

FIXED-SITE AMUSEMENT RIDE INJURY SURVEY, 2013 UPDATE

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Preface

This report presents the results of work done by the National Safety Council (NSC), Research and Statistical Services Group, under contract to the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. It includes estimates by the Council for calendar years 2003 through 2013. The Council's work is an extension of, but independent of, the estimates made for 2001-2002 by Heiden Associates, which are included here for reference and reported more fully in the June/July 2003 issue of *Injury Insights* (Heiden & McGonegal, 2003).

FIXED-SITE AMUSEMENT RIDE INJURY SURVEY, 2013 UPDATE

Since 2001 the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) has sponsored an annual survey to collect and analyze ride, attendance, and patron injury data from facilities that operate fixed-site amusement rides. The IAAPA survey was undertaken to gain perspective on fixed-site amusement ride injuries in the United States. The surveys include amusement and theme parks, tourist attractions, and family entertainment centers. The results of these surveys are presented below.

A total of 357 U.S. fixed-site amusement facilities were invited to participate in the 2013 survey of patron injuries. All facilities received an initial survey packet and a follow-up postcard via mail, while non-respondents received an additional follow-up postcard and up to four contacts via email. In addition, IAAPA member facilities also received follow-up calls from IAAPA staff or board members urging participation. Facilities were asked to report attendance and ridership as well as the number of patron injuries. This survey process resulted in a total of 160 parks providing attendance-based data and 147 parks providing ridership-based data. Of these, 121 parks provided both attendance and ridership data. Compared to 2012, participation increased 11% among parks providing attendance data and 17% among parks providing ridership data (see "Survey Response" and "2003-2013 Methodology" below for more details). Parks participating in the 2013 study represent approximately 72% of total U.S. estimated attendance and 86% of the total estimated rides taken.

Separate attendance-based and ridership-based analyses were performed. Not all facilities were able to report both attendance and ridership and therefore there were differences in the selection of facilities used in each analysis. Table 1 presents the attendance-based estimates of ride related injuries for all U.S. parks compared to ridership-based estimates of ride related injuries for the period 2003-2013. The difference between the two injury estimates has varied from as little as 11 in 2004 to as much as 355 in 2007. In 2013, the attendance-based injury estimate of 1,356 exceeded the ridership-based estimate by 135 injuries.

Table 1. Attendance-Based vs. Ridership-Based Injury Estimates, 2003-2013

Year	Attendance-Based		Ridership-Based		Difference between attendance-based and ridership-based injury count
	Estimated Annual Number of Ride-Related Injuries	Injuries per Million Attendance	Estimated Annual Number of Ride-Related Injuries	Injuries per Million Patron-Rides	
2003	2,044	7.0	1,954	1.0	+90
2004	1,637	5.2	1,648	0.9	-11
2005	1,783	5.2	1,713	0.9	+70
2006	1,797	6.6	1,546	0.9	+251
2007	1,664	4.6	1,309	0.7	+355
2008	1,523	4.7	1,343	0.8	+180
2009	1,181	4.4	1,086	0.6	+95
2010	1,299	4.4	1,207	0.7	+92
2011	1,204	4.3	1,415	0.8	-211
2012	1,424	4.6	1,347	0.9	+77
2013	1,356	4.7	1,221	0.9	+135

Source: National Safety Council estimates based on annual fixed-site amusement ride injury surveys.

Compared to 2012, the number of patron-injuries in 2013 decreased. Attendance-based estimates show a 5% decrease while ridership-based estimates show a 9% decrease. However, because both attendance levels and ridership levels also decreased in 2013, the attendance-based injury rate increased slightly while the ridership-based rate was stable from 2012. Figures 1 and 2 on the next page illustrate the longer term injury and injury rate trends for both the attendance- and ridership-based estimates. As can be seen, both estimate procedures show marked decreases in the number of patron-injuries since 2003. However, ridership-based injury rates have demonstrated less improvement than have attendance-based rates. Attendance-based and ridership-based injury estimates also show the following differences:

Attendance-based:

- The estimated injury total was down in 2013 compared to 2012 (1,356 vs. 1,424 injuries), while the injury rate was slightly up (4.65 vs. 4.63 injuries per million attendees).
- Compared to 2003, both the estimated number of injuries and the injury rate per million attendees in 2013 were down—by 34% and 33%, respectively.

