2024 – 25
Life Saving Victoria

Drowning report

Life Saving Victoria

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- Sport & Recreation Risk Management Services
- Surf Life Saving Australia
- Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Life Saving Victoria respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land and waterways in which we swim, explore, play, meet and live.

We wish to specifically acknowledge the Bunurong people of the South Eastern Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the Lands on which this report was compiled.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the stories, culture, and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of all communities who also work and live on these Lands.

Acknowledgement of Data Sources

Information presented in this report are from the Life Saving Victoria Drowning Databases, which rely on data collated from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS), the Coroner's Prevention Unit at the Coroner's Court of Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU), and year-round media monitoring. Information contained within the NCIS is made available by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Contents

Glossary

10-year average	Unless otherwise specified, the 10-year, or decade, average is the period between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2024.
Aquatic industry	The aquatic industry comprises council-owned aquatic facilities, learn to swim centres, and early childhood care; and secondary, tertiary and higher education venue swimming pools, as well as associated trades and services.
Coastal waterways	Includes beaches, oceans, bays, harbours, inlets and rocky outcrops.
Disaster and/ or extreme weather	Includes floods, heatwaves and other disaster events.
Drowning	"The process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid"[1]. Outcomes can be fatal, or non-fatal with potential for varied resulting morbidities.
Drowning rate	The frequency of drowning per 100,000 population, determined by most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population data[2].
Fishing	Unless otherwise stated, includes all methods of fishing, such as snorkelling or diving (e.g., for abalone), rock fishing, still water fishing and fishing from a boat.
High-risk populations	Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from multicultural backgrounds, international tourists, and international students. Statistics are primarily determined from country of birth data.
Inland waterways	Includes rivers, lakes, public dams, creeks and streams.
Multicultural communities	We refer to 'multicultural communities' rather than 'culturally and linguistically diverse' or 'non-English speaking' in this report because it is broadly inclusive, but we recognise this is not a perfect choice[3]. The diversity of Victoria cannot be condensed into one 'multicultural group' and there is diversity within diversity which requires nuance and careful attention when it comes to drowning prevention efforts.
Private pool	An in- or above-ground pool within a residential property and other restricted access setting.
Public pool	Public pools include those which are council-owned, learn to swim, early childhood care, tertiary education, and higher education venue pools. Pools are also considered public where swimming lessons are conducted for the duration of the lesson/s and any pool offering access on a pay-per-usage basis for the duration of the pay-per-usage access[4].

[1] van Beeck, E., & Branche, C. (2014). Definition of drowning: A progress report. In J. J. L. M. Bierens (Ed.), Drowning Prevention, rescue, treatment (2nd ed., pp. 85 – 89). Springer.

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025). Australian National, state and territory population statistics, Mar 2025. Cat. No. 31010, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

[3] State of Victoria, Australia – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. (2023). Better practice guide for multicultural communications. Retrieved from **www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/Better-practice-guide-for-multicultural-communications.pdf**

[4] Department of Health. (2020). Public aquatic facilities key compliance requirements. Victorian Government. Retrieved from **www.health.vic.gov.au/water/public-aquatic-facilities-key-compliance-requirements**

Introducing the 2024 – 25 Life Saving Victoria **Drowning Report**

Catherine Greaves
CEO, Life Saving Victoria

Drowning can happen to anyone, but in 2025, no one should be drowning in Victoria.

The reality, though, is demonstrated by Life Saving Victoria's Drowning Report for 2024 – 25, which reports that 52 people lost their lives to drowning and a further 123 people experienced a non-fatal drowning this year. Each drowning is a tragedy, and we extend our heartfelt condolences to all those impacted.

It's particularly concerning to see increasing numbers of incidents across many ages, backgrounds, and seasons. Summer consistently records the highest number of incidents for any season, with 23 fatalities last summer. But we've also seen a startling increase in drownings over autumn which rose to 14 fatalities this year: the highest in 12 years, and 49 per cent higher than the past decade.

This points to hotter and longer summer weather stretching into traditionally cooler months. More people are visiting our beaches and waterways more of the time, and the risks associated with this must be managed with resources that are already stretched.

Drowning rates among young people, older adults and multicultural communities in 2024 – 25 have been especially concerning.

Fatalities among 15 to 24-year olds were 27 per cent above the 10-year average, with a total of seven deaths. And, just as tragically, we recorded a further five drownings among children aged 0 to 14, equalling the previous year.

People aged 65 and older had the highest drowning rate of any age group, with 1.03 deaths per 100,000 people, compared to 0.75 deaths per 100,000 for the overall population.

People from multicultural backgrounds also continue to be over-represented in Victoria's drowning statistics. Twelve people who lost their lives were known to be from multicultural communities; yet this figure is likely underestimated due to gaps in current data.

Many factors contribute to these drowning numbers, including a lack of water safety skills and knowledge, risks of swimming alone or outside lifeguard patrolled areas, pre-existing medical conditions, language and cultural differences, and difficulty accessing safe aquatic environments.

Such challenges require a whole-of-community effort to drive down these drowning statistics. This includes targeted solutions to reach high-risk populations and communities, so everyone can enjoy the water safely and gain the full benefits of participating in aquatic activities.

Every life lost to drowning is an unbearable tragedy, and not a single drowning should ever be considered acceptable. It's critical that we expand our efforts to reach every part of Victoria, ensuring no community is left behind in the vital conversation and action for water safety. We owe it to every person and every family to keep this message front-of-mind, all year round.

I thank and commend everyone within Life Saving Victoria, the lifesaving movement, the aquatic industry and all our partners and stakeholders for your efforts to keep our community safe. Those who teach swimming and water safety skills, or operate facilities that provide safe and accessible aquatic environments, patrol our waterways, and keep our lifesaving clubs running, all play a vital role in water safety.

Together, we will continue to forge ahead in our purpose to save lives and empower communities to safely enjoy water.

Overview

	10-year average	2024 — 25	Difference 2024 — 25 to 10-year average
OVERVIEW	Number (rate)	Number (rate)	%
Fatal drowning	48 (0.73)	52 (0.75)	+9% (+2%)
Fatal drowning – males	36 (1.12)	38 (1.11)	+5% (-2%)
Fatal drowning – females	12 (0.35)	14 (0.40)	+21% (+13%)
Non-fatal drowning	90 (1.37)	123 (1.77)	+37% (+29%)

PEOPLE AND POPULATIONS	Rate	Rate	%
0 – 4 years	0.86	0.78	-10%
5 – 14 years	0.21	0.24	+13%
15 – 24 years	0.66	0.79	+21%
25 – 44 years	0.68	0.62	-8%
45 – 64 years	0.74	0.87	+17%
65+ years	1.24	1.03	-17%
High-risk populations[5]	1.01	0.58	-43%

TREND AND ACTION STATUS INDICATOR

% Urgent action required % Work needed % On track

	10-year average	2024 — 25	Difference 2024 — 25 to 10-year average
PLACES	**Number**	**Number**	**%**
Inland waterways	16	15	-6%
Coastal waterways	19	20	+8%
Water bodies around the home	12	13	+11%
Aquatic industry[6]	1	0	-100%

ACTIVITIES AND RISK FACTORS	Number	Number	%
Alcohol and drug-related[7]	13	8	-36%
Boating, watercraft, fishing and diving/snorkelling	10	11	+6%
Disaster and/or extreme weather	2	*Emerging issue*	

0 drowning deaths in public pools this year, the first time since 2019 – 2020.

[5] Statistics are primarily determined from country of birth data, yet at time of reporting country of birth was unknown for 75% of cases in 2024 – 25.

[6] Figures include drowning deaths at public swimming pools.

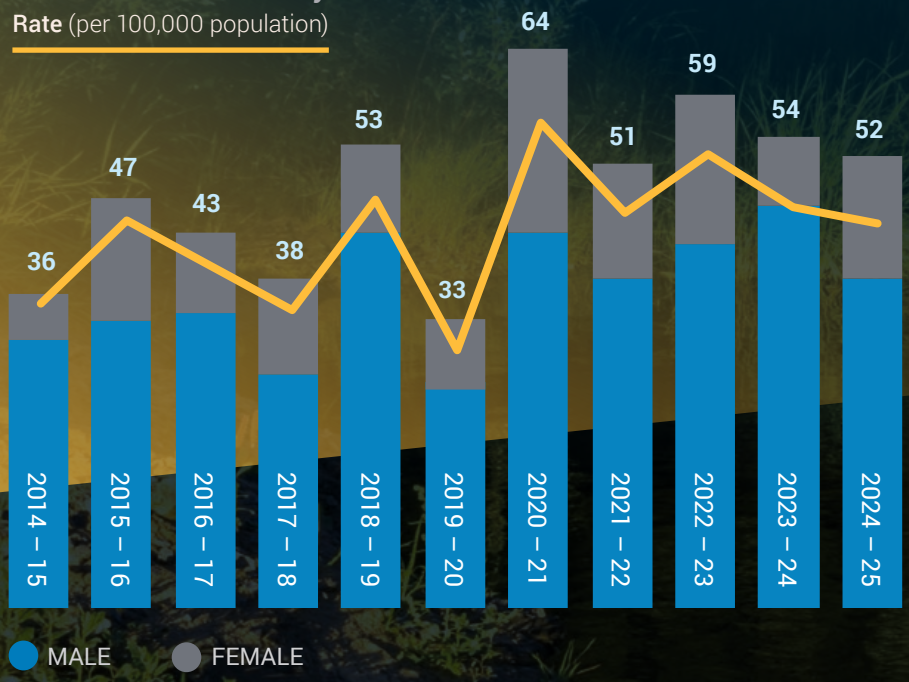
[7] Toxicology reports to confirm alcohol and/ or drug involvement are available only once a case is closed; therefore, numbers may be subject to change.

Fatal drowning 2024 – 25

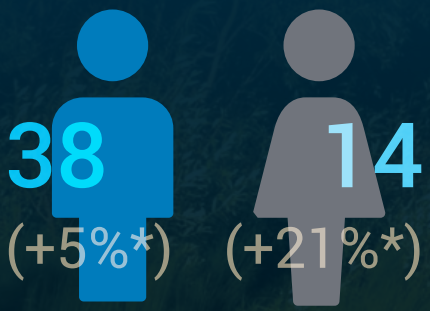
This year, 52 people fatally drowned in Victorian waterways, a 9% increase on the decade average. Males aged 25 – 64 continue to be overrepresented and made up the majority of incidents in 2024 – 25. However, increases were noted among females, and trends continued from previous years with higher-than-average fatalities among young people aged 15 – 24. Summer again recorded the most incidents, but 14 fatal drownings occurred in autumn, the most in 12 years: indicative of the warmer weather extending into April 2025.

