# Impaired & Distracted Driving Data Comparison

Steve Brown, Robyn D. Robertson & Ward G.M. Vanlaar, June 2021

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Traffic Injury Research Foundation 171 Nepean Street, Suite 200 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2P 0B4

#### www.tirf.ca

Toll Free: 1-877-238-5235 Fax: 613-238-5292

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Distracted driving has been reported to rival drinking and driving as the leading contributing factor in fatal crashes, at least in some jurisdictions. To illustrate, it is estimated 20% to 30% of fatal collisions in North America can be attributed to distracted driving (Bowman & Robertson 2016), making it comparable to drinking and driving. Self-reported data from 2020 showed 13.6% of Canadians often drove while talking on a handheld mobile device, 31.5% often talked hands-free, and 11.2% often texted while driving (Robertson et al., in press). This compared to 11.9% of drivers admitting to driving after drinking any amount of alcohol the same year, and 7.5% who drove while over the legal limit (Vanlaar et al. 2020).

Historically, data related to fatal and serious injury collisions, convictions, and self-reported behaviour have been used to measure progress in reducing drinking and driving. Comparing and contrasting data regarding the magnitude and characteristics of this issue to distracted driving can provide context to understand the risk posed. This is the purpose of this report.

#### Data Sources

The following data sources for drinking and driving as well as distracted driving are used in this report for comparison purposes.

- > Fatality data from TIRF's National Fatality Database, containing information about victims, vehicles, and temporal characteristics.
- > Self-reported survey data about concerns, attitudes and practices from TIRF's Road Safety Monitor (RSM).

A brief overview of each data source and indicators is below.

**Fatality data.** Using TIRF's National Fatality Database (tirf.ca/projects/the-national-fatality-database), data from 2017<sup>1</sup> were examined to compare alcohol-related with distraction-related fatalities. Trend data from 2008- 2017 were also analyzed. Multiple indicators in fatality data have been used to study and monitor the magnitude of drinking driving and recent trends.

These indicators include:

- > Average number and proportion of road fatalities involving a drinking driver;
- > Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of fatally injured drivers;
- > BAC of fatally injured pedestrians; and,
- > Alcohol involvement in off-road vehicle crashes.

Historically, data from the TIRF National Fatality Database have included police-reported crash data combined with alcohol and drug test data collected from coroners and medical examiners in every jurisdiction.

Since 2000, the National Fatality Database has included data about other key contributing factors such as distraction, fatigue, and speeding. The distraction variable indicates whether:

- > there was no distraction evident among any of the parties involved in the fatal crash;
- > the fatally injured driver was distracted;
- > the fatally injured pedestrian was distracted;
- > a driver other than the fatally injured victim was distracted; or,
- > one of the drivers was distracted, but it is not specified which one.

A second variable indicates the type of distraction that played a role in the crash. These distraction types include:

- > distracted, inattentive (no other details given);
- > phoning, texting;
- > communications device;
- > entertainment device;
- > vehicle displays;
- > in-vehicle distraction (e.g., passengers, pets);
- > distraction outside vehicle (e.g., person hanging onto vehicle, unsecured cargo); and,
- > eating, smoking, grooming.

For this particular indicator, distraction-related fatalities would include fatally injured distracted drivers, fatally injured distracted pedestrians, fatalities where a surviving driver was distracted, or those fatalities where one of the drivers was distracted but it is not specified. Similar to analysis of the role of alcohol, it would be possible to compare distraction in fatal crashes based upon victim age group, victim sex, victim type (driver, passenger, pedestrian), and type of vehicle occupied by the victim.

Below are some of the indicators examined in this analysis as well as a brief description of how alcohol involvement and distraction in fatal crashes were compared. Percentages for alcohol-related crashes are shown followed by percentages for distraction-related crashes.

Average number and proportion of road fatalities involving specified drivers. Using TIRF's National Fatality Database, comparisons were made between the incidence of alcohol-related and distraction-related fatalities for 2017. The prevalence of alcohol and distraction was examined for persons dying within 30 days of crashes which occurred on public roadways where at least one principle highway vehicle was involved.

