



DRINK-DRIVING FACT FILE

August 2022



INTRODUCTION

Switzerland saw a reduction in road deaths of 37% in 2021 compared to 2011, better than the EU average of 31%. With 23 road deaths per million population recorded in 2021, Switzerland remains one of the safest countries in Europe, following Norway and Sweden.

Figure 1. Relative change in road deaths between 2011 and 2021. *National provisional estimates used for 2020, as final figures for 2020 are not yet available at the time this report went to print.

**UK data for 2020 are the provisional total for Great Britain for the year ending June 2020 combined with the total for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2020. 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.

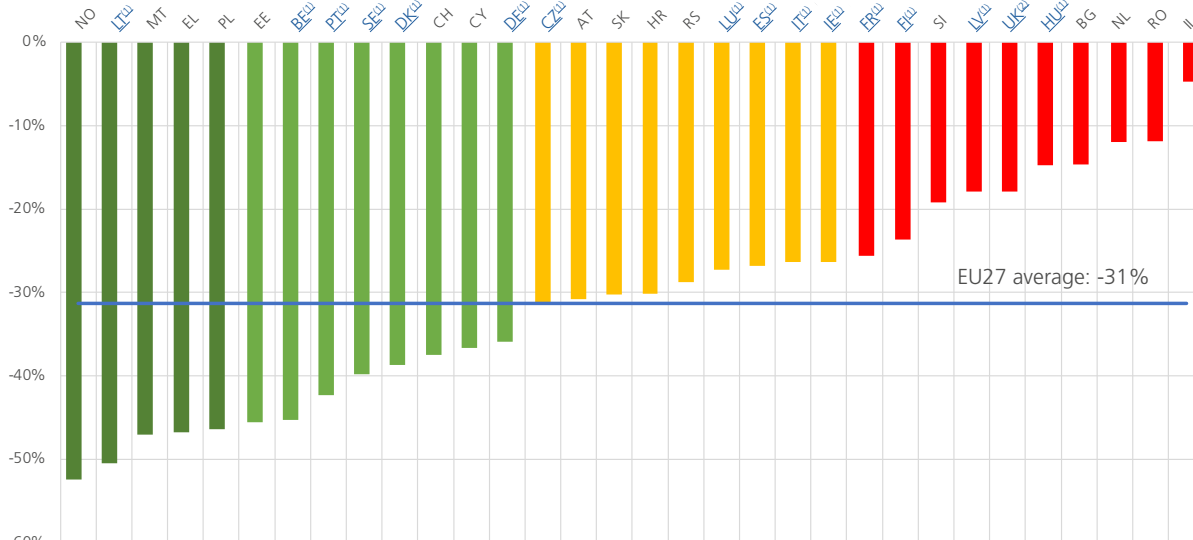
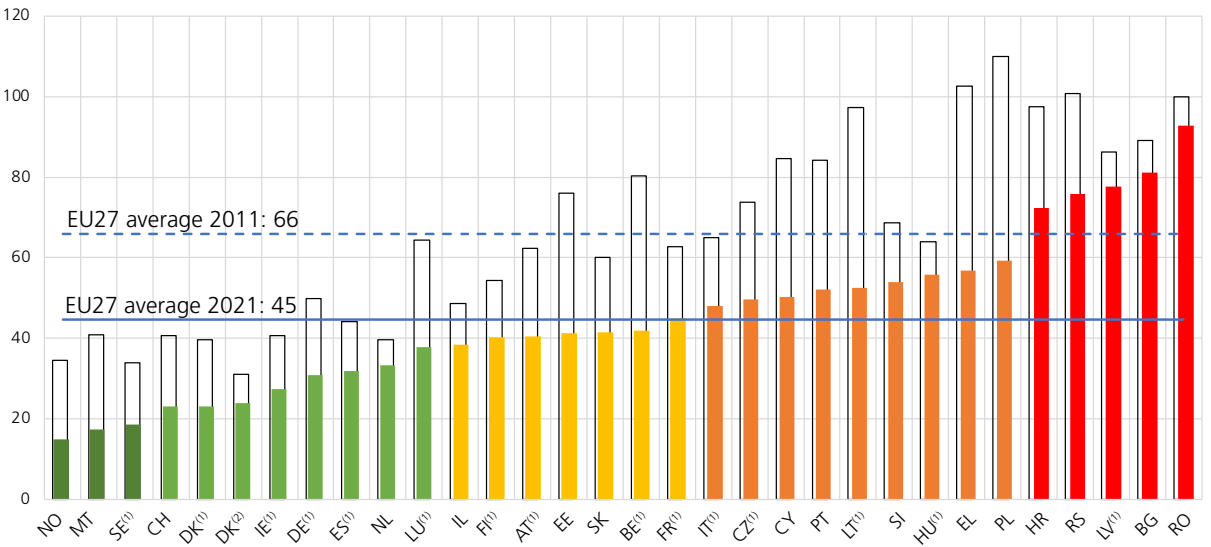


Figure 2. Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2021 (with mortality in 2011 for comparison).

(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.

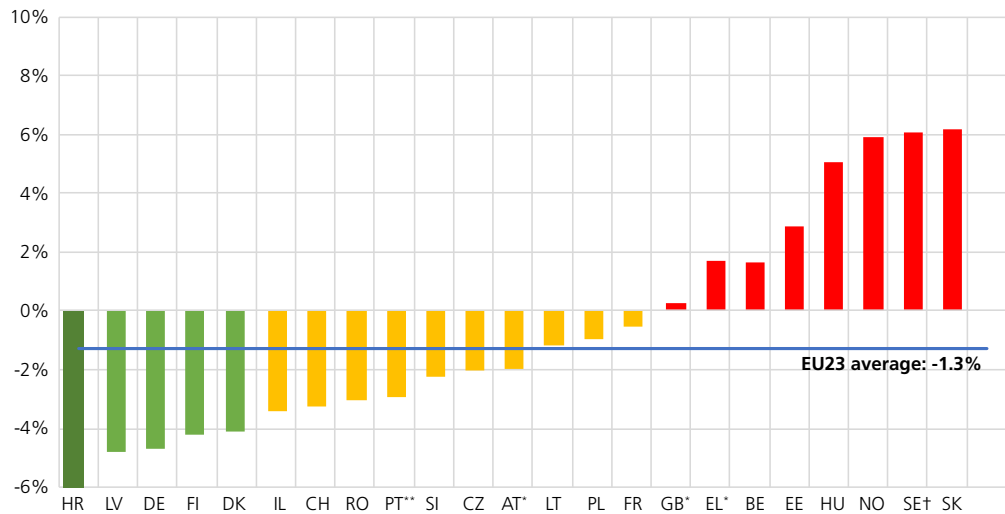


Alcohol-related road deaths decreased slightly faster than the rate for all other road deaths over the period 2010 to 2019, as shown in the graph below: 28 deaths due to alcohol were registered in 2020 in Switzerland. In 2021 alcohol-related deaths had decreased to 21.

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:

2005

Legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit lowered from 0.8 to 0.5g/l for all drivers. Random breath testing permitted.

2005

2016

Evidential breath testing alone is permitted, a follow-up blood test is no longer required, except in cases of suspected drug use or when the driver requests it, or in other exceptional circumstances.

2016

2014

2014

- Maximum BAC limit for certain categories of drivers (e.g. professional drivers, novice drivers and driving instructors) lowered to 0.1g/l
- Drivers caught with a BAC of 1.6g/l or more are required to participate in a fitness to drive test because, at that level, a problem of alcohol abuse or dependency is suspected.



BAC LIMITS AND SANCTIONS

The legal limit for **standard drivers**

is:

0.5g/l



The legal limit for

novice and professional drivers

is:

0.1g/l




In Switzerland, a traffic offence entails both criminal and administrative proceedings, that are largely independent of each other. The administrative procedure has similarities with a typical penalty point system. The Swiss Road Traffic Act provides for progressively stricter minimum measures for each repeated case. The penalty is linked both to the current offence and to the number and severity of previous offences (within certain time limits) which have led to administrative measures. This approach is called the "cascade system".

In addition, since 1 January 2015, motor vehicle liability insurers are obliged to claim against drink-drivers found to be responsible for a crash. The extent of the claim takes into account the degree of culpability and the economic circumstances of the offender. It is determined by the cost of the damage and level of personal injury (for example taking into account incapacity to work).

Two levels of drink-driving violation have been established in the Swiss legal code based on the maximum permitted BAC:

- Unqualified intoxication (“état d’ébriété non qualifiée”) which corresponds to a BAC between 0.5 to 0.8g/l.
- Qualified intoxication (“état d’ébriété qualifiée”) which refers to a BAC of at least 0.8g/l.

The alcohol-related offences committed by drivers of motor vehicles are divided into minor, moderate and severe offences, as shown in the table below:

 Type of offence	 Type of sanction	 Fine in €
<p>MINOR Driving with a BAC between 0.50 and 0.79g/l or novice and professional drivers with a BAC between 0.10 and 0.79g/l - and committing no other offence.</p>	<p>Warning (administrative measure) and a fine (criminal proceedings) if the driving licence has not been withdrawn in the previous two years and no other administrative measure has been imposed.</p> <p>One month withdrawal if the licence has been withdrawn or another administrative measure has been imposed in the previous two years.</p>	<p>A fine of around 600 up to 800 euros.</p> <p>In addition, there are administrative fees and possible costs for blood alcohol analysis, which may even exceed the actual fine.</p>
<p>MODERATE Driving with a BAC between 0.50 and 0.79g/l or novice and professional drivers with a BAC between 0.10 and 0.79g/l - and committing another offence.</p>	<p>Licence withdrawn for at least one month;</p> <p>Four or nine months if the driving licence has been withdrawn for respectively one or two moderate offences in the previous two years;</p> <p>At least 15 months if the driving licence has been withdrawn twice due to severe offences in the previous two years;</p> <p>Indefinite period, but at least two years if the driving licence has been withdrawn three times due to offences of at least moderate severity in the previous ten years.</p>	<p>Under criminal law, a moderate offence is treated as a minor offence and punished with a fine.</p>
<p>SEVERE Driving with a BAC of at least 0.8g/l.</p>	<p>Licence withdrawn for at least three months;</p> <p>At least six months if the driving licence has been withdrawn due to a moderate offence in the last five years or</p> <p>At least 12 months if the driving licence has been withdrawn twice due to moderate offences or once due to a severe offence;</p> <p>Indefinite period, but at least two years if, in addition, the driving licence has been withdrawn twice due to severe offences or three times due to offences of at least moderate severity in the previous ten years.</p>	<p>Severe offences also lead to punishment in the form of a custodial sentence of up to three years or a financial penalty. The amount of the financial penalty depends on the severity of the offence and the financial situation of the offender. Such fines run at least into four figures. There are also fees and charges for any blood alcohol analysis.</p>

Under certain circumstances, the driving licence can be revoked forever. In some cases, driving licences are withdrawn in order to protect other road users from dangerous drivers. Such withdrawals are always ordered for an indefinite period of time. Under the “cascade model”, repeated instances of drink-driving can lead to licence withdrawal and to an assessment of fitness to drive.

Probationary driving licence: when the holder commits a first offence leading to a licence withdrawal, the probationary period is extended by one year. In case of a second offence leading to a licence withdrawal, the probationary driving licence is revoked. A new application for a probationary licence can only be made after one year at the earliest. However, this requires a driving-related psychological assessment that confirms suitability. This assessment entails considerable costs.



ENFORCEMENT

Switzerland does not collect national data on the number of roadside alcohol checks. This is mainly due to the fact that responsibility for enforcement is held by 26 cantons and half-cantons. While in most cantons, tests are done systematically, in some, tests are done according to the severity of the collision, the suspicion of alcohol consumption, the type of road user, and the time when the collision occurred.

The latest information on drink-driving enforcement in Switzerland was collected by the Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (BFU) in 2021. The data came from various sources, including population surveys, a roadside survey conducted in 2006-2008 in the French-speaking region of Switzerland and alcohol checks carried out by the police as part of a biannual ROADPOL joint European police operation. With regard to the latter, out of a total of between 5800 and 7900 drivers checked for impaired driving in Switzerland during one week in 2019 and 2020, the proportion of drink-driving offenders (> 0.5g/l) accounted for about 2%.¹

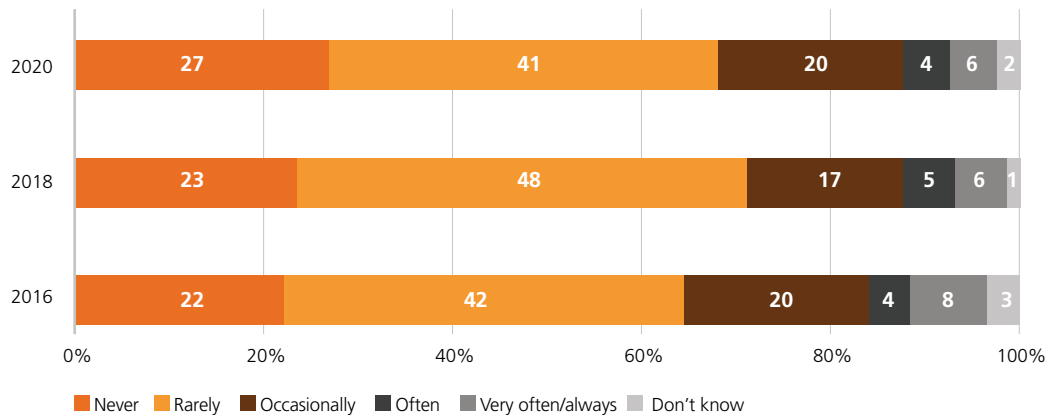
¹ https://www.bfu.ch/api/publications/bfu_2.402.01_Substanzkontrollen%20bei%20Motorfahrzeuglenkenden%20%E2%80%93%20Empfehlungen%20aus%20Pr%C3%A4ventionsicht.pdf