Number of fatalities/year

Rate (per 100,000 population)



52
FATAL DROWNINGS



0.75
rate per 100, 000

$296.4M
direct cost to society of lives lost[8]

Fatal drowning by location

Coastal 38%
Inland 29%
Home 25%
Other/unknown 8%

Fatal drowning by season

Spring 17%
Summer 44%
Autumn 27%
Winter 12%

* Compared to the 10-year average

[8] Office of Impact Analysis. (2024). Value of statistical life. Australian Government. Retrieved from *oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-assessing-impacts/value-statistical-life*

People and populations

40%
were males **aged 25 – 64**

27%
increase among **15 – 24 year olds***

65+ year-olds
highest drowning rate of all age groups 1.03

37%
fatalities 2015 – 2025 involved **people from multicultural backgrounds**

25%
fatalities 2015 – 2025 had **pre-existing medical conditions**

Places

42%
drowned within their **home postcode**

1.5x
regional residents more likely to drown than metropolitan residents

7
fatal drownings in **home swimming pools and retirement village pools**

0
fatalities 2024 – 25 in **public swimming pools**

Activities and risk factors

27%
swimming or wading in water

14
drownings deaths during **autumn, the most in 12 years**

27%
fatal drownings 2015 – 2025 among people **aged 15+ recorded alcohol and/or other drugs**

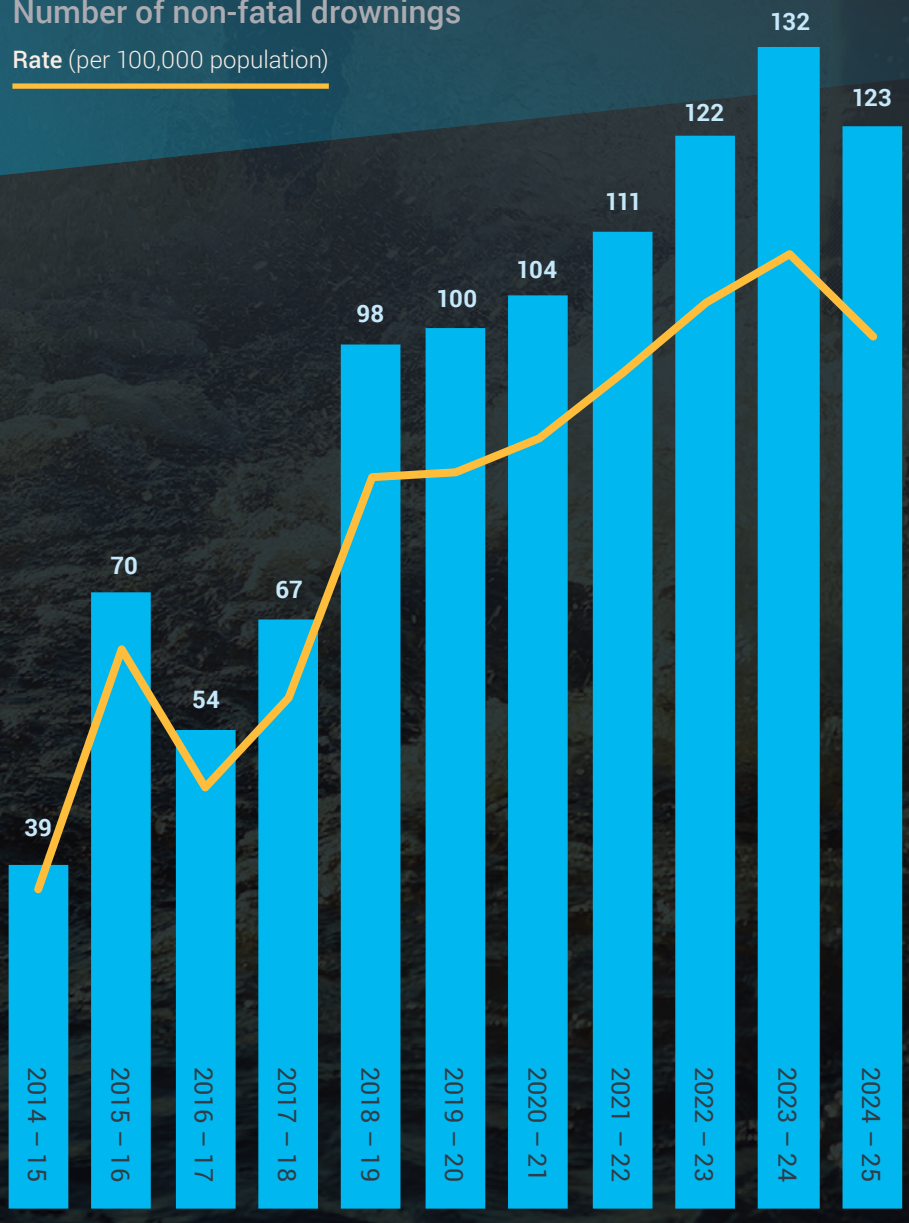
48%
rock fishing and boating fatalities 2015 – 2025 involved lifejackets that were either not worn, unsuitable, or worn incorrectly

Non-fatal drowning 2024 – 25

This year, 123 people experienced a non-fatal drowning incident: 37% higher than the decade average. The majority of these incidents consistently involve children and young people aged 0 – 14 years, with a leading contributing factor being a lack of adult supervision. Incidents in coastal waterways were almost twice the decade average, with swimming or wading again the most common activity leading up to the incident. Incidents involving attempted rescues were more than three times higher than the decade average.

Number of non-fatal drownings

Rate (per 100,000 population)



Ambulance Attendance

123
non-fatal drownings

+37%*

1.77
rate

+29%*

* Compared to the **10-year average**

People and populations

81 MALE

38 FEMALE

REMAINDER OTHER/ UNKNOWN

39% 0 – 14 years

21% 15 – 24 years

0 – 4 year-olds recorded the **highest non-fatal drowning rate of all age groups: 6.46**

Places

53% **coastal waterways**

19% **around the home**

15% **public pools**

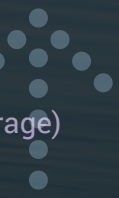
10% **inland waterways**

4% **unknown/other**

Activities and risk factors

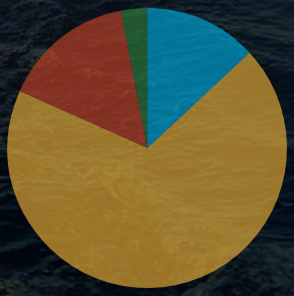
61% **swimming or wading** in water

11% incidents resulted from **attempting a rescue** (almost 3X 10-year average)



7% incidents resulted from **general leisure activities**

Non-fatal drowning by season



Spring 13%

Summer 68%

Autumn 15%

Winter 3%

Hospital admissions
2014 – 15 to 2023 – 24

1,143
hospital admissions for non-fatal drowning over the previous decade.

114
average per year

1.76
rate

People and populations

66% males: **756**

0 – 4 year-olds
recorded the **highest hospitalisation rate: 6.52**

65+ year-olds
recorded the **lowest hospitalisation rate: 0.99**

Places

60%
other locations

18%
water bodies around the home

Activities and risk factors

37%
incidents resulted from **sporting activities**

16%
swimming

13%
craft riding

Emergency department presentations
2014 – 15 to 2023 – 24

1,236
emergency department (ED) presentations for non-fatal drowning over the previous decade.

123
average per year

1.90
rate

People and populations

62% males: **768**

0 – 4 year-olds
recorded the **highest presentation rate: 13.59**

65+ year-olds
recorded the **lowest presentation rate: 0.41**

Places

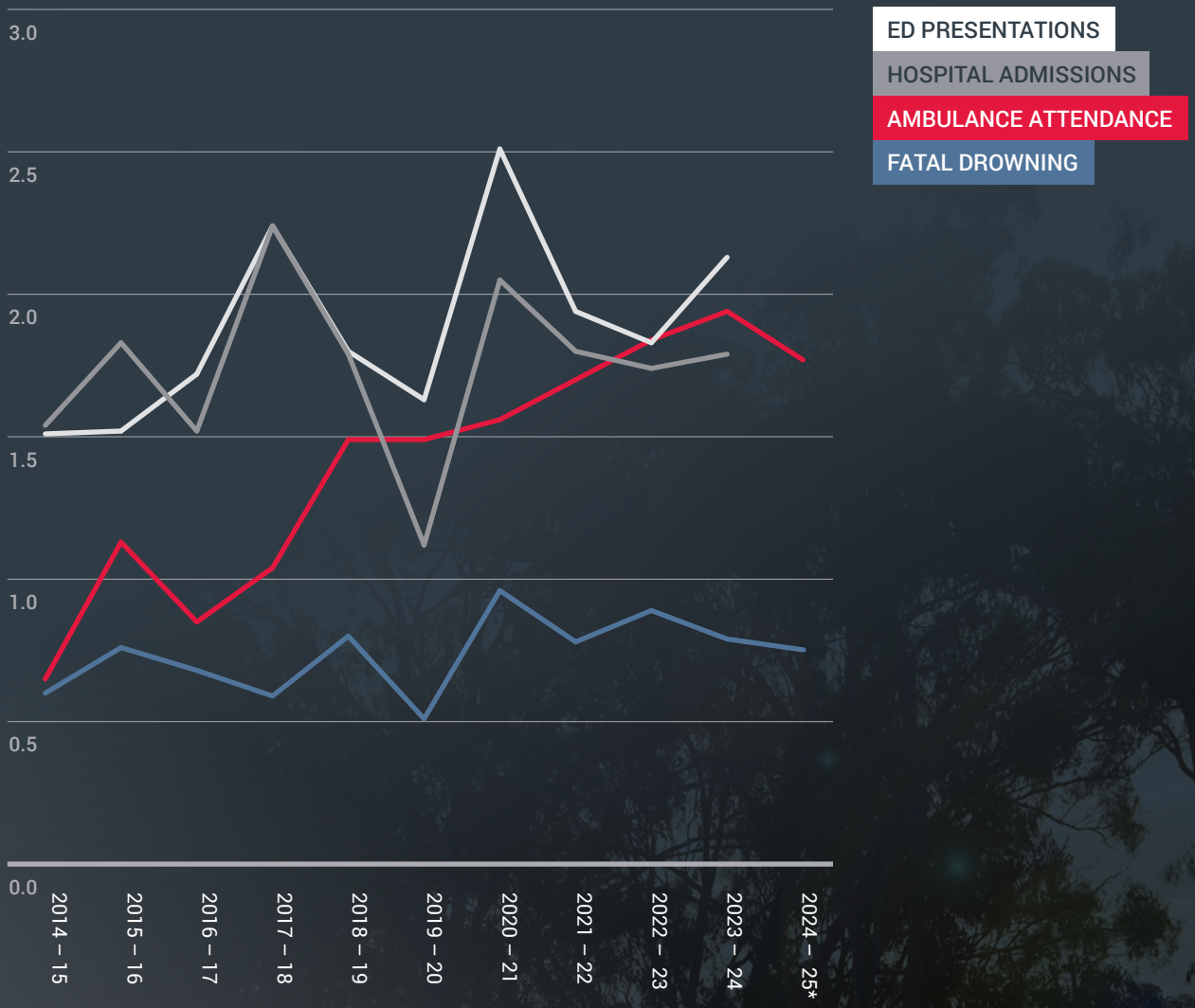
25%
swimming pool

32%
around the home

There is likely an overlap of data from ambulance attendance, hospital admissions and ED presentations.

Note. The Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU) advises that non-fatal drowning is likely underestimated in the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD) due to the coding system for emergency department presentations

All drowning rate per 100,000 persons
in Victoria, 2014 – 15 to 2024 – 25



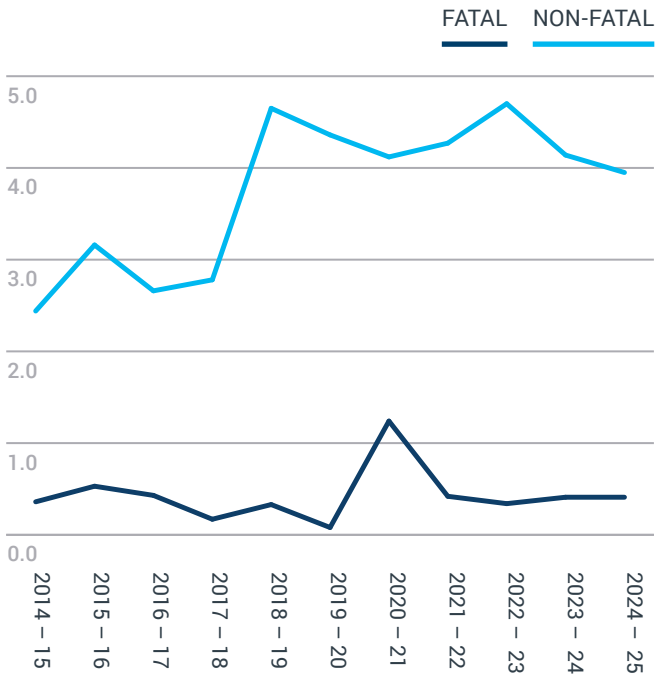
* Hospital admission and ED presentation data not available

