

Annual Report

Deaths of children
and young people
Queensland
2023–24

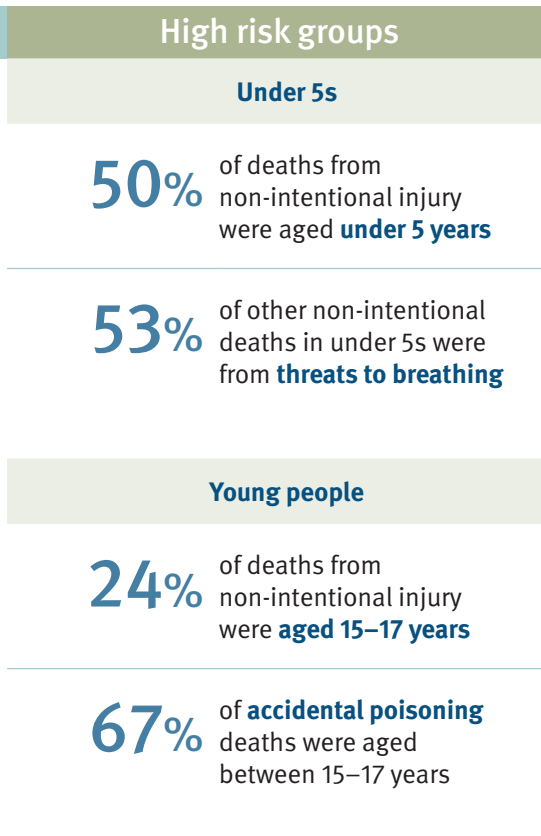
