

## **DLRG Barometer**

**at least 504 deaths due to drowning/significantly more drowned people during the long summer 2018**

**translated bathing rules:** <https://www.dlrg.de/informieren/regeln/uebersetzungen-baderegeln.html>.

Last year at least 504 people drowned in Germany. 435 men and women, about 86 percent of the victims, lost their lives in rivers, streams, lakes and canals. These figures were announced by the Deutsche Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft (DLRG). „If we had relatively low drowning rates last year due to the lack of summer per se, the prolonged summer weather now proved that unfortunately things can be different“, lamented Achim Wiese, press spokesman for the largest water rescue organisation in the world.

Most deaths occurred at unsecured bathing sites, especially in inland areas. There, 435 people lost their lives, which corresponds to about 86 percent of the total number. 161 died in rivers, 233 in lakes and ponds. „Inland waters unfortunately still lead the drowning statistics because they are rarely guarded by lifeguards. The risk of drowning is much higher here. We will continue to be available to local authorities and rural districts with our hazard expertise and lifeguards, you just have to approach us“, explains Achim Haag, President of the DLRG. A simple bathing prohibition sign prevents very few people from going into the water. In swimming pools, comparatively few of the 29 bathers died the wet death.

The total number of victims rose by 24.8 percent to 504 in 2018. The summer of 2018 already began in April and from then on drowning rates gradually increased. Many people longed to cool off in fine weather and often went too carelessly into the water. This is demonstrated by the months of June and July alone, in which 212 people died in the water alone - 42 percent of the total number. Other reasons are again alcohol abuse and overconfidence.

The number of fatal accidents in the North Sea and Baltic Sea has been reduced by three compared to 2017. On the coast between Borkum and Usedom, 25 people died (four in the North Sea and 21 in the Baltic Sea), many of them sailing or fishing – „another indicator that the voluntary work of the lifeguards pays off and that the Central Water Rescue Service on the coast has performed outstandingly“, says Haag. On the other hand, the number of deaths in swimming pools has increased. In 2018, the DLRG statistics recorded 29 (2017: 12) victims in outdoor, indoor and natural swimming pools. Two people drowned in private swimming pools.

In a gender comparison, the proportion of women is around 18 percent, while men once again form the risk group. „This can usually be attributed to recklessness, willingness to take risks and overestimation of oneself“, says Wiese.

Older people are still particularly affected by drowning. In the 55+ age group, 203 people drowned, or 40.3 percent of the total, compared with 29.2 percent in the previous year. The results for young people were also negative. Eleven primary school children and 15 preschool children drowned in water.

Refugees remain a particular risk group. Last year, 33 asylum seekers drowned, almost all of them were non-swimmers. The DLRG has already acted here and translated the bathing rules into over 25 languages:

<https://www.dlrg.de/informieren/regeln/uebersetzungen-baderegeln.html>.

As in previous years, most people drowned in Bavaria (Bayern). 89 people lost their lives in the Free State. North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen) ranks second with 63, followed by Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) (61) and Baden-Württemberg (62) as well as Hessen (36) and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) (31).

In the international statistic „Drowning per 100,000 inhabitants“;, the Federal Republic of Germany closes with a very good value of 0.61 for 82 million inhabitants. This puts it in the top group in a global comparison with England, the Netherlands and Italy. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ranks last among the federal states with 1.92. With seven victims, Thüringen is the best performer with 0.33 in relation to its population. This is followed by Berlin (also 0.33), Nordrhein-Westfalen (0.35) and Rheinland-Pfalz (0.54).

### **Petition for the preservation of public swimmingpools**

DLRG President Haag: „This can probably be seen in connection with the declining swimming ability and the ongoing development of swimming pools in Germany“. For years, the DLRG has been vehemently criticising the deteriorating conditions for swimming training. More and more swimming pools are being closed or converted into so-called fun pools where swimming training is no longer an option. As a result, waiting times for swimming courses become longer. „We must preserve baths, build baths, not rationalize away. Closures are at the expense of water security for the population and affordable social services“, warns Haag.

The possible consequences are already foreseeable: around 60 percent of ten-year-olds are not safe swimmers. Even 25 percent of primary schools no longer have access to a swimming pool - or some have to travel long distances. Against this background, the DLRG has launched a nationwide online petition entitled „Rettet die Bäder“ („Save the Baths“), to draw attention to the topic and counteract the continuing negative trend. At least 50,000 signatures are the goal, so that these are passed on directly to the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag. All further information on this subject can be found at [www.rettet-die-baeder.de](http://www.rettet-die-baeder.de).

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