



for Transport Safety

# Drink and Drug Driving

Presentation by PACTS, 16 March 2021

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# 50+ years of drink drive law and enforcement

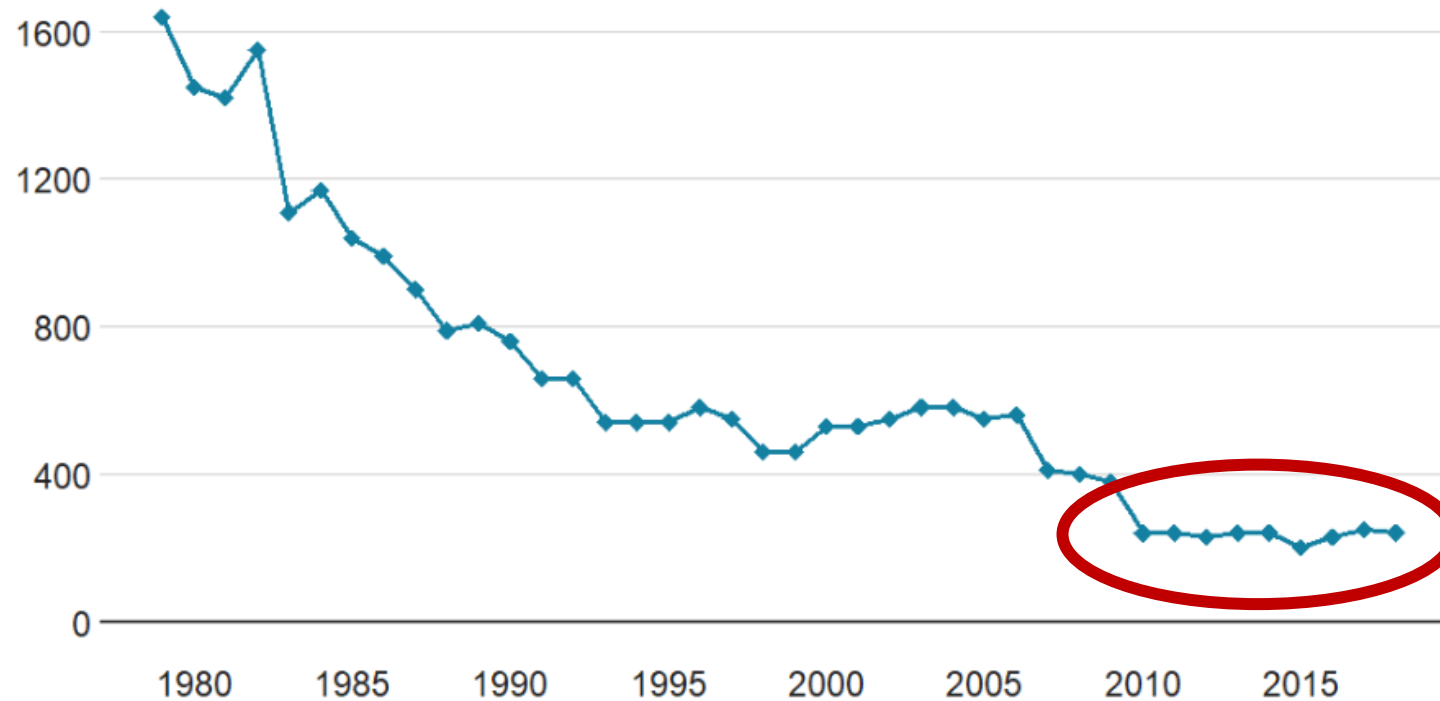


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# Drink driving and road safety

