2017 Drowning Prevention Report (Provisional)

12 January 2017

Introduction

> *Drowning is the respiratory impairment of lungs due to submersion / immersion in liquid. It can be fatal (mortality), or non-fatal (morbidity) resulting in a stay in hospital of 24 hours or longer.*

In 2017 there were 88 recreational (intending to be in the water) and non-recreational (no intention of being in the water) preventable drowning fatalities. The following analysis of fatalities is based on these 88 incidents in 2017 which represent an increase of 10, or 13%, compared to 2016.

While we have had an increase in fatalities versus 2016, an analysis of five year rolling averages indicates a plateauing of preventable drowning fatalities against an increasing population, high tourism and immigration, and growth in recreational activity.

Recreation in, on and around 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.

This report details the 2017 preventable drowning fatalities by region, age, gender, ethnicity, environment and activity with an overall summary at the rear of the document comparing 2017 with the five year average 2012 – 2016.

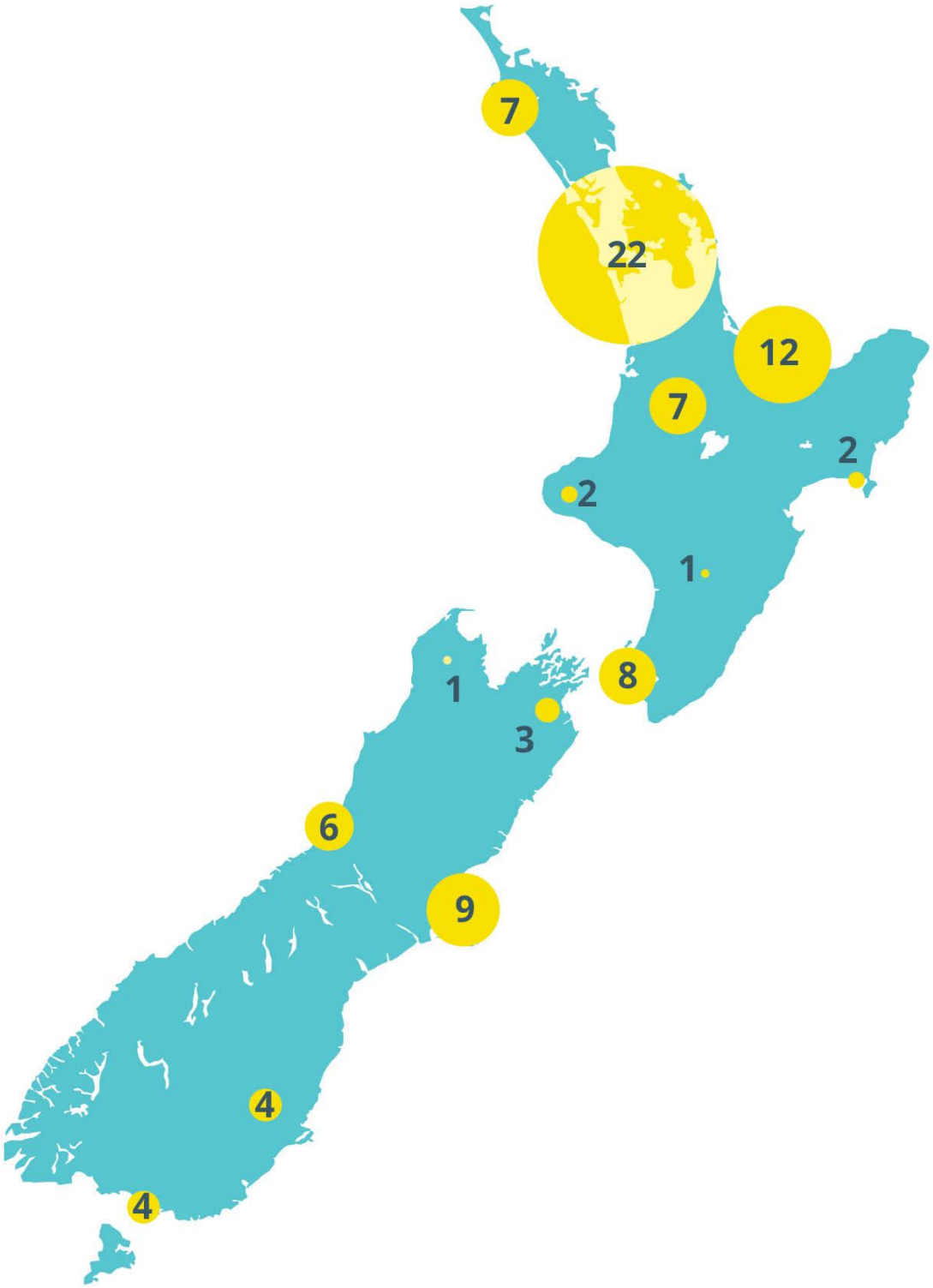
This information is provisional only with a final report expected mid 2018 once all police and coronial reports are processed.

