

Collective Action Issue Brief #6–September 2014

IMPAIRED DRIVING IN NH



WHAT WE KNOW

Driving or operating a vehicle when the brain is impaired by a substance puts many people at unnecessary risk, including the driver, his/her passengers, and other motorists and pedestrians. The impacts of impaired driving are devastating, including loss of employment, injury, death, and significant costs associated with emergency services, hospital care, adjudication and corrections.

According to national data shared by Mothers Against Drunk Driving¹, one of the nation's premiere advocacy and policy organizations for impaired driving prevention, we know a lot about the problem:

Many do it
—
few are stopped

Each day people drive drunk almost 300,000 times, but fewer than 4,000 are arrested². In 2012, 10.3 million people reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year³.

Driving impaired once
—
And again

About one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of drunk driving are repeat offenders⁴.

Alcohol and other drugs
—
are both a problem

Almost half of all drivers who were killed in crashes and tested positive for drugs also had alcohol in their system⁵.

Men are more likely than women
—
to drive impaired

Males are more likely than females (15.1 vs. 7.9 percent) to drive drunk⁶.

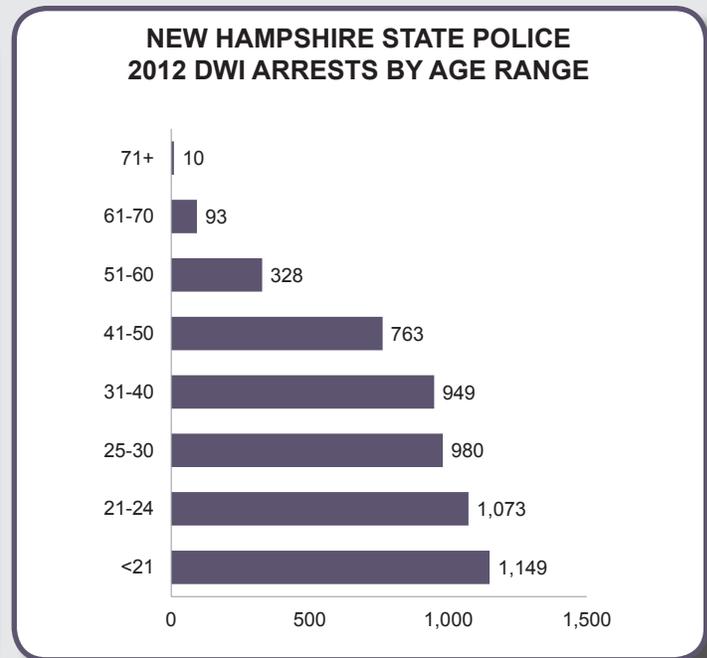
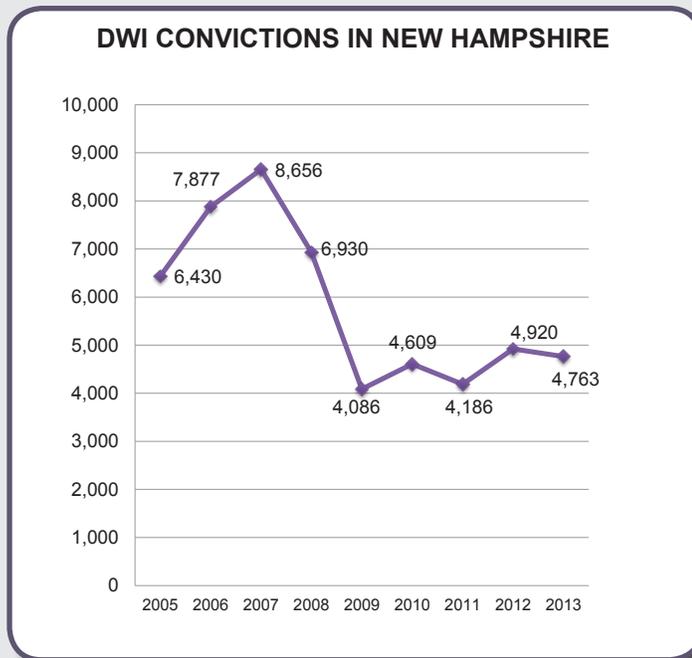
The younger
—
the more likely

The rate of drunk driving is highest among 21 to 25 year olds (23.4 percent)⁷. And in fatal crashes in 2011, the highest percentage of drunk drivers was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (32 percent), followed by ages 25 to 34 (30 percent) and 35 to 44 (24 percent)⁸.

