

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC) LIMITS (last updated Jan 2021)

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	0.5
Algeria	0.2
Andorra	0.5 (0.2 for professional drivers)
Angola	0.6
Argentina	0.5 for the general population, 0.2 for motorbikes, 0.0 for professional/ commercial drivers)
Armenia	0.4
Australia	0.5
Australian Capital Territory	0.0 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).
New South Wales	Zero for Learner and Provisional licences 0.2 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. 0.5 for all other drivers

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Northern Territory	Zero for provisional (probationary) licence holders.
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.
South Australia	Zero limit for learner, provisional, probationary, heavy (greater than 15 tonne) vehicle, taxis, licensed chauffeured vehicles, dangerous goods, and bus licenses.
Tasmania	Zero limit for learner, provisional, truck, bus, and taxi licences.
Victoria	Zero limit applies for unlicensed drivers, holders of learner permits and probationary licences, "professional" drivers, and certain relicensed drunk-drivers. Zero limit for methamphetamine, Cannabis and MDMA.
Austria	0.5 (0.1 for young driver under the age of 20, novice drivers and professional/commercial drivers) 0.8 for cyclists.
Azerbaijan	0.0
Bahrain	0.0
Barbados	-
Bahamas	0.8
Bahrain	0.0
Belarus	0.3
Belgium	0.5 and 0.2 for commercial drivers
Bhutan	0.8, 0.0 for learner and novice drivers and professional drivers
Bolivia	0.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.3, 0.0 for bus and truck drivers
Botswana	0.5, 0.25 for professional drivers
Brazil	0
Bulgaria	0.5
Cambodia	0.5
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. Province/Territory legal BAC limits: Saskatchewan 0.40 Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island - 0.50 Nunavut 0.60 Quebec and Yukon Territory 0.80

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Chile	0.3, A BAC between 0.3 - 0.8 qualifies as driving under the influence, whilst anything above 0.8 is considered driving drunk.
China	0.2, BAC levels of 0.2 - 0.8 constitute "driving while drinking alcohol", while BAC levels equal to or above 0.8 constitute "driving while intoxicated"
Colombia	0.0, There are different levels of penalty for a BAC of between 0.2 - 0.39, 0.4 - 0.99, 1.0 -1.49, and 1.5 and greater
Costa Rica	0.5, 0.2 for public transport, commercial drivers and new drivers
Croatia (Republic of)	0.5, 0.0 for commercial drivers and youth under 24 years old
Cuba	0.5, 0.0 for commercial drivers and young and novice drivers
Cyprus	0.5, 0.2 for novice drivers and commercial drivers
Czech Republic	0.0
Denmark	0.5
Dominican Republic	0.5, 0.0 for professional drivers and 0.2 for motor cyclists
Ecuador	0.3, 0.1 for professional drivers
Egypt	-
El Salvador	0.5
England and Wales	0.8
Estonia	0.2
Ethiopia	0.8
Finland	0.5
France	0.5, 0.2 for bus drivers, 0.2 for inexperienced drivers, who have passed their driving test within the last 3 years
Georgia	0.3
Germany	0.5, 0.0 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 for commercial drivers and novice drivers
Guatemala	-
Honduras	0.7
Hong Kong	0.5
Hungary	0.0
Iceland	0.2
India	0.3, In the state of Kerala, 0.0

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Ireland, Republic of	0.5, 0.2 for learner drivers and professional drivers
Israel	0.5, 0.1 for young or novice drivers and professional drivers
Italy	0.5, 0.0 for young, novice (less than 3 years) and professional drivers
Jamaica	0.8
Japan	0.3
Kenya	0.8
Kyrgyzstan	0.5
Latvia	0.5, 0.2 for drivers in their first two years after gaining a driving license
Lebanon	0.5, 0.0 for drivers of buses and public transportation and for novice drivers
Lithuania	0.4, 0.0 for drivers in their first two years after gaining a driving license and drivers of four wheel driver vehicles over 3.5 tons and 9 seat vehicles
Luxembourg	0.5, 0.2 for professional drivers and drivers with less than 2 years of experience
Macedonia	0.5
Malaysia	0.8
Maldives, Republic of	-
Malta	0.5, 0.2 for commercial and novice drivers
Mauritius	0.2
Mexico	0.5 - 0.8 (varies by state)
Moldova	0.3
Monaco	0.5
Montenegro	0.5
Mongolia	0.4
Morocco	0.2
Nepal	0.0
The Netherlands	0.5, 0.2 for those who have obtained their driving license in the last 5 years
New Zealand	0.5, 0.0 if under 20
Nicaragua	0.5
Nigeria	0.5
Norway	0.2

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Panama	0.0, 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 consider a very serious offence)
Peru	0.5, 0.25 for professional drivers
Philippines	0.5, 0.0 for professional drivers
Poland	0.2
Portugal	0.5, 0.2 for novice and commercial drivers
Puerto Rico	0.8, 0.2 for young or novice drivers 18-21
Qatar	0.0
Romania	0.0 beyond 0.8 drivers will not only receive a fine and have their license suspended, the offense will also be added to their criminal records
Russia	0.3
Scotland	0.5
Serbia	0.3, 0.0 for all professional/commercial drivers and young/ novice drivers
Singapore	0.8
Slovakia	0.0
Slovenia	0.5, 0.0 for young/ novice drivers (less than 3 years) and professional
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
Sweden	0.2
Switzerland	0.5, 0.1 for novice and commercial drivers
Taiwan	0.25
Thailand	0.5, 0.0 for professional drivers 0.2 for drivers younger than 20 and those on temporary license
Turkey	0.5 (0.0 for professional/ public service drivers)
Turkmenistan	0.3
Uganda	Uganda 0.5
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

Country	Standard BAC (in mg/ml)
Uruguay	0.0
Venezuela	0.5
Vietnam	0, 0.5 for motor cyclists
Zimbabwe	0.8