For more information contact staff at Water Safety New Zealand.

Jonty Mills
CEO

Data sourced from Water Safety New Zealand's DrownBase™

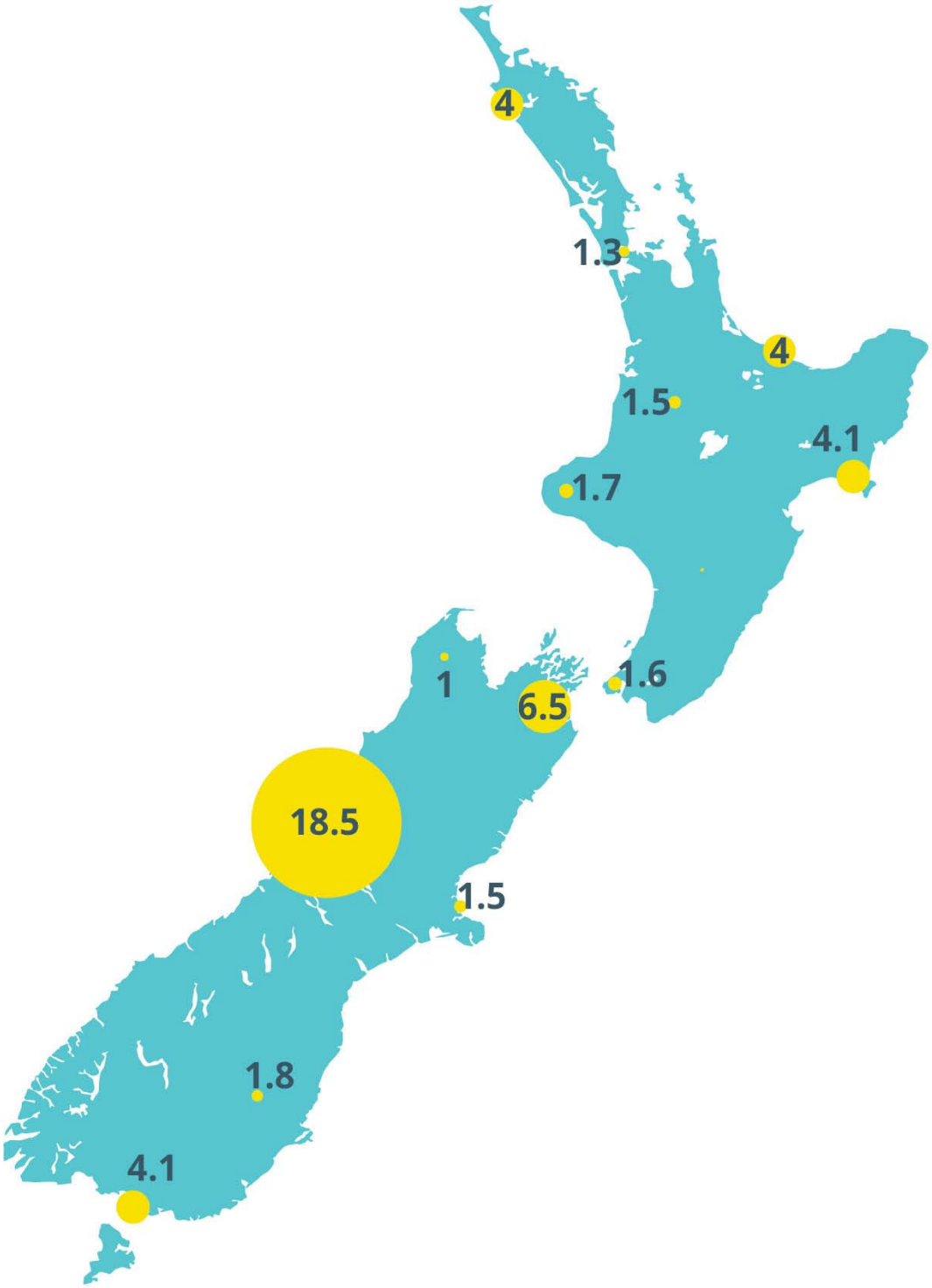
Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Region



