

# CHILD DEATH REGISTER KEY FINDINGS 2017–18

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Queensland  
Family & Child  
Commission

The Queensland Child Death Register records 912 deaths of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in the 14 years to June 2018 (14% of all child deaths), an average of 65 deaths each year.

During 2017–18 there were 72 deaths of Indigenous children. Forty-seven of these were from natural causes, 7 were from transport, 6 were suicide, 3 were from other non-intentional injury, and 2 were drowning. The cause of death was pending for 8 deaths. No fatal assault and neglect deaths were recorded in 2017–18.

### Trends

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality rate has decreased over the last 14 years (see Table 1). However, the Indigenous mortality rate continues to be twice the rate for non-Indigenous children as decreases in Indigenous mortality have been matched by decreases in non-Indigenous mortality.

Based on three-year average rates, between 2004 and 2018:

- Infant mortality for Indigenous children decreased from 11.7 to 6.9 deaths per 1000 live births, while non-Indigenous infant mortality decreased from 5.3 to 3.7 deaths per 1000 live births.
- The 1–17 years mortality rate for Indigenous children decreased from 38.6 to 28.0 deaths per 100 000 children, while non-Indigenous mortality for 1–17 year olds decreased from 17.6 to 12.8 deaths per 100 000 children.

### National comparison

Queensland's infant mortality rates by Indigenous status were higher than the most recently available national averages. The national Indigenous infant mortality rate for 2016 was 6.0 per 1000 live births, while the non-Indigenous infant mortality rate was 3.0 per 1000.<sup>1</sup>

### Causes of death

As indicated in Table 2, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children were over-represented for each of the primary causes of death, with mortality rates twice (or more) the rates for non-Indigenous children.

Deaths from diseases and morbid conditions were the largest contributor to child mortality overall. The mortality rate for diseases and morbid conditions for Indigenous children was twice the rate for non-Indigenous children.

As is the case for non-Indigenous children, these deaths occurred predominantly in newborns and infants from conditions originating in the perinatal period<sup>2</sup> or from congenital anomalies, placing a focus on prenatal care as a mechanism for prevention.

The Indigenous child mortality rate was more than twice those for non-Indigenous children over the last three years for:

- transport
- drowning
- suicide.

<sup>1</sup> AIHW (2018), *Children's Headline Indicators*

<sup>2</sup> Diseases and conditions that originate during pregnancy or the neonatal period (first 28 days of life).

**Table 1: Child mortality rate by Indigenous status, 2004–2018 (selected years)**

	3 years to June 2007	3 years to June 2010	3 years to June 2015	3 years to June 2018
	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
<b>All child deaths 0–17 years</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>35.0</b>
Indigenous	99.2	81.2	78.6	67.8
Non-Indigenous	44.1	45.6	37.2	32.2
<b>Infant mortality (&lt;1 year)</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Indigenous	11.7	8.2	8.0	6.9
Non-Indigenous	5.3	4.7	4.3	3.7
<b>Mortality 1–17 years</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>13.9</b>
Indigenous	38.6	34.8	30.2	28.0
Non-Indigenous	17.6	17.6	13.7	12.8

Data Source: Queensland Child Death Register 2004–18

1. Infant mortality rates are per 1000 live births, other mortality rates are per 100 000 population in the age/Indigenous status group. Rates are averaged over three-year periods.

**Table 2: Child mortality rate by Indigenous status by cause of death, three years to June 2018**

Cause of death	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
	Rate	Rate
<b>All causes</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>32.2</b>
<b>Diseases and morbid conditions</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>25.6</b>
<b>External causes</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Transport	5.2	1.3
Drowning	2.6	1.0
Other non-intentional injury	1.9	1.0
Suicide	4.5	1.7
Fatal assault and neglect	*	0.4
<b><i>Sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI)</i></b>	<b><i>93.7</i></b>	<b><i>44.0</i></b>

Data Source: Queensland Child Death Register 2015–18

\* Rates have not been calculated for numbers less than four.

1. Rates are per 100 000 population children aged 0–17 and are averaged over the three-year period 2015–16 to 2017–18.
2. Sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) is a category of deaths where an infant (<1 year) dies suddenly, usually during sleep, with no immediately obvious cause. The category is not a cause of death (which will be counted within the relevant cause) and will not add to the total.
3. Rates for SUDI are calculated per 100 000 Indigenous/non-Indigenous children aged under 1 year.

## Data for prevention activities

The QFCC collects, analyses and publishes information about child deaths to help prevent future deaths and serious injuries. We work with researchers and other 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 researchers and organisations at no cost. Contact [child\\_death\\_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au](mailto:child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au)

Reports on child deaths and 14-year data tables can be found at [www.qfcc.qld.gov.au](http://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au) on the child death reports and data page.