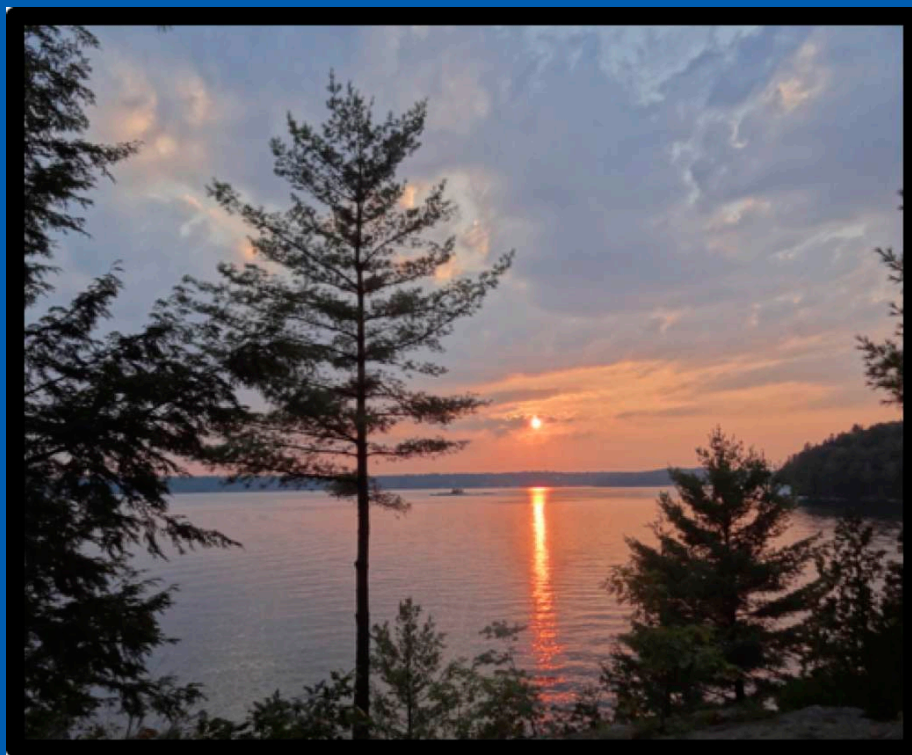


Lake Activity Survey 2013



Report prepared for
Safe Quiet Lakes
by
ERIN Research Inc.

Lake Activity Survey 2013
Research conducted for Safe Quiet Lakes by
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Contents

Introduction	4
Method	5
Profile of respondents	6
1 What boats do people use?	8
2 What are the most popular activities on the water?	11
3 Use of lifejackets and PFDs	13
4 Impact of accidents/close calls?	16
5 How do people view lake activities?	17
6 What are the key contributors to enjoyment?	19
7 What are the major problems?	25
8 What do people see as the primary solutions?	34



Introduction

Enjoyment of the lakes is central to the cottage experience. Safe Quiet Lakes is a volunteer organization that is working to ensure that our lakes are as safe and quiet as cottagers wish them to be.

As part of its mission, Safe Quiet Lakes is conducting research in cooperation with several lake and resident associations to understand the spectrum of views on lake activities. The 2013 survey centers on Muskoka and the surrounding area in the Province of Ontario.

Survey results will be used to help educate and inform our lake community and partners, to identify priorities for Safe Quiet Lakes and to develop strategy to achieve Safe Quiet Lakes goals. Results will also form a baseline for measuring change.

The 2013 research was designed, conducted and analyzed by ERIN Research Inc. in consultation with Safe Quiet Lakes as well as lake and resident associations.

The survey report is available on the Safe Quiet Lakes website: www.safequiet.ca.

Preview of results

Survey participants are united in several defining ways. All agree that swimming and relaxing on the dock or near the water are fundamental cottage activities. In addition, there is near universal agreement that we have a responsibility to preserve the natural state of the lakes for future generations. Most respondents enjoy hearing the sounds of nature.

Beyond this, the community divides on almost every specific issue and activity. For some, lake activities center around hefty motor boats while others favour canoes and sailboats. Boat wakes are a problem for some but not for others; some object to boat traffic and speed while others do not; some support more regulation and enforcement while others take exception to this strategy.

Still, results provide quantitative evidence for the principle that safe and quiet lakes are more enjoyable. These values hold for those who enjoy large powerful boats as well as for those who favour smaller boats and other types of lake activities. Of course, the definition of safe and quiet is an open question. This study is designed to provide a factual base of information that will help inform this discussion and enable responsive policy and action.



Method

The catchment area for the survey was the three larger Muskoka lakes – Lake Joseph, Lake Muskoka, and Lake Rosseau – and the surrounding lakes and rivers. Safe Quiet Lakes contacted the many associations that represent cottagers and residents in the area to solicit their cooperation in distributing the survey. ERIN Research managed the email distribution for several associations, sending the introductory email on June 12, 2013 and two subsequent reminders at weekly intervals. Some associations contacted their members directly: Safe Quiet Lakes provided these groups with a suggested introductory letter and the survey link. In addition, there was a link to the survey on the Safe Quiet Lakes website, and the survey was promoted at several community events and in local media. The survey closed on July 12, 2013.

The survey was designed to be easily accessible and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

In most instances, the email lists that associations maintain have contact information for only one or two members of a family. In order to gain broader participation, the introductory email and reminders encouraged recipients to share the survey link with other family members, neighbours, and friends.

The 2,291 completed surveys had relatively high proportions of older persons and of males, reflecting the composition of the original email lists. Data were, therefore, weighted by age and gender to make results representative of the population as a whole.

Reporting format

Some survey questions use 5-point scales, e.g. “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. When reporting average agreement, the more intuitive 10-point format is used. The scales correspond as shown below¹:

<i>Question on the survey:</i>	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
The mix of boaters and activities on my lake co-exist very well	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>0 - 10 scale used for reporting the average result:</i> (e.g., in Figure 14)	0	2.5	5.0	7.5	10.0	

¹ The 0 to 10 scale provides the same information as the 5-point scale but makes it easier to understand the result. An average score of 7.0 out of 10 has clear meaning for most people, while the corresponding average of 3.8 out of 5 may not.



Profile of respondents

A total of 2,291 people completed the survey. This sample is large and broadly based, therefore, results can be used with confidence.

Overall, 51% of responses came from the three larger Muskoka lakes and 49% from the surrounding lakes and rivers.

When reporting results by lake, those lakes with more than 50 respondents are shown individually. The three larger lakes, Lake Joseph, Lake Rosseau and Lake Muskoka, are each divided into two parts.

Table 1. Lakes in the analysis

Lake	Number of respondents	%
<i>The three larger Muskoka lakes</i>		
North Lake Joseph	302	13
South Lake Joseph	109	5
All Lake Joseph	411	18
North Lake Rosseau	168	7
South Lake Rosseau	162	7
All Lake Rosseau	330	14
East Lake Muskoka	194	9
West Lake Muskoka	227	10
All Lake Muskoka	421	19
<i>The surrounding lakes and rivers</i>		
Blackstone Lake	53	2
Kahshe Lake	232	10
Loon and Turtle Lakes	89	4
Mary Lake	53	2
Moon River	81	4
Muldrew Lake	88	4
Otter Lake	156	7
Other lakes and rivers	377	16
All surrounding lakes and rivers	1,129	49
Total	2,291	100

Note: Table 1 shows unweighted responses. All other results in this report are weighted as described in the Method section to be representative of the population with respect to age and gender.

Little Lake Joseph is included in North Lake Joseph.



Respondent characteristics

In brief, 94% of respondents are cottage owners or family members, 24% are water-only access, 68% have been in the area for more than 20 years, and 66% spend more than 30 days of the summer in the area. 71% of residences have children or young adults.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	% of respondents
Are you/your family currently...	
Owners of a cottage or residence near a lake	94
Renters of a cottage or residence near a lake	1
Guests in a cottage or residence near a lake	5
Campground users	<1
Guests at a resort, hotel, motel, B&B, etc. near a lake	<1
Is the place you stay...	
Road access	76
Water access	24
How many years have you been vacationing or living in the region?	
Less than 5 years	6
5 to 10 years	11
11 to 20 years	16
more than 20 years	68
Are there children or young adults sharing the space with you on a regular basis?	
Age 5 and under	31
6 to 11	28
12 to 17	28
18 to 24	36
There are no children in our household	21
(Note: These percentages add to more than 100 as respondents could select several answers.)	
About how much time will you spend by the lake from May to October 2013?	
Less than 10 days	4
10 to 30 days	30
Up to 60 days	29
Up to 90 days	13
More than 90 days	7
I live here full time in the summer	11
I live here full time all year round	6

1 What boats do people use?

"I think the love of going to the cottage is both for the peace and tranquility as well as the fun the motor boats add."

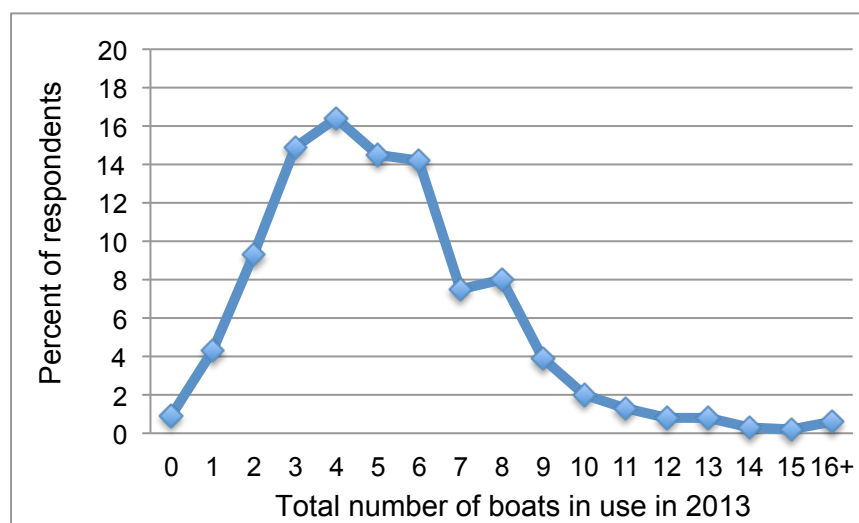
"Fast noisy large boats do not belong on the Muskoka lakes; they belong on oceans offshore."

"We enjoy our boats above all else, and had we wanted the quiet little cabin in the woods with a canoe we would not have chosen the Muskoka lakes. We should be focusing on safety, and common sense in the spirit of live & let live."

The survey began by asking how many boats of different types the family would use in the summer of 2013. The average family will use about 5 boats: 2 power boats and 3 non-powered boats (Figure 1).

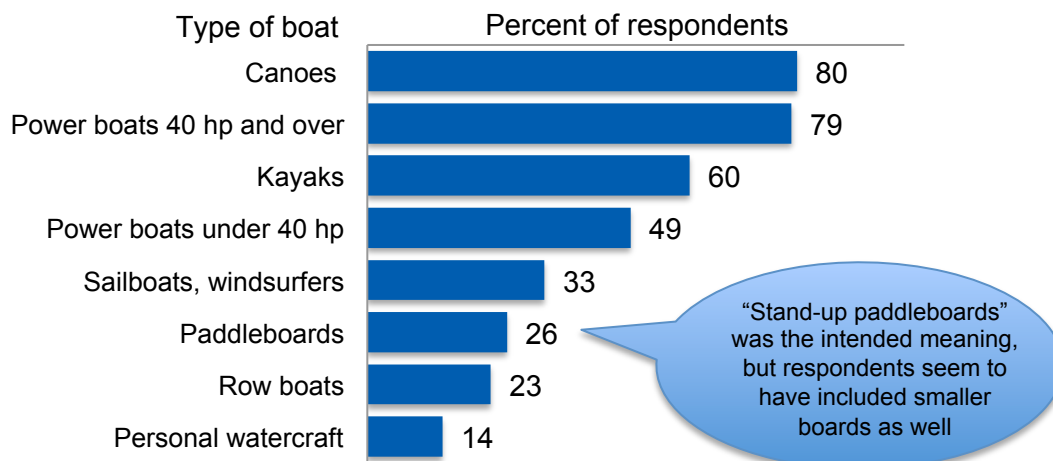
One percent said they would not use any boats in 2013, while a 60% majority will use between 3 and 6 boats.

