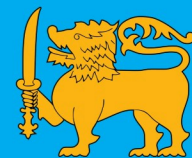


DROWNING PREVENTION REPORT SRI LANKA

2020



SRI LANKA



LIFE SAVING

DROWNING IS THE
LEADING CAUSE OF
DEATH IN
CHILDREN AGED

1-14

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



20%

REDUCTION
IN FATAL
DROWNING RATE

A success story of partnership and results

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AYUBOWAN SRI LANKA ...!!



WORLD CONFERENCE ON DROWNING PREVENTION

COLOMBO
OCTOBER 8-10

2021

Ayubowan! Together we can prevent drowning, a silent but deadly killer

Sri Lanka Life Saving is honored to host the "World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2021" in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The World Conference on Drowning Prevention (WCDP) is the International Life Saving Federation's (ILSF) flagship educational event. This biennial conference brings together the world's foremost experts, research, systems and information on drowning prevention, rescue, lifesaving and water safety. The exchange, debate and development are designed to find ways to reduce death and injury in all aquatic environments worldwide. Sri Lanka Life Saving is hosting the event with the support from the ILSF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

This will be a proud moment of the history of Sri Lanka Life Saving and Sri Lanka since it will be the biggest UN event Sri Lanka will host under the category of injury prevention. The conference is expected to be attended by more than 800 people representing over 60 countries. This achievement simply exemplifies the progress that Sri Lanka has made within the activities of drowning prevention and water safety. Sri Lanka will be the third Asian nation to host the World Conference on Drowning Prevention.

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DROWNING DEFINITION

“The process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid.”
(van Beeck et al, 2005)



MESSAGE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI LANKA

I would like to congratulate Sri Lanka Life Saving for compiling the Drowning Prevention Report for Sri Lanka 2020, with support from Life Saving Victoria.

Australia shares with Sri Lanka the common goal of preventing the loss of life through drowning. Drowning is a significant cause of death and injury. Those affected are from all age ranges, and incidents occur in many different circumstances.

The Drowning Prevention Report indicates that there are on average 755 drowning deaths each year in Sri Lanka. Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death in children aged 1 to 14 years in Sri Lanka. There are on average 91 children in this age group who die due to drowning each year.

The Australian High Commission is proud to have funded this important and valuable collaboration between Sri Lanka Life Saving and Life Saving Victoria, who have been working in Sri Lanka over the past 8 years.

I hope that the Drowning Prevention Report for Sri Lanka 2020 will provide the basis for further steps in Sri Lanka's efforts to identify causes of drowning and to prevent the loss of life through drowning.

David Holly

Australian High Commissioner

FOREWORD

SRI LANKA LIFE SAVING PRESIDENT



I am honoured to serve as the President of Sri Lanka Life Saving (SLLS) and it gives me great pleasure to announce the publication of Sri Lanka's second Drowning Prevention Report. Following the inaugural report published in 2014, which was the first of its kind in Sri Lanka and the South East Asian Region, the report encompasses the main objectives of Sri Lanka Life Saving, namely, to reduce fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents, and to ensure access to safe aquatic environments for the general public of our nation, whilst sharing best practices with the global fraternity.

The 2020 Drowning Prevention Report describes the measures taken to reduce the incidence of drowning and describes the global position of Sri Lanka's prevention and reduction efforts to date. The foremost step to achieve our goal was to formulate a National Action Plan, as recommended by the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2014 publication – Global Report on Drowning: Preventing a Leading Killer. Our approach involves extensive stakeholder engagements spanning from state entities such as the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Healthcare and Indigenous Medical Services, Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, Disaster Management Center, private sector companies, namely, Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka (A-PAD SL), The Capital Maharaja Organization, Rainbow Aquatic Club, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the World Health Organization (WHO) Sri Lanka Office, Diplomatic missions and the United States Embassy in Sri Lanka and well-wishers. I am proud to state that significant progress has been made since 2014 and the recommendations of our inaugural report are actioned through the said National Action Plan.

As a result, I am humbled that our efforts have reduced the rate of drowning related

deaths in Sri Lanka by 20% over the last ten years – a pleasing outcome. In addition, over one million people have been provided with water safety education across the island. There are now over 2,300 active lifeguards patrolling 235 patrol points, ensuring that Sri Lanka waterways are at its safest time to be enjoyed.

A milestone for Sri Lanka Life Saving was winning the opportunity to host the World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2021 (WCDP - 2021) in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The WCDP – 2021 is expected to be the largest WHO event ever to be held in Sri Lanka under the umbrella of Injury Prevention Category.

On behalf of SLLS, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all contributors who have supported us, both, directly and indirectly in achieving significant milestones in this journey towards creating safe waters in Sri Lanka.

At this remarkable juncture, I would like to acknowledge the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) for entrusting and assisting our endeavours and lead towards progression; the Royal Life Saving Society (Commonwealth) for involving SLLS in strategic planning and governance level fore-thought; International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) for opening opportunities to share out experiences in Search and Rescue (SAR) initiatives; Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) for providing us with international exposure; UTMATE team for accepting Sri Lanka to take a global lead and advocate to other nations to mainstream awareness and survival swimming skills; The Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka for being a driving force in implementing our initiatives. A special word of commendation to Life Saving Victoria (LSV) for great stride and support to reach great heights.

In concluding my message, I would like to thank you all for the support rendered over the years and Sri Lanka Life Saving looks forward to actively engage both locally and internationally with the lifesaving community to strive towards exceeding our goal of drowning prevention and safe water ways.

Asanka Nanayakkara

President

Sri Lanka Life Saving (SLLS)

PROGRESS SUMMARY

KEY DROWNING STATISTICS

IN SRI LANKA, DROWNING IS THE....

- ★ NUMBER 1 CAUSE OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH AMONG CHILDREN AGED 1-14 YEARS FROM INJURY
- ★ NUMBER 3 CAUSE OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS FROM INJURY

755

Drowning deaths each year in Sri Lanka; a 14% reduction when compared to the 2005-07 average.

#1

Drowning is the leading cause of death in children aged 1-14 years in Sri Lanka.

20%

20% reduction in the drowning rate in Sri Lanka when compared to the 2005-07 average. Crude fatal drowning rate of 3.6 per 100,000 population.

65+

People aged 65 years and over had the highest age-specific drowning rate (7.8 deaths per 100,000).

3.5

Males 3.5 times more likely to drown than females.

7.3

Fatal drowning rate per 100,000 population in Northern Province, the highest of all provinces in Sri Lanka.

TOP DROWNING LOCATIONS

26%
Lakes & Others

22%
Canals

21%
Sea

18%
Wells

LOWERING THE DROWNING TOLL

Since 2005-07 there has been a:

14%

reduction in the number of drowning deaths

20%

reduction in the national drowning rate

32%

reduction in the drowning rate for females, and an 18% reduction in the drowning rate for males.

2,364 ACTIVE
LIFEGUARDS

235 LIFESAVING
PATROL POINTS

300 + RESCUES
PERFORMED
EACH YEAR BY LIFEGUARDS

46 LIFESAVING
CLUBS
IN OPERATION

1 MILLION + PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED
WATER SAFETY EDUCATION
OVER TEN YEARS



NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF DROWNING

Drowning is a leading cause of accidental injury death in Sri Lanka, ranking the third highest across all age groups (transport accidents ranked first and falls ranked second) on average from 2004-2014. However, it was the leading cause of accidental injury death among children aged 1-14 years in Sri Lanka on average from 2004-2014 (Figure 1).

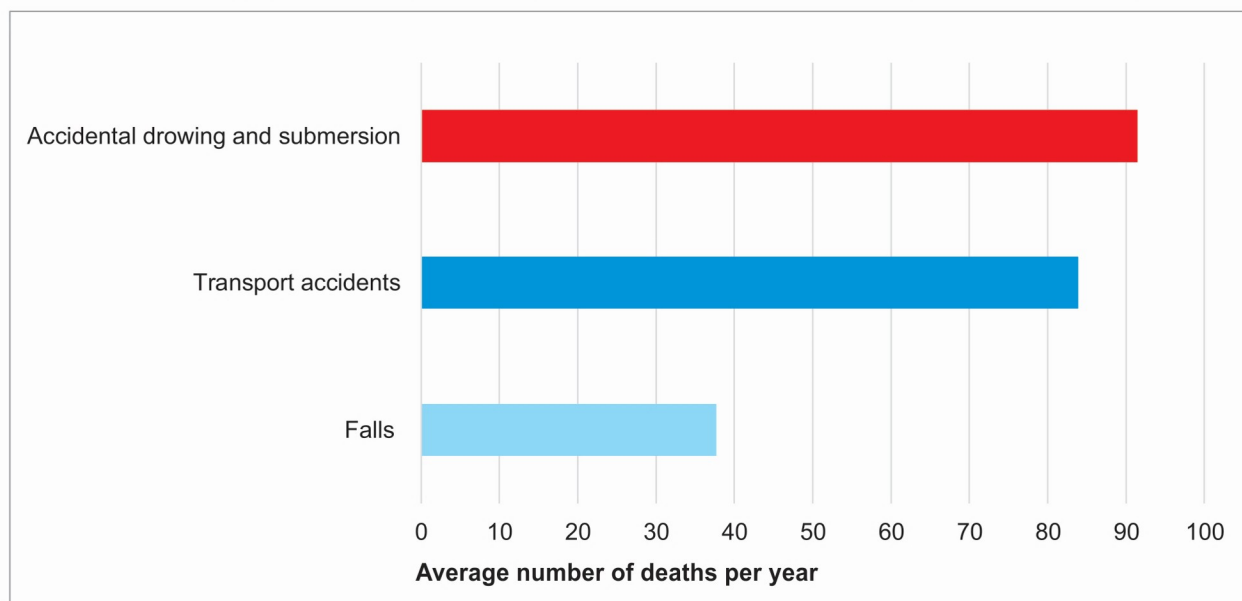


Figure 1 - Average Number of accidental injury deaths among children aged 1-14 years in Sri Lanka, Top 3 causes (2004-2014)

On average, 755 people drowned each year from 2016-2018 in Sri Lanka (Figure 2). The drowning rate was 3.5 deaths per 100,000 population in Sri Lanka averaged over the three-year period. This is a 20% reduction in the drowning rate when compared to the 2005-07 average rate (4.4 per 100,000 population, 878 people).



The average number of drowning deaths and rate of drowning for each province for 2016-18 is provided in Figure 3. Western province had the highest number of drowning deaths (168) compared to the other provinces; however Northern province had the highest crude drowning rate of 7.3 per 100,000 population, which is a 92% increase on the 2005-07 average. The breakdown of drowning statistics within each province is provided on pages 13 to 22.

