5 Other non-intentional injury

Seven children died in 2024–25 from other non-intentional injuries. These include non-intentional injury-related deaths outside of transport or drowning fatalities, for example, deaths from fire and smoke, poisoning, falls and threats to breathing.

In some scenarios, improved safety may be regulated through legislation—such as mandating smoke alarms, and establishing product safety standards for cots, window coverings and blind cords, and button batteries.

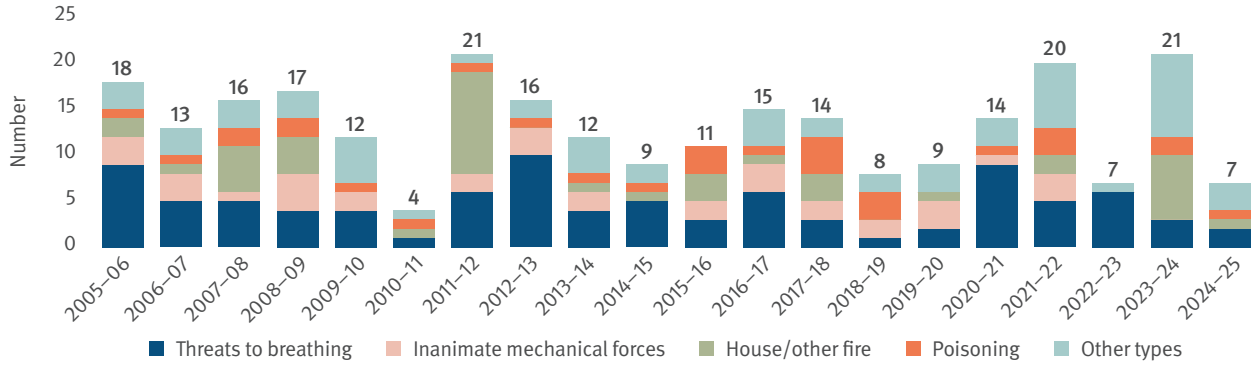
We share data with genuine researchers to enable more informed and coordinated responses across healthcare and public safety systems. This year, we provided data on child deaths involving:

- dog bite incidents, to identify patterns and high-risk areas
- toppling furniture, blind cords and windows, to inform changes to rental laws
- playground equipment, to inform a review of standards
- fencing design for use by Dr Ruth Barker, Director Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit, who was assisting a Northern Territory Coroner to investigate the death of a child
- risks in design and use of car restraints for children with disabilities, to inform discussions on national standards for child car restraints
- heat stress and vehicles, to identify the risks, trends, and to raise public awareness about prevention strategies.

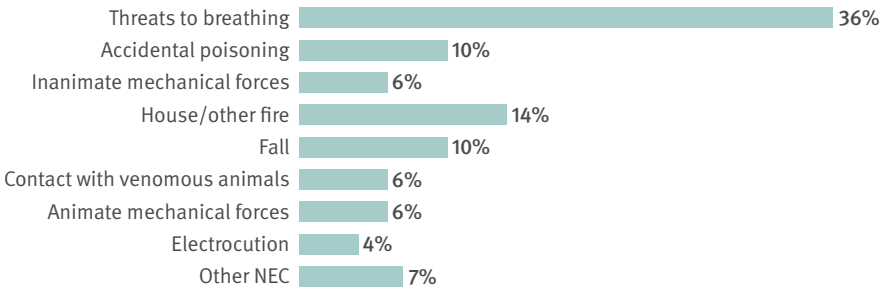
Data on incidents involving highly caustic hydroxide agents was used to inform a shared submission between the Commission, Dr Ruth Barker, Director Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit and the National Poisons Information Centres to the National Drugs and Poisons Scheduling Committee. The submission advocated for the reclassification of highly caustic hydroxide agents.

