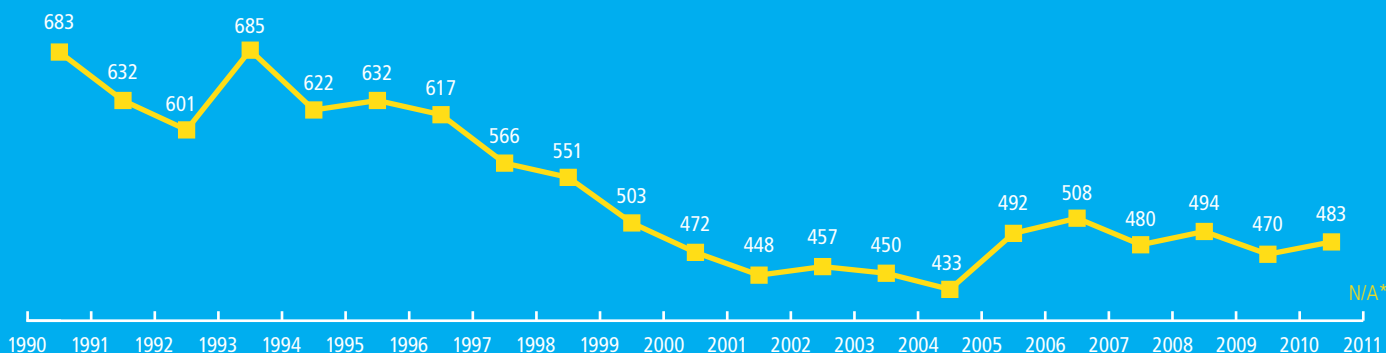


DROWNING REPORT

Prepared for the Lifesaving Society Canada by the Drowning Prevention Research Centre

Canadian Totals 1990 - 2011



*National total unknown due to unavailability of 2011 Alberta data.

Between 2007 and 2011, 153 drownings occurred in the Canadian Maritime provinces. In these most recent Coroner's data collection years, the average drowning rate in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island decreased by 11%. The average water-related fatality rate for 2007-2011 was 1.7 per 100,000 population, down from 1.9 in the previous five-year period.

The most dramatic decrease occurred in Prince Edward Island (PEI) where less than half the number of drownings (6) occurred between 2007-2011 compared with 2002-2006 (13).

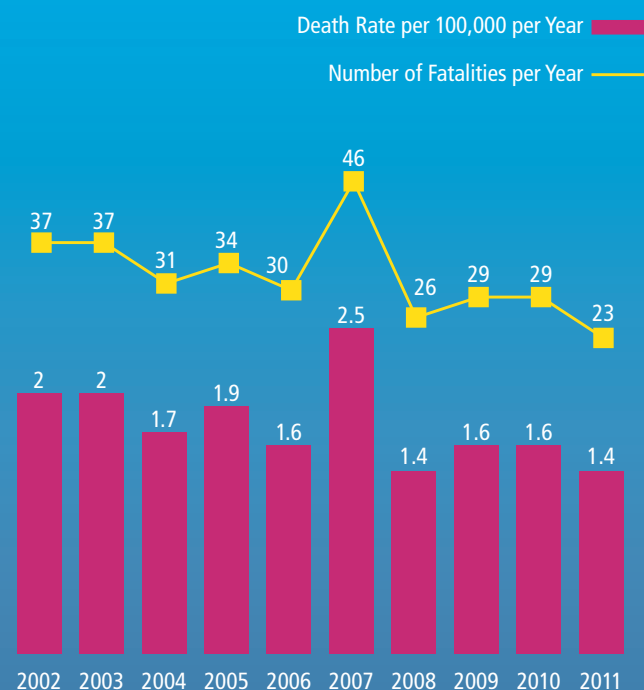
The New Brunswick drowning rate decreased more moderately from 1.9 to 1.7.

There was no change in the Nova Scotia drowning rate from the previous five-year period.