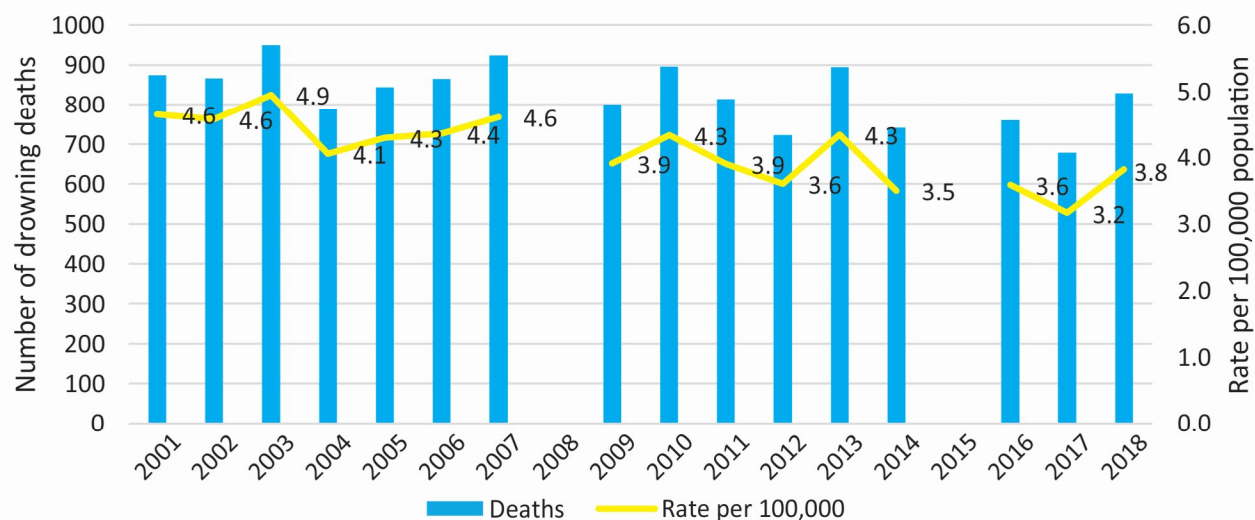


Figure 2 - Drowning deaths and rate by year, Sri Lanka 2001-2018

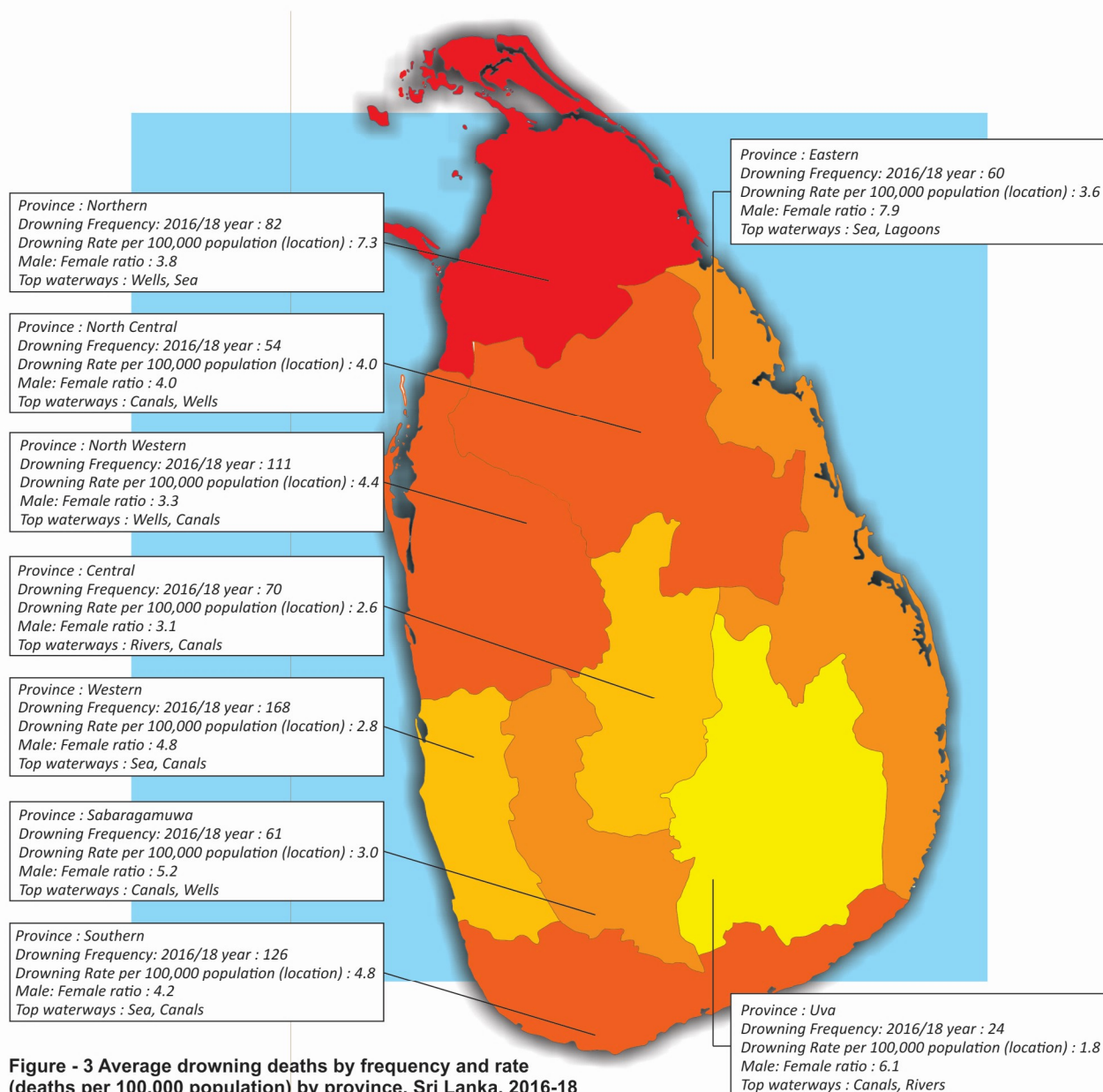


Figure - 3 Average drowning deaths by frequency and rate (deaths per 100,000 population) by province, Sri Lanka, 2016-18

WHO IS DROWNING ?

Sex

Between 2016-18, males were 3.5 times more likely to drown than females with a drowning rate of 5.9 deaths per 100,000 population compared with 1.3 deaths per 100,000 for females (Figure 4). The drowning rate for males decreased by 18% from 7.1 in 2005-07, with the rate for females decreasing by 32% from 1.8.

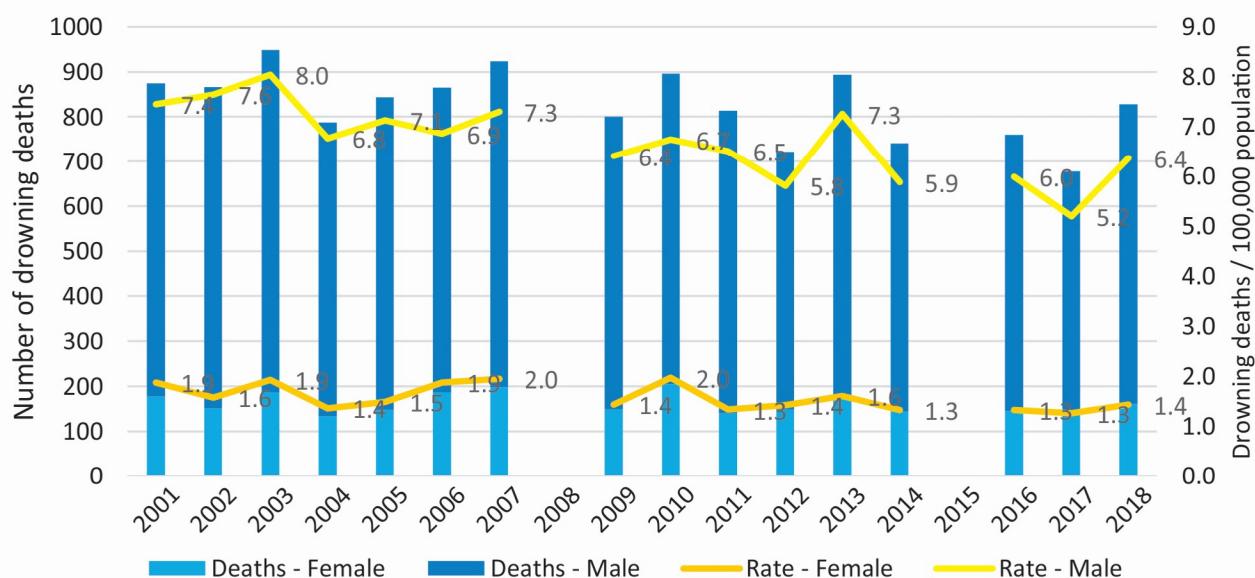


Figure 4 - Drowning deaths and rate by sex, Sri Lanka, 2001-2018

Age

Drowning by age was not available for 2016-18; therefore, the three most recent years with available data were used (2012-14). Adults aged 45-64 years and 25-44 years had the highest number of drowning deaths, with 215 and 213 respectively (Figure 5). However, those aged 65 years and over had the highest age-specific drowning rate (7.8 deaths per 100,000 population), followed by those aged 45-64 years and 15-24 years (both 4.7 deaths per 100,000 population). The drowning rate was lowest in the 0-4 year age group (1.5 deaths per 100,000).

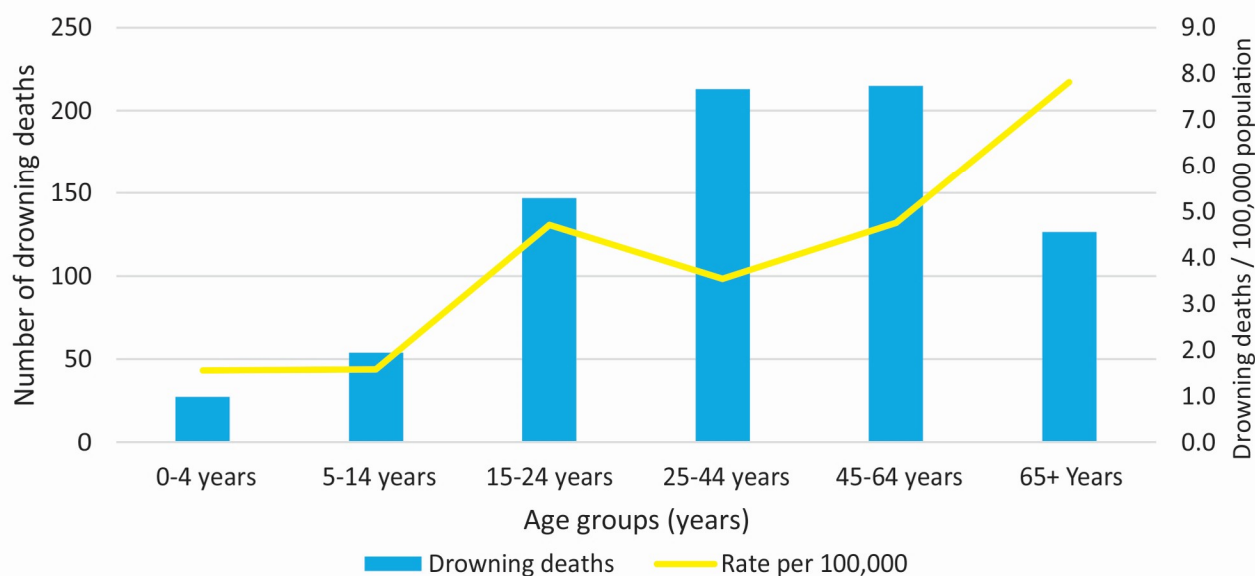


Figure 5 - Average number of drowning deaths and drowning rate by age group, Sri Lanka, 2012-14

Ethnicity

Data on drowning by ethnicity was available for three years within the past decade (2009, 2010 and 2013). Most drowning deaths over this period involved Sinhalese (75%), followed by Sri Lankan Tamil (15%), Sri Lankan Moor (9%) and Indian Tamil (4%; Figure 6). Sri Lankan Tamil were over represented relative to their population.

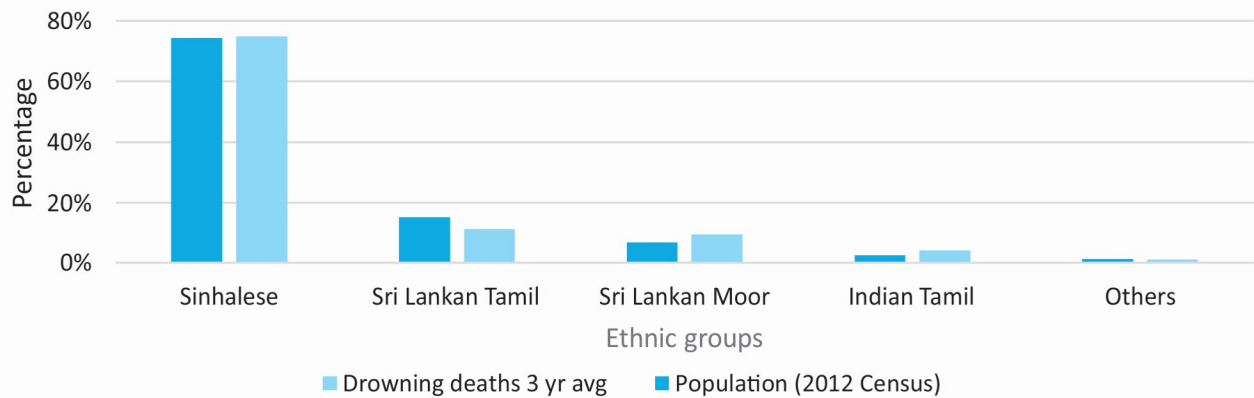


Figure 6 - Proportion of drowning deaths 2009-10 & 2013, and population at Census 2012 by ethnic group, Sri Lanka

WHERE DO THESE DROWNING DEATHS OCCUR ?

Location

Nationally, lakes and other waterways were the top location for drowning incidents accounting for 26% of all deaths in 2016-18 (Figure 7). This was followed by canals (22%) and sea (21%) which includes beach and ocean.

