

DROWNING DEATHS ON INLAND WATER AREAS

Location, activity and risk factors

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Background

Drowning deaths can occur in a wide variety of aquatic locations such as open water (beach, coast or port), aquatic centers and domestic swimming pools, and also in inland waterways like as rivers, creeks, lakes, dams, etc.

According to the last National Drowning Report in Spain (I.N.A.) from Royal Spanish Lifesaving Federation (RFESS), in our country, drowning deaths represents 28% of total deaths (373 in 2018) in aquatic areas per year. Moreover, deaths by drowning in these inland water areas are increasing respect years before.

Beaches are the aquatic areas where more drowning deaths occur in our country, almost 50% of deaths per year. Despite of that, **the high percentage of drowning deaths at inland areas make necessary realize more studies focused on it in order to establish prevention measures and increase the population knowledge about risk factors** at inland waterways. It is necessary educate people about hidden hazards at interior aquatic areas because they look calm from the shore, leading people to underestimate the unseen dangers such as strong currents, submerged objects and depth changes. In addition, most of these areas, although many of them are enabled for bath, do not have lifeguard on duty or security and safe services.

Objectives

- To gain an **increased understanding** of drowning deaths at inland waterways in Spain.
- To know and **identify location, activity and drowning risk factors**.
- To **establish prevention measures and develop programs** in order to reduce fatal drowning at interior aquatic areas.
- To make a comparison through years to **check the effectiveness** of the preventive measures and propose recommendations going forward.

Methodology

The information used for this study is based on the **National Drowning Report elaborated by the Royal Spanish Lifesaving Federation since 2015**. This report collect and analyses drowning deaths showed in media (electronic and print) during all year.

All care is taken to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible. This report does not include data of deaths known to be as a result of suicide or homicide, deaths from natural causes or all information about unknown cause of death in aquatic areas.



Picture 1. Drowning prevention workshops of the Spanish campaign #StopAhogados, in Proserpina swamp (Mérida - Badajoz), August 2019.

Results

Results obtained from the Report identified several risk factors that may be contributing to drowning deaths at inland waterways such as **ignorance of hazards and imprudence**.

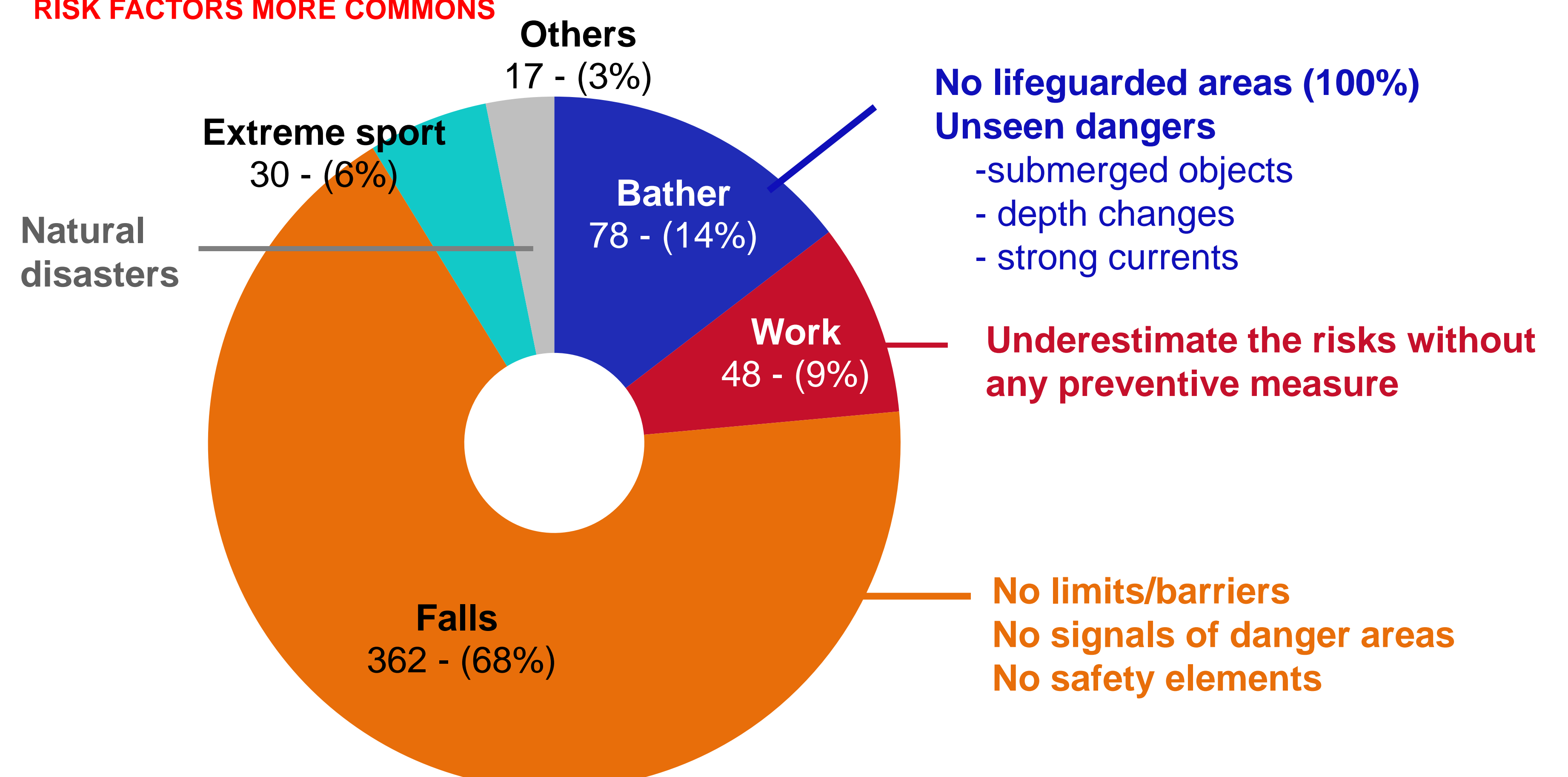
Drowning deaths in these aquatic areas **represent 28% of the total annual deaths** and correspond to the second aquatic area where more drowning deaths occur. The drowned profile, according to the latest report (year 2018), is a male (74%), Spanish nationality (85%), over 65 years old (32%) and where there was no lifeguard on duty at the time of the incident occurs (99%). Accidental falls in water areas represent 56% of all drowning deaths at inland waterways.

2.013 Total number of drowning deaths in Spain
2015 – 2019 (Until August, 31)

535 Total number of drowning deaths in Spain
INLAND WATER AREAS

RIVERS – 290 drowning deaths (54% of total deaths on inland areas)

RISK FACTORS MORE COMMONS



PREVENTION ACTIONS ON INLAND WATER AREAS



Picture 2-3. Drowning prevention workshops of the Spanish campaign #StopAhogados, in San Juan swamp (Madrid), August 2019. Users identify risk factors on inland water areas and know how to act in case of incident.

Conclusions

Statistic is an important tool to prevention. The report identifies risk population, locations and activities that provide us vital information for the development of prevention strategies in order to avoid drowning deaths. These **strategies will need to be targeted and specific taking into account different environments and population groups.**