



DRINK-DRIVING FACT FILE

November 2022



ESTONIA



INTRODUCTION

Road deaths in Estonia were reduced by 45% between 2011 and 2021, ranking the country highly when based on improvements made over the period. The EU27 average reduction was 31%. However, with a road mortality figure in 2021 of 41 deaths per million inhabitants, Estonia ranks a little below the EU average of 45.

Figure 1. Relative change in road deaths between 2011 and 2021. *National provisional estimates used for 2021, as final figures for 2021 are not yet available at the time this report went to print.

**UK data for 2021 are the provisional total for Great Britain for the year ending June 2021 combined with the total for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2021. The annual number of deaths in LU and MT are particularly small and, therefore, subject to substantial annual fluctuations. The annual numbers of deaths in CY and EE are also relatively small and may be subject to annual fluctuations.

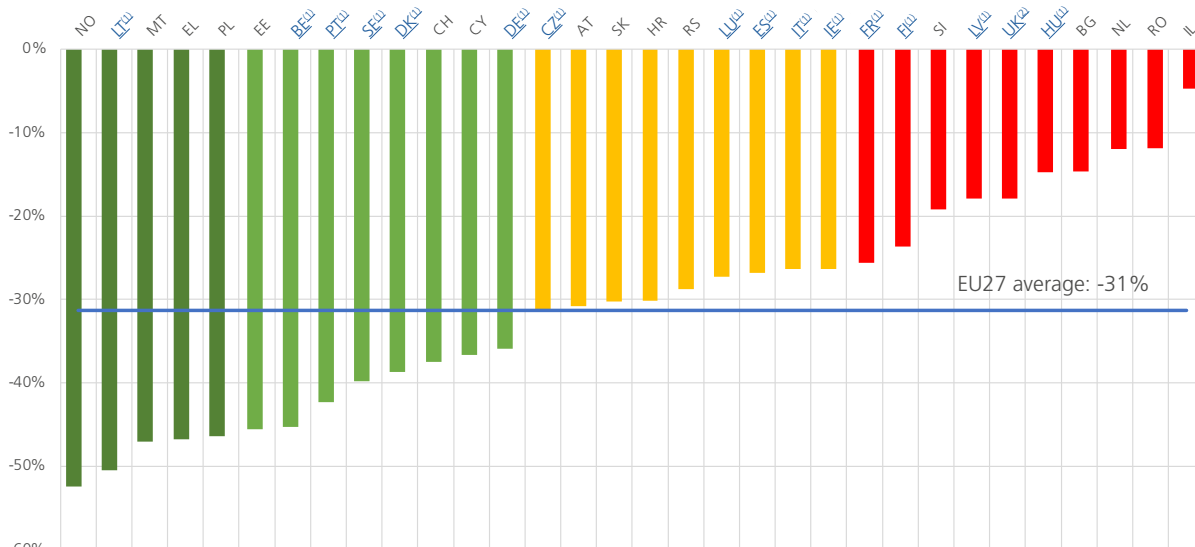
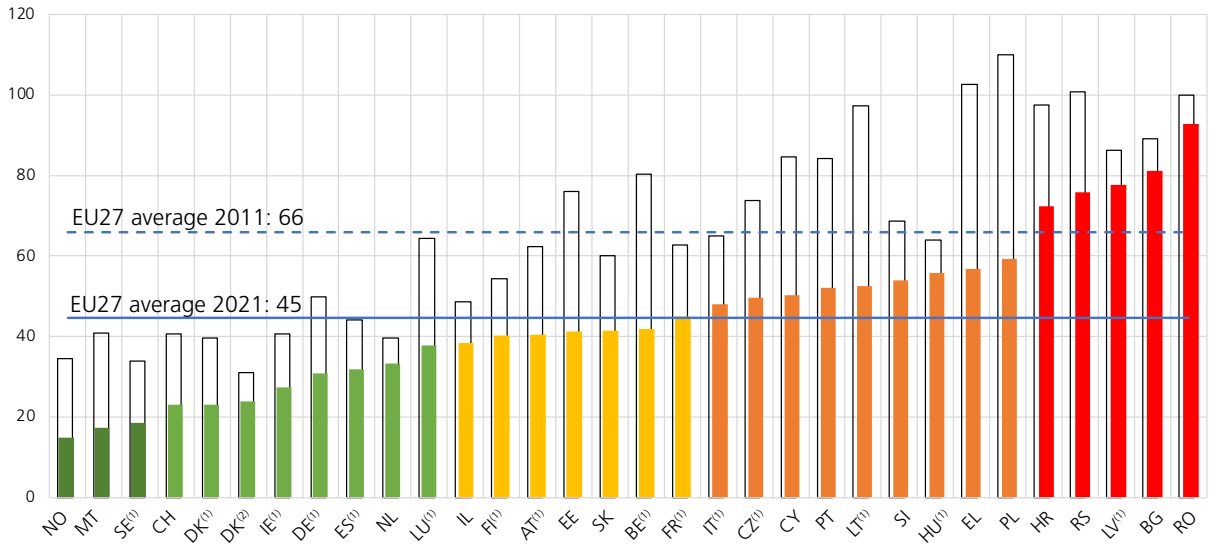


