

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Statistics on Drink and Drug Driving in Northern Ireland

Collated November 2017

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Keeping People Safe

Drink and Drug Driving in Northern Ireland

Compiled November 2017

This report presents, for the first time, a range of statistics on drink/drug driving, covering the areas of Preliminary Breath Tests and also referrals for prosecution. This information has been collated by the PSNI Statistics Branch in advance of the 2017 Christmas Drink Driving Campaign.

Related information is also available from other sources including the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), which publishes reoffending rates for those convicted of drink driving. This annual publication can be accessed below – <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/courses-for-drink-drive-offenders-working-group-annual-report-2016.PDF>

There is no one measure of counting drink/drug driving offences as this is a complex process and there is no unique source of data. While this report provides a snapshot of this issue please note that there are various limitations associated with the data.

It is particularly worth noting that the information is presented on the basis that those who have a Preliminary Breath Test with a result of 'Fail' or 'Failure to Provide' are considered a proxy measure for driving when under the influence of drink/drugs. In addition the PBT is only the start of a process (see Section 1 for further detail) which may or may not result in a case being presented to the Public Prosecution Service for their consideration of the prospect of a successful case.

Drink and drug driving offences contained in this report include not only those people driving with excess alcohol, but also those attempting to drive or in charge of a vehicle whilst with excess alcohol. It also includes persons aiding and abetting, persons failing to provide and those driving/attempting/in charge whilst unfit. A person is deemed unfit if their ability to drive properly is, for the time being, impaired.

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Section One - Preliminary Breath Tests (PBTs)

Under the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995 amended by the Road Traffic Order 2007 Police can require a Preliminary Breath Test (PBT) from any person driving or attempting to drive on a road or in charge of a motor vehicle on a road OR other public place, who is:

- involved in a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) OR
- whom is suspected of committing a moving traffic offence (no matter how minor) OR
- whom is suspected of having alcohol or a drug in their body or is under the influence of a drug

The PBT can also be administered where police have reasonable cause to suspect the person was previously driving in any of the above scenarios. Where an injury RTC has occurred, police have a power to enter any premises for the purpose of obtaining a PBT or to arrest someone who has "refused to provide" or failed a PBT. It is an offence to refuse to take a breath test when required to do so by a police officer unless there is a reasonable excuse. Court penalties for refusing an evidential test are the same as being above the legal limit.

In addition the Road Traffic (Amendment) (2016 Act) (Commencement No. 1) Order (NI) 2016 provides police the power to establish a check point and to require any person in charge of a vehicle to provide a breath test and not just in the circumstances outlined above. This new legislation came into force from 25th November 2016.

Results of PBTs can only be regarded as indicative of the level of alcohol present in a sample of breath and **are not used to determine whether a driver was above or below the legal limit to drive**. It remains the case that it is only at a police station or hospital that a specimen(s) can be obtained to determine the proportion of alcohol in a person's measured specimen of breath, blood or urine using pre-calibrated evidential devices. This ensures the sample has not been affected by any interfering substances. In some cases it becomes necessary to take further specimens of blood or urine for subsequent laboratory analysis. These subsequent evidential tests are not included in the preliminary breath test statistics.

