SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has made strides in reducing road crash fatalities since their peak in 2006. However, numbers still remain high and recent years have seen an increasing trend once again. The number of annual road deaths has increased every year between 2013 and 2016. In 2017, there were 14 050 reported road fatalities, 21 less than in 2016. South Africa’s fatality rate in 2017 was at 24.7 per 100 000 inhabitants. Pedestrians accounted for 38% of the fatalities in 2017, with children being particularly affected. The current National Road Safety Strategy covers the period 2016-2030. Its main target is to reduce the number of fatalities by 50% by 2030.

All data included in this report are those reported by the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) and have not been validated by IRTAD.

Trends

The number of road deaths stabilised in 2017 in South Africa. According to latest available data, 14 050 persons lost their lives in traffic crashes in 2017. This represents a small decline of 0.1% on 2016. In 2016, 14 071 road deaths were reported.

The longer-term trend for road deaths in South Africa has been upward. Between 1990 and 2017, the number of annual road fatalities increased by 26%. Between 1990 and 2000, the reported number of road fatalities fluctuated around 9 500 per annum. After 2000, the number increased significantly and reached a peak in 2006 with more than 15 000 reported road deaths. The country has since implemented a wide range of interventions which have produced positive results and a steady decline in fatal crashes between 2006 and 2014. However, the number of reported road deaths increased again in 2015 and 2016.

The number of traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants in South Africa fell by 19% between 1990 and 2017. In 2017, 24.7 traffic deaths per 100 000 inhabitants were recorded, compared to 30.3 in 1990. However, the mortality rate remains extremely high and has consistently been above 20 in recent years.

The fatality risk measured as traffic deaths per 10 000 registered vehicles decreased by 60% between 1990 and 2016. This improvement mainly reflects the sharp increase in motorisation with the number of motor vehicles more than doubling during
this period. In 2016, the fatality risk stood at 9.8 which is 20 times higher than in the best performing countries.

**Figure 1. Road safety, vehicle stock and GDP trends**

Index 2000 = 100

The picture for *fatalities by road user group* is characterised by a very high share of pedestrians among road casualties. In 2016, pedestrians accounted for 38% of reported fatalities, motorised vehicle passengers accounted for 33% and motorcyclists for 26%.

**Figure 2. Road fatalities by road user group in percentage of total, 2017**

*Road deaths by age group* in 2016 showed a very high share of children among road casualties. Children are very much affected by road crashes in South Africa and are particularly vulnerable as pedestrians.
Economic costs of road crashes

The high number of road traffic crashes and their associated consequences have had a significant impact on South African society, which in turn continues to hamper socio-economic development and affects the well-being of all South Africans. This impact is measured in terms of human lives lost, ‘pain, grief and suffering’, as well as an increasing cost to the economy.

The total cost of road crashes in 2017 amounted to an estimated ZAR 162.05 billion, or 3.5% of GDP (Labuschagne, 2016).

Table 1. Costs of road crashes, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit cost [ZAR]</th>
<th>Total cost [ZAR]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>4 119 437</td>
<td>68.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe injuries</td>
<td>445 857</td>
<td>34.8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight injuries</td>
<td>75 055</td>
<td>22.9 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property damage</td>
<td>1 141</td>
<td>35.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162.05 billion</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total as % of GDP</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.5%</strong></td>
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</table>

Behaviour

The behaviour of road users is an important determinant of a country’s road safety performance. Inappropriate speed in particular is one of the main causes of road crashes. In South Africa, it is estimated that 18.7% of all road fatalities in 2017 were caused by inappropriate speed.

The table below summarises the main speed limits in South Africa.

Table 2. Passenger car speed limits by road type, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General speed limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban roads</td>
<td>60 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural roads</td>
<td>100 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorways</td>
<td>120 km/h</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Driving under the influence of alcohol is another major cause of road crashes in South Africa. Based on crash reports from 2015, 5.5% of fatalities involved a driver with a BAC above the legal limit, and 1.8% involved a pedestrian with a BAC above the legal limit. However, these data are likely to be underreported.

In South Africa, the maximum authorised blood alcohol content (BAC) is 0.5 g/l. There is a lower limit of 0.2 g/l for professional drivers of public transport and heavy goods
vehicles. A crash is defined as alcohol-related when one of the participants has a BAC above the legal limit.

