

2023 preliminary lives lost in South Australia


**ROAD
SAFETY**

 Government of
South Australia

Preliminary data as at midnight 31 December 2023 reports 117 lives were lost on South Australian roads during 2023. This is 65% higher than the 71 recorded in 2022 and is 26 more than the previous five-year average (2018-2022) of 91 lives lost.

Table 1 – Lives lost, South Australia, 2018-2023

Year	Lives lost
2018	80
2019	114
2020	93
2021	99
2022	71
2023	117 ¹

South Australia's preliminary fatality rate for 2023 is 6.3 lives lost per 100,000 population and is above the 3.9 recorded at the end of 2022. This compares to the 2018-2022 five-year rate average of 5.2.

For the 12 months ending November 2023, South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria all recorded an increase in the number of lives lost compared to other States and Territories. South Australia recorded the highest percentage increase of 61.4%. Nationally the fatality rate as at end November 2023 was 4.7 lives lost per 100,000 population.

Key Points

- > **Location** – The increase in lives lost in 2023 was in the metropolitan area with 61 people losing their life, a 91% increase on the previous 32 killed in 2022. Similarly the number of lives lost on rural roads also increased with 56 people losing their life during 2023, 17 more than the previous year. This compares to the previous five-year average of 55.
- > **Young road users** – The number of 16-19 year olds killed has decreased from nine in 2022 to five in 2023, while the number of 20-24 year old deaths increased by one. The 13 lives lost in these two age groups is three more than the previous five-year average of 10 deaths.
- > **Older road users** – The number of lives lost for people aged 70+ has increased by 26% in 2023 compared to last five-year average. 23 lives were lost in this age group in 2023, up from 11 in 2022.

¹ 2023 fatalities are preliminary as of midnight 31 December 2023

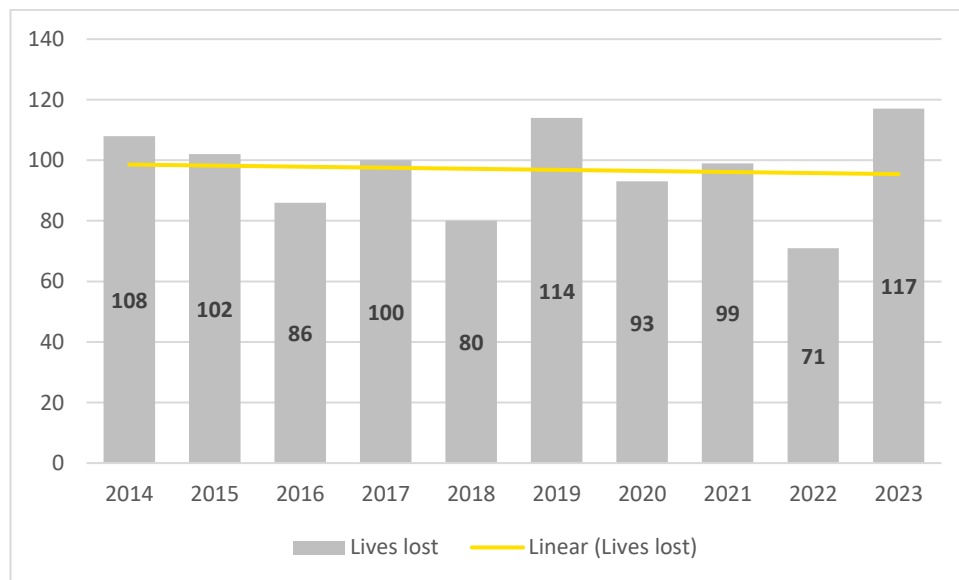
- > **Road users** – The increase in the number of lives lost in 2023 (from 2022) was seen across all road user groups apart from heavy vehicle drivers.

