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DROWNING PREVENTION IN CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

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Background Drowning risk is reported to be increased in people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, due to a limited awareness of hazards and risks, as well as a lack of aquatic participation and skills. However, there is limited information detailing these potential contributing factors in diverse communities.

Aims This study aimed to determine: the level of aquatic participation, self-reported aquatic skills, and behaviours in people from different cultural backgrounds.

Methods A survey was developed to assess participation, skill levels and behaviours among diverse community groups in Victoria, Australia. Demographic data were also collected. The study consisted of: A general community survey conducted among 601 residents of Victoria. Respondents were selected by a random sample process with interviews conducted by telephone. Telephone surveys with an additional 506 members of the Italian, Sudanese, Vietnamese, Chinese and Indian communities collectively were conducted. Focus group sessions with these communities further explored issues or trends emerging from the telephone surveys. All respondents were aged 18 years and over.

Results 63% of CALD groups had not been swimming in the past year compared to 33% of the general community. Only 23% CALD had formal swimming lessons compared to 71% general community; 37% CALD said they could not swim compared to 5% general community. CALD groups were less likely to consume alcohol and participate in aquatic activities.

Significance CALD groups had reduced participation and swimming ability but reported certain safer behaviours around water. This evidence will assist development of culturally appropriate programs and water safety messages for drowning prevention.