

The fast and the crashed: Study shows collisions five times more likely for street racers

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Evelyn Vingilis of Western University's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry has co-authored a study that shows people who admit to street racing are also five times more likely have crashed their vehicle in the previous year. Credit: Paul Mayne/Western University

Ontarians who have street-raced at least once in the past year are five times more likely than other drivers to have crashed their vehicle at some point during those 12 months.

Researchers from Western University and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) have produced the first Canadian survey that looks systematically at the demographics and crash rates of adult street racers in Ontario.

The data show one per cent of drivers - potentially as many as 86,000 people - admit to [street racing](#) at least once in the previous year. They are more likely to be single, young and men. They are also more likely than the Ontario average to drive after using alcohol or marijuana.

"We know that those who engage in street racing also tend to engage in other risky behaviours that, on their own, can increase [crash rates](#)," CAMH researcher and report lead author Christine Wickens said. "But even when we adjust for all other variables—age, sex, driving distance, impaired driving—we see this correlation between self-admitted street racers and significantly higher crash numbers."

As the study points out, despite its prominence in popular culture and movies like The Fast and the Furious franchise, very little empirical research has been done on the threat street racing poses to public safety.

Report co-author Evelyn Vingilis, a family medicine professor in Western's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, said, "It's clear that some people feel a need for speed. That's not necessarily a bad thing if it's only on the big screen—but in real life, the risks associated with stunt driving have some serious implications, including collisions that are eminently preventable and come at a high cost to health and society."

Ontario introduced street-racing and stunt-driving legislation in 2007, with penalties that include vehicle impoundment, licence suspension, higher fines and possible imprisonment. That has resulted in fewer driving injuries and fatalities among young men. But these data - collected since the new laws were enacted - show that a core of adult street racers remains undeterred.

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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