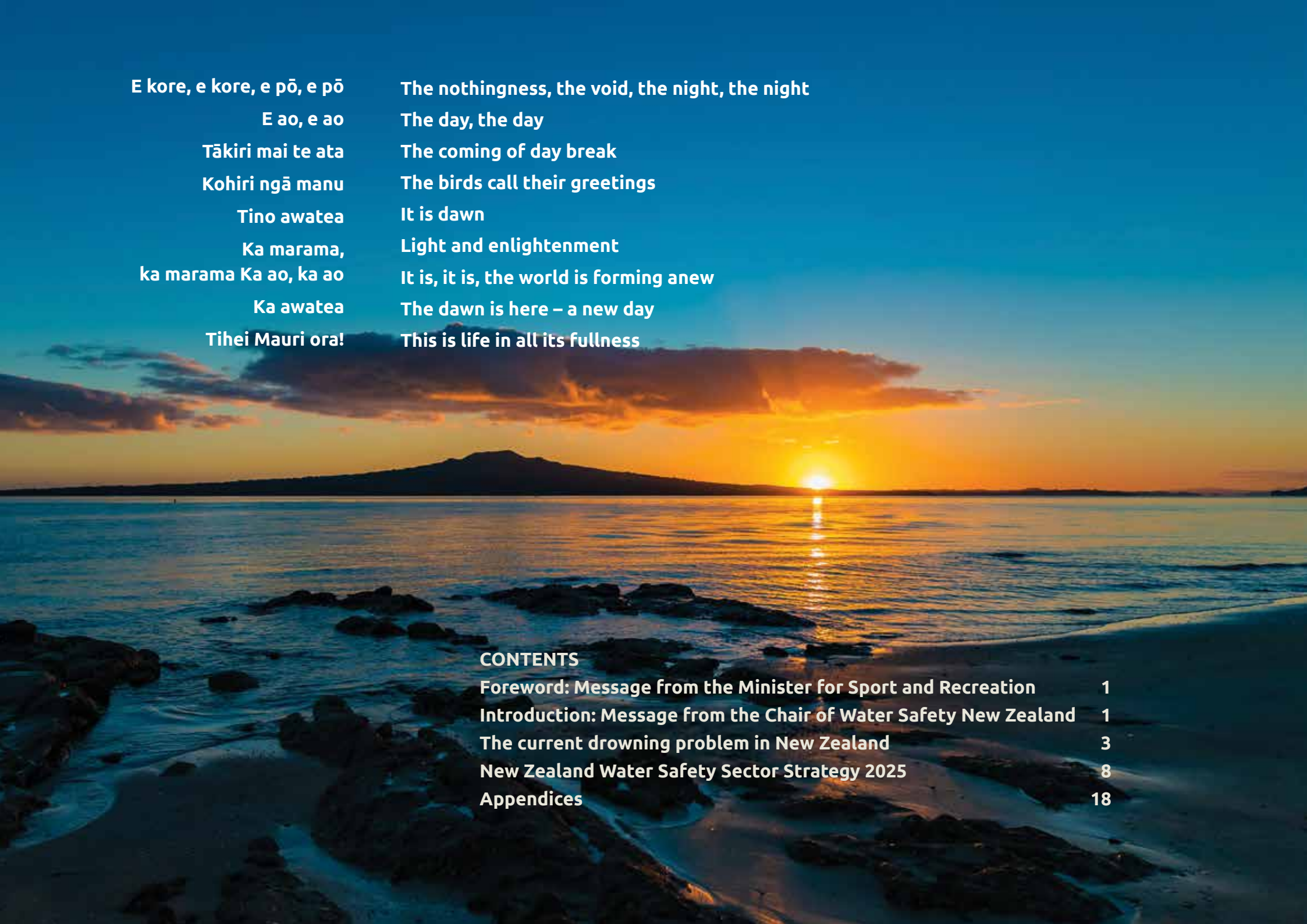


WAI ORA AOTEAROA

Navigating to a safer future

NEW ZEALAND
WATER SAFETY
SECTOR STRATEGY
2025





E kore, e kore, e pō, e pō	The nothingness, the void, the night, the night
E ao, e ao	The day, the day
Tākiri mai te ata	The coming of day break
Kohiri ngā manu	The birds call their greetings
Tino awatea	It is dawn
Ka marama,	Light and enlightenment
ka marama Ka ao, ka ao	It is, it is, the world is forming anew
Ka awatea	The dawn is here – a new day
Tihei Mauri ora!	This is life in all its fullness

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FOREWORD

Minister for Sport and Recreation

Kiwis love the water and with our long coastlines and the sheer proximity of most people to open water, we're spoilt for choice when it comes to water activities. But, with any water comes risk and sadly every year far too many people lose their lives or are injured in, on or around the water.

With the demand for water safety services growing, including extended patrol hours and more calls for help to coastguard services, the need to make sure our frontline agencies can focus their energy and skills on reducing the drowning toll and keeping New Zealanders safe in the water is crucial. The Government's \$63 million investment into the water safety sector over the next four years will ensure frontline rescue services are secured long term and the leadership, capability and support of the sector is enhanced.

The water safety sector is run almost entirely by passionate Kiwi volunteers and reducing the drowning toll requires collaboration across the sector. It takes a wide range of members, partners, educators and providers, the community, parents and families working together.

I'd like to congratulate the water safety sector on its new strategy and on the positive impact the collaborative approach of the water safety sector has had on prevention activities, education and frontline rescue services. This strategy will help ensure the continuation of this collective effort to ensure a high performing water safety sector that is connected and sustainable.

Thank you for all the work you are doing on behalf of New Zealanders.

Grant Robertson
Minister for Sport and Recreation



INTRODUCTION

Water Safety New Zealand Chair

Welcome to the New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025, our collective approach to ensure everyone connects to and enjoys the water safely. Achieving this vision will address the drowning problem in our country. As New Zealanders and visitors, we enjoy some of the most magnificent waterways in the world. At the same time, they are not without risk and demand respect. Too many people needlessly lose their lives or are injured in, on or around the water.

Drowning is a preventable public health problem in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although overall rates have been trending down on a per capita basis over the last 20 years, our drowning toll remains stubbornly high. Each fatality comes with a social and economic cost, as well as a life cut short – often a young life. Many more can suffer a non-fatal drowning incident; often resulting in long-term consequences that leave families and communities devastated.

The New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025 commits sector partners to continue to work together towards common goals with greater impact and efficiency. This sector alignment will ensure maximum buy-in to the vision and mission of the water safety sector and will in turn support sector organisations to incorporate this strategy into their own plans.

The sector has developed aspirational goals, determined measurable targets, and agreed an action plan to achieve the sector outcomes. There has been strong collaboration during the development of this strategy. We now need to continue to work constructively together to implement, monitor and evaluate our action plan, so that we reach our vision "Everyone connects to and enjoys the water safely".

As the lead agency of the sector, Water Safety New Zealand will drive the strategy's implementation, and report back. The sector will also stand accountable for its results. However, no one organisation can make the step change alone. This strategy is our collective response.

Ngā mihi ki te whānau whānui



Danny Tuato'o
Board Chair

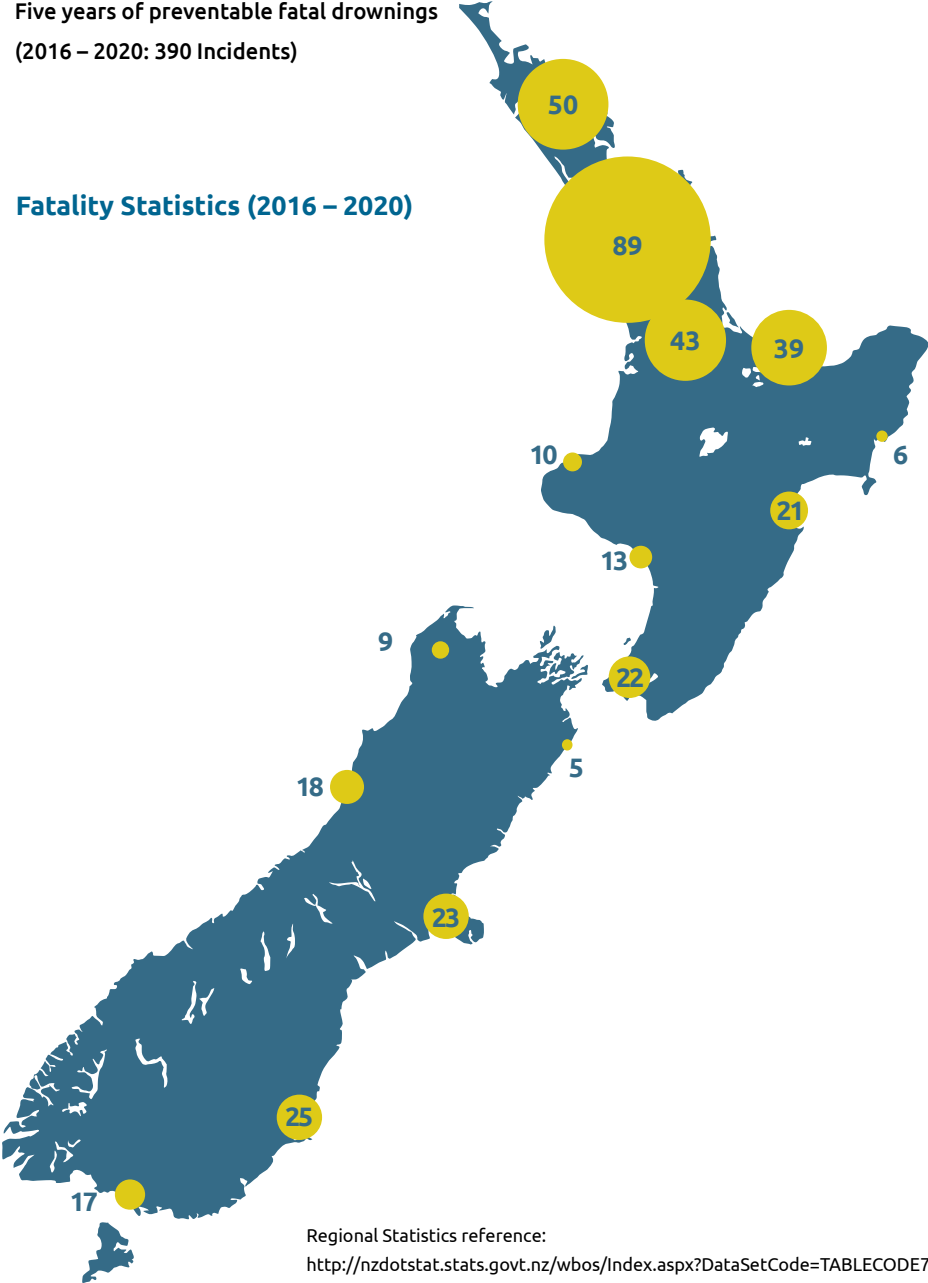




The current drowning problem in New Zealand

Five years of preventable fatal drownings
(2016 – 2020: 390 Incidents)

