2013 SURVEY OF

COMMUNITY PER CEPTIONS OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN'S SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS

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Executive Summary

AUSTSWIM is Australia's national organisation for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety. The AUSTSWIM accreditation is the industry standard for teachers of swimming and water safety and is delivered and recognised across Australia and internationally. There are over 30,000 AUSTSWIM Teachers™, 10,000 of which are licensed in specialist areas such as infants, adults and people with disabilities. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable and evidence based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships, quality programs, products and services; all underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

A National survey of parents of children currently enrolled in swimming and water safety programs across Australia was undertaken by AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving. The survey aimed to understand more about the effectiveness of swimming and water safety programs and to characterise the group of children accessing swimming and water safety lessons. The survey was administered to parents of children aged 5 to 14 years old, between April and June 2013. Responses were also collected from parents whose children were not currently enrolled in swimming and water safety lessons, from parents of children outside the age range of 5 to 14 years, and from other members of the community who didn't have children. The responses of 1,658 survey participants were analysed.

The majority of respondents were females and aged between 18 and 44 years – with 39 years being the most common age of respondents. New South Wales and Victoria were the States where most participants were residing (32% and 27% respectively). The most common household configuration was four people in total with two children aged under 17 years old.

Twelve percent of respondents experienced a non-fatal drowning themselves. An additional 154 indicated they had a friend who died by drowning and 90 mentioned they had a family member die from drowning. Regarding their own swimming abilities, most respondents (97%) described themselves as being able to swim. Of some concern is the fact that 26% of those indicated that they were unable to swim more than 50m in open water.

Of the 1,875 children identified, 1,702 (91%) were described as being able to swim. Of the remaining 173 children that couldn't swim, 147 were aged between 5 and 7 years. More boys were described as not being able to swim than girls in the 5 to 14 years age group.

When asked "what is the best age to start participating in swimming lessons", respondents chose primarily the option "2 years or less". The parents supporting earlier ages to start enrolling children in swimming lessons were younger, unlike the trends observed in the teacher's survey. Interestingly when parents were asked a question that gave them time and money restrictions on children participating in swimming and water safety lessons, parents tended to choose later ages to start enrolling them in such an activity.

Thirty six percent (n=666) of the children identified as offspring of the respondents, were enrolled in swimming lessons before the age of one year. The second most common age to start swimming lessons was three years old. Of the respondents surveyed, most children participated in 40 lessons per year. This is pleasing to note as this shows that most children are participating in swimming and water safety lessons on a regular basis and not just in a two week intensive program.

Even though most children were still enrolled in swimming and water safety lessons at the time of the survey completion, a noteworthy number of children (n=73) had stopped participating before the age of 5 years old. The most commonly identified barrier to participation was the cost of lessons (n=118), closely followed by children not wanting to participate (n=93) and children already knowing how to swim (n=56). Enhancing our understanding of why children do not want to participate in swimming and water safety lessons is vital to ensuring that all children gain a foundation level of swimming and water safety skills.

The majority of parents with children currently enrolled or enrolled in the past chose "safety" as the most important consideration. Additionally, when asked to assess, as a parent, the relative importance of a set of eight water safety and aquatic skills, the majority valued "personal survival skills" as the most important, which contradicts the perceptions of swim teachers who believed that parents valued competitive skills higher than survival skills. Parents also rated "water safety knowledge" and "survival skills" as the second and third most important skills. Furthermore, parents scored resuscitation and emergency skills higher than competitive swimming strokes and skills. It is therefore clear that the parents surveyed value safety and survival skills as the most important aquatic skills their children need to acquire. This suggests that swimming lessons should focus more on water safety and survival skills and less on competitive swimming.

When parents were asked about the skills that best reflected what a 12 year old should be able to perform, a large number of respondents selected options in alignment with the National Water Safety Framework equivalent to Level 4 of the Swim and Survive program. This included being able to swim 100 to 200m, having skills in 2 competitive and 2 survival strokes, being able to read water for more than 5 minutes and have experience being rescued as well as performing a variety of rescues including reach, throw, non-contact and contact tow rescues.

The high importance parents place on swimming and water safety lessons was emphasised when asked to value a set of seven extra-curricular activities for their child. Sixty eight percent of all parents and 76% of all non-parents chose "learn to swim" as the most important activity.

With respect to respondent's awareness of different swimming, water safety and drowning prevention organisations, most participants referred to AUSTSWIM as the preferred organisation regarding learn to swim and swim teacher certification. Royal Life Saving Society - Australia and Surf Life Saving were identified as the main organizations associated with water safety and drowning prevention. Despite parents identifying a teacher's qualifications as the most important factor in evaluating a teacher's effectiveness, it is concerning that over half (54%) of all parents did not seek the AUSTSWIM teacher accreditation when choosing a swim school.

When respondents were asked about satisfaction regarding customer service and levels of feedback on children's abilities and achievements, the great diversity of comments suggests that the learn to swim industry would benefit from being proactive in seeking parent's opinions and in providing parents with appropriate levels of feedback and implementing a more customer-tailored interaction.

This report presents several recommendations aimed at enhancing our understanding of the community's perceptions and attitudes towards children's swimming and water safety skills. These include the aquatic industry recognising the importance that parents place on personal survival skills, water safety knowledge and

survival strokes and ensure that these are taught. The industry should also consider responses given by parents regarding customer service and their desire for greater levels of feedback from their child's instructor.

Further research is also required around children who aren't enrolled in swimming lessons and can't swim, as well as around those who stopped ceased enrolment for reasons other than knowing how to swim. As few men participated in the survey, it would be of interest to conduct research into men's attitudes towards water safety in general, as well as attitudes of men with children towards their children's water safety and participation in formal swimming and water safety education.

Recommendations

- Implement systems that ensure the acquisition of skills, such as survival swimming and basic rescue, by all primary school aged children. This will build resilience through the use of knowledge and skills in the face of increased exposure to risks and hazards both across childhood and adolescence, and throughout adulthood.

- Programs in swimming and water safety should be aligned to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework.

    - Educate parents on the framework and the importance of the minimum benchmark.

- The learn to swim industry should be encouraged to teach holistic swimming and water safety skills that reflect the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework and provide data to nationally measure achievement against these skills.

- The industry should consider the importance that parents are placing on basic CPR and rescue skills and consider effective ages to introduce such content into their programs.

- The learn to swim industry should consider responses given by parents regarding customer service and levels of feedback including:

    - Considering how swim schools structure lessons, i.e. lessons back to back do not allow for discussion of progression and feedback to parents. Swim schools could consider using an assessor, to provide the adequate level of feedback to parents.

    - Being more pro-active in providing parents with regular feedback and keeping them informed of their child's progress rather than waiting for a parent to seek the feedback.

    - Considering how information is provided on child's skills/ability as well as further information on how to progress / when to progress.

    - Ensuring that swim school's assessment criteria ('must sees') against the skills taught is consistently applied.

    - Seeking feedback by surveying parents attending swim schools on their satisfaction with aspects of their child's swimming & water safety education such as the swim school's program, their instructor(s) and lesson structure among other topics.

- The industry should consider working with school and community groups to identify children from low socio-economic backgrounds and assist in overcoming barriers to participation in formal swimming and water safety education.

- Address infrastructure and human resources in rural and remote areas to ensure adequate coverage of aquatic instructors and safety management.

- Conduct further qualitative research, such as focus groups, to investigate issues such as identifying reasons behind children ceasing lessons, why children do not enjoy swimming lessons from a child's perspective, and with male parents to discover attitudes towards children's swimming and water safety skills.

Introduction

Background

AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving Society – Australia have conducted research to enhance the understanding of children's swimming and water safety skills acquisition and achievement levels from varying perspectives, namely swim school managers, teachers of swimming and water safety and parents. As aquatic skills gained in the formative years are essential for safe aquatic participation and underpin drowning prevention strategies, further understanding provides guidance for the development of aquatic programs, delivery and implementation strategies as well as training programs for teachers.

The first stage of this project encompassed a National survey that explored the operations of swim schools across Australia as assessed by over 350 swim school managers, owners and coordinators. The final report of this survey (1), found that although aquatic programs administered at public and private pools and aquatic facilities were accessible by the general public there were several barriers to participation including: distance to water/ swimming facilities, cost of lessons/ pool entry and access to qualified instructors and pool space. Responses justified the implementation of a second survey exploring attitudes of teachers of swimming and water safety delivering programs for swimming and water safety skills in the aquatics industry in Australia.

The second stage involved a National survey that was sent to all teachers of swimming and water safety within AUSTSWIM's database and the reach expanded to include other industry contacts as well as using online promotion and social media advertising. The results of over 6,300 teachers were analysed (2) and besides characterizing several vocational issues, the research found that, in general, teachers of swimming and water safety agree that the skills children should acquire were adequate and reflect the content of Royal Life Saving's Swim and Survive program Level 4 (or equivalent).

Although there has been substantial growth in the aquatic industry providing greater access to swimming and water safety lessons, there are many children who are not achieving the benchmark competencies equivalent to Swim and Survive Level 4 prior to leaving primary school as stated in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015. In fact, it has been observed that some children are not participating on a regular basis or missing out on learning to swim entirely (3). Little is known about why this is the case, or how parents perceive swimming and water safety programs and their understanding of the importance of acquiring aquatic skills. Some researchers have recently begun to study the impact of participation in swim lessons on parents' opinions of children's drowning risk, swimming ability and supervision needs (4,5). Preliminary results suggest that, while being able to swim may protect children from drowning, participation in swim lessons may produce undesirable effects on parent's beliefs relevant to children's drowning. Results from the abovementioned stages of this project, especially of the second, further confirmed the relevance of understanding the community's, particularly parents, attitudes and perceptions towards children's swimming and water safety skills.

This report will outline the findings of the third stage of this project, namely the parental survey. Comparisons will be made between similar questions asked in both surveys two and three.

Aims and scope

Expanding on previous research findings, this survey was applied to increase our understanding about the effectiveness of swimming programs from the community members' perspective. Additionally, this survey aimed to characterize the group of children accessing swimming and water safety programs and whether there is sufficient opportunity to overcome the barriers identified in previous surveys.

In joint collaboration with AUSTSWIM, this survey was available to parents of children enrolled in swimming and water safety programs across Australia as well as using online promotion and social media links to advertise the survey to parents whose children are not enrolled in swimming and water safety lessons. Additionally, parents of kids aged 5 to 14 years old were also targeted at public and private schools.

Objectives and outcomes

The objectives of this research were:

- Analyse parents' opinions and perceptions of the accessibility, affordability and effectiveness of swimming and water safety skills programs
- Compare and contrast findings with information from previous studies of swim school managers, conducted in 2010, and teachers and instructors, conducted in 2012
- Make recommendations arising from the research to inform swimming and water safety skill providers of issues pertinent to their industry

The intended outcome of this project was to improve understandings of the motivating factors for parents when choosing swimming tuition options, as well as their perceptions on swimming and water safety skills acquired over time by their children. This survey also examined the reasons behind parents deciding not to enrol their children or further continue in swimming and water safety classes among other topics.

Ultimately, the analysis, together with that of the previous two, will provide a more expansive understanding of the educational effectiveness of the swimming and water safety programs across Australia.

Methods

Survey content

The survey was made up of 72 questions, which were distributed across the following sections:

- Demographics
- Program accessibility and affordability
- Program effectiveness
- Choosing a swim school
- Understanding awareness of AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving as organisations

These sections were not made public and were used to structure the survey for internal purposes only. The survey also featured logic built in to some questions, this meant that depending on how the respondent answered they may or may not be required to answer every question in the survey.

Sections were not identified in the survey so as not to influence the answers. A copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix 1 of this report. Please note that the logic settings on the survey content will not be visible on the static pages of the survey as they are presented in Appendix 1.

Demographics (respondents and offspring profile)

The first section of the survey collected demographic and general information about parents and their child(ren), including: country of birth, year of birth, postcode, respondent sex, languages spoken other than English, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, household average income, parents swimming ability, parents education background and family experience with drowning incidents. Additionally, this section included questions to characterize the swimming and water safety skills of the respondents' children.

Program accessibility and affordability

This section had questions, which aimed to understand the barriers for enrolment in swimming lessons and continuation. This section asked if the respondent's children were currently participating in some form of swimming and water safety education. If yes, the respondent was also asked about the type of program and the frequency of participation throughout a year. Questions included identifying the main reason for enrolling or the main reason why they never or are not currently enrolled. Additionally, parents' were also asked what was the major outcome expected from having their children enrolling in swimming lessons.

Program effectiveness

All respondents were asked questions concerning children's swimming and water safety skills, namely the best age to commence swimming and water safety lessons, the value of specific aquatic skills and extra-curricular activities and their perceptions of general swimming and water safety skills of an 11/12 year old. Swim teachers were also asked similar questions in survey two as a basis for comparison.

Teacher effectiveness

Parents were asked to evaluate the top three factors that best described their expectations of a swim teacher, such as his qualifications, attitude to teaching, flexibility of instruction, consideration of safety and quality and methods of instruction.

Choosing a swim school

The survey also included a question made visible only to those who responded stating they had children, about the aspects considered by them when choosing a swimming school and tools used to find a swim school close to the residence location. This section of the survey also included questions about customer service and satisfaction with the operations of the swim school their children attended, such as level of feedback the parent had received on their child's progress.

Understanding of Water Safety and Drowning Prevention organisations

At the end of the survey three questions were asked regarding parents' understanding of water safety and drowning prevention organizations in Australia. This aimed to determine which organisations parents are aware of and associate with different aspects of drowning prevention and how they came to hear about the survey.

Survey development and hosting

The survey was collaboratively developed internally by AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving Society – Australia. The draft survey was originally developed in Microsoft Word before being transferred to Survey Monkey, the online survey hosting tool for piloting and delivery.

Survey Audience

The survey primarily targeted parents of children aged 5 to 14 years old. Respondents who did not have children within the target age group or who were not parents were asked several questions before exiting the survey. Recruitment of respondents was through swim schools' customer base, mailing lists, social media promotions, blog posts, website news items, as well as paper and web-based newsletters.

Piloting

The draft survey was piloted with a group of 10 people, both parents and not. As a result of their feedback minor changes were made. Representatives from AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving also tested the useability of the survey and the email and social media based invitation process.

Invitations, Reminders and Incentive

An invitation to participate in the survey was drafted using Adobe Illustrator® and sent to AUSTSWIM Registered Swim Schools and Royal Life Saving's Swim and Survive Partners via email. Additionally, invitations were posted on AUSTSWIM, Royal Life Saving and Swim Kids' Facebook® pages as well as various parent and family websites and social media pages and used as email signatures. Throughout the period of data collection, periodic reminder posts were published on social media (Appendix 2).

The survey was open for a period of 69 days (15th April to 22nd June). As a means of encouraging a higher response rate, prizes were offered to 52 respondents randomly chosen.

Importing and analysing data

After a 10 week period (April 15 – June 22) 1,790 participants had responded (fully or partially) to the survey. After closing the survey, the survey data was downloaded as CSV files. The data was then cleaned for ease of analysis and coded for analysis using R Statistical Software (http://www.r-project.org/). The answers of 1,658 participants were used in the analysis. Not all respondents answered every question and where there were a variety of responses to a question, not all responses were discussed in the report.

Limitations

While all effort was undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, the authors of this report identified the following limitations:

- Due to the nature of the survey (online based) there is a possibility that some people may have been excluded if they could not access the Internet. As such, the results might not be representative of the Australians parents' perceptions as a whole and may have unintentionally excluded people where access to Internet is limited, as is the case of rural and remote areas. To limit this we publicised the survey via a Parents' newsletter delivered on paper at schools located in rural New South Wales and Victoria and via the Swim Centres.
- The survey was written in English and therefore may have made it difficult for people from non-English speaking backgrounds to complete.
- The time of year that the survey was administered may have been a limitation. It is unclear if there is a better time of year to survey the community. There was a period of school holidays during our survey collection period, which may or may not have had an impact on promotion of the survey and as it was winter some respondents may have not been as motivated to respond to a survey on swimming and water safety skills as they might have been during the warmer months.
- The question for offspring characterization was presented as a table in which the variables could be filled for up to four children. Not all respondents filled in this variable for all the children they had. This limits our knowledge of the sample. Due to a software limitation it was not possible to make the fields mandatory for each child, thus resulting in different subset numbers.
- Results should be extrapolated and must be used with caution, as authors cannot guarantee that the results hold true for the Australian Community as a whole or are biased towards those who responded.
- A potential limitation was encountered when trying to translate specific skills and jargon from the survey aimed at teachers of swimming and water safety into language that was appropriate for a more general audience.
- A potential limitation is that almost one third (n=500) of respondents self-identified as being in some way involved in the swimming and water safety industry which may have had an impact on their responses.

Comparison with previous reports

AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving conducted an investigation into the issues surrounding swimming and water safety skills and knowledge attainment by primary school children in Australia as assessed by teachers of swimming and water safety (N=5,652). The findings and recommendations from the 2012 survey have been compared with the results from the community's survey.

Results

Respondents and offspring profile

Respondents' gender, age, and residence

The majority of the respondents were females (92%, n=1,529), which is higher than the gender ratio within the Australian population aged 16 to 79 years old (age of the survey respondents), which is estimated at approximately 51% female (based on population estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics[*]), indicating there was a higher response rate to the survey invitation from females than males.

Over 76% of the respondents (n=1,253) were aged between 18 and 44 years old; 18-24 years (3%), 25-34 years (23%), 35-44 years (50%). The most common age of the respondents was 39 years old (n=101), followed by 38 and 40 years with 96 and 97 respondents, respectively.

The respondents (N=1,658) represented all Australian States and Territories, with the majority representing views from people in New South Wales (32%, n=527) and Victoria (27%, n=454) (Figure 1).

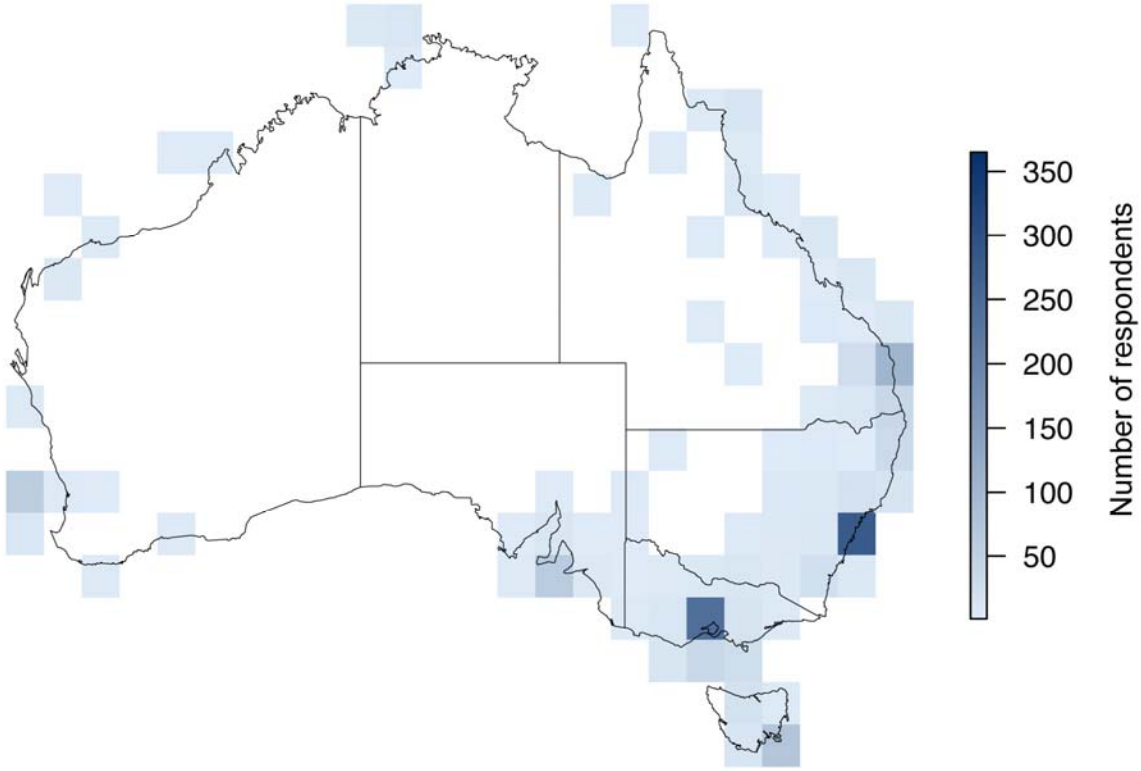


Figure 1 – Residential postcode of survey's respondents.

