

# Priority Level Three: Unlicensed Drivers

Between 2006 and 2008, there were 1,725 traffic fatalities in Washington State, involving 2,357 drivers. Among those 2,357 drivers, 318 (13%)<sup>1</sup> did not have a valid Washington driver license, meaning that either they had no license<sup>2</sup>, or else their license status was suspended, revoked<sup>3</sup>, expired, cancelled<sup>3</sup>, or denied. For purposes of *Target Zero*, these drivers are considered “unlicensed drivers”.

Seventy-three percent of these 318 unlicensed drivers had already lost their driving privileges for cause. At the time of their collision, the license status of the 318 individuals was found to be:

- Suspended: 198 (62%)
- Revoked, expired, cancelled, or denied: 33 (11%)
- No Washington license: 87 (27%)

## Causes of Serious Collisions Involving Unlicensed Drivers

Most of these fatal collisions involved similar causes to the fatal collisions involving validly licensed drivers, although at higher percentages.

- Impairment was involved in 71% of the unlicensed driver

fatal collisions, compared to 48% of the validly licensed driver collisions.

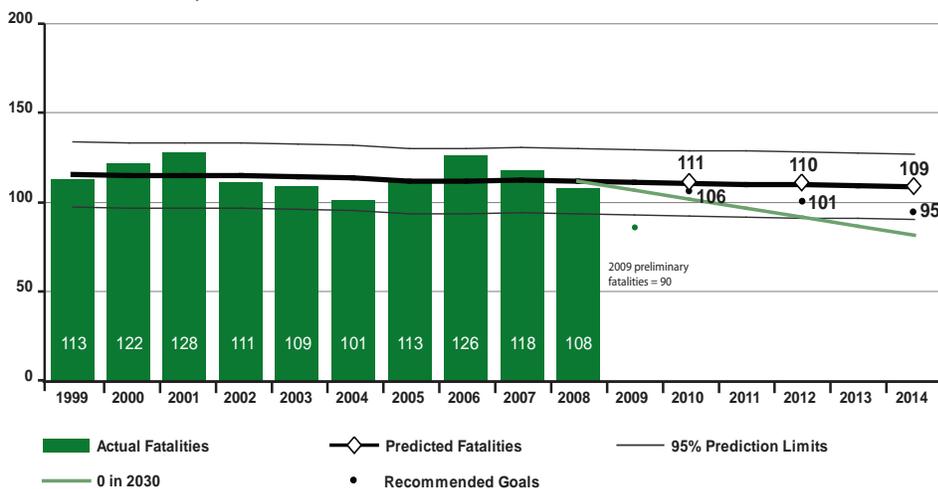
- Speeding was involved in 53% of the unlicensed driver fatal collisions, compared to 40% of the validly licensed driver collisions.
- Impairment and speeding were often co-occurring causes in fatal collisions, whether involving unlicensed or validly licensed drivers (see page 13).
- Unrestrained vehicle occupants, distracted drivers, and young drivers were also factors that often co-occurred with one another, as well as with speed and impairment, in fatal collisions involving unlicensed drivers.

## Strategies to Reduce Fatal and Serious Injury Collisions Involving Unlicensed Drivers

Based on the prevalence of impairment, speeding, and other driver behaviors among unlicensed drivers involved in fatal and serious injury collisions, applying strategies aimed at those causes may contribute to reducing these types of collisions. But more is needed, as these drivers are especially difficult to reach and influence: some are unknown, having never received a license, and many continue to drive without proper licensure. National research estimates that 75% of

drivers with suspended or revoked licenses continue to drive (NCHRP Report 500 Volume 2). Some intervention strategies have shown promise and are worthy of further implementation. They are included in the table at the end of this chapter.

