



Research snapshot:

State of drowning among
young people aged 10 -20 years
and the role of swimming skills



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA

> ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence-based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership and participation and international networks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of our national office in Ultimo, Sydney are the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We pay our respects to Australia's First Nations cultural and spiritual connections to water, and acknowledge the land where we work, live, and play always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

© 2025 Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

This publication is copyright. Except as expressly provided in the Copyright Act 1968 and the Copyright Amendment Act 2006, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted by any means (including electronic, mechanical, micro copying, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without prior permission from Royal Life Saving Society – Australia.

For enquiries concerning reproduction, contact RLSSA on: Phone 02 8217 3111; Email: info@rlssa.org.au

Every attempt has been made to trace and acknowledge copyright, but in some cases this may not have been possible. Royal Life Saving apologises for any accidental infringements and would welcome any information to redress the situation.

Please contact:

PO Box 558 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
Phone: 02 8217 3111
Email: info@rlssa.org.au
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

The drowning prevention research of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is proudly supported by the Australian Government.



Australian Government

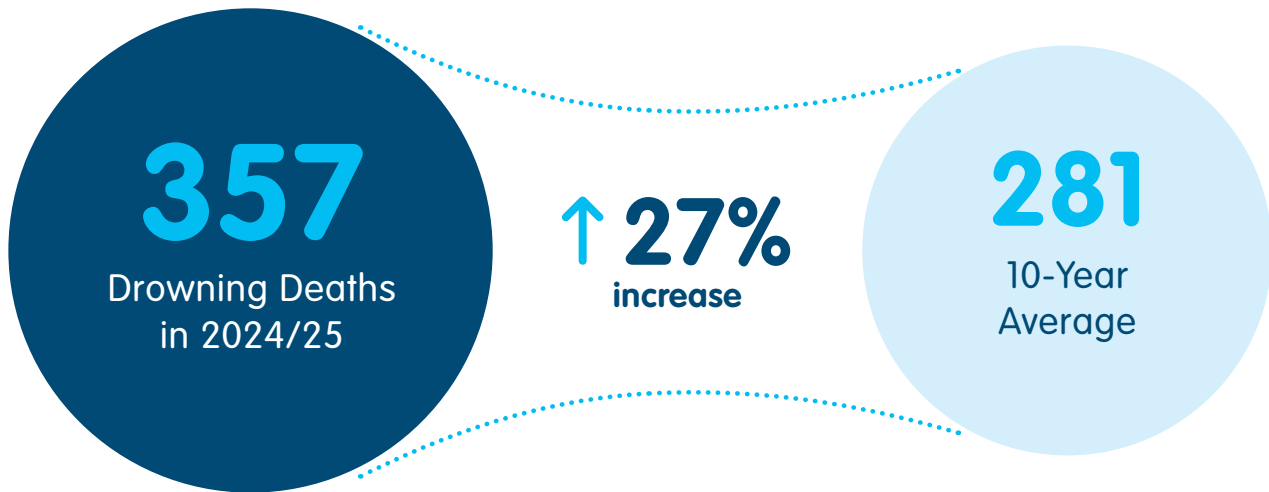
Suggested citation:

Pidgeon S, Haller M. State of drowning among young people aged 10 -20 years and the role of swimming skills. 2025. Sydney, Royal Life Saving.