People and populations

People aged 0 – 14 years

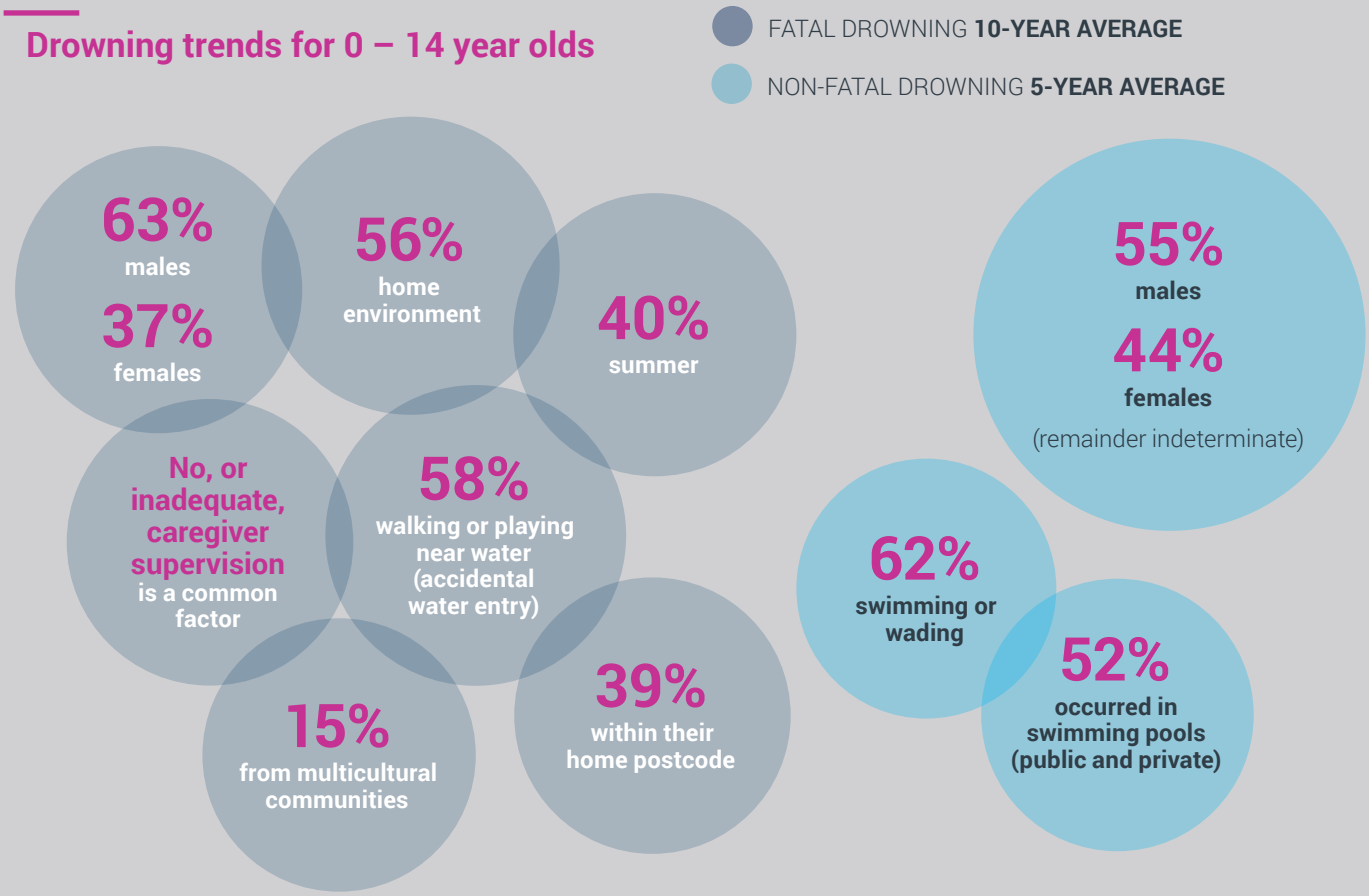
- Five fatal drownings among 0 – 14-year-olds: a rate of **0.41** and a 4% reduction on the 10-year average.
- Forty-eight 0 – 14-year-olds experienced a non-fatal drowning requiring ambulance attendance (25 incidents among 0 – 4-year-olds; 23 incidents among 5 – 14-year-olds), a combined rate of **3.95** and 6% increase on the 10-year average rate.
- 0 – 4-year-olds recorded a non-fatal drowning rate of **6.46**, the highest recorded among all age groups.

Drowning rate among 0 – 14 year olds, 2014 to 2025



For every one fatal drowning among 0 –14 year olds, eight children experience a non-fatal drowning.

Drowning trends for 0 – 14 year olds

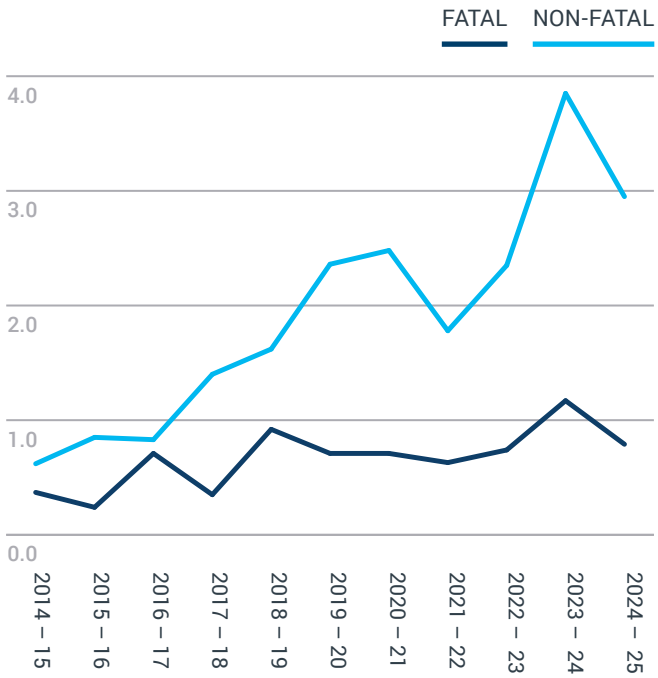


People and populations

People aged 15 – 24 years

- Seven people aged 15 – 24 years fatally drowned: a rate of **0.79** and a 21% increase on the 10-year average – **the highest increase of any age group this year.**
- Twenty-six 15 – 24 year-olds experienced a non-fatal drowning requiring ambulance attendance: a rate of **2.95** and 62% higher than the 10-year average rate.

Drowning rate among 15 – 24 year olds, 2014 to 2025



For every one fatal drowning among 15 – 24 year olds, three people experience a non-fatal drowning.

Drowning trends for 15 – 24 year olds

FATAL DROWNING **10-YEAR AVERAGE**

NON-FATAL DROWNING **5-YEAR AVERAGE**

75% males
25% females

53% swimming or wading

42% inland waterways
41% coastal waterways

44% from multicultural communities (commonly India and China)

42% summer

15% within home postcode

67% males
30% females
(remainder indeterminate)

66% swimming or wading

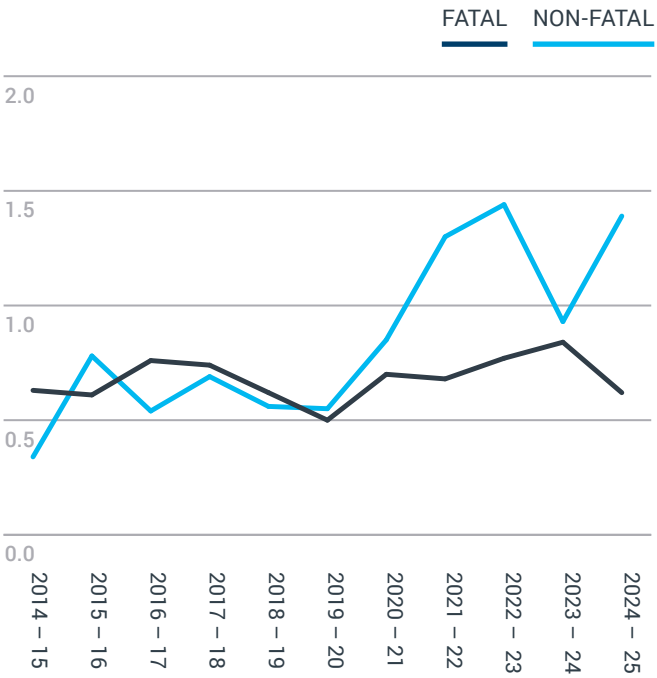
73% occurred in coastal environments

People and populations

People aged 25 – 44 years

- Thirteen people aged 25 – 44 years fatally drowned: a rate of **0.62** and an 8% reduction on the 10-year average.
- Twenty-nine 25 – 44 year-olds experienced a non-fatal drowning requiring ambulance attendance: a rate of **1.39** and a 74% increase on the 10-year average rate.

Drowning rate among 25 – 44 year olds, 2014 to 2025



For every one fatal drowning among 25 – 44 year olds, two people experience a non-fatal drowning.

Drowning trends for 24 – 44 year olds

FATAL DROWNING **10-YEAR AVERAGE**

NON-FATAL DROWNING **5-YEAR AVERAGE**

81% males
19% females

31% swimming or wading

49% summer

45% inland waterways
44% coastal waterways

49% from multicultural communities (commonly India)

12% within home postcode

74% males
25% females
(remainder indeterminate)

64% swimming or wading

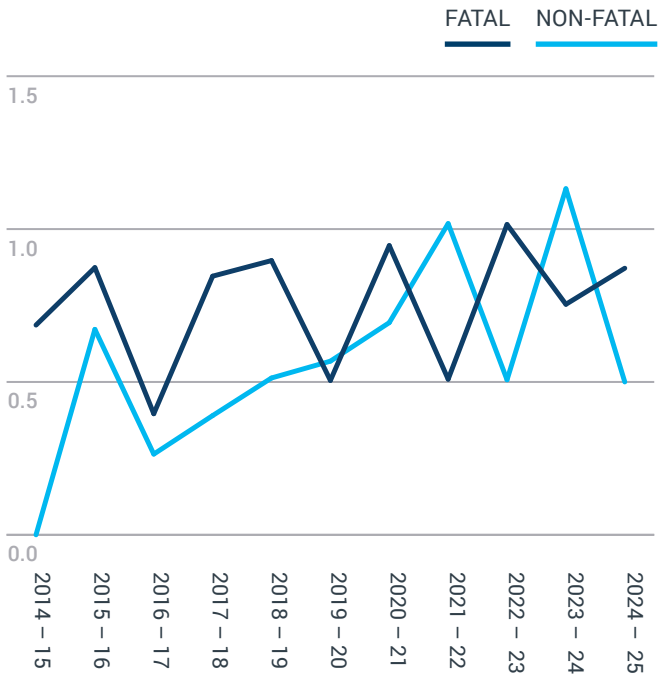
63% occurred in coastal environments

People and populations

People aged 45 – 64 years

- Fourteen people aged 45 – 64 years fatally drowned: a rate of **0.87**, 17% higher than the 10-year average rate. This age group recorded the **highest number of fatal drownings among all ages**.
- Eight 45 – 64 year olds experienced a non-fatal drowning requiring ambulance attendance: a rate of **0.50** and a 13% reduction on the 10-year average rate.

Drowning rate among 45 – 64 year olds, 2014 to 2025



For every one fatal drowning among 45 – 64 year olds, two people experience a non-fatal drowning.

