Drinking and Driving in Canada - Results of the Road Safety Monitor 2006

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CONTEXT: A general decreasing trend in the number of persons killed in a traffic crash involving a drinking driver in Canada is evident between 1995 and 2004. However, much of the decrease occurred during the 1990s. Furthermore, the number of alcohol-involved fatalities remains high (815 in 2004).

OBJECTIVE: This paper provides an overview of the results of the Road Safety Monitor (RSM); an annual public opinion survey conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) to take the pulse of the nation on key road safety issues.

METHODS: The survey was administered by telephone to a random sample of Canadian drivers in September 2006. A total of 1,201 drivers completed the interview. The RSM includes a core set of questions that are asked each year to provide information on trends in attitudes, opinions and behaviours with respect to a variety of road safety issues including drinking and driving.

RESULTS: The number of drinking driving trips in Canada is high (an estimated 1.7 million drivers accounting for about 10.2 million drinking driving trips above the legal limit). However, the vast majority of these trips (92.4%) were accounted for by a small minority of drivers (4.4%). Furthermore, Canadians remain more concerned about the problem of drinking and driving than any other contemporary social issue and any other road safety issue. Reasons for concern are furthered investigated.

CONCLUSIONS: While the majority of drinking driving trips are accounted for by only a small proportion of all drivers, and while generally speaking Canadians are concerned about drinking and driving, it is evident that Canada has a drinking and driving problem. Drinking and driving trends should be monitored closely to provide input for evidence-based practices allowing to overcome this problem.

Keywords: Drinking and driving, Public opinion survey, Concern