A Survey of Unlicensed Driving Offenders

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a survey of 309 unlicensed driving offenders interviewed at the Brisbane Magistrates Court. A wide range of offenders participated in the study, including: disqualified and cancelled drivers; expired licence holders; drivers without a current or appropriate licence; and those who had never been licensed. The results suggest that unlicensed drivers should not be viewed as a homogenous group. Significant differences exist between offender types in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics; driving history; whether they were aware of being unlicensed; and their behaviour while unlicensed. Among some offenders, unlicensed driving appears to be indicative of a more general pattern of non-conformity; almost two-thirds of the disqualified and never licensed drivers had prior criminal convictions. While many offenders limited their driving while unlicensed, others continued to drive frequently. Moreover, almost one-third of the sample continued to drive unlicensed after being detected by the police. While there was some evidence that offenders attempted to drive more cautiously while unlicensed, this was not consistent with other aspects of their behaviour. For example, almost one-quarter of the offenders admitted driving at some time when they thought they were over the legal alcohol limit. The results highlight the need to enhance current policies and practices to counter unlicensed driving. In particular, there is a need to examine current enforcement practices since over one third of the participants reported being pulled over by the Police while driving unlicensed and not having their licence checked.

INTRODUCTION

Despite ongoing improvements in traffic law enforcement practices and technology, unlicensed driving remains a serious problem. Unlicensed drivers represent over 5% of the drivers involved in fatal crashes in Australia. The crashes involving unlicensed drivers and riders account for almost 10% of the national road toll (FORS, 1997a). Unlicensed driving is also common in other countries. In the United States, over 11% of drivers involved in fatal crashes are unlicensed and over 16% of fatal crashes involve at least one unlicensed driver (Griffin & DeLaZerda, 2000).

While it does not play a direct causative role in road crashes, like alcohol impairment or speeding, unlicensed driving represents a major problem for road safety in two respects. Firstly, it serves to undermine the system used to monitor and manage driver behaviour. By operating outside the licensing system, unlicensed drivers dramatically reduce the ability of authorities to monitor and manage their behaviour through sanctions, such as demerit points. In particular, it serves to undermine the effectiveness of licence disqualification, which has otherwise been demonstrated to be a very effective deterrent to illegal behaviour (Nichols & Ross, 1990; Siskind, 1996). Secondly, there is a growing body of evidence linking unlicensed driving to a cluster of other high-risk behaviours, including drink driving, speeding and motorcycle use (Harrison, 1997; FORS, 1997b; Watson, 1997 & 2000; Griffin & DeLaZerda, 2000). Consistent with this, crashes involving unlicensed drivers tend to be more severe than those involving licensed drivers (Watson, 2000). Accordingly, there is a need to better understand unlicensed driving, in order to develop and implement more effective countermeasures to reduce the incidence of the behaviour.

A number of obstacles have hindered the development of unlicensed driver countermeasures. Firstly, unlicensed drivers are not necessarily a homogenous group. A wide variety of people drive without a valid licence, including those who: have let their licence expire; have had their licence cancelled or disqualified; drive a vehicle without an appropriate licence; or have never held a licence. As such, the motives for a person being unlicensed may vary greatly. In addition, the crash data indicates that those drivers who have let their licence expire are less likely to be involved in serious crashes than those who have never held a licence, have had it disqualified or hold an inappropriate class of licence (Watson, 1997). This suggests a possible link between the degree of risk-taking displayed by different types of unlicensed drivers and the intentionality of their actions. Therefore, from a criminological perspective it may be more appropriate to view different forms of unlicensed driving as discrete types, representing varying degrees of non-conformity (deviance).

A second major obstacle has been the lack of research into the behavioural characteristics and perceptions of unlicensed drivers. Although some self-report surveys have been conducted with disqualified and unlicensed drivers (eg. Robinson, 1977; Williams, Hagen & McConnell, 1984; Ross & Conzales, 1988; Smith & Maisey, 1990; Job, Lee & Prabhakar, 1994) the results are generally constrained by low response rates (typically around 30-40%). In particular, studies that have used official records to recruit subjects have found that many no longer reside at the address provided (Robinson, 1977; Mirrlees-Black, 1993; Job *et al*, 1994). This suggests that drivers convicted of unlicensed driving are a relatively transient group, possibly reflecting a lack of social control in their lives (Mirrlees-Black, 1993; Job *et al*, 1994). Consequently, the primary aim of the current study was to examine the behaviour of unlicensed drivers utilising a more representative sample of drivers. The specific objectives of the study were to examine: the nature and extent of the unlicensed driving undertaken by the offenders; the circumstances surrounding their apprehension; and the factors contributing to their behaviour.

