

# Addressing Impaired Driving: Insights from Research, Policy, and Community Engagement

CCMTA  
Regina, SK  
June 9, 2025

Presented by Hannah Barrett  
Researcher & Program Manager

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION



APPLYING RESEARCH TO THE REAL WORLD.



# About TIRF

TIRF is registered charity  
providing the following services:



**Research  
Services**



**Evaluation  
Services**



**Develop &  
Implement  
Solutions**



**Technical  
Assistance**



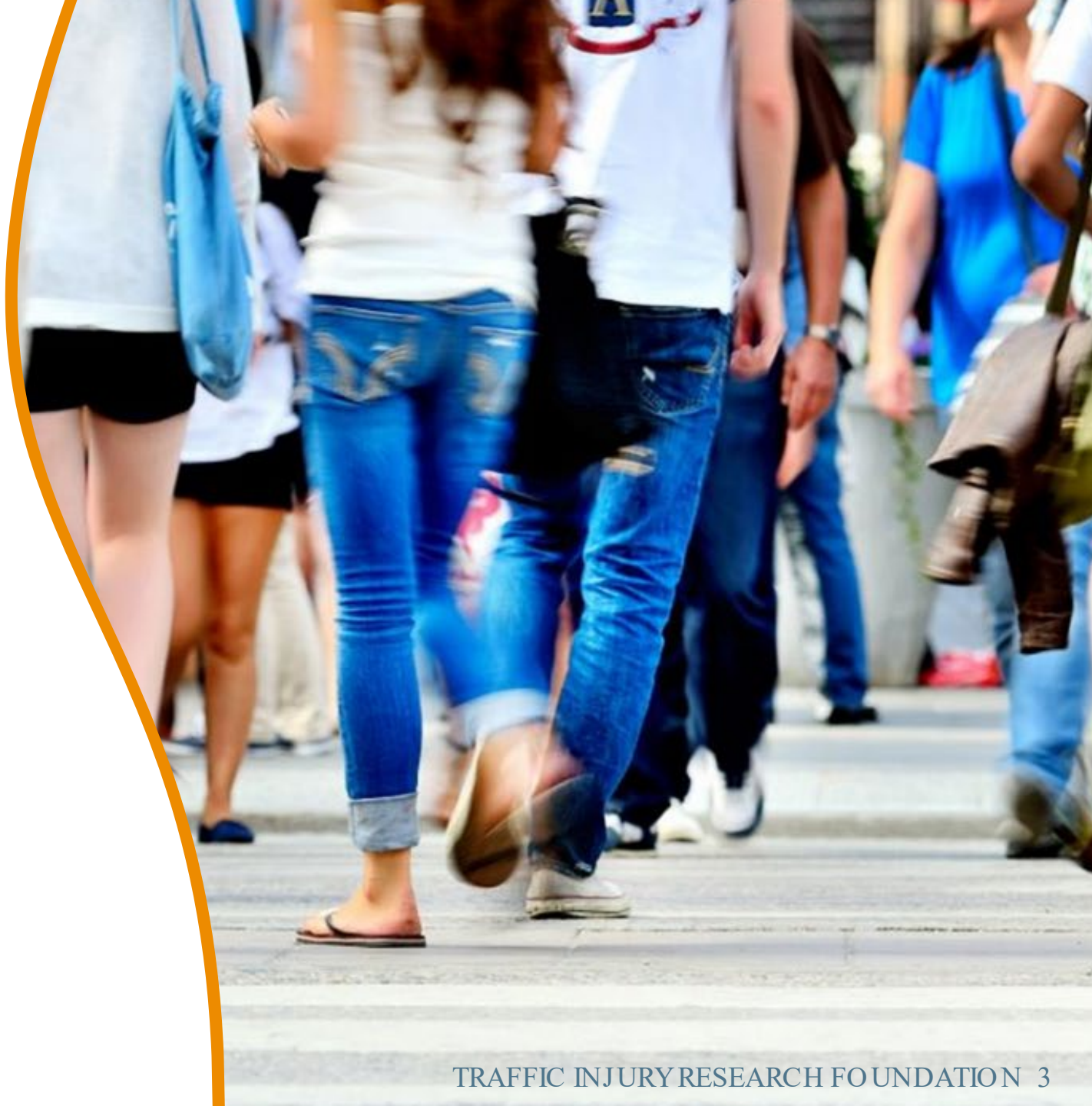
**Knowledge  
Transfer**





The **vision** of TIRF is to ensure people using roads make it home safely every day by eliminating road deaths, serious injuries and their social costs.

