

# Royal Life Saving Summer Drowning Report 2024/25

An investigation into drowning across  
Australia between 1 December 2024  
and 28 February 2025



**ROYAL LIFE SAVING**  
AUSTRALIA

SUPPORTED BY



Australian Government

## ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA

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Royal Life Saving Australia (RLSA) 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 Australia 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.

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### > OUR VISION

# A water-loving nation free from drowning.

 [RoyalLifeSaving.com.au](https://RoyalLifeSaving.com.au)

**Printed copies of this document are available upon request. Please contact:**

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



Australian Government

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### 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.

## BACKGROUND

Royal Life Saving (RLS) has tracked and reported drowning deaths over summer since the 2018/19 summer season.

Motivated to provide a clear summary of the drowning situation over summer, in December of 2018, RLS started tracking and reporting drowning deaths captured in media sources. In part as a response to various outlets collating their own inconsistent records of people drowning over summer, the core purpose of the RLS Summer Drowning Toll is to inform the public and media of drowning deaths in real time using a systematic and consistent approach.

The Summer Drowning Toll is publicly accessible on the Royal Life Saving website and updated daily from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December to the 28th February. The numbers provided represent a record of all drowning deaths reported in the media during the summer months. This information is also informed by the Victorian Coroners Prevention Unit through Life Saving Victoria, and Surf Life Saving Australia incident reports.

Importantly, the deaths reported in the Summer Drowning Toll are not yet under investigation from the coroner. This information should therefore be considered interim and will be different to the confirmed drowning deaths published in the National Drowning Report released later in the year.

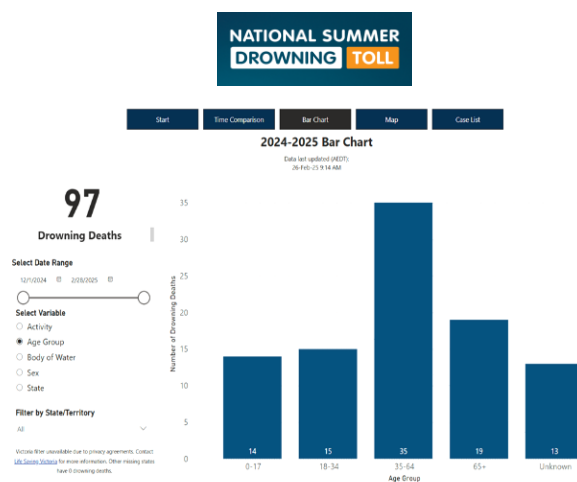
Ultimately, the Summer Drowning Toll is a helpful tool for timely tracking of drowning deaths, but RLS cautions against relying only on data from one summer to make important decisions regarding drowning prevention policy, funding, or programmes. While interim summer numbers will shift from year to year, drowning prevention strategy and action should be guided by long-term trends and patterns.

### Summer Drowning Toll Dashboard

This summer RLS was pleased to deploy the Summer Drowning Toll on an interactive data dashboard. The new system allowed users to compare this summer's numbers to last summer and the previous 5-year average, as well as select variables to evaluate on the national level or filtered by state. The dashboard improved the ability for media and drowning prevention organisations to quickly access information in a visual format.

### Aims

- › Record and report summer drowning deaths that were reported in the media between 1 December 2024 and 28 February 2025
- › Compare summer trends of drowning deaths reported in the media from the previous five years (2019/20 up to 2023/24)



2024/25 Summer Drowning Toll Dashboard



Scan or Click the QR code to visit the Summer Drowning Toll section of the RLS website and view the Dashboard

# SUMMER DROWNING REPORT 2024/25 SNAPSHOT

Summer 2024/25



Summer 2023/24



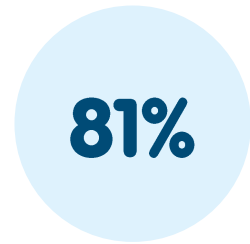
5-Year Summer Average  
2019/20 – 2023/24



