

## UNODC work on Road Safety

*Briefing in the occasion of Sixth United Nations Partnership Meeting for Road Safety, Hosted by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, 5 December 2022, 15:30 to 17:45 CET (09:30-11:45 ET)*

### Drug use and driving

Driving under the influence of alcohol and any other psychoactive substance increases the risk of a crash that results in death or serious injuries. In the case of drink-driving, the risk of a road traffic crash starts at low levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and increases significantly when the driver's BAC is  $\geq 0.04$  g/dl. In the case of drug-driving, the risk of incurring a road traffic crash is increased to differing degrees depending on the psychoactive drug used. For example, the risk of a fatal crash occurring among those who have used amphetamines is about 5 times the risk of someone who hasn't<sup>1</sup>.

Research from the United States, indicates how crash deaths involving cannabis increased from 9 percent to 21.5 percent of the total between 2010 and 2018, as well as how cannabis-involved car crashes are more likely to involve the deaths of passengers compared to crash deaths not involving cannabis<sup>2</sup>.

The latest volume of UNODC Current NPS Threats, published in October 2022, continues to highlight the challenge of new psychoactive substances associated with cases of driving under the influence of drugs. Substances with sedative effects such as benzodiazepines are a primary threat identified in 67% of driving under the influence of drugs cases, while potent synthetic opioids were also identified in 21% cases of driving under the influence of drugs associated with the use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)<sup>3</sup>.

The reduction of road traffic injuries and fatalities related to drivers using psychoactive substances other than alcohol is included in Target 9 of the Global Voluntary Performance Targets for Road Safety Risk Factors and Service Delivery Mechanisms adopted by the General Assembly in November 2017<sup>4</sup>. These contribute to the achievement of SDG target 3.6 on halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes, and, SDG target 11.2 on providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems as well as improve road safety for all.

### UNODC activities with impact on road safety

The United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund is guided by the Global Framework Plan of Action for Road Safety which is articulated on four pillars (safe user, safe vehicle, safe road and effective post-crash response) and four intersecting areas (legislation, enforcement, education and technology).

Ongoing activities of UNODC already contribute to the pillar on Safer User, particularly through its promotion of the UNODC/WHO Standards on both prevention<sup>5</sup> and treatment<sup>6</sup> with policy makers globally. At least 1,500

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<sup>1</sup> WHO (2022), Road traffic injuries, online fact sheet (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>)

<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UNODC (2022), UNODC Current NPS Threats, Volume V, October 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Lira, M. C., Heeren, T. C., Buczek, M., Blanchette, J. G., Smart, R., Pacula, R. L., & Naimi, T. S. (2021). Trends in cannabis involvement and risk of alcohol involvement in motor vehicle crash fatalities in the United States, 2000–2018. *American journal of public health*, 111(11), 1976-1985.

<sup>5</sup> UNODC-WHO (2018), International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

<sup>6</sup> UNODC-WHO (2020), International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders

policy makers in 20 countries are sensitized annually on evidence-based practice as per the Standards, which include interventions that are effective in reducing rates of driving under the influence.

These interventions, complemented by a strong component on effective and health-centred policing on road safety legislation interlink in a Road Safety package which is ready for implementation. The package includes the following components.

- *Effective policing and enforcement of road safety legislation.*  
UNODC has strong relationships with law enforcement stakeholders at all levels, including at community policing for crime prevention.
- *Road safety legislation and driving under the influence of drugs.* Through its work on treatment and care services as alternatives to conviction and punishment, UNODC is well placed to provide legislative and policy advice with regard to transforming instances of driving under the influence in opportunities for a health response that addresses the root of the problem, rather than a punitive and ineffective response<sup>7</sup>.
- *Workplace prevention programmes targeting the use of psychoactive substances by professional drivers.*  
UNODC promotes comprehensive workplace prevention packages that include, as per UNODC/WHO prevention Standards<sup>8</sup>: awareness raising; training of managers and peer in identifying a substance use problem and play a supportive role; screening, brief interventions and referral to services in the context of a non-punitive framework. These programmes have been shown to lead to significant reduction in accidents due to substance and drug use in the workplace.
- *Comprehensive prevention programmes in entertainment venues.*  
As per the UNODC/WHO prevention Standards, such comprehensive prevention programmes have been found to lead to significant reductions in accidents, fatalities, as well as intoxication and violence<sup>9</sup>, including the following components: training of staff and management, offer of treatment and care services to staff and management, awareness raising in the general public, visible and local enforcement of driving under the influence policies.
- *Awareness campaigns against driving under the influence of psychoactive substances (including alcohol and other drugs).*  
UNODC has identified principles for targeted and persuasive campaigning in the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention<sup>10</sup>.
- *Interventions in emergency settings with drivers injured following an accident while driving under the influence.*  
UNODC/WHO works with more than 20 countries annually, strengthening treatment and care services for people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders according the UNODC/WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders<sup>11</sup>. The continuum of services promoted in the UNODC-WHO treatment Standards includes interventions in emergency settings with drivers injured following an accident while driving under the influence. Evidence-based interventions of this kind have been found to be effective in decreasing the rates of driving under the influence and should be an important pillar of ensuring the safety of roads in the long term.

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<sup>7</sup> UNODC-WHO (2019), Treatment and Care for People With Drug Use Disorders in Contact With the Criminal Justice System - Alternatives to Conviction or Punishment.

<sup>8</sup> UNODC-WHO (2018), International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

<sup>9</sup> UNODC (2013), International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

<sup>10</sup> UNODC-WHO (2018), International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

<sup>11</sup> UNODC-WHO (2020), International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders