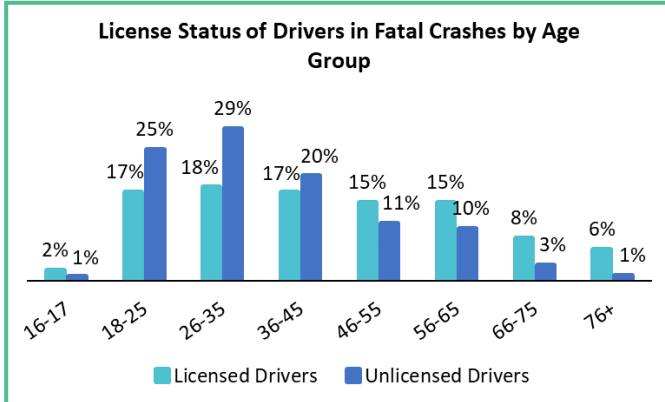




Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roads, 2017-2021

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 2017 to 2021, there were 2,682 fatal crashes involving a motor vehicle, which resulted in 2,888 fatalities. These fatal crashes involved a total of 4,128 drivers, 15% (n=618) of whom were unlicensed.

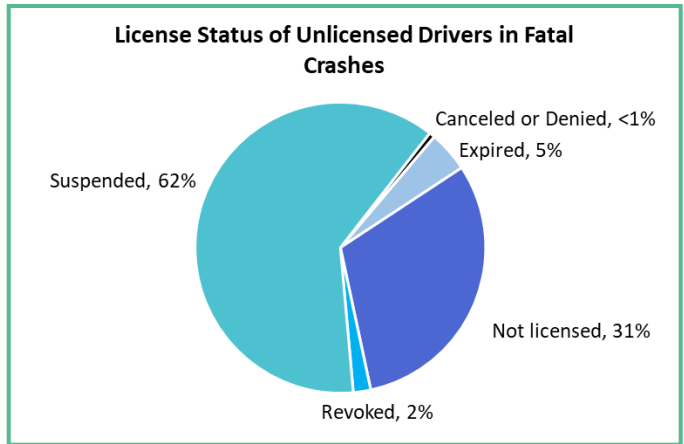
Most unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were relatively young, with one in four (25%) being between the ages of 18 and 25, and 29% being between the ages of 26 and 35.



I care, because 672 lives were lost in fatal crashes involving an unlicensed driver on Washington roadways from 2017 to 2021.

About 62% 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 one-third of unlicensed drivers were not licensed at all, and 7% had their license either expire, canceled, or revoked.

Nearly two out of three unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were driving with a suspended license.



Did you know?

- ⇒ As of April 2023, about 5% of all licensed drivers in Washington have their license suspended or revoked¹.
- ⇒ More than half (58.3%) of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were age 35 or younger.
- ⇒ <1% of unlicensed drivers were under the age of 16.
- ⇒ 81% of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash did not have valid liability insurance.
- ⇒ More unlicensed drivers were involved in multi-vehicle fatal crashes (54%) than single-vehicle fatal crashes (45%).

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 (57%). 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

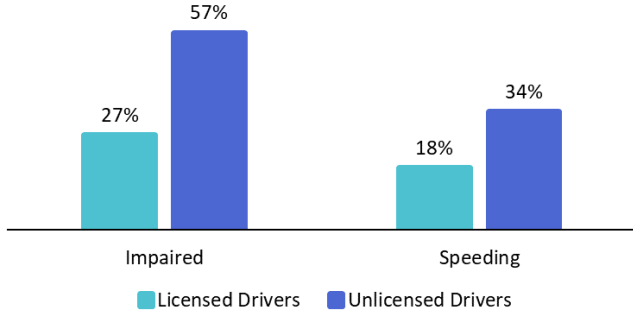
¹ Washington State Department of Licensing, <https://www.dol.wa.gov/about/howtorequestdata.html>

