



# DRINK-DRIVING FACT FILE

June 2021



## FRANCE



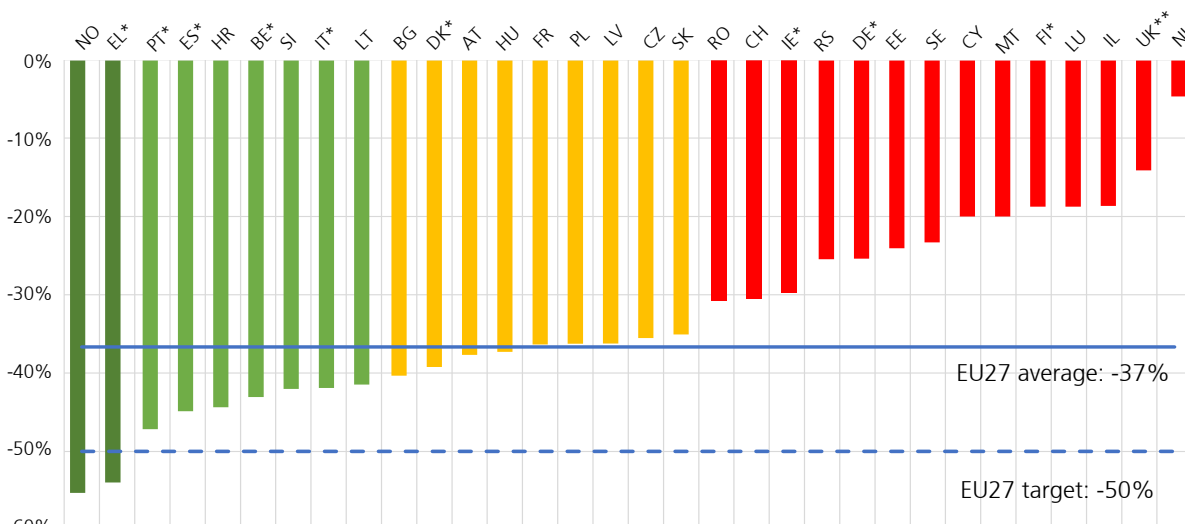
### INTRODUCTION

Over the period 2010 – 2019 France made slow progress in reducing road deaths compared to other European countries, with a reduction of only 18%. An exceptional annual 22% reduction in road deaths was recorded in 2020, mainly explained by the lockdowns and an overall decrease in traffic from March onwards. This increased the percentage of reduction in road deaths up to 36% for the last decade 2010-2020. In terms of road mortality in 2020, France ranks at around the same level as the EU average, with 39 deaths per million inhabitant.

**Figure 1. Relative change in road deaths between 2010 and 2020.** \*National provisional estimates used for 2020, as final figures for 2020 are not yet available at the time this report went to print.

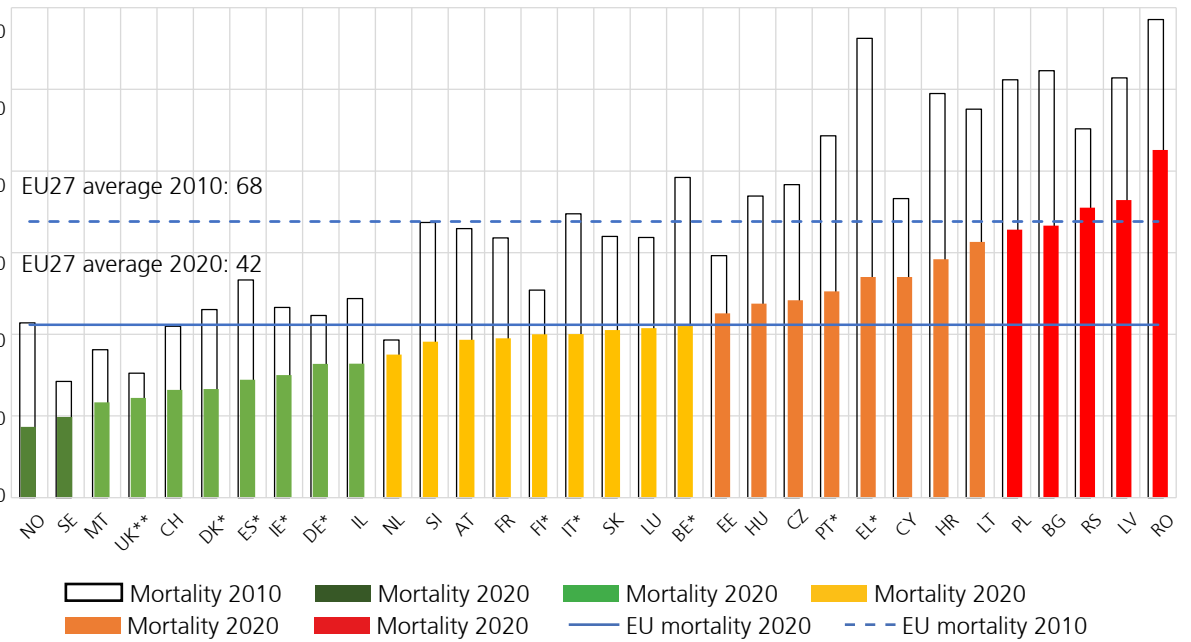
\*\*UK data for 2020 are the provisional total for Great Britain for the year ending June 2020 combined with the total for Northern Ireland for the calendar year 2020.

The annual number of deaths in LU and MT are particularly small and, therefore, subject to substantial annual fluctuations. The annual numbers of deaths in CY and EE are also relatively small and may be subject to annual fluctuations.



**Figure 2. Mortality (road deaths per million inhabitants) in 2020 (with mortality in 2010 for comparison).**

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Between 2010 and 2019, the number of people killed in a road collision with at least one driver whose Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) was above the legal limit has decreased by around 2.1 % on average every year.

In France, it is estimated that alcohol-related road deaths represent 32% of all road deaths. Based on this estimate, 1052 people were killed in 2019 in a crash involving a drunk driver, compared to 985 in 2018. At least 5821 crashes involved a driver under the influence of alcohol in 2019. That is 15% of all crashes in which the BAC is known. Collisions involving a drink-driver can be more serious than other collisions. 13% of such collisions result in a death compared to 5% for those without alcohol involved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://bit.ly/3fkVIH3>



## NATIONAL POLICIES

Timeline of national measures to tackle drink-driving:

**2003**

Withdrawal of 6 points from the licence for driving with a BAC between 0.5 and 0.8 g/l.

**2010**

Requirement for alcohol interlock devices to be fitted on all new coaches transporting children.

**2015**

Lowering of the legal alcohol level to 0.2 g/l for drivers on a probationary or learner's licence.  
Requirement for all coaches to be fitted with alcohol interlocks.

**2019**

National rollout of the scheme to install alcohol interlock devices as an alternative to licence suspension for drink-driving offences.

**2004**

**2003**

**2004**

Lowering of the BAC level to 0.2 g/l for professional drivers transporting people.

**2011**

**2010**

**2011**

Mandatory for nightclubs to provide customers with alcohol breath tests to check their alcohol level.

**2015**

**2015**

**2018**

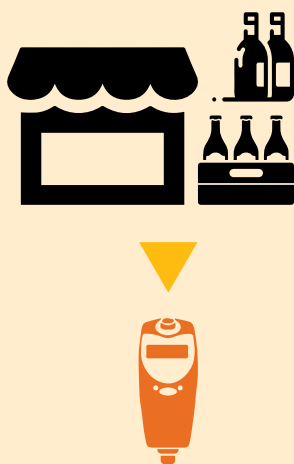
Alcohol interlock rehabilitation programme trial.

**2018**

**2019**

**2020**

Alcohol interlock programme in operation nationwide



From 1 July 2021, supermarkets, grocery stores, wine sellers and internet shops selling alcoholic drinks are among the enterprises that must also stock and display alcohol breath tests for sale. Shops will be required to display the devices, including chemical-based tests and electronic tests, next to the largest display of alcoholic beverages, or near the till. Websites will be required to display a banner notice on the payment screen, advertising the availability of tests. A failure to comply with the new rules could lead to a fine of between EUR 675 and EUR 1875.



# BAC LIMITS AND SANCTIONS

The legal BAC limit for **Standard drivers** is: **0.5g/l**



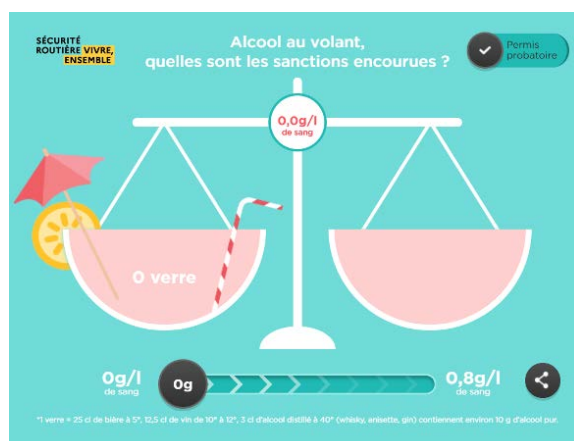
The standard BAC limit for **novice and professional drivers** is: **0.2g/l**

The BAC for standard drivers was introduced in 1995 while the reduced BAC for novice and bus drivers was adopted in 2015.

