

# WAID 2025 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

This report details the 2025 release of water-related fatality data. An interactive version of this report can be found online [here](#). Please be aware that this trend report uses enhanced five-year WAID data (2019 to 2023). This means that overall numbers, outcomes and some fatality details (e.g. location, ages, sex) may differ to previously published data tables and reports (more information on the enhanced data can be accessed [here](#)).

## Overall water-related fatalities

In 2025, there were 88 water-related fatalities in Scotland from all recorded causes. Although water-related fatalities in 2025 have increased compared with 2024, they remain below the long term average and are significantly lower than the levels recorded in 2021.

All outcomes are reported in Scotland since the introduction of the **Drowning and Incident Review (DIR)** in May 2023; however, some cases remain classified as “Inconclusive”. For further information on DIR and how this links with WAID data, see the notes page.

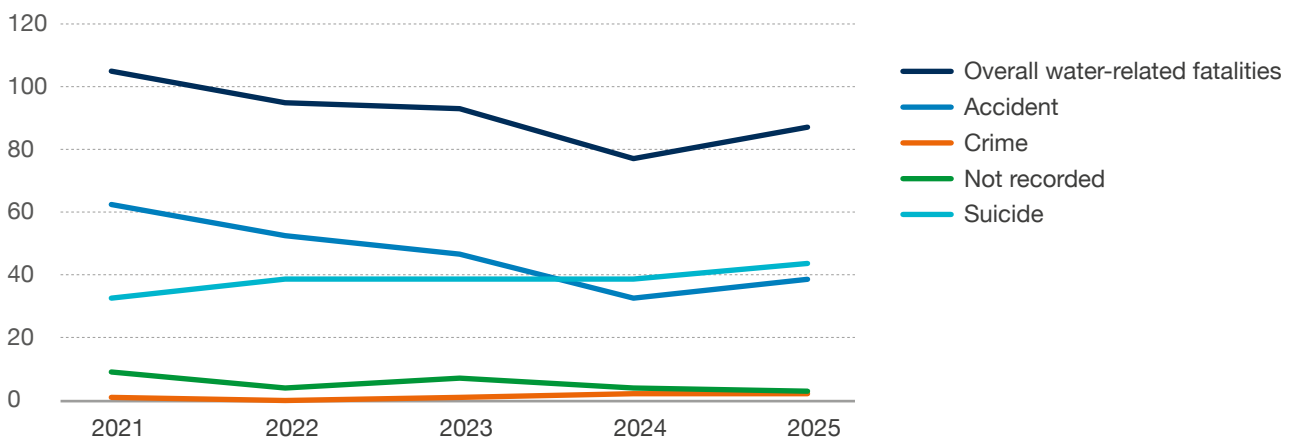


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by year (2021-2025)

**The 2025 figures show that overall water-related fatalities are generally decreasing. When compared to Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) baseline and the Six Year Review average, the 2025 figures are below both (see Figure 2).**

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013-2015 average)	96
Six Year Review average (2019-2023)	98
2021	106
2022	96
2023	94
2024	78
2025	88

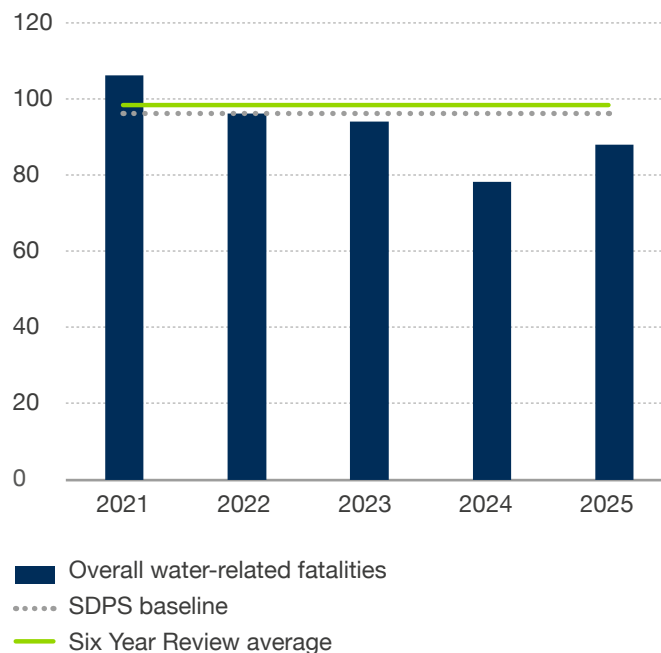


Figure 2: Overall water-related fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Six Year Review average (2019-2023)

## Accidental fatalities

In 2025, there were 39 accidental fatalities in Scotland. **This is a 22 per cent decrease in comparison to the SDPS baseline and a 13 per cent decrease in comparison to the Six Year Review average** (see Figure 3).

