

Annual Report

Deaths of children
and young people
Queensland
2023–24

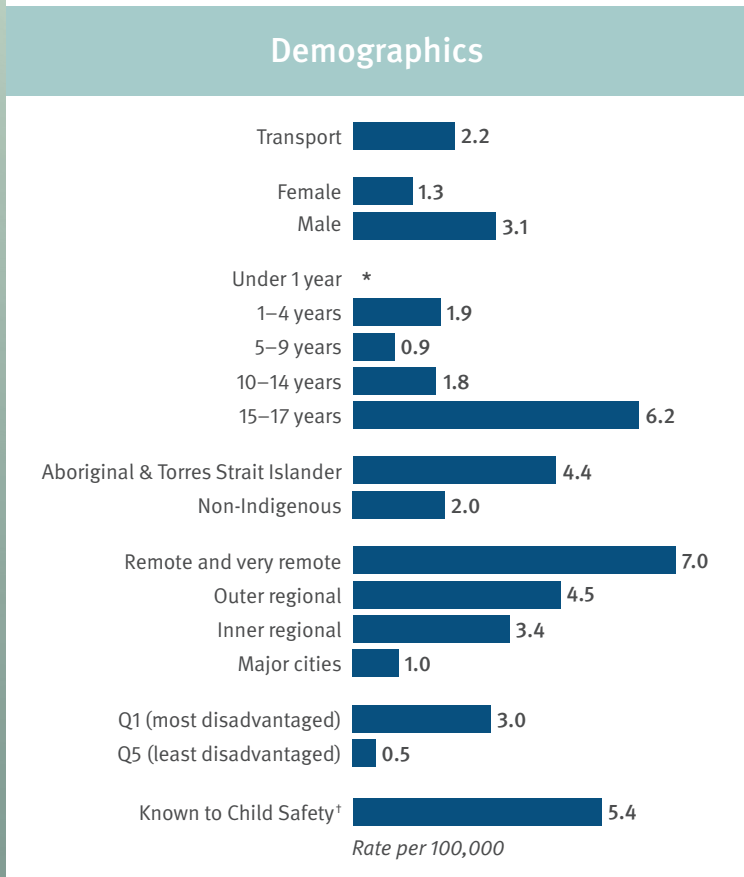
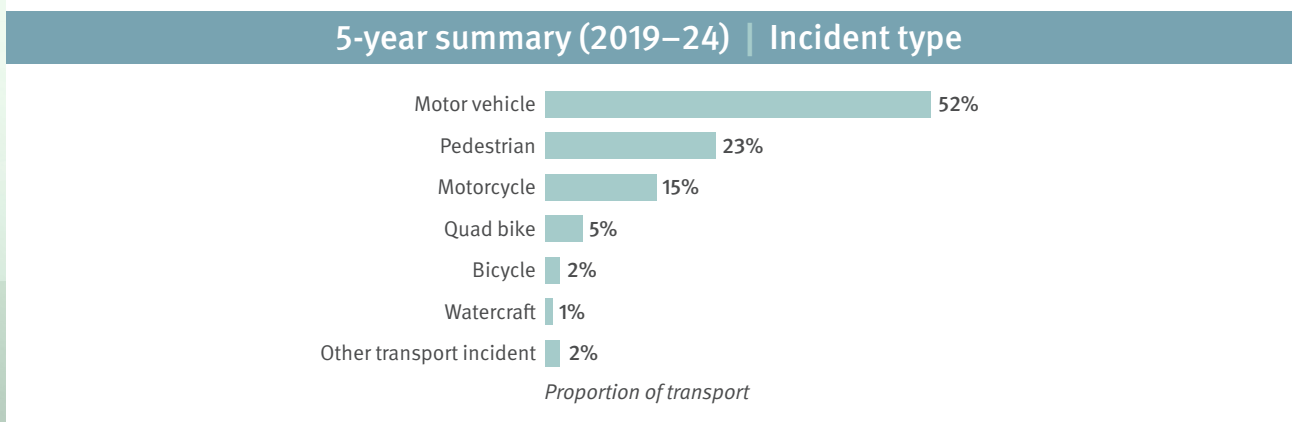
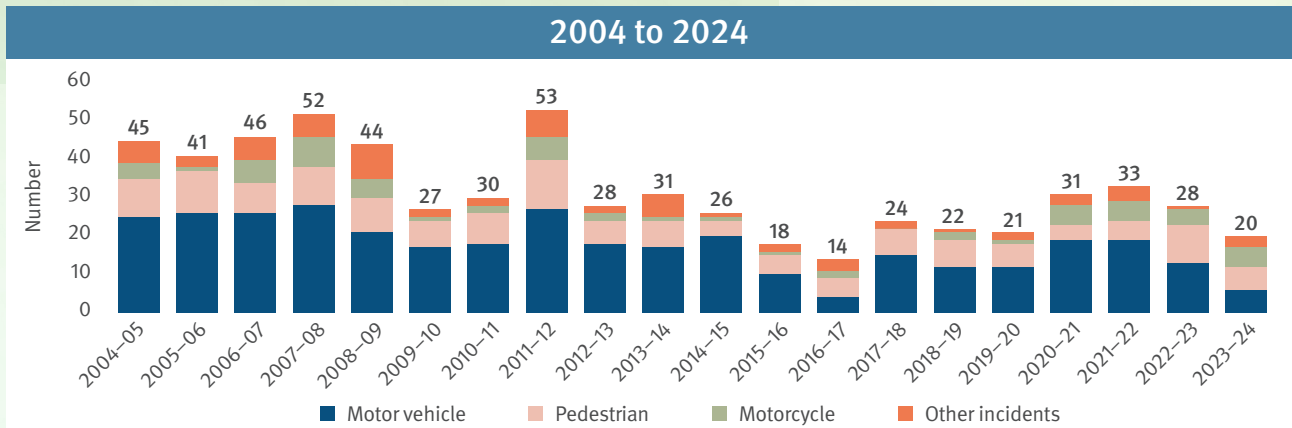