METHOD

General research strategy

In order to obtain a more representative sample, it was decided to recruit participants directly through the court system. In Queensland, there are two types of offences relating to unlicensed driving, *Disqualified Driving* and *Unlicensed Driving*, both of which must be dealt with in court (Travelsafe, 1998). In effect, this acts as a 'bottle-neck' through which all alleged offenders must pass – representing an ideal time to recruit subjects. Approval was obtained from the Registrar of the Brisbane Magistrates Court to survey unlicensed driving offenders either before or after their court hearing. This location was selected for two reasons. Firstly, at the Brisbane Court specific times are allocated for traffic-related matters, including drink driving, speeding, disqualified driving and unlicensed driving charges. These sessions are typically held in the same courtroom each morning. This practice made it possible to allocate interviewers to the court sessions when they were most likely to encounter unlicensed and disqualified drivers. Secondly, the Brisbane Court processes a large number of traffic offenders each year. Consequently, concentrating on this court represented the most cost-effective method of obtaining a sample that was both reasonably large and representative of offenders detected in a metropolitan setting. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the court primarily processes offenders who are detected in the inner city and suburban areas of Brisbane.

Participants and procedure

The study was conducted between June 2001 and April 2002. Trained research assistants approached people as they left the court and explained that they were conducting an anonymous, voluntary survey on the topic of unlicensed driving. Only people who were charged with Disqualified or Unlicensed Driving, and appeared to understand English, were invited to participate in the study. The offence category was primarily determined from information presented in the court hearing and/or published on notice boards at the Court. Once potential participants were identified, they were given a brief explanation of the survey and offered $25 to participate. Some basic information was collected about all the eligible offenders approached (irrespective of whether they agreed to participate or not) including their gender, the offence with which they were charged and, where applicable, the reason cited for non-participation. Under normal circumstances the interview took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The final sample consisted of 309 offenders.

Materials

The survey questionnaire drew on items and standardized scales from a variety of sources, including previous surveys of unlicensed driving (eg. Job *et al,* 1994). The main issues covered in the questionnaire were:

- socio-demographic characteristics (gender; age; marital status; level of education attained; employment status/occupation; income; and driving experience);
- circumstances of detection;
- driving behaviour while unlicensed (amount and frequency of unlicensed driving, cautiousness while driving, speeding and drink driving behaviour, seat belt compliance); and
- exposure to police traffic law enforcement and experiences of punishment avoidance.

Statistical analyses

The data collected from the survey was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 10.0.5. The level of missing data was minimal, given the interview method adopted for the administration of the survey. Consequently, cases with missing values were generally excluded from the

analyses since they had a minimal impact on the sample size. The significance level (α) for the main statistical tests was set at .05. A more stringent significance level ($\alpha = .01$) was used for post-hoc comparisons, to protect against inflating the Type 1 error rate. The categorical data was analysed using a variety of non-parametric tests. Chi-square (χ^2) tests were used to test for the independence of categorical variables. Where necessary, post-hoc analyses were undertaken within each variable using an adjusted standardised residual statistic ($\hat{e}$). The adjusted standardized residual indicates the relative difference between the observed and expected frequencies for a particular cell, adjusted for row and column totals. This statistic can be used to identify those cells with observed frequencies significantly higher or lower than expected. Adjusted standardized residuals are approximately normally distributed with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1, and can be interpreted as Z-scores (Haberman, 1978). The strength of association between categorical variables was tested using either the phi (ϕ) coefficient (for 2×2 tables) or Cramer's Phi (ϕ_c) coefficient (for tables greater than 2×2). Other non-parametric methods, such as the Kruskal-Wallis (H) test, were used to analyse interval data where the assumptions of normality or homogeneity of variance were sufficiently violated.

