

# Summary of Recreational Boating Research conducted by Research New Zealand

September 2016





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## **Introduction**

Whether at sea, on lakes or rivers, recreational boating in New Zealand is a popular pastime and enjoyed by many people. There are however, a number of fatalities each year that are associated with this activity. In 2000 the National Pleasure Boat Safety Forum (Forum) was established to investigate and coordinate national recreational boating safety initiatives. Maritime New Zealand, functioning as the chair of the Forum, commissioned Research New Zealand (Research NZ) to survey the recreational boating population in order to provide more data to contribute to a more complete picture of the boating population in New Zealand. Additionally, the aim of the research was to gauge whether the appropriate safety messages and initiatives were reaching the appropriate audiences.

Between March and April 2016, Research NZ surveyed 1,500 New Zealanders aged 18 and over for this survey, with 765 (51%) reporting that they were some way involved in recreational boating. The purpose of this survey was to examine the extent to which New Zealand's adult population currently participate in recreational boating activities, with a particular focus on their safety-related attitudes and behaviours and their awareness of Maritime New Zealand's recent recreational boating safety campaign. Only households with landline phones were surveyed as part of this research.

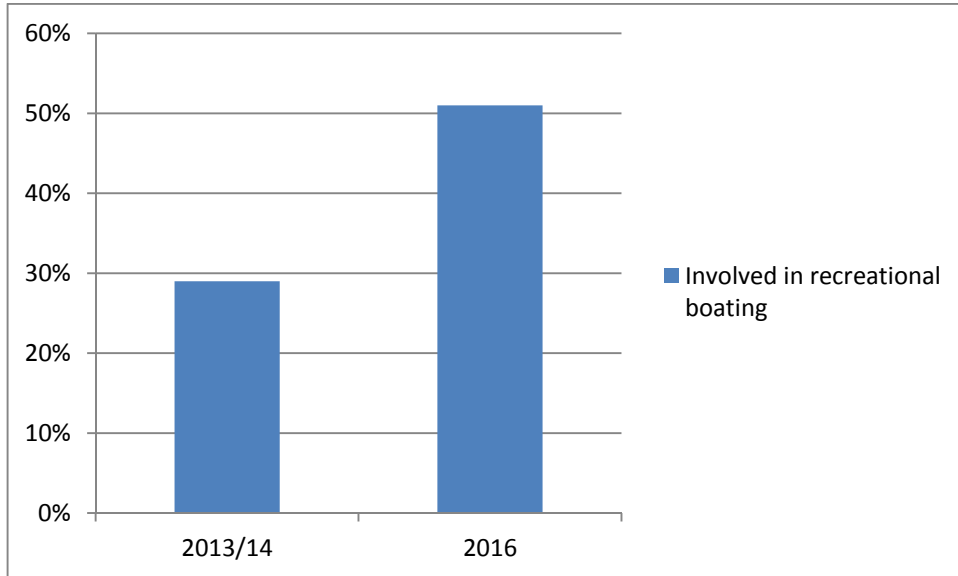
For the purpose of this research and reporting, recreational vessels were classified into the following six groups: Power boats under six metres; power boats six metres or more; sail boats under six metres; sail boats six metres or more; kayaks and users of 'other' vessels (canoes, SUPs, jet skis; dinghies and windsurfing boards). It should be noted when making direct comparisons between 2013/14 and 2016 survey periods that the most recent survey was conducted after one of New Zealand's hottest summers on record, while in contrast, the 2013/14 surveys were conducted during the winter months (in June/July).

## **Scope and spread of the recreational boating community**

One component of the survey measured a number of aspects of the recreational boating community (numbers involved, locations, number and types of vessels owned and used, age, gender, ethnicity and region). Each of these aspects of the recreational boating community will be summarised below.

## **Size of the New Zealand recreational boating community**

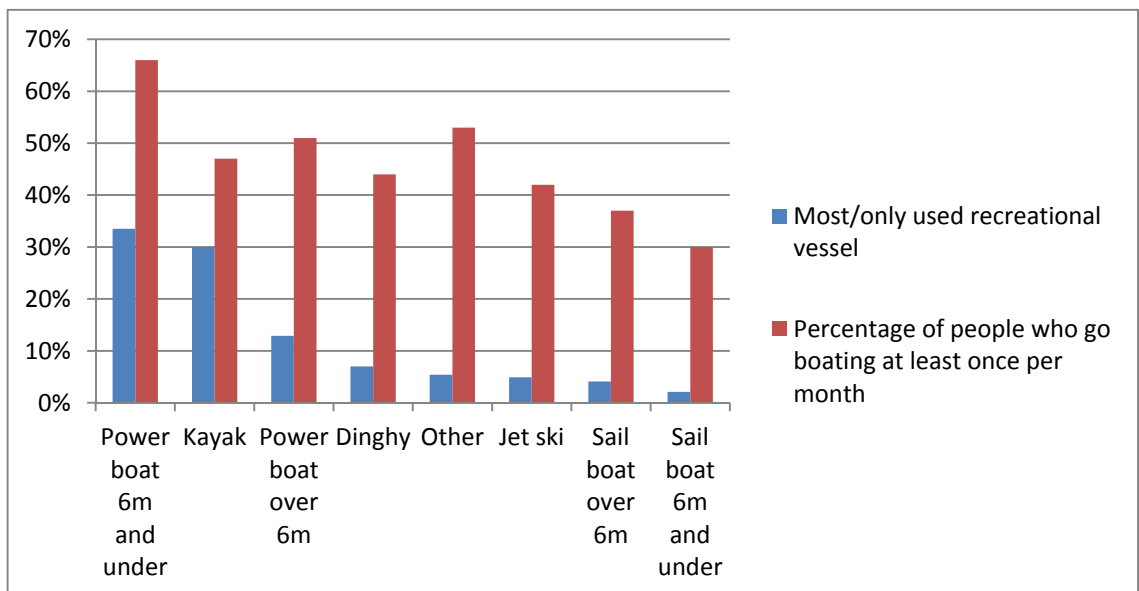
The survey determined that of the 1,500 people surveyed, 51% identified as being involved in recreational boating (Figure 1). Based on the survey responses and using the number of adult New Zealanders as identified by Statistics New Zealand as of 1 January 2016, this represents approximately 2,317,621 adult New Zealanders involved in recreational boating.



