

ROAD SAFETY MONITOR 2016 DRINKING AND DRIVING IN CANADA

Traffic Injury Research Foundation, November 2016

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ISBN: 978-1-926857-83-1

This fact sheet summarizes findings about self-reported drinking and driving in Canada based on the Road Safety Monitor (RSM), 2016, a national public opinion poll on road safety issues. This annual poll is conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) in partnership with Beer Canada, Desjardins Insurance and the Toyota Canada Foundation. The survey takes the pulse of the nation on key road safety issues by means of an online survey of a random, representative sample

of more than 2,000 Canadian drivers. These results are presented in conjunction with crash data from TIRF's National Fatality Database to provide context.

How many Canadians die in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver? In 2013, the most recent year for which data are available, 480 Canadians were killed in a traffic crash involving a drinking driver according to TIRF's National Fatality Database (see Figure 1). These fatalities occurred within 12 months of crashes on public roadways

Figure 1: Number of Canadians who have died in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver (excluding BC)

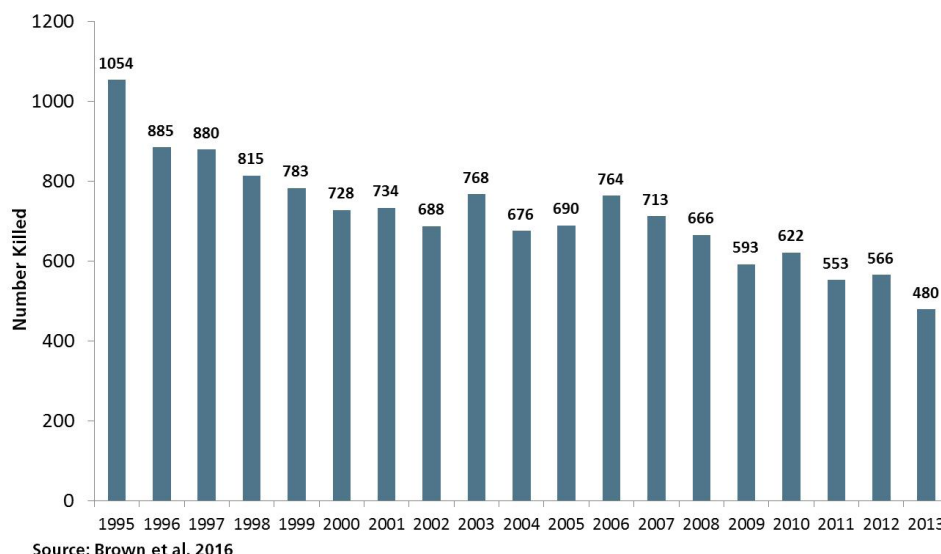
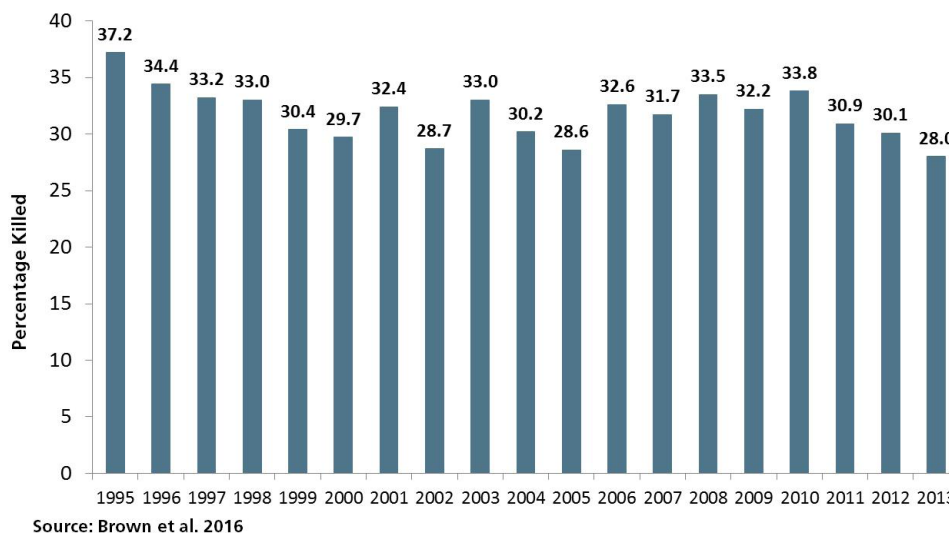


Figure 2: Percentage of Canadians who died in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver (excluding BC)



across the country, excluding British Columbia (BC). Data from BC were not available at the time that the 2016 RSM was prepared; all fatality data from 1995 to 2013 have been recalculated consistently to enable accurate comparisons over time.