Respondents' country of birth and languages spoken at home

Participants were commonly born in Australia (85%), of which 14 were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. The second most common country of birth was the United Kingdom, followed

[*] This percentage was calculated based on population estimates for people aged between 16 and 79 years old, by gender and as of June 2012, available on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website (Table 59 at http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3101.0Jun%202012?OpenDocument#Data)

by New Zealand, Germany and South Africa. Participants were born in 50 different countries (a detailed list with frequencies is presented in Appendix 4).

Table 1 – Top 5 countries of birth of respondents

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	1415
United Kingdom	80
New Zealand	37
Germany	12
South Africa	12

A total of 1,630 respondents spoke English at home (98%), meaning that 28 others only spoke languages other than English at home. The languages spoken by these 28 participants at home included: Afrikaans (n=1), Bengali (n=1), Chinese (n=2), Dutch (n=1), French (n=3), German (n=3), Greek (n=1), Indonesian (n=1), Italian (n=1), Japanese (n=1), Latvian (n=1), Malayalam (n=1), Persian (n=2), Polish (n=3), Slovenian (n=1), Tagalog (n=2), Tamil (n=1), Telugu (n=1), Visayan (n=1).

The second most commonly spoken language at home by respondents, other than English, was German (n=17), followed by Chinese (n=16), French (n=10), Italian (n=9) and Spanish (n=8). A detailed list of languages spoken at home by respondents is presented in Appendix 4.

When asked "How well do you speak English?", respondents mostly said they speak English very well (98%, n=1,631), while 27 categorized their oral proficiency as being good.

Respondents' education level

The most common highest school level completed was Year 12, with 1,326 respondents, followed by Year 10 (12%, n=200) and Year 11(7%, n=112).

Of the 1,658 respondents, 20% did not complete further education. Of those who completed further education, the Bachelor (or higher) degree option was the most commonly chosen (40%, n=669), followed by "Diploma or Associate degree" (11%, n=185) and "Certificate III or trade certificate" (10%, n=171).

Respondents' employment status

Regarding the employment status, 1,007 respondents were employed (working 1-39 hours per week), 241 were not employed and not looking for work and 226 were employed and working 40 or more hours per week. The most common education level in all three employment status categories were, in decreasing order, bachelor degree or higher, diploma or associate degree and certificate III or trade certificate.

500 respondents reported their involvement with the swimming and water safety industry.

Household characterization

When asked what was the total amount of money (pre-tax) that all members in their household earned in 2012, 28% (n=471) of respondents answered $50,000 to $99,999, 22% (n=361) answered $100,000 to $149,999 and 20% (n=334) preferred not to answer.

According to information provided by the respondents, a significant number (83%) were married or *de facto* and only 9% (n=143) were single and never married.

Most respondents (71%, n=1,178) lived together with one more person aged over 18 years old or lived alone (11%, n=178). In addition, 142 (9%) lived with two more people, 116 (7%) with three more people and 10 (0.6%) lived with five to eight people aged 18 and over, in the same house.

In relation to living with children under 17 years old, most respondents (42%, n=695) answered they shared the house with two children under that age. Living with one or three children under 17 years old, were the second most common choices, with 322 and 304 answers, respectively.

Taken together, the most common household configuration was four people in total in the same house (38%, n=630) with two of those being under 17.

When crossing the information of annual average household income and people living in the same house, the most common situation among respondents was having a total of four people living in the same house with an annual average household income of $50,000 to $99,999 or $100,000 to $149,999, n=177 or n=165, respectively.

When asked "Does your residence have a swimming pool?", 1,307 (79%) said their residences didn't have a swimming pool and a total of 338 (20%) have a fenced swimming pool. 12 respondents (1%) admitted to having a non-fenced swimming pool.

Respondents' swimming and water safety experience

After the first set of demographic questions, respondents were asked about their own swimming and water safety experience, starting with their experience of drowning incidents. The majority (86%, n=1,430) said they had never experienced a drowning incident themselves, while 206 (12%) had experienced it, 8 surviving with an injury and 198 without.

When asked whether a friend or family member had ever experienced a drowning incident, it was found that:

- 154 respondents indicated they had a friend die by drowning
- 30 respondents had a friend who drowned and survived with injuries
- 187 respondents had a friend who survived without injuries
- 90 respondents indicated they had a family member die by drowning
- 234 respondents had a family member who survived without injuries

The respondents had the opportunity to describe other experiences and some included:

- "As an emergency nurse I get to see many people with all outcomes" (n=3)
- "A family pet" (n=1)
- "A near-drowning at the swim centre during my daughter's baby class with parents in the water" (n=1)
- "A friend of my nephews is a drowning victim and is currently at end of life" (n=1)
- "I have one eldest brother drown and died in the water before I was born as well as my youngest sister, who drowned and died. I also experienced it myself" (n=1)
- "A few minor falls of family members in pools, dams or ponds, but supervising adult/ older child pulled victim out without harm" (n=1)
- "I have children from drowning with no injury" (n=1)
- "I plucked an unknown toddler out of a pool when I was a child. He was fine, but his parents didn't even notice" (n=1)
- "I see many drownings at work" (n=1)

- "I've witnessed multiple stranger near drownings" (n=1)
- "School colleague died from drowning" (n=3)

When asked, "Do you know how to swim?", only 54 respondents said they didn't know how to swim; 20 of them because they are "afraid of water", 10 because they "couldn't afford swimming lessons", six because their "parents were unable to swim", and three mentioned that "lessons not available" as their main reason why they can't swim.

Interestingly, one person mentioned that their parents didn't put him back into swimming lessons after almost drowning and another said: "I feel it unnecessary, I won't drown in water but would probably be unable to save anyone from drowning".

Most respondents (97%, n=1,604) said they currently know how to swim having started to learn at different ages:

- 651 when they were aged 4 years old and under,
- 928 started when they were aged 5 to 14 years old,
- 16 when aged 15 to 24 years old, and
- 10 when they were aged over 25 years old; the oldest age mentioned by respondents to start learning was 39 years old.

Respondents that know how to swim had the opportunity to describe in the survey the most relevant avenue of learning. A large percentage (60%) mentioned having participated in formal lessons with a qualified swim teacher while 30% (n=487) mentioned having been taught by parents, family or friends. Some 83 taught themselves how to swim and 57 learnt through school swimming lessons.

Respondents were asked to choose the maximum distance they thought they could swim, non-stop, in open-water (beach, river, lake, creek, etc.). Most respondents (44%, n=737) said they were able to swim more than 200 metres, 416 could not swim more than 50 metres and 18 referred to be unable to swim in open water.

Additionally, respondents that could swim (n=1,604) were asked to list all the strokes they could swim in open water. The swimming stroke that most respondents (88%, n=1,407) said they could swim was freestyle, followed by breaststroke (87%, n=1,391). Regarding the remaining swimming strokes, all were swum by at least 2/3 of the respondents except for butterfly (n=313). Taken together, 71% of the respondents said they could swim four or more different strokes. The very high number of respondents claiming they can swim four or more strokes uncovers a noteworthy observation: of the 434 respondents acknowledging not being able to swim more than 50 metres in open water (including 18 not being able to swim in open water), a total of 189 still mentioned they could perform four or more different strokes.

22 respondents referred not being able to swim any of the six listed strokes and 16 listed other strokes or techniques, such as:

- "Dog paddle" (n=8)
- "Treading water" (n=2)
- "Sculling" (n=2)

Only 17 respondents said they could not stay afloat with head above water in deep open water without support. Most respondents (n=838) referred being able to stay afloat for more than 25 minutes.

Offspring characterization and its swimming and water safety skills

A respondent with three children was the most common situation (45%, n=743), followed by four children (n=358) and two children (n=253). Fifty-one respondents have five or more children and only three referred to not having any child. Of those who have children, 42% (n=697) have at least one child aged less than five years old and 67% have at least one child aged 5 to 14 years old.

Respondents were asked to describe their offspring's (those aged between 5 and 14 years old) enrolment in swimming and water safety lessons. Together with age, the question asked parents not only the gender and the ability to swim, but also the age their child(ren) started lessons, the age they finished and if they were enrolled in lessons in the last 12 months. The question was presented as a table in which the aforementioned fields (variables) could be filled for up to four children. Not all respondents filled in this variable for all the children they have. This limits our knowledge of the sample. Due to a software limitation it was not possible to make the fields mandatory for each child, thus resulting in different subset numbers. Therefore, for the analysis of this question we only used the data of children from which we have information for all the variables (n= 1,875 children, from n= 1,105 respondents with children aged between 5 and 14 years old).

The most common age of children in that age range was five years old (n=307), followed by seven (n=250) and six (n=242). Of the 1,875 children identified, 1,192 were aged between five to nine years old, while 683 were aged between 10 and 14 years old.

Most children (91%, n=1,702) were described as being able to swim. The sex ratio of children aged between 5 and 14 years old in the sample was close to 1:1. Parents referred that 173 children couldn't swim, 147 of which were aged between five and seven years old. Between ages of 5 to 7 years old, the highest difference registered between being able to swim and not, was observed for children seven years old – 20 children couldn't swim and 230 were referred as being able to swim. Four parents indicated that their children aged 13 and 14 years old couldn't swim. When comparing gender and ability to swim, fewer girls (n=77) were referred as not being able to swim compared to boys (n=96). Although not significant, this difference is interesting in terms of drowning statistics and deserves further exploration.

An impressive number of respondents mentioned that their children started swimming lessons before they were one year old, corresponding to a total of 666 children being surveyed. The majority of children described (80%, n=1,504) started taking swimming lessons before the age of five. The oldest age described to start swimming lessons was more than nine years old for 47 children (2.5%). For all the children described in the survey, no matter how many years they are now, the second most common age to start swimming lessons was three years old (n=286), followed by four (n=195) and five (n=191) years old.

Even though, most children described (68%, n=1,271) were still enrolled in swimming lessons at the time the survey was completed, a noteworthy number of children stopped lessons before the age of five years old (n=73). The reasons why this happens might be highlighted by the answers provided to questions assessed later in this report.

Of the 604 children aged 5 to 14 years old that parents mentioned as having stopped swimming lessons, 442 (73%) did it more than 12 months before the survey was completed, with boys accounting for 52% (n=231).

When asked which program format did the children aged 5 and 14 years that have been enrolled in swimming lessons over the past 12 months, participate in, the top three answers were:

- Weekly group lessons (outside school hours): n=702
- Squad sessions: n=238
- Intensive lesson block (during school hours, e.g. 10 lessons over 2 weeks): n= 226

Some parents (n=11) specified “informal lessons” as a structured way of learning how to swim taught by parents, family or friends.

Most parents chose only one program (n=656) or two (n=283) of the list of eight program formats that was provided and 13% (n=142) of the respondents chose three or more program formats. In relation to how many weeks per year did they attend, the most common situation was having children participating in swimming lessons for an average of 40 weeks per year (n=286), followed by 30 weeks per year (n=58) and 48 weeks per year (n=56).

Program accessibility and affordability

In this section of the survey questions were asked in order to assess parents' perceptions and expectations about swimming lessons and barriers to enrolling their children in such activity.

Of the 13 parents of children aged between 5 to 14 years old that mentioned their children never participated in learn to swim programs, five mentioned they couldn't afford the swimming lessons as the main reason why they were never enrolled and two mentioned their children were taught at home.

For those parents that have children, that previously participated in swimming lessons but were not enrolled in at the time of the survey completion (Figure 2), the main reasons why they no longer attended were pointed as being:

- "I can't afford the swimming lessons" (n=118)
- "My child doesn't want to participate in swimming lessons" (n=93)
- "My child can swim" (n=56)

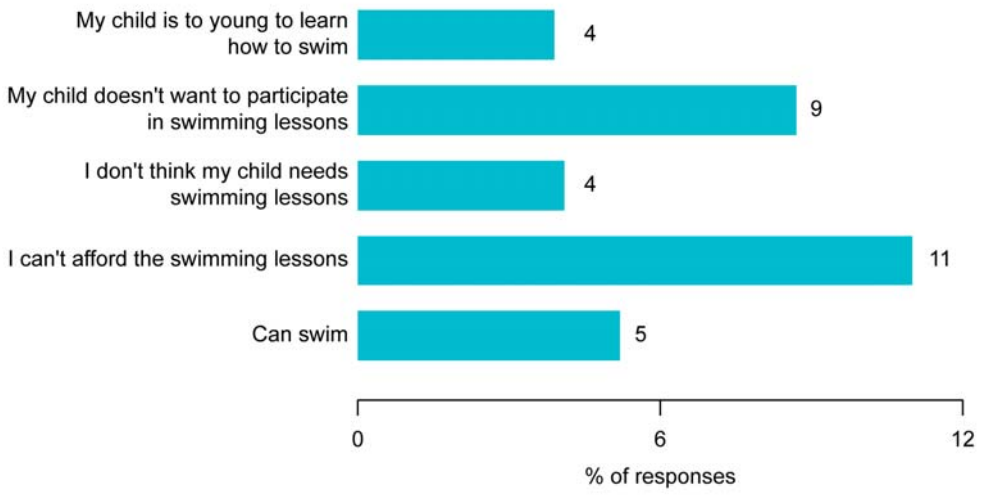


Figure 2 - Top 5 main reasons why children are not currently enrolled in swimming lessons (n=1068)

For the 56 answers referring "can swim" as the main reason why not currently enrolled, we looked for the can swim definition provided. The results are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 - Can swim definitions chosen by parents referring their children can swim as the reason why not currently enrolling in swimming lessons

Can swim definition	Number of respondents
Jump or dive into water, resurface and swim comfortably on back then rolling over swim on front. Duck dive & swim underwater a short distance, resurface, tread water, breathing in a relaxed manner, float & swim changing direction of travel & body position on command	24
Enter water and swim 100m of freestyle & 100m of backstroke. Tread water for 3 mins. Float on back for 1 minute. Perform a duck dive & underwater swim a short distance	17
Perform safe head-first entry & swim 100m of freestyle, backstroke, and breaststroke. Tread water for 3 min. Float on back for 1 min. Perform basic functions of tumble turn	7

Of the 11 parents mentioning that the main reason for not having their children currently enrolled was because they were learning with parents:

- All of them mentioned they know how to swim
- Four said they could swim less than 100 metres non-stop in open water
- Six said they could stay afloat no more than 15 minutes with their head above water in deep water without support

The majority of those parents (n=9) defined "Can swim" as:

"*Jump or dive into water, resurface and swim comfortably on back then rolling over swim on front. Duck dive & swim underwater a short distance, resurface, tread water, breathing in a relaxed manner, float & swim changing direction of travel & body position on command*".

The two remaining chose the definition:

"*Enter water and swim 100m of freestyle & 100m of backstroke. Tread water for 3 mins. Float on back for 1 minute. Perform a duck dive & underwater swim a short distance*".

Parents chose the sentence "My child doesn't want to participate in swimming lessons" as being the main reason why they are not currently enrolled for 93 of their children. Interestingly, only three of those children couldn't swim, and most were aged nine years and over (n=68). Furthermore, although these parents appear tolerant about their kid's choice, they still valued swimming as the most important extra-curricular activity their children should participate in, showing that the abovementioned answer does not stem from a reduced interest in swim when compared with other respondents.

The option "My child is too young to learn how to swim" was selected by parents to describe 42 of their children. When looking at the ages of those children, results show that most of them (n=35) were aged between five and nine years old.

Parents that mentioned “Other activities are priority” as being the main reason why their children are not enrolled in swimming lessons (n=11), also referred that most their children (n=10) could swim.

Of all parents mentioning the reason “Will start soon” (n=4), two have children aged five years old, one is aged nine and the other 14 years old.

For parents with kids enrolled in swimming lessons at the time of survey completion, or that had been enrolled in the past, the next question asked them to choose the main reason why they had enrolled them. From a total of 1,054 people who answered this question the top three choices were:

- Safety is the most important reason (43%, n=452)
- Learning to swim is the most important reason (35%, n=366)
- Confidence in water is the most important reason (10%, n=105)

The major outcomes expected from their children’s lessons were selected as:

- Being safer in water (38%, n=397)
- Being confident in water (24%n=254)
- Being able to recover safely to the edge after falling in deep water (11%n=115)
- Being able to enjoy the water (9%n=100)

An additional 14 parents said that all the outcomes listed were important despite being asked to select only one response.

Most respondents live less than 10 km from the swim school where their children participate (or have participated) in swimming lessons (n=804), while 165 live between 11 and 20 km away from the swim school and 85 more than 20 km. Of the 85 parents living more than 20 km away from the swim school, 31 have one child enrolled and 32 have two to four children enrolled in swimming lessons. And while 19 (22%) of those 85 parents have their children enrolled in swimming lessons an average of 40 weeks per year, more than half participate on a lower basis, from 1 to 36 weeks per year.

The main reasons for the 1658 respondents’ children to stop participating in swimming lessons in the future were nominated as:

- “My child has achieved all of the levels prior to squad training” (23%, n=379)
- “My child has sufficient skills to be safe” (22%, n=361)
- “My child doesn’t want to continue due to lack of enjoyment” (12%, n=194)
- “My child will enrol in a different activity” (6%, n=100)

Nineteen parents said that their children will not stop in the foreseeable future, and others mentioned that facilities too cold or closed in winter are a reason for seasonal interruption of swimming lessons. Parents could choose more than one reason but most parents (84%) only chose one.

Program effectiveness

Children's swimming and water safety skills

When asked 'what is the best age for children to start formal swimming lessons', both parents and non-parents chose primarily the option "2 years or less", 642 and 399, respectively. As can be seen in Figure 3, the trend is very similar for parents and non-parents, with non-parents showing a slight tendency to prefer younger ages, while, proportionally, parents have chosen more frequently later ages to start with swimming lessons. A previous report, surveyed certified swim teachers and among others, it assessed their opinions on this same subject. Teachers (n=5,515) most commonly chose the ages between 1 and 5 years old (57%) and then 6 to 10 years (36%). Those teachers supporting 6-10 years were more likely to be 18-24 years while in the parents' survey we have observed that the younger parents tend to choose earlier ages to start formal swimming lessons.

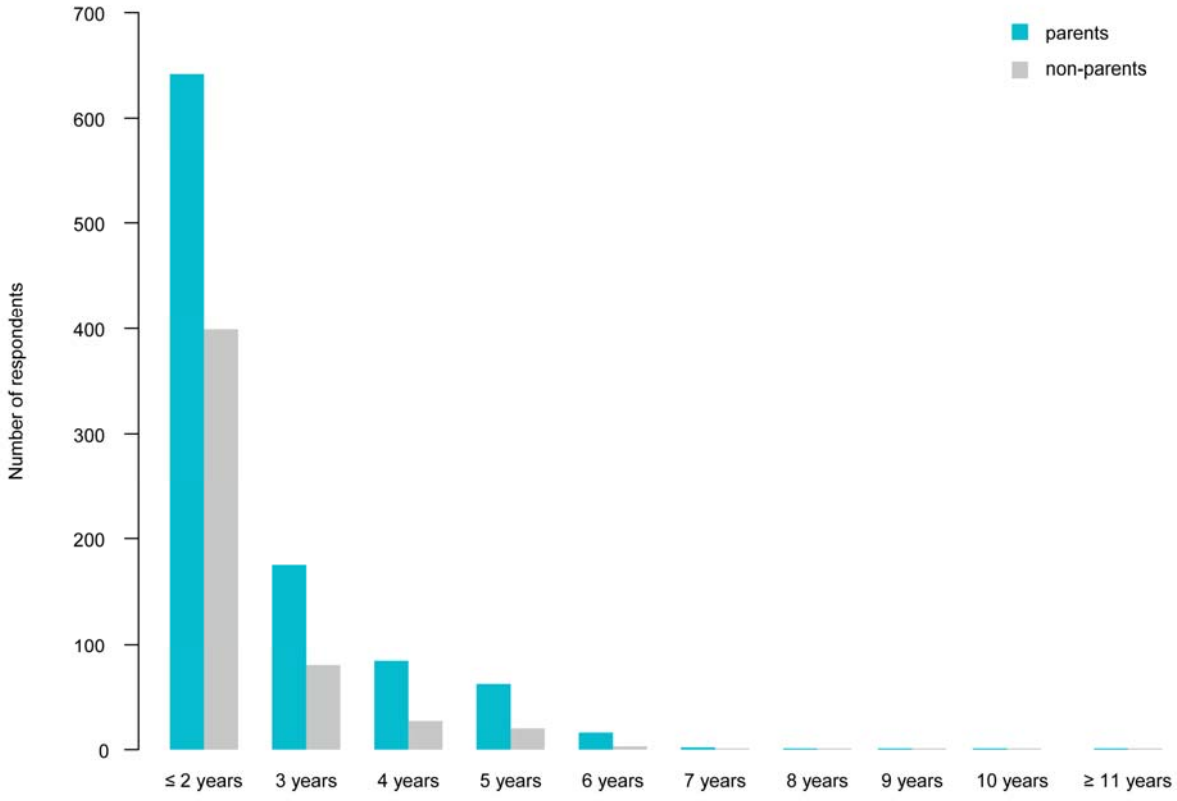


Figure 3 - Best age for children to start formal swimming lessons as selected by respondents (parents and non-parents).

