

Study: Md.'s alcohol tax increase led to drop in drunken driving accidents

By: [Tim Curtis](#) Daily Record Business Writer March 27, 2017



The increase in Maryland's alcohol tax in 2011 has saved lives, advocates said after a new study showed a decrease in alcohol-related car crashes in the last six years.

The study, by researchers at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, showed a 6 percent decrease in alcohol-involved car incidents that lead to an injury or fatality.

"Alcohol taxes save lives. We said that to the people of Maryland," Vincent DeMarco, president of the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative and a leader of the effort to increase the tax in 2011, told reporters at a news conference Monday.

The most significant drops in alcohol incidents came in the youngest age groups, with a 12 percent decrease in crashes involving 15-to-20-year-olds and 21-to-34-year-olds.

[The study, published last week in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#), looked at month-by-month data of alcohol-related incidents from 2001 through 2013.

"This is an instance where Maryland really did it right," said David Jernigan, a professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Public Health, who was not involved in the study. "This study confirms the large body of research showing that alcohol taxes can make a difference."

Marie-Claude Lavoie, the lead author of the study, said it controlled for other potential factors that could have lowered the number of alcohol-related incidents, including county-level enforcement measures and reduced numbers of teens drinking nationally.

A Johns Hopkins [study last year](#) showed that since the tax increase took effect, liquor sales dropped 5.2 percent, beer sales dropped 3.2 percent and wine sales dropped 2.5 percent.

The coalition that supported the tax increase said the studies provide evidence for increasing alcohol taxes in other states.

Wandra Ashley Williams, vice president of the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches, said the organization would be introducing a resolution at the national level to encourage other states to increase their alcohol sales taxes.

"We want other states to follow our example," DeMarco said. "We've gotten calls from other states about how we did it and does it work? With this study we're going to be able to really show other states, 'Yes, alcohol taxes do save lives. You should do it.'"