

PART 5

NON-AQUATIC DROWNINGS & OTHER INJURY FATALITIES INVOLVING FALLS INTO WATER

A non-aquatic drowning involves a victim who had not intended to be in the water, i.e., an unintentional fall into water. Such falls occur during recreational, daily living, and occupational activities. Most drownings from falls into water involve children or adults who are playing, walking, or fishing near water or on ice. Non-aquatic drownings account for 25% of drownings in Canada, excluding land and air transport.

It is informative to examine the circumstances of drownings from falls into different types of bodies of water by activity and by age group. For *recreational activities*, rivers and lakes are the most frequent location for non-aquatic drownings from falls into water, followed by home swimming pools. *Daily living and occupational incidents* most frequently involve rivers and lakes. Victims of falls during recreational activities in large bodies of water include both adults and children. Falls during daily living, occupational, and unknown activities affect mainly adults. Most drownings from falls *around the home* involve young children, mainly toddlers of 1-4 years of age, and home swimming pools are the most frequent body of water.

The risk groups for drownings from falls into swimming pools differ somewhat from those for most other bodies of water, in that nearly all of the victims from falls into swimming pools are *toddlers*. Toddlers are also the usual victims of drownings in other collections of water in and around the home. Since swimming pool drownings occur both from non-aquatic falls into water and from aquatic activities where the victim intended to be in the water, all pool drownings are discussed together in greater detail in Part 6 under special environments. Falls into water or through ice associated with travel on motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles are included in Part 7.

Drownings of *children* that result from falls into water are frequently associated with home swimming pools that lack a fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate. Many *adult* drownings from falls are associated with current, poor swimming ability, and/or impairment of brain function by alcohol or a chronic mental handicap.

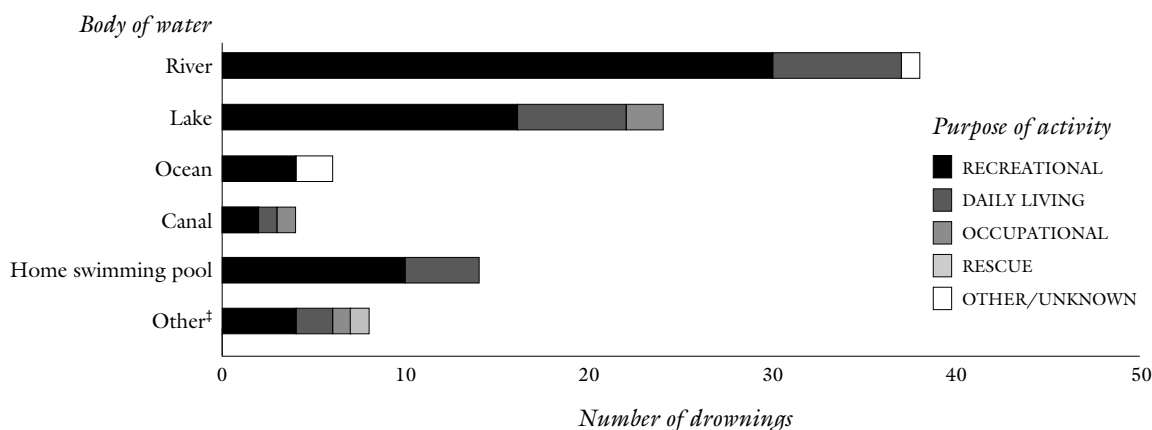
Ice-related incidents take about 20% of victims of non-aquatic drowning. More than half of these incidents involved rivers, reinforcing the point that rivers can never be considered safe due to constantly moving water. February was the most frequent months for such incidents. This might be simply because more people are exposed to skating and other activities at this time of year, or possibly due to overconfidence in the solidity of ice during the coldest month.

A category of drownings where falls into water are probable but unproven are those drownings where it was unknown whether the death occurred during non-aquatic, aquatic, or boating activities. This category of “unknowns” can be suspected to include many unwitnessed falls into water during non-aquatic activities, as well as possible suicides.

Deaths from falls into bathtubs are discussed separately in Part 4, since it is not always clear whether the victim had intended to be in the water, and this intent is the basis for classification of an incident as aquatic or non-aquatic.

Figure 5.1

DROWNINGS FROM FALLS INTO WATER DURING NON-AQUATIC ACTIVITIES BY PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY* & TYPE OF BODY OF WATER,† CANADA 1999 (n=94)

