

2024 Super Tuesday bicycle commentary

Introduction

The Super Tuesday count is a national count of cyclists and pedestrians undertaken on the first Tuesday in March since 2009, as an initiative of the Melbourne-based Bicycle Network. While five volunteers took the initiative to count cyclists in Adelaide in 2009, Super Tuesday only seriously began in Adelaide from 2010, when the City of Adelaide became involved.

The City of Adelaide soon began to undertake the counts using local knowledge and skills, with Bike Adelaide stepping in to help with volunteers and organisation. Super Tuesday is now organised as a partnership of Bike Adelaide and Walking SA in the City of Adelaide, as well as the Cities of Burnside, Unley and Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, with these Councils supporting the count financially.

71 locations were counted by Bike Adelaide and the Unley BUG, 13 fewer than in 2023. However the Adelaide City Council contracted The Bike Network to count a further 18 locations, many of which have been traditionally undertaken by Bike Adelaide. Counts were also undertaken by the Bicycle Network, in the Cities of Holdfast Bay and Port Adelaide Enfield.

The results of this year's count can be seen on a locational basis using a [clickable map](#). All but one of the Bike Network locations are included on the map. However the six Bike Network locations that were also counted by Bike Adelaide in 2023 have not been included in the calculation of trend data below, due to possible differing methodologies used by the Bike Network in terms of who to count, what legs to include, etc.

The location with the highest number of cyclists was again at the intersection of Porter Street and Greenhill Road, where 567 cyclists were counted. This shows just how popular the Porter-Rugby route is for Unley and Mitcham cyclists, with other locations further along Porter Street also recording very high numbers. Another location with large counts was the confluence of the River Torrens Linear Path and the Outer Harbor Greenway, just north of the Electranet Bridge over the Torrens. It had 510 cyclists. The highest in the CBD was Pirie Street/ Frome Street, with 427 counted. While this was 19% higher than in 2023, it is still well down on the 545 counted in 2019, before the pandemic.

Levels of cycling

This year saw an 17% increase in cycling levels, when the 58 intersections that were counted by Bike Adelaide and the Unley BUG in both 2023 and 2024 are totalled. No doubt the weather contributed: for the first time in a number of years the morning of the count was both dry and mild in temperature. With no wind to speak of, weather conditions were perfect for cycling. Light rain was experienced in 2023. (As a rule of thumb, rain results in levels of cycling falling by about a third.)

The graph below gives the year-by-year change in numbers, where these can be ascertained (i.e. at locations that were also counted the year before – new locations tend to be added to Super Tuesday every year).

