



2021 Recreational Boating Incident Summary



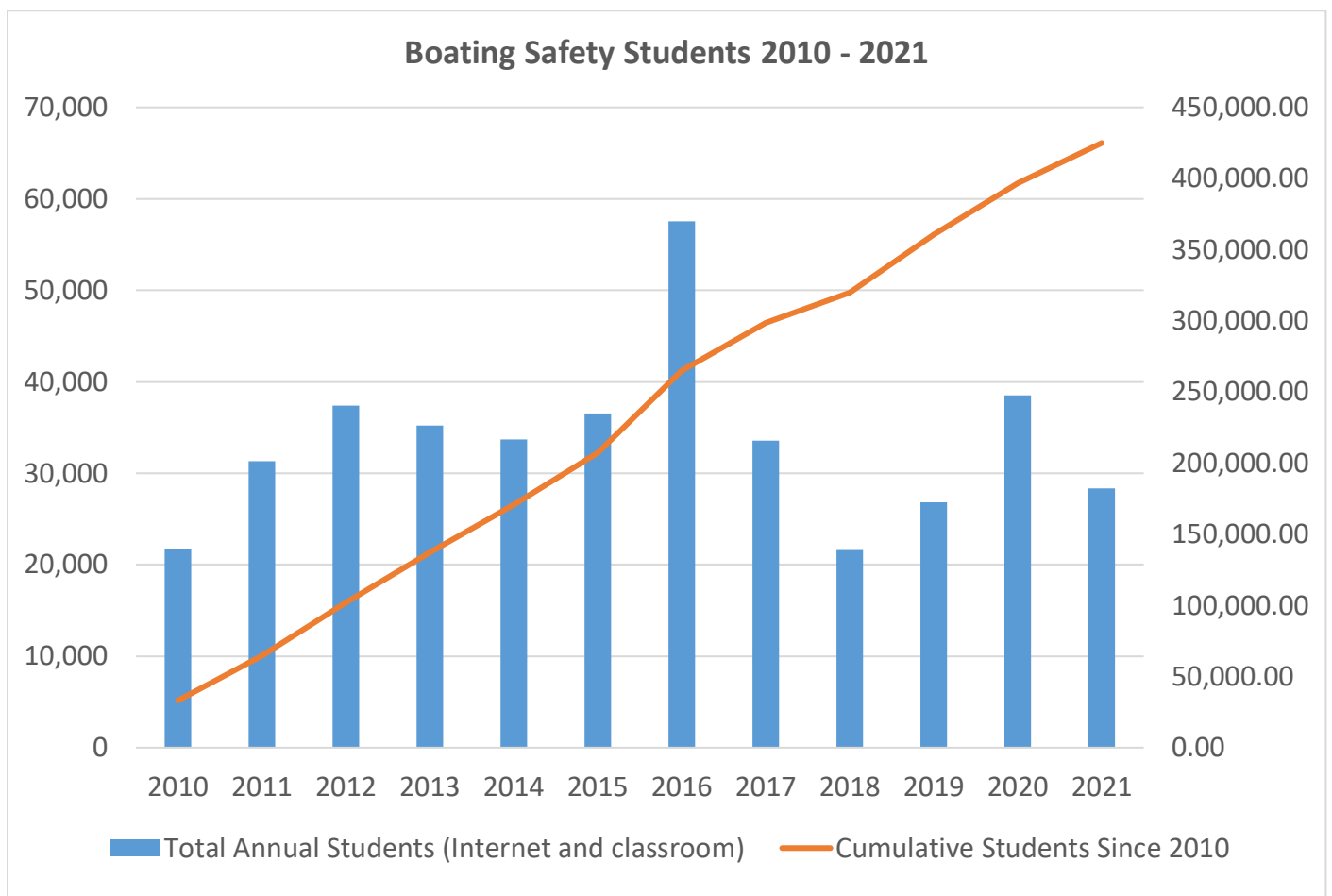
CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

Introduction

The 2021 Recreational Boating Incident Summary is compiled by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), Boating Division. The data used in this report is retrieved by Reportable Boating Incident reports submitted by DWR Conservation Police, Virginia Marine Resources Commission Marine Police, and local law enforcement agencies. Data included in this report is for incidents which occurred during the 2021 calendar year.

To be considered a “reportable boating incident”, an incident must involve death, missing person, an injury which requires or should have required treatment beyond first aid, or property damage of \$2,000 or more. Virginia requires operators involved in an incident to immediately notify DWR and provide information to the investigating officer.

DWR works to ensure Virginians and visitors are safe when enjoying the water. This is accomplished through proactive law enforcement patrols and statewide boating safety efforts.



Boating in Virginia

- River Miles – 52,225 miles (source VDEQ)
- Coastline – 132 miles (source VIMS)
- Tidal Shore – 7,213 (source VIMS)
- Inland Lakes – 116,364 acres (source VDEQ)

Incidents that are required to be reported to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

- Damage over \$2,000 by or to the vessel or its equipment
- Injury requiring medical assistance beyond first aid
- Loss of life
- Disappearance of any person from a vessel

2021 Virginia Boating Incident Summary *

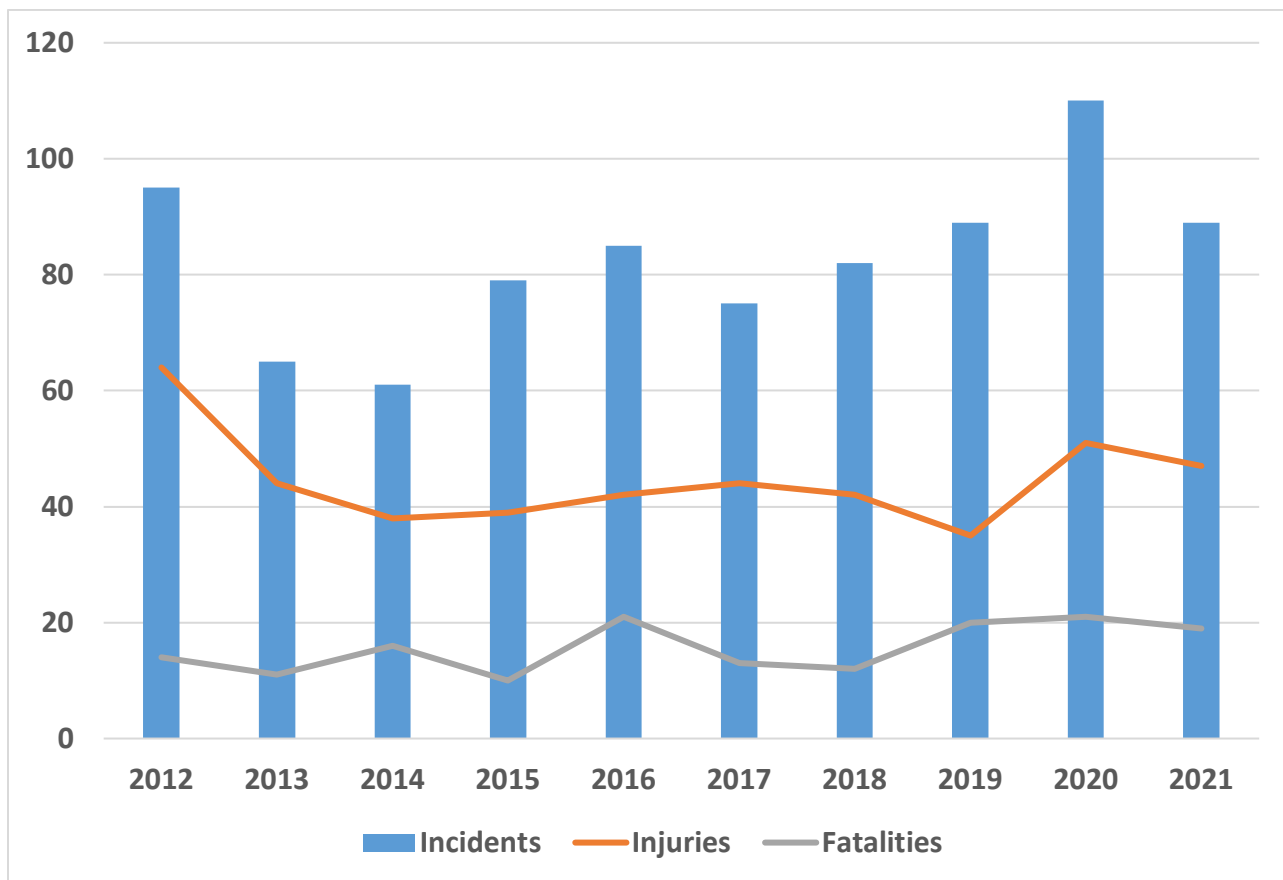
- **Number of Incidents = 89**
- **Number of Vessels Involved = 115**
- **Number of Injured Persons = 47**
- **Number of Fatalities = 19**
 - **Alcohol was a known factor in 16% of fatal incidents.**
 - **Paddlecraft (canoes and kayaks) were involved in 32% of fatal incidents.**
 - **In 84% of fatal incidents no life jacket was worn**
- **Property Damage = \$ 624,887**

*** reported to DWR**

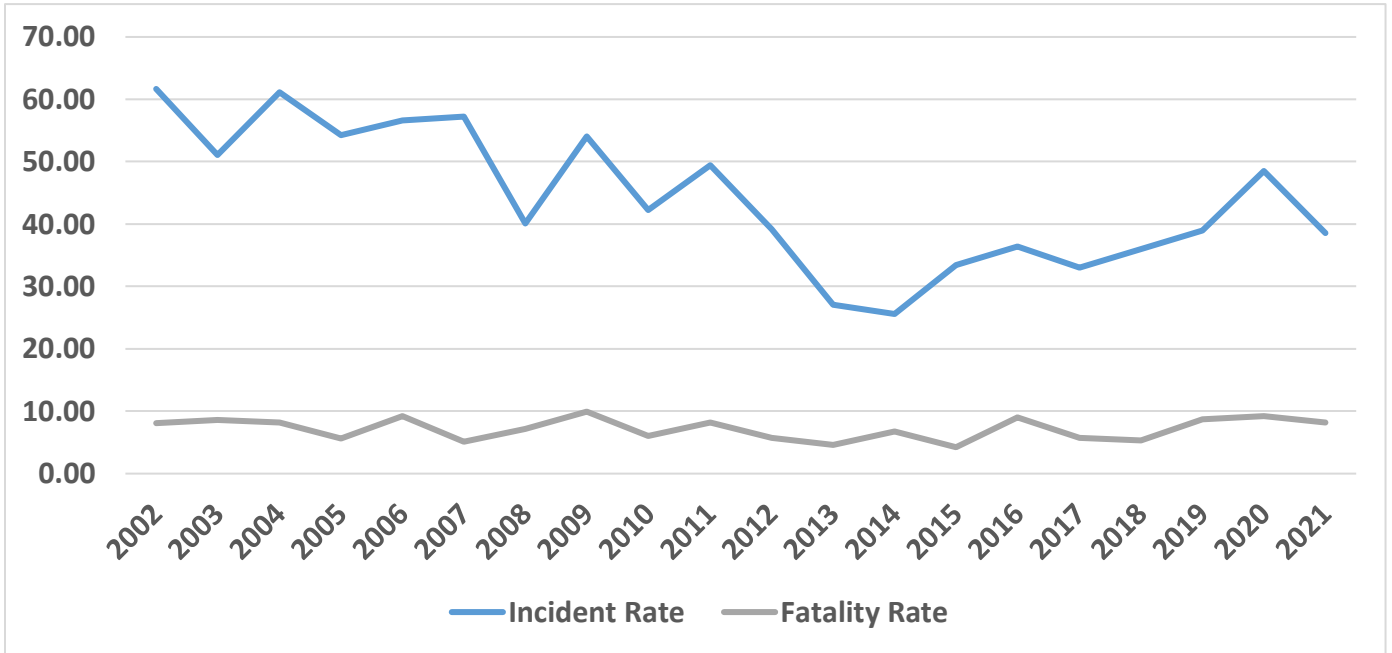
10 Year Boat Incident Summary

Year	Incidents	Injuries	Fatalities	Property Damage
2012	95	64	14	\$476,584
2013	65	44	11	\$981,945
2014	61	38	16	\$617,916
2015	79	39	10	\$441,301
2016	85	42	21	\$576,546
2017	75	44	13	\$308,160
2018	82	42	12	\$411,961
2019	89	35	20	\$572,456
2020	110	51	21	\$641,143
2021	89	47	19	\$624,887

