



# Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2012 Annual Report

## Drinking and Driving

This article presents statistics, and an analysis of, reported drinking and driving accidents in Great Britain and the casualties involved.

### Summary

- Provisional estimates for 2012 suggest that 280 people were killed in drink drive accidents, an increase of around 17 per cent compared with 2011 and accounting for 16 per cent of all road deaths in Great Britain.
- There was a 5 per cent decrease in seriously injured drink drive casualties in 2012, to around 1,200 (5 per cent of all seriously injured road casualties).
- Final estimates for 2011 show that there were 220 fatal drink drive accidents in 2011, resulting in 240 deaths, unchanged from 2010 and jointly the lowest number of drink drive deaths since detailed reporting began in 1979.
- Amongst those killed in drink drive accidents in 2011, the majority (71 per cent) were drivers and riders over the legal alcohol limit. The remaining 29 per cent were other road users, involved in the accident but not necessarily over the legal limit themselves.
- Since 1979, when detailed reporting began, there has been an almost six-fold reduction in the number killed in drink drive accidents and a similar drop in seriously injured casualties.
- During 2012, 55,300 people in England and Wales were convicted of driving after consuming alcohol or taking drugs, broadly in line with the number for 2011.

### Revisions to figures published in August 2013

On 1 August 2013, estimates for the total number of drink drive accidents in 2011 (final figures) and 2012 (provisional figures) were published. Since then, there have been small revisions to the datasets underlying these estimates, resulting in small revisions to the published estimates. The revisions affected the figures for the number of fatal drink drive casualties and were small (approx 3 to 4 per cent) in both cases – an upward revision of 10 to the 2011 estimate and a downward revision of 10 to the 2012 estimate.

The revisions do not change the direction of the observed trend in fatal drink drive casualties between 2011 and 2012.

Similar revisions were made to the 2010 dataset. Although these do not affect the estimates for the total number of drink drive casualties and accidents, there are slight changes to some of the detailed breakdowns in this report, compared to those published in last year's [Reported Road Casualties Annual Report](#).

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## Trends in the number of drink drive accidents and casualties

### Provisional figures for 2012

- In 2012, there were 280 fatalities resulting from drink drive accidents in Great Britain, **around 17 per cent (40 fatalities) higher than in 2011** and accounting for **16 per cent of all reported road fatalities** in 2012.
- The number of seriously injured casualties in drink drive accidents **decreased by 5 per cent compared with 2011**, to 1,210 (5 per cent of all seriously injured casualties).
- The total number of reported drink drive accidents in 2012 is estimated to have been 6,670, broadly in line with last year and corresponding to **4 per cent of all reported road accidents**. However, there was around a 15 per cent increase in the number of **fatal drink drive** accidents, to 250.
- The figures for 2012 are based on a limited sample of data and are **provisional** until more complete information is available in 2014. For more details on the methodology and revisions, see the Background Notes section at the end of this article.

### Final figures for 2011

- Final figures for 2011 show that there were **240 fatal casualties** resulting from drink drive accidents, unchanged from 2010 and, jointly with 2010, the lowest ever since detailed reporting began in 1979.
- There was a **slight rise in seriously injured casualties in 2011**, to 1,270 (a rise of 2 per cent from 2010) and in slightly injured casualties, to 8,420 (a 3 per cent rise), although given the estimation methodology used, changes of this magnitude are unlikely to be statistically significant.
- In 2011, drink drive accidents accounted for **13 per cent of all those killed on the roads** and 5 per cent of those seriously and slightly injured.

### Longer term trends

- Detailed reporting on drink drive accidents and casualties began in 1979. There were 1,640 fatalities due to drink drive accidents during 1979. The figures for 2010 - 2012 are around **six times lower** than this.
- Although the total number killed on the roads has fallen over the same period, **drink drive fatalities have seen a bigger fall** – in 1979, drink drive accidents accounted for around a quarter of those killed on the roads; for the last five years, they have accounted for around 15 per cent.
- The number of seriously injured casualties in drink drive accidents has fallen by a similar factor, from 8,300 in 1979 (10 per cent of all seriously injured road casualties) to 1,210 in 2012 (5 per cent). The **total** number of drink drive casualties has seen a three-

fold reduction since 1979.

- Although the provisional figures suggest an increase between 2011 and 2012, the number of drink drive fatalities is still **around 25 per cent lower than in 2009** and almost **40 per cent lower than the 2005 – 2009 average**. The number of seriously injured drink drive casualties for 2012 is around 30 per cent lower than the 2005 to 2009 average.

**Table RAS51001: Estimated number of casualties killed in reported drink drive accidents: Great Britain 2000 – 2011 (final); 2012 (provisional).**

