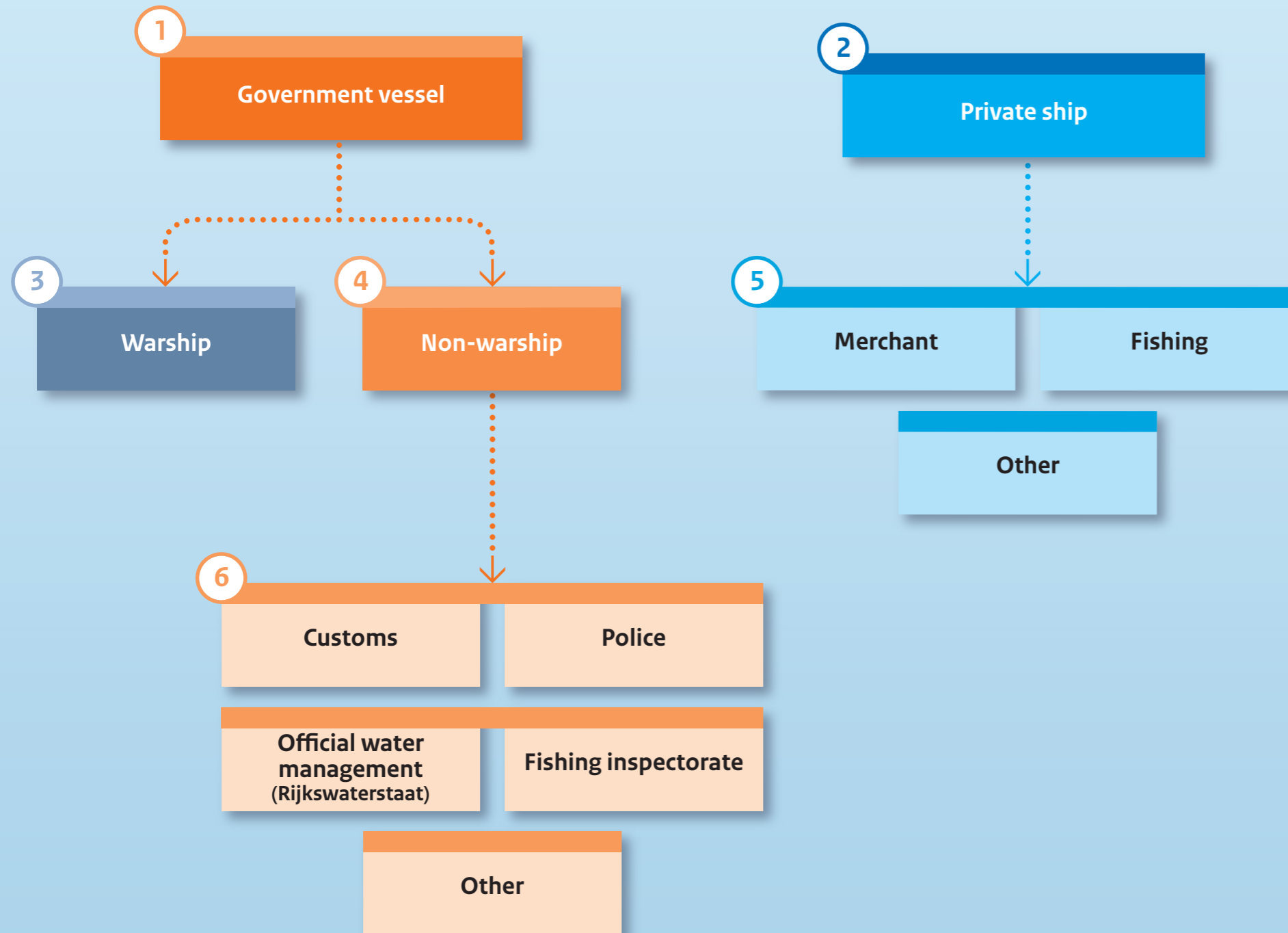


The classification of shipwrecks by owner



We are working to build solid foundations for the management of our maritime heritage overseas. An important aspect of this work is the shipwreck count and the allocation of these wrecks, see cultureelerfgoed.nl.

