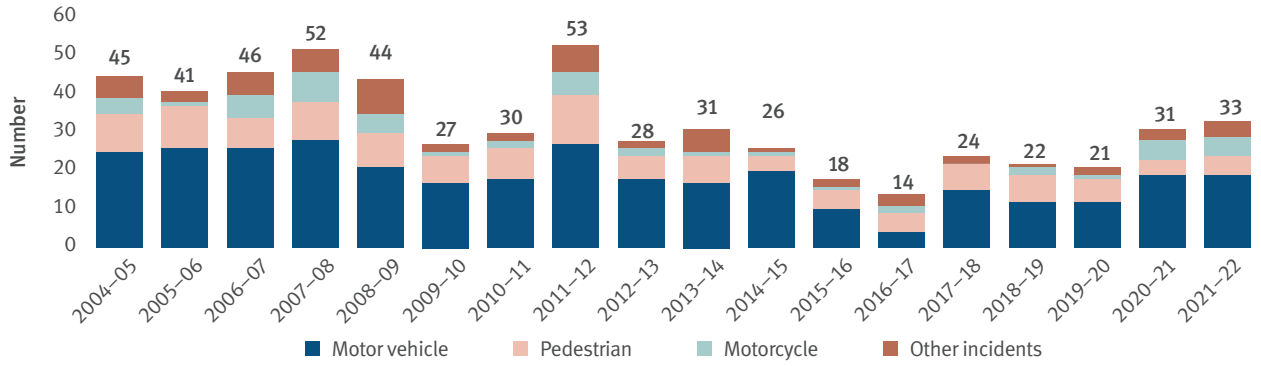
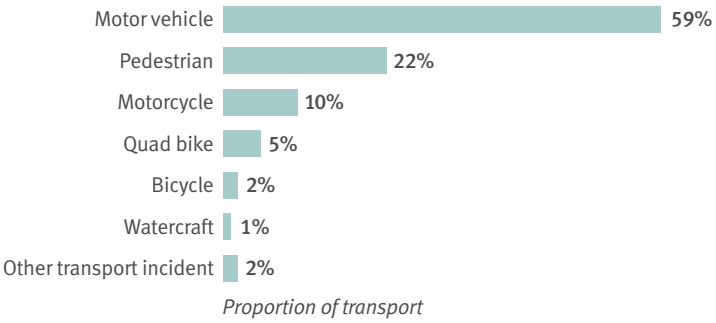
3 Transport-related deaths

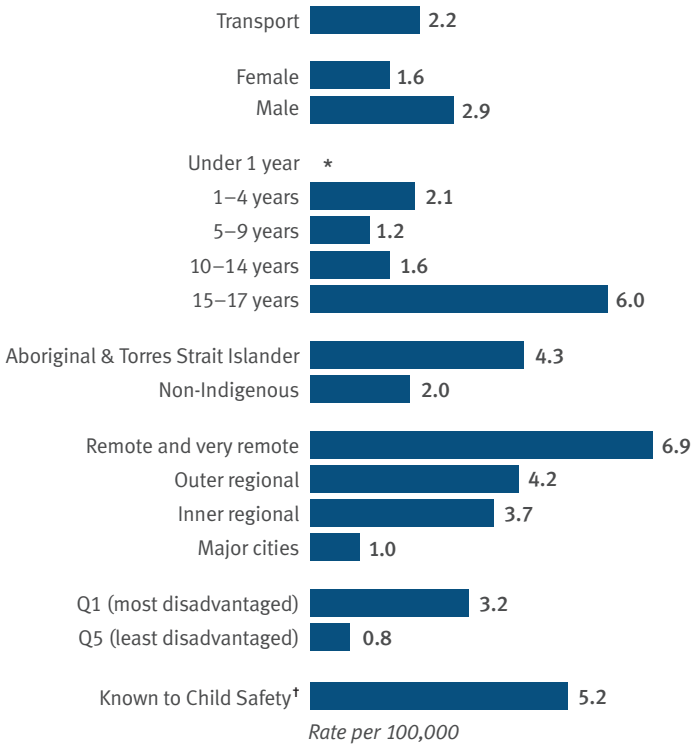
2004 to 2022



5-year summary (2017–22) | Incident type



Demographics



Risk factors in fatal motor vehicle crashes

53% excessive speed

40% no or inappropriate restraint

34% alcohol and/or substance use

32% inexperienced driver

Notes: Counting is by date of death registration. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
** rate not calculated for numbers between 1–3.*
† in the 12 months prior to death.

