

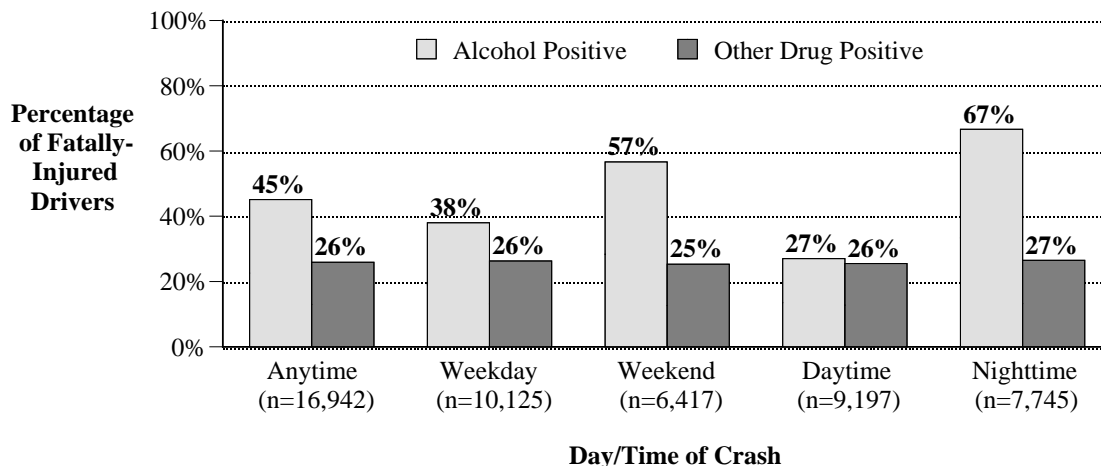
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Alcohol-Involved Fatal Crashes More Likely to Occur on Weekends and at Nighttime; Drug-Involved Fatal Crashes Likely to Occur Anytime

Drug-involved fatal crashes do not follow the same day and time patterns of occurrence as alcohol-involved crashes, according to an analysis of data from the national Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). Overall, 45% of fatally-injured drivers in single-vehicle crashes tested positive for alcohol and one-fourth (26%) tested positive for other drugs (most often stimulants and cannabinoids). Alcohol-positive crashes were more likely to occur on the weekend (57%) than on weekdays (38%), and were more likely to occur during nighttime (67%) than daytime (27%) hours. In contrast, there was no overall difference for drug-positive crashes by day of week or time of day (see figure below). However, fatal crashes specifically involving cannabinoids or stimulants were more likely to occur at nighttime, while those involving depressants or narcotics were more likely to occur in the daytime (data not shown). According to the authors, while these findings “represent only the presence or absence of drugs in a subset of fatally injured drivers and should not be interpreted as evidence of impairment,” the findings do suggest that the “criteria for developing effective laws and enforcement strategies to reduce [driving under the influence of drugs] may need to be significantly different from those currently applied to alcohol” (p. 9).

Percentage of Fatally-Injured Drivers in Single-Vehicle Crashes with a Known Drug Test Result Testing Positive for Alcohol or Other Drugs, by Day of Week and Time of Day



NOTES: Data are from the 1998-2010 Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) database for states and years in which at least 80% of the fatally-injured drivers in single-vehicle crashes had a known drug test result and died at the scene of the crash. To ensure proper identification of crash responsibility, drivers were excluded who: presented a condition signaling them as mentally challenged; were involved in a police chase; were driving buses, snowmobiles, construction, or farm equipment; or were parked in or in the process of parking a vehicle. Weekday is defined as Sunday at 6:00 p.m. to Friday at 5:59 p.m., and weekend is from Friday 6:00 p.m. to Sunday 5:59 p.m. Daytime is defined as 6:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m., and nighttime is from 6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Romano, E. and Pollini, R.A., “Patterns of Drug Use in Fatal Crashes,” *Addiction* (epub ahead of print), 2013. For more information, contact Eduardo Romano at romano@pire.org.