COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE
Connecting Knowledge, Collective Safety

Evidencing the practice that keeps people safe in the outdoors

Collective Knowledge

Innovative sector-led research which supports proactive safety management

European Ropes Course Association

24th November 2026



Steve Woods



Jo Barnett

UHI | NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES
A TUATH, AN IAR IS INNSE GALL

Institute for Outdoor Learning

AAIAC
Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee

Research Approach

- Collect data through JISC Online Surveys & secure Dropbox links
- All data is held securely on UHI systems
- Data is currently pseudonymized, and on completion will be anonymised

A 12-month research project that aims to capture a snapshot of participation and incident levels across the UK outdoor adventurous activities sector.

Participants are organisations or providers who deliver relevant activities. These could be in anything from a commercial to voluntary capacity.

We are recording participation and incident data over six separate two-week blocks throughout 2026 (i.e. 12 weeks of recording data).

Sector Endorsements

AHOEC – Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres
BCA – British Caving Association
BAPA – British Activity Provider Association
Mountain Training
OEAP
Scouts
NCC – Promoting Safe Coasteering
ERCA – European Ropes Course Association
British Cycling
SAMF – Scottish Adventure Activities Forum
SAPOE – The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education
RYA
PADDLE UK
UK YOUTH
FSA – Forest School Association
oia – outdoor industries association
WATO – Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation
Evolve Advice

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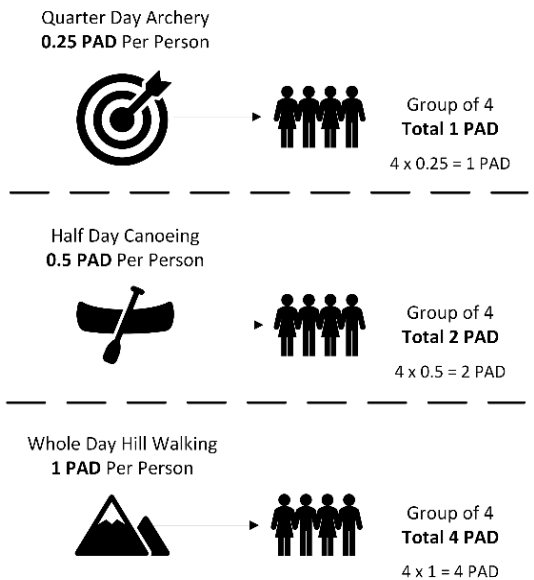
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Data descriptions

Participant Activity Day (PAD)

1 person participating in a full activity day equals 1 PAD.

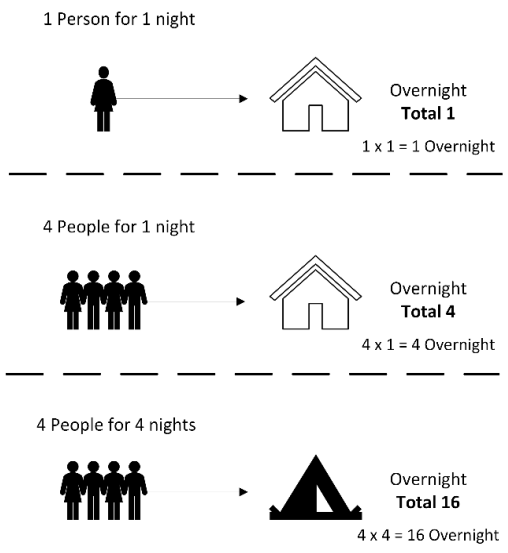
100 people participating in a full activity day equals 100 PAD.



Overnight Numbers

1 person staying overnight for 1 night is 1 Residential / Expedition Overnight

1 person staying overnight for 4 nights is 4 Residential / Expedition Overnight



Length of Sessions

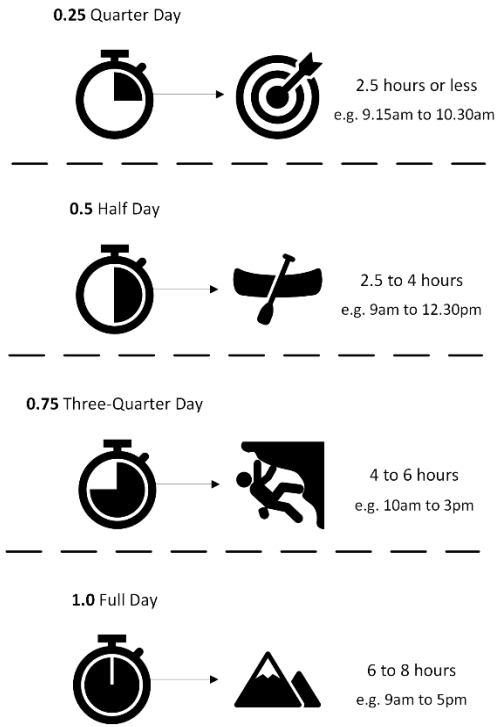
Session lengths will differ slightly for every provider.

This is an attempt to standardise our measurment of how long an individual participates in an activity.