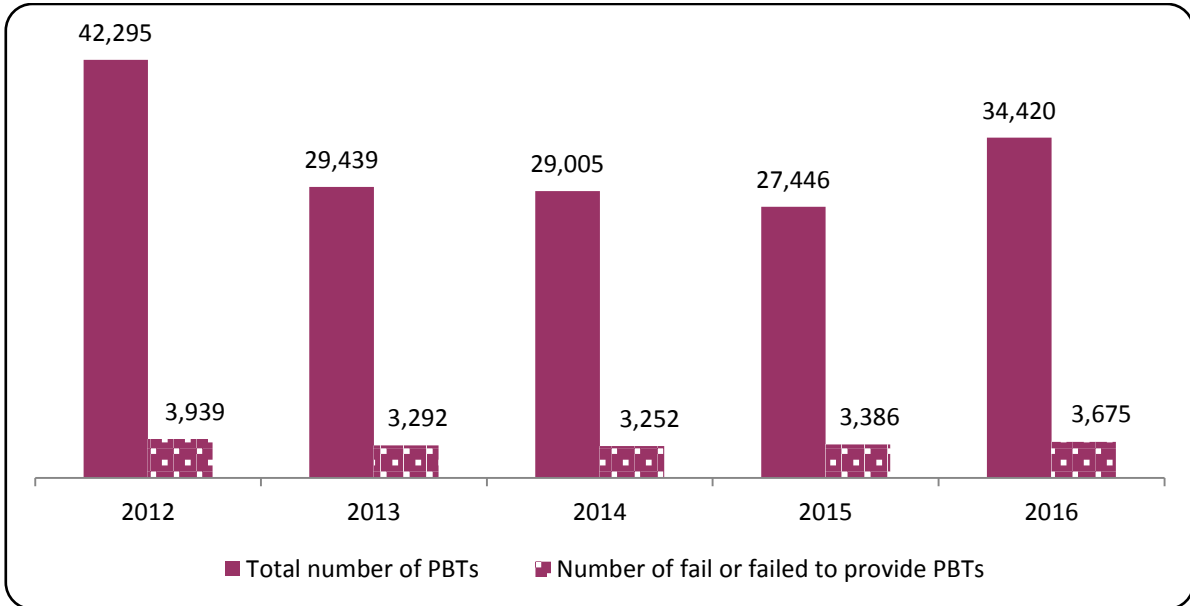
Since April 2009, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has been using Lion500b devices to conduct a PBT. The devices are able to record accurate breath alcohol readings and the result (Pass, Fail or Warn) of individual tests, as well as the reason for the test, time of day, day of week and age and gender profiles of those tested. Officers are responsible for downloading the data on a regular basis. Prior to this the service relied on manual returns for recording when a PBT was carried out. Statistics are not available prior to April 2009.

Number of PBTs

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) carried out 34,420 preliminary breath tests (PBTs) in 2016 compared with 27,446 in 2015. This 25% increase is most likely explained by the new legislation introduced on 25th November 2016 (see Section 1) giving police officers the power to set up a check point and conduct breath tests on all drivers of vehicles stopped.

In 2016, failed or 'failed to provide' PBTs represented 11% of all PBTs. The proportion of failed or 'failed to provide' PBTs has remained relatively constant over the years.

