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# Direct Line & Brake Reports on Safe Driving 2013-2014 **REPORT TWO**

## Fit to drive



Produced by:



Working in partnership with:



**direct line**



**Julie Townsend**, Brake's deputy chief executive, says:

“Driving while unfit –through drink, drugs, tiredness or poor eyesight – is one of the most disgraceful social ills of the developed world. Although drink driving is often referred to as being ‘socially unacceptable’, it remains one of the biggest killers on our roads. A significant number continue to fool themselves that they can get away with drinking one or two and driving (or even more), or driving early after a heavy night. At the same time, the indications are that driving on drugs is also a widespread and deadly menace. At the time of writing, new drug drive legislation being progressed should help ensure that these highly selfish drivers don't slip through the enforcement net.

“Tired driving and driving with poor eyesight can be just as devastating, and although these causes are often not detected following a crash, they are thought to lead to many violent casualties. It is estimated that driver tiredness causes one in ten road deaths while poor eyesight is estimated to result in 2,900 casualties a year.

“When someone is killed or seriously hurt by an impaired driver, lives are ripped apart by one person's selfish actions, completely needlessly. The recommendations for government outlined in this report set out key, evidenced steps we need taken to stop this carnage.”



## About this report

This is the second in a series of reports on safe driving 2012-14 by Brake and Direct Line. It examines attitudes and behaviour in relation to distraction, stress, speed, drink, drugs, mobile phones and tiredness among at-work drivers.

The report is based on a survey of 1,000 drivers and riders carried out by research company Redshift on behalf of Brake, across the UK. For other reports in the series, visit [www.driverpoll.com](http://www.driverpoll.com).

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## DRINK DRIVING – SPEAKING OUT

**Q1: Would you speak up if a close friend was drinking alcohol and intending to drive, to warn them not to?**

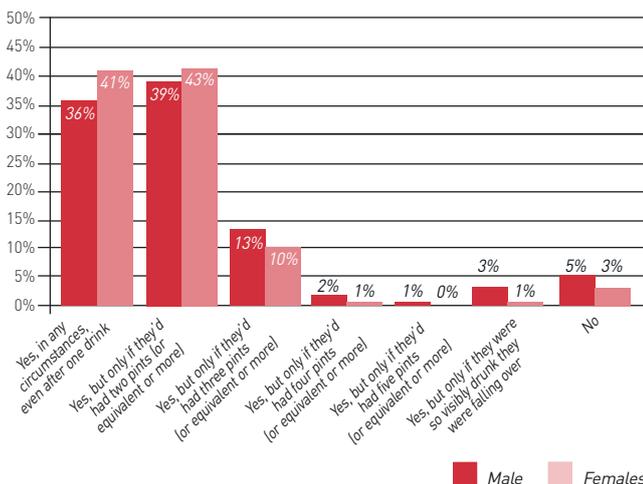
Although almost all respondents said they would speak up, the majority of those would only do so after their friend had finished two pints or more. A worrying 16% would wait until their friend had three or more pints or were fall-down drunk, while one in 25 wouldn't do anything at all.

- 39% said yes, in any circumstances, even after one drink
- 41% said yes, but only if they'd had two pints (or equivalent) or more
- 12% said yes, but only if they'd had three pints (or equivalent) or more
- 2% said yes, but only if they'd had four pints (or equivalent) or more
- 2% said yes, but only if they were so visibly drunk they were falling over
- 4% said no, they wouldn't speak to their friend

**Women are more likely than men to speak up in any circumstances if a friend was planning to drink and drive. 84% of women said they would speak up after one or two drinks, compared with 75% of men.**

- 41% of women said they would speak up in any circumstances even after one drink, compared with 36% of men
- 43% of women said yes, but only if they'd had two pints (or equivalent) or more, compared with 39% of men
- 10% of women said yes, but only if they'd had three pints (or equivalent) or more, compared with 13% of men
- 1% of women said yes, but only if they'd had four pints (or equivalent) or more, compared with 2% of men
- 0% of women said yes, but only if they'd had five pints or more (or equivalent) or more, compared with 1% of men
- 1% of women said yes, but only if they were so visibly drunk they were falling over, compared with 3% of men
- 3% of women said no they wouldn't speak up to their friend, compared with 5% of men.

Figure 1: Would you speak up if a close friend was intending to drink-drive?



**Q2: How far would you personally go to stop a friend from drink driving?**

The majority of people would do something to prevent a friend drinking and driving, but half won't go as far as taking someone's keys (50%), and the majority wouldn't put them in a taxi (64%) or walk their friend home if needed (74%).

