

**IAAPA RIDE SAFETY REPORT – NORTH AMERICA – 2018**

**Prepared for  
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**by**



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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 2018. The Council's work is an extension of, but independent of, the estimates made for 2001-2002 by Heiden Associates, published in the June/July 2003 issue of *Injury Insights* (Heiden & McGonegal, 2003).

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### Introduction

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 originally undertaken to gain perspective on fixed-site amusement ride injuries in the United States. Beginning with the 2016 data year, IAAPA members in Canada were also asked to complete the ride injury survey. Because of the relatively small number of amusement facilities with fixed-site rides in Canada and their high percentage of IAAPA membership, this change effectively expanded the coverage of the data collection from the U.S. to all of North America. The surveys include amusement and theme parks, tourist attractions, and family entertainment centers. The results of these surveys are presented below.

### 2018 Results

A total of 421 U.S. and Canadian fixed-site amusement facilities were invited to participate in the 2017 survey of patron injuries. This total was comprised of 272 IAAPA members and 149 non-members. The total increased 10% from the previous year resulting from an updated list of new member facilities provided by IAAPA. Direct internet searches were performed for the parks listed on all returned packets and indicated closure status verified where possible on such websites as [defunctparks.com](http://defunctparks.com) and the list of defunct parks on Wikipedia. In the course of the review, ten non-member facilities were identified as closed and removed from the non-member database. In addition, three member facilities and one non-member park responded to the survey indicating they did not operate fixed-site rides at their facility and were removed from their respective databases.

All facilities received an initial survey packet and a follow-up postcard via mail, while non-respondents received an additional follow-up postcard and contact via email. In addition, IAAPA member facilities also received follow-up calls from IAAPA staff or board members urging participation. Respondents had the option of completing the ride injury survey online or returning the completed paper version of the survey form. Facilities were asked to report attendance and ridership as well as the number of patron injuries. This survey process resulted in a total of 155 parks providing attendance-based data and 151 parks providing ridership-based data. Of these, 123 parks provided both attendance and ridership data. Compared to 2017, participation decreased 9% among parks providing attendance data and 12% among parks providing ridership data (see "Survey Response" and "2003-2018 Methodology" below for more details). Parks participating in the 2018 study represent approximately 63% of total North

American estimated attendance and 73% of the total estimated rides taken. Ride safety reports were received from a total of 217 parks, with 208 (96%) coming from IAAPA members and 9 (4%) from non-members. The member response represents 76% of all North American IAAPA members with rides.

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 below 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 2003-2018. The difference between the two injury estimates has varied from as little as four in 2014 to as much as 355 in 2007. In 2018, the attendance-based injury estimate of 1,256 was 33 injuries lower than the ridership-based estimate of 1,289 injuries.

**Table 1. Attendance-Based vs. Ridership-Based Injury Estimates, 2003-2018**

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
2014	1,150	3.8	1,146	0.7	+4
2015	1,502	4.8	1,508	0.8	-6
2016*	1,197	3.9	1,253	0.8	-56
2017	1,171	3.9	1,035	0.6	+136
2018	1,256	3.7	1,289	0.8	-33

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

\*Beginning in 2016, the ride injury survey was expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

Confidence intervals were developed for the estimated 2018 fixed-site amusement ride injury rates for parks in the United States and are presented in Table 2 on the next page. Confidence intervals were first developed separately for each park type. Composite confidence intervals for the attendance and ridership rates were then estimated through weighted averages. The confidence intervals along with exposure estimates were then used to estimate the likely range of injuries experienced in 2018. The confidence intervals provided below assume a Poisson

distribution of the data instead of the normal bell-shaped curve often used in statistics. The Poisson distribution is used in the medical and epidemiological fields to model events, particularly uncommon events like injuries and illnesses. This distribution is not symmetric about its mean and so the associated confidence intervals are not symmetric (the upper limit is slightly farther from the estimate than is the lower limit). Comparing previous injury and rate estimates to the 2018 confidence intervals shows that the 2018 attendance-based injury count estimate is consistent with 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, and 2009 estimates. The 2018 attendance-based rate estimate is consistent with prior years' estimates for 2017, 2016, and 2014. The 2018 ridership-based injury count estimate is consistent with previous estimates for 2016, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2008, and 2007. Finally, the 2018 ridership-based rate estimate is consistent with previous estimates for 2010 through 2016 and 2004 through 2008.

