Department for Transport

Reported road casualties in Great Britain: Estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels: 2014 (final) and 2015 (provisional)

About this release

This publication presents the final 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 2014 and provisional for 2015.
Figures are derived from the Stats19 forms completed by the police plus toxicology data for road fatalities from coroners and procurators fiscal.

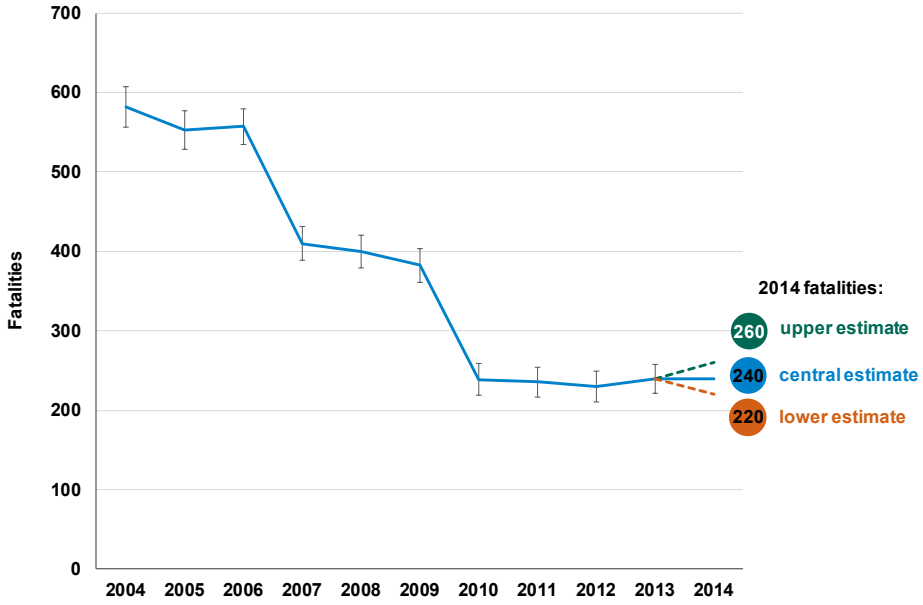
Uncertainty

These statistics, especially the number of fatalities, are subject to considerable uncertainty. This means that it is impossible to be sure of the precise number of casualties, so ranges and confidence intervals are used throughout the publication.

In this publication

Final estimates for 2014 show that 240 people were killed in accidents in Great Britain where at least one driver was over the drink drive limit. This is unchanged from 2013.

Chart 1: Killed casualties in reported drink drive accidents: GB 2004 to 2014; error bars show 95% confidence intervals



The number of **seriously injured casualties** in drink drive accidents decreased by 3 per cent from 1,100 in 2013 to 1,070 in 2014. **The reduction in seriously injured casualties in 2014 compared with 2013 is statistically significant.**

The first provisional estimates for 2015 suggest there were between 200 and 290 **deaths** in drink drive accidents.

What we can conclude: There have been statistically significant decreases in the number of people seriously and slightly injured in reported accidents involving at least one motor vehicle driver or rider over the legal alcohol limit. The proportion of drink drive serious and slight injuries of overall injuries have decreased in recent years. This indicates that there are a number of factors that have combined together to reduce the number of drink drive injuries on Britain's roads.

What we cannot conclude: Due to the uncertainty associated with drink drive deaths we cannot be sure that there has been any change in drink drive deaths since 2010. The proportion of drink drive fatalities compared to overall fatalities has stayed around 13 to 14 per cent for the last five years.

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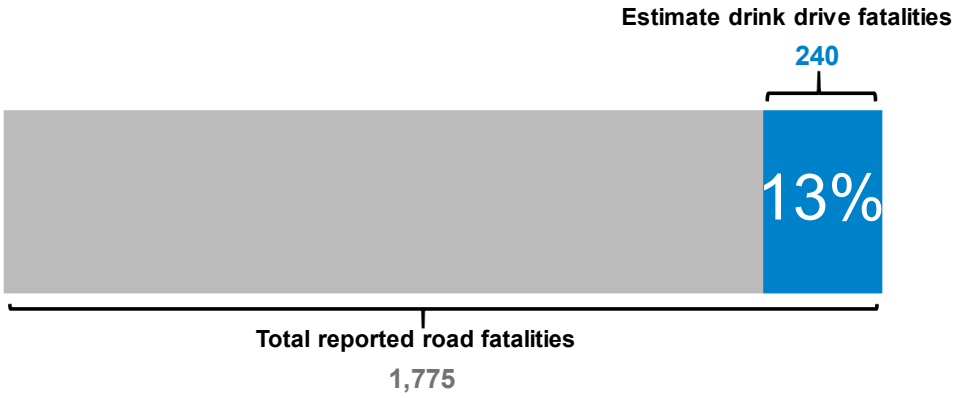
Casualties in drink drive accidents in 2014

The final central estimate of the number of deaths in accidents with at least one driver over the alcohol limit for 2014 is 240. This represents about 13 per cent of all deaths in reported road accidents in 2014. The figure is unchanged compared with the final figure for 2013, following a period of stability since 2010. It is the same figure as the second provisional estimate made in February 2016.

