

Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 3 2025



The
Seafarers
Happiness
Index



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Seafarers Happiness Index Quarter 3

After a promising upward trajectory in mid-2025, the Q3 Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) data and responses provide a stark reality check, as the average score has fallen to 7.05/10, a drop from Q2's encouraging 7.54/10.

This significant drop signals deep-rooted challenges resurfacing across the seafaring profession. The data paints a particularly alarming picture: nearly every measured aspect of seafarer wellbeing has deteriorated, with decline not isolated to one or two areas across almost every aspect of seafarer wellbeing, from wages and training to health and workload management. As it has done for over a decade, the SHI from the Mission to Seafarers takes quantitative data as a barometer of sentiment, weaving it with the human stories at sea, connecting individual experiences from our survey, socials and shipboard visitors, to better understand industry-wide challenges with a view to providing insight driven, coordinated action.

Voices from the Sea

Within this report we highlight the interconnected challenges facing those at sea, challenges that have unfortunately intensified during Q3 2025.

Manning Levels and Crew Shortages continue to deteriorate. The feedback reveals crews stretched beyond sustainable limits, with one seafarer noting, "Minimum safe manning isn't enough. We need more people." The industry faces a self-perpetuating cycle where reduced crewing mean more work but also fewer mentorship opportunities, threatening knowledge transfer and leadership development. The impact on workload management is evident in the significant decline this quarter.

The Administrative Burden has grown exponentially while manning levels remain static or decrease. Officers spend hours on paperwork that often duplicates information across systems. This administrative tide creates a dangerous inversion where "paper safety" is often reported as taking precedence over actual safety practices. The workload management score reflects this growing pressure.

Fatigue Management remains critically challenged by both traditional watch patterns that disrupt circadian rhythms, and the fact that there is also so much more work to do across all roles. How much extra work? Well, we do not know as rest hour violations have become normalised, with falsification of records an open secret.

The cognitive impairment from chronic fatigue creates risks comparable to alcohol intoxication, yet without equivalent recognition or mitigation strategies. The drop in health and exercise suggests this issue is worsening.

The Decline of Shore Leave has accelerated this quarter, with the score dropping once again. Multiple factors contribute shortened port stays, immigration restrictions, and prohibitive transportation costs. The psychological impact is profound, with vessels increasingly described as "floating prisons." One seafarer noted, "Seldom accessing welfare facilities ashore due to nature of trade."

Digital Connectivity showed a modest improvement, remaining one of the few bright spots. However, feedback reveals this masks significant disparities between vessels. While some seafarers report "good internet onboard," others continue to struggle with inadequate data allowances and unreliable connections. Since COVID the issue of connectivity has seen an improving picture, but the gains are not universal. Which makes it even harder for those who are still wrestling for better quality, lower cost data access.

Compensation concerns have intensified dramatically, with the wages score plummeting, the second-largest decline this quarter. Seafarers report that "demands are increasing and salaries have not increased." Nationality-based pay disparities for identical work create tensions within multinational crews, while benefits and allowances have simultaneously been reduced. This feels like a growing area of concern and will be something to monitor over coming report periods.

Food quality has reportedly declined significantly. Victualling rates have remained unchanged despite dramatic food price inflation. The impact on morale cannot be overstated, as mealtimes represent crucial social interactions and one of the few daily pleasures available onboard. Some seafarers report "food too much but not tasty," suggesting quantity without quality. The culinary worst of both worlds.

Health and Exercise issues were allied with issues around food. Health saw a substantial decrease. This suggests that operational pressures are increasingly compromising seafarers' ability to maintain their physical wellbeing, with inadequate time for exercise and rest.

Professional Development has suffered the largest decline this quarter. The shift toward compliance-focused approaches that prioritise documentation over skill development continues. Practical instruction has given way to isolated online modules, while mentorship faces structural challenges from reduced manning and operational pressures.

This has been also captured with concerns over the standards of watchkeeping and navigation in relation to Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) jamming. Questions are being raised by senior officers about the competency of their juniors. Which is a growing concern and discussions about training, mentoring and resilience are key to the future.

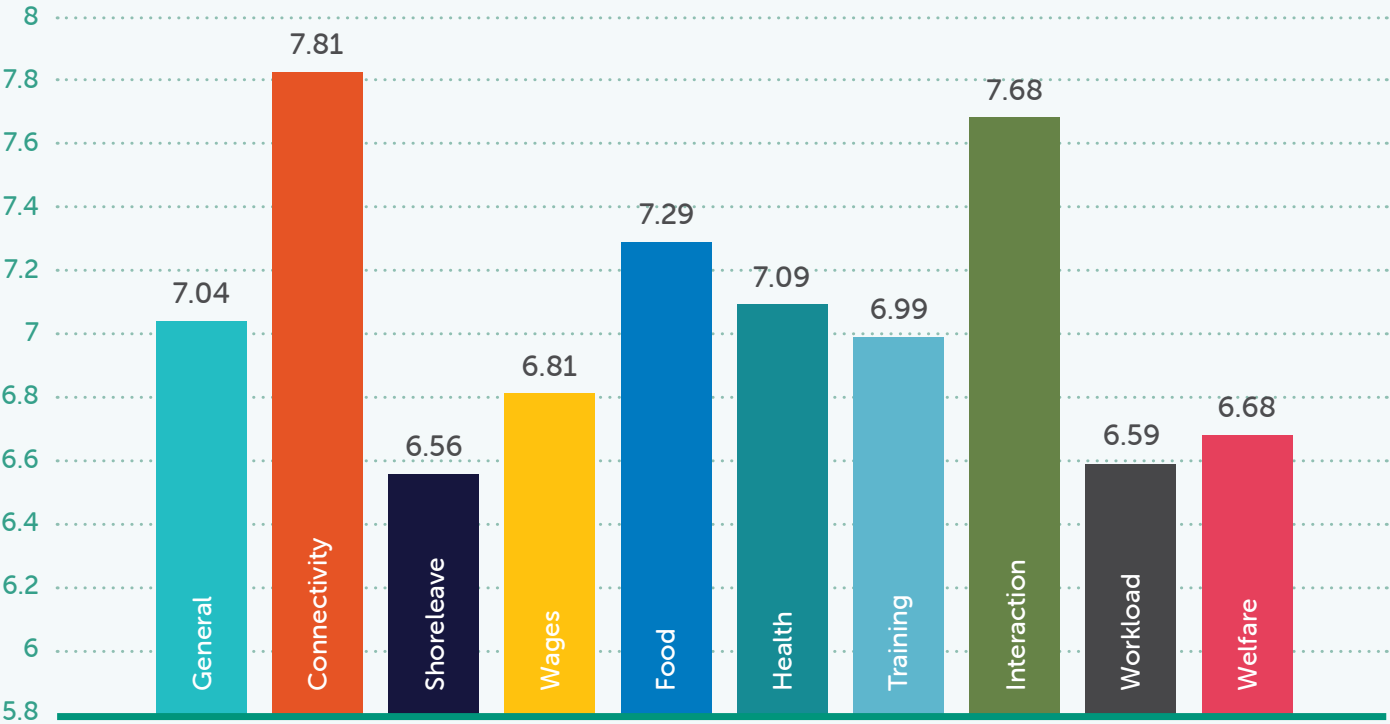
This significant decrease reflects growing concerns about the quality and relevance of professional development opportunities, with increased focus on compliance over competence.

