

Statistical Bulletin No. 4.

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SYDNEY CORONERS' COURTS:
STATISTICS 1979.

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
N.S.W. Department of the Attorney-General and of Justice
Box 6, G.P.O., Sydney , N.S.W., 2001

Senior City Coroner: N.F. Walsh, Stipendiary Magistrate
City Coroner: Mrs M. Sleeman, Stipendiary Magistrate
Coroners Court
44-46 Parramatta Road, Glebe, 2037

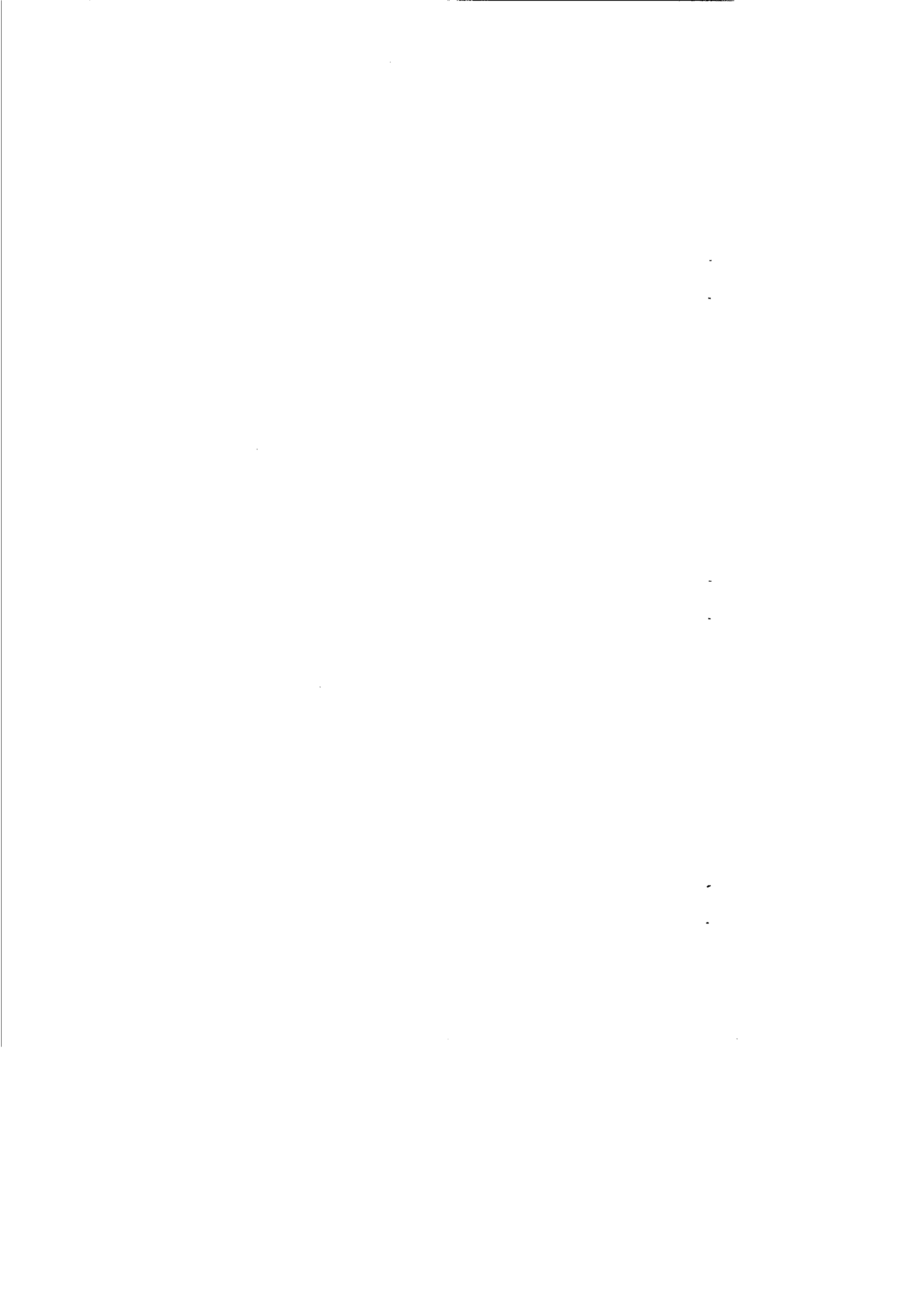
This report has been prepared from inquests and magisterial inquiries heard before the City Coroners' Court, Glebe.