Alcohol-related and distraction-related deaths were compared in terms of victim age, victim type, type of day (weekdays versus weekends), season of crash, hour of crash, and number of occupants in the deceased victim's vehicle.





In addition, a comparison was made for trends involving alcohol-related and distraction-related fatal crashes in Canada from 2008-2017. A distraction-related fatality was defined as one in which at least one of the drivers was distracted. There is some variation across provinces reporting distraction among fatally injured pedestrians. Defining a distraction-related fatality as one where one of the drivers is distracted offers a more even comparison across provinces.

Fatally injured drivers. Among fatally injured drivers, an average of 85.9% had their blood samples tested between 2000 to 2017. Measuring the role of distraction, however, is more subjective, based upon policereported collision data as well as descriptive data in coroners'/medical examiners' files. As a consequence, a lower percentage of fatally injured drivers can be judged to be either distracted or not distracted (80.1%).

Differences in reporting practices limit jurisdictional comparisons of the role of distraction among fatally injured drivers. However, similar to the analysis of the role of alcohol, comparisons of the role of distraction can be made based upon driver age group, driver sex, vehicle type, and collision type (number of vehicles).

- Fatally injured pedestrians. Among fatally injured pedestrians, 61.7% were tested for the presence of alcohol from 2000 to 2017. During this period, it was possible to determine whether or not distraction played a role in 68.9% of pedestrian fatalities. Comparisons can be made based upon pedestrian age group and pedestrian sex.
- Off-road vehicles. The testing rate for alcohol use among fatally injured off-road vehicle (snowmobile, ATV, dirt bike) operators is not much lower than the testing rate for fatally injured drivers of highway vehicles. However, there is a more pronounced gap for distraction data among this group of collision victims as a judgment can only be made in 57.5% of fatalities.

**Conviction data.** Alcohol-impaired driving charges based on conviction data have been used as another measure of the prevalence and trends in drinking and driving. Statistics Canada's Juristat publications chronicle the number and the rate of impaired driving charges (per 100,000 population). Indicators include driver sex and type of charge such as impaired driving causing death or impaired driving causing bodily harm. Juristat publications report on Criminal Code impaired driving offences but not alcohol-related offences (i.e., low-BAC offences) under provincial highway acts (Perreault 2017). Unfortunately, comparable conviction data for distracted driving charges are not available.

**Self-reported behavioural data from surveys.** TIRF's RSM is an annual survey conducted since 1998 by TIRF in partnership with multiple sponsors, most recently Beer Canada and Desjardins. It takes the pulse of the nation on key road safety issues by means of an online survey of a random, representative sample of at least 1,200 Canadian drivers. Each year, respondents are asked about their level of concern, attitudes, and practices related to various road safety issues. Results from the RSM can be considered accurate within plus or minus 2.5%, 19 times out of 20 (Lyon et al., 2020).

For the purposes of this study, respondents' attitudes and practices with regard to drinking and driving as well as distracted driving were reviewed. However, there are some notable data gaps because not all distraction questions were asked each year. Respondents were asked how concerned they were about drivers using cell phones in the

following years: 2004-2008, 2010-2011, 2017-2020. In the same years, they were asked how concerned they were about distracted drivers. In 2010-2011 and 2017-2020, respondents were asked how concerned they were about texting drivers. They were also asked about the frequency with which they engage in distracted behaviours on the road in several years. Comparisons can be made between selected years but trend data on distracted driving are not as robust as drinking and driving trend data (Lyon et al., 2021; Lyon et al., 2020).

#### Results

**Fatality data.** Results of comparisons between victims in alcohol-related and distraction-related crashes are described below. In addition, the prevalence of alcohol use and distraction for fatally injured drivers is presented.

