



National Rural Road Safety Month Fact Sheet

Embargoed until 1 August 2026

Rural roads are getting deadlier, not safer - regional communities are bearing more of the nation's road toll than ever¹:

- Despite being home to far fewer Australians than our cities, regional, rural and remote roads accounted for 69% of the nation's road toll in 2025 - more than two in every three deaths.
- That's 906 (out of 1315 total) lives lost on country roads in a single year, up from 820 in 2024 - a 10.5% hike
- Men accounted for three in four regional road deaths (75%).
- The lives lost spanned every type of road user:
 - 472 drivers (52%)
 - 163 passengers (18%)
 - 160 motorcyclists (18%)
 - 73 pedestrians (8%)
 - 23 cyclists (3%)
 - 15 were not recorded (2%)
- Almost one in five fatal crashes (18%) involved a heavy vehicle.
- Far from being a young-driver problem, mature Australians were the hardest hit. Together, Australians over 40 made up more than half (54%) of all regional road deaths.
- It's the everyday drive that is proving most deadly. The majority of fatal country crashes happened in daylight hours (65%), on an ordinary weekday (66%), and involved just a single vehicle (57%).

New Australian Road Safety Foundation research² suggests that rising road trauma can be attributed to a dangerous false sense of safety behind the wheel:

- Half of all Australian drivers travel on regional, rural or remote roads multiple times a year, and a third (33%) do so at least weekly - but familiarity is breeding complacency.

¹ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Road Deaths, Annual Road Deaths Database, Accessed May 2026

² Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 29 May - 9 June 2026 with a sample size of n=1506 adults aged 18+years with a current drivers licence



- More than half (53%) of Australian drivers admit to breaking a road rule on a country road. The most common offences were speeding (36%), driving fatigued (21%) and using a mobile phone (15%).
- Most alarming is *why*: the number one reason drivers gave for breaking the rules in regional areas was that they believed it was safe to do so (35%) - well ahead of distraction (19%) or fatigue (17%).
- On city roads, the leading reason is simple distraction (31%); on country roads, it's a misplaced belief that the law can safely be bent.
- This false confidence runs deep: more than a quarter of drivers (27%) believe rural roads are safer than city streets

Australians are hitting the road dangerously unprepared

- A love of the open road isn't being matched by basic preparation. Before a regional trip:
 - 63% don't make sure they have enough fuel or plan where to refuel.
 - 58% don't check their vehicle is in a fit condition to drive.
 - 53% don't check the weather forecast.
 - 50% don't ensure their phone is charged or pack a charger.

The good news is that the right message saves lives:

- Australians overwhelmingly understand road deaths are avoidable. Four in ten (42%) agree most regional road deaths are preventable crashes, while just 6% write them off as accidents.
- The most effective prompts for safer driving were reading or hearing about serious crashes in the news (34%), seeing roadside memorials and community tributes (32%), and road safety campaigns across TV, radio and online (28%).
- The most powerful message of all is a human one. Knowing they could stop someone else from making it home to family and friends would prompt 48% of drivers to take more care - and that message lands even harder in the regions (23%) than in the city (12%).
- Messaging that highlights how quickly a journey can be cut short encourages almost half of drivers (46%) to drive more responsibly, helps 42% follow the rules more closely, and makes 36% consider how their actions affect others.
- It hits close to home for many: more than a third of Australian drivers personally know someone who has been seriously injured or killed on our roads.