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Teens’ Definition of “Designated Driver” Can Be Loose, Survey Finds

Teens' definition of a "designated driver" can be loose, according to a new survey.

About one in five teens say their designated person is allowed to have "a little" alcohol or other drugs, as long as they aren't too impaired to drive.

The survey found 4 percent of teens describe their designated driver as the most sober person in the group, *Bloomberg News* reports.

One in 10 teens who said they have never driven under the influence of alcohol admitted to driving after having a drink.

The survey, conducted by Liberty Mutual and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), calls attention to risky behaviors by young people, the article notes.

Teens "seem to think that unless they're really falling-down drunk, that it's OK for them to drive," David Melton, Managing Director for Global Safety at Liberty Mutual, told Bloomberg News.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the driver was intoxicated in about 18 percent of fatal crashes involving drivers ages 16 to 20 in 2011.

The survey included 2,537 students in 11th and 12th grades. U.S. drivers with a blood alcohol concentration above .08 grams per deciliter are considered alcohol-impaired. "Long before you're at .08, you're definitely impaired in terms of your judgment," Melton said. "You may not be over the legal limit, but you are driving with a buzz on and that's not a good thing."

In a statement, Stephen Gray Wallace, Senior Advisor for Policy, Research and Education at SADD, said, "With teens reporting these lax definitions of what it means to be 'under the influence,' a zero tolerance approach is the only answer to prevent potential tragedy. The parents and community have a responsibility to initiate and maintain an open dialogue with teens about exactly what driving under the influence means."