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MIN-4297 – Unlicensed and Under-licensed Driver Statistics

1 September 2023

Provide figures on the number of unlicensed and under-licensed people in New Zealand.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

In response to your request, Waka Kotahi has extracted the numbers of unlicensed and under-licensed drivers from the Driver Licence Register (the Register). It has also provided some data regarding unlicensed and under-licensed drivers from the Crash Analysis System (CAS).

Please note that the definition of 'unlicensed' driver with respect to the data extracted from the Register differs slightly to the definition of 'unlicensed' in the CAS.

Number of unlicensed and under-licensed people recorded in the Driver Licence Register

Waka Kotahi maintains the Register which contains record of everyone in New Zealand who has been issued with a Photo Driver Licence (PDL). The Register, however, does not record information about people who have not been issued with a PDL.

The data provided in **Appendix A** is information extracted from the Register and is current as at 24 August 2023. It has been broken down into the following categories:

1. Unlicensed - the number of licences in the Register with a status other than 'current' (i.e., expired, suspended, reinstate etc).
2. Under-licensed - The number of licence holders who are showing as eligible for the next stage of licence, but have not progressed (i.e., someone on their learners who is of the right age and has held their licence for the required amount of time but has not yet progressed to their restricted licence).

Further caveats are provided in the first tab of **Appendix A**.

Number of unlicensed and under-licensed drivers recorded in the Crash Analysis System

The CAS is managed by Waka Kotahi and is New Zealand's primary tool for capturing information on where, when and how road crashes occur. The CAS also captures driver licence information for those involved in reported crashes.

The statistics provided in the following table have been extracted from our CAS and covers the periods from 2018 to 2022 inclusive. These statistics are also included in the latest Road to Zero Monitoring Report which is due to be published on the Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport website in the next two weeks.



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Deaths and Serious Injury (DSIs) for unlicensed and disqualified drivers, and restricted licence holders

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Number of unlicensed or disqualified drivers DSIs	83 (3%)	75 (3%)	99 (4%)	100 (4%)
Number of DSI crashes where a restricted licence was held at the time of a crash	<=12 months: 85 >12 months: 240	<= 12months: 82 >12 months: 207	<=12 months: 81 >12 months: 219	<=12 months: 78 >12 months: 212

With regard to the above DSI table, unlicensed and disqualified drivers are defined as follows:

- Unlicensed drivers in this instance means any person that never obtained a valid driver licence. This includes the licence Types "Never Licensed" or "Forbidden" as defined in our CAS.
- Disqualified drivers refers to Licence Status as opposed to Licence Type. This includes the Licence Status "Expired" or "Cancelled" or "Disqualified" or "Suspended" or "Forbidden" or "Re-qualify" as defined in CAS.



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The table below provides the number of class 1 driver licences issued each year from 2018 to 2022 inclusive, and the percentages of those who have progressed to the next stage of licence. These statistics were collated as part of the Road to Zero Monitoring Report which is soon to be published.

Access to and progression through the Graduated Driver Licence System

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Number of driver licences issued per stage of licence	Full: 57,286 Restricted: 62,314 Learner: 71,934 Total: 191,534	Full: 55,714 Restricted: 58,129 Learner: 67,274 Total: 181,117	Full: 65,980 Restricted: 73,725 Learner: 84,922 Total: 224,627	Full: 61,528 Restricted: 63,322 Learner: 67,231 Total: 192,081
Proportion of learner drivers who have progressed to restricted	27%	26%	33%	33%
Proportion of restricted drivers who have progressed to full.	26%	25%	30%	47%

Further to the above licence statistics, please see below for responses to additional questions noted in the Deep Dive on Graduated Driver Licence System document.

The class 1 restricted licence test

The progressive system that is the Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS) is considered to be international best-practice. Novice drivers are encouraged to practice, while being subject to certain route restrictions to ensure their safety and others.

These restrictions are progressively relaxed as they progress through the three stages (learner, restricted, full). For example, there are limitations on carrying passengers while new drivers are learning. Novice drivers are tested at each stage of the GDLS to ensure they are improving their skills to eventually merit a full licence. The restricted test is the last 'check point' in the GDLS before getting a full licence.

Further information about the restricted test is available on the Waka Kotahi website at:

www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/getting-a-licence/take-your-test/practical-tests/restricted-licence-practical-driving-test-class-1-car/.



