

WAID UK 2021 Summary for the NWSF

Overall water-related fatalities

In 2021, there were 616 water-related fatalities in the United Kingdom. There were fewer fatalities, overall, compared to the years 2019 and 2020, however, the cases of accidental fatalities are increasing when compared to years 2017 and 2018.

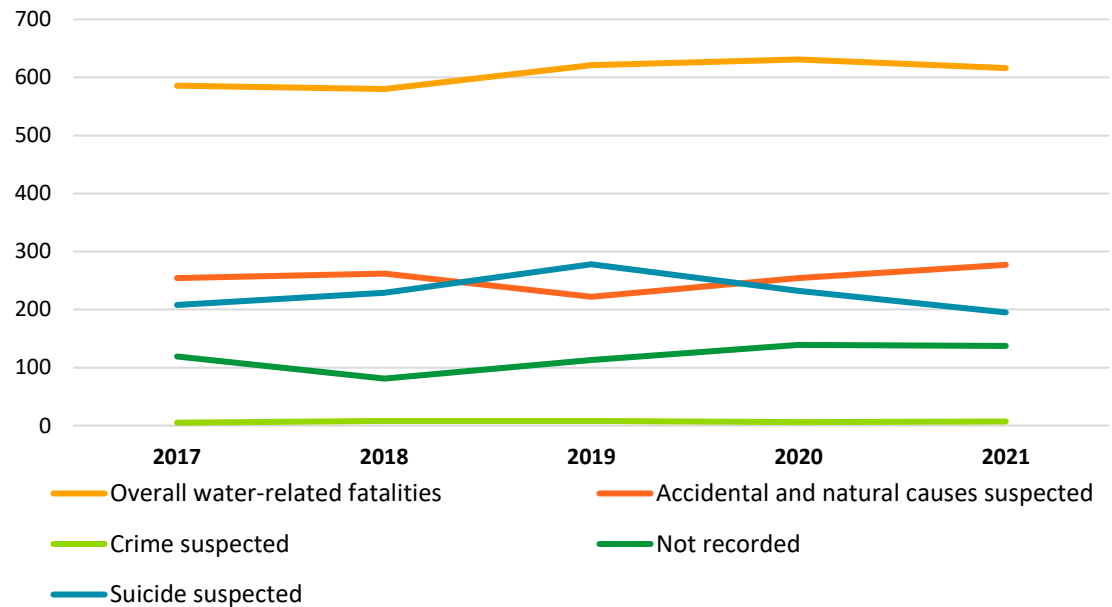


Figure 1: Overall fatalities by year, 2017-2021

[The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy](#) (UK DPS) establishes that there are 400 accidental drowning fatalities each year with a further 200 suicides (suspected). This analysis also considers a more up-to-date three year average (years 2013 – 2015) which precedes the release and implementation of the UK DPS.

The 2021 figures show that overall water-related fatalities are decreasing. The 2021 figures were below the three year average but still higher than the original UK drowning prevention strategy baseline (see Figure 2).

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
Three year average (2013-2015)	650
UK DPS baseline	600
2017	592
2018	585
2019	623
2020	631
2021	616

