



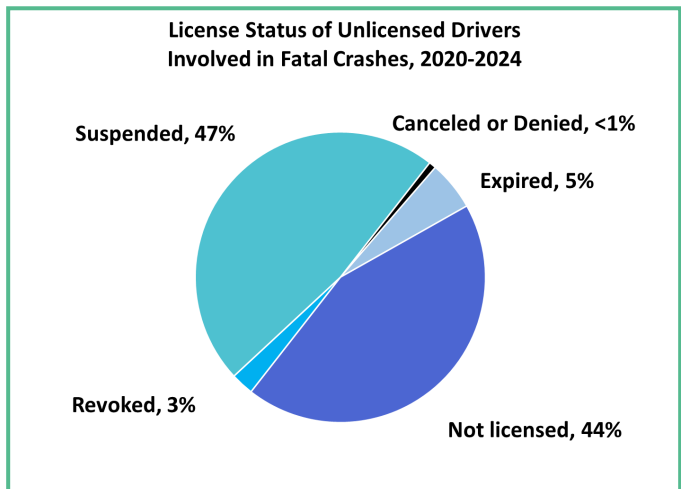
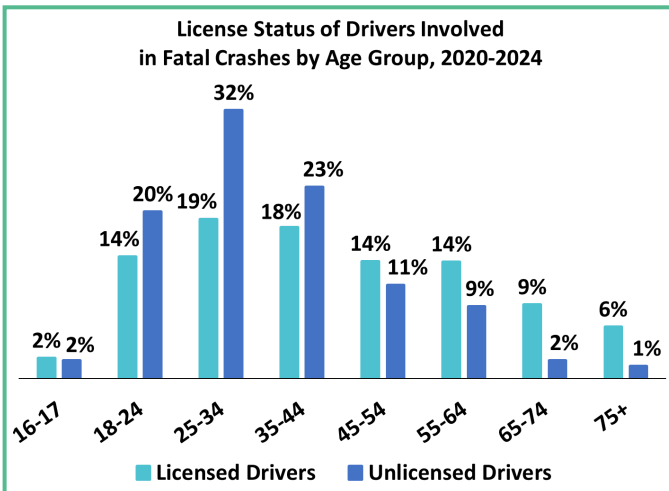
Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roads, 2020-2024

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 2020 to 2024, there were 3,260 fatal crashes involving a motor vehicle, which resulted in 3,537 fatalities. These fatal crashes involved a total of 4,966 drivers, one in six (15%) of whom were unlicensed.

Most unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were relatively young, with one in five (20%) being between the ages of 18 and 24, and one in three (32%) being between the ages of 25 and 34.

I care, because 808 lives were lost in fatal crashes involving an unlicensed driver on Washington roadways from 2020 to 2024.

Nearly half 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 (44%) unlicensed drivers were not licensed at all, and nearly one in ten (9%) had either an expired, canceled, or revoked license.



Did you know?

- ⇒ As of June 2024, four percent of drivers in Washington have had their license suspended, revoked or canceled¹.
- ⇒ More than half (54%) of unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash were under age 35.
- ⇒ 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 (55%) 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 (58%). Similarly, 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>

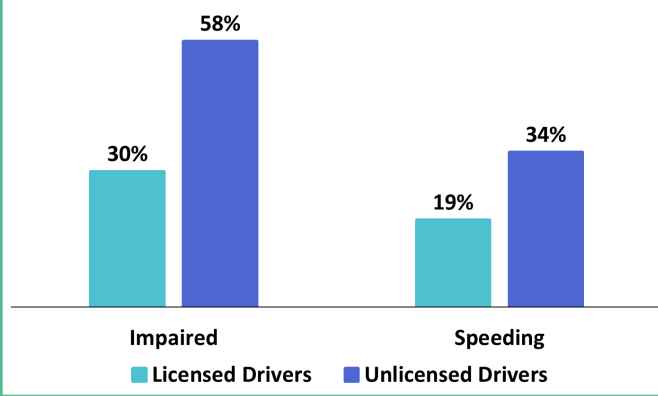
² Washington State Department of Licensing, Types of driver license suspensions, <https://dol.wa.gov/driver-licenses-and-permits/suspended-license/types-driver-license-suspensions>