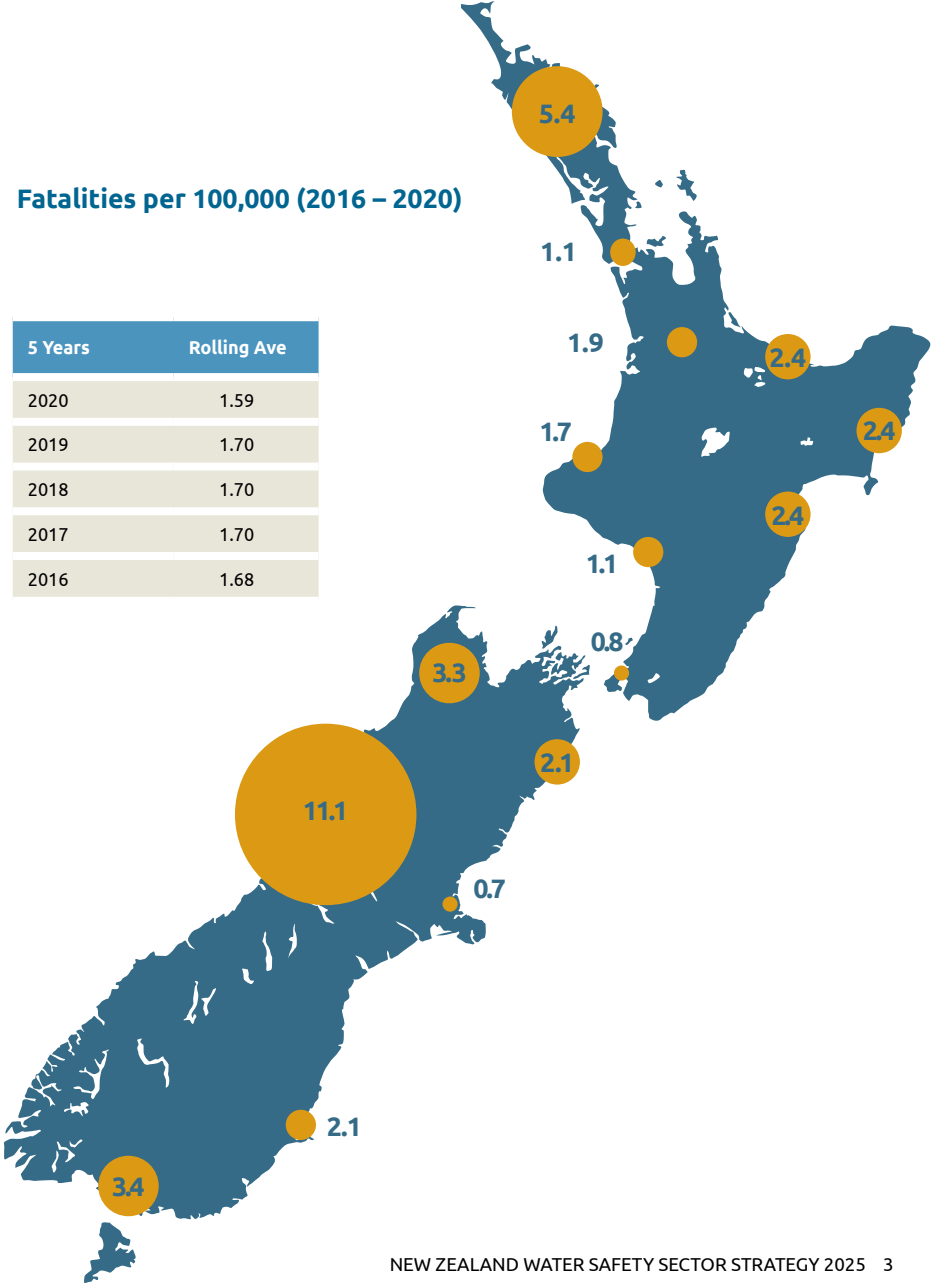
Fatality Statistics (2016 – 2020)



Regional Statistics reference:
<http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLECODE7512>

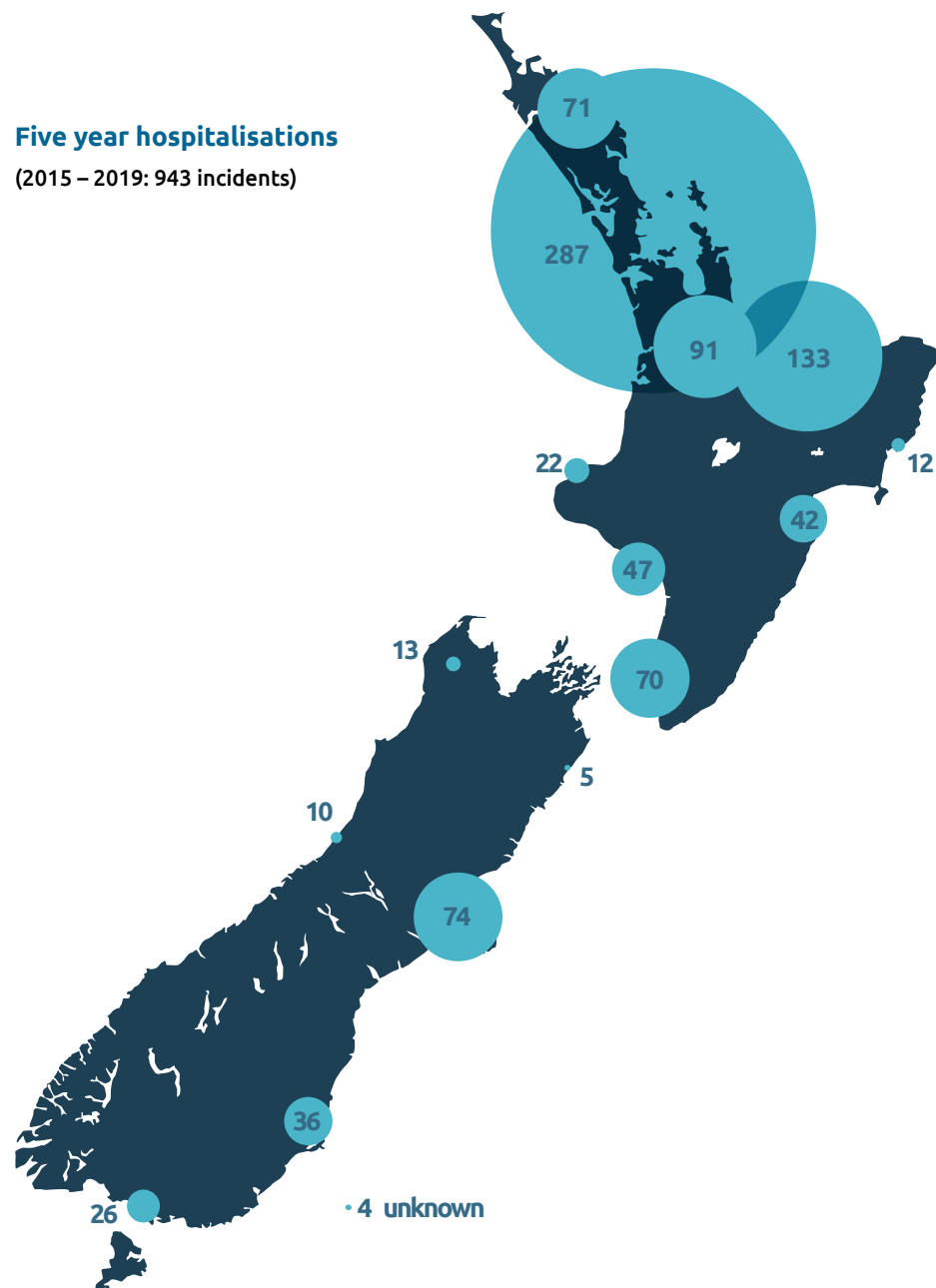
Fatalities per 100,000 (2016 – 2020)