**Table 2. 95% Confidence Intervals of Injury Rates and Counts Assuming a Poisson Distribution, 2018**

	Attendance Based Estimates		Ridership Based Estimates	
	Injuries per Million Attendance	Injury Count	Injuries per Million Attendance	Injury Count
Upper Confidence Limit	4.23	1,450	0.90	1,493
Estimated Value	3.73	1,256	0.78	1,289
Lower Confidence Limit	3.33	1,099	0.68	1,121

Compared to 2017, the number of patron-injuries in 2018 increased. Attendance-based estimates show a 7% increase while ridership-based estimates show a 24% increase. However, with observed attendance levels increasing 6% in 2018, the attendance-based injury rate decreased 4% from 2017 to 3.73 injuries per million attendees. With estimated ridership unchanged in 2018, the larger increase in injuries observed in the ridership-based analysis produced an injury rate of 0.78 injuries per million riders. This rate represents a 26% increase from the 2017 ridership-based rate of 0.62 injuries per million riders. 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. The downward trends of injuries and injury rates are apparent with the downward sloping (dashed line) trend lines. Attendance-based and ridership-based injury estimates also show the following differences:

Attendance-based:

- The estimated injury total was up in 2018 compared to 2017 (1,256 vs. 1,171 injuries, while the injury rate declined 4% (3.73 vs. 3.89 injuries per million attendees).
- Compared to 2003, the estimated number of injuries in 2018 was down 38%, while the injury rate per million attendees was down 47%.

Ridership-based:

- The estimated injury total was up 26% in 2018 compared to 2017 (1,289 vs. 1,035 injuries), while the injury rate per million patron-rides was 0.78 injuries per million patron rides, up 26% from 2017.
- Compared to 2003, both the estimated number of injuries and the injury rate per million patron-rides in 2018 were down—by 34% and 20%, respectively.

Figure 1.