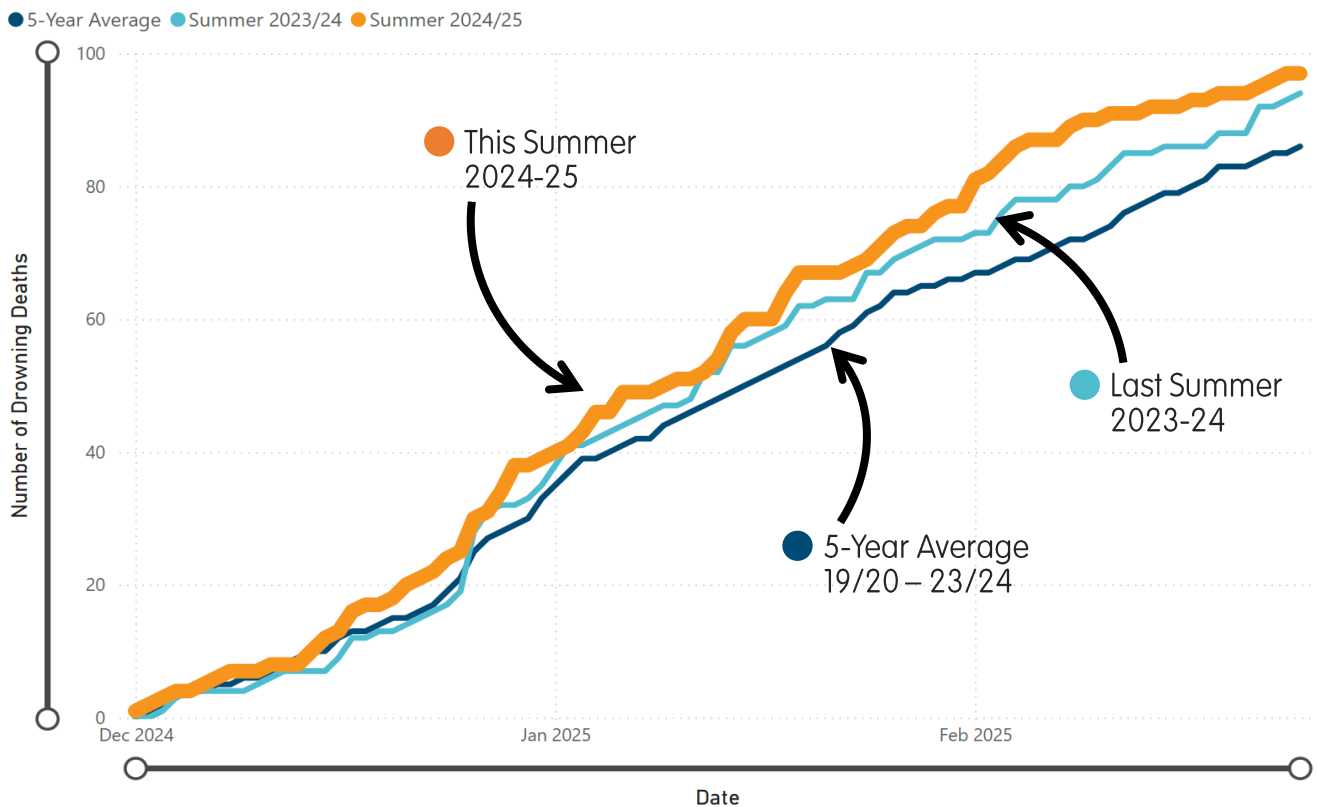
Average number of cases per day



Were aged **55 years and over**



**Males** accounted for drowning



Number of 2024/25 summer drowning deaths reported in the media compared to last summer and the five-year average