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



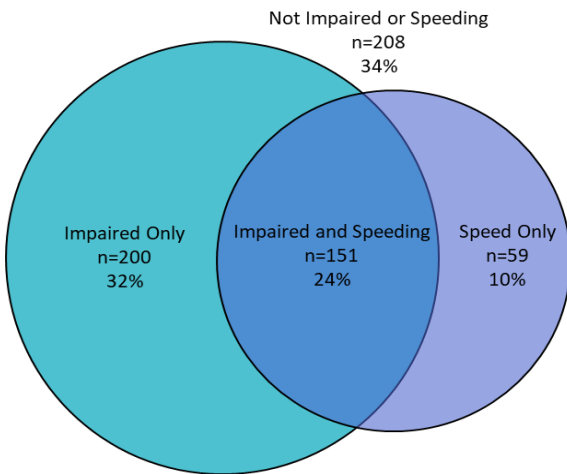
Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roadways, 2017-2021

Impairment and Speeding among Unlicensed Drivers in Fatal Crashes



Two-thirds (66%) of unlicensed drivers were impaired or speeding at the time of the fatal crash. Over 32% of unlicensed drivers were only impaired by alcohol or drugs at the time of the fatal crash, while 10% were only speeding. About one in four (24%) unlicensed drivers were both impaired *and* speeding at the time of the fatal crash.

Driving Behavior among Unlicensed Drivers

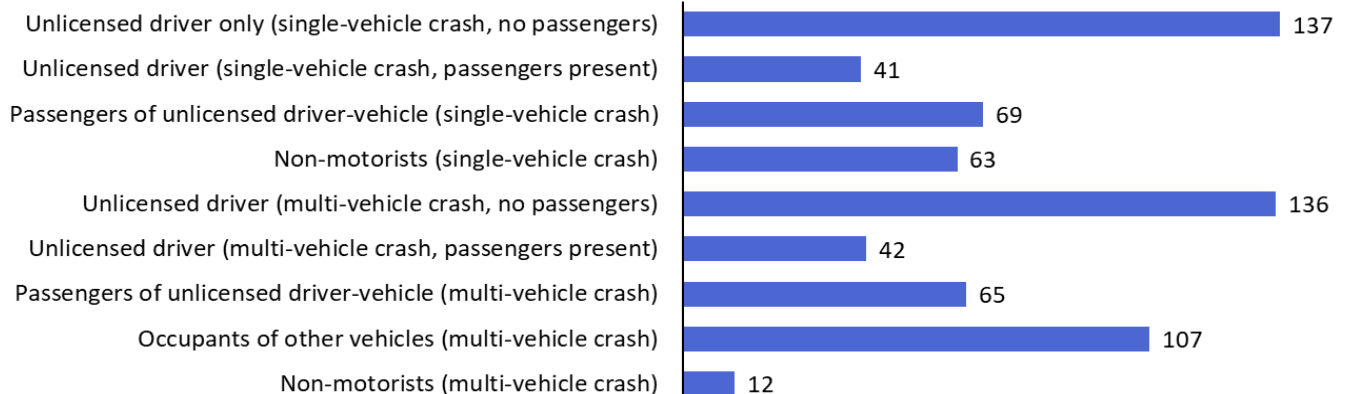


From 2017 to 2021, there was on average, 2.6 fatalities per week from crashes involving an unlicensed driver. In single-vehicle crashes where no passengers were present, 137 unlicensed drivers were fatally injured. In crashes where an unlicensed driver had passengers in their vehicle, 134 passengers were fatally injured. In multi-vehicle crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 107 occupants of other vehicles in the crash were fatally injured. In crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 75 non-motorists were fatally injured. In fatal multi-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver was involved, unlicensed drivers initiated* 58% of crashes, while licensed drivers initiated* 14% of crashes.

Did you know?

- ⇒ One out of every 10 fatal crashes were initiated* by an unlicensed driver.
- ⇒ 72% of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash who were speeding or driving while impaired were fatally injured in the crash.
- ⇒ 38% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous speeding conviction in the past five years (compared to 31% of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ 31% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had been in a previous crash in the past five years (compared to 26% of licensed drivers involved in a fatal crash).
- ⇒ 21% of unlicensed drivers in a fatal crash had a previous impaired driving conviction in the past five years (compared to 7% 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).