



Sobriety Checkpoints

Possible Lives Saved Nationally

303

Economic Impact

\$3,999,600,000

Background

Sobriety checkpoints provide officers with an opportunity to look for signs of alcohol or drug impairment, such as slurred speech or the odor of alcohol. These temporary roadblocks are set up by law enforcement at a fixed location to briefly stop vehicles according to a predetermined, neutral plan (e.g., every fourth car). While these checkpoints do remove impaired drivers from the road, their power is predominantly through general deterrence of impaired driving. By increasing the perceived risk of detection and arrest, sobriety checkpoints encourage the general driving public to choose not to drive while impaired, preventing crashes before they occur.

Data and Research

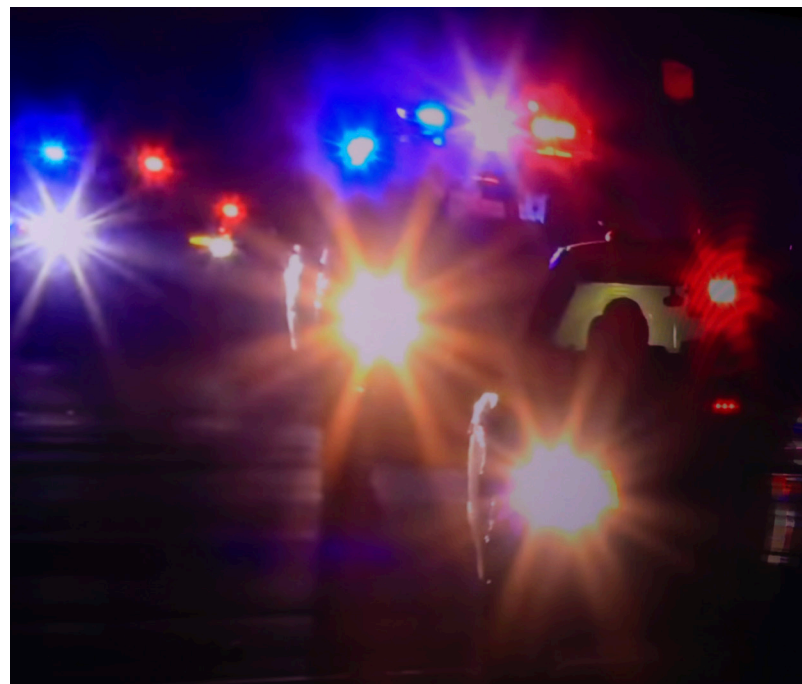
Research consistently shows that highly publicized, highly visible, and frequently conducted sobriety checkpoints are an effective countermeasure against impaired driving crashes.

- A meta-analysis found checkpoints reduce crashes involving alcohol by 17%, and all crashes by 10 to 15%.¹⁰ The CDC's systematic review of 15 high-quality studies found that publicized checkpoints reduce alcohol-related fatal crashes by 9%, and among high-risk populations, including males and drivers 21 to 34 years of age.¹¹
- Research suggests that high-visibility sobriety checkpoints deter drinking and driving in a community for approximately one week.¹²

Public Opinion: In a representative survey of 2,000 U.S. drivers, two-thirds (65%) were in favor of conducting sobriety checkpoints at least monthly.¹³

Estimated Lives Saved: If all U.S. states permitted and utilized sobriety checkpoints, 303 lives could be saved annually.

Economic Impact: This estimates how much money society saves when policies prevent deaths and injuries in car crashes. If all states states permitted and utilized sobriety checkpoints, almost four billion dollars would be saved.



Policy Recommendation

States should permit, and regularly utilize, sobriety checkpoints that are:

- acceptable under state constitutional law;
- tightly controlled to adhere to legal standards;
- strictly supervised and overseen by responsible officials;
- scheduled when and where crash and arrest data reasonably suggest a high rate of impaired drivers is expected;
- deployed across communities such that racial disparities tied to this enforcement tactic are prevented;
- conducted so as to reduce motorist delay and avoid creating a traffic hazard;
- well-publicized in advance; and
- periodically evaluated to determine their effectiveness as a deterrent.

This policy recommendation is supported by AAA, MADD, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Relevant Research

For more resources and tools visit newsroom.aaa.com/impaireddriving.

