



Department for Transport

# Self-reported drink and drug driving: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2014/15

## About this article

This article presents data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for 2014/15.

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.

## In this article

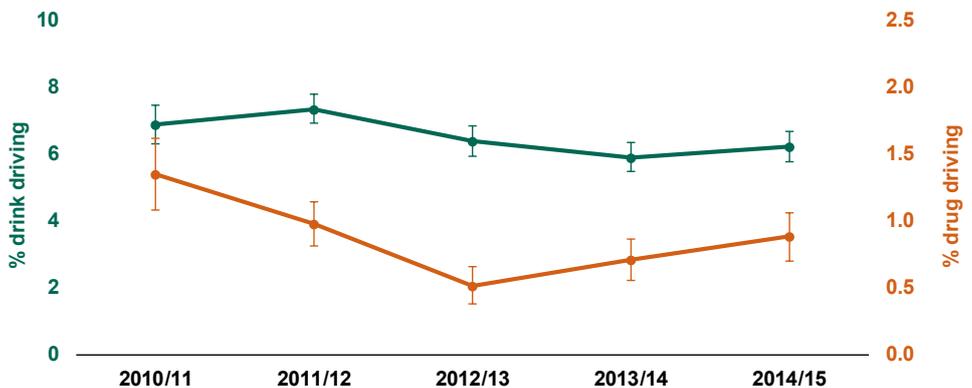
- Drink driving ..... [p2](#)
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Around 6.2 per cent of drivers in 2014/15 said they had driven whilst **over the legal alcohol limit** at least once in the last 12 months.

This proportion has remained broadly unchanged over recent years, and the 2014/15 proportion is not statistically significantly different from 2012/13 or 2013/14.

In 2014/15, 0.9 per cent of drivers said they had driven **under the influence of illegal drugs** at least once in the last year. This is not significantly different from the figures for 2010/11 to 2013/14.

**Chart: % 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**



Both drink and drug driving are more prevalent amongst males. In 2014/15 the proportion of **male drivers** who said they had driven whilst over the legal alcohol limit within the last year was around double that for **female drivers**. For drug driving, the difference between male and female drivers is even larger (around a factor of 4).

## Definitions

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.

In 2014/15, 6.2 per cent of drivers admitted to **driving when they thought that they might have been over the drink drive limit**.

This proportion has remained broadly unchanged over recent years, and the 2014/15 proportion is not statistically significantly different from 2012/13 or 2013/14.

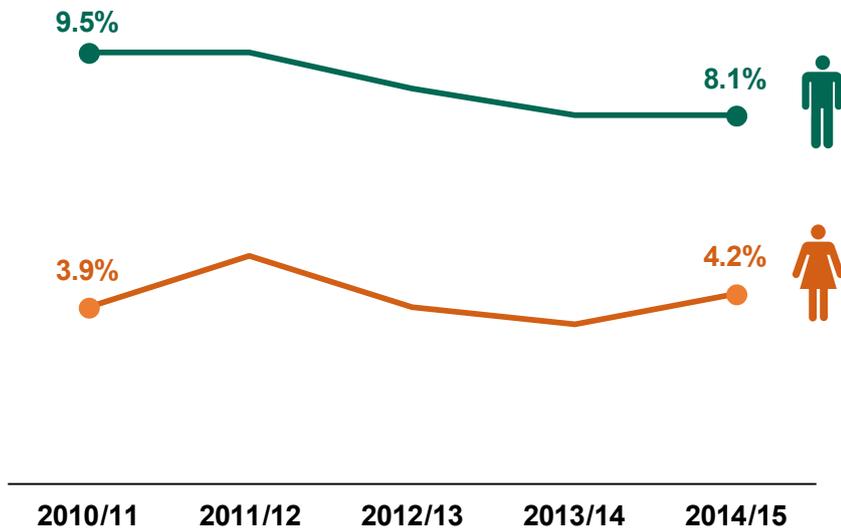
Of those who have driven when over limit in the last year, the majority (almost three-fifths of all people who had driven when drunk, or 3.7 per cent of all drivers) did so **‘once or twice’ in the year**. Around 1.6 per cent of all drivers had driven when drunk **once or twice a month or more frequently**.

**Men are more likely to drink and drive than women.** In 2014/15, 8.1 per cent of **male drivers** admitted to driving when over the legal alcohol limit at least once. In comparison, 4.2 per cent of **women drivers** admitted to the same offence. This difference is statistically significant.

## Tables

- Self-reported drink driving: [RAS51101](#).

**Chart 1: Percentage of male and female drivers reporting driving whilst thinking they are over the legal alcohol limit at least once in last 12 months: 2010/11-2014/15**



## Tables

- Self-reported drink driving by age and sex: [RAS51102](#).

