

# Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2011 Provisional Estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels

## Statistical Release

16 August 2012

Department for  
**Transport**

## Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2011 provisional estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels

This publication presents statistics on personal injury accidents in 2011 on public roads (including footways) in Great Britain, which became known to the police within 30 days.

These are provisional statistics on accidents reported to the police involving drinking and driving in Great Britain in 2011. The figures also include final estimates for 2010. More detailed statistics on drink driving accidents and casualties will be available in Article 3 of Reported Road Casualties Great Britain - Annual Report, due for publication on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012.



Key findings	1
Drink drive limits and definitions	3
Data sources	3
Strengths and weaknesses of the data	3
Background notes	4

### Provisional estimates of 2011 drink drive accidents show:

- Fatalities resulting from drink and drive accidents increased by 12 per cent from 250 in 2010 to 280 in 2011, and seriously injured casualties rose by 3 per cent from 1,250 to 1,290. Casualties sustaining slight injuries from drink drive accidents also increased by 3 per cent from 8,210 to 8,430. This is the first increase observed in killed or seriously injured from drink and drive accidents since 2002.
- Overall, total casualties resulting from drink and drive accidents rose by 3 per cent from 9,700 to 9,990.
- The number of fatal drink and drive accidents rose to 260 in 2011, an increase of 18 per cent relative to 2010. Overall drink and drive accidents rose by 2 per cent from 6,630 to 6,730.
- Fatalities resulting from drink and drive accidents represented 15 per cent of all road fatalities in 2011 (6 per cent of serious injuries).

**RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN:**  
Pat Kilbey

### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Media Enquiries:**  
020 7944 6898

**Public Enquiries:**  
020 7944 6595

Roadacc.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

A note on the methodology used to produce these estimates can be found at: <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/road-accidents-and-safety-drink-drive-estimates-2010/methodology-notes-drink-drive.pdf>

Adverse weather (heavy snow falls) experienced in the first and last quarters of 2010 but not in 2011 is considered likely to be a factor in the increase in overall serious casualties and fatalities recorded in 2011. This may also be a factor in the increase in the figures for drink drive related casualties and fatalities.

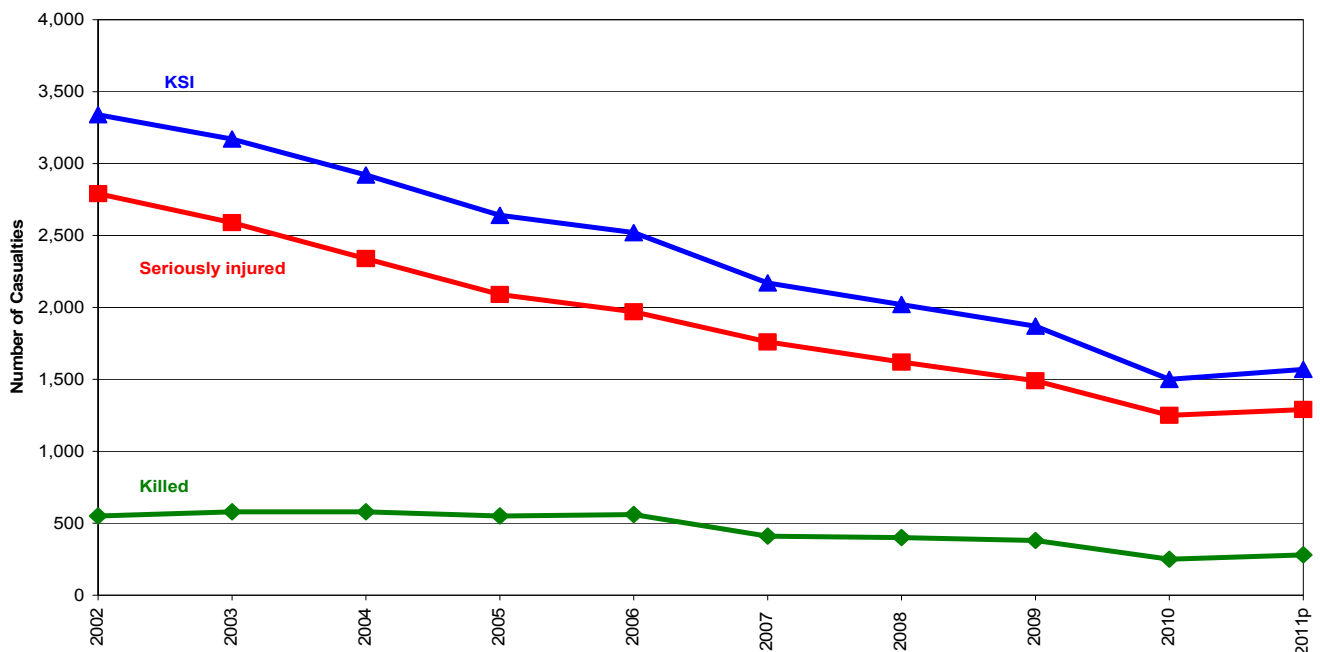
Table RAS51001 shows the estimated number of reported accidents and casualties involving at least one driver/rider over the legal alcohol limit for GB in 2002 to 2011 (provisional).

