

Key findings: Child deaths in Queensland

2015 – 16 Child Death Annual Report Factsheet

The *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland, 2015–16* is the twelfth in the series. It contains information from the Queensland Child Death Register.

The deaths of 390 children and young people were recorded in 2015–16, representing a rate of 34.9 deaths per 100 000 population aged 0–17 years.

Report findings include:

- Child deaths decreased this year by 12%, with decreases in:
 - the two main natural causes of deaths – perinatal conditions¹ and congenital anomalies
 - external (non-natural) causes of death – transport, suicide, drowning and fatal assault and neglect deaths.
- Infant mortality in Queensland was 3.7 deaths per 1000 live births, down from 4.5 deaths per 1000 in 2014–15.
- Three-quarters of all deaths were due to diseases and morbid conditions (291 or 75% of deaths), while 16% of deaths were from external causes (64 deaths).
- Suicide (20 deaths) has replaced transport (18 deaths) as the leading external cause of death for the past two years, with this being due to recent decreases in transport deaths rather than changes in suicide numbers.
- Eight children drowned, with 5 of the children aged 1–4 years. Three of the children drowned in swimming pools, 4 drowned in inland waterways and 1 in a bathtub. No deaths this year were due to defective pool fencing.
- Nine children are suspected or confirmed to have died from fatal assault or neglect in 2015–16, with 6 alleged to have been killed by a family member and 2 by a non-family member. The category for the remaining death is yet to be determined.

¹ Diseases and conditions that originate during pregnancy or the neonatal period (first 28 days of life).

Five of the 20 young people who died as a result of suicide were known to the child protection system. Four of the 9 children who died due to fatal assault or neglect were known to the child protection system.

Fifty two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children died in 2015–16, a 30% decrease from 74 deaths in 2014–15. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous child mortality rates narrowed between 2007 and 2016 (based on three year periods to June). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality; however, continues to be twice the rate for non-Indigenous children as decreases in Indigenous mortality have been matched by decreases in non-Indigenous mortality.

The leading causes of death across all age groups based on the last three years are as follows (see Table 1 over page):

- For **infants under 1 year** – diseases and conditions that originate during pregnancy or the neonatal period (first 28 days of life) followed by congenital anomalies. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and undetermined causes² was the third leading cause of death in infants.
- For **1–4 year olds** – drowning and transport-related deaths were equal first leading causes.
- For **5–9 year olds** – neoplasms (cancers) followed by transport.
- For **10–14 year olds** – suicide followed by transport and neoplasms (equal second).
- For **15–17 year olds** – suicide followed by transport.

² SIDS are sudden unexpected infant deaths, apparently occurring during sleep, where the cause remains unexplained after thorough investigation. For undetermined causes, the cause of death is unexplained but the death does not meet the criteria for SIDS.

Data for prevention activities

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.

QFCC can provide detailed child death data to researchers and organisations, at no cost – please email child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au

Reports on child deaths and 12-year data tables can be found at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/child-death-reports-and-data

Table 1:
Leading causes of death by age, 2013–14 to 2015–16

	#	Leading cause	Rate
Under 1 year	1	Perinatal conditions	220.4
	2	Congenital anomalies	122.3
	3	SIDS and undetermined causes	27.9
1–4 years	1	Drowning	2.4
	2	Transport	2.4
	3	Congenital anomalies	2.1
5–9 years	1	Neoplasms	2.5
	2	Transport	1.7
	3	Diseases of the nervous system	1.1
10–14 years	1	Suicide	1.3
	2	Transport	1.2
	3	Neoplasms	1.2
15–17 years	1	Suicide	10.4
	2	Transport	5.1
	3	Neoplasms	2.9

Source: Queensland Child Death Register
SIDS Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
Rates per 100 000 population in age group. Rates are averaged over three year periods.