There are approximately 3,000 coronial inquiries dealt with in New South Wales annually, of which one third are handled by the city court. The rest are held throughout the state by Magistrates, Private Coroners and Clerks of Petty Sessions.

The figures relate to inquiries conducted and finalised in their respective years, not to deaths occurring therein.

Traffic accidents and suicides accounted for over half the deaths investigated by the coroner.

As for previous years with 'Traffic Accident Deaths', most of the deaths were pedestrians, 132 of the total 370 (i.e. 36%), of whom 46% were aged 60 years and over. (It must be remembered that those figures do not represent all road deaths in New South Wales).



	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Inquests and Magisteral inquiries held	1446	1315	1308	1273
Fire Inquiries held	<u>17</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>
Inquests held before a Jury - 3	<u>1463</u>	<u>1324</u>	<u>1326</u>	<u>1279</u>

Findings as to Manner and Cause of Death

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
1. <u>Suicide</u>	342	265	293	323
2. <u>Suicide whilst Insane</u>	5	2	-	-
3. <u>Open Finding</u>	130	124	113	145
4. <u>Accidental Drug Death</u>	68	73	46	86
5. <u>Accidental Drowning</u>	59	53	49	45
6. <u>Traffic</u> - Inquest adjourned and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with culpable driving or manslaughter:-				
a) Committed for Trial	40	30	55	31
b) Discharged	11	12	11	6
c) Dealt with in Children's Court	3	-	3	2
7. <u>Traffic</u> - Inquest adjourned when prima facie case of manslaughter or culpable driving established against a known person.	3	1	1	1
8. <u>Other Traffic Accidents</u>	381	310	395	330
9. <u>Other Accidents</u>	236	298	221	201
10 a) <u>Adjourned</u> and followed by committal proceedings when person charged with murder or non-traffic manslaughter	63	48	34	40
b) <u>Adjourned</u> when prima facie case of murder or non-traffic manslaughter established by Coroner against a known person	1	-	20	-
11. <u>Killed</u> by a person since deceased or unknown	13	14	12	7
12. <u>Excusable and Justifiable Homicide</u>	1	-	1	3
13. <u>Natural Causes</u>				
a) Whilst driving a motor vehicle and not included in Categories 6,7 or 8	24	14	6	-
b) Others	<u>66</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>53</u>
	<u>1446</u>	<u>1315</u>	<u>1308</u>	<u>1273</u>

SUICIDE FINDINGS

Categories No. 1 and 2

Total = 323

1. Sex		5. Alcohol in Blood	
Male	222	Nil	220
Female	<u>101</u>	Below .08%	30
	<u>323</u>	.08% plus	50
		Not stated	<u>23</u>
			<u>323</u>
2. Age		6. Suicide Note Left	
to 12 yrs	-	Yes	101
13 to 19 yrs	15	No	222
20 to 29 yrs	70		<u>323</u>
30 to 39 yrs	67	7. Any prior treatment of	
40 to 49 yrs	61	Psychiatric Nature	
50 to 59 yrs	57	Yes	134
60 to 69 yrs	30	No	189
70 and over	<u>23</u>		<u>323</u>
	<u>323</u>		
3. Marital Status		8. Prior Indication of Suicide	
Married	141	Yes	125
Married but		No	198
separated	14		<u>323</u>
Single	110	9. Country of Origin	
Divorced	20	Australia	239
Widow/widower	32	England	18
Not stated	<u>6</u>	Scotland	7
	<u>323</u>	Italy	6
4. Method		Poland	5
Overdose	109	Germany	4
Barbiturate	<u>62</u>	Yugoslavia	4
Barbiturate plus		Greece	4
alcohol	12	New Zealand	3
Other sedative	24	Hungary	3
Anti-depressants	2	India	3
Other drugs	<u>9</u>	Finland	2
	<u>109</u>	Ireland	2
Shooting	51	U.S.A.	2
Hanging	54	Czechoslovakia	2
Gas		Lithuania	2
a) appliances	8	Malta	2
b) exhaust	35	Latvia	2
Jumping from height	25	Chile	2
Poison	5	France	1
Lie/jump under		Lebanon	1
train	12	Spain	1
Stabbing	1	Austria	1
Drowning	4	China	1
Burning	4	Belgium	1
Electrocution	5	South Africa	1
Suffocation	2	Uruguay	1
Cut throat	4	Canada	1
Lie in front of car	3	Sicily	1
Crash car	<u>1</u>	Seychelles	<u>1</u>
	<u>323</u>		<u>323</u>