The number of persons who died in crashes involving a drinking driver between 1995 and 2013 decreased to its lowest point in 2013 (480 compared to 1,054). More recently, there was an overall decrease in alcohol-related road deaths from 2006 through 2013.

What percentage of Canadians died in traffic crashes involving a drinking driver? The percentage of persons killed in a traffic crash on

a public roadway in Canada (excluding BC) that involved a drinking driver was 28.0% in 2013 (see Figure 2). This percentage has declined from a peak of 37.2% in 1995 and since remained consistently below 35%, although with some fluctuation. This percentage has steadily decreased since 2010.

Has the percentage of drinking drivers on roadways increased? According to the RSM poll, when asked about driving after consuming any amount of alcohol in the past 30 days, 21.6% admitted to doing this in 2016 (see Figure 3). It warrants mentioning that this includes drinking and driving after consuming low levels of alcohol, including levels below the legal limit

Figure 3: Percentage of drinking drivers who drove after drinking any amount of alcohol

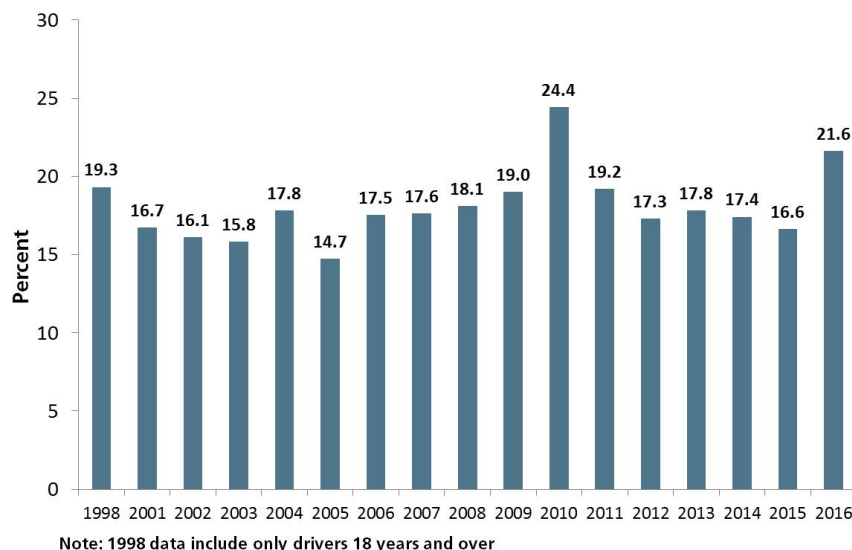
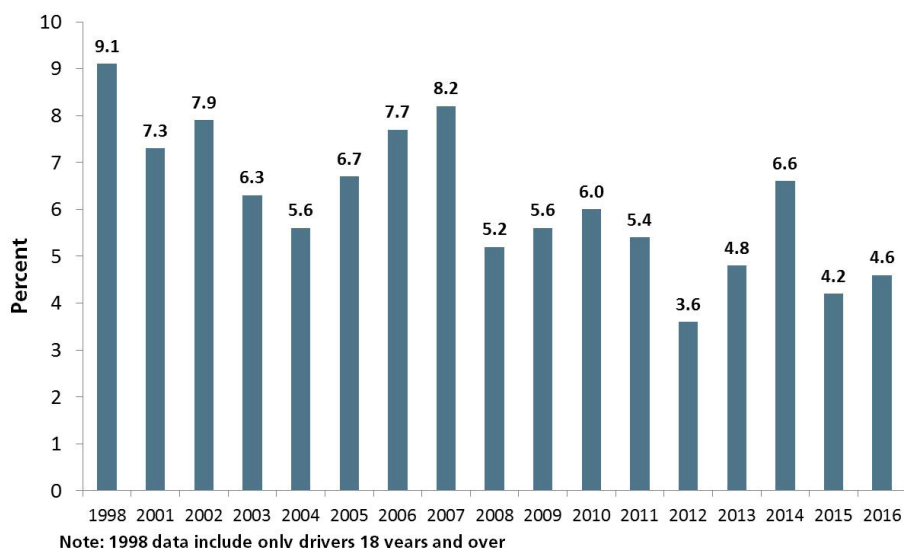