TIRF's **mission** is to be the knowledge source for safer road users and a world leader in research, program and policy development, evaluation, and knowledge transfer.





# Our Focus

## People on our roads

- ✓ Aging drivers
- ✓ Young & novice drivers
- ✓ Fatigued & distracted drivers
- ✓ Heavy truck & professional drivers
- ✓ School children
- ✓ Aggressive drivers
- ✓ Pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists
- ✓ Alcohol, drugs, medications & other substances
- ✓ Adult drivers
- ✓ Vehicle safety systems (ADAS)





# Road Safety Monitor 2024

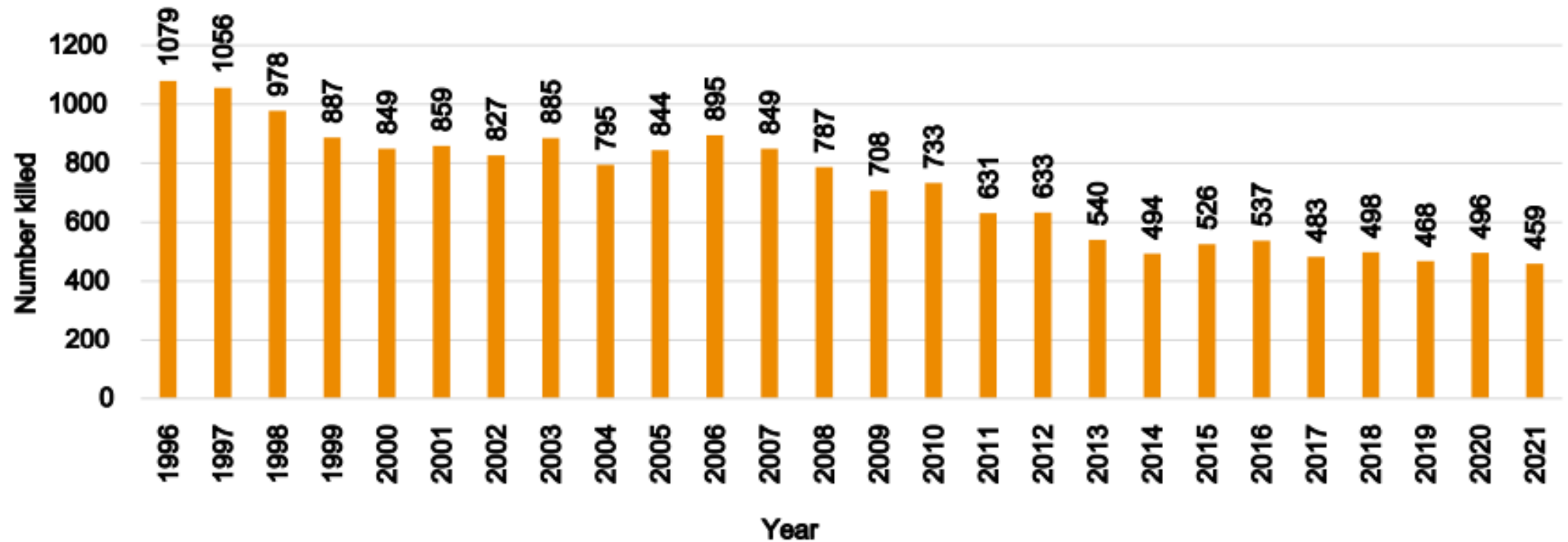
- > The annual Road Safety Monitor (RSM) is a national public opinion poll on road safety issues.
- > The RSM is conducted by TIRF in partnership with Beer Canada and Desjardins Insurance.
- > It gauges national attitudes on important road safety topics through an online survey conducted with a random, representative sample of Canadian drivers.
- > Additionally, data from TIRF's National Fatality Database are presented to examine trends in traffic fatalities involving a drinking driver.
- > 1,510 Canadians completed the poll in September 2024.