Sanctions for drink-driving offences based on the BAC level are summarised in the table below:

BAC level (g/L)	Fines	Penalty points	Driving ban	Imprisonment	Rehabilitation courses	Alcohol interlock
0.2g/l or above (only for novice drivers)	135	6 out of 6	If first year of driving licence, the driver has to pass the theory and practice exam again.	-	-	-
Between 0.5 and 0.8g/l	135	6 out of 12	Up to three years and vehicle confiscated.	-	-	-
Above 0.8g/l	Up to 4500	6 out of 12	Up to three years and vehicle confiscated.	Up to two years	Mandatory course on road safety at driver's expense.	In order to continue driving, the driver must participate in an alcohol interlock programme for up to five years.

If a driver refuses to be tested for alcohol via a blood test, sanctions are the same as for drivers with a BAC of 0.8g/l and above.



Check out this interactive page on different sanctions for BAC limits created by the Ministry of Interior (Road Safety Delegation).



## ENFORCEMENT

In France alcohol tests are done systematically for all active participants in a road collision, either alive or dead. Police also conduct both targeted and random breath testing.

Alcohol checks are targeted in the event of a collision or drink-driving offence and may be carried out in the following cases:

- in the event of a traffic collision causing injury (even if the driver is not responsible);
- in the event of a highway code infringement (even without a clear suspicion of driving under the influence).

Checks can also be carried out by the police or gendarmerie randomly, not necessarily in relation to a drink-driving offence or collision.

In 2019, 9,033,797 alcohol checks were conducted, of which 303,385 were positive. The positivity rate was 3.4%. Of these, 8,816,589 were preventive or infringement checks. 217,208 were collision checks (fatal, injury, or material). For the latter, the positivity rate of alcohol checks accounted for 9.1%.

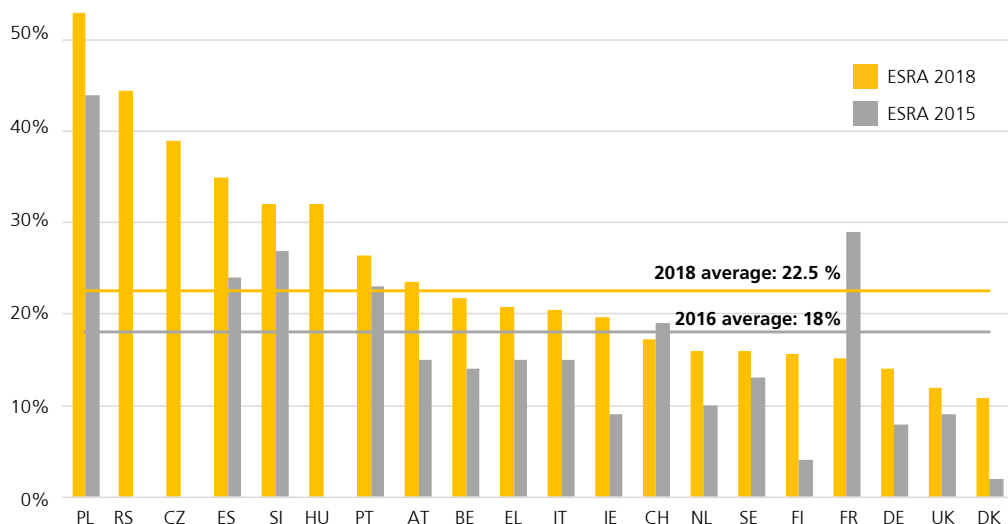


## DRIVERS' PERCEPTION

The E-Survey on Road Attitudes published in 2019 showed that the perceived likelihood of a police drink-driving check was one of the lowest in France, with only 15% of drivers considering themselves likely to be checked by the police for drink-driving, compared to the EU average of 22.5%.

**Figure 4. Proportion (%) of car drivers who considered themselves likely to be checked by the police for drink-driving.**

Source: ESRA survey (2015 and 2018)



This result was much better in the previous survey from 2015, where almost 30% of drivers thought they would be tested by the police for alcohol, compared to 18% , the EU average.



# REHABILITATION & ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMMES

Since 2019, an alcohol interlock rehabilitation programme has been in place in France, following a trial that took place in several departments in 2018.

