

# Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: Estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels: 2012 (final)



Department  
for Transport

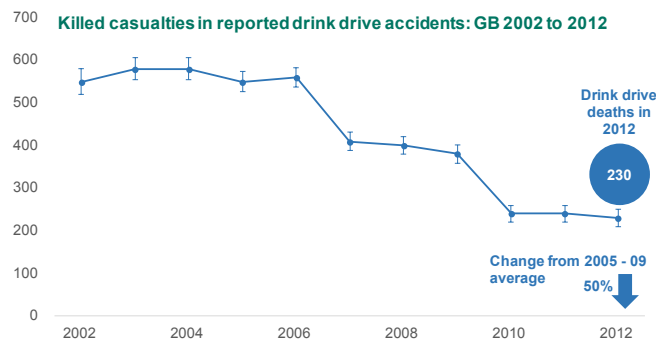
## Main findings

- 230 drink drive deaths in 2012, not significantly different to 2011

## An estimated 230 people were killed in drink drive accidents in 2012, which was not significantly different from 2011.

Jointly with 2010 and 2011, drink drive deaths in 2012 were the lowest since detailed recording began in 1979 and accounted for around 13 per cent of all road deaths.

- 1,200 people were seriously injured in drink drive accidents in 2012, a 6 per cent fall from 2011. Compared to 2011, slightly injured drink drive casualties from drink drive accidents rose by 1 per cent in 2012, to 8,510.
- The overall effect of these year-on-year changes is that total drink drive casualties in 2012, of all severities, were unchanged from 2011, at 9,930 (5 per cent of all reported road casualties).
- Drink drive accidents accounted for around 13 per cent of road deaths and 6 per cent of killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties in 2012.
- Drink drive deaths and serious injuries in 2012 were both around 85 per cent down on 1979 (when detailed recording began).



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## About this release

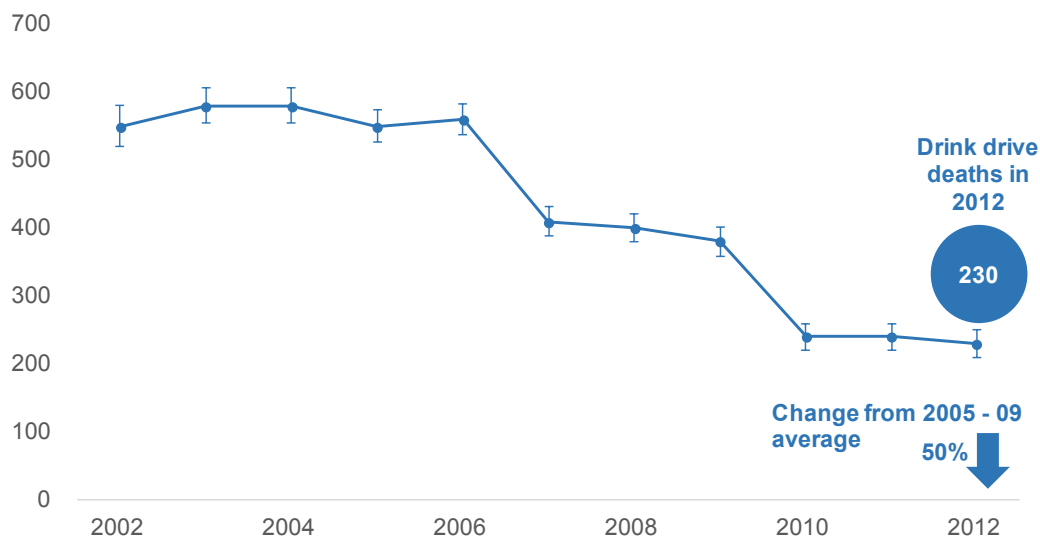
This publication presents statistics on personal injury accidents on public roads (including footways) in Great Britain, which became known to the police. These are estimates of casualties arising from reported accidents involving at least one motor vehicle driver or rider over the legal alcohol limit for driving, in Great Britain in 2012. Figures are derived from the "STATS 19" forms completed by the police plus toxicology data for road fatalities from Coroners and Procurators Fiscal.

