

# Tackling drink-driving: the British experience

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# Ethical basis

- **By drinking before driving we can increase our risk of killing by far more than through other common behaviour – risk rises steeply with concentration of alcohol in the blood**
- **We need not ask people not to drink or not to drive – just not to do one before the other**
- **Best advice is: never drive after drinking!**
- **But approach in legislation is to set a limit on concentration of alcohol in the blood – estimated in enforcement by breathtesting**

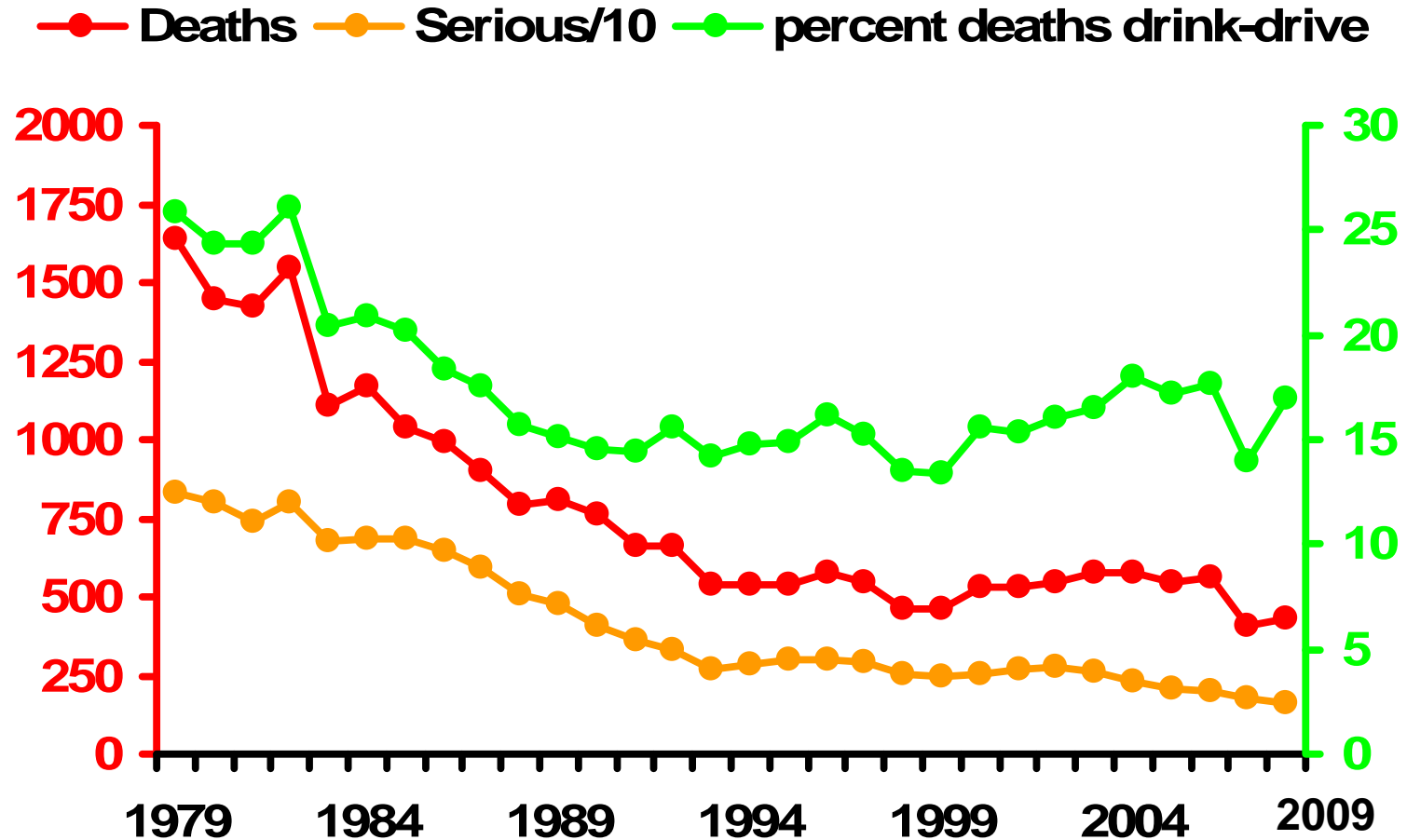
# Brief history

- 1967** Legal limit of 0.8g/l BAC imposed – strong initial impact eroded by perception of low risk of detection
- 1970s** Sustained public education gains support of drink industry – Enforcement hampered by practical difficulties – subject of independent report
- 1979** Long-term monitoring of progress in reducing drink-drive casualties begins

# Brief history

- 1980s Sustained public education continues**
- Improved enforcement procedures and more widespread public acceptance are followed by steep decrease in casualties**
  - Special regime for high-risk offenders**
  - Increased roadside breathtesting and breathtesting of accident-involved drivers**

# Reduction in **drink-drive deaths** and **serious injuries** and changes in **percentage of road deaths designated as drink-drive** in Great Britain 1979-2008



# Brief history

- 1990s** Efforts from 1980s continue and high-risk offender regime is strengthened
- But reduction in drink-drive casualties slows down and deaths level off
  - Amount of drink-driving stabilises
  - Reducing BAC limit to 0.5g/l is proposed and supported – but rejected in favour of stronger enforcement of 0.8g/l limit
- 2005** Evidential roadside breathtesting authorised but not yet implemented

# Current developments

- – Better BAC data being gathered from screening tests and tests at accidents
  - Further roadside surveys piloted
- Type-approval of evidential roadside breathtesting equipment is in hand
- Consultation has taken place about use of targetted checkpoint breathtesting, reduction of the legal limit on BAC to 0.5g/l and the use of alcolocks

# Where do we stand?

- **In Britain we may be close to reducing casualties from driving above 0.8g/l as far as we can without a lot more imprisonment**
- **But for every 2 or 3 deaths involving a driver over 0.8g/l there is one involving a driver who has been drinking but below 0.8g/l**
- **To reduce these we have to reduce driving after more moderate drinking – by imposing and enforcing a lower limit, initially 0.5g/l, with appropriate public information**



**Thank you for your attention**

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