

# IMPLICATIONS FOR PASSENGERS

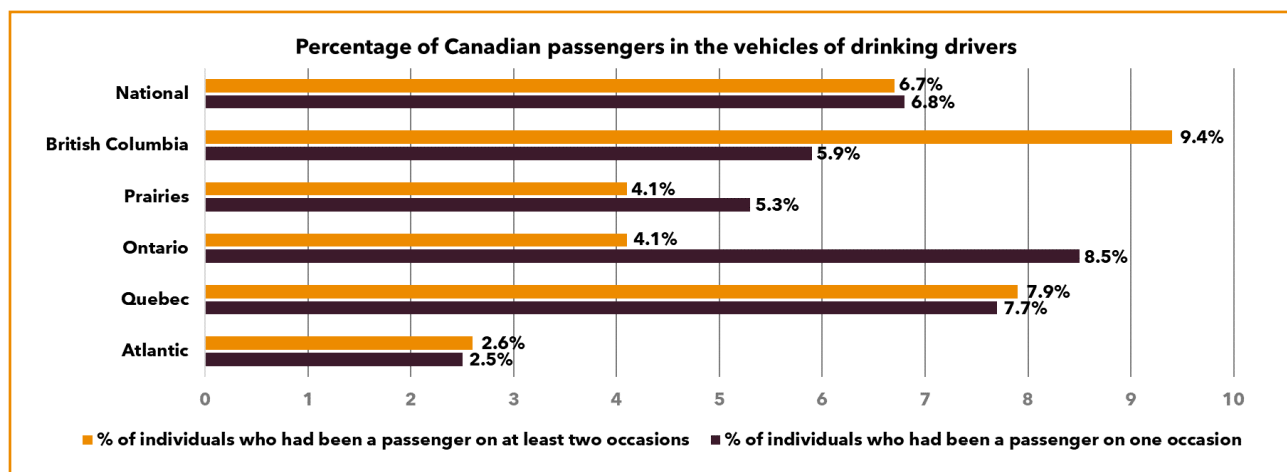
[SoberSmartDriving.tirf.ca](http://SoberSmartDriving.tirf.ca)



The Sober Smart Driving education program is produced by the **Traffic Injury Research Foundation** with funding from **Beer Canada**. It shares knowledge and science to answer common questions about alcohol, its effects on driving skills, and impaired driving.

## How often are Canadians passengers in the vehicles of drinking drivers?

The Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) conducted a survey in Canada in 2011 (Marcoux et al. 2011) that asked participants if they had been a passenger in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking in the last 30 days. The results are shown in the graph below.



More recently, a TIRF survey of American drivers showed that in 2017, 6.0% of respondents admitted that, in the past 30 days, they had been a passenger of an alcohol-impaired driver (Wicklund et al. 2018).

These results reveal a significant number of people knowingly get into a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking and unnecessarily put themselves at risk of injury or death.

Equally concerning is that among those surveyed, more people were likely to have ridden as a passenger with a driver who had been drinking on at least two occasions within a 30-day period thus increasing their risk of being involved in an alcohol-related crash.

### What are the implications for passengers of drinking drivers?

When an alcohol-related crash occurs, often it is not only the drinking driver who is injured or killed; passengers in the vehicle suffer the same fate. In 2016, 18.5% of persons dying in alcohol-related crashes in Canada were passengers (TIRF 2020). Many studies have determined that human performance skills, including driving, begin to decline at Blood Alcohol Concentrations (BACs) above zero (Borkenstein et al. 1964; Blomberg et al. 2009; Peck et al. 2008). The consumption of alcohol decreases an individual's ability to properly operate a motor vehicle and the greater the level of impairment from alcohol the greater the risk of crash.

A study conducted in Long Beach, California and Fort Lauderdale, Florida revealed that a notable relationship between risk and BAC begins at .04 to .05 and increases exponentially once BACs reach .10 or greater (Blomberg et al. 2009). This means that even driving with an amount of alcohol below the legal

limit in one's system greatly increases the risk of crash. By getting into a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking, passengers put themselves at risk for serious injury or death.

It is also possible that passengers are impaired which can affect their ability to make good decisions and exercise sound judgment. They may not have the ability to gauge if their driver is



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sober. This speaks to the importance of planning ahead and making arrangements if one knows they will be drinking. In response to this need, several safe ride programs provide free or low-cost rides to alcohol-impaired passengers. These programs are intended to reduce alcohol-related arrests, crashes and casualties and ensure that everyone has the option of a safe ride home. Generally, these programs are community-based in response to an immediate need to overcome limited transportation options and reduce impaired driving (Barrett et al. 2017).

### References

Barrett, H., Vanlaar, W. G. M., Robertson, R. D., & Traffic Injury Research, F. (2017). Safe Rides as an Alternative to Alcohol-Impaired Driving and Their Effects: A Literature Review. Ottawa, ON.: Traffic Injury Research Foundation.

Marcoux, K.D., Vanlaar, W.G.M., Robertson, R.D. (2011). The Road Safety Monitor 2011: Drinking and Driving in Canada. Ottawa, ON.: Traffic Injury Research Foundation.

Traffic Injury Research Foundation (2020). TIRF National Fatality Database. Accessed July 23, 2020.

Wicklund, C., Hing, M.M., Vanlaar, W.G.M., Robertson, R.D. (2018). Alternatives to Alcohol-Impaired Driving: Results from the 2017 TIRF USA Road Safety Monitor. Washington, D.C.: Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc.

## What does the Sober Smart Driving Education Program (SSD) contain?

The Sober Smart Driving Education Program contains facts to help Canadians learn about the risks associated with drinking and driving and encourages everyone to speak up and talk about why they choose not to drink and drive.

Key topics discussed on this site include:

- > Drinking and its effects on driving
- > Magnitude & characteristics of drinking & driving
- > Basics of the impaired driving system
- > Impaired driver programs & penalties

- > Myths & misconceptions about drinking and driving

Each of these topics contains a series of fact sheets structured in a question and answer format which are available for free download and sharing (with attribution). These resources are designed to support the education and prevention efforts of communities, schools, health and road safety professionals and advocacy organizations.

To view more fact sheets, or to get more information about alcohol, its effects on driving skills, and impaired driving, visit [SoberSmartDriving.tirf.ca](http://SoberSmartDriving.tirf.ca).



## Traffic Injury Research Foundation

The mission of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) is to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries. TIRF is a national, independent, charitable road safety research institute. Since its inception in 1964, TIRF has become internationally recognized for its accomplishments in a wide range of subject areas related to identifying the causes of road crashes and developing programs and policies to address them effectively.

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