5 Years	Rolling Ave
2020	1.59
2019	1.70
2018	1.70
2017	1.70
2016	1.68



Five year hospitalisations

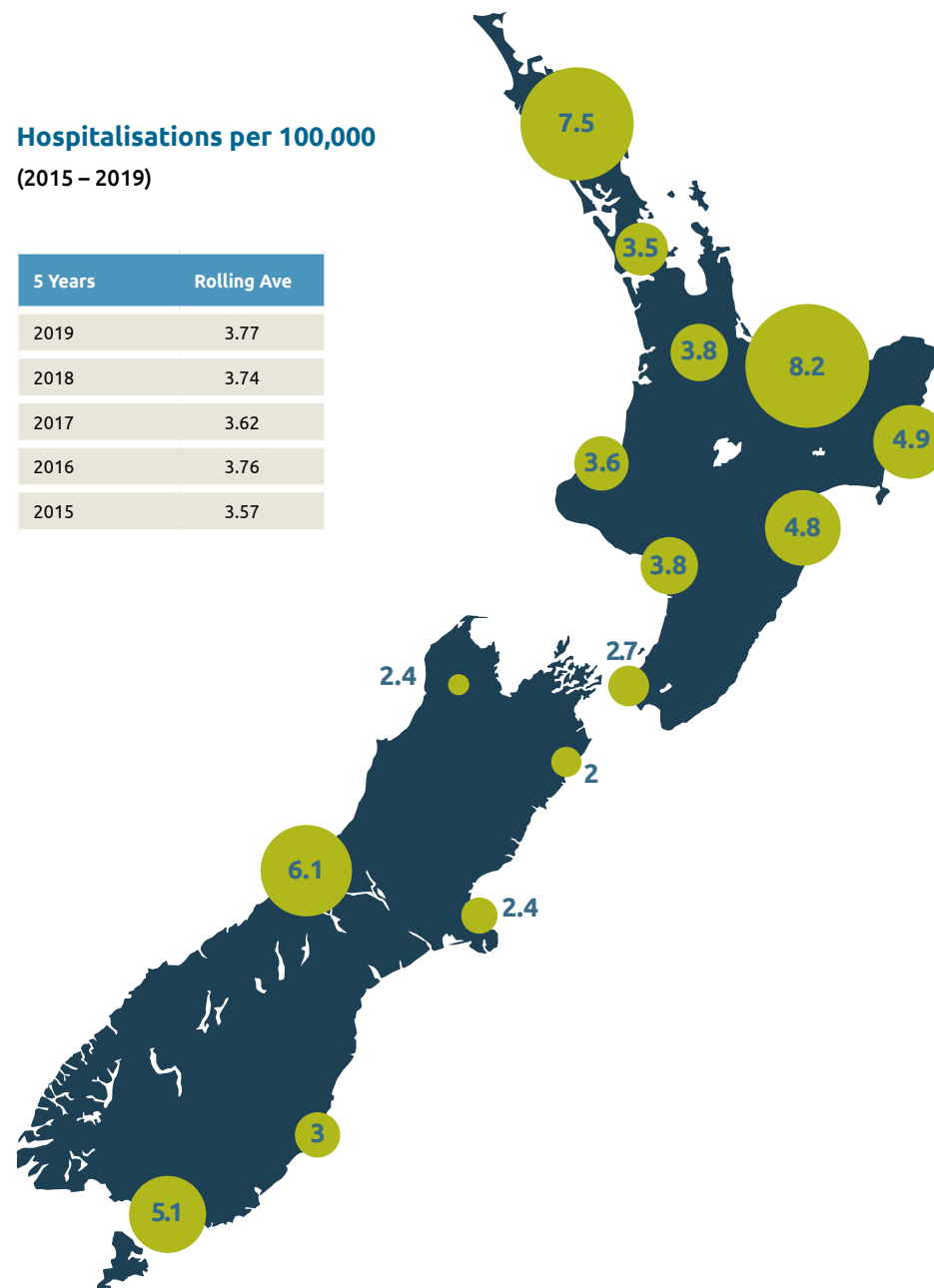
(2015 – 2019: 943 incidents)



Hospitalisations per 100,000

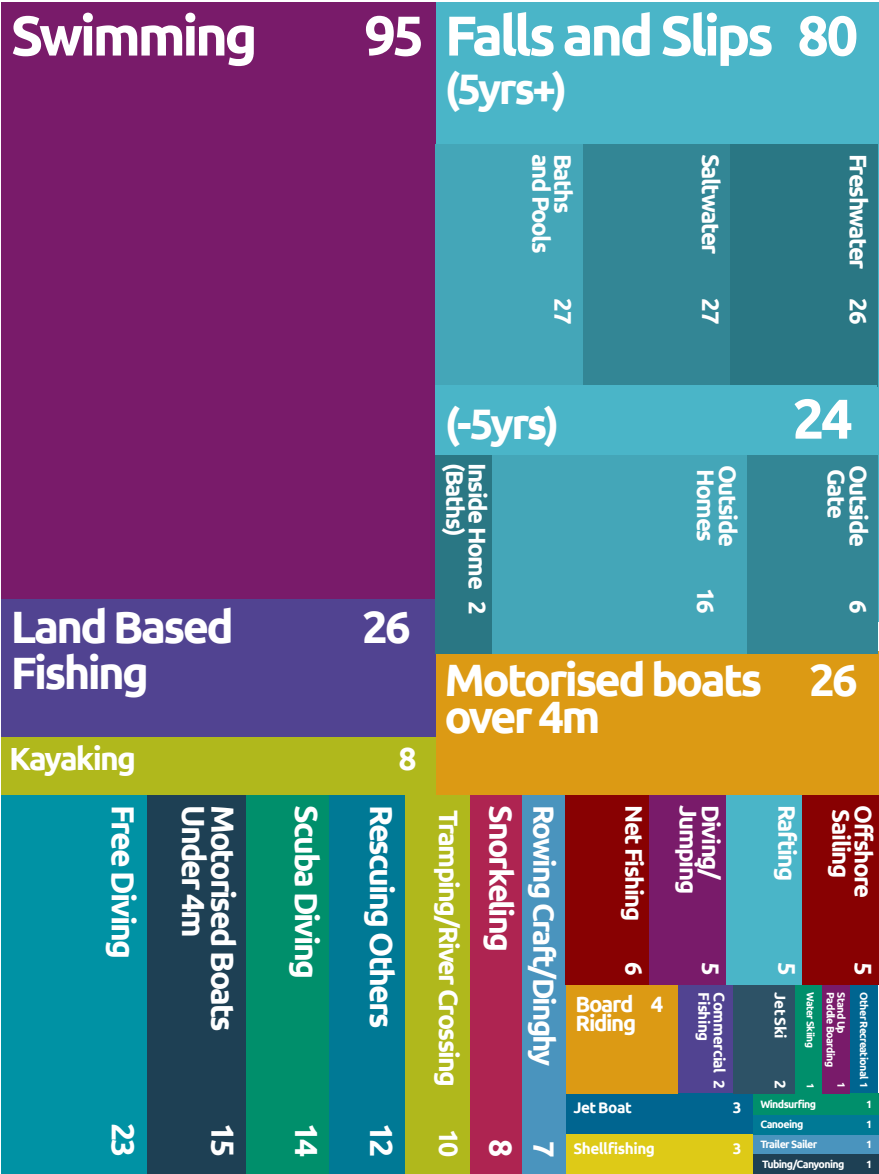
(2015 – 2019)

5 Years	Rolling Ave
2019	3.77
2018	3.74
2017	3.62
2016	3.76
2015	3.57



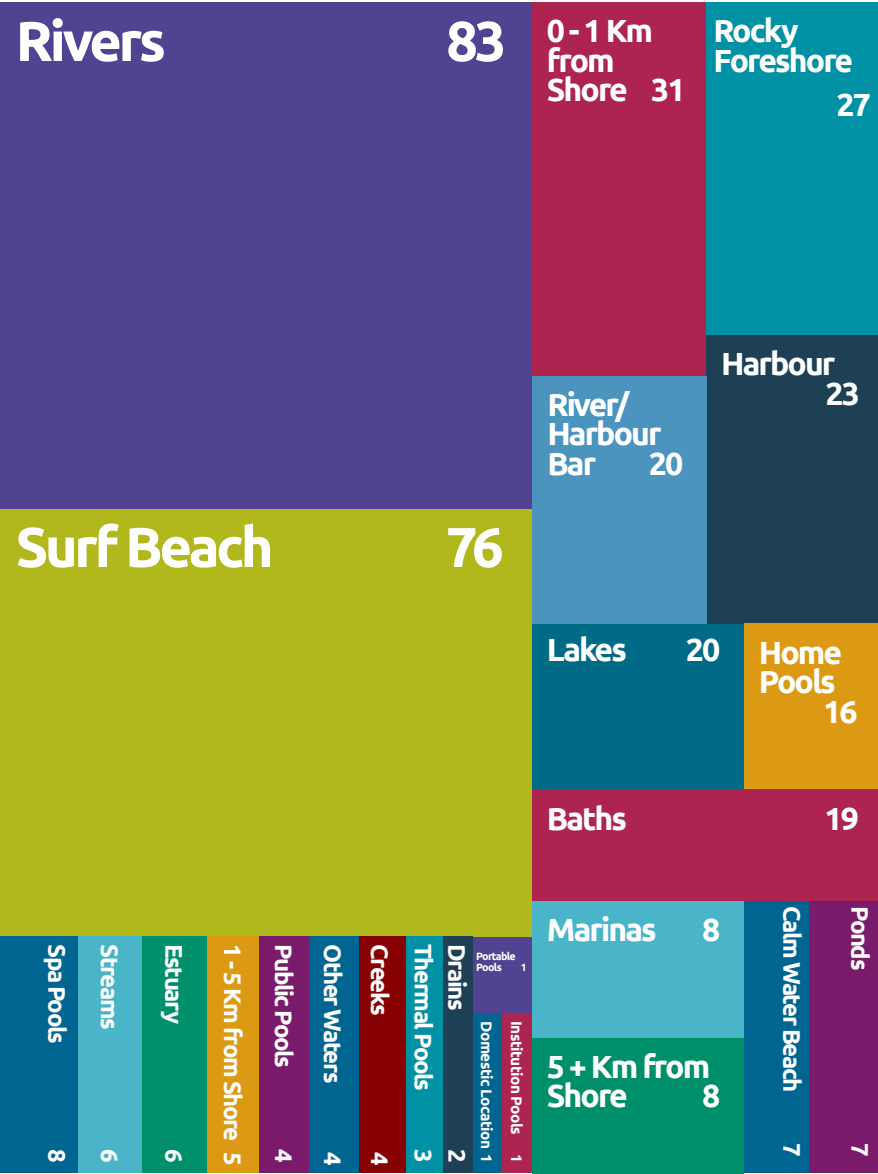
Activities

(2016 – 2020: 390 incidents)



