

Short report:

Swedish Boating Survey 2025

This report is based on a main report carried out by Institutet för kvalitetsindikatorer on behalf of the Swedish Transport Agency, with funding from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

// 2025

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Summary

Boating life

The Boating Survey 2025 shows that boating life is strong in Sweden. One third of Swedes have been out on a recreational craft during the past year — a clear increase compared with both 2020 and 2015. For many, boating is mainly about the experience of nature, the sense of freedom, and the opportunity to reach places that are otherwise difficult to visit. Two thirds, however, have not been out boating, most often because they lack access to a boat. The survey also shows that boating is more common among men, younger people, high-income earners, and multi-person households.

Boat ownership

Today, about one in five households owns a recreational craft, a share that has increased somewhat over the past ten years. Small boats are the most common, but day cruisers and cabin boats also hold a significant place. Above all, SUP boards and surfboards are becoming increasingly popular. Most boats are in good condition, but the proportion of fully usable boats has decreased somewhat since 2020. Four in ten households have owned a boat for more than 20 years, while three in ten have had their current boat for less than five years. Interest in buying a boat is growing among current boat owners, and it also exists among non-owners.

Boating habits and geographical distribution

Day trips remain the most common use, followed by fishing trips — although both have decreased over time. Almost half use their boat 6–20 days per year, but there is also a group of enthusiasts — one in ten are out more than 50 days a year. The average boating trip consists of two people. Boats are found all over the country, most of them in inland lakes and canals. Most boats are kept in inland waters, while just under four in ten are moored by the sea. There are also clear gender differences: nine out of ten male boat owners usually drive the boat, compared with half of the female boat owners.

Safety and incidents

On eight out of ten boat trips, there are life jackets available for everyone, and many use mobile phones, navigators, or echo sounders. At the same time, almost half of boat owners do not know whether their boat is type-approved. Most skippers are experienced, and incidents are rare — only three percent experienced an accident in 2024, which is half as many as in the previous survey.

Attitudes toward laws and proposals

Support for new rules is strong. Nearly three out of four want to make life jackets mandatory, six out of ten support a requirement for a boating license, and the greatest support is for an age limit for high-speed boats — more than eight out of ten Swedes think this is a good idea. A ban on older two-stroke engines is met with greater uncertainty, but the majority want to ban toxic antifouling paints and introduce a mandatory boat register. The law against boating under the influence of alcohol also continues to have strong support among Swedes.

Environment and engines

Swedes are usually not disturbed by other recreational crafts — seven out of ten say that they are seldom or never disturbed when out on the water. When disturbances do occur, they are mainly due to lack of consideration and reckless driving. Among motorboat owners, 17 percent have a carburetor two-stroke engine, a type that is less environmentally friendly.

Summary

In summary, boating is an important part of many Swedes' leisure time, and the interest in owning and using boats remains strong. The results do however highlight challenges, for example relating to gender equality, safety, environmental issues and regulations.

About Institutet för kvalitetsindikatorer

At Indikator, we want to understand what people think, feel, and experience. Since 2005, we have been helping organizations – particularly those within the public sector – capture both numbers and stories through various types of surveys.

Each year, we conduct several of Sweden’s largest, most advanced, and most widely reported surveys, collecting data in many ways: online questionnaires, mail, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, qualitative studies – or by combining multiple methods to create the most complete picture possible.

Behind this work is our dedicated team of consultants, analysts, statisticians, IT specialists, and administrators. Together, we combine extensive experience with specialized expertise at every stage of the survey process – from questionnaire design and survey planning to large-scale population surveys by mail, customized panel studies, and focus group discussions that provide deeper qualitative insights. Everything we do is guided by quality and consideration.

institutet
för kvalitetsindikatorer





About the survey

The Swedish Boating Survey 2025 is the fifth edition of the survey since its inception in 2004. It provides an overview of boating life in Sweden — who owns and uses boats, how they are used in practice, as well as issues related to safety, the environment, and costs. The survey was conducted by Institutet för kvalitetsindikatorer (Indikator) on behalf of the Swedish Transport Agency, with funding from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. This report is a shorter version of the main report, which is published alongside this version.

The aim is to provide an overview of boating in Sweden and for the results to serve as a basis for the Swedish Transport Agency's work, as well as being accessible to the public sector, businesses, and organizations. The survey primarily describes the current situation but also allows comparisons over time to highlight changes and trends.

The target group consisted of Swedish households with individuals aged 20–74. The questionnaire was tailored according to participants' relationship to boating. Those who do not own or use a boat received fewer questions, while boat owners received a more comprehensive survey.

This year's survey was conducted as an online questionnaire as opposed to via telephone interviews. Participants received an invitation with login details via mail, with reminders sent through digital mailbox and SMS. A total of approximately 25,000 individuals aged 20–74 were invited. Between March and May 2025 around 10,000 responses were submitted, including roughly 2,700 boat owners, resulting in a response rate of about 40 percent. The results were weighted against comparison data from an independent survey. The shift to an online survey and certain changes in the questions may affect comparability over time, although it generally remains high.

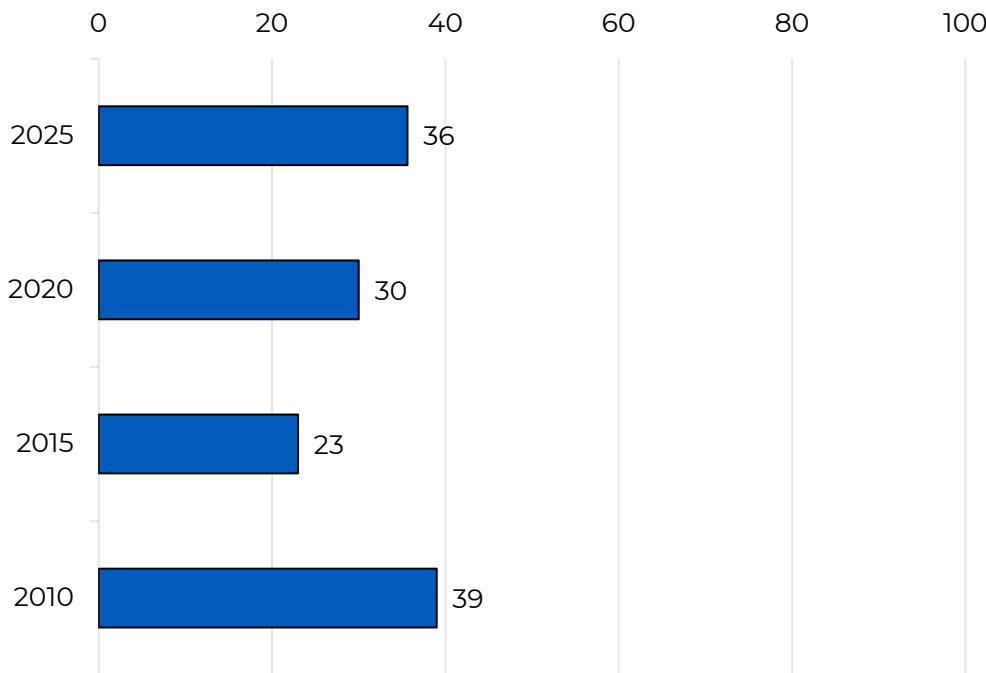
For questions regarding the survey or interpretation of the results, contact Indikator's project manager: Simon Nygren Greus, simon.nygren.greus@indikator.org

Results



Boating life

Share of past year recreational craft visitors (%)



36%

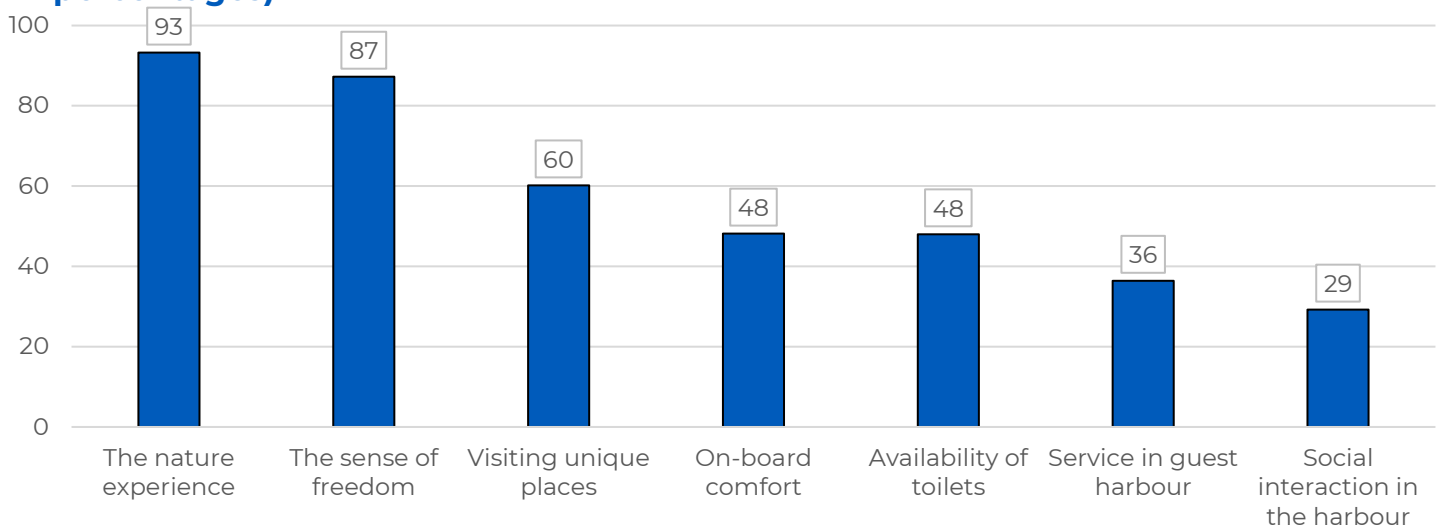
have been on a recreational craft in Sweden sometime during the last year

64%

have not been on a recreational craft in Sweden sometime during the last year

More than a third of Swedes have spent time on a recreational craft in the past year. This represents a clear increase compared with both 2020 and 2015. The nature experience is valued most highly, followed by the sense of freedom and the opportunity to reach places that would otherwise be inaccessible.

How important are these experiences to you when spending time on a recreational craft? (Very/Somewhat important, in percentages)

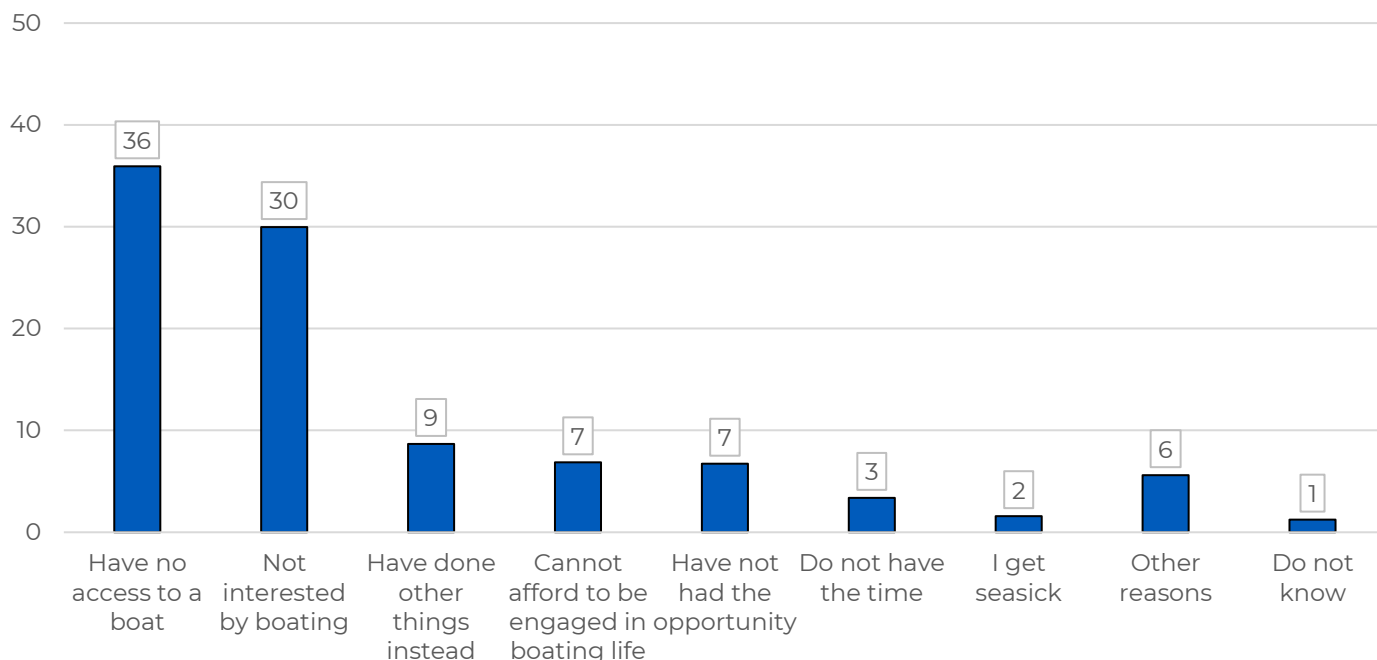


93%

of boat users consider the nature experience an important part of boating.