Key findings

In 2021–22, the deaths of 33 children and young people from transport-related incidents were recorded in Queensland. This represents a 5-year average rate of 2.2 deaths per 100,000 children aged 0–17 years. **Table A.5** in **Appendix A** provides summary data and key characteristics for transport-related deaths in the last 5 years.[35]

The rates of transport-related child fatalities have declined over the last 18 years, with the 5-year rolling rates dropping by 4.9% per year on average (see Figure 1.2). However, the strong decreasing trend to 2016–17 (14 deaths) did not continue, and the 33 transport deaths in 2021–22 is the highest transport total in the last 10 years.

Nature of transport incidents

During 2021–22, 19 deaths involved motor vehicle crashes, 5 were pedestrian incidents, 4 were motorcycle incidents, 2 were quad bike incidents and 2 were other incident types.

Over the last 5 years, the majority of transport-related fatalities were motor vehicle deaths (59%) followed by pedestrian deaths (22%) and motorcycle incidents (10%).

Sex

Twenty-four male children died from transport-related incidents in 2021–22, compared with 9 female children.

Over the last 5 years, the average annual transport-related mortality rate for males was 1.8 times the rate for females (2.9 per 100,000 males and 1.6 per 100,000 females). The higher rate of death for males has been attributed to, in part, greater risk-taking behaviours displayed by young males, including young male drivers.[36]

Age

Of the 33 transport-related fatalities during 2021–22, 7 were aged 1–4 years, 5 were aged 5–9 years, 9 were aged 10–14 years and 12 were aged 15–17 years.

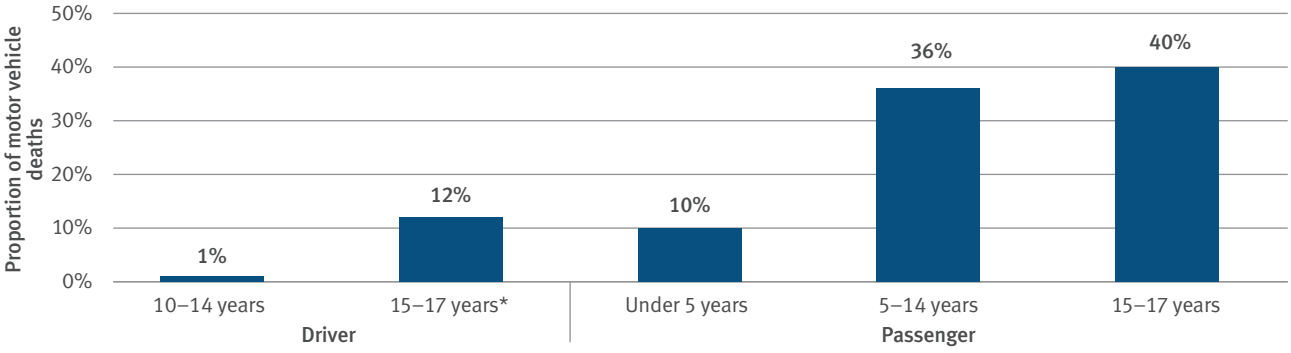
The highest rate of transport deaths was among young people aged 15–17 years (6.0 per 100,000) which was almost 3 times the rate for the 1–4 year age group, which had the next highest rate (2.1 per 100,000) (5-year averages).

Transport-related characteristics

Motor vehicle incidents

Figure 3.1 illustrates the role of the child or young person in motor vehicle fatalities over the last 5 years. Of the 77 children and young people who died in motor vehicle incident deaths between 2017–18 and 2021–22, 13% (10) were driving at the time of the incident while 87% (67) were passengers.

Figure 3.1: Motor vehicle fatalities by role and age category (proportion), 2017–18 to 2021–22



Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

35 Tables with data for 2004–2022 are available online at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/about-us/publications/child-death-reports-and-data

36 AIHW (2011) ***Young Australians: Their health and wellbeing***, cat. no: PHE 140, AIHW, Australian Government. www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/young-australians-their-health-and-wellbeing-2011/report-editions

Multiple fatalities

There was a total of 19 child deaths in 18 motor vehicle incidents in 2021–22. Six of these incidents resulted in the death of more than one person (7 child and 8 adult fatalities in total). Of those 6 incidents, one involved multiple child fatalities.

Twelve children died in 12 single fatality incidents.

Roadway type

Of the 19 children and young people who died in motor vehicle incidents in 2021–22, 7 died in crashes on highways (roadways with a speed limit greater than or equal to 100km/hr) and 5 on major roads (speed limit between 60 and 100km/hr). Over the last 5 years, 40% (31 out of 77) of child deaths in motor vehicle crashes occurred on highways, 21% were on major roads and 17% on residential streets.