**Fatally injured victims.** In 2017, there were 1,873 road fatalities in Canada. There were 480 alcohol-related fatalities which accounted for 25.6% of the total whereas distraction-related fatalities accounted for 474 fatalities, or 25.3%.

Table 1 presents the percentage of persons in each age group killed in motor vehicle crashes where alcohol and distraction were present. While 17.5% of persons under age 16 years died in an alcohol-related crash, 27.0% died in a distraction-related crash. Similarly, 11.9% of persons over 55 years of age died in an alcohol-related crash but 28.2% died in a distraction-related crash. Persons aged 20 to 25 years were the most likely to die in an alcohol-related crash (41.1%) while those over age 55 were the most likely to die in a distraction-related crash (28.2%).

Table 2 shows the percentage of persons killed in alcohol and distraction-related crashes for each victim type (drivers, passengers, and pedestrians). Among the different victim types, 30.1% of drivers and 27.6% of passengers died in crashes where at least one driver was drinking compared to only 3.3% of pedestrians. In contrast, 26.7% of pedestrians died in crashes where distraction played a role compared to 24.9% of drivers, meaning more fatally injured pedestrians were struck by distracted drivers than drinking drivers.

The percentage of persons dying in crashes involving alcohol and distraction during weekdays and weekends is shown in Table 3. Weekday crashes occurred between 6:00 p.m. on Sunday to 5:59 p.m. on Friday whereas weekend crashes occurred between 6:00 p.m. on Friday to 5:59 p.m. on Sunday. Alcohol-related deaths in crashes were more likely to occur on the weekend than during the week (36.5% vs. 21.0%). Distraction-related deaths were slightly more likely to happen during the weekend than during the week (26.3% vs. 25.6%).

	Number of	Alcohol-Rel	ated Deaths	<b>Distraction-Related Deaths</b>	
Age Group	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
<16	63	11	17.5	17	27.0
16-19	118	27	22.9	30	25.4
20-25	219	90	41.1	56	25.6
26-35	302	119	39.4	66	21.9
36-45	254	79	31.1	56	22.0
46-55	243	71	29.2	58	23.9
>55	674	80	11.9	190	28.2
* estimates based on	the percentage of dea	ths for which information	on was available to det	ermine alcohol use or c	distraction.

## Table 1: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by agegroup, 2017

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction. Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

### Table 2: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by victimtype, 2017

	Number of	Alcohol-Rel	ated Deaths	<b>Distraction-Related Deaths</b>			
vicum rype	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total		
Drivers	1254	377	30.1	312	24.9		
Passengers	319	88	27.6	82	25.7		
Pedestrians	300	10	3.3	80	26.7		

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction. Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

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### Table 3: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada during<br/>weekdays and weekends, 2017

Number of	Alcohol-Rel	ated Deaths	<b>Distraction-Related Deaths</b>		
Day Type Deaths		% of total	Number	% of total	
1320	277	21.0	338	25.6	
548	200	36.5	144	26.3	
	Number of Deaths 1320 548	Number of Deaths Alcohol-Rel   1320 277   548 200	Number of Deaths Alcohol-Related Deaths   1320 277 21.0   548 200 36.5	Number of Deaths Alcohol-Releted Deaths Distraction-R   1320 277 % of total Number   548 200 36.5 144	

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction. Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

### Table 4: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by seasonof crash, 2017

Season of	Number of	Alcohol-Rel	ated Deaths	<b>Distraction-Related Deaths</b>		
Crash	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Winter	391	77	19.7	78	19.9	
Spring	387	94	24.3	97	25.1	
Summer	554	161	29.1	176	31.8	
Fall	541	148	27.4	130	24.0	

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction. Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

### Table 5: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by timeof crash, 2017

Time of	Number of	Alcohol-Rel	Alcohol-Related Deaths		elated Deaths	
Crash	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
0:00-2:59	171	108	63.2	34	19.9	
3:00-5:59	116	53	45.7	16	13.8	
6:00-8:59	214	21	9.8	54	25.2	
9:00-11:59	211	18	8.5	72	34.1	
12:00-14:59	290	25	8.6	90	31.0	
15:00-17:59	327	54	16.5	90	27.5	
18:00-20:59	299	92	30.8	69	23.1	
21:00-23:59	224	103	46.0	54	24.1	