## Drink drive deaths

Drink drive deaths over time, 1979-2018



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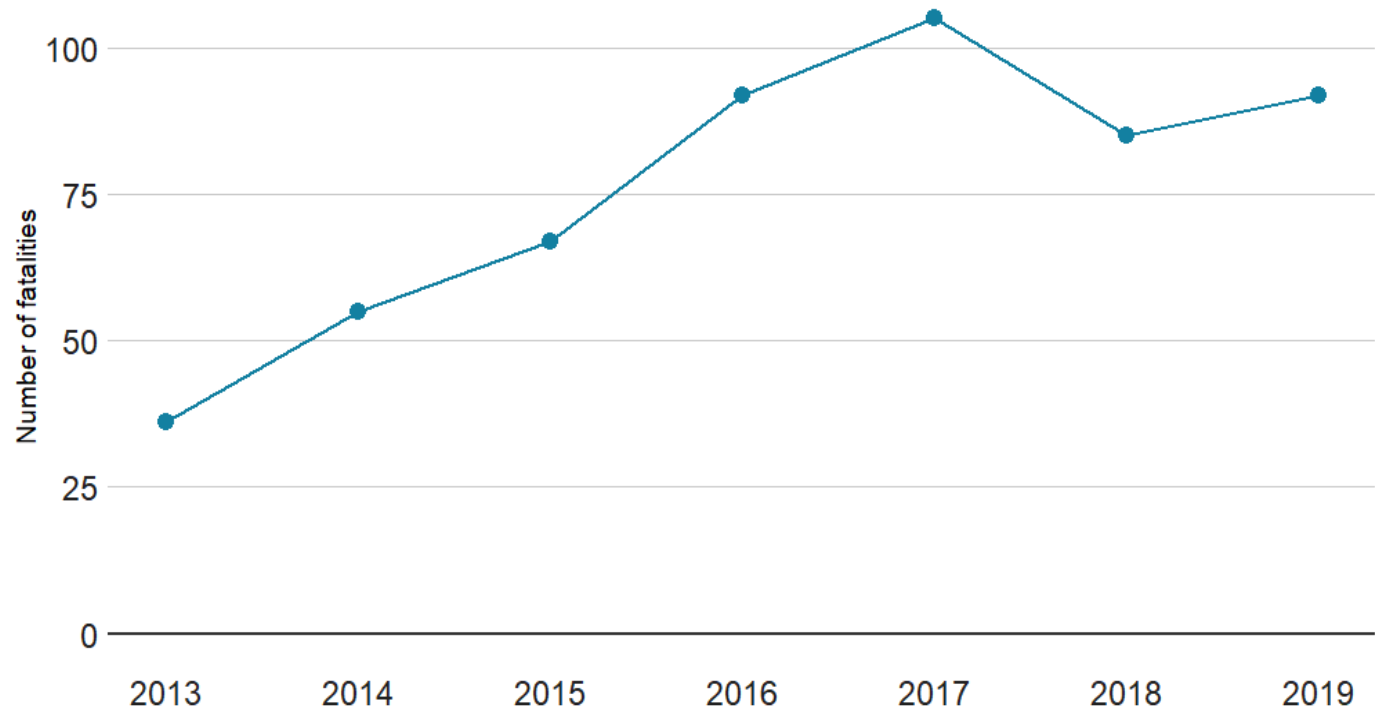
# Drug driving – is it an issue?

There is no accurate drug drive casualty data

The increase may reflect greater awareness and new enforcement methods

## Drug drive fatalities over time

The number of people killed in collisions where the contributory factor 'driver/rider impaired by drugs' was noted, 2013-2019



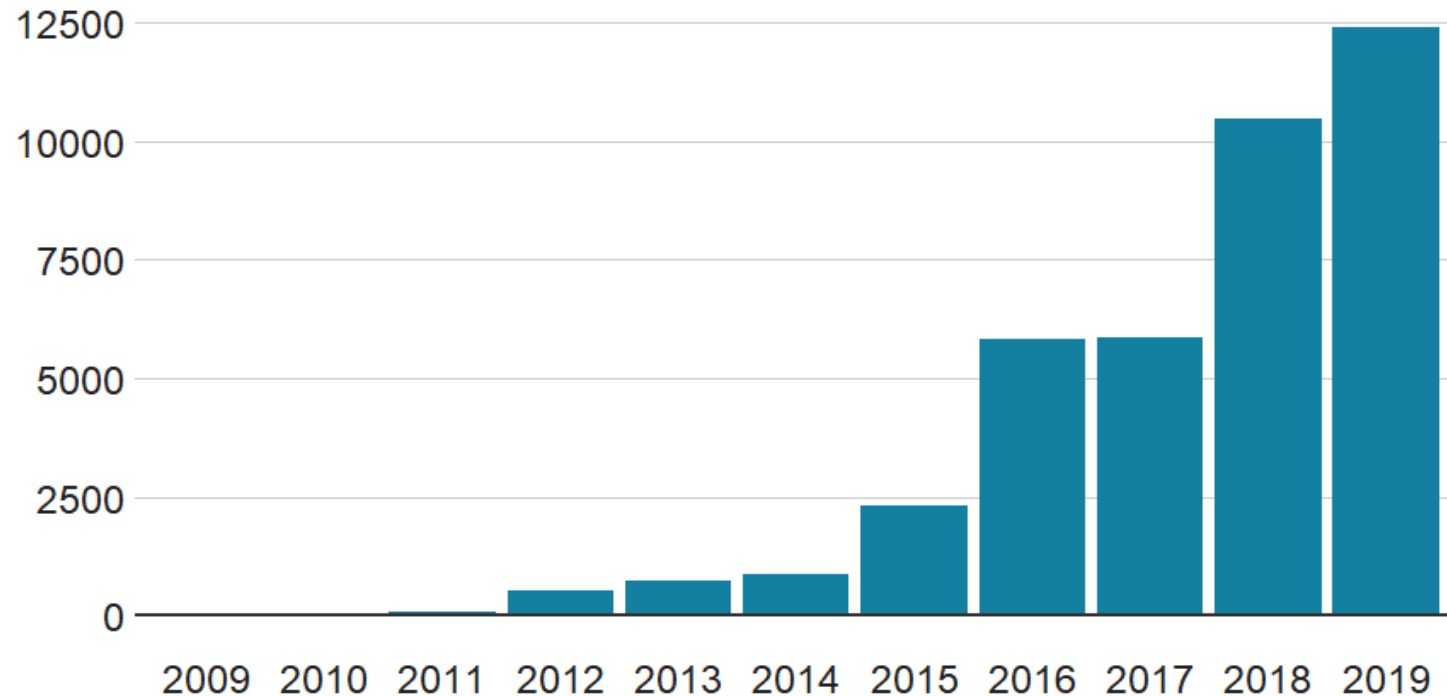
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# Drug driving – is it an issue?