SUICIDE FINDINGS continued

10. Occupations

<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
Professional	14	Pensioner	42
Commercial	21	Home duties	37
Clerical	15	Office	11
Tradesman	31	Nurse	2
Unskilled	28	Barmaid	1
Pensioner	41	Cook	1
Unemployed	43	Unemployed	3
Retired	4	Cleaner	1
Student	2	Self-employed	1
Factory	7	Property owner	1
Prisoner	2		
Musician	1		
Armed Forces	3		
Nurse	2		
Teacher	3		
Bookmaker	1		
Hairdresser	1		
Not known	3	Not known	1
	<u>222</u>		<u>101</u>

OPEN FINDINGS

Category No. 3

Total = 145

No evidence of manner and cause of death or either	29
Left 'open' as between suicide or accidental	<u>116</u>
	<u>145</u>

OPEN (suicide or accidental)

1. Sex

Male	77
Female	<u>39</u>
	<u>116</u>

2. Age

to 12 yrs	-
13 to 19 yrs	6
20 to 29 yrs	32
30 to 39 yrs	11
40 to 49 yrs	19
50 to 59 yrs	27
60 to 69 yrs	12
70 yrs plus	6
Not stated	<u>3</u>
	<u>116</u>

3. Method of Death

Overdose	
Barbiturate	25
Barbiturate plus alcohol	11
Other sedative	11
Anti-depressant	2
Heroin	8
Alcohol alone	2
Other drugs	12
Fall from height	8
Drowning	12
Train - struck or fell from	4
Gassing	6
Head injuries	4
M/vehicle accident	1
Drunken fall	1
Ruptured liver	1
Poisoning	1
Inhalation of vomitus	1
Unascertainable	<u>6</u>
	<u>116</u>

4. Opinion as to the more likely manner

Suicide	21
Accidental	19
Equivocal	73
Natural causes	<u>3</u>
	<u>116</u>

5. Reason for Open Finding

Lack of evidence of intent	45
Insufficient evidence	53
Mental illness factor	2
Decomposition	30
Addicted or habituated to drugs	<u>15</u>
	<u>145</u>

ACCIDENTAL (non-intended) DRUG DEATHS

Category No. 4

Total = 86

1. Hard Drugs

Heroin	13
Morphine	10
Methadone	6
Palfium	1
	<u>30</u>

2. Sedatives/depressants

Chloral Hydrate elix-nocte	2
Barbiturate plus alcohol	34
Diazepam plus alcohol	1
	<u>37</u>

Alcohol readings from .02% to .260%

3. Alcohol Alone 4

Alcohol readings from .38% to .460%

4. Other Drugs

Insulin	1
Promethazine	1
Dextropropoxyphene	1
Fluorocarbon	1
Methqualone	1
Preponolal	1
Glutethimide	1
Dupivicaïne	1
Diphenhydromine	1
Dextroramide	1
Vegemite	1
Stimulant	1
Not stated	3
	<u>15</u>

5. Addicted or Habituated to drugs or alcohol

Yes	53
No	7
Not known	26
	<u>86</u>

6. Sex

Male	62
Female	24
	<u>86</u>

7. Age

to 12 yrs	-
13 to 19 yrs	9
20 to 29 yrs	39
30 to 39 yrs	13
40 to 49 yrs	10
50 to 59 yrs	11
60 to 69 yrs	3
70 yrs plus	1
	<u>86</u>

8. Expansion of the Hard Drug Scene

Total 'accidental' drug deaths

Drug	1976	1977	1978	1979
Morphine	7	13	7	10
Heroin	10	13	6	13
Methadone	4	1	2	6
Palfium	-	1	1	1
Cocaine	-	1	-	-
Pethidine	-	1	-	-
	<u>21</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>30</u>

ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS

Category No. 5

Total = 45

1. Sex

Male 28
 Female 17
45

2. Age

to 5 yrs 12
 6 to 12 yrs 3
 13 to 19 yrs 3
 20 to 29 yrs 6
 30 to 39 yrs 4
 40 to 49 yrs 4
 50 to 59 yrs 6
 60 to 69 yrs 4
 70 yrs plus 3
45

3. Swimming Ability

Good 2
 Fair 6
 Slight 2
 Nil including children 7
 Not known 22
 Not applicable 6
45

