

Drinking and Driving in Canada: Results of the Road Safety Monitor 2007

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Alcohol Policy Network Teleconference
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Introduction

- The Road Safety Monitor (RSM) is an annual public opinion survey, funded by Transport Canada, Brewers of Canada, Toyota Canada.
- It examines:
 - what Canadians see as priority road safety issues and their concerns;
 - their views about how to deal with these problems;
 - what they know and don't know about safe driving practices;
 - how they behave on the highways.



Introduction

- The RSM includes a set of questions that are asked each year (7th edition), including questions about drinking and driving in Canada.
- Information on trends in attitudes, opinions and behaviour becomes available.



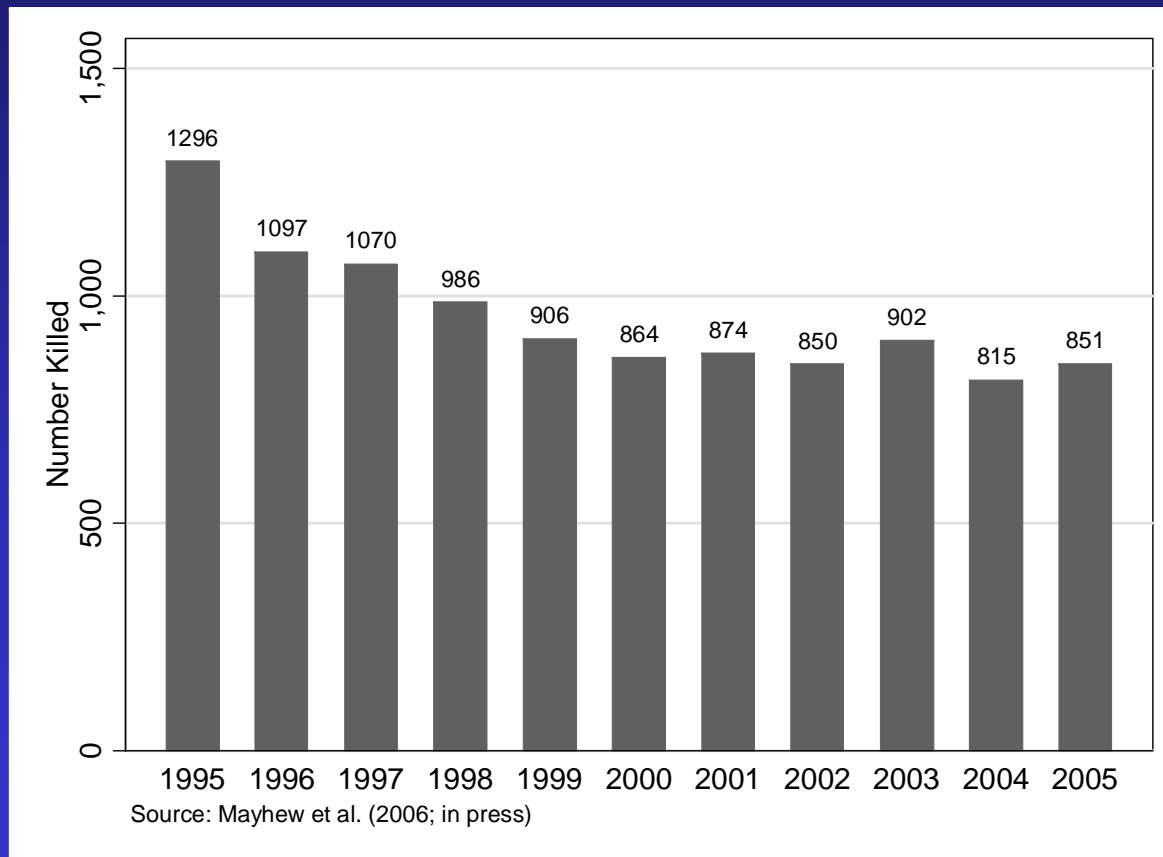
Method

- Survey required an average of 15min to complete.
- It was administered by telephone to a random sample of Canadian drivers (filter question).
- It was stratified by province and weighted using gender and age.
- 1,238 drivers completed the interview in September 2007.