Risk factors associated with motor vehicle crashes

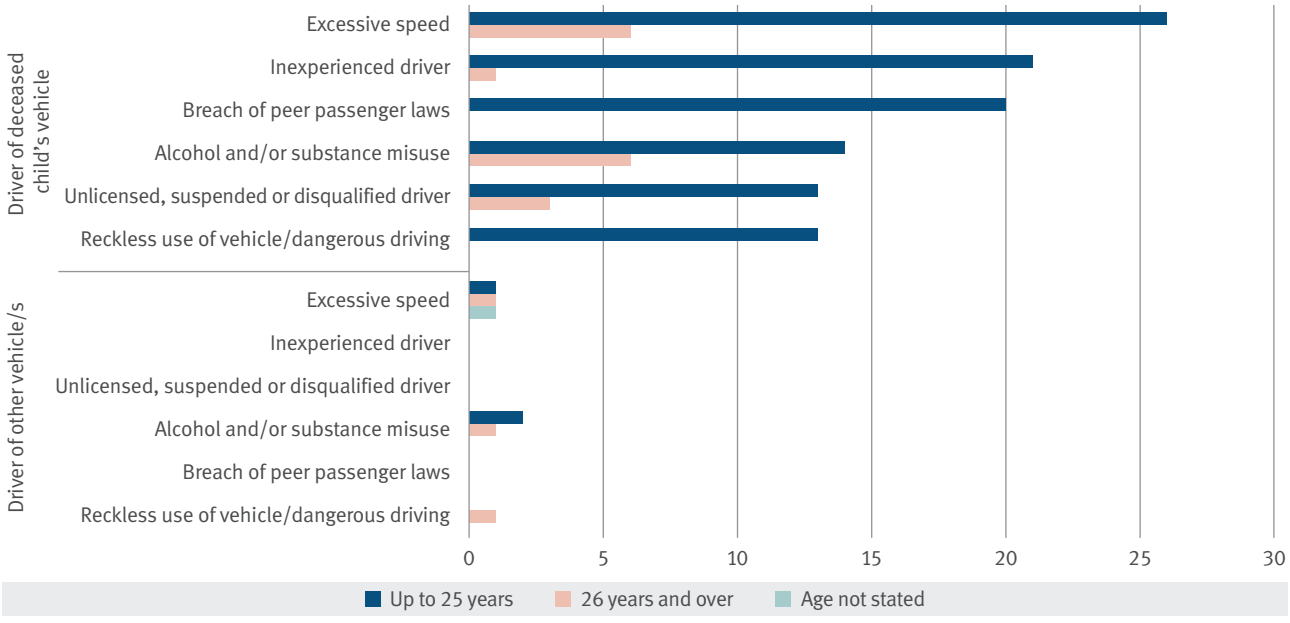
Of the 19 motor vehicle fatalities in 2021–22, speed was the most commonly identified risk factor (8 fatalities), followed by driver inexperience (7 fatalities) and alcohol and/or substance use (6 fatalities).

Over the last 5 years, 77 died in 68 motor vehicle incidents (7 incidents involved multiple child fatalities). Single-vehicle accidents accounted for 65% (44) of those incidents. Sixty-three per cent of the incidents involved a young driver (up to 25 years of age) driving the vehicle in which the child/ren was/were travelling. Thirty-one children (40%) were either not wearing a restraint or were inappropriately restrained.

Risk factors identified in fatal motor vehicle incidents over the last 5 years are illustrated in Figure 3.2. The most common driver risk factors were:

- excessive speed – 53%
- alcohol and/or substance use – 34%
- inexperienced driver – 32%.

Figure 3.2: Most common risk factors in motor vehicle incidents, by role of vehicle and age of driver (number of incidents), 2017–18 to 2021–22



Notes: The role of the vehicle applies to the vehicle in which the deceased child was travelling and, where applicable, any further vehicles involved in the incident. Multiple risk factors may be present in each incident.

Pedestrians

Five children and young people died in pedestrian incidents during 2021–22, with 4 incidents occurring in the context of a low-speed vehicle run-over.

Over the last 5 years, there have been 29 pedestrian incidents, the majority of which were low-speed vehicle run-overs (59%) followed by road and railway crossings (31%).

Children under 5 years are most at risk from pedestrian transport incidents, accounting for 20 of the 29 pedestrian deaths over the 5-year period. Children aged between 5 and 14 years accounted for 5 pedestrian deaths, 4 of which occurred while travelling on or crossing a roadway. Two deaths involved self-propelled kick scooters.[37] Four young people aged 15–17 years died in pedestrian incidents, with alcohol and/or substance misuse at the time of the incident identified as the most common risk factor.