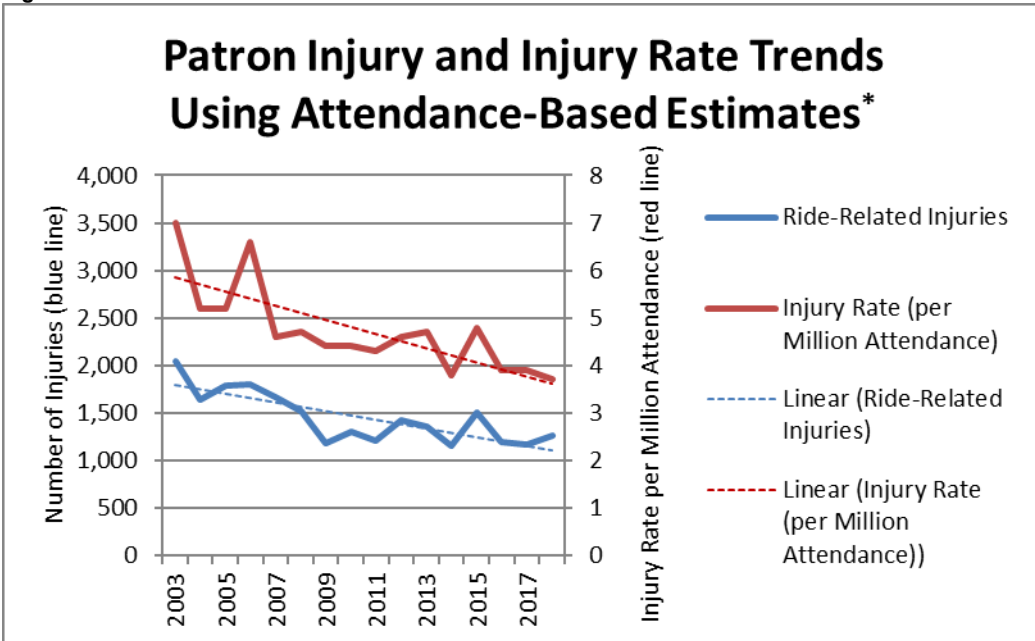
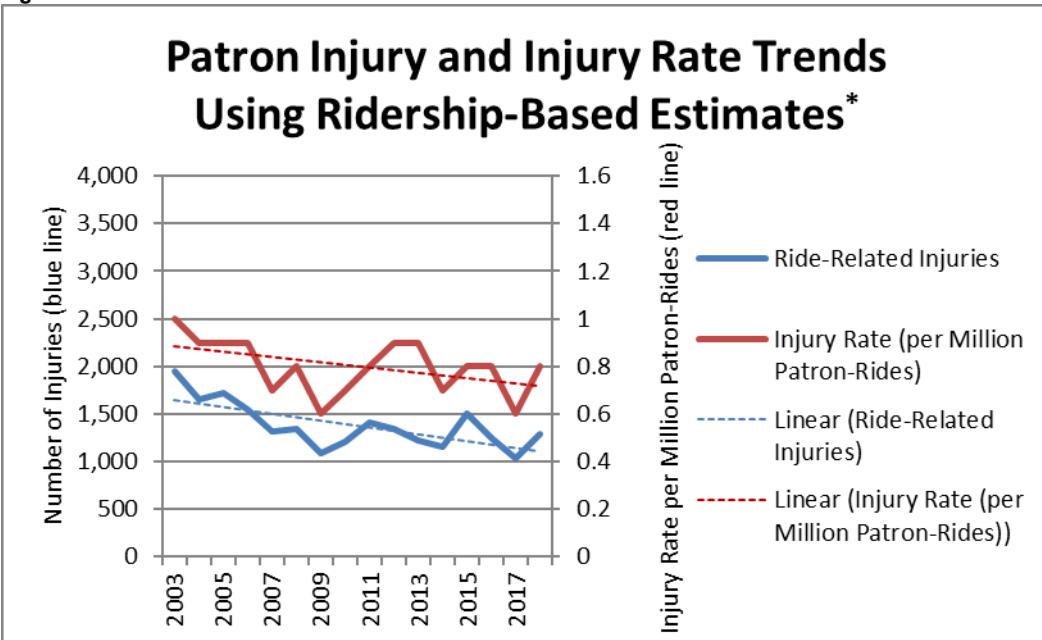


Figure 2.



\*In 2016, the survey was expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

The distributions of injuries by ride type and injury severity for 2018 obtained from the ridership-based estimates were similar to the distributions obtained from the attendance-based analysis 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 family and adult rides and across all injury categories – Serious, Other, and Total – were higher in the ridership-based analysis compared to the attendance-based analysis. For children's rides, the proportion of injuries was higher across all injury categories in the attendance-based analysis compared to the ridership-based analysis. The overall proportion of injuries on roller coasters was nearly identical across both analyses, with the proportion of serious injuries higher in the attendance-based analysis and the proportion of other injuries higher in the ridership-based analysis.

