

Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 1 2025



The
Seafarers
Happiness
Index



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Seafarers Happiness Index Quarter 1

Drawing on seafarers' real-world experiences across ten key areas of shipboard life, the Seafarers Happiness Index transforms data and shared experiences into personal narratives and insights from those working at sea. These responses highlight the ongoing realities, both good and bad, and allow a deeper dive into issues such as fatigue, isolation, lack of shore leave, which pose persistent struggles to those working at sea seeking to balance challenges with personal wellbeing.

It is pleasing to note that in Q1 2025 the previous fall has been steadied as the numbers have held substantively consistent. Despite some optimism though seafarers sent a clear message that wellness at sea is under increasing strain. The latest SHI reveals an overall happiness score of **6.98/10**, up from **6.91** in Q4 2024.

As the SHI marks its tenth year, we continue to track trends, giving the shipping industry an authentic, unfiltered view of life at sea. It is these first-hand accounts that give a chance of driving meaningful change, offering a roadmap for improvement, and we are extremely grateful to every seafarer who shares with us.

While there are definite indicators of progress in certain areas, the wider picture remains one of concern. Issues like mental health challenges, work overload, and inconsistent shore leave continue to weigh heavily on morale.

Good and Bad

Despite the rise in sentiment revealed in the data, the Q1 2025 responses reveal tales of the good and bad of life at sea, with recurring themes of camaraderie, adventure, and job satisfaction sitting alongside challenges like isolation, workload, and connectivity issues.

Positive Aspects



The Shipboard Team

- **Many highlighted strong bonds with crew:**
"All crew here is the best teamwork!"
"Good teamwork, harmonious relationship onboard."
- **Multinational crews were often seen as enriching:**
"Open communication helps build relationships."



Passion for the Sea

- **Seafarers expressed pride in their work:**
"I love the job of a sailor."
"I like to explore the world by working on ships."
- **Shore leave excitement:**
"Discovering new countries is very exciting."



Getting online

- **Good internet is key:**
"Starlink provides a crucial gateway."
"Free WhatsApp calls keep me connected."
- **Though weak signals in remote areas remain an issue, as do costs.**



Making Money

- **Wages were a major motivator:**
"Happy to work and happy salary."
"I can provide for my family's needs."

Challenge Areas



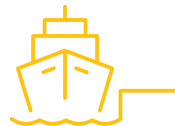
Feeling Isolated

- **The most frequent complaint:**
"Away from family, relatives, and friends."
"Missing family and hobbies."



Too much Work

- **Overwork and paperwork frustrations:**
"Too many inspections, unnecessary paperwork."
"Port operations leave no time for shore leave."



Cannot get ashore

- **Many reported limited opportunities to leave the vessel:**
"No shore leave in China."
"Short port stays mean no time to disembark."



Diet Dilemmas

- **Mixed reviews on food quality:**
"Very oily, not healthy." (vs.) "Amazing chief cook!"
Gym access varied: "No equipment" vs. "Best crew gym ever."



Real world and Wages

- **Some felt salaries stagnated:**
"No increase despite inflation."
"Filipino seafarers are underpaid."

Positives and Pain Points

Top Five Positives



Teamwork and Camaraderie:

Many seafarers highlighted the importance of good relationships with crew members, emphasising that teamwork enhances job satisfaction and creates a harmonious working environment.



Adventure and Travel:

The opportunity to travel and explore new destinations was a significant source of satisfaction. Seafarers enjoy the adventure and the unique experiences that come with life at sea.



Job Enjoyment:

Many respondents expressed a passion for their work, particularly those in technical roles like engine room operations. Enjoyment of the job contributes to overall satisfaction.



Financial Support:

A strong motivation for many seafarers is the ability to provide for their families. Regular income is viewed positively, with many expressing contentment with their salaries despite calls for increases.



Physical Activities:

Some seafarers appreciate the physical nature of their work and the opportunity to stay fit, often participating in sports and exercise onboard.

Top Five Pain Points



Family Separation:

A recurring theme was the emotional toll of being away from family and friends for extended periods. Many seafarers expressed feelings of homesickness, and the stress associated with long contracts.



Workload and Stress:

Some respondents reported high workloads and stressful conditions, particularly during port operations. There were mentions of excessive paperwork and pressure from management, leading to feelings of burnout.

We heard of dual pressures, where parallel challenges create a troubling dynamic as seafarers simultaneously manage the increasing maintenance demands of aging vessels and systems, and also the learning curve and implementation struggles of new technology.

This combination is particularly taxing, as it requires rapid context-switching between old and new paradigms of operation. The cognitive load of maintaining legacy systems while mastering new ones creates significant mental fatigue.



Food Quality:

The quality of onboard food varied widely. While some praised the meals, others expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of variety and quality, indicating a need for improvement in provisions.



Shore Leave Limitations:

Many seafarers expressed frustration over restricted shore leave opportunities, impacting their ability to relax and explore new destinations. Barriers Directly Impacting Well-being:

- Intense work schedules and port turnaround pressure: Time ashore squeezed out by operational demands.
- Company or port restrictions: Management decisions and regional policies block access.
- Lack of transport or infrastructure: Even in ports with facilities, shore leave is logistically difficult.
- Psychological impact: Growing feelings of isolation, fatigue, and entrapment.



Training and Development:

While some felt satisfied with their training opportunities, others noted the need for more consistent and relevant training to enhance their skills and safety awareness. Confidence is a key issue and concern, with seafarers questioning their own skills and those of fellow crew.

Action Stations

As with any subjective assessment, we hear both positive experiences and negatives too. There are real differences across different vessels, trades, places, cultures, and the like. There are some key areas which require attention and action.

For all that, seafarers remain resilient and passionate as they struggle with systemic issues (workload, connectivity, shore leave) which can all too often dampen morale. However, the sense of purpose (family support, career growth) often outweighs hardships, but we cannot expect seafarers to simply put up with the problems, as targeted improvements could significantly boost well-being, and that change is our aim.

Key Themes and Emerging Issues

Training and confidence

Training issues came to the fore in Q1. The feedback indicates that improving human performance at sea requires more than technical knowledge transfer, with a need for support to build confidence in dealing with real issues not the theoretical:

- More practical, scenario-based training that builds muscle memory for emergency situations.
- Creating psychological safety where expressing uncertainty is seen as responsible rather than incompetent.
- Implementing gradual, digestible onboarding processes rather than overwhelming "information dumps."
- Regular refreshers and simulations that reinforce knowledge through application.
- Open communication channels where questions are encouraged rather than discouraged.

The Burden Spiral

Crew members aboard older vessels report increasing maintenance demands that stretch available resources thin. This creates a cycle where routine maintenance tasks multiply as systems age, and so time pressures lead to prioritisation of critical issues only. Which means that deferred maintenance accumulates, creating further problems, and crew face growing backlogs that ultimately feel insurmountable.

This maintenance burden creates both physical fatigue and psychological pressure as seafarers struggle to keep aging systems operational with limited time and resources. The constant "firefighting" approach to maintenance prevents the establishment of more sustainable preventative practices.

Technology Implementation

Parallel to the problems of the old are those associated with the new. While technology should theoretically reduce workload, the implementation process often creates its own set of stressors. A particular pain point emerges around technology deployment:

Companies frequently install new equipment with expectations of immediate and smooth operation but provide inadequate support for the transition. Officers report finding themselves in the difficult position of being responsible for making unfamiliar systems operational without sufficient training or technical backing.

This creates a situation where officers must self-teach complex new systems while maintaining regular duties, and all the while technical support is often remote, delayed, or limited – and documentation may be inadequate or overly technical.

Pressure comes onto the vessel to get results as company expectations for rapid implementation remain high and the crew faces pressure from shore management and vessel operations timeline.

As one respondent described it: "Often companies put new equipment on, and it is down to the officers to get it working how the company believes it should. This can be time consuming and stressful."

Impact on Crew Wellbeing and Performance

The workload pressures around maintenance and technology create ripple effects that impact overall vessel operations:

- Increased stress levels lead to fatigue and potential safety concerns.
- Time spent troubleshooting takes away from other critical duties.
- Training gaps become more pronounced under time pressure.
- Team dynamics can suffer when systems fail to perform as expected.

Mental Health and Welfare Support - Critical Concern

One pressing issue is the perceived inadequacy of mental health and welfare support systems. Multiple respondents directly referenced "lack of mental health support from management" and limited recreational opportunities both onboard and ashore. The repetitive nature of seafaring life coupled with statements like "nothing's special" and descriptions of boredom suggest a concerning environment where mental wellbeing is at risk.

The absence of accessible welfare facilities during port visits appears to be particularly problematic. With limited opportunities for respite from the confined shipboard environment, seafarers report feeling increasingly isolated and neglected.

Implications

This decline in mental health support availability represents a troubling trend that requires immediate attention. The seafaring profession inherently involves prolonged separation from support networks, making robust onboard and shoreside mental health resources not merely beneficial but essential. Without addressing these support gaps, we risk seeing further deterioration in overall happiness metrics and potentially increased attrition from the industry.

The emotional resilience of our maritime workforce depends on comprehensive welfare services that acknowledge both the rewards and hardships of life at sea. Moving forward, prioritising mental health infrastructure is the most impactful way to improve seafarer wellbeing.