Two thirds of the Swedish population have not spent time on a recreational craft, mainly due to a lack of access. Compared to prior years, lack of access has become a more important reason for non-participation than lack of interest, although the latter still is a large factor.

Which is the main reason you have not spent time on a recreational craft in Sweden during the past year? (%)



36%

state that the main reason they have not spent time on a recreational craft is lack of access to one.

Boating life attracts some groups more than others

Those who have spent time on a recreational craft during the past year differ clearly from those who have not.

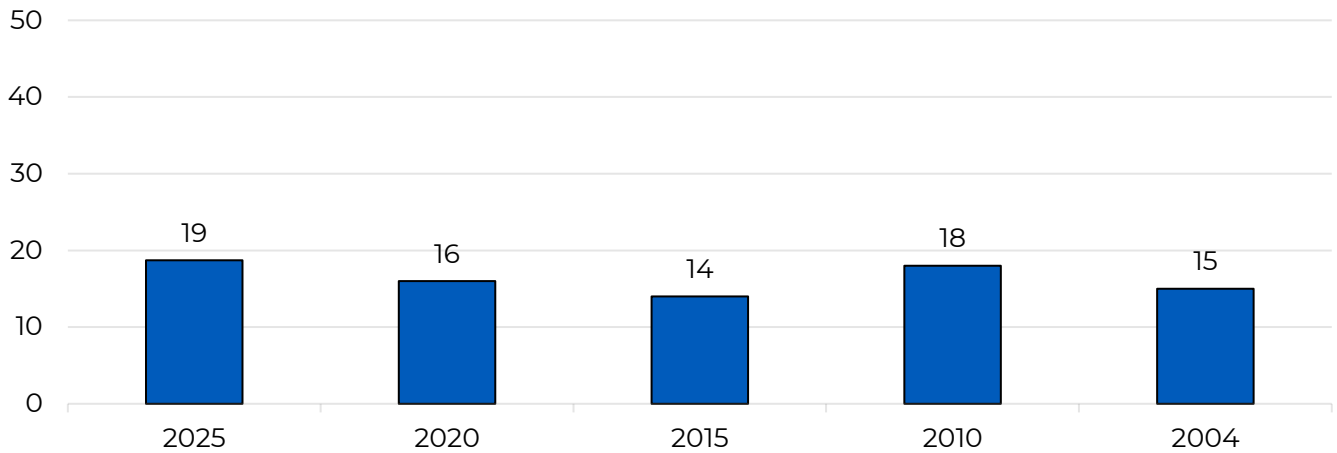
Among the boating population, men and under 50 year olds are overrepresented. Participation in boating is also more frequent among those with higher income, Swedish background and who live in multi-person households.

Proportions shown in blue show significantly higher values than the total average, while red values are significantly lower.

	Have been on a boat	Have not been on a boat
Females	31%	69%
Men	40%	60%
Age below 50	41%	59%
Age 50 or above	30%	70%
Income below 600,000 kr per year	27%	73%
Income above 600,000 kr per year	44%	56%
Swedish background	37%	63%
Foreign background	19%	81%
Single households	25%	75%
Multi-person households	38%	62%

Boat ownership

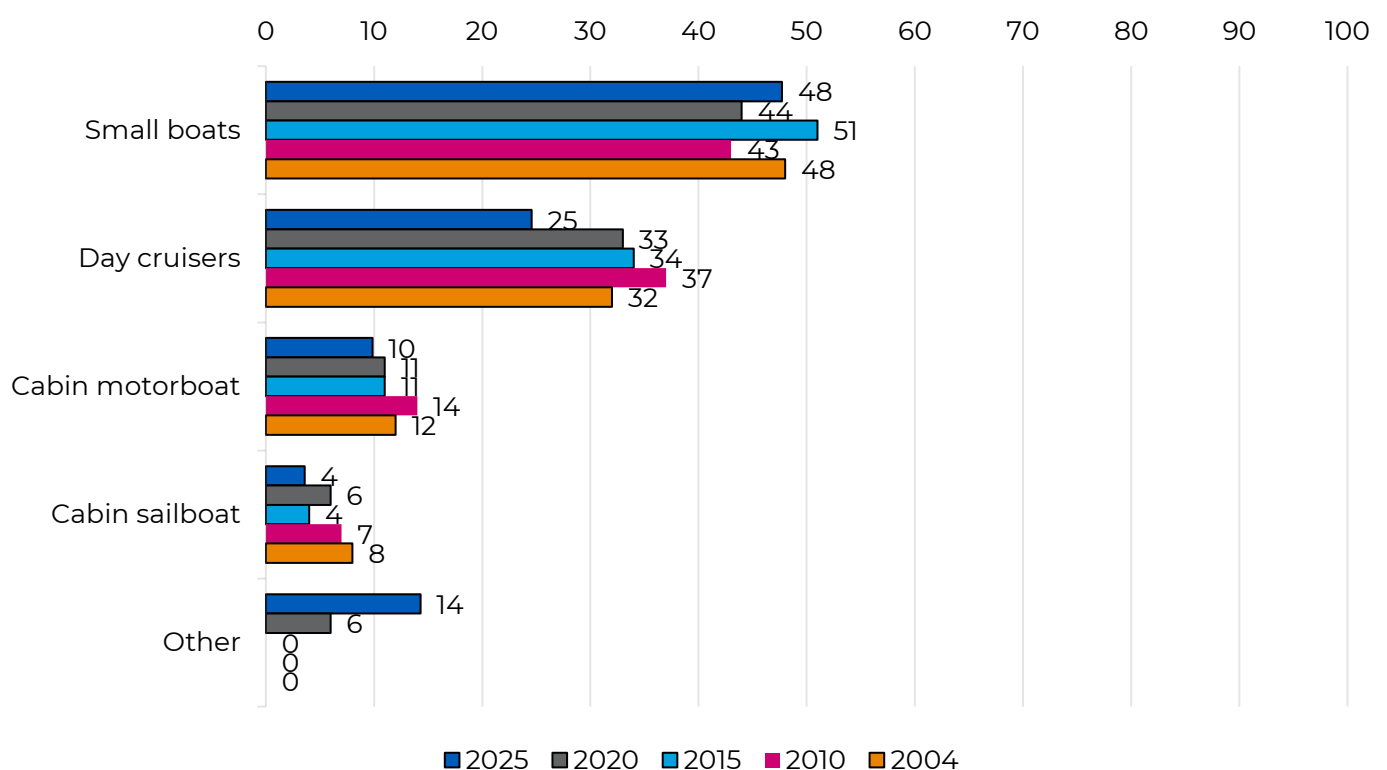
Proportion of households (%)



19 percent of households own a recreational craft, corresponding to around 800,000 households. The proportion of boat owning households has remained relatively stable for the past decade, though it has increased slightly, from 14 percent in 2015 to 19 percent in 2025.

Like before, small boats is the most common boat type, with nearly half of all boats being small boats. Day cruisers make up the second largest group at 25 percent. Cabin boats, often used for longer trips, make up around 14 percent. At the same time, other types of boats, such as SUPs and surfboards, have grown in popularity and are now as common as cabin boats.

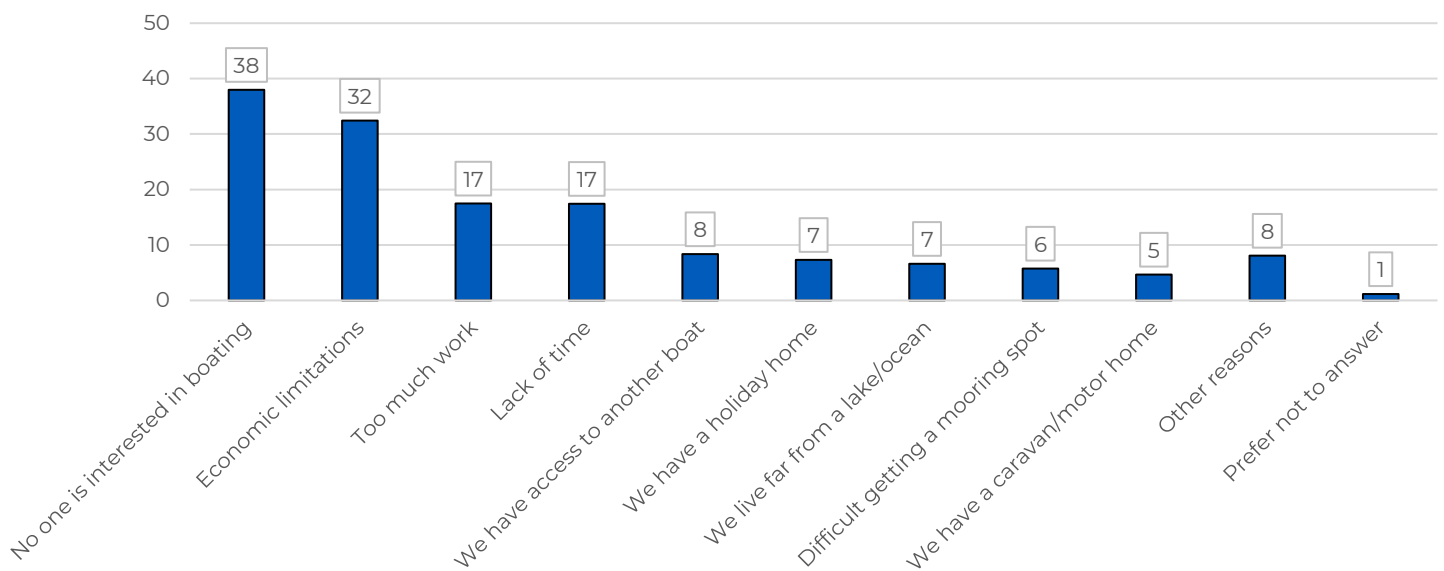
Boat type (%)





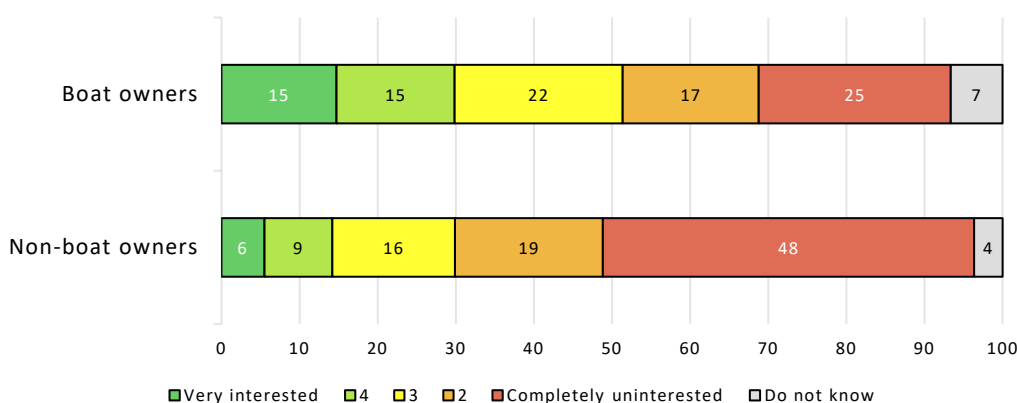
The most common reason to not own a boat, just as in prior surveys, is simply a lack of interest. Other common reasons are economic limitations, lack of time or a feeling that owning a boat requires too much work.