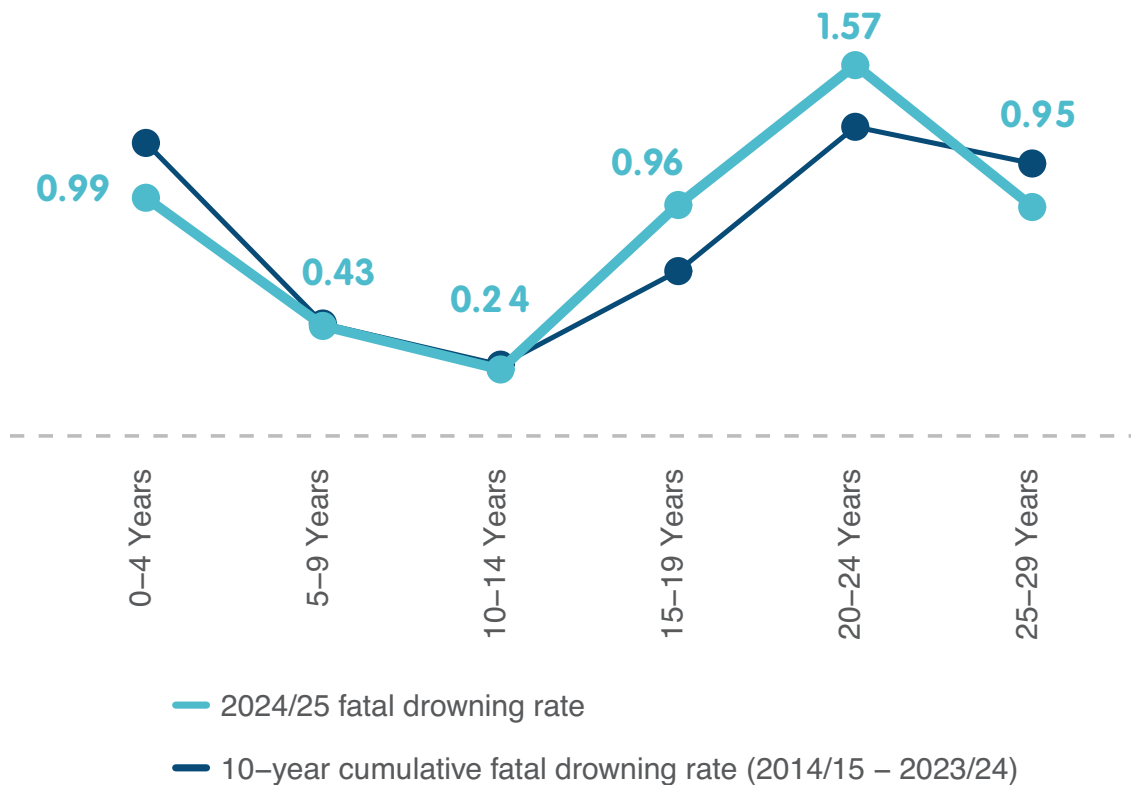
> RESEARCH SNAPSHOT: DROWNING TRENDS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

