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Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

Alcohol and Marijuana Alert - December 8, 2022



Alcohol and Pot Use by US Drivers Is Rising, Along With Deaths

A growing number of US drivers are getting behind the wheel after using alcohol or marijuana, contributing to an increase in road deaths.

Dangerous driving behaviors — from impaired driving to running red lights to speeding — rose last year, reversing declines since 2018, according to a new survey from the American Automobile Association. Motor vehicle fatalities increased 10.5% to almost 43,000 in 2021, AAA said, citing federal estimates.

Driving under the influence of booze was up 24% and cannabis climbed 14% — the biggest risers among the reckless behaviors studied. Speeding also showed a sharp increase, AAA said.

“The reversal in the frequency of US drivers engaging in risky driving behavior is disturbing,” said David Yang, executive director of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. “While drivers acknowledge that certain activities behind the wheel — like speeding and driving impaired — are not safe, many still engage in these activities anyway.”

The effects of alcohol on drivers are well-known among the public, but with only 21 states having legalized recreational marijuana its effects are less publicized. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health says marijuana use can lead to slower reaction time and decision making, but it’s tougher to reliably test for than drunken driving.

“Studies have shown that the risk of being involved in a crash increases after marijuana use,” NIOSH said on its website.

“Still, marijuana’s specific contribution to crash risk is unclear because it can be detected in body fluids for days or even weeks

after use.”

The survey also showed a 10% increase in driving through red lights and a 12% jump in speeding more than 15 miles per hour over the highway speed limit. AAA surveyed 2,657 licensed drivers ages 16 or older who reported having driven at least once in the previous 30 days. [READ](#)

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