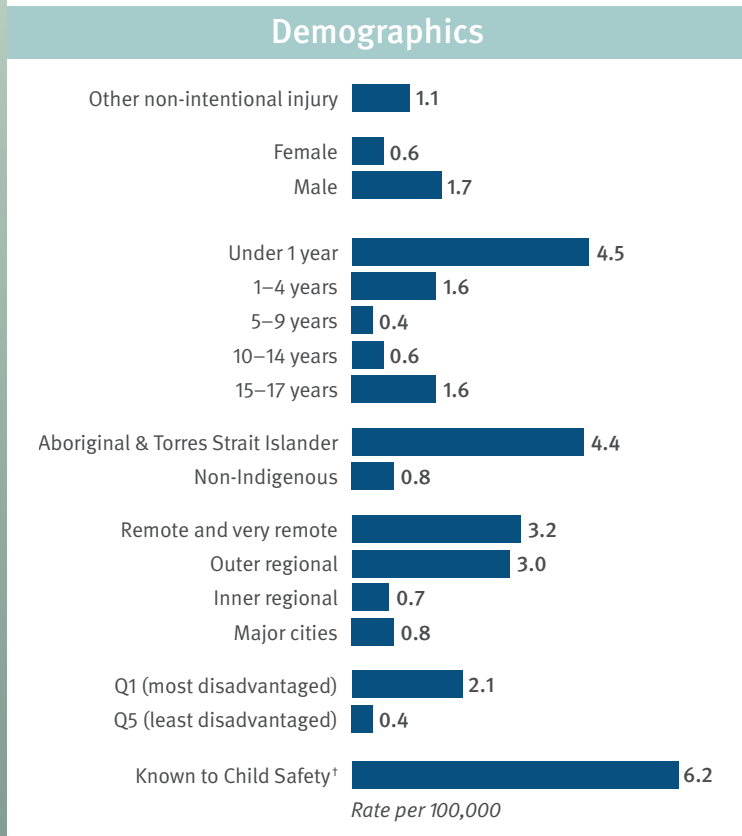
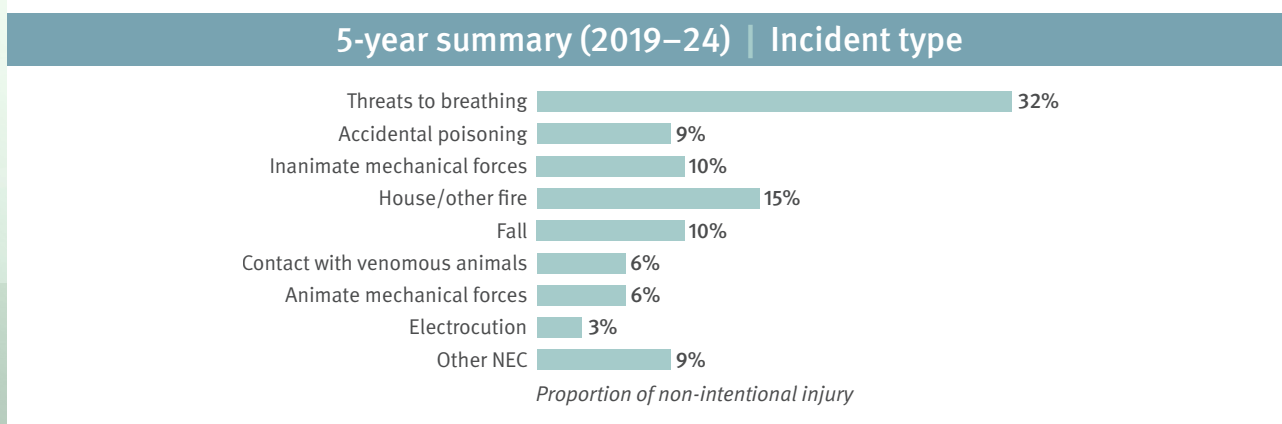
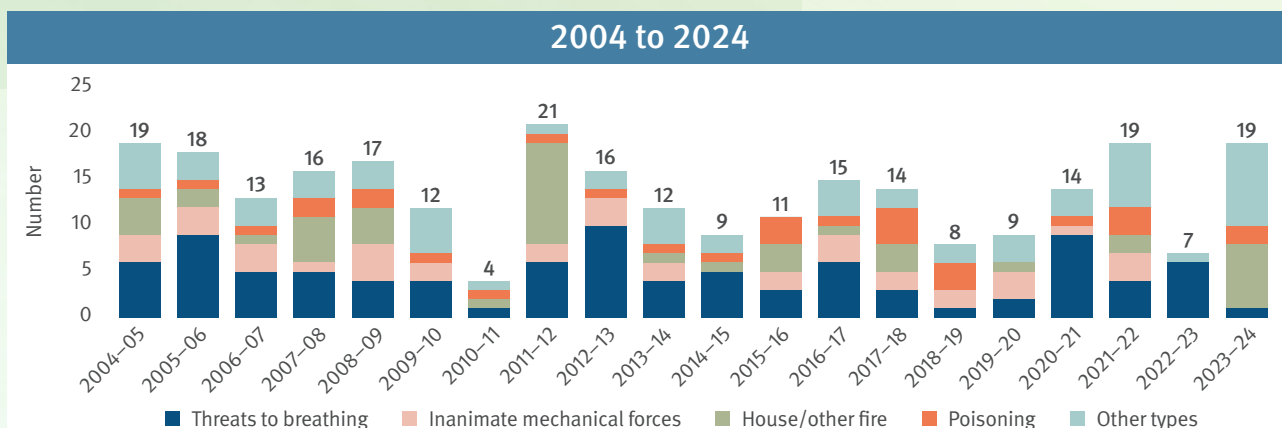