**Table RAS51001: Estimated number of reported drink drive accidents and casualties: GB 2002 – 2011p**

Year	Accidents				Casualties			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Killed	Serious	Slight	Total
	Number							
2002	480	2,050	10,620	13,150	550	2,790	16,760	20,100
2003	500	1,970	9,930	12,400	580	2,590	15,820	18,990
2004	520	1,790	8,900	11,210	580	2,340	14,060	16,980
2005	470	1,540	8,060	10,070	550	2,090	12,760	15,400
2006	490	1,480	7,430	9,400	560	1,970	11,840	14,370
2007	370	1,400	7,520	9,280	410	1,760	11,850	14,020
2008	350	1,280	6,980	8,620	400	1,620	10,960	12,990
2009	340	1,180	6,530	8,050	380	1,490	10,150	12,030
2010	220	990	5,420	6,630	250	1,250	8,210	9,700
2011 <sup>P</sup>	260	1,040	5,430	6,730	280	1,290	8,430	9,990

<sup>P</sup> Provisional data

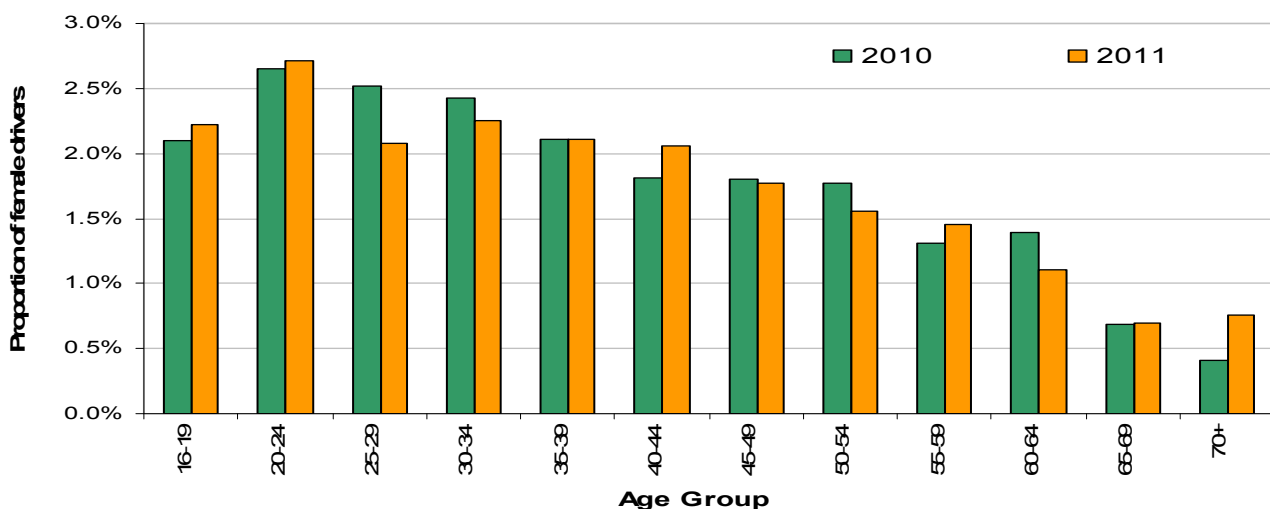
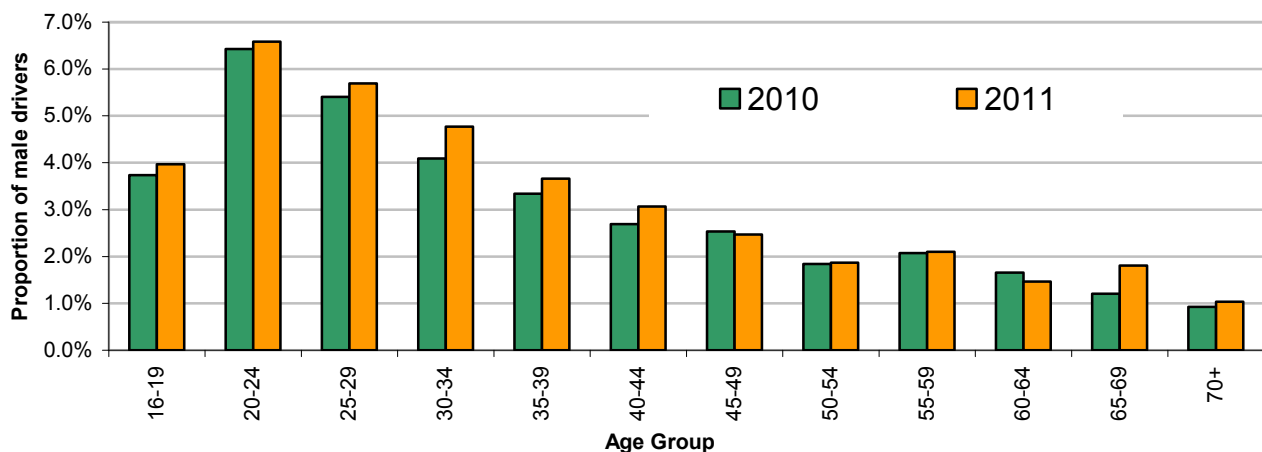
**Chart RAS51001: Estimated number of killed or seriously injured reported drink drive casualties: GB 2002 – 2011p**