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction. Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

The percentage of persons dying in fatal crashes involving alcohol and distraction by the season of the crash is shown in Table 4. Seasons are grouped as Spring (March-May), Summer (June-August), Fall (September-November), and Winter (December-February). Persons dying in the winter were equally likely to die in an alcohol-related crash or a distraction-related crash (19.6%). More than 24% died in alcohol-related deaths in each of the other seasons while there was more seasonal variation in terms of distraction-related crashes (low of 19.6% in winter vs. high of 31.3% in summer).

In Table 5, the percentage of persons dying in alcohol and distraction-related crashes is shown by the time of crash. Eight three-hour increments are used to categorize time periods. While 63.2% of persons dying between midnight and 3 a.m. died in an alcohol-related crash, only 19.3% died in a distraction-related crash. During the time periods from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., more than twice as many persons died in distraction-related crashes than in alcohol-related crashes. Therefore, the times of day when alcohol-related fatal crashes were more likely to occur do not coincide with times of day when distraction-related fatal crashes more commonly occurred.

### Table 6: Drivers and passengers killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in<br/>Canada by number of occupants, 2017

Number of	Number of	Alcohol-Rel	Alcohol-Related Deaths		elated Deaths	
Occupants	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
One	1007	298	29.6	247	24.5	
Two or more	553	165	29.8	145	26.2	
* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distraction						

\* estimates based on the percentage of deaths for which information was available to determine alcohol use or distra-Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

### Table 7: Drivers killed in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by agegroup and sex, 2017

	Number of	Had Beer	n Drinking	Number of	Distr	acted
Age Group	Deaths	Number	% of total	Deaths	Number	% of total
16-19	66	17	25.8	58	13	22.4
20-25	125	56	44.8	112	26	23.2
26-35	196	82	41.8	169	27	16.0
36-45	159	50	31.4	137	18	13.1
46-55	148	48	32.4	131	19	14.5
>55	317	46	14.5	325	55	16.9
Cox	Number of	Had Beer	Had Been Drinking		Distr	acted
Sex	Deaths	Number	% of total	Deaths	Number	% of total
Male	792	256	32.3	738	116	15.7
Female	220	43	19.5	195	42	21.5
Source: TIRF National Fatality Database						

![](_page_7_Picture_5.jpeg)

Table 6 compares the percentage of fatally injured occupants (drivers and passengers) dying in alcohol and distraction-related crashes among lone occupants and those who were in a vehicle with two or more occupants. In 2017, 29.8% of fatally injured occupants (drivers and passengers) died in an alcohol-related crash where there were two or more occupants in the vehicle. Among fatally injured drivers who were the lone occupants, 29.6% died in an alcohol-related crash. In comparison, 26.2% of occupants in a vehicle with two or more occupants died in a distraction-related crash which was slightly greater than the 24.5% of drivers who were alone in the vehicle.

**Fatally injured drivers.** Data for fatally injured drivers included known cases of drinking and driving (drivers tested for blood alcohol) and distraction (the dying driver was coded as either not distracted or distracted). In Table 7, a comparison is made for drinking drivers and distracted drivers by age group and sex. The 20-25 age group of drivers was the most likely to be drinking and the most likely to be distracted. Drivers over age 55 were the least likely to be drinking while those aged 36-45 were the least likely to be distracted. While fatally injured male drivers were more likely to have been drinking than fatally injured female drivers (32.3% vs. 19.5%), female drivers were more likely to be distracted (21.5% vs. 15.7%).