Which are the main reasons that no one in your household owns a recreational craft? (%)



Interest in buying a boat is growing. Today, 17 percent of Swedes would like to buy a recreational craft within the next five years, which is a clear increase compared to 10 years ago. Current boat owners are most interested in buying a boat, but 15 percent of non-boat owners share that interest as well.

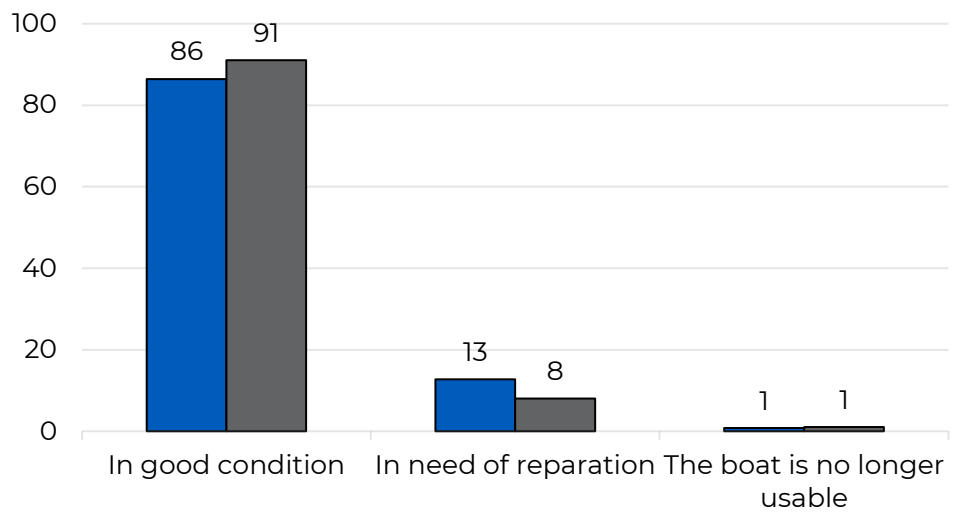
How interested is your household in buying a recreational craft within the next five years? (%)



17%
are interested in buying a recreational craft within the next five years,

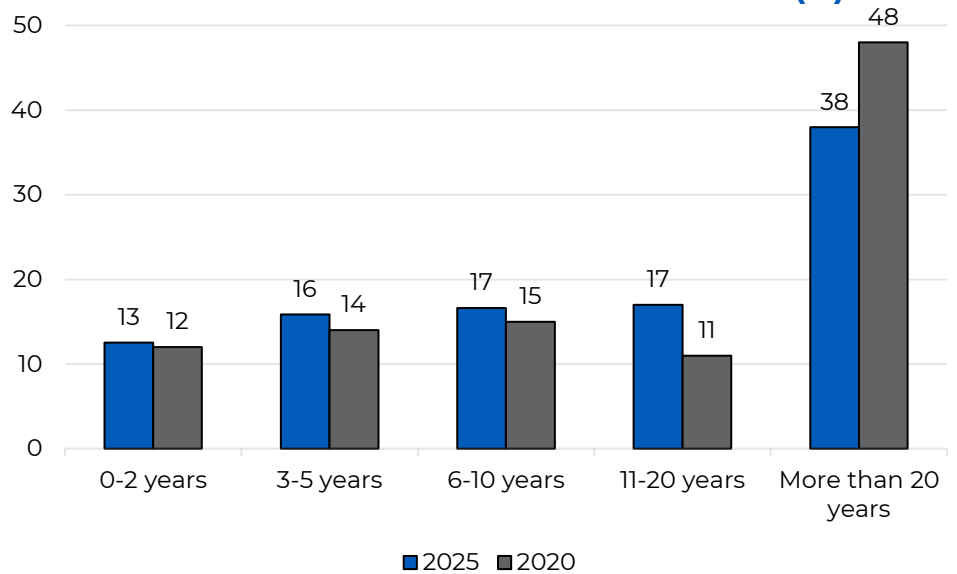
A majority, almost nine out of ten, of recreational crafts are in a usable condition, although the proportion has decreased slightly since 2020. Most of the remaining boats are in need of reparations. Very few are not usable at all. Approximately 1,29 million seaworthy boats exist in households with people aged 20-74 years.

In what condition is your or your household's boat? (%)



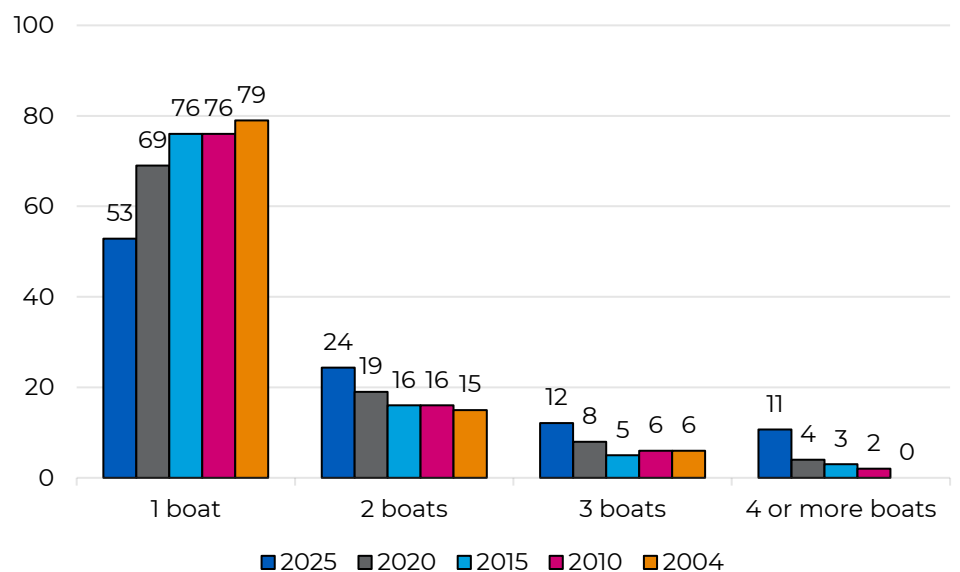
It is common for households to have owned their boat for a long time. Four out of ten boat owners have owned a boat for over 20 years, although that number is down slightly compared to 2020. Three out of ten have owned a boat for less than five years.

For how long has someone in your household owned or co-owned a recreational craft? (%)



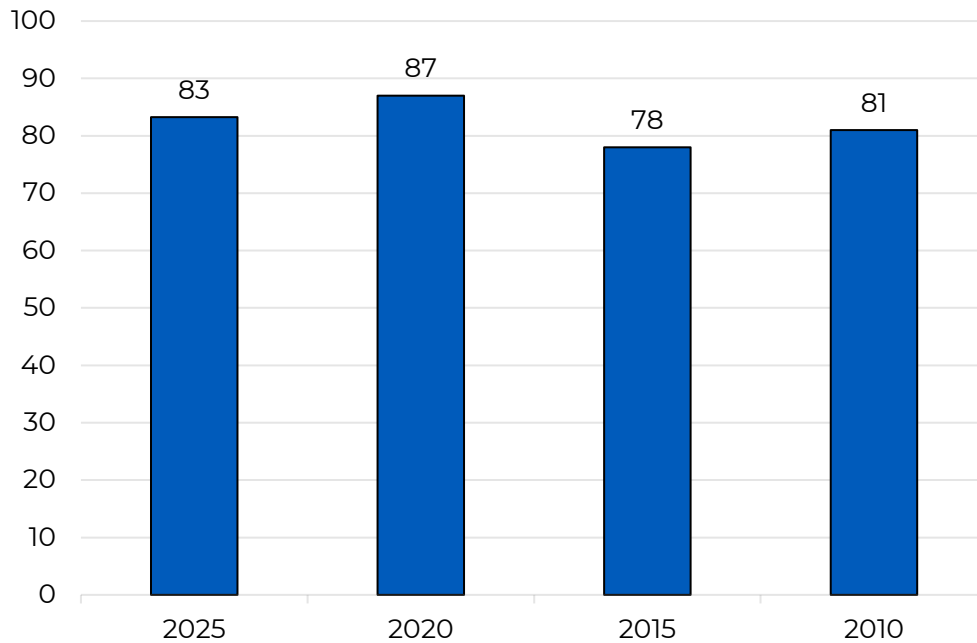
Just above half of boat-owning households have a single boat, but that proportion has gone down over time. Owning several boats is more common today than before — nearly a quarter of households have three or more boats, which is a sharp increase compared to previous surveys.

How many boats are owned or co-owned by someone in the household? (%)



Habits and geographical distribution

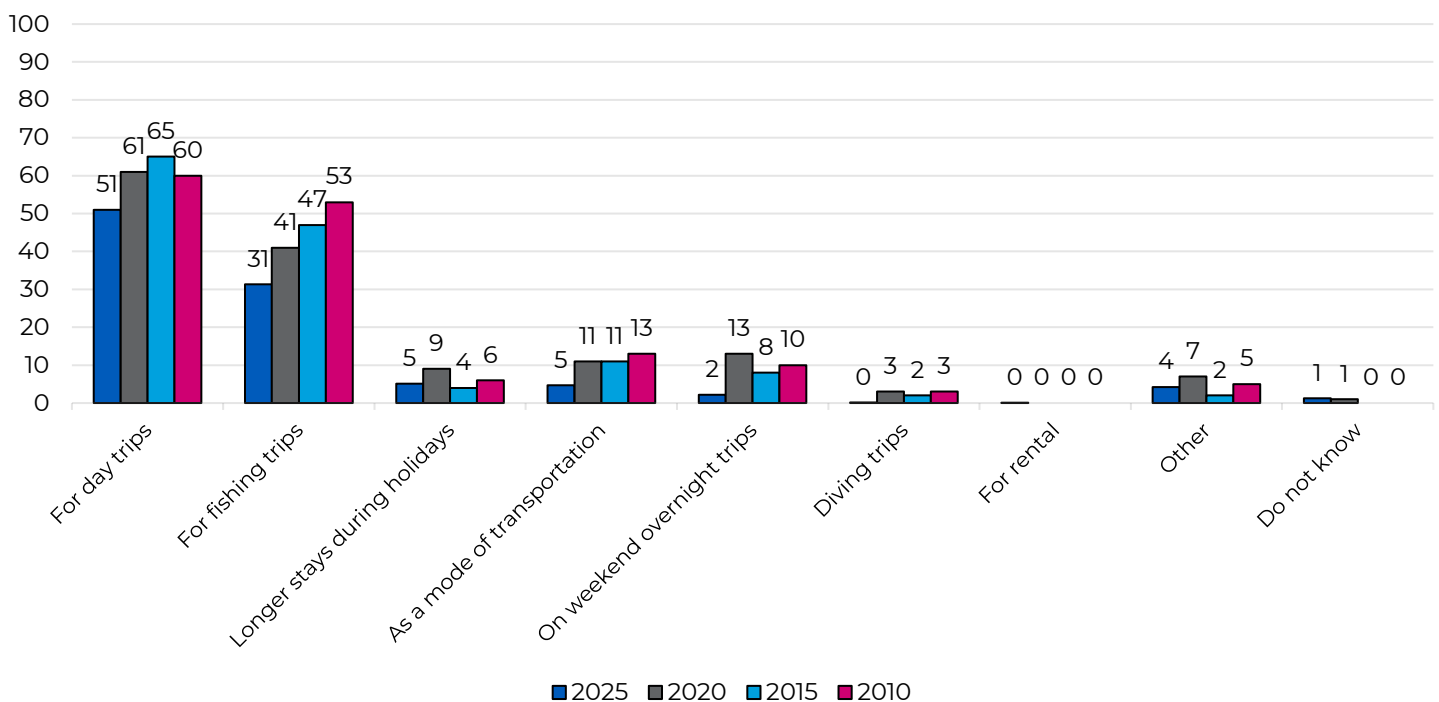
Boat usage during the past year (%)



83%
percent of Swedish boat-owning households used their boat during the past year.