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How the restricted test routes are decided and who makes the decisions

Each practical test site around the country has to have a minimum of four test routes (2x Restricted and 2x Full). From there, other routes are developed as necessary for heavy vehicles (Classes 2-5) and motorcycles (Class 6) based on demand. Decisions to create a new test site and/or route are made by Waka Kotahi in collaboration with Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ), with VTNZ having the ability to develop them themselves subject to Waka Kotahi approval.

Test routes need to meet the requirements as laid out in the Test Route Development Manuals (TRDM). These requirements for the test routes originate from the VicRoads test itself, which Waka Kotahi purchased from the Victorian Ministry of Transport in Australia and implemented in 2012.

Why is the drive-time 45 minutes and who determines this, and the overall purpose behind the restricted test (i.e. what it observes)

The 45 minutes of drive-time was how the VicRoads test was structured when purchased by Waka Kotahi. However, currently the information about the test [available on their website](#) states that stage one takes ten minutes and stage two takes 20 minutes, making it 15 minutes shorter than the test we administer today.

Excerpts from the VicRoads test and the Waka Kotahi test guide are provided below.

Excerpt from VicRoads test guide

On-road driving - stage one

Stage one is designed to assess your safety as a driver in less challenging conditions. The testing officer will give you simple, clear instructions during the test (eg. at the next street, turn right). You must follow their instructions and show that you can drive safely and efficiently. If you're unsure of an instruction, ask for it to be repeated.

Stage one will take about 10 minutes to complete. The testing officer will then instruct you to stop safely at the kerb while they calculate your score.

If during stage one you do anything unsafe or illegal, the drive test will end and you will be unsuccessful.

Stage one may include:

- starting and stopping the vehicle
- left and right turns at intersections
- changing lanes.

Stage one also includes a low speed parking manoeuvre. The testing officer will instruct you to complete one of the following:

- reverse parallel park
- three point-turn.

Speak to your driving instructor or supervising driver if you're unsure about how to do this task.

On-road driving - stage two

If you pass stage one of the on-road driving test, you will progress to stage two. Stage two is conducted in busier traffic and is designed to assess your ability to safely execute normal driving tasks. The testing officer will give you simple, clear instructions during the test (eg. at the next street, turn right). You must follow their instructions and show that you can drive safely and efficiently. If you're unsure of an instruction, ask for it to be repeated.

Stage two will take about 20 minutes to complete.

If during stage two you do anything unsafe or illegal, the drive test will end and you will be unsuccessful.



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Excerpt from Waka Kotahi restricted test guide

Test route stages

The test comprises two stages.

- Stage 1 of the test takes 10 minutes and is a set of relatively simple driving tasks conducted in a less complex traffic environment designed to assess the applicant's driving ability. This stage is conducted in speed zones of up to 60km/h and determines whether the applicant is a sufficiently skilled and safe driver to proceed to the more challenging driving tasks and environments of Stage 2 of the test.

An applicant who does not achieve a satisfactory score in Stage 1 is not permitted to undertake Stage 2 of the test. In this way, applicants who are not ready to tackle the more challenging tasks in Stage 2 are screened out before they can pose a danger to themselves and other road users.

- Stage 2 of the test takes 35 minutes and is designed to assess the applicant's ability to perform more challenging tasks in moderately challenging environments within speed zones of 60km/h and 110km/h.

To pass the RLT, an applicant must demonstrate safe decision-making, observance of road rules and satisfactory car-handling skills throughout the whole test.

Stages 1 and 2 of the RLT must be undertaken during a single test booking. They cannot be split into separate appointments.

The full Waka Kotahi guide to the restricted test is available online at:
www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/driver-licence-test-guides/restricted-test-guide.pdf

Reasons for people not progressing to a full licence

The following are reasons why people are not progressing to their full driver licence:

- lack of access or convenience to testing
- limited test slots or they may be at inconvenient times
- lack of access driver training support
- lack of suitable vehicle
- unclear and consistent information on what people need to do
- cost
- may not value a restricted or full licence
- may no longer require a licence (i.e. may no longer drive but travel by other modes of transport)
- failure to meet diverse needs, such as a lack of additional support if needed, such as for disabled or those needing support with language, cultural.

While Waka Kotahi has identified the reasons why individuals are not progressing to a full licence, in terms of percentages for each of these reasons, Waka Kotahi does not hold this level of detail.



