

WA DROWNING REPORT 2021

A water loving nation
free from drowning



Partner:



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
WESTERN AUSTRALIA





WA DROWNING REPORT 2021

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Royal Life Saving acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands in which we live and work. We pay our respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuing association with the land, waters and sky of this country.

We pay respect to elders; past, present and future.

Drowning incidents recorded in WA in 2020/21

301

Drowning Incidents
(11.3 per 100,000)

39

Fatal
Drownings

120

Hospital
Admissions

142

Emergency
Department
Presentations



Overall drowning rates
increased from 2019/20 by 15%.



Drowning trends show an average
increase of 8.9% over past decade

Males were 2.5 times more likely to drown than females

72% of those who drowned in Western Australia were male



Drowning risk was highest
amongst toddlers, young
children and older adults.

Rate per 100,000:

68.8

Toddlers (0-4 years)

14.4

Children (5-14 years)

7.5

Young People (15-24 years)

4.9

Adults (25-64 years)

9.7

Older Adults (65+ years)



People in **regional WA** were 1.8 times more
likely to be involved in a drowning incident
than those in the Perth metropolitan area.

Top 3 regions (rate per 100,000)

13.5

Midwest

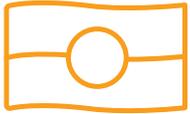
13.3

Kimberley

8.2

Great
Southern

Multicultural communities were over-represented in drowning data



6.8% of drowning involved **Aboriginal Australians**

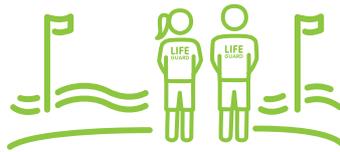


23.2% of drowning involved **a person born overseas**

Drowning incidents were most likely to occur at coastal and inland waterways while swimming, boating or recreating around water.



38.5%
Ocean/Harbour



15.4%
Beach



15.4%
River/Creek



23.8%
Swimming



16.2%
Boating



14.3%
Recreating

Key risk factors for drowning:

25.0%

Environmental factors such as poor weather/ water conditions

19.4%

Presence of a **pre-existing medical condition**

13.9%

Poor swimming ability

11.1%

Consumption of **alcohol** (BAC >0.05)

8.3%

Not wearing a lifejacket or using appropriate safety equipment

2.8%

Inexperience in the activity being undertaken

DROWNING AT A GLANCE

Drowning has a significant impact on the Western Australian community. In particular, the life-long consequences of non-fatal drowning have a great impact on the individual, their families and local communities.

This report highlights key drowning trends in Western Australia from July 2020 to June 2021 and identifies those at most risk. Translating this into policy and practice assists Royal Life Saving WA's efforts to better understand drowning and its impacts, build evidence-informed, innovative solutions to prevent drowning and empower the community to adopt safer aquatic behaviours.

LEAD



BUILD



EMPOWER



FATAL AND NON-FATAL DROWNING



Fatal Drowning

There were 39 fatal drowning incidents recorded in WA waterways between July 2020 and June 2021, at a rate of 1.5 per 100,000 population, an 11.4% increase from 2019/20. Fatal drowning trends have shown a 2.8% decrease in the rate of drowning over the past decade

Nationally, WA accounted for 13.3% of all fatal drowning incidents in 2020/21 and recorded the second highest rate of drowning behind the Northern Territory.

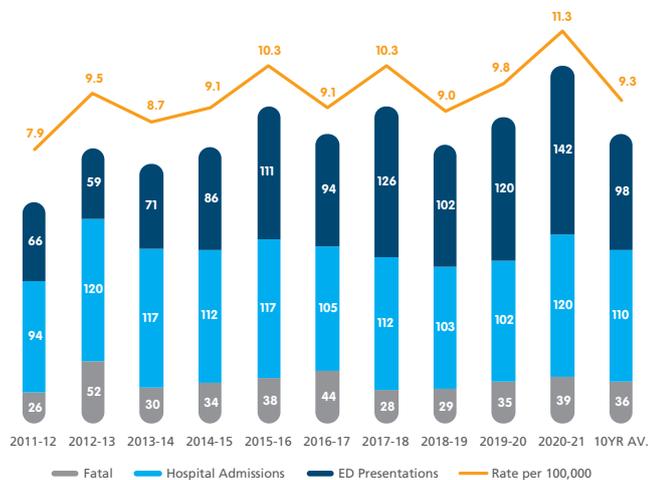
Non-Fatal Drowning

For every fatal drowning death recorded in 2020/21, there were seven non-fatal drowning incidents. Overall, 262 non-fatal drowning incidents were recorded in WA during 2020/21, a 18% increase from 2019/20.

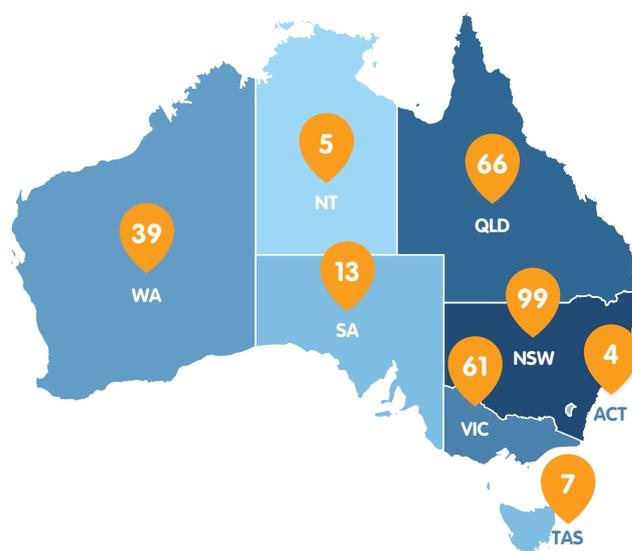
Of these, 120 people were admitted to hospital at a rate of 4.5 per 100,000 population, a 15.5% increase from 2019/20. While the average number of hospital admissions has remained similar over the past decade, rates have decreased by 8.4%.

In addition, 142 people presented at an emergency department in the Perth metropolitan area at a rate of 6.6 per 100,000 population, a 16.0% increase from 2019/20. Over the past decade, the average number and rate of presentations have increased by 39.4% and 14.8% respectively.

Overall drowning in WA, 2011/12 to 2020/21



State and Territory breakdown, Fatal Drowning



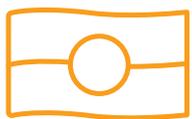
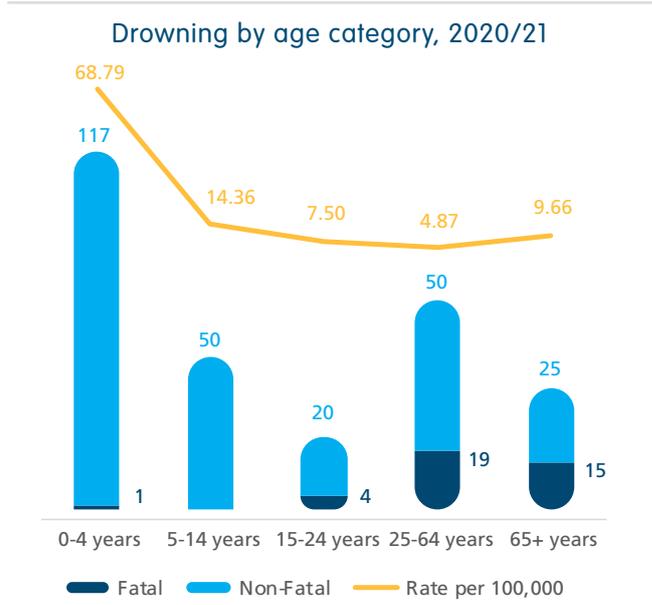
Males were 2.6 times more likely to be involved in a drowning incident (15.3/100,000) compared to females (6.0/100,000) with 71.8% of incidents involving men. Drowning rates amongst males increased by 22.4% from 2019/20, while the rates amongst females decreased by 16.7%.

