



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

FACT SHEET

Self-reported water safety skills and knowledge among newcomers to Canada

April 2025

Newcomers are defined as recent immigrants, refugees and international students who have resided in Canada for five years or less.

In 2024, the Lifesaving Society Ontario conducted a survey to better understand water safety skills and knowledge among subsets of Canadian residents. Nearly 3,000 residents were surveyed including Canadian-born residents, international students, recent immigrants and immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than five years. The survey results offer insight to the perceptions and barriers newcomers to Canada have about participating in aquatic activities.

Key Results

- More than 4 in 5 newcomers believe that learning to swim is a necessary life skill.
- Half of newcomers described themselves as non- or weak swimmers.
- Close to 3 in 5 international students described themselves as non- or weak swimmers.
- 9 in 10 newcomers who cannot swim report that they are not currently taking swimming lessons.

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- Newcomer parents whose children have not taken formal swimming lessons cite a lack of time and cost as barriers.
 - Close to 9 in 10 newcomers agree that all children should receive swimming instruction at school as part of a school safety program.
 - 4 in 5 recent immigrant respondents plan to be on, in or around the water during the summer.
 - Of newcomers who plan to be on, in or around the water in the summer, nearly half state that they plan to do this once a week or more.
 - Less than one-third of newcomers who participate in boating activities state that they sometimes wear their lifejacket.
 - 1 in 3 newcomers state that they always or sometimes go boating or swimming alone.
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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 research, aquatic safety management and lifesaving sport. The Lifesaving Society is a leader and partner in the delivery of water safety education throughout Canada and around the world.

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