



DRINK-DRIVING FACT FILE

December 2022



INTRODUCTION

The number of road deaths in Malta fell by 47% between 2011 and 2021, a decrease in excess of the EU average of 31%. With 17 road deaths per million population recorded in 2021, Malta is among the safest countries in Europe. However, the annual number of deaths in countries with as small a population as Malta may be subject to substantial annual fluctuations.

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.

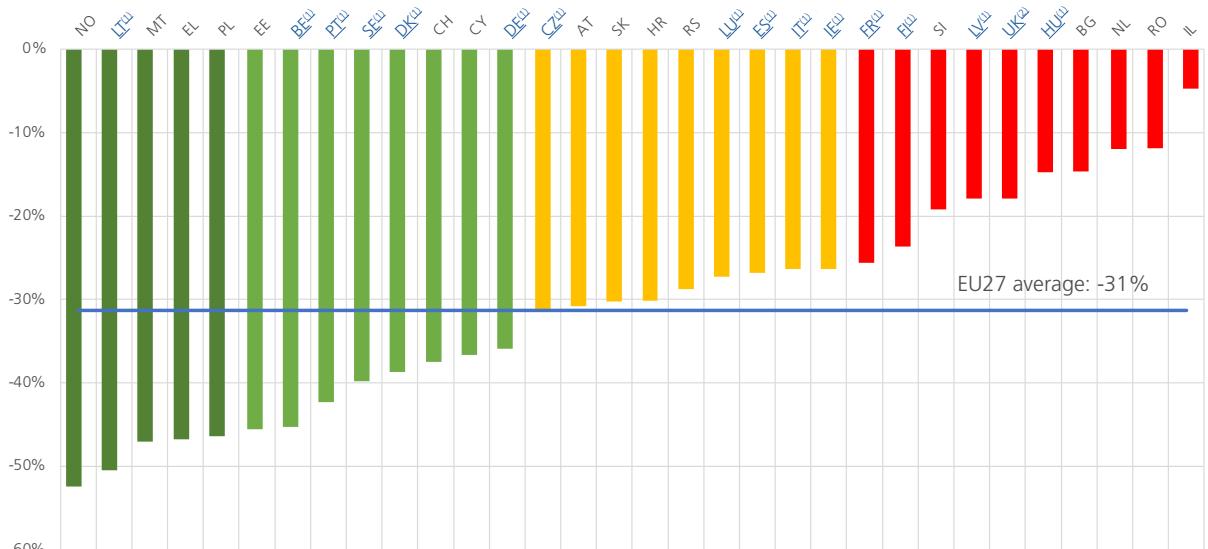
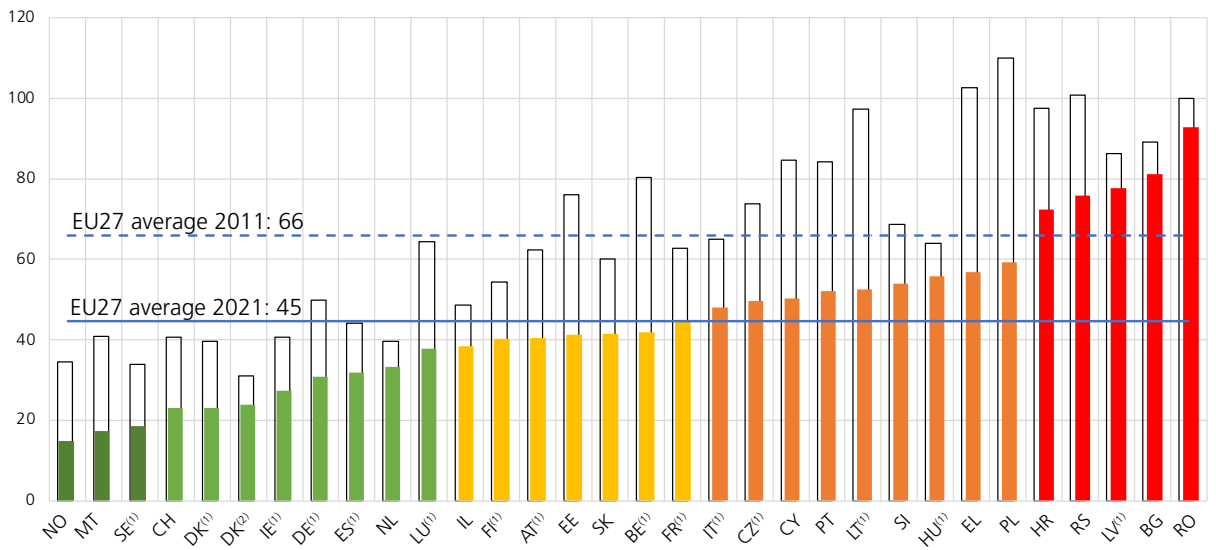


Figure 2. Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2021 (with mortality in 2011 for comparison).

(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.



Estimates of the number of deaths attributed to drink-driving are not available in Malta, leaving the country with no indicator for the effectiveness of their drink-driving policy measures. In road collisions, the cause of death is established by the health authorities following a post-mortem examination (including toxicology analysis) as part of a judicial inquiry. However, these data are collected to establish liability rather than for statistical and analysis purposes and very often are not recorded in the police database. Statistics regarding alcohol-related road deaths are not published by the National Statistical Office.