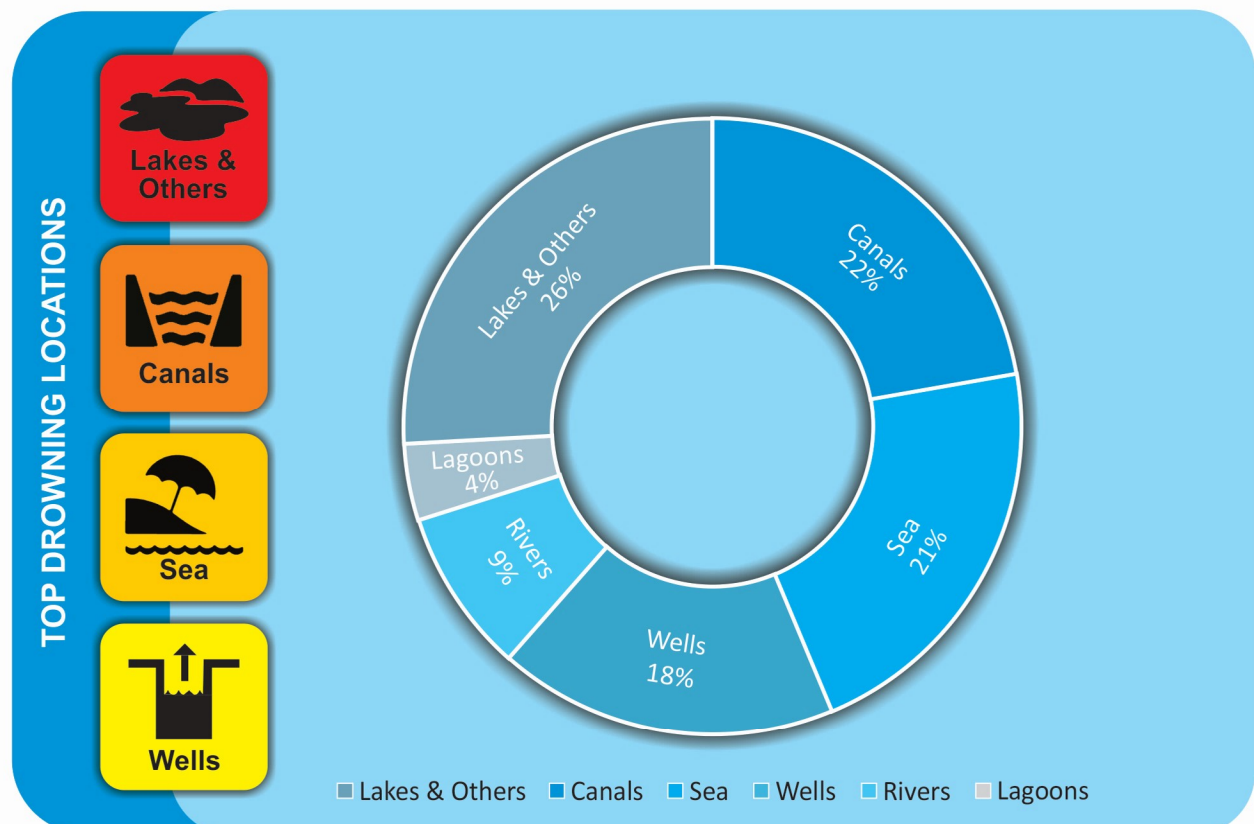


Figure 7 - Proportion of drowning deaths 2016-18, by waterway, Sri Lanka



INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Drowning is a significant cause of death and injury worldwide, as highlighted in the Global Report on Drowning (WHO, 2014a). While it is difficult to compare drowning rates internationally due to inconsistencies in the completeness and quality of data, it is recognised that drowning rates are highest in many low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

A study by Lin et al (2015) compared unintentional drowning rates across 60 different countries. The latest available three years of mortality data for each country were extracted from WHO Health Statistics and Information and the mortality rate of unintentional drowning by age group for each country was calculated. For this report the drowning rate for Sri Lanka over the years 2016-2018 was added to serve as a comparison to the other 60 countries studied.

The drowning rate for Sri Lanka averaged over three years from 2016-2018 was 3.5 deaths per 100,000 (Figure 8). Sri Lanka ranked equal 14th highest in the comparison of 61 countries, moving down from 12th using 2004-06 data. Sri Lanka also ranked equal 12th highest when compared to 35 LMIC (average of 3.5 deaths per 100,000).

Sri Lanka had a higher drowning rate across the 15-24 years, 45-64 years and over 65 years age groups when compared to the average drowning rate in both high-income countries (HIC) and LMIC (Figure 9). This difference was greatest in those aged over 65 years of age. Sri Lanka had a lower drowning rate for children aged 0-4 years and 5-14 years compared to the average HIC and LMIC rate.



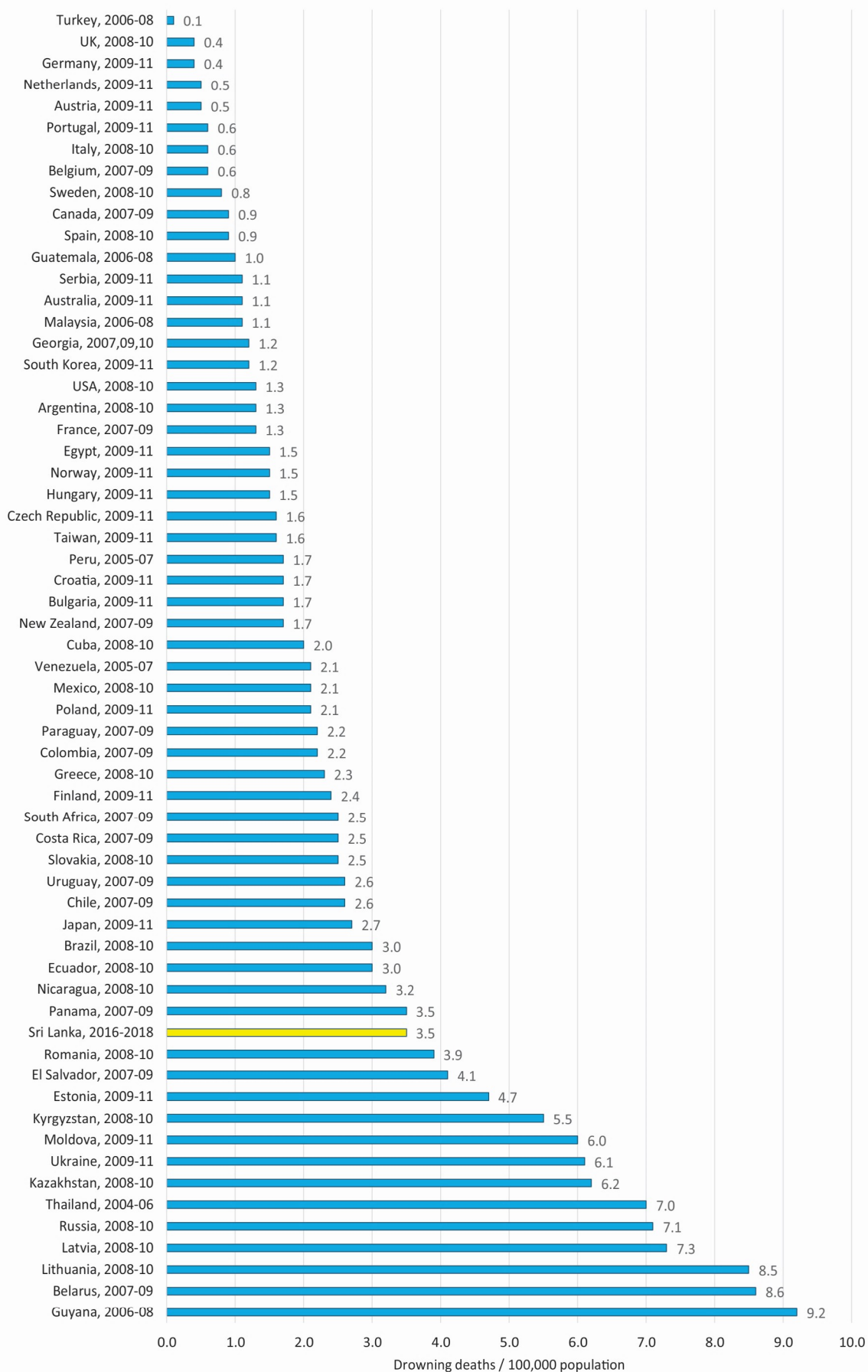


Figure 8 - Drowning rate (deaths per 100,000 population) by country, 3 year averages

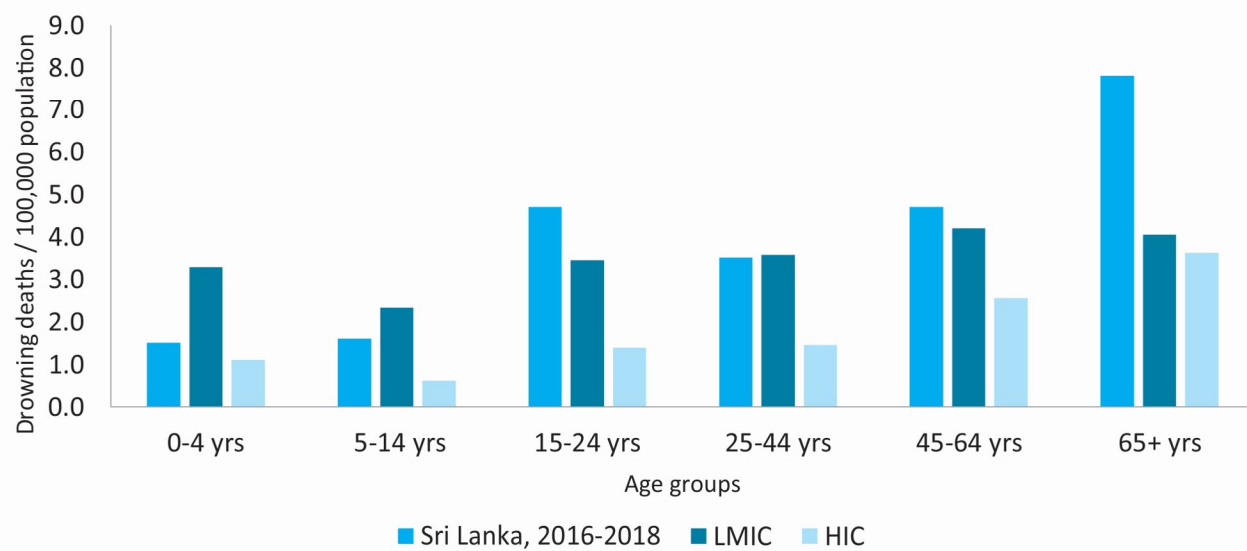


Figure 9 - Drowning rate (deaths per 100,000 population) by age group in Sri Lanka, low and middle income countries (LMIC) and high income countries (HIC), 3 year averages



PROVINCE DROWNING PROFILES

Looking at the available drowning data by province highlights the variability in drowning trends across Sri Lanka. Based on the drowning data from 2016-18, the estimated drowning rate varied from 1.8 deaths to 7.3 deaths per 100,000 population (Table 1).

Similarly, the number of drowning deaths varied considerably, from an average of 24 deaths per year in Uva province, to an average of 168 in Western province.

Males had a consistently higher drowning rate ratio than females, ranging from 3.1 in Central province, to 7.9 in Eastern province. This means that in Eastern province, males were 7.9 times more likely to drown than females.

In terms of waterways, lakes and others were the top location for drowning deaths in three provinces (Central, North Central and North western). Of the five provinces that abut the sea, the sea was the top location in three of these (Eastern, Southern and Western). Canals were the top location in Sabaragamuwa and Uva provinces. Wells were the top drowning location in Northern province.

