

Designated driver idea a problem for some

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A University of Alberta researcher says the concept of a "designated driver" is a good idea, but it is problematic for many people.

Peter Rothe of the university's Center for Injury Control and Research said the phrase "designated driver" is meaningless for many young adults who, instead of choosing a sober driver, pick the "least drunk" of their friends.

Rothe led a study combining a survey of more than 1,000 Albertans with 14 province-wide focus groups to determine how young Alberta drivers between 18 and 29 were using different drinking and driving interventions.

Rothe found one of the biggest problems in choosing a designated driver is that designated drivers often also drink alcohol.

Nearly 18 percent of the rural respondents said they chose the driver while or after they had been drinking. Many people also said they will allow someone who has been drinking to get behind the wheel, rather than risk a physical confrontation.

Rothe said educating newly licensed drivers on how best to deal with drunken drivers is one of many recommendations that came from the focus groups. Another recommendation was to provide alternative and affordable transportation, particularly in rural areas.

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