DWI
—
Costs \$\$\$

The costs to the driver for DWI can average between \$9,000 and \$24,000, which does not include costs incurred by others affected by the DWI. The financial hardship of the DWI arrest begins with attorney fees, lost work time, and cost of alternative transportation⁹ while license is revoked. Additional costs may include mandatory education, treatment and care management programs, increased auto insurance, and other court-related costs.

In New Hampshire, the statistics are not very different. After a peak of 8,656 convictions for Driving While Impaired (DWI) in 2007, the conviction rate dropped to 4,086 in 2009 and has held steady, with 4,763 convictions in 2013. Reviewing arrest data from the New Hampshire State Police that typically involves arrests on state highways reveals that the greatest number of arrests for DWI are among the state's youngest drivers, with 1,149 drivers under the age of 21 arrested in 2012. As shown in the following graph, the prevalence of DWI arrests decreases as the age of driver increases.



New Hampshire State Police Data on DWI arrests in 2012 also reveal:

- Three out of four arrestees are male, compared to one in four females
- The greatest number of DWI arrests occur on Saturday, followed by Sunday and Friday respectively
- The greatest number of arrests occur between midnight and 3:00AM, followed by the hours between 9:00PM and midnight

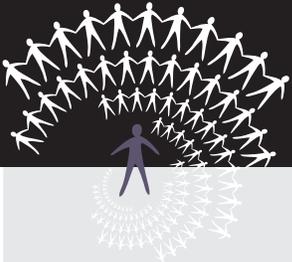
Unfortunately, DWI arrest and conviction rates only tell us a portion of the story as these data are typically representative of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

What law enforcement and safety personnel have expressed concern about, over the last several years, is the increasing number of drivers on the road impaired by drugs other than alcohol, including impairment from over-the-counter and prescription medications. This danger is on the rise and leading to significant challenges in ensuring public safety.

The problem of substance-impaired driving led the state to revise its DWI laws to include impairment as a result of alcohol or any drug that has the ability to impair brain functioning, regardless of whether the drug is over-the-counter, legally prescribed, taken as directed, or illicit. This change is likely to impact many data indicators in the next few years as new protocols for identifying suspicion of, testing for and prosecuting impairment are implemented.