Preliminary interim data

For drownings since 2011, only preliminary, interim data from media and internet reports are available. In the Maritimes, these numbers indicate that at least 27 drownings occurred in 2012 and at least 32 occurred in 2013.

The Maritimes Water-Related Fatalities and Death Rates 2002-2011



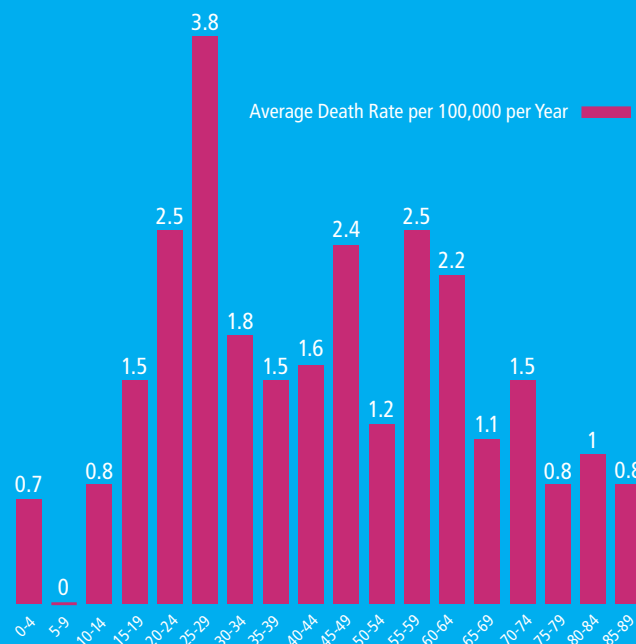
WHO is drowning?

The vast majority of drowning victims in the Maritimes are men. In the 2007-2011 period, their average yearly death rate was 3.1 per 100,000 population. While this trend is characteristic of all provinces, the proportion of male drownings in the Maritimes is even higher than national averages. Typically, 8 out of 10 drowning victims are male. In the Maritimes, this number jumps to 9 out of 10. The highest proportion of male fatalities occurred in Nova Scotia where over 95% of drowning victims were male.

By age, the highest drowning rates in the Maritimes are found among young adults in their 20s. Historically, national statistics have demonstrated high rates among this age group. The problem is even more severe in the Maritimes where 25-29-year-olds have an average yearly drowning rate of 3.8 per 100,000 which is 2.5 times greater than the national average for that age group.

Lower death rates are evident among children and older adults in the Maritimes. Few drownings occur among individuals under the age of 15 or over the age of 65.

Death Rate 2007-2011 by Age



Death rates should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size

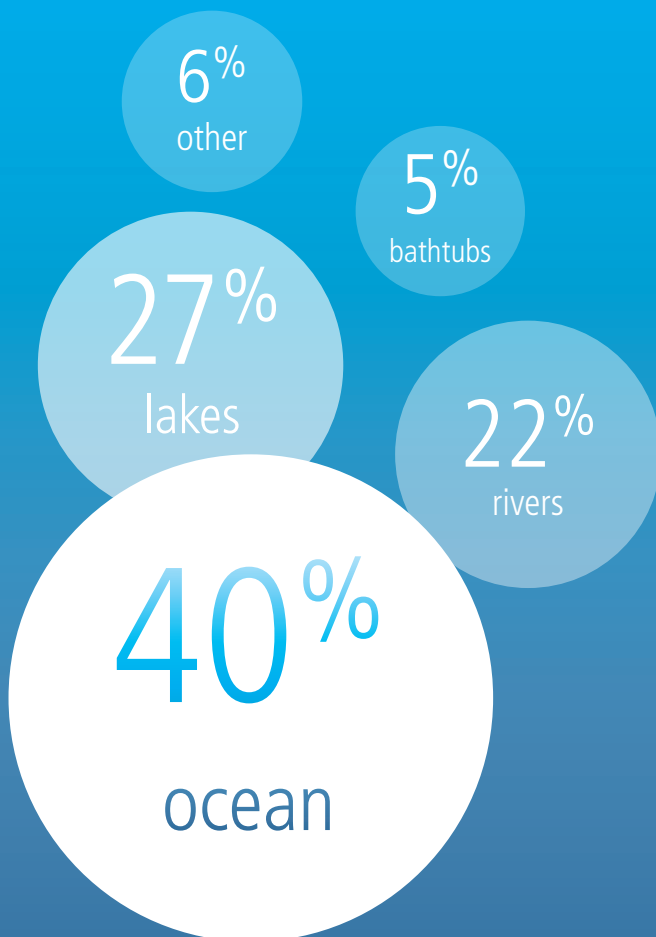
WHERE are they drowning?

