

# Young People

## Involved in road crashes in South Australia, 2017-2021

### Overview

Even though significant road safety improvements have been achieved in recent years, younger road users continue to be over-represented in road trauma statistics. People aged 16 to 24 years make up 11% of the population but accounted for 21% of all lives lost and 19% of all serious injuries in South Australia for the years 2017-2021. On average over the past 5 years (2017-2021) 20 people aged 16 to 24 were killed on our roads each year and 136 were seriously injured. This is a substantial improvement in comparison to the 5 year average (2007–2011) where there were 29 lives lost and 291 serious injuries reported per year in this age group.

**Table 1: 16–24-year-old casualties by severity, 2012-2021**

Year	Lives lost	Serious injuries	Minor injuries	Total
2012	17	180	1453	1650
2013	15	143	1326	1484
2014	17	170	1281	1468
2015	16	155	1212	1383
2016	15	167	1241	1423
2017	20	99	1068	1187
2018	17	111	1053	1181
2019	21	158	994	1173
2020	24	129	812	965
2021	19	185	933	1137
<b>Average % trend change</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>	<b>-4.8%</b>

Table 1 shows the number of lives lost, serious and minor injuries over the period from 2012 to 2021. There has been a small decrease in younger road user casualties over this period was driven by a decrease in minor and serious injuries yet the number of lives lost has increased.

- People aged 16 to 19 make up 4% of the population, and account for 8% of all lives lost and 10% of all serious injuries
- People aged 20 to 24 make up 6% of the population but account for 11% of all lives lost and 11% of all serious injuries

**Figure 1: Average number of drivers/riders involved in casualty crashes by age, 2017-2021**

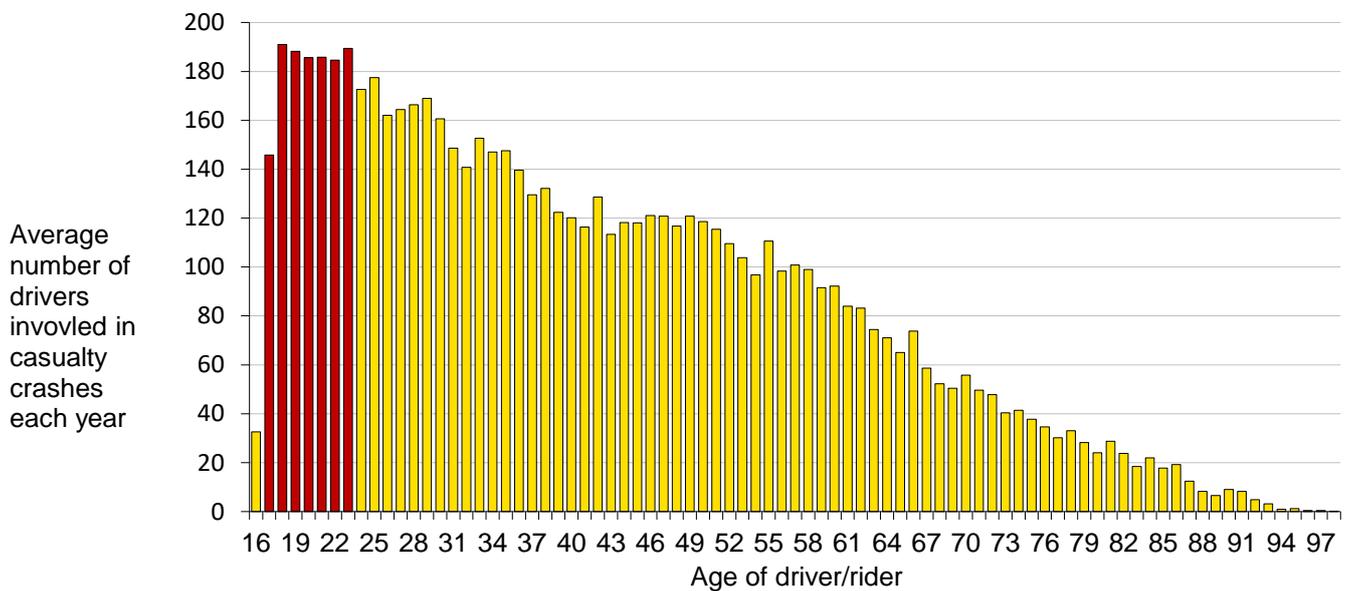
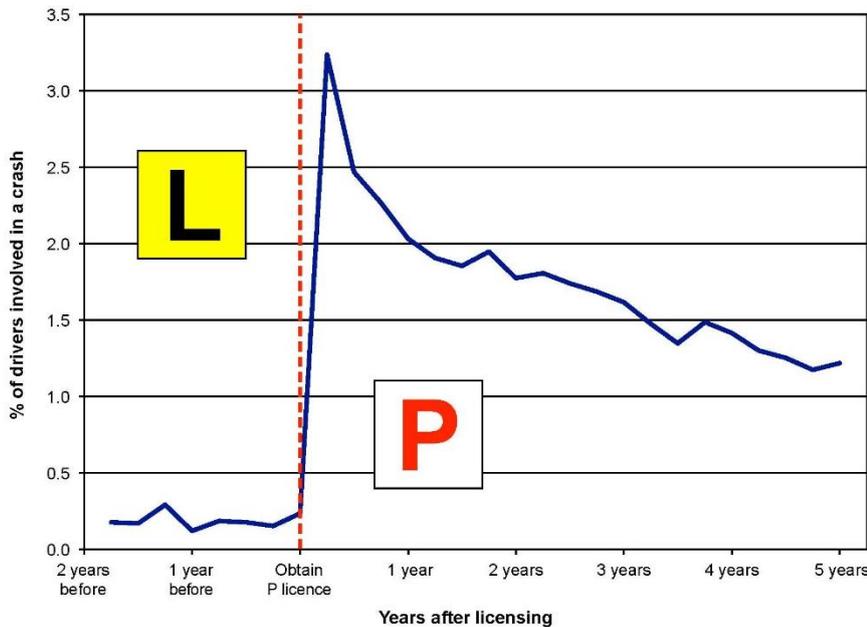


