

Paddling Safety: The Next Frontier for Boating Safety Education

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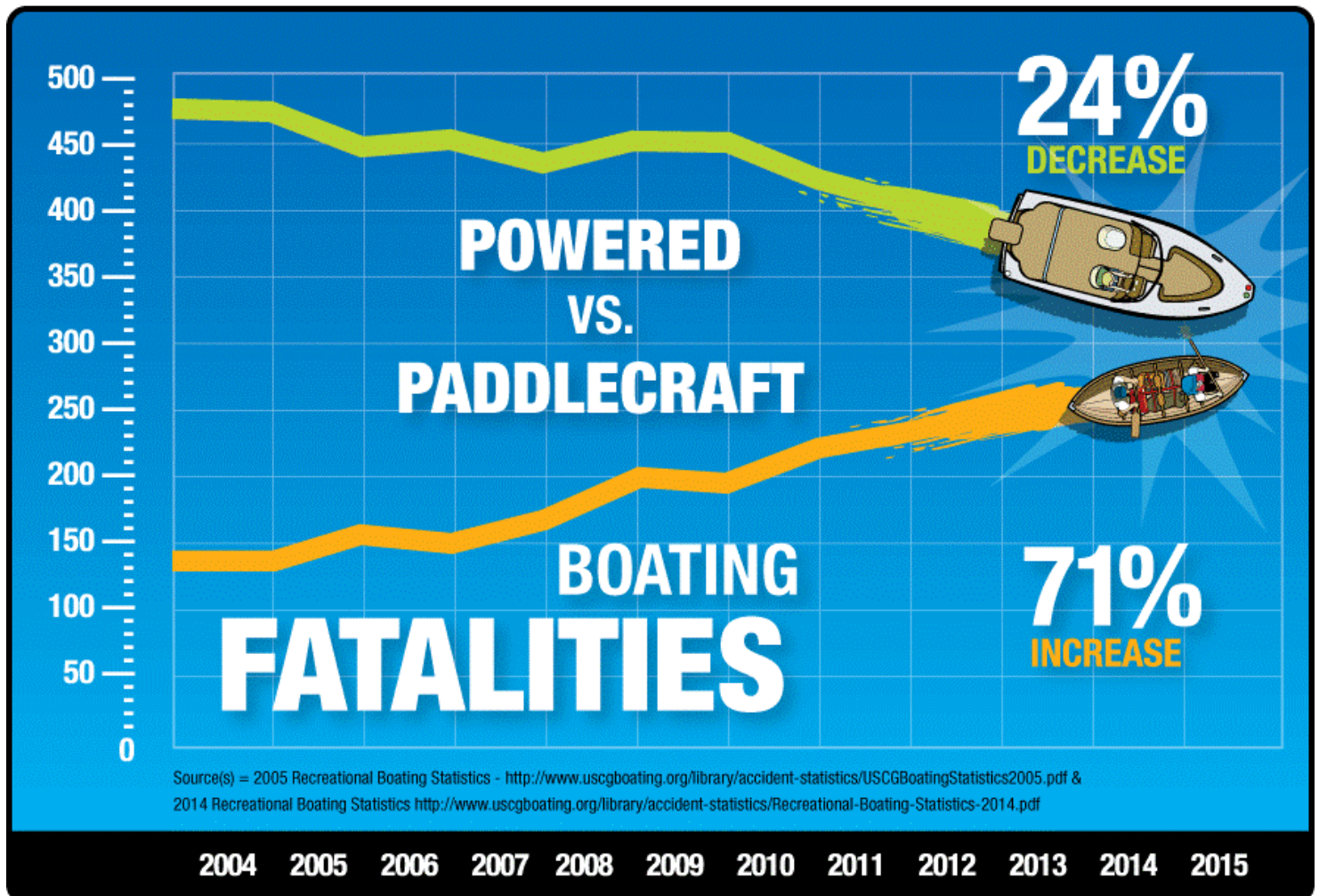
Like us, you have probably noticed a growing number of people paddling canoes, kayaks and paddleboards over the last few years. The numbers back up that trend.

According to a [2015 Special Report on Paddlesports](#), in 2014, over 21.7 million Americans took to the water by kayak, canoe, raft or paddle board, an increase of over 3 million participants since 2010¹.

It's a great boating success story, with more people enjoying the outdoors and getting great physical activity at the same time. Unfortunately, as the number of paddle enthusiasts has grown, so have serious paddling accidents.

According to United States Coast Guard, over the past decade, the number of boaters killed while operating a canoe or kayak has grown by an alarming 71%, rising from 78 fatalities in 2005² to 133 in 2014³.