In the Maritimes, 90% of drownings occur in natural bodies of water. The highest proportion occur in the ocean (40%), followed by lakes (27%) and flowing water such as rivers and streams (22%). By province, the ocean is the number one setting for water-related fatalities in PEI (100%) and Nova Scotia (45%). In New Brunswick, more drownings occur in flowing water (35%) than in the ocean (27%).

Few drownings take place in man-made settings such as bathtubs (5%) and pools (3%). While private pools do not account for a large proportion of drownings in the Maritimes, they pose a serious concern for young children. In the Maritimes between 2007 and 2011, all water-related fatalities for children under five years occurred in private pools.

Very few drownings occur in lifeguard supervised settings: in 2007-2011 fewer than 2% of drownings in the Maritimes occurred in a lifeguard supervised setting.

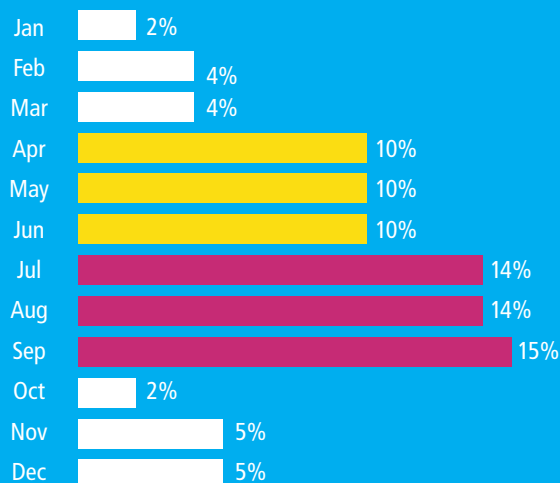
Almost two thirds (65%) of drownings in the Maritimes take place in urban settings. This proportion is slightly higher than historic national averages (58%).



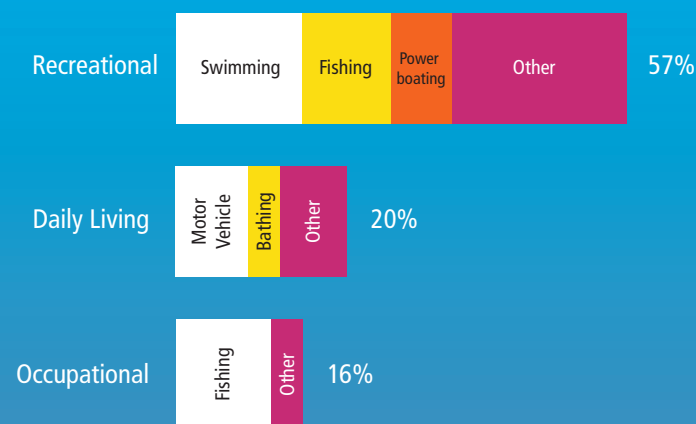
WHEN are they drowning?

The vast majority of drownings in the Maritimes occur during the warmer months – 74% of water-related fatalities between 2007 and 2011 occurred in April through September. The number of water-related fatalities begins to increase April through June (30%) and peak July through September (44%). In Prince Edward Island, all drownings between 2007 and 2011 occurred during the summer.

Victims by Time of Year



Victims by Most Common Activity



WHAT were they doing?

