



Maritime Activity & Risk Investigation Network

MARIN Report: #2004-01
Recreational Boating Survey Guidelines

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Suggested Materials

- 3-4 clipboards for people to use to fill out the surveys
- Pens attached to the clipboards with string to prevent people from walking away with them
- Maps taped to the back of the clipboards for easy reference
- Signs or posters – in Toronto we used 6 letter-sized laminated sheets, 1 with each of the following information:
 - “Recreational Boating Survey”
 - MARIN Logo
 - Dalhousie Logo
 - “Supported By:”
 - Canadian Coast Guard Logo
 - National Search and Rescue Secretariat LogoHaving 6 smaller signs rather than one big poster makes display arrangements more flexible. There may not be enough room for one big poster so having smaller ones allows you improvise.
- Nametags to identify the survey administrators
- Container for storing completed surveys – In Toronto we used half of a small cardboard box with a label taped to it saying “Completed Surveys”.
- Binder with ancillary materials (i.e. boat pictures, conversion charts)

Participant Requirements

- Resident of Canada
- Household owns a boat which the participant has used in the last year

If an individual hasn't used their boat(s) in the last year, they fill out the first and last sections only (boats owned and personal information respectively).

Clarification of terms

Owned in your household = you or someone in your immediate family, living in the same household owns

You Use = you personally use

Trip = More or less continuous use (no more than ~1 hr break)
Return to origin (some exceptions)

Approaching People

The way you approach someone will vary depending on the individual and the nature of the booth and surroundings. Obviously you have to find a balance between being too aggressive and not being aggressive enough. At the Toronto Boat Show, we were set up in the Coast Guard booth, so normally I would catch people after they had finished talking with the Coast Guard representatives. When people either slowed down to look at my table or made eye contact with me I would start by greeting people with a “Hi, how are you?”. Before asking someone to participate, it is important to determine if they actually own a boat since this is a requirement to take part. If they say “yes” when asked if they own a boat, I would say something along the lines of the following:

“I’m a researcher from Dalhousie University in Halifax in a group that’s supported by the Coast Guard. We are working on creating a database of maritime activity in Canada to help improve Search and Rescue operations. We are doing of survey of boat owners to learn more about boating behaviors of different types of recreational boaters. Would you have a few minutes to participate?”

If they say “yes”, I would hand them the survey and tell them that they’ll need to use the map attached to the back of the clipboard to answer some of the questions. I would also ask them to let me know if they have any questions.

If the person I approached didn’t own a boat, I would still explain to them briefly what we are doing and tell them that, unfortunately, they cannot participate because the survey is aimed at boat owners only.

Breakdown of Survey

Section 1 – Boats Owned

In this section we would like to know all boats owned in this person’s household. The boats should be listed in order of most frequently used (by the participant) through to least frequently used. Under **Type #**, the participant should enter the type number from the key on the left. If their boat does not fit into any of the categories, they should enter ‘12’ for ‘Other’ and beside it, write in the boat type.

Note: We are **NOT** requesting that the most frequently used boat in the **household** be listed first, but rather descending order of usage by the survey **participant**.

Supplementary Material:

- Pictures of boat types – If a participant is unsure as to what category their boat falls under, the pictures of typical boats in each category can be used as a guide.
- Length conversion chart – If a participant only knows the length of their boat in metres, use the conversion chart to convert the length to feet.

Common problems/questions:

- Some people have a water-accessed cottage and use a small boat to commute and also have their “recreational” boat at the cottage. Some people use their commuter boat the most often but use their “recreational” boat for longer periods of time. In these cases, I told them to write down the one they think use the most in terms of total duration on the water. (One woman had only a 5-minute commute so she put the commuter boat second).

Section 2 a – Boating Behavior

This section applies only to the boat that the participant used the most frequently in 2003 (this is the boat specified in line ‘A’ of the table in the previous section). If they did not use this boat in 2003 (and consequently any of their boats), tell them to skip this section and fill out only the personal information section at the bottom.

The following are notes on specific questions or groups of questions:

What is the **usual** purpose of your boating trips?

We are looking for **one** response (the one activity that they usually do). If there is more than one item checked, we will assume that these purposes are equally split across all of their boating trips.

- [Estimate the number of trips you take on this boat each month of the year
How long are you **typically** on the water each trip?
What is your **maximum** time on the water for a trip?

For these questions, a trip is defined by:

Trip = More or less continuous use (no more than ~1 hr break)
Return to origin (some exceptions)

How fast do you normally travel?

Some people don't know how fast they travel in km/hr. We have a conversion chart in the ancillary materials if people need to convert knots or mi/hr to km/hr.

- [How far from shore do you normally travel?
- [How far do you travel from your launch point?

For these questions we want people to enter the distance in the space and then check what units they specified it in. These 2 questions are similar but allow us to differentiate between going a long distance from shore and going a long distance but staying close to shore the whole time.

- [How many people are typically on board?
- [What is the maximum capacity of this vessel?

A lot of people don't know what the maximum capacity of their vessel is so it's ok for them to leave it blank.

