



# **How to Maim or Kill Your Child Using Alcohol**

Nick Baker

Community Paediatrician NMDHB

Chair CYMRC

# Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee



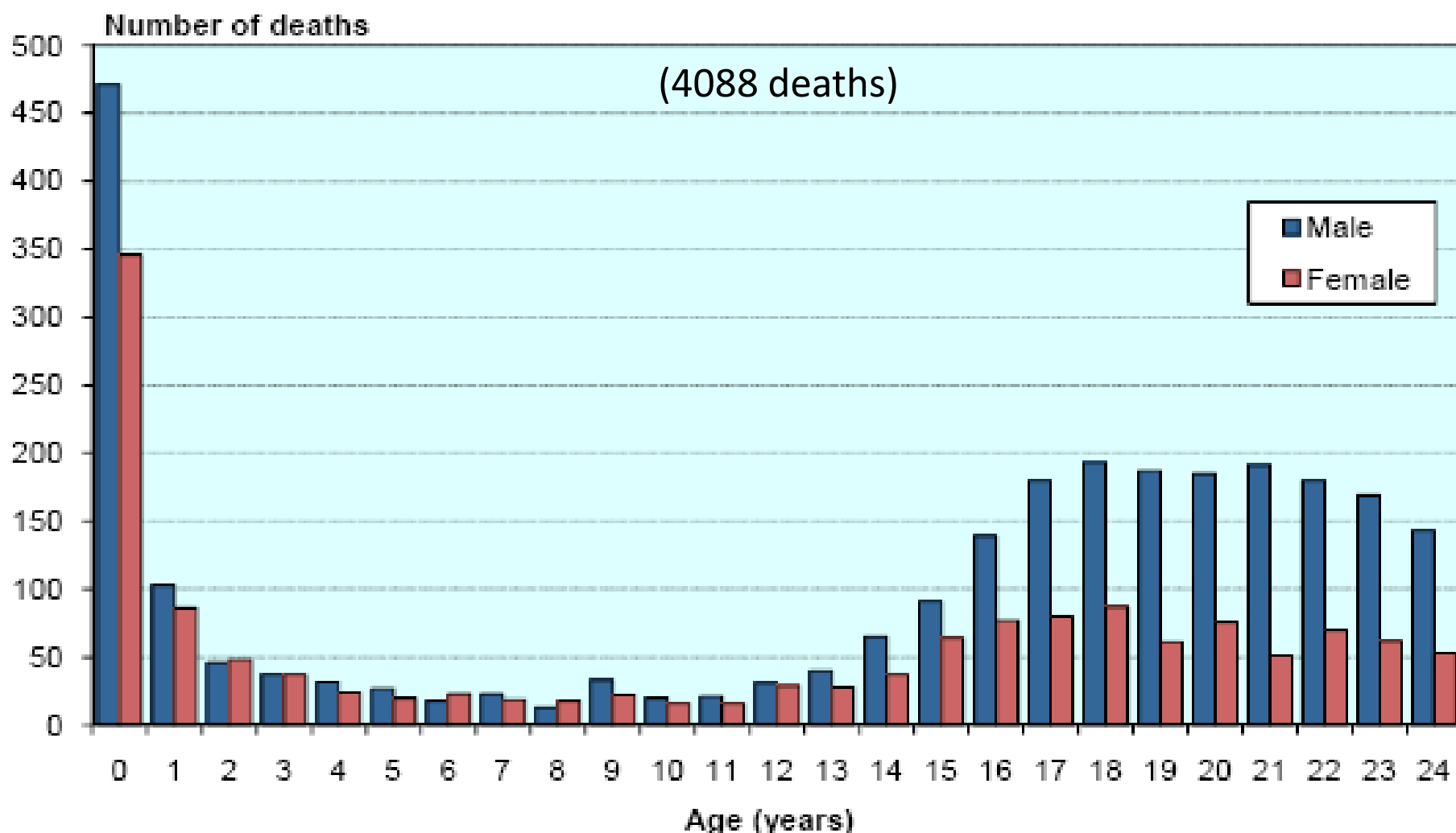
***“To identify, address and potentially decrease  
the numbers of infant, child and youth  
deaths in New Zealand”***



**HEALTH QUALITY & SAFETY  
COMMISSION NEW ZEALAND**

*Heiapa Taurangi Hauora o Aotearoa*

# New Zealand Mortality age 28<sup>days</sup>- 25<sup>yrs</sup> Gender and Age in Years 2004-2009





# Know Some of the Harm



- **32% of injury death 15 – 24 involved alcohol**
  - attributable or contributing
  - CYMRC Special Report Dec 2011
- **Very incomplete data around how alcohol causes and contributes to deaths of under 15 yr olds**



- **These examples are based on a compilation of what is learnt from death review and clinical practice**
- **Any resemblance to real cases is coincidence but may reflect that these themes are tragically common**



# Every Sleep a Safe Sleep



- **Busy household two families limited space**
  - 4 adults, 5 children ages 2 months to 8 years
  - 2 shift workers
  - 3 smokers
- **Mattresses on floor**
- **Adults and toddler routinely sleep on couch**
- **No regular routine as to where the baby sleeps**
- **Friday night social gathering with friends around**
- **One friend stays over**





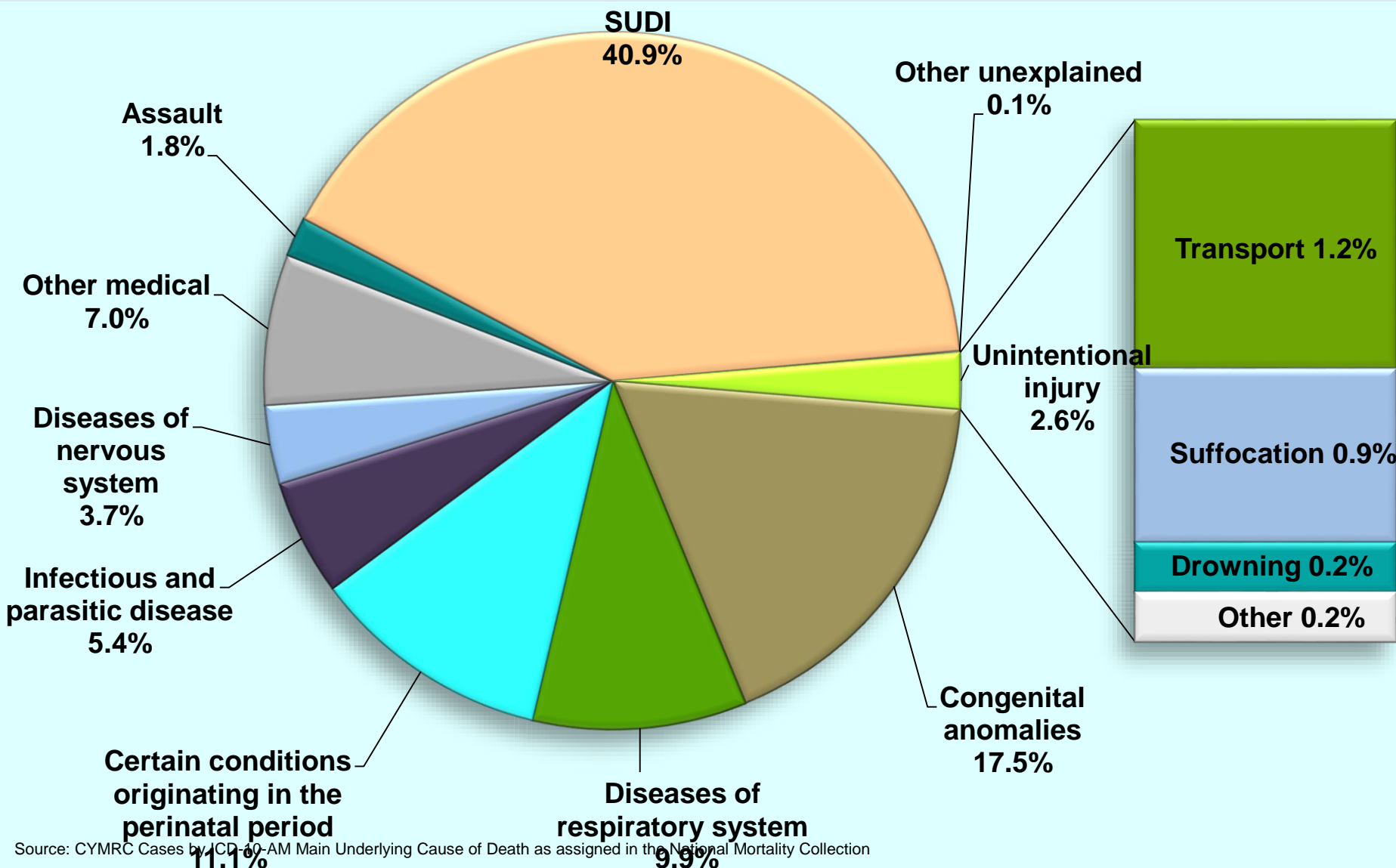
# Not a Safe Sleep



- **Mum wakes**
  - Realises baby has not feed all night
- **Cannot find baby**
- **Finally baby found cold and stiff on couch between cushions where mum has slept**
- **She cannot remember what happened, why was baby asleep on the couch**
- **In the report to coroner police make comment about empty bottles around the house**



# Post-neonatal mortality (% number of deaths) in children aged 28 days to 364 days by cause of death, New Zealand 2004–2009 combined



# Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy – A Spectrum



Infants under one who die without enough distress to alert caregivers

Vulnerability  
or Disease

Environment  
al Factors

10

10

10

10

10

10

SIDS

Vulnerability and Environment  
Conspire Together

Suffocation

- **Vulnerability or Disease** – smoking especially before birth, preterm, growth retarded, infections, weak, floppy, other diseases
- **Environmental factors** – face covering, tummy sleeping, chest compression, neck compression, airway blockage, over heating



