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ROAD SAFETY COMMISSION

2019

Preliminary summary of fatalities on Western Australian roads

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If you would like this document in
another format please contact us.

Office address:

Level 1, 151 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004

Postal address:

Road Safety Commission
PO Box 6348
EAST PERTH WA 6892

Telephone: (08)1300 999 772
Fax: (08) 6552 0802
Email: info@rsc.wa.gov.au
Website: www.rsc.wa.gov.au

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Foreword

Michelle Roberts MLA
Minister for Police and Road Safety

This summary of 2019 road fatalities in Western Australia reminds us just how dangerous roads can be. When we drive, ride or walk, we take it for granted that we will arrive at our destination. Last year 164 people died in crashes trying to do just that.

It is important to collect these statistics so that we can understand more about why crashes happen and the kinds of things that we can do to prevent them.

Speed continues to be the most common behavioural factor in road deaths. Nearly half of the 2019 fatalities occurred in 110 km zones. There has been improvement in speed-related fatalities with fewer than the preceding five-year average, and the number of alcohol-related deaths is also well below preceding the five-year average.

The number of deaths caused by inattention is up 48% on the preceding five-year average and males continue to be hugely over-represented in road fatalities.

Single vehicle crashes are still the most common fatal crash type, with 71% of fatalities recorded last year in crashes that did not involve another vehicle or motorcycle.

These figures are not lines on a page. Each statistic is a tragedy and reinforces the need for further work to reduce road trauma in Western Australia.

I thank the Road Safety Commission for putting this document together and I commend it as an important source of information for the Western Australian community.

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Introduction

Iain Cameron
Chairman, Road Safety Council

Since the start of the State's current road safety strategy, *Towards Zero 2008–2020*, there has been a 30 per cent reduction in road trauma but that is little comfort to those who have loved ones affected by road crashes.

Our community surveys show that most people do not accept any death or serious injury on our roads and there is increasing belief that one day "zero" might be possible.

Following extensive community engagement, the Council is currently preparing advice for the Minister in Government for a new road safety strategy to 2030 and there is an opportunity to achieve an even greater improvement on our community journey towards zero.

But today's reality is that in 2019, 164 people lost their lives on WA roads last year, hundreds more now live with permanent, life changing injuries, and families and communities are now left to pick up the pieces after a local tragedy.

The 2019 total number of road deaths is five more compared with the 159 people lost in 2018. This increase came from a rise in metropolitan road deaths and motorcycle fatalities.

99 people died driving on regional roads, which many of those people knew well and had driven on many times before.

In recent years metropolitan deaths have been trending down while the regional deaths

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are fluctuating with only slight improvement. One of our most enduring fatal and serious crash problems is a single vehicle running off the side of the road. Continuing to implement life-saving treatments like audible edges and wide centre lines remains vital, the more we can do sooner, the more people will avoid serious trauma.

In the metropolitan area most crashes occur at intersections and crashes involving a pedestrian or cyclist remain a concern here and around the world. Crashes involving young drivers aged 17–20 continue to decline at nearly double the rate of our overall improvement which is a very positive sign our community actions are working to better protect young drivers and others. Crashes involving speeding, drink driving and not wearing seatbelts are showing good reductions.

Most fatalities on our roads are due to someone simply making a mistake, not paying attention or falling asleep while travelling on a road with a 110km/h speed limit where the consequences of a crash are much more severe.

For this reason, the Road Safety Council is continuing its focus on the Safe System. This system protects road users by focussing not only on driver behaviour but also safe roads and roadsides, safe vehicles and safe speeds so that when a crash occurs as they invariably do, the consequences are less severe.

The Road Safety Council looks forward to working together with the Road Safety Commission, government agencies and the community to save lives and reduce injuries on our roads.

Preliminary summary of fatalities 2019

This publication presents statistics on fatalities as a result of crashes that occurred from 1 January 2019 up to, and including, 31 December 2019.

Unless otherwise identified, the Road Safety Commission (Commission) prepared the numbers reported in this publication based on preliminary fatality data provided by the WA Police Force. This data is accurate as at 05 February 2020. Numbers may change in the future due to police investigation, coronial inquiry or upgrade of injuries. For this reason, comparisons between this publication and others may result in discrepancies.

A fatality is defined as a person killed immediately or within 30 days of the crash, as result of the crash. This publication reports on fatalities as a result of reportable road crashes that occurred on roads open to the public from normal road use in metropolitan and regional WA. Regional WA includes remote areas. This definition excludes fatalities from crashes where the cause of the crash was a medical condition or premeditated intent to cause harm.

This publication adopts WA Police Force definitions. Please note that these may differ from those regularly reported by the Commission (or by the former Office of Road Safety). This information should also be considered with the following caveats:

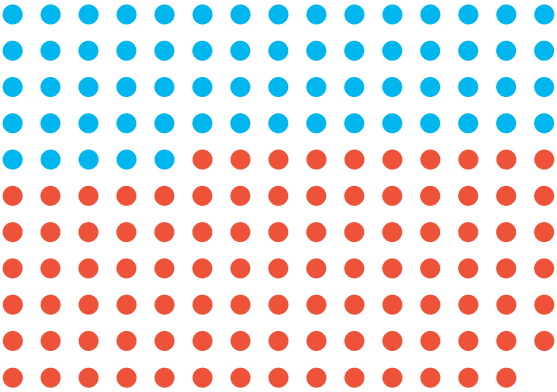
(1) These statistics have been derived from WA Police Force data, but the calculations have not been endorsed by WA Police Force.

(2) The information was sourced from the WA Police Force via the WA Police Force Traffic Enforcement and Crash Executive Information System.

(3) The information is provisional and may be subject to revision.

Key information at a glance

164 people died on WA roads in 2019 with 65 in metropolitan area and 99 in regional areas.



2019 had five more fatalities than 2018 which was the lowest number of lives lost (159) in a calendar year since 1961

20-29 20–29 years of age was the most common age group for fatalities (23%, 38)

74% of fatalities were male (122)

Most motorcycle fatalities were in metropolitan Perth (59%, 19)

The one cyclist killed was not wearing a helmet at the time of crash

32% fatalities were in speed-related crashes (52)

20% fatalities were in alcohol-related crashes (33)

19% fatalities were in inattention-related crashes (31)

12% fatalities were in fatigue-related crashes (19)

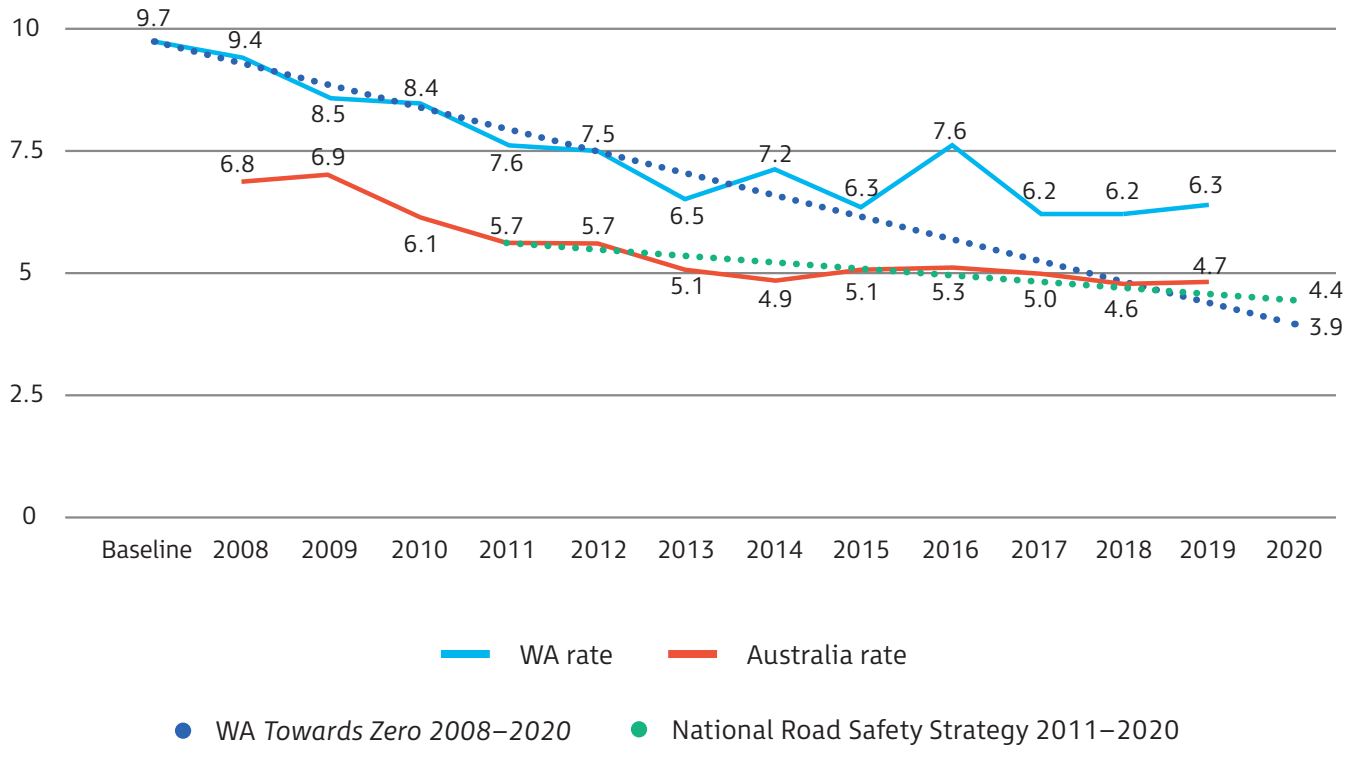
23 motor vehicle occupant fatalities (including passengers) were not wearing seatbelts at the time of the crash

Overview

In 2019, the WA fatality rate per 100,000 persons was 6.3. This is lower than the baseline rate (2005–2007 average: 9.7) before implementation of the State Government's road safety strategy *Towards Zero 2008–2020*.

Despite this reduction, WA's fatality rate is currently higher than expected if we are to meet the ambitions of the *Towards Zero* Road Safety Strategy (estimated to be 3.9 fatalities per 100,000 persons) and also higher than the current national average (4.7).[2]

Figure 1. Fatality rates per 100,000 population[1,2]