Figure 1 illustrates that on average young drivers are involved in more casualty crashes than any other driver age group.

Research shows that the human brain’s final stages of development, particularly for males, continues until around age 25. The prefrontal cortex, which governs reasoning, advanced thought and impulse control, is the final area of the human brain to mature but is a critical element in safe driving.

Figure 2: Percentage of SA drivers involved in a crash five years after licensing<sup>1</sup>



Young drivers in South Australia are more likely to crash in the first 12 months of holding a Provisional licence. Figure 2 shows very few drivers crash during the learner period, but the crash rate increases more than 10 times from the three months prior to obtaining a Provisional licence to the three months after gaining a P licence when they begin to drive unsupervised.

Figure 3: Rate of death or serious injury per 10,000 licences for drivers/riders by age, 2017-2021

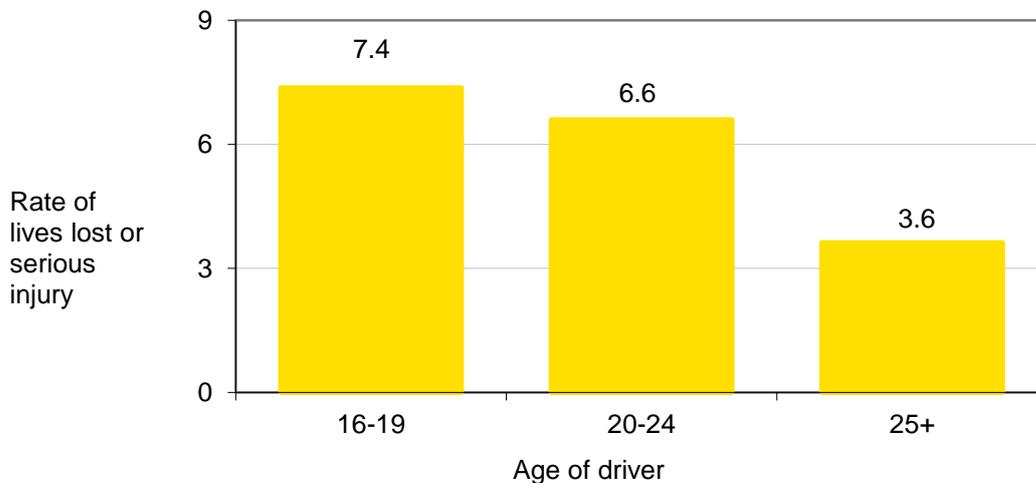
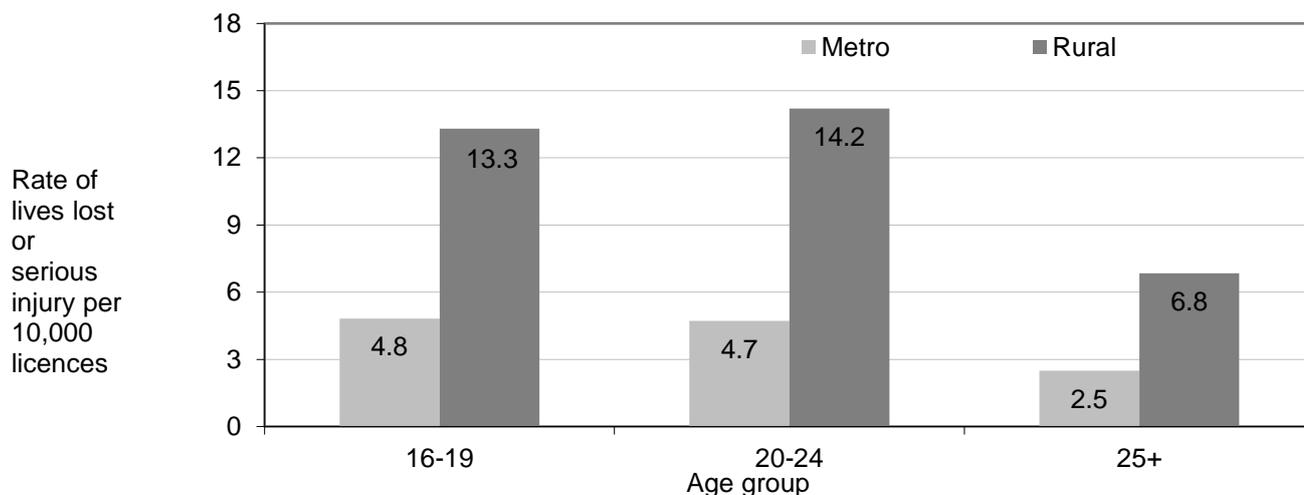


Figure 3 illustrates that young drivers aged 16 to 19 have a rate of 7.4 deaths or serious injuries for every 10,000 drivers licensed. This is around twice the rate of older drivers aged 25 and above who have a rate of 3.6 lives lost or serious injuries per 10,000 licences held. Figure 3 also shows that drivers aged 20 to 24 years have a rate of 6.6 deaths or serious injuries for every 10,000 licences held.

<sup>1</sup> The crash and offence experience of newly licensed young drivers in South Australia, Austroads, 2008

Figure 4: Rate of death or serious injury per 10,000 licences held for drivers/riders by residence, 2017-2021



Rural driver and rider casualties in all age groups have higher involvement rates per head of population than urban residents. Young drivers and riders aged 16–19 living in rural South Australia are almost 3 times more likely, and those aged over 19 are more than three times as likely to lose their life or be seriously injured in a crash, compared with people who reside in the Adelaide metropolitan area as outlined in Figure 4.

