

The Facts about Drowning in Canada

2005 edition



Canadian
Red Cross

1.877.356.3226 www.redcross.ca

Who is drowning?

WATER RELATED DEATHS IN CANADA IN 2002

There were 458 water-related fatalities in Canada in 2002. Non drownings (deaths from other causes such as hypothermia or collision trauma) accounted for 25 deaths, while drownings during land and air transport accounted for 50.

DROWNINGS

Apart from land and air transport, there were a total of 383 drownings in Canada in 2002.

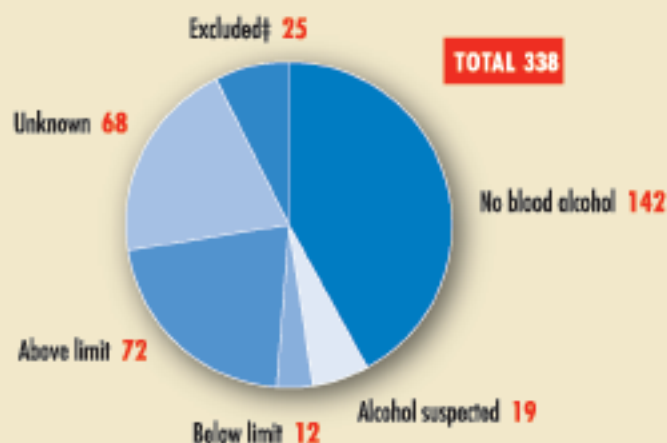
The largest number of drownings occurred in Ontario, with 137 victims (36%). However, the highest rates were seen in Yukon, the Atlantic provinces, and B.C.

ALCOHOL

Nearly a quarter of drowning victims had blood alcohol levels above the legal limit of 80 mg %; another 19% had levels below the legal limit or were suspected of alcohol use. Among victims with levels over the limit, almost half had levels higher than 250 mg %.

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DROWNING† BY BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL*, 2002



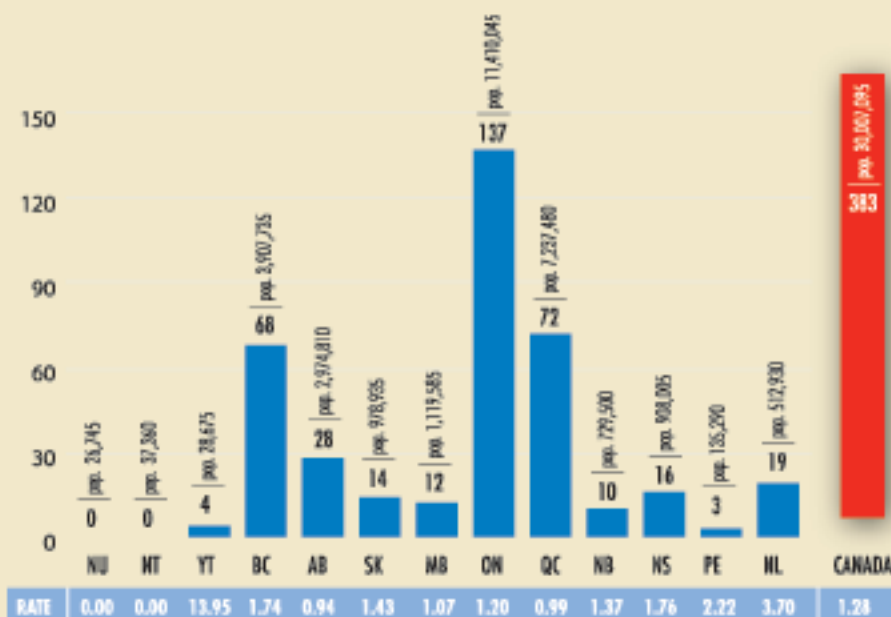
* Legal limit is 80mg%

† Excludes land & air transport drownings

‡ Decomposition rendered blood alcohol unreliable

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

RATE* AND NUMBER OF DROWNINGS† IN CANADA BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY, 2002



* Drownings per 100,000 population

† Excludes land & air transport drownings

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005
Population source: Census 2001

