

YOUR LAKES, YOUR VIEWS

Muskoka Lakes Activity Survey, 2017 - Full Report

By ERIN Research in cooperation with Safe Quiet Lakes





Your Lakes, Your Views - Muskoka Lakes Activity Survey, 2017
Full Report

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CONTENTS

Preview	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Purpose of research	7
1.2 Method	8
1.3 Respondent profile by lake	10
1.4 Respondent characteristics	11
2. JOYS OF THE LAKES	12
2.1 Lake activities	13
2.2 Boat ownership and uses	14
2.3 The lake community.....	16
3. WHAT DRIVES THE QUALITY OF THE LAKE EXPERIENCE?.....	17
3.1 Quality of experience	18
3.2 Drivers of quality of the lake experience.....	19
4. VIEWS ON TOPICAL ISSUES	29
4.1 Perceptions of change	30
4.2 Views on safety.....	34
4.3 Views on noise.....	36
4.4 Views on boat wakes	39
4.5 Views on boating close to shore	41
4.6 Boating safety	42
4.7 Inflatable water toys.....	43
4.8 Anchoring rafts and buoys	43
4.9 Performance boat events	44
4.10 Resolving noise and safety problems.....	46
5. THE FORWARD COURSE – RECOMMENDATIONS	48
5.1 General directions.....	49
5.2 Specific proposals.....	52
5.3 Forward course.....	53

PREVIEW

The 2017 survey, *Your Lakes, Your Views* drew an enthusiastic response across the Muskoka region.

- **3,300** respondents participated in the 2017 survey, a 44% increase over 2013
- **130 +** lakes and rivers in the Muskoka Region are represented in the results
- **78%** made written comments, a total of 274 pages; the volume and content of these reveal that people care deeply about the lakes and are passionate about their views.

On the waterfront

- **98%** of respondents have one or more boats of some kind; 87% have one or more power boats and 94% have one or more non-powered craft
- **62%** have between 3 and 7 boats. Overall, there is an average of 2 power boats and 4 non-powered boats per family
- **35%** rate their experience of the lake as “close to ideal”. Perceptions of safety, noise and boat traffic all contribute to the quality of the lake experience
- **31%** rate their lake as “Very safe” and give an **average** rating of **8.8 out of 10** for the overall quality of their lake experience, while the **2%** who consider their lake “Not at all safe” rate overall quality at just **4.1 out of 10**
- **5%** consider their area to be “Very quiet” in terms of boat traffic and rate the **overall quality of their lake experience at 9.2 out of 10**. The **12%** who consider their area of the lake to be “Very busy” rate the **overall quality of their experience at 5.2 out of 10**
- **50% +** perceive that there is more boat traffic, more boat noise, and a greater impact of boat wakes today compared to five years ago.

Top contributors to unwanted noise

- 46% view personal watercraft as contributing to unwanted noise
- 38% sound systems on boats
- 34% from modern power boats
- 32% from towing sports such as wakeboarding, water skiing, tubing
- 30% sound systems on docks

Non-boating sources such as fireworks, aircraft and construction, which are outside the mission of Safe Quiet Lakes, are not major concerns to most people, but are significant irritants to some.

Top concerns

The three most frequent problems in 2017 are associated with unsafe and inconsiderate boating:

- Boat noise, especially from personal watercraft and sound systems
- Boat wakes
- Boats operated at high speeds, especially when close to shore

Education and communications

- **72%** of all respondents support **increased education and communication** about responsible boating. This proposal receives the strongest support of all the proposals included in the survey
- Support for increased education and communication is significantly greater in 2017 – up 10% from the 62% in favour in 2013

Regulation and enforcement

- **31%** say there is **no need for additional laws and regulations** to protect our enjoyment of the lakes
- **45%** disagree with this statement, suggesting that they support additional laws and regulations
- **30%** say there is **no need for additional enforcement measures** to protect our enjoyment of the lakes
- **49%** disagree with this statement, suggesting that they support additional enforcement measures

A majority supports these specific proposals

- **71%** support no wake zones to protect people and wildlife in sensitive areas
- **67%** support frequent and consistent enforcement of laws about illegal above water exhausts
- **62%** support stronger enforcement of boating while under the influence, and support establishing decibel limits on noise made by boats

Approximately 40% support these specific proposals

- **44%** support adding an on-water competency test for the Pleasure Craft Operators Card
- **44%** support extending the 9-10km speed limit from the current 30 m. to 60 m. from shore
- **40%** support increasing police patrolling

One fifth supports this specific proposal

- **20%** support requiring everyone to wear Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) while boating

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Enjoyment of lakes and rivers is core to the Canadian experience.

Safe Quiet Lakes is a volunteer community organization that works to ensure that our lakes are as safe and quiet as cottagers and residents wish them to be.

As part of its mission **to ensure the sustainable enjoyment of a treasured shared resource**, Safe Quiet Lakes is conducting research in cooperation with more than twenty lake and resident associations to understand the spectrum of views on lake activities.

The 2017 survey, which centers on Muskoka and the surrounding area in the Province of Ontario, is the second survey undertaken by Safe Quiet Lakes. It is one of the largest lake life and boating surveys in North America.

The research explores in greater depth areas that emerged from the 2013 research and from subsequent discussions and stakeholder consultations. The research results identify changes as well as stable patterns.

This study of cottagers' and residents' experience will inform the priorities and plans of Safe Quiet Lakes and its partners and will be used to help educate and inform our lake community and partners.

The 2017 and 2013 research projects were designed, conducted and analyzed by ERIN Research Inc. in consultation with Safe Quiet Lakes as well as lake and resident associations in the region of Muskoka.

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

1.2 METHOD

Design and fielding

The survey questions were developed by ERIN Research Inc. in consultation with Safe Quiet Lakes and lake associations. The 2017 survey contained core questions from the 2013 baseline survey as well as new material to explore topics raised by the 2013 survey and subsequent discussions and stakeholder consultations in greater detail.

The survey was implemented online and was designed to be easily accessible, taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Safe Quiet Lakes maintains contact with many lake associations, community and watersports organizations in the broader Muskoka region, and these were invited to promote participation in the 2017 survey. Email, hard copy and social media invitations were the primary modes of directly engaging respondents.

The majority of email contacts were managed by ERIN Research, with an introductory email on June 12, 2017 and two subsequent follow-ups. Some associations distributed invitations directly to their mailing lists, using an introductory letter and the survey link that Safe Quiet Lakes provided.

Participation was also encouraged by communication on social media, announcements, volunteer presence and signage at community events and in local media – these directed people to a survey link on the Safe Quiet Lakes website. Special efforts were made to engage more young people in completing the 2017 survey, resulting in a significant increase in the under 35 age groups.

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

Response

The 2017 survey attracted a larger number of lake association partners, partly because of interest in the results of the 2013 baseline survey and the ongoing education activities of Safe Quiet Lakes. This, along with a greater social media push, **increased total response to the survey by 44% to 3,291 completed surveys**. This large database enables a precise definition of the activities and attitudes of the lake community.

Respondents wrote 274 pages of comments, an increase over the 2013 survey of nearly 90%. As the volume and content of the comments reveal, people care passionately about the lakes and welcome the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Respondents included 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.

Weighting is accomplished as follows: consider a survey with 30 respondents, 10 of which are women and 20 men. The real population has equal numbers of women and men, so a representative sample should have 15 of each. The weights that apply in this example are 1.5 for women (1.5 times the original 10 women gives 15) and 0.75 for men (.75 times the original 20 men gives 15). This weighting preserves the initial number of respondents – 30. In *Your Lakes, Your Views*, 12 weights were calculated: 6 age groups for each of women and men.

Verbatim comments

The verbatim comments included in the report were selected to illustrate the diversity and tone of comments provided by respondents. They do not reflect the number of comments in any theme.

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	
0 - 10 scale used for reporting the average result: (e.g., in Figure 13)	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.

1.3 RESPONDENT PROFILE BY LAKE

The study encompasses responses from more than 130 lakes and rivers in the Muskoka region, a substantial increase over 2013. Table 1 shows the unweighted returns by lake for those areas with more than 20 returns. For all tables and charts that follow, results are weighted on the basis of age and gender to reflect the Ontario population.

Table 1. Response by lake

Lake	Number of respondents	Percent of total
Brandy Lake	27	1
Clear Lake, Emsdale	43	1
Clear Lake, Torrance	62	2
Fairy Lake	79	2
Horseshoe Lake	47	1
Kahshe Lake	219	7
Lake Joseph North, incl. Little Lake Joe, Trout Bay	295	9
Lake Joseph South area	118	4
Lake Muskoka Bala, North Bay, East Bay areas	219	7
Lake Muskoka Rossclair, Port Carling, Milford Bay areas	141	4
Lake Muskoka Gravenhurst to Beaumaris	271	8
Lake Rosseau North area	157	5
Lake Rosseau South area	218	7
Lake of Bays	226	7
Lake Vernon	60	2
Leech Lake	24	1
Leonard Lake	30	1
Moon River	61	2
Morrison Lake	31	1
Muldrew Lake	123	4
Otter Lake	101	3
Pine Lake	24	1
Rankin Lake	46	1
Raven and Deer Lakes	78	2
Skeleton Lake	22	1
Three Mile Lake	120	4
Other: more than 100 lakes and rivers, each with 20 respondents or fewer	449	14
Total	3,291	100

1.4 RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The “typical” respondent owns a cottage, has been coming to Muskoka for more than 20 years, shares the space with young children or teens, and spends more than 30 days of the summer in residence.

Despite the 44% increase in overall response, the respondent characteristics shown in Table 2 remain almost unchanged from 2013. This allows direct comparison of results from the two surveys.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	% of respondents
Are you/your family currently...	
Owners of a cottage or residence near a lake	95
Renters of a cottage or residence near a lake	2
Guests in a cottage or residence near a lake	3
Campground users	<1
Guests at a resort, hotel, motel, B&B, etc. near a lake	<1
How many years have you been vacationing or living in the region?	
Less than 5 years	5
5 to 10 years	8
11 to 20 years	17
More than 20 years	70
Are you located	
On open water	84
On a channel or river	16
Are there children or young adults sharing the space with you on a regular basis? *	
Age 5 and under	31
6 to 11	31
12 to 17	30
18 to 24	35
There are no children in our household	21
About how much time will you spend by the lake from May to October 2017?	
Less than 10 days	3
10 to 30 days	25
Up to 60 days	25
Up to 90 days	12
More than 90 days	9
I live here full time in the summer	15
I live here full time all year round	11
Base number of respondents	3,291

* Percentages add to more than 100 as respondents could select several answers.

2. JOYS OF THE LAKES

“I love sitting on the dock watching the ducks with their young while listening to the waves on the shore.”

“Enjoy all water activity - sunset cruises, tubing, skiing, wake surfing, wake boarding, water trampolines, swimming, relaxing on the dock.”

“Things are pretty good just the way they are.”

“I enjoy clean water that is potable. Good fishing. Beautiful view. Privacy.”

“Having a balance between responsible boating, swimming and fishing.”

“Wakeboarding is one of the best ways to enjoy the lake. I also enjoy just relaxing and enjoying the natural view, and I believe that it's important to treat the lake with respect. If done responsibly, I don't believe towed water sports and taking care of nature are necessarily mutually exclusive.”

“Enjoyment of the serenity of our dock, nature. Love our swimming area. Enjoying boating, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, fishing, paddle boarding and swimming. I love our lakes!”

“Let's keep the lakes as close to nature as possible, like Algonquin Park.”

“Water based sports are part of life at the cottage. People seeking extreme quiet and solitude should look to nature conservancy areas.”

“Need to continue to protect the environment for next generations. This is heaven on earth.”

2.1 LAKE ACTIVITIES

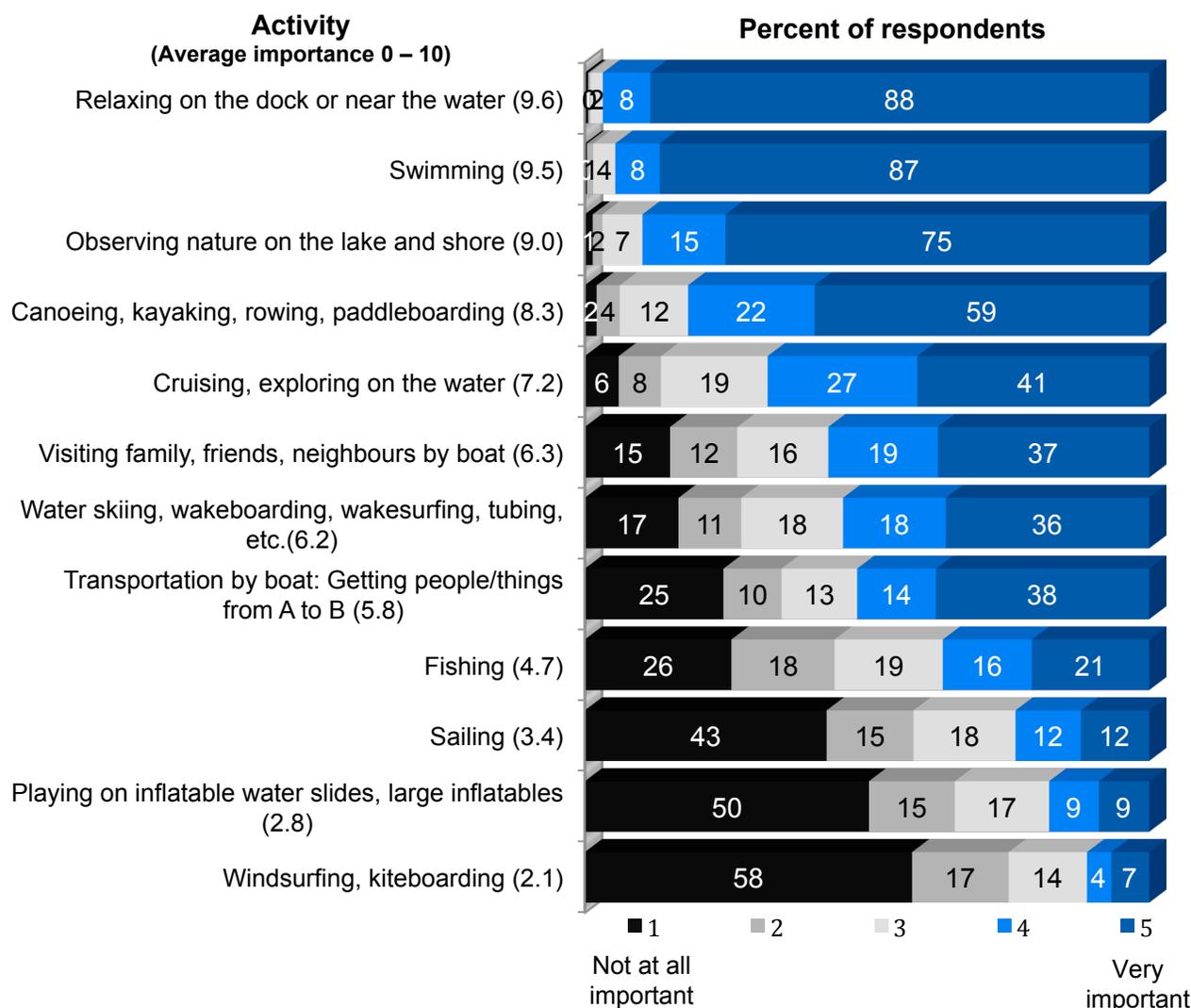
A dozen activities define summertime life on, in and by the water. Figure 1 lists these in order of their importance to survey respondents.