Auckland's preventable fatal drowning rate has jumped to 22 in 2017, double that of 2016. Previously, Auckland's preventable fatal drowning rate had been static for the past four years. However, per 100,000 of the population, this rate is less than the 1.8 average.

Other increases include Canterbury where the preventable fatal drowning rate has jumped from 1 in 2016 to 9 in 2017, Wellington (from 1 in 2016 to 8 in 2017), Bay of Plenty (from 7 in 2016 to 12 in 2017) and West Coast (from 3 in 2016 to 6 in 2017).

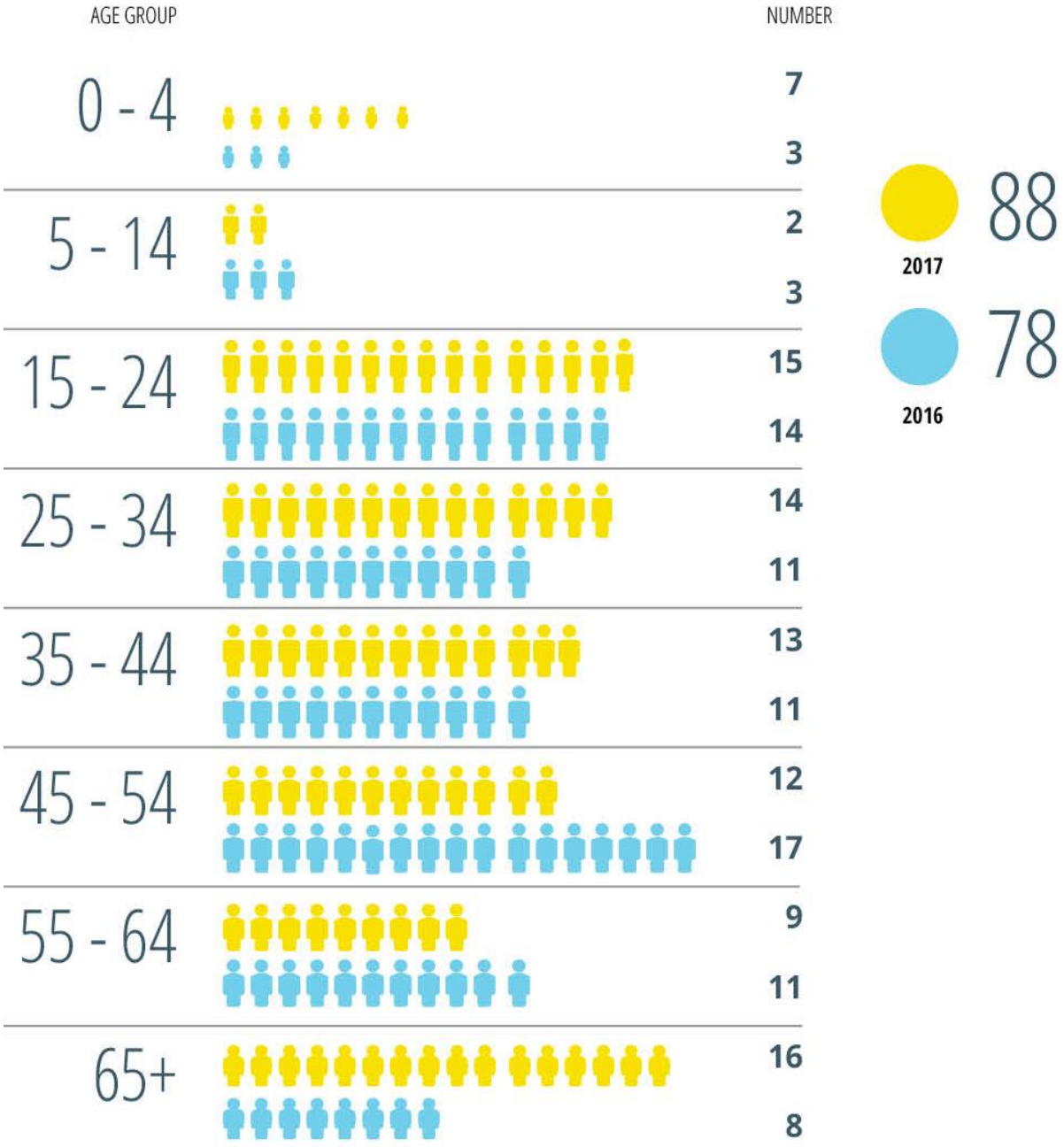
Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Region per 100,000 of Population