10 Year Boat Incident Statistics



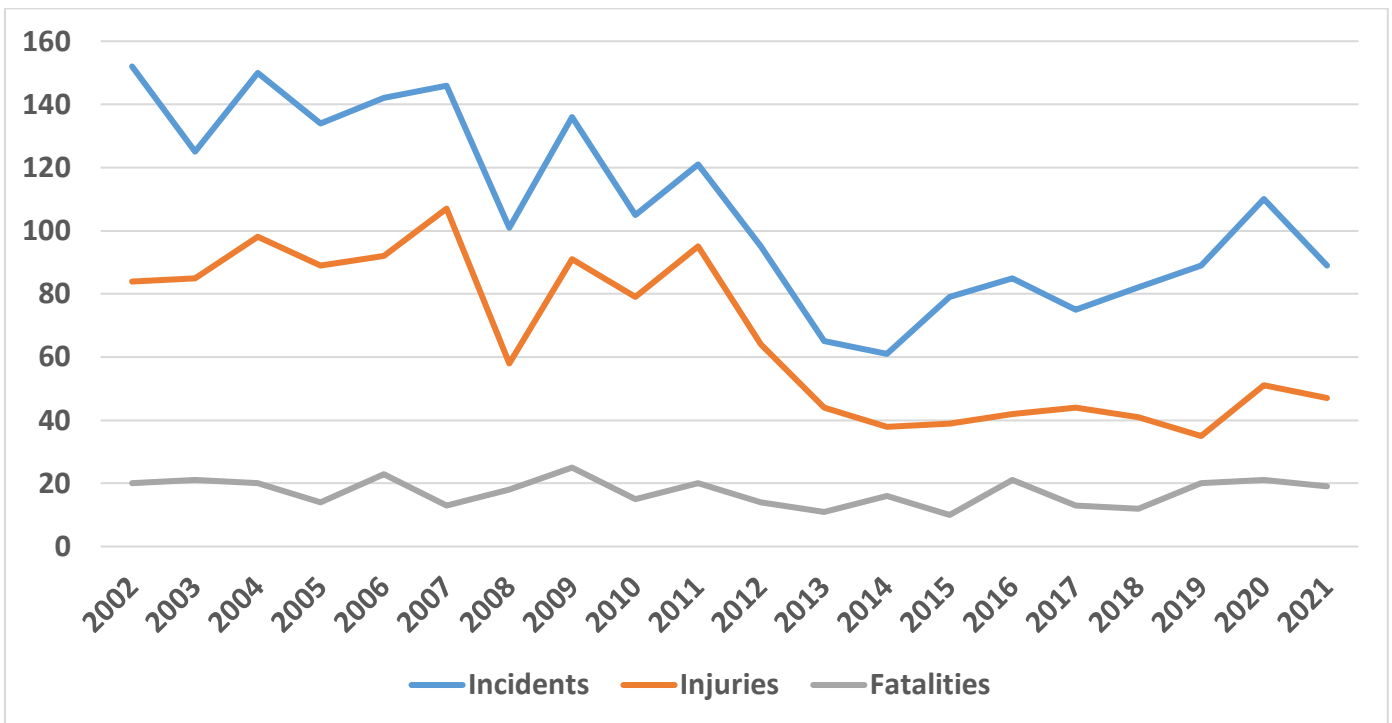
Annual Recreational Boating Incident Rate* 2002 - 2021 (per 100,000 Registered Boats)



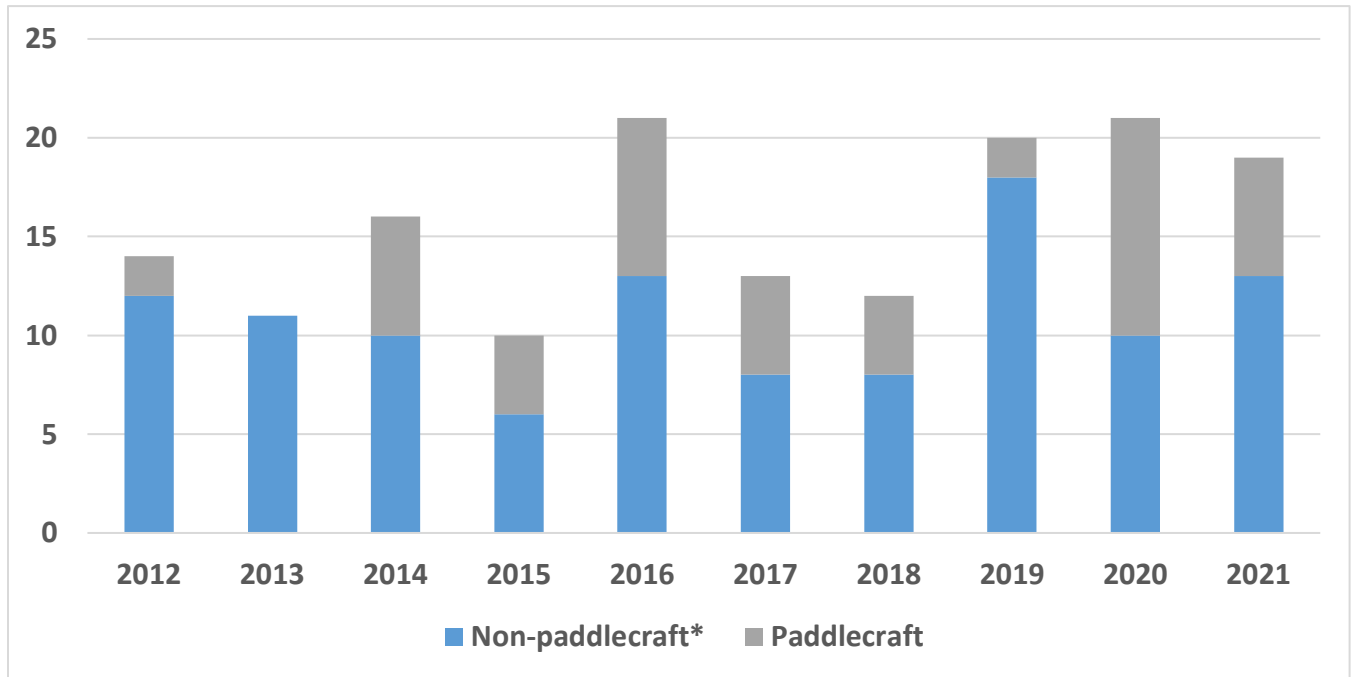
* These rates include paddlecraft incidents/fatalities although paddlecraft are not registered in Virginia.

* These rates includes incidents/fatalities involving boats registered in another state that were involved in incidents on Virginia's waters.