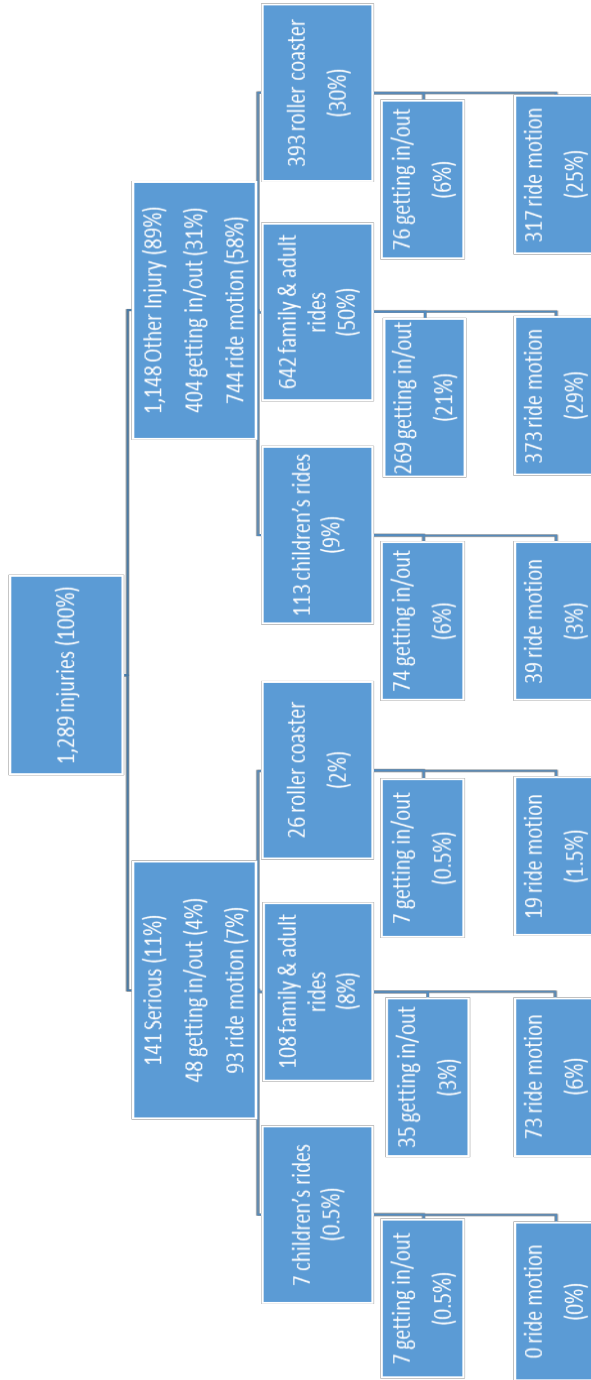
### Ridership Analysis

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 3 on pages 9-10.**

### Distribution of Injuries in 2018

Figure 3 on the next page summarizes the 2018 distribution of injuries in terms of severity, ride type, and location of the incident. A total of 1,289 injuries were estimated to have occurred on rides in 2018. About 11% 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, or result in fatality. The remaining 89% were reportable injuries that were other than serious, but required medical treatment beyond ordinary first aid. The proportion of injuries that were serious in 2018 was up about 10% from the proportion in 2017. The majority of incidents of both severity types took place on family and adult rides, followed by roller coasters and children's rides. Likewise, injuries due to ride motion predominated across both severity types for family and adult rides and roller coasters, while for children's rides a higher portion of injuries of both severity types occurred while getting into or out of rides.

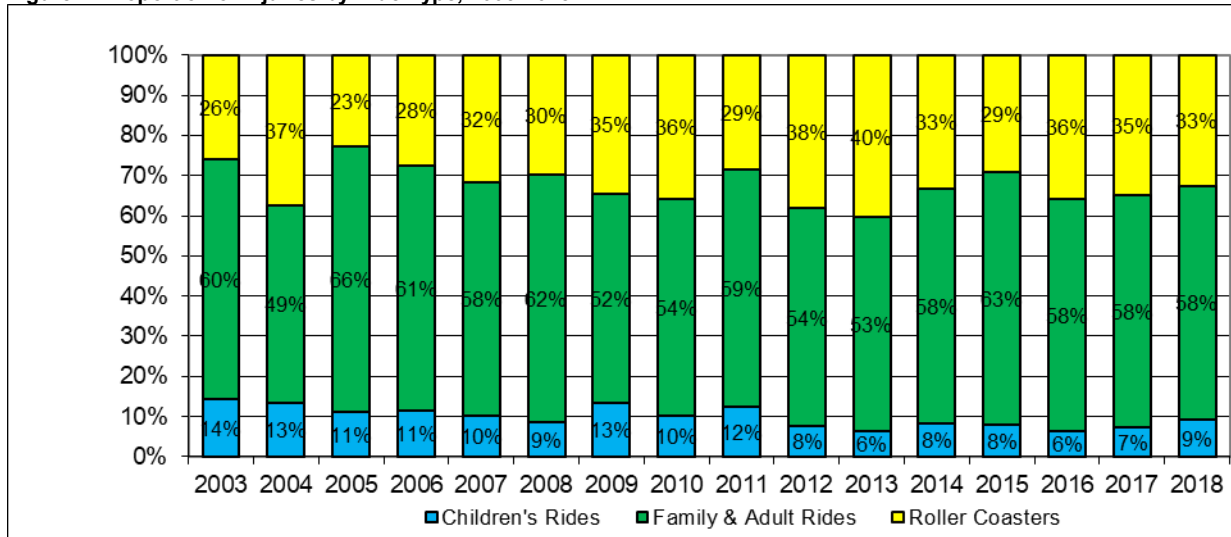
Figure 3. Distribution of ridership-based injuries by severity, ride type, and location, 2018.



