



# IMPAIRED DRIVING AND 0.05 BAC

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# STANDARD DRINK SIZE



**12 ounces**  
5% ABV beer



**8 ounces**  
7% ABV malt liquor



**5 ounces**  
12% ABV wine



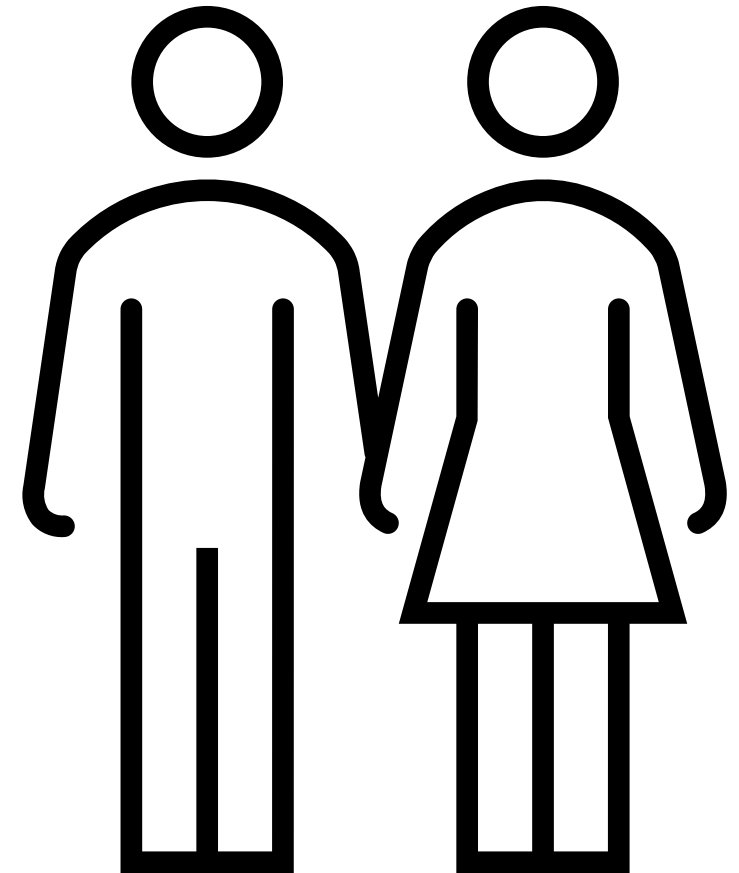
**1.5 ounces**  
40% (80 proof) ABV  
distilled spirits | (examples:  
gin, rum,  
vodka, whiskey)

**ABV = Alcohol by Volume**

# BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC)

One standard drink in one hour on an empty stomach results in a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of:

- 0.03 BAC for an average woman
- 0.02 BAC for an average man



# ALCOHOL EFFECTS AND INTOXICATION

- Depresses the central nervous system (CNS)
- Interferes with brain's communication pathways
- Impairs balance, coordination, and visual perception
- Reduces alertness, judgment, inhibitions

