

**Search and Rescue Society of British Columbia**

**BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS**

**LOST PERSON BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS**

These Stats are compiled from U.S. sources, except Climber Stats (Canada).  
 These Stats are NOT complete. Use your own judgment when considering them.

**BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL CHILDREN (1-3 YRS)**

		MI	
Median	Hilly	.3dn	
	Flat	1.2	
33% up			
11% same			
56% down			
Hilly	25%Z	.1 up	.4 dn
	50%Z	.5	.5
	75%Z	1.5	1.4

- No concept of being lost.
- No navigational skills.
- Tend to wander aimlessly.
- Remain in general area.
- Attracted by random events (a tunnel, path or animal).
- Usually found sleeping (anywhere--against a rock, under/in a log, under a bush, under a picnic table).

**DETECTABILITY**

90% in good weather  
 75% in bad weather (will retreat if weather foul)

**TRAVEL AIDS**

57% used paths, trail  
 (others scoot under bush)

**BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL CHILDREN (3-6 YRS)**

		MI	
Median	Hilly	.3d	
	Flat	1.2	
33% up			
11% same			
56% down			
Hilly	25%Z .	1 up .	4 dn
	50%Z	.5	.5
	75%Z	1.5	1.4
	89%	1.6	2.6

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- Have definite interest (playmate, pet or exploring).
- More mobile, can go further than 1-3 yr old.
- Attracted by something familiar.
- Concept of lost, try return home or go back to someplace they are familiar with.
- When tired, will sleep in some shelter (cave, hollow).
- Stranger resistant at first.

### DETECTABILITY

90% in good weather

75% in bad weather

(will retreat if weather foul)

### TRAVEL AIDS

57% used paths, trail

(others scoot under bush)

## BEHAVIOR CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN (6 - 12 yrs)

		MI	
Median	Hilly	1.6dn	
	Flat	1.2	
33% up			
8% same			
58% down			
Hilly	25%Z	1.0 dn	2.0 dn
	50%Z	.5 up	2.1 dn
	75%Z	2.0 up	4.0 dn
	92%	2.6 up	4.1 dn

- Oriented to familiar setting, confused in a strange environment.
- May intentionally run away if mad, or to avoid punishment, or gain attention.
- May not answer until cold/hungry.
- Similiar fears as adult, only enhanced - greater sense of fear/loneliness/helplessness.
- Navigation & direction skills much more developed.
- Often lost as a result of being placed in a strange environment by adults.
- Often will not answer when called, darkness usually brings on a willingness to accept help & be found.

### DETECTABILITY

65% in good weather

10% in bad weather

(will hide if weather foul)

### TRAVEL AIDS

87% used paths, trail

### YOUNG PERSONS:

93% found within 2 mi.

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNTERS

		MI	
Median	Flat	1.6	
	Hilly	2.0dn	
6% up			
11% same			
83% down			
Hilly	25%Z	1.8dn	2.8dn
	50%Z	.7dn	3.1dn
	75%Z	.8up	4.0dn
	93%	3.0up	6.0dn

- Tend to concentrate on game, not navigation.
- Tend to overextend into dark and push beyond physical abilities.
- Often try to take short cuts.
- Tendency to follow game to dense underbrush or deep snows, deadfall areas, boulder fields, etc. with little regard for exhaustion or navigation.
- Often only prepared for the day.
- Unprepared for extremely foul weather-heavy storms/improved hunting.
- When weather turns colder most take shelter.

**REASON LOST:** Disoriented, misjudge time/distance, accidental or intentional separation

### DETECTABILITY

83% in good weather \* Communicative

66% in bad weather \* Mobile

Detectability enhanced due to bright clothing

17% wear dark clothing

### TRAVEL AIDS

39% used natural drainages

(paths, trails usually not available)

- Generally 15-35 yrs old.
- 85% good physical condition.
- Most are in good mental condition.
- 33% have much experience, most have limited experience.
- 80% properly equipped & clothed, 50% no survival training (East US).
- 40% adequate equip/clothing, 40-50% questionable, 20% inadequate for Colorado.
- Cause - human error caused by subject.
- Weather a factor in 18%, darkness in 33%.
- Many wander about and go cross-country (in the west).
- Civilization and landmarks not attractors.
- 66% found within 2 mi from PLS.
- Calif. 87% found within 5 mi.
- Colo. 78% found within 5 mi.
- East US 97% found within 4 mi.
- 90% not moving for more than 24 hrs.
- Calif. and Colo. 45% moved at night. East US 80% moved at night.
- 25-60% found by SAR using attraction, confinement, hasty and heli-search.
- 25-45% found themselves.

