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Men more accident prone than women

By TOM MITCHELL
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Statistics Canada

OTTAWA - Did you get through 1987 without an accident? If you did, you weren't quite as lucky as a lottery jackpot winner but you were more fortunate than about 3.8 million of your fellow Canadians.

If you were among the one in every five people age 15 and over who had an accident in 1987, Statistics Canada figures show it is most likely that it happened either while you were in a motor vehicle, while playing at a sport or while you were at work.

Over all, the figures from a special survey demonstrate that men had a higher accident rate

than women. The highest probability of being an accident victim went to young men age 15 to 24 - at 27% compared with 19% for the total adult population. Persons who drank alcohol on a regular basis had higher rates than those who didn't for every type of accident except those which happened in the home.

A reportable accident was defined as one which interrupted normal activity for at least half a day or brought about expenses of at least \$200.

A full third of all such accidents were in the motor vehicle/traffic category. Accidents during sports or leisure activity were second at 23% and work-related accidents next at 21%. Mishaps in and around the home accounted

for 13%.

A review of accidental death in Canada for the years from 1926 to 1985 concluded that, in absolute terms, there was only a small net increase in accident mortality. But the relative importance of accidents-as a cause of death increase through the years and the importance of other causes of death diminished, probably due in part to medical advances against diseases. Vital statistics figures show that 13,000 persons 15 and over died as a result of accidents in 1987.

The survey found a definite link between accidents and alcohol. As well, accident prevalence rose with the amount of alcohol normally consumed.

Only 27% of non-drinkers had an accident in the three years ending in January 1988. This rate of accident involvement rose to 40% for those who had one to six drinks a week, to 51% for those who had seven to 13 drinks a week and to 56% for those who had 14 or more drinks a week. A drink was defined as one bottle of beer, one small glass of wine and 1.5 ounces of liquor.

In accidents where injury resulted, bruises were the most common injury by far - occurring in 43% of all cases. Cuts or scrapes occurred in 17% of accidental injury cases and broken bones in 11%.

Motor vehicle accidents were responsible for 37% of all reported head injuries. Sports were involved in just under half of all injuries to the legs or feet. Accidents at work were the cause of 39% of all back injuries.

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