



ALCOHOL-IMPAIRED DRIVING IN WASHINGTON

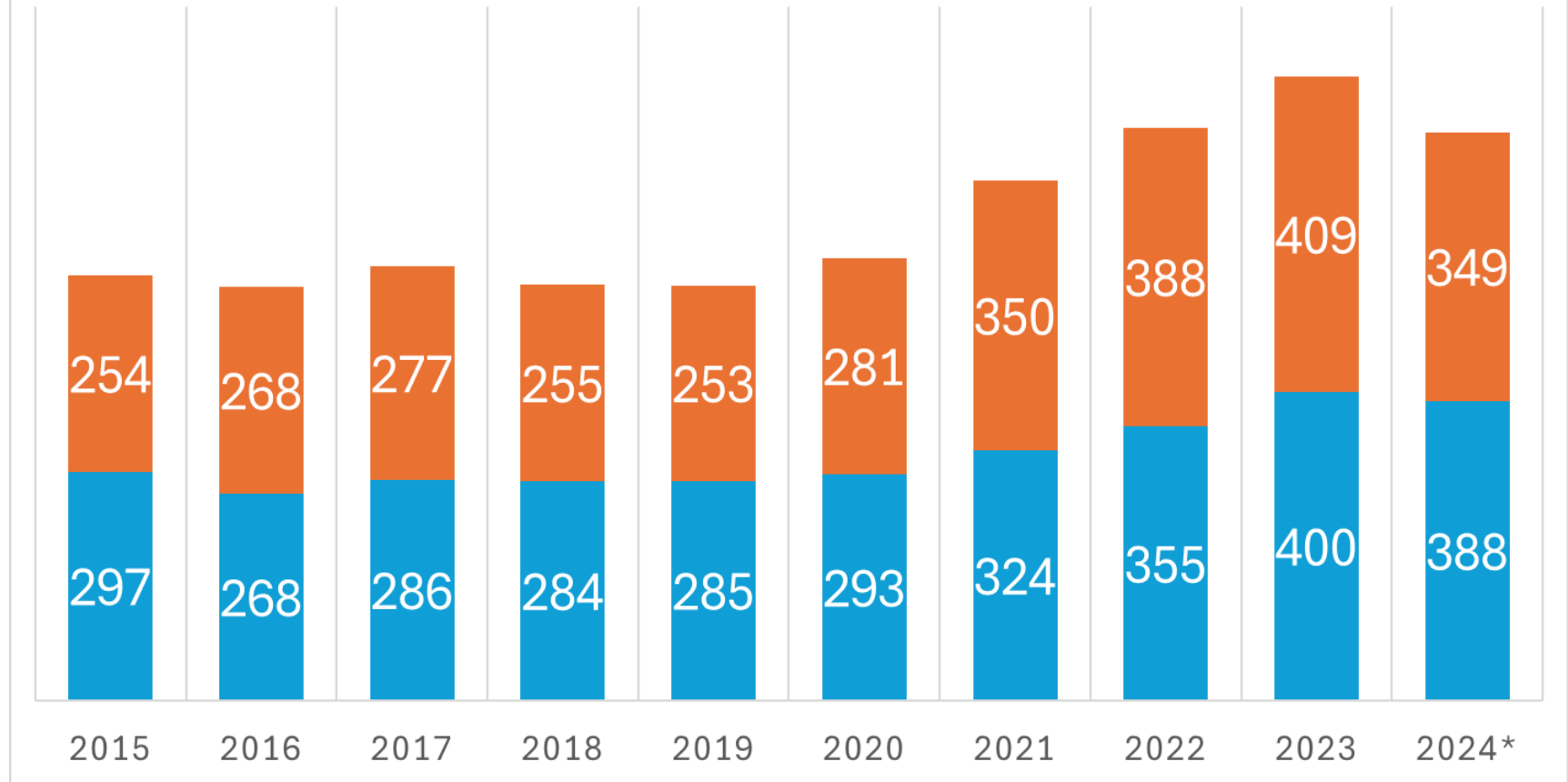
Mark McKechnie, WA Traffic Safety Commission

WASHINGTON DEATHS INVOLVING IMPAIRED AND NON-IMPAIRED DRIVERS (2015-2024*)

