

2025 FATALITY FREE FRIDAY NATIONAL FACT SHEET

AUSTRALIANS ARE STILL TAKING DANGEROUS RISKS ON THE ROAD

Despite widespread awareness of road safety risks, new research¹ shows that risky driving behaviours remain deeply embedded in Australian culture.

- More than two-thirds (68%) of drivers admit to engaging in risky behaviour, and over half (56%) admit they break road laws.
- Speeding remains the most common offence, with nearly half (47%) of drivers exceeding the limit - a concerning indication that many see speed limits as guidelines rather than essential safety measures.
- One in three (33%) have driven while fatigued, a risk often overlooked but comparable to drink-driving in its impact on reaction times and decision-making.
- Reckless decision-making remains prevalent:
 - More than a quarter of drivers (26%) have ignored stop signs, which exist to prevent high-impact crashes at intersections.
 - More than 1 in 10 (12%) have crossed a double line, a dangerous move that increases the risk of head-on collisions.
 - Additionally, 1 in 10 (10%) have run a red light, showing a willingness to gamble with split-second traffic decisions.
- Even the most extreme risks persist:
 - 8% admit to driving under the influence of alcohol, despite decades of messaging about the deadly consequences.
 - 3% admit to driving under the influence of drugs, showing that some are still willing to get behind the wheel when their judgment is impaired.

DISTRACTION: A HIDDEN EPIDEMIC BEHIND THE WHEEL

Distraction is one of the most underreported causes of road trauma, yet the data shows it's a widespread issue. More than 7 in 10 drivers (70%) admit to experiencing some form of distraction while driving.

¹ Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 28 January - 6 February 2025 with a sample size of n=1509 Australian drivers aged 18+years

- Technology is a major culprit:
 - Almost 4 in 10 drivers (38%) admit to being distracted by GPS or maps, a reminder that even safety tools can become hazards when not used responsibly.
 - More than 3 in 10 (31%) have been distracted while changing music, which results in drivers taking their eyes off the road for several seconds at a time.
- Passengers also contribute to distraction:
 - A third of drivers (33%) have been distracted by talking to or looking at passengers.
 - 17% admit to turning around and taking their eyes off the road to check on children or pets in the backseat.
- Mobile phone use remains a significant risk factor:
 - 13% of drivers have been distracted by looking at their phone, drawing their attention away from driving.
 - 17% have been distracted by talking on their phone - a habit (even handsfree) that significantly reduces a driver's concentration and reaction time.
- Everyday habits contribute to distraction and cause drivers to take one hand (and often both eyes) off the wheel
 - 15% of drivers admit to looking for something in their bag.
 - 15% eat, drink, or handle takeaway food while driving.
 - 4% engage in personal grooming while behind the wheel.

PEDESTRIAN DISTRACTION: WALKING INTO DANGER

It's not just drivers - pedestrian distraction is also a growing issue, with more than half (58%) of Australians admitting to risky behaviours while walking.

- Phones are the biggest culprit:
 - 32% of pedestrians text, check social media, or play on their phone while walking, which can lead to stepping out onto roads without looking.
 - 22% are distracted by talking on their phone or using voice assistants, reducing their awareness of traffic movements around them.
- Music is another significant distraction:
 - 30% of pedestrians listen to music or adjust their headphones while walking, impairing their ability to hear approaching vehicles.
- Blind trust is dangerous:
 - 19% of pedestrians admit to blindly following a crowd, assuming others are paying attention - when in reality, they may not be.

- Some distractions seem extreme but still occur:
 - 5% of pedestrians have admitted to reading while walking - a habit that completely removes focus from the surrounding environment.

OUR PRIORITIES ON ROAD SAFETY ARE BACKWARD

Despite overwhelming evidence of the dangers, Australians continue to prioritise convenience over safety.

- More than 4 in 10 (42%) would rather give up social media for a year than stop speeding - suggesting that instant digital gratification is valued more than road safety.
- More than 2 in 10 (21%) would rather keep drinking coffee than stop using their phone while driving, proving that some people still see distracted driving as an acceptable risk.
- More than 4 in 10 (44%) said they'd find it harder to give up their phone for a year than their car.
- Catching up with friends (44%) and exercising (30%) ranked far higher than any road-related habit, proving that people are far more concerned with lifestyle choices than making safer driving decisions.

ROAD SAFETY MESSAGING CAN STILL DRIVE CHANGE

The good news? Education and awareness campaigns still have the power to shift behaviour.

- 87% of drivers say road safety messaging inspires safer behaviour:
 - 61% believe these messages leave a lasting impact on their behaviour.
 - 26% believe it's improved their behaviour at least short-term.
- Simply being reminded of the road toll inspires 83% of drivers to think or act safer on the road.
- More than 1 in 10 (11%) *only* think about stopping unsafe behaviour after seeing a road safety message or sign.
- Almost all Australians (97%) acknowledge that their choices while driving could kill or injure someone on the road.

ROAD SAFETY MORE URGENT THAN EVER AS AUSTRALIA'S ROAD TOLL CLIMBS

In Australia, road trauma claimed the lives of 1,306 people last year - a 3.8% rise on the year prior²

- Last year's road toll marked the fourth straight year that the number of fatalities increased
- Of the 1,306 recorded deaths:
 - 340 were in New South Wales
 - 303 were in Queensland
 - 284 were in Victoria
 - 185 were in Western Australia
 - 91 were in South Australia
 - 60 were in the Northern Territory
 - 32 were in Tasmania
 - 11 were in the Australian Capital Territory
- Importantly, more than half (54%) of road deaths were individuals not drivers:
 - 597 fatalities (46%) were drivers
 - 273 fatalities (21%) were motorcyclists
 - 209 fatalities (16%) were passengers
 - 171 fatalities (13%) were pedestrians
 - 39 fatalities (3%) were cyclists
 - 17 fatalities (1%) were unknown

² Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Road Deaths, Annual Road Deaths Database, Accessed February 2025