Since small boats and day cruisers dominate in Sweden, it is not surprising that day trips are the most common way to use one's recreational craft. Half of all trips are day trips, while fishing trips account for just over three out of ten trips. However, both day trips and fishing trips have become somewhat less common over time.

For what purpose do you most often use your boat? (%)

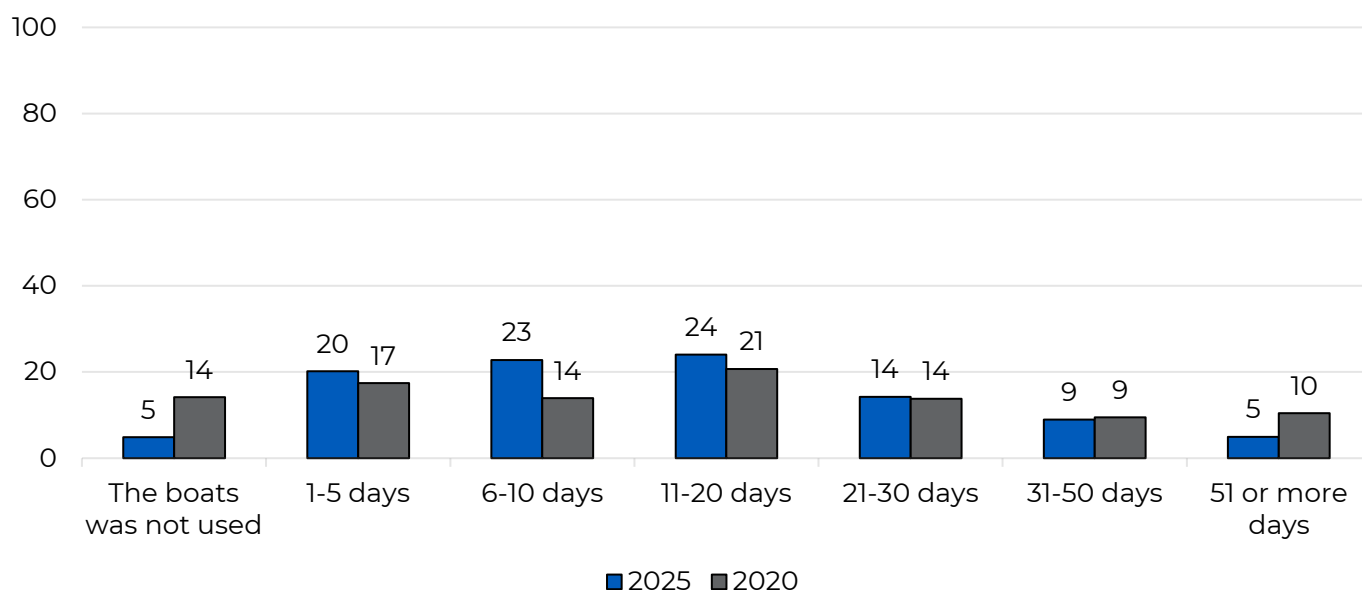


Number of boating days and amount of people on board

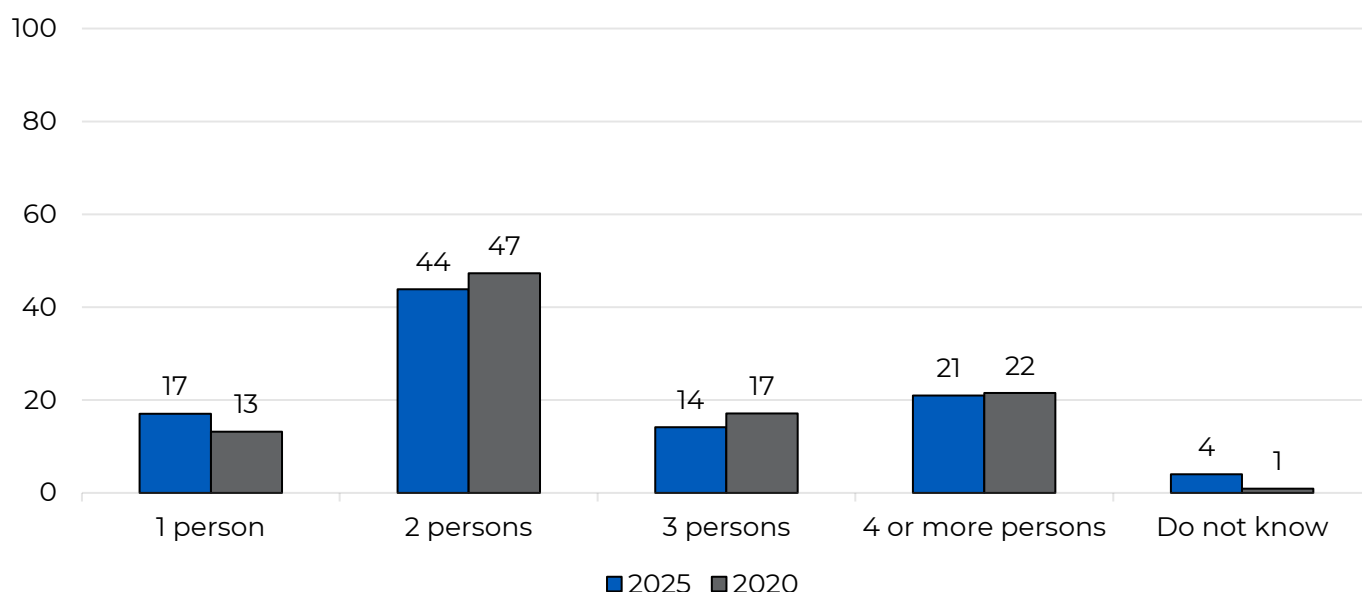
Most people use their boat occasionally — almost half were out between 6 and 20 days during the past year. At the same time, there are more dedicated boat owners: one in twenty spent over 50 days on the water. Compared with the previous survey, fewer boat owners did not use their boat at all.

A typical boat trip usually takes place in company. Almost half of the trips had two people on board, and on average just over two people participated per trip. It was more common to go out with more than four people than to go completely alone.

Approximately how many days was your boat used during 2024? (%)



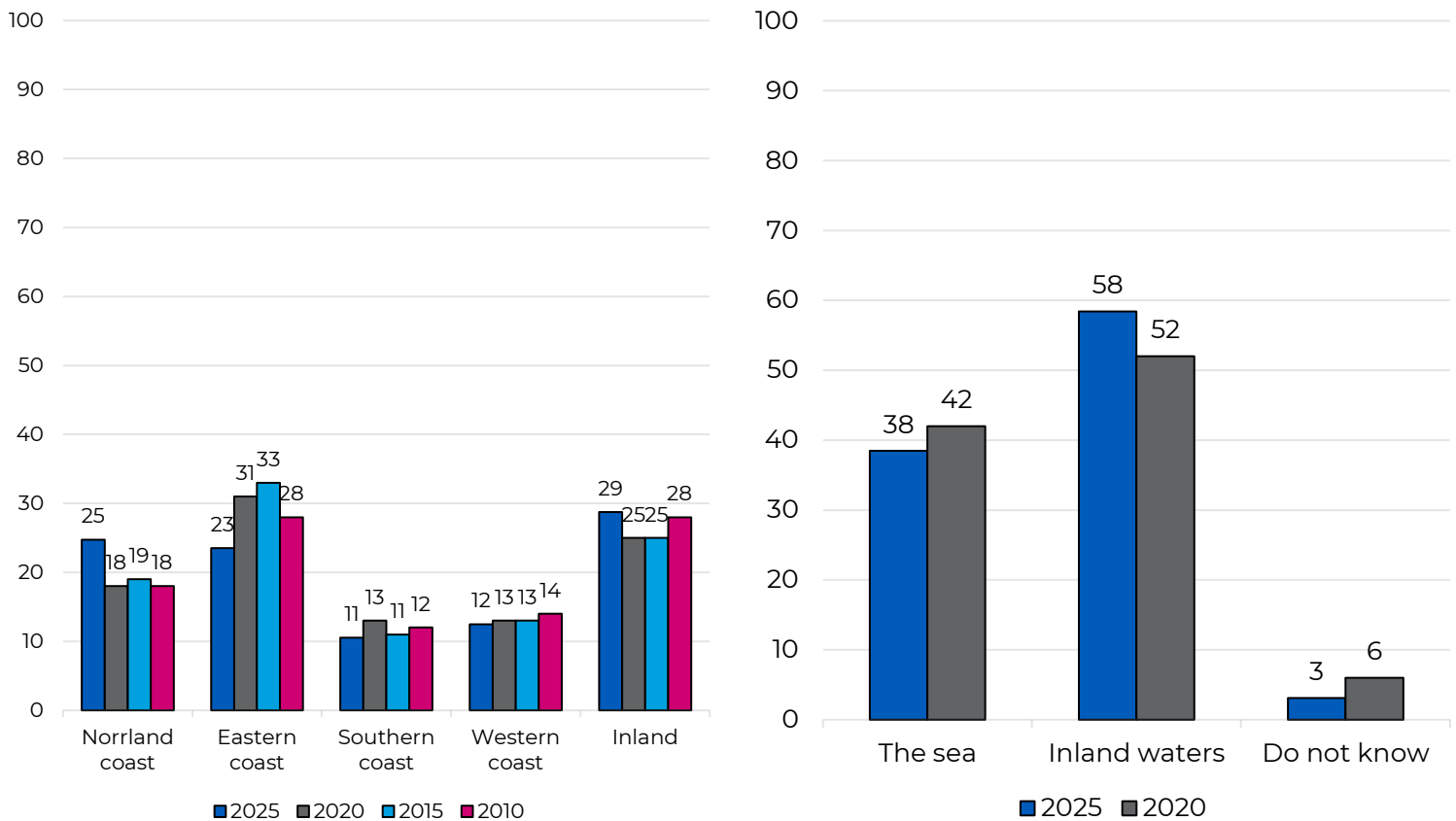
How many people most commonly went on the boat trips during 2024? (%)



The largest share of boats is found at inland lakes and canals (29 percent), followed by the Norrland coast (25 percent) and the eastern coast (23 percent). Compared with previous surveys, the share of boats has increased in inland areas and along the Norrland coast, while it has decreased slightly on the eastern coast. The western and southern coasts together account for the same share as the eastern coast.

