

2020-2021 Recreational Boating Accident Statistics



California State Parks
Division of Boating
and Waterways





Our Mission

The California Department of Parks and Recreation's Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) brings together a body of knowledge as the state's expert in recreational boating-related matters, including public access, safety and education, marine law enforcement, and consumer and environmental protection.

The Division of Boating and Waterways

California's reputation as a boater's paradise has lured millions of visitors to California's state parks and thousands of miles of waterways and coastline. For over 60 years, DBW has improved and safeguarded the boating experience for all users – from Mission Bay in San Diego to the crystal-clear water of Lake Tahoe and along every lake, river and stream in between.

DBW is responsible for planning, developing, and improving facilities on state-owned and state-managed properties, including those within the state park system and State Water Project properties. The division also provides funding to local agencies so that they can renew deteriorated facilities or develop new public access opportunities; furthers environmentally sound boating practices through its clean and green programs; and conducts research on climate change and wave prediction as they relate to navigation and coastal protection.

Purpose for Collecting Recreational Boating Accidents

To improve safety on California waterways, DBW collects and analyzes recreational boating accident reports to inform safety programs implemented by the division, law enforcement agencies and educational boating institutions.

Information contained in the reports is confidential and may not be used in prosecuting any violations which may have occurred, nor in civil litigation of any kind. DBW is responsible for submitting all recreational boating accidents to the U.S. Coast Guard that meet the requirements of Title 33 CFR Part 173.1



Accident Reporting as Required by State Law

A recreational boat owner/operator must report their boat accident to DBW if the accident results in death, disappearance or injury to a person requiring medical attention beyond first aid, damage to a vessel or other property exceeding \$500, or complete loss of a vessel, regardless of value.

Boat accidents must be reported within the following specific time periods:

Within 48 hours of an accident that involves:

- Death occurring within 24 hours of the accident
- Disappearance of a person
- Injury beyond first aid

Within 10 days of an accident that involves:

- A person who dies more than 24 hours after an accident occurs
- Property damage exceeding \$500, or there is a complete loss of a vessel

Reportable Boating Accidents

A vessel is considered to be involved in a “boating accident” whenever a death, missing person, personal injury, property damage, or total vessel loss results from the vessel’s operation, construction, seaworthiness, equipment, or machinery.

The following are examples of accident types included in this report:

- Grounding, capsizing, sinking, or flooding/swamping.
- Falls in overboard a vessel.
- Persons ejected from a vessel.
- Fire or explosions that occur while underway and while anchored, moored or docked if the fire resulted from the vessel or vessel equipment.
- Water-skiing or mishap involving a towable device.
- Collision with another vessel or object.
- Striking a submerged object.
- A person struck by a vessel, propeller, propulsion unit, or steering machinery.
- Carbon monoxide exposure.
- Electrocution due to stray current related to a vessel.
- Casualties while swimming from a vessel that is not anchored, moored or docked.
- Casualties where natural causes served as a contributing factor in the death of an individual but the determined cause of death was drowning.
- Casualties from natural phenomena such as interaction with marine life and interaction with nature.
- Casualties where a person falls off an anchored vessel.
- Casualties that result when a person departs an anchored, disabled vessel to make repairs, such as unfouling an anchor or cleaning out the intake of a jet- propelled vessel.





Non-Reportable Boating Accidents

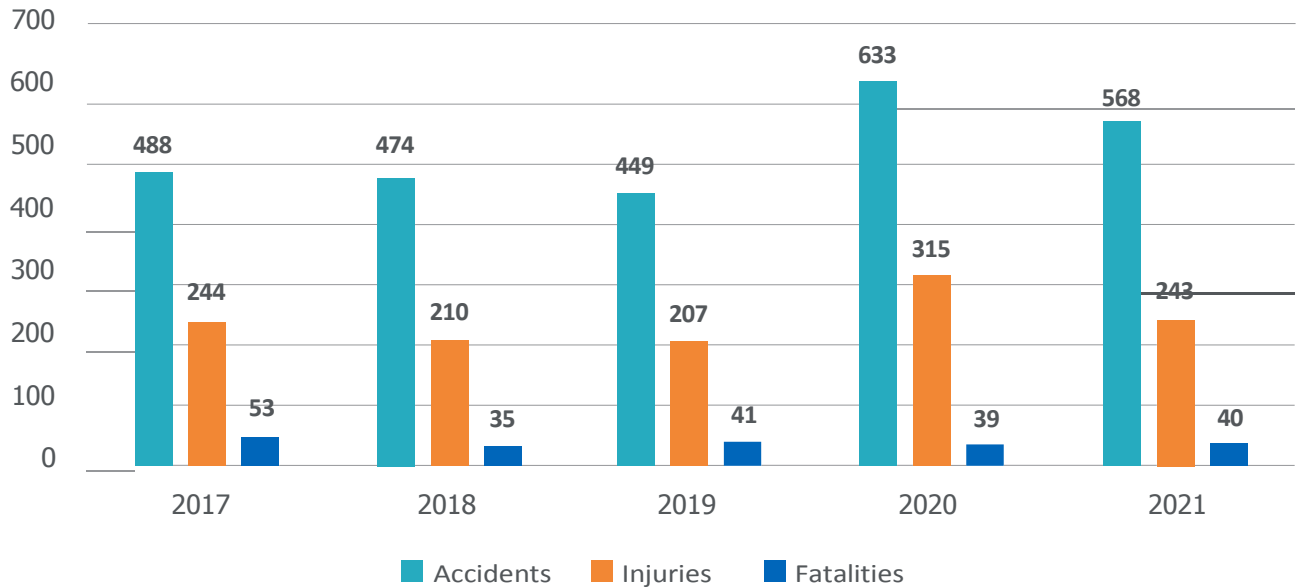
Not every occurrence involving a vessel is considered within the scope of the program. The following occurrences are examples of accidents that are considered non-reportable:

- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of self-inflicted wounds, alcohol poisoning, gunshot wounds, or the ingestion of drugs, controlled substances or poison.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of assault by another person or persons while aboard a vessel.
- A person dies or is injured from natural causes while aboard a vessel where the vessel did not contribute to the casualty.
- A person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of jumping, diving, or swimming for pleasure from an anchored, moored, or docked vessel.
- A person dies, is injured, or missing as a result of swimming to retrieve an object or a vessel that is adrift from its mooring or dock, having departed from a place of inherent safety, such as the shore or pier.
- Property damage occurs or a person dies, is injured, or is missing while preparing a vessel for launching or retrieving and the vessel is not on the water and capable/ready for its intended use.
- Property damage occurs if a person dies, is injured, or is missing as a result of a fire on shore or a pier that spreads to a vessel or vessels.
- Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel or a person dies, is injured, or is missing from such a vessel as a result of storms, or unusual tidal or sea conditions; or when a vessel gets underway in those conditions in an attempt to rescue a person or vessel.
- Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel due to lack of maintenance on the vessel or the structure to which it was moored.