72% of those who drowned in Western Australia were male 

Drowning risk varied with age. In a continuing trend, toddlers (68.8/100,000) and young children (14.4/100,000) were at the greatest risk of drowning and drowning severity increased with age.

Compared to 2019/20, drowning rates increased amongst all age groups, with the exception of adults 25-64 years (8.7% decrease), with the greatest increase seen amongst young children (42.7%), followed by older adults (31.5%) and toddlers 0-4 years (6.8%).

In addition, over the past decade, rates of fatal drowning have reduced significantly amongst toddlers aged 0-4 years (50.0%) and children 5-14 years (27.8%), while rates have increased for young people aged 15-24 years (61.3%).



Aboriginal Australians continue to be over-represented in drowning data with 6.8% of incidents involving Aboriginal Australians, despite making up only 4.0% of the WA population. Overall, Aboriginal Australians were 1.8 times more likely to be involved in a drowning incident (17.9/100,000) than non-Aboriginal Australians (10.1/100,000).

Overall, 23.1% of drowning incidents (fatal and non-fatal) involved a person **born overseas**, a slight increase from 2019/20 (1.2%). This was higher for fatal drowning where 61.1% of incidents involved a person who was born overseas. Of these, 63.6% were from a non-English speaking background. Half had been living in Australia for 10 or more years and 27.8% were new arrivals (less than five years in Australia). The average time in Australia was 32.6 years.

23.1% of fatal drowning incidents **involved tourists**, with 88.9% travellers within WA and the remaining 11.1% interstate travellers.



The majority of fatal drowning victims were from **high socio-economic areas**, with 28.2% in the highest quintile for economic advantage. The proportion of drowning deaths involving people from low socio-economic areas was lower than 2019/20, with 17.9% residing in areas within the lowest two quintiles for economic advantage compared to 25.0% in 2019/20.



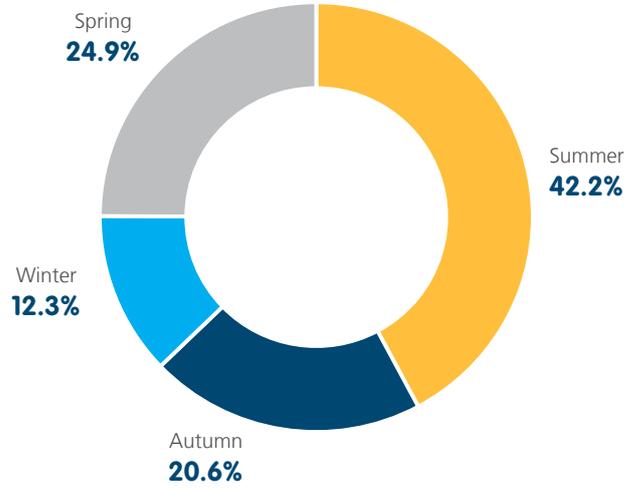
WHEN AND WHERE

Almost half of drowning incidents (fatal and non-fatal) occurred during the summer months (42.2%), likely contributed to by warmer weather, higher exposure through increased participation in aquatic activities and school holidays being during this time of year.

Almost two thirds of drowning deaths occurred during the week (64.1%), however, Saturday (25.6%) and Wednesday (23.1%) were the most common days for fatal drowning to occur. In addition, 12.8% of drowning deaths occurred over a public holiday/long weekend, a slight increase from 2019/20.

Similar to previous years, the majority of drowning deaths occurred during the afternoon (38.5%) with 2.00pm - 4.00pm the highest risk time for drowning.

Drowning by season, 2020/21



High-risk times for drowning



Summer months



Saturday, Wednesday and key public holiday periods



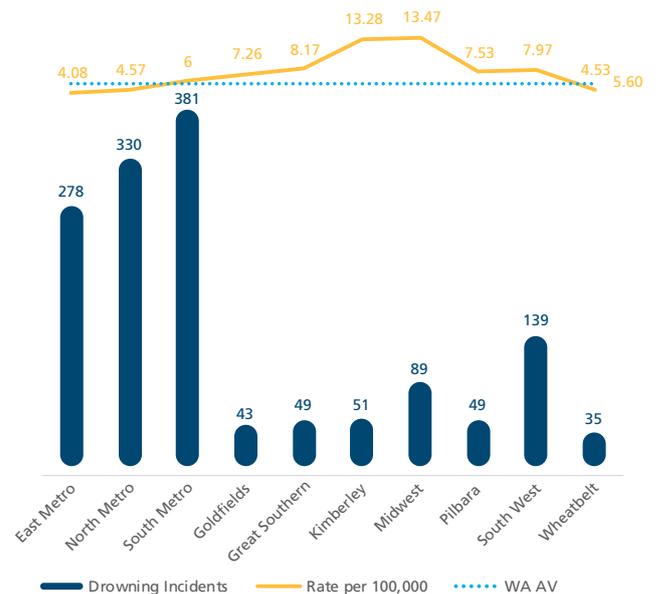
Afternoon between 2.00 and 4.00PM

> Metro vs. regional aquatic location

While a higher proportion of drowning occurred in the Perth metropolitan area (69.2%), rates of drowning were higher in regional WA with people 1.8 times more likely to drown in regional WA (9.2/100,000) than the Perth metropolitan area (5.1/100,000). The rate of drowning in regional WA decreased from 2019/20 by 3.6%, while the rate increased by 21.4% in the Perth metropolitan area.

Over the past decade, the Midwest, Kimberley and Great Southern regions recorded the highest drowning rates. The East Metropolitan, North Metropolitan and Wheatbelt regions recorded the lowest rates.

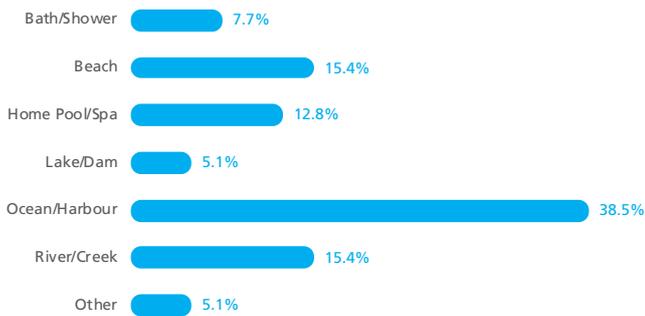
Drowning by health region, 2011/12 to 2020/21



Aquatic locations where the drowning occurred varied by age and geographic location. While the majority of drowning deaths occurred in major cities (48.7%), one quarter (25.6%) occurred at remote or very remote locations with limited access and mobile phone reception, affecting response times and rescue efforts.

Aquatic locations where drowning occurred varied by age and demographic. Fatal drowning incidents were most likely to occur at ocean/harbours, beaches or rivers/creeks. Overall drowning (fatal and non-fatal) was most likely to occur in open water locations (34.6%), followed by home swimming pools (20.8%) and beaches (15.7%) in 2020/21.

