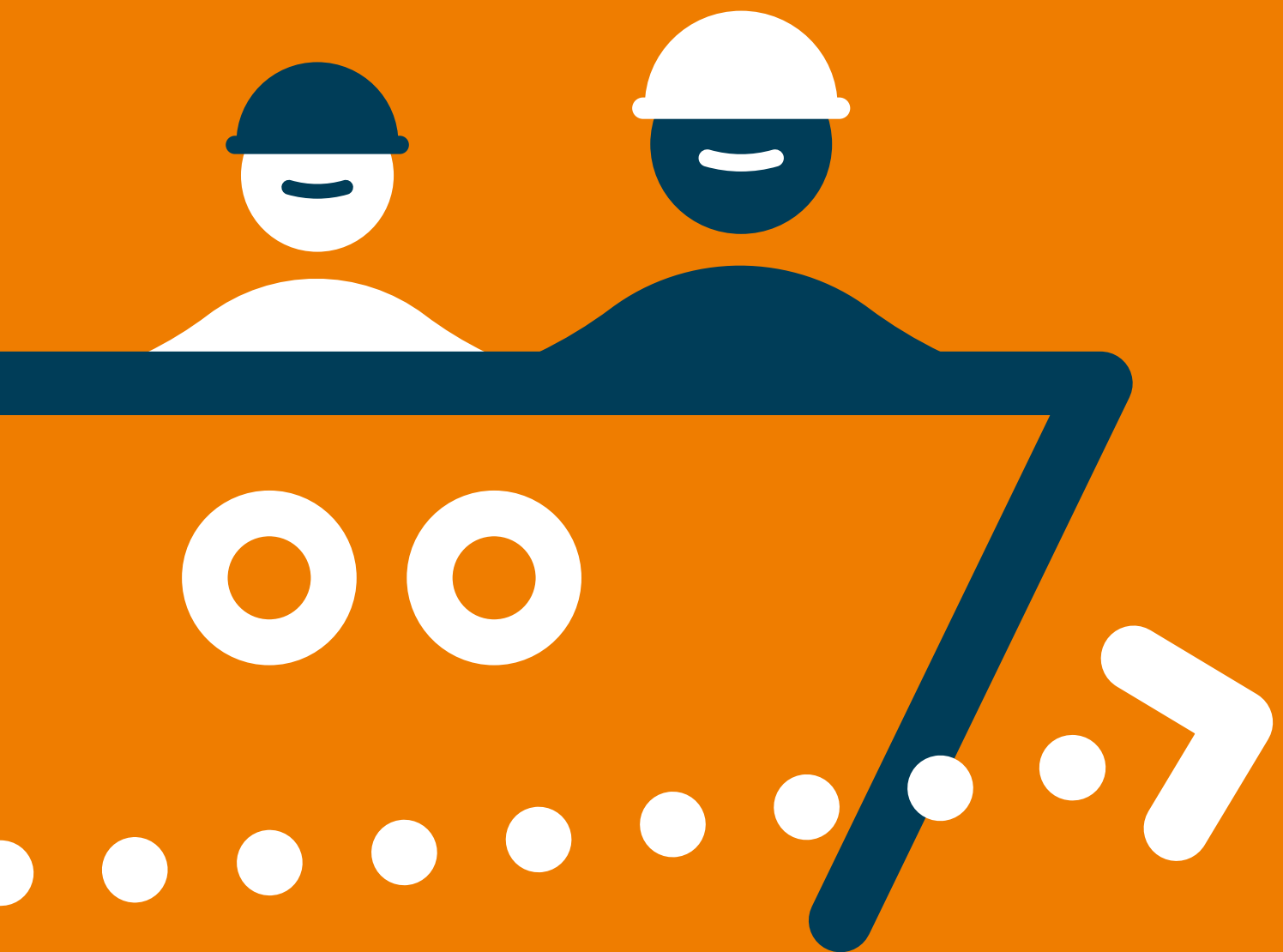




ALL ABOARD  
ALLIANCE  
GLOBAL MARITIME FORUM

# **Diversity@Sea: The Journey to the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines**



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## **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and not the views of the Diversity@Sea companies, the All Aboard Alliance or its member companies, or the Global Maritime Forum.

## **Credits**

The pictures in this report were taken on board the Diversity@Sea pilot vessels.

Data collection was conducted in collaboration with PsyFyi.

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# Foreword

Seafarer well-being has long been recognised as a critical issue within the maritime industry. Enhancing seafarer welfare is not only the right thing to do but is also essential for ensuring the sector's long-term viability, safety, and sustainability.

We are proud to share the third report of the Diversity@Sea initiative. Since 2022, the Global Maritime Forum has, in collaboration with member companies from the All Aboard Alliance, been looking closely at the key factors that shape seafarers' career development, well-being, and quality of life. Our shared goal is to make seafaring a safer, more inclusive, and more attractive career choice for people from all walks of life.

This report outlines the research that led to the development of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines. These guidelines were designed to be feasible to implement in day-to-day operations and are based on original research that reflects seafarers' actual experiences. A key part of this report is the inclusion of seafarers' voices. Their perspectives, experiences, and realities must inform every step we take to improve life at sea. Authentic, meaningful change can only be achieved when the people most affected are at the centre of the conversation.

As co-chairs of the All Aboard Alliance, we extend our sincere gratitude to the many companies that contributed their time, expertise, and insights to this work. We would particularly like to acknowledge the 12 companies that made working vessels available for the Diversity@Sea pilot study. Their participation was essential in testing and informing the guidelines, and the insights gathered from seafarers aboard those ships will prove invaluable in shaping impactful improvements.

This report is a call to action to continue pushing our progress forward. Looking ahead, the All Aboard Alliance and the Global Maritime Forum remain committed to championing these guidelines, broadening our impact, and driving systemic change across the maritime industry.

Thank you to the twelve pilot companies, staff, and seafarers for their participation in this project:

- Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement
- bp shipping
- Cargill Ocean Transportation
- Chevron Shipping Company
- Diana Shipping Inc.
- Dorian LPG
- GasLog
- Hafnia
- MISC
- Stena
- Swire Shipping
- Synergy Marine Group

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Chief Executive Officer, Hafnia  
Co-chair, All Aboard Alliance

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Chief Executive Officer, Circle DV  
Co-chair, All Aboard Alliance

# Executive summary

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This report presents the outcomes of the Diversity@Sea initiative, a unique collaborative effort led by the Global Maritime Forum in close partnership with member companies of the All Aboard Alliance. Through this initiative, first-mover companies agreed to openly share best practices and challenges, creating a foundation for joint learning and problem-solving. These shared experiences shaped the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines—an important step toward building a more inclusive and attractive career path at sea. The guidelines address long-standing challenges in the maritime industry and offer practical recommendations to improve working and living conditions for seafarers worldwide.

As part of Diversity@Sea, the Global Maritime Forum and members of the All Aboard Alliance conducted several rounds of data collection and analysis. The process began with exploratory interviews with female seafarers, which revealed 15 key pain points experienced by women at sea. These insights formed the foundation for co-design workshops with key stakeholders to develop targeted solutions. The proposed measures were then piloted over 13 months on multiple working vessels, with feedback collected directly from seafarers. Additional data was collected from seafarers outside of the pilot companies as a comparative study. Findings from the pilot were examined through additional workshops and publications, ultimately leading to the creation of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines—a set of research-backed, practical recommendations aimed at improving life at sea and enhancing the attractiveness of the maritime industry.

The resulting nine Sustainable Crewing Guidelines are:

1. Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour
2. Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour
3. Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals
4. Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all
5. Provide a reliable daily connection to the wider world
6. Reduce isolation by building supportive communities
7. Offer flexible contract lengths and respect contract terms
8. Provide paid parental leave
9. Continuously collect feedback and take action

In the face of industry-wide labour shortages, this report aims to raise awareness of the challenges affecting seafarers' well-being and provide practical guidance for companies seeking to improve conditions at sea—and for those looking to identify and support such companies. The hope is that it contributes to building a stronger, more resilient, and sustainable maritime industry.