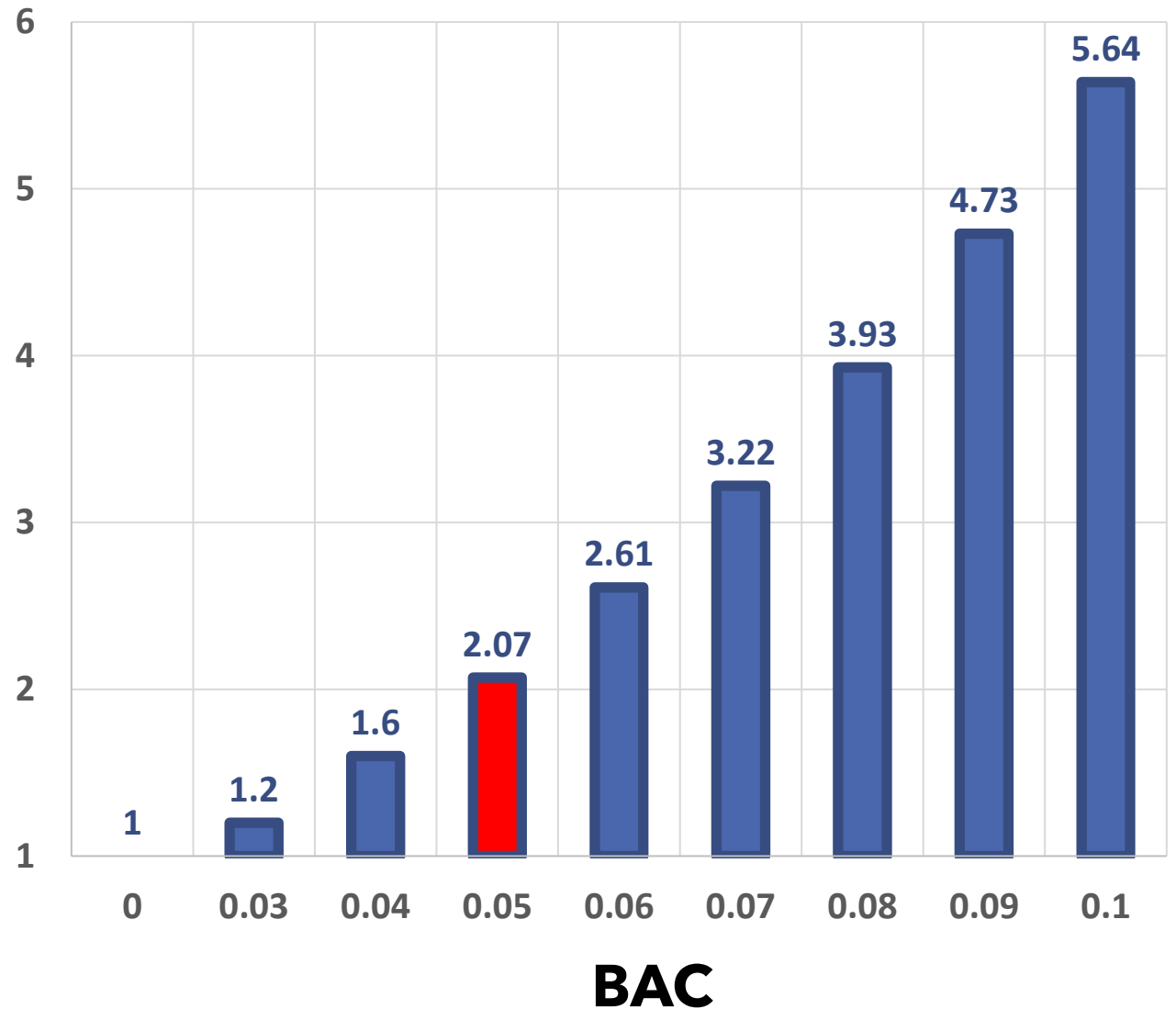


Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)	Typical Effects	Predictable Effects on Driving
<b>.02</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some loss of judgment</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Slight body warmth</li> <li>• Altered mood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Decline in visual functions (rapid tracking of a moving target)</i></li> <li>• <i>Decline in ability to perform two tasks at the same time (divided attention)</i></li> </ul>
<b>.05</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impaired judgment</li> <li>• Release of inhibition</li> <li>• Decreased small-muscle control (e.g., eye focus)</li> <li>• Exaggerated behavior</li> <li>• Usually good feeling</li> <li>• Lowered alertness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reduced coordination</i></li> <li>• <i>Reduced ability to track moving objects</i></li> <li>• <i>Difficulty steering</i></li> <li>• <i>Reduced response to emergency driving situations</i></li> </ul>
<b>.08</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle coordination becomes poor (e.g., balance, speech, vision, reaction time, and hearing)</li> <li>• Harder to detect danger</li> <li>• Impaired judgment, self-control, reasoning, and memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Speed control</i></li> <li>• <i>Impaired perception</i></li> <li>• <i>Reduced information processing capability (e.g., signal detection, visual search)</i></li> <li>• <i>Concentration</i></li> <li>• <i>Short-term memory loss</i></li> </ul>

