



The  
Seafarers  
Happiness  
Index

# Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 1 2023



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



NorthStandard

IDWAL



# Seafarers Happiness Index Quarter 1

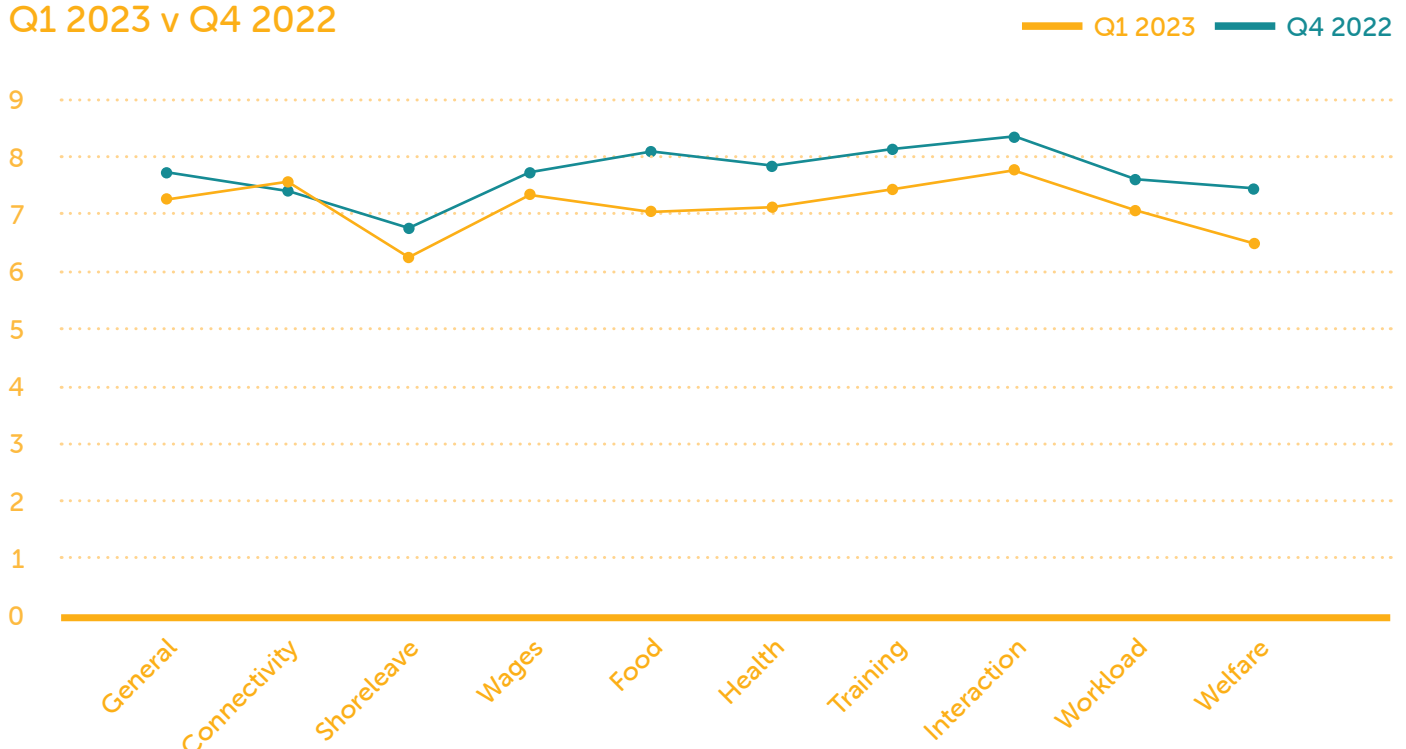
The Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) is a quarterly survey conducted by the Mission to Seafarers to gauge the sentiment of seafarers at sea. The survey asks seafarers around the world ten key questions about various aspects of their life and work. Their anonymous answers provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing seafarers.

The most recent SHI report covers data from Q1 2023, and we saw a drop to 7.1/10. During this reporting period, we identified some growing frustrations after a period of rising sentiment. As ever, there is much room for improvement, and shore leave and a desire to access welfare services ashore once more came to the fore.

The Mission to Seafarers is committed to working with the shipping industry to address the challenges facing seafarers and to improve their welfare. We hope the SHI is an important tool in this work, and the Mission to Seafarers is grateful to all the seafarers who have participated in the survey.

Bucking the negativity, we saw connectivity rise again this time. However, rather interestingly it was not all good news in this regard. The impact on social cohesion on board was mentioned, and it is clearly something which needs to be very carefully and considerately managed.

## Q1 2023 v Q4 2022



In 2022 we saw the satisfaction of seafarers steadily grow, with a high-water mark of satisfaction at 7.69/10 in Quarter 4. Unfortunately, the positivity has since fallen away and the generally increasing data trend has fallen back.

The data from Q1 2023 shows a drop against all question areas, with the exception of connectivity. Once again, the key areas of concern were shore leave and access to welfare services.

Such fluctuations are important to monitor as we look to understand the triggers for sentiment on board. The most recently reported average overall happiness level of 7.1/10 may be an outlier, or simply a natural readjustment at the start of the year.

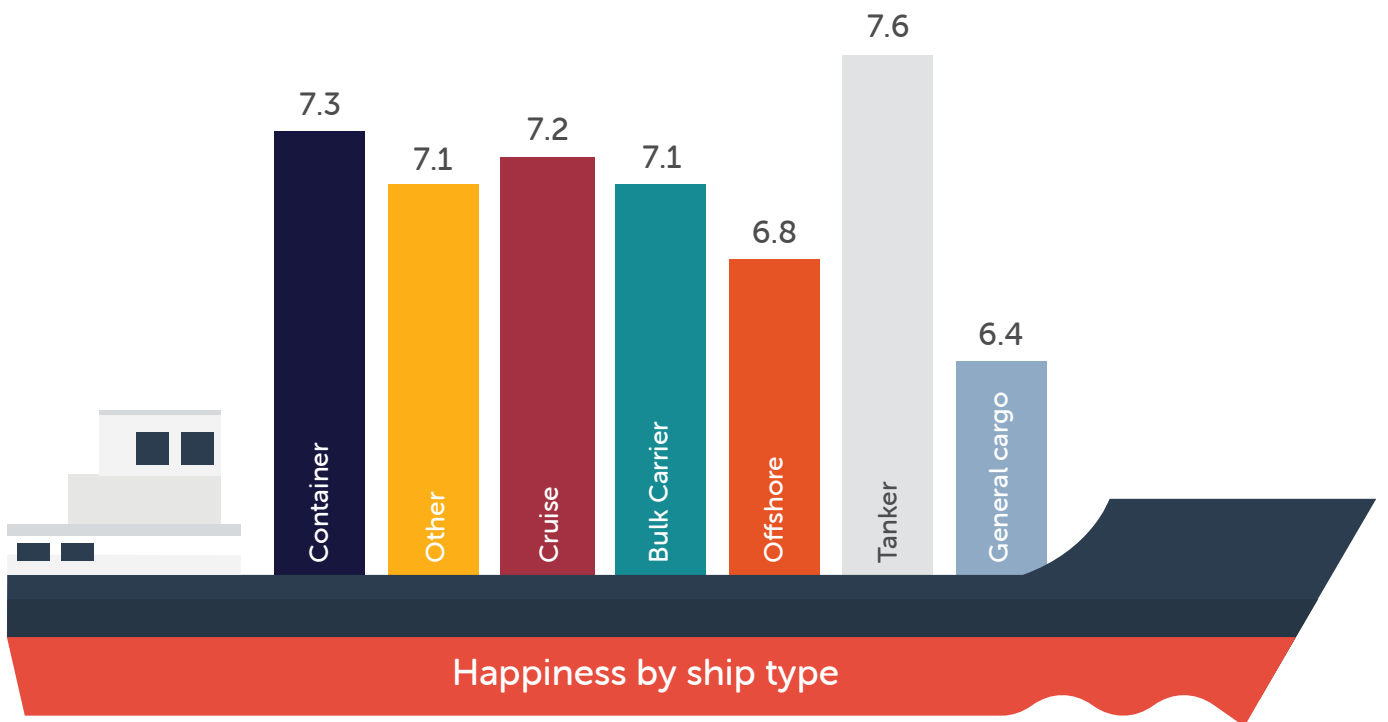
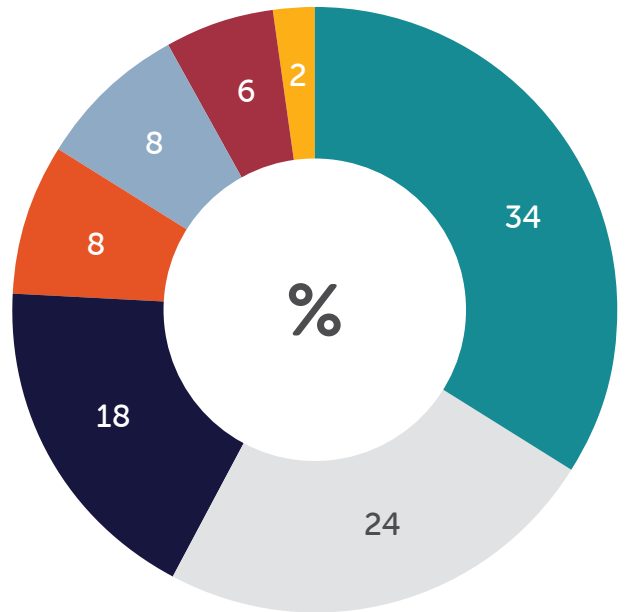
We have seen in other reports that the year does tend to start with a lower data point, and steadily rises. So, again, it will be important to monitor the data, and the messages we receive from seafarers explaining why they feel the way they do.



“  
I used to be very happy before, but nowadays less and less. Lack of proper food, proper leadership, more and more paperwork are leading me to think I don't want to work at sea anymore.  
”

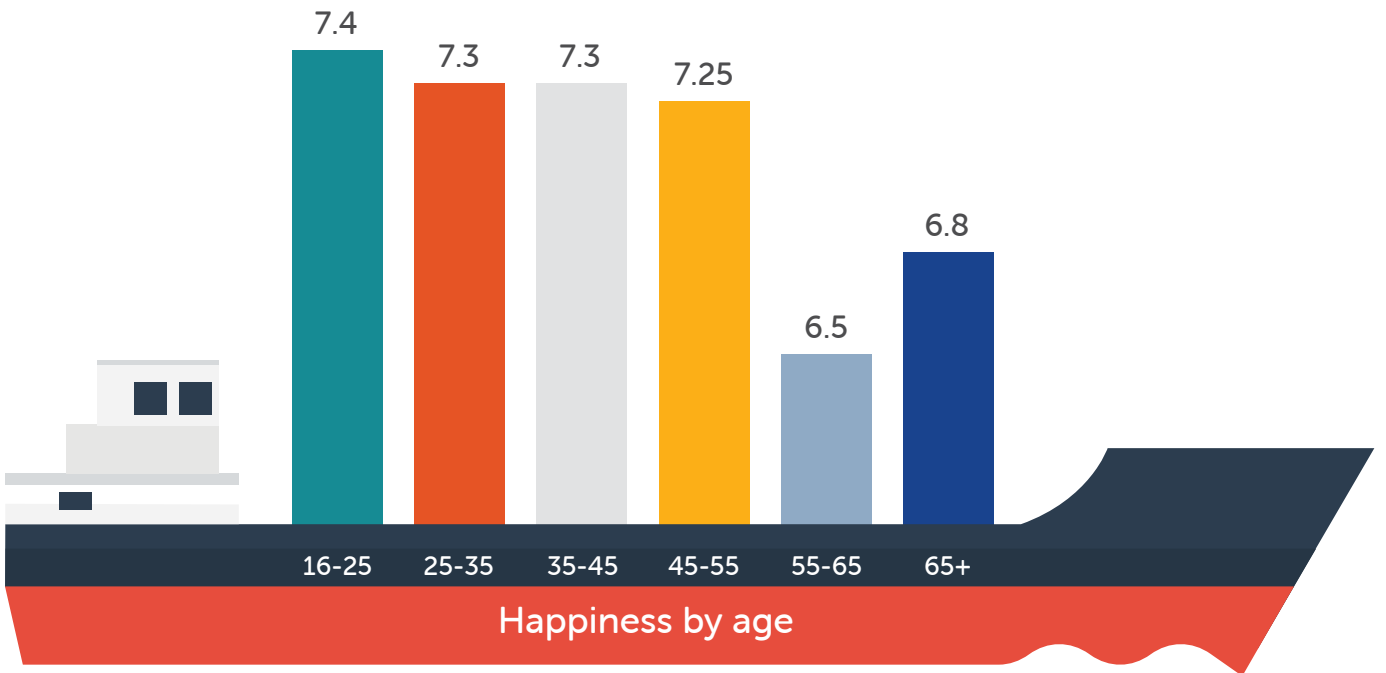
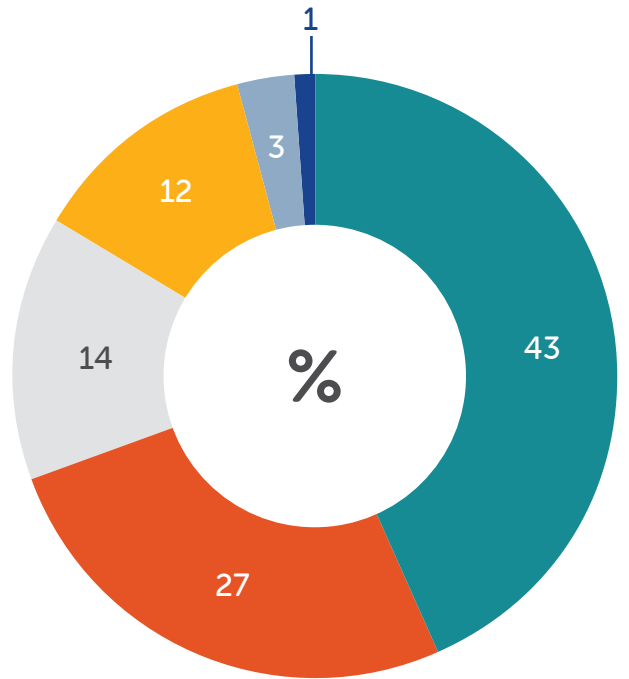
# Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Tanker
- Container
- Offshore
- General Cargo
- Cruise
- Others



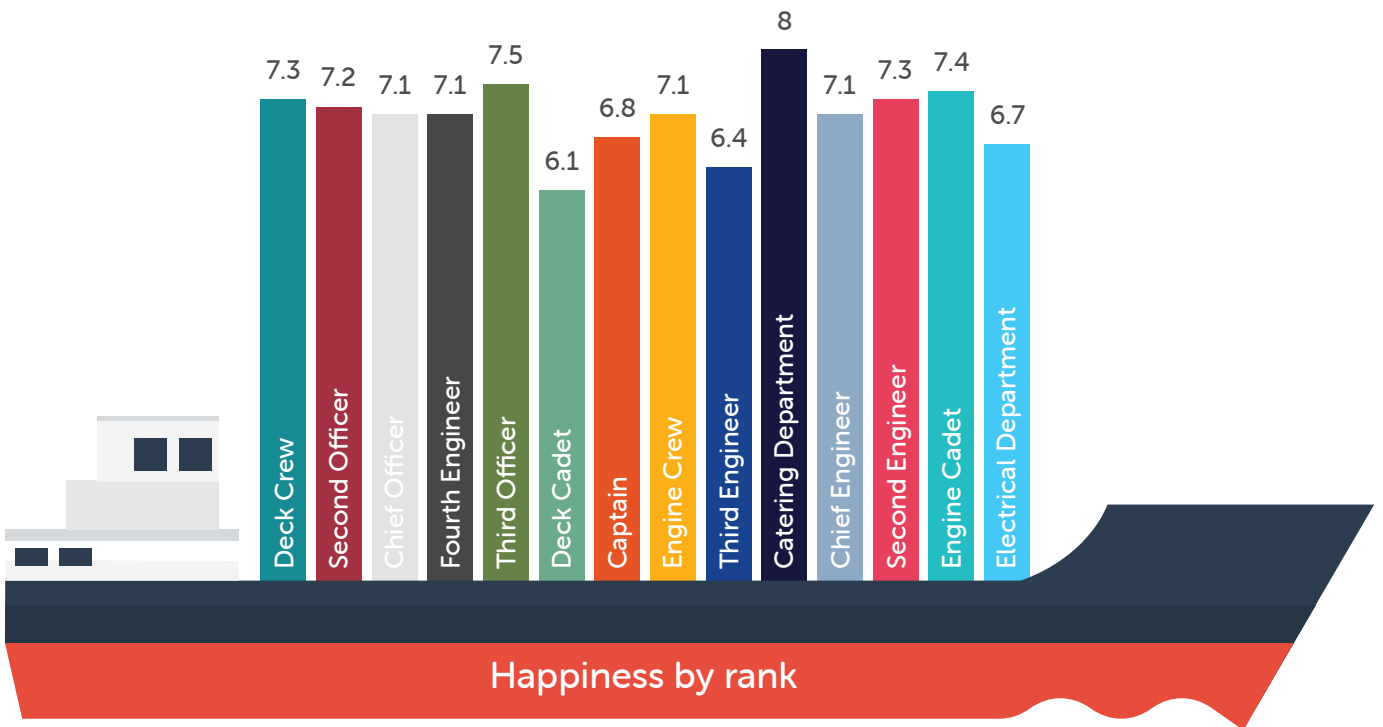
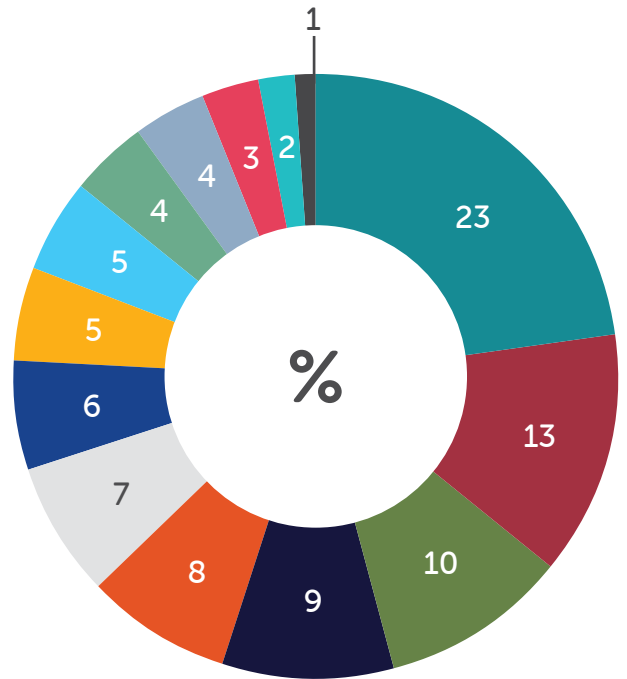
# Age Range

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



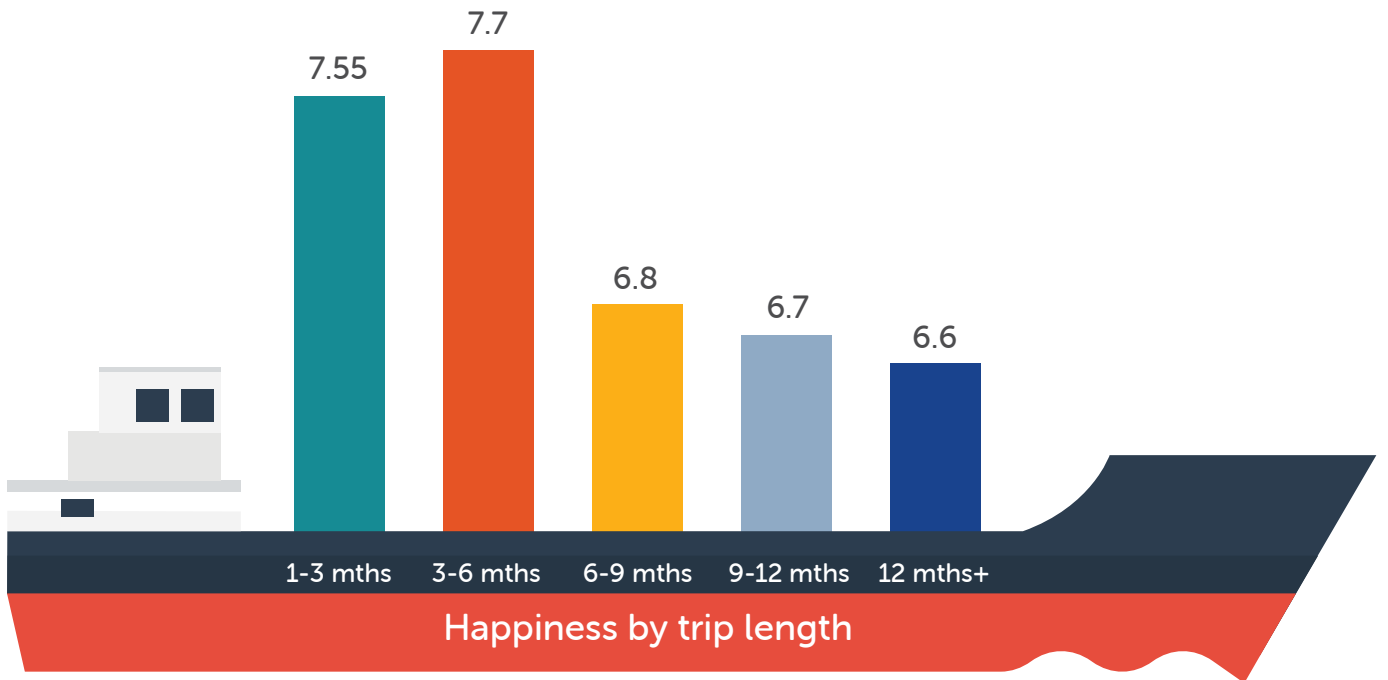
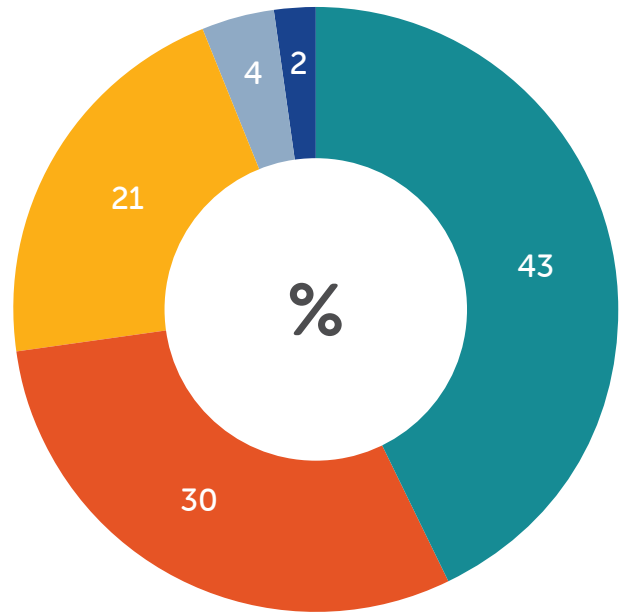
# Ranks

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



# Trip Length

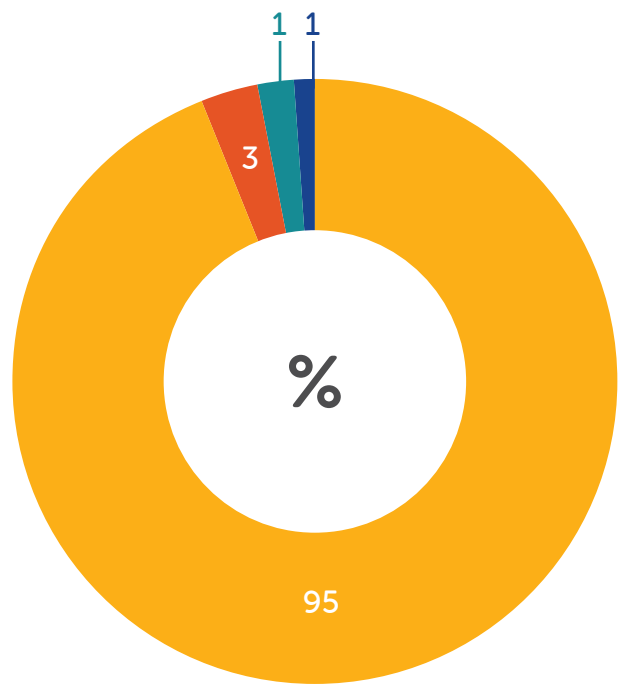
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-9 months
- 9-12 months
- Over 12 months





# Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other



## How happy generally when at sea?

7.26 ↓ from 7.72

This first question on seafarers' "general happiness" is used as a baseline check to ensure we do not stray too far from the general views of crews. It helps spot anomalies and provides a catch-all chance for seafarers to voice any issues which are not captured adequately across the other questions.

Based on the collective view of survey responses, the general sentiment is that everything is holding fairly steady, but with there are some growing concerns and a range of issues that are causing frustration to seafarers.

Two notable and recurring issues are the lack of shore leave and delays in sign-off procedures, these can be hugely problematic, and we are hearing more seafarers caught up in attempts to make them sign on for longer than they would like to. Whereas in the past many crew would actively seek contract extensions, now this less often the case and instead, we are caught in a strange limbo as companies push for more time on board, but seafarers now want to leave.

It seems that seafarers are struggling to cope with not only too many months on board, but the challenges and the quality of life are causing concern as well.

Indeed, this Quarter seafarers reported feeling less satisfied with their work at sea due to various reasons, such as the usual problems of poor food and demands of paperwork, but we also heard concerns about the lack of effective leadership.

This was not just about leadership in a professional sense, but also related to onboard community building. We are hearing far more concerns about the lack of social life, the boredom on board and the problem that there are too few ideas on how to fix it. Seafarers feel that they are going into some kind of suspended animation when they go away to sea.

Another significant concern is the absence of health and well-being programmes in some companies. There appears to be a growing gap between the companies that do focus on well-being, and those that don't. We heard from seafarers who bemoaned the fact that their friends working for other companies have access to mental health support, medical advisory services and physical wellbeing consultations, and they did not. They believe that these services should also be made available to them.

The issue of relationships with shore management was mentioned repeatedly. It is strongly felt that those in offices managing vessels need a better understanding of the realities of life at sea. There appears to be too little understanding, empathy and prioritisation of seafarers in these interactions.



**A friend working for another company has access to proper mental health support, medical advisory and physical wellbeing consultation those are services we should have as well.**

# How happy about contact with family at sea?

7.56 ↑ from 7.4

Based on this Quarter's responses we heard several key points about connectivity and its impact on seafarers. Some of it was positive, which perhaps explains the rising sentiment, however, there are many issues which remain.

We heard positive responses on costs and affordability for contacting family. Despite remaining concerns about the quality of internet connection, SHI respondents noted that contact with family has become cheaper and better almost year-on-year.

Advancements in communication technology have made it more affordable to stay connected with loved ones whilst at sea, and there was praise for the innovations that satellite companies have made.

Another positive was the fact that online access is seen as a stress reliever. It provides respite from the challenges of daily life at sea as seafarers rely on it as a means of relaxation and entertainment. Respondents stated that as the pace of life ashore appears so relentless, having connections allows seafarers to remain and feel part of their friendship groups. Even more, they felt that being able to share stories and images from their time at sea was hugely positive, and a real boost to their sense of self-worth.

So, we saw a rise in sentiment very much driven by these positives - a sense of improvement, and a recognition that we are hopefully seeing some impetus to make services better. There is optimism from seafarers that Starlink services will provide the access they crave at costs which they can afford. Hopes are very high!

As is the norm, however, it was not all good news. There was a host of very familiar issues raised. Respondents complained about data allowances and speed, and reported limitations in their internet data allowance, with some being restricted to low data limits per day.

Additionally, there were complaints about very slow internet speeds and sometimes no internet connectivity at all.

The SHI responses also revealed that the quality of internet connectivity at sea varies across different companies. Some respondents reported very good connectivity, while others experienced patchy service and poor connectivity. The discrepancies in the provision of internet services were not only about different shipping companies, often even within the same fleet, seafarers complained about wildly different experiences. This was a cause of much frustration, especially when crew had experienced good connectivity on one vessel, only to be on the end of very poor service on another.

We also heard more issues about what was deemed to be "insufficient Wi-Fi data". Respondents reported that their allocated Wi-Fi data is simply not enough to stay connected and access the online resources they want and need.

In addition, it was also reported that seafarers feel it is not merely the quality and cost of access that is an issue, they reported there is often too little time for video calls due to the trade-off between work, sleep and so little downtime.

The importance of reliable and affordable internet connectivity for seafarers to maintain communication with their families, manage their work-life balance and access information and entertainment is increasingly coming to the fore.

Challenges with data allowance, speed and availability, as well as variations in connectivity across company fleets, suggest the need for improvements in the provision of internet services to seafarers to enhance their well-being and job satisfaction.



**My data limit barely allows my phone to wake up.**

## How happy about access to shore leave?

6.23 ↓ from 6.76

Responses highlight the challenges and varying experiences of seafarers concerning shore leave, with limitations on time, energy, company policies, and the still remaining COVID-19 restrictions.

These are all still having a major impact on seafarers' ability to go ashore, with a huge impact on their well-being, as mental health, job satisfaction and overall welfare are dependent very much on access to get ashore occasionally. The inability to have shore leave or limited opportunities for going ashore were described as making life at sea boring and seriously affecting crew members' well-being and lowering morale on board.

Unfortunately, the SHI responses indicate that many seafarers do not have the time or energy to go ashore, even when shore leave is available. This is due to factors, such as inspections, surveys, and audits, as well as short port stays at remote and difficult-to-access docks and terminals.

It may come as a surprise, as so many nations are now dropping their COVID-19 pandemic protocols, but there is still a residual impact on seafarer shore leave. Respondents said they have been treated poorly and faced restrictions; some were even kept isolated at sea on a healthy ship. Seafarers also reported that even if they were fully vaccinated, company policies or local regulations prohibited them from going ashore. The survey responses also indicate that shore leave policies vary among different companies and locations.

Criticisms were heard about several ports, and it was stated that China and Saudi Arabia are still yet to fully allow seafarers full, unfettered access to shore leave. It is hoped this is changing, and that crews will be allowed elements of freedom of movement once more. In addition, seafarers reported a rising tide of port closures and industrial action which made it harder for them to get off the vessel.

Some respondents mentioned that "everybody wants to keep the crew on board," and they spoke of the factors and pressures that discourage or limit crew members from taking shore leave, with operational demands and logistical considerations making it less and less likely for crews to feel willing or able to get off the ship.

SHI respondents spoke of a need to improve shore leave policies and practices to better support the mental health, job satisfaction, and overall welfare of seafarers. There were calls for industry efforts to standardise protocols and to provide more opportunities for shore leave. It was suggested Port State Control inspectors should be more inquisitive about whether seafarers were being allowed to leave the vessel.



**Shore leave is impossible as we have constant inspections/surveys/audits in a short, crammed port stay with only a small crew.**

## How happy about wages/salary?

7.32 ↓ from 7.71

The latest results and responses highlight concerns about salaries, with mentions of “decreases” and “stagnation”. There is also a growing sense of disparity compared to other industries. This is especially concerning as there is something of a brain drain from seafaring.

In addition, issues related to the cost of living, lack of room for financial growth, and potential challenges with career advancement were mentioned.

The survey results indicate that many seafarers are dissatisfied with their current salaries. One part of the industry was singled out, and it was stated that salaries in offshore companies have been hit particularly hard.

It was also stated repeatedly that the rising cost of living is having a major impact. Seafarers feel squeezed and are not confident that their wages will be able to track upwards in line with inflation in their home nations. With inflation running at around 7-10% in many seafarer nations, it was felt that wages are not keeping pace. This was especially hard on seafarers away from home being told repeatedly that the price of goods is rising, and families are feeling concerned.

The survey results also indicate that there is a lack of room for growth in the earning potential of seafarers and a lack of opportunities for advancement. One interesting thread of responses was about a lack of support for seafarer entrepreneurs – people who have ideas and want to make them into businesses, but who do not want to currently leave the sea. It was suggested that some mechanism to support such ventures could be developed.

According to the respondents, there are indications of potential obstacles related to career advancement. They highlighted concerns about corruption and what was termed “cronyism” with certain people favoured for higher positions and overlooking more skilled and talented candidates. It is hard to know the truth about such allegations, but there is a clear need for diversity and more transparent recruitment practices.

Seafarers also stressed the need for competitive compensation, and they saw this as vital to attract and retaining skilled seafarers. There were calls for increased salaries to cover rising costs, seafarers wanted career advancement opportunities and support for entrepreneurship. They want fairness in the system and an end to cronyism.



**The industry has barely revised salaries in over 2 decades. All other industries have had increments. Seafarers are still paid the same that they were being paid in the 2000's.**

## How happy about the food on board?

7.02 ↓ from 8.09

The question of food brought the biggest single fall in sentiment this quarter. Seafarers expressed dissatisfaction with the state of onboard meals. The food budget allocated by companies, averaging it seems at around \$10 per day per person, is being deemed grossly inadequate in the face of rising costs.

Moreover, there were real concerns that some shipping companies are resorting to cost-saving measures by actually cutting the food budget or sacrificing the quantity or quality of the food provided on board. Respondents spoke of meals as being unhealthy, monotonous, and of poor quality.

The impact of food inflation is a huge concern, with worries that rising costs may further compromise the quality and availability of food on board. This adds to the growing list of challenges faced by seafarers in obtaining adequate and nutritious meals.

Hygiene is another pressing issue which seems to be throwing up new problems - perhaps literally, as instances of food poisoning were reported. Of particular concern were respondents talking of cooks catching fish to supplement meals. It was felt that this happened in potentially polluted waters, and with diseased or perhaps poisonous fish.

Perhaps fuelled by questions of whether some catering crew know what they are cooking, let alone how, seafarers expressed concerns about the qualifications and expertise of cooks and chefs on board. Respondents reported that many of these individuals have limited experience or training, which seems to be impacting their ability to provide nutritious and high-quality meals for seafarers.

In addition, seafarers lamented the lack of guidance and information about healthy eating on board ships. While there are industry schemes, respondents mentioned that were simply not being told enough about nutrition, and they felt they were not receiving healthy meals. This underscores the need for proper nutrition education and guidance to promote healthy eating habits among seafarers.

These latest SHI findings paint a bleak picture of the state of onboard meals for seafarers. Inadequate food budgets, poor food quality and hygiene, unqualified cooks, varying food experiences, lack of nutrition education, and concerns about food inflation are major issues that need to be addressed by the maritime industry.



**\$10 per day per person is not enough to eat properly.**

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

7.1 ↓ from 7.83

The SHI paints a concerning picture of the state of health and well-being on board ships. Respondents reported that basic personal care items such as toothpaste, shampoo and shaving gel are not provided, or are not easy to obtain. This is raising serious concerns about maintaining basic hygiene standards. This is a frustrating shortcoming that seafarers said needs urgent attention. The knock-on effect of poor access to shore leave is those items which we consider everyday essentials are not available. This further exacerbates the disconnect that seafarers feel.

Perhaps tied in with the issue of toothpaste, is the fact that seafarers reported problems accessing a dentist when they needed it. Emergency dental issues are going unchecked, and we have seafarers resorting to self-repairs. These are problematic in many ways, they could also potentially lead to issues of painkiller dependency. So, access to a dentist when needed is vital.

Furthermore, crew members face significant challenges when it comes to exercise. As we have heard across so many previous reports, demanding work schedules, long hours, lack of downtime, and irregular work schedules leave seafarers with limited time and energy for physical activity.

In addition, there are often insufficient or none existent gym facilities on board ships, and crew members may need to pool their resources to buy equipment. Lack of guidance and activities for keeping fit on board further hinders access to exercise facilities and resources. As to this point, rather unusually, we also heard from seafarers that poor internet connectivity is felt as adding to the challenges of keeping fit. Respondents claimed they struggle to access online resources for exercise or other recreational activities due to slow and unreliable internet connections.

Design considerations were also covered, with some questions about how relatively new ships could be constructed with so little consideration of welfare and the provision of gym space.

There was some crossover between the workload question and the issue of how it may also impact health and fitness. The role of Chief Officers in allocating work was mentioned. We received concerns about rest hour regulations and reports that these were being routinely breached on some vessels, with excessive workload and fatigue impacting crew members' ability to maintain a healthy routine and exercise.

Experiences with maintaining fitness and health on board ships vary greatly, with some respondents reporting positive experiences, while for others, the impact of watch patterns, time zones and night shifts impact seafarer health and well-being, underscoring the unique challenges faced at sea.

Overall, the survey responses indicate significant challenges faced by seafarers in maintaining a healthy routine and accessing exercise facilities on board ships. It is crucial to address these issues to promote the health and well-being of seafarers on board ships. Suggestions for improvement include collaboration with providers who offer exercise facilities or activities on board ships, indicating potential opportunities to improve access to fitness resources for crew members.



**There isn't any equipment on board or any guidance to activities we can do to keep fit.**

## How happy about the training you receive?

7.41 ↓ from 8.12

Issues concerning seafarer training programs were revealed in the latest SHI responses. While some crew did report positive experiences, describing the training programs as “good” or “very good,” others have a different perspective.

They were a number that expressed frustration, stating they felt programs were “ineffective”. They singled out a major challenge with the learning management system (LMS) used by companies. There were concerns that these are felt to be not sufficiently user-friendly.

This raises wider issues about the effectiveness of the training programs and the ability of crew members to fully engage with the content provided. If the LMS is difficult to navigate or lacks essential features, it can hinder the learning experience and leave crew members feeling frustrated and ill-equipped.

Another issue highlighted is “training overload” and its impact on crew members’ off-time. Many respondents reported that they are required to complete training during their downtime, adding a burden to their already demanding work schedule. Seafarers said they struggle to find a balance between their work and personal time, as training requirements encroach on their rest periods and leisure activities.

Moreover, the lack of a structured training program across different companies is also a concern. Respondents reported that there is often very little training or training structure provided, leading to inconsistencies and gaps in the quality and content of the training programs. While the outcomes of the training are strictly stated through STCW, some respondents felt more of a comprehensive structure is needed to cover not just areas of study, but the approaches to learning also.

The findings emphasise the need to address these challenges in seafarer training programs. Training should be relevant, accessible, and effectively delivered to meet the needs of the crew and to enhance their skills and knowledge. User-friendly LMS platforms, carefully manage training schedules to avoid overloading crew members during their off-time, and better-devised training programs can ensure consistency and quality across the industry.



**The training does not align with the demands of certificates.**



# How happy about interaction with crew on board?

7.78 ↓ from 8.34

Onboard interactions are usually one of the highest-performing aspects of the SHI. We receive many comments about having “good friends” and “good relationships and cooperation”, and the power of positive interactions makes a real difference on board.

However, it feels that we are at a real turning point. There is a huge problem at the fundamental core of seafarers’ social lives at sea. There is a growing dichotomy between the impact of internet connectivity and the willingness of seafarers to engage on board.

It would be all too easy to claim that internet access is bad for social cohesion on board, but that might be too simplistic. People do not interact, engage, or spend time in shared areas because there is not enough to entice or encourage them to do so. Seafarers feel that there is a massive hole at the centre of the onboard social experience. So, with that in mind many are more than happy with taking themselves off and simply being alone in their space, using online access as the consolation for a lack of cohesion.

It appears that there is a backlash against connectivity as a barrier to better relationships on board when it seems that the disengagement of crew is a symptom of wider issues. They will engage, enjoy, entertain and enter into positive activities if they are provided and if others do the same.

At the moment we have almost dead ships when it comes to interaction, and then fingers are pointed at seafarers who want to be online as the reason for this. This is not a fair criticism, and there needs to be more done to find solutions to camaraderie, engagement and enjoyment at sea. This is a key discussion as younger seafarers are feeling these pressures even more acutely.

There is a vast range of experiences and interactions among crew members. However, it is important to raise issues and to question the trends we are hearing about. Some crew members mentioned that workload and tiredness can hinder interactions among crew members, indicating that the demanding nature of work on board ships may impact crew members’ ability to interact with each other. Long working hours, fatigue, and high-pressure situations can affect crew members’ ability to communicate effectively and build strong relationships on board.

Seafarers spend extended periods working and living with their fellow crew members, and the quality of their interactions can have a significant impact on their well-being and job satisfaction. The maritime industry must recognise the challenges that crew members may face and take proactive steps to promote a positive work culture, foster effective communication, and provide support mechanisms to ensure that seafarers can work together harmoniously as a cohesive team.

Creating a supportive and respectful work environment, allied to a pleasant, comfortable and inclusive living setting, can not only enhance the overall experience of seafarers but also contribute to safer and more efficient operations on board ships. It is time to prioritise the importance of crew interactions and relationships and strive towards work and living conditions which promote mutual respect, effective communication, camaraderie and teamwork on every ship.



**We don't have control over who sails with us from the compatibility point of view. You just have to hope for the best and make do**

## How happy with your workload?

7.03 ↓ from 7.6

There were four key themes when it came to the question of workload. Seafarers spoke of “unnecessary jobs and corporate bureaucracy”, “increasing workloads and maintenance challenges”, “long working hours”, and “mixed perceptions of rules and regulations”.

The SHI responses reveal a troubling reality about the workload and administrative challenges faced by seafarers on board ships. The issue of unnecessary jobs and corporate bureaucracy is a prevalent concern, with respondents noting that certain roles and administrative processes are seen as mere tick boxes for head office. This bureaucratic burden adds to the workload and can create inefficiencies, hindering the overall work environment on board ships. It also brings problems in the working relationship between staff at sea and those ashore.

Furthermore, increasing workloads, poor budgets, and lack of time for maintenance were mentioned as contributors to stress and machinery failures. Seafarers are faced with demanding workloads and maintenance responsibilities, which can impact the efficiency and effectiveness of ship operations. The pressures of the job are compounded by concerns related to rest hour compliance, with some respondents expressing concerns that companies are not following rest hours and too much additional work. Proper management of rest hours and workload distribution among crew members was stated as being crucial for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment on board ships.

There are also mixed perceptions of rules and regulations among respondents, with some expressing scepticism that rest hours are only on paper and that rules always favour management ashore, while others highlight the importance of proper planning and the role that good senior officers and leadership make.

This disparity in perceptions indicates that there may be inconsistencies in the application and effectiveness of rules and regulations, which can impact the crew's overall experience and well-being. Indeed, long working hours were also mentioned by some respondents, with reports of crew working 12 hours every day. This indicates potential challenges related to fatigue, workload, and work-life balance, which can have adverse effects on the mental and physical health of seafarers.

The latest SHI findings underscore the urgent need for efficient workload management, proper planning, and adherence to regulations related to rest hours and other safety measures on board ships. Shipping companies and relevant authorities must address the concerns related to unnecessary jobs, corporate bureaucracy, increasing workloads, maintenance challenges, rest hour compliance, and long working hours.



**Our real seafarer work is great, but company bureaucracy is bad.**

# How happy with welfare facilities when you are ashore?

6.49 ↓ from 7.41

The SHI responses reveal that seafarers face significant challenges when it comes to accessing welfare facilities ashore. One of the key issues is work-life balance, with crew members mentioning the difficult choice between sleep/rest and going ashore. This highlights the constant struggle seafarers face in maintaining a healthy work-life balance while working on board ships, which can harm their overall well-being and quality of life.

Limited access to shore facilities is also a concern. Many mentioned that they generally do not have access to shore facilities or that these facilities are not available in the ports they visit, though they speak extremely fondly about the centres they can visit and stress the need for the facilities to be available universally.

Lack of access to shore welfare facilities can contribute to seafarers feeling isolated and disconnected from the rest of the world, impacting their mental health and overall satisfaction with their work. It also encourages despondency when it comes to getting ashore – so a lack of easy and positive access, means that crew are more likely to not bother. Instead of being able to use the facilities which can make such a difference to their physical and mental well-being.

The survey also revealed mixed perceptions of facilities ashore, with some respondents mentioning improvements while others expressed frustration that they do not get the opportunity to use them. Some crew members likened life at sea to going to prison, while others mentioned limitations in going ashore in certain regions. This suggests that the quality and availability of shore facilities can vary widely depending on the location, which can impact seafarers' experiences and well-being during their time ashore.

Where seafarers do use centres, there was huge praise and gratitude to the people who provide the services. Some spoke of lifelong friendships which they have gained from getting to know those working in seafarers' centres.



**A life at sea is akin to going to prison.**

# Where



8%  
North  
America

A world map with a teal background. A teal circle callout points to North America with the text '8% North America'. Another teal circle callout is positioned in the lower-left area of the map with the text '7% of seafarers were based in other regions worldwide'.

7%  
of seafarers were  
based in other  
regions  
worldwide



# Key Issues

1. A decline in seafarers' satisfaction and the overall trend of decreasing satisfaction levels. Only connectivity saw a rise in this reporting period.
2. Yet again, we returned to issues of lack of shore leave and delays in sign-off procedures causing frustration.
3. Reports of attempts by some owners to make seafarers sign on for longer periods than desired, shifting from past practices.
4. Challenges coping with extended periods on board made all the harder owing to poor food, paperwork demands, ineffective shipboard leadership, and a sense of social isolation.
5. Growing wellness gap between companies that provide health and well-being programs for seafarers and those that do not.
6. Concerns about access to dental care in some ports.
7. Limited access to mental health support, medical advisory services, and physical well-being consultations was reported by some seafarers.
8. Connectivity issues at sea, including concerns about data allowances, internet speed, and connectivity limitations.
9. Varying quality of internet connectivity at sea across different companies.
10. Optimism that Starlink will change connectivity at sea.
11. Concerns about salaries, cost of living, lack of room for financial growth, and potential obstacles to career advancement.
12. Challenges related to onboard meals, including inadequate food budgets, poor food quality and hygiene, unqualified cooks, and lack of nutrition education.
13. Importance of positive onboard interactions for seafarers' well-being and job satisfaction.
14. The dichotomy between the impact of internet connectivity and seafarers' willingness to engage with each other on board.
15. Insufficient entertainment options on board are making it harder for people to find a reason to come together.
16. Need for more enticing activities and shared spaces to encourage crew members to interact.
17. Workload, fatigue, and high-pressure situations hinder interactions among crew members.
18. Bureaucracy and unnecessary jobs add to workload and stress.
19. Mixed perceptions of rules and regulations among seafarers.

# Change and Place-Making: Transforming Feedback into Action

The Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) was developed to provide a mechanism for taking feedback and data gained from seafarers and translating it into positive change.

As part of that process, and within Singapore Maritime Week 2023, the Mission to Seafarers, Seafarers Happiness Index Founder Steven Jones, in partnership with Standard Club, part of NorthStandard, Idwal, and Inmarsat are all joining together for a roundtable deep dive into the SHI results.

Using data from crews, vessels and claims, the goal will be to develop an approach which allows us to collectively move beyond hearing the messages from seafarers, and how the lessons are actively translated into meaningful solutions.

Supported by an invited panel of leading ship owners, managers, and charterers, this collaborative effort seeks to convert words into actions, with a focus on improving the well-being of seafarers and generating lessons that can be applied across the global fleet.

Drawing from not just the SHI, but from the onboard findings of Idwal the aim will be to link lessons surrounding happiness levels with the standard of welfare provisions witnessed. Ensuring that the correlation between better welfare and improved ship conditions comes to the fore as we recognise the value of good welfare in supporting commercial necessities.

## Meta Data Approach

The roundtable group will explore a meta-approach of data, insights, and the feedback we receive. As we develop a strategic forecasting framework for seafaring realities and the need for positive progress.

By strategically evaluating current practices against future possibilities, the goal is to identify the right actions and approaches that can propel the industry towards a solutions-centred approach.

Critically evaluating today's practices against tomorrow's possible realities is a key part of this process. Building social good alongside commercial success is the aim, and with increasing emphasis on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) drivers, we will address challenges while building on the moral, legal, and ethical obligations of the industry to prioritise the well-being of crews while ensuring they are part of the equation for commercial success.

## Accelerating from Compliance to Excellence

This involves examining SHI feedback from the lens of seafarers' reality, reimagining and charting a course of action to find solutions. The aim is to harness all that we have flowing into the industry, the data, insights, and reports to accelerate us from compliance to excellence. This requires a change-making mindset, one which is focused on regenerating seafaring for a better future.

This is an opportunity to be bold and innovative, challenging the status quo and redefining how things are done in this transitional period between human-led operations and full autonomy.

## Placemaking for Seafarers:

We want to make a shift towards community participation, with a focus on placemaking for seafarers. This then becomes a key aspect of regeneration, with seafarers as local partners in shaping the vision and goals. So, we use the Seafarers Happiness Index and other tools to gather crew feedback on whether progress has been made. The ultimate aim is to create real-world shipboard solutions, and we are grateful that the feedback from seafarers and the support of key industry stakeholders allow us an opportunity to do that.

# Conclusion

The high-water mark of sentiment at the end of 2022 has given way to slack water and the seeming start of an ebb. It is clear from the feedback that seafarers are facing significant challenges that are impacting their satisfaction and well-being at sea. The decline in seafarers' satisfaction levels can be attributed to a combination of factors, including lack of shore leave, delays in sign-off procedures, attempts to extend seafarers' contracts, challenges with extended periods on board, and limited access to mental health support and wellbeing programs. Connectivity issues at sea, varying quality of internet connectivity, and concerns about salaries, career advancement, and cost of living are also major concerns.

Additionally, challenges related to onboard living conditions, including inadequate food budgets, poor food quality, unqualified cooks, and lack of nutrition education, are affecting seafarers' well-being and job satisfaction.

Workload, fatigue, high-pressure situations, bureaucracy, and unnecessary jobs are also hindering crew interactions, which are crucial for seafarers' mental health and job satisfaction. There is a growing gap between companies that provide health and wellbeing programs for seafarers and those that do not, resulting in limited access to mental health support, medical advisory services, and physical well-being consultations for some seafarers.

Seafarers need improved living conditions, access to quality mental health and well-being support, fair salaries, and opportunities for career advancement. There is also a need for more enticing activities and shared spaces on board to encourage positive interactions among crew members. Companies and industry stakeholders need to work collaboratively to address these challenges and prioritize the well-being of seafarers.

The feedback data and written responses underscore the need for concerted efforts to improve seafarers' satisfaction and well-being at sea. Addressing issues related to connectivity, onboard living conditions, health and wellbeing support, salaries and career advancement, perceptions of rules and regulations, and onboard interactions can contribute to a positive work environment for seafarers and ensure their well-being while at sea. By prioritising seafarers' needs and addressing these challenges, we can foster a more satisfied, motivated, and healthy workforce, ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and retention among seafarers.

## THANK YOU

We are grateful to the seafarers who take the time to discuss the reasons behind their own experiences and share their thoughts with us. This enables us to continue to develop the right responses and make a profession worthy of the fantastic people who operate ships, who make the industry work, and whose efforts deliver trade and prosperity globally.

We are also indebted to the shipping companies and managers ashore who encourage their seafarers to engage and to have their say. We always want to hear from more seafarers, to have even more data to build upon and to hear more stories and experiences. Please encourage your all seafarers to share, or if you are a shipowner or operator, please ask your crews to complete the survey. The more we know, the greater our power to shape positive change.





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