Fatal drowning by aquatic location, 2020/21



Top 3 Aquatic Locations



38.5%
Ocean/Harbour



15.4%
Beach



15.4%
Rivers/Creeks

Proportion of drowning deaths by remoteness



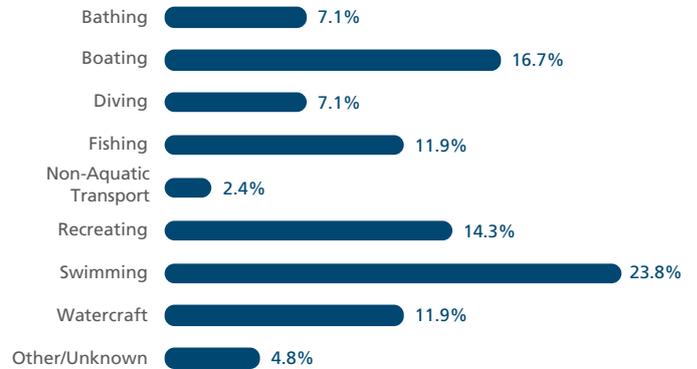
ACTIVITY

Activities being undertaken at the time of the fatal drowning incidents varied, with swimming the most common activity, followed by boating and recreating around water.

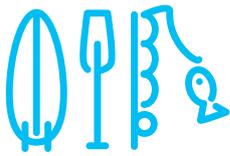
For non-fatal drowning incidents, almost one quarter (21.7%) of people were participating in a water sport and a further 12.5% were participating in a leisure activity at the time of the incident.

Overall, 53.9% of people involved in a fatal drowning incident entered the water intentionally while participating in an aquatic activity prior to the drowning event. Of those that weren't prepared to enter the water, 20.5% slipped or fell and 10.3% were swept in by a wave. Method of water entry was unknown in 5.1% of incidents.

Fatal Drowning by activity, 2020/21



Entry to Water – Fatal Drowning, 2020/21



53.9%

Aquatic activity participation



20.5%

Slipped/fell



10.3%

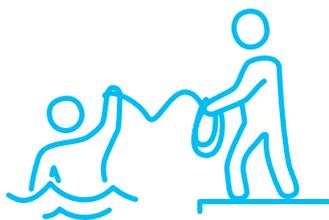
Swept in



RESCUE AND RESPONSE

A rescue was attempted in 30.8% of fatal drowning incidents recorded in 2020/21. Two thirds (66.6%) of the rescues were performed by people unknown to the victim including general members of the public and professional staff such as lifeguards and water police.

Common reasons for a rescue not being performed were that they were participating alone or that other persons weren't able to perform a rescue due to unsuitable weather conditions, lack of swimming skills or lack of safety equipment.



A rescue was attempted in **30.8%** of fatal drowning incidents



Of those incidents where an aquatic rescue was undertaken, **cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was performed** in 23.1% of incidents. In instances where CPR wasn't performed, most common reasons included that the rescuer was unable to locate the victim or that the person was clearly deceased when retrieved from the water.

Fatal Drowning Risk Factors

- > Environmental factors such as poor weather conditions, strong currents/flowing water, deep water, sudden changes in water depth and flooding were a factor in 25.0% of fatal drowning incidents
- > Pre-existing medical conditions contributed to 19.4% of fatal drowning incidents, a 13.9% decrease from 2019/20. Most common medical conditions were cardiac and respiratory-related
- > Poor swimming ability contributed to 13.9% of fatal drowning incidents, similar to 2019/20
- > One in ten people involved in a fatal drowning incident (11.1%) had alcohol in their system, a 5.6% decrease from 2019/20.
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly the use of lifejackets was a factor in 8.3% of fatal drowning incidents
- > Inexperience in the activity being undertaken contributed to 2.8% of fatal drowning incidents

TODDLER (0-4 YEARS) DROWNING

JULY 2011 TO JUNE 2021



1,005

Toddler drowning incidents recorded

29

Fatal Drownings

397

Hospital Admissions

579

Emergency Department Presentations

Fatal Drowning

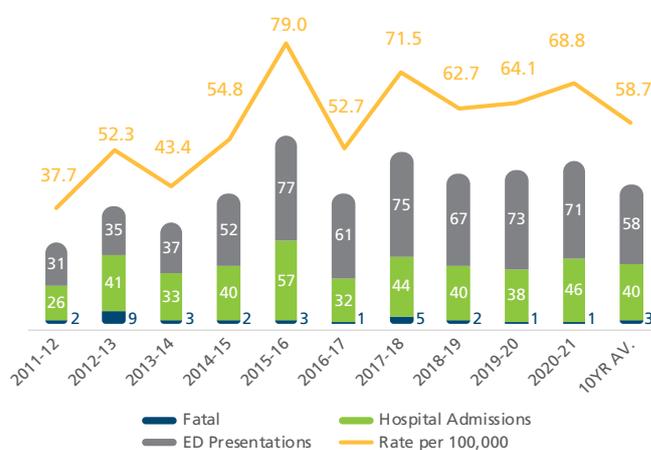
There were 29 fatal drowning incidents recorded amongst children aged 0-4 years, at a rate of 39.7 per 100,000 population, the highest of any age group in WA. Fatal drowning trends have shown that toddler drowning rates have halved over the past decade.

Non-Fatal Drowning

For every fatal drowning death recorded, there were 14 children hospitalised following a non-fatal drowning incident. Overall, 976 non-fatal drowning incidents were recorded over the past decade. Of these, 397 people were admitted to hospital at a rate of 23.3 per 100,000 population. Rates of hospitalisation have slightly decreased over the past decade (2.3%).

In addition, 579 people presented at an emergency department in the Perth metropolitan area at a rate of 43.2 per 100,000 population. This rate has almost doubled over the past decade (41.6% increase).

Toddler drowning by year, 2011/12 to 2020/21



Average length of stay in hospital was **2.5 days**.

23 (5.8%) of toddlers hospitalised experienced **brain injury** at a rate of 1.4/100,000, the highest of any age group in WA.

High-risk times for drowning



50.4%
Summer months



58.6%
Weekends
3.4% Public Holiday



55.2%
Afternoon
12-2PM

Boys were 1.4 times more likely to be involved in a drowning incident (67.9/100,000) than girls (49.4/100,000).

68% of all drowning deaths were males



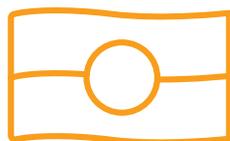
95.2% were born in Australia



4.1% were born overseas

79%

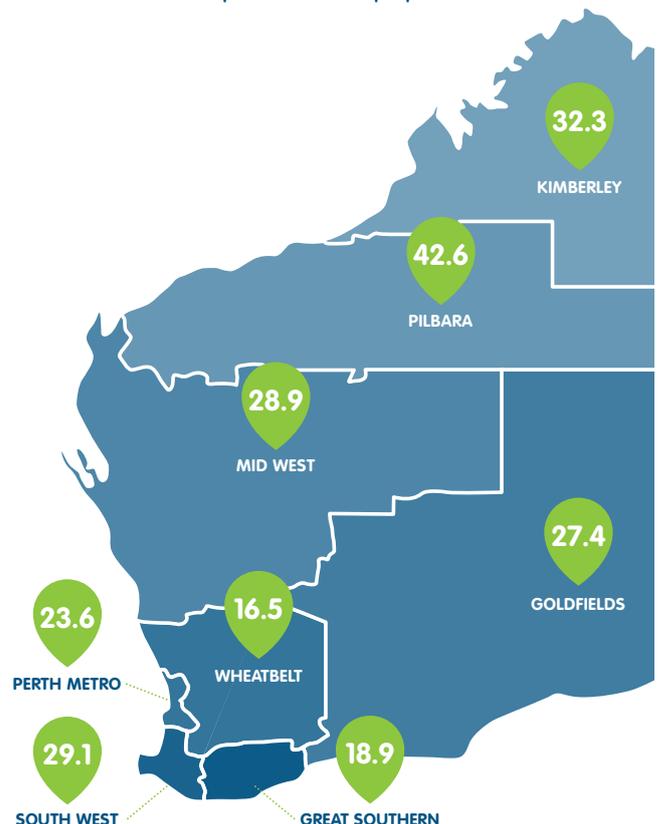
Of toddlers were **aged 0-2 years**



Overall, **6.8% of toddlers who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates similar for Aboriginal (61.5/100,000) and non-Aboriginal toddlers (58.8/100,000).

