

## 2020 Recreational Boating Statistics Report FAQ

Authored by the U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Division

### What is the 2020 Recreational Boating Statistics Report?

It is an annual report that summarizes all deaths, injuries, and accidents that occur while boating in calendar year 2020. It can be found on [uscgboating.org](https://uscgboating.org).

### What is the reporting threshold?

Per regulations, a boat operator must report when there is a death, disappearance, injury requiring more than first aid, \$2,000 or more in damage, and/or a totaled vessel.

### To whom does the operator report?

To the responsible state agency, which can be found by a quick internet search. In an emergency, a report to 911 will result in the notification of the appropriate agency.

### Why are deaths and injuries so much higher?

Boating activity was significantly higher during the pandemic. With the increased exposure (i.e., more boating hours), there was greater risk of deaths, injuries, and accidents.

### How much greater was boating activity?

Right now, we do not have quantitative data on the increase in activity. Anecdotally, we have heard that there have been increased numbers of boaters reported by some States, increases in insurance policies taken out/claims issued, and increases in boat sales, all of which suggest that activity increased. The Coast Guard is trying to obtain data to analyze these variables.

### Does the Coast Guard collect activity data?

The Coast Guard administers a five-year survey that collects exposure data for each state. The last time the survey was conducted was 2018. There was no survey done in 2020, so we do not have exposure data for the pandemic-induced boat activity.

### Is boating unsafe?

Boating is a relatively safe activity when compared with other modes of transportation, but there are actions that you can take to make it safer.

### What are the actions that Americans can take?

- **Wear a life jacket.** Most deaths occur by drowning (75%) and most drownings are victims who are not wearing a life jacket (86%). You never know when you might experience an event that will lead to you entering the water.
- **Boat sober.** Alcohol use is the single greatest contributing factor in fatal accidents.
- **Plan ahead.** A float plan left with a responsible person helps ensure we will come looking for you if you do not return on time. Don't forget to attach a recent photo of your boat.
- **Take the proper safety gear.** Are you ready to call for help? A marine VHF radio, visual distress signals, Personal Locator Beacon or EPIRB all shift the odds of survival in your favor.