Provisional estimates for 2012 were published last August but have been revised and finalised, as more data are now available.

## Short-term trends

- 230 people were killed in reported drink drive accidents in 2012, compared to 240 in 2011. However, the uncertainty associated with the estimate means that **this is not a statistically significant change**.
- Of the 920 drivers and riders killed in 2012, an estimated **18 per cent were over the legal alcohol limit**. This is an increase compared to 2011 (when 15 per cent of killed drivers and riders were over the limit), but the overall **decrease in killed drivers**, plus a fall in the number of failed breath tests means that the number of drink drive deaths has not increased.
- Following a sharp drop in deaths between 2009 and 2010 (a fall of around 40 per cent) **drink drive deaths have been stable since 2010**, between 230 and 240. These are the lowest figures seen since detailed reporting began in 1979.
- A similar period of stability was seen earlier in the decade – between 2002 and 2006, deaths fluctuated between 550 and 580 before falling off in 2007.

**Chart 1: Killed casualties in reported drink drive accidents: GB 2002 to 2012; error bars show 95% confidence intervals**



- There were 1,430 drink drive killed or seriously injured casualties (KSIs) in 2012, a fall of 5 per cent from 2011. Drink drive KSIs fell each year from 2002 to 2010, with an average fall of around 10 per cent each year. Since then, KSIs have been relatively stable,

## Definitions

### Drink drive accident:

A reported incident on a public road in which someone is killed or injured, where at least one of the motor vehicle drivers or riders involved met one of these criteria:

- refused to give a breath test specimen when requested by the police (other than when incapable of doing so for medical reasons)
- failed a roadside breath test by registering above 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath
- died and was subsequently found to have more than 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100ml of blood

### Drink drive casualties:

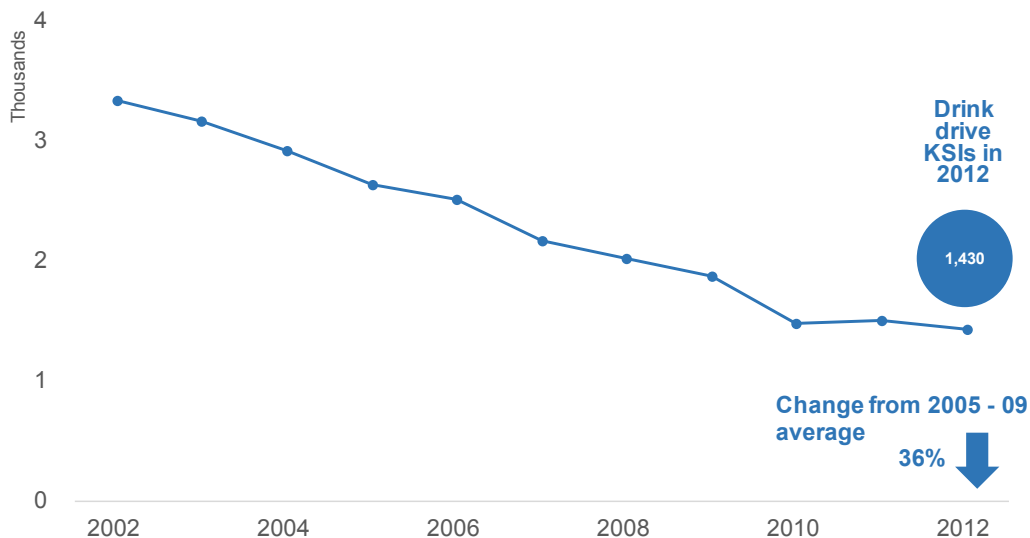
all road users killed or injured in drink drive accidents.

A full list of the casualty definitions used in this release can be found [here](#).

Error bars in Chart 1 are 95% confidence intervals, calculated assuming a random sample of toxicology data for killed drivers and riders.

rising 3 per cent in 2011 before a fall of 5 per cent in 2012.

