



Seafarers' Happiness Index

Q1 2018



Contents

Welcome	2
Story so Far.....	8
Seafarers’ Happiness Index Data	12
General Happiness.....	14
Connectivity.....	15
Getting Ashore.....	16
Talking Cash	17
Meal Deals.....	18
Exercising and Working Out.....	19
Learning and Training	20
Teamwork and Relationships.....	21
Working Hard	22
Welfare is Well Fair.....	23
Female Perspectives	25
Conclusions	26



Welcome to the Seafarers' Happiness Index

The Seafarers' Happiness Index is a means of engaging with crews on merchant ships to discuss the key challenges facing them, and to gauge their levels of satisfaction.

This is an ongoing study measuring 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.

SCALE OF HAPPINESS

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 many 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 understanding. 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 Seafarer Happiness Index, when it was run as part of a seafarers' social network, revealed fascinating trends and early warning signs too.

LATEST DATA

The latest Index showed a seafarer happiness result of 6.69 in the first quarter of 2018, a figure averaged across the key areas of seafarers' work lives. This shows a rise from the previous Index report- and so we see that seafarer happiness is on the up. However, there are some important caveats to consider, and the seafarers

who responded have provided incredibly important insight into their lives.

Workload and access to onshore facilities once more presented the largest setbacks, while on-board interactions and friendships were seen as the best part of the job. As has been seen within previous Index data, the most divisive issue was connectivity with family and home. On ships where internet access was available, happiness was marked very highly, but without it connectivity was a significant source of real discontent.

GLOBAL COMPARISON

The Seafarers' Happiness Index also gives an opportunity to compare how people at sea feel compared to those in nations ashore. So, we have asked if seafarers were a population of their own nation, how would that rank against the UN World Happiness Report?

Currently the seafarers of the world would almost break into the top twenty. The figure of 6.69 would see seafarers positioned at number 22 on the Global Happiness scale, sandwiched between the Czech Republic and Malta.

The UN Happiness Report also rates satisfaction against a scale called The Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, this asks respondents to think of a

ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10, and the worst possible life being 0. The ladder then places the numbers in three areas, suffering, struggling or thriving.

The Seafarers' Happiness Index result of 6.69 would place crews in the "struggling" zone. On this scale it means that wellbeing is moderate or inconsistent, with moderate views of their present life and future. They are either struggling in the present or expect to struggle in the future.

In the struggling zone, people report more daily stress and worry about money more than the "thriving" respondents. The UN reports that people at this level of happiness are prone to more than double the amount of sick days, are more likely to smoke and less likely to eat healthy.

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

While there is much room for improvement. Something the Mission to Seafarers hopes will come with this means of measuring and managing positive change. It may seem trite to talk about happiness, but there is much management research and data proving that happy people perform better.

Examination of performance indicates that happy people work harder, achieve more and create an environment of constant improvement.

Alas most of this management science is based on businesses and institutions ashore, there isn't a great body of work which relates to seafarers. However, the importance of knowing how happy people are about the things

which affect them at sea is a hugely effective means of checking the levels of performance on a ship and within a shipping company.

What do we mean by "happiness" though? Well, happiness is a universally understood concept, transcending cultures and religions. Humans, whatever race, creed, religion or nationality have a generally agreed sense of what it is to be happy. Humans tend to assess how much they like their life, and the conditions for happiness appear to be quite similar across the world.

So, even with multi-national crews, the concept stacks up well as an important metric for shipping. Humans prefer a happy life to an unhappy one, and we develop ideas of what we want from life and compare these aspirations with the realities of their life. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham's classic notion of happiness was, "the sum of pleasures and pains." Which rather neatly appears to capture the lot of a seafarer today, there are pleasures and there are pains – and this is our chance to shape which wins out on board ships.

MOVING FORWARD

To ignore or downplay the value of happiness in seafarers is to trample on the concept of these very human constructs. Seafarers prefer a happy life to an unhappy one, hopefully we can all agree on that much, and we need to be able to make life as happy as possible, within the realities of what it is to be a seafarer.

This is not about developing some kind of cult of the happy seafarer, it is not, either, about pretending that there is black and white when it comes to satisfaction. Things are not usually all bad or all good.

The Seafarers' Happiness Index exists to see through that grey fog in the middle. To explore the reasons people working at sea are either feeling positive or negative, and of suggesting the ways that improvements can be brought, or lessons applied elsewhere.

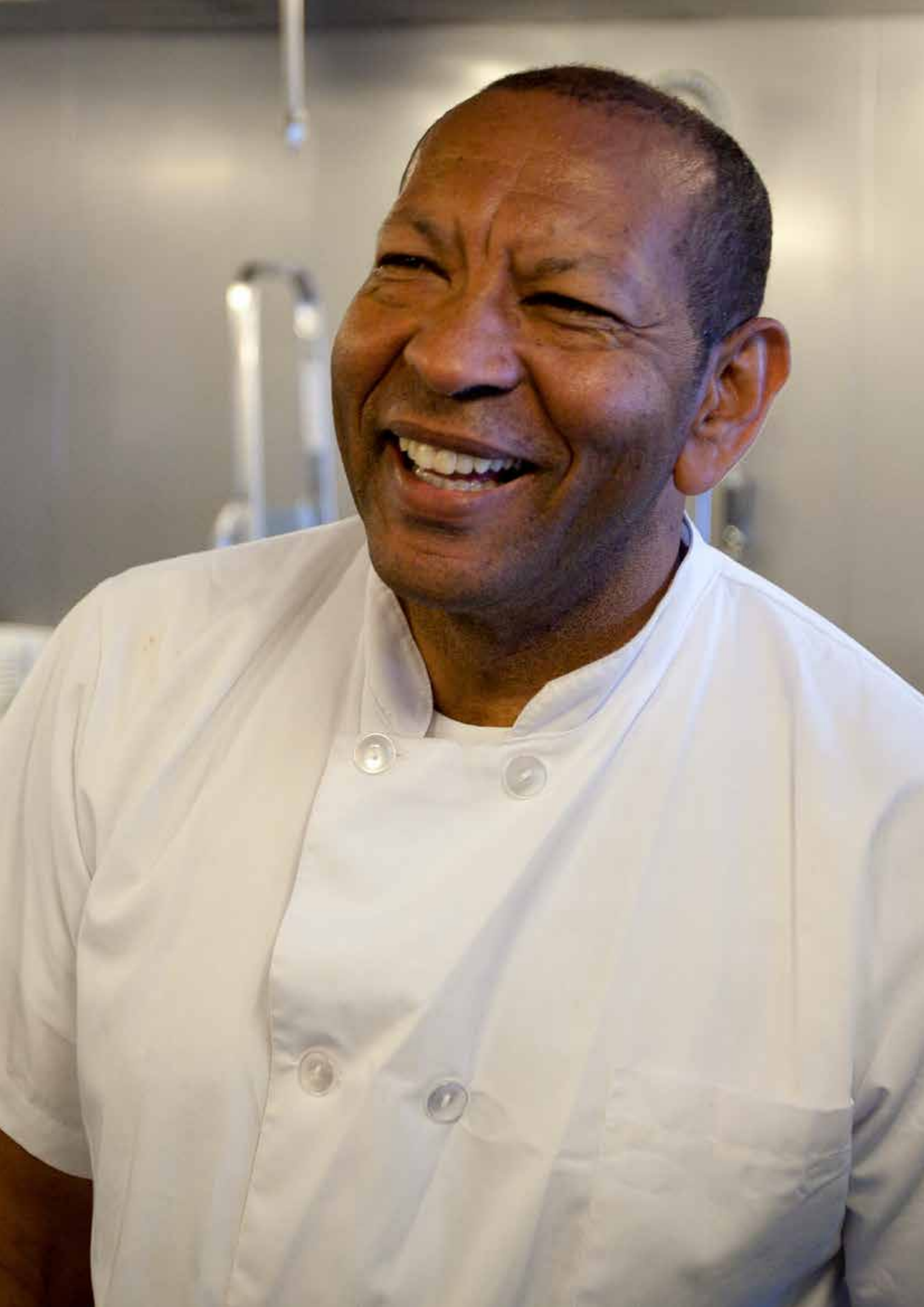
Happiness is often overlooked but is key to developing maritime careers. Happy, satisfied, well fed, fit and engaged seafarers are less likely to have accidents, they are less likely to become disaffected, and will stick around – something that is incredibly important as we look at maritime recruitment and retention.

