

COMPACT *Research*

Drunk Driving

by Peggy J. Parks

Current Issues

Contents

Foreword	6
Drunk Driving at a Glance	8
Overview	10
How Serious a Problem Is Drunk Driving?	22
Primary Source Quotes	29
Facts and Illustrations	32
Who Drives Drunk?	36
Primary Source Quotes	43
Facts and Illustrations	46
How Should Drunk Drivers Be Punished?	50
Primary Source Quotes	57
Facts and Illustrations	60
Can Drunk Driving Be Stopped?	64
Primary Source Quotes	71
Facts and Illustrations	74
Key People and Advocacy Groups	78
Chronology	80
Related Organizations	82
For Further Research	86
Source Notes	89
List of Illustrations	91
Index	92
About the Author	96

Drunk Driving at a Glance

Blood-Alcohol Concentration

Whether someone is intoxicated is determined by a test that measures blood-alcohol concentration (BAC). A BAC of .03 percent means that 100 milliliters of the person's blood contained .03 percent of alcohol. In all states and the District of Columbia, the legal BAC limit is .08 percent.

Drunk Driving Statistics

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that in 2007 more than 41,000 people in the United States were killed in traffic crashes, with 12,998 of the deaths resulting from at least one driver who was drunk.

The “Typical” Drunk Driver

People of both sexes, all races and religions, all income levels, and all ages have been arrested for drunk driving. The most common drunk drivers are males aged 21 to 34.

Repeat Offenders

Safety officials say that anywhere from one-third to three-fourths of drunk drivers are repeat offenders who have been charged with at least one previous drunk driving arrest.

How Serious a Problem Is Drunk Driving?

“Impaired driving is the most frequently committed violent crime in the United States.”

—National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“You seldom think of car keys as dangerous—unless they’re being poked by a drunk into a car’s ignition switch.”

—Bill Mooberry, former executive director of the Naval Safety Center.

On the evening of December 30, 2007, an employee of an Oregon, Ohio, Taco Bell restaurant called 911 to report a customer who smelled of alcohol and was slurring his words. “There’s this guy he’s driving like a black Ford F 250 . . . and he’s really drunk,” the caller told dispatchers. “We’ve got him stopped in our parking lot, in our drive-through right now, and I was just wondering if you could send someone over here to either stop him or pick him up.”⁹ Police officer Ted Moore responded to the call but by the time he arrived, the man had already driven away.

Drunk after a night at a local bar, 24-year-old Michael Gagnon missed the entrance ramp to northbound I-280, drove above the highway on an overpass, then turned onto the exit ramp heading the wrong way. Panicked drivers swerved to avoid his truck and used their cell phones

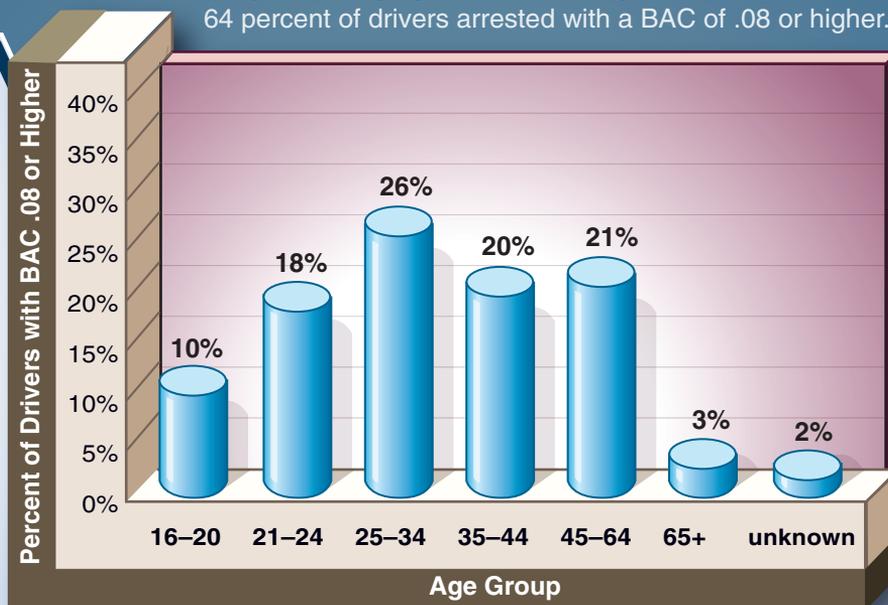
Facts and Illustrations

Who Drives Drunk?