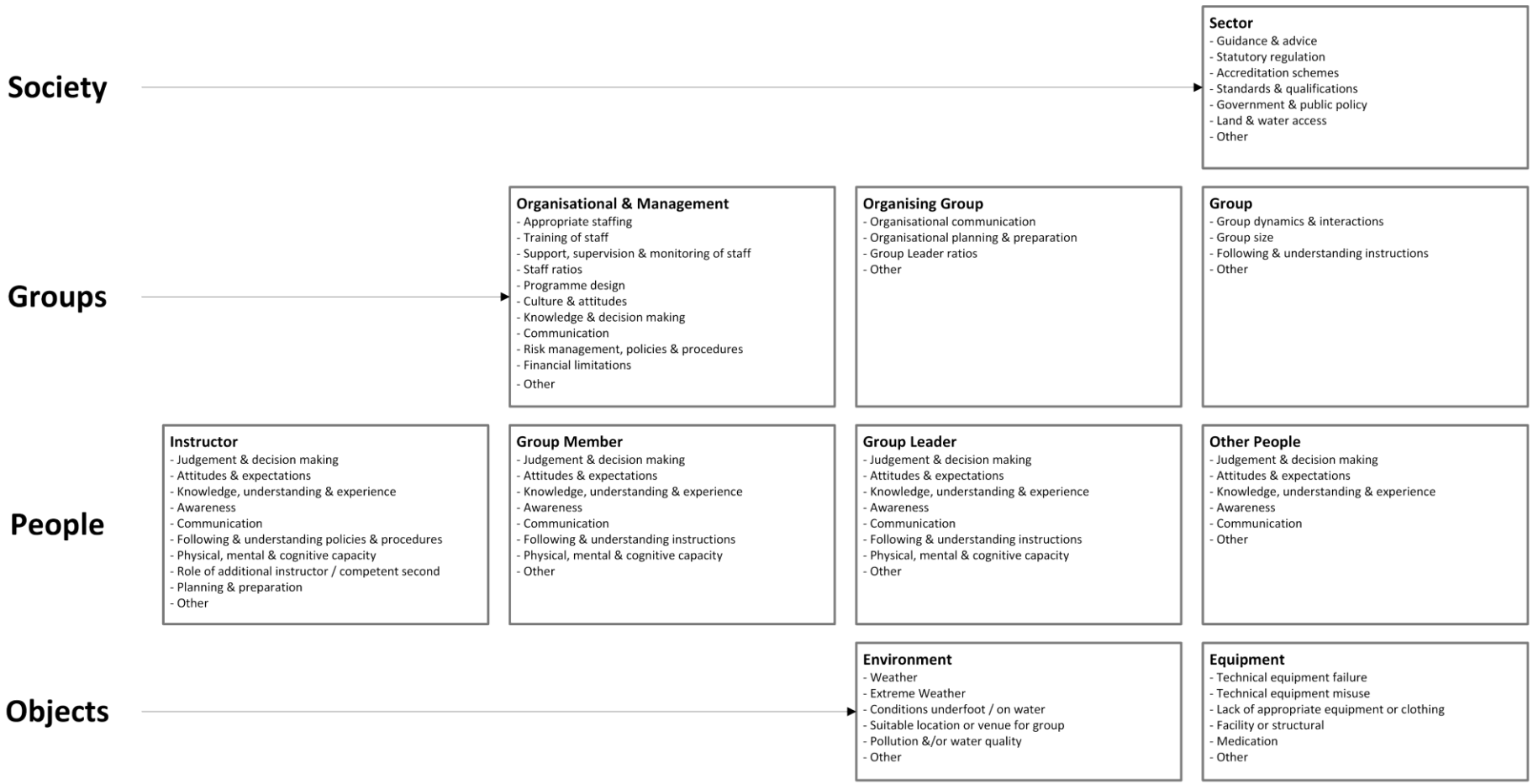
Times may include aspects such as kitting up, travelling to the activity, and breaks within the activity.

If you are on a single activity for more than a day, then you can change the number accordingly (e.g. 2-day exped is 2.0 PAD).

The activity images are only representative. They do not imply that these activities are only this length of session.



Contributory Factors Classification



Let’s look at survey participants…

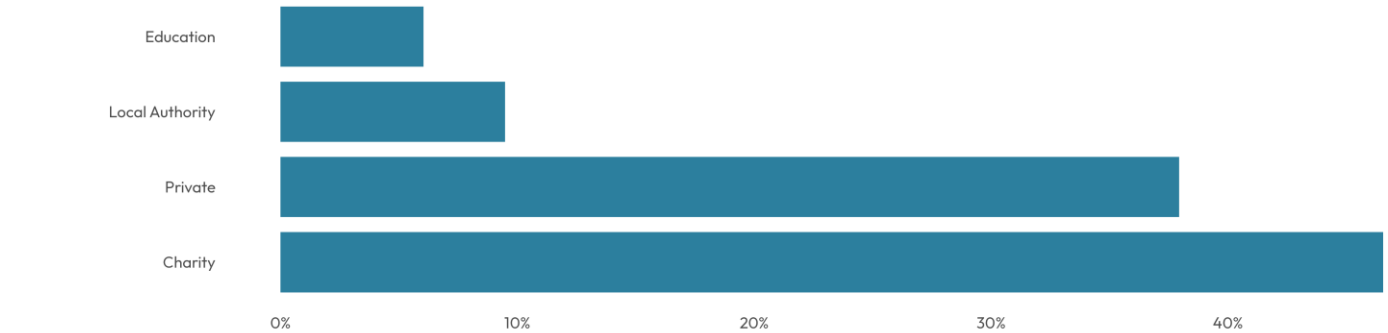


Participants

- 60 participant organisations
- 116 different sites in total
- Have had some organisations drop out throughout the survey.
- 96 sites have submitted data so far. Likely that some may not complete the survey.
- Wide range of sizes of organisations

How participant organisations are structured

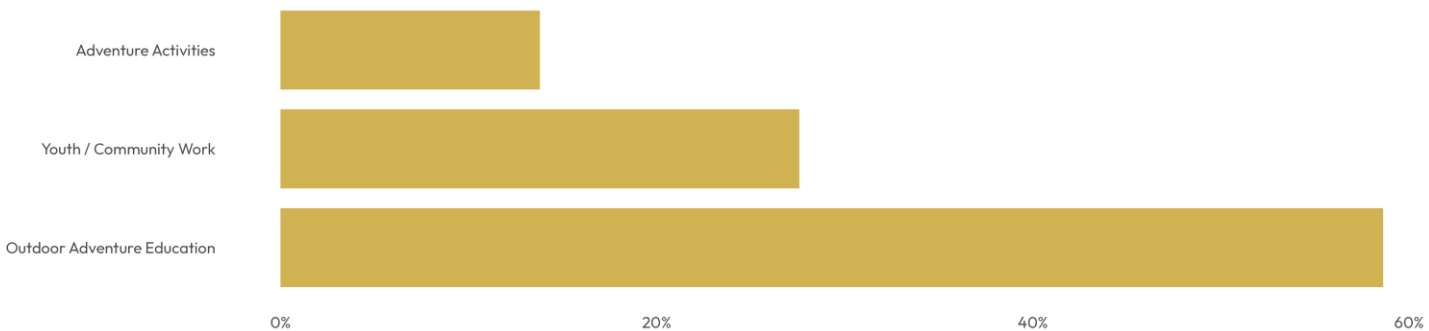
The majority of participants are a combination of private & charity



Data based on 60 participating organisations, with 108 different sites. Education includes schools, colleges and universities.
Local Authority includes centres and other types of provision. It does not include schools.