RESULTS

Sample characteristics

The 309 participants in the study were recruited from 495 eligible offenders approached, representing a response rate of 62.4%. There was a significant difference between males and females in their preparedness to participate in the study, with females (74.3%) being more likely to agree than males (60.5%) [$\chi^2 (1, n=495) = 4.89, p < .05, \phi = .10$]. In contrast, there was no significant difference between the participants and those who refused in terms of their offence [$\chi^2 (1,495) = 0.00, p > .05, \phi = .00$]. The most common reason cited by the offenders who refused to participate in the survey related to 'being in a rush' or 'having no time' (n=40). However, only 11 offenders specifically mentioned that they couldn't participate due to work-related commitments. The final sample of 309 offenders consisted of:

- 109 (35.3%) drivers who were detected driving on a *cancelled* licence;
- 91 (29.4%) driving with an *expired* licence;
- 52 (16.8%) drivers who had been *disqualified* from driving (primarily for drink driving or unlicensed driving);
- 26 (8.4%) drivers who had *never held a licence*;
- 21 (8.2%) offenders who were *not currently licensed* (at least 13 of whom appeared to have failed to renew their licence after a prior conviction for drink driving); and
- 10 (3.9%) who had an *inappropriate licence* for the vehicle they were detected driving (*eg*. riding a motorcycle with only a car licence).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample in terms of key socio-demographic and driving history variables. While the overall sample was predominantly male (83.5%) there was no significant gender difference between the unlicensed driver types. The sample was relatively young, with over half (54.7%) of the offenders being 25 years of age or younger. The offenders with *cancelled* licences were more likely to be young with over three-quarters (71.6%) being under the age of 25. Almost half (46.3%) of the offenders had only been educated to 'Grade 10 or less', with this being most common among the *not currently licensed* (76.2%) and *never licensed* (84.6%) drivers. The majority (65.0%) of the sample were employed at the time of the survey.

Many of the offenders (68.3%) reported having a prior traffic offence. There was an overall significant difference between the unlicensed driver types, with the *cancelled* drivers reporting the highest involvement in prior traffic offences (82.4%). This is not surprising given that these drivers would have originally had their licence cancelled for accumulation of demerit points. In contrast, a significantly lower proportion of the *expired* drivers (61.6%) reported having a prior traffic offence. Interesting, the *never licensed* drivers reported the lowest involvement in traffic offences (30.8%). This may suggest a greater level of compliance with road rules among these drivers or, alternatively, a greater capacity to evade detection.

Overall, over one third (39.2%) of the sample reported having a prior conviction for unlicensed or disqualified driving. There was a significant difference among the unlicensed driver types with three sub-groups being particularly likely to have a prior conviction: the *disqualified* drivers (71.2%), the *not currently licensed* drivers (71.4%) and the *never licensed* drivers (59.3%). In the case of the *disqualified* drivers this is not surprising, given that over a third of these offenders had originally been disqualified for unlicensed driving. However, the proportion of *never licensed* drivers reporting priors convictions for unlicensed or disqualified driving is somewhat surprising. It highlights that many of these offenders were prepared to continue to drive unlicensed despite being previously detected and punished.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics and driving history of offenders by type of driver

