

# WAID UK 2024 Summary for the National Water Safety Forum

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 597 water-related fatalities in the United Kingdom (UK) 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).

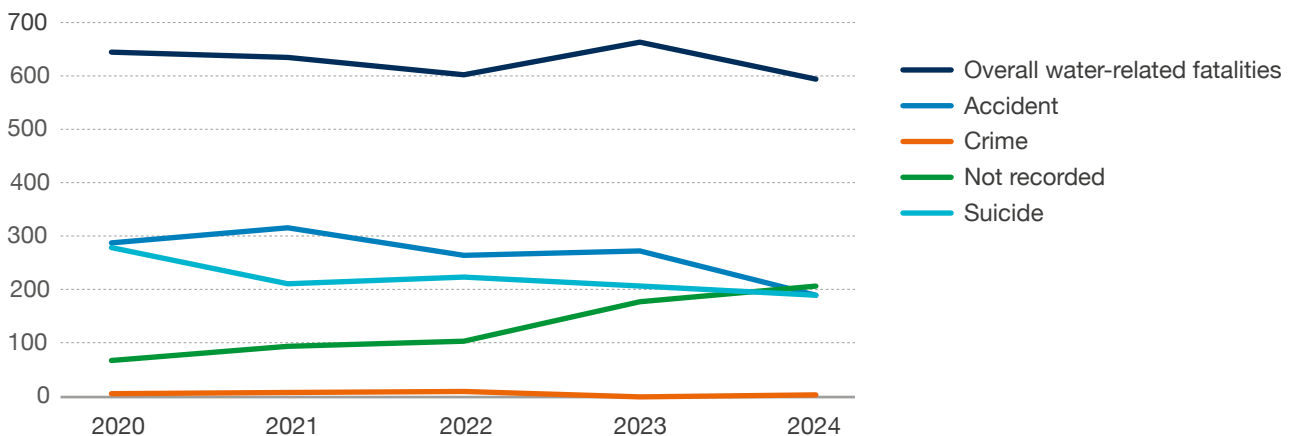


Figure 1: Overall fatalities by year (2020 – 2024)

The 2024 figures show that overall water-related fatalities decreased. When compared to the original UK Drowning Prevention Strategy (DPS) baseline and the DPS review average, the 2024 figures are below both (see Figure 2).

Year	Overall water-related fatalities
UK DPS baseline	676
DPS review average (2019 – 2023)	636
2020	644
2021	635
2022	605
2023	662
2024	597

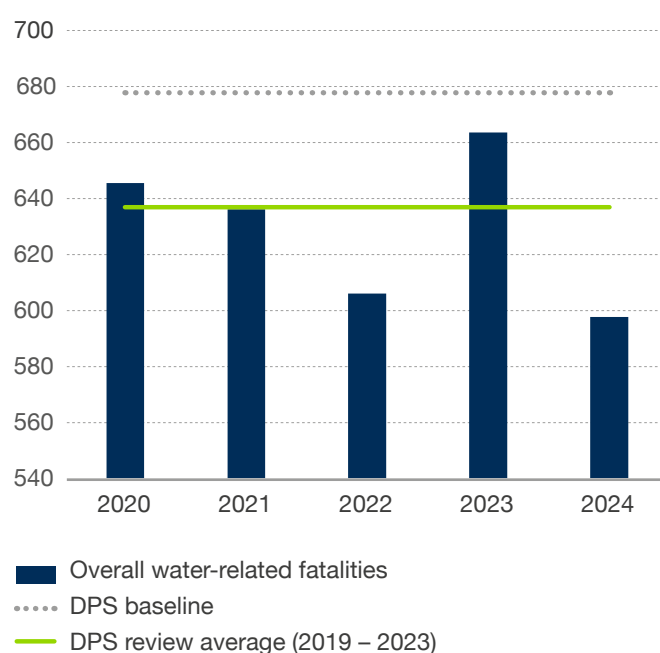


Figure 2: Overall water-related fatalities by year (2020 – 2024) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

Across the UK, overall water-related fatalities decreased in every country in 2024 except Wales, which saw a small increase. Figure 3 shows the 2024 per cent difference in comparison to country baselines. For country specific insights, please see [individual WAID nation reports](#).