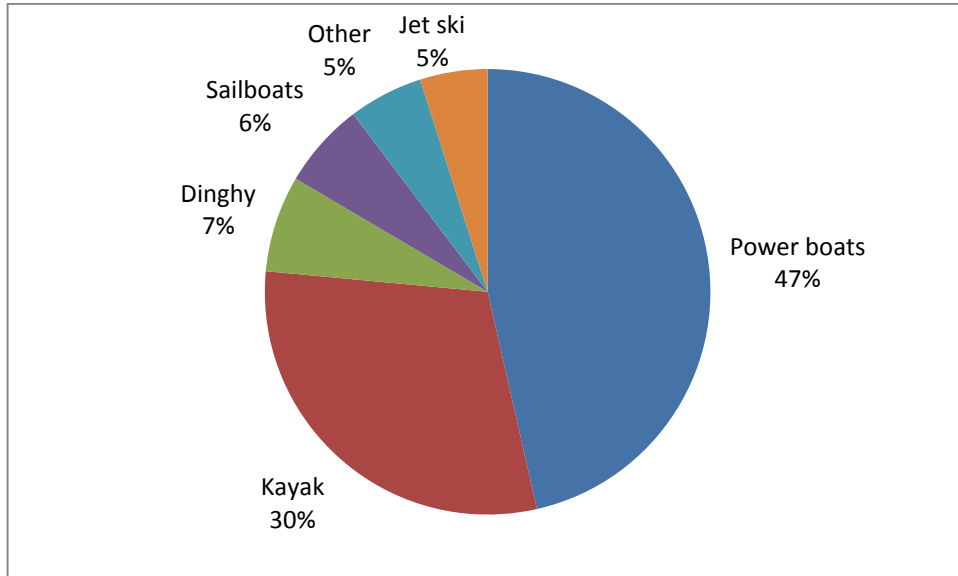
**Figure 1 Percentage of New Zealanders involved in recreational boating**

The majority of the recreational boating community in New Zealand reside in the upper North Island, with 22% in the Auckland region, 9% in the Waikato, 9% in the Bay of Plenty and 4% in Northland. Outside of this area, 16% live in Canterbury, 11% in Wellington-Wairarapa and 6% in Otago.

The proportion of recreational boaters using or owning different categories of recreational vessels can be seen in Table 1 below. The table also shows the percentage of recreational boaters who go out in each category of vessel at least once per month.

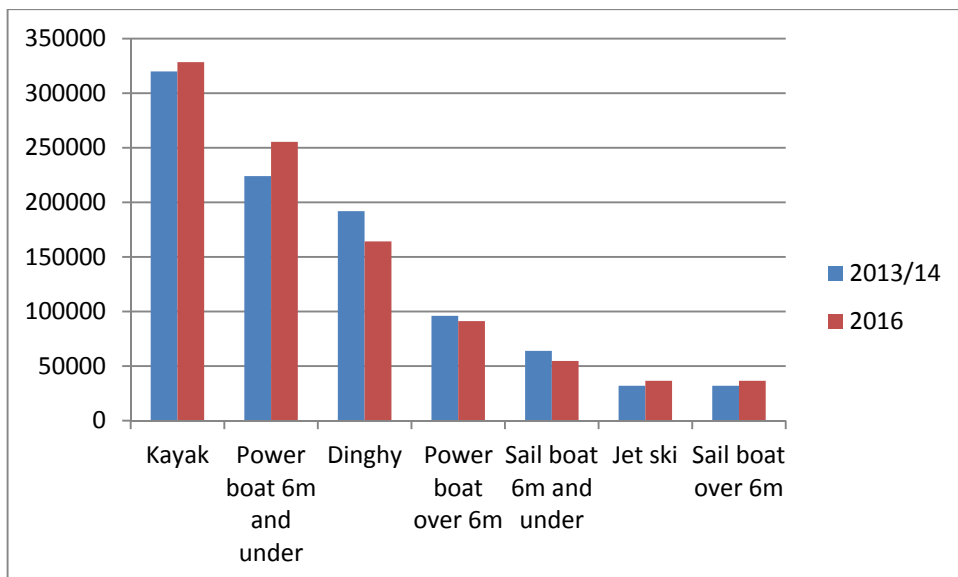


**Figure 2 Type of recreational vessel owned or used**



**Figure 3 Most popular recreational vessels in New Zealand**

The questions were refined to be able to make an estimation of the minimum number of vessel types that are owned in New Zealand. The questions did not take into account whether owners owned more than one of each type of vessel (Table 2). For example, the survey would capture ownership of a kayak and jet ski, but would not capture ownership of two canoes.