Variable	UNLICENSED DRIVER TYPE							Significance level
	Disqual -ified %	Cancell -ed %	Expired %	Not curr'tly licensed %	Never licensed %	Inapp. licence %	Total %	
Gender[1,2]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Males	90.4	84.4	74.7	90.5	84.6	100.0	83.5	$\chi^2(4,299) = 7.44$,
Females	9.6	15.6	25.3	9.5	15.4	0.0	16.5	$p > .05$, $\phi_c = .16$
Age[1,2]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
17-20	19.2	**30.3**	**6.6**	19.0	26.9	30.0	20.4	$\chi^2(12,299) = 41.77$,
21-25	42.3	41.3	26.4	38.1	19.2	20.0	34.3	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .22$
26-39	28.8	**26.6**	**59.3**	33.3	46.2	50.0	39.5	
40 and over	9.6	1.8	7.7	9.5	7.7	0.0	5.8	
Education level[1,2]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Grade 10 or less	63.5	**33.9**	37.4	**76.2**	**84.6**	10.0	46.3	$\chi^2(12,299) = 44.74$,
Grade 12	13.5	**38.5**	29.7	14.3	11.5	60.0	28.5	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .22$
TAFE/Technical/ Apprentice	13.5	12.8	13.3	9.5	0.0	10.0	12.0	
University/CAE	9.6	14.7	18.7	0.0	3.8	20.0	13.3	
Employed at time of court hearing[1,2]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Yes	59.2	70.6	66.3	63.2	53.8	70.0	65.6	$\chi^2(4,299) = 2.83$,
No	40.8	29.4	33.7	36.8	46.2	30.0	34.4	$p > .05$, $\phi_c = .10$
Prior criminal conviction[1]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Yes (%)	**65.4**	30.3	**28.6**	42.9	**65.4**	10.0	38.8	$\chi^2(5,309) = 34.19$,
No (%)	**34.6**	69.7	**71.4**	57.1	**34.6**	90.0	61.2	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .33$
Prior conviction for unlicensed/ disqual. driving[1]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Yes (%)	**71.2**	**29.4**	**23.1**	**61.4**	61.5	**0.0**	39.2	$\chi^2(5,309) = 57.70$,
No (%)	**28.8**	**70.6**	**76.9**	**28.6**	38.5	**100.0**	60.8	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .43$
Prior traffic offences[1]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Yes (%)	75.5	**81.7**	60.4	76.2	**30.8**	40.0	68.3	$\chi^2(5,309) = 33.86$,
No (%)	25.0	**18.3**	39.6	23.8	**69.2**	60.0	31.7	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .33$

1. Where the overall Chi-square was significant (p<.05), the cells with significant (p<.01) adjusted standardised residuals are bolded.
2. The 'Inappropriate licence' category was excluded from the Chi-Square tests to ensure sufficient cell sizes.

The above differences among offenders are further reinforced by the findings relating to prior criminal convictions. The overall proportion of offenders who reported having a prior criminal offence (38.8%) was almost identical to the proportion reporting a prior unlicensed or disqualified driving offence. Once again there was a much higher proportion of prior criminal convictions among the *disqualified* (65.4%) and *never licensed* (65.4%) drivers. These results suggest a strong relationship between the likelihood of prior unlicensed/disqualified driving offences and criminal offences. Indeed, a significant association was found between the two variables [$\phi = .29$, $p < .001$].

Circumstances of detection

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the circumstances surrounding the detection of the participants, by type of unlicensed driver. The most common reason for a participant to be detected was due to an illegal behaviour, which included being caught for a traffic offence (33.7%) or being involved in a traffic crash (3.9%). The second most common reason offenders were stopped was as a result of a targeted check (26.9%), which included cases where offenders were stopped for a licence or registration check, either randomly or due to the nature of their driving behaviour or the characteristics of their vehicle. The third most common method of detection was as a result of a random breath test (RBT). No significant difference was found between the offender types in terms of their method of detection.

Table 2: Circumstances of detection by type of unlicensed driver

Variable	UNLICENSED DRIVER TYPE							Significance level
	Disqual-ified %	Cancell-ed %	Expired %	Not curr'tly licensed %	Never licensed %	Inapp. licence %	Total %	
Reason stopped[1]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=309	
Illegal behaviour	32.7	38.5	42.9	28.6	30.8	50.0	37.9	$\chi^2 (12,299) = 14.44$,
RBT	17.3	22.0	23.1	28.6	30.8	0.0	22.0	$p > .05$, $\phi_c = .13$
Targeted check	28.8	25.7	29.7	19.0	23.1	30.0	26.9	
Other	21.2	13.8	4.4	23.8	15.4	20.0	13.3	
Reason for driving[2]	n=51	n=109	n=90	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=308	
Social-recreational	53.8	52.3	51.1	52.4	73.1	50.0	53.9	$\chi^2 (8,286) = 7.10$,
Work-related	23.1	30.3	27.8	14.3	15.4	30.0	26.0	$p > .05$, $\phi_c = .11$
Family-related	21.2	12.8	17.8	19.0	11.5	10.0	15.9	
Other	1.9	4.6	3.3	14.3	0.0	10.0	4.2	
Vehicle ownership[3]	n=49	n=97	n=82	n=20	n=25	n=7	n=280	
Respondent	59.2	**72.2**	64.6	45.0	**32.0**	85.7	62.5	$\chi^2 (5,280) = 18.40$,
Other	40.8	**27.8**	35.4	55.0	**68.0**	14.3	37.5	$p < .01$, $\phi_c = .26$
Aware of being unlicensed[3]		n=109	n=91	n=21		n=10	n=231	
Yes		59.6	**46.2**	**90.5**		90.0	58.4	$\chi^2 (3,231) = 18.70$,
No/unsure		40.4	**53.8**	**9.5**		10.0	41.6	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .28$
Still had photo licence[3]	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=25	n=10	n=308	
Yes	**13.5**	54.1	**75.8**	38.1	**0.0**	80.0	49.0	$\chi^2 (5,308) = 82.49$,
No	**86.5**	45.9	**24.2**	61.9	**100.0**	20.0	51.0	$p < .001$, $\phi_c = .52$