Figure 4: Percentage that drove when they thought they were over the legal limit



or administrative limits (where they exist). With the exception of 2010 and 2016, there are some clear, albeit only mildly pronounced trends that have emerged over the years. From 1998 through to 2005, there was a downward trend in the proportion of drivers who admitted driving after consuming any amount of alcohol. However, an increasing trend is evident from 2005 through to 2011. That trend again reversed in 2011 and has since generally declined until 2016, when there was a spike in self-reported drinking and driving. It remains to be seen whether there will be increases in the percentage of respondents who admit to driving after drinking in future years or whether 2016 was an anomaly, similar to 2010.

In 2016, 4.6% of respondents admitted they had driven when they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months (see Figure 4). Of importance, with the exception of 2014, the difference between 2007 and every year until 2016 is significant. In other words, both the consistency in the trend that has been observed and the results of significance tests suggest a continued decline since 2007 in the percentage of drivers in Canada who admitted to driving while they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months. Continued monitoring is essential to see if the increase from 2015 to 2016 will continue or not.

Where do drivers do most of their drinking?

Respondents who admitted to driving when they thought they were over the legal limit were asked where they did most of their drinking (see Figure 5). In 2016, almost one-third (30.4%) of these respondents

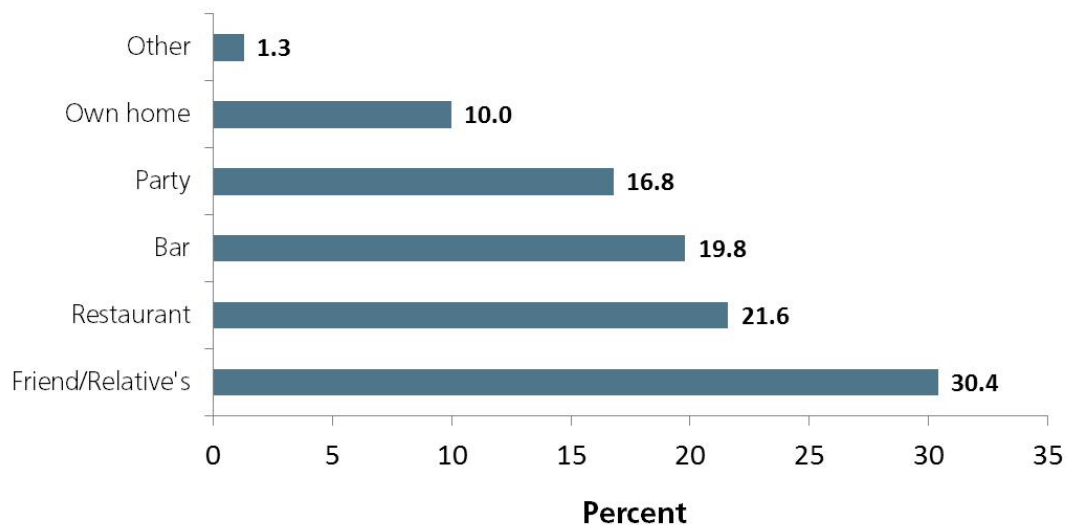
reported doing most of their drinking prior to driving at the home of a friend or relative, compared to 31.1% in 2014 and 32.3% in 2015. One-fifth of respondents (21.6%) reported doing most of their drinking in a restaurant (20.5% in 2014 and 24.5% in 2015). Slightly less than one-fifth (19.8%) of those who drove when they thought they were over the legal limit report doing most of their drinking at a bar, down from the percentage of respondents who reported doing so in 2014 (20.7%) and 2015 (29.3%). One-sixth of respondents in 2016 (16.8%) reported doing most of their drinking at a party compared to 19.1% in 2014 and 5.0% in 2015.



