Department for Transport

Statistical Release

Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2007 provisional estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels

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The Department for Transport has today published provisional statistics on accidents involving drinking and driving in Great Britain in 2007, according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

Provisional drink drive estimates show:

- Fatalities resulting from drink drive accidents fell by 18% from 560 in 2006 to 460 in 2007, whilst seriously injured casualties fell by 11% from 1,970 to 1,760. Slight casualties, however, rose by 4% from 11,840 to 12,260. Total casualties rose by 1% from 14,370 to 14,480.

- Fatal accidents fell by 16% from 490 to 410, although there was an overall increase of 2% in drink drive accidents from 9,400 to 9,620.

Table A shows the number of accidents and casualties involving at least one driver/rider over the legal alcohol limit for GB in 1979 to 2007.

Table A: Drink drive accidents and casualties: GB 1979-2007

Number

	Accidents				Casualties			
Year	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Killed	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	530	2,540	14,990	18,060
2001	470	2,020	9,780	12,270	530	2,700	15,550	18,780
2002	480	2,050	10,620	13,150	550	2,790	16,760	20,100
2003	500	1,970	9,930	12,400	580	2,590	15,820	18,990
2004	520	1,790	8,900	11,210	580	2,340	14,060	16,980
2005	470	1,540	8,060	10,070	550	2,090	12,760	15,400
2006	490	1,480	7,430	9,400	560	1,970	11,840	14,370
2007[P]	410	1,400	7,810	9,620	460	1,760	12,260	14,480

[P] Provisional data. The sample of fatality data from Coroners for 2006 has now been finalised but 2007 estimates are based on a reduced sample of coroners' returns and may be biased. They remain provisional until more complete information for 2007 is available.

More information about drink drive definitions, the data sources and the completeness of data and reliability of estimates can be found in the annex.

A more comprehensive analysis of drinking and driving statistics will be published on 25th September 2008 in *Road Casualties Great Britain: 2007*.

Annex

Drink drive limits and definitions

For the purposes of these drink drive statistics, a drink drive accident is defined as being an incident on a public road in which someone is killed or injured and where one or more of the motor vehicle drivers or riders involved *either* refused to give a breath test specimen when requested to do so by the police (other than when incapable of doing so for medical reasons), *or* one of the following:

i) failed a roadside breath test by registering over 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath

ii) died and was subsequently found to have more than 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood.

Drink drive casualties are defined as all road users killed or injured in a drink drive accident.

Data sources

Two sources of data are used to assess the extent of drink drive accidents in Great Britain. These are:

(i) **Coroners' data**: Information about the level of alcohol in the blood 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 by procurators fiscal in Scotland.

(ii) **STATS19 breath test data**: The personal injury road accident reporting system (STATS19) provides data on injury accidents in which the driver or rider survived and was also 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 are deemed unable to take the test for medical reasons.

Once the drink drive accidents have been identified using coroners' and STATS19 data, then the resulting casualties in these accidents are identified from STATS19 data.

Completeness of data and reliability of estimates

Both sources of data from the Police and Coroners on drink drive accidents are incomplete. In recognition of the uncertainty associated with the estimates produced from this data the numbers of accidents and casualties are rounded to the nearest 10.

In the case of the STATS19 breath test data, some drivers and riders are not breath tested since it is not always possible to administer a test to all drivers involved. Some drivers and riders not tested might have failed if a test could have been administered.

For many drivers or riders killed in road accidents, a post-mortem blood alcohol level is not available, either because the casualty died more than twelve hours after the

accident, or because no test was carried out, or because some of the data are not reported to the Department by coroners and procurators fiscal.

Adjustments to the reported data are required to estimate the actual number of drink drive accidents and their related casualties. The estimates published are based on a method described in the 1989 edition of *Road Accidents Great Britain* (RAGB). This method has two parts:

a) the number of fatal accidents where a driver or rider died with an illegal alcohol level is estimated from the Coroners' and Procurators' Fiscal data.

b) the number of accidents where a surviving driver or rider had an illegal alcohol level is an estimate based on a calculation of the proportion of these alcohol-related accidents which can be identified from the STATS19 breath test data.

Part b) was revised in 1993 in the light of research by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), published in TRL Report PR40 *The Actual Number of Non-Fatal Drink drive Accidents*. This provided a method which takes into account the fact that relatively more of the drivers and riders involved in fatal and serious accidents are breath-tested than in slight accidents, whereas previously a single factor had been used to allow for under-reporting for all accident severities. The revised estimates were first published in *RAGB 1992*.

Estimates for 2007 are provisional due to coroners' data being available for analysis a year later than the main road accident data. Around 58 per cent expected to be available ultimately were available for inclusion in the 2007 provisional estimates. The estimates for fatalities depend mainly on coroners' data and are particularly susceptible to revision between the provisional and final figures.