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NorthStandard

State of the Industry Snapshot:

# The relationship between connectivity and wellbeing at sea

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This report aligns with Navarino's belief in supporting seafarers through advanced communication technologies. At Navarino, we understand that access to high speed, reliable connectivity is not to be considered a luxury, but a necessity for the wellbeing of crew members. This report highlights the critical relationship between internet access and mental health, demonstrating how reliable connectivity can reduce feelings of isolation, strengthen social ties, and improve overall wellness.

We have always championed the importance of robust, secure, and seamless communications for those working at sea. We believe that with today's technology, seafarers should each have the same opportunity to stay connected with

their families, access support services, and enjoy social interactions, no matter where they are. The findings in this report reinforce our commitment to providing innovative solutions that address these needs. By supporting this report, we aim to foster dialogue across the maritime industry and encourage the adoption of technologies that prioritize crew welfare, ensuring that every individual on board can thrive both mentally and emotionally.

This sponsorship reflects our shared vision with Sailors' Society in creating a more connected and caring environment for the world's seafaring community.

**Christian Vakarelis**  
VP, Communications, Navarino



NorthStandard highlights the importance of seafarer wellbeing, supporting Sailors' Society's State of the Industry Snapshot, which explores the relationship between internet connectivity and crew mental health.

For seafarers, internet access is crucial in maintaining connections with loved ones, reducing isolation, and boosting overall wellbeing. Healthier, happier crew members perform better, enhancing operational efficiency and reducing turnover costs through improved job satisfaction. Reliable, affordable internet access is vital in enhancing wellbeing across vessels.

However, there are challenges. Over-reliance on connectivity may reduce meaningful in-person social interactions among crew, weakening onboard cohesion. Additionally, excessive

online engagement can lead to distractions from duties or rest. Some seafarers, despite having good internet access, still experience low wellbeing, suggesting that connectivity alone isn't a comprehensive solution and additional mental health support or onboard social activities may also be required.

The report stresses the business imperative for companies to support crew wellbeing and calls for international regulatory frameworks to promote affordable, high-quality and reliable internet use. As companies embrace corporate social responsibility, seafarers, too, are encouraged to use internet access responsibly while fulfilling their duties onboard.

**Capt Yves Vandeborn, FNI**  
Head of Loss Prevention Asia-Pacific,  
NorthStandard



**NorthStandard**

# Welcome to Sailors' Society's first State of the Industry Snapshot.

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Using unique data gathered from our MyWellness e-learning platform and extensive research carried out by our Head of Wellness, Johan Smith, this Snapshot examines the relationship between internet connectivity and seafarer wellbeing. It explores how digital connectedness can mitigate the unique challenges faced by seafarers in remote environments.

We know that social connectedness is a vital component of wellbeing and that the internet and social networking have revolutionised how this social connectivity is formed and maintained.

The harsh reality of living and working in confined, isolated environments at sea severely limits social interactions and keeps seafarers physically and socially distant from family and community ties. This work/rest environment's unique and complex nature presents significant obstacles to the seafarer's overall wellbeing.

It also means that the availability of good internet access has the potential to overcome some of these obstacles and enhance wellbeing at sea by fostering connections, strengthening social ties, reducing feelings of isolation and building social support while at sea.

While in recent years we have seen a substantial improvement in internet access for seafarers, there has been limited investigation into the relationship between connectivity and overall crew wellbeing. The detailed research behind this Snapshot aims to address that.

Our unique data and research have allowed us to look beyond the simplicities of a basic correlation between good connectivity and positive mental health and instead address the multifaceted nature of wellbeing at sea – a state where essential human needs are met, individuals can pursue meaningful goals and enjoy a fulfilling quality of life.

We look at wellbeing through a combination of the nine distinct areas that encompass a range of factors from loneliness and relationships to negative emotions and overall health and explore whether internet connectivity can mitigate the unique challenges faced by our seafaring community.

This Snapshot, and the extensive research and data behind it, will be crucial in highlighting to the wider maritime industry the indispensable role of reliable internet access in safeguarding the holistic wellbeing of seafarers and, subsequently, a company's bottom line.

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[You can read more about the research behind this Snapshot here.](#)

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# How the relationship between internet connectivity and wellbeing is explored

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Data was gathered from seafarers who were undertaking the Sailors' Society's MyWellness e-learning and from online surveys. The first section of this Snapshot will look at the rank, gender and years at sea of these respondents.

## FINDINGS ON INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AT SEA

The second section will focus on the internet connectivity of the respondents, looking at:

- Whether individuals have access to the internet while at sea.
- The quality and reliability of this internet access.
- The frequency of communication with family and friends.
- This frequency verses the desired contact.
- The actual mode of communication verses the desired mode.

From this an aggregated score is calculated to represent a respondent's internet score.