*2024 data are still preliminary

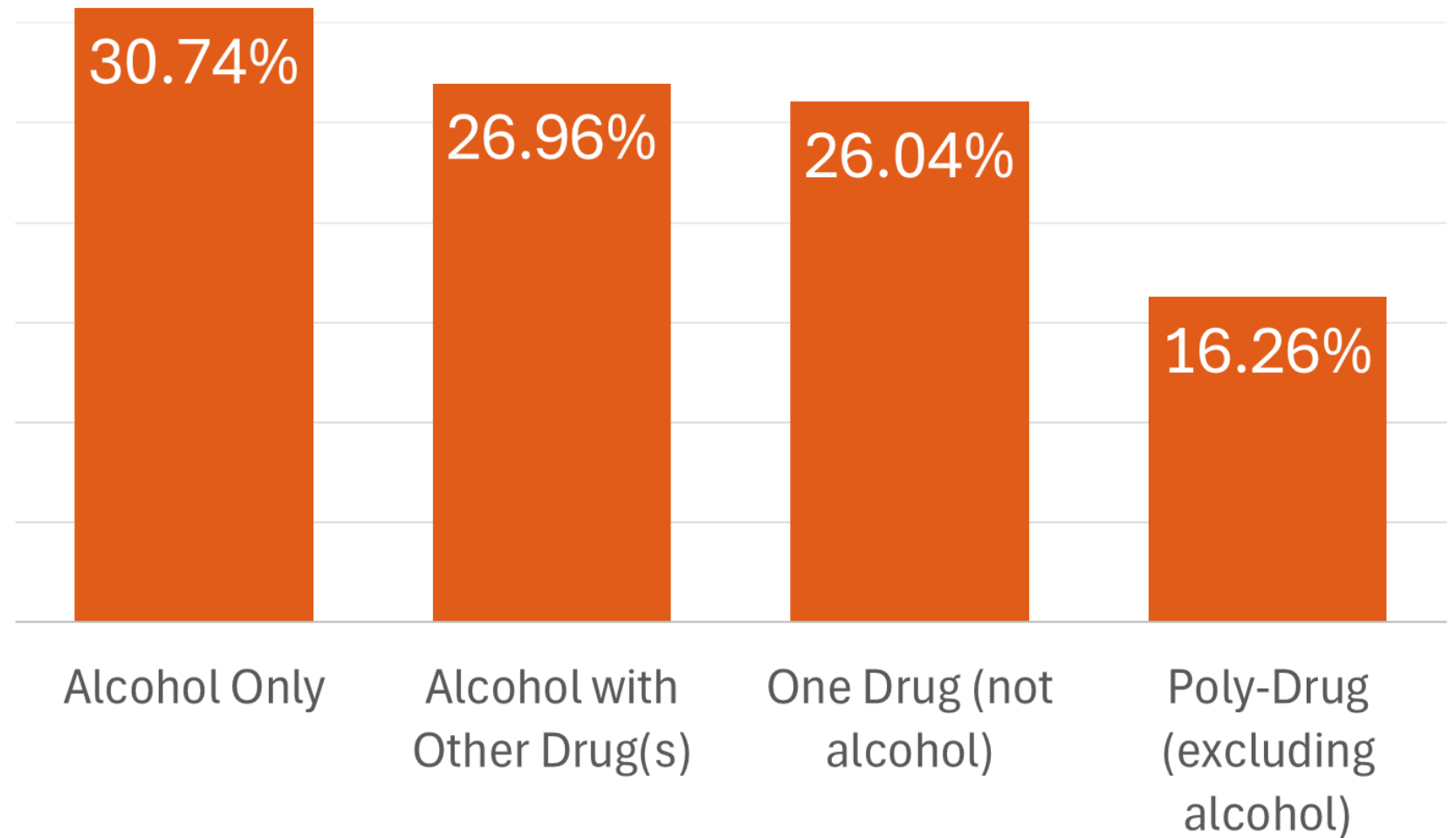
TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN WASHINGTON INVOLVING IMPAIRED AND NON-IMPAIRED DRIVERS, 2015-2024*

