
Unintentional drowning

From global problem to local action

Jonathon Passmore

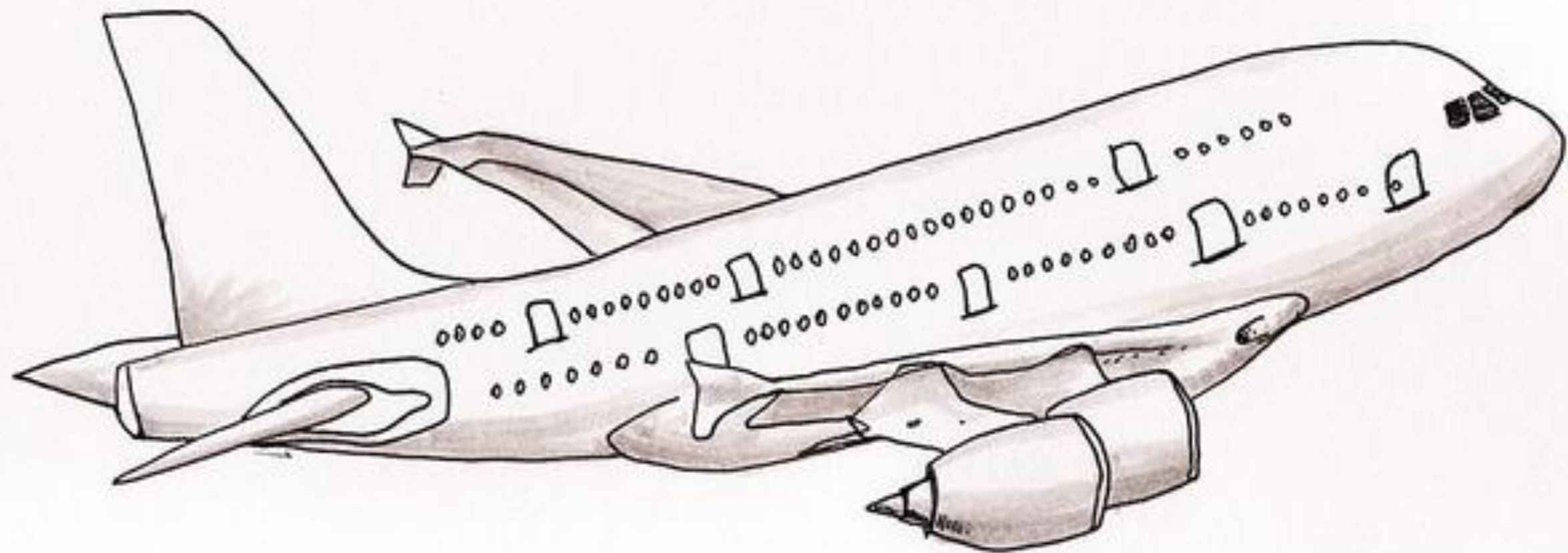
Regional Advisor for Violence and Injury Prevention