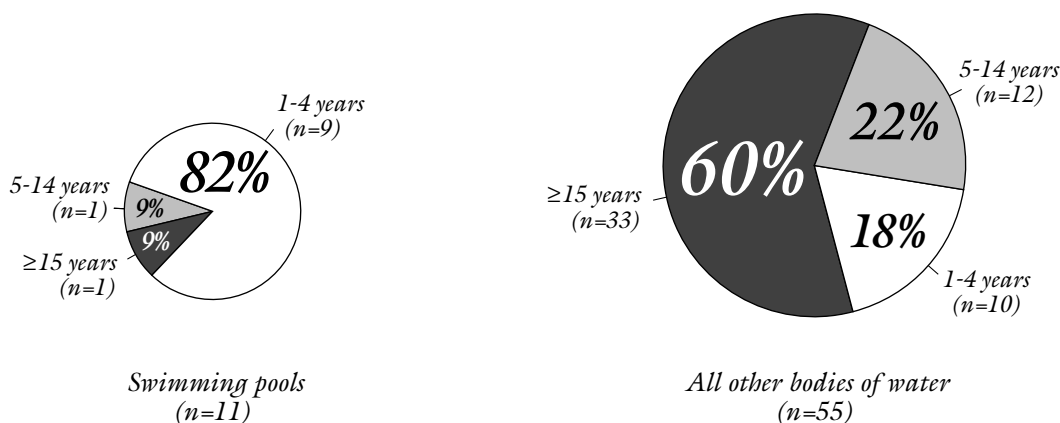


* Recreation includes adult leisure activities and children's play; daily living includes activities such as non-recreational travel by foot
 † "Lake" includes pond & reservoir ‡ Including recreational 4 (1 each of motel pool, dam, rut, cattle watering trough); daily living 2 (ditch, shallow well); occupational 1 (excavation hole); & rescue 1 (dam)

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Figure 5.2

DROWNINGS FROM FALLS INTO SWIMMING POOLS & ALL OTHER BODIES OF WATER* DURING NON-AQUATIC RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES† BY AGE OF VICTIMS, CANADA 1999 (n=66)



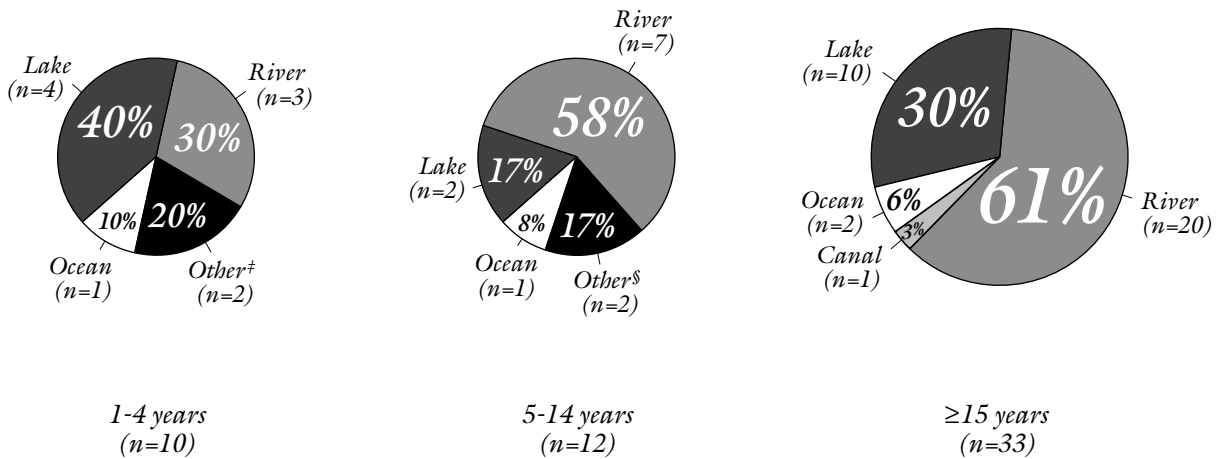
* See Figure 5.1 for information on types of bodies of water

† Including, for victims ≥15 years: walking 22, fishing from shore 4, partying 2, & 1 each of ice fishing, cleaning fishing gear, hunting, cycling, skating, unknown; for victims <15 years: playing/walking 30, & 1 each of fishing from shore, cycling

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Figure 5.3

DROWNINGS FROM FALLS INTO WATER OTHER THAN SWIMMING POOLS DURING NON-AQUATIC RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES BY AGE* & TYPE OF BODY OF WATER,† CANADA 1999 (n=55)

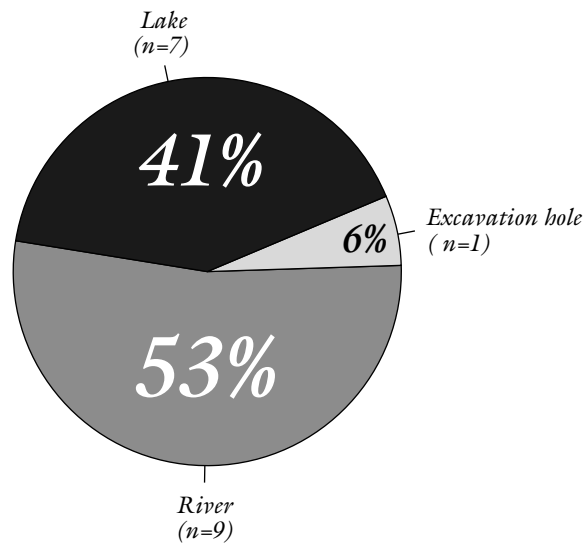


* There were no infant (<1 year) deaths from falls into water in 1999 † “Lake” includes pond & reservoir
‡ Including rut & cattle watering trough § Including canal & dam

