

Prevalence of Drug Driving in Ireland

Nationwide Survey: Medical Bureau of Road Safety and University College Dublin 2000-2001: The MBRS was commissioned by the then Department of Environment and Local Government to carry out a nationwide survey during 2000 and 2001 on blood and urine specimens from drivers suspected of intoxicated driving. 2,000 specimens were selected for drug analysis, 1,000 with results under the limit for alcohol and 1,000 over the (old) limit of 80mg/100mL in blood. 231 (33.1%) of the drivers under the legal limit for alcohol tested positive for one or more of the relevant drugs, and the corresponding figures for drivers over the limit was 142 (14.2%). Using weighted analysis this corresponded to 15.7% of all tested drivers (15.8% in men and 14.5% in women).

Medical Bureau of Road Safety Specimen Analysis Data 2007-2011: 7,776 specimens of blood and urine tested between the years 2007-2011 were reviewed. Cannabis followed by benzodiazepines continued to be the most prevalent drugs detected.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) deaths in vehicle drivers with a positive toxicology for an illicit drug(s), recorded by the NDRDI 2004 to 2009 in Coroner's Districts Nationally:

A review was undertaken by the NDRDI of drug toxicology from Coroners' nationwide data on driver fatalities between 2001 and 2009. The following analysis presents the NDRDI data on road traffic collisions (RTC) deaths among vehicle drivers in Ireland, for the period 2004 to 2009, where the individual had a positive toxicology finding for an illicit drug(s) at the time of death. In this six year period there were 93 of these deaths recorded by the NDRDI. Cannabis (38.7%) was the most common illicit drug found in the toxicology of these 93 individuals, followed by cocaine (23.7%) and MDMA (18.3%)

RTC deaths in drivers of a vehicle (car, van or motorcycle) reported to the Coroner's District of Kildare 1998 to 2009; A review of road traffic collisions and drug and alcohol toxicology analyses from the Coroners District in Kildare during the period of 1998 – 2009 was carried out. 92 (56.1% of total number of road users killed) were the driver of a vehicle (car, van or motorcycle). Of these 92 deaths, 9 (9.8%) had a positive toxicology for a drug(s).

Garda DUI Recorded Crime Statistics 2004-2011: The incidence of Garda recorded crime statistics 2004-2011 [8] for driving or being in charge of a vehicle while over the alcohol limit or under the influence of a drug are reproduced below is shown in the table below.

Year	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Driving/In charge of a vehicle while over legal alcohol limit	12,168	14,075	18,598	19,822	17,940	13,771	10,682	9,013
Driving/In charge of a vehicle while under the influence of a drug	77	106	117	270	728	891	602	421

Table 2.4: Recorded Crime Offences (Number) for Driving/In charge of a vehicle while over legal alcohol limit and Driving/In charge of a vehicle while under the influence of drug 2004-2011

National Advisory Committee on Drugs: Drug Prevalence Survey 2010/2011: In 2012 the NACD and the Public Health Information and Research Branch (PHIRB) in Northern Ireland published data from a household survey conducted in 2010/2011 [3]. The results of the survey showed that cannabis was the most commonly used illegal drug with a lifetime prevalence of 25% in the Republic of Ireland and 24% in Northern Ireland. Cannabis use was more prevalent in the younger age groups.

RSA Online Drug Driving Survey 2010: An online survey was conducted by the RSA in July 2010 among 1,000 people aged 17 to 34 years old into the use of recreational drugs while driving and revealed that 1 in 20 (6%) drivers have driven under the influence of recreational drugs in the past. 1 in 5 people (22%) admitted they were a passenger in a car driven by someone under the influence of drugs.

The survey also found that:

- Almost half (45%) of the total sample have used recreational drugs in the past
- 13% of the total sample have used recreational drugs in the past 2 months
- 79% of respondents viewed driving under the influence of drugs as 'very unacceptable' compared to 85% who viewed driving under the influence of alcohol as 'very unacceptable'
- 50% of those who admitted they have driven under influence of recreational drugs were fined for other traffic offences before

There are significant variations among drug users of the impairment effects of various types of drug. The use of ecstasy while driving was viewed as 'extremely dangerous' by 8 out of 10 respondents – while 46% view Cannabis / Marijuana as 'extremely dangerous'.