The Issue Of Drunk Driving In USA

Is drunk driving really that big of a deal? Whether we realize it or not, drunk driving is a dangerous epidemic that continues to hurt our country. Drunk driving ruins relationships and tears families and friends apart, as it causes severe injuries or even death. There are a ton of factors that come with drunk driving. This raises the question: is it really worth it to drive drunk?

Drunk driving in basic terms is driving during the time frame that one is intoxicated. In all cases, drunk driving is considered a crime. According to alcoholrehabguide.org, “Getting behind the wheel of a vehicle – car, truck, motorcycle or any other motorized vehicle – after consuming alcohol is a serious crime. Drinking and driving is sometimes called driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI), and involves operating a vehicle with a blood alcohol content (BAC) level of at least 0.08 per cent. However, even a small amount of alcohol can lead to harmful situations.” Police officers can tell that someone is driving drunk is a measurement of the driver's blood alcohol concentration (BAC). Police officers use what is called a breath alcohol test (breathalyzer test). This test measures the amount of alcohol that is in the air breathed out. Blood alcohol concentration, according to alcohol.stanford.edu, is “Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) refers to the per cent of alcohol (ethyl alcohol or ethanol) in a person's bloodstream. ABAC of .10% means that an individual's blood supply contains one part alcohol for every 1000 parts blood.” What mainly causes drunk driving is that some people feel like they are fine enough to drive after they have drunk, no matter how much alcohol is in their system. Even the smallest amount of alcohol can not only endanger oneself, but passengers if there are any, those who share the road with a drunk driver, and pedestrians as well. Sometimes, people feel that they have no other way of getting home so they feel it is necessary to drive themselves. Another cause of drunk driving is peer pressure. The main targets of peer pressure are often younger adults. Teens feel that is is necessarily to drink in order to prove a point to their friends or family. The article titled ‘Four Ways Peer Pressure Influences Drinking and Driving’ on https://njduidefense.lawyer/drinking-and-driving/ informs the reader that “Just as a teen might be labelled as “nerdy” by not drinking, one might be labelled the same way for worrying about driving under the influence. Even if he knows that drinking and driving could result in his first DUI offence, he might be more concerned about the social consequences than the legal ones” Some teens drink in order to fit into different social groups, or be someone they are not. Most of the time, it does not end well.

Drinking has ample effects alone, but imagine getting behind the wheel while doing so. When someone drinks, it takes between thirty minutes to two hours for alcohol to be absorbed in the bloodstream. This slows down breathing, and cognitive skills as well. One effect of drunk driving is the limitation of vision. Looking straight at the road is almost impossible to do while under the influence. The distance one can see is also drastically reduced. A second effect of drunk driving is the loss of coordination. Your eye, foot, and hand coordination will all be in disarray, which could potentially divert one from avoiding a dangerous situation on the road. This could also result in an inability to stay in a lane, to maintain the correct speed limit, and can make it harder to brake the car. A third effect of drunk driving is incredibly decreased concentration. This lack of concentration also contributes to the loss of coordination, as if one cannot concentrate, it will just make any driving situation much more difficult than it needs to be. Finally, decision making and reaction times are severely affected. According to alcoholrehabguide.org, “Drinking slows

your response time, which can increase the likelihood of an accident. Therefore, if the car in front of you brakes suddenly or a pedestrian crosses the street, it will take longer for your brain to process the situation and prevent an accident." Again, if someone is drunk, it will be much harder to avoid dangerous situations on the road. The brain will take longer to process what is going on, which could make it impossible in some cases to prevent an accident from happening. Driving a car after drinking just does not seem like it's worth it, especially considering the fact that some people struggle to drive without drinking anything at all.

The consequences of drunk driving are seemingly endless. It is almost as if they pile on top of one another, which can make the consequences feel never ending. If an officer suspects an individual of drunk driving, their job is to get that person off of the road before they further endanger others. The individual in that case almost always gets arrested and taken to jail until they can post bond. In most cases, a DUI (driving under the influence) offence can be classified as a misdemeanour. However, if an intoxicated driver severely injures or kills someone else, it can be considered a felony. Multiple DUI's typically result in a felony. When convicted of drinking and driving, an individual's pockets will feel nothing but pain. DUI's are very expensive. Costs of a DUI can range anywhere from $2,000 to almost $8,000. The average DUI offence usually costs $6,500. According to alcohol.org, "The entire process of getting a DUI is extremely expensive. Even before one is formally convicted, one should expect to start shelling out money. Individuals often have to pay the court a bond to be released, pay a bond to get their car back, and pay towing charges. They often have to give their chosen attorney a down payment before the attorney begins working on their case." The court has to be paid, a bond has to be paid to get the car involved back to go along with towing charges, and insurance premiums skyrocket due to the driver being a liability. Additional fees from insurance companies can range from $100 to $1000 depending on different variables. Some insurance companies go to the extent of dropping the individual, which would force them to have to try to find a new insurance company that is willing to pick them up. Since a DUI is a crime, those who are convicted are typically put on probation. While on probation, drug and alcohol use is prohibited and the individual cannot leave their state or in some cases their town without letting their probation officers know. Think of it as some sort of confinement. There are also restrictions, depending on the state, the judge, or the probation officer. Nowadays, alcohol prevention programs are more prevalent among first time offenders. The offender is typically the person who pays for it (which is more money being spent). While attending this program, attendance is monitored in some sort of way. These programs can last up to a month. Due to the extensive fines given by courts, the offender can opt for a payment program. Not only is paying out thousands of dollars to handle a DUI a major consequence, but emotional distress is as well. The entire process of a DUI can be very draining for anyone involved. "Most individuals can also expect significant issues with emotional distress, being inconvenienced, relationship issues, and the overall effects of a DUI conviction to linger on for years following an individual's initial arrest. These emotional effects can affect one's finances in numerous ways, including increased medical expenses, lost productivity, an extended need for therapy, etc" (alcohol.org). When a DUI gets paid off, it is unimaginable to think of how much of a set back it can truly be. It can follow someone for years. Some of the money from each paycheck earned by an individual involved will be continuously shelled out because of how expensive they can be. Sometimes, that individual might need some sort of therapy in order to relieve the stress that comes with a DUI which is just additional money that needs to be spent. Another consequence of a DUI is the revocation, suspension, or restriction of your driver's license which puts restrictions on your ability to drive. In most states, those who refuse to take a BAC test given by a police officer will automatically have their license suspended. Usually, the time your license can be suspended is