If respondents only had enough time and money to spend on 30 swimming and water safety lessons, most would still choose (n=477) 2 years or less, followed by 3 years (n=319) (Figure 4). Nevertheless, given those restrictions, parents chose from a broader spectrum of ages and not mainly the "2 years or less" – in Figure 4 we only observe a significant decrease in numbers after 6 years of age while in Figure 3 we can see it immediately after the option "2 years or less". This suggests that parents might have a more realistic perception of the progress their children can achieve if starting learning at later ages.

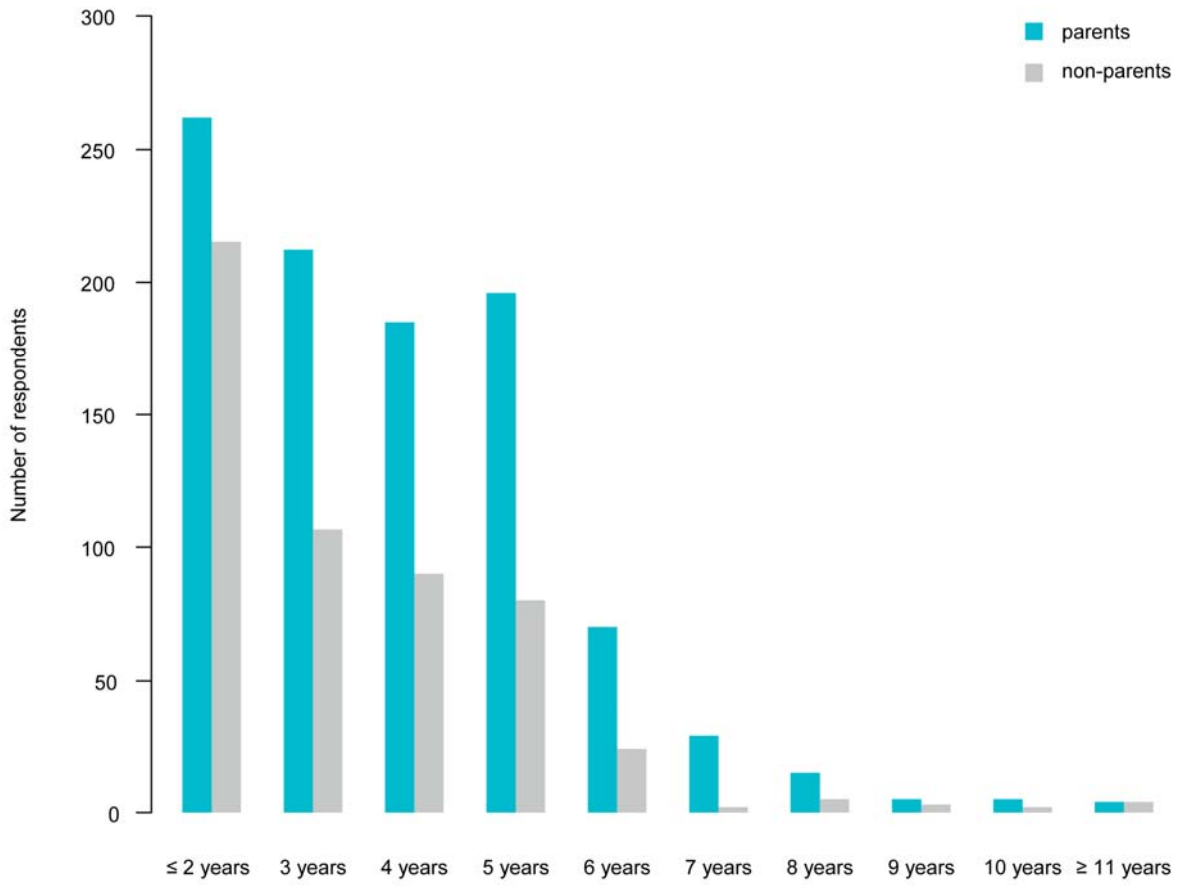


Figure 4 - Best age for children to start formal swimming lessons as selected by respondents (parents and non-parents) given time and money restrictions.

Respondents were asked to value a set of seven extra-curricular activities for their children, depicted in Figure 5. This Figure is a boxplot chart, which provides the reader with a comprehensive analysis of the answers given by participants. Each green box shows the range where the majority of answers fall. The white line is the median of the answers, the small green dots are outliers and the whiskers represent the maximum and minimum classification for each activity. For example, regarding "music", most participants classified it between 2 and 5, the median classification was 3, the minimum was 1 and the maximum was 7. Looking at Figure 5 in more detail we can see that most respondents chose "Learn to swim" as the most important activity for their children, being chosen by 68% (n=672) of all parents and 76% (n=406) of all non-parents. Caution is required when interpreting these results as they may be biased due to the fact that the survey was mainly promoted targeting parents of children enrolled in swimming and water safety lessons.

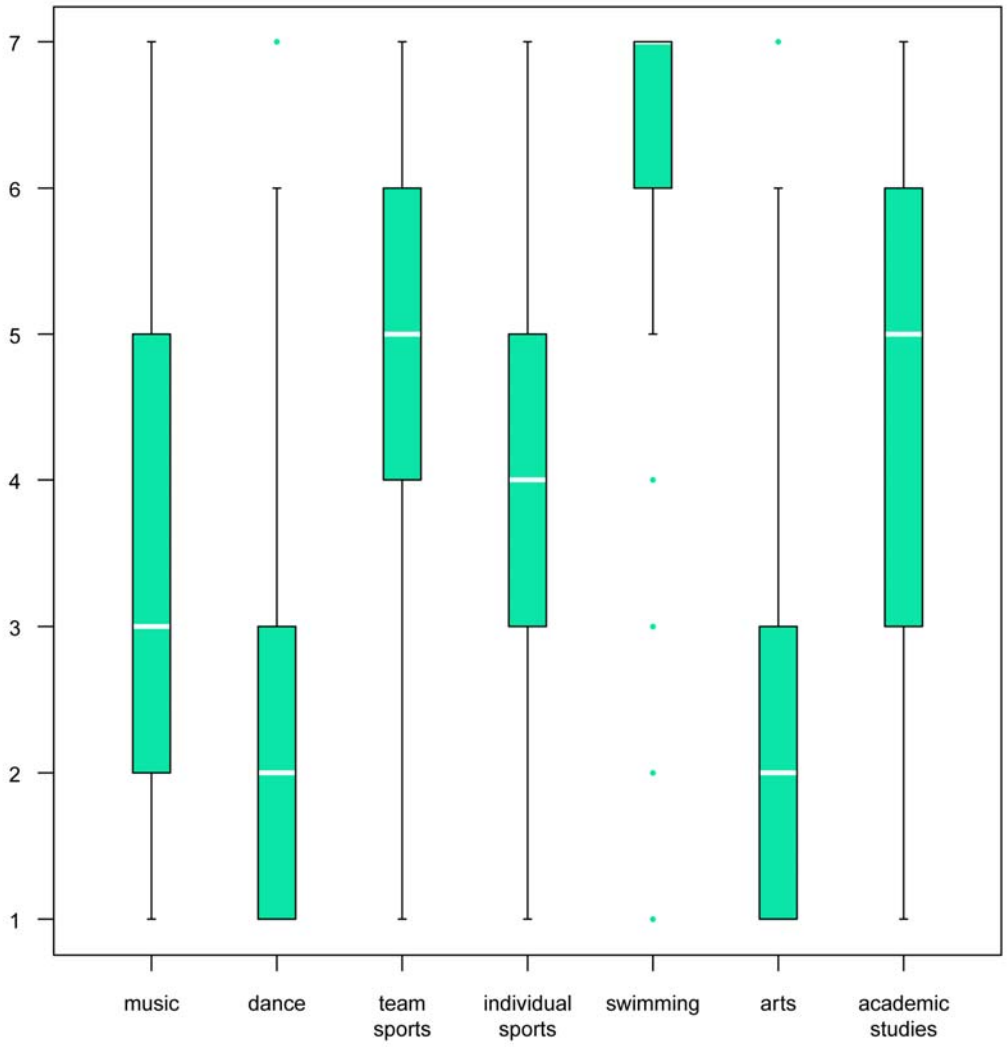


Figure 5 - Boxplot of the answers provided by respondents about the value of extra-curricular activities for their children (1 – least important to 7 – most important).

Academic studies and team sports scored second best, with "5" being the median score among all respondents. The lowest classified activities were Ballet/ Dance and Arts/Crafts, both with a median score of "2" among all respondents.

A subsequent question asked respondents to choose one statement that best represented their own definition of "can swim" from a list of three options. Both the majority of parents (57%, n=551) and non-parents (55%, n=290) felt the best description of the term "can swim" was:

- "*Jump or dive into water, resurface and swim comfortably on back then rolling over swim on front. Duck dive & swim underwater a short distance, resurface, tread water, breathing in a relaxed manner, float & swim changing direction of travel & body position on command*".

Interestingly, teachers mentioned that their perception was that parents would value simple actions such as ability to float, basic strokes, can swim to the edge. This suggests that teachers' perceptions were in tune with parents' opinions.

The majority of teachers (68%, n=5,058) also chose the "jump or dive into water (...)" as their best description for the term "can swim".

Perceptions of general swimming and water safety skills of a Year 6 primary student

When asked to select a skill along a continuum that best reflected the skills a Year 6 primary school student should be able to competently and consistently perform, 41% (n=405) of the parents felt that 100 - 200 metres was the most appropriate range of swimming distance competency, with 26% supporting 100 metres and 15% (n=149) supporting 200 metres (Figure 6). Noteworthy is the number of parents (29%, n=282) who believed that their children should be able to perform more than 200 metres. The same question was asked to non-parents but the results were a bit different. Twenty six percent (n=139) believed 100 metres is the swimming distance a Year 6 primary school student should be able to perform, while 26% (n=134) believed they should be able to swim for more than 200 metres and 21% (n=112) supported 50 metres. On the other hand, teachers (n=5,478) felt that 50-100 metres was the most appropriate range, with 29% supporting 50 metres and 28% supporting 100 metres.

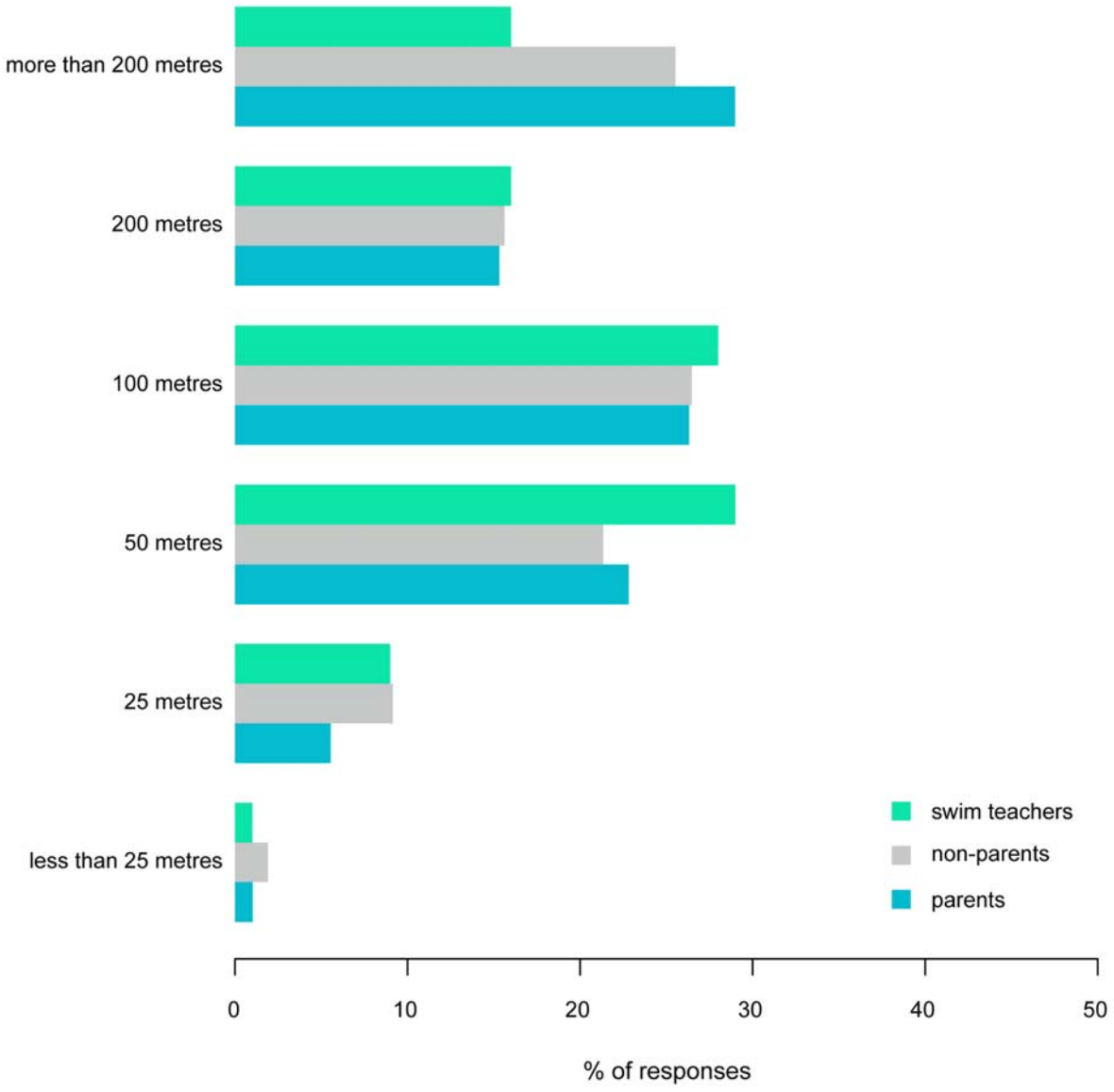


Figure 6 – Children's swimming and water safety skills – Swimming Distance (comparison of teachers, parents and non-parents responses)

Nearly half of the respondents (47%) suggested that more than 2 competitive strokes and 2 survival strokes should be achieved (Figure 7). This is in accordance with teachers' beliefs as they mostly (68%) chose the same option.

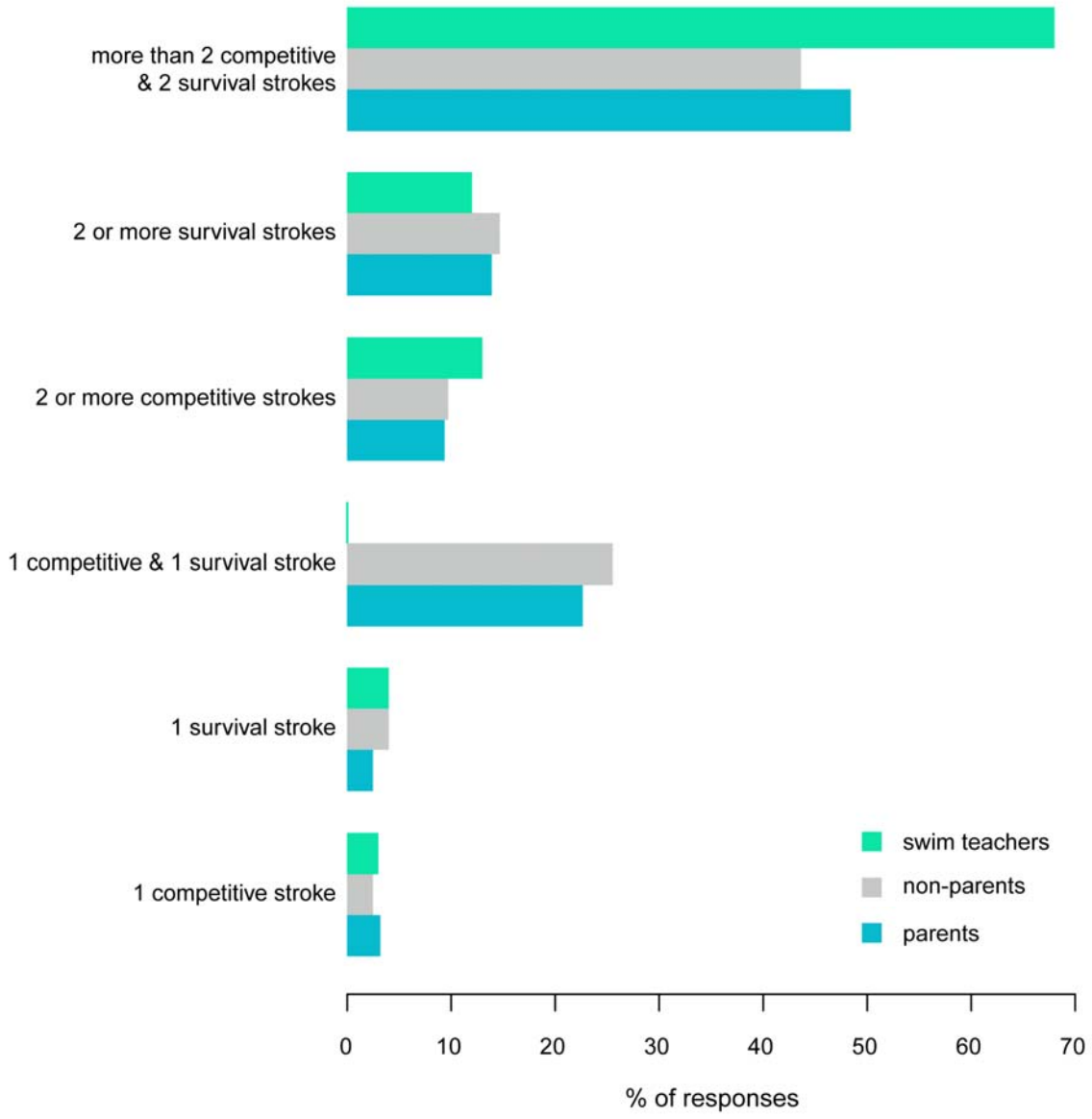


Figure 7 – Children's swimming and water safety skills – Swimming Strokes (comparison of teachers, parents and non-parents responses)

Respondents indicated they felt that treading water for more than 5 minutes was important – 68% (Figure 8). Teachers' opinions varied more, with 22% indicating treading water for 2 minutes, 21% for 3 minutes, and 35% for more than 5 minutes, as being important.

