



The
Seafarers
Happiness
Index

Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 4 2021
and Annual Review



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Standard
Club

Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 4

The Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) is the shipping industry's ongoing barometer of the key issues facing those at sea today. Seafarers are asked 10 key questions every quarter, sharing their views about specific issues affecting their life and work.

This latest report highlights not only the findings of the Q4 2021 data but serves to review the annual feedback through 2021. Throughout the year we heard from crews all over the world, and we are grateful to every single one of them. Not simply for assisting us with the survey, but for their efforts in keeping trade flowing in these most difficult circumstances.

Again, it is clear that they do so with professionalism, care and resolve. However, as we have seen in many reports before, there are clear frustrations and challenges being faced. We are also hearing even louder calls for seafarers to be recognised as key or essential workers. These calls cannot and should not be ignored, and without an adequate response it seems likely that many may be seeking to leave their seagoing careers.

Q4 2021: Riding the Covid Waves

We are hugely grateful, as ever, to the many seafarers who took the time to share their experiences with us. This generated vital data and written submissions which allows us to report back to the industry. In addition, through the Mission to Seafarers network of seafarer centres and social channels we also had a range of online interactions with thousands of seafarers, and were able to harness their thoughts.

Crews from across the world took time to share their views, feelings, experiences, and comments about life at sea, providing incredibly powerful and important insight into key issues for seafarers today. The overall average was 6.41 down from 6.59 in the previous quarter.

There were some rises in areas such as shore leave, connectivity, training and food. However, these were very small increases, and overall the trend was far less positive. The impact of the latest Omicron COVID variant and the rush to close borders hit seafarers especially hard in the final month of 2021. This was especially unfortunate given the timing around the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

It appears that the yo-yo nature of COVID is having a serious impact on mental health and is driving negative sentiment on board. Seafarers raised concerns about the draconian nature of repeated testing and expressed concerns about the quality of quarantine provision.

There has been a growing sense that COVID has moved the issue of internet connectivity forward, and there are signs of progress. When it comes to shore leave, however, it was noted that seafarers do not expect to get ashore, and the pandemic has changed the dynamic further. There are signs of growing tension, as vaccinated seafarers feel that they should be able to get ashore.

On the issue of wages, there was a perception from respondents that shipping's financial gains were not being adequately shared amongst seafarers.

When it came to food, we heard from some seafarers who felt that not all their needs were being taken into account. Meanwhile, the knock-on effect of more time spent on board means that facilities are coming under more scrutiny and pressure. Unfortunately, it often seems that the chance to exercise and keep healthy is being negatively impacted.

Respondents reported a growing emphasis on training and were very pleased to receive instruction on board or be given access to courses. However, there were also those who felt that the standards are dropping.

It has been a significant part of the COVID yo-yo effect that relationships and interactions on board have become strained as uncertainty and concerns have risen. More tensions were evident towards the closing weeks of 2021.

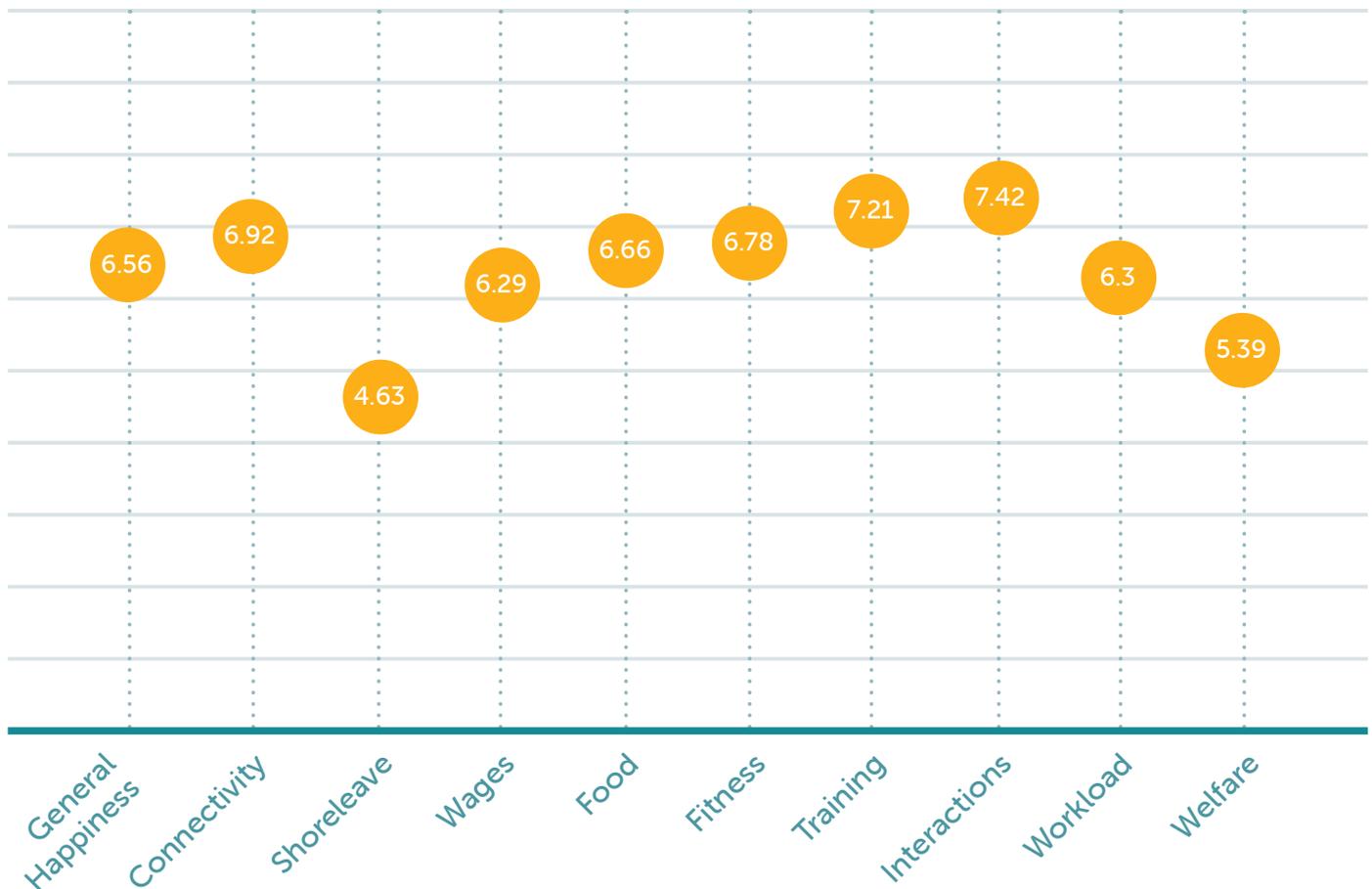
However, it was not all negative. Those who had positive experiences wrote about the conditions on board and of the actions and activities which seemingly helped to ensure better cohesion.

We received a number of detailed and troubling responses from seafarers regarding watchkeeping and also hours of work and rest. They reported a rise in six on/six off watch patterns, something which is not felt to be sustainable.

There were also a number of comments from engineers who felt that planned maintenance on board was not being done, and some not to the necessary standards. In addition, there were indications of "job creep", as duties are seemingly passed around.

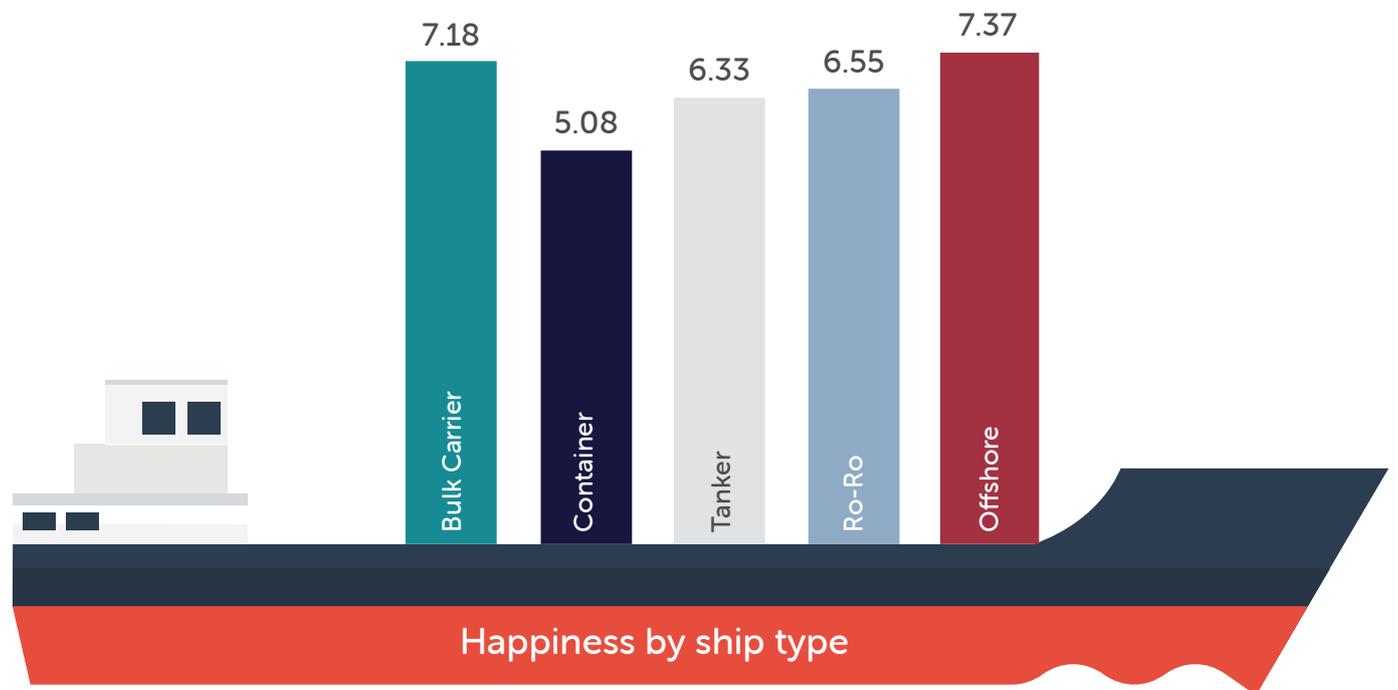
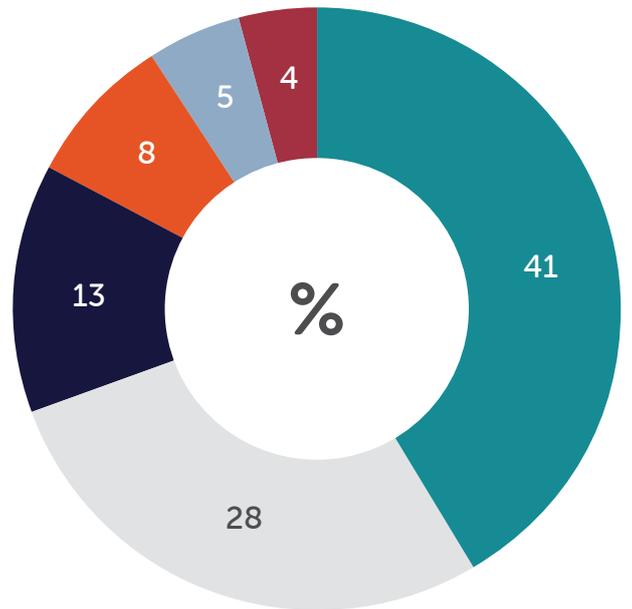


Average happiness levels in Q4 2021



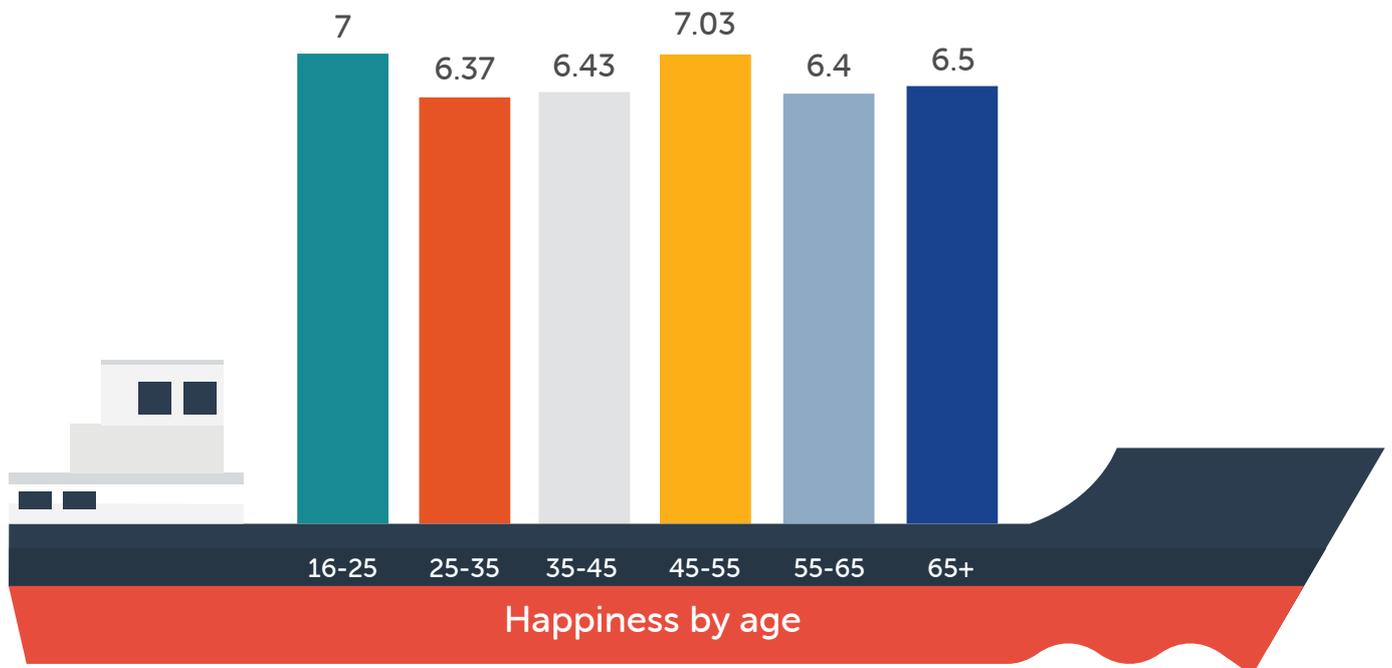
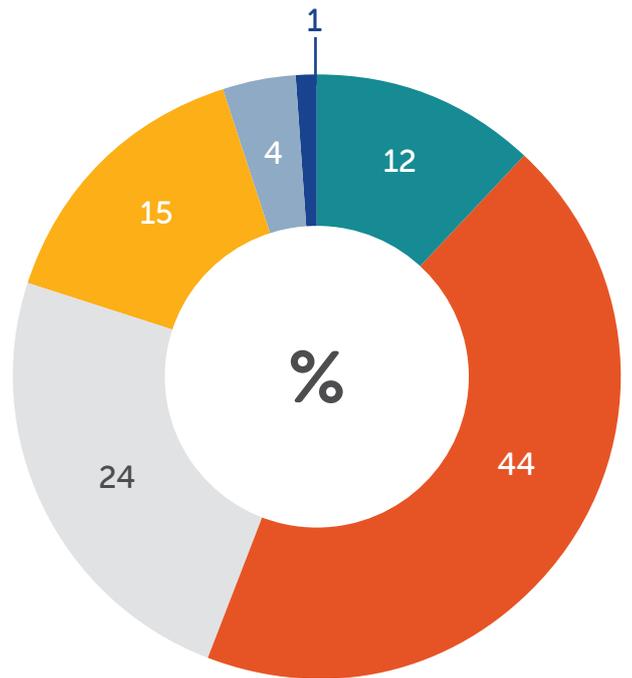
Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Tanker
- Container
- General Cargo
- Ro-Ro
- Offshore



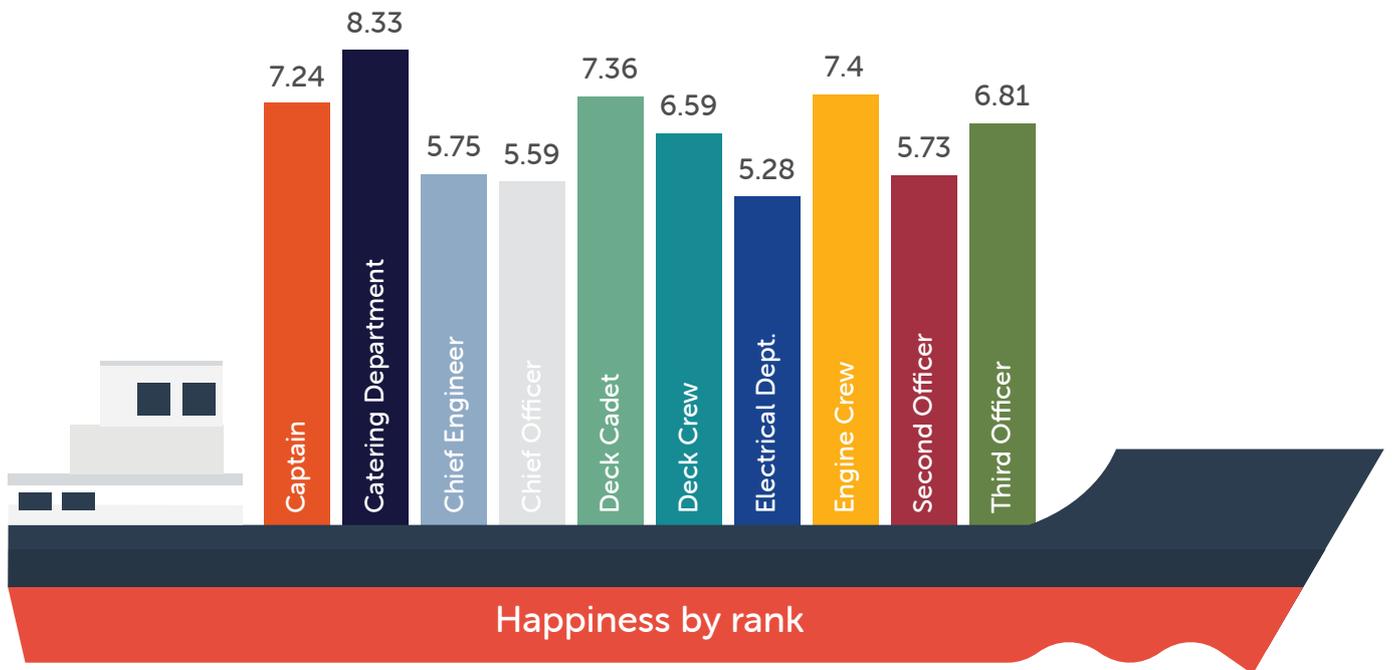
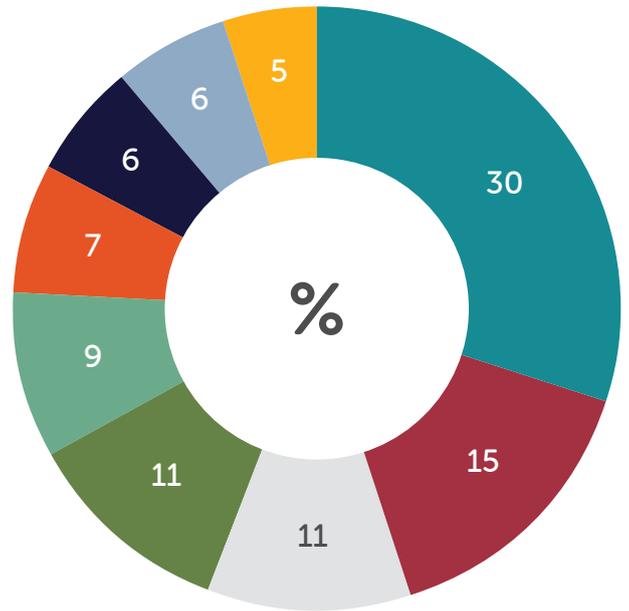
Age Range

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



Ranks

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

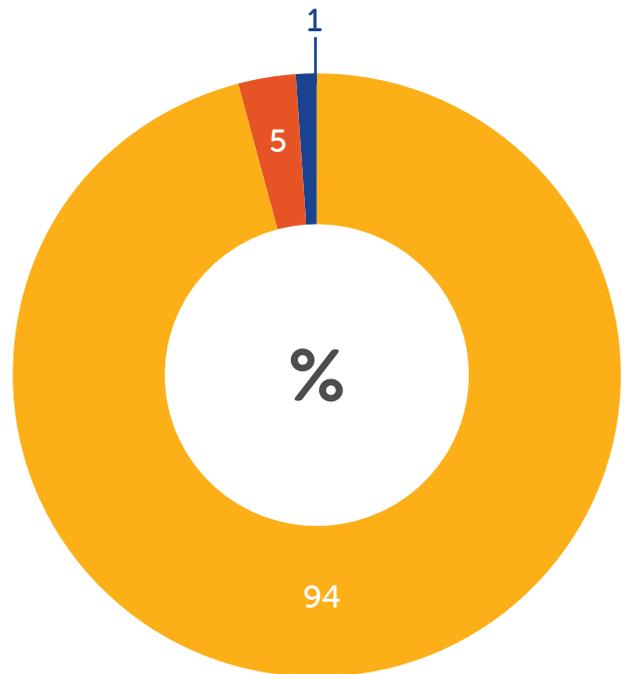


Gender

The vast majority of responses were from male seafarers. However, the level of female responses are holding fairly steady – even if they are lower than we would like.

While it is only a small percentage of returns, it was noted that female respondents are on the whole happier than their male colleagues. However, with such a small sample it was not possible to fully explore the reasons underpinning this.

As ever, we would encourage female seafarers to have their say. If you are a female seafarer and would like to share any thoughts on how we could encourage more interaction, please do get in touch.

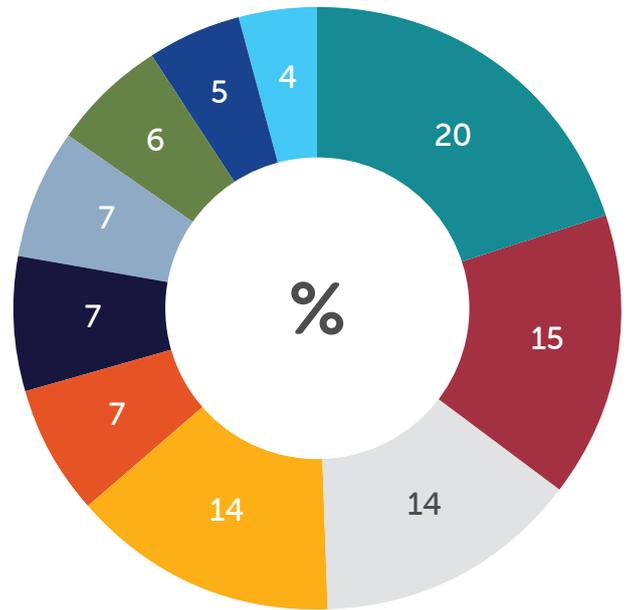


- Male
- Female
- Other

Flag State

The collection of data on flag states is a new introduction in 2021. As such we are still gathering a wider picture of particular standing when it comes to the happiness of seafarers sailing under different flags.

While it is perhaps expected that we would get more responses from the world's biggest registries, i.e., Panama, Marshall Islands and Liberia, it has been interesting to note responses from flags such as Hong Kong and South Africa.



- Hong Kong (China)
- Marshall Islands
- Liberia
- Panama
- South Africa
- Malta
- United Kingdom
- Netherlands
- Singapore
- Philippines

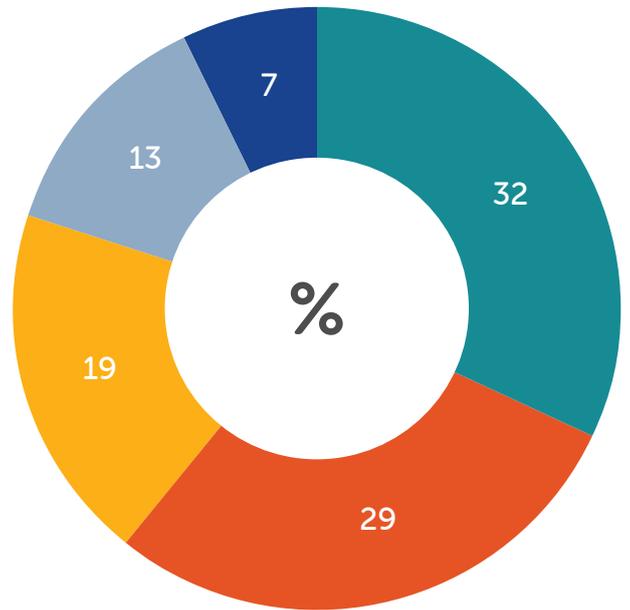


Trip Length

It is positive to note that the majority of seafarer respondents have been on board for less than six months, though the fact that 19% are in the 6-9 month bracket is something of a concern. The COVID delays to crew changes can very quickly spiral into problems, meaning that seafarers are having to serve far longer than they would expect or want.

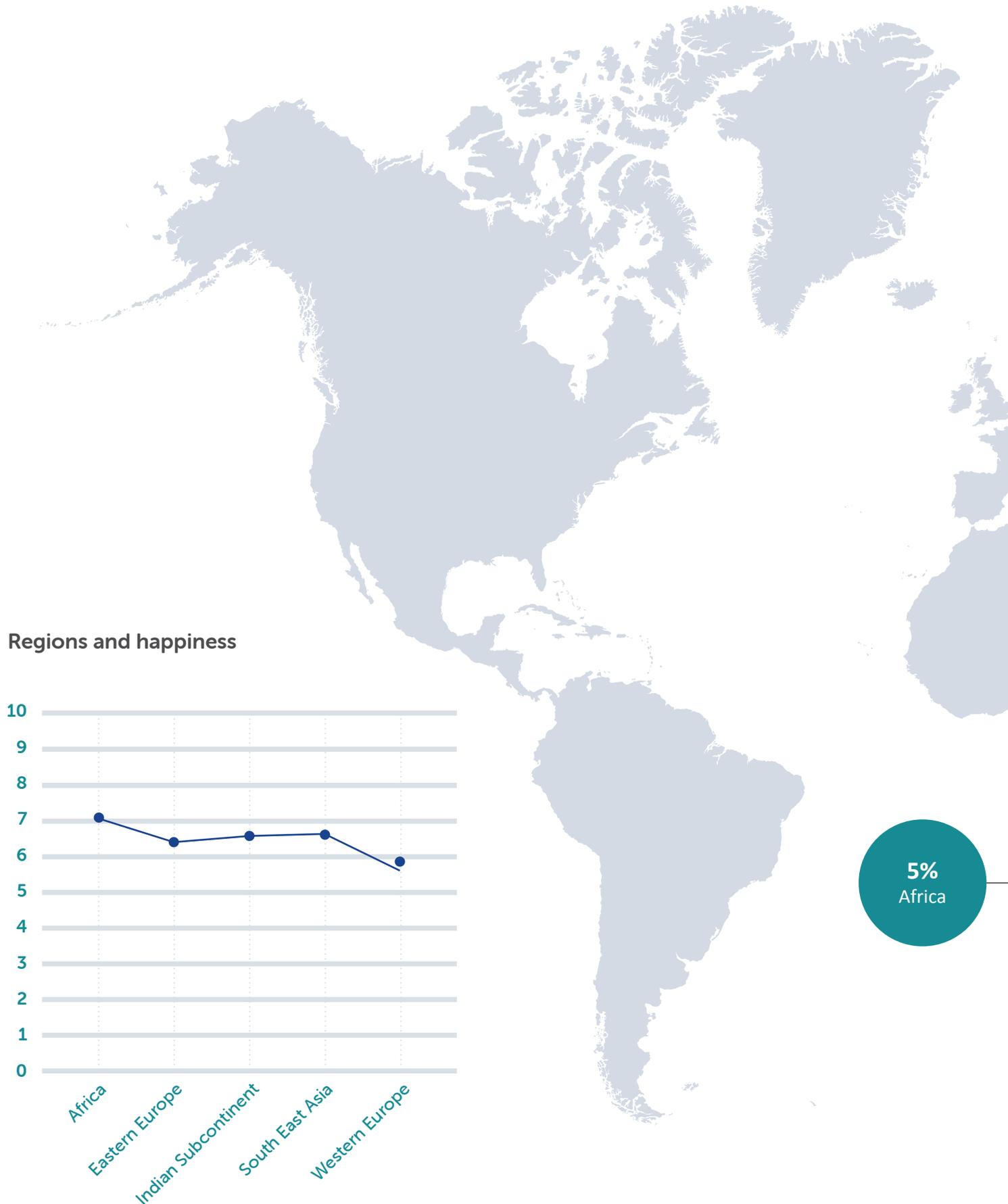
A growing area of concern, for which we received a number of comments, was contracts of employment being changed without the seafarer's consent or agreement.

Another issue is that 7% of respondents have been on board for over 12 months. This is far too long, and while COVID has seen some changes to the lengths of acceptable continuous service, it is clear that the situation needs to be improved and changes made to ensure repatriation.



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

Where





How happy generally when at sea?

6.56 ↓ from 6.8

In asking seafarers for their general sense of happiness, we received a range of responses. These included messages from many seafarers who felt that they are being pushed towards breaking point. There are worrying signs that the unpredictable nature of COVID is having a serious impact on mental health and is driving negative sentiment on board.

We heard from seafarers who are desperate to get home. "All I can think about is going on vacation, the stress and fatigue after 6 months on board are too much", stated one. While for others the impact of COVID testing and quarantine experiences is a major problem.

Seafarers raised concerns about the draconian nature of repeated testing and expressed concerns about the quality of quarantine provisions. One was certain that he caught COVID in a hotel he was forced to endure for two nights before joining a vessel. He stated, "This was the last time I go to sea. My career of over 40 years came to a stop. Who wants this way of life?"

Aside from specific complaints, there is a growing feeling of frustration at sea and uncertainty surrounding trip duration. Lack of shore leave and concerns over getting back to work once they are home, have all combined to create a growing sense of anger. They also make seafaring a less attractive career option, something which was stressed by multiple respondents.

Allied to this was anger about the lack of recognition of seafarers and the fact that, despite so many initiatives, they are still not universally seen as key workers.

This frustration is seemingly combined with all the other day-to-day issues to create a potentially toxic atmosphere, one which is very likely to have long term implications for recruitment and retention. Regardless of whether seafarers are "happy" with the micro view of their jobs, there is definite anger about the macro employment environment, and that resentment is growing.

Until seafarers feel certainty about their freedom of movement, until they feel they have the same access to vaccination as the wider populace, and until they feel accepted and recognised as key workers, then there is a seafaring storm brewing. Seafarers are clear in their message that these issues need to be addressed.



This was the last time I go to sea. My career of over 40 years came to a stop. Who wants this way of life?

How happy about contact with family when at sea?

6.92 ↑ from 6.6

There has been a growing sense that COVID has moved the issue of connectivity forward, and there are signs of progress. Once again, this was an area of the Index which saw a rise in sentiment.

Seafarers repeatedly spoke of having their online access increased, with leaps in the time they were allocated. There was gratitude too, as campaigns delivered free access to calls or internet access over the holiday period. This was very gratefully received by seafarers.

That said, there was still a very clear divide between vessels that provided free or cost-effective access, versus those that do not. This was reflected in the happiness scores. There is a chasm in the responses, and more and more seafarers are stating that they always check what access they will have before accepting new contracts. This is a trend that is only likely to grow.



Today internet on board is vital. Nobody will stay onboard with poor, expensive, or ineffective network systems.

How happy about access to shore leave?

4.63 ↑ from 4.6

There was very small rise in the data for shore leave – but seemingly more as a reflection that it has gone about as low as it can. Seafarers do not expect to get ashore, and the pandemic has changed the dynamic further.

In past reports, seafarers spoke of their anger, frustration and disappointment of not being able to get ashore. That is no more, now it is purely an accepted part of life at sea. Seafarers so rarely get to leave the vessel, and we had many reports from crew who said they hadn't left a vessel in over six or more months.

"At the moment due to the pandemic, being a seafarer means you are in full lockdown on the vessel the period you are on board", ran one comment. There has been much talk ashore about the impacts on mental health of lockdowns, but seafarers are in this state constantly.

Vaccinated seafarers feel that they should be able to get ashore and that they should not be treated any differently to "shore workers being able to leave their place of work, observing the normal mitigations such as social distancing, mask-wearing and hand sanitising".

There also appear to be issues around shipping companies not wanting to allow crews ashore: "When local authorities are allowing shore leave, yet shipping companies still hold personnel on board against their will, then we have serious problems to address".

Many ports have understandably prohibited shore leave during COVID, and indeed many seafarers supported the stance to limit exposure and mixing. However, they also expressed hopes that the issue would be revisited and new ways of ensuring seafarers can take a break from work would emerge.

Alas, it seems likely there will be a long-term knock-on effect, and seafarers are unlikely to view shore leave as a normal part of their working life. That is a shame, but it is also a significant tipping point in the evolution of seafaring culture. "Go to sea and see the world", used to be the big selling point of a career in the Merchant Navy. That is no longer the case, and it does not seem it will ever be again.



At the moment due to the pandemic, being a seafarer means you are in full lockdown on the vessel the period you are on board.

How happy about wages/salary?

6.29 ↓ from 6.78

The question of wages saw a fall this quarter, and there was much mention of the perception that shipping's financial gains were not being adequately shared amongst seafarers.

Responses included, "Salary is generally good - until you compare it relative to profits. My workload and stress have increased over the last four years, company profits increased yet my wages remain the same." Another stated, "Wages/salary have not been increased at all. We are running the ships day and night 24x7 without any break. We deserve a salary increase".

One respondent said, "For me what I earn is not enough for totally stressful work, but yes if I don't like I should leave". This was a sentiment echoed by many, with respondents stating that they did not feel the rewards for seafaring were sufficient and questioning their reasons for remaining in the profession.

There is also a growing sense that seafaring is being eroded in comparison to other positions ashore. "When I initially went to sea, senior officers were paid similarly to doctors, dentists and lawyers. However, over the last thirty years, seafarers have endured below-inflation pay increases and, in many years, pay freezes along with employing other nationalities who will work for less, driving down wages. After a full career at sea, I am looking at a very frugal retirement, and will likely have to work way beyond the age I originally planned to retire". This captures what is a cold, hard financial reality for many seafarers, and again suggests there are likely to be challenges ahead.



My workload and stress have increased over the last four years, company profits increased yet my wages remain the same.

How happy about the food on board?

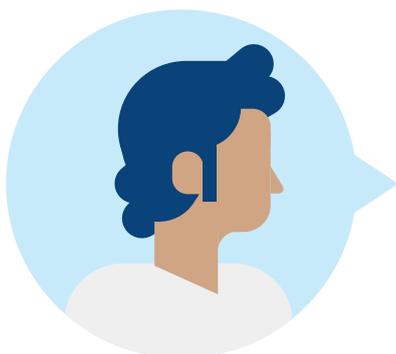
6.66 ↑ from 6.6

Once again, the issue of food on board runs counter to other trends. As general happiness levels drop, seafarers tend to find solace in food, and they are more positive about it.

That is not to say there are not problems associated with catering, and we heard from seafarers who feel that their provisions are no longer of the quantity or quality they would expect or had experienced in the past.

Some seafarers felt that not all of their needs were being taken into consideration: "Cultural and religious backgrounds are seldom taken into account. It can be incredibly challenging for the cook, however, it is completely unfair that the same dishes repeat themselves day in/day out." It was also stressed that on some vessels, supplies of Halal food were an issue.

With multicultural crews, it is vital that diet and religious needs are recognised and the right food is provided in the right way, at the right time.



Cultural and religious backgrounds are seldom taken into account... It is completely unfair that the same dishes repeat themselves day in/day out

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

6.78 ↓ from 7.12

The knock-on effect of more time spent on board the vessel, with little or no opportunity to get ashore, means that the facilities come under more scrutiny and pressure. Unfortunately, it often seems that the chance to exercise and keep healthy is being negatively impacted.

There were repeated responses about the lack of equipment, and of gyms being used for other purposes. Seafarers spoke of companies paying lip service, and never treating exercise as a priority: "Our company always says it is about to deliver new gym equipment, but it never comes".

"Management needs to draw up a proper plan of what we have, and what we need on board," ran one comment, "They just treat welfare as a hassle, they would not like to live like this".

The other barrier to fitness is time. Many seafarers claimed that working 12 hours (or even more) per day, which means they do not feel they have the time to get to the gym or to exercise.

One respondent said, "Every trip I seem to gain more weight, and my colleagues feel the same. It is not uncommon to see 10kgs or more gained per trip. A combination of poor food and lack of movement". Weight gain can bring with it a range of health problems, so this is another risk factor when it comes to potential sickness and labour issues on board.



Our company always says it is about to deliver new gym equipment, but it never comes.

How happy about the training you receive?

7.21 ↑ from 7.0

Respondents reported a growing emphasis on training and were very pleased to receive instruction on board or access to courses. However, some felt that the standards are dropping.

“Our drills and exercises are pathetic. It seems that no one is interested, and we go through the motions”, said one concerned seafarer. It is immensely concerning that practical training and practising for emergencies appears to be falling away.

Another added, “We log and show we have done many things for safety training, the truth is not always the same”. This is a very unfortunate trend and one that needs to be dealt with. However, it is also perhaps a sad reflection of the reality of seafarers spending too long at sea. There is apathy creeping in, even about standards and safety. Careful and considered management is needed to make seafarers engage with safety once more.



Our drills and exercises are pathetic. It seems that no one is interested, and we go through the motions.

How happy about interaction with other crew on board?

7.42 ↓ from 7.63

It has been a significant part of the COVID effect that relationships on board have become strained as uncertainty and concerns have risen, while they have improved when seafarers feel more confident with regards to reliefs and leave.

Unfortunately, the Omicron variant situation appears to have had a significant impact, as relationships and interactions on board have become more strained towards the closing weeks of the year.

Where the tensions were evident, there were accusations that crewmates were “selfish, vain and lazy”. It seems that when pressures rise on board, there is a tendency for seafarers to perhaps see the worst in each other. Small disagreements or tensions have a habit of becoming magnified as tensions eat away at relationships and any sense of camaraderie on board.

This was particularly evident on vessels with a significant degree of cultural or national mixing. In times of stress, the social fabric on board can become frayed, and the responses highlight these difficulties. Some comments spoke of bullying, and an underlying feeling of tension, stress and victimisation. Even at low levels, such negatives can cause serious mental health problems for those suffering.

It was not all negative. Those who had positive experiences wrote a lot about the actions and activities which seemingly helped to ensure better cohesion. Perhaps as a template that can be used by others, one respondent said that their trips were punctuated by, “Board games, bingo, movies on Saturday, TV and karaoke, even monthly BBQ on deck. We have lots to look forward to and it makes life enjoyable.”

Sadly, for some, working hours mean that there is seldom a chance to relax or talk. The relentless demands of watchkeeping can mean there is little or no opportunity for team building or enjoyment.



Board games, bingo, movies on Saturday, TV and karaoke, even monthly BBQ on deck. We have lots to look forward to and it makes life enjoyable.

How happy with your workload?

6.3 ↓ from 6.61

While the question of workload did not fall by much this quarter, there were some detailed and troubling responses from seafarers. The written submissions we received focused on concerns regarding watchkeeping and hours of work and rest.

One response stated, "From nowhere we are suddenly expected to keep 6-on/6-off watch patterns. This is not sustainable, and I am already feeling exhausted. There will be accidents".

We received comments from engineers who felt that planned maintenance on board was not being done, some not all, some not to the necessary standards. "We do not have the people to do all that is stated and required. Some things are recorded, but they are not done fully".

Others said that companies "just keep piling responsibilities and paperwork on the officers", and there are no breaks. "We have no Sunday or even half-day. No offs, 12 hrs/day normal work and most of the time 18hrs/day work". Another stated, "When I joined the company five people used to do the same job as two do now in my department. There is no way to comply with hours of rest when the vessel is on operations".

There were also indications of "job creep", as duties are seemingly passed around. One stated, "Duties from Third Mate have been transferred up to second mate, and duties from Chief mate have been transferred down to Second Mate. However, the salary and working hours for Second Mate have remained the same however it is impossible to conduct all those duties properly without working additional hours."

The relentless demands are taking their toll and some officers are having to use Stop Work Authority as there is too much going on to be handled, especially in port. One comment summed up the sentiment well, "Everyone thinks seafarers are superhuman with four hands and four legs".



When I joined the company five people used to do the same job as two do now in my department.

How happy with welfare facilities when you are ashore?

5.39 ↓ from 5.62

It was not surprising to see a fall in the data with regards to this issue. Access to welfare facilities has been hugely impacted by the lockdown of ports and vessels, and as such, there is very little positive feedback available.

The responses we received were focused on the future, and hopeful that seafarer centres will be able to weather the pandemic storm and still be open when crew can use them. Respondents also called for better transport links when everything does finally reopen.

There were once again, as we have seen before, many responses praising the volunteers who run centres, and who do visit vessels. Many have been continuing to provide supplies, access to the internet, calls and moral and spiritual support – even where access is limited. This is noted by seafarers, and they expressed real gratitude for those who look after their wellbeing.

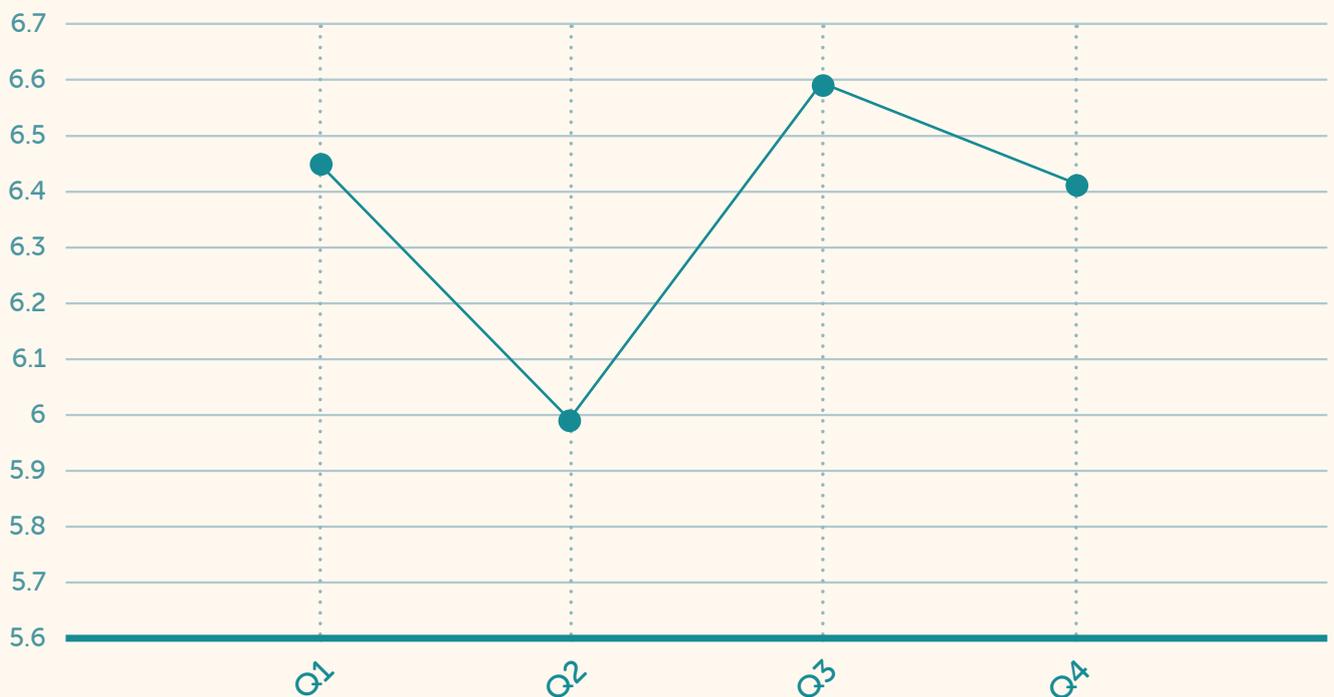


I really appreciate the efforts made and given to seafarers, but we cannot get to centres anymore.

2021 Review:

A Yo-Yo of a Year

2021 Average Happiness Levels



2021 has seen seafarer happiness rise and fall throughout the year, a trend that almost perfectly mirrors the rising waves of COVID infections. Where there has been an opening up of movement, the optimism has seen sentiment rise, while in times of rising infections and movement bans, the data has fallen. This highlights the real-world impacts of decision making on seafarers.

At the start of the year, we saw an ever so slight upward trajectory in the data. While the margins of improvement were fine, it seemed there was some optimism that the worst of 2020 was behind us and seafarer vaccination, shore leave and freedom of movement could be sorted.

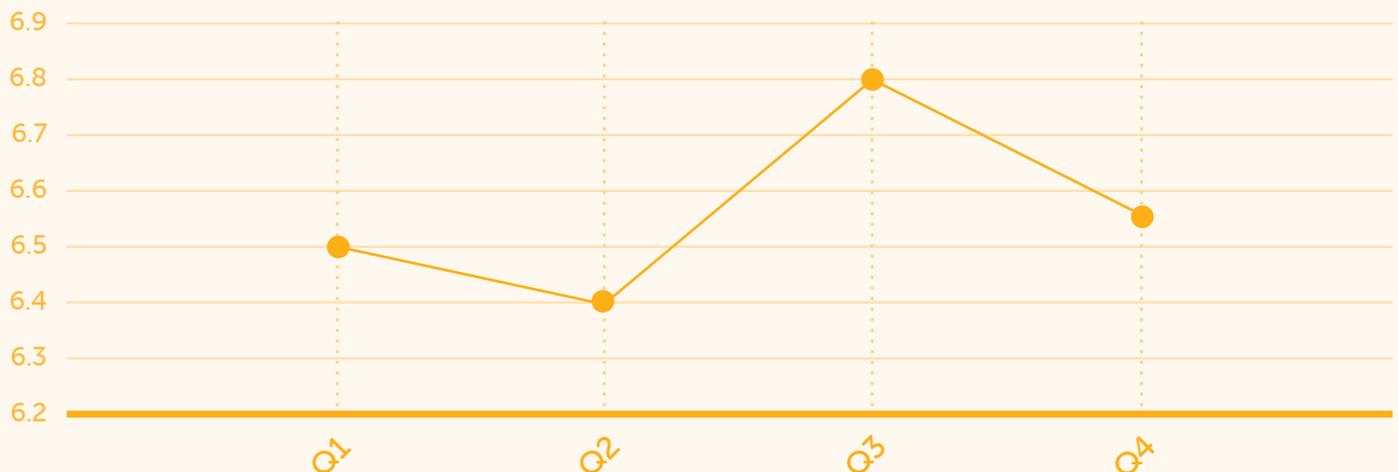
The rising numbers were good to see, though lingering fears, worries and doubts about the crew change situation remained.

Sadly, but perhaps unsurprisingly given the problems facing crews, tensions on board were running high. At the start of the year, there were many more seafarers than normal talking of bullying, harassment, and tension on their ships. We heard worrying reports about xenophobia and even racism. Oppression, victimisation and intimidation were mentioned as real causes for concern.

The downward trend should serve as a reminder that the maritime world is not dealing well with COVID, because nations are not supporting the industry and seafarers are suffering. From small scale injustices and frustrations to life and career-changing realisations, seafaring may never recover unless life at sea is improved, and unless seafarers are recognised and respected as key workers.

General Happiness

How happy generally when at sea?



The past year has shown that the issue of key/essential worker status is fundamental to the "general happiness" of seafarers. The impact of delays in global trade and the role of seafarers and shipping fired up seafarers to question the levels of risk and reward. Why, respondents asked, when shipping company earnings have surged, had seafarer wages remained stagnant?

We heard frustration that despite shipping being fundamental to society, crews seem to be the forgotten figures so often. This was seemingly brought to something of a head when the Suez Canal closure had the world's press waking to the importance of shipping. Why then, asked many seafarers, are they not adequately recognised and rewarded as key workers? Access to the vaccine has also been a concern for many.

There was a negative tone to collective responses and a sense that the basic essence of seafaring as a profession and vocation feels broken. One respondent mirrored the general mood, stating, "We have broken sleep, broken systems, and people feeling broken too".

Seafarers want reassurance. From the responses we received there was a strong sense that if people know when they are going home, then they can cope with most things thrown at them. If they do not know, if there is doubt, fear and uncertainty, then everything becomes a problem.

All the signs of a depressed stressed, fed-up and frustrated workforce were evidenced in the responses. Across several years in compiling this data, there has never felt such a sense of deep and entrenched despair and anger growing.

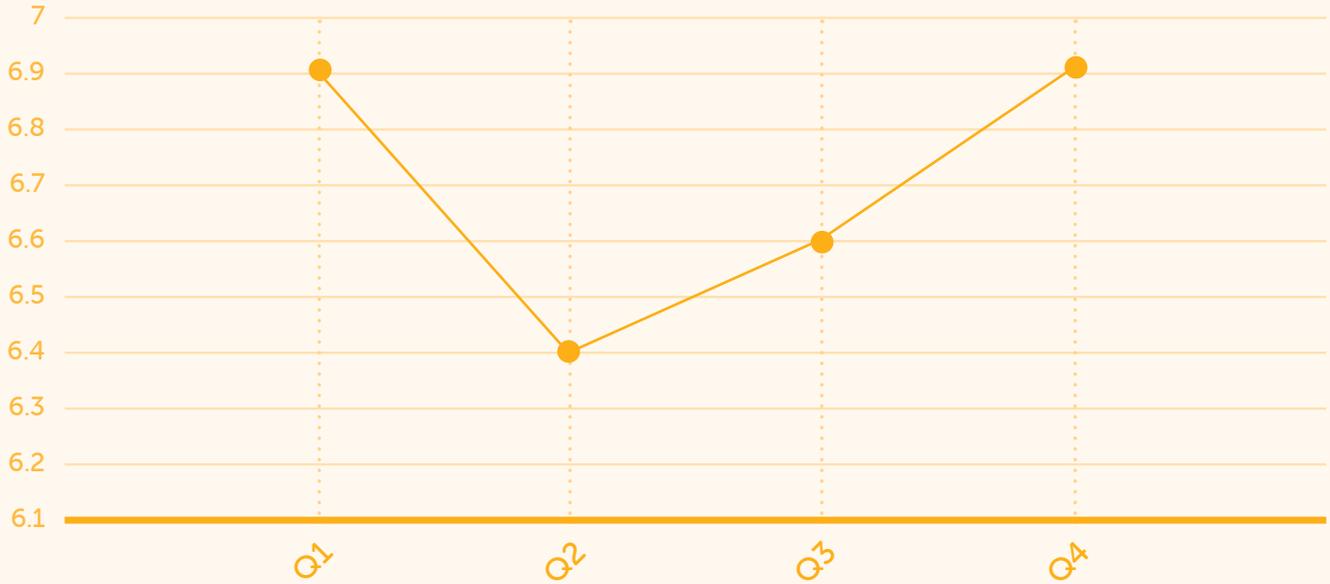
For all the well-meaning efforts, there is very little which is cutting through and making life and the grinding, relentless day-to-day reality any better. In hearing the voices of those at sea, it is clear that we need to keep pressing hard for the diplomatic, legal and external actions which will bring longer-term positives.

There has been a sense of disconnection, being sick of meals, fed up with the gym, tired of the same company, and missing the physical intimacy which so many ashore may so often take for granted. We all believe that seafarers are key workers and essential, but we need to start treating them so. There is a sense that patience at sea is running out if we don't.

Without leave and certainty about crew changes, seafarers have spoken of not wanting to come back to sea. We are seemingly at a tipping point, one that could spiral out of control if remedial actions are not taken.

Connectivity

How happy about contact with family?



In 2021, there has been one seafaring issue that has come to the fore, and that is connectivity. Finally, it seems that progress has been made. We heard more seafarers experiencing positives when it comes to getting online and connecting with friends, family and loved ones back home.

Evidence showed that more shipping companies were working to ensure their crews can get online. The impact has been positive and can perhaps be seen as one good thing which has come from the pandemic. More seafarers can now stay connected, and it has become cheaper, easier and a better level of service.

The online “lifeline” for many seafarers on board makes for happier crews. As we heard through the year, seafarers want, need, crave and demand the levels of online access that those ashore are accustomed to. Seafarers want good, affordable and high-quality connectivity. Thankfully, we are seeing improvements. It is just a shame that it has taken such tumultuous events to push improvements.

Shore Leave and Crew Changes

How happy about access to shore leave?



The issue of shore leave has always been contentious. In 2021, we heard time and time again that the idea of getting ashore, much less having an opportunity for rest and recreation, is dead. This once fundamental staple of what it was to be a seafarer, appears to be a remnant of a past age.

Despite seafarers struggling to access welfare centres, there was praise and gratitude for the centre staff who still managed to get support and care packages onto vessels. This was making a difference to morale.

However, through the year many seafarers have reported feeling that shore leave is no longer a realistic aspect of life at sea. As one frustrated seafarer said, "Stop asking about shore leave, there is none. We are never allowed to leave the ship, and it is not possible to get away for even a couple of hours."

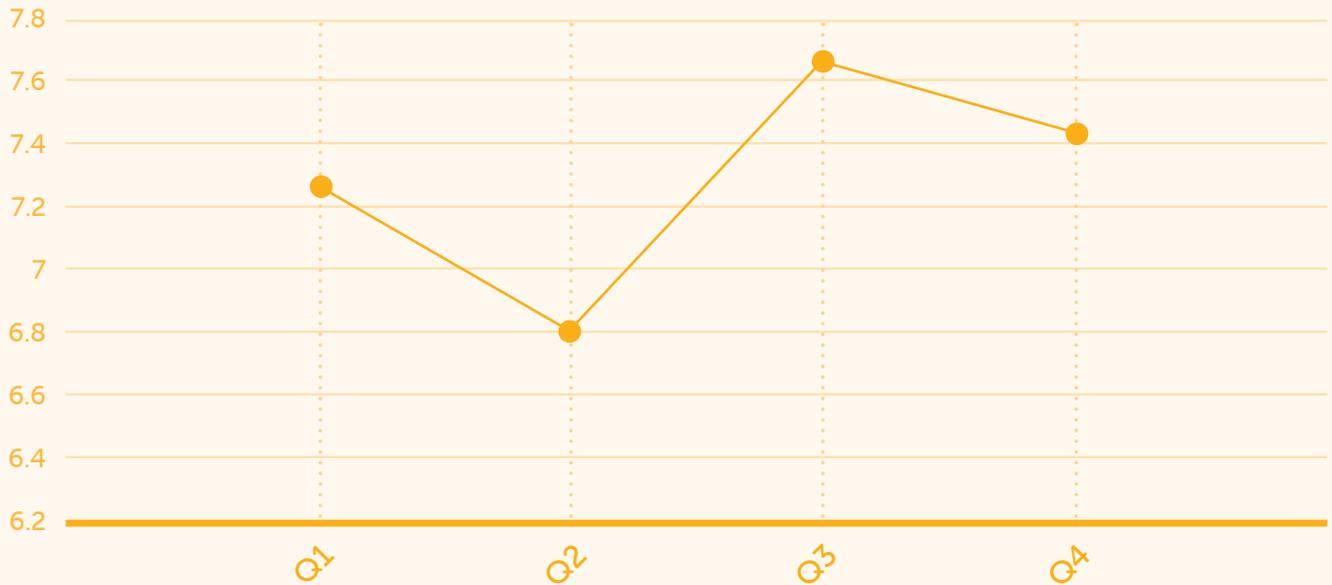
An issue that has repeatedly been mentioned is the mental health impact. "I cannot get ashore and talk to anyone but those on board", was one quote, echoing the intense and claustrophobic reality of life on ship.

Whether it is a short break away from the vessel to grab some shore leave or the issue of crew changes, we have seen anger, frustration, and stress.

We heard from a growing number of respondents who said that they will be completing their trip and not coming back, or they are throwing themselves into finding a new job. Some are seeking roles within maritime, but many are just seeking a way to get out. We therefore note signs of trouble to come, that of a shortage of replacement crews and a drain of seafarers away from the industry.

Mental Wellbeing

How happy about interaction with other crew on board?



Mental wellbeing is a focus for many companies, and there are signs more is being done to protect or improve the wellness of crews. There is a seeming trend for companies to provide more entertainment or exercise equipment on board.

While some were seeing improvements, unfortunately, some were left struggling. Sleep and good quality rest were repeatedly seen as a problem. There were issues of noise, bad weather, as well as poor-quality mattresses and bedding, something which is slipping through the MLC and port state control net.

When it came to welfare on board, seafarers have been feeling isolated, but we heard many reports of ship visitors making it to the vessel gangway and providing small tokens of gratitude and support, such as washing gear, confectionary, books, and the like. Those seafarers who had such experiences recorded far higher scores than those who did not.

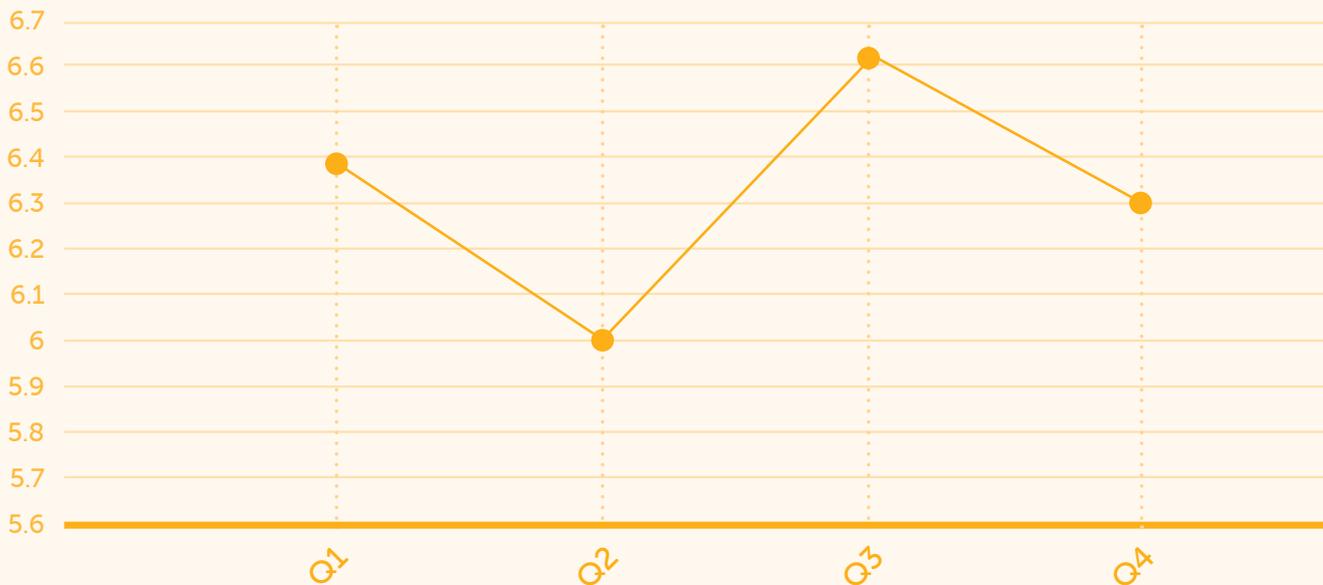
Seafarers are struggling and many of the responses painted a picture of stress, fatigue and frustration. Indeed, there was a growing sense of weariness with the problems at sea. This is compounded by the perceptions on board that ships are working even harder to deliver on the demands of trade.

It has been a significant part of the COVID yo-yo effect that relationships on board have become strained as uncertainty and concerns have risen. Pressures on board are rising, and there have been an increasing number of seafarers talking of bullying, harassment, and frictions on their ships.

However, it was not all negative. Those who had positive experiences wrote about the conditions on board and of the actions and activities which seemingly helped to ensure better cohesion.

Workload

How happy with workload?



When it came to workload, crew have repeatedly and consistently spoken of pressures to sign against working hours which do not reflect what they have worked. Seafarers are telling us that the systems do not reflect the realities of the tasks and that the times recorded as being spent working and resting are manipulated.

It seems there is a massive hidden problem, which means that all the focus on improvements is seemingly and worryingly built on a potentially fraudulent foundation. It was claimed that pressures to make things appear compliant on paper are coming at the expense of seafarers.

The impact of COVID on workloads has been a consistent theme, with seafarers left wrestling with hygiene demands and requirements. We also heard complaints about the levels of administrative work. Some said that the demands of paperwork are even jeopardising the safety of vessels, as so much time is spent on administrative tasks. Others feel that their working days are inexorably being stretched, not just in time, but in what they are demanded to deliver.

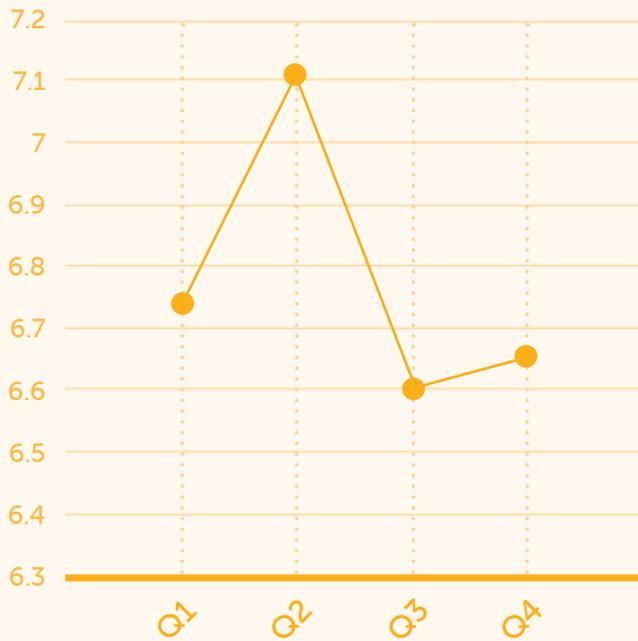
It was even felt that management systems used were

no longer fit for purpose, and there was talk of things feeling broken: "We have broken sleep, broken systems, and people feeling broken too". Another added, "Who can be happy with high stress, overtimes, constant papers and regulations?".

In Quarter 3 2021 there was a sense that mechanisms to deal with seafarers had now had a chance to bed in, and that problems had begun to be addressed. We saw a creeping rise in the happiness figures, with the responses capturing increased optimism about getting home on time. Sadly, such optimism proved rather short-lived, as the rise of COVID variants and the race to shut borders once more meant that it was harder for crews to get ashore or to get home.

Food

How happy about the food on board?

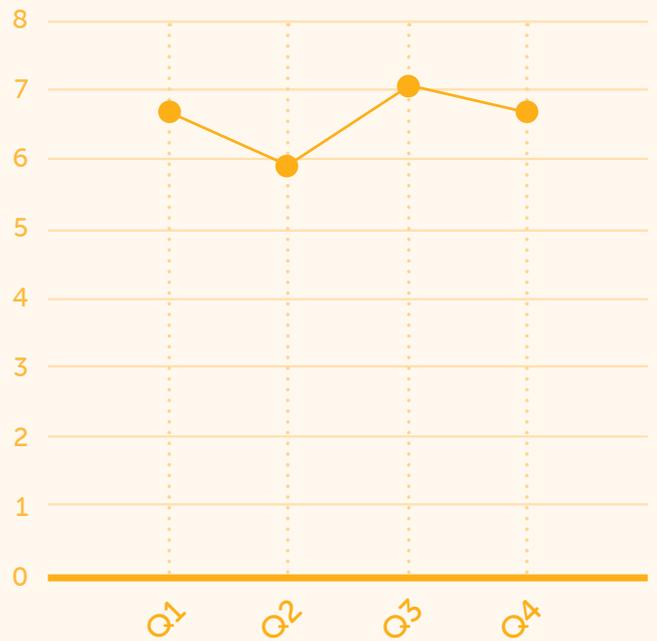


The issue of food on board, the standard of catering, cooking and ingredients have often been a major sticking point for seafarers. We heard of some welcome improvements as it seems companies have been investing more in better food.

It seems that food is an interesting area which almost always seems to run contrary to the prevailing mood. If the general Index rises, then it is likely that food becomes an irritant – like Oliver, there is a sense of always wanting more. While conversely, when everything else is suffering, it seems that meals are a literal and figurative crumb of comfort.

Exercise

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



The issue of exercise on board has held remarkably steady through the year. Those who have equipment or access to gyms are happy, those who do not are frustrated and angered by it. This is a common trend in the responses and has not changed through COVID.

Training

How happy about training?

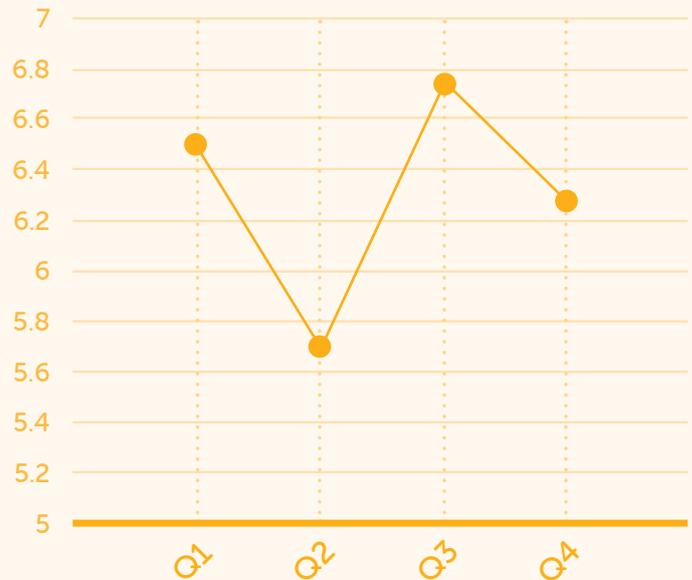


Satisfaction with wage levels seems to have been on the rise and has increased across a year of Index reports. Unfortunately, we heard from some seafarers struggling to get wages owed to them, though they did indicate good support of unions and welfare organisations.

There was also a feeling that crews deserve something in recognition of the importance of shipping in keeping global trade moving. This was a recurring theme in the responses throughout the year.

Wages

How happy about wages?



Maritime training was another area of discussion which showed a significant jump in data in quarters 3 and 4. Some respondents said they were pleased to see a shift online for many of their courses. This was an area that saw a large divergence when it came to age ranges, with younger seafarers embracing the changes while older ones were more circumspect.

One concern raised was that of revalidation periods of certificates. Some respondents were concerned about future problems if they cannot get home to renew or refresh their shore-based training as required.

The recent responses showed positivity about the growing emphasis on training and were pleased to receive instruction on board or access to courses. However, some felt that standards are dropping.

The Mission to Seafarers: Bringing Vaccines to Crews

As key workers who are vital to the global economy, there can be little argument against seafarers being prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine. However, the great disparity from country to country in vaccination availability, shore leave restrictions, together with the peripatetic nature of life at sea, mean that receiving one, let alone two, doses of the vaccine remains a challenge for many.

The Mission to Seafarers and other local seafarers' welfare organizations have been assisting where they can with facilitating vaccinations for visiting crews. Where possible, seafarers are being taken to local pharmacies and health providers and, in some places, vaccinated on board ship.

In Sydney, the local Mission to Seafarers centre has been working in collaboration with the New South Wales port and health authorities, to roll out vaccinations to seafarers calling at the port.

Strong wind and wet weather meant that setting up a tent or gazebo would prove risky, so instead, they decided to convert their 25-seater bus into a mobile vaccination station.

As Revd Un Tay, Port Chaplain in Sydney, comments, "This set up is perfect for the vaccination team, seafarers, as well as for the port terminal workplace safety. I call it a 'One-stop Mobile Vaccination Station.'"

The team drive the bus to the terminal and park at the gangway. Two or three seafarers disembark at a time and board the bus to meet the vaccination staff.

They started their trial run for two vessels in September and since then both demand and vaccinations have soared.

"Since we posted photos of our vaccination on Facebook, we had 5,000 hits within 36 hours of our posting," comments Revd Tay, "We received numerous requests for vaccination from the Captains and Shipping Agents. Then other MtS stations called me to find out how are implement the vaccinations roll out. It was indeed a great outcome."

Vaccination initiatives such as this are a crucial step in helping crews feel safe once again, enabling them to leave port, enter their own countries and visit their loved ones.



What makes your crew happy at sea?

The Mission to Seafarers is now able to run bespoke Happiness Surveys for your crew, so you can benchmark your quality of care against the international survey.

If you're interested in finding out more, contact ben.bailey@missiontoseafarers.org

www.happyatsea.org



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