

Crime & Drunk Driving

A recent criminal study on drunk driving in Hualien examined three main areas: (1) criminal policies and punishments, (2) economic factors, and (3) the behavior and attributes of drunk drivers.

Findings from the study indicate the following:

1. There is a higher percentage of males who drink at night.
2. Most drunk drivers are between 40 and 49 years of age.
3. In rural villages of indigenous populations, there is a greater proportion of female drunk drivers.
4. Most drunk driving incidents occur in the northern part of Hualien.
5. Most drunk driving incidents occur between 9:00 PM and midnight.
6. More drunk driving incidents occur in the fall and winter seasons.
7. Most drunk drivers do their drinking at a residence.
8. Most drunk drivers drink cheap alcohol.
9. Most drunk drivers are riding a motorcycle.
10. There are fewer drunk drivers over age 50.
11. Drunk driving often results in a high financial cost (or loss).

The study concludes that more severe punishments and higher fines cannot reduce the rate of drunk driving in Hualien. Increasing a fine only has a limited effect. Raising the fine may affect a person who has a steady or regular income. Such a person is also affected by criminal penalties (such as incarceration) or even the possibility of losing his or her job. So, fines and penalties are often effective in such cases.

However, many people who live in Hualien do not have a steady or high income. Adding to the problem is a lack of effective public transportation. These drinkers drive cars or ride their

motorcycles home even though they are unable to pass a drunk-driving test. Increasing fines on such drunk drivers has no effect since they are unable to pay. A family may face financial ruin after a single instance of drunk driving. A more comprehensive and benevolent solution is necessary.

In order to discourage and reduce the problem of drunk driving, government and law officials need to factor in regional considerations. Recommendations to reduce the problem of drunk driving include the following:

1. The government should construct a nation-wide anti-drunk driving campaign.
2. Legal agencies should strive to prevent repeat offenders of drunk driving in a thoughtful and fair manner.
3. Legal agencies should reexamine the use of excessive fines and seizure of property as deterrents.
4. Agencies should establish an effective public transportation system of subsidized buses or taxis so that drinkers do not have a need to drive.

In order to prevent drunk driving, government agencies not only need to improve criminal liability and administrative sanctions. They need to look beyond merely increasing fines and penalties. Agencies should promote legal education. Further, they should establish a method wherein drunk-driving defendants have a chance for rehabilitation or change. Only by reallocating existing social resources properly can Hualien and Taiwan achieve true justice and create a truly fair and reasonable society.