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Making the 0.05 blood alcohol content limit work

...the critical role of public sensitization and enforcement

"A person is under the influence of alcohol where the alcohol concentration in the blood or breath of that person, as shown by competent medical evidence or any other evidence, is 0.05 percent or more when measured within two hours of the time operating or attempting to operate a motor vehicle." Section 1, Road Traffic Amendment Act 2025, Act 1153

The recent passage of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2025 (Act 1153) by Ghana's Parliament marks a watershed moment in our nation's fight against road carnage. Among its many provisions, the bill introduces revised standards for blood alcohol concentration limits for drivers from 0.08 percent to 0.05 percent, a change that civil society organizations and road safety advocates have championed for years. However, as we celebrate this

legislative victory, we must confront an uncomfortable truth: laws alone do not save lives. Without comprehensive public sensitization, even the most progressive legislation risks becoming another well-intentioned statute gathering dust in our law books.

Understanding the magnitude of Ghana's Road Safety crisis

Ghana's roads continue to exact a devastating human toll. In 2025 alone, provisional data from the National Road Safety Authority shows that 14,743 road traffic crashes were reported nationwide, resulting in 2,949 fatalities and 16,714 injuries. The data represents the life of a mother or father whose life has been cut off. It represents a pedestrian whose leg has been amputated because a car ran over him. These statistics underscore a worsening road safety crisis that demands urgent, sustained intervention from policymakers, enforcement agencies, and communities alike.

There is actually a science behind the BAC limit. Scientific research overwhelmingly supports revising blood alcohol concentration limits. While Ghana previously operated under a 0.08 percent threshold,

one of the highest globally, impairment begins well before drivers reach this level. Studies show that at 0.05 percent BAC, critical faculties such as reaction time, visual coordination, and decision-making are already significantly compromised.

Research from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation reveals a sobering reality: drivers with a BAC between 0.05 and 0.08 percent face at least seven times the risk of being involved in fatal single-vehicle crashes compared to sober drivers. This scientific evidence makes it clear that our previous legal threshold permitted levels of impairment that put both intoxicated drivers and countless innocent road users at grave risk.

Global best practices and success stories

Ghana's revised BAC limit aligns the nation with international best practices. More than 85 countries, including those in the European Union, Canada, Australia, and Japan, have adopted BAC limits of 0.05 percent or lower. These nations have paired their legislation with rigorous enforcement and sustained public education campaigns, that has yielded commendable results.

Japan's experience is particularly instructive. After adopting a 0.05 percent limit, the country recorded a 38 percent decline in alcohol-related accidents of all severities. Similarly, countries that reduced their BAC limits to 0.05 percent have experienced five to ten percent drops in alcohol-related crashes.

In the United States, Utah became the first state to adopt a 0.05 percent BAC limit in 2017. The result was a measurable reduction in alcohol-related traffic fatalities without any significant impact on general alcohol consumption.

The growing evidence also aligns with the EU. The European Union's approach also merits attention. Countries like the Netherlands have complemented their lower BAC limits with comprehensive educational programs. When drivers exceed the threshold, they are required to complete courses on alcohol and traffic safety.

Why public sensitization is non-negotiable

The passage of legislation is merely the first step. Without extensive public sensitization, the revised BAC limit will face significant implementation

challenges. Here's why public education must be prioritized:

There are cultural considerations to alcohol. Alcohol consumption is deeply embedded in Ghanaian social life, from weddings and funerals to festivals and casual gatherings. Many citizens may not immediately understand that the new law is not an attack on cultural traditions but a safeguard against reckless behavior. Public sensitization campaigns should frame the message carefully, emphasizing that responsible celebration and road safety are not mutually exclusive.

Knowledge Gaps: Most Ghanaians lack a precise understanding of what 0.05 percent BAC means in practical terms. How many drinks does it take to reach this threshold? Does it vary by body weight, gender, or food consumption? Without clear, accessible information, drivers cannot make informed decisions. Sensitization programs should translate scientific data into actionable knowledge that ordinary citizens can apply in their daily lives.

Enforcement Preparedness: As Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General, aptly stated, "enforcement mechanisms such as random breath testing and sobriety checkpoints are among the most effective strategies for reducing alcohol-related crashes. However, enforcement only works when the public understands what is being enforced and why". Officers conducting roadside tests will encounter less resistance and more cooperation from a well-informed populace.

A multi-stakeholder approach to sensitization

Effective public sensitization requires coordinated efforts across multiple sectors. The media must play a central role in disseminating information through news coverage, talk

shows, and public service announcements. Driver unions and transport operators should be engaged as partners, not adversaries, in spreading awareness among their members.