## 2. Analysis of Breath Alcohol Screening Tests

- Overall the proportion of drivers either failing or refusing to take a breath test, following a road accident has remained relatively stable at 3 per cent of all drivers that were screened for breath-alcohol levels, between 2010 and 2011.
- In 2011, 4 per cent of male drivers failed or refused a breath test, of all male drivers that were screened following a road accident. While only 2 per cent of female drivers failed or refused a breath test, of all female drivers that were screened.
- For male drivers in 2011; the age group with the highest proportion either failing or refusing to take a breath test, following a road accident, was 20-24 year olds at 7 per cent, with second highest for 25-29 year olds at 6 per cent.
- For female drivers in 2011; the age group with the highest proportion either failing or refusing to take a breath test, following a road accident, was 20-24 year olds at 3 per cent, with second highest for 30-34 year olds at 2 per cent.
- For 2011, 54 per cent of drivers that were involved in a road accident were tested for breath-alcohol levels. This proportion has remained relatively stable across the last three years (2009 to 2011).

**Chart RAS51019/RAS51020: Proportion of male & female drivers failing or refusing to be screened for breath-alcohol, as a proportion of those requested, following a road accident in Great Britain: 2011**



**Table RAS51021: Reported number of male and female drivers screened for breath-alcohol by outcome of test: Great Britain 2010 – 2011**