The Shore-Ship Relationship suffers from a growing disconnect, with many shore offices increasingly staffed by those with little to no seagoing experience. Micromanagement has increased with improved communication technology, while a blame culture discourages open reporting and learning from near-misses. Once again, the growing connection between office and ship can be a force for good, but we received details of management ashore simply piling ever more demands onto the ship crew.

Interactions among crew members, traditionally the highest-scoring category, has declined. While still relatively strong, this drop suggests that mounting pressures are beginning to strain even the most resilient aspect of seafaring life, the bonds between crewmates.

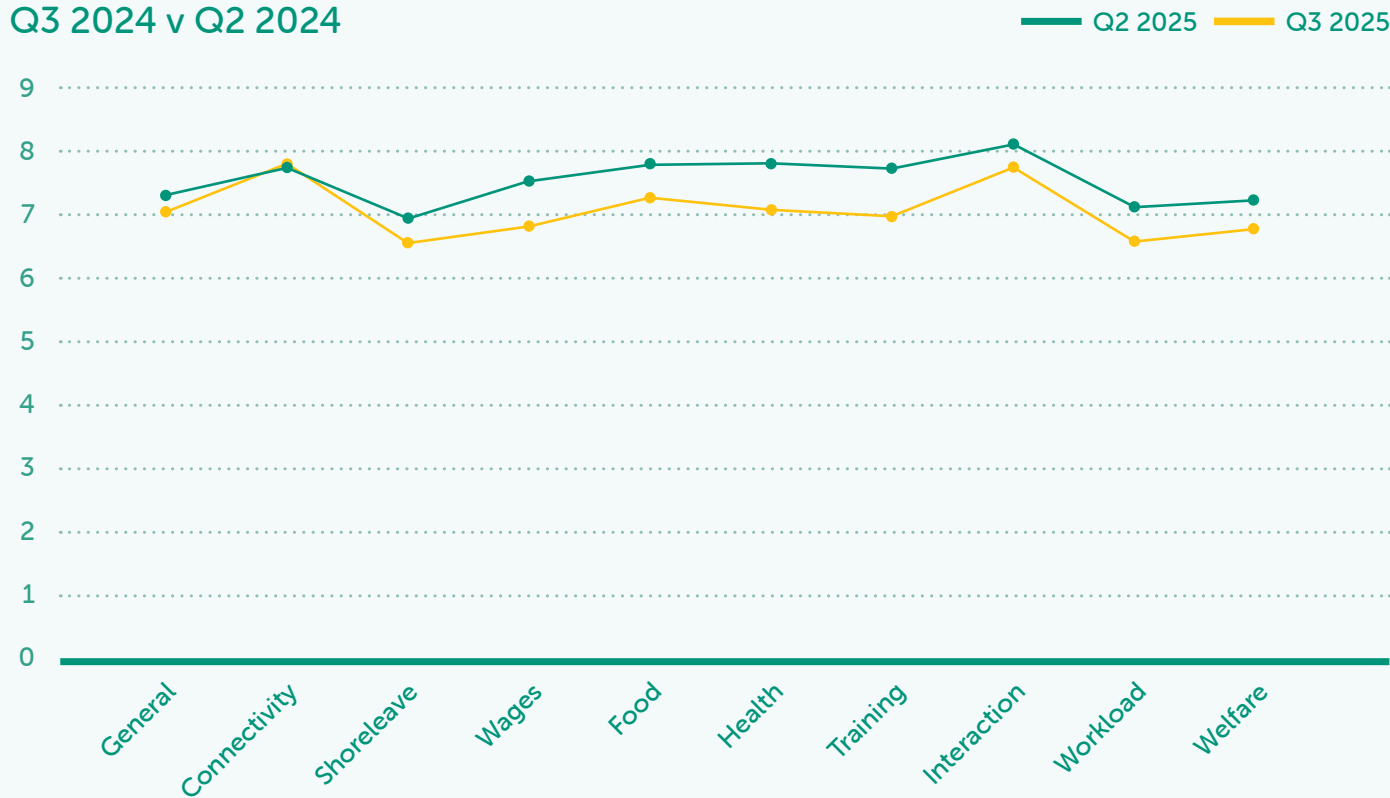
These interconnected challenges require solutions. The seafarers who identify these issues also offer practical suggestions: additional watchkeepers, dedicated administrative officers, improved connectivity, and shore management with seagoing experience. Their insights represent not complaints but rather a roadmap for creating a more sustainable maritime workforce. Finding the fixes and listening to seafarers is a vital part of progress.

Q3 2025 Data



Happiness Data

Q3 2024 v Q2 2024



General Happiness

7.04 ↓ from 7.31

The baseline happiness measure mirrors the overall average and sees declining satisfaction. This decrease reflects the cumulative impact of deteriorating conditions across multiple areas.

Seafarers tell us that their satisfaction and happiness levels are significantly influenced by relationships. Whether that relates to crew interactions or the ability to maintain connections with family, or indeed the conduct of managers ashore. With many seafarers noting that at sea it is a mantra of "friendship despite hardship" that remains a crucial factor in wellbeing.

The declining general happiness score suggests that mounting pressures are beginning to erode the resilience that has traditionally characterised the seafaring workforce. Comments reveal that happiness is often contextual, with significant variations between vessel types.

Positive feedback includes: "I love my job, and I sail with good people," "Because of good relationship with fellow crew," and "Happy travel around the world." However, the overall decline suggests these positive experiences are becoming less universal.

Contact with family

7.81 ↑ from 7.75

Digital connectivity remains a critical lifeline for seafarers, and the modest improvement reflects ongoing enhancements in maritime communications technology and access granted to it. This is the only category to show improvement this quarter, suggesting that investments in connectivity infrastructure continue to deliver results, and are hugely welcomed when they arrive.

The feedback reveals that connectivity directly impacts family relationships and mental health, with seafarers describing internet access as essential for "calling my family regularly" and maintaining daily contact with loved ones. One seafarer noted, "For me as a seafarer communication is important, good internet onboard is very important."

However, the narrative responses also highlight persistent disparities between vessels. While many report "we have internet onboard" and "good service," others continue to struggle with inadequate data allowances, significant costs and unreliable connections. The improvement in this category masks significant inequality in access to this critical resource.



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"It would be great to see more females in the industry."

Shore leave

6.56 ↓ from 6.96

Shore leave accessibility continues to represent the most significant challenge identified in this survey, scoring lowest among all categories and declining further this quarter. Seafarers consistently report limited opportunities to go ashore, with operational pressures and commercial considerations continuing to override seafarer welfare needs.

The narrative feedback reveals the profound psychological impact of shore leave restrictions. One seafarer noted “rarely accessing welfare facilities ashore due to nature of trade,” while others describe the challenge of “depends on the schedule at port.”

This category represents perhaps the most critical area requiring industry intervention, as shore leave directly impacts mental health and overall job satisfaction. The continued decline suggests that despite industry awareness of this issue, practical improvements remain elusive.

The combination of tight scheduling, reduced port times, inflated costs of transfers, and ongoing restrictions creates a situation where shore leave has become the exception rather than the norm for many seafarers. That is something of a tragedy for individuals, but also for industry, and indeed the culture of seafaring.