Civil society organizations like CUTS International Accra, which have advocated tirelessly for BAC revision, must continue their public sensitization efforts. Religious and traditional leaders can leverage their influence to convey the moral imperative to protect life. Educational institutions should integrate road safety into curricula, ensuring that young people understand these issues before they begin driving.

The National Road Safety Authority (NRSA) and the Motor Traffic and Transport Department of the Ghana Police Service must be equipped with breathalyzers and enforcement tools, as well as communication skills to educate drivers during stops. Every enforcement interaction should be an opportunity for education, not just punishment.

The path forward

Ghana's Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2025 (Act 1153) represents hope. Hope that we can stem the tide of preventable road deaths. But hope must be coupled with action. The Ministry of Transport, the National Road Safety Authority, and all stakeholders should launch comprehensive sensitization campaigns immediately. These campaigns should utilize radio, television, social media, community meetings, and workplace programs to reach every corner of the nation.

Public sensitization should not be a luxury or an afterthought; it is the bridge between legislative intent and real-world impact. We must understand that legislation without enforcement is no legislation at all.

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effectiveness. It is not merely about doing things right, minimizing waste, streamlining processes, and optimizing resource use, but equally about doing the right things: aligning effort with purpose, outcomes with societal needs, and actions with public value. In public service, where success is measured not only in outputs but in trust, equity, and impact, overlooking either dimension creates blind spots as large as the elephant itself.

Time Dimension

The multi-faceted nature of Productivity considers the time dimension as well, which translates as the relationship between results and the time taken to accomplish a task. Time is often a good denominator because it is the universal measurement and beyond human control. The less time used to achieve the desired result, the more productive the system is perceived to be.

Labour dimension

Productivity is not intensive labour, because while labour productivity reflects the beneficial results of labour, labour intensity means excess effort and is therefore not smart enough. The essence of productivity is working more

intelligently and not harder.

Value creation

This is the ability to create more value for customers. For many organizations, the economic goal and basis for existence is value creation. Financial gains for all (employees, management, government, and other stakeholders) are measured in terms of value added, which may come from increases in inputs or improvements in productivity. Hence, to such proponents, value creation underpins the essence of productivity.

Attitude of mind

The worker continually seeks to improve what already exists. This is based on the belief that one can do things better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today. It should be emphasized that to make tomorrow better than today is an innate wish of everyone. Hence, productivity can be a common objective for everyone, aiming to improve the quality of life for all. Therefore, productivity holds that we must make the best use of resources, minimize waste, and continuously improve through innovation and creativity.

Perception and indicative trends

The Public Sector has held its own over the years, and clearly, many interventions have been undertaken to improve the delivery of its mandate. Nonetheless, as enumerated above, delivery of set objectives alone may not necessarily connote productivity. The narrative below tries to expand on the notion.

• Productivity is not measured by the presence of staff

The adage that 'I am going to work' presents an interesting phenomenon in the public service. Here, the headcount of staff is erroneously misrepresented as an activity that will lead to productivity. People see work as a place they go to, not necessarily the actions that lead to specific outputs, which in turn lead to productivity gains.

• Introduction of systems and gadgets without stakeholder buy-in

Productivity thrives through the introduction of new systems and innovative ideas. This is meant to reduce, among other things, the intensive use of labour and to

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The Productivity Elephant: Blind spots in public service delivery

Productivity, much like truth, resists tidy definition. It is elusive, multifaceted, and often misunderstood, particularly by those who attempt to capture it with excessive precision. To comprehend productivity entirely is to confront complexity, ambiguity, and competing perspectives. It recalls the timeless parable of the blind men and the elephant: each participant, guided only by touch, offers a confident yet partial description of the creature. One grasps the trunk and declares it a serpent; another encounters the sturdy legs and insists it is a pillar; still another

feels the tail and imagines a rope. Each perception is sincere, yet incomplete. Only when these fragmented experiences are woven together does the full magnitude of the elephant emerge. So it is with productivity. No single definition suffices, because productivity is not a singular concept but a constellation of interrelated strands.

In Public Service Delivery, productivity manifests differently depending on who observes it: policy designers, frontline workers, managers, or citizens. Each sees a portion of the whole, shaped by their role, incentives, and constraints. The danger lies not in partial

understanding, but in mistaking the part for the whole. At its most conventional level, productivity is expressed as the relationship between outputs and inputs, often quantified as a ratio. Outputs represent the goods produced or services delivered, the tangible or intangible results that justify institutional effort. Inputs, by contrast, encompass the resources consumed in generating those results: labor, capital, time, technology, and organizational capacity. Yet this arithmetic alone does not capture the essence of productivity. Actual productivity resides at the intersection of efficiency and