



# THE ROAD SAFETY MONITOR 2012

## DRINKING AND DRIVING IN CANADA: TRENDS



The knowledge source for safe driving

# THE 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 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.

Traffic Injury Research Foundation

171 Nepean Street, Suite 200

Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0B4

Ph: (613) 238-5235

Fax: (613) 238-5292

Email: [tirf@tirf.ca](mailto:tirf@tirf.ca)

Website: [www.tirf.ca](http://www.tirf.ca)

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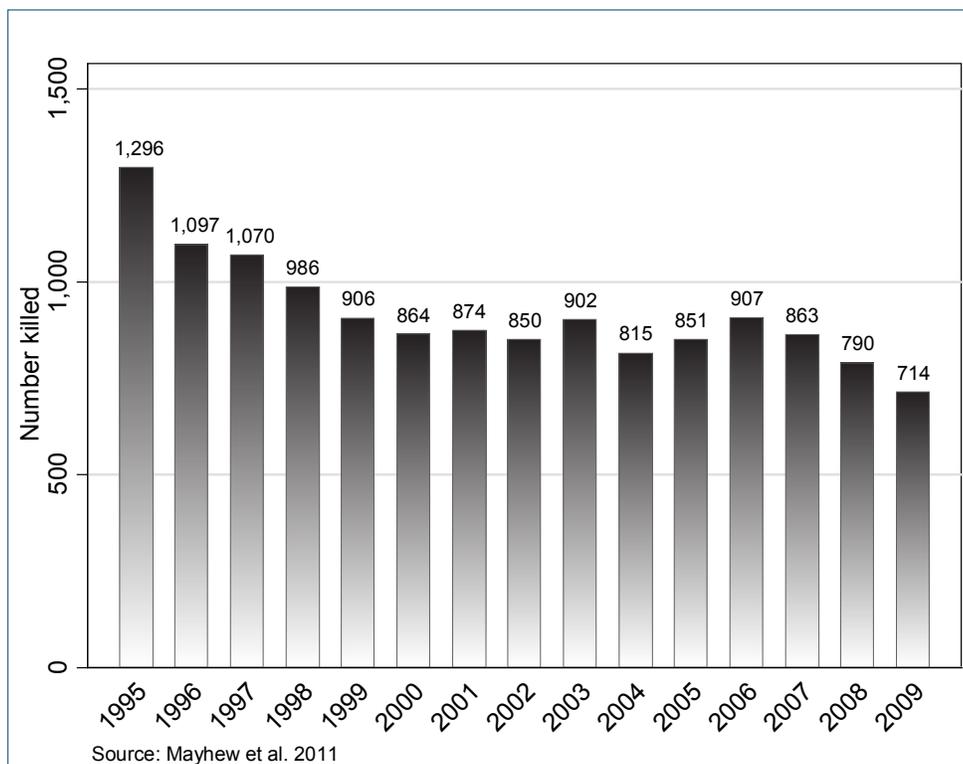


# DRINKING AND DRIVING IN CANADA

This fact sheet summarizes national results from *The Road Safety Monitor (RSM)*, 2012 on drinking and driving in Canada. The RSM is an annual public opinion survey conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) under sponsorship from the Brewers Association of Canada, Toyota Canada Foundation and Aviva Canada. The survey takes the pulse of the nation on key road safety issues by means of a telephone and on-line survey of a random, representative sample of Canadian drivers. Regional results on drinking and driving across the country are contained in a companion series of fact sheets.

**How many Canadians die in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver?** In 2009, the most recent year for which data are available<sup>1</sup>, 714 Canadians were killed in a traffic crash involving a drinking driver. This represents a continued and consistent decrease since 2006 and is below the 2004 number (815), the lowest count from 1995 through 2007. It appears a decreasing trend in fatalities is emerging toward the end of the first decade of the new millennium; this will have to be further monitored.

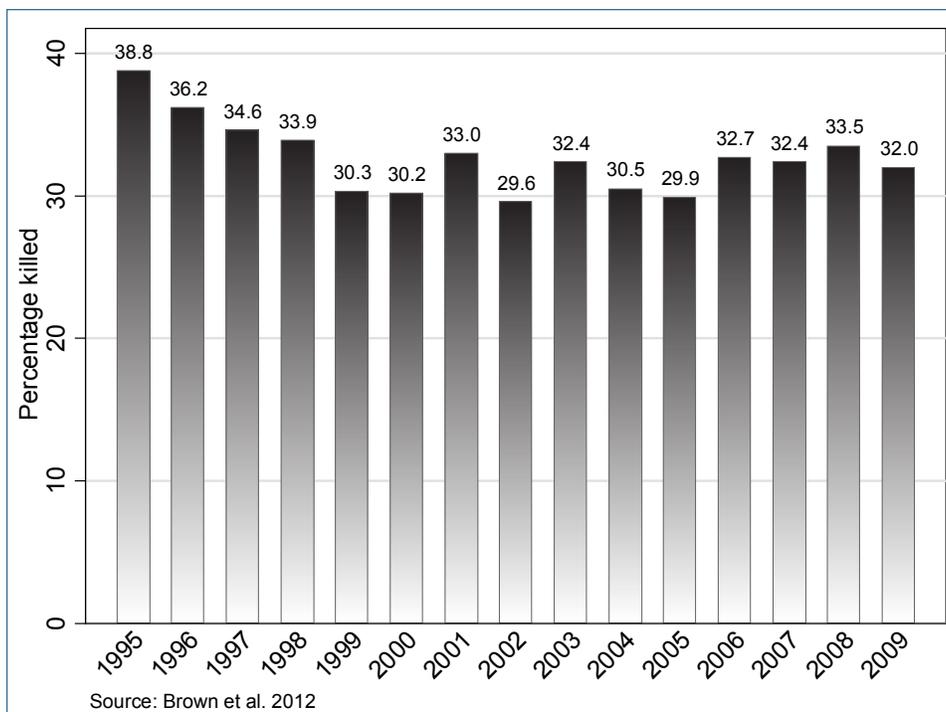
**Number of Canadians who have died in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver**



