



# Drinking, Driving and the Holidays.

By: [HealthDiscovery.org](https://HealthDiscovery.org)

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Eve, the winter holidays present ample opportunities to drink and be merry. Unfortunately, this merriment often leads to buzzed drinking and driving. Traffic crashes involving an impaired driver killed 1,013 people in December 2021 alone.

Buzzed driving is defined as operating a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 to .07. A driver is technically under the legal limit, but operating a vehicle can still be dangerous. Even a small amount of alcohol can affect driving ability. In 2021, 2,266 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes where a driver had a BAC of .01 to .07 g/dL.

People believe they know their limits. They have a couple of drinks at the holiday party at work, then get behind the wheel. Or they enjoy wine at a relative's dinner party, followed by a spiked eggnog or two (or three) before bundling the family in the car to drive home.

Time and again, drivers who have had a couple of drinks put themselves and others at risk. You don't have to be falling-down drunk to be too impaired to drive.

Here's a sobering statistic but one worth noting: 42,915 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2021 a 10.5% increase from the 38,824 fatalities in 2020. Almost 95% of people who die using U.S. transportation networks are killed on roadways.

Every 79 seconds someone is injured in a crash that involves alcohol, and a person dies every 39 minutes in alcohol-related road accidents. That's a lot of needless tragedy.

Alcohol-impaired crashes (where a driver had a blood alcohol content [BAC] of 0.08 or higher) plays a significant role in the overall increase in traffic fatalities. Data from the National Traffic Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that overall traffic deaths and alcohol-involved road fatalities increased in 2021 over the previous year. In 2021, 13,384 people died in alcohol-impaired driving traffic deaths — a 14% increase from 2020. These deaths were all preventable.

These statistics add fuel to concerns that progress on reducing drunk driving is slowing down. The number of alcohol-impaired traffic deaths has stubbornly hovered near 10,000 per year since 2010. Roadway fatalities and the fatality rate declined consistently for 30 years, but progress has stalled over the last decade and actually increased in 2020 and 2021.

If you drink, please don't become a statistic. Arrange a designated driver if out with friends or use a rideshare like Lyft or Uber to get home safely.