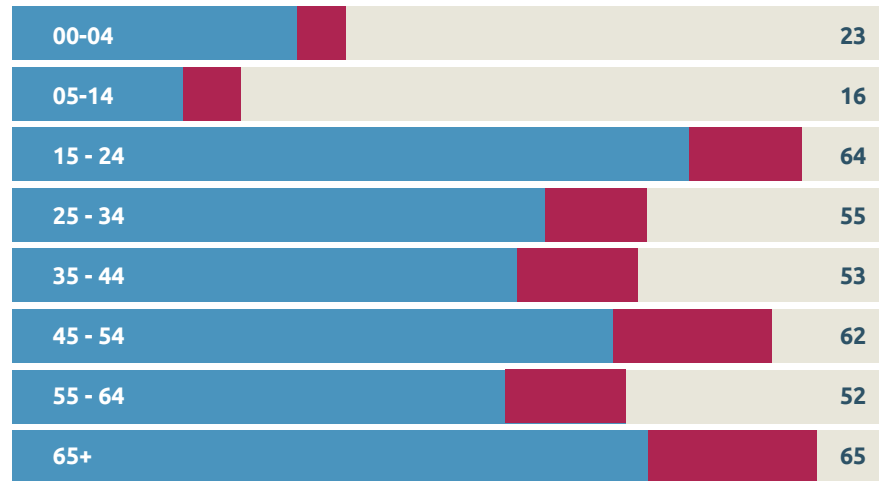
Environments

(2016 – 2020: 390 incidents)



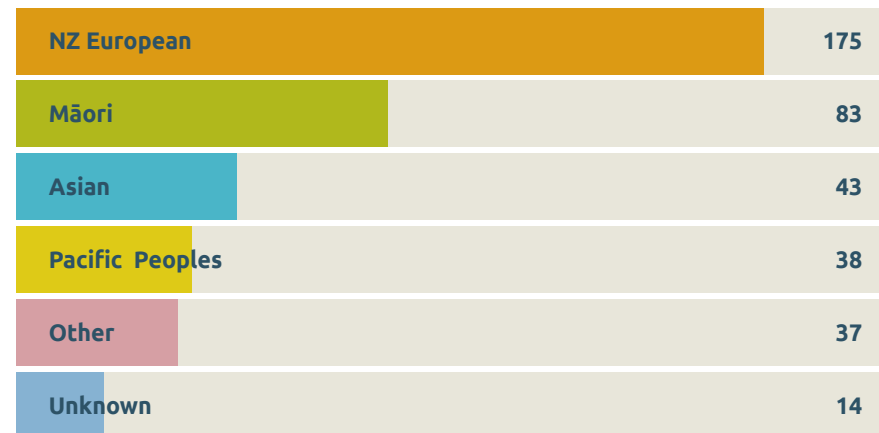
Age

(2016 – 2020: 390 incidents)



Ethnicity

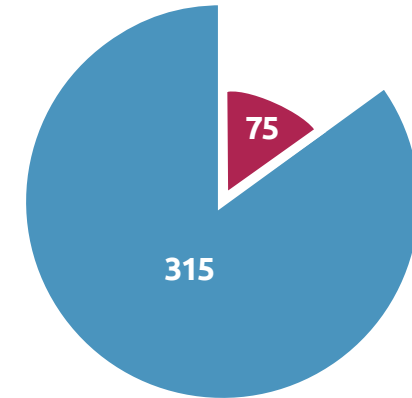
(2016 – 2020: 390 incidents)



Gender

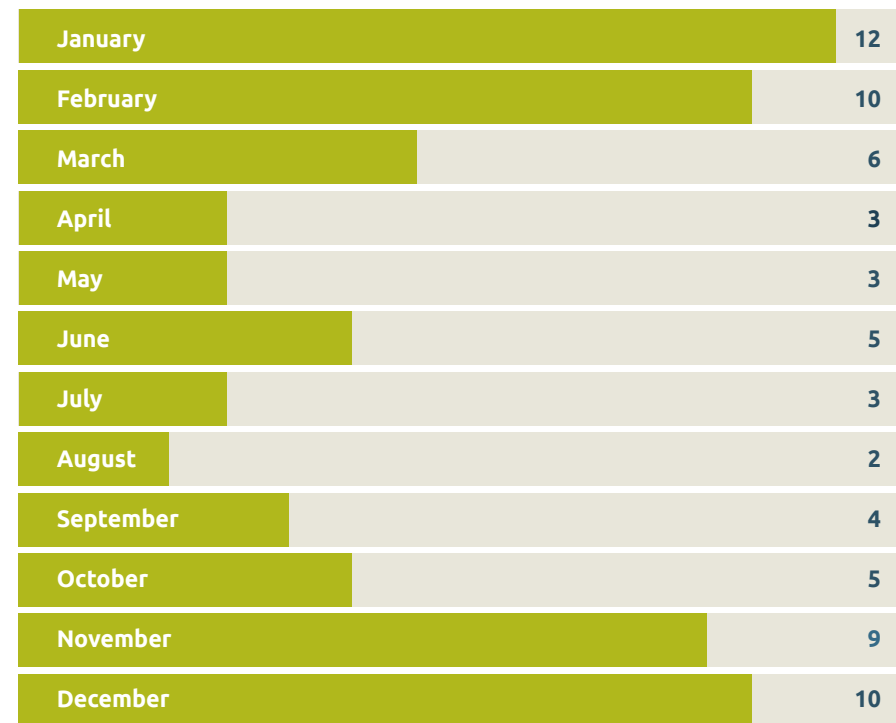
(2016 – 2020: 390 incidents)

- Male
- Female



Monthly Average

(2016 – 2020)



Previous New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2020

In 2015 the first New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2020 was developed and published. This document is the next iteration of that 2020 strategy. The strategy has been developed by the Cross Sector Reference Group (see page 16) in consultation with a wide group of water safety stakeholders and a broad cross-section of multi-sector related agencies, who each have a part to play in water safety and drowning prevention in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The 2020 strategy sought to increase the sector's ability to work together to reduce drowning deaths and injuries. The sector aimed to achieve three outcomes:

Culture change – a changed culture in which every New Zealander understands the risks associated with water and has the ability to survive in, on or around the water;

Reduced costs – minimised social and economic costs from preventable drowning and water related injury and hospitalisation; and

High performing – a world leading water safety sector.

These three outcomes are still considered relevant. The reduced cost outcome has been amended to highlight the primary outcome, that of “Reduced drowning fatalities and drowning related hospitalisations”. The high performing outcome has been reworded to bring focus to the sector being sustainable, collaborative and coherent.



Māori Partnership

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. The water safety sector is committed to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation in order to obtain better water safety outcomes for Māori.

The sector is committed to partnership with tangata whenua and the protection of Māori culture and taonga. We value the distinctive point of view that tangata whenua bring to strengthen the connection to water and the crucial role of water safety and safeguarding the lives of Māori whānau and communities. We believe a strong bi-cultural foundation is critical to our national identity and wellbeing.

Working towards a true partnership is highlighted in this strategy by introducing the three Māori focus areas of the Wai Puna model that encapsulates the importance of strengthening connection to water through **Whakapapa: Attitudes & Beliefs**, **Mātauranga: Knowledge** and **Tikanga: Behaviour**, which reflect a Māori worldview. [1] Wai Puna is an evidence-based model that is grounded on the importance of strengthening people's connection to the water for positive health outcomes and subsequently improving water safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. From a Wai Puna approach, water safety is not merely about teaching water skills alone. It starts with a deeper understanding and respect for wai, an understanding inherent for Māori, that can also lead to the provision of more purposeful drowning prevention for all New Zealanders.

Water Safety New Zealand is currently in the process of formally partnering with the Wai Puna Kaihautū Leadership Rōpū of Coastal People: Southern Skies Centre of Research Excellence. The water safety sector is committed to supporting greater use of a kaupapa Māori approach to water safety for tangata whenua. We value the need for culturally distinctive pathways that enable tangata moana (people of the sea) and all New Zealanders to participate and understand the critical link between water safety and Māori Mātauranga: Knowledge.

New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025

Wai Ora Aotearoa

VISION

Everyone connects to and enjoys the water safely

Whakapapa: Attitudes & Beliefs

The source of water safety knowledge

Mātauranga: Knowledge

The deepening of water safety knowledge

Tikanga: Behaviour

The application of water safety knowledge

This vision and mission is derived from the Wai Puna framework with the central focus of strengthening our connection to the water through whakapapa, mātauranga and tikanga [1]

MISSION

To work collectively to instill respect
for the water, and encourage
safe behaviours/tikanga by all people
in Aotearoa New Zealand
so that drowning fatalities and
injuries are reduced

Water safety sector's outcomes and measures

OUTCOMES	DESIRED TRENDS	INDICATORS	TARGETS
Culture change People's water safety competencies are increased and they modify their behaviours in on and around water based on risk awareness.	The population's ability to understand risky behaviours associated with fatal and non-fatal drowning increases over time Water safety competencies to survive in, on or around the water are improved over time	Public Attitudes and Behaviours surveys to assess the population's beliefs about, and responses to the dangers in, on and around the water The reach of aquatic education across pool, beach, boat and river The achievement of key water survival skills	A statistically significant year-on-year increase in improved attitudes and behaviours as demonstrated by the "Attitudes and Behaviours" survey and the "Use of life jackets" survey from a 2021 baseline Year-on-year increase in people participating in and competencies achieved in water safety education programmes, as evidenced by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 50% increase in students participating in pool-based Water Skills For Life programmes from a 2019-20 baseline of 200,000, and • a 10% increase in the Water Skills For Life achievements of the two fundamental water survival skills from the 2019-20 baseline
Reduced drowning fatalities and drowning related hospitalisations The social and economic costs of drowning and water related injury and hospitalisations are minimised	The average annual rate of fatalities consistently trends down over time The average annual rate of drowning related hospitalisations consistently trends down over time	Annual rate of drowning fatalities per 100,000 of New Zealand population (lag indicator) Annual rate of drowning related hospitalisations per 100,000 of New Zealand population (lag indicator)	Reduce per capita preventable drowning deaths using a 5 year rolling average, of 25% by 2025. Target the per capita fatalities moving from 1.59 to 1.19 by 2025 Reduce per capita preventable drowning related hospitalisations using a 5 year rolling average, of 12% by 2025. Target the per capita hospitalisations moving from 3.7 to 3.25 by 2025
High performing The New Zealand water safety sector is sustainable, collaborative and coherent	The water safety sector is sustainable and able to meet identified needs and adapt to changing circumstances The sector is aligned and integrated to achieve the greatest collective impact	Integration of the Water Safety Sector Strategy into each of the Cross Sector Reference Group's own organisations strategies The number of water safety sector actions implemented	Member organisations have the Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025 incorporated into their own strategic annual and long term planning where relevant At least 75% of the Water safety sector's actions in the Water Safety Strategy's implementation plan are delivered by the end of 2025