Year	Accidental fatalities
SDPS Baseline (2013-2015 average)	50
Six Year Review average (2019-2023)	45
2021	63
2022	53
2023	47
2024	33
2025	39

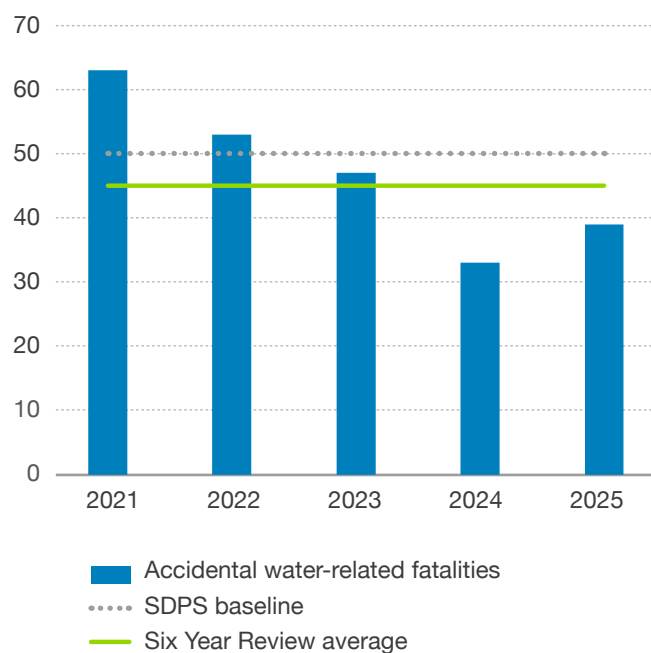


Figure 3: Accidental fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Six Year Review average (2019-2023)

1 Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

## Key points

The remainder of this WAID report is based entirely on data from the DIR and does not use WAID data. It may therefore differ to the online WAID dashboard.

The DIR dataset is maintained as a live resource and can be accessed online. The analysis presented reflects the position of the data as of May 2026.

In 2025:

- There were 39 accidental fatalities<sup>2</sup>
- 84 per cent of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 60 to 69 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 4)
- 55 per cent of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters (see Figure 5)
- Recreational activities accounted for 73% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 6)
- 2 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol
- The rate of accidental water-related fatalities is below the SDPS baseline and the Six Year Review average. In 2025, the accidental water-related fatality rate was 0.70 (see Figure 7)
- When considering the population rate, males aged 60 to 69 were the highest group (see Figure 8)
- August was the month with the most accidental fatalities (see Figure 9).

<sup>2</sup> There were 39 accidental fatalities identified; however, one case did not progress to a DIR and has therefore been excluded. Subsequent analysis is based on the remaining 38 fatalities, except where noted.