■ Non-Impaired Drivers ■ Impaired Driver Involved



ALCOHOL IS THE MOST COMMON DRUG, ALONE OR IN COMBINATION, DETECTED IN IMPAIRED DRIVERS INVOLVED IN FATAL CRASHES

ALCOHOL/DRUG PROFILES OF IMPAIRED DRIVERS INVOLVED IN FATAL CRASHES, WASHINGTON: 2015-2024



Total Alcohol impaired: 57.7%

AGE AND BAC

Age group	Washington <i>per se</i> BAC limit	Percentage of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes from this age group
15-20	0.02	7.91%
21-24	0.08	15.65%
25-29	0.08	14.92%
30-34	0.08	12.77%
35-39	0.08	11.19%

**INCREASE IN
HIGH-RISK
BEHAVIORS:

SPEEDING
AND BAC IN
FATAL
CRASHES
(2015-2024*)**

Alcohol Levels of drivers involved in a fatal crash (includes alcohol only and poly-drug impairment)	Drivers who were speeding (%)
0.00 BAC and no other drugs detected	11%
0.00 BAC, but impaired by one or more other drugs	30%
0.01 - 0.049	37%
0.05 - 0.079	43%
0.08 - 0.119	46%
0.12 - 0.159	48%
0.16 - 0.199	52%
0.200 or higher	47%

Source: WTSC Fatal Crash Files, [Impairment-Involved Fatal Crashes dashboard](#)

ALCOHOL IMPAIRED DRIVING IS DEADLY

Over five years, 2020-2024:

- 936 people died in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver
- This includes 156 people who died in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver with a BAC < 0.08

RACE AND ETHNICITY: FATALITY RATES PER 100,000 WASHINGTON POPULATION

Group	Fatalities of Any Road User Involving an Impaired Driver per 100,000 population
American Indian or Alaska Native	17.61
Black	5.1
Hispanic	4.25
Washington Average	3.73
White	3.67
Multiracial	1.91
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.56

LOWER PER SE BLOOD ALCOHOL LIMITS FOR
DRIVING:

EDUCATION + DETERRENCE =
SAFER ROADS

IMPACT OF 0.05 *PER SE* LAWS

**Drivers change
behavior**



More people plan ahead (sober driver, transit, rideshare, etc.)

Existing DUI enforcement provides deterrence (“It’s just not worth it.”)

Effects:

Fewer impaired drivers on the road

Lower average BACs among drivers decrease crash risks

Fewer crashes from impaired driving

RESULTS OF REDUCTION FROM 0.08 TO 0.05

- Average of 11% decrease in alcohol-related traffic fatalities
- Average 5% in serious injury crashes
- No significant increase in arrests
- No significant impact on alcohol consumption or hospitality industry

Source: [Fell & Scherer, 2017](#)

SURVEY CONDUCTED BY DHM RESEARCH, NOVEMBER 2025

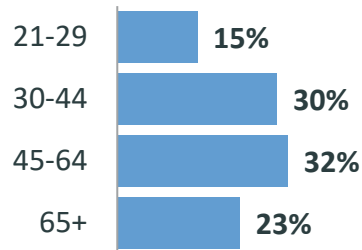
METHODOLOGY

- Mixed-mode (phone and text-to-online) survey of N=850 Washington residents (ages 21+)
- Conducted November 1-8, 2025; 12 minutes to complete
- Quotas were set by gender, age, area of the state, education, race and income to ensure a representative sample
- Margin of error $\pm 3.4\%$
- Due to rounding, some totals may differ by ± 1 from the sum of separate responses

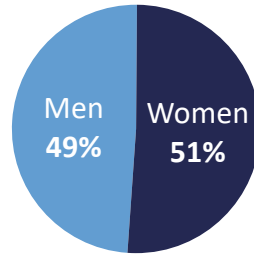
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

