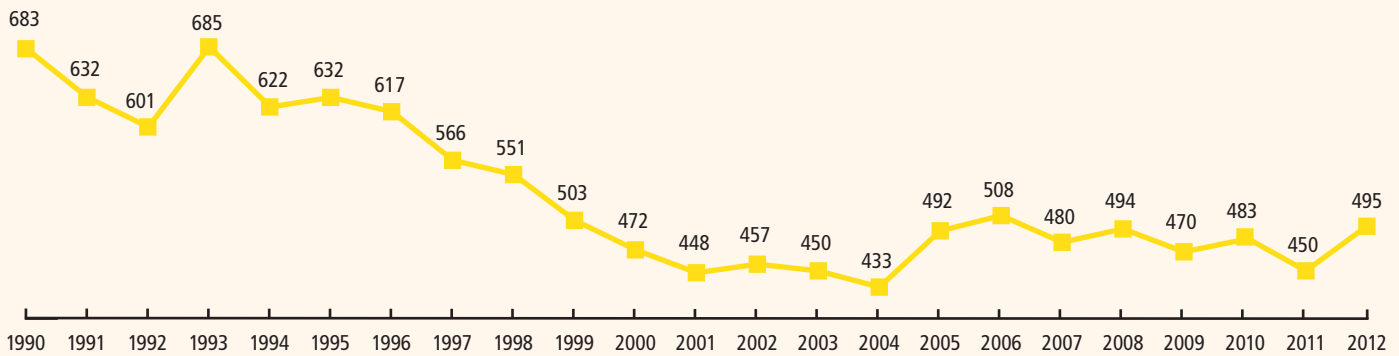


DROWNING REPORT

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

Canadian Totals 1990 - 2012



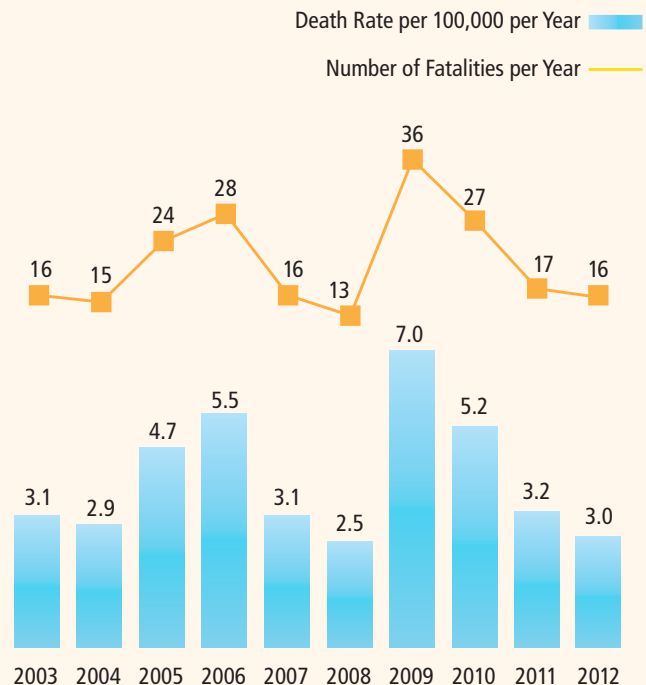
After a surge in drowning deaths in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2009 and 2010 (36 and 27 respectively), 2011 and 2012 saw a decrease in the number of water related fatalities (to 17 and 16) and a return to more typical death rates (3.2 and 3.0). Despite this encouraging reduction, looking at the most current five years (2008-2012) of data as a whole, the average water-related fatality rate increased by 8% over the previous five year period. The average drowning rate for 2008-2012 was 4.2 per 100,000 population (up from 3.9). Moreover, when compared to national averages, the drowning rate in Newfoundland and Labrador is still substantially higher than that of Canada as a whole (1.4 per 100,000).

A total of 109 water-related fatalities occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador between 2008 and 2012. Of these, 16 occurred in 2012, the fewest since 2008. The greatest number of drownings (36) occurred in 2009, when 17 people suffered a water-related fatality as the result of a single helicopter incident.

Preliminary interim data

For drownings since 2012, only preliminary, interim data from media and internet reports are available. In Newfoundland and Labrador, these numbers indicate that at least 11 drownings occurred in 2013 and at least 14 in 2014.

Newfoundland and Labrador Water-Related Fatalities and Death Rates 2003-2012



WHO is drowning?

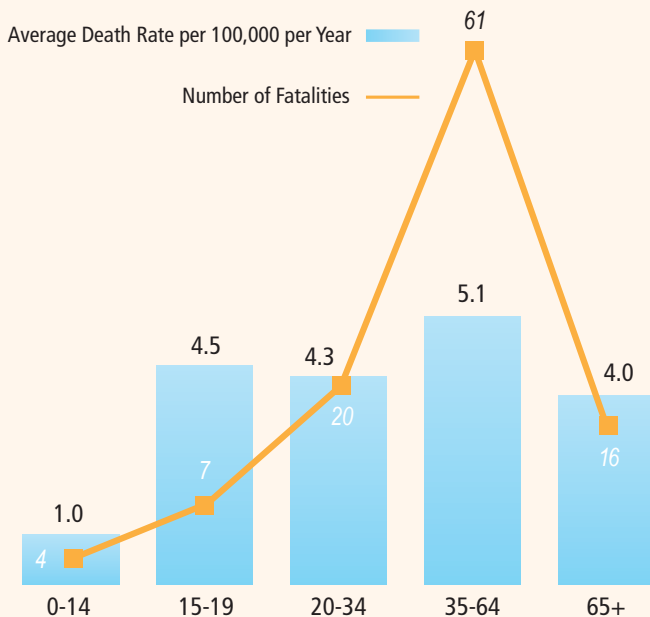


The vast majority of Newfoundland and Labrador drowning victims are men (95%). This is even greater than the national trend, typically, 8 out of 10 drowning victims in Canada are male. Between 2008 and 2012, the average water-related fatality rate for men was 8.0 per 100,000 population compared to 0.5 for women. In 2012, all 16 of the drowning victims were male.

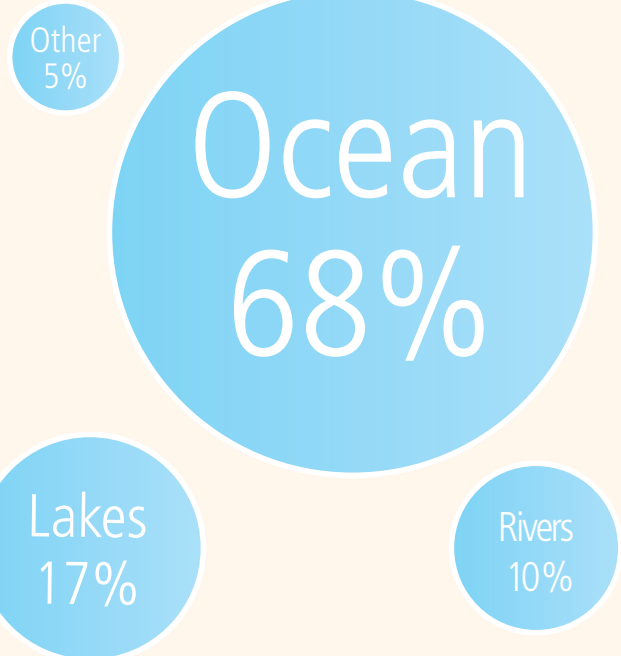
By age, the highest drowning rates in Newfoundland and Labrador were found among middle aged adults 35-64 years of age (5.1 per 100,000), followed by teenagers 15-19 years of age. This differs from national trends. In most other provinces, the highest rates were found among young adults 20-24-years-of age. In 2012, 7 of the 16 drownings occurred among middle aged adults.