4. Country of Origin

Australia 38
 England 2
 Scotland 1
 Lebanon 1
 Poland 1
 Latvia 2
45

5. Alcohol in Blood

Nil including children 27
 Below .08% 4
 .08% plus 12
 Not known 2
45

6. Circumstances

Home Pools
 Under 5 yrs 7
 Over 5 yrs 3
 Public Pools
 Under 5 yrs -
 Over 5 yrs 2
 Open sea 2
 Surf 2
 Skin Diver 1
 River 8
 Accidental fall into fish pond 2
 Still water 5
 Drunken falls into water 2
 Boating and canoeing 2
 Bath
 Under 5 yrs -
 Over 5 yrs 2
 Accidental fall into harbour 1
 Swamp 2
 Storm water canal 1
 Not stated 3
45

7. Home Pool Drownings

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Under 5 yrs	10	10	9	7
Total drownings	59	53	49	44
Proportion	17%	19%	18%	16%

		TRAFFIC ACCIDENT DEATHS						Categories No. 6, 7 and 8		Total = 370
STATUS		DRIVER	PASSENGER	MOTOR CYCLE RIDER	PILION PASSENGER	PEDAL CYCLE OR SCOOTER	PEDESTRIANS	TOTAL		
SEX	Male	78	42	49	1	3	79	252		
	Female	14	44	2	4	1	53	118		
AGE	No 12 years	-	9	-	-	3	23	35		
	13 - 19 yrs	11	20	16	5	-	5	57		
	20 - 29 yrs	36	21	28	-	-	8	93		
	30 - 39 yrs	16	8	5	-	-	6	35		
	40 - 49 yrs	12	10	1	-	-	8	31		
	50 - 59 yrs	9	7	1	-	-	21	38		
	60 - 69 yrs	5	6	-	-	-	24	35		
	70 plus yrs	3	5	-	-	1	37	46		
	Total	92	86	51	5	4	132	370		
	ALCOHOL	Not known	10	8	8	-	-	14	40	
Nil (including children)		49	57	30	4	4	95	239		
Below .08%		10	5	1	-	-	2	18		
.08% - .150%		6	9	8	1	-	8	32		
.151% - .250%		14	5	2	-	-	7	28		
.251% plus		3	2	2	-	-	6	13		
Total	92	86	51	5	4	132	370			

The figures understate the alcohol factor. Many victims survive for considerable periods after injury. Where death occurs more than 24 hours after injury, blood alcohol analysis is not ordered. Survival even for a few hours will result in a lower reading and in fact may result in a 'nil' reading.

OTHER ACCIDENTS

Category No. 9

Total = 201

Circumstances

1. Falls

Drunken	5
At work	5
From train	4
Aged from train	2
From bus	2
At home	7
From building	2
From cliff	2
From ladder	1
From window	4
Down stairs	2
Aged down stairs	9
From roof	3
On wet floor	1
Aged from bed	2
Aged while walking	23
Fall in hall mentally retarded	1
From bridge	1
From bicycle	2
	<u>78</u>

2. Burns

Smoking in bed or chair	11
House on fire	4
Bath	3
Radiator	1
Gas fire	1
Petrol in car caught fire	1
Rubbish caught fire	1
Stove	2
Clothing	1
Molten metal	1
Machine exploded	1
	<u>27</u>

3. Suffocation

Smoke from fire in house	2
By plastic	1
	<u>3</u>

4. Injuries

Hit or run over by train	10
Crushed by pillar/wall	2
Struck by tree	1
Hit by boat	1
Struck by winch	1
Crushed by car	3
	<u>18</u>

5. At Factory or Ship

Drawn into machinery	3
Crushed	5
Hit by work vehicle	4
Fell into mixer bin	1
Head injuries	1
Compressed air in mouth	1
Explosion	1
	<u>16</u>

6. Gassed

Faulty appliance	3
Gas left on or not ignited	14
	<u>17</u>

7. Electrocution

Faulty appliance or cord	5
Touched live wire	2
Hit chisel into wire	1
Lamp on rotary line	1
Travelling on top of train	2
	<u>11</u>

8. Food

Choking	9
	<u>9</u>

9. Strangulation

Auto eroticism	2
	<u>2</u>

10. Others

Asphyxia	2
Carbon monoxide poisoning accidental	11
Hit by yacht boom	1
Inhalation of habithane	1
Renal machine failure	1
Sepsis	1
Inhalation of vomitus whilst drunk	1
Shooting	1
Pole snapped	1
	<u>20</u>