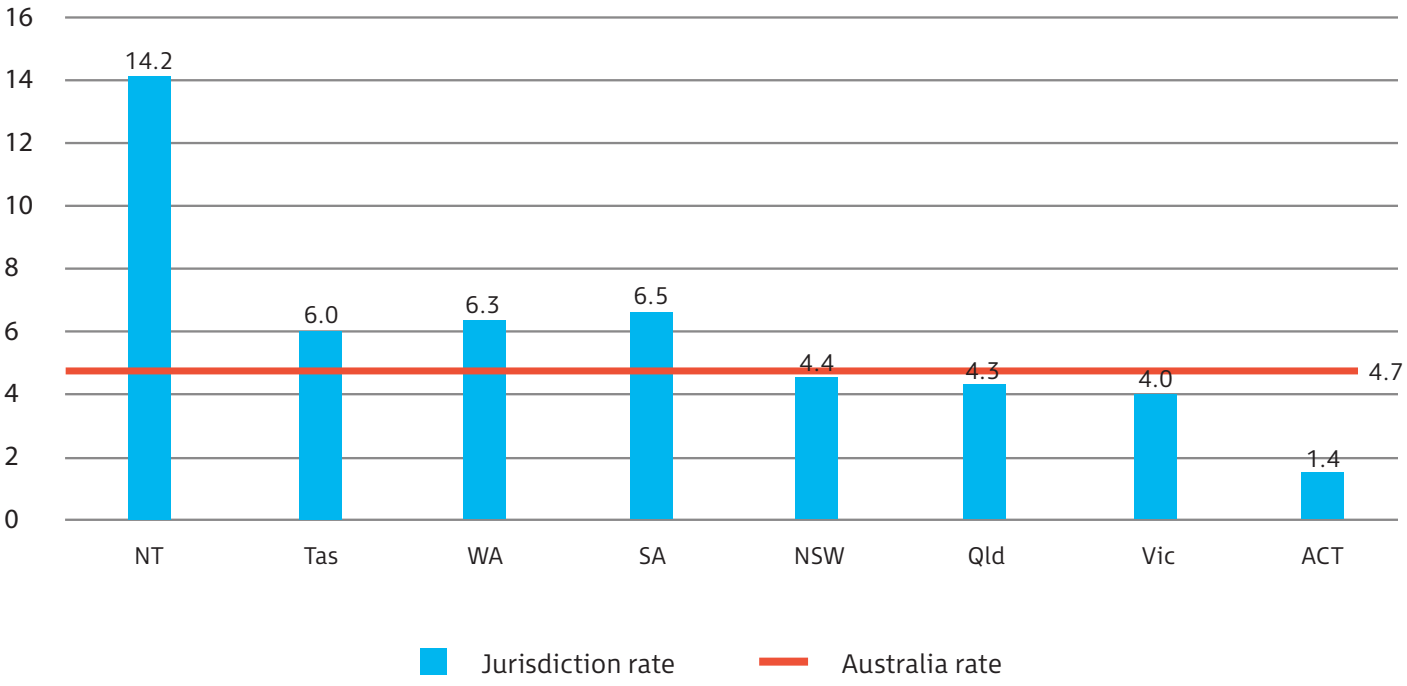


[1]Denominators from Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). Australian demographic statistics, Australia, June 2019, (Catalogue No. 3101.0). Retrieved from https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0

[2]Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities (BITRE). Australian Road Deaths Database, December 2019. Retrieved from https://www.bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database

In 2019, there were 164 fatalities in reported road crashes in Western Australia. This represents a 3% increase compared to the 2018 total of 159, but a 4% reduction compared with the preceding five-year average of 171. The reduction has occurred despite ongoing increases in our population and the number of registered motor vehicles and licensed drivers.[1,3,4]

Figure 2. Fatality rates per 100,000 persons by jurisdiction, 2019[1, 2]



[3]Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). Motor Vehicle Census, 31 January 2019, (Catalogue No. 9309.0). Retrieved

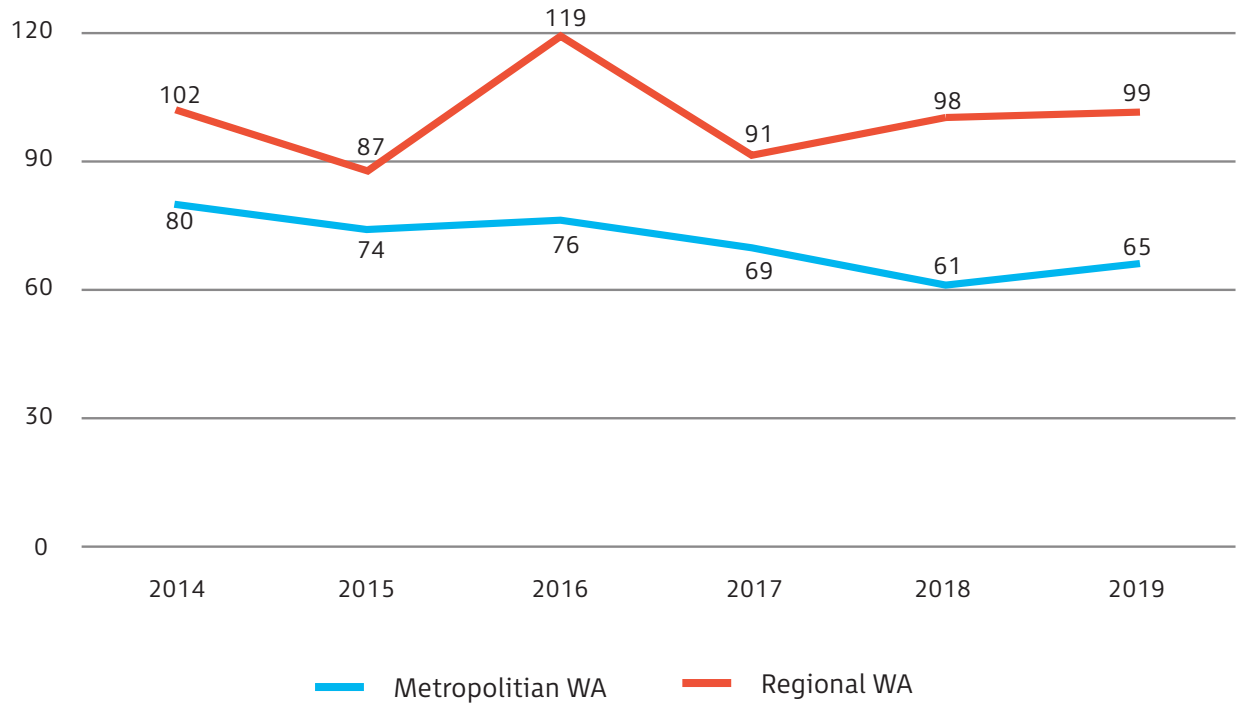
[4]Motor vehicle drivers licence counts provided by Department of Transport, Western Australia.

Table 1. Fatality counts and rates

	Fatality count	Rate per 100,000 persons
2014	182	7.2
2015	161	6.2
2016	195	7.5
2017	160	6.2
2018	159	6.2
2019	164	6.3

Consistent with historical trends, the majority (60%, 99) of 2019 road fatalities were a result of crashes in regional WA. This is equal to the preceding five-year average (99). Metropolitan WA had 65 fatalities and showed a reduction in fatalities compared with the preceding five-year average (72). The increase in the total number of fatalities for 2019 compared to 2018, was driven by an 7% increase in fatalities in the metropolitan area (4).

