

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC) LIMITS (last updated January 2012)

Defining BAC

A person's BAC level measures the amount of alcohol in the blood, by recording the milligrams of ethanol per milliliters of blood. Most countries around the world have legal BAC limits, ranging from 0.0 mg/ml to 0.8 mg/ml with different penalties applying for breaking the law. In some countries, lower BAC limits are set for young, inexperienced drivers and/or for operators of commercial vehicles.

BAC levels are affected by how much alcohol has been drunk, the speed of drinking and over what period of time. An individual's weight, gender, health, and food intake also affect the absorption and metabolism of alcohol, making an estimation of how much it is safe to drink before driving risky.

Legal limits are set as a person's risk of being involved in a traffic crash increases with the amount of alcohol consumed as reactions slow down. Involvement in fatal crashes is 11 times more likely for drivers with BAC levels between 0.5 mg/ml and 0.9 mg/ml, compared with drivers who have not consumed alcohol, hence the recommendation to nominate a non drinking 'designated driver' or to plan other ways of getting home safely when drinking.

Special legislation or BAC regulations are set nationally, at company level or internationally for operators of commercial vehicles, airline pilots, buses, truck, and taxi drivers, as well as for captains of ships for example. In some countries, BAC limits apply to operators of bicycles, snowmobiles, personal aircraft and boats.

TABLE 1: STANDARD BAC LIMITS

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Albania	0.1
Algeria	0.1
Argentina	0.5 (0.02% for motorbikes, 0.00% for truck/taxi/bus drivers)
Armenia	0.0
Australia	<p>Australian Capital Territory</p> <p>Zero for drivers and motorcyclists holding a learner, provisional, restricted or probationary licence and for drivers operating heavy vehicles over 15t GVM or driving a public vehicle for hire or reward (for example taxi and bus drivers).</p> <p>0.05% for all other drivers and motorcyclists</p>

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
	<p>New South Wales Zero for Learner and Provisional licences 0.02% for Drivers of vehicles of "gross vehicle mass" greater than 13.9 tonnes, vehicles carrying dangerous goods or public vehicles such as a taxi or bus. 0.05% for all other drivers</p> <p>Northern Territory Zero for provisional (probationary) licence holders. 0.05% for all other drivers.</p> <p>Queensland A Zero limit applies to the drivers of trucks, buses, articulated vehicles, vehicles carrying dangerous goods, pilot vehicles, taxis, all learner drivers and provisional drivers. 0.05% for other drivers.</p> <p>South Australia Zero limit for learner, provisional, probationary, heavy (greater than 15 tonne) vehicle, taxis, licensed chauffeured vehicles, dangerous goods, and bus licenses. 0.05% for all other drivers.</p> <p>Tasmania Zero limit for learner, provisional, truck, bus, and taxi licences. 0.05% for all other drivers.</p> <p>Victoria Zero limit applies for unlicensed drivers, holders of learner permits and probationary licences, "professional" drivers, and certain relicensed drunk-drivers. Below 0.05% for most other drivers. Zero limit for methamphetamine, Cannabis and MDMA.</p>
Austria	0.5 (0.1 for young/novice drivers and professional/commercial drivers)
Azerbaijan	0.0
Bahrain	0.0
Belarus	0.3
Barbados	-
Belgium	0.5
Bolivia	0.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.3 (0.0 for bus and truck drivers)
Botswana	0.8
Brazil	0.2
Bulgaria	0.5
Cambodia	0.5

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Canada	0.8 (new drivers undergo graduated licensing in Ontario, Quebec, Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; drivers under the age of 22 in Ontario).
Chile	0.5
China	0.2
Colombia	0.0
Costa Rica	0.49
Croatia (Republic of)	0.5 (0.0 for bus drivers and youth under 24 years old)
Cyprus	0.5
Czech Republic	0.0
Denmark	0.5
Dominican Republic	Zero (0.5 for professional drivers)
Ecuador	0.7
Egypt	0.5
El Salvador	0.5
Estonia	0.2
Ethiopia	-
Finland	0.5
France	0.5 (0.25% for bus drivers)
Georgia	0.3
Germany	0.5 (zero for learner drivers, all drivers 18-21 and newly licensed drivers of any age for first two years of licence, and commercial drivers)
Greece	0.5 (0.2 young/ novice drivers drivers of less than 2 years and commercial drivers)
Guatemala	0.8
Honduras	0.7
Hong Kong	0.5
Hungary	0.0
Iceland	0.5
India	0.3
Ireland	0.5 (0.2 for learner drivers and professional drivers)
Israel	0.5
Italy	0.5 (zero for young, novice (less than 3 years) and professional drivers)
Japan	0.3
Kenya	0.8
Kyrgyzstan	0.5
Latvia	0.4 (0.2 for drivers in their first two years after gaining a driving license)

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Lithuania	0.4 (0.2 for drivers in their first two years after gaining a driving license)
Luxembourg	0.05% and 0.02% for professional drivers and drivers with less than 2 years of experience
Macedonia	0.5
Malaysia	0.8
Maldives, Republic of	-
Malta	0.8
Mauritius	0.5
Mexico	0.8
Moldova	0.3
Montenegro	0.5
Mongolia	0.2
Nepal	0.3
The Netherlands	0.5 (0.2 for those obtaining their driving license obtained on or after March 30, 2002)
New Zealand	0.8 (0.0 if under 20)
Nicaragua	0.5
Norway	0.2
Panama	0.1 - 0.85 (BAC levels between 0.1 - 0.5 merit a warning, between 0.51 - 0.85 a fine, and 0.86 and above a fine plus retention of vehicle)
Paraguay	0.2 - 0.8 (A BAC between 0.01 and 0.2 is considered a light offence, a BAC between 0.21 and 0.8 is considered a serious offence, and a BAC of 0.81 or greater is considered a very serious offence)
Peru	0.5
Philippines	0.5
Poland	0.2
Portugal	0.5
Puerto Rico	0.8 (0.2 for young or novice drivers 18-21)
Qatar	0.0
Romania	0.0
Russia	0.0
Serbia	0.3 0. for all professional/commercial drivers and beginners)
Singapore	0.8
Slovakia	0.0
Slovenia	0.5 (0.0 for young/ novice drivers (less than 2 years)
South Africa	0.5 (0.2 for professional drivers)
South Korea, Rep of	0.52
Spain	0.5 (0.3 for young/ novice drivers and some commercial drivers)

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Sweden	0.2
Switzerland	0.5
Thailand	0.5
Turkey	0.5 (0.0 fo professional/ public service drivers)
Turkmenistan	0.33
Uganda	0.5
United Kingdom	0.8
United States	0.8 (Drivers under 21, the most common US legal drinking age, have stricter standards 0.0-0.2). Varying in different states, lower BAC levels exist for criminal and/or license suspension purposes, commonly 0.1 to 0.5
Uruguay	0.3 (zero for truck/taxi/bus drivers)
Venezuela	0.5
Zimbabwe	0.8