

CCSA Roadside Survey Shows More Drivers Using Drugs than Alcohol

OTTAWA, December 10, 2008—The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) has released preliminary findings of its new survey on drug and alcohol use among drivers. The 2008 British Columbia Roadside Survey found that while fewer people were driving after drinking, more drivers tested positive for drugs. 10.4% of night-time drivers showed evidence of drug use, while 8.1% of drivers tested positive for alcohol. 16.9% tested positive for drugs, alcohol or both.

“The good news is that drinking and driving appeared to be on the decline in the samples we collected,” said Doug Beirness, Senior Research and Policy Analyst at CCSA and lead researcher for the survey. “But the messages about drugs and driving don’t seem to be getting through.”

Despite perceptions that drug use is less harmful to drivers, there is growing evidence that drug impairment is also a major contributor to collisions. A study conducted in 2004 showed that drugs, often combined with alcohol, were detected in up to 30% of fatally injured drivers.

“People still don’t think the use of drugs impairs their ability to drive a car,” said Mr. Beirness. “Young people between 16 and 18 did not show any evidence of alcohol use, but a small proportion did test positive for drug use, indicating they may not know or understand the risks associated with drugs and driving. This provides a strong argument for greater investment in education as well as increased countermeasures.”

Another significant finding showed that while fewer moderate drinkers are choosing to drive after drinking, more heavy drinkers are doing so, sometimes drinking up to three times the legal limit before driving. Current drinking-driving countermeasures don’t seem to be having an impact on this group, indicating a fresh approach may be needed.

The 2008 Roadside Survey is one of the first surveys to collect information on both drug and alcohol use among drivers in Canada. While relatively small in scope, it is the fifth survey examining alcohol use among drivers in B.C. The findings of the survey will be used to evaluate the effects of Bill C-2, the legislation giving Canadian police the power to conduct roadside tests on drug and alcohol impairment among drivers and a complete drug evaluation including the collection of a sample of blood, oral fluid, and/or urine to test for the presence of drugs. The full report will be released early in 2009.

For additional background information, please [click here](#).



About CCSA

With a legislated mandate to reduce alcohol- and other drug-related harms, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse provides leadership on national priorities, fosters knowledge-translation within the field, and creates sustainable partnerships that maximize collective efforts. CCSA receives funding support from Health Canada.

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