Year	Accidents				Casualties			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Killed	Serious	Slight	Total
1979	1,380	5,630	12,460	19,470	1,640	8,300	21,490	31,430
1980	1,280	5,430	11,860	18,570	1,450	7,970	20,420	29,830
1981	1,200	4,940	10,900	17,040	1,420	7,370	19,160	27,950
1982	1,300	5,420	12,070	18,800	1,550	8,010	20,660	30,220
1983	950	4,750	11,430	17,130	1,110	6,800	18,610	26,520
1984	1,000	4,790	11,540	17,320	1,170	6,820	19,410	27,390
1985	900	4,900	11,460	17,260	1,040	6,810	19,380	27,220
1986	850	4,590	11,510	16,940	990	6,440	19,220	26,650
1987	780	4,220	10,560	15,560	900	5,900	17,670	24,470
1988	680	3,660	10,190	14,520	790	5,100	16,860	22,740
1989	700	3,390	10,300	14,390	810	4,790	16,620	22,220
1990	650	2,910	9,650	13,210	760	4,090	15,550	20,400
1991	570	2,590	8,530	11,690	660	3,610	13,610	17,880
1992	540	2,360	7,890	10,790	660	3,280	12,770	16,710
1993	460	1,870	7,160	9,480	540	2,660	11,780	14,980
1994	470	2,090	7,330	9,900	540	2,840	11,780	15,160
1995	460	2,140	7,590	10,180	540	3,000	12,450	16,000
1996	480	2,150	8,240	10,870	580	3,010	13,450	17,040
1997	470	2,140	8,100	10,710	550	2,940	13,310	16,800
1998	410	1,860	7,840	10,100	460	2,520	12,610	15,580
1999	400	1,850	8,800	11,050	460	2,470	13,980	16,910
2000	450	1,950	9,410	11,800	530	2,540	14,990	18,060
2001	470	2,020	9,780	12,270	530	2,700	15,550	18,780
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	1,550	8,060	10,080	550	2,090	12,760	15,400
2006	490	1,480	7,430	9,400	560	1,970	11,850	14,370
2007	370	1,400	7,520	9,290	410	1,760	11,850	14,020
2008	350	1,280	6,980	8,620	400	1,620	10,970	12,990
2009	340	1,180	6,530	8,050	380	1,500	10,150	12,030
2010 <sup>R</sup>	220	990	5,420	6,620	240	1,240	8,210	9,690
2011 <sup>R</sup>	220	1,040	5,430	6,690	240	1,270	8,420	9,930
2012 <sup>P, R</sup>	250	960	5,460	6,670	280	1,210	8,500	9,990

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal

R = Estimates for 2010 to 2012 have been revised from those published previously following the discovery of a small error in the underlying data.

P = Provisional. The sample of data from coroners for 2011 has been finalised but 2012 estimates are based on a reduced sample and remain provisional until more complete information is available.

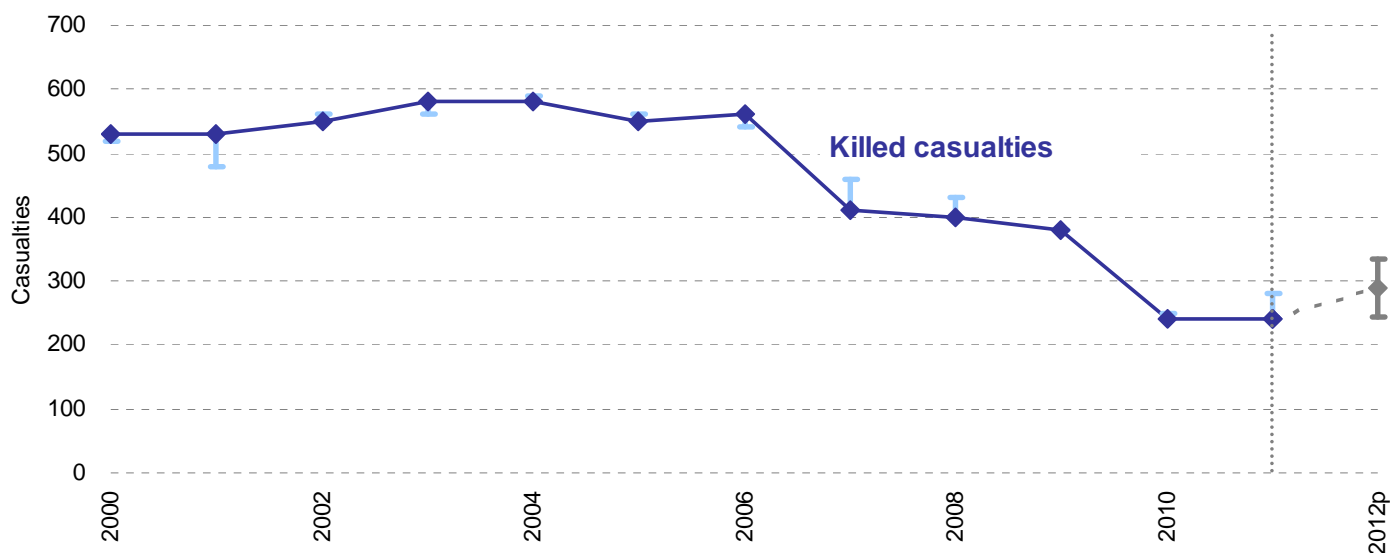
Estimates are rounded to the nearest ten to reflect the uncertainty in making estimates based on incomplete data sources. See Background Notes section for more information.

**Chart RAS51001a: Estimated number of casualties killed in reported drink drive accidents: Great Britain 2000 – 2011 (final); 2012 (provisional).**

Pale blue ticks show previous provisional estimates for each year 2000 to 2011.

