



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Commissioner of Probation

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DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF LIQUOR:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE AGE, SEX AND INCIDENCE
OF SIMULTANEOUS OFFENSES OF DEFENDANTS IN
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, FEB. 1979

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FINAL
REPORT

ACQUISITIONS

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LIQUOR: An analysis of the age, sex and incidence of simultaneous offenses of defendants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, February, 1979.

I. Purpose of the Study

The objective of the DUIL study was to determine the age and sex distribution of drunk driver defendants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and to assess the incidence of simultaneous offenses by age.

In light of the current legislation raising the legal drinking age in the Commonwealth, the study asked the questions:

1. What is the average age of drunk driver defendants in the state?
2. What percent of those charged with drunk driving would be effected by an increase in the legal drinking age to 20?
3. Is there any age linkage to simultaneous offenses; that is, do certain types of additional charges occur more frequently among certain age groups?

II. Methodology

The Office of the Commissioner of Probation analyzed data based on court records received from 70 probation departments statewide from February 5 through March 2, 1979. A total of 1,795 defendants were charged with driving under the influence of liquor (111A) during the four sample weeks.

The Office of the Commissioner of Probation is unique in that all criminal and delinquency records statewide are centrally filed in Boston; six million records dating back to 1924 are stored in the OCP central file. Each day, probation departments across the state send in records of cases heard on the previous day, including new charges, the status of continued cases and dispositional information. Only those records reflecting new charges for drunk driving were included in the sample.

Records were counted daily, and coded by age, sex and offenses.

Offenses were coded, based on the following categories:

* DUIL only

* DUIL, plus one or more of the following:

1. Operating to endanger
2. Use of a motor vehicle without authority
3. Larceny of a motor vehicle
4. Leaving the scene of an accident
5. Property damage
6. Personal injury
7. Speeding/reckless driving
8. Other major motor vehicle
9. Other minor motor vehicle
10. Other criminal
 - a. against persons
 - b. against property
 - c. controlled substance
 - d. public order

III. Findings

A total of 1,795 Drunk Driver records were received and included in the four week sample.

The sex distribution of those cases is as follows:

Male	1,647	(91.75%)
Female	148	(8.25%)

The average age for male and female DUIL defendants was as follows:

Male	29.8 yrs. -- range: 15-75 years
Female	31.4 yrs. -- range: 17-67 years

The age distribution for the DUIL cases by sex was as follows:

Age	Male	Female	Combined
15	.18%	0	.18%
16	.60%	0	.60%
17	2.36%	2.70%	2.30%
18	5.46%	3.37%	5.29%
19	5.52%	5.40%	5.51%
20	8.80%	5.40%	8.52%
21-25	25.14%	25.67%	25.18%
26-30	16.87%	13.51%	16.60%
31-40	17.97%	22.97%	18.38%
41-50	8.98%	12.83%	9.30%
51-60	6.19%	6.75%	6.23%
61-70	1.76%	1.35%	1.72%
71+	.12%	0	.12%
TOTAL	99.95%	99.95%	99.93%

This age distribution shows that 14.12 percent of the males and 11.47 percent of the females were under 20 years of age, and would be affected by the recent legislation raising the legal drinking age to 20 years.

The data also shows that when the legal drinking age was 18 years, 3.14 percent of the male DUIL defendants and 2.70 percent of the female DUIL defendants were 17 years of age or younger; that is, they were under the legal drinking age of 18 years.

For both males and females, the 21-25 year old age group showed the highest frequency of drunk driver charges. One-quarter of the total 4-week sample were within the 21-25 year old age group, with little difference between males and females.

More than half the male DUIL defendants (51.97%) and female defendants (57.41%) were 26 years of age or older.

Nature of the Charges

The study also examined the nature of the charges, analyzing those 924 cases (51.48% of the total sample) who had one or more simultaneous offenses in addition to the drunk driving charge.

If there was no age linkage to multiple offenses, one would expect the distribution of multiple offenses to parallel the overall percent distribution of the various age groups in the sample. That is, if 20 percent of the overall sample were within a given age group, one would expect the incidence of any given simultaneous offense to also be about 20 percent in that age group. Where an offense was under or overrepresented when compared to the age group's percent of the total sample, that offense may have some age linkage.

The table on the following page (DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LIQUOR: DISTRIBUTION OF OFFENSES BY AGE) shows that defendants under the age of 20 are overrepresented in the incidence of several offenses. Because of the small number of females in the sample (n=148), no separate analysis by sex was undertaken.

While the 250 defendants 15-19 years of age accounted for 13.97 percent of the total cases in the sample, they were underrepresented among those charged with DUIL only, indicating a higher than expected frequency of multiple offenses. This pattern was repeated among defendants up to age 25. Defendants 26 years of age and older were consistently underrepresented in the incidence of multiple offenses.