Ridership-based:

- The estimated injury total was down 9% in 2013 compared to 2012 (1,221 vs. 1,347 injuries), while the injury rate per million patron-rides was unchanged at 0.89.
- Compared to 2003, both the estimated number of injuries and the injury rate per million patron-rides in 2013 were down—by 38% and 10%, respectively.

Figure 1.

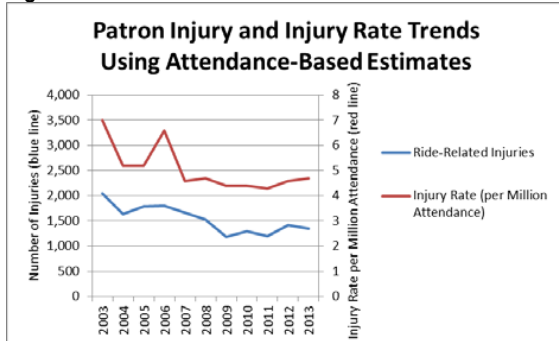
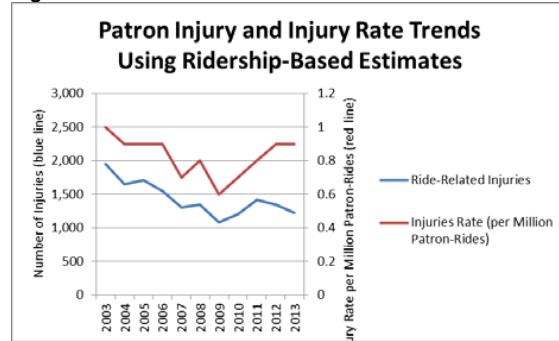


Figure 2.



The distributions of injuries by ride type and injury severity for 2013 obtained from the ridership-based estimates were similar to the distributions obtained from the attendance-based estimates for total injuries, serious injuries, and other injuries. The largest portion of injuries for both sets of estimates took place on family and adult rides, followed by roller coasters and children’s rides. However, the portion of injuries by injury severity on children’s rides and family and adult rides for “other injuries” and “total injuries” was higher in the attendance-based analysis compared to the ridership-based analysis, while for serious injuries the portion of injuries was slightly higher in the ridership-based analysis. For roller coasters the reverse was true—the proportion of injuries by severity for “other injuries” and “total injuries” was higher in the ridership-based analysis compared to the attendance-based analysis, while for serious injuries the portion of injuries was higher in the attendance-based analysis.

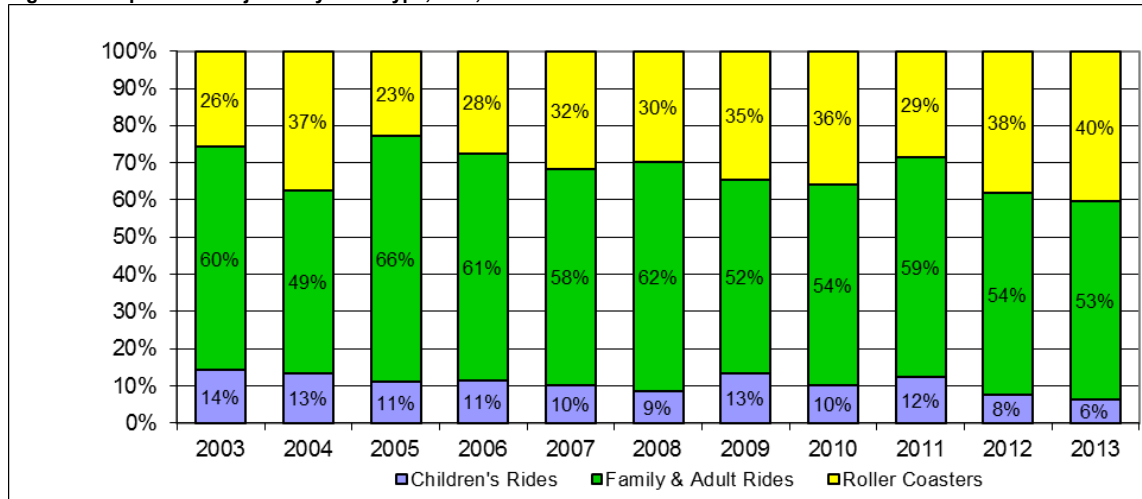
As discussed above, the number of facilities participating in this year’s survey is substantially more than in previous years (see table 2). To explore the impact of this larger sample on the 2013 estimates, a secondary analysis was conducted. Looking at only the parks that provided data for both 2012 and 2013, a percentage change method comparing the current and prior year was conducted. Using this method, the 2013 attendance-based rate estimates decreased 2% (4.55 injuries per million attendees vs. 4.65). In the ridership-based analysis, the injury rate decreased 6% (0.84 injuries per million riders vs. 0.89). These results suggest that the improved outreach conducted this year to increase the number of participating facilities successfully attracted a more diverse group of facilities that tended to have slightly higher injury rates compared to the facilities that have historically participated.

