

## Increased awareness about safe ride home programs needed: Poll

### Key points:

- > Across the U.S., 41% of respondents reported familiarity with safe ride home programs.
- > Analyses revealed that among those drivers who were familiar with safe ride home programs, less than 10% reported using them always or almost always.
- > Young adults reported using both safe ride home programs and public transportation options more frequently than older age groups.
- > Among U.S. drivers, 49% reported that they had access to public transportation in their area, and 28% said they did not; 18% of respondents reported that public transportation was only available in urban areas and not in residential areas.
- > Nationally, only 7% of drivers who had access to public transportation reported that they always or almost always used it when they consumed alcohol and only 11% reported using it sometimes.
- > Several regional differences were observed in relation to availability and use of safe ride home programs, which suggests that some areas may need to do more to ensure drivers are aware of alternatives.
- > Among the 8% of respondents who reported drinking and driving when they thought they were over the illegal limit, the majority did so because they thought they were okay to drive (44%), or thought that they could drive carefully (12%).

Washington, DC, October, 24, 2016 /CNW/ – A new Road Safety Monitor (RSM) poll conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. (TIRF USA) and sponsored by Anheuser-Busch revealed low awareness of safe ride home programs among U.S. drivers. It also showed that a large proportion of drivers do not use safe ride home programs, even when they are available and U.S. drivers were aware of them. A concerning proportion of persons who reported driving while impaired did so because they believed they were okay to drive.

The public opinion poll conducted in October and November 2015 investigated U.S. driver opinions and behaviors in relation to impaired driving. Results were analyzed in accordance with the 10 regions of the country identified by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to gain insight into variations across the country. The online poll was based on a sample of 5,009 drivers, aged 21 years or older and conducted in partnership with TIRF in Canada.

“According to NHTSA, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities (involving a driver with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or greater) accounted for 30 percent of total motor vehicle crash fatalities in 2014, corresponding to 9,943 lives lost.” explains Tara Casanova Powell, Director of Research at TIRF USA. “Fatality data from 2015 showed that 10,265 people died in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, which is a

3.2 percent increase from 2014. Raising awareness about the availability of alternative transportation options to help drivers get home safely can help encourage greater use of these services.

In addition, the survey showed that safe ride home programs and public transportation were not consistently available across the U.S., and a proportion of drivers seeking these options were not aware of whether these programs were available in their area. These results indicate that awareness of these programs may be low, and more work is needed to increase driver awareness of these options when they are available. Regional differences were also observed in relation to availability and use, which suggests that more intensive efforts may be beneficial to ensure drivers know that services are available.

Of concern, in places where safe ride home programs and other alternatives were available, these options were not often used. Continued research is needed to better understand the reasons why some drivers specifically choose not to use alternative options when available, and what features may help to encourage increased use.

“Ride-sharing can be a useful tool to reduce impaired driving,” says Dr. Ward Vanlaar, Chief Operating Officer at TIRF in Canada, “Additional research to explore effective strategies to deliver these programs, and promote their availability to drivers at critical moments can help ensure they are more frequently used and reduce crashes.”

Survey results showed that most U.S. drivers were concerned about the consequences of impaired driving. Concern about injuring themselves or someone else was most often reported by drivers, particularly those who reported driving when they thought they were over the limit. As such, it may be useful to focus educational efforts to underscore the risks and consequences for drivers themselves as well as other road users.

Additionally, young adult drivers and respondents who had multiple tickets were found to be more concerned about the consequences of alcohol-impaired driving. Tailored awareness campaigns for these audiences that communicate the risks and alternatives to driving can be beneficial.

“It is clear that most U.S. drivers understand the overall concerns of driving while alcohol-impaired as evidenced by the 92 percent who reported not driving drunk. However, the majority of those who chose to drive while impaired made this decision because they thought they were capable of driving,” says Casanova Powell. “This study revealed a common misperception among at least some drivers who believe they are capable of driving when alcohol-impaired.”

**About the poll.** These results are based on the 2015 TIRF USA RSM, an annual public opinion survey developed and conducted by TIRF USA, in partnership with TIRF in Canada. A total of 5,009 U.S. drivers aged 21 years or older completed the poll in October and November of 2015. Results can be considered accurate within plus or minus 1.4 percent, 19 times out of 20. The data were stratified and weighted by sex, age, and region. The majority of the questions were answered using a scale from one to six where six indicated high agreement, concern, or support and one indicated low agreement, concern, or support, as well as numerous yes/no questions. All of the respondents completed the survey online.



The knowledge source for safe driving

**About TIRF USA.** The mission of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. (TIRF USA) is to develop and share the knowledge that saves – preventing injuries and loss of life on American roads, reducing related social, health and insurance costs, and safeguarding productivity. TIRF USA is an independent road safety research institute that obtained 501(c)3 non-profit status in the US in 2014 and is affiliated through an exchange of services agreement with TIRF in Canada, established in 1964. Visit us online at [www.tirf.us](http://www.tirf.us) or [twitter.com/tirfusainc](https://twitter.com/tirfusainc)

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