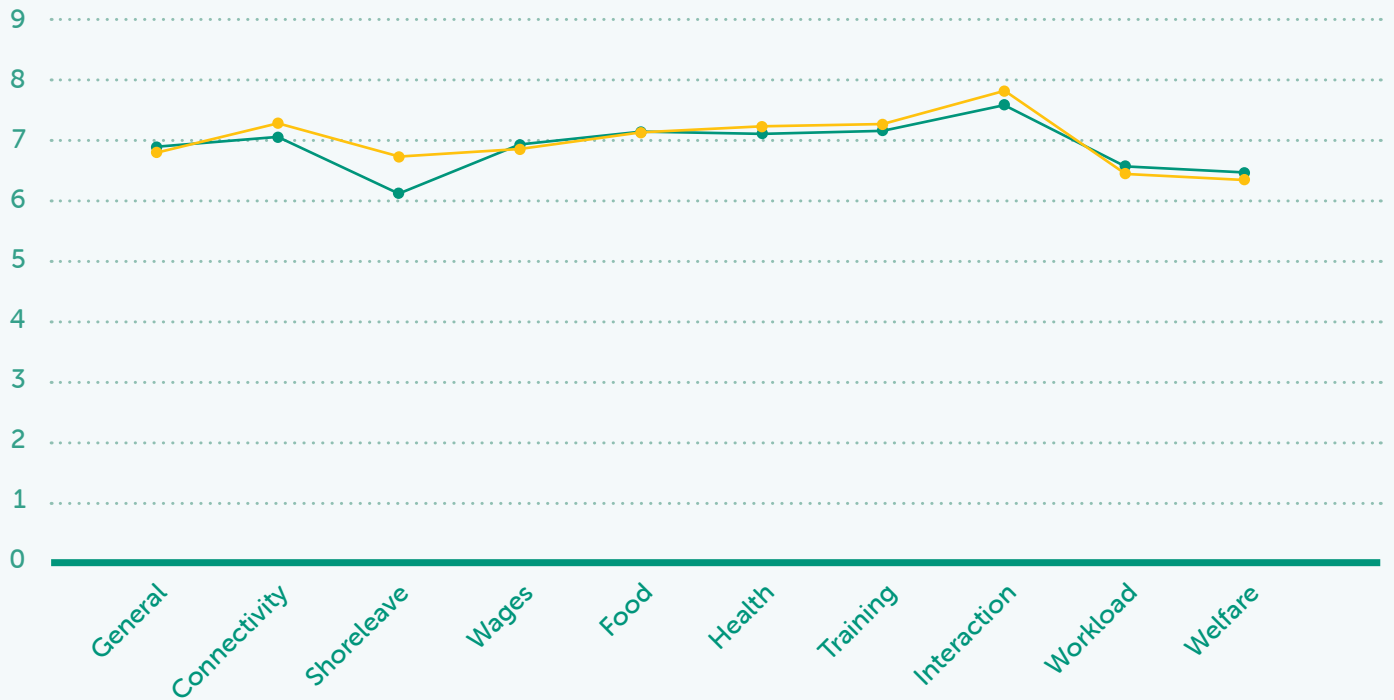
What Next?

- **Enhance Family Support:** Companies should consider providing better resources for family communication and support during long contracts to alleviate homesickness.
- **Improve Work Conditions:** Addressing workload management and reducing unnecessary paperwork can help lower stress levels.
- **Invest in Connectivity:** Ensuring reliable and high-speed internet access can significantly improve morale and help seafarers maintain connections with loved ones.
- **Focus on Food Quality:** Regular assessments of food quality and provision variety should be conducted to meet the nutritional needs and preferences of the crew.
- **Facilitate Shore Leave:** Companies should strive to create more opportunities for shore leave, allowing crew members to recharge and explore new cultures. Ports must be part of the focus on seafarer welfare.
- **Continuously Improving Training:** Implement ongoing training programs that are relevant to the crew's roles and incorporate feedback from seafarers to enhance their learning experience

Happiness Data

— Q4 2024 — Q1 2025

Q4 2024 v Q1 2025



The latest data reveals both areas of modest improvement, but the main feature is of continuing concerns and issues.

Notably, **connectivity** and **shore leave** have seen the most encouraging gains, reflecting ongoing industry efforts to improve internet access and port policies, allowing crew members to better maintain personal connections and enjoy much-needed respite ashore. Though as can be read in the written assessment seafarers, there is still much to be done when it comes to the issue of shoreleave, and the past reports reveal a low bar to improvement.

Interaction has also risen, showing as is so often the case that social engagement and onboard community-building have a hugely positive impact.

However, despite these improvements, there are areas that continue to weigh heavily on morale. **Wages** slipped slightly, and while the change appears marginal, it reflects growing frustrations in the face of increasing responsibilities and living costs. More concerning is the sustained decline in **workload** and **welfare** scores.

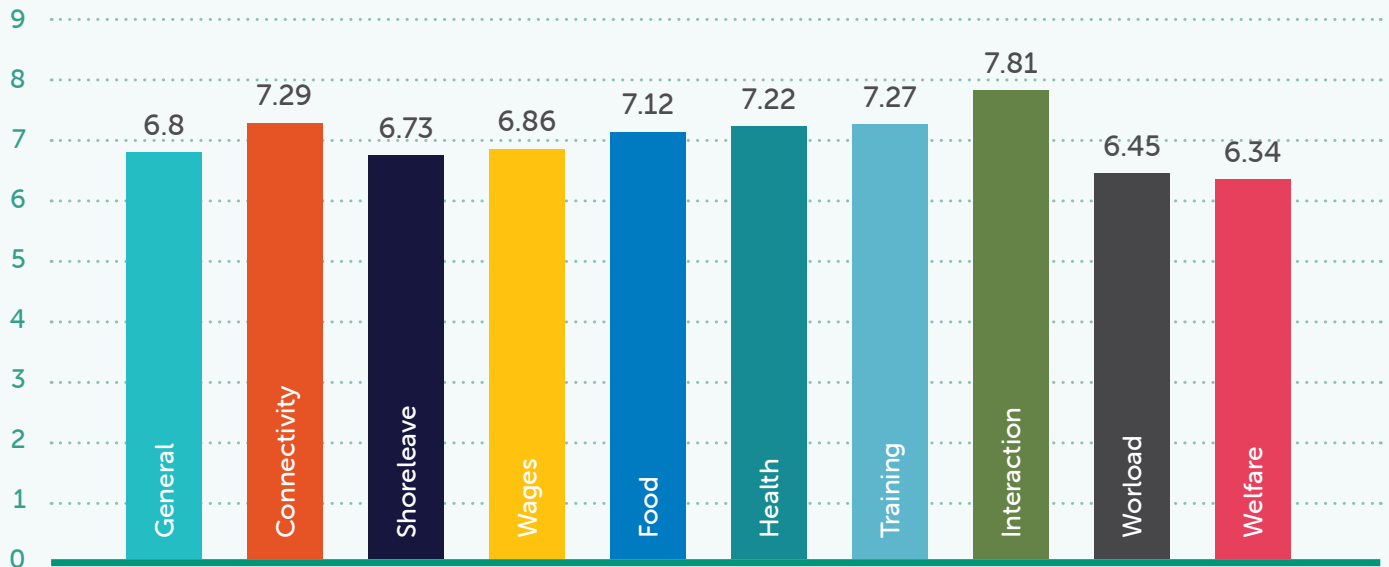
Seafarers continue to report high demands and pressure onboard, alongside a perception that their wellbeing is not being adequately safeguarded.

General happiness also saw a slight dip, highlighting the complex balance between positive strides in some areas and enduring challenges in others.

Encouragingly, small gains in **health** and **training** point to greater emphasis on upskilling and care for physical wellbeing, both crucial for long-term resilience at sea.

Q1 2025 data

Q1 per question



Question by Question

These insights highlight a complex seagoing reality: while strong social bonds and better connectivity can boost morale, unrelenting workloads and insufficient welfare measures continue to dampen overall satisfaction.

Addressing these pain points—particularly workload pressures and the broader scope of crew welfare—will be key to ensuring that the positive strides in other areas truly translate into higher overall happiness at sea.

General Happiness

6.8 ↓ from 6.9

Seafarers expressed a broad spread of emotions about their overall happiness at sea. It was heartening to hear that many take pride and joy in their work, appreciating the “adventure,” the unique experiences, and the ability to support their families financially.

Comments such as “Happy because I can provide enough to my family” and “I love the job of a seafarer” reflect this positive outlook. Cadets, in particular, seem to enjoy the learning opportunities and the relative freedom from heavy responsibilities at this early stage in their careers.

However, these positives are often counterbalanced by significant challenges. Isolation, stress, and prolonged time away from loved ones, as captured by remarks like “Away from family” and “High stress environment.” More experienced crew members, in some cases, voiced feelings of frustration and disillusionment, with one noting, “Hate this job, and what it became in last 10 years.”

