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Driving without a licence
- a phenomenon that is
more common in rural
areas.

Problem "Fare evasion"

Driving without a licence poses a major risk to road safety - in all age groups. The Moving International Road Safety Association e. V. warns.

TEXT: THOMAS CYGANEK

The phenomenon of driving without a licence has "dramatically increased", says Moving. "We want to raise awareness of how many people are putting other people's lives and their own at risk. And not only in Germany."

Because "driving without a licence The "revenge" is a fundamental problem.

INCREASE IN YOUNG PEOPLE

For example, according to Moving research, which is based on figures from the Federal Motor Transport Authority, the number of violations of driving bans is "alarmingly high". Of the approximately 432,000 driving bans ordered in 2021, around 144,000 drivers were unimpressed and did not comply.

were caught behind the wheel of a motor vehicle - either because they did not have a driving licence or because they drove despite having their driving licence impounded, seized or impounded. This corresponds to a share of 33 percent. Compared to previous years, there was even an increase in this type of offence.

**// FARE EVASION AMONG
YOUNG PEOPLE:
"SENSATION-SEEKING" AS A
POSSIBLE CAUSE //**

In 2019 and 2020, the number of violations of the driving ban was between 29 and 31 percent. According to the KBA, no data is yet available for 2022.

In addition, the number of accidents involving people driving without a valid driving licence increased by 18 percent between 2017 and 2019, while the number stagnated in the "Corona years" 2020 and 2021. This is according to data from the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis). Drivers in the 35 to 45 age group were responsible for most of these accidents. Overall, however, an increased growth of the problem can be seen rather at the edges of the statistics by age group. Especially the under 18s and drivers over 55 are statistically more often guilty of driving without a licence with a subsequent accident. The number of 17-year-olds charged in this area grew by 72 per cent from 2017 to 2019. In 2020 and 2021, the development stagnated or declined slightly.

SERIOUS ACCIDENTS ON THE INCREASE

According to Destatis, the number of accidents caused by drivers without a driving licence resulting in serious injuries increased by 16 percent between 2017 and 2019. The number of people killed by drivers without a licence also increased by ten percent in the same period. In 2020 and 2021, these numbers decreased somewhat. Driving without a valid licence was shown to be responsible for 3.4 per cent of fatal accidents in 2019, and 3.5 and 3.6 per cent in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

According to KBA statistics, most drivers without a driving licence are caught in the most populous federal states of Bavaria (2021: around 28,000), North Rhine-Westphalia (around 29,000) and Baden-Württemberg (around 25,000). In Hamburg there were

In 2017, there will be around 1,700, and in 2021 already 2,400 drivers without a licence, Bremen came to just over 1,500 in 2021, compared to around 790 cases in 2017.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE "JUVENILE FARE EVASION"

Why is it that more and more young people are driving without a licence? There are no clear findings on this. However, from a developmental-psychological perspective, "minor forms of delinquency" are part of adolescence, says youth researcher Prof. Dietmar Sturzbecher from the University of Potsdam in his time series study "Youth in Brandenburg" (Source: Schmidt, J. & Sturzbecher, D. (2019). Risk behaviour and delinquency. In D. Sturzbecher, B. Bredow & M. Büttner (Ed.), *Wandel der Jugend in Brandenburg - Lebenslage, Werte, Teilhabe* (pp. 149-182). Wiesbaden: Springer VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-23710-3_6). Transgressions and norm-breaking are "typical youth behaviour".

Risky, delinquent behaviour in young people has various explanations, for example personal characteristics, but also those that come from the family environment. It could also be "sensation-seeking", i.e. the desire for varied, new and overwhelming experiences, believes Sturzbecher. Young people are therefore prepared to accept physical, social, legal and financial risks. This can be partly genetically anchored, meaning that risky behaviour is virtually inherited. "At the age of 16 or so - i.e. at the time when risky behaviour is most often practised - young people are ready to accept physical - are also the "sensation-seeking" wer-highest. Boys achieve higher "sensation-seeking" values than girls."

LOW AFFECT REGULATION

In his opinion, emotional-psychological explanations assume that adolescents are more strongly influenced by affects because their ability to regulate affects is less pronounced. Neuropsychological research offers an explanation for this.

The increased willingness of young people to take risks is due to a reorganisation of the brain structures and changes in the hormonal, neuronal and cognitive systems that control emotions.

"The brain region that is responsible for behavioural planning, decision-making, impulse control and risk assessment, among other things, is in a phase of massive change during adolescence, during which all the functions that regulate emotions are not yet fully developed," says Sturzbecher. "So even during adolescence, people learn to control their own feelings, which increasingly prevents rash actions and promotes realistic risk assessments."

RESIDENTIAL LOCATION AS A FURTHER FACTOR

But there are also more plausible explanations for "fare evasion": According to the youth researcher, the location of the young people can be a factor. For example, young people who do not live in the outskirts of Berlin drive more often without a driving licence than young people who live in the outskirts of Berlin. "This could be due to the fact that the transport infrastructure in the countryside is less well developed than in large cities and their regional interdependencies. As a result, young people may be more tempted to travel illegally by motorised means in order to maintain social contacts, for example," explains Dietmar Sturzbecher. On the other hand, young people living in urban areas more often used public transport without a valid ticket.

"Driving without a licence is a This is a risk for general road safety that cannot be disregarded," says Moving President Jörg Michael Satz. In order to implement the Vision Zero, we also have to talk about driving without a licence. Moving therefore calls for the topic to be put on the agenda of a national dialogue to find suitable countermeasures - in order to get to grips with the problem of "fare evasion". //