



England Drowning Prevention Strategy 2026

Annex 1: England Data Tables





Understanding the issue (data)

The following data are taken from the updated dataset used in the [WAID Enhancement Project](#). This is v2 of the published 2019 to 2023 data and is the most up-to-date and accurate dataset.

Water-related fatality data snapshot

- Over the five years (2019 to 2023) 2,306 people lost their life due to a water-related fatality
- Accidental outcomes accounted for 42 per cent (957 people)
- On average, each year, there are 191 water-related accidental fatalities in England
- Eight in ten accidental water-related fatalities are male with accidental drownings are most frequent in males aged 20 to 29
- Over half of accidental water-related fatalities happened at inland locations (59 per cent)
- 39 per cent of accidental water-related fatalities happened in the summer season
- The majority of fatalities (47 per cent) occurred during a recreational activity
- Alcohol/drugs were reported as being present in 34 per cent of fatalities.

Overall water-related fatalities

There were 2,306 water-related fatalities in the England between 2019 and 2023. Accidental outcomes accounted for 42 per cent of these (n=957).

The average number of overall water-related fatalities was 461 per year, of which 90 fatalities were inconclusive outcomes, which may be later classified as suicide, crime or accidental.

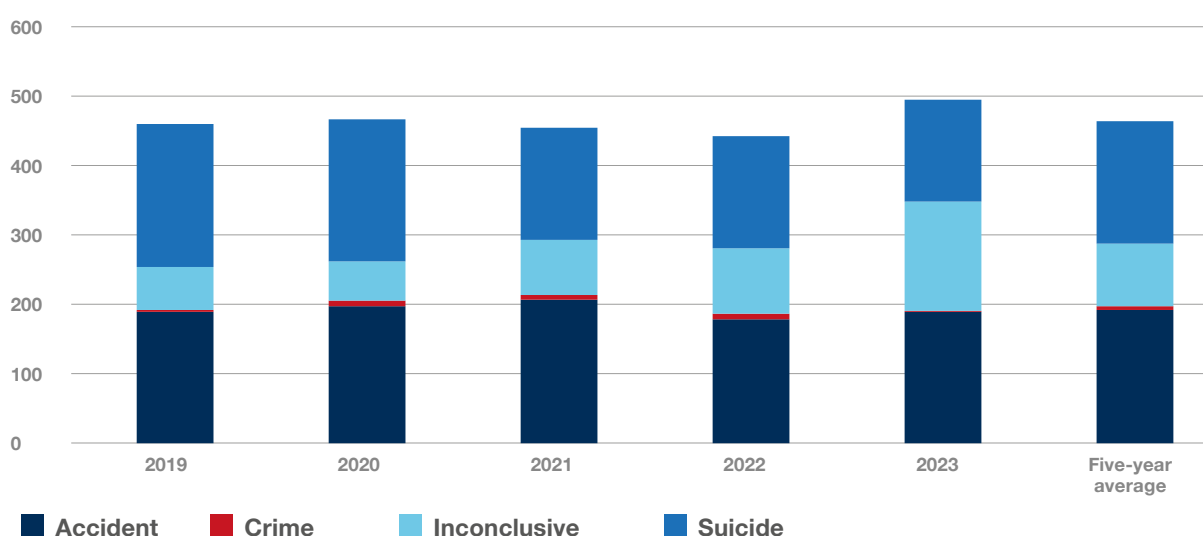


Figure 1: Overall water-related fatalities by outcome, year and five-year average



Accidental fatalities

There were 957 accidental water-related fatalities in England between 2019 and 2023. The average number of accidental water-related fatalities was 191 per year (see Figure 2).

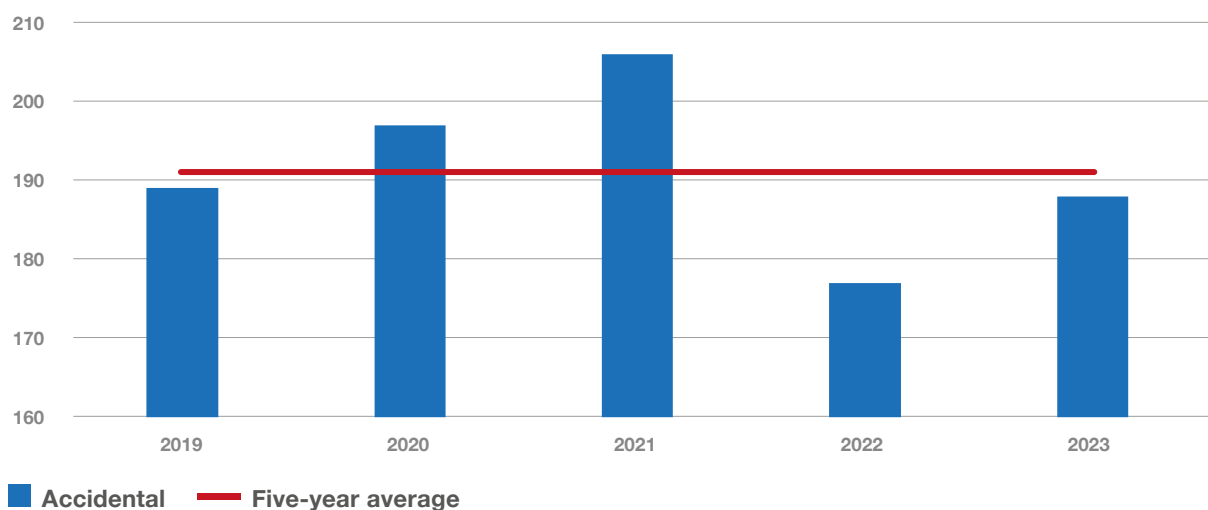


Figure 2: England water-related fatalities by year and five-year average

In terms of the rate per population, the average accidental water-related fatality rate per 100,000 people was 0.34, with accidental water-related fatalities generally increasing across the years (see Figure 3).

Five-year average estimated population	56,837,555
Accidental fatalities	191
Overall rate per 100,000 people	0.34

