



# DRINK-DRIVING FACT FILE

May 2021



## FINLAND

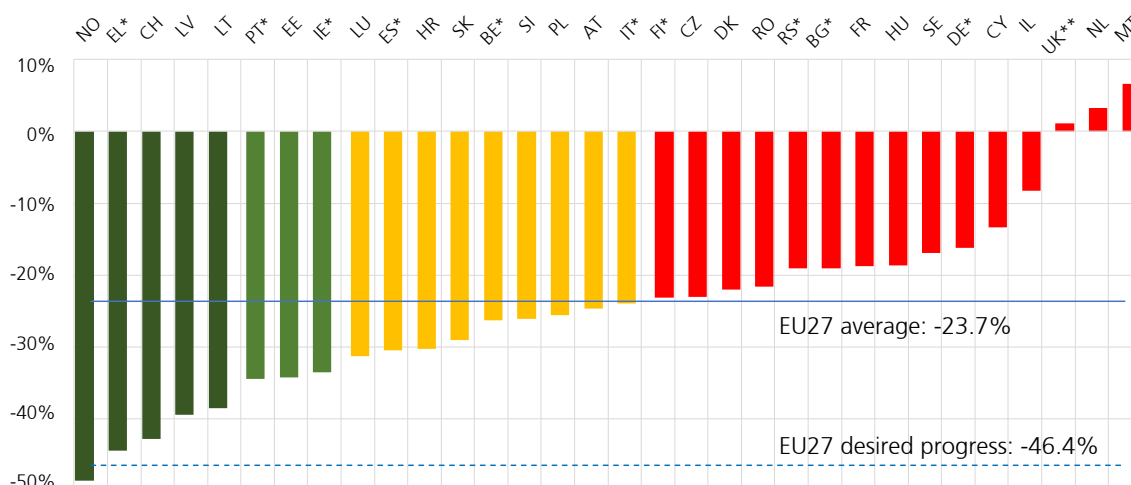


### INTRODUCTION

In terms of road mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) Finland ranks among the good performers with 38 deaths per million inhabitants compared to the EU average of 51.

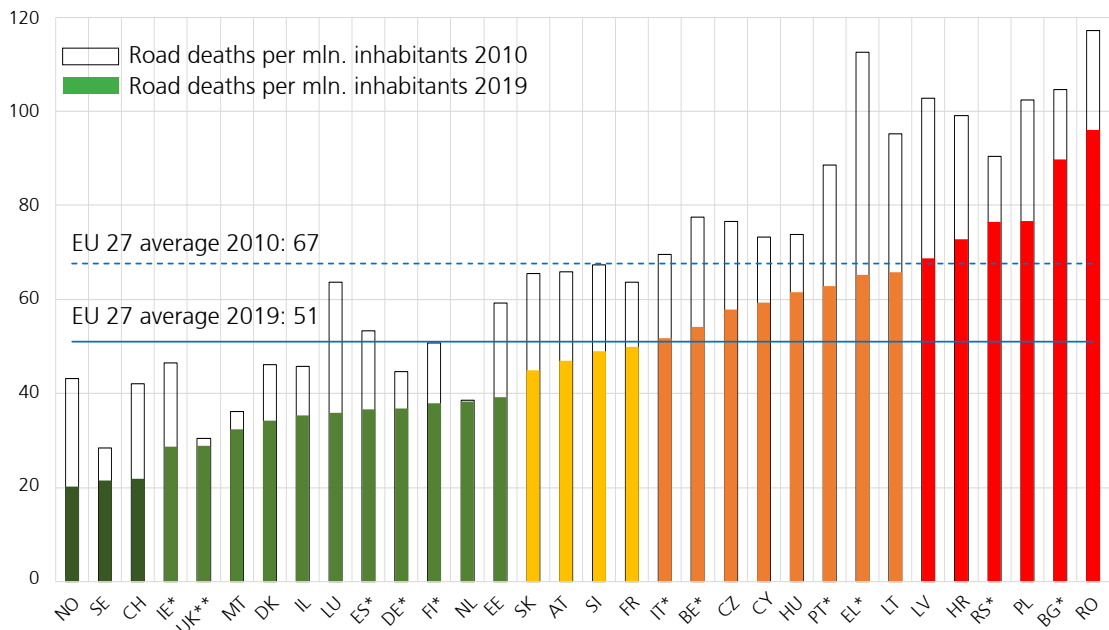
Finland's progress in reducing annual road deaths over the period 2010 – 2019 was relatively slow, with just a 23% reduction.

**Figure 1. Relative change in road deaths between 2010 and 2019.** \*National provisional estimates used for 2019, as final figures for 2019 are not yet available at the time of going to print. \*\*UK data for 2019 are the provisional total for Great Britain for the year ending June 2019 combined with the total for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2019.