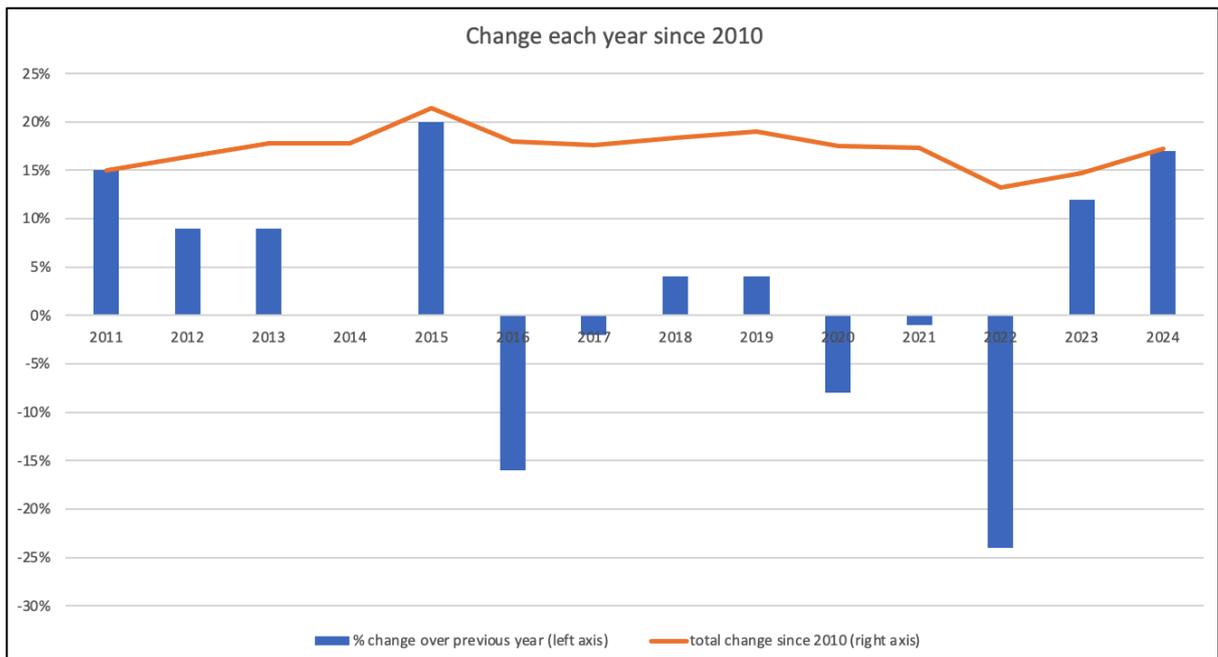
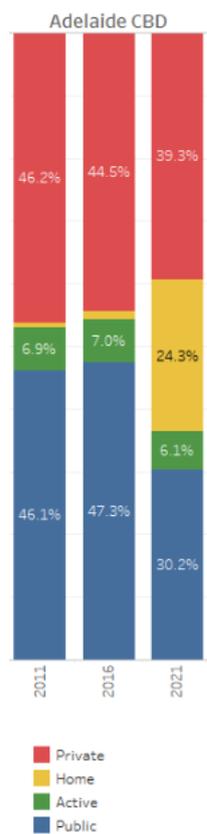


Figure 1: Year by year changes in Super Tuesday counts, 2010 to 2024

It shows that numbers have fallen since 2019, the last count before the Covid pandemic. Looking specifically at the Super Tuesday counts, the 2020 count was undertaken at a time when there was general concern about the spread of the pandemic into Australia, but no formal restrictions on activities. The 2021 count was undertaken at a time when SA’s isolation from other States and Australia’s isolation from the world enabled us to live reasonably normal lives, although many had taken to working from home or attending classes virtually, especially if they were overseas students. The 2022 count occurred a few months after SA was opened up to the rest of the world, the number of Covid infections was surging, and the State government had a policy of requiring close contacts of those infected to also isolate. There were also work-from-home mandates (such as a limit of 50% on the proportion of public servants allowed to work in the office) and the strengthening of social distancing requirements in offices and at public venues. It is not surprising that the numbers saw a decline of 24% – by far the biggest fall recorded in over a decade of counting.



This chart, from Charting Transport’s blog, [What can the 2021 census tell us about commuting to work in Australia’s big CBDs during the COVID19 pandemic?](#) shows the dramatic impact of covid on public transport use.

We may well be in a new regime, where changed work and study habits will have a permanent impact on the numbers commuting, including commuting by bicycle.

Cycling might also have suffered with the desertion of public transport during covid. Some commuters who bought a car to avoid public transport may have previously varied their trip: cycling some days, using public transport on others. With the purchase of a car, they may have given up cycle commuting.

Figure 2: Changes in commuting habits to Adelaide CBD, 2011 to 2021 censuses.

Having said that, we have seen increases since 2022, when the impact of Covid was most dramatic on numbers. The increase in 2023 could be attributed to a lifting of the “close contact” work restrictions (2023). Good weather could explain this year’s jump. Numbers are now almost the same as before the pandemic.

While the impact of Covid can be inferred from the graphs, it is noteworthy that the first five years of the past decade saw increases every year except 2014, whereas numbers plateaued at a lower level in the last four years of that decade.