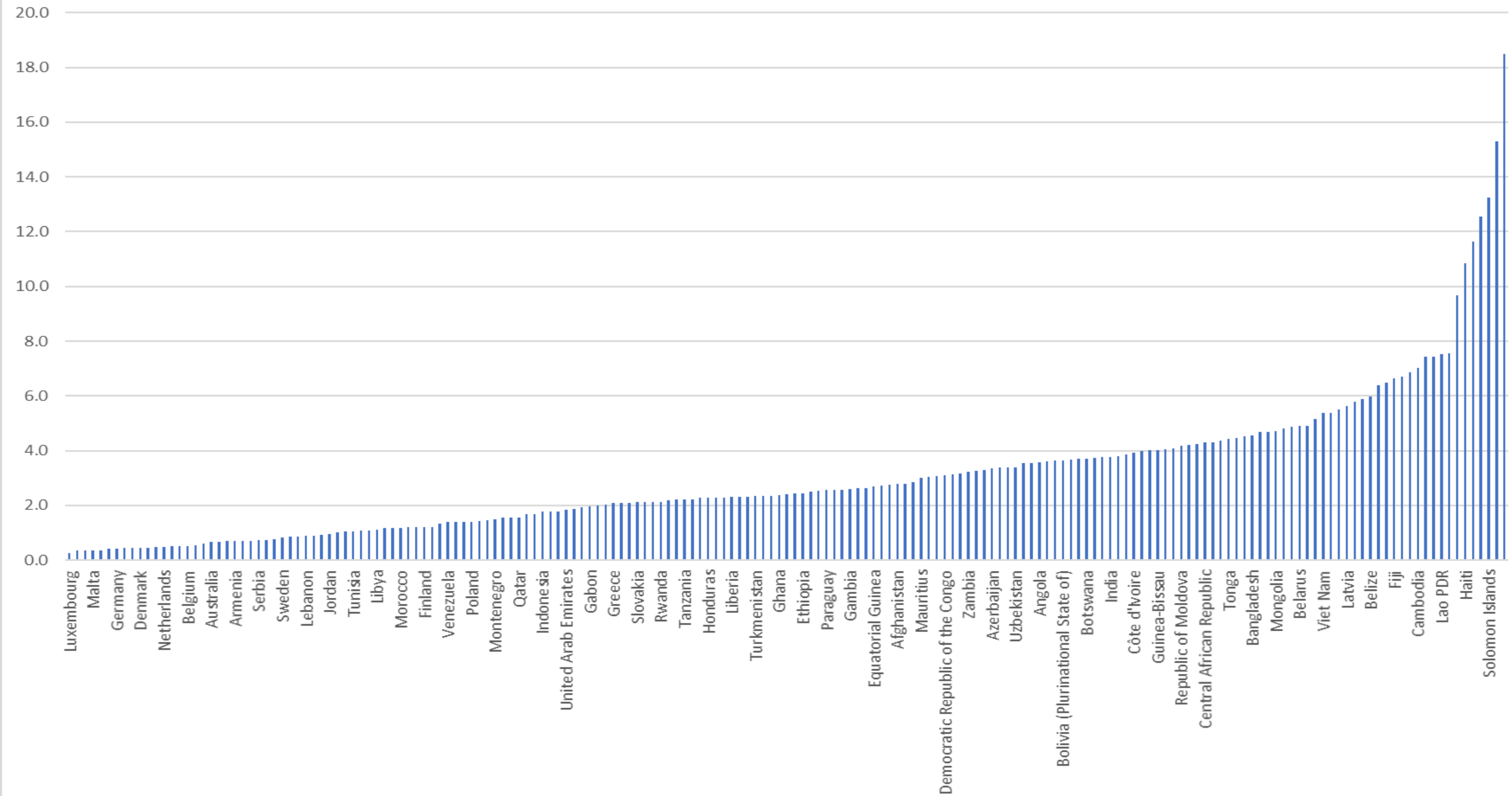
European Region



236,000 people drown each year



Age standardised drowning rates, 2019



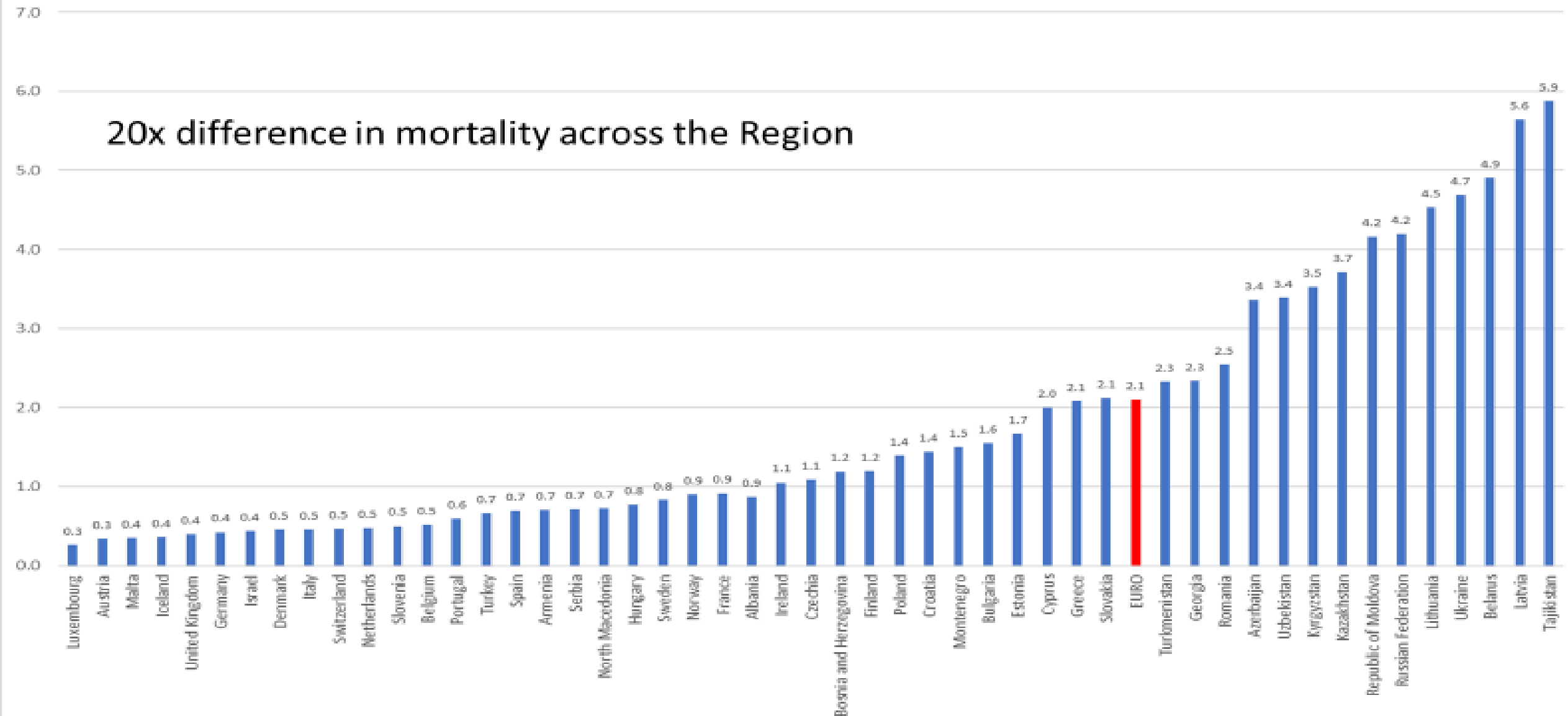


.....20,000 people drown in EURO in 2019

Unequal burden

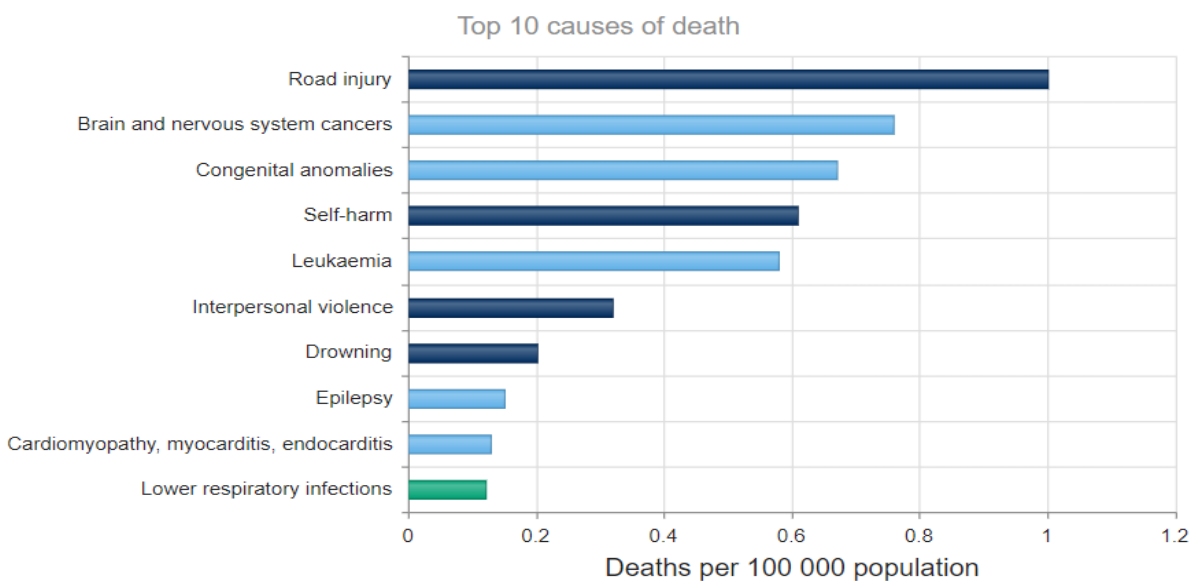
Drowning mortality, EURO, 2019

20x difference in mortality across the Region

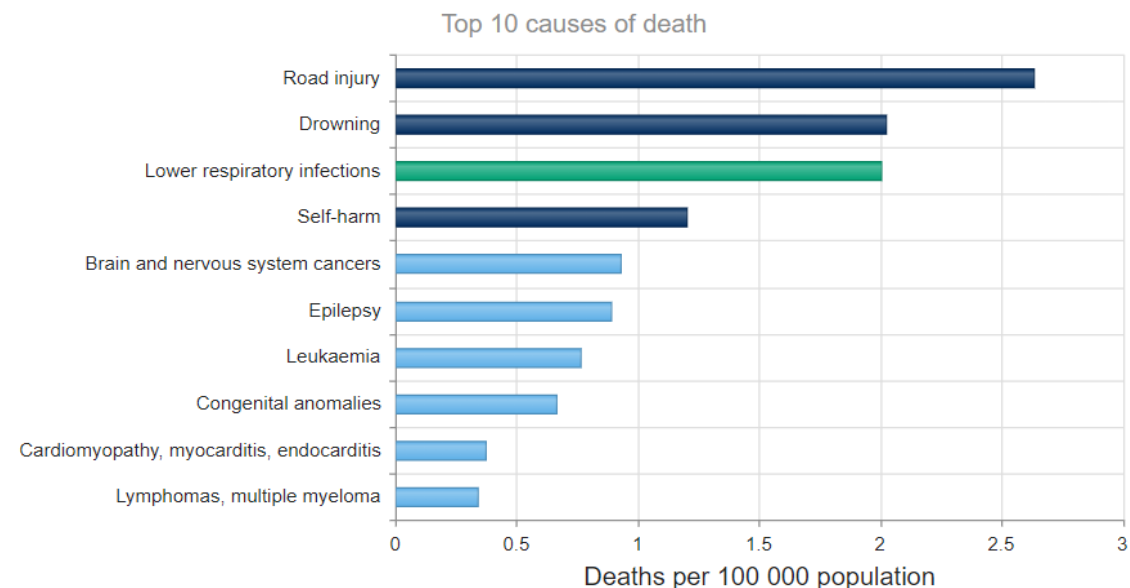


Number and rank of the 10 leading causes of death for both sexes in the WHO European Region, 2019																
Rank	0–4 years		5–14 years		15–29 years		30–49 years		50–59 years		60–69 years		70 + years		All ages	
1	Preterm birth complications 20,414		Road injury 2,030		Self-harm 14,629		Ischaemic heart disease 56,705		Ischaemic heart disease 137,711		Ischaemic heart disease 329,637		Ischaemic heart disease 1,628,977		Ischaemic heart disease 2,155,222	
2	Congenital heart anomalies 8,823		Lower respiratory infections 1,361		Road injury 13,880		Self-harm 41,831		Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers 62,901		Stroke 141,430		Stroke 814,102		Stroke 1,036,785	
3	Birth asphyxia and birth trauma 8,768		Drowning 1,348		Interpersonal violence 5,073		Cirrhosis of the liver 39,715		Stroke 54,528		Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers 135,359		Alzheimer's disease and other dementias 482,319		Alzheimer's disease and other dementias 496,586	
4	Other congenital anomalies 8,311		Leukaemia 1,072		Other unintentional injuries 4,025		Cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis 27,997		Cirrhosis of the liver 43,002		Colon and rectum cancers 57,598		COPD ¹ 263,048		Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers 421,334	
5	Lower respiratory infections 7,881		Brain and nervous system cancers 990		Drug use disorders 3,997		Stroke 25,052		Colon and rectum cancers 24,934		COPD ¹ 50,384		Other circulatory diseases 260,466		COPD ¹ 332,652	
6	Other neonatal conditions 5,017		Other unintentional injuries 899		Drowning 2,572		HIV/AIDS 22,159		Breast cancer 24,444		Cirrhosis of the liver 50,034		Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers 208,711		Other circulatory diseases 322,353	
7	Neonatal sepsis and infections 3,809		Other malignant neoplasms 755		Cirrhosis of the liver 2,329		Road injury 22,032		Cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis 22,411		Other circulatory diseases 36,232		Lower respiratory infections 198,480		Lower respiratory infections 266,375	
8	Diarrhoeal diseases 2,505		Self-harm 631		Lower respiratory infections 2,308		Alcohol-use disorders 21,786		Self-harm 21,959		Breast cancer 35,283		Colon and rectum cancers 167,733		Colon and rectum cancers 259,424	
9	Neural tube defects 1,897		Other neurological conditions 578		HIV/AIDS 2,293		Lower respiratory infections 15,851		Alcohol-use disorders 17,568		Pancreas cancer 34,629		Hypertensive heart disease 164,702		Hypertensive heart disease 190,749	
10	Other unintentional injuries 1,814		Other congenital anomalies 567		Cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, endocarditis 2,246		Other unintentional injuries 15,805		Stomach cancer 16,672		Stomach cancer 32,686		Kidney diseases 118,788		Cirrhosis of the liver 178,747	
Deaths attributed to violence and injuries	(14) Drowning 1,017		(14) Interpersonal violence 363		(12) Falls 1,860		(13) Interpersonal violence 15,036		(17) Other unintentional injuries 12,511		(19) Self-harm 16,726		(18) Falls 63,829		(17) Self-harm 118,660	
	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number	Percentage	Absolute number
	6,2%	5,498	37,9%	6,456	49,9%	44,876	22,2%	115,514	8,7%	65,263	4,2%	60,487	2,7%	167,171	5,1%	465,255