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3 Transport-related deaths



Notes: Counting is by date of death registration. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
 * rate not calculated for numbers less than 4.
 † in the 12 months prior to death.

Key findings

During 2023–24, 20 children and young people died from transport-related incidents in Queensland. This is down from 28 in 2022–23 and 33 in 2021–22. 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.³⁷

The rates of transport-related child fatalities have declined over the last 20 years, with the 5-year rolling rates dropping by 3.4% per year on average (see Figure 1.2). Although there has been an overall decrease in the transport mortality rate since 2004, transport remained the leading external cause of death for children and young people in Queensland in the last 5 years.

Nature of transport incidents

In 2023–24, 6 children and young people died from motor vehicle crashes, 6 from pedestrian-related incidents, 5 from motorcycle, 2 from quad bike and one from watercraft incidents.

Over the last 5 years, the majority of the 133 transport-related fatalities were motor vehicle deaths (69 or 52%), followed by pedestrian deaths (31 or 23%) and motorcycle incidents (20 or 15%).

Sex

Seventeen male children died from transport-related incidents in 2023–24, compared with 3 female children.

Over the last 5 years, the average annual transport-related mortality rate for males was twice the rate for females (3.1 per 100,000 males and 1.3 per 100,000 females). The pattern of male over-representation in transport mortality has been attributed to, in part, greater risk-taking behaviours displayed by young males, including young male drivers.³⁸

Age

Of the 20 transport-related fatalities during 2023–24, 9 were aged 15–17 years, 6 were aged 10–14 years, 3 were aged 1–4 years, and one each were aged 5–9 years and under 1 year.