Fatalities, Injuries, and Incidents by Year 2001 – 2021

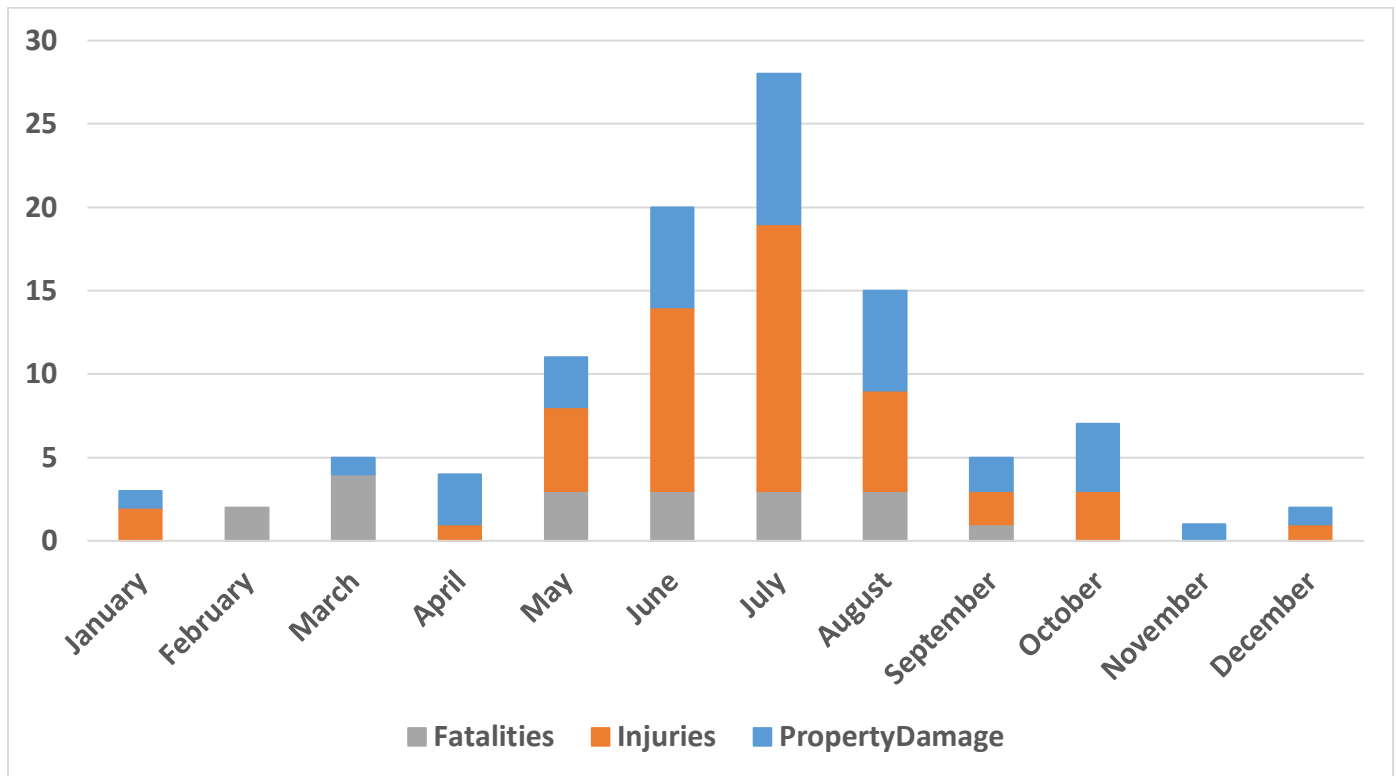


Fatalities – Paddlecraft and Powered Vessels Last 10 Years

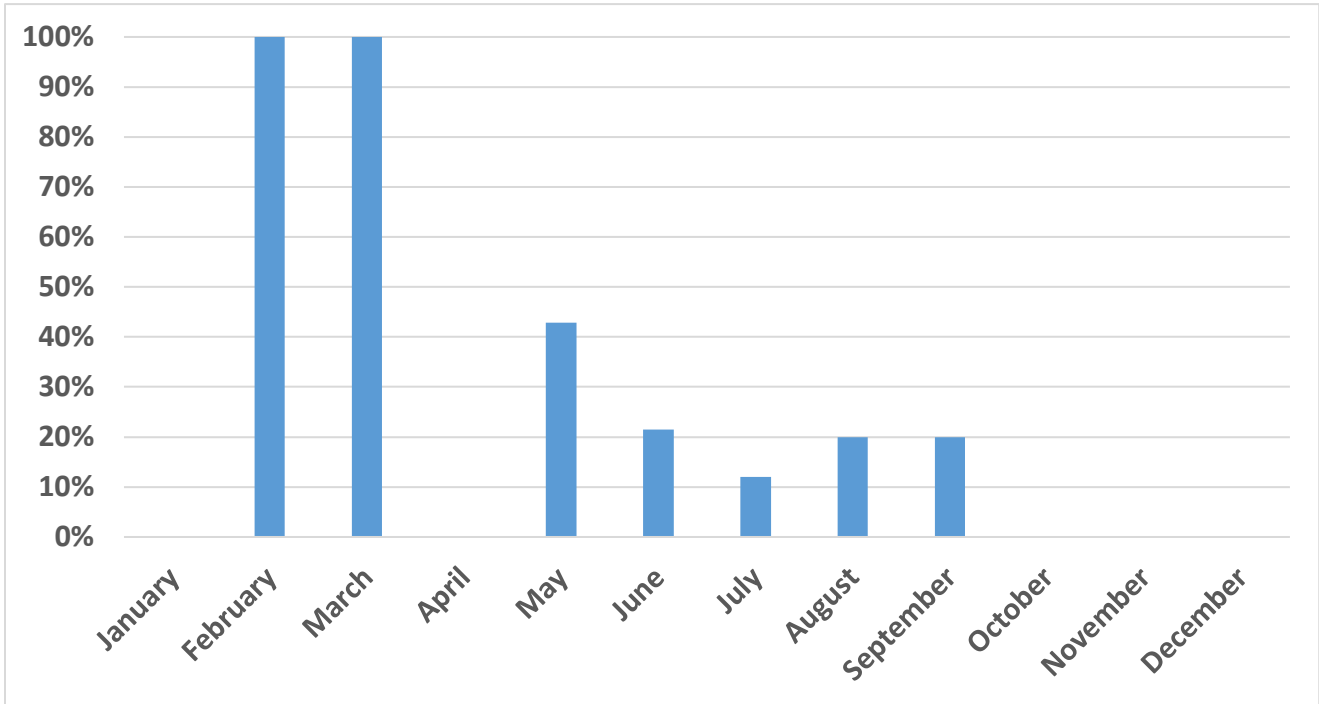


* Non-paddlecraft includes motorized vessels, sailboats, jon boats

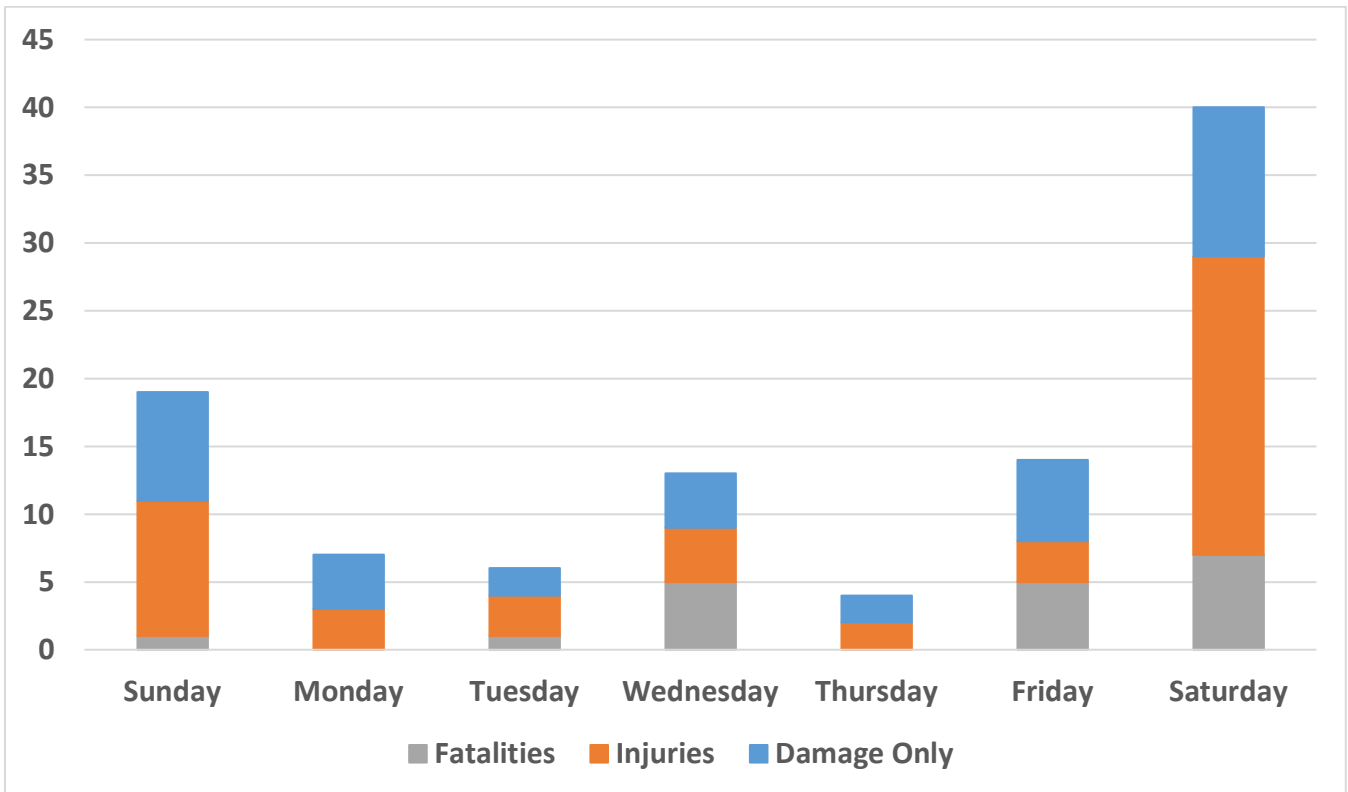
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities - By Month



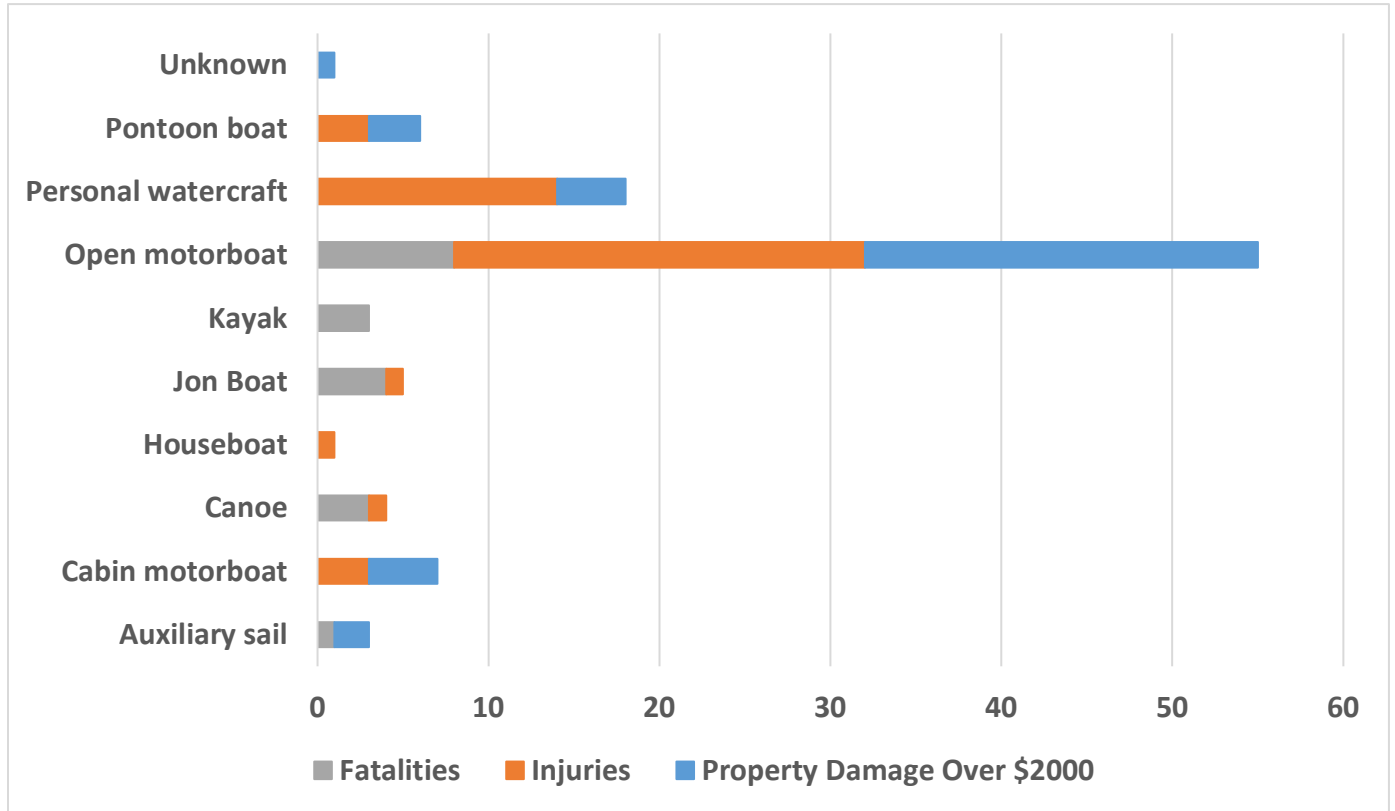
2021 Percentage of Incidents Each Month that were Fatal