**Figure 2. Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2019 (with mortality in 2010 for comparison).**

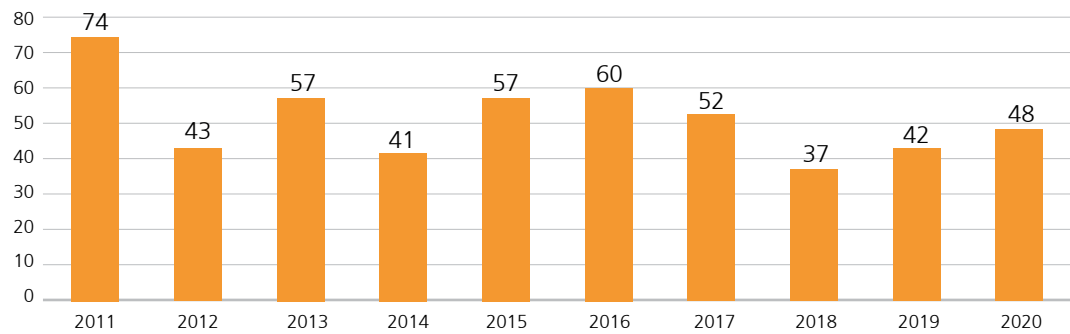
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Alcohol-related road deaths decreased by 4% faster annually than other road deaths until 2018. 37 people died in collisions involving a driver, a rider or a pedestrian with a BAC above 0.5 g/l (or with a strong suspicion of having been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the collision) compared to 77 in 2010.

**Figure 3. Alcohol-related road deaths in Finland in the period 2011-2020.**

Source Liikenneturva and Statistics Finland.



However, these last two years have shown an increase in the number of road deaths due to alcohol, rising from 37 to 48 in 2020 (provisional figure). It is too early to see if this is due to the impact of COVID-19 on changes in driving behaviour (with more people taking dangerous risks) or if this is just a random variation. Drink-driving remains, nevertheless, a serious issue to address, still accounting for around 20% of all road traffic deaths.



In Finland, all fatal collisions are investigated in-depth. The Finnish Crash Data Institute (OTI) coordinates independent in-depth investigations of all fatal road collisions and administers the data collected from them. OTI regularly publish reports analysing five-years of data on collision investigations that reported the involvement of alcohol, illegal drugs or medicines.

The latest report from OTI on substance abuse was published in 2020. It investigated road crashes resulting in death in Finland over the period 2014–2018 and drivers who had been driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs or both. The investigators found that the majority of drink-drivers who caused a fatal collision had not used drugs other than alcohol. In terms of timing, collisions involving only alcohol-using drivers were focused on weekends and night time: half of drink-driving collisions occurred between Friday night and Sunday morning. Drink-drivers typically were involved in single vehicle collisions, on the road alone at night with no other people involved in the collision, except other passengers in their vehicle.

In 2014–2018, 320 people died in motor vehicle collisions caused by intoxicated drivers. Of these, 248 were intoxicated drivers, 54 were passengers with an intoxicated driver, and 18 were in another vehicle. In addition to these motor vehicle collisions, four pedestrians and one cyclist were killed in collisions caused by intoxicated drivers in 2014–2018. A total of 18 cyclists who had ridden while intoxicated died between 2014 and 2018. Typically, the level of intoxication was high, at least 1.2 g/l .



## NATIONAL POLICIES

Timeline of the main measures adopted to fight drink-driving in Finland:

**2005**

Trial on alcohol interlocks launched

**2011**

Alcohol interlocks mandatory for all vehicles providing transportation services for pupils and for day care in cases where transport is organised or (partially) funded by public institutions

**2016**

A new act on alcohol interlocks came into force. A major change is the fact that offenders in the alcohol interlock programme are no longer required to have log-data exported

**2020**

The new road Traffic Act gives police the power to prevent a person from driving even if they have a very small amount of alcohol in the body (under the legal limit of 0.5g/l)

2005

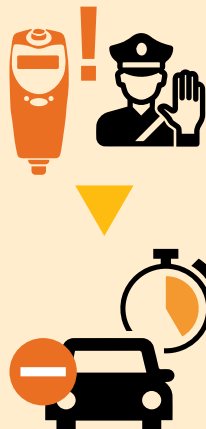
2011

2014

2020

**2008**

Alcohol interlock programme for drink-driving offenders adopted



### (NEW) ROAD TRAFFIC ACT ENTERED INTO FORCE ON 1 JUNE 2020

The act has a new paragraph according to which the police may prevent someone from driving if they are found to have consumed alcohol but the test results do not give reason to suspect that the intoxication clearly affects the driver's ability to drive. In this case driving is temporarily prevented until there is no more detectable amount of alcohol in the body. In other words, if the driver has a very small amount of alcohol in their breath sample, the police may order them to wait on the roadside until there is no more detectable amount of alcohol in their body.