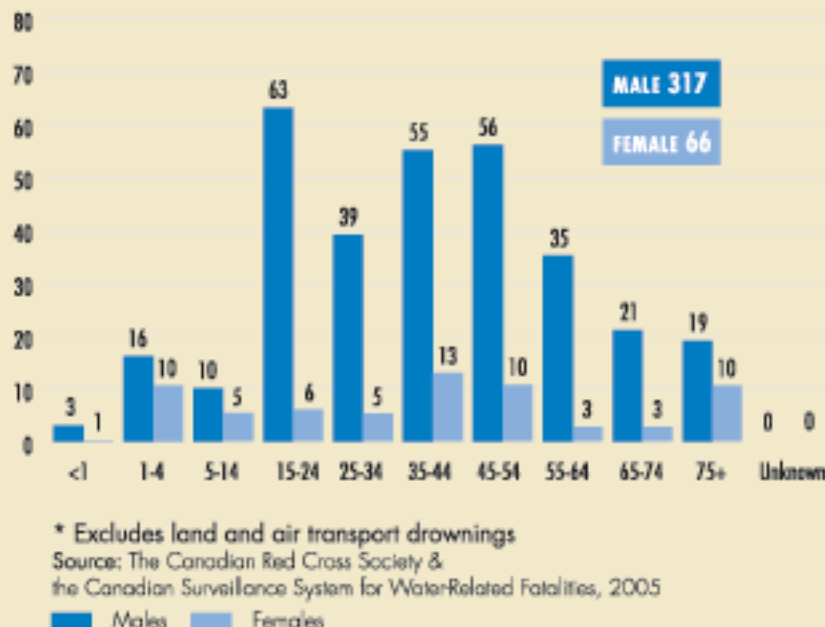
HIGH RISK GROUPS

Overall, 83% of drowning victims were male; for recreational boating the proportion was even higher at 97%. Some age groups were at particular risk during certain activities; for example, males 15 and older accounted for 95% of recreational boating victims, while nearly a third of recreational swimming drownings (22/69) involved males 15 to 24 years old.

Five of every six drowning victims were male

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NUMBER OF DROWNINGS* BY AGE AND SEX, 2002



* Excludes land and air transport drownings

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

■ Males ■ Females

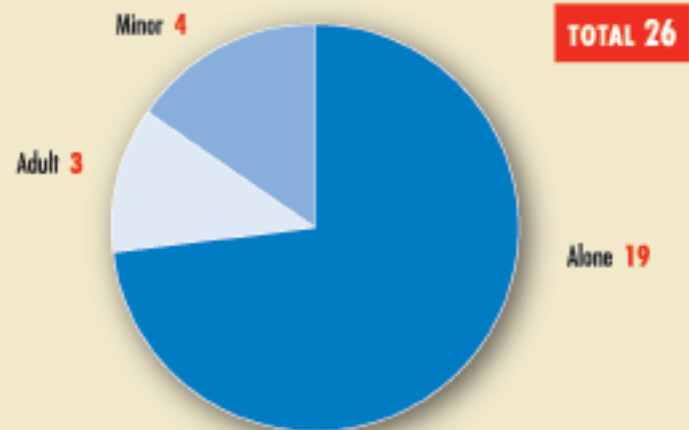
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TODDLERS

Toddlers represented 7% of drowning victims. In almost three-quarters of cases, the victim was alone. 42% drowned in a swimming pool.



TODDLER (1-4 YEARS OLD) DROWNINGS* BY ACCOMPANYING PERSON(S)†, 2002



ABORIGINALS

Although estimated to comprise only 3 to 4% of the Canadian population, Aboriginals accounted for 9% of drownings. Many incidents occurred during daily living and subsistence activities.