Data on the role of drug use by road users for road crashes in South Africa is unavailable. Driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs having a narcotic effect, or with an excessive amount of alcohol in the blood or breath is prohibited. Drug driving measures are not yet enforced.

An increasing problem for traffic safety in South Africa is distraction, for instance through the use of mobile phones while driving. The National Road Traffic Act states that no person shall drive a vehicle on a public road holding a cellular or a mobile telephone or any other communication device in one or both hands or with any other part of the body.

In 2016, the RTMC commissioned and published a research report with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on distracted and inattentive driving (Venter et al., 2016). It shows that drivers frequently engage in secondary activities while driving. Passenger-related distractions (i.e., looking at, talking to or listening to a passenger) constitute the most common distraction. Other secondary distractions include using electronic devices, grooming, eating and other person or object-related distractions. The important question to answer is what constitutes normal driving and is it possible that distracted driving has become the norm rather than the exception.

**Seat belt wearing** has been compulsory in South Africa since 2005 in front seats and rear seats for cars and minibuses registered after 1 January 2006. All new motor vehicles must be fitted with seat belts for all passengers. The driver is responsible for ensuring that infants are seated with an appropriate child restraint. The seat belt wearing rate is very low, estimated in 2010 at 4.5% for the drivers and 5% for front seat passengers. There has not been any more recent survey on the use of seatbelts.

For motorcyclists, **helmet wearing** is the most effective passive safety habit. In South Africa, helmets have been compulsory for users of all of motorised-two wheelers since 2004. The helmet-wearing rate of riders of motorised two-wheelers is not surveyed regularly, but it is believed to be very low.

Helmets are compulsory for cyclists. In practice, it is not enforced.

**Road safety management and strategies**

There are several factors of influence on South Africa’s road safety performance as captured by the above indicators.

In the past various strategies were developed and implemented in South Africa in order to address road safety. These resulted in uneven progress towards reducing fatalities and crashes. The Road Traffic Management strategy 1996-2000 focused on vulnerable road users (VRUs), quality of roads and vehicles. This succeeded in educating road users and
laid a basis for the introduction of AARTO (Administrative Adjudication of Road Traffic Offences) and the establishment of the RTMC (Road Traffic Management Corporation). However, the strategy had some limitations including the lack of a well-developed legal framework. This hamstrung the efforts aimed at regulating the road safety space.

The road safety strategy 2001-2005 focused on education and communication of road safety to VRUs. Emphasis was also put on drivers and vehicle fitness. This was done mainly through law enforcement initiatives. The period under review witnessed high police visibility through road blocks, alcohol testing and patrolling in hazardous areas. However, there was only partial implementation of the strategy and a weak monitoring and evaluation system.

The National Road Safety Strategy, introduced in 2006, prioritised road safety management, road environment, vehicle and driver fitness as well as creating institutions tasked with the responsibility of implementing the strategy. This strategy focuses on law enforcement, the role of government in coordination and improving the capacity of state institutions to deliver. There were successes with regards to law enforcement operations. However, there was again only partial implementation and skill shortage.

**Responsibility for the organisation of road safety** in South Africa lies with the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), established in April 2005, as the lead agency for Road Safety in South Africa. RTMC reports to the Department of Transport. Other major road agencies that also have a responsibility to contribute towards road safety are:

- Road Accident Fund (RAF)
- Road Traffic Infringements Agency (RTIA)
- South African National Roads Agency (SOC; Limited) (SANRAL)
- Cross-Border Roads Transport Agency (CBRTA).

In addition, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the Department of Roads and Public Works, the Department of Safety and Security, the Provincial Traffic Authorities, Statistics South Africa, and the emergency medical services are important stakeholders.

The RTMC's shareholders are composed of provincial representatives from each of the nine provinces. The shareholder group also comprises a representative from the South African Local Government Authority (SALGA) with the Minister being the Chairperson.

The Road Safety Advisory Council was established in 2014, with the main objective to provide strategic advice to the Minister of Transport. It is composed of representatives of different sectors (automotive industry, road engineering, NGOs, transport companies, motor insurance companies, civil society organisations, etc.).
In 2015, the Department of Transport and its other road agencies began developing the National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2030 which is aligned with the United Nations Decade of Action pillars. The objective is to reduce fatalities and injuries by 50% from the 2010 baseline by 2030. The National Road Safety Strategy was approved by the National Assembly. It places emphasis on the following priority areas:

- road safety in schools
- drink driving
- safety of young people.