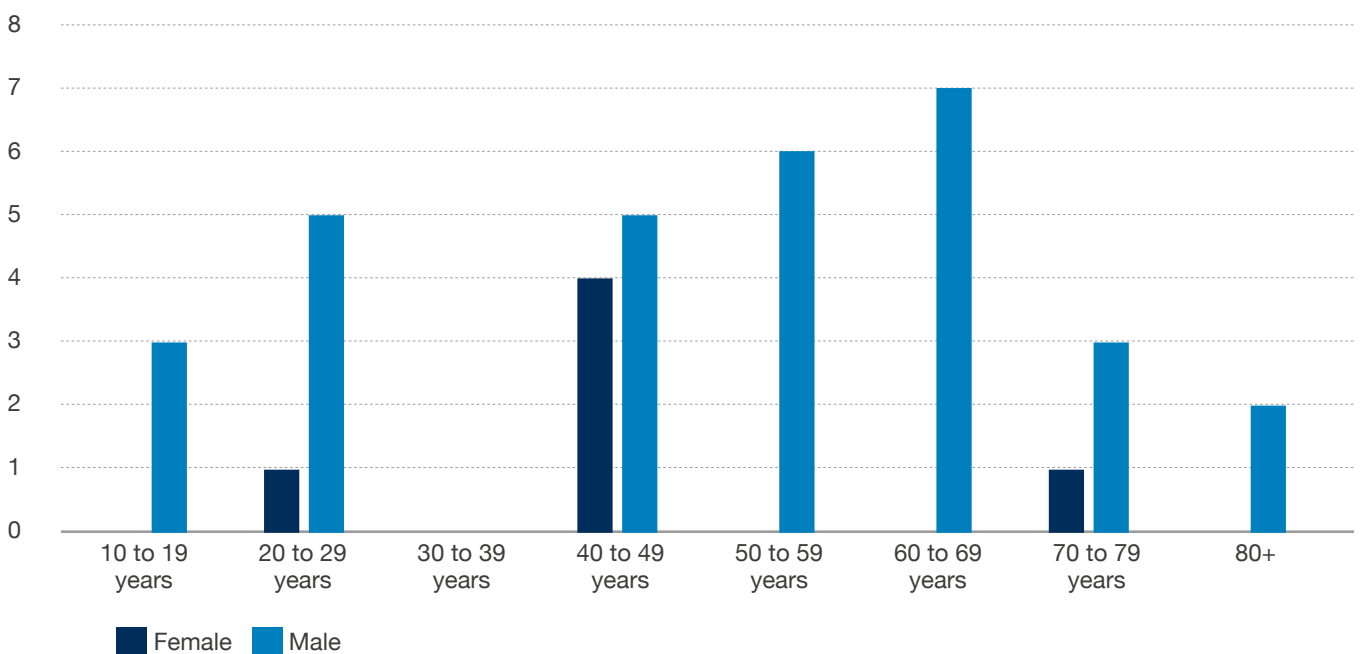


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by age. n=37, 1 excluded

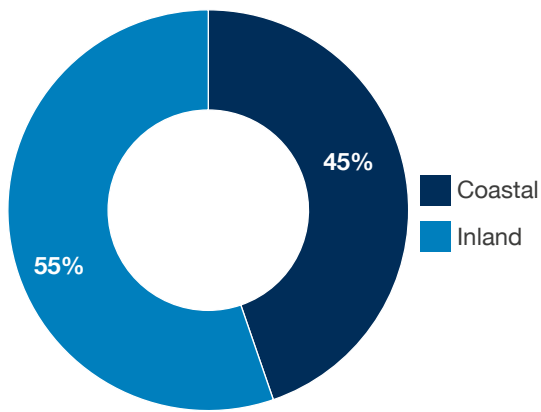


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by location. n=38

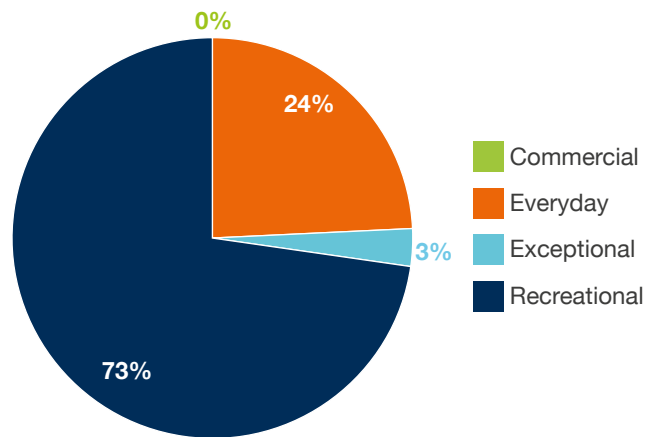


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by activity. n=33, 5 excluded

