

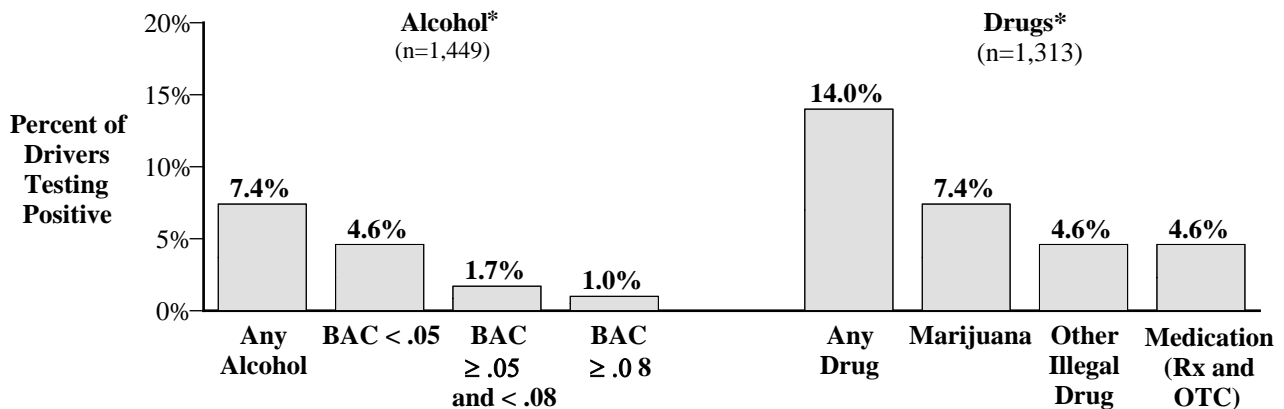
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

California Roadside Survey Finds Twice as Many Weekend Nighttime Drivers Test Positive for Other Drugs as for Alcohol; Marijuana as Likely as Alcohol

Drugs that may affect driving were detected in one of every seven weekend nighttime drivers in California, according to data from the first statewide roadside survey of alcohol and drug use by drivers. Anonymous breath tests, oral fluid samples, and responses to questionnaires were collected from a random sample of weekend nighttime drivers in nine California jurisdictions. Twice as many drivers tested positive for other drugs (14.0%) as for alcohol (7.4%), and just as many drivers tested positive for marijuana as for alcohol (see figure below). Marijuana (either alone or in combination with other drugs) was the drug most likely to be detected, comprising 53% of all drug positives. The study also found that 23% of those testing positive for alcohol tested positive for at least one other drug, usually marijuana (data not shown). The authors caution that “these figures describe the prevalence rates for the presence of these drugs in drivers and do not address whether those drivers were impaired by these substances” (p. 2).

Percentage of California Nighttime Weekend Drivers Testing Positive for Alcohol or Drugs, 2012



NOTES: Data are from a random sample of nighttime drivers interviewed on Friday and Saturday nights from 10 p.m. to midnight and 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. Data were collected on one weekend in eight communities and on two weekends in one community during the summer of 2012. Among eligible drivers approached to participate in the survey, 81% (1,375 drivers) agreed to answer questions, 85.3% (1,449 drivers) provided a breath sample, and 77.3% (1,313 drivers) provided an oral fluid sample. The breath alcohol samples were analyzed for alcohol and the oral fluid samples were analyzed for nearly 50 drugs, including prescription, illegal, and over-the-counter drugs. The methodology was modeled after NHTSA's "2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers" (<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Research+&+Evaluation/2007+National+Roadside+Survey+of+Alcohol+and+Drug+Use+by+Drivers>).

*The percentages for the BAC do not add to the total for "Any Alcohol" due to rounding. The percentages for "Marijuana," "Other Illegal Drug," and "Medication" do not add to the total for "Any Drug" because individuals may have tested positive for more than one drug.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), *Results of the 2012 California Roadside Survey of Nighttime Weekend Drivers' Alcohol and Drug Use*, 2012. Available online at http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/Press_Room/2012/doc/2012_Drug_And_Alcohol_Roadside_Survey.pdf.