The first four activities – relaxing on the dock, swimming, observing nature and the paddle sports – are each rated as important by more than 80% of respondents.

The next four are power boating activities that majorities of 52% to 68% rate as important.

The final four activities are considered important by 11% to 37% of respondents.

Figure 1. How important are each of these activities to you and your family?

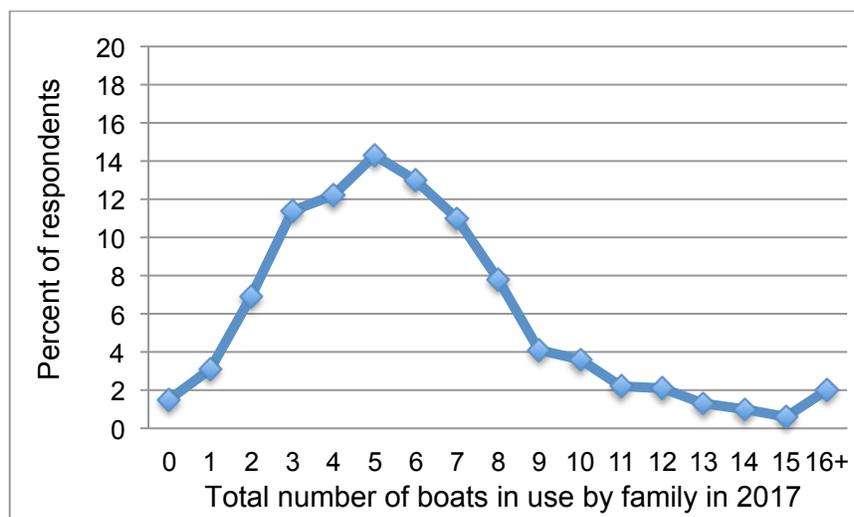


2.2 BOAT OWNERSHIP AND USES

With water a defining feature of life in Muskoka, there is an abundance of boats. Most families, 62%, report having between 3 and 7 boats. Overall, there is an average of 2 power boats and 4 non-powered boats per family. (These results include all the boat types shown in Figure 3.)

- 98% of respondents have one or more boats of some kind
- 94% have one or more non-powered boats
- 87% have one or more power boats
- 33% have power boats of 200 horsepower or more
- 4% are members of the Antique and Classic Boat Association.

Figure 2. Boats on the water



Sources of joy

“We feel so blessed to be able to experience the amazing landscape of Muskoka!”

“Quiet enjoyment of the waterfront is crucial to our cottage enjoyment.”

“Not having too many rules. Boating and relaxing.”

“Boat rides make everything better.”

“Water Skiing and Wake Surfing, dock parties, fireworks.”

“Peace and quiet. A gentle cruise. Lots of birds and trees. Clean water.”

“I love kayaking and swimming on the lake and just sitting on the deck or dock.”

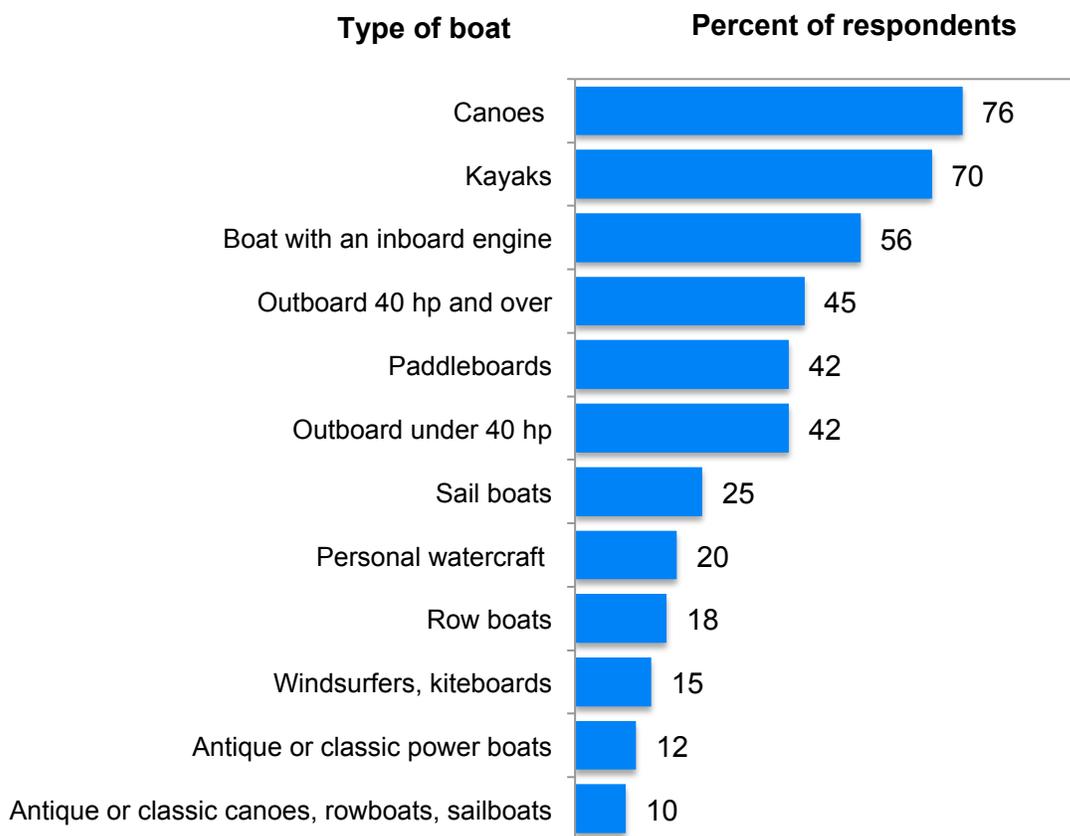
“A gathering place for the family.”

“The lake is part of my identity.”

Notable changes in the four years since the 2013 baseline study involve kayaks and paddleboards:

- Kayaks: the 2017 figure of 70% is up 10% from 60% in 2013
- Paddleboards: the 2017 figure of 42% is up 16% from 26% in 2013.

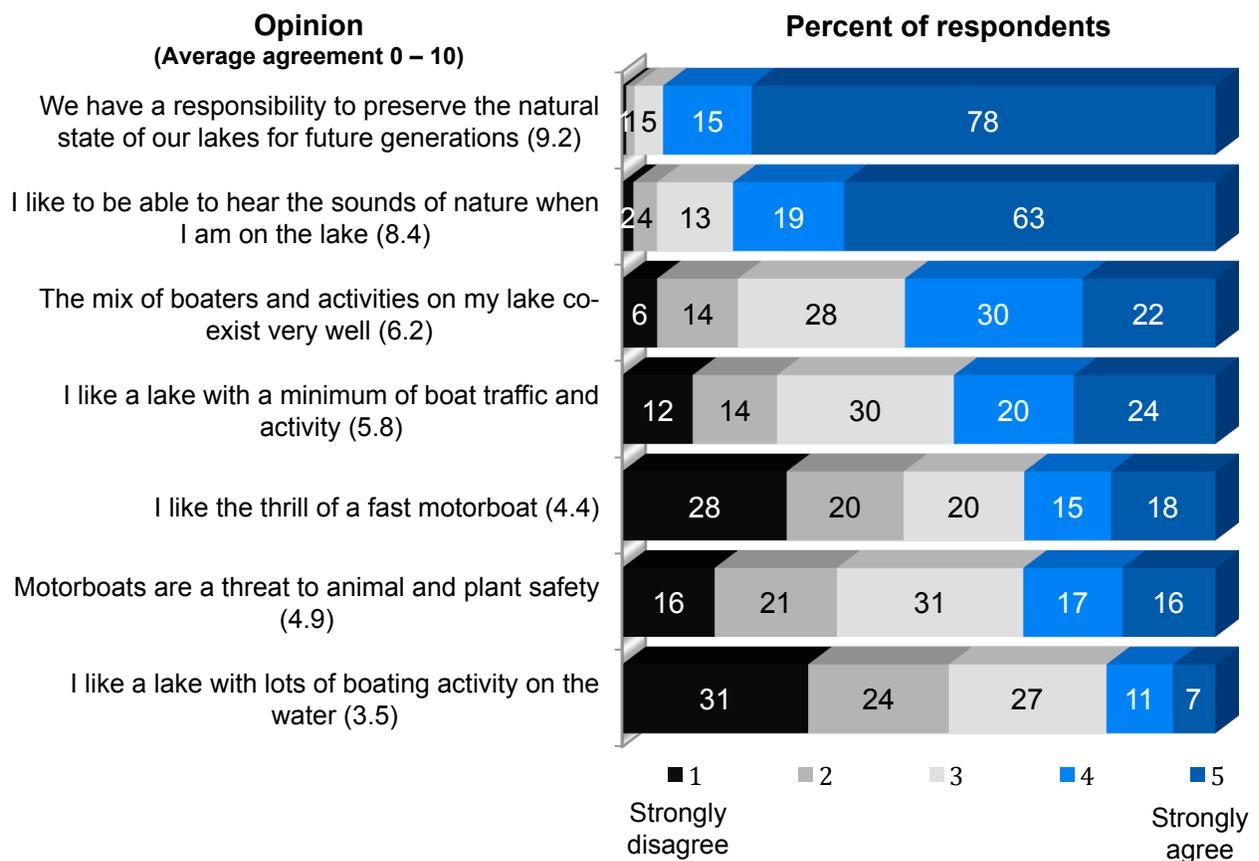
Figure 3. What boats will your family use in 2017?



2.3 THE LAKE COMMUNITY

There is nearly universal agreement, 93%, holding the view that “we have a responsibility to preserve the natural state of our lakes for future generations” and strong agreement (82%) with the view that “I like to hear the sounds of nature when I am on the lake”.

Figure 4. Agreement with various opinions



3. WHAT DRIVES THE QUALITY OF THE LAKE EXPERIENCE?

“The idea of buying a cottage on a lake is to enjoy the tranquility, not live on a perpetual race course with all the accompanying noise.”

“We want ALL people to enjoy the lake - in whatever form it takes to make them happy. Most disruptive to us are above-board exhausts and high wakes and lack of safety/knowledge.”

“Personal Watercraft like Seadoos and Jet Skis tend to be the worst for unwanted sound and invasion of privacy while Wakeboard boats tend to throw MASSIVE wakes that can be dangerous and destructive.”

“The most enjoyable part of our lake experience is the quiet enjoyment of our shoreline and nature. We are increasingly finding that very fast/loud boats, boats actually designed to create giant wakes, and personal watercraft are impinging negatively every day (noise, speed, wakes and loud speakers on the boats) on that enjoyment. These craft also present significant safety hazards because they often seem to be driven with little or no regard for those around them.”

“I think if people are buying waterfront on bigger lakes are expecting quiet and no boat traffic, then perhaps they are buying on the wrong lakes.”

“Our privacy at the lake is important to us and people cruising by on their boats at a slow pace close to the dock is not appreciated.”

3.1 QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

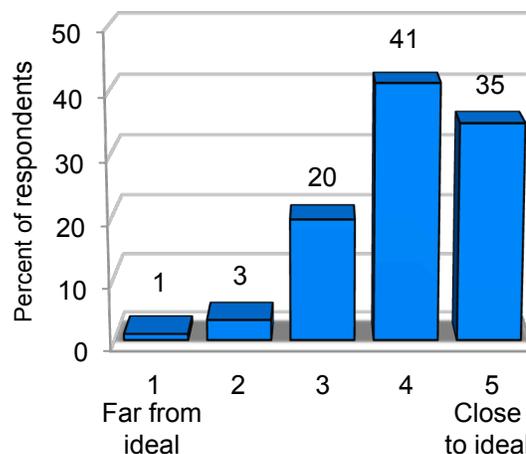
The pace of change from one year to the next may seem slow, but at the time scale that most cottagers and residents can recall, the gradual accumulation of change is substantial. The lakes support an increasing number of cottagers and residents, and an increasing diversity of activities. There are more and bigger boats. Paddleboarding appeared only a few years ago and is growing quickly, kayaking is booming, and wakeboarding² was a rare activity just 20 years ago.

Many, if not most, of the survey respondents embrace these changes with enthusiasm, but the data show that stresses sometimes develop. The written comments in the survey express both profound joys and enormous frustrations very directly and at length.

As an overall appraisal, respondents rated the quality of their lake environment on a scale ranging from “Close to ideal” to “Far from ideal” (Figure 5). The large majority, 76%, rate their experience as “Close to ideal” or nearly so (either 4 or 5 out of 5).

Part C of this report uses the survey data to better understand who are particularly happy with their lake or river environment, who are not, and what makes the difference. Do the more and less happy cluster into identifiable groups? Does “safe” make a difference? Does “quiet” make a difference?

Figure 5. “Thinking of all the boating and waterfront activities that you like to do, what quality of experience does your lake or river offer?”



² This report uses the term wakeboarding to include both wakeboarding and wake surfing.

3.2 DRIVERS OF QUALITY OF THE LAKE EXPERIENCE

Having such a large data sample to work with enables deeper analysis of the behaviours and perceptions that determine the quality of experience for lake users. In a nutshell, five drivers were identified statistically using regression analysis, which is a way of mathematically analyzing the relationship between different variables.

The five drivers help to determine the quality of one's experience of the lakes. These drivers apply universally – to larger and smaller lakes, and to people across the spectrum of opinion on specific issues.

5 DRIVERS OF QUALITY OF THE LAKE EXPERIENCE

1 SAFETY - *The lake is safe for the activities that the family enjoys*

2 NOISE - *Noise levels are low*

3 BOAT TRAFFIC - *The amount of boat traffic is low*

4 POWER BOAT ACTIVITIES - *Participation in cruising, visiting friends, towing sports, and transportation by boat*

5 THE "PADDLE SPORTS" - *Participation in canoeing, kayaking, rowing and paddleboarding*

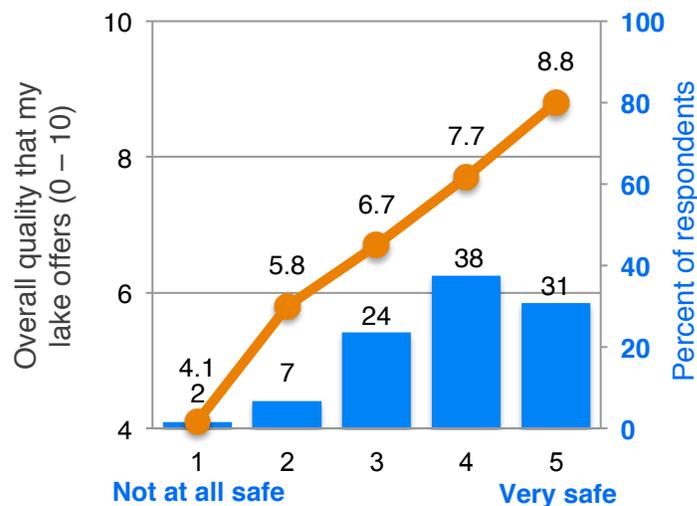
Drivers 1), 2) and 3) are described in sequence in the following pages. Drivers 4) and 5) interact in a slightly more complex manner and their impact on the quality of experience is explored beginning on page 24.