How participants describe their work

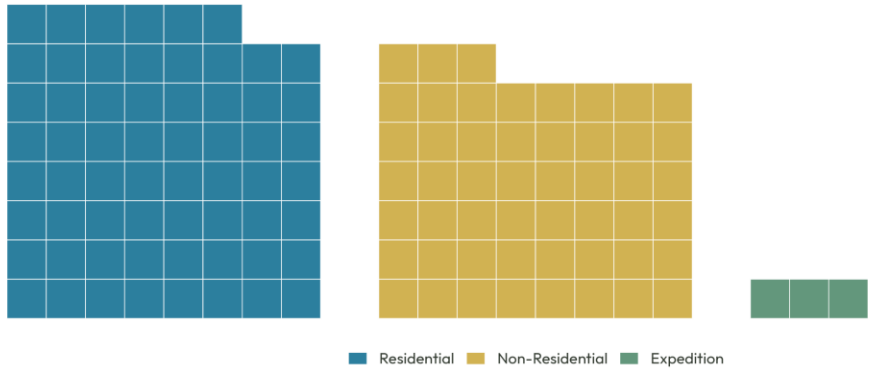
Majority identify with Outdoor Adventure Education



Data based on 60 participating organisations.
Other category includes Adventure Tourism, Adventure Performance & Coaching, and Outdoor Learning

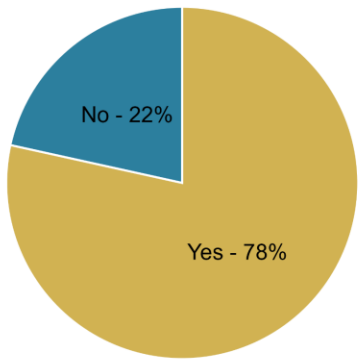
Participants main mode of provision

This does not exclude participants having a mixture of provision, but just indicates what their main mode of provision is.



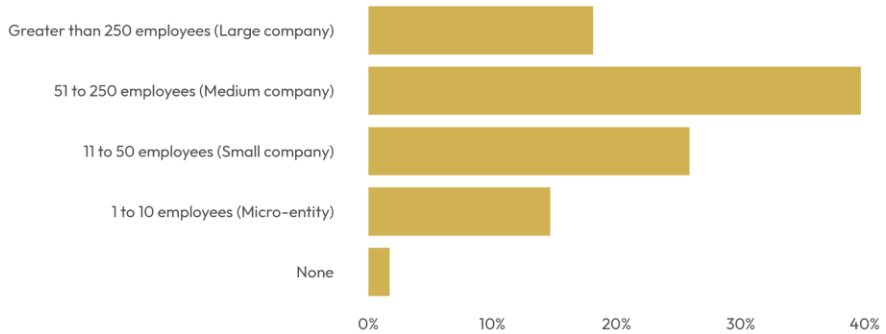


AALA Licence



How participants describe their work

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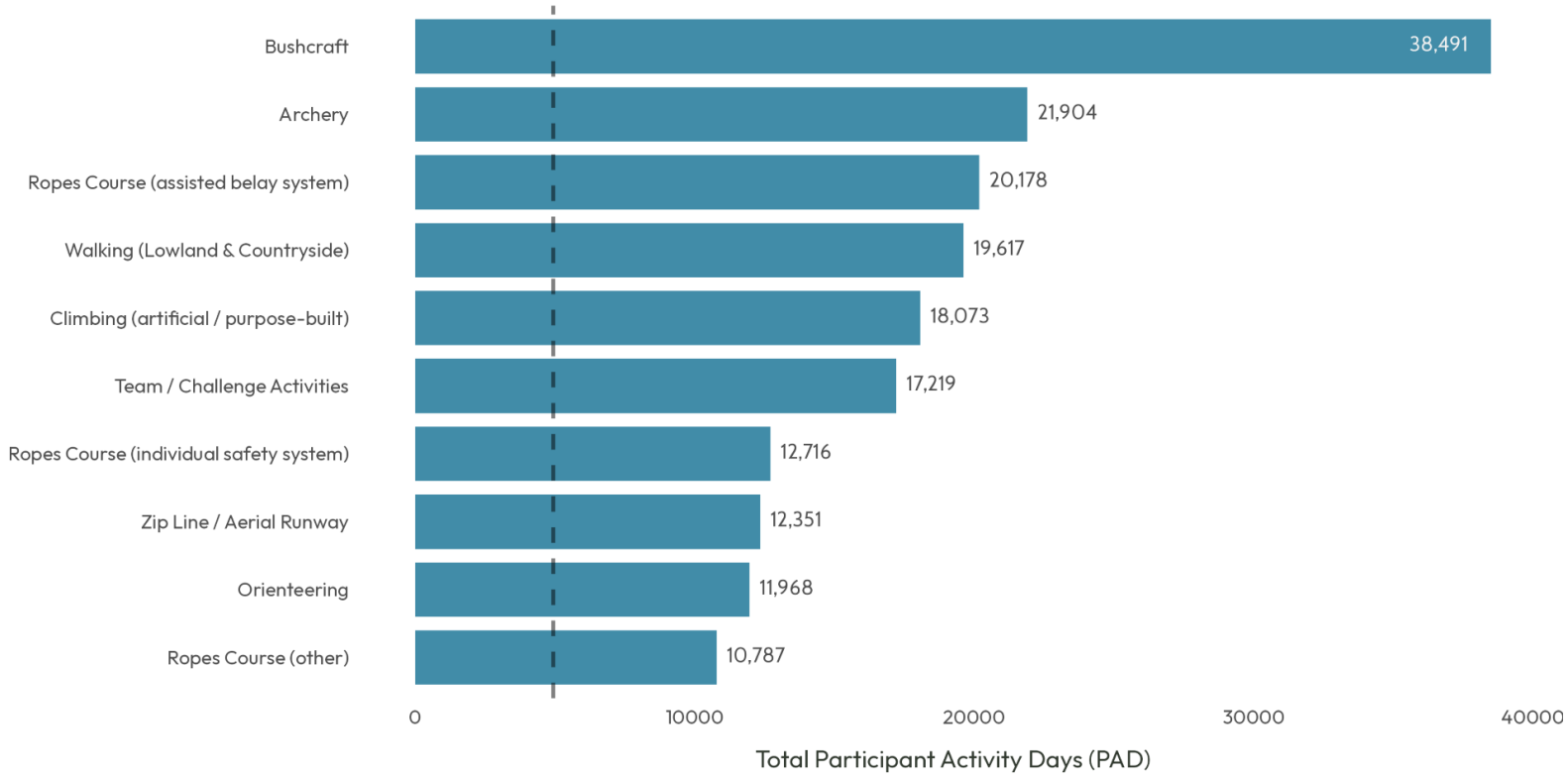
Westfield Shopping Centre



