

UNLICENSED DRIVERS

INVOLVED IN FATAL ROAD CRASHES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OVERVIEW Unlicensed drivers and riders can represent a high risk element within the driving community as they may have never undergone a practical driving test or they may be driving while disqualified due to a breach of licence condition or having committed a road traffic offence. The number of people expiated /apprehended by SAPOL for driving unlicensed has remained static over the last five years. There were on average nine fatal crashes a year involving an unlicensed driver/rider over the last five years. Unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes are more likely to be male and aged between 20 – 39 years of age. These drivers are also more likely to test positive for illegal drugs and alcohol content and less likely to be wearing a seatbelt or helmet than licensed drivers involved in fatal crashes.

For the purposes of this fact sheet, “unlicensed” refers to situations where:

- The driver/rider has never held a licence
- The licence has expired and the driver/rider has failed to renew
- The driver/rider is unlicensed for the particular vehicle they were driving at the time of a crash (eg. car licence while driving a heavy vehicle, or riding a motorcycle without the appropriate licence endorsement)
- Learner driver unaccompanied by a Qualified Supervising Driver*
- The driver/rider has been disqualified from driving.

*(*To act as a Qualified Supervising Driver for a learner’s permit holder, the accompanying driver must have held a full driver’s licence continuously for the previous two years)*

Driving Unlicensed

It is difficult to estimate the number of drivers or riders who drive while unlicensed at any one time. However Table 1 shows the number of drivers reported for driving while unlicensed or disqualified and the number of drivers who have been reported or received an expiation notice for driving with an expired or inappropriate licence.

Table 1: Drivers /riders expiated/apprehended for driving unlicensed, South Australia, 2011-2015

| Year | Expiated/Reported for Driving with Expired or Inappropriate Licence | Reported for Driving Unlicensed/Driving Disqualified |
|----------|---|--|
| 2011 | 8606 | 5054 |
| 2012 | 9208 | 5166 |
| 2013 | 10257 | 5445 |
| 2014 | 9895 | 6136 |
| 2015 | 10620 | 6446 |
| 5 yr Avg | 9735 | 5649 |

Table 2 shows that, between 2011 and 2015, 44 fatal crashes involved an unlicensed driver, an average of 9 crashes per year. This equates to 10% of all fatal crashes over the same period. Of the unlicensed drivers or riders, the unlicensed person was considered responsible for the crash in 89% of cases.

Table 2: Fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers, South Australia, 2011-2015

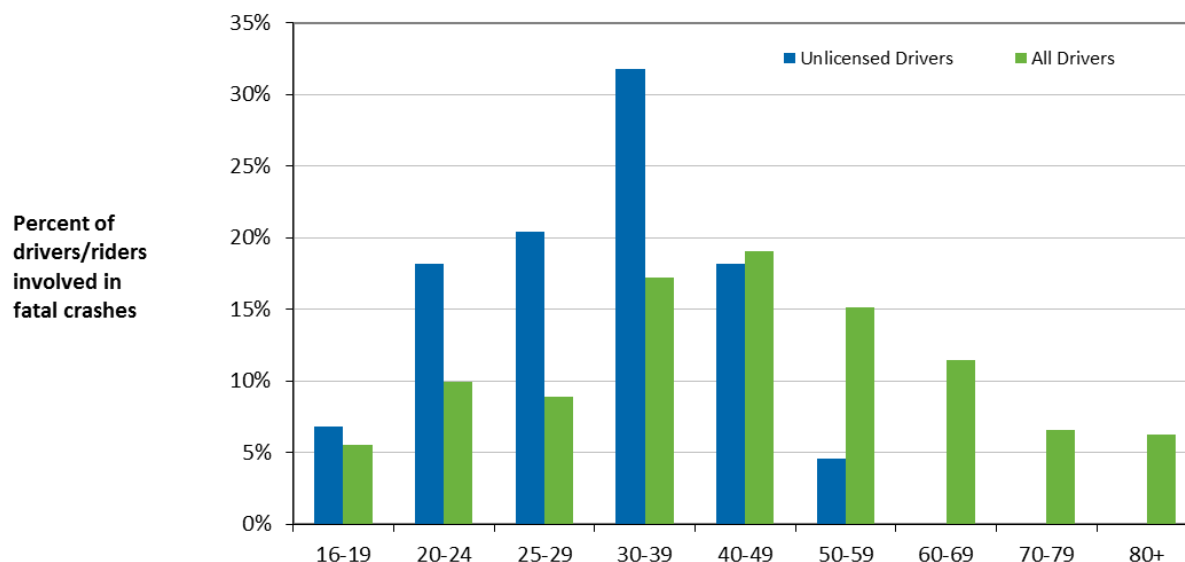
| Year | Number of crashes | Percent of all fatal crashes |
|-------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 2011 | 9 | 9% |
| 2012 | 13 | 15% |
| 2013 | 8 | 9% |
| 2014 | 7 | 7% |
| 2015 | 7 | 7% |
| Total | 44 | 10% |