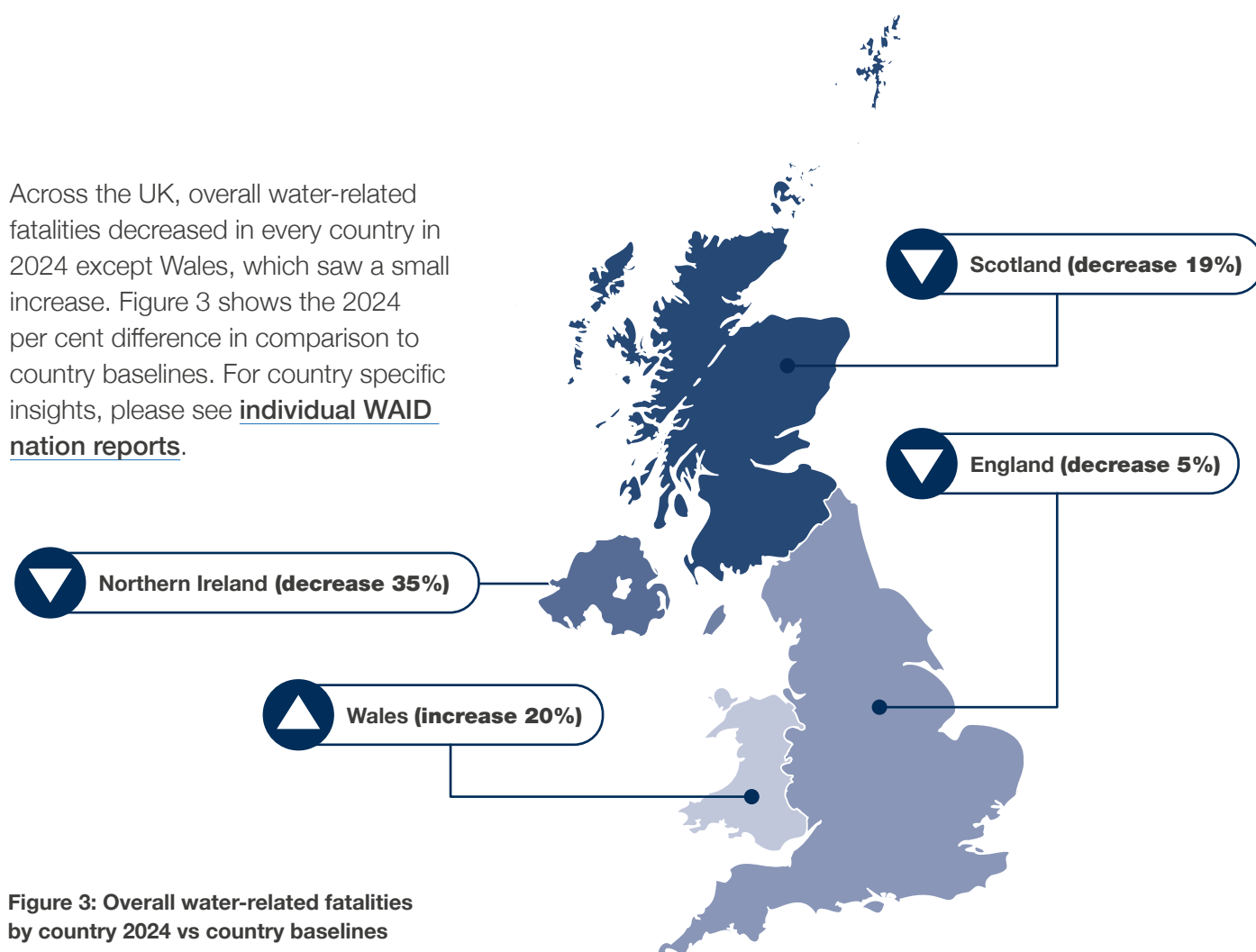


Figure 3: Overall water-related fatalities by country 2024 vs country baselines

# Accidental fatalities

In 2024, there were 193 accidental fatalities<sup>1</sup> in the UK. This is a **51 per cent decrease in comparison to the UK DPS baseline** and a **32 per cent decrease in comparison to the DPS review average** (see Figure 4). However, caution should be taken in the interpretation of this trend due to the high number of not recorded/inconclusives in the 2024 data. The 2020 – 2023 data uses an enhanced dataset with a reduced number of not recorded/inconclusives.