Let’s look at the activities…

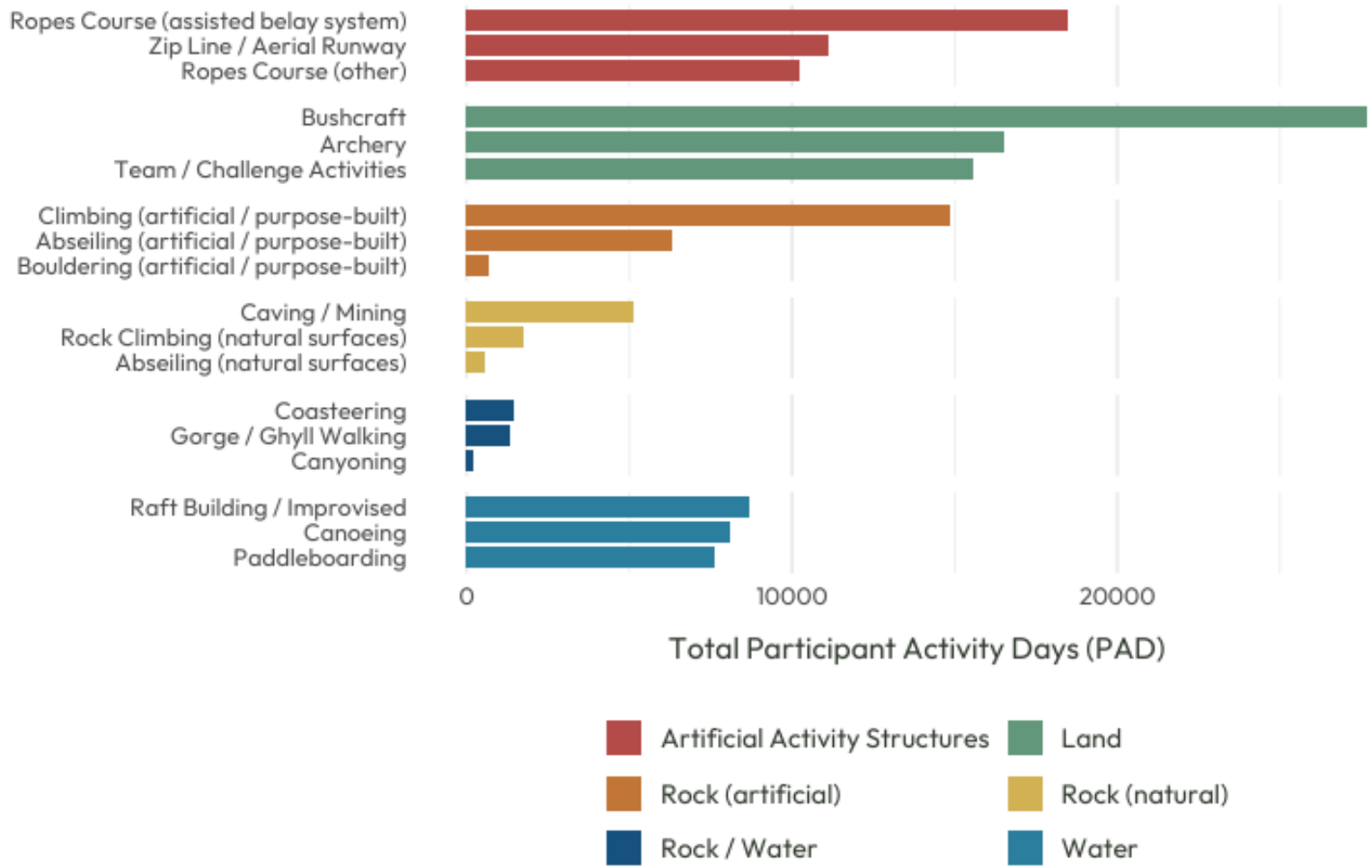
Top 10 Activities by Participation

The total participation currently recorded over the five blocks is **281,848** PAD, from a total of 57 activities.
The average participation by activity is **4945** PAD, as indicated by the dashed line.



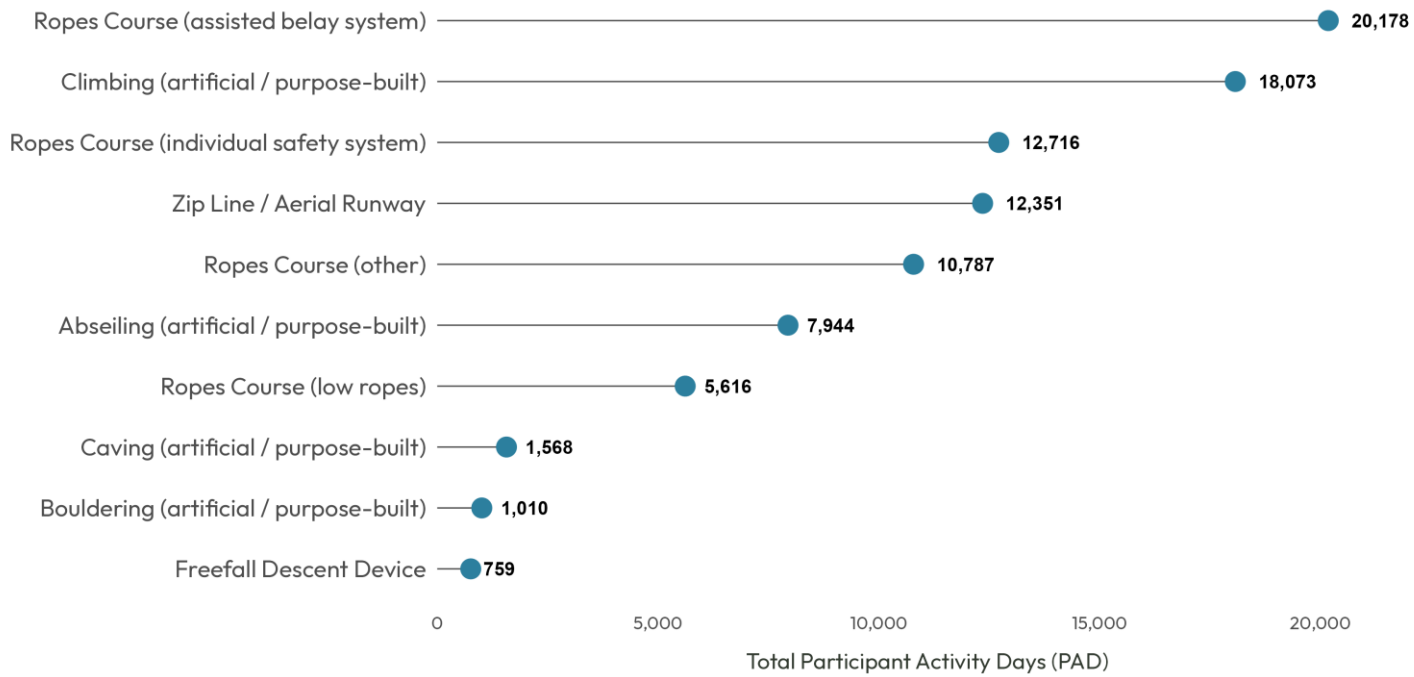
Data collection is still ongoing, and this visualisation is based on reporting from four blocks.
Block 1 was 26th January to 8th February, Block 2 was 23rd March to 5th April, Block 3 was 25th May to 7th June, Block 4 was 27th July to 9th August, and Block 5 was 21st September to 4th October.