Figure 3. Fatality counts by region



WA Police Force Districts

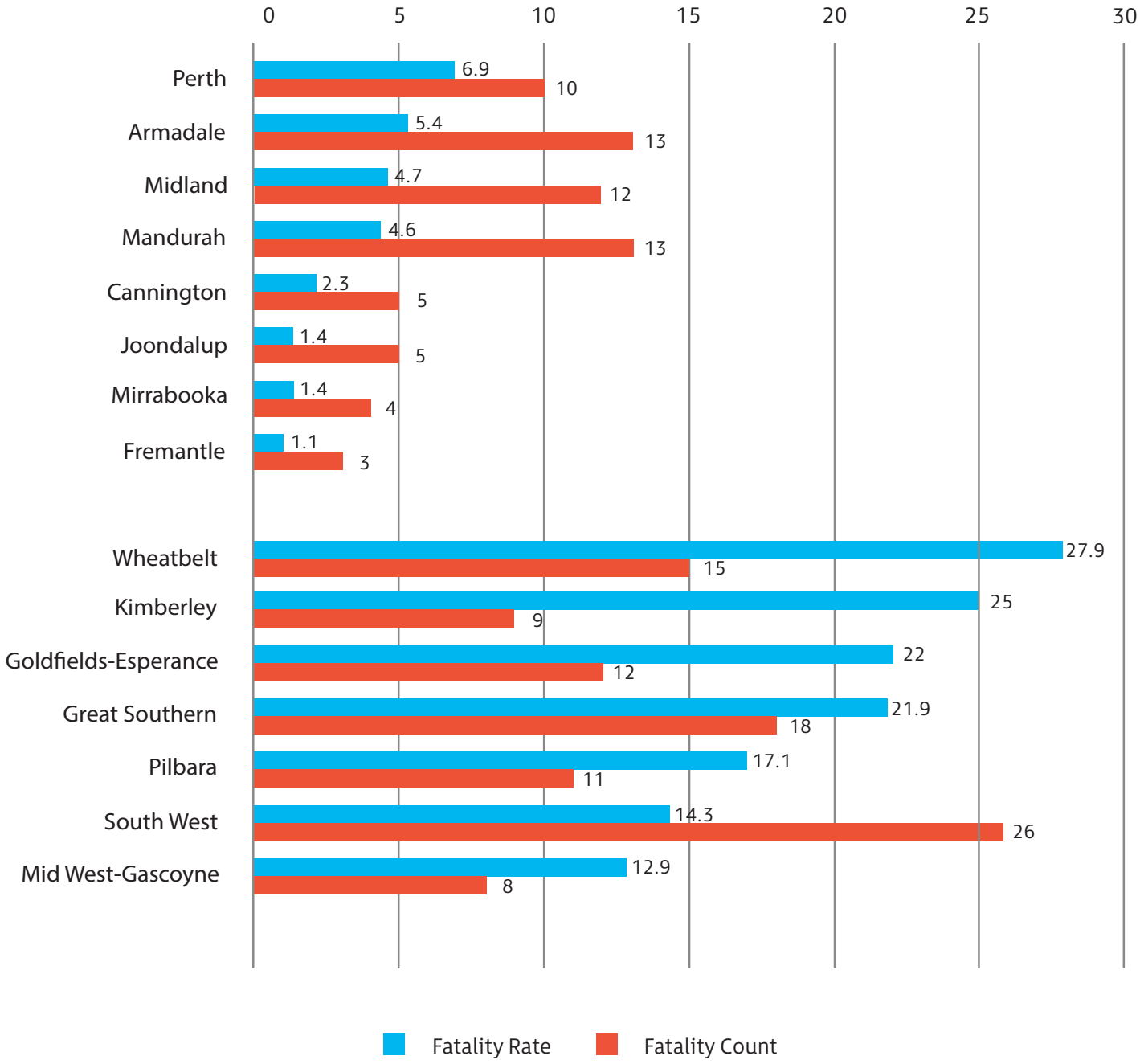
The data reported in the 2019 Preliminary Fatality Summary is based on WA Police Force District operational boundaries.

Daily reporting of fatalities by the Road Safety Commission incorporates data from WA Police Force and Main Roads WA, who report different regional boundaries in WA.

Regional districts recorded higher fatality rates than metropolitan police districts. The highest fatality rate in the state was recorded in the Wheatbelt Police District (27.9 per 100,000 people).

The Fremantle Police District recorded WA's lowest fatality rate of 1.1 per 100,000 people.

Figure 4. Indicative fatality rates per 100,000 persons and fatality counts by WA Police Force district, 2019[5]



[5]The rate denominators are estimated population counts for WA Police Force districts which were prepared for the WA Police Force by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2019.. District boundaries changed in July 2018 and this may affect reliability of the calculated rates.

Local Government areas (LGAs)

The 14 LGAs with the highest fatality count are shown in Table 2. These 14 LGAs accounted for 38% (63) of all fatalities in 2019. The fatalities in these LGAs were distributed evenly across both local government roads (52%, 33) and State-controlled roads (48%, 30).

Table 2. Fatalities by LGA of crash – Top 14

Local Government areas	Fatality count
Armadale	6
Murray	6
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	5
Port Hedland	5
Swan	5
Ashburton	4
Busselton	4
Canning	4
Derby-West Kimberley	4
Harvey	4
Mundaring	4
Serpentine-Jarrahdale	4
Wanneroo	4
Waroona	4
Total	63

Temporal characteristics

On average last year, 14 people lost their lives every month in road crashes.

January 2019 recorded the highest number of fatalities compared to the other months with 20 road deaths, while the most common weekday for fatalities to occur was Saturday (29).

Fatalities in metropolitan areas were most common between the hours of 6:00pm and 8:59pm (11), while fatalities in regional WA were most common between the hours of 3:00pm and 5:59pm (24).

Roads and speed zones

In 2019, 80 people died in crashes on State roads (49%), and 84 people were killed as a result of a crash on a local government road (51%).

