

# Illinois Marijuana Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes are Increasing

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## Summary

Since the Illinois law for medical marijuana was passed in 2013 there has been a steady increase of the involvement of marijuana impaired drivers being involved in fatal crashes. With only medical marijuana available and cardholders prohibited from driving under the influence, about 17% of the fatalities involved marijuana high drivers resulting in the death of more than 500 persons with more than 200 innocent victims in the crash in the last 5 years (See Table 1). As the numbers of medical marijuana cardholders increase it is expected that the percentage of fatalities in Illinois will rise and soon rival drunk driving as the No. 1 cause of fatal crashes.

If Illinois becomes a Recreational Marijuana state and the percentage of drivers involved in fatal crashes testing positive for marijuana follows the percentage of existing Recreational Marijuana states, the number of total fatalities in Illinois would have increased from 114 to 149, a 31% increase (See Table 3)

While the percentage of fatalities that are marijuana related has increased, testing of drivers for drugs has dropped a statistically significant percent, from 62% in 2014 to 43% in 2015 (See Table 1), calling into question the validity of the Illinois traffic safety data base. For example, in Cook County where there were 8 drivers marijuana impaired, 145 drivers were not tested for any drugs (See Table 2).

Most notable characteristics of the marijuana driver are that 75% are killed in the crash (See Table 1), 40% are killed from 4pm to midnight (See Table 5), and 46% are DUI (See Table 5).

## Background

The Illinois Medical Marijuana program was signed into law in 2013 and implemented in January 2015. As of June 2017, there are 20,600 qualifying cardholders with 53 dispensaries. The medical cannabis act has a sunset clause and is set to be reconsidered in 2020.

However, data from the National Highway Safety Administration, NHTSA, shows that the presence of marijuana in fatal motor vehicle crashes has already been found and to a surprisingly high degree.

## Involvement of Marijuana in Fatal Crashes

Table 1 shows the number and percent of fatalities involving a marijuana driver for the years 2011 to 2015, the most recent data available. **Since less than half of the drivers in fatal crashes are tested for drugs, the actual number and percentage is likely to be much higher.**

Of highest importance in Table 1 is the number of innocent persons known to have been killed in marijuana fatal crashes. **Of the over 500 killed in the last 5 years over 200 innocent others were killed.**

Table 1. Fatalities for Illinois Drivers in Fatal Crashes with Marijuana, 2011 to 2015, NHTSA FARS Data						
Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011 – 15
IL Driver with Marijuana*	80	108	96	99	97	480
Percent Marijuana	12.1%	15.7%	13.9%	16.3%	16.6%	14.9%
Total Fatalities, where Driver Mj	85	117	102	107	114	525
Drivers Killed	49	69	63	65	73	319
Others Killed	36	48	39	42	41	206
% Drivers Killed	61.3%	63.9%	65.6%	65.7%	75.3%	66.5%
ILLINOIS Drivers in Fatal crashes	1246	1322	1346	1274	1357	6545
IL Drivers Drug Tested	659	690	690	607	586	3231
% Drug Tested	59.60%	60.70%	58.80%	61.70%	43.1%*	49.4%

\* Statistically significant decrease in drug testing of drivers.

A major detriment to accurately assessing drugged driving incidence is the lack of testing the blood of drivers during fatal crashes. The 2013 NHTSA report **shows** that only 62.6% of drivers of crash fatalities are tested for other drugs. In 2015, Illinois is consistent with this inadequate testing level **only** 58.8% of the counties with 3 or more **marijuana-related fatalities were tested (See Table 2)**. The most populated county, Cook **County, tests** blood for the presence of drugs only in 45.9% of fatal crashes. To accurately assess the true incidence of poly-drug driving, **all** fatal crashes should have the drivers' blood assessed for drugs.

