

SUPERIOR ADVISORY NOTES



Minnesota Sea Grant Extension

University of Minnesota

Minnesota Boating Registration Trends

by Chad P. Dawson and Kim Elverum

INTRODUCTION

Minnesota's per capita boat registration has tended to lead the nation with one boat for every 6.5 resident adults. The 629,291 boats registered* in 1984 set another state record and places Minnesota as one of the top 3 states in boat registration along with Michigan and California.

From 1972 to 1984, there has been continual growth in the total number of registered boats in Minnesota. The number of boats increased 57 percent from 400,899 to 629,291. Minnesota's rate of increase has been higher than the national increase (47%) in boats-in-use during 1972 to 1984. Both the national and state numbers of boat-in-use and registered boats is expected to continue to increase over the next several years.

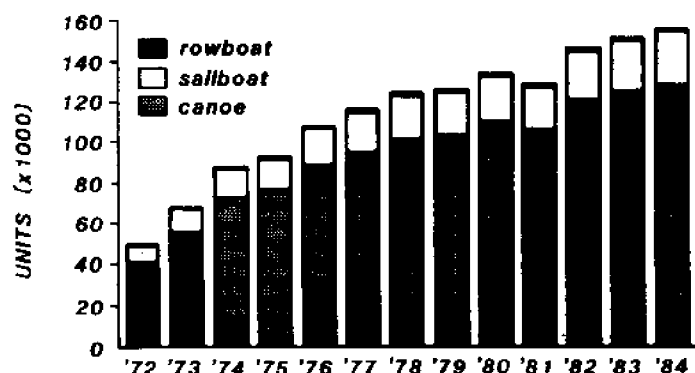
The number of motor boats registered in Minnesota increased 35 percent from 350,721 in 1972 to 473,468 in 1984. Growth was continual with the exception of 1982 when the number of motorboats registered declined. The period of greatest growth was during 1975 to 1981. Inboard-Outboard motorboats have increased at a higher rate than either inboards or outboard motorboats.

The number of non-motorboats registered increased 211 percent from 50,178 in 1972 to 155,823 in 1984. Non-motorized boats refer to rowboats, sailboats, and canoes that do not rely on an engine as the primary source of power — although motors may be used at times, especially on sailboats. Growth has been continual with the exception of 1981 when a decline was reported. The period of greatest growth was during 1972 to 1978. Both sailboat and canoe registrations have increased over 100% during this time period.

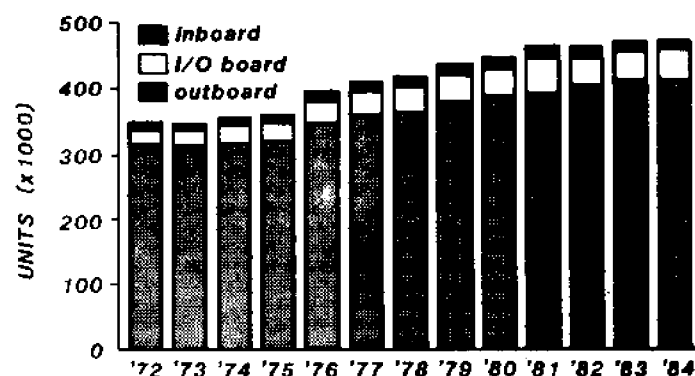
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* In 1980, there were 1,144 U.S. Coast Guard documented yachts (5-tons net capacity) in Minnesota that are not required to register with the Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources.