# BAC AND CRASH RISK

SOURCE: NATIONAL HIGHWAY  
TRAFFIC SAFETY  
ADMINISTRATION, 2016

**Crash  
Risk\***

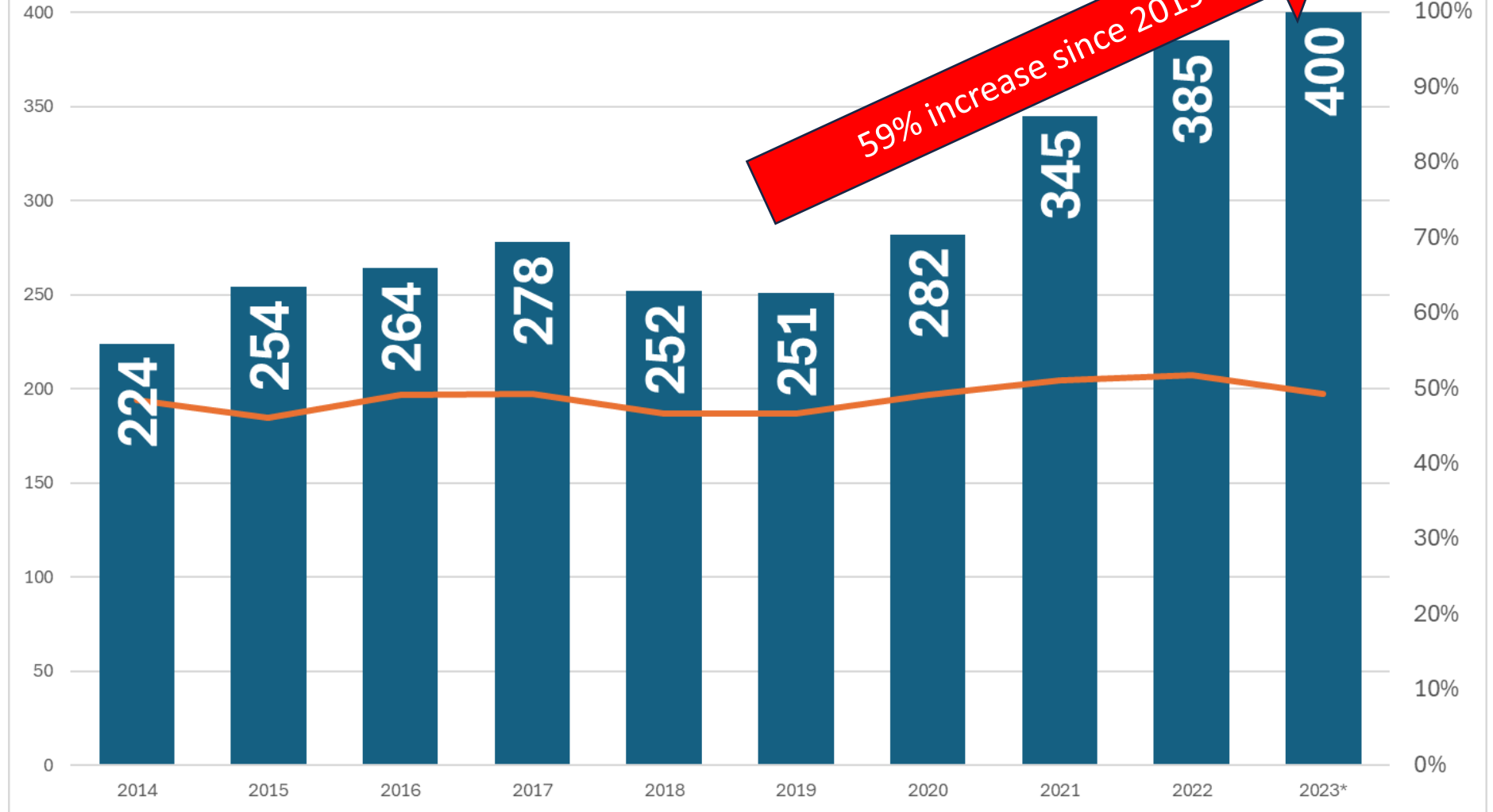


\*Adjusted to account for other factors that increase crash risk, e.g. males and younger drivers have higher crash rates compared to females and older drivers.