- A 2007 study by Johns Hopkins University showed that people who drive drunk are not necessarily problem drinkers, although those who drive with a BAC of **.10 percent** or higher are most likely to have a history of **drinking problems**.
- According to a report by Community Oriented Policing Services, drunk drivers are most likely to be **male, white or Hispanic, between 25 and 44 years old, and unmarried**.
- In 2007 there were 12,068 drivers with a BAC of .08 percent or higher involved in fatal crashes; of those, **83 percent** were male, **15 percent** were female, and the sex of the remaining **2 percent** was unknown.
- The NHTSA reports that during 2007, **5,161** motor vehicle fatalities involved alcohol-impaired drivers aged 21 to 34, and only **622** involved impaired drivers aged 65 and older.
- Repeat offenders are from **one-third to three-fourths** more likely to be involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes than first-time offenders.
- Statistics show that of all drunk driving–related traffic crashes, drunk drivers or their passengers are the most likely to be **killed**.

Drunk Drivers Involved in Fatal Traffic Crashes by Age

Although all types of people, from every possible walk of life, have been arrested for driving drunk, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that the offense is more common among certain age groups. Drivers aged 21 to 44 make up 64 percent of drivers arrested with a BAC of .08 or higher.



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "2007 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment—Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities," August 2008. www.nhtsa.gov.

- A 2006 study by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation showed that drivers with a BAC of .05 to .07 percent are 4 to **10 times** more likely to be involved in a **fatal crash** than drivers who have not been drinking.
- According to the NHTSA, in 2006 the most frequently recorded BAC among drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes was **.16 percent**.
- According to the FBI, of all juveniles arrested for driving under the influence in 2007, **93.1 percent** were white.

“State highway safety offices . . . and others encourage ‘no use’ of alcohol when driving, yet our society encourages alcohol consumption through the media and our laws permit a certain legal amount of alcohol when driving.”

—Governors Highway Safety Association, “Statement of the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) for the Oversight Hearing on the Effectiveness of Federal Drunk Driving Programs,” October 25, 2007. www.ghsa.org.

The GHSA’s mission is to provide leadership and representation for the states to improve traffic safety, influence national policy, and enhance program management.

“We must stop putting ourselves in positions where we can drive drunk. This means not driving to the bars, not driving to parties, not driving anywhere for the explicit purpose of drinking.”

—*Iowa State Daily*, “Editorial: Let Two Lost Lives Change Our View of Drunk Driving,” February 15, 2006. www.iowastatedaily.com.

Iowa State Daily is an independent, student-run publication of Iowa State University.

“The purpose of the sobriety checkpoint is to reduce the number of traffic collisions involving intoxicated drivers through enforcement and public awareness. The message is simple ‘You Drink & Drive, You Lose.’”

—Los Angeles Police Department, “LAPD Conducts Sobriety Checkpoint,” LAPD Blog, May 19, 2006. <http://lapdblog.typepad.com>.

The LAPD is the fifth largest law enforcement agency in the United States.

“The simple fact is that checkpoints are largely wastes of police resources and taxpayer money—not to mention unjustified invasions of privacy.”

—Lawrence Taylor, “Do DUI Roadblocks Work? (Part II)” DUI Blog, April 20, 2005. www.duiblog.com.

Taylor is a defense attorney from California.

“Founded in 1980, MADD has helped save more than 330,000 lives.”

—Amy George, “Miss America and the CarMax Foundation Launch New UMADD Chapter at NC State,” Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) news release, October 16, 2006. www.madd.org.

George is MADD’s communications manager.

“My favorite example of distorting statistics for self-serving purposes is MADD’s own oft-repeated claim: ‘Since MADD’s founding in 1980, alcohol-related fatalities have decreased 44 percent (from 30,429 to 17,013) and MADD has helped save almost 300,000 lives.’ 300,000? Do the math.”

—Lawrence Taylor, “Do DUI Roadblocks Work? (Part II)” DUI Blog, April 20, 2005. www.duiblog.com.

Taylor is a defense attorney from California.

“Drunk driving, why is drunk driving even an issue? We have cabs, buses, designated driver programs, but most of all we have common sense. Don’t we? Here is a societal problem that is 100% preventable!”

—Crystal Sciarini, “How Drunk Driving Changed My Life,” Associated Content, February 5, 2007. www.associatedcontent.com.

Sciarini is a woman from Wisconsin whose stepfather was killed by a drunk driver in 1997.

Chronology

1919

The ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution by Congress marks the beginning of Prohibition, which bans the manufacture and distribution of alcohol in the United States.

1980

After Candace Lightner's 13-year-old daughter Cari is struck and killed by a drunk driver, Lightner founds Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD); the organization's name is later changed to Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

1982

President Ronald Reagan appoints the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving.

1920

1950

1980

1933

Alcohol Prohibition legislation is repealed.