2024/2025 National Drowning Report

Overall number of drowning deaths

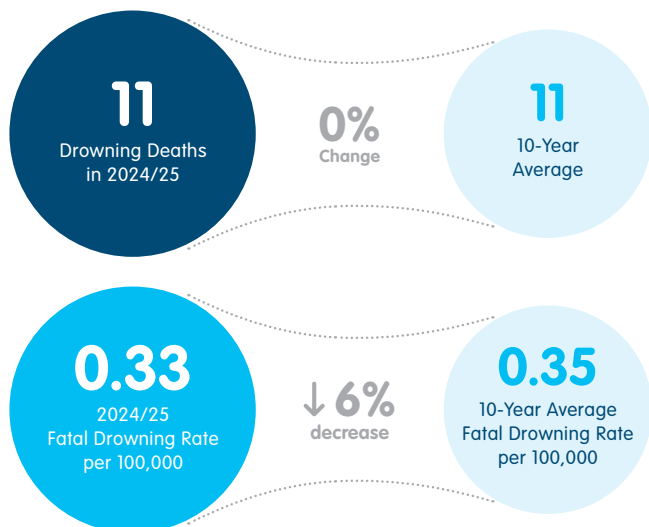


Drowning rates of children and young people aged 0 – 29 years, 2024/25

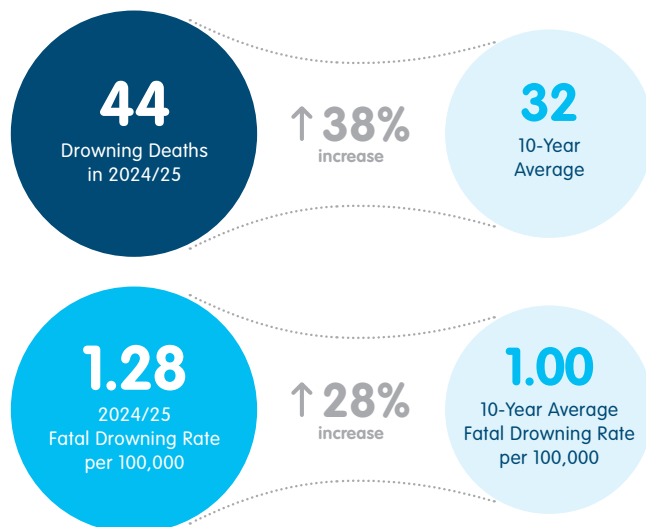


> COMPARING DROWNING BETWEEN CHILDREN (5 – 14 YEARS) AND YOUNG PEOPLE (15 – 24 YEARS), 2024/25

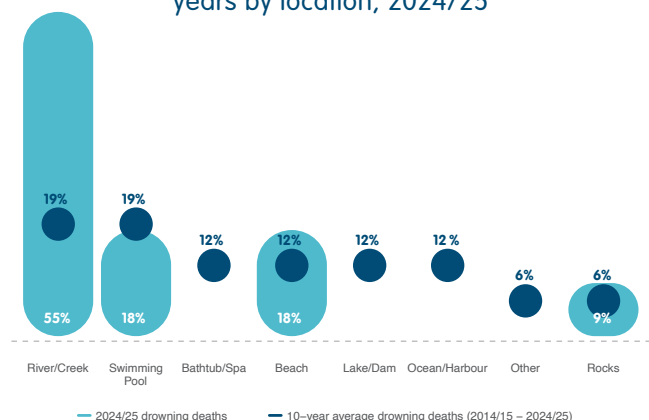
Children aged 5-14 years



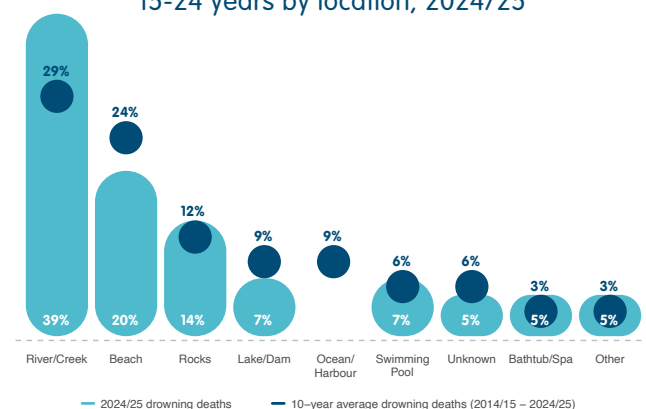
Children aged 15-24 years



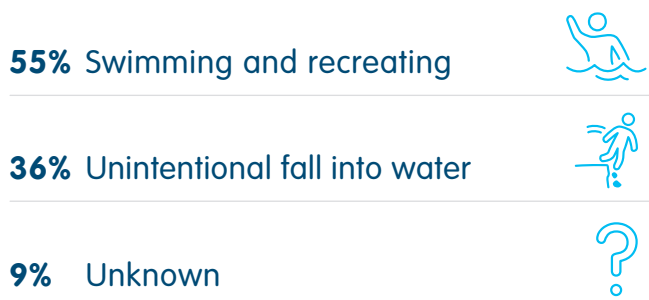
Drowning deaths of children aged 5-14 years by location, 2024/25



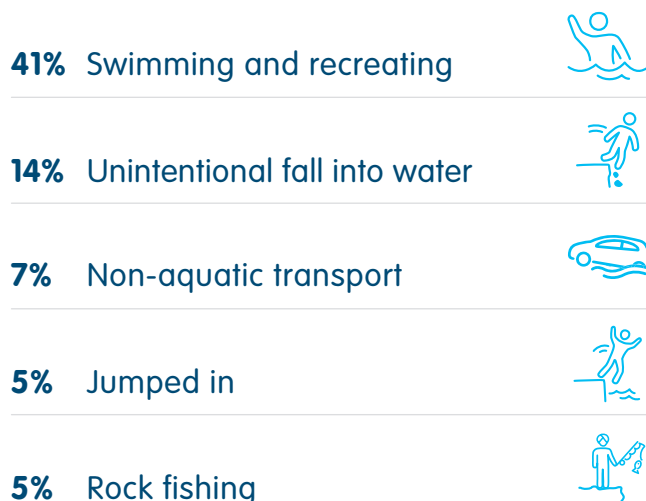
Drowning deaths of young people aged 15-24 years by location, 2024/25