New offence in 2015 made drug drive enforcement more efficient

## Drug driving over time

Number of people convicted of drug driving offences (2009-2019)



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# 2010: The North Report

- Lower blood alcohol limit
- Improvements to the legal system
- New drug drive legislation

Report of the Review of  
**Drink and Drug Driving Law**

Sir Peter North CBE QC

June 2010

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# 2010-2020: Government action

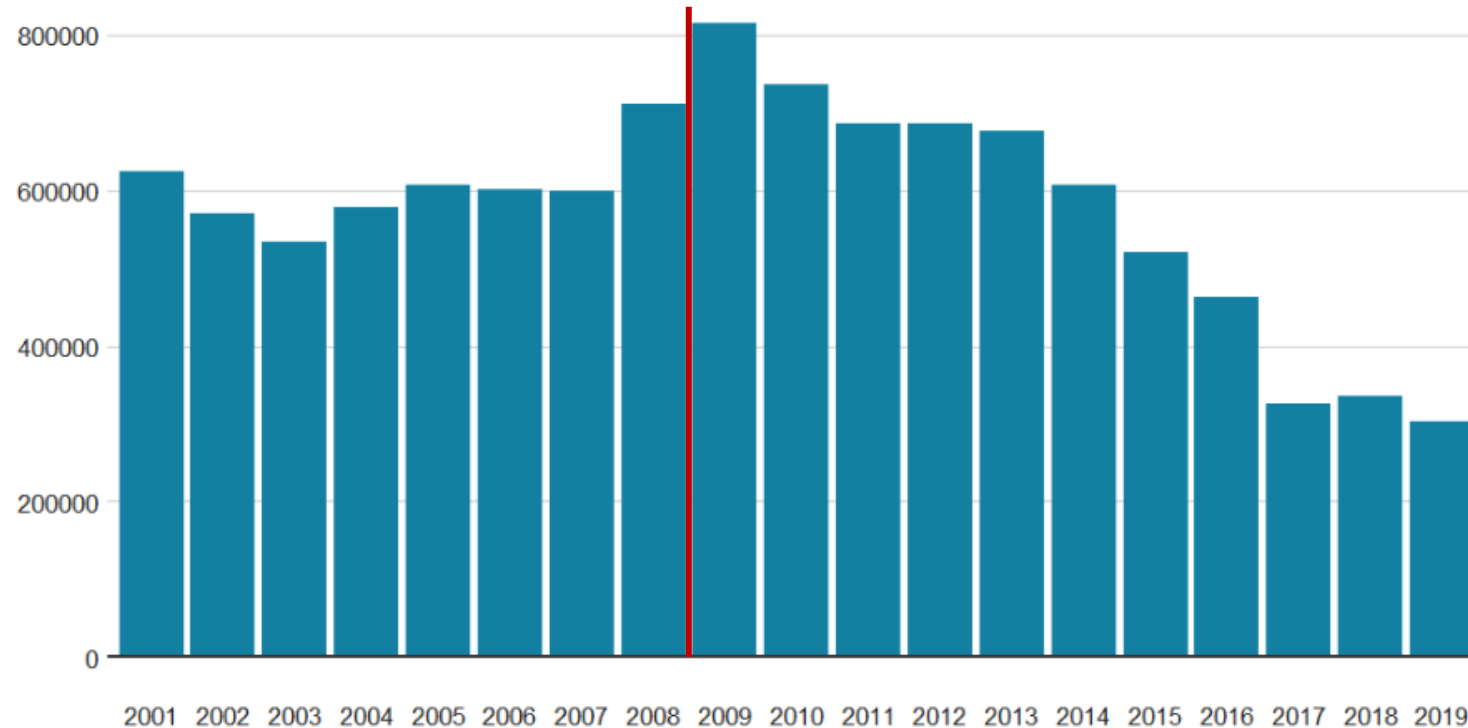
- Lower blood alcohol limit in Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Reforms to the drink drive legal system – statutory option
- New drug driving law
- Drug screeners type approved
- Drink/drug drive regime based on enforcement by police and courts