We can observe the most participated activities by their activity group.



Total Participation for Artificial Activity Structures & Rock (artificial)

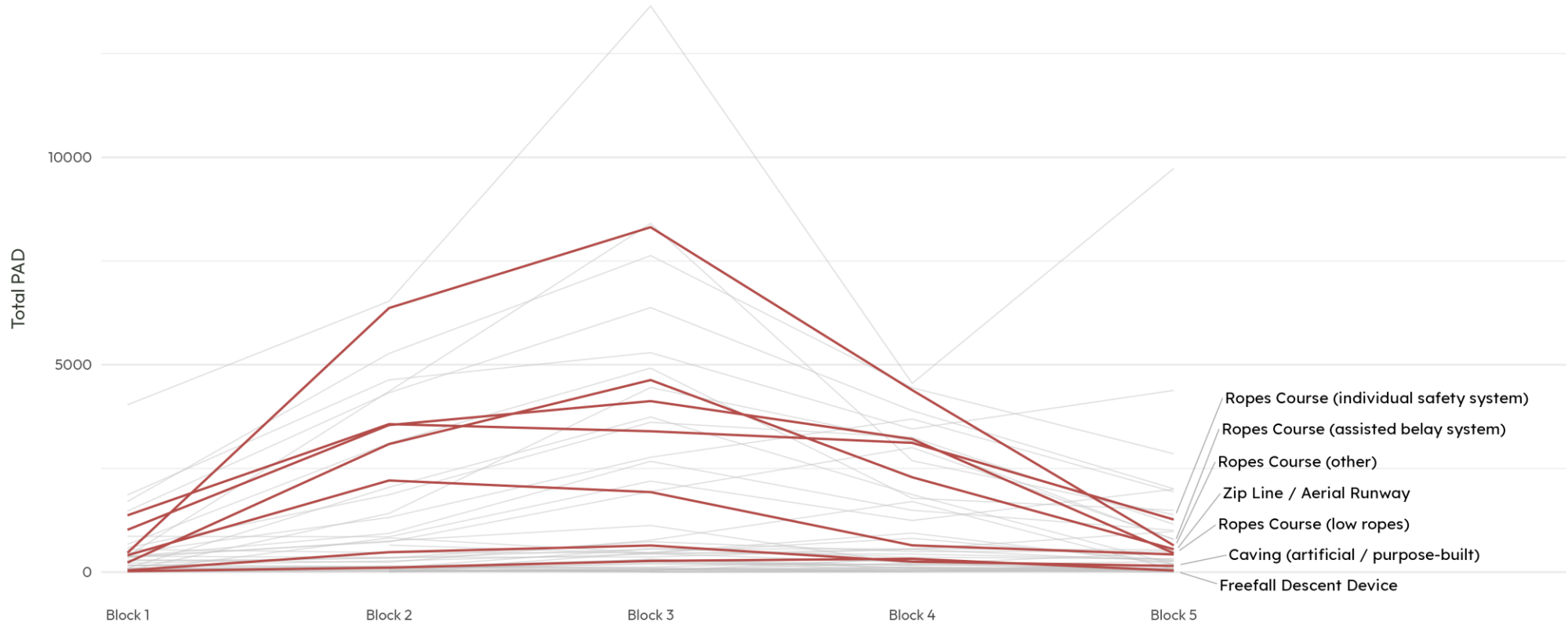
The total participation currently recorded over the five blocks is **91,002** PAD, from a total of 10 activities.
The average participation by activity is **9100** PAD.



Data collection is still ongoing, and this visualisation is based on reporting from five blocks.
Block 1 was 26th January to 8th February, Block 2 was 23rd March to 5th April, Block 3 was 25th May to 7th June, Block 4 was 27th July to 9th August, and Block 5 was 21st September to 4th October.

Comparing participation across Artificial Activity Structures-based activities

There was a total of 63,976 PAD across the Artificial Activity Structures-based activities. The grey lines in the background represent the participation of all other recorded activities.



Let's look at incidents...





Accidents vs Incidents vs Near Misses

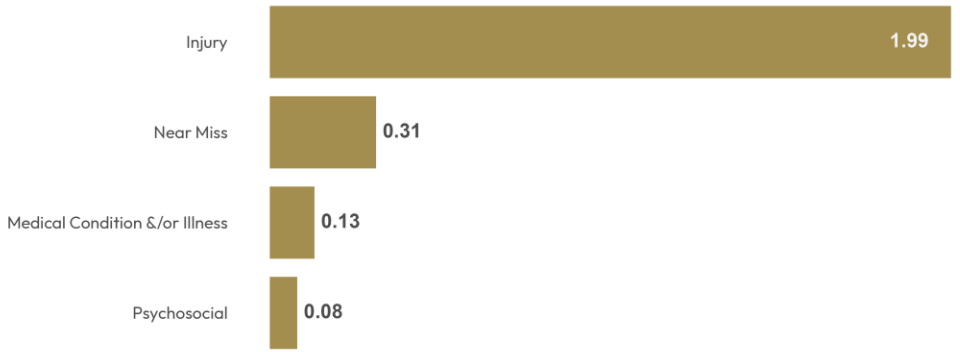
- Accidents cause actual harm or damage
- Incidents are any unplanned event that disrupts operations with or without actual harm
- Near Miss is an event that could have caused harm but didn't

- Misclassification kills prevention
- Reporting culture determines survival – fewer reports does not mean fewer events!
- Classification is a skill, not a technicality