Drowning deaths of children aged 5-14 years by activity, 2024/25



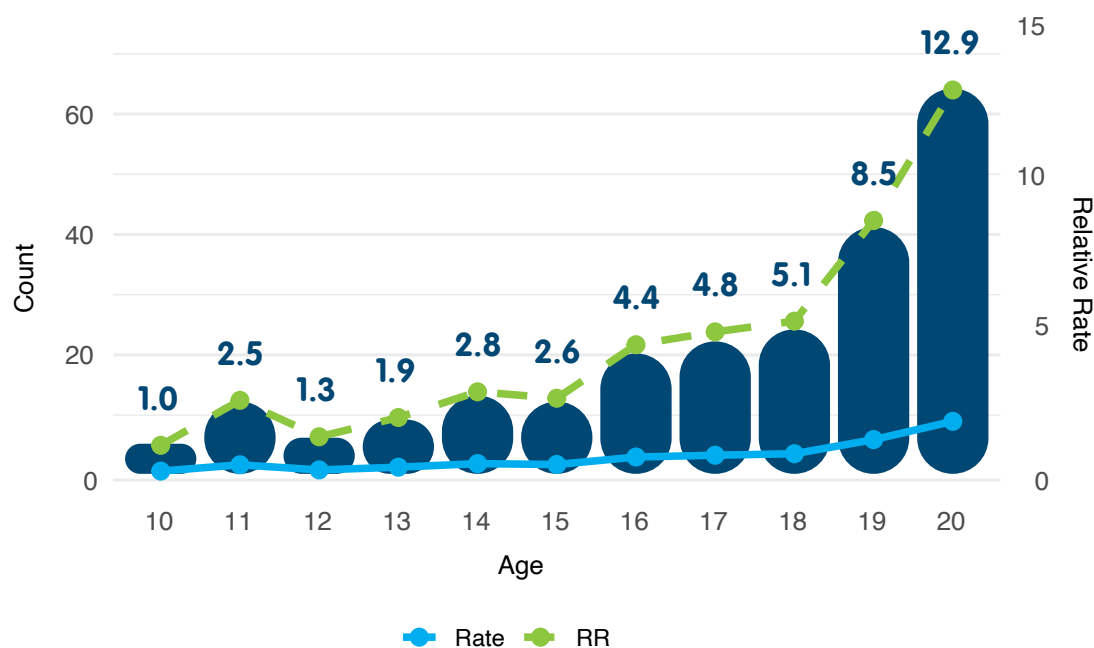
Drowning deaths of young people aged 15-24 years by activity, 2024/25



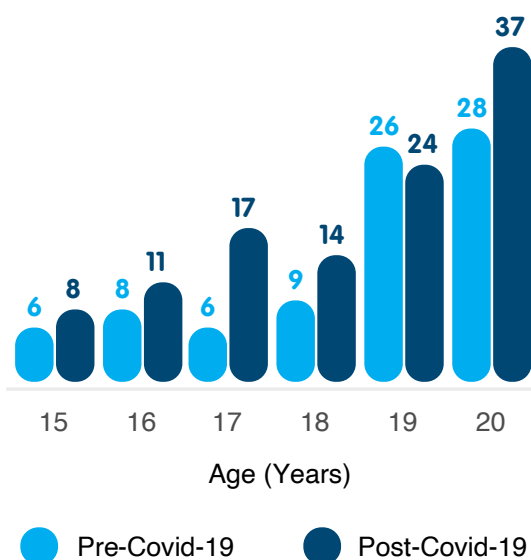
➤ COMPARING DROWNING BETWEEN CHILDREN (5 – 14 YEARS)
AND YOUNG PEOPLE (15 – 24 YEARS), 2024/25

- Drowning risk rapidly **increases from age 10**
- Drowning numbers **peak at age 20**
- 20-year-olds have a risk of drowning **13x times** that of a 10-year-old
- **34%** increase in drowning deaths among 15-20-year olds since the pandemic

Ten-Year Drowning Counts, Cumulative Crude Fatal Rate & Relative Rate from (Age 10 to 20 year olds)



Drowning deaths by single year of age between 15 years and 20 years old.
Pre-Covid-19 (2015/16 to 2019/20) vs Post-covid-19 (2020/21 to 2024/2025)