# Road Safety Monitor 2024

Alcohol-impaired driving fatalities (2021)

> 459 Canadians lost their lives in road crashes involving a drinking driver







# Road Safety Monitor 2024

- > In 2024, 11.4% of respondents admitted in the past 30 days to driving after consuming alcohol, compared to 13.0% in 2023.
- > In 2024, 5.9% of respondents reported having driven when they thought they were over the legal limit within the past year, which is similar to 5.8% in 2023.

## Road Safety Monitor 2024

### Drinking & Driving in Canada

Milad Delavary, Craig Lyon, Hannah Barrett, Ward G.M. Vanlaar & Robyn D. Robertson  
December 2024



#### KEY FINDINGS

- > The number of Canadians killed in road crashes involving a drinking driver decreased by 57.5% from 1996 to 2021 (from 1,079 to 459 fatalities).
- > In 2024, female drivers were 62% less likely than male drivers to report driving over the legal limit.
- > In 2024, each 10-year increase in age corresponded to a 25% reduction in the odds of driving after consuming alcohol above the legal limit.
- > In 2024, 5.9% of drivers admitted to driving after drinking over the legal limit in the past 30 days, compared to 5.8% in 2023.
- > Among the 5.9% of respondents who admitted to driving over the legal limit, 44.1% admitted to drinking at home, 43.3% admitted to drinking alone.

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION



ROAD SAFETY MONITOR 2024 | DRINKING & DRIVING IN CANADA 1



# Road Safety Monitor 2024

- > Respondents who admitted to driving when they thought they were over the legal limit were asked where they typically drank:
  - » at home (44.1%),
  - » drinking with friends or relatives (26.6%),
  - » at restaurants (16%).
- > These results suggest that the trend towards drinking primarily at home before driving while likely over the legal limit, which began during the COVID-19 pandemic, is continuing, although there is a slight decline from 2023 to 2024.





# Road Safety Monitor 2024

- > Among the drivers who admitted to driving after consuming alcohol within the last 30-days, females were 76% less likely to report driving after consuming alcohol.
- > Among the drivers who admitted to driving when they believed they were over the legal limit within the past 12-months, females were 62% less likely to do so compared to males.
  - » Age was also a significant factor, with each 10-year increase in age associated with a 25% decrease in the odds of driving when believing to be over the legal limit.



# Road Safety Monitor 2024

## Conclusions

- > Canada has made significant progress in addressing drinking and driving, as evidenced by recent trends in alcohol-related road fatalities and the proportion of total road deaths involving impaired drivers.
- > Recent data shows although there was an uptick in 2020, fatalities decreased by 7.4% from 2020 to 2021.
- > Certain trends, such as the rise in drinking at home and drinking alone, are likely influenced by social factors, including the increased cost of living, loneliness and the accessibility of home entertainment options, such as online gaming, social media, and expanded streaming services.



# Impaired Driving Coalition of Canada (IDCC)

TIRF and Diageo North America partnered to establish the IDCC.

- > The coalition combines the knowledge and expertise of member organizations, along with innovative educational resources to guide the development of a national action plan aimed at preventing impaired driving.
- > The IDCC's priority is to increase public awareness and help drivers recognize the risks associated with driving after drinking.





# IDCC Members

Sponsored by: **DIAGEO**







# IDCC National Action Plan

- > The IDCC created a National Action Plan with four key areas of focus identified by coalition members.
  - » Prevention: Using local data to guide local initiatives.
  - » Education: Helping communities develop customized local educational messaging.
  - » Data: Identifying and compiling current, local sources of impaired driving data to inspire action.
  - » Technology: Exploring the role of technologies in preventing impaired driving.



## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### Using Technology to Increase Community Awareness About Impaired Driving

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, DECEMBER 2023

Impaired driving remains one of the top contributing factors to road deaths and injuries across the country. In fact, 391 people were killed in a road crash in Canada involving a drinking driver in 2021 (excluding British Columbia). New technologies have resulted in some unique tools which can help community-based organizations and partners increase awareness about the prevalence of impaired driving at a local level. In particular, visual tools are an effective approach to help communities understand the current magnitude of the problem. One such technology involves the use of dynamic Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of locations where impaired drivers are caught or collisions have occurred.