1. The 'Inappropriate licence' category was excluded from the Chi-Square tests to ensure sufficient cell sizes.
2. The 'Inappropriate licence' category and the 'Other' category of reason for driving were excluded to ensure sufficient cell sizes.
3. Where the overall Chi-square was significant (p<.05), the cells with significant (p<.01) adjusted standardised residuals are bolded.

The most common reason cited by offenders for driving at the time they were detected was related to social/recreational activities (53.9%), followed by work-related (26.0%) and family (15.9%) reasons. The 'Other' category mainly involved personal-related activities, such as shopping. There was no significant difference between the various types of unlicensed drivers and their reason for driving when detected [χ^2 (8, n=286) = 7.10, $p > .05$, $\phi_c = .11$]. It is possible that the primary motivation of the drivers who were detected driving for work-related reasons was to retain their job. To explore this, a question in the survey asked the participants whether they needed to drive as part of their job during the period in which they were unlicensed. A

significant association was found between this variable and whether the offenders were caught driving for work-related purposes or not [ϕ =.25, $p < .001$].

The vast majority of the offenders (92.6%) were detected driving a car. A further 5.2% were riding a motorcycle while the remaining offenders were driving a truck or bus. Unfortunately, the small number of offenders who were caught riding a motorcycle makes it difficult to conduct separate analyses on this group. There was a significant difference among the offenders in terms of vehicle ownership. In particular, those offenders with a *cancelled* licence were more likely to be driving a vehicle that they owned (72.2%), whereas the least likely were those who had *never been licensed* (32.0%). This latter result is still surprising, since it indicates that almost one-third of the *never licensed* drivers actually owned a vehicle.

In total, 100 (36.0%) participants claimed that they were unaware, or at least unsure, that they were unlicensed at the time they were detected. The comparison of offenders shown in Table 2 excludes *disqualified* and *never licensed* drivers, due to the very small numbers of these offenders who reported being unaware of their invalid licence status. As can be seen, a substantial proportion of the offenders with *cancelled* (40.4%) and *expired* licences (53.8%) claimed that they were unaware of being unlicensed. Among the 44 *cancelled* drivers who were unaware, 26 (59.1%) claimed that they hadn't received any notification in the mail (although some acknowledged that they had changed address). While almost one-fifth (18.7%) of the *expired* drivers claimed that they did not receive a renewal notice in the mail, most of the others admitted that they had either overlooked or forgotten to renew their licence.

Almost half of the offenders (49.0%) reported that they still had their photographic licence when they were driving unlicensed. As can be seen in Table 2, the *expired* drivers were significantly more likely to still have their licence and the *never licensed* and *disqualified* drivers less likely. These results are not at all surprising in the case of the *never licensed* drivers (who would never have officially been issued with a licence) or the *expired* drivers (who would still have retained their licence). In addition, it is possible that some of the *cancelled* drivers had not yet received the notification in the mail to surrender their licence. However, it remains a concern that there were many *cancelled*, *disqualified* and *not currently licensed* drivers who still had their photographic licence. Many of these participants claimed that they did not realise that they were meant to surrender their licence or that no one had requested it from them. Nonetheless, a total of 15 offenders acknowledged that they had held onto their licence for identification purposes, while one admitted that they had done it to "deceive the police".