Chart 2: Fatalities in reported drink drive accident in comparison with overall fatalities: GB, 2014



The fatalities figure is an estimate based on coroners' and procurators' fiscal reports for 62 per cent of the drivers or riders who were killed in road traffic accidents in 2014. As the figure is based on an incomplete sample, **the true figure could be between 220 and 260 fatalities** at a 95% confidence level.

The number of road fatalities have decreased over the long term. **As the number of deaths fall, missing data create larger uncertainties in the estimates.**

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 each year. A similar period of stability was seen earlier in the decade – between 2002 and 2006 deaths fluctuated between 550 and 580, before falling further in 2007.

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

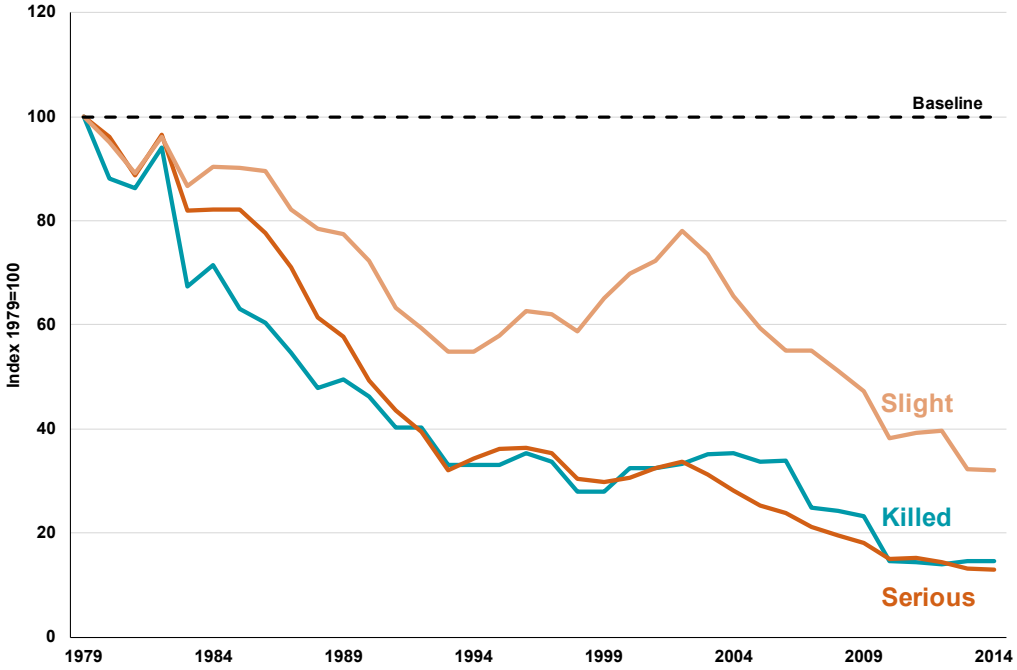
Drink drive casualties: All road users killed or injured in drink drive accidents.

A full list of the casualty definitions used in this release can be found here.

Scottish drink drive limit

On the 5th December 2014 the limit in Scotland was reduced to 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath or 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100ml of blood. The 2014 final estimates and the provisional estimates for 2015 have been produced using the new limits, for the relevant periods of time.

Chart 3:Central estimates for casualties sustained in reported drink drive accidents: GB, 1979 - 2014 (index 1979=100)



The number of killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties, which is 1,310 for 2014, is the lowest KSI total for reported drink drive accidents on record. However the **reduction in KSI casualties from the 2013 levels is not statistically significant**. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing downward trend, with falls in every year since 2002, barring 2011.

95% confidence interval

The bars on the graph are ranges of values for an estimate which we are 95% confident that the 'true' value falls in.

Technically, it indicates that if many samples of the same population were drawn, 95% of the results would fall between the confidence interval values.

For instance, for 2014 we have an upper bound 260 and lower bound of 220. This means that we are 95% confident that the true number of fatalities for 2014 will fall between 220 and 260 deaths, but most likely towards the centre of this range.

Chart 4: Killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties in reported drink drive accidents: GB 2004 to 2014; error bars show 95% confidence intervals

