



## More awareness about alternatives to alcohol-impaired driving needed: Poll

### Key points:

- > The Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA (TIRF USA) conducted the second annual Road Safety Monitor (USA RSM) on alcohol-impaired driving with sponsorship from Anheuser-Busch in October 2016. More than 5,000 drivers across the country completed the online poll.
- > According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), alcohol-impaired driving fatality data from 2015 (involving a driver with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or greater) showed that 10,265 people died in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities. This is a 3.2 percent increase from 2014 (compared to an overall increase in fatalities of 7.2 percent).
- > Drunk-driving fatalities decreased 51 percent from 1982 to 2015, but progress has been eroded in recent years. Results from this poll are consistent and reveal a significant increase in self-reported alcohol-impaired driving. To illustrate, 5.5 percent of respondents admitted to driving impaired often or very often in 2016, compared to 4.0 percent in 2015. Additionally, 11.7 percent admitted to driving when they thought they were over the legal limit one or more times within the previous 12 months in 2016, compared to 8.0 percent in 2015.
- > Based on only two years of RSM data, it is premature to draw conclusions about trends. Therefore, continued monitoring is essential in light of increases in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities.
- > Data from this poll suggest more awareness is needed about alternatives to alcohol-impaired driving. In this regard, almost all U.S. drivers (98.5 percent) think that having a designated driver is important when planning to go out with friends when drinking will occur, but 19.3 percent said they never use one. Also, 8.7 percent said they thought there was no alternative when asked why they drove when they thought they were over the legal limit. And, only 18.7 percent of drivers have used ride share services on a night out.
- > In terms of using alternative transportation, 71.2 percent of respondents report having been a designated driver (an estimated 142 million drivers), 63.5 percent always or nearly always use a designated driver (127 million drivers), 47.2 percent have been driven home by a designated driver (94 million drivers), 30.9 percent have used some form of public transportation such as a taxi or bus (62 million drivers) and 18.7 percent (37 million drivers) have used alternative ride share services such as Uber or Lyft. These results suggest more focused strategies can encourage people to choose a safe ride home as an alternative to driving alcohol-impaired.

Washington, DC, December 20, 2016 /PR NEWSWIRE/ – The Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. (TIRF USA) in partnership with TIRF in Canada released the second annual Road Safety Monitor (RSM) on alcohol-impaired driving sponsored by Anheuser-Busch. The public opinion poll conducted in October 2016 investigated U.S. drivers' opinions and behaviors in relation to this issue. Results are based on a sample of 5,050 drivers, aged 21 years or older.

“According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), alcohol-impaired driving fatalities involving a driver with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 or greater accounted for 30 percent of total motor vehicle crash fatalities in 2014, corresponding to 9,943 lives lost.”, explains Ms. Tara Casanova Powell, Director of Research at TIRF USA. “However, fatality data from 2015 showed that 10,265 people died in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, which is a 3.2 percent increase from 2014.”

While drunk-driving fatalities decreased 51 percent from 1982 to 2015, it appears progress is being eroded. Results from this poll also reveal a significant increase in self-reported alcohol-impaired driving. To illustrate, 5.5 percent of respondents admitted to driving impaired often or very often in 2016, compared to 4.0 percent in 2015. Additionally, 11.7 percent of respondents admitted to driving when they thought they were over the legal limit one or more times within the previous 12 months in 2016, compared to 8.0 percent in 2015. Alcohol-impaired driving and young drivers impaired by alcohol were considered two of the most serious issues in the U.S. and showed a significant increase in concern from 2015. Overall, a majority of respondents (75 percent) said they are concerned about the issue of alcohol-impaired driving.

According to Dr. Ward Vanlaar, Chief Operating Officer of TIRF in Canada and a co-author of the study, “When we asked why respondents drove after drinking when they thought they were probably over the legal limit, 8.7 percent said they didn’t think there was an alternative available to them and just under 44 percent answered they thought they were okay to drive, demonstrating the lack of awareness regarding the importance of using alternative solutions. As such, we believe an opportunity exists as our poll also showed a decrease in awareness of alcohol-impaired driving campaigns, suggesting tailored educational strategies would be beneficial.”

Alternatives to driving such as using a designated driver on a night out with family or friends, or taking a taxi or public transportation where it is available are strategies used to eliminate alcohol-impaired driving. The poll asked respondents about their behaviors in this regard and revealed that 71 percent of U.S. drivers reported that they had been a designated driver, 63 percent always or nearly always use a designated driver, 47.2 percent have been driven home by a designated driver, 30.9 percent have used some other form of transportation such as a taxi or bus, and approximately 18.7 percent have used alternative ride share services such as Uber or Lyft. Casanova Powell explains that in absolute numbers, this corresponds to an estimated 142 million drivers aged 21 years or older who have been a designated driver, 94 million who have used a designated driver, 62 million who have used some other form of transportation and 37 million who have used alternative ride share services. To provide a more general picture, 54 percent of U.S. drivers



reported either using a designated driver or alternative transportation (an estimated 108 million drivers aged 21 years or older) and 80 percent reported using a designated driver, being a designated driver, or using alternative transportation (an estimated 160 million drivers aged 21 years or older).

Casanova Powell says, "Although 98.5 percent of respondents reported they thought that having a designated driver is important when planning to go out and drinking will occur, the reported use of a designated driver is low. Even when drivers are aware of ride sharing programs or public transportation in their area, these programs are not widely used. The results from our poll suggest more focused strategies can encourage people to choose a safe ride home as an alternative to driving alcohol-impaired."

[Click here](#) to download: Alcohol-Impaired Driving in the United States. Results from the 2016 TIRF USA Road Safety Monitor.

**About the poll.** These results are based on the 2016 TIRF USA RSM, an annual public opinion survey developed and conducted by TIRF USA, in partnership with TIRF in Canada. A total of 5,050 U.S. drivers aged 21 years or older completed the poll in October of 2016. 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 respondents completed the survey online.

**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 U.S. 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)

**About Anheuser-Busch.** Anheuser-Busch and its employees build on a legacy of corporate social responsibility by focusing on three key areas: promoting alcohol responsibility, preserving and protecting the environment and supporting local communities. In the past three decades, Anheuser-Busch and its wholesalers have committed more than \$1 billion in national advertising campaigns and community-based programs to encourage responsible drinking and prevent underage drinking and drunk driving. Anheuser-Busch reduced total water use at its breweries 32 percent over the last 5 years and by 45.5 percent over the last 10 years. The company has been a leading aluminum recycler for more than 30 years. Since 1997, Anheuser-Busch and its Foundation have invested in local communities through donations of more than \$557 million to charitable organizations. The company also has provided more than 73 million cans of emergency drinking water to people impacted by natural and other disasters since 1988. Based in St. Louis,



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For more information, please contact:

Tara Casanova Powell  
Director of Research  
TIRF USA Inc.  
Tel.: 203-809-8709  
Email: [taracp@tirf.us](mailto:taracp@tirf.us)

Connecticut Office  
24 Farmington Drive, Hamden, CT 06518

Corporate Office  
20 F Street, 7th Floor, Washington, DC 20001  
Website: [www.tirf.us](http://www.tirf.us)  
Email: [tirf@tirf.us](mailto:tirf@tirf.us)