# Introduction

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Shipping companies face labour shortages that could threaten the viability of their operations. The 2021 Seafarer Workforce Report predicted that there would be a shortage of 89,510 officers by 2026.<sup>1</sup> As this shortage has become a reality,<sup>2</sup> companies are resorting to hiring less experienced seafarers into higher ranks and operating at minimum manning levels, which increases safety risks for both crew members and vessels.<sup>3</sup>

Clear opportunities to broaden recruitment include women and individuals from emerging seafaring nations, particularly in Africa.<sup>4</sup> Currently, only 1.28% of seafarers are women—approximately 24,000 out of 1.9 million— making maritime one of the industries with the lowest female participation rates.<sup>5</sup> Whilst issues of geography and nationality certainly play a part in access to training and recruitment, this significant gender disparity also indicates that gender-specific barriers may be discouraging women from pursuing maritime careers.

Since Autumn 2022, the Global Maritime Forum has worked closely with All Aboard Alliance member companies on the Diversity@Sea project, exploring how to make a career at sea more inclusive and attractive. This report documents three years of research, moving through exploration to identify key pain points, co-designing possible solutions, testing those measures on pilot vessels, and identifying best practices in multiple areas that are important to all seafarers' well-being and job satisfaction. The culmination of the Diversity@Sea efforts is the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines, a set of concrete recommendations that would improve the welfare of all seafarers and the attractiveness of the industry if implemented.

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1 BIMCO & International Chamber of Shipping. (2021). *Seafarer Workforce Report: The Global Supply and Demand for Seafarers in 2021* (2021 ed.). Witherbys.

2 Danica Crewing Specialists. (2024). *Danica Seafarers' Survey 2024*.

3 Kypriotaki, A. (2024, November 12). *Danica: Seafarer wages keep rising due to crew shortage*. SAFETY4SEA. <https://safety4sea.com/danica-seafarer-wages-keep-rising-due-to-crew-shortage/>

4 Lloyd's Register Foundation, Lloyd's Register, & World Maritime University. (2025). *Deep dive on seafarer sustainability: Supporting the opportunity for Africa and women to create a sustainable supply of seafarers for the future*. <https://www.lrfoundation.org.uk/publications/deep-dive-on-seafarer-sustainability>

5 BIMCO & International Chamber of Shipping. (2021).

## The Journey

The Diversity@Sea initiative was first discussed at the Global Maritime Forum Annual Summit 2022 in New York with an initial commitment from 25 All Aboard Alliance member companies. Each participating company appointed a C-suite leader to the Diversity@Sea committee, along with a dedicated project lead to work closely on the initiative. An exploratory research phase began at once, resulting in the *15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea* report, published in April 2023.<sup>6</sup> Based on interviews with 115 anonymous women seafarers from all ranks, the report identified 15 key pain points across four categories that served as the foundation for the pilot study moving forward.

| Difficult for women to succeed professionally                                            | Challenging social relations                                 | Employment challenges                                                                    | Physical conditions onboard                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A culture onboard where women get treated as 'less' competent than their male colleagues | A culture in which (avoiding) rumors and gossip is a concern | Contracts at sea are too long                                                            | Access to female sanitary products onboard                                           |
| Women having to outperform male peers to be perceived as competent                       | Women feeling isolated, unsupported and/or alone onboard     | Lack of family planning option, included maternity leave and sea-shore rotation programs | Access to appropriate PPE equipment, e.g. boilersuit size, fire suits and boot sizes |
| Women having unequal access to on-the-job training onboard                               | Power abuse by officers                                      | Companies not wanting to recruit women                                                   | Access to designated woman changing rooms, bathrooms, laundry area, etc.             |
| Getting assigned different tasks than male colleagues                                    | Sexual abuse and sexual harassment                           | Women seafarers go elsewhere                                                             |                                                                                      |

Based on these findings, two co-design workshops were held in spring 2023 with key stakeholders, including seafarers, experts, industry leaders, flag states, and government officials, to identify possible measures that would address the identified pain points. Twelve member companies from the All Aboard Alliance agreed to pilot these measures on working vessels. These companies committed to an ambitious gender balance on board, ensuring proper conditions for menstrual needs and private hygiene, providing internet access, and ensuring inclusive personal protective equipment. Additionally, the pilot measures aimed to create a more inclusive environment, ensure freedom from abuse, harassment, and bullying, and promote more flexible scheduling to improve work-life balance.

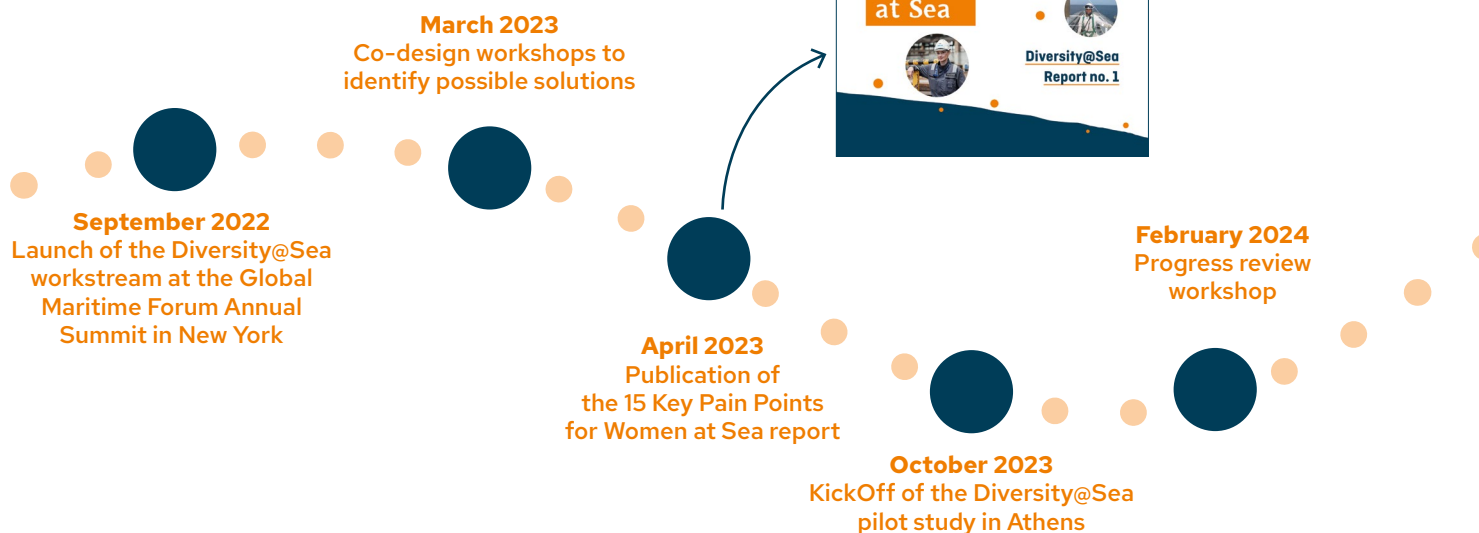
<sup>6</sup> Global Maritime Forum. (2023). *New study finds 15 key pain points for women at sea*. <https://globalmaritimeforum.org/press/new-study-finds-15-key-pain-points-for-women-at-sea/>

## Introduction

Thank you to the 25 companies that contributed their resources and knowledge:

- Anglo-Eastern
- Ardmore Shipping Corporation
- Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement
- bp shipping
- Bureau Veritas
- Cargill Ocean Transportation
- Chevron Shipping Company
- Danaos Corporation
- Diana Shipping Inc.
- Diversity Study Group
- Dorian LPG
- Euronav
- Fleet Management
- GasLog
- Hafnia
- International Seaways
- Lloyd's Register
- MISC
- Mitsui O.S.K. Lines
- Navigator Gas
- Philippine Transmarine Carriers
- Rio Tinto
- Stena
- Swire Shipping
- Synergy Marine Group
- Turtle

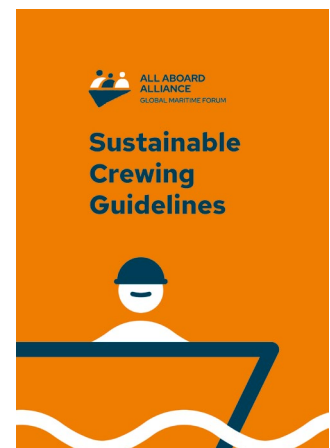
Between November 2023 and September 2024, data was collected from 680 seafarers on board a total of 21 pilot vessels. Seafarers responded to questions about their work and life on board, with participation being entirely voluntary and confidential. During this period, a progress review workshop was held in February 2024 with the pilot leads from the participating companies to review initial results and assess the data collection process. A preliminary findings report was published in August 2024 to inform the broader industry about seafarers' needs and priorities.<sup>7</sup> To benchmark against industry averages outside the pilot group, a comparative study was conducted using similar questions with data collected from seafarers globally. This phase ran from November 2024 to March 2025 and received 398 responses.