Figure 1. Boats on the water



Canoes and power boats over 40 horse power (hp) are near-universal equipment, followed by kayaks and smaller power boats (Figure 2).

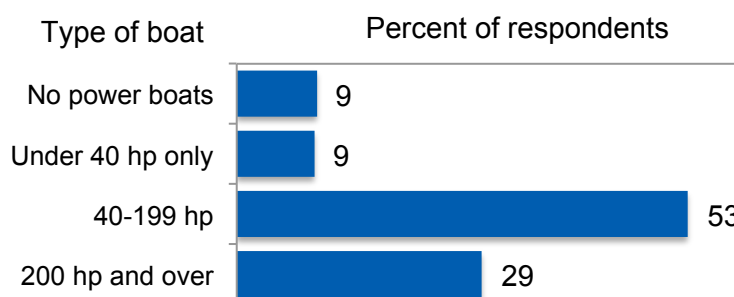
Figure 2. What types of boat will your family use in 2013?



Sizes of power boat

91% of families have 1 or more power boats. The majority have boats in the 40-199 hp range.

Figure 3. Sizes of power boat

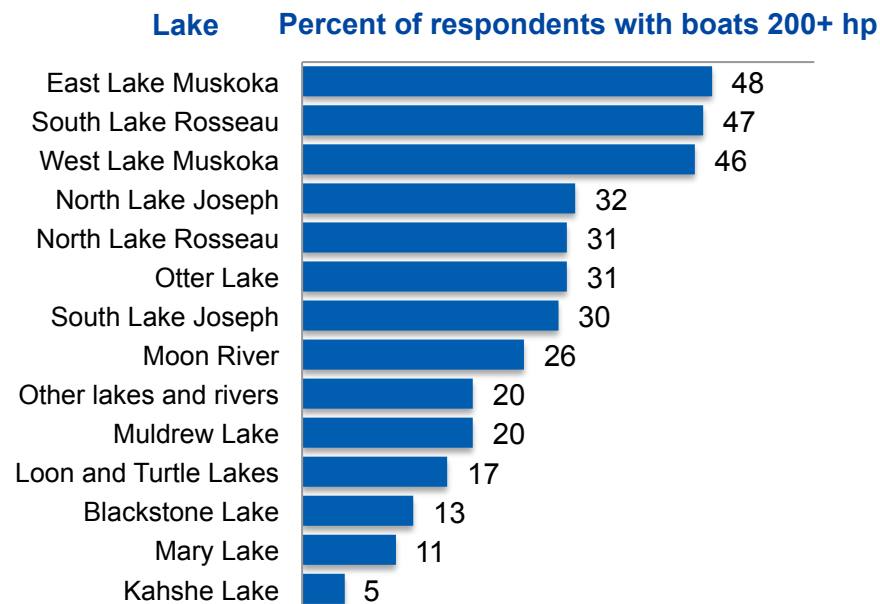




Where are the big boats?

Overall, 29% of respondents have boats with engines of 200 hp or more, but the concentration of these larger boats varies greatly from lake to lake. They are understandably more common on the larger lakes. Kahshe Lake is surprising: a relatively large lake but with the lowest percentage of large boats. The legendary rocks and shoals in this lake may play a role.

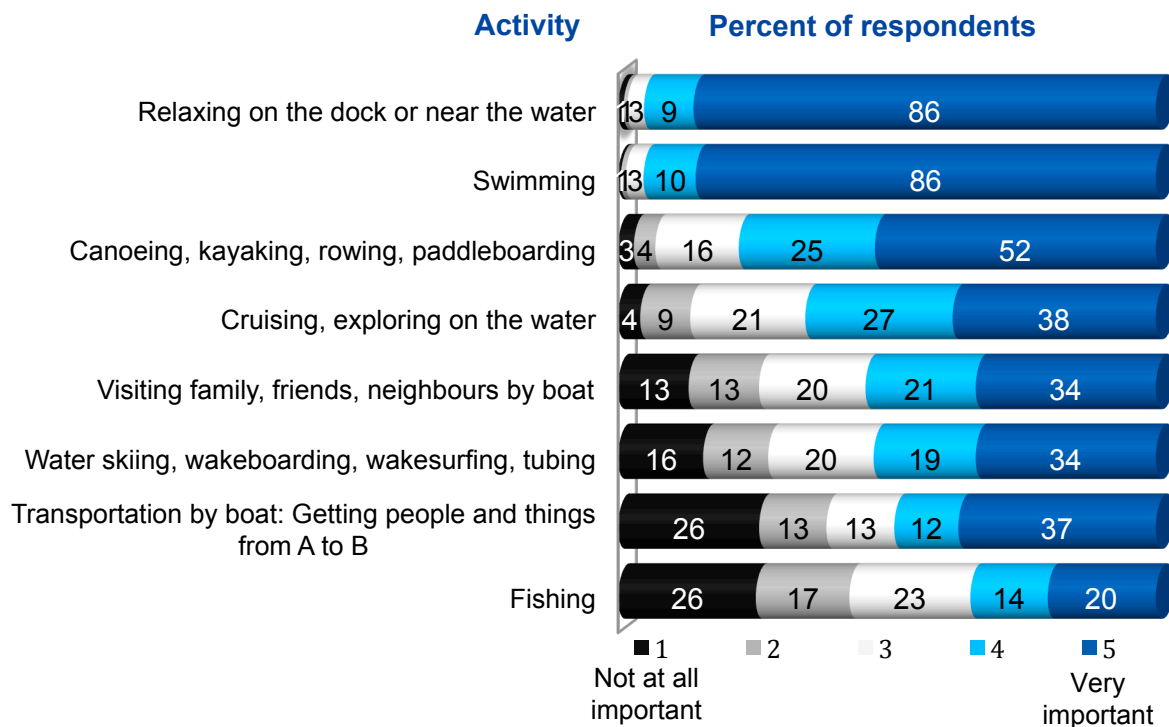
Figure 4. Where are the big boats?



2 What are the most popular activities on the water?

The two most popular activities – relaxing on the dock or the near the water and swimming – do not involve boats.

Figure 5. How important are each of these activities to you and your family?



To some extent, the boats that people use reflect the activities that they consider important. Figure 6 shows four activities where respondents differ according to the horsepower of the boats they use. Those with larger boats rate cruising, visiting friends by boat, towing sports and transportation as more important than those with smaller boats and those with no power boats.

On the other hand, the size of boats in the household has little or no bearing on the importance of swimming, relaxing on the dock, paddle sports and fishing (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Importance of activities: A) Notable differences among users of different boats

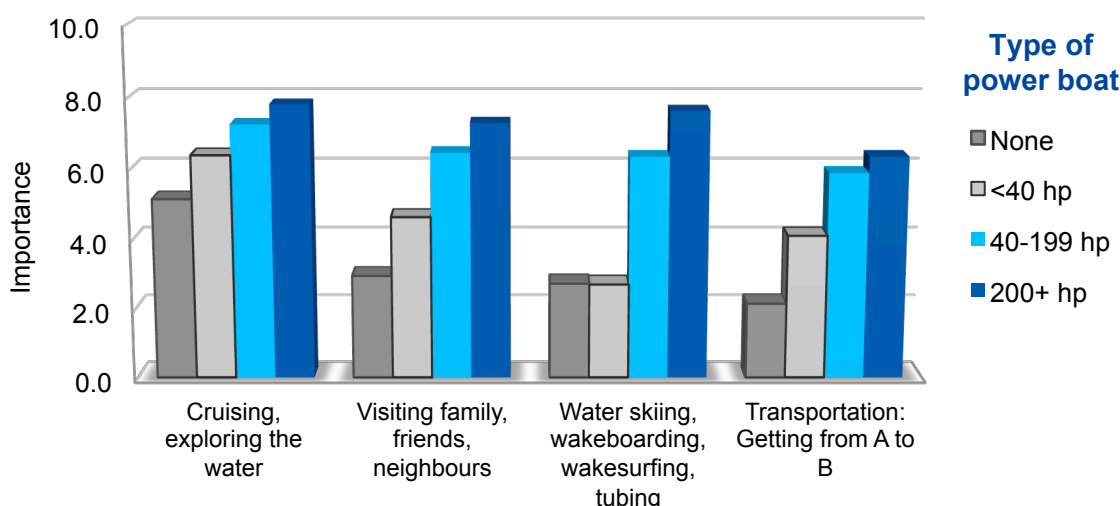
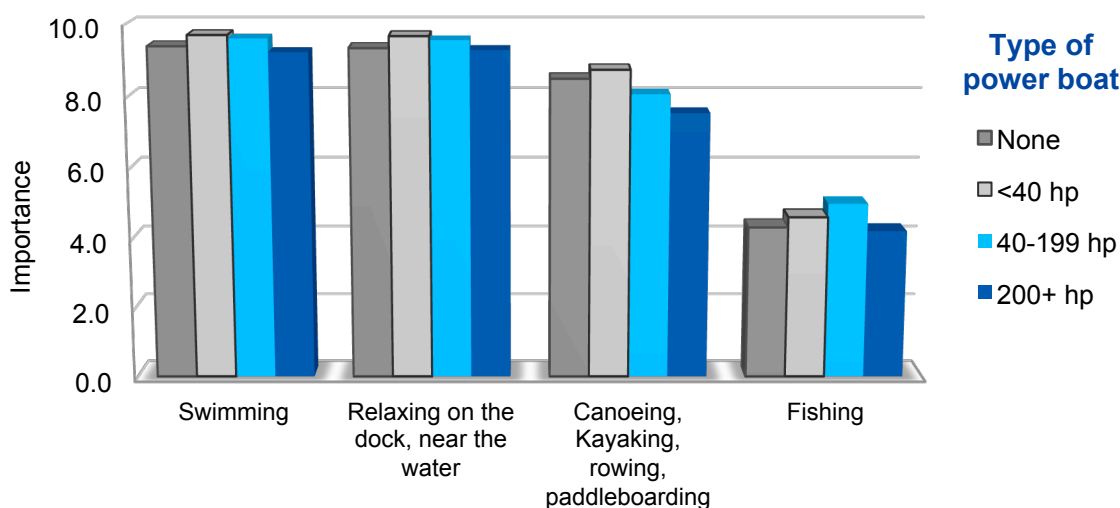


Figure 7. Importance of activities: B) Little difference among users of different boats

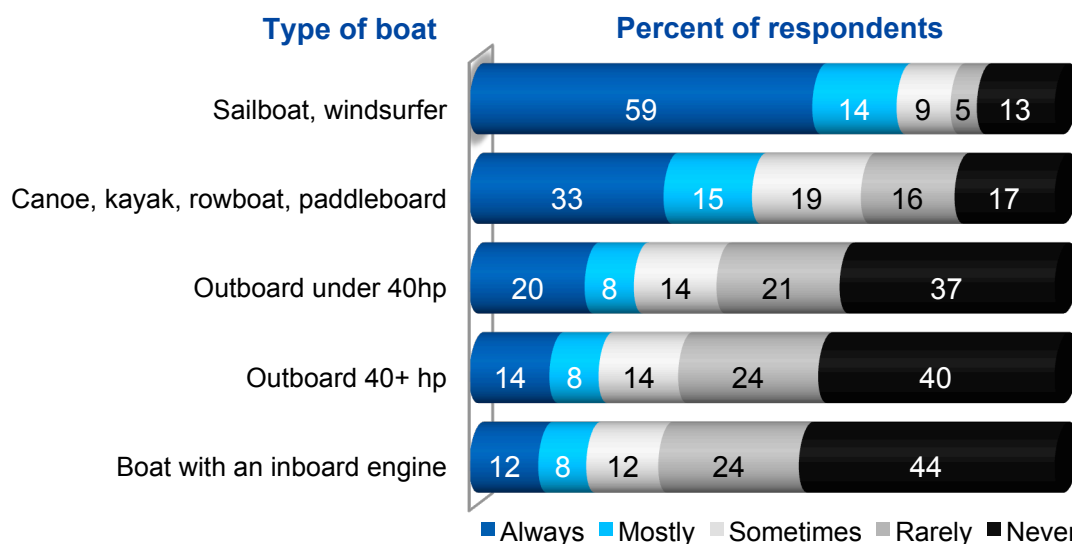


3 Use of lifejackets and PFDs

The use of lifejackets and PFDs has been encouraged over the past few decades, and is in all likelihood greater than a generation ago. Today, use of these devices is common in non-powered boats, but rare in power boats (Figure 8).