#### Are there really that many impaired drivers on our roads?

According to TIRF's 2022 Road Safety Monitor, one in ten drivers admitted to driving after drinking when they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months. In the same year, police services across Canada reported 57,221 alcohol-impaired driving incidents, which equals a rate of 147 incidents per 100,000 population.

In addition, 2021 data from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) showed slightly more than one in ten youth (11.8%) were a passenger in a vehicle with a drinking driver in the past year. Equally concerning, slightly less than one in ten youth (8.8%) youth were a passenger in a vehicle when the driver had used drugs in the past year.

In other words, the likelihood of people drinking and driving on the roads in your community is very real. Many people underestimate the frequency of impaired driving on our roads, and it can happen in any community and at any time.



USING TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS ABOUT IMPAIRED DRIVING 1



## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### Using Social Media to Strengthen Initiatives

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, DECEMBER 2023

#### Introduction

Social media tools create unique opportunities to reach target audiences with tailored messages to increase awareness about impaired driving and strengthen educational initiatives. These platforms are ideal for delivering brief, informative, and personally relevant information at critical moments which can help change behaviour. This fact sheet answers common questions about social media tools that are available, who uses them, optimal strategies to post and promote content as well as strategies to engage with social media influencers, track impact on audiences, and develop messaging. For any of the tools mentioned, YouTube is a great resource to source short how-to training videos.

#### What is social media?

Social media comprises various online platforms allowing users to connect and share news, ideas, images, and videos. Nearly 33 million Canadians actively use social media, equating to 85.7% of the total population.<sup>1</sup> The list of social media sites is growing, and well-known platforms are constantly adding new features. As traffic safety stakeholders, integrating social media into our impaired driving campaigns is crucial.

#### How do I choose which platforms to use?

Different sites specialize in different kinds of engagement and targeted audiences. For example, social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, allow individuals and businesses to interact in various ways. Everyday actions include tagging, sharing, using #hashtags, commenting, direct messaging, and reacting to posts. Media Sharing Sites, including Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, share moments through pictures and videos and link them to other social networking platforms. Video hosting sites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) allow users to upload, share, and track longer videos. Other sites include blogging/<sup>2</sup>



THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA IS IT FORCES NECESSARY CHANGES.  
ERIK QUALMAN

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO STRENGTHEN INITIATIVES 1



## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### Strategies to Strengthen Alcohol Interlock Programs in Canada

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, JULY 2024

Increases in self-reported impaired driving and fatalities among Canada's 26 million licenced drivers in the past few years, particularly during and post-pandemic, are a cause for concern. According to the Traffic Injury Research Foundation's (TIRF's) 2023 Road Safety Monitor (RSM), 5.8% of Canadian drivers admitted driving when they thought they were over the legal limit in the past 12 months. While this percentage may appear small, it should be underscored that this is a percentage of 26 million drivers across Canada (Barrett et al., 2023).

Equally concerning, there were 391 Canadians killed in a road crash involving a drinking driver in 2021; the most recent year that data are available. These fatalities occurred within 12 months of crashes on public roadways across the country (Vanlaar et al., 2022). The percentage of persons killed in a crash on a public roadway in Canada involving a drinking driver was 26.5% (or roughly 1 in 4 road deaths) in 2021. Although this percentage has remained under 30% since 2012, it has increased during the past two years (Barrett et al., 2023).

It is noteworthy that the prevalence of risk-taking on the road among persons not previously taking such risks in 2019 increased in 2020 and 2021 in tandem with the pandemic. These risks included impaired driving, speeding, distraction and fatigue. However, while the latter three behaviours subsequently declined among this population in 2022, impaired driving remained higher until 2023, decreasing from 10.5% in 2022 to 5.8% in 2023 (Barrett et al., 2023). Compared to other risky behaviours, impaired driving declined more slowly and as such, it is imperative that more targeted action is undertaken to address impaired driving.