Table 01- Key drowning statistics per province 2016-18, Sri Lanka

PROVINCE	FREQUENCY	RATE	MALE:FEMALE RATIO	TOP WATERWAYS
Central	70	2.6	3.1	Lakes & others, Rivers
Eastern	60	3.6	7.9	Sea, Lagoons
North Central	54	4.0	4.0	Lakes & others, Canals
North Western	111	4.4	3.3	Lakes & others, Wells
Northern	82	7.3	3.8	Wells, Lakes & others,
Sabaragamuwa	61	3.0	5.2	Canals, Lakes & others
Southern	126	4.8	4.2	Sea, Lakes & others
Uva	24	1.8	6.1	Canals, Lakes & others
Western	168	2.8	4.8	Sea, Canals



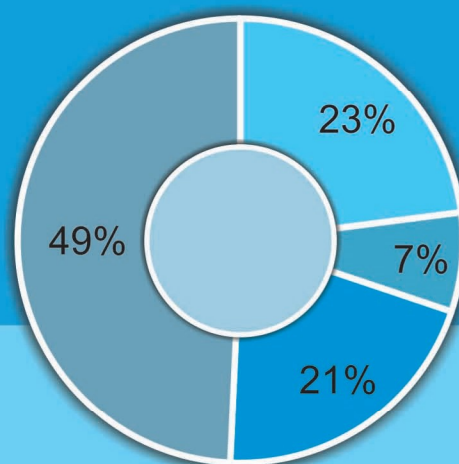
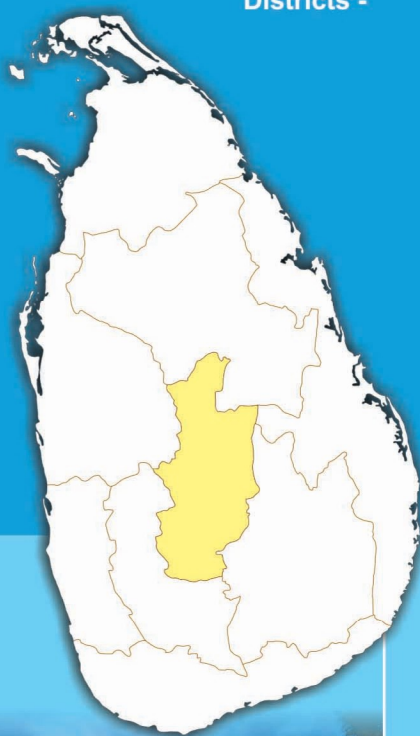
CENTRAL PROVINCE

Districts -

Kandy
Matale
Nuwara Eliya

Province area - **5,674 km²**
(8.6 % of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **2.71 million**
(12.7% of Sri Lankan total)



□ Rivers □ Wells □ Canals □ Lakes and Others



On average, 70 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Central province, which had the second lowest drowning rate in Sri Lanka at 2.6 per 100,000 people. There was a 29% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 3.1 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 4.1 and 1.2 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Central province were lakes & other waterways (49%) and rivers (23%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

2.6 per 100,000 population

70 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

3.1

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **3.6**

2016-18 rate **2.6**

Change **29% decrease**

Top drowning locations



Lakes & Others



Rivers

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline

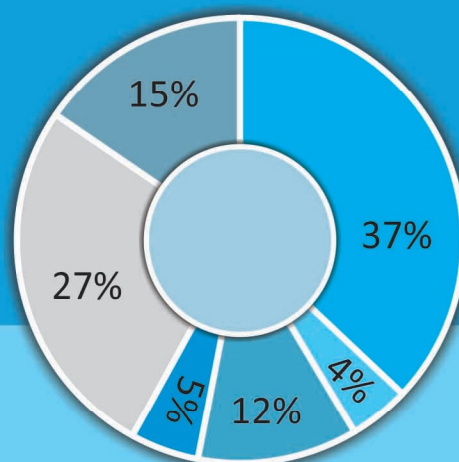
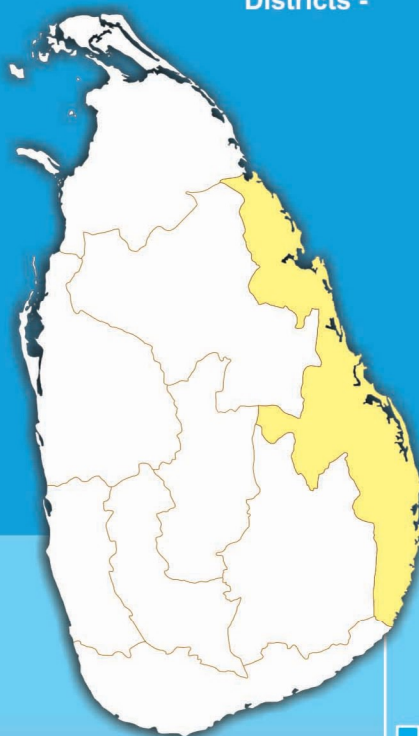
EASTERN PROVINCE

Districts -

Trincomalee
Ampara
Batticaloa

Province area - **9,996 km²**
(15.2% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population **1.66 million**
(7.8% of Sri Lankan total)



Sea Rivers Wells Canals Lagoons Lakes & Others



On average, 60 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Eastern province, which had a drowning rate of 3.6 per 100,000 people. There was a 26% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 7.9 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 6.5 and 0.9 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Eastern province were sea (37%), and lagoons (27%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

3.6 per 100,000 population

60 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

7.9

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **4.9**

2016-18 rate **3.6**

Change **26% decrease**

Top drowning
locations



Sea



Lagoons

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

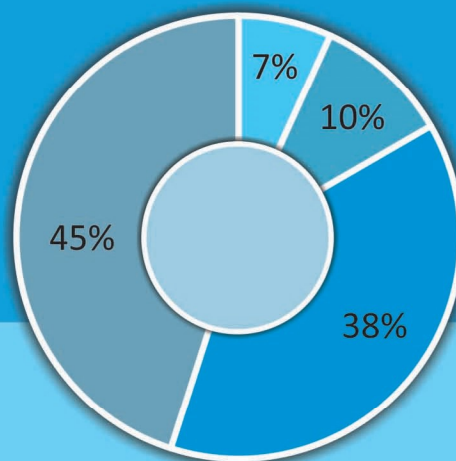
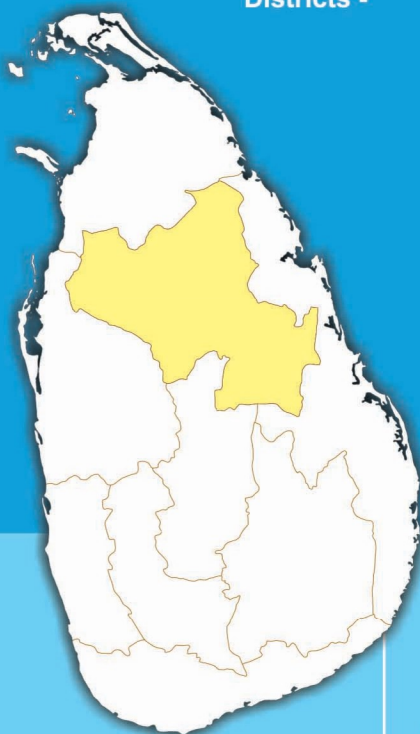
NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE

Districts -

Anuradapura
Polonnaruwa

Province area - **10,472 km²**
(16% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated
population - **1.34 million**
(6.3% of Sri Lankan total)



□ Rivers □ Wells □ Canals □ Lakes & Others



On average, 54 people drowned from 2016-2018 in North Central province which had a drowning rate of 4.0 per 100,000 people. There was a 30% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 4.0 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 6.5 and 1.7 for females.

The top locations for drowning in North Central province were lakes and other waterways (45%) and canals (38%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

4.0 per 100,000 population

54 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

4.0

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **5.8**

2016-18 rate **4.0**

Change

30% decrease

Top drowning
locations



Lakes &
Others



Canals

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

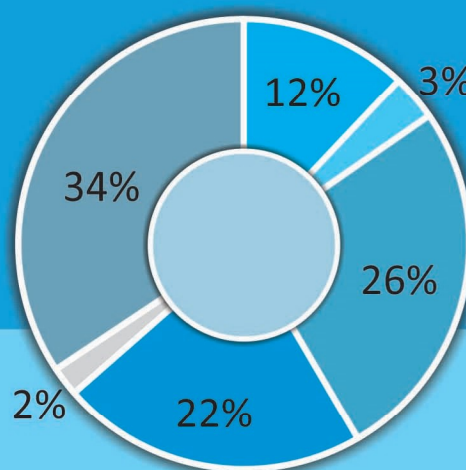
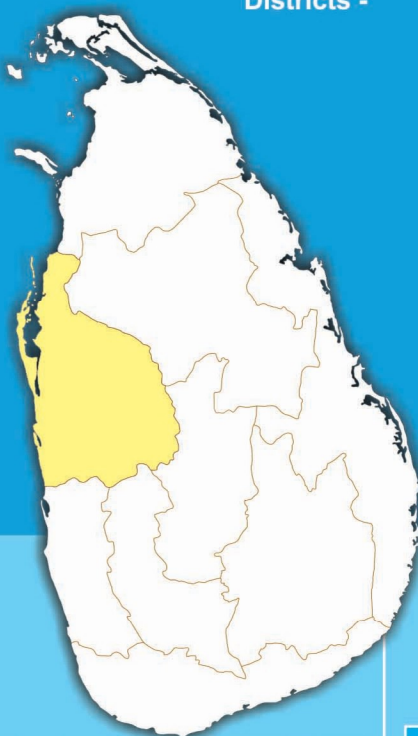
NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Districts -

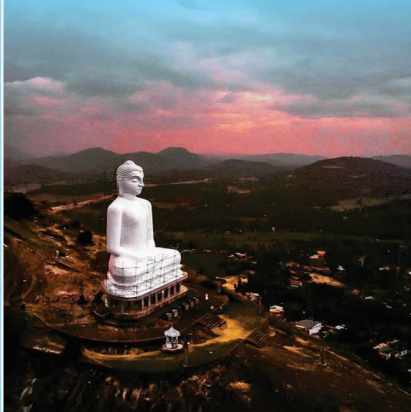
Kurunegala
Puttalam

Province area - **7,888 km²**
(12% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **2.49 million**
(11.7% of Sri Lankan total)



■ Sea
 ■ Rivers
 ■ Wells
 ■ Canals
 ■ Lagoons
 ■ Lakes & Others



On average, 111 people drowned from 2016-2018 in North Western province, which had a drowning rate of 4.4 per 100,000 people. There was a 33% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 3.3 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 7.0 and 2.0 for females.

The top locations for drowning in North Western province were lakes and other waterways (34%) and wells (26%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

4.4 per 100,000 population

111 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

3.3

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **6.6**

2016-18 rate **4.4**

Change **33% decrease**

Top drowning
locations



Lakes & Others



Wells

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

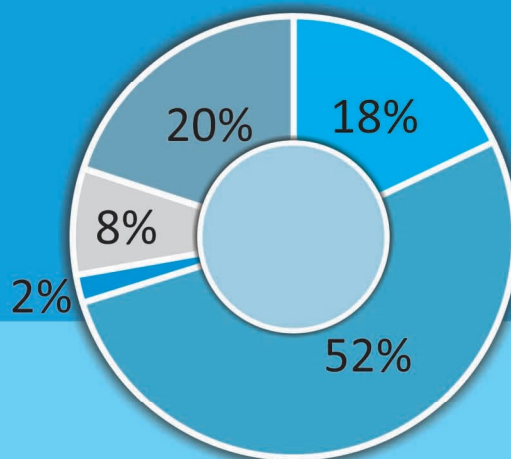
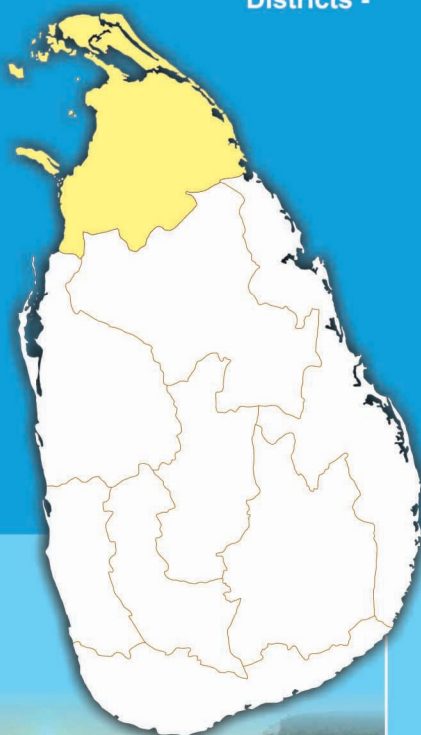
NORTHERN PROVINCE