Figure 2. Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2021 (with mortality in 2011 for comparison).

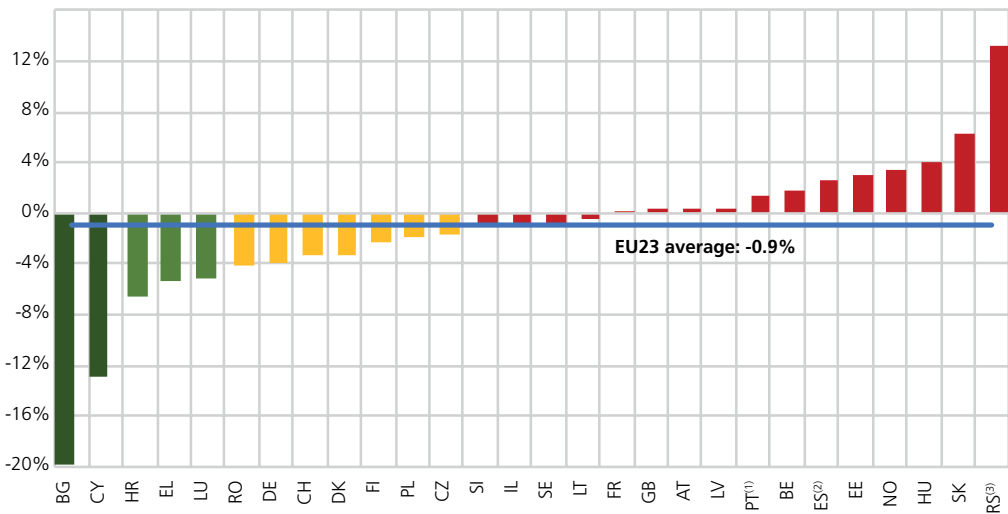
(1) National provisional estimates used for 2021, as final figures for 2021 were not available at the time this report went to print. The annual number of deaths in LU and MT are particularly small and, therefore, subject to substantial annual fluctuations. (2) UK 2021 estimate is based on GB provisional total for the year 2021 and the provisional data for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2021, population data is an estimate for the year 2021.



Alcohol-related road deaths decreased at a slower pace compared to all other road deaths in the period from 2010 to 2019, as shown in the graph below. In terms of actual figures, alcohol-related road deaths recorded by the police in Estonia for 2020 and 2021 were similar, with respectively 16 and 17 road deaths attributed to alcohol.

Figure 3. Difference between the average annual change in the number of road deaths attributed to alcohol and the corresponding change for other road deaths over the period 2010–2019

(1) PT: Number of road deaths attributed to alcohol are not available, so numbers of positive forensic post-mortem tests of drivers, passengers and pedestrians were used instead. (2) ES: data for Catalonia and the Basque Country are not available. (3) RS: data collection methodology changed in 2016. Serbia is working to improve alcohol-related fatal collision data collection according to the EU guidelines on the Common Accident and Injury Database (CaDas).
EU 23: EU 27 Member States minus Ireland, Italy, Malta and the Netherlands due to insufficient data.