One very effective and proven strategy to keep communities safe from impaired driving is to ensure all convicted impaired drivers have an alcohol interlock installed on their vehicles. An interlock is a breath-testing device attached to the starter of a vehicle and it is shown to be one of the most effective tools available.

This fact sheet describes the current impaired driving situation in Canada and discusses the effectiveness of the interlock technology. It also summarizes the latest best practices for alcohol interlock programs that should be considered by licensing authorities.



Ignition interlocks are one of the most effective strategies to prevent impaired driving.

STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMS IN CANADA 1





## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### 10-step Guide to Form a Fatal Collision Review Committee

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, DECEMBER 2023

A Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC) is a multi-disciplinary committee formed to undertake timely reviews of fatal road crashes as they occur within a municipality. This fact sheet provides a comprehensive 10-step guide to forming an FCRC.

An overview of the structure and main features of an FCRC is available as a fact sheet on the TIRF website at: [tirf.ca/download/idcc-fcrc-overview](https://tirf.ca/download/idcc-fcrc-overview)



#### STEP 1 Engage key stakeholders to gauge interest and gather ideas

Identify and connect with key stakeholders in your community to gauge the level of interest in forming an FCRC. Establish a strategy for approaching agencies to gauge interest, discuss ideas, build support and identify potential issues requiring consideration. This can be accomplished by reaching out individually or by hosting a meeting with your local knowledge as a guide on the best course of action. Key stakeholders to include in this process are:

- > Regional coroner's office
- > Police (collision investigations and traffic enforcement)
- > Municipal road safety engineers
- > Ministry of Highways & Transportation
- > Representatives from the local Public Health Unit (PHU)
- > Other road safety stakeholders as appropriate



10-STEP GUIDE TO FORM A FATAL COLLISION REVIEW COMMITTEE (FCRC) 1



## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### Fatal Collision Review Committee Overview

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, DECEMBER 2023

This fact sheet is designed to help communities understand the role and benefits of a Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC). It provides some background on the City of Ottawa's establishment of an FCRC including the rationale prompting its creation. A overview of an FCRC and the general steps to establish and manage one can help communities to better understand fatal collisions and steps to prevent them in the future.

#### What is a Fatal Collision Review Committee?

The City of Ottawa established a multi-disciplinary Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC) in 2017 as a pilot program. It was formed with the intention of undertaking a timely review of fatal road crashes as they occurred in the municipality.

The committee is comprised of representatives from the Regional Supervising Coroner's Office of Eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Police Service (Collisions and Traffic Enforcement), Traffic Services (City of Ottawa), city planners and engineers, Safer Roads Ottawa and Ottawa Public Health.

The committee reviews all aspects of fatal crashes to identify contributing factors that played a role and how they might be addressed. They are responsible for making recommendations specific to the precise location of the crash which may potentially have implications for the larger transportation network.

FCRCs are more common at a municipal level, but for rural communities, a regional approach may be more efficient or manageable for smaller communities within the same geographic area. However, this approach will require more complex confidentiality protocols with respect to small numbers of incidents to protect the privacy of individuals.



FATAL COLLISION REVIEW COMMITTEE OVERVIEW 1



## IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

### Alcohol, Other Drugs & Driving Know the Facts

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, SEPTEMBER 2023

#### Alcohol, Other Drugs & Driving: Know the Facts

Obtaining a driver's licence is often a source of excitement and celebration because it brings independence. But a driver's licence does not make you invincible in a collision.

Road crashes are a leading source of death for young people. Young drivers are 5-10 times more likely to be fatally injured than any other age group (Reniers et al., 2016). Generally, they overestimate their driving skills and abilities, while underestimating the risks and hazards in different road environments.

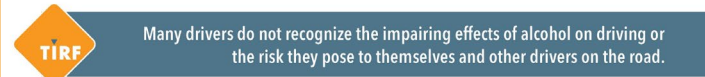
From an early age, males take more risks than females because young males are less likely to believe they will be hurt. Males are also more likely to believe injuries are a result of bad luck instead of impulsive behaviours (Bukis, Lenne, & Fitzharris, 2015).

Most of all, young males underestimate the risks associated with certain behaviours, such as consuming alcohol and drugs other than alcohol<sup>1</sup>, and using their phone while driving (Reniers et al., 2016).

