

Casualty Review Panel

Statistical Briefing Note (2010)

On 1 March 2011 an expert panel review (consisting of members from RNLI, RYA, MCA, industry and academia) was convened to analyse the fatal maritime incidents recorded in the UK SAR area¹ for 2010 and to assess whether a lifejacket or buoyancy aid would have made a difference in saving a person's life. After reviewing each incident, the panel had to decide whether it was **probable**, **possible** or **unlikely** that the person would have been saved by wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid that was suitably maintained, correctly worn and fit for purpose, or alternatively, that it was **not appropriate** for the person to be wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid e.g. swimmers. The full criteria are as follows:

- The casualty **probably** would have been saved by wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid that was correctly maintained, correctly worn and fit for purpose.
- The casualty **possibly** would have been saved by wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid that was correctly maintained, correctly worn and fit for purpose.
- It is **unlikely** that the casualty would have been saved by wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid that was correctly maintained, correctly worn and fit for purpose.
- It was **not appropriate** using best practise as the measure for the casualty to have been wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid.

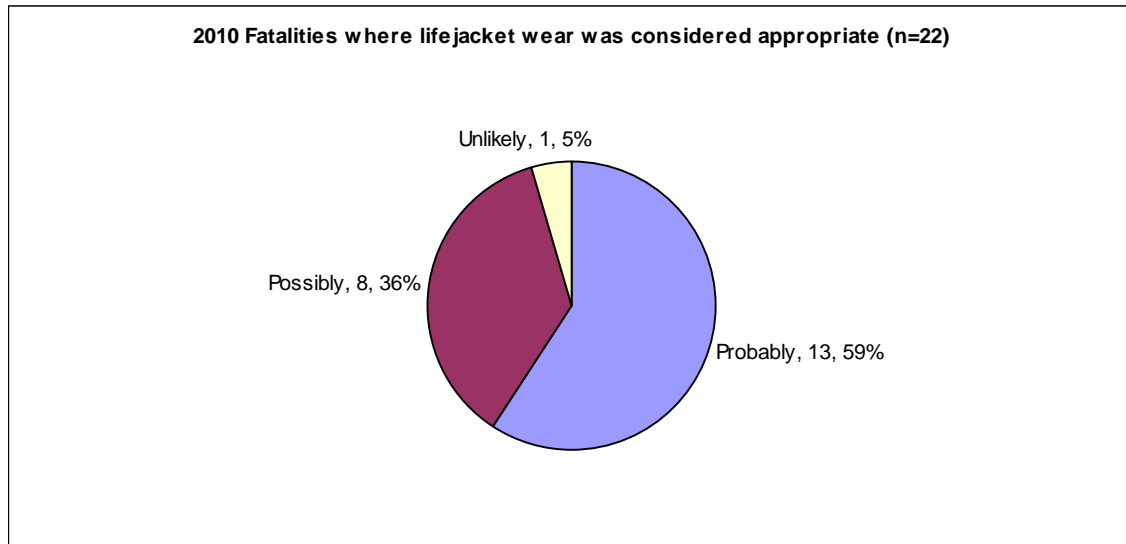
The incidents are selected for analysis by the MCA and those occurring in marinas and harbours will include incidents where it was appropriate for people to be wearing a lifejacket (using best practise as a measure) ie. When boarding or alighting from a boat (recreational or commercial)

As currently little official guidance exists for anglers to wear or not wear lifejackets or buoyancy aids, all angling fatalities from either the shore or a vessel were included for the panel's consideration and categorised separately. For larger commercial vessels there are no legal requirements to wear a lifejacket at all times on board.

There were 91 maritime fatalities in 2010. The expert panel reviewed the 35 of these where the casualty might have worn a lifejacket or buoyancy aid (so cliff fallers, suicides and so on were not included). Of these 35 incidents, the panel judged that it would have been appropriate for 22 people to have been wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid. Of these 22, the panel agreed that 21 would probably or could possibly have been saved had they been wearing a lifejacket or buoyancy aid (See diagram A).

¹ HM Coastguard covers SAR for all of the UK coast and the responsibility for the co-ordination of land-based and inland waters SAR rests with the Police but they delegate this co-ordination responsibility to MCA for the following inland waters: Lochs Ness, Oich and Lochy, Loughs Neagh and Erne, Upper River Clyde, Windermere, Coniston Water, Ullswater and Derwent Water, River Severn to Gloucester, Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, and River Thames to Teddington.

