

The Status of Drowning Prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean

PAHO



Friday Aug 8th at 11am
Webinar

Accelerating Action on Drowning Prevention in the Commonwealth

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Key messages for Accelerating Action:

1. **Fatal and non-fatal drowning data is needed to inform prevention interventions**
2. **Government support is an accelerator**
3. **Public Health approach for multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination is best**
4. **Focus on reach, inclusion and impact**

Link to RLSS Commonwealth Fatal Drowning Factsheet Issue 2 July 2025

https://www.rlsscommonwealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/RLS_CommonwealthFS2025_FINAL-1.pdf

FATAL DROWNING IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

FACT SHEET

Issue 2, July 2025



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Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid; outcomes are classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity. The focus of this fact sheet is on fatal drowning in Commonwealth countries, a significant yet preventable cause of loss of life.

KEY FINDINGS



In 2021 over 121,000 people died from drowning in Commonwealth countries. The fatal drowning rate was 4.7 per 100,000 per year¹.



Two-fifths (40%) of global drowning deaths occurred in Commonwealth countries.



Approximately two thirds of all drowning deaths in Commonwealth countries were males, with males at greater risk than females across all age groups.



54% of fatal drowning in Commonwealth countries occurred among children and adolescents aged 0-14 years.



34% of drowning fatalities in the Commonwealth countries occurred among children under 5 years.

¹ Global Health Estimates 2021: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000-2021. Geneva, World Health Organization; 2024.

Fig 3: Fatal drowning rates in 15-29 year-old-persons by region in Commonwealth countries