## Historical Distribution of Injuries by Ride Type, 2003-2018

As shown in Figure 4 below, about 58% of the injuries in 2016 through 2018 occurred on family and adult rides compared to 63% in 2015, 58% in 2014, and 53% in 2013. The overall number of injuries on family and adult rides in 2018 was up 25% compared to 2017, increasing from 598 to 750 and remaining at 58% of injuries. The number of injuries on children’s rides increased from 75 in 2017 to 120 in 2018, with the overall proportion of injuries on children’s rides increasing 2% -- from 7% to 9%. The overall number of injuries on roller coasters increased from 362 in 2017 to 419 in 2018, an increase of 16%. The proportion of injuries on roller coasters decreased from 35% of the injuries in 2017 to 33% of the injuries in 2018.

**Figure 4. Proportion of Injuries by Ride Type, 2003-2018\***



Source: National Safety Council estimates based on annual fixed-site amusement ride injury surveys.  
 \*In 2016, the survey was expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

## Injury Rates

The overall injury rate increased from 0.62 injuries per million patron-rides in 2017 to 0.78 in 2018. The injury rate per million patron-rides in 2018 was 1.2 for roller coasters, 0.7 for family and adult rides, and 0.6 for children’s rides.

Total ride injuries are comprised of events involving getting in/out of the ride and those events resulting from ride motion. A secondary analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of the prevalence of injuries resulting from ride motion events. The 1.2 per million injury rate on roller coasters decreases to 0.9 per million rides when counting only those incidents due to ride motion. The overall 0.7 per million injury rate for family and adult rides decreases to 0.4 per million rides due to ride motion, and the 0.6 per million injury rate for children’s rides decreases to 0.2 per million rides due to ride motion.

About 11% 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 89% were reportable injuries that were other than serious. The proportion of injuries that were serious in 2018 was up about 10% from the proportion in 2017. The rate of serious injuries per million patron-rides was 0.08 in 2018—up 33% from 2017.



**Table 3. Summary of Estimated Fixed-Site Amusement Ride-Related Injuries, 2003-2018 (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
2014	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,146	94	670	383	1,146	111	1,036
	Percent	100.0%	8.2	58.4	33.4	100.0%	9.6	90.4
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.7	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.07	0.7
	Getting In/Out	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.01	0.2
	Ride Motion	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.06	0.4