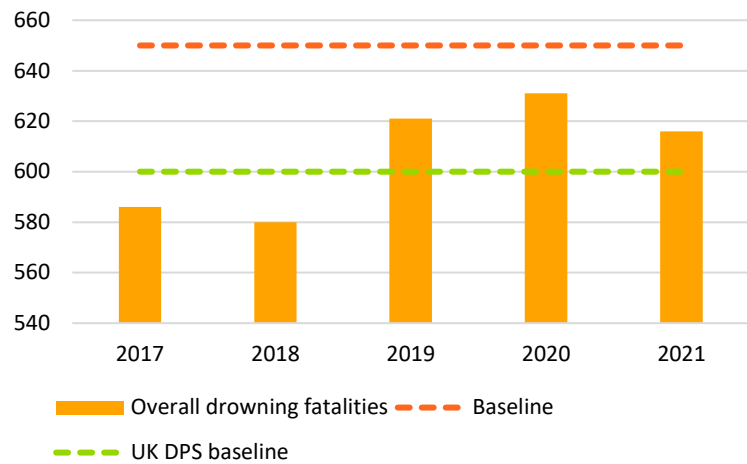


Figure 2: Overall water-related fatalities by year 2017-2021 vs Baselines, UK

Suicide suspected fatalities

In 2021, there were 195 suicide suspected fatalities at or near water in the UK. This is a decrease from last years and below both the three year average baseline and the UK DPS baseline.

Year	Suicide suspected fatalities
Three year average (2013-2015)	200
UK DPS baseline	211
2017	209
2018	232
2019	279
2020	232
2021	195

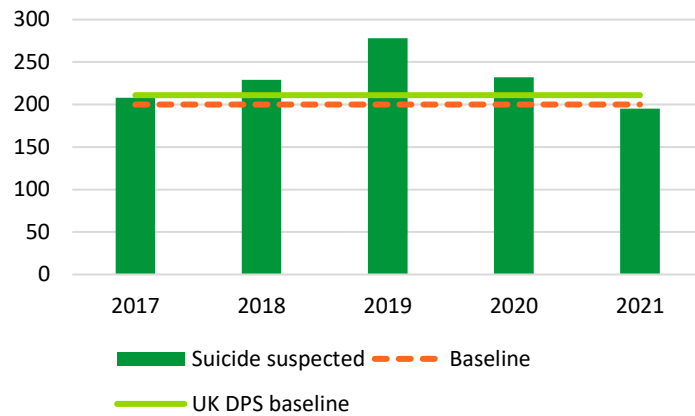


Figure 3: Suicide suspected fatalities by year 2017-2021 vs Baselines, UK

Accidental fatalities

In 2021, there were 277 accidental fatalities¹ in the UK. This is a 31 per cent decrease in accidental drowning fatalities in comparison to the UK DPS baseline and a 19 per cent decrease in comparison to the three year average (see Figure 4).

Year	Accidental fatalities
Three year average (2013 – 2015)	344
UK DPS Baseline	400
2017	255
2018	263
2019	223
2020	254
2021	277

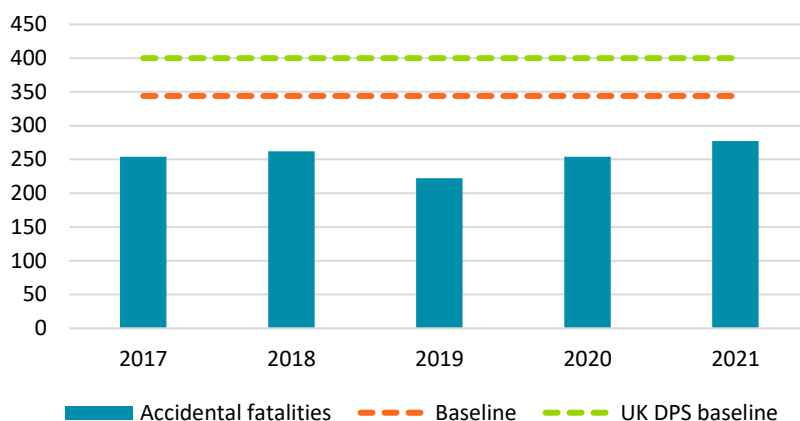


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by year 2017-2021 vs Baselines, UK

Key points

In 2021:

- There were 277 accidental fatalities
- 83% of accidental fatalities were male
- Males 30 -39 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 5)
- 62% of accidental fatalities happened at **inland waters** (see Figure 6). This is a significant change from previous years which has seen most accidental fatalities at the coast
- Recreational activities accounted for 55% of accidental fatalities (see Figure 7)
- 68 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol
- The rate of accidental drowning has increased slightly since 2017 (0.38 per 100,000) to 0.41 in 2021 (see Figure 8)
- When considering rates, those aged 60-69 were the highest at risk group (see Figure 9)