Most boat owners keep their boats in inland waters — almost six out of ten are moored at a lake, canal, or watercourse. Fewer, just under four out of ten, have their boats moored at the sea, a share that has decreased slightly since 2020

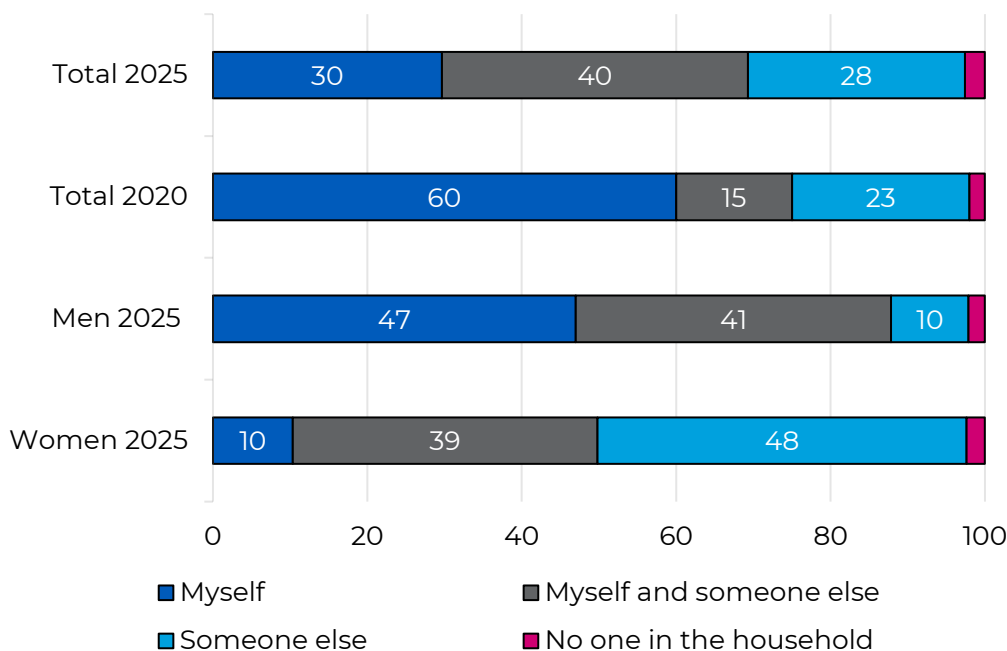
The boat's primary mooring spot — region and body of water type (%)



Who operates the boat? Gender differences between boat owners

There are clear differences between men and women regarding who operates the boat. Nine out of ten men report that they are usually the ones that operate the boat, either alone or alongside another household member, whereas the corresponding proportion of women is just under 50 percent. In seven out of ten cases where another household member operates the boat, that person is a man.

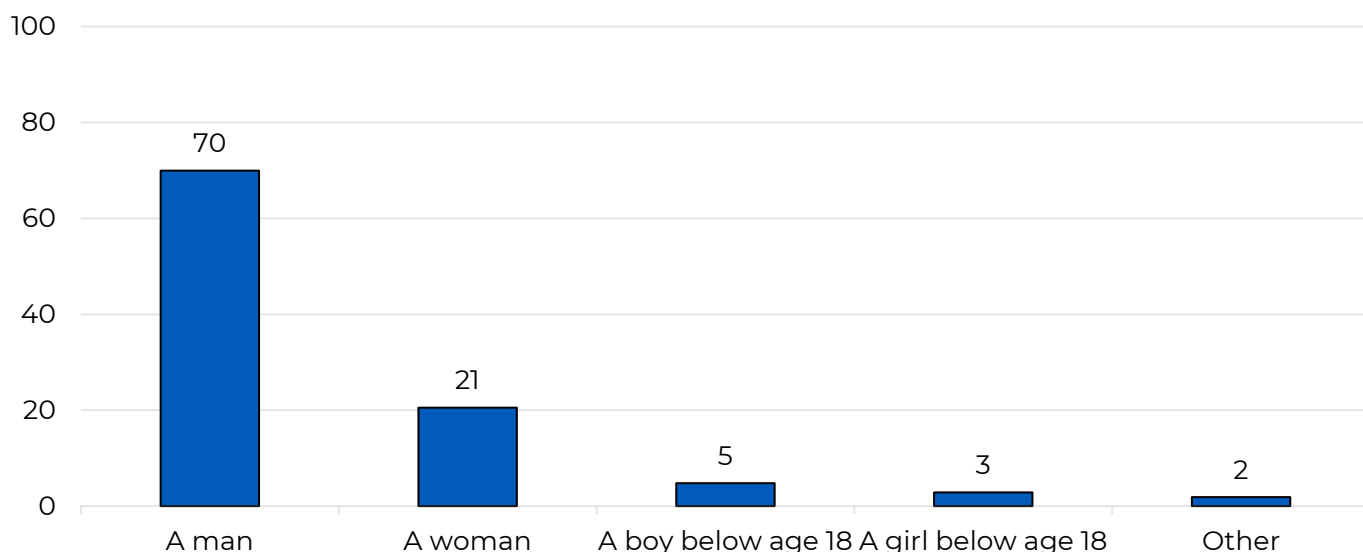
Who in your household most often operates the boat? (%)



88%
percent of men report that they most often operate the boat

49%
percent of women report that they most often operate the boat

You responded that someone else in your household drives the boat, at least in part. Who in your household is it primarily that drives the boat? (%)

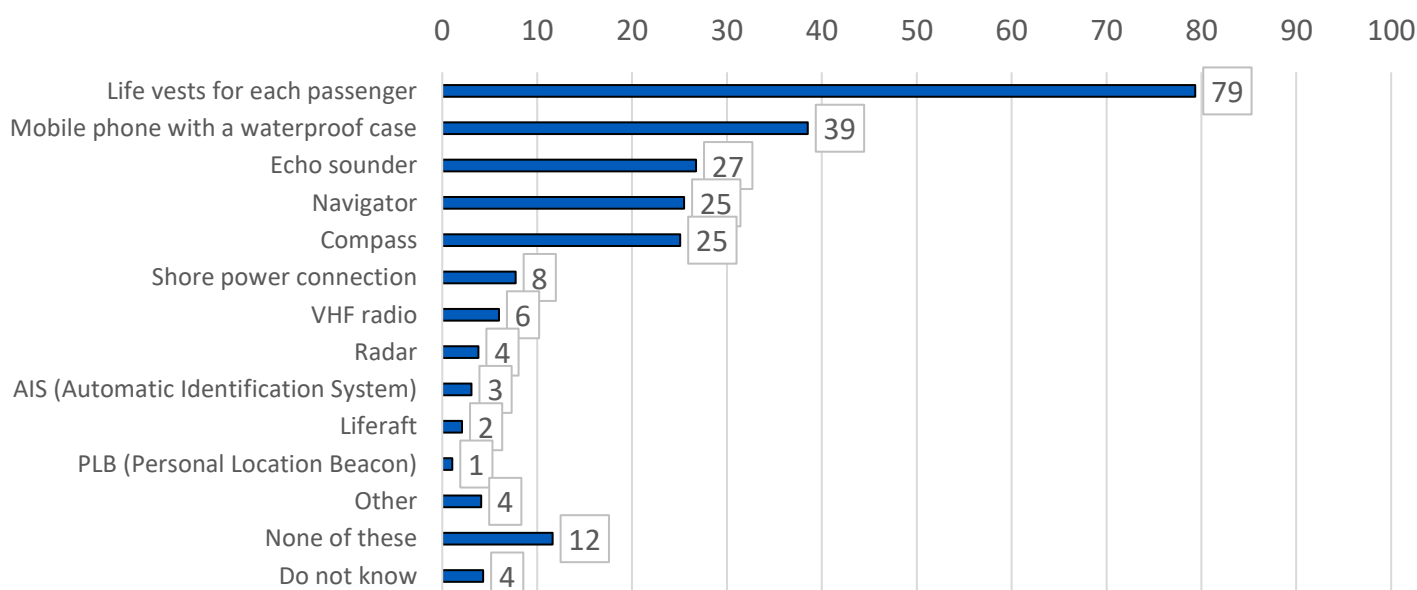


Safety and incidents

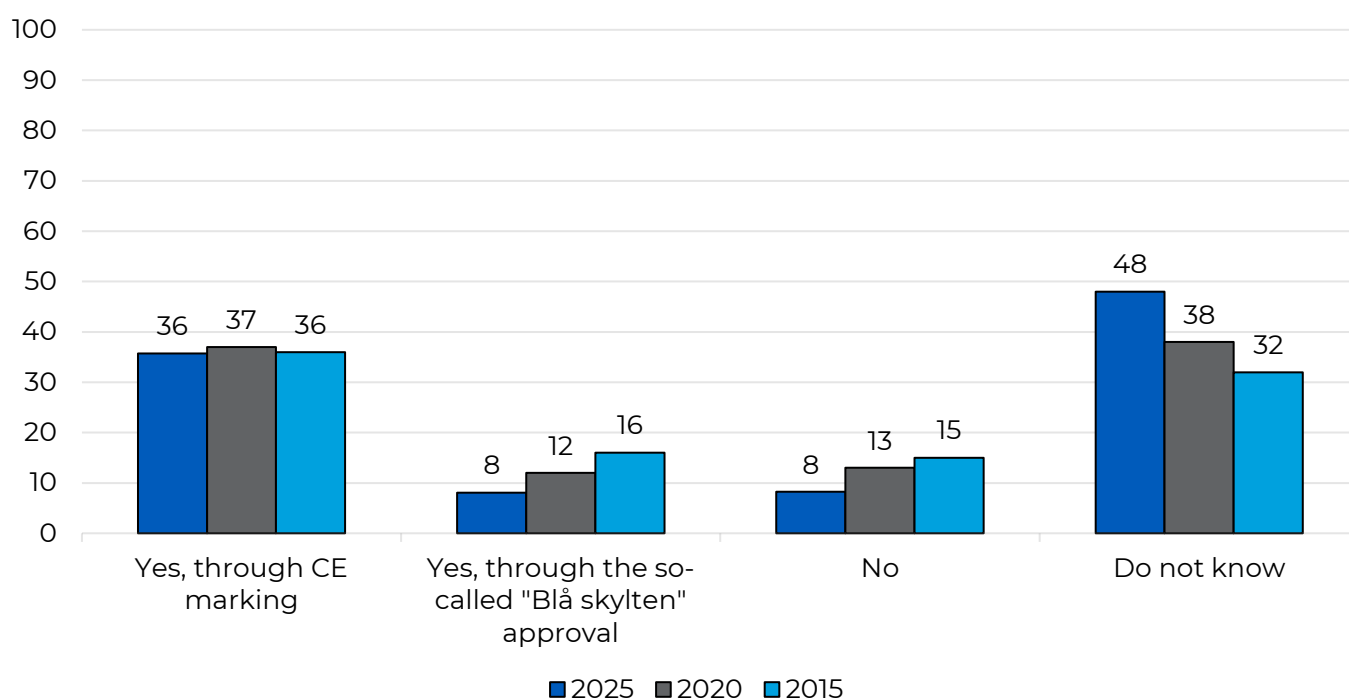
Swedish boating safety varies depending on which aspect of safety one focuses on. Eight out of ten boats are equipped with life vests for every passenger. Waterproof phone cases, echo sounders, navigators and compasses are also relatively common.

At the same time there is a sizable knowledge gap: nearly half of all boat owners do not know whether their boat is type approved. This uncertainty has increased over time. Even among newer boats, where requirements are stricter, knowledge is weak.

