

Report Overview

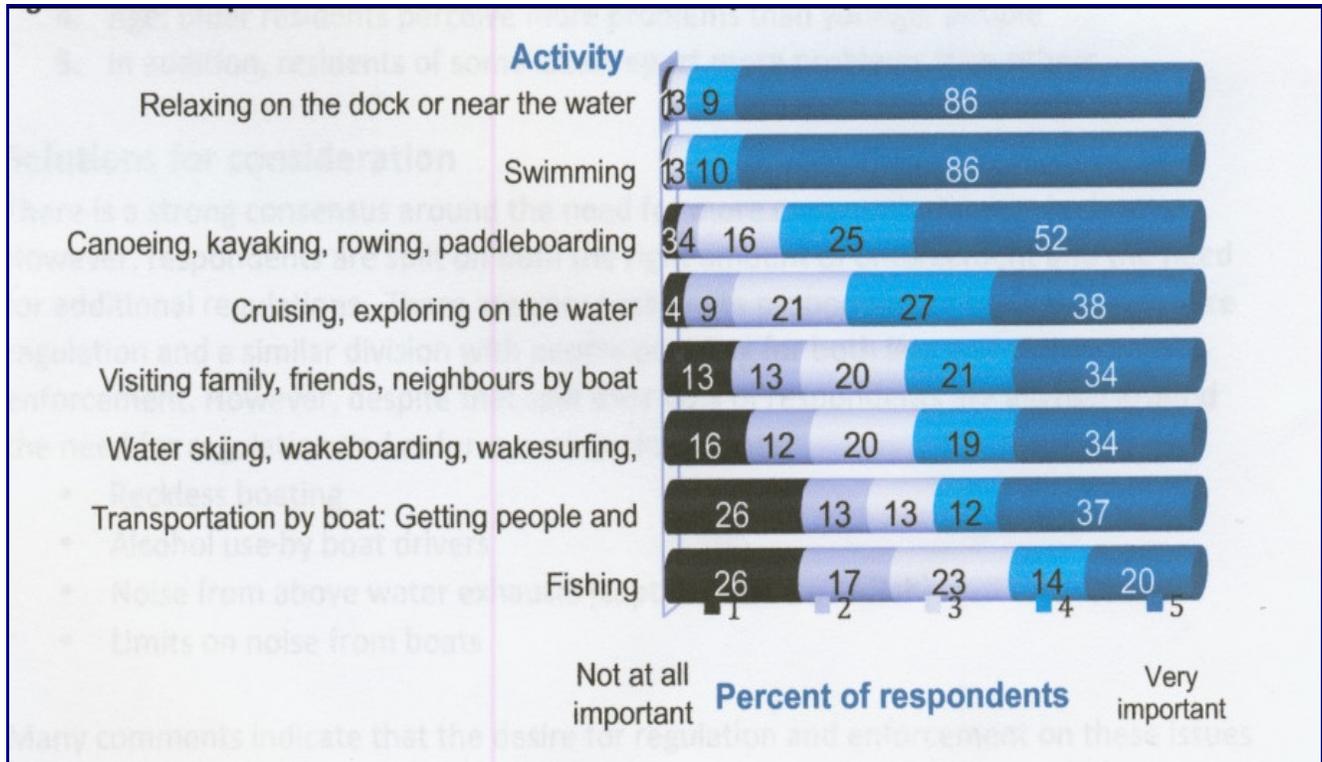
What did we hear?

We heard a powerful consensus from respondents across ages, locations and boating preferences around a few key themes (see figure 1):

- Safety is critical to almost everyone
- We have a responsibility to preserve the natural state of the lakes for future generations
- We like to hear the sounds of nature
- We like to spend time near the water
- We like to swim and use boats - 80% of the respondents say their families use a canoe and a similar number use power boats

Perceptions of safety and quiet on the lake correlate directly to enjoyment - this is true for different age groups, those who use very small or human powered craft and those who use large power boats and participate in towing sports. Almost everyone feels that safer and quieter lakes are more enjoyable.