Toddler drowning was **1.2 times more likely** to occur in regional WA (57.5%; 28.2/100,000) than the Perth metropolitan area (61.9%, 23.6/100,000).

Drowning by location, 2011/12 to 2020/21
(Rate per 100,000 population)



Lack of supervision was a contributing factor in 100% of fatal toddler drowning incidents.

Top reasons for lapse in supervision

24.1%

household chores

20.7%

sleeping

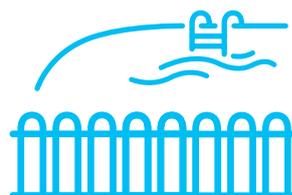
20.7%

preparing food/meals

10.3%

supervising other children

The majority of toddler drowning incidents occurred at **locations within the home** (67.8%). This was greater for fatal drowning where 89.7% occurred in and around the home.



The **home swimming pool** was the most common location for both fatal (65.5%) and non-fatal drowning (43.1%) followed by bath/shower (20.7% and 19.1% respectively).



Fatal drowning incidents were most likely to occur when supervision had been absent for **less than five minutes** (27.6%)

27.6%

<5minutes

24.1%

5-10 minutes

13.8%

10-15 minutes

13.8%

> 1 hour

Toddler drowning deaths were most likely to occur at their **usual place of residence** (75.9%) with the remaining incidents occurring at either a relative's (10.3%) or neighbours (6.9%)



Aquatic rescue and **CPR was performed in 89.7%** of fatal toddler drowning incidents, with almost all (96.2%) performed by a family member.

Home Pool Drowning

Access to pool

36%

Gate propped/
left open

47%

Doors not
closed/faulty

Pool barrier

31.6%

Type 1 barrier
(isolation barrier around the pool)

42.1%

Type 2 barrier
(barrier includes child-resistant
doors/windows)

5.3%

No barrier

15.8%

Unknown



YOUTH DROWNING 15-24 YEARS

July 2011 to June 2021



228

Youth drowning incidents recorded

38

Fatal Drownings

111

Hospital Admissions

79

Emergency Department Presentations

Fatal Drowning

There were 38 fatal drowning incidents recorded, at a rate of 1.1 per 100,000 population. Fatal drowning trends have shown that youth drowning rates have increased by 61.3% over the past decade.

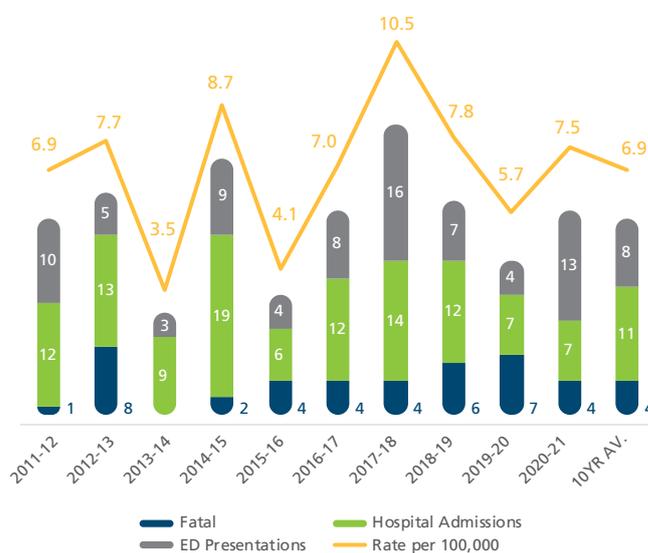
Non-Fatal Drowning

For every fatal drowning death recorded, there were three young people hospitalised following a non-fatal drowning incident.

Overall, 190 non-fatal drowning incidents were recorded over the past decade. Of these, 111 people were admitted to hospital at a rate of 3.3 per 100,000 population. Rates of hospitalisation have decreased by 7.8% over the past decade.

In addition, 79 people presented at an emergency department in the Perth metropolitan area at a rate of 2.9 per 100,000 population. This rate has increased by 61.2% over the past decade.

Youth drowning by year, 2011/12 to 2020/21



Average length of stay in hospital was **2.9 days**.

15 (13.5%) young people hospitalised **experienced brain injury** at a rate of 0.5/100,000, the second highest rate of any age group in WA.

High-risk times for drowning



46.1%
Summer months



57.9%
Weekends
7.9% Public Holiday



65.8%
Afternoons
12-2PM

Males were 6.9 times more likely to drown than females

79% of those who drowned were male



Drowning increased with age amongst young people



15-17 years

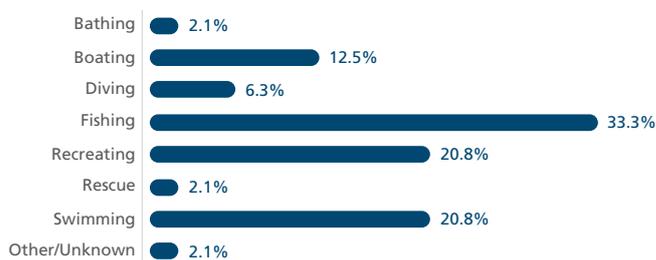


18-21 years



22-24 years

Youth drowning by Activity, 2011/12 to 2020/21



Overall, **4.5% of young people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates slightly lower amongst Aboriginal Australians (5.1/100,000) than non-Aboriginal Australians (7.0/100,000).

Overall, 46.2% of young people involved in a fatal drowning incident **entered the water intentionally** while participating in an aquatic activity prior to the drowning event. Of those that weren't prepared to enter the water, 18.0% were swept in by a wave, 12.8% slipped or fell and 10.3% jumped in (e.g. cliff jumping). Method of water entry was unknown in 7.7% of incidents.

Multicultural communities were over-represented in youth drowning data with 32.7% born overseas.



91.7% were from a non-English speaking background



41.7% were in Australia on working visa or as an international student.



41.7% were new arrivals who had lived in Australia for five years or less.

Top Aquatic Locations, Youth-related drowning



32.2% Ocean/Harbour



18.1% Inland Waterway



18.1% Beach



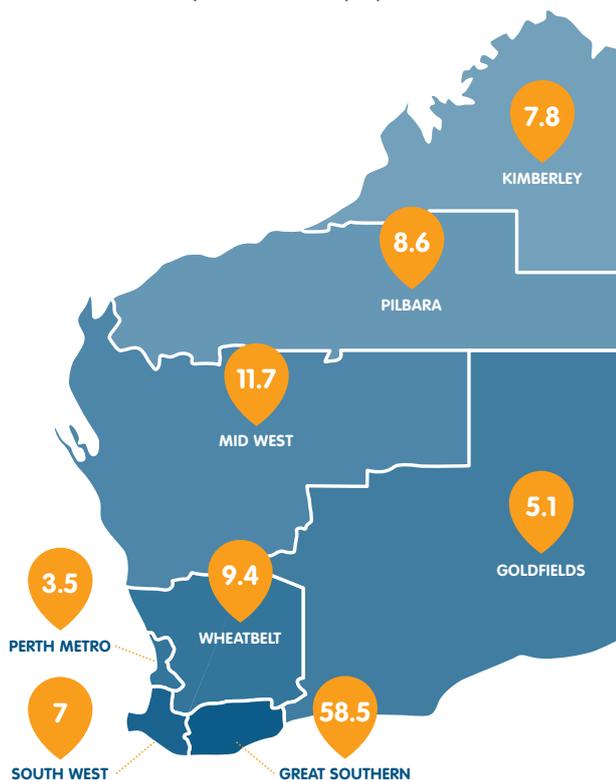
5.4% Home Pool/Spa



1.0% Bath/Shower

Youth drowning was **2.8 times more likely to occur in regional WA** (35.6%; 9.6/100,000) than the Perth metropolitan area (64.4%, 3.5/100,000).