- 55% would chat to them in a friendly way and tell them they shouldn't drive
- 40% would, if necessary tell them off, or have a go at them, warning them not to drive
- 50% would, if necessary take their keys off them to ensure they couldn't drive
- 36% would, if necessary, call them a taxi and put them in it, or put them on a bus
- 26% would, if necessary and a reasonable distance, and they felt it was safe, walk them home
- 11% would, if necessary (and all else failed) call the police
- 2% probably wouldn't do any of the above themselves, but might ask someone else to do something
- 2% would not do any of the above.

### LOST LIVES

#### Clifford Jones, aged 17

In the early hours of 28 February 2009, Clifford Jones, from Anglesey, and four friends were in a car travelling along the A5 near Anglesey. The driver, Richard Brown, 24, had been drinking and lost control. The car crossed a grassy verge and hit a wall before thumping into a tree. Clifford, along with two young girls age 18 and 15, were all killed. The front passenger, a 17 year old female, survived, but spent months in hospital. She is paralysed from the neck down. Brown survived, with broken bones in his leg and pelvis. At court he admitted three counts of causing death by dangerous driving and one of drink driving. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

**Q3: How far would you personally go to stop a stranger from drink driving if they were obviously drunk and about to drive?**

Drivers are four times more likely to call the police on a stranger (40%) than on a friend (11%) who was obviously drunk and about to drive. But they were five times less likely to try to take a stranger's keys (10%) than a friend's (50%). Young drivers (18-24) were much less likely than older drivers to intervene with a stranger who was obviously drunk and about to drive.

- 35% would chat to them in a friendly way and tell them they shouldn't drive, compared to 45% of young drivers
- 13% would, if necessary tell them off, or have a go at them, warning them not to drive, compared to 0% of young drivers
- 10% would, if necessary, take their keys off them to ensure they couldn't drive, compared to 0% of young drivers
- 9% would, if necessary, call them a taxi and put them in it, or put them on a bus, compared to 0% of young drivers

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- 5% would, if necessary and a reasonable distance, and they felt it was safe, walk them home, compared to 0% of young drivers
- 40% would, if necessary (and all else failed) call the police, compared to 27% of young drivers
- 23% probably wouldn't do any of the above themselves, but might ask someone else to do something, compared to 36% of young drivers
- 8% would not do any of the above, compared to 0% of young drivers.

**Young drivers (18-24) were much less likely than older drivers to intervene with a stranger who was obviously drunk and about to drive by either helping them home or calling the police. However, no young drivers said they wouldn't act, compared to nearly one in 10 (8%) older drivers.**

- 45% of young drivers would chat to them in a friendly way and tell them they shouldn't drive
- 0% of young drivers would, if necessary tell them off, or have a go at them, warning them not to drive
- 0% of young drivers would, if necessary take their keys off them to ensure they couldn't drive
- 0% of young drivers would, if necessary, call them a taxi and put them in it, or put them on a bus
- 0% of young drivers would, if necessary and a reasonable distance, and they felt it was safe, walk them home
- 27% of young drivers would, if necessary (and all else failed) call the police
- 36% of young drivers probably wouldn't do any of the above themselves, but might ask someone else to do something
- 0% of young drivers would not do any of the above



## THE FACTS: ALCOHOL AND DRIVING

- One in seven road deaths – five every week – in Britain are caused by drivers who are over the legal limit of 80mg alcohol per 100ml blood.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2011, 280 deaths, 1,290 serious injuries and 8,430 slight injuries were caused by drivers over the legal drink-drive limit in Britain.<sup>1</sup>
- Experts have estimated that lowering the drink-drive limit to 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood could save about 65 lives and 230 serious injuries per year in Britain.<sup>2</sup>
- Research shows even very small amounts of alcohol, well under the current UK limit, significantly increase reaction times and therefore your risk of crashing.<sup>3</sup> With a level of 20-50mg of alcohol per 100ml blood, drivers have at least a three times greater risk of dying in a crash than those with no alcohol in their blood. This increases to at least six times with an alcohol level of 50-80mg, and 11 times with 80-100mg.<sup>4</sup>
- Reaction times are slower after just one drink. Alcohol prevents you from judging speed or distance accurately and causes over-confidence. Researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands found that the part of the brain that detects errors and influences thinking processes was significantly affected even by low doses of alcohol.<sup>5</sup>

More information on alcohol and driving is available at [www.brake.org.uk/facts](http://www.brake.org.uk/facts).

## End notes

1. *Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2011, Department for Transport, 2012*
2. *Reducing the BAC limit to 50mg – what can we expect to gain? PACTS, 2005*
3. *Reducing the BAC limit to 50mg – what can we expect to gain?, Professor Richard E Allsop, Centre for Transport Studies University College London (PACTS, 2005)*
4. *Report of the Review of Drink and Drug Driving Law, Sir Peter North, 2010*
5. *Alcohol Consumption Impairs Detection of Performance Errors in Medial Frontal Cortex, University of Leiden, 2002*