NATIONAL POLICIES

Timeline of national measures to tackle drink-driving:

2000

Introduction of a 0.2g/l Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit for all drivers.

2009

Evidential breathalysers were used for the first time*. Introduction of sanctions linked to the level of alcohol (less than 0.49 g/l; between 0.5 and 1.49 g/l; above 1.5 g/l). Above 1.5g/l is considered a criminal level drink-driving offence.

2015

2015

Fines were increased for a criminal level drink-driving offence, with a new maximum of 5,000 euros. Road safety rehabilitation programmes were introduced as an alternative option instead of a driving ban.

*A driver can choose one of these two options: evidential breathalyser on spot or blood sample test. If a driver agrees on being tested by breathalyser, than the result is considered as proof and can be used in court.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS



Political discussions on the adoption of a demerit point system in Estonia are ongoing. The concept and draft legislation are ready, but the necessary political steps have not yet been taken. Concerning drink-driving, the offence is included among the most severe and the system foresees a multilevel intervention model*, based on the profile of the offender.



Another draft law under consideration is to withdraw the right to drive as well as the medical certificate after a drink-driving offence at the criminal level. The Ministry of Justice has received an order from the Government to develop a system where a driver caught for a high-level drink-driving offence would automatically have the driving licence and health certificate suspended. In order to restore the health certificate and, through it, the right to drive, a person must undergo an additional health check-up at his/her family doctor, who then issues a new health certificate or decides not to if the person does not meet the requirements.

* The first stage of this multilevel intervention is awareness-raising courses (online and in presence) and participants receive relevant information on road safety during them. Next levels are based on a therapy-based approach that aims to actively engage participants and guide them to think about their behaviour in traffic.



BAC LIMITS AND SANCTIONS

The legal limit for
all drivers
is:

0.2g/l

Sanctions are shown in the table below:



BAC level (g/L)



Sanction



Driving ban



Imprisonment

BAC level (g/L)	Sanction	Driving ban	Imprisonment
0.2 to 0.49g/l	up to 100 fine units *	Up to six months as an alternative to a fine	-
0.5 to 1.49g/l	up to 300 fine units *	Up to twelve months as an alternative to a fine	Can apply
Above 1.5g/l	For a criminal offence, the judge may impose a fine of thirty to five hundred daily rates. The court shall calculate the daily rate of the fine on the basis of the average daily income of the offender. The court may reduce the daily rate due to special circumstances or increase the rate on the basis of the standard of living of the offender. The daily rate applied shall not be less than the minimum daily rate. The minimum daily rate is around 10 euros.	In addition, the judge may decide to withdraw the driving licence for a period of at least three months	Up to three years

* A fine unit is the base amount of a fine and is equal to 4 euros.

- If the driver receives a driving ban for a period of six to twelve months, he/she must retake the driving test (theory only)
- If the driver receives a driving ban for a period of more than twelve months, he/she must retake the driving test (both theory and practice part)



ENFORCEMENT

Alcohol tests are done systematically for all active participants in a road collision, either alive or dead. Estonia has the highest drink-driving enforcement levels in the EU. Since 2015, Estonia has recorded the highest number of roadside police drink-driving checks compared to other EU countries that could provide data. The most active year was 2019, with 696 checks carried out per 1000 population. This is confirmed in the table below showing the total number of alcohol checks carried out by the police from 2017 until 2021. 2019 was a record year with more than nine hundred thousand alcohol checks recorded.

Table 4. Roadside alcohol breath tests per 1000 inhabitants and proportion of those tested found to be above the legal limit. Ranked by number of roadside breath tests in 2020, from highest to lowest

⁽¹⁾IE: data refers to breath tests performed at Mandatory intoxicant Testing Checkpoints.
⁽²⁾ES: checks on roads inside urban areas and in the region of the Basque Country are not available. Data for checks in Catalonia include urban areas.
⁽³⁾IT: alcohol roadside breath tests by national police only.
⁽⁴⁾GB: number of alcohol roadside breath tests and population data for England and Wales only. The figure for the number found to be above the legal limit includes those who refused to take the breath test.