Ridership-based rates are perhaps a more appropriate measure of exposure to risk than attendance-based rates because injuries on rides are the outcome of interest. Parks with similar attendance may have much different ridership numbers because of differences in the number and kinds of amusement rides provided. **The results discussed in the remainder of the report are based on the ridership analysis, which is shown in Table 2 on page 6.**

As shown in Figure 3, about 53% of the injuries in 2013 occurred on family and adult rides compared to 54% in 2012, 59% in 2011, and 54% in 2010. The overall number of injuries on family and adult rides in 2013 was down 11% compared to 2012. The number of injuries on children’s rides decreased from 104 in 2012 to 78 in 2013, with the overall proportion of injuries on children’s rides decreasing 17% -- from 7.7% to 6.4%. Similarly, the overall number of injuries on roller coasters also declined from 515 in 2012 to 494 in 2013, a decrease of 4.1%.

However, the proportion of injuries on roller coasters increased. Roller coasters accounted for 40.5% of the injuries in 2013, up from 38.2% in 2012.

Figure 3. Proportion of Injuries by Ride Type, U.S., 2003-2012



Source: National Safety Council estimates based on annual fixed-site amusement ride injury surveys.

In 2013, the injury rate per million patron-rides was 0.8 for family and adult rides, 1.4 for roller coasters, and 0.50 for children's rides. The difference between the injury rate for children's rides and family and adult rides is statistically significant, as is the difference between the injury rate for family and adult rides and roller coasters and the difference between the injury rate for children's rides and roller coasters.

About 6.9% of the injuries were reported to be "serious," meaning an injury resulting in immediate admission and hospitalization in excess of 24 hours for purposes other than medical observation. The remaining 93.1% were reportable injuries that were other than serious. The proportion of injuries that were serious in 2013 was up over 1% from the proportion in 2012 and was the highest since 2006. The rate of serious injuries per million patron-rides was 0.06 in 2013—unchanged from 2012 and also the highest since 2006.

Table 2. Summary of Estimated Fixed-Site Amusement Ride-Related Injuries, U.S., 2003-2012 (based on ridership)

Year	Characteristic	Injuries by Ride Type				Injuries by Severity		
		Total	Children's Rides	Family and Adult Rides	Roller Coasters	Total	Serious Injuries	Other Reportable Injuries
2003	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,954	277	1,173	504	1,954	106	1,848
	Percent	100.0%	14.2	60.1	25.8	100.0%	5.4	94.6
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.1	1.0
2004	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,648	219	806	613	1,648	132	1,516
	Percent	100.0%	13.3	49.5	37.2	100.0%	8.0	92.0
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.2	0.9	0.1	0.8
2005	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,713	192	1,131	390	1,713	132	1,582
	Percent	100.0%	11.2	66.0	22.8	100.0%	7.7	92.3
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.1	0.9
2006	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,546	177	943	426	1,546	135	1,411
	Percent	100.0%	11.4	61.0	27.6	100.0%	8.7	91.3
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.1	0.8
2007	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,309	134	759	416	1,309	35	1,274
	Percent	100.0%	10.2	58.0	31.8	100.0%	2.7	97.3
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.02	0.7
2008	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,343	117	827	399	1,343	80	1,264
	Percent	100.0%	8.7	61.5	29.7	100.0%	5.9	94.1
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.8	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.05	0.7
2009	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,086	145	565	375	1,086	65	1,021
	Percent	100.0%	13.4	52.1	34.5	100.0%	6.0	94.0
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.6	0.04	0.6
2010	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,207	122	652	433	1,207	59	1,148
	Percent	100.0%	10.1	54.0	35.9	100.0%	4.9	95.1
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.7	0.5	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.03	0.7
2011	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,415	175	836	405	1,415	61	1,355
	Percent	100.0%	12.3	59.0	28.6	100.0%	4.3	95.7
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.8	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.04	0.8
2012	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,347	104	728	515	1,347	91	1,256
	Percent	100.0%	7.7	54.1	38.2	100.0%	6.8	93.2
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.9	0.5	0.8	1.5	0.9	0.06	0.8
2013	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,221	78	649	494	1,221	84	1,137
	Percent	100.0%	6.4	53.1	40.5	100.0%	6.9	93.1
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.9	0.5	0.8	1.5	0.9	0.06	0.8

Source: National Safety Council estimates based on annual fixed-site amusement ride injury surveys.

