



Unlicensed Drivers Involved in Road Crashes in South Australia

August 2012

Unlicensed drivers and riders can represent a high risk element within the driving community as they may have never undergone a practical driving assessment or they may be driving while disqualified due to a breach of licence condition or having committed a road traffic offence.

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, Table 1 however shows the number of drivers and riders who have received an expiation notice for driving with an expired or inappropriate licence as well as those apprehended for driving while unlicensed or disqualified.

Table 1: Drivers /riders expiated/apprehended for driving unlicensed, South Australia, 2007-2011

| Year | Expired/ Inappropriate Licence | Unlicensed/ Disqualified | Total |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 2007 | 7495 | 11339 | 18834 |
| 2008 | 7085 | 9851 | 16936 |
| 2009 | 7503 | 8431 | 15934 |
| 2010 | 8025 | 7270 | 15295 |
| 2011 | 7966 | 6399 | 14365 |
| Avg | 7615 | 8658 | 16273 |



Table 2 shows that, between 2007 and 2011, 76 fatal crashes involved at least one (78) unlicensed drivers, an average of 15 crashes per year. This equates to 15% of all fatal crashes over the same period. Of the 78 unlicensed drivers or riders, the unlicensed person was considered responsible for the crash in 79% of cases.

Table 2: Fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers, South Australia, 2007-2011

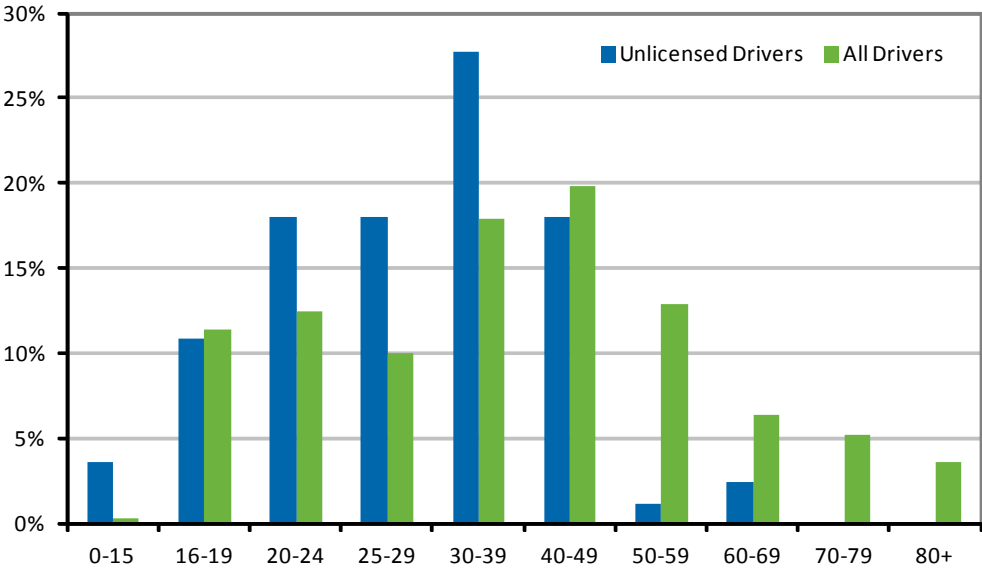
| Year | Number of crashes |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 2007 | 19 |
| 2008 | 16 |
| 2009 | 14 |
| 2010 | 18 |
| 2011 | 9 |
| Total | 76 |

Of the 78 unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes in Table 2:

- 14% were disqualified from driving at the time of the crash
- 44% had never held a licence
- 9% were unlicensed for the vehicle which they were operating at the time of the crash
- 33% allowed their licence to expire – for periods that ranged from a few days to 25 years

The 76 fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers resulted in 83 fatalities, 49 serious injuries and 25 minor injuries. The majority of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers were hit fixed object (39%), roll over (18%) and right angle crashes (12%), which is comparable to fatal crashes generally in South Australia.

Figure 1: Unlicensed drivers/riders involved in fatal crashes by age group, South Australia, 2007-11



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. 64% of unlicensed drivers/riders involved in fatal crashes are aged between 20-39 years of age, this is in contrast to 40% of drivers falling into these categories generally. Similarly 4% 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 28% of all drivers/riders. As in fatal crashes generally, men are over represented - 87% of unlicensed drivers were male.

Rural or Metropolitan

More fatal crashes typically occur in rural areas. Over 2007-2011, 55% of all fatal crashes occurred in rural areas. This is comparable to 51% of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers occurring 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.

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 killed in crashes.

Table 3: Drivers and riders fatalities by seatbelt/helmet not worn, South Australia, 2007-2011

| | Seatbelt not worn | Helmet not worn |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Unlicensed Drivers/Riders | 39% | 10% |
| All Drivers/Riders | 33% | 4% |

Alcohol & Drugs

Of the unlicensed drivers and riders who died as a result of the crash, that were tested, 48% were found to be over the legal limit of 0.05. Of those who tested positive, 64% were three or more times over the legal limit. In addition 46% were found to have MDMA, methamphetamine, THC (Cannabis) or a combination of these in their system.

This compares to all driver/rider fatalities of those tested, 31% 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. Figures relating to the current year are preliminary and are subject to revision.

Enquiries

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