Low-speed vehicle run-overs

'Low-speed vehicle run-over' (LSVR) is a term used to describe incidents where a pedestrian is injured or killed by a slow-moving vehicle in a non-traffic area or while entering or exiting a traffic area. Most of these incidents involve children under the age of 5. Over the last 5 years there have been 17 LSVR incidents, most commonly occurring at the child's home or the home of a person known to the child (82%), with the driver most frequently identified as a parent or other close relative (82%).

Motorcycles, quad bikes and bicycles

There were 5 deaths from motorcycle incidents in 2021–22. Over the last 5 years, there have been 13 deaths of children and young people riding motorcycles. Almost all of the motorcycles were being driven by the child or young person with excessive speed the most commonly reported risk factor.

There were 2 deaths from quad bike[38] incidents in 2021–22. Over the last 5 years, there have been 6 deaths of children and young people riding quad bikes. Five of the 6 deaths were children under the age of 16, driving or riding as passengers.

There have been 3 bicycle-related fatalities in the last 5 years, although none occurred in 2021–22.

Off-road fatalities

Eight children died in off-road environments in Queensland during 2021–22. Four deaths were pedestrian incidents, 2 children died in motorcycle incidents and a further 2 in quad bike incidents. The deaths of children and young people occurring in off-road environments are not included in the official road toll. Over the last 5 years, a total of 38 children and young people died in off-road environments.

Two children died in an airplane crash in 2021–22.

Charges and criminal proceedings

Of the 33 transport-related fatalities in 2021–22, 4 resulted in driving-related criminal charges (e.g. dangerous operation of a motor vehicle causing death). Over the last 5 years, there were criminal charges in relation to 26 of the 131 transport-related deaths.

Over the last 5 years, 11 young people who died were travelling in stolen vehicles in 7 distinct incidents.

37 Incidents involving wheeled toys without the involvement of another motor vehicle are not considered transport accidents. Falls from wheeled toys or collisions with stationary objects are examined in other non-intentional injury. Where a vehicle collides with a child riding a wheeled toy, these incidents are classified as pedestrian incidents.

38 Also known as all-terrain vehicles or ATVs. Includes side-by-side vehicles (SSVs) (also known as utility task vehicles (UTVs)).

Reducing the risk of low-speed vehicle run-overs

Young children are at particular risk of low-speed vehicle run-overs as they are not visible to a driver when they are near the rear (or front) of a vehicle. Lines of sight when reversing are worse in higher vehicles such as 4WDs. Reversing aid technologies in vehicles such as cameras and proximity alerts have the potential to prevent run-overs.

Public consultation on the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts **Vehicle Reversing Aid Technologies Regulation Impact Statement**[39] occurred in March 2022. The QFCC made a submission supporting the option which would mandate a new national road vehicle standard. The standard would require all new light and heavy vehicles to be fitted with devices for rear visibility and detection to improve a reversing driver's awareness of persons located behind vehicles.

The standard, if implemented, is expected to be introduced in phases in 2024 and 2026.

Quad bike safety in workplaces

In 2022 Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) held a public consultation on government interventions to improve the safety of workers and others when operating quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles (SSVs) at the workplace.

The QFCC made a **submission**[40], referencing evidence from the Queensland Child Death Register, in support of the introduction of the work health and safety regulations.

Queensland Ambulance Service data

Injury data can be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the risks posed to children by vehicles and machinery. The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) has provided data on the number of ambulance responses to transport incidents involving children. Table 3.1 outlines the QAS responses to over 4,500 transport incidents in the last year, including both fatal and non-fatal injuries. The majority involved motor vehicles, followed by motorcycle and bicycle incidents. The highest number of incidents involved young people aged 15–17 years.

Table 3.1: Queensland Ambulance Service responses to transport incidents (number), 2021–22

Type of incident	Under 1 year	1–4 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	15–17 years	Total
Motor vehicle	127	404	619	620	1,269	3,039
Bicycle	*	27	89	295	139	550
Motorcycle	*	9	86	254	215	564
Scooter	0	7	28	73	50	158
Pedestrian	*	9	25	63	34	131
Quad bike	*	5	9	17	11	42
Watercraft	*	5	7	10	21	43
Other (e.g. go kart, skateboard)	0	5	10	22	38	75
Unknown type	0	0	5	14	7	26
Total	127	471	878	1,368	1,784	4,628

Source: Queensland Ambulance Service (Aug 2022)
** Not reported for numbers less than 5 and excluded from totals.*
Notes: Excludes data for children and young people whose gender was recorded as missing or indeterminant (n=19).

39 www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/reversing-aid-technologies-vehicles
40 www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/policy/policy-submissions