



Press Release on MBRS Annual Report 2024

The published report summarises the activities and outcome performances for 2024 of the Medical Bureau of Road Safety, the independent national statutory forensic laboratory for analysis of intoxicant substances in drivers, with data and figures for public information and examination from its scientific testing during 2024 on driving under the influence of intoxicants.

In 2024, 174 lives were tragically lost in road collisions in Ireland. The Bureau has a focused input to the Road Safety Strategy on Alcohol Ignition Interlock Devices and this was successfully actioned in 2024 by the testing and approval of such devices. The Bureau continues to work with the Department of Transport on legislation for Polydrug Traffic Offence penalties. It remains in close partnership in all relevant road safety actions with the Department of Transport, An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority and other national and international bodies.

In 2024, 36 drivers were arrested three times for intoxicated driving, 263 drivers were arrested twice and seven drivers were arrested between five and eleven times. The concern around repeat and high risk intoxicated driving offenders remains to be addressed legislatively, in the prosecutorial and judicial process and also in medical rehabilitation under the Road Safety Strategy by the co-operative work of a number of bodies, including the Bureau.

The number of specimens received in 2024 for alcohol analysis continued at a high level of 5,900 specimens. Specimens received for drugs analysis reached 4,348 (3,873 in 2023) with an increased number of 81 drug types targeted for testing. Drug analysis reporting times were shortened further in 2024. Evidential Breath Alcohol Testing was carried out in Garda Stations nationwide in 3,580 cases.

A significant achievement in 2024 was the testing and approval of the first four Alcohol Ignition Interlock devices for Ireland (with a further device approved in 2025). These devices can be installed in a motor vehicle to prevent it from starting if the driver tests positive for alcohol and are already in place on a voluntary basis in several commercial bus and truck fleets in the country. This has the potential to be one of the most significant and transformational developments in road safety in decades when rolled out on a statutory basis recognizing that in the region of 30% of road traffic crashes have alcohol presence as a contributory or associated factor.

Alcohol remained the most frequently detected intoxicant in drivers. The average alcohol level in blood was 142mg/100ml and in urine was 194mg/100ml when the 59% of specimens with no trace of alcohol were excluded. These figures have sadly changed very little over the past decade. Alcohol intoxicated driving thus remains a very real and significant danger on Irish roads with many drivers driving when several times over the legal limits for the different categories of driver, including the lower limits set for the learner, novice and professional or heavy vehicle driver.

For intoxicants other than alcohol, the three most commonly detected drugs in 2024 were again cannabis, cocaine and benzodiazepines. The mean level of cannabis found in samples was 6.2ng/ml and of cannabis THC acid was 49.4ng/ml. The mean level of cocaine was 120.3ng/ml and of benzoylecgonine was 749.7ng/ml. These levels are multiples of the set legal limits and continue to reflect the high levels found in drug intoxicated drivers which, like alcohol intoxication, are a major contributory factor to road traffic collisions.

The Gardaí were supplied with 35,000 roadside drug testing devices in 2024, an increase on the 30,000 supplied in 2023. The frequent finding of combinations of drugs and drugs with alcohol remains of enormous concern. The drugs landscape is always changing and the Bureau continues to keep abreast of new and evolving impairing drugs as they become evident in drivers and to keeping pace with technology that will enhance the Gardaí's capacity to detect impairment and intoxicant use in drivers.

The Bureau will continue its ongoing and expert contributions to improve and support road safety measures, particularly in the areas of intoxicant driving and medical aspects of safe and healthy driving for all road users into 2025. This includes the advance preparation for the Phase 2 Action Plan for 2025-2027 within the national Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 (since published in July of 2025) as part of Vision Zero for road traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2050 with an interim targeted reduction of 50% by 2030 to 72 deaths.

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Website: <https://www.ucd.ie/mbrs/t4media/MBRS%20Annual%20Report%202024.pdf>

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