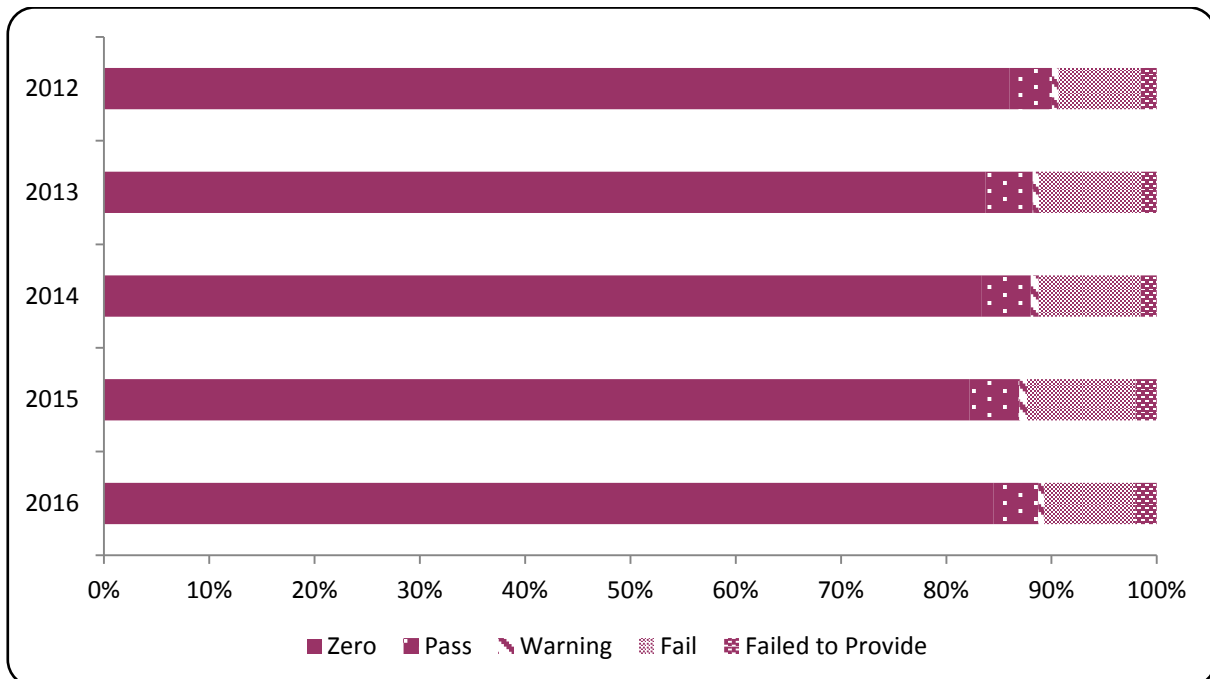
Figure 1: Number of PBTs 2012 – 2016



Result of PBTs

Over four fifths (85%) of all PBTs conducted in 2016 showed that the driver had no alcohol consumed. This is a similar proportion to previous years.

Figure 2: Number of PBTs by result 2012 – 2016



Note: A zero reading indicates no or low levels of alcohol have been detected, pass or warnings indicate levels below the legal limit have been detected and a fail indicates that the person is over the legal limit.

Reason for PBTs

PBTs can be carried out for a number of reasons including following a road traffic collision, where police have a suspicion of drink, or from 25th November 2016 the police could request a PBT under the new legislation allowing officers to set up a check point in order to conduct breath tests. In 2016 road traffic collisions account for over two fifths (44%) of the reasons recorded for conducting a PBT.

Table 1: Reason for PBT 2016

PBT reason	2016
Moving Traffic Offence	6,423
Road Traffic Collision	15,000
Suspicion of Drink	5,006
Other (i.e. check points, bail conditions)	7,991
Total	34,420

PBTs by month

The chart below shows the number of PBTs conducted each month in 2016. The highest numbers were in December when 11,114 PBTs were conducted, and which accounted for almost one third of all PBTs in 2016. This can be explained with the introduction of check points in November 2016 and also the fact the Christmas drink/drug driving campaign was running at this time.