¹ Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

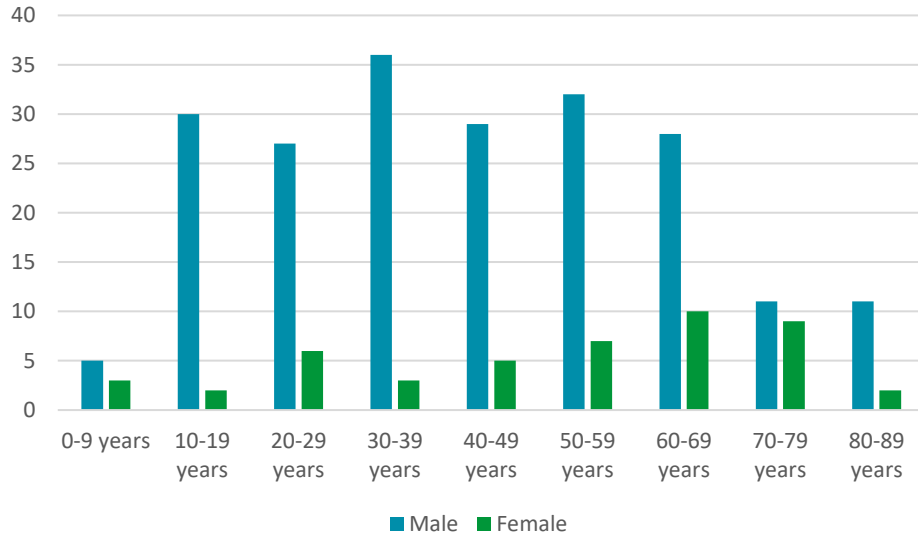


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by age, N=256, 21 not recorded

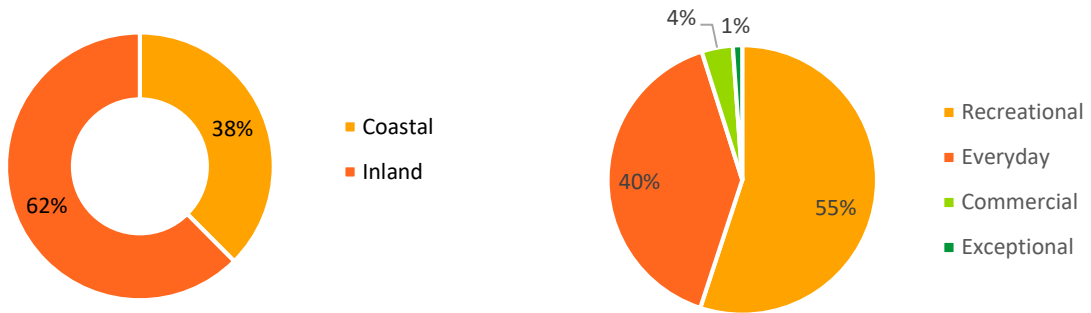


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by location, N=269, 8 excluded

Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by activity. N=267, 10 excluded