Background: Drinking and Driving

persons killed in traffic crash involving a drinking-driver



Decreasing trend

Decrease especially during 90s

Absolute # remains high

Increase in 2005

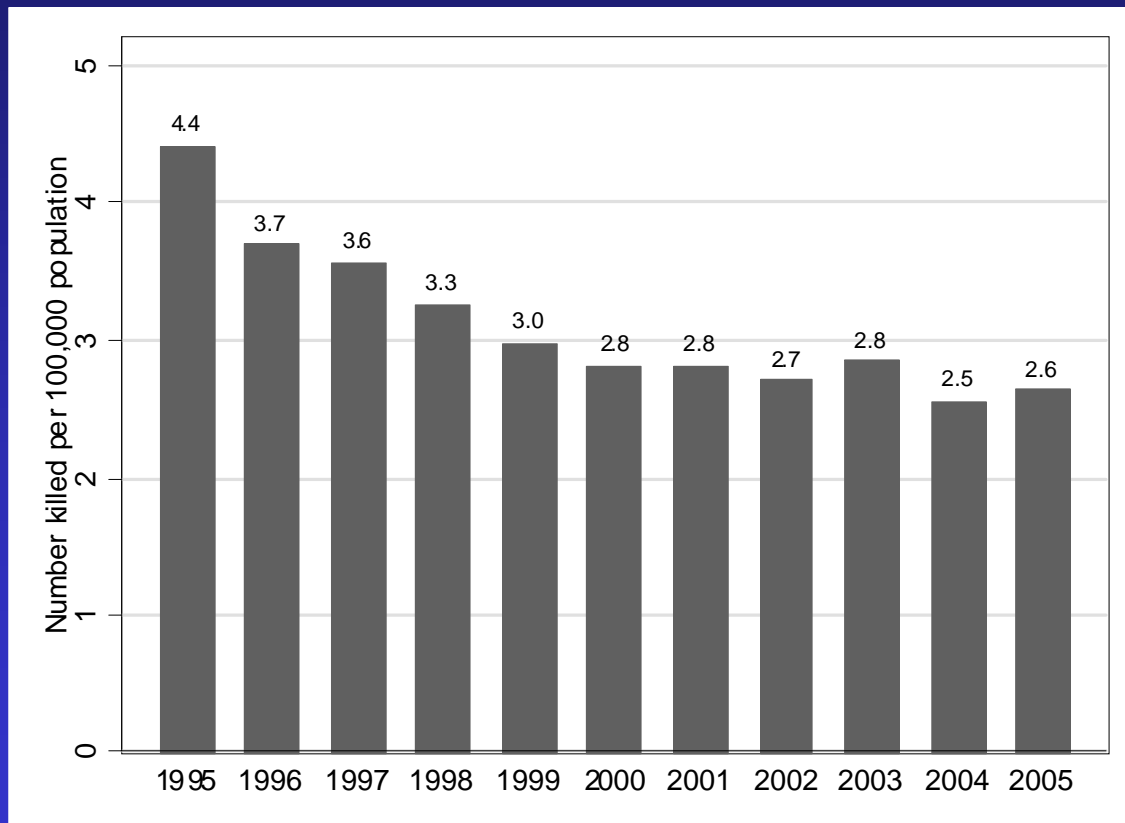


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Background: Drinking and Driving

persons killed in traffic crash involving a drinking-driver per 100,000 population



Decreasing trend

Decrease especially during 90s

Increase in 2005

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The Easy Gains?

- Many experts agree that these declines during 90s can be traced primarily to socially responsible individuals:
 - they were drinking and driving less often;
 - they were consuming less alcohol if they did drink and drive.



Into the New Millennium

- Compared to 90s, progress basically halted as we entered the new millennium.
- Same pattern holds for all the reliable indicators we have.

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Progress Halted or Increase in Crashes?

- Crash data alone are not sufficient to answer this question:
 - Increase from 815 in 2004 to 851 in 2005 may be random; e.g., perhaps 2006 data will turn out to be lower than 815 (cf. jump in 2003 to 902).
 - Such random fluctuations may mask true trends.
 - Delay in data collection.



The Problem Today

- Despite progress, the problem persists at unacceptable levels and may be on the verge of increasing.
- Given these statistics, it is not surprising to find that drinking and driving is anything but uncommon.



Drinking and Driving

- 17.6% of Canadians report they have driven at least once in the past thirty days within two hours of drinking *any* amount of alcohol.
- 8.2% of Canadians report they had been driving at least once in the past 12 months when they thought they were over the legal limit.