Table 2: 16–19-year-old lives lost per 100,000 population for 2017-2021 by jurisdiction<sup>2</sup>

State	16-19 yr old lives lost (Avg)	16- 19 yr old Population	16- 19 yr old lives lost rate
ACT	1	21457	4.7
Vic	16	291794	5.3
NSW	27	365074	7.3
WA	10	125064	8.3
Qld	23	251320	9.2
SA	9	80241	11.7
Tas	3	24135	12.4
NT	3	12019	21.6
Aust	92	1171104	7.8

<sup>2</sup> Fatality data sourced from the Australian Road Deaths Database as at 14 July 2022, population as of June 2020, ABS, cat 3101.0

For the 5 years (2008–2012) South Australia had the second worst fatality rate in the nation for 16- to 19-year-olds with 16.0 deaths per 100,000 population, this rate improved to 5.9 for the period 2012-2016 but rose again for the most recent 5-year period to 11.7 deaths per 100,000 population.

**Table 3: Number of 16–24-year-old lives lost and serious injuries by user type, 2017-2021**

User Type	Lives lost	Serious Injuries	Total
Driver	48	311	359
Passenger	19	128	147
Motorcyclist	28	174	202
Cyclist	0	27	27
Pedestrian	6	40	46
Other	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>783</b>

Most lives lost and serious injuries in the 16- to 24-year-old age group are vehicle occupants, this is a similar distribution seen in general. Younger age groups however have a higher representation in motorcycle crashes (28% of lives lost and serious injuries for the younger age group are motorcyclists compared to 16% of over 25's). 16–24-year-olds have a lower representation in cyclists and pedestrian lives lost and serious injuries.

Research has shown that younger drivers, particularly males, exhibit certain attributes that contribute to their higher risk of road crashes. These include:

- A greater inclination for risk taking
- The use of older vehicles with fewer safety features
- A greater susceptibility to inappropriate peer pressure and other driver distractions such as mobile phones
- Driving too fast for the road conditions
- Running red lights
- Not allowing appropriate space between vehicles.

In keeping with best practice internationally and interstate, South Australia manages these risks through a Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS) that supports drivers in gaining appropriate experience at an appropriate age. On July 28 2014, new rules were introduced for South Australian novice licence holders aged under 25, these included;

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- No driving between midnight and 5 am on a P1 licence
- No more than one passenger aged 16 to 20 on a P1 licence
- Hazard perception test for learners
- Time spent on a Provisional licence increased from 2 to 3 years
- Removal of regression.

More information can be found here [http://mylicence.sa.gov.au/gls/the\\_new\\_rules](http://mylicence.sa.gov.au/gls/the_new_rules)

Over the 5-year period 2017-2021 for drivers/riders in the 16-to-24-year age group:

- 23% of drivers/riders killed and tested for blood alcohol concentration (BAC) recorded a BAC of .05 or above and 27% tested positive for the presence of cannabis, methamphetamine or ecstasy or a combination of these drugs.
- 36% of the drivers and passengers killed were unrestrained
- 72% of drivers/riders killed or seriously injured were male
- 43% of drivers/riders were killed or seriously injured on rural roads
- 49% of drivers/riders were killed or seriously injured on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday
- 56% of drivers/riders were killed or seriously injured on roads signposted as 80 km/h or above.

**Definitions of police reported casualty types:**

**Casualty Crash** – crash where at least one 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.

**Minor Injury Crash** – A crash in which at least one person sustains injury but no person is seriously injured or dies within 30 days of the crash.

**Minor Injury** – A person who sustains injuries requiring medical treatment, either by a doctor or in a hospital, as a result of a road crash and who was not admitted to hospital 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.

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**Enquiries**

For further information, contact:

Department for Infrastructure and Transport  
GPO Box 1533  
Adelaide SA 5001

**Email:** [http://www.dit.sa.gov.au/contact\\_us](http://www.dit.sa.gov.au/contact_us)

**Website:** <https://www.thinkroadsafety.sa.gov.au/>

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