



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 78/16

19 October 2016

NIAR 391-16

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Selected causes of fatal and serious road traffic collisions in Northern Ireland

1 About this Briefing Paper

This Briefing Paper presents information on selected causes of fatal and serious road traffic collisions in Northern Ireland. This information was requested by the Committee for Infrastructure at its meetings on 28 September 2016 and 05 October 2016. The paper presents data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions caused by the driver or rider being impaired by alcohol or by drugs; mobile phone use; vehicle defects and by distraction by action inside or outside the vehicle. Data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions caused physical or mental illness or injury by road user type is also presented. The data presented covers the period 1 January 2011 to 31 July 2016.

2 Fatal and serious road traffic collisions caused by alcohol and drugs

Table 1 presents data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions recorded by the PSNI where the principal causation factor was attributed to either 'impaired by alcohol-driver/rider' or 'impaired by drugs – driver/rider' for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 July

2016. Data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions caused by individual types of drugs is not collated by the PSNI although may exist in coroners reports.

In 2015, 44 fatal and serious road traffic collisions were caused by the driver or rider being impaired by alcohol while 7 were caused by the driver or rider being impaired by drugs. In 2016 (up to 31 July), 22 fatal and serious road traffic collisions were caused by the driver or rider being impaired by alcohol while 4 were caused by the driver or rider being impaired by drugs in 2016. Please note 2016 figures are provisional and may be subject to minor amendment.

Table 1: Fatal and serious PSNI recorded RTCs where the principal causation factor was either ‘impaired by alcohol- driver/rider’ or ‘impaired by drugs – driver/rider’, 1 January 2011 to 31 July 2016*

Year	Impaired by alcohol – driver/rider			Impaired by drugs – driver/rider			Total		
	Fatal	Serious	Total	Fatal	Serious	Total	Fatal	Serious	Total
2011	8	64	72	1	4	5	9	68	77
2012	7	39	46	0	7	7	7	46	53
2013	7	31	38	2	1	3	9	32	41
2014	14	33	47	1	3	4	15	36	51
2015	5	39	44	2	5	7	7	44	51
2016*	3	19	22	1	2	3	4	21	25

Source: Statistics Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Lisnasharragh

**To 31 July. Please note 2016 information is provisional and subject to minor amendment*

3 Mobile phone Use

Table 2 below presents data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions recorded by PSNI where either the principal or a contributory factor was attributed to ‘using mobile phone’. In both 2013 and 2014, mobile phone use caused or contributed to one fatal road traffic collision. Over the period 1 January 2011 to 31 July 2016, in addition to the two fatal collisions, mobile phone use caused or contributed to 10 serious road traffic collisions. This compares with 2011 when there were no fatal and three serious road traffic collisions where mobile phone use was recorded by the PSNI as a cause. It is worth noting that these figures are a likely underestimate as it is possible that not all collisions where mobile phone use was a factor were detected.

Table 2: Fatal and serious PSNI recorded RTCs where the principal or contributory factor was attributed to ‘using mobile phone’, 1 January 2011 to 31 July 2016*

Year	Using mobile phone		
	Fatal	Serious	Total
2011	0	3	3
2012	0	2	2
2013	1	2	3
2014	1	2	3
2015	0	1	1
2016 (to 31 July)*	0	0	0

Source: Statistics Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Lisnasharragh

**To 31 July. Please note 2016 information is provisional and subject to minor amendment*

4 Vehicle defects

Table 3 below presents data on fatal and serious road traffic collisions recorded by the PSNI where vehicle defects were a causation factor. In 2015, 11 fatal and serious road traffic collisions were caused by vehicle defects. This compares with ten in 2011.

Table 3: Fatal and serious PSNI recorded RTCs where vehicle defects were a causation factor, 2011-2015

Year	Fatal and serious collisions caused by vehicle defects
2011	10
2012	13
2013	10
2014	8
2015	11

Information on the number and age of private and light goods vehicles in Northern Ireland is attached in Annex A, as requested by the Committee.

5 Distractions inside or outside a vehicle

Table 4 presents data on serious road traffic collisions attributed to distraction by action inside or outside a vehicle. There were no fatal collisions attributed to distraction inside or outside a vehicle between 1 January 2011 and 31 July 2016. In 2016 (up to 31 July) there was one serious accident caused by a distraction by action outside the vehicle. In 2015, there were three serious road traffic collisions caused by a distraction by action inside the vehicle and one collision caused by a distraction by action outside the vehicle. This compares with two serious collisions caused by a distraction by action inside the vehicle and also two collisions caused by a distraction by action outside the vehicle in 2011.

Table 4: Fatal and serious PSNI recorded RTCs caused by distraction by action inside or outside the vehicle, 1 January 2011 to 31 July 2016*

Year	Serious collisions caused by distraction by action inside vehicle	Serious collisions caused by distraction by action outside vehicle
2011	2	2
2012	1	0
2013	2	1
2014	1	1
2015	3	1
2016 (to 31 July)*	0	1

Source: Statistics Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Lisnasharragh

**To 31 July. Please note 2016 information is provisional and subject to minor amendment*

6 Physical or mental illness or injury

Table 5 presents data on the number of fatal and serious road traffic collisions caused by physical or mental illness or injury. In response to a request for information on fatal and serious road traffic collisions as a result of an impairment or disability the PSNI have said:

“We do not have a marker to identify disability and as the best approximation for this have provided collisions where the causation was attributed to ‘physical/mental illness or injury’ for drivers, pedestrians and passengers. Please note that this is not the complete picture as these collisions may cover some instances of disability but also account for drivers taking a turn at the wheel or instances where a pedestrian/passenger causes a collision through their actions. We have combined the fatal and

serious collisions in this response in order to protect from disclosure as causation of collisions can be a sensitive area.”

Table 5: Fatal and serious PSNI recorded RTCs where the principal causation factor was ‘physical/mental illness or injury – driver/rider’, ‘physical/mental illness – pedestrian’ or ‘physical/mental illness – passenger’, 1 January 2011 – 31 July 2016

Year	Physical/mental illness or injury – driver/rider	Physical/mental illness or injury – pedestrian
2011	7	0
2012	13	1
2013	13	1
2014	6	1
2015	10	0
2016 (to 31 July)*	7	1

Source: Statistics Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Lisnasharragh

**To 31 July. Please note 2016 information is provisional and subject to minor amendment*

Further detail on how these statistics are collated is available in the [User Guide](#) on the PSNI website.

Annex A

Number of Private and Light Goods vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland by year of first registration, at 31 December 2015

Registered less than (years)	Northern Ireland	
	Number	%
1	52,643	5.6
2	112,712	12.0
3	170,906	18.2
4	230,848	24.5
5	292,729	31.1
6	355,928	37.8
7	414,178	44.0
8	481,242	51.1
9	562,430	59.7
10	636,385	67.6
11	705,096	74.9
12	766,981	81.5
13	819,689	87.1
14	861,772	91.5
15	890,722	94.6
All Private Light Goods	941,330	100.0
Average age of vehicles (years)⁴	7.8	

Source: Department for Infrastructure, Northern Ireland Transport statistics, 2015/16

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-transport-statistics>