**Chart 2: Killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties in reported drink drive accidents: GB 2002 to 2012**



**2005 -2009 average**  
is the baseline for the  
[Strategic Framework for  
Road Safety Outcomes](#).

## 2005-2009 average

**Drink drive casualties**  
compared to the 2005-  
2009 average:

Killed	50%
Serious	33%
KSI	36%
All casualties	28%
Accidents	23%

- Slightly injured casualties from drink drive accidents rose by 1 per cent between 2011 and 2012, to 8,510. They show a similar trend to the KSIs: falls from 2002 to 2010, followed by very slight increases each year from 2010 to 2012.
- The overall effect of these year-on-year changes is that total drink drive casualties in 2012, of all severities, were unchanged from 2011, at 9,930 (5 per cent of all reported road casualties).

## Long-term trends

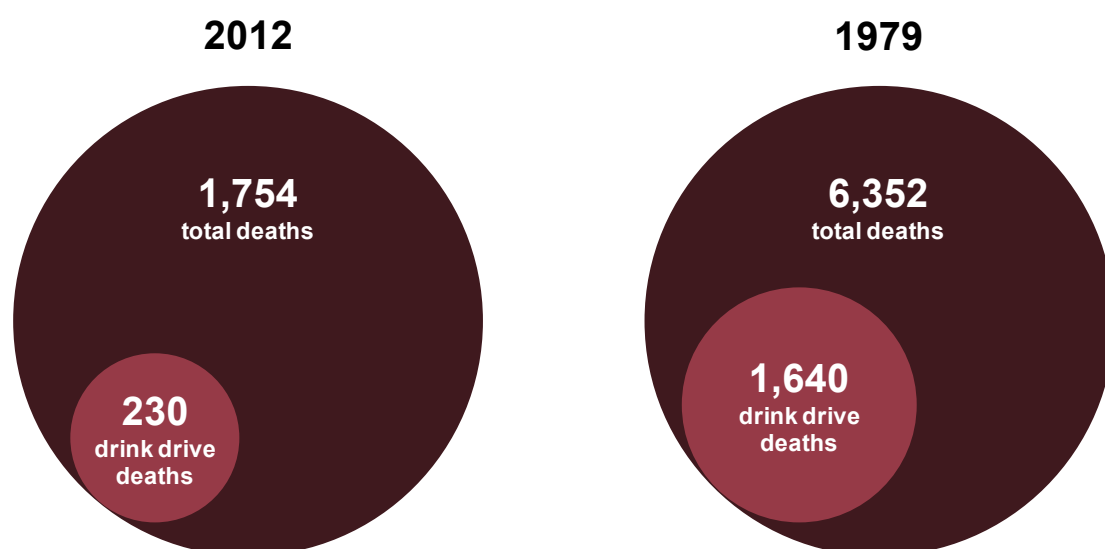
- Detailed reporting on drink drive accidents and casualties began in 1979. That year, there were 1,640 drink drive fatalities. Since 2010, the figures have been **around 85 per cent (more than 6 times) lower than this**.
- KSIs from drink driving have fallen by a similar factor.
- Although the total number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads has fallen over the same period, **drink drive casualties have fallen more steeply**: in 1979, drink driving accounted for around a quarter of road deaths, compared to 13 per cent now.

## Detailed statistics...

• Reported drink drive accidents and casualties since 1979, Great Britain, table [RAS51001](#)

• More detailed statistics on drink driving, including breakdowns by casualty type will be available alongside Reported Road Casualties Great Britain - Annual Report, due for publication on 25 September 2014.

**Chart 3: Comparing total road deaths and drink drive deaths: 1979 and 2012**



#### Drink drive fatalities – drivers over the limit and others

- Of the 230 drink drive fatalities in 2012, we estimate around 165 were the **drivers and riders who were over the legal limit**. The remaining 65 were other road users, involved in the accident but not necessarily over the legal alcohol limit themselves.
- A similar split has been seen in recent years. Of the 1,490 drink drive deaths seen between 2008 and 2012, 68 per cent were drivers or riders above the limit.
- This suggests that the biggest risk of **death** from driving whilst over the legal limit is to the driver or rider themselves, rather than to other road users. This is unsurprising if we consider that just over half of fatal drink drive accidents between 2008 and 2012 involved **only one vehicle** (i.e. the one being driven whilst over the limit) and no pedestrians.
- The breakdown of fatalities has evolved over time. Amongst the 7,170 people killed in drink drive accidents between 1979 and 1983, there was closer to a 50-50 split between drink drivers and riders (53 per cent) and other road users.

