

# CHILD DEATH REGISTER KEY FINDINGS 2020–21

## Children known to the child protection system

Queensland  
Family & Child  
Commission

Of the 398 children who died in 2020–21, 53 were known to Child Safety (the child protection system) in the 12-month period prior to their death. This included child deaths from natural causes (diseases and morbid conditions), external causes, unexplained deaths and deaths pending a cause at the time of reporting (Table 1).

Some children are more vulnerable to experiencing adversity—including experiences that increase risk of death—than others. Children who are known to the child protection system often experience multiple vulnerabilities and are consistently and significantly over-represented in child mortality statistics.

The mortality rate for children known to Child Safety was almost twice the Queensland child mortality rate.<sup>i</sup>

Over the last 5 years, the mortality rate for children known to Child Safety was more than 3 times the rate for all children in Queensland for:

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

Children known to Child Safety were over-represented in Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infancy (SUDI). Some 30% of SUDI in the last 5 years were infants known to Child Safety.

### Background

Child Safety (Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs) administers the child protection system in Queensland. A child is deemed to be known to the child protection system if, within one year before the child's death:

- the child was in the custody or guardianship of Child Safety, or
- Child Safety was aware of alleged harm or alleged risk of harm, or
- Child Safety took action under the *Child Protection Act 1999* in relation to the child, or
- Child Safety was notified of concerns before the child's birth and reasonably suspected the child might be in need of protection after their birth.

Deaths of children known to the Child Safety in the 12-months prior to death are subject to a review of the services provided to the child.

**Table 1: Deaths of children known to Child Safety and all child deaths in Queensland, 2020–21<sup>a</sup>**

	Known to Child Safety <sup>b</sup>	All children
	Number	Number
<b>All deaths</b>		
Deaths of children 0–17 years	53	378
<b>Cause of death</b>		
<b>Natural causes</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>External causes</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>86</b>
Transport	5	31
Drowning	5	10
Other non-intentional injury-related death	6	12
Suicide	4	30
Fatal assault and neglect	2	3
<b>Unexplained deaths</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>
SIDS and undetermined causes	5	17
<b>Cause of death pending</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infancy (SUDI)</b>		
Sudden unexpected infant deaths	13	34

a By date of death registration.

b Known to Child Safety within 12-month period prior to death.

The population used as a denominator for 'children known to Child Safety' is the number of children known to Child Safety as the subject of a child concern report, notification, investigation and assessment, ongoing intervention, child protection orders or placements, in the 12 months before the relevant year.

## More information

This fact sheet provides summary information from the *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2020–21*. Information on methodology, sources and definitions can be found in the report.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) annual reports on child deaths, 17-year data tables and the latest Australian states and territories and New Zealand child death statistics can be found at <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/keeping-kids-more-safe/preventing-child-injury-death/child-death-reports-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 child death data to genuine researchers and organisations at no cost.

Email [child\\_death\\_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au](mailto:child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au)

© The State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission) 2022

---

<sup>1</sup> Five-year average rate for children known to Child Safety was 61.2 deaths per 100,000, compared to the overall Queensland child mortality rate 32.9 per 100,000 (3-year average).