



Shakespeare Business Centre  
245a Coldharbour Lane  
London SW9 8RR

info@roadpeace.org  
[www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)  
Tel: 020 7733 1603

## The crime of drink driving (2012)

### 2012 reported drink drive casualty toll (Provisional)

- **280 deaths** (provisional estimate), up 17% from 2011 final but same as 2011 provisional figure.
- **1,200 serious injuries**, down 5% from 2011.
- **8,500 slightly injured**, up 1% from 2011.

### Who is killed/seriously injured

- One in six road deaths (15%) and one in 20 serious injuries (5%) are drink drive related (2011).
- Around one quarter of drivers/riders aged 20-35 killed are over the limit.
- Two third of those who were over the legal limit were at least twice over it.
- Over half of fatal drink drive crashes (55%) involve only one vehicle, and no pedestrian.
- Over two thirds of those killed in drink drive collisions are the drink drivers/riders themselves (71%). Of the remaining 29%, over half were passengers of drink drivers.
- Only 3% of those killed by drink drivers are pedestrians.

### Recent trend

- Drink drive deaths have decreased by 40% since 2005-2009, whilst serious injuries drink drive related have fallen by around 30% over same period.
- Drink drive related deaths and serious injuries have decreased by almost six fold since 1979.

### When does it happen?

- Drink driving is a year round problem. It is not just at holidays.
- Some 60% of drink drive collisions occur on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.
- 42% of drink drive collisions occurred between 2100 and 0300 (2011).

### Breath tests

- Only 686 thousand breath tests were conducted in England and Wales in 2011, down 7% from 2010.
- Just over half of drivers in injury collisions (54%) were breathalysed, with a 1.7% failure/refusal rate.

## Drink drive convictions and sentences

- In 2012, 27 Drivers were convicted of Causing Death by Careless Driving Whilst Under the Influence of Drink or Drugs. Another 10 were prosecuted but found not guilty. (Note: impaired drivers may be prosecuted for Causing Death by Dangerous Driving).
- 89% drivers convicted of Causing Death by Careless Driving Whilst Under the influence received a custodial sentence. 30% were given sentences over 5 years.
- In 2012, there were 47,503 drivers convicted of being over the limit, of whom only 3% were imprisoned. Another 4082 were convicted for refusing to be tested, with 10% given custodial sentences.

## Public support and punishment

There is strong support for lower limits and tougher sanctions. Recent IAM research showed two thirds of those surveyed supported a reduction of a lower limit while more than one in five supported a zero tolerance approach.

Over half (57% thought current punishment was too weak and more than one in three (38%) thought that it should be much tougher. In comparison, Italy has introduced a new “Road murder” crime where a driver convicted of causing a death by drink driving will be banned for at least five years, and 15 years if the BAC is 1.5g/l or under the influence of drugs (ETSC, 2012).

### Proposed Drink Driving bill (Repeat Offenders)

Rehman Chisti, MP (Gillingham and Rainham), has proposed a Bill that would allow custodial sentences for third or subsequent offences to be increased from the current six month limit, with the Crown Court allowed to imprison for up to two years.

## RoadPeace key calls

Drink driving could and should be designed out with the use of alcolocks and vehicle technology, but the British government has so far lagged behind other countries in introducing this.

1. **More tests**—Britain has a disgracefully low breathalyzer rate. Many more roadside tests should be conducted, including random tests. Drivers should worry that they could be stopped and tested any time and anywhere. All drivers in injury crashes should be tested.
2. **Lower limits**—The UK should reduce its limit from 0.8 g/l to a maximum limit of 0.5.g/l, with lower limits for commercial and young drivers. Technical tolerance limits should be reduced immediately as they are no longer justified.
3. **Tougher penalties**—Much more could be done with alternative punishments to deter drivers before they kill someone. Fines should be raised, driving bans and custodial sentences increased and vehicle confiscation extended. Lifetime driving bans should be introduced for those who cause a death or grievous injury whilst over the limit.

## References

DfT (2013), Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain (2013): 2012 provisional estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels

ETSC (2012), A Challenging Start Towards the EU 2020 Road Safety Target, 6<sup>th</sup> Road Safety PIN Report

ETSC (2013), Drinking and Driving Monitor

RoadPeace (2013), Causing Death by Driving (2012)