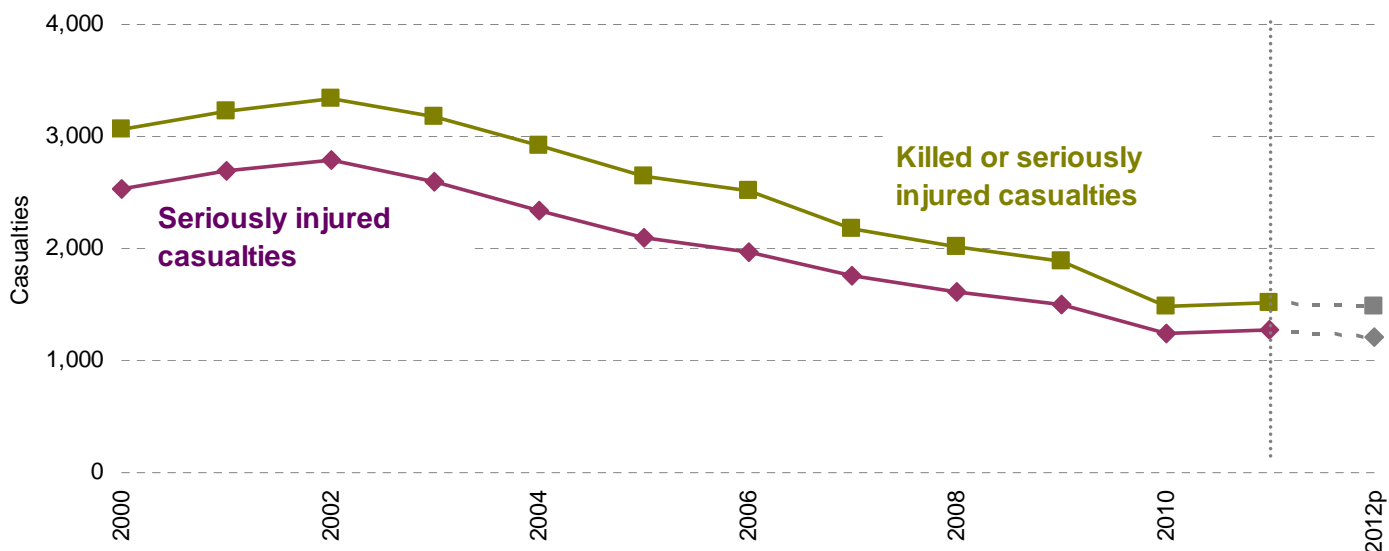
Grey ticks for 2012 show the 95 per cent confidence interval for the provisional estimate<sup>1</sup>.

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal



**Chart RAS51001b: Estimated number of casualties killed or seriously injured in reported drink drive accidents: Great Britain 2000 – 2011 (final); 2012 (provisional).**

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal



<sup>1</sup> The 95 per cent confidence interval for the 2012 provisional estimate is calculated assuming the sample of available data is randomly distributed, although in practice it may be exposed to bias. For more detail about the sample and methodology used to produce the estimate, see "Background Notes".

## Casualties in drink drive accidents: characteristics

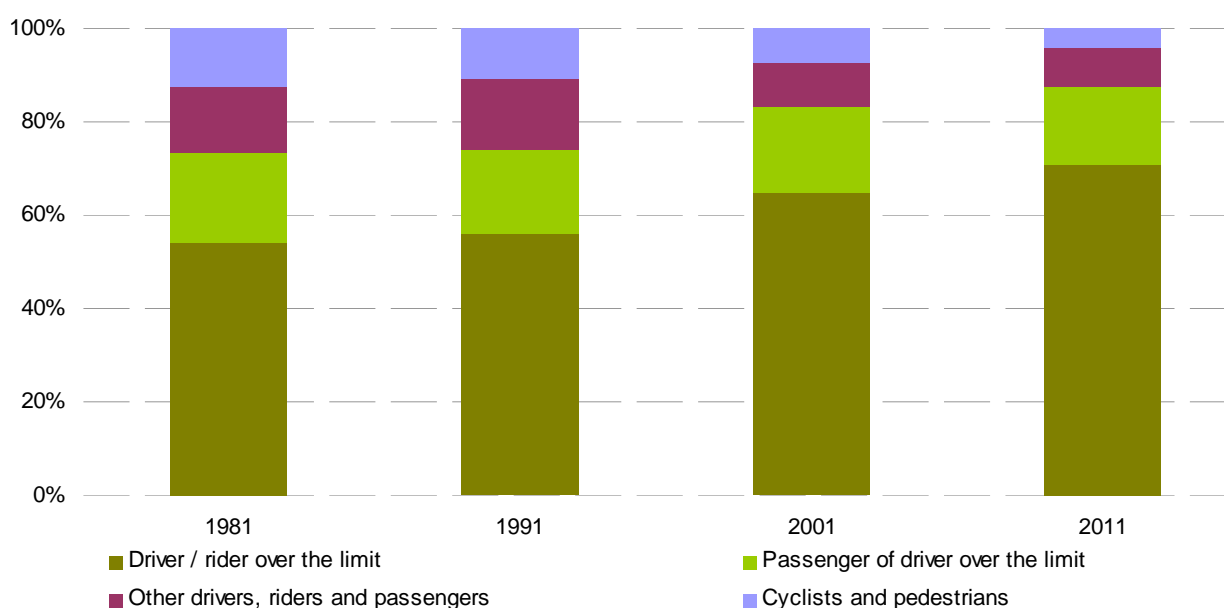
Most analyses in this section are restricted to 2011 and earlier. The provisional estimates for 2012 are based on a limited sample of data, which is insufficient to allow detailed analysis.

### Drink drive casualties – drink drivers and other road users

- Of the 240 people killed in drink drive accidents during 2011, the majority (71 per cent) were **drivers and riders who were over the legal alcohol limit**. Of the remaining 29 per cent, more than half were the **passengers of drink drivers**.
- These figures suggest that the highest risk of **death** from driving whilst over the legal limit is to the driver themselves and their passengers, rather than to other road users.
- This finding reflects the nature of drink drive accidents – **more than half of fatal drink drive accidents involved only one vehicle** (i.e. the one being driven by the drink driver) and no pedestrians<sup>2</sup>.
- Amongst those who suffered **serious injuries** in drink drive accidents, 50 per cent were drink drivers and riders. A further 22 per cent were passengers of drink drivers.
- The split of drink drive fatalities between different road user types has evolved over the last three decades – **in 1981, 54 per cent (770) of those killed were drink drivers and riders**. By 2011, although the number of drink drivers and riders killed had fallen more than four-fold, they accounted for more than 70 per cent of all drink drive fatalities.
- In contrast, thirty years ago, **pedestrians** accounted for more than 10 per cent of casualties in drink drive accidents. This has fallen to less than 5 per cent today.