Wages

6.81 ↓ from 7.52

Compensation satisfaction has declined dramatically this quarter, representing one of the most significant drops across all categories. This substantial decrease reflects mounting frustration with stagnant wages despite increasing responsibilities, inflation, and the demanding nature of seagoing life.

While some positive feedback included comments about “competitive salary” and “I can provide my family needs,” the overall trend reveals deeper concerns. Seafarers note that “demands are increasing and salaries have not increased,” highlighting the growing disconnect between compensation and workload.

The dramatic decline in this category suggests that economic pressures are forcing companies to constrain wage growth, even as they demand more from their crews. This creates a troubling situation where the value proposition of maritime careers is eroding, potentially impacting recruitment and retention in an industry already facing crew shortages.



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Due to short port stays, vessel's need to attend management visit, audits and inspection, there's almost no more time for shore leave.

Food

7.29 ↓ from 7.81

Food quality aboard vessels shows a significant decline, indicating growing dissatisfaction with onboard catering. While some positive feedback mentions “the food is good and fresh” and “sufficient and nutritious food served on board,” the overall trend suggests that cost pressures are impacting provisions.

Negative feedback includes concerns about food being “too much but not tasty”, which is troubling on both levels, and issues with preparation methods. The decline suggests that victualling budgets may be under pressure, affecting both the quality and variety of meals available to crews.

The impact on morale cannot be overstated, as mealtimes represent crucial social interactions and one of the few daily pleasures available onboard. The deterioration in this category suggests that companies may be cutting costs in areas that directly impact daily quality of life for seafarers.

Ability to keep fit and healthy

7.09 ↓ from 7.82

Physical health and exercise facilities show a dramatic decline, one of the largest drops this quarter. This substantial decrease indicates that operational pressures are increasingly compromising seafarers’ ability to maintain their physical fitness and overall health.

While some positive feedback includes references to “we carry out regular exercise onboard” and “balance eating food,” the overall trend reveals growing challenges. Comments about inadequate time for exercise and rest suggest that workload pressures are leaving seafarers with insufficient opportunities to maintain their health.

The decline in this category is particularly concerning given the known links between physical health, mental wellbeing, and safety performance. The deterioration suggests that the industry’s focus on wellness programs may not be translating into practical improvements in seafarers’ daily lives.



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Vessel has dedicated gym with necessary equipment like treadmill, multi gym, cycle.

Training

6.99 ↓ from 7.75

Professional development opportunities experienced the largest decline this quarter. This dramatic drop suggests that seafarers are increasingly dissatisfied with the quality and relevance of training opportunities available to them.

While some appreciate learning opportunities, noting training as “informative” and “good training and learning environment on board,” the overall trend reveals significant concerns. The shift toward compliance-focused approaches that prioritise documentation over skill development continues to frustrate seafarers seeking meaningful professional growth.

The narrative responses reveal that much learning still occurs through practical experience and mentorship, but operational pressures are limiting these opportunities. The decline suggests that formal training programs are not adequately compensating for reduced informal learning opportunities.

A fall in satisfaction about the standards of training and development was also captured with concerns over watchkeeping and navigational skills, especially in relation to GNSS jamming.

Questions are being raised about the competency of junior officers. Senior shipboard leaders expressed concerns about overreliance on technology at the expense of core abilities, especially if they need to fall back on traditional skills.



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**Could be a bit more in depth and thorough.
Felt thrown in the deep end at times.**

Interaction with crew

7.68 ↓ from 8.12

Crew interactions, traditionally the highest-scoring category, has declined significantly though it remains the strongest performing area. This drop is particularly concerning as positive relationships among crew members have historically been the most resilient aspect of seafaring life.

Positive feedback emphasises that colleagues are “good mannered and respectful to each other” and crews maintain “harmonious relationship and good social interaction with other crew.” However, the decline suggests that mounting pressures are beginning to strain even these traditionally strong bonds.

The deterioration in this category may reflect the cumulative impact of increased workload, reduced manning, and general stress affecting crew dynamics. When the most resilient aspect of seafaring life begins to decline, it signals serious underlying problems in the industry. There are also criticisms suggesting that certain demographics needed more “soft skills” to manage and encourage crews more effectively.

Workload

6.59 ↓ from 7.13

Workload management shows a significant decline. This substantial drop reveals growing concerns about work-life balance aboard vessels and the intensification of maritime work demands.

Written feedback consistently highlights issues with “manageable workload with consideration of fatigue” being the exception rather than the norm. The trend toward reduced manning levels and increased administrative requirements continues to place additional pressure on seafarers.

The decline in this category is particularly concerning given its direct links to safety, health, and retention. When seafarers feel overwhelmed by their workload, the risks of accidents, burnout, and departure from the industry all increase significantly.



Workload is increasing and manpower is decreasing - new regulations, increased inspections, audits, paperwork.

Access to welfare facilities

6.68 ↓ from 7.23

Shore-based welfare satisfaction shows an unfortunate decline, reflecting reduced access to support services and the continuing impact of restricted shore leave. While some seafarers describe facilities as “good and refreshing,” others note they are “seldomly accessing welfare facilities ashore due to nature of trade.”

Satisfaction, or otherwise, with this question is closely linked to shore leave accessibility, as even the best welfare facilities are of limited value if seafarers cannot access them. The decline suggests that both access to and quality of welfare services may be deteriorating.

The feedback reveals appreciation for seafarer centres and visiting personnel, with comments like “all are in good order for recreational use.” However, the overall trend indicates that these positive experiences are becoming less common or accessible.



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**The ship visitor makes
us all very happy.**

Tell Us More

The “Tell Us More” question responses revealed a diverse range of perspectives and concerns. This open-ended question provided respondents with an opportunity to express thoughts beyond the structured survey questions, resulting in valuable insights into life at sea during Q3 2025.

Key Themes

Connectivity and Communication

Internet access continues to emerge as a predominant concern. Seafarers emphasise that connectivity is essential for maintaining family relationships and mental health. One respondent noted that “for me as a seafarer communication is important, good internet onboard is very important.”

The feedback reveals that while some vessels have improved connectivity, significant disparities remain. Seafarers on vessels with good internet report far higher satisfaction and better ability to cope with the challenges of life at sea.

Work-Life Balance

Several comments addressed the challenges of maintaining work-life balance at sea. Seafarers note that “life onboard is adventure though far away from family. The sacrifice we take is worth it for the better future of our families.

However, the declining scores across multiple categories suggest that this sacrifice is becoming harder to justify as conditions deteriorate. The balance between the rewards of seafaring and its demands appears to be shifting unfavourably.

Positive Perspectives

Despite the overall decline in scores, many respondents shared positive outlooks, demonstrating the resilience that characterises seafarers. Comments include:

- “It makes you open minded to different attitude and inspiring experiences.”
- “Full of excitement and memorable stories”
- “I enjoy the work I do.”

These positive perspectives highlight that many seafarers continue to find meaning and satisfaction in their roles, even as challenges persist.

Cultural Diversity

The feedback reveals both the benefits and challenges of multicultural crews. While many seafarers appreciate the opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds, some note tensions that can arise from cultural differences.

The ability to maintain positive interactions despite cultural diversity remains a strength of the maritime industry, though one that requires continued attention and support. There appears to be tension with the management approach of certain nations, and a desire for leadership training and development to better align expectations and experiences.

Training Concerns and Navigation Technology Dependency

Analysis of the “Tell Us More” comments revealed significant concerns among senior seafarers regarding over-reliance on GNSS technology and the apparent erosion of traditional navigation skills among junior officers.