Most fatalities, 45%, occurred in 110km/h speed zones (74), followed by 24 deaths recorded in 60km/h zones (15%). In regional WA, 63 fatalities were recorded in 110km/h speed zones (64%), while in the metropolitan area, 21 fatalities occurred in 60km/h speed zones (32%).

In 2019, more fatalities were recorded in 100km/h and 110km/h speed zones compared to the preceding five year average, while deaths on 70km/h roads reduced by the highest amount.

Table 3. Fatalities by speed zone

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Five-year average	2019
<=40km/h	5	1	0	5	0	2.2	2
50km/h	17	11	19	25	18	18	17
60km/h	30	21	24	23	19	23.4	24
70km/h	21	16	16	15	19	17.4	5
80km/h	14	19	16	15	9	14.6	15
90km/h	11	17	13	7	9	11.4	9
100km/h	14	11	10	10	9	10.8	14
110km/h	65	65	94	58	74	71.2	74
Not recorded	5	0	3	2	2	2.4	4
Total	182	161	195	160	159	171.4	164

Crash nature

Almost 2 in 5 (38%, 63) of the 2019 fatalities resulted from collisions with objects such as walls and trees. This is higher than the preceding five-year average (57).

The most common crash type for fatalities in metropolitan WA was collisions with objects such as walls and trees (45%, 29). This was higher than the preceding five-year average (21). While the distribution across crash natures remained reasonably constant, metropolitan fatalities in rear end (3), hit-pedestrian (7) and head-on crashes (3) decreased in 2019 when compared with the preceding five-year average (8, 10 and 7, respectively).

In regional WA, collisions with objects such as walls and trees (34%, 34) was also the most common crash type for fatalities. The distribution of fatalities by crash nature remained relatively stable when compared with the preceding five-year averages.

There isn't always another driver involved – 71% of fatalities in 2019 involved one motor vehicle or motorcycle.

Common behavioural factors

Speed-related crashes include those crashes where police recorded speed as a primary crash factor, either alone or in combination with other factors, and/or where police recorded speed as a contributing factor. Police may record speed as a contributing factor where at least one vehicle is travelling above the speed limit or at an inappropriate speed for the prevailing conditions.

Fatigue-related crashes include those crashes where police suspected fatigue as a contributing factor and/or the primary crash factor.

Inattention-related crashes include those crashes where police suspected inattention as the primary crash factor. Inattention includes distractions, eating, using in-vehicle devices, using mobile phones, etc.

Alcohol-related crashes include those crashes where the attending police officer suspected alcohol as a primary crash factor, either alone or in combination with other factors, and/or where police suspected that at least one driver or rider in control of a motor vehicle had consumed alcohol.

Common behavioural factors

These categories should not be summed, as they are not mutually exclusive.

In 2019, 96 (58%) fatalities were the result of crashes that police suspect involved at least one driver or rider behavioural factor.

Of the four behavioural factors, speed was the most frequently recorded category. About one third (32%, 52) of fatalities were in speed-related crashes. This was the same as 2018 (52) but lower than the preceding five-year average (56).

One fifth (20%, 33) of those killed were in alcohol-related crashes – a decrease of 25% on the preceding five-year average (44). It was also a 47% decrease on the peak in 2016 of 62 fatalities.

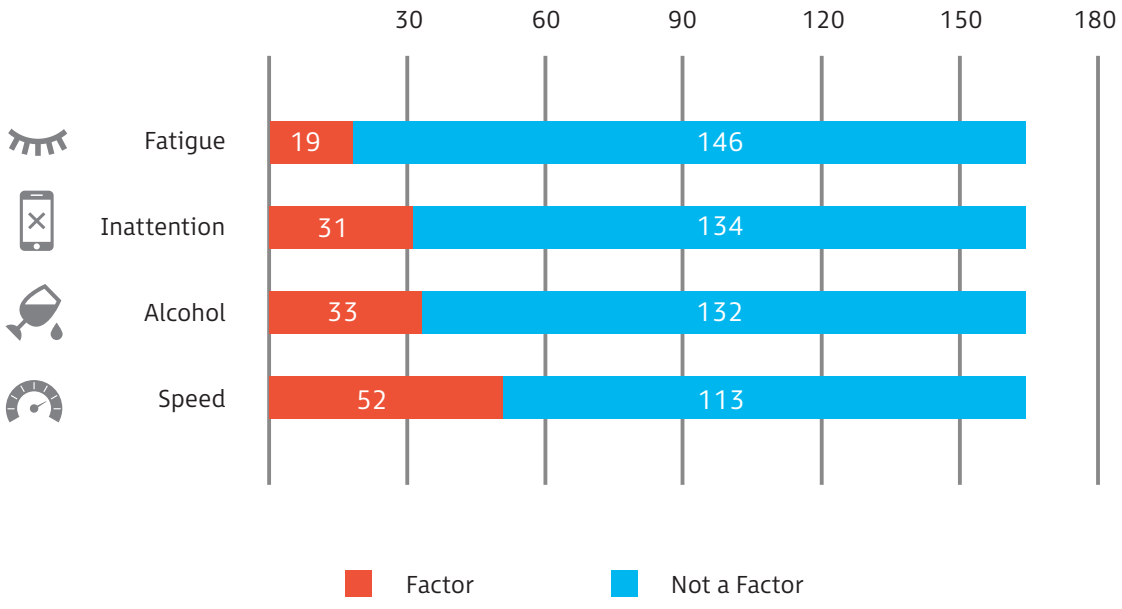
Most (76%, 25) alcohol-related fatalities occurred in regional WA.

Thirty-one fatalities (19%) were in inattention-related crashes. This was a 48% increase compared to the preceding five-year average of 21. This increase was driven largely by fatalities from crashes in regional WA, which were 64% higher in 2019 (18) when compared with the preceding five-year average (11).

Nineteen fatalities (12%) in 2019 were in fatigue-related crashes. This was a 14% reduction compared to the preceding five-year average of 22. Most of these fatalities (74%, 14) occurred in regional WA.

Fact: In 2019, 59% of fatalities were a result of crashes with recorded driver behavioural factors.