[Read more about how the internet score was calculated](#)

## ASSESSING WELLBEING

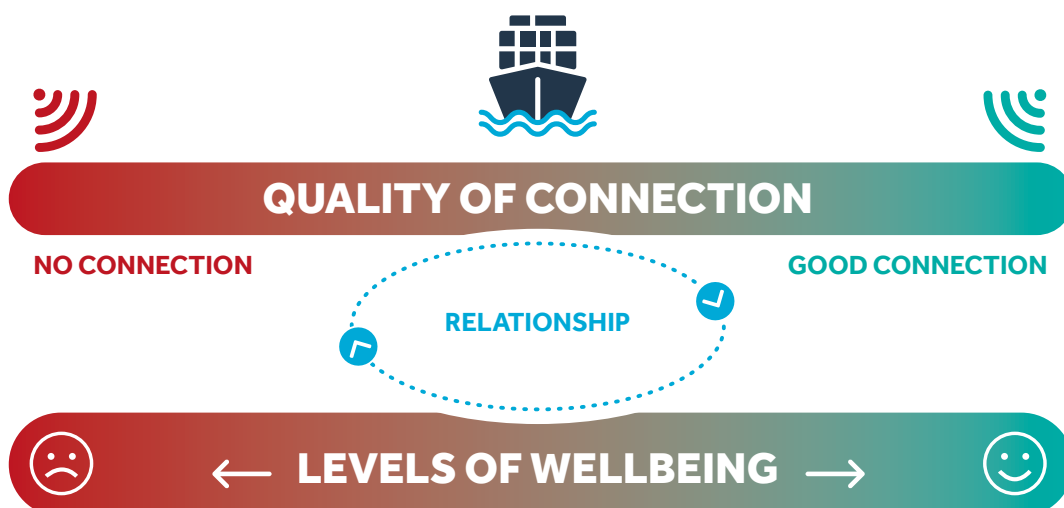
In the third section, we will look at the wellbeing of the respondents and calculate a score for this.

The assessment is conducted using the PERMA-Profiler, a validated psychometric tool designed to measure an individual's wellbeing across eight key dimensions. By aggregating the scores over these dimensions, a wellbeing score will be calculated.

[Read more about PERMA profiler, its reliability, validity and application.](#)

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND SEAFARER WELLBEING

Finally, using this data, we will explore how the internet score, either low or high, correlates with the wellbeing score and what this means for wellness at sea.



# Demographics

**952**

Respondents to the study

**29**

Countries represented in the study

## MOST DOMINANT COUNTRIES

Philippines 40%

India 20%

Ukraine 18%

Myanmar 6%

## YEARS AT SEA

### Number of respondents

<b>10</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>153</b>
Less than a year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years

## REPRESENTIVENESS OF SAMPLE

This sample's diversity in terms of experience, rank, gender and geographic origin makes it a valuable resource for understanding the wellbeing of seafarers across different contexts.

## RANK

Given the vast number of ranks, we opted to group the different ranks in terms of the function they perform and the location on ship, as well as the required experience for the position. The table below displays how ranks were grouped and then spread across the sample.

<b>21%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Other	Master	Engineering Officer	Deck Officer	Cadet	Rating	Steward / Cook
Other, chose not to say	Master	Chief Engineer 2 <sup>nd</sup> Engineer 3 <sup>rd</sup> Engineer 4 <sup>th</sup> Engineer Electro-Technical Officer	Chief Mate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Mate 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mate	Engine Cadet Deck Cadet	Able Seaman Ordinary Seaman Boatswain's Mate Oiler/Greaser Wiper Fitter Radioman	Steward Cook

## GENDER

<b>98%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Male	Female	Other, chose not to say

The sample of seafarers in this study closely mirrors the gender composition in the broader maritime industry reflecting the long-standing male dominance in the sector.

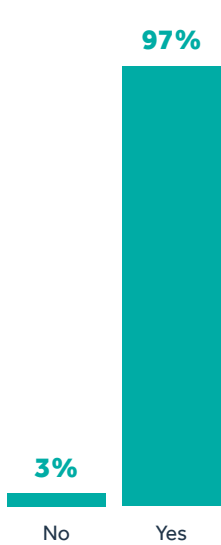
Despite recent efforts towards gender diversity, the maritime industry still faces challenges in this area. These figures underline the ongoing need for initiatives aimed at increasing female representation in seafaring roles, a key objective for both the industry and wider society.

# Findings on internet connectivity

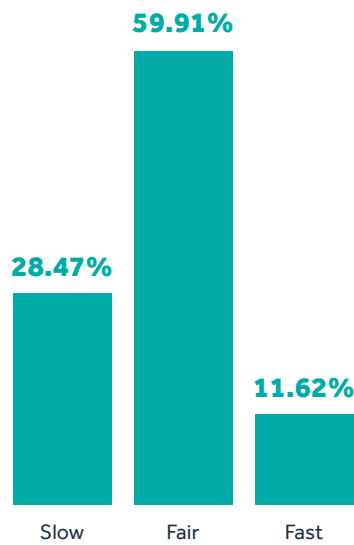
## SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF INTERNET ON VESSEL

In our sample, more than 97 per cent of respondents said they had internet connectivity on their vessel. This shows how on board connectivity has improved dramatically. However, the speed and cost of the internet on the vessel did limit how seafarers could make use of the connectivity.

