

# DRIVING HIGH

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Even with a lot of interesting and important debate around drugs these days – marijuana legalization, the opioid crisis, medical uses and abuses – there's one area that remains a clear and present danger: Driving while impaired by drugs is unsafe, and can even be deadly, for everyone on the road.

## MYTH-BUSTING DATA

Ever heard someone try to explain away drugs as having less of an effect on driving than alcohol?

I'm high functioning.

I don't feel any different.

But I didn't even drink anything!

It's just my medicine.

I'm more focused when I'm high.

But traffic data in New York State refutes those excuses with serious facts. Drug-related crashes resulting in injury or fatality are higher than ever and are affecting real people every single day.<sup>1</sup>



of all fatal crashes in 2016 were drug-related. Up from 17% in 2012-2013.

In 2016, drug-impaired driving led to:

**1,041**  
total crashes with an injury or fatality

Nearly 1  
every 8 hours

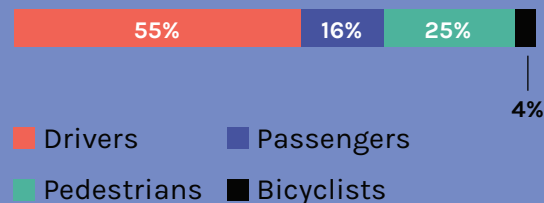
**267**  
fatalities

More than 5  
per week

**1,303**  
people injured

More than 3  
per day

An impaired driver puts more than just themselves at risk. In 2016, the 267 drug-impaired driving fatalities included others on the road as well:



## HIGH ON DRUGS, SHORT ON DRIVING SKILLS

Drugs, whether illicit or prescription, have a wide range of effects on your brain and body. Unfortunately, along with the munchies, pain-relief, or euphoria, other side-effects include obstructing the most basic skills you need to safely operate a vehicle.

### MARIJUANA<sup>2</sup>

- Distorts sense of time and distance
- Delays judgment and response
- Reduces concentration



### COCAINE

(and other stimulants like methamphetamine, Molly, even Adderall)<sup>3</sup>

- Incites speed and aggression
- Provokes high-risk choices
- Leads to restlessness, anxiety, irritability



### PRESCRIPTION DEPRESSANTS (like Valium, Xanax, Ambien)<sup>4</sup>

- Causes drowsiness
- Slows brain activity
- Leads to sluggish and uncoordinated motor skills



## GETTING CAUGHT

If you need a reason other than safety to avoid drug-impaired driving, consider this: highly trained Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) police officers are increasing their numbers and skills in a serious effort to keep drug-impaired drivers off the road.



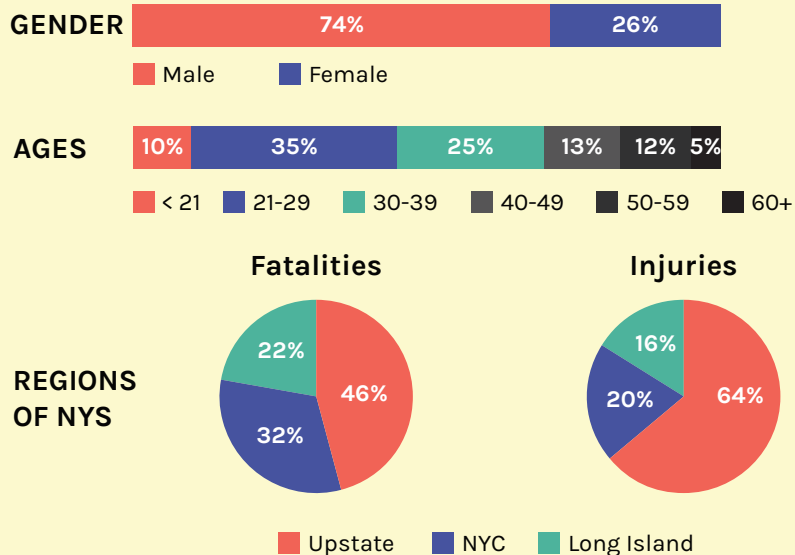
IN 2016:<sup>5</sup>

- **8,277** DREs nationwide performed **31,421** enforcement checks
- **217** DREs in New York State performed **1,874** enforcement checks

Since drug-impairment is harder to detect than using a breathalyzer, suspected impairment often leads to an arrest. DREs then perform a meticulous 12-step evaluation that includes interviews, pulse and eye examinations, and eventually a blood and/or urine test.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Whether you're a driver, a passenger, a party host, friend or family, be an active voice on the dangers of drug-impaired driving. Here are the populations with the highest risks for fatal and personal injury crashes in New York State:<sup>6</sup>



### ACTION STEPS

- ▶ Be a buddy. Pay special attention if you—or someone you know—are at high risk, and speak up about the life and death risks of drug-impaired driving:
  - Men in their 20s or 30s
  - People in their 40s and 50s on prescription meds
- ▶ Check prescription labels and consult your doctor
- ▶ Designate a sober driver
- ▶ Use a taxi, ride-share, or public transit
- ▶ Stay put and off the road when using drugs or taking meds

Funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with a grant from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee.



Governor's Traffic Safety Committee

<sup>1</sup> "Drug Involvement in Fatal and Personal Injury Crashes on New York Roadways," 2016, Institute for Traffic Safety and Management and Research

<sup>2</sup> "How Safe is Recreational Marijuana?" 2013, Scientific American

<sup>3</sup> "Cocaine use and driving impairment," 2013, Addiction.com

<sup>4</sup> "Drug Facts: What are prescription CNS depressants?" 2018, National Institute on Drug Abuse

<sup>5</sup> "Annual Report," 2016, International Association of Chiefs of Police

<sup>6</sup> "Drug Involvement in Fatal and Personal Injury Crashes on New York Roadways," 2016, Institute for Traffic Safety and Management and Research