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5 Other non-intentional injury



Notes: Counting is by date of death registration. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. † in the 12 months prior to death.

Key findings

This chapter considers all non-intentional injury-related deaths outside of transport or drowning fatalities. A comprehensive outline of the types of incidents included in ‘other non-intentional injury-related deaths’ can be found in **Appendix E** (available at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data).

Injury type

Nineteen children died from other non-intentional injuries during 2023–24. These included 7 from house or other fire, 4 each from falls and exposure to forces of nature, 2 from accidental poisoning, and one each from threats to breathing and exposure to inanimate mechanical forces.

Sixty-eight children died from other non-intentional injury over the last 5 years. The most common injury types were threats to breathing (22), house or other fire (10), exposure to inanimate mechanical forces (7), and falls (7).⁵⁰

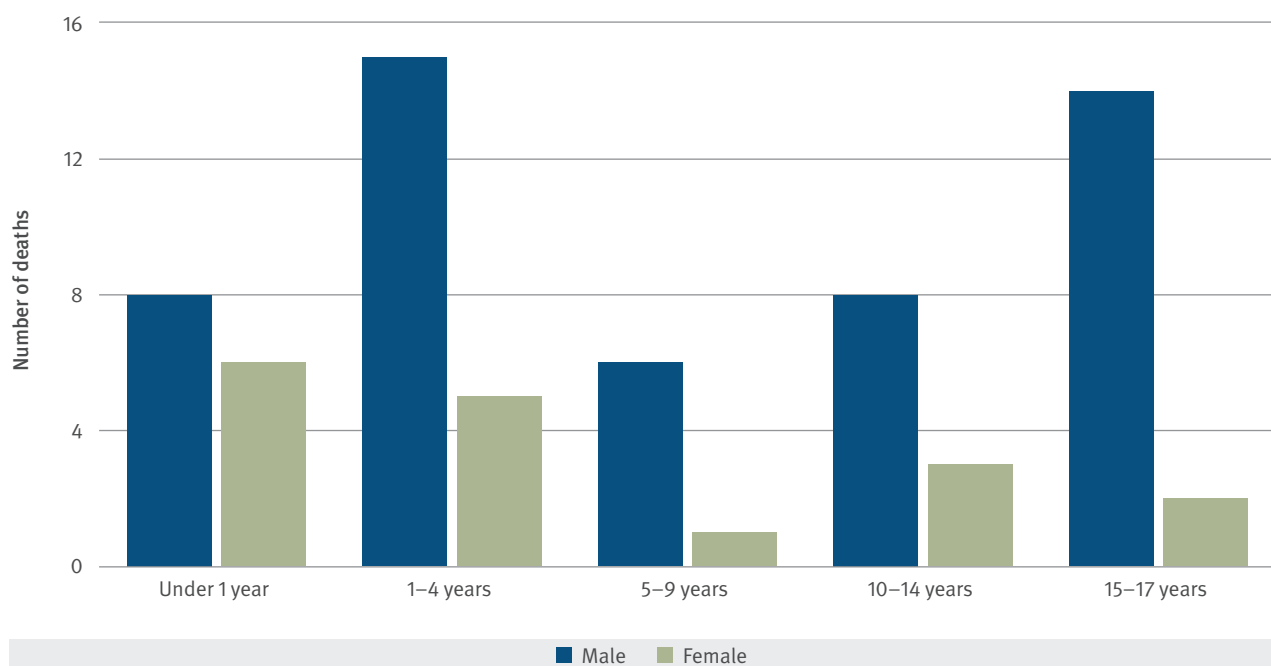
Table A.7 in **Appendix A** provides summary data on other non-intentional injury deaths in the last 5 years.⁵¹

Age and sex

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, patterns in differential risk of death by age and sex emerge in deaths from non-intentional injuries. Over the last 5 years, males have made up 75% of deaths from non-intentional injuries. With the exception of infants under 1 year, the deaths of male children outnumbered the deaths of female children by more than a factor of 2 for all age groups 1–17 years.

The rate of death from non-intentional injuries was highest for infants aged under 1 year (4.5 per 100,000), followed by children aged 1–4 years (1.6 per 100,000) and young people aged 15–17 years (1.6 per 100,000) (5-year averages).

Figure 5.1: Other non-intentional injury deaths by age and sex (number), 2019–20 to 2023–24



⁵⁰ Threats to breathing includes suffocation, strangulation and other threats to breathing. Exposure to inanimate mechanical forces includes, for example, struck or crushed by an object and accidental firearm discharge.

⁵¹ Tables with data for 2004–2024 are available online at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data

Risk factors

Situational risks

Children, particularly young children, are at risk in certain settings and circumstances. Over the last 5 years:

- Seven children died in 3 residential house fires.
- Seven children, all under the age of 4 years, died from heat stress when they were unintentionally left alone or became trapped in vehicles.⁵²
- Threats to breathing was the most common injury type for children aged 0–4 years (82% or 18 of 22 deaths).

Sleep environment for infants

Infants are particularly vulnerable to sleep accidents due to their immature development and susceptibility to airway compromise from their environment. The [Queensland Clinical Guideline: Safer infant sleep](#) provides recommendations for infant caregivers around risk-reduction strategies, focusing primarily on a clear sleep space and airway.⁵³

Of the 14 infant deaths due to other non-intentional injury over the last 5 years, 13 occurred during a sleep event. Incidents involved accidental over-lay by a co-sleeping person (6), entrapment/entanglement incidents in the sleep environment (5) and accidental suffocation by objects in the sleep environment (2).

Product safety

Various consumer products are subject to mandatory or voluntary safety standards, including products which present a higher risk of injury to children.

