

Too many young French drivers are still mixing alcohol and driving

The association Prévention Routière and the insurance companies of the FFSA publish the results of a survey* carried out among young drivers in 8 European countries. This study highlights the dangers facing young people with regard to their driving habits when going out. The study explains why so many young people are killed and injured on French roads**.

The study confirms the importance of alcohol consumption among young Europeans (8 out of 10 consume even if only occasionally). But it also reveals disparities in how to handle the issue of alcohol and driving: if the young Swedish, Polish and English are the biggest drinkers of alcohol during parties, the French, with their Latin neighbours (Spaniards and Italians), take more risks driving: during their last evening party, 1 in 4 young Frenchmen drove after drinking alcohol and 1 in 10 drank more than 2 glasses.

France is also one of the countries where young people play most with the legal limits of alcohol (41% drink just enough to stay below the BAC, 7% try to keep their consumption under control but believe it to be above the BAC). In Germany or in the Netherlands, young people interviewed said they did not drink before driving (70%). One example is where young Swedes drink a lot of alcohol but manage to make sure they do not drive home after drinking (70% of them). In these 3 countries, the legal alcohol limit is less than or equal to 0.2 grams per liter of blood.

However the study shows that France is, with Poland, the country where one finds the highest number of designated drivers (92%). But the initiative comes too often from the person who proposes it, while in Germany and the Netherlands, each member of the group does it in turn.

Young French people are also among the largest number in Europe to have already used a breath test for alcohol (42% against 17% on average in other countries) or to have entrusted their car to another person when they have drunk too much (56% against 38 % on average).

When asked what motivates them most to pay attention to their consumption of alcohol, young European drivers cite, first, fear of accident, before the fear of the police. However, young French drivers are distinguished by being the most numerous of those (30%) who feared a police check.

More generally, the majority of young European drivers (7 out of 10) believe that alcohol checks on the road are not frequent enough. Driving with a blood alcohol level above the legal limit is considered to be the most serious offence in most countries.

Finally, when asked about the effectiveness of measures to reduce accidents related to alcohol, young Europeans prefer the development of public transports in the evening to get home to an increase of the number of police checks and the installation of breath alcohol ignition interlock devices in vehicles.

* *Young European drivers* by BVA carried out on behalf of the association Prévention Routière and the insurance companies of the FFSA, among a panel of 5 051 Internet surfers aged between 18 to 25 in 8 European countries : Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, UK and Sweden, in July 2008.

** In France, road accidents are the prime cause of mortality among young people aged between 18 to 24 years : 22 % of deaths and 22 % injured in 2007 (they represent 8,5 % of the population). They appear to be in the highest percentage of deaths among the 8 European countries of this survey. Alcohol related accidents account for 38 % of deaths on the roads, among the young drivers (18 -24 years old).