# SUMMER DROWNING REPORT 2024/25 SNAPSHOT

## SUMMER 2024/25

1 December 2024 to 28 February 2025

## SUMMER 2023/24

1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024



### MONTH



### MONTH



### SEX



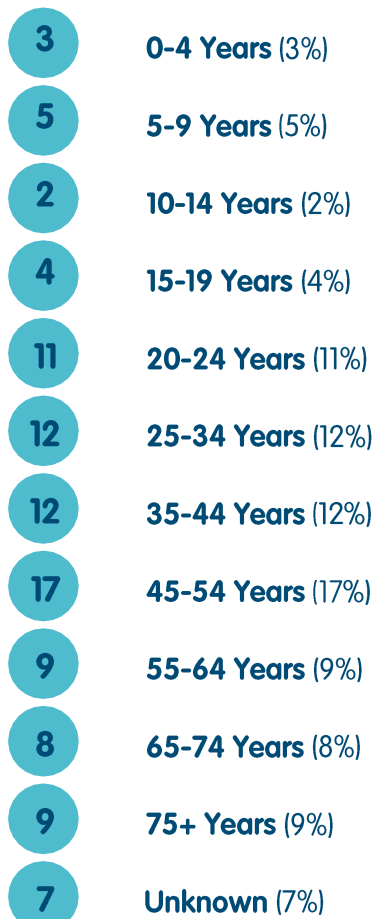
### SEX



### AGE



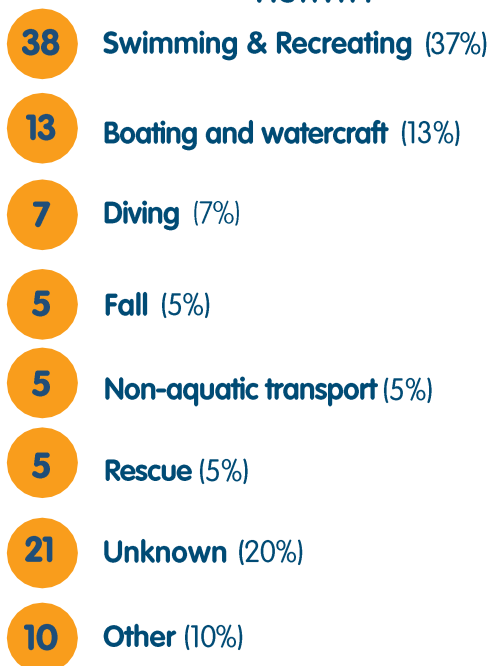
### AGE



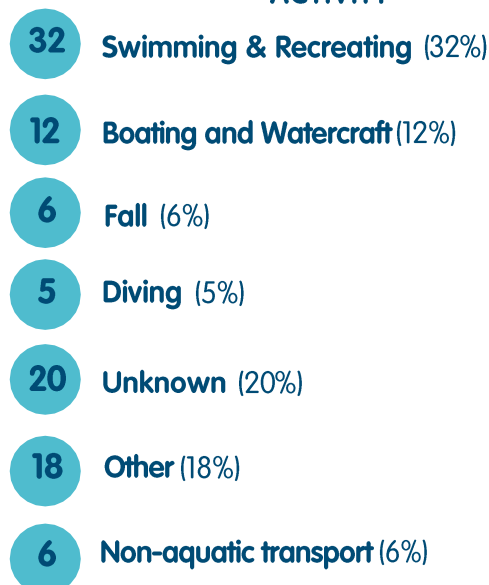
**SUMMER 2024/25**  
1 December 2024 to 28 February 2025