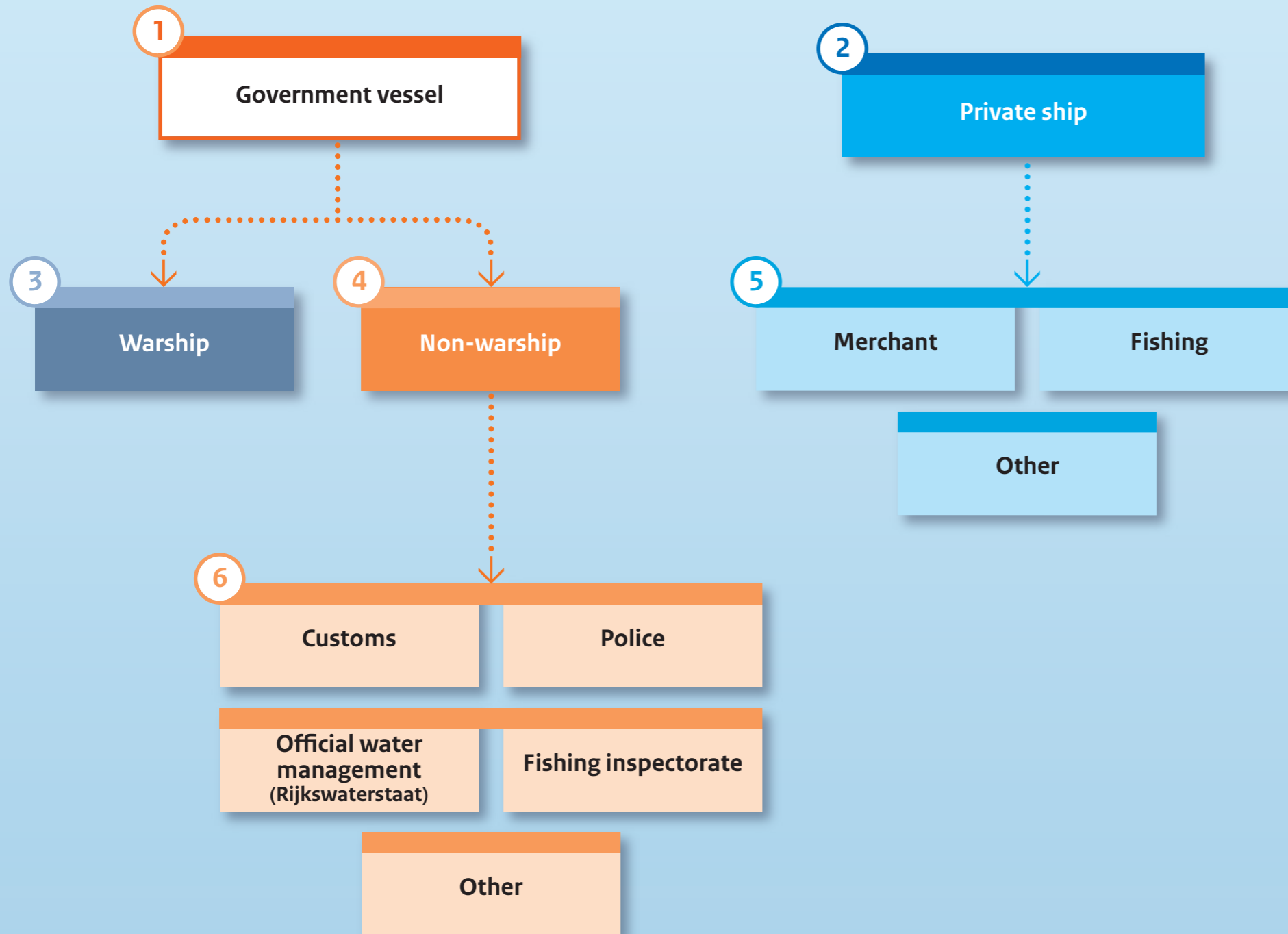
We distinguish between government vessels, which have Dutch sovereignty, and private vessels. These private vessels do not possess sovereignty, so the Dutch state cannot derive ownership rights to such vessels. Still, even private vessels might have played an important role in Dutch history, or are of important archaeological value. Therefore, we will work on a sustainable management plan for these vessels as well. The approach might differ for each wreck.

Vessels of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Dutch West India Company (WIC) form a specific category. Ownership of these ships was passed onto the Dutch government when the companies went bankrupt. Therefore, these ships are now considered government vessels.