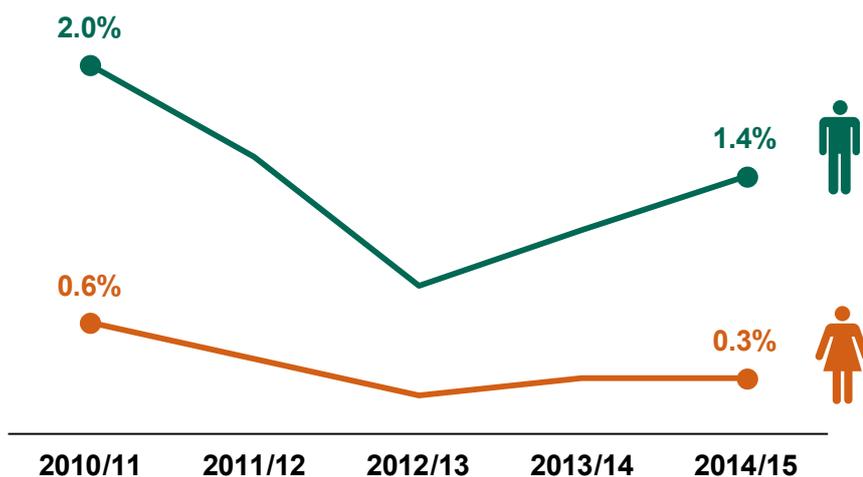
## Self-reported drug driving

In 2014/15, 0.9 per cent of drivers admitted to **driving when they thought that they might be under the influence of illegal drugs**. This is not significantly different from the figures for 2010/11 to 2013/14.

Of those people who had been under the influence of drugs whilst driving, 45 per cent (or 0.4 per cent of all drivers) had driven **'once or twice' in the year**. A further 23 per cent (or 0.2 per cent of all drivers) had driven under the influence of drugs **once or twice a week, or more frequently**.

**Men are more likely to use drugs and drive than women.** In 2014/15, 1.4 per cent of men admitted to driving whilst under the influence of illegal drugs at least once. In comparison, 0.3 per cent of women admitted to the same offence.

**Chart 2: Percentage of male and female drivers reporting driving whilst thinking they are under the influence of illegal drugs at least once in last 12 months: 2010/11-2014/15**



### Tables

- Self-reported drug driving by age and sex: [RAS51104](#).

One major difference between drink and drug driving is the number of drivers who either drink alcohol or use illegal drugs at all, irrespective of whether they drive whilst under the influence. Around 81 per cent of all drivers admitted to **drinking alcohol at some point in the last 12 months, but had not driven when they thought they had been over the legal alcohol limit**. In contrast, only 8.8 per cent of drivers admitted to **taking illegal drugs at some point in the last 12 months, but had not driven when they thought that they might be under the influence of illegal drugs**. This finding is unsurprising as we would expect a smaller proportion of the population to undertake an illegal activity than a legal activity.

However, this also means that it might be more appropriate to look at the trends in drug driving for

just the section of **drivers who have taken illegal drugs**, rather than all drivers, as they make up such a small proportion of the general population.

On this basis, of the drivers who have taken illegal drugs at all in the last 12 months, 9.2 per cent had **driven under the influence of illegal drugs at least once in the last year**. In comparison, 7.2 per cent of the drivers who had drunk alcohol at all in the last year reported that they had also **driven when over the legal alcohol limit**.

This suggests that drivers are **less likely to drive under the influence of drugs than alcohol**, in general, but the group of drivers who do take illegal drugs at all are more likely to drive under the influence of drugs than the group of drivers who drink alcohol are to drive under the influence of alcohol.

### Self-reported drink and drug driving by age

Over the period 2012/13 to 2014/15 the age groups that were most likely to admit to **driving whilst over the legal alcohol limit** were **20-24 year olds** and **25-29 year olds**.

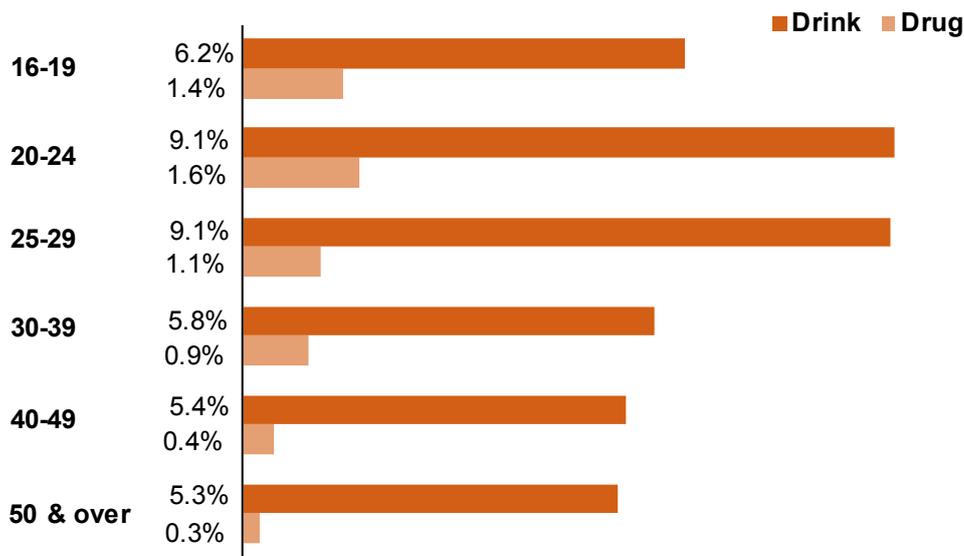
Around 9.1 per cent of **drivers aged 20-24 or 25-29** admitted to drink driving, in comparison with 6.2 per cent of drivers aged under 20, 5.8 per cent of drivers in their 30s, 5.4 per cent of drivers in their 40s and 5.3 per cent of those aged 50 and over.