If you are a seafarer, The Mission needs you to complete the survey and encourage all your colleagues to do so too. If you are an employer, then please encourage the same. The report from the most recent data can be found online at the Mission to Seafarers website and makes for fascinating reading. You can also access the latest ongoing survey to have your say.
<https://www.missiontoseafarers.org/seafarershappiness>



Steven Jones
Founder of the
Seafarers Happiness Index

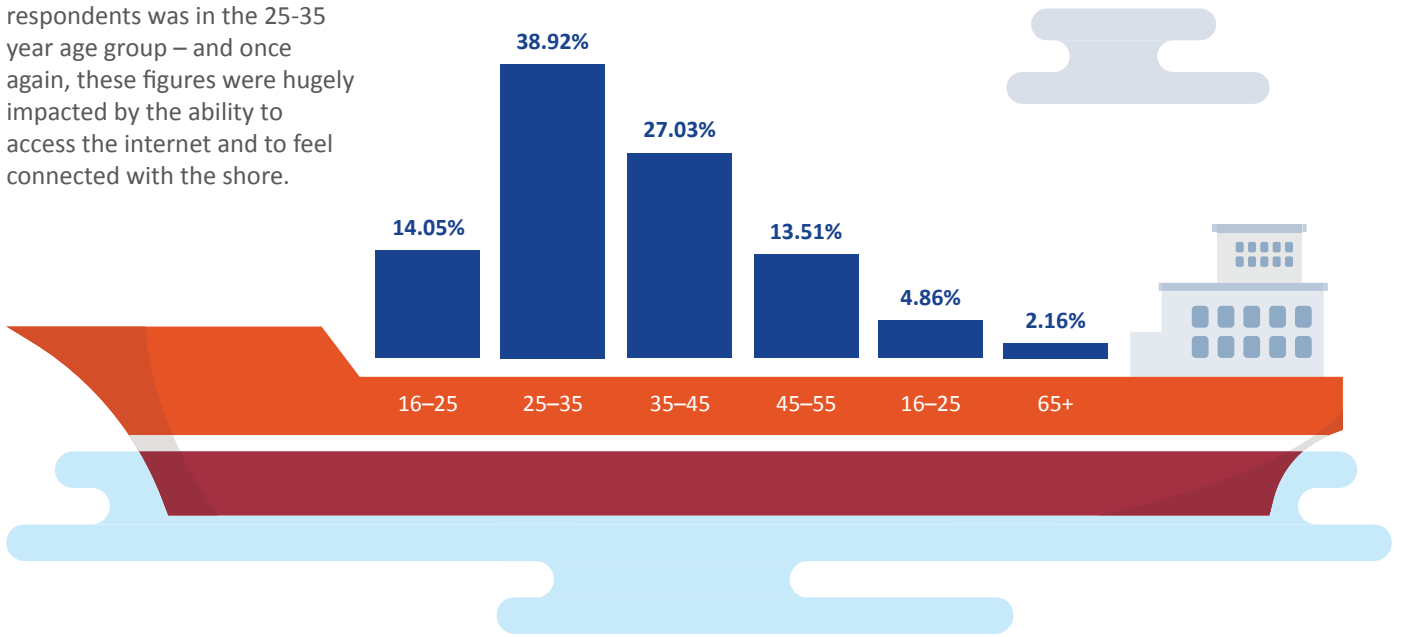




The Story So Far: Q1 2018

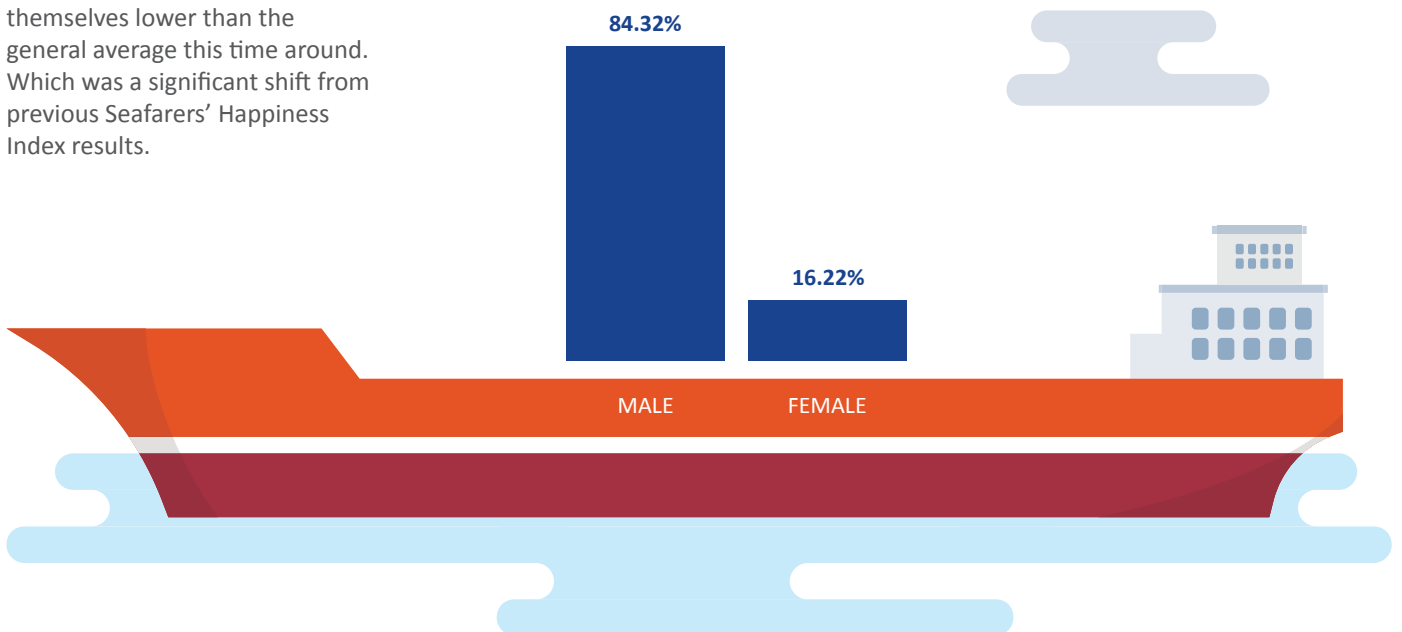
WHO

The happiest tranche of respondents was in the 25-35 year age group – and once again, these figures were hugely impacted by the ability to access the internet and to feel connected with the shore.