<sup>7</sup> Global Maritime Forum. (2024). *Improving seafarer well-being: Preliminary findings from the Diversity@Sea pilot project*. <https://globalmaritimeforum.org/insight/improving-seafarer-well-being-preliminary-findings-from-the-diversity-sea/>

It became clear that many of the initial pain points raised by female seafarers—such as unsuitable PPE and limited family planning options—were also relevant to their male colleagues. Additionally, seafarers highlighted other important challenges affecting well-being at sea, such as the need for improved shore leave. As a result, the development of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines focused on improving conditions and ensuring fair opportunities for all seafarers.

Towards the conclusion of the project, a final workshop was held in January 2025 with seafarers and pilot leads from participating companies to identify key lessons and determine how to share these with the wider industry. What would eventually become the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines emerged from the research insights and the practical knowledge of maritime professionals participating in the workshops.



**August 2024**  
Preliminary findings  
report published

**November 2024**  
Comparative study  
launched

**January 2025**  
Guidelines  
workshop

**March 2025**  
Launch of the Sustainable  
Crewing Guidelines as part  
of Singapore Maritime Week

# Key findings from the Diversity@Sea initiative

Nine key areas were identified through the Diversity@Sea initiative, which subsequently informed the development of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines. This section explores each of these nine areas in greater detail, outlining both the challenges they present and the measures proposed to address them effectively.



1.

**Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour**



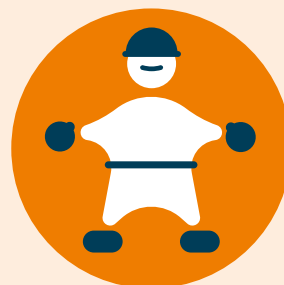
2.

**Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour**



3.

**Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals**



4.

**Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all**



5.  
Provide a reliable  
daily connection  
to the wider world



6.  
Reduce isolation  
by building  
supportive  
communities



7.  
Offer flexible  
contract lengths and  
respect contract  
terms



8.  
Provide paid  
parental leave



9.  
Continuously  
collect feedback  
and take action

## Building a culture of respect at sea



*"Too often seamen, both officers and crew, do not feel valued and even feel disrespected by their respective manning office ashore. Manning representatives often have a 'take it or leave it' attitude towards the crews at sea. These days, many younger sailors, especially officers, choose to 'leave it'."*

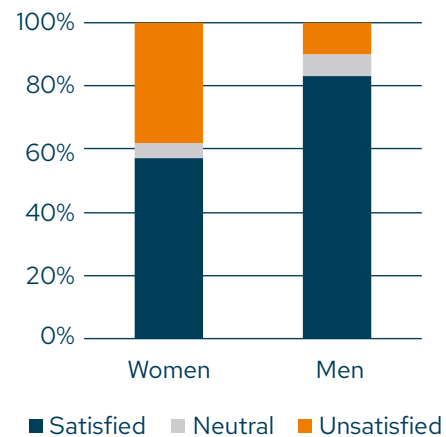
The need for clear expectations for respectful and professional behaviour emerged clearly from the interviews and pilot data. Everyone deserves to feel respected and valued for their contributions, yet many seafarers report experiencing belittling and disrespectful treatment. This occurs not only among colleagues, but also across rank hierarchies and between seafarers and onshore management.

Female seafarers, young seafarers, and other minorities frequently experience disrespectful behaviour related to their identity. In some cases, this constitutes harassment. As one seafarer explained, "I've experienced working with people who don't know how to respect women through their actions and words, such as attempting and actually touching women inappropriately, making sexist jokes, and asking rude questions." It more frequently takes the form of undermining professional competencies, with comments such as "some men say that women cannot do this work [and that] women are not suitable for vessels."

Numerous accounts from seafarers highlighted the importance of a respectful culture and the role of senior leaders in building it. As another seafarer explained, "the safety and working culture onboard a vessel primarily depend on the master's behaviour. If the master creates a stressful working environment, the rest of the crew cannot focus on their jobs effectively." Many pilot study and interview participants pointed to positive experiences they had with senior officers. "Top ranks are very respectful to their subordinates, including cadets and ratings. They don't assert their authority in a way that pushes others down," one said.

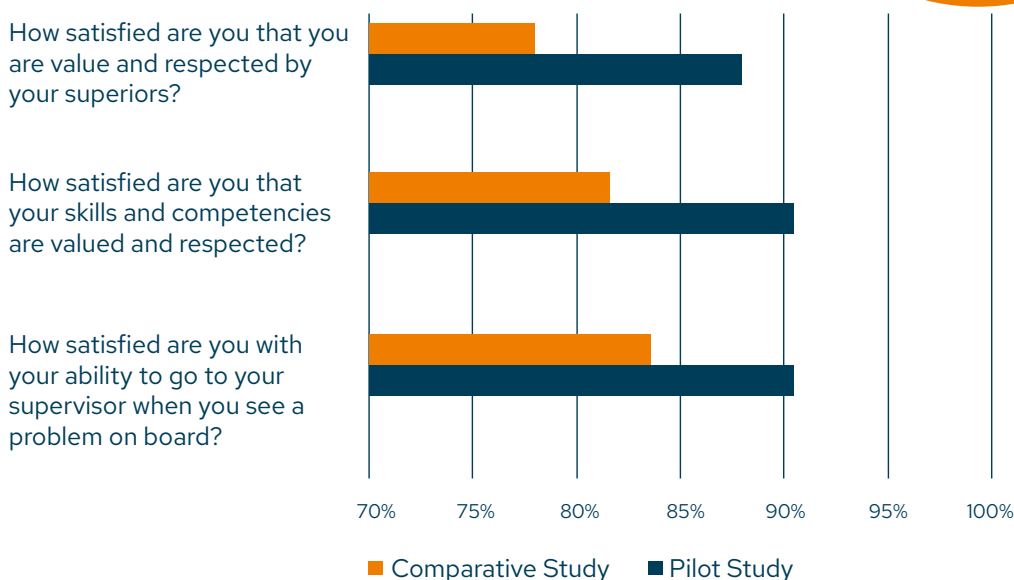
Pilot findings reveal that clear behavioural guidelines and training contribute to better teamwork, productivity, and motivation. When trust exists among colleagues, individuals feel comfortable sharing honest opinions, knowledge, and expertise. As one seafarer put it, "I speak with my supervisors regularly; we discuss problems together and find solutions."

How satisfied are you that your skills and competencies are valued and respected? – Comparative Study



The crews of the pilot vessels reported higher satisfaction in this area than those in the comparative study. In response to questions regarding respect and collaboration, seafarers on the pilot vessels reported about 10 percentage points higher satisfaction.

*"Yes, I do experience a more positive culture on board the pilot vessel. The crew is collaborative and supportive, which makes the work environment much more enjoyable."*



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

Following the research, the first Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

### Guideline One: Establish clear expectations of respectful and professional behaviour

- Incorporate behavioural competencies related to respect and inclusivity into appraisals and/or the code of conduct.
- Provide ongoing training to raise awareness of inclusive practices.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between shore-based management and seafarers to enhance trust and support.