Table 1: Accidental water-related fatality rate per 100,000 people

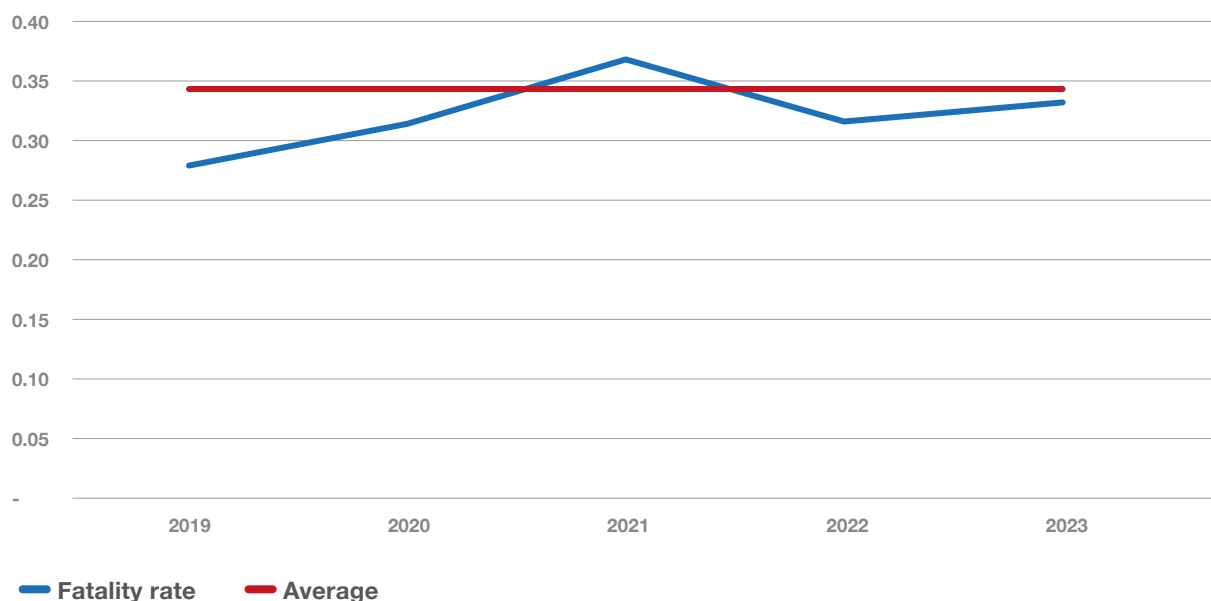


Figure 3: Accidental water-related fatality rate per 100,000 by year, England

Accidental water-related fatality data by demographics

Accidental drownings reflect normal everyday activities and happen throughout every stage of life. In every age group however, males are the most at-risk group, accounting for eight in ten of all accidental water-related fatality deaths (see Figure 4).

Accidental fatalities rise from late teens, with a distinct peak in males drowning in the 20 to 29 age group. Among females, those aged 20 to 29 and 50 to 59 are the most frequent casualties.

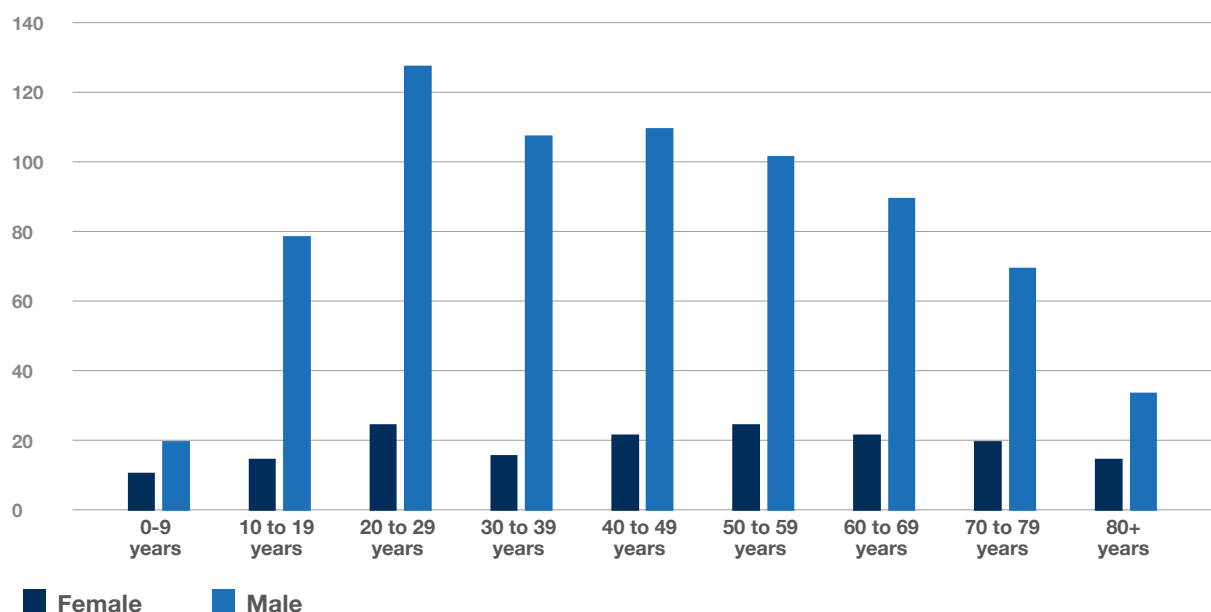


Figure 4: Accidental water-related fatalities by sex and age, five-year data (2019-2023), n=912 (45 excluded)



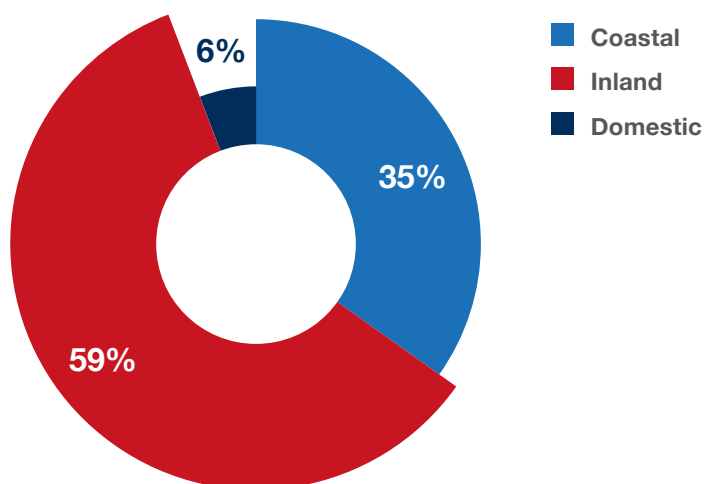
The average age of an accidental water-related fatality is 36.

- For males it is 35
- For females it is 39

Where do fatalities take place?

Over the five years (2019 to 2023), over half of accidental water-related fatalities happened at inland locations (n=552, 59 per cent) compared to coastal locations (n=324, 35 per cent) and domestic locations (n=54, 6 per cent) – see Figure 5.

Figure 5: Accidental water-related fatalities by location, five-year data (2019-2023), n=930 (27 excluded)



Inland locations

Inland locations refer to the following:

- River
- Lake/Loch/Lough
- Canal/Aqueduct
- Stream/Ditch/Burn
- Reservoir
- Pond (public realm)
- Dry ground
- Drain/Well/Pit/Culvert
- Quarry
- Marsh.

Of the 552 accidental water-related fatalities that occurred in inland locations over the five-year period (2019-2023), 267 were at rivers (48 per cent) followed by 111 (20 per cent) at canals/aqueducts (see Figure 6).

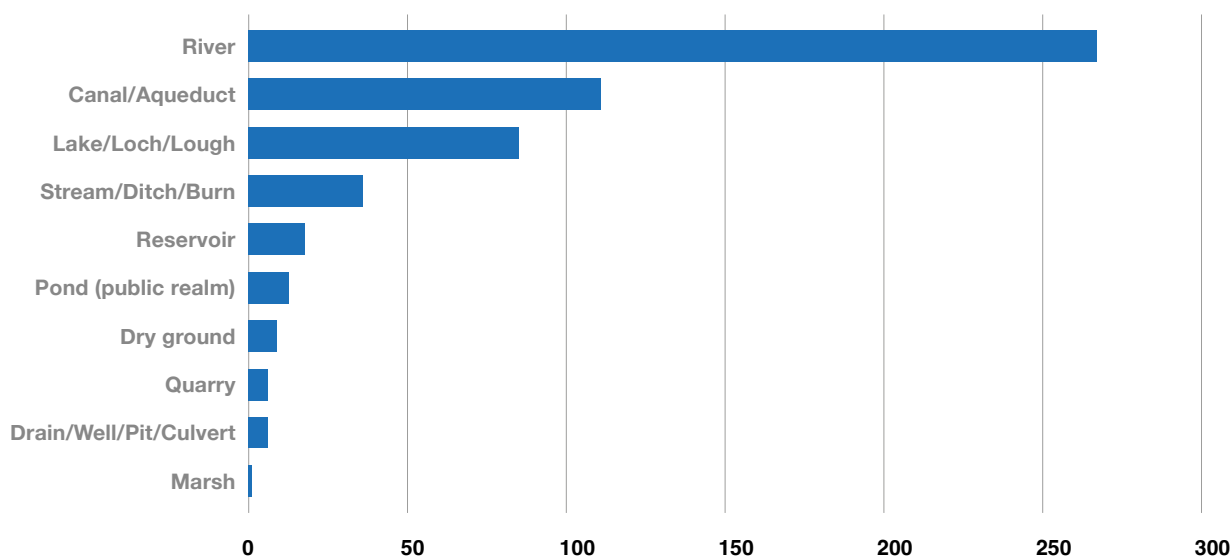


Figure 6: Accidental water-related fatalities at inland locations, five-year data (2019-2023), n=552

