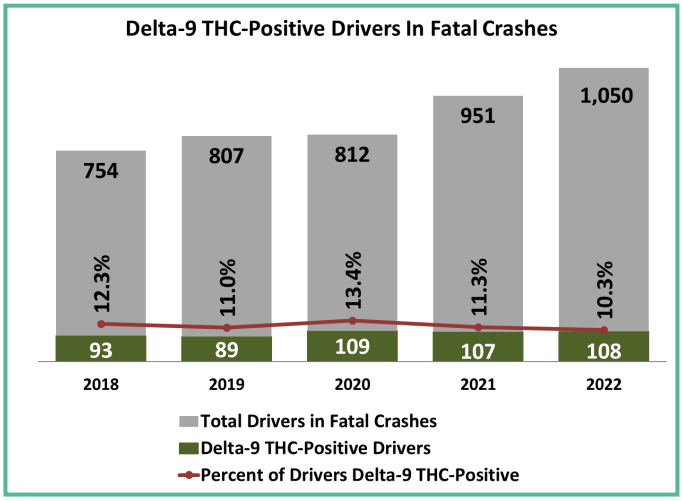
TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Brief No. 5
March 2024

Delta-9 THC Involvement Among Drivers in Fatal Crashes

Trends show that the number of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-positive drivers involved in fatal crashes has remained relatively stable since 2018, despite the overall number of drivers involved in fatal crashes increasing by nearly 40 percent. In 2020, the number of delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes increased by 22 percent from 89 in 2019 to a historic high of 109. This number remained virtually unchanged through 2022, where delta-9 THC -positive drivers represented about 10 percent of all drivers in fatal crashes.



Did you know?

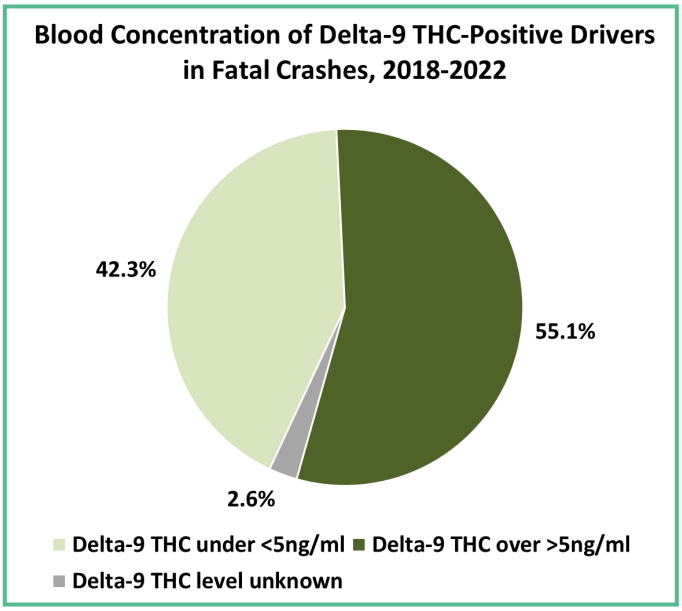
⇒ About one in ten drivers in fatal crashes were positive for delta-9 THC.

⇒ Delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes also exhibited other high-risk behaviors, such as speeding (42%), not wearing a seat belt (28%), and being distracted (16%).

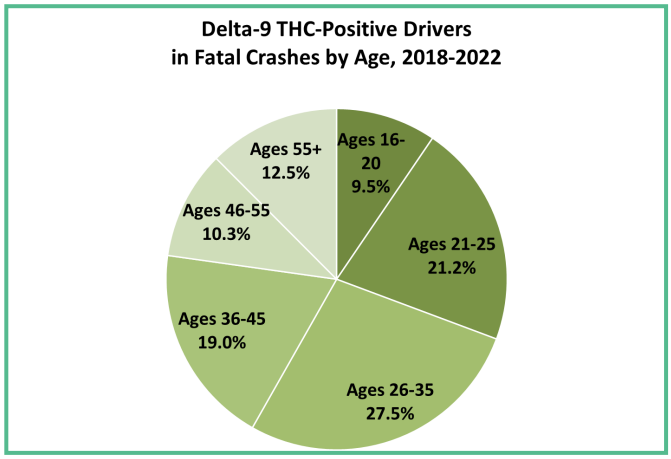
⇒ Nearly one-third of delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes were between the ages of 16 and 25.

⇒ Delta-9 THC is second most common substance detected among drivers in fatal crashes after alcohol.

I care, because 547 people have died in Washington since 2018 in crashes involving delta-9 THC-positive drivers — nearly one in every five traffic deaths.



Among delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes, more than half (55.1%) had a blood concentration greater than or equal to the Washington per se limit of 5 ng/ml (RCW 46.61.502). About 42 percent had a blood concentration below the per se limit of 5 ng/ml. The majority (81%) of delta-9 THC-positive drivers were males. About one-quarter (27.5%) were ages 26-35. About one in five (21.2%) were ages 21-25. Another one in five (19%) were ages 36-45.