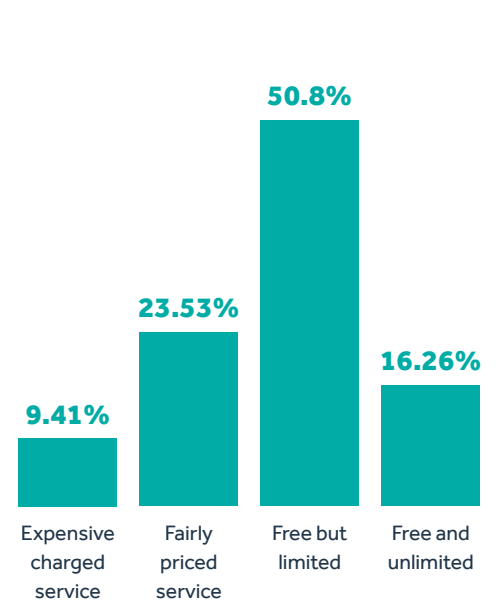
### AVAILABILITY



### CONNECTIVITY SPEED



### COST



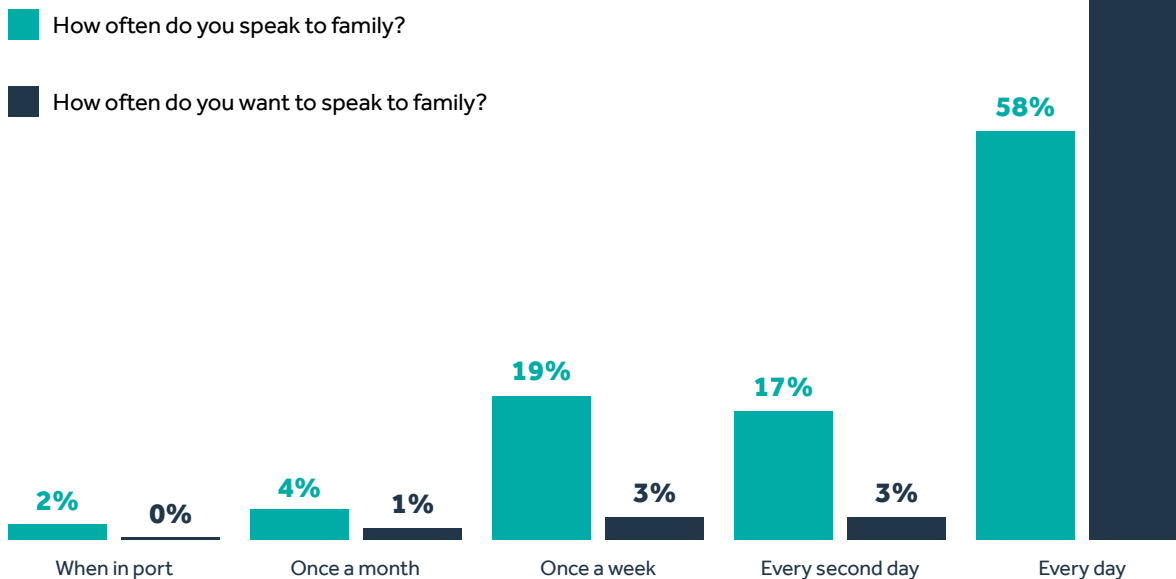
## MY INTERNET CONNECTION ALLOWS ME TO...

**13.53%**  
Send emails

**28.79%**  
Send emails and use social media

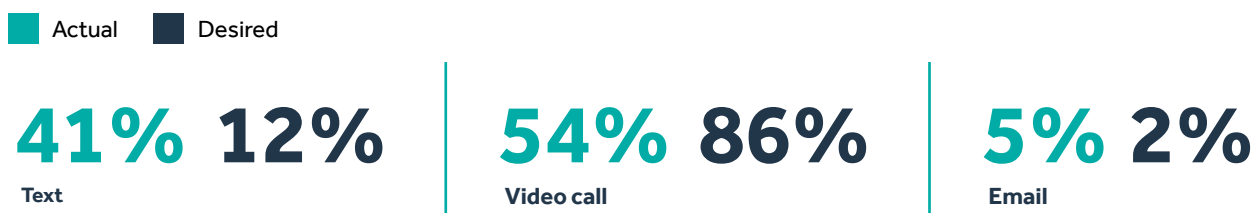
**57.68%**  
Send emails, use social media and make voice calls

## FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS - REALITY VERSES DESIRE



While nearly all the respondents expressed a strong desire for daily contact with family and friends, only 58 per cent achieved this while at sea. Constant contact with friends and family was clearly of great importance to seafarers, but the way they could connect through on board internet connectivity also made a big difference.