The implementation of the strategy has been broken into the short, medium and long-term phases. In the short-term it is envisaged that a solid safety management will be established. Included in this phase is the building of credible institutions to improve road user behaviour. In the medium-term phase, the objective is to reduce crashes and injuries as well as their consequences to society. The objective of the long-term phase is to become one of the leading countries in road safety.

The main target of the 2016-2030 strategy is to reduce the number of fatalities by 50% by 2030.

**Figure 3. Trends in road fatalities towards national target**

![Figure 3. Trends in road fatalities towards national target](image)

**Measures**

Several measures to improve road safety management have recently been put into place.
**Road safety management** efforts are focusing on actions to improve coordination and management, eliminate fraud and corruption, improve road safety data systems, ensure adequate funding and capacity and enhance the use of technology to protect road users.

Measures targeting **road user behaviour** have focused on increasing the protection of vulnerable road users, strengthening enforcement and further involving communities in road safety.

Work is ongoing to increase **vehicle** safety standards and ensure that vehicles on the road network are roadworthy.

To ensure a **safer infrastructure**, regular road audits and safety assessments are conducted to identify and address high risk locations.

Efforts are being made to facilitate access to post-crash care and increase the effectiveness of first response.

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**Definitions, methodology, data collection**

*Road fatality*: any person killed during or immediately after a crash, or death directly attributable to a crash within 30 days of such a crash.

* Seriously injured*: any person sustaining injuries to such an extent that hospitalisation is required. Serious injuries include fractures, concussion, internal injuries, severe cuts and lacerations, severe shock, etc. which require medical treatment, hospitalisation and/or confinement to a bed.

*Slightly injured*: any person sustaining minor cuts and bruises, sprains and light shock which may be treated at the scene of the crash or at home.

In South Africa, the police and traffic authorities collect motor vehicle crash data using Accident Report (AR) forms. The data collection procedure is conducted on behalf of the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), which has a legislative responsibility to report on the information.

Data is then sent to the RTMC which generates, consolidates, interprets, analyses and compiles State of Road Safety reports. Fatal crashes are reported within 24 hours using quick response forms. South Africa records fatalities in accordance with the 30-day international standard.

The Culpable Homicide Crash Observation Report (CHoCOR) forms are used to collect fatal crash data on a daily basis. The South African Police Service (SAPS) is the primary source of the fatal crash data. RTMC receives a list of all recorded fatal crashes from SAPS as well as the CHoCOR forms from the various police stations. RTMC then captures, processes and verifies the data in order to compile a consolidated report. There are
continuous engagements with provinces to validate the integrity of the submitted information.

The management of road traffic information across the local, provincial and national authorities continues to be ineffective. Police records alone are usually inadequate for carrying out an analysis on the nature and consequences of serious injuries and other risk factors associated with crashes. To address this, initiatives are being undertaken to strengthen co-operation between the bodies involved in road traffic data. In an effort to move towards an integrated road traffic information management, a new database is being developed in collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in partnership with Statistics South Africa (STATS SA).

There is currently a process underway to expand the data sources by obtaining road crash information from other stakeholders.

Information included in this report corresponds to the consolidated set of the SAPS data.

**Resources**

**Websites**


**Contacts**

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Motselisi MP. Juma: MotselisiJ@rtmc.co.za

**References**


Venter, K., et al. (2016), *Indications of high levels of inattentive and distracted driving in South Africa*, CSIR Built Environment, Transport Systems and Operations, [https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/57986/Venter_Indications_2016.pdf?sequence=1](https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/57986/Venter_Indications_2016.pdf?sequence=1)
## Road safety and traffic data

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<tr>
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<td>13 967</td>
<td>12 944</td>
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<td>10 837</td>
<td>10 613</td>
<td>11 676</td>
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<td>7.7%</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
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<td>27.9</td>
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<td>15.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<td>Registered vehicles (thousands)</td>
<td>4 616</td>
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<td>11 710</td>
<td>11 964</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
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<td>97.0%</td>
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<td>Registered vehicles per 1,000 population</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>213</td>
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