Experiences on board pilot vessels also supported these recommendations. For instance, one seafarer positively described their experience of training on inclusive practices. "We had training and discussions on equality, racism and diversity with the master. It was a full conversation about the importance of understanding and not judging people based on their religion, nationality, gender, sexuality, colour, etc. It helped us to open our minds and think about it a lot," they said.

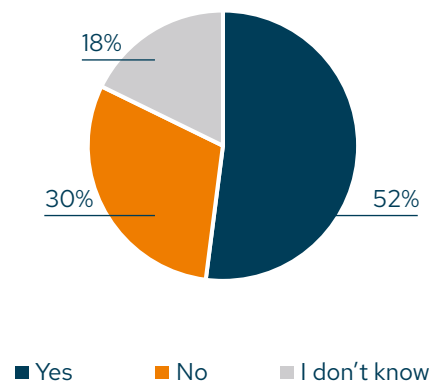
## Strengthening trust in safety protocols



*"Women on board must feel safe and understand that reporting the issues to the captain or company will not lead to losing their job. I think 90% of abuse and harassment cases are not reported at all due to fear of losing a job."*

Building a positive work culture also includes addressing unacceptable behaviour to ensure seafarers feel safe from mental or physical abuse. This is essential for fostering trust and accountability. Seafarer interviews made it clear that bullying and power abuse harm seafarers' mental health and drive many to leave the industry altogether. Structures that keep seafarers safe are particularly important given that seafarers frequently work with new colleagues. "Every contract is working with strangers, so there is always a huge gap in trust and feeling safe," one respondent said.

Do you currently have access to an anonymous helpline?  
- Comparative Study



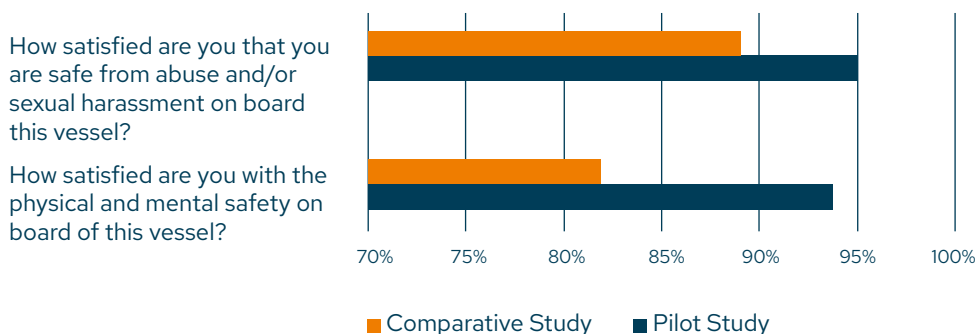
A major challenge is ensuring that seafarers trust that they can report cases of abuse without fear of retaliation or other negative consequences. While many companies offer anonymous helplines, employees are not always aware of these services or may not believe that they are truly anonymous. Almost half of the respondents in the comparative study either did not have access to an anonymous helpline or were unaware that their company offered one.

After a report is made, seafarers would like to know that action will be taken by the company. As one seafarer explains, "I want to know that the company I work for will have my back in case something arises. I don't always receive the help from some of my co-workers that a guy would receive." When procedures are poorly defined or inconsistently applied, victims of abuse are concerned about the personal consequences of making a report, especially gossip that can follow them to new vessels.

The seafarers in the Diversity@Sea pilot study expressed that clear and consistent procedures support seafarers' feelings of security. "I feel safe as I strongly believe in the mechanisms in place," one said. This includes having multiple systems in place, which might be appropriate depending on the severity of the problem or the ability of one person to address the issue.

As this seafarer highlights, “At present there is no direct line for crews to direct their queries on HR matters. All questions have to go through the master, so if the master does not follow up on the query or send it in the first place, you are stuck with no reply.”

*“I used the direct helpline for women. It was helpful. They took action as soon as possible with my concern.”*



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

All companies in the pilot study provided seafarers with access to anonymous helplines, alongside other initiatives aimed at supporting their physical and mental well-being. These efforts are reflected in improved satisfaction scores in this area among the crews of the pilot vessels compared to those in the comparative study. While the percentage of those who feel safe from abuse or sexual harassment is relatively high, this may be influenced by the fact that the majority of respondents are male.

Following the research, the second Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

## Guideline Two: Zero tolerance and clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour

- Provide access to a confidential third-party helpline via phone and/or email to report harassment, bullying, power abuse, or misconduct without fear of retaliation.
- Clearly outline the consequences of violating behavioural standards in the company's code of conduct.
- Appoint a staff member on shore that seafarers can contact with concerns about social challenges and welfare.

## Creating fair procedures for career advancement



*"Sometimes promotions are confusing from the standpoint of why is this person being promoted over that person when talent and ability are clearly mismatched."*

Setting rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals provides equal opportunities for all crew members to succeed. Many seafarers described experiencing unequal career opportunities depending on which officers they worked under. "Some writing reports are very good and grade fairly, others say they will 'never' give great reports even when deserved. There needs to be a standard. After a trip where I put in a lot of effort and hard work, I feel demoralised by just an average report," one seafarer explained.

*"People often judge by gender. Stereotypes are still very popular."*

When the criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals are poorly defined, people assume that personal biases play a greater role. This not only affects formal procedures, including appraisals and promotions, but also day-to-day opportunities to learn and practice essential skills.

"Sometimes my leader thinks women can't do certain things and won't give me a chance to practice. Instead, he'll give the task to someone he likes, which I think is unfair," one female seafarer said.

Another seafarer described a situation where "the chief officer would favour another third mate just because they are of the same nationality." These situations highlight how unclear expectations, and inconsistent practices can undermine fairness and limit professional growth, especially for more vulnerable, underrepresented groups.

Seafarers generally value opportunities to demonstrate their competencies and be judged fairly for promotion. Unfortunately, many report that they are not able to progress due to biased assessments of their abilities. A strong theme that emerged in the interviews with women seafarers was a perceived pressure to overperform just to be seen as competent.

"I always feel I need to work harder than my male colleagues and constantly prove myself," one seafarer explained. "They get promoted for average work, I have to stand out among them."

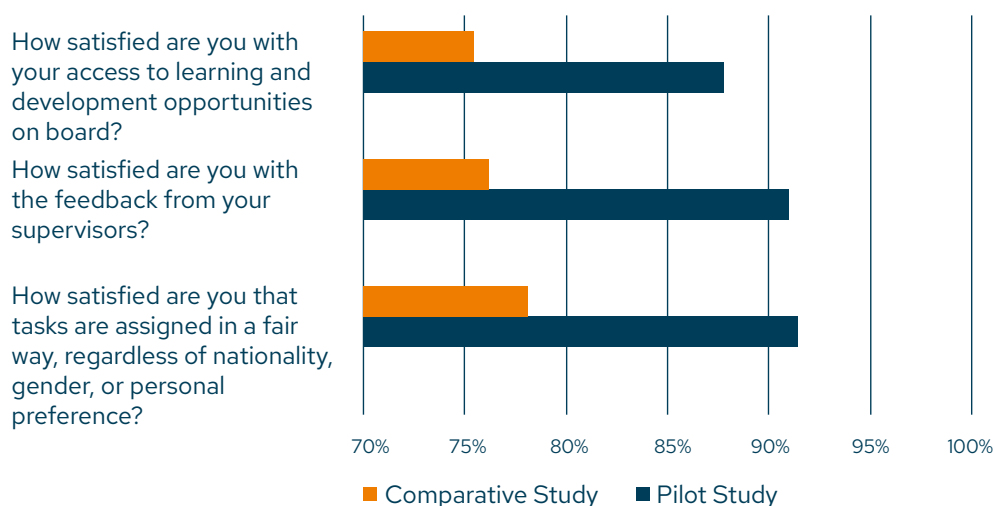
*"Women seafarers can be just as good leaders as others as long as they get support from the crew. Crew needs to understand that competency has no gender."*

Such expectations create a heavy mental burden.