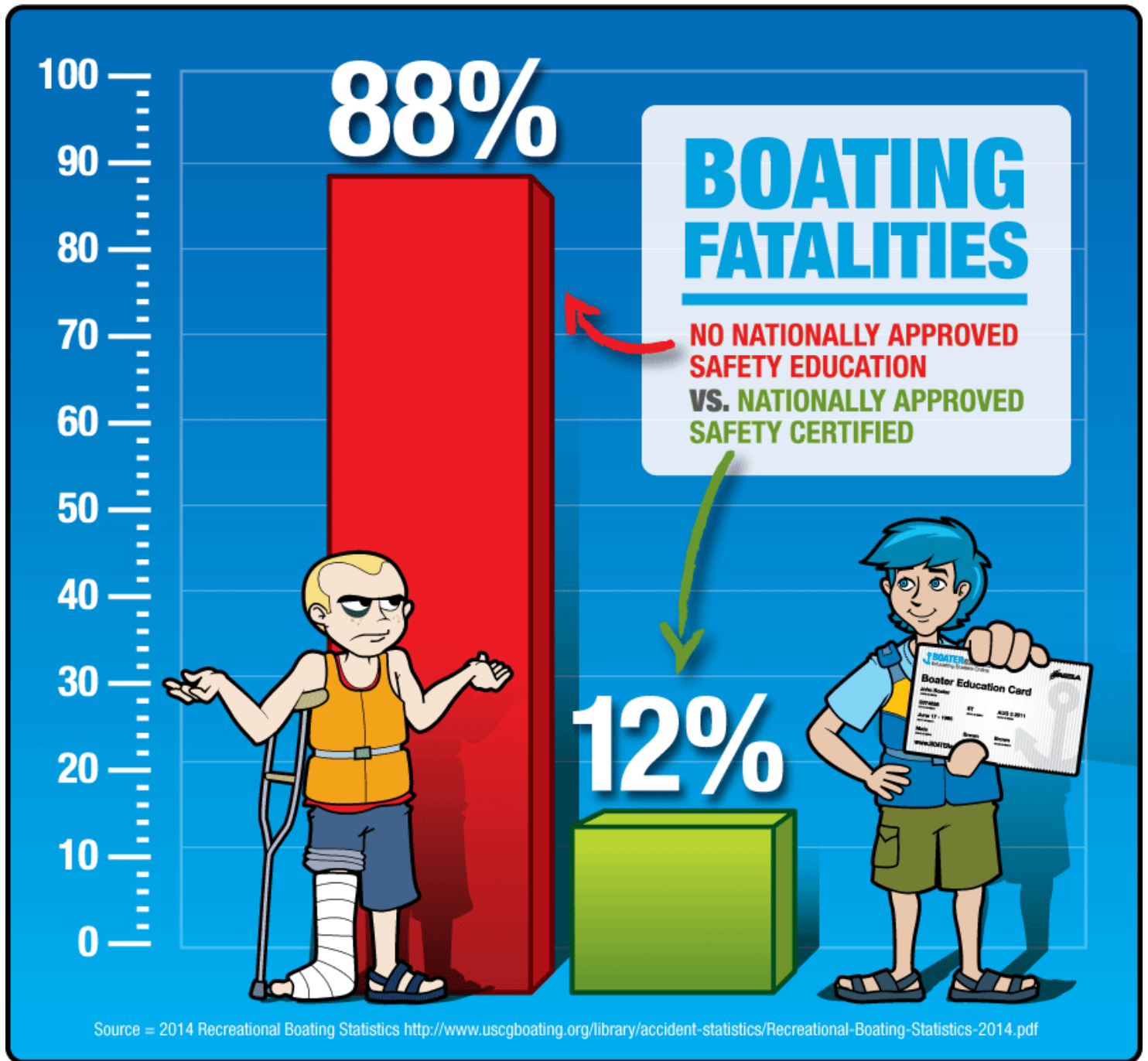
This is while the fatality rate for recreational powerboating continues to decline, decreasing 24% over the same period.



Why are we seeing paddling fatalities on the rise while powerboating fatalities decline? One reason is education.

The latest United States Coast Guard statistics also reveal that in 2014 only 12% of boating fatalities occurred on vessels where the operator had a nationally approved boating safety certificate⁴. Which means that almost 90% of

recreational boating fatalities happen when the operator has not taken approved education.



With almost 50 states and territories now having some form of mandatory boating safety education for operators of powered watercraft (compared to only 6 in 1986) it's not a surprise that fatality rates have been on the decline.

"We know that education will be key to reducing the growing number of fatalities in paddlesports," says Kerry Moher, Vice President at Fresh Air Educators. "The question now is: How we can encourage more paddlers to take a safety course before heading out on the water?"

Fresh Air Educators' free online paddle safety course is available at: <http://www.boaterexam.com/paddling>.

1. [2015 Special Report On Paddlesports](#)
2. [2005 Recreational Boating Statistics](#)

3. [2014 Recreational Boating Statistics](#)
4. [2014 Recreational Boating Statistics](#)