1981

Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) is founded by Robert Anastas, a high school student from Massachusetts.

1966

The National Traffic Safety Board is established by the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act; later the organization is renamed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

1984

The National Minimum Drinking Age Act is passed by Congress, which requires that states prohibit the purchase or possession of alcoholic beverages by anyone under age 21 as a condition of receiving federal highway funds.

1985

After disputes with board members over MADD's focus, Candace Lightner leaves the organization that she founded five years before.

2008

The NHTSA releases a report stating that the number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities declined 3.7 percent from 2006 to 2007; 32 states had decreases in the number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in that same period.

1995

The number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities totals 17,274, a 24 percent reduction since 1985.

2005

All states and the District of Columbia have .08 BAC limits or lower.

1985

2008

1988

America's most catastrophic drunk driving crash occurs in Carrollton, Kentucky, when Larry Mahoney, a repeat drunk driving offender, slams into a church bus, killing 24 children and 3 adults.

2000

Congress passes the DOT Appropriations Act, thereby adopting .08 BAC as the national limit for impaired driving. States that do not comply will be penalized by losing federal highway construction funds.

1997

To broaden the scope of its mission, SADD is renamed Students Against Destructive Decisions.

Related Organizations

The Century Council

2345 Crystal Dr., Suite 910

Arlington, VA 22202

phone: (202) 637-0077 • fax: (202) 637-0079

e-mail: info@centurycouncil.org • Web site: www.centurycouncil.org

Funded by the distilled spirits industry, the Century Council's mission is to fight drunk driving and stop underage drinking. Its Web site offers news articles, a collection of facts about underage drinking, drunk driving statistics, and research findings.

DUI Awareness Initiative

PO Box 340804

Tampa, FL 33694

phone: (813) 629-5705

e-mail: infodui@duiawareness.org • Web site: www.duiawareness.org

DUI Awareness Initiative administers educational programs about alcohol- and drug-impaired driving at high schools throughout Florida's Tampa Bay area. Its Web site features a collection of facts, news articles, and a special section for teenagers.

The Marin Institute

24 Belvedere St.

San Rafael, CA 94901

phone: (415) 456-5692 • fax: (415) 456-0491

e-mail: info@marininstitute.org • Web site: www.marininstitute.org

The Marin Institute, which calls itself the "alcohol industry watchdog," is dedicated to fighting what it perceives as the impact of the alcohol industry's negative practices, and protecting the public from them. Its Web site offers news releases, information about the alcohol industry, fact sheets, interviews, and a link to the organization's blog.

Index

- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 39
- alcohol
 - effects on body, 13–14
 - lethal dose of, 15–16
 - See also* blood-alcohol concentration
- Alexander, Kyle, 10–11
- Armstrong, Marie, 65
- Arpaio, Joe, 67

- Balko, Radley, 31, 50
- Bermudez, Andre, 30
- Bickham, Andrew John, 55
- Bieber, Joel, 59
- Biegala, Walt, 23
- Bingham, Frank, 53–54
- Bingham, Rebecca, 53
- Birch, Glynn R., 45
- Blaisdale, Jack, 23–25, 36, 41–42
- Blackistone, Steve, 58
- blood-alcohol concentration (BAC), 8, 12–13
 - age group with highest levels in fatal crashes, 48
 - debate over lowering, 67–68
 - gender differences in, 13–14
 - increase in legal limit has reduced alcohol-related traffic deaths, 64
 - legal maximum limit on, 18
 - lowering, effects on alcohol-related traffic deaths, 74
 - most frequently recorded in fatal crashes, 47
 - opinions on, 63 (chart)
- boating
 - alcohol as factor in accidents involving, 48 (chart)
 - alcohol-related accidents in, 12
- breathalyzers, 13
 - punishment for refusal to take, 60
- Brick, John, 15
- Buckner, Julie, 19
- Busch, Clarence William, 26–27

- Campeau, Dina, 44
- car crashes
 - alcohol-related
 - definitions of, 25–26
 - percent of teenagers at risk for, 49 (chart)
 - annual number of teenagers killed in, 17
 - fatal
 - age group with highest BAC levels in, 48
 - most frequently recorded in BAC, 47
 - by time of day, 35 (chart)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 45
 - on percentage of young drivers killed with high BAC levels, 33
- Chico (Ca) Enterprise-Record* (newspaper), 51
- Clouet, Erika, 17
- Clouet, German, 17
- Comer, Terri, 14, 16
- Community Oriented Policing Services, 46
- Cook, Shon, 54–55
- Cowen, Tyler, 57
- Cronin, Michael, 12
- Crovelli, Mark R., 30, 57

- Davies, Laurie, 27–28, 29