

April 15, 2010

LIVES SAVED

Total Lives Saved 1982-2007: 32,883

Although there have been sharp declines in alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Canada during the past three decades, there is no precise indication of the total number of lives that have been saved. However, a reliable estimate can be calculated. Such an estimate is important in terms of documenting the progress that has been made and in determining what additional measures must be implemented to bring about further substantial reductions in these needless deaths.

Dr. James Fell, an internationally-respected traffic safety expert and former Chief of Research and Evaluation for the United States National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), developed a method for estimating the number of lives saved in the United States. Given the similarities in Canada and the United States in drinking and driving patterns, collision rates and other relevant variables, MADD Canada has adopted Dr. Fell's approach in estimating the number of lives saved for Canada since 1982.

The starting point of the analysis is the 1982 crash statistics. According to Transport Canada, there were 4,169 fatalities on Canadian roads in that year. The Traffic Injury Research Foundation has estimated that 60% of the fatalities were alcohol-related (2,501) and that 40% (1,668) were non-alcohol-related crashes. Dr. Fell's approach assumes that if there were no declines in alcohol-related fatalities, this 60/40 ratio would remain constant. Using the number of non-alcohol-related crash fatalities as the base, we calculated the number of fatalities that would have occurred had the 60/40 ratio remained constant. The difference between this figure and the actual number of traffic fatalities provides an estimate of the number of lives saved due to the reduction in alcohol-related fatalities. The calculations for Canada from 1982 until 2007 are presented in the Table below.

The number of total traffic fatalities for 1982 to 1997 has been obtained from Transport Canada's "Canadian Motor Vehicle Traffic Collision Statistics 1999" (Table entitled "Collisions and Casualties – 1980-1999"). The number of total traffic fatalities for 1998 to 2007 has been obtained from Transport Canada's "Canadian Motor Vehicle Collision Statistics 2007" (Table entitled "Collisions and Casualties – 1988-2007").

The percentage of alcohol-related fatalities and of non-alcohol-related fatalities for 1987 to 2007 has been obtained from Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) Standing Committee on Road Safety Research Policies, "The Alcohol-Crash Problem in Canada: 2007" prepared by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation of Canada (March 2010) (Table 3-7).

MADD Canada
 Analysis of Lives Saved due to Reduction in Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes
 For the Years 1982 to 2007

Year	Total Traffic Fatalities	Alcohol-Related Fatalities		Non-Alcohol-Related Fatalities		Estimated Total Fatalities if Alcohol-Related had Remained at 1982 Level	Lives Saved Due To Reduction in Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes
1982	4,169	2,501	60%	1,668	40%	4,169	
1983	4,216	2,441	57.9%	1,775	42.1%	4,437	221
1984	4,120	2,324	56.4%	1,796	43.6%	4,491	371
1985	4,364	2,265	51.9%	2,099	48.1%	5,248	884
1986	4,068	2,132	52.4%	1,936	47.6%	4,841	773
1987	4,286	2,276	53.1%	2,010	46.9%	5,025	739
1988	4,154	2,106	50.7%	2,052	49.4%	5,130	976
1989	4,246	1,970	46.4%	2,272	53.5%	5,679	1,433
1990	3,963	1,799	45.4%	2,164	54.6%	5,409	1,446
1991	3,690	1,771	48%	1,919	52%	4,797	1,107
1992	3,501	1,680	48%	1,817	51.9%	4,543	1,042
1993	3,615	1,616	44.7%	1,999	55.3%	4,998	1,383
1994	3,263	1,432	43.9%	1,831	56.1%	4,576	1,313
1995	3,351	1,454	43.4%	1,897	56.6%	4,742	1,391
1996	3,091	1,289	41.7%	1,805	58.4%	4,513	1,422
1997	3,063	1,195	39%	1,865	60.9%	4,663	1,600
1998	2,911	1,138	39.1%	1,773	60.9%	4,432	1,521
1999	2,984	988	33.1%	1,996	66.9%	4,991	2,007
2000	2,927	1,042	35.6%	1,885	64.4%	4,712	1,785
2001	2,776	1,052	37.9%	1,724	62.1%	4,310	1,534
2002	2,932	1,026	35%	1,906	65%	4,765	1,833
2003	2,768	1,060	38.3%	1,708	61.7%	4,270	1,502
2004	2,722	945	34.7%	1,777	65.3%	4,444	1,722
2005	2,905	1,060	36.5%	1,845	63.5%	4,612	1,707
2006	2,895	1,074	37.1%	1,821	62.9%	4,552	1,657
2007	2,767	1,054	38.1%	1,713	61.9%	4,282	1,515
Totals	89,747	40,691		49,052		122,630	32,883
Total Lives Saved = 32,883							

The figures in this Table are estimates, as the true number of lives saved can never be known with certainty. Nevertheless, these figures are based on a scientifically justifiable approach and provide a reasonable estimate of the total number of lives that have been saved. The figures provide us with an important perspective on the progress that has been made since the founding of MADD Canada and its predecessor organizations.

MADD Canada is extremely gratified to see that its efforts, along with those of other organizations and agencies, have contributed to reducing alcohol-related traffic deaths. However, we must be mindful that during this period 40,691 Canadians were killed in alcohol-related crashes and that impaired driving remains Canada's leading criminal cause of death. While we are pleased with the progress that has been made, we must redouble our efforts if we are to make further gains in minimizing alcohol-related crash deaths and injuries in our society.