**What percentage of Canadians die in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver?** When looking at the percentage of persons killed in a traffic crash in Canada involving a drinking driver out of all persons killed in traffic crashes on principal roadways in that year, in 2009, 32.0% of fatal crashes involved a drinking driver. This percentage has decreased from a high of 38.8% in 1995 and has been fairly consistent since 1997 remaining below 35%.

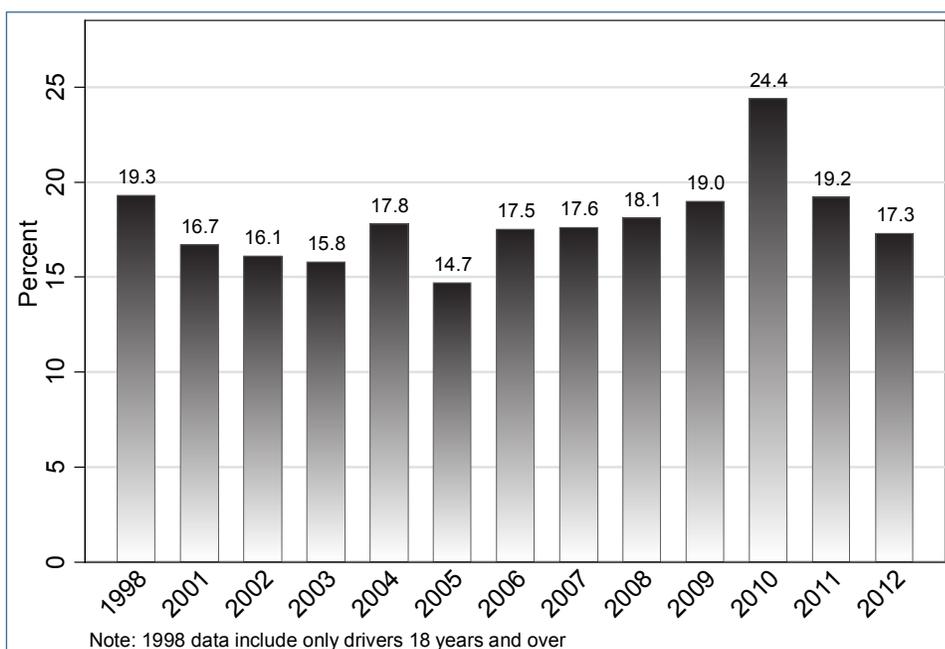
<sup>1</sup> 2010 data were not available at time of publication. Additional data years will be included when available.

## Percentage of Canadians who died in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver



**Is the percentage of drinking drivers increasing?** When asked about driving after consuming any amount of alcohol in the past 30 days, 17.3% of Canadians admitted to doing this in 2012. It warrants mentioning that this includes drinking and driving after consuming lower levels of alcohol and levels below the legal limit or administrative limits (where they exist). Before 2006, this percent had decreased from 19.3% in 1998 to 14.7% in 2005. The percentage then slightly increased between 2006 and 2009 and jumped to 24.4% in 2010. The drop to 19.2% in 2011 and to 17.3% in 2012 suggests that the apparent increase in 2010 was an anomaly.