Drowning by location, 2011/12 to 2020/21
(Rate per 100,000 population)



Aquatic rescue was performed in 63.2% of fatal drowning incidents.

Who performed rescue



CPR was performed in 45.8% of incidents.

Key risk factors for drowning

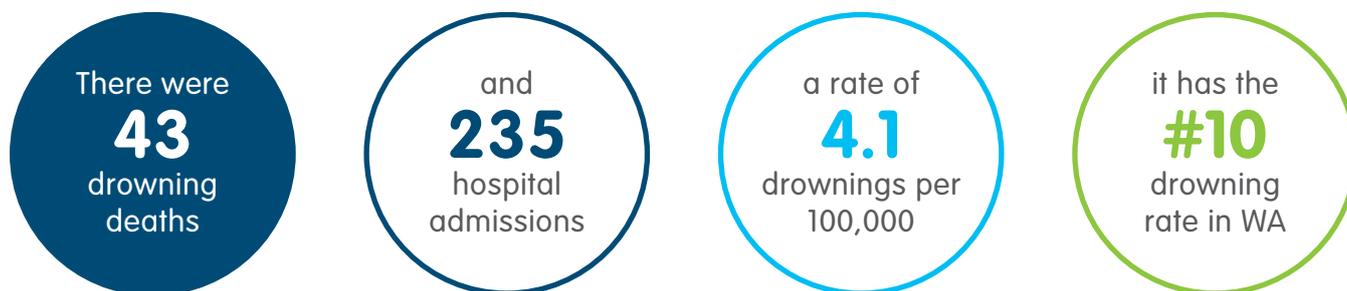
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (58.3%)
- > Participating at an unfamiliar location (30.6%)
- > Participating in unsafe behaviours (27.8%)
- > Remoteness of location (26.4%)
- > Not wearing a lifejacket and/or not using appropriate safety equipment (22.2%)
- > Low socio-economic areas (22.1%)
- > Inexperience in chosen activity (19.5%)
- > Poor swimming ability (16.7%)
- > Presence of pre-existing medical condition (16.7%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (>0.05BAC) (16.7%) with an average BAC almost double the legal limit for driving (0.094%).
- > Injury including head injury (16.7%)





Photo: Lake Leschenaultia, Chidlow

There were **278 drowning incidents** recorded in the Perth Metropolitan - East region



Males (5.0/100,000) were **1.6 times more likely to drown** than females (3.1/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
2.7 City of Perth	37.2 Home Pool	34.9 Recreating
0.8 Shire of Mundaring	30.2 River/Creek	25.6 Swimming
0.7 City of Bayswater	14.0 Lake/Dam	11.6 Bathing



70.8% were born in Australia



27.7% were born overseas



Of these, **68.4%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **5.0% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with Aboriginal Australians (9.8/100,000) 2.5 times more likely to drown than non-Aboriginal Australians (4.0/100,000).

9.3% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is significantly lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (71.1%)
CPR performed (70.4%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
3.2 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years followed by older adults 65+ years and young children 5-14 years. (Rate per 100,000)



Toddlers (0-4 years)



Children (5-14 years)



Young People (15-24 years)



Adults (25-64 years)



Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



49.6%
Summer months



62.8%
Weekdays
14.0% Public Holiday



51.2%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

Key risk factors for drowning

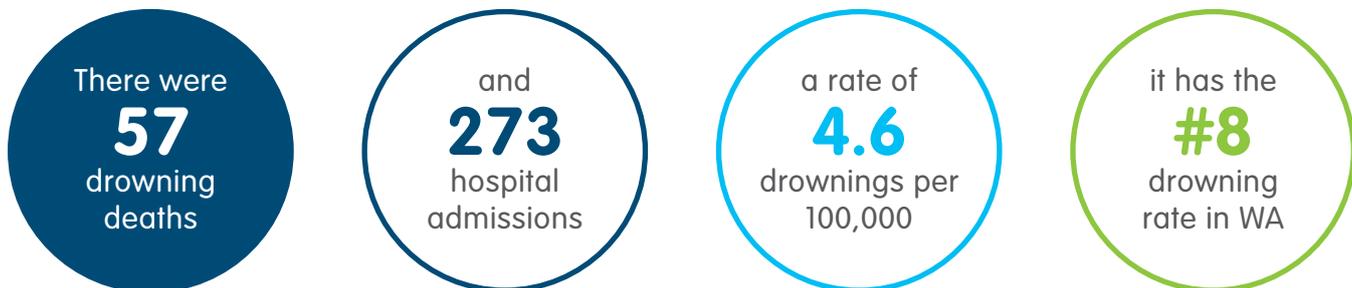
- > Participating alone (60.5%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (51.2%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (23.3%) with an average BAC over twice the legal limit for driving (0.115)
- > Poor swimming ability (20.9%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (14.0%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (14.0%)
- > Injury including head injury (7.0%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (7.0%)
- > Absent or faulty pool barrier (4.7%)

PERTH METRO - NORTH
July 2011 to June 2021



Photo: Matilda Bay, Crawley

There were **330 drowning incidents** recorded in the Perth Metropolitan - North region



Males (5.9/100,000) were **1.9 times more likely to drown** than females (3.2/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
1.1 City of Joondalup	31.6 Beach	33.3 Recreating
1.1 Town of Cambridge	31.6 Home Pool	28.3 Swimming
0.9 City of Wanneroo	8.8 Ocean/Harbour	8.3 Fishing



70.3% were born in Australia



28.2% were born overseas



Of these, **43.5%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **2.1% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with Aboriginal Australians (8.8/100,000) almost twice as likely to drown than non-Aboriginal Australians (4.5/100,000).