DRIVERS' PERCEPTION

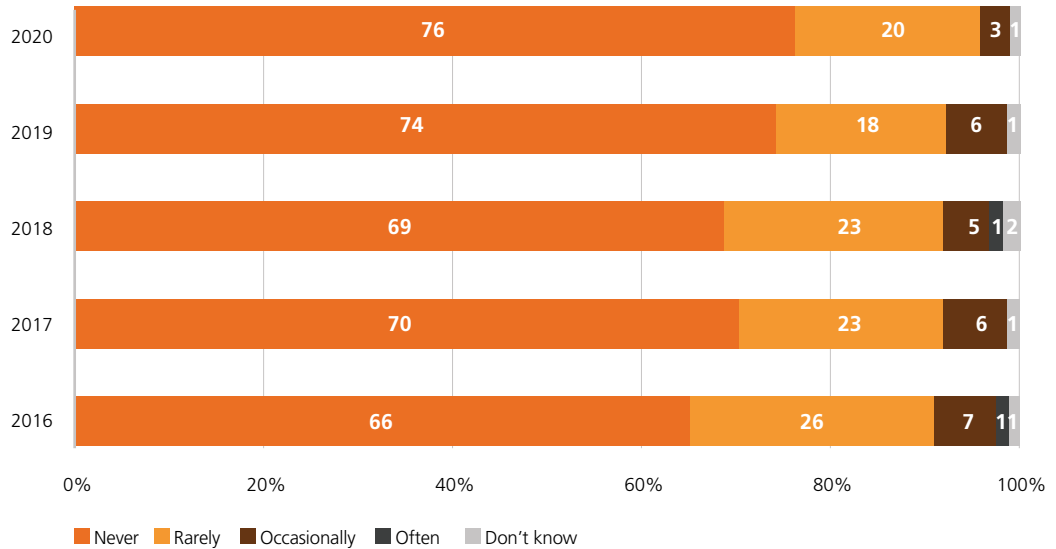
According to a 2021 publication by BFU on road safety², the share of drivers expecting to be checked occasionally, often or very often/always was 30% in 2021. Little has changed since 2016, when the figure was 32%. Compared to the rest of Europe, Swiss drivers seem to rarely deal with alcohol checks done by the police. This was confirmed by the ESRA survey on road safety attitudes published in 2019 that showed that 17% of Swiss drivers expected to be checked for alcohol consumption, compared to an average of 22.5% in the EU.³

Figure 4. Proportion of car drivers expecting to be checked occasionally, often or very often/always for alcohol.



The report also states that, in 2020, 10% of drivers believed they could still drive safely after three drinks (or more), while in 2018 the figure was 18%. This suggests a shift in attitudes to drink-driving. Moreover, in recent years, fewer drivers claim to have driven after drinking at least two glasses of alcohol. The share of drivers replying that they never drive after drinking increased from 66% in 2016 to 76% in 2020.

Figure 4. Share of car drivers replying to the question 'How often do you drive after two glasses of alcohol or more', 2016-2020.



² https://www.bfu.ch/api/publications/bfu_2.403.02_Sinus%202021%20E2%80%93Niveau%20de%20s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9%20et%20accidents%20dans%20la%20circulation%20 routi%C3%A8re%20en%202020.pdf

³ <https://www.esranet.eu/storage/minisites/esra2018thematicreportno5drivingunderinfluence.pdf>



REHABILITATION AND ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMMES

No alcohol interlock rehabilitation programme for drink-drivers is in place in Switzerland.

A proposal for the adoption of alcohol Interlocks was part of the action programme "Via sicura" adopted in 2012 by the Swiss Parliament. The measure proposed was to allow drivers whose driving licence had been withdrawn for an undetermined period of time due to drink-driving to recover the licence provided that he or she drives for five years exclusively in vehicles in which an alcohol interlock is installed. Eventually, of the 20 measures in the programme "Via sicura", three have not been adopted, among them the measure on the alcohol interlock.



CAMPAIGNS

The Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (BFU) is currently running a campaign on drink-driving which emphasises that even small amounts of alcohol can affect driving ability.



[Un verre d'alcool suffit à troubler la vision | BPA \(bfu.ch\)](https://www.bfu.ch)



SOURCES

Figures:

BFU, Sinus 2021 'Niveau de sécurité et accidents dans la circulation routière en 2020'
<https://bit.ly/3tWo00K>

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<https://bit.ly/39HJtyQ>

Enforcement:

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<https://bit.ly/3tXL22t>

Forensic Science International, Suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs: Cross sectional analysis of drug prevalence in the context of the Swiss legislation strategy (2021)
<https://bit.ly/3yeoddj>

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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

Drivers' perception:

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<https://bit.ly/39OG0hN>

ESRA survey 2019:

<https://www.esranet.eu/storage/minisites/esra2018thematicreportno5drivingunderinfluence.pdf>

Campaigns:

<https://www.bfu.ch/fr/le-bpa/campagnes/alcool>