

OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Drowning data for people
aged 65 years and over



2018/19
60
 DEATHS
 1.5 Deaths
 per 100,000

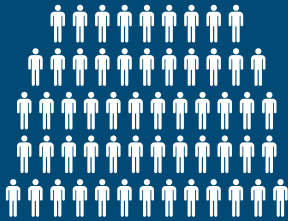
2017/18
51
 DEATHS
 1.3 Deaths
 per 100,000

10-YEAR AVERAGE
61
 DEATHS
 1.9 Deaths
 per 100,000

↓ 2%
 ↓ 21%



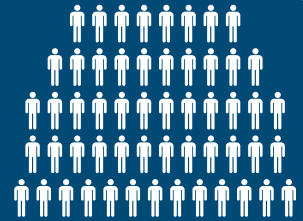
NON-FATAL DROWNING INCIDENTS



57

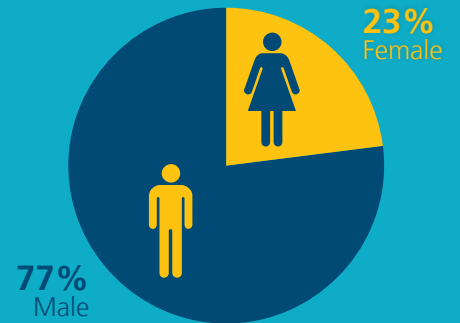
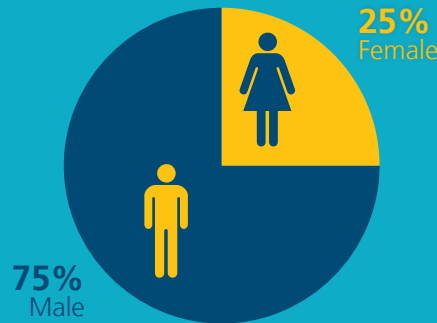
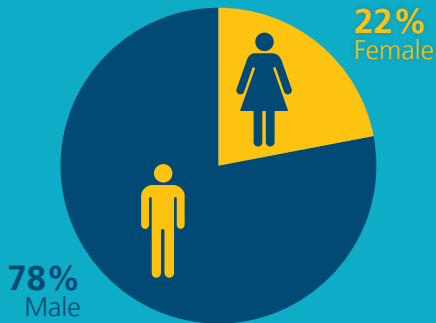


47



55

SEX



2018/19 | **2017/18**



Pre-existing medical condition

40%* **63%**



Alcohol

5%* **14%**



Medication

12%* **29%**



*Risk factor data presented for 2018/19 is pending closure of coronial cases and therefore will be underreported above.

OLDER AUSTRALIANS

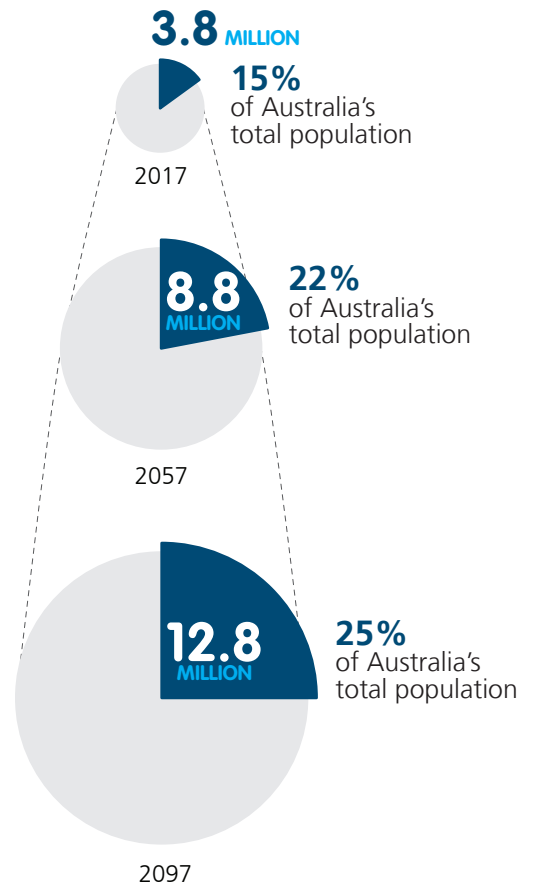
As with any group, older Australians come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, with varying life experiences and lifestyles. These factors all influence the individual ageing process, and also reflect the risk of drowning for each individual.