[Click on the diagram for more information.](#)



The classification of shipwrecks by owner



1

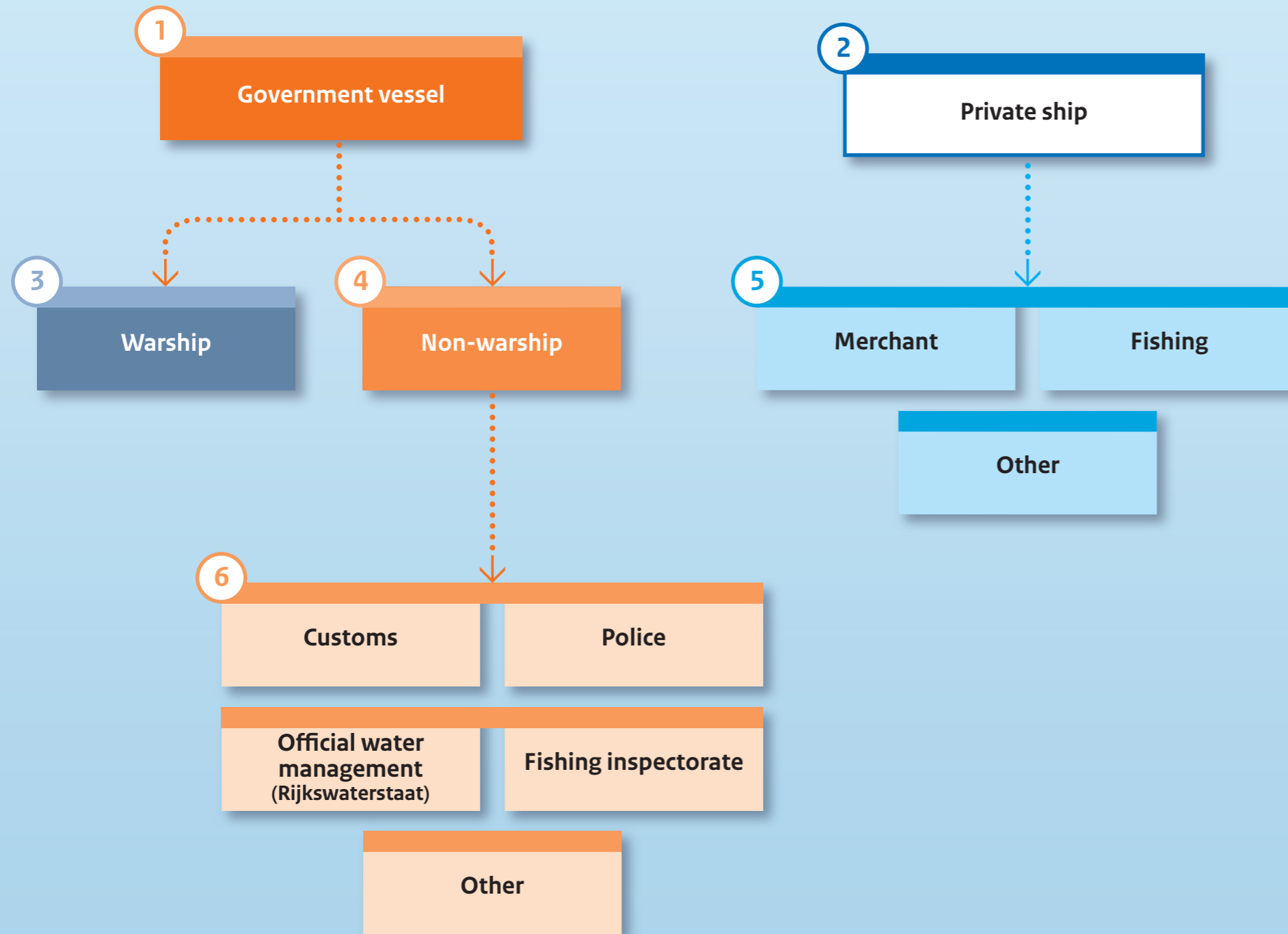
Government vessel: a ship employed in public service. Such a ship may be state-owned or state-operated.

Warships are a category of government vessel. Sovereignty also extends to government vessels performing public legal duties.

Currently, vessels of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Dutch West India Company (WIC) are also state-owned.