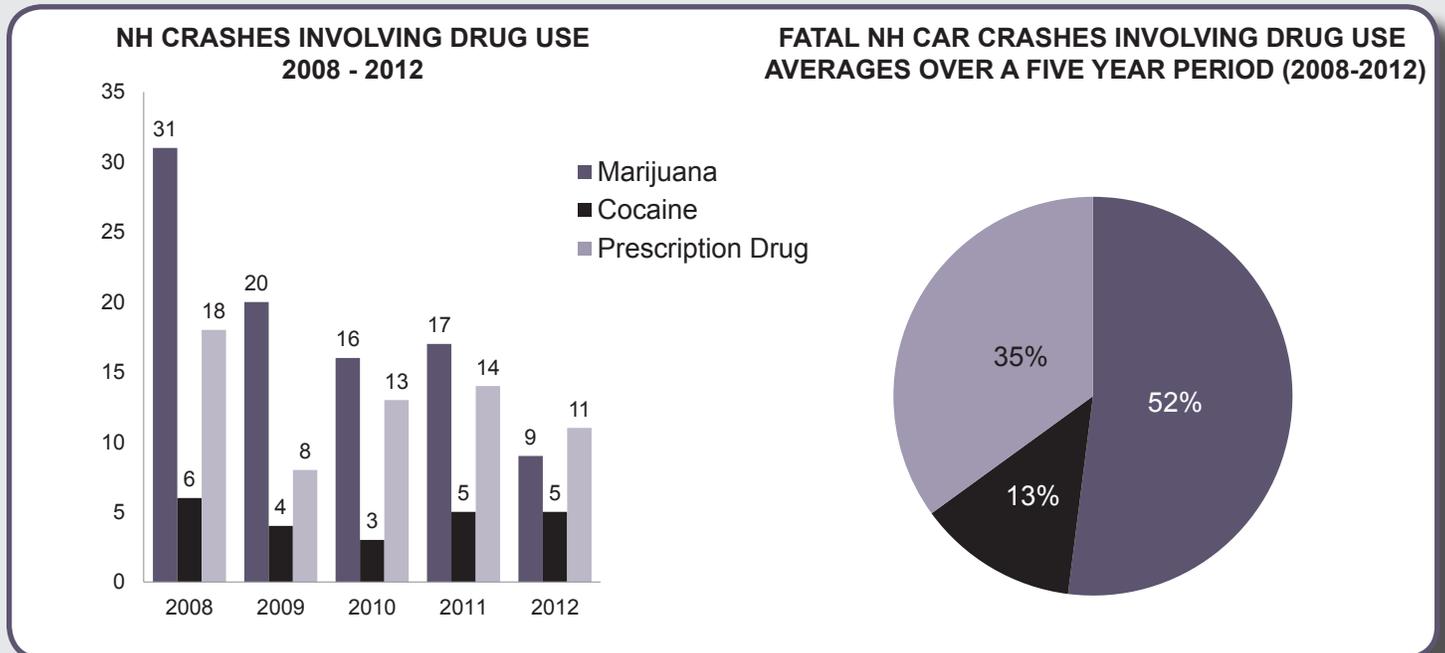
WHAT MORE WE KNOW

One of the greatest challenges of preventing and reducing impaired driving and its devastating consequences is a lack of understanding of impairment levels. Many drivers claim that they “know their body” when it comes to decisions about impairment. Unfortunately, it is often an already impaired brain that is attempting to judge its own impairment. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, even one drink begins to relax the senses and people can experience minor impairment of reasoning and lowering of caution at only 1/2 of a percent of alcohol in the blood.



WHY IT MATTERS

The most devastating impact of alcohol and drug impaired driving is the loss of life that has untold impacts on families and communities. Unfortunately, the number of alcohol related fatalities in New Hampshire is rising. In 2011, there were 27 alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities, representing 30% of all fatalities. In 2012, the number was 32, an increase of 19%. The data also shows that there were 27 drug-related fatalities in 2012, representing 25% of all motor vehicle related fatalities.



These data were made available by the NH Department of Safety

New Hampshire has also begun to track other drugs in a driver's system following crashes involving a suspected impaired driver. This data reveals that marijuana is the most prevalent drug in drug-involved crashes, followed by prescription drugs and cocaine. Data also reveals that drug impairment uncovered as a result of post-crash drug tests has decreased since 2008; however, the Department of Safety has indicated that lab testing is limited by capacity limitations and needed technology upgrades to stay ahead of new drugs and drug formulas that require changes to testing protocols in order to detect.

In terms of costs, alcohol-related crashes in the United States cost the public an estimated \$114.3 billion in 2000, including \$51.1 billion in monetary costs and an estimated \$63.2 billion in quality of life losses. People other than the impaired driver paid \$71.6 billion of the alcohol-related crash expenses.

For those who drive under the influence or for those impacted by them, the fallout can include:

- Impacts at work, such as suspended work time and difficulty with transportation to work due to a suspended license, an injury or other related problems
- The emotional impact of tragic crashes or near-crashes, injuries, and death
- A sense of self-blame, guilt, and low self-worth that is often felt after an incidence of impaired driving whether or not driving resulted in harm
- The financial impacts that are felt by the impaired driver, family members, victims, taxpayers, and many others, including costs associated with law enforcement, emergency personnel, legal proceedings, corrections, increased insurance payments, treatment of emotional trauma, impaired driver education programs, alcohol and drug treatment, license restoration and other services



WHAT WE CAN DO



Safety & Law Enforcement

- Institute legal interventions that promote treatment
- To reduce repeat offenders, leverage other alternative sentencing including drug courts, and intensive and supportive probation supervision combined with substance use disorder treatment
- Increase public awareness campaigns to educate drivers
- Expand high visibility enforcement, such as sobriety checkpoints
- Expand the use of in-vehicle devices, such as ignition locks, to prevent operation by an impaired driver
- Prosecute businesses that overserve
- Advocate against high visibility advertising of alcohol such as billboards

On January 1, 2013, the New Hampshire Impaired Driver Care Management Program (IDCMP) went in to effect to increase public safety. The program requires individuals convicted of an impaired driving offense to attend a program that includes screening and evaluation to determine if the driver has a substance use disorder. The program also requires those identified as having a substance use disorder to participate in education, treatment, and recovery support services as appropriate. This important public policy supports public safety and helps individuals gain access to needed treatment in an effort to prevent future impaired driving and to support people in seeking recovery.