Figure 3: Number of PBTs by month of year 2016

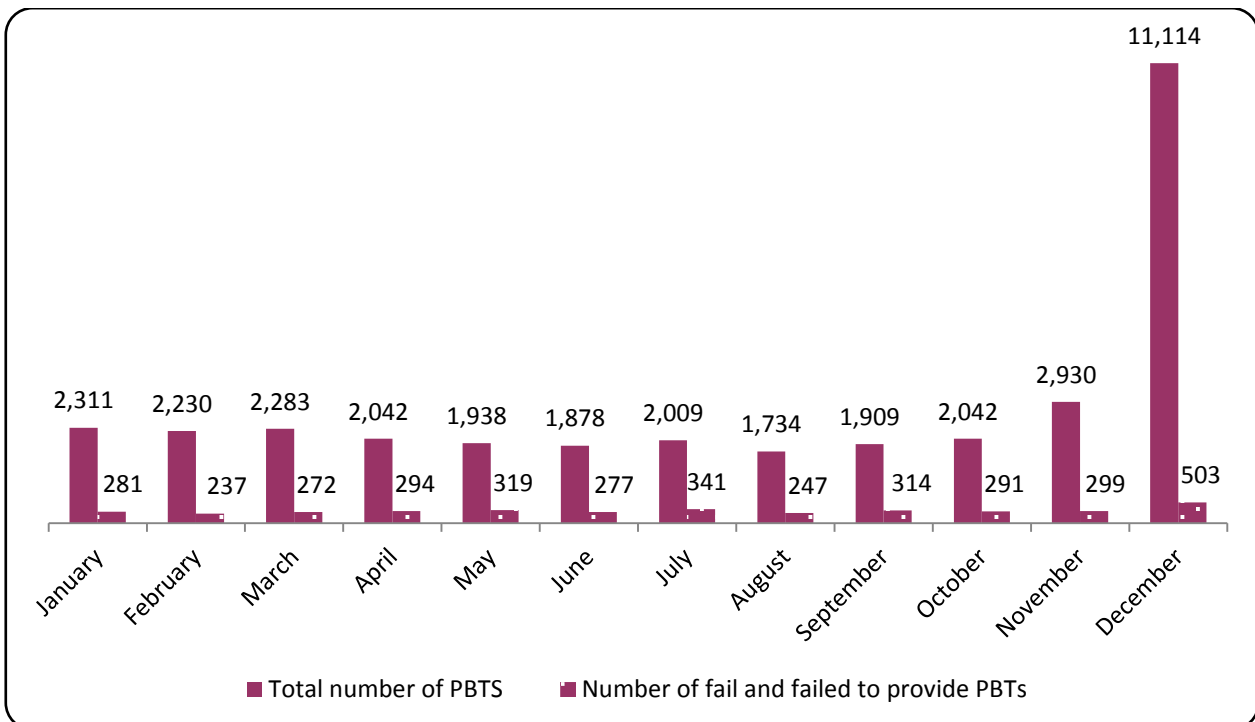
