



**THE ROAD SAFETY MONITOR 2014**  
DRINKING AND DRIVING IN CANADA



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.

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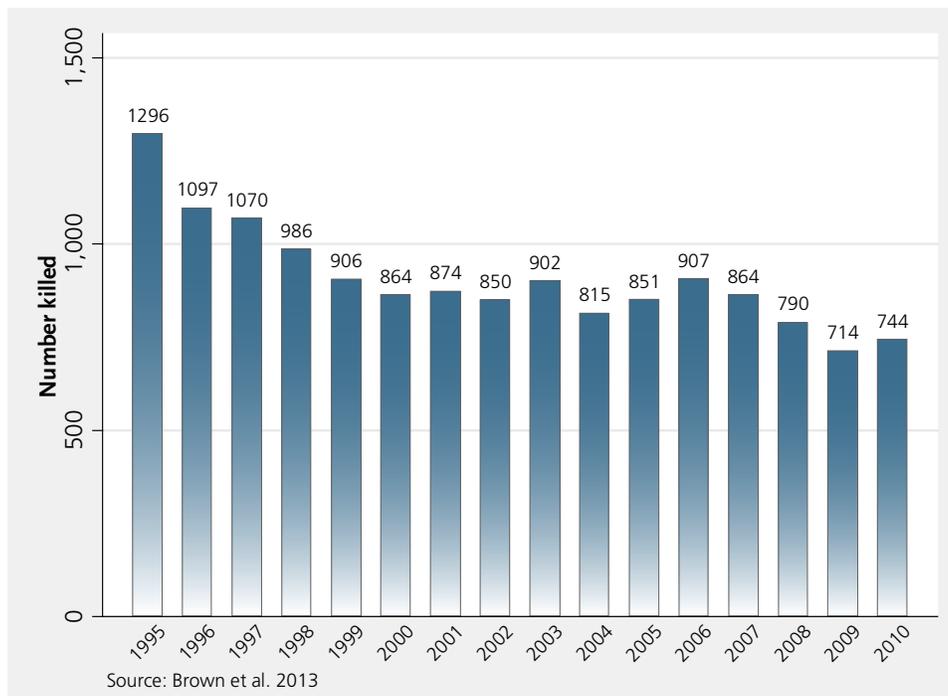


# DRINKING AND DRIVING IN CANADA

This fact sheet summarizes national results from The Road Safety Monitor (RSM), 2014 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 Beer Canada and the Toyota Canada Foundation. The survey takes the pulse of the nation on key road safety issues by means of an on-line survey of a random, representative sample of Canadian drivers.

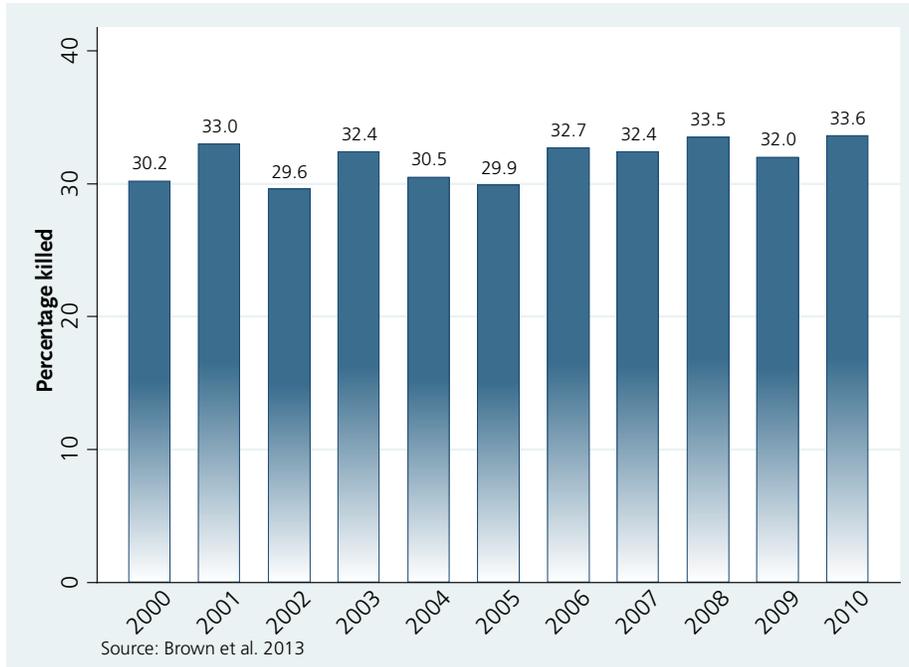
**How many Canadians die in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver?** In 2010, the most recent year for which data are available, 744 Canadians were killed in a traffic crash involving a drinking driver. While this disrupts the continued and consistent decrease since 2006, results from 2010 are still below the 2008 number (790), the lowest count from 1995 through 2008. An overall decreasing trend in alcohol related deaths was emerging from 2006 through 2009, but it is not clear whether this trend will continue when considering the 2010 data. This will have to be further monitored.

