

Research Report Title (Generated Using PlusMind ChatGPT)

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of harsher punishments on DUI recidivism, using regression discontinuity design and administrative records from Washington State. Results indicate that having a BAC above the DUI threshold decreases recidivism by up to 17

Introduction

Drunk driving significantly contributes to traffic fatalities, highlighting the importance of effective deterrence measures. This paper investigates the impact of blood alcohol content (BAC) thresholds on DUI recidivism. By exploiting the quasi-experimental setting of Washington State's DUI enforcement, the study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of current policies in reducing drunk driving incidents.

Literature Review

Prior research has explored various aspects of criminal behavior and deterrence, with mixed findings on the impact of punishment severity. This study contributes to the debate by focusing on drunk driving, a context where the law provides clear BAC thresholds for enhanced punishments, offering a unique opportunity to examine the deterrent effects of harsher sanctions.

Methodology

The analysis utilizes a regression discontinuity design, leveraging over 500,000 DUI stops in Washington State. By comparing recidivism rates of individuals just below and just above BAC thresholds, the study isolates the impact of crossing these legal limits on subsequent DUI behavior.

Findings

TABLE 3—REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY ESTIMATES FOR THE EFFECT OF EXCEEDING THE 0.08 BAC THRESHOLD ON RECIDIVISM			
	All tested drivers (1)	No prior tests (2)	At least one prior test (3)
Panel A. BAC ∈ [0.03, 0.13]			
DUI	−0.021*** (0.004)	−0.017*** (0.004)	−0.053*** (0.015)
Mean	0.103	0.093	0.172
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	95,111	82,626	12,485
Panel B. BAC ∈ [0.055, 0.105]			
DUI	−0.019*** (0.005)	−0.018*** (0.005)	−0.038** (0.018)
Mean	0.103	0.093	0.172
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	49,396	43,070	6,326

Figure: Regression Discontinuity Design Findings

Discussion

The results demonstrate a significant decrease in recidivism for drivers with BACs above legal thresholds, suggesting that stricter sanctions serve as an effective deterrent. The study also explores mechanisms such as deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation, indicating that deterrence plays a crucial role in reducing drunk driving.

Conclusions

Harsher punishments at specific BAC thresholds are associated with reduced DUI recidivism, supporting the effectiveness of such policies in deterring repeat offenses. These findings have important implications for policymakers and law enforcement, advocating for the maintenance or introduction of strict BAC limits to enhance road safety.