Driver 1 - How SAFETY drives the quality of experience

The directness of the relationship between perceived safety and the quality of the lake experience is striking. The right hand column of Figure 6 shows that the 31% of respondents who consider their lake “Very safe” rate overall quality at 8.8 out of 10³. At the left side of the graph, the 2% of respondents who consider their lake “Not at all safe” rate overall quality of the lake experience at just 4.1 out of 10.

Written comments suggest that threats to safety centre on high speeds, dangerous operation of boats, and operators not following the “rules of the road” through either negligence or ignorance. While incidents such as collisions or swamped boats are fortunately rare, the more widespread consequence of unsafe boating is to make some people fearful of being on or in the water. This concern was expressed frequently in the comments, as the quotes below illustrate.

Figure 6. For the activities that my family and I do, my lake is... From "Not at all safe" to "Very safe"



“Unfortunately many wakeboarding boats with VERY large wakes travel unsafely close to our docks endangering swimmers and damaging property and shoreline.”

“My brother was thrown from a fishing boat in a river when caught between two large wakes. Only one of the boats stopped to help.”

“Boats go faster, people aren’t looking where they’re going, and my neighbours in particular have no common sense or boating safety.”

“My main concern is safety in swimming. Boaters do not always look to see if there are swimmers in the water, particularly if they are pulling skiers, wakeboarders or tubers.”

“My biggest concern is the boat rental to people without a boat license. It dangerous. Can you rent a car without a license?”

³ Average scores for overall quality are scaled from 0 to 10.

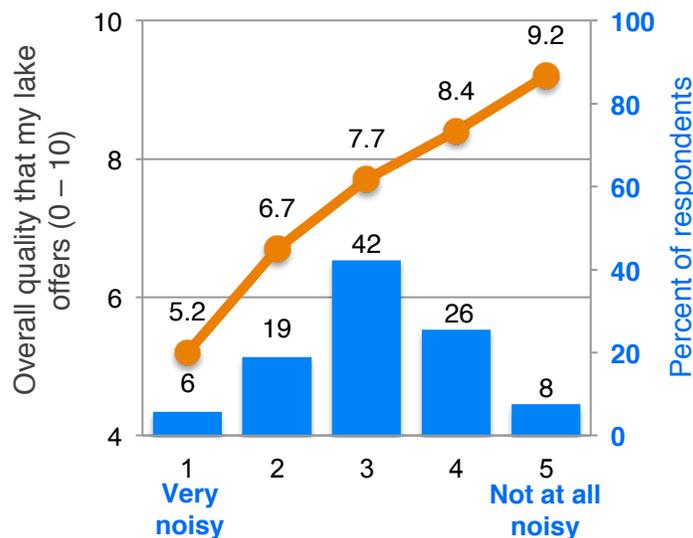
Driver 2 - How NOISE drives the quality of experience

Just 8% of respondents find their lake “Not at all noisy”, and this fortunate group rates overall quality of the lake at 9.2 out of 10. As the noise level goes up, the quality of experience drops (Figure 7).

One might ask whether respondents with more or bigger power boats are accustomed to noise, and so tend to perceive their surroundings as “not noisy”, but this is not the case. There is very little relationship between the perceived noise level of the lake and the equipment that one uses. Those with big power boats and those who just paddle are equally likely to see their lake as noisy (or not noisy).

Sources of noise are discussed on page 36. Personal watercraft top the list of contributors to unwanted noise, followed by boat engines and sound systems in boats and on the shore. The written comments are also strongly weighted toward concern about the noise from personal watercraft, but sound systems appear to be a growing issue.

Figure 7. Rate the overall noise level of your lake



“Two of my friends have above water exhaust and think it sounds great. I tell them to flip the switch to make it quieter. They seldom do it. Love to see them get a noise ticket!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“Noise from people enjoying themselves is welcome, but noise from boats is very disruptive to people and wildlife.”

“Personally I think sound systems on boats should be banned or at least seriously limited.”

“Personal Watercraft like Seadoos and Jet Skis tend to be the worst for unwanted sound and invasion of privacy.”

“I fully agree that many boats have become outrageously noisy and should be curtailed, but limiting the fun we can have on the lake is NOT something I agree with.”

Driver 3 - How BOAT TRAFFIC drives the quality of experience

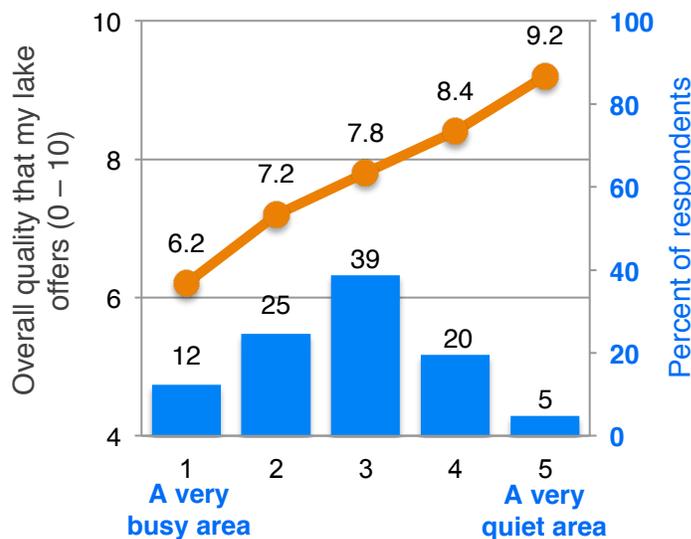
Boat traffic also has an impressively direct impact on perceived quality of experience.

As Figure 8 illustrates, the 12% who consider their area of the lake to be “Very busy” rate the overall quality of their experience at 6.2 out of 10.

At the other end of the spectrum, the 5% who consider their area to be “Very quiet” (in terms of traffic) rate overall quality at 9.2 out of 10.

2017 sees a slight increase in the proportion who consider their area to be busy (rated either 1 or 2 out of 5), from 32% in 2013 to 37% today.

Figure 8. How would you describe the amount of boat traffic near your cottage, compared to other areas of your region?



“Due to weekend boat traffic, [we] spend less time out on the water especially in small watercraft.”

“Weekends are horrific. Muskoka is being spoiled.”

“... yes, noise is apparent, but it’s 2-3 days a week and usually only 10:00am - 5:00pm (which is not discussed in the survey). You can have peace and quiet and added safety in Muskoka early mornings and evenings, during the week, rainy days, away from lakes populated with young families.”

“I have no objection to others enjoying the lakes in their own way as long as they understand and respect our desires and rights as well.”

“I love the water. Swimming, boating, kayaking, wakeboarding etc. I love watching people doing the same. I love hearing kids jumping in the water and learning to waterski and wakeboard. I hate wakeboard boats that have the tunes cranked. That is annoying. I hate boats that have the through-hull exhaust (or whatever it’s called). This is just ignorant...for a couple extra horsepower?”

“Need to find balance, encourage everyone to be sensitive to others - privacy and noise, avoid over regulation.”

The quality of experience puzzle: Power boats

When friction arises on the water, it frequently centres on boats and the activities that go with them. It is valuable to look at the lake experience from the perspectives of the various groups of boaters.

To begin with, simply engaging – or not engaging – in activities that rely on power boats⁴ has an impact on one’s outlook. Four power boating activities were set out earlier in Figure 1: cruising, transportation, visiting friends and the towing sports. Some people rated all of these activities as important (4 or 5 out of 5), while others rated some or none as important.

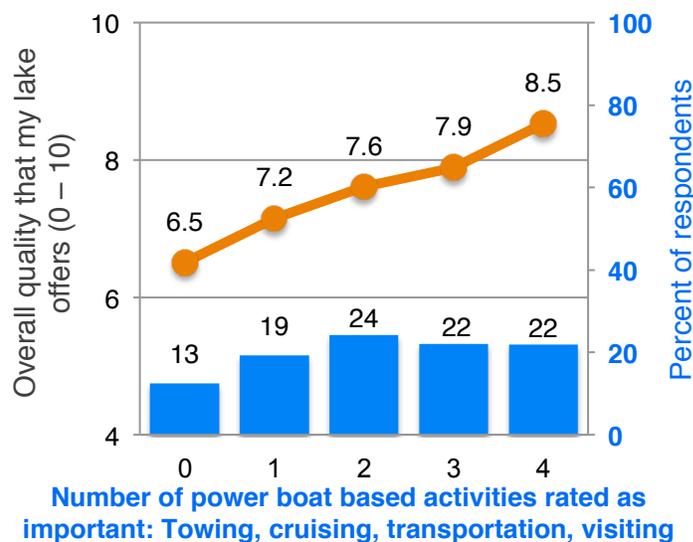
The more power boating activities that a person rates as important, the better is their overall lake experience. Figure 9 illustrates the effect – the 22% of respondents who rated all four as important rate their overall lake experience at 8.5 out of 10 while the 14% who rate none as important rate their overall experience 6.5.

Most of those who rated none of the four activities as important (the “zero” column in Figure 9) do in fact have power boats – they just do not find this set of activities to be important.

A partial answer to the puzzle rests on the drivers discussed previously:

- Those who engage in fewer power boat activities perceive their lake environment as less safe – and feeling safe is strongly related to overall quality of the lake experience (Figure 6).
- Those who engage in fewer power boat activities perceive their lake environment as more noisy – and this is also related to overall quality of the lake experience (Figure 7).
- A related aspect: those who engage in fewer power boat activities tend to be older than those who do more activities, and those over age 55 tend to rate both safety and the overall experience lower.

Figure 9. Power boat activities and the overall lake experience

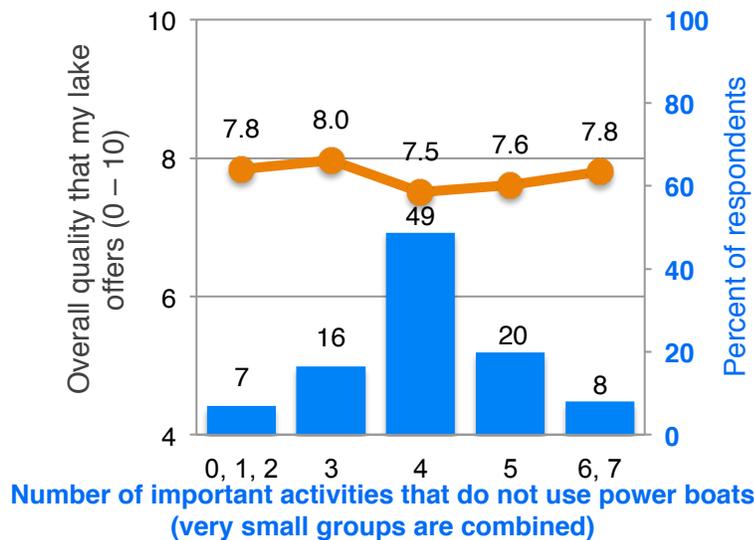


⁴ It is assumed that power boats are involved in the vast majority of these activities, even though it is possible to do some with non-powered craft.

But these are only partial explanations. Even after statistically removing the impacts of safety, noise and age, the effect remains strong. More power boating activity is still associated with a better overall lake experience.

One possibility is that activity in general is the key – a positive lake experience follows from a more active lifestyle, and those who engage in power boating activities are more active than those who don't. But the data do not support this hypothesis. As Figure 10 shows, people who engage in more or fewer non-power boat activities rate their overall lake experience at essentially the same level. So it appears that participation in power boating activities *per se* underlies the more positive ratings of overall lake experience.

Figure 10. Activities that do not rely on power boats and the overall lake experience



The quality of experience puzzle: Towing and paddle sports

Another perspective is gained by considering respondents' interest in two sets of activities – the towing sports (water skiing, wakeboarding, wakesurfing and tubing) and the paddle sports (canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding and rowing):

- 10% of respondents rated the towing sports as important (4 or 5 out of 5) and the paddle sports as not important (1, 2 or 3 out of 5)
- 37% rated paddling as important but not towing
- 42% rated both as important
- 12% did not rate either as important (although they did rate others activities as important, e.g. sailing, swimming, observing nature).

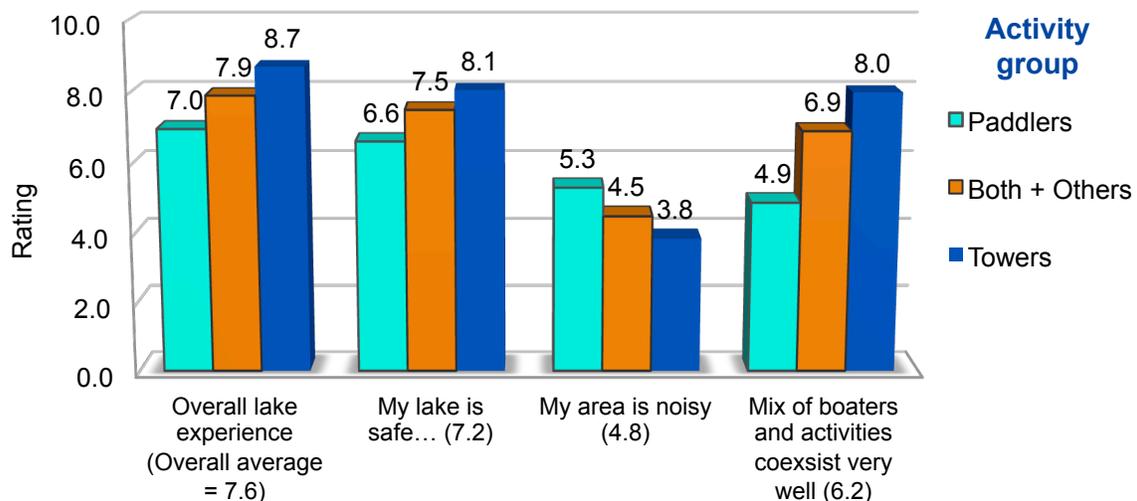
The distinction between paddlers and towers is useful as these groups are at opposite ends of the spectrum on many issues in this survey. They define the opposing perspectives on safety, noise, boat wakes and regulation. Their views are clearly expressed in the written comments.

The smaller towing group has the most positive score on each of four critical measures (Figure 11). They rate their overall quality of experience higher (8.7 out of 10), see the lake as safer (8.1) and less noisy (3.8), and find that the mix of boaters and activities in their area co-exist very nicely (8.0).

Paddlers have the least positive score on each measure.

The 54% majority, composed of the 42% who like both activities plus the 12% who have interests other than towing and paddling, stand squarely between the poles of the continuum.⁵ The average for all respondents tends to lie between the paddlers and the both/other groups, as these are considerably larger than the tower group.

Figure 11. Paddlers and towers



⁵ Age may account for some of the differences between paddlers and towers: two-thirds of paddlers are age 45+ while two-thirds of towers are under age 45. The "both" group falls evenly along the age distribution. But the differences between paddlers and towers are much greater than can be attributed to age alone.