### Chart [RAS51005](#): casualties killed in reported drink drive accidents: breakdown by road user type: GB, selected years 1981 to 2011.

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal



<sup>2</sup> By comparison, for **all** fatal accidents, 25 per cent involve only one vehicle and no pedestrians.

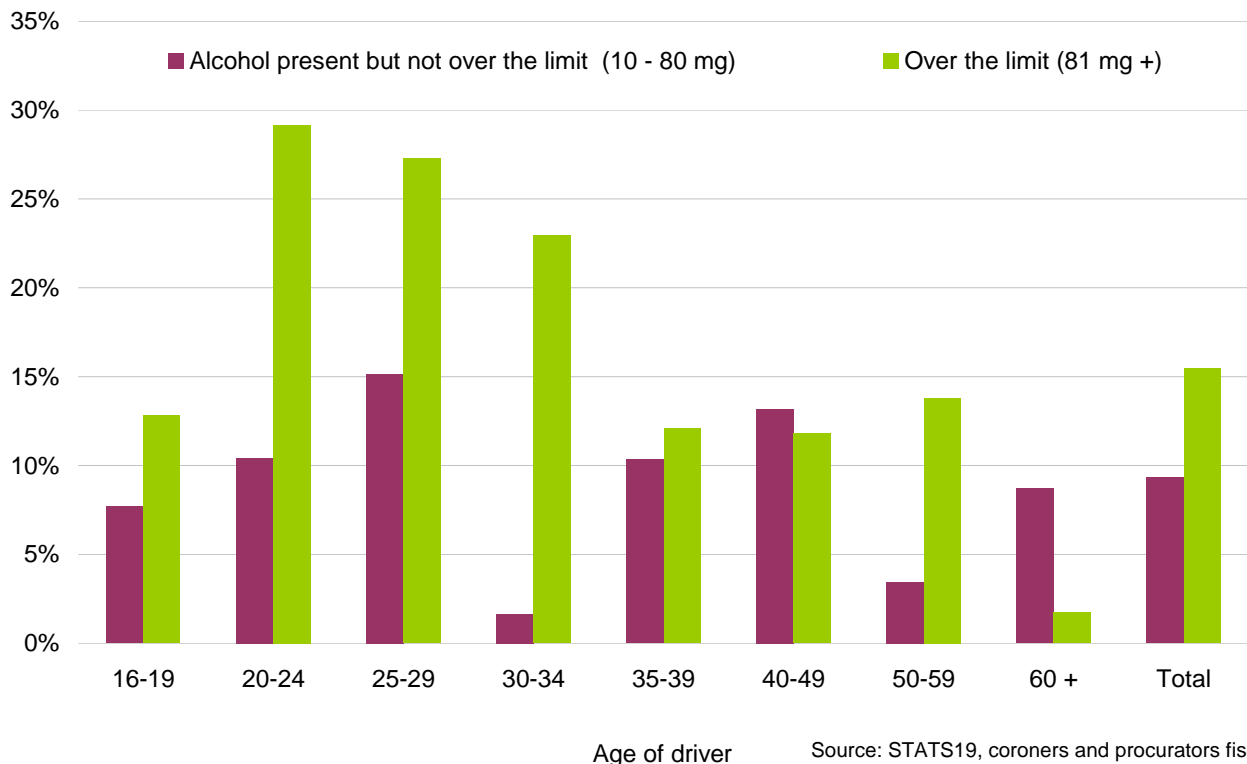
- Men are far more likely to be drink drive casualties than women. In 2011, around **two thirds of all drink drive casualties and three quarters of those killed and seriously injured** were male.
- Younger road users are also disproportionately likely to be involved in a drink drive accident - around **one third of those killed or seriously injured** were aged between 16 and 24, almost 80 per cent of whom were male.

### Drivers and riders killed whilst over the limit

- 15 per cent of drivers and riders killed on the roads during 2011 were subsequently found to have a **blood alcohol content (BAC) over the legal limit**. This proportion is similar to that seen over the past decade. Two thirds of those who were over the legal limit were at least twice over it.
- In the late 1970s, around **one third of drivers killed were over the legal limit**. The proportion fell steadily until the early 1990s but thereafter fluctuated between 15 and 20 per cent, without any sustained long term trend.
- The proportion of killed drivers and riders over the limit is **highest amongst 20 to 35 year olds**. In 2011, around a quarter of those killed from this age group were found to be over the limit, compared to less than 15 per cent for older age groups.

