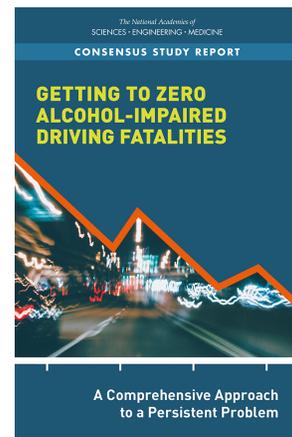




GETTING TO ZERO ALCOHOL-IMPAIRED DRIVING FATALITIES

POLICY SOLUTIONS CAN ACCELERATE NATIONAL PROGRESS

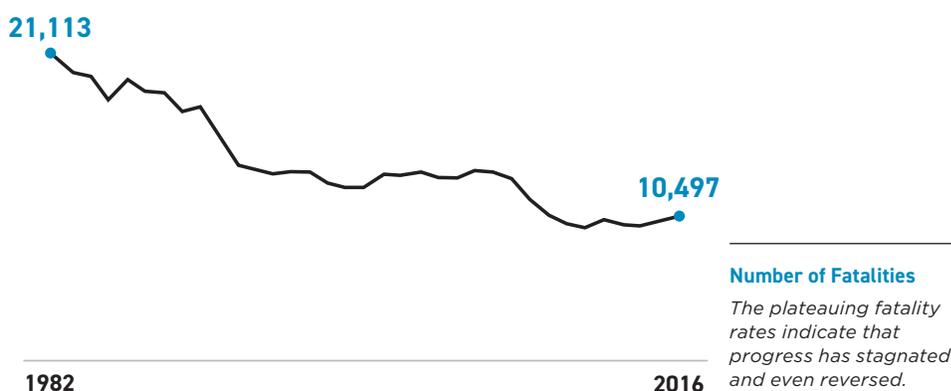


Alcohol-impaired driving is the deadliest and costliest danger on roads in the United States. It's also preventable. Promising technologies and policies can be leveraged to reach a bold goal: zero deaths from drinking and driving.

A report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine explores policy solutions, among others, to accelerate national progress in reducing alcohol-impaired driving fatalities. Historically, the enactment of effective policies and laws has been the impetus for reductions in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities.

What are the most promising policy solutions to prevent alcohol-impaired driving fatalities?

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities in the United States, 1982–2016



A PERSISTENT PROBLEM

Each day
29 people die
in the United States in an alcohol-impaired driving crash, or one person every
49 minutes.

In 2016, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 28 percent of traffic deaths with a total of
10,497 lives lost.

The most recent available data show that in one year, the societal cost of alcohol-impaired driving crashes, including medical costs, legal expenses, property damages, productivity losses, and more was
\$121.5 billion.

ALCOHOL TAXES

There is strong, direct evidence that increasing alcohol prices and taxes reduces binge drinking and alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities. Alcohol taxes have eroded over time in inflation-adjusted terms at both federal and state levels, and current alcohol taxes (about 11 cents per standard drink) do not cover costs attributable to alcohol-related harms (about \$2 per standard drink). Alcohol taxes should be increased significantly so that they comprise a meaningful percent of the net-of-tax price (e.g., 30% or more) of alcohol products and cover the secondhand costs of alcohol.

POLICIES TO REDUCE ILLEGAL SALES OF ALCOHOL

To reduce excessive alcohol consumption prior to driving at the population level, there is a need for a comprehensive set of policies that minimize the illegal sale of alcohol to people under age 21 and already-intoxicated persons, beyond the laws currently in place. This could include:

- strong penalties for violations of existing laws, such as sale of alcohol to already-intoxicated adults;
- dram shop liability laws without caps;
- high-quality mandatory responsible beverage service training;
- strong social host laws; and
- systematic collection of place-of-last-drink data.

POLICIES TO ADDRESS AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL

Addressing the physical availability of alcohol has strong evidence for reducing excessive drinking and related harms. Among these harms are alcohol-impaired driving and crashes, which have strong links to excessive consumption. Policies to address physical availability include reducing hours and days of sale and limiting outlet density.

0.05% BAC PER SE LAWS

Currently, in most states blood alcohol concentration (BAC) per se laws are set at 0.08%; however an individual's ability to operate a motor vehicle begins to deteriorate at BAC levels well below 0.05%, increasing a driver's risk of being in a crash. Data from other countries that have decreased their BAC levels to 0.05% suggest that this is an effective policy intervention for reducing alcohol-impaired driving fatalities. A change to this law would have the greatest potential impact on those at the highest risk of alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities. The benefits of lowering BAC are on a continuum, but they are enhanced when introduced alongside high-visibility enforcement, sobriety checkpoints, and publicity.

ALL-OFFENDER IGNITION INTERLOCK LAWS

Strong evidence from the United States and other countries shows having an ignition interlock device—breath alcohol analyzers connected to the ignition system of a vehicle—installed in a vehicle reduces repeat offenses and risk of crashes. States that have passed all-offender ignition interlock laws have experienced reductions in alcohol-related motor vehicle crash deaths. Research indicates that a minimum monitoring period of two years is effective for a first offense and four years for a second offense.

ADMINISTRATIVE LICENSE SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION LAWS

Administrative license suspension and revocation (ALS/ALR) laws are not in place in all states, and penalty severity varies among the states that have enacted these laws. The adoption of ALS/ALR laws that provide for pre-conviction license suspension or revocation for refusing or failing a BAC test; include an initial complete suspension; and are based on model legislation would improve effectiveness to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.

MODEL LEGISLATION

There is considerable variation in how alcohol-impaired driving laws and policies are implemented across states. Given the lack of progress over the last decade in reducing fatalities, a more uniform approach is needed to move toward best practices. Model legislation from the National Conference of State Legislatures would allow states to adopt or update policies or laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving based on the best available evidence. Such legislation could also inform stakeholder groups such as community coalitions, which often lack the technical expertise to develop this type of legislation.

REGULATION OF ALCOHOL MARKETING

There is substantial evidence to suggest that young people are at higher risk of alcohol-impaired driving and they are influenced by alcohol marketing. Multiple studies have found the alcohol industry's self-regulation of its marketing to be ineffective and insufficient. Therefore, federal, state, and local governments should use their existing regulatory standards for permissible alcohol marketing content and placement across all media, establish consequences for violations, and promote and fund countermarketing.

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY SEATBELT LAWS

The safety benefits of seatbelt use are well documented; alcohol-impaired drivers are less likely to use seatbelts than non-impaired drivers. Given the low rates of seat belt use and high rates of crashes in rural areas, universal adoption of primary seat belt laws for all occupants and child restraints, combined with enhanced enforcement, could reduce alcohol-related crash injuries and fatalities particularly in these high risk areas.

CONCLUSION

The policy solutions highlighted in this brief and discussed in the report work synergistically and do not take on a one-size-fits-all approach as each state and locality differs with respect to physical environment, population needs, existing policies, and more. Progress in this area requires a multipronged approach, which includes a set of complementary policies to reduce hazardous drinking and alcohol-impaired driving, enhanced with enforcement activities and other important intervention components. A comprehensive, multisector approach will accelerate progress to reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-impaired driving once again.

To download a free copy of the full report and other resources, please visit nationalacademies.org/endDWIdeaths

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