**SUMMER 2023/24**  
1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024

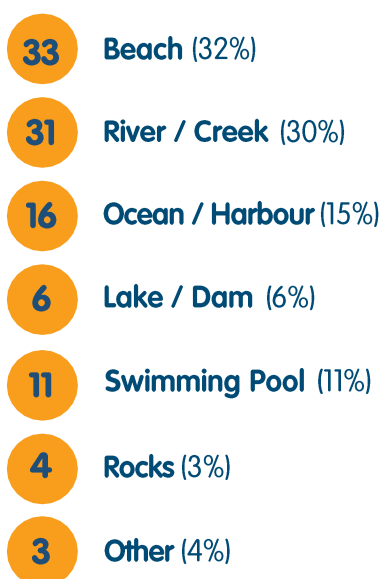
**ACTIVITY**



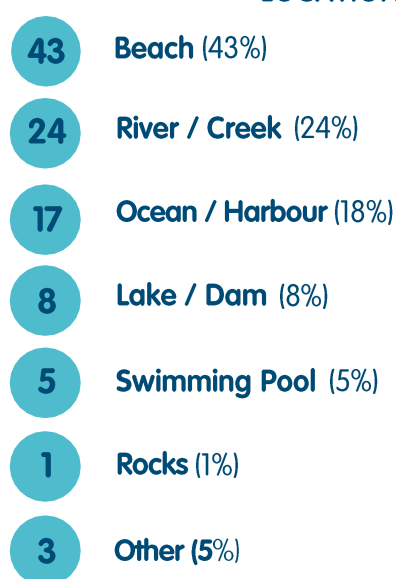
**ACTIVITY**



**LOCATION**



**LOCATION**



**Definitions**

**Activity - Other** includes includes jumped in, fishing and rock fishing, swept away and swept in.

**Location - Other** includes pond, storm drain, bathtub/spa bath

**Disclaimer – Media Analysis Only**

2024/25 figures shown are derived from media reports only. As such, they should be considered interim, pending the outcome of ongoing coronial investigations.

These numbers are likely to be different when final drowning deaths are reported in the National Drowning Report released in September.

2023/24 figures are derived from media reports from last summer and may be different from final numbers published in the 2024 National Drowning Report that were finalised from coronial statistics.

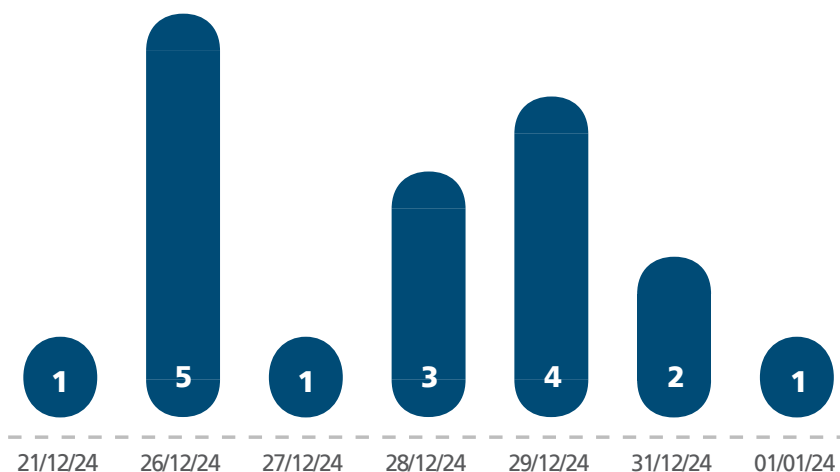
# HOLIDAY PERIOD INSIGHTS: PEAK DROWNING PERIOD

