Drink-driving Factsheets
# The drink drive limit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of alcohol</th>
<th>England, Wales and Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligrams per 100 millilitres of urine</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) | The drink drive limit
Drink drive limits in the EU

Milligrammes / Millilitres

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

0 Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia

20 Estonia, Poland, Sweden

40 Lithuania

50 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

80 UK*

* England and Wales 80 mg / ml; Scotland is 50 mg / ml since December 2014; Northern Ireland has legislated for a 50 mg / ml limit (to be enacted)

Source: European Transport Safety Council | Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) Drink Driving Limits across Europe
# Drink-driving offences and penalties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving offence</th>
<th>Penalties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving or attempting to drive with alcohol level above limit</td>
<td>12-month minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), up to six months’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving or attempting to drive while unfit through drink</td>
<td>12-month minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), up to six months’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving or attempting to drive then failing to supply a specimen for analysis</td>
<td>12-month minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), up to six months’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In charge of a vehicle while alcohol level above limit</td>
<td>Disqualification is decided by the court – if none, then 10 penalty points given. Up to three months’ imprisonment and a £2,500 fine. Remains on licence for 4 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In charge while unfit through drink</td>
<td>Disqualification is decided by the court – if none, then 10 penalty points given. Up to three months’ imprisonment and a £2,500 fine. Remains on licence for 4 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to provide a specimen for analysis in circumstances other than driving or attempting to drive</td>
<td>Disqualification is decided by the court – if none, then 10 penalty points given. Up to six weeks’ imprisonment and a £2,500 fine. Remains on licence for 4 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving or attempting to drive then refusing to give permission for analysis of a blood sample that was taken without consent due to incapacity</td>
<td>12-month minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), up to six months’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to give permission for analysis of a blood sample that was taken without consent due to incapacity in circumstances other than driving or attempting to drive</td>
<td>12-month minimum disqualification (10 penalty points in special circumstances), up to six months’ imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing to provide specimen for breath test</td>
<td>Disqualification is decided by the court in addition to four penalty points and a fine of up to £1,000. Remains on licence for 4 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causing death by careless driving when unfit through drink / with alcohol level above the limit</td>
<td>A two-year minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), in addition to an unlimited fine and up to 14 years’ imprisonment. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causing death by careless driving and then failing to supply specimen for analysis</td>
<td>A two-year minimum disqualification (or 3–11 penalty points in special circumstances), in addition to an unlimited fine and up to 14 years’ imprisonment. Remains on licence for 11 years*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) | Penalty points (endorsements), [https://www.drinkdriving.org/](https://www.drinkdriving.org/) | * From date of conviction ** From date of conviction or offence
Alcohol-related motoring offences (1)

The number of convictions for alcohol-related motoring offences in England and Wales in 2016 was almost half of the number of those sentenced a decade before.

The most common offence – driving with alcohol in the blood above the prescribed limit – accounted for 82% of all drink-driving convictions.

Source: The Ministry of Justice | Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2016, Motoring data tool
Alcohol-related motoring offences (2)

England and Wales

- Drink drive convictions in 2016: 44,629

Scotland

- Drink drive convictions in 2016–17: 3646

Northern Ireland

- Drink (or drug) driving offences referred for prosecution: 2863

Drink drive injuries, by time of day and by sex

Drink drive accidents are most likely to occur during evening, night-time, or early morning hours.

There are roughly two male drink drive casualties for every female drink drive casualty.

Source: Department for Transport | Reported drinking and driving (RAS51005, RAS51012), STATS19 Statistical data set
Drink drive injuries, by road user

Car drivers are most likely to be injured in drink drive casualties in Great Britain – they represent **57%** of all casualties.
Drink drive accidents and casualties, GB

Drink-drive fatalities

Number in 2017: 250
Change since 2016: 9% ns
Change compared to 2010: 4% ns
As a proportion of all: 14% of all fatalities

All drink-drive casualties

Number: 8,600
Change since 2016: 5%
Change compared to 2010: 11%
As a proportion of all: 5% of all casualties

All drink-drive accidents

Number: 5,700
Change since 2016: 6%
Change compared to 2010: 14%
As a proportion of all: 4% of all accidents

Source: Department for Transport | Reported road casualties in Great Britain: Estimates for accidents involving illegal alcohol levels: 2016 (final)
Three out of every ten killed drivers / riders had alcohol present in their bloodstream in 2016 – almost a fifth were over the limit.

Killed drivers / riders in their twenties and thirties were most likely to have alcohol present in their bloodstream at any level, with the older group most likely to have exceeded the limit.
Ages of drink drive deaths in Scotland

One in ten killed drivers / riders had alcohol present in the bloodstream in 2016 – 6% were over the limit.

Those in their twenties were most likely to have alcohol present at the time of death – those aged 20-24 and 35-39 were most likely to have exceeded the limit.

Source: Department for Transport | Reported drinking and driving (RAS51007), STATS19 Statistical data set
Drink drive trend data (1)

- Transport Act introduces evidential breath testing
- Road Traffic Act consolidates drink-driving laws
- New criminal offence introduced: 'Causing death by driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs'
- Drink-driving rehabilitation courses adopted nationwide
- Evidential roadside breath testing becomes law
- Maximum sentence for serious drink-driving offences set at 14 years
- Scotland reduces drink drive limit

Source: Department for Transport | Reported drinking and driving (RAS51001), STATS19 Statistical data set
Stalled: There have been no meaningful changes to the annual number of drink drive accidents and casualties in Great Britain since 2010…
In 1979, more than a quarter of road accident fatalities occurred as a result of drink-driving.

Over time, the proportion of road accident fatalities caused by drink-driving has halved.

Since 2010, drink-driving has accounted for 12–14% of all GB road deaths, the lowest proportion on record.

Source: Department for Transport | Reported drinking and driving (RAS51001, RAS51003), STATS19 Statistical data set
The estimated cost of drink drive accidents with casualties across the UK, where the driver was found to be above the 80mg limit

£754m

* 2014: This figure was calculated by multiplying estimated fatal, serious and slight drink drive accidents by the average valuation of the cost of each type of accident, based largely on willingness to pay studies and surveys (eg of emergency service providers, insurance companies).
References

- **The Department for Transport**
  - Reported road casualties in Great Britain
  - Reported drinking and driving statistics

- **European Transport Safety Council**
  - Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) Drink Driving Limits across Europe

- **Drinkdriving.org**
  - The web's #1 drink driving resource

- **The Ministry of Justice**
  - Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly

- **The Scottish Government**
  - Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2016-17

- **Police Service for Northern Ireland**
  - Motoring Offence Statistics for Northern Ireland