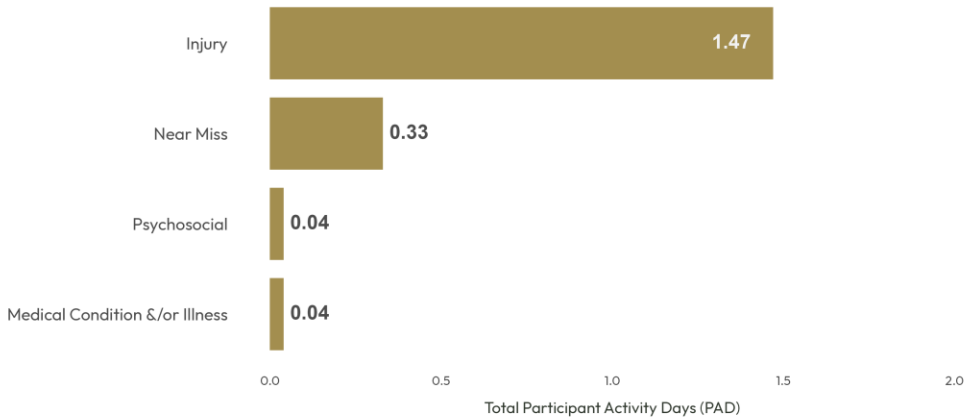
Incident Type for all activity incidents

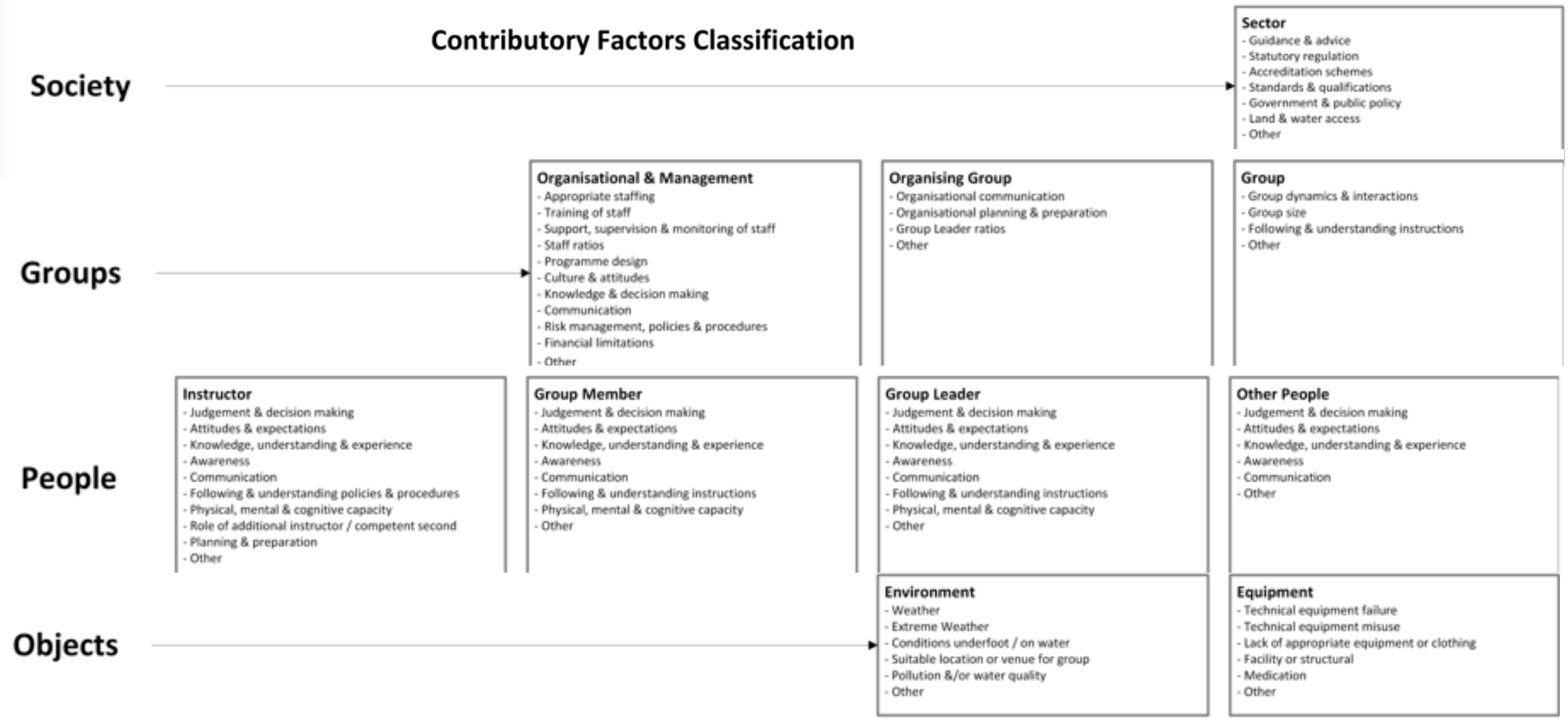
The overall incident rate was **2.3** incidents per 1,000 participant activity days.



Incident Types for Artificial Activity Structures & Rock (artificial)

The overall incident rate was **1.86** incidents per 1,000 participant activity days.