Drinking and Driving

- 8.2% represents 1.8 million Canadians!
- The vast majority of trips when the driver thought he/she was over the legal limit (89%) were accounted for by only 4.8% of all drivers.



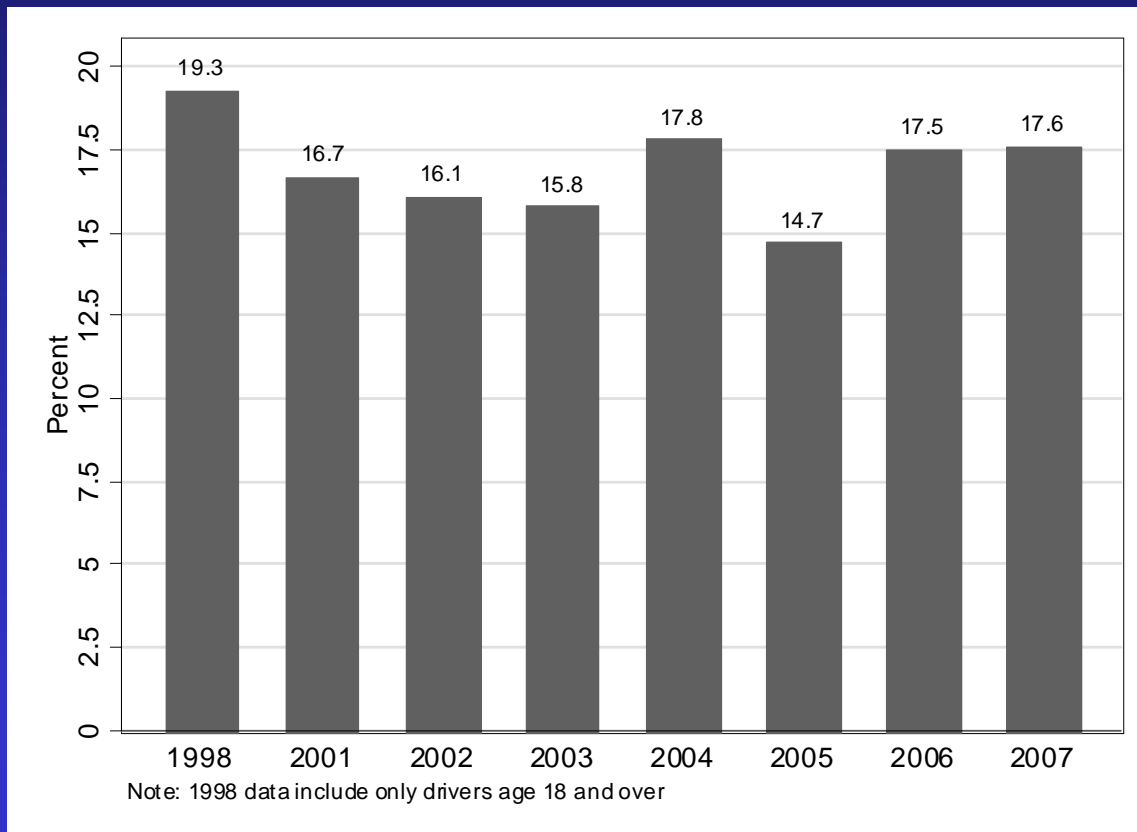
Hard Core Drinking Drivers

- This finding suggests the problem is *mainly* (i.e., not exclusively) one of a small group of offenders.
- These are known as hard core drinking drivers – they repeatedly drink and drive with high blood alcohol concentrations.



