

At-work drivers



DRINK AND DRUGS

THE FACTS: SPEED

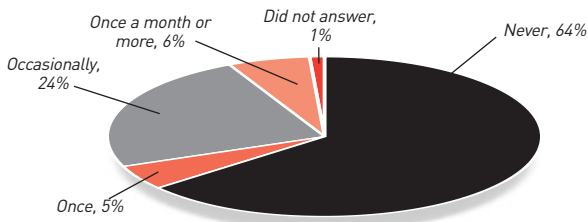
- Even very small amounts of alcohol have a significant effect on your ability to drive safely. After just one small drink, your reaction times are slower and judgment of speed and distance are affected. Alcohol also creates a false sense of confidence ¹.
- 15% of road deaths are caused by people driving over the legal alcohol limit: that's 280 lives lost needlessly, plus 1,290 serious injuries each year ².
- An estimated 65 more deaths are caused each year by drivers who are under the limit but have a significant amount of alcohol in their blood ³.
- Nearly one in 12 drink drivers prosecuted are caught the morning after they were drinking ⁴.
- 57% of fleet operators surveyed by Brake don't have alcohol testing in place for their drivers ⁵.

Q9: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven after drinking alcohol?

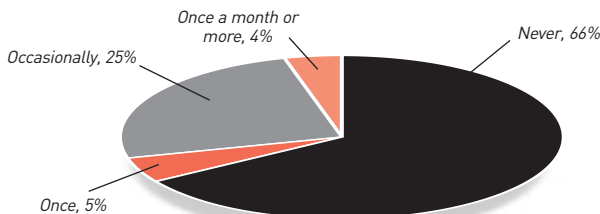
Even a very small amount of alcohol impairs driving, but a similar and worryingly high proportion of at-work and non-work drivers – more than one in three – admit getting behind the wheel after drinking alcohol.

- 64% of at-work drivers have not driven after drinking alcohol in the past 12 months, compared with 66% of non-work drivers
- 5% of at-work drivers have driven after drinking once in the past 12 months, compared with 5% of non-work drivers
- 24% of at-work drivers have driven after drinking occasionally, compared with 25% of non-work drivers
- 6% of at-work drivers have driven after drinking once a month or more, compared with 4% of non-work drivers
- 1% of at-work drivers did not answer.

Figure 8: At-work drivers who have driven after drinking



Non-work drivers who have driven after drinking



LOST LIVES

Claire, 18, Jenny, 15, and Carla, 18

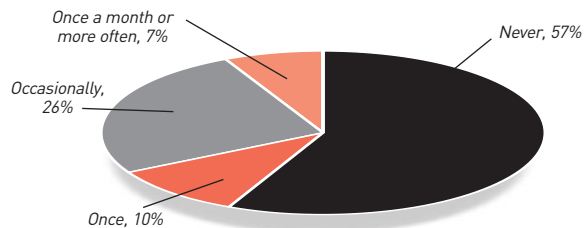
Claire Stoddart, 18, of Lowestoft, was driving back from a concert with her sister Jenny, 15, and three friends, Carla, Sarah and Adam. A car came over the brow of a hill and smashed into them, head-on. Claire, Jenny and Carla were killed. Sarah and Adam suffered broken bones. Two passengers in the other car also died. The 23-year-old driver of the other car had drunk more than eight pints of lager. He was jailed for six and a half years for causing the deaths.

Q10: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven first thing in the morning after drinking a lot of alcohol the night before?

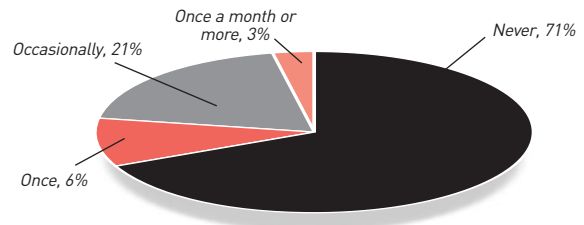
Driving the morning after drinking can be just as dangerous, as it can take a long time for alcohol to get out of your bloodstream. At-work drivers are far more likely to take the potentially deadly risk of driving the morning after a heavy night than other drivers.