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF HIKERS

		Mi	
MEDIAN		2.5dn	
25% UP			
20% SAME			
55% DOWN			
Hilly	25%Z	2.0dn	3.0dn
	50%Z	.6dn	3.6dn
	75%Z	.4up	6.1dn
	83%Z	4.0up	6.0dn

- Generally relies on trails with set destination.
- Trails create problems if overgrown, snow covered, poor junctions, slide over trail, trail not maintained, poorly defined junctions.
- Mismatched abilities: ....one may get tired, fall behind and eventually get disoriented/lost.
- Take other trails or short cuts - cutting switchbacks-leading to disorientation or going down wrong hill or drainage.
- Poor or no map or compass.
- Very dependent on trails and travel aids for navigation.

**REASON LOST:** 40% Disoriented

20% accidental & intentional

separation, poor supervision

25-30% misjudge time/distance

### DETECTABILITY

75% in good weather

67% in bad weather

### TRAVEL AIDS

75% used paths, trail or drainage

- Largely under 30 yrs old. 33% are 10-15 yrs old.
- Good physical and mental condition.
- Not necessarily experienced, less than 20% with much experience, most with little experience.
- 40% adequately equipped/clothed, 30% questionable, 30% not.
- Cause - human error caused by subject, weather, darkness.
- 82-90% found within 5 mi of PLS.
- 67% found within 2 mi of PLS.
- 92% moving less than 24 hrs.
- 30-40% travelled at night.
- 40% found by hasty team.
- 17% confinement/attraction instrumental.
- 5% found by dogs.
- 3% found by line searchers.

Those who travelled more than 10 mi, also descended several thousand feet, and followed trails, as opposed to going cross-country.

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF Hiker-Climbers

### CLIMBERS:

- Range from "Hill walkers" to "Scramblers" to "Rock climbers" to "Ice climbing" to "Alpine Mountaineering".
- Best climbing ages are "30-35" not uncommon "14-60".
- Climb for the pure joy of climbing.
- They do not need to have a great deal of physical strength nor superior co-ordination.
- Avalanches are the major cause of fatalities.
- Falling is the major cause of injuries.
- Stranded by weather or rock fall (landslide).
- Well equipped and self-sufficient.
- Tend to stay on or near routes.
- \*\* Check for scuff marks near cliff.

Many climbing accidents never get reported because of pride.

### 1959 to 1982

No. of accidents	Canada - 365	B.C. - 158
No. involved	Canada - 733	B.C. - 312
No. injured	Canada - 283	B.C. - ?
No. killed	Canada - 139	B.C. - 66

Break-down for 4w's and how climbers were injured or killed in CANADA.  
(Sorry, no stats for U.S.)

TYPE OF TERRAIN	GOING UP/DOWN	ESTIMATE OF EXPERIENCE
ROCK - 236	ASCENDING - 250	LITTLE OR NONE - 248
SNOW - 212	DECENDING - 159	MODERATE - 165
ICE - 29	UNKNOWN - 39	EXPERIENCED - 180

### AGE OF CLIMBERS / MONTH OF ACCIDENT

UNDER 15	11	JAN	6	JULY	136
15 - 20	158	FEB	27	AUG	140
21 - 25	160	MAR	26	SEPT	25
26 - 30	112	APRIL	10	OCT	20
31 - 35	46	MAY	25	NOV	3
36 - 50	58	JUNE	26	DEC	5
OVER 50	6				
UNKNOWN	152				

### IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF ACCIDENT / CONTRIBUTORY CAUSES

SLIP AND FALL	231	CLIMBING UNROPED	83
FALLING OBJECT	107	EXCEEDING ABILITIES	105
EXCEED ABILITIES	34	INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT	53
FAILURE OF EQUIPMENT	29	FAULTY EQUIPMENT	13
STRANDED	29	PARTY SEPARATED	9

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ILLNESS	23	CLIMBING ALONE	28
FAILURE TO STAY ON ROUTE	11	ILLNESS	7
UNKNOWN	15	DARKNESS	7
OTHER	11	BAD WEATHER	14

### AFFILIATION WITH CLIMBING CLUBS

UNAFFILIATED	103
AFFILIATED	202
UNKNOWN	272

## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF WALKAWAYS - Elderly, Alzheimer's, etc.)

		MI	
Median	Flat	1.0	
	Hilly	1.2dn	
70% down			
Hilly	25%Z	.5dn	1.8dn
	50%Z	0.0	2.4dn
	75%Z	.4up	2.6dn
	90%	1.0up	3.0dn

- May be affected by senility or Alzheimer's; mentally retarded, or a form of psychosis.
- Sometimes oriented to the past.
- Behaviour characteristics very similar to that of children.
- Easily attracted by things.
- Active ones will overexert themselves.
- If active and lucid, likely to overextend self rapidly.
- High hypothermia risk - lower normal temperatures.
- Many have suboptimal nutrition, are less able to generate heat from reserve calories, and are poorly clothed.