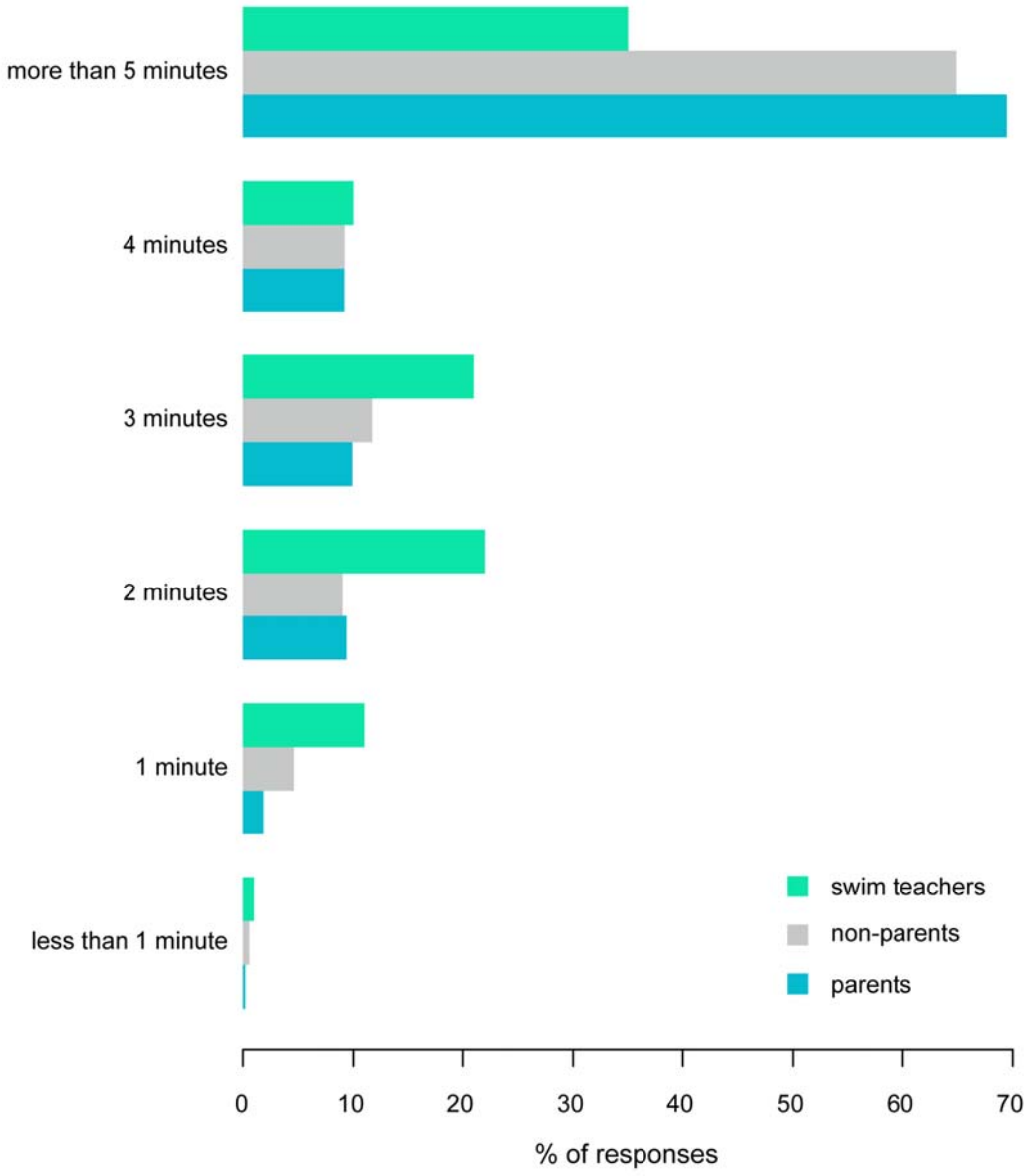


Figure 8 – Children's swimming and water safety skills – Treading Water (comparison of teachers, parents and non-parents responses)

Sixty nine percent of respondents (n=1,026) believed children should have a rescue ability consisting of (i) being rescued, (ii) reach rescue, (iii) throw rescue, (iv) non-contact rescue and (v) contact tow rescue. So, they felt that children should be able to perform all rescue activities (Figure 9). This might reflect a liability of the survey where people assume the greatest capability is preferred. Nevertheless, parents' choice is in accordance to what teachers' chose, with 60% having the same opinion as respondents of the current survey.

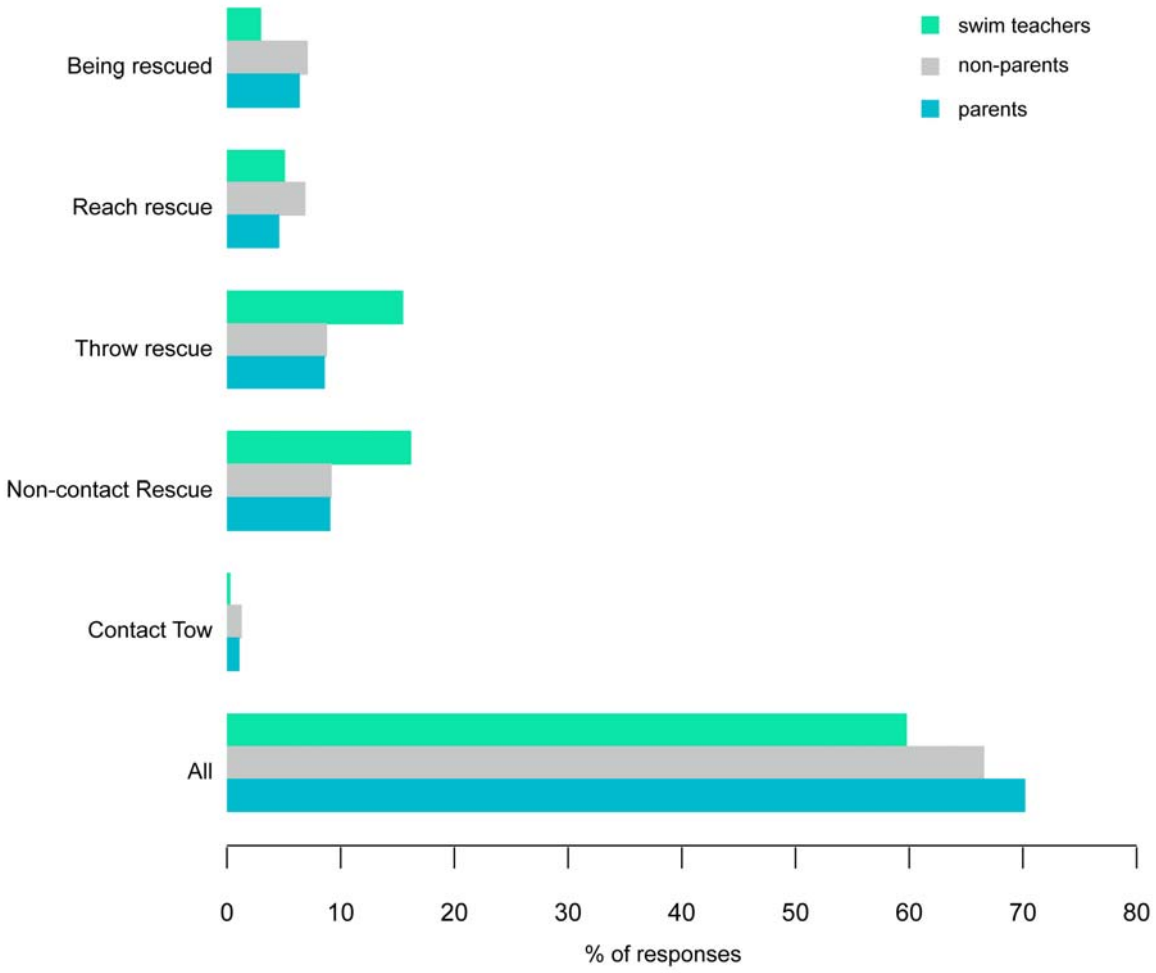


Figure 9 – Swimming and water safety skills – Rescues

In terms of survival skill capability (defined as a sequence of floating, treading water and swimming survival strokes) 48% of respondents (n=719) suggested the child should be able to swim to safety wearing long sleeved shirt and jumper and long pants, while 29% felt it would be sufficient wearing long sleeved shirt and long pants (Figure 10). Once more the answers might reflect the style of questioning and caution is required when analysing this data. Teachers' were less demanding and while 40% suggested that child should be able to swim to safety wearing long sleeve shirt and long pants, 29% felt it would enough wearing shorts and a shirt.

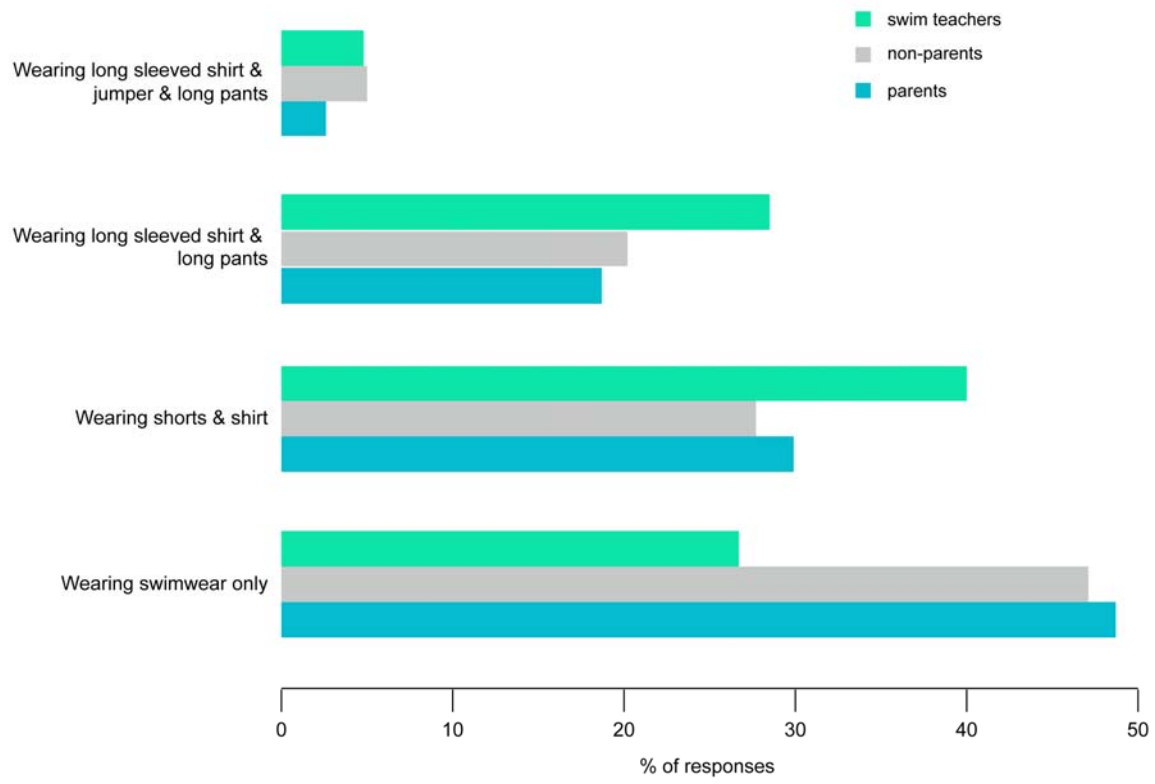


Figure 10 – Swimming and water safety skills – Survival Skill Capability

Regarding safe entries to the water, 87% (n=1,296) of respondents believed that a safe entry requires the ability to slide, step, jump, fall and stride into the pool (Figure 11). Curiously that was the exact same percentage of teachers that chose all categories of safe entries listed in the previous survey.

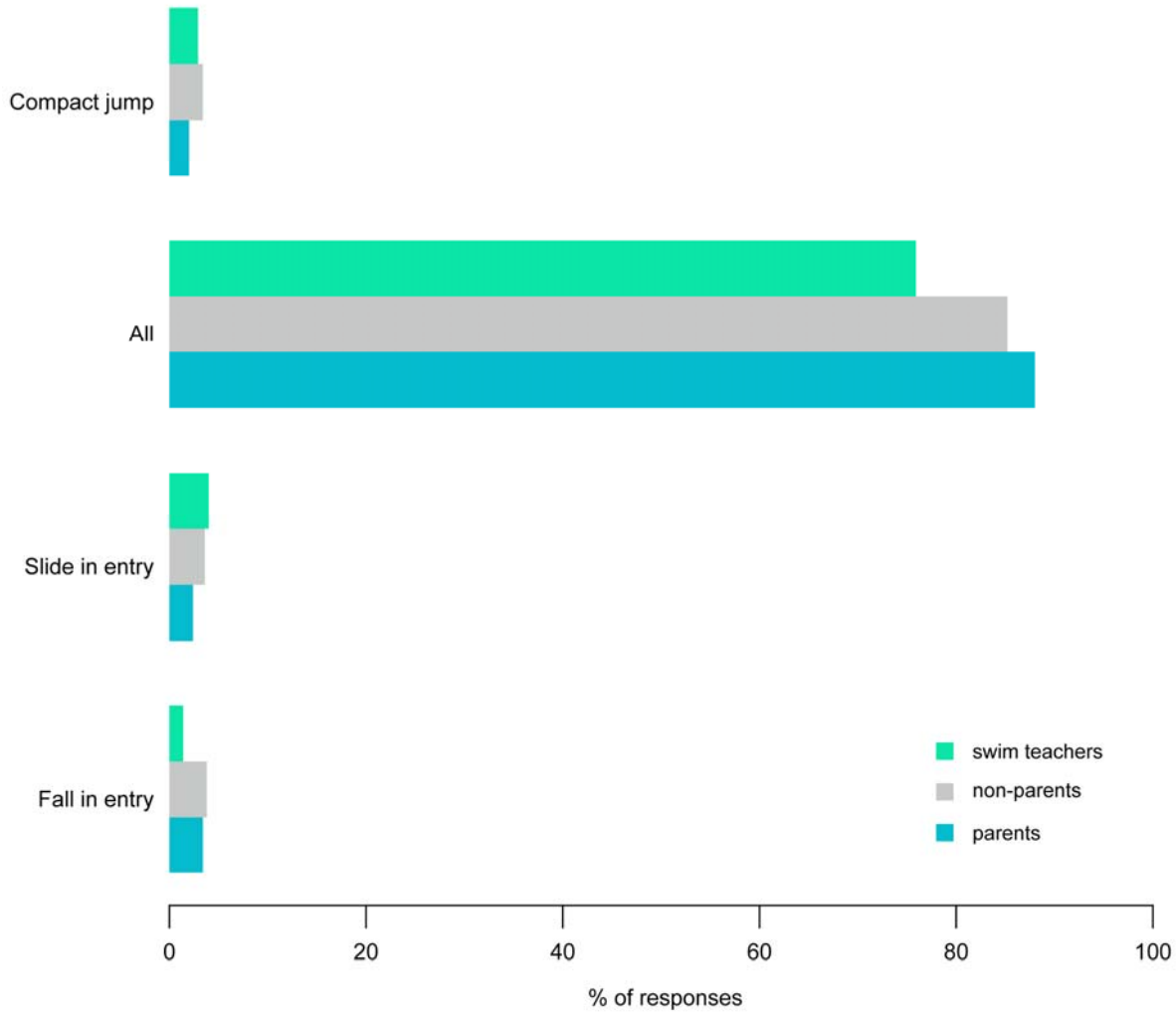


Figure 11 - Swimming and water safety skills – Safe Entries

Importance of swimming and water safety skills

Respondents were asked about their assessment as a parent to the relative importance of a set of eight swimming and water safety skills. The majority of respondents valued "personal survival skills" the most, followed by "water safety knowledge" and "survival swimming strokes" (Figure 12) contradicting the beliefs expressed by teachers in the previous survey. From the second survey of Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety, teachers viewed water safety knowledge as the most important skill that children should acquire and believed that parents would also rank water safety knowledge as the most important skill for their children. The major difference in perception was that teachers suggested that parents valued competitive swimming strokes more highly. As can be seen in Figure 12, parents scored resuscitation and emergency care skills higher than competitive swimming strokes and other competitive swimming skills also opposing teachers' perceptions.

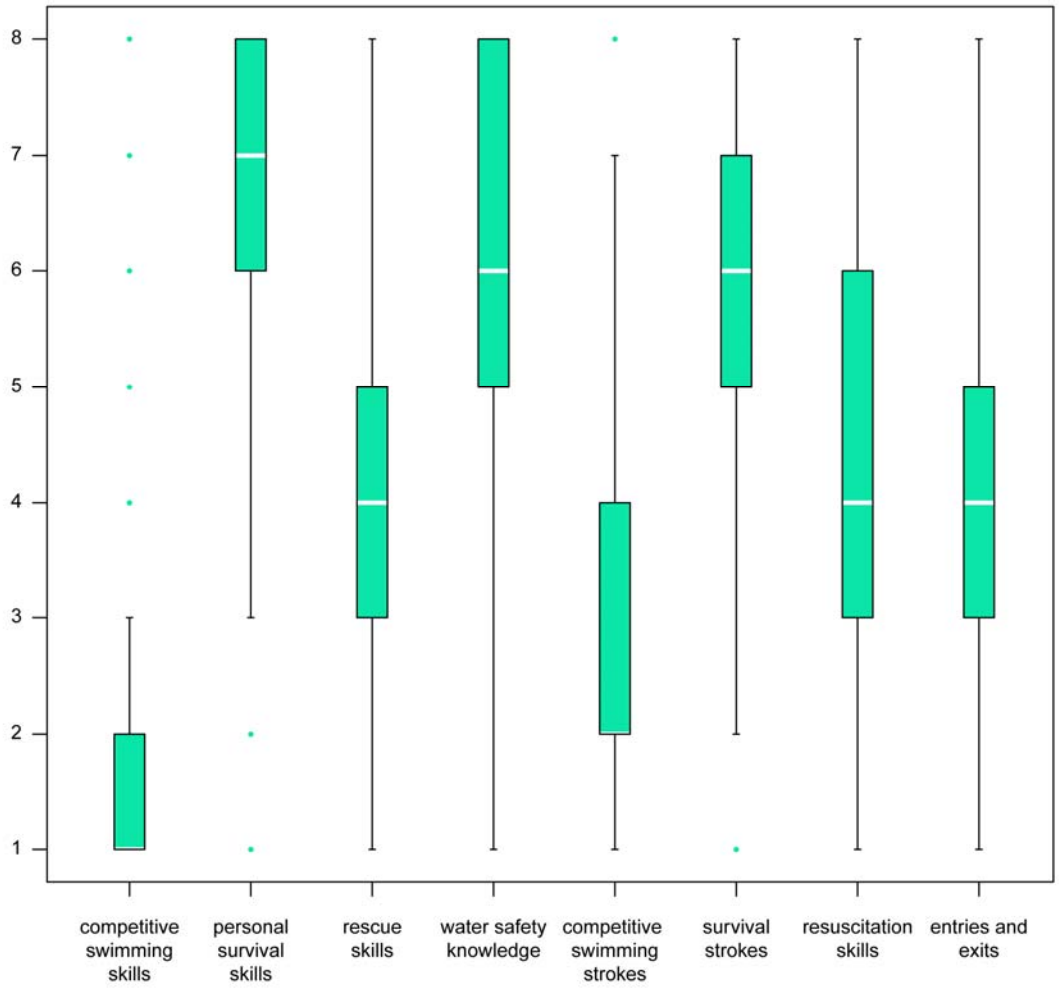


Figure 12 – Boxplot of the answers provided by respondents about the value of different aquatic and safety skills for their children (1 – least important to 7 – most important).

Teachers' effectiveness

Parents were also asked to rank the top three factors that best described their expectations of a swim teacher. From their point of view "teacher's qualifications" (n=242), "quality of instruction" (n=201) and "positive attitude to teaching" (n=188) were the top three factors that best describe their expectations of a swim teacher.

Choosing a swim school

Additionally, parents were also asked to rank the top three most important aspects when choosing a swim school. Word of mouth from other parents was the most selected aspect (n=168), followed by swim school's industry reputation (n=150) and program being used (n=103)

When asked about the typical tools used to find a swim school, most respondents referred to using Google (n=246) and the Swim School Locator on AUSTSWIM Website (n=178). Interestingly, although 325 of the respondents considered word-of-mouth an important aspect when choosing a swim school, only 35 respondents described ever using word-of-mouth as a factor to actually find a swim school.

Satisfaction with feedback provided by the swim school and swim teacher

Most respondents (75%, n=751) stated they were satisfied with the feedback provided by the swim school (75%, n=751), and by the teachers (78%, n=782).