# Suffocation During Sleep

- every baby needs a sober caregiver
  - 25% of cases mum two units alcohol in last 24 hours Vs 3% of controls
- reprioritise safe spaces for babies to sleep
  - just as important as car seats





# Safety in Numbers?

- Beautiful sunny day
- Banks of the river extended family gathering
  - Plenty of food and alcohol
- Kids playing together
  - Happily moving pool – pool
    - Group supervision
  - Adults settling for a quiet afternoon
- Where is the four year old?
  - Bush and scrub around river banks pools of quiet water



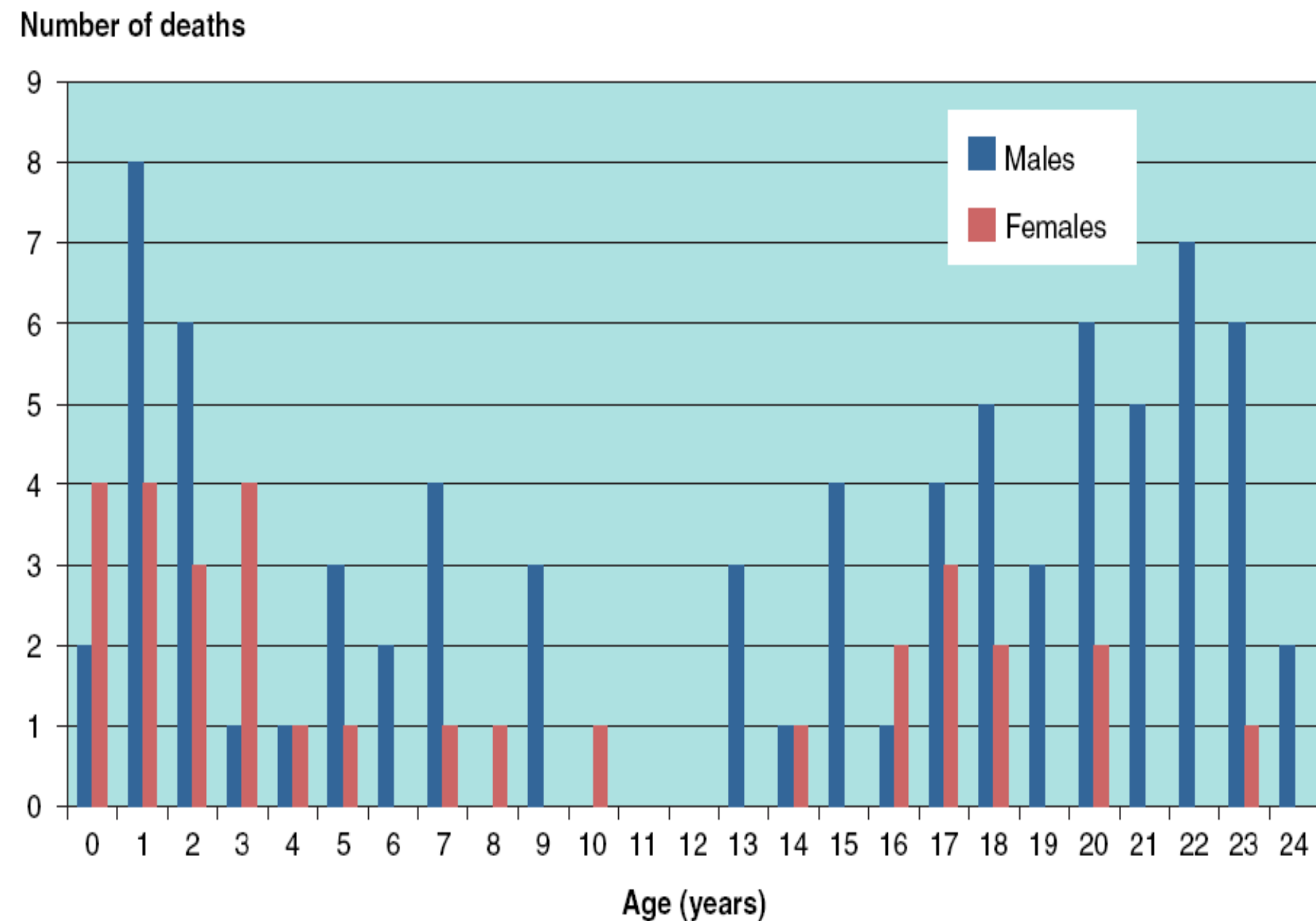


# Safety in Numbers? – NO!



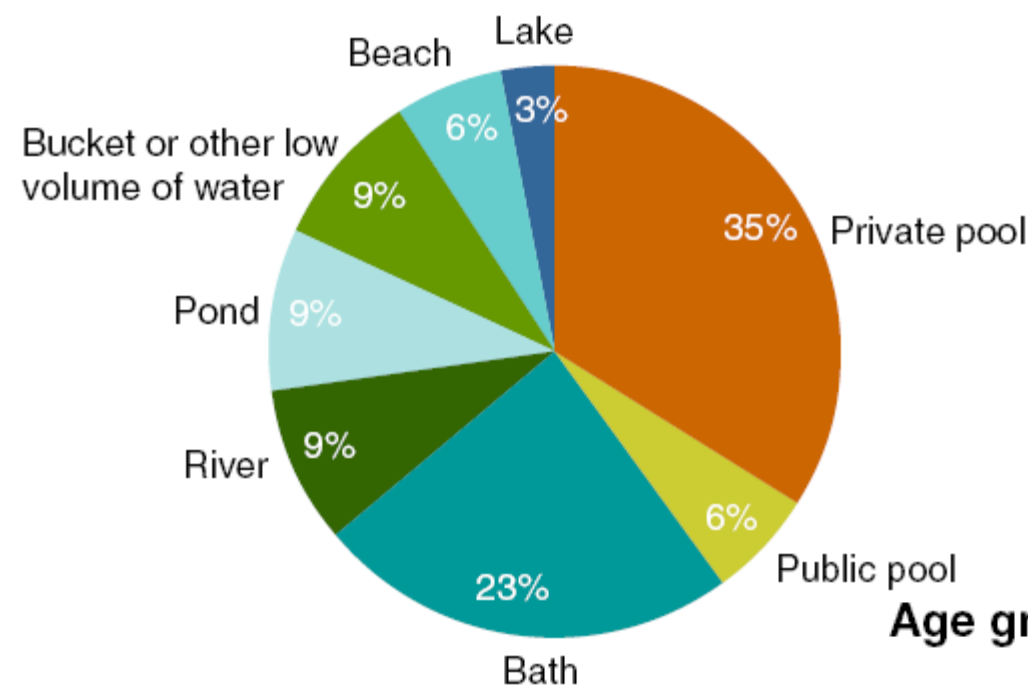
- After a quick search
- Found face down floating under the surface in a calm pool
- CRP from family members
- Ambulance called
  - resuscitation stopped after 20 minutes