Coastal locations

Coastal locations refer to the following:

- Coast/Shore/Beach
- Harbour/Dock/Marina/Port
- At sea
- Estuary.

Of the 324 accidental water-related fatalities that occurred in coastal locations over the five-year period (2019 to 2023), 271 (84 per cent) were at the Coast/Shore/Beach (see Figure 7).

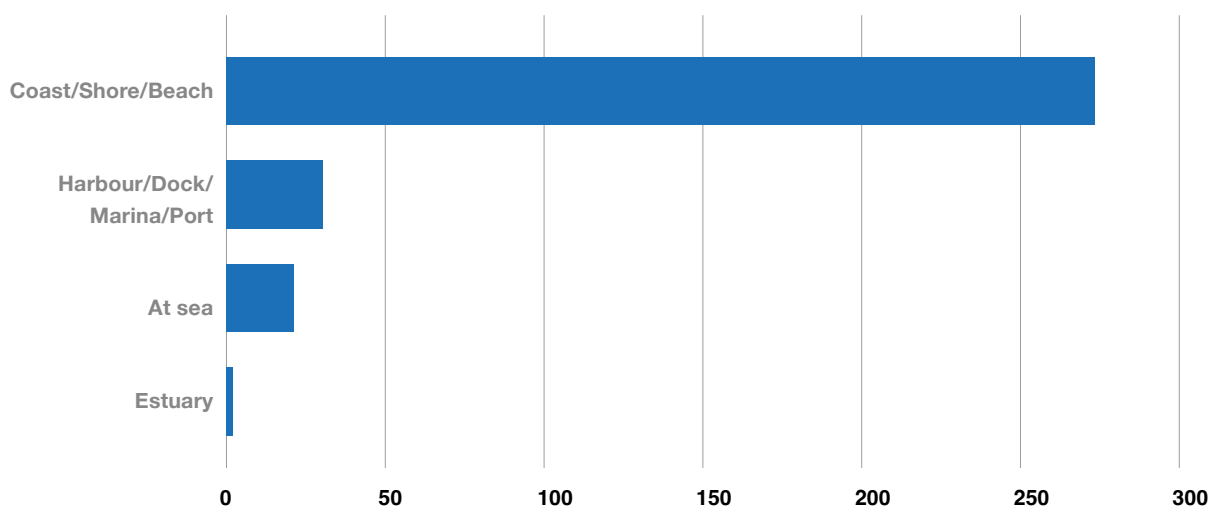


Figure 7: Accidental water-related fatalities at coastal locations, five-year data (2019-2023), n=324



Domestic locations

Domestic locations refer to the following:

- Bath
- Pond
- Hot tub
- Swimming pool
- Paddling pool
- Water container
- River
- Canal/Aqueduct
- Dry ground.

Of the 54 accidental water-related fatalities that occurred in domestic locations over the five-year period (2019 to 2023), 23 (43 per cent) were in baths (see Figure 8).

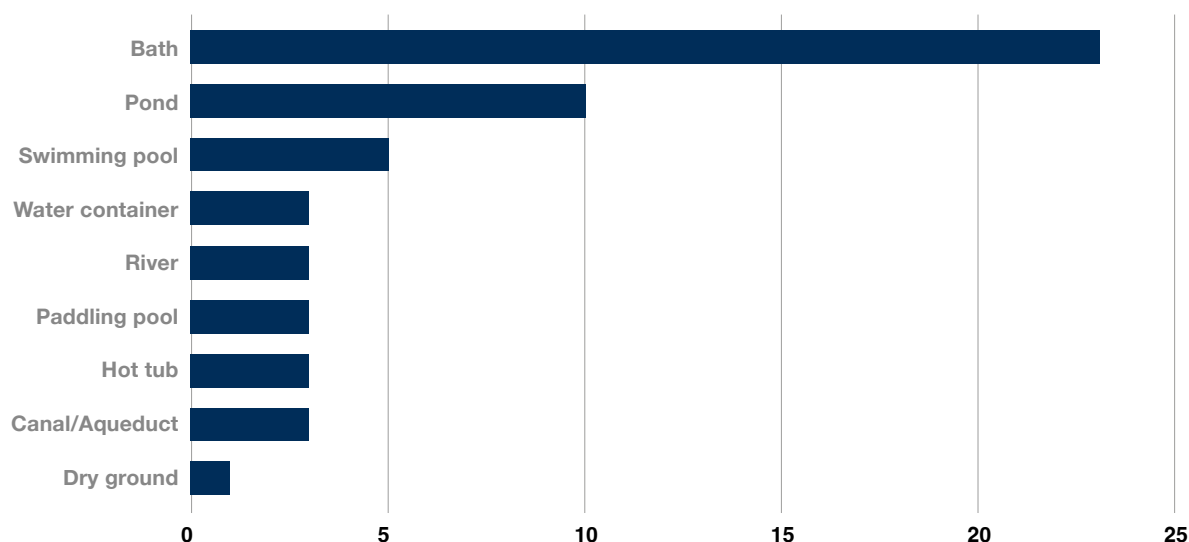


Figure 8: Accidental water-related fatalities at domestic locations, five-year data (2019-2023), n=54



When do accidental water-related fatalities take place?

Accidental water-related fatalities occur in every season of the year. However, fatalities tend to peak in the summer months (June, July, August), as can be seen in Figure 9, which shows 378 fatalities in the summer season (40 per cent).

