

# WAID 2024 Summary for Water Safety Scotland

This report details the 2024 release of water-related fatality data. An interactive version of this report can be found online [here](#). Please be aware that this trend report uses enhanced five-year WAID data (2019 – 2023). This means that overall numbers, outcomes and some fatality details (e.g. location, ages, sex) may differ to previously published data tables and reports (more information on the enhanced data can be accessed [here](#)).

## Overall water-related fatalities

In 2024, there were 78 water-related fatalities in Scotland from all recorded causes. There were fewer fatalities, overall, compared to the previous years (see Figure 1, which also breaks down water-related fatalities by outcome). 'Not recorded' outcomes have reduced significantly since the introduction of the **Drowning and Incident Review** (DIR) in May 2023 which has impacted the other outcomes. For further information on DIR and how this links with WAID data, see the notes page.

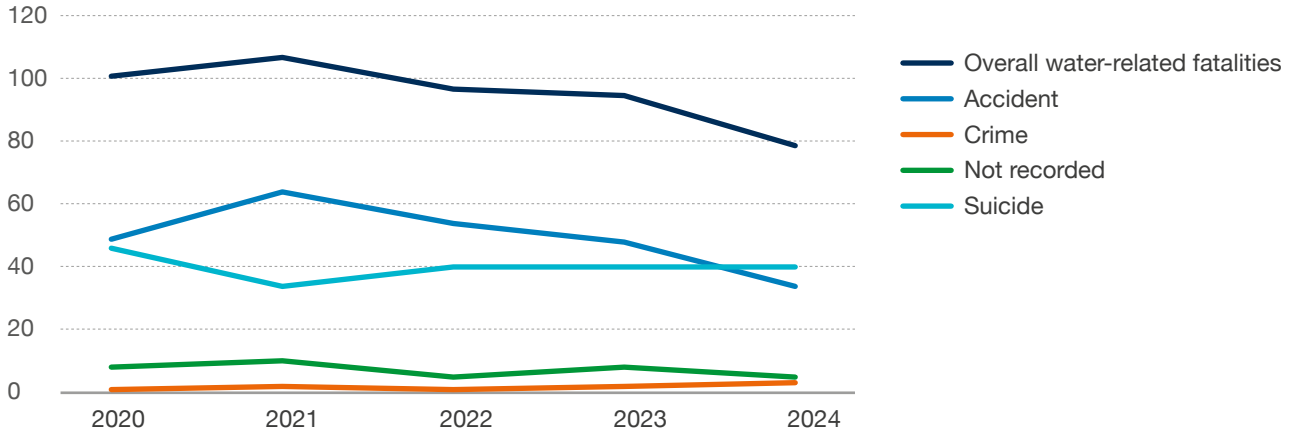
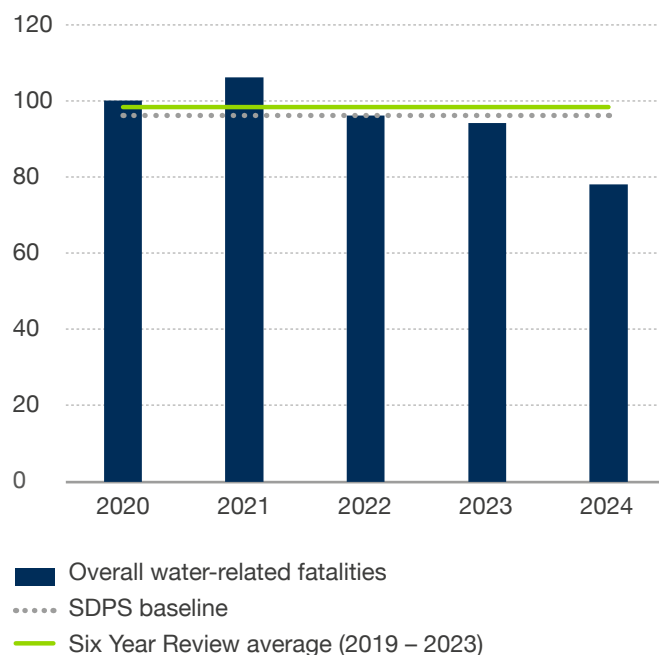


Figure 1: Overall fatalities by year (2020 – 2024)

The 2024 figures show that overall water-related fatalities decreased. When compared to Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) baseline and the Six Year Review average, the 2024 figures are below both (see Figure 2).