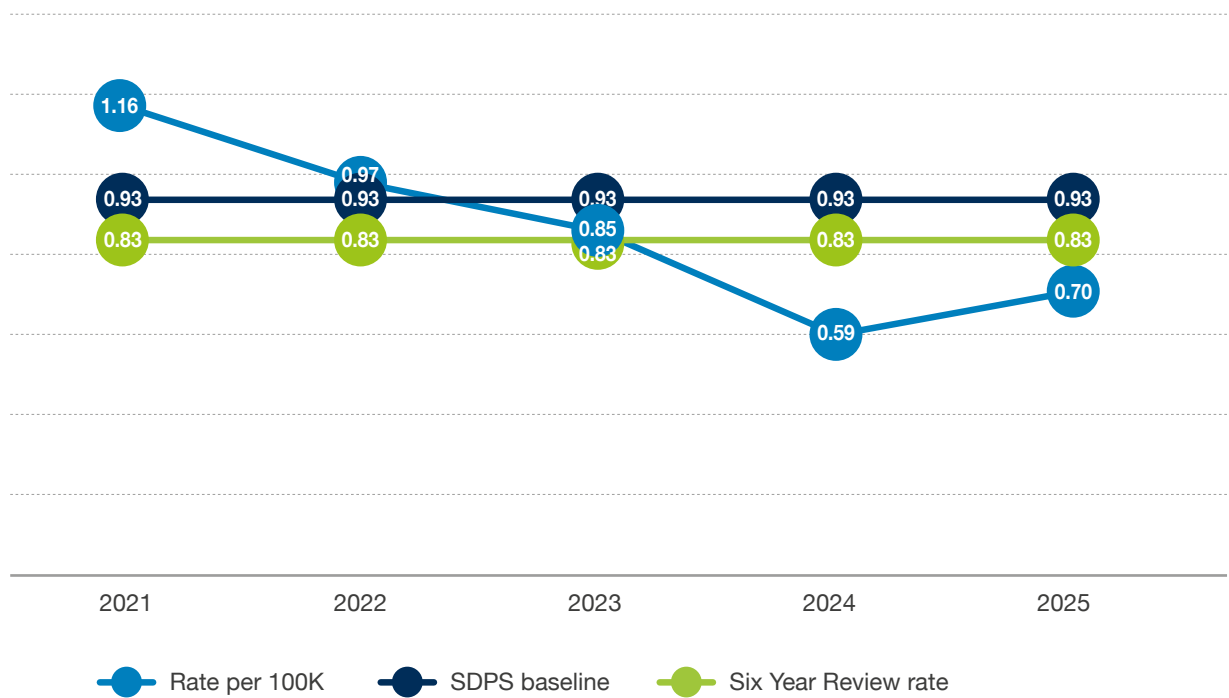


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by year and rate (2020-2024) vs SPDS baseline rate and six year review average. Rates based on NRS figures per 100,000, n=39