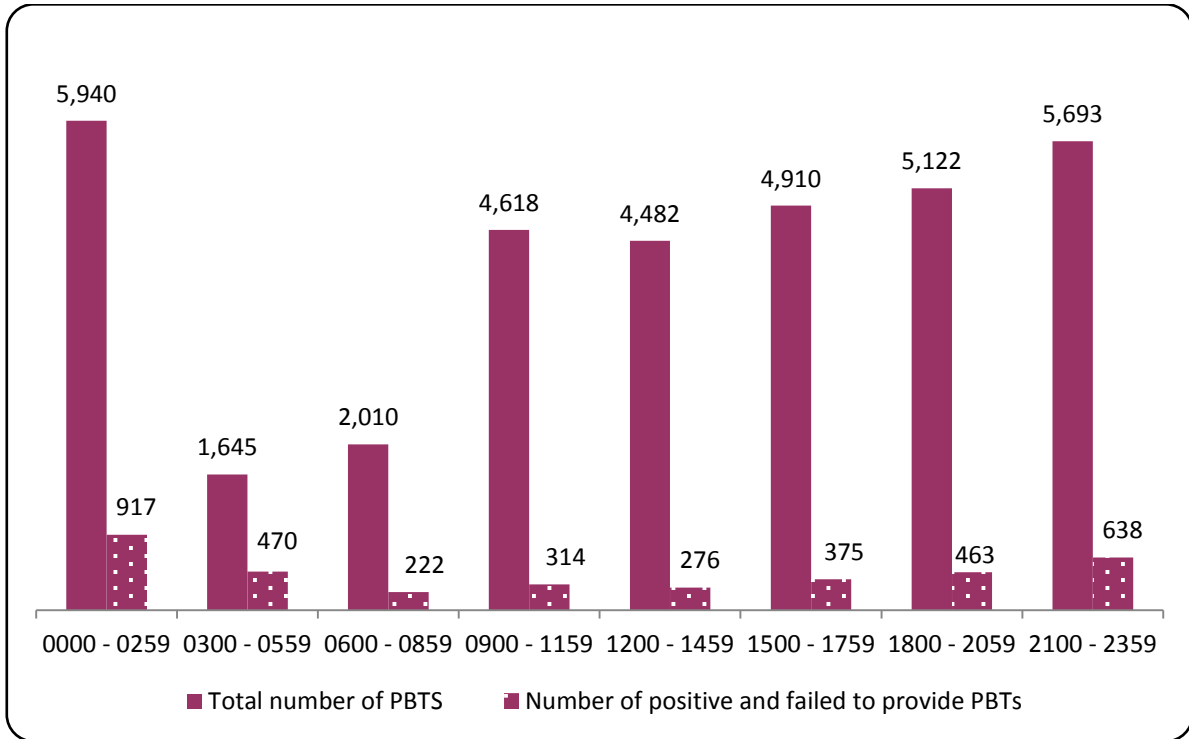
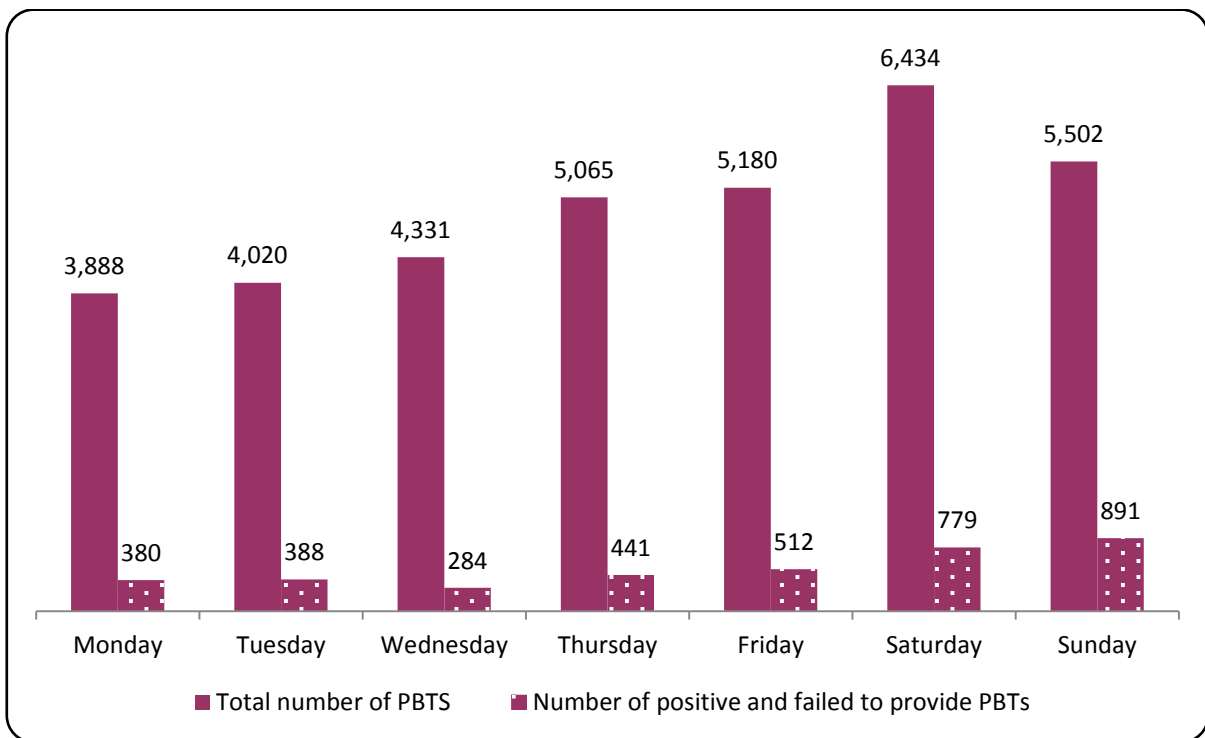