Overall water-related fatalities are at their lowest number in Scotland since 2018, which also recorded 78 water-related fatalities.

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015 average)	96
Six Year Review average (2016 – 2020)	98
2020	100
2021	106
2022	96
2023	94
2024	78

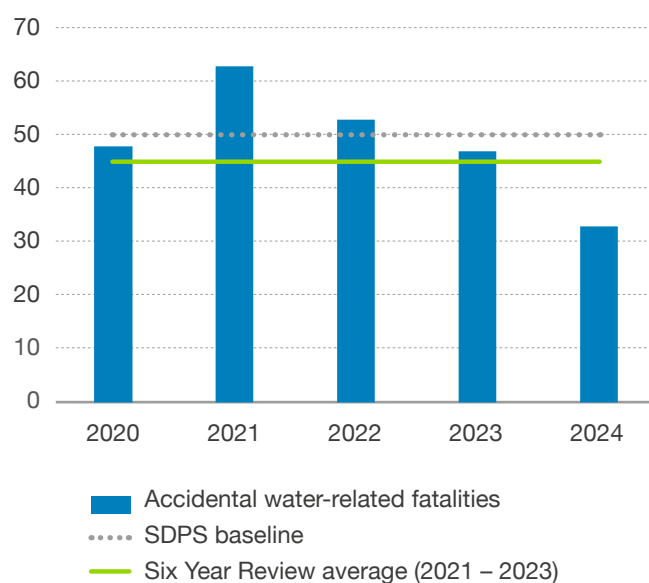


**Figure 2: Overall fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015) and Six Year Review average (2019 – 2023)**

## Accidental fatalities

In 2024, there were 33 accidental fatalities<sup>1</sup> in Scotland. **This is a 34 per cent decrease in comparison to the SDPS baseline and a 27 per cent decrease in comparison to the Six Year Review average** (see Figure 3).

Year	Accidental fatalities
SDPS Baseline (2013 – 2015 average)	50
Six Year Review average (2016 – 2020)	45
2020	48
2021	63
2022	53
2023	47
2024	33



**Figure 3: Accidental fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015) and Six Year Review average (2019 – 2023)**

<sup>1</sup> Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

## Key points

In 2024:

- There were 33 accidental fatalities
- 82 per cent of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 20 to 29 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see *Figure 4*)
- 55 per cent of accidental fatalities happened at coastal waters (see *Figure 5*) which is a shift from previous years where inland waterways accounted for most fatalities
- Recreational activities accounted for 46% of accidental fatalities (see *Figure 6*)
- 2 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol
- The rate of accidental water-related fatalities has decreased in comparison to SDPS and the Six Year Review. In 2024, the accidental water-related fatality rate was 0.60 (see *Figure 7*)
- When considering the population rate, males aged 20 to 29 were the highest group (see *Figure 8*)
- April was the month with the most accidental fatalities (see *Figure 9*).