Districts -

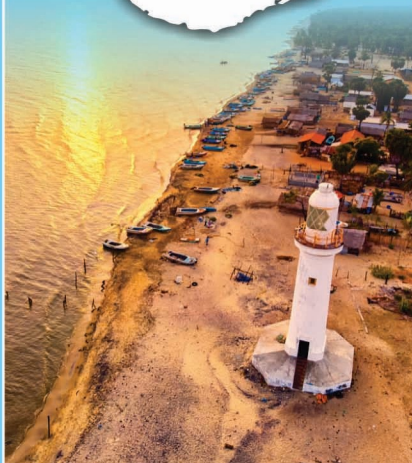
Jaffna
Kilinochchi
Mannar
Mullaitivu
Vavuniya

Province area - **8,884 km²**
(13.5% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **1.11 million**
(5.2% of Sri Lankan total)



■ Sea
 ■ Wells
 ■ Canals
 ■ Lagoons
 ■ Lakes & Others



Northern province has the smallest population in Sri Lanka and saw an average of 82 deaths per year between 2016-2018. It also had the nation's highest drowning rate of 7.3 per 100,000 people. This is nearly double the baseline rate of 3.8 in 2005-07 and may be a result of more accurate data collection following the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, and/or the region opening to local and international tourism. Males were 3.8 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 12.0 and 3.0 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Northern province were wells (52%) and lake & other waterways (20%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

7.3 per 100,000 population

82 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

3.8

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **3.8**

2016-18 rate **7.3**

Change **92% Increase**

Top drowning locations



Wells



Lakes & Others

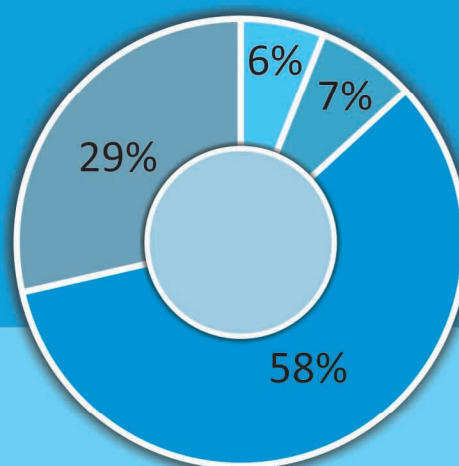
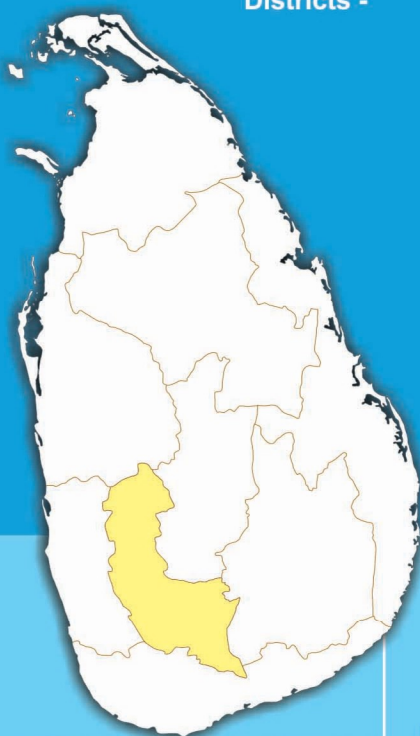
The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

SABARAGAMUWA PROVINCE

Districts - Ratnapura
Kegalle

Province area - **4,968 km²**
(7.6% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **2.02 million**
(9.5% of Sri Lankan total)



□ Rivers □ Wells ■ Canals □ Lakes & Others



On average, 61 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Sabaragamuwa province, which had a drowning rate of 3.0 per 100,000 people. There was a 33% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 5.2 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 5.1 and 1.0 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Sabaragamuwa province were canals (58%) and lakes and other waterways (29%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

3.0 per 100,000 population

61 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

5.2

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **4.5**

2016-18 rate **3.0**

Change **33% decrease**

Top drowning
locations



Canals



Lakes &
Others

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

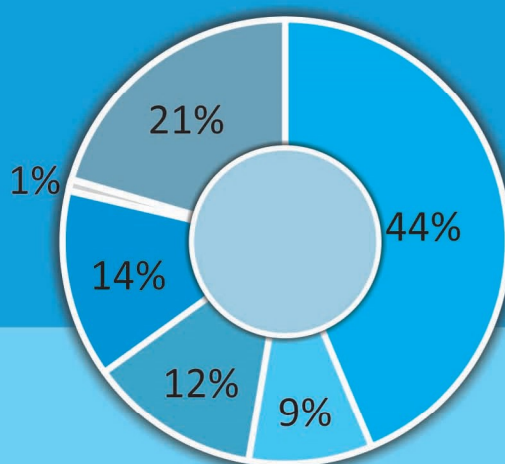
SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Districts -

Galle
Hambantota
Matara

Province area - **5,544 km²**
(8.4% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **2.60 million**
(12.2% of Sri Lankan total)



■ Sea
 ■ Rivers
 ■ Wells
 ■ Canals
 ■ Lagoons
 ■ Lakes & Others



On average, 126 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Southern province, which had the second highest drowning rate in Sri Lanka at 4.8 per 100,000 people. There was a 9% increase in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 4.2 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 8.1 and 1.8 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Southern province were sea (44%) and lakes & other waterways (21%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

4.8 per 100,000 population

126 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

4.2

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **4.4**

2016-18 rate **4.8**

Change **9% Increase**

Top drowning
locations



Sea



Lakes & Others

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

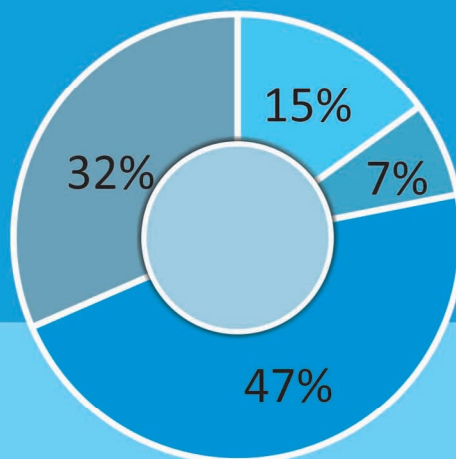
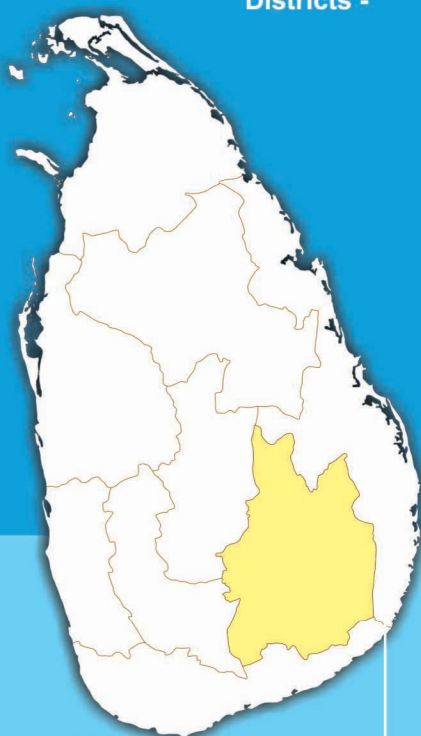
UWA PROVINCE

Districts -

Badulla
Monaragalla

Province area - **8,500 km²**
(13% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **1.34 million**
(6.3% of Sri Lankan total)



□ Rivers □ Wells □ Canals □ Lakes & Others



On average, 24 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Uva province, which had the lowest drowning rate in Sri Lanka at 1.8 deaths per 100,000 people. There was a 50% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 6.1 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 3.2 and 0.5 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Uva province were canals (47%) and lakes and other waterways (32%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

1.8 per 100,000 population

24 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

6.1

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **3.6**

2016-18 rate **1.8**

Change **50% decrease**

Top drowning
locations



Canals



Lakes &
Others

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

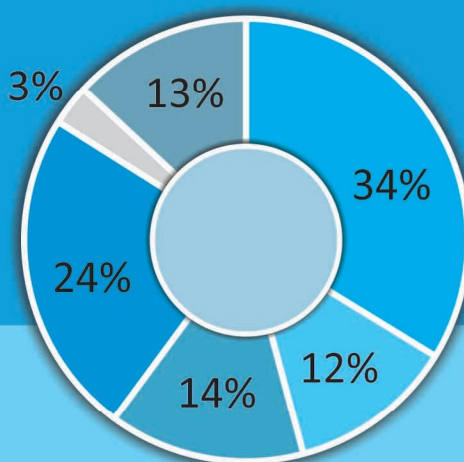
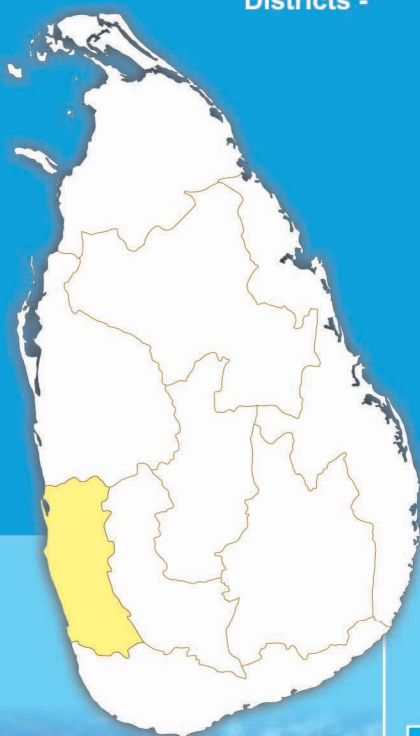
WESTERN PROVINCE

Districts -

Colombo
Gampaha
Kalutara

Province area - **3,684 km²**
(5.6% of Sri Lankan total)

Estimated population - **6.06 million**
(28.4% of Sri Lankan total)



■ Sea ■ Rivers ■ Wells ■ Canals ■ Lagoons ■ Lakes & Others



On average, 168 people drowned from 2016-2018 in Western province, which had a drowning rate of 2.8 per 100,000 people. There was a 27% decrease in the drowning rate between 2005-07 and 2016-18. Males were 4.8 times more likely to drown than females. The average drowning rate for males was 4.7 and 1.0 for females.

The top locations for drowning in Western province were sea (34%) and canals (24%).

Drowning rate
2016-2018

2.8 per 100,000 population

168 people

National drowning rate **3.5**

Male: Female ratio

4.8

Drowning frequency and rate
(2005-07 and 2016-18)

2005-07 rate **3.8**

2016-18 rate **2.8**

Change

27% decrease

Top drowning
locations



Sea



Canals

The province drowning profiles are based on drowning data from 2016-18, with 2005-07 data used as a baseline.

NATIONAL DROWNING PREVENTION AND WATER SAFETY PLAN

The National Council for Disaster Management, chaired by the former President of Sri Lanka, and the Interim Management Committee for Disaster Management formed a National Advisory Committee comprising the Ministry of Disaster Management and Disaster Management Centre, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Sports, Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Coast Guard, Sri Lanka Police, Civil Security Defence, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Fisheries and Sri Lanka Life Saving.

The National Advisory Committee was mandated to develop a proposal for a National Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Plan (National Action Plan). The National Action Plan should include the following: risk profiling, developing national beach and pool safety operational guidelines, improving the Swim for Safety curriculum, identifying and promoting safe bathing and swimming zones, and developing a national drowning data surveillance system.

The formulation of a National Action Plan was entrusted to the National Advisory Committee by the National Council for Disaster Management to reduce the numbers of lives lost due to drowning in Sri Lanka, which remains high.

With the objective of reducing drowning fatalities by ten per cent, stakeholders and experts collaborated to formulate a plan under the theme: "Towards a National Plan - Drowning Prevention and Water Safety in Sri Lanka" from 3 - 7 July 2017.

The following strategies towards the implementation of the National Action Plan were agreed:

Strategy 1:	Deliver Swimming and Water Safety Education
Strategy 2:	Communicate and Manage Information for Water Safety
Strategy 3:	Provide Lifesaving and Water Safety Services
Strategy 4:	Conduct Water Safety Research and Development
Strategy 5:	Maximise Economic Benefits for tourism through Safe Water Related Activities
Strategy 6:	Develop Regulations for Governance of Water Safety and Drowning Prevention



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN : HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Table 2 outlines high priority projects under the National Action Plan. From these, five projects have been prioritised.