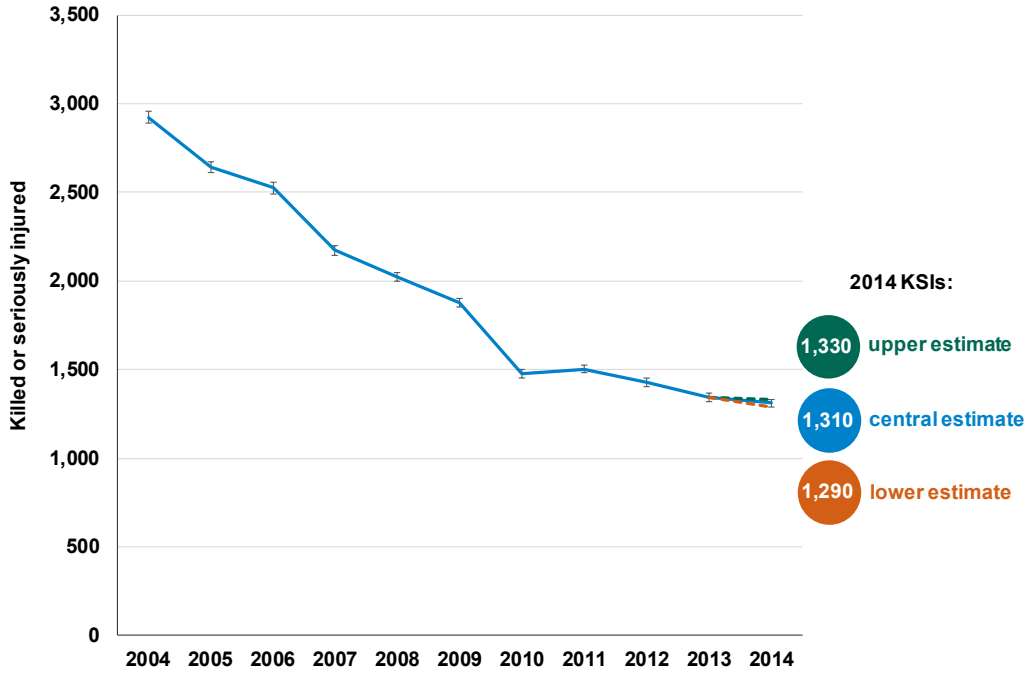


Table RAS51001: Casualties in reported drink drive accidents: GB 1979 to 2014

Number

	Accidents[1]				Casualties[1]					
Year	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	95% CI lower[2]	Killed	95% CI upper[2]	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	500	530	560	2,540	14,990	18,060
2001	470	2,020	9,780	12,270	510	530	560	2,700	15,550	18,780
2002	480	2,050	10,620	13,150	520	550	580	2,790	16,760	20,100
2003	500	1,970	9,930	12,400	550	580	600	2,590	15,820	18,990
2004	520	1,790	8,900	11,210	560	580	610	2,340	14,060	16,980
2005	470	1,550	8,060	10,080	530	550	580	2,090	12,760	15,400
2006	490	1,480	7,430	9,400	530	560	580	1,970	11,850	14,370
2007	370	1,400	7,520	9,290	390	410	430	1,760	11,850	14,020
2008	350	1,280	6,980	8,620	380	400	420	1,620	10,970	12,990
2009	340	1,180	6,530	8,050	360	380	400	1,500	10,150	12,030
2010	220	990	5,420	6,620	220	240	260	1,240	8,210	9,690
2011	220	1,040	5,430	6,690	220	240	250	1,270	8,420	9,930
2012	210	960	5,460	6,630	210	230	250	1,200	8,510	9,930
2013	230	880	4,590	5,690	220	240	260	1,100	6,930	8,270
2014	220	880	4,530	5,620	220	240	260	1,070	6,900	8,210

1. Estimates are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. Upper and lower range for fatalities based on the 95% confidence interval.

Similarly the number of **seriously injured casualties** in drink drive accidents decreased by 3 per cent from 1,100 in 2013 to 1,070 in 2014. This is the third consecutive annual decrease and is the **lowest number of seriously injured casualties on record**. The number of seriously injured casualties in drink drive accidents has ranged from 1,070 (2014) to 1,270 (2011) over the last five years. **The reduction in seriously injured casualties in 2014 compared to 2013 is statistically significant.**

The **total number of casualties** of all types in drink drive accidents for 2014 is 8,210, down 1 per cent on the 2013 figure. This is also the lowest total on record.

There were an estimated 220 **fatal drink drive accidents** in 2014, down 5 per cent on the 2013 figure (230). Although this seems to be a reduction from 2013 levels the change is not statistical significant and it should be interpreted as **having remained unchanged since 2010**. The estimates for fatal accidents have fallen while fatal casualties have remained unchanged; this reflects the uncertainty in the estimates for fatalities.

Similarly, the **total number of drink drive accidents** of all severities fell by 1 per cent to 5,620 in 2014, the lowest level on record. This means that around 4 per cent of all reported road traffic accidents in 2014 involved at least one driver over the drink limit.

Statistically Significant

The **95% confidence level** is the standard against which statistics are typically tested. It means that in 100 years with the same risk of fatalities (or injury), 95 of those years will result in a number of fatalities (or injuries) between a given range. If the actual change falls outside of this range then we can be 95% confident that the change is as a result of a genuine trend (statistically significant) rather than a product of chance (not statistically significant).

How does this compare with the previous estimate?

Second provisional estimates for 2014 were published in February 2016 (see here). Compared with these estimates, the final estimates for 2014 published here show the range for fatalities narrowing. In the second provisional figures the range was 210 to 270 and the revised range is from 220 to 260. This change is due to more reports becoming available from coroners and procurators fiscal. The central estimate for fatalities is unchanged from the second provisional estimates. Compared with the second provisional estimates the final estimates for 2014 published here show 10 fewer serious casualties and 10 fewer slight casualties with deaths central limit unchanged. As it takes around 18 months from year-end to collect the toxicology samples, provisional estimates based on a limited sample of data were published in August 2015 and February 2016.