During 2023–24, two children died from caustic injuries after ingesting caustic substances contained in cleaning products. Since 2006, a total of 4 caustic injury related deaths were recorded in Queensland, and 3 of the 4 children who died were aged under 4 years at the time of the ingestion incidents.

Child fatalities involving consumer products in Queensland over the 5 years included:

- 3 from the use of an infant or child product where the products were either potentially maladapted, defective or with high intrinsic risk
- 2 from strangulation after becoming entangled in a roller blind cord (4 in total since 2004)
- one from ingesting a button battery (2 in total since 2004)
- one from toppling furniture (6 in total since 2004).

Unsafe petrol-handling practices were identified in 2 fire-related deaths. Further, there have been an additional 2 deaths of young children due to ingestion of petrol which had been decanted into bottles. These 2 deaths remain unregistered at the time of reporting and are not counted in the totals of this report. Queensland Poisons Information Centre provides guidance around the safe storage of petrol and other poisons in the home.⁵⁴

Young children are particularly vulnerable to household hazards. Of note in the last 5 years is the storage practices of chemicals and poisons and the rapidity of fatal injury following ingestions. Kidsafe provides [A parent's guide to kidsafe homes](#) with a comprehensive list of common household risks and actions that caregivers can take to identify and reduce those risks within their homes.⁵⁵

⁵² Only 5 of these deaths are counted in this chapter while the other 2 are included in [Chapter 7 – Fatal assault and neglect](#).

⁵³ www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/1166353/g-safer-sleep.pdf

⁵⁴ www.poisonsinfo.health.qld.gov.au/household-poisons

⁵⁵ <https://kidsafe.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/202010-A-Parents-Guide-to-Kidsafe-Homes-Web.pdf>

Infant sleep product safety

New national safety and information standards for infant sleep products, developed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), were released in July 2024. These standards cover both sleep and inclined non-sleep products, aiming to reduce the risks of death and injury to infants. The mandatory safety standard applies to design, construction, performance and testing requirements for infant sleep products. The mandatory information standard will ensure consumers are provided with important messaging on safe sleeping and infant product suitability.⁵⁶

Toppling furniture hazard warnings

In May 2024 a new toppling furniture information standard came into force, requiring furniture suppliers to provide safety warnings to consumers about the dangers of toppling furniture. Securing furniture items to the wall or floor is one of the best ways to address the risks of toppling furniture. The toppling furniture information standard will require suppliers to attach a permanent warning label to furniture, include safety information and advice about anchoring furniture, and provide warnings about the hazards in furniture stores and online. The standard will apply to chests of drawers, wardrobes, bookcases, hall tables, display cabinets, buffets and sideboards with a height of 686mm or more, and entertainment units of any height.⁵⁷

Campfire safety

Two deaths over the 5-year period involved injuries caused by campfires. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services provides guidance in their **Campfire and camping safety** information sheet around campfire safety practices, including safe ways to build and start a campfire, monitoring and extinguishing practices.⁵⁸

Risk-taking activities

Several deaths have occurred in the context of risk-taking activities. In the 5 years ending 30 June 2024:

- 4 deaths involved drug overdose
- 3 deaths appeared to be the result of a choking game or prank
- 3 deaths occurred while exploring or recreating at waterfalls or natural pools.

In addition to the 3 other non-intentional injury deaths that occurred at waterfalls and natural pools, there were also 2 deaths that were the result of drowning (included in Chapter 3) in similar locations. Four of the 5 deaths were young people aged 15–17 years of age. Waterfalls and natural pools can pose a number of safety risks to visitors including slips or falls, striking submerged objects, cold water immersion, dynamic or fluctuating water levels and submersion or entrapment under flowing water. Royal Life Saving Australia's report **Drowning in rivers, creeks, lakes and dams: A 10-year analysis** identified an emerging theme in drowning data for incidents occurring at national parks and waterfalls.⁵⁹

Of note, 67% of fatalities of 15–17 year olds due to other non-intentional injury were either the result of drug overdose or involved significant substance misuse at the time of the incident. There have also been 2 deaths, that were unregistered at the time of reporting, that occurred as a result of chroming with aerosol deodorant cans.