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



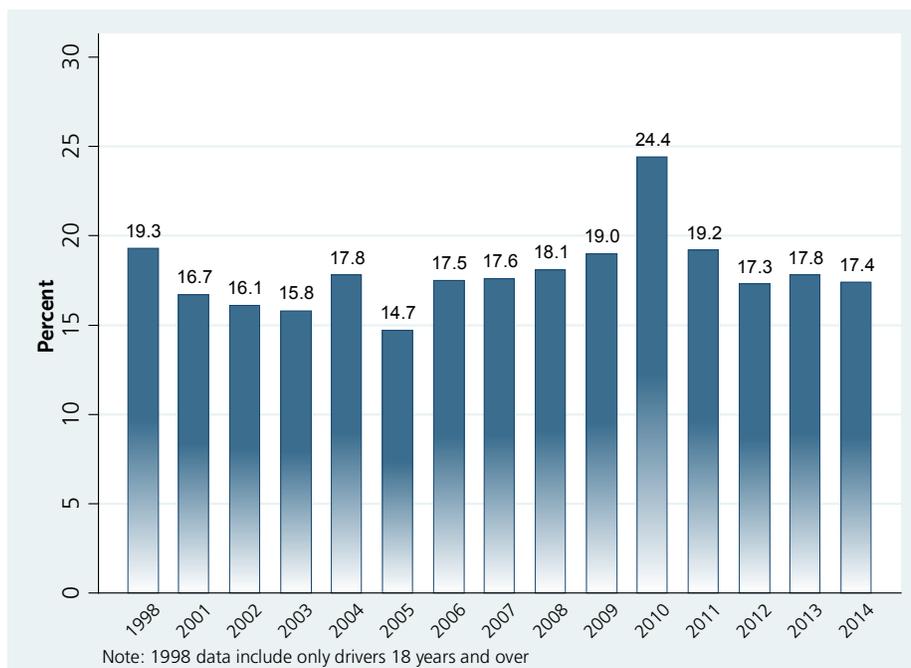
**What percentage of Canadians die in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver?** When looking at the percentage of persons killed in a traffic crash in Canada involving a drinking driver out of all persons killed in traffic crashes on principal roadways in that year, in 2010, 33.6% of fatal crashes 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%.

## 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, 17.4% of Canadians admitted to doing this in 2014. 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 jumped to 24.4% in 2010, decreased to 17.3% in 2012, and has since stabilized (17.4% in 2014). The percentages of respondents from 2006-2009 and 2011-2014 who admitted to drinking and driving were relatively consistent. This suggests that the high percentage of respondents who admitted to drinking and driving in 2010 was an anomaly.

