

PIRE Roadside Drug and Alcohol Survey in Washington, 2014/2015.

Question: will legalization of recreational marijuana worsen Washington's impaired driving problem?

The issue: Recreational marijuana was approved by voters in 2012, setting in motion a regulatory process that resulted in the first 24 stores getting their business license from the state Liquor Control Board in July, 2014.

Background:

Impaired driving in Washington resulted in the deaths of 1,088 people in the five year period between 2009 and 2013; an average yearly death toll of 218. During this time period, about half (48%) of traffic deaths came from collisions that involved impaired driving. Progress was made during this time, from a death toll of 265 in 2009 down to a death toll of 182 in 2013.

There were over 2,400 serious injury collisions that involved impaired driving in the five year period between 2009 and 2013, an average of 486 a year. About one in five serious injury collisions (21%) involve impaired driving.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) contracted with the national non-profit research organization the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) to gather and analyze data about driver drug and alcohol impairment. The first data collection took place during the first three weeks of June, 2014. The second data collection will take place the first three weeks of November, 2014 and the third wave of data collection is expected to take place in June, 2015.

The June roadside survey data collection effort intercepted a cross-representation sample of Washington drivers in 30 separate locations within six counties statewide (Spokane, Yakima, Whatcom, Snohomish, King and Kitsap counties). The goal was to obtain accurate, objective estimates of the numbers of drivers who have alcohol and/or drugs in their systems, testing for 75 different drugs (prescription, legal and illegal) and drug levels which will help gauge impairment. Participation by drivers is voluntary. Data provided is anonymous.

Another goal of the research is to track changes over time of driver impairment as legalized recreational marijuana is implemented, as well as driver perceptions about the dangerousness of driving while high.

June, 2014 – Preliminary findings:

- Over 943 drivers were intercepted at five locations within six counties (Spokane, Yakima, Whatcom, Snohomish, King and Kitsap).
- Among them, 926 drivers were deemed eligible to participate and agreed to participate. Commercial vehicle drivers, drivers under age 16 and people who did not speak English were eliminated).
- Breath tests, saliva samples and blood samples were collected from drivers, and driver opinions were collected via a knowledge and awareness test.
 - 97% (917) of drivers provided a breath sample

- 96% of drivers provided a saliva sample (902)
- 74% of drivers provided a blood sample (711)
- 95% completed the knowledge and awareness test questions.

A preliminary report on the June survey is available. It goes into the driver demographic composition compared with Washington census data. There was an over-representation of male drivers ages 20 to 34 in the sample (this population segment makes up 21% of the overall population but was 45% of the survey sample). Older drivers (age 64+) were under-represented in the survey sample. Native Americans, African Americans and Latinos were over-represented in the survey; Asians were under-represented.

Marijuana questions:

Have you ever, even once, used marijuana? (T= 888 respondents)

- 69% -- yes
- 31% -- no

220 drivers (24% of the survey sample) said they used marijuana within the last year. They were also asked: **Have you used marijuana within two hours of driving?**

- 44% -- yes (T=97)
- 56% -- no (T=123)

The drivers who said “Yes” (97) that they used marijuana within two hours of driving, were also asked: did the marijuana affect your driving ability? Here’s the question: **“When you used marijuana and drove, how do you think it affected your driving?”** (87% said it made no difference or it improved my driving)

	Percentage of drivers:	Total number:	
Did not make any difference in my driving	62%	60	
Made my driving better	25%	24	T= 84 (87%)
I don’t know	10%	10	
Made my driving worse	3%	3	

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Question from the larger survey sample: Among the drivers surveyed, 877 answered the question: **How likely do you think it is that marijuana impairs a person’s ability to drive safely if used within two hours of driving?**

	Percentage:	Number of respondents:	T= 877
Very likely	47%	409	
Likely	19%	162	
Somewhat likely	22%	197	768 (88%)
Not at all likely	12%	109	

What’s the likelihood you’ll be busted if you drive high? Question: **“How likely do you think it is that a person could be arrested for impaired driving after using marijuana within two hours of driving?”**

	Percentage	Number of people	T - 881
Very likely	41%	360	
Likely	23%	204	
Somewhat likely	25%	219	T= 783 (89%)
Not at all likely	11%	98	

Impaired Driving Involved Deaths:

	All Traffic Deaths	Alcohol BAC over .08	DUI alcohol &/or DUI drugs combined	IDI percentage of all deaths
2013	436 * _p	106 * _p	182* _p	42%
2012	438	126	202	46%
2011	454	135	199	44%
2010	460	152	240	52%
2009	492	189	265	54%
	T= 2280	T= 708	T= 1,088	48%
	Serious injuries	Drug &/or alcohol involved	% of all serious injuries	
2013	1921* _p	411* _p	21%	
2012	2200	501	23%	
2011	2136	479	22%	
2010	2482	470	19%	
2009	2646	570	21%	
	T= 11,385 (Ave. 2,277 yr)	T= 2,431 (Ave. 486 yr)	Ave. 21%	