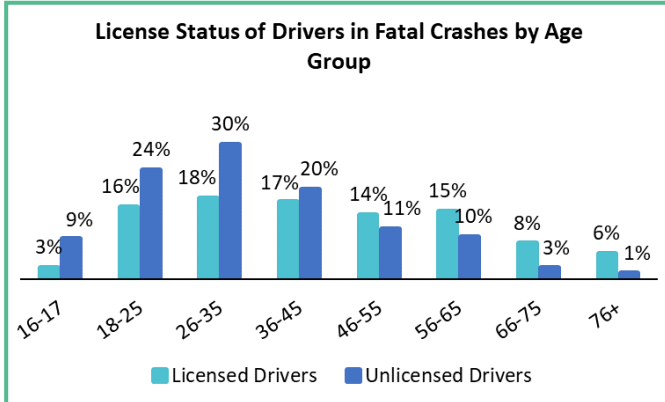




# Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roads, 2018-2022

**Unlicensed drivers** represent a population of motorists who either lack a license to operate a vehicle, have let an existing license expire, or have had their license suspended or revoked. From 2018 to 2022, there were 2,850 fatal crashes involving a motor vehicle, which resulted in 3,064 fatalities. These fatal crashes involved a total of 4,364 drivers, 15% (n=674) of whom were unlicensed.

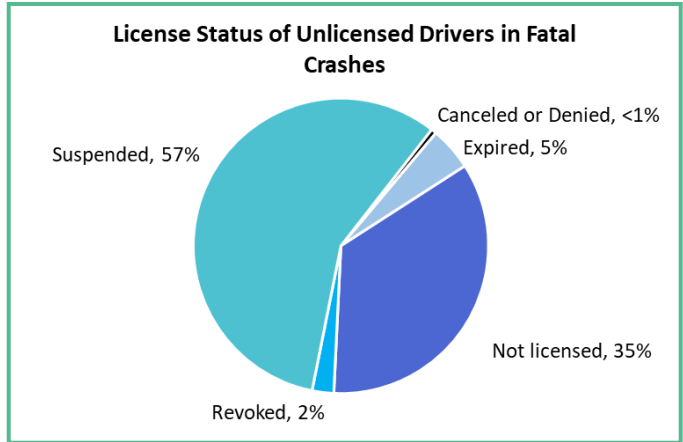
**Most unlicensed drivers** involved in a fatal crash were relatively young, with one in four (24%) being between the ages of 18 and 25, and 30% being between the ages of 26 and 35.



**I care, because** 734 lives were lost in fatal crashes involving an unlicensed driver on Washington roadways from 2018 to 2022.

**About 57%** of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were operating a vehicle with a suspended license. A license can be suspended if a driver accumulates too many traffic violations (i.e., habitual traffic offender) or is convicted of a serious traffic violation such as driving while impaired, or driving recklessly<sup>2</sup>. This means that the majority of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash had previous encounters with law enforcement and were prohibited from operating a vehicle. More than one-third (35%) of unlicensed drivers were not licensed at all, and 8% had their license either expire, canceled, or revoked.

**More than half of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were driving with a suspended license**



## Did you know?

- ⇒ As of December 2023, 4% of all licensed drivers in Washington have their license suspended, revoked or canceled<sup>1</sup>.
- ⇒ More than half (63%) of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were age 35 or younger.
- ⇒ <1% of unlicensed drivers were under the age of 16.
- ⇒ 82% of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash did not have valid liability insurance.
- ⇒ More unlicensed drivers were involved in multi-vehicle fatal crashes (56%) than single-vehicle fatal crashes (44%).

**Impaired driving and speeding** was observed more often among unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash than among licensed drivers. Twice as many unlicensed drivers than licensed drivers were impaired by alcohol or drugs at the time of the fatal crash (59%). Likewise, nearly twice as many unlicensed drivers than licensed drivers were speeding at the time of the fatal crash (34%).

(see figure top of next page)

### Data Sources

Washington Coded Fatal Crash (CFC) Data Files, Washington Traffic Safety Commission, WSDOT Multi-Row Flat File (MRFF), Washington State Department of Transportation

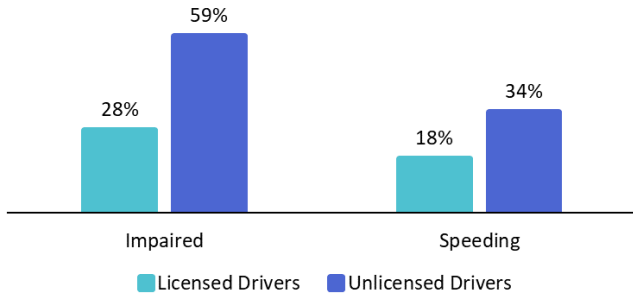
<sup>1</sup> Washington State Department of Licensing, <https://www.dol.wa.gov/about/howtorequestdata.html>