## 25 DECEMBER 2024 TO 1 JANUARY 2025

### Between 25 December 2024 and 1 January 2025



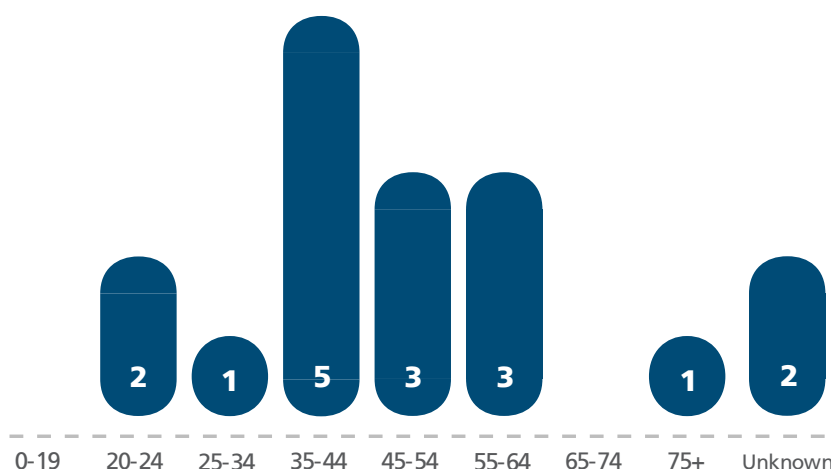
Between Monday 25 December and Tuesday 1 January, was the highest period of drowning incidents, representing 17% of total drowning over the summer. Boxing day (26<sup>th</sup> December) had the highest number of drowning deaths (n=5) over the summer period. Males represented 76% of drowning deaths during the holiday period.



Number of drowning deaths each day of the 2024/25 holiday period

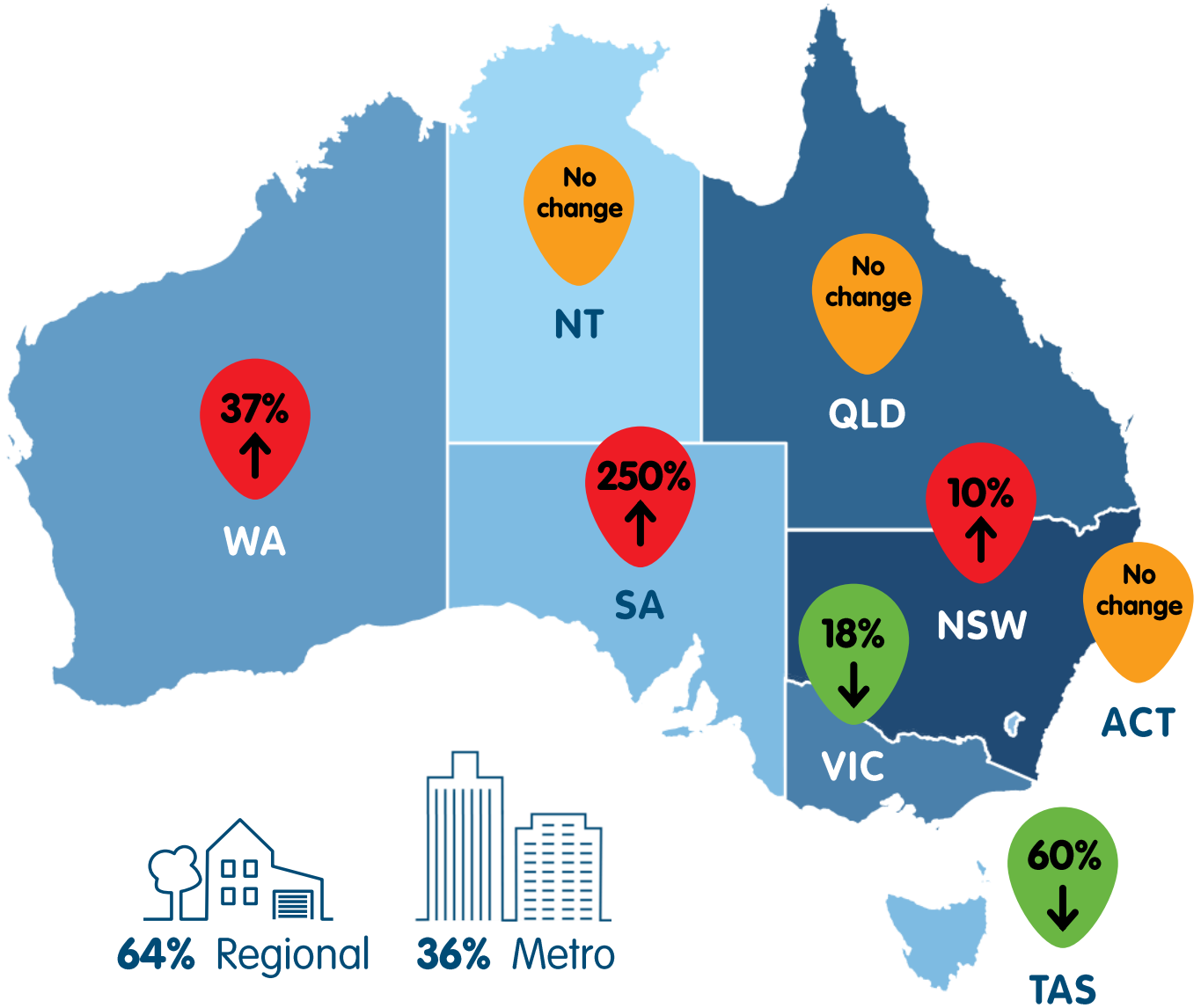
The highest age group that drowned during the summer Christmas period was the 35–44-year age group, representing 29% of drowning deaths. Males accounted for most of these incidents, highlighting the ongoing trend of higher drowning risk among men, potentially due to risk taking behaviors.