7.0% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is significantly lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (75.4%)
CPR performed (88.4%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
3.3 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and older adults over 65 years
(Rate per 100,000)



Toddlers (0-4 years)



Children (5-14 years)



Young People (15-24 years)



Adults (25-64 years)



Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



41.8%
Summer months



59.7%
Weekdays
5.3% Public Holiday



40.4%
Mornings
6AM - 12PM

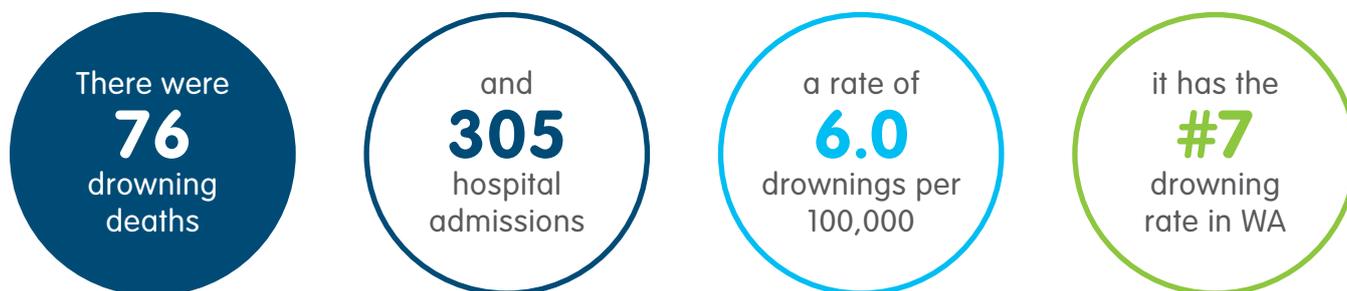
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Participating alone (50.9%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (40.4%)
- > Poor swimming ability (38.6%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (26.3%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (22.8%)
- > Absent or faulty pool barrier (21.1%)
- > Inexperience or unfamiliarity with location (19.3%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (8.8%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (8.8%) with an average BAC twice the legal limit for driving (0.103%)



Photo: Murray River, Yunderup

There were **381 drowning incidents** recorded in the Perth Metropolitan - South region



Males (8.2/100,000) were **2.1 times more likely to drown** than females (3.9/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
3.0 City of Fremantle	38.7 Ocean/harbour	26.1 Boating
2.2 City of Mandurah	20.0 Beach	18.2 Fishing
1.1 City of Rockingham	16.0 River/Creek	12.5 Recreating



73.5% were born in Australia



23.9% were born overseas



Of these, **64.0%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **4.7% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with Aboriginal Australians (16.0/100,000) 2.8 times more likely to drown than non-Aboriginal Australians (5.8/100,000).

11.8% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (64.5%)
CPR performed (77.6%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
2.7 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and older adults over 65 years
(Rate per 100,000)

20.9

Toddlers (0-4 years)

5.2

Children (5-14 years)

4.1

Young People (15-24 years)

3.9

Adults (25-64 years)

6.0

Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



44.3%
Summer months



63.2%
Weekdays
7.8% Public Holiday



40.4%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

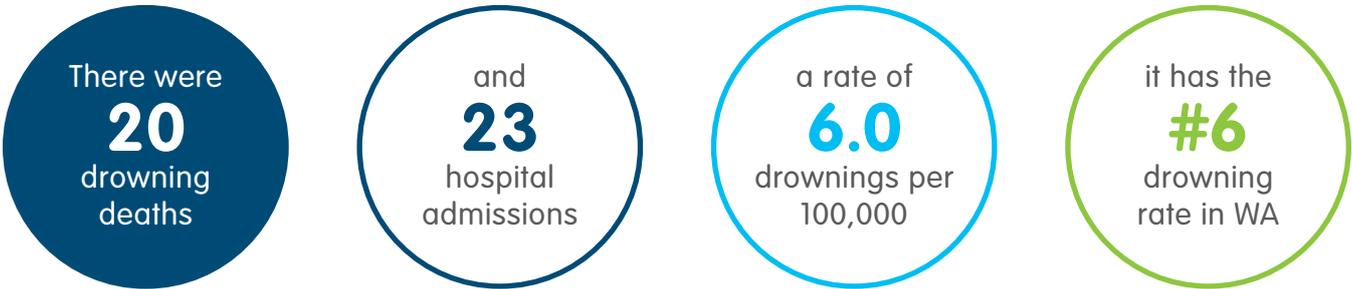
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Participating alone (40.8%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (38.2%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (29.0%)
- > Poor swimming ability (19.7%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (17.1%) with an average BAC twice the legal limit for driving (0.096%)
- > Inexperience or unfamiliarity with location (14.5%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (10.5%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (9.6%)
- > Injury including head injury (6.6%)
- > Absent or faulty pool barrier (5.3%)



Photo: Goldfields Oasis, Kalgoorlie

There were **43 drowning incidents** recorded in the Goldfields region



Males (10.6/100,000) were **3.6 times more likely to drown** than females (3.0/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
10.5 Shire of Esperance	50.0 Ocean/harbour	30.0 Fishing
5.2 Shire of Leonora	20.0 Beach	25.0 Swimming
1.0 City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder	10.0 Lake/Dam	20.0 Recreating



79.1% were born in Australia



16.3% were born overseas



Of these, **40.0%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **9.3% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates similar for Aboriginal Australians (7.1/100,000) and non-Aboriginal Australians (7.1/100,000).

20.0% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (80.0%)
CPR performed (56.3%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
3.3 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and older adults over 65 years
(Rate per 100,000)

27.4

Toddlers (0-4 years)

5.8

Children (5-14 years)

5.1

Young People (15-24 years)

5.1

Adults (25-64 years)

7.4

Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



47.5%
Summer months



55.0%
Weekdays
10.0% Public Holiday



55.0%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

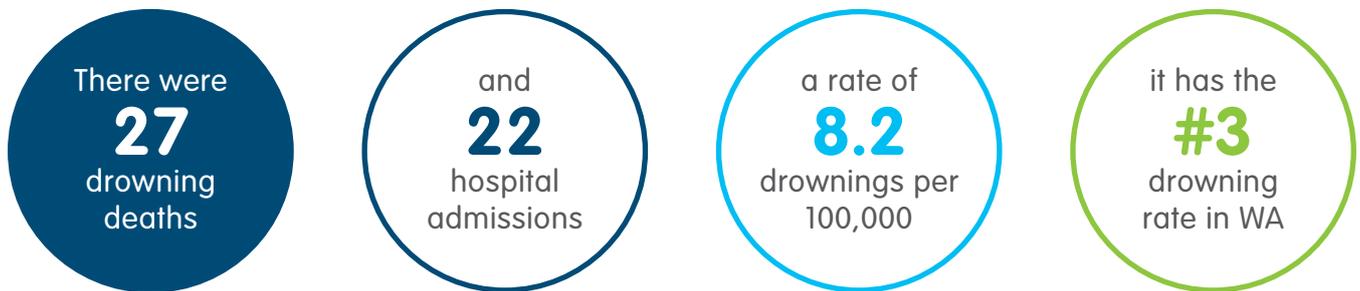
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Remote or very remote locations (85.0%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (70.0%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (40.0%) with an average BAC almost three times the legal limit for driving (0.137%)
- > Inexperience/unfamiliar with location (30.0%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (30.0%)
- > Participating alone (30.0%)
- > Poor swimming ability (25.0%)
- > Injury including head injury (10.0%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (5.0%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (5.0%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (4.7%)



Photo: Elephant Rock, Denmark

There were **49 drowning incidents** recorded in the Great Southern region



Males (11.4/100,000) were **2.3 times more likely to drown** than females (4.9/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
10.8 Shire of Ravensthorpe	59.3 Ocean/harbour	30.0 Fishing
5.7 City of Albany	18.5 Beach	10.7 Watercraft
5.0 Shire of Denmark	7.4 Lake/Dam	10.7 Non-Aquatic Transport



63.3% were born in Australia



34.7% were born overseas



Of these, **66.7%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, there were **no drowning deaths involving Aboriginal Australians** recorded in the Great Southern region between 2011/12 and 2020/21.

