

Queensland Child Death Register

Key findings 2023–24

Children known to Child Safety

October 2024

Of the 422 children who died in 2023–24, 53 were known to the Queensland child protection system (Child Safety), a decrease from 72 deaths in 2022–23. Children are considered known to Child Safety if they were the subject of an intake call or intervention in the preceding 12-months. It is important to note that only 4 child deaths occurred for children in the care of the child safety system.

This and previous annual reports have found child mortality rates for children known to Child Safety to be consistently higher than the rates for all children, especially for external causes.

Children who are at increased risk of child maltreatment are often from families with higher levels of economic disadvantage, poor parental mental health and problematic substance misuse and social instability, all of which are risk factors for adverse childhood outcomes—including death. The over-representation of children coming to the attention of the child protection system can therefore, at least in part, be explained by the often multiple risk factors present in these children’s lives.

The mortality rate for children known to Child Safety was almost twice the Queensland child mortality rate (respectively, 60.4 and 34.5 per 100,000 population). Children known to Child Safety were four times more likely to die of external causes than the total child population in Queensland.

Over the last 5 years, the mortality rate for children known to Child Safety have been more than 3 times higher than the Queensland child mortality rates for:

- fatal assault and neglect
- other non-intentional injury
- drowning
- suicide
- unexplained causes.

Children known to Child Safety were also over-represented in sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI), with a mortality rate around 4 times the rate for all Queensland infants.

Table 1: Deaths of children known to Child Safety and all child deaths in Queensland, 2023–24^a

	Known to Child Safety ^b	All children
All deaths		
Deaths of children 0–17 years	53	422
Rate per 100,000 ^c	6.4	34.5
Cause of death		
Natural causes	23	314
External causes	19	70
Transport	0	20
Drowning	3	10
Other non-intentional injury	11	19
Suicide	4	19
Fatal assault and neglect	1	2
Unexplained causes	2	8
SIDS and undetermined causes	2	8
Cause of death pending	9	30
Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)		
Sudden unexpected infant deaths	8	40

^a By date of death registration.

^b In the 12 months prior to death.

^c Rate averaged over 5 years.

Background

The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services administers the child protection system in Queensland.

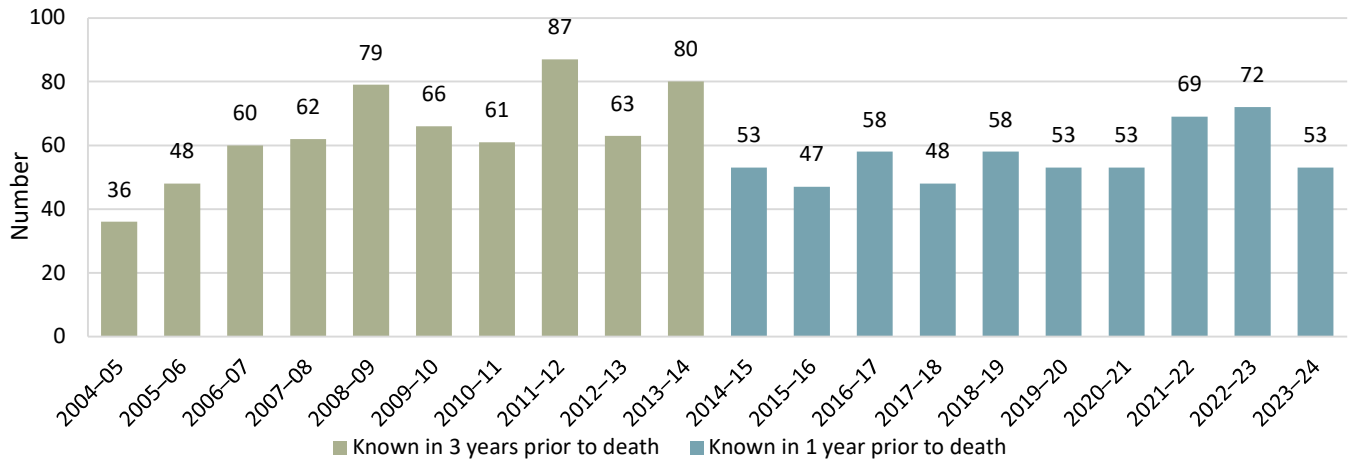
Queensland’s Child Death Review Board reviews the deaths of children known to Child Safety.