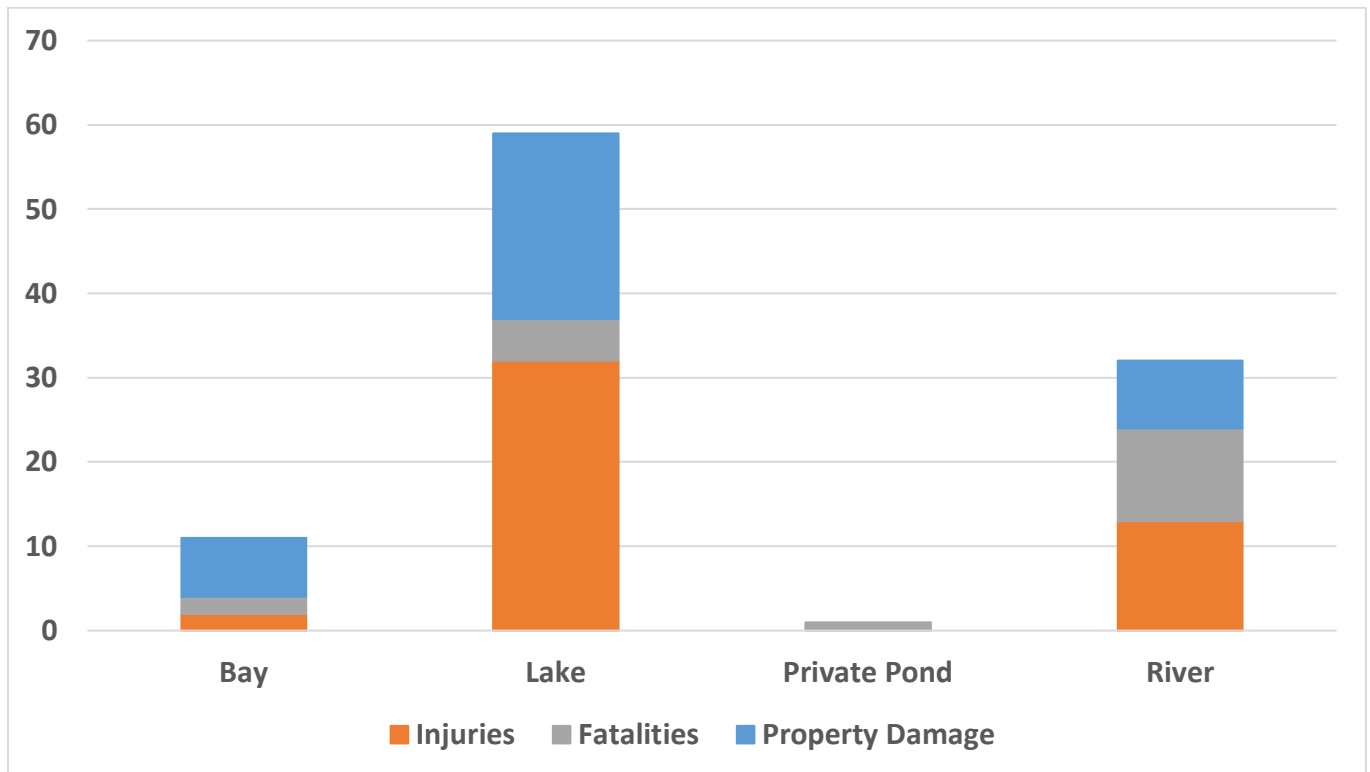
2021 Boating Incidents by Day of Week



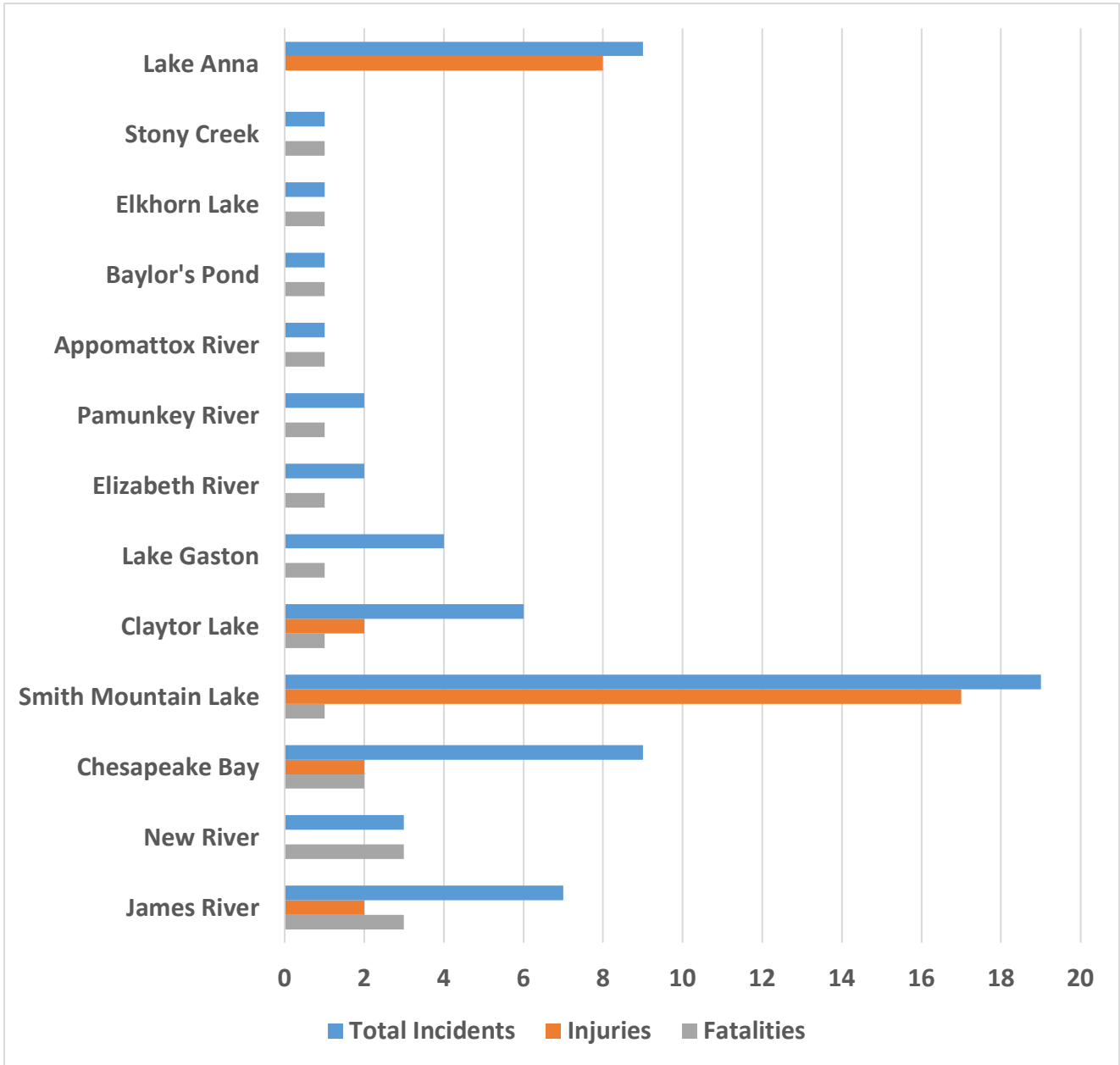
2021 Boating Incidents by Vessel Type



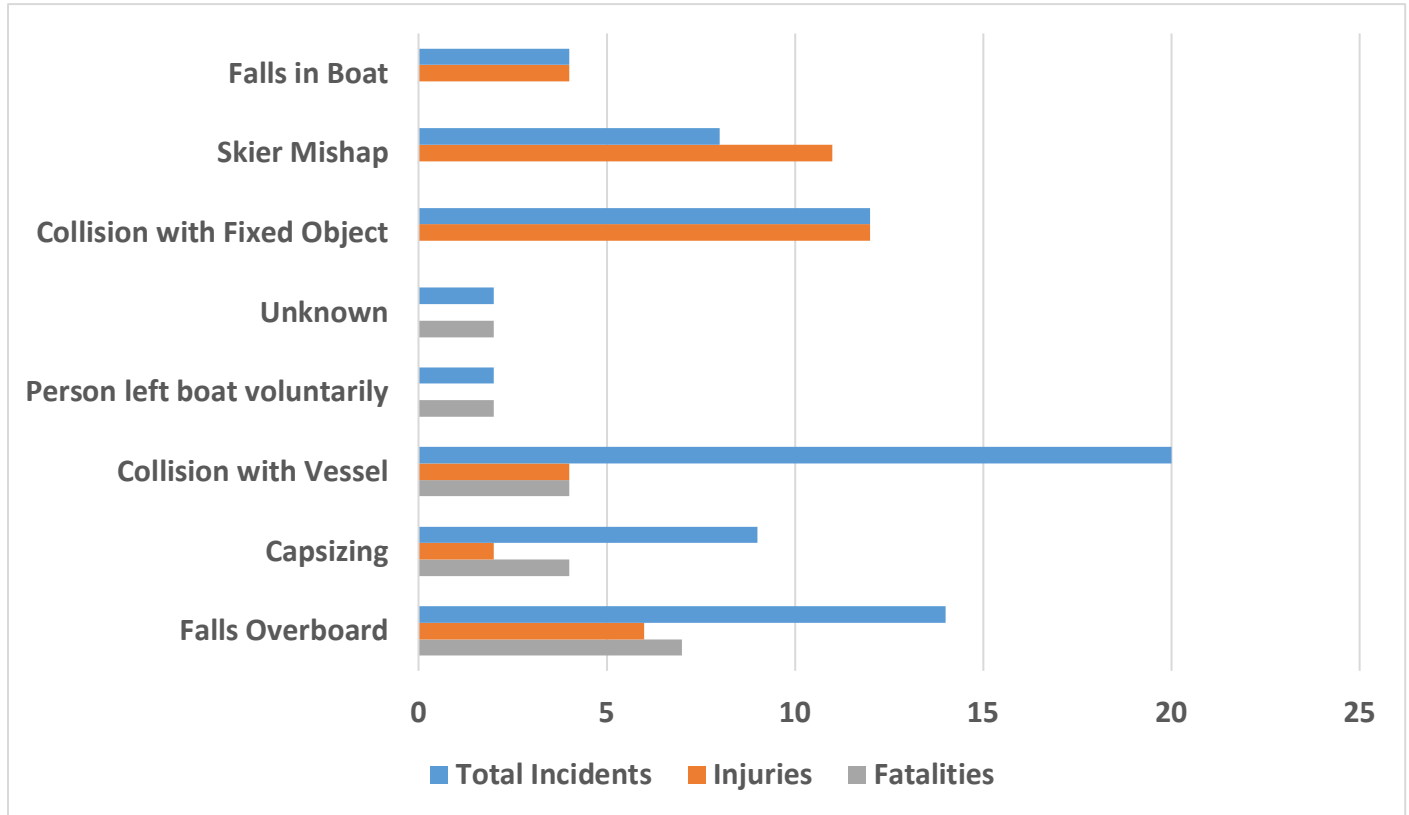
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities by Water Body Type



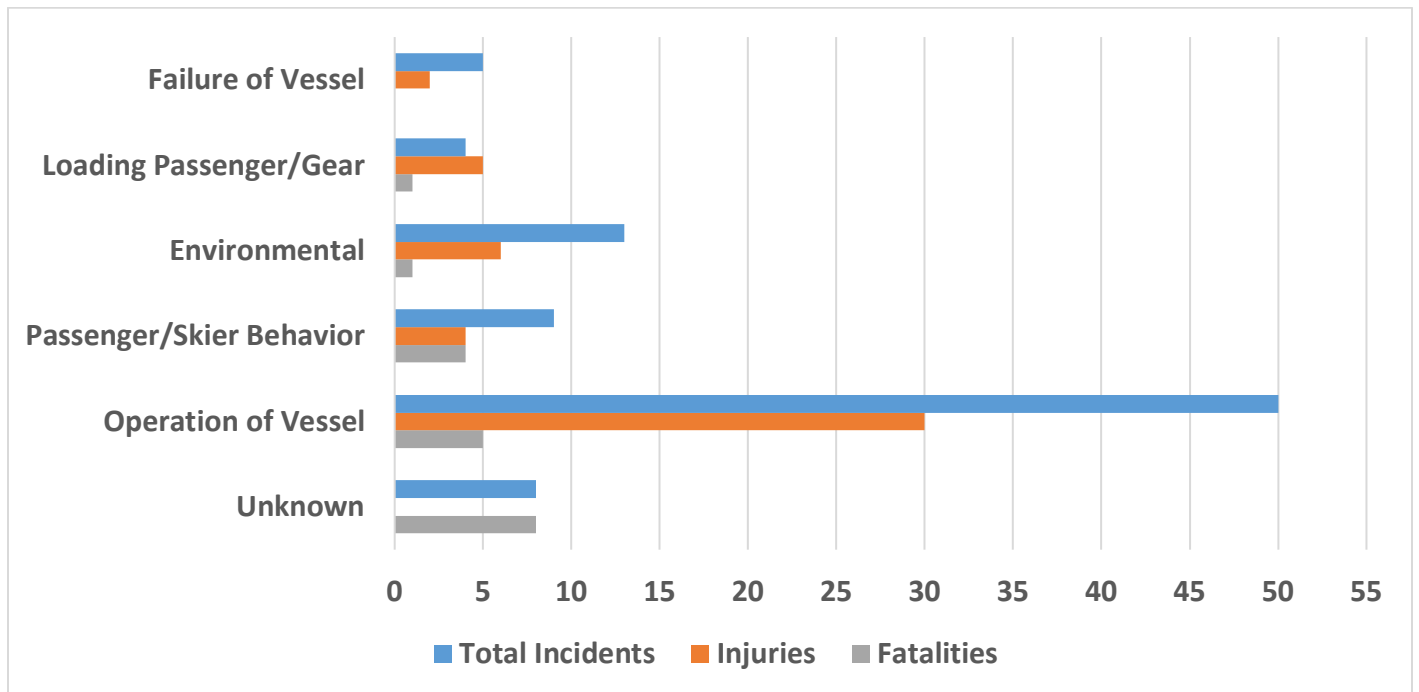
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities - Top Locations of Incidents



2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities - Top Primary Incident Types

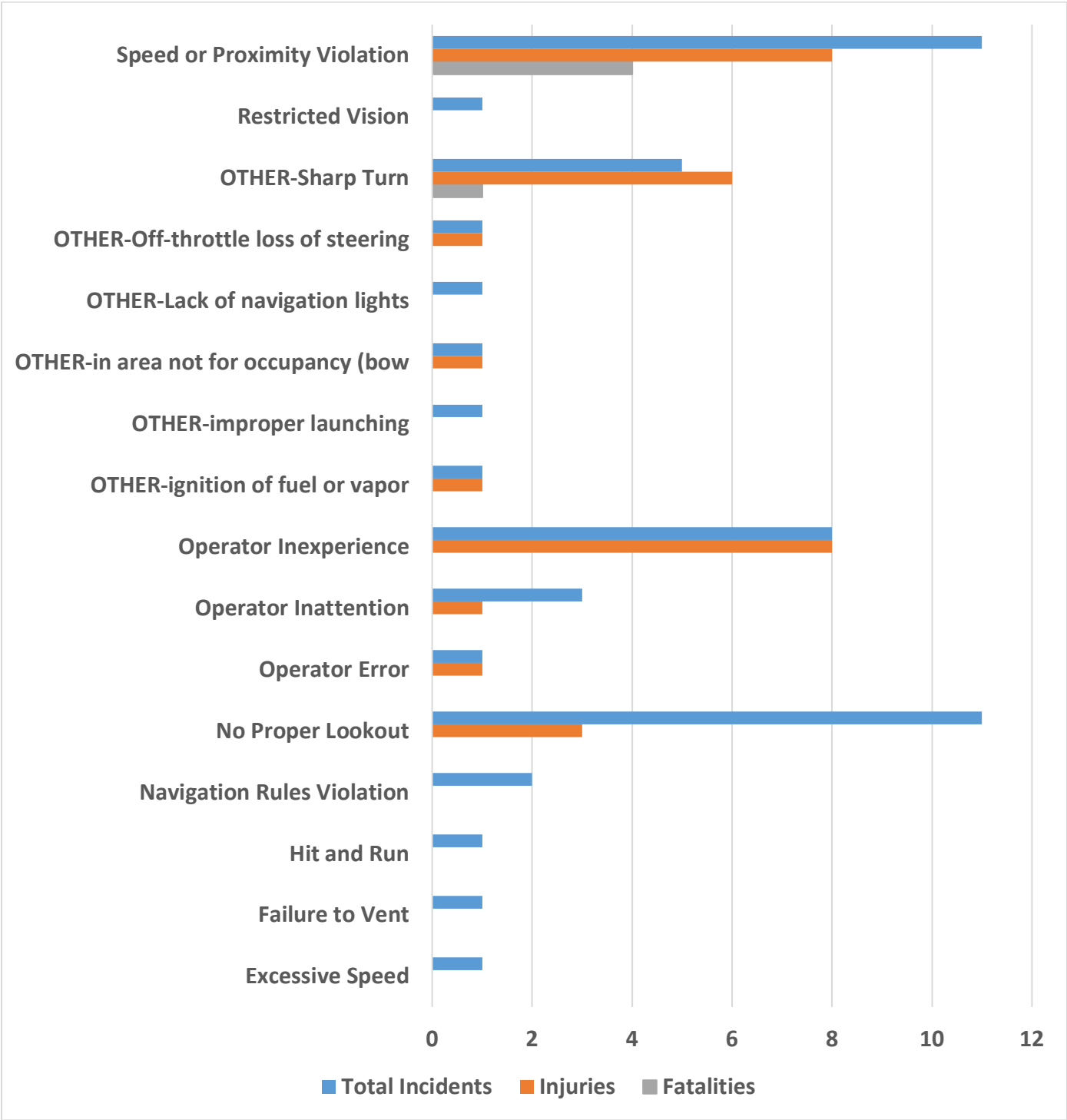


2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities – Contributing Factor (by Category)