25.9% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is slightly higher than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (70.4%)
CPR performed (31.6%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
6.1 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst young people 15-24 years and toddlers 0-4 years
(Rate per 100,000)



Toddlers (0-4 years)



Children (5-14 years)



Young People (15-24 years)



Adults (25-64 years)



Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



33.3%
Autumn months



55.6%
Weekdays
11.1% Public Holiday



48.2%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

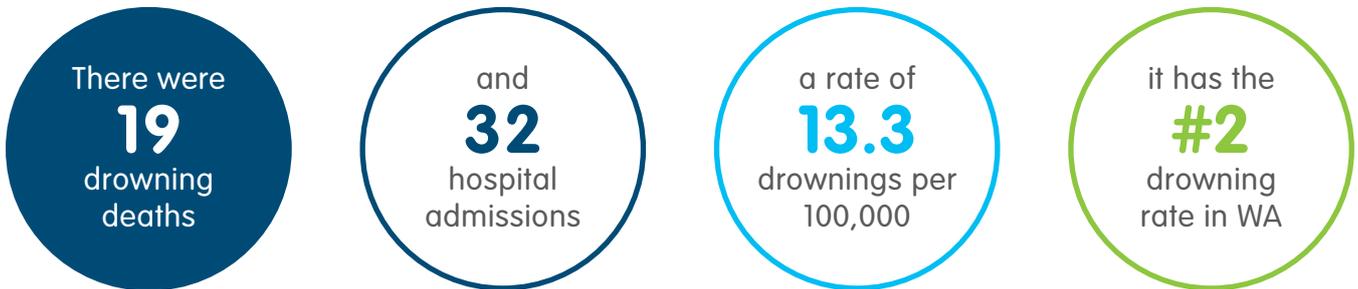
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (55.6%)
- > Inexperience/unfamiliar with location (51.9%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (29.6%)
- > Participating alone (25.9%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (24.5%)
- > Poor swimming ability (22.2%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05)(18.5%) with an average BAC three times the legal limit for drowning (0.150%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (14.8%)
- > Injury including head injury (14.8%)
- > Remote or very remote locations (7.4%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (3.9%)



Photo: Gantheaume Point, Broome

There were **51 drowning incidents** recorded in the Kimberley region



Males (17.0/100,000) were **1.8 times more likely to drown** than females (9.3/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
9.0 Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley	59.3 River/Creek	35.0 Recreating
5.3 Shire of Broome	15.8 Beach	25.0 Swimming
3.5 Shire of Derby-West Kimberley	15.8 Ocean/Harbour	10.0 Diving



78.4% were born in Australia



19.6% were born overseas



Of these, **50.0%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **33.3% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, the largest proportion of any region. However, drowning rates for Aboriginal Australians (11.0/100,000) were slightly lower than that of non-Aboriginal Australians (14.9/100,000).

10.5% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (63.2%)
CPR performed (66.7%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
1.0 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and adults 25-64 years

(Rate per 100,000)

32.3

Toddlers (0-4 years)

8.2

Children (5-14 years)

9.8

Young People (15-24 years)

13.0

Adults (25-64 years)

9.0

Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



34.0%
Summer months



52.6%
Weekdays



31.6%
Mornings
6AM-12PM

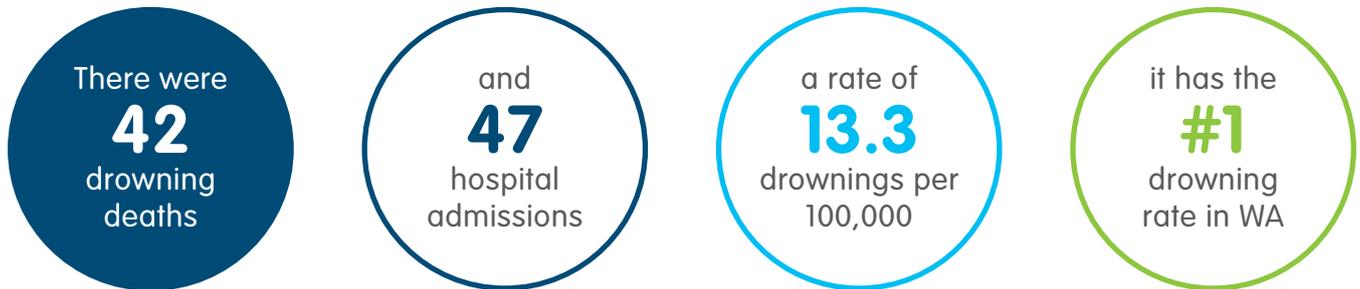
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Remote or very remote locations (100.0%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (68.4%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (52.6%) with an average BAC almost three times the legal limit for driving (0.137%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (42.1%)
- > Participating alone (36.8%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (26.3%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (10.5%)
- > Poor swimming ability (10.5%)
- > Injury including head injury (5.0%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (2.0%)



Photo: Quobba Station, Carnarvon

There were **89 drowning incidents** recorded in the Midwest region



Males (19.1/100,000) were **2.7 times more likely to drown** than females (7.1/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
31.9 Shire of Shark Bay	52.4 Ocean/Harbour	26.9 Fishing
31.7 Shire of Carnarvon	35.7 Beach	25.0 Diving
29.2 Shire of Exmouth	4.8 River/Creek	25.0 Boating



73.0% were born in Australia



24.7% were born overseas



Of these, **69.2%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **11.2% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates for Aboriginal (12.3/100,000) the slightly lower than non-Aboriginal Australians (13.5/100,000).

23.8% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is higher than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (57.1%)
CPR performed (79.2%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
2.1 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and adults aged 65 years and over

(Rate per 100,000)

29.0

Toddlers (0-4 years)

3.3

Children (5-14 years)

11.7

Young People (15-24 years)

13.3

Adults (25-64 years)

17.9

Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



31.6%
Summer months



64.3%
Weekdays
11.9% Public Holiday



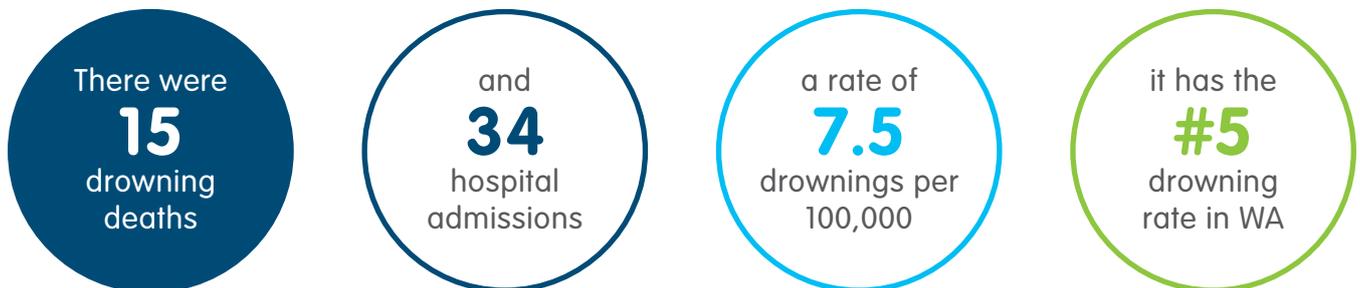
47.6%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

Key risk factors for drowning

- > Remote or very remote locations (83.3%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (54.8%)
- > Inexperience/unfamiliar with location (50.0%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (40.5%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (31.0%)
- > Participating alone (23.8%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (20.2%)
- > Poor swimming ability (14.3%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (9.5%) with an average BAC twice the legal limit for driving (0.139%)
- > Injury including head injury (7.1%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (2.4%)

Photo: Dampier Archipelago, Karratha

There were **49 drowning incidents** recorded in the Pilbara region



Males (8.7/100,000) were **1.5 times more likely to drown** than females (5.7/100,000)

71.4% of those who drowned in Pilbara were male



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)



Top 3 locations (%)



Top 3 activities (%)





85.7% were born in Australia



12.2% were born overseas



Of these, **50.09%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **22.4% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates for Aboriginal (13.1/100,000) 1.9 times greater than non-Aboriginal Australians (6.7/100,000).