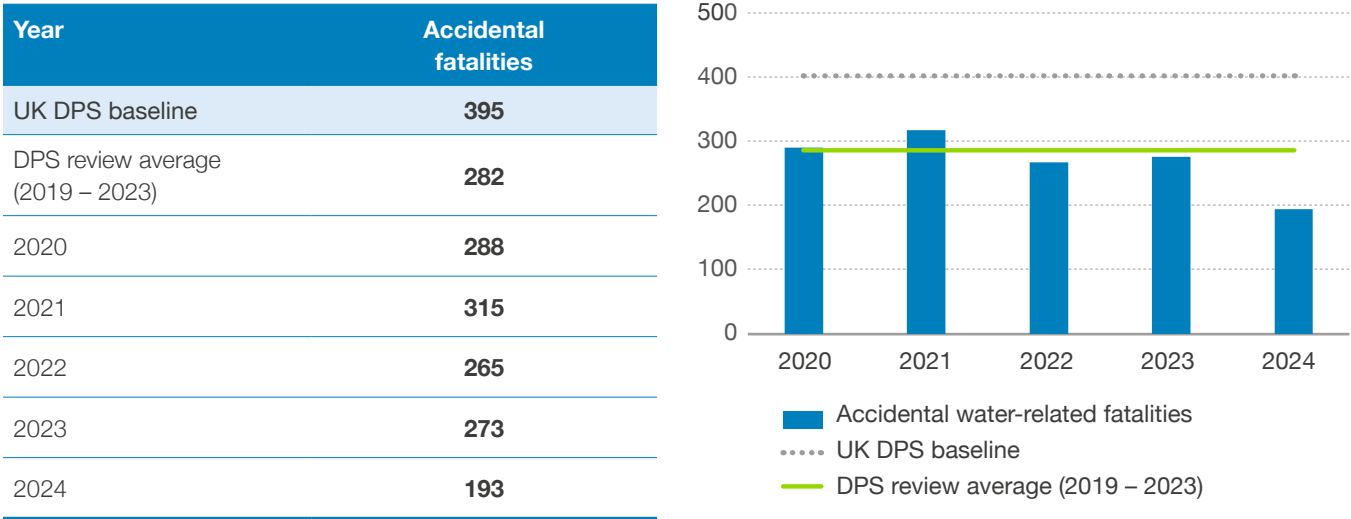


Figure 4: Accidental fatalities by year (2020 – 2024) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

1 Accidental fatality refers to accidental and natural causes suspected.

## Key points

In 2024:

- There were 193 accidental fatalities
- 84 per cent of accidental fatalities were male
- Males aged 20 to 29 were the highest group for accidental fatalities (see Figure 5)
- 61 per cent of accidental fatalities happened at **inland waters** (see Figure 6)
- Recreational activities accounted for 54 per cent of accidental fatalities (see Figure 7)
- 33 accidental fatality reports noted the presence or potential presence of drugs and/or alcohol
- The rate of accidental water-related fatalities has decreased in comparison to the UK DPS and the DPS review. In 2023, the accidental water-related fatality rate was 0.28 (see Figure 8)
- When considering the population rate, males aged 80+ were the highest group (see Figure 9)
- May was the month with the most accidental fatalities (see Figure 10).