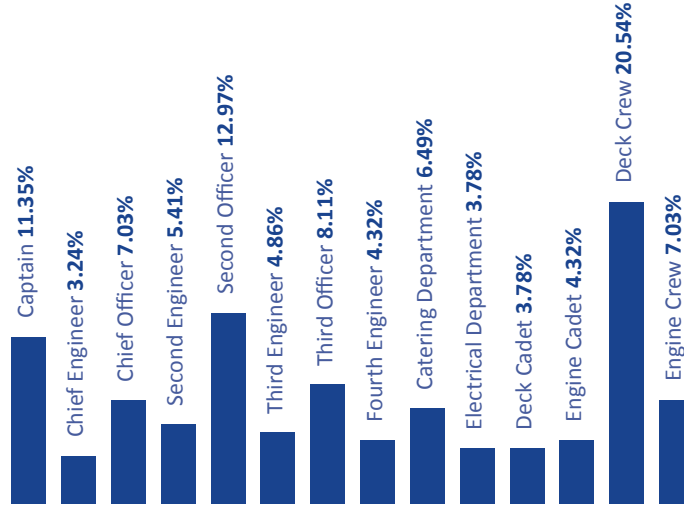
GENDER

Female seafarers actually marked themselves lower than the general average this time around. Which was a significant shift from previous Seafarers' Happiness Index results.



RANKS

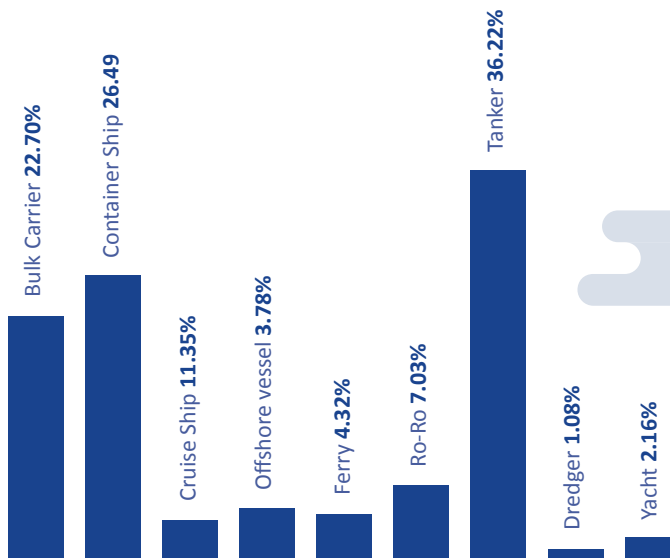
Deck crew and officers tended to be happier than their engineering counterparts – and the middle cohort of ranks, second officer and third engineer, chief officer and second engineer, performed better. They recorded the highest results across the board.



WHAT

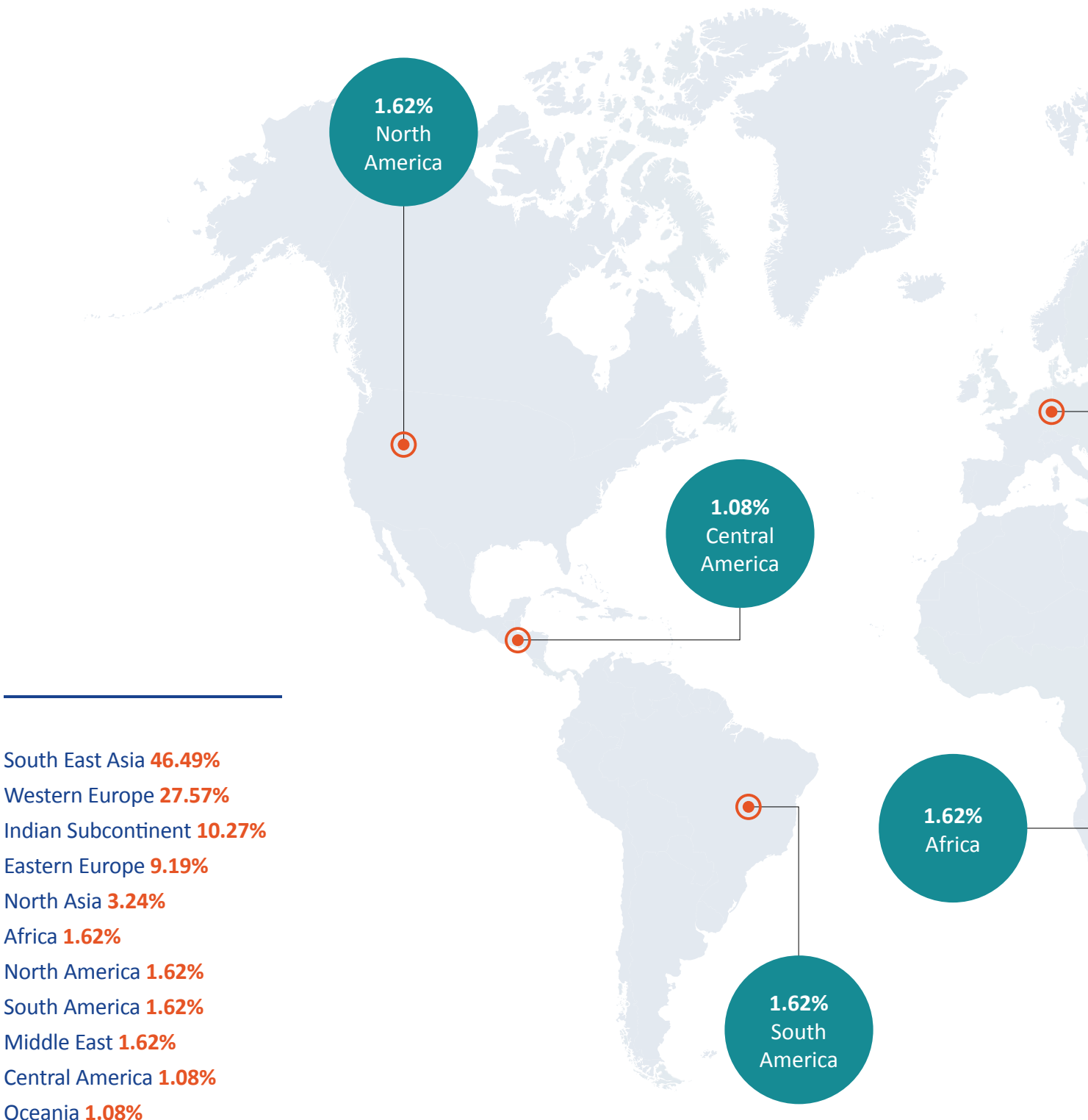
Other 12.97% These included gas carriers, general cargo, specific kinds of offshore vessels, as well as icebreakers, survey vessels, and sail training vessels.

Seafarers on container vessels once again were the highest in terms of happiness. However, the differential between those crews and those serving on tankers was narrowing when it comes to happiness. Of the major constituent vessel types, bulk carriers were the worst performing – but these were also on the rise this quarter.



Where

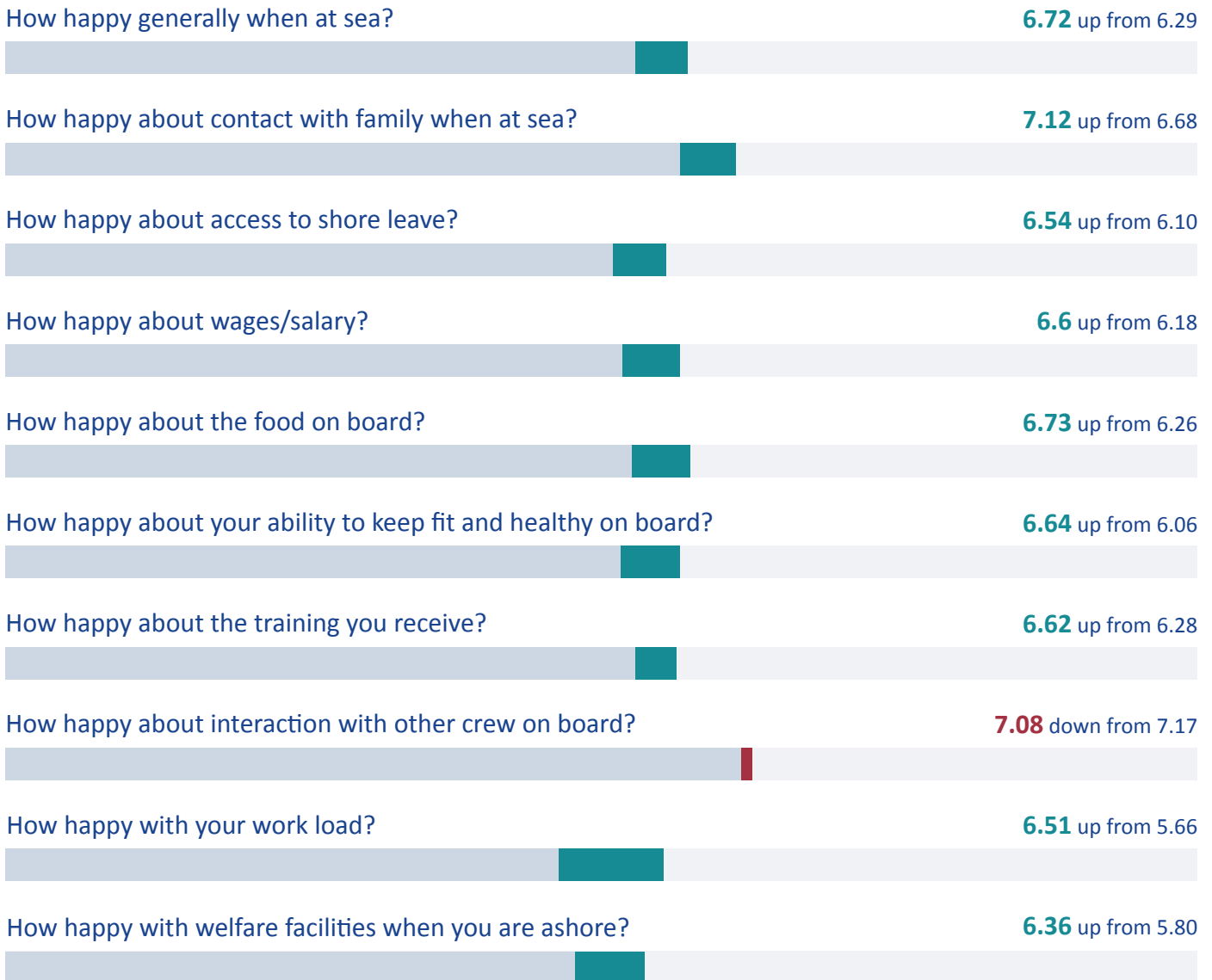
Once again, respondents from South East Asia tended to record higher happiness marks in their responses.





Seafarers' Happiness Index

Data: Q1 2018



Overall average score:

6.69/10 in Q1 2018, up from **6.25/10** in Q4 2017

Dialogue behind the data

Let's look at the stories behind the numbers. An increasing level of respondents took the time to explain how they felt and why – so this is their story, their life at sea and the experiences that they have in the job and career as a seafarer.



General Happiness ↑ 6.72

How happy generally when at sea?

While the general level of happiness at sea was on the rise this quarter, there was a very mixed bag when it came to the experiences behind those figures. There were some who were having fantastic times on board and were so proud of providing for their families. While, sadly, there were others who were seemingly struggling badly.

The positive responses focused on a range of issues – and these included the fact that seafarers felt sense of profound satisfaction at being able to send money back to their homes. Despite the fact that many said how much they missed being with their families, the ability to provide for them seemed to make this sacrifice worthwhile and tolerable.

Quotes such as, “I am happy when at sea because I earn a salary to provide for my family’s needs” and “earning for the future of my family makes me happy”. They capture a definite theme which emerged in a number of the responses.

Other positives related to some of the unique experiences of being at sea. For those seafarers who felt that travelling the world, getting glimpses of nature out in the oceans and feeling sense of awe being away from land and experiencing the power of the sea.

When the vessel is underway, and clear of port, seafarers said that this was a time of satisfaction, and of optimism. They felt able to relax in the watchkeeping system, there was a sense of certainty to the schedule and rhythm of life on board.

One respondent captured this rather poetically, “Being at sea makes me happy because it is far from stresses of the cities, noise, and the sea is relaxing to the eyes especially when you want to feel some personal space”. While another respondent wrote, “Happiness at sea are the sunsets, occasional BBQs, some fishing, a good film watch with the rest of the crew and food”.

There was a definitely more artistic set of responses this time around, and another wrote, “Sometimes I can feel the waves bringing luck to me, trying to talk to me. There is no other wind as the pacific wind. When I am there, I feel like I belong to be there”.


This is interesting, and perhaps hints at something of a resurgence in the artistic connection between seafarers and the ocean. Something which appears to have been lost since the 1960s. Fostering and developing this kind of bond could perhaps offer opportunities

to encourage seafarers to better see the positives of their time at sea.

However, multiple respondents commented that they only felt this way in good weather. Indeed, a surprising number of seafarers commented on the difference to quality of life that the weather conditions make. Perhaps that is an issue which can all too often be overlooked. When seafarers experience bad weather, then the patterns of sleep, eating and of leisure activities are distorted and that can have a serious impact.

The fact that weather conditions can affect life so much indicates the delicate balance of conditions on board. If one thing changes, then it can have massive implications for seafarers.

I am happy when at sea because I earn a salary to provide for my family’s needs.



Connectivity ↑ 7.12

How happy about contact with family when at sea?

The highest mark on the Seafarers' Happiness Index for Q1 2018 was the issue of contact with family and lived ones, and the pleasure that connectivity brings. Virtually every single written response from seafarers was positive when it came to the pleasure and enjoyment that being in contact with home brings.

The only negative response about actual contact related to the burden of knowing "every small adversity they encounter at home". Which is understandable, it can be extremely difficult to hear of problems, but not be in a position to assist.

There were a number of negative responses when it came to the cost, availability, and level of service. Being on vessels without internet access was almost unbearable to the seafarers who responded. This was a view which was, unsurprisingly, prevalent in the younger age groups. However, it was also a view which is now permeating the high ranks. So as millennials progress through their careers, we are now seeing their views on access to the internet and connectivity shaping the overall picture. This is no longer an issue with just the cadets and junior officers – senior ranks are now just as eager to be connected.

Something that should serve as a warning shot to the industry.

Aside from frustration about costs and speed of access, the rest of the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Seafarers spoke of the happiness, pleasure, relief and joy at being in contact with home. Many even talked of it in terms of refreshing them and making them better able to cope with the rigours of being away at sea.

Connectivity on board vessels makes seafarers feel like they have a support network, albeit not one that is on the ship with them. However, aside from those who perhaps wrestle with potential problems at home, the rest feel that being connected is good for their mental wellbeing.

While voice and video calling are popular, it was reported that WhatsApp is increasingly the communications tool of choice for most seafarers who commented. The ability to be in touch in touch with not just family, but also circles of friends was seemingly of great importance.


So, seafarers want more opportunity to connect. They want it cheaper, faster and to be more of an accepted part

of shipboard life. Something that no doubt this new generation of shipboard leaders will insist on.

Some of the key quotes, were that "Contacting the family gives me the enthusiasm and positivity about life and work at sea. Hearing from them is a good source of strength and motivation despite the isolation we feel when we are away."

While another respondent states, "Communication with the family is very vital in our wellbeing at sea. Just a simple "Hello, how are you?" from our love ones takes away the "homesickness" and loneliness of being away from home". One seafarers said, "I need to talk and relax with my family. Whether I hear good or bad news, talking with my family can release the bad emotions at sea".

Communication with the family is very vital in our wellbeing at sea. Just a simple "Hello, how are you?"



Getting Ashore ↑ 6.54

Tell us more about your access to shore leave.

Shore leave is always a key seafarer concern, but it is an area which has been given new prominence by a very recent change in legislation. As such we are hopeful it will be possible to plot real time and life change, as the relevant amendments to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) take effect.

The amendment to the international standard on shore leave adds a new provision, 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.

This is the first quarter in which responses have been received from seafarers since the entry into force of the above FAL Convention amendments on January 1st, 2018, so it will be interesting to see the changes (if any) in the responses of seafarers.

This time around the Seafarers' Happiness Index showed a modest rise, up to 6.54/10, from 6.10 in 2017. However, despite this, the written responses from crews do seem to paint many of the same problems.

It seems, reading many of the responses, that the rules have not been the real barrier to shore leave – it is the realities and tight time constraints on board. A number of seafarers, more particularly officers, wrote of the difficulties for them of getting ashore, as there is simply so much to be achieved while alongside.

Issues ranging from maintenance, taking stores, through to the obvious issue of managing cargo operations. These obviously ramp up when in port. Other problems relate to the sheer volume of official visitors to vessels, these all need managing, accompanying and require the time and attention of an already stretched crew.


Sadly, the result is that shore leave becomes less of a priority, despite the fact so many seafarers spoke about its importance. They stressed, across numerous responses, of the fact that getting off the vessel provides them with a real psychological boost. It is a means of de-stressing, to see new places and to have the chance to interact with others.

Getting off the vessel provides seafarers with a chance to “relax” and “refresh” themselves, and these were terms which were repeatedly used by respondents. One respondent said, “Despite the hectic schedules at port and tiresome working hours, I still prefer to go outside to remove stresses and refresh my thoughts about life on board. Having a personal time is a way to build up your morale and thinking about working at sea. Going outside is another form of how a seafarer can handle all the pressure, stress and isolation during the voyage”.

Respondents talked about how good it is to see other places, to have a chance to buy things, to take in culture and to get a break from the relentless nature of life on board. One respondent also felt it was a basic need, “Human are social creatures, as you can get chance to go shore, your mind will relax.”

Sadly, and even with changes to the FAL Convention, some ports and nations were once again singled out for not facilitating shore leave. The United States and ports in China drew criticism. Huge costs were mentioned in America, while security checks appeared to be a major barrier in some Chinese ports. It is to be hoped that the new changes will take effect soon.

Human are social creatures, as you can get chance to go shore, your mind will relax.



Talking Cash ↑ 6.6

Tell us more about how happy you are about your wages/salary

The issue of wages is always bound to be a contentious issue. Given how many seafarers have responded about how important it is for them to provide for their families ashore, then perhaps it takes on even more importance.

The subject saw a jump up on the happiness index, up to 6.66 from 6.18 previously. However, there seemed to be rather more negative comments than last time around, and there definitely seemed to be something of an edge to comments about “foreigners” taking jobs and accepting lower pay. This was repeatedly mentioned and was a source of annoyance for a number of respondents.

The issue of “cheaper crews” undercutting salaries was a significant feature of the responses. Multiple respondents focused on the same issue, and some claimed it was “devastating” the industry. One comment received stated, “Well the big question, we are all seafarers with international recognized certification, yet the salaries are not equal. Two crew members doing the same job should be entitled to the same salary. While many seafarers syndicate fight for their own, when shall we see a common spirit to fight for better rights?” Related to this issue, there were concerns raised about Open Registries.

Some felt that “Flags of Convenience are killing the industry”. Again, this appeared to relate to the use of multinational crews on differential pay scales.

Wage stagnation was another repeated issue – and there was as sense from seafarers that they had not received a pay rise in years. Some mentioned five years, others as many as ten years.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this issue was the fact that seafarers are still being taken advantage of by rogue “manning agents”. Respondents spoke of having paid money for work, only to have their cash and the agent go missing.

Fake shipping companies claiming to offer good work, but then defrauding and cheating seafarers is a feature of the landscape in some countries. Respondents from India and the Philippines were particularly affected by this issue. Many respondents felt that this was a form of parallel face of what is traditionally considered “seafarer abandonment”.


These scams see crews “employed” by companies that do not even exist, and then simply left to fend for themselves when they ask about wages, or when

a cargo consignment is delivered. The mysterious, fake shipping companies simply vanish, and seafarers are left to count the cost.

It was felt there needs to be a better international mechanism for checking on companies. While the Maritime Labour Convention has supposedly closed some loopholes, many seafarers feel it is not simple or easy enough to find out the truth about employers.

As with most areas of the Index, it was not all bad news. Again, the positives which emerged focused on the pride that seafarers feel in being a provider for their family. Numerous responses stated that was the main driver for them and their career at sea.

Well the big question, we are all seafarers with international recognized certification, yet the salaries are not equal.



Meal Deals ↑ 6.73

Tell us more about the standard of food you eat on board

From the responses we have received, it seems that there is an obvious equation when it comes to food on board and the happiness of seafarers. The cooks need to be qualified, skilled and knowledgeable. They also need to be aware of cultural challenges, and the expectations of their shipmates.

However important the cook is, they need to be supported, resourced and properly budgeted. They need to combine their own skills with the ability to buy good quality ingredients and be able to store them properly.

Time again across our respondents, it was these areas which drew the most observations. In the responses which quoted the lower happiness marks, cooks were criticised and there was a sense that feeding budgets had been cut or were inadequate. While the happiest seafarers said the cooks were great, and the quality of the food was good, and quantities sufficient. Indeed, there is also a correlation between a seafarer happiness in their interactions on board, and the higher the answer about food. It seems that in a time where social cohesion is a struggle, then the dining experience takes on new importance over and above nutrition alone.

There were calls to impose a minimum acceptable spending limit on crew victualing, and if one were in doubt as to what underfeeding sounds like, one quote perhaps captures the misery and grind. One seafarer wrote, "Cook and Master cut our provision ration: No milk No bread only one egg for the breakfast: even drinking water is limited". That sounds grim, and obviously has a serious knock on effect to mental and physical health.

It also seems that despite the MLC requiring cultural considerations to be taken into account. There is little evidence, from the responses received, that this is happening, with nationals of a range of countries complaining that their diet did not reflect the norms of their homelands.

There were some comments about the health aspects of cooking on board. Interestingly, seafarers complained that at home the authorities a minimum 5 veg/fruits a day, but at sea such guidance vanished.


Again, as is often reported, there are concerns about the overuse of frying. This is especially a problem on multicultural vessels, some cooks were

criticised for adding oil to meals "as if it were water". While there are clear and repeated concerns on the issue of healthy food, they are not always in the ways we might perhaps think.

One exasperated respondent said the crew ate too healthily and they were tired of "meat, chicken or fish and rice every single day and s****y salads, vegetables and healthy cooking. I would prefer deep fried hamburgers and pizza all the time". As they say, there is no accounting for taste...

Where crews are happy about the catering on board, they are really happy! The responses indicate just how important food is. Those who appreciated the food, and the cooks were effusive in their praise. Quotes included, "the cook is great and can really cook up a storm", while another said, "If you are lucky to have a good chief cook, you will be happy. But if not, all crew will be affected when performing their duties. Lousy cook = lousy ship."

If you are lucky to have a good chief cook, you will be happy. But if not, all crew will be affected when performing their duties.



Exercising and working out ↑ 6.64

Tell us more about your ability to keep fit and healthy on board

With shore leave often limited, it can be even more important to ensure that seafarers are able to access some form of exercise and activity on board. There is often a surprisingly mixed bag of responses when it comes to the matter of exercise.

Looking at the data, those seafarers who marked their exercise more highly also tended to experience a higher level of general happiness. So, it seems that exercise does indeed appear to impact the overall well being of seafarers.

The data shows that there are very different experiences at sea. There are those who really enjoy and value the ability to exercise, and who have access to good facilities. They are usually far more likely to experience better general happiness and are happier across a range of the other key areas. One seafarer stated, "Exercising boosts your mood and confidence. It'll help also maintaining your mental health."

Then there are those whose experiences are more negative. There are crews who do not have access to equipment, nor have a space to engage in recreation and exercise. There was also a sense that companies should provide these,

rather than being left to the crew to fund them. One such quote stated, "Not all ships have the facilities like gym equipment and sometimes we have to take from our "welfare fund" to buy this equipment which should be provided by the company."

While there are others who simply do not feel they have the time or energy to exercise. There were complaints that time working and punishing schedules mean that there is no time to exercise. While for some the impact of bad weather also took its toll. Storms, rolling and heavy weather often mean that even where there are facilities, then seafarers cannot always access or make use of them.

In addition, though, lest we forget the fact that not everyone sees themselves as responding well to exercise. One respondent perhaps captured a sense that many of us have on occasion, stating, "Truth be told, I am just too lazy to work out".

**Exercising boosts your mood and confidence.
It'll help also maintaining your mental health.**



Learning and Training ↑ 6.62

Tell us more about the training you receive on board

Seafarers want to proceed up the career ladder, and they also want to become ever better at their jobs. This is the feedback that comes back from multiple responses to the Happiness Index.

Quite how they achieve career profession and development, and their preferred approaches to it seem to vary quite significantly. However, it is clear from the data that the seafarers who feel they are being well trained return higher figures when it comes to happiness.

There does seem to be some confusion as to what constitute “training”, and for some seafarers they are just happy to take part in drills, or to watch a safety video. While others see the issue more holistically and want their training to form part of their own wider career picture, and ultimately career path.

As one might expect, the senior ranks below Master and Chief Engineer seemed to swing from high to low on the Index, depending on whether they felt they were being supported.

Those who felt the company was encouraging them or were supporting their career development recorded higher than average on the Happiness Index, and they spoke positively about their experiences. Common responses were along the lines of “great, no problems”. They felt that their skills were improving and so too was safety on board the vessel.

The seafarers who felt that they were not receiving sufficient, or the right kinds of training were conversely low scorers on the Index. They felt that it was sometimes, “not clear what we are meant to be doing”. There was a sense of confusion and frustration.

There was also a sense that a blended approach to training is needed, and some reported that too much reliance on computer-based training (CBT) can “drain moral”. While some found CBT to be useful and wanted more, there was a universal sense that practical training either ashore, or from senior officers makes for the best standard.

Unfortunately, there were some respondents who felt their employers were not doing enough. One seafarers claimed the company, “does not care whatsoever for career development. You are nothing but a number”. Which is a shame on many levels. Also, some seafarers stated that it was difficult to convince their company of the need for higher levels of training. This left them feeling frustrated and dissatisfied.

If you are lucky to have a good chief cook, you will be happy. But if not, all crew will be affected when performing their duties.

Teamwork and Relationships ↓ 7.08

Tell us more about your ability to keep fit and healthy on board

We received quite a mixed response to the question of on board interaction this time around. Respondents seemed to feel that either their shipmates were one of the best things about their life at sea, or the worst.

Obviously, those without strong feelings don't tend to take the time to share their thoughts, over and above the numerical return. However, it makes for very interesting reading to hear what seafarers think of their fellow crew members.

The negative responses all seemed to have a common thread, and they focused on the varying degrees of bullying, disrespect and general lack of decency between some crews. This was felt, as one might expect, more keenly from lower to higher ranks, and within multinational crews.

Quotes captured the difficult nature of some on board relationships. They included quotes such as, "Senior officers are plain rude", "Officers are very arrogant". While the issue of the treatment of female seafarers also came in for comment. One responder wrote, "Sexual harassment/bad attitude towards women are a problem and needs to change NOW!!" While another wrote, "I encounter gender and race harassment every day".

It can be all too easy for those who have not been to sea to appreciate the proximity to other seafarers, and the fact that maintaining a positive balance between privacy and camaraderie can be a challenge. One seafarer hammered this home quite well, stating, "One snorer on board can ruin an entire trip".

Whether that is more to do with the snorer or badly designed accommodation is perhaps up for debate. However, it paints a vivid picture of the frustrations and the hardships of living and working in a steel box out at sea.

There were some who felt that since internet was introduced on board that interaction with crew is less now compared to the old days, and another stated that a lot of people stay in their cabins nowadays. There has been a temptation to think that access to the internet is the problem, but there are others that see connectivity as a major positive.

So, what is the truth when it comes to the internet? Does connectivity erode interaction on board, and is being online the reason that social cohesion is more difficult at sea today? There is a danger in jumping too readily to that conclusion, but lest we forget correlation is not causation.

With ever smaller crew numbers, with single occupancy cabins and the fact that ships no longer have a bar to serve as the hub of activity, then it is perhaps too easy to think that online access is the reason for people retreating into isolation. It seems though, that there is rather more to consider.

One respondent also made an interesting observation, stating that, "offices have been moved to lower decks, so you get less people coming to visit the bridge". The act of moving working areas away from shipboard activities can mean we are creating unnecessary isolation.

For the positive responses, there were themes which consistently emerged. These seafarers spoke of the fun and enjoyment they experience. There was much talk of jokes and good humour on board. One quote perhaps captured the reality and the need for seafarers to manage their interactions. This respondent stated, "Harmony and unity on board is very crucial in the safety and success of operations on the ship. But we cannot select which crew is going on board, each has their own unique characteristics and attitude. So, adjustment to interact is really needed."

Harmony and unity on board is very crucial in the safety and success of operations on the ship.

Working Hard ↑ 6.51

Tell us more about your workload

As with other issues covered in the Seafarers' Happiness Index, there is very much a two-tiered view within the written responses we received. There are those who are happy to be busy, and who see it as way of passing the time. While there are those who feel that they are worked too hard, taken advantage of and even abused.

There were a few responses which virtually shrugged and said the work load levels are "as you would expect", but for others the issue is far from cut and dried. Obviously, the mirror issue to work load is that of rest, and many respondents spoke of the fact that they don't mind the heavy work load, but that it impacts so badly on their ability to get enough sleep.

Time and again the issue of rest and recuperation was mentioned, "Only work...no quality time", said one respondent. Another commented that, "Although as per STCW 2010 we should have enough rest, during ships arrival and departure it is difficult to maintain work hour / rest hour".

The sheer amount of responsibilities and roles to be completed when arriving and alongside in port were repeated time and time again by respondents. The operational demands of berthing and cargo work, are then exacerbated by a slew of visits to the vessel, by officials and often by company officials. Throw in additional maintenance work, and the receipt of stores, and it can be seen that the work load increases massively when in port.

There was also criticism that all too often there are new responsibilities placed onto seafarers, but that there was little consideration of the work that already had to be completed. One seafarer commented, "Companies seem to find more to do without adjusting what was previously required".

While others commented that "Workload increases almost daily with more and more bureaucracy from head office", and there was a sense that managers ashore were passing too much work to ships, "Work that should have been done ashore in the office is given to the ship, our job is supposed to navigate and deliver the goods in port, not doing paperwork".

This seems to be adding greatly to the stress of seafarers, which of course has an impact on physical and mental wellbeing.

Those with a more positive view of the workload issue often saw it as a form of "badge of honour" to work hard and get things done. There were many who felt proud that they pushed themselves so hard. While others were fortunate enough to work for companies who applied both the letter and spirit of the regulations. One respondent stated, "Workloads are regulated well according to the Code of Safe Working Practice and SOLAS regulation". Though it seems not all companies are so compliant.

Workloads are regulated well according to the Code of Safe Working Practice and SOLAS regulation.

Welfare is well fair ↑ 6.36

Tell us more about the welfare facilities

As we have seen from the question of shore leave, seafarers are far from guaranteed to be able to get ashore when they arrive in port. If they are fortunate to get off the ship for a little much need rest and recreation, then it is important that they have the means to get to facilities they need.

Obviously from the Mission to Seafarers' perspective the emphasis is very much on the seafarers' centres, and the ability for crews to use the facilities to access the services they need and want. The actual Seafarers' Happiness Index figure for this question has risen this quarter, which is pleasing. This is especially significant as we have started taking hard copy responses from the seafarers visiting Missions in port. So, thankfully the fact that the numbers are rising seems to suggest that the crews who do avail themselves of the centres are happy.

From the written responses, we had a spread of sentiments. Thankfully the majority wrote to praise the centres. There were multiple responses which stated, "they help us very much", and "they are so welcome to see".

One seafarer stated the Missions "...give us a moral and wellbeing boost. we get cherished as well as refreshed by having contact with chaplains, access to WIFI, support from the staff, and a chance to talk to our families". While another interesting response captured the fact seafarers' centres and missions are so important in helping to, "bridge the gap between land life and sea life".

Sadly, many of the negative responses were about how difficult is to sometimes get ashore and to actually visit the centres. There were many responses which focused on the cost of taxis, or the strict rules in place which stand as barriers for seafarers wishing to get ashore.

There were some suggested improvements and observations too – and one interesting one was the fact that Seafarers centres should be able to provide crews with an experience of local culture. So, a chance to taste local cuisine, and to perhaps feel once more that thrill of travel that is sometimes not associated with modern seafaring.

From all the responses there were two centres which were singled out for praise, and the seafarers who visited them were hugely impressed by the facilities and the welcome that they received. These were the Mission to Seafarers' Centre in Mombasa, Kenya and the Rosenhill Seamen's Center which is in Gothenburg, Sweden and operated by the Swedish Seamen's Service, a division of the Swedish Maritime Administration.

...give us a moral and wellbeing boost. we get cherished as well as refreshed by having contact with chaplains, access to WIFI...



СЕЛЕНГА
ХОЛМСК

Female Seafarer Perspectives

As noted, we had a fairly large number of returns from female seafarers, with 16.22% reporting on their happiness levels. This is a significant increase from previous Happiness Index results. A large percentage of female respondents served on Tankers, most were in the age 25-35 section, and were predominantly from Western Europe.

This was both pleasing to note and provided some interesting insight. On a purely numbers perspective, the female seafarers were actually lower when it came to the question of “General Happiness” levels. The total average was 6.72, female seafarers marked themselves as an average of 6.46, which is a change from previous surveys when female seafarers have tended towards a higher level of satisfaction.

We thought it might be useful to assess the responses from female seafarers, so as to better build a picture of what seafaring means to them, as both a career but also living their life at sea.

The positives that female respondents voiced opinions on focused on were actually very similar to their male counterparts. There was a great emphasis placed on connectivity, perhaps even more than by male seafarers. Female respondents wrote a great deal about how important it was to feel a connection to family

and friends at home, and this eased loneliness, isolation and also better equipped them to deal with the pressures of being often the only female on board.

As with all seafarers, if the moral on board is good then they reported higher levels of satisfaction. Respondents also wrote of the importance of camaraderie and of feeling part of a team. Those females who reported higher happiness levels on the questions about connectivity and also the interaction with other crew on board, went on to have higher scores across the board.

It seems that good relationships with fellow crew, allied with a sense of being able to contact those at home, these are the foundations which really mean a lot to female seafarers.

Food was another key issue – and female seafarers seemed to be more attuned to the need for a healthy diet. However, the most vociferous answer

about being sick of salad and healthy food, and preferring, “deep fried hamburgers and pizza all the time” was actually made by a female seafarer.

Sadly, there were mentions of sexual and gender harassment, and of the effect that this has on moral, happiness and job satisfaction. From the responses received, it seems clear that regardless of gender, the building blocks of happiness remain the same – but there is an obvious and vital need to ensure that harassment, bullying or singling out of people is stopped, as a matter of urgency.

Conclusions

Overall there the Seafarers' Happiness Index figures have shown a rise, and while it is obviously early days, it is positive to see growth across various key issues.

The average Seafarers' Happiness level expressed by respondents was up from 6.25 out of 10.0 in 2017 to 6.69 in this first quarter of 2018.

The happiest tranche of respondents was in the 25-35 year age group – and once again, these figures were hugely impacted by the ability to access the internet and to feel connected with the shore.

Deck crew and officers tended to be happier than their engineering counterparts – and the middle cohort of ranks, second officer and third engineer, chief officer and second engineer, performed better. They recorded the highest results across the board. Female seafarers marked themselves lower than the general average this time around. Which was a significant shift from previous Seafarers' Happiness Index results. While, once again, respondents from South East Asia tended to record higher happiness marks in their responses.

Seafarers on container vessels once again were the highest in terms of happiness. However, the differential between those crews and those serving on tankers was narrowing when it comes to happiness. Of the major constituent vessel types, bulk carriers were the worst performing – but these were also on the rise this quarter.

"Happiness" on the part of seafarers can be seen as being driven by some key basics. As has long been stressed, connectivity is a key component of satisfaction. The ability to feel connected to life at home, to talk with loved ones or to just have a sense of

belonging and engagement is crucial.

There were some dissenting voices, which felt that crews being online was negative to interaction on board. However, it is difficult to wholly point the finger of blame at people being online, especially when the social fabric of vessels has been altered. Fewer people, shorter trips, single cabins, the removal of the ship's bar – all have had an effect.

Seafarers do retreat to their cabins, they do spend time online and there is less interaction on board. Which came first though, in a chicken and egg conundrum, did seafarers sit in their cabins and go online because there was less opportunity to interact, or is their less chance to interact because people are online?

The issue of shore leave saw a positive shift in sentiment, but it is not yet clear the effects of new legislation are being felt. Wage sentiment rose too – rather than much focus on the level of wages, though there was some disquiet about stagnation, the main problems were around timely payments.

The parallel issues of food, health and exercise saw rises – there were many comments about the quality of Cooks, and the importance of ingredients. Seafarers value these hugely, and where there is a sufficiently high spend on food, where Cooks are able to prepare good and varied, culturally sensitive menus – then these are happy seafarers indeed.

Training saw a rise too in this quarter. There was a positive sense from respondents about the importance of

their career progression, and most felt that their employers were supportive and looked to provide them with the tools they needed.

Unfortunately, the one area of the Index which fell this quarter was that of on board interactions. This is still one of the highest performing factors and issues within the Seafarers' Happiness Index, but it is a concern to see the data falling. Comments about issues such as harassment and even racism were noted, and it is an obvious area to monitor. Given the rising global tide of nationalism, it could well be that some attitudes or views are filtering into the seafaring population. This is a concern, and we can hope that it is a blip rather than a trend.

The issue of workload saw a surprising rise this time around – however, in the comments received, the same old problems came to the fore. This is especially prevalent around vessel activities in port. Too many tasks, as well as visitors, a slew of activities, as well as the operational norms and requirements – these all add up to a huge and significant spike in workload as a vessel nears and arrives in port, and as it sits alongside.

Seafarers' welfare facilities ashore also saw a rise in positive sentiment, and respondents time and again stressed just how important it is to have access to the support, interaction and facilities that the centres provide. The only negatives were that, as has been covered in the shore leave question, it can be too hard and expensive to get off the vessel.





The Mission to Seafarers

St Michael Paternoster Royal
College Hill
London
United Kingdom
EC4R 2RL

Tel: +44(0)20 7248 5202

Fax: +44(0)20 7246 4761

Email: info@missiontoseafarers.org

www.missiontoseafarers.org



[themissiontoseafarers](https://www.facebook.com/missiontoseafarers)



[FlyingAngelNews](https://twitter.com/FlyingAngelNews)

JustGiving™ [JustGiving.com/missiontoseafarers](https://www.justgiving.com/missiontoseafarers)

Registered charity no: 1123613 (England and Wales) and SCO41938 (Scotland)