### Chart [RAS51007](#): Proportion of killed drivers and riders by BAC category: GB 2011

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal

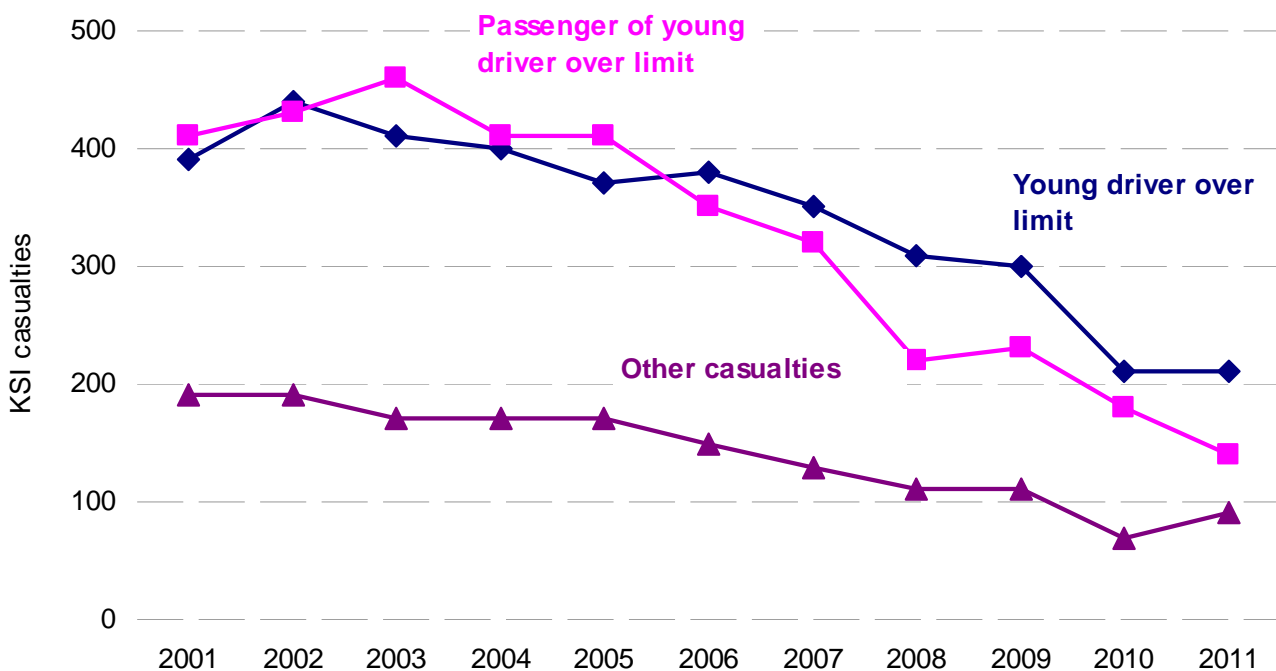


## Young drink drivers

- Drink drive accidents in which a **young driver** (aged 17 to 24) was over the limit accounted for 60 deaths and 380 seriously injured casualties during 2011, broadly unchanged from 2010.
- In common with other drink drive accidents, the majority (80 per cent) of those killed or seriously injured were the **young drink drivers and their passengers**.
- Although the number of casualties from young drink drive accidents saw little change between 2010 and 2011, they remain **well below the levels seen previously**: since 2002, killed or seriously injured casualties from young drink drive accidents have fallen by more than 50 per cent.
- However, young drink drive accidents still account for a **disproportionate** number of drink drive casualties – around a quarter of drink drive fatalities and a third of seriously injured drink drive fatalities casualties are arise from accidents in which a young driver was over the limit.

### Chart [RAS51008](#): Killed and seriously injured casualties in reported accidents involving young drivers (17-24 years old) over the legal alcohol limit: GB 2001-2011

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal



## Other casualties with alcohol involvement

Previous sections considered accidents in which the driver or rider of a motorised vehicle was over the legal alcohol limit, based either on a breath test performed at the accident scene or, if the driver or rider is killed, toxicology data from coroners / procurators fiscal. However, coroners' data is also available for pedestrian, pedal cyclist and passenger fatalities. Although these fatalities may not necessarily have been killed in drink drive accidents, the data nonetheless allows us to look at the extent to which alcohol may be a factor for these casualty types.

Coroners' data is available for 64 per cent of drivers and riders, but only 40 per cent of pedestrians and 50 per cent of cyclists. Therefore, the figures may be an overestimate for these groups, since they are more likely to be tested only if there is a suspicion of alcohol use.

Table [RAS51009](#) below shows the proportion of fatalities by blood alcohol content and when they were killed, for 2011.

- Almost **three quarters of pedestrians** who died in road accidents "overnight" (between 2200 and 0400) were over the legal alcohol limit for driving, broadly in line with previous years.
- A similar proportion of **pedal cyclists** killed overnight were over the legal limit for driving, although it should be noted that only 11 cyclists aged 16 or over in total were killed overnight (13 per cent of all cyclist fatalities aged 16 or over).

**Table [RAS51009](#): Blood alcohol levels of reported fatalities aged 16 and over: GB 2011**

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal

	Cumulative percentage over blood alcohol levels (mg/100ml)						Sample size	Percentage over 80mg/100ml time of accident	
	Below limit		Above limit					22:00-03:59	04:00-21:59
	9	50	80	100	150	200			
Motorcycle riders	20	10	10	10	7	3	239	42	6
Car drivers	28	21	19	18	13	7	382	43	11
Other vehicle drivers/riders	21	19	17	17	9	2	47	67	14
Passengers	28	24	23	20	12	4	105	42	14
Pedestrians	45	39	37	35	29	22	179	74	27
Cyclists	21	19	19	17	9	8	53	86	9



## Characteristics of reported drink drive accidents

### Drink drive accident rates

- Table [RAS51010](#) compares the **rates** of drink drive accidents for different groups of car drivers. In accordance with the findings earlier in this article, the highest rates are found amongst young drivers (17 to 24 years olds). Comparing the rates by mileage, these groups are between four and five times more likely to be in a drink drive accident than drivers taken as a whole.
- All age groups have seen a reduction in rates compared to the period 2005 to 2009, with around a 40 per cent reduction in the overall rate.