#### 6 THE KNOWLEDGE SOURCE FOR SAFE DRIVING

### Table 8: Drivers killed in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada by vehicletype and collision type, 2017

Vehicle	Number of	Had Been Drinking		er of Had Been Drinking Numb		Number of	Distra	acted
Туре	Deaths	Number	% of total	Deaths	Number	% of total		
Automobile	511	154	30.1	513	90	17.5		
Truck/van	303	102	33.7	225	42	18.7		
Tractor- trailer	38	5	13.2	35	12	34.3		
Motorcycle	159	38	23.9	159	13	8.2		
Collision	Number of	Had Been Drinking		Number of	Distra	acted		
Туре	Deaths	Number	% of total	Deaths	Number	% of total		
Single vehicle	407	192	47.2	359	41	11.4		
Multi vehicle	605	107	17.7	574	117	20.4		
Source: TIRF Natio	Source: TIRF National Fatality Database							

![](_page_8_Picture_2.jpeg)

Tractor-trailer drivers were the least likely to have been drinking (13.2%), but they account for the largest percentage of drivers who were distracted (34.3%). Caution should be exercised when interpreting these data since the number of fatally injured tractor-trailer drivers is relatively small although they drive much longer distances than drivers of passenger vehicles.

Table 8 compares the percentage of fatally injured drivers who were drinking and distracted by vehicle type and collision type. Although tractor-trailer drivers were the least likely to have been drinking (13.2%), they account for the largest percentage of drivers who were distracted (34.3%). Caution should be exercised interpreting these data since the number of fatally injured tractor-trailer drivers is relatively small although they drive much longer distances than drivers of passenger vehicles. While fatally injured drivers in single-vehicle crashes were far more likely to have been drinking, drivers in multiple-vehicle crashes were more likely to have been distracted (20.4% vs. 11.4%).

In Table 9 and Figure 1, trend data are presented showing the percentage of persons killed in motor vehicle crashes where alcohol and distraction were present. From 2008-2017, an average of 29.7% of fatalities died in an alcohol-related crash compared to 23.3% who died in a distracted driving crash. In terms of trends, there has been a steady decrease in the percentage of persons dying in alcohol-related crashes from 34.0% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2017. However, there has been a general increase in the percentage of distraction-related fatalities from 21.2% in 2008 to 25.3% in 2017. There may be a reporting bias as distraction may be coded more often on collision report forms as a contributing factor in more recent years due to improvements in crash report forms.

![](_page_9_Picture_1.jpeg)

#### Table 9: Persons killed\* in alcohol and distraction-related crashes in Canada, 2008-2017

Year of	Number of	Alcohol-Related Deaths		Distraction-R	elated Deaths
Death	Deaths	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
2008	2314	786	34.0	490	21.2
2009	2168	706	32.6	425	19.6
2010	2161	733	33.9	461	21.3
2011	2068	632	30.6	494	23.9
2012	2142	632	29.5	524	24.5
2013	1953	536	27.4	469	24.0
2014	1849	493	26.7	415	22.4
2015	1937	526	27.2	532	27.5
2016	1925	537	27.9	471	24.5
2017	1873	480	25.6	474	25.3
Average	2039	606	29.7	476	23.3
* actimates based on	the percentage of dea	the for which informati	on was available to dat	ormina alcohol uso or c	listraction

Source: TIRF National Fatality Database

#### Figure1: Percentage of persons killed in alcohol and distraction-related crashes: Canada, 2008-2017

![](_page_9_Figure_6.jpeg)

**Self-reported behaviour.** Respondents were asked to rate their level of concern about road safety issues ranging from 1 (no problem at all) to 6 (an extremely serious problem). For scoring purposes, respondents were coded as being concerned about an issue if they gave it a score of 5 or 6. In 2004, while 80.6% of respondents were concerned about drinking drivers, only 33.4% were concerned about distracted drivers. In contrast, 76.1% of respondents were concerned with drinking drivers in 2020 compared to 53.0% who were concerned about distracted drivers.

