

# DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED: INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT DRIVERS' DECISIONS

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately one in three traffic fatalities in the United States has occurred in a crash involving an alcohol-impaired driver every year since 1995, despite substantial investment in efforts to combat impaired driving. Moreover, recent trends are concerning. Rates of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the years that followed. An average of 37 people were killed every day in 2022 in crashes that involved alcohol-impaired drivers. These statistics vary greatly, however, in relation to place, time, and demographic characteristics. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is working with researchers at NORC at the University of Chicago to examine how drivers make decisions regarding whether or not to drive after drinking alcohol.

## PROJECT GOAL AND PLAN

Drivers' decisions regarding whether to drive after drinking alcohol are influenced by many individual, interpersonal, social, and contextual factors. The goal of this project is to understand how these factors impact the decisions that drivers make. This will be accomplished by reviewing past research; examining data from alcohol-related and non-alcohol-related crashes; and conducting a large-scale survey of a nationally representative sample of drivers. The findings can be used by traffic safety stakeholders to develop strategies for reducing the incidence of driving while impaired, especially among populations at increased risk.

## Project Team

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## Period of Performance

Q2 2025 – Q4 2026