When analysing the preventable fatal drowning rate per 100,000 of population, West Coast has the highest at 18.5 in 2017 compared to 8.3 in 2016. With 3 fatalities in Marlborough in 2017 (compared to 1 in 2016), this region has the second highest rate per 100,000, at 6.5. Gisborne, Southland, Bay of Plenty and Northland hover around 4 per 100,000 of population. All other regions sit on or below the average of 1.8.

There were no preventable fatal drownings in Hawke's Bay in 2017.

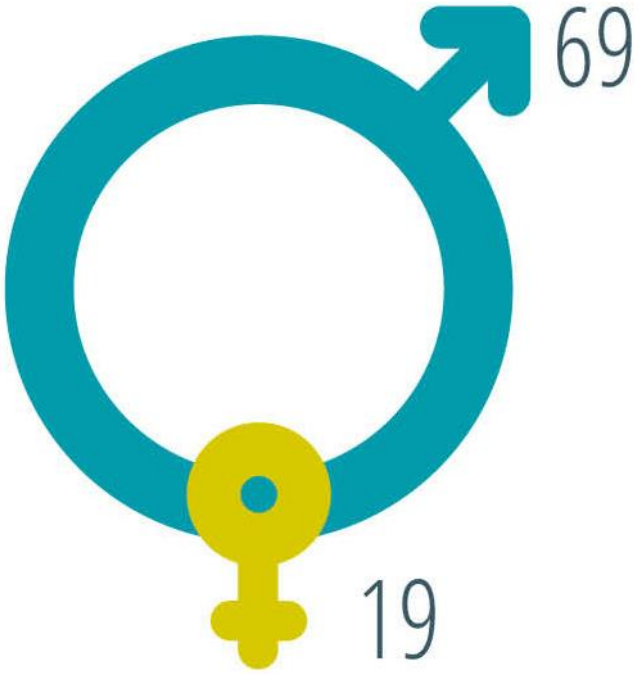
Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Age Group



In 2017 there were 7 preventable fatal drownings of toddlers, 4 more than in 2016. Preventable fatal drownings in the over 65 years age group doubled from 2016 to 16 in 2017 compared to 8 in 2016.

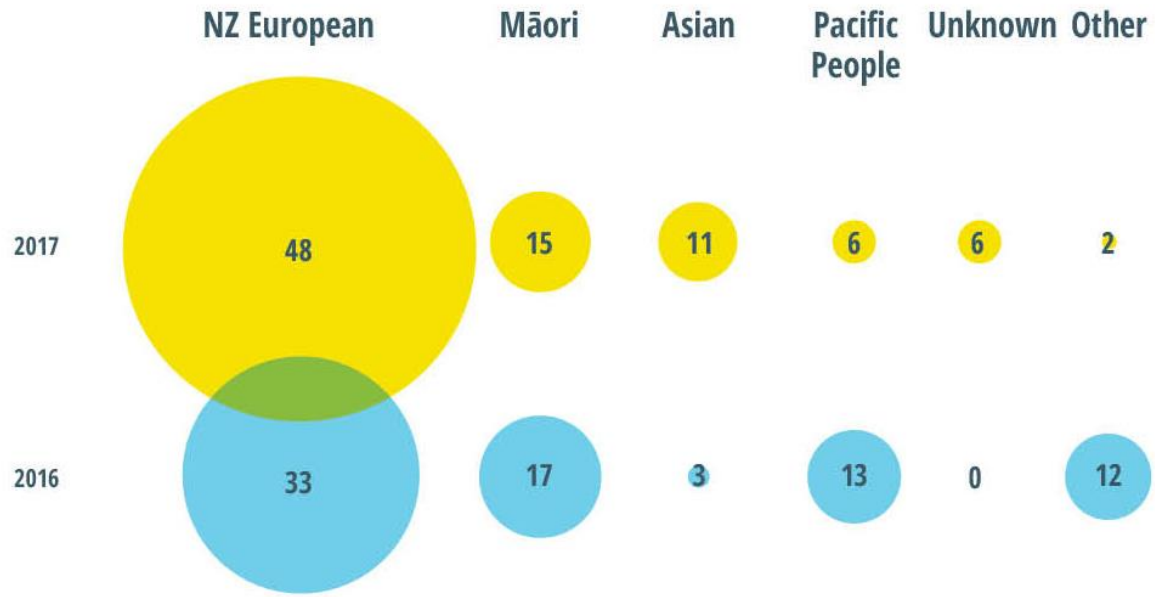
Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Gender