Water-related fatality rates in Newfoundland and Labrador continue to be low for children. Few drownings occur among individuals under the age of 15, especially under the age of 5. In 2012, no drownings occurred among 0-14-year-olds in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Water-Related Death Rate By Age, 2008-2012



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



WHERE are they drowning?

Natural bodies of water continue to account for the vast majority of drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 2008-2012 period (95%). The ocean claimed the greatest number of lives (68%), followed by lakes (17%) and rivers and streams (10%). In 2012, all 16 water-related fatalities occurred in a natural body of water; 12 of these occurred in the ocean.

Very few drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2008-2012 took place in a man-made setting such as bathtubs, pools, ditches and culverts (5%).

Drownings in lifeguard supervised settings continue to be very rare: none of the 109 drownings in the five year period occurred under lifeguard supervision.

In Newfoundland and Labrador between 2008 and 2012, drownings more commonly occurred in rural (63%) versus urban (37%) settings. This proportion differs from some other provinces where the majority of drownings occur in urban environments. Approximately 41% of the Newfoundland and Labrador population lives in rural settings. By district, the greatest number of drownings in 2012 occurred in Notre Dame Bay-Lewisporte (31%) followed by Bonavista/Trinity-Clareville and Avalon Peninsula-St. John's (both 19%).

WHEN are they drowning?

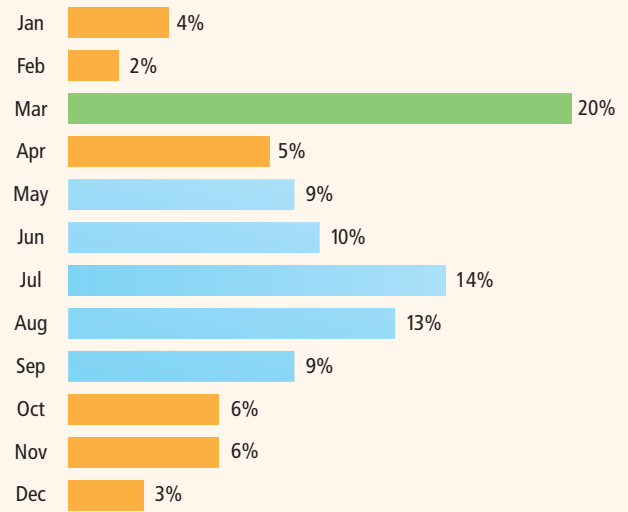
By time of year, the warmer months still account for a large proportion of drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador. Excluding the helicopter incident which occurred in March of 2009, two thirds (65%) of water-related fatalities in the 2008-2012 period occurred in May through September. In 2012, 10 of the 16 water-related fatalities occurred in the warmer months.

Excluding the helicopter incident, over half (54%) of Newfoundland and Labrador drownings occurred on weekend days (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday), with the greatest proportion (32%) occurring on Saturday.

WHAT were they doing?

By purpose of activity, recreational activities continue to account for the largest proportion of drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador. Half (50%) of individuals who drowned between 2008 and 2012 were engaged in a recreational activity at the time. Among these, the most common primary recreational activities were fishing (22%) and powerboating (18%). In 2012, even more than half of the water-related fatalities were recreational (10 of the 16). Of these 10 recreational drownings, 5 occurred during fishing. Fewer drownings occur as the result of an incident while swimming in Newfoundland and Labrador (11%). This differs from national trends where swimming is the number one primary recreational activity (25%).