* Excludes land & air transport drownings

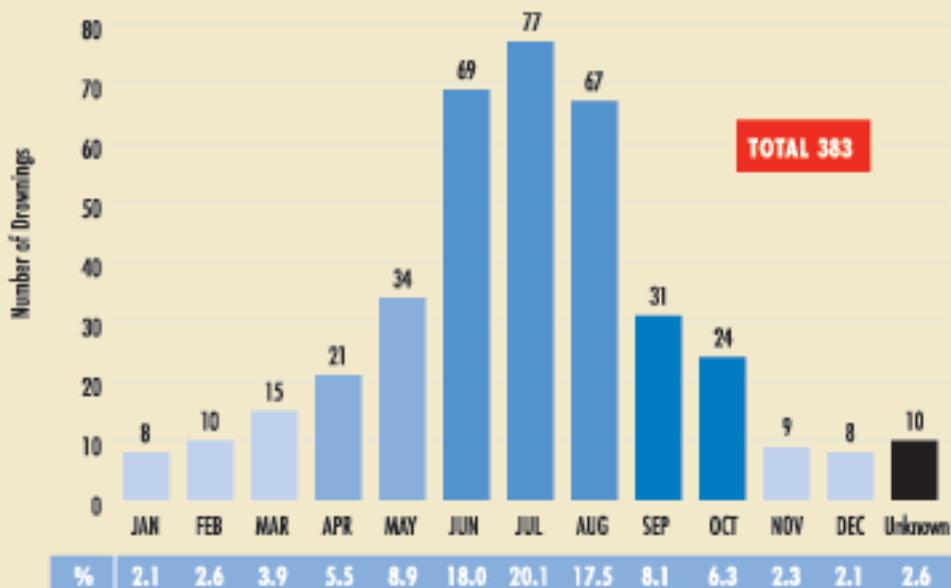
† "Adult" indicates that victim was accompanied by adult(s); does not exclude presence of minor(s) (<18 years);

"Minor(s)" indicates presence of minor(s) only

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

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DROWNINGS* BY MONTH OF INCIDENT, 2002



* Excludes land and air transport drownings

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

When do drownings happen?

56% of drownings occurred in Canada during the summer months (June, July and August), with 13% occurring during the winter months (November through March). Another 14% occurred in the spring (April and May) and 14% during the fall (September and October).

More than half of drownings occurred in the summer

What activities lead to drowning?

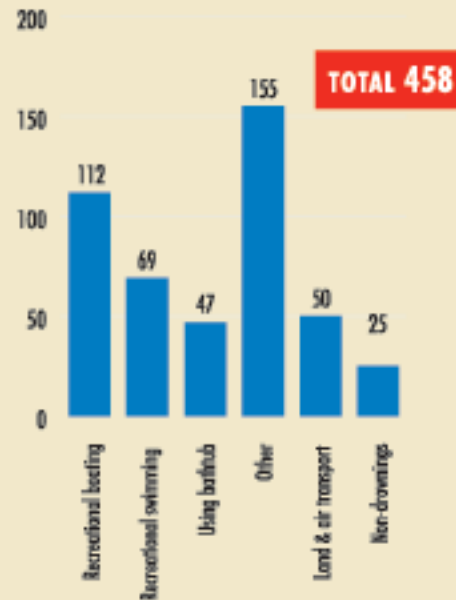
Recreational boating continued to be the major activity leading to drowning, at 29%, followed by recreational swimming at 18%.

38% of recreational boating victims were fishing at the time of the incident, while 16% were powerboating and another 16% were canoeing.