**Figure 4 Number of recreational vessels owned in New Zealand, 2013/14 & 2016**

Vessel category	Estimated number owned
Kayak	328,484
Power boat 6m and under	255,488
Dinghy	164,242
Power boat over 6m	91,246
Sail boat 6m and under	54,747
Jet ski	36,498
Sail boat over 6m	36,498

**Table 1 Estimated number of recreational vessels owned in New Zealand, by category**

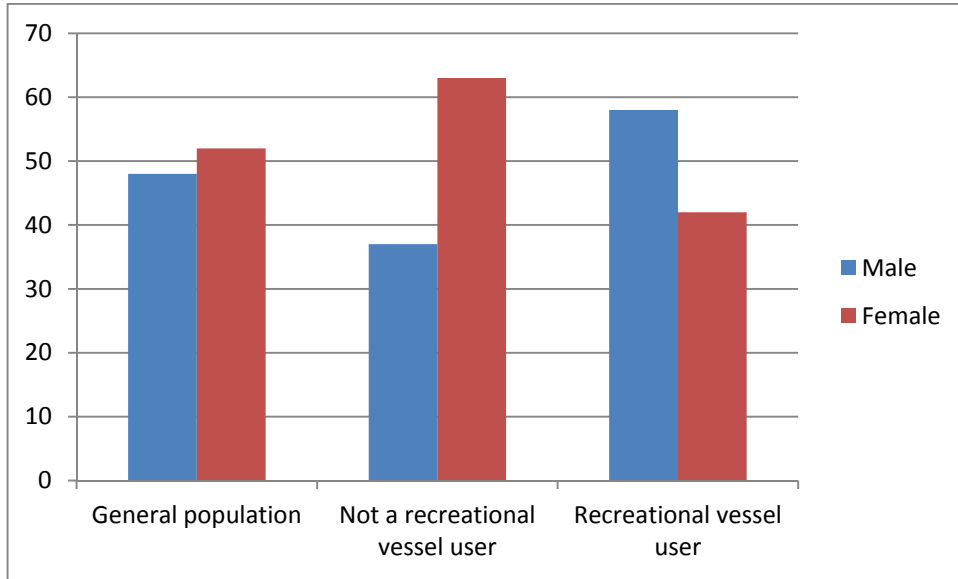
### **Demographics of the New Zealand recreational boating community**

The profile of the recreational boating community is presented below, with corresponding graphs in Appendix 1.

#### **Gender**

There is a larger percentage of males who own/use a recreational vessel (58%) compared to the proportion of males in the general population (48%). Females represent a smaller percentage of recreational vessel owners/users (42%), when compared to the general population (52%). Sail boat owners are predominately comprised of males, with 71% of that demographic, followed by 64% of power boat users and 57% of 'other vessels'. A larger proportion of females comprise the kayaking population with 52% of the kayak population.