# BAC LIMITS AND SANCTIONS

Since the introduction of lower BAC limits in 2011:

The standard BAC limit for  
**ALL drivers**  
is: **0.5g/l**



No further lower alcohol limit has been specified for any specific driver group. According to the European SARTRE survey on Social Attitudes to Road Traffic Risk in Europe (2012), in Finland 43.3% of the drivers thought that car drivers should not drink any alcohol at all when they drive. In total 65.9% supported a lower legal limit (European average: 59.8%), 34.0% were satisfied with the current alcohol limit and only 0.2% thought that it should be higher.

Finland is one of the few countries in the EU to use an income-related day fine system for severe crimes, including road offences. A Finnish fine consists of a minimum of a 1 day-fine, up to a maximum of 120 day-fines. The minimum amount of a day-fine is 6 euros. Usually, the day-fine is one half of daily disposable income.

Below is a detailed table of sanctions for drink-driving offences:



**BAC level  
(g/L)**



**Driving ban**



**Fines**

0.5 TO 0.59	2 months (first time) 7 months (recidivist)	Fewer than 40 day-fines
0.6 TO 0.69	2 months 2 weeks (first time) 7 months 2 weeks (recidivist)	40-49 day-fines
0.7 TO 0.89	3 months (first time) 8 months (recidivist)	50-59 day-fines
0.9 TO 0.99	4 months (first time) 9 months (recidivist)	60-69 day-fines
1.0 TO 1.09	5 months (first time) 9 months 2 weeks (recidivist)	Over 69 day-fines
1.1 TO 1.19	6 months (first time) 10 months (recidivist)	Imprisonment
1.2 TO 1.49	7 months 1 year 2 months	Imprisonment (less than 45 days)
1.5 TO 1.99	8 months 1 year 4 months	Imprisonment (45-59 days)
2.0 TO 2.49	10 months 1 year 6 months	Imprisonment (60 to 79 days)
2.5 TO 2.99	1 year 1 year 8 months	Imprisonment (4 months)
3.00	Up to 5 years	Imprisonment (over 4 months)



## ENFORCEMENT

Finland has been among the most active EU countries in the fight against drink-driving when it comes to enforcement levels during recent years. In Finland, alcohol tests are done systematically in practice for all active participants in a road collision.

	2019	2020
Number of breathalyser tests	959 307	428 903
Positive tests	10 238	9 784
Share of positive tests	1.07 %	2.28 %

Source: Liikenneturva and Finnish Police

As shown in the table above, however, the number of checks in 2020 fell by more than half compared to the previous year, while the percentage of drivers tested positive has doubled. One explanation for lower breathalyser test numbers is that police have been busy with controlling Covid-19 lockdowns and therefore less resources were available for drink-driving surveillance.

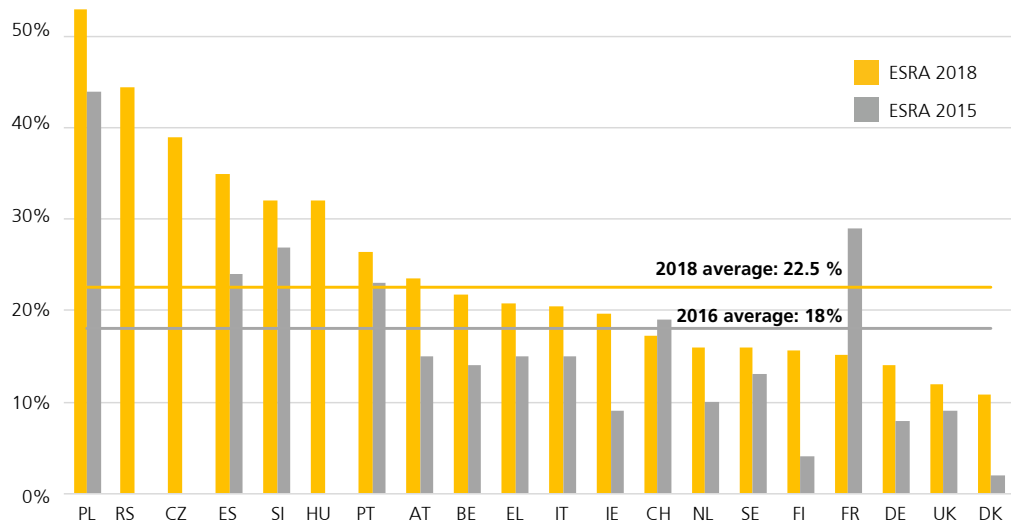
The pandemic forced the police to stop randomised testing for many months in 2020. The Finnish public was also made aware that randomised testing had paused. This obviously reduced the impact of enforcement.