69 Male
19 Female



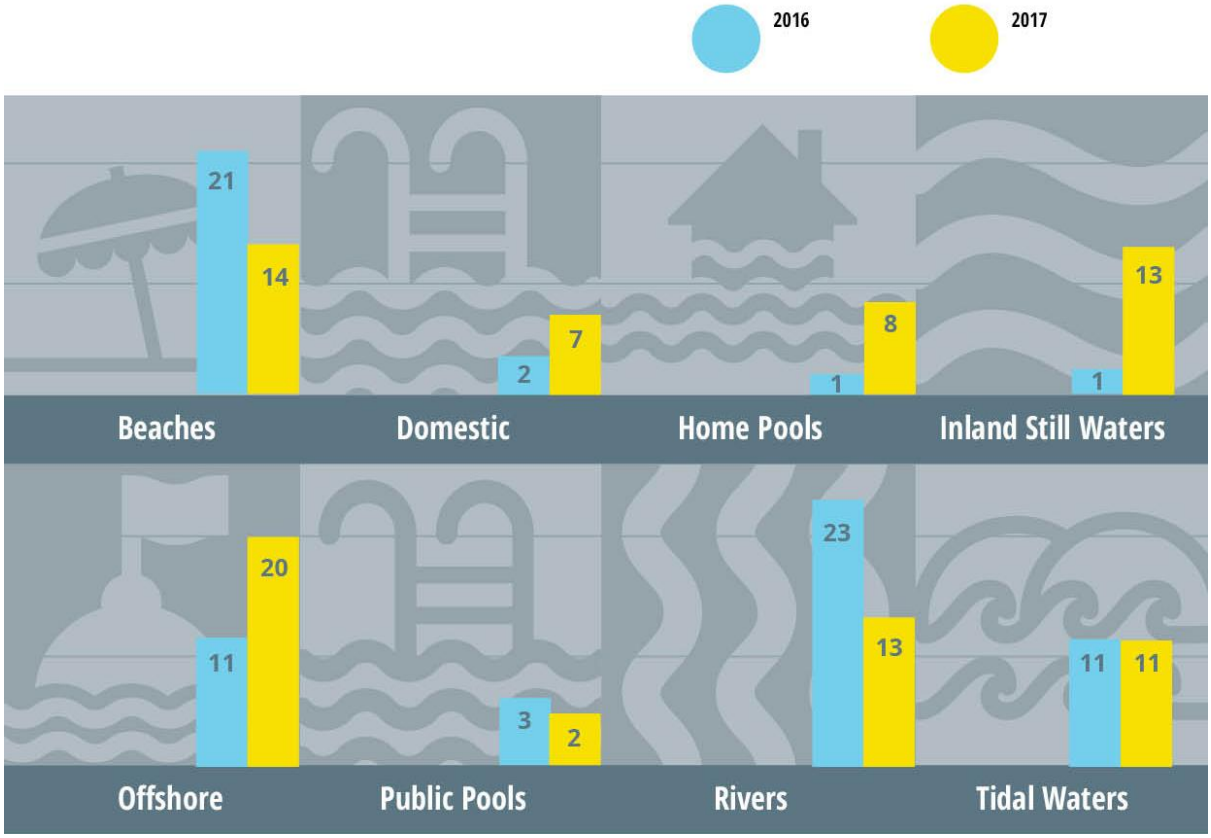
An increase in female preventable fatal drownings has contributed to the increase in preventable fatal drownings overall with 19 female fatalities in 2017 up from 11 in 2016. Male preventable fatal drownings were 69, 2 up from 67 in 2016.

