



Seafarers

Happiness

Index
Q4 | 2017





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“By sharing their feelings on a scale out of ten, and by providing some written insight – the Index gives a voice to seafarers”

BACKGROUND

There is often talk about seafarers and the challenges facing them. All too often though, it is done without real data, and without input on the realities of life at sea.

Such gaps in knowledge hamper the shipping industry, as those ashore often know little of the building blocks of a productive job, fulfilling career and the demands of those working at sea.

With that in mind, The Mission to Seafarers has re-launched a major shipping industry initiative, the *Seafarers Happiness Index* (SHI). This is an ongoing study into how those at sea feel about a range of key areas which impact them.

Measuring just how happy people are about the various elements of their working life gives a picture of the real successes and problems within seafaring. It also provides learning opportunities to improve and develop.

The Index is made up of a standard set of ten questions and these cover key areas, such as mental and physical health, diet, rest, workload, connectivity, training, access to shore leave, as well as relationships at home and on board. These are answered anonymously, and seafarers are encouraged to complete their answers during each trip.

Happiness is key to developing maritime careers. Happy, satisfied, well-fed, fit and engaged seafarers are less likely to have accidents, they are less likely to become disaffected, and are the manifestation of the confidence or pressures which may be felt elsewhere up the industry chain.

By sharing their feelings on a scale out of ten, and by providing some written insight, the Index gives a voice to seafarers, and addresses the fundamentals of why people are happy to go to sea, or not as the case may be. The feedback provides a blueprint to the improvements needed.

The numbers only tell part of the story though, and we are grateful for the seafarers who took the time and effort to share their views and experiences. It is the narrative that is woven through their modern life at sea which compellingly captures the challenges of being at sea today.

Gaining an insight into seafarers' lives and exploring their feelings about key facets of life at sea, can afford shipping companies extremely valuable insight. This offers the chance to learn from the mistakes of others, meaning employers can see where things are going wrong and what changes are needed.

Making sure seafarers are happy means heading off problems, it means making life better for those working at sea, as well as safer and more efficient. The *Seafarers Happiness Index*, when it was run as part of a seafarers' social network, revealed fascinating trends and early warning signs too.

Across past reports, crews have spoken of not only the erosion of shore leave, but the fact they have begun to dread port calls altogether as the pressure and work load builds alongside. Another fascinating trend was the slashing of feeding rates and of budgets for spares.

If seafarers are not being allowed ashore, or cannot face the aggravation of trying to get ashore, then it points at wider problems. So too the reports on poor quality food and a lack of exercise. Or that vessels are not carrying enough spares, or are being tempted to use non-Original, perhaps even fake spare parts.

Happiness is the foundation for good employment. Happy people stick

around, happy people work well, they embrace challenges, they look to excel, and they share with others. Happiness matters, and shipowners ignore it at their peril.

That is why The Mission to Seafarers has re-launched the *Seafarers Happiness Index*, to provide a vital, live and ongoing link with crews and the ability to report back to the industry.

Every quarter, seafarers are needed to provide their input and insight – so we would encourage people at some point during each trip to sea to take a few minutes to share their thoughts. The Seafarers Happiness Index can be completed at www.missiontoseafarers.org/seafarershappiness.

So please, whether you are a seafarer or whether you work with seafarers – we need to hear the real-life tales on board ships today. That way we can build data and weave the stories of what is truly being experienced during life at sea.



Steven Jones
Founder of the *Seafarers Happiness Index*



“While there is a degree of consistency it is important to admit that the trend is downwards”

THE STORY SO FAR

According to the returns submitted to the *Seafarers Happiness Index* during the period of this report, the 2017 Q4 average Seafarer Happiness level is **6.25** out of 10.

As this is the first of a new set of *Seafarer Happiness Index* reports, there is no current Mission to Seafarers data set to compare with. However, looking back on past surveys the 2016 annual happiness level was 6.41, while for 2015 it was 6.46.

So, the figures are holding fairly steady across the past couple of years, but while there is a degree of consistency it is important to admit that the trend is downwards. Seafarer happiness is falling. That should be a concern for the industry and it seems there are important questions to ask and issues to address to ensure that seafarers happiness is not relentlessly on the slide.

WHO

So, who have we been listening to? Well, the Mission rolled out the Index for the first time across the tail end of 2017. This was across a range of social media platforms, its own website and within Missions themselves. Seafarers were encouraged to open up and share their thoughts on what makes them happy, and of how their life at sea makes them feel.

The Index is finding its feet and place in the industry once more, and we look forward to ever more responses from seafarers. However, given that, there were approaching 8,000 seafarers who engaged with the initiative, and who are motivated to make a difference.

The most engaged ranks were across the deck crew and also catering departments, however there were strong representations from Second Officers and Captains too. The deck

department was also consistently the most satisfied across the questions, aside from when it came to workload.

Interestingly, the engineering department ranks were all consistently conspicuous by their absence, indeed the response levels from engineers was disappointing. We can only guess if that means they are extremely happy or incredibly dissatisfied. Hopefully, more will engage with the Index as the project progresses.

The largest group of respondents, over 40%, were in the 25-35 age range. While all other ranges were fairly well spread, which gives a good cross generational insight into what is going on out at sea. The younger seafarers appeared to be happier with their life at sea, though much of that rested on whether they had internet access or not.

Unfortunately, as one might expect, the gender balance of responses was overwhelmingly skewed. Almost 95% of respondents were male – which mirrors the make-up of the industry on board ship, but which is a little disappointing all the same.

Interestingly though, the responses by female seafarers tended to be more positive than their male counterparts. The Average Seafarer Happiness of female respondents was 6.85, which outstrips the overall figure of 6.25.

However, there was also the widest spread across the answers given. Incredibly the answers from female seafarers ranged from 2 at its lowest, through to a perfect 10. So, there are some wildly different experiences for those females working in shipping.

WHERE

Seafarers from a host of nationalities provided responses, including the UK, Philippines, Poland, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, USA, Canada, India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, a range of nations across Africa and others took part.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the national breakdown in manning at sea, the largest groups of respondents were from South East Asia, followed by the Indian Subcontinent and then Western Europe. These stood at almost 40% and 20% respectively.

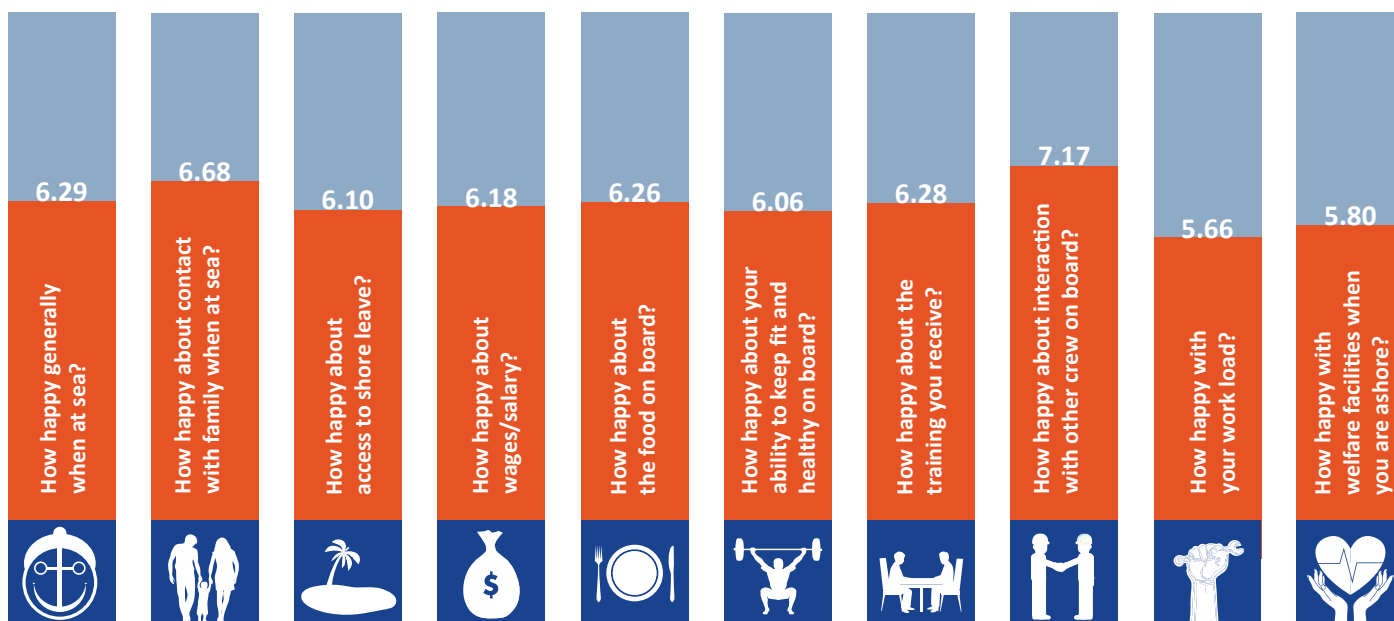
WHAT

Bulk carriers, then tankers, followed by container ships provided the largest groups. These were followed by a selection across other vessel types, but the big three covered some 95% of the responses.

Those serving on container vessels marked their average happiness highest, followed by bulk carriers and then tankers bring up the rear.

Overall
average score:
6.25/10

SNAPSHOT Q4 2017



According to the returns submitted during the period of this report, the 2017 4th quarter average Seafarer Happiness level is **6.25** out of 10.

6.29 GENERAL HAPPINESS
Though there was negativity about loneliness, disconnection and dissatisfaction, the Index responses brought glimpses of the potential for seafaring to remain an incredible profession. Hopefully these reports can shed more light on what seafaring can be, as we lift it from what it has all too often become.

The general happiness level of seafarers' rests on a balancing act between the challenges of work and personal issues. Where pressures build and seafarers lack outlets or a means of releasing and relaxing, then that is where problems fester.

6.68 CONNECTIVITY
Seafarers were overwhelmingly critical of companies who either do not provide internet or call access, or who make it expensive or low quality. There is also dissatisfaction onboard when masters made the decision to remove or to limit access. Younger seafarers (<35 years of age) with internet access tended to mark their happiness quite high, while those without scored low and were seemingly discontent.

6.10 SHORE LEAVE
The responses pre-dated the entry into force of the new FAL Convention amendments which entered force on January 1st, 2018. As such they capture the usual issues which have been long affecting seafarers.

Seafarers spoke of a need for reliable, cheap/free transport. They want to be able to relax and feel refreshed but feel short turnaround times in port and "uncoordinated" vessel visits by authorities make this all the more impossible or unlikely.

6.18 WAGES/SALARY
Some shipmanagement companies were criticised, as there was a general sense they are quick to blame the woes of owners and charterers as a means of stagnating wages and keeping them low. They are, however, perceived as slow to respond when the markets improve.

There were concerns that rises in the standards of living in the maritime labour supply markets could mean the rewards at sea are diminished. The issue of rising inflation in certain nations was seen as having a serious impact on seafarer buying power.

6.26 FOOD ON BOARD
The standard of food preparation, with criticisms about hygiene. Time again, respondents commented on the excessive use of oil in the cooking. It seems the use of fatty foods and frying is an issue keenly felt by seafarers.

**“Areas without centres
are a source of annoyance
and frustration for crews”**



6.06

KEEPING FIT AND HEALTHY

Multiple respondents felt that the physical demands of their job were exercise enough.

This was particularly prevalent within the engineering department. Though many also wanted to exercise more but struggled to find the time.

6.28

TRAINING

Some respondents reported a lack of willingness from officers to assist in the training of crew. There were also cadets who

relayed similar experiences, stating that officers simply wanted trainees to stay on deck. There were strong suggestions that companies were taking on cadets as cheap labour – using them as ordinary seamen, rather than training them to become officers. Issues relating to the standard of computer-based training (CBT) courses also emerged.

7.17

INTERACTION ON BOARD

Communication, interaction and team building were recognised and seen as being

highly positive. However, language issues were felt to be a barrier at times, and there were concerns that cliques and divisions can occur when certain nationalities excluded others. Some felt that cultural barriers will always exist, and that multicultural crews are a barrier to social cohesion.

5.66

WORK LOAD

Too much pressure, accusations of being treated like “slaves” or “cattle”, too

much to do and too few people to get it done. These are just some of the brutal assessments from seafarers about the workloads they are tolerating at sea.

There were also repeated suggestions that hours of rest are not being followed, and overtime agreements being reneged on, the issue of workload is one that is bringing most dissatisfaction to seafarers.

5.80

WELFARE FACILITIES ASHORE

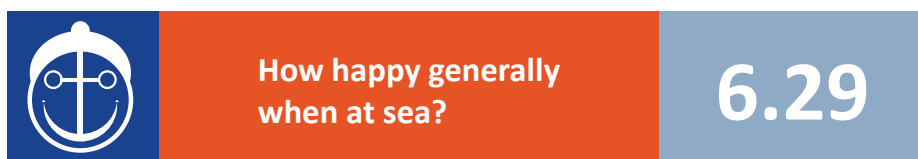
The major issues which emerged relate to the fact some ports do not have adequate provisions for seafarers.

Areas without centres are a source of annoyance and frustration for crews. Around the world seafarers depend on the ability to be able to access seafarers’ clubs, hubs lounges or missions. The facilities are welcomed and clearly serve as an important resource and welcome break from the pressures of life onboard.

THE BIG PICTURE ON SEAFARER HAPPINESS

THE HUMAN ANGLE

How happy are you generally when you are at sea?



This may be the first of the new Seafarers Happiness Index reports, but sadly the themes which featured in this latest set of responses were all too common and have been expressed many times before. The impact of isolation, stress and heightened workloads are still taking a very heavy toll on those at sea.

Though it is not all bad news. On the positive side, there is still a sense of pride in being a seafarer, and those who expressed these feelings talked of being a “breadwinner” and of the importance of their role providing for their family.

Some still felt that seafaring gave them an opportunity to see the world, and to enjoy a lifestyle which outstrips those who work back in their home countries. There was a clear sense when it came to seafarers’ general happiness that the financial imperative means so much. As one would rightly expect of a job!

In answer after answer, those seafarers who shared their views spoke of the importance of earning “good money”, and of the importance of providing “insurance for family”.

There was even some poetry in the answers, talk of sunsets, sunrises and changing skylines caught the eye. A reminder, perhaps, of the fact that

working at sea provides an everchanging backdrop to work. The same seafarer wrote of the “peace, bliss and joy” of meeting new people, in new places and feeling closer to nature.

So, within all the negativity about loneliness, disconnection and dissatisfaction, the Index responses brought us glimpses of the potential for seafaring to remain an incredible profession. Hopefully these reports can shed more light on what seafaring can be, as we lift it from what it has all too often become.

The seafarers who shared their insight with the Index clearly outlined the problem areas, and these will need to be managed to ensure that crews remain committed and engaged.

The general happiness levels of seafarers seem to rest on a balancing act between the challenges of work and personal issues. Where pressures of the job build the levels can be managed so long as there is sufficient outlet – whether it be friendships onboard, contact with home, or access to shore leave. Where seafarers lack outlets, then that is where problems and pressures build and fester.

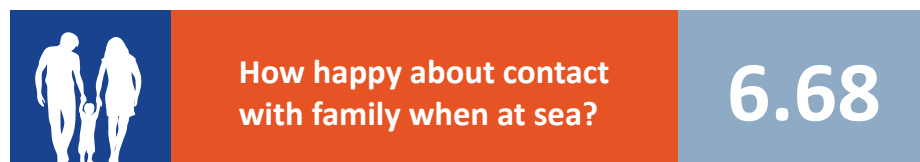
In analysing the responses, while the numbers give an overall sense of the

“The general happiness levels of seafarers seem to rest on a balancing act between the challenges of work and personal issues”

scale of issues, it is the written answers which say so much. It seems that seafarers do not want much, they want a stable job, they want to maintain relationships, to be paid a salary worthy of the job they do, and they want to be respected. Which does not seem too much to ask.

CONNECTIVITY

How happy are you about the contact you are able to have with your family when you are at sea?



The issue of contact with family and connectivity is increasingly significant. From answer after answer, it is clear that seafarers crave the connection that online access brings. Connectivity was felt as being the most obvious and simple answer to ensure that seafarers can head off the effects and fears of solitude, boredom and loneliness.

Wi-Fi, it was stated, makes life at sea “easier”, “better” and “sustainable”. Yet, the responses of those who lack regular, reasonably priced and quality connection to those ashore paint a very sorry picture indeed.

Respondents spoke of their desire to stay in touch, and the pain that disconnection can cause. One seafarer spoke of having to try and help fellow Indian crew to get in touch with their families after a cyclone. The human cost of people needing to be in touch in times of stress, fear and emergency is a compelling one, and something that seafarers hope will drive change.

Many stated that they felt internet access should be made mandatory, and they stressed that the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC2006) provisions have not gone far enough. There were repeated and clear calls for every seafarer to have internet access, and that it should be reasonably priced and provide sufficient speed and bandwidth to allow crews to no longer feel disadvantaged compared to their compatriots ashore.

A number of respondents felt that a lack of connectivity could well mean no seafarers in the future and they felt that this is clearly an area which needs careful management.

There was a clear message about the companies which do look after what is increasingly seen as the “human right” of connectivity. The companies who provide are increasingly being seen as the place to work. This is likely to have a major impact on recruitment and retention.

Seafarers were overwhelmingly critical of companies who either do not provide access, or who make it expensive and slow. There was also a number of responses about tensions onboard when masters made the decision to remove access or to limit it.

Not all seafarers were as enthusiastic about connectivity though – there were respondents who felt that being connected “just makes me miss home more”, while others felt they were conditioned to cope with being away and cut off from family. That has been the traditional way, and it seems many seafarers (usually older), are comfortable to break links for the time they are away. Given that many of the written responses spoke of frustration and were calling for more and better access, it can perhaps appear confusing to see such a relatively high figure on the Seafarers Happiness Index, at 6.68. However, from analysing the data what it shows is a trend for those who have access to be incredibly happy – posting results of 8, 9 and even 10s. While those who do not seem a little

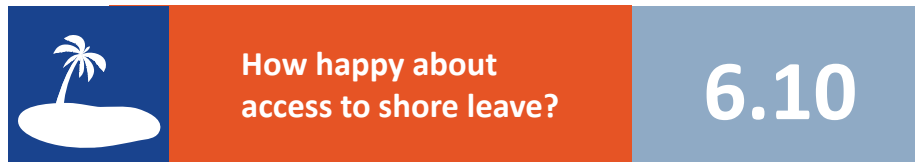
“Respondents spoke of their desire to stay in touch, and the pain that disconnection can cause”

more circumspect – so the Index posts a higher than expected result.

That should not obscure the fact that seafarers increasingly want, need and demand to be connected. The younger seafarers (below 35), who stated they had internet access were incredibly happy. While those who don’t are equally dissatisfied. This is something that will seemingly need managing and addressing if the industry is going to keep the latest generations of seafarers happy.

GETTING ASHORE

How happy are you about your access to shore leave?



Shore leave has become an increasingly hot topic for shipping. As new changes to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) take effect, it will be interesting to monitor the impact or otherwise through the Seafarers Happiness Index.

The amendment to the international standard on shore leave adds a new provision, on top of the requirement to allow crew ashore while the ship on which they arrive is in port. This new provision says there should be no discrimination on grounds of nationality, race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, or social origin. Shore leave should be granted, irrespective of the Flag State of the ship.

If any request is turned down, the relevant public authorities must provide an explanation to the crew member and the master, which the seafarer or master can request to be provided in writing.

The responses we received from seafarers pre-dated the entry into force of the above FAL Convention amendments on January 1st 2018, so they capture the usual issues which have been long affecting seafarers as they seek to escape the confines of the vessel and take a trip ashore.

As has become the norm when seafarers speak out about shore leave, something which was once meant to be a positive experience, giving a change of environment and relaxation, has become

divisive and problematic. It is seafarers who are left to bear the brunt and are inconvenience.

Prior to the FAL changes, the seafarers who engaged with the Index spoke of the expense of transport from terminals, they spoke of the internal pressures from shipboard managers not to go ashore. Often when one looks at problems for seafarers it stems from people ashore – in this instance it seems that there are issues of masters and officers not allowing shore leave. Often this seems to relate to the heavy work load in port, and of the many inspections that have become the norm. Though, rather concerningly, one respondent stated that they had a company policy of “no shore leave” – something which is very troubling indeed.

Seafarers spoke of a need for reliable, cheap/free transport. They want to be able to relax and feel refreshed, but recognise that short turnaround times and “uncoordinated” vessel visits by authorities make this all the more impossible or unlikely.

The sense that rules, regulations and the need to police them are impacting the quality of life at sea came across repeatedly. There seems to be an inherent irony that the rules, and indeed the stream of inspections, audits and surveys which are meant to be making ships safer are actually having a negative effect on crews.

“Something which was once meant to be a positive, giving a change of environment and relaxation, has become divisive and problematic”

TALKING CASH

How happy are you about your wages/salary?



The Seafarers Happiness Index received a wide and divergent set of responses from those who shared their views. Some it seems are earning well, while others feel they are working for low salaries, something which is strongly affected by nationality.

There seems little middle ground when it comes to this issue. Indeed, it seems that respondents often either feel well paid or underpaid. Those who felt positively said that wages were “good”, and that they felt “fully satisfied”.

For those who felt they weren’t getting their rightful rewards the talk was of an industry which is growing while cutting wages. There was much talk of stagnation across pay, with a number relating tales of very small increases or none at all over years.

Some had issues which were not solely about their take home pay, they wanted to see retirement issues addressed - and there were calls for pensions to be looked at. While there were many frustrated about the differential in pay across nationalities.

There were also some companies who were cited as breaking labour laws – this was especially prevalent when it comes to lashing of cargoes. According to one respondent, the company, “let us make the lashing of the cars without any pay. and when any ITF personnel is coming they hide us from them”.

Some management companies were also criticised, as there was a sense some employers are quick to blame the woes of owners and charterers as a means of ensuring wages are kept low. Though they are seemingly not so quick to respond with wage rises when the markets improve.

The issue of cadet pay was mentioned repeatedly – there were a number of respondents who felt that cadet pay is not sustainable and is leading to fewer trainees coming to sea.

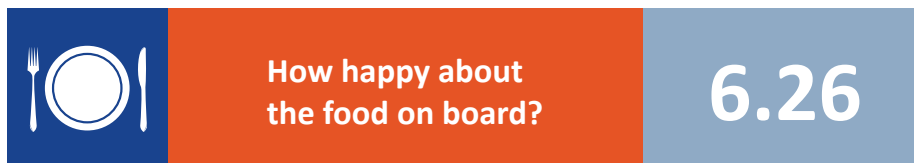
Often there has been a positive sense that salaries at sea outstrip those ashore, especially in developing nations. However, it seems that things are changing. As the standards of living rise in the maritime labour supply markets, the rewards at sea are diminished. The issue of rising inflation in certain nations has also been seen as having a serious impact on seafarer buying power.

It was also stated that shore based employees seem to be able to climb the career ladder more quickly. Again, this is something that perhaps needs exploring, as seafarers are seemingly sensing they are often overlooked when it comes to career development.

“Respondents often either feel well paid or underpaid, there is little middle ground”

MEAL DEALS

How happy are you about the standard of food you eat on board?



Cost cutting, poor hygiene, bad training, lack of skills and passion from cooks, dreadful quality of stores, poor ingredients and stretched budgets. These are just some of the concerns that were voiced about food onboard ships.

Food is important not just for fuelling the body, but from the responses we heard from seafarers, it also carries a lot of emotional attachment too. So, when seafarers talk about food that is “swimming in fat”, or of a lack of fresh provisions – then it can impact happiness greatly.

Seafarers were concerned about the levels of healthy nutrition they are receiving, but there was also a focus on the standards of preparation and the skills of the cooks onboard. Where seafarers were happy, they talked of the “heart” that cooks give to produce. Cooks who work tirelessly to produce good food.

Alas, many respondents stated that the standard of food was poor, and that there was too much fat and salt, with not enough healthy options. Some felt that companies are not doing enough to train and develop the cooks they use and spoke of a lack of “policing” of standards from the management ashore.

The main issues were in three areas, quality, training and culture. Respondents questioned the standard of the provisions and stores that are being delivered to vessels. Whether this is from a lack of spend, or whether chandlers are not

giving good quality probably differs from port to port – but the net result for crews is the same.

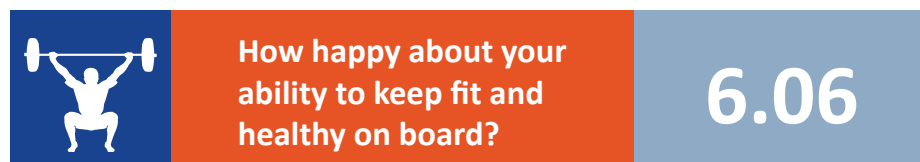
The standard of food preparation was an issue, and there were criticisms about hygiene and of the ways in which meals are produced. Time again, respondents commented on the excessive use of oil in the cooking. It seems the use of fatty foods and frying is an issue keenly felt by seafarers.

The cultural aspects of shipboard cuisine were also an often-repeated issue. Filipinos often complained about the provision of rice, suggesting that companies need to consider the dietary wants and needs more carefully, and then invest sufficiently in delivering them.

“Respondents commented on the excessive use of oil in the cooking”

EXERCISING AND WORKING OUT

How happy are you about your ability to keep fit and healthy on board?



The issue of exercise and the ability to keep fit and active on board remains a topic of much discussion. A number of respondents felt positively about the efforts made by their companies to support them in keeping fit.

As the MLC2006 has brought the issue to companies, there are many who have indeed given consideration to sports equipment on board, and many commented that they now have gyms. Though there was some mistrust of company promises, and some felt they would “believe it when they see it”, regarding the provision of gym equipment.

Rather more problematic was finding the time to use them. Repeated respondents stated that they found it extremely difficult to build gym time into their regime and shipboard life. Though they felt they should and wanted to.

The demands of workload versus the need to rest, sleep and relax were acutely felt. There were many who wanted to exercise, who had access to the equipment, but for whom the time was simply not sufficient.

For those who did not have a gym or space for exercise, it was felt that vessel design, construction and size was a key problem. A number of seafarers stated that their vessel was simply too small for a gym.

On the whole seafarers seem fairly positive about their access to exercise but recognise that it can be extremely difficult to find the time and motivation to ensure

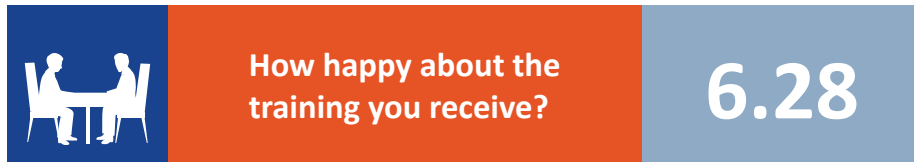
their own fitness and health. Heavy work schedules and demands meant it was difficult to find the time, or they were too fatigued to contemplate exercise.

Though there was much talk about more sedentary lifestyles and working lives, it seems that seafarers do not all agree. There were many who felt that the physical demands of their job were exercise enough. This was particularly prevalent within the engineering department. One commented that he “really likes to sweat while working”, a sentiment that there probably isn’t much of an answer to, though it seems seafarers are finding their own answers to staying in shape.

“On the whole seafarers seem fairly positive about their access to exercise but recognise that it can be extremely difficult to find the time and motivation to ensure their own fitness and health”

LEARNING AND TRAINING

How happy are you about the training you receive?



As has been the pattern in earlier reports, the issue of training at sea is often complicated and there are many differing views of the many diverse approaches to the issue.

From the engagement with senior officers or crew, and learning on the job through mentoring and guidance, from shore-based courses or time in the office and increasingly the use of computer-based training (CBT), there are many divergent views held by seafarers.

There is a spread of views on training, often based on very differing expectations and thoughts with regards to expectations, goals and motivations. There is also a wide generational divide on the issue.

Perhaps unsurprisingly younger respondents were keen to learn and gather qualifications, so they could climb the career ladder. While amongst many more senior seafarers there was a sense that much of the training was merely a tick box exercise for the company.

There seems to be a worrying trend that “drills” on board are being seen as a substitute for training. Repeated respondents stated that they were doing more than enough training, as they took part in drills on board. Now it may be that the senior staff do indeed spend the time actually improving responses and skills during such activities. However, some of the explanations seemed to call that into doubt and painted a worrying image of people simply going through the motions and actually thinking they were learning.

The Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) categorises and covers drills and training differently, so it is worrying to hear from some seafarers that these requirements seem to be getting confused. Of course, training is to learn how to perform a task, while a drill is simply to repeat the task. If training hasn’t been delivered prior and properly, then a drill can merely be the repetition of errors.

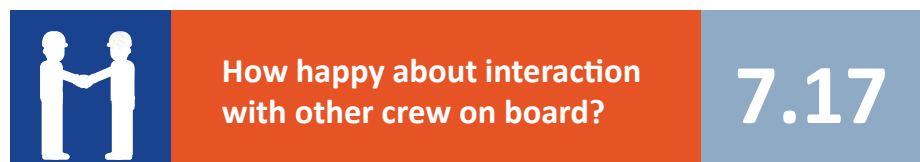
Criticisms were voiced regarding the costs of training, especially in centres ashore. While there were several responses which felt that CBT has become “dry” and more of a “tick a box” to say that training was provided, rather than actually educating seafarers.

Some respondents also reported a lack of willingness from officers to assist in the training of crew. There were also cadets who relayed similar experiences, stating that officers simply wanted trainees to stay on deck, rather than gaining time watchkeeping. There were a number of strong suggestions that companies were taking on cadets as cheap labour – using them as ordinary seamen, rather than training them to become officers. This perhaps ties in with the responses concerning low salaries paid to cadets.

“Criticisms were voiced regarding the costs of training, especially in centres ashore”

TEAM WORK AND RELATIONSHIPS

How happy are you about interaction with other crew members on board?



Seafarers come from many nations, and sometimes find themselves on multi-cultural vessels. A mixture of different people from around the globe and even different backgrounds.

This is challenging, even more so when one considers the constraints, challenges and pressures of shipboard life.

However, seafaring is a culture based on traditions of camaraderie, friendships and interaction with colleague. Seafarers are also usually resourceful and robust, pragmatic and philosophical. So, these are the answers as to why crews are still able to get along in modern shipping, as they did in the past.

Not every ship is perfect of course, and some respondents pointed accusatory fingers at some nations, stating that they preferred segregation as opposed to inclusion.

Again, as with past reports, the Seafarers Happiness Index respondents spoke of the pleasure of getting along with people, and of how positive their friendships and camaraderie were. The Index score for this question was the highest across the ten questions and hammered home the message that good colleagues are seen as being hugely significant and made all the difference for those at sea.

Communication, interaction and team building were recognised and encouraged, though language issues were felt to be a barrier at times, and there were concerns that cliques

and divisions can occur when certain nationalities congregated or spent time together. Some felt that cultural barriers will always exist, and that multicultural crews are a major barrier to having an enjoyable social life.

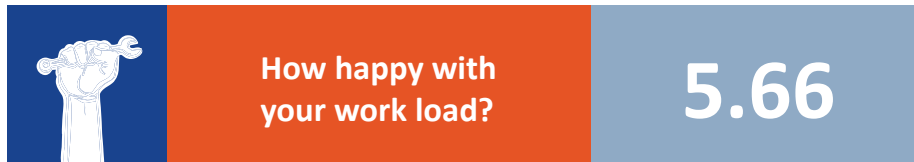
It can be isolating being the only person from a nation on board, and that was voiced by a number of respondents. For others there were comments about the power of making new friends, of a sense of “family”, and of how they felt part of a “great team”.

For those who were less happy about their interactions it was often individuals who were the cause of dissatisfaction. The master, “who everyone hates, including the office ashore”, sounds particularly challenging.

“It can be isolating being the only person from a nation onboard, and that was voiced by a number of respondents”

WORKING HARD OR HARDLY WORKING

How happy are you with your work load?



Too much pressure, accusations of being treated like “slaves” or “cattle”, too much to do and too few people to get it done. These are just some of the brutal assessments from seafarers about the workloads they are tolerating at sea.

There were repeated suggestions that hours of rest are not being followed, and overtime agreements being reneged on, the issue of workload is one that is bringing most dissatisfaction to seafarers.

These heightened work load levels are leading to tiredness, stress and fatigue and crewmembers feel unable to complain as their jobs are perceived to be under threat if they do.

Seafarers spoke of “overload” as they feel unable to cope within the hours of rest requirements. There was also criticism from some respondents that paperwork was being used not to make operations safer or more efficient, but to cover liabilities ashore. Some felt the issue was being managed well by the management and senior officers onboard. Others felt the work load, particularly on short sea voyages could be completely overwhelming.

Numerous responses captured the sense that there is “Too much to do and too little time to do it in”. The most universal common complaints across all vessel types surrounded paperwork and dealing with audits and inspections. While seafarers on smaller vessel types expressed concern about the time between port calls, and the difficulties of adequately resting.

Interestingly as there is so much talk of digitalisation, technology and cyber security across the industry, there was concern voiced about the lack of IT support for vessels. One respondent, stated that the “lack of IT support is killing me”.

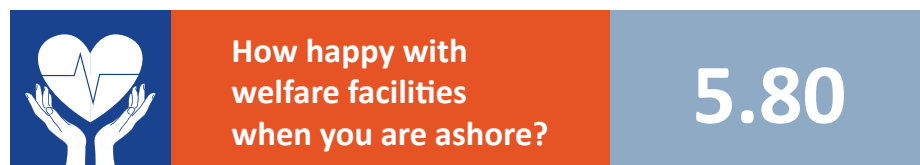
Others felt that the blame for increased workload comes from the office personnel, and it was stated that they “need to come to realize the crew are humans not machines”.

The work load question was the lowest ranked on this Seafarers Happiness Index, and it seems that there are real problems out at sea. While some did claim it was manageable and “as expected on a ship”, there were so many more respondents who claimed their current workloads are making life and their jobs a misery.

“The work load question was the lowest ranked on this Seafarers Happiness Index, and it seems that there are real problems out at sea”

WELFARE IS WELL FAIR

How happy are you with welfare facilities when you are ashore?



For The Mission to Seafarers to read negative comments about welfare facilities ashore it could, perhaps, make uncomfortable reading. However, to hear the problems seafarers are experiencing, to get to know their frustrations and also the weaknesses in the global welfare picture, then the feedback is incredibly valuable and valued.

Given the problems for seafarers getting access to shoreleave, it makes it even more important that they are able to visit facilities that deliver on their needs, and which can make them happy.

The major issues which emerged from this low scoring question, seem to relate to the fact that some ports do not have provisions for seafarers. Areas without centres are a source of annoyance and frustration for crews. Around the world seafarers depend on the ability to be able to access seafarers' clubs, hubs lounges or missions. Call them what you will, the facilities are welcomed and clearly serve as an important resource and welcome break from the pressures of life onboard.

Some seafarers reported never having seen welfare facilities on the runs and port calls they made, while others said they were excellent. For those fortunate to be in a port with welfare provisions they spoke of being made to feel welcome and able to relax. Respondents were particularly pleased when there was free transportation, and especially free Wi-Fi.

One comment stated, "seafarer's missions all over the world are always a welcome sight to us". Adding that it should be, "mandatory to have a seaman's club in every port".

"Some seafarers reported never having seen welfare facilities on the runs and port calls they made, while others said they were excellent"

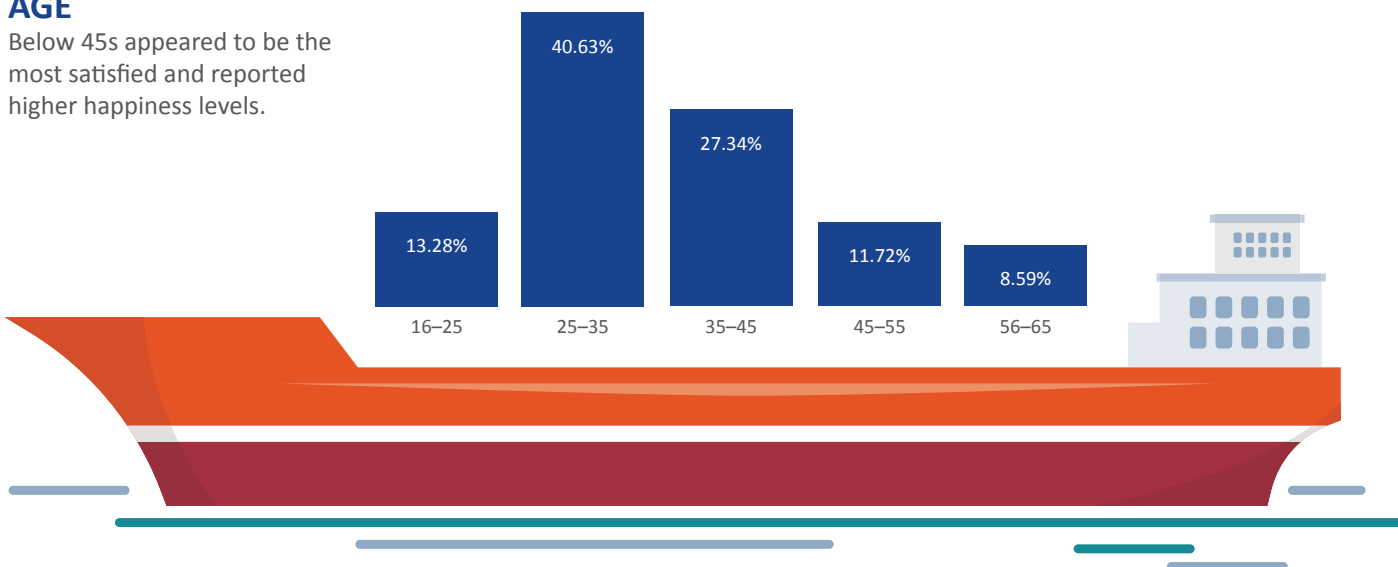
OUR SEAFARERS

The data includes responses from globally based seafarers responding to a targeted, ongoing survey by The Mission to Seafarers.

AGE

Below 45s appeared to be the most satisfied and reported higher happiness levels.

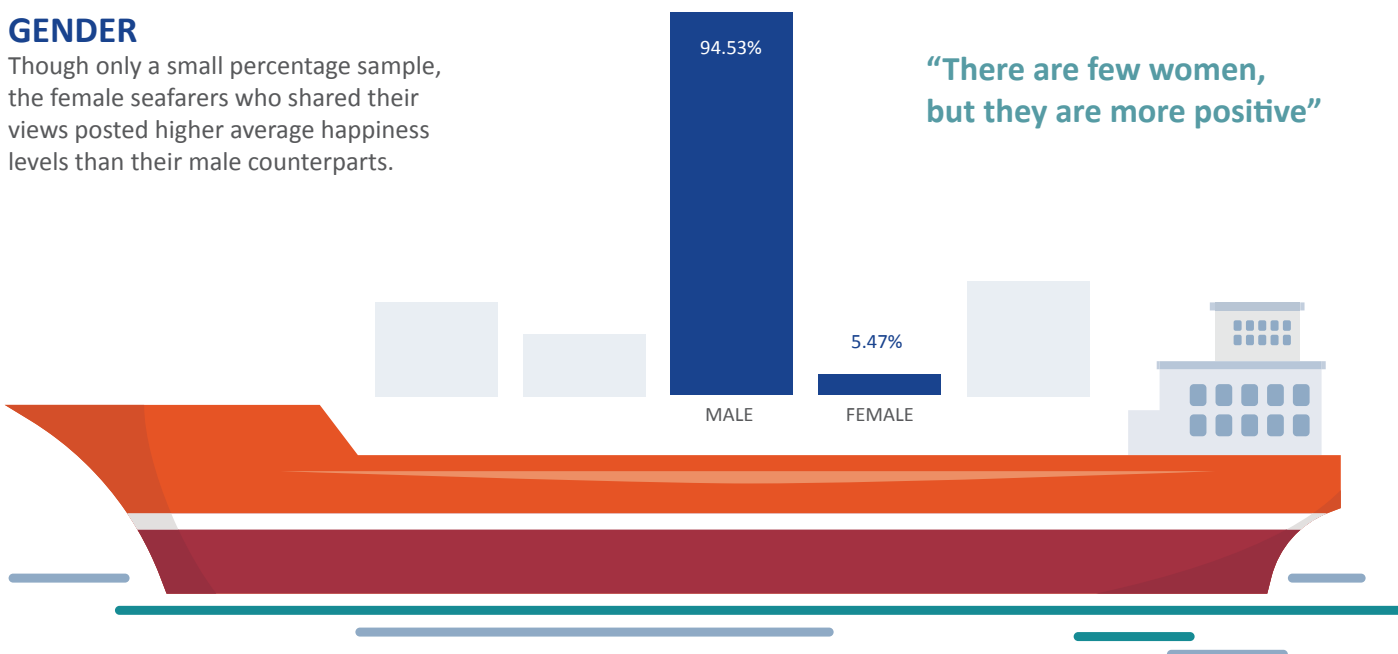
“Young seafarers are having their say”



GENDER

Though only a small percentage sample, the female seafarers who shared their views posted higher average happiness levels than their male counterparts.

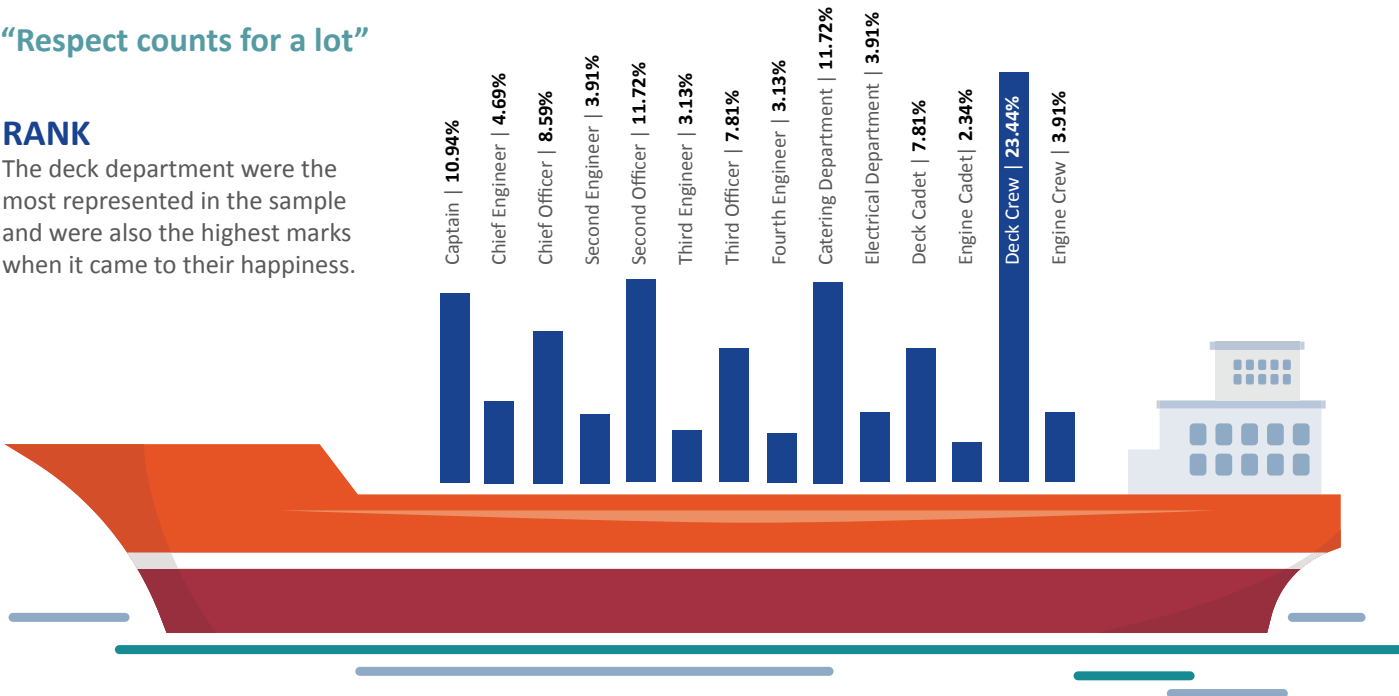
“There are few women, but they are more positive”



“Respect counts for a lot”

RANK

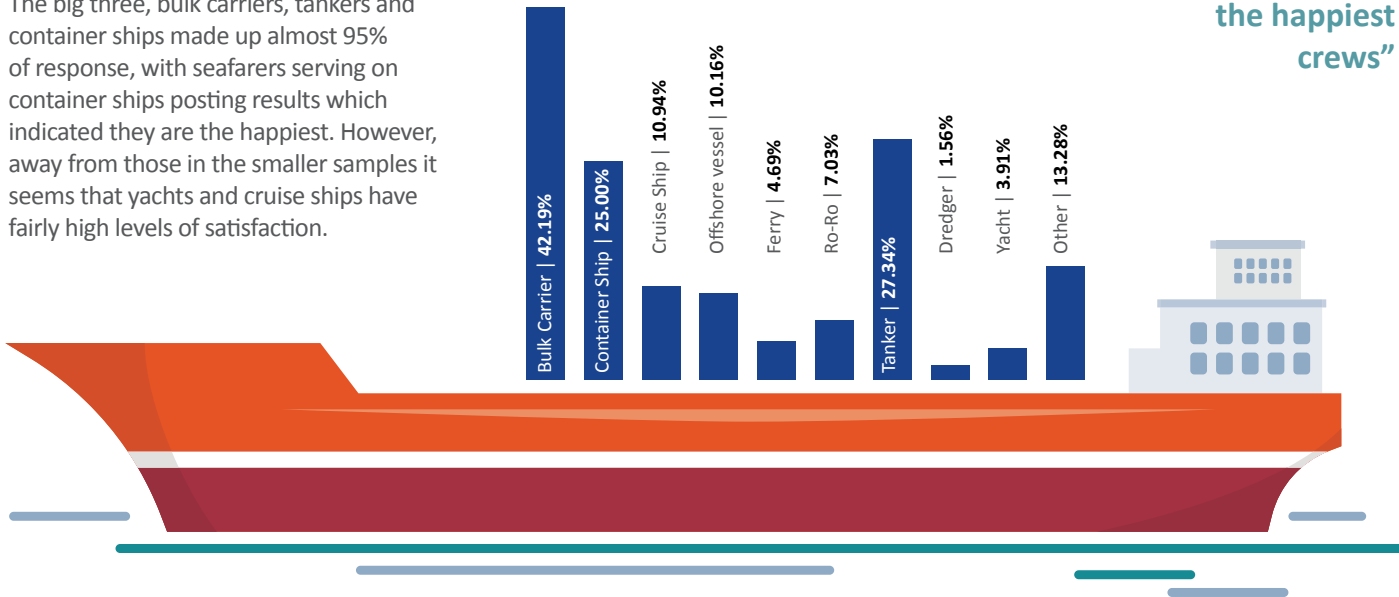
The deck department were the most represented in the sample and were also the highest marks when it came to their happiness.



SHIPS

The big three, bulk carriers, tankers and container ships made up almost 95% of response, with seafarers serving on container ships posting results which indicated they are the happiest. However, away from those in the smaller samples it seems that yachts and cruise ships have fairly high levels of satisfaction.

“Container ships have the happiest crews”



NATIONALITY

The biggest volume of seafarers who completed the Seafarers Happiness Index were from **South East Asia**, and these were also consistently the most satisfied.





12 YAYs AND NAYs

“The sea is still the best office around”

12 YAYs

The successes in the Seafarers Happiness Index

- 1. Container ships have the happiest crews**
2. There are few women, but they are more positive
- 3. Young seafarers are having their say**
4. The sea is still the best office around
- 5. Being in touch with home feels amazing**
6. There is pride in the job and being a provider
- 7. When the money feels good the seafarers feel great**
8. A stable job with a future means so much
- 9. Respect counts for a lot**
10. New FAL Convention shoreleave rules could make a real difference
- 11. Being part of a team makes seafarers feel happy**
12. Seafarers centres give a place to relax and recharge



“Training can be boring and purely for ticking boxes”

12 NAYS

The troubling issues in the Seafarers Happiness Index

1. **Uncoordinated port inspections and visits**
2. No internet access is the pits
3. **Restricted or expensive internet access almost as bad**
4. Stress and pressures are taking a toll
5. **Some companies are discouraging shoreleave**
6. Worries that cadets are being used as cheap labour
7. **Companies making crews do more for less**
8. Inflation at home hitting seafarers' pockets
9. **Poor food, or bad cooking brings morale plummeting**
10. Training can be boring and purely for ticking boxes
11. **Lone nationals can feel isolated onboard**
12. Some crews treated like cattle



AS SEAFARERS SEE IT

Issues such as isolation, loneliness and a lack of connectivity are striking at the hearts of seafarers and these will need to be managed to ensure that crews remain committed and engaged.

Issues such as internet access, connectivity and Wi-Fi are seemingly the most prevalent and emotive affecting seafarers.

In the Seafarers Happiness Index 2017 Q4 report, there was a clear divide between seafarers with access and those without. It seems to be increasingly the case that seafarers not only want internet access, they demand it.

Shore leave, or the lack therein is a perennial problem for the modern seafarer. Long gone are the days when port calls meant something to look forward to – today, it is more likely to signal a procession of people demanding time and attention from the crew and bringing more work to be done.

Indeed, seafarers bemoan the fact that so many audits, visits and inspections are uncoordinated and ironically make them tired, thus potentially impacting safety. Shore leave was always considered a basic necessity, meaning a change of environment and relaxation. After possibly weeks at sea, what better than an escape from the constant noise and throb of the vessel. Alas many seafarers commented that even these seemingly basic ideals are denied them. These responses came before the effects of the new FAL Convention amendments, so it will be most interesting to see what change that brings.

The issue of salary and wage levels is always a contentious one in any industry. As may be expected, the Seafarers

Happiness Index received a wide and divergent set of responses. Some it seems are earning well, while others are not only working for low salaries – sometimes they receive no money at all. Those who feel well rewarded are proud to be able to provide for their families, and this is a source of immense satisfaction.

The standard of food onboard massively impacts morale and health, from the purely nutritional demands needed to fuel a vessel's workforce, through to the social benefits and bonds which come through people enjoying their dining. There were clear indications that good food does indeed equal happier seafarers.

However, seafarers were concerned about the levels of healthy nutrition they are receiving. A number of respondents stated that the standard of food was poor, and that there was too much fat and salt, with not enough healthy options.

Seafarers do like to work out, and exercise is a major component of happiness. Access to facilities or time to enjoy them is making difference to seafarer welfare and wellness, but sadly, even with the MLC in place, there are many who do not have the equipment or opportunity. Though interestingly some still feel that the exertion of the physical side of their roles is keeping them in good shape.

Training is vitally important given that at all levels it affects the standards of safety, operations and effectiveness


“All in all, this first Mission to Seafarers report on happiness has seen some really important positives. However, there are many troubling issues that need to be addressed”

of crew. However, seafarers have widely divergent views, with different groups having diverse expectations, goals and drivers – there is also a wide generational divide and bias. Some were concerned that computer-based training can sometimes feel a little dry and is simply an exercise to ensure compliance rather than excellence.

Seafaring is a culture based on the tradition of camaraderie, friendships and interaction with colleague. So for seafarers' interaction with other crew members and the friendships, bonds and professional support they can bring are vitally important.

Respondents spoke of how positive their friendships and camaraderie are on board. However, there were concerns that quick turnarounds, short voyages and spikes in workload meant that there was never really any quality time to relax and get to know colleagues better.

Ships are perhaps busier today than they have ever been – faster turnarounds




have meant that there is ever more to do in a shorter period of time. Add to that the fact that most crew sizes have been reduced – then there is a potential problem in that not only is there less time to do more, there are less people to share the burden. Some respondents spoke of being treated like “slaves” or “cattle” and told terrible tales of being taken advantage of.

The issue of work load is an ever-present issue for seafarers. A heightened work load level is likely to lead to tiredness, stress and fatigue. An increased work load and lack of rest can combine to further undermine crews, weaken morale and damage the reputation of the profession. Seafarers spoke of “overload” as they feel unable to cope within the hours of rest requirements. Numerous responses captured the sense that there is “Too much to do and too little time to do it in”.

When and where seafarers do manage to leave the ship, then the issue of welfare facilities takes on enormous significance – if crew are going to struggle to get ashore, while spending money and time, then it is vital that the facilities they can access make them happy, and it is pleasing to hear that when they can reach centres ashore they are hugely appreciated, but that makes it all the more difficult when there are none, or they can’t be readily accessed.

All in all, this first Mission to Seafarers report on happiness has seen some

really important positives. However, there are many troubling issues that need to be addressed. We thank each and every seafarer that took the time to complete the online index, to watch the videos and to share with others. We want to encourage seafarers every trip to do the same – by anonymously sharing their thoughts on what makes them happy or dissatisfied, then we can take those experiences and do something. Talking, sharing and being open can lead to positive change, and will make us all happy.



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