Many older Australians have not received or were not exposed to the level of water safety education that most Australians receive today. This highlights the importance of introducing water skills and education for older Australians, as well as promoting the health benefits of recreating safely in aquatic environments.

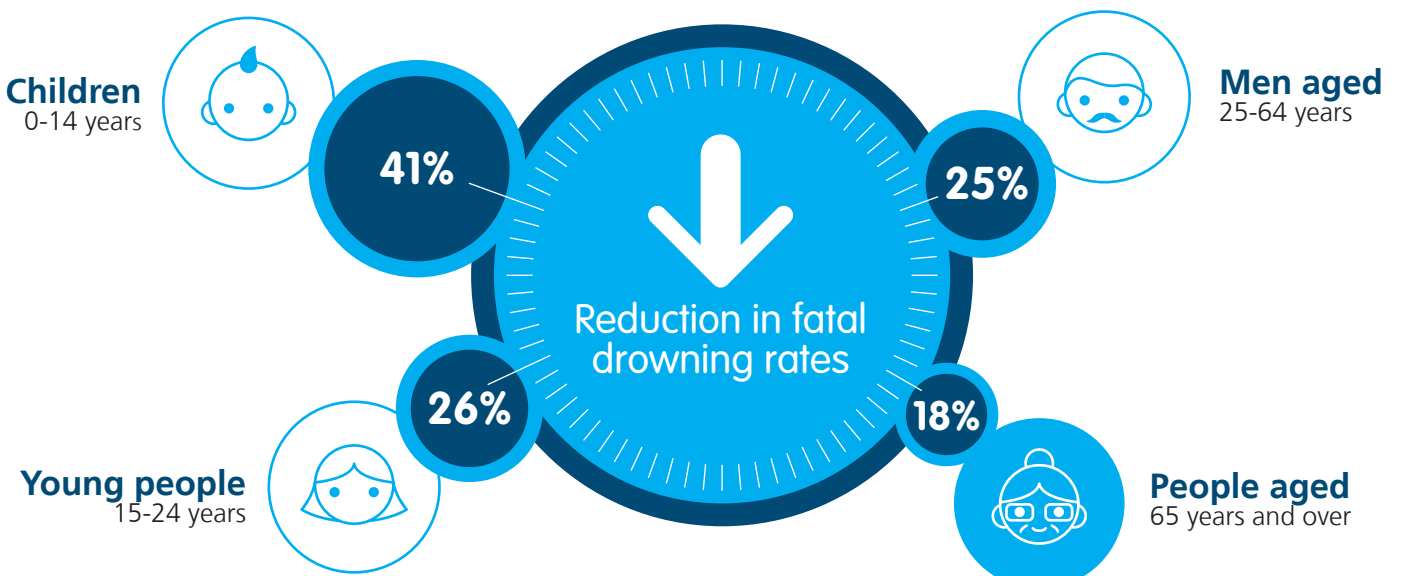
For the 10-year period, 1st July 2008 to 30th June 2018, the crude drowning death rate for older Australians (1.9 drowning deaths per 100,000 older population) was greater than the national Australian crude drowning rate (1.3 drowning deaths per 100,000 population).



People aged 65 years and over accounted for 22% of all drowning deaths over the past year, rising from 16% in 2002/03



Projected growth in the number of older Australians from 2017 to 2097¹



Older Australians experienced the lowest reduction in fatal drowning rates from 1st July 2008 to 30th June 2018

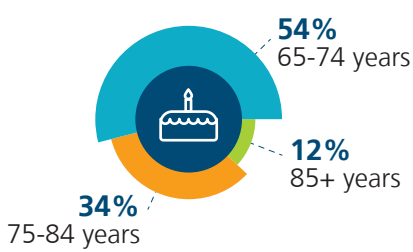
10-Year Data Breakdown

612 People aged 65+ years drowned in Australia

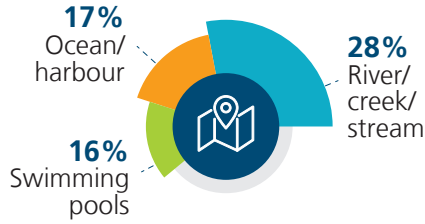
1st July 2008

30th June 2018

Age



Top locations



Top activities



Risk factors



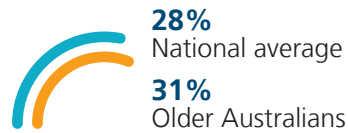
Index of relative socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage (IRSAD)



