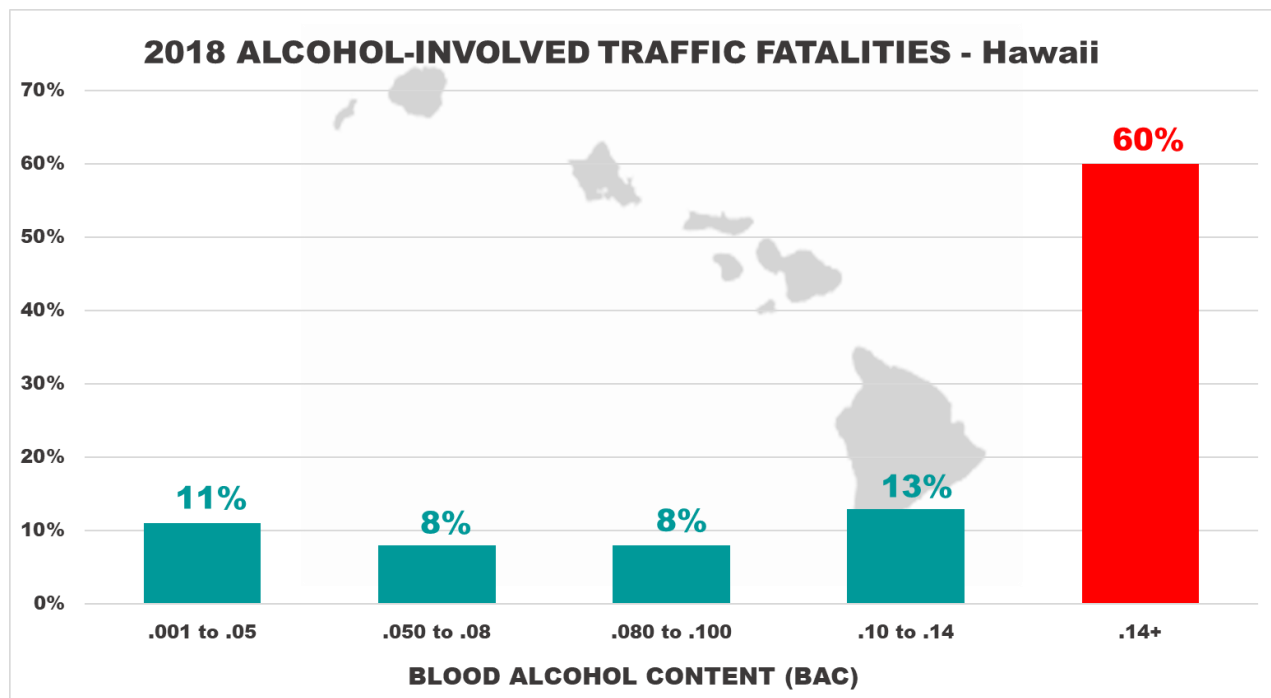


Primer: Traffic Fatalities in Hawaii

Hawaii lawmakers are considering legislation that would lower the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) arrest level for driving from 0.08 to 0.05. The 40 percent reduction would subject those who consume a drink or two prior to driving to jail. Predictably, at this low BAC level, impairment is not meaningful. Studies have shown talking on a *hands-free* cellphone—what is broadly considered responsible behavior—is more impairing than having a 0.05 BAC.

Traffic fatality data in Hawaii reflects these findings. Drivers with high-BAC levels are responsible for the vast majority of alcohol-involved traffic deaths—even when including incidents where only small traces have been detected and it’s unlikely alcohol was the primary factor. **The average BAC of a drunk driver involved in a fatal crash in the state is 0.18—nearly four times the proposed new level.**



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Lowering the BAC limit to 0.05 will do little to improve road safety. High-BAC offenders who are already breaking the law are unlikely to change their behavior because the legal definition of “drunk driving” is expanded. The change would mainly impact responsible consumers.

If Hawaii lawmakers want to truly improve road safety, new legislation needs to focus on the most pressing danger—high-BAC drunk drivers—not someone who has a drink with dinner.