1) Establish a dedicated unit for water safety: Discussions with the Disaster Management Centre have been conducted, which have resulted in the agreement to establish an independent unit that reports to the Centre. Five operational committees have also been appointed under the Office of Chief of Defence Staff to ensure drowning deaths are minimised. These committees are mandated to:

- Ensure safety in and around water while increasing swimming ability
- Create awareness among the public
- Demarcate safe water resource areas
- Gather data and derive valuable insights for strategic decision making
- Improve tourism ensuring safety in and around water

2) Implement the National Swim for Safety Program for schools: The program has been successful in its efforts to mainstream safe swimming practices across four provinces since its launch in 2016. Eastern, Southern, Sabaragamuwa and North Central provinces were selected based on their risk profiles and a total of 70 programs were delivered to over 2,015 beneficiaries.

3) Establish a national drowning data surveillance system: Discussions have been held with the Disaster Management Centre to amalgamate with their current Hot-line (117) and to continue with the same.

4) Develop risk profiles for beaches and waterways: Sri Lanka Life Saving has developed a Water Safety App which is designed to:

- Details of safe water resources in the country will be shown.
- Pin-Provide information on every lifeguard service and duty point, including information on safety equipment, patrol times, responsible personnel and their respective roles.
- Provide real-time weather report

5) Establish national beach and pool safety operating guidelines: Due to the lack of guidelines for the country, institutions and people involved tend to work in silos. Through an established set of guidelines, safety in and around water will be recognized as a high priority. These guidelines will be developed with relevant subject matter experts and implemented through respective line ministries.



PRIORITY NATIONAL ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

Project	Description
1. Establish a dedicated unit for water safety	Establish a dedicated entity to implement a national plan for water safety where dedicated staff will be appointed to collaborate with all stakeholders including technical committees. This entity will also be mandated to convene all key stakeholders from provincial, district and local governments.
2. Implement the national Swim for Safety program for schools	Advocate for the Swim for Safety program to become a mandatory component in school and university curricula. A key objective of the program is to teach communities survival swimming in all water bodies including pools, beaches, rivers, lakes, dams and tanks.
3. Establish a national drowning data surveillance system	Establish a centralised system to gather up-to-date data on fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents, which will be utilised in evidence-based reports and will inform all water safety education programs and awareness campaigns.
4. Develop risk profiles for beaches and waterways	Develop risk profiles for beaches and inland waterways and implement tailored risk mitigation strategies based on each risk profile. Risk mitigation strategies will include the creation and installation of signage, allocation of lifesaving services and delivery of education programs.
5. Establish national beach and pool safety operating guidelines	Develop a set of safety guidelines for pools and beaches including public and hotel-run sea bathing areas. The guidelines will define the minimum requirements and best practices in the operation of aquatic areas. This process will result in enhanced facilities, resources including lifesaving equipment and training programs.
6. Develop a water safety promotion campaign for tourism	Incorporate water safety into national tourism programs and promote Sri Lanka as a safe destination for aquatic recreation. Develop an App to provide the public with location-specific information on safe locations for recreational activities in and around water.
7. Establish media and communication platforms	Raise public awareness of aquatic-related injury and drowning incidents and educate people on the importance of developing water safety skills and knowledge. Develop a network of media channels and relationships

Table 2- Priority projects



Since the publication of the 2014 Drowning Prevention Report Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Life Saving has expanded its lifesaving services across the country. With the addition of seven new lifesaving clubs, there are now 46 clubs patrolling 90 of Sri Lanka's open waterways including 48 beaches, 38 lakes and reservoirs/tanks and four rivers. Since 2014, the number of active lifeguards has almost doubled, with over 2,300 operationally qualified lifeguards providing effective lifesaving service coverage nationally.

Table 3 and 4 as well as Figure 10 highlight the location and key details of current lifesaving services in Sri Lanka.

300+ RESCUES PERFORMED EACH YEAR BY LIFEGUARDS. THIS IS OVER 300 LIVES SAVED FROM DROWNING.

90 OPEN WATER LOCATIONS WITH LIFESAVING SERVICES | 48 BEACHES | 38 LAKES AND RESERVOIRS/TANKS | 4 RIVERS

SERVICES RANGING FROM DAILY AND WEEKEND PATROLS TO PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVAL SEASON.

46 LIFESAVING CLUBS | **2,364** ACTIVE LIFEGUARDS



LIFESAVING DUTY POINTS

● Open water Duty Points per Districts

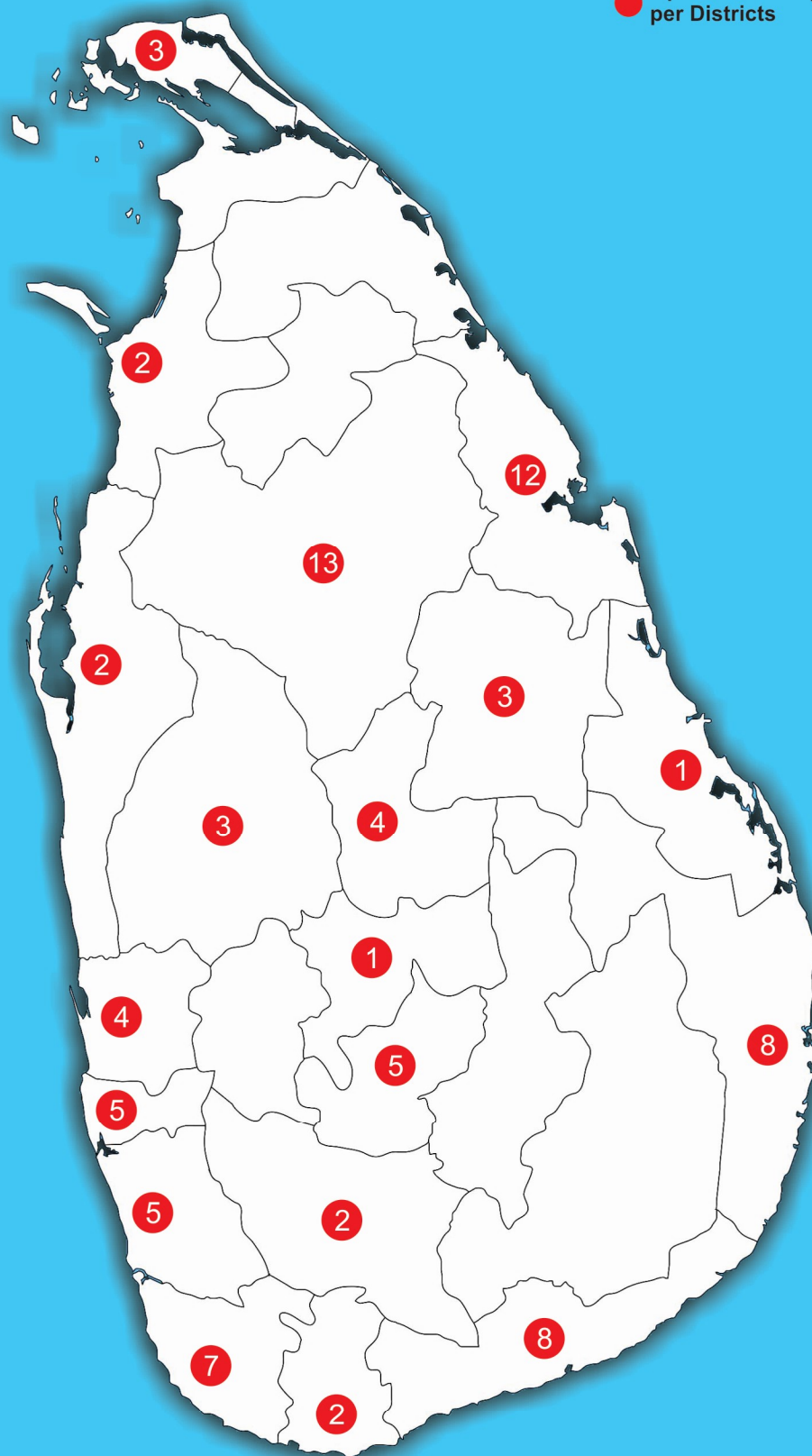


Figure 10: Map of lifesaving services in Sri Lanka

LIFESAVING CLUBS AND NUMBER OF ACTIVE LIFEGUARDS, 2018/19

Life Saving Club Name	Number of active lifeguards	
Anguruwathota Life Saving Club	10	
Ampara District Lifesaving Club	15	
Ananda College	25	
Anuradhapura District Lifesaving Club	35	
Bandaranayake College Gampaha	10	
Biyagama Aquatic Club	12	
Dambulla Lifesaving Club	30	
Dharmapala College Pannipitiya	20	
Lion Swimming Club Ambalangoda	15	
Jayawardenapura University Club	20	
Kin Ross Swimming Club	25	
Mahinda College, Galle	15	
Matara Aquatic Club	15	
Nalanda College, Colombo	25	
Piliyandala Central College	20	
Police Lifesaving Club	328	
Puttalam District Lifesaving Club	30	
Rangiri Aquatic Club Dambulla	5	
Red Cross Lifesaving Club	20	
Richmond College, Galle	15	
Sea Lion Aquatic Club	35	
Singhe Aquatic Club	5	
Sri Lanka Civil Security Department	126	
Sri Lanka Coast Guard	195	
Sri Lanka Navy	554	
St. Aloysius College	10	
Surf Society	5	
Trinco District Lifesaving Club	10	
Wattala Lifesaving Club	20	
Old Richmond Aquatic Club	10	
Old Nalanda Aquatic Club	15	
Galle Aquatic Club	15	
Old Thomian Aquatic Club	5	
Otter Aquatic Club	10	
Kelani Aquatic Club	25	
Sri Lanka Air Force	74	
Sea Horse Aquatic Club Bentota	25	
Sri Lanka Army	483	
Old Ananda Lifesaving Club	10	
Old Dharmapala Lifesaving Club	10	
Asoka Vidyalaya, Maradana	6	
Janadhipathi Balika Vidyalaya	4	
Anuradhapura Puja Lifesaving Club	5	
Galgamuwa/ Nikaweratiya Lifesaving Club	10	
Blue Whale Lifesaving Club, Hikkaduwa	5	
Veluvana College, Borella	2	
Total	2364	

Table 3- Active clubs and lifeguards, 2018/2019

LIFESAVING SERVICE LOCATIONS			
PROVINCE	DISTRICT	LOCATION	DUTY HOURS AND DAYS
Western Province	Colombo District	Mount Lavinia Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Dehiwala	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Mattakkuliya	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Wellawaththa	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Galle Face	Daily - 0800 to 1830
	Gampaha District	Negombo Beach	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Bronze Beach – Negombo	Sunday - 1200 to 1800
		Tourist Beach - Ethukala	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Preethipura Beach	Poya Day - 1000 to 1800 Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
	Kalutara District	Panadura (Nachchimale)	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Aluthgama	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Moragalla Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Beruwala	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Kalutara Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
North Western Province	Puttalam District	Waikkala Beach	Sunday (First/Last) 0800 to 1300
		Thalawila Temple	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
	Kurunegala District	Magalla Tank - Nikawaratiya	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Palaukadawala Tank -	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Galgamuwa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
Southern Province	Galle District	Ibbangamuwa Tank	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Unawatuna Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Benthota	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Balapitiya	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Ahungalla	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Hikka Trance Hotel	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Hikkaduwa	Daily - 0700 to 1800
	Matara District	Galle Old Jetty	Variable times
		Polhena Beach	Daily - 0700 to 1800
			Poya Day - 1000 to 1500
	Hambanthota District	Mirissa Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1830
		Parewella Beach	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Kuchchama Beach	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Kirinda Beach	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Ussangoda Beach	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Thissa Kirinda Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Madilla Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
Northern Province	Jaffna District	Thissa Wewa	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Katharagama Menik River	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Jaffna Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
	Mannar District	Maadagal Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Kasurina Beach - Kareinagar	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Wankaala	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Madhu (Roman Catholic Marian shrine)	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800