Drowning trends for 45 – 64 year olds

FATAL DROWNING **10-YEAR AVERAGE**

NON-FATAL DROWNING **5-YEAR AVERAGE**

75% males
25% females

20% swimming or wading

40% summer

31% from multicultural communities (commonly from China and Vietnam)

50% coastal waterways

24% within home postcode

77% males
23% females

41% swimming or wading

62% occurred in coastal environments

People and populations

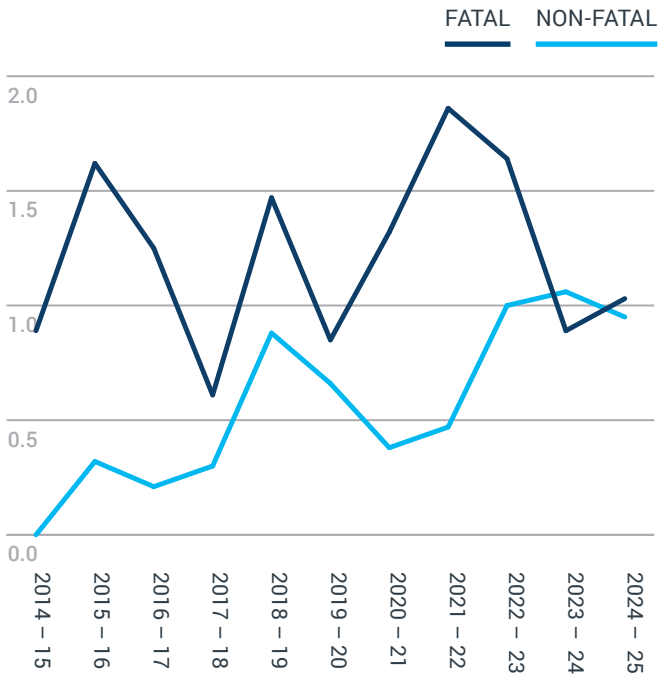
People aged 65+ years

- Twelve people aged 65 years and older fatally drowned: a rate of **1.03** – 17% lower than the 10-year average but **the highest drowning rate among all age groups.**
- Eleven 65+ year-olds experienced a non-fatal drowning requiring ambulance attendance: a rate of **0.95** and 79% higher than the 10-year average rate.

EMERGING TREND

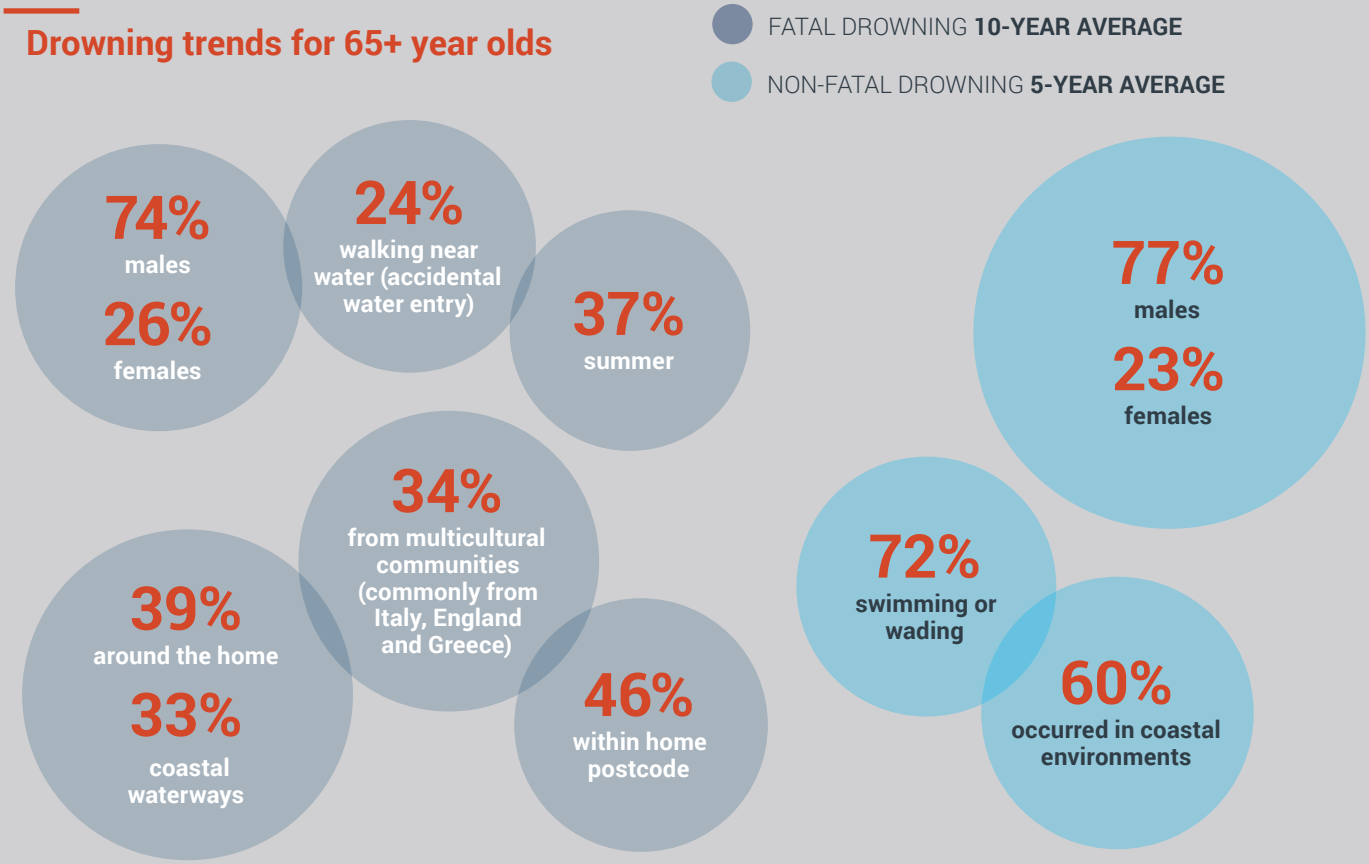
Increase in fatal drowning within retirement village swimming pools

Drowning rate among 65+ year olds, 2014 to 2025



For every one fatal drowning among 65+ year olds, one person experiences a non-fatal drowning.

Drowning trends for 65+ year olds



Fatal drowning among Victoria's high-risk populations, 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25

Victorian fatal drowning by country of birth, since 2015 – 16

Australian 41%

Overseas-born 37%

Unknown 22%

185

people from **multicultural backgrounds fatally drowned in Victoria** since 2015 – 16: 37 per cent of all drowning deaths (22% unknown at time of reporting); 12 in 2024 – 25.

58%

of all **fishing-related drowning deaths** since 2015 – 16 were known to be people of multicultural backgrounds.

Most common countries of birth outside of Australia: India, China, Vietnam, England, Italy.

People and populations

76% male

36% 25 – 44 years

25% 65+ years

46 mean age

92% lived in major cities in Victoria

20 years

mean length of time living in australia

Places

29%

beaches

19%

rivers, creeks, streams

55%

drowned in a metropolitan waterway

Activities and risk factors

34%

swimming or wading

21%

walking or recreating near water

15%

fishing (including rock fishing, fishing from a boat, snorkelling/ diving for fish)

21%

known alcohol and/or other drugs present

What are the drowning trends among multicultural communities by age group?

0 – 14
Walking/playing near water (accidental water entry) at inland waterways (rivers, creeks, lakes).

15 – 24
Swimming/wading at beaches and rivers.

25 – 44
Swimming/wading at beaches and inland waterways (rivers, creeks, lakes).

45 – 64
Swimming/wading at beaches, and general recreation at rivers.

65+
Walking near backyard pools (accidental water entry) and swimming/wading at beaches.

Places

Fatal drowning 2024 – 25

0 **in public pools – the first time since 2019 – 20.**

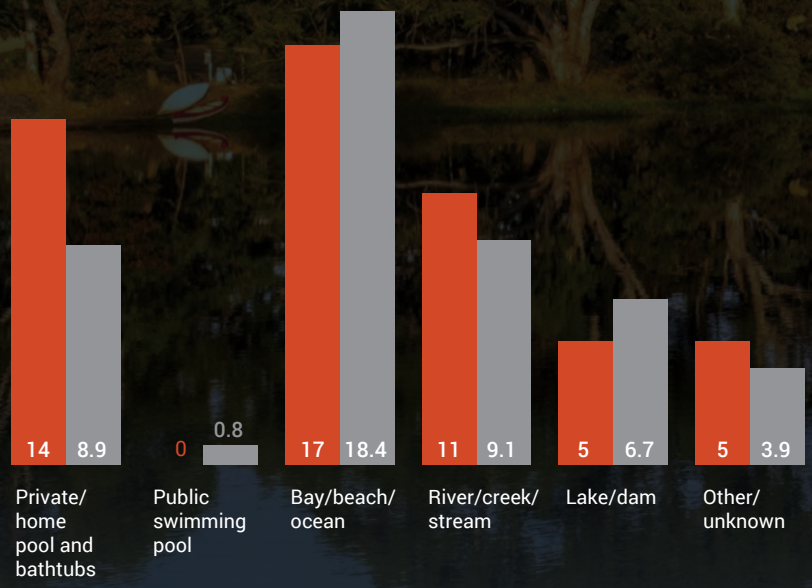
17 at bays/ beaches/ ocean environments: **8 per cent fewer** than the decade average.

11 at rivers, creeks and streams; **21 per cent more** than the decade average.

5 at rocky outcrops – **almost double** the decade average.

42% of people fatally drowned at a waterway within their residential postcode, **equal to the decade average**.

Frequency of fatal drowning by location, 2024 – 25 compared to decade average



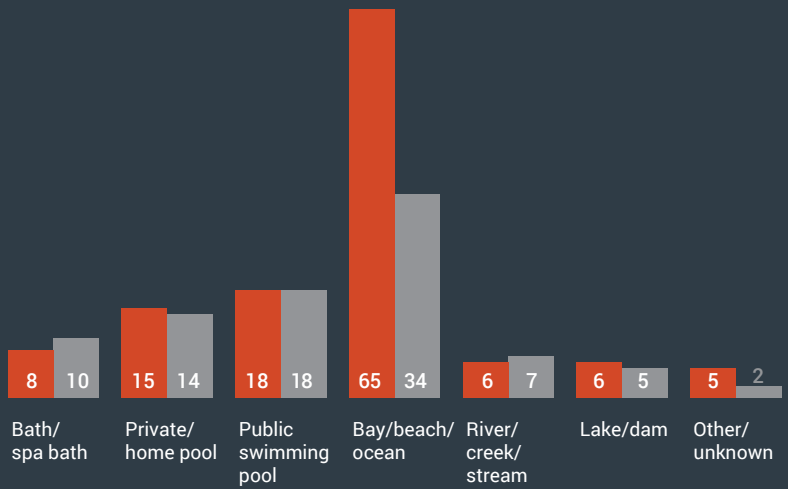
Non-fatal drowning 2024 – 25

Almost double the decade average of non-fatal drownings at coastal locations.

Slight increase in incidents in inland waterways.

Small reduction in non-fatal drowning incidents in home environments.

Frequency of non-fatal drowning by location, 2024 – 25 compared to decade average



Region

Fatal drowning 2024 – 25

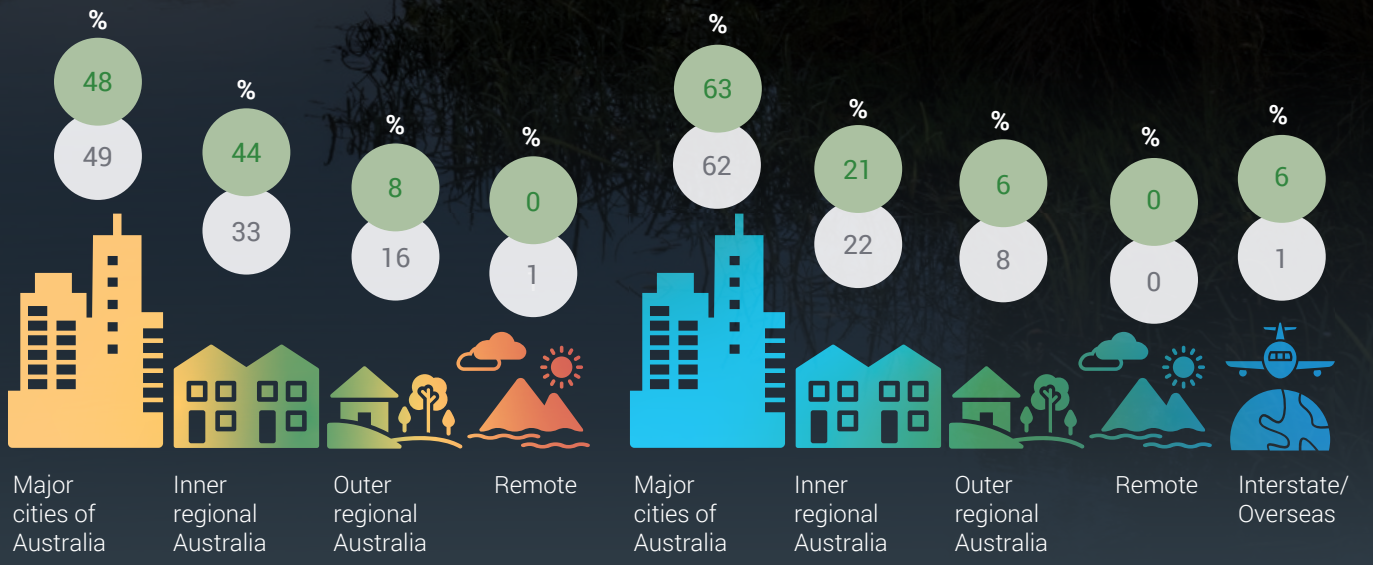
48% (25) of fatalities occurred within **metropolitan areas**, 1 more than the 10-year average.