In France (metropolitan and overseas departments), 10,974 prefectural decrees restricting driving with an alcohol interlock were proposed to offenders fined at the roadside by the police in 2020.

The programme is proposed to all offenders driving with a BAC above 0.8 g/l. The alcohol interlock can be installed for a maximum duration of one year since May 2020 (it was previously six months) however it can be extended to five years by the judge at a later point.

Following an alcohol interlock measure as an alternative to licence suspension, the prefecture's medical commission may issue an opinion to the prefect on the return of the driving licence, subject to certain conditions being met by the driver:

- To install at their own expense an approved alcohol interlock in the vehicle they drive;
- To carry out a medical-psychological follow-up i.e. an addiction consultation (follow-up is limited to this mandatory consultation, without any ongoing monitoring during the program and no data analysis)

Costs are the following:

- Purchase : 1,300 euros
- Rent : 100 euros/month.

The installation and operating costs of the device are the responsibility of the driver. The price of installation and dismantling in the vehicle must be added. To facilitate the installation of the devices, the French road safety website provides users with a national map of approved installers by department and region.

No evaluation has been planned yet but several improvements have been made:

- This alcohol interlock programme was decided as an alternative to a driving licence suspension in order to improve the existing judicial system as it was felt that the obligation to drive with an alcohol interlock was coming too late in the process.
- In order to combat recidivism, a measure from 9 January 2018, makes it compulsory to install an alcohol interlock in the event of a repeat offence of driving under the influence of alcohol.

**Alcohol interlocks in commercial transport:** Buses and coaches in France are required to be fitted with alcohol interlocks. Coaches assigned to public transport for children have been equipped with alcohol interlocks since 2010 and all coaches since 2015. The devices record and store data for 45 days and must be checked every year in an approved centre.



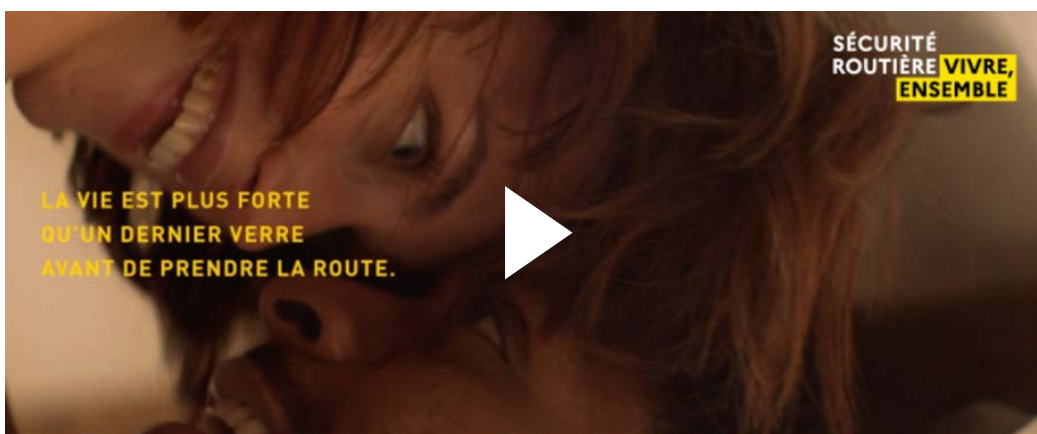
## CAMPAIGNS

France has a similar concept to Belgium's BOB campaign. SAM is the French version: i.e. a designated driver who drives his/her friends safely home. It was created in 2006, targeting particularly young and novice drivers. The slogan is "the one who drives is the one who does not drink". Several videos are carried out every year for the SAM campaign, one of the latest is from 2018 (see video below).



<https://youtu.be/DoV4RBXGh28>

In December 2020, the French government launched a new campaign called "La vie" on television and social media. Four short movies were created on different road safety topics, one of them concerning drinking and driving, entitled "La vie est plus forte qu'un dernier verre avant de prendre la route" ("Life is worth more than a last drink before taking the road"). The campaign was launched during the Covid-crisis when reckless and risky driving behaviour was observed everywhere in France.



<https://youtu.be/YIYAKYID14Y>



## SOURCES

### **Figures :**

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<https://bit.ly/34gDHNW>

### **Sanctions :**

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### **ETSC, Alcohol Interlocks and Drink-driving Rehabilitation in the EU (2016) :**

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### **Drivers' perception :**

ESRA survey 2018 <https://www.esranet.eu/en/publications/>

### **Campaign :**

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