



Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2012 Annual Report

Self-reported drink and drug driving: Finding from the Crime Survey for England and Wales

This article presents data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Since 2009, the CSEW has asked respondents to state (anonymously) whether they have driven over the legal alcohol limit or under the influence of drugs.

Results from the 2009/10 and 2010/11 CSEW appeared in the [2011 Reported Road Casualties Annual Report](#) (published September 2012). This article is an update, with data for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Summary

- Around 6 per cent of drivers in 2012/13 said they had driven whilst over the legal **alcohol** limit at least once in the last 12 months. This proportion has been broadly similar for the last 3 years.
- In 2012/13, 0.5 per cent of drivers said they had driven under the influence of **illegal drugs** at least once in the last year. This is a **fall** from 2010/11, when the corresponding figure was 1.3 per cent of drivers.
- Both drink and drug driving¹ are **more prevalent amongst males**. The proportion of male drivers who said they had driven whilst over the legal alcohol limit within the last year is consistently around double that for female drivers. For drug driving, the difference between male and female drivers is even larger (around a factor of 4).
- In 2012/13, **drivers in their 20s** had the highest rates of both drink and drug driving. 10 per cent of drivers in their 20s reported drink driving at least once in the last year and 1 per cent reported drug driving. Amongst older drivers, the prevalence was around half that, for both drink and drug driving.

¹ Throughout this publication, “*drink driving*” refers to the survey respondent *driving when they think they may have been over the legal alcohol limit*.

“*Drug driving*” refers to the respondent *driving when they think they may have been affected by or under the influence of illegal drugs*.

Drink driving

- In 2012/13², 6.4 per cent of drivers³ said that they had driven at least once in the last year whilst thinking they may have been over the legal alcohol limit. This proportion is broadly unchanged from the last few years.
- Of those who have driven over the limit in the last year, the majority (around two thirds) were “occasional” – doing so only once or twice in the year.
- Drink driving remains more prevalent among men. In 2012/13, around 9 per cent of male drivers said they had driven whilst over the legal limit at least once, compared to just 4 per cent of female drivers.

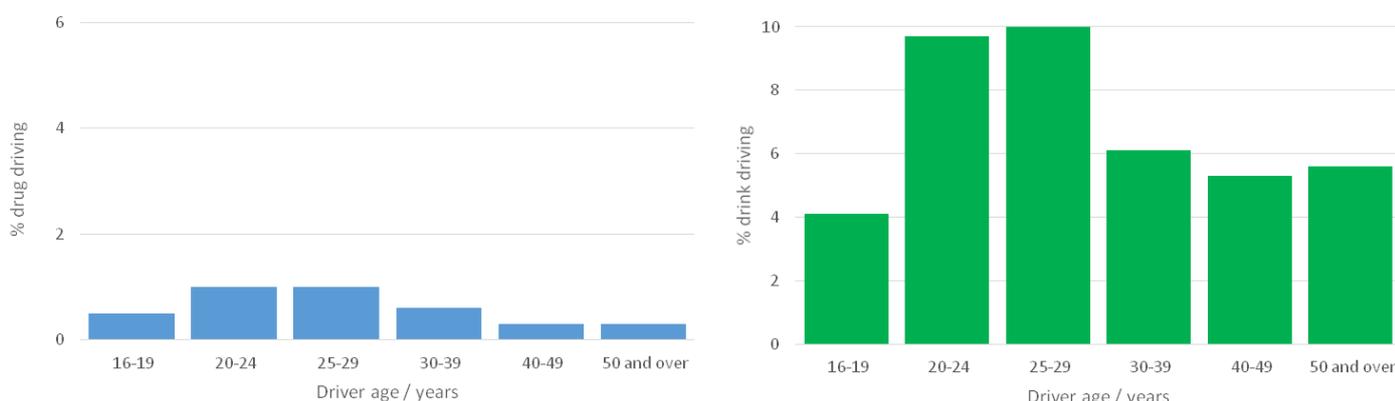
Drug driving

- In 2012/13, 0.5 per cent of drivers said that they had driven under the influence of illegal drugs at least once in the last year.
- In common with drink driving, the majority of these drivers reported that they had done so only once or twice in the last year.
- The contrast between male and female drivers is even starker than for drink driving. In 2012/13, 0.8 per cent of male drivers said they had driven under the influence of drugs at least once in the last year, a factor of four higher than the proportion of female drivers (just 0.2 per cent). Data for the last few years shows a similar difference.

Variation across age groups

- For both drink and drug driving, the highest rates are amongst drivers aged 20 to 29. In 2012/13, 10 per cent of drivers in their 20s reported drink driving at least once in the last year and 1 per cent reported drug driving. Amongst older drivers, the prevalence was around half that, for both drink and drug driving.