N=850 Washington State Drivers

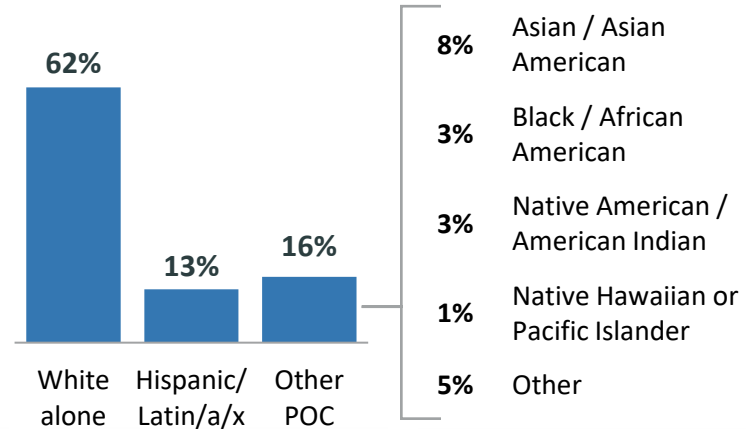
AGE



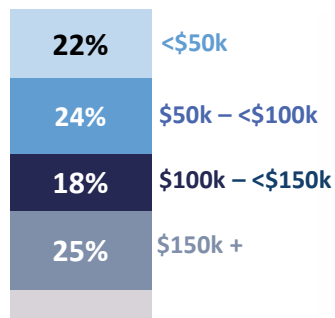
GENDER



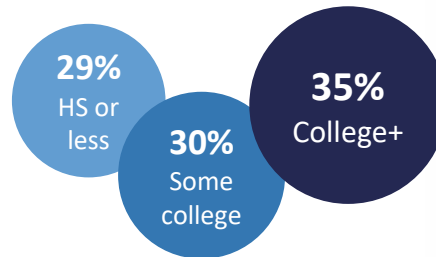
RACE / ETHNICITY



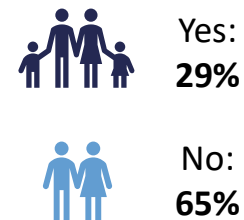
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



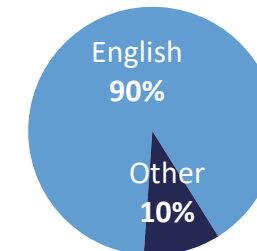
EDUCATION



CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD



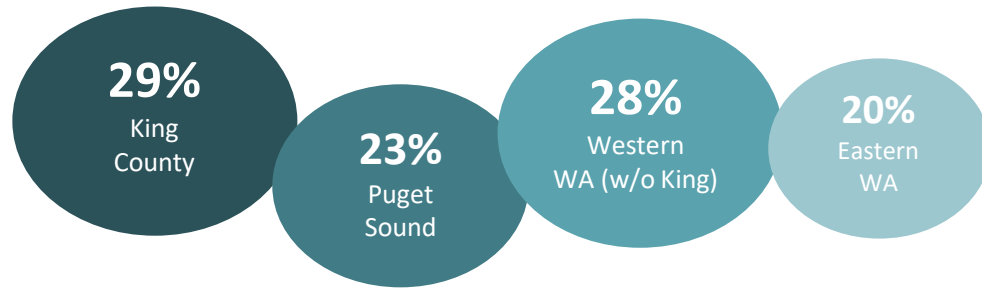
LANGUAGE



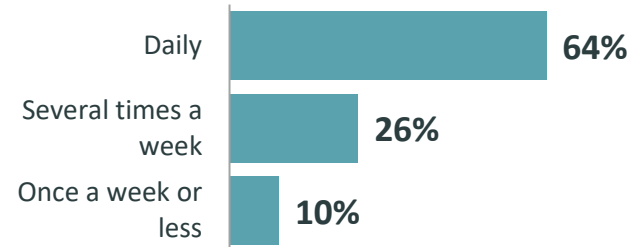
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

N=850 Washington State Drivers

AREA



DRIVING FREQUENCY



CONSUMES ALCOHOL

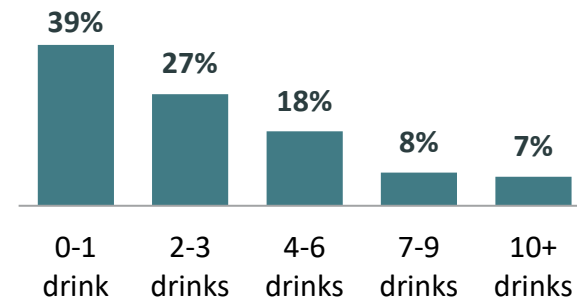


No:
44%



Yes:
56%

WEEKLY CONSUMPTION*



*n=472; among those who drink alcohol

Majorities across groups believe someone can be impaired under the limit.

% YES, can be impaired under the 0.08% BAC limit

Nearly 1 in 4 alcohol drinkers surveyed do not believe they can be impaired below 0.08% BAC.