## HOW SEAFARERS CONNECT WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS - ACTUAL VERSES DESIRE



The study's insights suggest a growing reliance on digital to nurture relationships. 92 per cent of those surveyed believed that good internet connectivity (regular video calls) would have a positive effect on their relationships.

This raises important considerations about the future dynamics of social connections in an increasingly connected world - and means the gap between the reality of their connectivity and seafarers' desire to connect frequently with those back home is an issue. It underlines the importance that should be placed on improving connectivity bandwidths and speeds on board ships.

While it seems obvious that good internet connectivity leads to improved wellbeing in seafarers, until now this hypothesis has not actually been rigorously tested.

To do this we have assigned scores to both a seafarer's internet connectivity and their overall wellness.

By assigning a numerical score to the four main aspects of internet connectivity - connection, internet speed, cost and quality of connectivity - and then combining these, we were able to allocate an overall Internet Score to each respondent.

[Find out how the scores were calculated](#)

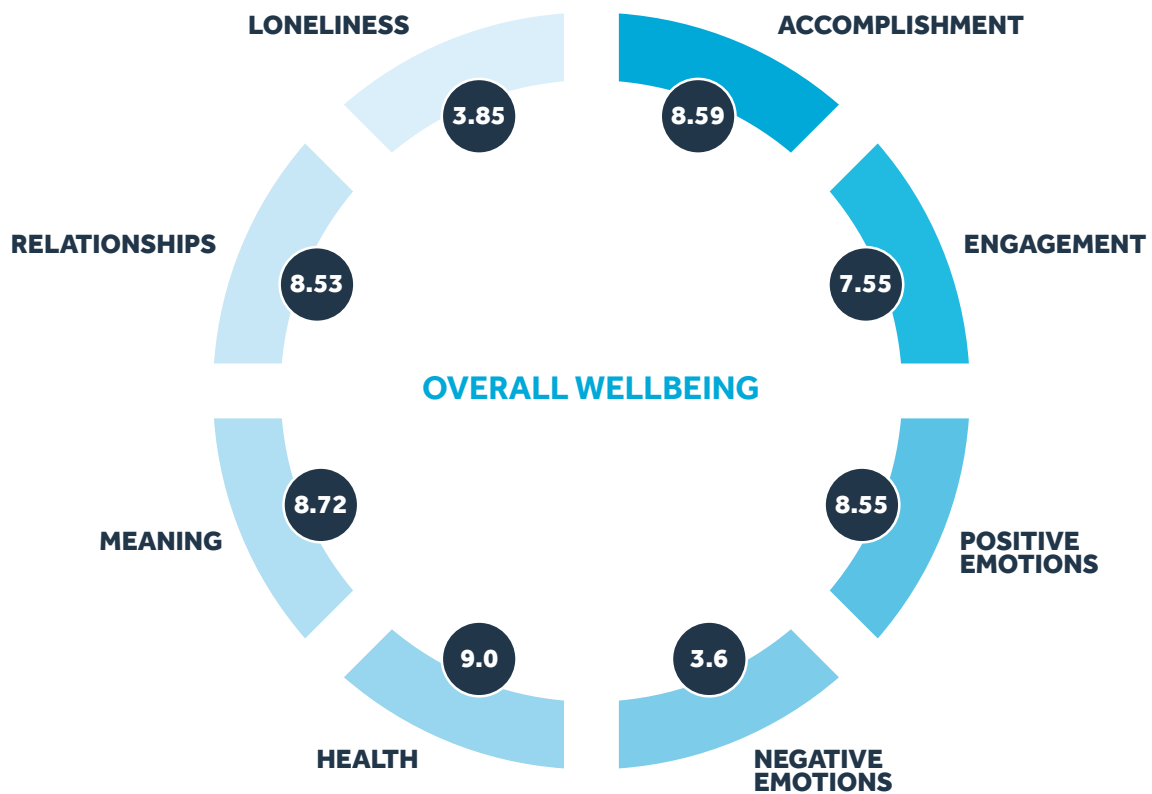


# Findings on crew wellbeing

To measure wellbeing among crew, we used the psychological assessment tool PERMA-profiler.