These concerns highlight a critical vulnerability in areas of known spoofing and jamming.

Senior officer respondents (Chief Officers and Captains) expressed serious concerns about growing vulnerability to GNSS jamming and spoofing incidents. Respondents reported firsthand encounters with navigation system disruptions that leave their younger colleagues in unfamiliar territory. “We experienced GPS spoofing three times last year in the Red Sea,” revealed one captain. “The junior officers had no idea what was happening or how to respond. They’ve become completely dependent on electronic systems.”

This dependency creates a dangerous vulnerability. Another chief officer observed: “When GNSS fails I’ve observed real panic among some of the younger officers. They lack confidence in traditional methods that should serve as reliable backups.”

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The implications of this skills erosion are not theoretical. Officers report concerning incidents that highlight the real-world dangers:

"We had an incident where our position was clearly wrong, but the officer of the watch continued to trust the system for nearly 30 minutes before raising concerns."

A Widening Skills Gap

The concerns extend beyond specific incidents to a fundamental shift in navigational competence. Senior officers consistently report a troubling erosion of core skills among the newer generation:

"The younger generation has excellent technical knowledge but lacks the mindset to question electronic data," explained one master. "When I ask them to verify positions using celestial navigation or visual bearings, many seem uncomfortable or unfamiliar with these fundamental techniques."

From the insights provided, it was stated that the overreliance manifests in several ways:

- Near-exclusive dependence on electronic navigation systems
- Diminishing adherence to position verification using multiple methods
- Reduced situational awareness when electronic systems are unavailable.

The Training Disconnect

In deeper discussions, the root of the problem appears in the balance between current training approaches that are struggling to cover both traditional navigation fundamentals alongside technology which seafarers are using.

Senior officers identify specific gaps:

1. Insufficient practical training in non-electronic navigation methods
2. Limited exposure to emergency scenarios involving navigation system failures.
3. Inadequate emphasis on cross-verification techniques
4. Reduced competency requirements for traditional navigation skills

Bringing Technology and Skills Together

Some forward-thinking leaders have implemented countermeasures. "Every month, we conduct a watch using traditional fixing," shared one captain. "Initially, there was resistance, but now officers see the value. Their confidence in traditional methods has improved dramatically."

As one master aptly summarised the core issue:

"Technology should enhance a navigator's capabilities, not replace their fundamental skills. We need confidence and practice to stay as navigators."

There was also a suggestion that each vessel should have a "low/no tech navigation" advocate onboard. Someone who has the skills and knowledge to pass on to younger colleagues, or those whose techniques need sharpening.

With GNSS jamming and spoofing incidents on the rise globally, this growing dependency on potentially vulnerable systems represents one of the most significant emerging safety concerns in modern maritime operations.

Q3 2025 Demographics

Happiness Data

Critical Insights:

1. **Young seafarers (16-25) are struggling** - lowest satisfaction levels across ages, suggesting potential retention crisis.
2. **Gender disparity still evident.**
3. **Engineering officers face unique challenges** - Second Engineers particularly dissatisfied, citing too much work with fewer resources to call on.
4. **Vessel type matters more than almost anything** - widest-point spread.
5. **Southeast Asian training/preparation appears superior** - highest regional satisfaction.
6. **Older vessels (20+) need facility upgrades** - significantly lower crew satisfaction.

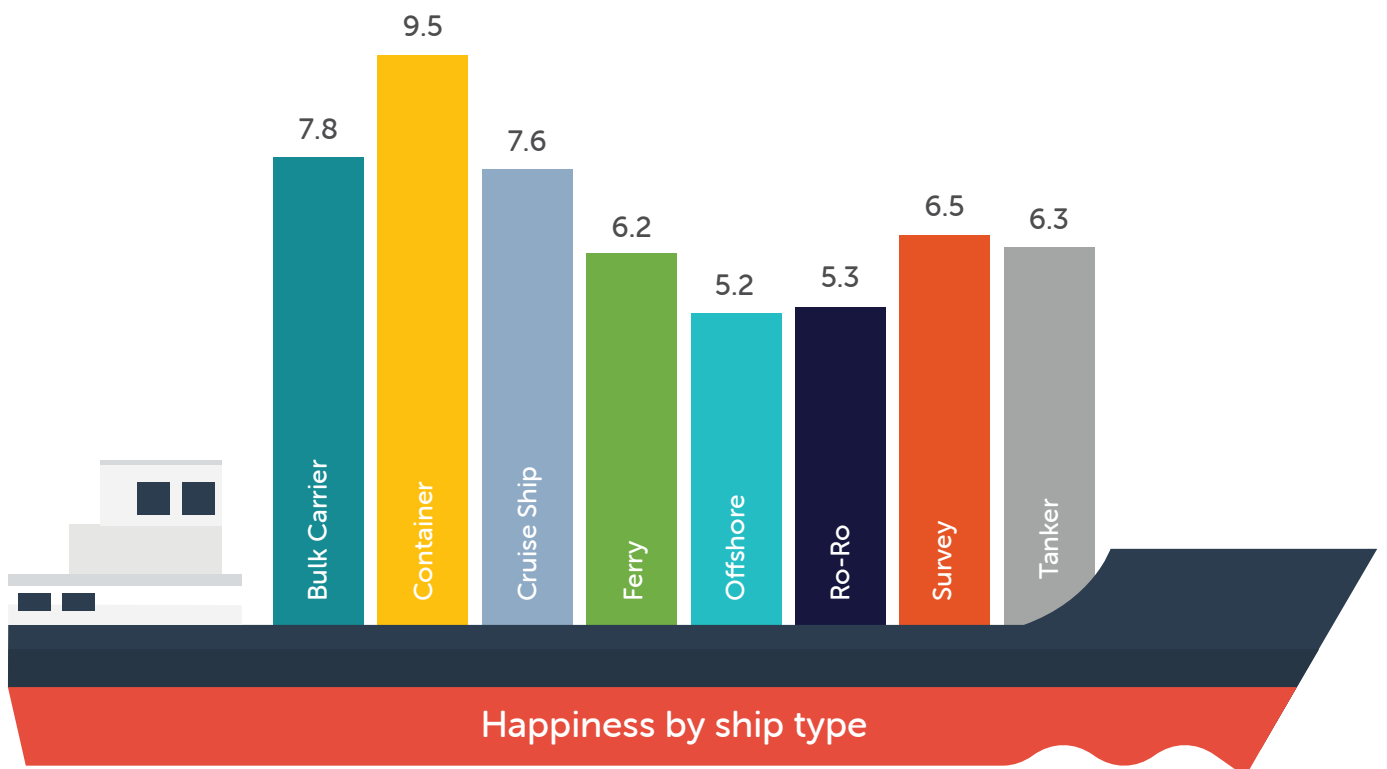
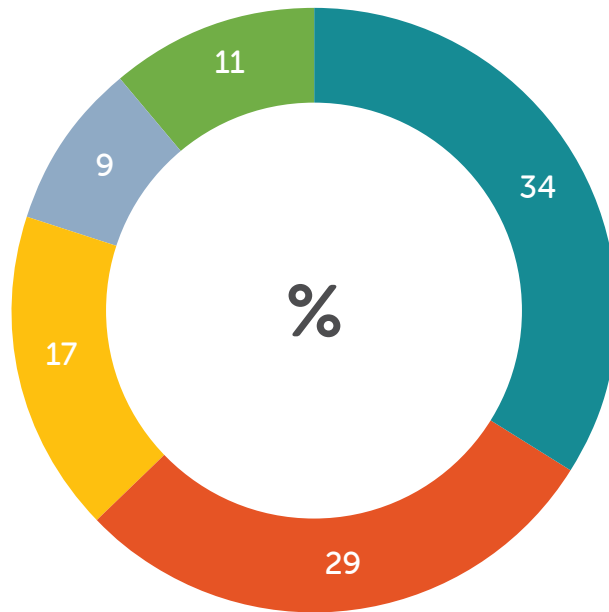
Gender Distribution and Happiness Patterns

Male seafarers made up 89% of responses while female seafarers represented 7%. This distribution continues to reflect the ongoing gender imbalance at sea, though the presence of female voices in the survey provides valuable insights into their specific experiences.