63% of fatal incidents involved **metropolitan residents.**

1.5 TIMES **Regional residents** were 1.5 times more likely to fatally drown than metropolitan residents.

% **Percentage of fatal drowning by remoteness area of incident and residence in Victoria,** 2014 – 15 to 2024 – 25

2024 – 25
10-YEAR AVERAGE



The Murray River

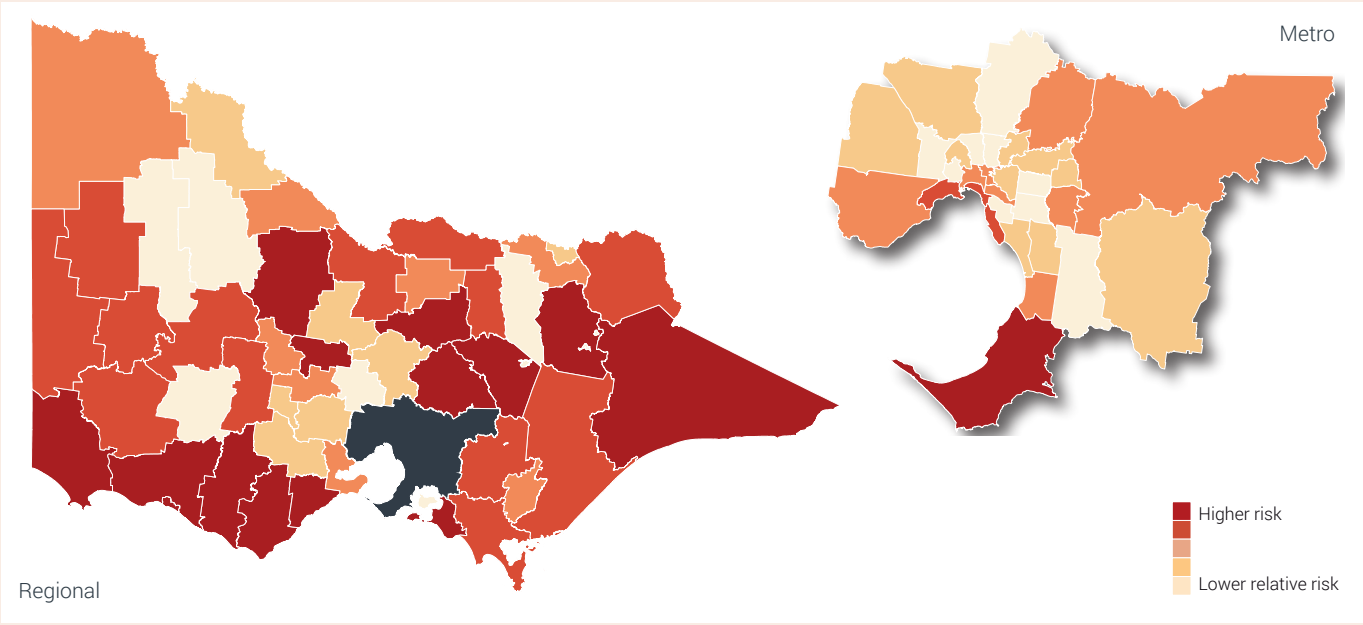
State government legislation requires drowning incidents in the Murray River to be reported within New South Wales jurisdiction, however, Victorians made up almost half (48%, 22) of the 46 Murray River drowning incidents over the previous decade (2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25). Among these 46 drownings, 93 per cent were males, the majority were aged 18 – 44 years (48%, 23), 59 per cent were affected by alcohol and 35 per cent of incidents were preceded by swimming and/or recreating in the water.

Relative fatal drowning risk by location and residence 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25

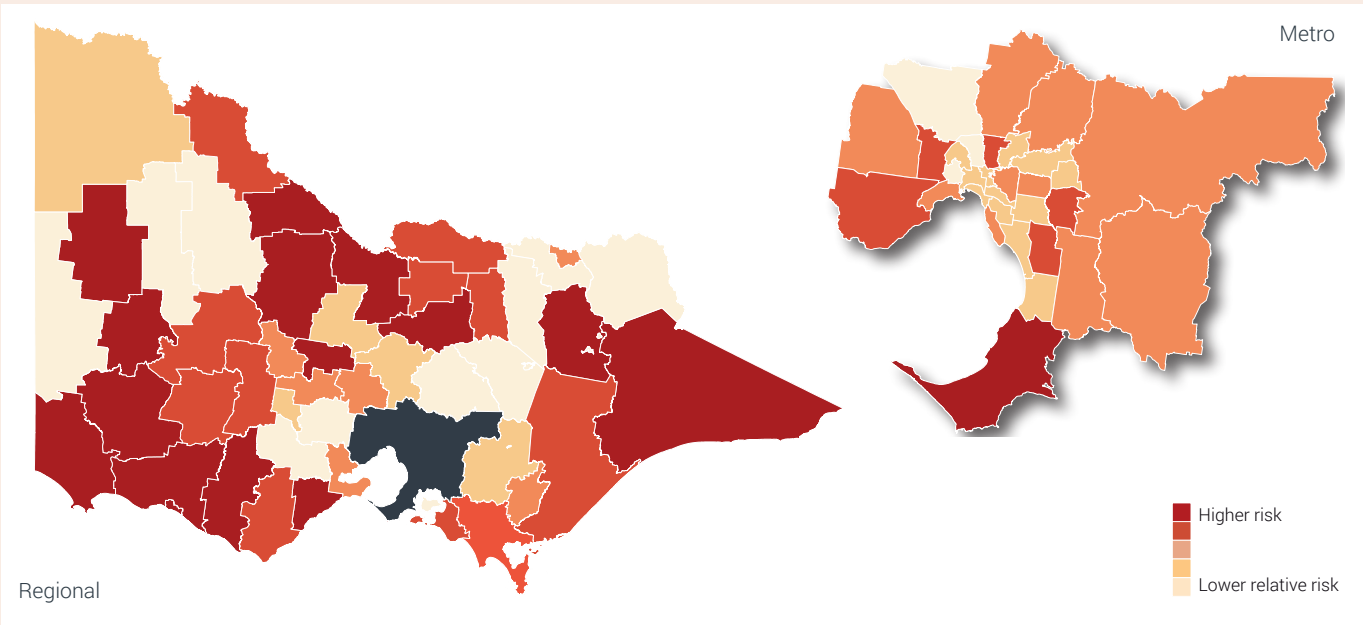
These maps show drowning risk in local government areas (LGAs) over the past decade by place of a) incident, and b) residence.

Colours range from light yellow (low risk) to dark red (high risk). They highlight relative risk levels, based on underlying population counts within each Victorian LGA.

A) Incident location relative risk, based on postcode



B) Place of residence relative risk, based on postcode

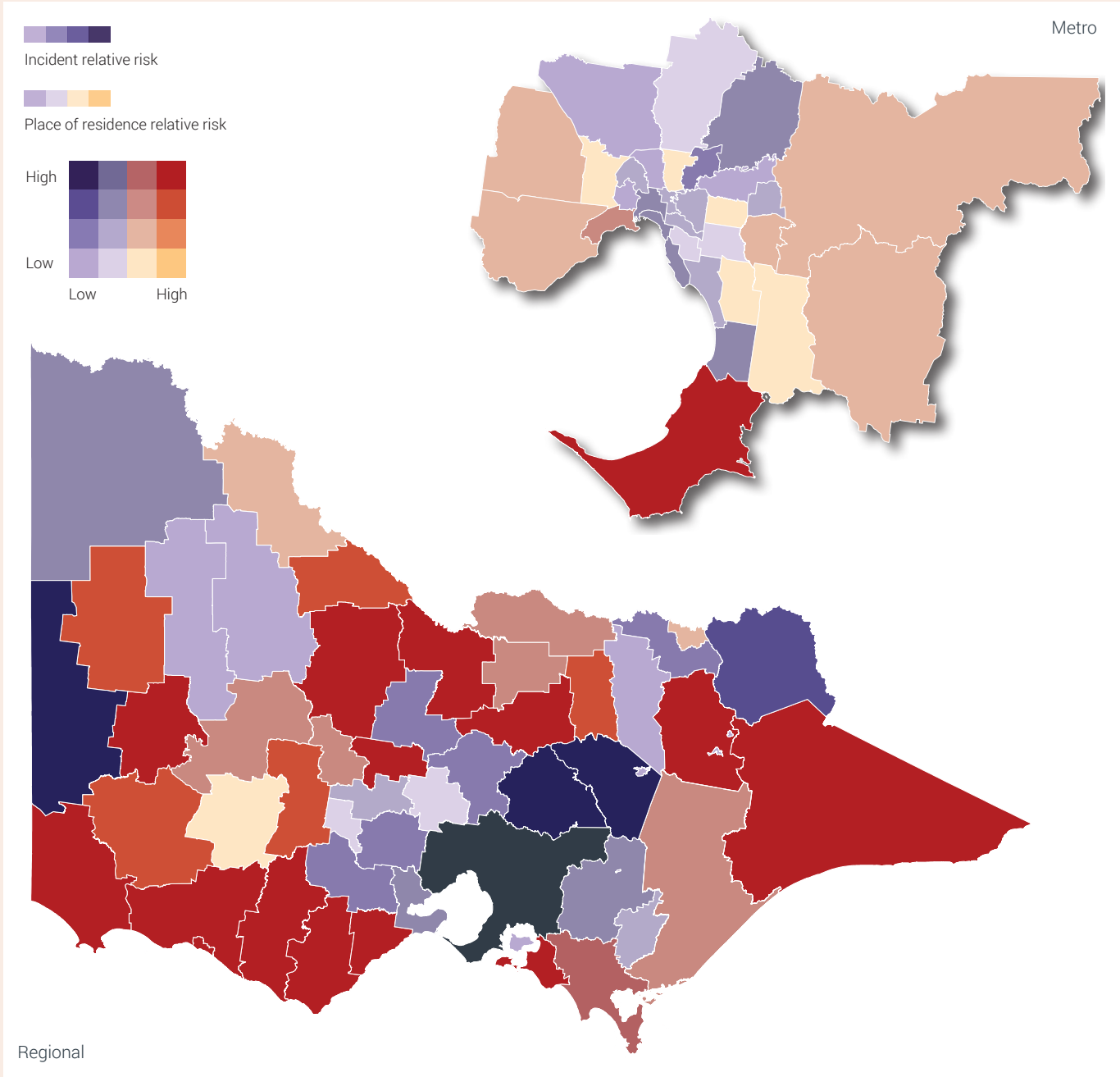


Combined relative fatal drowning risk 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25

This map provides a dual relative risk perspective by incorporating both incident location and place of residence.

The red-shaded areas indicate elevated risk for both incidents and residence. Light purple shows low risk for both. Dark purple highlights high incident risk but low residence risk. Pale orange/peach colour signifies higher residence risk but lower incident risk. This visualisation provides insights into the combined geographical relative risk of drowning across Victoria.

Combined incident and place of residence relative risk, based on postcode



Victorian local government areas: Fatal drowning summary 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25

This table summarises fatal drowning incidents since 2015 – 16 within Victorian LGAs where **five or more incidents have occurred**. Trends are not necessarily related and should be interpreted independently of one another. LGAs are listed by the number of fatal drownings in descending order, from most to least incidents recorded.