# Drink driving enforcement

## Breath tests over time

Number of breath tests conducted in England and Wales, 2001-2019



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# Drink driving enforcement

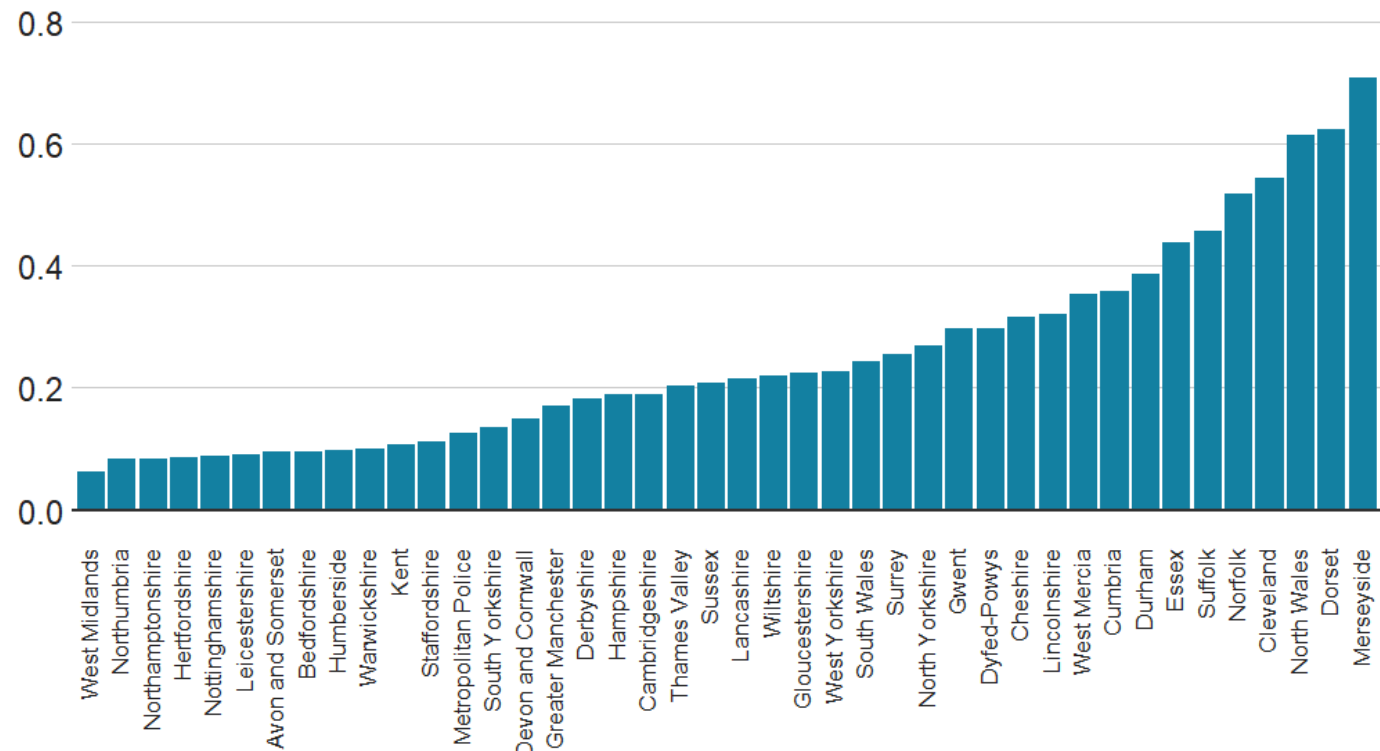
*“Even in England, I mean I go out on the roads...I don’t even see people being breathalysed... I wouldn’t drink and drive in a place where you know, you’re going to lose your licence, you could go to jail. (Nancy, F, 59, in recovery (alcohol))*