Over half (57%) of drowning victims in the Maritimes between 2007 and 2011 were engaged in a recreational activity at the time of the incident. The most common primary recreational activities were swimming (28%), fishing (20%), and powerboating (14%). Compared to historic national figures, fishing is identified as a more common recreational activity for drowning victims in the Maritimes than in other Canadian provinces.

Daily living incidents account for the next highest proportion of water-related fatalities in the Maritimes (20%), almost half of which (45%) are attributed to motor vehicle fatalities.

The proportion of occupational incidents (16%) in the Maritimes is almost three times that of historic national averages. The majority (79%) of these drownings occur in Nova Scotia. Overwhelmingly, the most common occupational activity in the Maritimes was commercial fishing (92%).

Given the high proportion of recreational and occupational fishing deaths in the Maritimes, it is not surprising that by type of activity, the greatest proportion of incidents occurred while boating (42%). Two thirds (66%) of these incidents involved a powerboat. Fewer than 10% of victims involved in boating incidents were wearing lifejackets.

Risk Factors

The major risk factors contributing to drowning incidents in the Maritimes are consistent with those the Lifesaving Society has identified for the national population in the past.

Boating

Not wearing a PFD (82%)
of cases where known
Alcohol consumption (34%)
Boating alone (28%)
Boating in twilight
or darkness (55%)

Swimming

Victim unable to swim (28%)
of cases where known
Alcohol consumption (22%)
Swimming alone (22%)

Age

< 5

Alone near water often when
supervision was distracted

5-14

With other minors only

15-34

Alcohol consumption (35%)
After dark (42%)
Not wearing PFD when relevant
(79%) of cases where known

35-64

Alcohol consumption (38%)
Alone (39%)
Not wearing PFD when relevant
(87%) of cases where known

65+

Alone (80%)

In Summary

Water-related fatality rates in the Maritimes are highest among men and people 25-29 years of age.

Drownings are most likely to occur during the spring and summer in natural bodies of water such as the ocean, lakes, and rivers.

The highest proportion of incidents occurs during a recreational activity, most commonly swimming, fishing, or boating. There are substantially more occupational drownings in the Maritimes than in other provinces.

Despite the dip in the Maritimes drowning death rate in the most recent five-year period, the death rates in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island remain substantially higher than the national average. This reinforces the need for continued strong drowning prevention efforts.

Research methodology

Complete data from 2007-2011

The drowning research process involves data collection; research tabulation and analysis. Water-related death data is extracted from the offices of Canada's Chief Coroners and Medical Examiners. The scope of this research:

- collects the data needed to profile victims of aquatic incidents, including the circumstances and contributing factors under which these incidents occurred.
- includes all deaths in each provincial/territorial jurisdiction resulting from incidents "in, on or near" water; "near-water" incidents were included if the incident was closely related to water-based recreational, vocational or daily living activity, or if the presence of water appeared to be an attraction contributing to the incident.
- includes only preventable (unintentional) deaths, not deaths due to natural causes, suicide, or homicide.

Interim data

Complete final data on more recent drownings and other water-related deaths are not yet available from the offices of the provincial/territorial Chief Coroners and Medical Examiners. The interim, preliminary data are derived from media releases, media clippings, news reports and internet searches.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the support, co-operation and efforts of:

- The Offices of the Chief Coroner of New Brunswick and the Chief Coroner of Prince Edward Island, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Nova Scotia which permitted and facilitated confidential access to coroners' reports on preventable water-related deaths.
- The volunteers who contributed their time and energy including data extraction on preventable water-related deaths from coroners' files.
- Tessa Clemens who was primary author and data analyst for this report and Lucie Simoes who provided data input and verification.

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Drowning Prevention Research Centre Canada

The Drowning Prevention Research Centre is the lead agency for drowning and water-incident research in Canada. The Centre conducts research into fatal and non-fatal drowning, significant aquatic injury and rescue interventions.

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The Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society – Canada's lifeguarding experts – works to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education, aquatic safety management, drowning research and lifesaving sport. Annually, over 1,000,000 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard and leadership training programs. The Society sets the standard for aquatic safety in Canada and certifies Canada's National Lifeguards.



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