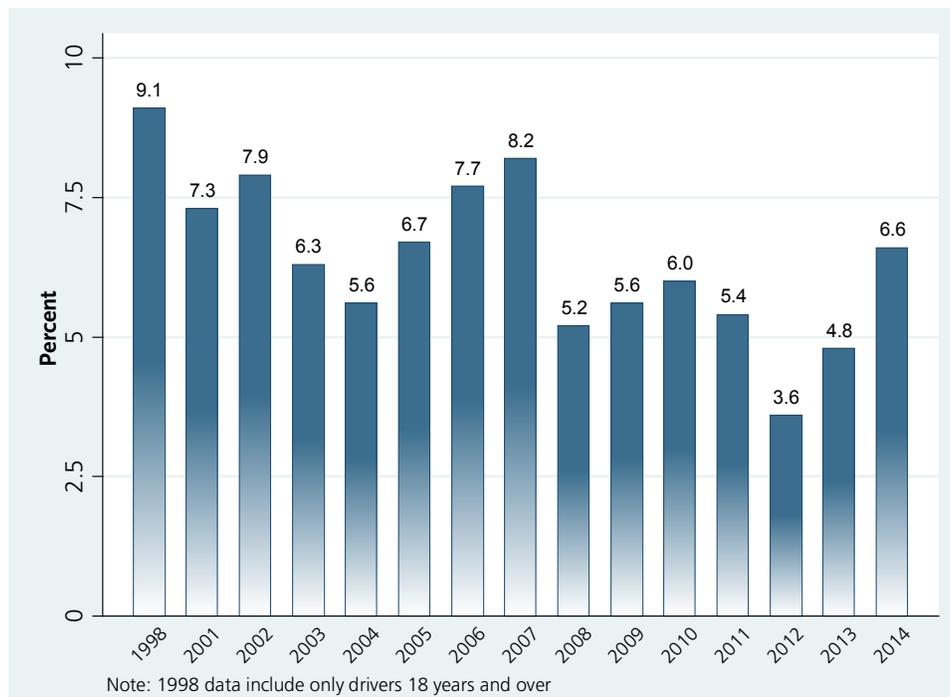
## Percentage of drinking drivers



When asked about driving when they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months, 6.6% of Canadians admitted to doing this in 2014. The difference between 2007 and every year until 2013 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. However, the difference between 2007 and 2014 is not significant.

More recently, significance tests affirm the increase from 3.6% in 2012 to 6.6% in 2014 among respondents who claimed to have driven when they thought they were over the legal limit. Reasons for this increase are not immediately apparent but this trend may be cause for concern and will require further monitoring. Once more recent fatality data become available for analysis, these can be compared with trends in drinking and driving to provide a more complete picture of the problem.

