

13 January 2017

Recreation around and in the water is a natural and popular past time for millions of New Zealanders. As an island nation, our beaches, rivers and lakes are some of the most magnificent in the world. A moderate climate, accessible waterways and public and residential pools provide ample opportunities for Kiwis and tourists alike to swim, play, participate in water sports and activities and go boating and fishing year round. This is part of the quintessential Kiwi lifestyle.

With any water comes risk and sadly every year far too many people lose their lives or are injured in, on or around the water. The tragedy is that most drownings and injuries are preventable. Of the 108 people who died by drowning (both recreationally and non-recreationally) in New Zealand in 2016, 81 were preventable. That means that prevention and rescue could have saved lives.

Drowning is the fourth highest cause of accidental death in New Zealand - after motor vehicle accidents, falls and poisoning.

This annual drowning report makes grim reading. While preventable drownings are down on 2015 by five, they are on a par with the past five year average of 81. Males are four times more likely to drown in New Zealand and people across all age groups have lost their life in the water including three children under five years. Immersion incidents, where the victims had no intention of being in the water, remains the largest cause of drowning followed by those who simply went for a swim which ended in tragedy.

Jonty Mills
CEO
Water Safety New Zealand

This data has been sourced from the Water Safety New Zealand's DrownBase™ and is provisional as at 13 January 2017.

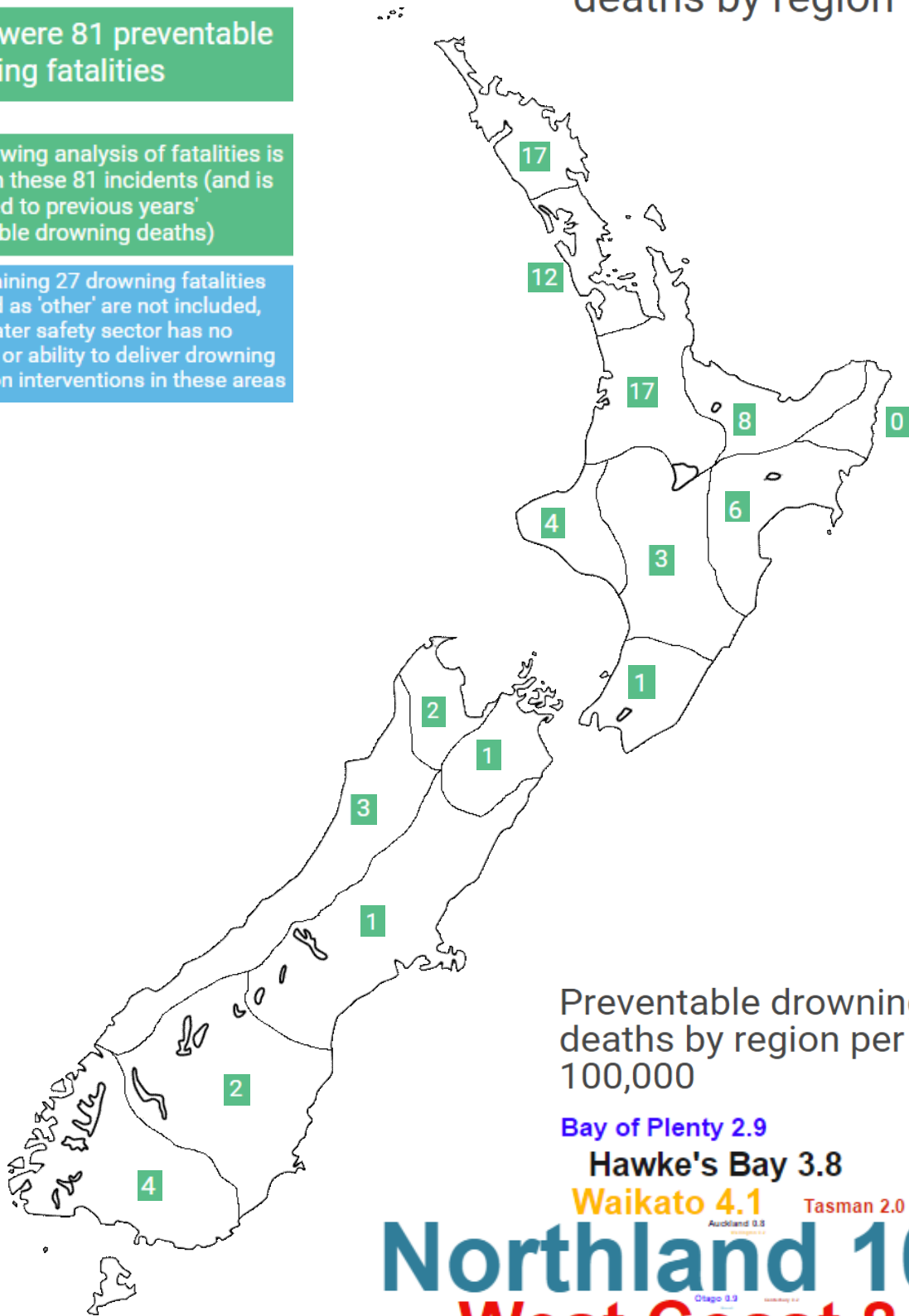
108 people died by drowning in New Zealand in 2016