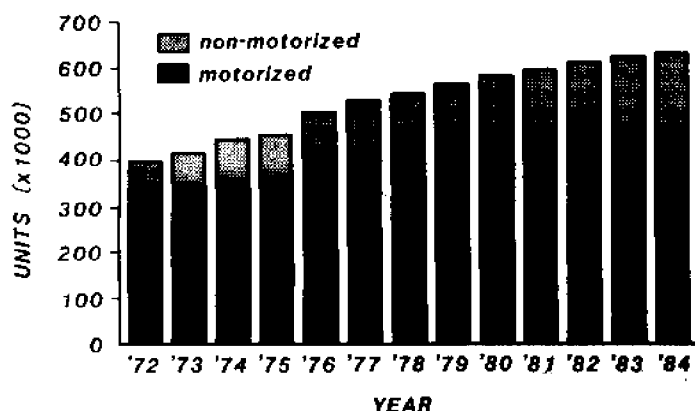
NON-MOTORIZED BOATS



MOTORIZED BOATS



TOTAL BOATS



REGISTERED BOATING FLEET MAKEUP

Outboard motorboats accounted for 66 percent of the fleet in 1984, followed in registrations by canoes (20%), inboard-outboard motorboats (7%), and sailboats (4%). The trend in the last 5- and 10-year periods (1980-84 and 1975-84, respectively) has been towards more 16-26 foot long boats with outboard or inboard-outboard motors. Canoes and sailboats have also significantly increased their percentage contribution to the overall boating fleet.

Outboard and inboard-outboard boats less than 16 feet in length and all boats with inboard engines have declined in their overall share of the boating fleet during the last 5- and 10-year periods. Although outboard motor boats are the largest percentage of the recreational fleet (44%) this category has experienced the greatest decline in its percentage contribution over the last 5- and 10-year periods.

DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTERED BOATS

Boat registrations are listed by the county of residence and not by the county of use. The geographic distribution of registered boats in Minnesota does not entirely parallel the population distribution in the 6 state tourism regions. The metropolitan area and northeast regions have a larger percentage of boat registration than all other regions. The largest percentage (44%) of the registered boats is within the Metroland region, and followed in distribution by the Arrowhead (16%), Heartland (13%), Pioneerland (9%), Vikingland (8%), and Hiawathaland (6%). An additional 4 percent of boats are registered by boaters with an out-of-state residence.

Percentage of Boats Registered During 1975 to 1984 by Boat Type and Length

Boat Type/Length	1984		Percentage Shifts	
	Number	Percent	1980-84	1975-84
Inboard Motor				
less than 16 ft	1,926	0.3	*	-0.1
16-26 ft	10,769	1.7	-0.7	-0.5
26-40 ft	1,852	0.3	-0.1	*
40-65 ft	470	0.1	*	*
more than 65 ft	4	*	*	*
Subtotal	15,021	2.4	-0.8	-0.6
Outboard Motor				
less than 16 ft	274,674	43.6	-3.0	-8.2
16-26 ft	137,370	21.8	+1.7	+3.5
26-40 ft	1,085	0.2	*	-0.1
40-65 ft	131	*	*	*
more than 65 ft	9	*	*	*
Subtotal	413,269	65.5	-1.3	-4.8
Inboard-Outboard Motor				
less than 16 ft	23,037	3.7	-0.6	-0.4
16-26 ft	20,839	3.3	+0.9	+1.3
26-40 ft	1,156	0.2	+0.1	+0.1
40-65 ft	139	*	*	*
more than 65 ft	7	*	*	*
Subtotal	45,178	7.2	+0.4	+1.0
Sailboat	25,579	4.1	+0.3	+0.9
Rowboat	1,883	0.3	*	-0.1
Canoe	128,361	10.4	+4	+3.6
TOTAL	629,291	100.0		

