

Majority of Americans believe designated driver important: Poll

Key points:

- > A new poll by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. with sponsorship from Anheuser-Busch reveals almost all Americans (98 percent) think that having a designated driver who agrees to do the driving is important when planning to go out with friends when there will be drinking. The poll was conducted in partnership with TIRF in Canada.
- > In recent years, the average number of annual fatalities involving alcohol-impaired driving has declined and since 1982, these fatalities have declined 53 percent.
- > According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), alcohol-impaired driving fatalities (involving a driver with a Blood Alcohol Concentration of .08 or greater) accounted for 31 percent of total motor vehicle crash fatalities in 2014, corresponding to 9,967 lives lost.
- > A majority of Americans (78 percent) are concerned about the issue of alcohol-impaired driving.
- > Seventy percent of respondents reported that they had been a designated driver, corresponding to an estimated 140 million Americans, aged 21 years or older. Forty five percent have used a designated driver (90 million) and 28 percent (56 million) have used some other form of transportation such as a taxi or bus.
- > Americans are looking for – and using – safe rides home. Of all respondents, 51 percent reported either using a designated driver or alternative transportation (an estimated 103 million drivers aged 21 years or older) and 78 percent reported using a designated driver, being a designated driver, or using alternative transportation (an estimated 156 million drivers aged 21 years or older).
- > There is still work to be done. Eight percent of respondents self-reported alcohol-impaired driving when they thought they were over the legal limit.

Washington, DC, December 17, 2015 /CNW/ – A new Road Safety Monitor (RSM) poll conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. (TIRF USA) and sponsored by Anheuser-Busch reveals that almost all Americans (98 percent) think that having a designated driver who agrees to do the driving is important when planning to go out

with friends when there will be drinking. The public opinion poll conducted in October and November 2015 investigated Americans' opinions and behaviors in relation to this issue and is based on a sample of 5,009 drivers, aged 21 years or older.

"Fatalities involving alcohol-impaired driving have declined to approximately 10,000 in comparison to previous years, which recorded averages of 13,000 to 14,000 according to official statistics. When using a longer lookback period, drunk-driving fatalities have actually decreased 53 percent since 1982", explains Ms. Tara Casanova Powell, Director of Research at TIRF USA. "Although this drop reveals progress in reducing the problem, data from recent years suggest that these declines may have plateaued since 2010, which means that alcohol-impaired driving requires continued attention and action if further improvements are to be realized."

The good news is that progress has been made and that Americans clearly consider this to be a top priority compared to other road safety and societal issues. Such levels of concern suggest there is support among the public to further reduce the problem. To illustrate, a majority of Americans (78 percent) are concerned about the issue of alcohol-impaired driving. However, the poll also found that 8 percent of respondents self-reported alcohol-impaired driving when they thought they were over the legal limit. When asked about reasons for engaging in this type of behavior, more than half of those respondents who indicated they had driven in these circumstances answered that they thought they were capable of driving at the time. In particular, 44 percent of these respondents thought they were okay to drive and 12 percent thought that they could drive very carefully when they thought they were over the legal limit.

According to Dr. Ward Vanlaar, Vice President Research of TIRF in Canada and a co-author of the study, research has clearly demonstrated that today the majority of Americans realize driving while impaired is dangerous; however, some people simply do not understand the risks they pose to themselves and others. "It is clear that while many people have gotten the message through education and enforcement, there are some drivers who believe they are less impaired, or better able to manage the effects of impairment, and do not realize they are unsafe to drive," says Vanlaar. "Also, our results are consistent with other research and indicate that young male drivers are at a heightened risk for driving drunk. This speaks to the importance of tailored approaches toward groups at risk."

One simple solution that can help is to educate the public about alternatives to driving such as using a designated driver who agrees to do the driving on a night out with family or friends, a taxi or public transportation where it is available. The poll asked respondents about their behaviors in this regard and revealed that 70 percent of

Americans reported that they had been a designated driver, 45 percent have used a designated driver and 28 percent have used some other form of transportation such as a taxi or bus. Casanova Powell explains that in absolute numbers, this corresponds to an estimated 140 million drivers aged 21 years or older who have been a designated driver, 90 million who have used a designated driver, and 56 million who have used some other form of transportation. To provide a more general picture, 51 percent of Americans reported either using a designated driver or alternative transportation (an estimated 103 million drivers aged 21 years or older) and 78 percent reported using a designated driver, being a designated driver, or using alternative transportation (an estimated 156 million drivers aged 21 years or older).

“Although designated driver programs alone will not solve the problem,” Casanova Powell says, “they can be a part of the solution, and the fact that so many drivers have already relied upon such alternatives shows that providing alternative solutions to drivers can help to encourage better decisions after a night out.”

About the poll. These results are based on the 2015 TIRF USA RSM, an annual public opinion survey developed and conducted by TIRF USA. A total of 5,009 American drivers aged 21 years or older completed the poll in October and November of 2015. Results can be considered accurate within plus or minus 1.4 percent, 19 times out of 20. The data were stratified and weighted by sex, age, and region. The majority of the questions were answered using a scale from one to six where six indicated high agreement, concern, or support and one indicated low agreement, concern, or support, as well as numerous yes/no questions. All of the respondents completed the survey online.

About TIRF USA. The mission of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation USA, Inc. (TIRF USA) is to develop and share the knowledge that saves – preventing injuries and loss of life on American roads, reducing related social, health and insurance costs, and safeguarding productivity. TIRF USA is an independent road safety research institute that obtained 501(c)3 non-profit status in the US in 2014 and is affiliated through an exchange of services agreement with TIRF in Canada, established in 1964. Visit us online at www.tirf.us or twitter.com/tirfusainc

About Anheuser-Busch. Anheuser-Busch and its employees build on a legacy of corporate social responsibility by focusing on three key areas: promoting alcohol responsibility, preserving and protecting the environment and supporting local communities. In the past three decades, Anheuser-Busch and its wholesalers have committed more than \$1 billion in national advertising campaigns and community-based programs to encourage responsible drinking and prevent underage drinking and



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drunk driving. Anheuser-Busch reduced total water use at its breweries 32 percent over the last 5 years and by 45.5 percent over the last 10 years. The company has been a leading aluminum recycler for more than 30 years. Since 1997, Anheuser-Busch and its Foundation have invested in local communities through donations of more than \$557 million to charitable organizations. The company also has provided more than 73 million cans of emergency drinking water to people impacted by natural and other disasters since 1988. Based in St. Louis, Anheuser-Busch, the leading American brewer, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Anheuser-Busch InBev, the leading global brewer. For more information, visit www.anheuser-busch.com

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For more information, please contact:

Tara Casanova Powell

Director of Research

TIRF USA Inc.

Tel.: 203-809-8709

Email: taracp@tirf.us

Connecticut Office

24 Farmington Drive, Hamden, CT 06518

Corporate Office

20 F Street, 7th Floor, Washington, DC 20001

Website: www.tirf.us

Email: tirf@tirf.us