To sum up: the divide in overall quality of experience scores is based on both:

- One’s preferences for towing and paddling, and
- The importance that one places on the four major power boat activities – cruising, visiting, transportation and towing.

It may not be the activities themselves that drive a person’s outlook, but rather the impact that these activities can have on safety and noise levels.

Consider, as a hypothetical example, a canoeist who rated paddle sports as very important, and who does not consider towing sports or any of the other power boating activities to be important. On the water, the canoeist is in a relatively vulnerable position. Even if 99.9% of power boaters are driving safely, the potential for danger arising from the other 0.1% can be alarming. The canoeist hears the sounds of every power boat in the area. If canoeing is what you do on the water, you are continually aware of noise and potential danger. The score of just 4.9 for the mix of boating activities “co-existing very well” (see Figure 4) reflects this.

A wake surfer’s view is different. You are operating your boat safely, with due regard for other craft in the area, and you know it. You don’t hear other boat noise above that of your own engine or sound system. You generally travel at slow speed and if a nearby boat is driving erratically, you can easily avoid it. Your experience does not involve a sense of danger or of intruding noise.

The canoeist and the wake surfer have different minute-by-minute experiences on the water, and these would seem to generalize to broader perceptions, notably the overall quality of the experience of the lake.⁶

“Ban wakeboarding! Ours is a small lake and wakes have caused discomfort and damage to our boats and floating docks, to say nothing of shoreline habitat.”

“Ensure with your findings you are distinguishing between classic waterskiing with low impacts to wakes and environment, and the rather impactful sports of wakeboard and surfing. They are NOT the same thing both in impact as well as culture associated with them.”

“I feel our worst enemy is the SeaDoo. Some seem to spend what seems like hours driving round in circles creating excess waves and noise.”

“I enjoy going out and enjoying the water in a method of my choosing. Not a method determined acceptable by a select few.”

“Wakeboarding is one of the best ways to enjoy the lake. I also enjoy just relaxing and enjoying the natural view, and I believe that it’s important to treat the lake with respect.”

⁶ A small number of wakeboard and wakesurfing enthusiasts expressed suspicion, anger and disdain for the views of others in their comments. Their anger seems directed largely at the survey methodology and at Safe Quiet Lakes. The concern expressed is that by asking about perceptions of wakes in the survey their sport is being singled out and is evidence of “bias”.

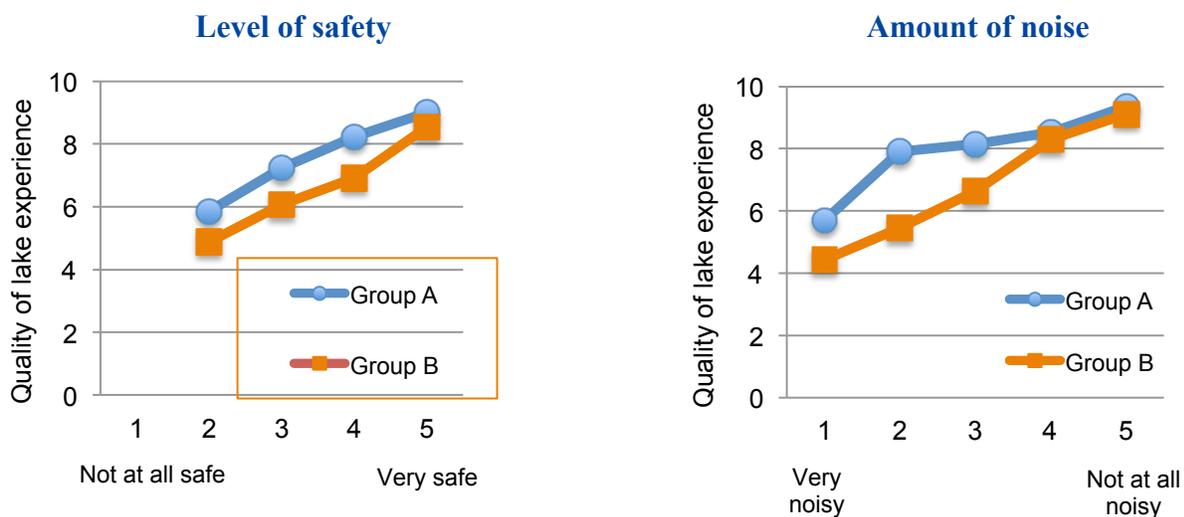
Similarities among diverging groups

Figure 12 repeats an analysis used in the 2013 survey report that shows common ground among diverging constituencies.

- 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 horsepower and who place a low value (1 or 2 out of 5) on wakeboarding, wake surfing, water skiing, tubing, etc.

It was clear in the 2013 data and the pattern is clear again in the 2017 survey that safety and quiet have a similar impact on each group. To the extent that the lake is unsafe, enjoyment goes down, regardless of the type of boating people do. Those with big boats have a little more tolerance for moderate levels of noise, but converge with Group B when noise levels are either very high or very low.

Figure 12. Impacts on enjoyment for groups with different interests



4. VIEWS ON TOPICAL ISSUES

“Party boats are a scourge! People on them are usually drinking, and playing their music so that the whole world can hear it. Sound travels on water and most people either don't know or do not care.”

“Sometimes swimmers are seen without escorts swimming in areas that are NOT safe for them.”

“Loons do not nest on the lake anymore due to wakes from boats – time to keep speeds down when close to shore, more education is needed.”

“The greatest irritant are PWC's such as Jet Ski boats. Too fast, noise and less concern for safety and other users of the lake.”

“I would like to point out the key difference between Wake Boarding and Waterskiing with respect to the wake itself. Wakeboarding requires a very large wake to facilitate the wakeboarder to ‘get air’ as they say. Conversely, waterskiing necessitates a very small wake to allow the skier a smooth path from side to side. Clearly it is the wakeboard boats causing the unsafe conditions on our lakes.”

“Establishing a decibel limit would be very effective if it is clearly communicated and well enforced. Cracking down on excessively noisy boats due to illegal above water exhaust would also help.”

“Serious consideration should be given to extending the speed limit zone to 100 metres from shore. Ban wake boats completely unless they are 4 nautical miles from shore.”

“I only come here because I can do boating and PWC. Any more restrictions on boating and I will spend my summers in Myrtle Beach!”

4.1 PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE

Respondents see both change and stability in the boating scene.

Fifty percent or more of the respondents find that, compared to five years ago, there is now:

- More boat traffic
- More boat noise
- Greater impact of boat wakes

Still, remarkably, the consensus is that the overall level of safety on the lakes is unchanged (top bar in Figure 13). The average score is 5 out of 10 for this measure, as it was in 2013.

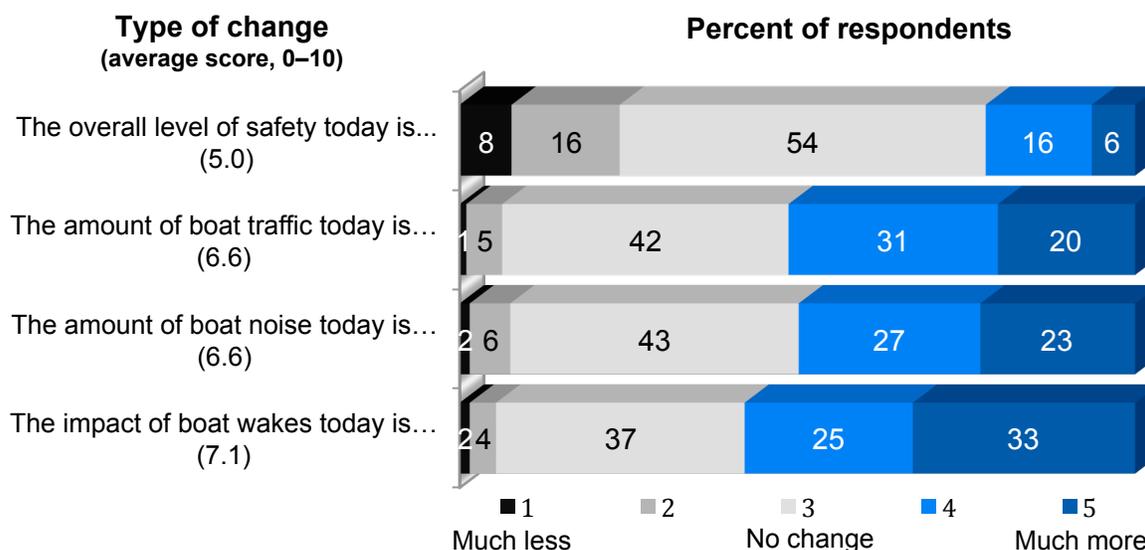
Results vary somewhat by lake. For safety, three lakes had scores of 4.5 out of 10 or less, indicating that respondents perceive their environment to be less safe now than in the past:

- Lake Joseph south (4.3 out of 10)
- Lake Rosseau north (4.4 out of 10)
- Clear Lake, Torrance (4.5 out of 10)

Three lakes had scores of 5.5 or more, indicating that respondents perceive their environment to be more safe now than in the past:

- Three Mile Lake (5.5 out of 10)
- Lake Vernon (6.1 out of 10)
- Moon River (6.3 out of 10)

Figure 13. Have you seen a change in your area of the lakes over the past five years?



“I remember the wonder that used to be had at my dock, like watching a loon’s mating dance, or 22 mergansers float by, or fish jump, and try to shut out the fact that my shore has been eroded by at least a foot in the past 5 years due to WAKE from people who, when approached say, ‘We don’t care.’ And to know that that attitude is killing everything that used to call this space home, all for the sake of FUN!!!!”

“People on the mainland like to head out and around the islands since such a trip seems to give their pleasure ride a sense of purpose. This brings with it unwanted noise and excessive wakes from every type of craft, but the worst are those wake-boats designed to create a wake for someone else’s pleasure. The lack of consideration given to the unanticipated side-effects’ of their actions is astounding.”

“Motor craft and motorized activities on the big lakes has always been a constant for many decades - nothing has changed. It is not nosier now, in fact there is less traffic as gas prices have gone up. There are still quiet times on the lake (mornings, evenings, weekdays) but during the afternoons on weekends it has always been busier - nothing has changed.”

“Nobody has died from a loud boat or a boat wave.”

“There is a growing new group of cottagers (or renters) who did NOT grow up in a cottage environment and who treat cottaging like a trip to Disneyland or a holiday resort. Informing of, and enforcing the rules that we have already will only go so far. Making our lake inhospitable to new and increasingly powerful craft MIGHT help.”

“Over-powered, noisy boats are on the increase.”

Perception of change vs. direct measures

Overall, there is remarkable stability in response to the three dozen survey questions that appeared in both 2013 and 2017 surveys.

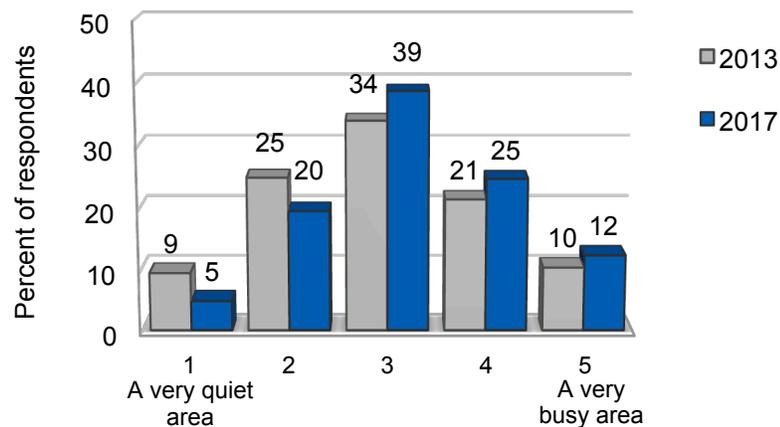
The perceptions reported in Figure 13 suggest that there is more boat traffic today as well as more boat noise, but no change in the level of safety on the water. Can we verify whether these perceptions are accurate? One way to check is to compare measures from the 2013 and 2017 surveys. Figure 14 to Figure 16 show the results of these comparisons.

Boat traffic

The 2013 and 2017 surveys both asked, “How would you describe the amount of boat traffic near where you stay?” Responses to this question corroborate the perceived increase in boat traffic (Figure 14).

- Response options 1 and 2 indicate little boat traffic, and these decreased from 34% in 2013 to 25% in 2017.
- Response options 4 and 5 indicate busy traffic, and these increased from 31% in 2013 to 37% in 2017.

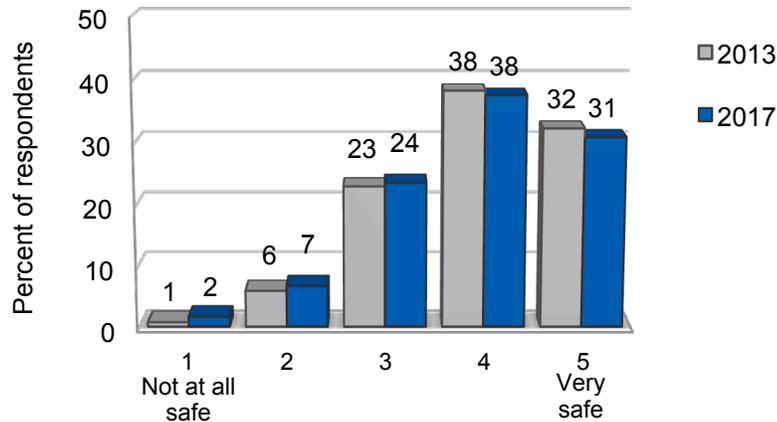
Figure 14. How would you describe the amount of boat traffic near where you stay?



Overall safety

A comparison of 2013 and 2017 results also confirms the perception that there has been no change in overall safety. The proportion who rated their environment as not safe (response options 1 and 2) went from 7% in 2013 to 9% in 2017. The proportions at the safe end of the scale, options 4 and 5, went from 70% in 2013 to 69% in 2017. The difference from year to year is not statistically significant.

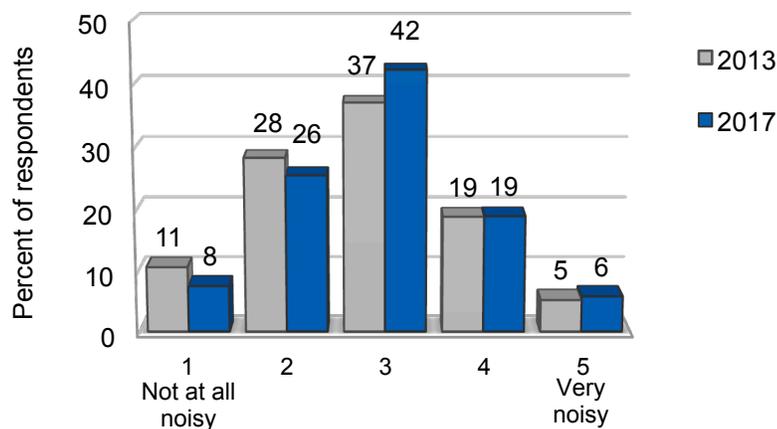
Figure 15. Rate the overall safety of your lake.