\*\*\* 44% travelled more than 4 mi (Calif.), 84% (East US) less than 2 mi.

### DETECTABILITY \* Often deaf or hard of hearing

59% in good weather

10% in bad weather

(Difficulty in locating subjects, most found in prone position regardless of weather condition)

### TRAVEL AIDS

47% used travel aids - (hunters used path or game trail).

Those lost in bush areas seldom used any type of trail.

Frequently found under brush, or in densely treed areas.

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF FISHERMEN

- Usually well oriented.
- Reason accident related, usually boat - swept of feet,
- boat overturned or went over waterfall, falls over cliff.
- Often recovery mission.

### DETECTABILITY

### TRAVEL AIDS

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTALLY RETARDED

	MI
Flat median	1.2
Hilly median	1.6
33% up	
8% same	
58% down	

- Act and react similar to kids 6-12.
- Usually does not respond to name called.
- Remain in same area for days.
- Usually hidden from view - fright, hiding from elements.
- No physical impairments but will not help themselves.
- Easily attracted by sights and sounds.
- May set off to explore without any sense of direction or how to return.

### DETECTABILITY

(kids 6-12)

65% in good weather

10% in bad weather

(due to bad weather crawl under logs, heavy branches)

### TRAVEL AIDS

67% used travel aids - (used paths, game trails, streams or drainages).

33% were found in brushy areas.

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## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF DESPONDENTS

FLAT TERRAIN	
MEDIAN	.8 MI
RANGE	.06-2.1 MI
50% Z	.4-1.0 MI

- Often seeking solitude.
- Usually found within sight and sound of civilization.
- All maintain they weren't lost - merely getting away to think.
- Felt intruded upon.
- Some avoided being found.

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- (US) Found near prominent locations ex. scenic lake/hill, lookout.
- (US) Tend not to go into underbrush.
- (US) Most tend to go upward to distinctive locations.
- (CAN) Tend to settle down in first secluded spot, often next to a tree.
- (CAN) Attracted to secluded, open spaces, surrounded by trees, some distance away from trails.  
Don't travel far.

### DETECTABILITY

Not responsive to searchers - feel it is an intrusion upon their solitude.

### TRAVEL AIDS

Usually stay in one place.

## BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF MISC. CATEGORY

		MI	
Median	Flat	1.6	
	Hilly	1.6dn	
Hilly	25%Z	.6dn	1.6dn
	50%Z	0	3.0dn
	75%Z	1.4up	3.1dn
	84%	2.5up	3.2dn
66% went down			

- Pinecone, berry, mushroom pickers; rock hounds; photographers.
- Poor survival risk.
- Go in good weather, no extra clothing.
- Generally unprepared (physically, clothing).
- Complete disorientation.
- Attempts to find their way usually gets them further into trouble - because of disorientation.
- Intentions are usually to stay in one location.
- Dose n't know the area.
- Little or no food, water or survival gear.

**REASON LOST:** disoriented, poor supervision, intentional separation

### DETECTABILITY

75% in good weather

50% in bad weather

(will retreat if weather foul) \* high % are communicative.

### TRAVEL AIDS

50% used paths, trail or drainage

- More cases for young [ <8 yrs old] and older [ >60 yrs old].
- Generally good physical condition.
- 65-70% in good mental condition.
- 40-50% adequately equipped.
- 45-55% properly clothed, 30% questionable, 15% not.
- Cause - human error, caused by subject.
- Greater likelihood to wander about or go cross-country.
- 69% found within 2 mi of PLS.
- 90% found within 5 mi of PLS.
- 33% found within 1/2 mi of PLS.



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- 90% not moving more than 24 hrs.
  - 30-50% move at night.
  - Found by variety of techniques.
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### BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF SKIERS

- Generally under 35 yrs old.
- Almost all are in good physical and mental condition.
- 33% have much experience, significant number with some experience.
- Generally well equipped and clothed.
- 60% have survival training.
- Cause - Human error caused by subject - 33% weather, 20% darkness.
- 54% found within 2 mi. from PLS.
- 82-85% found within 5 mi.
- 83% are not moving more than 24 hrs.
- 30-45% move at night.
- 50% found by hasty search, visual tracking. 50% by themselves.

#### REASON LOST:

Disoriented, misjudge time/distance

30% accidental & intentional separation.

20% poor or no map.

#### DETECTABILITY

\* 50% Mobile \* Almost all are communicative

#### TRAVEL AIDS

Used path or trail or drainages.

25% attracted by civilization.

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