There is some support for mandatory use of PFDs: 38% agree with this idea overall (Figure 9). Support for mandatory use of PFDs decreases with the size of boats in the family: among those without power boats, 45% are in favour of mandatory PFDs, but this proportion drops to 10% for those with boats over 200 hp. More comfortable lifejackets would attract a few more users, but not the majority.

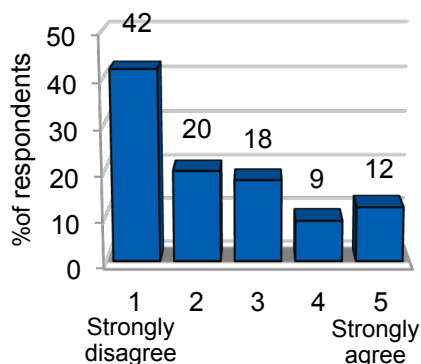
Figure 8. How often do you wear a lifejacket or PFD?



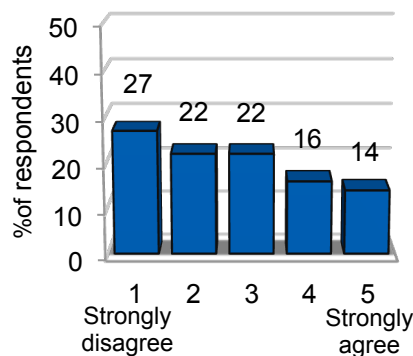
Note: Windsurfers are required to wear a PFD at all times; sailboaters are not. The mix of these two craft in the survey response is not known.

Figure 9. “Persons of all ages should be required to wear a life jacket or PFD while on a boat”

Persons of all ages should be required to wear a life jacket or PFD while on a boat



I would wear a life jacket or PFD more often if it were more comfortable or less restricting

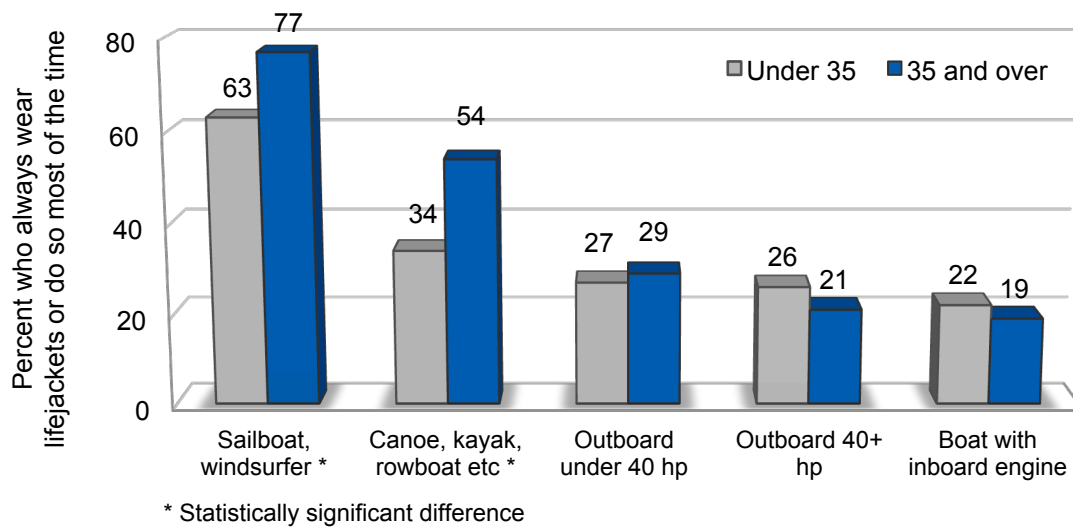




Use of lifejackets by age

The idea of wearing life jackets as a matter of course has become prevalent only in the past decade or two. Do younger boaters, who have grown up in this culture, use lifejackets more than the older generation? The answer is no: people under age 35 wear lifejackets and PFDs less often in non-powered boats, while there is no significant age difference in the use of lifejackets in motorized boats.

Figure 10. Use of lifejackets by age



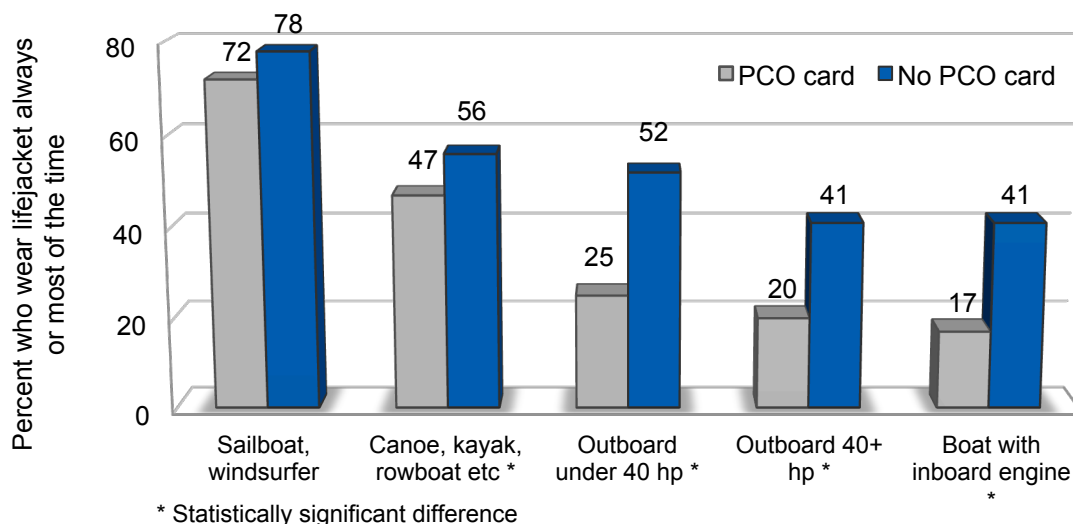


Pleasure Craft Operator Card holders and use of life jackets

Overall, 85% of respondents have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC). This figure increases to 90% in families that have power boats. (This does not imply that people are operating power boats without a PCOC: it just means that not all members of a family with power boats have the card.)

A reasonable assumption would be that PCOC holders would be more lifejacket-conscious than others, but this is not the case. Those who have a PCOC wear a lifejacket *less often* than those without a card. The difference is slight for non-powered craft, but substantial for power boats. There is no apparent explanation for this. For example, age is not a factor (e.g., if boat operators insisted that elderly passengers wear a lifejacket, there would be an age differential in this result, but there is not.)

Figure 11. Card holders wear lifejackets less often



"Lifejackets are NOT like seat belts and making them mandatory will seriously impact the enjoyment of boating."

"We are over policed as it is. I don't want the do-gooders telling me I have to wear a life jacket."

"I think life jackets should be mandatory for all ages."

"I think forcing adults to wear life jackets while traveling in the boat is a mistake. I am fine with it for younger children and require my grandchildren to wear them."

"I urge that mandatory life jackets are never required except for non-swimmers."

4 Impact of accidents/close calls?

Incidence

Accidents on the water are fortunately rare. A majority of respondents reported that they have not been involved in or witnessed any accidents or even close calls in the past ten years.

The first two columns in Figure 12 show the proportion of respondents who were directly involved in accidents (2%) or who witnessed accidents (11%). These include a total of more than 250 incidents, of which:

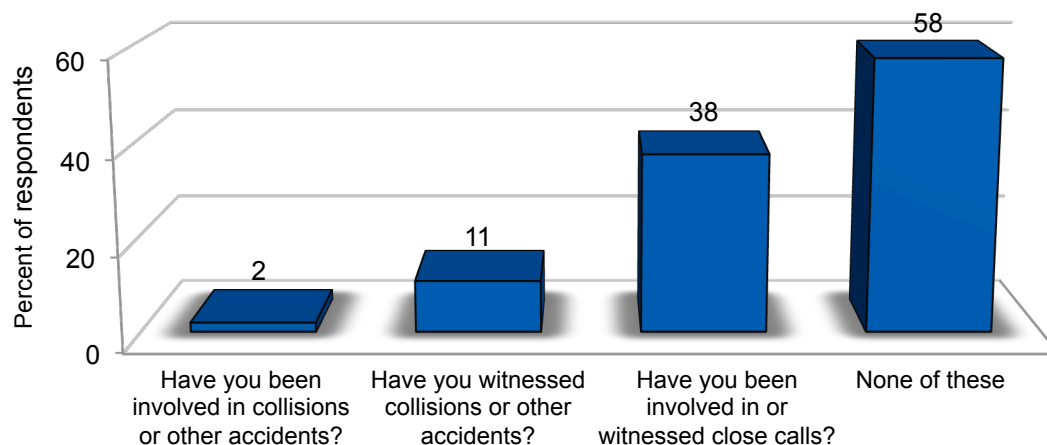
- 48% involved damage to property
- 30% involved personal injury
- 22% involved both damage and injury.

Of those who witnessed close calls, about half recall witnessing one incident and half more than one.

Impact

What impact do accidents and close calls have on attitudes or behaviour? There is no impact on wearing lifejackets as the use of lifejackets is nearly identical for all concerned. On the other hand, those who have been involved in accidents or close calls take a considerably more cautious stance on various issues related to safety. This is discussed in the following sections.