## DRIVERS' PERCEPTION

Despite high levels of enforcement on drink-driving until 2019, it appears that the perception of being caught on Finnish roads remains quite low, according to the E-Survey on Road safety Attitudes from 2019 (ESRA2).

**Figure 4. Proportion (%) of car drivers who considered themselves likely to be checked by the police for drink-driving.**  
Source: ESRA survey (2015 and 2018)



The perceived likelihood of a police drink-driving check is one of the lowest, with only 15% of drivers thinking they are likely to be stopped by the police for drink-driving, compared to the EU average of 22.5%. In the previous survey from 2015 the percentage was even lower, just 4%.

Part of the explanation can be found in the fact that in 2014 the Finnish Police underwent a major organisational reform. As part of this the independent National Traffic Police service was abolished. Traffic policing was restructured in an effort to save costs and streamline resources.

The ongoing public discussion has led to the feeling that there has been a lack of police enforcement, especially enforcement at the roadside. ESRA results show clearly that, even if Finns have more enforcement than other Europeans, they still feel enforcement is lacking.



# REHABILITATION AND ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMMES

In 2008, an alcohol interlock rehabilitation programme was adopted by the Finnish government after a trial launched in 2005. The administration managing the programme is the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom). The programme is voluntary for all DUI offenders regardless of the blood alcohol concentration level at the time of arrest. Offenders can choose to participate in the programme instead of opting for a driving licence ban.

The programme is offered to the following categories of drink-driving offenders:

- BAC 0.5 - 1.2 g/l : 12-36 months, median 16 months
- BAC 1.2 g/l and above: 12-26 months, median 18 months

To enter the programme the offenders have to send their application to the police. Participants are also required to meet a health care professional and get a certificate provided by the police.

The costs of the programme are as follows:

Year 1: 2,400 euros; Year 2: 1,920 euros; Year 3: 1,440 euros.

So far, around 85% of the participants have completed the programme. 84% of them are male drivers and the average age is 51.

An evaluation of the programme was carried out in 2013 with the following main results:

- 1,687 drivers
- Average duration: 17 months
- 5.7% of the drivers reoffended during or after the probation period whereas the usual recidivism rate for drink-driving offenders is 30%
- The alcohol interlocks have prevented 12,000 participants from driving under the influence of alcohol

Since 2011, Finland has also equipped all vehicles dedicated to publicly-funded school and day care transport with alcohol interlocks

Public support towards this tool seems to be quite high in Finland. In May 2017, the road safety organisation Liikenneturva surveyed a total of 1,035 respondents, of whom 79% were motorists. More than nine out of ten (91%) Finns who responded to the survey considered it good to have technology in their cars that would prevent them from driving drunk. The attitude towards the alcohol interlock was positive. In a previous survey from December 2016, 65% of drivers felt that an alcohol interlock should be standard on all new cars.



## CAMPAIGNS

Finland has a strong culture of disapproval of driving under the influence of alcohol. Some surveys carried out by Liikenneturva in 2013 and 2015 showed slightly different attitudes between adults and young people:

- 9/10 adults would inform police of a drunk driver (Liikenneturva 2015)
- 7/10 young people would inform police of a drunk driver (Liikenneturva 2013)

There is anyhow a strong social pressure against drink driving in Finland and it is addressed in driver education and also in school education. Moreover, it is one of the main themes in Finnish road safety campaigning/risk communication, developed in cooperation with different sectors.

The latest nationwide drink driving campaign #rohkee #bebrave ran from 2015 to 2018 and targeted young drivers aged 15-24. The campaign focused first on drink driving and later also on drug driving. The campaign was very well received. 87% of the target audience had seen the campaign and 83% agreed with the key message which was: 'Be Brave - Encourage young people to stop friends from driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs'.

The campaign was a co-operation between Liikenneturva, the Finnish Road Safety Agency and other partners and was launched on TV, radio, social media and during several events.

The TV advertisement might seem at first glance to be a typical fear-appeal story, but it actually uses a theoretical model to reduce the negative effects of fear appeal messaging. By telling the story backwards, with the accident at the beginning and a more positive ending, the advertisement is based on theory of "model of emotion" which emphasises the importance of leaving the audience in a state of positive arousal.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVXpert67kY>



## SOURCES

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<https://bit.ly/33afFnw>

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European Transport Safety Council

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