Driving behaviour while unlicensed

The offenders were asked how many times a week they had driven prior to getting caught (see Table 3). The overall mean number of trips was 14.0 per week. Interestingly, this represents at least one return trip per offender each day of the week. Only 31 offenders (10.0%) reported that they didn't undertake at least one trip per week. While there was no significant difference between the offender types, those with the highest means/mean ranks were the *cancelled*, *not currently licensed* and *expired* drivers.

The offenders were asked whether they continued to drive unlicensed after being detected by the police. As shown in Table 3, almost one-third of the sample (30.5%) admitted that they did continue driving. However, no significant difference was found between the offender types.

The participants were requested to rate on a 7-point Likert scale whether they were more careful or not obeying a range of road rules during the time they were driving unlicensed. The items related to obeying: the speed limit, traffic lights, Stop and Give Way signs, drink driving laws, seat belt laws and other traffic rules. The Cronbach alpha for these items was quite high (.87), so the scores were combined to create a scale. As shown in Table 3, the mean for the scale was very high (35.5 from a total possible score of 42). This indicates that the participants generally reported being much more careful obeying the various road rules during the period in which they were unlicensed. There was no significant difference across the offender types.

The participants were also asked whether they limited or altered their driving in anyway in terms of when or where they drove while unlicensed. Among the total offenders responding to this question, only 48.3% indicated that they limited their driving in some way. However, many of the *expired* and *cancelled* drivers had previously reported that they were unaware of being unlicensed. Consequently, a further analysis was undertaken excluding those offenders who were unaware of being unlicensed. Once this was done, the proportion of offenders indicating that they did alter their driving rose to 56.3% (see Table 3). Among the respondents who reported limiting their driving, the most popular methods were: restricting the overall amount of driving (47.1%); driving on back streets/avoiding main roads (10.0%); and only driving during the day (10.0%). Interestingly, three respondents said that they only drove during peak periods, while two others reported avoiding these times.

Table 3: Driving behaviour while unlicensed by type of unlicensed driver

Variable	UNLICENSED DRIVER TYPE							Significance level
	Disqual-ified %	Cancell-ed %	Expired %	Not curr'tly licensed %	Never licensed %	Inapp. licence %	Total %	
Trips per week[1]	n=52	n=108	n=91	n=21	n=26	n=10	n=308	
Mean	11.4	15.7	14.3	16.4	9.1	13.4	14.0	$H(5,308)=12.03$,
Median	10.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	7.0	12.0	12.0	$p<.05, \eta=.18$
Std. deviation	10.7	13.5	11.3	15.6	9.8	11.7	12.4	
Mean rank	132.5	167.9	161.4	163.4	113.4	150.0		
Minimum	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Maximum	42.0	80.0	60.0	56.0	42.0	30.0	80.0	
Continued to drive after detection	n=52	n=109	n=91	n=21	n=5	n=10	n=308	
Yes	28.8	35.8	24.2	42.9	20.0	40.0	30.5	$\chi^2(5,308)=6.45$,
No	71.2	64.2	75.8	57.1	80.0	60.0	69.5	$p>.05, \phi_c=.15$
Care in obeying road rules scale[1]	n=49	n=99	n=81	n=20	n=25	n=9	n=283	
Mean	36.9	35.0	35.2	35.2	36.8	34.4	35.5	$H(5,283)=4.73$,
Median	38.0	37.0	37.0	35.5	39.0	36.0	37.0	$p>.05, \eta=.12$
Std. deviation	4.9	7.2	6.6	6.0	8.2	6.5	6.7	
Mean rank	152.9	137.2	138.8	130.1	166.8	121.2		
Minimum	22	6	21	22	10	24	6	
Maximum	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	
Limited driving[2,3]	n=15	n=64	n=42	n=19	n=25	n=9	n=174	
Yes (%)	73.3	56.3	**38.1**	73.7	56.0	77.8	56.3	$\chi^2(5,174)=11.45$,
No	26.7	43.8	**61.9**	26.3	44.0	22.2	43.7	$p<.05, \phi_c=.26$
Drove when they thought they were over limit	n=48	n=102	n=86	n=19	n=24	n=10	n=289	
Yes	37.5	18.6	17.4	36.8	28.0	22.2	23.5	$\chi^2(5,289)=10.71$,
No	62.5	81.5	82.6	63.2	72.0	77.8	76.5	$p=.058, \phi_c=.19$

1.   A Kruskal-Wallis (H) test was used to test for differences between groups due to violations of normality in the dependent variable.
2.   The cells with significant (p<.01) adjusted standardised residuals are bolded.
3.   Only included participants who were aware of being unlicensed.