Strategic Areas of Focus

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PAGE 11	<p>There is an effective water safety education framework in place, designed to promote behaviour change and skills development, for all ages and abilities in Aotearoa New Zealand.</p>
DATA, RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS PAGE 12	<p>Evidenced based decision making is driven and supported by a trusted “knowledge hub” that provides relevant data, research and insights to focus investments and response activities to achieve desired sector outcomes.</p>
COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP PAGE 13	<p>There is strong sector collaboration utilising members strengths and capacity.</p> <p>There is sustainable engagement at a local, regional and national level to ensure best practice is enacted, and cost effective solutions and efficiencies are adopted.</p>
LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE PAGE 14	<p>Water safety objectives and interventions are advocated for, and key decision makers influenced, in order to increase public and political support for water safety and drowning prevention.</p>
FRONTLINE PREVENTION, SEARCH AND RESCUE PAGE 15	<p>Prevent or reduce drowning and water related injuries through providing targeted supervision and surveillance, safety services, guidance, and if necessary rescue, of those at the point of being exposed to water hazards.</p>

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Water Safety New Zealand will be responsible for leading the implementation of the Water Safety Sector Strategy. It will undertake this role in consultation with the Cross Sector Reference Group and with the support of sector organisations.

More specifically Water Safety New Zealand will:

- Recruit an implementation manager to project manage the sector strategy,
- Develop an implementation plan to deliver on the strategic actions,
- Form sector working groups to support the delivery of the action plan.

The development of a sector wide monitoring and evaluation framework will gauge progress, effectiveness and efficiency of the water safety sector, generating the expected outcomes. It will ensure activities undertaken move the sector closer to delivering on the stated outcomes.

The monitoring and evaluation framework will enable the sector to measure and report on the expected outcomes effectively and efficiently each year. This will fulfill the statement of service performance reporting obligations with the sector's funders, and the individual organisations' evaluation of their involvement working towards the sector's strategic areas of focus.

Actions for implementation



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Develop an Under-Fives Action Plan including expanding existing initiatives and developing effective campaigns to improve whakapapa/ attitudes and beliefs, mātauranga/ the knowledge and tikanga/ behaviours of parents and caregivers.
- Make Water Skills for Life and water safety education an integral part of children's and young people's learning through the Health and PE Curriculum. Embedding programmes into environment, aquatic activities and sports related practices, to make water safety skills training fundamental to 'real life' experiences and to influence a culture change around water.
- Develop Māori water safety education programmes that reflect Māori values and aspirations and strengthen the connection to wai/water.
- Focus on reducing male drowning and improve decision making in the 15-34 age range.
- Implement programmes and provide tools that aid people's awareness of the difference between their perceived competencies and actual competencies.
- Focus on reducing 50+ male recreational boating drownings via improved decision making and risk awareness.



DATA, RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

- Establish fit for purpose data collection methodologies with sector organisations and government agencies to improve evidenced based decision making.
- Work with organisations to strengthen the consistent reporting of water related incidents, injury and hospitalisation.
- Establish and agree definitions and protocols around data capture and use. Establish data hygiene, sharing, management, privacy, data sovereignty, and ethical use.
- Use centralised data to develop evidenced based insights into water safety interventions.
- Develop appropriate prevention strategies in conjunction with public health officials and suppliers to the sector.
- Form a repository of Aotearoa New Zealand and international research on drowning prevention, water safety and water competency so that information is collected at a single point and is easily accessed and disseminated.
- Highlight data and research gaps. Undertake and fund culturally appropriate research that is prioritised and focused on key issues. Engage with the research findings to develop, implement and evaluate new initiatives.
- Promote the citing and use of Aotearoa New Zealand research both locally and internationally.
- Acquire new participation and other data sources for benchmarking and indexing risk and deriving insights.



COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- Develop agreed sector position statements for key issues, building consensus across the sector, underpinned with consistent policies and communications.
- Collaborate on shared opportunities of national significance, through both traditional and digital channels.
- Develop a sustainable approach, partnering and collaborating with Māori on water safety and drowning prevention, reflecting the partnership principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Expand joint sector strategic planning activities and deliver greater cross-sector integration and effective outcomes.
- Complete the implementation of the Regional Strategy pilots and develop a Fresh Water Strategy for the sector.
- Targeted interventions are in place for overrepresented groups, activities and locations.
- Open discussion and collaboration with the Pacific region regarding establishing tuakana-teina /mentoring relationship pathways for three New Zealand Pacific Territories and three Pacific region Islands by 2025.
- Engage and collaborate with organisations that have a significant role to play but may not have a major water safety or drowning prevention focus.



LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE

- Water Safety New Zealand will lead the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the sector's strategic actions in conjunction with sector agencies.
- Water Safety New Zealand will lead and advocate agreed sector positions for key policy statements.
- Ensure the sector is financially sustainable to achieve its mission, and multi-year funding from government is secured in perpetuity.
- Ensure the water safety sector structure, form and function is considered as part of the Ministry of Transport's sector review.
- In partnership with the sector organisation's Māori advisors, Water Safety New Zealand will develop the water safety sector's strategic direction for Māori, and will support the development of the sector's capability to work with Māori.
- Develop a water safety sector local government engagement strategy that focuses on relationship building and engaging with local government planning.
- Engage with central government to develop a greater shared understanding of how we can work together for the public good of water safety and drowning prevention.



FRONTLINE PREVENTION, SEARCH AND RESCUE

- Continue to evolve each organisation's structure and services individually to meet the changing needs of the community and ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Strive to develop 'step change' initiatives, particularly in prevention that can focus on target areas without letting slip what is currently being achieved (e.g. via technology).
- Frontline agencies will develop their capability for working in partnership with Māori and other high risk groups and ensure their service delivery is effective for all.
- Improve support and resourcing for volunteer workforces to ensure the frontline services that depend on them can be maintained.
- Continue to exploit and look for new opportunities where greater cross-agency collaboration can achieve better operational outcomes.

Cross Sector Reference Group – maintaining our focus and commitment

The water safety sector's Cross Sector Reference Group was established by sector agreement at the Water Safety New Zealand AGM in late 2014. The group is committed to improving water safety in New Zealand, and is made up of a number of leading organisations in the water safety space.



Water Safety New Zealand is the national leading agency for the New Zealand water safety sector. Through leadership, advocacy, policies, initiatives and funding programmes, Water Safety New Zealand works with water safety sector organisations, individuals and the public to promote water safety, and reduce the incidence of drowning and water related injury in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Surf Life Saving New Zealand is one of the lead agencies for drowning prevention in New Zealand and the primary agency for beach and coastal safety.



Coastguard New Zealand provides the primary maritime search and rescue service in New Zealand.



Swimming New Zealand is the National Sports Organisation (NSO) for swimming in New Zealand. It has an active role in the promotion of water safety, learn to swim, Water Skills for Life education and certification of swimming instructors and swim schools.



Coastguard Boating Education is the lead provider of boating courses throughout New Zealand, offering courses to suit all abilities, types of boating and training pathways.



Drowning Prevention Auckland is a lead agency for regional water safety coordination and education in the Auckland region.



Maritime New Zealand ensures that all maritime activities are carried out safely, with minimal impact on the environment and on our nation's security.



Mountain Safety Council is a national organisation with a mandate to encourage safe participation in land-based outdoor activities.



The **NZSAR Council** provides national strategic governance to the New Zealand search and rescue sector. The **NZSAR Secretariat** supports the NZSAR Council, and provides strategic coordination for search and rescue in New Zealand through support services, policy advice, and implementation of NZSAR Council decisions.



Recreation Aotearoa is the voice of recreation in Aotearoa, representing all professionals in the industry. It empowers members to deliver the quality recreation experiences, places and facilities, that fuel a more active, healthy and connected New Zealand.



Water Safety New Zealand is currently in the process of formally partnering with the **Wai Puna Kaihautū Leadership Rōpū of Coastal People: Southern Skies Centre of Research Excellence**.



Conclusion

The implementation of this strategy will be owned by the sector and driven by Water Safety New Zealand, who will play a lead role in ensuring its goals are monitored and measured. Sector participants include organisations across prevention, education, rescue, academia, regulation and recreation. We thank all contributors and interested parties for the input. Our problem is not one-dimensional, it is complex by nature. By working together, we will be more efficient and have more impact in achieving our desired outcomes.

We need to ensure there are changes to Aotearoa New Zealand's water safety culture in the face of entrenched behaviours and attitudes. We live in an ever-changing world, with the global events of 2020 certainly a reflection of that. We will need to be agile and adapt as we face future challenges.

Now is the time to reset and generate the momentum needed to advance our mission substantively, by working together so that more lives can be saved. We need the support of all our stakeholders, ongoing dialogue and deliberate action – non-profit organisations, business, government (both central and local), policy makers, parents and concerned community members can all act to help improve water safety and prevent drowning in Aotearoa New Zealand.