Table 2 – Lives lost, South Australia, 2018-2023

Lives lost	2023	2022	Avg. 2018 to 2022	Change from 2022 to 2023
Total lives lost	117	71	91.4	46
Rate of lives lost per 100,000 population	6.3	3.9	5.2	2.4
Drivers	51	34	42	17
Heavy vehicle drivers	2	4	4	-2
Passengers	12	9	13	3
Motorcyclists	23	13	16	10
Cyclists	8	3	5	5
Pedestrians (includes gopher & wheelchair users)	19	7	11	12
Railway vehicle occupants	2	0	0	2
Older road users (70+)	23	11	18	12
Young road users (16-24)	13	16	19	-3
Lives lost in metropolitan areas	61	32	37	29
Lives lost in rural areas	56	39	55	17
Driver and passenger fatalities not wearing a seatbelt	20%	36%	27%	-16%
Speed a contributing factor in fatal crash	27%	44%	36%	-17%
Drivers/riders killed with an illegal BAC ²	NA	29%	20%	NA
Drivers/riders killed tested positive to drugs ²	NA	20%	19%	NA

NA = Data not available

Figure 1 – Lives lost, South Australia 2014-2023



² Data is incomplete. Results are not yet available for all drivers and riders.

Although an increase has occurred in the number of lives lost during 2023 compared to the long term average a slight downward trend remains over the past ten years. The five-year average for 2019-2023 now sits four higher at 99 compared to the 2014-2018 average which was 95 lives lost.

Road User Types

Table 3 – Lives lost by road user type, 2018-2023

Road user type	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Drivers	42	34	51
Heavy vehicle drivers	4	4	2
Passengers	13	9	12
Motorcyclists ³	16	13	23
Cyclists	5	3	8
Pedestrians ⁴	11	8	19
Railway vehicle occupants	0	0	2
Total	91	71	117

- > **Road Users** – The increase in the number of lives lost in 2023 (from 2022) was seen across all road user groups apart from passengers and heavy vehicle drivers.
 - **Drivers** – The number of drivers (including heavy vehicle drivers) who lost their life increased 39% from 38 in 2022 to 53 in 2023.
 - **Passengers** – Passenger deaths increased from nine lives lost in 2022 to 12 in 2023.
 - **Motorcyclists** – 23 motorcyclists lost their life in 2023, this is 77% higher than 2022 where 13 were killed.
 - **Pedestrians** – 19 pedestrians lost their life in 2023, this is 11 higher compared to seven lives lost in 2022.
 - **Cyclists** – Eight cyclists lost their lives in 2023 compared to three in 2022.
 - **Rail vehicle occupants** – One driver and one passenger lost their lives in 2023 compared to zero in 2022.

Gender

Table 4 – Lives lost by sex, 2018-2023

Sex	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Male	69	53	85
Female	23	18	32
Total	91	71	117

- > 85 males lost their lives in 2023 representing 73% of all lives lost. This is a 60% increase from the 53 killed in 2022.

³ Motorcyclists include scooter operators and pillion passengers

⁴ Pedestrians include gopher & wheelchair users

- > 32 females were killed in 2023, a 78% increase from the 18 killed in the previous year.

Age

Table 5 – Lives lost by age, 2018-2023

Age	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
0-15	3	1	0
16-19	10	9	5
20-24	10	7	8
25-29	6	8	15
30-39	13	8	15
40-49	11	12	18
50-59	11	7	18
60-69	10	8	15
70-79	9	5	13
80-89	7	6	9
90+	2	0	1
Total	91	71	117

- > All driver age groups saw an increase in 2023 from the previous year apart from the 16-19 cohort which recorded a decrease.

Location

Table 6 – Lives lost by location, 2018-2023

Location	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Metropolitan Area	37	32	61
Rural Area	55	39	56
Total	91	71	117

Table 7 – Fatal crashes by location, 2018-2023

Location	Fatal crashes		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Metropolitan Area	36	31	61
Rural Area	50	37	48
Total	86	68	109

- > There were 61 crashes where lives were lost in the metropolitan area in 2023. This is 30 more crashes than the previous year.
- > Within the metropolitan area in 2023, 23% of crashes where lives were lost occurred at intersections. This is less than the 29% in 2022.
- > Crashes where lives were lost in rural areas increased from the previous year from 37 in 2022 to 48 in 2023.
- > 48% of crashes in 2023 where lives were lost in the rural area were single vehicle crashes such as vehicle rollovers or hitting objects such as trees, a decline from 65% in 2022.