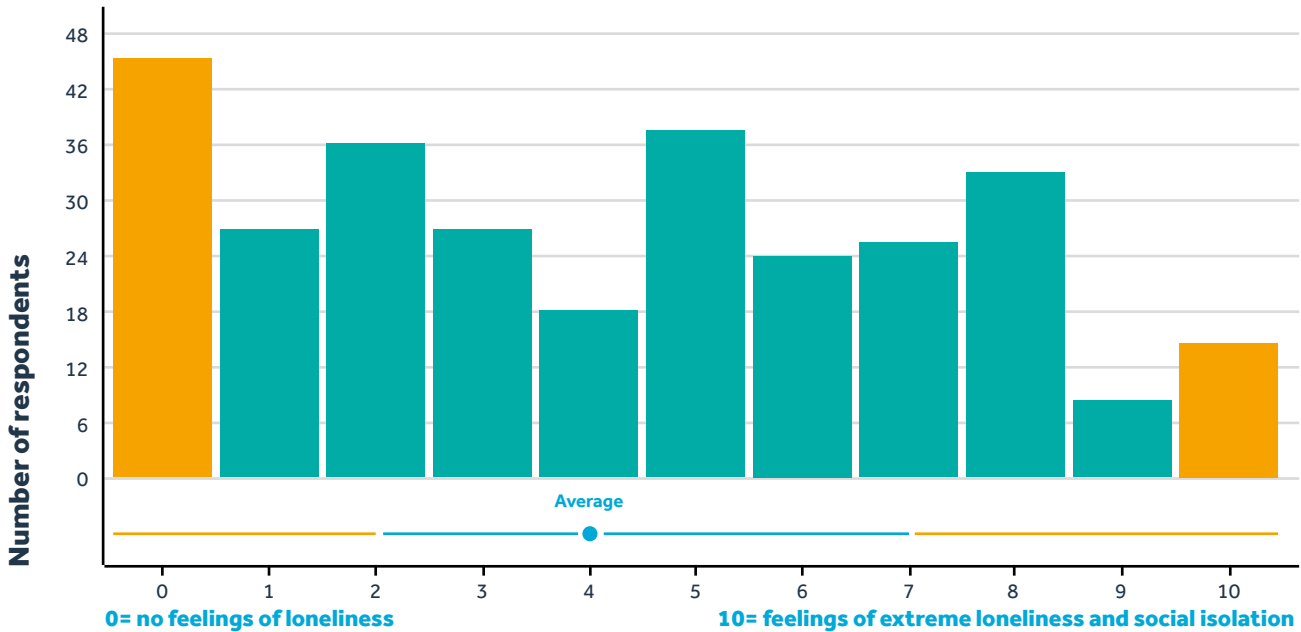
This comprehensive assessment captures the full spectrum of wellbeing with eight distinct aspects being measured. This is essential when looking at the multifaceted and multicultural maritime industry, where seafarers face unique challenges and stressors.

## AVERAGE SCORES



Scores are derived from a series of questions on each aspect of wellbeing, which seafarers have rated from 0-10.

[Find out how the scores were calculated](#)



**Participants' sense of loneliness**

In all but one of the aspects of wellbeing, the respondents all appear to have similar experiences. However, this is not the case with loneliness. Here the data reveals a striking disparity in respondents' experiences.

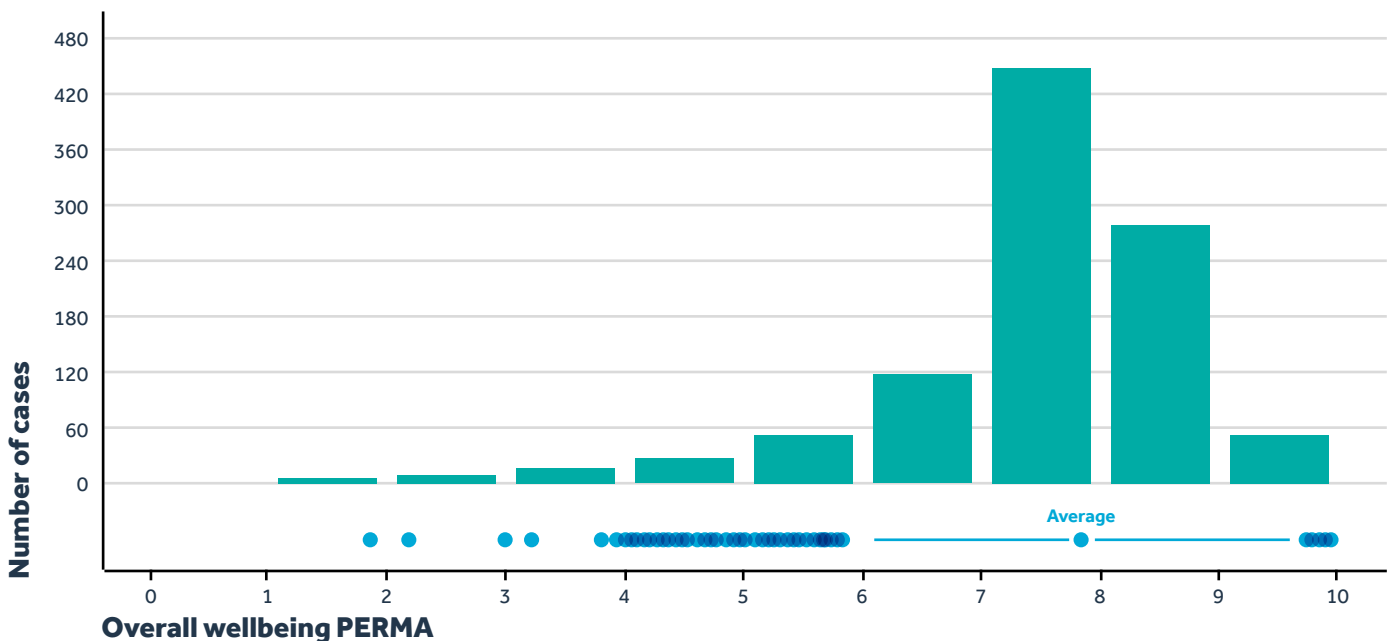
experienced high levels of loneliness, indicating pronounced feelings of social isolation, while conversely, others reported very low levels of loneliness, suggesting strong social connections and minimal feelings of isolation.

