

Children and young people known to the child protection system

Key findings 2024–25

Children are considered known to the Queensland child protection system if they have had any contact with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (the department) within the 12 months prior to death, including being the subject of an intake, investigation or intervention.

Of the 427 children who died in 2024–25, 57 were known to the child protection system, compared to 53 deaths in 2023–24. Ten of the 57 children were in out-of-home care at the time of their death. Queensland’s Child Death Review Board (the Board) reviews the deaths of children known to the child protection system.

Children known to the child protection system are consistently over-represented in child deaths, especially for deaths from external causes and sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI).

The mortality rate for children known to the child protection system was more than 1.5 times the Queensland child mortality rate (respectively, 59.1 and 35.1 per 100,000 population).

The mortality rates for children known to the child protection system were at least three times higher than the Queensland child mortality rates for:

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

Children known to child protection were also over-represented in SUDI, with a mortality rate more than four times the rate for all Queensland infants.

The elevated risks for children coming to the attention of child protection are closely linked to the intersecting and often compounding challenges these children and their families face, including intergenerational socio-economic disadvantage, the

unmet needs of parents including unresolved traumas, mental illness, domestic and family violence, problematic substance use, and housing instability, and the children’s own experiences of neglect and abuse causing long term physical and psychological impacts. Such factors significantly increase the likelihood of child maltreatment and other adverse outcomes, including fatal incidents. The disproportionate number of children who had contact with the child protection system can, in part, be attributed to the cumulative impact of these intersecting conditions in their lives.

Table 1: Deaths of children known to child protection and all child deaths in Queensland, 2024–25^a

	Known to child protection ^b	All children
All deaths		
Deaths of children 0–17 years	57	427
Rate per 100,000 ^c	59.1	35.1
Cause of death		
Natural causes	21	321
External causes	16	68
Transport	3	23
Drowning	1	10
Other non-intentional injury	2	7
Suicide	7	24
Fatal assault and neglect	3	4
Unexplained causes	10	13
SIDS and undetermined causes	10	13
Cause of death pending	10	25
Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI)		
SUDI	14	29

a By date of death registration.

b In the 12 months prior to death.

c Rate averaged over 5 years.