The highest rate of transport deaths was among young people aged 15–17 years (6.2 per 100,000) which was more than 3 times the rate for the 1–4-year age group, which had the next highest rate (1.9 per 100,000) (5-year averages).

While risk taking in adolescent drivers may contribute to the higher rates of death in the 15–17 age group, driver inexperience, without an intention to drive recklessly, may also contribute. Relatively new drivers may lack critical driving skills such as hazard perception, attentional control and managing multiple driving tasks.³⁹

³⁷ Tables with data for 2004–2024 are available online at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data

³⁸ 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

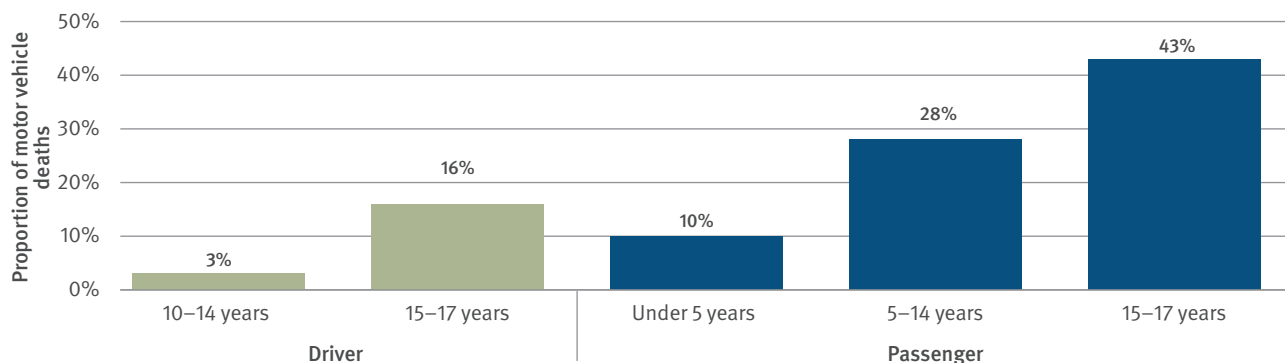
³⁹ Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety Queensland (2019) *Adolescent risk-taking*, <https://research.qut.edu.au/carrs-q/wp-content/uploads/sites/296/2020/06/Adolescent-risk-taking.pdf>

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 69 children and young people who died in motor vehicle incidents between 2019–20 and 2023–24, 19% (13) were driving at the time of the incident while 81% (56) were passengers.

Figure 3.1: Motor vehicle fatalities by role and age category (proportion), 2019–20 to 2023–24



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

Multiple fatalities

No multiple fatalities were recorded in motor vehicle incidents in 2023–24. In the past 5 years, there were a total of 69 child deaths in 62 motor vehicle crashes. Five incidents involved multiple child fatalities, and 17 incidents involved adult fatalities.

Roadway type

Of the 6 children and young people who died in motor vehicle incidents in 2023–24, 2 died in crashes on highways (roadways with a speed limit equal to or greater than 100km/hr) and one each on a major road (speed limit between 60 and 100km/hr), residential street (speed limit under 60km/hr), rural roadway, and private roadway. Over the last 5 years, 33% (23 out of 69) of child deaths in motor vehicle crashes occurred on major roads, 32% were on highways, 17% on rural roadways and 10% on residential streets. Five deaths (7%) in the last 5 years occurred in off-road settings (i.e. not on public roadways).