On average, the seafarers polled reported a moderate level of loneliness. However, the columns shaded yellow show some

This wide range reveals that seafarers seem to react very differently to the social isolation a life at sea brings.

**OVERALL WELLBEING**

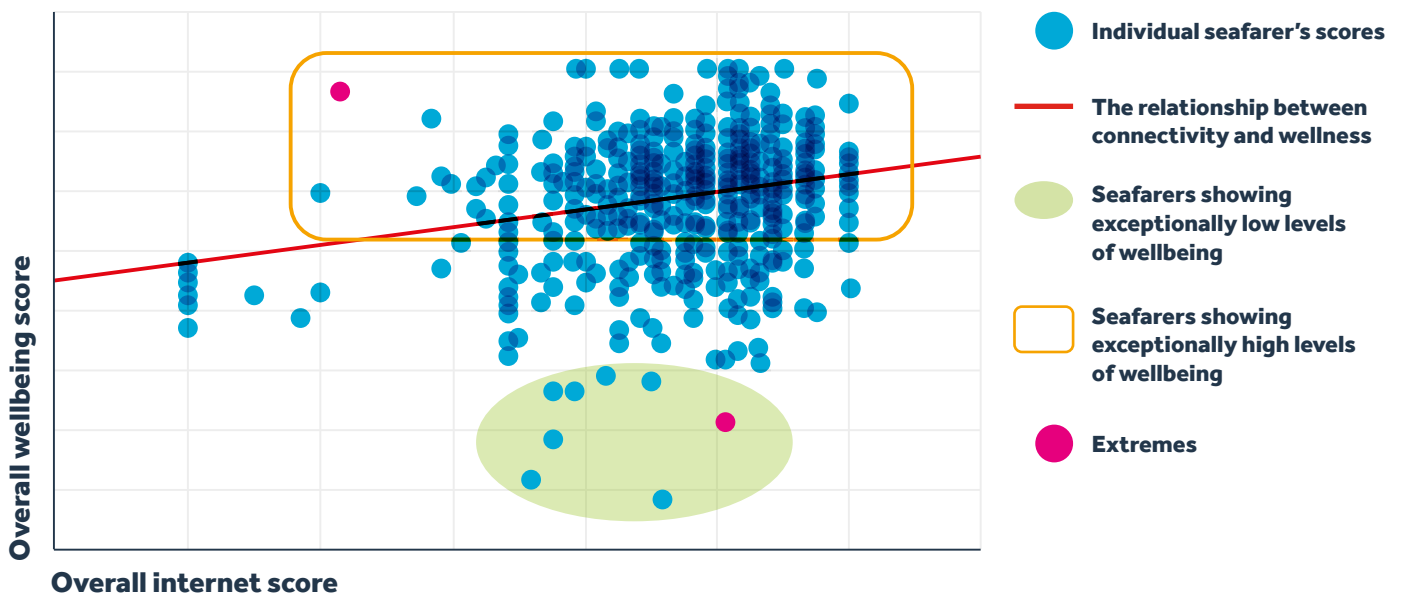
The average score appears to show very little variation between the ranks. A score of 7.6 suggests a relatively high level of overall wellbeing with scores above this suggesting very high wellbeing. So overall wellbeing seems to be good.



[Find out how the scores were calculated](#)

# The relationship between internet connectivity and crew wellbeing

## COMBINING THE SCORES



As shown by the red line on the graph, the scatter plot analysis\* reveals that as internet connectivity increases so do the wellness levels in the seafarers surveyed.

But this is, of course, a very simplistic view. The multifaceted nature of human beings means we would not expect one single factor in isolation to exclusively determine wellbeing. And certainly, the data does reveal two individuals with contrasting extremes – the pink dots.

The higher pink dot represents an individual who enjoys high levels of wellbeing despite having a low internet connectivity score, while the lower dot reveals an individual who exhibits alarmingly low levels of wellbeing despite having a reasonable internet connectivity score. These are, however, exceptions.

Overall, the data does reveal that across all the aspects of wellness, generally crew wellbeing increases and decreases with changes in the quality of the internet connectivity and the generosity of access given to crew. And this suggests two key strategic questions for the maritime industry.

