

Young drivers

DRUGS

THE FACTS: DRUGS

Drug driving is a widespread menace on our roads. In the UK, around 18% of people killed in road crashes have traces of illegal drugs in their blood, with cannabis being the most common¹.

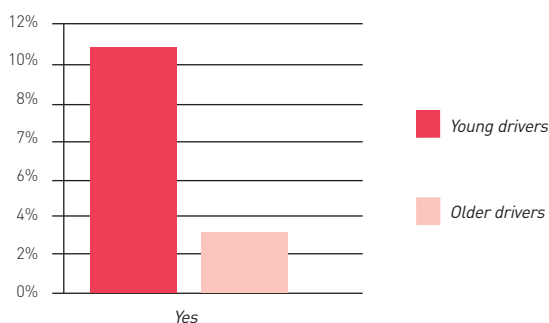
Different drugs affect people in different ways and the effects can last for days, sometimes without someone realising. Researchers at the University Claude Bernard in Lyon, France, found taking cannabis almost doubles the risk of being involved in a fatal car crash while mixing cannabis with alcohol increased crash risk 16-fold². Research into drivers who take cocaine reveal it reduces driving ability, increases recklessness³ and increases the likelihood of being involved in a fatal crash⁴. Drivers who take MDMA are less able to keep to their lane or regulate speed⁵ and its negative effects may last for considerable time after use⁶.

Q4: In the past 12 months, have you driven after taking illegal drugs?

Drivers under 25 are nearly four times as likely to drive on illegal drugs as their older counterparts, with a shocking one in nine saying they have done this in the past year.

- 11% of young drivers said they drive on illegal drugs compared to 3% of older drivers
- 3% of young drivers said they do this monthly or more compared to less than 1% of older drivers
- 89% of young drivers do not drive on illegal drugs, compared with 95% of older drivers

Figure 1: Do you drive on illegal drugs?



IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS...

- Slightly more young drivers admit to driving on illegal drugs now compared to four years ago - 11% compared to 9% in 2007

LOST LIVES

It took seven days for **George Fisher**, 24, to die after he was hit by Mark Featherstone, who was found to have cannabis in his system. On 23 February 2001, George finished work for the day and went home to eat with his family. He was a web designer by profession, and an avid kick boxer. Later that evening he joined his friend for a drink at the local pub. At 11.45pm he left to walk to the bus station, but he didn't make it there. A car came speeding through a red light and hit George as he stepped onto the pavement. George was tossed into the air, his head hit the windscreen, and he was hurled into a concrete wall. Surgeons operated to try to save his life but he went into a coma. His spine was broken in five places and he had a massive blood clot on the left side of his brain. A decision was taken to switch off his life support on 1 March 2001.



End notes

1. The incidence of drugs and alcohol in road accident fatalities, Transport Research Laboratory, 2000
2. Cannabis intoxication and fatal road crashes in France: population based case-control study, French National Institute for Transport and Safety Research, 2005
3. Driving Behavior Under the Influence of Cannabis or Cocaine, Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia, 2008
4. The role of cocaine in fatal crashes: first results of the Québec drug study, Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, 2001
5. MDMA and alcohol effects, combined and alone, on objective and subjective measures of actual driving performance and psychomotor function, Maastricht University, 2006
6. 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, ecstasy) and driving impairment, Washington State Toxicology Laboratory, 2001