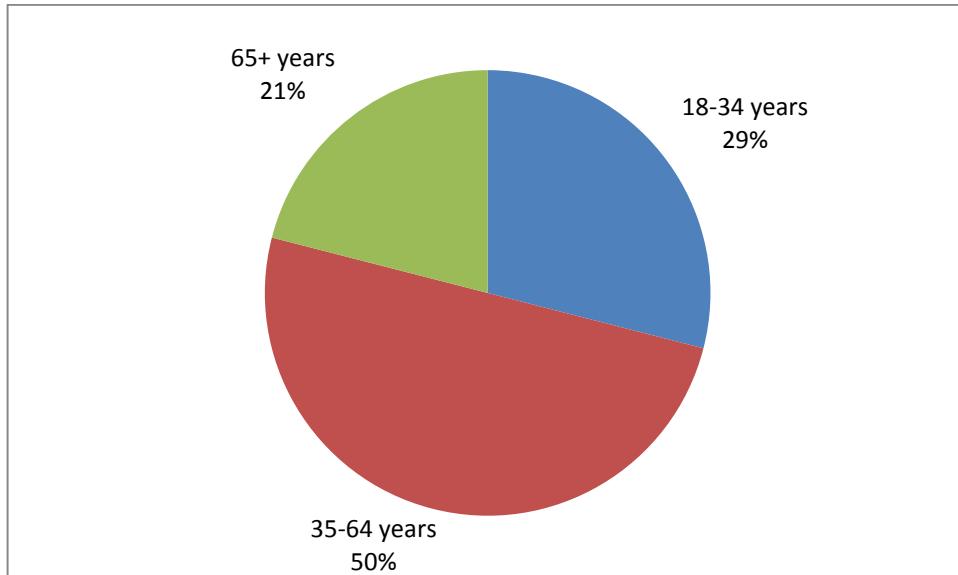




**Figure 5 Recreational boating community gender profile**

### Age

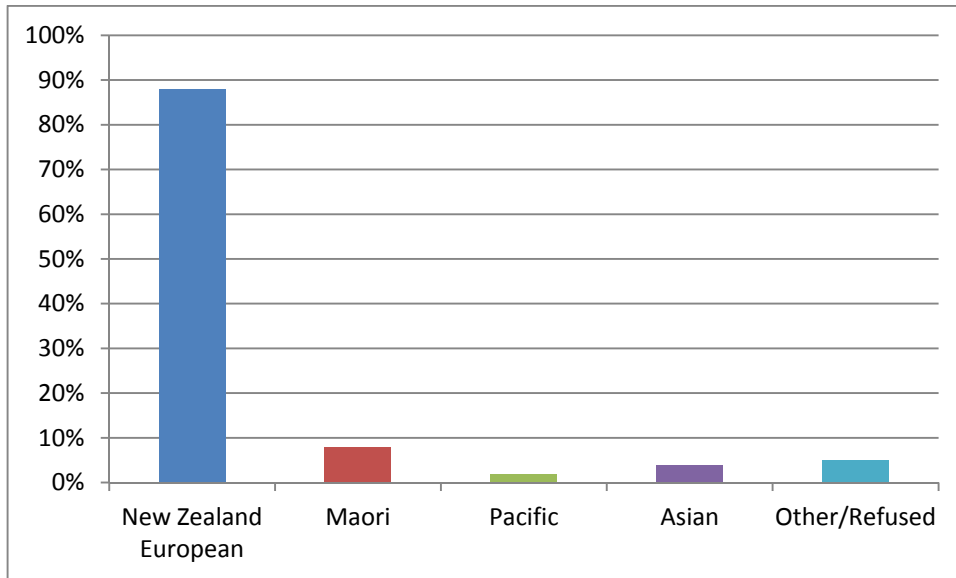
Recreational boaters are more likely (50%) to be aged 35 to 64 years than adult New Zealanders. Users of kayaks are fairly evenly divided with 47% between 18-34 years old and 46% 35 to 64 years old. 58% of powerboat and 53% 'other vessels' users are 35 to 64 years old, while 45% of sail boats are in this age range.



**Figure 6 Recreational boating community age profile**

### Ethnicity

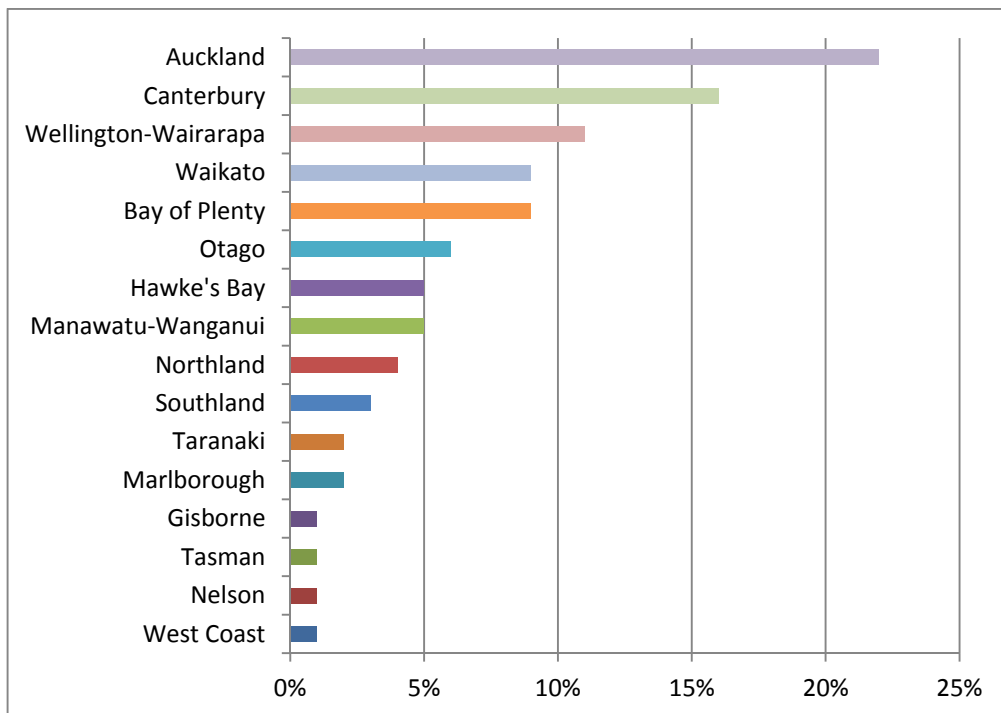
A large majority (88%) of recreational boaters identify as NZ European than in the adult population (75%). Power boat users are significantly more likely to identify as NZ European (92%). Maori are more likely to use smaller vessels, while those identifying as Asian are more likely to use sail boats.



**Figure 7 Recreational boating community ethnic group profile**

### Region

Most recreational boaties lived in the central/lower North Island (43%),, with 27% from the upper North Island, followed by the South Island (30%). However, a large proportion of sail boat users (45%) indicated living in the upper North Island, while kayak (46%), 'other vessels' (44%), and power boat (43%) lived in the central/lower North Island. In the South Island, 'other vessels' was the largest percentage of recreational boat users with 33%.



**Figure 8 Recreational boating community area of residence**

### Boating experience

The percentage of recreational boaters with up to five years' experience is 22%; those with 6-20 years' experience is 31% and 44% have more than 20 years' experience.