Boat noise

On this measure, the year-by-year results do not support the perception that there has been an increase in boat noise. In rating “the overall noise level of your lake”, 2013 sees a slight shift away from the “not noisy” end to the middle rating of 3 out of 5. This is in the direction of the perceived change to a noisier environment but is below the level of statistical significance. Time will tell if the trend solidifies.

Figure 16. Rate the overall noise level of your lake.



4.2 VIEWS ON SAFETY

Power boats are the greatest concern with respect to safety on the water:

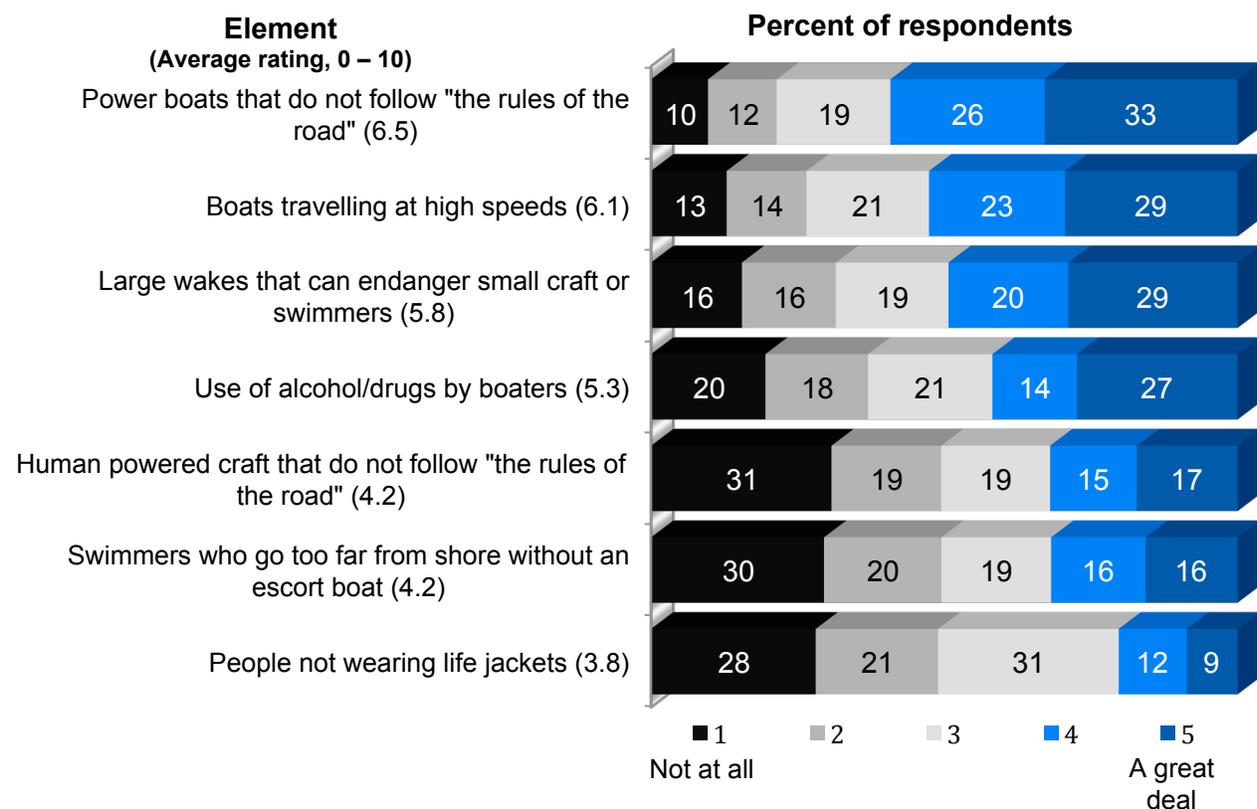
- 59% believe that water safety is reduced by operators of power boats that do not follow “the rules of the road”
- 52% believe that safety is reduced by boats operated at high speeds
- 49% believe that large wakes can endanger small craft or swimmers

Other practices that raise safety concerns for respondents:

- 32% are concerned about swimmers going too far from shore without an
- 32% are concerned about human powered boats not following “the rules of the road”
- 31% are concerned about the use of alcohol/drugs by boaters

Finally, only 21% see a safety risk for people not wearing life jackets.

Figure 17. Do these elements reduce safety on the water near your cottage?



How paddlers and towers view threats to safety

The paddler and tower groups, described on page 26, define two ends of the Muskoka boater continuum. Paddlers account for 37% of respondents, towers 10% and those who like both activities 42%. The remaining 12%, who have interests other than towing or paddling activities, are very close to the “Both” group and are included with them here to provide a complete picture.

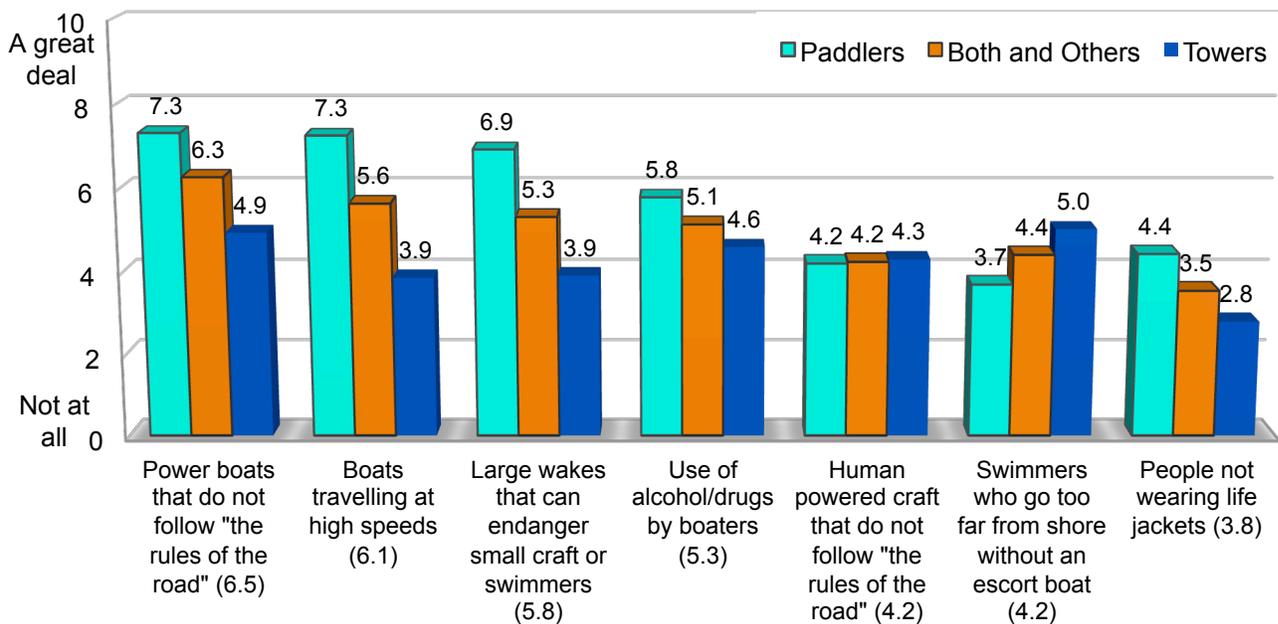
Figure 18 reports where opinions differ among these groups and where they do not, in order to illustrate the range of perspectives.

The main differences are:

- Paddlers see power boats operated at high speeds, not following the “rules of the road” and generating large wakes as a greater threat than do towers
- Towers see swimmers far from shore as a greater threat than do paddlers and not wearing life jackets as less of a risk

On each issue, the majority, composed of those who support both towing and paddling along with those having interests other than paddling and towing activities, stand about half way between the two smaller groups. The average for all respondents tends to lie between the paddlers and the both/other groups, as these are considerably larger than the tower group.

Figure 18. Do these elements reduce safety on the water near your cottage?



Overall average for all respondents appears in brackets

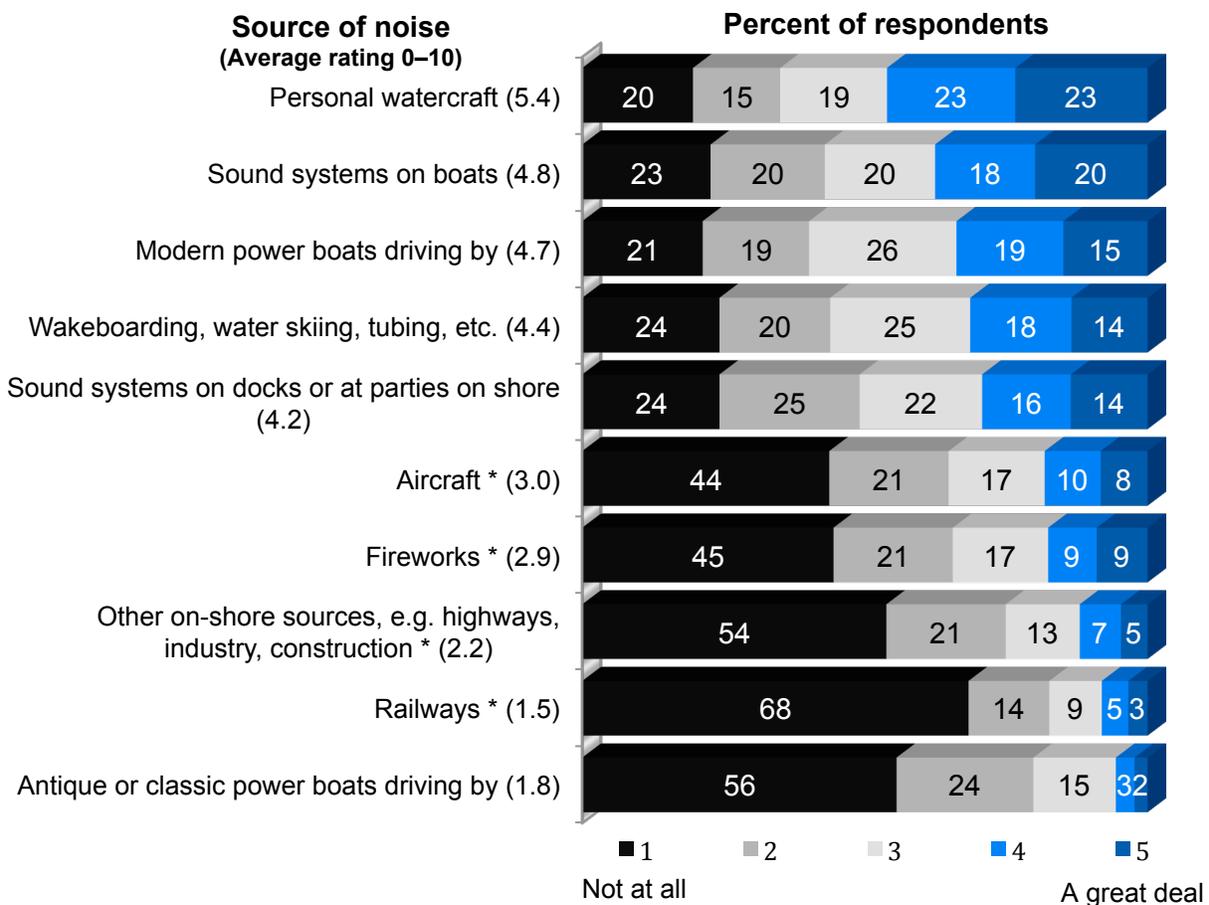
4.3 VIEWS ON NOISE

People view personal watercraft (46%), sound systems on boats (38%) and on docks (30%), modern power boats (34%), and the towing sports such as wakeboarding, water skiing, tubing (32%) as the top five elements contributing to unwanted noise.

Non-boating sources such as fireworks, aircraft and construction, which are outside the mission of Safe Quiet Lakes, are not major concerns to most people, but based on the comments are significant irritants to some.

People do not object to antique or classic power boats driving by - possibly they relate to the different engine sound which they consider has historical significance and because many of these boats move through the water at a slower pace.

Figure 19. Do these elements contribute to unwanted noise near your cottage?



* Indicates a source of noise that is partly or entirely outside the mission of Safe Quiet Lakes.

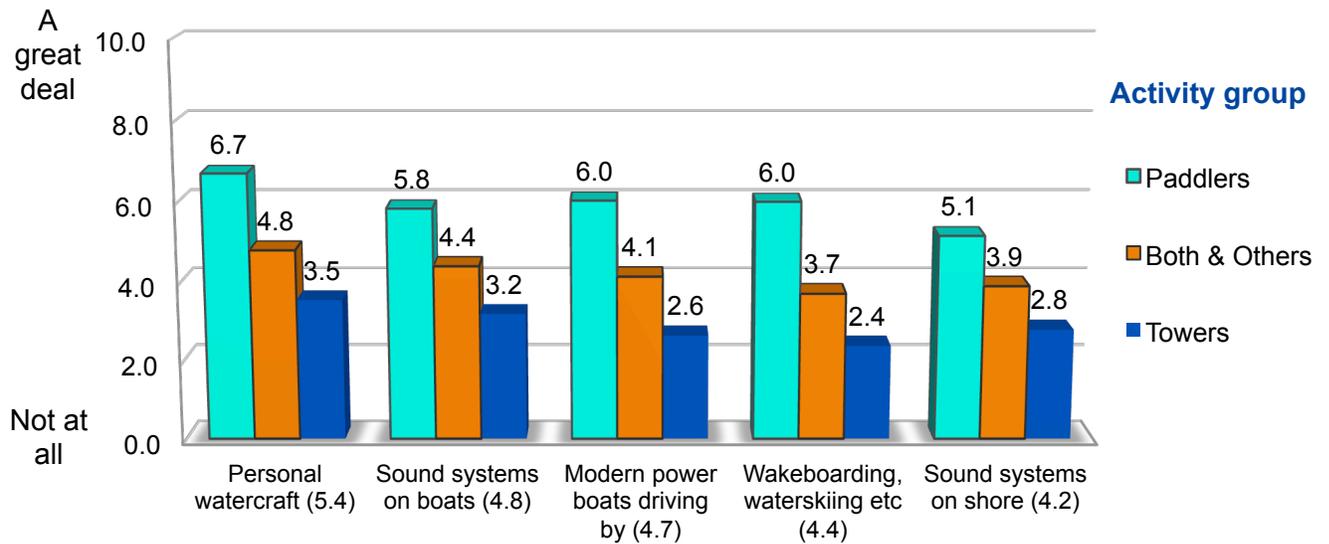
How paddlers and towers respond to noise

Is that boat noise an invasion of my personal space or is it the sweet sound of a well-tuned machine?

Paddlers are most concerned about the various noise sources and towers are the least concerned.

As with other measures, those who enjoy both paddling and towing activities, along with those having other interest other than paddling and towing, occupy the large middle ground.

Figure 20. Do these elements contribute to unwanted noise near your cottage?