Of the 44 unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes in Table 2:

- 34% were unlicensed for the vehicle which they were operating at the time of the crash or did not have an exemption for the vehicle they were driving or driving outside GLS rules
- 25% were disqualified from driving at the time of the crash
- 25% had never held a licence
- 16% allowed their licence to expire – for periods that ranged from a few days to up to 10 years

The 44 fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers resulted in 49 fatalities, 16 serious injuries and 15 minor injuries. The majority of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers were hit fixed object (55%) then roll over (14%), head on (11%) and right angle crashes (9%).

Figure 1: Drivers/riders involved in fatal crashes by age group and licence status, South Australia, 2011-2015



Age and Gender

As can be seen in Figure 1, the distribution of unlicensed driver and riders involved in fatal crashes is different to drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes generally. 77% of unlicensed drivers/riders involved in fatal crashes are aged between 20-39 years of age, this is in contrast to 42% of drivers falling into these categories generally. Similarly 5% of unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes are over the age of 50, whereas drivers involved in fatal crashes more generally this category accounts for 39% of all drivers/riders. As in fatal crashes generally, men are over represented, 77% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes are male. 93% of unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes were male.

Rural or Metropolitan ¹

During 2011 to 2015, 57% of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers occurred in rural areas. This is slightly higher than fatal crashes in general, where 55% occur in rural areas.

Other Risk Factors

Driving while unlicensed is already a risk taking activity. When combined with other risk factors such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and failure to wear a seatbelt or helmet, the chances of a crash occurring or a crash ending in a fatality increase.

¹ Rural and metro boundaries changed on 1 January 2013 to align with new ABS Greater Adelaide City Statistical Area boundaries, new boundaries have been used in calculations and will not be comparable with previous editions of this report.

Seatbelts & Helmets

Table 3 shows the frequency with which drivers and riders wear seatbelts or helmets. An increase in failure to wear these safety items is seen in unlicensed drivers and riders that were involved in fatal crashes.

Table 3: Drivers and riders fatalities by seatbelt/helmet not worn, South Australia, 2011-2015

| | Seatbelt not worn | | Helmet not worn |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Unlicensed Drivers | 67% | Unlicensed Riders | 19% |
| All Drivers | 31% | All Riders | 7% |

Alcohol & Drugs

Of the unlicensed drivers and riders who died as a result of the crash and were tested, 63% were found to be over the legal limit of 0.05. Of those who tested positive, 75% were three or more times over the legal limit. In addition 58% were found to have MDMA, methamphetamine, THC (Cannabis) or a combination of these drugs in their system.

This compares to all driver/rider fatalities of those tested, 24% had a blood alcohol concentration over the legal limit, and 22% tested positive for one or a combination of drugs.

Definitions of police reported casualty types:

Casualty Crash - A crash where at least one fatality, serious injury or minor injury occurs.

Casualty – A fatality, serious injury or minor injury.

Fatal Crash - A crash for which there is at least one fatality.

Fatality - A person who dies within 30 days of a crash as a result of injuries sustained in that crash.

Serious Injury Crash - A non-fatal crash in which at least one person is seriously injured.

Serious Injury - A person who sustains injuries and is admitted to hospital as a result of a road crash and who does not die as a result of those injuries within 30 days of the crash.

Minor Injury Crash - A crash for at least one person sustains injury but no person is admitted to hospital or dies within 30 days of the crash.

Minor Injury – A person who sustains injuries requiring medical treatment, either by a doctor or in a hospital, as a result of a road crash and who does not die as a result of those injuries with 30 days of the crash.

Property Damage Only Crash – A crash resulting in property damage in excess of the prescribed amount in which no person is injured or dies within 30 days of the crash.

Data sources

The data presented in this reports was obtained from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure Road Crash Database. The information was compiled from police reported road casualty crashes only. Expiation data supplied by Traffic Intelligence Section, SAPOL

Enquiries

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