

# ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND RAIL AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH SAFETY INDICATORS

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## Introduction and Aims:

Rail is a safety critical industry with an ageing workforce. Rail driving is characterised by shiftwork, high stress and performance demands, sedentariness and elevated risk of musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular disease. However, no data exists on the patterns or profiles of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use in this cohort, or how they may correspond with safety indicators. This paper addresses this gap.

## Design and Methods:

Rail drivers across Australia and New Zealand (N=751) completed an anonymous survey assessing AOD use and workplace culture, and safety-related items including involvement in operational incidents. Analyses were conducted to determine the extent and nature of AOD by worker profile, and associations with safety outcomes.

## Results:

58% of the sample scored positive on AUDIT-C, with no difference by age. 23% of drivers reported that AOD negatively impacts their driving on a day-to-day basis. Freight drivers were more likely than passenger drivers to drink at risky levels; use prescribed medication, and be aware of co-workers affected by hangover or other drugs (all  $p < .05$ ). Operational incidents and difficulty remembering signals were associated with a positive CAGE score and lifetime cannabis use ( $p < .05$ ).

## Discussions and Conclusions:

This is the first study to investigate AOD and safety in Australian and New Zealand rail with important implications for workplace policy. High levels of alcohol use are of concern. AOD use in freight rail modes warrant attention, particularly as these drivers work for long periods in isolated environments. Future work into AOD-related performance impairment and accessible workplace supports is required.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None to disclose.