GENDER



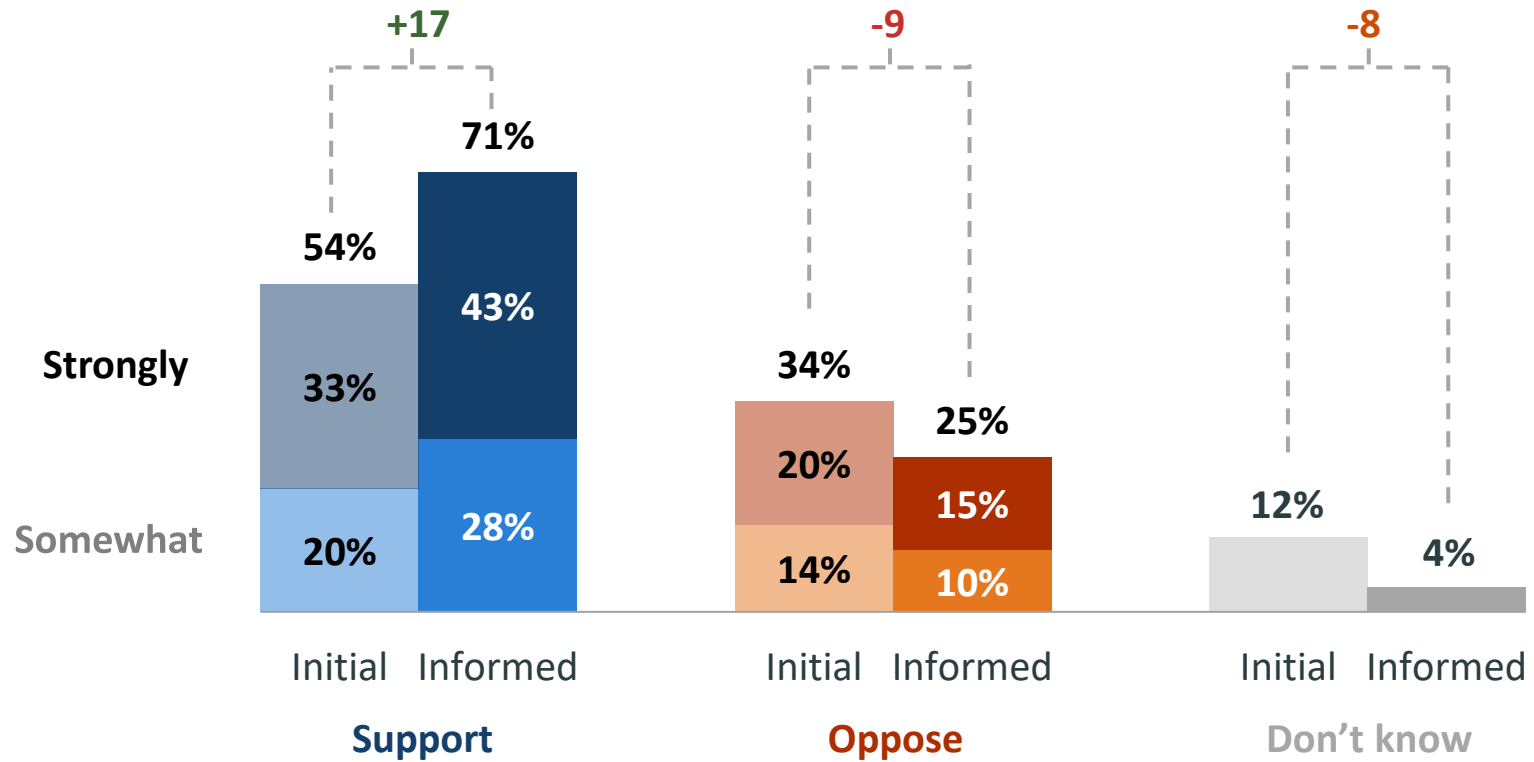
DRINKS ALCOHOL



RACE

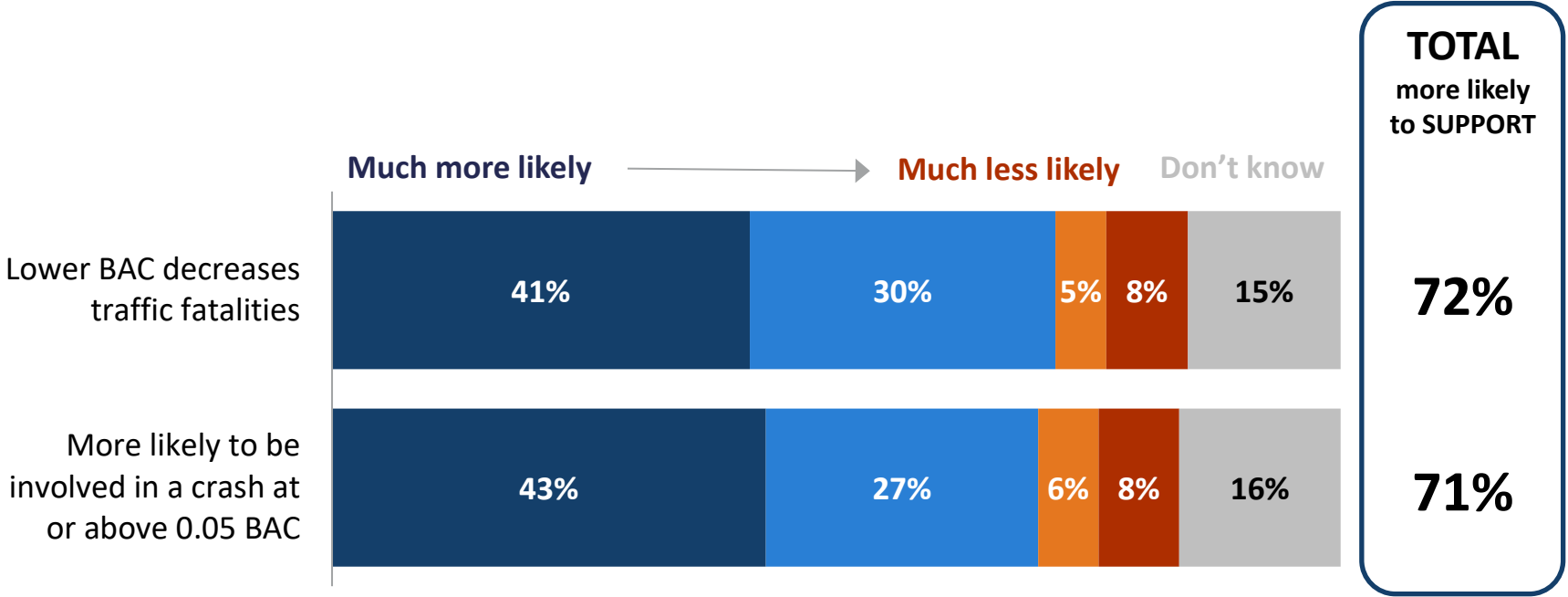


After sharing facts, support for lowering the per se BAC limit increases and is stronger.