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



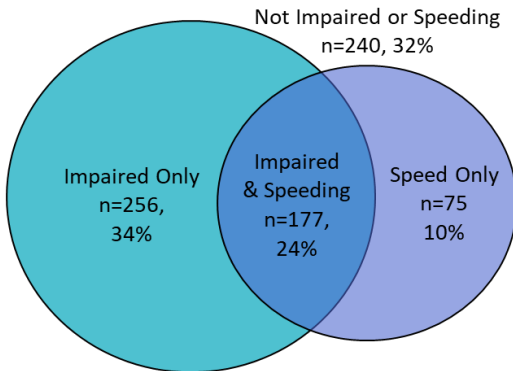
Unlicensed Drivers on Washington Roadways, 2020-2024

Impairment and Speeding among Unlicensed Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2020-2024



About two-thirds (68%) of unlicensed drivers were impaired, speeding or both at the time of the fatal crash. One in three (34%) unlicensed drivers were only impaired at the time of the fatal crash, while one in ten (10%) were only speeding. One in four (24%) unlicensed drivers were both impaired *and* speeding at the time of the fatal crash.

Driving Behavior among Unlicensed Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes, 2020-2024

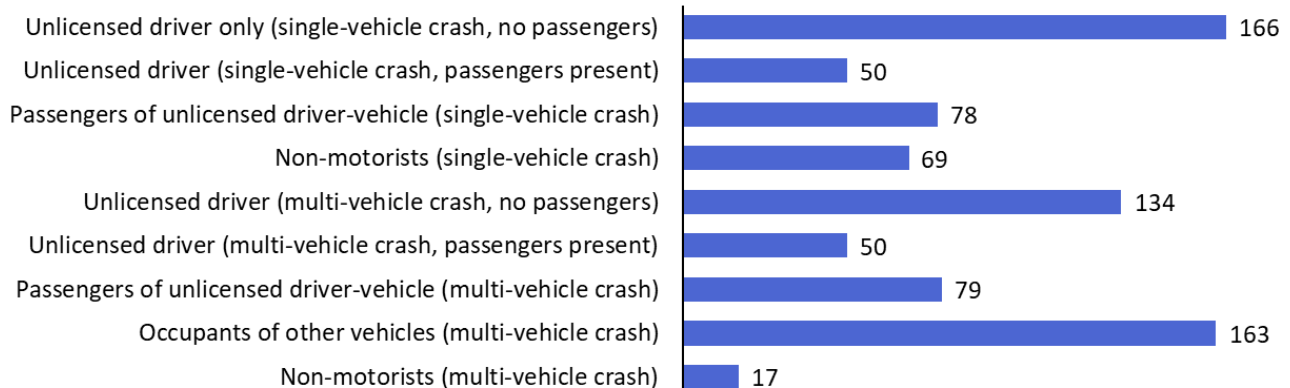


From 2020 to 2024, there was on average, 15.5 fatalities per week from crashes involving an unlicensed driver. In single-vehicle crashes where no passengers were present, 166 unlicensed drivers were fatally injured. In single-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver had passengers in their vehicle, 78 passengers were fatally injured. In multi-vehicle crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 168 occupants of other vehicles in the crash were fatally injured. In crashes involving an unlicensed driver, 86 non-motorists were fatally injured. In fatal multi-vehicle crashes where an unlicensed driver was involved, unlicensed drivers initiated* 50 percent of crashes, while licensed drivers initiated* 22 percent of crashes.

Did you know?

- ⇒ About one out of every 10 fatal crashes were initiated* by an unlicensed driver.
- ⇒ One in three (33%) unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash had a previous speeding conviction in the past five years (compared to one in four (25%) licensed drivers).
- ⇒ One in four (27%) unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash had been in a previous crash in the past five years (compared to one in four (21%) licensed drivers).
- ⇒ One in five (20%) unlicensed drivers involved in a fatal crash had a previous impaired driving conviction in the past five years (compared to three percent of licensed drivers).

Fatalities in Crashes Involving an Unlicensed Driver, 2020-2024



* 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).