- Property damage occurs to a docked or moored vessel due to theft or vandalism.
- Property damage occurs to, a person dies or is injured on, or a person is missing from a non-propelled residential platform or other watercraft used primarily as a residence that is not underway.
- Casualties that result from a person climbing aboard an anchored vessel from the water or swimming near an anchored vessel (unless the causality was related to carbon monoxide exposure or stray electric current).
- Fire or explosions on anchored, docked or moored boats where the cause of the fire was not attributed to the vessel or vessel equipment.
- Casualty or damage that results when the vehicle used for trailering the vessel fails.
- Casualties or damage that occur during accidents that only involve watercraft that have not been deemed a vessel.
- Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are being used solely for governmental, commercial, or criminal activity.
- Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are not required to be numbered and are being used exclusively for racing.
- Casualties or damage that occur when the only vessel(s) involved are foreign vessels and thus not subject to U.S. federal reporting requirements.

Accidents, Injuries, and Fatalities 2017-2021



Accidents by Location 2020 and 2021

Waterbody Type	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities
	2021	2021	2021	2020	2020	2020
Colorado River	29	19	2	34	23	1
Delta	66	20	4	56	35	6
Northern Coast	29	15	5	30	18	5
Northern Lake	136	78	14	162	83	14
Northern River	21	9	3	24	14	2
San Francisco Bay Area	14	3	1	15	2	0
Southern Coast	218	74	3	226	92	2
Southern Lake	54	24	8	78	42	9
Southern River	1	1	0	8	6	0

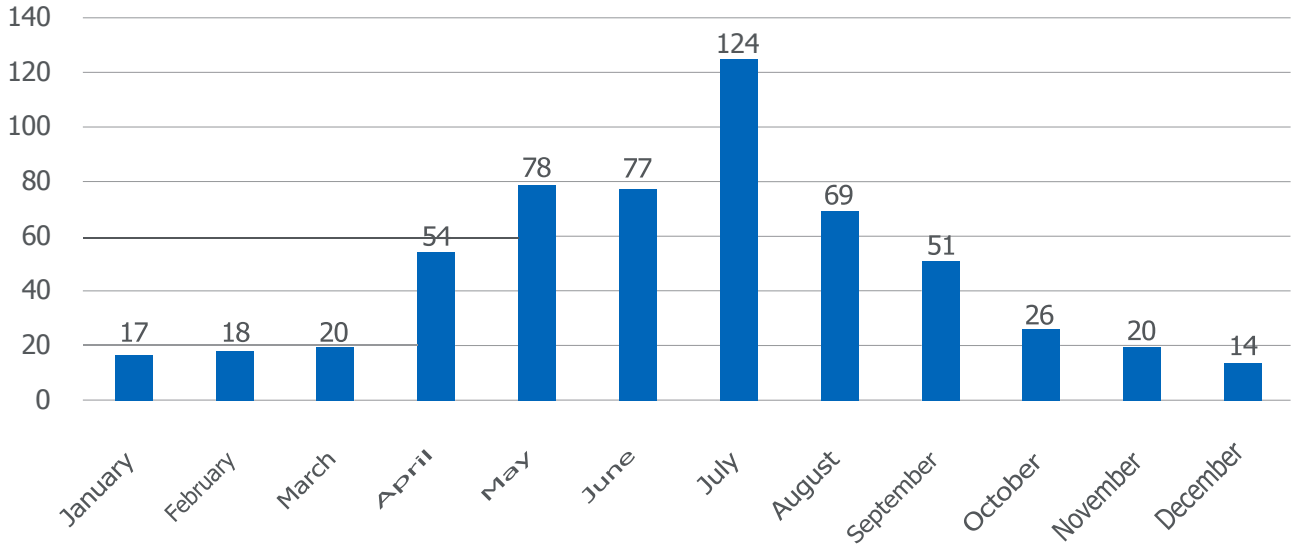
Accidents by County 2021

County				
Alameda	10	2	1	\$52,000
Amador	5	3	0	\$21,001
Butte	7	4	1	\$4,900
Calaveras	10	3	1	\$61,800
Contra Costa	21	6	0	\$237,800
Contra Costa County	1	0	0	\$2,000
Del Norte	3	1	1	\$61,581
El Dorado	7	2	1	\$52,300
Fresno	26	13	2	\$136,800
Humboldt	6	7	1	\$97,587
Imperial	3	3	0	\$14,000
Kern	2	1	1	\$2,000
Lake	7	2	5	\$5,000
Los Angeles	49	10	2	\$805,850
Madera	17	11	0	\$36,192
Marin	6	5	1	\$39,680
Mariposa	3	2	0	\$8,500
Mendocino	1	0	0	\$2,000
Merced	1	0	0	\$4,000
Monterey	3	2	0	\$34,000
Napa	15	8	1	\$42,700
Orange	76	13	0	\$1,906,084
Placer	5	0	0	\$33,365
Plumas	2	2	0	\$2,500