Risk factors associated with motor vehicle crashes

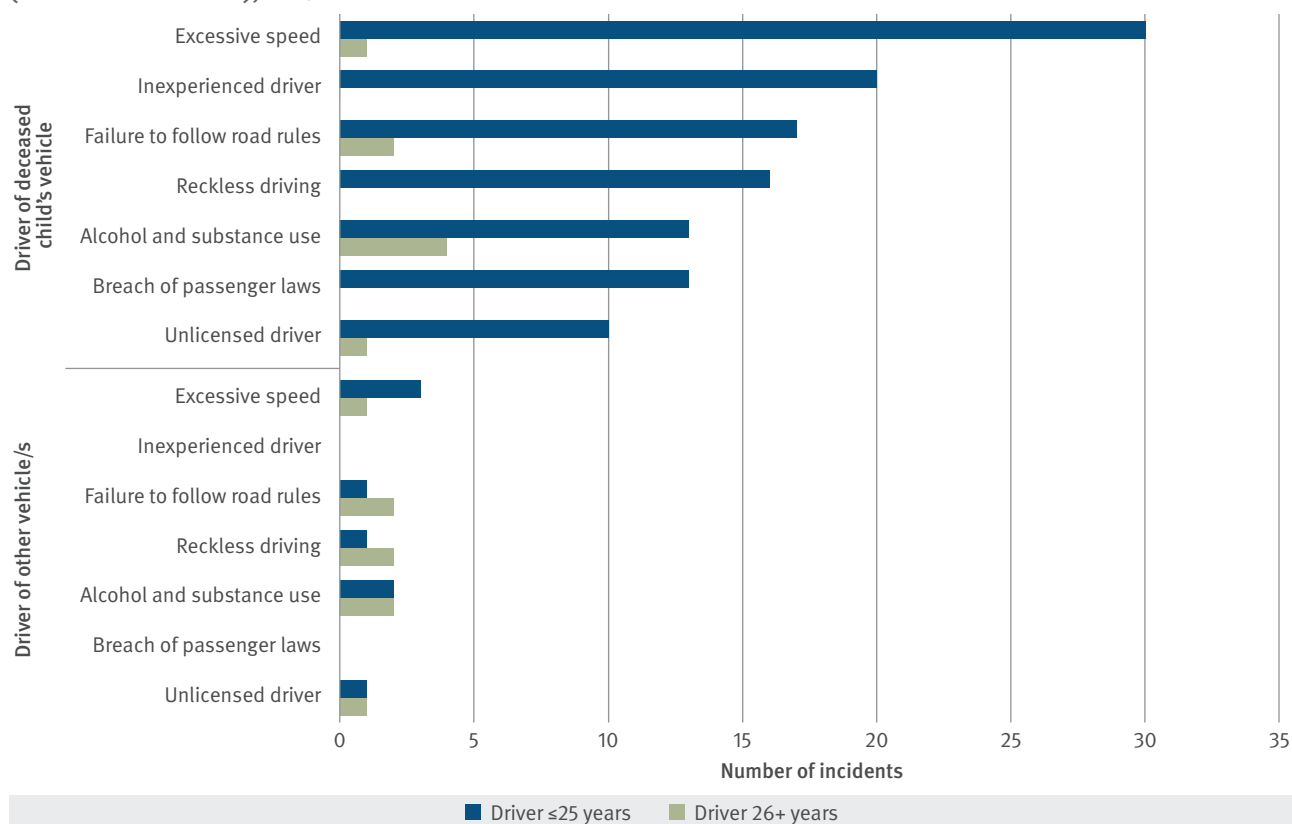
Of the 6 motor vehicles incidents in 2023–24, 4 were children and young people travelling as passengers. Excessive speed and no or inappropriate restraint were identified as a risk factor in half of the deaths (3), coupled with other risk factors such as alcohol or substance use, reckless use of vehicle, failure to follow road rules and fatigue.

Over the last 5 years, 69 children died in 62 motor vehicle incidents (5 incidents involved multiple child fatalities). Single-vehicle accidents accounted for 65% (40) of those incidents. Forty-nine incidents (79%) involved a young driver (up to 25 years of age) driving the vehicle in which the child/ren was/were travelling. Twenty-eight children (41%) were either not wearing a restraint or inappropriately restrained.

Risk factors identified in 62 incidents over the last 5 years are illustrated in Figure 3.2. The most common driver risk factors were:

- excessive speed (55%)
- failure to follow road rules (35%)
- alcohol and/or substance use (34%)
- inexperienced driver (32%)
- reckless/dangerous driving (31%).

