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 common.

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-fold. Research into drivers who take cocaine reveal it reduces driving ability, increases recklessness and increases the likelihood of being involved in a fatal crash. Drivers who take MDMA are less able to keep to their lane or regulate speed and its negative effects may last for considerable time after use.

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

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
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