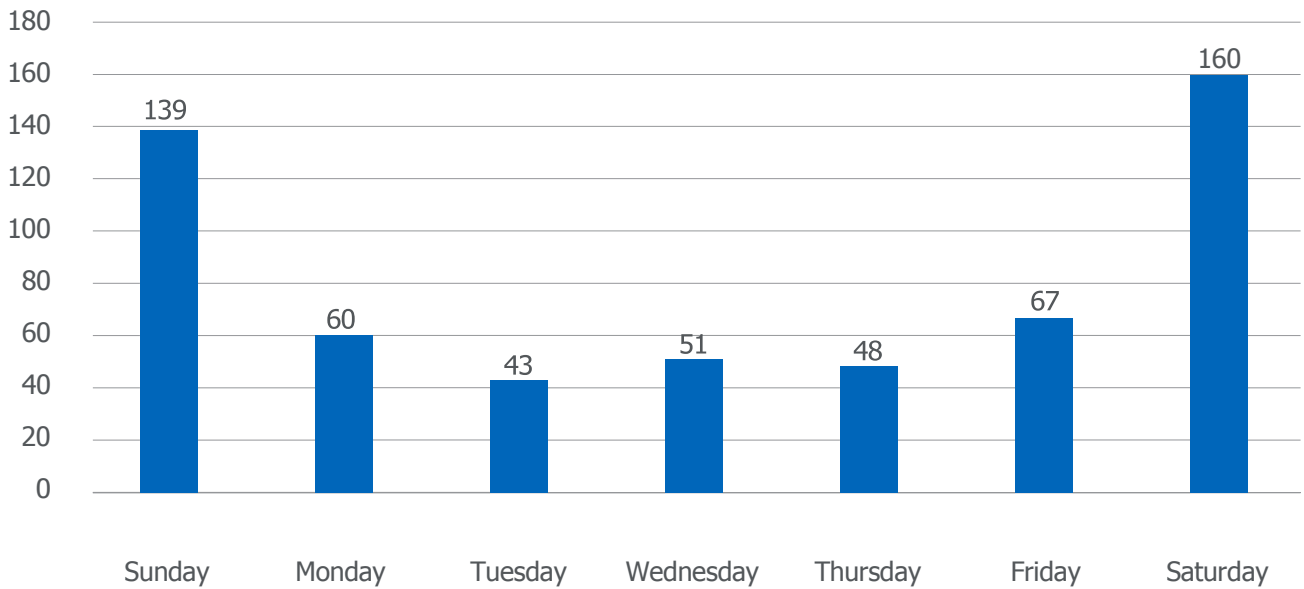
Accidents by County 2021, continued

Riverside	16	8	3	\$36,150
Sacramento	12	2	1	\$96,250
San Bernardino	31	17	3	\$130,504
San Bernardino County	2	1	0	\$40,500
San Diego	81	49	1	\$1,016,870
San Francisco	5	1	0	\$31,500
San Joaquin	37	16	4	\$482,601
San Joaquin County	1	0	0	\$3,000
San Luis Obispo	2	2	0	\$0
San Mateo	2	0	1	\$1,000
Santa Barbara	8	0	1	\$9,350
Santa Clara	1	1	0	\$0
Santa Cruz	5	0	0	\$34,500
Shasta	25	20	0	\$147,660
Sierra	1	1	0	\$11,500
Solano	4	0	0	\$14,000
Sonoma	8	0	1	\$541,850
Stanislaus	8	5	0	\$47,400
Sutter	2	1	0	\$3,000
Tehama	4	5	1	\$18,000
Trinity	1	1	0	\$0
Tulare	1	0	0	\$3,000
Tuolumne	16	10	5	\$28,000
Ventura	8	2	1	\$19,100
Yolo	1	1	0	\$0