Figure 5. Number of fatalities by behavioural factor, 2019



Road user type

In 2019, 49 (30%) of fatalities were vulnerable road users, such as motorcyclists, pedestrians, cyclists and other unprotected road users.

In 2019, the number of motorcyclist fatalities (32) remained the same as the preceding five-year average (32). However, despite representing only 6% of the registered vehicles for 2019 in WA, 20% of fatalities occured on motorcycles (32)[3].

Most (59%, 19) of the motorcyclist fatalities in 2019 were in metropolitan WA. The vast majority were males (97%, 31) and 28% (9) were aged between 20–29 years old.

The number of pedestrian fatalities in 2019 (16) decreased 6% compared to the preceding five-year average (15). The majority (56%, 9) were in regional areas. The most common age group for pedestrian fatalities was 20–29 years of age (4) and people 80 years old and above (4).

Cyclist fatalities in 2019 (1) were lower than the preceding five-year average (5).

115 motor vehicle occupants

32 motorcyclists

16 pedestrians

1 cyclist

Table 4. Fatalities by road user and year

Road user type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Five-year average	2019
Motor vehicle occupant	113	120	137	108	110	117.6	115
Vulnerable road user	69	41	58	52	49	53.8	49
Motorcyclist	*44*	*23*	*39*	*26*	*28*	*32*	*32*
Pedestrian	*16*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*15*	*14.6*	*16*
Cyclist	*8*	*4*	*3*	*7*	*5*	*5.4*	*1*
*Other**	*1*	*1*	*2*	*4*	*1*	*1.8*	*0*
Total	182	161	195	160	159	171.4	164

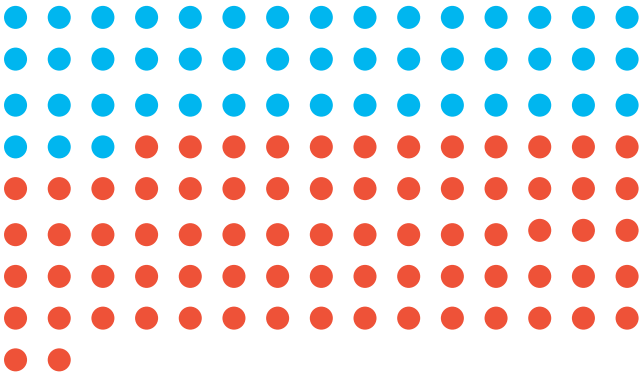
**Other includes gophers, horse and skateboard riders*

Gender

Males were overrepresented in fatalities, comprising 74% (122) of lives lost in 2019, but only make up 50% of the WA population.[1] 60% of all male fatalities were in regional WA (74). Of the 164 fatalities, 40 (24%) were female. 60% of all female fatalities were in the regional area (24). While the number of fatalities that were male and female have decreased compared with the preceding five-year averages (129, 43%), the relative proportions have not changed compared to the preceding five-year average (75%, 25%).

Males

48 metropolitan, 74 regional



Females

16 metropolitan, 24 regional

[1]Denominators from Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). Australian demographic statistics, Australia, June 2019, (Catalogue No. 3101.0). Retrieved from https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0

[3]Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019). Motor Vehicle Census, 31 January 2019, (Catalogue No. 9309.0). Retrieved

Age

The 20–29 year age group recorded 38 fatalities last year (23%), the highest number of any age group. However, that was a slight decrease in the preceding five year average for that age group (Figure 6).

The lowest fatality rate was in the 0–16 age group (1.2 per 100,000 population).

Compared the preceding five year average, there were fewer deaths recorded by children aged 0–16 years, down from 2.0 to 1.2 per 100,000 population, fatalities aged 17–19 years reduced from 12.7 to 7.5 per 100,000 population and there was a reduced fatality rate of 6.8 to 5.8 per 100,000 population in 70–79 age group.

An increase in fatalities was observed in the 40–49 year age group from 8.2 to 9.4 per 100,000 population and those aged 50–59 years, from 4.5 to 5.2 per 100,000 population.

The 38 people aged 20–29 years old who lost their lives represent 2,239 potentially healthy life years lost.[7]

[7]Potential life years lost were estimated by multiplying fatality counts by age and gender–specific life expectancies from: Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018). Life Tables, States, Territories and Australia, 2016–2018 (Table 1.5), (Catalogue No. 3302.0.55.001). Retrieved from https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3302.0.55.001