Trends from 2004 to 2024

Figure 1 illustrates the trends in deaths of children known to the child protection system since 2004. From 2004–05 to 2013–14, statutory reviews were required for children known to Child Safety in the three years prior to their death. Following changes

to the child protection system in 2014, reviews are completed only for children known to Child Safety in the 12 months prior to their death.

Figure 1: Deaths of children known to the child protection system, 2004–05 to 2023–24



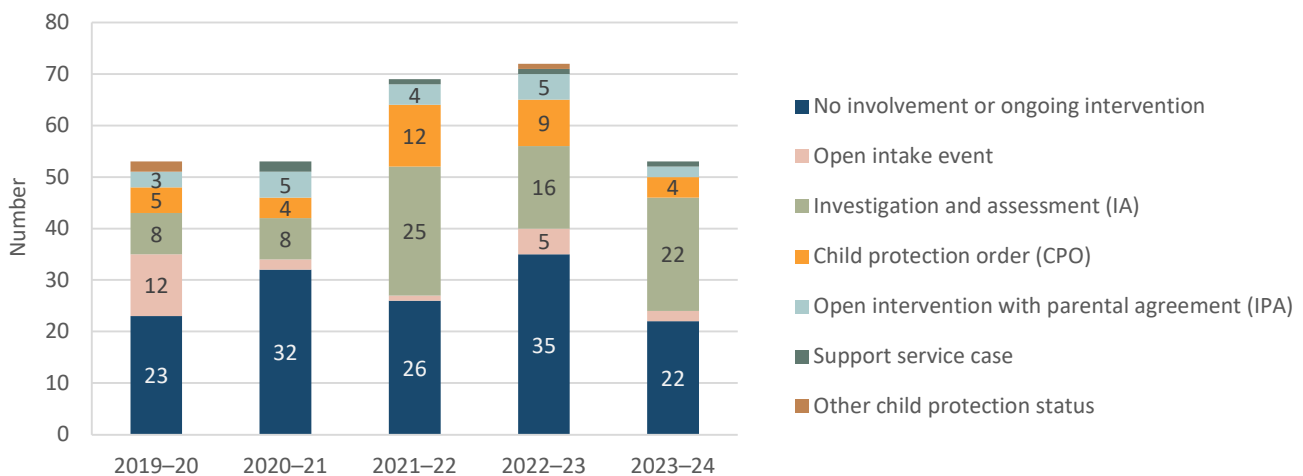
Child protection status

The child protection status is an indicator of the level of Child Safety involvement with a child. Figure 2 provides the child protection status recorded at the time of death. Over the last 5 years, child protection status recorded at the time of death included:

- 138 or 46% of 300 – no involvement or ongoing intervention

- 79 or 26% – investigation and assessment (IA)
- 34 or 11% – child protection order (CPO)
- 22 or 7% – open intake event
- 19 or 6% – intervention with parental agreement (IPA).

Figure 2: Child protection system by status at the time of death, 2019–20 to 2023–24



Children on child protection orders

A child protection order is an order made by the Childrens Court under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, when a child is assessed to be in need of protection. Custody or guardianship of a child may be granted to the chief executive (Director-General) of the department, or to a suitable person.

Four children who died in 2023–24 were subject to child protection orders at the time of death. In the last 5 years, 34 children were subject to child protection orders at the time of their death, representing 11% of the 300 deaths of children who were known to the child protection system.

More information

This fact sheet provides summary information from the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2023–24*, available at <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data>

Data for prevention activities

The QFCC works with researchers and government agencies to raise community awareness and develop prevention programs and policies by identifying risk factors, trends and emerging safety hazards.

The QFCC can provide detailed Queensland child death data to researchers and organisations at no cost. Email child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au

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