

February 20, 2009



Background Note

The Magnitude of the Alcohol/Drug-Related Crash Problem in Canada Overview

MADD Canada has adopted a comprehensive approach in assessing the magnitude of the alcohol-drug-related (impaired) crash problem in Canada. MADD Canada has attempted to obtain a complete picture of the problem that encompasses: both alcohol and drugs; all types of vehicles, vessels, and aircraft; the full range of harms and losses (fatalities, injuries, property damage and their societal financial costs); and crashes that occur on public roads and property, private roads and property, or on the water. This inclusive approach to the data is mandated by MADD Canada's mission, which is to assist all victims of impaired crashes, and reduce the total number of such fatalities, injuries and crashes.

Other organizations and government agencies also publish reports on the impaired crash problem in Canada; their data often differ from MADD Canada's because they have defined their terms of reference more narrowly. For example, their fatality statistics may be limited to alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes occurring on public roads. Similarly, their injury data may be limited to crashes that the police attend, and for which they write a formal report. Simply because their data differ from that of MADD Canada does not mean that their data are inaccurate. Rather, these differences typically reflect their more limited scope of inquiry.

Fatalities

In 2006, it was estimated that 3,122 individuals were killed in motor vehicle crashes in Canada. MADD Canada estimates that at a minimum 1,278 of these fatalities involved impaired driving. Moreover, in MADD Canada's opinion, the 1,278 figure is a conservative estimate, due to the underreporting that results from the inability to test surviving impaired drivers and reliance on police reports.

As well, the 1,278 fatalities do not include individuals killed in impaired crashes on the waterways. In 2004, it was reported that there were 164 water-related deaths involving alcohol (many of these may not be included in the 1,278 number).

Given the limits on the 1,278 fatalities figure, and adding in water-related deaths, MADD Canada estimates there are somewhere between 1,350 and 1,600 impaired crash fatalities in Canada each year (3.7-4.4 deaths per day).

Injuries

In 2006, it was estimated that about 368,396 individuals were injured in motor vehicle crashes. MADD Canada estimates that approximately 75,374 of these individuals were injured in impaired driving crashes (207 per day). Note that this figure does not include impaired crash injuries occurring on the water.

Property Damage

In 2006, it was estimated that approximately 2,029,300 motor vehicles were involved in property damage crashes in Canada. Of these, MADD Canada estimates that approximately 216,480 involved impaired driving (roughly 593 per day). Note that this estimate is limited to motor vehicle crashes only.

Estimated Cost of Impaired Driving Crashes

Depending on the model used, the cost of impaired driving crashes in Canada has been estimated to range from 2.2 billion dollars (real dollar model) to 12.8 billion dollars (willingness to pay model). The real dollar model is based on the money spent, without considering any social costs. In contrast, the willingness to pay model includes money spent and a broad range of social related costs. Again, these figures are limited to motor vehicle crashes.

Sources for the Data

The estimates used in the document are explained in full details in a discussion paper, entitled "Estimating the Presence of Alcohol and Drug Impairment in Traffic Crashes and Their Costs to Canadians".

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The estimates for water-related deaths came from "*The National Drowning Report, 2008 Edition, Lifesaving Society*".

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Local Road Check Volunteers

The local volunteers for the road check are Rick and Sue McNulty. Rick is the father of Laura O'Dell and father-in-law of Gregg O'Dell, both of whom were killed on October 29, 2006 by a drunk driver. Rick and Sue care for Laura and Gregg's children, Kali and Jeremy.