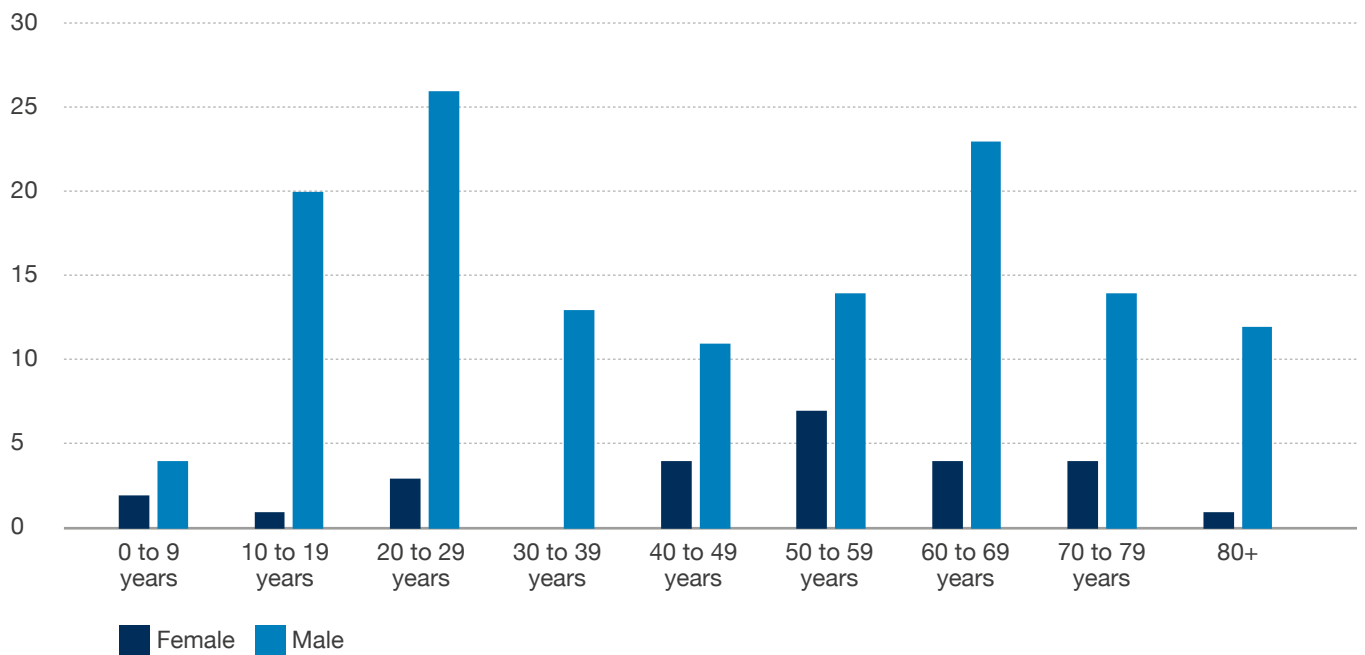


Figure 5: Accidental fatalities by age. N = 163, 30 not recorded

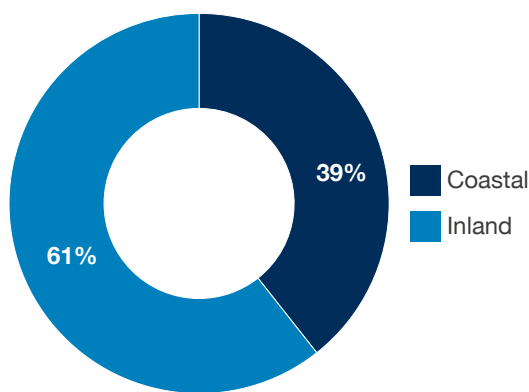


Figure 6: Accidental fatalities by location. N = 160, 33 excluded

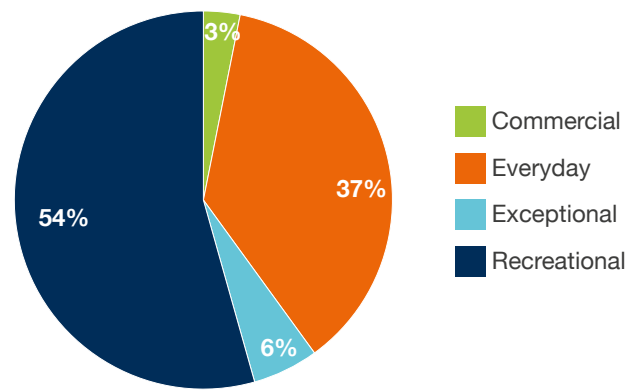