When asked about the frequency, satisfaction and the desired frequency for three different kinds of feedback (informal chat with teacher, written feedback and certificate), the majority of parents were happy with the frequency of all the three types of feedback. Surprisingly, 21 parents referred they wish that an informal chat with teacher never happened, 160 wished that written feedback never happened and 70 would prefer not to receive a certificate for their children skills achievement. The most frequent kind of feedback was the weekly informal chat with teacher (n=406) and 462 parents referred they want to keep it on a weekly basis. Parents would prefer to receive written feedback when level achieved or at the end of program (n=187 and n=145, respectively).

Most common comments on feedback included:

- Acknowledgment of skills attained should be provided consistently
- I don't talk directly to teacher, but with the assessor and I am happy with that
- Written in passport book
- Watching my child in lessons
- I don't get feedback unless I specifically ask for it

Other comments included:

- "Certificate didn't give true indications of what they could and couldn't do."
- "Feedback is inconsistent from term to term. Child isn't clear about what skills need to be improved and why."
- "I can have informal chat when I want but Swim School is not pro-active at all in giving feedback on child's performance"
- "I don't get feedback unless I specifically ask for it but teacher always rushed for time as lessons are back-to-back."
- "If parents can't attend learn-to-swim (work), there is no feedback at all, except for a tick-box form without detail of what to do next."
- "Totally depends on teacher, some are just amazing, great feedback, others do not make any effort to chat to parents regarding feedback!"

When parents with children aged between 5 and 14 years and currently enrolled in swimming lessons were asked if the swim school ever sought feedback through a survey (either written or online), most said it didn't (79%, n=802).

Understanding of water safety and drowning prevention organisations

As depicted in Figure 13, both parents and non-parents chose AUSTSWIM when asked which was the organization that first came to their minds when thinking of learn to swim and swim teacher certification, followed by Royal Life Saving – Australia.

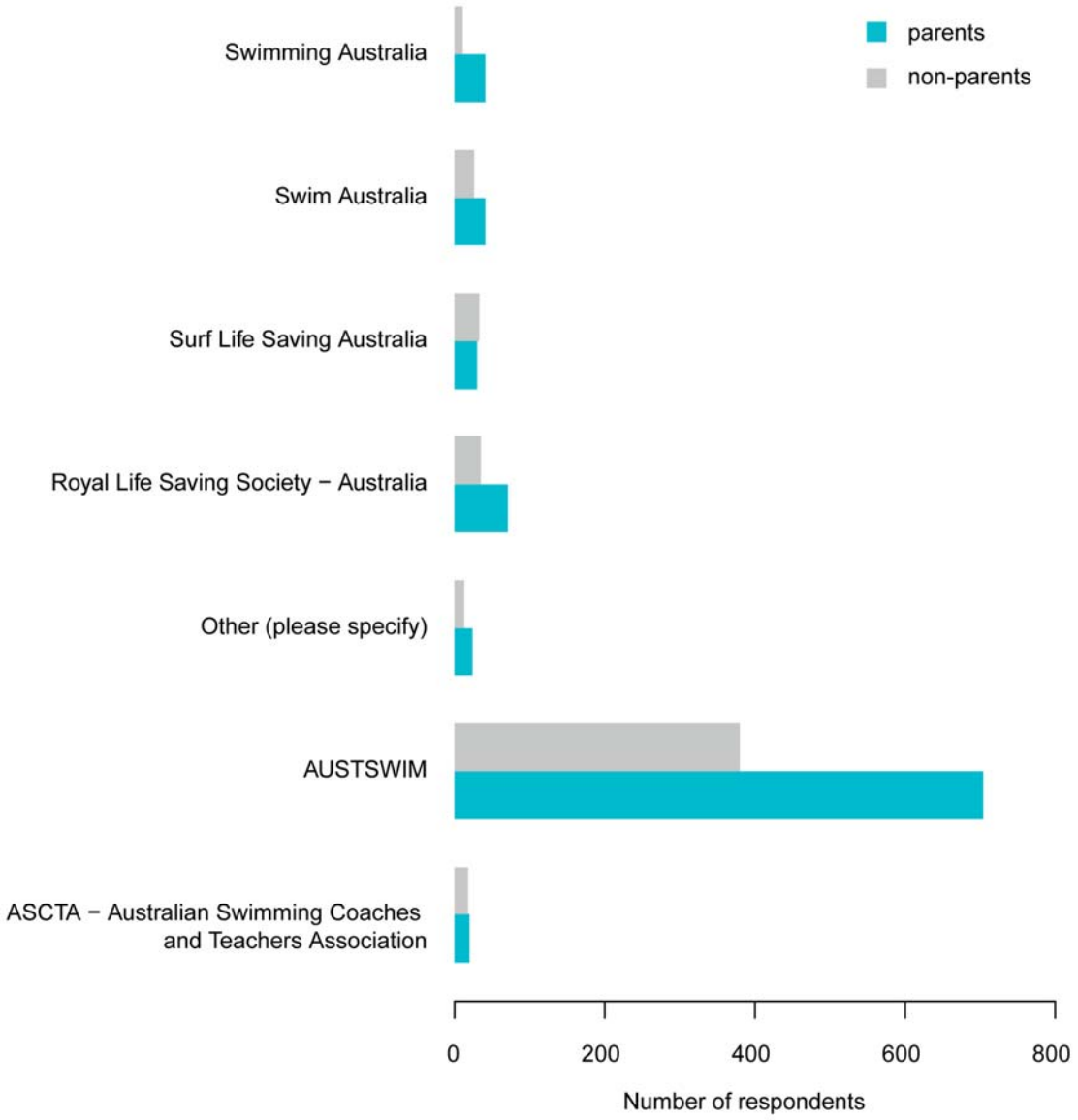


Figure 13 – Ranking of organizations that first come to respondents minds when thinking of learn to swim and swim teacher certification

Furthermore, parents were asked if they solicited for the AUSTSWIM teacher accreditation when choosing a swim school and/or swim teacher – 54% didn't ask for it. This might be explained by the fact that while the majority of participants recognised AUSTSWIM as the first organization when thinking of learn to swim and swim teacher certification, they don't feel compelled to ask for a certification. Further investigation of why parents are not asking for qualifications of swimming and water safety teachers would be of interest and may help to develop strategies to educate parents on the importance of doing so.

A similar question was asked, but regarding the organization they would immediately relate to water safety and drowning prevention. Figure 14 shows that all respondents chose the organization Royal Life Saving – Australia, followed by Surf Life Saving Australia.

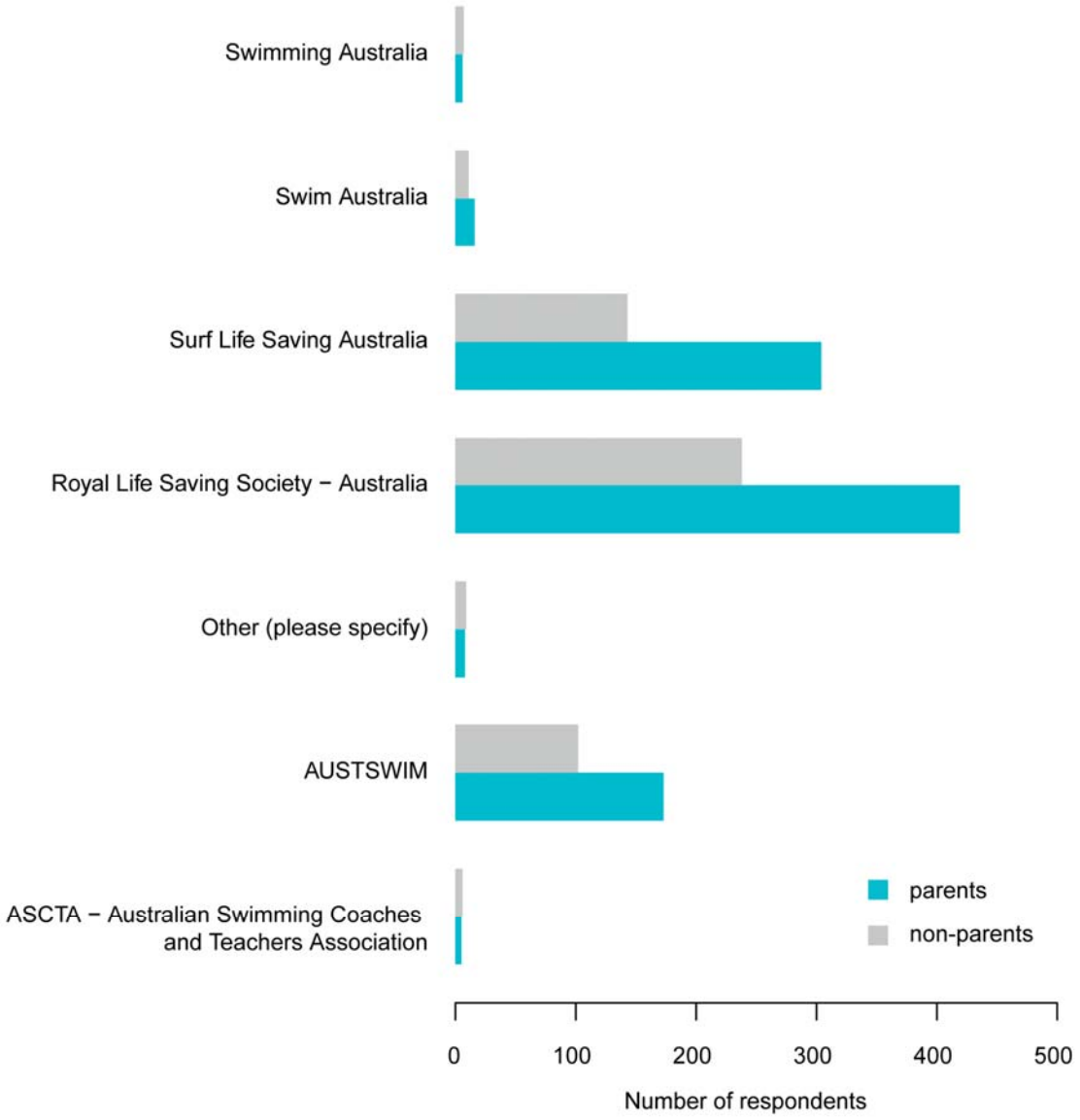


Figure 14 – Ranking of organizations that first come to respondents' minds when thinking of water safety and drowning prevention

When looking at the answers to the question "How did you hear about this survey?" (N=1,658), participants identified several channels to access the survey (Figure 15). Interesting gender differences were observed, that might help understanding the high proportion of female respondents. The main channel for males was "friend or family", which was responsible for 14.5% of the male respondents (n=18). For females the main channel through which they learned about the survey was the "swim centre" (13.5%, n=207), followed by "friend or family" (12.9%, n=197) and "Swim Kids Facebook page" (12.5%, n=192). The "Australian Family newsletter" reached out only to female respondents, while "LinkedIn" and "ASCTA" only to male respondents. The fact that female carers are usually more open to participate in this kind of surveys, and are usually the ones that stay

longer at home taking care of their children, might explain the gender differences observed Females are also more likely to be the ones taking children to extra-curricular activities such as swimming. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to further understand the reasons why this happened.

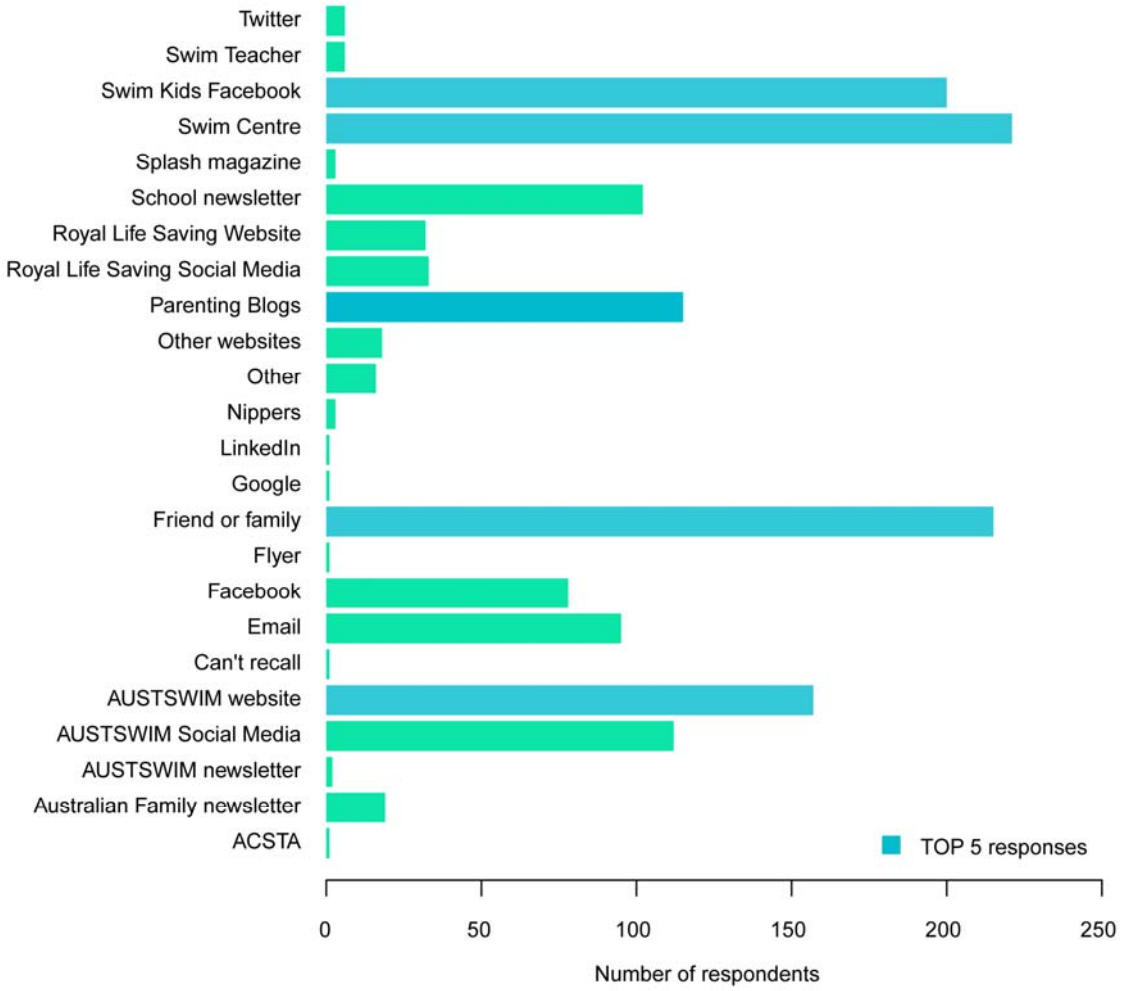


Figure 15 – Main channels respondents used to access the survey (blue bars show the top 5 channels).

Final comments

Respondents were asked if they had any final comments to add regarding children's swimming and water safety skills, their own experiences with learn to swim (themselves or their children) or the industry in general. A total of 528 different responses were provided with some comments that deserve to be further explored in the future. Examples include suggestions to focus more on water safety techniques at earlier ages and also of how teachers should conduct the lessons, specially young and inexperienced teachers, with little knowledge of encouragement, flexibility and other techniques with young children.

A total of 447 participants mentioned they would be interested in participating in a face-to-face discussion group on issues covered in the survey.

Discussion

The present report, by assessing the Australian community's view on the effectiveness of swimming and water safety programs, has allowed the identification of several key points.

Of the 1,658 respondents, 92% were females, most of them mothers of children aged 5 to 14 years old and enrolled in swimming lessons at the time of the survey completion. This percentage is quite different from the national female/male ratio (ca. 51%), and there might be gender-related differences in attitudes and perceptions towards children's swimming and water safety skills that need to be further investigated. The findings of this report must, therefore, be interpreted in light of the above.

One of the findings of the survey is that most respondents considered formal swimming lessons to be important while evaluating themselves as good/proficient swimmers. This shows that respondents recognize that formal swimming lessons provide children with skills beyond those they, or their family/ friends, could teach them. Furthermore, respondents considered that learning to swim is better than any other activity listed in the survey, and scored survival skills higher than competitive skills. Interestingly, the former comes in contradiction with teachers' beliefs that parents would value competitive strokes and skills over survival skills. Parents classified learning "personal survival skills" and related water safety skills much higher than learning "competitive swimming strokes". The preference of parents for survival over competition becomes even more evident when respondents mention that they would like children aged 5 to 14 years old to have access to resuscitation and emergency care programs. This should be regarded as a signal for the need to adjust the lessons to include more activities that encourage an increased acquisition of water safety knowledge and related skills.

Of the respondents surveyed, most children participated in 40 lessons per year. This is pleasing to note as this shows that most children are participating in swimming and water safety lessons on a regular basis and not just in a two week intensive program. Parents mainly enrolled their children in swimming and water safety lessons due to safety considerations, which *per se* is interesting. It is however important to study in more detail children who were enrolled in swimming lessons and know how to swim (according to parents), but don't want to continue due to lack of enjoyment. Understanding the reasons underlying the lack of enjoyment is crucial for drowning prevention agencies to increase participation and improve retention in water safety programs. Therefore, a possible follow up of such cases mentioned in this survey would help to assess the level of swimming competence of the children involved and the reasons for the lack of enjoyment, which, in turn, will be useful in adjusting existing programs to make them more enjoyable specially by children of such different ages as 5 and 14 years old. Additionally, it would be interesting to further explore those children who have stopped swimming lessons as they have achieved all levels prior to squad. This demonstrates a willingness of parents to continue until a certain level has been achieved. Nevertheless, learning if there were other aquatic activities available to them or if different options would have kept them involved in aquatics would be helpful to improve retention in water safety related programs.

Of the parents whose children were not currently enrolled, being unable to afford the lessons was indicated as the main reason why their children no longer attended (n=118). However, a substantial number (n=93) indicated that their child did not want to participate as being another key reason why they were not currently enrolled. Enhancing

our understanding of why children do not want to participate in swimming and water safety lessons is vital to ensuring that all children gain a foundation level of swimming and water safety skills.

When asked what was in their opinion the best age for children to start participating in swimming lessons, most respondents answered “2 years old or less”. It seems that parents are more aware of the progress a child can achieve with 30 lessons because when asked about time and money restricted to 30 lessons, many changed their answer to three, four and five years old as the best age to start enrolling in swimming lessons. Interestingly, the same trend was not observed with the non-parents answering this survey. Further investigation of what are people’s beliefs of the skills a child can acquire with only 30 lessons, its connection with the child’s age at the beginning of such lessons and the relation with parents’ age, would highlight the reasons why such differences were observed.

A common situation in surveys of this kind is that respondents tend to assume the greatest capability is preferred, such as choosing the longest distance listed in the options when asked the distance a 12 year old should be able to swim in open water without support.

Regarding the selection of a statement that best reflects the skills respondents believed a 12 year old should be able to perform, a relatively large number of respondents selected options in agreement with the National Water Safety Framework (Appendix 5) equivalent to Swim and Survive Level 4. However, most of them still chose the greatest capability listed, even though that was not a reasonable answer in some cases. This is a common situation in surveys of this kind and likely reflects the lack of knowledge of the appropriate skills a child of that age should master. Educating parents of what the minimum benchmark will probably improve the quality of their assistance in the learning progress and might positively impact the retention over time.

Boys were reportedly more likely to not be able to swim than girls. Even though there is not a significant difference this fact deserves further investigation, including looking at the relation not only with drowning deaths in the 5-14 and 15-19 years age groups but also the burden of male drowning deaths throughout adulthood.

It is interesting to note that most participants referred to AUSTSWIM as the preferred organization regarding learn to swim and swim teacher certification and Royal Life Saving Society - Australia and Surf Life Saving as the main organizations regarding water safety and drowning prevention. Despite parents identifying a teacher’s qualifications as the most important factor in evaluating a teacher’s effectiveness, it is concerning that over half (54%) of all parents did not seek the AUSTSWIM teacher accreditation when choosing a swim school.

Considering the comments and suggestions provided by parents regarding customer service and levels of feedback, the great diversity of the comments suggests that the learn to swim industry would probably benefit from being proactive in seeking parents’ opinions and in providing them with appropriate levels of feedback and from implementing a more customer-tailored interaction.

Future perspectives

- Conduct research into men's attitudes towards water safety in general, comparing with women's perceptions of their own skills, as well as attitudes of men with children towards their children's participation in formal swimming and water safety education.