The classification of shipwrecks by owner

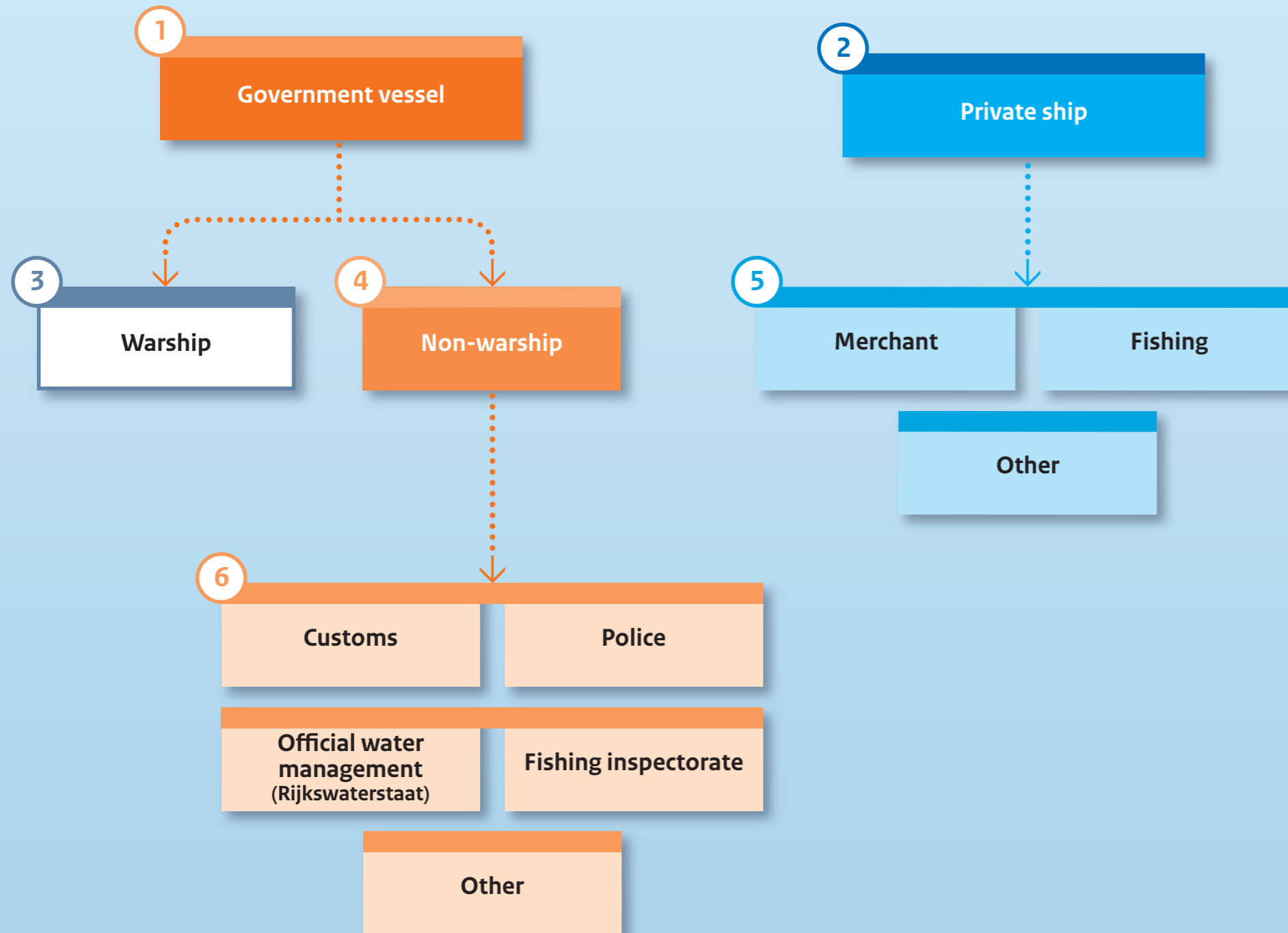


2

Private ship: not governmental.
Private owner.