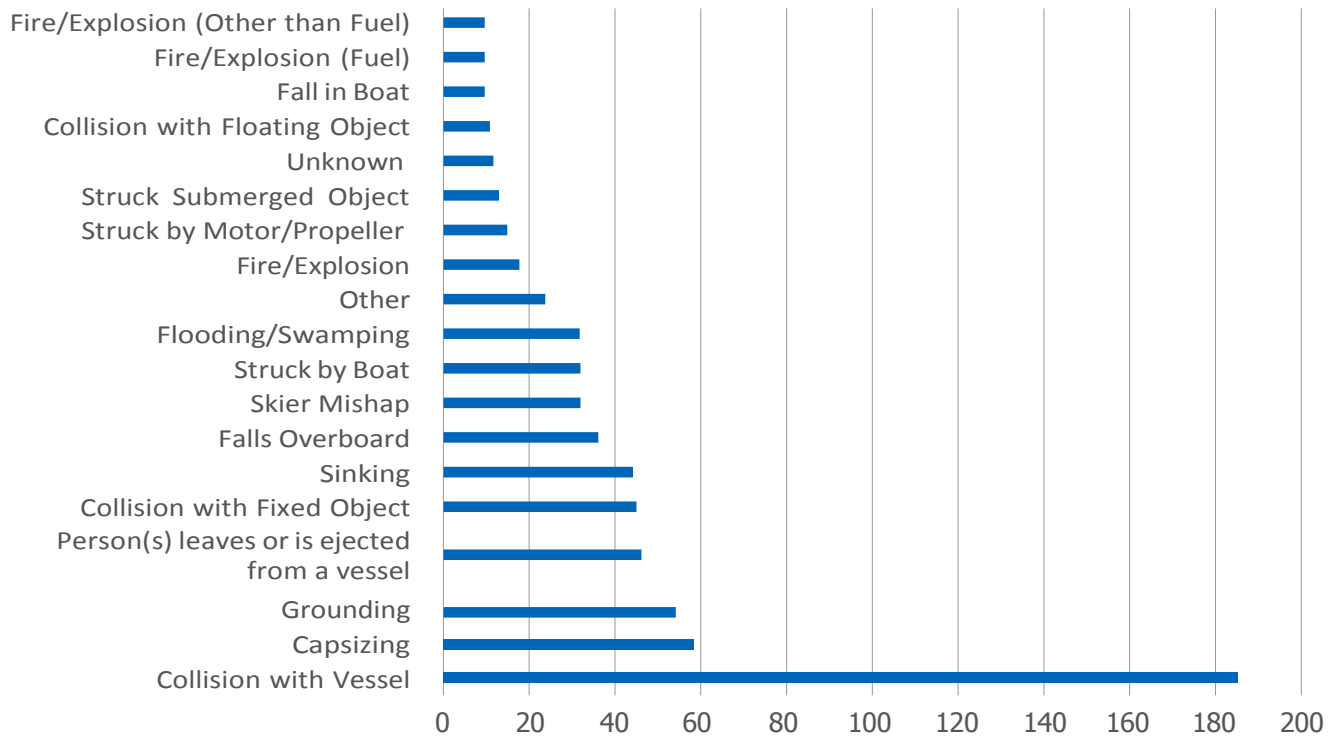
Accidents by Month 2021



Accidents by Week 2021



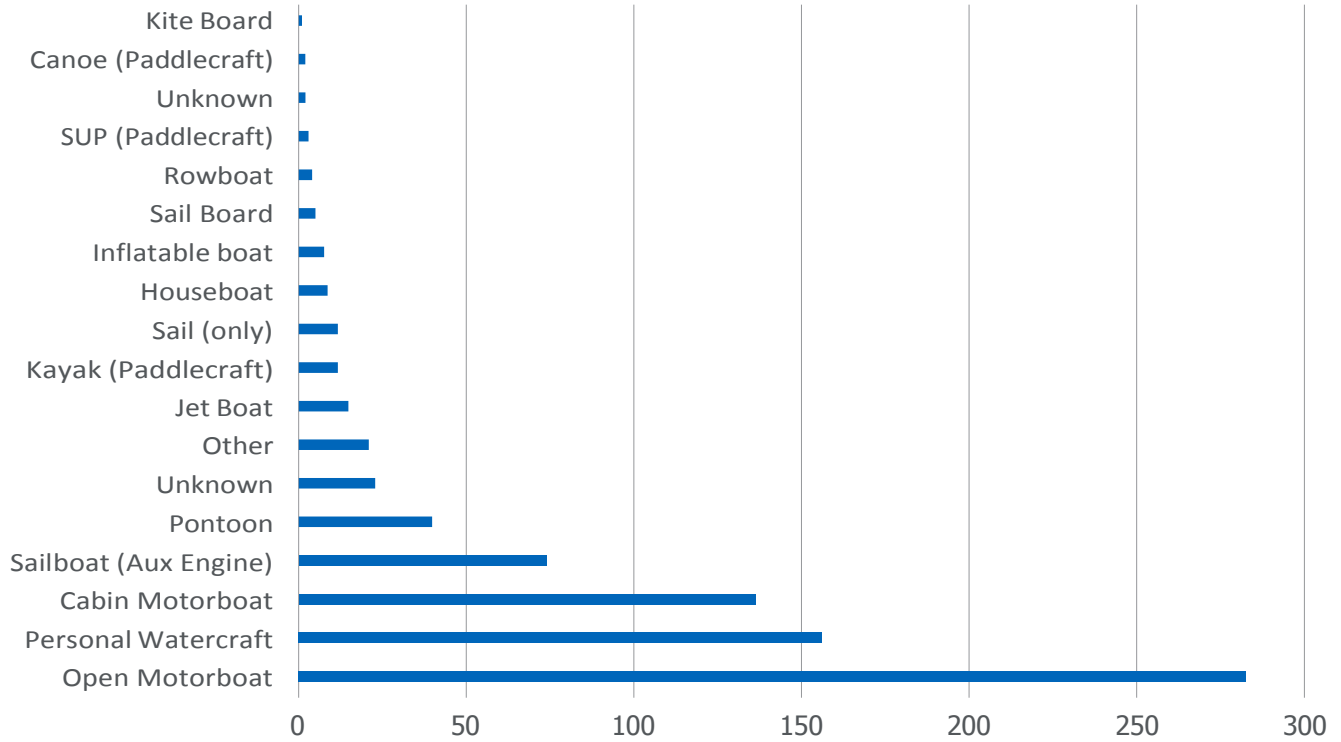
Type of Accident 2021



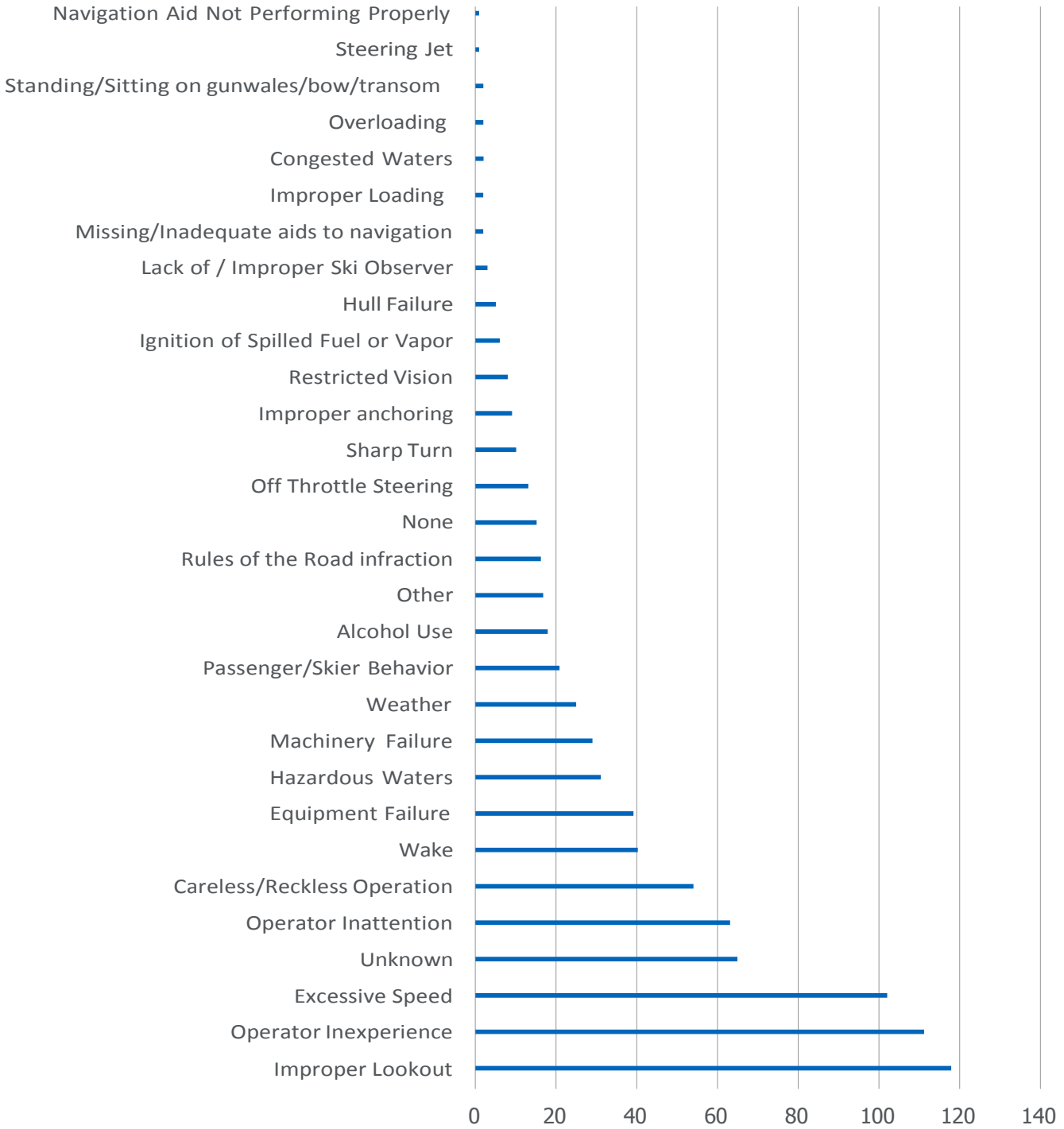
Type of Accident by Vessel Type 2021

	All Vessels	Open Motorboat	Cabin Motorboat	Personal Watercraft	All SailBoats	Houseboat Pontoon
Capsizing	59	26	2	12	6	0
Collision with Fixed Object	46	18	8	7	6	1
Collision with Floating Object	11	5	2	2	1	1
Collision with Vessel	185	58	48	66	39	28
Fall in Boat	10	7	0	0	0	1
Falls Overboard	37	10	1	16	2	1
Fire/Explosion	17	3	11	2	2	0
Fire/Explosion (Fuel)	10	7	2	1	0	0
Fire/Explosion (Other than Fuel)	10	1	8	0	0	1
Flooding/Swamping	32	15	8	3	1	0
Grounding	55	28	5	3	16	1
Other (see below)	24	12	3	5	2	1
Person(s) leaves or is ejected from a vessel	47	19	2	15	1	4
Sinking	45	23	9	4	4	1
Skier Mishap	33	28	0	0	0	1
Struck by Boat	33	14	4	6	7	1
Struck by Motor/Propeller	15	9	2	2	0	1