**Figure 2.1** Number of drownings in New Zealand, 2003–2007 combined

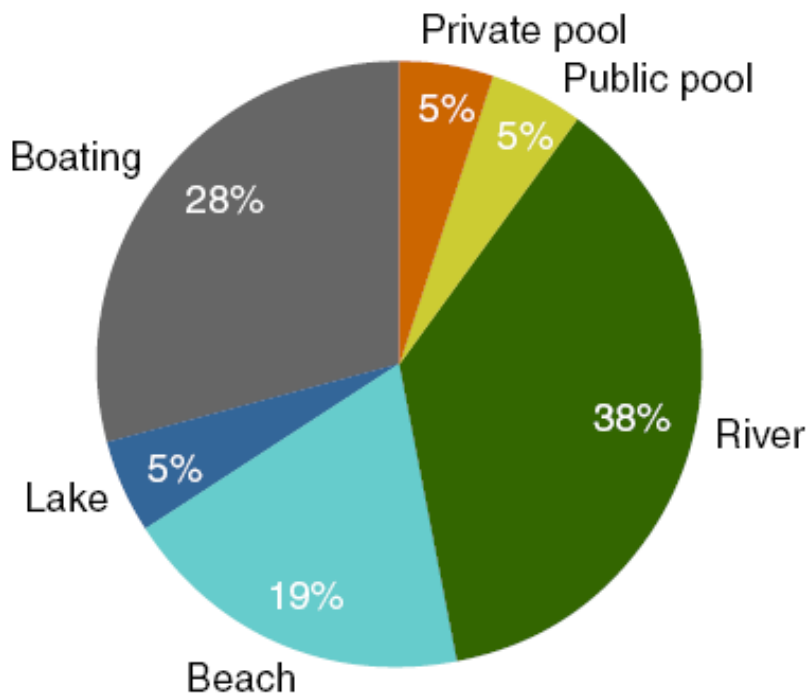




# Age group 0–4 years (34 deaths)



# Age group 5–14 years (21 deaths)

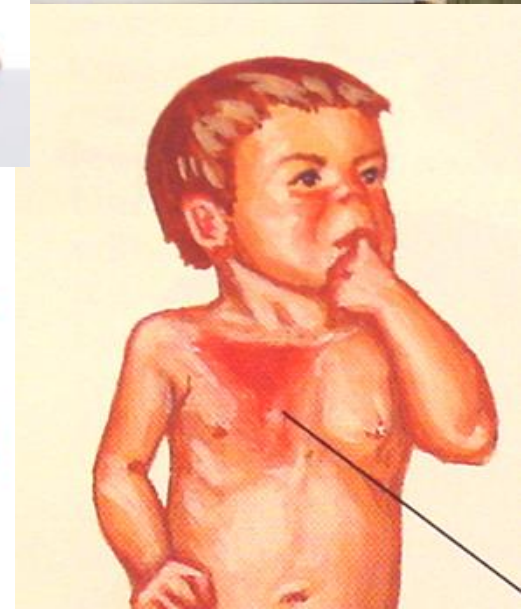
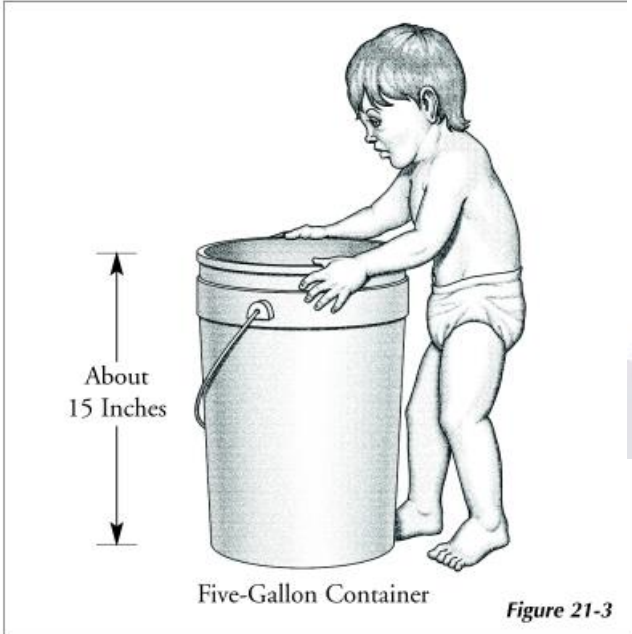


# Facts



- **Children drown**
  - very quietly
  - very quickly
- **Inadequate supervision factor in drowning under 5 years**
  - always direct line of sight of an adult - sober
- **Group supervision is a hazard**
- **Alcohol involvement in drowning? – NZ – 20 +/-yr.**
- **Intense supervision is a major protector**