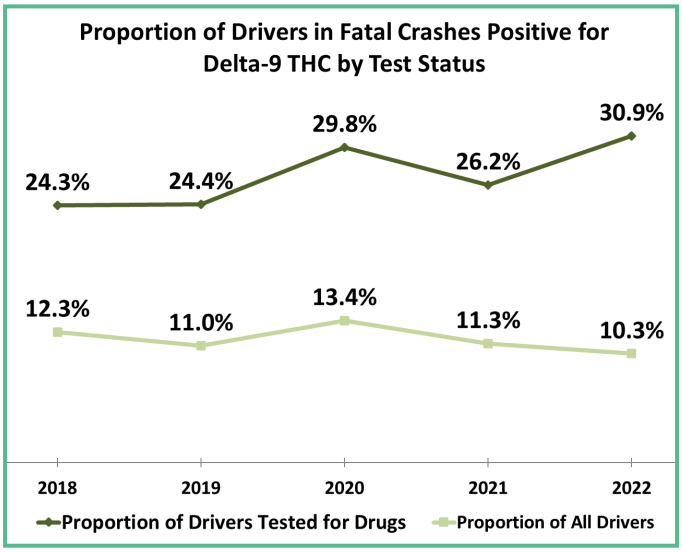
Data Sources: ***Washington Coded Fatal Crash (CFC) Files,*** *Washington Traffic Safety Commission*
For more information, *please contact (360) 725-9860.* https://wtsc.wa.gov/research-data/

TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Brief No. 5
March 2024

Delta-9 THC Involvement Among Drivers in Fatal Crashes

The proportion of all drivers in fatal crashes tested for drugs decreased from 50 percent in 2018 to just one-third of drivers in 2022. Among drivers that *were* tested for drugs, nearly one-third (30.9%) tested positive for delta-9 THC in 2022.



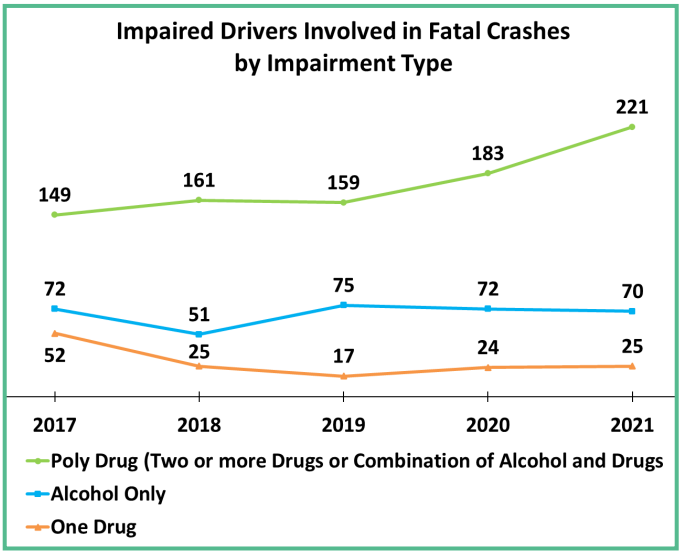
Did you know?

- ⇒ Alcohol is the most common substance paired with delta-9 THC among impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes.
- ⇒ About 44 percent of delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes also had a BAC of 0.08 or greater.
- ⇒ One-third of delta-9 THC positive drivers in fatal crashes were also positive for other drugs.
- ⇒ In total, three out of four delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes were also positive for alcohol and/or other drugs.
- ⇒ One-quarter of delta-9 THC-positive drivers in fatal crashes were positive for only delta-9 THC and no other drugs/alcohol.

More than half of delta-9 THC-positive drivers were also positive for alcohol. Alcohol and delta-9 THC is the most common substance combination observed among impaired drivers in fatal crashes. Methamphetamine is the next substance commonly paired with delta-9 THC after alcohol, although much less frequently than alcohol.

Substance Combinations among Delta-9 THC-Positive Drivers in Fatal Crashes	Percent
alcohol & delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC	38.6%
delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC	23.7%
delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & methamphetamine/amphetamine	5.0%
alcohol & delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & methamphetamine/amphetamine	4.4%
delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & fluoxetine/norfluoxetine	0.6%
delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & oxycodone	0.6%
methamphetamine/amphetamine & ephedrine & phenylpropanolamine & delta-9 THC	0.6%
alcohol & delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & cocaine/benzoylecgonine/cocaethylene	0.8%
alcohol & delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & amlodipine	0.4%
alcohol & delta-9 THC/carboxy-THC & fentanyl	0.4%

Poly-drug drivers, or those positive for two or more drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol, are the most common type of impaired driver involved in fatal crashes. The number of poly-drug drivers has increased by nearly 50 percent since 2018. Meanwhile, the number of drivers positive for one drug (not alcohol) or alcohol only, has remained relatively consistent over time. Most delta-9 THC-positive drivers were also positive for other drugs and/or alcohol.



Data Sources: ***Washington Coded Fatal Crash (CFC) Files,*** *Washington Traffic Safety Commission*
For more information, *please contact (360) 725-9860.* https://wtsc.wa.gov/research-data/