*Less than 0.1 percent

Number of 1984 Registered Watercraft by County of Residence

Region/County	Number	region/County	Number
1. Metroland	274,213	5. Pioneerland	56,771
Anoka	10,847	Traverse	604
Carver	5,276	Big Stone	872
Dakota	24,811	Swift	1,700
Hennepin (Minneapolis)	141,712	Lac Qui Parle	919
Ramsey	58,345	Chippewa	1,818
Scott	6,090	Kandiyohi	5,889
Washington	16,607	Meeker	3,170
Wright	10,525	Yellow Medicine	1,283
2. Arrowhead	102,816	Renville	2,134
Aitkin	4,651	McLeod	4,679
Carlton	6,312	Sibley	1,530
Cook	3,641	Nicollet	1,595
Lake	3,332	Lincoln	592
St. Louis (Duluth)	47,754	Lyon	2,084
Itasca	15,032	Redwood	1,755
Koochiching	5,534	Brown	2,940
Kanabec	1,824	Le Sueur	4,131
Pine	3,786	Pipestone	725
Isanti	3,525	Murray	858
Chisago	7,425	Cottonwood	1,229
3. Heartland	78,673	Watsonwan	1,272
Roseau	1,694	Blue Earth	7,182
Lake of the Woods	1,415	Rock	590
Beltrami	7,891	Nobles	1,723
Hubbard	5,871	Jackson	1,114
Cass	9,590	Martin	2,593
Crow Wing	15,172	Faribault	1,790
Todd	3,333	6. Hiawathaland	40,897
Morrison	5,142	Rice	5,162
Mille Lacs	3,963	Goodhue	4,346
Sherburne	5,371	Wabasha	2,977
Stearns	16,471	Waseca	2,068
Benton	2,760	Steele	2,919
4. Vikingland	49,953	Dodge	1,099
Kittson	613	Olmstead	8,426
Marshall	1,039	Winona	4,765
Pennington	1,671	Freeborn	3,209
Red Lake	542	Mower	3,109
Polk	4,052	Fillmore	1,198
Clearwater	1,563	Houston	1,619
Mahnomen	951	7. Residence Unknown	889
Norman	892	8. Out-of-State Residence	25,140
Clay	5,760	TOTAL	629,352
Becker	6,371		
Wilkin	1,117		
Otter Tail	11,561		
Grant	1,257		
Douglas	6,889		
Stevens	1,303		
Pope	1,920		
Wadena	2,452		

Percentage of Boats Registered During 1975 to 1984 by Boathull Materials and Boat Type

Boat Type/Length	1984		Percentage Shifts	
	Number	Percent	1980-84	1975-84
Wooden Hull				
Motorboat	16,993	2.8	-2.1	-5.8
Sailboat	1,930	0.3	-0.1	-0.1
Rowboat	208	*	*	*
Canoe	5,292	0.8	-0.1	-0.2
Subtotal	24,423	3.9	-2.3	-6.1
Fiberglass Hull				
Motorboat	116,184	18.5	+1.3	+0.1
Sailboat	19,073	3.0	+0.4	+0.8
Rowboat	911	0.1	*	*
Canoe	26,378	4.2	+0.6	+1.1
Subtotal	162,546	25.8	+2.3	+2.0
Aluminum Hull				
Motorboat	307,125	48.8	+1.8	+2.8
Sailboat	462	0.1	*	*
Rowboat	101	*	*	*
Canoe	85,906	13.7	+0.7	+2.0
Subtotal	393,594	62.6	+2.5	+4.8
Steel Hull				
Motorboat	13,911	2.2	-0.5	-1.4
Sailboat	30	*	*	*
Rowboat	11	*	*	*
Canoe	112	*	*	*
Subtotal	14,064	2.2	-0.5	-1.4
Other Material Hull	34,664	5.5	-2.0	+0.7
TOTAL	629,291	100.0		

*Less than 0.1 percent

BOATHULL MATERIALS OF REGISTERED BOATS

Aluminum hull boats account for 63 percent of the recreational boat fleet, followed in importance by fiberglass (26%), other materials such as plastic laminates (6%), and wood (4%). The trend in the last 5- and 10-year periods has been towards more fiberglass and aluminum hull materials for registered boats. Fiberglass and aluminum hulls on motorboats and canoes have substantially increased their percentage contribution to the overall boating fleet.

Boats with wooden and steel hulls have declined in their overall share of the boating fleet during the 5- and 10-year periods. The greatest decline in percentage contribution was experienced by wooden hull motorboats. The use of other hull materials, such as plastics and plastic laminates, declined over the last 5-year period but had some gains in percentage share over the 10-year period.

DISCUSSION

Boating registrations and boating use have increased in the United States over the last 15 years. This trend is expected to continue in the near future. The rate of growth in Minnesota boat registrations has been moderate over the last 5-6 years and is expected to continue. If past behavior patterns continue, the greatest growth will be in 16-26 foot motorboats with outboard or inboard-outboard motors. Canoes and sailboats are also anticipated to be a strong market for the next several years. The trend toward more moderate sized motorboats and more sailboats and canoes can be interpreted as one response to increased fuel costs and economic constraints since the mid-1970's.

Chad P. Dawson is a marine recreation/tourism agent with the Minnesota Sea Grant Extension Program in Duluth.

Kim Elverum is the boat and water safety coordinator with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in St. Paul.

August, 1985

Superior Advisory Note No. 20

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