

Compilation  
of  
Lost Person Profiles

by  
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## **Introduction**

The information in this document is a compilation of multiple documents. None of the work here is original. The intention of this document is to provide the search manager with a concise source of lost person behavior. This document only gives a reflection of past searches and may not apply for all searches.

## Children (1-3 Years Old)

### Distances:

Median: .50 miles  
90%: 1.65 miles  
Speed: 1.9 mph

**Survivability:** Good Weather: 96%    Bad Weather: 34%

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 90%    Bad Weather: 75%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 57%

### Characteristics:

- No concept of being lost, no navigational skills, no sense of direction
- Tend to wander aimlessly
- Tend to seek places to sleep: in, on, under things such as a shallow cave, logs, abandon car bodies, bushes, under picnic tables, and under leaves. **This is very important to note in bad weather and at night**
- About half will follow travel aids including drainage and sometimes will scoot or crawl through types of vegetation impassable adults

## Children (4-6 Years Old)

### Distances:

Median: .50 miles  
90%: 1.65 miles  
Speed: 2.42 mph

**Survivability:** Good Weather: 96%    Bad Weather: 34%

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 90%    Bad Weather: 75%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 67%

### Characteristics:

- Often lost to taking short cuts
- Begin to exhibit climbing skills
- Will try to return home or to familiar surroundings
- May become distracted by interests
- May not respond to searchers (“strangers”)
- When they get tired, then tend to seek places to sleep or rest: in, on, under things such as a shallow cave, logs, abandon car bodies, bushes, under picnic tables, and under leaves. **This is very important to note in bad weather and at night**

## Children (7-12 Years Old)

### Distances:

Median: 1.3 miles  
90%: 4.97 miles  
Speed: 2.73 mph

**Survivability:** Good Weather: 96%    Bad Weather: 34%

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 65%    Bad Weather: 10%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 67%

### Characteristics:

- Often lost or injured during “adventuring”
- More developed navigational skills and are normally well oriented to their normal, familiar surroundings
- May become confused in strange surroundings
- May resort to direction sampling. Some this age may even climb a tree or find ways to elevate themselves so they can get a better view to locate familiar landmarks or locations
- May intentionally run away to avoid punishment or gain attention
- May not respond to searchers
- With the onset of night or other fears they may be very happy to have themselves found
- In one unusual case, a child followed a rail road track for 11 miles
- **Note:** Since 67% follow travel aids, only 33% will stay in bushy areas

## Teenagers (13-15 Years Old)

### Distances:

Median: 1.12 miles  
90%: 4.35 miles  
Speed: 4.8+ mph

**Survivability:** Good Weather: 96%    Bad Weather: 34%

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

### Characteristics:

- Frequently become lost while exploring
- Rarely travel far
- Usually respond to searchers' calls
- Often resort to direction sampling
- May be a runaway

## **Elderly** **(Exhibiting signs of dementia, senility, or Alzheimer's)**

### **Distances:**

Median: 1 mile  
90%: 3 miles  
Speed: no data

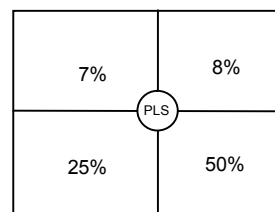
**Survivability:** Good Weather: 65%    Bad Weather: 33%

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 59%    Bad Weather: 10%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 47%

### **Characteristics:**

- Easily attracted to something which grabs their attention
- Oriented to the past. “Goal oriented” patients may be actively seeking something from their past or try to travel someplace from their past, even the goal seems impossible or difficult to accomplish
- May tend to overextend themselves (may suffer from other physical ailments)
- Hearing problems may effect detections
- Will normally travel within 10 degrees of initial direction of travel until physically stopped by a barrier
- Some may be “goal oriented” and seeking
- If the PLS is the residence, then consider that statistically patients are found in the following quadrants:



## Developmental

### Distances:

Median: .5 miles  
90%: 2.5 miles  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

### Characteristics:

- Act much like their mental age
- Generally do not respond to searchers
- Most often will be hiding
- Often will stay holed up for days in the same location. May be in bushes or hidden from plain view
- May have no physical impairment, but lack the will to help themselves
- Easily distracted and may be attracted to surrounding sights and sounds. Often are exploring without a sense of direction and how to return home

## Despondents

### Distances:

Median: 0.4 miles  
90%: 2.9 miles  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

### Characteristics:

- Are generally seeking solitude
- Will not generally respond to searchers and may actively evade searchers
- Are generally within sight and sound of civilization
- Do not assume a despondent is suicidal
- May maintain they are not lost
- Tend to go to distinctive locations: an open area with a view, top of a hill, or beside a picturesque lake

## Suicidal

### Distances:

Median: no data  
90%: no data  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** Yes

### Characteristics:

- Will generally take a road or trail which starts near the PLS/LKP
- Will travel until they decide to commit suicide
- Will leave the road or trail and continue, usually at a right angle, until they are out of sight of the road or trail
- Areas which should be given special attention:
  - Head rows of corn fields
  - Thickets along prominent paths

## Hunters

### Distances:

Median: 1.6 miles  
90%: 5.2 miles  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 83% Bad Weather: 66%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 52%

### Characteristics:

- Concentrate on game more than navigation
- While in pursuit of game will end up in deadfalls, boulder fields, thick underbrush, or heavy snow
- Tend to overextend themselves into darkness
- Typically unprepared for foul weather
- Often do not carry provisions
- In a haste to return before nightfall, they may get lost trying to take shortcuts

## Hikers

### Distances:

Median: 2.3 miles  
90%: 5.2 miles  
Speed: 1.49 - 1.99 MPH depending on backpack

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** Good Weather: 75%      Bad Weather: 67%

**Uses Travel Aids:** 73%

### Characteristics:

- Rely on trails and have a set destination but may have an inadequate map or not have a map at all
- Problem occur when trail conditions change or injury occurs
- Mismatched hiking parties can lead to separation. The lost hiker may be the one who struggled to stay in a group and may have been exhausted before getting separated
- Disorientation can occur from cutting switchbacks.
- May not have a compass

## **Picknickers, Campers, etc.**

### **Distances:**

Median: 2.4 miles  
90%: 7.5 miles  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

### **Characteristics:**

- Intend to stay in one location
- Usually don't have any survival gear
- Generally wear light clothing
- Often do not notice subtle terrain variations
- Become rapidly disoriented and despondent
- High risk for survival

## Fishermen

### Distances:

Median: no data  
90%: no data  
Speed: no data

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

### Characteristics:

- Well oriented
- Usually a delay is accident related
- Very high percentage are water related
- Often a recovery mission

## Cross Country Skier

### Distances:

Median: 2 miles  
90%: 5 miles  
Speed: 1.49 – 2.49 MPH on trail  
0.75 – 1.24 MPH off trail

**Survivability:** 50% found by hasty team and visual tracking; 50% by themselves

**Easily Detected:** 50% mobile

**Uses Travel Aids:** Yes

### Characteristics:

- Almost all are in good physical condition
- 33% have much experience, significant number with some experience
- 60% have survival training
- Cause:
  - Human error caused by subject - 33% weather, 20% darkness
  - Disoriented, misjudge time/distance
  - 30% accidental & intentional separation
  - 20% poor map or no map

## Snowshoer

### **Distances:**

Median: 2 miles

90%: 5 miles

Speed: 0.75 – 2 depending on experience, trail, and pack

**Survivability:** no data

**Easily Detected:** no data

**Uses Travel Aids:** no data

**Characteristics:**

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