Figure 3.2: Most common driver risk factors in motor vehicle incidents, by role of vehicle and age of driver (number of incidents), 2019–20 to 2023–24



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.

Car restraint guides for parents and carers

The Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has released a series of videos to provide step-by-step instructions on how to safely install and use a variety of child restraints. The QFCC provided child death data to TMR to inform the development of the guides. The videos are available on the StreetSmarts website at <https://streetsmarts.initiatives.qld.gov.au/parents/child-restraints/>

The video guides were a core deliverable under the TMR's *Road safety education blueprint*. The blueprint contains 27 actions across 6 key areas, including actions that focus on higher risk youth such as those living in rural and remote or lower socio-economic areas, or in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Pedestrians

Six children and young people died in pedestrian incidents during 2023–24, with 3 incidents occurring in the context of a low-speed vehicle run-over and 3 (including one E-scooter related incident) during a road or railway crossing.

Over the last 5 years, there have been 31 pedestrian incidents, the majority of which were low-speed vehicle run-overs (20 out of 31 or 65%), followed by road and railway crossings (8 out of 31 or 26%). The risk of pedestrian injuries differed by age groups:

- Children under 5 years are most at risk from pedestrian incidents, accounting for 58% (18 of 31) of the pedestrian deaths over the 5-year period.
- Children aged 5–14 years accounted for 7 pedestrian deaths, 5 of which occurred while travelling on or crossing a roadway.
- Six young people aged 15–17 years died in pedestrian incidents. Of the 6 deaths, 2 were recorded as having consumed alcohol and/or substance at the time of the incident.

Deaths involving E-scooters and other personal mobility devices are classified as pedestrian incidents in the Child Death Register, in line with coding rules in ICD-10 (coded to V09). As of November 2022, changes to Queensland's general road rules also include E-scooters within the scope of rules applying to personal mobility devices. Two young people have died in E-scooter related incidents since 2022.

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 20 LSVR incidents, with the majority occurring at the child's home or the home of a person known to the child, with the driver most frequently identified as a parent or other close relative.

Motorcycles, bicycles and quad bikes

There were 5 deaths from motorcycle incidents in 2023–24. Over the last 5 years, there have been 20 deaths of children and young people riding motorcycles. Almost all of the motorcycles were being driven by the child or young person (19 out of 20). Helmets not worn or inappropriately fastened were identified in half of the motorcycle incidents (10 out of 20). Speeding and alcohol and/or substance use were recorded as the most common risk factors.

There have been 3 bicycle deaths in the last 5 years, although none occurred in 2023–24.

There were 2 quad bike⁴⁰ deaths in 2023–24. Over the last 5 years, there have been 7 deaths of children and young people riding quad bikes. Five of the 7 deaths were children under the age of 16. The mechanism of the incidents were: rollover (3), thrown from vehicle (3) and collision with a stationary object (1). Of the 7 deaths, 6 were not wearing helmets.

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

Off-road fatalities

Eleven children and young people died in off-road environments in Queensland during 2023–24. Four deaths were motorcycle incidents, 3 were pedestrian incidents, 2 were quad bike incidents and one death each in motor vehicle and watercraft incidents. Over the last 5 years, a total of 49 children and young people died in off-road environments.

Charges and criminal proceedings

Of the 20 transport-related incidents in 2023–24, 3 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 33 of the 125 transport-related incidents.

Over the last 5 years, 8 young people who died were travelling in stolen vehicles in 5 distinct incidents.

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 5,200 transport incidents during 2023–24, including both fatal and non-fatal injuries. The majority involved motor vehicles (69%), followed by motorcycle (11%) and bicycle incidents (9%). Transport-related incidents occurred most frequently in young people aged 15–17 years or 10–14 years (37 % and 30% in each group respectively).