There were 81 preventable drowning fatalities

The following analysis of fatalities is based on these 81 incidents (and is compared to previous years' preventable drowning deaths)

The remaining 27 drowning fatalities classified as 'other' are not included, as the water safety sector has no authority or ability to deliver drowning prevention interventions in these areas

Preventable drowning deaths by region



Preventable drowning deaths by region per 100,000

Bay of Plenty 2.9

Hawke's Bay 3.8

Waikato 4.1

Tasman 2.0

Northland 10.9

West Coast 8.3

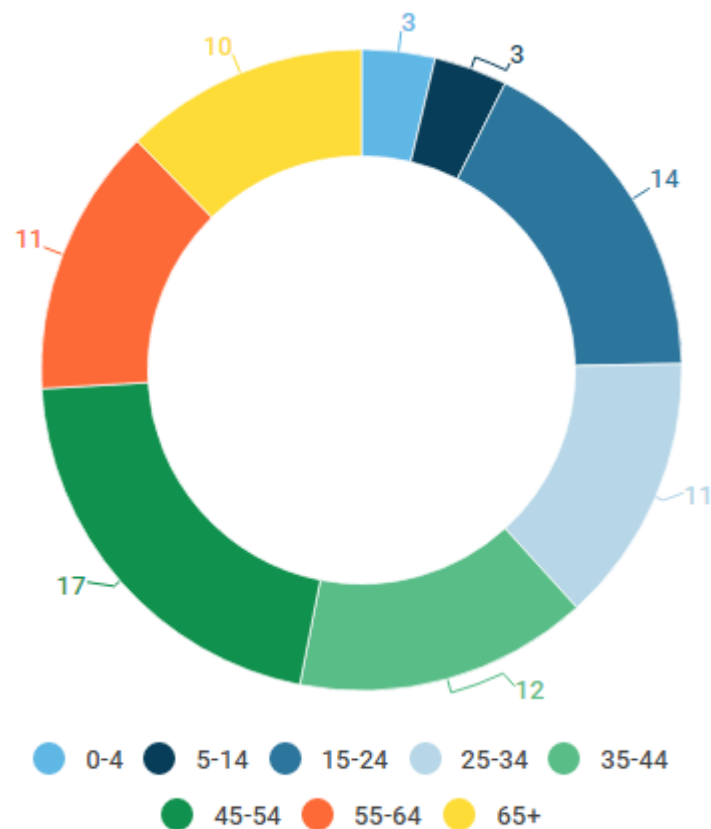
Southland 4.1

Taranaki 3.6

Marlborough 2.2

Manawatu-Wanganui 1.3

Mortality by age group



3

under fives deaths - the same as 2015 and the lowest equal toll on record



93%

of deaths in the 15-24 year old age group were male

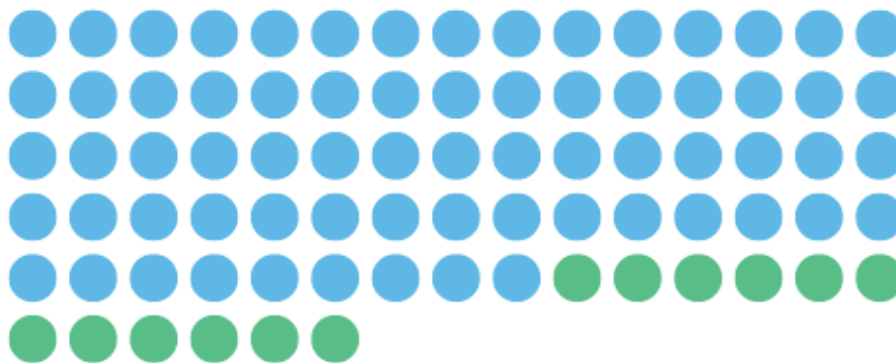


55%

increase on the five year average in the 45-54 year old age group - the highest since 2009