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



The most commonly cited problems

The top five problems people experience on the lakes are:

- Boats going too fast close to shore
- Loud boat engines
- Large boat wakes
- Boaters not following the rules
- A lack of courtesy on the water.

Other issues that were mentioned by respondents include:

- The behaviour of PWC operators and the noise associated with PWC's
- Dissatisfaction with the current boat operators licensing system
- Loud music from boats (and cottages)
- Invasion of privacy by kayakers, canoeists and fishermen being too close to shore
- Resorts, camps and other commercial operations particularly relating to wakeboarding schools and the rentals of PWC
- OPP spot checks (responses indicating that there are both too few and too many)
- Frustration with the intrusiveness of aircraft, rafts and buoys
- Excessive use of fireworks.

Respondents' perception of the severity of the problems is affected by several factors:

1. Witnessing or being involved in an accident or close call: these individuals generally perceive there to be more problems
2. Horsepower: those with higher horsepower boats generally perceive there to be fewer problems
3. Traffic: those who live near a source of traffic such as a marina, channel, public wharves, or retail area experience more problems
4. Age: older residents perceive more problems than younger people
5. In addition, residents of some lakes report more problems than others.

Solutions for consideration

There is a strong consensus around the need for more communication and education. However, respondents are split on both the right amount of enforcement and the need for additional regulations. There are very passionate proponents of both less and more regulation and a similar division with people

pleading for both less and more enforcement. However, despite that split over 60% of respondents are aligned around the need for regulation and enforcement on four issues:

- Reckless boating
- Alcohol use by boat drivers
- Noise from above water exhausts (captain's choice switch)
- Limits on noise from boats

Many comments indicate that the desire for regulation and enforcement on these issues is tempered by discomfort with current enforcement, specifically OPP "spot checks" and the perception that these are a "nuisance" and don't address more critical issues.

There is a worrisome trend in PFD usage - the younger generation doesn't use PFD's to the extent that older people do. Drowning statistics in Ontario and in most jurisdictions around the world indicate that young, healthy males are the most frequent drowning victims and that appropriate use of PFD's saves lives.

Dialogue

We were fortunate to receive a huge, unprecedented response to the survey. With close to 2300 responses and over 130 pages of detailed and largely thoughtful comments, the message from this level of participation is unmistakable: people care deeply about their lake community and want their voices to be heard. The perspectives are different, passionate and sometimes angry.

Where do we go from here?

The detailed results of the survey will be shared with each of the lake associations who participated, the OPP, Transport Canada, elected officials locally, provincially and federally, marine manufacturers, area marinas and other community groups.

Safe Quiet Lakes will continue our communication and education campaigns and will work to facilitate dialogue between individuals and groups who want to address these issues in a constructive way.

More than 750 individuals voluntarily shared their email and contact information with Safe Quiet Lakes in completing the survey, and they will be kept informed of activities and opportunities for input.

Please join the dialogue by sharing your stories or ideas at www.safequiet.ca or volunteer to share our Boater's Code and our message of respectful boating.

Thank-you

Thank you to ERIN Research Inc. and to everyone who participated in the survey. And thank--you to all of our survey and supporting partners listed below:

Township of Muskoka Lakes

Township of Seguin

Blackstone Lake Cottagers Association

Bruce Lake Family Association

Horseshoe Lake Cottagers Association

Kahshe Lake Ratepayers Association

Lake Joseph North Association

Lake of Bays Association

Lake Rosseau North Association

Little Lake Joseph Association

Loon and Turtle Lake Cottage Association

Moon River Property Owners Association

Muskoka Lakes Association

North Alport Bay Ratepayers Association

Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association

Ratepayers' Association

Silver Lake (Port Carling) POA

Skeleton Lake Cottagers' Organization

South Muskoka Lake Community Association

Star Lake Woods Association

Stephens Bay Association

Sugar Lake Association

Sunny Lake Cottagers'