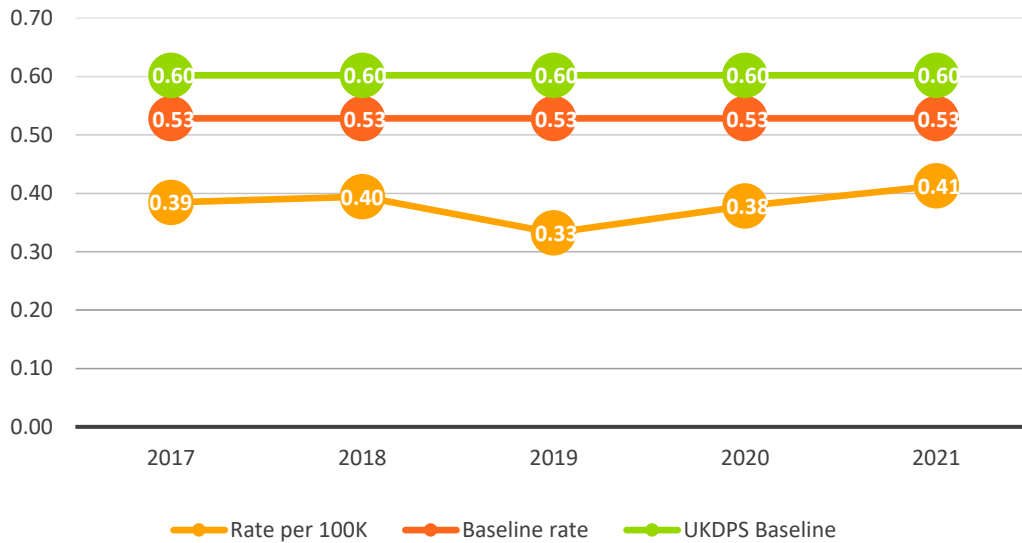


Figure 8: Accidental fatality rates by year and baselines per 100,000 (Population Source: ONS)

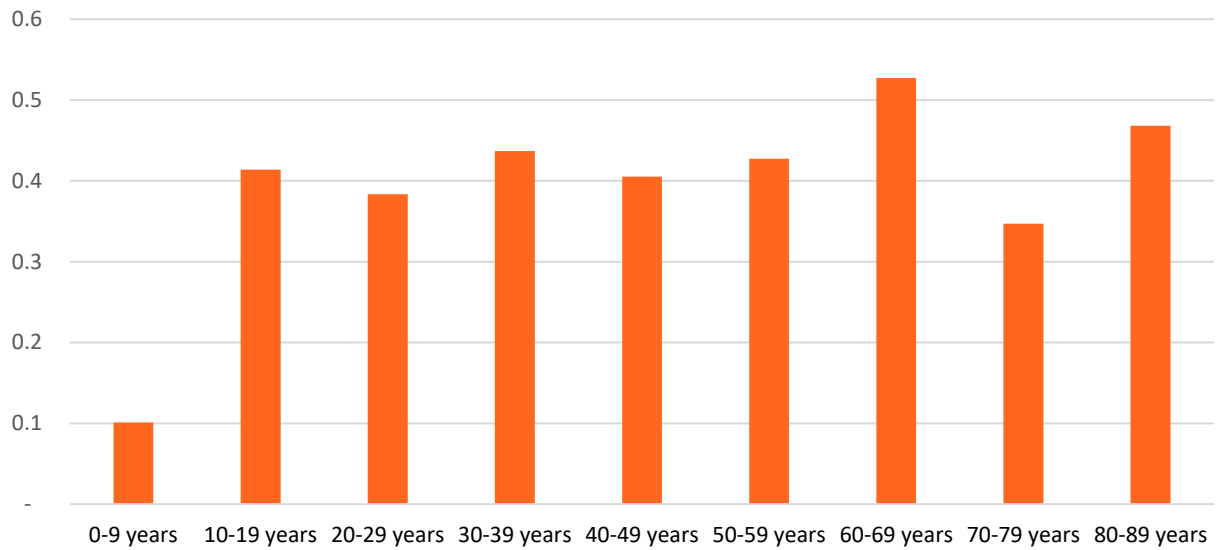


Figure 9: Accidental drowning fatalities by age and rate per 100,000 (Population Source: ONS)

Notes:

"Accidental fatalities" refers to accidental causes and natural water related causes.

This data analysis is based on the official releases of WAID data as found online <https://nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid/annual-reports-and-data> . It should be noted that the core data providers continue to improve verification and completeness of records starting in 2012 which results in an improved record set.

All rates for population figures are based on ONS figures for the previous mid-year, published online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland> Baseline rates are based on mid-year 2015 data.