	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2010	
	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)	Roadside police tests per 1000 inhabitants	Proportion above the legal limit (in %)
EE	566	0.9%	696	0.8%	584	0.9%	513	1.0%	656	0.8%	677	0.9%	105	5.5%
PL	177	n/a	444	n/a	434	n/a	470	n/a	473	n/a	466	0.7%	88	4.9%
HU	173	1.3%	279	0.9%	298	1.0%	241	1.2%	174	1.5%	135	1.5%	126	3.5%
SI	172	3.2%	203	3.1%	171	3.3%	191	3.5%	142	3.7%	157	3.6%	200	4.7%
AT	137	2.1%	204	1.7%	197	1.6%	196	1.6%	192	1.7%	189	1.6%	123	3.7%
PT	115	1.6%	186	1.9%	172	2.2%	172	3.9%	167	2.7%	160	3.0%	112	3.8%
FR	108	3.2%	139	3.4%	145	3.4%	157	3.3%	153	3.1%	159	2.9%	174	3.4%
FI	74	2.2%	170	1.0%	249	0.8%	264	0.7%	272	0.7%	268	0.8%	201	0.8%
NO	64	2.6%	180	0.8%	177	0.7%	211	0.6%	258	0.6%	281	0.5%	367	0.2%
CY	49	9.0%	92	8.9%	102	9.0%	120	7.2%	105	7.9%	135	7.0%	213	5.3%
SE	35	2.4%	125	0.9%	116	0.9%	117	1.0%	122	1.0%	147	0.9%	287	0.6%
IE ⁽¹⁾	21	0.4%	64	0.5%	65	0.5%	n/a							
RO	n/a										72	1.8%	n/a	
LT	n/a										48	9.8%	42	10.5%
EL	n/a												164	2.1%
MT	n/a												0	46.6%

YEAR	Number of alcohol checks
2017	764 276
2018	770 692
2019	921 527
2020	761 738
2021	765 589



REHABILITATION AND ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMMES

No alcohol interlock rehabilitation programme is in place in Estonia. However, alcohol interlocks are required within state public procurement for state-owned public transport vehicles.

There is a drink-driving rehabilitation programme in Estonia for those sanctioned with a driving ban. However, alcohol interlock use is not a part of the programme.

The program consists of a total of four lecture modules, each meeting lasting 2 x 90 minutes. Topics covered are: the effect of alcohol on human physiology; the impact of impaired physiology on traffic behaviour; analysis of own alcohol consumption and traffic behaviour. The participation fee in the programme is around 230 euros.



CAMPAIGNS

In 2021 the Estonian Transport Administration carried out a joint campaign together with the rescue service on the risks of drink-driving. The campaign is still ongoing in 2022. The key message is that every person has the duty to stop another person from driving under the influence of alcohol.

“You’ve got a backbone. Tell your drunk friend not to drive!”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sd4YTkWxKE>

Another campaign against drink-driving was launched in 2019 to support the measures implemented by the Estonian government such as enforcement and rehabilitation programmes for drink-drivers. The campaign was shown on TV, buses, banners and also broadcast on radio. According to a survey, 66% of drivers saw an element of the campaign. In Estonia, 99% of drivers think drink-driving and drug driving is dangerous or rather dangerous. The purpose of the campaign was to make road users aware that they can prevent their loved ones from drinking and driving. The campaign is also available online.



<https://youtu.be/fwOYojwmJ-E>



SOURCES

Sanctions:

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/515072022005/consolide/current>

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/527012016001/consolide/current>

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/522012015002/consolide/current>

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/515072022014/consolide/current>

ETSC, 16th PIN Annual Report (2022):

https://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/16-PIN-annual-report_FINAL_WEB_1506_2.pdf

ETSC, How traffic law enforcement can contribute to safer roads (2022):

https://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/ETSC_PINFLASH42_v2TH_JC_FINAL_corrected-060522.pdf

Rehabilitation programme:

<https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/joobes-juhtide-programm>

Campaigns:

<https://pilv.mkm.ee/s/WgCoA1UXODHIBl4>

<https://youtu.be/fwOYojwmJ-E>



European Transport Safety Council

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