11 March 2021

Acknowledgments

Water Safety New Zealand would like to acknowledge the Cross Sector Reference Group, the Māori advisory group, our monitoring agencies Sport NZ and ACC, and the wider water safety sector partners for providing content and helpful consultation feedback during the development of this strategy.

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- [1] Phillips, C. (2020). Wai Puna: An Indigenous Model of Māori Water Safety and Health in Aotearoa, New Zealand, *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education*, 12(3) Article 7.
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APPENDIX 1:

The development process of the New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025

At the Water Safety New Zealand Drowning Prevention Summit 2019, there was strong feedback from attendees that members and interested parties should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new Water Safety Sector Strategy. Water Safety New Zealand engaged a project manager in early 2020 to coordinate the process, develop the consultation document and collate and combine feedback.

A significant phase in the development process was the holding of Cross Sector Reference Group workshops. At these workshops the group considered the previous strategy, analysed data and considered the evolving patterns of drowning and other factors that might impact drowning prevention and water safety over the next five year period.

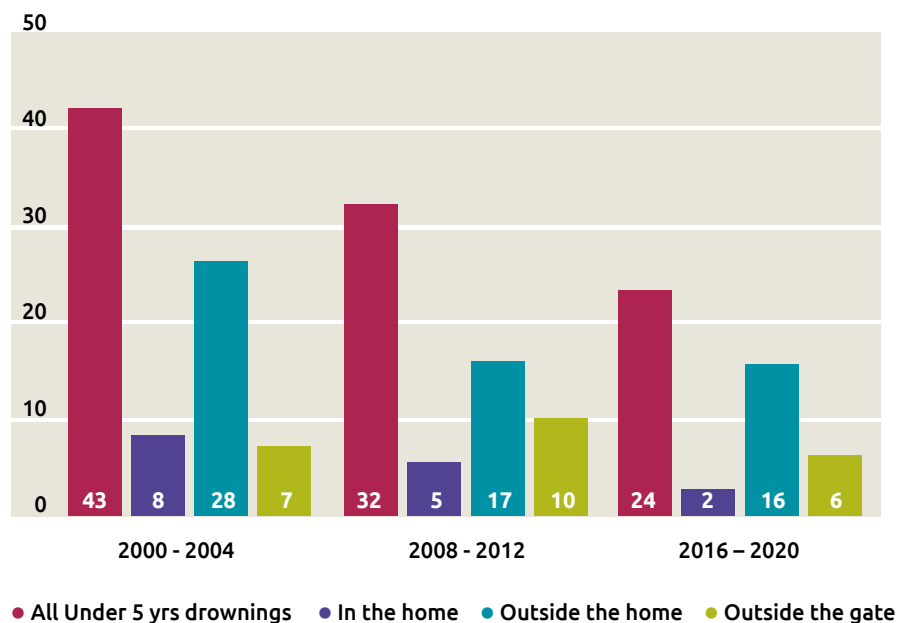
A consultation document was released mid-year to enable interested local, regional and national agencies and other multi-sector groups interested in water safety and drowning prevention outcomes to feed back into the process. This feedback was discussed by the Cross Sector Reference Group and fed into the development of the final draft strategy. The final draft strategy was released in November 2020 to close the consultation loop and provide interested stakeholders with an understanding of how feedback was incorporated.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the early development process of the strategy. Face to face meetings were not able to be conducted for the first two workshops. However, all agencies committed to keep momentum going by holding online meetings. Water Safety New Zealand and the Cross Sector Reference Group wished to ensure that all interested parties were properly consulted and had the opportunity to provide input during a time of nationwide uncertainty.

APPENDIX 2: Supporting Data

1. Under Fives

Causal factor:	Lack of (or minimal) active adult supervision.
Intervention:	The bathmat water safety campaign supported by Plunket was introduced in 2011. Drownings have reduced to an average of 3 annually in 2020.



2. 5 – 13 year olds

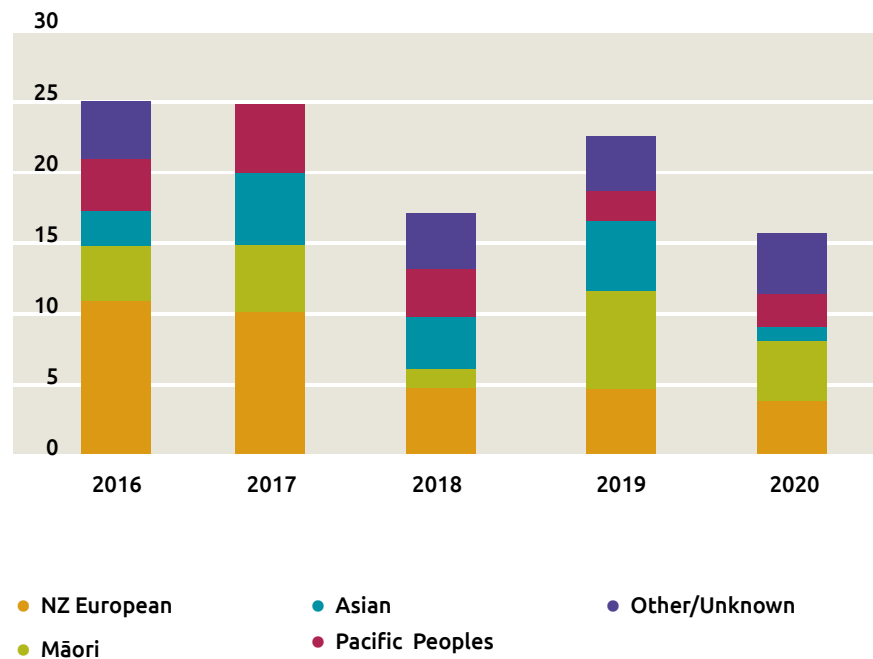
This is the lowest drowning cohort and the time when aquatic water safety education is established through Water Skills for Life and other aquatic programmes. 2019 data insights indicate the following achievements from a sample of up to 64,000 students.

Get into and go under the water safely	98%
Float and regain feet	96%
Move under water for 5 counts	94%
Move 15m	86%
Scull for at least 3 mins	65%
Tread water for 3 mins	58%
Move 100m, or, for 5 minutes non stop and confidently	51%

3. Swimming

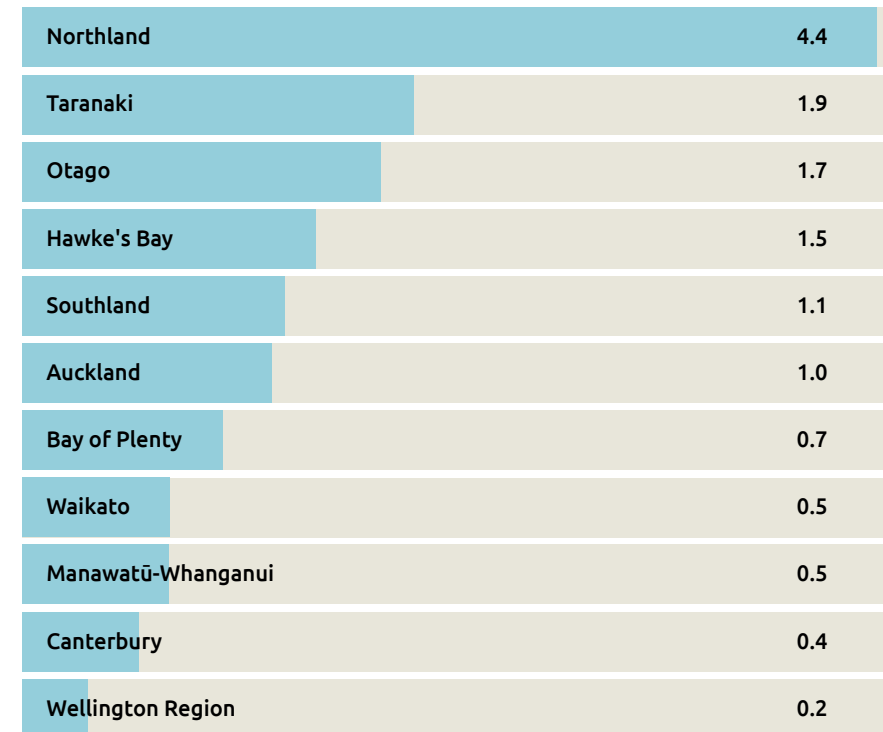
Most at risk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males 15 – 34 years. • Māori, Pacific Peoples and Asians over-represented.
Intervention:	<p>The Swim Reaper campaign, supported by ACC and NZSAR was introduced in 2017.</p> <p>Over the four year period fatalities among this cohort have reduced significantly among NZ European males.</p>

Males 15 – 34 years preventable fatalities (2016 – 2020)



4. Males 50+ Recreational boating

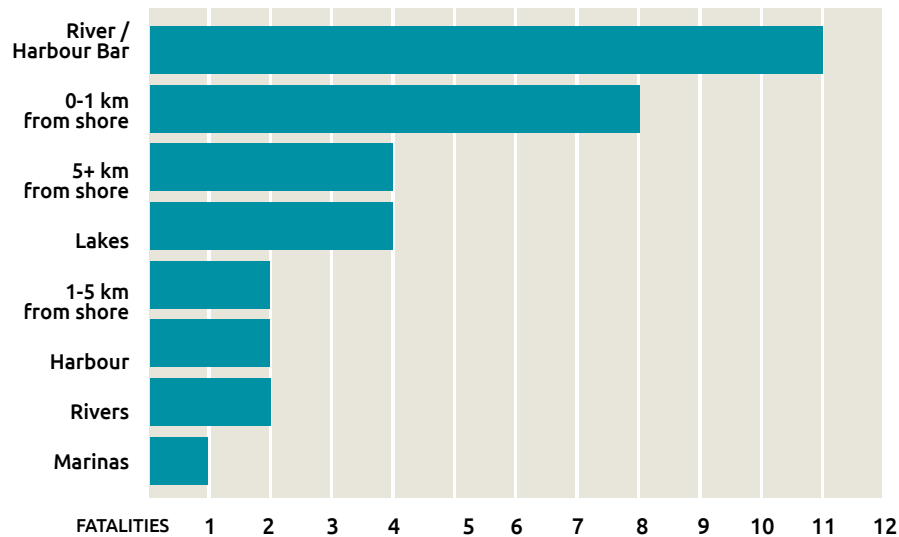
Boating fatalities by region per 100,000 (2016 – 2020)