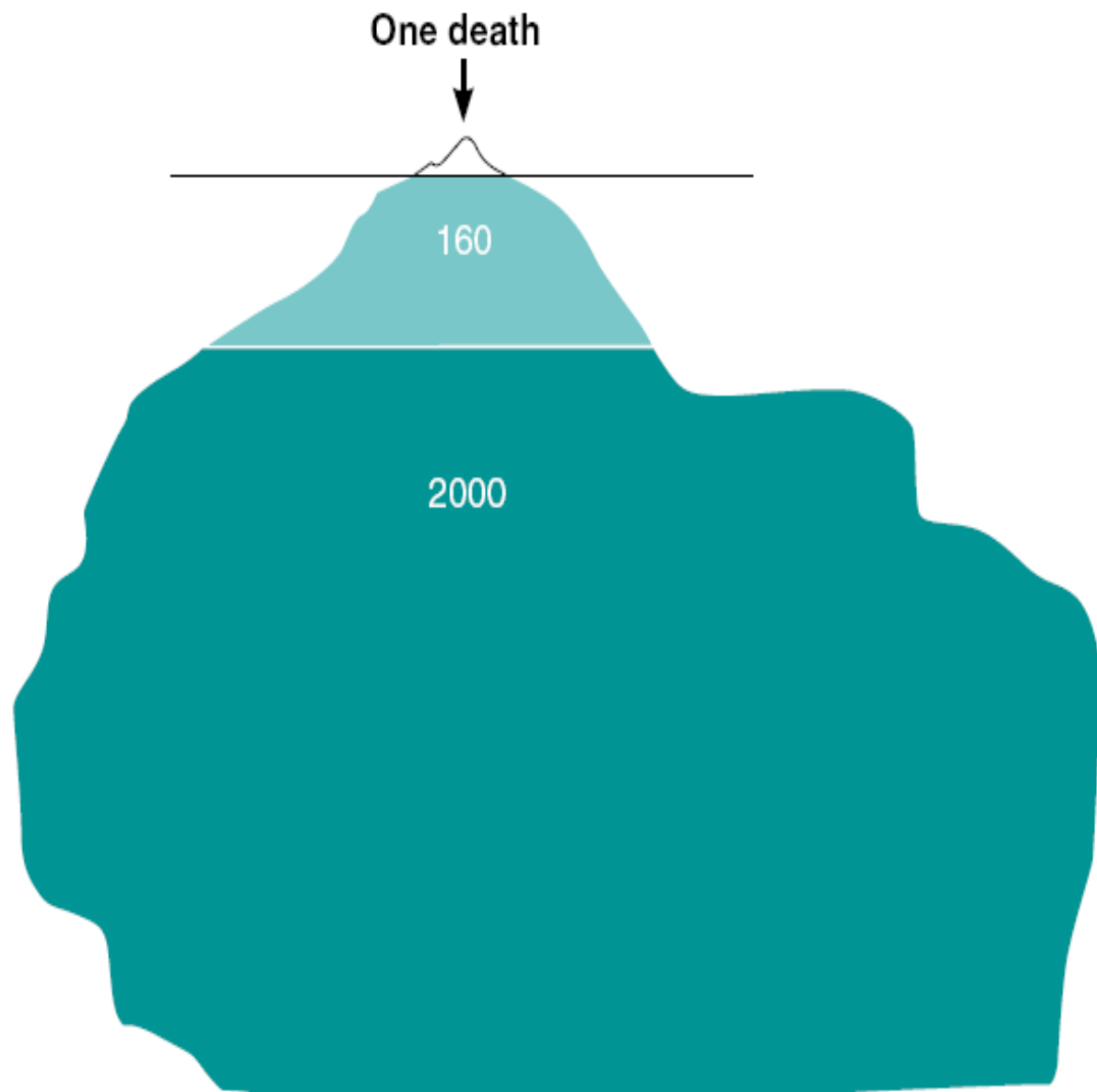




Beep..... Beep.....

For every one death among children aged 0 to 14 in the Netherlands during 1991–95 (home and leisure accidents) there were:

- 160 hospital admissions
- 2,000 accident and emergency department visits





# Pattern of Injury



- **0 – 5 years**
  - total dependence on intense supervision for safety and support
  - environmental safety - home
- **5 - 14 years**
  - parental support remains + own innate skills increasing
  - relative safety – fewer deaths
  - environmental safety - wider
  - build risk competence for the years ahead



# Issues



- **Every child needs a sober caregiver**
- **Broader understanding of risks of alcohol and hazardous environments – homes, outdoors**
- **Police should be mandated to test for alcohol related impairment whenever a child or young person suffers serious injury or fatality, regardless of location**



# Sue



- **Born to a young mum**
  - Alcohol related conception
  - Alcohol during pregnancy
- **Mum and partner frequently drunk**
- **Witnessed and experienced domestic violence**
  - possibly shaken
- **CYF involvement - 18 months out of family home**
- **School failure – poor attention, low achievement**
- **Violence outbursts**
- **Truant by 9 stood down by 11**



# What Next?



- Early use of sweet alcoholic drinks
- Disconnection from school and family
- Known to police
  - violent assaults
  - shop lifting
- Alcohol poisoning - unconscious in the bushes
- Unplanned teen pregnancy