13.3% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is lower than the overall state average (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (66.7%)
CPR performed (73.3%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
1.0 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and young people 15-24 years
(Rate per 100,000)

42.6

Toddlers (0-4 years)

3.7

Children (5-14 years)

10.0

Young People (15-24 years)

4.0

Adults (25-64 years)

0.0

Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



38.8%
Summer months



53.3%
Weekdays
13.3% Public Holiday



40.0%
Early Morning
12AM - 6AM

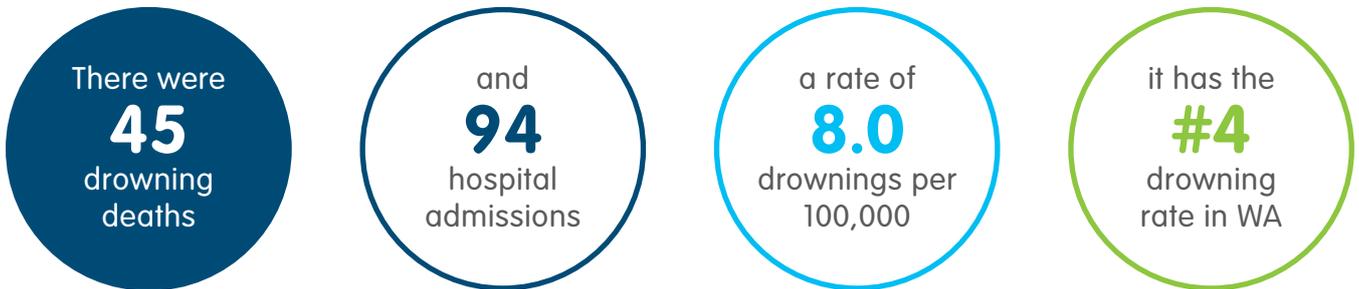
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Remote or very remote locations (100.0%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (60.0%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (46.7%) with an average BAC of 0.043
- > Injury including head injury (26.7%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (20.0%)
- > Participating alone (20.0%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (14.3%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (13.3%)
- > Inexperience/unfamiliar with location (13.3%)
- > Poor swimming ability (6.7%)



Photo: Wyadup Rocks, Injidup

There were **139 drowning incidents** recorded in the South West region

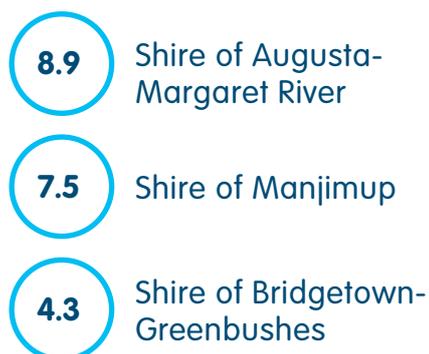


Males (12.9/100,000) were **3.2 times more likely to drown** than females (4.1/100,000)

77% of those who drowned in South West were male



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)



Top 3 locations (%)



Top 3 activities (%)





77.7% were born in Australia



22.3% were born overseas



Of these, **76.5%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **2.3% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates for Aboriginal Australians (10.2/100,000) 1.3 times higher than non-Aboriginal Australians (7.9/100,000).

22.2% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is slightly lower than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (66.7%)
CPR performed (73.3%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
3.1 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and adults aged 25-64 years
(Rate per 100,000)



Toddlers (0-4 years)



Children (5-14 years)



Young People (15-24 years)



Adults (25-64 years)



Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



46.0%
Summer months



53.3%
Weekdays
15.6% Public Holiday



48.9%
Afternoons
12PM - 6PM

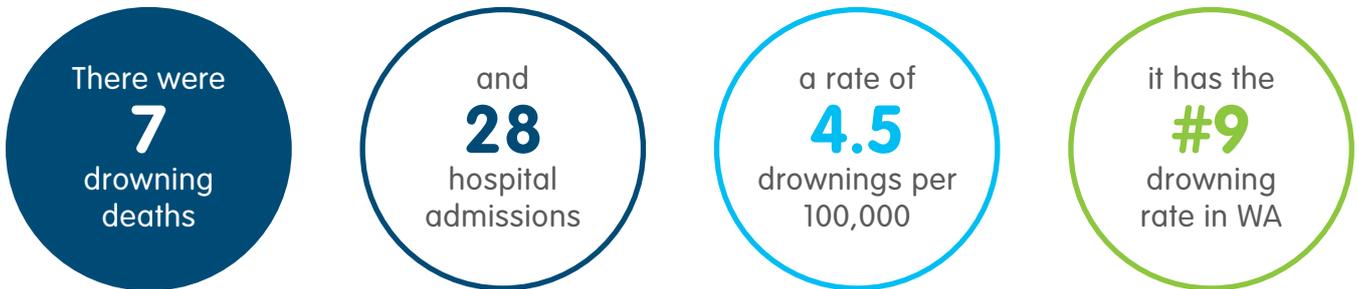
Key risk factors for drowning

- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (48.9%)
- > Inexperience/unfamiliar with location (35.6%)
- > Participating alone (31.1%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (28.9%)
- > Injury including head injury (22.2%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (20.0%)
- > Consumption of alcohol (BAC >0.05) (17.8%) with an average BAC more than twice the legal limit for driving (0.118%)
- > Poor swimming ability (17.8%)
- > Remote or very remote locations (6.7%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (5.8%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (4.4%)



Photo: Avon River, Northam

There were **35 drowning incidents** recorded in the Wheatbelt region



Males (5.6/100,000) were **1.9 times more likely to drown** than females (3.1/100,000)



Top 3 local areas (per 100,000)	Top 3 locations (%)	Top 3 activities (%)
19.2 Shire of Wyalkatchem	28.6 Ocean/Harbour	22.2 Boating
6.1 Shire of Dandaragan	28.6 Beach	22.2 Fishing
5.7 Shire of Gingin	28.6 River/Creek	22.2 Bathing



71.4% were born in Australia



22.9% were born overseas



Of these, **100.0%** were from a non-English speaking country

Overall, **2.9% of people who drowned were Aboriginal**, with drowning rates for Aboriginal Australians (3.0/100,000) slightly lower than non-Aboriginal Australians (5.2/100,000).

28.6% of fatal drowning involved a **tourist and/or visitor** to the area, which is higher than overall state trends (23.1%).

Rescue attempted (57.1%)
CPR performed (75.0%)

Av. length of hospital stay (non-fatal)
4.4 days



Drowning risk was greatest amongst toddlers 0-4 years and young people 15-24 years
(Rate per 100,000)



Toddlers (0-4 years)



Children (5-14 years)



Young People (15-24 years)



Adults (25-64 years)



Older Adults (65+ years)

High-risk times for drowning



40.0%
Autumn months



57.1%
Weekdays
57.1% Public Holiday



42.9%
Mornings
6AM - 12PM

Key risk factors for drowning

- > Poor swimming ability (42.9%)
- > Environmental factors such as poor weather/water conditions (42.9%)
- > Presence of a pre-existing medical condition (28.6%)
- > Remote or very remote locations (28.6%)
- > Resided in a low socio-economic area (28.6%)
- > Lack of supervision by a responsible adult (28.6%)
- > Participating alone (14.3%)
- > Inexperience or unfamiliarity with location (14.3%)
- > Lack of safety equipment, particularly use of lifejackets (8.6%)



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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