Consistent and supportive practices that enable all seafarers equal opportunities to succeed lead to higher job satisfaction and motivation. As described in the quotation on the right, learning from more experienced senior crew is essential for developing skills at sea, and seafarers feel highly motivated when they have good teachers.

*"We have the pleasure of working with one of the best captains on the fleet who is always there for us to support us and to advise us where we need to improve. His appraisals are always honest, and everyone gets the appraisal based on their work. With captains like this, you feel appreciated, and it boosts your confidence as well."*

Access to learning, feedback, and task assignment shows some of the largest differences in satisfaction between seafarers in pilot companies and those outside them, with gaps of 13–15% on related survey questions. As shown in the figure below, satisfaction rates among crew members on pilot vessels were notably high in these areas—ranging from 88% to 91%. This highlights the significant positive impact that targeted efforts in these areas can have.



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

Following the research, the third Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

### Guideline Three: Set rank-specific criteria for tasks, training, and appraisals

- Define roles and training opportunities by rank and clearly communicate these to all seafarers.
- Publish transparent appraisal criteria.
- State a commitment to equal and diverse recruitment policies in company communications.

## Providing seafarers with the right tools

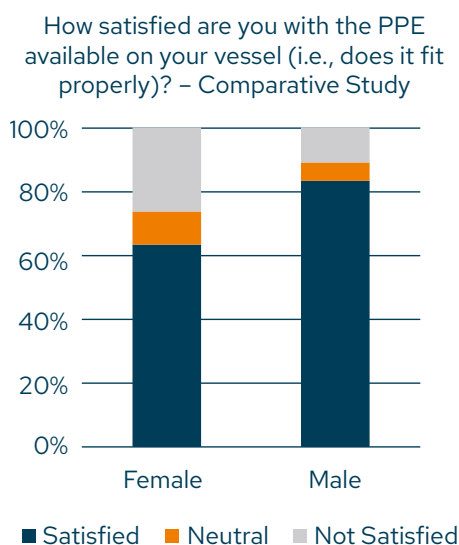


*"We struggle to work in the larger gloves. You don't have fingertips to do things like nuts and bolts, so you have to remove your gloves."*

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential to ensuring that seafarers can perform their jobs safely and effectively. While PPE is a fundamental safety requirement, it is often designed for the average male body, making it ill-fitting for others. As one seafarer describes, this can be dangerous.

"The fire suits are ridiculous. It becomes unsafe if a smaller crew member is expected to respond to an emergency in such big PPE. The gloves are so massive that you aren't able to hold the fire hose or do anything, as your fingers don't even make it to the finger part of the gloves."

Seafarers who do not conform to the average male size frequently purchase their own PPE at their own expense, a cost that ought to be borne by the company. Quality and durability are also concerns, with respondents reporting that PPE shrinks and degrades over time.

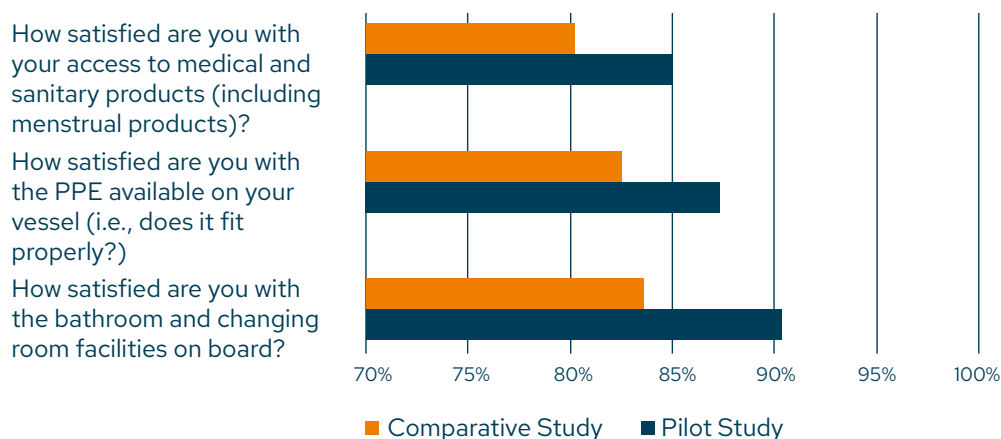


In addition to the need for more suitable and durable PPE, gender-separated bathrooms, changing rooms, and laundry facilities were rated as highly important by study participants. Where such facilities are lacking, women often have to go back to their cabins to change or attend to personal needs. Seafarers also emphasised the need for discrete and hygienic disposal options for sanitary products.

"If we had colour-coded bins for sanitary pads for women onboard, it would be easier for the fourth engineer when burning garbage in the incinerator – they wouldn't have to segregate it before burning," one respondent explained.

Respondents also stressed the importance of supplying appropriate medical and sanitary products for all genders, ensuring that the diverse needs of seafarers are considered. As one seafarer highlighted, "menstrual products are just as important as having deodorant or toothpaste".

Pilot study participants reported higher satisfaction in areas related to personal PPE, onboard facilities, and sanitary products than those in the comparative study, which may reflect the fact that the pilot vessels were equipped with gender-segregated facilities and specifically stocked menstrual products. However, the perceived need for such provisions varies significantly among individuals, and not all crew members viewed them as a priority.



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

Following the research, the fourth Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

#### Guideline Four: Ensure appropriate equipment and facilities for all

- Provide PPE appropriate for all different body types and different weather conditions or reimburse seafarers for buying their own.
- Ensure access to gender-separate changing rooms.
- Provide a supply of sanitary products on board and allow seafarers extra luggage space to bring their own.
- Ensure private and hygienic options for disposing sanitary products.

The pilot study revealed a positive response to such measures. For instance, one pilot seafarer highlighted the benefits of more comfortable living conditions.

“They have all the products in a cabinet in the hospital, and it’s labelled so that we do not have to approach the commanding officer just to have it dispensed. It makes the environment much more comfortable, they said.”

Respondents also said that such measures improve seafarers’ relationships with their companies.

“The company always strives to provide us the best quality PPE and actually cares about our safety,” one participating seafarer said. “I’m wearing a smaller size than usual as a woman, which was provided by the company and fits me well.”

## Enhancing connectivity



*"One of the main slogans that encouraged me to start this career was 'see the world while working and earning a good salary'. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. With such limited shore leave, this has become almost non-existent in today's world."*

Connectivity with the wider world is essential to seafarers' well-being. While internet access at sea was once considered a luxury, today it is a necessity. It not only allows seafarers to stay connected with family and friends through calls, messaging, and social media, but also supports other vital aspects of daily life, including entertainment, banking, e-learning, and even physical exercise through online platforms. The survey with the general seafarer population shows that the majority either lack sufficient free internet access or must pay high rates for basic use.

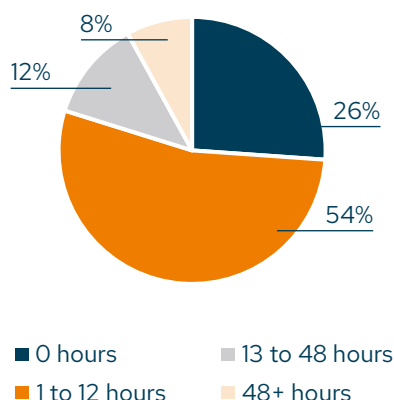
As highlighted in the quotation below, many seafarers spoke positively about the benefits of improved internet infrastructure; however, on some vessels, seafarers reported issues with the functionality of internet services. When internet access is insufficient, ship communication systems can serve as a vital lifeline to maintain contact with home. Access to such systems therefore needs to be secured.

In our comparative study, 46% of seafarers reported receiving 1GB or less of free and reliable internet per week.