The classification of shipwrecks by owner



3

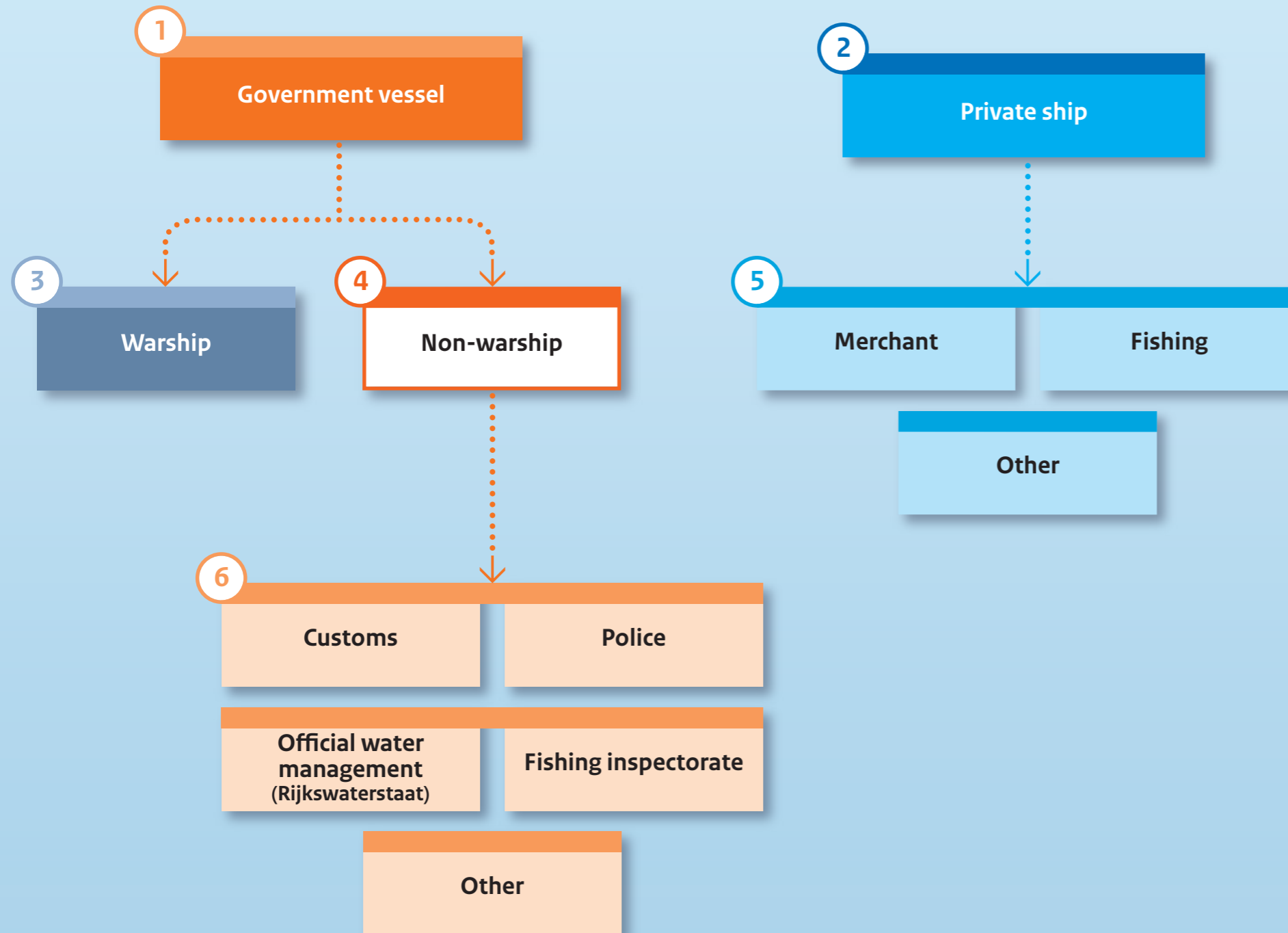
Warship: the generally accepted definition of 'warship' is included in article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). For a ship to be designated a warship it has to possess the following characteristics:

- 1 It has to belong to a nation's military forces;
- 2 It has to bear external evidence of its nationality;
- 3 The commander of the vessel must work in the service of the state, and his/her name must be listed;
- 4 The crew must be subject to armed forces discipline.

On the basis of the decision of 19 March 1956 (concerning the attributes of a Dutch vessel of war), a Dutch warship is distinguished from other vessels by its pennants, either one of the command flags or the standard flag.

Although warships are generally recognizable by their grey colour, a letter and a pennant number on the bow, and a name prefixed by 'Zijner Majesteits', from a strictly legal perspective these external attributes are not required for a vessel to be designated as a warship. It is nevertheless the case that Dutch warships bearing the pennant also prefix their names with 'Zijner Majesteits' (Zr.Ms.).

