

# Unintentional drowning rates higher in 2020, 2021, 2022 than 2019

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Unintentional drowning rates were higher in 2020, 2021, and 2022 than in 2019 and are highest among children aged 1 to 4 years, [according to research](#) published in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Tessa Clemens, Ph.D., from the CDC in Atlanta, and colleagues compared unintentional drowning death rates in 2019 to those in 2020,

2021, and 2022 by age, sex, and race and ethnicity using National Vital Statistics System data. Adults' self-reported swimming skill, swimming lesson participation, and exposure to [recreational water](#) were described.

The researchers found that compared with those in 2019, unintentional drowning death rates were significantly higher during 2020, 2021, and 2022. Rates were highest among [children](#) aged 1 to 4 years in all years; in most age groups, significant increases occurred.

Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black or African American persons had the highest drowning rates. Of U.S. adults, 54.7 percent reported never having taken a swimming lesson. There were differences seen in swimming skill and swimming lesson participation by age, sex, and race and ethnicity.

"Basic swimming and water safety skills training can reduce the risk for drowning, but social and structural barriers to accessing this training persist; these barriers disproportionately affect groups at the highest risk for drowning," the authors write.

"Addressing system-level barriers to accessing basic swimming and water safety skills [training](#) could curb increasing drowning rates and reduce inequities."

**More information:** Tessa Clemens et al, Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates, Self-Reported Swimming Skill, Swimming Lesson Participation, and Recreational Water Exposure—United States, 2019–2023, *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2024). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7320e1](#)

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