Table 4 - Patrol hours by province and district, 2018/2019

PROVINCE	DISTRICT	LOCATION	DUTY HOURS AND DAYS
Eastern Province	Ampara District	Namal Oya Tank	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Ekgal Oya Tank	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Alioluwa Tank	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Ampara Wewa	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Whisky Point - Pothuvil	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Elephant Rock - Panama	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Peanut Farm - Panama	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Arugam Bay	Daily - 0700 to 1800
	Batticaloa District	Pasikuda Beach and Points	Daily - 0800 to 1800
	Trincomalee District	Nilaweli Beach	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Beach Near Sea View Hotel- Nilaweli	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Pigeon Island - Nilaweli	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Main Security Point Sangamitta Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Sangamitta Beach Near Bodhi	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Beach Near Aqua Hotel - Uppuweli	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Near Sangamitta Green park Hotel	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Swimming Pool - Urban Council	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Aliyathuduwa Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Corelcro Beach	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Gopal Puram	Daily - 0800 to 1830
Central Province	Kandy District	Kandy Lake - Sri Dalada Maligawa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
	Nuwara Eliya District	Near Kehelgamuwa oya- Lakshapana	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Gregory Lake	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Kande Ela Reservoir	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Nortonbridge Dam	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Nallathanniya	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
	Matale District	Dambulu Oya Reservoir	Weekends & Poya - 0800 to 1800
		Moragahakanda	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Kandalama Reservoir	Weekends & Poya - 800 to 1800
North Central Province	Anuradhapura District	Thisa Wewa	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Bassawakkulama	Daily - 0700 to 1800
		Kandalama Wewa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Kala Wewa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Nachchiya Wewa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Swimming Pool - Public Ground	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Rajanganaya Lake	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Nuwara Wewa	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Kanthale Tank - Montana Gate	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Nuwara Wewa	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		2 Ela – Pollanaruwa	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Kanthale	Seasonal - 0700 to 1800
		Mihinthale Kaludiya Pokuna	Poya Day (Every)
	Polonnaruwa District	Parakrama Samudraya	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Parakrama Samudraya - 2 canal	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Mahaweli River - somawathiya	Daily - 1800 to 1800
Sabaragamuwa Province	Rathnapura District	Near Delhouse Bridge - Nallathanniya	Daily - 0800 to 1800
		Near Mohini Ella - Nallathanniya	Daily - 0800 to 1800

CASE STUDIES: THE BROADER IMPACT OF DROWNING PREVENTION AND WATER SAFETY IN SRI LANKA

A life saved by Swim for Safety

Mavindu Peiris, a Grade 8 student of Aluthgama College, is a graduate of the Swim for Safety survival swimming program, which was delivered to students in his community. On 2 September 2018, an incident occurred that had a lasting impact on Mavindu. He began his day as usual and made his way to the community well, which is not too far from his residence. Whilst on the edge of the well, Mavindu lost balance and fell 16 feet to the bottom. Although petrified and struggling to survive, Mavindu had the presence of mind to employ the survival skills that he had learnt in the Swim for Safety program. By utilising the floatation technique that was taught to him, Mavindu remained afloat whilst clinging onto a rock on the surface of the water for 30 minutes after which he was rescued and rushed to the nearest hospital. Having experienced a near-death situation such as this, Mavindu expressed immense gratitude towards those that encouraged him to take part in the Swim for Safety program, including his parents, the Principal and Master-in-Charge at his school, community leaders, and especially, Sri Lanka Life Saving. If he had not participated in the program, he may not have survived the fall. He is now an advocate for the program in his community as he recognises that Swim for Safety is an invaluable asset to help save lives of children just like him.

“...the Swim for Safety program saved my life. Swimming is an essential life skill that every child should have.”



Mavindu Isisara Peiris

What is Swim for Safety?

The inaugural Drowning Prevention Report for Sri Lanka (published in December 2014), identified the lack of swimming ability within the population as a major contributor to drowning in Sri Lanka. In addition, there were limited opportunities for Sri Lankan children to learn swimming and water safety skills, which are fundamental requirements for the prevention of drowning death and injury in Sri Lanka. Besides increasing water safety, the ability to swim enables access to a range of water-based recreation and competition opportunities which positively impact the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Awards Program, the Swim for Safety program was developed by a team of expert water safety and swimming professionals from Life Saving Victoria, YMCA Victoria, CandleAid Lanka, Sri Lanka Life Saving and University of Peradeniya to address the lack of swimming ability among the general population, with an aim to reduce drowning deaths and injuries in Sri Lanka.

The program comprises a 12-lesson survival swimming curriculum including in-water and out-of-water sessions designed to impart basic swimming and water safety skills, thus transforming non-swimmers to basic swimmers whilst providing them with the skills to cope with an unexpected entry into water. The key areas are: water safety knowledge, floating, survival swimming strokes and propulsion, safe entry and exit, basic emergency response and safe rescue techniques.

The program is versatile in that it may be conducted in open water locations (rivers, lakes,

beaches etc.) or at swimming pools, thereby familiarising participants with various aquatic environments.

The first version of the program was initiated by Mevan Jayawardena in 2007 through CandleAid Lanka, a Sri Lankan non-governmental organisation. Since Sri Lanka Life Saving took responsibility for delivering Swim for Safety in 2016, 70 programs have been conducted, providing over 2,000 students with life-changing swimming and water safety skills and knowledge.

The successful results of this program have been presented at numerous local and international conferences in collaboration with University of Peradeniya and Life Saving Victoria (Ekanayaka, Birch, Matthews et al, 2018).

Inflatable Rescue Boats

As a volunteer organisation, Sri Lanka Life Saving successfully provided uninterrupted services during the floods of 2016, 2017 and 2018 by utilising specifically designed Inflatable Rescue Boats (IRBs). IRBs are rubber boats with an outboard motor, which are crewed by trained personnel and commonly used in surf rescue operations.

“IRBs have been vital to serve affected communities during national disasters effectively and efficiently.”

Sri Lanka Life Saving has successfully mobilised trained volunteers to deliver emergency services in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Armed Forces, Sri Lanka Police and Civil Security Department under the guidance of the Disaster Management Centre.

The IRBs used by Sri Lanka Life Saving were donated by the Australian people through Life Saving Victoria. Sri Lanka Life Saving ensures the maintenance of this equipment and has taken every measure to ensure that its IRB crews are trained and able to handle the most demanding situations, in the surf and in flood zones.

The main benefit of IRBs is that they can travel in rough water against the flow and can therefore access almost any location. These features play a critical role in the delivery of goods including food and potable water to people during floods and provide transportation to safe areas. IRBs are regarded as an indispensable water rescue vehicle and are invaluable during emergency situations owing to their power, speed, reliability and versatility.



Education and awareness

Education and awareness-raising have been fundamental in Sri Lanka Life Saving's efforts to mainstream best-practice lifesaving service provision in Sri Lanka. Multiple structured training programs targeted at creating awareness and promoting safe behaviours have been delivered to over one million beneficiaries with the support of the Disaster Management Centre, Armed Forces, Sri Lanka Police, Civil Security Department, non-government organisations, the private sector and other philanthropic trusts and foundations.

“...over one million people have been trained over ten years and they are able to assess an emergency and take action as needed.”



Women and lifesaving

Breaking through cultural challenges, women have been meaningfully involved in lifesaving activities in Sri Lanka in recent years. In February 2018, a group of 13 women representing diverse segments of society across different provinces received world-class training in Australia. One team received hands-on technical training on saving lives using rescue tubes, rescue boards, IRBs, and other lifesaving equipment. Other key skills that were imparted to the team include: beach patrol protocol, course of action during emergencies including beach evacuation, risk assessments and documentation of activities, incidents and responses. The second team was familiarised with the role of governance and management in budgeting; controlling and mitigating risks and hazards; maintenance of lifeguards' requirements; and beach patrol procedures at Bondi Beach and the Gold Coast.

“The rise in women's engagement in lifesaving activities in recent years is a testament to meaningful gender mainstreaming activities by Sri Lanka Life Saving.”

Inclusivity and diversity have been imperative to Sri Lanka Life Saving, and this exemplar reflects Sri Lanka Life Saving's values of fostering an environment where females and males are given equal opportunities for training and development. The provision of lifesaving and water safety skills to women across different age groups, ethnicities and provinces is closely aligned with the priorities set in the National Action Plan.



Shaping careers at home

With a background in nursing, I became aware of the enormous burden of drowning in Sri Lanka through my work at the University of Peradeniya in Kandy. I also learned that drowning is entirely preventable, especially through the provision of basic swimming and water safety skills and awareness to the general population. This led me to embark on research into drowning prevention measures that would help reduce the burden of drowning in Sri Lanka.

For my thesis as part of my Master of Science degree, I conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Swim for Safety program among undergraduate students. The study was a randomised controlled trial, where Swim for Safety was delivered to 78 undergraduate students, following which the effectiveness of the program was evaluated. My research was carried out under the guidance of Dr. Chan Kim Geok, University of Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, Malaysia; Prof. Samath D. Dharmarathne, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka; and Dr. Bernadette



Matthews, Live Saving Victoria, Australia. I was lucky to have received funding and all the necessary support and guidance from Sri Lanka Life Saving and Life Saving Victoria. Whilst the research is ongoing, preliminary results indicate that the program was successful at improving survival swimming skills and generated high interest among students.

Working on drowning prevention research and activities with Sri Lanka Life Saving and Life Saving Victoria led me to explore and share knowledge at various local and international conferences. By participating in the World Safety Conference 2018 and World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2019, I realised the magnitude of drowning globally and learned from leaders in the drowning prevention world. Inspired by a multitude of ideas, I have conducted awareness programs and training programs under the guidance of Sri Lanka Life Saving. Some of my key work highlights include a leadership position that I undertook for a community awareness program at the Vedasa exhibition 2018, conducted at the University of Sri Jayawardenepura; the Power of Water program, which touched on the therapeutic aspect of water; and the Swim for Safety program – all of which reinstated my responsibility as a nurse in contributing to the prevention of drowning.

It is my privilege to work with both Sri Lanka Life Saving and Life Saving Victoria since 2016. The great teamwork and feedback from the Swim for Safety study motivates me to continue my work. I am really proud to be a member of the drowning prevention and water safety team and am very grateful to Sri Lanka Life Saving and Life Saving Victoria for giving me the opportunity to collaborate and work on various projects.

*E.M.J.S.K. Ekanayaka (Ekanayaka Mudiyanseelage Jeewanthika Sanya Kumari Ekanayaka), **Lecturer (Probationary),***

University of Peradeniya

Postgraduate student,

Master of Science (By Research) Degree Program,

University of Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Volunteerism to Professionalism

I drew inspiration for what I do for a living today from a decade ago when I saw and was amazed at how school lifesavers volunteered at the beach. Disciplined, committed and brave are words that could be used to describe them.

Having swum for most of my life, I thought to myself that I too would love to be a lifesaver!

So, in 2009 I began my journey to becoming a qualified lifesaver. Over this time, I have learnt a lot from lifesaving and it has been a major part of my life. Lifesaving has provided me with amazing memories, which include travelling around the world and meeting people from different walks of life. Whilst studying for my undergraduate degree, I led the Under 19 National Team, and two years later I went on to lead the National



Team at the World Life Saving Championships.

It's also important to note that the programs conducted by Sri Lanka Life Saving with the support of Life Saving Victoria are a great opportunity for all lifesavers on the island. I moved to Australia in 2017 to undertake my postgraduate studies and was fortunate to settle in quickly thanks to my friends and the lifesaving community in Australia.

"...I also work as a lifeguard at Knox Leisure work. It's a fantastic opportunity to work in such a diverse environment..."

Today, having completed my postgraduate degree in Accounting and Finance, I work as a Purchasing Officer for Life Saving Victoria. I also work as a lifeguard at Knox Leisureworks. It's a fantastic opportunity to work in such a diverse environment where I meet and make new friends every day. I feel proud when I look back at the past 10 years of learning and growth I have achieved through lifesaving and look forward to passing this knowledge on to future generations to educate them on water safety.

Akila Watareka

Past Sri Lanka Life Saving Captain, Life Saving Gold Medallist

Shaping careers overseas

I come from a very modest family where my father was a postman and my mother was a housewife. My dream was to become a lifeguard at a beach in Australia. Currently I'm a lifeguard in Dubai. After hours, I took up a part-time job as a waiter where I closely observed chefs at work. One day while I was serving a nicely plated dish to a guest, I decided that I want to be a chef, too. Hence, I joined the kitchen of Fairmont Hotel and after some time, I was selected for one of their scholarship programs. The knowledge that I gained has made everything easy for me at work. I also enjoyed working with people from different backgrounds and nationalities. The diploma has added value to my experience where I can now look to travel to another place for better career prospects. Lifesaving paved the way to where I am today.

"...I wanted to be a Lifeguard in Australia, but ended up becoming a Lifeguard and then a chef in Dubai..."