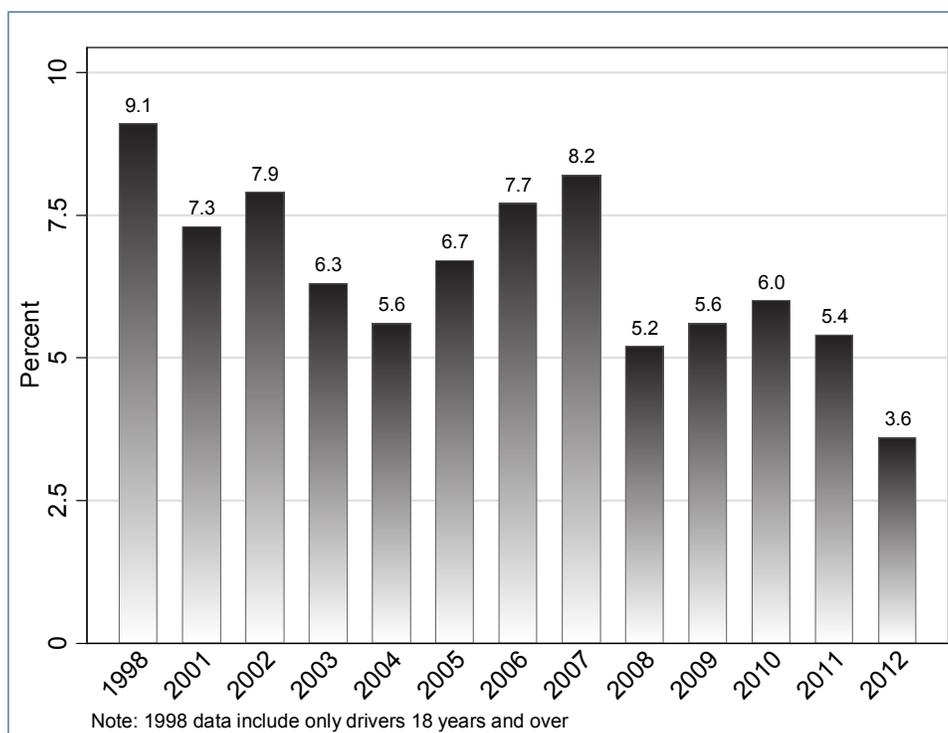
## Percentage of drinking drivers



When asked about driving when they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months, 3.6% of Canadians admitted to doing this in 2012. This represents a significant decrease compared to 2011 when the percent was 5.4%. Of importance, the percentages from 2008 to 2012 do appear to confirm the considerable drop from 8.2% in 2007 to 5.2% in 2008. This significant decrease to 5.2% in 2008 could perhaps be explained by the passage of Bill C-2 (this new law was announced in July 2008), designed to strengthen drunk driving legislation as well as the media attention these amendments received. In light of this possible explanation, a small increase (in this case from 5.2% in 2008 to 5.6% in 2009 and 6.0% in 2010) is not surprising given that the effect of any legislation can dissipate somewhat after its introduction due to lower awareness among the public about it (e.g., because media attention disappears after a while or because enforcement efforts decrease).

Note that the difference between 2007 and every subsequent year is significant, so both the consistency in the trend itself as well as significance tests suggest a decrease in drivers admitting to driving while they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months. Reasons explaining the additional decrease in 2012 to 3.6% are not immediately apparent but this finding is encouraging. It suggests that fatalities in 2011 and 2012 may also further decrease. Further monitoring is needed.

**Percentage who drove when they thought they were over the legal limit**



**Where do drivers do most of their drinking?** In 2012, 37.9% (38.8% in 2011) of those who drove when they thought they were over the legal limit report doing most of their drinking at the home of a friend or relative; 17.5% (14.7% in 2011) report doing most of their drinking in a restaurant; 15.3% (16.6% in 2011) report doing most of their drinking at a bar; 15.1% (13.0% in 2011) report doing most of their drinking in their own home; 14.2% (3.7% in 2011) report doing most of their drinking at a party;

and no respondents (13.2% in 2011) reported doing most of their drinking at other locations. Such a pattern suggests a variety of messages and approaches may be needed to reach these different groups and influence their behaviour.

**Where does the issue of drinking and driving sit on the public agenda?** Canadians continue to regard drinking and driving as a priority concern. The percentage of those who say that they are concerned or very concerned about drinking and driving has increased to 71.6% in 2012, from a low of 69.3% in 2011. When compared to other societal issues such as crime and global warming, drinking and driving had consistently been at the top of the list of societal concerns. However, 2011 and 2012 marked the first years ever that drinking and driving was not of most concern to Canadian drivers. At the top of the list both years was the price of gas, which was a concern of 69.7% Canadians in 2011 and 78.8% Canadians in 2012.

**Is drinking and driving a major road safety issue for Canadians?** When comparing drinking and driving to other road safety issues (rather than societal issues), drinking drivers were rated as a very or extremely serious problem by 81.5% of Canadians (compared to 80.9% in 2011 and 83.0% in 2010). While Canadians clearly continue to express great concern about this issue, in 2012, for the third year in a row, drinking and driving was not at the top of the list. The issue that most Canadians expressed concern about in 2012 was texting while driving with 87.4% rating this as a very or extremely serious problem. Of interest, a 2011 and 2010 poll by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) also found that texting while driving had risen to the top of Canadians' road safety concerns.

**About the poll.** These results are based on the RSM, an annual public opinion poll developed and conducted by TIRF. A total of 903 Canadians completed the poll in October of 2012. Results can be considered accurate within plus or minus 3.3%, 19 times out of 20. The majority of the questions were answered using a scale from one to six where six indicated high agreement, concern, or support and one indicated low agreement, concern or support. For the fourth time, some respondents were contacted by phone (225 in 2012; 303 in 2011; 401 in 2010; 600 in 2009) and some on-line (678 in 2012; 905 in 2011; 800 in 2010; 600 in 2009).