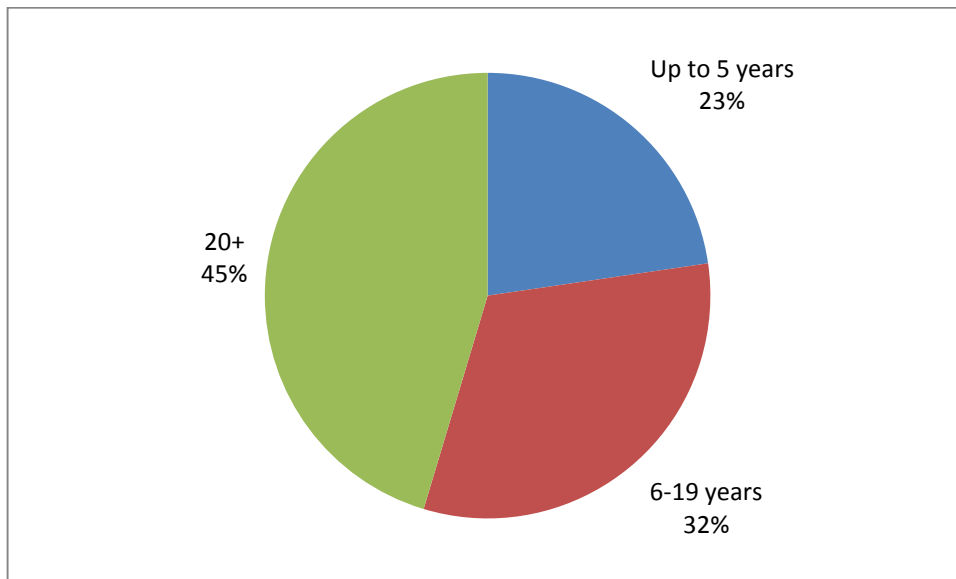


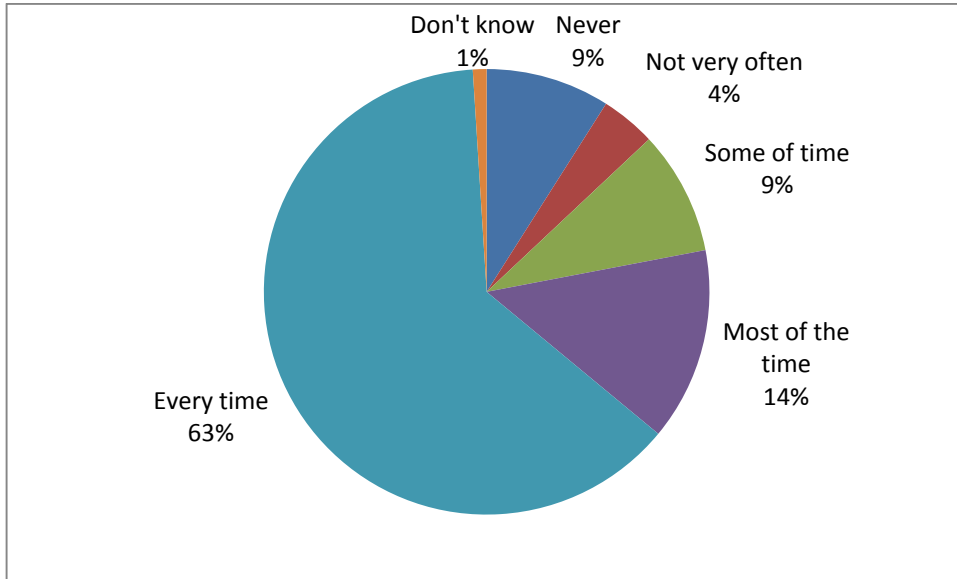
Figure 9 Boating experience

## Recreational vessel users' attitudes vs. behaviours in regards to boating safety

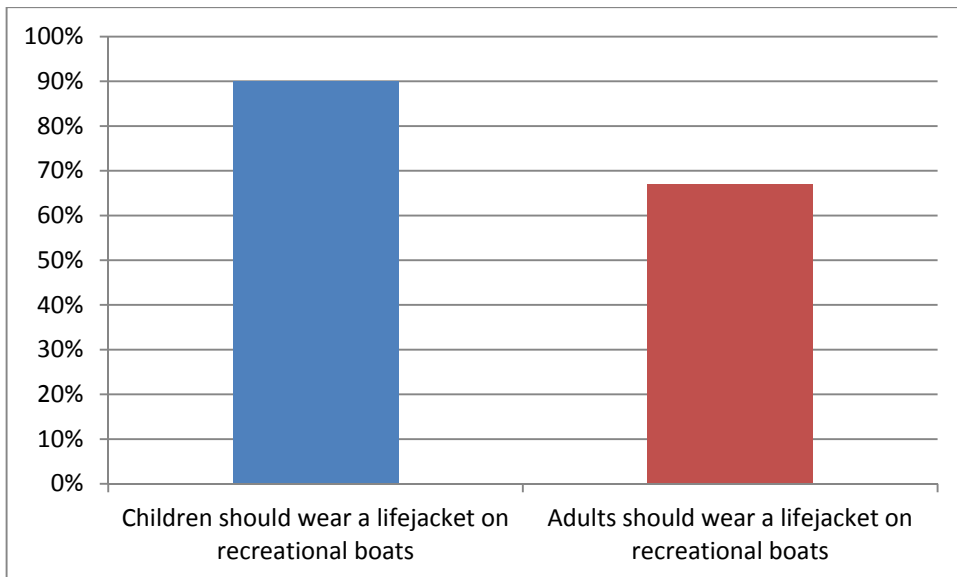
### Lifejackets

There are a number of factors that Maritime New Zealand has identified as being associated with recreational boating incidents and fatalities. One of these key factors is whether sufficient lifejackets are carried and worn on recreational boating excursions. It is a legal requirement to carry a correctly sized, serviceable lifejacket for each person on board a recreational vessel in New Zealand. Maritime New Zealand further recommends that the right size and type of lifejackets be worn at all times by adults and children on small boats while underway. In addition, Regional Councils have bylaws that may prescribe mandatory lifejacket wearing at all times while on the water.