Kavindu Heshan

Past Life Saving Captain - Ananda College, Life Saving Bronze Medallist

Positive role models at home

Losing a loved one is one of the most difficult situations in life to face. It's something one is never prepared for and yet, one which needs to be faced with resilience. I was only 11 years when I had to face such an unfortunate event in my life. My uncle lost a long and hard-fought battle with cancer. Having been like another father to me, losing him was not just a shock but an emotion I had to deal with. How does a young boy cope with such sadness and pain in losing a loved one? Does life move on? These were some of the questions in my mind when I sat his funeral service. The reassuring message of the Buddhist monk who officiated the funeral gave me a sense of purpose and direction. It put me at ease. In short, I learnt that afternoon that the best way to find peace with a loss of life, is to save another. This statement, simple as it maybe, left an indelible mark in my life. With a renewed sense of purpose, I decided to join my school's lifesaving association. Over the period of seven years in the 90's, I was involved in many rescues, which brought out the best in me and have shown me that the selfless act of saving another's life is more rewarding than any material thing on this earth. This created a passion and fire within me that led me to volunteer and in 1995, I was involved in saving four lives in one incident. A year later I was awarded the prestigious Lord Mountbatten Medal for bravery in Commonwealth Countries. Lifesaving is a service to humanity and there is perhaps no parallel to it. And this, has helped me overcome some of life's greatest obstacles.



Captain Yasith De Silva

Sri Lankan Airlines

Mountbatten Medallist, Life Saving Bronze Medallist



Positive role models overseas

Living by the principle of endless possibilities, Asela Jayaweera, the ever-dynamic Director of Recreation at Sharq Village & Spa, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, embarked on a journey of benevolence from a young age, bearing one motto, "Nothing is impossible."



Asela spearheaded numerous initiatives that would benefit a wide range of humanitarian projects aimed at providing aid to people in need, especially those with financial constraints.

For his extensive efforts to conserve the environment, charity drives and remarkable rescue missions, Asela was awarded the 'J. Willard Marriott Award of Excellence'.

"The knowledge and experience that I've gained has made everything easy for me at work. I enjoy working with people from different backgrounds. I am where I am today, thanks to lifesaving."

With over 1,400 volunteering hours dedicated by 600 volunteers, and over USD 30,000 raised through donations in 2018, Asela partnered with organisations such as Qatar Charity, Doha College, Hamad Medical Corporation Blood Bank, Qatar Foundation, PADI, MAD Triathlon, Desert Hound Express Foundation, and Sidra Women's Hospital. Furthermore, Asela collaborated with Education Above All and Qatar's Marriott Business Council to host a cycling event, 'Ride to Educate' at Sheraton Grand Doha Hotel. Over 500 benefactors participated in the event, which raised more than QAR 40,000. The funds were utilised to provide education to communities affected by poverty.

Driven with a distinguished passion to influence positive change, Asela continually strives to eradicate hunger and poverty and mitigate the impact of disasters, whilst developing activities to improve the well-being of children, youth and women, and conserve the environment. He has organised numerous educational indoor and outdoor programs for children which focus on marine life and the sustainable management of bees (which are locally endangered) via a bee-keeping project. Asela participated in campaigns aimed at promoting healthier lifestyles to combat the rising prevalence of obesity amongst youth by organising group fitness classes, sports activities and triathlons. Other campaigns included blood donations, swim-for-a-cause, tree planting, and clean-up drives. With his undying passion to develop and implement fruitful initiatives, Asela has proven to be an exceptional contributor to the welfare of society.

Asela Jayaweera

Director of Recreation

Sharq Village & Spa, Ritz-Carlton Hotel

Life Saving Silver Medallist



METHODS

Data collection and statistical analysis

This report includes unintentional drowning deaths reported in Sri Lanka from 1 January to 31 December for the following periods: 2001-2018; excluding 2008 and 2015.

Information on unintentional drowning deaths for 2001-2014 was collected from the Registrar General's Department. Deaths are classified by a trained coder at the central Registrar General's Department using scanned death declaration forms from the District Secretariat offices.

The Registrar General's Department extracted the data based on the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD) reporting system. Specifically, the supplementary classification of external causes of injury, Accidental drowning and submersion, Accident to watercraft causing submersion, and Other accidental submersion or drowning in water transport accident. Deaths due to natural causes, assaults, suicide, or homicide were not included.

For 2016-2018, information on unintentional drowning deaths was collected from Sri Lanka Police. There are 44 Police Areas across the 25 districts in Sri Lanka. Within each Police Area, the Police Investigation Unit records details of any incident, including deaths. This data is used (by the police and/or coroner) to assess the incident and determine cause of death. The data used in this analysis was obtained from summary reports provided by police. These reports include: sex, location (water source) and residence (whether within or outside of Police Area, or foreign visitor), by province.

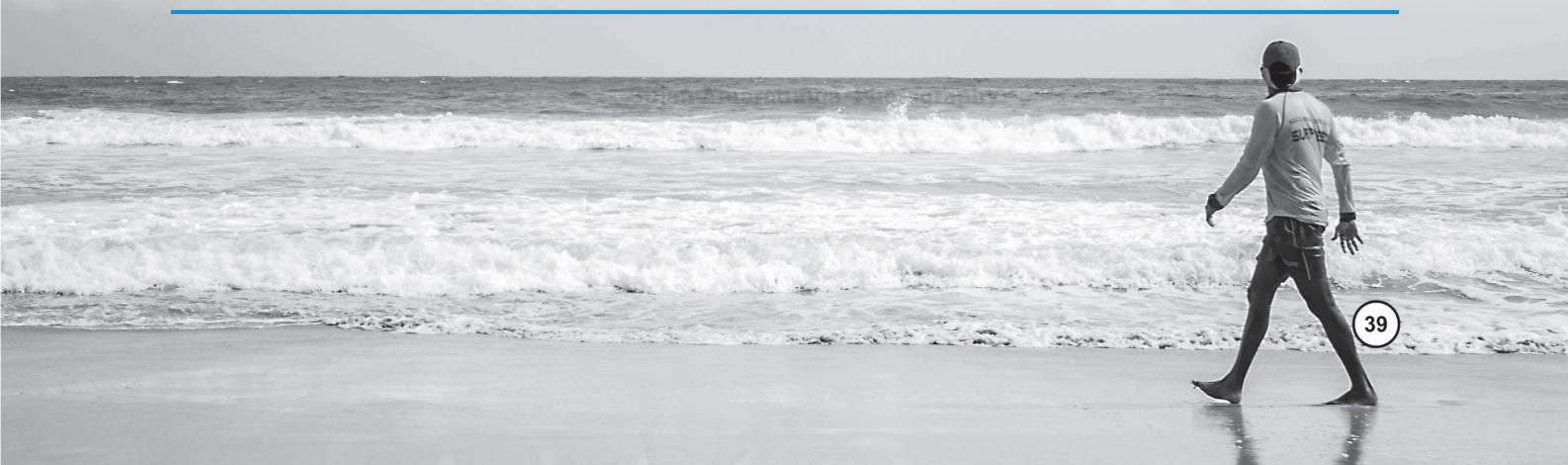
Denominator populations by sex, five-year age group, ethnicity and period were obtained from the Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka for each year.

Results of analysis are presented by sex, age, ethnicity and location. Periods have been selected based on availability of data. Drowning data were not available for 2007 due to some data being missing after the civil war. Drowning data were also not available for 2014 at the time of compilation of the report due to lack of access. Therefore, these periods are not included in the analysis.

Note that actual drowning figures may be higher due to only 81.9% of registered deaths with cause-of-death information and 28% of registered deaths having ill-defined causes (2006) for all mortality data for Sri Lanka (WHO, 2019).

Countries were classified into high income countries (HIC) and low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) based on World Bank income levels.

The report also includes accidental injury deaths reported in Sri Lanka from 2004-2014 from the Registrar General's Department and coded as per the ICD reporting system.



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Dr Bernadette Matthews PhD, MAgSc, Bsc
[Principal Research Associate, Life Saving Victoria](#)

Bernadette specialises in aquatic injury prevention research, from epidemiology of drowning and other aquatic related injuries, swimming competency in children and adults, through to monitoring and evaluation of education programs and major public awareness campaigns. Working in collaboration with academia, government and industry, Bernadette is a member of various national and international committees and working groups in the area of aquatic injury prevention and was awarded the International Life Saving Federation Medal for her contribution to international lifesaving. Bernadette leads Life Saving Victoria's Risk and Research as well as the Media and Communications teams.

Rhiannon Birch BEnv Sc (Hons), GradDipEd (Sec)
[Manager – Research, Life Saving Victoria](#)

Rhiannon assists in the management and undertaking of Life Saving Victoria's research on injury prevention and water safety issues, including: swimming and water safety education programs; water competency among children and older adults; inland waterways drowning prevention; coastal risk assessments; public pool safety; multicultural water safety campaigns and international drowning prevention research. Rhiannon holds a Bachelor of Environmental Science and Graduate Diploma in Education

Mevan Jayawardena MBA, BBus, Bcom
[Chief Operating Officer, Life Saving Victoria](#)

In addition to managing a number of portfolios, Mevan has led Life Saving Victoria's work in developing drowning prevention and lifesaving activities in Sri Lanka since 2011. Mevan is a dual citizen of Australia and Sri Lanka and a volunteer Director of CandleAid, a Sri Lankan charity with a focus on poverty alleviation. In the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami, Mevan led disaster operations for CandleAid and amongst other relief projects, implemented an ongoing drowning prevention initiative that has taught swimming free of charge to over 8,000 underprivileged children in Sri Lanka. Having held positions in technology and banking, Mevan completed a MBA at INSEAD in 2010 and joined Life Saving Victoria in 2011 to continue his pursuit to make an impact in the prevention of drowning.

Asanka Nanayakkara MBA, LLB (Hons), Certified Instructor - (International Life Saving Federation)
[President, Sri Lanka Life Saving \(SLLS\)](#)

Asanka has over 15 years of management level experience with the Life Saving Association of Sri Lanka. As the President, he is responsible for governance level, strategic level and operational level activities relating to lifesaving programs and activities throughout Sri Lanka and abroad. He possesses comprehensive knowledge and experience of lifesaving services, having been a beach lifeguard in the Mount Lavinia region since 1994 (where he saved 21 lives), a volunteer lifeguard in Anuradhapura, a Senior Royal Life Saving Instructor since 1998, as well as the Superintendent of Competition and the Royal Life Saving Controller for the Life Saving Association of Sri Lanka. Asanka represented the Commonwealth Life Saving Society UK at the Commonwealth People's Forum in Sri Lanka in 2013 and also the Life Saving Association of Sri Lanka at the Asia Pacific Forum and AGM of the International Life Saving Federation in 2012 and 2016. He coordinates lifesaving and related activities with both local and international organizations such as International Life Saving Federation, Royal Life Saving Society (Commonwealth), World Health Organization, Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism and the Disaster Management Centre in Sri Lanka. Also, the only Sri Lankan to represent the country in the World Conference on Drowning Prevention 2015, 2017 and 2019 in Malaysia, Canada and South Africa respectively. Asanka also captained the Sri Lankan Life Saving Team in the World Life Saving Championships in New Zealand in 1998 and was appointed team coach in 2000. He also managed the Sri Lankan Life Saving Team in the first South Asian Beach Games in 2012.

Sanath Wijayarathne MBA
[Former President and Honourable Adviser, Sri Lanka Life Saving \(SLLS\)](#)

Sanath continued and provided his service as the former President, honorable adviser and the Chief Coordinator for Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Plan for Sri Lanka on a volunteer and commercial basis, leading the National Action Plan and its work at a strategic level whilst ensuring a strong position in governance level. Notable achievements since his strategic level engagement from 2009, include i) ensuring a medal for Sri Lanka in the World Lifesaving Championships, ii) facilitating the first Silver Medallion lifeguard training in Sri Lanka, iii) supporting the development of the inaugural Drowning Prevention Report in 2014, and iv) coordinating with the office of chief of defense staff and formulating a National Action Plan working committee to reduce drowning and drowning related deaths in Sri Lanka. Sanath coordinates lifesaving matters with both local and international organisations such as International Life Saving Federation, Royal Life Saving Society (Commonwealth), World Health Organization, Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism and the Disaster Management Center in Sri Lanka. Sanath was an Operations Manager, Risk Lead, Business Information Risk Lead in the finance industry and was previously engaged in marketing for a leading airline in Sri Lanka.

MEMBERSHIPS

Sri Lanka Life Saving is a full member / affiliation of the following international organisations:



The International Life Saving Federation (ILS)



COMMONWEALTH
DROWNING
PREVENTION

The Royal Life Saving Society (Commonwealth)



INTERNATIONAL
MARITIME RESCUE

The International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF)



The Society of Water Rescue and Survival Research, Japan (UITEMATE)

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