Profiling drunk driving recidivists in Denmark

Drunk drivers are a menace to themselves and to other road users, as drunk driving significantly increases the risk of involvement in road accidents and the probability of severe or fatal injuries. Although injuries and fatalities related to road accidents have decreased in recent decades, the prevalence of drunk driving among drivers killed in road accidents has remained stable, at around 25% or more during the past 10 years. Understanding drunk driving, and in particular, recidivism, is essential for designing effective counter measures, and accordingly, the present study aims at identifying the differences between non-drunk drivers, drunk driving non-recidivists and drunk driving recidivists with respect to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, road accident involvement and other traffic and non-traffic-related law violations. This study is based on register-data from Statistics Denmark and includes information from 2008 to 2012 for the entire population, aged 18 or older, of Denmark. The results from univariate and multivariate statistical analyses reveal a five-year prevalence of 17% for drunk driving recidivism, and a significant relation between recidivism and the drunk drivers' gender, age, income, education, receipt of an early retirement pension, household type, and residential area. Moreover, recidivists are found to have a higher involvement in alcohol-related road accidents, as well as other traffic and, in particular, non-traffic-related offenses. These findings indicate that drunk driving recidivism is more likely to occur among persons who are in situations of socio-economic disadvantage and marginalisation. Thus, to increase their effectiveness, preventive measures aiming to reduce drunk driving should also address issues related to the general life situations of the drunk driving recidivists that contribute to an increased risk of drunk driving recidivism.