Table 2. IL Counties with 3 or more Fatal Marijuana Crashes, 2015 FARS Data				
County	# Mj Drivers	Not Tested	% Not Tested	% Tested
COOK	8	145	54.1%	45.9%
MCLEAN	6	22	40.9%	59.1%
ST CLAIR	6	38	55.3%	44.7%
WILL	6	53	39.0%	61.0%
KANE	5	35	42.9%	57.1%
LAKE	4	42	50.0%	50.0%
CHAMPAIGN	3	16	68.8%	31.2%
CHRISTIAN	3	6	16.7%	83.3%
DE KALB	3	12	33.3%	66.7%
MACON	3	23	26.1%	73.9%
PEORIA	3	13	26.3%	73.7%
Total	50 of 91	405	41.2%	58.8%

Table 3 shows how Illinois compares to other states by status of marijuana legislation in the state. Clearly the recreational use states have the highest fatality rate. As shown in Table 3, the Illinois percentage of 16.6%, is slightly less than the average of 18.5% in other medical marijuana states.

The Table also shows that 2,038 marijuana drivers were killed and a total of 3,142 persons were killed in marijuana fatal crashes. Most notable is that 1,104 other innocent persons were killed in the marijuana crashes.

Table 3. Fatalities in Marijuana Fatal Crashes for Drivers and Others by State and Marijuana Legal Status, 2015 FARS Data.							
State	Mj Drivers ÷ Total Tested and Percent Marijuana	Mj Driver Killed	Total Killed	State	Mj Drivers ÷ Total Tested and Percent Marijuana	Mj Driver Killed	Total Killed
Recreational Marijuana Allowed				Non-Legal Status for Marijuana			
Colorado	80/361 (22.2%)	60	90	Alabama	84/599 (14.0%)	51	94
Washington	93/400 (23.3%)	62	98	Arkansas	91/433 (21.0 %)	50	104
Oregon	16/110 (14.5%)	0	19	Florida	140/1125 (12.4%)	110	154
<b>Total Rec.</b>	189/871 (21.7%)	122	207	Georgia	96/678 (14.2 %)	69	105
				Idaho	14/100 (14.0 %)	11	17
"Medical" Marijuana Allowed				Indiana	47/517 (9.1%)	30	55
Alaska	13/63 (20.6%)	6	11	Iowa	25/126 (19.8%)	21	33
Arizona	50/357 (14.0%)	33	60	Kansas	13/136 (9.6%)	11	16
California	226/1089 (20.8%)	160	257	Kentucky	80/549 (14.6 %)	56	94
Connecticut	29/194 (15.0%)	28	30	Louisiana	42/311 (13.5%)	27	48
Delaware	15/48 (31.3 %)	10	16	Mississippi	33/235 (14.0%)	26	38
DC	3/11 (27.3 %)	2	3	Missouri	99/409 (24.2%)	78	104
Hawaii	15/65 (23.1 %)	6	16	Nebraska	20/84 (23.8%)	18	20
Illinois	97/586 (16.6 %)	73	114	N Carolina	2/33 (6.1%)	0	2
Maine	3/17 (17.6%)	2	4	N Dakota	5/90 (5.6%)	4	6
Maryland	1/254 (0.4%)	0	1	Ohio	163/815 (20.0%)	127	172
Mass.	35/130 (26.9 %)	35	37	Oklahoma	33/341 (9.7%)	0	39
Michigan	94/433 (21.7%)	61	105	Penn	84/677 (12.4%)	69	90
Minnesota	32/230 (13.9%)	25	35	S Carolina	125/506 (24.7%)	113	141
Montana	33/204 (16.2%)	20	36	S Dakota	3/54 (5.6%)	1	3
Nevada	47/226 (20.8%)	36	54	Tennessee	75/653 (11.5%)	44	80
New Hamp	26/105 (24.8%)	18	24	Texas	187/1118 (16.7%)	138	228
New Jersey	49/341 (14.4%)	34	53	Utah	38/254 (15.0%)	27	45
New Mexico	17/126 (13.5%)	17	18	Virginia	66/414 (15.9%)	66	69
New York	113/484 (23.3%)	87	127	W Virginia	28/175 (16.0%)	28	32
Rhode Island	10/31 (32.3%)	9	11	Wisconsin	88/421 (20.9%)	53	99
Vermont	11/35 (31.4%)	11	13	Wyoming	21/77 (27.3%)	15	22
<b>Total Med</b>	919/5029 (18.3%)	673	1025	<b>Total Non Legal</b>	1702/10930 (15.6%)	1243	1910
<b>Ave Total U.S.</b>	2810/16830 (16.7%)	2038	3142				

\* Statistical difference (p< .01), for Rec vs. Med states and Med vs. Non-Legal states. "States in RED = or > Rec States Mj as 21.7%."