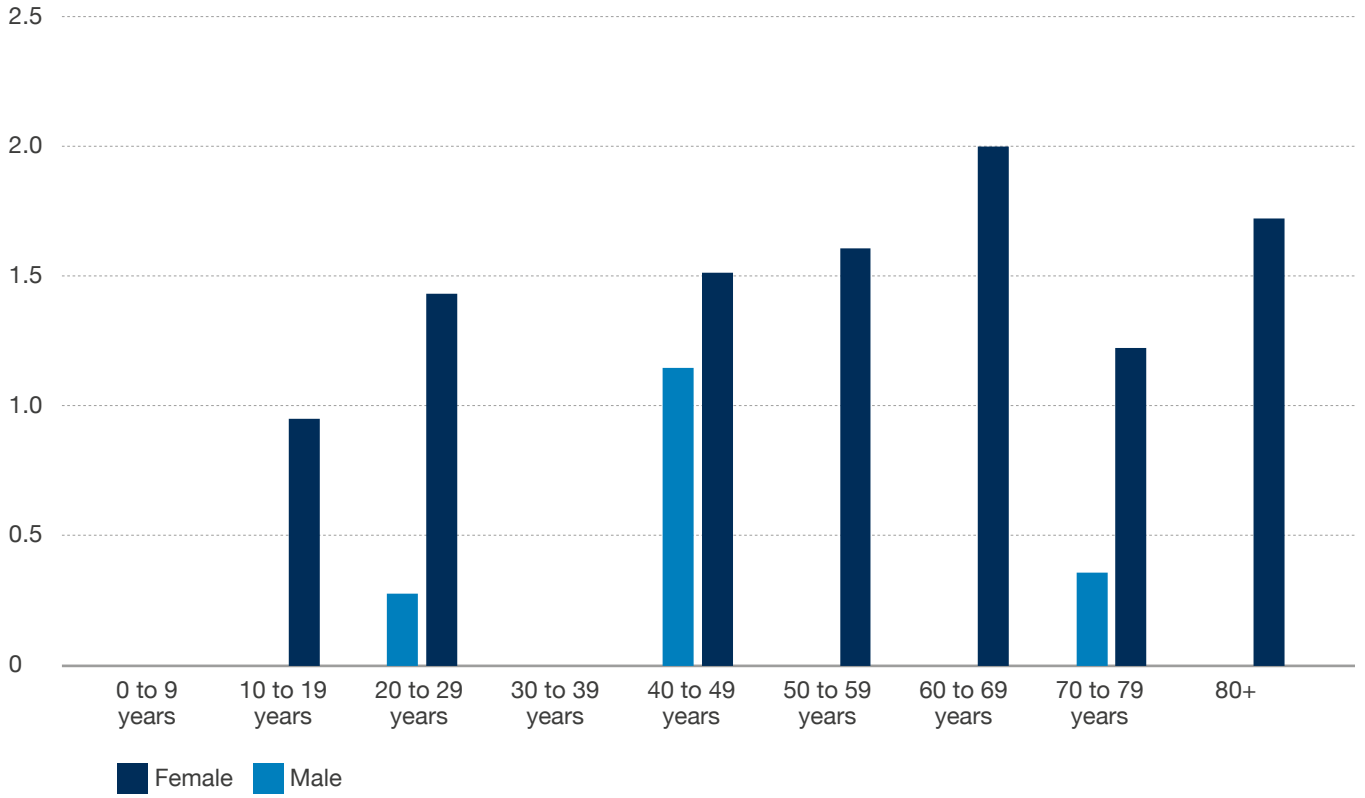


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000). n=37, 1 excluded

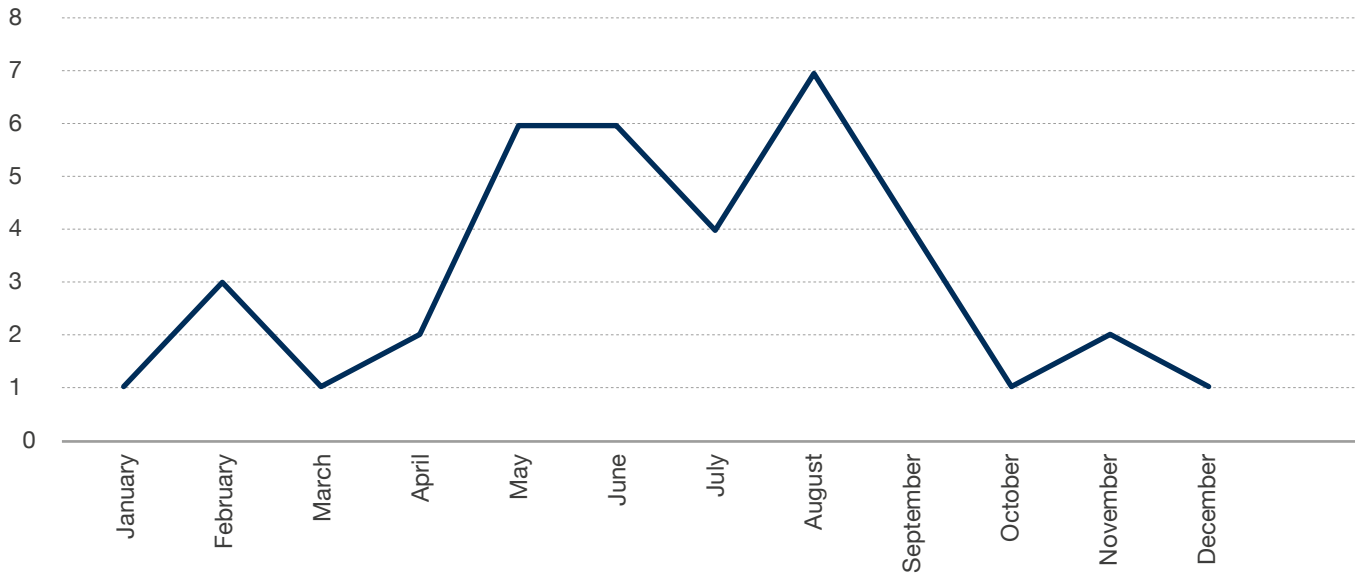


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by month, n=38

## Suicide fatalities

In 2025, there were 44 suicide fatalities at or near water in Scotland. This is an increase on previous years and a 52 per cent increase in comparison to the SDPS baseline.