Chart 1: % of drivers self-reporting drug (left) and drink (right) driving at least once in the last year, by age; 2012/13.



² Data for 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 refers to financial years (Apr – Mar). Data for 2009/10 refers to the period Oct 2009 to Sept 2010.

³ A “driver” in this context is a survey respondent who stated that they had *driven at least once in the last 12 months*.

Trends over time

- Chart 2 below compares the prevalence of self-reported drink and drug driving each year from 2010/11 onwards.

Chart 2: % of drivers self-reporting drink (left hand axis) and drug (right hand axis) driving at least once in the last year; 2010/11 onwards. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.



- Although the proportion who reported drink driving within the last year (green line) has been relatively stable, the proportion for drug driving (blue line) has seen a statistically significant decrease, from 1.3 per cent in 2010/11 to just 0.5 per cent in 2012/13.
- A decrease in drug driving could simply be due to a reduction in general drug use amongst the drivers. However, if we consider only the sub-set of drivers who stated that they had used drugs (in any context) within the last year, we still see a reduction in the proportion reporting drug driving: in 2010/11, 20 per cent of drivers who had taken an illegal drug in the past 12 months reported that they had driven under the influence of an illegal drug; by 2012/13, this had fallen to 9 per cent. This suggests that the apparent reduction in self-reported drug driving is not simply due to a reduction in general drug use, but a reduction in drug driving, even amongst those drivers who do take drugs.
- Care is needed when comparing year-on-year trends from sample surveys and even changes that appear to be statistically significant can still be the result of random fluctuations. As more data is added to the time series each year, it will be possible to monitor the longer term trends and put individual changes in context.

The data tables accompanying this release can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras51-reported-drinking-and-driving

Tables ras51101 and 51102 – self-reported drink driving

Tables ras51103 and 51104 – self-reported drug driving

Background notes

1. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The CSEW (formerly known as the British Crime Survey) is a long-running household survey of adults aged 16 and over, resident in England and Wales. It collects data on experiences and perceptions of crime via a face-to-face interview. Since 2009, it has included questions asking people whether they have driven whilst over the legal alcohol limit or under the influence of drugs.

Between 35,000 and 50,000 people were interviewed for the survey in each year 2009/10 to 2012/13. Around half the sample underwent a self-completion module towards the end of the interview, including the questions on drink and drug driving.

Responsibility for the survey passed from the Home Office (HO) to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2012. Further technical information about the survey, including a copy of the questionnaire, can be found here: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/crime-statistics-methodology/index.html

Other published outputs from the CSEW can be found here: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/browse-by-theme/taxonomy/index.html?tons=Crime+and+Justice

2. Limitations of the data

The CSEW results are based on a sample of 16 – 59 year olds within the general household population. The results are weighted to ensure they best reflect a profile of the general population.

As with all sample surveys, the results are subject to random fluctuation, particularly when broken down into small age groups. Based on standard statistical tests, the overall reduction in self-reported drug driving appears to be significant, but **trends or differences amongst individual age groups shown in the accompanying tables have not been tested for statistical significance and should be treated with caution.**

There may also be issues with accurate recall and self-reporting from respondents, particularly in relation to illegal or illicit behaviours. In addition, respondents may not be able to make an accurate assessment of whether they were over the legal alcohol limit when they drove.

3. Other data on drink and drug driving

The Department publish annual statistics and analysis on drink driving. For the latest statistics, see Chapter 3 of the 2012 Annual Report:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012

The THINK! Annual Survey measures road safety attitudes and behaviour in Britain,

including self-reported drink and drug driving. The latest report is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-research

4. Background information on drug driving

A new drug driving offence was created through the Crime and Courts Act 2013 by inserting a new Section 5A in the Road Traffic Act 1988. New legislation includes an enabling power to make regulations to specify the drugs and their limits over which it will be an offence to drive. There will be no need to prove impairment due to drugs case by case - unlike the existing offence. There is a statutory medical defence for those taking medication under the supervision and/or advice of a healthcare professional. The regulations are expected to be approved by Parliament in Summer 2014. More information is available here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/drug-driving

The Department has commissioned an evaluation to assess the implementation, operation and impacts of the new drug driving legislation. The evaluation will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and will support and inform Departmental policy.

5. Statistics information and contact details

- This article forms a chapter of the Reported Road Casualties Great Britain Annual Report, 2012. The rest of the report was published in September 2013 and can be found here - www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012
- The CSEW is designated National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. More information is available here:
www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html
- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-accident-and-safety-statistics-pre-release-access-list>
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