

At-work drivers



DRIVER TIREDNESS

THE FACTS: DRIVER TIREDNESS

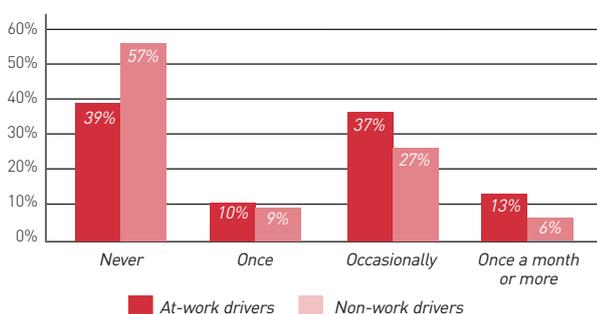
- Research suggests one in five deaths on trunk roads are caused by drivers falling asleep at the wheel, but the exact number of casualties is unknown as it's often difficult to prove tiredness or falling asleep was the cause.
- Crashes caused by tired drivers typically involve vehicles running off the road or into the back of another vehicle. They are often serious, high speed crashes because the driver does not brake.
- Too little sleep radically affects your ability to drive safely: on just five hours' sleep you only have a one in ten chance of staying awake on a lengthy journey?
- Sleep does not occur without warning and drivers know when they are getting sleepy. Warning signs include: difficulty concentrating; yawning; heavy eyelids; eyes starting to 'roll'; neck muscles relaxing, making your head droop.
- Drivers who try to fight off sleep often experience 'microsleeps', nodding off for two to 30 seconds, often with out realising or remembering it. Although only brief, microsleeps can be fatal: a driver experiencing a six-second microsleep at 70mph on a motorway would travel 200m in that time.
- At-work drivers are particularly at risk from driver fatigue, because they typically spend much longer hours at the wheel.

Q13: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven after less than five hours' sleep the night before?

Doctors recommend we get eight hours' sleep a night to feel properly refreshed and allow our brains and bodies to recover. However, a significant proportion of people who drive for work habitually get much less, with 13% driving on less than five hours' sleep once a month or more.

- 39% of at-work drivers and 56% of non-work drivers have not driven after less than five hours' sleep
- 10% of at-work drivers have driven after less than five hours' sleep once in the past 12 months, compared with 9% of non-work drivers
- 37% of at-work drivers have driven after less than five hours' sleep occasionally in the past 12 months, compared with 27% of non-work drivers
- 13% of at-work drivers have driven after less than five hours' sleep monthly or more, compared with 6% of non-work drivers.

Figure 10: driving after less than five hours' sleep



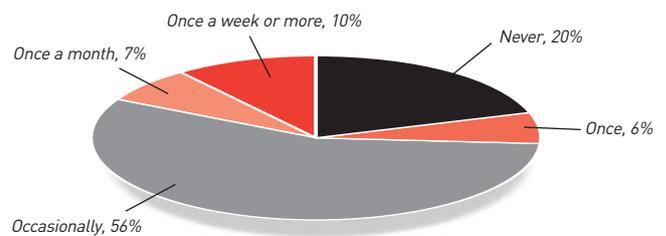
Q14: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven when feeling tired?

Driving while tired puts you at great risk of causing a deadly crash, and this is far more prevalent among people driving for work.

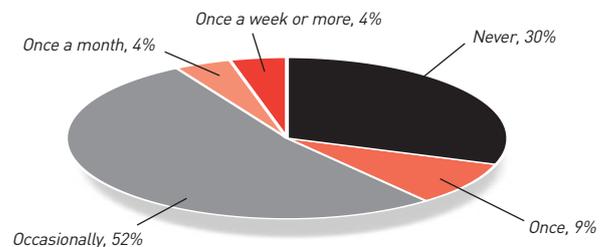
At-work drivers are more than twice as likely to drive tired once a month or more than non-work drivers.

- 20% of at-work drivers have not driven while tired, compared with 30% of non-work drivers
- 6% of at-work drivers have driven while tired once, compared with 9% of non-work drivers
- 56% of at-work drivers have driven while tired occasionally, compared with 52% of non-work drivers
- 7% of at-work drivers have driven while tired about once a month, compared with 4% of non-work drivers
- 10% of at-work drivers have driven while tired once a week or more, compared with 4% of non-work drivers.

Figure 11: At-work drivers driving tired



Non-work drivers driving tired



LOST LIVES

Peter Jones

Peter Jones was killed by a tanker driver who fell asleep on the M62. Peter's taxi had broken down and he was sitting in the passenger-side seat when the tanker ploughed into him, pushing the taxi across three lanes and into the central reservation. Peter was killed instantly. His death devastated his fiancée Tracey and all his friends and family. The driver was later diagnosed with sleep apnoea, a condition that often causes acute daytime sleepiness.