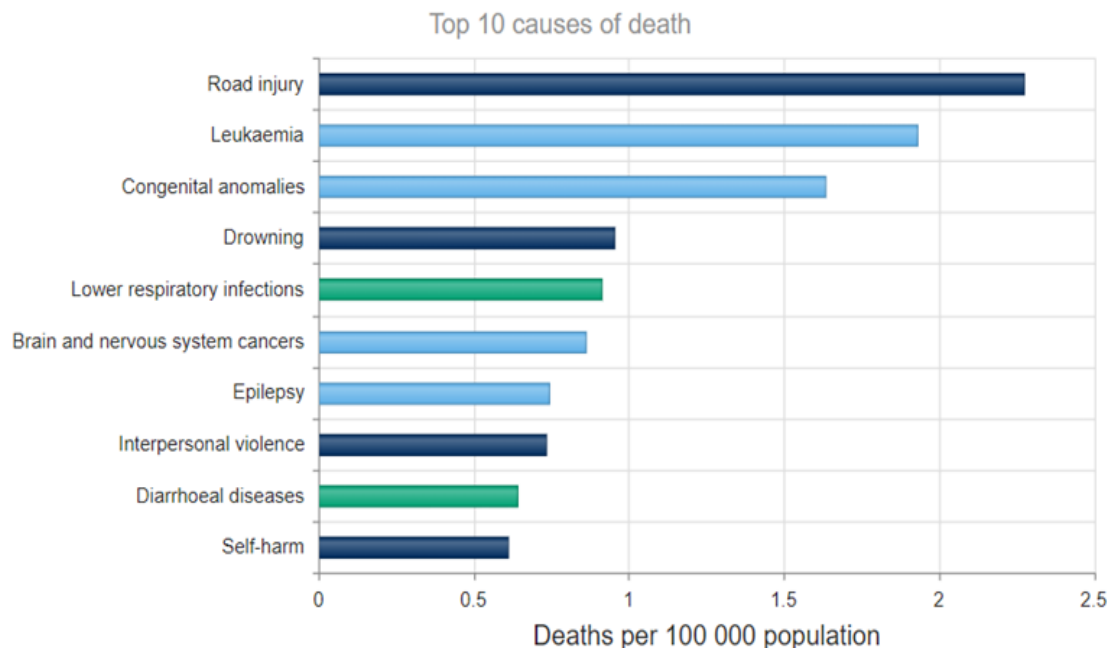
Top 10 causes of death in France for both sexes aged 10 to 14 years (2019)



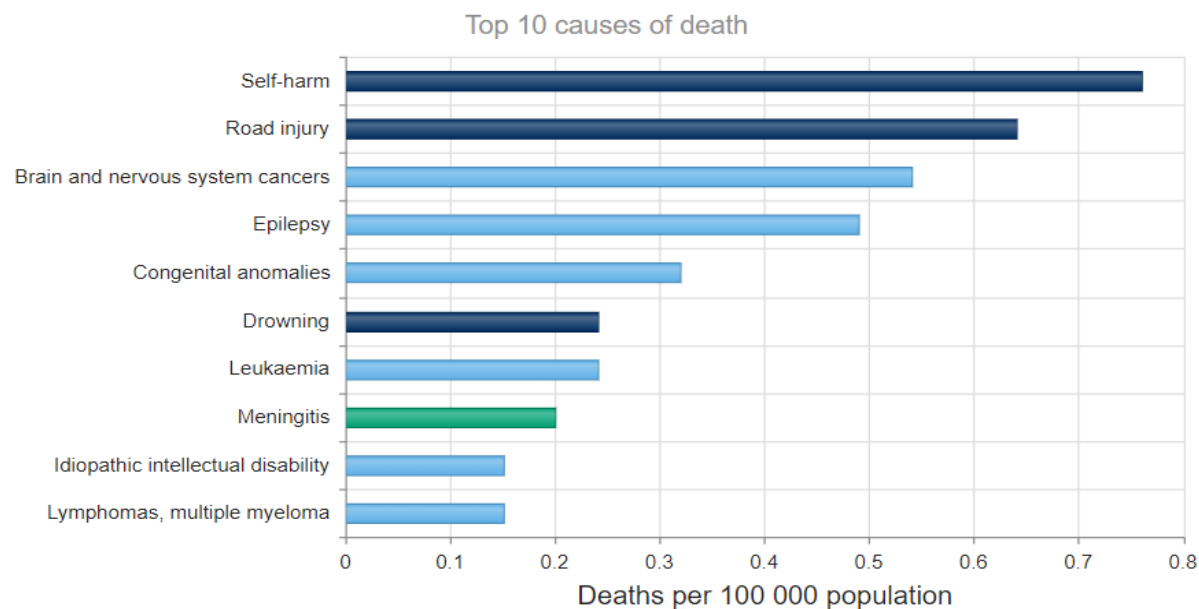
Top 10 causes of death in Romania for both sexes aged 10 to 14 years (2019)

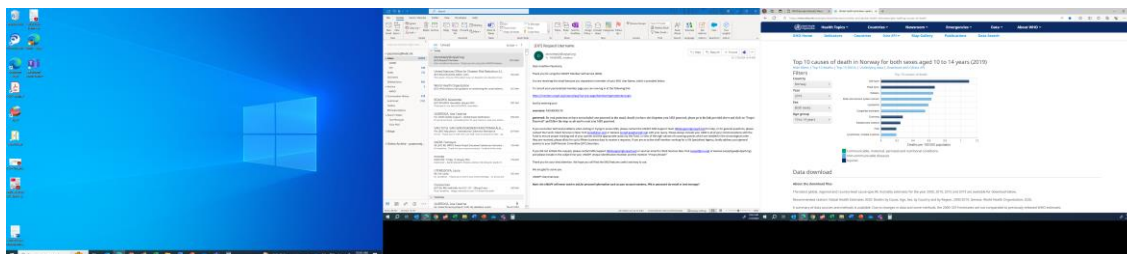


Top 10 causes of death in Türkiye for both sexes aged 10 to 14 years (2019)



Top 10 causes of death in Netherlands (Kingdom of the) for both sexes aged 10 to 14 years (2019)