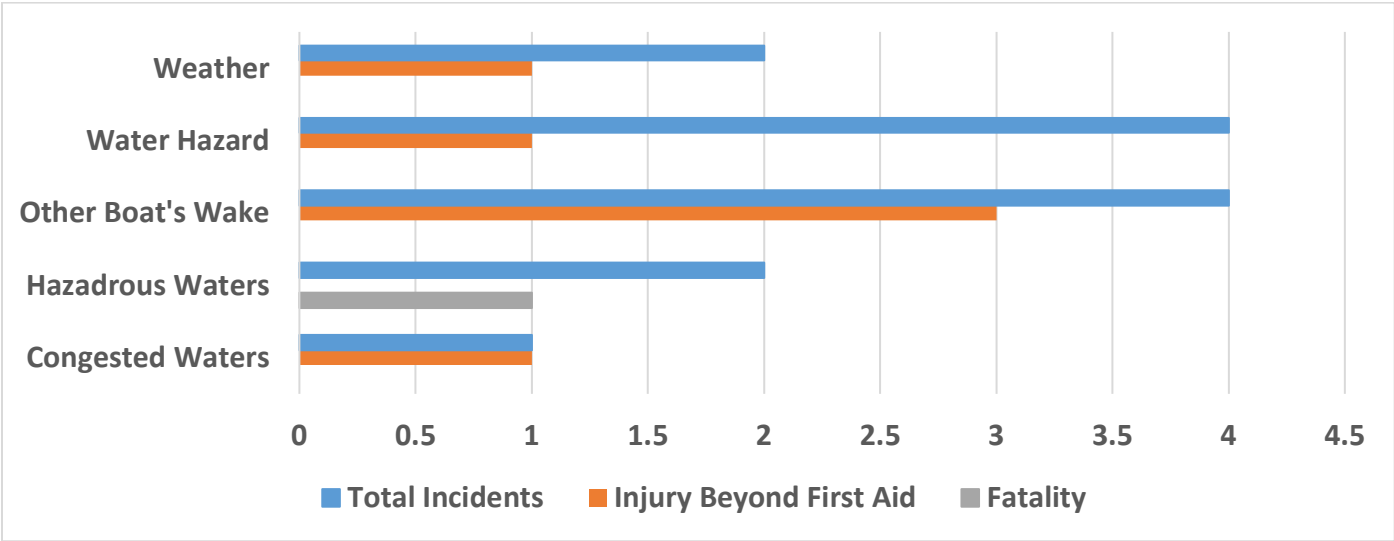
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities – Contributing Factor (detailed)

Operation of Vessel

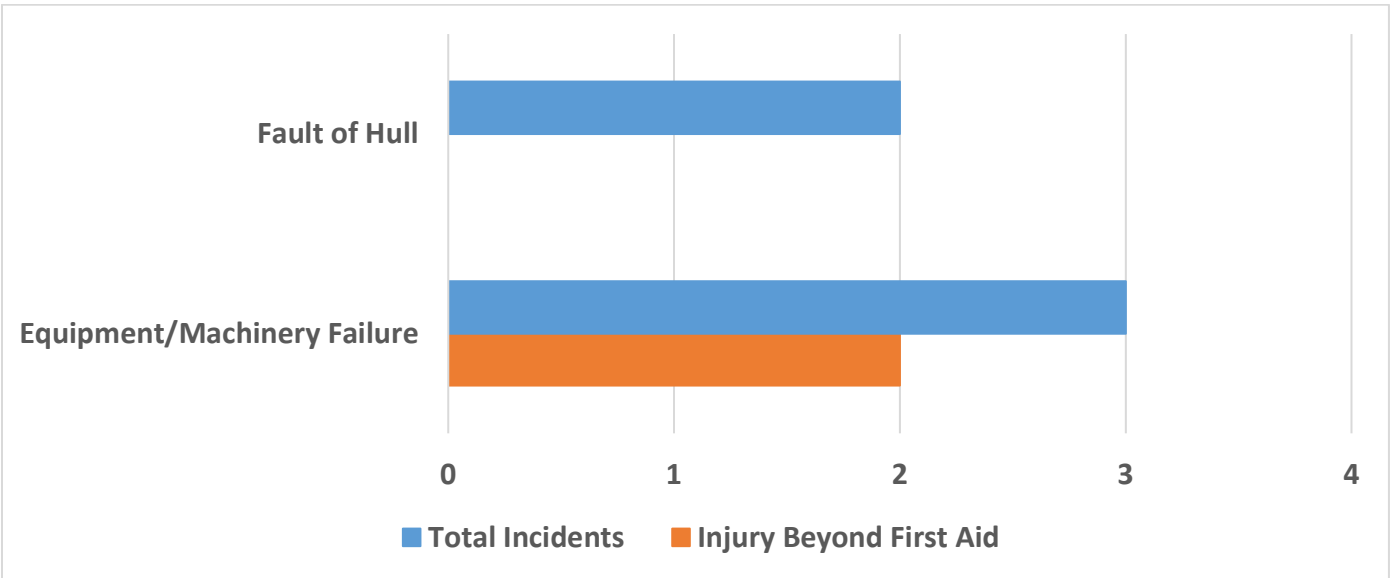


2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities – Contributing Factor (detailed)

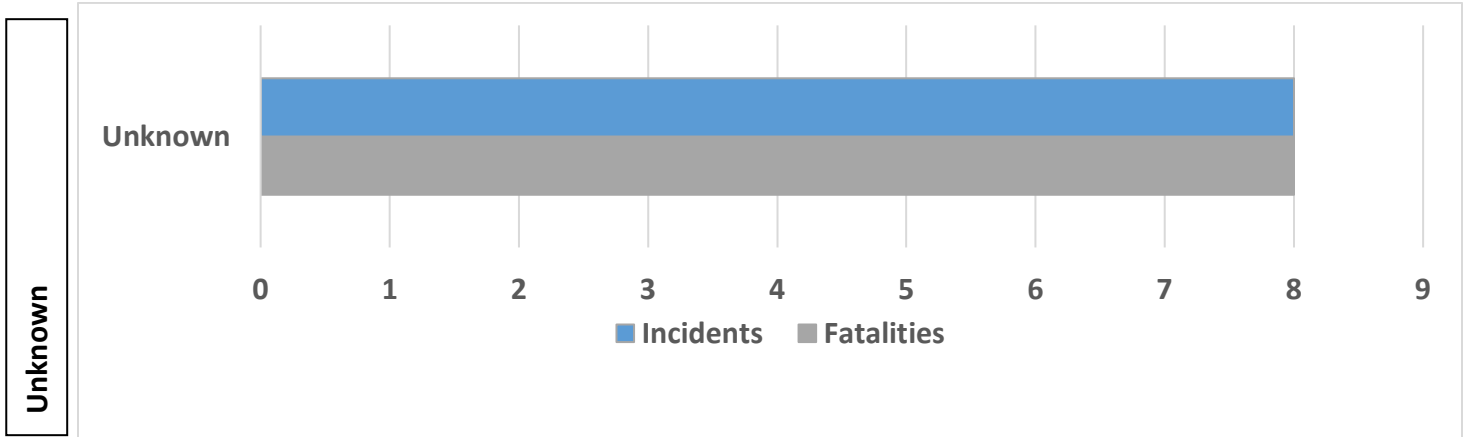
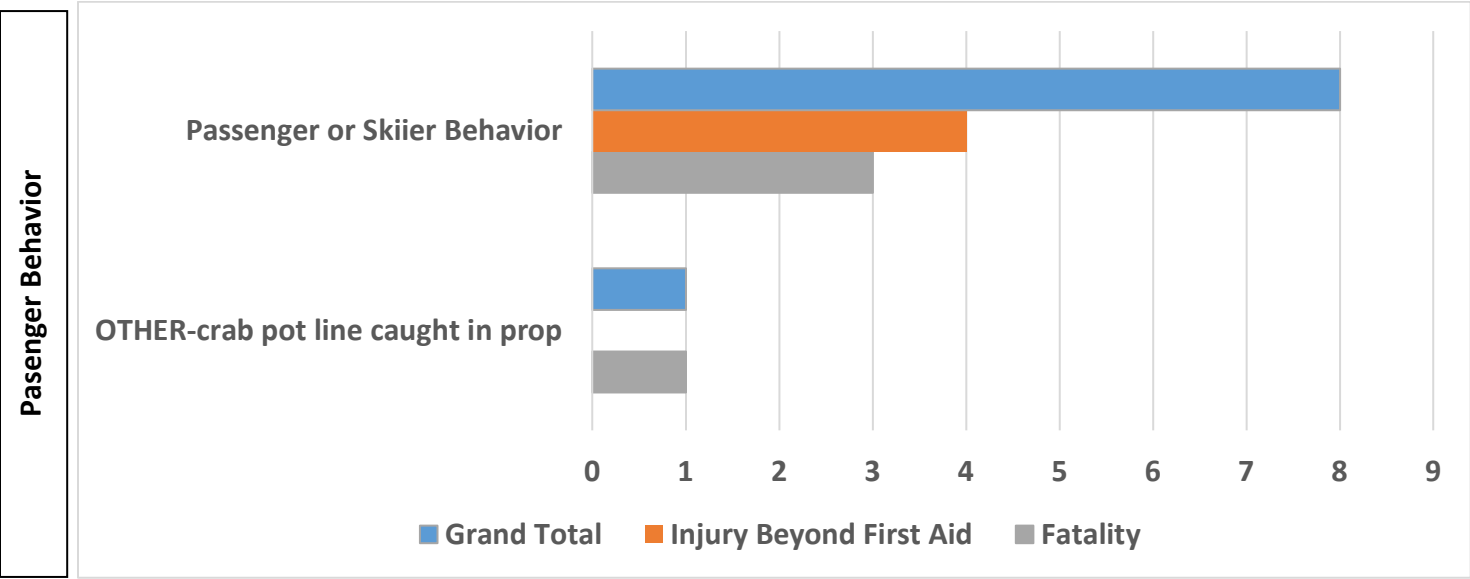
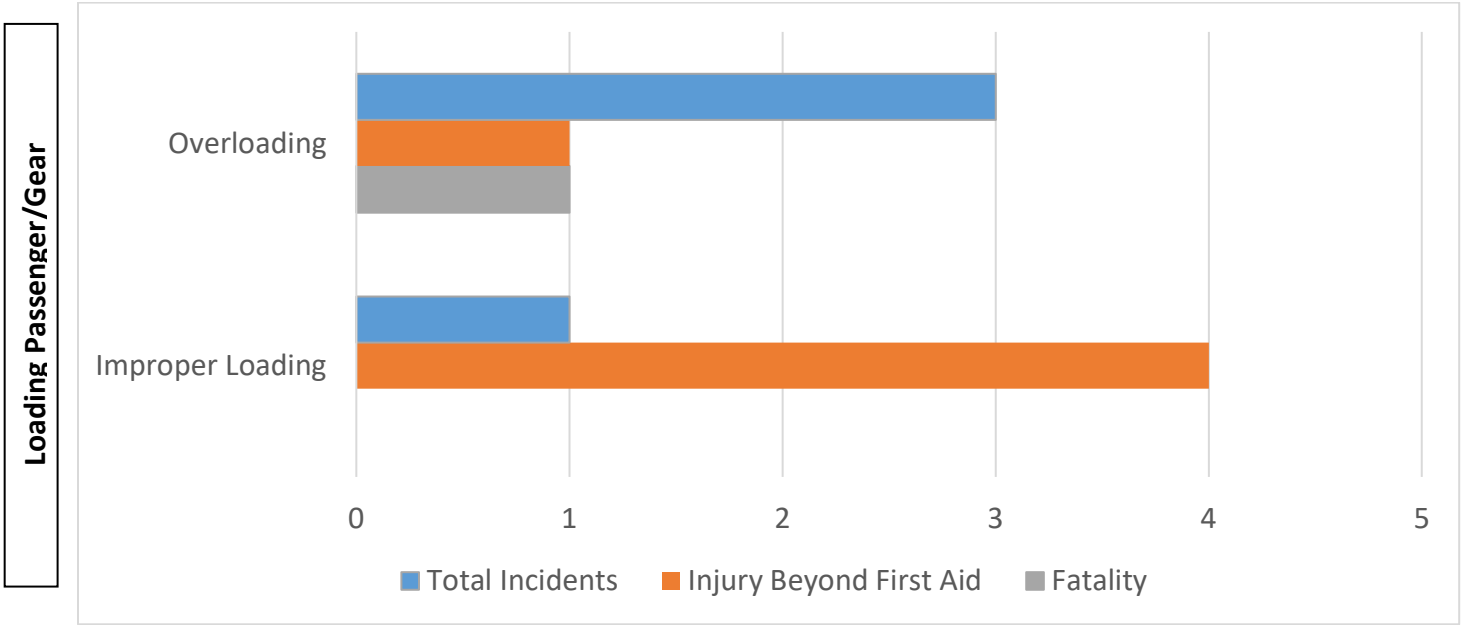
Environmental