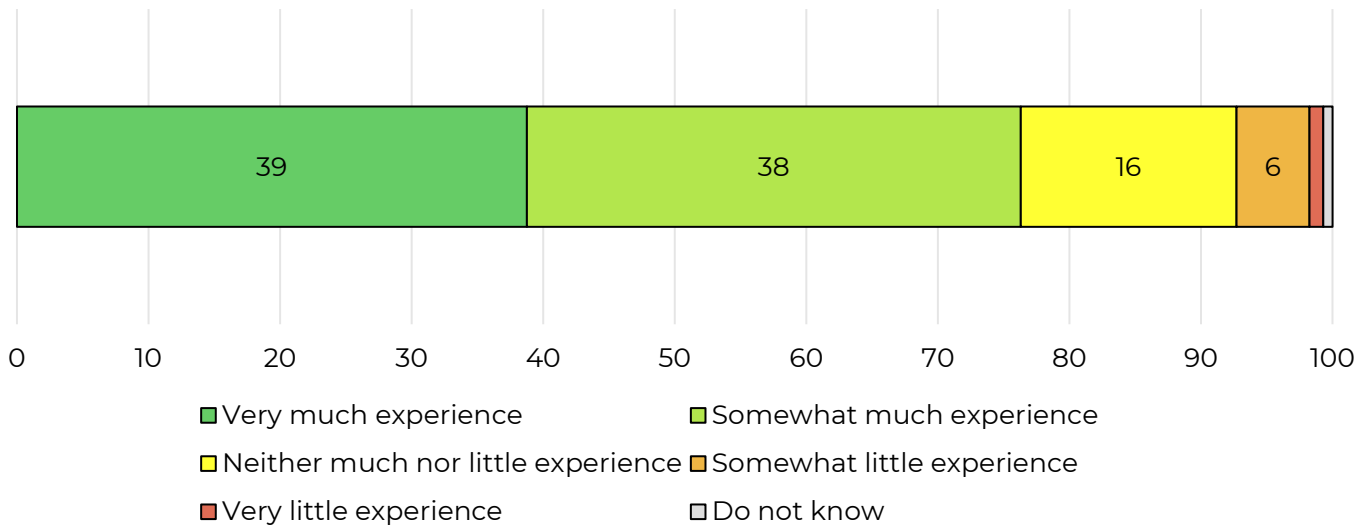
Which of the following safety equipment is your boat equipped with? (%)



Is your boat type approved? (%)



How much experience do the person or persons that most often operate the boat have? (%)

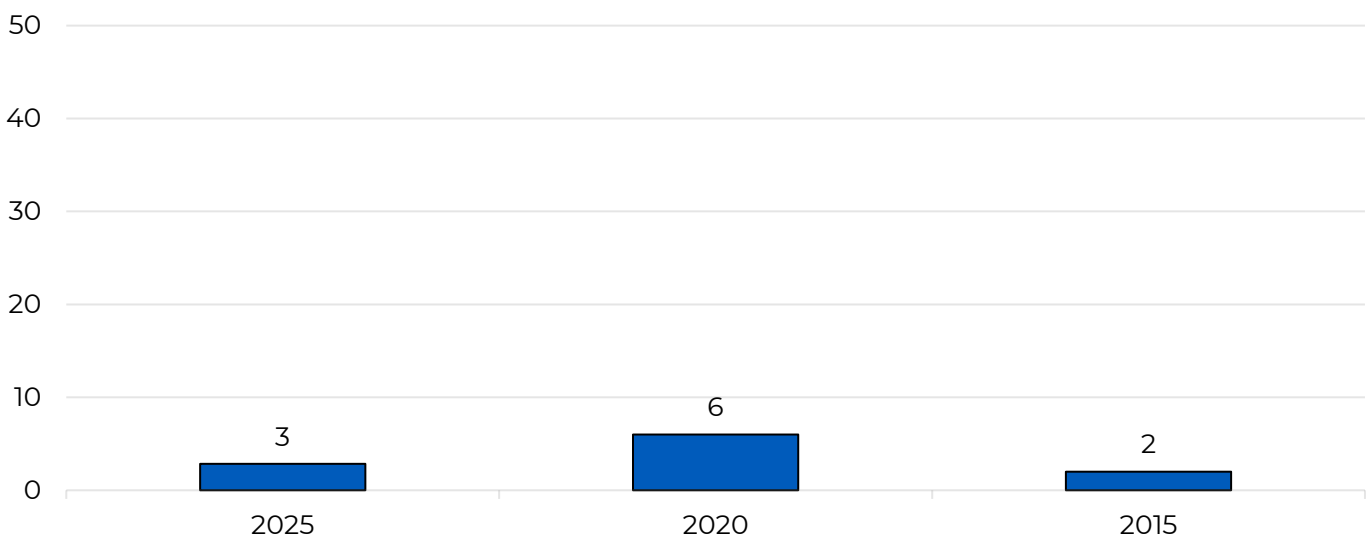


Most boat operators have substantial experience: more than three out of four describe the person steering the boat as very or somewhat experienced. Fewer than one in ten report the operator’s experience as limited. Accidents and incidents are uncommon: only three percent experienced an incident during 2024, which is half as many as in the previous survey.

30%

of recreational craft users experienced an incident during 2024.

Incident during a boating trip during the past year (%)



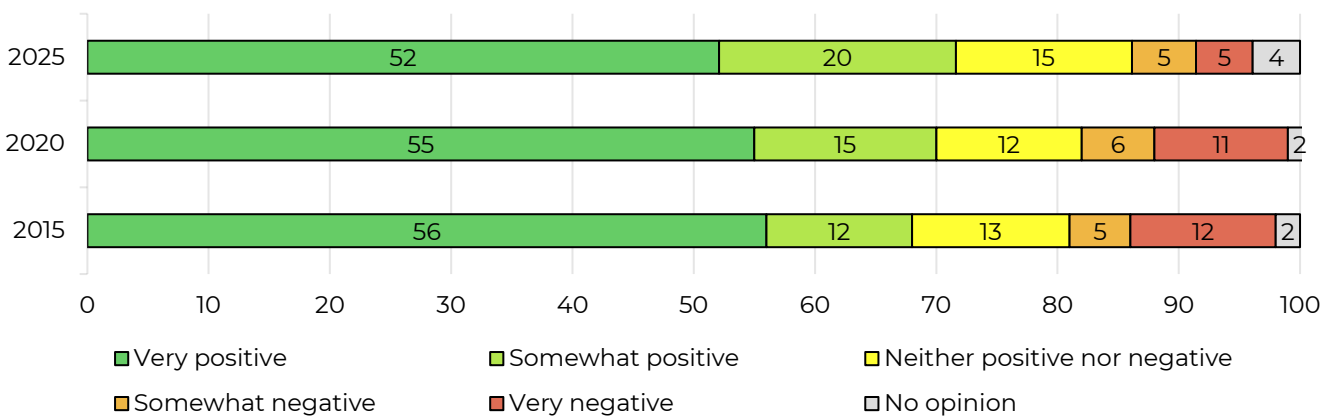
Attitudes towards laws and proposals

The survey also examined Swedes' opinions on various legislative proposals and measures related to boating. The results show that support for these is overall strong — more people are positive than negative. Women and older individuals stand out as the groups that are most supportive.

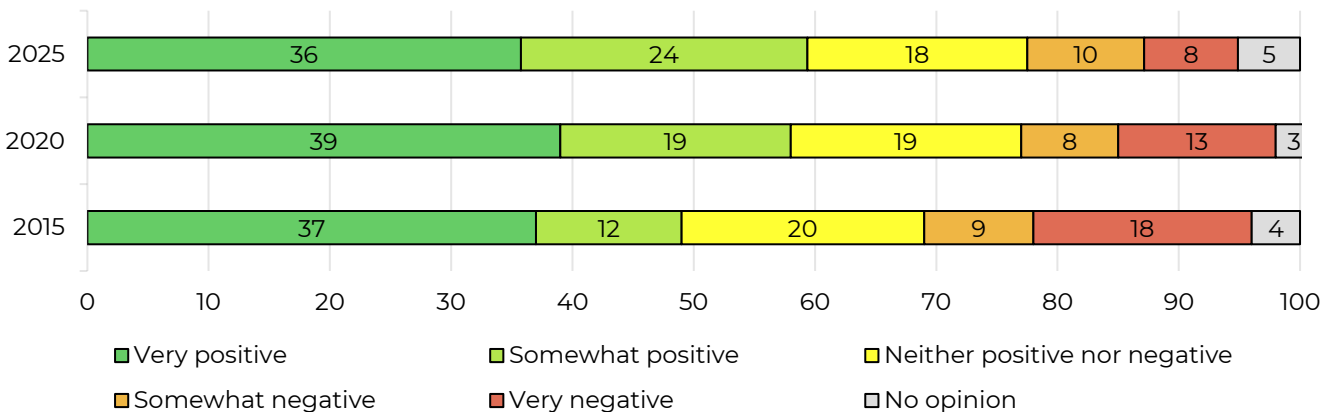
Several of the proposed safety regulations receive strong support. Almost three out of four believe that life vests should be mandatory, and six out of ten support introducing a boating license requirement for recreational crafts. The most popular proposal, with more than eight out of ten people in support, is an age limit for high-speed boats.

Some proposals generate more uncertainty. Regarding a ban on older two-stroke engines, almost half of respondents are neutral or have no opinion. There is, however, clearer support for prohibiting toxic antifouling paints, with a majority in favor — although many remain neutral on this proposal as well. The idea of a mandatory boat registry also receives backing: just over half of all respondents believe that all boats longer than five meters or faster than ten knots should be registered.

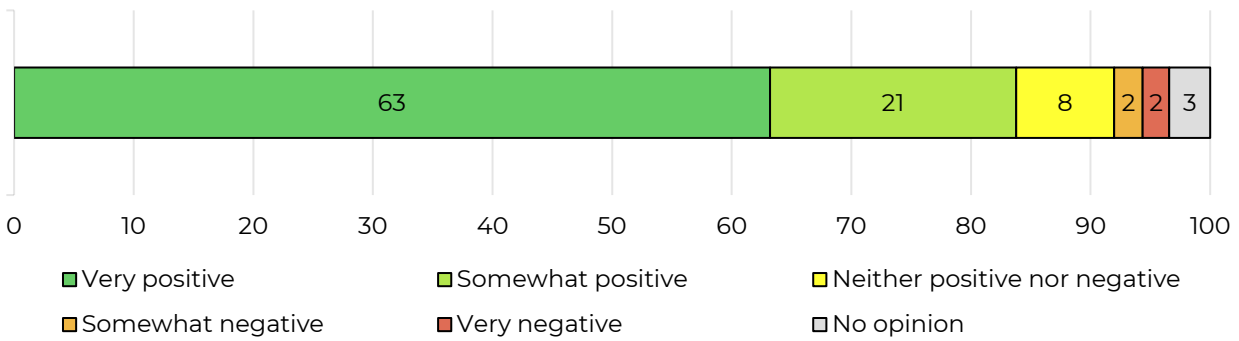
Attitudes towards life vests being mandatory (%)



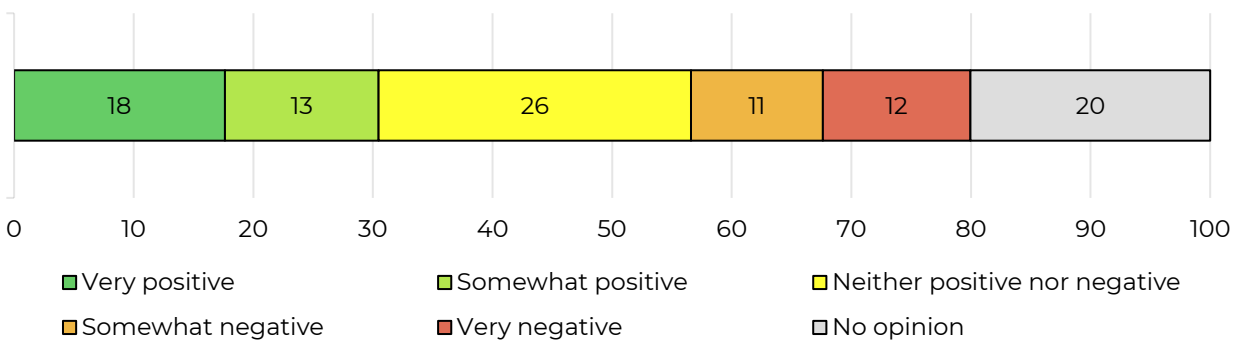
Attitudes towards introducing a boating licence or competence requirements to operate a boat (%)



