

Queensland Child Death Register

Key findings 2022–23

Children known to Child Safety

March 2024

Of the 446 children who died in 2022–23, 72 were known to the Queensland child protection system (Child Safety). Children are considered known to Child Safety if they were the subject of an intake call or intervention in the preceding 12-months.

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, 63.8 and 34.2 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.

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, 2022–23^a

	Known to Child Safety ^b	All children
All deaths		
Deaths of children 0–17 years	72	446
Rate per 100,000 ^c	63.8	34.2
Cause of death		
Natural causes	31	327
External causes	25	67
Transport	10	28
Drowning	4	10
Other non-intentional injury	3	4
Suicide	6	20
Fatal assault and neglect	2	5
Unexplained causes	1	6
SIDS and undetermined causes	1	6
Cause of death pending	15	46
Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)		
Sudden unexpected infant deaths	13	40

a By date of death registration.

b In the 12 months prior to death.

c Rate averaged over 5 years.

The child protection status is an indicator of the level of Child Safety involvement with a child. Over the last 5 years, the child protection status at the time of death for children who were known to the Queensland child protection system included:

- 49% – no involvement or ongoing intervention
- 20% – investigation and assessment (IA)
- 12% – child protection order (CPO)
- 10% – open intake event
- 7% – intervention with parental agreement (IPA).

Trends from 2004 to 2023

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.

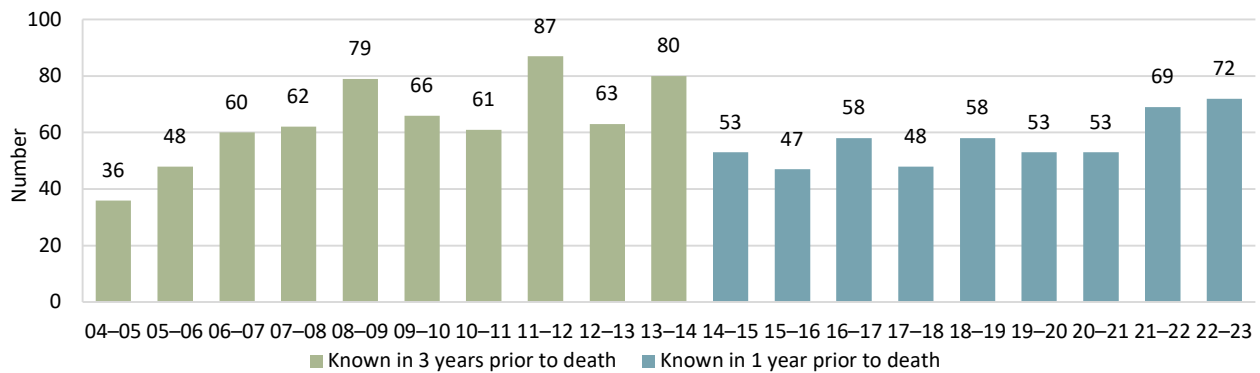
The population of children known to the child protection system has increased over the last 5 years, although this growth does not fully account for the increase in child deaths observed in the last 2 years.

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.

Figure 1: Deaths of children known to the child protection system, 2004–05 to 2022–23



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 2022–23*, 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