Figure 4: Number of PBTs by time of day 2016



By examining the time of day that PBTs were conducted it is evident that the busiest period is between midnight and 3am. The table below highlights that Saturday and Sunday are the days that PBTs are most likely to detect those driving with excess alcohol. This mirrors when the most fatal and serious collisions attributed to drink or drugs – driver/rider are occurring.

Figure 5: Number of PBTs by day of week 2016



Section Two – People referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence

Table 2: Age and gender of persons referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence 2012 – 2016

	Male	Female	Other ¹	Under 18	18-29	30-49	50-69	70+	Total
2012	2,389	522	0	46	1,121	1,227	491	26	2,911
2013	2,205	460	0	25	1,062	1,081	457	40	2,665
2014	2,146	492	0	42	996	1,127	443	30	2,638
2015	2,212	450	1	26	1,046	1,158	399	34	2,663
2016	2,414	481	0	32	1,072	1,301	454	36	2,895
Total	11,366	2,405	1	171	5,297	5,894	2,244	166	13,772

¹ Where the gender is unknown or where the gender was recorded as 'transgendered'.

- There have been 13,772 people referred for prosecution by the police between 2012 and 2016 for drink/drug driving.
- Males accounted for over four fifths of people referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving offence in 2016 (representing 83.4%). This is typical of the gender split observed over the last five years.
- Those aged between 18 and 29 and 30 to 49 made up the majority of the total referred for prosecution over the last five years, accounting for over four fifths combined (81.3%).
- The number of persons who 'fail' or fail to provide a PBT is not comparable with the number of persons referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence. This can be for a number of reasons which include – i) those who fail a PBT but then pass the evidential test will not be included as a person referred for prosecution for drink/drug driving ii) those persons who are deemed unfit will not be included in the PBT figures.

Figure 6: Persons referred for prosecution by age group 2012 – 2016

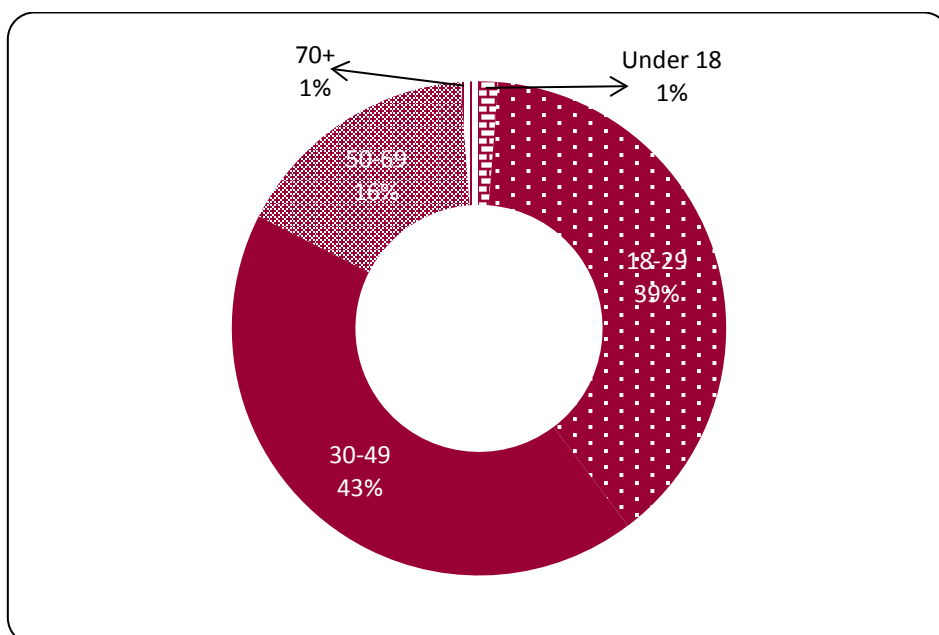


Table 3: Number of persons referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence by District 2012 – 2016

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	147	5.0	160	6.0	177	6.7	176	6.6	190	6.6	850	6.2
Ards and North Down	184	6.3	182	6.8	176	6.7	179	6.7	205	7.1	926	6.7
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	327	11.2	294	11.0	295	11.2	362	13.6	273	9.4	1,551	11.3
Belfast City	574	19.7	535	20.1	480	18.2	490	18.4	553	19.1	2,632	19.1
Causeway Coast and Glens	262	9.0	191	7.2	192	7.3	214	8.0	244	8.4	1,103	8.0
Derry City and Strabane	246	8.5	230	8.6	236	8.9	222	8.3	238	8.2	1,172	8.5
Fermanagh and Omagh	197	6.8	193	7.2	159	6.0	206	7.7	241	8.3	996	7.2
Lisburn and Castlereagh	178	6.1	177	6.6	171	6.5	171	6.4	198	6.8	895	6.5
Mid and East Antrim	191	6.6	140	5.3	141	5.3	141	5.3	156	5.4	769	5.6
Mid Ulster	271	9.3	241	9.0	269	10.2	201	7.5	266	9.2	1,248	9.1
Newry, Mourne and Down	306	10.5	298	11.2	328	12.4	299	11.2	329	11.4	1,560	11.3
Unknown	28	1.0	24	0.9	14	0.5	2	0.1	2	0.1	70	0.5
Total	2,911	100	2,665	100	2,638	100	2,663	100	2,895	100	13,772	100

Please note:

1. Figures were extracted from the PSNI information system on 24th October 2017 and are provisional and subject to change.