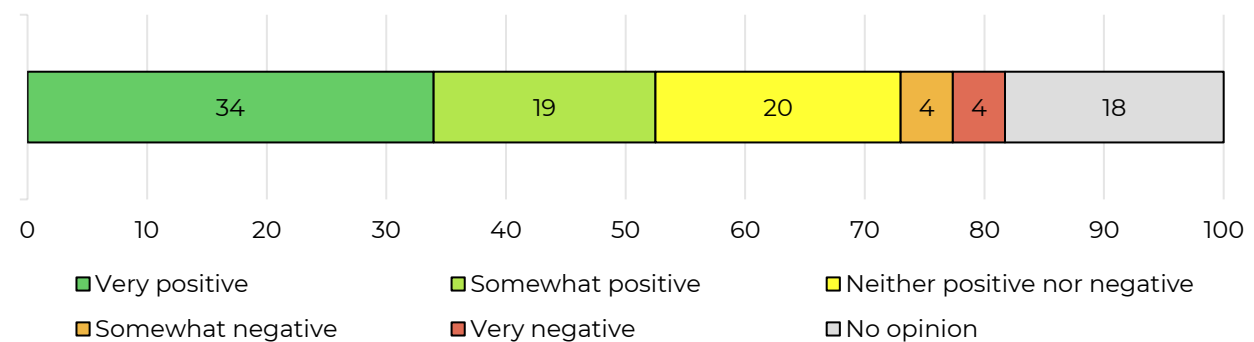
Attitude towards an age limit on high-speed boats (%)



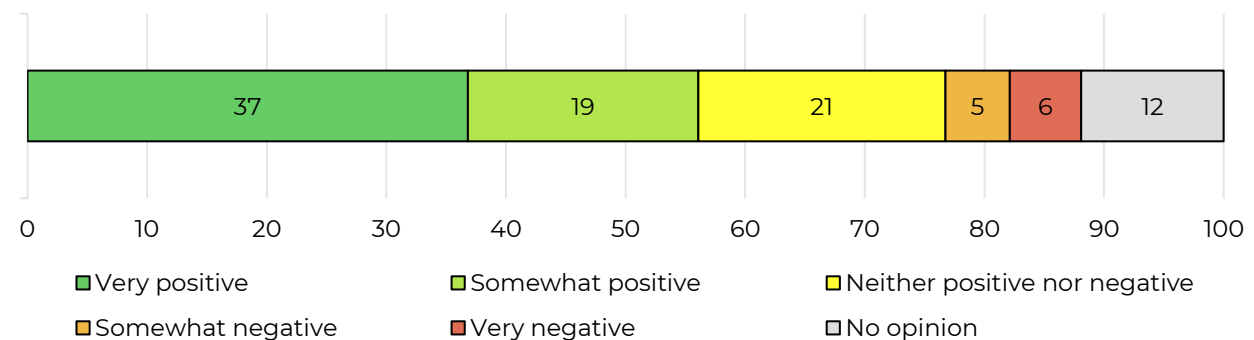
Attitudes towards a ban on older two-stroke engines (%)



Attitudes towards a ban on biocide-containing antifouling paints (%)



Attitudes towards a mandatory boat registry (%)

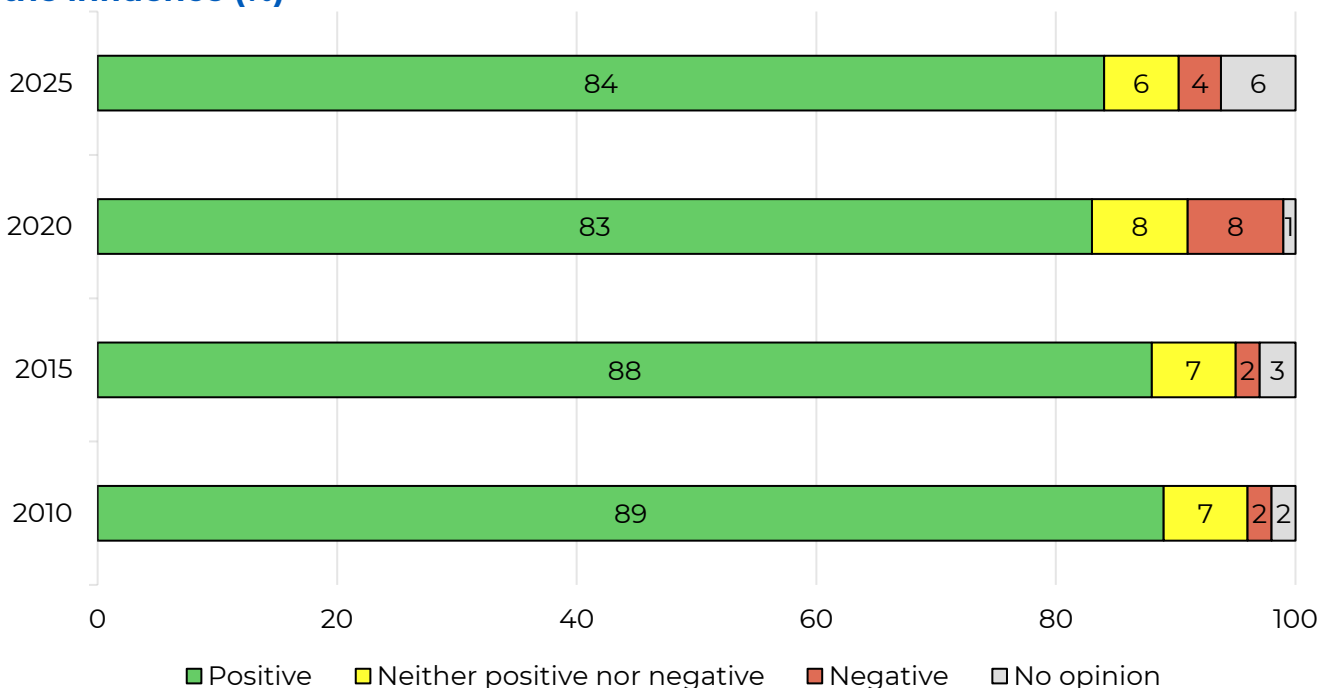




The law on boating under the influence stipulates that anyone operating a boat must not have a blood alcohol concentration above 0.02 percent or be under the influence of other substances in a way that could compromise safety. The rules apply to boats that are at least 10 meters long or capable of speeds above 15 knots

The vast majority of Swedes support the law on boating under the influence. A full 84 percent report having a positive attitude, while only 4 percent are negative. The result has remained stable over time, and although women and older individuals are more positive than men and younger people, support is strong across all groups.

Attitudes towards the law on boating under the influence (%)

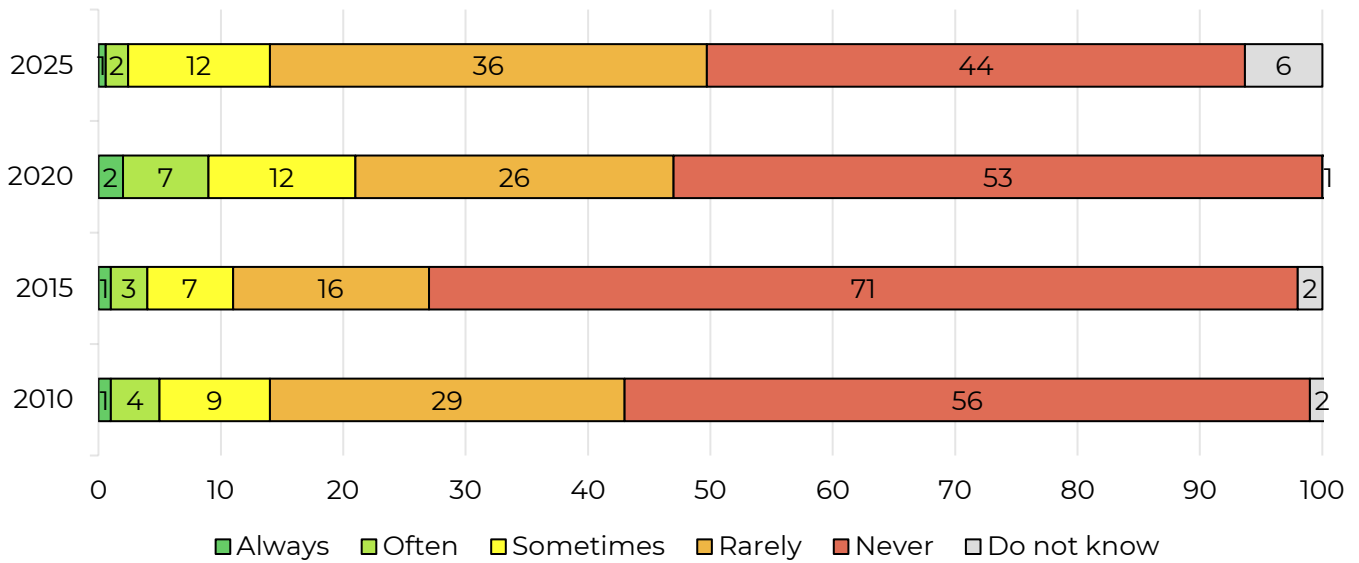


Environment

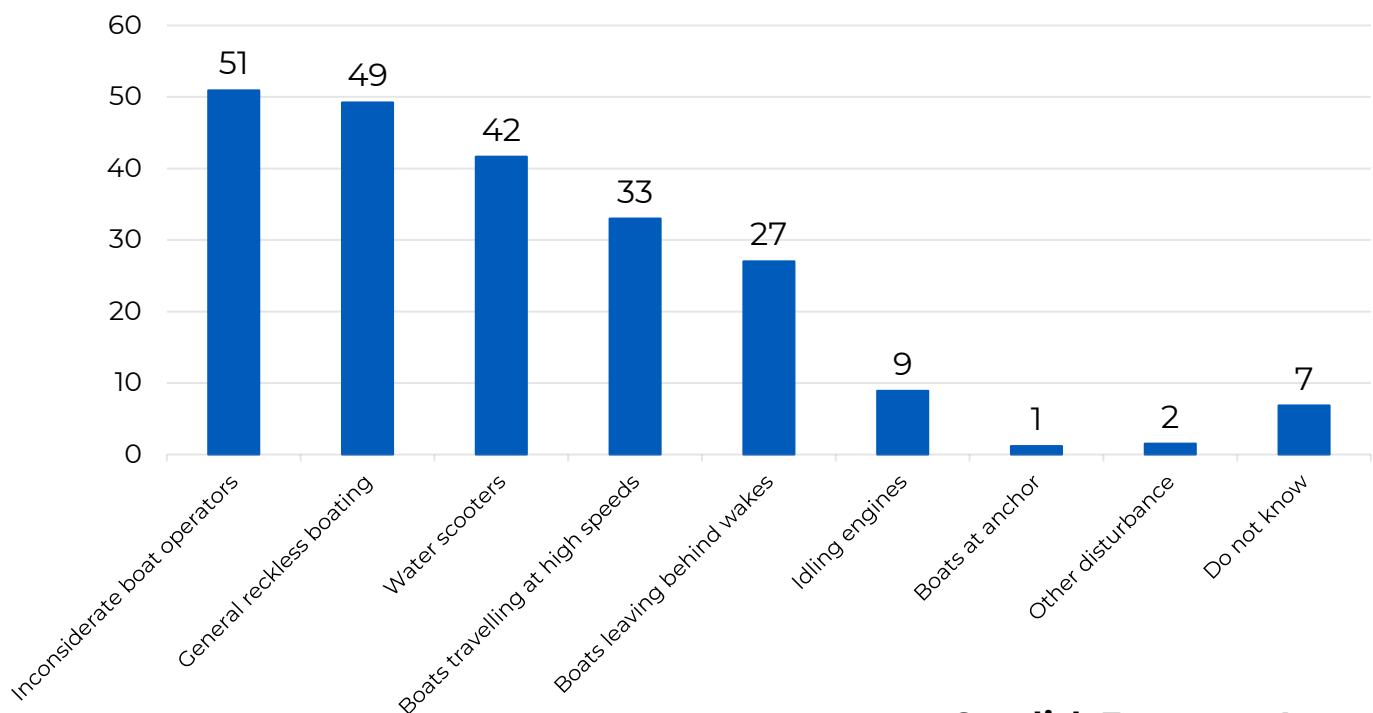
Most people, eight out of ten, are never or rarely bothered by other recreational crafts while on the water. Only a few report being often or always disturbed by other boats.

