

Psychiatric comorbidity among first-time and repeat DUI offenders

Mental health and substance use disorders are common among driving under the influence (DUI) offenders.

Rates of psychiatric disorders among DUI offenders are typically higher than the general population, but few studies have compared rates between first-time and repeat DUI offenders.

The Study



Participants consisted of 122 first-time offenders and 261 repeat offenders recruited from two court-mandated DUI programs in Massachusetts.



Participants completed the screener module of the Computerized Assessment and Referral System, an assessment that screens for 19 mental health disorders.



First-time offenders: those *arrested* for DUI for the first time. However, most have engaged in impaired driving multiple times before their first arrest.

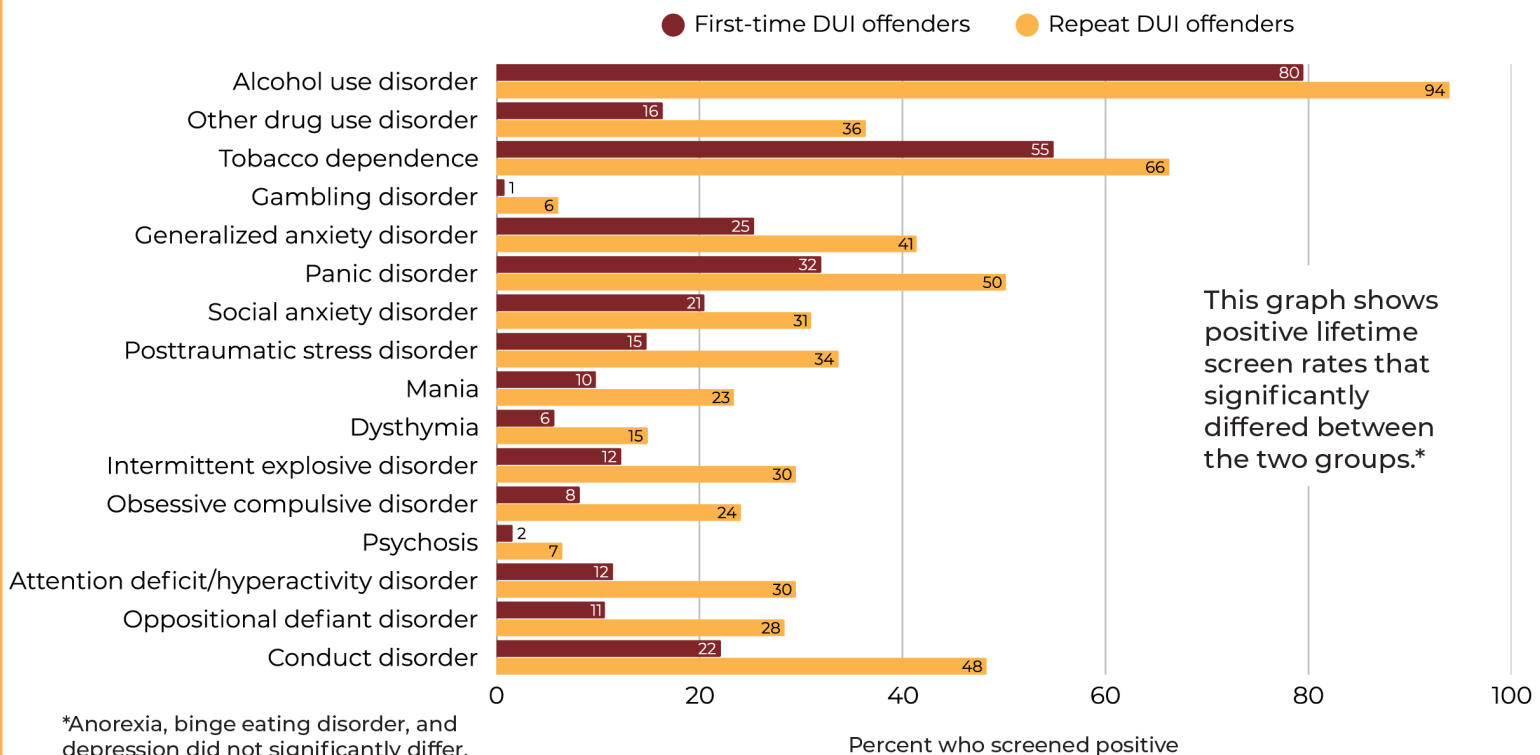


Repeat DUI offenders screened positive for an average of 6.3 disorders in their lifetime compared to 3.7 for first-time offenders.



Repeat DUI offenders had higher lifetime screen rates for 16 out of 19 disorders compared to first-time offenders.

Key Findings



Key Takeaways

Rates of mental health and substance use disorders are higher among repeat DUI offenders compared to first-time offenders.

However, first-time offenders have significant comorbidity as well. DUI treatment programs should establish comprehensive mental health screening for first-time offenders to identify psychiatric comorbidity that might put these individuals at risk of becoming repeat offenders.