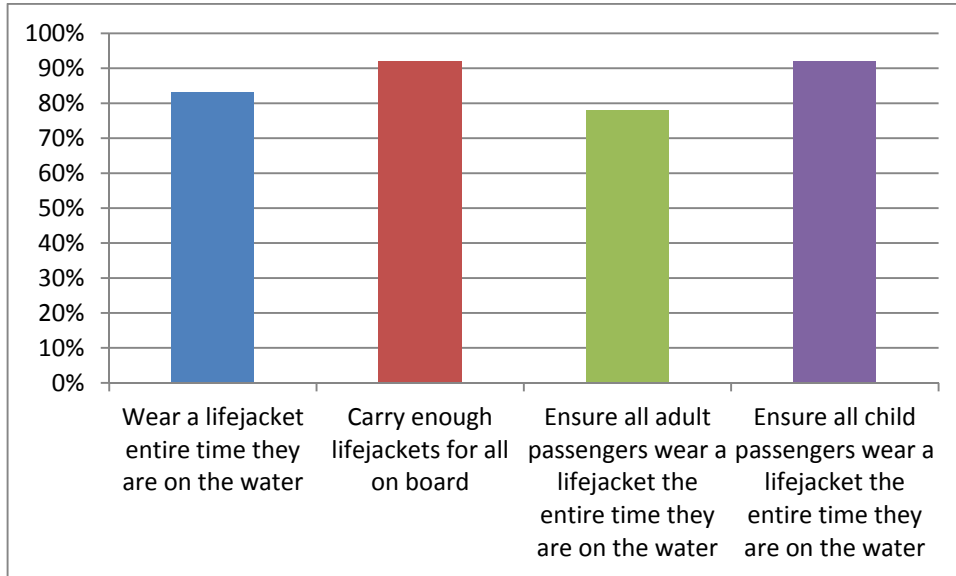
The below charts and tables present the results concerning the recreational boating population's general attitudes towards wearing lifejackets.



**Figure 10 Profile of recreational boating community that wear lifejackets**



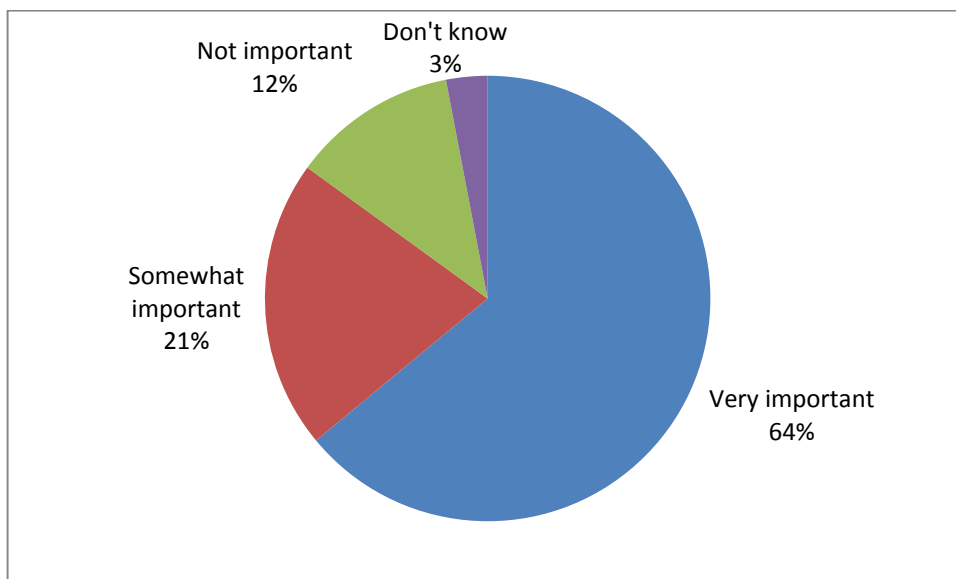
**Figure 11 Attitude towards wearing lifejackets on recreational boats**



**Figure 12 Attitudes regarding wearing lifejackets on recreational vessels**

### Emergency communications

Maritime New Zealand recommends that recreational boaters carry at least two forms of communications that will work when wet. Further, Maritime New Zealand recommends that these devices be ones that will work in the area in which boaters are boating.



**Figure 13 Emergency communications**

A majority (64%) of recreational vessel users agree that it was very important to carry two forms of communication on their vessel, while 55% reported doing so every time they go out on the water. Sailboat users were significantly more likely to agree that it was very important to carry two forms of communication (88%, up from 66% in 2013/14). Although the difference was not statistically significant, sail boat users also appeared to be more

likely to report actually carrying two forms of communication when they go out (78%, up from 66% in 2013/14).

### Weather forecast

Almost three-quarters (74%) of all recreational vessel users agreed that it was very important to check the weather forecast before going out on the water. Sixty-five percent reported doing so every time.