Recreational boating was the primary activity leading to drowning

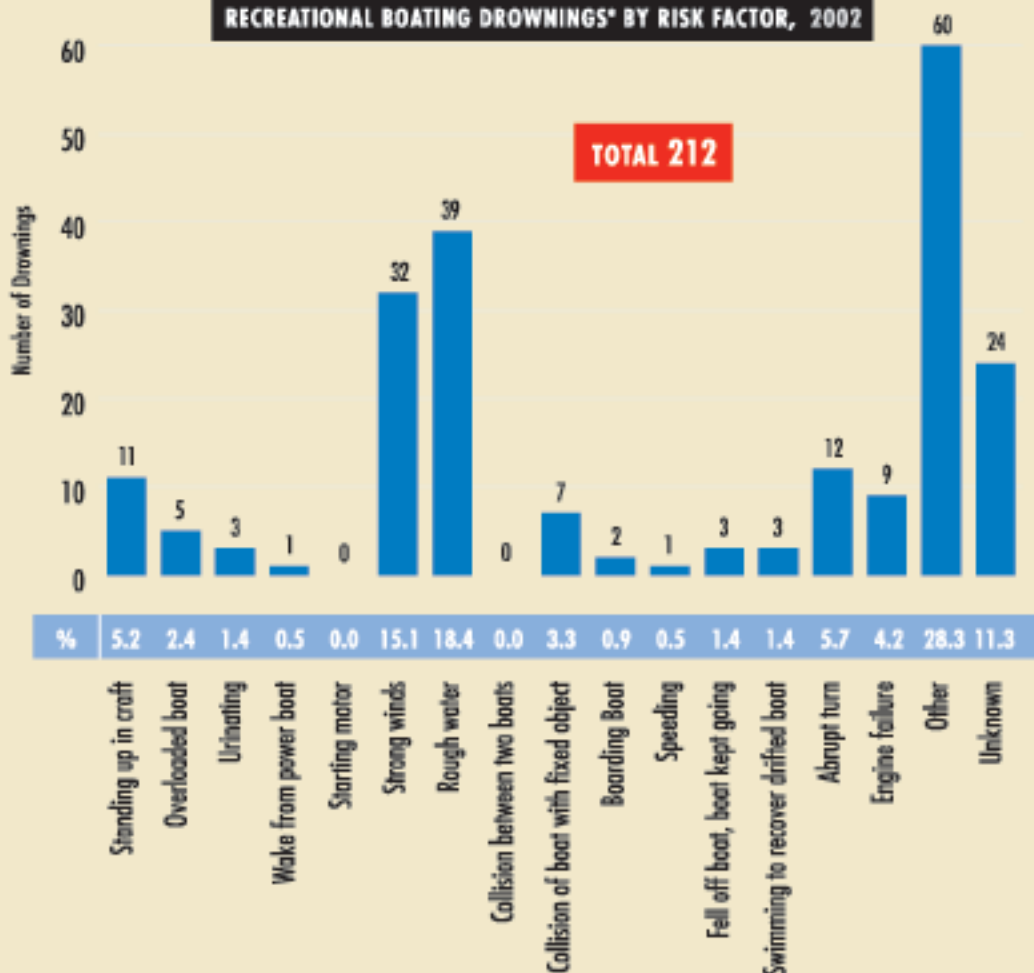
MAJOR ACTIVITIES LEADING TO DROWNINGS, 2002



Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

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RECREATIONAL BOATING DROWNINGS* BY RISK FACTOR, 2002



* There may be more than 1 response per victim

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

Why are Canadian boaters drowning?

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for recreational boating drownings included environmental factors such as cold water, current, strong winds and rough water, as well as high risk behaviours such as making an abrupt turn and standing up in the boat. Alcohol consumption, poor swimming ability and failure to wear a flotation device were also significant contributing factors.

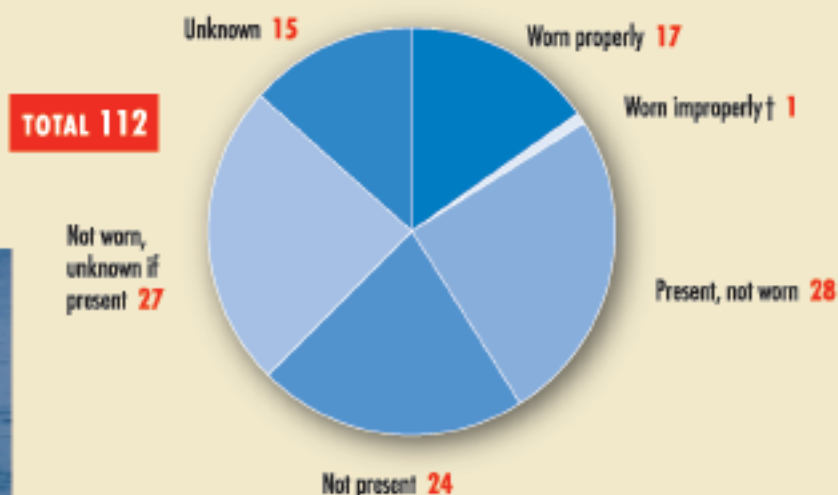
LIFEJACKETS AND PFDs

Boaters are legally required to carry a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) for every person on board. Each PFD must be properly fitted to the individual; however, the law does not require that boaters wear their lifejackets. Only 15% of those who drowned in boating incidents were known to be correctly wearing a PFD.



