Concern about Drinking and Driving and Drugs and Driving

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CONTEXT: Concern about such issues as drinking and driving and drugs and driving may affect more people than the issue itself. Relevant questions in this context are whether the level of concern adds to, or detracts from the level of traffic safety; and, whether the level of concern can and should be controlled.

OBJECTIVE: This paper describes the results from a study on concern about a variety of road safety issues. Special attention is given to the findings regarding drinking and driving and drugs and driving.

METHODS: Data from two independent random samples were used. Both samples come from a telephone survey; one was administered to a random sample of 750 Ontario residents, the other to a random sample of 1,201 Canadians. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of concern about a variety of traffic safety issues using a six-point ordinal scale, as well as their perception of risk; prevalence; seriousness of consequences; and, other people’s level of concern about each of the probed issues. Logistic regression analyses and multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS: Using both samples MDS produced two perceptual maps that showed a very high degree of similarity; both maps can be considered almost exact copies of one another, illustrating the robustness and stability of the MDS solution. According to this solution the level of concern about traffic safety issues can be explained as a function of risk perception and perception of others’ level of concern. Other dimensions such as prevalence perception and perception of severity of consequences were less useful to explain concern. With regard to drinking and driving and drugs and driving this means that, generally speaking, people seem to be so concerned about it because they believe it is very risky and because they believe others are concerned about it as well.

CONCLUSIONS: Level of concern about a variety of traffic safety issues can be explained by several relevant dimensions. These dimensions according to the results in this research are risk perception and perception of other people’s level of concern. Prevalence perception, which was found to be relevant in previous research, and perception of severity of consequences were found not to be relevant. Relationships between these dimensions should be further investigated and can serve as a looking glass on the public’s level of concern and reasons for concern. As such, this may serve as a tool to establish evidence-based practices.

Keywords: Drinking and driving, Drugs and driving, Concern