To more specifically examine their drink driving behaviour, the participants were asked if they ever drove when they thought they may have been over the legal limit during the time they were unlicensed. As shown in Table 3, 23.5% of the drivers admitted to this. The differences among the offenders were approaching significance (*p*=.058), with the *disqualified* (37.5%), *not currently licensed* (36.8%) and *never licensed* (29.2%) drivers the most likely to admit to driving when they thought they may have been over the limit.

In addition, other data collected in the survey suggested that the participants engaged in less safe driving behaviour than general drivers. For example, 25.2% of the respondents reported exceeding the speed limit by 10 km/h or more on most occasions. It is interesting to compare the responses to those obtained in a community telephone survey of 1430 general drivers, which utilised the same question (ATSB, 2000). This survey found that only 10% of the respondents reported exceeding the speed limit on most occasions. While it is problematic to compare responses across surveys that feature different methodologies, these results suggest that the level of self-reported speeding among the unlicensed drivers may be relatively high. Similarly, 7.4% of the respondents

reported wearing a seatbelt either sometimes, just occasionally or never. A similar question asked in the ATSB (2000) community survey found that only 3% of general drivers reported wearing a seat belt either sometimes, just occasionally or never.

Evasion of detection

As noted earlier, many of the offenders in the sample were detected by the police as a result of either RBT or due to an illegal driving behaviour, such as committing a traffic offence or being involved in a crash. However, many of the offenders reported incidents where they were pulled over by the police and didn't have their licence checked or were able to avoid the matter coming to the attention of the authorities. For example, a total of 164 offenders reported being pulled over by an RBT operation at least once during the time they were driving unlicensed, representing 53.1% of the sample. However, 97 (31.4% of total sample) of these offenders reported that they didn't have their licence checked on one or more occasions. Indeed, of these offenders, 58 (18.8% of total) failed to have their licence checked on two or more occasions.

In addition, a small number of offenders also cited cases where they were pulled over for speeding or another offence and did not have their licence checked (8 and 11 offenders, respectively). Another 8 offenders reported that they were involved in a traffic crash but were able to evade detection. In these cases the crashes were either minor in nature and the police weren't called or they fled the scene. Finally, 11 offenders reported that they were able to evade a speed camera ticket for which they were responsible. In these cases the offenders were driving either another person's car or a work vehicle, and hence were able to avoid the allocation of the penalty to themselves. In two of these instances, the offenders reported that another person lost their licence as a result of the speeding offence(s) they committed.

In total, 113 offenders (representing 36.6% of the sample) were able to evade detection from the police on one or more occasions when they could otherwise have been identified. Of these offenders, 67 (21.7% of sample) evaded detection on two or more occasions. In addition, whether an offender evaded detection or not was significantly associated with the frequency of their unlicensed driving [$\phi = .31$, $p < .001$]. However, the causal direction of this relationship is unclear. While it is possible that evading detection encourages more frequent unlicensed driving, it may only indicate that those people who drive more frequently have more opportunities to evade detection.

DISCUSSION

This study achieved a relatively high response rate, particularly when compared with previous surveys of unlicensed drivers. In addition, the strategy to recruit participants through the court system would have overcome some of the problems previously experienced in locating unlicensed driving offenders. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the current sample. Firstly, it was exclusively drawn from a metropolitan setting with a bias toward offenders detected in an inner city and suburban area. Secondly, males were significantly less likely to agree to participate than females and some of the offender groups were relatively small (eg. the inappropriate licence category). Thirdly, it is unclear to what extent the behaviour of the sample is indicative of unlicensed drivers who have not been detected by the police. It is possible that offenders who remain undetected are generally more cautious (and possibly safer) than those caught by the police. However, many of the offenders in the sample were detected through random enforcement processes. Within these constraints, the findings have important implications for understanding and countering unlicensed driving.