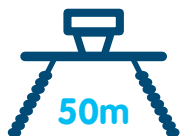
> SWIM SKILLS: INSIGHTS BY AGE



50% of 10-year-olds cannot swim 50 metres



There is little improvement in swimming skills after primary school



40% of 15-year-olds cannot swim 50 metres

Proportion of children who cannot swim 50m 12-year-old National Benchmark

50%



10 years

50%



11 years

40%



12 years

40%



13 years

40%



14 years

40%



15 years

Age group

> SWIM SKILLS: LESSON PARTICIPATION TRENDS



One in ten children aged 5-14 years have never attended swimming lessons

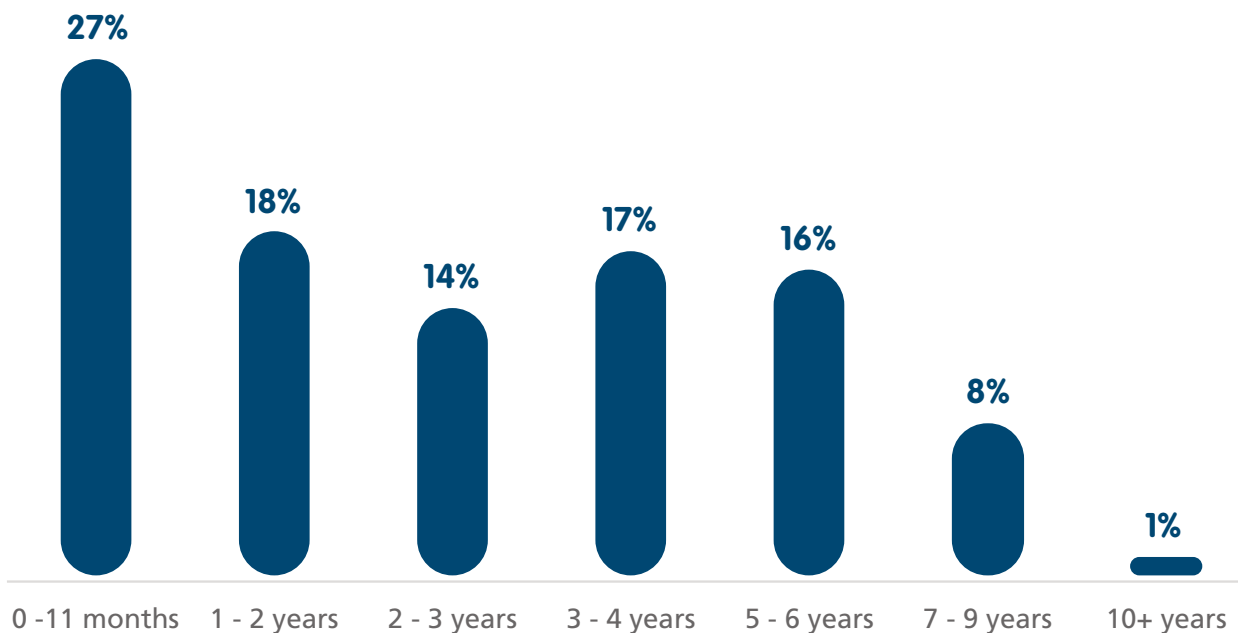


59% of children first enrol in formal swim lessons between 0-3 years old.



33% of children stop lessons between ages 7-9 years.

What age did your child start lessons?



> METHODS

This is a brief research snapshot of the state of drowning and the role of swimming skills, focusing on children and young people aged 10 – 20 years old. The data for this research snapshot was drawn from previous Royal Life Saving research - National Drowning Report 2025 (released in August 2025) and the Children's Swimming and Water Safety Skills report (released March 2025).

Drowning data in this report was sourced from the National Drowning Report. Data is sourced from the National Fatal Drowning Database held by Royal Life Saving Australia and crossed-checked with data from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) and year-round media monitoring. Information from the NCIS is made available from the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety. Drowning rates per 100,000 population are calculated using census population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Swim skills and participation data produced in the Children's Swimming and Water Safety Skills report were collated from two national surveys; one of school-teachers conducted by Royal Life Saving (N=326 survey respondents). The second was a nationally representative survey of parents from across Australia (N=1,234) with at least one child aged 14 years or younger. This was a nationally representative, with results aggregated and weighted to best reflect a population sample.

Further details of the methods from both reports can be found on the Royal Life Saving website www.royallifesaving.com.au/research-and-policy





FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call 02 8217 3111

Email info@rlssa.org.au

CONNECT WITH US

 [RoyalLifeSaving](#)

 [RoyalLifeSaving](#)

 [RoyalLifeSaving](#)

 [RoyalLifeSavingAust](#)

 [RoyalLifeSaving.com.au](#)