Key facts on child deaths from other non-intentional injury

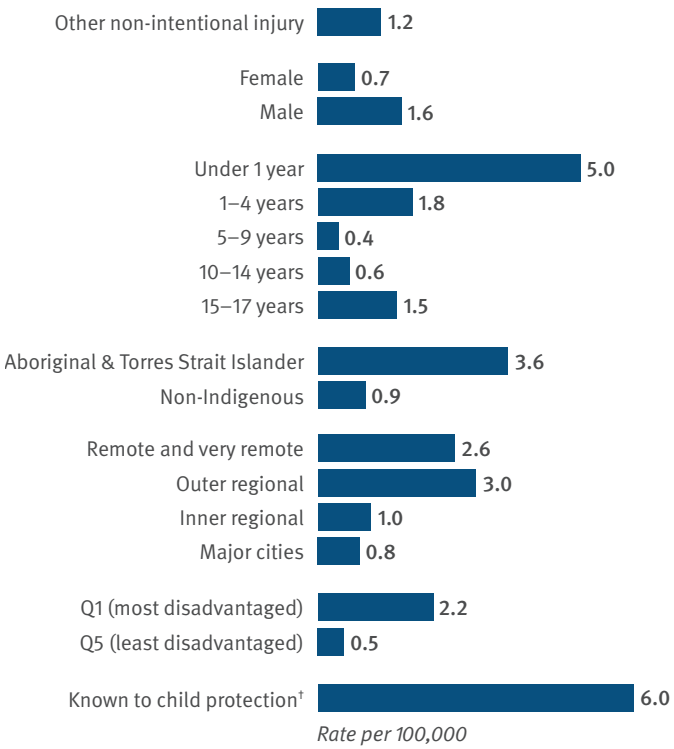
2005 to 2025



5-year summary (2020–2025) | Incident type



Demographics



High risk groups

Under 5s

54% of deaths from non-intentional injury were aged **under 5 years**

57% of other non-intentional deaths in under 5s were from **threats to breathing**

Young people

22% of deaths from non-intentional injury were **aged 15–17 years**

57% of **accidental poisoning** deaths were aged between 15–17 years

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

In the 2024–25 reporting period, 7 children died from other non-intentional injuries. These included 2 from threats to breathing, one each from accidental poisoning, contact with venomous animals and plants, exposure to animate mechanical forces, heat stress, and house/other fire.

Over the past 5 years, 69 child deaths were attributed to other non-intentional injury. The most common types of injury were threats to breathing (25), house or other fire (10), accidental poisoning (7), and falls (7).[56]

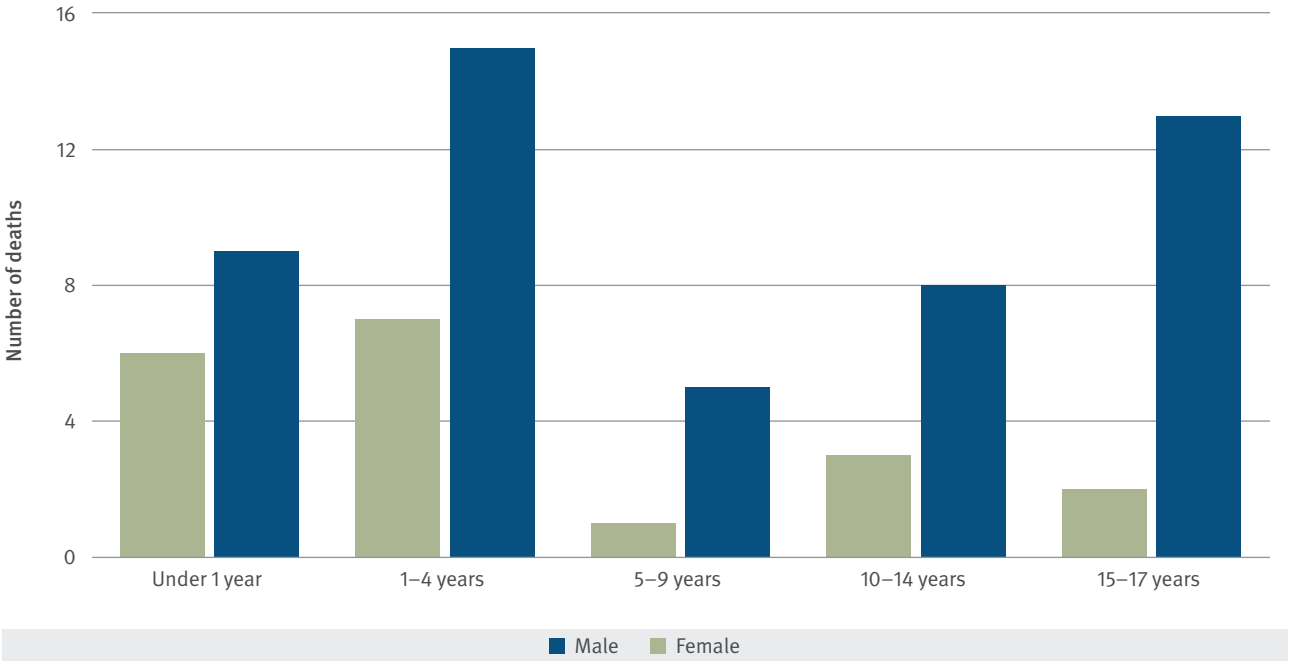
Table A.7 in **Appendix A** provides summary data on other non-intentional injury deaths in the last 5 years.

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 72% 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 (5.0 per 100,000), followed by children aged 1–4 years (1.8 per 100,000) and young people aged 15–17 years (1.5 per 100,000) (5-year averages).