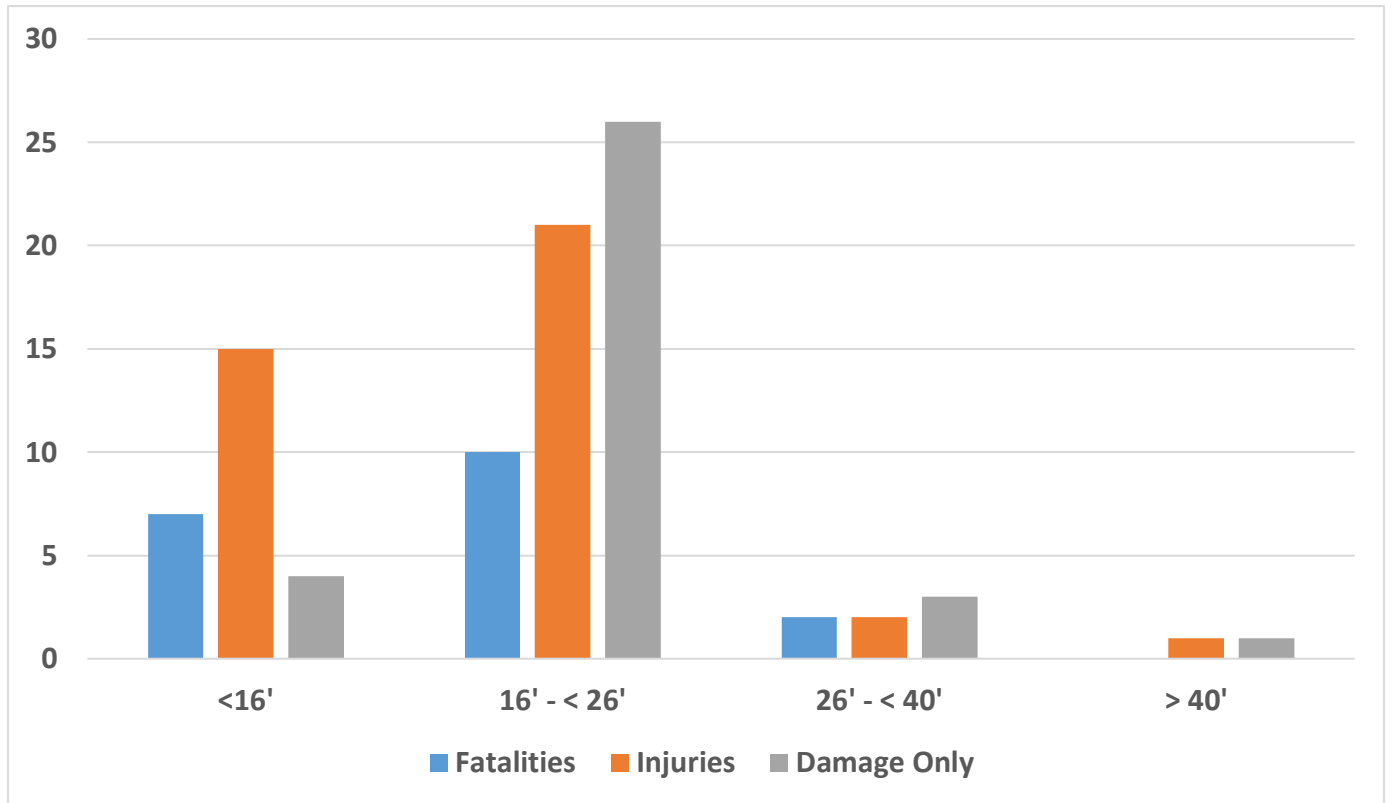
Failure of Vessel



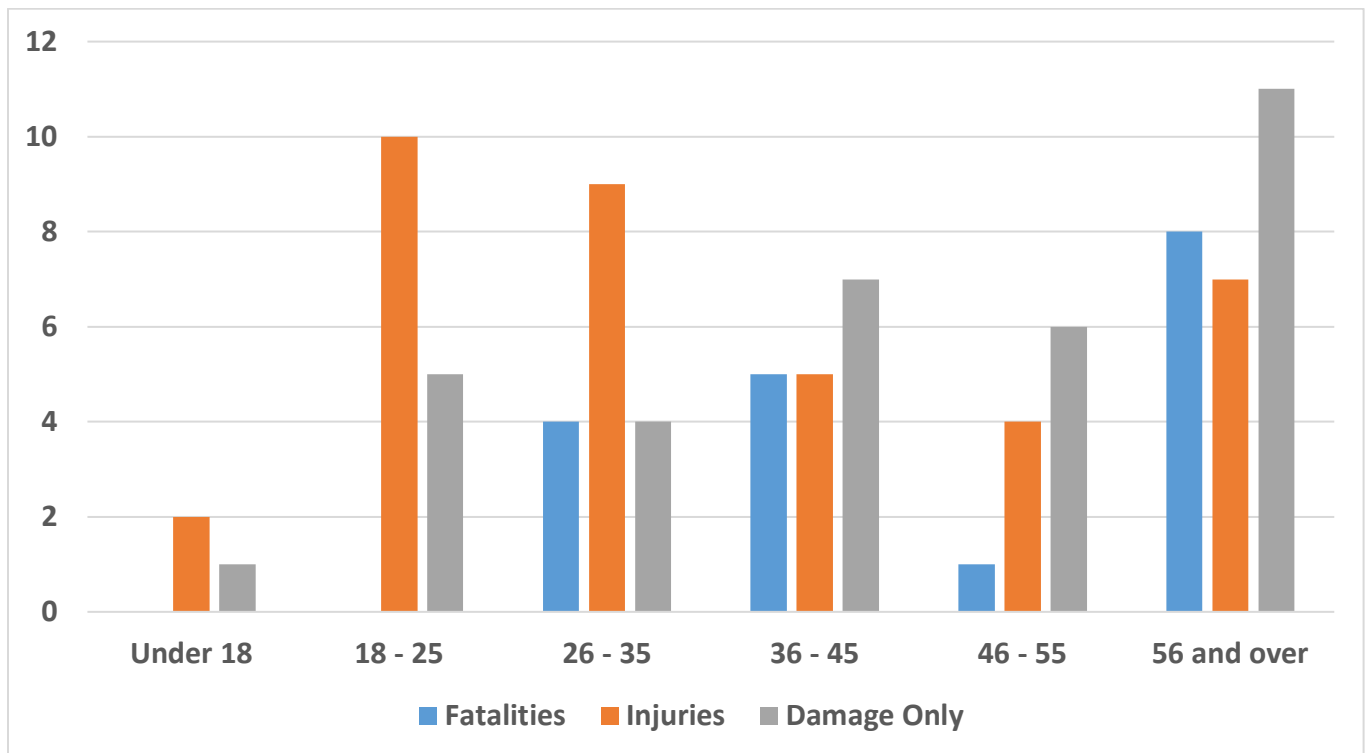
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities – Contributing Factor (detailed)



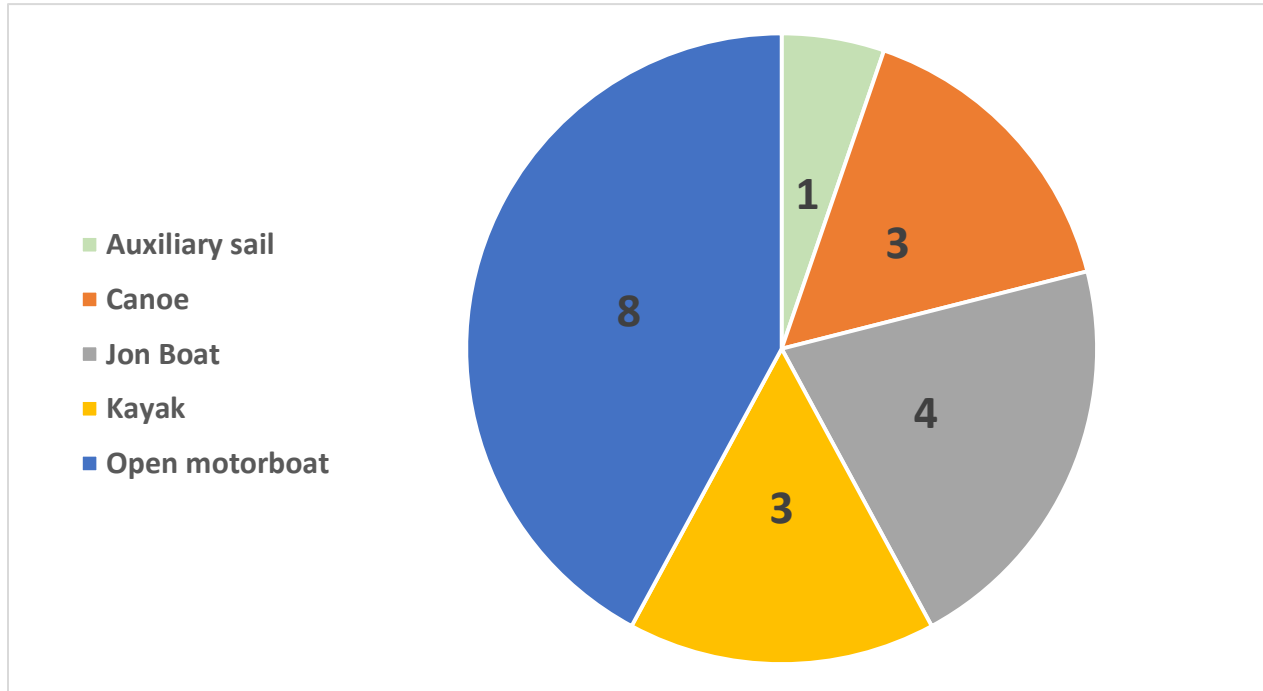
2021 Boating Incidents and Fatalities by Vessel Size