- Further explore parents' attitudes towards optimal age to commence swimming lessons and their perceptions and attitudes around different skills at different ages depending on when they started swimming.

- Look in more detail at those children who don't want to continue enrolling in swimming and water safety lessons due to lack of enjoyment in a comprehensive study involving parents, teachers and facilities' managers, to understand how the industry can improve retention.

- Conduct further research with parents of children aged 5-14 who have never accessed any type of formal swimming and water safety education.

References

1. AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving Society - Australia. (2010) 2010 Survey of Swim School Managers Report.

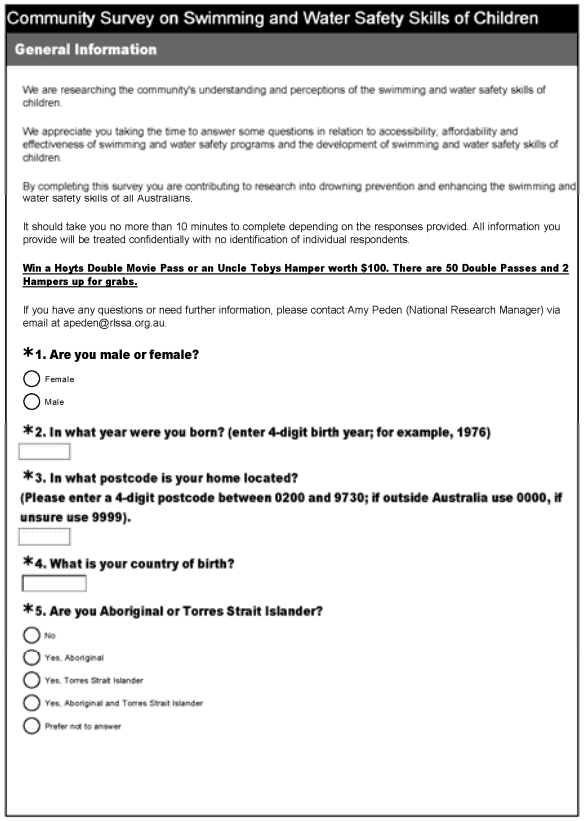
2. AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (2012) 2012 Survey of Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety - Public Version

3. Peden A, Scarr JP. (2012) No child to miss out: Basic swimming & water safety education - The right of all Australian children. Sydney: Royal Life Saving Society - Australia.

4. Morrongiello BA, Sandomierski M, Schwebel DC, Hagel B. (2013) Are parents just treading water? The impact of participation in swim lessons on parents' judgments of children's drowning risk, swimming ability, and supervision needs. *Accid Anal Prev*. 50:1169–75.

5. Moran K. (2009) Parent/caregiver perceptions and practice of child water safety at the beach. *International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion* 16(4):215–21.

Appendix 1 – Survey



Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

We are researching the community's understanding and perceptions of the swimming and water safety skills of children.

We appreciate you taking the time to answer some questions in relation to accessibility, affordability and effectiveness of swimming and water safety programs and the development of swimming and water safety skills of children.

By completing this survey you are contributing to research into drowning prevention and enhancing the swimming and water safety skills of all Australians.

It should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete depending on the responses provided. All information you provide will be treated confidentially with no identification of individual respondents.

Win a Hoyts Double Movie Pass or an Uncle Tobys Hamper worth $100. There are 50 Double Passes and 2 Hampers up for grabs.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Amy Peden (National Research Manager) via email at apeden@rlssa.org.au.

***1. Are you male or female?**

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

***2. In what year were you born? (enter 4-digit birth year; for example, 1976)**

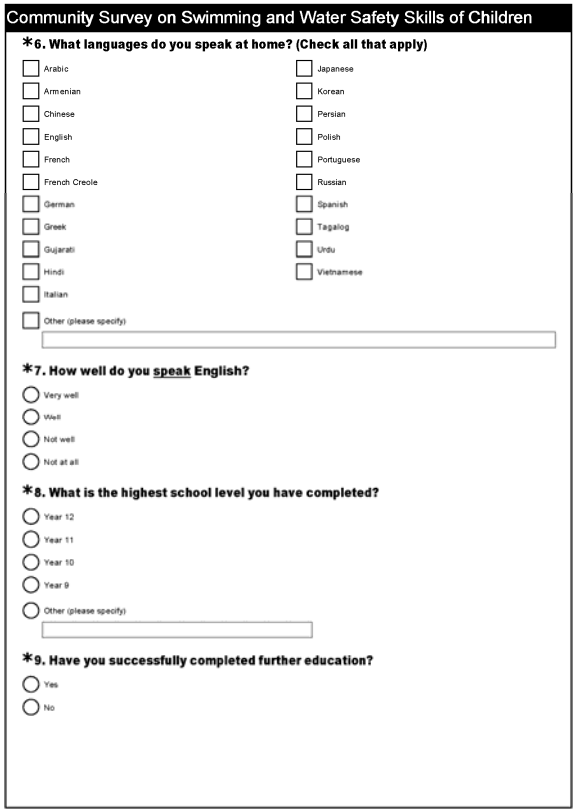
***3. In what postcode is your home located?**
(Please enter a 4-digit postcode between 0200 and 9730; if outside Australia use 0000, if unsure use 9999).

***4. What is your country of birth?**

***5. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?**

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes, Aboriginal
- ◯ Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- ◯ Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- ◯ Prefer not to answer

Page 1



Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***6. What languages do you speak at home? (Check all that apply)**

- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Armenian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ French Creole
- ☐ German
- ☐ Greek
- ☐ Gujarati
- ☐ Hindi
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Persian
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Portuguese
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Tagalog
- ☐ Urdu
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***7. How well do you speak English?**

- ◯ Very well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Not at all

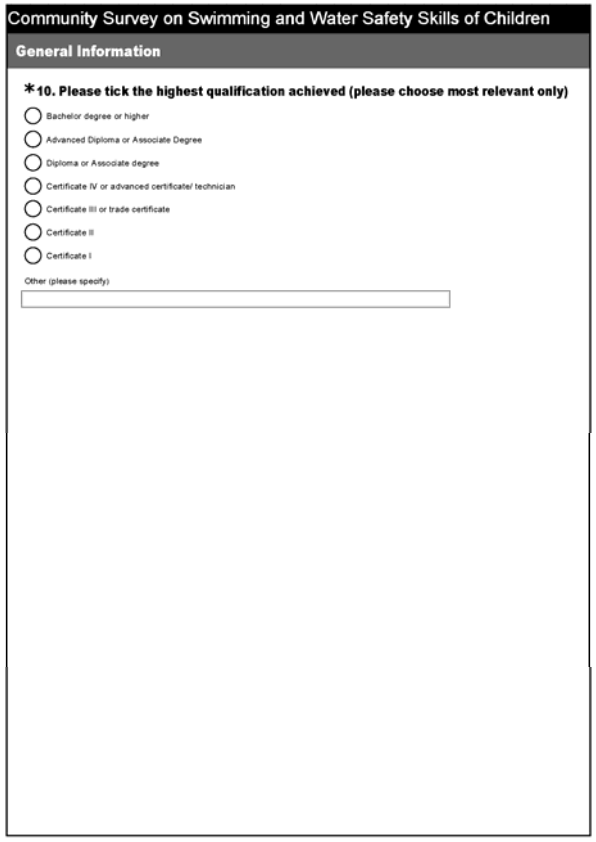
***8. What is the highest school level you have completed?**

- ◯ Year 12
- ◯ Year 11
- ◯ Year 10
- ◯ Year 9
- ◯ Other (please specify)

***9. Have you successfully completed further education?**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Page 2



Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

***10. Please tick the highest qualification achieved (please choose most relevant only)**

- ◯ Bachelor degree or higher
- ◯ Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree
- ◯ Diploma or Associate degree
- ◯ Certificate IV or advanced certificate/ technician
- ◯ Certificate III or trade certificate
- ◯ Certificate II
- ◯ Certificate I

Other (please specify)

Page 3

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

***15. Including yourself, how many people aged 18 and over currently live in your household?**

***16. How many children aged 17 or younger live in your household?**

***17. Does your residence have a swimming pool?**

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes and it has a fence
- ◯ Yes and it doesn't have a fence
- ◯ Prefer not to answer

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

***18. Have you, a friend and/ or a family member ever experienced a drowning incident**

	No	Yes, and the outcome was survival without injury	Yes, and the outcome was survival with injury	Yes, and the outcome was death
I have experienced it myself	◯	◯	◯	◯
A friend has experienced it	◯	◯	◯	◯
A family member has experienced it	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

***19. Do you know how to swim?**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

20. What is the <u>main reason</u> why you can't swim:** ***(please choose only one response from the list)

- ◯ Afraid of water
- ◯ Don't need to know how to swim
- ◯ Parents unable to swim
- ◯ Lessons not available
- ◯ Facility not available or too far away from my residence
- ◯ Couldn't afford swimming lessons
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

General Information

***21. At what age did you start learning to swim? (please record your answer using numbers only; if unsure provide most approximate age)**

***22. How did you learn how to swim? (choose the most relevant option only)**

- ◯ Formal lessons (qualified swim teacher)
- ◯ Parents, family and/or friends taught me
- ◯ I taught myself
- ◯ Other (please specify)

***23. Choose the maximum distance you think you can swim non-stop in open water (beach, river, lake, creek, etc.):**

- ◯ 1 to 10 metres
- ◯ 11 to 25 metres
- ◯ 26 to 50 metres
- ◯ 51 to 100 metres
- ◯ 101 to 200 metres
- ◯ more than 200 metres
- ◯ I can't swim in open water

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***24. Which of the strokes below could you swim in open water? (please choose all that you could do)**

- ☐ Breaststroke
- ☐ Freestyle
- ☐ Butterfly
- ☐ Backstroke
- ☐ Sidestroke
- ☐ Survival backstroke (sculling on back)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

***25. How long can you stay afloat with your head above water in deep open water (deeper than your body height) without support? (please choose one option, the longest option you could stay afloat)**

- ◯ Can't do it at all
- ◯ 1 to 5 min
- ◯ 6 to 15 min
- ◯ 16 to 25 min
- ◯ more than 25 min

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***26. How many children do you have?**

- ◯ 0
- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 5
- ◯ 6
- ◯ 7 or more

Page 10

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*27. How many of them are aged under 5?

*28. How many of them are aged between 5 and 14 years old?

Page 11

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*29. Enrolment of your child(ren) (between 5 and 14) in swimming and water safety lessons: *(please answer for your oldest 4 children)*

	Age	Gender	Can swim?	Age started lessons	Age finished lessons	Enrolled in lessons in last 12 months
Child 1						
Child 2						
Child 3						
Child 4						

*30. For your children between the ages of 5 and 14 years that have been enrolled in swimming lessons over the past 12 months, which of the following program formats did they participate in?

- [ ] Weekly group lessons (outside of school hours)
- [ ] Intensive Lesson Block (during school hours e.g. 10 lessons over 2 weeks)
- [ ] Weekly group lessons (during school hours)
- [ ] Intensive Lesson Block (during school holidays)
- [ ] Private lessons (one-on-one)
- [ ] Squad sessions
- [ ] Not currently enrolled
- [ ] Have never participated in learn to swim programs
- [ ] Other (please specify)

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*31. For children that have **never been enrolled** in swimming lessons, choose the **main reason** why not: *(please choose only one response from the list)*

- ◯ Swim school is too far from our residence
- ◯ I can't afford the swimming lessons
- ◯ I don't think my child needs swimming lessons
- ◯ My child doesn't want to participate in swimming lessons
- ◯ My child is too young to learn how to swim
- ◯ My child is too old to learn how to swim
- ◯ My child has a medical condition
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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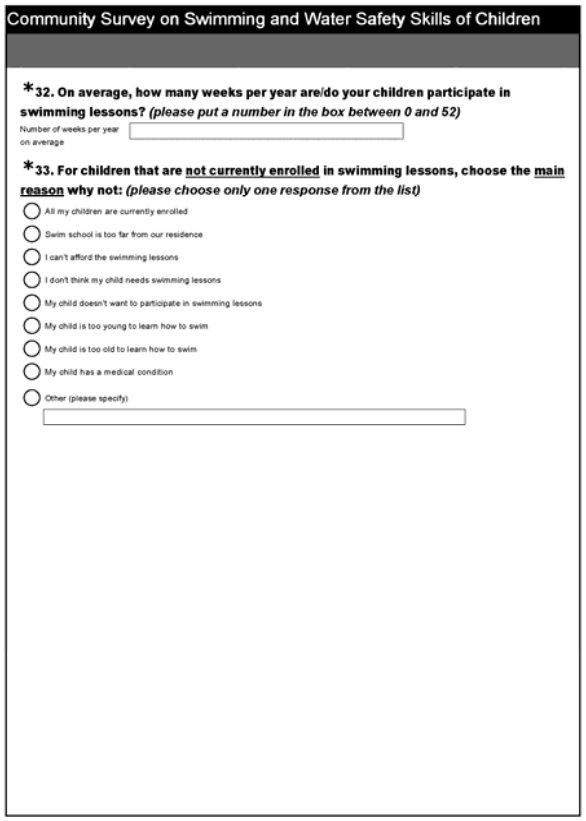


Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

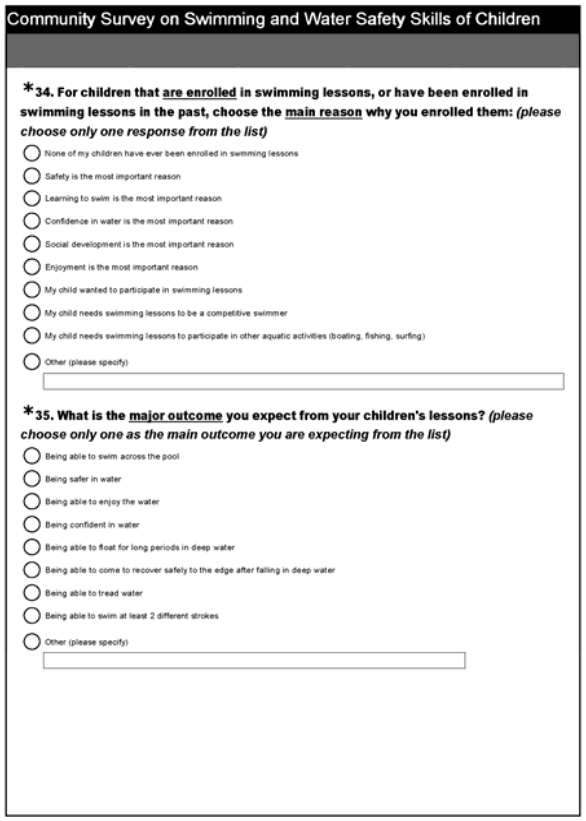
*32. On average, how many weeks per year are/do your children participate in swimming lessons? *(please put a number in the box between 0 and 52)*

Number of weeks per year on average

*33. For children that are **not currently enrolled** in swimming lessons, choose the **main reason** why not: *(please choose only one response from the list)*

- All my children are currently enrolled
- Swim school is too far from our residence
- I can't afford the swimming lessons
- I don't think my child needs swimming lessons
- My child doesn't want to participate in swimming lessons
- My child is too young to learn how to swim
- My child is too old to learn how to swim
- My child has a medical condition
- Other (please specify)

Page 14



Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*34. For children that **are enrolled** in swimming lessons, or have been enrolled in swimming lessons in the past, choose the **main reason** why you enrolled them: *(please choose only one response from the list)*

- None of my children have ever been enrolled in swimming lessons
- Safety is the most important reason
- Learning to swim is the most important reason
- Confidence in water is the most important reason
- Social development is the most important reason
- Enjoyment is the most important reason
- My child wanted to participate in swimming lessons
- My child needs swimming lessons to be a competitive swimmer
- My child needs swimming lessons to participate in other aquatic activities (boating, fishing, surfing)
- Other (please specify)

*35. What is the **major outcome** you expect from your children's lessons? *(please choose only one as the main outcome you are expecting from the list)*

- Being able to swim across the pool
- Being safer in water
- Being able to enjoy the water
- Being confident in water
- Being able to float for long periods in deep water
- Being able to come to recover safely to the edge after falling in deep water
- Being able to tread water
- Being able to swim at least 2 different strokes
- Other (please specify)

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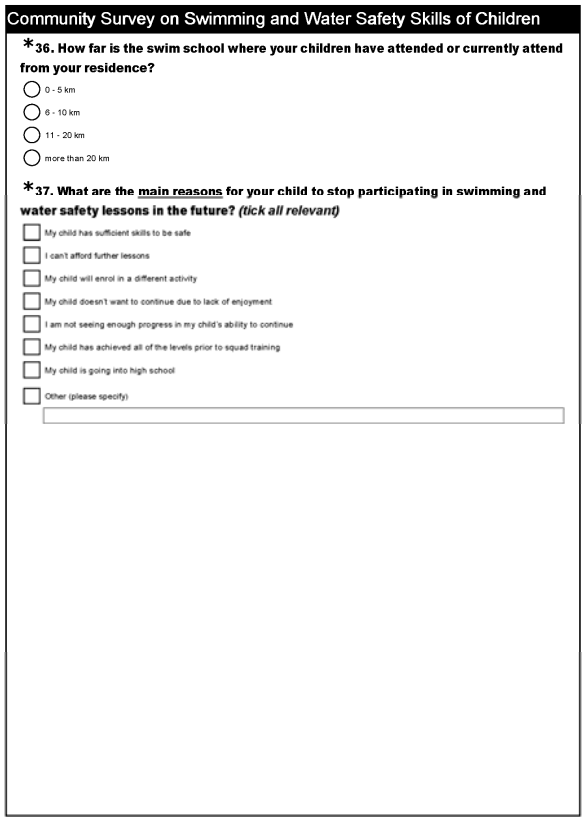

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*36. How far is the swim school where your children have attended or currently attend from your residence?

- 0 - 5 km
- 6 - 10 km
- 11 - 20 km
- more than 20 km

*37. What are the **main reasons** for your child to stop participating in swimming and water safety lessons in the future? *(tick all relevant)*

- My child has sufficient skills to be safe
- I can't afford further lessons
- My child will enrol in a different activity
- My child doesn't want to continue due to lack of enjoyment
- I am not seeing enough progress in my child's ability to continue
- My child has achieved all of the levels prior to squad training
- My child is going into high school
- Other (please specify)

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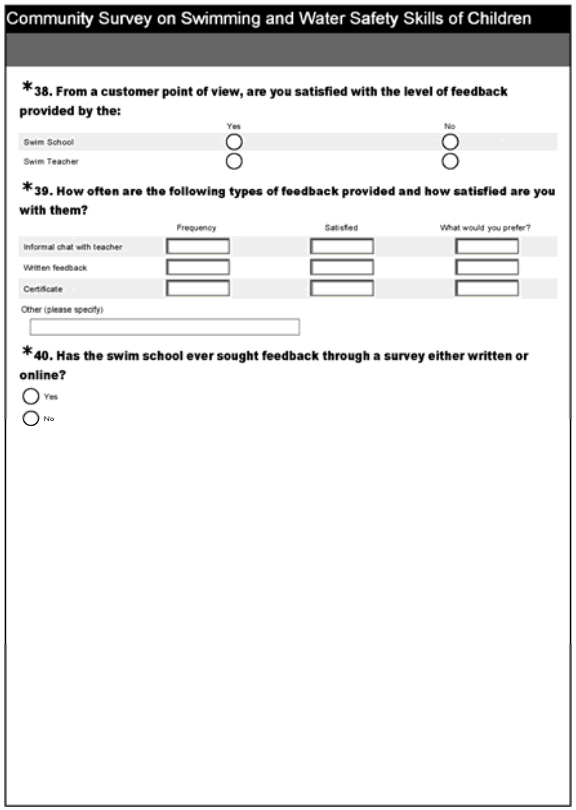

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*38. From a customer point of view, are you satisfied with the level of feedback provided by the:

	Yes	No
Swim School	◯	◯
Swim Teacher	◯	◯

*39. How often are the following types of feedback provided and how satisfied are you with them?

	Frequency	Satisfied	What would you prefer?
Informal chat with teacher			
Written feedback			
Certificate			

Other (please specify)

*40. Has the swim school ever sought feedback through a survey either written or online?