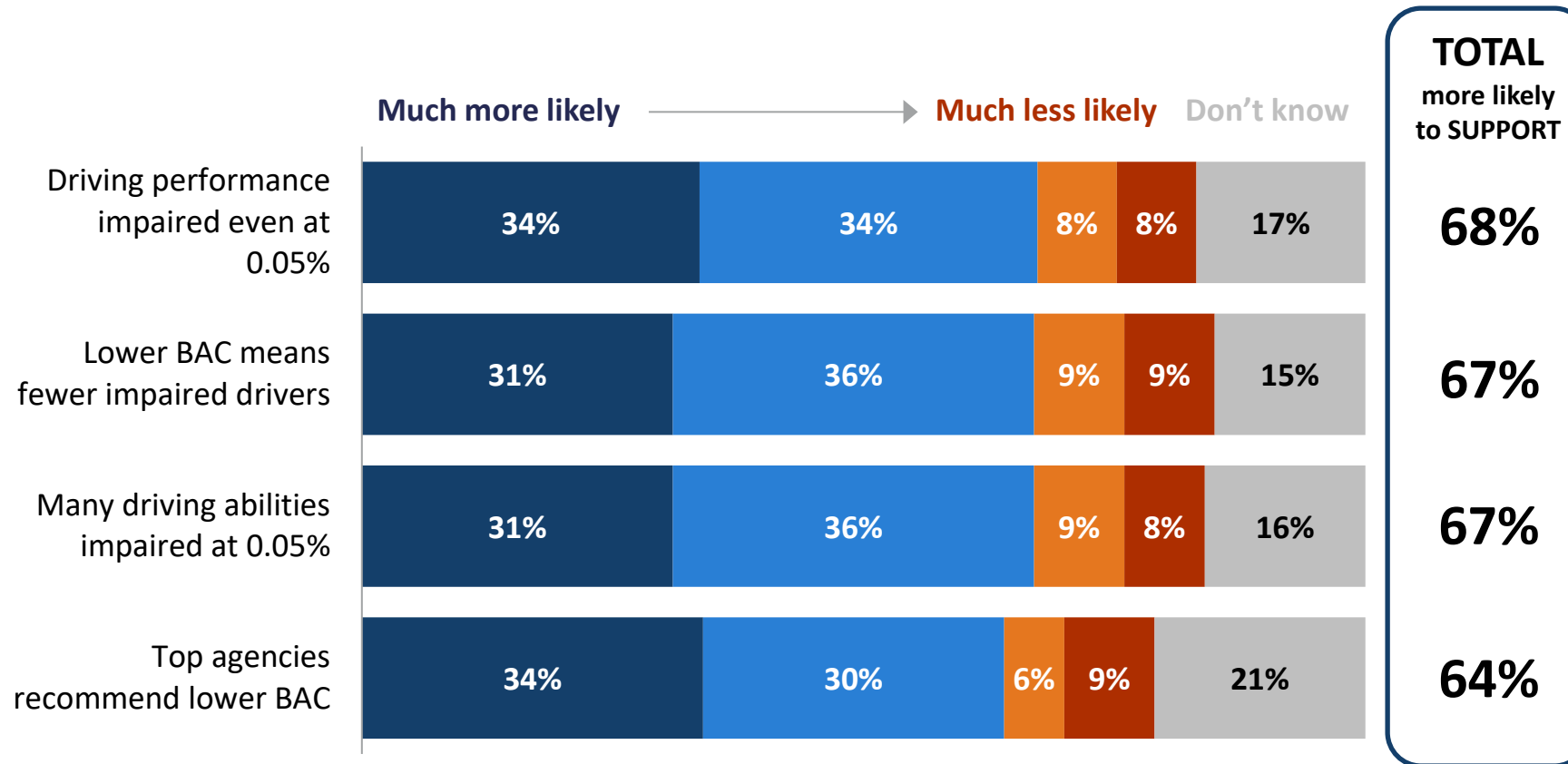


Shorthand	Full message statement shown to respondents
BAC is lower in other countries	150 countries, eleven Canadian Provinces, nine Mexican states, and the state of Utah all have BAC limits of 0.05% or lower. Their combined population is 6.5 billion people.
Lower BAC decreases traffic fatalities	Researchers have found that countries or states that reduce the BAC limit for driving from 0.08% to 0.05% see an average 11% decrease in traffic fatalities involving alcohol-impaired driving.
<i>Lower BAC means fewer impaired drivers</i>	In states and countries that have reduced their BAC levels, they find that fewer people drive under the influence of alcohol and the level of alcohol among people who do drive is reduced.
Driving performance impaired even at 0.05%	Research has found that driving performance declines between 25% and 55% for a person with a BAC of 0.05%.
Many driving abilities impaired at 0.05%	Impairment at 0.05% BAC means that a person's abilities to drive are reduced in terms of reaction time, visual functioning, ability to shift attention, steering, emergency responses, and coordination.
Can consume 2-3 drinks and stay below 0.05%	An average male can drink three standard drinks and an average female can consume two standard drinks on an empty stomach within two hours and remain below 0.05% BAC. [Note: a standard drink is one serving of the following in size and alcohol content: 12 ounces of beer, 5%; 5 ounces of wine, 12%; 1.5 ounces of hard alcohol, 40%.]
<i>More likely to be involved in a crash at or above 0.05 BAC</i>	With a BAC level of 0.05% - 0.079%, a driver (ages 21-34) is nearly 5 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash compared to a driver with no alcohol in their system.
Lower BAC does not affect tourism or sales	After adopting 0.05%, Utah did not experience any decreases in tourism or alcohol sales.
Other countries with lower BAC consume more alcohol	Many countries with lower BAC limits for driving consume more alcohol than Americans do, including Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain.
Top agencies recommend lower BAC	Many national and international health and safety organizations have recommended that the United States adopt a BAC limit of 0.05% for driving, including the National Transportation Safety Board, National Academies of Science, the American Medical Association, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and AAA.
Lower BAC does not affect police procedures	Police procedures for stopping, assessing, and arresting suspected impaired drivers do not change based upon a lower BAC limit.

