

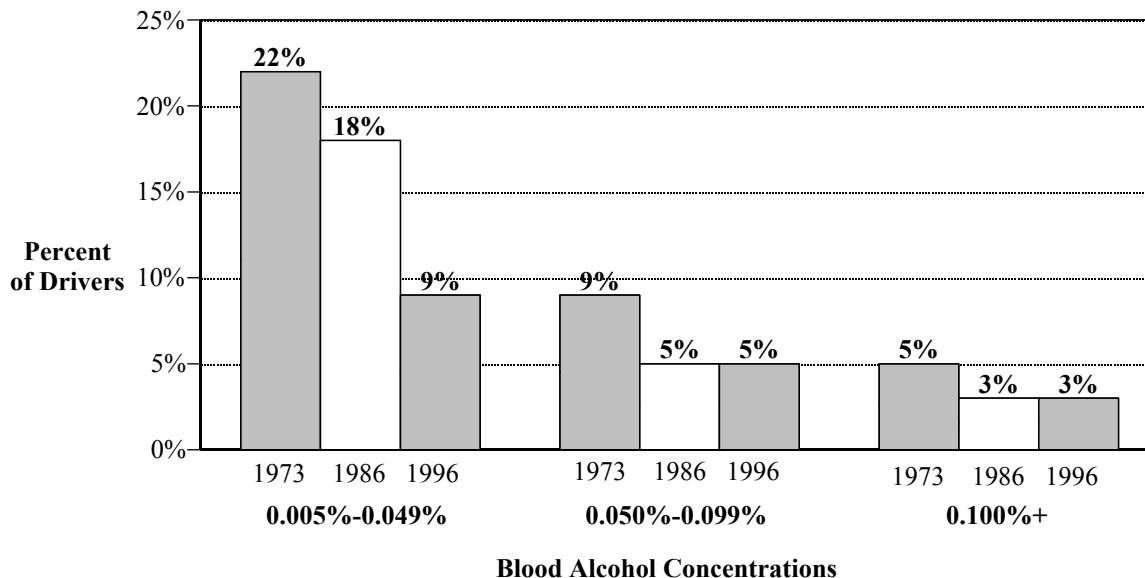
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

National Roadside Survey Finds Drinking and Driving Has Declined, Drunk Driving Has Not

In 1973, 1986, and 1996, national roadside surveys were conducted to assess the prevalence of drinking and driving by private automobile operators at locations and during periods when drinking and driving is most prevalent (i.e., on highly traveled roads on weekend nights). At 24 locations across the U.S., drivers were flagged down by a police officer, then asked by an independent interviewer to voluntarily complete a brief interview and submit to a breath test to determine their blood alcohol concentrations (BAC). Overall, the percentage of drinking drivers (drivers with BACs greater than 0.005%) has declined significantly, from 36% in 1973 to 17% in 1996. However, as the table below illustrates, “the largest declines among the drinking drivers in the last decade have occurred at the lowest BACs, not at the high-risk concentrations above 0.05” (p. 270). From 1986 to 1996, the percentage of drivers with BACs at or above 0.05% has not changed. Currently, it is illegal in 33 states and the District of Columbia to drive with a BAC at or above 0.10%, and 15 states have lowered that limit to 0.08%.

**Blood Alcohol Concentrations of Drinking Drivers in National Roadside Surveys,
1973, 1986, and 1996**



SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Robert Voas, JoAnn Wells, Diane Lestina, Allan Williams, and Michael Greene, “Drinking and Driving in the United States: The 1996 National Roadside Survey,” *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 30(2):267-275, 1998. For more information, contact the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation at 301-951-4233.

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