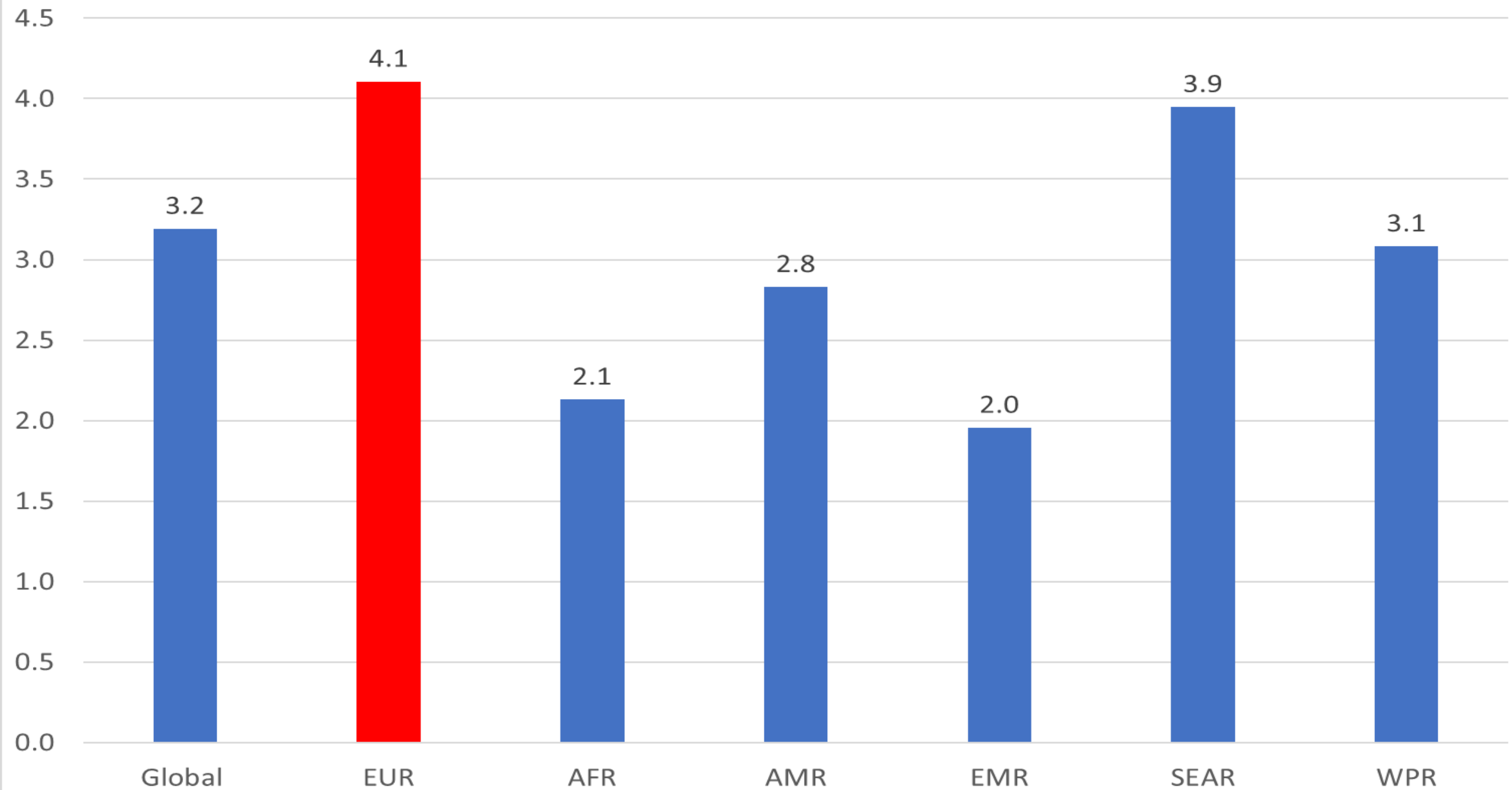


Drowning as a leading cause of death in LIC and HIC



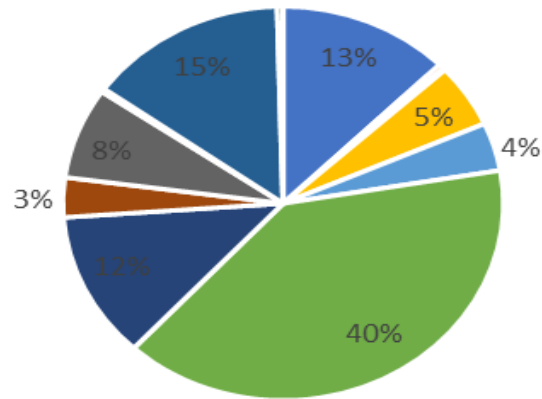
- 90% drowning occurs in LIC
- Top 10 COD in ALL HIC in G20
 - 1-4
 - 5-9
 - 10-14

Drowning mortality by WHO Region, 30-49 years males, 2019



True burden

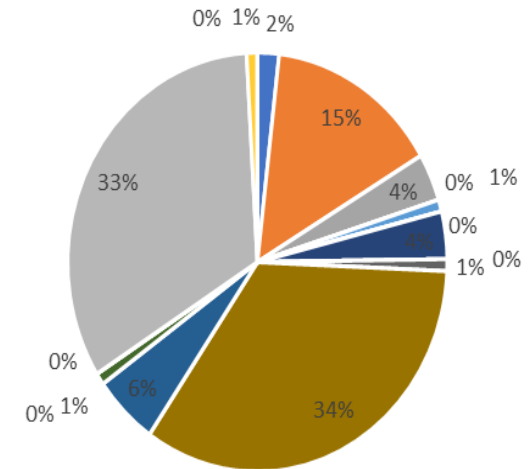
Drowning deaths by ICD10, Spain, 2021



■ V90 ■ W65 ■ W66 ■ W67 ■ W68 ■ W69 ■ W70 ■ W73 ■ W74 ■ X37 ■ X71 ■ Y21

12% water transport
72% unintentional
15% intentional
<1% environmental
1% undetermined

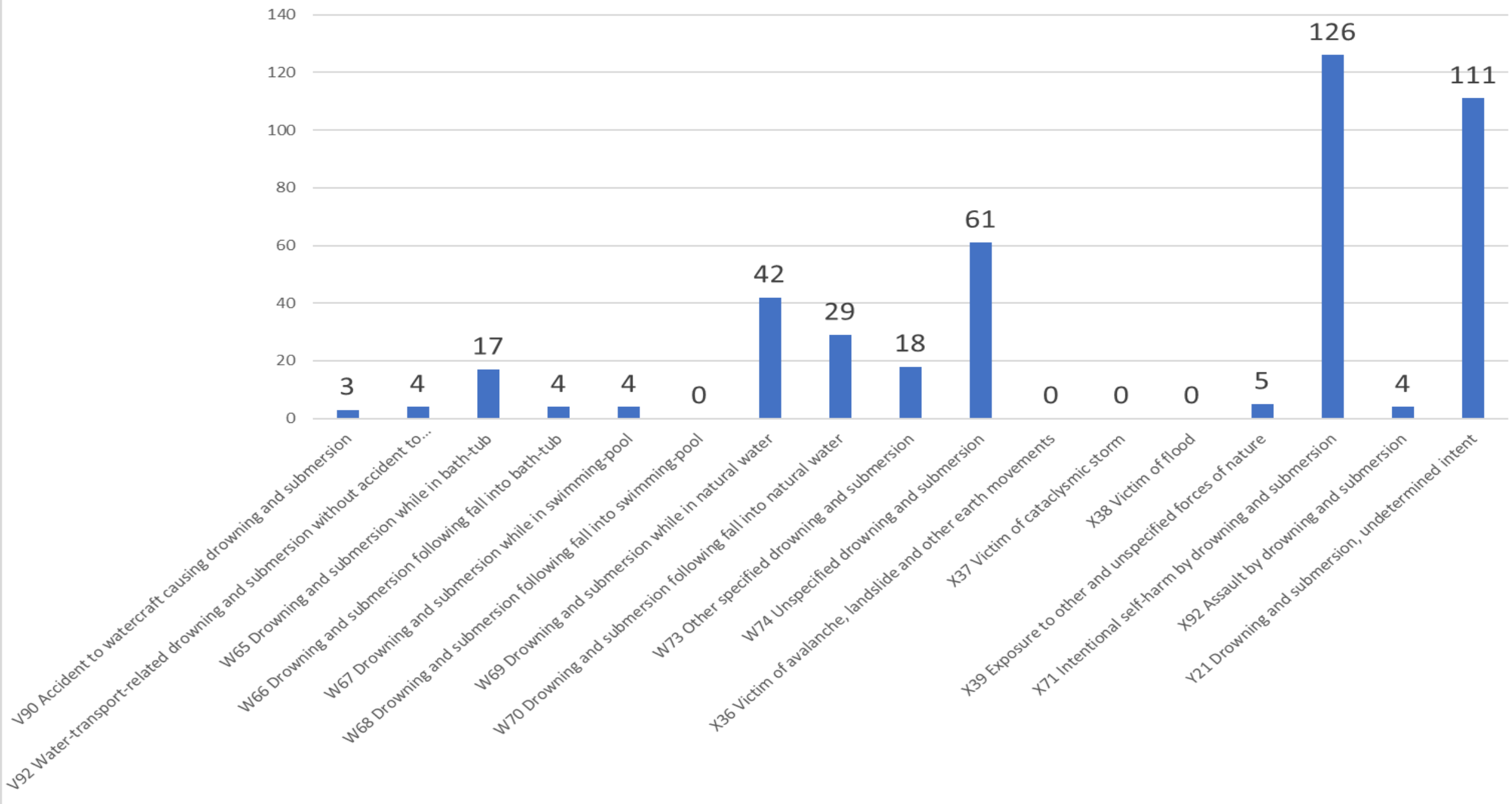
Drowning deaths by ICD10, Norway 2015



■ V90 ■ V92 ■ W65 ■ W66 ■ W67 ■ W68 ■ W69 ■ W70 ■ W73 ■ W74 ■ X36 ■ X37 ■ X38 ■ X39 ■ X71 ■ X92 ■ Y21

16.5% water transport
43% unintentional
33.9% intentional
6.4% environmental

All causes of drowning, England and Wales, 2019





An iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg, which is visible above the water, is white and contains the text 'Injuries resulting in death'. The much larger part of the iceberg, which is submerged below the water, is dark blue and contains a list of injury outcomes. This visual metaphor illustrates that the visible deaths are only a small fraction of the total injuries that occur.