# Washington Traffic Fatalities Involving an Impaired Driver and Percentage of Total, 2014-2023 (2023 is preliminary)

Half of fatal crashes involve an impaired driver.

Alcohol is the most common drug involved in fatal crashes.



59% increase since 2019

# COMPARISON TO CURRENT BAC LIMIT OF 0.08

Norway adopted the first *per se* BAC limit in 1936: *0.05 percent*

Many other countries adopted *per se* limits of 0.05 in the 1960s – 1990s.

By the mid 2010s, 75% of countries (home to 84% of the Earth's population) had adopted BAC limits of *0.05 or lower*

Commercial drivers (CDL): 0.04 BAC = 1 yr. disqualification

The BAC limit for drivers under 21 in WA: 0.02



# MOST PEOPLE KNOW DRINKING AND DRIVING IS DANGEROUS AND DON'T DO IT

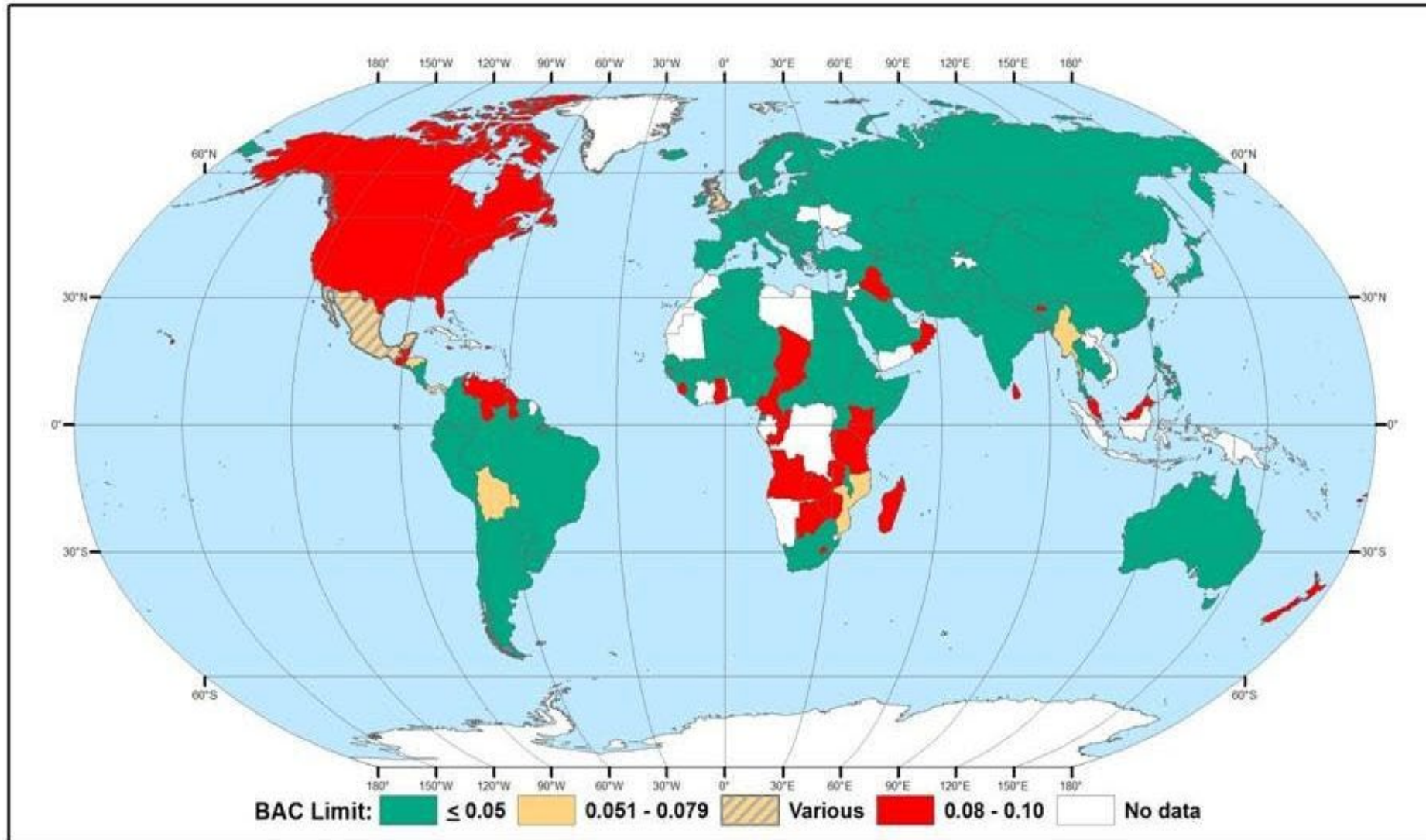
- Most people believe it is unsafe to drive after consuming 2+ drinks (various public opinion surveys)
- 78 percent of Washington respondents said they don't drive after consuming two or more drinks of alcohol (WTSC, 2018)
- Over 93 percent of Washington respondents said they have not driven under the influence of alcohol in the previous 12 months (WTSC, 2023 - 2024 statewide surveys, N = 21,523)