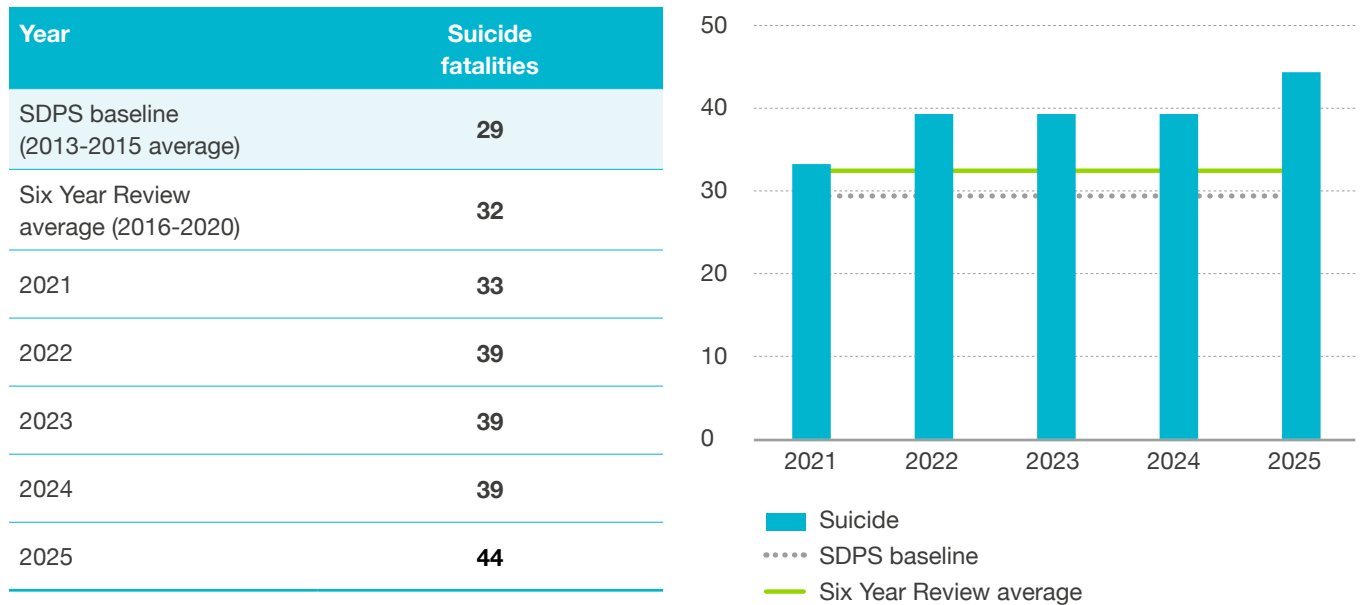


Figure 10: Suicide fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013-2015) and Six year review average (2019-2023)

## Notes

All data used are from WAID 2019 to 2023 (v2) and 2024 to 2025 (v1).

“Accidental fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed accidental causes and natural water-related causes.

“Suicide fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed suicide causes.

Population rate figures use ONS mid-year data. As official 2025 mid-year estimates have not yet been published, the 2024 population is used as a baseline.

Figures 5 and 6 exclude “ungrouped activities”.

### Baseline figures

The Scotland baseline is based upon 2013 to 2015 WAID data – as detailed in Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) – and shows 96 water-related fatalities per year. 50 of which are accidental, 29 are suicide and the remainder are ‘not recorded’ or crime.

The Six Year Review of SDPS provided updated averages (years 2019 to 2023) to ascertain changes to the baseline. It established that since the implementation of SDPS, there were an average of 98 overall water-related fatalities per year including 45 accidental fatalities and 32 suspected suicides.

### Drowning and Incident Review data and WAID

The Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) dashboard is more accurate and provides live data updated monthly:

[watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/drowning-and-incident-review/dir-dashboard](https://watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/drowning-and-incident-review/dir-dashboard)

Scene and Outcome Review (SOR) data from the Drowning Incident Review (DIR) process has been used in this report and aligned with WAID data to classify water-related fatality outcomes from Scotland. While the two sources can differ in their raw form due to differences in classification, these discrepancies have been addressed. In particular, incidents recorded in WAID as “potential fatalities” or missing persons—where no body has been recovered and the Procurator Fiscal has not confirmed a fatality—have been reviewed and excluded. As these cases are not classified as fatalities within the DIR process, their removal ensures consistency between datasets.

### WAID taxonomies

WAID taxonomies for activity include:

- ‘Everyday activities’ – running, walking, cycling, mobility vehicle, motor other, commuting
- ‘Recreational activities’ – adventure sports, angling, boating (other), motorboating, sailing, waterside activities
- ‘Commercial activities’ – only includes those categorised as ‘commercial’
- ‘Exceptional activities’ – person/animal rescue, person on ice, flooding
- ‘Ungrouped activities’ – bathing, residential, unknown activity, undetermined.