Rank	LGA	Key age group	Key waterway	Known key activity	Percentage of drownings involving LGA residents	Likelihood of a drowning (in any given year)
1	Mornington Peninsula (S)	25 – 44	Beach	Swimming	36%	99%
2	Bass Coast (S)	25 – 44	Beach	Swimming	15%	96%
3	Greater Geelong (C)	45 – 64	Beach	Swimming	50%	93%
4	East Gippsland (S)	45 – 64	River	Swimming	47%	85%
5	Hobsons Bay (C)	25 – 44	Beach & Harbour/ Bay/Inlet	Snorkelling	20%	78%
	Melbourne (C)	25 – 44	River	Swimming	27%	78%
	Wyndham (C)	65+	River	Walking/playing near water	80%	78%
6	Bayside (C)	65+	Beach	Swimming	36%	75%
	Surf Coast (S)	45 – 64	Rocks	Swimming	29%	75%
7	Port Phillip (C)	45 – 64	Beach	Swimming	33%	70%
8	Campaspe (S)	45 – 64	Creek	Walking/playing near water	73%	67%
	Frankston (C)	15 – 24	Beach, Private pool	Swimming	55%	67%
9	Yarra Ranges (S)	45 – 64	River	Walking/playing near water, Cleaning oneself	90%	63%
10	Casey (C)	65+	Bathtub	Cleaning oneself	78%	59%
	Corangamite (S)	25 – 44	Rocks	Attempting a rescue	44%	59%
	Warrnambool (C)	65+	Ocean	Fishing, Motorised Watercraft	78%	59%
11	Baw Baw (S)	25 – 44	River	Transport	38%	55%
	Mansfield (S)	25 – 44	Lake	Swimming	0%	55%

Rank	LGA	Key age group	Key waterway	Known key activity	Percentage of drownings involving LGA residents	Likelihood of a drowning (in any given year)
12	Brimbank (C)	0-4	Private pool - residential, Bathtub	Walking/playing near water	100%	50%
	Greater Shepparton (C)	65+	Private pool - residential, River	Walking/playing near water	86%	50%
	Kingston (C) (Vic.)	65+	Beach	Swimming	57%	50%
	Knox (C)	45 – 64	Lake	Unknown	71%	50%
13	Colac Otway (S)	25 – 44	Beach	Swimming	0%	45%
	Glenelg (S)	45 – 64	Rocks	Walking/playing near water	33%	45%
	Hume (C)	25 +	Bathub	Walking/playing near water	83%	45%
	Moyne (S)	45 – 64	Creek	Swimming, Transport	50%	45%
	South Gippsland (S)	25 – 44	Beach	Swimming	17%	45%
	Stonnington (C)	25 – 44	Bathtub	Cleaning oneself	67%	45%
	Strathbogie (S)	65+	Lake	Swimming, Walking/ playing near water	33%	45%
	Yarra (C)	25 – 44	River	Cleaning oneself	50%	45%
14	Banyule (C)	25 – 44	Creek, Bathtub	Cleaning oneself	40%	39%
	Greater Bendigo (C)	65+	Lake, Home Dam	Walking/playing near water	60%	39%
	Horsham (RC)	25 – 44, 65+	River	Swimming	60%	39%
	Manningham (C)	25 – 44, 65+	River	Swimming	60%	39%
	Monash (C)	65+	Bathtub	Cleaning oneself	100%	39%
	Mount Alexander (S)	65+	Bathtub	Cleaning oneself	80%	39%

Activities and risk factors

Fatal drowning 2024 – 25

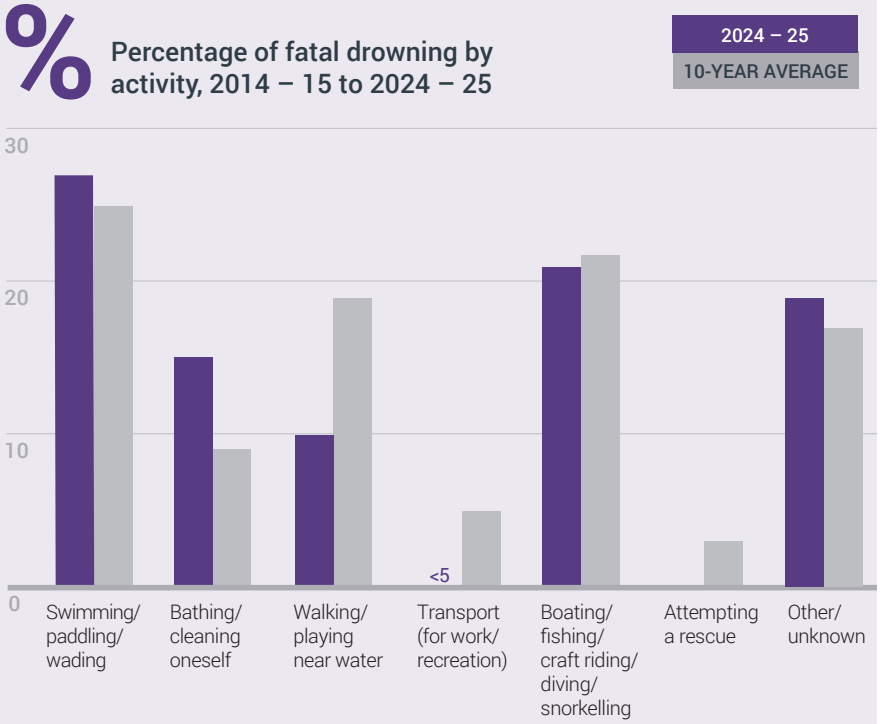
27% **of incidents involved swimming, or wading –** the most common activity.

8 fatal drowning incidents resulted from **boating** (including craft riding) and **fishing-related activities**.

8 fatal drownings associated with **cleaning oneself/ bathing**.

5 **people fatally drowned after walking or playing near water**, 46 per cent lower than the decade average.

% **Percentage of fatal drowning by activity, 2014 – 15 to 2024 – 25**



Risk factors

Lifejackets

Among the 36 boating-related drowning deaths since 2015 – 16, **lifejackets were correctly worn in only 25 per cent of incidents**. In **53 per cent, lifejackets were not worn**, and in **22 per cent lifejackets were ill-fitting or incorrect** for the activity or conditions (29% unknown lifejacket use).

Extreme weather

Since 2015 – 16, approximately **two fatal drownings each year are the result of extreme weather**, such as heatwaves and flooding.

Alcohol and/or other drugs

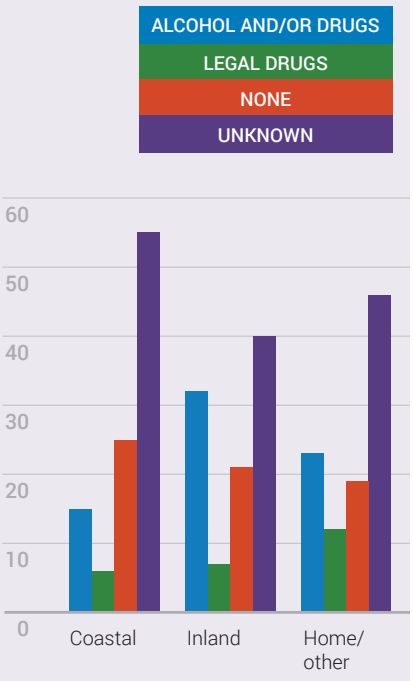
Since 2015 – 16, alcohol and/or drugs have been recorded in **27 per cent of fatal drownings** among people **aged 15 years and above**. Specifically alcohol and/or illegal drugs were recorded in:

- 32 per cent of inland waterway drowning
- 23 per cent of drowning in home environments
- 15 per cent of coastal waterway drowning

Pre-existing medical conditions

In **25 per cent** of fatal drowning since 2015 – 2016, the person was known to have a **pre-existing medical condition**.

Proportion of alcohol and drug involvement in fatal drowning 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25, by waterway type



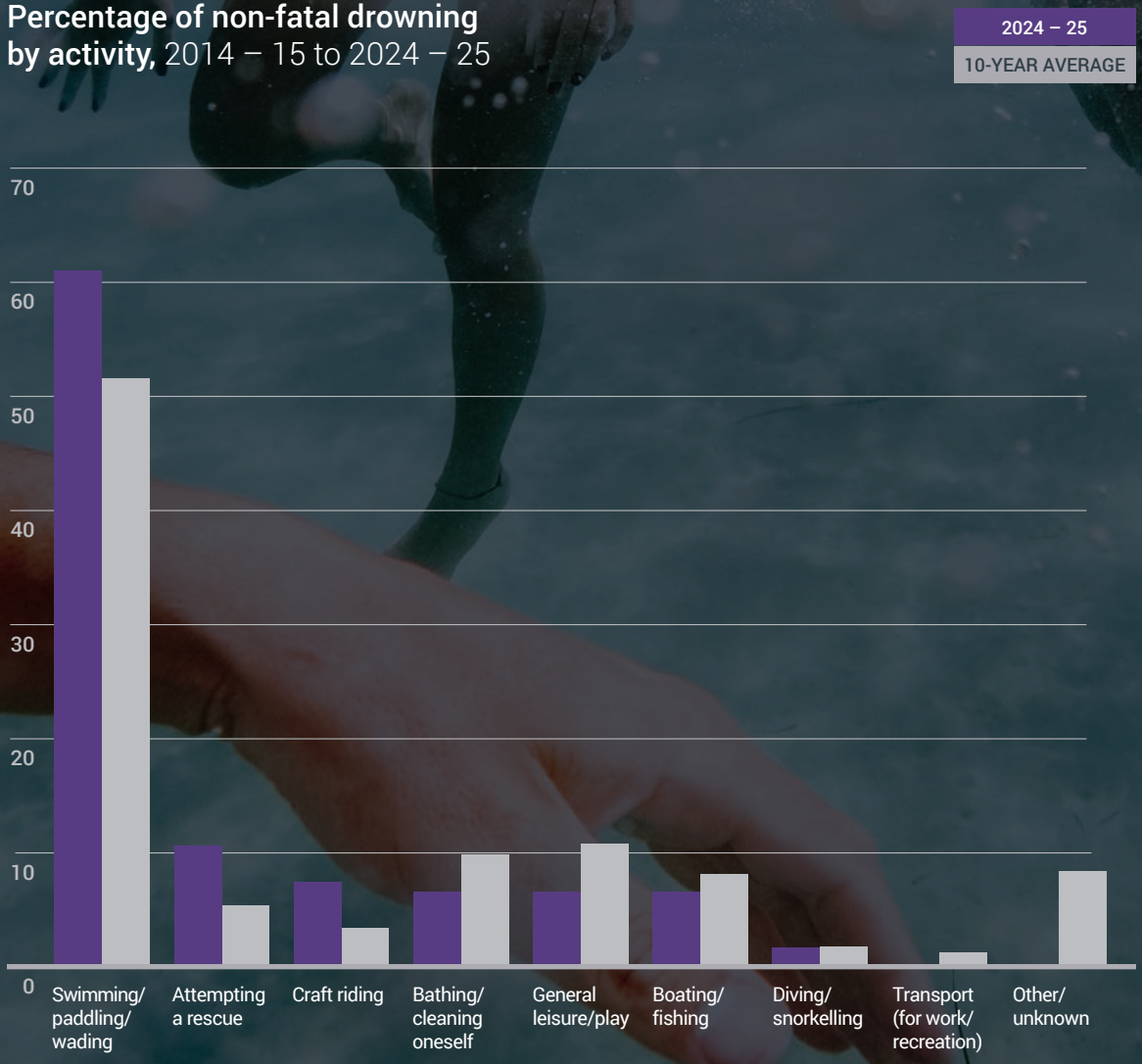
Non-fatal drowning 2024 – 25

61% **swimming or wading**: the most common activity.

13 incidents involved attempting a rescue: **almost three times** the decade average.

%

Percentage of non-fatal drowning by activity, 2014 – 15 to 2024 – 25



Coronial recommendations

Life Saving Victoria recognises that every life lost to drowning is a tragedy and causes devastation to all who are impacted. We pay our heartfelt respects to those who have lost their lives and send our condolences to their loved ones.