Ethnicity



Maori and Pacific People preventable fatal drownings were down in 2017 from 2016. NZ European preventable fatal drownings were up.

Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Environment

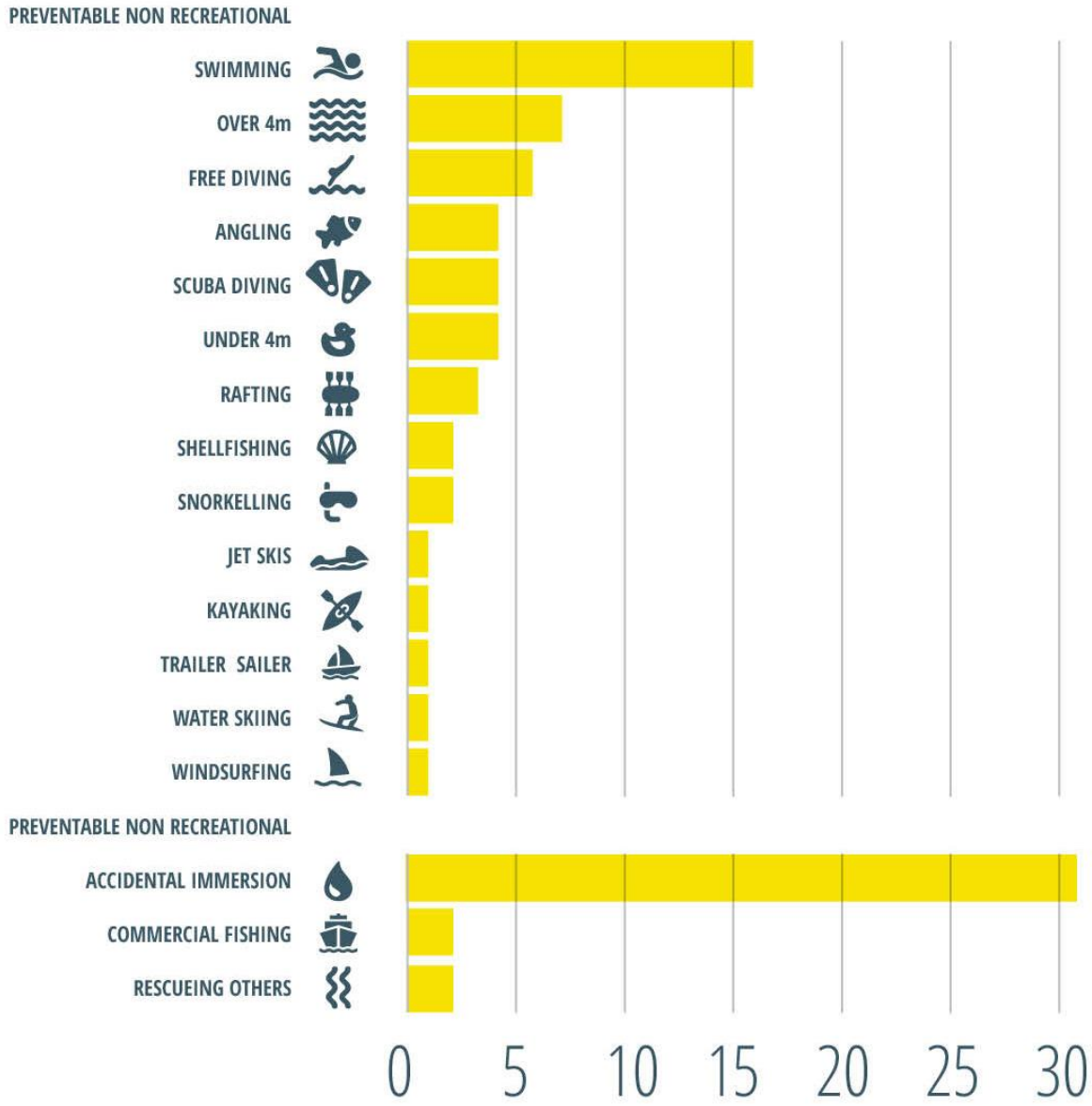


There was an increase in preventable fatal drownings in, or around the home in 2017 with 7 bath, 8 home pool and 3 pond fatalities – 18 compared with 5 in 2016. Two fatalities occurred in Public Pools.