**Table [RAS51010](#): Estimated number of car drivers in drink drive road injury accidents: accidents per licence holder and per mile driven, GB 2005 – 2009 and 2011**

	Number / Rate					
	Car driver drink drive accidents		Drink drive accidents per 100 thousand licence holders		Drink drive accidents per billion miles driven	
	2005 to 2009	2011	2005 to 2009	2011	2005 to 2009	2011
Under 17	40	10	..	..	..	..
17 - 19 <sup>1</sup>	940	400	60	26	230	117
20 - 24	1,860	1,110	61	33	138	93
25 - 29	1,340	840	42	24	69	45
30 - 34	920	670	27	20	38	30
35 - 39	870	490	22	14	28	19
40 - 49	1,200	790	16	10	19	12
50 - 59	580	410	9	6	12	8
60 or over	300	250	4	3	7	5
All ages <sup>2</sup>	8,170	5,040	22	13	33	21

Source: DfT National Road Traffic Survey, DfT National Travel Survey, STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal

1 Figures based on a small NTS sample.

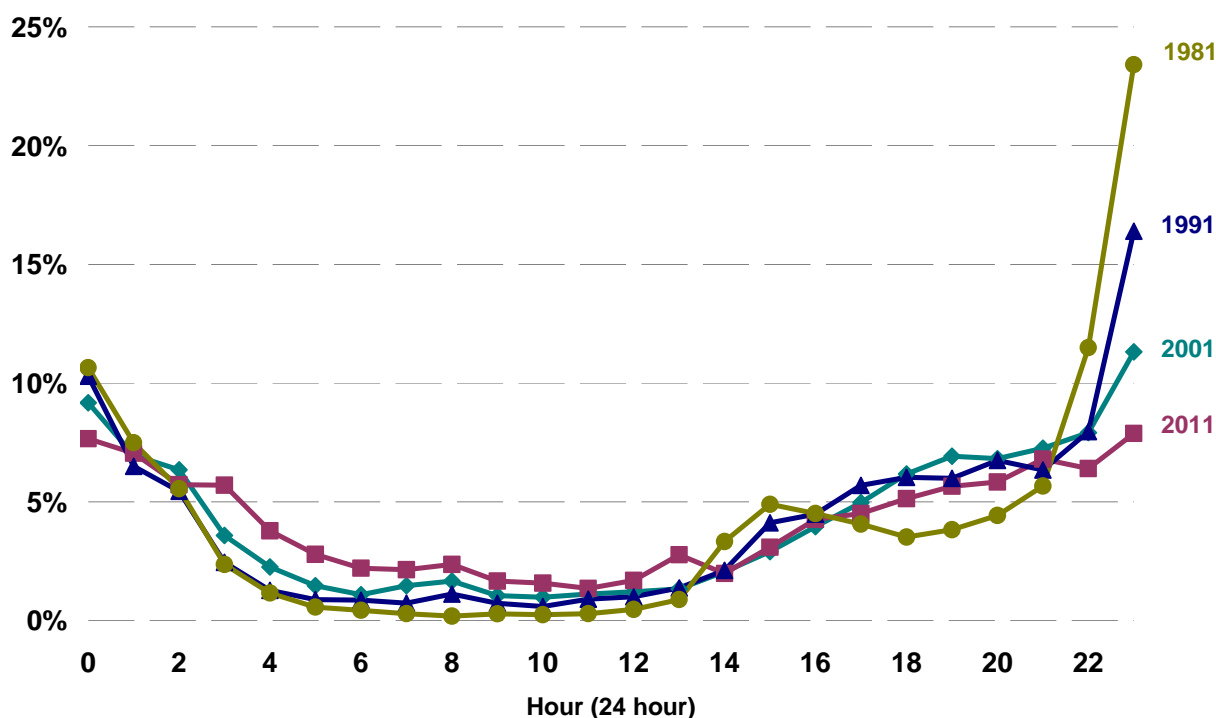
2 Includes age not known.

### When do drink drive accidents occur?

- Drinking and driving is a **year-round problem**, rather than being strongly associated with the Christmas / New Year or summer periods. Data for the past few years show **no significant seasonal variation** in the distribution of drink drive accidents across the year.
- Around **60 per cent** of drink drive accidents in 2011 occurred on a **Friday, Saturday or Sunday**. For comparison, only 40 per cent of **all** reported accidents occurred on these days.
- Chart [RAS51012](#) below shows the distribution of drink drive accidents across the day and the changes over the last 30 years. In 1981, almost two thirds (64 per cent) of drink drive accidents occurred between 2100 and 0300. This late night peak has gradually reduced – by 2001, just under half (49 per cent) of drink drive accidents occurred then and today the corresponding figure stands at 42 per cent.

## Chart [RAS51012](#): Reported drink drive accidents by time of day: GB, selected years since 1981

Source: STATS19, coroners and procurators fiscal



### Types of drink drive accident

- In 2011, 42 per cent of reported drink drive accidents were **single vehicle accidents, with no pedestrian casualties**<sup>3</sup>. Typically these accidents involved the vehicle being driven whilst over the limit leaving the carriageway and hitting an object such as a tree or road sign. For comparison, just 15 per cent of **all** reported road accidents were single vehicle accidents with no pedestrian casualties.
- Only 4 per cent of drink drive accidents during 2011 involved a pedestrian casualty, compared to 17 per cent for all accidents.
- For **fatal** drink drive accidents alone, over half (55 per cent) were single vehicle accidents with no pedestrians involved. Only 3 per cent involved pedestrian casualties.
- The nature of fatal drink drive accidents has changed over the last 30 years: in 1981, 43 per cent of fatal drink drive accidents involved just one vehicle and no pedestrians. By 2011 this had risen to 55 per cent.
- By contrast, in 1981, 14 per cent of fatal drink drive accidents **involved at least one pedestrian casualty**, which had fallen to just 5 per cent in 2011.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that there is likely to be some under-reporting for accidents where only one vehicle is involved and the injuries suffered are minor.

## Breath testing

This section makes use of three data sources on roadside breath screening tests administered by police forces:

**1. Home Office data:** on the number of roadside tests (and failures) administered by the police in England and Wales.

**2. Department for Transport data on the number of breath tests administered by the police in England and Wales:** includes the reason for the test and detailed results, using digital breath screening devices, introduced in 2008. Data are not received from all police forces, so is incomplete, but are nonetheless useful for looking at proportions and distributions.

**3. Department for Transport data on breath tests administered following reported road accidents (“Stats19”):** this source covers all police forces in Great Britain, but only includes breath tests administered following personal injury accidents that are reported to the police.