Figure 6. Fatalities by age, five-year average and 2019

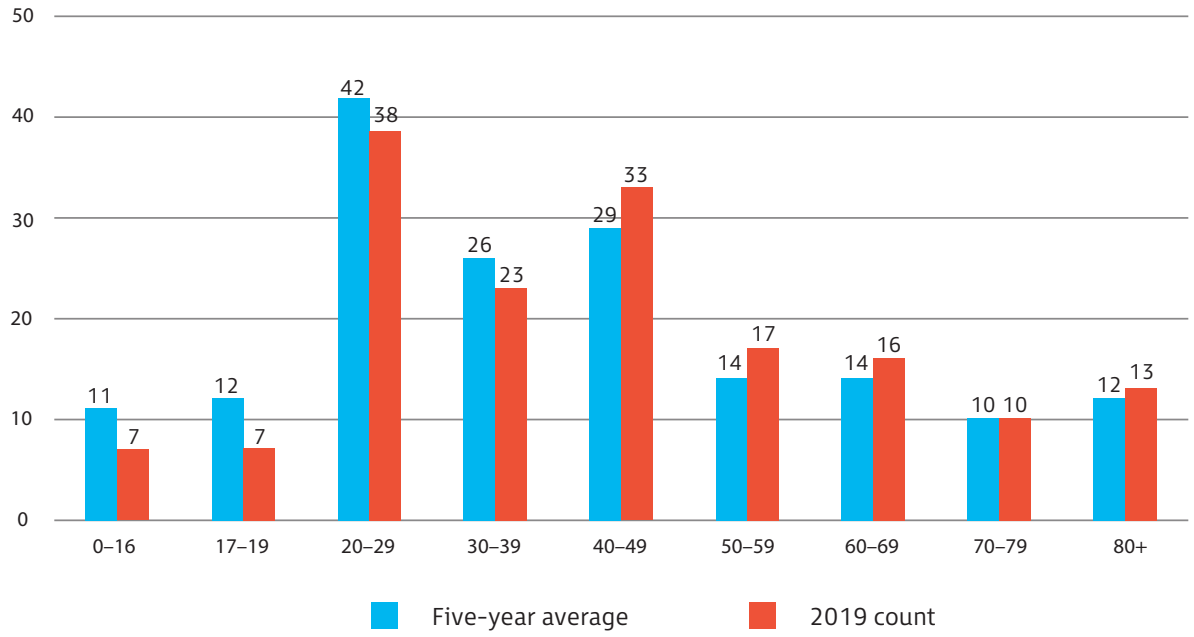
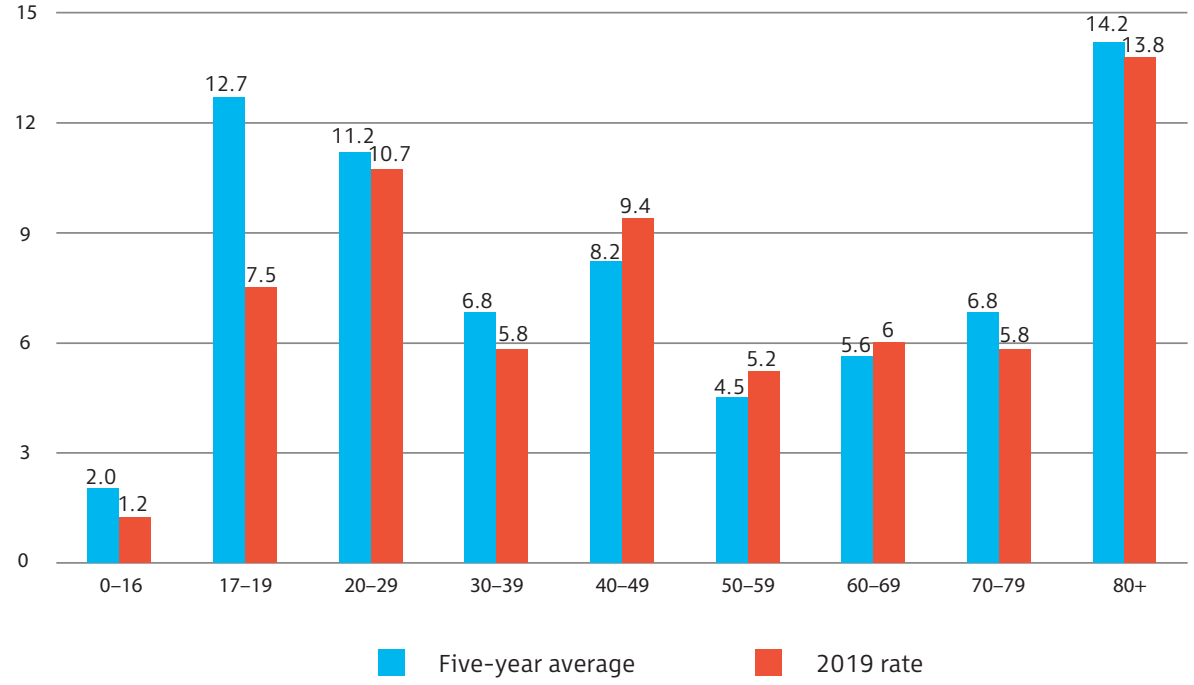


Figure 7. Fatality rates by age, five-year average and 2019[2]



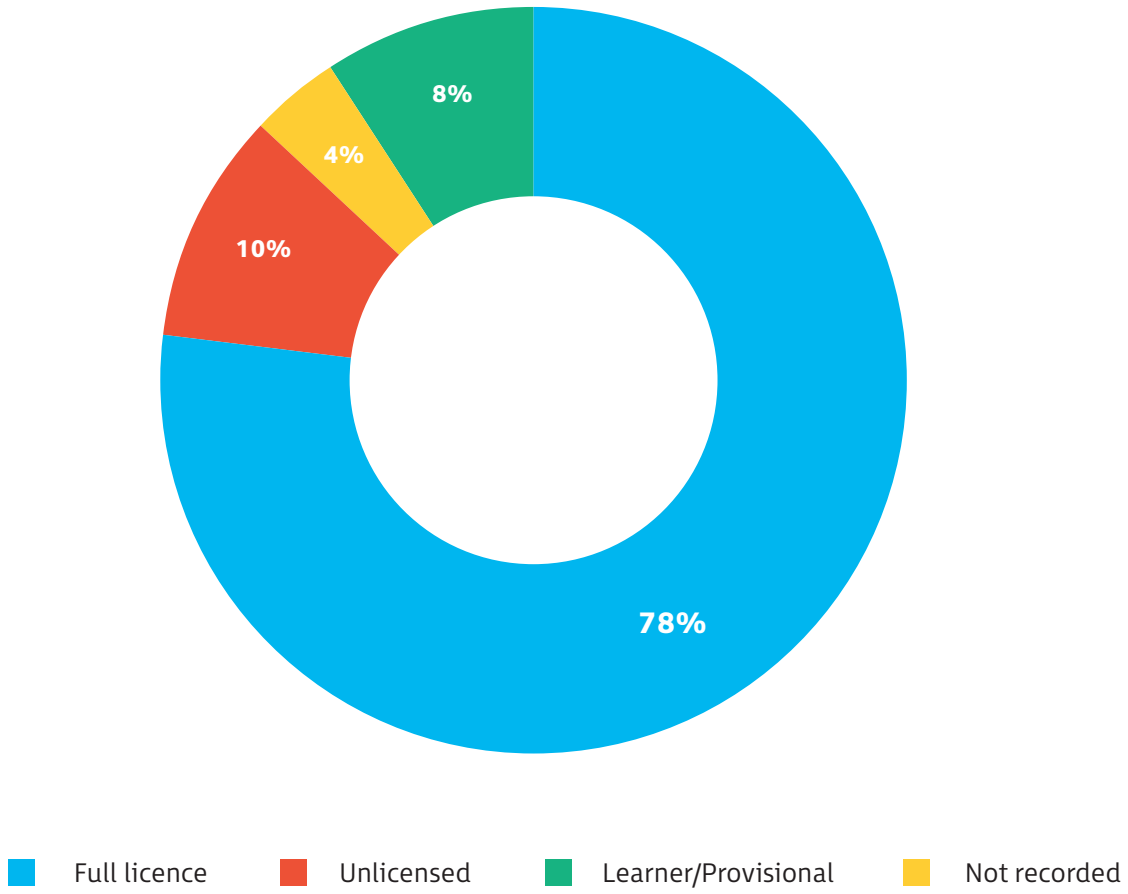
[2]Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities (BITRE). Australian Road Deaths Database, December 2019. Retrieved from https://www.bitre.gov.au/statistics/safety/fatal_road_crash_database