◯ Yes
◯ No

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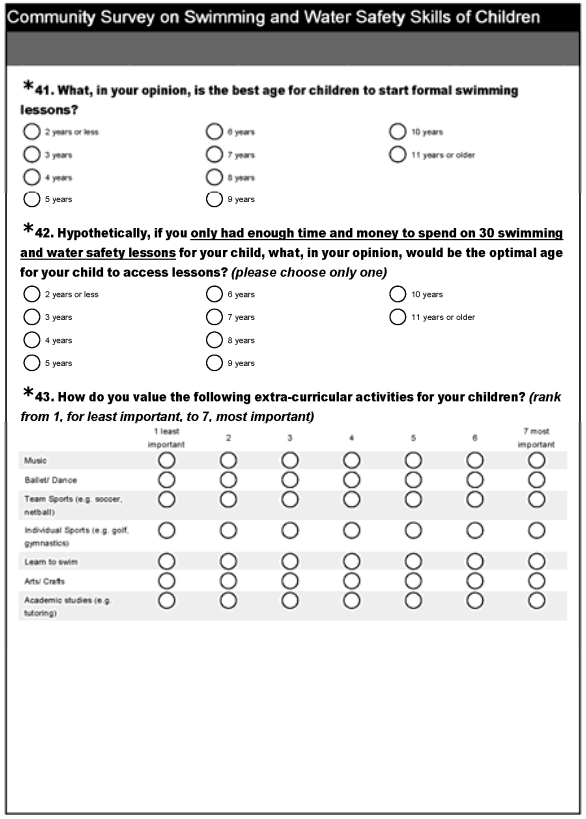

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*41. What, in your opinion, is the best age for children to start formal swimming lessons?

◯ 2 years or less ◯ 6 years ◯ 10 years
◯ 3 years ◯ 7 years ◯ 11 years or older
◯ 4 years ◯ 8 years
◯ 5 years ◯ 9 years

*42. Hypothetically, if you only had enough time and money to spend on 30 swimming and water safety lessons for your child, what, in your opinion, would be the optimal age for your child to access lessons? *(please choose only one)*

◯ 2 years or less ◯ 6 years ◯ 10 years
◯ 3 years ◯ 7 years ◯ 11 years or older
◯ 4 years ◯ 8 years
◯ 5 years ◯ 9 years

*43. How do you value the following extra-curricular activities for your children? *(rank from 1. for least important, to 7. most important)*

	1 least important	2	3	4	5	6	7 most important
Music	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Ballet/ Dance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Team Sports (e.g. soccer, netball)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Individual Sports (e.g. golf, gymnastics)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learn to swim	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Arts/ Crafts	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Academic studies (e.g. tutoring)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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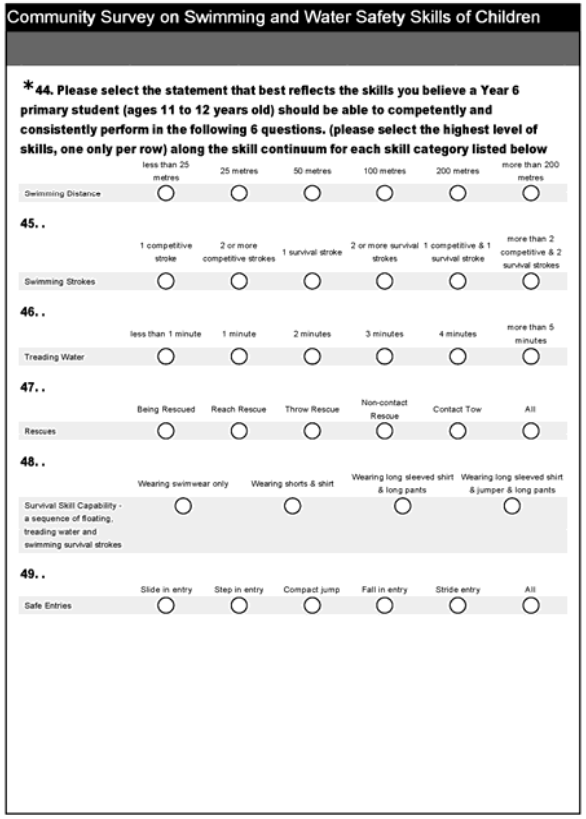

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

*44. Please select the statement that best reflects the skills you believe a Year 6 primary student (ages 11 to 12 years old) should be able to competently and consistently perform in the following 6 questions. (please select the highest level of skills, one only per row) along the skill continuum for each skill category listed below

	less than 25 metres	25 metres	50 metres	100 metres	200 metres	more than 200 metres
Swimming Distance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

45. .

	1 competitive stroke	2 or more competitive strokes	1 survival stroke	2 or more survival strokes	1 competitive & 1 survival stroke	more than 2 competitive & 2 survival strokes
Swimming Strokes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

46. .

	less than 1 minute	1 minute	2 minutes	3 minutes	4 minutes	more than 5 minutes
Treading Water	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

47. .

	Being Rescued	Reach Rescue	Throw Rescue	Non-contact Rescue	Contact Tow	All
Rescues	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

48. .

	Wearing swimwear only	Wearing shorts & shirt	Wearing long sleeved shirt & long pants	Wearing long sleeved shirt & jumper & long pants
Survival Skill Capability - a sequence of floating, treading water and swimming survival strokes	◯	◯	◯	◯

49. .

	Slide in entry	Step in entry	Compact jump	Fall in entry	Stride entry	All
Safe Entries	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***50. While not definitive, which statement best represents your definition of "can swim"? The ability to:**

- ◯ Jump or dive into water, resurface and swim comfortably on back then rolling over swim on front. Duck dive & swim underwater a short distance, resurface, tread water, breathing in a relaxed manner, float & swim changing direction of travel & body position on command
- ◯ Enter water and swim 100m of freestyle & 100m of backstroke. Tread water for 3 mins. Float on back for 1 minute. Perform a duck dive & underwater swim a short distance
- ◯ Perform safe head first entry & swim 100m of freestyle, backstroke, and breaststroke. Tread water for 3 min. Float on back for 1 min. Perform basic functions of tumble turn.

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

51. How important is for you that children learn the following skills:** ***(rank from 1, for least important, to 8, most important. You can only use each number once)

	1 least important	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 most important
Rescue skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Water safety knowledge (e.g. rules for behaviour, awareness of dangers, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Survival swimming strokes (e.g. breaststroke, survival backstroke, sidestroke)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Resuscitation and emergency care skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Competitive swimming strokes (e.g. freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Personal survival skills (e.g. treading water, signal for help)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Entries and exits (e.g. slide, step-in, stride-in, compact jump, deep water exit)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Competitive swimming skills, including diving, tumble, turns, etc.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

52. Please rank the top 3 factors that best describe your expectations of a swim teacher:

	First	Second	Third
Teacher's qualifications	◯	◯	◯
Positive attitude to teaching	◯	◯	◯
Teacher's communication skills	◯	◯	◯
Flexibility of instruction (aware of different skill levels)	◯	◯	◯
Consideration of safety	◯	◯	◯
Quality of instruction	◯	◯	◯
Methods of instruction	◯	◯	◯

***53. Please rank the top 3 most important aspects when choosing a swim school:**

	First	Second	Third
Program being used	◯	◯	◯
Distance from home	◯	◯	◯
Location	◯	◯	◯
Price	◯	◯	◯
Teacher's qualifications	◯	◯	◯
Word of mouth from other parents	◯	◯	◯
Quality of facilities	◯	◯	◯
Teacher's reputation	◯	◯	◯
Swim school's industry reputation	◯	◯	◯

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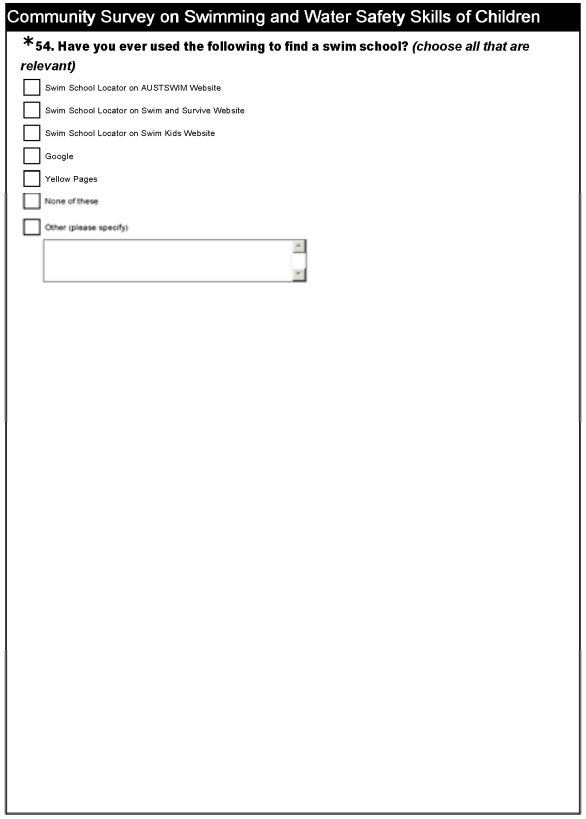
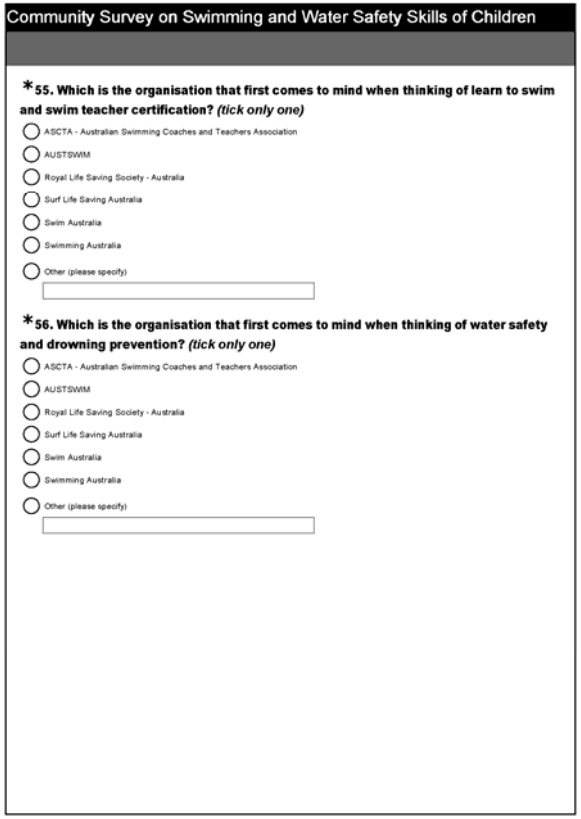
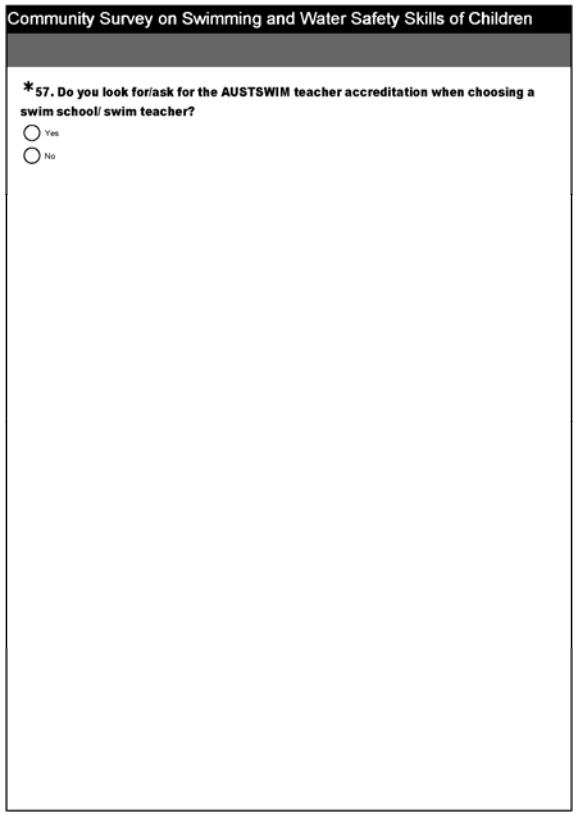

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children
*54. Have you ever used the following to find a swim school? (choose all that are relevant)
Swim School Locator on AUSTSWIM Website
Swim School Locator on Swim and Survive Website
Swim School Locator on Swim Kids Website
Google
Yellow Pages
None of these
Other (please specify)
Page 23


Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children
*55. Which is the organisation that first comes to mind when thinking of learn to swim and swim teacher certification? (tick only one)
ASCTA - Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association
AUSTSWIM
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
Surf Life Saving Australia
Swim Australia
Swimming Australia
Other (please specify)
*56. Which is the organisation that first comes to mind when thinking of water safety and drowning prevention? (tick only one)
ASCTA - Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association
AUSTSWIM
Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
Surf Life Saving Australia
Swim Australia
Swimming Australia
Other (please specify)
Page 24


Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children
*57. Do you look for/ask for the AUSTSWIM teacher accreditation when choosing a swim school/ swim teacher?
Yes
No
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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***58. What, in your opinion, is the best age for children to start formal swimming lessons?**

- 2 years or less
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years or older

***59. Hypothetically, if you had children and only had enough time and money to spend on 30 swimming and water safety lessons, what, in your opinion, would be the optimal age for your child to access lessons?** *(please choose only one)*

- 2 years or less
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years or older

***60. Hypothetically if you had children, how would you value the following extra-curricular activities for them?** *(rank from 1, for least important, to 7, most important)*

	1 least important	2	3	4	5	6	7 most important
Music	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ballet/ Dance	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Team Sports (e.g. soccer, netball)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Individual Sports (e.g. golf, gymnastics)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learn to swim	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Arts/ Crafts	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Academic studies (e.g. tutoring)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***61. Please select the statement that best reflects the skills you believe a Year 6 primary student (ages 11 to 12 years old) should be able to competently and consistently perform in the following 6 questions. (please select the highest level of skills (one only per row) along the skill continuum for each skill category listed below**

	less than 25 metres	25 metres	50 metres	100 metres	200 metres	more than 200 metres
Swimming Distance	○	○	○	○	○	○

62. .

	1 competitive stroke	2 or more competitive strokes	1 survival stroke	2 or more survival strokes	1 competitive & 1 survival stroke	more than 2 competitive & 2 survival strokes
Swimming Strokes	○	○	○	○	○	○

63. .

	less than 1 minute	1 minute	2 minutes	3 minutes	4 minutes	more than 5 minutes
Treading Water	○	○	○	○	○	○

64. .

	Being Rescued	Reach Rescue	Throw Rescue	Non-contact Rescue	Contact Tow	All
Rescues	○	○	○	○	○	○

65. .

	Wearing swimwear only	Wearing shorts & shirt	Wearing long sleeved shirt & long pants	Wearing long sleeved shirt & jumper & long pants
Survival Skill Capability - a sequence of floating, treading water and swimming survival strokes	○	○	○	○

66. .

	Slide in entry	Step in entry	Compact jump	Fall in entry	Stride entry	All
Safe Entries	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

***67. While not definitive, which statement best represents your definition of "can swim"?** *(please choose the most relevant)*

- Enter water and swim 100m of freestyle & 100m of backstroke. Tread water for 3 mins. Float on back for 1 minute. Perform a duck dive & underwater swim a short distance
- Perform safe head first entry & swim 100m of freestyle, backstroke, and breaststroke. Tread water for 3 min. Float on back for 1 min. Perform basic functions of tumble turn.
- Jump or dive into water, resurface and swim comfortably on back then rolling over swim on front. Duck dive & swim underwater a short distance, resurface, tread water, breathing in a relaxed manner, float & swim changing direction of travel & body position on command

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

68. How important is for you that children learn the following skills:** ***(rank from 1, for least important, to 8, most important)

	1 least important	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 most important
Competitive swimming skills, including diving, tumble, turns, etc.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Water safety knowledge (e.g. rules for behaviour, awareness of dangers, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Competitive swimming strokes (e.g. freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Personal survival skills (e.g. treading water, signal for help)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Entries and exits (e.g. slide, step-in, stride-in, compact jump, deep water exit)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Resuscitation and emergency care skills	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Survival swimming strokes (e.g. breaststroke, survival backstroke, sidestroke)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Rescue skills	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

69. Which is the organization that first comes to your mind when thinking of learn to swim and swim teacher certification?** ***(tick only one)

- ○ ASCTA - Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association
- ○ AUSTSWIM
- ○ Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
- ○ Surf Life Saving Australia
- ○ Swim Australia
- ○ Swimming Australia
- ○ Other (please specify)

70. Which is the organization that first comes to your mind when thinking of water safety and drowning prevention?** ***(tick only one)

- ○ ASCTA - Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association
- ○ AUSTSWIM
- ○ Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
- ○ Surf Life Saving Australia
- ○ Swim Australia
- ○ Swimming Australia
- ○ Other (please specify)

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Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

Final Comments

71. How did you hear about this survey?** ***(please choose the main channel if more than one)

- ○ Royal Life Saving Website
- ○ AUSTSWIM website
- ○ Swim Kids Facebook
- ○ Royal Life Saving Social Media
- ○ AUSTSWIM Social Media
- ○ School newsletter
- ○ Swim Centre
- ○ Friend or family
- ○ Parenting Blogs
- ○ Other (please specify)

72. Do you have any final comments regarding children's swimming and water safety skills, your own experiences with learn to swim (yourself or your children) or the industry in general?

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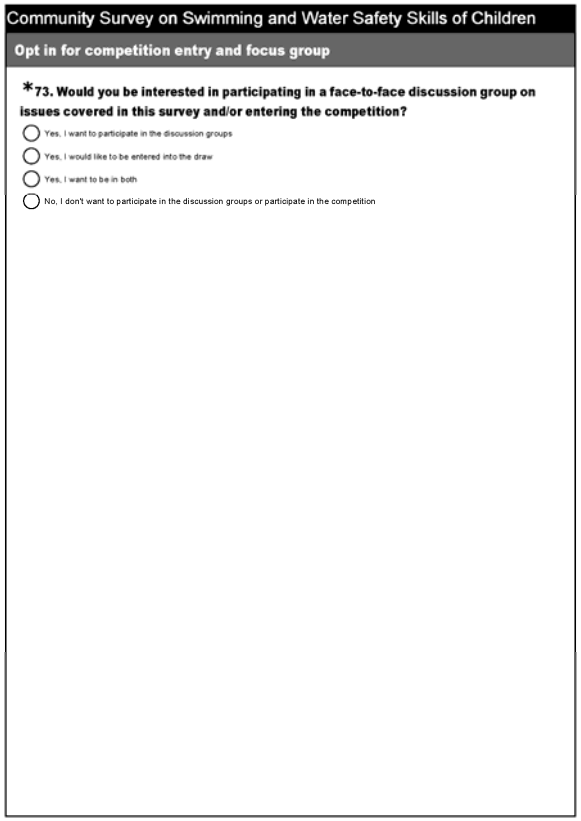

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

Opt in for competition entry and focus group

***73. Would you be interested in participating in a face-to-face discussion group on issues covered in this survey and/or entering the competition?**

- ◯ Yes, I want to participate in the discussion groups
- ◯ Yes, I would like to be entered into the draw
- ◯ Yes, I want to be in both
- ◯ No, I don't want to participate in the discussion groups or participate in the competition

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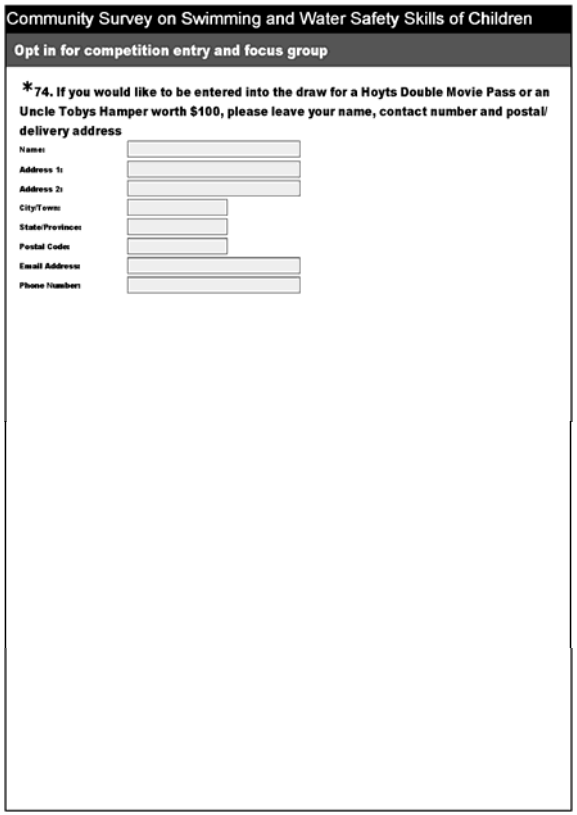

Community Survey on Swimming and Water Safety Skills of Children

Opt in for competition entry and focus group

***74. If you would like to be entered into the draw for a Hoyts Double Movie Pass or an Uncle Tobys Hamper worth $100, please leave your name, contact number and postal/ delivery address**

Name:
Address 1:
Address 2:
City/Town:
State/Province:
Postal Code:
Email Address:
Phone Number:

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Appendix 2 – Survey media release, email signature and social media posts

Survey media release

AUSTSWIM AND ROYAL LIFE SAVING TO CONDUCT A NATIONAL SURVEY FOR PARENTS ON SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY PROGRAMS

12/04/2013

AUSTSWIM and Royal Life Saving are seeking the community's views on children's swimming and water safety skills in a new survey. The survey will enhance our understanding of Swimming and Water Safety programs for children aged 5–14 years old.