Figure 7: Accidental fatalities by activity. N = 160, 33 excluded

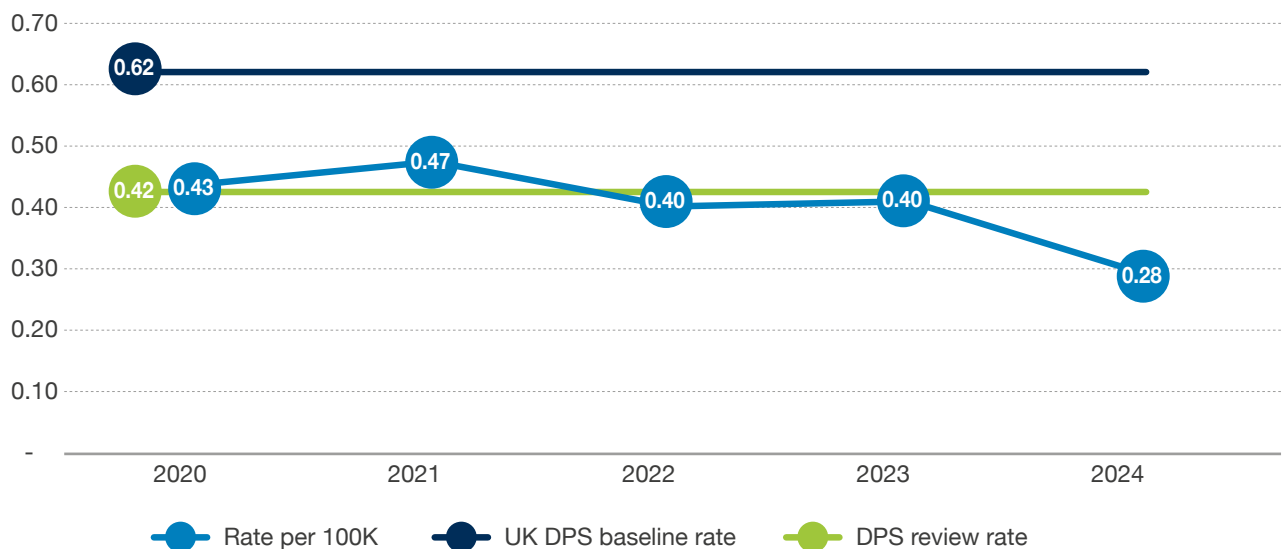


Figure 8: Accidental fatality rates by year (2020 – 2024) vs UK DPS baseline rate and DPS review rate. Rates are per 100,000 (Population Source: ONS)