1GB per week of data would typically provide:

- ~30 minutes of video calling (standard quality)
- ~30 minutes of standard-quality video streaming
- ~2.5-3 hours of voice calls
- A mix of ~3-4 hours of browsing or ~1.5 hours of music streaming
- Some combination of the above

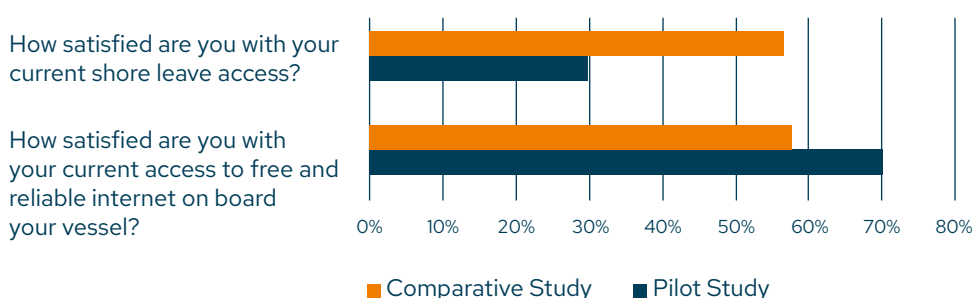
Hours of Shore Leave per month  
- Comparative Study



Seafarer well-being is also linked to the ability to see and experience the world beyond the ship. Exposure to different cultures, landscapes, and environments is a key factor in maintaining a sense of fulfilment and purpose during long voyages. One of the areas where seafarers expressed the greatest dissatisfaction was shore leave policies. In the comparative study, one quarter of respondents reported no shore leave per month, whilst just over half have only one day or less of monthly shore leave. Without the opportunity to go ashore, some seafarers spend months confined to the ship. Even when shore leave is granted, it is often too short, and terminals are frequently located far from cities or areas of interest, leaving seafarers with little to no time to visit places beyond the port.

Internet connectivity and shore leave policies emerged as the areas with the lowest levels of satisfaction in our studies. Satisfaction with shore leave was generally low, including among seafarers in pilot companies, where it was identified as one of the most dissatisfying aspect of their experience. Dissatisfaction appeared to be even higher within the pilot group—possibly due to higher expectations compared to those of seafarers outside the pilot.

*"Starlink has been a moral boost with communication back home. It is a big mental boost to talk with family and friends over a quality connection anywhere in the world."*



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

Following the research, the fifth Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

### Guideline Five: Provide a reliable daily connection to the wider world

- Provide at least 1GB per day of free, stable, and reliable internet connectivity.
- Allow seafarers to make phone calls daily using the ship's communications system for a free limited period, and then at a reasonable price.
- Enable seafarers to take shore leave at least once per month.

Whilst most seafarers do not have consistent access to shore leave, those who do report a positive effect on their mental health.

"Having shore leave back again since COVID has given everyone something to bond over and we're now able to look forward to potential ports," one seafarer explained. "There is also the fact that people can bring snacks on board to share, which may seem small but greatly improves morale."

## Creating community



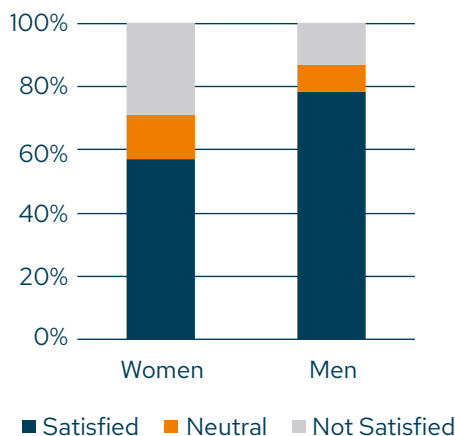
*"Being lonely is part of every seafarer's life. Every seafarer is used to it but doesn't get affected much if there's a good working atmosphere that is friendly and conflict free. Good human relationships with coworkers while working for an employer who cares is sufficient to overcome loneliness."*

Building positive relationships on board addresses isolation and contributes significantly to seafarers' mental health and overall quality of life. Interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the importance of having someone to talk to who understands their struggles and achievements.

"There was another woman onboard when I joined as a cadet for the first time; she was older and I could lean on her," one seafarer explained. "She would listen to my venting and provide a support system. Having other women onboard helps you to feel more supported emotionally".

These supportive connections can be found both on board and through professional networks beyond the ship.

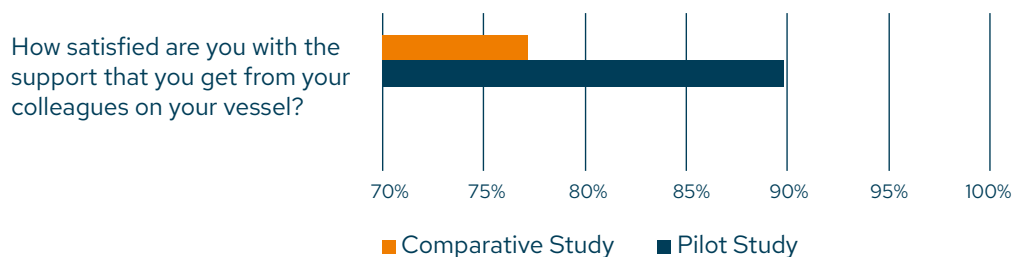
How satisfied are you with the support that you get from your colleagues on your vessel? – Comparative Study



It became apparent in interviews that seafarers who are the only person of their nationality, language, or gender on board are more likely to experience loneliness, often because they feel excluded or unwelcome. As one seafarer described, "[others] don't want to socialise with us because of our colour or gender." Another respondent added that "having sailed alone as a woman seafarer on most of my vessels, it is a hassle to fit in, you have to make extra efforts to be recognised as part of the crew."

A positive and welcoming onboard atmosphere is not a given; it must be actively cultivated through activities that promote camaraderie and connection.

Both living and working together, seafarers are more than just colleagues. Many of the seafarers interviewed expressed an appreciation for being able to participate in social activities with their colleagues. Inclusive social activities offer seafarers opportunities to bond in relaxed, informal settings. Support from colleagues is an area that saw a large difference in satisfaction between the pilot and comparative groups, a gap of 13 percentage points.



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

The findings suggest that the pilot companies were able to cultivate very supportive environments on board their vessels.

Following the research, the sixth Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

### Guideline Six: Reduce isolation by building supportive communities

- Allocate a designated budget for social activities to foster a supportive and inclusive onboard environment.
- Provide mentorship opportunities to all seafarers.
- Establish company-wide support groups or networks for underrepresented communities, including women, youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other minority groups.

*"The cadets were intimidated by me as I'm their training officer. But every Sunday we watch movies together. I like inviting them to socialise so they feel more comfortable on board."*



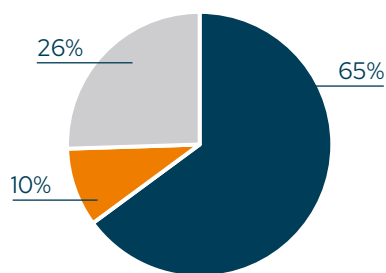
## Improving contract conditions



*"I don't know how long I will be on board."*

Participants in both studies expressed clear preferences for different contract lengths, depending on their individual needs and circumstances. Some said they prefer a longer contract to earn more at once, while others find extended periods at sea mentally and physically exhausting. The comparative study indicated that only roughly two-thirds of seafarers are satisfied with the terms of their current contract.

How satisfied are you with the terms of your current contract?  
- Comparative Study



■ Satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Not Satisfied

Contract extensions can exacerbate the challenge of being at sea for a long time. This is particularly hard at the end of an already long stint at sea.

"The eight-month contract for me is exhausting; I would like to reduce the contract to six months," one seafarer noted. "Plus, it has happened many times that I reach eight months and there is no convenient port to sign off, and I have to extend the contract until we reach a port with a cheap airfare."

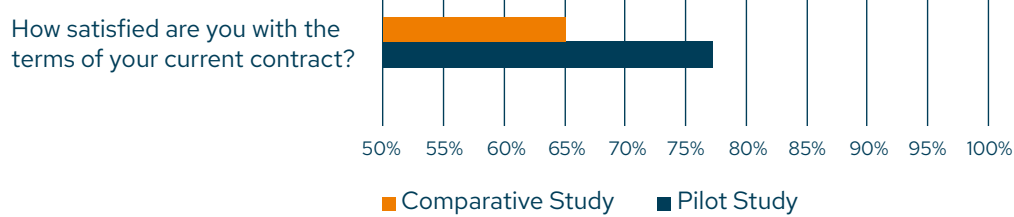
Knowing their contract lengths allows seafarers to plan their lives, including spending time with families, going on holidays, and attending celebrations.