Injuries resulting in death

Injuries resulting in:

- **hospitalization**
- **ambulatory treatment**
- **emergency treatment**
- **primary care treatment**
- **paramedic treatment**
- **unreported or no treatment at all**

#DrowningPrevention

ADOPTED 

The first-ever UN
resolution on
Global Drowning
Prevention





General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
28 April 2021

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 24

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Bangladesh and Ireland: draft resolution*

Global drowning prevention

Addendum

Add the following countries to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominica, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe



World Health
Organization

EXECUTIVE BOARD
152nd session
Agenda item 16

EB152(12)
3 February 2023

Accelerating action on global drowning prevention

The Executive Board, having considered the report by the Director-General,¹

Decided to recommend to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report by the Director-General,

Recalling resolution WHA64.27 (2011), which recognized drowning as a leading global cause of child death from unintentional injury,² requiring multisectoral approaches to prevention through the implementation of evidence-based interventions;

Recalling also resolution WHA74.16 (2021), which recognized the need to strengthen efforts to address the social, economic, gender-related and environmental determinants of health,³ including the need to address the consequence of the adverse impact of climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather events;

Recalling also the adoption of resolution 75/273 (2021) by the United Nations General Assembly on global drowning prevention,⁴ inviting WHO to assist Member States in their drowning prevention efforts and to coordinate actions within the United Nations system among relevant United Nations entities;

INJURY

Unintentional Injury

Road
Traffic
Injury

Drowning

Falls

Burns

Poisoning

Other
unintentional
injuries

Intentional Injury

Interpersonal Violence

Self
directed
Violence

Collective
Violence

Child
Maltreatment

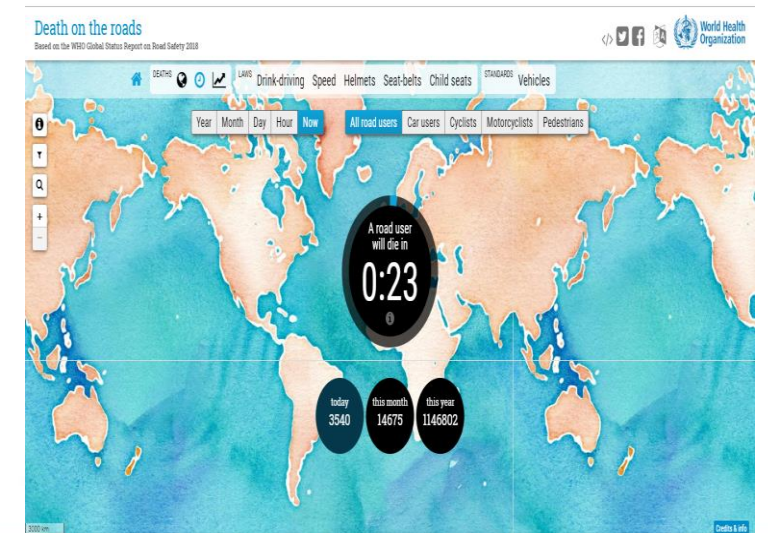
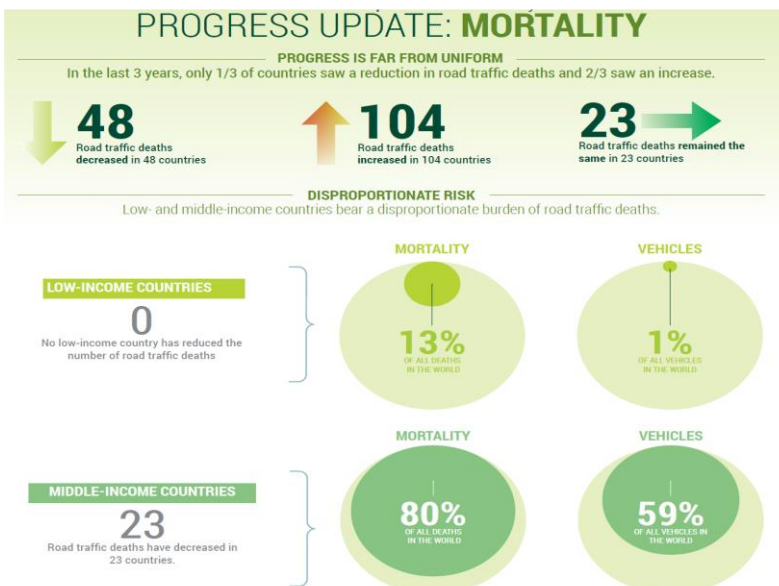
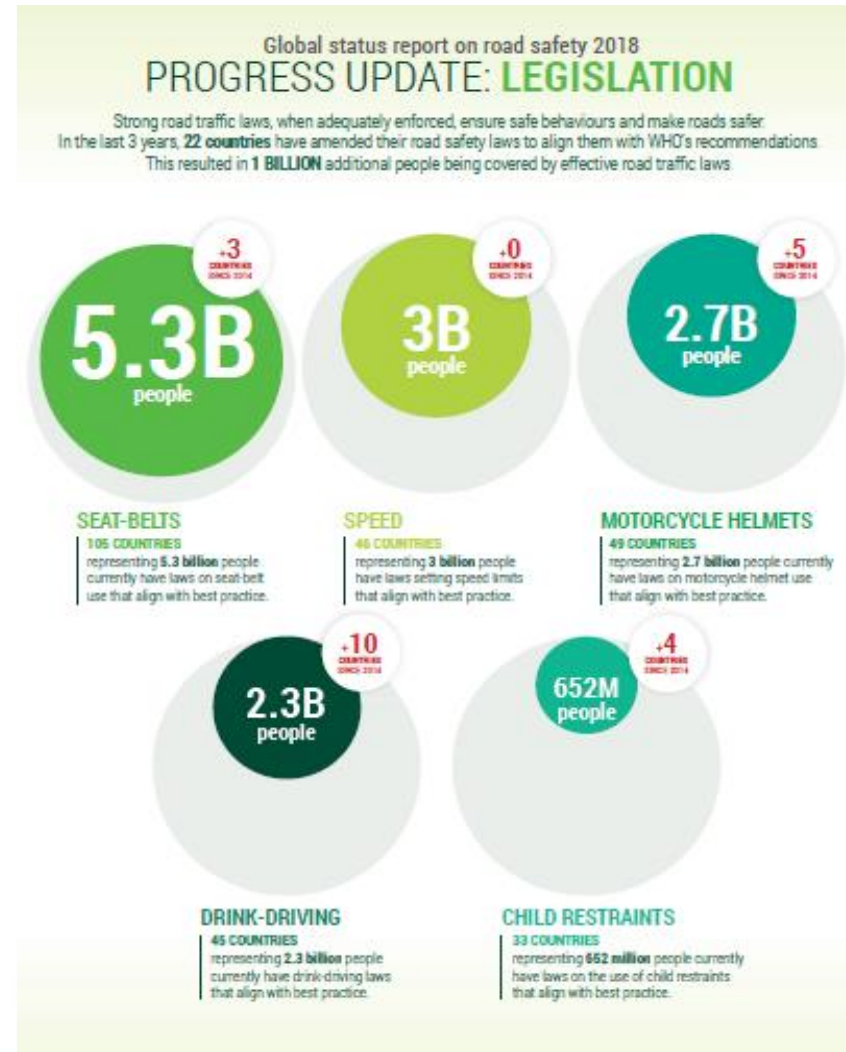
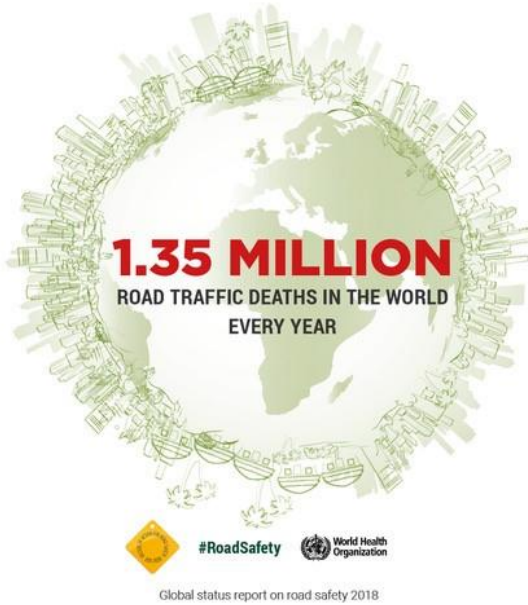
Intimate
partner &
sexual
violence