A notable driver behind declining happiness appears to be a perceived lack of mental health and welfare support. Seafarers pointed to insufficient care from management, as well as the scarcity of welfare facilities both on board and ashore. Comments such as “Lack of mental health support from management,” “Not much to do,” and “No welfare facilities ashore” highlight these gaps. The recurring mentions of monotony and boredom — “bored” “Nothing’s special only more work” — underscore the emotional toll of limited recreational and support options.

This matters greatly. If access to welfare services and mental health resources has diminished, seafarers may feel increasingly overlooked and unsupported. Without adequate outlets for rest and recreation, feelings of loneliness and stress are likely to intensify, dragging down overall happiness and wellbeing across the fleet.



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The good things are my colleagues, we have a nice team feeling and make jokes to survive. Also, I earn money to provide for my family needs, but after 9 months on board, it becomes very difficult mentally.

Connectivity

7.29 ↑ from 7.05

Internet access remains a critical pillar of seafarer wellbeing, with the ability to stay connected to family and friends at home playing a major role in maintaining morale. Positive experiences are reflected in comments like “Good internet for communication” and “I can contact my family every day,” which highlight how reliable connectivity can ease the emotional strain of life at sea.

However, frustrations over poor or inconsistent internet access are widespread. Seafarers voiced dissatisfaction with comments such as “Due to no Internet,” “Poor internet connection during underway,” and “Limited internet and weak signal.” Issues of slow speeds, data restrictions, or inconsistent coverage remain. Responses like “Restrictions on internet data,” and “No good connection for our internet because it was controlled by our captain,” suggest that connectivity continues to be a significant pain point.

Even those who report good internet often qualify their remarks with caveats such as “sometimes no signal when vessel is underway.”

The emotional importance of connectivity cannot be overstated. For many seafarers, being able to communicate with family serves as a vital lifeline. If connectivity has worsened due to technical limitations, cost-saving measures, or tightened data controls, it risks deepening feelings of isolation and disconnection — factors that can quickly erode overall happiness.

Separation from family is a recurring and deeply felt theme throughout the feedback. Simple yet powerful statements like “Away from family” and “I miss my family” underscore this emotional burden. While some seafarers find solace in the financial security their work provides — “Because when I’m onboard I know that my family will receive income” — or adopt a positive mindset — “I choose to enjoy life even I am far from my family” — the combined effect of limited shore leave and poor connectivity only exacerbates feelings of distance from home.



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Family life is very difficult, last contract I missed my daughter’s wedding. The internet connection is always poor, slow and very expensive.

Shore leave

6.73 ↑ from 6.12

Shore leave can be a deep source of either positivity or frustration for seafarers. When granted, it offers relief from the pressures of life at sea. Seafarers express genuine appreciation for these moments: "I am happy with shore leave because I can explore." For many, it is an essential chance to decompress, experience normality, and momentarily step away from their intense shipboard environment.

Yet, the latest responses reveal that for too many, shore leave remains painfully out of reach. Comments such as "No shore leave," "Management don't let us to go ashore," and "Short stay at port. No time for shore leave with engine maintenance" show how widespread the problem has become. Even when shore leave is technically permitted, it is often unsatisfactorily short: "Very short time, port stay... loading and discharging very fast," highlighting the operational pressures that squeeze this crucial respite to the margins.

This matters profoundly to seafarer well-being. Shore leave is a critical component of mental and emotional recovery. Without it, seafarers face prolonged confinement aboard, increasing the risk of fatigue, frustration, and emotional strain. The loss of shore leave removes a key coping mechanism, cutting off contact with the outside world and denying the normal human experience of freedom and variety.

The situation is being worsened by factors such as accelerated turnaround times, heightened commercial pressures, tighter management control, and regional restrictions ("We don't get shore leave in China"). Seafarers increasingly feel trapped by a system that does not recognise the human need for rest and relief.

This quarter, shore leave was one of the most frequently discussed concerns, alongside fatigue from workload. The link between the two is clear: relentless work schedules leave no time to step ashore, while the absence of shore leave compounds the exhaustion from relentless work. The latest data paints a stark picture—where shore leave is available, it is often limited to a few rushed hours, if that.



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No more shore leave now, we stay on ship every time for months. Before was different, now everything is a rush.

Wages

6.86 ↓ from 6.91

Wages remain a central driver of seafarer motivation and overall job satisfaction. Many expressed contentment with their earnings, highlighting “Good salary and great opportunities” and “Competitive salary” as key positives that make the demands of life at sea worthwhile. A constant message from seafarers is the fact that, the ability to provide for their families remains a powerful incentive.

However, discontent is also clearly present. Numerous responses point to stagnant wages and the rising cost of living as major concerns. Comments such as “No increase of wages,” “Need to increase salary due to inflation,” and “Seafarers wages has not been revised since ages” reflect frustration that their earnings have not kept pace with inflation or the increasing demands of the role. There is also a sense of inequity among certain nationalities, with remarks like “Salary is quite low for Filipino seafarers.”

Cadets, in particular, accept lower wages as part of their learning curve — “As a cadet I earn less than 250€/ month”. Among more experienced crew, there is a stronger feeling that their workload and responsibilities are not adequately reflected in their pay: “Salary very low compared to workload.”

This matters because, for many seafarers, financial reward is naturally the primary reason for enduring prolonged periods away from home and the physical and emotional demands of the job. If inflation continues to rise without corresponding wage increases, purchasing power erodes, and the sense of fair compensation diminishes. This financial strain, especially for those supporting families, risks undermining morale and happiness, making seafarers feel undervalued and underpaid for their efforts.



“

As a cadet I earn less than 250\$/month and often work 12 hours per day. Other companies pay better, but what can I do? The inflation rises and we need transparency about remittance fees and salary increases that follow inflation.”

Food

7.12 ↓ from 7.14

Food quality, variety and a sense of familiarity are critical factors in maintaining morale at sea. Positive experiences with food noticeably lift spirits, with seafarers commenting “Food is delicious” and “We have 2 amazing cooks,” recognising the value of good catering in making daily life onboard more enjoyable. A skilled catering team can make a significant difference, transforming mealtimes into times of comfort and community.

However, food is also a frequent source of dissatisfaction. Common complaints include lack of variety and poor quality, with seafarers noting “always the same, limited variety of foods,” “Food is not so good,” and “very oily, not good for health.”

Some even report inadequate provisions, stating “the food not enough because it was controlled by our Captain” and “No provisions and average food. Always repeating.” These comments suggest concerns not only about quality but also quantity and nutritional balance, which can directly affect wellbeing.

Management practices and budget constraints play a role, with hints of limiting and cost-cutting impacting what is served onboard. If the food supply has deteriorated due to tighter budgets, provisioning challenges, or logistical delays, this has a damaging impact on all onboard. There also some comments about cooks working shorter times onboard, “Cooks should only be on 3 months as we get bored of same meals”.

Food and mealtimes are as much about comfort, routine, and a rare opportunity for communal enjoyment. Poor food quality or monotonous meals erode morale and physical health alike.



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Chief cook tries his best but company always cutting provision budget. Sometimes we eat the same food every week it is so boring.”

Ability to keep fit and healthy

7.22 ↑ from 7.13

Maintaining physical health at sea is crucial for seafarers, and when conditions allow, it can be a positive aspect of life onboard. Some seafarers report access to good facilities and active work routines that help keep them fit, with comments like “We have complete gym equipment” and “My work keeps me fit.” These opportunities support both physical wellbeing and morale, offering a much-needed outlet from the demands of shipboard life.

However, many others face significant barriers. Common frustrations include “No gym / exercise room onboard,” “Almost no time to keep fit, due to workload,” and “The job onboard is demanding, and we don’t have enough energy to have a proper exercise.” These remarks reflect how limited time, heavy workloads, and inadequate onboard facilities restrict the ability to maintain fitness.

Mental health also emerges as a concern, with seafarers pointing out a “Lack of mental health support from management” and subtle signs of strain like “Feeling mild stress at work.” The absence of structured support for mental wellbeing leaves crew members more vulnerable to the pressures of isolation and intense work demands.

Where access to fitness facilities, healthy food, or time for exercise are eroded the physical and mental health of seafarers is compromised. These issues combine with the problems of workload and the potential for fatigue to form a potentially lethal cocktail – impacting both mental health and maritime safety.



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To keep fit on ship is a big challenge. Gym equipment is very old and when vessel is rolling, using a treadmill or weights becomes dangerous.

Training

7.27 ↑ from 7.17

Training is seen as a positive element of life at sea, providing seafarers with valuable knowledge and enhancing safety. Many appreciate the opportunity to improve their skills, with comments like “It gives us more knowledge to work properly and safely,” reflecting the general recognition of its importance. For cadets and those early in their careers, training is especially valued as it equips them for future responsibilities and career progression.

However, not all feedback is favourable. Some experienced crew members feel that training can be excessive or poorly integrated with their existing workload. Remarks such as “Some trainings are redundant and a waste of time” suggest frustration, particularly when courses cover material already well understood or are delivered at inconvenient times. For seafarers already stretched thin by operational demands, mandatory training sessions can feel like an additional burden rather than a benefit.

If training delivery has become less effective—either through poor timing, repetition, or lack of relevance—it risks turning a normally positive experience into a source of discontent. Balancing the need for ongoing professional development with practical workloads is key to maintaining training as a morale booster rather than a drain.

Many seafarers report a disconnect between their formal training and genuine confidence when facing critical situations. As one respondent noted: “We know the procedures but feels like crossing fingers when things get complicated.”

This suggests that while technical knowledge is necessary, it is insufficient for creating a truly safe environment. Seafarers need not just to know what to do, but to feel genuinely confident in their ability to execute procedures under pressure.

New crew members particularly struggle with the intense safety familiarisation at the beginning of contracts. Rather than building confidence, these information-dense sessions can undermine it: “There’s so much to take in on day one. I have more questions than answers.”

This suggests a need to reconsider how safety information is delivered, with a focus on building genuine understanding rather than simply ticking compliance boxes.



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Training big problem now. Many crew, including me, sometimes not sure about new equipment, very dangerous if we make mistake. CBT training is not enough, we need proper training from people.

Crew interaction

7.81 ↑ from 7.6

Strong relationships among crew remain a crucial pillar of seafarer happiness. Many highlight positive onboard camaraderie as a source of daily motivation, with comments such as “I made some great friends onboard,” and “We have a great crew ...we all get along good like a family.” Teamwork and mutual support clearly lift morale, helping seafarers manage the challenges of life at sea. Sentiments like “Good harmonious relationship with other crew,” and “All crew here are the best!” reflect the benefits of a cohesive, supportive environment.

However, this is not universally the case. Reports of strained relationships, unprofessional conduct, and leadership issues also feature prominently. Negative experiences include “Master verbal abuse, shouting and hard to understand,” “Rude and disrespectful behaviour from some senior officers,” and “Too many two face people onboard.” Tensions between management and crew are also evident: “Not good relationship between management and crew on board.” These conflicts erode trust and chip away at the sense of unity that is so essential for well-being at sea.

If social cohesion deteriorates—whether due to crew changes, management style, cultural frictions, or unresolved disputes—the onboard atmosphere suffers. A toxic or fragmented environment can undermine morale, leaving seafarers feeling isolated or undervalued.

Another key aspect of interactions was the respect held for others, and the confidence (or lack) that was placed in each other. The data highlights how safety perceptions are deeply entwined with trust in colleagues’ capabilities. Experienced seafarers admit concerns: “I trust my crew, but I do worry sometimes if they’re under too much pressure, or not fully familiar with the equipment.”

This reveals how seafarers’ sense of security depends not just on individual competence but on the perceived reliability of the entire team. Individual responses reveal a concerning pattern of low confidence that often remains unexpressed. The culture of not admitting uncertainty creates hidden vulnerabilities: “You don’t want to say you’re not sure, because you think you should already know it.”

This reluctance to acknowledge knowledge gaps creates a dangerous facade where crew members may proceed with tasks despite internal doubts—potentially compromising safety for the sake of appearing competent and further straining relationships onboard.



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I trust my crew, but I do worry sometimes if they are under too much pressure, or not fully familiar with the equipment.

Workload

6.45 ↓ from 6.59

Workload continues to be one of the most significant stressors for seafarers, with many expressing frustrations at the relentless demands placed upon them. While a few describe manageable or even enjoyable experiences (“I enjoy my work with my crewmates,” “Because I like to be in engine room, always learning some new things”), a far greater number report being overwhelmed by excessive tasks, limited support, and inadequate rest. Comments such as “Too much workload,” “High demand of paperwork,” and “Rest hours manipulated for compliance purposes” highlight both the intensity and unsustainable nature of their schedules.

Port calls, in particular, exacerbate pressure levels. Seafarers point to “Port State, agent, documentation, watchkeeping and audit are stressful,” and “Short voyages with high workload,” as key contributors to fatigue. The erosion of traditional rest periods—“No Sundays, no holidays, no New Year or Christmas celebration”—further underlines the severity of the issue. Commercial pressures and reduced crew sizes have intensified these challenges, with too few hands to manage an ever-growing workload.

The fatigue reported is more than mere tiredness. It reflects the dangerous interplay between disrupted sleep patterns, relentless work demands, and insufficient recovery time. Fragmented sleep—short naps instead of restorative rest—leaves crew physically depleted and mentally strained. This chronic exhaustion not only diminishes morale but also raises serious concerns about safety and performance on board.

Where conditions worsen, whether through tighter schedules, more inspections, or thinning crew numbers—the increased strain saps energy, undermines resilience, and inevitably contributes to lower happiness. Without meaningful changes, the risks to both welfare and operational safety remain profound.

Responses also reveal significant concerns about workload pressures, particularly in two key areas: maintaining aging vessels and implementing new technology. These challenges create additional stress that can further undermine the confidence issues previously identified.



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Old ships mean too many problems, and then the office asks for many reports. Sometimes we take shortcuts because we have no choice, and there is not enough crew to do a proper job. Very dangerous, but what can we do?"

Access to welfare facilities

6.34 ↓ from 6.47

Welfare facilities ashore remain an underused and, for many, an inaccessible support system for seafarers. While those who can access these centres express appreciation (“Quite happy with support and facilities”), the majority highlight significant barriers, often linked to restricted shore leave or poor communication about available services. Comments such as “No welfare facilities ashore,” and “Don’t really know what welfare facilities are,” suggest both physical and informational obstacles preventing seafarers from benefiting fully from these resources.

Short port stays, tight schedules, and administrative hurdles frequently make shore leave difficult, if not impossible. Even when welfare centres are nearby, seafarers may not have the time or freedom to visit. Complex port entry requirements, lack of transport, or security restrictions leave many cut off from the very services designed to support them. Some seafarers report not even being aware of what facilities are available, highlighting a communication gap between welfare providers and those at sea. Though there was praise and gratitude for ship visitors who are a lifeline in such ports.

The issue matters deeply. Welfare facilities provide critical respite: opportunities to rest, connect with family, receive pastoral care, or simply experience a change of environment away from the confines of the vessel. When access is denied or severely limited, seafarers lose a vital outlet for stress relief and social connection. This deprivation is especially impactful in a context of growing workloads and fatigue, compounding feelings of isolation.

As shore leave becomes even harder to obtain, then satisfaction with welfare facilities ashore falls too. These issues are in a symbiotic relationship, linked by the reality of access. Seafarers value opportunities to visit welfare centres, not just for recreation but for maintaining their mental well-being. When denied, it leaves them feeling unsupported, contributing to lower happiness levels overall.



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When we reach port, terminal is far from city and no transportation. Company doesn't provide welfare information, we don't know what is available for us.

Q1 2025 Conclusions

Seafarers' feelings are a complex blend of satisfaction and struggle. They take pride in their work, value good crew dynamics, and appreciate the financial rewards, but these are offset by isolation, heavy workloads, and limited personal time.

Connectivity and shore leave are critical to their emotional well-being, yet often inadequate. While some thrive on the adventure and learning opportunities, others feel trapped by the demands and lack of support. Their happiness hinges on a delicate balance of work conditions, personal connections, and small comforts like good food and rest—factors that vary greatly depending on the ship, crew, and management.

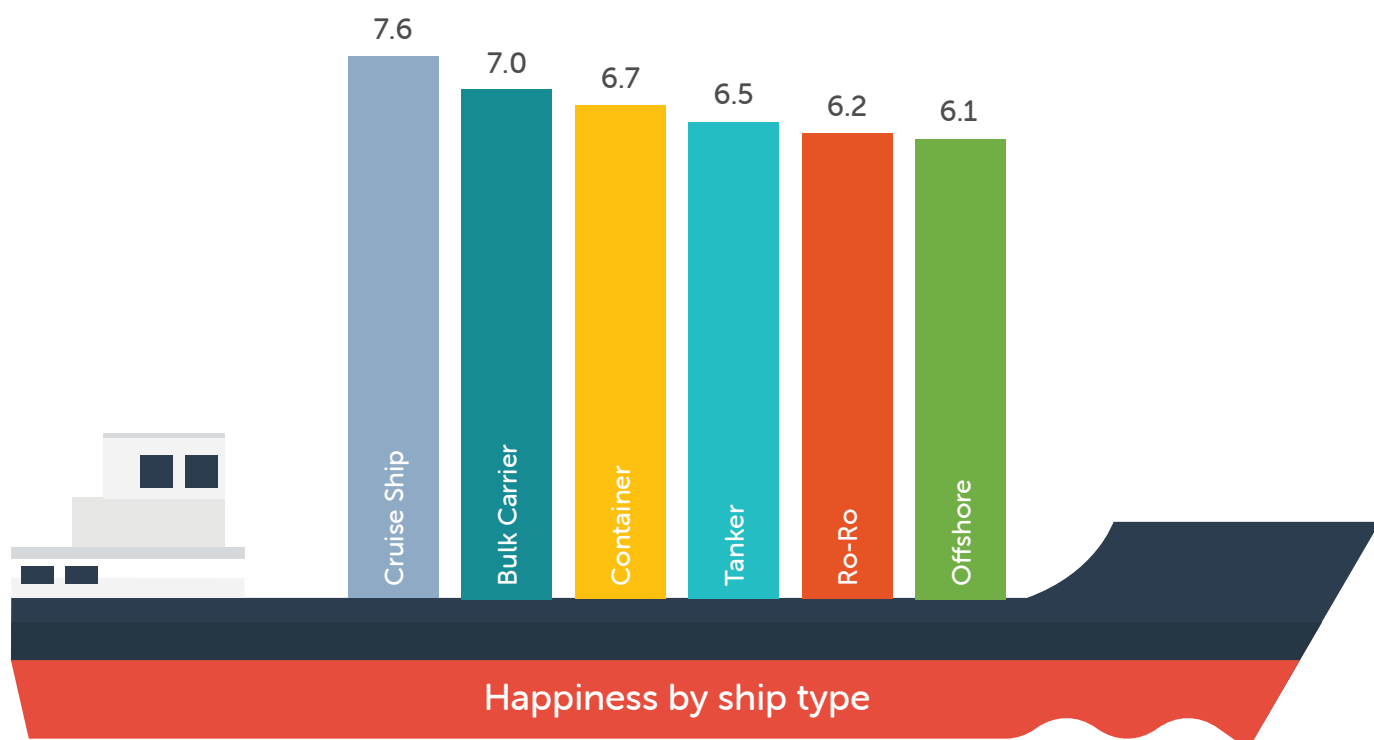
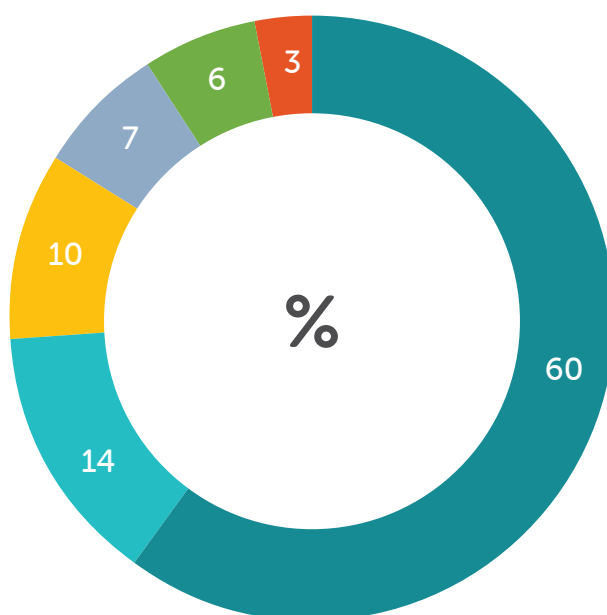
Despite some positive feedback, negative sentiments predominate. While some seafarers find fulfilment in their profession, travel opportunities, and financial stability, more report dissatisfaction with workloads, isolation, and substandard amenities. Comments range from "I love the job of a seafarer" to "Hate this job, and what it became last 10 years," with the balance clearly shifting toward discontent.

Longstanding issues like poor internet connectivity, limited shore leave, and wage stagnation appear increasingly problematic, exacerbated by inflation, stricter port regulations, and corporate cost-cutting measures. Seafarers' express frustration at their lack of control over working conditions, as management decisions about internet access, food quality, and operational schedules dictate their quality of life.

A notable divide exists between career stages. Cadets report higher satisfaction, enjoying their learning phase with minimal responsibilities. As one stated, "As a cadet I do not have any responsibilities, I can do whatever I want." In contrast, senior crew members struggle with heavier workloads and growing disillusionment about the profession's evolution over the past decade.

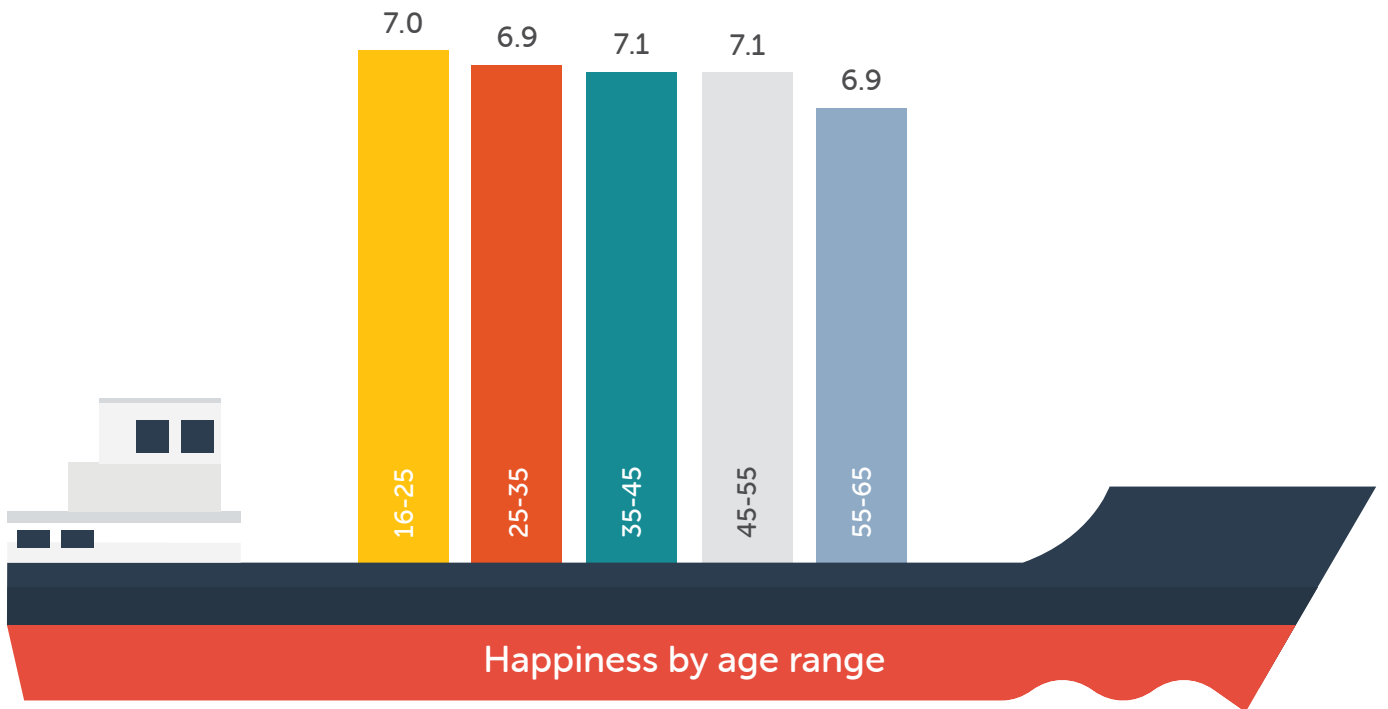
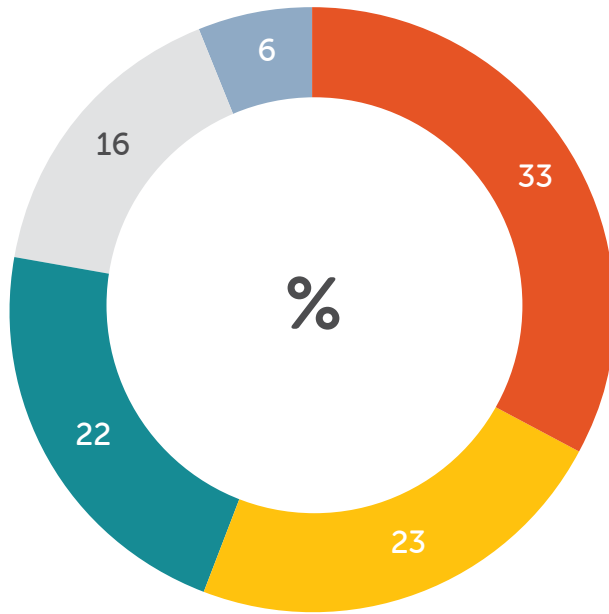
Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Tanker
- Container
- Cruise Ship
- Offshore
- Ro-Ro



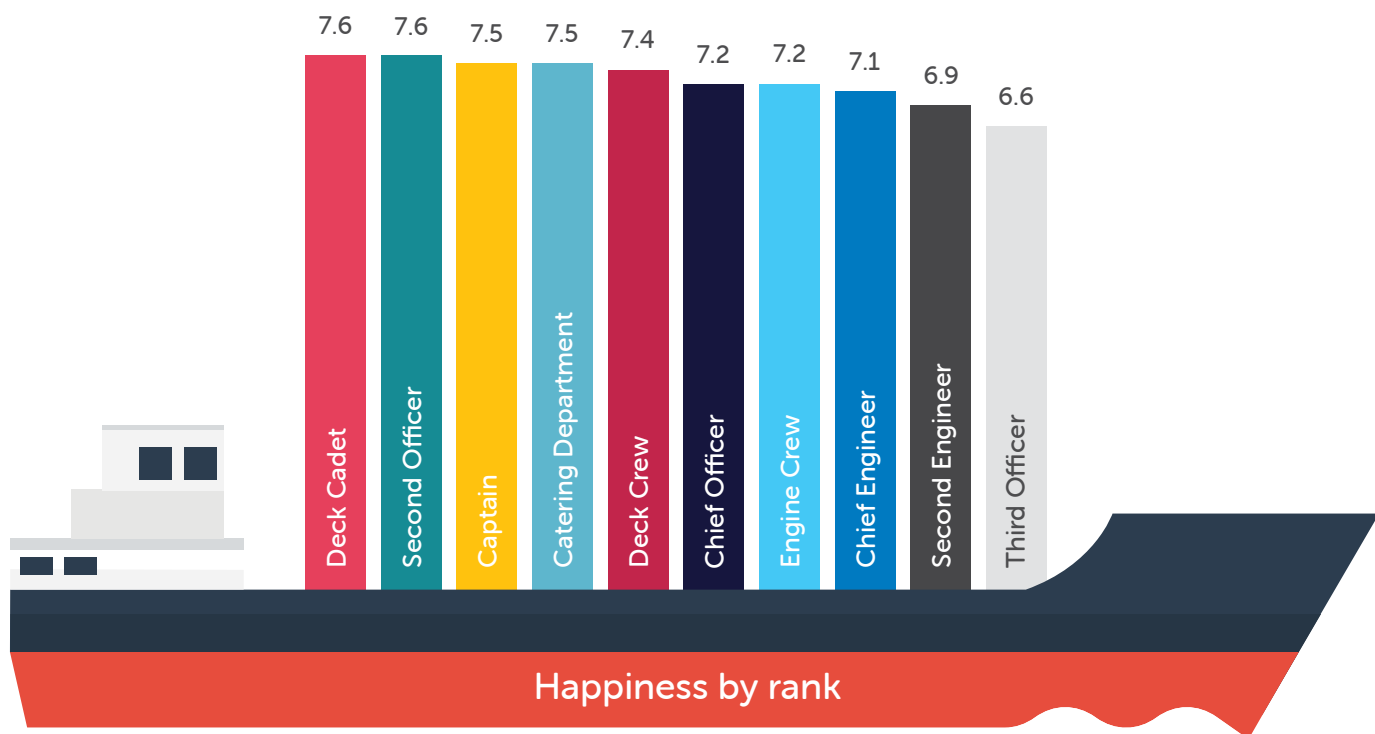
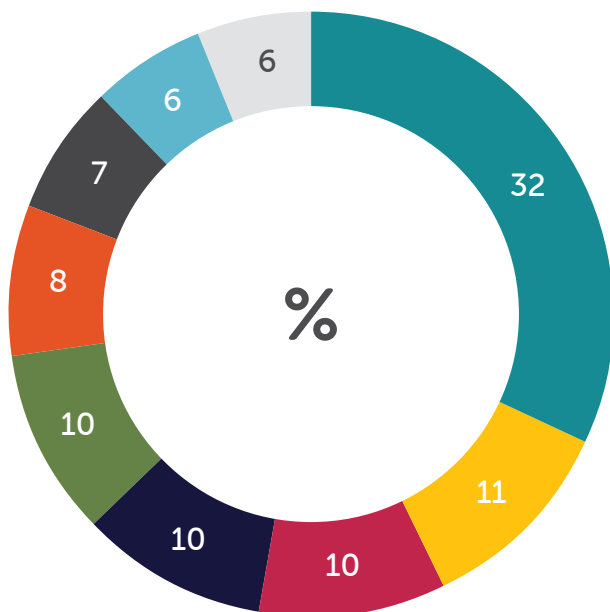
Age Range

- 16-25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55-65



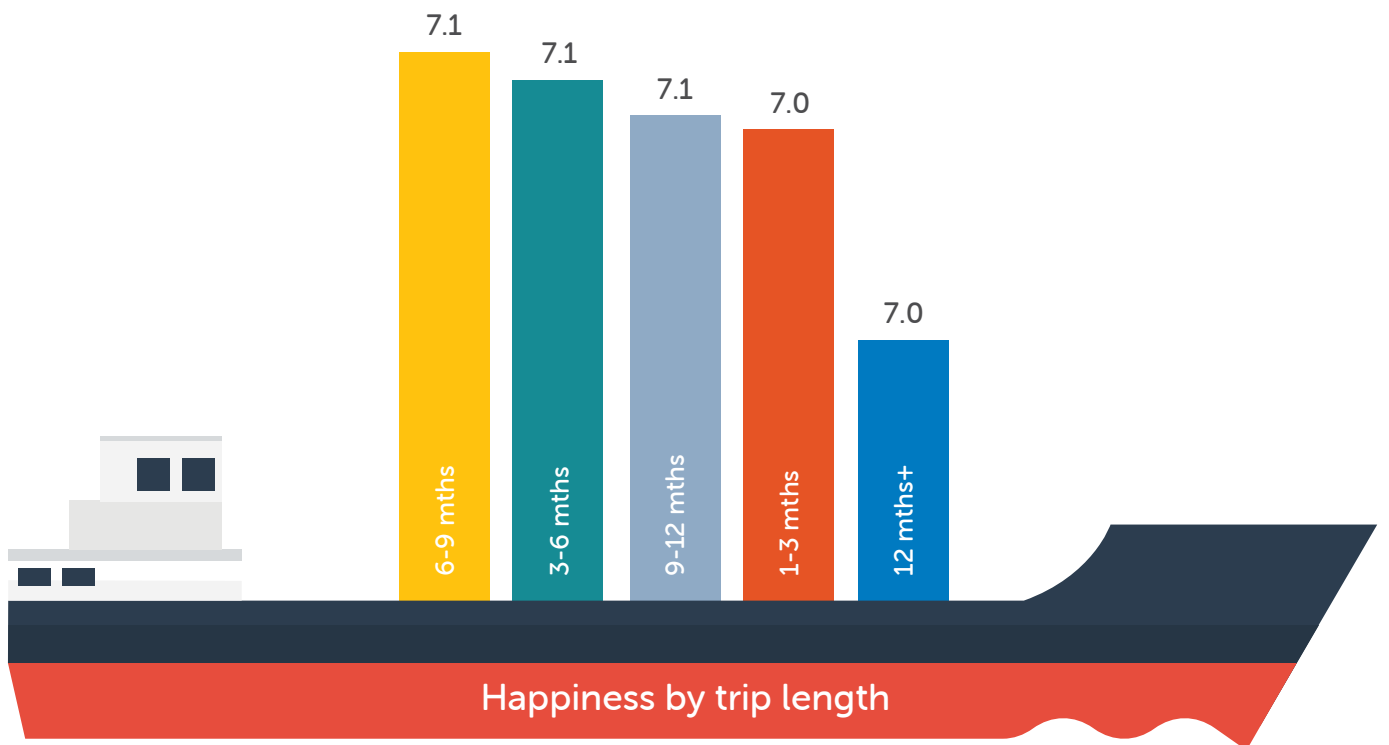
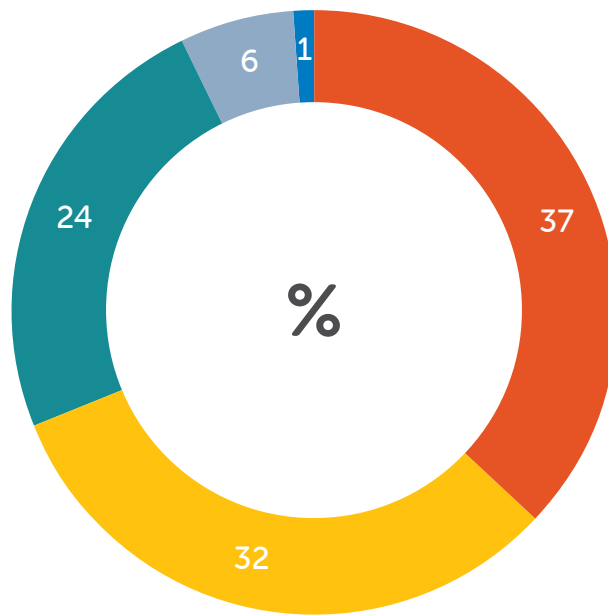
Rank

- Captain
- Catering Department
- Chief Engineer
- Chief Officer
- Deck Crew
- Engine Crew
- Second Engineer
- Second Officer
- Third Officer



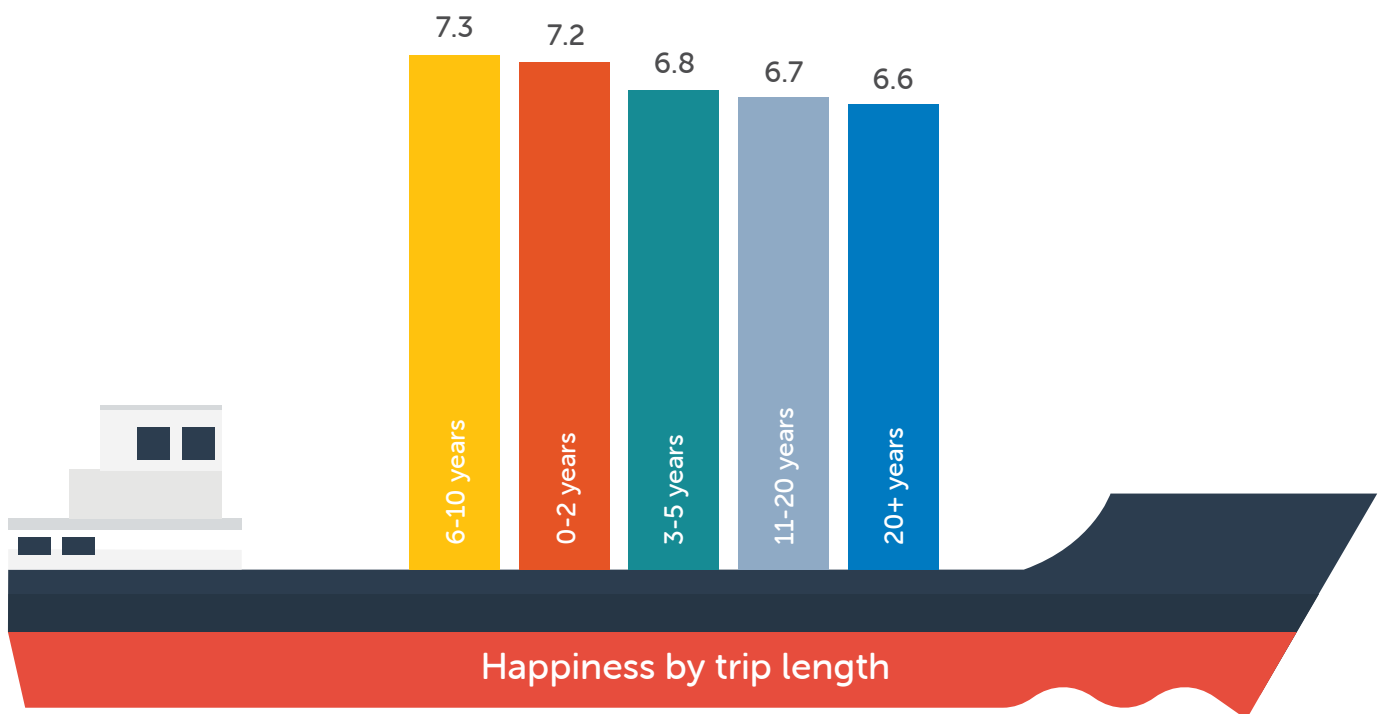
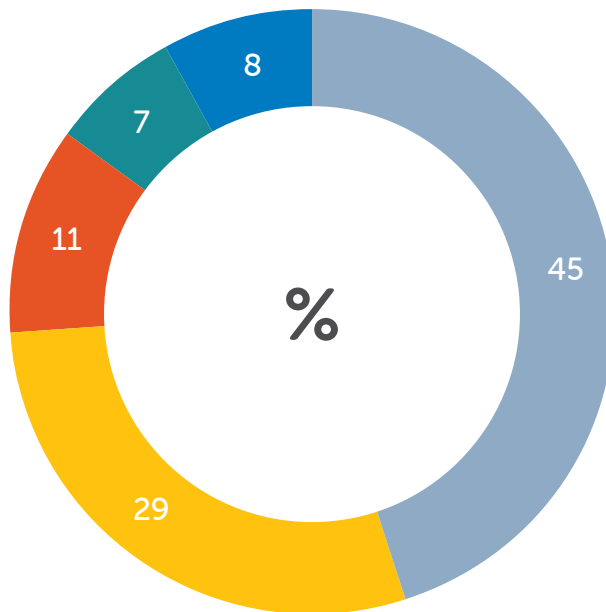
Trip Length

- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-9 months
- 9-12 months
- Over 12 months



Age of Vessel

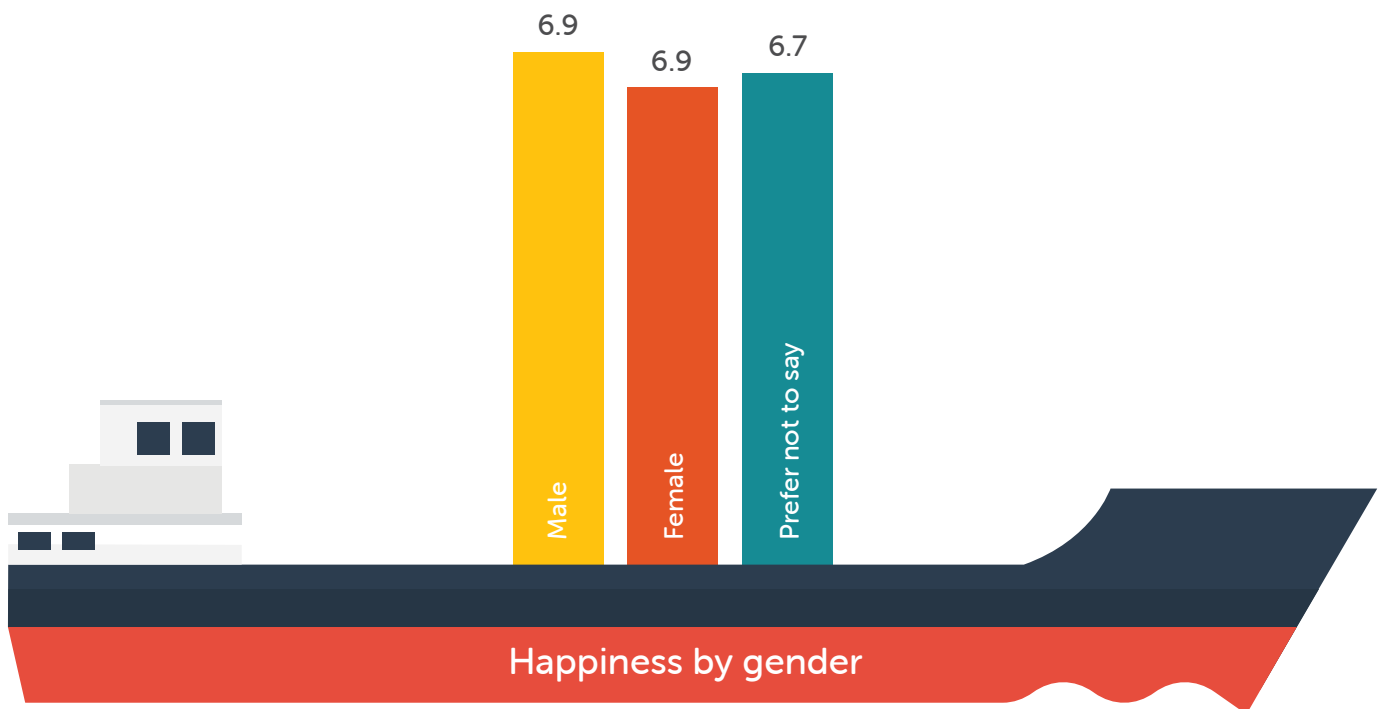
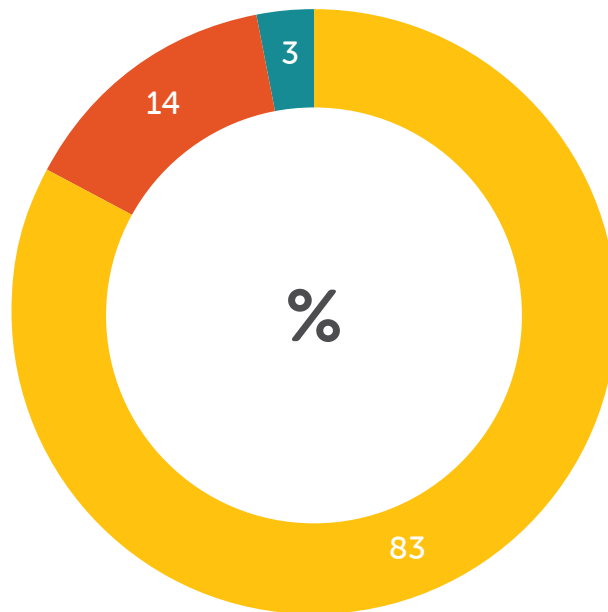
- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 20+ years



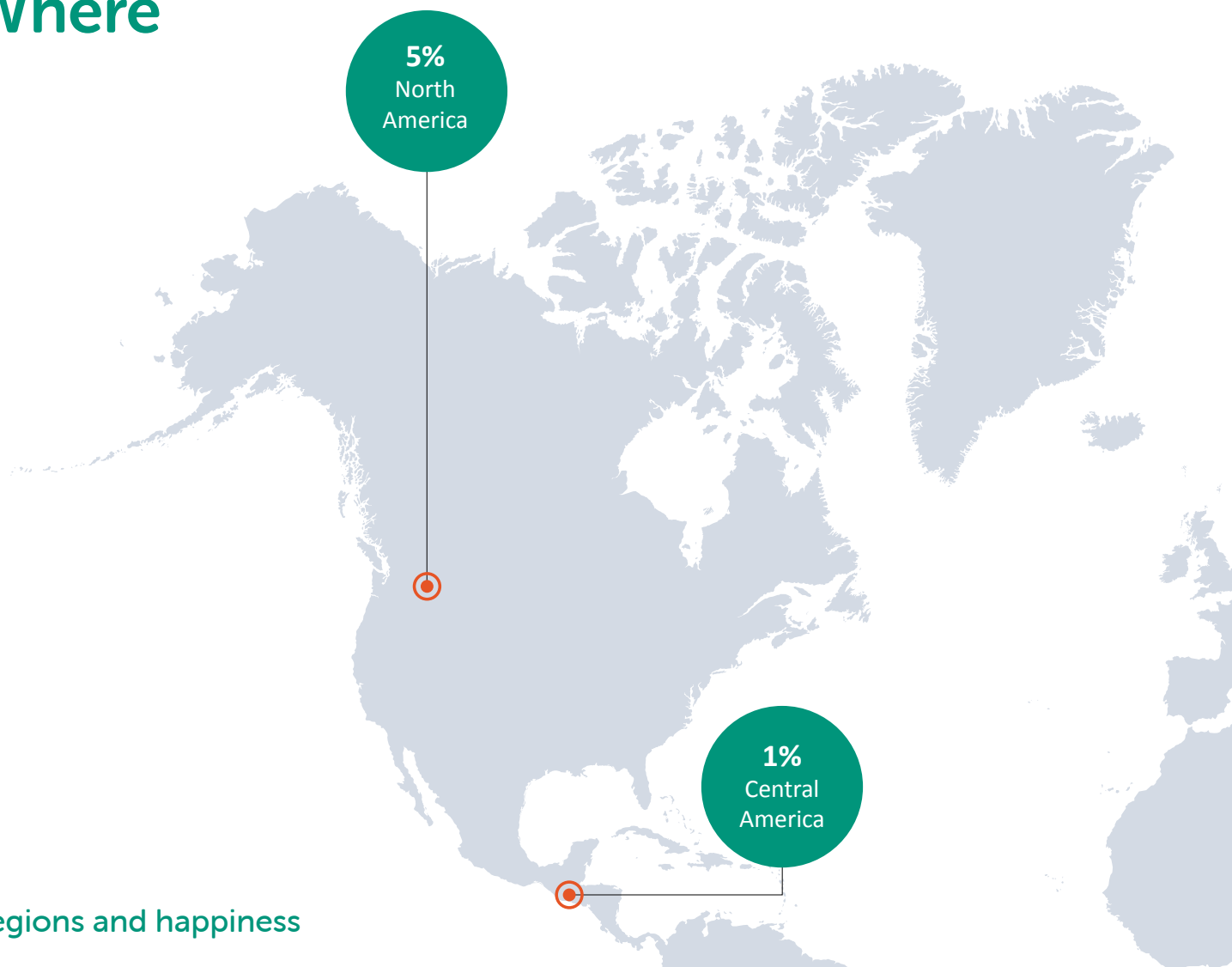
Happiness by trip length

Gender

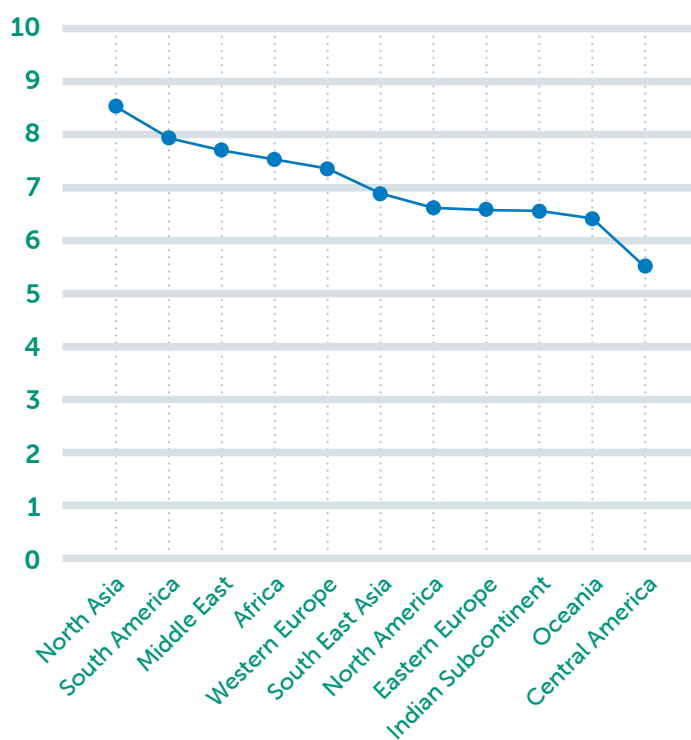
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say



Where



Regions and happiness





Key Findings with Demographic Analysis

This demographic data illustrates notable trends in satisfaction across different vessel types, age groups, regions, roles, and durations of service. The insights can guide targeted improvements in service or training, especially in regions and roles where scores are lower. The gender imbalance suggests a need for initiatives that enhance female participation and address their unique concerns in the maritime industry.

Vessel Type Matters

Seafarer happiness significantly varies by vessel type, revealing how working environments directly impact crew wellbeing. Cruise ships lead this quarter with an impressive 7.6 satisfaction score - a testament to how vessels designed with human comfort in mind benefit not just passengers but crew as well.

In stark contrast, offshore vessels (6.13) and Ro-Ro vessels (6.19) occupy the bottom ranks. Offshore operations often involve harsh conditions, high-risk environments, and isolated locations. Ro-Ro vessels present unique challenges with complex loading operations and tight port schedules, creating high-pressure environments that wear on crew morale.

Container vessels (6.69) and tankers (6.47) fall in the middle range but still below average, reflecting the demanding nature of these operations. Container shipping's relentless schedules and tanker operations' stringent safety protocols create distinctive stressors that management strategies must address.

Age Demographics: The Experience Paradox

Our findings reveal an inverse relationship between age and happiness at sea. Younger seafarers (16-25) report the highest satisfaction (7.21), contrasting sharply with their more experienced counterparts in the 55-65 bracket (6.43).

This pattern suggests a "maritime career arc" where initial enthusiasm gradually yields to accumulated fatigue and family separation strain. Industry stakeholders might view this as a warning sign about retention challenges, but also an opportunity to develop targeted wellbeing interventions for mid and late-career seafarers.

Regional Variations: Geography of Happiness

This region's sophisticated maritime infrastructure, technological advancement, and cultural emphasis on operational excellence creates positive working environments. South America (7.98) and Middle East (7.75) also demonstrate strong performances, potentially through different approaches to crew welfare.

The concerning 5.5 score in Central American operations signals an urgent need for improvement. This may reflect regulatory gaps, resource limitations, or infrastructure challenges that directly impact daily life aboard vessels in this region.

Western Europe's middling performance (7.33) challenges assumptions about developed markets automatically providing better conditions, suggesting cost pressures may be compromising crew experience.

Rank and Responsibility: The Hierarchy Effect

The happiness distribution across ranks tells a nuanced story about career progression in maritime work. Deck Cadets lead with 7.64, possibly reflecting the optimism of career beginnings and structured training programs. Captains (7.48) demonstrate that reaching career pinnacles delivers satisfaction despite heavy responsibilities.

The lower scores among Third Officers (6.56) and Second Engineers (6.92) highlight a critical "mid-career valley" where responsibility increases without proportionate rewards or authority. This suggests a potential retention vulnerability at these career stages that merits industry attention.

Time at Sea: The Duration Dilemma

Most striking is how service duration affects wellbeing. Optimal happiness was seen in the 6–9-month range (7.8), this may appear at odds with seafarers wanting to get home, but it appears to be the time period representing a balance point where seafarers have adjusted to shipboard life without experiencing severe homesickness or burnout, with perhaps a growing sense of hopefully paying off soon.

The precipitous drop to 3.7 for deployments exceeding 12 months represents a red flag. This dramatic decline suggests such extended deployments, which are not allowed anyway, are clearly unsustainable for psychological wellbeing, regardless of other factors.

Gender Landscape: An Industry in Transition

The overwhelming male dominance (83.45%) reflects the maritime industry's historical gender imbalance. The female representation (14.08%) shows progress but highlights the substantial distance yet to travel toward gender parity. The "prefer-not-to-say" category (2.47%) warrants attention as a potential indicator of inclusivity challenges.

Strategic Implications

This data compels the maritime industry to consider:

1. Vessel-specific wellbeing strategies rather than one-size-fits-all approaches
2. Career-stage interventions that address the diverse needs of early, mid, and late-career seafarers.
3. Regional best practice sharing to elevate standards in underperforming areas.
4. Service duration optimisation with particular vigilance against deployments exceeding 12 months.
5. Inclusive culture building to support gender diversity and broader representation

By addressing these dimensions holistically, the industry can make meaningful progress toward a happier, more sustainable seafaring workforce.

Thank you

We extend huge thanks to the seafarers who share their personal experiences and insights with the Seafarers Happiness Index. Their first-hand accounts deepen our understanding of the challenges at sea and highlight areas where improvements can be made. These invaluable perspectives shape our recommendations and significantly influence the development of more effective policies and practices.

We are also thankful for the strong support from shipping companies and shore managers who have made it possible for many to participate in this survey. Their dedication to transparency and continuous improvement serves as an inspiring model for the entire industry. We urge additional organisations to follow suit, recognising that open dialogue is essential for driving meaningful progress.

Looking ahead, we call for even broader participation from seafarers across all sectors of the industry. Every contribution enhances our insight and reinforces our ability to advocate for lasting change. Shipowners and operators, your continued support in encouraging and enabling crew participation is vital to our collective success.

The journey forward requires a united effort from every stakeholder. By prioritising the happiness and well-being of seafarers, we not only address current challenges but also build a foundation for a more resilient, efficient, and innovative maritime industry.

To complete the survey, visit:

www.seafarershappinessindex.org



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