Licence type

In 2019, 229 people were involved as motor vehicle drivers or riders in fatal crashes. Most (78%, 178) of the recorded motor vehicle drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes were appropriately licensed. However, one in ten (10%, 24) had no licence or an expired, inappropriate, suspended or cancelled licence. This number is fewer than the preceding five-year average of 33. It should be noted, however, that involvement does not infer liability.

10% of recorded drivers/riders involved in fatal crashes were unlicensed.

Figure 8. Motor vehicle driver/riders involved in fatal crashes by licence type, 2019



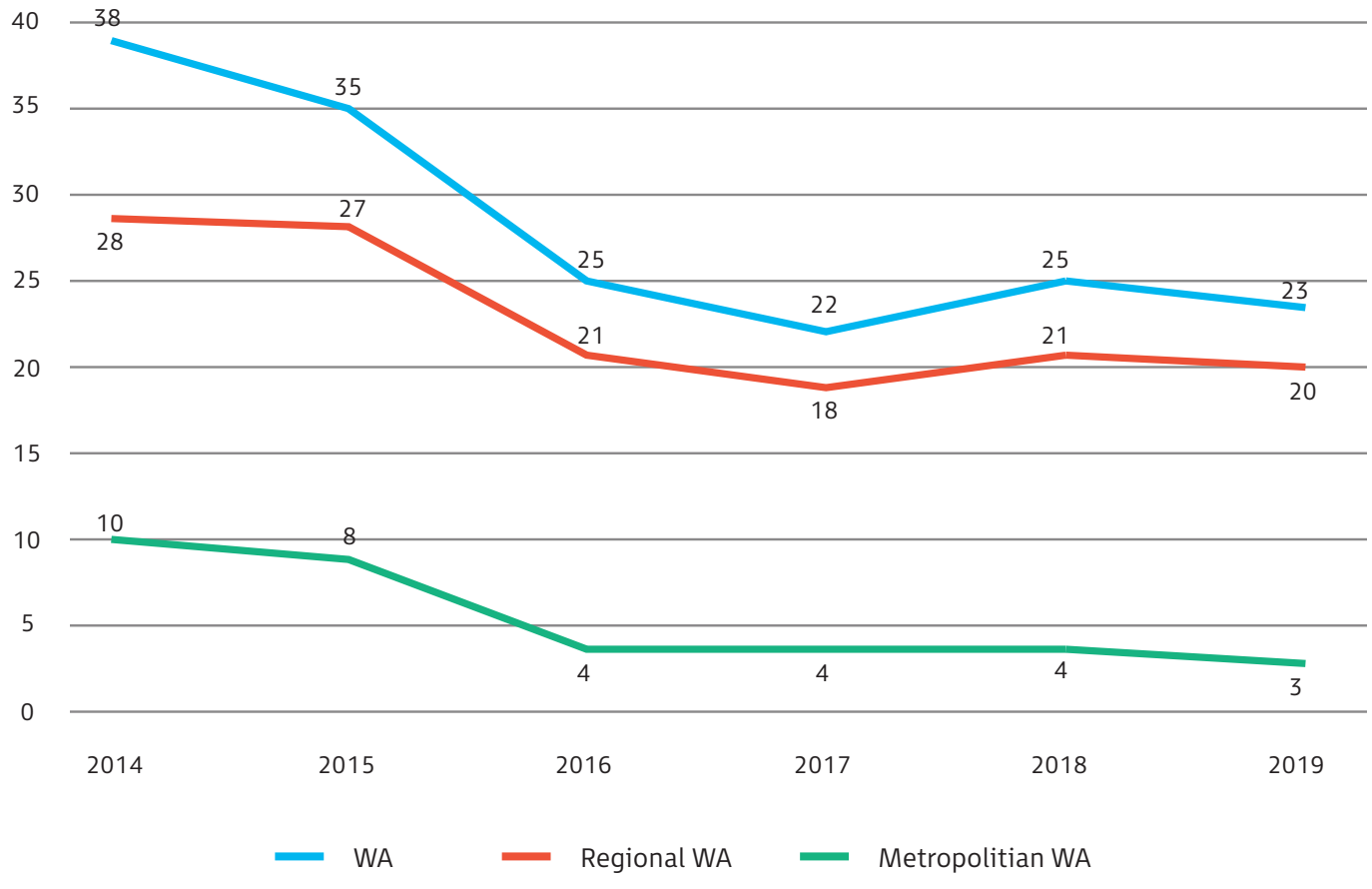
Seatbelts and helmets

Of the 115 motor vehicle occupant fatalities in 2019, 23 (20%) were not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash. This number is 21% lower than preceding five-year average (29). Most of these fatalities (20) were in regional WA.

The one cyclist fatality and three of the 32 motorcyclist fatalities were not wearing a helmet at the time of the crash.

20% of motor vehicle occupant fatalities were not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash.

Figure 9. Motor vehicle occupant fatalities recorded as not wearing an appropriate restraint by region and year



Saving Lives Together