



Enhancing Drug-Impaired Driving Data Across Canada: National Public Survey Data



The Issue

Every year, thousands of people living in Canada drive after using drugs other than alcohol, posing significant risks to themselves and other road users (Brown et al., 2015, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021). National public surveys on drug-impaired driving (DID) offer a glimpse into the decisions made by road users and their driving and riding habits. While a few Canadian drug use surveys include select questions on DID, there are no national surveys dedicated to the collection of DID data from the public on a regular basis.

The Significance of the Data

National surveys offer a relatively quick way of assessing public knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about DID and how these relate to self-reported DID behaviours. To create effective public education programs, Canada needs to understand why certain drivers drive while impaired by drugs and others do not. Policy makers, decision makers and road safety practitioners can use this data to inform their strategies to reduce and prevent DID and its potentially severe outcomes (e.g., deaths, serious injuries).

Recommended Indicators

One indicator is recommended to obtain standardized national public survey data on DID across Canada. This was developed by and in consultation with DID experts across Canada.

The table provides an overview of this indicator. In line with long-standing practices in studying road safety, it is recommended that data be collected regularly on indicators across driver knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and self-reported behaviour. Since public survey data on DID are not widely collected in Canada, the proposed collection is new to the national context and may need a higher degree of effort and investment to implement. Policy makers, decision makers, road safety professionals and even the public themselves can benefit from this data.



Data source	Indicator
New ^a	Driver knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and self-reported behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various indicators (e.g., driver demographics, substances consumed, driving within two hours of consumption, knowledge about impairment, passenger of impaired drivers)

^aNew indicators include nonexistent or not widely used indicators (e.g., some agencies may track some of these data).

These indicators are part of a broader set of 34 national DID indicators for various agencies recommended by an expert Drug-Impaired Driving Indicators Advisory Committee, chaired by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. For a complete list of the recommended indicators, see the full report, [Measuring the Impact of Drug-Impaired Driving: Recommendations for National Indicators](#). Also included in the report are suggestions for agencies to address potential challenges in implementing the recommendations (e.g., standardizing data, data sharing, financial costs) and more detailed information about the Advisory Committee.

Key Considerations for Implementation

- There are no national ongoing surveys dedicated to collecting data on public knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and self-reported behaviours specific to DID in Canada. To ensure regular and consistent collection of public data, experts should develop a standalone survey for DID while continuing to incorporate DID questions on national drug use surveys, like the Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey (formerly Canadian Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Survey) and the Canadian Cannabis Survey.
- Data collected from drivers about their substance use (e.g., consumption methods, most recent use) are limited by what the driver remembers or reports, whether they know the substance or substances they have consumed may cause impairment (e.g., prescription or over-the-counter medications) and their willingness to disclose the use of illegal substances. This is a natural limitation to studies with people. However, with more education about impairing drugs, driver knowledge could improve these types of self-reported data.

For a full discussion of these and other key considerations for implementation, see the [full report](#).



References

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