

Chapter 5 — Other non-intentional injury-related deaths

This chapter provides details of child deaths from other non-intentional injury (transport and drowning deaths are included in earlier chapters).

Key findings

- In 2017–18, 10 children and young people died in non-intentional injury-related incidents, other than a drowning or transport incident, at a rate of 0.9 deaths per 100 000 children aged 0–17 years.
- Three deaths each were caused by accidental threats to breathing and exposure to smoke, fire and flames, and two were caused by non-intentional poisoning.
- Over the 14 years since 2004, the most common types of non-intentional injury were threats to breathing, exposure to fire, smoke and flames, and exposure to inanimate mechanical forces.
- The highest number of deaths in 2017–18 occurred in the 1–4 year and 15–17 year age groups, with four deaths each.
- Over the last 14 years infants under one year had the highest rate of fatal non-intentional injuries, with a mortality rate four times the average for all Queensland children.
- Children known to the child protection system had a mortality rate for non-intentional injury that was five times the rate for all children in Queensland.
- Thirty-seven children died in 24 house or dwelling fires in Queensland over the 14 year period 2004–18. A further 10 adults also lost their lives in these incidents. Young children are at particular risk in house fires with 20 of the deaths being of children aged under five years.
- The *Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Act 2016* came into effect in January 2017. All new and renovated dwellings are required to have inter-connected photoelectric smoke alarms in bedrooms and on each level. Smoke alarms in existing dwellings must be replaced after 10 years as stipulated in the new legislation.

Other non-intentional injury-related deaths 2015–18

An expanded version of Table 5.1 containing data since 2004 is available online at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au.

Table 5.1: Summary of other non-intentional injury-related deaths of children in Queensland 2015–18

	2015–16		2016–17		2017–18		Yearly average
	Total n	Rate per 100 000	Total n	Rate per 100 000	Total n	Rate per 100 000	Rate per 100 000
All other non-intentional injury deaths							
Other non-intentional injury	10	0.9	15	1.3	10	0.9	1.0
Incident type							
Exposure to inanimate mechanical forces	2	*	3	*	1	*	0.2
Exposure to forces of nature	0	0.0	1	*	0	0.0	*
Exposure to smoke, fire and flames	3	*	1	*	3	*	0.2
Falls	0	0.0	1	*	1	*	*
Non-intentional poisoning by noxious substances	3	*	1	*	2	*	0.2
Threats to breathing	2	*	6	0.5	3	*	0.3
Contact with venomous animals and plants	0	0.0	1	*	0	0.0	*
Other not elsewhere classified	0	0.0	1	*	0	0.0	*
Sex							
Female	1	*	3	*	2	*	0.4
Male	9	1.6	12	2.1	8	1.4	1.7
Age category							
Under 1 year	1	*	2	*	1	*	2.1
1–4 years	5	2.0	3	*	4	1.6	1.6
5–9 years	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	*	*
10–14 years	2	*	8	2.6	0	0.0	1.1
15–17 years	2	*	2	*	4	2.2	1.5
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status							
Indigenous	1	*	1	*	3	*	1.9
Non-Indigenous	9	0.9	14	1.3	7	0.7	1.0
Geographical area of usual residence (ARIA+)							
Remote	0	0.0	1	*	1	*	*
Regional	3	*	7	1.7	6	1.5	1.3
Metropolitan	6	0.9	7	1.0	3	*	0.8
Socio-economic status of usual residence (SEIFA)							
Low to very low	5	1.1	6	1.3	6	1.3	1.2
Moderate	1	*	4	1.7	1	*	0.9
High to very high	3	*	5	1.1	3	*	0.8
Known to the child protection system							
Known to the child protection system	5	5.9	2	*	6	7.1	5.2

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2015–18)

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

1. Data presented here is current in the Queensland Child Death Register as at August 2018 and thus may differ from those presented in previously published reports.
2. Rates are based on the most up-to-date denominator data available and are calculated per 100 000 children (in the sex/age/Indigenous status/ARIA+ region/SEIFA region categories) in Queensland each year. Rates for the 2015–16 period use the ERP data as at June 2015 and rates for the 2016–17 and 2017–18 periods use the ERP data as at June 2016.
3. The number of children known to the child protection system represents the number of children whose deaths were registered in the reporting period, who were known to the DCSYW within the one-year period prior to their death. The denominator for calculating rates is the number of children aged 0–17 who were known to the DCSYW, through either being subject to a child concern report, notification, investigation and assessment, ongoing intervention, orders or placement, in the one-year period prior to the reporting period.
4. ARIA+ and SEIFA exclude the deaths of children whose usual place of residence was outside Queensland.
5. Yearly average rates have been calculated using the ERP data as at June 2016.