Youth
Violence

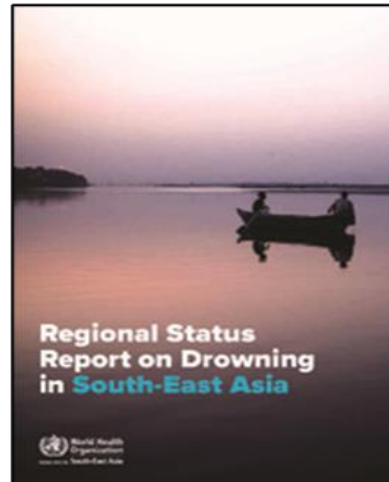
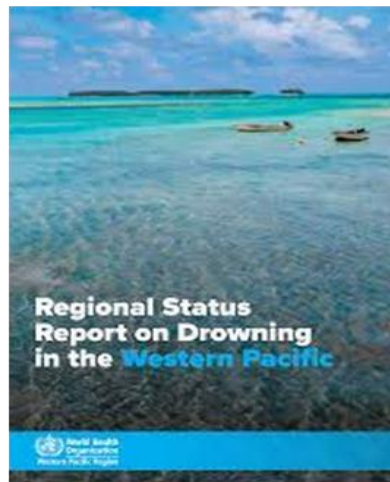
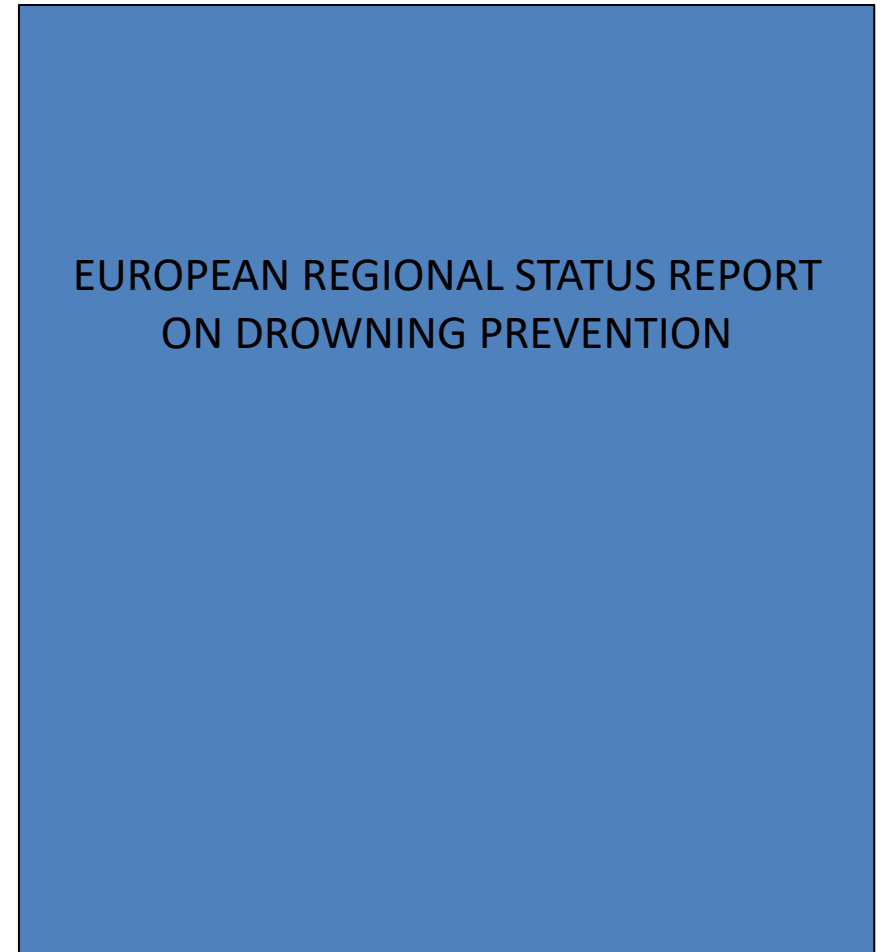
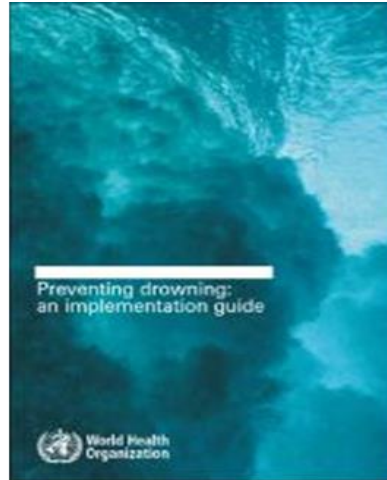
Elder
Maltreatment

Armed,
criminal
and gang
related
violence

How do we know?



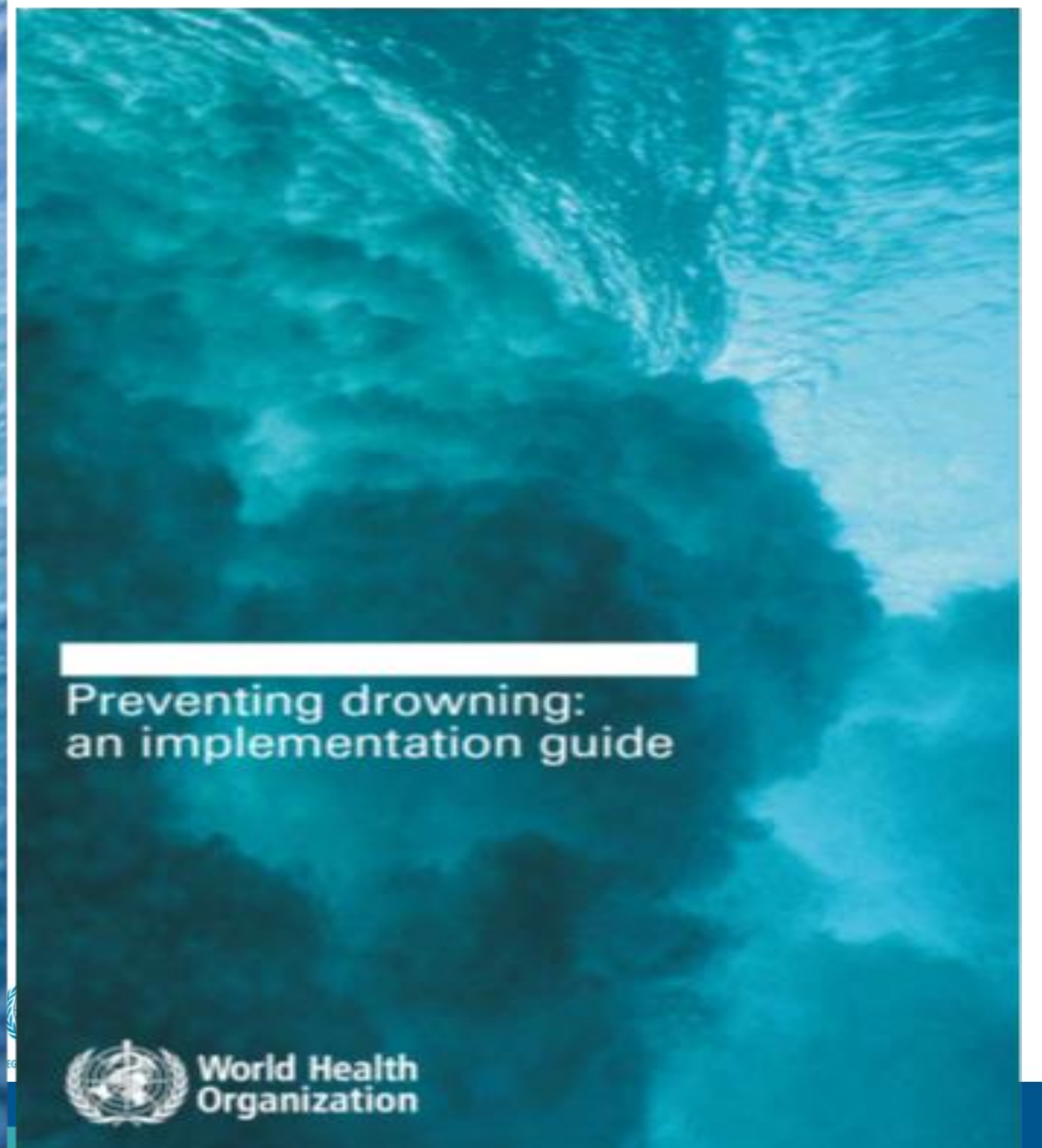
1st Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention





GLOBAL REPORT ON DROWNING

PREVENTING A
LEADING KILLER



Preventing drowning:
an implementation guide

Global burden of drowning

Key facts

Drowning caused over **2.5 MILLION** preventable deaths in the last decade

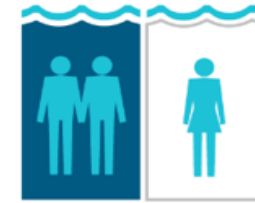


Global estimates do **NOT** capture drowning deaths that are caused by **WATER TRANSPORT INCIDENTS** or **NATURAL DISASTERS**

Drowning is one of the **10 LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH** for people aged 1-24 years



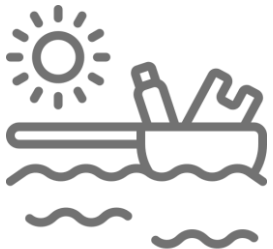
MALES ARE TWICE AS LIKELY to drown as females



Over **90%** of drowning deaths occur in **LOW- and MIDDLE-INCOME** countries



Risk factors for drowning



Bathing and collecting water



Living near water



Flooding disasters



Travelling over water



Working on or around water



Poor supervision of young children

24,130

MISSING MIGRANTS

RECORDED IN MEDITERRANEAN (SINCE 2014)

61%

Deaths/Missing
presumed dead, in
the act of migration
are caused by
drowning

75%

deaths/missing due to
drowning occurred in the
Mediterranean

CAUSE OF DEATH



22,396

Drowning



1,149

Mixed or unknown



286

Vehicle accident / death
linked to hazardous
transport



181

Harsh environmental
conditions / lack of adequate
shelter, food, water



53

Violence



46

Accidental death



19

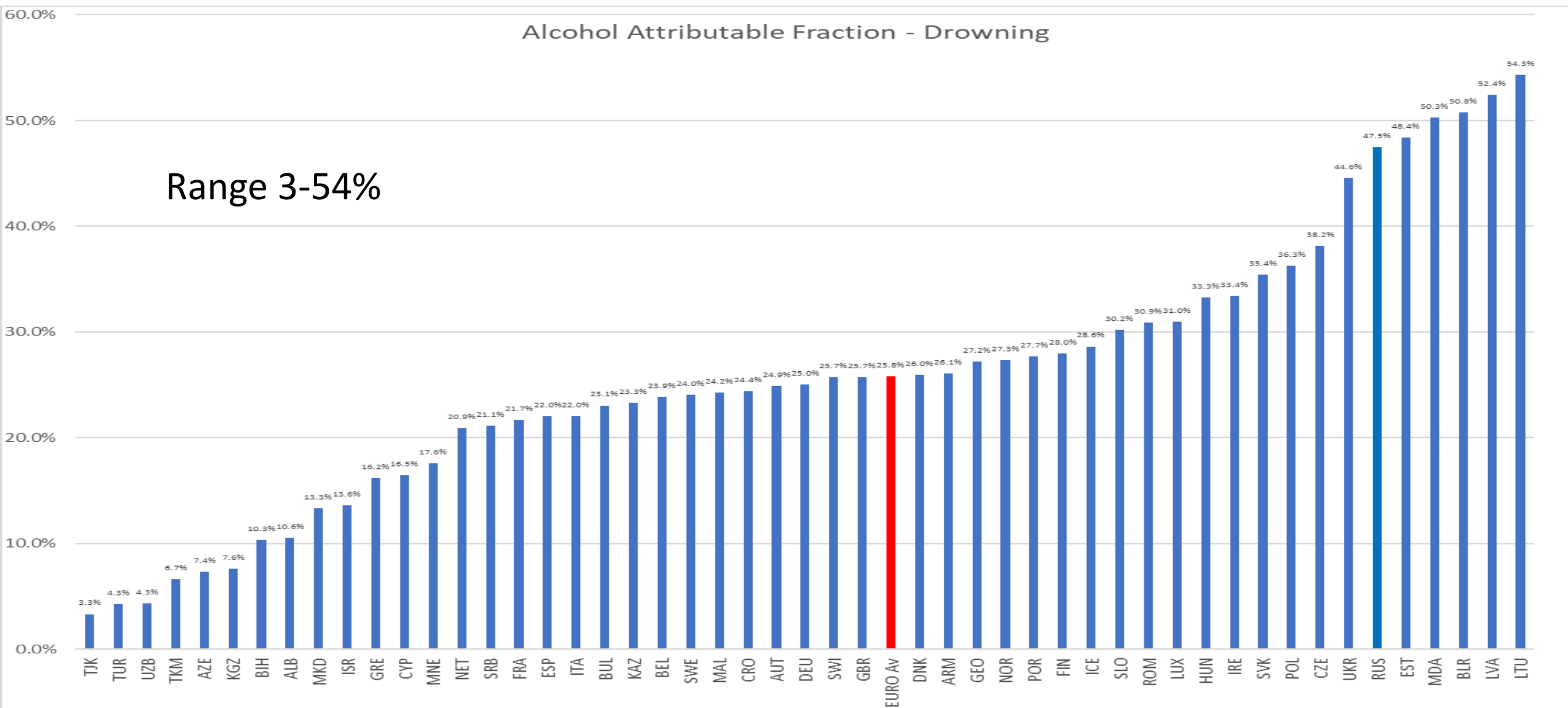
Sickness / lack of access to
adequate healthcare