Trends in Drinking and Driving

% who report driving within 2 hours after drinking any amount of alcohol



Decline from 1998-2003

Increase in 2004 and decrease in 2005

Increase in 2006 *and* in 2007

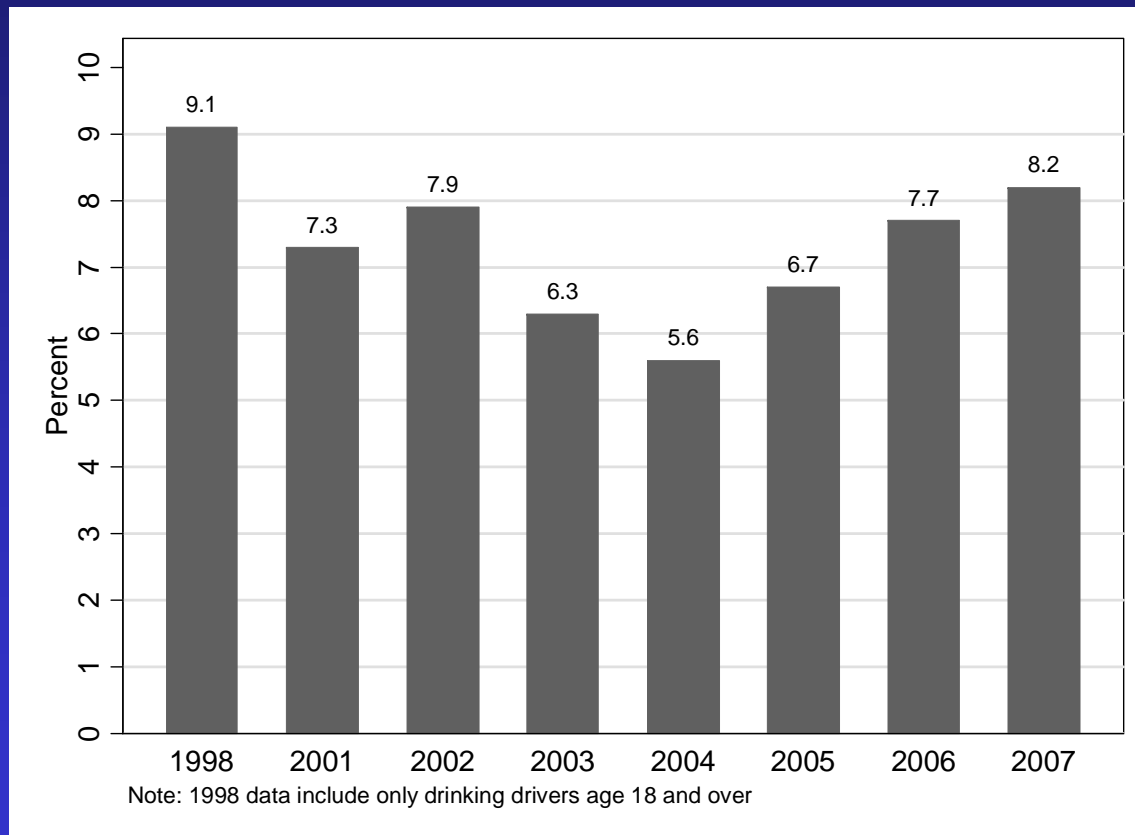


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Trends in Drinking and Driving

% who report driving when they thought they were over the legal limit in past 12 months