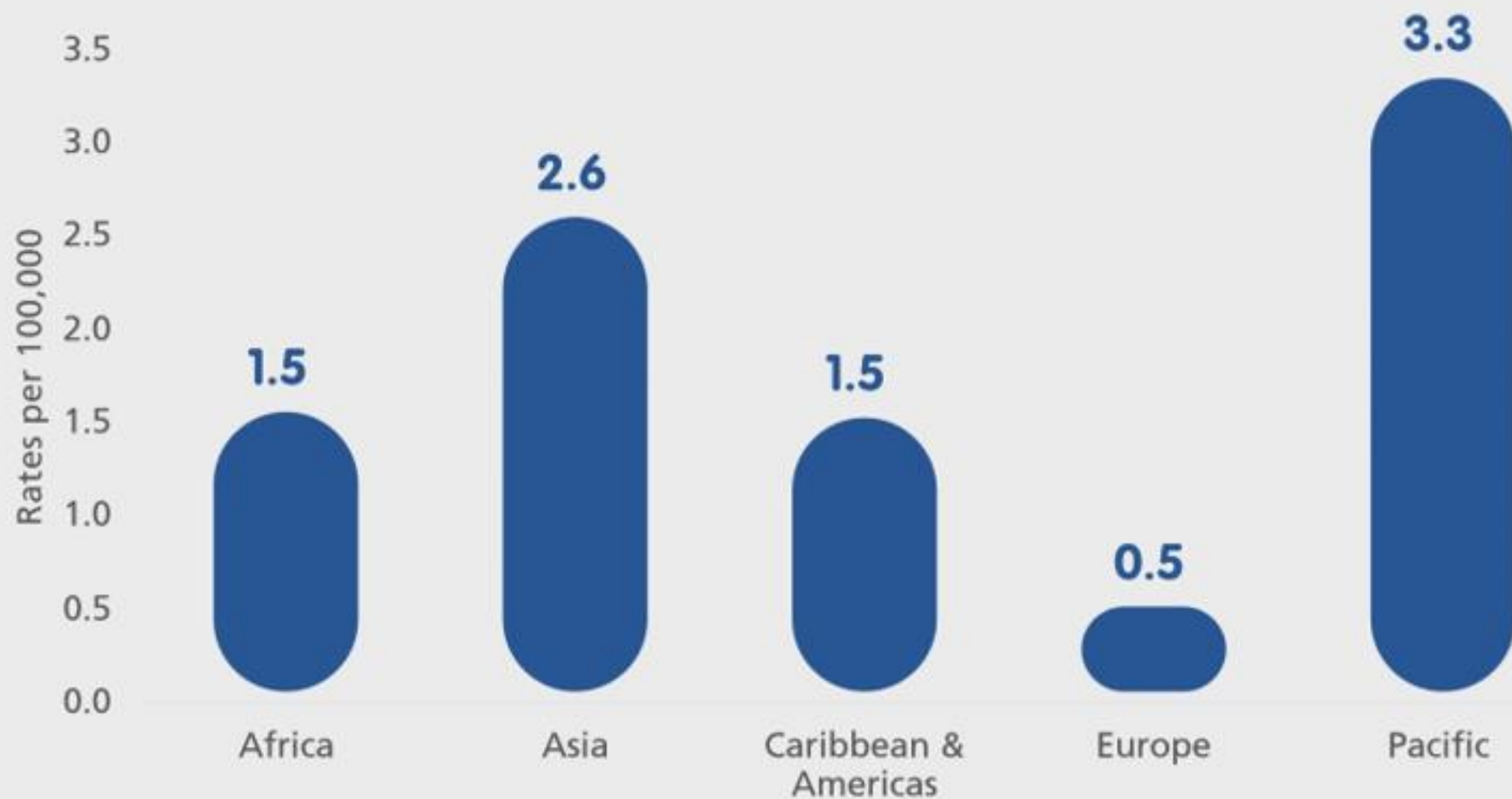


Fig 5: Fatal drowning rates by age in Commonwealth countries of Caribbean and Americas in 2021