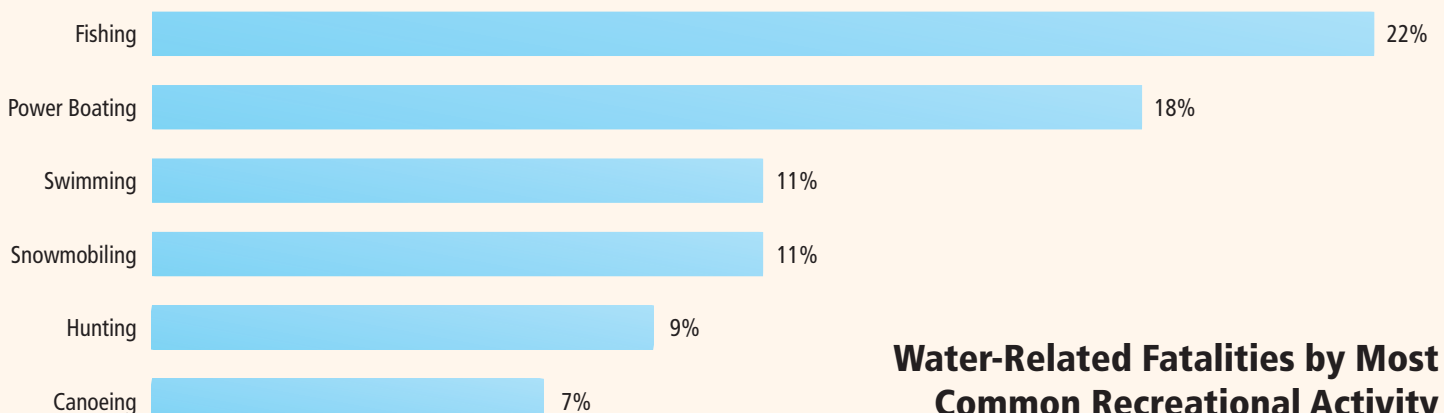
Water-Related Fatalities by Time of Year



The proportion of occupational incidents (29%) in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be substantially higher than the national average (6%). The most common occupational activity in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2008 to 2012 was fishing (34%).

Daily living incidents accounted for the third highest proportion of drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador (17%). The most common daily living activity was travel by foot (58%).

By type of activity, the greatest proportion of incidents in 2008-2012 occurred while boating (42%), the majority of which occurred during powerboat use (65%) followed by canoeing (11%) and rowboat use (11%). Only 13% of the victims of a boating-related fatality were wearing a lifejacket properly at the time of the incident and 37% had consumed alcohol. In 2012, half (8) of the 16 drownings occurred as the result of a boating incident. Only one of these victims was wearing a lifejacket properly. After boating, the second most common type of activity was land, ice or air transportation (28%).



Water-Related Fatalities by Most Common Recreational Activity

Risk factors

The major risk factors contributing to drowning incidents in Newfoundland and Labrador continue to be consistent with those the Lifesaving Society has identified for the national population in the past.

Boating

Not wearing a PFD
(78% of cases where known)
Capsizing (43%)
Falling overboard (33%)
Alcohol consumption (37%)
Boating in twilight
or darkness (22%)

Age

15-19

Alcohol consumption (57%)
After dark (29%)
Not wearing a PFD when relevant
(100%)

20-34

Alcohol consumption (45%)
Alone (35%)
After dark (30%)
Not wearing a PFD
when relevant (88%)

35-64

Alcohol consumption (38%)
Alone (36%)
Not wearing a PFD when relevant
(78%)

65+

Alcohol consumption (25%)
Alone (56%)
Not wearing a PFD
when relevant (63%)

In summary

Water-related fatality rates in Newfoundland and Labrador are highest among men, and middle aged adults 35 to 64 years old.

Drownings are most likely to occur on weekends during the warmer months in natural bodies of water, especially the ocean.

The highest proportion of incidents occurs during a recreational activity, the most common of these are fishing and powerboating. Occupational accidents contribute to a high proportion of drownings in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The water-related fatality rate in Newfoundland and Labrador has increased in recent years, reinforcing the need for continued strong drowning prevention efforts.

Research methodology

Complete data from 2008-2012

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

- 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 Newfoundland and Labrador 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 Office of the Chief Coroner. 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 Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Newfoundland and Labrador 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.

Contact Barbara Byers, Research Director,
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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.

