



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

RESEARCH BACKGROUNDER

In 2010, the Lifesaving Society commissioned an Ipsos Reid research study to gain insight into the influence ethnicity has on attitudes and behaviours around water safety. In 2011, the Society engaged Canadian qualitative research service firm Heads Up Research to conduct focus groups with new Canadians to gain further insight into their initial findings.

Results from 2011 Focus Groups support findings from the 2010 study, which revealed that 79 per cent of new Canadians plan to be in and around water during the summer despite the higher risk for drowning when boating or swimming. In fact, focus group participants said they are drawn to the water and want to be a part of what they call the 'real Canadian' experience.

"People have a general perception that Canada is a swimming country...it is part of being a Canadian"

– Focus Group Participant

Research Highlights

2010 Research Study Findings	2011 Focus Group Findings
73 per cent of new Canadians feel it is important to know how to swim when you live in Canada because there is so much water	Feedback from parents in the focus groups supported these sentiments. Many parents commented on the desire for their children to take advantage of what Canadian culture has to offer, and in particular, to enjoy swimming as part of 'nature and the great outdoors'. While access to recreational swimming may not have been readily available in their home countries, focus group participants say they perceive swimming as part of the recreational culture in Canada and see the benefits for their children in terms of exercise and developing a life skill.
74 per cent of new Canadians enjoy swimming for fun and recreation	
71 per cent of new Canadians see swimming as a safe activity for themselves and 78 per cent see it as a safe activity for their children	
Only 41 per cent of new Canadians have taken formal swimming lessons but most want their children to have lessons	Despite not having taken formal lessons themselves, most parents consider lessons for their children a priority. Value was placed on lessons that were considered 'high quality', that had a system of levels or standards to mark progress and celebrate achievement, and that provided lessons on how to be safe around water as well as learning how to swim. Swimming lessons at school were identified as ideal because they addressed issues around lack of time or financial limitations.
60 per cent of parents with children between the ages of five and 15 reported that their child had participated in swimming lessons	
57 per cent of Muslim respondents felt that their religion or culture has an impact on what they wear when swimming and close to 50 per cent felt that it has an impact on who they are able to swim with and where they can swim	There were some concerns raised by Muslim parents about public swimming lessons that didn't/failed to address cultural and religious issues such as appropriate swimming attire and separation of boys and girls. Parents are interested in female only lessons, with female instructors. ** Many municipalities are beginning to address this issue by offering female-only swimming lessons

About the study

In May 2010, the Lifesaving Society commissioned an Ipsos Reid Public Affairs Study called “The Influence of Ethnicity on Aquatic Participation and Drowning in Canada,” to help understand the attitudes and behaviours of new Canadians towards swimming, and their knowledge of water safety practices. The study focused on a population of respondents born in Canada and a population of respondents from the Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian and Muslim communities not born in Canada. Countries within these regions have been identified by Citizenship and Immigration Canada as the top source countries for newcomers to Canada.²

Several issues around water safety were investigated, including:

- Likelihood of participation in swimming and other water activities
- Correlation between the length of time a person is settled in Canada and their knowledge, attitudes and experiences around water safety
- Effectiveness of certain water safety education programming and programs including in-language materials as a way of reaching out to groups of new Canadians.

The total sample was 1032 Canadian residents between the ages of 18 and 60. Of the total respondents, 433 were born in Canada and 599 were not born in Canada. They are referred to as ‘new Canadians’ throughout the report. (Results of a probability study with a sample size of 433 are considered accurate within +/- 4.66 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Results of a probability study with a sample size of 599 are considered accurate within 3.94 percentage points, 19 times out of 20).

About the Focus Groups

During the month of April, 2011, six two-hour focus groups were conducted by Heads Up, a Canadian qualitative research services firm. The research was funded by Ontario Power Generation. The focus groups took place in Vancouver and Toronto and participants were screened for the following criteria:

- New to Canada within the past 5 years
- Have at least one child under 13 years of age
- Mostly parents who know how to swim
- Mixed views on a number of water safety issues

Focus groups were conducted in Mandarin and English and included three groups among the Chinese community (one group of Chinese dads and two groups of Chinese moms) and three groups among the South Asian community (one group of Muslim dads from Pakistan, one group of Muslim moms from Pakistan; one group of Hindu moms from India).

About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society is a full-service provider of programs, products and services designed to prevent drowning. We save lives and prevent water-related injury through our training programs, Water Smart® public education, drowning prevention research, aquatic safety management and lifesaving sport. Each year in Canada, more than 800,000 Canadians participate in the Society’s swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard, first aid and leadership programs. For more information, please visit www.lifesavingsociety.com.

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