		2010			2011			Number
Gender	Age Group	Failed or refused breath test	Passed breath test: below limit	Total breath tests requested	Failed or refused breath test	Passed breath test: below limit	Total breath tests requested	
Male	< 16	1	46	47	3	24	27	
Male	16-19	298	7,972	8,270	283	7,310	7,593	
Male	20-24	786	11,441	12,227	777	11,022	11,799	
Male	25-29	591	10,344	10,935	605	10,025	10,630	
Male	30-34	398	9,324	9,722	466	9,301	9,767	
Male	35-39	333	9,636	9,969	339	8,921	9,260	
Male	40-44	279	10,103	10,382	312	9,861	10,173	
Male	45-49	240	9,249	9,489	234	9,238	9,472	
Male	50-54	140	7,466	7,606	142	7,473	7,615	
Male	55-59	121	5,708	5,829	121	5,639	5,760	
Male	60-64	80	4,750	4,830	70	4,712	4,782	
Male	65-69	40	2,620	2,660	51	2,840	2,891	
Male	70+	45	4,820	4,865	53	5,072	5,125	
Male	Unknown	42	1,072	1,114	49	1,033	1,082	
<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,394</b>	<b>94,551</b>	<b>97,945</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>92,471</b>	<b>95,976</b>	
Female	< 16	0	4	4	0	3	3	
Female	16-19	75	3,521	3,596	72	3,175	3,247	
Female	20-24	168	6,162	6,330	166	5,950	6,116	
Female	25-29	135	5,222	5,357	107	5,047	5,154	
Female	30-34	108	4,337	4,445	99	4,305	4,404	
Female	35-39	93	4,309	4,402	90	4,167	4,257	
Female	40-44	85	4,600	4,685	98	4,653	4,751	
Female	45-49	75	4,084	4,159	74	4,093	4,167	
Female	50-54	54	3,003	3,057	48	3,031	3,079	
Female	55-59	30	2,256	2,286	32	2,174	2,206	
Female	60-64	23	1,630	1,653	19	1,698	1,717	
Female	65-69	6	990	996	8	1,124	1,132	
Female	70+	7	1,687	1,694	14	1,829	1,843	
Female	Unknown	12	367	379	8	298	306	
<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>42,172</b>	<b>43,043</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>41,547</b>	<b>42,382</b>	

Source: STATS19

## 1. Drink drive limits and definitions

For the purposes of these drink drive statistics, a drink drive accident is defined as being an incident on a public road in which someone is killed or injured and where one or more of the motor vehicle drivers or riders involved *either* refused to give a breath test specimen when requested to do so by the police (other than when incapable of doing so for medical reasons), *or* one of the following:

- i) Failed a roadside breath test by registering over 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath
- ii) Died and was subsequently found to have more than 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood.

Drink drive casualties are defined as all road users killed or injured in a drink drive accident.

## 2. Data sources

Two sources of data are used to assess the extent of drink drive accidents in Great Britain. These are:

(i) **Coroners' data:** Information about the level of alcohol in the blood of road accident fatalities aged 16 or over who die within 12 hours of a road accident is provided by Coroners in England and Wales and by Procurators Fiscal in Scotland.

(ii) **STATS19 breath test data:** The personal injury road accident reporting system (STATS19) provides data on injury accidents in which the driver or rider survived and was also breath tested at the roadside. If the driver or rider refused to provide a breath test specimen, then they are considered to have failed the test unless they are deemed unable to take the test for medical reasons.

## 3. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The sample of fatality data from Coroners for 2010 has now been finalised but 2011 estimates are based on a reduced sample of coroners' returns and therefore may be exposed to bias. They remain provisional until more complete information for 2011 is available in August 2013.

Comparisons of road accident reports with death registrations show that very few, if any; road accident fatalities are not reported to the police. However, it has long been known that a considerable proportion of non-fatal casualties are not known to the police, as hospital, survey and compensation claims data all indicate a higher number of casualties than police accident data would suggest. Proportionally, the unreported number of casualties who sustained slight injuries from a road accident is likely to be higher compared to the unreported number of casualties which sustained serious injuries from a road accident.

Our best estimate produced in 2011, derived primarily from National Travel Survey (NTS) data, is that the total number of road casualties in Great Britain each year, including those not reported to police, is within the range 660 thousand to 800 thousand with a central estimate of 730 thousand. A discussion of how this estimate has been derived, and its limitations, together with information

on complementary sources of data on road accidents and casualties, are contained in Article 5 (pages 83-92) of Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2010 Annual report, which can be found at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/road-accidents-and-safety-annual-report-2010/>

A revised estimate will be produced earlier next year as a separate article to the detailed analysis of 2011 road accident statistics in the RRCGB 2011 report.

The data used as the basis for these statistics are therefore not a complete record of all personal injury road accidents, and this should be borne in mind when using and analysing the figures. However, police data on road accidents (STATS19), whilst not perfect, remain the most detailed, complete and reliable *single* source of information on road casualties covering the whole of Great Britain, in particular for monitoring trends over time.

## 4. Background notes

1. Reported road casualties in Great Britain: 2011 provisional estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels web page provides further detail of the key findings presented in this statistical release. The table is available at: <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/ras51001.xls>
2. On 17 December 2010, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, signifying their compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

3. Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release and a full list of definitions used to produce these statistics can be found here: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/road-accidents-and-safety/>