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Further information on international evidence

The following references contain more evidence and details on the following points that were made in the Deep Dive on Graduated Driver Licence System document:

- A graduated driver licence system is international best-practice,
 - There have to be standards and proper supervision around training and practice. Some interventions can be counter-productive if they lead to over-confidence and more risk-taking behaviour.
- Gregersen, N. P., Nyberg, A., & Berg, H. Y. (2003). Accident involvement among learner drivers—an analysis of the consequences of supervised practice. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 35(5), 725-730.
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 - Mayhew DR, Simpson HM & Pak A (2003) Changes in collision rates among novice drivers during the first months of driving. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 35, 683-691.
 - Curry AE, Metzger KB, Williams AF, Tefft BC4, (2017), Comparison of older and younger novice driver crash rates: Informing the need for extended Graduated Driver Licensing restrictions, *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 108, 66-73.
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 - Horswill, M. S. (2016). Hazard Perception in Driving. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 25(6), 425–430
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MIN-4297

Report date: 25 August 2023
Data extract date: 25 August 2023
Question: Number of under-licensed and unlicensed people. This was a query on the GDLS slide pack which Karen gave the Minister at last weeks officials.
Request interpreted as: 1. unlicensed = the number of licences in DLR with a status other than current (i.e. expired, suspended, reinstate etc)
2. under-licensed = the number of licence holders who are showing as eligible for the next stage of licence but have not progressed (i.e. someone on their learners who is of the right age and has held their licence for the appropriate amount of time but has not yet progressed to restricted).

Requestor: Hon Damien O'Connor
Source database: Driver Licence Register (DLR)
Created by: Boah Rasmussen (Data Services)
Peer reviewed by: Moses Kakrada (Data Services)

Caveats:
— The information was extracted from the Driver Licence Register (DLR) and is current as at 24 August 2023.
— The data is limited licence holders on a standard and diplomatic licence as at 24 August 2023.

Table 1 and 2

- The data is limited to Class 1 (Motor Cars and Light Motor Vehicles) licence holders with a class/stage or licence status other than "Current" or "Cancelled" as at 24 August 2023.
- The exclusion of a "Cancelled" class/stage or licence status excludes records where
 - we've received notification that the licence holder is deceased, or
 - the licence holder has progressed to the next stage of class (cancelled class/stage)

Table 3

- The data is limited to current licence holders with the following current class and stage held as at 24 August 2023:
 - Class 1 (Motor Cars and Light Motor Vehicles) learner licence
 - Class 1 (Motor Cars and Light Motor Vehicles) restricted licence
- The data does not take into consideration any period of time a current licence was not held. For example, a current learner licence must be held for at least 6 months before a learner licence holder is eligible to sit their restricted licence. When a licence holder is disqualified or suspended, the period of time they are disqualified or suspended is not included as part of the time the learner licence was held (unless a current limited licence was held during the disqualification or suspension period).
- The data does not take into consideration the reduction in the minimum age or time with a defensive driving course.
- Eligibility for a learner licence holder to progress to a restricted licence is determined by:
 - the learner licence holder must be 16.5 years or older as at 24 August 2023, and
 - the number of months between the start date of the learner licence and 24 August 2023 is 6 months or more.
- Eligibility for a restricted licence holder to progress to a full licence is determined by:
 - Licence holders aged 18-24 years**
 - the restricted licence holder must be 18-24 years as at 24 August 2023, and
 - the number of months between the start date of the restricted licence and 24 August 2023 is 18 months or more.
 - Licence holders aged 25 years or over**
 - the restricted licence holder must be 25 years or older as at 24 August 2023, and
 - the number of months between the start date of the restricted licence and 24 August 2023 is 6 months or more.
- Further information on obtaining a car licence can be found here: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/getting-a-licence/licences-by-vehicle-type/cars/>

For further information, please contact StatisticalAnalysis@nzta.govt.nz

This information must be read in conjunction with the caveats in the "Caveats" sheet of this document.
Data extracted from Driver Licence Register (DLR) on 25 August 2023 for the 25 August 2023 report.

Table 1.

Total number of Class 1 (Car) licence holders with a licence status other than current or cancelled (unlicensed) as at 24 August 2023	
	1,046,269

Table 2.

Total number of Class 1 (Car) licence holders with a licence status other than current or cancelled (unlicensed) by licence status as at 24 August 2023	
Licence status	Total
Disqualified	21,225
Expired	306,888
Limited	986
Reinstate	31,589
Requalify	670,606
Revoked	7,395
Surrendered	2,782
Suspended	4,798
Grand Total	1,046,269

Table 3.

Total number of current Class 1 (Car) learner and restricted licence holders by progression status (under-licensed) as at 24 August 2023			
Licence stage	Eligible to progress	Not eligible to progress	Grand Total
Learner	209,346	42,619	251,965
Restricted	197,840	80,932	278,772
Grand Total	407,186	123,551	530,737