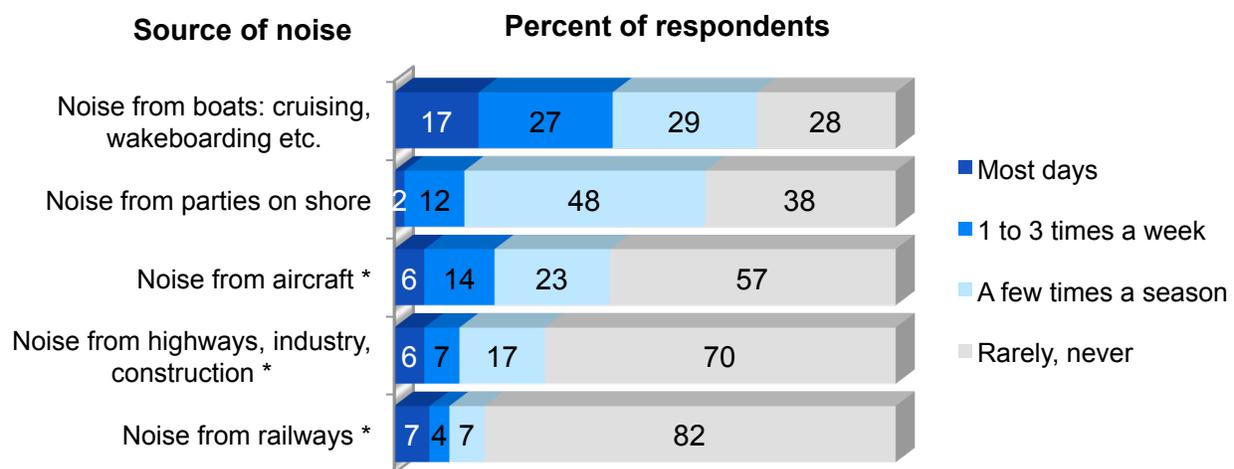
How often is noise a problem?

Boats are the most frequent source of noise, reported several times a week or more by 44% of respondents and a few times a season or less by 56% of respondents.

Considering all five sources of noise together:

- 26% of respondents reported that one or more sources were present on most days ... and at the other end of the spectrum,
- 11% reported that all five sources occurred rarely or never

Figure 21. How often is noise from these sources a problem during the summer season?



* Indicates a source of noise that is partly or entirely outside the mission of Safe Quiet Lakes.

“Instead of focusing on no wake zones why not ban personal watercraft from some lakes – they are noisy, intrusive, often rented by non-cottagers and drive me crazy. They don't just drive by they circle endlessly. They let toddlers steer and blaze thru narrow channels. Limit size of engines/boats depending on size of lake.”

“Focus should be on the local marinas to obey the law. It is illegal for them to sell boats with cut-outs. They should render existing cut-outs inoperable when boats come in for service. They should educate their customers on the noise regulations.”

“Anything that can be done to reduce the noise level of very high horsepower racing speedboats would be greatly appreciated.”

4.4 VIEWS ON BOAT WAKES

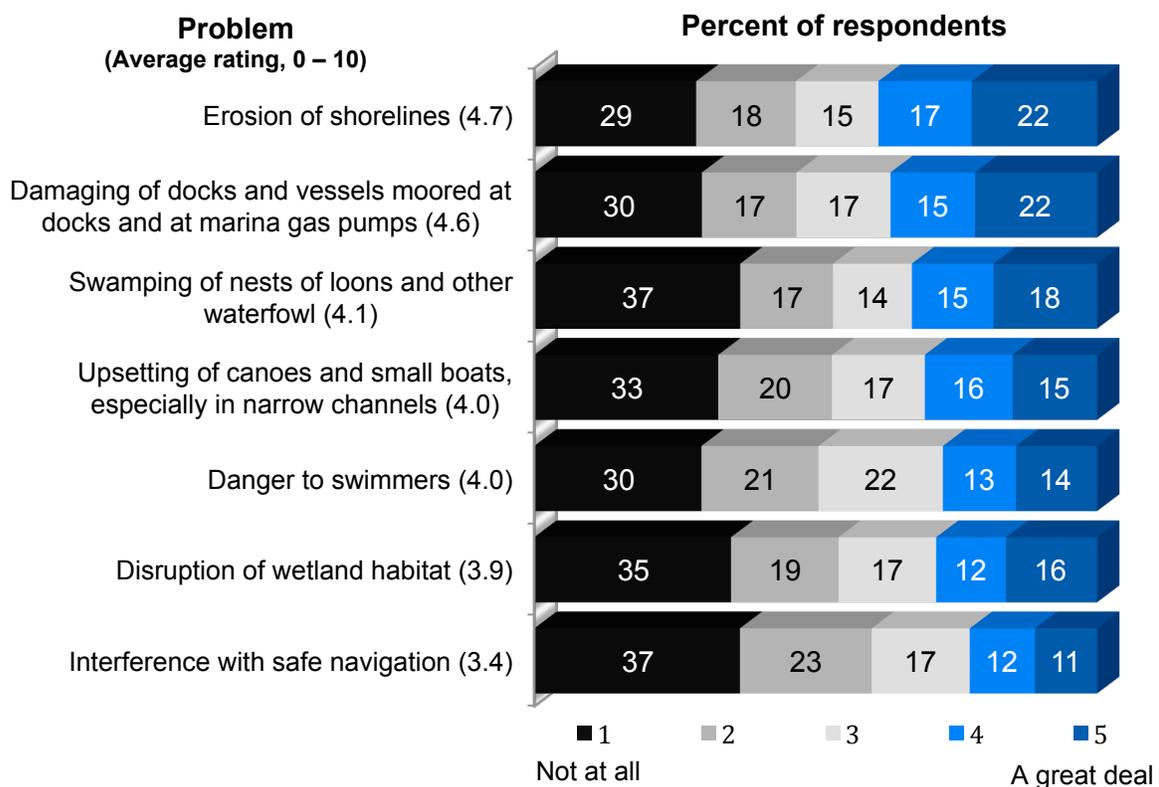
The Township of Georgian Bay has proposed a “No Wake Resolution”⁷ to Transport Canada to limit the harm that large wakes can cause. The resolution has been endorsed by 26 other Ontario municipalities as of July 2017.

The resolution refers to seven types of damage and these seven were listed in the survey question below to gauge perceptions of the extent of wake problems in our area.

Figure 22 shows that between 23% and 39% of respondents experience one or more of the wake problems. Location is a key factor in the type of problem that might exist, for example, erosion may be an issue on a sandy or treed shore but not on a rocky shore.

Altogether, 53% of respondents identified one or more of the boat wake impacts cited in the Resolution as problematic (rated 4 or 5 out of 5).

Figure 22. Do boat wakes create any of these problems in your area?



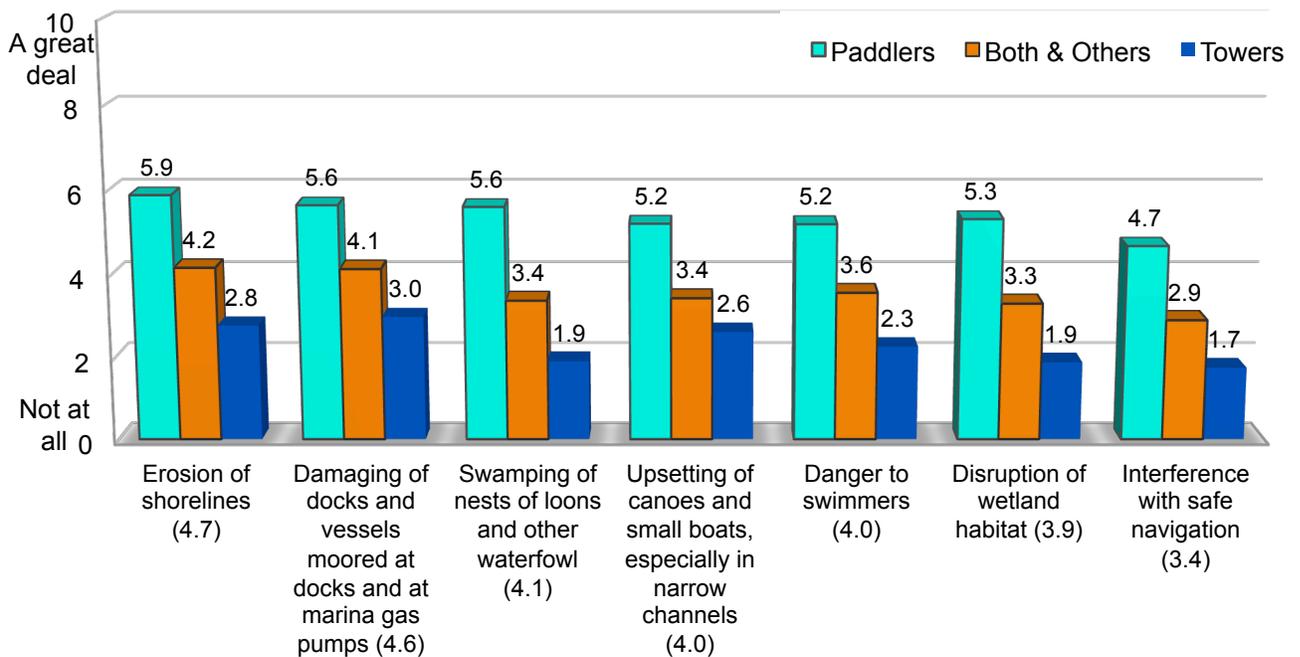
⁷ The text of the resolution can be found [here](#) (pdf download).

How paddlers and towers view boat wakes

Paddlers perceive the problems of boat wakes as greater than do towers in terms of impact on safety, the environment and property.

The majority, composed of those who do both paddling and towing activities and those who do neither, stand between the paddlers and the towers.

Figure 23. Do boat wakes create any of these problems in your area?



4.5 VIEWS ON BOATING CLOSE TO SHORE

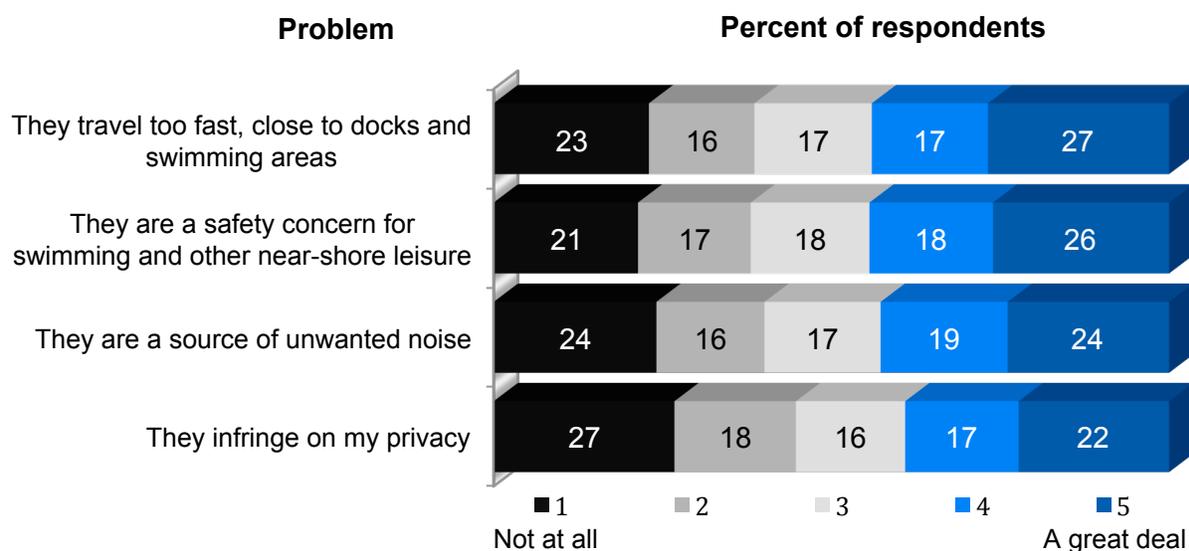
Boats close to shore are an issue for some but not others.

One might expect that those in rivers and channels would experience more problems than those on open water, but this is not the case – there is virtually no difference between these groups.

Overall,

- 26% see **none** of these issues as critical (i.e. they rated all of them at 1 or 2 out of 5).
- 25% see **all** of these issues as critical (i.e. they rated all of them at 4 or 5 out of 5).

Figure 24. Do boats driving close to shore create any of these problems near you?



“We have no issues with fishing boats passing close to our shore nor do we have any issues with any other boaters.”

“Fishermen who sit near your dock fishing are truly invading your privacy and should be educated to fish away from cottage waterfronts.”

“My main concern is safety in swimming. Boaters do not always look to see if there are swimmers in the water, particularly if they are pulling skiers, wakeboarders or tubers.”

“My biggest concern is the lack of laws/regulation and enforcement for those boats who create huge wakes, excessive speeds and fishing right at your dock. Very little respect from visiting boaters and anglers for privacy and safety. I often worry about my children swimming.”

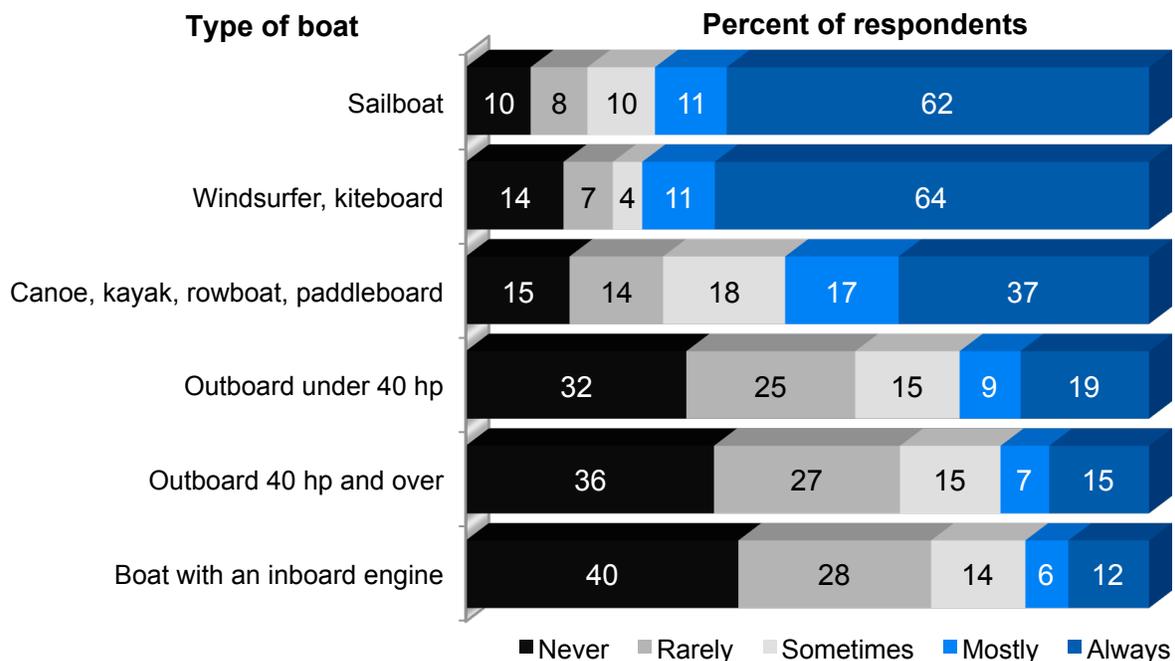
4.6 BOATING SAFETY

The vast majority of respondents, 88%, hold a Pleasure Craft Operators Card (PCOC), and 75% have taken a boating safety course (for 82% of these, the course was for the PCOC).