The classification of shipwrecks by owner

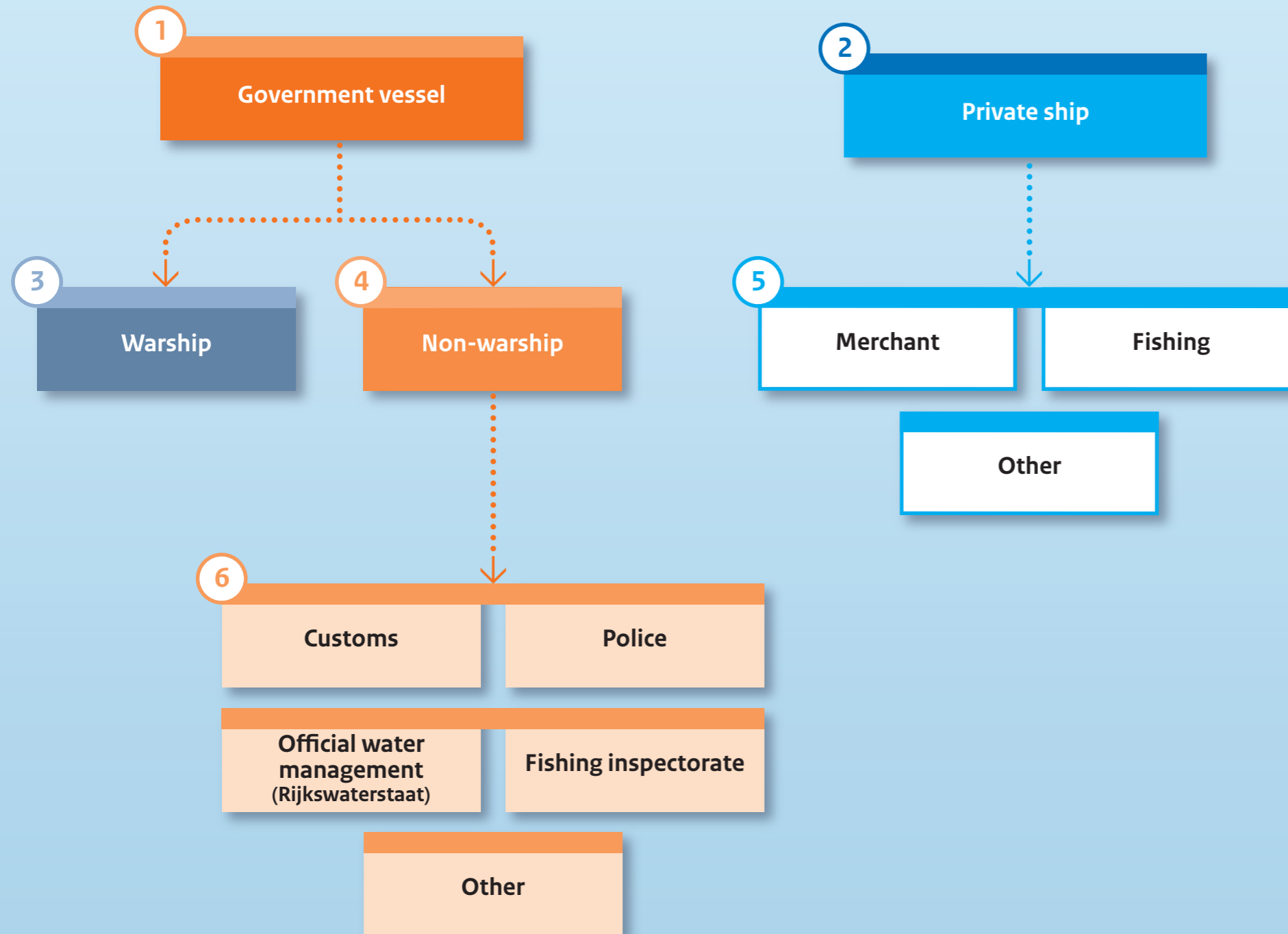


4

Non-warships but other types of government vessel: a vessel employed by the state for non-commercial, non-military purposes.