2. Figures are based on the date the offence was detected.

3. A person can be referred for prosecution for more than one drink / drug driving related offence during the same incident and this is treated as one referral. Persons referred for prosecution on more than one occasion are counted each time.

4. District figures are based on the location of the offence.

- Between 2012 and 2016, almost one fifth (19.1%) of drink/drug related offences resulting in prosecution occurred in Belfast, compared with 5.6% in Mid and East Antrim.

Section Three – Previous Christmas Drink Drive Campaigns

Table 4: Number of PBTs during Christmas drink drive campaign 2012 - 2016

Christmas Campaign	Number of PBTs	Number who failed PBT or failed to provide	% who failed PBT or failed to provide
2012 Christmas Campaign: 29th Nov 2012 - 3rd Jan 2013	4,601	358	7.8
2013 Christmas Campaign: 28th Nov 2013 - 2nd Jan 2014	4,672	361	7.7
2014 Christmas Campaign: 27th Nov 2014 - 2nd Jan 2015	5,743	397	6.9
2015 Christmas Campaign: 26th Nov 2015 - 3rd Jan 2016	4,874	446	9.2
2016 Christmas Campaign: 24th Nov 2016 - 2nd Jan 2017	12,606	620	4.9
Total	32,496	2,182	6.7

- The large increase in the number of PBTs conducted during the 2016 Christmas campaign is most likely explained by the legislative change in November 2016.
- The number of PBTs resulting in a fail or 'failed to provide' saw an increase of 39% throughout the 2016 Christmas campaign when compared with the 2015 Christmas campaign, however this should be considered in the context of the overall increase in tests over the same period.

Table 5: Number of persons referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence by District during Christmas drink drive campaign 2012 – 2016

	2012 Christmas Campaign: 29th Nov 2012 - 3rd Jan 2013		2013 Christmas Campaign: 28th Nov 2013 - 2nd Jan 2014		2014 Christmas Campaign: 27th Nov 2014 - 2nd Jan 2015		2015 Christmas Campaign: 26th Nov 2015 - 3rd Jan 2016		2016 Christmas Campaign: 24th Nov 2016 - 2nd Jan 2017		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	15	5.9	18	6.9	16	6.2	25	7.0	23	7.2	97	6.7
Ards and North Down	20	7.9	14	5.4	19	7.4	17	4.8	21	6.6	91	6.3
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	32	12.6	32	12.4	42	16.3	42	11.8	27	8.5	175	12.1
Belfast City	46	18.2	43	16.6	48	18.7	65	18.2	60	18.8	262	18.1
Causeway Coast and Glens	20	7.9	22	8.5	15	5.8	40	11.2	22	6.9	119	8.2
Derry City and Strabane	25	9.9	27	10.4	21	8.2	37	10.4	31	9.7	141	9.8
Fermanagh and Omagh	14	5.5	18	6.9	15	5.8	28	7.8	31	9.7	106	7.3
Lisburn and Castlereagh	15	5.9	20	7.7	11	4.3	20	5.6	17	5.3	83	5.7
Mid and East Antrim	14	5.5	10	3.9	18	7.0	14	3.9	24	7.5	80	5.5
Mid Ulster	18	7.1	26	10.0	23	8.9	23	6.4	25	7.8	115	8.0
Newry, Mourne and Down	30	11.9	25	9.7	29	11.3	46	12.9	37	11.6	167	11.6
Unknown	4	1.6	4	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	9	0.6
Total	253	100.0	259	100.0	257	100.0	357	100.0	319	100.0	1,445	100.0

- The largest proportion of persons referred for prosecution for a drink/drug driving related offence over the last 5 Christmas campaigns was in Belfast City (18.1%), followed by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon district (12.1%). This compares with 5.5% in Mid and East Antrim.