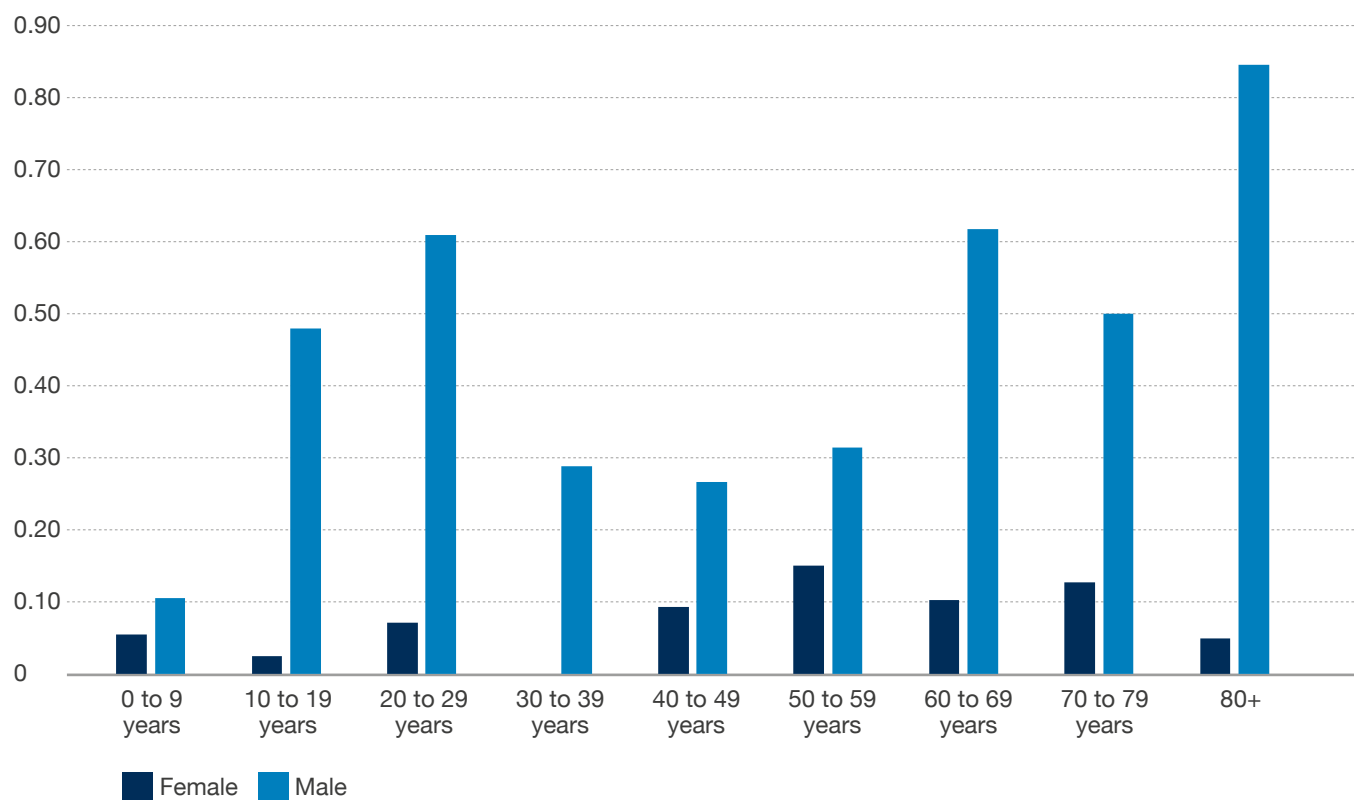


Figure 9: Accidental fatalities by age, sex and rate (based on ONS figures per 100,000). N = 162, 30 not recorded

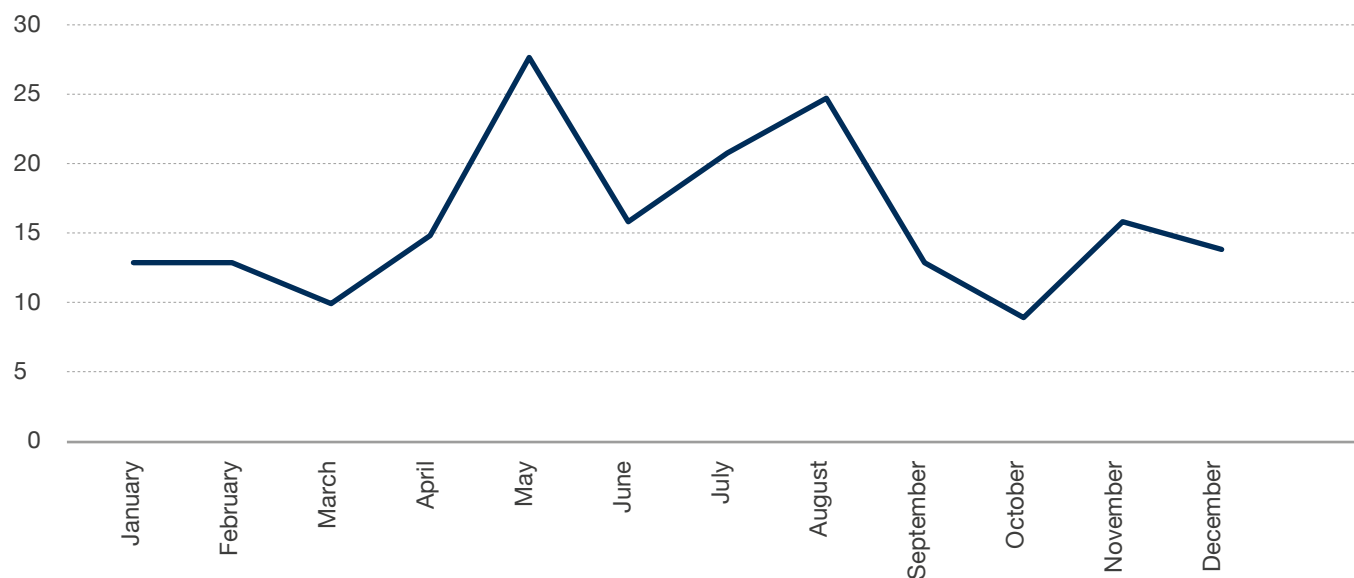


Figure 10: Accidental fatalities by month. N = 193

## Suicide fatalities

In 2024, there were 193 suicide fatalities at or near water in the UK. This is slightly less than previous years but again caution should be taken in interpretation due to the high number of not recorded/inconclusives within the 2024 dataset.