Comparing with baselines

2010-2014 average is the new baseline, following the publication of the Working Together to Build a Safer Road System: British Road Safety Statement in December 2015.

2014 Drink drive casualties **compared with the 2010-2014 average:**

Killed	↑ 1%
Serious	↓ 9%
KSI	↓ 7%
All casualties	↓ 11%
Accidents	↓ 10%

2005-2009 average was the baseline for the Strategic Framework for Road Safety Outcomes. We have included them here to help with the migration to the new baseline.

2014 Drink drive casualties **compared with the 2005-2009 average**:

Killed	↓ 48%
Serious	↓ 40%
KSI	↓ 42%
All casualties	↓ 40%
Accidents	↓ 38%

Characteristics of reported drink drive casualties

Males account for 70 per cent of killed or seriously injured (KSIs) in **all road accidents in 2014**. This is reflected in **drink drive accidents** with 77 per cent of KSIs are sustained by males.

3 in 4 drink drive KSIs are male

Tables

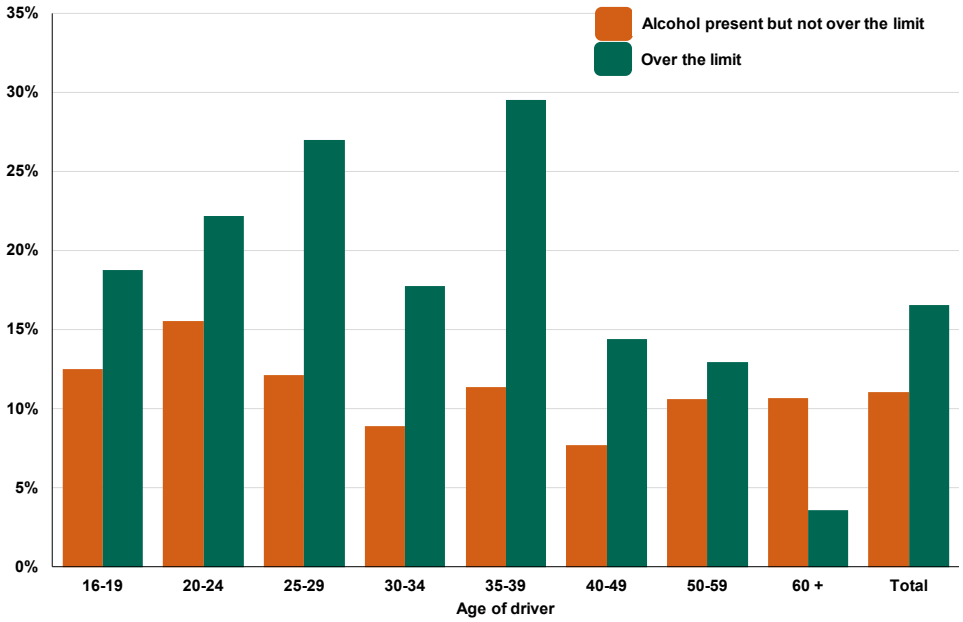
• Drivers and riders killed: percentage over the legal blood alcohol limit, Great Britain, annual from 2001: RAS51006.

• Proportion of killed drivers/ riders resulting from reported accidents in each BAC, by age: RAS51007.

The proportion of killed drivers and riders over the limit is highest amongst 25 to 39 years old. In 2014, around 25 per cent of those killed from this age group were found to be over the limit, compared with less than 15 per cent for older age groups.

The proportion of the killed youngest driver age group (16 to 24 years old) that were found to be over the limit was 21 per cent.

Chart 5: Proportion of killed drivers and riders by BAC category: GB, 2014



Of the estimated 1,310 people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in reported drink drive accidents in 2014, an estimated 40 per cent (520) were car drivers over the drink drive limit.

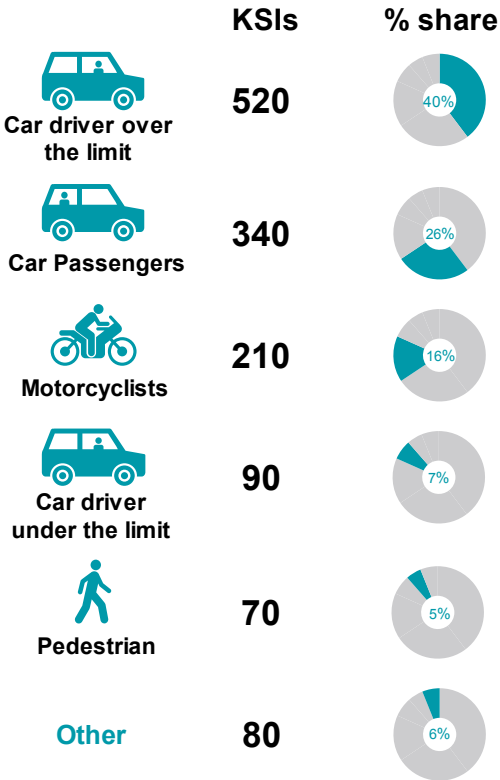
Definitions

Due to the changes in the Scottish limit, the definitions have changed for 2014: Alcohol present but not over the limit includes killed drivers/ riders with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of: 10-80mg for England and Wales, 10-80mg for Scotland until 05/12/14 and 10-50mg for Scotland from 05/12/14 - 31/12/14.