Where there are relatively high levels of wellness - those seafarers whose scores are in the yellow box - it appears these seafarers also generally exhibit high levels of wellbeing. However, as a person's mental and physical health is fluid and can constantly change, a key strategic question for companies should be how to implement and maintain effective structures that ensure that their crew within the yellow box remain there.

But of particular concern are those seafarers whose scores appear in the green circle. These scores reveal exceptionally low levels of wellbeing in these crew members despite good internet connectivity. This highlights the existence of a subgroup of people within the seafaring community who are struggling to find purpose and significance in their experiences. As a company, a key strategic question should be how to implement and maintain effective structures that ensure that crew members who fall within the green circle are taken care of.

[\\*Find out how the relationship was explored](#)

# Recommendations to the shipping industry

## INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

### Enhance Internet Connectivity at Sea

Shipping companies and vessel owners should invest in improving and maintaining reliable internet connectivity on board ships. This includes upgrading hardware, increasing bandwidth and ensuring coverage even in remote areas.

### Evaluate Internet Quality

Given the fast-changing landscape of connectivity, companies should actively and continuously assess the quality of internet access on their vessels, including speed, reliability and coverage. Including crew in this not only demonstrates that the company is actively pursuing higher levels of connectivity, but will gauge how companies are faring in terms of improvements to connectivity.

## COMMUNICATION

### Facilitate Communication

The availability of video calling between crew and their families while at sea clearly has a significant impact on seafarers' emotions, relationships and overall wellbeing. Shipping companies should look to provide video calling options that are as inclusive and affordable as possible.

### Family Support

Good connectivity is important not just from ship to shore but from shore to ship. Shipping companies should therefore actively seek to provide the families of seafarers with access to internet-based communication tools and resources to cope with the challenges of separation.

## WELLBEING

### Mental Health Support

Improved internet connectivity is associated with reduced loneliness among seafarers. To mitigate loneliness and improve emotional wellbeing, shipping companies should consider implementing mental health and counselling services for seafarers who may experience isolation or psychological distress. The high number of respondents who showed extremely high levels of loneliness should be a concern. This should be addressed urgently. Support services that are easily accessible and confidential will be of paramount importance in addressing and assisting those struggling.

### Prioritise Relationships

The data emphasises that the quality of relationships among seafarers is strongly influenced by internet connectivity. Recognising this, shipping companies should encourage and facilitate meaningful interactions among seafarers. Providing spaces and resources for socialisation and promoting a positive on board culture can enhance the quality of relationships among the crew.

### Peer-to-Peer Support Groups

Companies should acknowledge that seafarers themselves are resourceful, resilient and have extensive experiences that can assist their fellow crewmates. It is evident from the data that some seafarers are flourishing. These seafarers can positively contribute by sharing their experiences with others. Companies should consider promoting

Sailors' Society's Peer-to-Peer Support Groups ([sailors-society.org/support-for-seafarers](https://sailors-society.org/support-for-seafarers)) to foster a sense of community and help seafarers connect. These groups can provide emotional support and help combat feelings of isolation.

## ADVOCACY AND COLLABORATION

### Collaboration

Companies should encourage collaboration between maritime industry stakeholders, including shipping companies, maritime organisations and governments to address seafarer wellbeing comprehensively.

### Regulatory Frameworks

Given the importance of internet connectivity to seafarers' wellbeing, shipping companies should advocate for policies and regulations that support affordable, reliable and high-quality internet access for seafarers worldwide. International regulations and guidelines that set standards for internet connectivity and wellbeing support in the maritime industry are pivotal. This can ensure consistent practices across different companies and vessels.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### Crisis Response Network

Using Sailors' Society's Crisis Response Network ([sailors-society.org/crn](https://sailors-society.org/crn)) will build awareness around already existing support and offer immediate assistance to seafarers facing emergencies or crises, including mental health support.

# Conclusion



The unique data from Sailors' Society's MyWellness e-learning platform and Johan Smith's extensive research unequivocally establishes that internet connectivity can be crucial for seafarers' wellbeing. Combined into this Snapshot, this highlights the indispensable role that internet connectivity and high-quality online communication play in shaping seafarers' psychological and emotional health.

The compelling evidence from the data demonstrates that enhanced internet access and superior online communication capabilities dramatically improve the various dimensions of seafarers' emotional, psychological and social experiences and can reduce feelings of loneliness while at sea.

The maritime industry cannot ignore these results and should take decisive action to ensure that seafarers have reliable and high-quality internet access. This is not merely a recommendation but a crucial imperative.

Implementing the recommendations in the Snapshot, such as investing in improved internet infrastructure, promoting video communication options, addressing seafarer loneliness and prioritising relationships, will significantly enhance seafarers' wellbeing, increase job satisfaction and foster a more prosperous and humane maritime sector.

The evidence is irrefutable: prioritising seafarers' wellbeing through better internet connectivity is both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity for the future of maritime operations.