NATIONAL POLICIES

Timeline of national measures to tackle drink-driving:

2014

Launch of the Road Safety Strategy for the period 2014-2024

2017

General blood alcohol limit lowered from 0.8g/l to 0.5g/l; 0.2g/l for professional and novice drivers (0.0g/l for taxi and bus drivers)

2017

Penalty Point System adopted for all drivers. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs may see drivers penalised by between three and eleven points*.

2014

2017

*A full driving licence can be revoked if, at any time during any period of twelve months, a driver accumulates, in total, twelve penalty points or more.

BAC



THE MALTESE ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY 2014-2024

The Maltese government published its Road Safety Strategy in 2014 and set the main target to decrease deaths by 50 per cent over a 10-year period. More specifically on drink-driving, under the section 'Enforcement', the objectives listed are:

- Objective 1: Establish social intolerance for drink-driving;**
- Objective 2: Eliminate drink-driving and drug driving.**

To achieve these objectives, the Strategy Action Plan included these specific measures:

1. Carry out a consultation with stakeholders and the community to investigate the scope of reducing the legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for all drivers;
2. Manage educational programmes;
3. Promote the application of alcohol interlocks for convicted drink-driving offenders;
4. Work to strengthen random breath testing and random roadside drug testing programmes and improve public awareness of these programmes;
5. Monitoring progress by checking the BAC of drivers involved in road crashes with serious and fatal injuries.

However, until now, only measures 1 and 2 have been successfully achieved. Measures 3 to 5 have not been implemented yet.





BAC LIMITS AND SANCTIONS

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



The legal limit for **drivers of commercial vehicles and for novice drivers** is: **0.2g/l**



The legal limit for **bus and coach drivers** is: **0.0g/l**

Sanctions are shown in the table below:



Offence



Fine in €



Imprisonment



Driving ban



Rehabilitation or community service

First offence (depending on BAC level)	Min. eight hundred euro + from three to 11 penalty points added to driving licence	Alternative or in addition to fine (max. six months)	Minimum six months (can apply)	Can apply if judge decides so
Second offence or more (depending on BAC level)	Min. three thousand euro + from three to 11 penalty points added to driving licence	Alternative or in addition to fine (max. one year)	Minimum one year (can apply)	Can apply if judge decides so



ENFORCEMENT

Malta does not allow random targeted roadside alcohol breath testing, therefore a police officer can only ask for a breath test if there is reasonable suspicion of drink-driving. The numbers of alcohol checks done by the police are not available.

There are, however, some local data available for an estimate of drink-driving behaviour. In a position paper on drink-driving in Malta, published in 2020, a study on alcohol levels in patients who were admitted to the Accident and Emergency department after a road crash in the years 2014 and 2015 was mentioned.¹ The figures show that of 1 235 people involved in a road crash (including both drivers and passengers) and requiring emergency care, 103 (8.3%) had their blood alcohol level measured. Out of these, 75% (77 persons) had BAC levels above those permitted by law. This implies that excess alcohol levels were present in at least 6% of individuals requiring emergency care after a crash, a likely gross underestimate considering that in 91.7% of these cases the person was not tested and the BAC was therefore unknown.

In the same position paper a table on the number of alcohol checks carried out by the police from 2015 to 2018 can be found (see below). The police carried out an average of 176 breathalyser tests a year between 2015 and 2018, as shown in the table below.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Tests carried out	146	241	155	165
Positive results	106	188	109	106
%	72%	78%	70%	64%

According to figures provided by the Malta Road Safety Council on alcohol checks carried out in 2020 and 2021, there were respectively 70 and 137 tests done by the police.

Discussions at a political level are ongoing on the possibility of allowing random breath testing, so that every driver or rider has the same probability to be selected for an alcohol check.

¹ Doctors for Road Safety, A Position Paper on Drink-driving in Malta (Dec. 2020) <https://cdn-others.timesofmalta.com/2ccd0549608adf7e9b3fbd5ce2da7f8d25e.pdf>



REHABILITATION AND ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMMES

No alcohol interlock programme is in place in Malta, although this was included as a measure to tackle drink-driving in Malta in the latest Road Safety Strategy 2014-2024.



CAMPAIGNS

Since 2015 the Malta Road Safety Council has carried out several road safety campaigns, including on drink-driving. They have included:

- distribution of free disposable breathalyser kits during events;
- visiting schools and universities and testing students after they had reported that they had been drinking the night before;
- campaigning during summer months at local entertainment events where alcohol was being consumed;
- spreading the message on TV, radio and social media.



Photo - DOI - Reuben Pisco



SOURCES

National Road Safety Strateg

Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure, Road Safety Strategy Malta 2014-2024 (2014)

www.infrastructure.gov.mt

Sanctions:

Chapter 65 of the Laws of Malta - Traffic Regulation Ordinance (2017).

<https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/65/eng/pdf>

Enforcement:

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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):

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European Transport Safety Council

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