- 57% of at-work drivers say they have not driven first thing the morning after drinking heavily, compared with 71% of non-work drivers.
- 10% of at-work drivers have driven the morning after drinking heavily once in the past year, compared with 6% of non-work drivers.
- 26% of at-work drivers have driven the morning after drinking heavily occasionally, compared with 21% of non-work drivers.
- 7% of at-work drivers have driven the morning after drinking heavily once a month or more, compared with 3% of non-work drivers.

Figure 9: At-work drivers who have driven early the morning after drinking heavily



Non-work drivers who have driven early the morning after drinking heavily



At-work drivers



ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: DRINKING AND DRIVING

- Never risk drinking and driving. If you need to drive, don't drink, not even one. Equally, if you're planning to drink, or think you might be tempted to, plan ahead to make sure you can get home safely using alternative means or a designated driver who you trust to stay off the booze.
- Don't try to calculate how much you can 'get away with' drinking before you are impaired or over the legal limit. It's not safe to drive after even one drink ⁶, even if you feel fine: you can't judge your own impairment.
- Don't drive the morning after having any more than one or two small drinks the night before. There's no way of telling exactly how long it will take to sober up, but it's probably longer than you think. If you drink three pints of strong lager or three large glasses of wine finishing at midnight, it's unlikely you will be safe to drive again until 10am the next day, but it could take longer ⁷.
- If you have to drive for work the next morning, be careful to limit what you drink the night before. Many firms now have zero-tolerance alcohol policies, so you could face losing your job if you're found with even small amounts of alcohol in your blood, as well as putting yourself and others at risk.

Q11: Within the past 12 months, have you driven after taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication that recommends you don't drive?

Many medicines can make people drowsy or otherwise impair driving, but a high proportion of both at-work drivers and non-work drivers don't check the labels, or ignore warnings. Slightly fewer at-work drivers than non-work drivers admit driving after taking medication that recommends against it in the past 12 months.

- 10% of at-work drivers have driven after taking medication that recommends against driving, compared with 13% of non-work drivers
- 86% of at-work drivers have not driven after taking medication that recommends against driving, compared with 87% of non-work drivers
- 2% of at-work drivers don't check if the medicines they are taking might impair driving, compared with 5% of non-work drivers
- 2% of at-work drivers did not answer.

Q12: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven after taking illegal drugs?

Appallingly, people who drive for work are more than twice as likely to admit to driving after taking illegal drugs compared to other drivers.

- 5% of at-work drivers admitted driving after taking illegal drugs in the past year, compared with 2% of non-work drivers
- 93% of at-work drivers have not driven after taking illegal drugs in the past year, compared with 96% of non-work drivers
- 2% of at-work and non-work drivers did not answer.

ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: DRUGS AND MEDICINES

- Always read the small print of any medication you are taking, to check whether it may affect your driving.
- If you are unsure, or are taking more than one type of medication, check with your doctor or a pharmacist, making clear to them that you drive.
- If you have a medical condition that requires you to take medication that may impair your driving, tell your employer, as they have a responsibility to keep you and others safe.
- If you have any doubts about whether you are safe to drive because of medication, be cautious and don't drive until you've spoken to a medical professional.
- Never risk taking illegal drugs and driving. The effects of illegal drugs are highly unpredictable, and have been shown to have a significant effect on driving and crash risk ⁸. The effects of drugs can also last a long time, and it's impossible to judge whether you're impaired. Because of this if you take illegal drugs, the only way to be completely safe is to not drive, or vice-versa.
- More organisations are introducing random drug testing for their drivers, so even if you leave long gaps between taking illegal drugs and driving, you may be risking your job as well as your safety.

THE FACTS: DRUGS AND DRIVING

- Many prescription drugs can cause drowsiness, which can slow reaction times or even make you fall asleep at the wheel ⁹.
- Cannabis slows reaction times, affects coordination and concentration and makes you drowsy ¹⁰.
- 'Stimulant' drugs such as ecstasy, speed and cocaine impair driving by distorting perceptions and making you jumpy. They can also make you overconfident, or paranoid and confused ¹¹.
- Heroin and other opiates make the user feel relaxed and sleepy. This affects driving by slowing reaction times and impairing coordination ¹².
- Illegal drugs can remain in your system much longer than alcohol, and it is impossible to know exactly how long you are going to be affected ¹³. It is also impossible to judge your own level of impairment ¹⁴.

End notes

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