anywhere from three months to a year depending on the state. “Most often, individuals have to meet certain specifications, such as having interlock systems installed on their car ignition if they are issued restricted driver’s licenses, or they must wait for a specified period of time to get their license back if it is suspended or revoked” (alcohol.org). To further restrict someone driving, if someone receives a restricted driver’s license, an ignition interlock device can be installed on someone’s car. Is getting a DUI really worth the trouble?

Although the drinking and driving epidemic continues to hurt the United States, drunk driving fatalities have been decreasing throughout the past few decades, thanks to different means of prevention. “In 2017, the rate of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities per 100,000 population was 3.3, representing a 64% decrease since 1982, when record keeping began, and a 47% decrease since the inception of The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility in 1991” (Drunk Driving Fatalities). One of the reasons for this decrease is teaching teenagers and adults about the dangers and consequences of drinking and driving. Thankfully, parents have talked to their children more often on the dangers of drinking and driving, along with the dangers of drinking alcohol in general. There are multiple ways to prevent drinking and driving. The easiest way to prevent drinking and driving is to not even bother drinking any alcohol at all. Alcohol does not have to be drank in order to have fun at a party or an event. No matter how much one drinks, that individual should be the first that prevents the idea of drinking and driving. If an individual knows that they are going out and they are going to drink, that individual should either have a designated driver or money for a taxi home. A designated driver is someone who opts to not drink at all. It is important that someone else makes sure that the designated driver who swore not to drink alcohol lives up to their word. If an individual thinks they are going to drink and drive, it is a good idea to give someone who is sober and trustworthy their keys. It is also recommended to put keys in a place where one can remember. Although one can plan on not drinking and driving, one can never be too sure when alcohol affects judgement.

The government has also made attempts to crack down on drinking and driving. Laws have been created in order to attempt to reduce drinking and driving, such as the Zero Tolerance Law. The Zero Tolerance Law, according to safeny.ny.gov, “The Zero Tolerance law applies to a person under age 21 who operates a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .02% or more but not more than .07%.” What this law does is make it illegal to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in an individual’s system. This law specifically targets the teenagers of our country, as they are the most likely age group to drink and drive. An attempt that seems reasonable, but has failed are DUI checkpoints. DUI checkpoints are essentially roadblocks where police officers stop drivers using a certain sequence, like stopping every fifth car. At these roadblocks, officers evaluate the driver to determine whether or not they are under the influence by asking either a series of questions, or giving a breathalyzer test. Probable cause is not needed to search one’s vehicle when stopped. According to https://dui.drivinglaws.org/topics/dui-checkpoints, “ Although a police officer must have probable cause to stop a vehicle, the Supreme Court ruled in 1990 that DUI checkpoints don’t require probable cause provided that certain criteria are followed. The high court decision held that the government’s interest in reducing alcohol-related injuries was sufficient to justify a “brief intrusion” of a checkpoint.” Due to the fact that there have been many fatal accidents related to driving under the influence, the government felt that briefly stopping one’s vehicle to comply to these quick tests is justified. However, only eleven states do not allow DUI checkpoints. Thirteen states conduct these DUI checkpoints weekly. Most people would think that these checkpoints are effective in catching and apprehending drunk drivers, but in reality, it’s not. If anything, drunk drivers are warned ahead of time before even encountering these checkpoints.

Press releases from some police agencies even inform the public of when and where these checkpoints are going to be conducted, which gives a drunk driver more than enough time to avoid them. This especially works for those drunk drivers who have the ability to plan ahead. For the most part, though, most of the United States efforts to crack down on drunk driving have worked as drunk driving has greatly been reduced in the last few decades. Thankfully, most of the attempts to crack down on drunk driving by the government have worked.

Even though drinking and driving in the United States has drastically decreased throughout the past few decades, it is still a major problem to this day. Even with the laws against it, there are still repeated offenders out there who just do not care about anything. Whether it is losing your job, your loved ones, or even your life, drinking and driving is not worth the pain it brings to everyone involved.