Offshore fatalities almost doubled from 11 in 2016 to 20 in 2017. Nine lake fatalities in 2017 (zero in 2016) has brought Inland Still Water preventable drownings to 13 in 2017.

River fatalities almost halved from 23 in 2016 to 13 in 2017, beach fatalities were down to 14 in 2017 from 21 in 2016 and there were 5 less tidal water fatalities (11 in 2017 down from 16 in 2016).

Preventable Drowning Fatalities by Activity



Swimming preventable fatal drownings were down on 2016, from 22 to 16 in 2017. Also down is fatalities in craft over 4m (11 in 2016 to 7 in 2017).

Increases have occurred in the recreational pursuits of free diving, angling, scuba diving, craft under 4m, rafting, shell fishing and snorkelling.

There were no diving/jumping preventable fatal drownings in 2017, down from 4 in 2016.

Accidental immersions increased from 18 in 2016 to 31 in 2017. These are incidence where the victim had no intention of being in the water.

Total Preventable Drowning Fatalities in 2017 (Provisional as at 12 January 2018)

Category	2017		Five Year Ave 2012-2016	
	Numbers	% (rounded)	Numbers	% (rounded)
Age Group				
00 - 04	7	8%	4	5%
05 - 14	2	2%	4	5%
15 - 24	15	17%	15	20%
25 - 34	14	16%	10	12%
35 - 44	13	15%	11	15%
45 - 54	12	14%	12	15%
55 - 64	9	10%	11	14%
65+	16	18%	11	14%
Total	**88**	**100%**	**77**	**100%**
Gender				
Female	19	22%	13	16%
Male	69	78%	64	84%
Total	**88**	**100%**	**77**	**100%**
Ethnicity				
Asian	11	13%	8	10%
Maori	15	17%	18	24%
NZ European	48	55%	34	44%
Other	2	2%	7	10%
Pacific Peoples	6	7%	8	11%
Unknown	6	7%	1	2%
Total	**88**	**100%**	**77**	**100%**
Environment				
Beaches	14	16%	17	22%
Domestic	7	8%	5	6%
Home Pools	8	9%	2	3%
Inland Still Waters	13	15%	7	9%
Offshore	20	23%	16	21%
Public Pools	2	2%	2	2%
Rivers	13	15%	17	22%
Tidal Waters	11	13%	12	15%
UnSpecified	0	0%	0	0%
Total	**88**	**100%**	**77**	**100%**

Category	2017		Five Year Ave 2012-2016	
	Numbers	% (rounded)	Numbers	% (rounded)
Preventable (Recreational Activity)				
Angling	4	5%	3	4%
Board Riding	0	0%	1	1%
Boogie Boarding	0	0%	0	0%
Canoeing	0	0%	0	0%
Diving / Jumping	0	0%	3	4%
Fixed Keel Boat	0	0%	0	0%
Free Diving	6	7%	1	2%
Jet Boat	0	0%	0	0%
Jet Skis	1	1%	0	1%
Kayaking	1	1%	2	3%
Net Fishing	0	0%	2	3%
Non-Powered Boat (Injury)	0	0%	0	0%
Offshore Sailing	0	0%	1	1%
Other Recreation	0	0%	0	0%
Other Water Sport (Injury)	0	0%	0	0%
Over 4m	7	8%	7	9%
Powerd Boat (Injury)	0	0%	0	0%
Rafting	3	3%	0	0%
Rowing Craft / Dinghy	0	0%	1	1%
Sailing Dinghy	0	0%	0	1%
Scuba Diving	4	5%	2	3%
Shellfishing	2	2%	0	1%
Snorkelling	2	2%	1	2%
Swimming	16	18%	17	22%
Trailer Sailer	1	1%	0	0%
Tubing / Canyoning	0	0%	0	0%
Under 4m	4	5%	4	6%
Water Skiing	1	1%	0	0%
Windsurfing	1	1%	0	0%
Preventable (Non Recreational Activity)				
Accidental Immersion	31	35%	23	29%
Commercial Fishing	2	2%	2	3%
Flood/Civil Emergency	0	0%	0	1%
Rescuing Others	2	2%	3	4%
Total	**88**	**100%**	**77**	**100%**

For further information email wsnz@watersafety.org.nz or call on 04 801 9600
Visit www.watersafety.org.nz