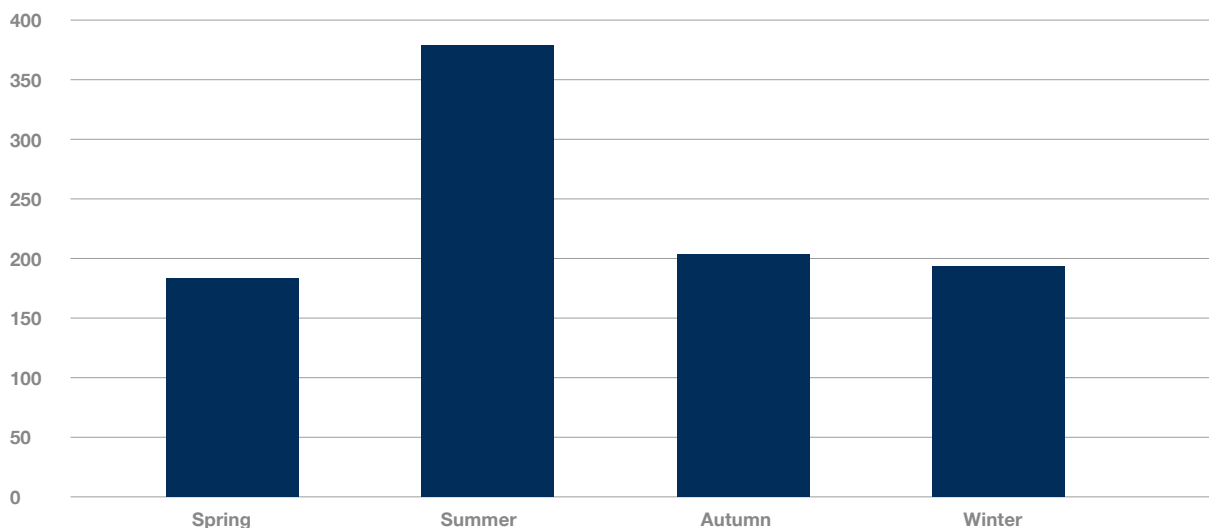


Figure 9: Accidental water-related fatalities by season, five-year data (2019-2023), n=957

By month, July recorded the highest proportion of accidental fatalities (n=139, 15 per cent), closely followed by August (n=136, 14 per cent) – see Figure 10.

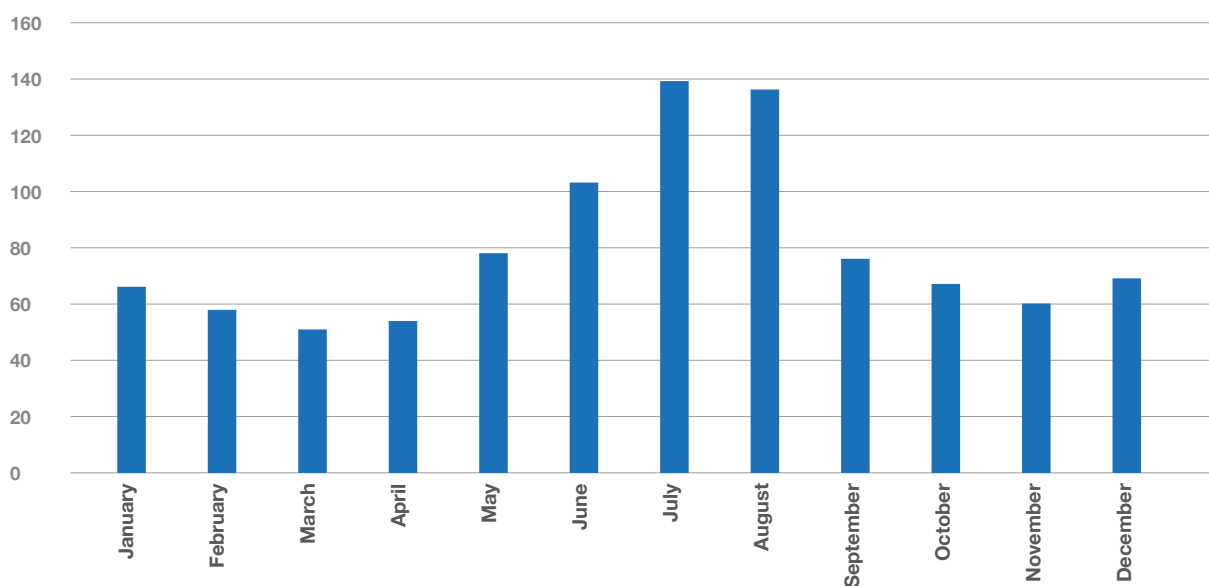


Figure 10: Accidental water-related fatalities by month, five-year data (2019-2023), n=957

When broken down by location, July continued to be the month with the highest number of reported accidental water-related fatalities for inland and domestic locations. At the coast, August had the highest number of reported accidental water-related fatalities (see Figure 11).

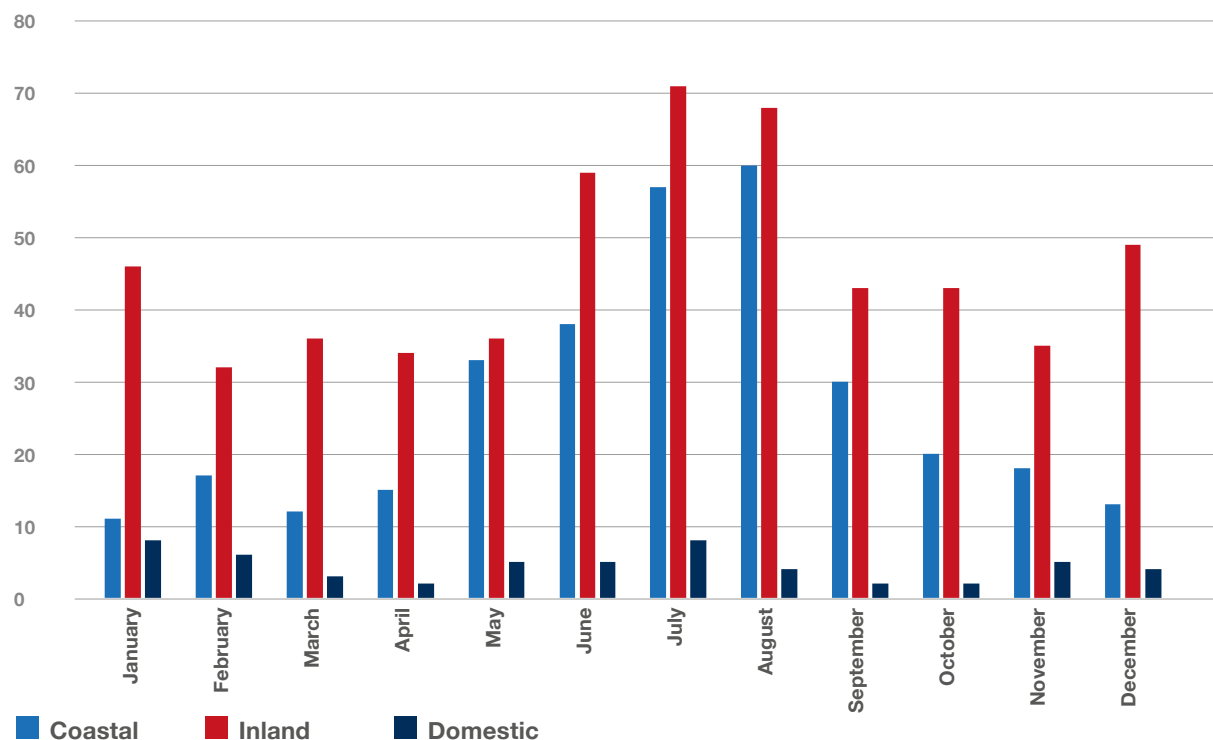


Figure 11: Accidental water-related fatalities by month and location, five-year data (2019-2023), n=930 (27 excluded)

Although accidental water-related fatalities happened across the full week, 346 (36 per cent) of them happened at the weekend (see Figure 12).