In sharp contrast, just 10.0% reported doing most of their drinking in their own home (7.9% in 2014 and 6.4% in 2015); and 1.3% reported doing most of their drinking at other locations (0.7% in 2014 and 2.5% in 2015).

These results suggest that more persons who drive after drinking do so at the home of friends

Figure 5: Locations where Canadian drivers reported doing most of their drinking



or family, in a restaurant or bar, or at a party. Conversely, a much smaller proportion of persons drink at their own home. Key messages to reach and influence these different groups should be tailored accordingly.

With whom do drivers do most of their drinking? Respondents who reportedly drove when they thought they were over the legal limit were also asked with whom they did most of their drinking (see Figure 6). In 2016, over one-third (36.1%) of this group reported doing most of their drinking in the company of close friends. In addition, almost one-third (31.2%) reported doing most of the drinking in the company of a

life partner and/or family member; and 25.9% reported doing their drinking in the company of acquaintances or colleagues. Less than 10% of drivers (6.8%) reported doing most of their drinking alone. These results suggest that a focus on messages and approaches aimed at targeting life partners and/or families as well as close friends may reach and influence the behaviours of the largest portion of drinking drivers.

Where does the issue of drinking and driving sit on the public agenda? In 2016, more than two-thirds (71.0%) of respondents cited drinking and driving as an issue of concern on the public agenda, the highest percentage of any societal

Figure 6: Persons with whom Canadian drivers reported doing most of their drinking

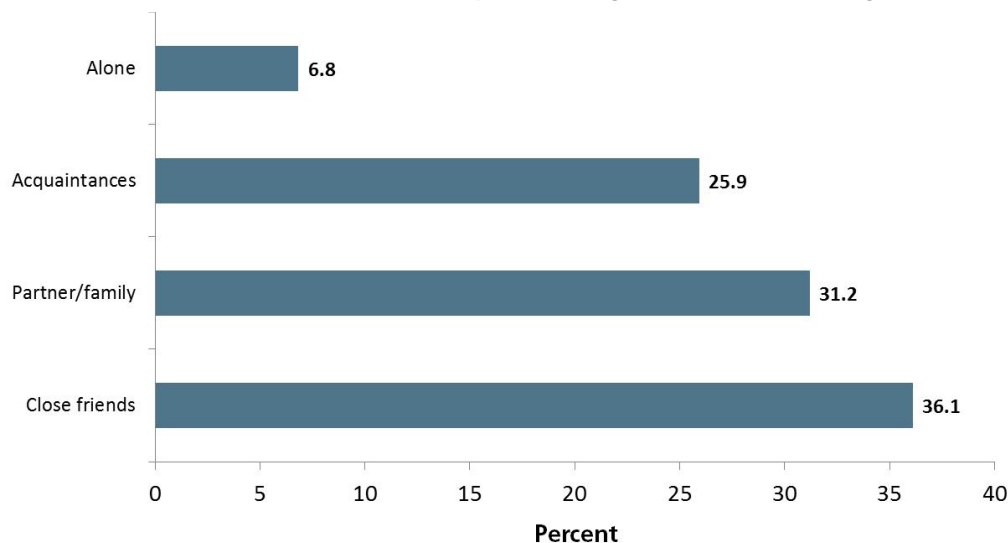
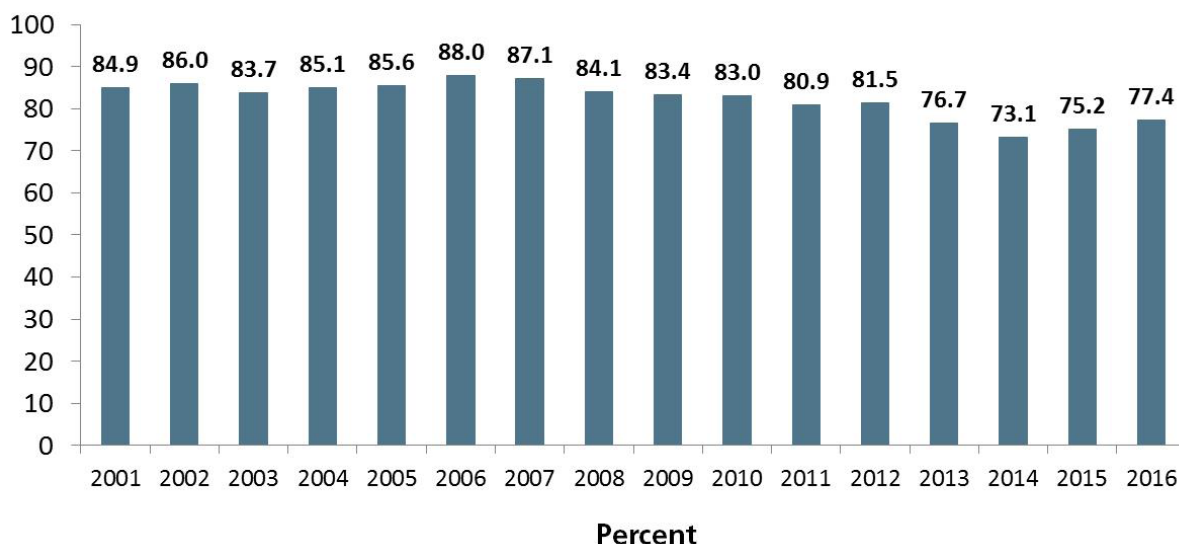