The data suggests that efforts to increase female participation in maritime careers must be accompanied by targeted improvements in working conditions and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by women at sea.

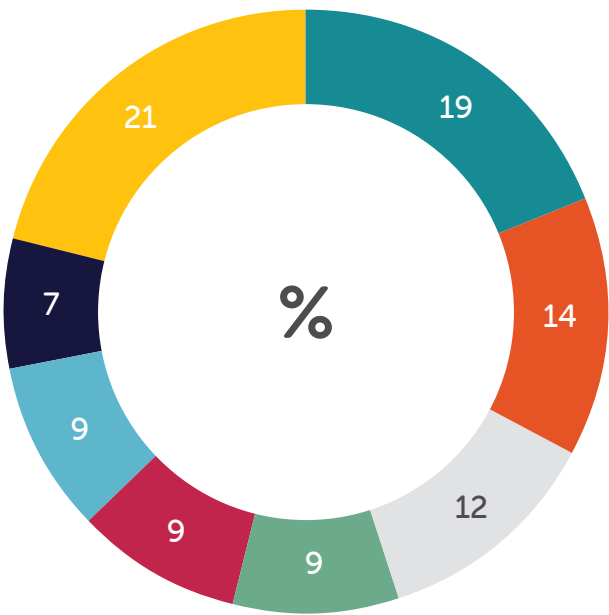
Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Tanker
- Container
- Cruise
- Other



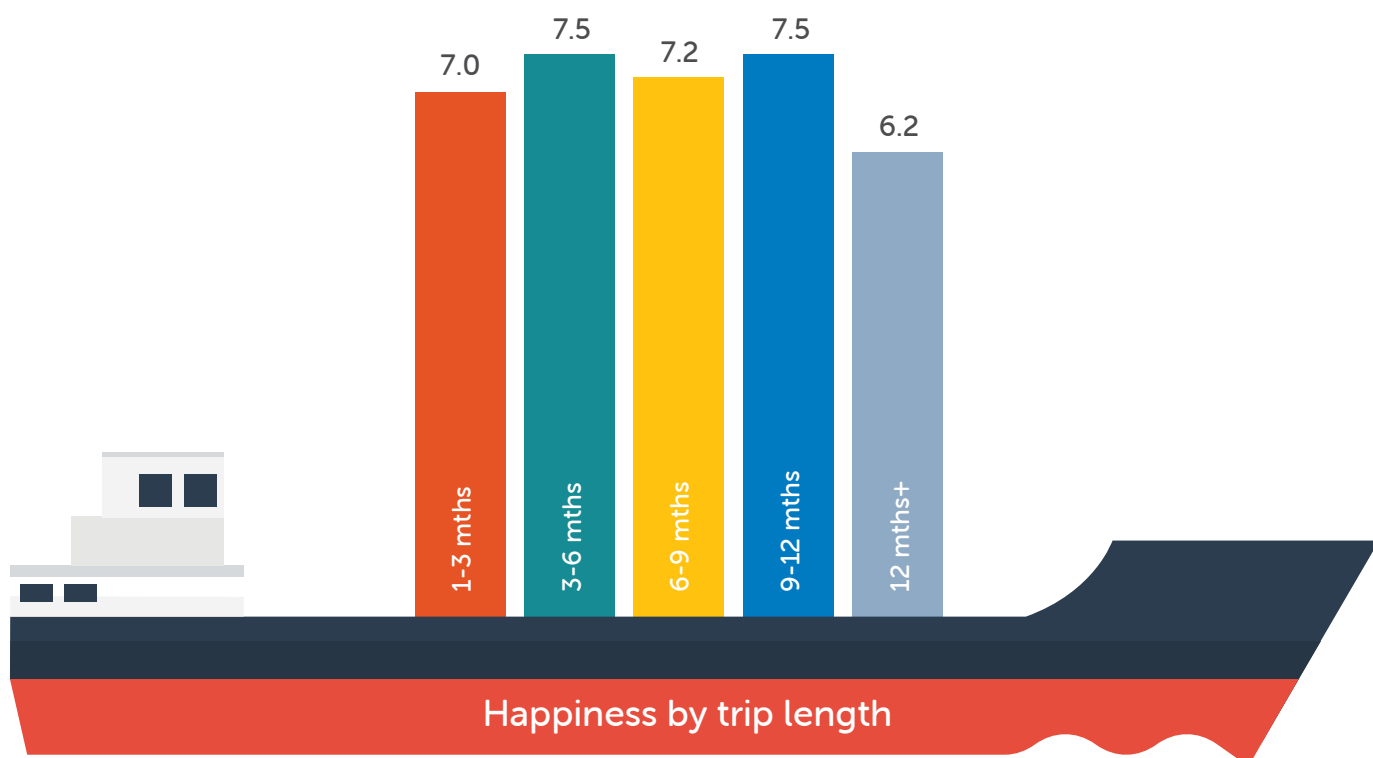
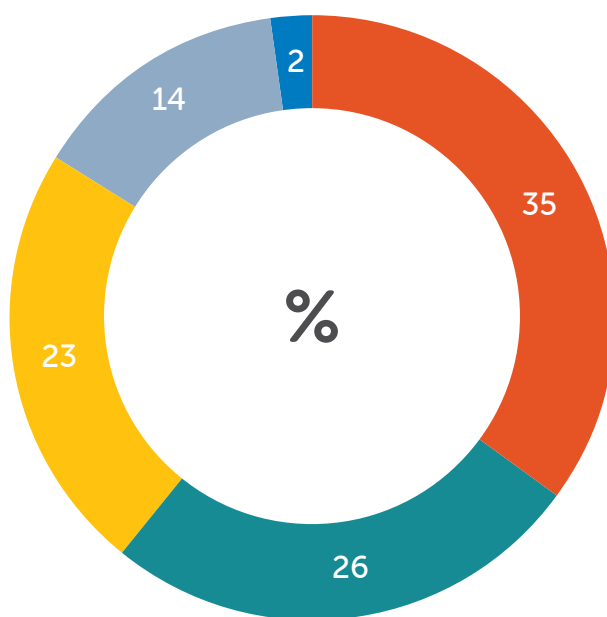
Rank

- Captain
- Catering Department
- Chief Engineer
- Chief Officer
- Deck Cadet
- Deck Crew
- Other Ranks
- Second Officer