Over the limit includes killed drivers/riders with a BAC of: 81mg+ for England and Wales, 81mg+ for Scotland until 05/12/14 and 51mg+ for Scotland from 05/12/14 - 31/12/14.

The other two road user groups that accounted for the largest amount of KSIs were car passengers (26 per cent) and motorcyclists (16 per cent). Motorcyclist and car passengers include both fatalities over and under the drink drive limit.

Chart 6: Estimated number of killed or seriously injured casualties in reported drink drive accidents by road user type: GB, 2014[1]



Tables

• Estimated number of reported drink drive accidents and casualties, Great Britain, annual from 2001: RAS51005.

Definitions

Other includes pedal cyclists, HGVs, LGVs, buses and coaches and other vehicles.

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 was 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.

In 2014, **coroners' data** was available for 62 per cent of drivers and riders killed in reported accidents, but only 40 per cent of pedestrians and 39 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: Fatalities[1] over the drink drive limit as a percentage of all fatalities by time of accident, England and Wales[2]: 2014

Percentage

	Time of accident		
	22:00- 03:59	04:00- 21:59	Sample size
Motorcycle riders	*48*	*5*	190
Car drivers	*52*	*15*	297
Other vehicle drivers/riders	*40*	*0*	29
Passengers	*30*	*16*	71
Pedestrians	*74*	*15*	144
Pedal cyclists	*0*	*9*	35

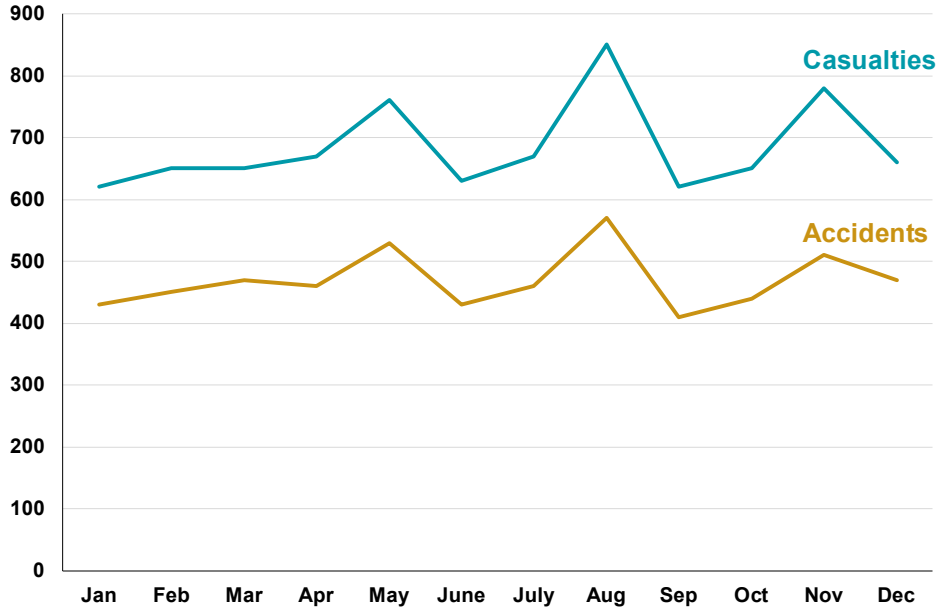
1 These figures are from Coroners and Procurators Fiscal only
2 Figures for Scotland can be found in RAS51009.

The table above highlights that a high proportion of fatalities (for whom blood alcohol levels are known) who were in reported road accidents between the hours of 10pm and 4am were over the drink drive limit. In particular, 74 per cent of pedestrian fatalities in reported road accidents at night had a blood alcohol content over the limit compared with 15 per cent of pedestrians who were killed between the hours of 4am and 10pm (day). It is likely that the majority of their deaths were as a result of the pedestrian's action rather than the driver's fault.

Characteristics of reported drink drive accidents

Drinking and driving is a year-round problem. Although the exact pattern varies year on year, the first few months of the year generally have lower numbers of drink drive accidents and casualties than other months. The fall in drink drive accidents and deaths in December and the earlier months of the year may reflect Christmas drink drive campaigns and increased enforcement leading up to Christmas. In 2014, the highest month for drink drive accidents was August.