## Marijuana Most Common Drug in Fatal Crashes

As shown in Table 4, **marijuana** is the No. 1 drug found in the blood of Illinois drivers in fatal crashes at about 45%. The total of Narcotics at about 22% and Depressants at 18% is less than the total tested and found for marijuana at 45%. Note that in Table 1 above, the percent of drivers tested for drugs in Illinois has dropped sharply from 2014 to 2015, and probably masks the extent of marijuana involvement in fatal crashes.

<b>Drug Type</b>	<b>No. of Tests</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Narcotics</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
<b>Depressants</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>18.0%</b>
<b>Stimulants</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>11.4%</b>
<b>Hallucinogens</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
<b>Marijuana</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>45.0%</b>
<b>Total Tests</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Top Counties for Marijuana Fatal Crashes

As shown in Table 5, Cook (Chicago), St. Clair (Belleville), Will (Joliet), and McLean (Bloomington) were the top four counties for marijuana fatal crashes. With 102 Counties in Illinois, most counties either had no marijuana fatalities or just 1 fatality.

<b>1</b>	<b>COOK</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>ST CLAIR</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>MCLEAN</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>WILL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>KANE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>LAKE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>WINNEBAGO</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>CHAMPAIGN</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>CHRISTIAN</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>DE KALB</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>MACON</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>MADISON</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>PEORIA</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>TAZEWELL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total top 14 Counties</b>		<b>61</b>

## Many Illinois Marijuana Drivers Also DUI

Table 6 shows that over 30% of the marijuana drivers are also DUI with a BAC at 0.08% or higher. This is similar to the finding in other states where the marijuana drivers are also mixing marijuana with alcohol well above the impairment level of alcohol. Note also that 60.8% of marijuana drivers had no alcohol.

Mj Drivers	Number Drivers	Percent of Drivers
NO Alcohol, BAC 0.00	59	60.80%
BAC 0.01-0.07	8	8.20%
<b>DUI, BAC 0.08+</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30.90%</b>
<b>Total Mj drivers</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## Illinois Marijuana Drivers Younger than DUI Drivers

Table 7 shows the median age and the percent of drivers in several age groups for both Illinois marijuana and DUI drivers. A 10-year median age difference exists between marijuana and DUI drivers, with marijuana drivers younger. The percentages of marijuana drivers under age 25 at 44.3% and under age 21 at 15.5% are much higher and quite different than DUI drivers. The differences are statistically and practically different. Marijuana is often called the gateway drug and **the Illinois data clearly shows the increased involvement for younger drivers in fatal crashes.**

Group	Mj Drivers	DUI Drivers
Median Age	26	36
% 21 and Under	15.50%	6.10%
% < Age 25	44.30%	20.40%

## Time of Marijuana Fatal Crashes are different than DUI Fatal Crashes

Table 8 shows that Illinois marijuana fatal crashes are most prevalent 4-8am and 4 to 8pm compared to 8pm to Midnight and Midnight-4am for DUI crashes. The more daytime fatal crashes for marijuana has resulted in a higher percentage of total fatalities per crash because of the traffic volume, and a higher percentage of innocent persons killed.