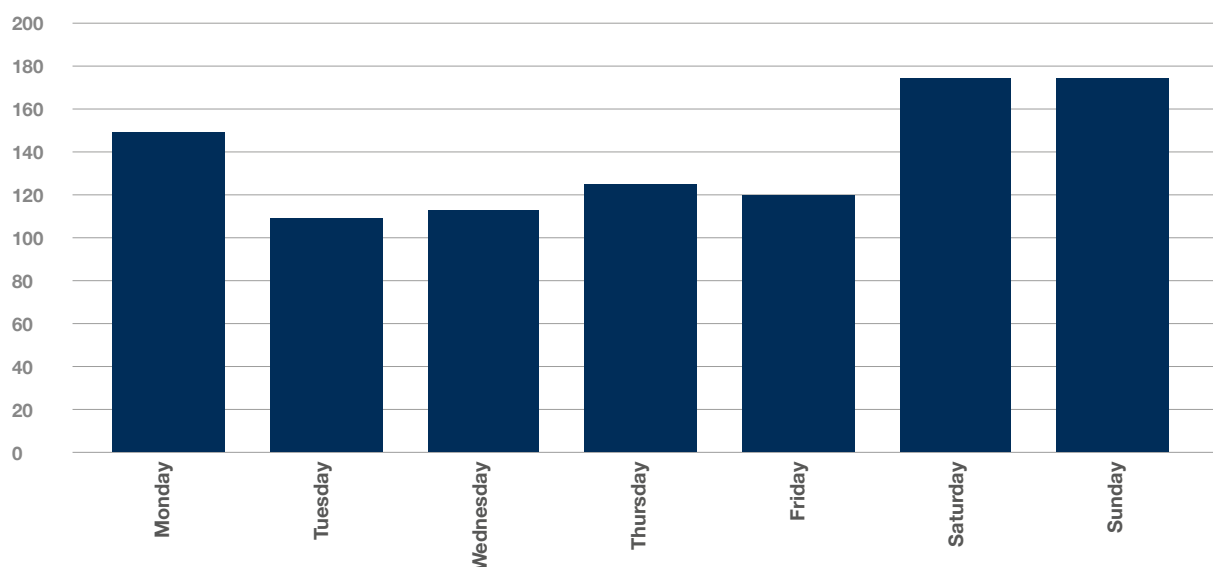


Figure 12: Accidental water-related fatalities by day of the week, n=957



Over the five-year period, when broken down by location, Saturdays and Sundays at inland locations reported the highest numbers of accidental water-related fatalities (see Figure 13).

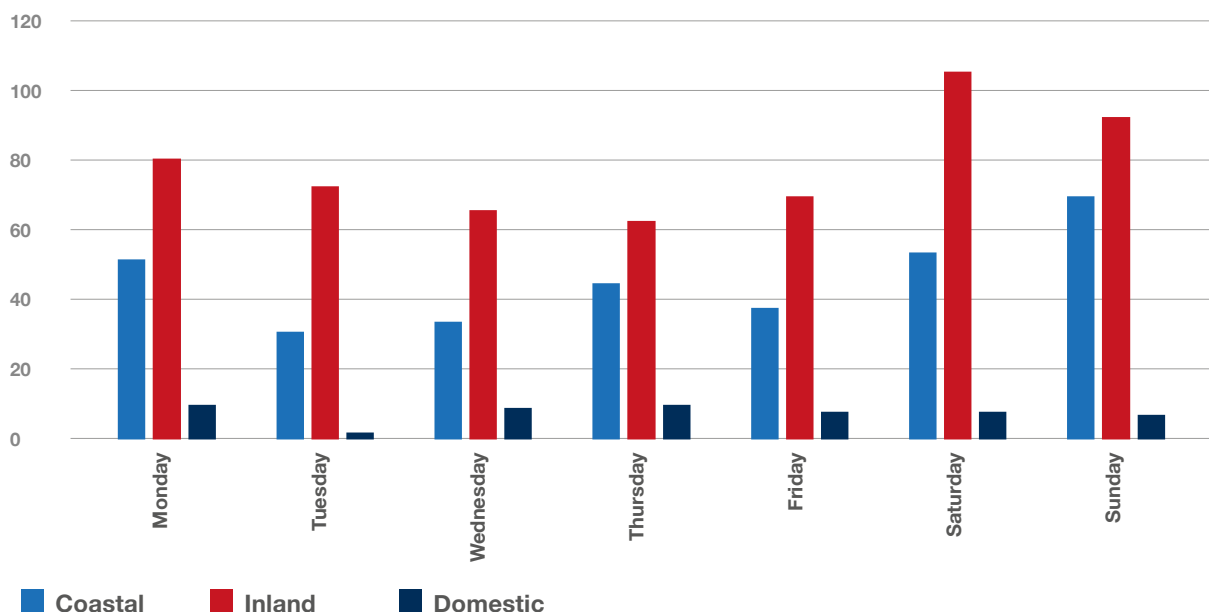
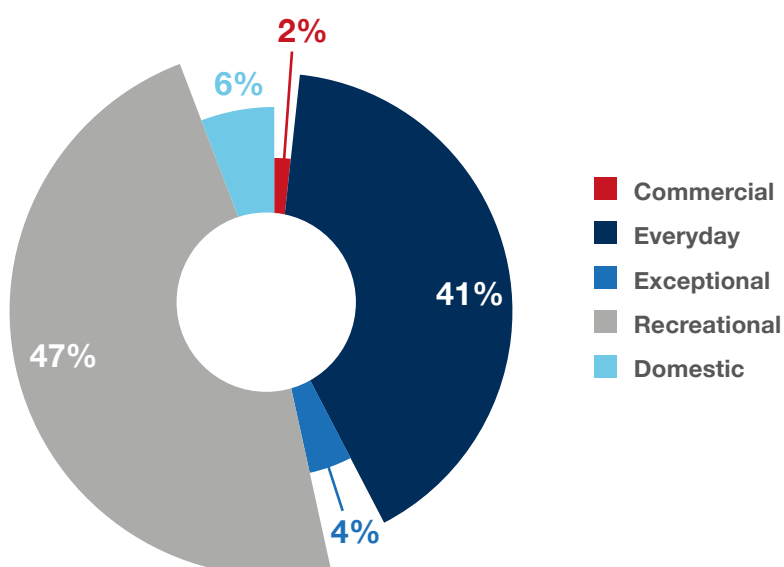


Figure 13: Accidental water-related fatalities by day of week and location, five-year data (2019-2023), n=930 (27 excluded)

What activities were people doing?

Accidental water-related fatalities occurred following a wide range of activities. The majority occurred following a recreational activity (n=443, 47 per cent), whilst 41 per cent (n=378) occurred during everyday activities which would not involve entering the water, such as walking, running or cycling – see Figure 14.

Figure 14: Accidental water-related fatalities by activity type, five-year data (2019-2023), n=930 (27 excluded)





Recreational activities

Of the 443 accidental water-related fatalities that occurred due to recreational activities over the five-year period (2019 to 2023), 148 (33 per cent) happened whilst participating in swimming (see Figure 15). When looking at the location, swimming at the coast accounted for most fatalities (n=80).

