

Annual report: ML5 Medical Assessments 2020

Important notice:

The ML5 certificate does not comply with the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention, or other international conventions and so may not be accepted during vessel inspections outside UK. If you need certificates that are MLC compliant, crew members must have an ENG 1 medical performed by an [MCA Approved Doctor](#), or a [recognised equivalent certificate issued by another maritime authority](#).

The ML5 system

Masters of small commercial vessels and crew members of certain classes of vessel within this group have the option of periodic fitness certification by means of the ML5 system rather than the ENG 1 system of medical examinations for Merchant Navy seafarers performed by doctors who are approved by MCA.

The ML5 form includes information and instructions for both doctor and applicant, and is [available on line](#).

Applicants should download the form and may then request any GMC registered doctor with a licence to practice (normally their general practitioner) to complete the form giving information on their health. The ML5 form is designed so that if there are no boxes ticked indicating ill health or disability the doctor may complete a certificate that indicates that the applicant may work on the designated classes of vessel. If one or more of the boxes indicates the presence of illness or disability the medical report must be referred to one of the four Medical Assessors appointed by the MCA, two for RYA and two for Boatmaster applicants. Referral for Boatmasters will be via the MCA Marine office, and for holders of RYA commercial endorsements via the RYA. Some 5 -10% of medical reports are so referred although exact numbers of certificates issued with no referral are not recorded. The Medical Assessor will review the medical report and may then contact the individual and/or their doctor for further information. Based on what is reported and any additional information supplied the Assessor will make a decision on fitness and issue an appropriate certificate.

Data sources

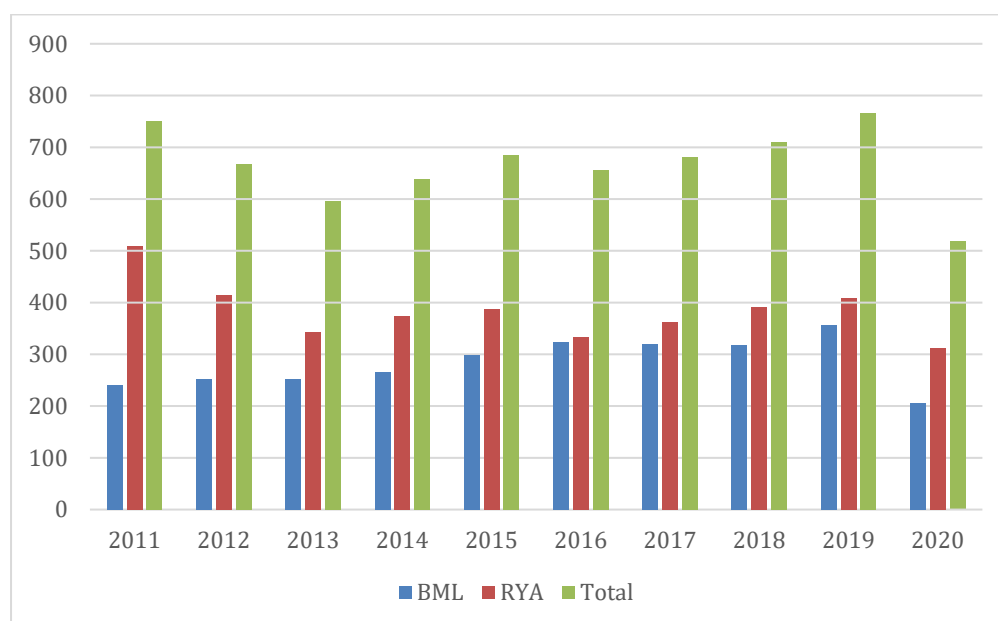
The MCA Assessors summarise their findings at the time of the assessment in a structured way on a database. The results presented here are from this source. Each year a clinical review meeting is held between MCA and the Assessors at which the summary data for the last year is presented and specific case work and policy issues are considered in order to assure the quality of the system.

As this information only relates to the cases referred to Assessors, the overall numbers of RYA and Boatmaster applicants are not available. As a result it is not possible to access total numbers with regards to age, gender and the class of licence or endorsement applied for, and incidence and prevalence rates for different conditions cannot be analysed. As only 5% of applicants are female these have not been analysed separately and the results presented are for both men and women.

Key results for 2020

A total of 518 referrals were made, 205 being applicants for Boatmasters' licenses and 313 for RYA commercial endorsements for Yachtmasters and powerboat operators. This represents a significant decrease in both RYA and BML referrals which is no doubt due to the current pandemic.