Respondents studied boating safety in these ways:

- 58% engaged in self-study from printed materials
- 46% engaged in self-study on the Internet
- 39% had classroom or in-person instruction
- 18% had on-water instruction.

Figure 25. How often do you wear a life jacket or PFD (Personal Flotation Device) while on the water?



“First and most important, we DO NOT want or need life jacket requirements (other than having them on board). The drownings related to boating are more related to lack of boating and swimming skills and reckless boating.”

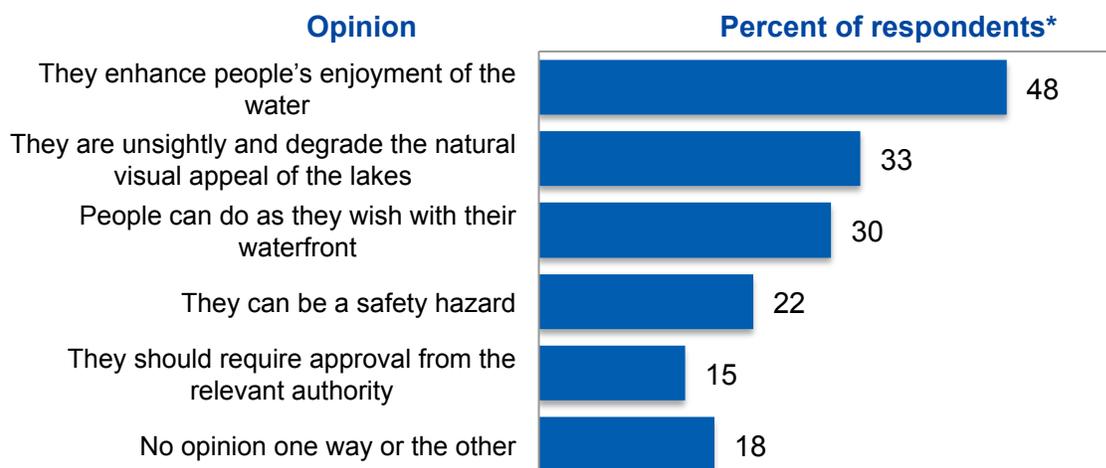
“Not interested in regular enforcement of trivial crap like life jackets and occasional beer in the boat and having to have all the safety equipment that is so completely unnecessary in a small boat on a very small lake.”

“More people need to wear life jackets in non-motorized boats.”

4.7 INFLATABLE WATER TOYS

Large inflatable water toys have become more common since the 2013 survey. While opinion is divided, the majority do not object to the presence of large inflatable toys.

Figure 26. What is your view on inflatable water slides / water castles anchored near the shore?



* Percentages add to more than 100 as multiple responses were allowed.

4.8 ANCHORING RAFTS AND BUOYS

Anchoring some obstacle to keep boat traffic at a distance from a dock or swimming area is a common practice.⁸ The range of objects used includes standard orange buoys, rafts, boats, plastic decoy ducks and inflatable water toys.

The survey found that 32% have some object near their dock or swimming area to warn off boat traffic.

Most in this group, 88%, think it is appropriate to do so, while 12% are uncertain. Among those who have not anchored any warning devices, 53% find it appropriate for others to do so. The comments indicate some uncertainty among respondents about the regulations governing this practice.

⁸ Many may be unaware that anchoring a buoy or other object in a navigable waterway requires Transport Canada approval. Enforcement of this regulation has apparently been rare.

4.9 PERFORMANCE BOAT EVENTS

“Poker races” are an annual feature on Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph. A flotilla of powerful boats race in a circuit, stopping briefly at various points along the way. The boats are generally large, fast and loud and the event generates a range of opinions.

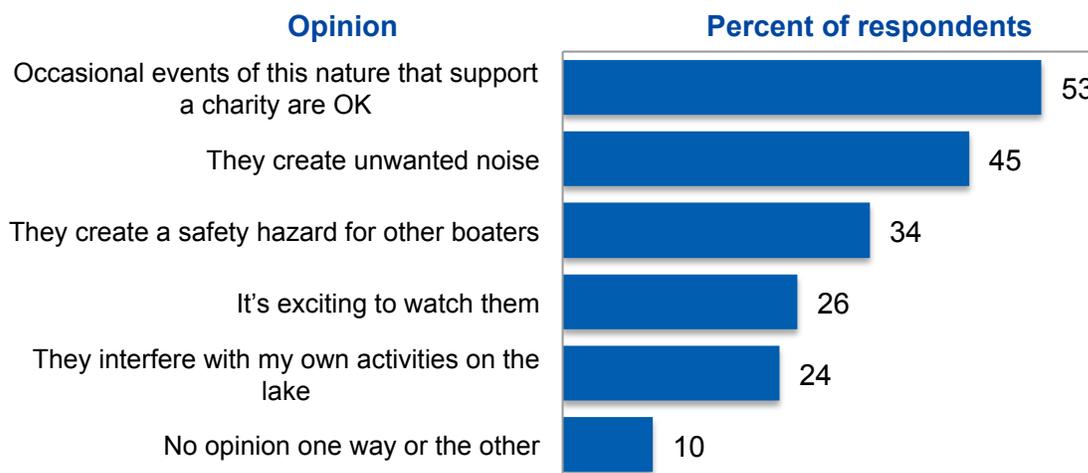
- A slight majority, 53%, indicated that the occasional one day events involving performance boats that were used to support a charity are OK
- 26% said that it’s exciting to watch such events

Those who voiced concerns included:

- 45% who felt they created unwanted noise
- 34% who felt they created a safety hazard for other boaters
- 24% who felt that they interfered with their own activities on the lake

This survey question sparked comments about “performance” boats in general, beyond that those appear in the Poker runs. The comments reflect this broader concern.

Figure 27. What is your view on performance boat events and poker runs, that are held from time to time on the larger lakes? (restricted to respondents on Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph)



Note: This question allows multiple answers, so the percentages add to more than 100.

“ I enjoy watching performance poker runs.”

“Keep the poker run.”

“This year we noticed that the poker run stayed out on the big lake (Muskoka) and avoided inside channels. This was a great move.”

“Someone will get killed by the poker run and then it will be stopped.”

“Abolish poker run now. Enforce boating noise limits.”

“The biggest issue I would like to see addressed is noisy performance boats racing up and down the lake. They should be banned entirely.”

“Would like to see an enforced restriction on the size, noise and speed of boats. Would like to see cigarette boats, ocean-going and racing boats banned from Lake of Bays.”

4.10 RESOLVING NOISE AND SAFETY PROBLEMS

When something creates a concern in your vicinity, what do you do?

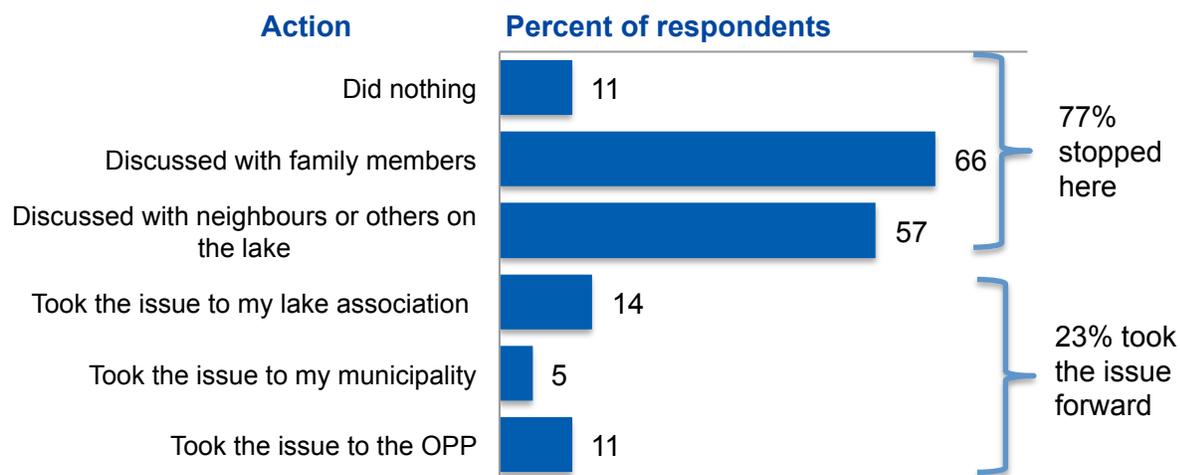
45% reported having had a concern about noise or water safety in the previous year that they wished to take forward with others.

Of those who had such concerns, most discussed the issue with family, 66%, and/or friends, 57%, and there it ended.

Nearly one quarter, 23%, took the issue forward to one or more of their lake association, their municipality, or the OPP.

Success in resolving such issues is discussed on the following page.

Figure 28. Within the past year, have you had a concern about noise or water safety that you wanted to discuss with others? (multiple responses allowed)



“Regularly checking for a throw line and whistle in a canoe 50 feet from shore angers everyone and does no good - in fact it is a very negative image for law enforcement. Refusing to take action when large wakes are reported due to lack of interest, time or needed legislation is a very grave cause of concern for me and for others on our lake and for the lake association and has been for some years. OPP, Town and MNR are helpless or hopeless or both.”

“(We need) a 911 type of line to report irresponsible boat operation. A place to call when boaters create huge wakes near shore.”

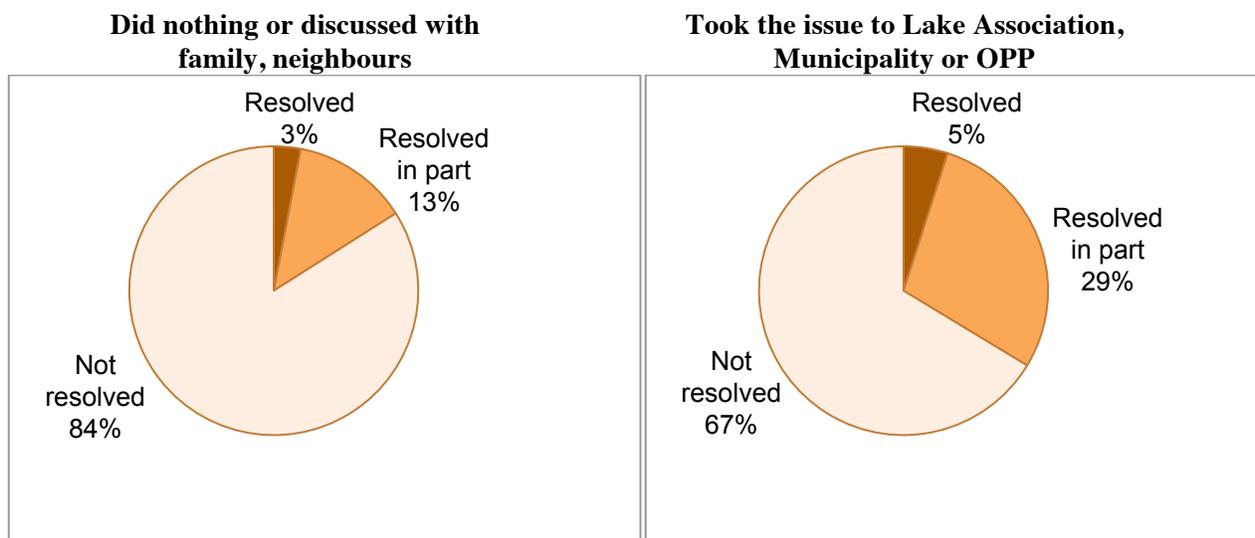
How were your safety and noise problems resolved?

The great majority of those who had a concern around noise or safety did not find a resolution to their problem. This can cause immense frustration for some, as seen in the comments. For example, some boaters are described as appearing to wilfully disregard the law and their neighbours, and some respondents feel that the OPP does not act on what are seen to be legitimate complaints.

The degree of problem resolution is shown in Figure 8 below:

- For the group that did nothing or discussed the issue with family and friends, 3% found a resolution and 13% a partial resolution
- For the group who took the issue forward to their lake association, their municipality, or the OPP, 5% found a resolution and 29% a partial resolution

Figure 29. Was the problem resolved?



“I have tried desperately to have proper authorities enforce our own laws. This is a huge problem. To my knowledge many other people on the lake have also reported and complained.”

“I have great concern to the way the police patrol the lakes. They seem to have skewed priorities when it comes to inspecting boaters. All too often I am hearing reports of intimidation. They should be present to help, inform and educate, not simply to hand out tickets.”

“Some municipalities are known to instruct the Police to not do anything to bother the tourists.”

5. THE FORWARD COURSE – RECOMMENDATIONS

“Overall I feel most people respect and use the lakes properly. The issues I see are usually just with a few idiots, mostly renters who do not live on the lake, that are loud and unsafe.”

“When everyone is respectful of each other's rights to enjoy the lakes in their own way, without imposing their way or activities on others, or disregarding safety and courtesy. That usually means simply giving each other space. Enjoy yourself but please don't blare your music on your boat, do loops in front of our cottage, come too close to shore with your wake boat throwing off a tidal wave or drive too close. Have fun, but use the whole lake.”

“Stop spending our money on enforcement now. It is up to the boating industry to teach and show our summer friends the proper use of their boats and express the importance of respecting others. Any enforcement should be - we will call you when we need you to help control our out of control spending.”

“We need higher fines, not more rules.”

“I don't feel the police are any help because all they do is charge kayakers for not having a bailing can or burn people in a small boat for not having a flashlight in the middle of the day. If police spent their time stopping idiot boat drivers, encouraging people to reduce their wake or stay farther from shorelines, I would have more faith in their purpose. I feel with the lack of useful police patrolling, the cottager is required to be creative in protecting their privacy, shoreline and swimmers.”

“Too many people complaining about irrelevant concerns in regards to motor boats. If you don't like them they should move to a lake that doesn't have them.”

5.1 GENERAL DIRECTIONS

The proposals described in Figure 30 to Figure 32 are a product of stakeholder workshops that included lake associations, marinas, industry associations, representatives of sporting groups and elected officials.

Education, communication, regulation and enforcement

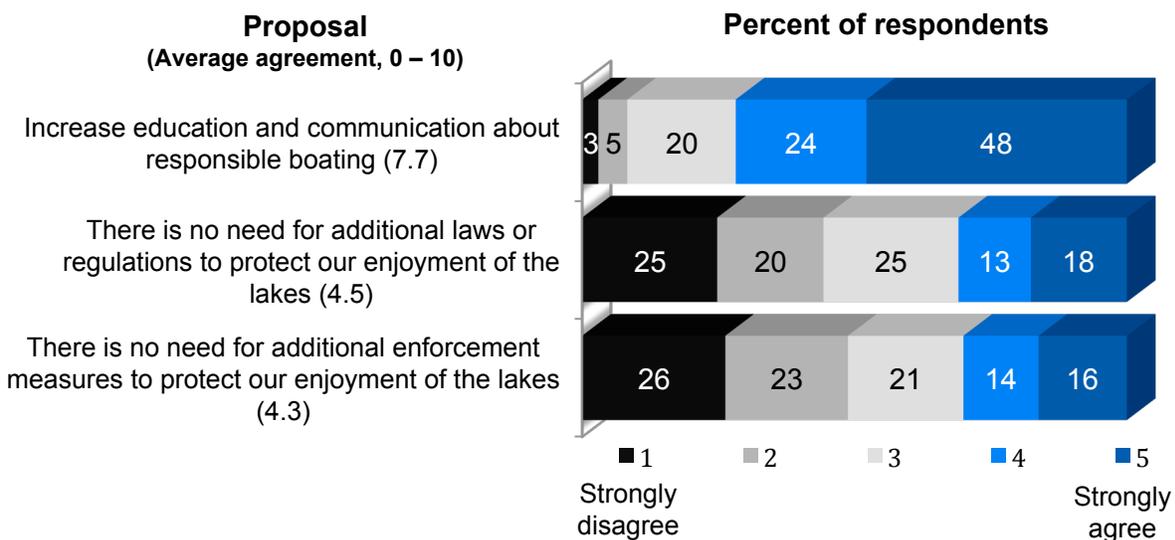
72% of all respondents or approximately 2,300 respondents feel increased education and communication about responsible boating would have value. This proposal receives the strongest support of all the proposals included in the survey. In addition, it represents a 10% increase over the 62% in favour of increased education in 2013.