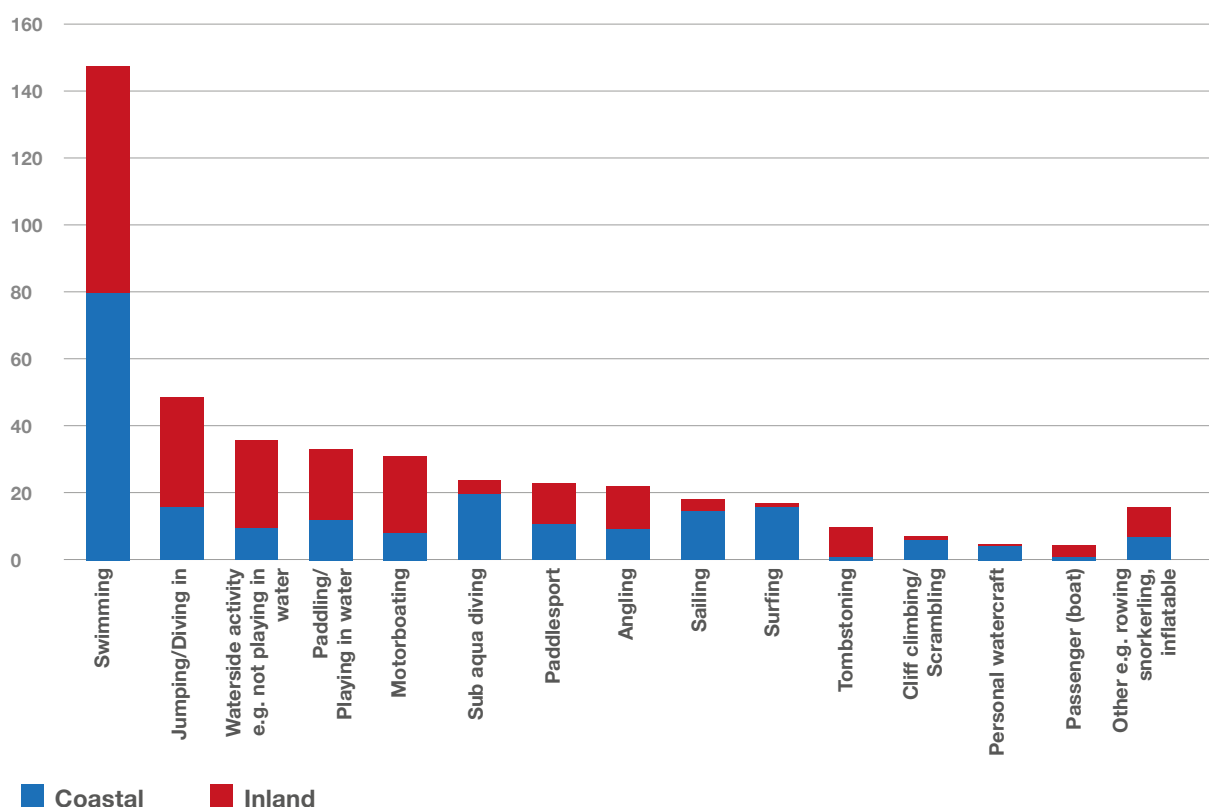


Figure 15: Accidental water-related fatalities by recreational activity type and location, five-year data (2019-2023), n=443



Everyday activities

Of the 378 accidental water-related fatalities that happened as a result of everyday activities, 334 (88 per cent) were the result of walking (see Figure 16).

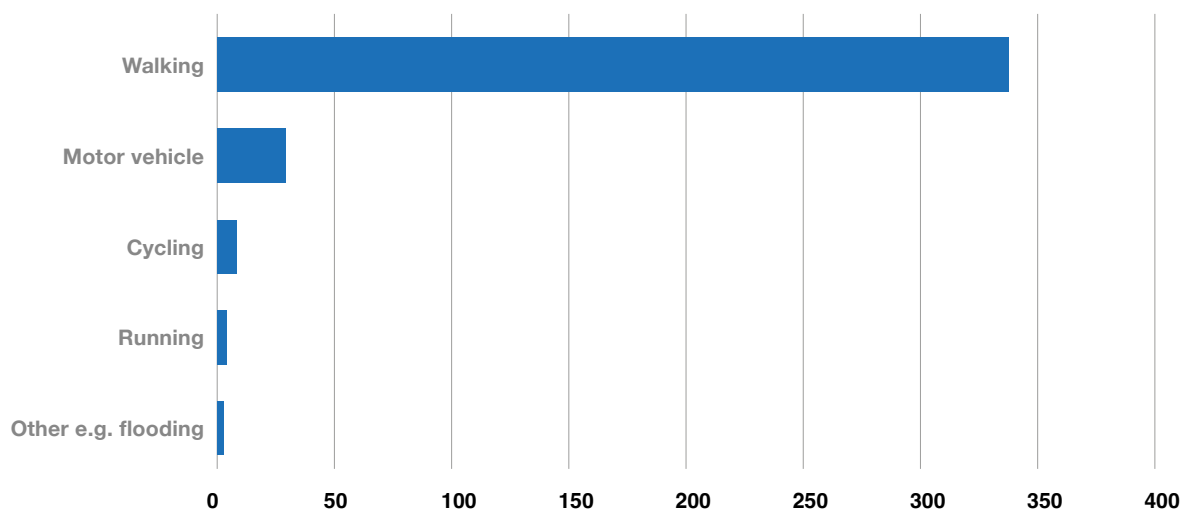
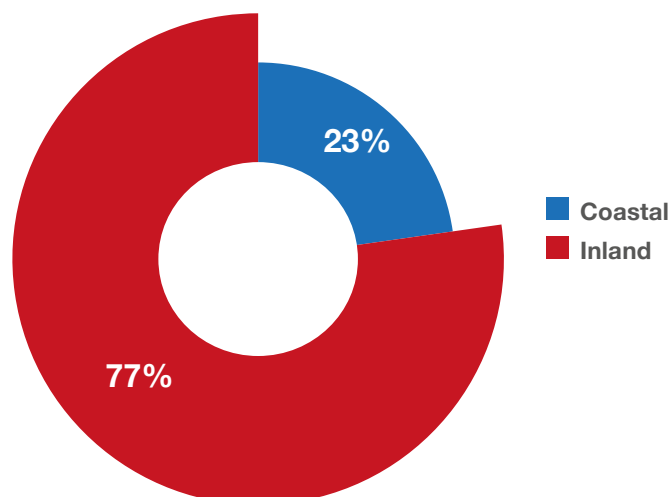


Figure 16: Accidental water-related fatalities by everyday activity type, five-year data (2019-2023), n=378

When looking at the location of everyday walking, inland locations accounted for 77 per cent (n=258) of accidental fatalities – see Figure 17.

Figure 17: Accidental water-related fatalities by everyday walking and location, five-year data (2019-2023), n=334





The presence of alcohol/drugs

The presence of alcohol/drugs was reported in 321 (34 per cent) of accidental water-related fatalities. Figure 18 provides an over year by year and the five-year average. Over the five years, there has been a downward trend in the number of fatalities that included alcohol/drugs.