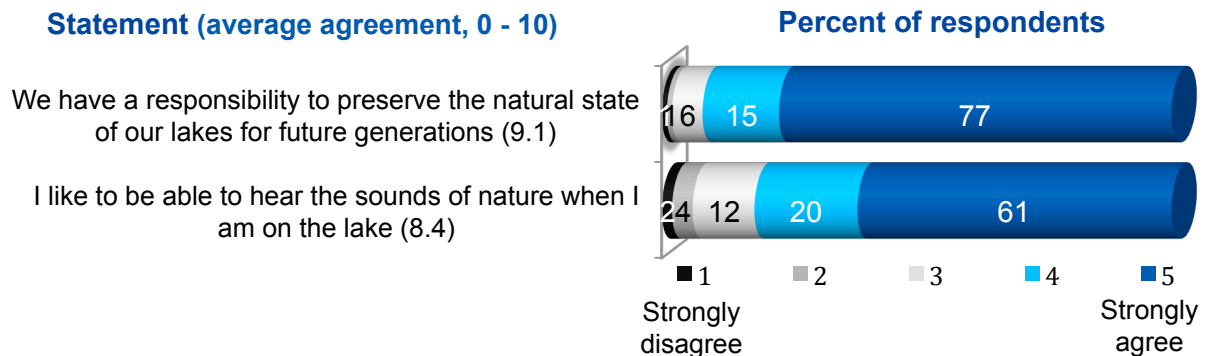
Figure 12. Involvement in accidents and close calls on the water



5 How do people view lake activities?

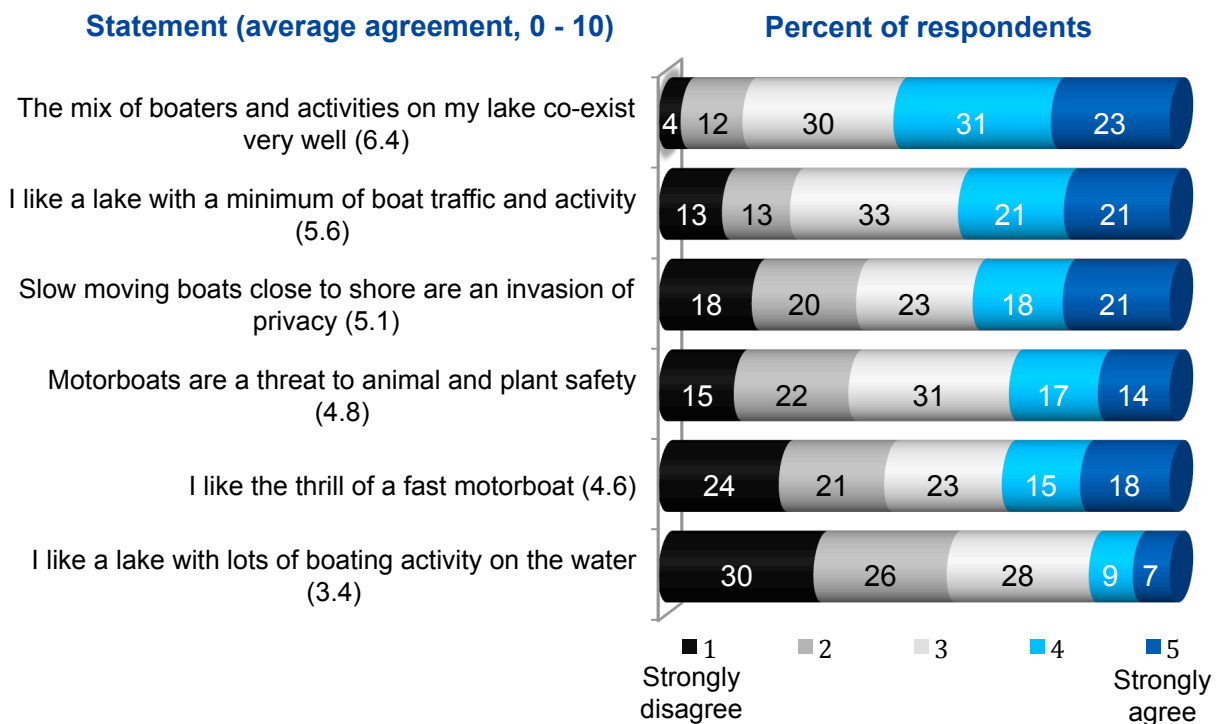
Two of the statements in this section of the survey drew near universal agreement (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Universals



The first statement in Figure 14, “The mix of boaters and activities on my lake coexist very well” speaks to the level of friction between people who participate in different activities. 16% of respondents indicated that they experience a notable degree of friction, while 54% felt that friction is low in their environment.

Figure 14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Differences among lakes

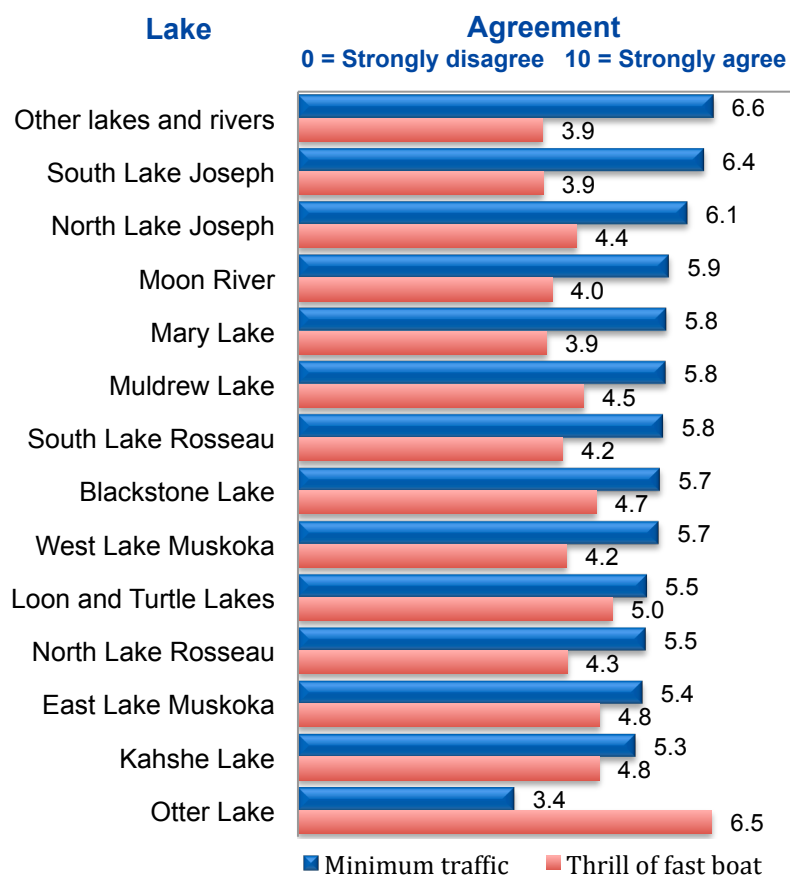
One might expect that the different lakes in the study would exhibit a range of responses to the points of view expressed in Figure 14. This is true, but only to a limited degree. Figure 15 shows response to two contrasting statements:

- “I like a lake with a minimum of boat traffic”
- “I like the thrill of a fast motorboat”.

Opinions on the statements are clearly related, in that lakes where residents tend to favour minimal traffic are less interested in fast motorboats. It is important to note that these differences are small in statistical terms – the differences *among respondents* (see Figure 14) are far greater than the differences *among lakes*.²

The one seeming outlier in the group is Otter Lake, where the desire for minimal traffic is relatively low and the interest in speed is relatively high.

Figure 15. Response by lake for, “I like a lake with a minimum of boat traffic” and, “I like the thrill of a fast motorboat”



² The different lakes account for 5% of the variation in response for “I like a lake with a minimum of boat traffic” and 3% of the variation in response for, “I like the thrill of a fast motorboat”. The remaining 95% or so of the variance is due to other factors such as individual preference.

6 What are the key contributors to enjoyment?

“We have been coming up to Muskoka for 3 generations and during that time have fallen in love with the natural beauty of the area.”

“We love all activity on or near the water, and have for over 50 years on the lake and across multiple generations.”

“My canoe which is my love is primarily used early (6 AM) to hear nature.”

“Boating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, watersports is an essential part of Cottage Life.”

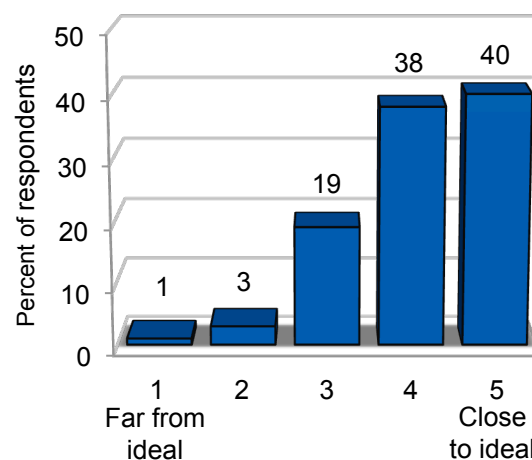
“I would love to see more sailing and windsurfing on the lake - they are quiet and add to (at least my) visual pleasure.”

“We love all activity on or near the water, and have for over 50 years on the lake and across multiple generations.”

78% of respondents take a positive view of the quality of experience that their lake or river offers. Only 4% are in the negative range.

Next we explore what contributes to enjoyment: why some respondents rate their lake 5 out of 5 while others do not.

Figure 16. “Thinking of all the boating and waterfront activities that you like to do, what quality of experience does your lake or river offer?”

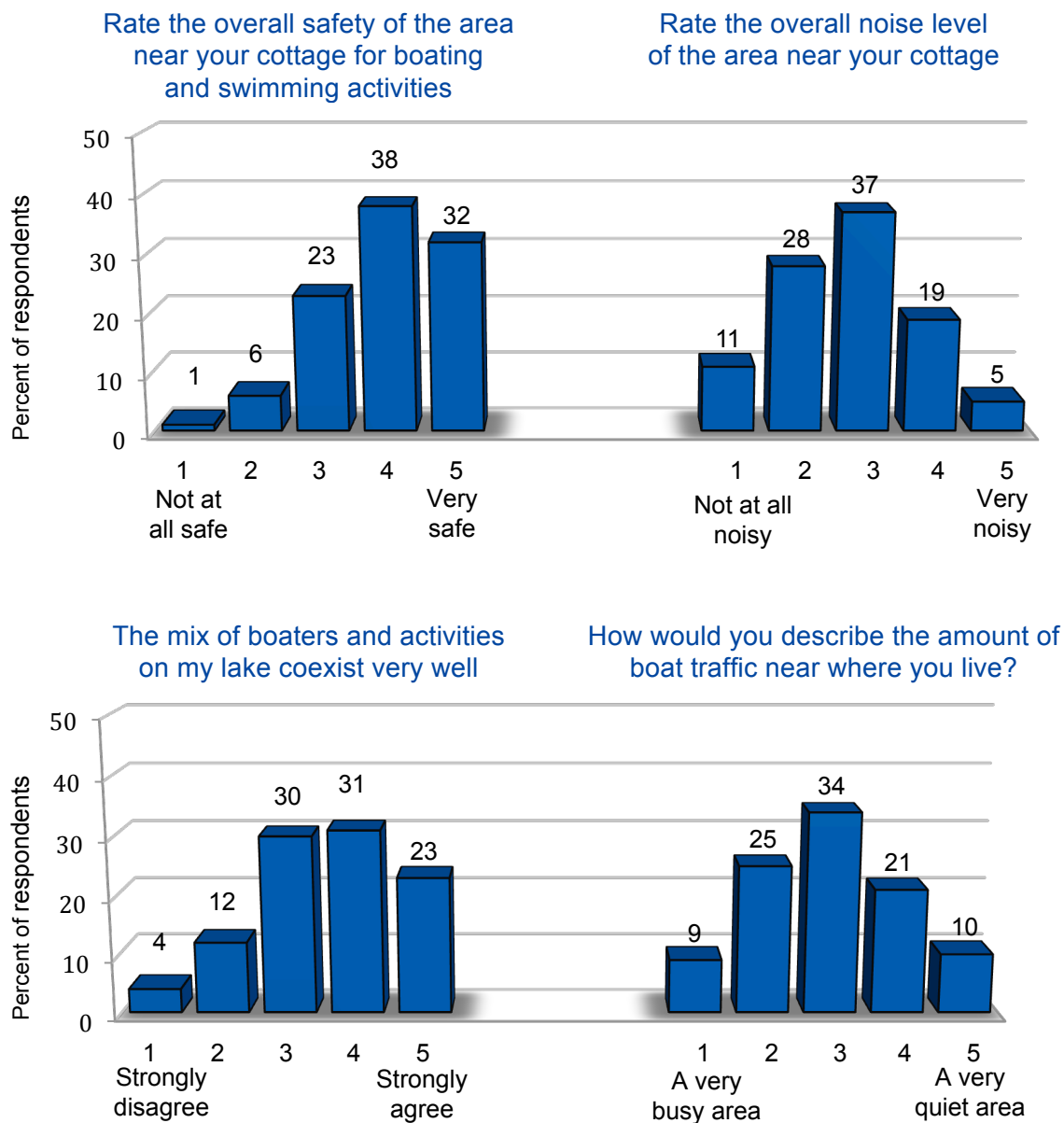


Four major elements affect enjoyment of the lakes

The four elements in Figure 17 each have a strong impact on enjoyment of the lakes. They are safety, noise, the amount of traffic on the water, and friction – the degree to which different boaters and activities coexist.

