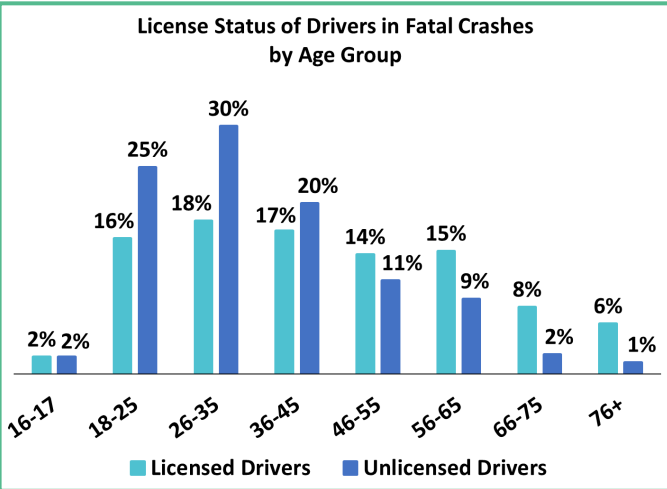




Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roads, 2019-2023

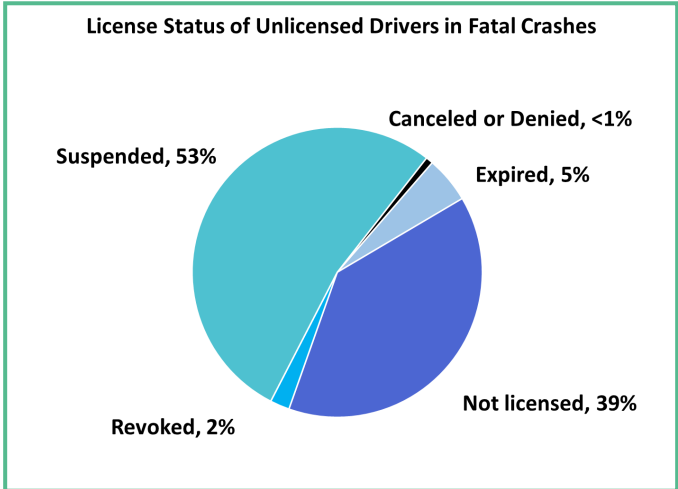
Unlicensed drivers represent a population of motorists who either lack a license to operate a vehicle, have let an existing license expire, or have had their license suspended or revoked. From 2019 to 2023, there were 3,092 fatal crashes involving a motor vehicle, which resulted in 3,330 fatalities. These fatal crashes involved a total of 4,694 drivers, 16 percent (n=738) of whom were unlicensed.

Most unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were relatively young, with one in four (n=182, 24%) being between the ages of 18 and 25, and nearly one in three (n=218, 30%) being between the ages of 26 and 35.



I care, because 797 lives were lost in fatal crashes involving an unlicensed driver on Washington roadways from 2019 to 2023.

About 53 percent 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 recklessly². 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. Nearly four in ten (n=287, 39%) of unlicensed drivers were not licensed at all, and eight percent (n=60) had their license either expire, canceled, or revoked.



Did you know?

- ⇒ As of June 2024, four percent of all licensed drivers in Washington have their license suspended, revoked or canceled¹.
- ⇒ More than half (n=412, 55%) of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were age 35 or younger.
- ⇒ Most (82%) unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash did not have valid liability insurance.
- ⇒ More unlicensed drivers were involved in multi-vehicle fatal crashes (n=401, 54%) than single-vehicle fatal crashes (n=337, 46%).

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 (60%). Likewise, nearly twice as many unlicensed drivers than licensed drivers were speeding at the time of the fatal crash (34%).

(See chart 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

¹ Washington State Department of Licensing, Statistics At-A-Glance, FY 2024, <https://dol.wa.gov/media/pdf/3467/2024-fy-stats-glancepdf/download?inline>

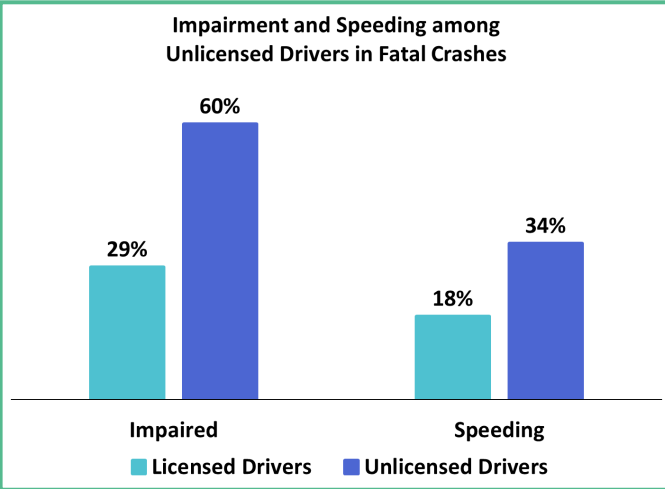
² Washington State Department of Licensing, Types of driver license suspensions, <https://dol.wa.gov/driver-licenses-and-permits/suspended-license/types-driver-license-suspensions>

For more information, please contact Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Research and Data Division (360) 725-9860.