# COUNTRIES WITH LOWER BAC LIMITS HAVE FEWER FATALITIES

International studies have found, *on average*:

- 9.2 percent fewer fatal DUI crashes with a reduction from 0.10 to 0.08 BAC
- An additional 11.1 percent reduction in fatal DUI crashes with a reduction from 0.08 to 0.05 BAC
- A 5 percent reduction in non-fatal crashes
- No significant reduction in alcohol consumption

# THE GREEN COUNTRIES HAVE A BAC OF 0.05 OR LOWER:



Countries that have *not* adopted lower BAC limits include:


- Iraq
- Libya
- Angola
- Congo
- Bolivia
- Venezuela
- Greenland
- England
- Canada
- U.S.A. (exc. Utah)

# ADDRESSING QUESTIONS/CONCERNS ABOUT 0.05 BAC

1. Will it increase arrests (and increase racial disparity)?
2. Will it hurt the hospitality industry (alcohol sales)?

# WHY A BAC CHANGE IS *UNLIKELY* TO INCREASE ARRESTS


Law enforcement stops a driver for specific infractions and/or behavioral signs of impairment. An arrest will not result without specific evidence of impairment (see below).



The decision to arrest is based upon observed driving deficiencies, interaction with the driver, and the Standard Field Sobriety Test (SFST)



If the investigation, including SFST, does not indicate driver impairment, law enforcement does not test the driver's BAC.



If impairment is determined, preliminary breath tests are used to confirm the officer's arrest decision (for alcohol impairment).



Post arrest, evidentiary breath test is taken (or blood if other drugs are suspected)

# SEPARATING DRINKING FROM DRIVING REDUCES FATALITIES

Country/State	Fatality Rate per 1,000,000	BAC Limit (adult)	Alcohol Consumption (annual liters/person)
USA	129	0.08	8.93
Washington	94.5	0.08	8.59
Portugal	63	0.05	10.37
France	49	0.05	11.44
Austria	41	0.05	11.9
Germany	34	0.05	10.56
Finland	34	0.05	8.23
Spain	36	0.05	10.72
Ireland	31	0.05	10.91

# CONCLUSION: HIGH BENEFIT, LOW COST

- ✓ 0.05 helps to reduce fatal and non-fatal crashes by encouraging more people to plan ahead if they are going to drink (broad deterrence effect).
- ✓ More people separate driving and drinking by taking advantage of sober drivers, rideshare, taxis, and transit to travel safely.
- ✓ We do not expect arrests to increase significantly (this was Utah's experience).
- ✓ We have not seen documented evidence of harm to hospitality businesses, and it is an international norm.

# Questions