These perceptions vary to some extent from lake to lake, but not to a large degree. Respondents on every lake demonstrate the spectrum of opinions.

Figure 17. Elements that affect enjoyment



Impacts on enjoyment

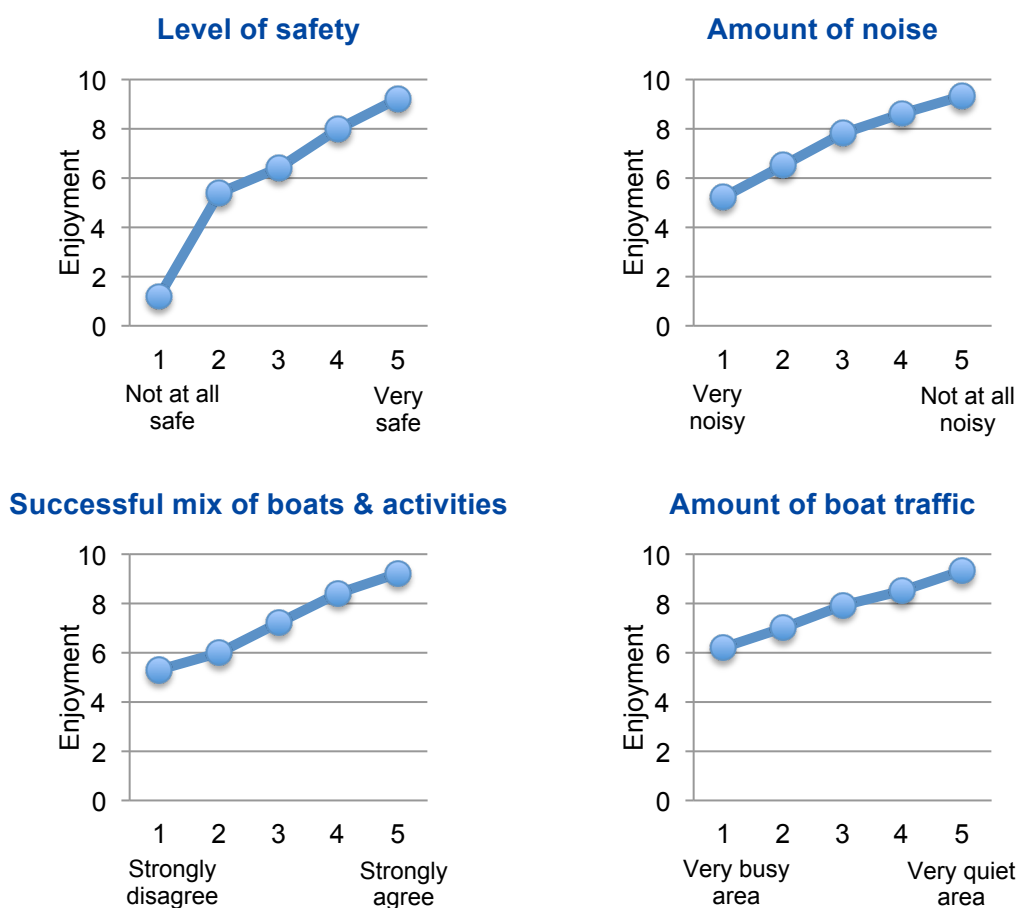
Figure 18 shows the considerable impact that each of the four elements has on enjoyment. There is a near straight-line relationship in each case. Each increment in safety carries a corresponding increase in enjoyment; each rise in noise levels brings a decrease in enjoyment, and so on.

Safety has the strongest relationship: enjoyment scores range from 1 out of 10 for the few who see their area as very unsafe, to 9 for those who see their area as very safe.

The four measures overlap to some extent, for example, with more traffic, one might expect to find more noise, more friction and a reduced sense of safety. Taken as a group, these four measures explain 41% of the variation in enjoyment scores. In plain language, people who experience safe, quiet lakes have a more enjoyable experience than those who do not.

Clearly, other factors that are not part of this survey play a role in enjoyment of the lakes – nearby on-shore activities, the weather, water quality, and so on.

Figure 18. Impacts on enjoyment



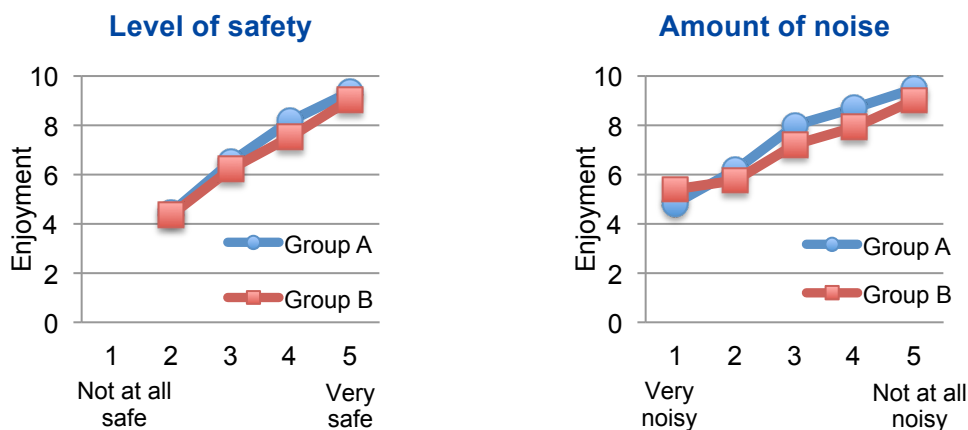
In Figure 18 we see that the average response, across some 2,000 participants, supports the idea that safe quiet lakes are more enjoyable. But averages can conceal critical underlying differences, so it is important to break down this pattern in case we are missing anything.

Figure 19 contrasts two groups that might be expected to have quite different positions on the safe-quiet debate:

- Group A consists of respondents with boats of 200-plus horsepower who place a high value (4 or 5 out of 5) on wakeboarding, wake surfing, water skiing, tubing, etc.
- Group B consists of respondents who either have no power boats or who only have boats under 40 hp and who place a low value (1 or 2 out of 5) on wakeboarding, wake surfing, water skiing, tubing, etc.

It is clear that safety and quiet have the same effect on each group. To the extent that the lake is unsafe or noisy, regardless of the type of boating you do, enjoyment goes down.

Figure 19. Impacts on enjoyment for groups with different interests



Note: The “Not at all safe” option, 1 out of 5, is omitted here as there are too few respondents to provide reliable data.

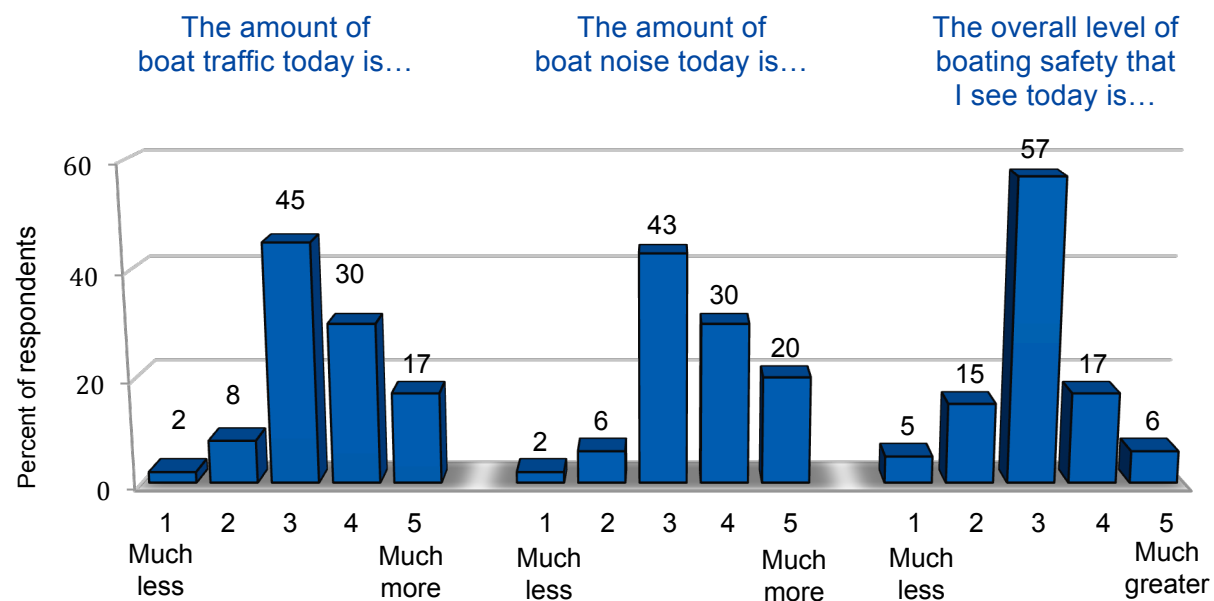
Is there a trend in safety?

The Muskoka region has changed over time, with more development, more vacationers, and bigger boats being some of the primary dynamics.

The survey asked respondents how they perceived changes in boat traffic, noise, and safety over the past 5 years. A majority observe increases in both boat traffic and noise, while fewer than 10% see decreases in traffic and noise.

Perhaps surprisingly, the increase in traffic has not lead to a reduction in respondents' perceptions of safety. A 57% majority see no change in the level of safety over the 5 years, while nearly equal numbers perceive more and less safe environments. Perhaps the emphasis on boating safety in recent years counteracts the effects of increased traffic.

Figure 20. Change in traffic, noise, and safety over the past five years

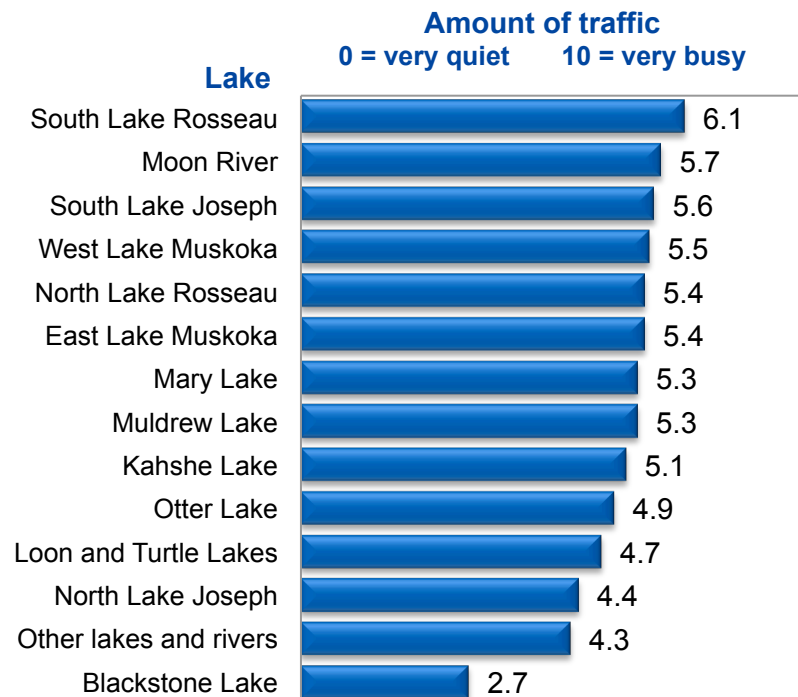




Amount of traffic

The amount of boat traffic on a lake is a defining feature of its character. Figure 21 shows how residents of the 14 regions view the amount of traffic in their area.