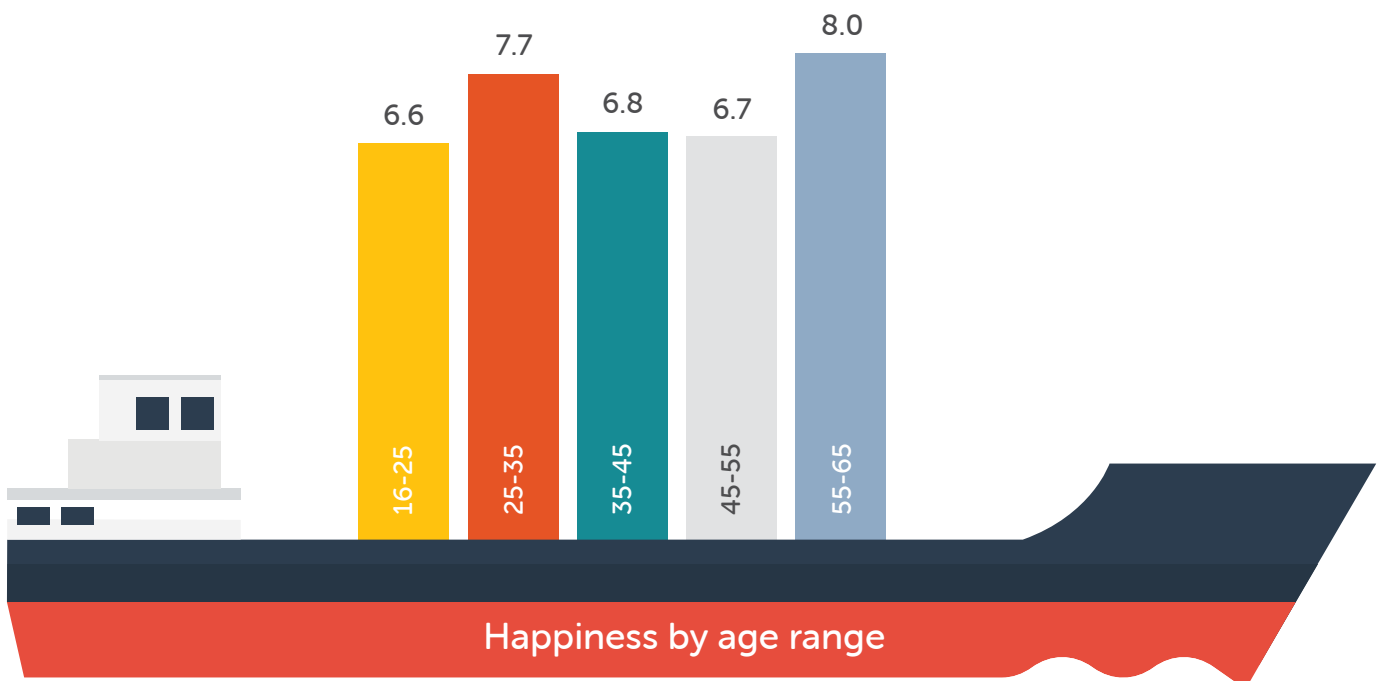
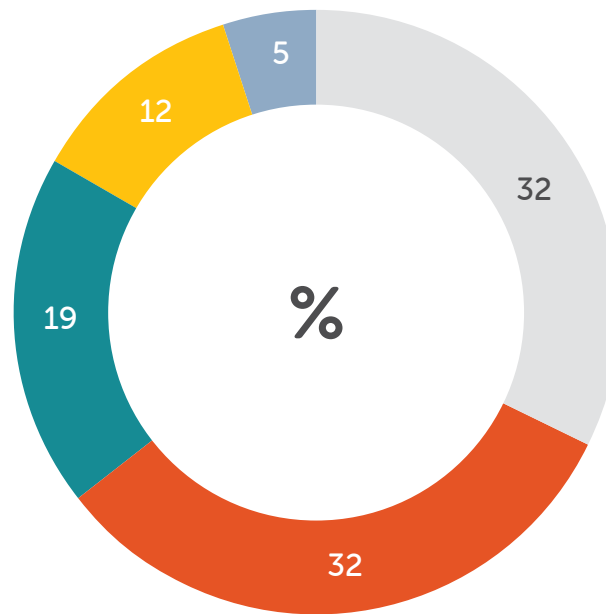
Trip Length

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



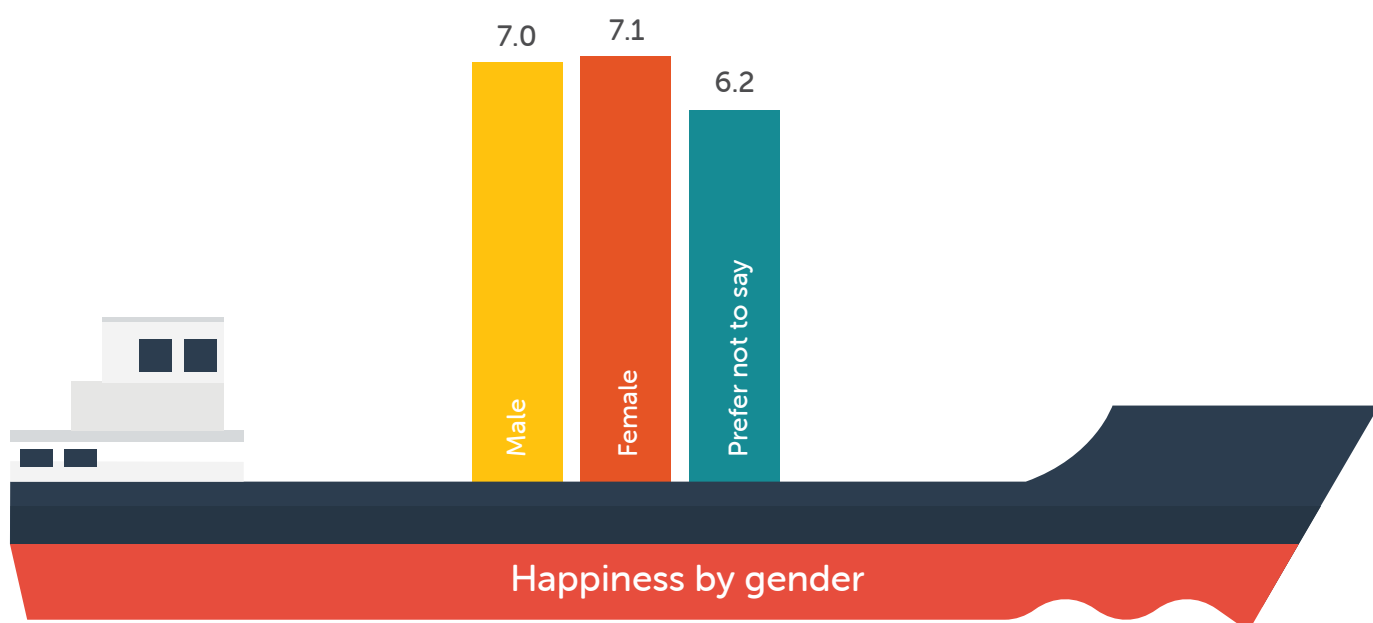
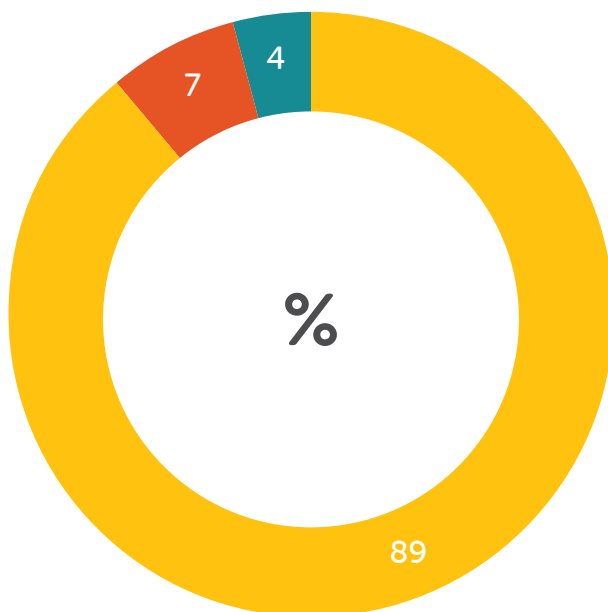
Age Range