The following summarises 12 coronial findings released in 2024 – 25 where a relevant recommendation or comment was made by a coroner investigating a drowning death. The coroner's role includes investigating reportable deaths to determine identity, cause, and circumstances, and may recommend measures to prevent similar incidents. Summaries here are grouped by the primary recommendation and are not exact reproductions of the findings, which are available on the Coroners Court of Victoria website.

Unpatrolled beaches

Remy Da Silva 20 years old

On 6 January 2023, Remy Da Silva visited the highly hazardous Gunnamatta Ocean Beach with family and friends. The group noted strong winds and that lifesaving patrols had recently concluded. Mr Da Silva and his brother, Otto, became caught in a rip, prompting their father and two bystanders to attempt a rescue. Otto returned to shore with assistance, but Mr Da Silva was already unresponsive, and the bystanders, unable to maintain a hold in the exhausting conditions, returned to shore supported by LSV members. Despite rescue efforts and a week-long, multi-agency search, Mr Da Silva's body was sadly unable to be located.

Recommendations

1. Life Saving Victoria conduct a site-specific risk assessment at Gunnamatta Beach to explore the most effective drowning mitigation strategies for that particular location.
2. Life Saving Victoria, Parks Victoria, and Surf Living Australia continue to promote the Beachsafe app and website, including by installing infrastructure to support QR code access to information on site at Victorian beaches.
3. Parks Victoria explore the feasibility of interactive signage with up-to-date safety information at Gunnamatta and other high risk Victorian beaches.

Ying Sun 53 years old

On 30 September 2024, Ying Sun was visiting from Taiwan with her husband, to visit their son who resided in Australia. The group attended Cape Schanck, and while returning to the beach after walking along the rocks, a large wave struck from behind, knocking all three off their feet. A second wave dragged Ying into the sea, despite her being a strong swimmer. A bystander attempted a rescue but was forced to retreat due to dangerous conditions. Emergency services responded, and a police helicopter located Ying near the beach. She was tragically pronounced deceased at the scene.

Recommendations

1. Parks Victoria consider the installation of additional signage at the end of the boardwalk towards Black Rock Beach. This additional signage should remind visitors and warn them of the hazards present in the area and the need for caution around the water and rocks.
2. Parks Victoria consider updating all hazard warning signage in the area with QR codes to link to information on the Parks Victoria website that is available in multiple languages to ensure international visitors have access to relevant information in their own languages.

Forrest Caves Beach Accident

On 24 January 2024, Suhani Anand (20 years old), Kirti Bedi (20 years old), Jagjeet Singh Anand (23 years old), and Reema Sondhi (42 years old) were members of a large family group from India – some of whom resided in Australia – who visited Forrest Caves Beach on Phillip Island. Forrest Caves Beach is highly hazardous, and all four individuals had never had formal swimming training and limited beach exposure. The group played in the shallows with their children, but none were dressed in swimming attire as they did not plan to swim. When

about to leave the water, they were knocked off their feet by a large wave. The four adults were pulled further out and subsequent waves crashed over them. Bystanders contacted emergency services and retrieved Ms Anand, Ms Bedi, and Ms Sondhi from the water and commenced CPR. Mr Anand was subsequently located unconscious in the water by members of Woolamai Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Victoria Police. Following an extended period of resuscitation, Mr Anand, Ms Bedi, and Ms Sondhi were tragically pronounced deceased at the scene. Ms Anand was airlifted to hospital but sadly passed away the following morning.

Jil Jayeshbhai Khokhara 26 years old

On 17 March 2024, Mr Jil Jayeshbhai Khokhara and his friends visited Marengo Beach, southwest of Apollo Bay. Mr Khokhara was a postgraduate student from India who could not swim. Marengo Beach is unpatrolled and classified as 'extremely hazardous' on SLSA's Beachsafe app. Mr Khokhara and friends went for a swim around 1pm but soon began to struggle in the surf, as they had been pulled by the current away from shore. A bystander was able to rescue all three men consecutively; the first two rescued were able to be revived, however tragically Mr Khokhara died at the scene.

The coroner did not make any specific recommendations in the two above cases, but did endorse the recommendations of LSV relevant to multicultural communities presented in the Aquatic Injury Prevention Agenda 2024–25. In both findings, the coroners noted the presence of beach signage illustrating the aquatic hazards that may be present. However, the coroners noted signage is only ever displayed in English, which may limit dissemination of messaging in high-tourism areas. They noted individuals do not always read or correctly perceive warning signs at waterways, therefore it is clear that signage alone will not prevent further fatal drownings, and water safety education and awareness is critical.

Alcohol and other drugs

Frank Mellia 39 years old

On 14 January 2023, Frank Mellia arranged to meet two friends at Taroona Reserve, Warrandyte for a swim in the Yarra River. Mr Mellia had never had swimming lessons. Mr Mellia entered the water alone and could not be found by his friends a short time later. Bystanders later reported seeing a male struggle in the water in a section of rapids. Tragically, Mr Mellia's body was recovered two days later, approximately 650 metres downstream from where he is thought to have entered. It was determined that Mr Mellia drowned in the setting of a very high blood alcohol level, which would have impaired his judgement and ability to properly swim or get to safety; exacerbated by his lack of aquatic skills.

Recommendation

1. Parks Victoria review the signage warning the public of river hazards in the Warrandyte River Reserve and particularly, the Taroona Reserve. Among the hazards identified, the signage should warn of the danger of alcohol or drugs in combination with use of the river.

B 23 years old

On the evening of 27 January 2024, B and friends celebrated his girlfriend G's birthday. While alcohol and other drugs had been consumed, no one was noted to be overly intoxicated. At sunrise, B and some friends entered a section of the Yarra River adjacent to G's home in North Warrandyte. Despite being a competent swimmer and familiar with the area, B disappeared suddenly and without warning. Emergency services were called, and a multi-agency search was launched. B's body was found that day, 14 metres from the bank and 3.5 metres underwater. Toxicological analysis revealed the presence of alcohol and several other substances. It was concluded that B tragically drowned in the setting of mixed drug consumption, in non-suspicious circumstances from misadventure.

While the coroner did not make any recommendations, they shared a quote from B's mother, and noted data from the National Drowning Report 2024 highlighting that drownings in rivers and creeks had increased, and equated to 25% of the 323 drowning deaths in Australian waterways. Men continued to account for 84 per cent of these deaths, and in 15% of river and creek fatal drownings, alcohol was involved. The coroner noted the report's message of avoiding alcohol and drugs, and urged sharing of this message.

Children and young people

Alison Debra Johns 5 years old

Alison Debra Johns was confident around water but had only had three swimming lessons and was not a skilled swimmer. At the time of Alison's death medical practitioners suspected, but had not diagnosed, that Alison had Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental issues. On 27 December 2022, Alison and family gathered at Buckley Park at Lake Nagambie for a picnic. Alison's mother swam out to a buoy in the water approximately 15 metres from shore and turned to see Alison enter the water alone wearing an inflatable ring. Alison's mother told her to return to the lakeshore; however, upon turning around, could only see the inflatable ring and not Alison. After searching the water and the bank of the lake, Alison was located in the reeds near the lake's edge, fully submerged in approximately one metre of water. Alison was sadly unable to be revived.

Recommendation

1. Strathbogie Shire Council consult with the Victorian Water Safety Coordination Forum, Life Saving Victoria and any other appropriate body, to ensure appropriate safety measures are in place at Buckley Park on Lake Nagambie (including appropriate signage, depth warnings, fencing or other identified safety measures) to promote the safety of those engaging in recreational water activities such as swimming.

Cienna Ros'Se Jervies 12 years old

On 19 September 2023, Cienna Ros'Se Jervies, an experienced swimmer who had a pool at home and lived near the beach, visited Ocean Grove Beach with family and friend Ebony. The group swam in a hazardous, unpatrolled section. Around 6pm, Cienna and Ebony became caught in a rip. Bystanders attempted rescues; Ebony was brought to shore, but Cienna was unable to be assisted in the rough conditions and was tragically swept away. Both rescuers required medical treatment. After a multi-agency search, a police helicopter recovered Cienna 100 metres offshore. She was tragically pronounced deceased at the scene despite resuscitation efforts.

Recommendation

1. Emergency Management Victoria consider developing a resource similar to NSW's Practice Note 15: Water Safety under the Victorian Statement Emergency Plan with a view to clarifying, coordinating and strengthening the water safety functions and responsibilities of Victorian water safety duty holders.

Baby LA 10 months old

On 15 December 2023, Baby LA crawled out of the house and towards the pond while his aunty cooked dinner. Baby LA often crawled freely in and out of the house and into the backyard, where there was a small pond covered with a light and unsecured steel grate. Within a matter of minutes, Baby LA had removed the grate and fallen into the pond. Baby LA remained submerged in the pond for 27 minutes before being pulled from the water. Despite medical intervention, tragically Baby LA was taken off life support a week later due to severe hypoxic brain injury.

While the coroner did not make any specific recommendations, they noted that young children are at risk of unintentional drowning in all types of bodies of water due to their curiosity and lack of understanding of the dangers of water. As a result, young children require close and vigilant adult supervision, as they can drown quickly and quietly in very shallow water. Additionally, it was noted that fishponds do not require a building permit nor any form of safety barrier in Victoria, and regulation is needed in the building and design of these structures to improve child safety.

Boating and fishing

Munif Mohammed 64 years old

Munif Mohammed moved from Fiji to Australia in 1989 and was described as an experienced fisherman capable of keeping himself afloat in the water, but was not a competent swimmer. He took medication for ischaemic heart disease and respiratory conditions. On 12 June 2023, Mr Mohammed and his friend Mr Khan organised to go fishing on Mr Khan's boat, launching from Werribee South where the conditions were cold and the water was choppy. While fishing in Portarlington, Mr Khan heard Mr Mohammed complain of feeling hot, before hearing a splash in the water and seeing Mr Mohammed in the water. Mr Khan was unable to lift Mr Mohammed back into the boat and Mr Mohammed was not wearing his lifejacket at the time.

Despite the best efforts of Mr Khan to remain in contact with his friend, Mr Mohammed continued to struggle in the water and after some time, tragically became unresponsive and passed away at the scene. An inspection of the boat deemed it to be unseaworthy and unstable, and some safety equipment on board was expired or out of service.

Recommendations

1. Safe Transport Victoria explores potential models for a recreational vessel seaworthy inspection and certificate regime to assess the already legislated prescribed conditions under regulation 27 of the Marine Safety Regulations 2023 (Vic) as a means of ensuring the seaworthiness of vessels at points of registration, transfer of ownership, and after any modification of the vessel.
2. Safe Transport Victoria considers the introduction of practical training and assessment as part of the Victorian marine licencing regime analogous to regimes already in existence in other Australian States.
3. The Minister of the Department of Transport and Planning amend the Marine Safety Regulations 2023 (Vic) to mandate boarding ladders or other similar means of reboarding a vessel from the water in vessels with a freeboard greater than 0.3 metres, irrespective of the size of the vessel.

Thanh An Nguyen 39 years old

On 4 November 2023, Thanh Nguyen visited Gunnamatta Ocean Beach to go crabbing with friends at last light. Mr Nguyen often went crabbing at night and would return home early in the morning. While crabbing, some bystanders saw Mr Nguyen fall into the water from some rocks while wearing his waders, a jacket and a cross-body fishing bag. Mr Nguyen had never learnt to swim and quickly drifted away from shore and sank beneath the water. A bystander arrived with a flotation device; however, Mr Nguyen could no longer be seen. It is believed that he was sadly swept out to sea after falling from the rocks where he was crabbing.

While the coroner did not make any recommendations, they highlighted the risks of visiting beaches and waterways even when swimming is not a contemplated activity. Though the group were safety conscious and had a flotation device, the conditions and the time of day hindered the ability to render assistance.