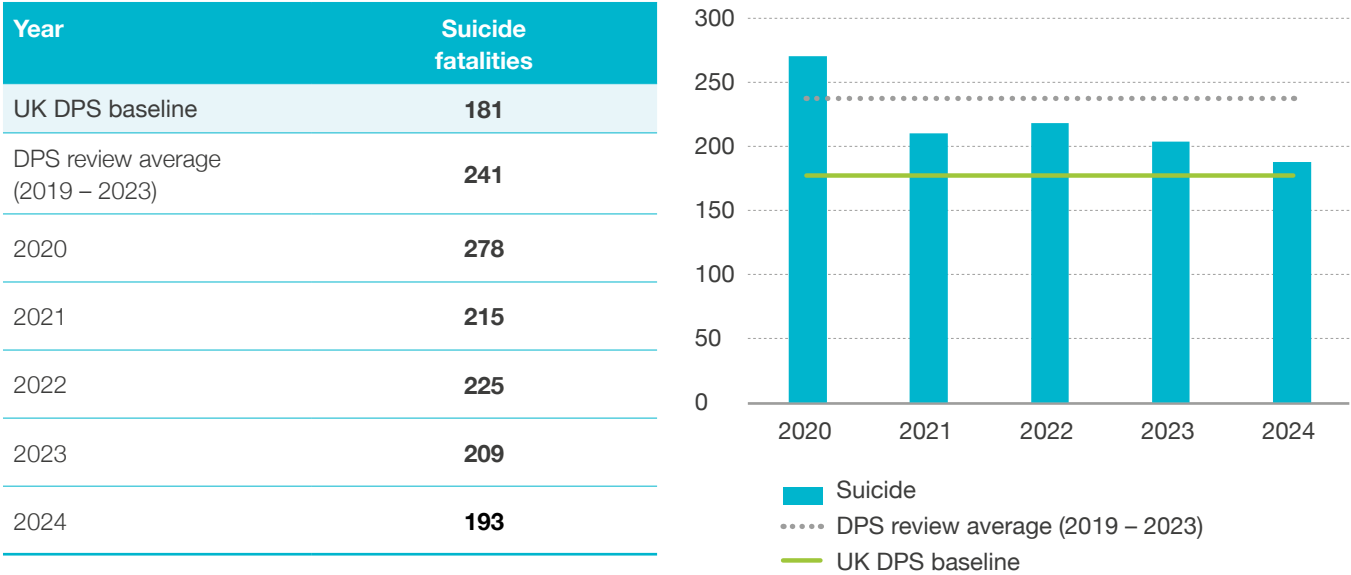


Figure 11: Suicide fatalities by year (2020 – 2024) vs UK DPS baseline and DPS review average

## Notes

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

“Accidental fatalities” refers to suspected/confirmed 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 UK Drowning Prevention Strategy baseline, as part of the 2025 review, was refined to provide a more specific baseline figure. This is based upon the same original dataset (WAID data 2010 – 2013) and shows an average baseline figure of 676 overall water-related fatalities, 395 of which were accidental.

The England baseline, as above, is based upon the original dataset (WAID data 2010 – 2013) as referenced in the [UK DPS Review 2024/25](#).

The Scotland baseline is based upon 2013 – 2015 WAID data as detailed in [Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy \(SDPS\)](#).

The Wales baseline is based upon 2016 – 2018 WAID data, as detailed in [Wales’ Drowning Prevention Strategy \(WDPS\)](#).

The Northern Ireland baseline is based upon the original dataset (WAID data 2010 – 2013), as referenced in the [UK DPS Review 2024/25](#).

### 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.