## Methodology

Two sources of data are used to compile these statistics:

- **Coroners' toxicology data** Information about the level of blood-alcohol content (BAC) 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 (Scotland). The toxicology data are linked to STATS19 to identify accidents in which a killed driver or rider was over the limit.
- **STATS19 breath test data:** to identify accidents in which a surviving driver or rider was 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 were recorded as unable to do so for medical reasons.

## Methodology details

**A methodology note** describing how the estimates are compiled from the sources is available [here](#).

**STATS19 forms** are completed by the police to record detailed data on the circumstances, casualties and vehicles for reported personal-injury accidents.

## Data limitations

### Sampling uncertainty

Toxicology data are not available for all killed drivers / riders recorded in STATS19 – either because a toxicology test was not carried out, it was not possible to collect the data from the coroner or because the driver died more than 12 hours after the accident and thus the toxicology tests are unlikely to be reliable indicator of BAC at the time of accident.

Typically toxicology data are available for around 60 – 70 per cent of relevant cases (62 per cent for 2012). To account for the killed drivers without a known BAC, the casualties from the known cases are scaled up. Thus, the estimates are based on a sample, rather than a complete count, which introduces an element of uncertainty.

The uncertainty is expressed as a 95% confidence interval around the estimates in Chart 1, which demonstrates that despite an apparent reduction in drink drive deaths compared to 2011, in practice a change of this size is not statistically significant.

## Provisional vs final estimates

As it takes around 18 months from year-end to collect the toxicology sample, we usually publish provisional estimates, based on the limited sample of data that could be gathered up to 6 months after year-end.

Provisional estimates for 2012 were published in August 2013. Compared to these estimates the final estimates published here show 50 fewer deaths (18 per cent reduction), 10 fewer serious (1 per cent reduction) and 10 extra slight casualties (0.1 per cent increase).

We are aware of a strong tendency for downward revisions between the provisional and final estimates and the problems of a diminishing sample size for the provisional estimates. Like the 2012 data, large downward revisions were seen for 2011. We are currently consulting on improvements to the methodology for the provisional estimates and would welcome responses from users, before 4 September 2014 (see opposite for link). The provisional estimates for 2013 have been delayed pending the outcome of the consultation.

## Under-reporting of road casualties and other data sources

The estimates in this release 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.

For more information about the extent of under-reporting see the article entitled "Survey data on road accidents" [here](#).

In addition, the Office for National Statistics Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) includes questions on people's own admission of driving whilst over the legal alcohol limit or under the influence of drugs. The latest CSEW results for drink and drug driving show that the proportion of drivers who admitted driving whilst over the legal alcohol limit in the past year has been broadly unchanged since 2010/11. This finding broadly reflects the finding in this release, that drink drive casualty numbers have also been relatively stable since

## Take part in a consultation...

...on the future of the provisional drink drive casualty estimates:

[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/drink-driving-monitoring-data](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/drink-driving-monitoring-data)

## Data on self-reported drink and drug driving

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277556/rrcgb2012-05.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277556/rrcgb2012-05.pdf)

2010.

Over the past 4 years, between 20 and 40 people each year in England and Wales were convicted of causing death by careless driving under the influence of drink or drugs. A further 50 – 55 thousand were convicted of various other offences related to driving after consuming drugs or alcohol (e.g. driving with blood-alcohol above the prescribed limit, failing to provide a breath specimen etc). Both figures have remained relatively stable over the last few years.

## Data on driving convictions

- Ministry of Justice data

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-december-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-december-2013)

## Background notes

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. The first assessment report, number 4, and letter confirming that the statistics have been designated as National Statistics are available here: [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html). The statistics were reassessed during 2013 and the report, number 258, was published at the link above on the 25th July 2013.

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: [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).

## Next release

More detailed drink driving statistics, including breakdowns by road user type, will be available alongside Reported Road Casualties Great Britain - Annual Report, due for publication on 25 September 2014.