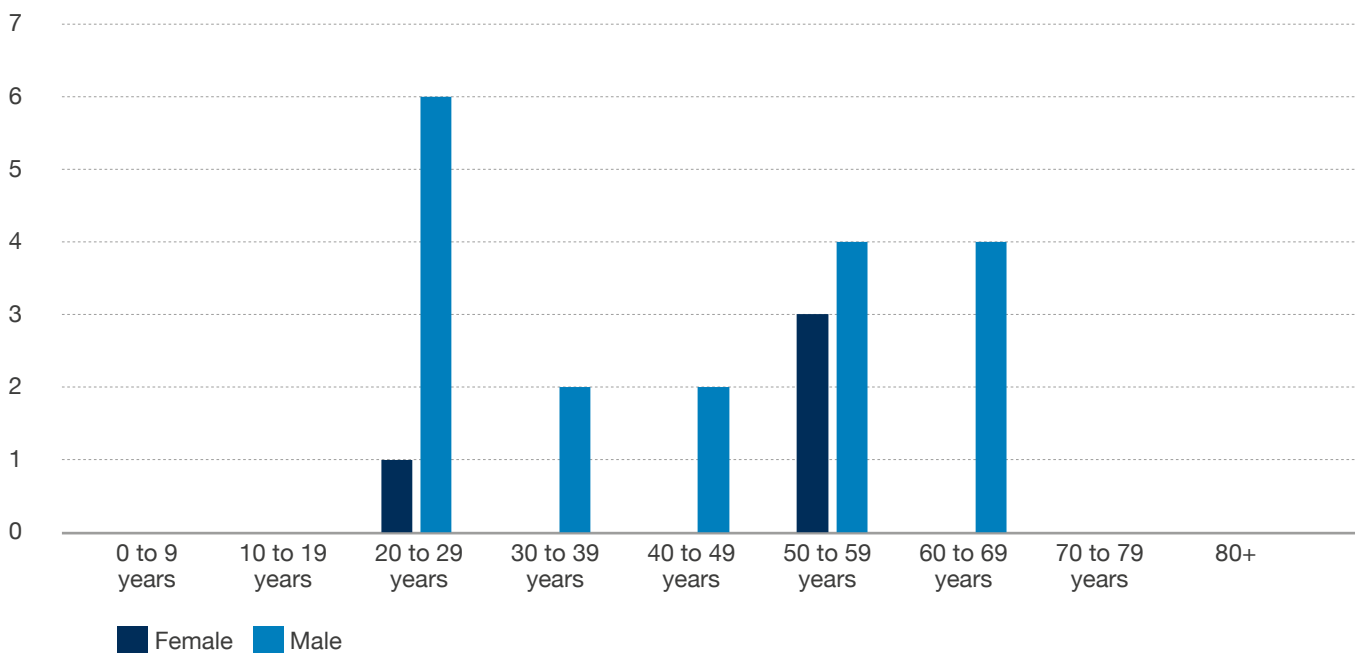


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by age. N = 22, 11 not recorded

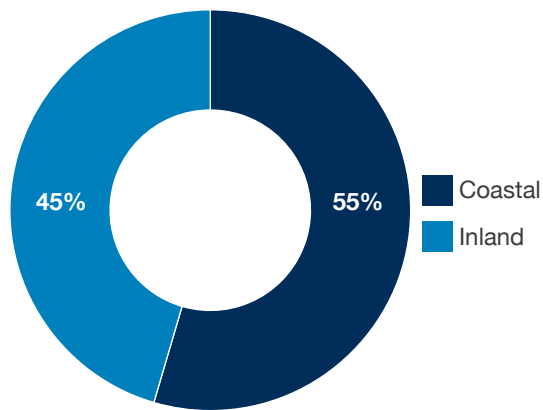


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by location. N = 22, 11 excluded

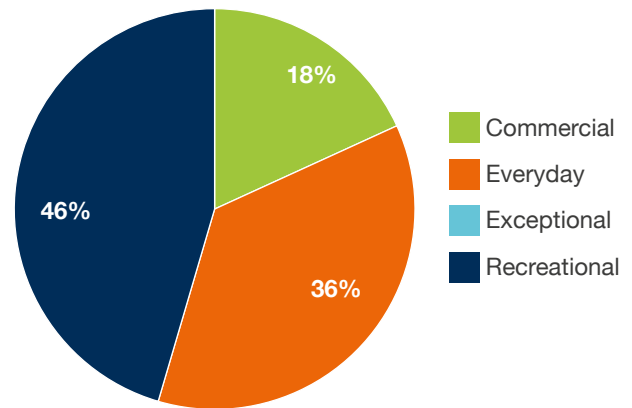


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by activity. N = 22, 11 excluded