Visitor status



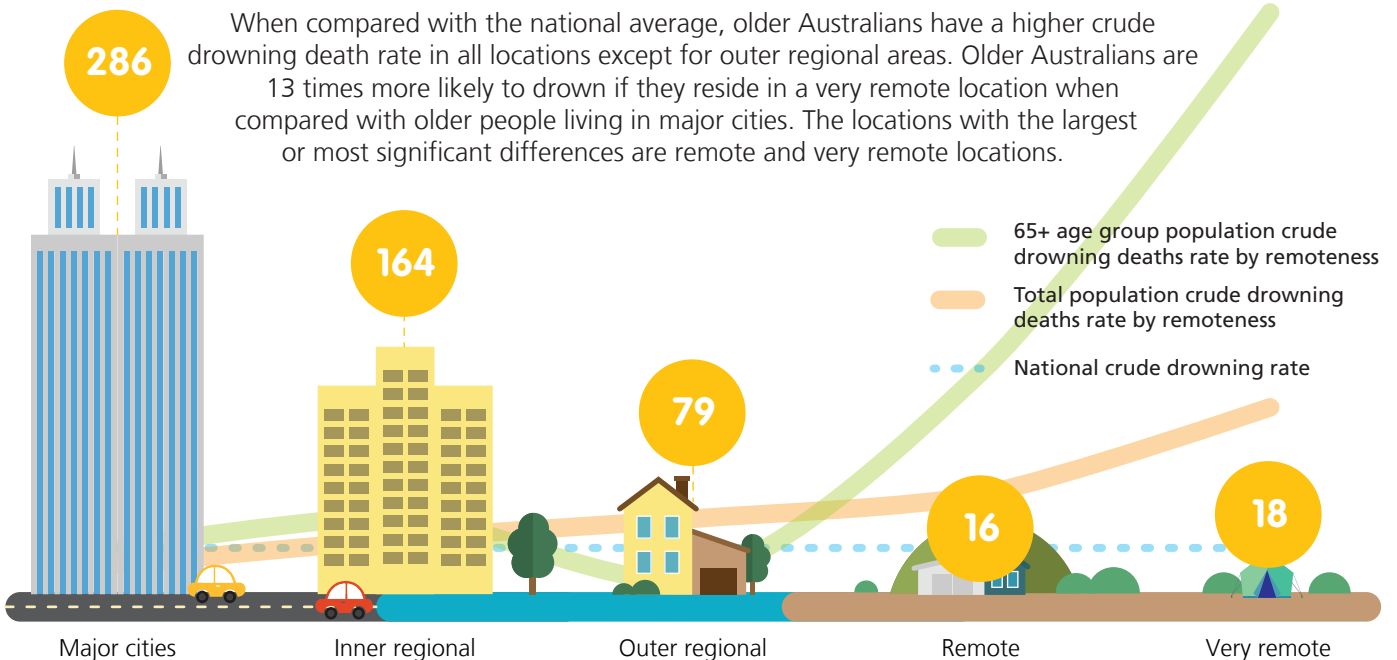
Overseas-born



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



When compared with the national average, older Australians have a higher crude drowning death rate in all locations except for outer regional areas. Older Australians are 13 times more likely to drown if they reside in a very remote location when compared with older people living in major cities. The locations with the largest or most significant differences are remote and very remote locations.



Total number of drowning deaths in the older population by remoteness from 1st July 2008 to 30th June 2018

Health Benefits of Swimming

Physical activity in the later years of life is essential to promote a healthy ageing process and independent functioning. Swimming has been shown to help prevent or manage many chronic diseases, as well as improving overall physiological and psychological health.