Struck Submerged Object	13	5	1	1	1	2
Unknown	11	5	1	1	1	1
Total Accidents Count	568	250	106	116	80	43

Vessels Involved in all Accidents by Type 2021



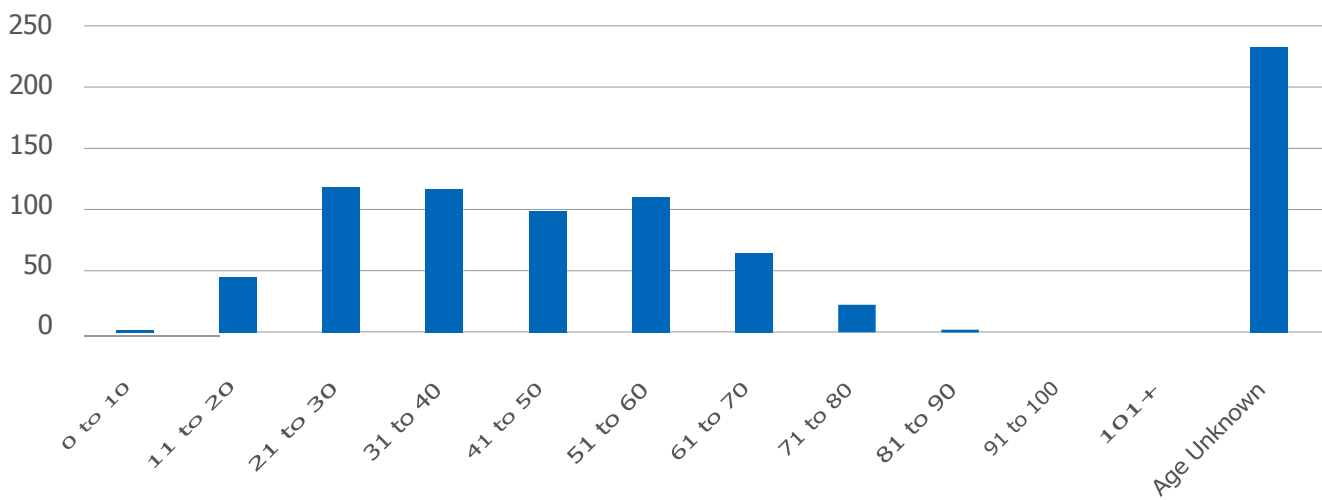
Cause of Accident by Vessel Type 2021



Ownership Status of Vessels Involved in Accidents 2021

Operated By	All vessels		Open motor boats		Personal watercraft	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
No Operator	158	176	38	34	0	4
Operated by Owner	294	297	131	157	31	20
Operated by Renter	171	170	56	34	71	87
Operated by Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Vessels	805	895	282	321	156	196

Operators Involved in all Accidents by Age 2021



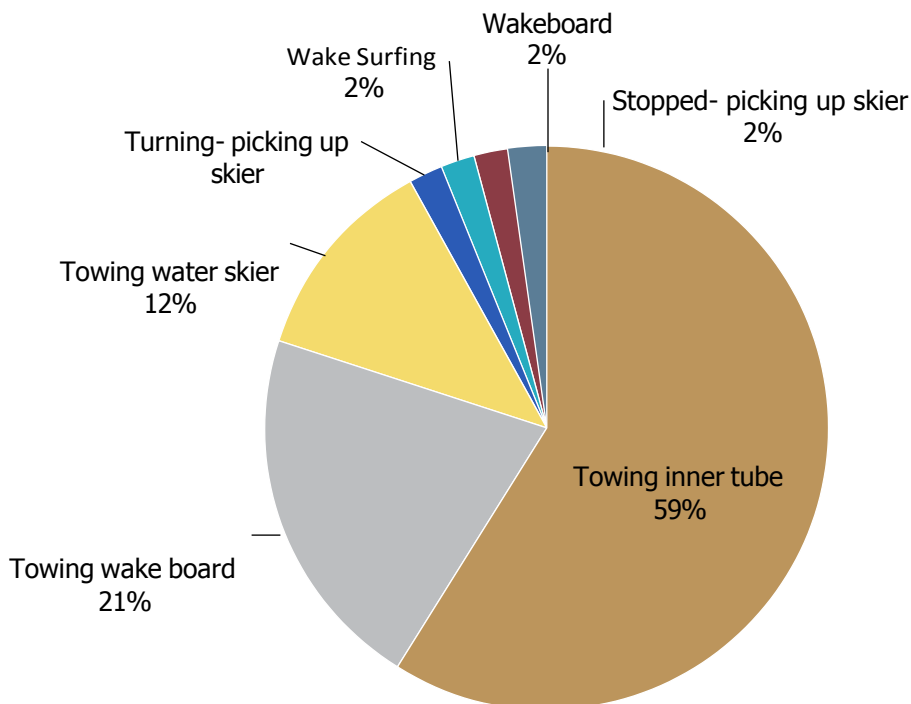
Operator Education 2021

Operator Education	Number of Operators
State Course	29
USCG Auxiliary	7
USCG Captains License	11
Other	49
Informal	144
None	212
Unknown	195
No Operator	158