Other non-intentional injury-related deaths: Findings 2017–18

The child deaths discussed in this chapter are those unintentional deaths which fall outside the scope of the more common non-intentional injury deaths covered earlier in this report (transport incidents and drowning).³⁷

During 2017–18, the deaths of 10 children and young people from non-intentional injury were registered in Queensland, at a rate of 0.9 deaths per 100 000 children aged 0–17 years. The number of deaths from non-intentional injury registered since reporting commenced in 2004 ranges from 4 to 22 per year, with an average of 13.9 per year.³⁸

Types of non-intentional injury-related deaths

Of the ten deaths from non-intentional injury, three were from threats to breathing, three were caused by exposure to fire, smoke and flames, two were from non-intentional poisoning by noxious substances, one was caused by exposure to inanimate mechanical forces, one was from a fall.

Over the 14 years since July 2004, the most common types of non-intentional injury were threats to breathing (72 of 192 deaths or 38%), exposure to fire, smoke and flames (37 deaths or 19%) and exposure to inanimate mechanical forces (28 deaths or 15%).

Sex

During 2017–18, eight deaths from non-intentional injury were of male children and two deaths from non-intentional injury were of female children.

Over the last three reporting periods, the average annual rate of mortality from non-intentional injury for males was four times the rate for females (1.7 deaths per 100 000 male children aged 0–17 years, compared to 0.4 deaths per 100 000 female children).

Age

Of the 10 deaths from non-intentional injury during 2017–18, one was of a child under one year, four were of children aged 1–4 years, one was of a child aged 10–14 years and four were of children aged 15–17 years.

Over the 14 years since July 2004, children aged under one year followed by 1–4 year olds had the highest rates of mortality from non-intentional injury compared to children from all other age groups (respectively, 5.2 and 2.0 per 100 000 in each group, compared to the all children rate of 1.3 per 100 000).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

There were three deaths of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children from non-intentional injury during 2017–18.

Geographical area of usual residence (ARIA+)

Of the 10 deaths from non-intentional injury during 2017–18, one was of a child who resided in a remote area of Queensland, six were of children from regional areas and three were of children from metropolitan areas.

Socio-economic status of usual residence (SEIFA)

Of the 10 deaths from non-intentional injury during 2017–18, six were of children who resided in areas of low to very low SES, one was of a child from moderate SES areas and three were of children from areas of high to very high SES.

³⁷ See Appendix 5 for a comprehensive outline of categories of death constituting 'other non-intentional injury-related deaths'.

³⁸ Tables with data for 2004–18 are available online at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au

Children known to the child protection system

Of the 10 deaths from non-intentional injury during 2017–18, six were of children known to the Queensland child protection system within the year before their death.

Over the last three-year period the mortality rate for non-intentional injury for children known to the child protection system was five times the rate for all children in Queensland (respectively, 5.2 and 1.0 per 100 000 in each category).

Deaths of children in house fires

Three children died from exposure to smoke, fire and flames in Queensland during 2017-18. Thirty-seven children died in house or dwelling fires since reporting commenced in 2004. A further 10 adults lost their lives in these incidents. In relation to the use and operation of smoke alarms in the 24 house fire incidents in the period 2004–18:

- In 14 house fires there were no smoke alarms or no operational smoke alarms (23 child deaths), while in eight house fires smoke alarms were in place and believed to be operational (10 child deaths). No information was available for three incidents (three child deaths).
- The greatest loss of life occurred in night-time house fires, with 11 lives lost in one fire.
- There were three house fires that resulted in three deaths each and one house fire that resulted in two deaths.
- There were five other house fires that resulted in one death each.
- Importantly, in five night-time house fires the smoke alarms woke the occupants allowing some occupants time to escape.
- One coronial investigation found evidence that an ionisation-type smoke alarms had not activated.

The *Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Act 2016* was passed with amendment in August 2016 and came into effect in January 2017. The requirements, to be phased in over ten years, will make smoke alarms mandatory in all bedrooms, between each part of the dwelling containing bedrooms, and in any storey not containing bedrooms. Smoke alarms will need to be interconnected, either hardwired or fitted with a 10-year battery, and be of a photoelectric type.

These requirements will be introduced in the following phases:

- when a new dwelling is built or substantial renovation are made to an existing dwelling, compliance is required from 1 January 2017
- by 2022, dwellings that are sold or leased are required to comply immediately
- all government-owned housing will need to comply by 2022
- by 2027 all domestic dwellings must comply with the changes.