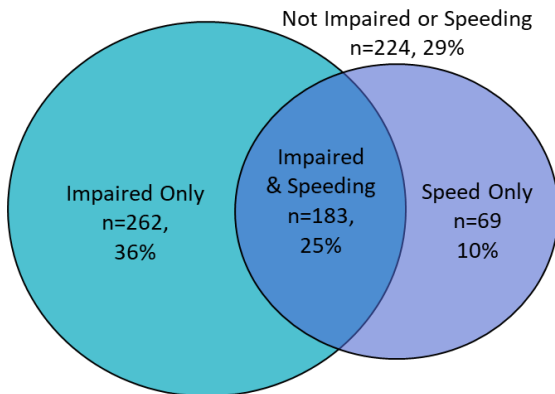
Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roadways, 2019-2023

Impairment and Speeding among Unlicensed Drivers in Fatal Crashes



More than two-thirds (n=514, 71%) of unlicensed drivers were impaired, speeding or both at the time of the fatal crash. About 36 percent (n=262) of unlicensed drivers were only impaired by alcohol or drugs at the time of the fatal crash, while 10 percent (n=69) were only speeding. One in four (n=183, 25%) unlicensed drivers were both impaired *and* speeding at the time of the fatal crash.

Driving Behavior among Unlicensed Drivers

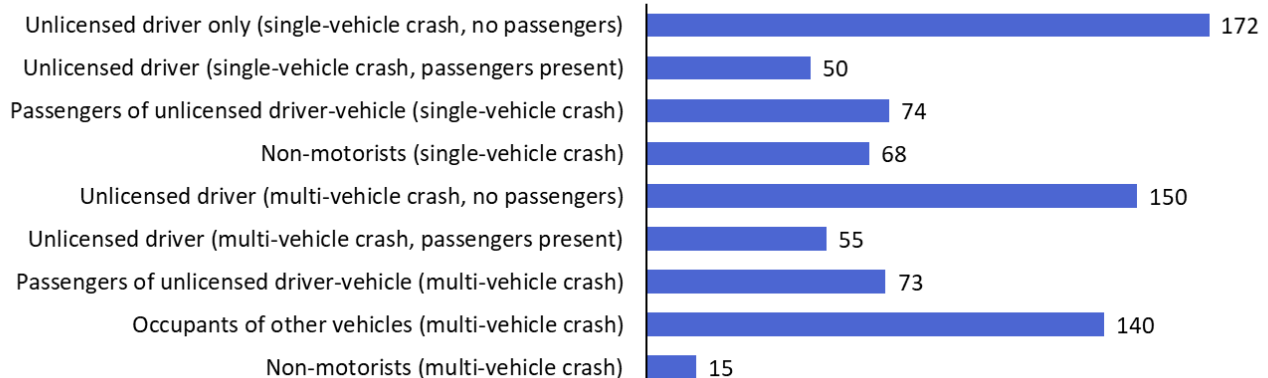


From 2019 to 2023, there was on average, 15.1 fatalities per week from crashes involving an unlicensed driver. In single-vehicle crashes where no passengers were present, 172 unlicensed drivers were fatally injured. In single-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver had passengers in their vehicle, 74 passengers were fatally injured. In multi-vehicle crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 140 occupants of other vehicles in the crash were fatally injured. In crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 83 non-motorists were fatally injured. In fatal multi-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver was involved, unlicensed drivers initiated* 55 percent of crashes, while licensed drivers initiated* 18percent of crashes.

Did you know?

- ⇒ About one out of every 10 fatal crashes were initiated* by an unlicensed driver.
- ⇒ One in three (33%) of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous speeding conviction in the past five years (compared to 26 percent of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ About one-quarter (28%) of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had been in a previous crash in the past five years (compared to 23 percent of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ One in five (20%) unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous impaired driving conviction in the past five years (compared to three percent 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).