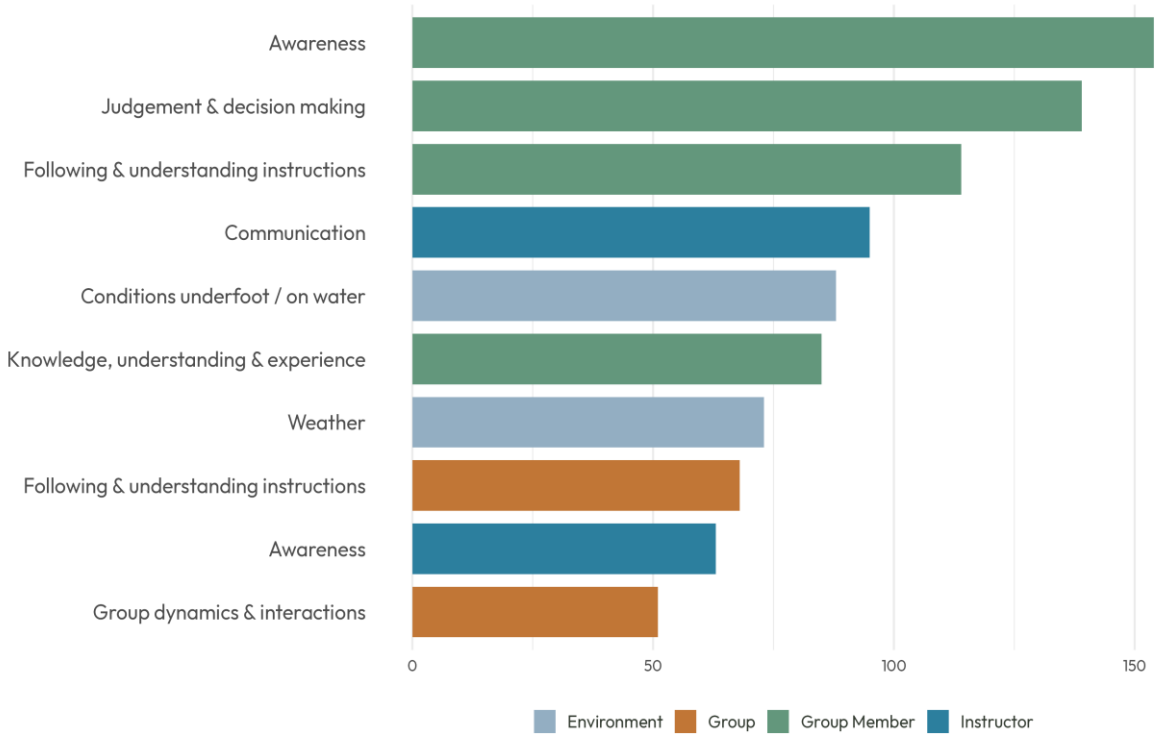



Contributory Factors Classification
Society
Groups
People
Objects
Sector
- Guidance & advice
- Statutory regulation
- Accreditation schemes
- Standards & qualifications
- Government & public policy
- Land & water access
- Other
Organisational & Management
- Appropriate staffing
- Training of staff
- Support, supervision & monitoring of staff
- Staff ratios
- Programme design
- Culture & attitudes
- Knowledge & decision making
- Communication
- Risk management, policies & procedures
- Financial limitations
- Other
Organising Group
- Organisational communication
- Organisational planning & preparation
- Group Leader ratios
- Other
Group
- Group dynamics & interactions
- Group size
- Following & understanding instructions
- Other
Instructor
- Judgement & decision making
- Attitudes & expectations
- Knowledge, understanding & experience
- Awareness
- Communication
- Following & understanding policies & procedures
- Physical, mental & cognitive capacity
- Role of additional instructor / competent second
- Planning & preparation
- Other
Group Member
- Judgement & decision making
- Attitudes & expectations
- Knowledge, understanding & experience
- Awareness
- Communication
- Following & understanding instructions
- Physical, mental & cognitive capacity
- Other
Group Leader
- Judgement & decision making
- Attitudes & expectations
- Knowledge, understanding & experience
- Awareness
- Communication
- Following & understanding instructions
- Physical, mental & cognitive capacity
- Other
Other People
- Judgement & decision making
- Attitudes & expectations
- Knowledge, understanding & experience
- Awareness
- Communication
- Other
Environment
- Weather
- Extreme Weather
- Conditions underfoot / on water
- Suitable location or venue for group
- Pollution &/or water quality
- Other
Equipment
- Technical equipment failure
- Technical equipment misuse
- Lack of appropriate equipment or clothing
- Facility or structural
- Medication
- Other

All Incidents

Top 10 Contributory Factors

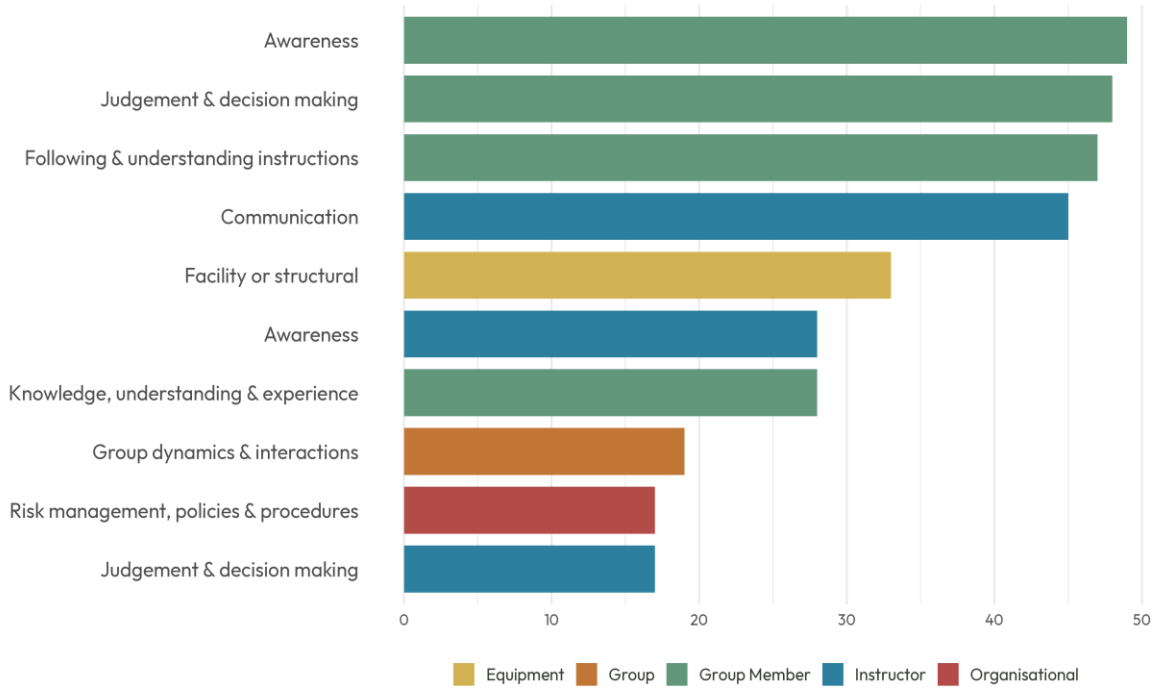
Highlights the number of times these specific factors are identified within all recorded incidents.