Decline
1998-2004

Increase in
2005 *and* in
2006 *and* in
2007

Suggests an
upward
trend

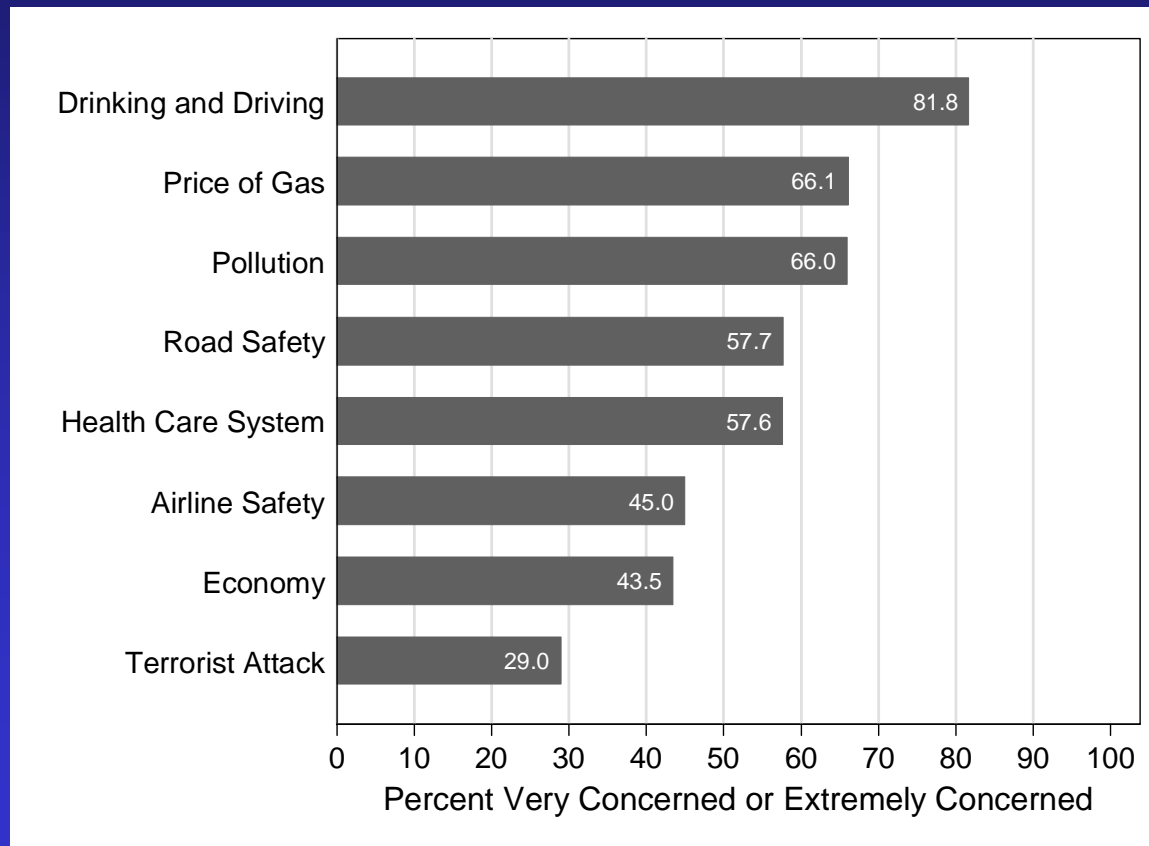
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Concern

Level of concern about social issues (2006)