Table 10 shows the percentage of respondents admitting to drinking and driving or distracted driving in 2010 and 2020. As can be seen, 24.4% of Canadian drivers admitted driving after drinking in 2010, declining to 11.9% in 2020. However, there was an increase from 2010 to 2020 for drivers who admitted driving when they thought they were over the legal limit (6.0% versus 7.5%). There were increases in the percentage of drivers who admitted to driving while distracted in 2020 compared to 2010. The percentage of respondents who drove often using a hands-free phone rose from 21.7% in 2010 to 31.5% in 2020. The percentage of those who drove often when using a handheld phone increased from 8.6% in 2010 to 13.6% in 2020. Lastly, 4.8% of drivers admitted to driving often while texting in 2010 compared to 11.2% in 2020.

![](_page_10_Figure_2.jpeg)

### Table 10: Percentage of drivers in Canada who self-reported certain behaviours in2010 vs. 2020

Drinking	2010	2020
Driving after drinking	24.4	11.9
Driving while over the legal limit	6.0	7.5
Distraction		
Often talked on hands-free phone	21.7	31.5
Often talked on handheld phone	8.6	13.6
Often texted while driving	4.8	11.2
Source: TIRF Road Safety Monitor		

The percentage of respondents who drove often when using a hands-free phone rose from 21.7% in 2010 to 31.5% in 2020. The percentage of those who drove often using a handheld phone increased from 8.6% in 2010 to 13.6% in 2020.

![](_page_11_Figure_0.jpeg)

#### Limitations

Several limitations prevent the role of distraction from being described as extensively as the role of alcohol. These limitations affect fatality data and self-reported behavioural data.

**Fatality data.** There are some limitations to the role of distraction and how it is recorded in fatality data. It should be noted that:

- > Alberta's collision report form does not include distraction as a driver condition. As a result, many fatalities in that province are coded as unknown.
- Some collision report forms (Ontario, Northwest Territories) allow officers to enter only one human condition as a contributing factor. If a drinking driver was suspected of being distracted and under the influence of drugs, only one human condition is shown as a contributing factor.
- > Quebec's collision report form allows officers to enter only two contributing factors per crash. Distraction may be under-reported if there are several other contributing factors.
- > While the blood of fatally injured victims can be tested for the presence of alcohol and drugs, one cannot quantify the degree to which fatally injured victims were distracted.
- > Narrative summaries of collisions may indicate a driver was using a cell phone but no further description is provided with regards to other types of distraction.
- Some jurisdictions are more inclined than others to report pedestrians as being distracted (ON, AB, SK). This means the ability to report distraction-related pedestrian fatalities in terms of whether the pedestrian was distracted or the driver who struck the pedestrian was distracted is limited.
- > The role of distraction in crashes involving off-road vehicle operators is less complete than the role of alcohol. These crashes are less routinely included in police-reported collision data since almost 60% of off-road vehicle occupants die in crashes which occur off-road (e.g., private property, Crown land, First Nations land, body of water). Since some of these crash locations are remote, there may not be any eyewitnesses to provide any information about contributing factors. Lastly, since a larger percentage of fatally injured off-road vehicle operators test positive for alcohol than highway vehicle operators, there may be a bias that alcohol was the main, or only, contributing factor to the crash. Similar to pedestrian data, there are gaps in the role of distraction.

**Conviction data.** Comparing data related to distracted driving charges may be limited to provincial Highway Traffic Act infractions since there is no Criminal Code offence specifically for distracted driving. Some distracted drivers in fatal crashes may be charged with dangerous driving causing death. However, some of these charges may be levied against speeding or aggressive drivers. Although there are some provincial data available for *Highway Traffic Act* distracted driving infractions, there may be reporting differences inhibiting comparisons of provincial distracted driving data. Thus, a comparison of conviction data for alcohol-related and distraction-related offences was not performed.

#### 10 THE KNOWLEDGE SOURCE FOR SAFE DRIVING

**Self-reported drinking and driving.** As mentioned earlier, while TIRF's Road Safety Monitor routinely includes questions about drinking and driving, there were some years where questions were not included dealing with distracted driving. Comparisons could be made between selected years, but trend data is not as robust as compared to drinking and driving.