Section Four – Road Traffic Collisions attributed to drink/drug driving

Table 6: Injury road traffic collisions attributed to ‘Drink/drugs – driver/rider’ as a proportion of all injury collisions¹ 2012 - 2016

	Number of reported injury collisions											
	Fatal Collision			Serious Collision			Slight Collision			Total Collision		
	All	No. attributed to Drink or drugs	% attributed to Drink or drugs	Serious	No. attributed to Drink or drugs	% attributed to Drink or drugs	Slight	No. attributed to Drink or drugs	% attributed to Drink or drugs	Total	No. attributed to Drink or drugs	% attributed to Drink or drugs
2012	45	7	15.6%	669	46	6.9%	5,061	209	4.1%	5,775	262	4.5%
2013	55	9	16.4%	615	32	5.2%	5,150	194	3.8%	5,820	235	4.0%
2014	74	15	20.3%	577	36	6.2%	5,434	201	3.7%	6,085	252	4.1%
2015	69	7	10.1%	570	44	7.7%	5,508	220	4.0%	6,147	271	4.4%
2016	65	16	24.6%	689	50	7.3%	5,471	230	4.2%	6,225	296	4.8%
Total	308	54	17.5%	3,120	208	6.7%	26,624	1,054	4.0%	30,052	1,316	4.4%

¹Based on the principal causation factor

- In 2016, a total of 296 injury collisions which were reported to the police had a principal causation factor of ‘drink/drugs – driver/rider’. This equated to 4.8% of all injury collisions which was consistent with previous years.
- However, one quarter (24.6%) of fatal collisions in 2016 were attributed to a principal causation factor related to ‘drink/drugs – driver/rider’, the highest level recorded in the last 5 years. The number of serious collisions attributed to ‘drink/drugs – driver/rider’ (50) also increased while the 230 slight injury collisions was the highest number recorded since 2007 (238).
- Over the last five years, 262 collisions with a principal causation factor of ‘drink/drugs by driver/rider’ resulted in persons being killed or seriously injured (KSI) - 54 fatal and 208 serious.
- Most fatal and serious collisions with a causation factor related to ‘drink/drugs – driver/rider’ occurred at the weekend with 26.4% recorded on a Saturday and 29.4% on a Sunday, while one third occurred between midnight and 4am.

Notes

For further information and statistics see [PSNI website](#) and [RTC User Guide](#) and the [Motoring Offences User Guide](#)

The offences identified as relating to drink or drug driving for this report are listed below:

Aiding and abetting driving when unfit through drink or drugs
Aiding and abetting driving with excess alcohol in blood
Aiding and abetting driving with excess alcohol in breath
Aiding and abetting in charge of a motor
Attempting to drive when unfit through drink or drugs
Attempting to drive with excess alcohol in blood
Attempting to drive with excess alcohol in breath
Attempting to drive with excess alcohol in urine
Cause death by driving carelessly and failing to provide specimen
Causing death by driving carelessly when unfit
Causing death by inconsiderate driving when unfit
Causing death by inconsiderate driving with excess alcohol
Causing death or GBI by driving carelessly with excess alcohol
Causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly and failing to provide specimen
Causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly when unfit
Causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly with excess alcohol
Causing grievous bodily injury by inconsiderate driving and failing to provide specimen
Causing grievous bodily injury by inconsiderate driving when unfit
Causing grievous bodily injury by inconsiderate driving with excess alcohol
Driving when unfit through drink or drug
Driving with excess alcohol in blood
Driving with excess alcohol in breath
Driving with excess alcohol in urine
Fail to provide specimen when attempting to drive with excess alcohol
Fail to provide specimen when causing death by careless driving
Fail to provide specimen when driving with excess alcohol
Failing to co-operate with preliminary test (offences after 27 June 2007)
Failing to give permission for laboratory test of specimen of blood
Failing to provide specimen of blood or urine for analysis
Failing to provide specimen of breath for analysis
Failing to provide specimen of breath for preliminary test
Failing to provide specimen when attempting to drive unfit
Failing to provide specimen when driving unfit
Failing to provide specimen when in charge unfit
Failing to provide specimen when in charge with excess alcohol
Failure to provide specimen during investigation into causing grievous bodily injury by careless driving
In charge of a motor vehicle with excess alcohol in blood
In charge when unfit through drink or drugs
In charge with excess alcohol in breath
In charge with excess alcohol in urine