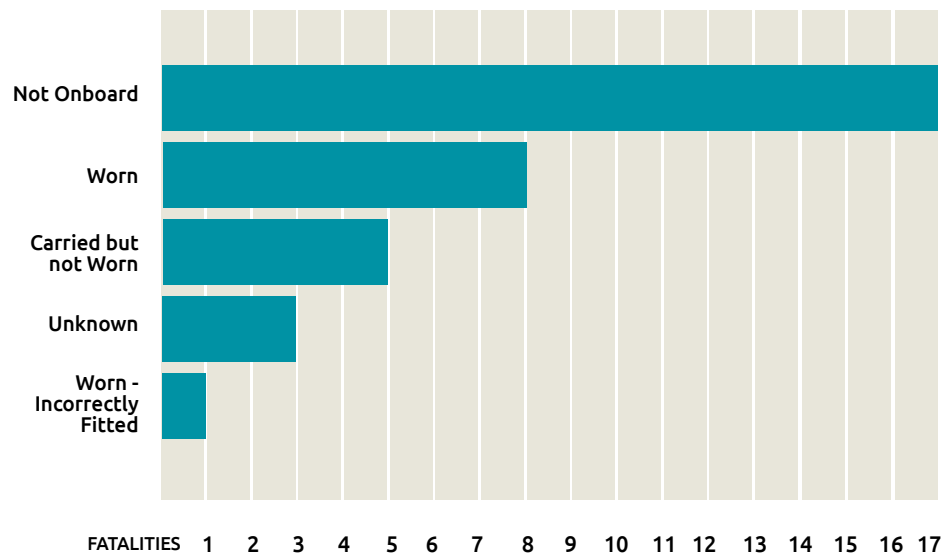
* Tasman Region, Nelson Region, Marlborough Region, West Coast Region.

Males 50+ Recreational boating (cont)

Locations



Lifejacket use



5. Insights Gaps

Incidents where the victims had no intention of being in the water when on land, represents approximately a third of the 390 preventable drowning fatalities in the period 2016 – 2020.

These incidents are random by age, geographic location and environments but falls/slips are a major contributor. In addition, alcohol appears to be a very strong contributing factor, and drugs and mental health a possible contributing factors. The majority of victims are NZ European males and a disproportionate number have been unemployed at their time of death.

Further Insights work is required to identify interventions and support in this area.

Five years (2016 – 2020)

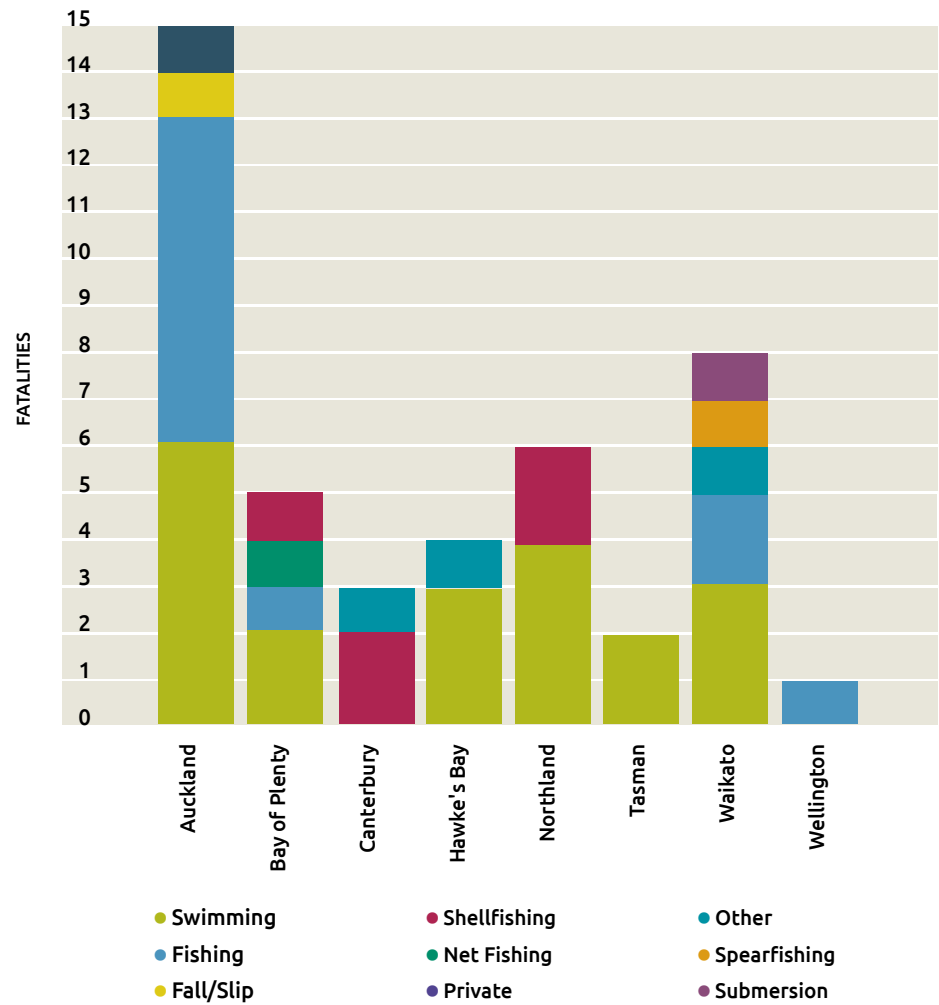
Preventable fatalities

Alcohol involved	66
Unemployed	34
Drugs involved	16
Mental health problems	16

EMERGING TRENDS

6. Asian

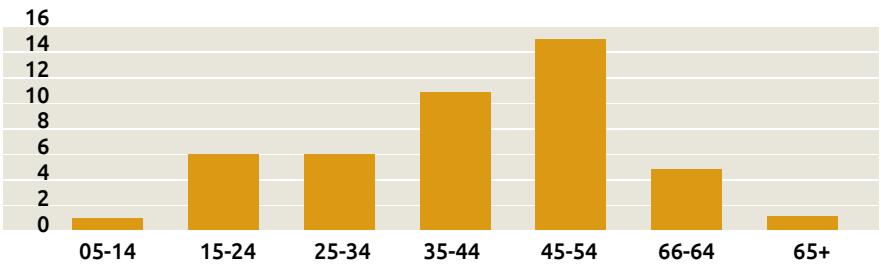
Asian - Preventable Fatalities (2016 – 2020)



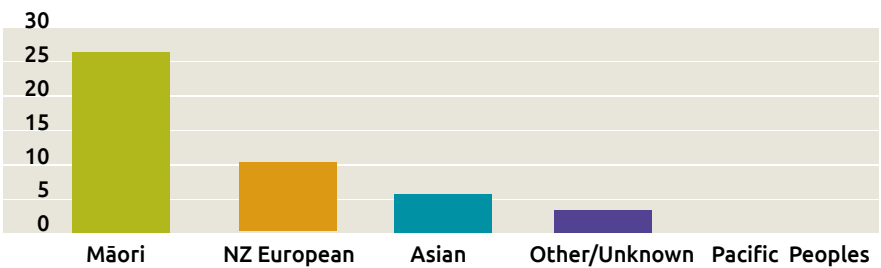
7. Underwater diving (scuba, snorkeling, free)

Preventable Fatalities (2016 – 2020)

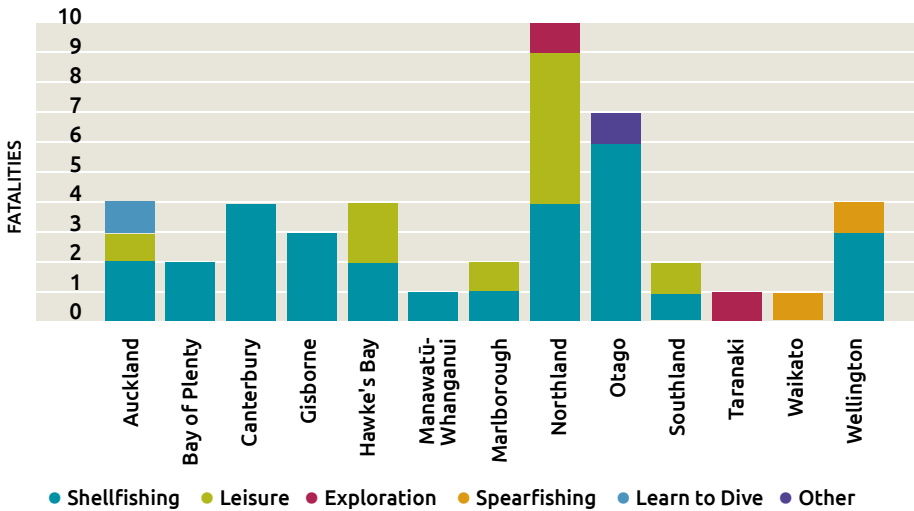
Age



Ethnicity



Purpose



APPENDIX 3

What is new in the 2025 Strategy?

A broader focus and wider consultation

To help us ensure the preventable drowning toll in Aotearoa New Zealand is reducing, and that we are building towards our vision, the water safety sector must be collaborative, share information and resources, and have common strategic areas of focus which will enable us to work together to implement our action plan.

During the development of this refreshed sector strategy, there was significant consultation across the sector¹. Feedback received was that much of the previous strategy's intent remains valid – the vision, mission and outcomes of the 2020 sector strategy were still considered well founded, as were many of the strategic actions and challenges faced by the sector from the previous strategy.