Arguments that highlight preventing crashes and fatalities are the most impactful.

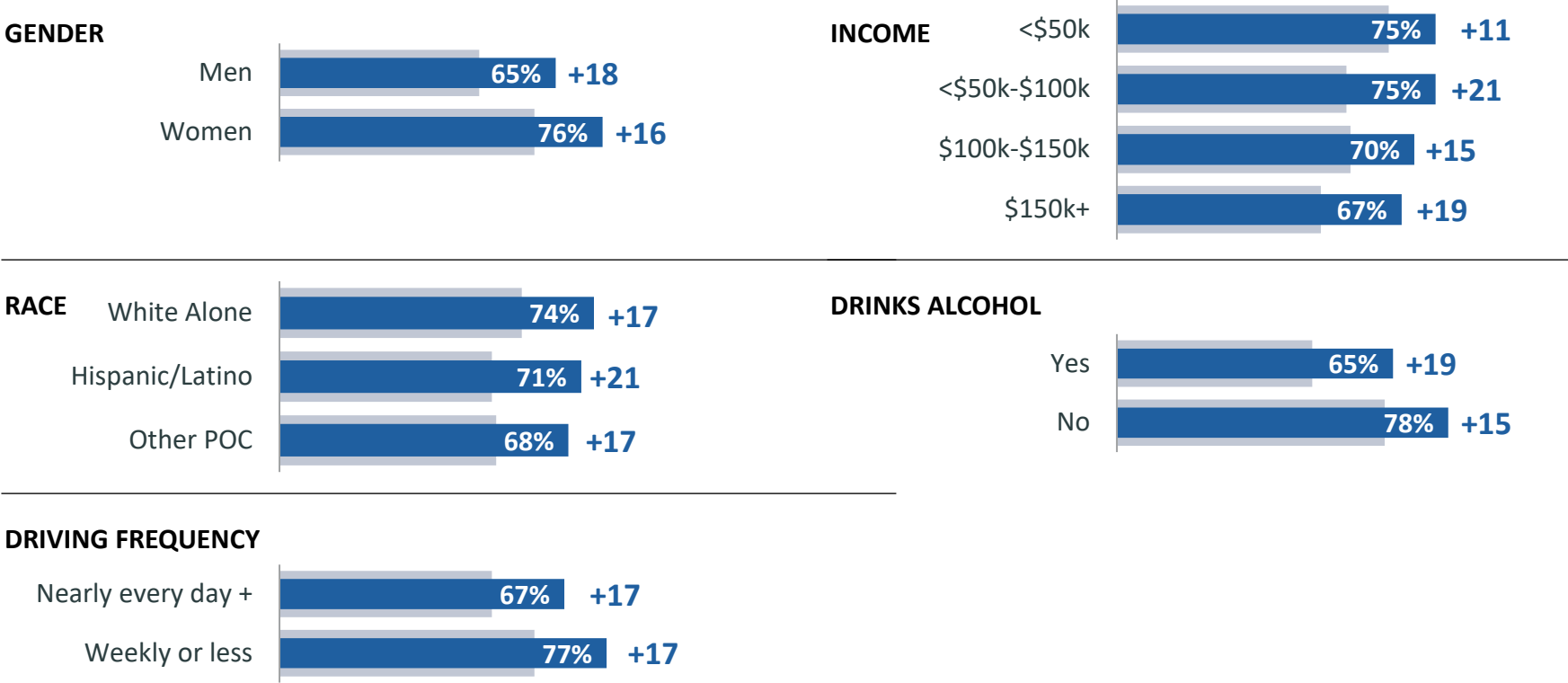


Facts related to impact on driving performance or endorsement from reputable sources are also helpful.



Support for lowering the per se BAC limit is widespread and increases among all groups.

% **support** lowering the BAC limit to 0.05 (*Initial vs Informed*)



Questions

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[0.05 BAC Saves Lives - Washington
Traffic Safety Commission](#)