A breath test failure corresponds to a breath alcohol content (BrAC) of **more than 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath**, which is the legal limit for drink driving.

### Number of breath tests administered and reasons<sup>4</sup>

- According to Home Office figures, police forces in England and Wales administered **686 thousand breath screening tests during 2011**, 7 per cent down from 2010.
- **12 per cent of these tests were failed / refused**, broadly in line with the previous few years. Failure rates fell for a number of years from 20 per cent in 2003, but have been remained at 11 to 12 per cent for the last three years.
- According to DfT data from digital breath screening devices, the most common reasons for requesting breath tests during both 2011 and 2012 was **following a moving traffic offence** (38 per cent of tests in 2012) or a **road traffic collision**<sup>5</sup> (36 per cent), of which 7 per cent failed. However, the highest rate of breath test **failure** (19 per cent) was for tests carried out due to **“suspicion of alcohol”**.

### Table [RAS51017](#): Screening test results, by reason for test: England Wales, 2012<sup>6</sup>

Source: Department for Transport data from digital breath screening devices; as supplied by police forces

Reason for test	0 - 4	5 - 20	21 - 35	36 - 50	51 - 80	81 mcg	Under the limit	Over the limit
	mcg	mcg	mcg	mcg	mcg	+		
Moving Traffic Offence	84	6	3	2	3	2	93	7
Road Traffic Collision	88	2	2	2	3	3	92	8
Suspicion of Alcohol	62	12	7	5	8	5	81	19
Other/ unknown	83	3	3	3	4	3	90	10
All	81	6	3	3	4	3	90	10

<sup>4</sup> The figures in this section are outside the scope of National Statistics and unlike other data presented in this article, are not exclusively collected following a personal injury road accident.

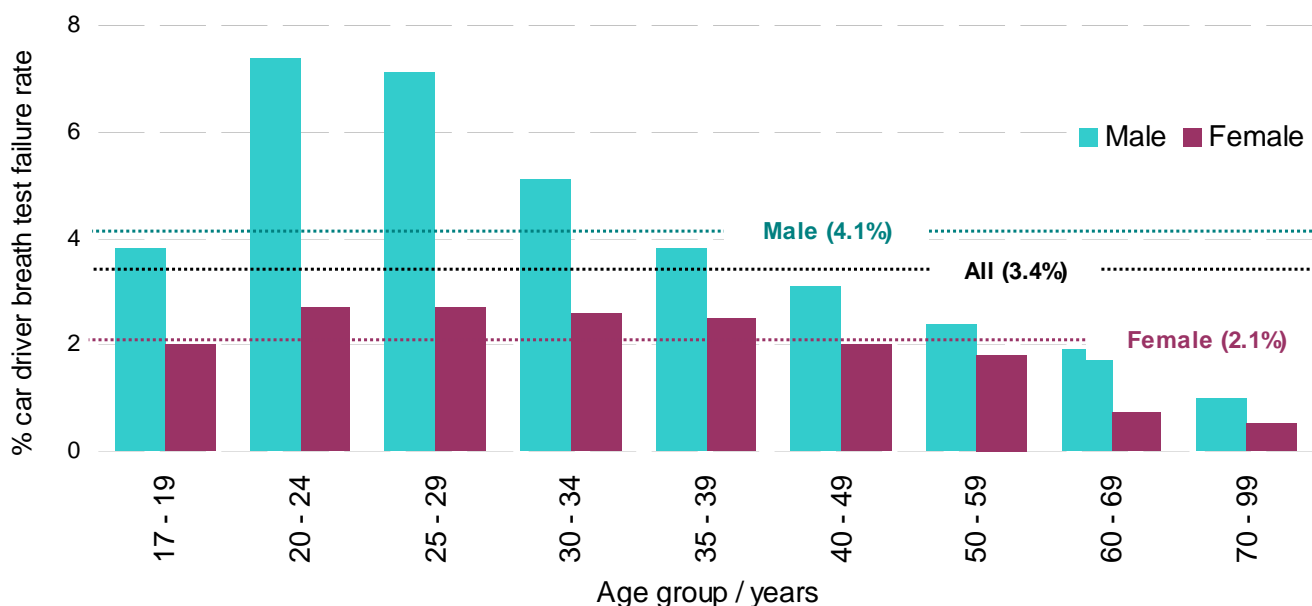
<sup>5</sup> “Road traffic collisions” include damage-only incidents, as well as those involving personal injury.

<sup>6</sup> Multiple reasons can occur at the same incident. The devices do not allow recording of multiple reasons and the reason recorded is at the discretion of the reporting police officer. Care should therefore be taken interpreting table RAS51017.

## Breath tests following reported personal injury road accidents

- Around 246 thousand drivers and riders were involved in personal injury accidents reported to the police in 2012 in Great Britain. Just over half (54 per cent) of these drivers and riders were breath tested by the police, unchanged since 2009.
- Of those requested, around **4,100 (3.1 per cent) failed or refused the test**, broadly in line with 2010 and 2011 and below that for earlier years (the average failure rate for 2005 – 2009 was 3.6 per cent).
- As a proportion of **all** drivers and riders<sup>7</sup> involved in road accidents, 1.7 per cent failed or refused a breath screening test in 2012, unchanged from 2011.
- As in previous years, failure / refusal rates amongst **car drivers** in 2012 were highest for **males aged 20 to 24** years - 7.4 per cent failed or refused, more than double the average for all drivers.
- By contrast, the highest failure / refusal rate for females was 2.7 per cent, amongst 20 to 29 year olds, below the average for all drivers.