The main sources of disturbance are lack of consideration by other boat operators and reckless boating. Usage of water scooters is also perceived as disturbing, but by fewer respondents this year compared with the 2020 survey.

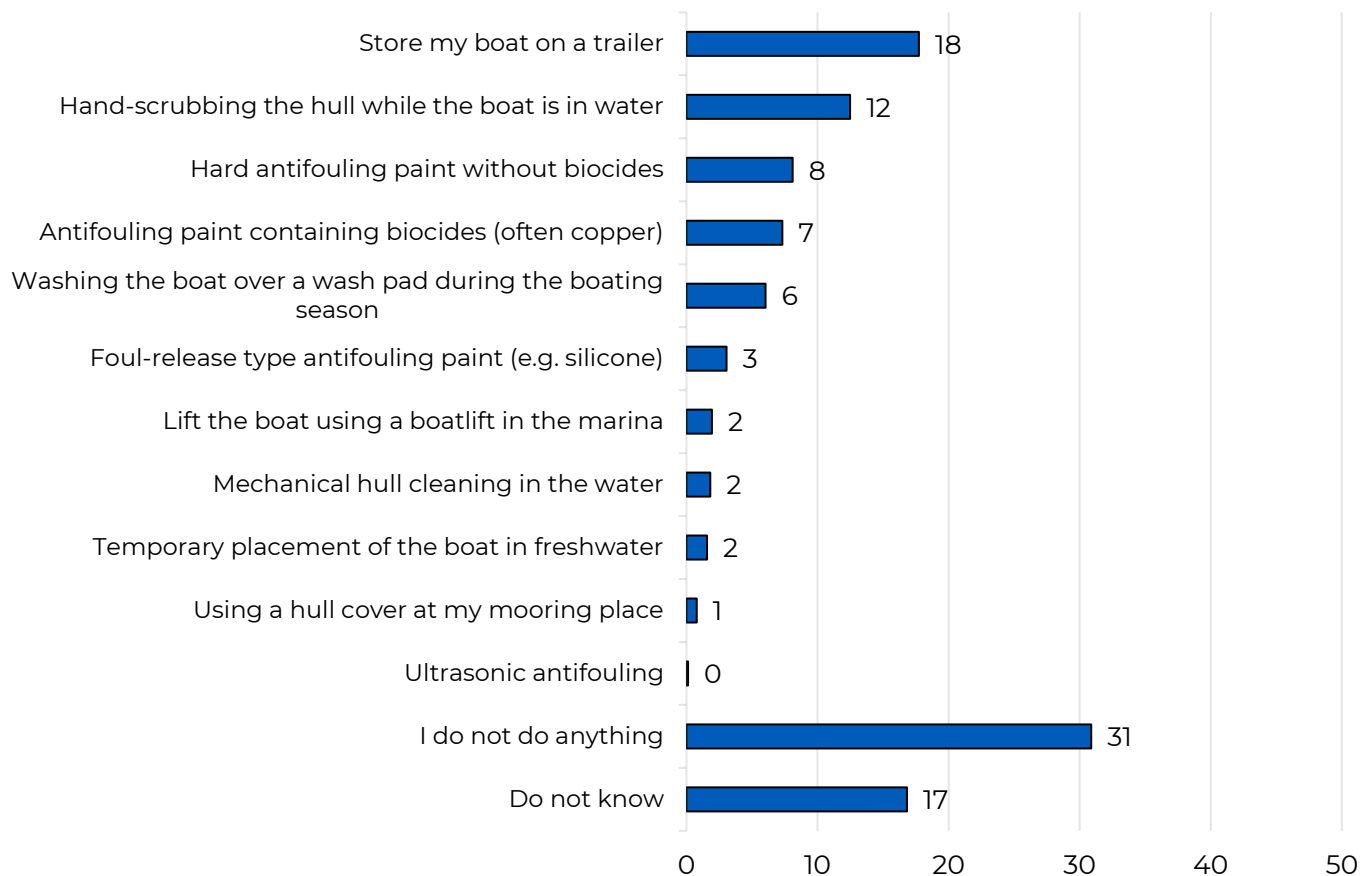
How often are you disturbed by recreational crafts when you are on a boating trip? (%)



Which of the following disturbances are you experiencing when you are on a boating trip? (%)



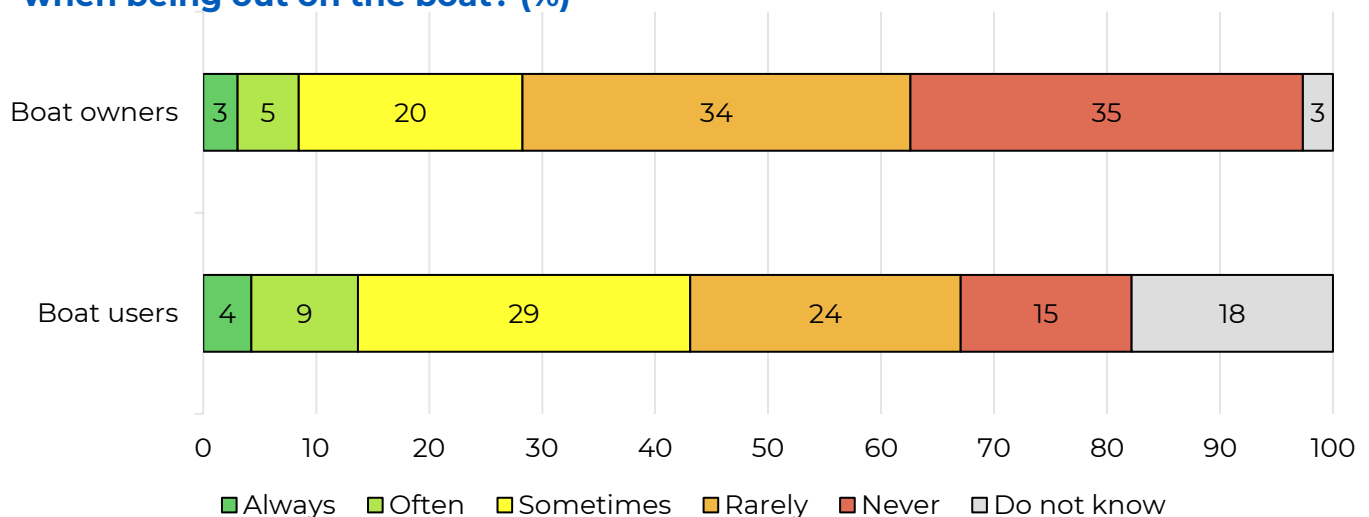
Which method do you use to prevent fouling on the hull? (%)



The most common method to prevent hull fouling is storing the boat on a trailer, which 18 percent do. The potentially environmentally harmful usage of biocide-containing antifouling paint is employed by relatively few – 7 percent. Meanwhile, 31 percent of respondents report not taking any measures to prevent fouling.

There is a need among some to use land-based toilet facilities when being out on a boat. This need is more prevalent among those who do not own a boat themselves.

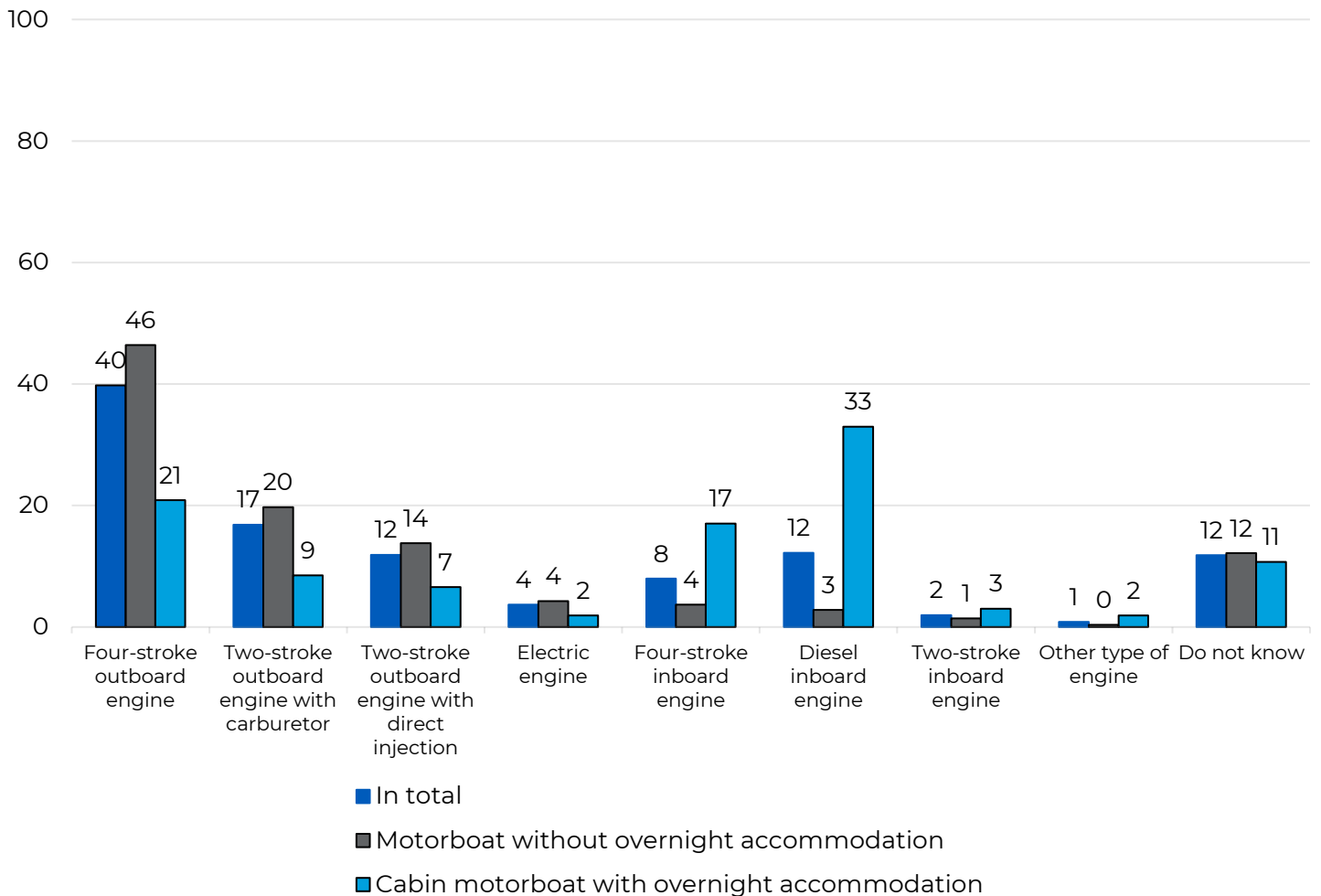
How often do you need to use a toilet facility on land when being out on the boat? (%)



The boats' motors

Four-stroke outboard engines remain the most common engine type among motorboats. Two-stroke outboard engines with carburetors – which have been prohibited from manufacture and sale since 2007 – are still relatively widespread. In total, 17 percent of motorboats, primarily boats without overnight accommodation, have this type of potentially environmentally harmful engine.

Which type of motor does your boat have? (%)



DNR: TSS 2024-4887

Author: Simon Nygren Greus, Institutet för kvalitetsindikatorer

Month and year: September 2025