Chart 7: Estimated number of reported drink drive accidents and casualties, by month: GB, 2014

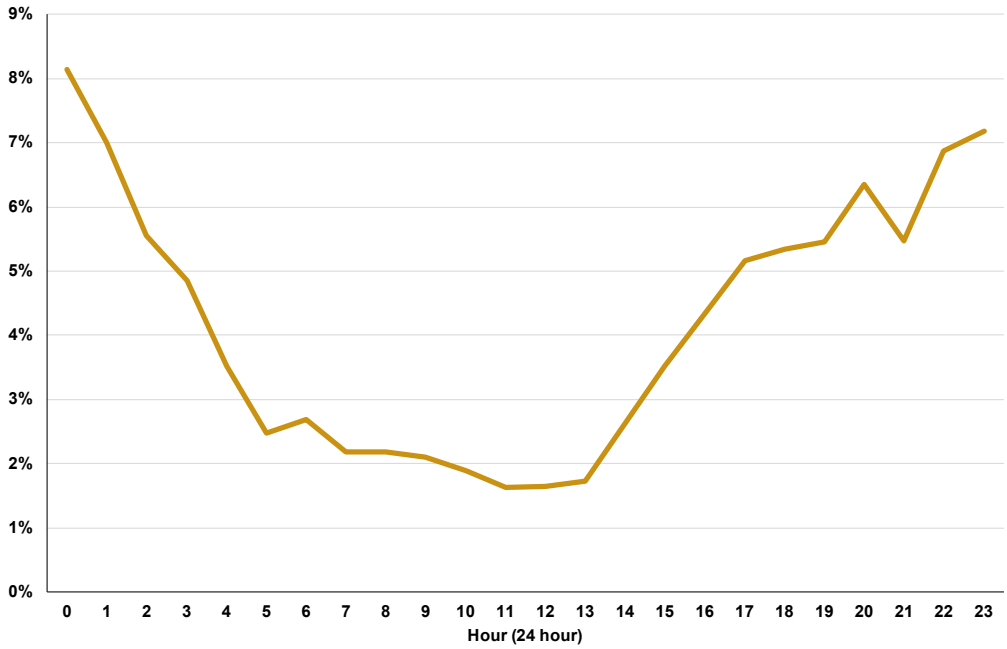


Tables

• Estimated number of reported drink drive accidents and casualties, by month, Great Britain: RAS51011.

In 2014, nearly two thirds (61 per cent) of all drink drive accidents occurred on a **Friday, Saturday or Sunday**. Two-fifths of all drink drive accidents occurred during the hours of **9pm to 3am** (see chart 8).

Chart 8: Reported drink drive accidents, by time of day: GB 2014



Tables

• Reported drink drive accidents, by time of day, Great Britain: RAS51012.

In 2014, 43 per cent of reported drink drive accidents were **two vehicle accidents, with no pedestrian casualties**. Accidents involving a single vehicle and no pedestrians accounted for around 50 per cent of reported fatal drink drive accidents. 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 23 per cent of all reported fatal road accidents were single

vehicle accidents with no pedestrian casualties.

Only 4 per cent of drink drive accidents during 2014 **involved a pedestrian casualty**, compared with 16 per cent for all accidents.

Table RAS51013: Reported drink drive accidents by pedestrian involvement: GB, 2014

Number/Percentage

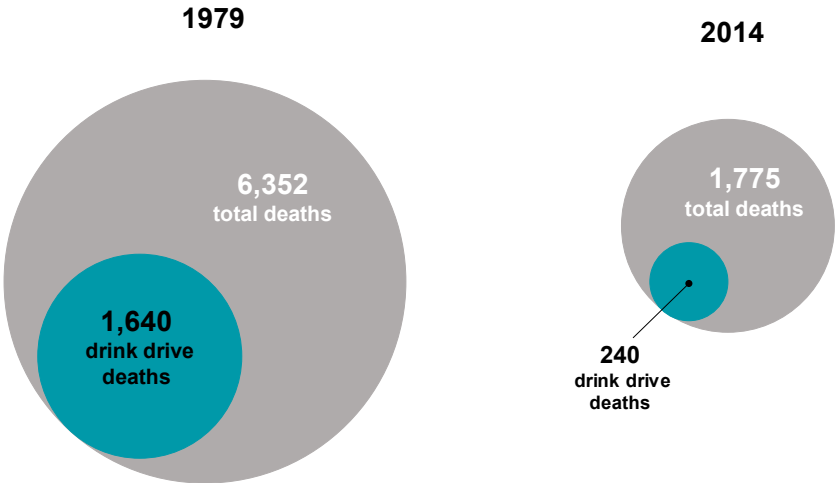
Pedestrian casualties	Number of vehicles involved						Total	
	1	%	2	%	3 or more	%		%
No	**2,230**	*93*	**2,410**	*98*	**760**	*99*	**5,400**	*96*
Yes	**160**	*7*	**40**	*2*	**10**	*1*	**210**	*3.7*
Total	**2,390**	*100*	**2,450**	*100*	**770**	*100*	**5,620**	*100*

Long term trends

Detailed reporting on drink drive accidents and casualties started in 1979. At that time, there were around 1,640 fatalities in drink drive accidents out of a total of 6,352 road deaths in all accidents. **Drink drive fatalities in 2014 are more than six times lower than in 1979**, a significant reduction.