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

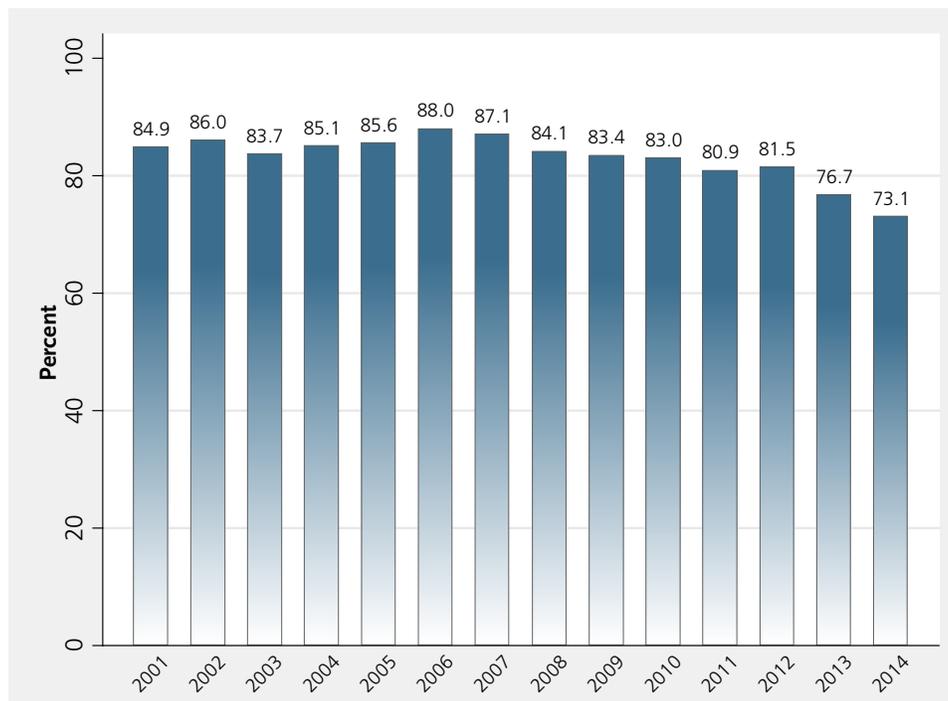


**Where do drivers do most of their drinking?** In 2014, 31.1% (24.4% in 2013) of respondents who drove when they thought they were over the legal limit report doing most of their drinking at the home of a friend or relative; 20.7% (25.5% in 2013) of those who drove when they thought they were over the legal limit report doing most of their drinking at a bar; 20.5% (21.4% in 2013) report doing most of their drinking in a restaurant; 19.1% (10.0% in 2013) report doing most of their drinking at a party; 7.9% (11.5% in 2013) report doing most of their drinking in their own home; and 0.7% (7.0% in 2013) report 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 rose from 69.3% in 2011 to 71.6% in 2012, before decreasing to a low of 68.2% in 2014. When compared to other societal issues such as crime and global warming, the issue of drinking and driving has consistently been at the top of the list of societal concerns. With the exception of 2011, 2012, and 2014, drinking and driving was the issue of foremost concern to Canadian drivers. In the other three years, the issue of greatest concern for Canadians was the price of gas, mentioned by 69.7% in 2011 and 78.8% in 2012. Gas prices continued to be a major issue in 2014, according to 68.6% of respondents, slightly more than those who were concerned about drinking and driving, the second-ranked issue on the public agenda. Although the percentage of Canadians who consider drinking and driving to be a priority concern has decreased slightly in recent years, it still ranks prominently on the public agenda.

**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), in 2014 drinking drivers were rated as a very or extremely serious problem by 73.1% of Canadians (compared to 76.7% in 2013 and 81.5% in 2012). Although there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents who regard drinking and driving as a major road safety issue in 2014 compared to 2006 (73.1% vs. 88.0%), a clear majority of Canadians continue to express great concern about drinking and driving. Given the relationship between levels of concern among the public and their behaviour, it is perhaps not surprising to see the increase in self-reported drinking and driving over the legal limit to 6.6% in 2014.

**Percentage of Canadians who regard drinking drivers as a 'very' or 'extremely' serious problem**



When asked if the issue of young drivers impaired by alcohol was a very or extremely serious problem, 69.2% of respondents agreed in 2014. This is lower than those 82.2% of respondents who cited that this particular issue was of concern to them in 2010. In 2014, respondents were also asked about how concerned they were about four other road safety issues. Young drivers impaired by drugs (65.1%), drugged drivers (59.5%), older drivers impaired by prescription drugs (46.9%), and wild animals crossing or standing in roadways (28.4%) were considered to be less problematic than drinking and driving and young drivers impaired by alcohol. Although the issue of drinking and driving in general, and drinking and driving by young drivers in particular, appears to be regarded as a less serious problem than in past years, a majority of respondents continue to believe that this issue is an important one.

**About the poll.** These results are based on the RSM, an annual public opinion poll developed and conducted by TIRF. A total of 1,031 Canadians completed the poll in October and November of 2014. Results can be considered accurate within plus or minus 3.1%, 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 first time, all of the respondents completed the survey online. In the five previous years, some respondents were contacted by phone (301 in 2013; 225 in 2012; 303 in 2011; 401 in 2010; 600 in 2009) and some on-line (900 in 2013; 678 in 2012; 905 in 2011; 800 in 2010; 600 in 2009).