Artificial Structures Incidents

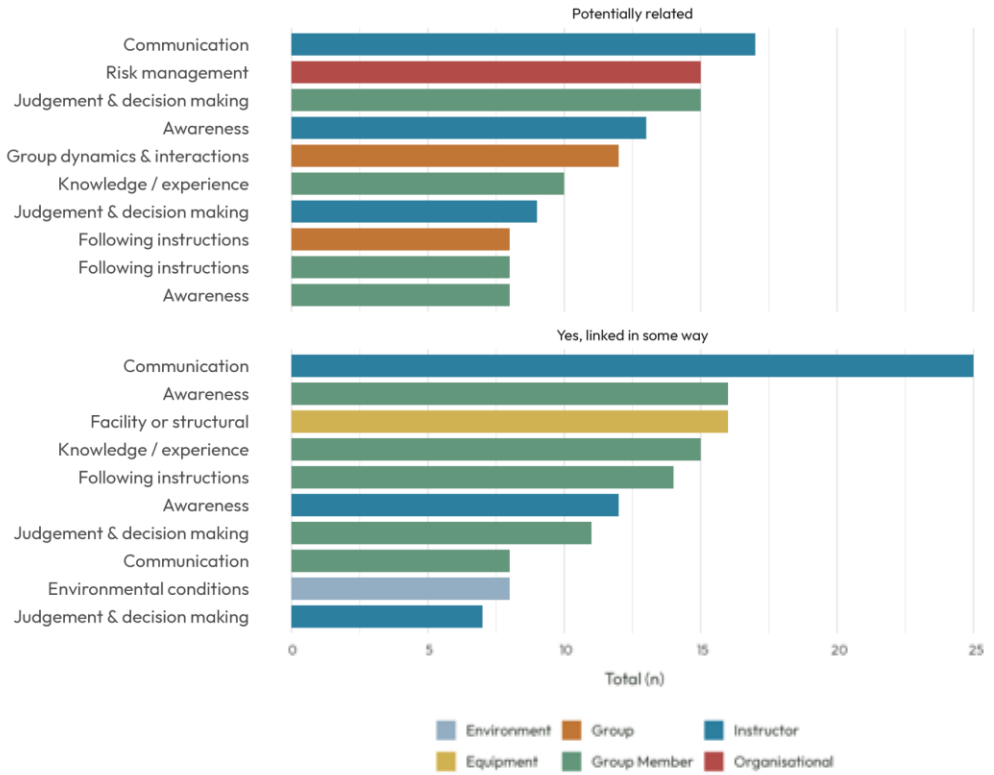
Top 10 Contributory Factors

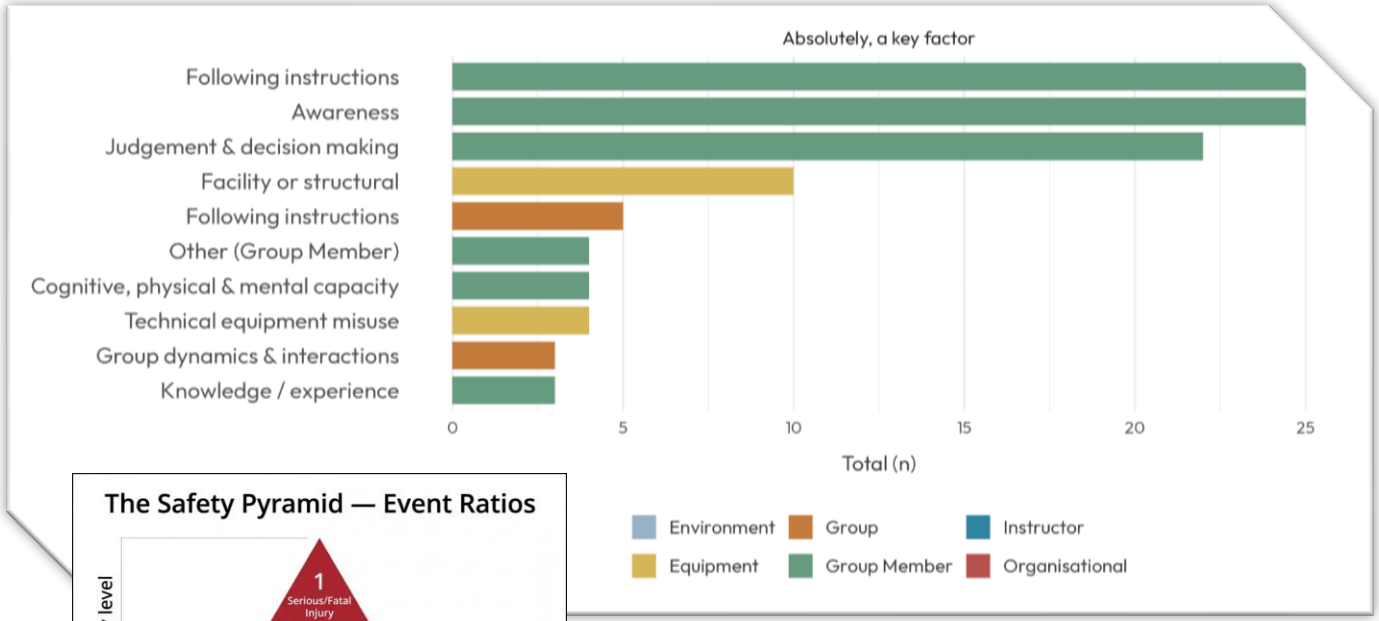
Highlights the number of times these specific factors are identified within Artificial Activity Structure & Rock (artificial) incidents.



Contributory Factors

Each contributory factor had its strength of association selected, ranging from 'Potentially related' to 'Absolutely a key factor'. The following shows the Top 10 for each of these categories for both Artificial Activity Structure & Rock (artificial) incidents.







Unintended consequences…

- Participation data itself – understanding who and how much
- Knowledge of what is everyone doing when they do adventure
- Trends – need to do multi year research
- Business consultancy
- The scale – becoming world leading!

> *"Participation is straightforward; data is the type we'd collate anyway for our own statistics and it's really interesting to see what is going on industry-wide."*
> Anonymous

> *"The survey's have been a helpful way for our organisation to think more about how we collect information about incidents and what we actually do with that information.*
> *As a small organisation, it has also been a good way for us to contribute to a wider project and help build sector knowledge."*
> *Anonymous*

Next Steps



- Completion of 2026 Survey
- Feedback from 2026 participants
- Practical formation of the Curation Committee
- Production of final report – availability & circulation
- Funding & Recruitment for 2027

Further Webinars if you want to know more

Thursday 26th November, 7pm [BOOK HERE]

Overall, the actual submitting the data didn't take that long – for Participation data between 11-30 minutes on average, and for Incident data between 2-13.5 minutes.

Where it was more of an issue, was in getting the data in the right format and ready to then submit. There was comments that the use of the provided Excel 'Helper Sheets' made this more possible.

"The bigger the sample group the more reliable the data, the more the industry as a whole understands how to minimise and mitigate risk without losing adventure and excitement. The safer, more fun and better educated all of our clients are."
Andrew Davies, Venture Trust

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE
Connecting Knowledge, Collective Safety

Evidencing the practice that keeps people safe in the outdoors

Participate through funding and/or data

Financial Support...

PGL Beyond – THE BREAKTHROUGH NETWORK
oia – outdoor industries association
AHOEC – Leading Outdoor Learning
Vertex Instructor Training

For 2027 so far...

RJM adventure
Vertex Instructor Training

Collective Knowledge Project
Snapshot Survey
Supporting Resources

Sign up here:
https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uhi/ck-survey27-consent-form-2027



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Thank you very much for your participation ☺

Any questions?

The slides will be shared as a PDF



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