However, it is common for contracts to be extended or reduced without the seafarers' agreement.

"Two trips in a row I had my trip length extended beyond my contracted length, which makes it impossible to plan anything on my leave and disrupts my expected time at home," one participant noted. This way of working contributes to stress both when on board and during time at home.

"This leads to an unknown schedule regarding the stuff you have to do when you are on vacation and is quite stressful when you have a prolonged stay on board and off board," another said.

Sufficient forward planning and manning allow seafarers to take control of their work and home schedules, as well as contribute to meeting company goals and regulations. Many seafarers are not satisfied with the terms of their current contracts, especially those outside of the pilot study, where the number of seafarers satisfied with their contracts was 12 percentage points lower than that of pilot participants.



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

During expert workshops with leaders and seafarers from the pilot companies, it became clear that addressing dissatisfaction with contract conditions involves more than just the contracts themselves—it requires a broader examination of planning procedures.

Following the research, the seventh Sustainable Crewing Guideline and corresponding recommendations are as follows.

### Guideline Seven: Offer flexible contract lengths and respect contract terms

- Provide flexible contract lengths, including options as short as four months, based on individual needs and operational requirements.
- Ensure that at least 85% of seafarers are offboarded within 15 days of the end of their contract.

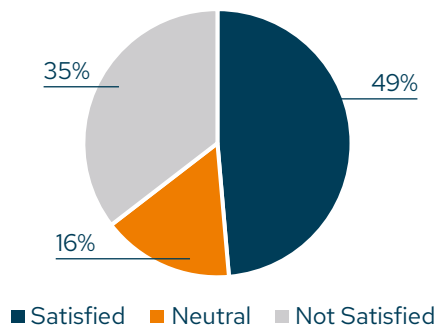


## The need for family support at work



*"They demand so much work output from us that they forget we are people with family to come back to. A little bit of compassion, crew support, and family support would be much appreciated. Being a seafarer is a very stressful and demanding job, and companies should value their people more and give us enough benefits and support befitting our job."*

How satisfied are you with the maternity / paternity support from your company?  
- Comparative Study



Parental leave policies are crucial for both men and women and both genders reported high dissatisfaction with these policies. With paid parental leave in many countries and industries, 89% of seafarers in the pilot study stated that having strong parental leave packages, benefits, and support from their company is important to them (rating seven or more out of ten).

Under the current status quo, seafarers who are new parents face great professional and financial uncertainty. In many companies,

women stand to lose their jobs as soon as pregnancy is discovered. This is a clear case of gender discrimination that undermines equality in employment, discourages women from maritime careers, and is illegal under many flag states.

Many seafarers report that they have limited options to continue a career in the maritime industry if they wish to start a family.

"I believe that if I start a family, I will eventually quit," one female seafarer explained. "Personally, I'm considering leaving when I have a family, and I'm not sure if there are real efforts to address this issue."

*"If I got pregnant, I'd lose my job."*

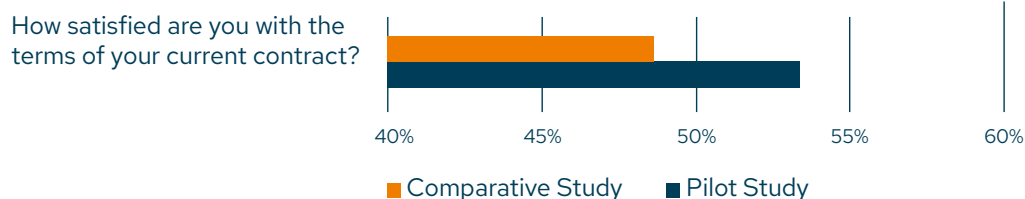
*"I think paternity packages should be at least two months. The father also deserves to stay with the newborn for some time and also be a support to the mother."*

Unless they can secure shore-based opportunities, many seafarers feel they would have no choice but to leave the maritime industry, as they do not believe companies would accommodate their needs.

As paternity leave is less common than maternity leave, male respondents were among the most dissatisfied with parental leave in the pilot and comparative studies. Norms of fatherhood are changing globally, and many men expressed the desire to be present to bond with their children and help care for their partners after childbirth.

Parental leave policies were among the top concerns in both studies. Many seafarers expressed a strong desire to continue their seafaring careers after starting a family, provided that companies accommodate their needs. These accommodations included temporary shore-based roles, as well as temporary financial assistance and assurances of job security.

*"I would like to have a happy family and become successful in my career. If my employers can help me in that matter – I will continue to sail for many years."*



Percentage of seafarers who report that they are satisfied (give a rating of seven or more out of ten)

There is an added complexity within the maritime industry when it comes to implementing parental leave policies, such as flag state legislation, a lack of clearly-defined obligations to seafarers who may be under temporary contracts, and ensuring that pregnant mothers at sea have access to appropriate healthcare. The guidelines for parental leave policies for seafarers are in line with recommendations from the International Labour Organization, and the most common minimum level policies in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

### Guideline Eight: Provide paid parental leave

- Provide either appropriate onshore work options or paid pregnancy leave to pregnant seafarers, primarily at the wishes of the seafarers and at the latest 24 weeks into the pregnancy.
- Provide a minimum of 14 weeks of paid leave (at least 50% of regular salary) for birthing parents or primary caregivers and at least two weeks for non-birthing parents or secondary caregivers, to be used within six months of birth or adoption.
- Support return to work through onshore jobs or short contracts at sea.
- The above should apply to all seafarers currently under contract as well as any seafarer who has completed at least 12 months of service at sea with the same employer within a three-year period. This entitlement should be valid for three years, starting from the end date of the last contract.

## Why staying connected with seafarers matters



*"If you ask questions, you must take action. If I don't see any follow-up, why should I continue to answer the questions?"*

Regularly and consistently monitoring seafarers' well-being and satisfaction is crucial for companies to meet their needs effectively. Among pilot companies, there were numerous instances where management successfully addressed issues as they emerged, mitigating potential problems.

Some seafarers felt that "nobody really listens to what we seamen have to say." However, throughout the pilot, it was observed that simply asking questions had a positive impact on trust between seafarers and their companies. As one participant noted, "it is good knowing our concerns are being noticed regarding life on board the vessel".

It is not only important to ask seafarers questions, but also to act on their responses. Many seafarers expressed a desire for greater involvement from their companies, with comments such as "send a supervisor onboard to see what it's really like" and "we need more participation from the company side." Without meaningful follow-up, they may experience 'survey fatigue.' Responding to seafarer feedback demonstrates that seafarers feel valued and heard.

*"It feels good that someone cares".*

The crews involved in the pilot research study provided highly positive feedback, particularly expressing appreciation for companies listening to their experiences. The participants also emphasised their hopes that, by providing their feedback, they will help improve conditions for future seafarers.

Companies maintaining connections with their seafarers also emerged as a key theme in the expert workshop. The pilot company participants highlighted various methods, emphasising the importance of ensuring crew members do not feel burdened by questions. The resulting guideline outlines various ways companies can foster meaningful engagement with their teams at sea.

### Guideline Nine: Continuously collect feedback and take action

- Monitor overall well-being at least every six months, including all ranks, in feedback processes.
- Share survey results with respondents within one month of completion.
- Outline the actions the company will take based on the results.

## Areas for future research and work

Over the course of the Diversity@Sea initiative, seafarers raised several issues that warrant further attention and exploration. Many of these issues are also gaining attention from other maritime and welfare organisations. The Global Maritime Forum and All Aboard Alliance intend to take these issues forward in our work to ensure that seafarers' concerns are addressed.

The topics of insufficient rest hours and manning levels emerged as a key theme, with many seafarers reporting extremely long work days.