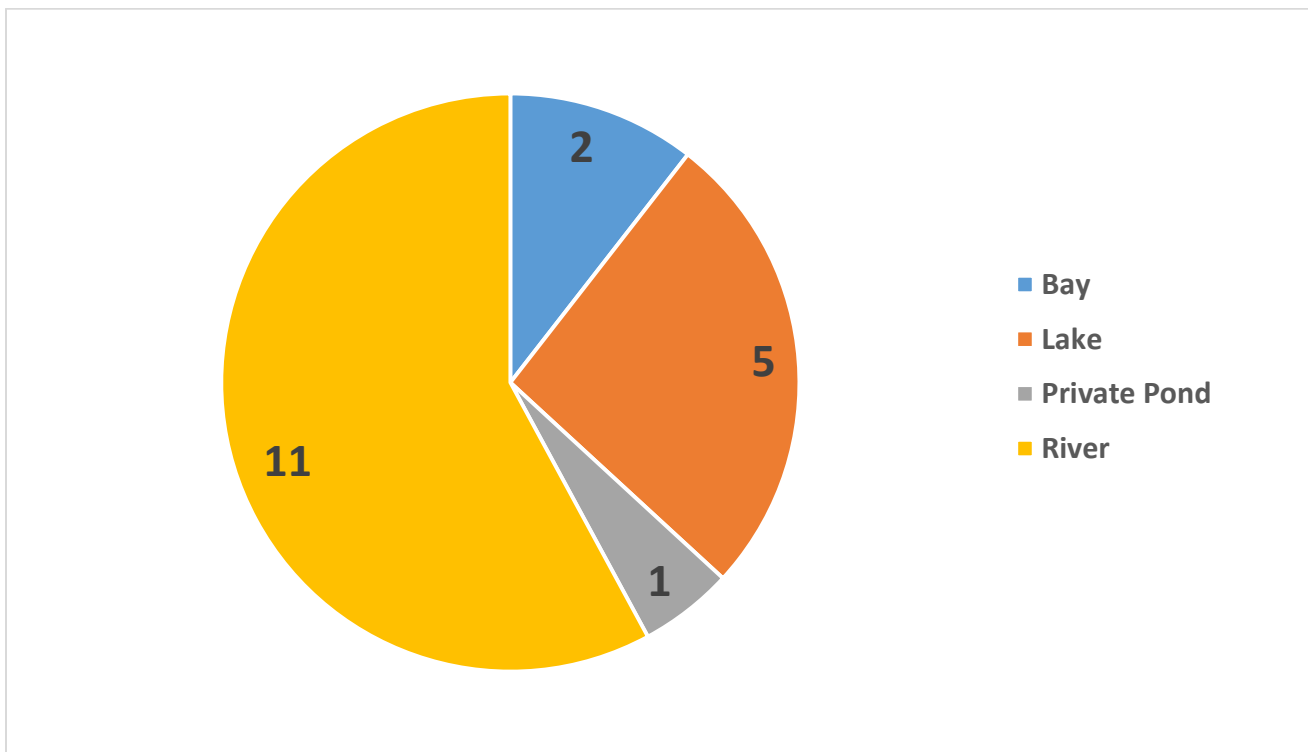
2021 Boat Incidents Age of Operators



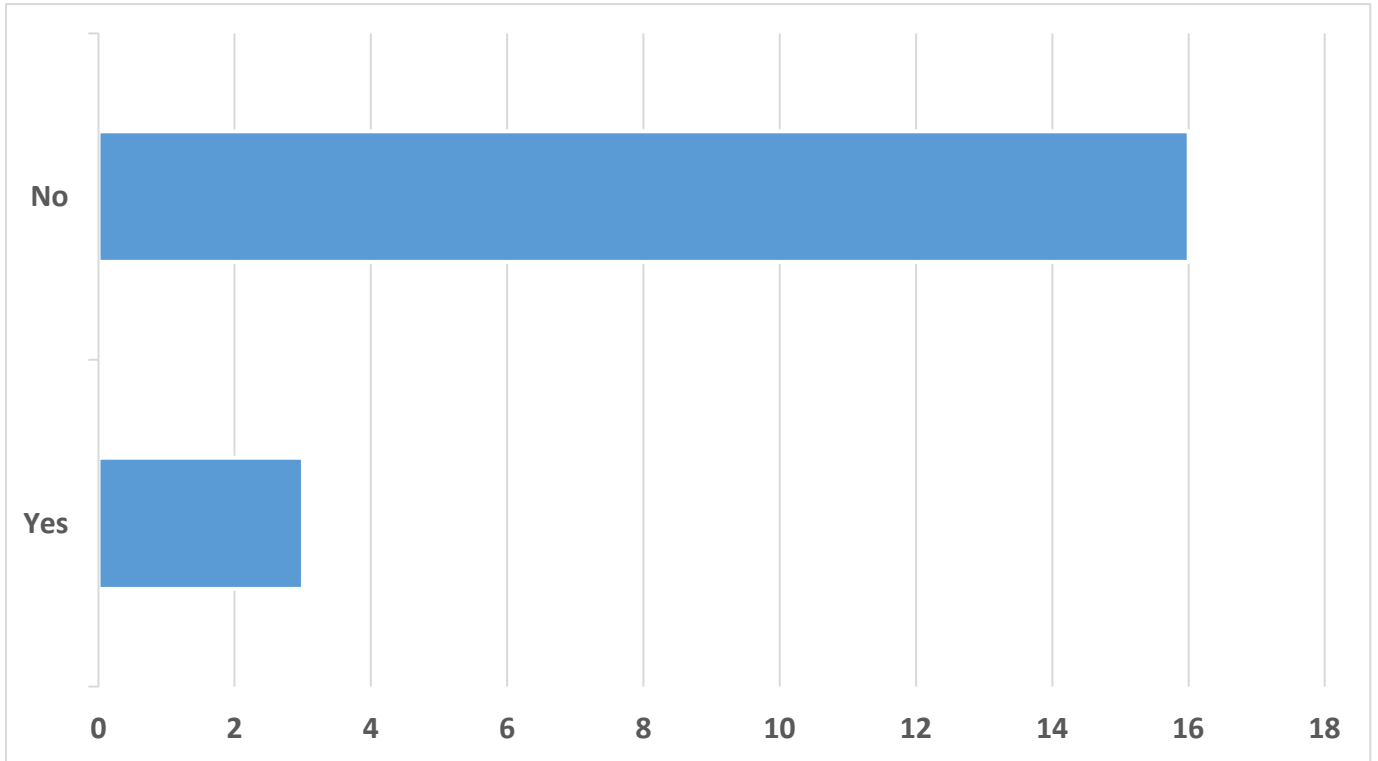
2021 Boating Fatalities – By Vessel Type



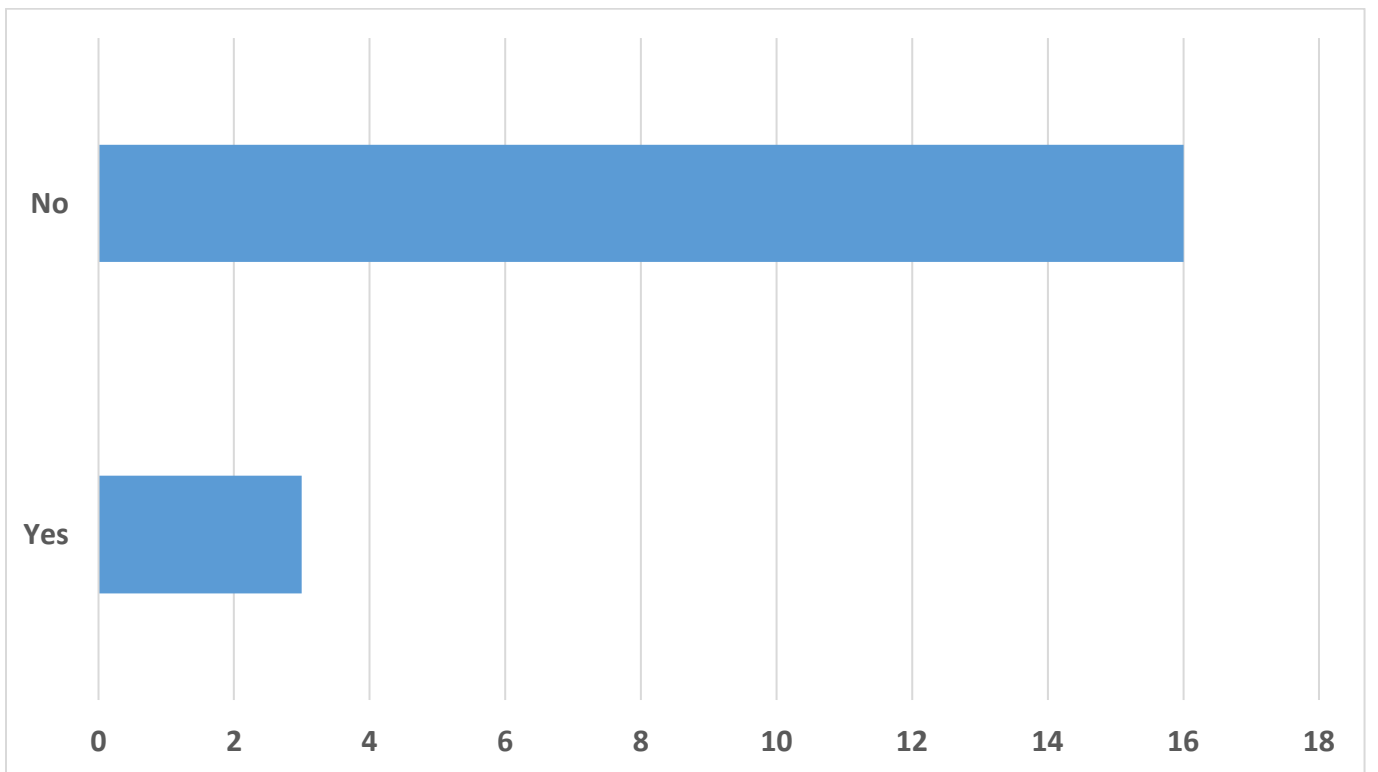
2021 Boating Fatalities – By Waterbody Type



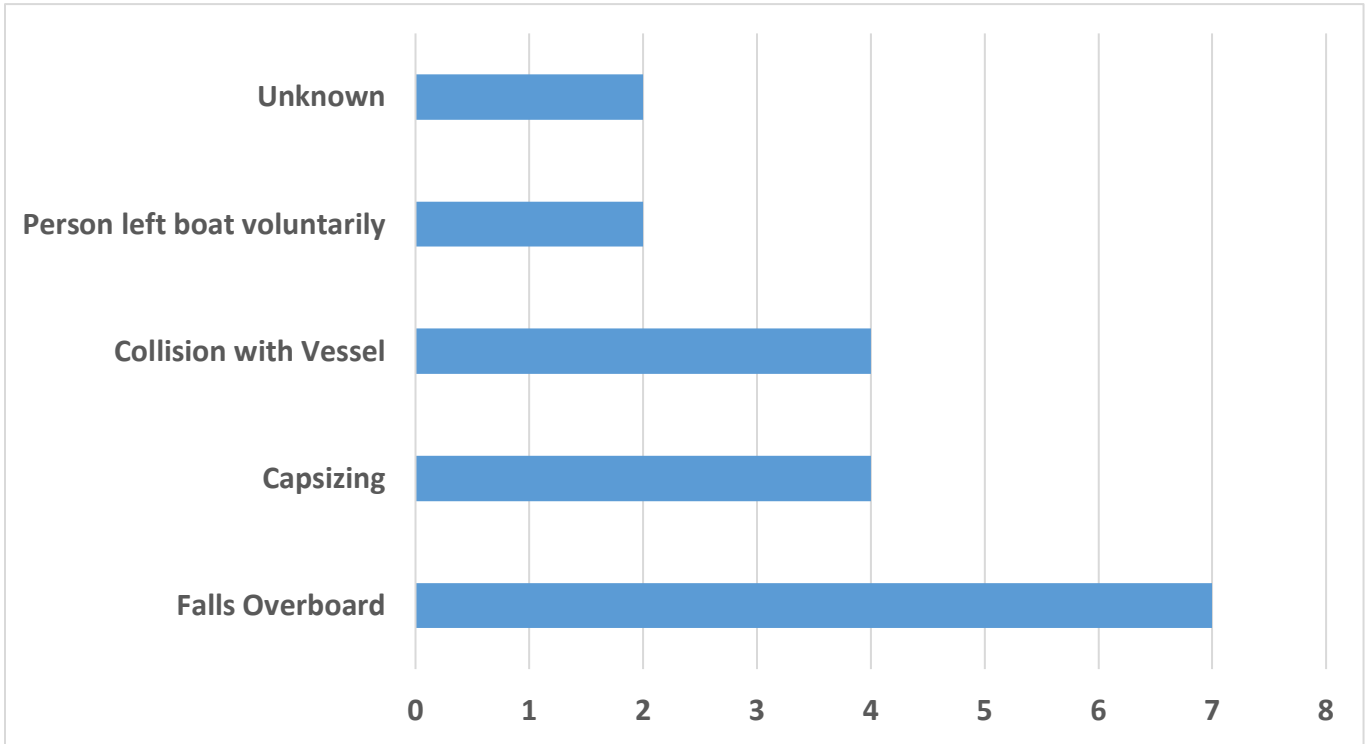
2021 Boating Fatalities – Alcohol/Drug Use