The classification of shipwrecks by owner



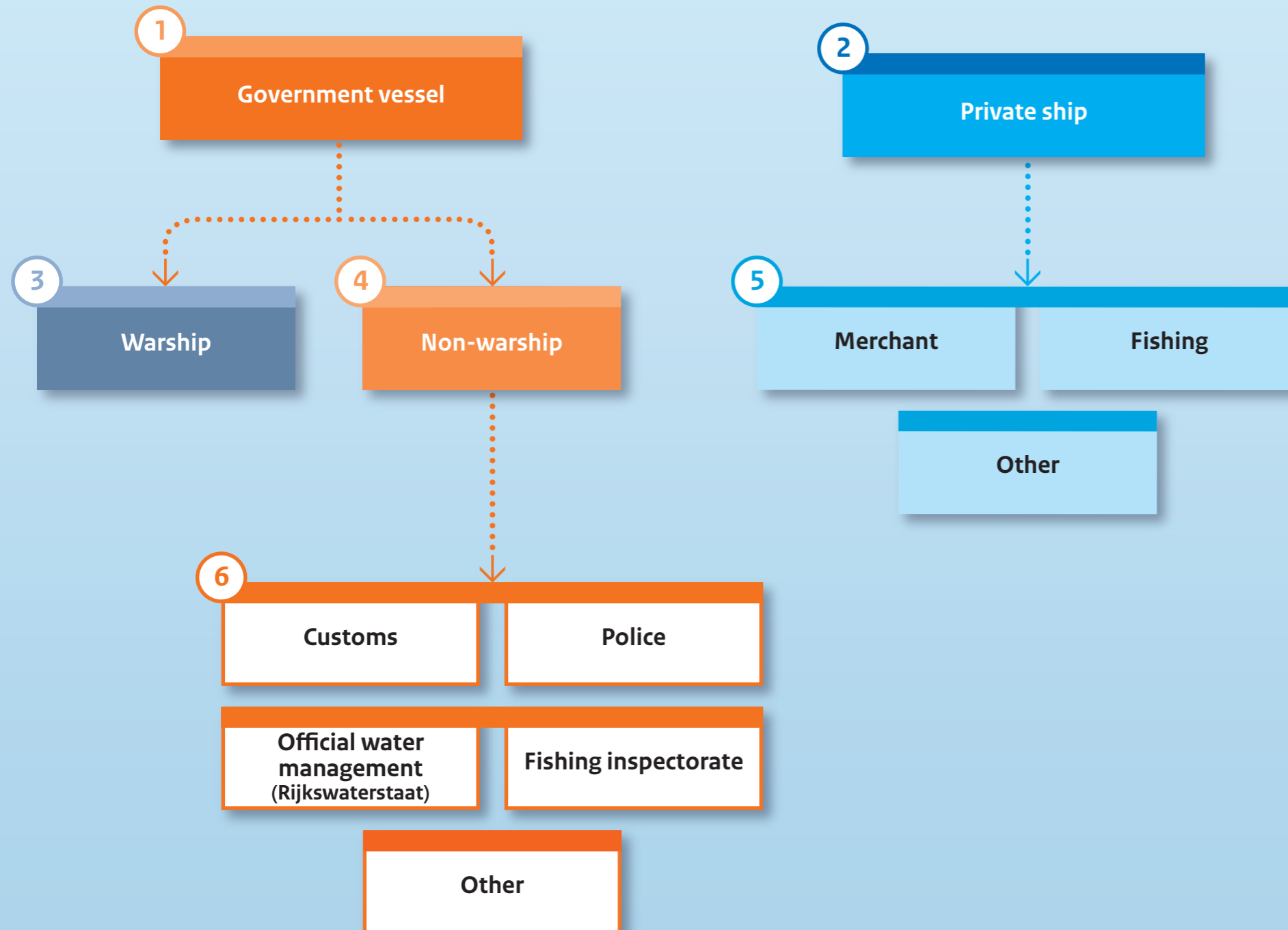
5

Examples of private ships: merchant vessels, fishing boats, and other ships.

When in use, the ships of the VOC and WIC were part of large private company (with sovereign rights). After bankruptcy, the companies' assets passed onto the Dutch government. Their wrecks are therefore now state-owned.



The classification of shipwrecks by owner



6

Examples of non-warships that are nevertheless government vessels: customs, police, official water management (*Rijkswaterstaat*), fishing inspectorate, etc.