The results clearly suggest that unlicensed drivers should not be viewed as a homogenous group. Significant differences existed between the types of offenders in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics (age, education level, prior criminal convictions); driving history (prior convictions for unlicensed driving and other traffic offences); whether they were aware of being unlicensed; the degree to which they limited their driving while unlicensed; and their drink driving behaviour. In particular, the high levels of prior criminal convictions among the *disqualified*, *not currently licensed* and *never licensed* drivers, combined with the self-reported drink driving data, suggests that unlicensed driving may be associated with a more general pattern of non-conformity and risk-taking among many of these offenders.

There is a common assumption in the literature that unlicensed drivers drive in a more cautious manner to avoid detection (Williams, Hagen & McConnell, 1984; Ross & Conzales, 1988; Mirrlees-Black, 1993, Job *et al*, 1994). Some of the findings tend to confirm this assumption, with many offenders reporting that they limited their driving while unlicensed and that they drove more cautiously than usual. However, the responses relating to drink driving, speeding and seat belt compliance draw into question this assumption. Almost a quarter of all offenders (and over a third of the *disqualified*, *not currently licensed* and *never licensed* drivers) reported driving unlicensed when they thought they may have been over the limit. While it is problematic to compare

responses across surveys, the self-reported speeding and seat belt behaviour of the participants appeared less safe than that reported by general drivers in the ATSB (2000) community survey. Therefore, as suggested by Hurst (1982, cited in Silcock, 2000) it is possible that the behaviour learned while driving unlicensed may not actually be safer, but rather more oriented to avoiding detection.

The findings have a number of implications for driver licensing processes. The relatively high proportion (36%) of offenders who claimed that they were unaware of being unlicensed raises questions about the methods used to inform drivers about the expiry and cancellation of licences. Similarly, almost half of the sample (49%) still had their photographic licence when unlicensed, including some *cancelled*, *disqualified* and *not currently licensed* drivers. Processes for the surrendering/retrieval of licences may need closer scrutiny to ensure that drivers are not tempted to utilise an old licence to evade detection. The majority of the offenders (62.5%) were detected driving a vehicle that they owned. This highlights the potential value of vehicle-based sanctions, such as alcohol ignition interlocks, vehicle or registration plate confiscation/impound and electronic licences. In particular, evidence from North America suggests that alcohol ignition interlocks can be effective in reducing repeat drink driving offences, at least during the period in which they are fitted, and that other vehicle-based sanctions can reduce driving-while-disqualified offences (Watson, 1998a; 1998b).

Finally, the findings have implications for current enforcement practices. Over one-fifth of the offenders were detected through RBT operations. However, it is interesting to note that the Police do not routinely check licences at RBT operations in Queensland (Watson, 1998a; 1998b). Indeed, 97 (31.4%) of the offenders reported that they didn't have their licence checked at an RBT operation during the time they were driving unlicensed. In total, 113 offenders (36.6%) were able to evade detection from the police on one or more occasions when they could otherwise have been identified. In this regard, Stafford and Ward (1993, p.125) have argued that: "*it is possible that punishment avoidance does more to encourage crime than punishment does to discourage it. Offenders whose experience is limited largely to avoiding punishment may come to believe that they are immune from punishment, even in the face of occasional evidence to the contrary*". This highlights the potential value for police to more routinely check licences at RBT and to consider random licence checking programs. In Queensland, as in many other states, this would be facilitated by the introduction of compulsory carriage of licences (Watson, 1998 a; 1998b).

CONCLUSION

This study of unlicensed drivers detected in a metropolitan setting has both confirmed and questioned previous assumptions about unlicensed driving. The results indicate that unlicensed drivers should not be viewed as a homogenous group, suggesting that a variety of approaches is required to address the problem. While there was some evidence that offenders attempted to drive more cautiously while unlicensed, this was not consistent with other aspects of their behaviour. In particular, it appears that many unlicensed drivers do not regularly comply with existing drink driving or speeding laws. The results highlight the need to enhance current countermeasures to unlicensed driving, particularly in the area of enforcement practices. Consideration needs to be given to the more widespread, routine checking of driver's licences to ensure that offenders do not evade detection. It remains unclear how indicative the results of the current survey are of unlicensed driving in non-metropolitan settings and among those who evade detection. However, they highlight the need for further research and policy development in the area, particularly in relation to the factors contributing to unlicensed driving among different types of offenders.

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