Overall road deaths have similarly fallen over this timescale – down to 1,775 in 2014, a 72 per cent decrease. However, **drink drive deaths** have had larger falls, down by 85 per cent since 1979. Rather than accounting for roughly a quarter of all road deaths, as they did in 1979, drink drive deaths now account for around 13 per cent of all road fatalities (see chart 9).

Chart 9: Comparing total road deaths and drink drive deaths: GB, 1979 and 2014



Overall serious and slight injuries have decreased considerably since 1979 and have carried on decreasing in recent years. Drink drive serious injuries accounted for 7 per cent of total serious casualties ten years ago. This proportion has fallen to 5 per cent in 2014. This suggests that the decrease is through more at than just general road safety improving. It is therefore likely that some drink drive initiatives have been effective in reducing the number of drink drive injuries.

Casualties in drink drive accidents in 2015 - provisional estimates

The first provisional estimates for 2015 suggest there were between 200 and 290 **deaths** in drink drive accidents. It is estimated that there were 1,420 **killed or seriously injured** casualties and 8,530 **casualties of all severities** in drink drive accidents in 2015.

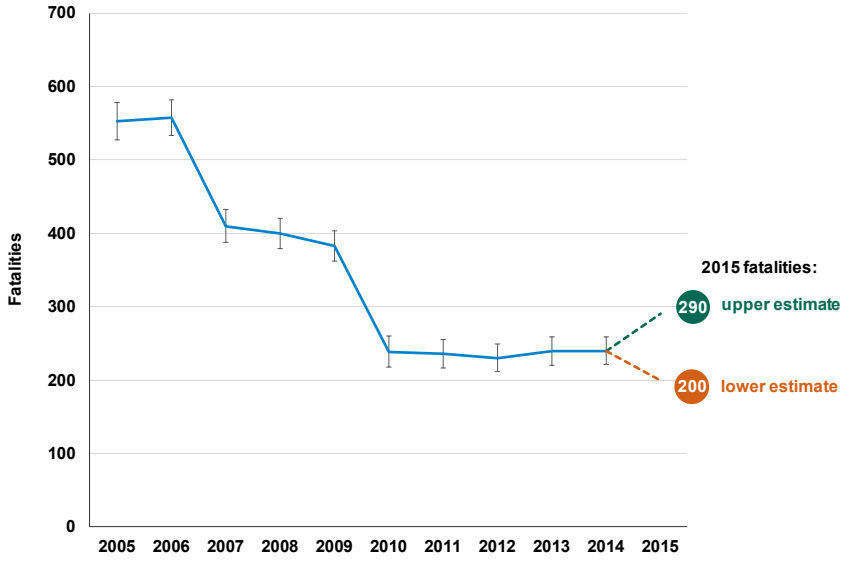
Next update

Updated 2015 provisional estimates for casualties in reported drink drive accidents will be published in February 2017 and will include a central fatality estimate as well as a range.

Scottish drink drive limit

On the 5th December 2014 the limit in Scotland was reduced to 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath or 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100ml of blood. The 2015 provisional estimates have been produced using the new limits for Scotland.

Chart 10: First provisional estimate of drink drive deaths: GB 2005 to 2014; error bars show 95% confidence intervals



The first provisional interval for fatalities for 2015 published here (200 to 290 deaths) is similar in width (90 deaths) to the first provisional published for 2014 (240 to 340). Although the range for 2014 was at a higher level, it is too early to predict that there will be a fall in drink drive deaths in 2015.

The **fatalities figure** is based on coroners' and procurators' fiscal reports for only around a quarter of the drivers or riders who were killed in road traffic accidents in 2015. Therefore the final figure, which will be based on reports on around 60-70 per cent of drivers or riders who died in road accidents, **may be substantially different from this provisional estimate** (see uncertainty section for more detail). Recent years have typically shown large falls between the provisional and final estimates.

Other data sources

Data on the results of **roadside breath alcohol screening tests**, administered by police forces in England and Wales, using **digital breath testing devices** can be found here. The devices are able to record exact breath alcohol readings and the result of individual tests, as well as reason for test, time of day, day of week and age and gender profiles of those tested and results are downloaded to data systems on a monthly basis and provided to the Department for Transport. The data are not provided by all police forces so are incomplete and therefore do not cover England and Wales as a whole. The data relate to drivers of road vehicles only.

Home Office data on the number of roadside tests (and failures) administered by the police in England and Wales can be found here.

Uncertainty in the estimates

Due to the nature of the data used to create these estimates, **there is considerably more uncertainty in the number of fatalities and fatal accidents than any other severity level**. The reason for this is that, of the **1,775 deaths in 2014, 951 of the fatalities were vehicle drivers themselves**. In the accidents where there was a fatality that was not a driver, we are confident that all of the drivers would have been breath-tested at the scene or at a later point (for instance, in hospital). Therefore, in the majority of these specific cases the police record of the accident contains all the information required to decide if any driver in the accident were over the drink drive limit.