Mortality by gender

Much research has been conducted on the phenomena of male drownings and males injured from drowning incidents. New Zealand's culture has been forged from our pioneering forefathers and indigenous peoples who took great risks in settling New Zealand. This legacy of muscular and masculine virtues and risk taking as well as our sporting prowess has helped shape the people we are. Fishing, boating and water sports make up this expression of independence and masculinity and may well contribute to why males are more at risk from drowning. As a general observation, males tend to over estimate their abilities and underestimate the risks associated with their activity on the water, compared to females.



● Male (69) ● Female (12)



85%

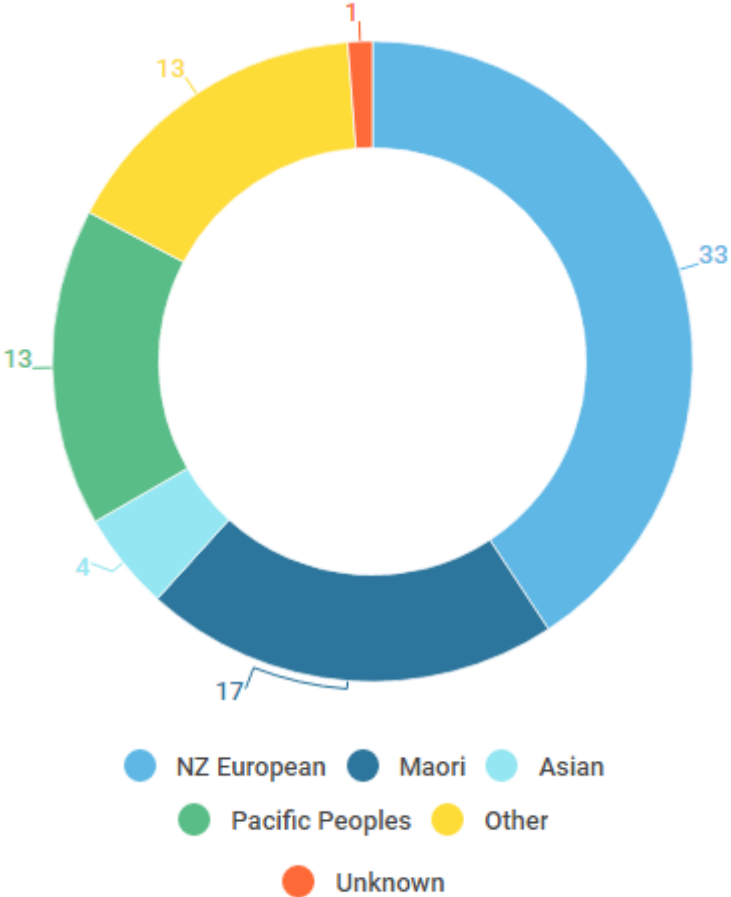
were male drowning deaths. Males died participating in 16 different activities



