



# SHARING THE ROAD: KEY FACTORS IN FATAL CRASHES IN TORONTO

Traffic Injury Research Foundation & Toronto Police Service

May 2018



The most common contributing factors in fatal collisions are speeding, impairment (by alcohol or drugs), distraction, non-use of seatbelts, and aggressive driving. This fact sheet examines the prevalence of these factors among the 70 drivers of passenger vehicles (cars, trucks, vans) who died in Toronto from 2011 to 2015.



## Speeding

Among drivers of passenger vehicles:

- > Almost 1 in 6 drivers were speeding at the time of the crash.
- > Drivers dying in crashes which occurred on Saturday or Sunday were twice as likely to have been speeding as drivers killed in weekday crashes.
- > 1 in 6 male drivers were speeding compared to 1 of 10 female drivers.

Source: TIRF National Fatality Database 2018

## Impairment

More than two-thirds of drivers of passenger vehicles were tested for the presence of alcohol and drugs. Toxicological data showed that:

- > Almost 2 in 5 drivers tested positive for alcohol.
- > Almost half of drivers tested positive for drugs.
- > 1 in 4 drivers tested positive for cannabis.

Source: TIRF National Fatality Database 2018



## Distraction

Among drivers of passenger vehicles:

- > Almost 1 in 6 drivers killed in crashes between 2011 and 2015 were distracted.
- > 1 in 3 drivers killed in 2015 were distracted.
- > 1 in 6 drivers killed in multi-vehicle crashes were distracted compared to 13% of drivers killed in single vehicle crashes.



Source: TIRF National Fatality Database 2018

## Seatbelt Use



Nationally, data show that more than 95% of passenger vehicle occupants wear their seatbelt. However, 1 in 3 occupants killed

in road crashes did not wear seatbelts (Transport Canada 2011). Among drivers of passenger vehicles in fatal crashes in Toronto:

- > More than 1 in 4 drivers of passenger vehicles were not wearing seatbelts.
- > More than 1 in 3 female drivers did not wear seatbelts compared to 1 of 4 male drivers.
- > Drivers with passengers were more likely to wear seatbelts than drivers who were travelling alone (87% compared to 69%).

Source: TIRF National Fatality Database 2018

## Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving is more difficult to define as compared to other key factors. There is no code for "aggressive driving" in Ontario's police-reported collision data. In TIRF's Road Safety Monitor which surveyed driver behaviour (Vanlaar et al. 2007), aggressive driving was defined as follows:

- > running red lights;
- > street racing;
- > excessive speeding;
- > swearing;
- > using the horn when annoyed; and,



- > taking risks.

Some drivers involved in collisions who engaged in aggressive driving may have been coded as distracted or speeding. Furthermore, some of these drivers may also have tested positive for alcohol or drugs.

Studies linking driver aggression to increased collision risk suggest that curbing aggressive driving could save many lives and crash costs. Increased enforcement, incentive programs (e.g., insurance companies offering rate reductions to customers who demonstrate safe driving practices), and public service messages discourage aggressive and risky



driving. Stresses experienced on the roadway may carry over into one's work and family life. Even when aggressive driving behaviours

such as shouting or cursing are not noticed by the driver at whom they were directed, reports of a collision were greater among drivers who self-reported this behaviour. (Wickens et al. 2016).

## Traffic Injury Research Foundation

TIRF is a national, independent, charitable road safety research institute that studies road user behaviours. Visit [www.tirf.ca](http://www.tirf.ca) or call (877) 238-5235  
ISBN: 978-1-988945-59-0

## Toronto Police Service

TPS is dedicated to delivering police services, in partnership with our communities, to keep Toronto the best and safest place to be.  
[www.torontopolice.on.ca/](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/)



## Drop It And Drive®

DIAD is a TIRF education program focused on preventing distraction-related road user fatalities and injuries. Visit: [www.diad.tirf.ca](http://www.diad.tirf.ca)



In partnership with The Co-operators