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Figure 5.4

NON-AQUATIC DROWNINGS* IN PRESENCE OF ICE BY TYPE OF BODY OF WATER, CANADA 1999 (n=17)†

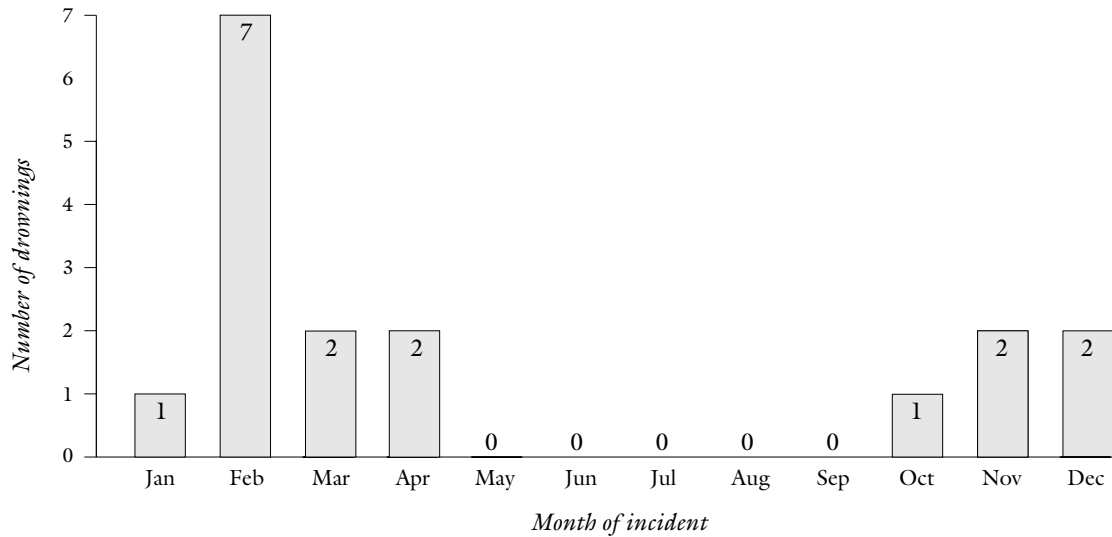


* Falls into water † For 94 non-aquatic drownings: ice present 17, no ice 71, & unknown 6

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Figure 5.5

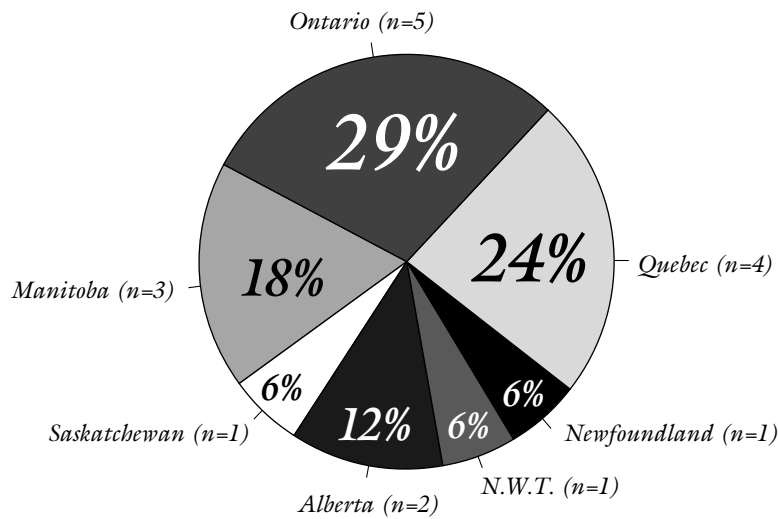
NON-AQUATIC DROWNINGS* IN PRESENCE OF ICE BY MONTH OF INCIDENT, CANADA 1999 (n=17)†



* Falls into water † For 94 non-aquatic drownings: ice present 17, no ice 71, & unknown 6
 Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Figure 5.6

NON-AQUATIC DROWNINGS* IN PRESENCE OF ICE BY REGION, CANADA 1999 (n=17)†



* Falls into water † For 94 non-aquatic drownings: ice present 17, no ice 71, & unknown 6
 Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001

Table 5.1

**WATER-RELATED INJURY FATALITIES OTHER THAN DROWNINGS*
DURING NON-AQUATIC ACTIVITIES,† CANADA 1999 (n=3)**

Activity/incident	No.	%	Nature of injury	No.	Age	Sex		Alcohol		Other risk factors§
						M	F	mg%‡	No.	
Walking/playing near water/on ice	3	100	Hypothermia	1	54	3	0	0	1	Fell off cliff, berry picking, sitting on cliff, walking in dark while partying
			Head injury	2	8, 18			127	1	
								—	1	
Total	3	100				3	0			

* Primary cause of death was injury other than drowning, although drowning may have complicated another injury;
in case of hypothermia, only hypothermia deaths reportedly uncomplicated by drowning are included here

† Excludes land & air transport drownings ‡ Legal limit is 80 mg % § Other factors that may have contributed to these incidents

Source: The Canadian Red Cross Society & the Canadian Surveillance System for Water-Related Fatalities, 2001