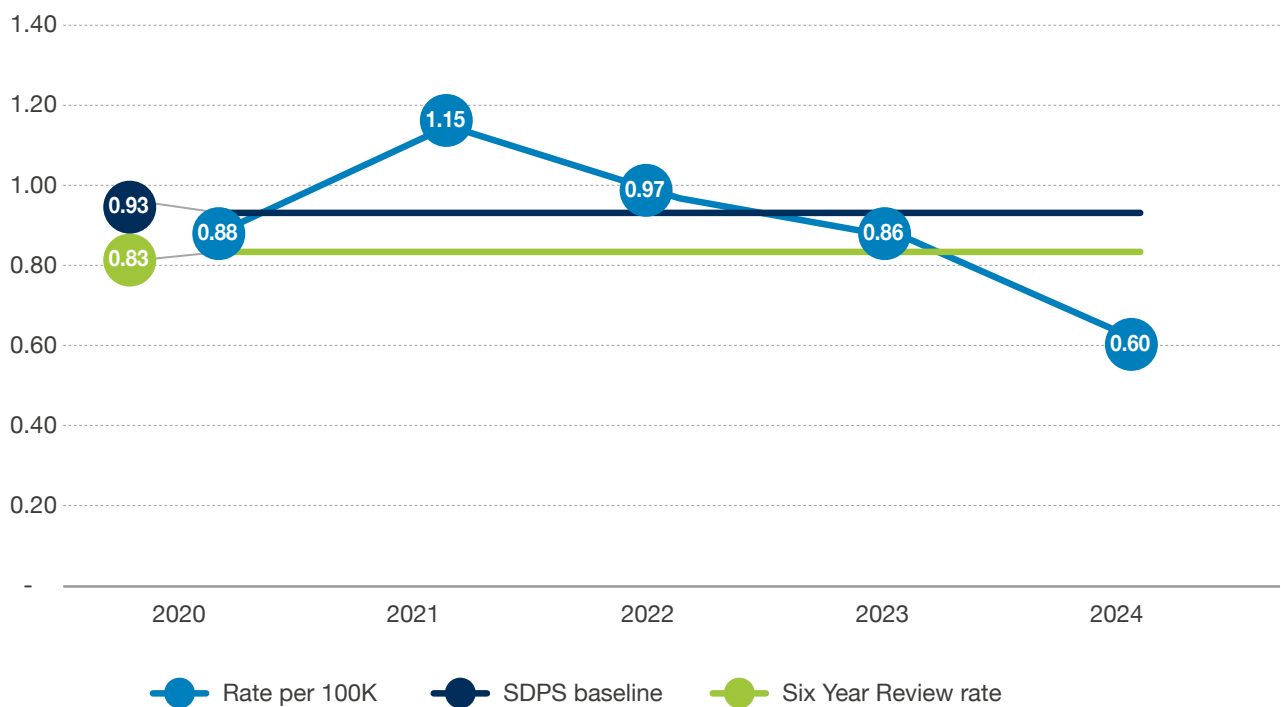


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by year and rate (2020 – 2024) vs SPDS baseline rate and Six Year Review rate. Rates based on NRS figures per 100,000