A main focus of the survey will be the accessibility, affordability and effectiveness of swimming and water safety programs for children aged 5–14. The survey will also determine just how well children develop their swimming and water safety skills.

Parents will also have the opportunity to comment on factors affecting their choice of swim school and instructor such as the reputation of their chosen swim school, the effectiveness and accreditation of the teachers, and what understanding and expectations they have of the skills being taught to their children.

Each parent's comments will contribute to research being conducted on drowning prevention in Australia. The outcomes of which are set to enhance the swimming and water safety skills of all Australian children.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and no identification of individual respondents will be made available.

The survey will be open until 5pm Friday, 17 May 2013 and can be accessed via:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/parentswimsurvey

Participants who complete the survey will go into the draw to win a double Hoyts movie pass or an UNCLE TOBYS hamper worth $100. There are 50 double passes and 2 hampers up for grabs.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Amy Peden at Royal Life Saving via email at apeden@rlssa.org.au.

Do you know someone that you think would like to participate in this survey? If so, please share the survey link on social media or email to your friends.

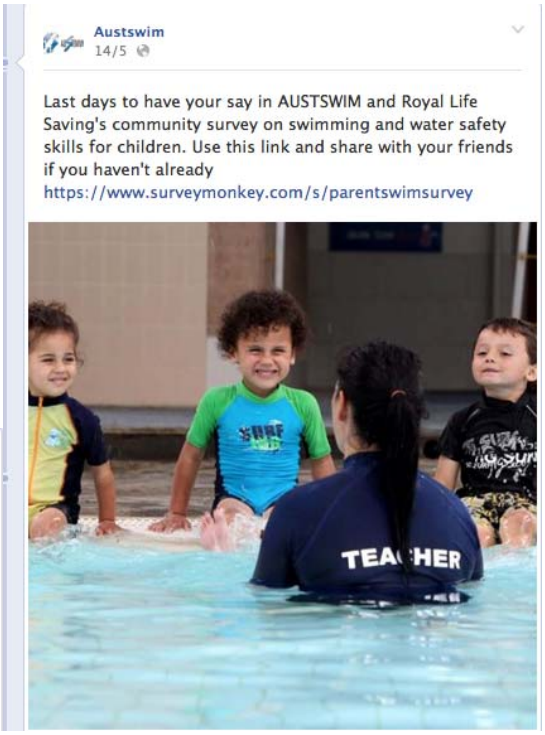
Thank you for your participating in this survey and helping to keep all Australian children safe!

SEE ALL NEWS

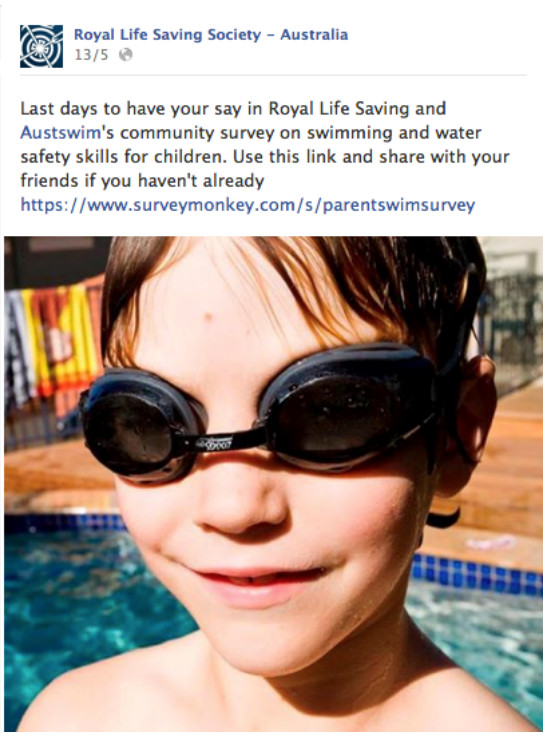
Email signature

Social media posts

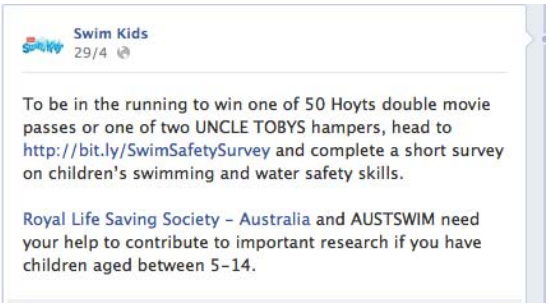
AUSTSWIM



Royal Life Saving



Swim Kids



Appendix 3 – Postcode details

A full list of Australian postcodes was obtained through the Australia Post website, which makes data freely available for non-commercial uses. To access the data, one needs to complete and submit a form. After sending the request, and email containing links to the downloadable files was received.

Australia postcode data contains locality and postcode records, Large Volume Receivers (LVRs) and valid postal delivery type ranges such as PO Boxes. Data also includes reference to latitude and longitude coordinates, which was used to map the residence postcodes of respondents (Figure 1). The full dataset is 227 pages long but the following table shows how the dataset looks like for the first records.

Post code	Locality	State	Comments	Delivery Office	Presort Indicator	Parcel Zone	BSP number	BSP name	Category	Latitude	Longditude
200	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY	ACT	PO Boxes	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNI LPO x	150	N2	19	CANBERRA	Post Office Boxes	-35.277272	149.117136
221	BARTON	ACT	LVR Special Mailing		150	N2	19	CANBERRA	LVR	-35.201372	149.095065
800	DARWIN	NT		DARWIN DELIVERY CENTRE	85	NT1	1	DARWIN	Delivery Area	-12.801028	130.955789
801	DARWIN	NT	GPO Boxes	DARWIN GPO DELIVERY ANNEXE	85	NT1	1	DARWIN	Post Office Boxes	-12.801028	130.955789
804	PARAP	NT	PO Boxes	PARAP LPO	85	NT1	1	DARWIN	Post Office Boxes	-12.432181	130.84331
810	ALAWA	NT		DARWIN DELIVERY CENTRE	85	NT1	1	DARWIN	Delivery Area	-12.378451	130.877014

Appendix 4 – Countries of birth and languages spoken at home

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	1,415
Austria	2
Belgium	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Brazil	1
Brunei Darussalam	1
Cambodia	1
Canada	5
Chile	1
China	1
Croatia/Hrvatska	2
Denmark	5
Fiji	1
Germany	12
Greece	1
Hong Kong	2
Hungary	1
India	7
Indonesia	2
Iran, Islamic Republic of	3
Ireland	4
Japan	1
Jersey	1
Kenya	2
Korea, Republic of	1
Kuwait	1
Latvia	1
Malaysia	9
Malta	1
Netherlands	1
New Zealand	37
Papua New Guinea	5
Philippines	4
Poland	2
Russian Federation	1
Samoa	1
Singapore	2
Slovenia	1
South Africa	12
Soviet Union	1
Sri Lanka	3
Sweden	2
Switzerland	1
Thailand	2
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom	80
United States of America	9
Uruguay	3
Zambia	1

Zimbabwe	2
Languages spoken at home	Number of respondents
Afrikaans	2
Arabic	3
Bengali	1
Bosnian	1
Cantonese	1
Chinese	16
Creole	1
Croatian	3
Danish	4
Dutch	2
English	1630
Faroese	1
Former Yugoslavian	1
French	10
German	17
Greek	6
Hebrew	1
Hindi	3
Hungarian	1
Indonesian	1
Italian	9
Japanese	4
Korean	1
Latvian	1
Macedonian	1
Malayalam	1
Maltese	1
Maori	1
Melanesian Pisin	1
Norwegian	2
Persian	2
Polish	5
Portuguese	1
Russian	4
Scottish	1
Serbian	1
Sign language	2
Sinhalese	1
Slovenian	1
Spanish	8
Swedish	2
Tagalog	4
Tamil	1
Telugu	2
Thai	2
Vietnamese	3
Visayan	1
Welsh	1
Yiddish	1

Appendix 5 – The Royal Life Saving National Swimming and Water Safety Framework

National Swimming and Water Safety Framework

INTRODUCTION

Royal Life Saving believes that every individual in Australia should be provided with a balanced water safety, personal survival and swimming education. To facilitate this belief Royal Life Saving has developed the *National Swimming and Water Safety Framework*.

The framework provides parents, aquatic educators, educational institutions and governments with a basis for developing, providing or selecting an appropriate swimming and water safety program. The framework has been based on the success of Royal Life Saving's Swim and Survive program and has been developed in consultation with the aquatic industry.

DESIRABLE STANDARDS

Royal Life Saving's *National Swimming and Water Safety Framework* represents the skills that Royal Life Saving believes are desirable in the provision of swimming and water safety opportunities to individuals of all backgrounds. Royal Life Saving strongly believes that if all individuals attained the relevant standard within the framework then the number of people involved in aquatic emergencies would be significantly reduced.

MINIMUM TARGETS

Royal Life Saving provides support and advice to those groups that have chosen to set minimum targets for achievement by individuals under their care. These targets reflect what can be realistically achieved given a range of variables such as financial commitment, climatic conditions and access to swimming and water safety programs. It is expected that by working with such groups Royal Life Saving will ultimately ensure the achievement of the desirable standards.

ALIGNMENT

The framework standards are especially relevant to primary-school-aged children and have been aligned to years of schooling. This alignment provides a guide for providing swimming and water safety experiences by parents, schools and education systems. Royal Life Saving believes that the standards are attainable in the context of an ongoing comprehensive and developmentally sound water safety, personal survival and swimming education.

A CONTINUUM OF LEARNING

Royal Life Saving recognises that at any point in a child's water safety and swimming education they may be achieving above or below the appropriate year standard. An individual with limited aquatic experience is not expected to perform at the relevant standard. However, the seven standards within the framework set out a skill-based continuum from which an individual's progression in swimming and water safety may be mapped and planned. It caters equally to learners of all abilities and allows programs to be structured to an individual's needs.

THE CONTENT

The framework contains two elements: core and extension skills. The core skills in each standard are critical to each individual's swimming and water safety education, whereas the extension skills are desirable but not pivotal.

SWIM AND SURVIVE PROGRAM

Royal Life Saving also offers the Swim and Survive program to individuals who wish to achieve within the framework. Details of the Swim and Survive program may be obtained from Royal Life Saving Branches in each state and territory.

Strand	Year 1 Standard	Year 2 Standard
Entry and exit	**Entry and exit** Enter and exit the water safely and confidently.	**Entry and exit** Perform a slide-in entry and exit using the edge.
Sculling and body orientation	**Float to stand** Recover from a face-down float or glide to a standing or other secure position.	**Scull** Demonstrate horizontal arm sculling actions to support the body in an upright position with the face above the surface of the water. Small movements of the legs permitted. **Float to stand** Recover from a back float or back glide to a standing or other secure position.
Movement and swimming strokes	**Movement** Move through the water unassisted with the feet clear of the bottom for a distance of 3 metres. Any method of propulsion is acceptable.	**Swim** Swim 20 metres using an action that resembles a stroke.
Survival and PFD skills	**Float with an aid** Float for 30 seconds holding a rescue flotation aid for support. Signal for help intermittently.	**Survival skills** Demonstrate the following as a continuous sequence: • survival sculling for 30 seconds • floating for 1 minute, holding a rescue flotation aid that has been thrown for support, and kick to safety.
Underwater skills	**Submerging** Open the eyes and breathe out while submerging the body completely.	**Recover an object** Submerge and recover an object from chest-deep water.
Rescue skills	**Be rescued** Grasp a rigid article or piece of clothing offered by a rescuer and be pulled to safety.	**Be rescued** Be pulled through the water with a rope for 5 metres to a standing position of safety.
Water safety knowledge	**Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.**	**Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.**
Extension skills		

Year 3 Standard	Year 4 Standard
Step in Perform a step-in entry.	**Compact jump** Safely perform a compact jump, a fall-in entry and exit from deep water.
Scull – head first Demonstrate sculling head first.	**Scull – feet first** Demonstrate sculling feet first on the back. **Body rotation** Demonstrate rotation of the tucked body, keeping the face above the surface of the water.
Swim Swim 50 metres using actions that resemble two or more strokes. These must include at least 15 metres using an above-water arm recovery stroke and 15 metres using an underwater arm-recovery stroke.	**Swim** Swim continuously: • 50 metres of stroke(s) with above-water arm recovery • 25 metres of stroke(s) with underwater arm recovery. Recognised stroke techniques must be used.
Survival skills Demonstrate the following as a continuous sequence: • survival sculling for 1 minute • swim for 1 minute, holding a rescue flotation aid which has been thrown for support.	**Survival skills** Dressed in swimwear, shorts and T-shirt, demonstrate the following as a continuous sequence: • sculling, floating or treading water for 2 minutes • swim slowly for 3 minutes using the actions that resemble three recognised survival strokes, changing after each minute to another stroke. **Float with a buoyant aid** Float for 1 minute using an open-ended flotation aid thrown to the candidate.
Underwater swim Surface dive, swim underwater and recover an object from chest-deep water.	**Underwater search** Demonstrate a surface dive, swim underwater, search for and recover an object from water of depth equivalent to the candidate's height.
Reach rescue Using a rigid object, pull a partner to safety.	**Throw rescue** Throw a rescue flotation aid to a partner at 5 metres distance and instruct the partner to kick to the edge.
Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.	**Answer questions about dangers in the aquatic environment.**
Butterfly Demonstrate introductory dolphin kick for a distance of 5 metres.	**Butterfly** Demonstrate introductory butterfly arm action for a distance of 5 metres.

200

Strand	Year 5 Standard	Year 6 Standard
Entry and exit	**Dive** Demonstrate a dive.	**Stride entry** Demonstrate a stride entry.
Sculling and body orientation	**Body rotation** Rotate the body about the vertical and horizontal axes with and without arm and leg action. **Eggbeater kick** Demonstrate the eggbeater kick to show the basic coordination of the leg action. Arms or a kickboard may be used for support.	**Somersaults** Demonstrate a backward and a forward somersault in the water.
Movement and swimming strokes	**Swim** Swim continuously: • 25 metres freestyle • 25 metres survival backstroke or sidestroke • 25 metres backstroke • 25 metres breaststroke. Recognised strokes must be used.	**Swim** Swim continuously: • 50 metres sidestroke • 50 metres backstroke • 50 metres breaststroke • 50 metres freestyle. Efficient stroke techniques should be used.
Survival and PFD skills	**Survival skills** Dressed in swimwear, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, perform the following as a continuous sequence: • demonstrate survival sculling, floating or treading water for 4 minutes • perform a feet-first surface dive and swim underwater for a short distance • swim slowly for 6 minutes using three survival strokes, changing after each minute from one stroke to another. Remove clothing in deep water. **PFD** Correctly fit a PFD, jump into the water, float for 30 seconds and then climb out of deep water.	**Survival skills** Dressed in swimwear, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt and jumper, perform the following as a continuous sequence: • enter deep water using feet-first entry • submerge feet-first, swim underwater on the back looking up at the surface • swim 50 metres quickly as if escaping from a dangerous situation and then swim 50 metres slowly and float using a buoyant aid for 1 minute • swim slowly, demonstrating survival strokes for 6 minutes • scull, float or tread water for 3 minutes waving for help intermittently. Clothing may be removed. **PFD** Correctly fit a PFD while treading water and then swim 25 metres using survival strokes. Climb out of the water.
Rescue skills	**Reach rescue** Using a rope, towel or item of clothing, pull a partner to safety.	**Throw rescue** Throw an unweighted rope over a distance of 6 metres to within reach of rescuer and ending when the swimmer has grasped it.
Water safety knowledge	**Answer questions on water safety and personal survival techniques.**	**Answer questions on water safety and personal survival techniques.**
Extension skills	**Butterfly** Swim butterfly for 10 metres demonstrating a recognisable stroke and using correct breathing technique.	**Butterfly** Swim butterfly for 15 metres using an efficient stroke and correct breathing technique.

Year 7 Standard
Entry Demonstrate an entry technique selected by the examiner.
Eggbeater kick Demonstrate an efficient eggbeater kick without using the arms.
Swim Swim continuously: • 50 metres butterfly or freestyle • 50 metres backstroke • 50 metres breaststroke • 50 metres freestyle • 50 metres sidestroke • 50 metres survival backstroke. Efficient stroke techniques must be used. All alternative techniques are permissible.
Survival skills Dressed in swimwear, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, long-sleeved jumper, shoes and socks, perform the following as a continuous sequence: • dive and swim a distance underwater to simulate an escape from a sinking boat surrounded by oil (if the water at the examination venue is not clear, swim on the surface with face submerged) • swim a further 40 metres freestyle as if escaping from a dangerous situation • remove shoes while treading water and then swim slowly 50 metres breaststroke • float, survival scull or tread water for 5 minutes and demonstrate waving one arm occasionally as if signalling for help; reassure any nearby candidates by talking to them • swim slowly for 200 metres using survival strokes, changing after each 50 metres to another stroke • remove clothing in deep water. **PFD** Correctly fit a PFD while treading water, swim 100 metres using survival strokes, demonstrate HELP technique and climb out of the water while wearing the PFD.
Throw rescue Throw a weighted rope over a distance of 10 metres to within reach of a partner and pull to safety. A time limit of 1 minute shall apply commencing with an uncoiled and untangled rope lying at the feet of the rescuer and ending when the swimmer has grasped it. **Wade rescue** Wade to and pull to safety a partner by using a towel or item of clothing as an aid.
Answer questions on water safety and personal survival techniques indicating a thorough knowledge of basic concepts.
Butterfly Swim butterfly for 25 metres using an efficient stroke and correct breathing technique.

Appendix 6 – Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-15: National Swimming and Water Safety Benchmarks

School Level	Competency framework	Minimum competencies	% Target Population
(I) Infant And Pre-School	Experience in skill competencies for safe water entries & exits, floating & sculling, breathing, movement & swimming strokes, survival & underwater skills, water safety education & parent education	• Participation in the program	100%
(II) Primary School	Personal Aquatic Survival section of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework • Competencies to be achieved by the completion of Primary School education	• Equivalent to Swim and Survive Level 4 (and Surf Ed where available) • Level 5 Swim and Survive (and Surf Ed where available) • Level 6 Swim and Survive (and Surf Ed where available)	100% 75% 50%
(III) Secondary School	Life Saving section of the National Water Safety Framework – including exposure to Basic First Aid & Resuscitation Training • Competencies to be achieved by the completion of Year 10	• Equivalent to RLSSA Dry Rescue, including Resuscitation (and SLSA Surf Survival where available) • RLSSA Bronze Star (and SLSA Surf Survival where available) • RLSSA/SLSA Bronze Medallion	100% 75% 50%

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

AUSTSWIM LIMITED
Head Office
Phone 03 9562 7900
E-mail info@austswim.com.au
Visit www.austswim.com.au

Royal Life Saving Society - Australia
National Office
Phone 02 8217 3111
E-mail info@rlssa.org.au
Visit www.royallifesaving.com.au

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