Respondents are split on the need for additional regulations or enforcement, with slightly more people favouring additional regulation than opposing it:

- 31% say there is **no need for additional laws and regulations** to protect our enjoyment of the lakes. 45% disagree with this statement, implying that they support additional enforcement measures
- 30% say there is **no need for additional enforcement measures** to protect our enjoyment of the lakes. 49% disagree with this statement, implying that they support additional enforcement measures

The comments that follow illustrate these positions.

Figure 30. To what extent do you agree with the following proposals intended to enhance the boating experience on your lake?



“Education is key but not the only solution required. Enforcement is important but costly; give more responsibility to citizen groups and more authority to by-law officers.”

“More OPP enforcement is the only way to get the message across. Education just preaches to the converted. For some reason, people feel it is their right to travel at high speeds close to docks. I have little confidence in the future of Muskoka as a quiet safe haven. Going down the tubes rapidly.”

“Safe and Quiet needs to promote education for both sides. Water skiers, wakeboards have just the same rights as the non-water sports people.”

“A boater’s license should have to be attained with the same level of education and testing as a driver’s license. The current system is useless and only serves as a money grab.”

“Education is necessary, but law enforcement is way too strict and involved; we’re becoming a police state and ruining the Muskoka experience. TEACH your children about the issues with speed, drugs, alcohol and driving too close to shore. Problems are caused by lazy people that don’t care for others - but, fear is not the answer.”

“I believe strongly with the Canadian Power and Sail Squadron’s mandate: Safe Boating through Education.”

“STOP going after the WAKEBOARD community. There are bigger issues you should be worrying about. I see more shoreline issues with the flooding than any boat could ever cause.”

“When travelling at high speeds, large power/speed boats represent a real danger to small craft operators and swimmers. There are not many of these boats but increased OPP attention to their speed and operating safety would be appreciated.”

The only people that cause an issue with wakes are those who have no idea how to drive a boat!

“Tone down the extremism and focus on educating people while encouraging enforcement action against the small percentage of idiots who diminish everyone else’s experience.”

“We have more than enough rules already in place. OPP doesn’t need to patrol more but rather adjust shifts to cover off times when most infractions occur i.e. overnight.”

“Boating issues only really surface on weekends and holidays. Most of the time, especially in the off months, this lake is very quiet.”

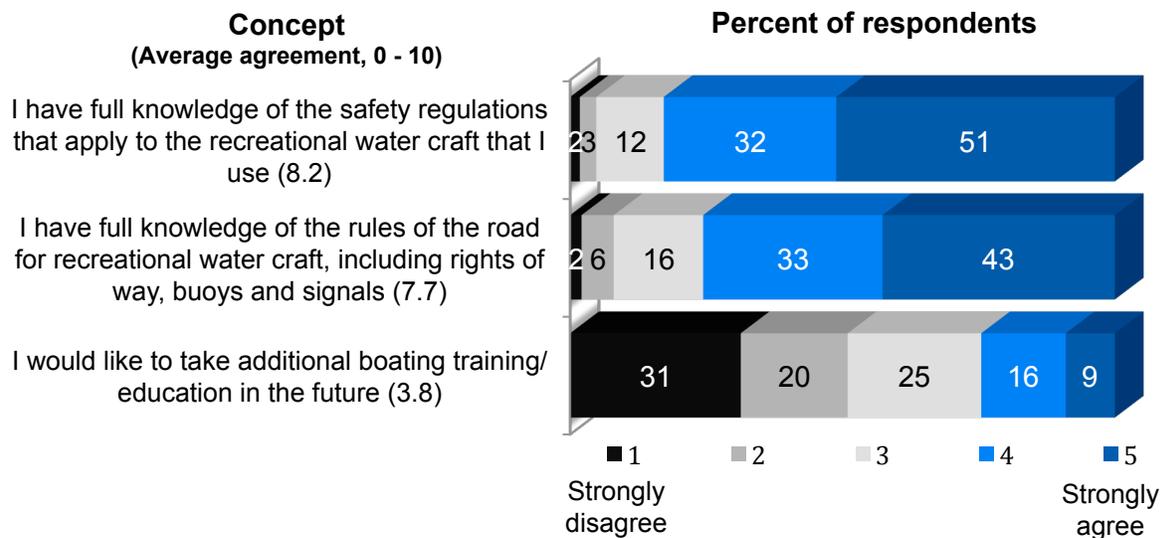
“Enforcement of the rules is difficult. A fair number of boaters really have no idea what they are doing on the water. The boater card is a joke, there should be an on water test to demonstrate proficiency in operating the vessel.”

Knowledge and training

A large majority, 69%, believe that they have **both** full knowledge of safety regulations that apply to recreational watercraft, **and** full knowledge of the rules of the road, including rights of way, buoys and signals.

It is common in surveys to find that respondents are confident of their own abilities but less assured of the abilities of others. This may explain the apparent divergence between having full knowledge of rules and regulations (Figure 31) and feeling the need for more education and communication (Figure 30).

Figure 31. Views on boating knowledge and training



“Too many do not know or ignore simple common sense rules such as right of way and distance/speed from shore.”

“There needs to be better training and certification required to drive a boat. Policing of our lake is over done and is simply income generating for police.”

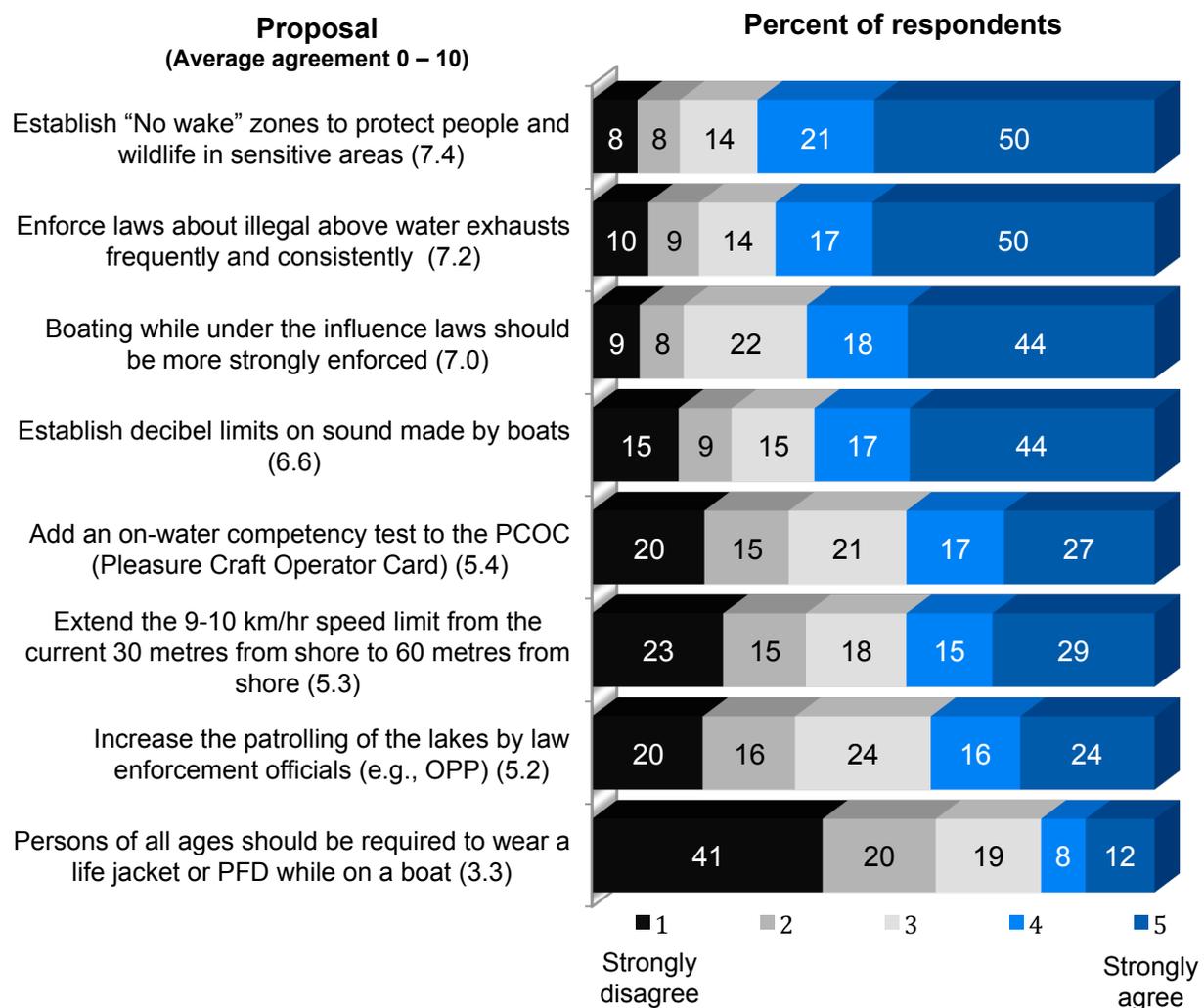
“We often see poor boating techniques in our area. We suspect that it is renters without boating knowledge who come too close to shore.”

5.2 SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

Respondents evaluated eight specific proposals, which emerged from multi-stakeholder focus groups as well as ongoing dialogue with lake associations and other partners. Figure 32 shows how the proposals fall into majority and minority opinions:

- A majority, ranging from 61% to 71%, favour the top four measures dealing with “no wake” zones, illegal above water exhausts, boating under the influence and clear decibel limits on noise
- A minority, between 20% and 44% favour the bottom four measures that concern extending the 9-10km speed limit from the current 30 metres to 60 metres from shore, adding a water competency component to the PCOC, increasing police patrol and requiring all persons to wear PFDs while boating

Figure 32. To what extent do you agree with the following proposals intended to enhance the boating experience on your lake?



5.3 FORWARD COURSE

Overall, there is remarkable stability in response to the 2013 and 2017 surveys. Meaningful change has occurred in these areas:

- There is increased interest in paddleboarding and kayaking
- There is an increase in the level of reported boat traffic
- There is an increase in support for education and communication about responsible boating as a means of enhancing enjoyment of the lakes

In addition, there is a perceived increase in the impact of boat wakes, and the written comments reflect this concern.

The forward course will require close cooperation among lake associations, government jurisdictions, elected representatives, law enforcement, emergency response agencies, boating associations, watersports organizations, marinas, resorts, manufacturers of watercraft, environmental groups and other interested stakeholders.

The strong alternative views expressed in the comments indicate a need for continuing dialogue between groups of lake users, some of whom, particularly the “paddler” and “tower” groups have significantly different visions for the appropriate balance of use.

Almost everyone recognizes the importance of being able to enjoy quiet moments with nature.

Finally, a strong majority of lake users appear to favour solutions based on balanced use of the water and respect for others.

“We would all be better off if we made it a priority to all get along.”

“We must all share the lakes. Quieter boats will help. But the varied uses make coming up with legislation or regulations complex.”

“It is hard to find the balance between those people who want a fun filled action packed (noisy) day on the lake and those that want peace and quiet. Lakes are for everyone’s enjoyment. Being accepting of both views is important, just difficult to do in practice.”

“I am opposed to further government regulation. Those who love cottage life know we are stewards of the lake. There are always a few inconsiderate people but most are very caring.”

“The only people that cause an issue with wakes are those who have no idea how to drive a boat!”

“I do not think we require more laws or enforcement by officials, we require education, more respect for one another and common sense, remembering everyone's idea of cottaging is a little different; we should remember what has drawn us to cottage country in the first place and try to preserve this for ourselves and future generations.”

“We need to develop laws that are reasonable and then enforce them aggressively.”

“We do not need more laws just the ones we have enforced. Would like a noise level of boats determined and then enforced, perhaps the over noisy motor owners could be given direction on how to correct the problem.”

“It's fine for people to enjoy boating in a respectful way, as long as: they drive safely and are aware of their surroundings and safety hazards; they keep the volume down on their stereos; they stay away from the shoreline/docks and swimmers. Loud boats (without mufflers) should not be allowed (have restricted max. decibels.). Personal watercraft are the worst, unless they are used for travel purposes. They are loud, usually rude, following too closely to boats so they can jump wakes. They need serious noise reduction technology.”

“(re. Education) Not sure how we are going to fix stupid but we can work on ignorance.”

“People are not stupid. There seems to be more and more rules that are sucking a lot of the enjoyment out of boating and fishing etc. I think the rules that are in place are adequate. If there are people doing things on the lake that aren't appropriate then they are usually spoken to about by people that see whatever it is.”

“Continue to educate our next generation on the safety and enjoyment of the lakes while respecting neighbours.”

“Amplified electronic sound, such as music to wake board by should be simply banned.”

“Generally, the balance today works. PWCs are of note though because they are very loud and I find they constitute much of the excess noise. Are we going to ban them? Seems impractical to do so but in my mind they are most of whatever problem exists.”

“Our concern is that many people want their lake to be specific to their wants and needs, and have a not in my back yard mentality. Lakes are for everyone to enjoy and cottages will go through changes as each generation ages and new ones come in.”

“Education is very important with regards to naturalizing waterfronts, etc. so that the lake does remain healthy. Education - not enforcement!! Additional police/law enforcement presence makes sense on larger lakes. On smaller lakes, it does not. Education does make sense however.”

“Boats are fun and if people enjoy them in the right way there is no need for change. OPP write tickets more than they educate people on boating. It is not about more enforcement it is about the right enforcement.”

“People are the concern not the equipment.”

“The problems I see with some using the lakes is the lack of courtesy to others. Examples would be there is nothing wrong with a PWC but back and forth in front of cottages becomes a nuisance. The same applies to big board boats with stereo blasting passing a canoe kayaking paddle boarding persons without slowing down and respecting their water. The problem I see is not any of the equipment but only the lack of respect to cottages or others using the equipment.”

“Education first, foremost and always, is the key to doing a better job of enjoying the lake country, respecting our neighbours, and preserving what we enjoy for future generations. Laws are important, but what we need more than anything else is people understanding that it is in their personal best interest to respect the laws, and to use the 3 Cs as their cottage life guide: Take CARE, Use COMMON SENSE, Be COURTEOUS.”