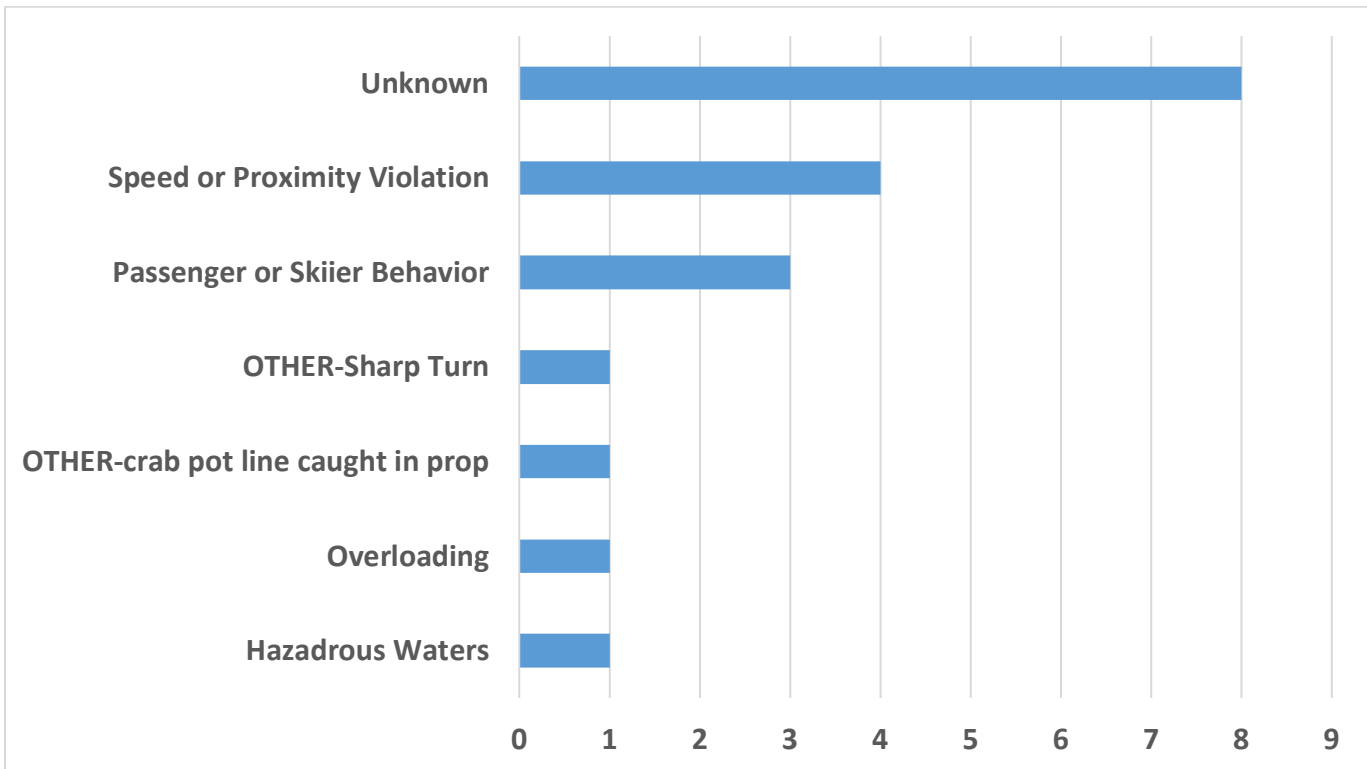
2021 Boating Fatalities – Life Jacket Use



2021 Boating Fatalities – Type of Incident



2021 Boating Fatalities – Cause of Incident



2021 Boating Fatalities Summaries

2/12/2021 - Smith Mountain Lake, Franklin County

An 18' open motorboat was just launched when the operator fell overboard and was seen by by-standers struggling in the water. The operator tried to swim to the shore, but both the vessel and the operator continued to drift further away from the shore and the boat ramp. Someone on the shore tried to throw a life jacket to the operator and other by-standers entered the water to help. The 35 year old male was not wearing a life jacket and drown, hypothermia was a contributing factor.

2/27/2021 – Chesapeake, Accomack County

A 37' sailboat with one person onboard was reported overdue. During the search and rescue, the vessel was found and the victim was recovered from the water. Despite wearing a life jacket, the 40 year old female drown.

3/3/2021 - Appomattox River, City of Hopewell

While kayaking on the Appomattox River by the Hopewell City Marina, the 37 year old male operator fell out of his 8' kayak and drown. The operator had not completed a boating safety course (and was not required to complete one) and was not wearing a life jacket.

03/10/2021 – Claytor Lake, Pulaski County

Two open motorboats (18') were operating on Claytor Lake. One boat struck the other in the port stern of the other vessel. The impact caused both operators to be ejected from their respective boats and subsequently drown. Neither the 66 year old male operator nor the 70 year old male operator was wearing a life jacket.

3/20/2021 - Lake Gaston, Mecklenburg

A 63 year old male was fishing from a 14' canoe. For an unknown reason, the canoe overturned resulting in the drowning of the operator. No life jackets were worn.

5/2/2021 - James River, James City County

A 34 year old male departed Grey's Creek Marina at approximately 5:38 pm. The vessel was found aground close to Two Rivers Marina at approximately 10:40 am the next day, but the operator was not onboard. The vessel was found with both engines down, running motor, and controls were in neutral. The operator was later found deceased. The operator drown, no life jackets were worn.

05/19/2021 – Elizabeth River, City of Chesapeake

At 9:04 pm, a 19' open motorboat struck a 59' tug boat head on. The 36 year old male operator and 8 year old passenger died as a result of blunt force trauma. The cause was failure of the open motorboat to take evasive action. The operator had not completed a boating safety course and was not wearing a life jacket.

6/5/2021 - New River, Montgomery County

Two people were in a 16' canoe in the rapids of the Arsenal Falls on the New River. Both subjects flipped out of the 16 ft. canoe in the rapids. One occupant located a life jacket while in the water and was able to put it on. The other occupant attempted to swim to a throwable life jacket but was swept underwater and did not resurface. The 58 year old male drown.

6/8/2021 – Baylor's Pond, Essex County

Two people were fishing in a canoe when one of the people stood up to get more comfortable. This movement rocked the canoe, and the victim fell out of the canoe. The other occupant of the canoe tried to retrieve the person in the water, but was unable to do so. The 33 year old male drown. No life jackets were on the canoe.

06/19/2021 - Stony Creek, Sussex

Three males went fishing in a 12' boat jon boat around 12:00 pm. The boat started to take on water, and the three of them fell out into the river. Two passengers were able to swim to shore, but the operator, a 51 year old male was not able to swim to shore. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and drown. The cause of the incident was overloading of the vessel.

7/3/2021 - New River, Pulaski County

A 56 year old male was fishing in a 12' kayak. His wife waited for him downstream of some rapids. She heard a yell but was unable to see him. The victim was recovered the next day. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and drown.

7/3/2021 - Elkhorn Lake, Pittsylvania County

Two males were fishing in a 14' jon boat at Elkhorn Lake in Pittsylvania County Virginia. They replaced a broken seat with another seat, but were unable to secure it to the boat. The operator was sitting in this replacement seat that was not secured to the boat. The operator turned in the seat to turn on the trolling motor and fell into the water. The other occupant attempted to recover the operator with a fishing pole, but was unsuccessful. The operator, a 72 year old male, was not wearing a life jacket, did not know how to swim, and drown.

7/17/2021 – Pamunkey, New Kent

The operator of an 18' jon boat entered the water to use the restroom. He let go of the boat and was carried away by the current. The passenger pulled the anchor and moved the vessel to retrieve the person in the water. He was not able to maintain his grip on the vessel and was pulled under by the current. The 37 year old male was not wearing a life jacket and drown.

8/6/2021 – James River, Newport News

A body was found along the rip-rap, near Anderson Park, by two persons walking along the MMBT overlook picnic area. The overturned vessel, a 12' jon boat, was found on the Hampton Bar with no apparent cause or witnesses to the accident. A life jacket was found near the body, along with a throwable life jacket. The victim, a 42 year old male had drown.

8/6/2021 – Giles, New River

A kayak was located upside down anchored with the paddle on top. The operator was located downstream about ¾ mile from the kayak. Despite wearing a life jacket, the 68 year old male drown.

8/6/2021 – James River, Chesterfield County

A 17' open motorboat was traveling on the James River and the operator said he may have taken his hands off the wheel momentarily, which resulted the vessel pulling to the right. The operator tried to correct and gain control of the vessel and he looked over and saw his passenger was no longer in the boat. The 78 year old male passenger was not wearing a life jacket and drown.

9/2/2021 – Chesapeake Bay, Northumberland

On September 2, 2021 at approximately 2:50 pm, authorities were notified of an overdue boater. The marine weather forecast indicated north winds of 15-20 knots and waves of 2-3 feet. The vessel was found drifting, with the engine off and the motor tilted with a crab pot line wound around the prop. It appears the operator left the vessel in an attempt to remove the line from the prop in heavy seas. The 69 year old male drown, no life jackets were worn.

Incident Summaries from Selected Boating Injuries

1/27/2021 – Chesapeake Bay, City of Norfolk

The vessel operator stated that they were traveling east bound in the Chesapeake Bay approximately 1 mile off shore. A container ship passed causing a large wake. The operator turned into the wake causing the vessel to move violently and lifted the passenger off the seat. The passenger struck his back on the edge of the seat. The passenger was transported by Norfolk EMS to Sentara Leigh Hospital. The operator was a 41 year old male.

5/1/2021 – Smith Mountain Lake, Franklin County

Two individuals on a PWC were towing three individuals on an inter-tube. The operator made a sharp turn within a cove, hit a wake then straighten back up. The inter-tube continued turning striking a fixed dock, sending the three individuals onto the fixed dock. Three individuals went to Franklin Memorial to get injuries checked. The operator was a 19 year old male.

6/19/2021 – Smith Mountain Lake, Bedford County

The 18' open motorboat was being loaded into the slip and the operator gave it some throttle because the prop was hung on the boat lift. A wake then came from the stern of the boat and the prop freed-up and the boat went in forward motion completely under the dock walkway at the bow of the boat pushing the boat completely under the fixed walkway. Four people were injured. The operator was a 55 year old male with less than 100 hours experience.

6/23/2021 – Buggs Island Lake, Mecklenburg County

As a pontoon boat was in the process of docking a juvenile jumped out the side gate into the water without the operator's knowledge. The boat did not have a good approach so the operator had to put the boat in reverse and back up to re-approach the dock. While backing up the boats motor and propeller struck the juvenile in the water. Juvenile suffered lacerations to both lower legs. The operator was a 74 year old female with less than 100 hours of boating experience.

7/12/2022 – James River, Chesterfield County

A PWC and bass boat were navigating toward each other on opposite sides of the river channel. At the last minute, the PWC veered into the path of the bass boat. This resulted in major injuries to the operator of the PWC. The operator of the PWC was a 28 year old female with less than 20 hours of experience.

7/17/2021 – Lake Anna, Spotsylvania County

Operator of PWC struck a wake that caused his face to collide with handlebars, causing injury to lower lip, teeth, and right cheek. Operator was thrown from PWC and was recovered from the water by a passer-by and was discovered floating face up while wearing his PFD. The operator sustained substantial injuries to their teeth and mouth from the impact. The operator was a 45 year old male with less than 100 hours of boating experience.

12/21/2021 – Little Creek, City of Norfolk

A 21' open motorboat was traveling outbound in the Little Creek entrance channel near the end of the West side jetty. The vessel lost power and drifted towards the jetty. The operator of the vessel attempted to keep the vessel from striking the rocks using a boat hook. He slipped off the bow of the vessel and fell overboard. The vessel forced him against the rocks injuring his left side ribs and causing a laceration to the palm of his right hand. The operator was a 32 year old male with over 500 hours of experience.