

May 2026

Proposed changes to penalties for motoring offences

5. In your view, should the legal alcohol limit for drink and drive offences in England and Wales:

- Be lowered
- Stay the same
- Don't know

6. What legal limit do you think is appropriate?

20mg alcohol per 100ml blood

7. Why do you think this legal limit is appropriate?

A 20mg alcohol/100ml blood limit sends a clear message that the legal level is essentially no alcohol beyond what may naturally exist in someone's body.

Currently, England and Wales have one of the highest drink driving limits in the world. Seven countries in the European Union have limits between zero and 20mg alcohol/100ml blood.¹ The Government must make our roads safer for everyone.

There is clear evidence that lowering the legal limit will reduce road collisions and save lives, because a person's ability to drive is affected after consuming any amount of alcohol.^{2 3}

Under the Railways and Transport Safety Act (2003), the prescribed limit for people working in some transport roles like in aviation is 20mg alcohol/100ml blood. This shows that people recognise the impact of even a little bit of alcohol, but this is not extended to driving amongst the general population.

8. In your view, should the legal alcohol limit for drink and drive offences in England and Wales be lower for novice drivers than for other drivers?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

9. What legal limit do you think is appropriate for novice drivers?

20mg alcohol per 100ml blood

10. Why do you think this legal alcohol limit is appropriate?

Alcohol Change UK strongly believes that there is enough evidence to support lowering the legal alcohol limit to 20mg alcohol/100ml blood for all drivers. However, if the government instead chooses to lower the limit to 50mg alcohol/100ml blood for all drivers, the limit should be lowered to 20mg alcohol/100ml blood for new private drivers, for 3 years after passing their test.

According to Government data, one in five new drivers crashes within their first year on the road.⁴ Newly qualified drivers are at greater risk on road, due to their relative inexperience.⁵ The compound effect of someone being a novice driver and the impact of alcohol likely increases their chances of a crash.

The rate of self-confessed drink-driving is highest among the under-25s: in this age group, 30% say they have driven while over the limit compared to 19% of drivers aged 25 to 44, 5% of those aged 45 to 64 and just 2% of those aged 65 or older.⁶

11. In your view, if the legal alcohol limit for drink and drive offences in England and Wales is lowered, should the criteria for being considered a high-risk offender be lowered accordingly?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

13. In your view, should a person suspected of committing a:

	Have their driving licence suspended until attendance at court	Have their driving licence suspended until guilty plea	Have their driving licence suspended until bailed pending forensic analysis being undertaken	Not have their driving licence suspended
Drink offence			X	
Drug offence				

18. In your view, should new powers be created to allow the seizure of vehicles of a person arrested for drink and drug driving?

- Yes
- No

Don't know

20. In your view, should alcohol ignition locks (alcolocks) be allowed to be used as part of a drink drive rehabilitation process?

Yes

No

Don't know

21. Why did you give this answer?

Alcohol interlocks can be a useful tool in the drink drive rehabilitation process, and all new vehicles in the UK should include alcohol interlock installation facilitation technology as standard.

23. In your view, could hospital procedures for drink and drug driving suspects be improved?

Yes

No

Don't know

24. How do you think hospital procedures for drink and drug driving suspects could be improved?

The time between someone being suspected of drink or drug driving and healthcare professionals actually taking samples from them must be reduced.

Hospitals may also be well placed to provide interventions by assessing people for alcohol problems and offering support and referrals to treatment services where needed.

Collecting data on the location of the last alcoholic drink consumed could support local authorities with identifying hotspots for drink driving.

25. Are there any other changes to current law and practice regarding drink and drug testing that you would like to suggest?

Yes

No

Don't know

26. How do you think current law and practice regarding drink and drug testing could be improved?

Section 7A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 should be reformed, to take away the need for consent when death has occurred because of a motor vehicle, in line with calls from Brake and others campaigning for Sharlotte's law.⁷

27. In your view, should random breath testing (mirroring the powers in Northern Ireland) be introduced in England and Wales?

Yes

No

Don't know

28. Why did you give this answer?

The UK College of Policing has concluded that drink drive stops to assess drivers' degree of alcohol impairment result in an overall reduction in crime and reoffending, with a very strong effect impact on crime, by reducing alcohol related injuries and crashes.⁸

Any such changes to the legislation will need to include adequate protections to prevent discrimination. There is evidence from the USA that checkpoints can also be positioned disproportionately.⁹ To mitigate this risk there would need to be a clear rationale for checkpoint location, set out in legislation.

References

¹ European Transport Safety Council (n.d.). [Blood Alcohol Content \(BAC\) Drink Driving Limits across Europe.](#)

² Moskowitz, H., and Florentino, D. (2000). [A Review of the Literature on the Effects of Low Doses of Alcohol on Driving-Related Skills.](#) US Department of Transportation.

³ NICE (2010). [Review of effectiveness of laws limiting blood alcohol concentration levels to reduce alcohol-related road injuries and deaths.](#) Centre for Public Health.

⁴ Department for Transport (2019). [Government looks at steps to make new drivers safer.](#)

⁵ Brake and AXA UK (2023). [Driver testing and education.](#)

⁶ RAC (2025). [Report on Motoring 2025.](#)

⁷ McIntyre, A. (2026). [Bereaved mum says drink-drive limit should be zero.](#)

⁸ College of Policing (2015). [Drink-drive stops.](#)

⁹ Kagawa, R. M. C., McCort, C. D., Schleimer, J., et al. (2021). [Racial bias and DUI enforcement: Comparing conviction rates with frequency of behavior.](#) *Criminology & Public Policy*, 20, pp. 645-663.