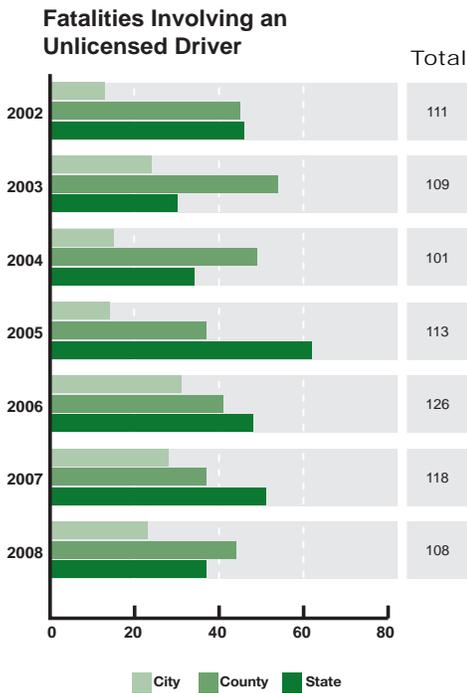
## Fatalities Involving Unlicensed Drivers: Trends, Forecasts, and Goals



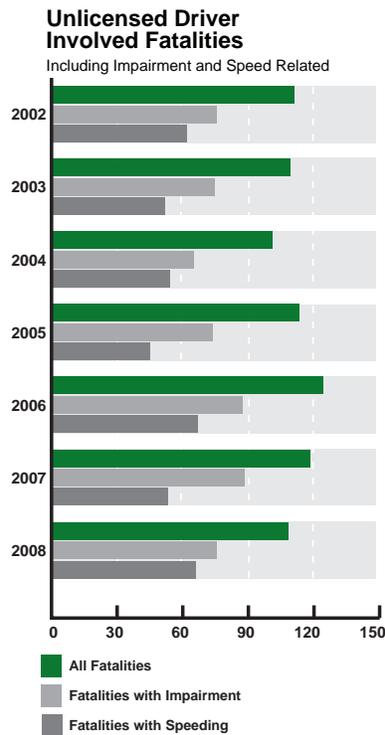
Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System

<sup>1</sup> These drivers were involved in 352 (20.4%) of the 1,725 fatalities.  
<sup>2</sup> The driver potentially could be licensed by another state.  
<sup>3</sup> **Revoked** – license was invalidated, generally because of driver behavior. **Cancelled** – license was issued in error and then cancelled, generally because the driver did not have full qualifications.

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Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission - Fatality Analysis Recording System (FARS)

## Why is There No Serious Injury Data for Unlicensed Drivers?

Unlike the factors presented in the other chapters of *Target Zero*, license status data is not captured in WSDOT's collision database. Driver identification numbers are captured, but 21% of those numbers for serious injury collisions from 2003 through 2008 could not be matched to DOL's driver identification numbers, and only suspended and revoked data could be matched to serious injury collisions. Because the serious injury data is not complete, it will not be presented in *Target Zero*.

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### 2.4 Strategies to Reduce Unlicensed-Driver-Involved Collisions

<b>2.4.A. Apply special enforcement practices.</b>	2.4.A1. Routinely link citations with driver records and ensure timely transmittal from courts to DOL of suspended status. (T)
	2.4.A2. Create and distribute “hot sheets.” (T)
<b>2.4.B Change the law to restrict mobility through license plate modification or removal.</b>	2.4.B1. Modify license plate with “zebra” stripe, easily identifiable to law enforcement, but not to the public at large. Such modification alerts law enforcement to the possibility that the driver may not be properly licensed. (P)
	2.4.B2. Impound license plate. (P)
<b>2.4.C. Restrict mobility through vehicle modification.</b>	2.4.C1. Immobilize/impound/seize vehicle. (P)
	2.4.C2. Install ignition interlock device. (P)
<b>2.4.D. Restrict mobility through direct intervention with offender.</b>	2.4.D1. Monitor electronically. (P)
	2.4.D2. Incarcerate offenders. (P)
<b>2.4.E. Eliminate need to drive.</b>	2.4.E1. Provide alternative transportation service. (P)
<b>2.4.F. Increase the courts ability to effectively process “driving while license suspended or revoked” cases.</b>	2.4.F1. Evaluate the impact of new legislation on “driving while license suspended or revoked” 3rd degree.
	2.4.F2. Evaluate the effectiveness of “driving while license suspended or revoked” laws.