Note: Totals may not equal sum of parts due to rounding.

Survey Response

Of the 357 eligible facilities with rides in 2013, a total of 203 provided some or all of the data requested (44 provided attendance data only, 31 provided ridership data only, 121 provided both attendance and ridership data, and 7 provided injury data only). The overall total for 2013 represents a 16% increase from the previous year and is mainly due to the increased follow-up efforts by both NSC and IAAPA. The respondents used in the analyses represented about 71.7% of the estimated total annual attendance and 85.6% of the estimated total rides taken at all facilities.

The table below summarizes the number of facilities whose data were used for the attendance-based and ridership-based estimates from 2004-2013. In 2013, the number of facilities used for the attendance-based and ridership-based estimates each reached historical highs, increasing 12% and 17%, respectively. It was impractical to find a single set of facilities that reported all data (attendance, ridership, and injuries) for all years as that would have reduced the reliability of the estimates.

Table 3. Number of facilities included in estimates

Year	Number of facilities used for injury estimates	
	Attendance-based	Ridership-based
2004	124	99
2005	117	90
2006	124	97
2007	125	104
2008	153	134
2009	113	105
2010	104	96
2011	117	100
2012	143	126
2013	160	147

National Attendance and Ridership Estimates

Based on IAAPA membership data as well as on going NSC surveillance, it is estimated that 357 facilities were in operation at the end of 2013 (see Table 4). Total U.S. attendance and ridership is estimated by inflating the reported attendance figures by the ratio of the total number of U.S. facilities to the number reporting and calculating average rides per guest figures. Using this method, it is estimated that 315.2 million people visited U.S. facilities with fixed site amusement rides and approximately 1.38 billion rides were taken in 2013.

Table 4. Estimated Number of U.S. Fixed-Site Amusement Parks with Rides, Attendance and Ridership

Year	Estimated Number of Facilities w/Rides in the U.S.	Estimated Annual Attendance (millions)	Estimated Annual Ridership (billions)
2001-2002	459	302.9	---
2003*	403	300.4	1.95
2004	403	300.0	1.81
2005	398	300.4	1.82
2006	395	291.7	1.76
2007	395	292.1	1.78
2008	422	291.2	1.70
2009	398	278.4	1.69
2010	386	290.1	1.70
2011	383	297.4	1.69
2012	373	324.1	1.51
2013	357	315.2	1.38

Source: 2001-2002, Heiden & McGonegal (2003). 2003-2013, National Safety Council estimates based on fixed-site amusement ride injury surveys.

*Changes in the estimating method beginning with 2003 affect comparability with the 2001-2002 survey.

2003-2013 Methodology

The National Safety Council conducted the survey using a master list of amusement/theme parks, family entertainment centers, and tourist attractions thought to have fixed-site rides. The original master list was prepared in consultation with IAAPA and Amusement Industry Consulting, Inc. The list was reviewed this year by IAAPA staff and several new parks were added to the database and the member status of each park was verified for accuracy. The survey consisted of a notification letter, a package of reporting information mailed one week later, a follow-up postcard mailed one week after the reporting package, and a final follow-up postcard mailed at the end of the response period. In 2013, four subsequent follow-ups to all nonrespondents were conducted via e-mail—two more than for 2012. After the mailings and electronic follow-up, IAAPA volunteers made follow-up telephone calls and sent e-mails to nonresponding IAAPA member facilities. Injury rates based on the reporting facilities were used to estimate national totals. (See also “Survey Response” above.)

2001-2002 Methodology

In 2001 and 2002 IAAPA mailed survey questionnaires to members previously identified as having fixed-site amusement rides. IAAPA retained Heiden Associates, Washington, DC, to analyze the survey results. Using the IAAPA survey results and other data, Heiden Associates estimated the number of U.S. facilities with one or more fixed-site amusement rides and the injury totals and rates.

References

Heiden, E.J., & McGonegal, S. (2003). 2001-2002 fixed-site amusement ride injury survey analysis. *Injury Insights*, June/July 2003.