This situation could be due to cycling conditions in the City. The first five years saw significant new cycling infrastructure each year: new bike lanes, often green, bike boxes at intersections, and of course the separated Frome Bikeway. New facilities from then on were largely confined to paths in the Park Lands, such as alongside South Terrace and Dequetteville Terrace. 2016 represents a bit of an ‘annus horribilis’: cycling conditions became worse on North Terrace, when the installation of tram lanes removed the wide kerbside lane that cyclists could formerly use. The shift of the Royal Adelaide Hospital and associated tertiary activities from the eastern side of the City to the western end would have had a bad impact on the cycling habits of medical staff and students who lived in the eastern suburbs. The impact can be seen in the graph of numbers counted at the corner of North Terrace and Pulteney Street, where practically all cycling on North Terrace is confined to the footpath.

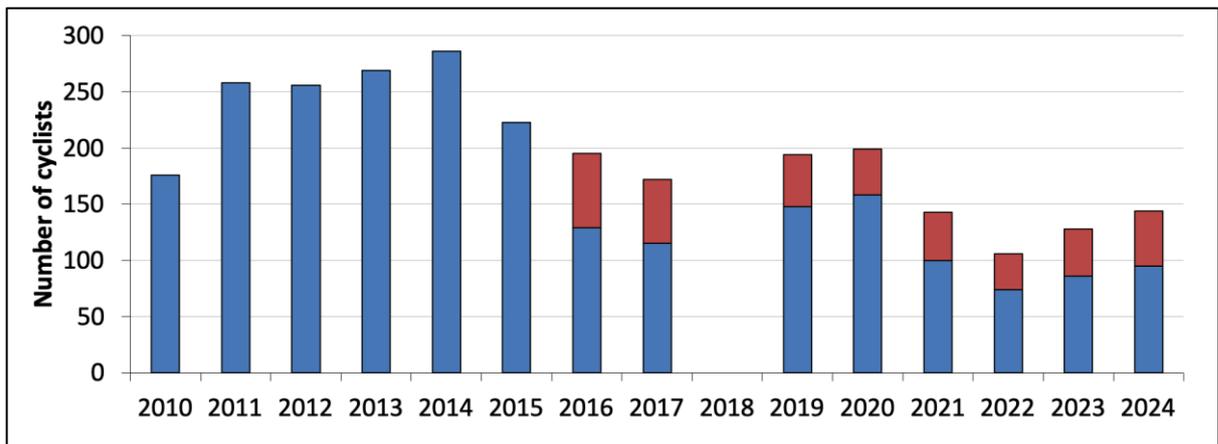


Figure 3: Super Tuesday counts, North Terrace and Pulteney Street

Similar halving of numbers from the peak can be seen on the other North Terrace counts. The western half of North Terrace also suffered due to the closing of Station Road, which had enabled direct access from the River Torrens to North Terrace, opposite Bank Street.

Female cycling

23% of those counted in 2024 were female, lower than in recent years. (25% is a reasonable rule of thumb, based on counts from the last 5-10 years.) The highest percentage was 35%. This was where cyclists use the pedestrian actuated lights and median crossing to cross Park Road at Gilberton. It has a relatively small count overall. The traditional strong intersection of Halifax Street with the Frome Bikeway was counted by The Bike Network. It reported 26% female riding, compared with 38% in 2023.

We have traditionally noted that the female count is likely to be an underestimate, and we note a recent [academic report](#) that about 34% of cyclists in Australia are female.

We expect that the Super Tuesday counts underestimate female cyclists because of three factors:

- (1) It is often difficult to distinguish whether cyclists are male or female, particularly at locations where roads are wide and so those being counted might be 30m away. The situation has become worse with the general fashion for dark clothing in recent years. In cases where there is doubt, it is reasonable to adopt the “default” category – male.
- (2) The process of counting requires that an extra action be taken to record a female: a special mark, and a mark in a separate column. At times counting can be quite hectic and the extra actions might be forgotten.
- (3) The Super Tuesday count is taken on a weekday, from 7am-9am i.e. the traditional commuter peak. Women are more likely to have shift work that does not fit into a 9-5 work day, so will be under-represented in this period.

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