However, of the 1,631 fatal accidents involving at least one motor vehicle, 935 **(57 per cent of the total) resulted in the death of one or more drivers or riders of motor vehicles**. I**nformation about the blood alcohol content (BAC) level for the drivers who died is required from coroners and procurators fiscal** to know whether anyone involved in these accidents was over the drink drive limit.

It is impossible to be absolutely sure about the BAC level of every driver involved in reported accidents without a coroners' report for each driver who died. At each stage of publication (first and second provisional, and the final data) **we do not know the BAC level for some of the drivers**. This is partly because it takes time to receive coroners' reports (we had 211 reports for the 2014 first provisional, 416 reports for the 2014 second provisional and 586 for the 2014 final), but also because there are some reports that are never returned, and some drivers died too long after the accident to allow the coroner to get a reliable BAC reading (we use a 12 hour cut off; any driver who died later than 12 hours after the accident is removed from the analysis). **Typically we would expect to receive, match and have usable data for 60-70 per cent of drivers**.

Unlike the other data collected and published on road accidents, therefore, the number of casualties in drink drive accidents is **based on only a sample of data**, rather than a complete set of all reported accidents. We therefore have to make assumptions about the drivers without BAC level data. These assumptions are based on the drivers for whom we do have BAC level data. However, we cannot be certain that exactly the same proportion of the unknown drivers were over the limit as the known drivers. This is where the uncertainty in the estimates comes from. **The smaller the set of known drivers we have, the greater the uncertainty** as it becomes increasingly possible that the unknown drivers have a different set of characteristics from the known drivers. For instance, the provisional data provided for 2011 indicated that 19 per cent of the drivers were over the limit, based on 329 forms from 1,040 drivers who were killed. By the time the final data were processed, though, this had fallen to 15 per cent (based on 666 forms, so just over double the sample size). This is the reason that the number of fatalities has been revised

so significantly between provisional statistics and final statistics in recent years – **in most years the BAC levels for drivers received after the provisional statistics were published tend to be lower than for the drivers used to create the provisional statistics**. This meant that the provisional statistics were overestimating the total number of drivers over the drink drive limit in comparison with the final estimates.

The best way of dealing with and representing uncertainty is to provide a range of values or confidence intervals around a central estimate. The new method that is being reported now is to give **just a range of values for the first provisional estimate**, as this minimises the risk of producing a central estimate that will have to be revised by a significant amount, as has been done in recent years. T**he second provisional and final statistics include a central estimate, plus a 95% confidence interval**. The confidence interval gives a range in which we are 95 per cent confident that the 'true' value falls (Technically, it indicates that if many samples of the same population were drawn, 95% of the results would fall between the confidence interval values).

In theory, **the range provided should narrow from the first provisional through the second provisional and to the final figures**. Depending on how the percentage of drivers over the BAC level changes, the actual values covered by the range might change as well. This can be noted in the 2014 figures: the first provisional range is between 240 and 340 deaths, the second provisional is between 210 and 270 deaths and the final estimate is between 220 and 260 with a best estimate of 240 deaths. In this case, the range has narrowed but the central estimate has stayed the same between the second provisional and final estimates. This is because the failure rate remained fairly static between the second and final results – starting at 16.3 per cent and rising slightly to 16.6 per cent.

The number of casualties who are seriously or slightly injured is less uncertain than the number of fatalities. Whereas 58 per cent of all fatalities in 2014 occurred in an accident where at least one motor vehicle driver died, only 1.3 per cent of serious injuries and 0.2 per cent of slight injuries occurred with the death of a driver. For these severity types, therefore, **almost all of the drink drive information comes from breath tests** rather than coroners' reports, meaning that the **uncertainty drops to almost negligible levels**.

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.

Self-reported drink and drug driving

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales is available here.

Breath test from reported road accidents

Breath test figures from reported road accidents in 2015 will be published in September 2016 alongside with the Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2015 Annual Report (RCGB).

Digital breath test data

Breath analyser data collected from a proportion of police forces will be published in September 2016 alongside the RCGB.

Further information

Ministry of Justice data on driving convictions can be found here.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

Sampling uncertainty

Toxicology data are not available for all killed drivers / riders recorded in STATS19 and are typically available for around 60 – 70 per cent of relevant cases (62 per cent for 2014). 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 (see uncertainty section for more detail).

Provisional vs final estimates

As it takes around 18 months from year-end to collect the toxicology sample, provisional estimates which are based on limited samples of data are published in August and February. Provisional estimates for 2014 were published in February 2016 (see here). Compared to these estimates the final estimates for 2014 published here show 10 fewer serious casualties and 10 fewer slight casualties with deaths unchanged.

Under-reporting of road casualties

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.

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 (report number 4) and letter confirming that the statistics have been designated as National Statistics are available at: https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-reported-road-casualties/. The statistics were reassessed during 2013 and the report, number 258, was published at the link above on the 25th July 2013.

Next release

Updated 2015 provisional estimates for casualties in reported drink drive accidents will be published in February 2017 and will include central estimates and ranges.

Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-accident-and-safety-statistics-pre-release-access-list.