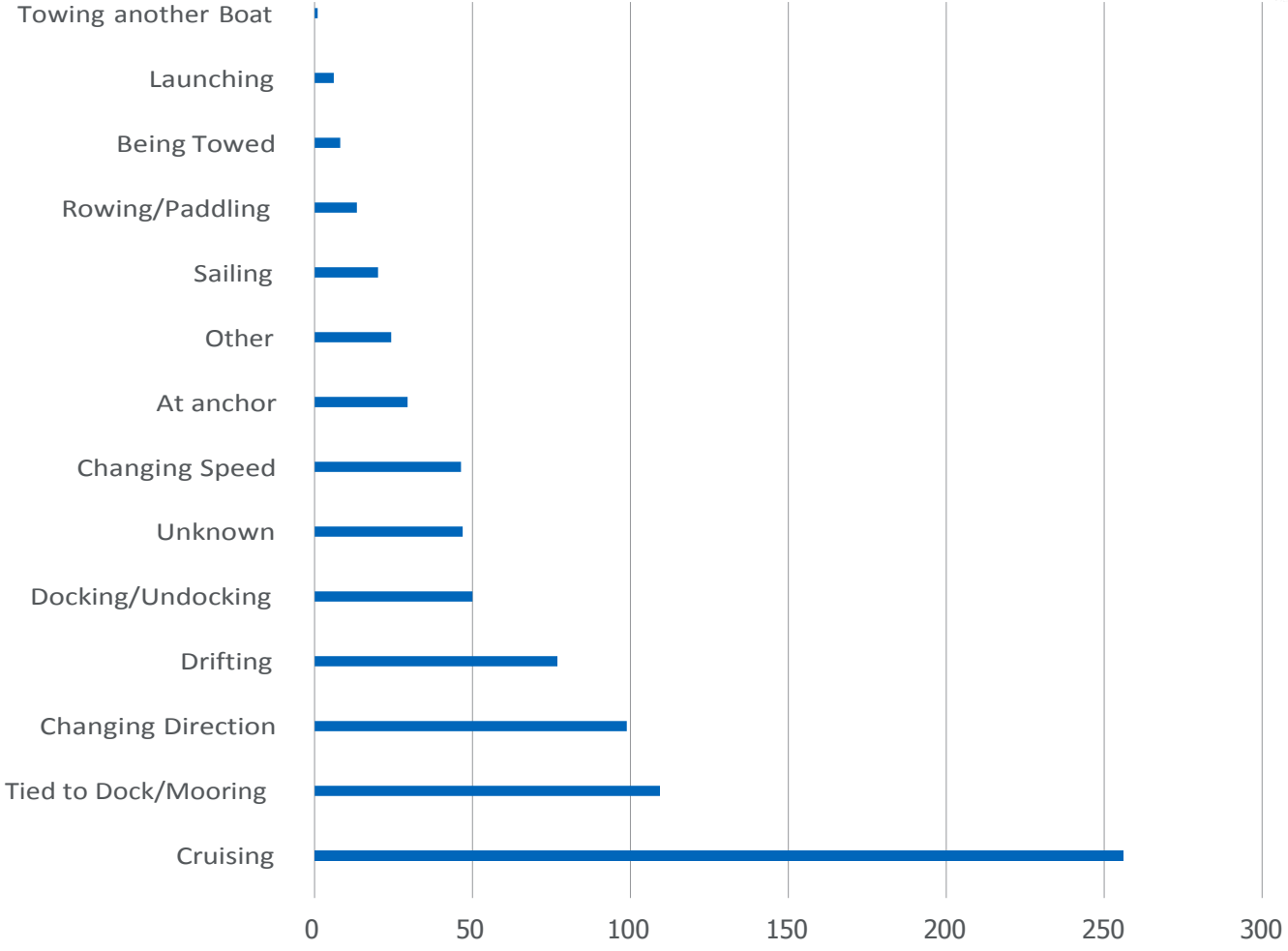
Gender of Operator 2021

Gender	Number Of Operators
Female	74
Gender Unknown	58
Male	515
No Operator	158

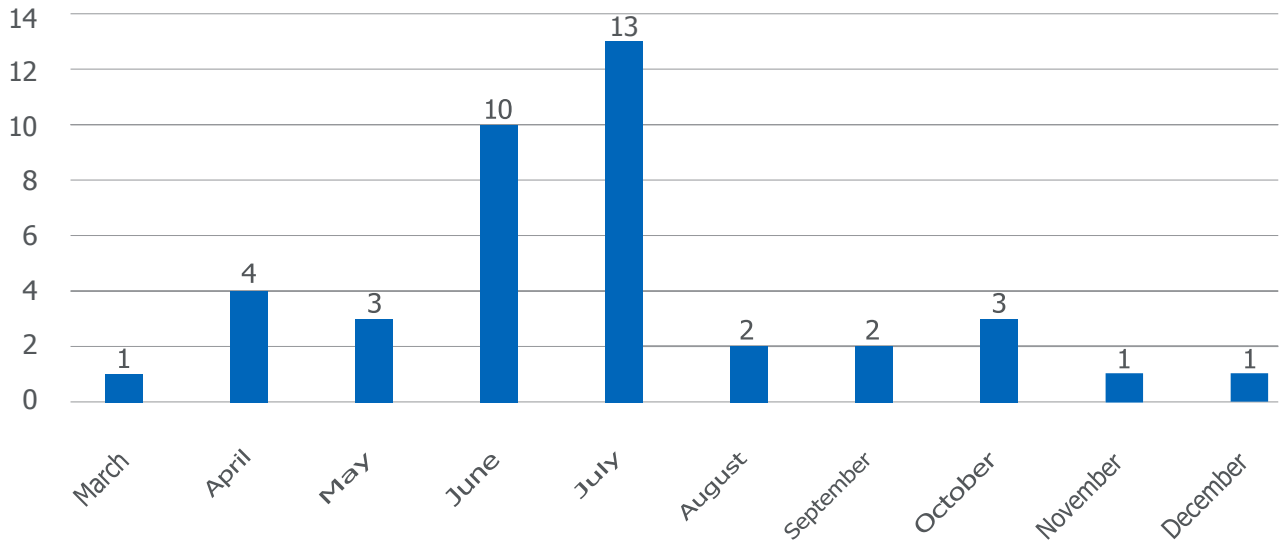
Accidents Involving Towing Sports 2021



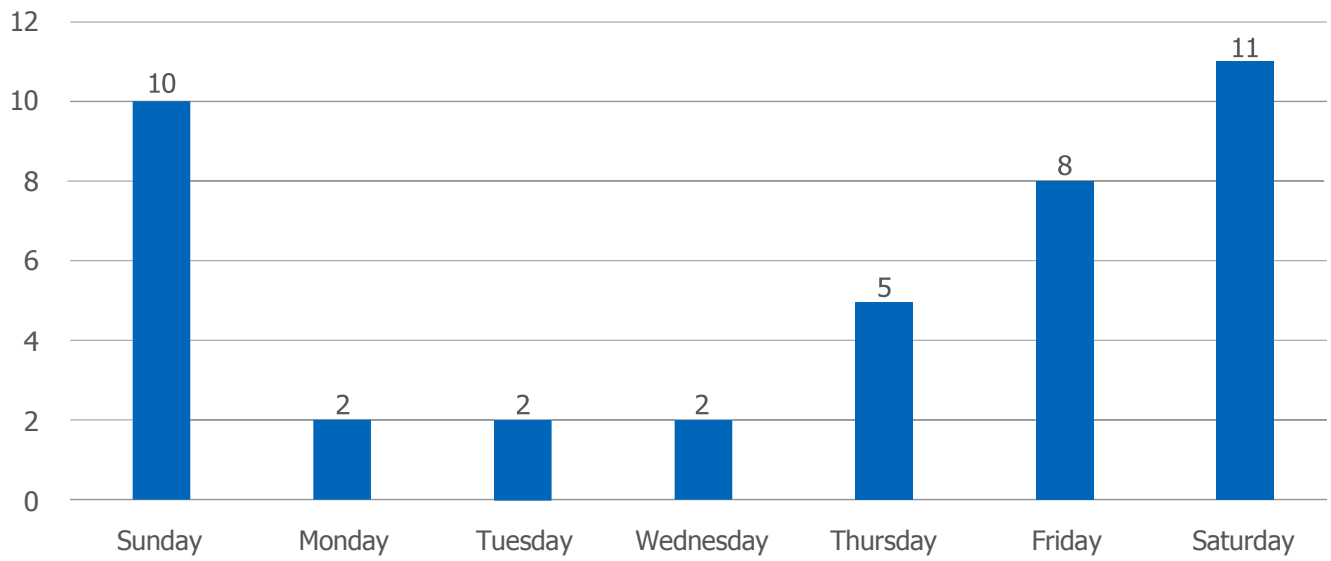
Operation at Time of Accident 2021



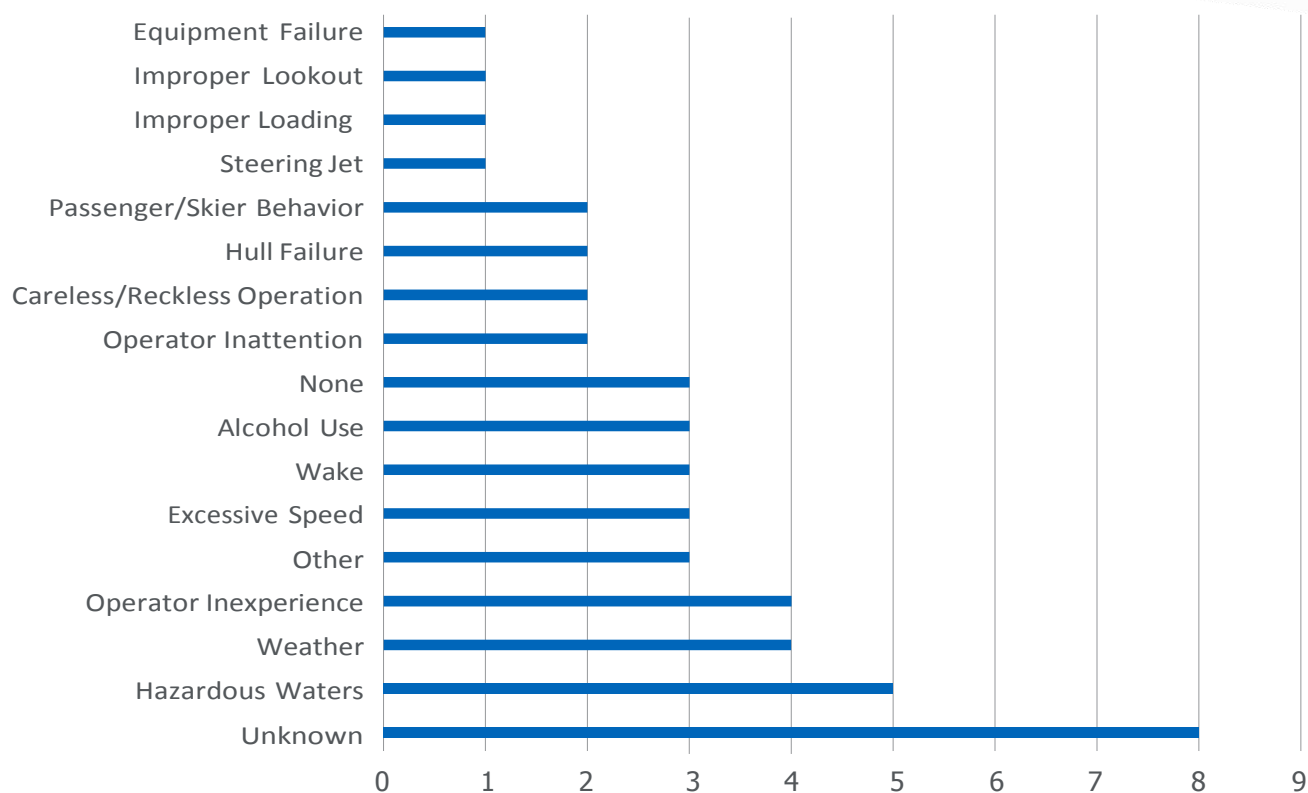
Fatalities by Month 2021



Fatalities by Day of Week 2021



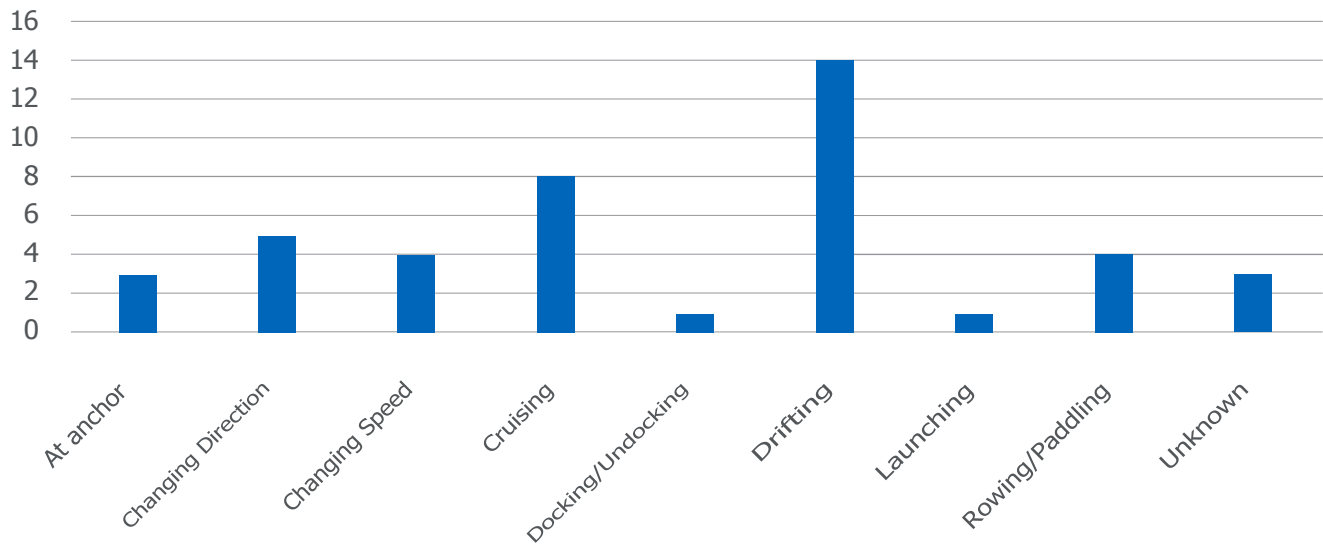
Fatalities by Cause of Accident 2021



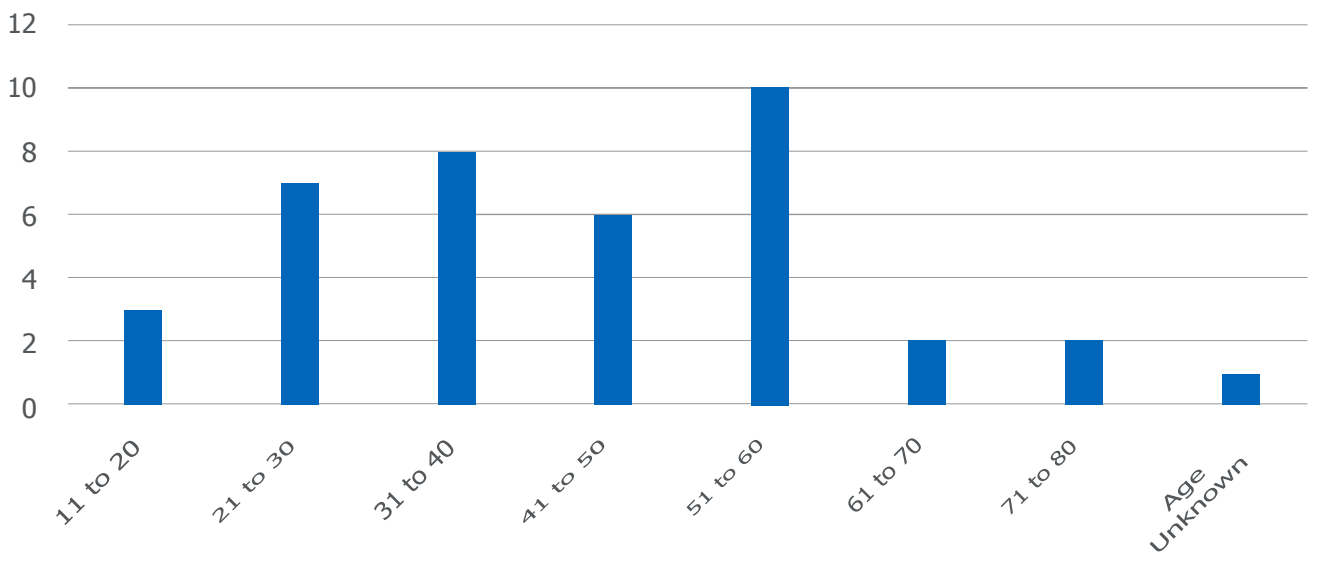
Vessels Involved in Fatal Accidents 2021

Boat Type	Total Vessels
Cabin Motorboat	3
Canoe (Paddlecraft)	1
Kayak (Paddlecraft)	4
Open Motorboat	18
Personal Watercraft	8
Pontoon	4
Rowboat	1
Sail (only)	1
SUP (Paddlecraft)	1

Operation at Time of Fatal Accident 2021



Operator Involved in Fatal Accident by Age 2021



Gender of Operator Involved in Fatal 2021

Gender	Number Of Operators
Female	3
Gender Unknown	1
