jokes about rampant campus squirrels, the app has sparked controversy on some college campuses for threatening, bullying or racist messages.

In recent months, Norwich University in Vermont and Utica College in New York have banned Yik Yak. In those cases, the app was banned from the school's wireless networks, a symbolic but limited move, since students could still access the app through their phone's data.

Last semester, the student government at Emory College in Atlanta voted to denounce the use of Yik Yak as a forum for hate speech.

The app has drawn attention in the Upstate after middle and high schools warned parents and students last spring about how the app was being used as a platform for cyberbullying.

The app's creators quickly banned the app from school zones by eliminating access to it on or near school properties, a technique called geofencing.

Geofences were added around all Greenville County Schools, said Oby Lyles, school district spokesman.

It's listed as an adult, 17+ app, which gives parents the additional option to use parental controls to keep it off their child's phone.

Yik Yak's statement of use and emergency guidelines say the app's creators will cooperate with law enforcement in emergency situations to prevent harm, including releasing a user's IP address, GPS coordinates, message timestamps and content a user's previous messages.

Will Snapchat Payments Lead to More Bad Behavior?

November 18, 2014

Snapchat's rise to its current spot as one of the most popular social media apps among teens has been quite a thing to watch. This has happened despite a plethora of bad press over obvious (to us at least) shortcomings.

If you haven't tried Snapchat you might not know exactly how it works, but its premise is simple. A user takes a picture and sends it to a friend or group of friends using the app. The picture self-destructs within ten seconds of the recipient viewing it. If the recipient attempts to save the picture, the sender is notified. Brilliant, right? Well, the shortcomings:

- Pictures don't actually disappear

- It can be gamed using third party apps

- It has been hacked on a very large scale, leaking thousands of user photos and videos

On November 17, 2014 Snapchat announced Snapcash, a not-exactly-expected initiative that will allow users to send each other cash using the app. In-app payments aren't new, but owing at least in part to novelty of Snapchat, it didn't take long for headlines like the one below to hit the web, this one from Motherboard:

"Accidentally" can't be the correct word here. We hardly think that one very popular use case for the app, sending nude photos, is unknown to the execs at Snapchat. Nor are they likely unaware that there is a very vibrant market online in which eager men (and women? Perhaps in a small way.) purchase nude photos, fetish items or whatever tickles their fancy.

Just one example is the subreddit KIKSnaps, where posters, predominantly female, charge money to add users to a subscriber list for nude pictures, sell fetish items or "rent" 1 on 1 digital online sessions for, well, you can guess what. Many of the posters claim to be teens, but who knows.

If your teen is a Snapchat user, does the existence of payment functionality within the app make it more likely that she will engage in nefarious activities? Probably not. The market for such has been out there, and not at all difficult to find. Will it change anything for teen Snapchat users? Who knows.

Over Half Of Teens Feel They Are Addicted To Social Media

By Erik Sass, January 2, 2015

The average UK teen checks social media eleven times a day, and a large proportion of them -- 58% -- said they would have trouble giving up social media for a month, according to Allen Carr Addiction Clinics, which conducted the survey of 1,000 British teens ages 12-18. Similarly, 66% of teens surveyed said they couldn't go without texting for a month; British teens send an average 17 text messages per day.

By comparison, just 6% of respondents said they couldn't give up alcohol for a month, and 28% said the same for junk food. Indeed nearly half of all teens' spending on various habits goes to texting, mobile phones, and data plans. More troubling, 14% of teens said they had lied to their families to get money to pay for their habits (including technology, junk food, and alcohol) and 7% said they had stolen from a relative to do so.

The study attributed social media's addictive qualities to a number of characteristics among users, including their constant need for stimulation, desire for approval of peers, the possibility of instant gratification, and of course narcissistic impulses.

Allen Carr, Addiction Clinics global managing director and senior therapist, warned that exposing children and teens to potentially addictive behaviors like social media can set them up to develop full-blown addictions as adults: "This study indicates that huge numbers of young people are developing compulsions and behaviors that they're not entirely in control of and cannot financially support. Unless we educate our young people as to the dangers of constant stimulation and consumption, we are sleepwalking towards an epidemic of adulthood addiction in the future."

Last month I wrote about a study by researchers at University at Albany-SUNY who surveyed 292 undergraduate respondents about their usage of social media, using addiction criteria similar to those used to diagnose alcoholism. The researchers identified a cohort of around 10% of the total survey group who displayed behaviors matching the profile of "disordered social networking use," including irritability when unable to access Facebook, cravings to use the social network, and increasing usage as time went on.

They also displayed addictive personality traits including difficulty with tasks related to psychological self-management, like emotional regulation and impulse control. Indeed, people who experienced symptoms of social media addiction were also more likely to report having trouble regulating their consumption of alcohol.