# Drug driving enforcement

Huge variation by police force, some forces record 10x more convictions

## Drug drive enforcement

Number of people convicted of drug driving offences per thousand population, by police force (2019)



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# Policing and justice procedures

- There are several issues with current testing procedures
  - Long delays
  - High cost
  - Obstructive legal challenges
  - Needle phobia
  - Issues with taking blood
  - ‘Low level’ drink and drug driving



# Reoffending

- Nearly half of drug drive offences are committed by people reoffending.
- 1 in 5 drink drive offences
- Alcohol interlocks?

## Drug drive reoffending

Number of drug drive offenders and offences split by first time and repeat offenders/offences



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# Mental health and alcohol problems

*“We drank maybe 3 bottles of wine between us and then I decided that I wanted more wine...I left the house, told her I was walking, but I didn’t have my bank card so I drove my car the 20 miles back to my house to get my bank card to go to a garage to get wine to go back to her house... (Holly, F, 37, England, in recovery (alcohol))*

*“It’s the early hours of the morning, it’s dark, there’s hardly anybody on the road. If anybody is going to die, it’s going to be me.” (Ruby, F, 50, England, in recovery (alcohol))*

# Mental health and alcohol problems

- Rehabilitation course
- High risk offender scheme criteria
- Referrals to treatment
- *“...they should be compelled to begin with to do 90 meetings of some sort of twelve step programme or other form of, what’s the word, recovery programme that works for them.” (Jaxon, M, 57, Scotland, in recovery (alcohol))*

# Recommendations



## DRINK DRIVING TAKING STOCK, MOVING FORWARD



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December 2020

In association with:

UNIVERSITY of  
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- A broader approach to drink driving is needed that learns lessons from public health
- The fall in drink drive enforcement should be reversed
- The drink drive limit should be lowered
- Mandatory breath testing should be introduced – and carefully monitored

# Recommendations

- Enforcement needs to be ‘levelled up’ across the UK
- The current blood testing system should be reviewed and improved
- Accurate data on drug drive deaths and testing is urgently needed
- A combined drink and drug driving offence should be introduced



## DRUG DRIVING THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG?



Evan Webster  
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February 2021





# Further information

- [Fifty years of the breathalyser - where now for drink driving? | PACTS](#)
- [PACTS – Roads policing and its contribution to road safety](#)
- [PACTS-Drink-Driving-Taking-stock-moving-forward-Report-3.0.pdf](#)
- [PACTS-Drug-Driving-The-tip-of-an-iceberg-3.0.pdf](#)

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# Spare slides

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# Drink drive limit

- Scotland
- Rest of the world
- *“...as far as I am concerned if you’ve had a glass of wine, small, large or whatever then it should be illegal...the drink drive limit went down from thirty-five down to twenty-two, but it should be zero... it should in theory then negate this level of debate that a potential drink driver will have. I’ve had one glass...Am I still okay? Yes, I’m fine because I’ve had something to eat. Or it’s half an hour since I’ve had a drink, I will be fine. So even with a twenty-two limit, which it is currently, then I just think that invites debate.”* (Lucas, M, 48, Scotland, DD conviction, in recovery (alcohol))

# Alternative transport provision



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# Combined approaches

- Danish model
  - Low BAC limits
  - Widespread random breath testing
  - Workplace policies
  - Alcohol rehabilitation
  - Media campaigns
  - Drink drive deaths 112 in 2007, 30 in 2016.

# Better understanding the problem

- Clear and urgent need for accurate casualty data
  - How many resources should be allocated to drug driving?
  - Is the situation getting worse?
  - Are our policies having an impact?
  - What drugs are causing the most harm on the roads?
  - How significant an issue are medicinal drugs?
  - How big a problem is people combining alcohol and illicit drugs?
- Not collecting information on drug tests is a missed opportunity
  - More accurate picture of enforcement
  - Better understand the profile of drug drivers