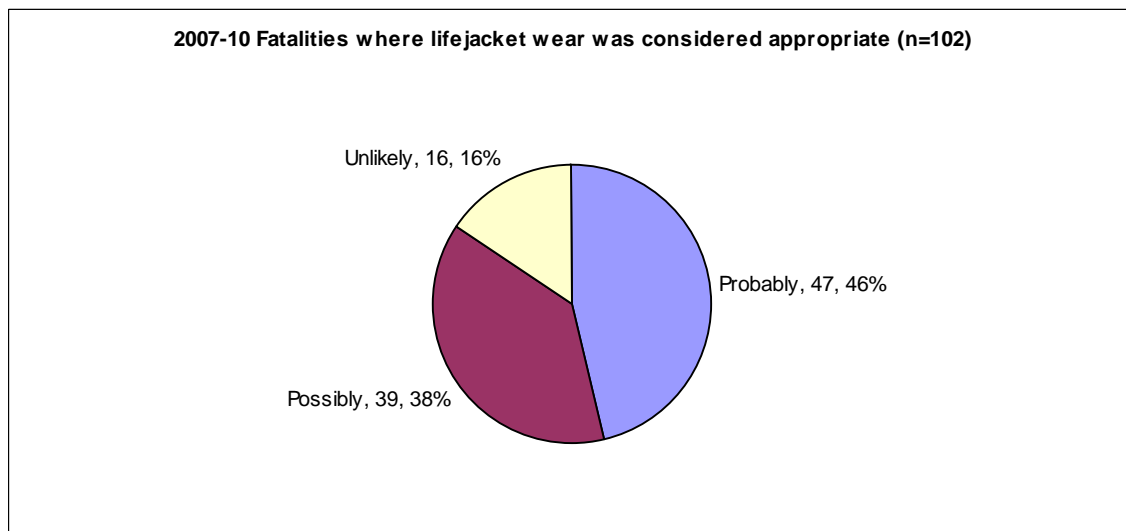
Diagram A



This exercise is now in its fourth year, and by combining the results we are able to undertake a more robust analysis of the figures. During 2007-10 it was considered appropriate for the casualty to have been wearing a lifejacket in 102 fatalities. In 84% of these incidents (86 fatalities) the panel agreed that a life “may have **probably** or **possibly** been saved, if the casualty had been wearing a lifejacket”.

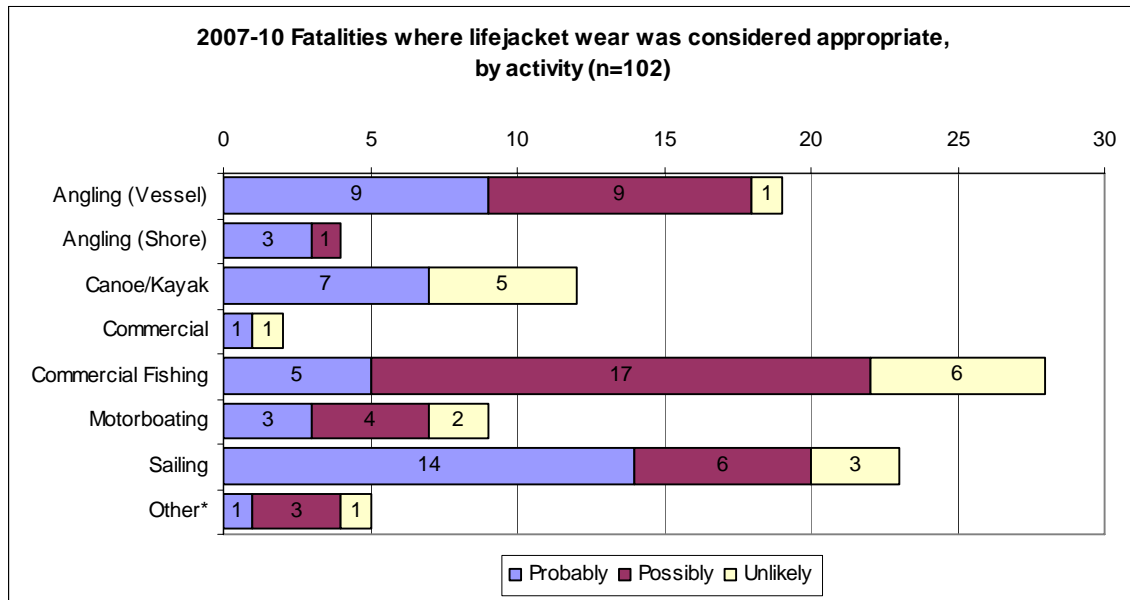
47 lives (46% of incidents) **probably** would have been saved if they had been wearing lifejackets. (See diagram B)

Diagram B



In the last four years (see diagram C) the results tell us that commercial fishing, angling and sailing¹ have the highest number of incidents where a life may **probably** or **possibly** have been saved if a lifejacket had been worn. It is these areas where we need to focus our campaign efforts.

Diagram C



These figures represent a small number of occurrences within the maritime environment, limiting the analysis and conclusions that can be drawn. The incidents considered are a subset of all the fatal maritime incidents in the UK SAR record, where the person was not wearing a lifejacket in a situation it would be considered appropriate. No reference to populations or exposure is considered in the above analysis.

Our intention is to circulate this information widely in order to further raise awareness of the issue and to engender support and interest for the continuing lifejacket awareness campaign. We will use the information alongside additional data to help inform our future prevention strategies and activities.

** Other includes incidents where Probably, Possibly or Unlikely were categorized against activities that were not recorded in the vessel categories (i.e. windsurfing, transfer, inflatable etc)*

ⁱ For the purposes of the four year reporting period the term 'angling' covers both shore based angling and angling from a boat. As more information is gathered in subsequent years these figures will be separated.