Shock survey reveals 1 in 5 think it’s sometimes acceptable to drink-drive - if you FEEL unaffected

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A CarTakeBack.com (https://www.cartakeback.com/) and YouGov survey.

Highlights:

Almost 1 in 5 (17%) think it’s sometimes acceptable to drive after drinking - as long as they feel unaffected. This equates to 7 million drivers in Great Britain.

Nearly 1 in 10 think they could drink more than the UK legal limit before their driving ability would be affected.

6 times more men than women believe they can consume 6-10 drinks before their driving ability is affected.

Half as many students compared to those not in education, thought it was sometimes OK to drink and drive - if they feel unaffected.

Drink-driving skyrockets around festive period – latest police data shows there were 5,869 positive or refused breath tests in December vs 4,446 in February.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Policy and Research Director, said: “Christmas can be a perfect storm for drink-driving. This survey suggests a high level of ignorance and misunderstanding around limits and safe levels. Ultimately there is no safe level of alcohol in the blood if you intend to drive.” (Full unabbreviated quote below.)

DETR found drivers with a Blood Alcohol Concentration between 50mg and 80mg are up to 6 times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than someone with no alcohol in their bloodstream.

University of California study finds there is no safe combination of drinking and driving. Any alcohol in the bloodstream whilst driving poses an increased risk to the driver and others.

Lowering the legal blood alcohol limit whilst driving to 0.05% could save more lives.

More information:

A CarTakeBack.com (https://www.cartakeback.com/) and YouGov survey revealed that almost 1 in 5 (17%) think it’s sometimes acceptable to drive after drinking - as long as they feel unaffected. With 40 million driving licenses in Great Britain, this is nearly 7 million drivers!

Drivers appeared to define their own ‘safe’ limit for drink-driving. Nearly 1 in 10 think they could drink more than the UK legal limit before their driving ability would be affected.

The survey revealed a number of other findings. Men think they can drink the most and still be fine to drive, with 6 times more men than women believing they can consume 6-10 units of alcohol before their driving ability is affected. This is equivalent to 6-10 single shots of spirits or 3-5 pints of lower strength beer/cider/lager!

With recent reports of a sharp decline in youth drinking, unsurprisingly, half as many students compared to those not in education, thought it was sometimes OK to drink and drive, if they feel unaffected. When asked their opinions on driving after drinking, 7% more of the respondents who were aged 55+ felt it was sometimes fine if you feel unaffected, compared to those responding aged 18-24.

Perhaps worryingly, many studies show that despite how you feel, any amount of alcohol in a driver's bloodstream can impair driving.

The government commissioned Sir Peter North to review drink and drug driving laws (https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmtran/460/460.pdf). In his report, he stated the DETR found drivers with a Blood Alcohol Concentration between 50mg and 80mg are 2-2.5 times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers with zero alcohol, plus up to 6 times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision.

Similarly, a study led by David Phillips (https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-06-amount-alcohol-safe.html#nRlv) at The University of California, San Diego, and published in Injury Prevention (https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/21/e1/e28), found there is no safe combination of drinking and driving and any alcohol in the bloodstream whilst driving poses an increased driving risk.

In the UK, the current legal blood alcohol limit is 0.08%, it's suggested that lowering this to 0.05% (in line with European countries) would save more lives.

The festive season is upon us and it seems the drink driving problem skyrockets during the party season. Data from Police.uk (https://data.police.uk/data/) shows December is the month with the highest number of positive or refused breath tests on the roads. In the latest data, there were 5,869 in December compared to 4,446 in February.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Policy and Research Director, said: "Christmas can be a perfect storm for drink-driving. Temptations all around, the normal rules relaxed, and as this survey suggests, a high level of ignorance and misunderstanding around limits and safe levels. Ultimately there is no safe level of alcohol in the blood if you intend to drive. The simplest message is none for the road. Plan your night out so that you can enjoy yourself and not have any stress about the journey home."

Our research

The YouGov survey polled 2,077 people in the UK between 2nd and 5th November 2018. The data has been weighted to be representative of the UK adult population. The survey asked adults (18+) questions to understand their personal views and attitudes towards drink driving.

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Resources

Phillips DP, Sousa ALR, Moshfegh RT
Official blame for drivers with very low blood alcohol content: there is no safe combination of drinking and driving
Injury Prevention 2015;21:e28-e35.

House of Commons Transport Committee.
Drink and drug driving law.
2010-2011.

Data.police.uk

Confused.com estimate that ‘as a rule of thumb, two pints of regular-strength lager or two small glasses of wine would put you over the limit.’

9% of respondents reported that they could drink 4-6 units of alcohol before their driving ability is affected. 4 units is equivalent to two pints of regular strength lager according to https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator.

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