

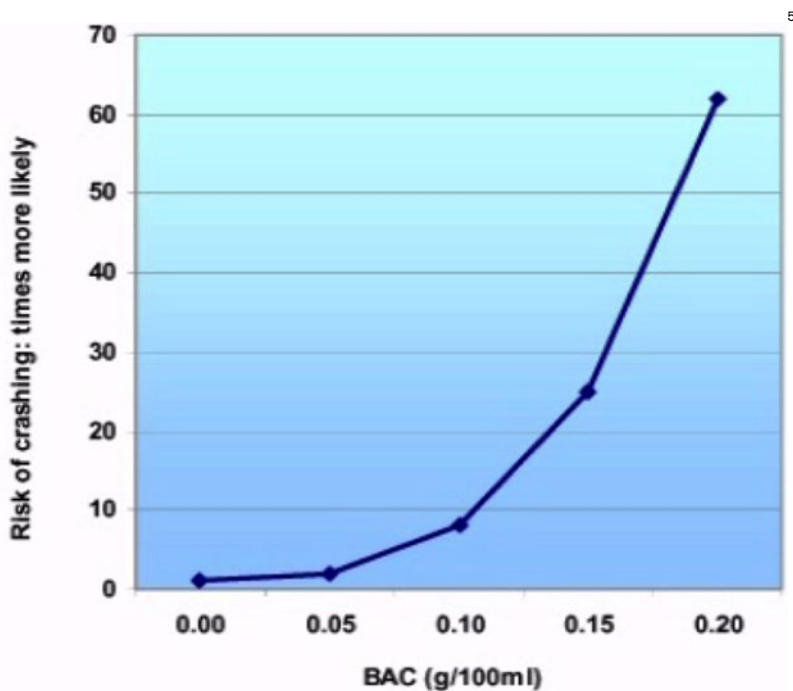


Drinking and Driving

Key issues

- Drinking and driving increases the risk of being involved in a crash, even at moderate levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC). This crash risk increases dramatically at higher levels of BAC.¹
- The risk of impairment starts at very low levels of alcohol consumption and rises exponentially with alcohol intake. Drivers with a BAC of between 0.02 g/dl and 0.05 g/dl have at least a three times greater risk of dying in a vehicle crash. This risk increases to at least six times with a BAC between 0.05 g/dl and 0.08 g/dl, and rises exponentially above 0.08 g/dl.²
- The level of BAC is also related to the severity of injury in a crash. Alcohol in the body has been linked with higher risk of death and serious injury; it also limits the extent and level of recovery.³
- Inexperienced young drivers with a BAC level of 0.05g/dl have more than twice the risk of a crash compared with more experienced drivers with a comparable BAC.⁴

Drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of between 0.02 g/dl and 0.05 g/dl have at least a three times greater risk of dying in a vehicle crash.





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Key Messages

- Laws that set limits on BAC of 0.05g/dl or lower together with effective enforcement can lead to significant reductions in alcohol related crashes.
- Drink-driving legislation, accompanied by visible and rapid enforcement following enactment, is an effective means of reducing alcohol-related crashes.⁷
- Targeted public education and social marketing campaigns, when conducted together with effective police enforcement, can help to reduce drinking and driving.
- One of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets (3.6) is to halve the global number of deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020. Laws that set limits on BAC of 0.05g/dl or lower and that are effectively enforced are essential to achieve this target.

Components of Strong Drinking and Driving Policies

- To be most effective, drinking and driving laws need to be based on BAC, or breath alcohol concentration, not on other measures that try to assess the level of intoxication.
- The BAC limit for drivers should be set at a maximum of 0.05g/dl. Consideration should be given to lower limits or zero BAC for new drivers and commercial drivers.
- Penalties for drivers exceeding BAC limits need to be at levels that are serious enough to deter people from breaking the law. These penalties should be more severe as the level of BAC increases and be applied consistently across all offenders.
- There should also be measures put in place for dealing with repeat offenders, including setting up offender rehabilitation programmes which have shown positive results in some countries.
- Legislation should allow for police to conduct random alcohol screening of drivers at any time. Police should conduct widespread random breath testing as frequently as possible.
- Approved alcohol screening devices need to be easy for police to use and be regularly serviced and calibrated to ensure accuracy.
- Laws that establish lower BAC limits (≤ 0.02 g/dl) for young and novice drivers can lead to reductions in the number of crashes involving young people of up to 24% while graduated licensing schemes (which may include lower BAC limits or zero tolerance limits for this group) are also effective at reducing alcohol-related injuries and deaths.⁸

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Drinking and Driving

Enforcing drink-driving laws can reduce road deaths by:



Enforcement needs to be particularly carried out at locations where crashes have occurred involving drink driving, or where people are more likely to have been drinking alcohol, such as around bars and restaurants.

Requirements of Effective Enforcement

- Successful enforcement of drink driving laws needs to be highly visible and involve testing large numbers of drivers. It is important that as many drivers as possible are stopped and all are tested for alcohol.⁹
- Drink driving checkpoints are an effective method of enforcement and involve many police and police vehicles. The checkpoints are highly visible through the use of police vehicles, signs and warning lights so that it is obvious that drink driving is being enforced. This sends a clear message to people that pass by that police are actively enforcing drink driving.
- Enforcement activities need to be consistent and repeated often, with good publicity that police are targeting drink driving and that violators can be stopped 'anywhere and anytime' for a blood alcohol test.
- Enforcement needs to be particularly carried out at locations where crashes have occurred involving drink driving, or where people are more likely to have been drinking alcohol, such as around bars and restaurants. There are also particular times and days of the week when people are more likely to have been drinking alcohol, which is when more enforcement activities should be carried out.
- It is important that data on drink driving is collected and analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and to guide planning of future efforts.



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References

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Global Road Safety Partnership secretariat

c/o International Federation of Red
Cross and Red Crescent Societies
P.O. Box 372
17, chemin des Crêts
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0) 22 730 42 49
Fax: +41 (0) 22 733 03 95

E-mail: grsp@ifrc.org
Website: www.grsproadsafety.org