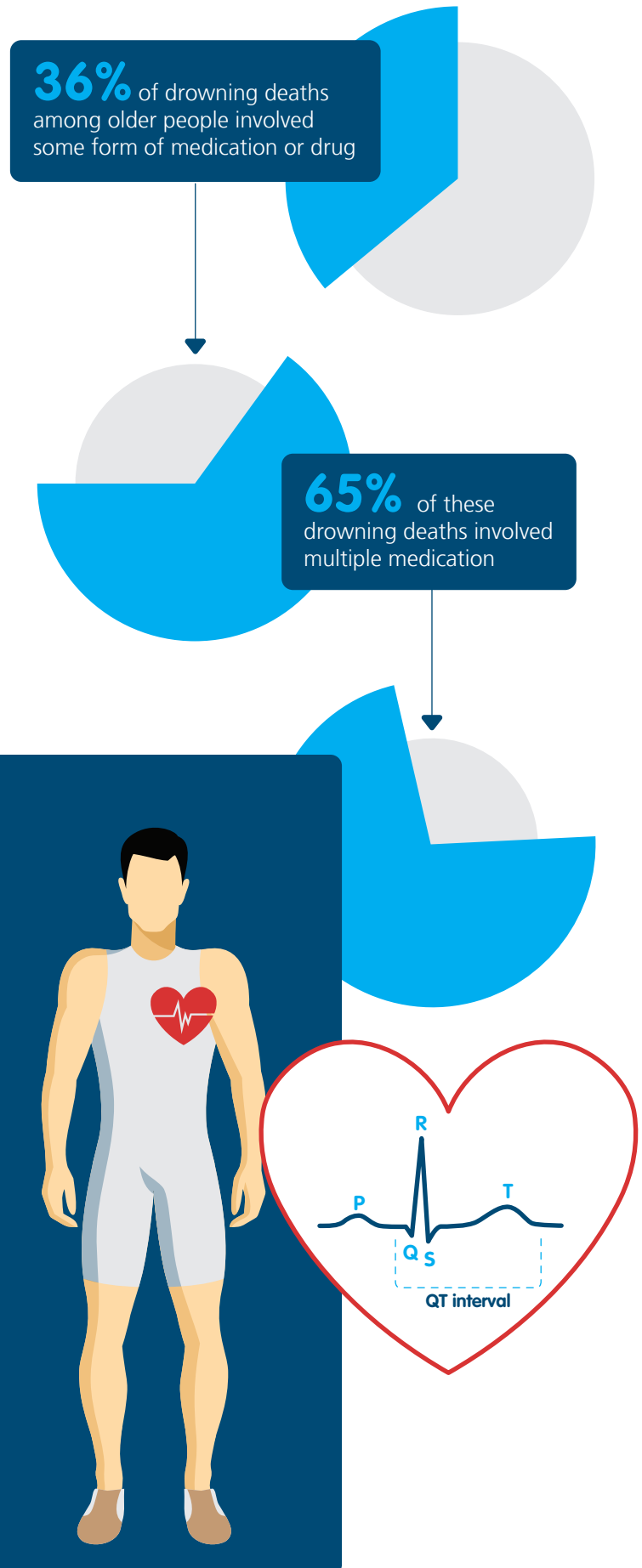


Effects of Medication on Drowning in Older People

As people age, changes occur in the way their bodies process medications, and the benefit/risk profile of a medication can change.

Chronic medical conditions are more common in ageing populations¹⁰ which means older people are more likely to be prescribed several medications.¹⁰⁻¹¹ Multiple drug interactions can be complex and can increase the incidence of side effects in older individuals,¹¹⁻¹² which can increase the risk of drowning in this group.

Drowning data from 2008/09 to 2017/18 suggests that, for unintentional fatal drownings in older people, an estimated 36% were taking some form of medication or drug. Of these, 65% of drownings involved multiple drugs. Of these individuals, 72% involved medication that is a known or conditional risk of propagating drug-induced long QT syndrome and Torsades de Pointes.¹³⁻¹⁴





Speedo

Highlander's
Mansfield Blue
Water Challenge
DIVE ENGINE

RECOMMENDATIONS



Target drowning prevention interventions and advocacy messaging to older people to highlight the risks of recreating in and around water alone.



Focus drowning prevention interventions and advocacy on the issue of pre-existing medical conditions, and the potential side effects of prescription medication that could increase the risk of drowning.



Use current data to target drowning prevention interventions to people aged 65 years and older in the local areas where they reside, particularly in remote and very remote locations.



Encourage safe aquatic activity at public aquatic facilities to improve overall physical and mental health and wellbeing among older people.



Review the role of medication in increasing the risk of drowning in older people.



Investigate the potential link between drowning and medication known to propagate long QT syndrome and Torsades de Pointes ventricular tachycardia.