**Her baby suffocates under her arm while she sleeps on the sofa after binge drinking!**

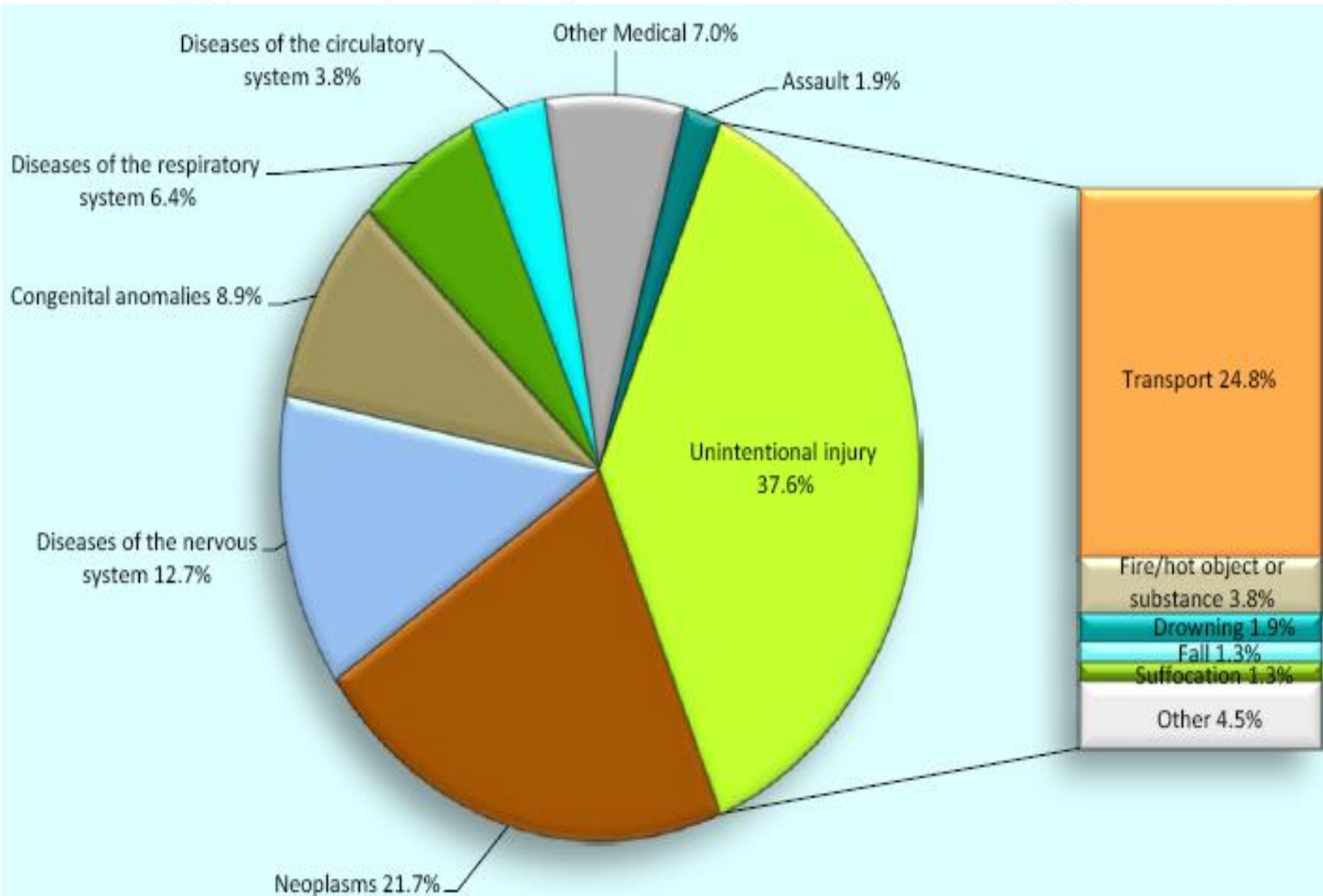


# **A Life Spoiled by Marinating in Alcohol**



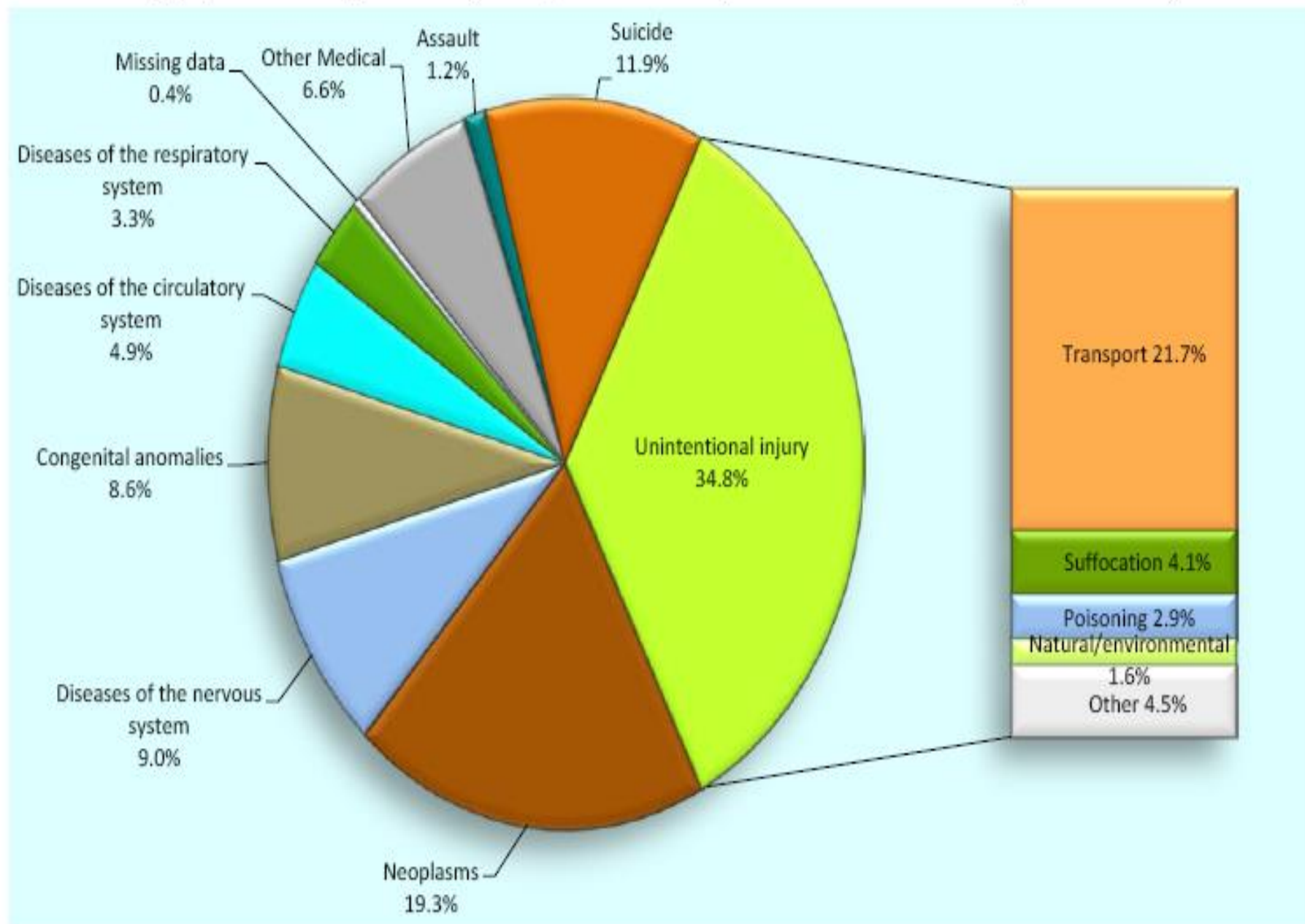
- **Alcohol exposure before birth**
- **Impacts of witnessed and learned behaviours**
  - **Effects every aspect of her life**
  - **Less**
    - **supervision, attention, resources, connection**
  - **More**
    - **drinking, fear, violence**
- **How do we break the cycle?**
  - **intervention points, unbroken chain of support**
  - **children visible in the services for parents?**

