Americans Are Concerned About Road Safety As More States Legalize Recreational Cannabis, New Survey Finds

- One-third of Americans have heard someone say: "I drive better when I've smoked marijuana"

- While drunk driving is on the decline, drug-impaired driving is on the rise[1]

- Eleven states and Washington, DC, have legalized marijuana for recreational use; Illinois, Michigan are two of the next states to begin adult-use sales in 2020

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., Oct. 22, 2019 — A new survey released by Abbott, a global healthcare leader, shows almost two-thirds of Americans (64%) are concerned about an increase in drugged driving crashes as more states legalize recreational marijuana.[2] This comes as 16,000 law enforcement and public safety representatives from around the world tackle the most critical public safety issues, including drug-impaired driving, at the annual International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference (Oct. 26-29) in Chicago.

According to the survey of 1,007 U.S. adults, conducted by Atomik Research on behalf of Abbott, more than 1 in 5 Americans (21%) know someone who has been in a car crash caused by a driver who was under the influence of drugs. Additionally, Americans strongly favor law enforcement having access to tools that curb the increase of crashes caused by drug-impaired drivers.

Additional statistics uncovered from the survey, designed to gauge behaviors and attitudes toward drug-impaired driving and road safety, include:

- 2 in 5 Americans (42%) personally know someone who has driven an automobile "soon after taking drugs"
- More than 8 in 10 (84%) Americans believe law enforcement needs a way to quickly test whether a driver is under the influence of drugs
- 40% of all respondents say they don't believe law enforcement has a reliable way to quickly test drivers for being under the influence of drugs during a traffic stop

These findings echo data recently collected in AAA's Foundation for Traffic Safety survey in which respondents in both AAA and Abbott's surveys showed that overwhelmingly (70% and 92% respectively) people feel it's dangerous to drive within an hour after ingesting marijuana.[3,4]

Victims and Experts Bear Witness to Tragedy of Drug-Impaired Driving
Brian Swift, executive vice president with Tarrant County Medical Society in Fort Worth, Texas, received a call in 2013 that would forever alter his life. He learned both of his parents were involved in a fatal car crash caused by a drug-impaired driver.

"In a moment that only took seconds, my family was changed forever," said Swift, who is a leading national voice in passing legislation to prevent drugged driving. "This loss has spurred me to get policymakers and the public to understand the tragic consequences of drug-impaired driving so other families don't have to go through what my family has experienced."

Swift's sentiments are echoed by Lt. John Flannigan, a retired Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) with the Vermont State Police and principal of Flannigan Safety Consulting: "Having to tell any family member that they've lost a loved one due to a completely preventable crash caused by a drug-impaired driver is one too many. These survey results show we have a long road ahead to educate people on the dangers of drug-impaired driving."

Tools and Technology to Keep Roads Safe
Roadside drug testing tools are critical to not only help law enforcement detect drug-impaired drivers but also act as a deterrent and cause a motorist to think twice before getting behind the wheel.

Currently, many law enforcement agencies rely on blood and urine tests to confirm whether a driver has taken drugs. However, blood sample collection can take hours to collect and analyze so it may not offer a true snapshot at the time of the incident or traffic stop. Police need an easier way to reliably and quickly test whether a driver is under the influence of drugs.

To help law enforcement detect and deter drug-impaired drivers at the roadside, Abbott developed SoToxa, a handheld device that analyzes a subject's oral fluid to quickly determine if they have recently taken drugs.

"We cannot backslide on road safety in the U.S., especially given all the progress we've made to reduce drunk driving crashes and fatalities," said Erin Holmes, vice president, Criminal Justice and Technical Writer, Criminal Justice Programs, and subject matter expert on alcohol and drug-impaired driving. "Legislators need to urgently address drug-impaired driving with the same resolve they attacked drunk driving. They owe it to the people who use the roads daily, especially in states that have moved to legalize recreational cannabis."

"These survey findings affirm what we hear throughout the states and countries that we visit, which is that drug-impaired driving is shockingly common and poorly understood," said Chris Scoggins, senior vice president, Rapid Diagnostics, Abbott. "We hope that all parties at the table – from policymakers and police, to academia and industry – can come together to address this pressing public safety challenge and keep our roadways safe.

ABOUT THE SURVEY
Abbott commissioned unbiased, third-party vendor, Atomik Research to run an online survey of 1,007 adults in the United States. Data were collected between June 21 and 28, 2019.

ABOUT SOTOXA
SoToxa™, formerly known as the Alere DDS®2 Mobile Test System, is a portable system designed for rapid screening and detection of drugs in oral fluid. SoToxa is able to generate test results in minutes, indicating the presence of amphetamine, benzodiazepines, cannabis (THC), cocaine, methamphetamine, and opiates.

In addition, the technology is lightweight, easy to use and built for the rugged and unpredictable nature of a police officer's real-life work environment. Because SoToxa uses oral fluid to screen for the active presence of the parent drug – not the drug's metabolite – it only registers recent usage and will not indicate historical drug usage.

Today, the device is used in countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany, where it's also approved to test for cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, methamphetamines and benzodiazepines.

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[1] Governors Highway Safety Association: https://www.ghsa.org/resources/news-releases/DUID18

[2] Abbott survey, June 2019

[3] AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's 2018 Traffic Safety Culture Index, June 2019

[4] Abbott's survey is not affiliated with surveys and research conducted by AAA

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