Table 3.1: Queensland Ambulance Service responses to transport incidents (number), 2023–24

Type of incident	Under 1 year	1–4 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	15–17 years	Total
Motor vehicle	169	581	676	817	1,353	3,596
Motorcycle	*	17	73	248	213	551
Bicycle	*	22	71	265	117	475
Scooter/E-scooter	*	5	27	159	183	374
Pedestrian	5	9	36	40	23	113
Quad bike	0	*	9	19	13	41
Watercraft	*	*	*	8	6	14
Other (e.g. go kart, skateboard)	0	*	*	*	5	5
Unknown type	15	18	18	5	14	70
Total	189	652	910	1,561	1,927	5,239

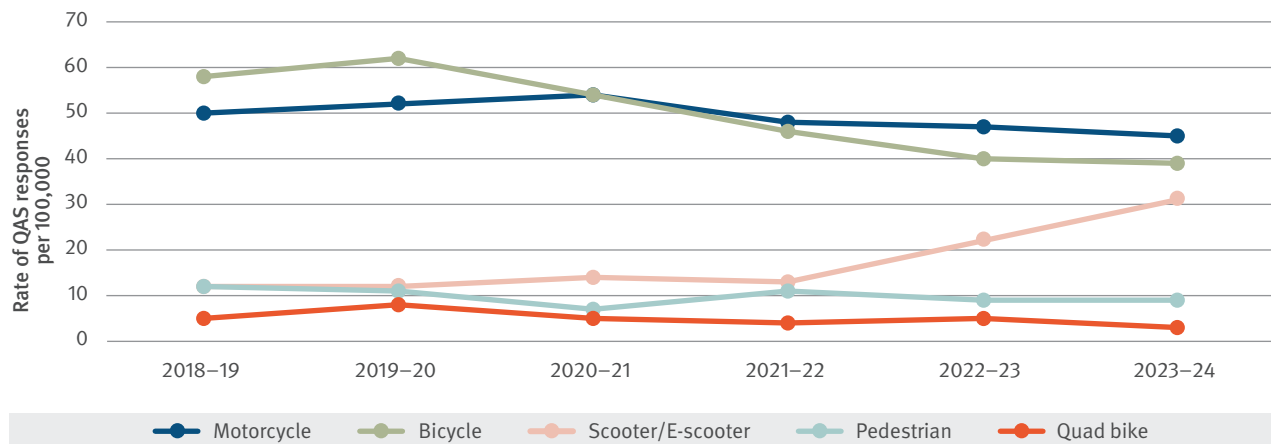
Data source: Queensland Ambulance Service (Aug 2024)

* 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 indeterminate (n=36). Numbers in the table do not add to the total number of transport incidents attended by QAS (n=5,259) as cells with less than 5 are not shown, and are excluded from table totals.

Analysis of the rate of QAS responses for selected transport incidents over the last 6 years are shown in Figure 3.3.⁴¹ There has been a notable increase in the rate of responses for scooter/E-scooter incidents in the last 2 years. Further analysis of the 2023–24 data indicates 272 of the 374 scooter-related injuries involved E-scooters (73%).⁴² Most of the incidents occurred in older children aged 10–17 years. Responses for bicycle incidents have decreased in recent years, while other categories have fluctuated with no strong trends.

Figure 3.3: Queensland Ambulance Services responses to selected transport incidents (rate per 100,000), 2018–19 to 2023–24

