

# PROFILE OF UNLICENSED MOTORISTS IN FATAL CRASHES

Australian roads feature a disturbingly high incidence of unlicensed driving, and crashes involving these motorists make a significant contribution to Australia's road casualty statistics. This monograph examines the incidence of unlicensed motorist involvement in fatal crashes. It is based on information derived from coroners' records about fatal crashes in 1992 and 1994. Monograph 21 will describe the road behaviour of these motorists.

## The extent of the problem

Table 1 shows that amongst drivers and motor cycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 1992 and 1994, at least 5 per cent of drivers and 19 per cent of motor cycle riders were unlicensed. About half of the unlicensed drivers and almost three quarters of the unlicensed riders had never held a licence for that type of vehicle (Table 2). Disqualified drivers and riders made up most of the balance.

Table 3 shows that crashes involving unlicensed drivers and motor cycle riders accounted for 9 per cent of all road fatalities in 1992 and 1994. Table 4 shows that almost half of the deaths involved parties other than the unlicensed motorist. They included 43 occupants of other vehicles and 14 pedestrians.

	Number	%
<b>Involved drivers</b>		
Unlicensed	204	5%
Licensed (a)	4129	95%
Total drivers	4333	100%
<b>Involved motor cycle riders</b>		
Unlicensed	76	19%
Licensed (a)	323	81%
Total motor cycle riders	399	100%

(a) Motorists have here been given the benefit of doubt where licence details are not recorded.

## Who are unlicensed?

### Crash location

Table 5 shows the extent to which unlicensed motorists were involved in fatal crashes in each State and Territory in 1992 and 1994. It indicates a major problem in the Northern Territory and, to less an extent, Western Australia. The Northern Territory problem appears to be long standing, with 26% unlicensed motorist involvement in fatal crashes in 1990, 21% in 1992 and 23% in 1994.

Table 6 indicates that fatal crashes in remote rural areas have a higher incidence of unlicensed drivers and motor cycle riders than fatal crashes in other areas.

### Demographic and employment profile

Table 7 compares fatal crash involvement of unlicensed male and female drivers. Motor cycle riders are excluded from this comparison. It shows that the male drivers in these crashes are more likely than the female drivers to be unlicensed (5 per cent compared with 3 per cent).

Table 8 shows that young motorists involved in fatal crashes are more likely to have been unlicensed than their older counterparts. Nine per cent of 16 to 24 year old motorists involved in fatal crashes in 1992 and 1994 had been unlicensed.

**Table 2 Number of unlicensed motorists involved in fatal crashes, by reason not licensed, 1992 and 1994**

	Number	%
<b>Unlicensed drivers</b>		
Never held a licence for this vehicle type	110	54%
Disqualified from driving	70	34%
Expired licence	22	11%
Driving outside licence restriction	2	1%
Total unlicensed drivers in fatal crashes	204	100%
<b>Unlicensed motor cycle riders</b>		
Never held a licence for this vehicle type	55	72%
Disqualified from driving	12	16%
Expired licence	2	3%
Driving outside licence restriction	7	9%
Total unlicensed riders in fatal crashes	76	100%

**Table 3 Number of persons killed in crashes involving unlicensed motorists, 1992 and 1994**

Persons killed in crashes	Number	%
Involving unlicensed motorists	332	9%
Not involving unlicensed motorists (a)	3500	91%
All crashes	3832	100%

(a) includes motorists for whom licence details are unknown.

**Table 4 Types of road users killed in crashes involving unlicensed motorists, 1992 and 1994**

Persons killed	Number	%
Unlicensed motorists	174	52%
Passengers of unlicensed motorists	101	30%
Occupants of other vehicles	43	13%
Pedestrians	14	4%
Total persons killed	332	100%

Table 9 shows that amongst male motorists involved in fatal crashes, the worst offenders for unlicensed driving and riding are the unemployed and, to less an extent, students and blue collar workers. No clear pattern is evident for the few unlicensed female motorists in this period (not tabulated).

**Table 5 Unlicensed motorist involvement in fatal crashes, by State/Territory of crash, 1992 and 1994**

State/Territory of crash	No. of licensed <sup>(a)</sup> motorists	No. of unlicensed motorists	% unlicensed
NSW	1515	70	4%
Vic	942	62	6%
Qld	970	48	5%
SA	348	24	6%
WA	424	45	10%
Tas	139	11	7%
NT	68	19	22%
ACT	46	1	2%
Australia	4452	280	6%

(a) Includes motorists for whom licence details are unknown.

**Table 6 Unlicensed motorist involvement in fatal crashes, by crash location, 1992 and 1994**

Crash location	No. of licensed <sup>(a)</sup> motorists	No. of unlicensed motorists	% unlicensed
Remote rural regions	59	17	22%
Small towns	158	11	7%
Non-remote rural regions	1886	116	6%
Medium/large towns and cities	786	48	6%
Capital cities	1557	87	5%
Australia <sup>(b)</sup>	4452	280	6%

(a) Includes motorists for whom licence details are unknown.

(b) Totals include 7 motorists for whom crash locality was not stated.

## Summary

- Amongst motorists involved in fatal crashes in 1992 and 1994, at least 5 per cent of drivers and 19 per cent of motor cycle riders were unlicensed.
- About three-quarters of the unlicensed riders and about half of the unlicensed drivers had never held a licence for that type of vehicle.
- Crashes involving unlicensed motorists account for about one in every eleven road fatalities. Almost half of these deaths involve parties other than the unlicensed motorist.
- The worst offenders for unlicensed driving and riding are:
  - males,
  - those below 25 years of age,
  - the unemployed, students and blue collar workers, and
  - those travelling in remote rural regions and the Northern Territory.

**Table 7 Unlicensed driver<sup>(a)</sup> involvement in fatal crashes, by gender, 1992 and 1994**

Driver gender	No. of licensed <sup>(b)</sup> drivers	No. of unlicensed drivers	% unlicensed
Male drivers	3146	177	5%
Female drivers	934	25	3%
All drivers <sup>(c)</sup>	4129	204	5%

(a) Excludes motor cycle riders.

(b) Includes drivers for whom licence details are unknown.

(c) Totals include 51 drivers for whom gender was not stated.

**Table 8 Unlicensed motorist involvement in fatal crashes, by age, 1992 and 1994**

Motorist age	No. of licensed <sup>(a)</sup> motorists	No. of unlicensed motorists	% unlicensed
11 - 15	0	22	100%
16 - 24	1237	126	9%
25 - 39	1443	90	6%
40 - 59	1026	33	3%
60 or more	538	5	1%
All motorists <sup>(b)</sup>	4452	280	6%

(a) Includes motorists for whom licence details are unknown.

(b) Totals include 212 motorists for whom age was not stated.

**Table 9 Unlicensed male motorists aged 16 or more in fatal crashes by labour force activity, 1992 and 1994**

Labour force activity	No. of licensed <sup>(a)</sup> motorists	No. of unlicensed motorists	% unlicensed
Unemployed	154	54	26%
Student	109	14	11%
Tradesperson or labourer	688	52	7%
Professional, manager or para-professional	267	10	4%
Retired or keeping house	326	5	2%
Clerical, sales	148	3	2%
Skilled machine operator or driver	682	6	1%
All male motorists aged 16 or more <sup>(b)</sup>	3458	232	6%

(a) Includes motorists for whom licence details are unknown.

(b) Includes 1,080 motorists of unknown labour force status and 92 in various miscellaneous employment categories, not recorded separately.