Figure 21. Amount of boat traffic near where you live, by lake

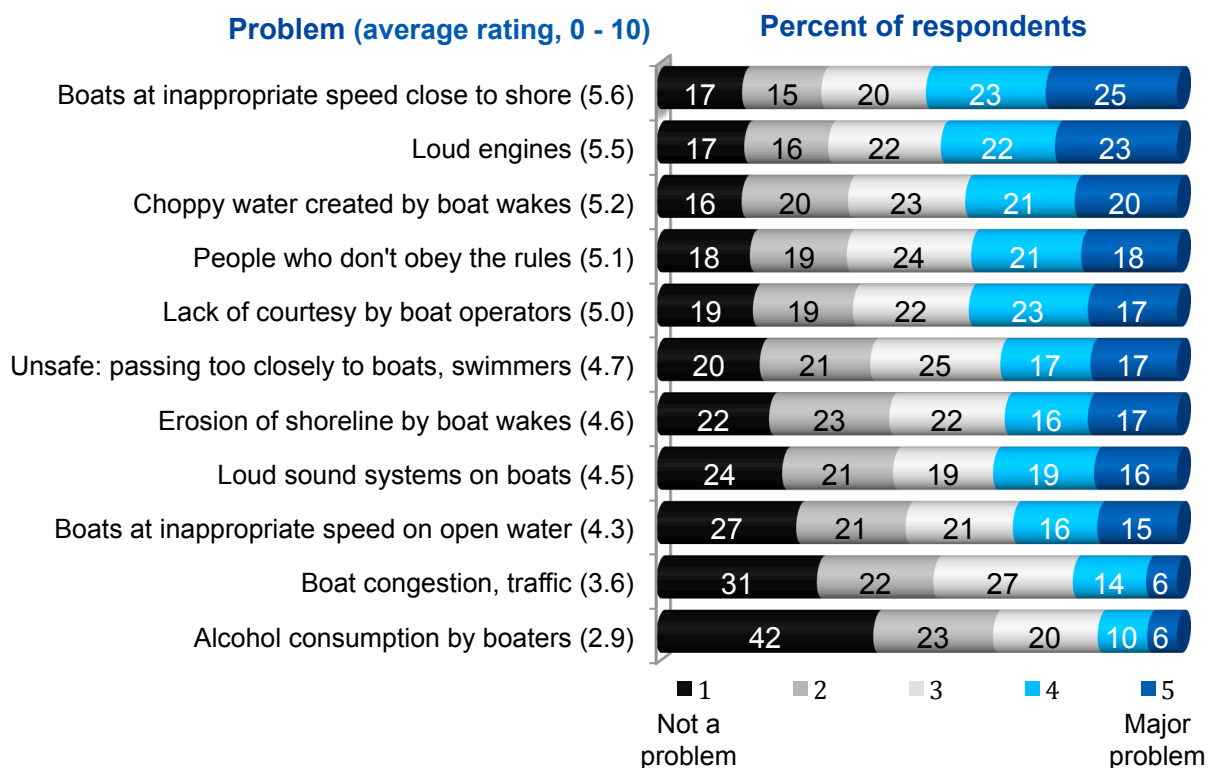


7 What are the major problems?

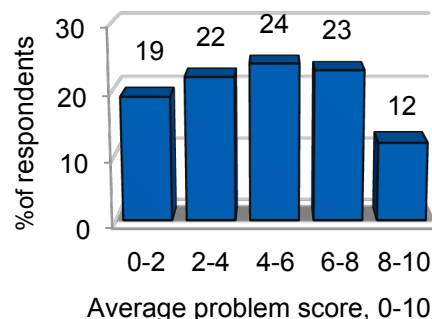
The survey listed eleven potential concerns and asked respondents to indicate the degree to which these affected their enjoyment of the lake.

There is a wide divergence of opinion on each issue: for some it is a problem while for others it is not. An extensive set of comments later in this chapter gives definition to these summary statements.

Figure 22. To what extent do these impact your enjoyment of the lake?



The problems in Figure 22 are correlated: respondents who see one issue as a problem tend to see other issues as problems as well. We can calculate an average score for each respondent which summarizes their overall perception of problems on the water. The chart to the right shows how average problem scores range from low to high.



Why might some people perceive greater problems than others? The survey provides some insight into this range of opinion. There are five contributing factors:

1. Having experienced or witnessed a boating accident or close call;
2. The size of boats that the family operates: those with no power boats or low-powered boats give higher problem ratings than those with higher powered boats.
3. Living near a source of traffic such as a marina, channel, public wharves, or retail area;
3. Age: older respondents give higher problem ratings than those who are younger; and
4. The lake on which the respondent lives.

This constellation of five factors explains 36% of the variation in respondents' overall perception of problems. This is a good beginning. Other factors, not examined in this survey, might include water quality, development, and individual beliefs and sensitivities.

Figure 23 to 25 show impact that each of the factors has on perception of problems:

Figure 23:

- Having any involvement in an accident or close call raises a person's scores across the set of items in Figure 22.
- Those with boats of 200 hp or more see relatively few problems – an average of 4.2, while those with no power boats see more problems – an average of 5.7.

Figure 23. Elements that contribute to the perception of problems, part 1

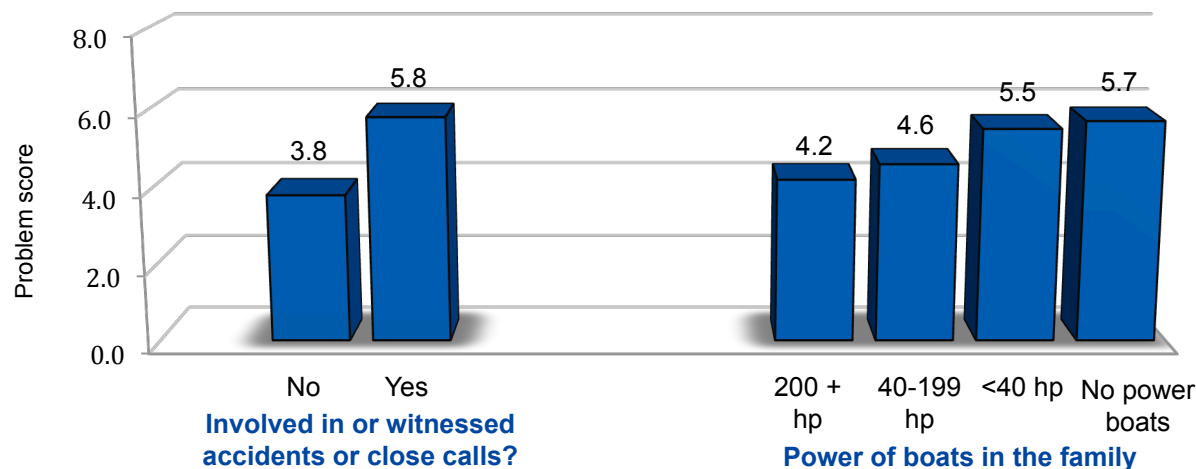


Figure 24 and Figure 25:

- Those near sources of traffic such as marinas or channels report an average of 5.4 problems while those removed from such sources report an average of 3.8 problems.
- The number of perceived problems increases with age.
- The number of perceived problems also varies by lake (Figure 25). In preceding sections of this report, differences among lakes were minimal. The difference is slightly more pronounced here – the average number of problems ranges from 2.8 for Otter lake to 6.1 for South Lake Joseph.

Figure 24. Elements that contribute to the perception of problems, part 2

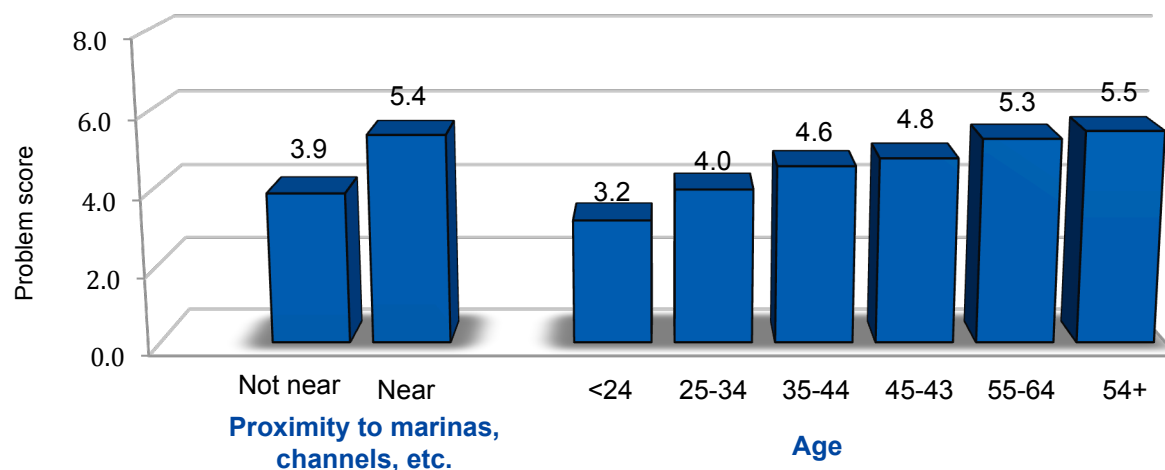
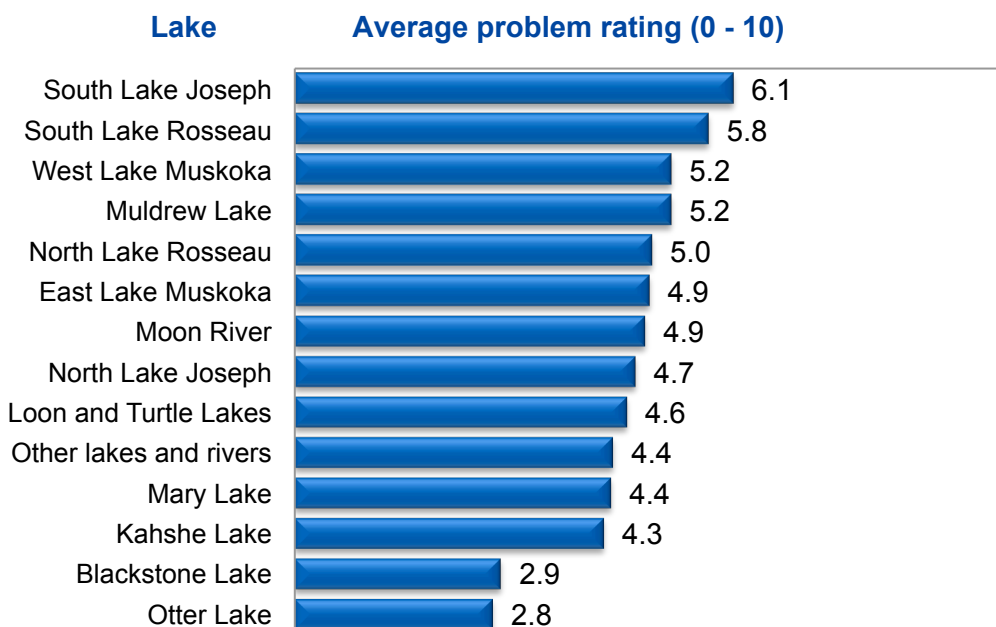


Figure 25. Elements that contribute to the perception of problems, part 3





Respondents' written comments: Problems on the water

More than 1,000 respondents took the time to write comments on topics in the survey. Their remarks extend to more than 130 pages of text and are overwhelmingly thoughtful and insightful.

The following selection reflects the major problems that people identified and illustrates the range of opinion that was expressed. Comments are grouped under six headings for convenience. In some instances, the quoted comment is part of a longer submission.

1. Boating activity too close to shore

Wakeboats are having devastating impact to waterfront structures, docks, boathouses.

My biggest concern is speeding near shore by boats and especially PWCs. It makes swimming very, very unsafe. Addressing this alone would make a huge difference.