2

activities for female drowning deaths: swimming and immersion incident

Mortality by ethnicity



21%

of deaths were Maori; Maori make up 14% of the population



100%

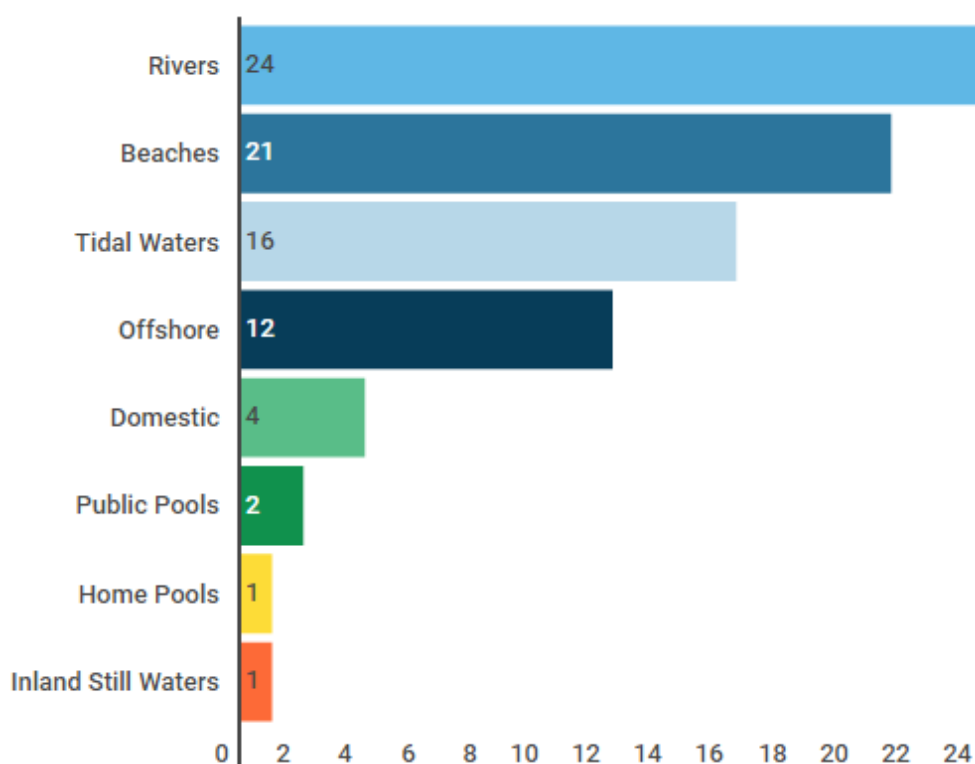
of Pacific Peoples deaths were male (note: 7 were involved in the incident at Kaipara bar)

Mortality by environment

River drownings make up just under a third of all drownings and the number of deaths in 2016 is 60 percent higher than the five year average and a third higher than in 2015. No anomalies are currently apparent to provide causation of this increase over time. Rivers can be dangerous depending on the weather, terrain, forces, hazards and behaviour of those recreating in and near rivers. Rivers generally are not patrolled and the absence of warning signage and ignorance of the dangers a likely factor.

People 15 – 34 years old make up half the river drownings in 2016 and swimming and accidental immersion in rivers a major contributor.

Offshore drownings are down by 43 percent from 2015 and 33 percent lower than the five year average. Drownings in tidal waters however has increased to 16, up from the five year average of 10.