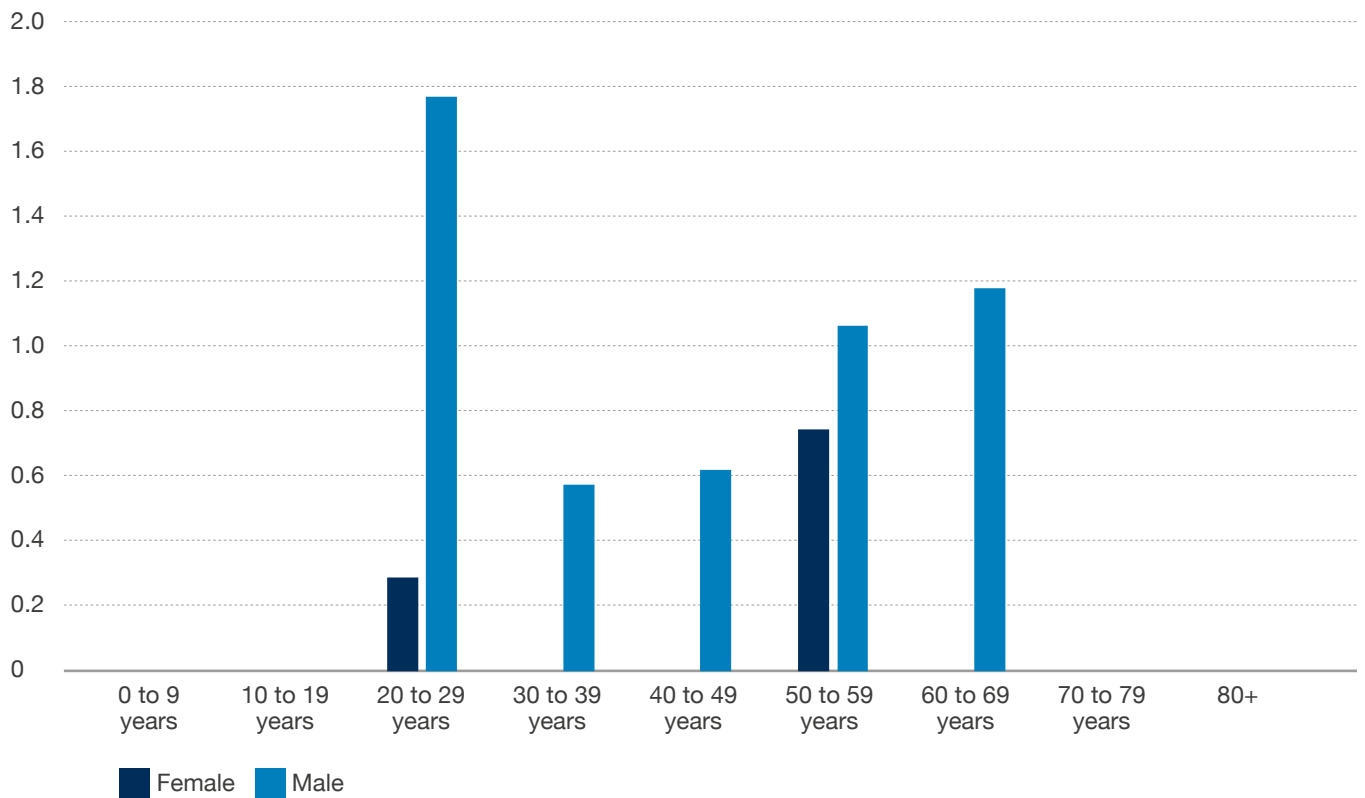


Figure 8: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on NRS figures per 100,000). N = 22, 11 not recorded

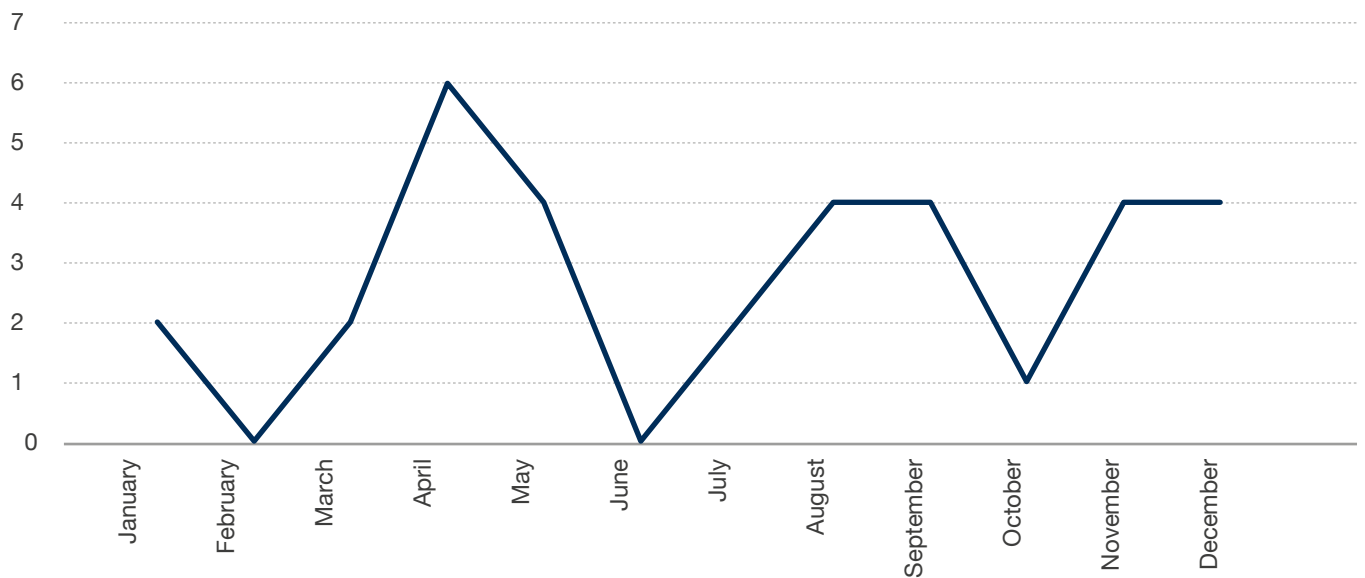


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by month. N = 33

# Suicide fatalities

In 2024, there were 39 suicide fatalities at or near water in Scotland. This is the same as the previous two years.