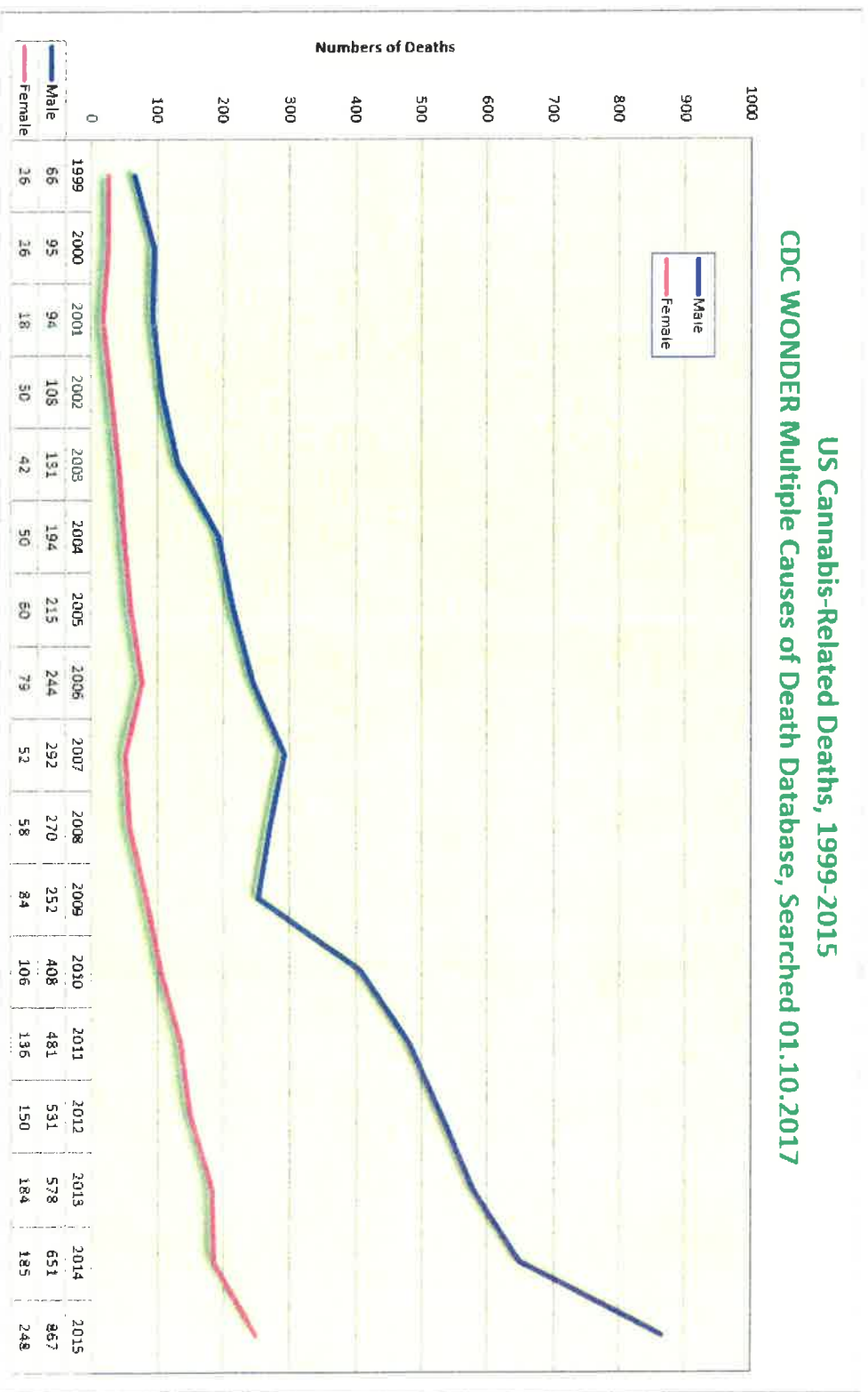
**Table 8. Illinois Crash Hour of Marijuana & DUI Drivers,  
2015 FARS Data**

Crash Hour	Mj IL		DUI IL	
	#	%	#	%
4am-7:59am	20	20.60%	28	14.50%
8am-11:59am	8	8.20%	7	3.60%
12pm-3:59pm	16	16.50%	10	5.20%
4pm-7:59pm	23	23.70%	39	20.20%
8pm-11:59pm	16	16.50%	51	26.40%
Mid-3:59am	14	14.40%	58	30.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

2 highest Mj M-4am & 4-8pm. For DUI M-4am & 8-12pm.

# THC Deaths, USA 1999 - 2015

US Cannabis-Related Deaths, 1999-2015  
 CDC WONDER Multiple Causes of Death Database, Searched 01.10.2017



Year	Male	Female
1999	66	26
2000	95	26
2001	94	18
2002	108	30
2003	131	42
2004	194	50
2005	215	60
2006	244	79
2007	292	52
2008	270	58
2009	252	84
2010	408	106
2011	481	136
2012	531	150
2013	578	184
2014	651	185
2015	867	248
All Years	5477	1534

Both Sexes **7011**