Yong Li 59 years old

On 29 April 2023, Yong Li, a Chinese national and experienced swimmer, met with three friends at Sorrento Back Beach to snorkel and fish for abalone. He was familiar with the area from over 40 previous visits while living in Australia. The beach, rated 'moderately hazardous' on Beachsafe, was unpatrolled that day, and had poor conditions with large swells and low visibility. Other snorkellers had exited the water due to dangerous currents. Mr Li was seen in waist-deep water before being knocked over and dragged seaward. Bystanders pulled Mr Li onto a rock ledge 30 metres from shore and commenced CPR, but sadly he could not be revived.

While the coroner did not make any recommendations, they noted that the warning signs in the carpark and footpath access area at Sorrento Back Beach are only in English and include large graphic symbols of hazards. The "unexpectedly treacherous conditions" at the beach highlight the importance of frequently reassessing weather conditions for water-based activities, particularly at beaches with known hazards.

Our preventive efforts

1,011

rescues by lifesavers and lifeguards on patrolled beaches, inland waterway sites and event lifeguard services in 2024 – 25: the highest in over 20 years.

19

rescues per 100,000 beachgoers on average per year from 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25.

1,593

first aids performed by volunteer lifesavers, lifeguards and state services on patrolled beaches in 2024 – 25.

45,000+

lifesaving club members, patrolling our coastlines and inland waterway locations while providing education and training in lifesaving activities, to ensure the safety of waterway users in Victoria.

Our key statistics

250,000+
patrol hours

7,856
lifesaving awards achieved

130+
Inland Waterways Forum delegates

31,597
diversity and inclusion program participants

170
pool safety assessments conducted

8,516
students attained the Victorian Water Safety Certificate

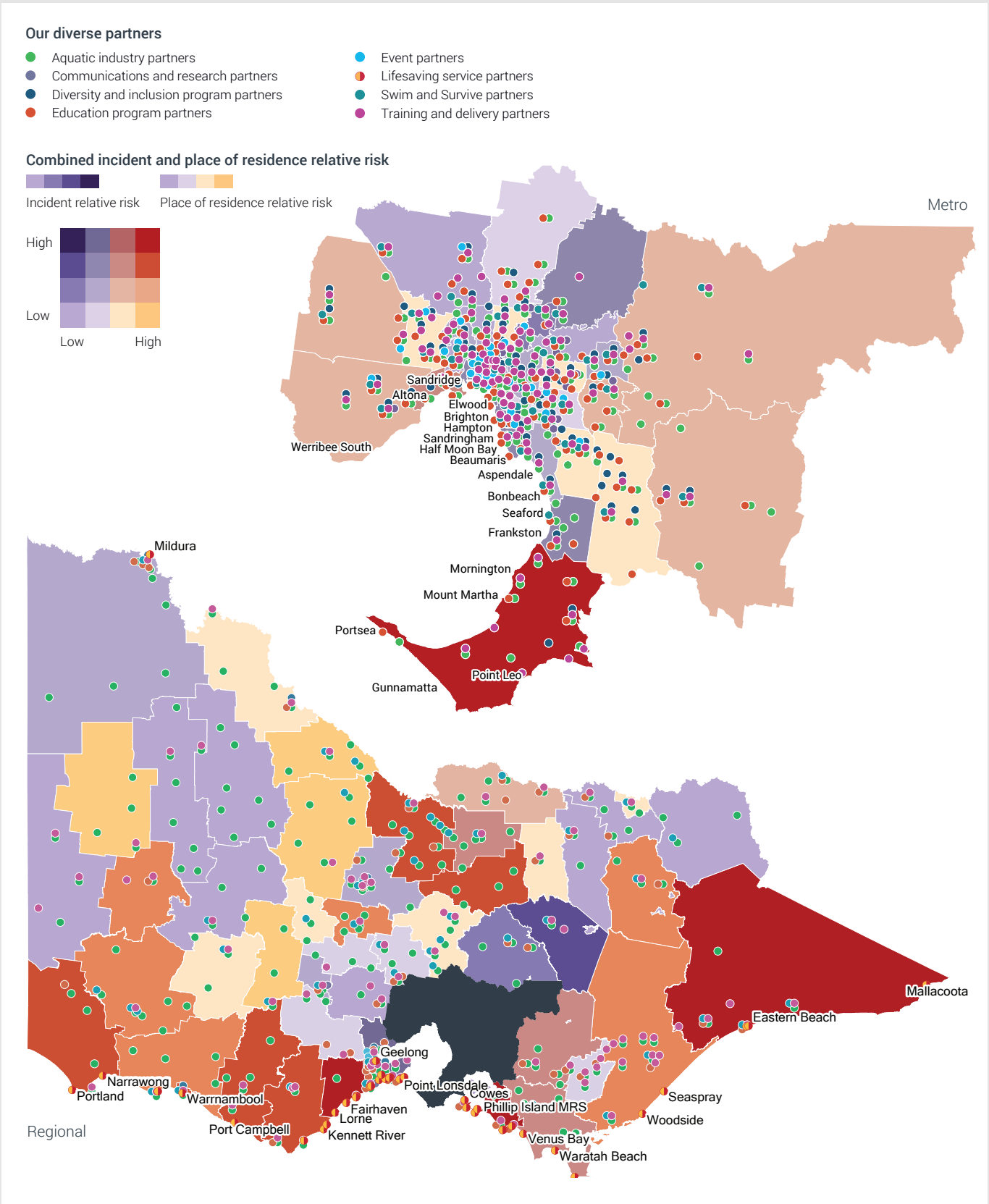
$6.5 billion

Estimated **value of coastal safety and lifesaving services** per year in Australia*

*Deloitte Access Economics. (2020). *Between the red and yellow flags: The social and economic value of Surf Life Saving Australia* Deloitte Access Economics: Sydney.

These maps illustrate how LSV programs and services are positioned in response to fatal drowning risks, considering both incident and resident locations.

LSV programs and services and relative risk of drowning by incident location and place of residence



What can you do?

Aquatic facilities	• Display key information from this report in your facility and discuss it with your staff. • Encourage patrons to transfer safe aquatic behaviours around all waterways. • Use the key messages from this report to help develop your programs, implement and run programs for people who have been identified as high-risk.
Government entities (including councils and land managers)	• Promote shared responsibility and empower communities to better assess and respond to local water safety risks. • Work with local partners to manage local risk. • Improve coordination and collaboration between agencies and with community members. • Refer to the Victorian Water Safety Strategy 2021 – 25[9] and the Australian Water Safety Strategy[10] for specific actions.
Healthcare practitioners and community service organisations	• Educate patients on the importance of water safety, particularly to parents/carers, people with disabilities or medical conditions. • Inform people of the impacts that medication, health conditions and swimming ability can have on their capabilities in, on and around water; especially older adults. • Assist older adults and their families to install handrails in their bathrooms.
Lifesaving clubs	• Print out key pages of this report to display around your club. • Circulate the report to your members. • Use the key messages and high-risk groups identified in this report to help develop, implement and run programs and activities.
Media outlets and journalists	• Prioritise reporting drownings of underrepresented groups, such as older people, through traditional and social media. • Promote key drowning prevention messages in accessible and inclusive ways.
Parents and carers of children	• Contact your local aquatic centre and enrol your child in swimming lessons. • Discuss the importance of water safety with other parents/carers, including making supervision plans. • Discuss water safety risks and safe aquatic behaviours with your child. • Share this report with your child's school, and advocate for water safety lessons to be delivered in, and out, of the classroom.
School principals and teachers	• Sign up for Life Saving Victoria's lifesaving education programs at the beach and in the classroom. • Ensure the swim school where your students attend integrates the competencies of the Victorian Water Safety Certificate. • Encourage parents to adopt constant and focussed supervision of children around water.
Water safety agencies	• Distribute this report within your organisation and to wider audiences. • Use the key messages and high-risk groups identified in this report to help develop, implement and run programs and activities. • Promote opportunities for subsidies, funding, and grants to at-risk communities.

[9] Department of Justice and Community Safety. (2021). Victorian Water Safety Strategy 2021 – 25. Department of Justice and Community Safety: Melbourne.

[10] Australian Water Safety Council. (2021). Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030. Australian Water Safety Council: Sydney.

Together, we will continue to forge ahead in our purpose to **save lives and empower communities to safely enjoy water.**

Methods

This report includes unintentional fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents reported in Victoria, Australia.

An overview of fatal and non-fatal drownings for 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 is provided and compared with 10-year averages from drowning data from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2024.

Fatal incidents

Information collected from the Coroners Court of Victoria, and the National Coronial Information System (NCIS). Deaths due to natural causes, suicide or homicide were excluded from this report.

Coronial information relates to both open and closed cases. While all care is taken to ensure that the results are as accurate as possible, these figures are provisional only as coronial investigations and findings relating to open cases may alter the reported drowning figures. At the time of compilation, all suspected unintentional drowning cases in 2024 – 25 remained open on the NCIS.

Information of Victorians who drowned in the Murray River from 2015 – 16 to 2024 – 25 was collected from the Royal Life Saving National Fatal Drowning Database and the NCIS, as part of the Inland Waterways Drowning Prevention project by Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, funded by the Australian Government.

Non-fatal incidents

Information on non-fatal drowning in 2024 – 25 was provided by Ambulance Victoria (AV). Cases of non-fatal and immersion related injuries attended by AV paramedics were extracted from the VACIS® clinical information system. Potential drowning data for this report were identified via a database search for all drowning related dispatch codes identified at the emergency call-taker level, as well as cases in which paramedics reported a final assessment of 'post immersion'. Only patients reported as suffering respiratory compromise or vomiting as a result of immersion were included in analyses.

Information on non-fatal drowning from 2014 – 15 to 2023 – 24 was provided by the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU). Data included non-fatal, and immersion related injuries extracted from the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD) and Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED) for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2024.

The VEMD is a dataset containing records of emergency department presentations in Victorian hospitals with 24-hour emergency services. One hundred percent statewide coverage of these hospitals applied from 2004. Data was selected if the cause of injury was 'drowning/near drowning' or the terms 'drown', 'submerged', 'immersion' and their variations were included in the "Description" variable. Further, all injuries with an injury coded to 'drowning' or 'immersion' were also selected. Finally, any injury coded to a drowning or non-fatal drowning cause code with the mention of 'decompression illness' in the description was also chosen.

These cases were then manually screened to ensure that they were submersion or non-fatal drowning cases. Cases were retained if the "human intent" was coded to "non-intentional harm".

Cases were limited to incidence (excludes return visits and pre-arranged admissions). The VAED is a record of all hospital admissions in the state of Victoria. VAED data is coded to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modifications (ICD-10-AM). VAED records were initially extracted if the principal diagnosis was a community injury (S00-T75 or T79 ICD 10 AM code). Cases were then extracted if there was a drowning injury diagnosis (ICD 10 AM code of T75.1 "Drowning and non-fatal submersion") anywhere in the 40 diagnosis codes or the external cause code was in the range W65-W71 (accidental drowning and submersion) or V90 (accident to watercraft causing drowning and submersion) or V92 (water-transport-related drowning and submersion without accident to watercraft).

Admissions as a result of transfer from another hospital or due to a statistical separation from the same hospital were excluded. Re-admissions for day-treatments within 30 days of initial admission were excluded.

Drowning deaths from either AV or VISU data were excluded to avoid an overlap with LSV fatal drowning data.

Incidence calculations

Incidence calculations were performed using population figures published by the ABS[11].

Relative risk maps

Three local government area (LGA) map series were developed to show drowning risk across Victoria by incident location, place of residence, and a combined (bivariate) representation of both. Each map shows the relative risk ratio for each LGA, comparing the local rate of drowning with the overall Victorian average to highlight areas where risk is higher or lower than expected.

Incident and residence data were first summarised by postcode and then converted to LGA totals. Postcode locations were derived using weighted population centroids within the Australian Bureau of Statistics postcode boundaries[12]. Drowning counts cover a ten-year period (2015–16 to 2024–25), and census population values from 2016 and 2021[11] were averaged to provide a consistent population base for comparison.

[11] Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Digital Boundary Files." Version Edition 3. 2025. GeoPackage. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/access-and-downloads/digital-boundary-files.

[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Census DataPacks." Version Time Series Profile. April 1, 2022. CSV. ABS. https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools/datapacks.

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