Most drowning deaths occurred in Queensland (n=6) and New South Wales (NSW) (n=4). Top activities prior to drowning was swimming/recreating (n=5), followed by rescue (n=3). Beaches were the highest location for drowning during the Christmas period (n=8), followed by rivers/creeks (n=5).



Number of drowning by age group in the 2024/25 holiday period

State and Territory breakdown with percentage change from last year



**SUMMER 2024/25**  
1 December 2024 to 28 February 2025

**SUMMER 2023/24**  
1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024

STATE OR TERRITORY

<b>1</b> ACT (1%)	<b>7</b> SA (6%)
<b>33</b> NSW (32%)	<b>2</b> TAS (2%)
<b>1</b> NT (1%)	<b>22</b> VIC (21%)
<b>22</b> QLD (22%)	<b>15</b> WA (15%)

STATE OR TERRITORY

<b>1</b> ACT (1%)	<b>2</b> SA (2%)
<b>30</b> NSW (31%)	<b>5</b> TAS (5%)
<b>1</b> NT (1%)	<b>27</b> VIC (28%)
<b>22</b> QLD (23%)	<b>11</b> WA (10%)



## METHODS

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### Collation of summer drowning cases

The data collated for this report are derived primarily from media reports of drowning deaths that occurred between 1 December 2024 and 28 February 2025.

**As such, these numbers should be considered interim, pending the outcome of ongoing coronial investigations.**

Drowning data for Victoria are drawn from a combination of media reports and data from the Coroners Prevention Unit. Historical drowning numbers used for this report have been derived from previous years Summer Drowning Tolls for comparative purposes, which are also from media monitoring, therefore numbers will not be the same as that reported in National Drowning Reports. Consistent with all Royal Life Saving drowning reports, where deaths were known to be a result of suicide or homicide, deaths from natural causes, shark and crocodile attack were excluded. The data included in this report are accurate to the best of the authors knowledge and as per the information available at the time. At the time of completing this report, 90 per cent of cases were under coronial investigation.

### Definitions

The circumstances of the drowning incident were coded into defined variables for analysis related to age, sex, location of the incident, activity being undertaken and local health region.

## LIMITATIONS

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As indicated throughout the report, the figures regarding drowning deaths over summer 2024/25 should be regarded as interim until ongoing coronial investigations have been finalised. Following the conclusion of formal investigations, relevant documentation will be assessed, including autopsy reports, toxicology reports and coroner's findings.

It is possible that the formal investigation of some cases may result in a change in the assigned cause of death. For example, a case may be determined to be due to natural causes, rather than drowning. This is why the final number of drowning deaths that occurred in summer reported in the Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report (released in September) will differ.

Risk factors commonly reported in Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report, such as the presence of alcohol and drugs, lifejackets, swimming ability were unknown at the time of writing and unlikely to be known until the coronial investigation has been conducted.





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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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