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



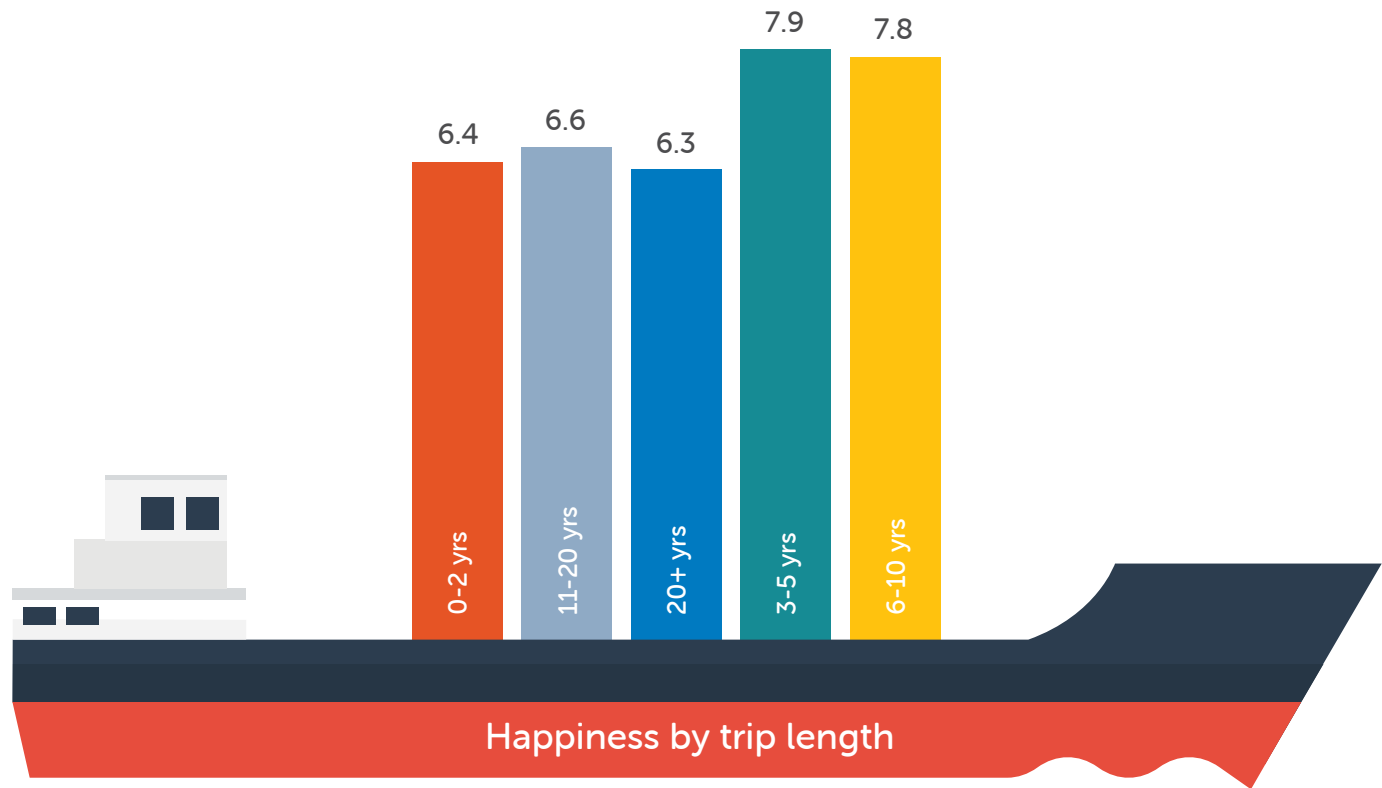
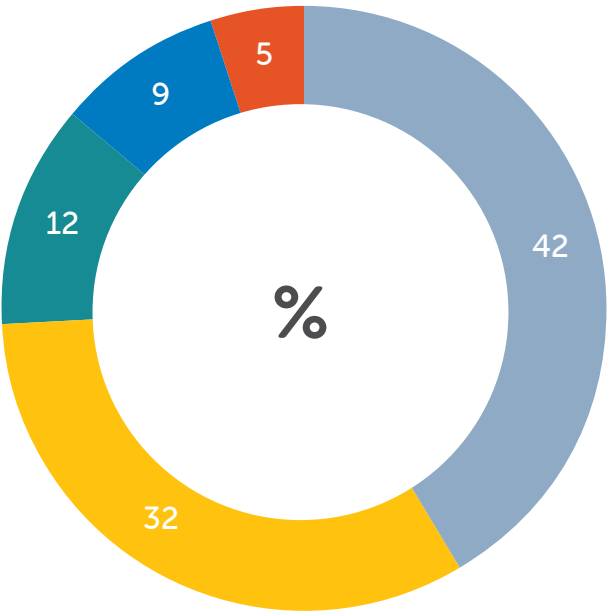
Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say