60%

increase in River drowning deaths on the five year average. Over half of these were aged between 15 and 34



50%

of the Tidal Waters deaths were involved at the incident at Kaipara bar



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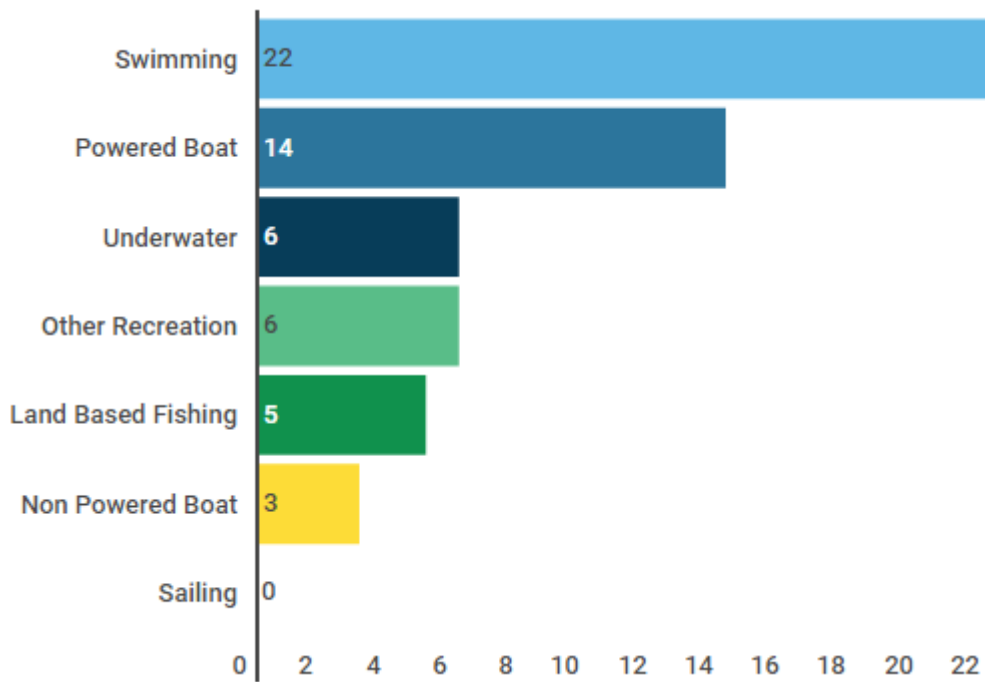
death in a home pool - the lowest equal toll on record. The death was of an under five



90%

decrease on the five year average in drowning deaths in Inland Still Waters (lakes, ponds, etc.)

Mortality by activity



22

is the highest Swimming toll since 1998



43%

of Powered Boating deaths were aged 55+, male and not wearing a lifejacket



63%

decrease of Non Powered Boat deaths on the 2015 total

Quick Facts	2016 (preventable)		2011-2015 average (preventable)	
	Numbers	% (rounded)	Numbers	% (rounded)
Recreational Activity				
Land Based Fishing	5	6%	7	8%
Non Powered Boat	3	4%	5	6%
Powered Boat	14	17%	11	14%
Sailing	0	0%	2	2%
Swimming	22	27%	16	20%
Underwater	6	7%	6	8%
Other Recreation	6	7%	4	5%
Non Recreational Activity				
Immersion Incidents	23	28%	28	35%
Occupational	2	2%	2	3%
Total	81	100%	81	100%
Environment				
Beaches	21	26%	18	22%
Domestic	4	5%	5	7%
Home Pools	1	1%	3	4%
Inland Still Waters	1	1%	10	12%
Offshore	12	15%	18	22%
Public Pools	2	2%	2	2%
Rivers	24	30%	15	19%
Tidal Waters	16	20%	10	13%
Total	81	100%	81	100%
Ethnicity				
Asian	4	5%	10	12%
Maori	17	21%	19	23%
NZ European	33	41%	37	45%
Other	13	16%	6	8%
Pacific Peoples	13	16%	8	9%
Unknown	1	1%	2	2%
Total	81	100%	81	100%
Gender				
Female	12	15%	14	17%
Male	69	85%	67	83%
Total	81	100%	81	100%
Age Group				
00 - 04	3	4%	6	7%
05 - 14	3	4%	3	4%
15 - 24	14	17%	14	18%
25 - 34	11	14%	10	12%
35 - 44	12	15%	12	15%
45 - 54	17	21%	11	14%
55 - 64	11	14%	12	15%
65+	10	12%	12	15%
Total	81	100%	81	100%