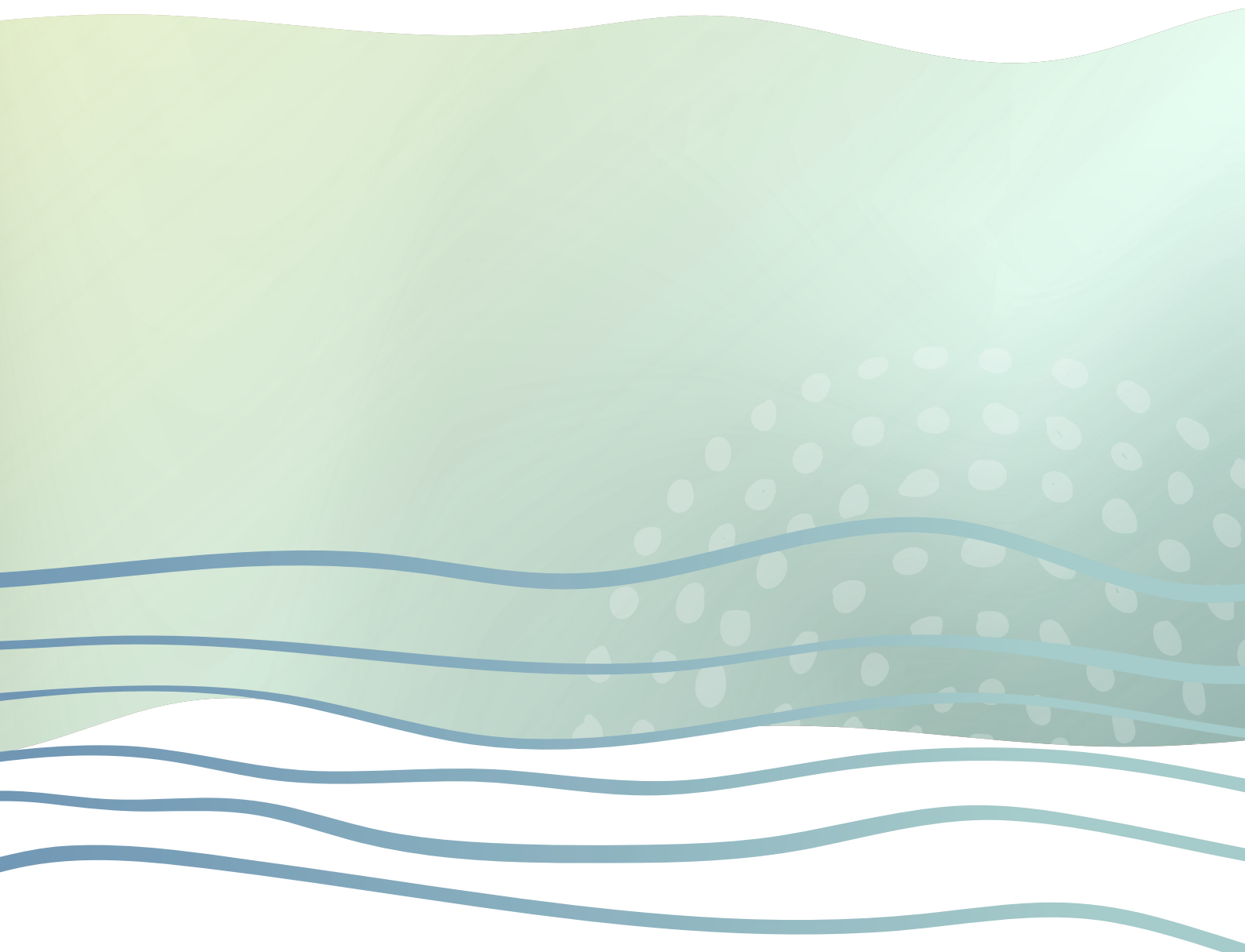


Data source: Queensland Ambulance Service (Aug 2024)

Notes: Excludes cases where gender was recorded as indeterminate or missing. Rates are calculated for each financial year per 100,000 population aged 0–17 years.

41 Data for the past years is published in previous editions of this report, from data originally provided by the QAS.

42 All scooter incidents were manually reviewed by QAS. Incidents were only identified as E-scooter incidents where the type of scooter was recorded somewhere in the record. QAS advise that E-scooter incidents may therefore be an under-estimate.



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