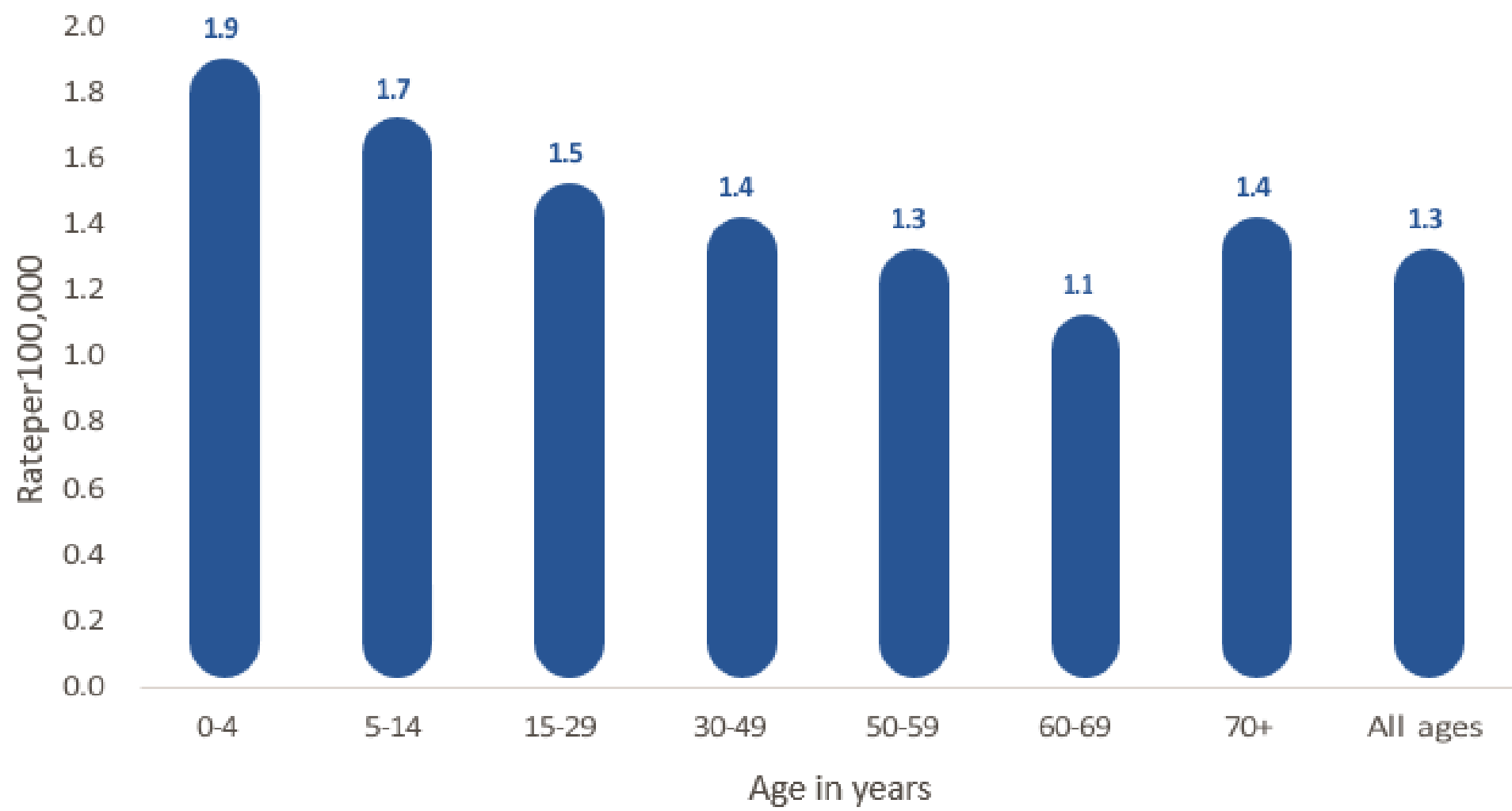


Table 7: Fatal drowning **estimated number and rates** of by sex in Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and Americas in 2021

Rank	Estimated Number				Rate/100000			
	Country	Male	Female	Both	Country	Male	Female	Both
1	Canada	231	67	298	Guyana	8.4	1.0	9.5
2	Dominica	189	35	226	Bahamas	5.4	1.0	6.4
3	Guyana	69	8	78	Saint Vincent And The Grenadines	4.0	1.0	5.0
4	Trinidad And Tobago	45	6	51	Saint Lucia	3.6	0.4	4.0
5	Bahamas	21	4	25	Belize	3.0	0.9	4.0
6	Jamaica	17	2	20	Trinidad And Tobago	3.0	0.4	3.4
7	Belize	12	4	16	Barbados	2.4	0.5	2.9
8	Barbados	7	1	8	Grenada	2.3	0.1	2.3
9	Saint Lucia	6	1	7	Dominica	1.7	0.3	2.0
10	Saint Vincent And The Grenadines	4	1	5	Canada	0.6	0.2	0.8
11	Grenada	3	0	3	Jamaica	0.6	0.1	0.7
12	Antigua And Barbuda	0	0	0	Antigua And Barbuda	0.4	0.0	0.5

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Challenges for RLSS Facilitation to Accelerate Action:

1. RLSS has only 5/12 members in the Caribbean and Central America

Action – engage with all Commonwealth Countries/Territories and non-Commonwealth countries that want to engage.

2. Data and drowning focal point agency is weak and or absent

Action – build capacity for robust data collection and facilitate country NGO governance

3. Weak or no Government engagement

Action – leverage data, collaboration and capacity to inspire government engagement

4. Need for broad community reach

Action – transition to a public health approach for inclusion, equity and reach for burden reduction

5. Lack of urgency for drowning prevention

Action – connect narrative stories with data and capacity

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Opportunities and potential avenues for collaboration to further advance drowning prevention efforts:

1. Multi-sectoral coalitions for drowning prevention

- at community, regional and national levels
- focused on inclusion, diversity and equity
- government, university, health, education, media, industry, disaster community engagement

2. Effective coordination and leadership for drowning prevention

- NGO, government and/or academic lead with capacity and skills
- community action, policy/regulation and research needed
- resourcing is empowering

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Opportunities and potential avenues for collaboration to further advance drowning prevention efforts:

3. International connection and associations for sharing and learning

- formal and informal
- respect and capacity building
- focused on drowning prevention vs the entities

4. It is all about the relationships

- we are all on an amazing learning journey
- There are no rivals or space for competition between agencies/collaborative partners
- investing in each others success

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