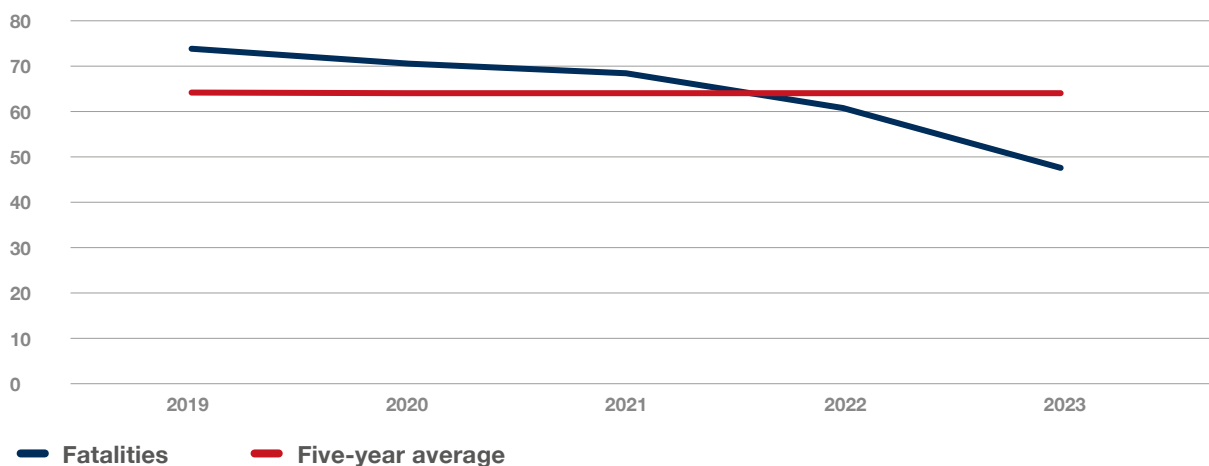


Figure 18: Presence of alcohol/drugs in accidental water-related fatalities by five-year data (2019-2023) and five-year average

Priority locations

Inland

As shown in Figure 6, 267 (48 per cent) of inland water-related fatalities over five-year period (2019 to 2023) happened at rivers.

When looking specifically at rivers, males account for the highest number of incidents, accounting for eight in ten of accidental water-related fatality deaths (see Figure 19). Males aged 20 to 29 are the most frequent casualties.

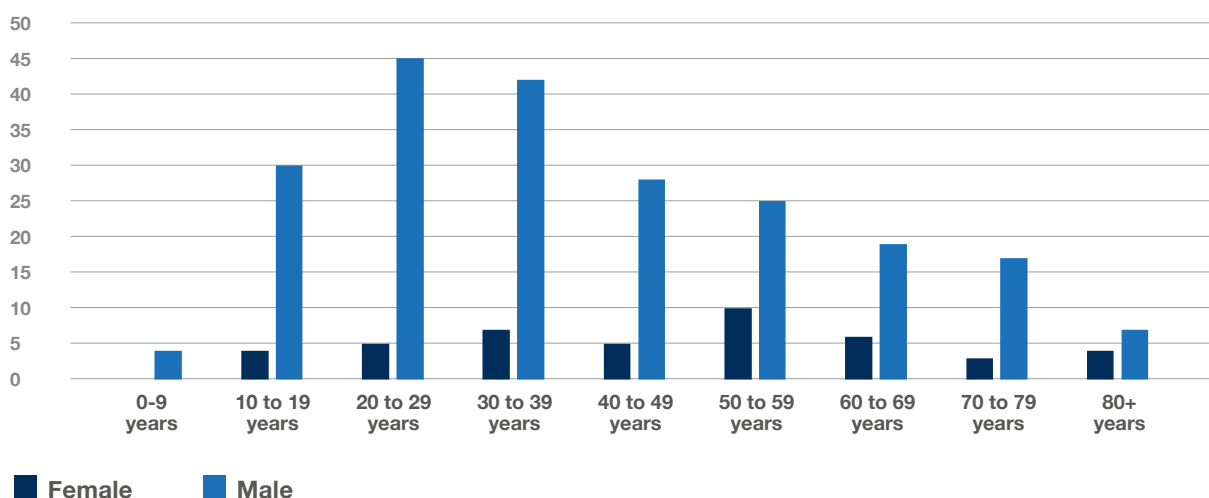
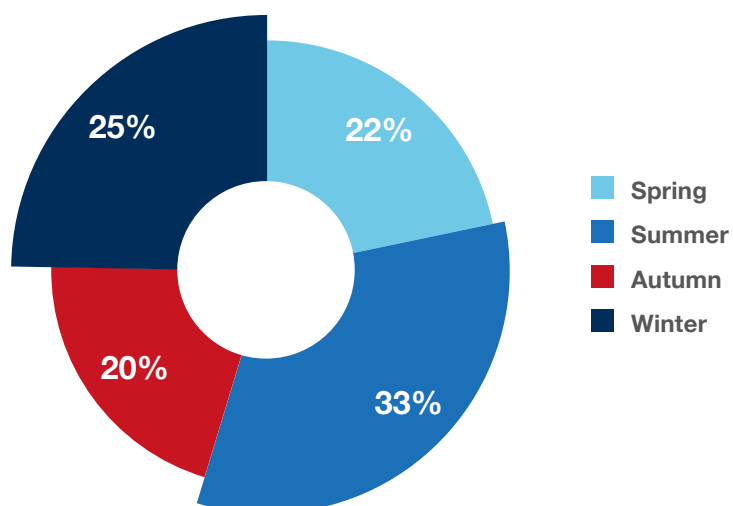


Figure 19: Accidental water-related fatalities by sex and age, five-year data (2019-2023), river, n=261 (6 excluded)



Accidental water-related fatalities at rivers occur most frequently in the summer months (June, July, August), as can be seen in Figure 20, which shows 33 per cent of fatalities occur in the summer.

Figure 20: Accidental water-related fatalities by season, five-year data (2019-2023), river, n=267



In terms of activity at rivers, the majority occurred as a result of five activities, with walking accounting for most (n=114) – see Figure 21.

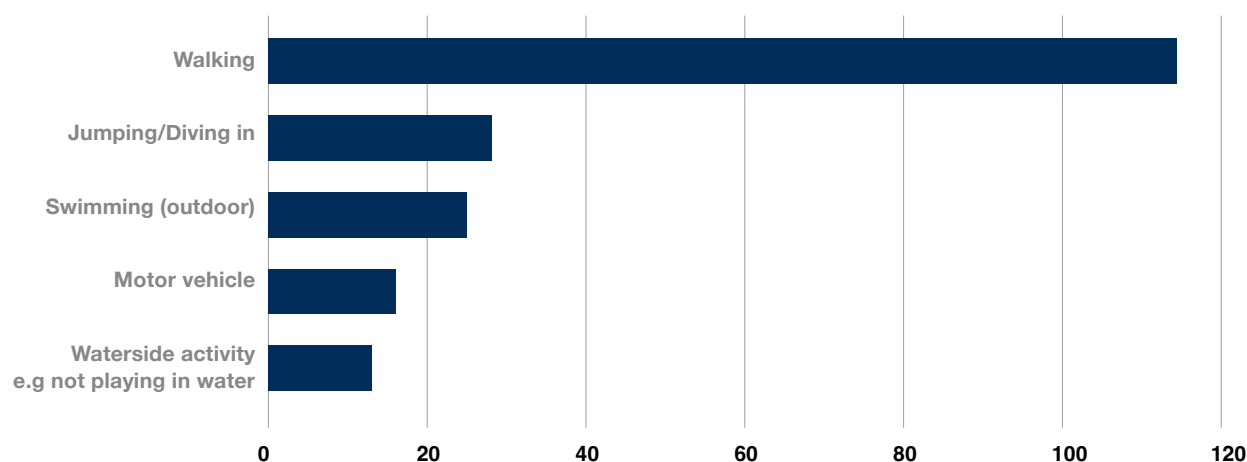


Figure 21: Accidental water-related fatalities by activity, five-year data (2019-2023), river, n=196 (71 other activities)

The presence of alcohol/drugs was reported in 105 (39 per cent) of accidental water-related fatalities at rivers.