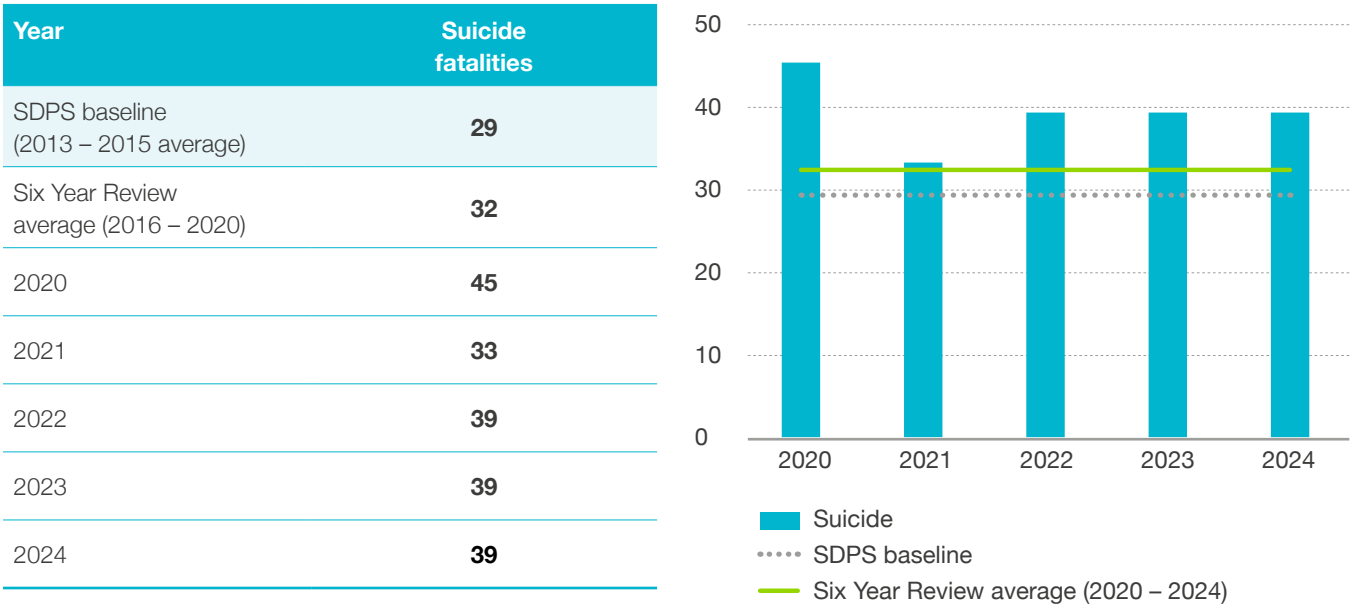


Figure 10: Suicide fatalities by year vs SDPS baseline (2013 – 2015) and Six Year Review average (2019 – 2023)

## Notes

All data used are from WAID 2019 – 2023 (v2) and 2024 (v1).

“Accidental fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed to accidental causes and natural water-related causes.

“Suicide fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed suicide causes.

Population rate figures use ONS mid-year data.

Figures 5 and 6 exclude ‘Ungrouped activities’.

### Baseline figures

The Scotland baseline is based upon 2013 – 2015 WAID data – as detailed in Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) – and shows 96 water-related fatalities per year. 50 of which are accidental, 29 are suicide and the remainder are ‘not recorded’ or crime.

The Six Year Review of SDPS provided updated averages (years 2019 – 2023) in order to ascertain changes to the baseline. It established that since the implementation of SDPS, there were an average of 98 overall water-related fatalities per year including 45 accidental fatalities and 32 suspected suicides.

### Drowning and Incident Review data and WAID

The Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) dashboard is more accurate and provides live data updated monthly:

[watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/water-safety-data/dir-dashboard](https://watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/water-safety-data/dir-dashboard)

Some Scene and Outcome Review data from the DIR process has been amalgamated with WAID Data to classify water-related fatality outcomes. Due to the way in which the DIR process works, WAID data and SOR/DIR data may not always show the same number of fatalities. This is because SOR data is verified by the Procurator Fiscal before a DIR meeting commences. Unlike WAID, on occasions when no body is recovered, the Procurator Fiscal does not classify this as a fatality. The DIR process classifies this as a ‘potential fatality’ or a ‘missing person’ and is not included in the SOR/DIR data set. Should evidence emerge where the Procurator Fiscal is able to determine a fatality, SOR/DIR data is updated accordingly.

### WAID taxonomies

WAID taxonomies for activity include:

- ‘Everyday activities’ – running, walking, cycling, mobility vehicle, motor other, commuting
- ‘Recreational activities’ – adventure sports, angling, boating (other), motorboating, sailing, waterside activities
- ‘Commercial activities’ – only includes those categorised as ‘commercial’
- ‘Exceptional activities’ – person/animal rescue, person on ice, flooding
- ‘Ungrouped activities’ – bathing, residential, unknown activity, undetermined