 82% are very or extremely concerned

 Has not changed since 2001: #1 issue with at least 80%

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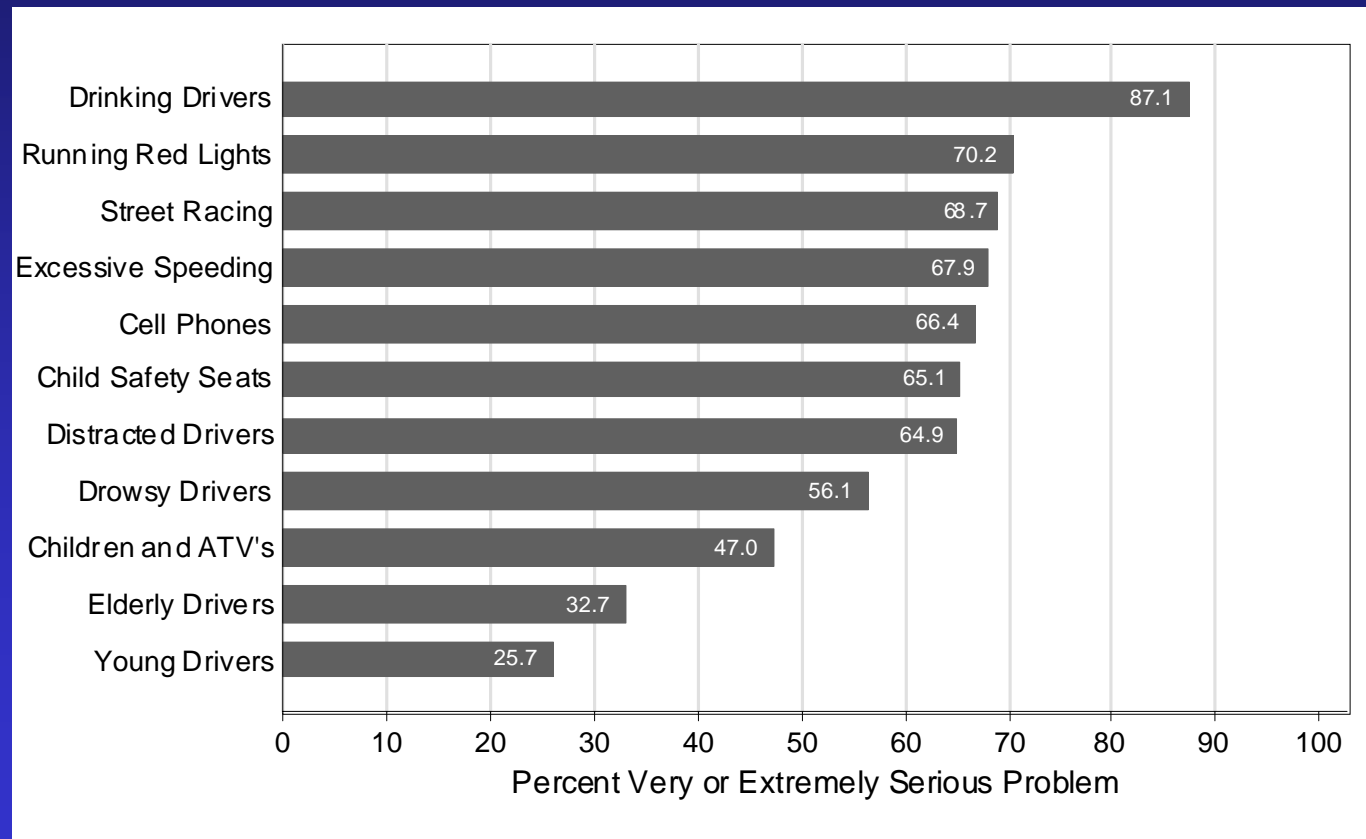
Concern

- Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of concern about a variety of road safety issues.
- Canadians also regard drinking and driving as the most serious road safety issue.
- 2007: 87% see it as a very serious or extremely serious problem.



Concern

Level of concern about road safety issues (2007)



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Concern

- Canadians who are not concerned about the issue of drinking and driving are far more likely to report driving while they thought they were over the legal limit. Cf. 2006 data:
 - Those who are not concerned: 21% report drinking and driving;
 - Those who are concerned: 8% report drinking and driving.



Law and Law Enforcement

Public's *perception*:

- Canadians overestimate chance of getting caught by the police when drinking and driving – mitigates their concern;
- If caught, not arrested or no license suspension;



Law and Law Enforcement

Public's *perception*:

- If charged and arrested, no conviction;

- If convicted, only a nominal sanction that will do little to change behaviour.

- Canadians don't have a lot of confidence in the criminal justice system.



Law and Law Enforcement

- The perceived lack of effectiveness and efficiency partly explains the high level of concern about drinking and driving.
- It may also explain the behaviour of drinking-drivers, and the high prevalence of drinking and driving.



Profile

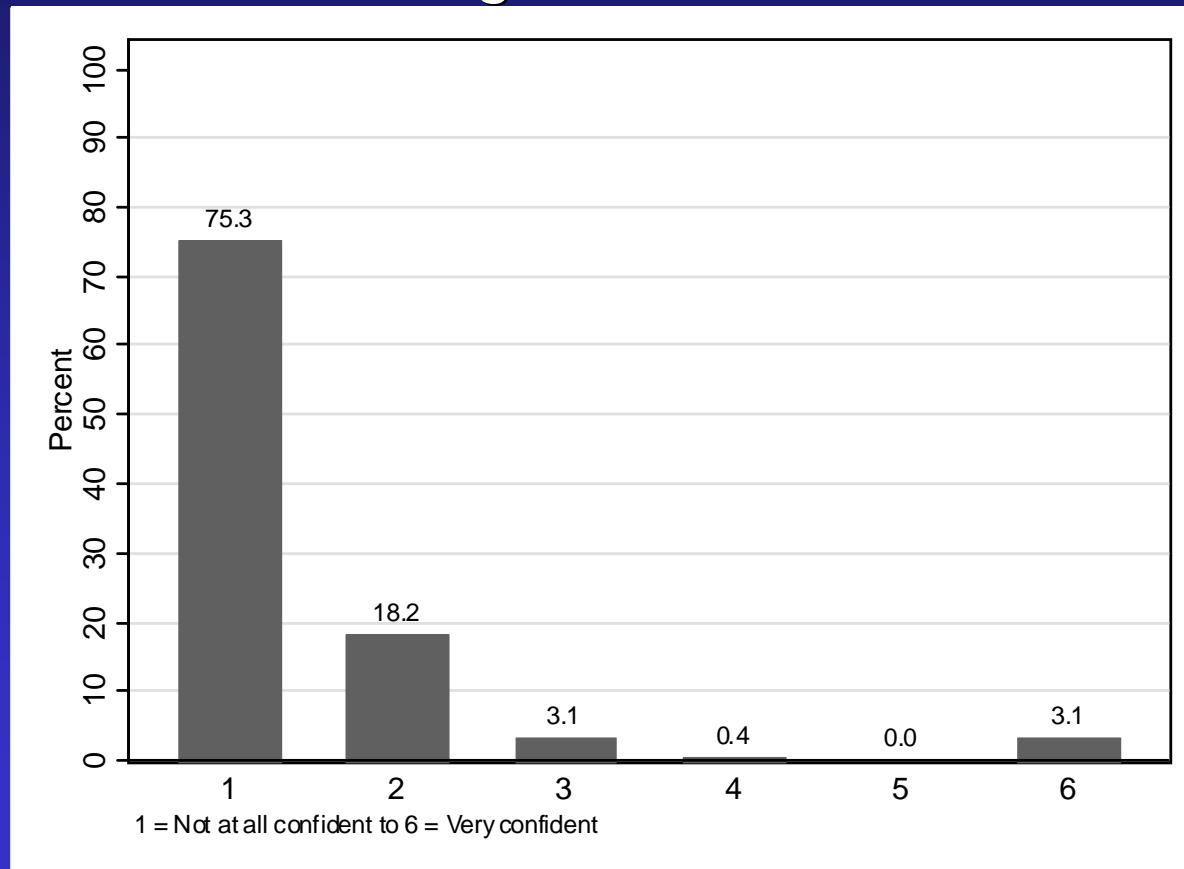
■ Drinking driving is typically associated with:

- being male;
- believing that the problem of drinking and driving is a small one;
- believing that drinking and driving does not necessarily increase the risk for a collision;
- a history of traffic tickets (excluding parking tickets);
- lower levels of concern for road safety in general.



Profile

Percent of levels of confidence about maintaining control of vehicle when driving within 2 hours after drinking



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Profile

- Majority stated they were not confident (96.6% answered 1, 2 or 3);
- Comparable results for those who drove when they thought they were over legal limit (95.1%);
- Suggests that drinking drivers may not fully understand the risk of a collision associated with this behaviour.

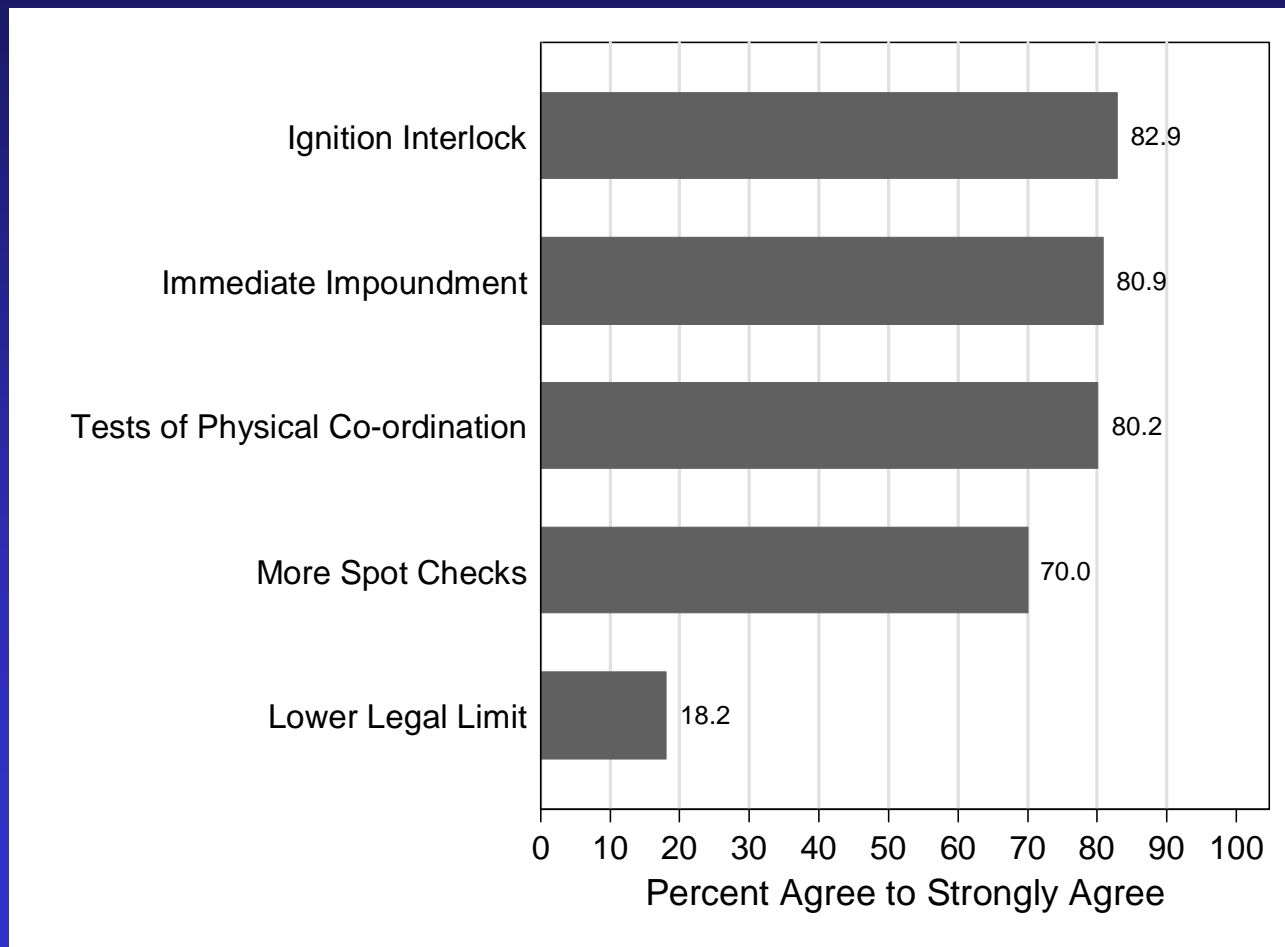


Level of Support for Countermeasures

- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for various actions against drinking and driving:
 - mandatory use of ignition interlock devices for persons convicted for impaired driving;
 - a test of physical coordination in case the driver is suspected of being impaired;
 - immediate impoundment of the vehicle of a driver who fails a breath test;
 - more police spot checks;
 - lowering the legal limit.



Level of Support for Countermeasures



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Level of Support for Countermeasures

- Majority of Canadians endorse first four actions.
- Lowering legal limit garnered lowest level of support.
- This pattern is consistent over several years.



Level of Support for Countermeasures

- Being more concerned about drinking and driving implies more support for all actions, except for lowering the legal limit.
- Compare to 2006 data:
 - Those who report they have driven within two hours of drinking any amount are less likely to support lowering the legal limit (9% vs. 27%).
 - However, 73% of those who report not to drive after drinking any amount do not support lowering the limit.



Conclusion

- ■ Canada has a drinking and driving problem:
 - ■ general decreasing trend in number of persons killed in crashes involving a drinking-driver;
 - ■ much of the decrease occurred during the 1990s;
 - ■ number of persons killed remains high;
 - ■ a large number of drinking-drivers drive on Canadian roads.



Conclusion

- It is too premature to draw definitive conclusions about the trends regarding this issue, but it is clear that progress has halted!
- Canadians have good reasons to be concerned...and they are!



Conclusion

- One of the reasons explaining their level of concern may be their perception of the law and law enforcement.
- Canadians are supportive of a variety of countermeasures.
- Lowering the legal limit garnered the lowest level of support.



Solutions

■ We need measures that will:

■ protect the public;

■ change behaviour.



Solutions

- Many such effective programs have already been introduced in Canada (e.g., ignition interlocks, vehicle impoundment, treatment).

- Bill C-2





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The Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) is a charitable, independent road safety institute. It performs original research into the causes of road crashes and develops and promotes effective prevention programs and policies.



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January 24, 2006

5th Annual Ignition Interlock Symposium Proceedings

The proceedings from TIRF's 5th Annual Ignition Interlock Symposium held in Tempe, Arizona in October 2004 are now available.

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OPINION POLL

Opinion Poll

In your opinion, which is the most serious traffic safety problem?

To submit your answer simply click on the traffic light.

red = drugs and driving
yellow = distracted driving
green = drowsy/fatigued driving

Click here for more information

International Conference on **Distracted Driving**

October 2-5, 2005

International Inventory of **INTERLOCK PROGRAMS**

[- Previous polls](#)

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Finally...

The hard core should be a priority for drinking-driving countermeasures.

But by no means should this exclude our focus on “social drinkers” or young drivers.

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