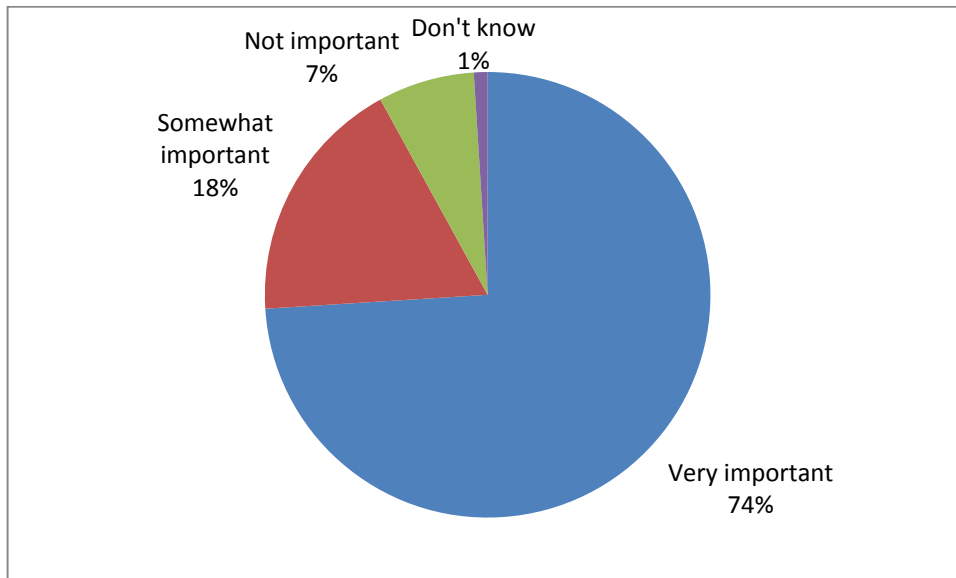


Figure 14 Check the weather forecast

### Alcohol use

Seventy-two percent also agreed that it was very important to not consume alcohol before, or while they're on the water and 80% reported that they never did so. Compared to 2013/14, users of 'other' vessels were significantly more likely to report that they never consume alcohol before or during an outing on the water (89% compared with 77% in 2013/14). However, as mentioned earlier, this apparent different must be treated as indicative, due to differences in the way in which users of 'other' vessels was defined between the two surveys.

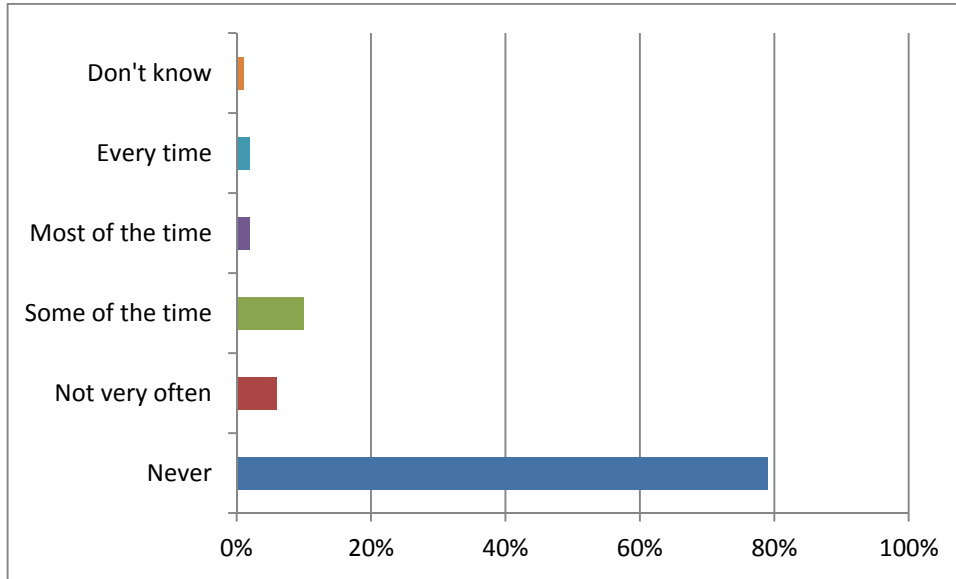


Figure 15 Alcohol consumption

## Concluding notes

Even though 93% of recreational vessel users stated that boating safety was important/very important to them personally, the safety attitudes and behaviours of recreational boaters don't always match up, as demonstrated in Figure 19. The attitudes and behaviours vary across vessel user groups, and also within each user group with respect to lifejackets, communications, weather and alcohol use.