- [What is the postal code of your primary residence? _____
- [Where is your boat normally stored during boating season? (see map for grid number) _____
Is this: your primary residence? your cottage? marina? other?: _____
- [Where do you boat most often? (see map for grid number) _____ Name of River/Lake/etc.: _____
- [What percentage of your trips on this boat do you do at this location? _____%

For these questions, we are trying to get information on where the person boats and where this is in relation to their primary residence and where their boat is stored during boating season (i.e. where they boat from). If their boat storage or boating location is not shown on the map, just get them to write down the place name (probably a town) and province (we ask them to indicate their boating location anyway). The last question is there to give us an idea of what proportion of trips on this boat this person actually does at the location they specified.

Supplementary Materials:

- Maps for indicating the grid number of where the participant's boat is stored during boating season and where he/she boats most often.
- Speed conversion chart for converting knots or mi/hr to km/hr.

Common problems/questions:

- This section does not apply to trips made on other people's boats or rented boats; **ONLY** the one that the participant uses the most amongst those owned in the participant's household.
- Several people asked for clarification on what I meant by a trip. We have defined a trip as being more or less continuous (no more than 1 hr break) and normally means returning to the point of departure. The following are some common cases of boating activity and how we have counted the number of trips for each:
 - At the Toronto Boat Show, a lot of people said that they lived on their sailboat for most of the summer and wanted to know if they should consider that one trip. I told them to count their trips as the number of times that they were actually traveling (not docked). Most of these people put 1 trip/day (30 or 31 per month).
 - For someone who uses their boat for water-skiing or tubing, as long as it is ongoing with quick interruptions for picking people up or dropping them off (i.e. less than 1 hr breaks), it would be considered one trip.
- A lot of people couldn't find the map even though I told them at the beginning that it was on the back of the clipboard. People seemed to tune me out as soon as I handed them the survey. Almost everyone flipped over the actual survey form to look for the map when they came to those questions. Some people asked me where it was and for the others, I just kept an eye on them and when they started searching, I would let them know. It was pretty easy to do this without looking over their shoulder and making them feel uncomfortable.

Section 2 b – Weather Factors

For this section, we are trying to determine what weather conditions would prevent someone from going boating if they were already planning on going otherwise. As in the previous section, these questions apply only to the boat used most frequently. This is because perceptions of what is good and bad weather may depend on the type of boat people are using. For instance, people who sail may not go sailing if there is no wind whereas canoeists may not go boating if there is wind.

We have broken down weather into 6 specific factors. For each factor, we ask people to indicate the actual condition that would prevent them from boating and then to rate the factor on a scale of 1 to 5 for how important this weather factor is in their decision **NOT** to go boating (1 being not important, 5 being very important).

For temperature, wind speed and wave height we ask people to specify an actual value in the spaces provided and to check the units in which they were specified. A lot of the time, only one end of the spectrum would prevent people from boating. For instance, for a lot of people, it's never too hot to go boating. In this case they would fill in the information after "the temperature was below _____" and leave the space after "**OR** above _____" blank.

For each of the remaining factors (Sun Exposure, Fog, and Precipitation) we want people to check the **most favorable** condition that would prevent them from boating.

If a factor has no influence on a person's decision not to go boating, they would only need to circle an importance of "1" (they would leave the middle section blank for that row).

Common problems/questions:

- Most of the questions were along the lines of "This factor doesn't matter to me, what should I do?". I would tell them to leave the conditions section blank for that factor and to circle an importance of '1'.
- Some people, out of curiosity, would ask, "Who wouldn't go boating if it was sunny?". We included "Sunny" because some people who fish recreationally will only go when it is cloudy (the fish don't bite when it's sunny apparently). This was also the reason why we included "No Rain".

Section 3 – Personal Information

These questions are pretty straightforward.

Common problems/questions:

- The only question you'll probably get in this section is "Why are you asking this information?". The best answer is to explain to them that we are trying to find ways to predict recreational boating activity in Canada. We are trying to find different factors that can be used to create a predictive model. We are investigating the effects that characteristics of the population, such as gender, age and income, have on levels and distribution of recreational boating.

Additional Information

The following are general questions that may be asked regarding the survey or study as a whole:

- “What are you going to do with all this information?”
Response: We are going use the information collected on these surveys to generate a predictive model for recreational boating traffic in Canada. The information we collect will give us a better idea of boating behaviors for different types of recreational boating. The behaviors include frequency of boating activity and typical trip characteristics such as speed, distance, duration and purpose. We are also investigating the effect that various weather conditions have on boating behavior as well as characteristics of the boating population such as gender, age and income.
- “How is this going to help the Coast Guard/Search and Rescue?”
Response: By knowing more about the spatial and temporal distribution of various types of recreation boating, the Coast Guard will be better able to target prevention programmes and improve Search and Rescue planning.
- “What do I get for filling out the survey?”
Response: The obvious answer is “Nothing”, but I normally remind people that they are contributing to important research that will help in the Coast Guard’s Search and Rescue planning. Also, if you have a chair for them to sit down in while they fill out the survey, this may be worth mentioning as well. Most people like having a chance to take a break from walking and sit and relax for a few minutes.

Other Notes:

- In order to avoid duplications in the data, it is important that only one person per household participates in the survey. We have no way of fully enforcing this rule but we’d like to keep track of it as much as we can. If, for example, you happen to notice that a husband and wife both fill out a survey, make sure to flag the surveys by writing a quick note on the back so that we can account for this duplication during data collation.
- If there are any other problems or questions that you are unsure how to handle, just describe of the details of the case on the back of the survey form in question and we can deal with it at a later time.