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
2015	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,508	119	952	437	1,508	82	1,425
	Percent	100.0%	7.9	63.1	29.0	100.0%	5.5	94.5
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.05	0.8
	Getting In/Out	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	<0.005	0.3
	Ride Motion	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.05	0.5
2016*	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,253	81	723	450	1,253	107	1,146
	Percent	100.0%	6.5	57.7	35.9	100.0%	8.5	91.5
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.06	0.7
	Getting In/Out	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.01	0.2
	Ride Motion	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.04	0.5
2017	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,035	75	598	355	1,035	100	935
	Percent	100.0%	7.3	57.8	34.9	100.0%	9.7	90.3
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.06	0.6
	Getting In/Out	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.01	0.2
	Ride Motion	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.06	0.4
2018	Estimated Number of Injuries	1,289	120	751	419	1,289	141	1,149
	Percent	100.0%	9.3	58.2	32.5	100.0%	10.9	89.1
	Injuries per Million Patron-rides	0.8	0.6	0.7	1.2	0.8	0.08	0.7
	Getting In/Out	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.03	0.3
	Ride Motion	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.05	0.4

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 expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

## Survey Response

Of the 421 eligible facilities with rides in 2018, a total of 155 provided some or all of the data requested (32 provided attendance data only, 28 provided ridership data only, and 123 provided both attendance and ridership data). An additional 25 facilities provided their injury data, but were unable to provide any exposure data and were therefore not included in the analysis. The overall total of participating facilities for 2018 represents a 5% decrease from the previous year. The respondents used in the analyses represented about 63.0% of the estimated total annual attendance and 73% of the estimated total rides taken at all facilities. Ride safety reports were received from a total of 217 parks, with 208 (96%) coming from IAAPA members and 9 (4%) from non-members. The member response represents 76% of all North American IAAPA members with rides.

Table 4 on the following page summarizes the number of facilities whose data were used for the attendance-based and ridership-based estimates from 2004-2018. The 155 facilities used for the 2018 attendance-based estimate was down 9% from 2017 and down 16% from high of 184 in 2016. The 151 facilities used for the ridership-based estimate was down 12% from 2017 and down 14% from the high of 175 in 2016. 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 4. 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
2014	147	137
2015	160	154
2016*	184	175
2017	171	171
2018	155	151

\*Survey expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

#### Attendance and Ridership Estimates

Based on IAAPA membership data as well as on-going NSC surveillance, it is estimated that 421 facilities were in operation at the end of 2018 (see Table 5 on the next page). This total was up 10% from the previous year and was the result of an updated list of new members provided by IAAPA. NSC also conducted an online review of parks whose survey packets were returned as undeliverable. Direct internet searches were performed for the parks listed on all returned packets and indicated closure status verified where possible on such websites as defunctparks.com and the list of defunct parks on Wikipedia. In the course of the review, ten non-member facilities were identified as closed and removed from the non-member database. In addition, three member facilities and one non-member park responded to the survey indicating they did not operate fixed-site rides at their facility and were removed from their respective databases.

Total attendance and ridership is estimated by inflating the reported attendance figures by the ratio of the total number of facilities to the number reporting and calculating average rides per guest figures. Using this method, it is estimated that 391.6 million people visited North American facilities with fixed site amusement rides and approximately 1.66 billion rides were taken in 2018. The attendance estimate represents a 6% increase from 2017, while the ridership estimate was unchanged. The ridership estimate was influenced by a few large parks reporting relatively large declines in ridership along with several other large parks reporting small to moderate declines in ridership. As noted earlier, starting in 2016 the survey was expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

**Table 5. Estimated Number of Fixed-Site Amusement Parks with Rides, Attendance and Ridership**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Facilities w/Rides in the U.S.</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Attendance (millions)</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Ridership (billions)</b>
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
2014	405	366.9	1.57
2015	413	367.1	1.79
2016*	411	383.9	1.68
2017	383	368.6	1.66
2018	421	391.6	1.66

Source: 2001-2002, Heiden & McGonegal (2003). 2003-2018, 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. In 2016, the survey was expanded to include both U.S. and Canadian facilities.

### 2003-2018 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. A revised list of member and nonmember parks was provided this year by IAAPA. Additional parks thought to have rides that were on the previous park list were added to the IAAPA-provided list in order to have the most complete universe of parks. 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. Up to three additional follow-up contacts to all non-respondents were conducted via e-mail. After the mailings and electronic follow-up, IAAPA volunteers made follow-up telephone calls and sent e-mails to non-responding 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.