Speed Limit

Table 8 – Lives lost crashes by speed limit, 2018-2023

Speed limit	Fatal Crashes		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
40 km/h or below	2	0	7
50 km/h	8	7	19
60 km/h	15	15	24
70-90 km/h	16	15	19
100 km/h	22	19	20
110 km/h	23	12	20
Total	86	68	109

- > In 2023, 37% of crashes where lives were lost were on roads with a speed limit of 100 or 110 km/h compared to also 46% in 2022.
- > In 2023, 22% of crashes where lives were lost occurred on roads with a speed limit of 60km/h, the same percentage as the previous year (2022).

Young Road Users

- > There were 13 lives lost in 2023 within the 16-24 year old age group. Five 16-19 year olds were killed in 2023, compared to nine in 2022. There were eight lives lost within the 20-24 year old age group, an increase of one life lost compared to 2022.

Table 9 – Young road users lives lost, 2018-2023

Age group	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
16-19	10	9	5
20-24	10	7	8
Total	19	16	13

- > The 13 lives lost in 2023 is the lowest recorded in the last five years with young people aged 16-24 representing 11% of all lives lost. This age group make up 12% of licensed drivers and 11% of the total population in South Australia.
- > 16-24 year old fatalities for 2023 include:
 - eight drivers
 - one pedestrian
 - one passenger
 - ten were male, three female
 - three motorcycle riders
- > Of the 16-24 year old driver lives lost:
 - one held a P1 licence
 - two held a full licence
 - five were P2 licence holders
- > Of the 16-24 year old rider lives lost:
 - two riders were disqualified at the time

Older Road Users

- > 23 people aged 70 and over were killed in 2023, 12 more than in 2022.
- > Fatalities in this age group include:
 - ten drivers
 - four pedestrians
 - 57% were male
 - 61% occurred in the rural area

Table 10 – Older road users lives lost, 2018-2023

Age group	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
70-79	9	5	13
80-89	7	6	9
90+	2	0	1
Total	18	11	23

- > In 2023 older road users aged 70+ represented 20% of all lives lost. This age group make up 15% of licensed drivers and 14% of the total population in South Australia.

Motorcyclists

- > 23 motorcycle riders lost their life in 2023, higher than the 13 killed in the previous year.

Table 11 – Motorcyclists lives lost, 2018-2023

User group	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Motorcyclists	15	13	23

- > Of the 23 motorcyclists killed:
 - All were male
 - All were wearing a helmet at the time of the crash.

Table 12 – Age of motorcyclists killed, 2023

Age group	Lives lost	Age group	Lives lost
0-15	0	40-49	6
16-19	0	50-59	4
20-24	3	60-69	2
25-29	4	70+	2
30-39	2	Total	23

Pedestrians and Cyclists

- > 19 pedestrians lost their life in 2023 compared to eight in the previous year.
- > Eight cyclists lost their life in 2023 compared to three in 2022.

Table 13 – Pedestrians and Cyclists lives lost, 2018-2023

User group	Lives lost		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
Pedestrian	11	7	19
Gopher/Wheelchair	0	1	0
Cyclists	5	3	8
Total	16	11	27

Table 14 – Location where pedestrians and cyclists lost their life, 2023

User group	Lives lost	
	Metropolitan	Rural
Pedestrian	14	5
Cyclists	7	1
Total	21	6

Table 15 – Age of pedestrians and cyclists who lost their lives, 2023

Age group	Lives lost
0-15	0
16-19	1
20-24	0
25-29	2
30-39	3
40-49	4
50-59	4
60-69	7
70-79	4
80+	2
Total	27

Speed

- > The identification of speeding as a contributing factor in road traffic crashes cannot always be directly determined and is often underreported in road crash data. However, analysis suggests that in 27% of crashes where a life was lost in 2023 speeding was considered a contributing factor. This is below the previous five-year figure of 36%.

Non-restraint use

- > Of the drivers and passengers killed in 2023, 16% were not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash compared to 36% not restrained in 2022.
- > Of the 12 vehicle occupants killed not wearing a seatbelt, 11 were drivers and one was a passenger.

Age of passenger vehicles involved in crashes

- > In 2023, 62% of passenger vehicles involved in crashes where lives were lost were 10 or more years old, lower than the previous year when it was 75%.

