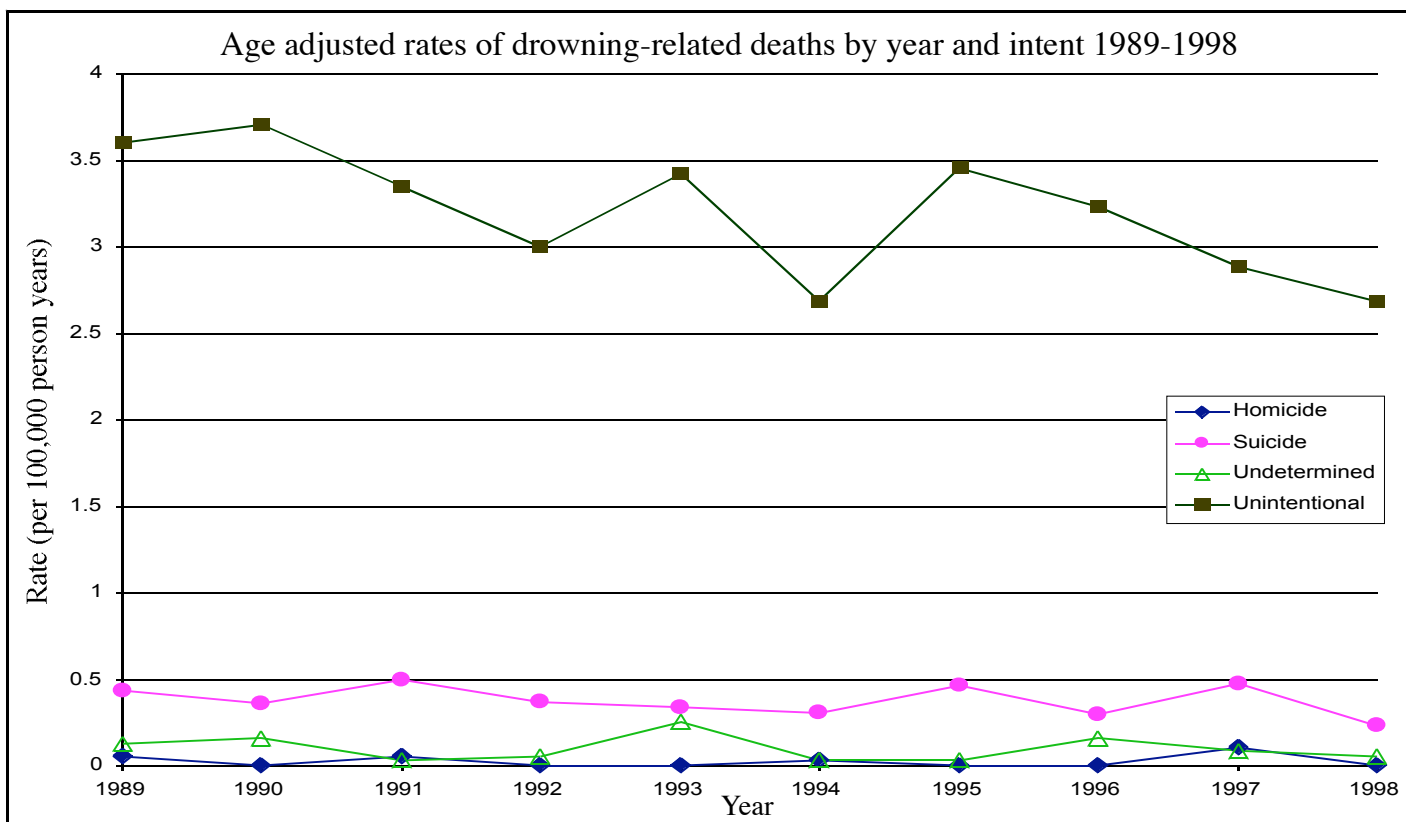


Drowning-related Deaths in New Zealand 1989-1998



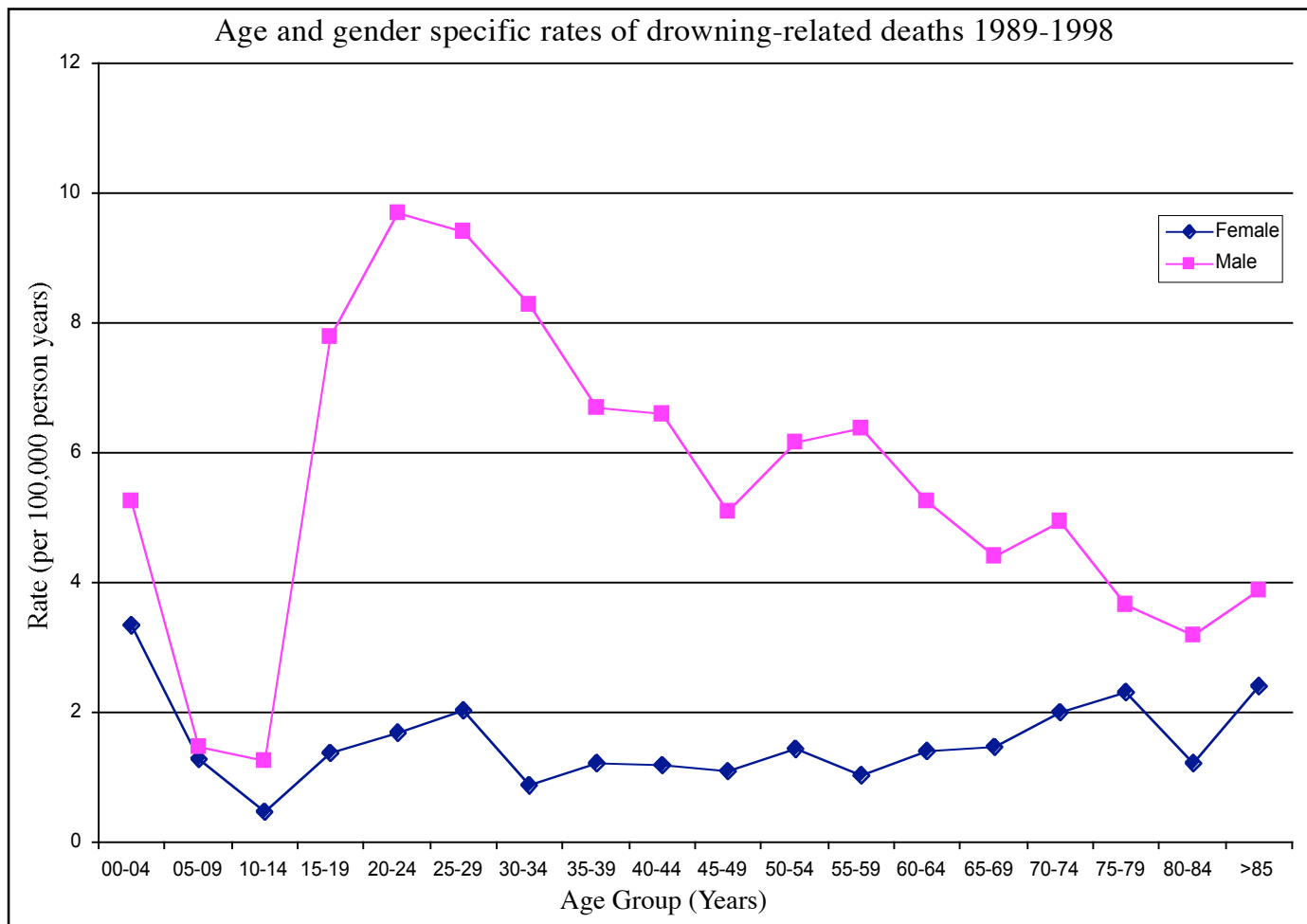
Drowning-related injuries are a significant cause of deaths in New Zealand (refer to IPRU fact sheet 29, Injury Causes by Age). The data presented in this fact sheet do not include drowning-related deaths from natural causes.^{1,2}



- From 1989-1998 there were 1324 deaths by drowning in New Zealand.¹
- For 63% of the incidents, the victim entered the water voluntarily e.g. for swimming, diving or bathing.
- A further 22% were associated with water transport, 12% with motor vehicle crashes, and 4% were associated with other external causes.²
- The majority (87%) of the drownings were unintentional (n=1197).
- There were 134 incidents of suicide by drowning, 9 homicidal drownings, and 34 from undetermined causes.

1. Drowning deaths were selected from the NZHIS injury mortality data if they met one of two criteria: The external cause of death was coded to one of the following ecodes: 830, 832, 910, 954, 964, 984; or the 90 character event description (free-text) included a text string resembling 'drown'.

2. A study by IPRU estimated that a further 5% of drowning deaths were associated with natural causes such as epilepsy or ischaemic heart disease. (Langley, et al: Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 2001, 25(5):451-7).



- Males had a higher rate of death by drowning than females across all age groups (79% of victims were male).
- For males, the highest rates were in the 15-44 year age groups. For females, the highest rates were in the 0-4 and over 65 year age groups.
- Between the ages of 15 and 44 years, the rate for males was approximately 6 times that for females.
- There were no significant differences in the rates for males and females for suicide, homicide, or drownings of undetermined intent.
- 10% of drowning-related deaths in 0-4 years olds were associated with motor vehicle crashes. This rose to 23% for 15-19 year olds.
- 19% of female drowning-related deaths were associated with motor vehicle crashes compared to 10% of male drowning-related deaths.
- 25% of male drowning-related deaths were associated with a water transport incident compared to 7% of female drowning-related deaths.

Data Source: Mortality Data, 1989-1998, New Zealand Health Information Service (NZHIS), Ministry of Health, Wellington.

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