#### Why do people drive impaired?

Many people cannot accurately gauge their level of impairment and ability to drive after drinking or consuming cannabis. This is because they tend to focus on impairment in physical movements, such as staggering or swaying instead of impairment in thinking such as unclear thinking, poor decision-making and inability to focus on a task or anticipate risks which are common factors in alcohol-related crashes (Sober Smart Driving, 2020). Many drivers do not recognize the impairing effects of alcohol on driving or the risk they pose to themselves and other drivers on the road.

In addition, people mistakenly believe they are okay to drive when they stop drinking and begin to feel better. But in truth they are still impaired, and their level of impairment continues to rise after their last drink even though they may not feel that different. Similarly, people also over-estimate their ability to perform tasks as impairment begins to decline and this is because they feel less impaired than they did



Many drivers do not recognize the impairing effects of alcohol on driving or the risk they pose to themselves and other drivers on the road.

ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS & DRIVING | KNOW THE FACTS 1



# IDCC Regional Workshops

- > TIRF alongside members of the IDCC organized four regional one-day impaired driving workshops.
- > Objectives:
  - » Share research and best practices to increase public awareness about the risks associated with impaired driving and effective strategies to avoid it.
  - » Learn about the experiences of local communities and the current challenges they face in reducing impaired driving and lessons learned from their initiatives.
  - » Work with communities to develop road safety strategies designed to reduce impaired driving.







# IDCC Regional Workshops

## Key takeaways

1. Partnerships that existed pre pandemic are no longer there or barely there because funding and staffing cuts, capacity and resources, as well as engagement.
2. A more holistic look at impaired driving is needed with a focus on contextual vs quantitative data as it is incorrectly assessing the prevalence of the issue. We think it's declining but we are asking the wrong questions. Charges are down because enforcement is down.
3. Short cuts are becoming normalized but send the wrong message.



# IDCC Regional Workshops

## Key takeaways

4. Better youth strategies are needed.
5. Proactive enforcement that is more data driven to be optimized.  
Tactical analysis to guide operations planning, particularly for large geographic areas.



# IDCC Regional Workshops

Outputs:

## 1. Engineer toolkit

- » Help communities identify impaired driving crashes using crash and hotspot analyses, and increase understanding of factors and characteristics contributing to impaired driving collisions.

## 2. Trauma admissions triage template

- » Support trauma centres in adopting this practice to enable police services to be more efficient and return to their duties





# IDCC Regional Workshops

Outcomes:

3. Help local governments assess impaired driving in the community.
  - » Guide municipalities in collecting qualitative data from key stakeholders to augment quantitative data in order to accurately assess the magnitude of the issue in their community.
4. Community research toolkit.
  - » Help communities identify their potential data sources, how to request them and understand some of the barriers to sharing and ways they can be overcome.



# IDCC Regional Workshops

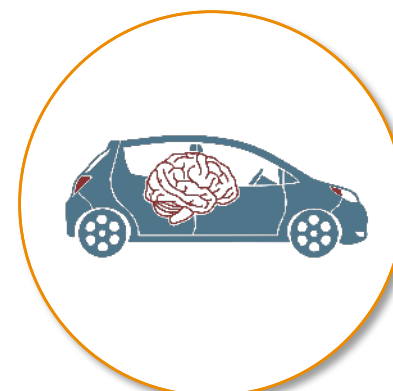
Outcomes:

## 5. Youth education.

- » Designed to provide guidance on how to begin to address road safety and teach the basics of risk (speed, impaired, seatbelts) and strategies to avoid them.

## 6. The role of media in addressing impaired driving

- » Highlights the vital role of media and provide guidance, suggestions, and access to tools to help journalists effectively report on the issue as well as hold the justice system accountable.



Learn more about road safety & ways to safe.  
[tirf.ca/education-resources-programs](http://tirf.ca/education-resources-programs)



# Meet the team



# Visit TIRF.CA

Access all TIRF educational resources & social media |  
[linktr.ee/tirfcanada](https://linktr.ee/tirfcanada)

For more information | [hannahb@tirf.ca](mailto:hannahb@tirf.ca)

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION



APPLYING RESEARCH TO THE REAL WORLD.