My only concerns are boaters going too fast too close to shore and boats that are too noisy.

My biggest concern is the gawkers that come to close and are generally not on plane causing huge wakes that damage shorelines, docks and boats.

On our lake a major source of problems are irresponsible kayakers and open water swimmers. I enjoy the quiet of a morning kayak and hug the shore to take in nature and experience the wildlife, but kayaking in active boating lanes is disruptive, dangerous.

Being a boater who just likes to cruise at a slow leisurely speed I find it annoying that cottage owners have put out swim rafts and water toys so far out into the lake. They do not own the water and I find it unsafe for the boater.



2. Wakeboard boats and PWCs

High speed personal water craft operators have come so close to our shore that we are afraid for the safety of swimmers - their high speeds prevent them from being able to even see if someone is in the lake and they cut far too close to our point and shoreline

My concern is mainly with the 'wake boats' and both the HUGE waves that swamp our dock and any swimmers and throw the boats against the dock and also and even more importantly the destruction of the loon's and other animal's habitat and the erosion of the shorelines.

PWC are a blight - noise wise and safety of boating with non-motorized vessels.

Greatest concern in our immediate area is the significant increase in the use of wake-board boats... The excessive large wake-board waves shift our floating dock and cause our boats to slam against the dock. The river is too small to handle the increase in large inboard wake-board boats.

The issue for us is high displacement wake board boats that create monster waves, Property (small craft and small docks), small children and the unaware, (canoeists, fishers, renters) are at risk.

Shore erosion due in significant part to wakeboard wakes is a major concern on our lake.

We love all activity on or near the water, and have for over 50 years on the lake and across multiple generations. The two genuinely obnoxious changes are the proliferation of PWCs which zip at 40+ mph 10 feet from shore, and the wake boats which repeatedly churn up large wakes eroding the shoreline on smaller lakes.

Waves from wake board boats are the biggest problem. Operators often don't seem to realize the effect of the boat's waves on docks and parked boats. There should be a restriction on the use of wakeboard boats based on the size of the lake and they should be required to stay set distances out from shore when creating large wakes.



3. Size, noise and speed

Boat wakes are getting ridiculous. The boats are larger and the lake is the same size.

Boats are becoming too large for the waterways... i.e. boats that are sized properly for the great lakes should not be allowed on the Muskoka lakes...

Cigarette boats have no place on these lakes.

In general the majority of boaters respect and adhere to good boating sensibility. The most offensive boating is the constant buzzing of jet ski boats, large oversized boats with no muffler on and the annual offensive and unsafe race of non-resident, fast and noisy boats.

Noise, noise and noise are the three main issues. Improve the standards for both existing and new boats.

The above water exhaust noise from boats needs to be enforced! The poker run of the monster boats is entirely inappropriate to our lakes and should not be permitted.

The noise from Big boats with above water level exhausts is my only real concern.

The ongoing depreciation of the Muskoka experience is partly the result of increasing power boat and float plane activity, but more specifically the level of noise many of them emit.

The biggest concern is crazy big cigarette boats and loud exhausts.

The large offshore boats have no place on these lakes. They are too fast, too big and don't mix well with a recreational environment. They belong on the ocean.

Loud Exhaust Noise is the main problem. Cars on the road that made that much noise would be pulled over for enforcement. Some boats can be heard coming or going several miles away.

I am very concerned about the cigarette boats ... their size and noise and speed are totally unsuited to a lake district like Muskoka. They should be banned.

Boat noise is the most aggravating and intrusive thing. It comes out of the blue at night or on a busy weekend keeps assailing you.

Loud, fast performance boats pose the greatest threat to the enjoyment of the lake by far.

I would suggest focussing your efforts to limit the noise produced (both by the engine and by the music) and shoreline erosion from excessive wakes.

Boat noise is a huge disruption to both quiet non power boating (kayaks and canoes), and to quiet enjoyment of swimming and the waterfront.



4. Courtesy, respect and privacy

A person operating a canoe or kayak often invades my shore privacy more than a motor boat because they are closer to the shoreline.

Extremely high speed boats are very dangerous. We don't experience them very often, but when they do come on our bay, we are helpless to protect ourselves, and feel very vulnerable, especially in small watercraft and swimming, which are favourite activities.

I would say that the level of boating courtesy has declined sharply over the last 15-20 years. It seems that as the boats get bigger and more expensive the operators get less competent and much less courteous.

People have lost the sense of respecting the good of the 'community' and selfishly impose their music from cottages, boathouses and boats at high decibels ruining the peace and natural sounds of nature.

Cottagers new to the area or who have no previous experience with cottage life and the need for neighbourly respect are the biggest problem on our lakes these days. They don't know how to operate watercraft safely and are ignorant of their neighbours and the peace that we used to know!

Boating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, watersports is an essential part of Cottage Life. Let's all show some compromise and tolerance to our fellow boaters and cottagers.

Where to start - there seems to be an amazing lack of courtesy on the lake.

Your survey is obviously an attack on boating. All lake residents have equal rights to the activities on the lake.

Discourteous fishermen who fish near docks and swimmers reducing one's safety, privacy and enjoyment of the lake.

There are sufficient regulations for boating now. The problem is that many boaters do not know or do not care to know these regulations. Either that or they just don't give a damn for anyone else. No respect for others.

It is getting worse every year. Boats are getting bigger, boaters are getting more thoughtless.



5. *Unsafe practices*

I have been driving a boat for 45 years on all the 3 big lakes, and do not feel comfortable going out on the water, not because of my driving ability, but, because I see so many people who just do not know how to drive a boat.

Lifejackets are NOT like seat belts and making them mandatory will seriously impact the enjoyment of boating.

As a canoe and kayaker, I feel my safety is at risk. I've seen SeaDoos whip through the rivers without a care or consideration of the swimmers around their docks. It's every stressful.

There is no respect for keeping a safe distance from shore or from somebody's dock where people may be swimming. People who are doing skiing/boarding should do so in the larger open area of the lake, or stick to the centre of the channel only. Being on a small narrow lake, we experience these problems constantly, and every year it gets worse, to the point that the enjoyment is no longer there.

Your questionnaire NEEDS to include a question regarding irresponsible swimmers and kayakers/canoers. Without this it seems imbalanced and biased. On our lake a major source of problems are irresponsible kayakers and open water swimmers.

I think the survey overlooked a key area that creates so many of the issues on the lake. That is resorts and fractional ownership organizations that rent watercraft to people who aren't qualified to use them. Try boating by [name of resort] or some of the other areas on a long weekend or mid summer.



6. Lack of peace and tranquility

Overall I am close to giving up on cottage life due to the excessive noise pollution.

Over the last few years I have seen people treating Muskoka like a cheap personal entertainment wonderland... I am a thirty year old who has been fortunate enough to grow up on Lake Joseph. I want my children to bob around safely in the water as I did growing up. Everyone deserves that chance, or no one will remember that Muskoka is about peace. Not boats and showing off.

Restricting speed, size, and noise of boats is the main concern as these directly impact the serenity of the cottage.

Cottagers are quite far apart on boating issues. I welcome any solution that would improve safety and peaceful enjoyment.

When I moved here 28 years ago I could watch the loons do their mating dance, listen to them calling, count 22 merganser chicks floating by, watch the heron fishing off my dock, canoe and swim in much clearer water, and I had a least 1 and a half feet more of shore. Now I neither hear nor see loons or mergansers, only see the heron flying by, can't swim on weekends due to the disgusting water caused by the boat wakes dragging my shore into the water, have to completely rethink my access to the water, and there's no way I would risk my life in the boat traffic either swimming or canoeing.

Cottagers new to the area or who have no previous experience with cottage life and the need for neighbourly respect are the biggest problem on our lakes these days. They don't know how to operate watercraft safely and are ignorant of their neighbours and the peace that we used to know!

8 What do people see as the primary solutions?

There is a fair consensus in favour of more education and communication about responsible boating (Figure 26).

On the other hand, respondents are evenly divided on the need for more regulation and enforcement (Figure 27). In this regard, there is distinctly more appetite for regulation and enforcement among those who perceive a greater degree of problems on the water (those who agree with the items in Figure 22). In fact, the correlation between a person's average rating of problems and their support for regulation and enforcement is a healthy .68. But the link between perceived problems and regulatory solutions is by no means universal. The written comments reveal many who object to further regulation.

Figure 26. Is there a need for education and communication?

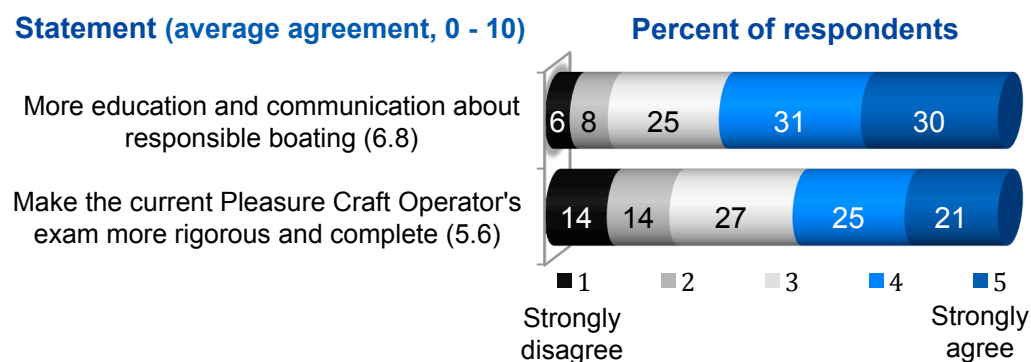
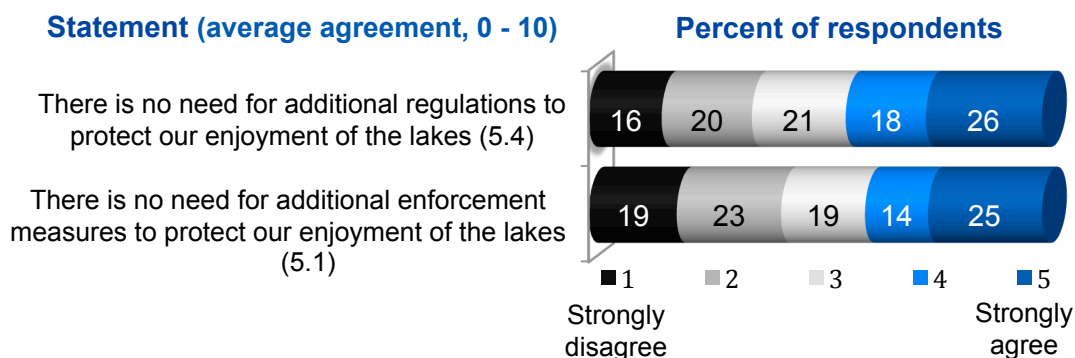


Figure 27. Is there a need for more regulation and enforcement?