**Chart RAS51015: Car drivers in reported injury road accidents: breath tests and failures by age: GB 2012. Dashed lines denote average across all age groups for each sex.** Source: Stats19



## Convictions for drink driving

- According to the [Ministry of Justice](#), 55,300 people in England and Wales were convicted of driving after consuming alcohol or taking drugs during 2012, broadly unchanged from 2011 and accounting for around 9 per cent of motoring-related convictions. More than 80 per cent of those convicted were male.
- The annual number of convictions has fallen over the last decade and is now 40 per cent lower than it was in 2002 (90,500).

<sup>7</sup> Including those not tested.

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Detailed statistics on **drink driving, including estimates of accident numbers, casualty types involved and breath test numbers and rates** can be found in web tables ras51001 to ras51021 on the Department for Transport website:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras51-reported-drinking-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras51-reported-drinking-and-driving)

Statistics on **prosecutions, convictions and sentences** for drink and drug driving are published by the Ministry of Justice:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-update-to-december-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-update-to-december-2012)

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# Background notes

## 1. Drink drive limits and definitions

For the purposes of these statistics, a **drink drive accident** is defined as being an incident on a public road in which someone is killed or injured and where at least one 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 **or**
- 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 compile these statistics. 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 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.

A methodology note describing how the estimates are compiled from these sources can be found here: [www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-accident-and-safety](http://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-accident-and-safety)

## 3. Provisional estimates and revisions

As it takes some time for information to be gathered from coroners and procurators fiscal, the estimates published in each year for the previous year are based on a reduced sample of returns, which may be exposed to bias. They are finalised the following year, when a more complete set of returns is available. For example, in August 2012, provisional figures for 2011 were published. These were finalised in August 2013 and provisional estimates for 2012 were released alongside them.

Finalising the figures mainly affects the estimates for fatalities and fatal accidents. As discussed elsewhere in this article, around 70 per cent of those killed in drink drive accidents are drivers or riders who are over the legal alcohol limit. Therefore the estimated number of fatalities is highly dependent on information from coroners about these casualties.

The table overleaf shows the scale of recent revisions to the number of drink drive fatalities and the number of coroners' returns they are based on.

**Table 1: Comparison of provisional and final drink drive fatality estimates**

Year	Drink drive fatality estimates			Number of returns <sup>2</sup>	
	Provisional	Final	% change <sup>1</sup>	Provisional	Final
2003	560	580	+ 4	875	1,348
2004	590	580	- 2	710	1,225
2005	560	550	- 2	774	1,288
2006	540	560	+ 4	709	1,297
2007	460	410	-11	634	1,175
2008	430	400	- 7	555	1,024
2009	380	380	- 0	491	834
2010	250	240	- 4	398	652
2011	280	240	-14	329	666
2012	280	..	..	264	..

1. Percentage change from provisional to final figures.

2. Returns received from coroners and procurators fiscal with blood alcohol content for drivers / riders killed in road accidents.

In recent years the provisional estimate has been based on a relatively small number of returns, reflecting the overall reduction in drivers and riders killed on the roads. The small sample size increases the uncertainty around the estimate and thus there is scope for a large change when it is finalised, as seen for the 2011 figures.

Given the small sample sizes, for future years, we are considering delaying the publication of provisional drink drive estimates until later in the year. This would enable a larger sample to be gathered and improve the robustness of the provisional estimate.

We welcome users' views on this proposal, by email on [roadacc.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roadacc.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk) or using the contact details on the front of this release.

### 3. Digital breath screening data sources

From April 2008 onwards, police forces across England and Wales progressively began using new digital recording equipment in place of traditional breath testing screening devices. Unlike previous devices, the digital devices enable recording and reporting of the specific quantity of any alcohol present in the breath sample at the roadside, the reason for the test, the age and gender of the person being tested and the date and time it was carried out.

A breath alcohol screening test can be required when a driver involved in a collision, is suspected of driving with alcohol in the body or following the commission of a moving traffic offence. Results of breath alcohol screening tests **can only be regarded as indicative** of the level of alcohol present in a sample of breath and are not used to determine whether a driver was above or below the legal limit to drive.

It remains the case that it is only at a police station or hospital that a specimen(s) can be obtained to determine a person's actual alcohol concentration. A person's breath alcohol content (BrAC) can be measured, using evidential devices, which are calibrated before and after the test and which ensure that: a sample of breath is not affected by mouth alcohol or other interfering substances or that blood or urine specimens may be taken for subsequent laboratory analysis. Roadside breath testing devices have more **limited ability** and are calibrated less often and so consequently, the breath alcohol reading obtained through a screening at the roadside can only ever be regarded as indicative. Care should therefore be taken when examining the figures produced.

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#### 4. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The sample of fatality data from coroners for 2011 has now been finalised. 2012 estimates are based on a reduced sample of coroners' returns and may be biased. They remain provisional until more complete information for 2012 is available next year.

The estimates in this article are based only on those road accidents which are reported to the police. 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. 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.

The 2012 annual report includes an estimate of the total number of road casualties in Great Britain each year derived primarily from National Travel Survey (NTS) data. Our best estimate is within the range 630 thousand to 690 thousand with a central estimate of 710 thousand. See the article entitled **Survey data on road accidents** at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012) for further details.

In addition, an article on **self-reported drink and drug driving: findings from the Crime Survey and England and Wales (CSEW)**, was included in the Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain 2011 report, published in September 2012. The article presented data on people's own admissions of driving whilst being under the influence of drugs or over the legal alcohol limit, and can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2011](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2011)

The data used for the self-reported drink and drug driving article were not available in time for this year's annual report. This article will be released later in the year once it has been completed.

#### 5. Further information

Further information about the Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2011 Annual Report can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2012).

Notes & Definitions used in STATS19 can be found at: [www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-accident-and-safety](http://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-accident-and-safety)