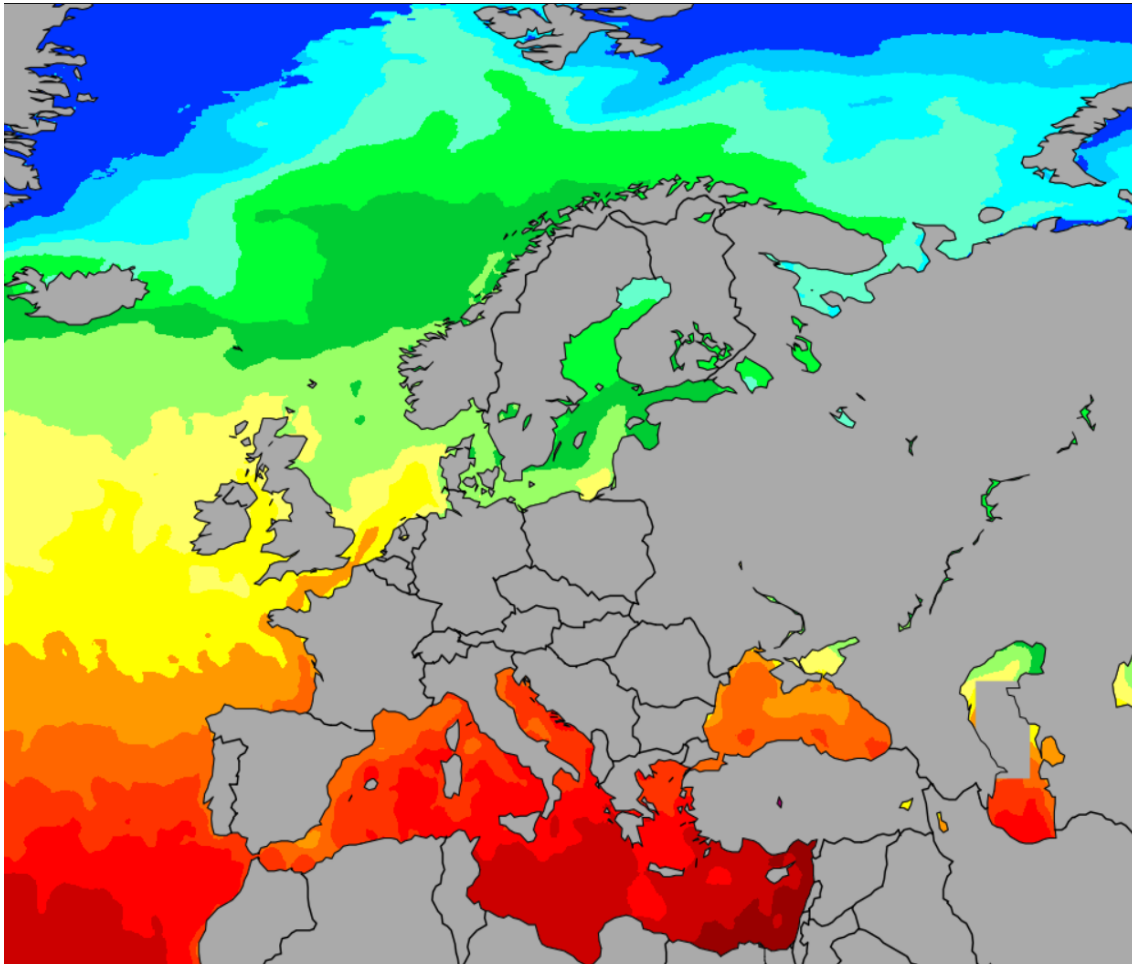
European Floods

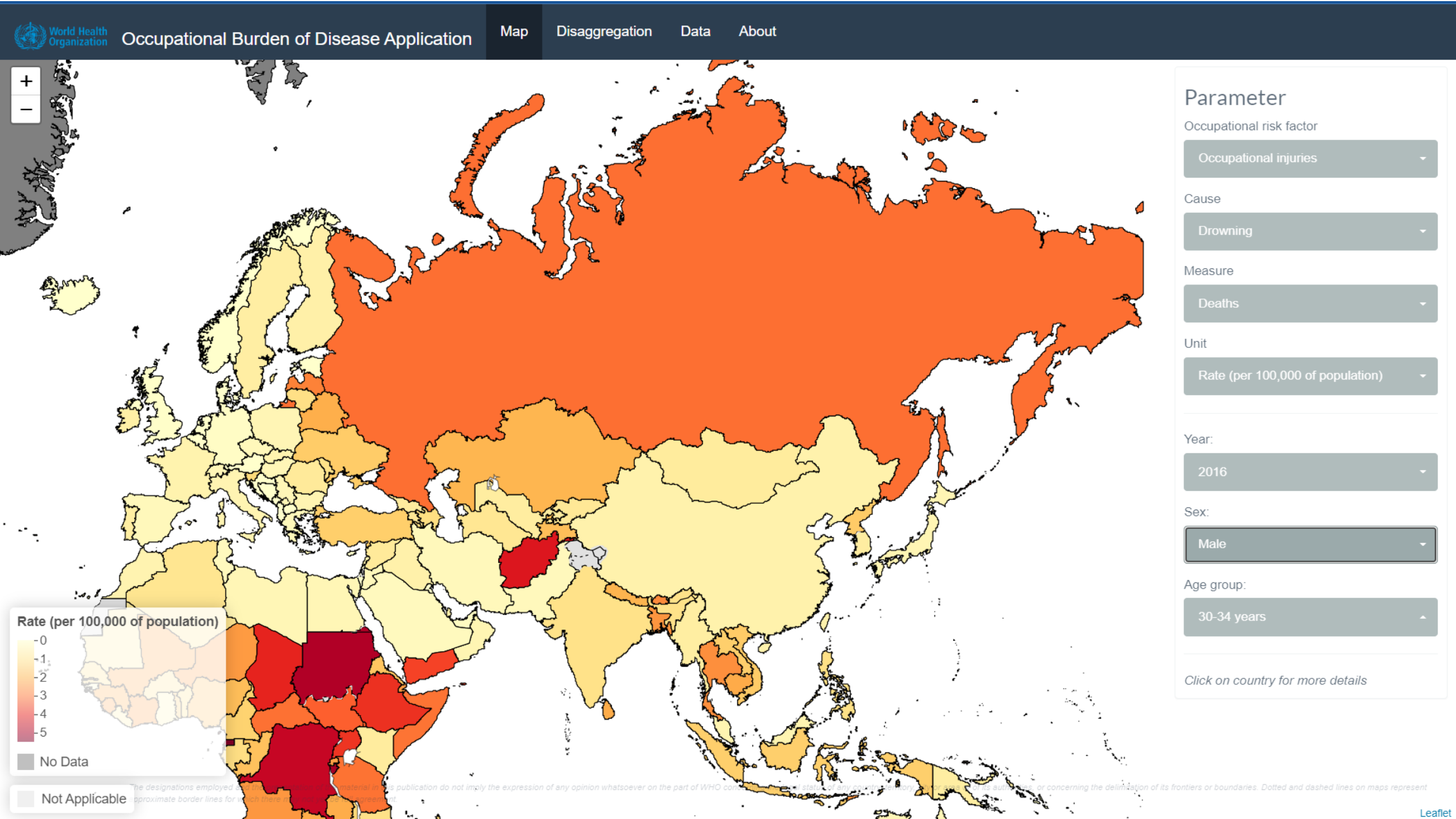


Alcohol “causes” 25% of all drowning



Cold water shock





SECTION 2

TEN ACTIONS TO PREVENT DROWNING


The 10 actions outlined in this section are based on available evidence and are deemed to be effective, feasible and scalable. Complementary measures such as drawing on best-practice models, using social media and communication to raise public awareness, and adapting interventions to suit local contexts (for example, making barriers from locally sourced materials) are important in ensuring these strategies are effectively implemented.

In addition, in resource-poor settings where educational levels are low, it is important to understand how people perceive drowning before introducing interventions, including what local people see as the cause of drowning and appropriate ways to treat and prevent it. Findings should guide how actions are implemented.

Our 10 actions fall into three categories:


COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION

1



Install barriers controlling access to water

2



Provide safe places (for example, a crèche) away from water for pre-school children, with capable child care

3



Teach school-age children basic swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills

4



Train bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation

5



Strengthen public awareness and highlight the vulnerability of children

EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

6



Set and enforce safe boating, shipping and ferry regulations

7



Build resilience and manage flood risks and other hazards locally and nationally

8



Coordinate drowning prevention efforts with those of other sectors and agendas

9



Develop a national water safety plan

FURTHER RESEARCH

10



Address priority research questions with well-designed studies

Coordination & Collaboration



International
Life Saving Federation
of Europe



accidents don't have to happen



Lifeboats



SÁBHÁILTEACHT UISCE
NA hÉIREANN
WATER SAFETY
IRELAND



national
water safety
forum



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR
Europe



Organisation
mondiale de la Santé
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'
Europe



Weltgesundheitsorganisation
REGIONALBÜRO FÜR
Europa



Всемирная организация
здравоохранения
Европейское региональное бюро





Norway Drowning Prevention Goals?



Domestic Objectives?

- SDG commitments
- UNGA/WHA Resolutions
- Data driven/Evidence based
- Intersectoral coordination

International Objectives/Offerings?

- International capacity development
- Sharing national experiences
- Mentoring
- Effective governance



1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Goal 3.2

End preventable deaths
of children under-five



Goal 3.5
Prevent harmful use of alcohol

A close-up photograph showing a person's hand holding a piece of light-colored, fibrous cloth over a black plastic container. The cloth is being used to filter water from a larger, shallow, reddish-brown container. The water being filtered is dark and murky. The background is a textured, reddish-brown surface, possibly a wall or a large container. The lighting is warm, suggesting an indoor or shaded outdoor setting.

Goal 6.1

Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030



Goal 6.b
Community action for
improving water management

Goal 11.5

Reduce the number of deaths by water-related disasters



**World
Drowning**

**Prevention
Day** 25 July

**Anyone
can drown.
No one
should.**

Thank you

For more information, please contact:
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European Region