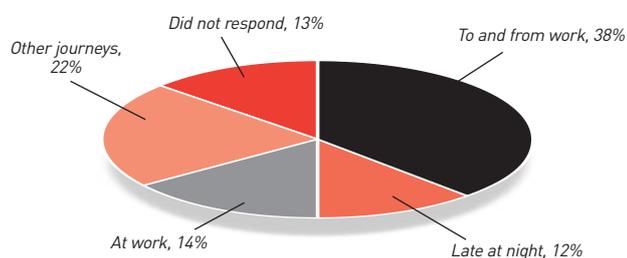
At-work drivers

Q15: If you have driven when tired in the past 12 months, when did this happen most often?

People who drive for work are more than twice as likely to be tired driving to or from work than while they are driving at work.

- 38% of at-work drivers were most often tired while driving to or from work
- 14% of at-work drivers were most often tired while driving for work purposes
- 12% were most often tired while driving late at night after a social event
- 22% were most often tired while driving on another type of journey.

Figure 12: journeys on which people who drive for work are most likely to be tired



Q16: In the past 12 months, how often have you fallen asleep at the wheel?

A horrifying one in 15 (7%) at-work drivers have fallen asleep while driving in the past 12 months, and most of these have done so more than once, repeatedly risking tragedy.

- 3% of at-work drivers admit falling asleep at the wheel once in the past 12 months, compared with 4% of non-work drivers
- 4% of at-work drivers admit falling asleep at the wheel more than once, compared with 1% of non-working drivers.

ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS: DRIVER TIREDNESS

- Employers with staff who drive for work should ensure drivers understand the risks of tired driving and that safety is more important than sticking to a schedule. Tell drivers to rearrange appointments if they are delayed and become tired, rather than pressing on. Tell drivers to stop and stay overnight at the company's expense if their journey time has been significantly extended and they are too tired to drive on.
- Ensure drivers know the importance of regular rest breaks, even if they are behind schedule, and ensure journeys are planned to allow time for breaks and potential hold-ups.
- Drivers should know the importance of taking steps to prevent tiredness, including getting a good night's sleep before driving. They should also be educated on the importance of paying attention to warning signs and taking immediate action if they feel tired at the wheel.
- Bus, coach, and truck drivers are subject to European and British legislation relating to drivers' hours. So if your company operates these vehicles you must ensure you are fully compliant. Failure to comply with drivers' hours rules can present huge risks to your drivers and other road users, and can also result your operator's licence being withdrawn.

ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: DRIVER TIREDNESS

- Always have a good night's sleep before any journey. If you drive when tired, it is impossible to stop yourself eventually nodding off at the wheel³.
- The government recommends drivers stop at least every two hours for a break, to ward off tiredness and aid concentration.
- Professional truck and coach drivers have their working hours controlled by law, and are required to take breaks totalling at least 45 minutes in eight-and-a-half hours driving, followed by a break of at least 30 minutes: an average of almost 10 minutes' rest for every hour driving.
- Research shows drivers who fall asleep know they are tired and go through a stage of 'fighting off' sleep before falling asleep⁴. If you start to feel tired when driving, it is crucial to stop somewhere safe as soon as possible, and take a break of at least 15 minutes. Winding down the window or turning up the radio does not work. Do not fool yourself you can stave off sleep: it can ensue extremely quickly following the initial signs of yawning and heavy eyelids.
- If you stop because you feel tired, drink coffee or ideally an energy drink with caffeine in it. Then try to snooze for ten minutes or so in your vehicle. Set an alarm if necessary. By the time you wake up, the caffeine will have kicked in⁵. If you feel alert again, drive on. If not, stay put. Bear in mind the effects of caffeine are temporary, and the only solution if you have a long journey ahead is a good night's sleep.
- If you wake up in the morning feeling tired, struggle to stay awake, snore or wake up struggling to breathe, you may suffer from sleep apnoea. It's a relatively common condition that can stop you breathing at night, causing you to wake up repeatedly and feel very tired during the day, meaning sufferers are at a significantly increased risk of crashing⁶. Many sufferers don't remember waking up and so don't realise they have the condition. However, it is fully treatable, so if you experience sleepiness in the day, stop driving immediately and ask your doctor to check you for the condition.

End notes

1. Department for Transport, www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk
2. Horne J.A. & Reyner L.A. "Sleep Related Vehicle Accidents". *British Medical Journal*, 1995
3. Horne J.A. & Reyner L.A. "Sleep Related Vehicle Accidents". *British Medical Journal*, 1995
4. *ibid*
5. *ibid*
6. Sleep Apnoea Trust, Website: www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org