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RECREATIONAL BOATING DROWNINGS BY USE OF FLOTATION DEVICE*, 2002



* Personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket

† Not fastened or inappropriate size

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

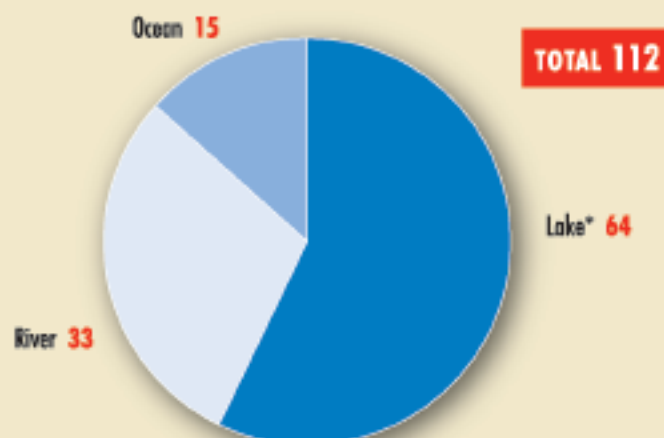
Where do Canadian boaters drown?

56% of recreational boating drownings occurred in a lake or reservoir, 29% in a river, and 13% in the ocean.

Over half of recreational boating drownings occurred in lakes

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RECREATIONAL BOATING DROWNINGS BY BODY OF WATER, 2002



* "Lake" includes pond & reservoir

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2005

Some typical—and preventable—drowning stories

A two-year-old child exploring the backyard is just out of sight of an older sibling, and finds that the gate to the pool is open. The toddler goes to the water to have a look, and falls in, barely making a sound.

A young man goes fishing on a lake. He has tossed a PFD into the boat, but is not wearing it. He stands up to pull a fish in, tipping the boat and capsizing it. The shock of the cold water and the weight of his clothes quickly overwhelm him, and he disappears under the water.

Late at night a group of teens is travelling back from a party by snowmobile. Upon reaching their destination, they realize that one of their group is missing. They retrace their path to find a large hole in the ice, but no sign of their companion.

What can I do?

Be prepared in, on and around the water

- Never mix alcohol or drugs with any type of activity in, on or near water
- When boating, always wear a lifejacket or PFD
- Carry the necessary safety equipment, and make sure it is in good condition
- Protect toddlers by ensuring that your home swimming pool is fenced, with a self-closing, self-latching gate
- When swimming, know the depth of the water before you dive, and know your own limits
- Have a Red Cross First Aid kit on hand – in your car, on your boat, on your snowmobile, and at home

Boating information

For information on small vessels, age and horsepower restrictions and other boating regulations visit the Office of Boating Safety online at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/BoatingSafety/> or call **1-800-267-6687** and request a copy of the Safe Boating Guide.

Learn first aid and CPR

In the event of an emergency, knowing how to respond is critical. First Aid and CPR can mean the difference between a few lost hours and permanent disability or death. For more than 50 years the Canadian Red Cross has been teaching Canadians how to help when an emergency strikes—at home, at work, on the water, or wherever you happen to be. Canadian Red Cross First Aid teaches you the lifesaving skills that can help you make a difference. Contact Red Cross for more information.

Take Red Cross Swim at your local pool or waterfront

The Canadian Red Cross is a leader in water safety education. Since 1946, Red Cross has taught more than 20 million Canadians how to swim and prevent aquatic injuries. This year Red Cross launched its new research-based Red Cross Swim program that teaches children how to swim and how to make wise choices in, on, and around water. Ask for the program by name. Swim with the best!



**Canadian
Red Cross**

The Canadian Red Cross and Lifesaving Society work together to collect information from coroners and medical examiners across Canada. Data from all provinces and territories are transcribed by volunteers and staff. Because of the time required by coroners' offices to complete their investigations, and the time needed to transcribe, compile, verify, and analyse the data, it takes two or three years to release national drowning statistics to the public. Thus this 2005 edition is based on 2002 data. The Canadian Red Cross would like to thank all those who collaborated on this project.

For information on The Facts About Drowning in Canada or any Canadian Red Cross Program call toll free 1-877-356-3226

www.redcross.ca