**Figure 4.1:** Mortality (%) in children aged 5–9 years by cause of death, New Zealand 2006–2010 (n=157 deaths)



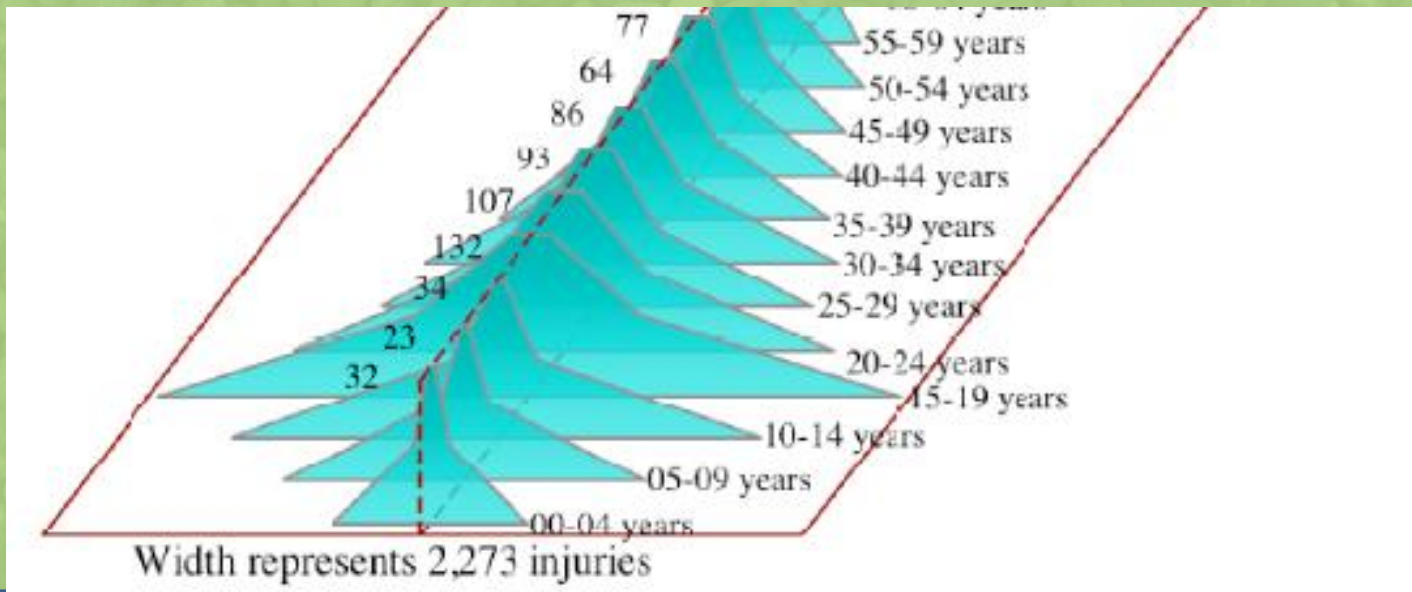


**Figure 5.1: Mortality (%) in children aged 10–14 years by cause of death, New Zealand 2006–2010 (n=244 deaths)**



# Transport Related Death & Injury

- The biggest killer 5 - 14
- Major cost
- Major expenditure
- Alcohol issues significant





At least a third of all Police recorded offences are committed by an offender who has consumed alcohol prior to committing the offence

# *Through the Eyes of a Child?*



# Summary



- The real size of the problem is unknown
- Every child needs a sober caregiver
- Broader understanding of risks of alcohol and hazardous environments – homes, outdoors
- Testing for alcohol whenever a child or young person suffers serious injury or fatality
- Alcohol control and harm minimisation is important for infants and children they only have one chance to reach their full potential
- Make children visible in services for parents



# Acknowledgements



- CYMRC Workforce
  - Local & National Coordinators
  - Local Groups and Chairs
  - 500 plus Agents — *Police, CYF, Plunket, St Johns, MOE, NGOs*
  - DHBs
  - Coroners
  - Data group
  - HQSC staff
- CYMRC advisors
- PMMRC – sharing information