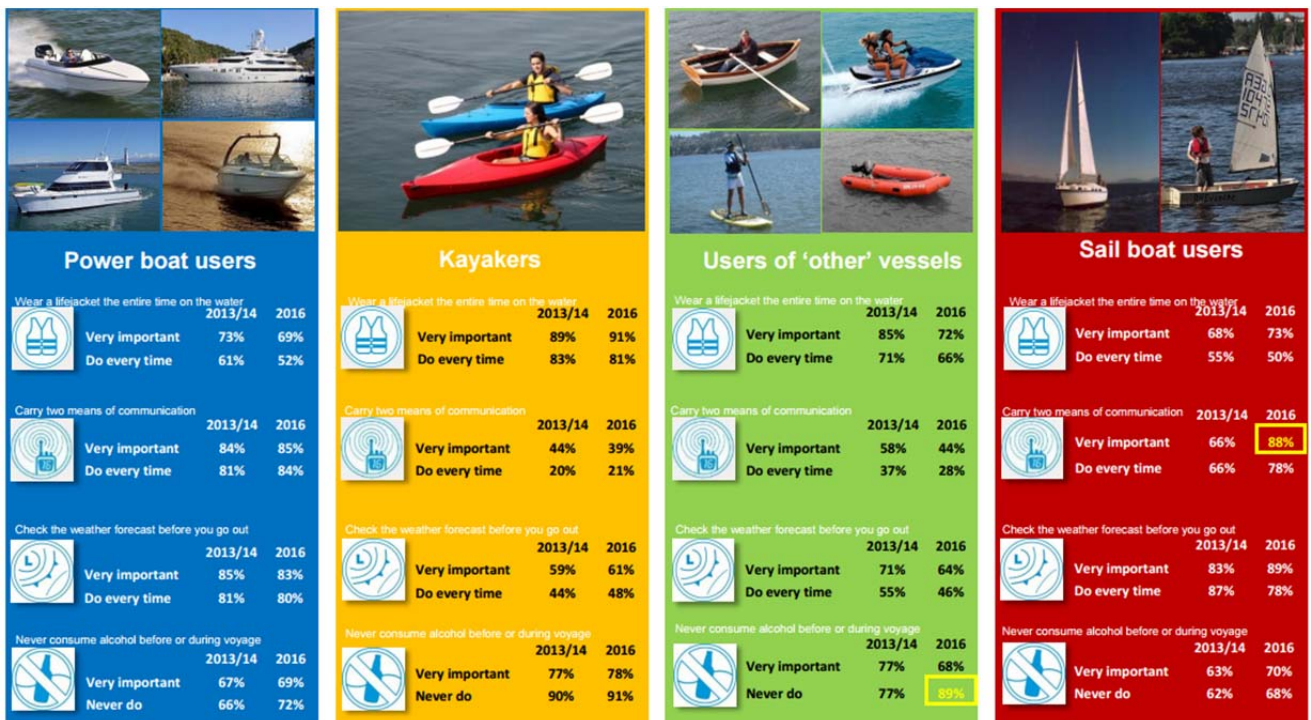
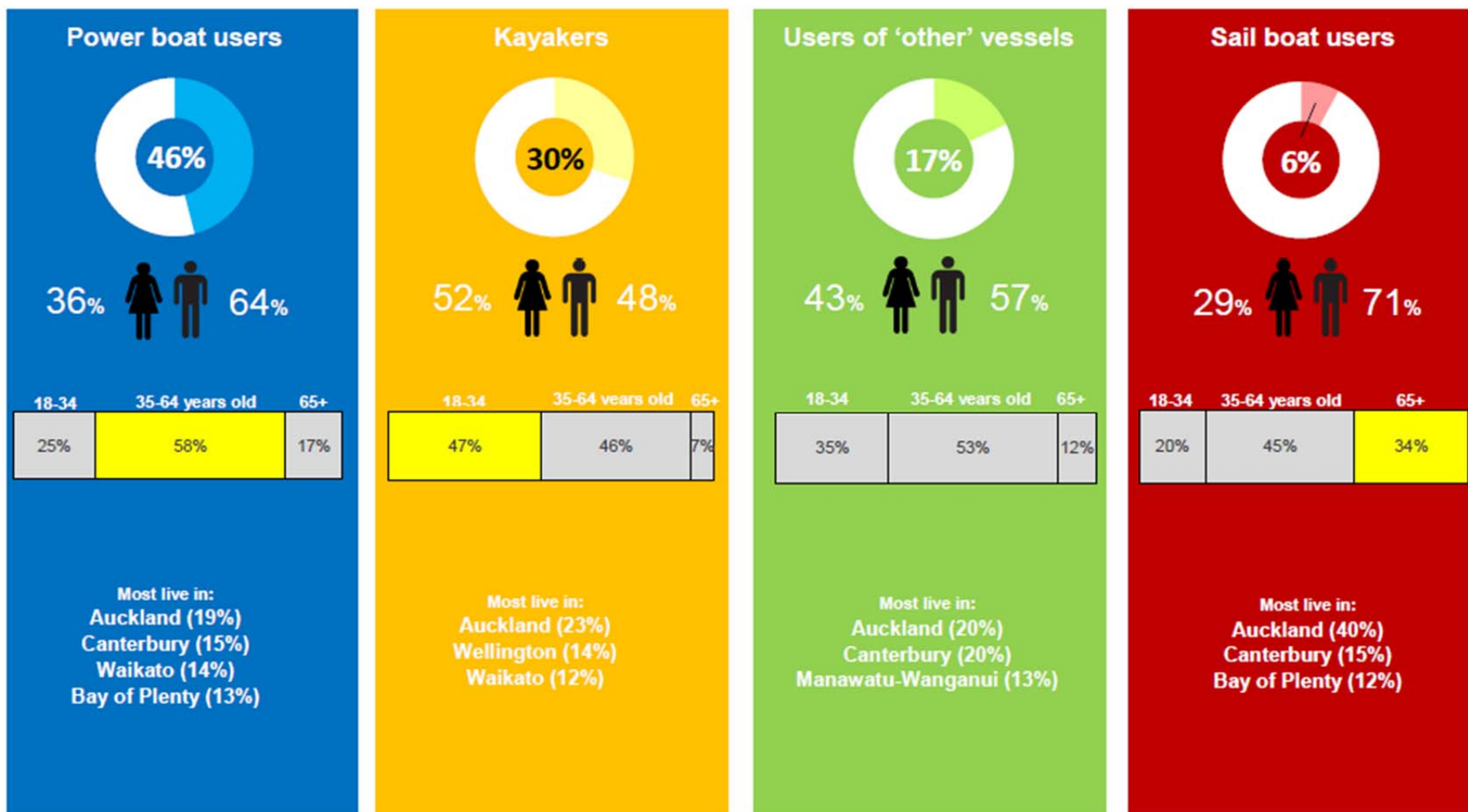


Figure 16 Attitudes towards safety and actual safety behaviours – power boats and sail boats





## Appendix 1: Attitudes and behaviours



Note: The yellow age bands represent the vessel type that each of the three age groups are most likely to use.