Male	35
No Operator	2

Operator Education Involved in a Fatal 2021

Operator Education	Total Operators
Informal	7
No Operator	2
None	12
Other	1
Unknown	19



Life Jacket Use by Cause of Death 2020 and 2021

Cause of Death	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2020	2020	2020	2020
Drowning	4	18	2	24
Heart Attack	1	0	0	1
Hypothermia	1	0	0	1
Other	0	3	0	3
Trauma	4	3	3	10
Total Fatalities	10	24	5	39

Cause of Death	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2021	2021	2021	2021
Drowning	7	22	2	31
Heart Attack	1	1	0	2
Other	1	3	0	4
Trauma	2	0	0	2
Unknown Cause	0	0	1	1
Total Fatalities	11	26	3	40

Life Jacket Use by Victim Type of Vessel 2020 and 2021

Type of Vessel	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2020	2020	2020	2020
Open Motorboat/ Pontoon	3	14	4	21
Cabin Motorboat	0	4	0	4
Personal Watercraft	4	2	0	6
Canoe/Inflatable/ Kayak/Raft/Row/SUP	3	2	1	6
Other	0	1	0	1
Houseboat	0	1	0	1
Total Fatalities	10	24	5	39

Type of Vessel	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2021	2021	2021	2021
Open Motorboat/ Pontoon	2	19	0	21
Cabin Motorboat	0	3	1	4
Personal Watercraft	7	0	0	7
Canoe/Inflatable/ Kayak/Raft/Row/SUP	1	4	2	7
Sailboats/Sailboards	1	0	0	1
Total Fatalities	11	26	3	40

Life Jacket Use by Victim Activity 2020 and 2021

Victim Activity	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2020	2020	2020	2020
General Recreation	5	7	4	16
Fishing	3	6	0	9
Paddle Sports	1	0	0	1
Towing Sports	0	1	0	1
Swimming	0	5	0	5
Other	1	5	1	7
Total Fatalities	10	24	5	39

Victim Activity	Wearing a Life Jacket	Not Wearing a Life Jacket	Life Jacket Use Unknown	Total
	2021	2021	2021	2021
General Recreation	9	9	2	20
Fishing	1	5	0	6
Paddle Sports	0	1	0	1
Swimming	0	9	0	9
Whitewater Sports	1	1	0	2
Unknown	0	2	0	2
Total Fatalities	11	27	2	40

2020-2021
Recreational Boating Accident Statistics



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