# How we help



It is probably no surprise to most of us that as internet connectivity increases so do the wellness levels in the seafarers surveyed. But because this report has access to an unapparelled depth of data we can now see that this picture is far more nuanced.

For example, when we look at answers we received around loneliness (page 10) the data reveals that some seafarers experience extremely high levels of loneliness and pronounced feelings of isolation, and that when we look at overall wellbeing some crew exhibit alarmingly low levels - and all this despite having a reasonable internet connectivity score.

But our data also reveals that some seafarers enjoy high levels of wellbeing despite having poor internet connectivity. Is it that these men and women are more resilient or is it that they have been equipped with the tools to look after their welfare while at sea?

I would argue that Sailors' Society's Wellness at Sea programme allows us to inform and educate seafarers about all aspects of their wellbeing. Our all-round approach takes seafarer wellness far beyond a training tick-box. Our Awareness Campaign, wellness and Sea Ready departure orientation training can give a crew the best support available to ensure they keep physically and mentally fit.

And, at Sailors' Society, our range of services encompasses the needs of all the seafarers reflected in this snapshot.

Our 24/7 support, through our helpline, crisis response and chaplaincy, means we are here for those seafarers who experience the depth of loneliness and isolation reflected in our data. We offer support, comfort, practical aid and advice whenever and wherever seafarers find themselves struggling to find purpose and significance in their experiences, be those hundreds of miles out at sea, in a busy port or back home.

Our acclaimed Peer-to-Peer Support Groups allow that support and advice to be given by those in the same boat but not on the same ship, creating a community that can reduce those feelings of isolation and loneliness.

And our proactive Ship Connect service with its regular calls to a ship's crew allows us to spot potential problems and work together to prevent them from developing into more serious issues.

So, as I read this snapshot, I do so knowing that I can be confident, whether you are a seafarer in crisis or just want to stay healthy and positive while at sea, Sailors' Society has it covered. And through this, we can help the maritime industry retain and nurture healthy crews fit for a long and productive career at sea.



**Sara Baade**  
CEO, Sailors' Society



# Our services

Sailors' Society is a global maritime welfare charity that has supported seafarers and their families for more than 200 years.

We are by their side around the clock, 365 days a year.

We provide a complete support system in a seafarer's pocket wherever they are, miles out at sea or alone in a faraway port.

Our services include our pioneering and adaptable Wellness at Sea training for the maritime industry and focused support for the future of seafaring - maritime cadets and trainees.



## 24/7 SUPPORT



A **24/7 Helpline** for all seafarers and their families with a global network of chaplains who listen, offer counselling and support.



A **Crisis Response Network** offering practical and emotional support in any crisis, like help with repatriation, supporting family back home and ongoing trauma support.



**Grants providing vital financial support** for serving and retired seafarers with pressing welfare needs such as food, medical bills or education costs.



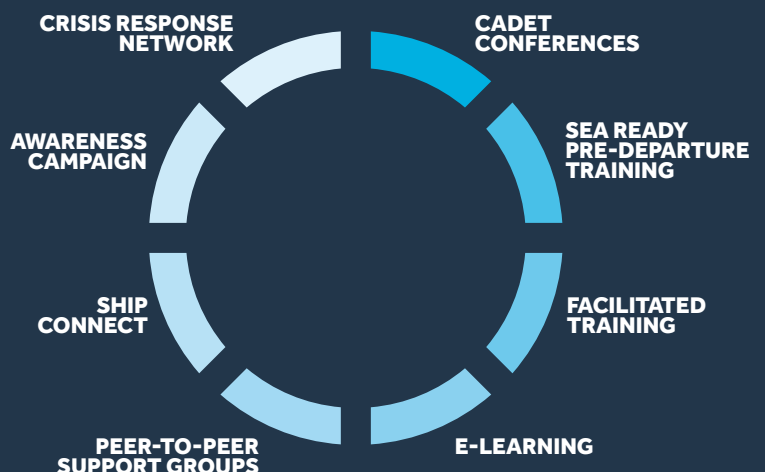
More than 140 **Peer-to-Peer Support Groups** where seafarers can share and support each other. There are groups for all seafarers as well as groups for female seafarers, cadets, families, maritime pilots, LGBTQ+, captains and those caught up in the Ukrainian conflict.



The **MyWellness e-learning app** allows seafarers to navigate their own journey of self-awareness, taking their wellbeing into their own hands and living their best life at sea.

## WELLNESS AT SEA

Sailors' Society has created a circle of care around seafarers that supports them from their first days of training to their final contract. The award-winning Wellness at Sea programme includes a range of services used widely throughout the maritime industry.



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We work with shipping companies, maritime schools and unions all over the world, supporting cadets, seafarers and their families.

To find out more about Sailors' Society's Wellness at Sea, please contact our Head of Wellness Johan Smith at [jsmith@sailors-society.org](mailto:jsmith@sailors-society.org)

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