#### Conclusion

In terms of both numbers and percentage, almost as many persons died in distraction-related crashes as alcoholrelated crashes in Canada in 2017.

Fatally injured victims under age 16 and over 55 years were under-represented in alcohol-related crashes but were over-represented in distraction-related crashes. While some of these individuals may have been distracted, these younger and older victims may represent a notable portion of vulnerable road users who died in collisions involving distracted drivers.

While pedestrians were under-represented in alcohol-related crashes, they were over-represented in distractionrelated crashes. Although more fatally injured pedestrians were struck by distracted drivers than drinking drivers in 2017, further analysis is necessary to determine whether this is a pattern.

Persons dying on weekends were far more likely than persons dying during weekdays to be in an alcohol-related crash (36.5% vs. 21.0%). On the other hand, persons dying on the weekend were slightly more likely than those dying during the week to be in a distraction-related crash (26.3% vs. 25.6%). The difference in seasonal variation between persons dying in alcohol-related crashes versus distraction-related crashes is nominal. A greater percentage of alcohol-related fatal crashes occurred during night-time which does not coincide with times when distraction-related fatal crashes more often occurred (during the workday).

There appeared to be little variation in the number of occupants in the vehicle (alone vs. with passengers) as a factor in both alcohol and distraction- related fatalities. The presence of one or more passengers may encourage drivers to exercise safe driving practices. Or drivers may feel a need to interact with passengers while the vehicle is in motion.

Among fatally injured drivers, those aged 20 to 25 years were the most likely to be distracted. However, drivers over 55 years of age were the only age group more likely to be distracted than drinking. While fatally injured male drivers were more likely to be drinking than female drivers, a larger percentage of female drivers were considered to have been distracted.

Fewer survey respondents were concerned about drinking and driving in 2020 as compared to 2004 while a larger percentage expressed concern about distracted driving. Similarly, while there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who admitted to drinking and driving in 2020 compared to 2010, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents who drove while distracted in 2020 compared to 2010.

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#### **Fatality Database Disclaimer**

Data from TIRF's National Fatality Database may be subject to change as the closure of cases is ongoing. As such, there may be minor differences in this document compared to previous documents reporting on the same topic.

Each year, TIRF uses the Database to examine a variety of contemporary road safety issues and explore the magnitude and characteristics of drivers killed in road crashes and the role of different contributing factors. The Fatality Database has been used to examine fatality data on drivers of various ages (e.g., teens, adult and aging drivers), vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcyclists, and cyclists), distracted and fatigued drivers, and the use of safety equipment (e.g., seatbelts, helmets). It is also a reliable source of information on the magnitude of the alcohol and drug crash problem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 2017 is the most recent year for which fatal-crash data is available.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> TIRF's National Fatality Database contains records of persons fatally injured in motor vehicle crashes for all Canadian jurisdictions (from 1987 to 2017). It is the only road safety database in Canada that includes both: (1) police-reported data and (2) coroners' and medical examiners' reports. The database contains complete data on victims, crashes, vehicles, and toxicology as well as details of the crash (vehicle type, collision time and date, and contributing factors). Toxicological data on alcohol and drug use among fatally injured victims are obtained from coroners' and medical examiners' data which are based on chemical tests of body fluid samples (typically blood).

#### Financial support provided by The Co-operators

The Co-operators Group Limited is a Canadian co-operative with more than \$51.4 billion in assets under administration. Through its group of companies, it offers home, auto, life, group, travel, commercial and farm insurance, as well as investment products. The Co-operators is well known for its community involvement and its commitment to sustainability.

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![](_page_14_Picture_4.jpeg)

![](_page_14_Picture_5.jpeg)

### 171 Nepean Street, Suite 200 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2P 0B4 www.tirf.ca

Toll Free: 1-877-238-5235 Fax: 613-238-5292

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The knowledge source for safe driving