Figure 7: Percentage of Canadians who regard drinking drivers as a 'very' or 'extremely' serious problem



issues that were presented to respondents. The issue that had the second highest level of concern among Canadians was the state of the health care system which was identified by 66.0% of respondents.

In seven out of 11 years since 2006, when compared to other societal issues such as crime, the economy, and global warming, drinking and driving has been mentioned as the societal issue of greatest concern by Canadian drivers. The price of gas was identified as the societal issue of greatest concern in three years (2011, 2012, and 2014) while the state of the health care system was mentioned as the top societal issue of concern in 2015. During the four years when drinking and driving was not mentioned as the foremost societal issue of concern, it was consistently ranked second among respondents.

In summary, although the percentage of Canadians who considered drinking and driving to be a priority concern is lower in 2016 compared to 2006 (71.0% versus 81.8%), it has consistently been a prominent issue on the public agenda.

Is drinking and driving a major road safety issue for Canadians? A comparison of drinking and driving to other road safety issues (rather than societal issues) in 2016 revealed that drinking drivers were rated as a very or extremely serious problem by 77.4% of Canadians (see Figure 7), representing a slight increase from 2015 (75.2%). Although there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents who regard drinking and driving as a major road safety issue in 2016 (77.4%) as compared to 2006 (88.0%), a clear majority

of Canadians continued to express high levels of concern about drinking and driving. Furthermore, since 2014, there has been an increase in the percentage of Canadians who consider drinking and driving to be a very or extremely serious problem.

Conclusion. Based upon recent trends in the number of alcohol-related road deaths and the percentage of total road deaths that are attributed to drinking drivers in Canada, excluding BC, it is evident that progress in reducing drinking and driving has been achieved, at least until 2013, the most recent year for which fatality data are available. Self-reported data on drinking and driving from this RSM since 2013 suggest that the proportion of drivers engaging in drinking and driving behaviour is not decreasing. Recent data patterns for the past few years for both indicators on drinking and driving (with any amount of alcohol and above the legal limit) are somewhat volatile. Therefore, continued monitoring is necessary to determine the direction of the trend. In the interim, it appears prudent to consider alcohol-impaired driving a priority road safety issue that requires continued attention.



References

Brown, S.W., Vanlaar, W.G.M., Robertson, R.D. (2015). The Alcohol and Drug-Crash Problems in Canada: 2012. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators.

About the poll

These results are based on the RSM, an annual public opinion poll developed and conducted by TIRF. A total of 2,009 Canadians completed the poll in October of 2016. Results can be considered accurate within plus or minus 2.2%, 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. Similar to 2014 and 2015, all of the respondents completed the survey online.

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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