



# Enhancing Drug-Impaired Driving Data Across Canada: Court Data



## The Issue

Every year, thousands of people living in Canada drive after using drugs other than alcohol, posing serious risks to themselves and other road users (Brown et al., 2015, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021). Drivers in Canada face criminal penalties if they are convicted of drug-impaired driving (DID) as a form of punishment and deterrence for future DID. Very little court data (i.e., court outcomes) on DID cases are accessible to agencies outside of the justice system, which limits Canada's understanding of the effect of judicial efforts to reduce DID.

## The Significance of the Data

Data on DID cases that pass through the courts can provide information about drivers, serious collisions and the effects of arrests, convictions and sentences. By expanding and standardizing DID court data collected across Canada and making this information accessible to agencies beyond the justice system, Canada can improve collaboration and help reduce DID incidents, serious injuries and deaths. Law enforcement, policy makers and road safety practitioners will be able to use these data to inform their responses to DID.

## Recommended Indicators

Three data indicators are recommended for justice departments to enhance and standardize DID court data. These were developed by and in consultation with DID experts across Canada.

The table describes the three indicators, which are grouped by the extent to which the data are already collected. Since DID court data is not systematically collected and consistently shared beyond the justice system, the proposed indicators are considered relatively new to the field.



Data source	Indicator
New <sup>a</sup>	<p>Disposition type (court decision) among drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and percentage of different court dispositions out of all DID cases</li></ul> <p>Sentencing (type and quantum<sup>b</sup>) data on drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and percentage of fines issued out of all DID cases</li><li>• Number and percentage of nonmonetary sentences issued out of all DID cases (e.g., probation, community work, prison)</li><li>• Number and percentage of driving suspensions issued out of all DID cases</li></ul> <p>Driver demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and percentage of drivers sentenced for DID across sex (or gender where possible)</li><li>• Number and percentage of drivers sentenced for DID across standardized age groups<sup>c</sup></li></ul>

<sup>a</sup>New indicators include nonexistent or not widely used indicators (e.g., some agencies may track some of these data).

<sup>b</sup>Quantum refers to the court's punishment, which can be a fine, the length of a sentence or both.

<sup>c</sup>Recommend standardization be based on the Canadian Council of Motor Transportation Administrators age groups (i.e., 16–19, 20–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, and 65 years and older).

These indicators are part of a broader set of 34 national DID indicators for various agencies recommended by an expert Drug-Impaired Driving Indicators Advisory Committee, chaired by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. For a complete list of the recommended indicators, see the full report, [Measuring the Impact of Drug-Impaired Driving: Recommendations for National Indicators](#). Also included in the report are suggestions for agencies on addressing potential challenges in implementing the recommendations (e.g., standardizing data, data sharing, financial costs) and more detailed information about the Advisory Committee.

Top considerations for implementation:

- Since some of these court data are already collected by justice and enforcement agencies, the committee recommends making improvements to ensure data are accurately and promptly entered into shared systems, by both law enforcement and judicial agencies.
- Prosecutors may pursue cases primarily as an alcohol-impaired driving case, even if drugs are involved and contributed to impairment. To build expertise in the DID area, people working in the justice system should consider pursuing all relevant DID cases (where possible), rather than focusing solely on the alcohol conviction.
- Despite the independent approaches of provinces and territories in managing DID cases and the potential for wide variations, shared (anonymized, secured, etc.) and national-level data reporting may provide insights into the effectiveness of different jurisdictional approaches to managing DID.

For a full discussion of these and other considerations for implementation, see the [full report](#).



## References

- Brown, S. W., Vanlaar, W. G. M., & Robertson, R. D. (2015). *Alcohol and drug-crash problem in Canada: 2011 report*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. [https://www.ccmta.ca/web/default/files/PDF/2011\\_Alcohol\\_and\\_Drug\\_Crash\\_Problem\\_Report\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.ccmta.ca/web/default/files/PDF/2011_Alcohol_and_Drug_Crash_Problem_Report_Eng.pdf)
- Brown, S. W., Vanlaar, W. G. M., & Robertson, R. D. (2021). *The alcohol and drug crash problem in Canada: 2016 report*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. <https://www.ccmta.ca/web/default/files/PDF/CCMTA.2016%20Alcohol%20and%20Drug%20Crash%20Problem%20Report.EN.MAR2021.pdf>
- Statistics Canada. (2021). Table 35-10-0177-01 *Incident-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, Canada, provinces, territories and Census Metropolitan Areas*. Ottawa, Ont.: Author. <https://doi.org/10.25318/3510017701-eng>