However, for this next iteration, it was agreed that a broader water safety focus was needed as opposed to the narrower drowning prevention focus.

Water safety refers to the procedures, precautions and policies associated with safety in, on, and around bodies of water, where there is a risk of injury or drowning.

Drowning prevention is the interventions and strategies delivered through programmes to national and local communities.

There was strong consultation feedback that the vision and mission should be restated with positive wording although still retain the underlying intent that “no one drowns”.

The Wai Puna model is new to the 2025 strategy and highlights the water safety sector working towards true partnership with Māori. Wai Puna is a theory of Māori water safety and health developed by Dr Chanel Phillips (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi), co-director of Te Koronga Indigenous Science Research Theme and lecturer at the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Otago. Dr Phillips' work in this area culminated in her PhD entitled *A Journey to Belonging: Explorations of Māori Perspectives of Water Safety* which analysed Māori oral narratives such as pūrākau (creation stories), mōteatea (chants), karakia (incantations), whakataukī (proverbs) and pepeha (tribal aphorisms) to better understand water safety and drowning prevention from a Māori perspective and help reduce the high drowning rate of Māori in Aotearoa. Dr Phillips employed interface research examining the intersection between Māori and

Western notions of water safety reflecting the importance of a strengthened connection to, and respect for, water that can lead to the provision of more purposeful drowning prevention for all New Zealanders.

Five strategic areas of focus

Five strategic areas of focus have been explicitly stated in this iteration of the strategy. These areas of focus are considered by the sector as the key “pillars”, with each playing a significant role in the achievement of the targets of the sector.

Sector measures and dashboards for the areas of focus

Desired trends, indicators and targets have been set against each of the three sector outcomes. Detailed dashboard measures will be developed against each action in the monitoring and evaluation framework relating to each of the five areas of focus.

This will provide high level assurance that the implementation of the action plan behind the strategy, is moving the water safety sector in the direction of our overall desired outcomes.

An action plan and implementation plan

An action plan has been developed for the 2025 strategy and has been agreed for the next 5-year period. Each action explicitly relates to one of the five strategic areas of focus. Water Safety New Zealand will be responsible for leading the implementation of the Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025. It will undertake this role in consultation with Cross Sector Reference Group and with the support of sector organisations. The implementation plan will be closely monitored and updated by Water Safety New Zealand.

A monitoring and evaluation framework

A sector wide monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to inform progress with the strategy, and report on the expected outcomes each year. This will fulfill the statement of service performance reporting obligations with sector funders, and the individual organisation's evaluation of their own involvement working towards the sector's strategic goals. This continual process of monitoring and evaluation will determine how we are progressing and enable the action plan to be reviewed and amended annually where appropriate.

¹ See Appendix 1: Design and development of the 2025 Strategy

Development of the sector Knowledge Hub and consideration of data and research gaps

A key focus of this iteration of the Water Safety Sector Strategy will be the development of a water safety sector Knowledge Hub led by Water Safety New Zealand. We will aim to expand data capture and use, establish data hygiene, sharing, management, privacy, data sovereignty, and ethical use of data.

A repository of Aotearoa New Zealand and international research on drowning prevention, water safety and water competency will be developed so that information is collected at a single point and is easily accessed and disseminated. This centralised data and research will include distilling and disseminating the best available evidence from research, practice and experience. It will then be used to better inform decision-making and to develop evidenced-based insights and to improve policy, and action water safety interventions.

Alongside the development of the Knowledge Hub, work will be undertaken to highlight data and research gaps relating to water safety and drowning prevention. Improving drowning and water related hospitalisation data across countries has been identified by the World Health Organisation as a key strategy to better understand the full extent and circumstances of drowning, to target interventions and evaluate their effectiveness. [2]

Further work in Aotearoa New Zealand is required to validate water related incidents, injury and hospitalisation data, so that we can ensure that the information gathered is reliable and consistent.

There are a number of areas where drowning prevention research is currently being undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further understanding is required regarding the impact of alcohol and drugs on the drowning and non-fatal drowning statistics. We also need to be conscious about factors that may affect us that are imminent, and the possible impacts they might have on our society (and statistics). With the development of the Knowledge Hub, these areas of potential research will be prioritised so the sector is kept abreast of future trends.

2 Half Year Economic and Fiscal Update 2020 – 16th December 2020 – The Treasury
<https://www.treasury.govt.nz/system/files/2020-12/hyefu20.pdf>

COVID-19, immediate and ongoing impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause widespread economic and social disruption around the world. At the time of writing, infection rates are still rising in many parts of the world and the timeline for the vaccination of the population is still some months off. The crisis has caused the biggest contraction in the global economy since records began, with a flow on effect in New Zealand of the disappearance of tourism revenues, minimal immigration, and national restrictions to movement due to lockdown measures. All these factors, along with slower population growth, an ageing population and more workers retiring than entering the workforce, will influence our population's demographics, and may give rise to increased uncertainty and increased inequality.

Aotearoa New Zealand is generally regarded as a country with a high level of social cohesion, given our considerable diversity; but underlying vulnerabilities and issues remain that are yet to be fully addressed². The COVID-19 crisis has brought into stark relief the position of those who were already in social and economic difficulties. There is likely to be a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable segments of society, with the likelihood that existing inequality will worsen. [3]

New Zealand's early elimination strategy has resulted in a much lower prevalence of COVID-19 compared to many other countries. The recovery from the initial downturn has been swift, despite the return to higher alert levels during August and September. In line with the stronger domestic recovery, the unemployment rate is forecast to peak at 6.9% by the end of 2021, compared to the 7.8% forecast in the September 2020 Pre-Election Update. In comparison the unemployment rate peaked at 6.6% during the Global Financial Crisis.

Those already vulnerable are expected to bear the brunt of the rise in unemployment in 2021. With the anticipated increase in jobless over the next year, we are expecting to see a rise in the number of families supporting themselves by kai/food gathering in our waterways. This may well lead to increased drownings or hospitalisations and is an area that the sector needs to be monitoring closely.

Alert levels 3 and 4, and the associated restriction to movement, resulted in a significant reduction in the number drowning. This will distort our 2020 statistics and five-year rolling averages for some time.

DrownBase™ data methodology

The data and infographics presented in the New Zealand Water Safety Sector Strategy 2025 are drawn from Water Safety New Zealand's DrownBase™ and the online Water Safety New Zealand provisional Drowning Report 2020³.

DrownBase™ is the official integrated drowning database of Water Safety New Zealand. It was developed in 1994 to maintain details of all drownings (mortality and morbidity) that have occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand waterways since 1st January 1980.

The database is a vital tool for the New Zealand water safety sector and is considered integral to the evidence base by allowing analysis of drowning data to provide targeted programmes and initiatives, improve funding decisions, target advocacy and develop research. New Zealand's Drownbase™ is considered to be world leading and to have one of the three best "unintentional drowning" databases in the world alongside Australia and Canada. [4]

The success of Drownbase™ is due to the partnership between Water Safety New Zealand, New Zealand Police, the Coronial Services of the Ministry of Justice and the New Zealand Health Information Service. All care is taken to ensure that the information in DrownBase™ is as accurate as possible. Please note, however, that figures may change depending on the outcome of coronial investigations. At any point in time there may be several deaths which have been referred to the coroner, with ongoing coronial investigations. It is more likely to affect more recent years' data as this is where investigations are still likely to be underway⁴.

Drowning rates per 100,000 people are calculated using population data from Statistics New Zealand publications. Percentages and averages are presented as whole numbers and have been rounded up or down accordingly.

The data presented in this document relates to preventable drownings. Preventable fatalities include recreational and non-recreational drowning deaths. It excludes drowning deaths as a result of road or air vehicle accidents, suicides or homicides, or deaths from natural or unknown causes.

³ <https://watersafety.org.nz/2020-Report-Provisional>

⁴ Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) gives no warranty as to the correctness of the information or the data provided as it is supplied to WSNZ by third parties not under its control. While WSNZ is satisfied as to its accuracy for the purposes for which it is supplied to it, WSNZ shall not be liable for any loss or damage

Non-fatal drowning – the impact on individuals, families, and society

The World Health Organisation defines drowning as "... the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid". [5] Outcomes are classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity. Morbidity is defined as a decline from the individual's functional capacity prior to the drowning.

There has however, been a limited consensus of a definition for non-fatal drowning which often result in hospitalisations. This has given rise to data inconsistencies which have hindered research efforts and underestimates the burden of non-fatal drowning on society. In order to improve and provide more comprehensive reporting, an international working group was formed in 2017. The outcome of the working group was to provide a definition and categorisation for non-fatal drowning. [6]

The impact of non-fatal drowning may be catastrophic for an individual, where they may suffer long term neurological impairments. There is also the significant ongoing impact on the individual's family, society, hospitals and the wider health sector. As part of the 2025 strategy, Water Safety New Zealand will facilitate working with organisations to strengthen the consistent reporting of water related incidents, injury and non-fatal drowning hospitalisation data. This will give the sector confidence in the data being reported, allow us to target interventions to reduce water related injury and hospitalisations, and, as a result, reduce the burden on individuals, families and society.

Drowning hospitalisation numbers are increasing year on year in New Zealand. 943 people have been hospitalised over the 5 year period⁵ from 2015-2019 for non-fatal drowning, compared to 408 preventable drowning deaths over the same period. This identifies a preventable drowning death to survival ratio of 1: 2.31 fatal to non-fatal drownings. We may well find that with the increased funding received in 2020 for frontline rescue, that fatalities track down with more and quicker rescues but that hospitalisations continue to track up for some time to come. A close watch on the drowning death to survival ratio will be necessary.

Further understanding of the impact of non-fatal drowning in New Zealand is needed. Non-fatal drowning and hospitalisations have been identified as a gap in research and one where we need to improve our knowledge and goal setting.

⁵ Water Safety New Zealand. DrownBase™