Health & Medical

- Expand the use of Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment in primary care, hospital, urgent and emergency care settings, particularly when patients, be they drivers or passengers, are being seen as a result of a motor vehicle accident
- Expand treatment services for Substance Use Disorders



Education

- Universities, community colleges and adult education programs can establish mechanisms to identify students who may have substance use problems and refer them to appropriate intervention or treatment resources on campus or in the community
- Implement media and education campaigns in schools and colleges regarding driving while impaired, levels of impairment and NH law on campus and in campus communities
- Ensure Driver Education programs stress information on risks and costs associated with driving impaired by alcohol, over-the-counter or any drug



Business

- Ensure that screening, intervention and treatment for substance use disorders is comprehensively covered by insurance providers
- Have business-sponsored or employee events that do not include alcohol, or maintain policies that keep alcohol consumption to low risk levels and ensure that those who drink do not drive
- For businesses that sell or serve alcohol, have all staff who sell or serve attend annual responsible server trainings offered through the NH Division of Liquor Enforcement
- Provide incentives for employees who intervene in situations to prevent impaired driving
- Provide free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services



Government

- Provide resources to state agencies, law enforcement, treatment services, public education campaigns, and other activities to ensure a comprehensive, effective strategy to reduce impaired driving
- Encourage New Hampshire and Federal Highway Safety Agencies to work together to campaign against impaired driving



Community & Family

- Ensure that community-wide events are alcohol free
- For social events in communities and neighborhoods, if alcohol is to be served, communicate expectations regarding low risk amounts and that driving under any level of impairment is not okay
- Get support ahead of time by creating family/friend agreements regarding how concerns about a potential driver will be addressed
- Contact law enforcement if you see or suspect an impaired driver
- Get involved with community prevention efforts at drugfreenh.org/get-involved/reach-out-to-your-community



WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

- NH Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services – Impaired Driver Services: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bdas/driving.htm>
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving- Local Offices
newhampshire.nh@madd.org or <http://www.madd.org/local-offices/nh/>
- Drug Free New Hampshire – Impaired Driving Information
<http://www.drugfreenh.org/get-help/impaired-driving>
- NH Center for Excellence – Technical Assistance for Community Organizations
<http://www.nhcenterforexcellence.org/impaired-driving>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Fact Sheet
www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/index.html
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration facts and resources
www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.18e416bf1b09b6bbbf30811060008a0c/
- U.S. Department of Transportation – Impaired driving information and programs
www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/sp_iss/idhome.asp
- Governor’s Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Treatment and Recovery
<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bdas/commission.htm>

“Impairment continues to be the leading cause of fatal car crashes, and it is our continued goal to work on messaging, education and enforcement in hopes of preventing a tragedy,”

Colonel Robert Quinn, New Hampshire State Police

Recovery is Possible

People can and do recover from alcohol and drug addiction with appropriate treatment and recovery supports. There are several private and state-funded agencies and organizations who provide inpatient and out-patient treatment for substance use disorders and who can connect people with recovery coaches and support groups in their area. If you or someone you know is experiencing problems with alcohol or other drug use, make a call and learn more about treatment and recovery supports. Information can be found at www.drugfreenh.org or by calling the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services at 603.271.6738 or 800.804.0909. National hotlines with information on NH services are available at 1-800-662-HELP or 1-800-662-9832 (Español). A national treatment locator that cover New Hampshire is also available on-line at findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

This issue brief is one in a series of issue briefs produced and disseminated by the New Hampshire Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, New Hampshire Center for Excellence and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Issue briefs share information from the state plan, Collective Action - Collective Impact: NH's Strategy for Reducing the Misuse of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Promoting Recovery. The plan is available at www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs/bdas/documents/collectiveaction.PDF



¹ www.madd.org/statistics/

² Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Crime in the United States: 2012”

³ National Highway Traffic Safety Association available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/NCSA>

⁴ Fell, Jim. “Repeat DWI Offenders in the United States.” Washington, DC: National Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Traffic Tech No. 85, February 1995.

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Association available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/NCSA>

⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Crime in the United States: 2011”

⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. “Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings.” September 2011

⁸ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. “Traffic Safety Facts 2011: Alcohol-Impaired Driving” Washington DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2012.

⁹ <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/personal-finance/dui-memorial-day-20-000-1.aspx#ixzz3APBYzQJK>