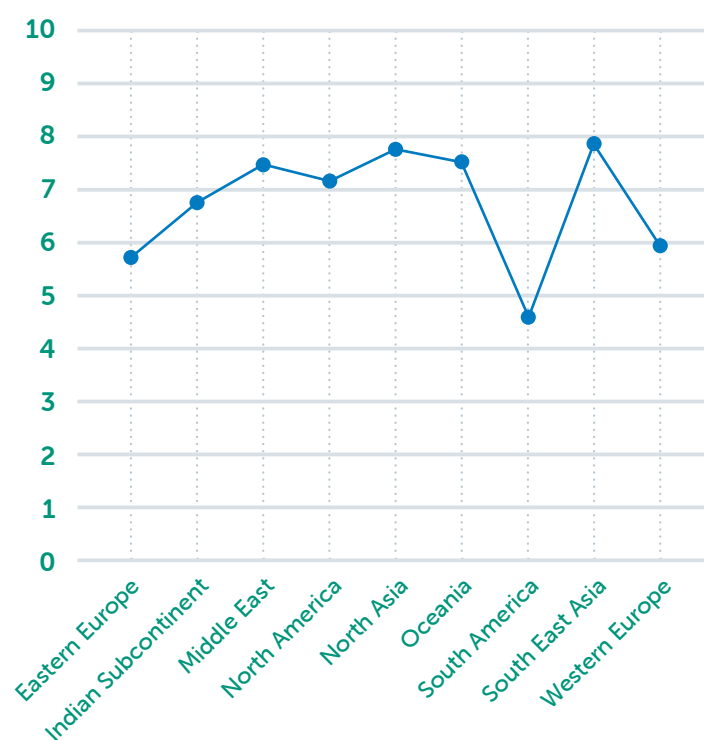
Age of Vessel

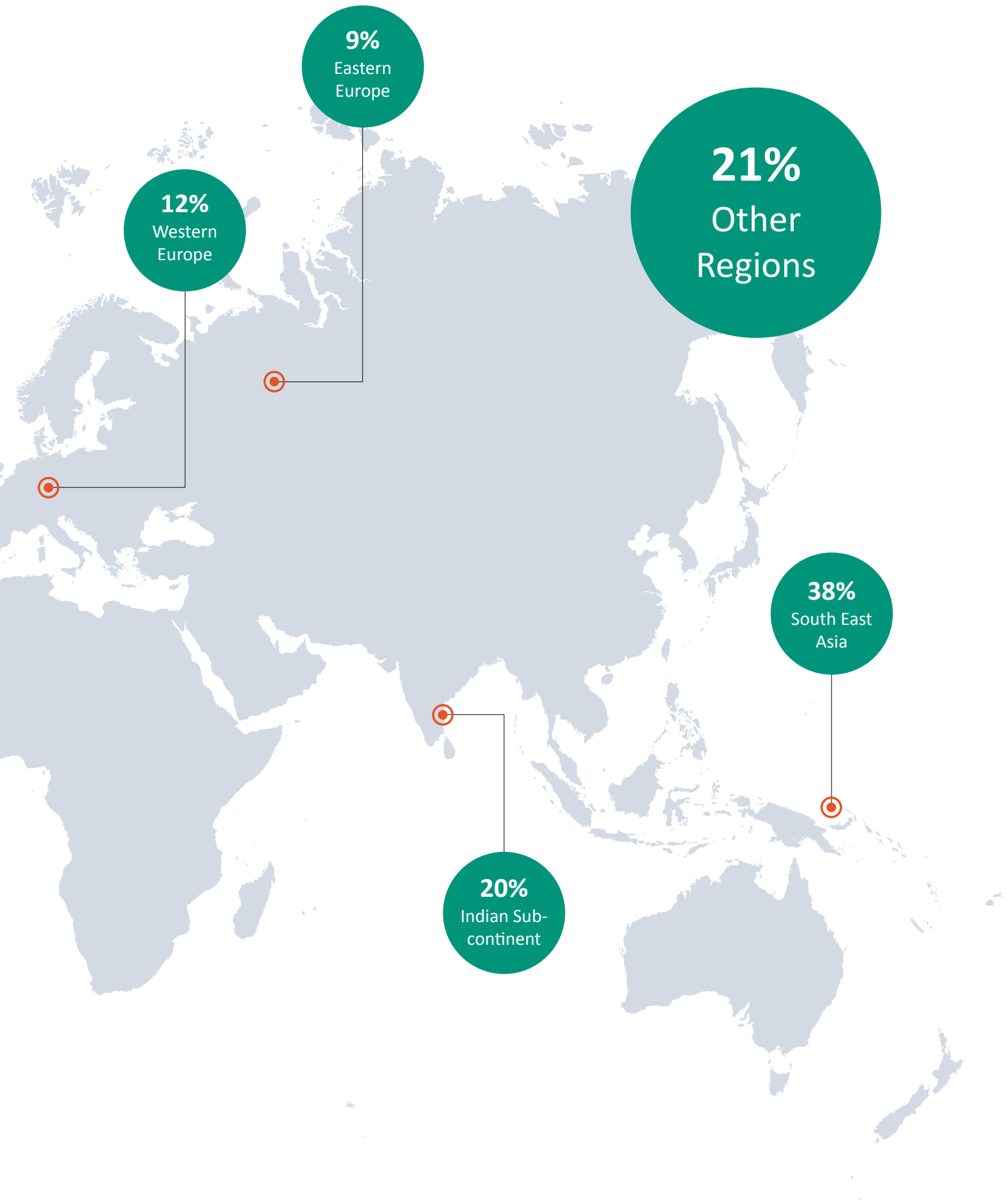
- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 20+ years



Where

Regions and happiness





Conclusion: A Quarter of Concern

The Q3 2025 Seafarers Happiness Index presents a concerning picture of professionals under increasing strain. The reversal of positive trends observed in Q2, with almost every category declining, signals that systemic pressures are overwhelming efforts to improve seafarer wellbeing.

The most concerning aspect of this quarter's results is not any single metric, but rather the breadth and consistency of the decline. When every aspect, aside from connectivity, of seafarer life deteriorates simultaneously - from wages and training to health and interactions - it suggests fundamental problems in how the industry is managing its human resources.

The drops in satisfaction point to cost pressures and operational demands that are compromising crew welfare. These are not peripheral issues but core elements of what makes maritime careers sustainable and attractive.

Even the traditionally resilient area of crew interactions has declined significantly, suggesting that mounting pressures are straining even the strongest bonds at sea. When the most positive aspect of seafaring life begins to deteriorate, it signals deep underlying problems.

The only bright spot, a modest improvement in connectivity, demonstrates that targeted investments can deliver results. However, one area of improvement cannot compensate for widespread deterioration across all other aspects of seafarer wellbeing.

The feedback from seafarers themselves provides both a diagnosis and a prescription. They identify specific, actionable solutions: additional watchkeepers, dedicated administrative officers, improved connectivity, fair compensation, quality provisions, and shore management with seagoing experience. These are not unreasonable demands but rather basic requirements for a sustainable maritime workforce.

As we move into Q4 2025 the industry faces a critical choice, as growing unhappiness is unsustainable. Without significant intervention to address the systemic issues, the maritime industry risks a crisis of recruitment, retention, and safety that will ultimately impact the reliability and efficiency of global shipping.

The Seafarers Happiness Index has consistently demonstrated that when seafarers thrive, shipping excels. The inverse is equally true: when seafarer wellbeing declines, the entire industry suffers. The Q3 2025 results serve as a clear warning that urgent action is needed to reverse these troubling trends.

Thank you

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to the seafarers who generously contribute their personal stories and perspectives through our survey, social channels and conversations to the Seafarers Happiness Index. These authentic voices from the frontlines of shipping provide crucial insights into maritime realities and illuminate pathways for meaningful change. Their honest reflections form the backbone of our analysis and drive the creation of more targeted policies and industry practices.

Our appreciation also extends to the progressive shipping companies and shore-based management teams who actively facilitate crew participation in this research. Their commitment to openness and ongoing enhancement sets a powerful precedent that we hope will inspire others throughout the maritime community. We encourage more organisations to embrace this collaborative approach, understanding that honest conversation is the catalyst for substantial advancement.

Moving forward, we seek to expand our reach, welcoming voices from all seafarers. Each new perspective strengthens our collective understanding and amplifies our capacity to champion transformative initiatives. To shipowners and operators, your ongoing commitment to supporting and facilitating crew engagement remains fundamental to achieving our shared objectives.

The path ahead demands collaboration from all maritime stakeholders. When we place seafarer happiness and well-being at the centre of our priorities, we tackle immediate concerns while simultaneously laying the groundwork for a more robust, productive, and forward-thinking maritime sector.

To complete the survey, visit:

www.seafarershappinessindex.org



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