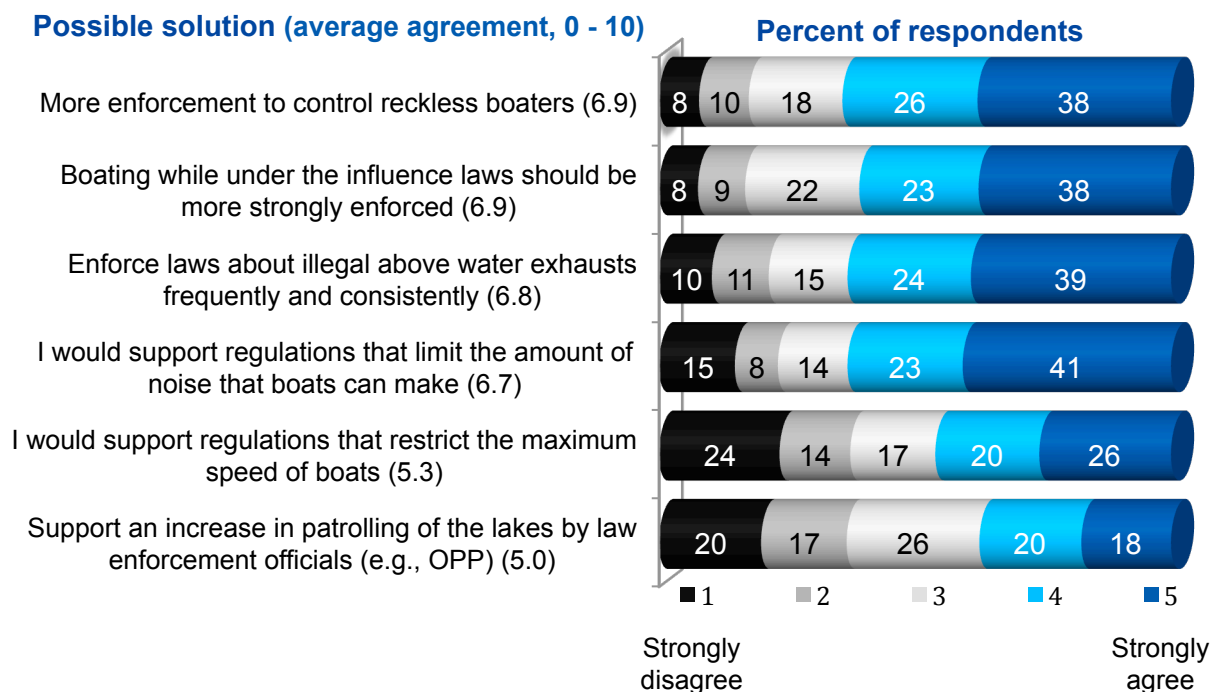


There is general support for greater enforcement of four types of regulation. More than 60% favour enforcement of laws dealing with:

- Reckless operation of boats;
- Boating while under the influence of alcohol;
- Above water exhausts; and,
- Regulations that limit the amount of noise that boats can make.

This support for enforcement is tempered somewhat by the fact that fewer respondents want to see increased police patrolling of the waters, something that is clearly needed for greater enforcement. While more police patrols can be effective in reducing the three problems named above, they also, presumably, increase the risk of inspections that reveal common infractions such as driving a boat without your PCOC on hand or failing to carry required equipment.

Figure 28. What needs regulating or enforcing?





Respondents' written comments: Solutions

The comments that follow were selected to represent the main solutions that respondents proposed and the range of opinion that exists on each. Again, some of the quoted comments are excerpts from longer submissions.

The solutions fall under the five general areas illustrated following.

1. Co-operation, understanding, courtesy, respect

Communication is the best way to get along with your own family and your fellow cottagers. Educate your children at a young age regarding boating.

I feel the greatest impact to improve the quality of our lake experience can come from increased awareness and conversations among stakeholders.

These issues should never be solved by regulation or governmental enforcement. These are issues to be solved by community interaction and personal responsibility and personal effort as these issues bother individuals to different levels.

No additional amount of regulations will ever protect us from the ignorant self-centered people who knowingly / intentionally put the lives of others at risk (through activities like drinking and boating) and compromise the enjoyment of our natural surroundings (i.e. by blasting their sound systems in their boats).

Those who do not enjoy this lake due to fast boaters should move!!!!

The idea of what makes cottaging enjoyable differs for different people. I like to kayak and swim and also like the action of boating, water skiing or simply sitting on my dock watching the boats go by. Paddle sports enthusiasts can co-exist with motor-boat enthusiasts if everybody just uses a little common sense.

Boaters need to be reasonable and courteous. We do not need more government involvement and regulations to tell us everything, common sense should be used.



2. Regulations and enforcement: In favour

Anti-noise regulation and enforcement should be a major priority. Large wakes from larger vessels, wake-boarding boats, and poor operators are a major problem--for shoreline/dock impacts and for loon nesting.

Ban wake board boats from running within 100 meters of shore. They destroy docks and rip dock rings out. I wish they could be banned altogether.

If new regulations are being considered, I would strongly support a noise restriction with adequate enforcement.

The size, noise and number of boats has grown at an alarming rate over the last few years. There should DEFINITELY be restrictions to length and horsepower on the Muskoka Lakes.

Excessive noise is my main concern, with more regulation and enforcement badly needed.

There are too many people who see Muskoka as a giant playground for their own personal pleasure. We need regulations to not only make being in Muskoka more pleasant but to preserve its beauty for future generations.

The increase of noisy, race boats is troublesome in Muskoka, and I would support restricting those boats in Muskoka. In general, however, I am against more government regulation as being costly and in most cases unwarranted.

Please make cigarette powerboats illegal on the Muskoka Lakes. There are some in North Lake Rosseau and the noise is appalling - you can still hear them for 10 minutes after they leave our bay.

The Bala OPP and Marine Patrol need more personnel, encouragement and power to photograph and stop people who speed through narrow channels, drive at 30mph within 10 feet of shore, zero tolerance for alcohol and encourage boaters to whistle blow those who abuse the rules and speed zones.

Rules are adequate, need more presence of police on lakes and more enforcement.

Wakeboard boats, i.e. those designed to create large wakes should be banned. They are a menace to small craft, create discomfort to most other boaters, and heavily impact shorelines as compared to other watercraft.

We definitely need strong regulations regarding maximum noise and speed of boats on the lake.

We have found that the proliferation of wake boats has caused a lot of damage to our shoreline and property. Wake boats should be required to operate at a greater distance from shore.

Speed, noise, alcohol level, and safety equipment regulations are, unfortunately, all necessary if the Muskoka Lakes are to retain (return) the peaceful, natural and environmental characteristics which attracted my family to the area in 1897.



High powered boats and above water exhausts should be banned.

Renters of boats should have to be licensed in the same manner as owners of boats!!!

Speed boats -- hydroplanes -- like race cars on country roads, are completely inappropriate on smaller lakes. Take them off shore in marked courses.

Personal Water Craft are very noisy and disturbing of the peace and quiet on the lake... personally I would like to see some restrictions placed on when and where they can be operated.

One of my big concerns is boaters who do not slow down near canoes or kayaks. I accept that it is fun to go quickly in boats (and I enjoy that too), but they need to slow down near non-motorized watercraft. I have seen boats come close to swamping our canoe and drive blithely away with no sense of what they did or why it was wrong. There really needs to be an education program AND enforcement on this - it is dangerous!

I really feel that additional visits and/or enforcement is necessary for reckless boaters. Education only goes so far.

Large wakeboats should be out in the middle of the lakes and at least 500 meters from shore. This added distance will allow the waves to dissipate before reaching docks and the shore line. Also, repeated runs in a small area should not be permissible. Also, current laws do not require those who rent boats to be licensed. Therefore you get inexperienced boaters, operating large boats or jet skis in an area they are not familiar with.

3. Regulations and enforcement: Against

I would not like to see the lake over regulated or more police presence. Better education of existing laws might be the answer.

Please do not support more regulation of the waterways. Additional, nit-picky rules are not necessary. Instead, encourage awareness and enforcement of existing rules and even boating courtesies.

Those large and noisy cigar boats, and boats with above water exhaust have no place and disturb the setting. BUT I really do not want to see cottage country turned into an armed camp with patrols and enforcement everywhere.

I think everything is fine. There is no need to add more government expense.

We are over policed as it is. I don't want the do-gooders telling me I have to wear a life jacket.

More regulation, more government intrusion and more laws are NOT the answer. Behaviour is mean-reverting and will come back in line.



There are too many laws in this country now. People should be educated to take responsibility for their own actions and wellbeing, as well as showing some courtesy to others. I urge that mandatory life jackets are never required except for non-swimmers.

I personally take pleasure from fast boats, so a speed limit would be taking away part of my definition of cottaging.

I enjoy fast boats and I also enjoy water sports that require a large wake, but I appreciate that not everyone does. My fear is that those that dislike it or are unprepared to accept any nuisance from these activities will demand increased regulations, which will adversely affect the enjoyment of these activities, which are a part of what makes Muskoka so attractive. I would prefer less noise, no super-fast boats, less wakes on my shoreline and more quiet, generally, but I am prepared to accept these nuisances rather than have overly-restrictive regulations implemented.

Lake Muskoka is VERY over-patrolled by the OPP. It is not uncommon for us to see them 15 - 20 times per day passing by our home. A waste of resources and completely unnecessary.

The majority of boaters are capable and courteous. I would not want to see a huge increase in regulations to try and control the minority of careless boaters, which negatively impacts the larger group.

Please, let's not turn Muskoka into a police state. Idiots are always going to be idiots, but most people are safe, responsible boaters. I'm in favour of better education and communication, not enforcement tactics that will put a damper on everyone.

I support responsible boating, water safety and concern for the environment. I resent the legislation that encourages law enforcement to pull boats over at random and without cause.

Please don't regulate us all to death, let common sense and personal choices be a part of everyone's life on land and on the water

Stop trying to run my life. Everything has been fine for 100 years.

More patrolling by OPP actually alienates cottages as they do not educate but rather just give fines.

Increased police visibility would take care of most concerns.

Creating a 'nanny state' is wrong.



4. Boat license examinations

I think there should be an in-water portion of the boating operators card (docking skills, figure 8s, simple defensive manoeuvres etc.).

You may be able to answer all the questions on a paper but driving an actual boat on the water takes a great deal of experience. Therefore, I am all for boat exams in the water and forget the paper work.

Part of doing that I feel is making the boating examinations more difficult. There are a lot more first time boaters arriving on the lakes, now more than ever before, that do not understand the full extent of the safety needs and precautions that are needed to keep everyone safe and having a good time.

I feel that boat licensing requirements have made things worse as boaters feel that they know how to drive a boat because they passed the boater exam.

I am all in favour of more rigorous standards, including an on-water component to obtain an operators card. The current licensing situation is laughable.

The Pleasure Craft Operator Card exam should not be something that anyone can write on the way home from Canadian Tire. Courses should be more involved so that people can learn more about restrictions, stories and smart boat handling.

The problem with the Pleasure Craft Operating exam is that there is no practical experience part of the exam, and the written part is not very applicable to our lakes. Every new cottager should be required to take at least 2 practical lessons in boat driving and boating etiquette before they are allowed to buy a boat.

Boating licences are a well-intentioned joke. In no way do they mean the person knows how to drive a boat or has any intention of doing so.

I do not agree with on-line testing. I think the level of knowledge should be higher and there should be an operators practical test... Why not set up municipally controlled classes to learn how to handle and moor and dock a boat with friendly help at specified times. It could involve volunteers.



5. Education and communication

More education and more communication on safe and considerate boating behaviour is needed. But don't penalize the every boater for the actions of the few who are unsafe and inconsiderate boaters. Enforce the law and deal with the ones who are problems.

At the moment I do not like the idea of more police presence on the lakes. I much prefer the idea of better education & more awareness, of the rules of the road as well as a more rigorous Boating Certificate process.

I feel that too much regulation isn't necessarily the answer to some of the issues that we face. I think that better education is the place to start.

Noise abatement begins with education as has been demonstrated in the campaign to curb drunk driving.

Public education of safe, courteous lake practices is key to reaching a satisfactory result for all lake users.

I think the key here is Education. Not more police handing out tickets.

In my view, motorboats on their own are not the problem. Rather, irresponsible, inconsiderate behaviour by motorboat operators is the problem. So I think education and information are important elements of any campaign to improve everyone's enjoyment of our lakes and rivers--along with appropriate/smart regulations and enforcement of same.

We just need to educate new people and limit boat horsepower to reasonable power based on lake size.

Boating annoyances are a phenomenon of conflicting desires in the same area, a tragedy of the commons if you will, and this can usually only be solved by massive education and some enforcement.