<sup>2</sup> Washington State Department of Licensing, <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/suspended.html>



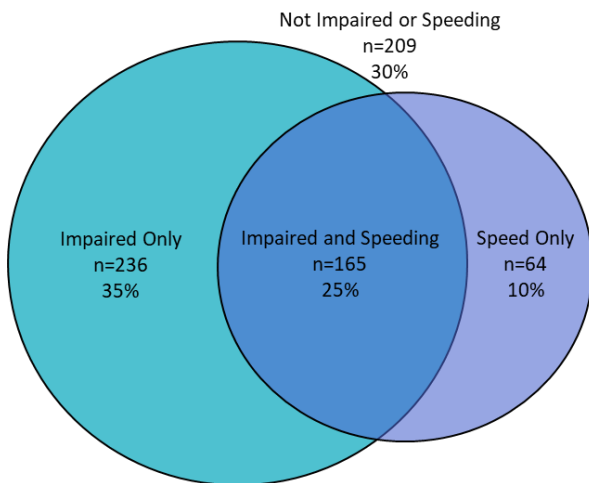
# Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roadways, 2018-2022

**Impairment and Speeding among Unlicensed Drivers in Fatal Crashes**



**More than two-thirds (70%)** of unlicensed drivers were impaired, speeding or both at the time of the fatal crash. About 35% of unlicensed drivers were only impaired by alcohol or drugs at the time of the fatal crash, while 10% were only speeding. One in four (25%) unlicensed drivers were both impaired *and* speeding at the time of the fatal crash.

**Driving Behavior among Unlicensed Drivers**

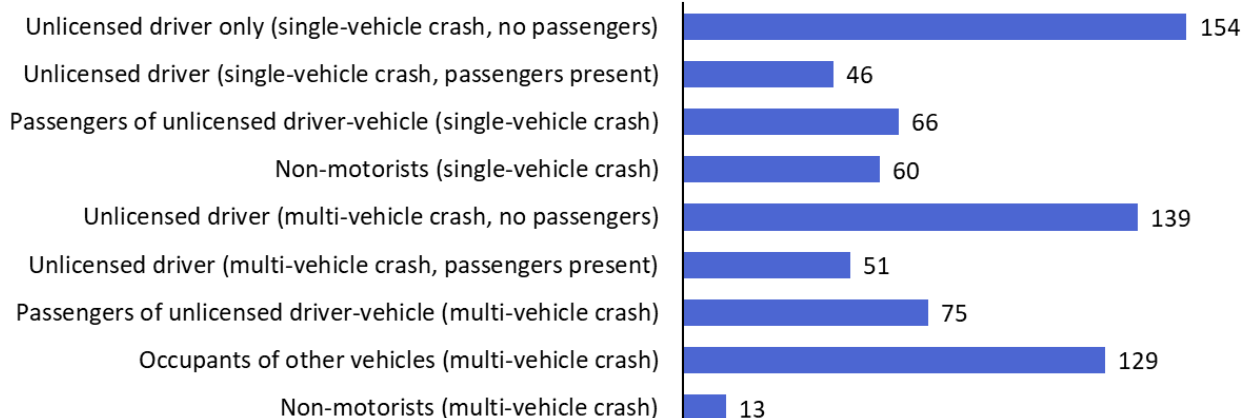


**From 2018 to 2022**, there was on average, 14.1 fatalities per week from crashes involving an unlicensed driver. In single-vehicle crashes where no passengers were present, 154 unlicensed drivers were fatally injured. In single-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver had passengers in their vehicle, 46 passengers were fatally injured. In multi-vehicle crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 129 occupants of other vehicles in the crash were fatally injured. In crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 73 non-motorists were fatally injured. In fatal multi-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver was involved, unlicensed drivers initiated\* 56% of crashes, while licensed drivers initiated\* 18% of crashes.

## Did you know?

- ⇒ About one out of every 10 fatal crashes were initiated\* by an unlicensed driver.
- ⇒ 71% of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash who were speeding or driving while impaired were fatally injured in the crash.
- ⇒ 35% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous speeding conviction in the past five years (compared to 27% of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ 29% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had been in a previous crash in the past five years (compared to 23% of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ 20% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous impaired driving conviction in the past five years (compared to 3% of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).

**Fatalities in Crashes Involving an Unlicensed Driver**



\* A driver was deemed to have initiated the crash when they were the only driver in a crash with contributing circumstances reported (excluding 'none', 'other', and missing circumstances).