Charges and criminal proceedings

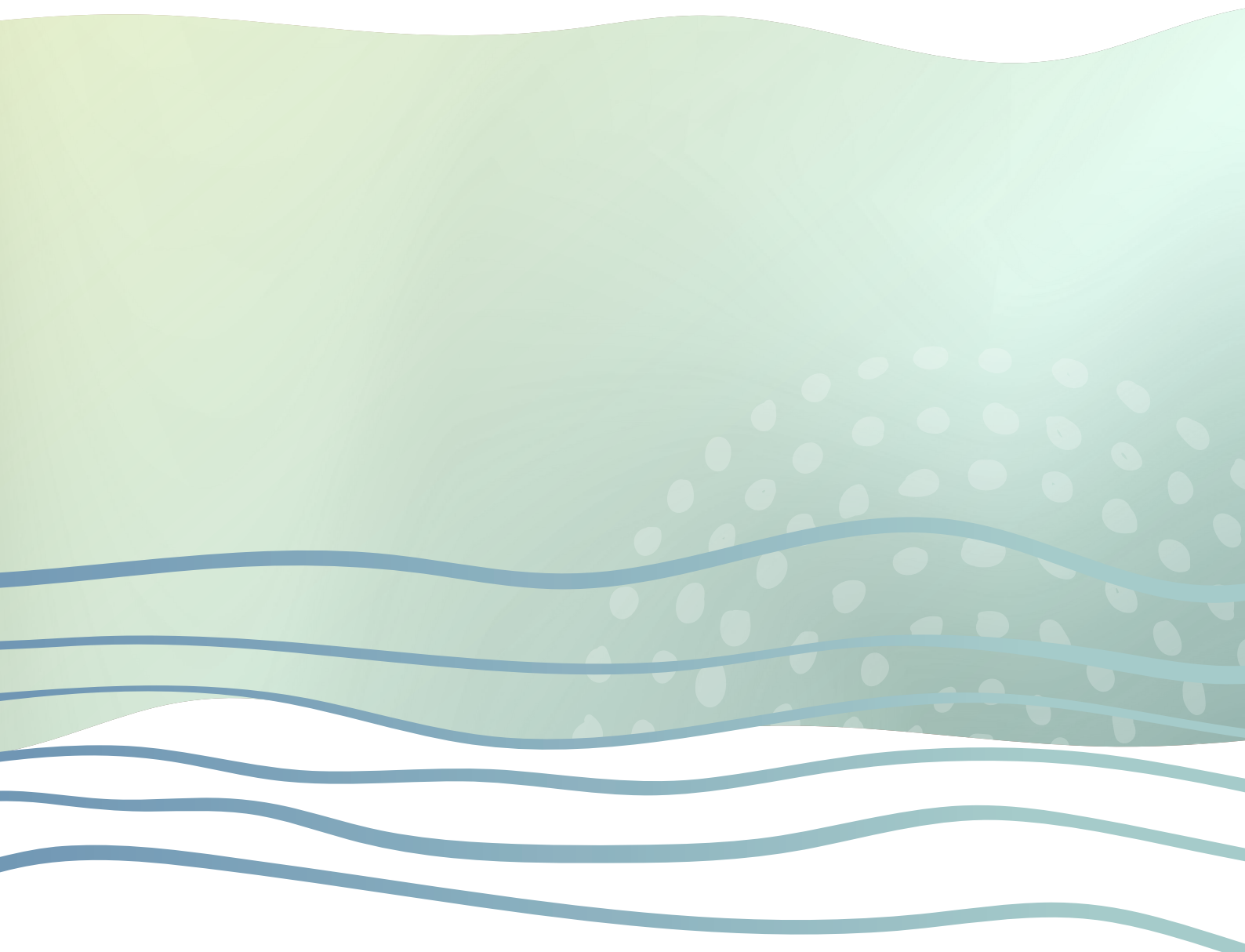
No deaths resulted in criminal charges in 2023–24. Over the last 5 years; however, there were criminal charges in relation to 4 deaths.

⁵⁶ <https://www.productsafety.gov.au/business/search-mandatory-standards/infant-sleep-products-mandatory-standards>

⁵⁷ www.productsafety.gov.au/product-safety-laws/safety-standards-bans/mandatory-standards/toppling-furniture

⁵⁸ www.fire.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/CEU-CampfireSafety.pdf

⁵⁹ www.royallifesaving.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/72456/RLS_InlandWaterwaysReport2023_LR.pdf



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