Figure 5.1: Other non-intentional injury deaths by age and sex (number), 2020–21 to 2024–25



56 Threats to breathing includes suffocation, strangulation and other threats to breathing.

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.
- Five children, all under the age of 4 years, died from heat stress when they were unintentionally left alone or became trapped in vehicles.
- Threats to breathing was the most common injury type for children aged 0–4 years (84% or 21 of 25 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.[57]

Of the 14 infant deaths due to other non-intentional injury over the last 5 years, all 14 occurred during a sleep event. The incidents included accidental overlay by a co-sleeping person (7 deaths), entrapment or entanglement in the sleep environment (5 deaths), and accidental suffocation by objects in the sleep environment (2 deaths).

These findings highlight the importance of safe sleep practices and environment for infants to reduce the risk of unintentional injury or death.

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 2024–25, one child died after ingesting hazardous chemicals contained in a specialised industrial cleaning product.

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

- 2 from the use of an infant or child product where the products were either potentially maladapted or defective
- 2 from caustic injuries after ingesting caustic substances contained in domestic cleaning products (4 in total since 2006)
- one from strangulation after becoming entangled in a roller blind cord (4 in total since 2006)
- one from ingesting a button battery (2 in total since 2013)
- one from the use of household appliance where the product was maladapted
- 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.[58]

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.[59]

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

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

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

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.[60]

Risk-taking activities

Several fatalities over the last 5 years occurred in the context of risk-taking behaviours:

- Four deaths were attributed to drug overdose.
- Two deaths appeared to result from participation in choking games or pranks.
- Three deaths occurred during recreational activities at waterfalls or natural pools.
- One death resulted from contact with overhead power lines while climbing infrastructure.

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 in similar locations (covered in Chapter 3). Of the 5 deaths in these environments, 4 involved young people aged 15–17 years.

Waterfalls and natural pools present various safety hazards, including slips or falls, striking submerged objects, 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*** highlights a growing concern around drowning incidents in national parks and waterfall areas.[61]

Notably, drug overdose or substance misuse was the leading causes of death among 15–17-year-olds in the other non-intentional injury category, accounting for 27% (4 out of 15 deaths).

Lethal encounters with animals and marine creatures

Over the last 5 years, 8 children and young people lost their lives due to encounters with animals and marine creatures. Of these, 4 fatalities were caused by exposure to animate mechanical forces, such as attacks by sharks, crocodiles, and dogs, and 4 resulted from contact with venomous species, including snakes and box jellyfish.

Charges and criminal proceedings

No deaths resulted in criminal charges in 2024–25. Over the last 5 years, there were criminal charges in relation to 4 deaths.

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

61 www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/72456/RLS_InlandWaterwaysReport2023_LR.pdf

Protecting children from the dangers of heat in vehicles

In August 2025, the Queensland Family and Child Commission published an Insight Paper on children losing their lives due to vehicular hyperthermia.[62] The paper highlights a concerning trend in Queensland, where an average of 2 children are locked in vehicles daily. Between 2004 and 2024, 14 children under the age of 4 died from heat-related causes after being left in cars. These incidents often result from children accessing unlocked vehicles or caregivers unintentionally leaving them behind due to stress, distraction, or changes in routine.

Parked vehicles can become dangerously hot very quickly. Within just 5 minutes, 75% of the total temperature increase occurs. Even on mild days or in shaded areas, a car's interior can reach 40°C in 30 minutes, posing a serious risk to children left inside.

Children are especially susceptible to heat stress because their body temperature rises 3 to 5 times faster than that of adults. Once a child's body temperature exceeds 40°C, they are at risk of heatstroke, which can lead to organ failure, brain damage, or death.

Common myths about mitigating heat risks—such as leaving windows slightly open, parking in shade, or using sunshades—are largely ineffective. These measures may delay heat build-up slightly but do not prevent dangerous temperature levels. Vehicle size, colour, or type also have minimal impact on internal heat accumulation.

If a child is found in a hot vehicle, immediate action is critical. Call 000 for emergency services and RACQ on 13 1111, even if you're not a member. Remove the child safely, begin cooling measures such as removing clothing and applying damp cloths, and follow the DRSABCD first aid protocol. If necessary, break into the vehicle using a glass-breaking tool.

Caregivers should always check the back seat before leaving a vehicle and keep cars locked when not in use to prevent children from climbing inside. Childcare centres and transport providers should be equipped with emergency tools and trained in heat-related first aid procedures.

Following serious incidents, including the tragic deaths of children on buses, Queensland has implemented regulatory changes to improve safety. These include mandatory checks and procedures for transport providers to ensure no child is left behind.

The Commission recommends ongoing public education campaigns to dispel myths and raise awareness of the dangers of leaving children in vehicles. These campaigns should target caregivers, educators, and the general public to foster a culture of vigilance and proactive prevention.

62 www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/Paper-protecting-children-from-the-dangers-of-heat-in-vehicles.pdf