Table 16 – Age of passenger vehicles involved in crashes, 2023

Vehicle age	Passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes		
	2018-2022 average	2022	2023
< 5 years	13	10	16
5-9 years	13	5	27
> 9 years	57	44	71
Total	83	59	114

Star safety rating for light vehicles involved in fatal crashes

- > Of the light vehicles involved in crashes where lives were lost in 2023, 50% had a car safety rating less than or equal to 3 star, or were more than 15 years old and did not have a safety rating. Only 24% were 5 star vehicles (including both ANCAP rated and Used Car Safety Ratings).

Results from previous years

Year	Lives lost ¹	Lives lost per 100,000 population ²	Licences ²	Vehicle Registrations ²	BAC above legal limit	Tested positive to drugs	No Seatbelt ⁴	Location ⁵	
								Rural	Metro
1974 - highest lives lost	382	30.77	636,604	577,600	n/a	n/a	n/a	207	175
1980s ³	252	20.56	757,974	708,600	46 (56%) ³	n/a	n/a	135	117
1990s	179	15.78	923,309	883,500	30 (35%)	n/a	26 (36%) ⁴	104	75
2000s	137	11.03	1,025,260	1,011,100	24 (32%)	n/a	24 (32%)	82	55
2021	99	5.6	1,305,364	1,545,535	15(24%)	8(20%)	14(27%)	59	40
2022	71	3.9	1,327,113	1,588,048	29%	19%	16(36%)	32	39
2023	117	6.3	1,349,764	1,629,532	Unk	Unk	11(20%)	48	61

¹ Average per year over the decade where appropriate.

² Data is taken from the beginning of the decade.

³ Legal BAC limit was below .08 during the 1980's.

⁴ Seatbelt data only available from 1992. Percent is of those with a known seatbelt status.

⁵ The boundary used for defining the Adelaide metropolitan area has been changed in this report to be consistent with the ABS Greater Adelaide Statistical Area definition (ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard). For comparison purposes within this report, all crash and casualty data by region since 2010 have been updated to reflect the boundaries defining the metropolitan and rural regions. Data by region prior to 2010 cannot be directly related as it uses the previous metropolitan/rural boundaries. For the same reason, data by region presented in previous reports cannot be compared to data in this report.

Fatalities, South Australia, 1940-2023

Year	Lives lost	Year	Lives lost
1940	126	1982	270
1941	112	1983	265
1942	127	1984	232
1943	106	1985	269
1944	71	1986	288
1945	61	1987	256
1946	97	1988	223
1947	101	1989	222
1948	128	1990	225
1949	119	1991	184
1950	170	1992	164
1951	197	1993	218
1952	172	1994	163
1953	136	1995	182
1954	153	1996	181
1955	173	1997	149
1956	167	1998	168
1957	185	1999	153
1958	200	2000	166
1959	185	2001	154
1960	234	2002	154
1961	203	2003	156
1962	194	2004	139
1963	223	2005	147
1964	238	2006	117
1965	243	2007	125
1966	270	2008	99
1967	253	2009	119
1968	275	2010	118
1969	251	2011	103
1970	349	2012	94
1971	292	2013	97
1972	312	2014	108
1973	329	2015	102
1974	382	2016	86
1975	339	2017	100
1976	307	2018	80
1977	306	2019	114
1978	291	2020	93
1979	309	2021	99
1980	271	2022	71
1981	222	2023	117

Definitions of police reported casualty types:

Casualty Crash – crash where a life is lost, serious injury or minor injury occurs.

Casualty – A life lost, serious injury or minor injury.

Fatal Crash – A crash for which there is at least one life lost.

Life lost – A person who dies within 30 days of a crash as a result of injuries sustained in that crash.

Serious Injury Crash – A non-fatal crash in which at least one person is seriously injured.

Serious Injury – A person who sustains injuries and is admitted to hospital for a minimum period of an overnight stay as a result of a road crash and who does not die as a result of those injuries within 30 days of the crash.

Data sources

The data presented in this report was obtained from the Department for Infrastructure and Transport road crash database. The information was compiled from police reported road casualty crashes only.

Enquiries

For further information about data in this report, contact:

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