SIDS Sudden infant death syndrome

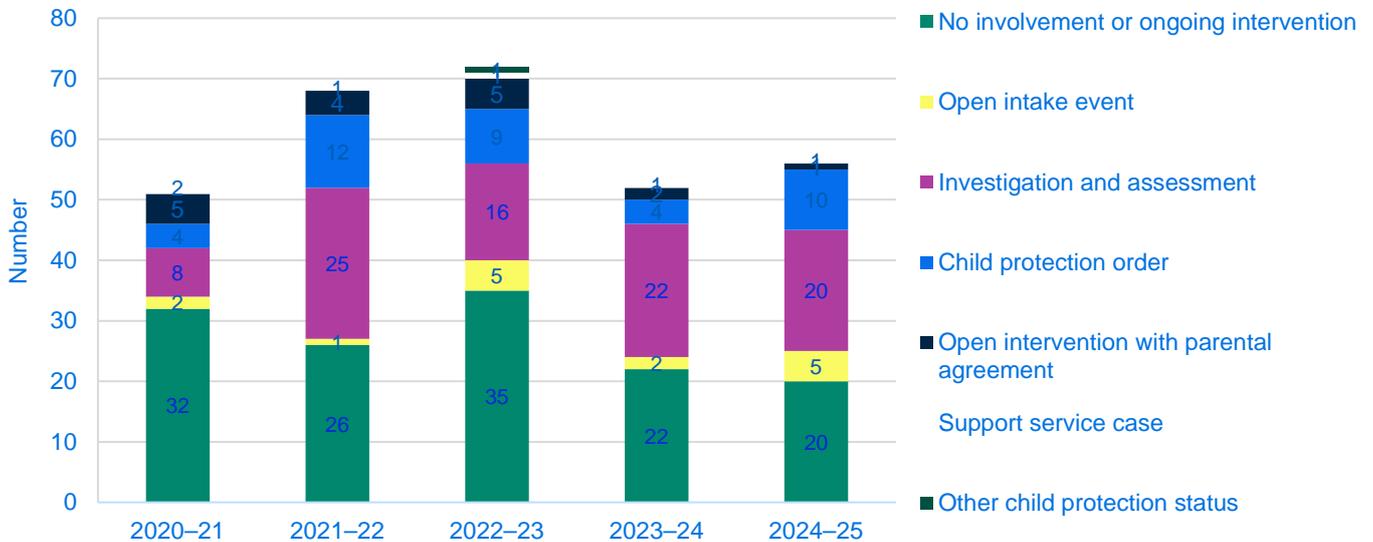
Child protection status

'Known to child protection' refers to a broad cohort of children and is a proxy indicator for family wellbeing. Over the last five years, child protection status recorded at the time of death included:

- 44% – no involvement or ongoing intervention
- 30% – investigation and assessment
- 13% – child protection order
- 6% – intervention with parental agreement
- 5% – open intake event.

On occasion, children not previously known to the child protection system may come to its attention due to an incident causing critical injuries and subsequently dying in hospital from their injuries. In 2024–25, 3 of the 57 children who were known to child protection did not have a child protection history prior to the incident, or had a protection history but the contact was more than 12 months before the incident. The causes of death for these 3 children were fatal assault and neglect, unexplained causes and cause pending.

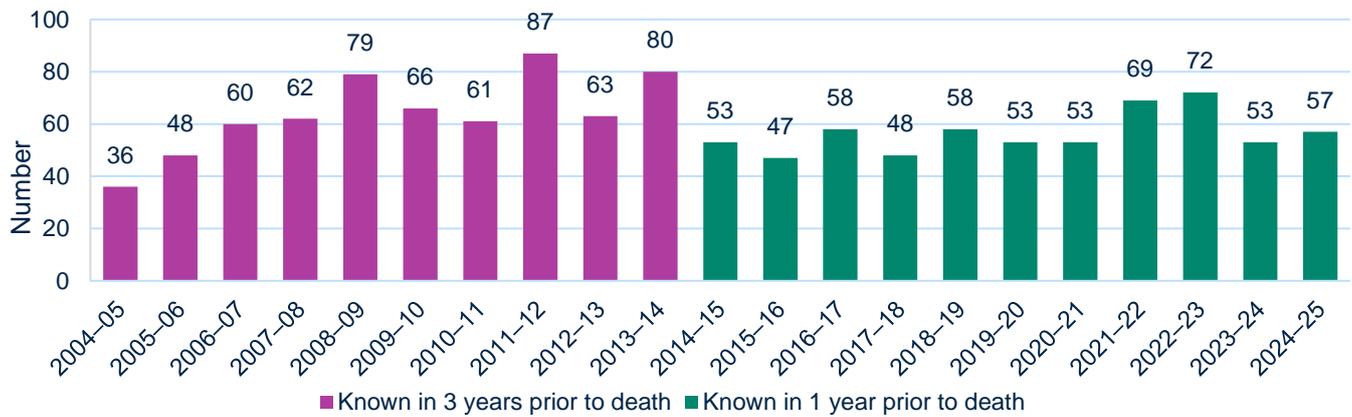
Figure 1: Deaths of children known to child protection by status at the time of death, Queensland, 2020–21 to 2024–25



Trends from 2004 to 2025

Figure 2 illustrates the trends in deaths of children known to the child protection system. From 2004–05 to 2013–14, statutory reviews were required for children known to the child protection system in the three years prior to their death. Following changes to the child protection system in 2014, reviews are only completed for children known to child protection in the 12 months prior to their death.

Figure 2: Deaths of children known to the child protection system, Queensland, 2004–05 to 2024–25



Children in care

A child in out-of-home care (in care) in Queensland refers to a child or young person who is subject to statutory child protection intervention and placed under the custody or guardianship of the Chief Executive of the department. This includes placements in foster care, kinship care, residential care, or other approved out-of-home care arrangements.

Ten children who died in 2024–25 were in care at the time of death. In the last 5 years, 42 children were in care at the time of their death, representing 14% of the 304 deaths of children known to the child protection system.

More information

This fact sheet provides summary information from the Queensland Family and Child Commission's *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2024–25*, available at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data

Data for prevention activities

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) 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 Commission 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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The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies where we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.