Drivers 15-19 years of age accounted for 15.59 percent of those charged with Operating to Endanger (112A), 40.46 percent of those charged with Use of a Motor Vehicle Without Authority (114A), 26.65 percent of those charged with leaving the scene with property damage, and 33.33 percent of personal injury.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LIQUOR -- Distribution of Offenses by Age

Age	% of total	DUIL only	DUIL PLUS SIMULTANEOUS OFFENSES												
			112A	114A	Lar.MV	113A/B	Prop. Dmg.	Pers. Inj.	116A/110A	Other maj.MV	Other min.MV	Agst. Pers.	Agst. Prop.	C.S.	P.O.
15	.18	0	.50	9.52	-	-	.83	13.33	-	.63	-	-	-	-	-
16	.60	.34	1.00	2.38	-	-	.83	-	-	.63	-	-	-	-	-
17	2.39	2.18	1.00	7.14	-	-	4.16	-	5.33	2.54	2.51	3.22	3.13	2.32	10.0
18	5.29	4.25	7.30	14.28	25.0	4.16	10.00	20.00	5.33	3.82	4.68	9.67	9.37	8.13	10.0
19	5.51	4.82	5.79	7.14	-	2.08	10.83	-	6.66	5.73	6.35	3.22	3.13	5.81	4.28
sub total	13.97	11.59	15.59	40.46	25.0	6.24	26.65	33.33	17.32	13.35	13.54	16.11	15.63	16.26	24.28
20	8.52	4.25	9.82	4.76	25.0	6.25	9.16	6.66	8.00	2.54	5.35	16.12	3.13	18.60	14.78
21-25	25.18	24.79	28.96	21.42	50.0	20.83	11.66	-	29.33	30.57	27.75	20.96	40.62	31.39	11.42
26-30	16.60	16.99	15.11	16.67	-	18.75	19.16	6.66	13.33	21.01	18.06	14.52	18.75	17.44	21.42
31-40	18.38	20.55	16.12	7.14	-	27.08	17.50	26.66	22.66	18.47	22.41	17.74	15.62	16.27	22.85
41-50	9.30	10.90	8.31	7.14	-	10.42	7.50	20.00	8.00	12.10	10.03	11.29	3.13	-	4.28
51-60	6.23	8.72	4.03	-	-	2.08	3.33	-	-	1.91	3.01	1.61	3.13	-	1.42
61-70	1.72	2.06	1.51	2.38	-	6.25	4.16	6.66	1.33	-	.66	-	-	-	-
71+	.12	-	.50	-	-	2.08	.83	-	-	-	-	1.61	-	-	-

The young drivers, 15-19 years of age, were also overrepresented in other types of criminal offenses. They accounted for 16.11 percent of crimes against person (including: homicide by motor vehicle, assault and battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, threats), 15.63 percent of crimes against property (such as: receiving stolen property, larceny more, breaking and entering of a motor vehicle, malicious damage to property), 16.26 percent of controlled substance violations and 24.28 percent of public order crimes.

However, despite the frequency of multiple charges against younger drivers, the 21-25 year old age group showed the highest absolute frequency of defendants in the sample ... accounting for 25.18 percent of the total cases.

The 21-25 year old age group (which will not be affected by changes in the legal drinking age) was overrepresented in several offenses, including: operating to endanger, speeding/reckless driving, other major motor vehicle and minor motor vehicle offenses, property crimes and controlled substance violations.

Drivers 26 - 30 years and older showed a consistent pattern of reduced percentage of defendants charged with multiple offenses, and a higher percentage of defendants charged with drunk driving only.

Older drivers (61 years of age and over) accounted for only 1.72 percent of the sample, but represented 6.25 percent of the leaving the scene of an accident charges, 4.16 percent of property damage and 6.66 percent of personal injury offenses.

Summary of Findings

The 4-week sample of drunk driver defendants in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts found that only 13.97 percent of those charged with DUIL were under 20 years of age. One will therefore expect that if the new legislation is effective, the number of persons charged with DUIL should be reduced by about 10-14 percent.

The study found that the majority of DUIL defendants were above the proposed 20 year old limit. The mean age was approximately 30 for males and females. Defendants ranged in age from 15 to 75 years old, with no significant difference by sex.

Younger drivers (15-19 years of age) were found to show a higher than predicted frequency of several simultaneous charges, including: operating to endanger, use of a motor vehicle without authority, property damage, personal injury, speeding/reckless driving, crimes against person, crimes against property, controlled substance and public order violations.

However, drivers 21-25 years of age represented the highest absolute frequency of DUIL defendants in the sample; 25.18 percent of those in the study fell into this age group.

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