Coastal

As shown in Figure 7, 271 (84 per cent) of coastal water-related fatalities over five-year period (2019 to 2023) were at the coast/shore/beach.

Males account for the most incidents, accounting for eight in ten of accidental water-related fatality deaths at the coast/shore/beach (see Figure 22). Males aged 40 to 49 are the most frequent casualties.

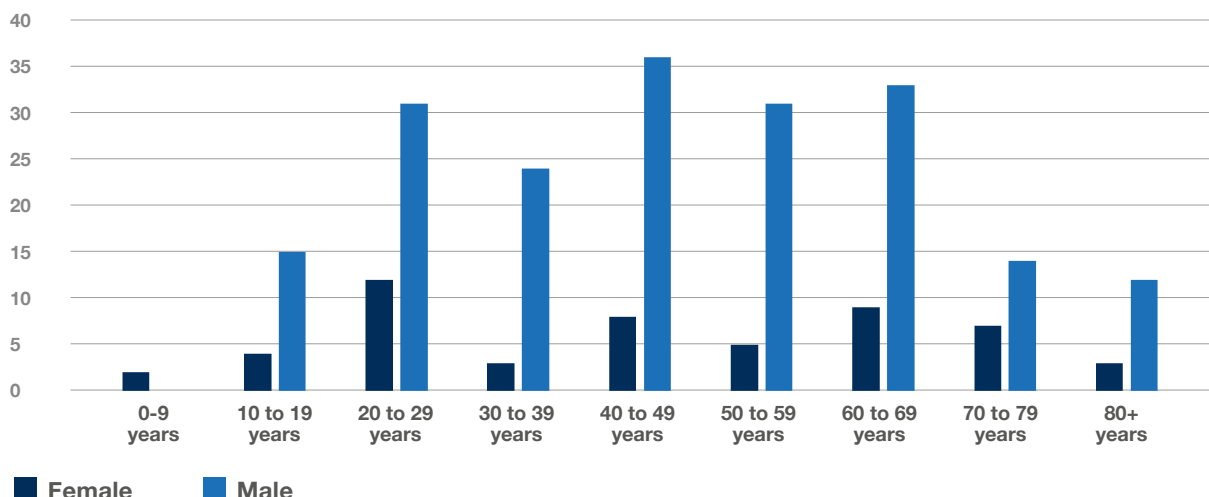
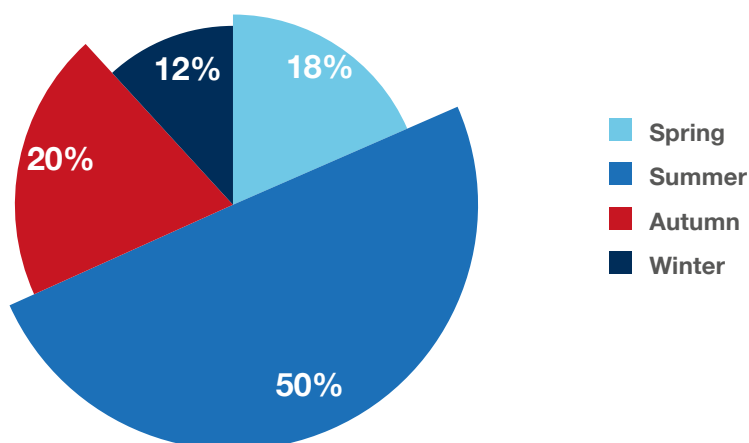


Figure 22: Accidental water-related fatalities by sex and age, five-year data (2019 to 2023), coast/shore/beach, n=249 (22 excluded)

Accidental water-related fatalities at the coast/shore/beach occur most frequently in the summer months (June, July, August), as can be seen in Figure 23, which shows 50 per cent of fatalities occur in the summer.

Figure 23: Accidental water-related fatalities by season, five-year data (2019-2023), coast/shore/beach, n=271





In terms of activity at the coast/shore/beach, the majority of fatalities occurred as a result of five activities, with swimming (outdoor) accounting for most (n=77) – see Figure 24.

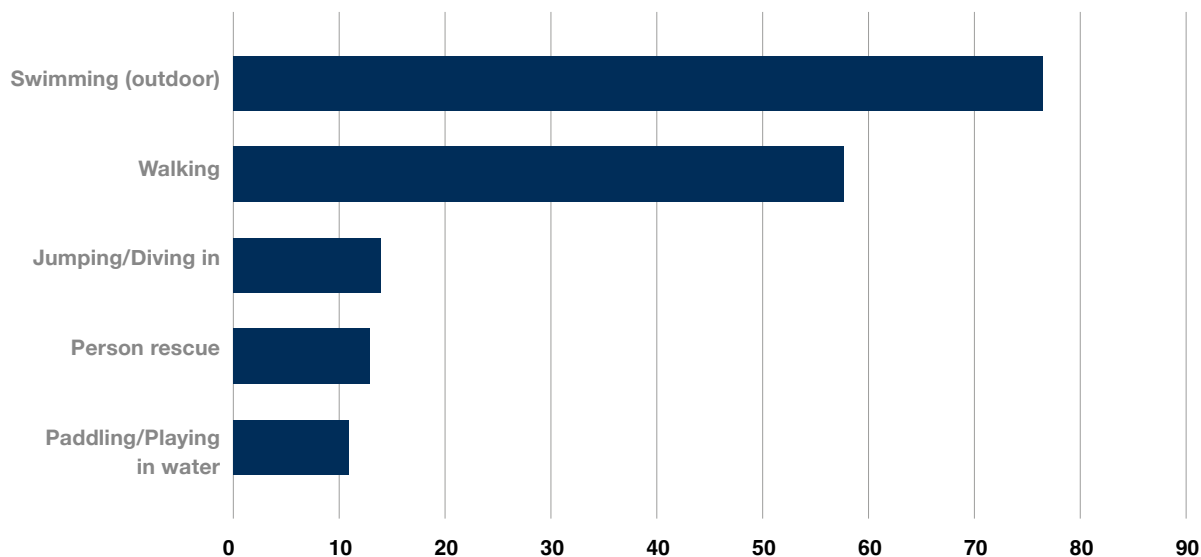


Figure 24: Accidental water-related fatalities by activity, five-year data (2019-2023), coast/shore/beach, n=173 (99 other activities)

The presence of alcohol/drugs was reported in 54 (20 per cent) of accidental water-related fatalities at the coast/shore/beach.



Notes on the data

All data used are from WAID 2019 to 2023 (v2) unless otherwise noted.

Population rate figures use ONS mid-year data from the Mid-2024 edition of the data.

Overall water-related fatalities include: accidental, suicide, crime and inconclusive.

Accidental fatalities refers to suspected/confirmed accidental causes and natural water-related causes. Suicide fatalities refers to suspected/confirmed suicide causes.

Inconclusive refers to incidents where intent has not been able to be categorised.

Where figures have been excluded due to limited information, this has been clearly indicated by category (e.g. n=394; 13 excluded).

WAID taxonomies for activity:

- Commercial activities where the activity of the deceased was recorded as commercial
- Domestic activities where the activity of the deceased was recorded in a domestic/residential setting
- Everyday activities where the deceased did not intend to be in the water (e.g. people who were walking, running and cycling next to water)
- Exceptional activities where the activity of the deceased was recorded as exceptional e.g. person/animal rescue
- Recreational activities where the activity was recorded as sports or a water-based activity.



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