Over the period 2012/13 to 2014/15 the age groups that were most likely to admit to **driving under the influence of illegal drugs** were **20-24 year olds** and **16-19 year olds**.

Around 1.6 per cent of **drivers aged 20-24** admitted to drug driving. Around 1.4 per cent of **drivers aged 16-19** and 1.1 per cent **aged 25-29** admitted to drug driving, whereas 0.9 per cent of drivers in their 30s, 0.4 per cent of drivers in their 40s and 0.3 per cent of drivers aged 50 and over admitted to driving under the influence of illegal drugs.

These figures indicate that **driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is mostly a problem in younger, rather than older drivers**. However, continuous monitoring of the figures will be required to assess whether the problem remains in the cohorts (i.e. whether young drivers who offend today continue to offend when they get into the older age groups) or whether it is an age-related problem (i.e. whilst drivers offend at younger ages, they then stop offending as they get older).

**Chart 3: Percentage of drivers reporting driving whilst thinking they are over the legal alcohol limit or under the influence of illegal drugs at least once in last 12 months by age of driver: 2012/13-2014/15 average**



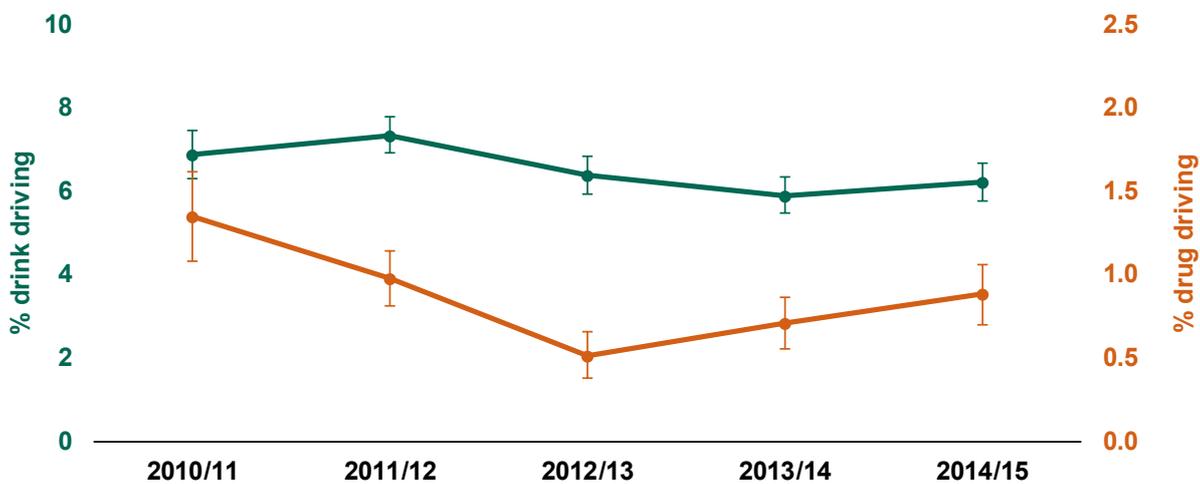
**Tables**

- Self-reported drink driving by age and sex: [RAS51102](#).
- Self-reported drug driving by age and sex: [RAS51104](#).

**Trends over time in self-reported drink and drug driving**

These figures are based on a **sample survey**, covering around 15,000 to 20,000 drivers each year. Given that the proportion of drivers who admit to driving while under the influence of either alcohol or drugs is low, the **sample sizes for the estimates are very small**. This introduces **considerable uncertainty** and sampling error into the figures, and caution is required when making year on year comparisons.

**Chart 4: Percentage 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**



The confidence interval for the **proportion of drivers admitting to driving over the legal alcohol limit at least once** in 2014/15 overlaps with every year except 2011/12. So we can conclude that although the level of drink driving (green line) has decreased from that year, it has been **fairly steady in the years since**.

The confidence interval for the **proportion of drivers admitting to driving whilst under the influence of illegal drugs at least once** in 2014/15 overlaps with every other year.

It seems likely, therefore, that **any changes observed over the last three years are probably as a result of sampling errors and randomness in the respondents** rather than actual changes in real life behaviour. As more data are collected and additional years are added to the series it will become easier to separate out real changes from random fluctuations in the responses.

## Background notes

### Data limitations

The **Crime Survey for England and Wales** results presented in this article are based on a sample of people aged 16-59 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**. The commentary and tables include standard statistical tests and confidence intervals for the overall figures, but most 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.

### The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The CSEW (formerly known as the British Crime Survey) is a **long-running household survey of people 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 2013/14. 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](http://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/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Crime+and+Justice](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Crime+and+Justice)

Crime Survey for England and Wales statistics are designated National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards as set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs.