

## ***Yacht Crew Help 2022 – a year in data***

### ***About Yacht Crew Help***



ISWAN launched its Yacht Crew Help service in November 2020, in response to the findings of its 2018 research study, [The Welfare of Superyacht Crew](#). The study, in partnership with MHG Insurance, identified that although many yacht crew experienced mental health challenges, low morale and loneliness while working on board, there was a lack of accessible, specialised support available to help them. As a result, ISWAN established Yacht Crew Help, a free, multilingual, 24/7/365 service operated by a team of helpline officers with broad-ranging experience of providing emotional support and practical guidance. This new service drew on ISWAN's expertise from operating SeafarerHelp, our long-established helpline for the maritime sector.

Through responding to wide-ranging contacts from yacht crew who have sought our support over the past two years, ISWAN has gained unique insights into the challenges that crew who work in the yachting industry face. Data from the first two years of Yacht Crew Help show that the issues faced by yacht crew are in many ways distinct from those who work in merchant shipping. ISWAN is committed to using insights from Yacht Crew Help to raise awareness about the key issues and trends affecting yacht crew and to working effectively in partnership with the industry to develop potential solutions.

### ***Yacht Crew Help in 2022: headline figures***



**New contacts increased by 19.5% year-on-year on the 2021 total**



**300 crew members supported, up by 31.0% year-on-year**



**Yacht crew from at least 42 different nationalities supported**



**Women accounted for 40.0% of helpline users, where gender was known**



**Mental health challenges was the most common reason for calling Yacht Crew Help, accounting for 16.6% of all issues raised**



**Abuse, bullying, harassment or discrimination (ABHD) accounted for 13.5% of issues raised by women, as opposed to 5.8% of issues raised by men. Overall, contacts relating to ABHD increased by 81.3% year-on-year**

## An overview of 2022

- **Call volume**

After dropping slightly during the second half of 2021, new contacts to Yacht Crew Help increased in each successive quarter of 2022, totalling 239 for 2022, up by 19.5% on the previous year (fig. 1). The total number of contacts, including all follow-up contacts with yacht crew, totalled 610, up by 27.1% year-on-year. We envisage that contacts to the helpline will continue to increase over the coming years as it becomes better known amongst yacht crew and in the wider industry.



Fig. 1

- **Nationality**

Yacht crew of at least 42 different nationalities used Yacht Crew Help in 2022. Where nationality was known, British nationals accounted for the highest proportion of callers, at 27.2%, perhaps reflecting the higher awareness of Yacht Crew Help in the UK (fig. 2). Just over 10% of helpline users were South African, whilst 8.2% were Indian nationals.

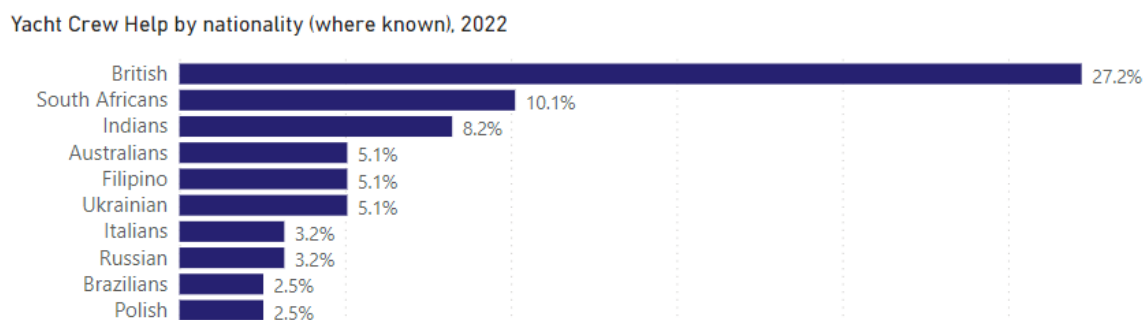


Fig. 2

- **Gender**

Women accounted for 40.0% of contacts to Yacht Crew Help, where gender identity is known (in just over 40% of cases we do not know the gender identity of the caller). This is strikingly different to the gender composition of SeafarerHelp, ISWAN's 24/7/364 free helpline for seafarers across all maritime industries, which receives only 3.8% of callers from women seafarers, reflecting the very different demographic profile of yacht crew.

- **Call length**

On average, our helpline team spent 22.5 minutes on the first call that a crew member made to Yacht Crew Help and had an average of 3.4 further contacts after the initial call. The average time spent in total on each interaction with a helpline user was 44.0 minutes. This is substantially higher than the average total call length of 32.8 minutes for SeafarerHelp, indicating the high proportion of complex contacts raised by yacht crew. For example, the average length for contacts relating to mental health, the most commonly raised issue to Yacht Crew Help, was 104.1 minutes. Contacts relating to providing information queries, for example about training opportunities, were typically much shorter at around 14 minutes in total.

- **Communication channels**

Email was the most frequently used communication channel for new contacts, accounting for 38.1% of cases in 2022 (fig. 3). Live chat made up just over a quarter of all contacts, with the telephone being used in just under 20% of cases. Despite only launching in September 2022, WhatsApp accounted for 16.7% of contacts in 2022 and 45.7% of contacts in the October-December quarter, indicating its popularity as a communication tool.

Yacht Crew Help, method of first contact, 2022

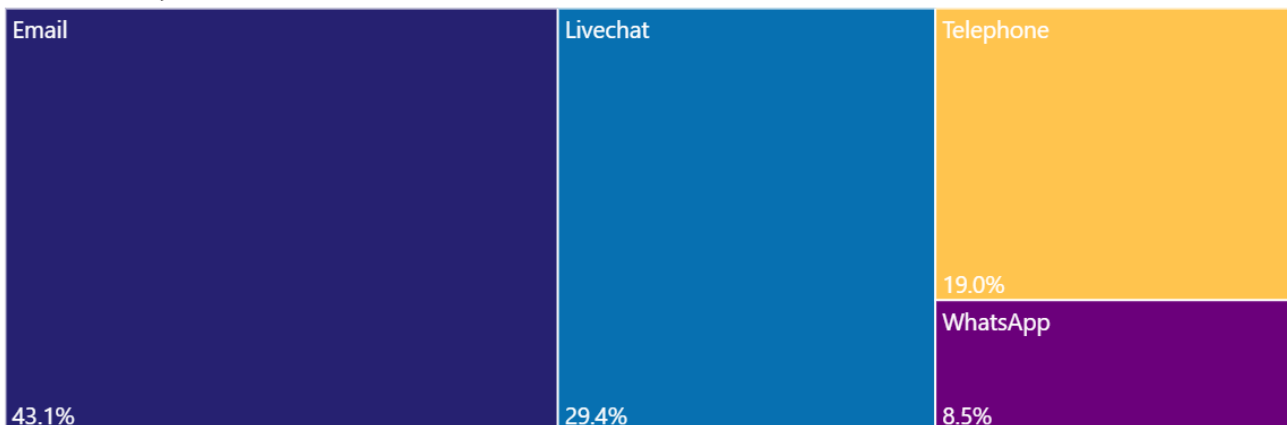


Fig. 3

## Issues raised

The composition of issues raised through the Yacht Crew Help helpline is strikingly different to that of SeafarerHelp, which is more generally accessed by seafarers from the merchant shipping industry. This indicates the specific and often more complex challenges facing crew in the yachting industry, as well as the less well-developed infrastructure of support and guidance that is available, in comparison to merchant shipping. Data from Yacht Crew Help shows that a higher proportion of yacht crew raised issues relating to mental health challenges, unpaid wages and experiences of abuse, bullying, discrimination and harassment than is the case for seafarers contacting SeafarerHelp (fig.4).

Key issues, Yacht Crew Help, 2022  
% of total issues raised

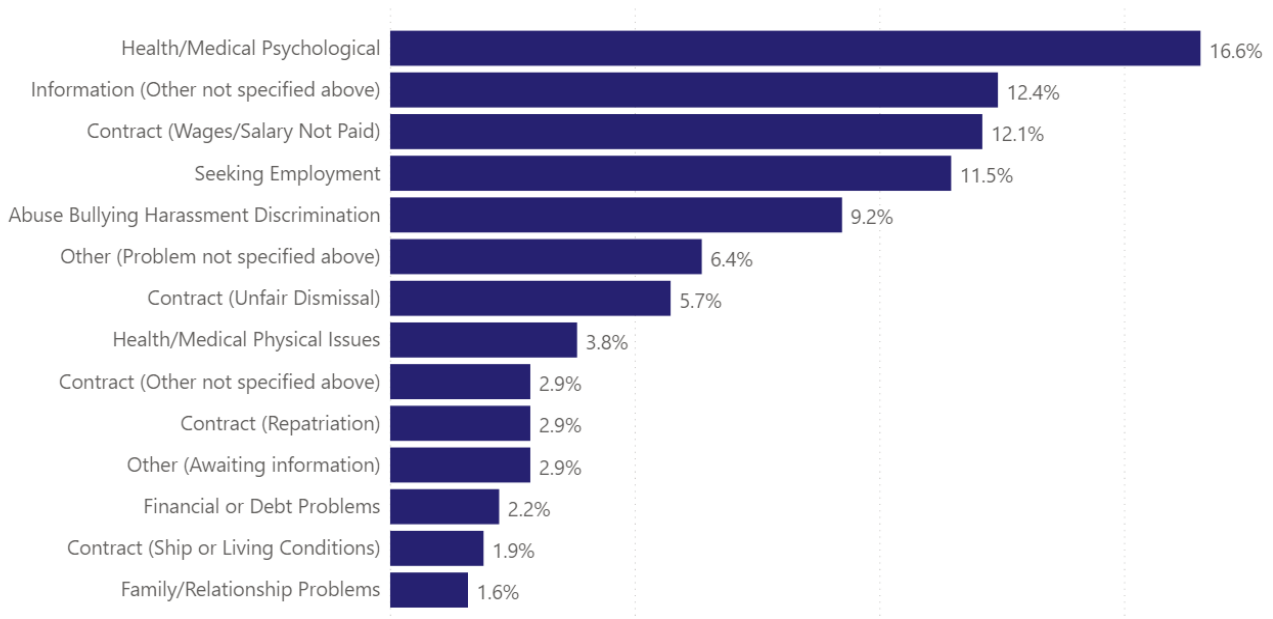


Fig. 4

There was also a very striking difference in the nature of issues raised by women yacht crew, as opposed to men (fig. 5). Issues relating to mental health challenges and experiences of abuse, bullying, harassment or discrimination were much higher amongst women crew members. The most common reasons for contacting Yacht Crew Help among men were for support seeking employment or for resolving unpaid wages. The higher complexity of issues raised to Yacht Crew Help as opposed to SeafarerHelp is reflected both in the longer average total call length and in the higher levels of emotional support provided: 21.0% of callers to Yacht Crew Help were provided with more in-depth emotional support, as opposed to 5.9% of SeafarerHelp users.

### Key issues raised by gender, Yacht Crew Help, 2022

Percentages of total issues raised by gender

● Female ● Male

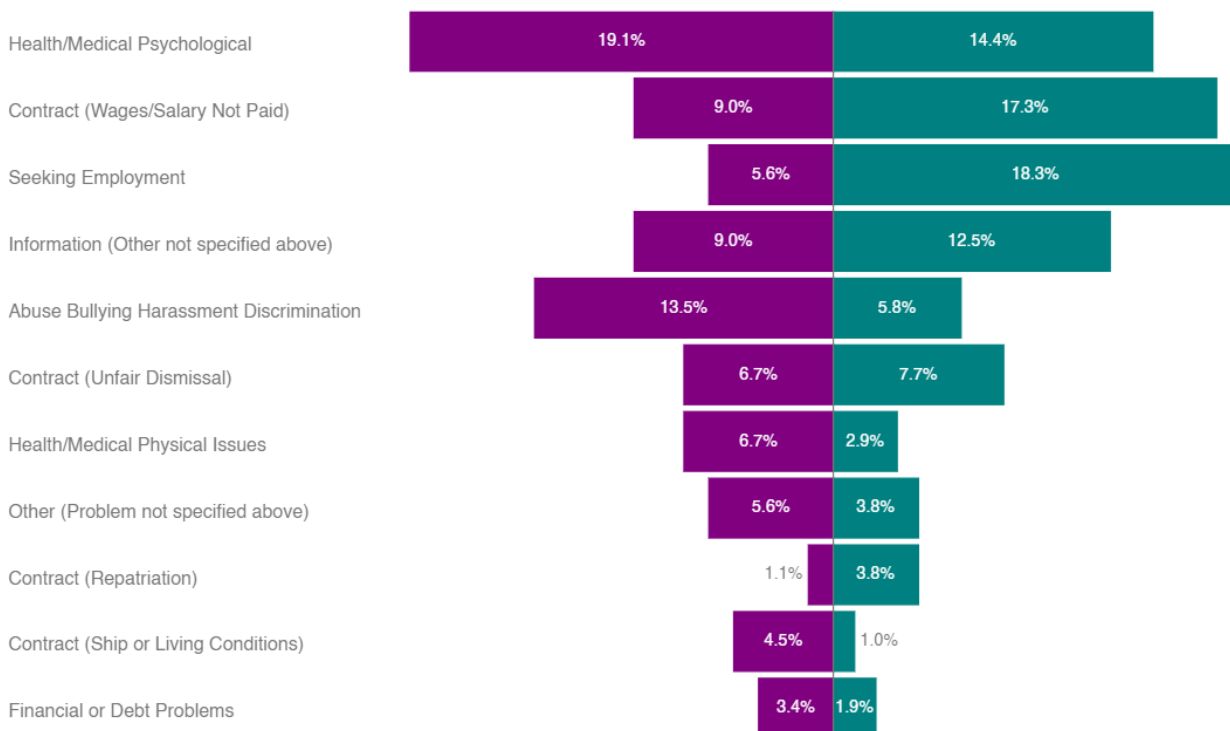


Fig. 5

## Yacht crew wellbeing

- **Mental health**

The most frequent issue raised to Yacht Crew Help was mental health challenges, which accounted for 16.6% of issues raised, in comparison to 4.4% for SeafarerHelp (excluding grant applications).<sup>1</sup> Yacht Crew Help contacts relating to mental health increased by 10.6% on the 2021 level. Where the gender identity of the helpline user was known, contacts relating to mental health accounted for 19.1% of issues raised by women, as opposed to 14.4% of issues raised by men (fig. 5). Yacht crew who contacted our helplines frequently talked about the impact on their mental health of long working hours, lack of sleep, the impact of alcohol or drugs onboard or difficulty fitting into the crew culture.

<sup>1</sup> ISWAN administered a number of emergency grant funds via SeafarerHelp in 2022, which was not the case for Yacht Crew Help. As a result, data relating to grant applications to SeafarerHelp has been excluded from analysis in this report in order to provide more meaningful comparisons between data insights from SeafarerHelp and Yacht Crew Help.

- **The impact of abuse, bullying, harassment and discrimination**

Our helpline data suggests that experiences of abuse, bullying, harassment or discrimination (ABHD) is the issue that has the greatest impact on the mental health of yacht crew. Almost a quarter (24.3%) of yacht crew who contacted Yacht Crew Help in relation to mental health challenges also raised an experience of some form of abuse. Overall, experiences of ABHD accounted for 9.2% of all issues raised, in comparison to 3.0% of issues raised to SeafarerHelp. Contacts relating to ABHD increased by 81.3% on the 2021 level.

Amongst women, experiences of abuse accounted for 13.5% of issues raised to Yacht Crew Help, as opposed to 5.8% of issues raised by men. In many cases, yacht crew contacted our helpline for support to cope with bullying, aggression and at times assault, frequently by more senior crew members. Amongst women yacht crew, half of all ABHD-related contacts involved sexual abuse or harassment.

- **Physical health issues**

In 2022, physical health issues accounted for 3.8% of issues raised to our helplines. Contacts relating to physical health doubled on the 2021 level, with yacht crew seeking support from ISWAN to cope with issues including the ongoing impact of COVID or accidents onboard. Helpline data demonstrates the close relationship between physical and mental health, with 16.2% of crew who contacted Yacht Crew Help in relation to their psychological health also raising physical health concerns.

- **Contractual issues**

The high proportion of contacts relating to contractual issues, in particular unpaid wages or unfair dismissal, is another key trend in Yacht Crew Help data. These issues are again more prevalent in comparison to SeafarerHelp. Overall, just over a quarter (25.4%) of contacts related to some form of contractual issue, with the number of contacts about contractual problems increasing by 14.1% on the 2021 level. The most prevalent contractual issue was unpaid wages, which accounted for 12.1% of all helpline contacts. This potentially reflects the less formal contractual arrangements among some sectors of the yachting industry and lower levels of trade union membership than is the case among Merchant Navy seafarers. Unfair dismissal accounted for 5.7% of issues raised to Yacht Crew Help.

## ***Yacht Crew Help: the future***

Insights from the early years of the Yacht Crew Help helpline clearly demonstrate the need for greater support provision for yacht crew, in particular in relation to mental health. As part of our wider Yacht Crew Help project, we are committed to continuing to work with the yachting industry to identify preventative steps that can be taken to provide psychologically healthy working environments for yacht crew. We will also be working to strengthen the support provision that is available for those yacht crew members who do experience psychological challenges whilst at sea.



Our data also indicates the need for greater understanding of the prevalence of experiences of abuse, bullying, harassment and discrimination (ABHD), in particular sexual assault and harassment, in the yachting sector. In the coming months, ISWAN will be launching a campaign and associated safety resource to support yacht crew to find safe, positive working environments in the sector. Furthermore, one of ISWAN's key priorities for the coming year is to work towards strengthening the evidence base around ABHD in the maritime industry more widely, including the yachting sector, and to increase our capacity to provide specialist support to survivors of abuse at sea.

Yacht Crew Help data also points to the need for greater clarity as regards contractual arrangements for yacht crew staff and increased support for those who feel that their contractual rights have been breached.

If you have any comments about this report or if you are interested in getting involved with or helping to promote ISWAN's work to improve crew welfare in the yachting sector, please get in touch at [iswan@iswan.org.uk](mailto:iswan@iswan.org.uk)