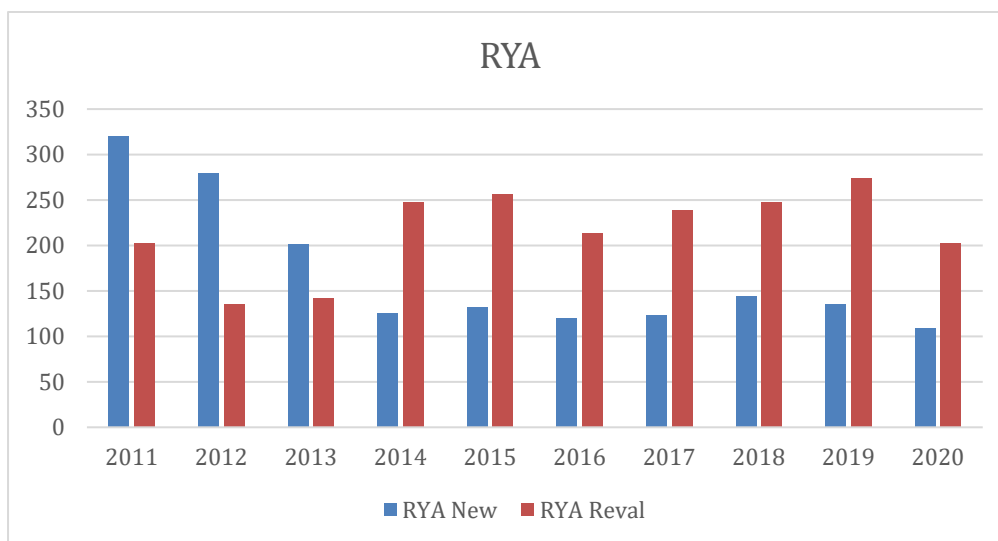
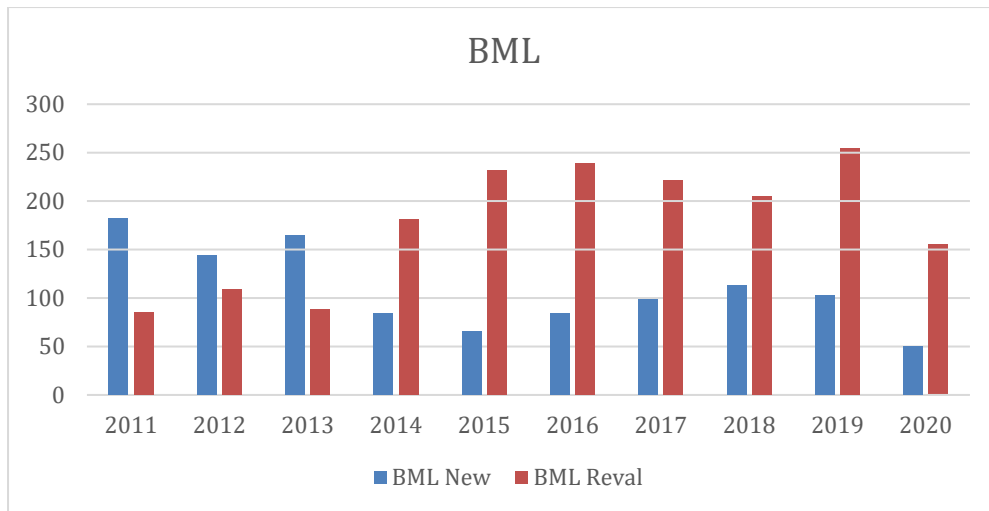
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
BML	241	253	253	265	298	323	320	318	357	205
RYA	509	414	343	373	388	333	362	392	409	313
Total	750	667	596	638	686	656	682	710	766	518



New applications and revalidations are reviewed each year, and from the tables and graphs below it can be seen that despite the drop in numbers revalidations have continued to outnumber new applications since 2014.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
BML New	182	144	165	84	66	84	99	113	103	50
BML Reval	85	109	88	181	232	239	221	205	254	155

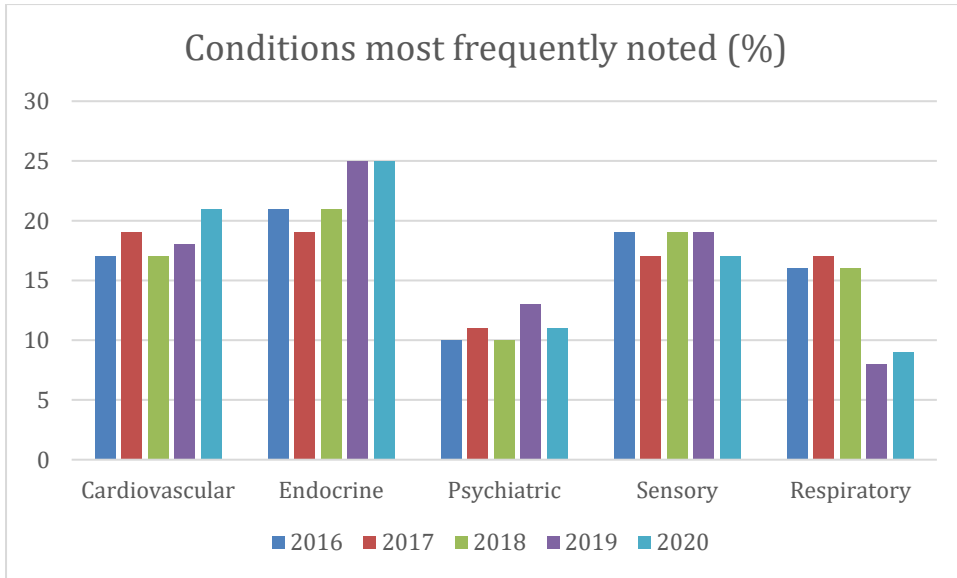
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
RYA New	320	279	201	125	132	120	123	144	135	109
RYA Reval	203	135	142	248	256	213	239	248	274	202



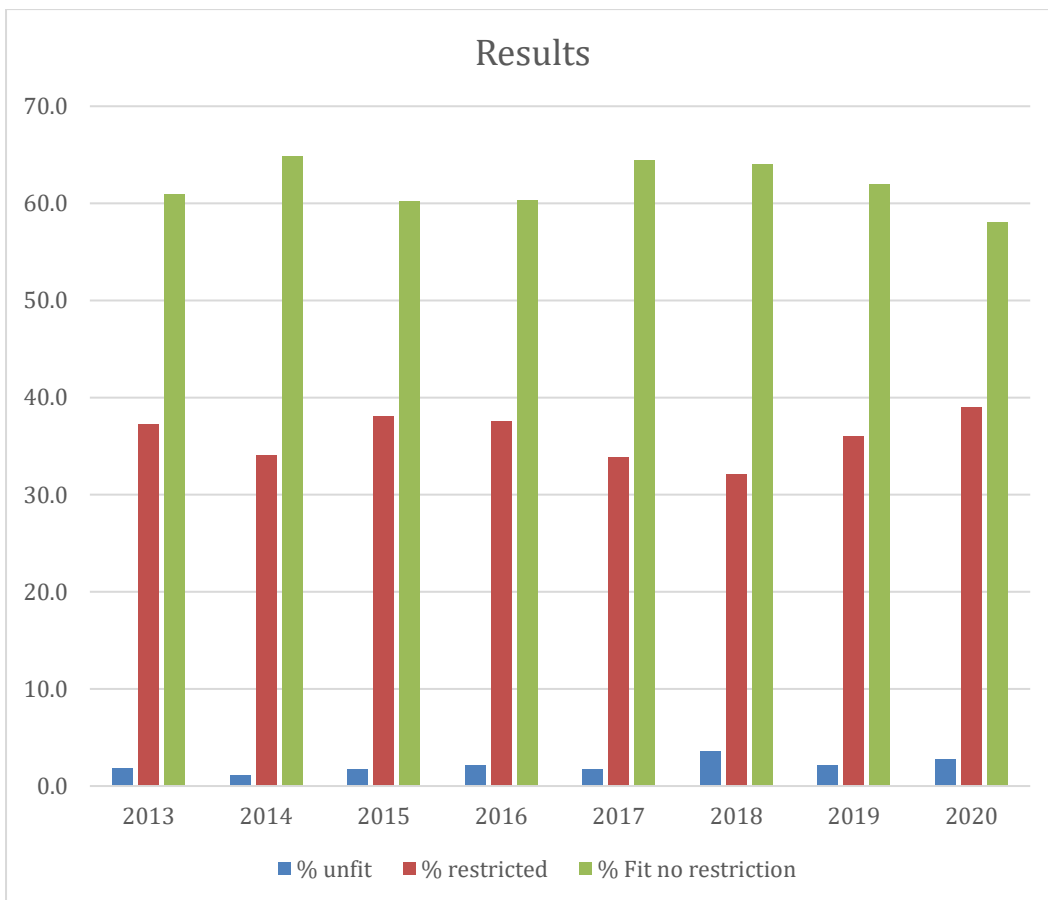
Outcomes

Analysis of the reasons for referral shows that figures are relatively constant, with the highest number of referrals continuing to be related to Endocrine and Metabolic, Cardiovascular and Sensory conditions. The prevalence of Respiratory conditions referred for assessment has reduced since the redesign of the form to avoid referral for more stable asthmatics as noted last year, and is now similar to that of psychiatric problems. It should however be borne in mind that many referrals are for more than one reason, and in the more complex cases are for a number of different conditions.

%	Cardiovascular	Endocrine	Psychiatric	Sensory	Respiratory
2016	17	21	10	19	16
2017	19	19	11	17	17
2018	17	21	10	19	16
2019	18	25	13	19	8
2020	21	25	11	17	9



The percentage found fit, unfit, or restricted varies slightly year on year, but as demonstrated by the chart below, no specific trends have been identified. 2.7% were found unfit, 39% were able to obtain a restricted certificate and all others assessed (58%) were found fit without restriction.



As before, the MCA has not been made aware of any significant incidents arising because of health related impairment in those using the ML5 system as the means of certifying fitness to work at sea. This demonstrates the value of this simple method of assessment for those pursuing careers in inland waterways or in certain limited sea areas.

Quality assurance of the system is achieved by discussing different aspects of certification for specific conditions with the assessors, the detail of a number of different cases selected by both the assessors and the Chief Medical Advisor, and also by comparing the number of failures and restrictions for each assessor in order to ensure that decisions are being made fairly.

Sally Bell
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Maritime and Coastguard Agency
2021