"In this company, I feel unsafe because of the long overtime. We have four hours of overtime every day, not including if we have drills, trainings, and meetings. So our rest hours are disturbed," one seafarer said.

*"Work and rest hours do not reflect reality. We are forced to change/ amend them to satisfy company requests so that the vessel does not have problems."*

*"The workload on the ship is increasing, but the manpower is not increasing."*

Several seafarers noted that this is a consequence of low manning levels on ships, especially at crucial moments such as in port. Seafarers not only reported working long hours but also falsifying work and rest records at the request of companies to comply with regulations. These practices are reportedly common in the maritime industry but extremely dangerous, leading to fatigued seafarers and accidents.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous crew members also expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries. Many respondents noted that salaries have remained stagnant for years and have not kept pace with the rising global cost of living, and some even reported late or missing payments. Many reported feeling demotivated due to being paid less than colleagues of different nationalities or genders.

"Personally, as a woman, it is not nice seeing all my male counterparts being paid significantly more than I am for the same work," one female seafarer said.

It is common practice for shipping companies to set salaries based on perceived living costs in seafarers' countries of origin. However, this approach often overlooks the actual cost of living in specific areas (for example, Singaporean employees being offered the same salary as other Asian colleagues) or short-term changes due to economic fluctuations.

*"Working on a ship today is very stressful and the conditions are extremely exhausting for the entire crew, and the salaries do not keep up with the living needs of the seafarers."*

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8 Bhatia, B. S., Baumler, R., Carrera-Arce, M., Manuel, M. E., & Bartuseviciene, I. (2024). *Quantifying an inconvenient truth: Revisiting a culture of adjustment on work/rest hours* (WMU Report No. 80). World Maritime University.

## Key findings from the Diversity@Sea initiative

Seafarers also highlighted great variations in living conditions. Whilst some were happy with their living quarters and facilities, others described “very few options to stay fit, healthy and entertained on board”. Gymnasiums were mentioned multiple times as unfit for use. Another aspect is food and nutrition. Many seafarers reported dissatisfaction with both the quantity and quality of food available to them, and some were unable to access food that met their dietary requirements, such as halal meat. Other research also confirms that there are widespread deficiencies in living conditions across vessels.<sup>9</sup>

*“Vessel designs are getting worse. Living quarters getting smaller. Gymnasiums are there only to satisfy regulations, most of the time they are not suitable for proper exercise.”*

Finally, the responses highlighted a clear need for improved mental health support. Seafarers are exposed to a range of stressors that, if left unaddressed, can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, and other mental health issues. While at sea, their ability to seek help is often limited, and they are frequently isolated from the support of family, friends, or community networks who would be most able to help them.

*“Regarding mental health. It’s so important yet not very visible to spot. People struggling with mental health don’t wear a sign saying please help or I’m struggling mentally. It’s tough to spot. Separation from family, long contracts, 24-hour work cycles, heavy seas limiting decent rest. All add up on the mind, body, and soul.”*



<sup>9</sup> Idwal. (2024). *Social Impact Report 2024*. Idwal Marine. <https://www.idwalmarine.com/social-impact-report>Idwal Marine+2Idwal Marine+2North Standard+2

# Conclusions and next steps

This report highlights several pressing challenges that impact seafarers' well-being at sea, while also showcasing the potential of global collaboration to address them. Through the Diversity@Sea initiative, 25 companies came together to share insights, identify practical solutions, and develop a deeper understanding of the issues facing seafarers today. In addition to outlining key challenges, the report documents best practices that can be adopted more broadly across the industry. By taking meaningful action, companies have the opportunity to improve the lives of seafarers and make the maritime sector more inclusive, attractive, and sustainable for future talent.

A core principle of the Diversity@Sea initiative is to ensure that seafarers' voices are heard and that policies are grounded in the lived realities of life at sea. These findings make it clear that improving the working and living conditions of seafarers is not only a matter of fairness but also essential to the long-term viability and resilience of maritime operations. As the industry faces growing pressures to attract and retain a diverse and skilled workforce, addressing these conditions becomes a critical step toward ensuring a sustainable and inclusive future for global shipping.

The extensive research that took place as part of the Diversity@Sea project led to the development of the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines, as described in this report. Launched at Singapore Maritime Week in March 2025, these guidelines serve as a roadmap for shipping companies to improve employee well-being. They also help seafarers and other stakeholders identify companies that take sustainability and social responsibility seriously.

The next steps for the Global Maritime Forum and All Aboard Alliance focus on ensuring the widespread implementation of the guidelines across the industry. This will entail a range of initiatives aimed at deepening knowledge-sharing among committed companies, as well as efforts to raise awareness among a broader group of stakeholders who may be able to adopt some or all of the recommended practices.

The experiences and insights gained through the Diversity@Sea initiative have laid a strong foundation for a new and more ambitious next objective: developing more comprehensive, binding standards that define good, better, and best practices across the industry. These standards aim to guide and support shipping companies, charterers, customers, flag states, and other key stakeholders in fostering a safer, more inclusive, and more attractive maritime industry. By translating the lessons learned into actionable frameworks, the aim is to drive meaningful, long-term change across the sector and build a stronger, more sustainable industry.

# Appendix: About the data collection

## Interviews - 115 female seafarers

Beginning in late 2022, 115 female seafarers were interviewed in depth about their positive and negative experiences at sea. These perspectives informed the 15 Key Pain Points for Women at Sea report.

| Category           | Subcategory                                                        | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| <i>Rank</i>        | One stripe (third officer, fourth engineer, junior officer, cadet) | 61     | 53.0%      |
|                    | Non-Officer (rating, able-bodied seafarer, etc.)                   | 22     | 19.1%      |
|                    | Two strips (second officer, third engineer)                        | 17     | 14.8%      |
|                    | Three stripes (chief officer, second engineer)                     | 8      | 7.0%       |
|                    | Four stripes (captain, chief engineer, doctor)                     | 4      | 3.5%       |
|                    | Other                                                              | 3      | 2.6%       |
| <i>Nationality</i> | Asia (mostly the Philippines and India)                            | 72     | 63%        |
|                    | Europe                                                             | 29     | 25%        |
|                    | Africa                                                             | 10     | 9%         |
|                    | Americas                                                           | 3      | 3%         |



## Pilot study – 680 seafarers

From November 2023 to September 2024, the Global Maritime Forum collected data from seafarers on board 21 pilot vessels with the help of data collection agency PsyFyi.

Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Seafarers were asked questions daily via WhatsApp, Messenger, or Telegram. Each day, those who registered received a question in two parts: 1) how important a selected aspect of work and life on board is to them on a scale of one to ten, and 2) how satisfied they are with that aspect on a scale of one to ten. Follow-up questions were sometimes asked to elaborate on their responses in more detail.

An overview of the respondents on pilot vessels is presented below.

| Category           | Subcategory       | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|------------|
| <i>Gender</i>      | Male              | 420    | 61.8%      |
|                    | Female            | 97     | 14.3%      |
|                    | Non-binary        | 5      | 0.7%       |
|                    | Other             | 1      | 0.1%       |
|                    | Prefer not to say | 11     | 1.6%       |
|                    | No Response       | 146    | 21.5%      |
| <i>Rank</i>        | Officer           | 184    | 27.1%      |
|                    | Non-officer       | 155    | 22.8%      |
|                    | Prefer not to say | 24     | 3.5%       |
|                    | No response       | 317    | 46.6%      |
| <i>Vessel Type</i> | LGN/LPG           | 278    | 41%        |
|                    | Tanker/Chemical   | 238    | 35.0%      |
|                    | Container         | 87     | 12.8%      |
|                    | Dry Bulk          | 77     | 11.3%      |

## Comparative study – 398 seafarers

The Global Maritime Forum collected data from a broader sample of seafarers who do not work for any of the pilot companies. This was done through an online survey with a subset of the questions asked of pilot participants. The survey was distributed through numerous online channels and platforms.

The comparative study aimed to gain insights into the global industry average when it comes to working and living conditions at sea, and thus identify which specific actions, policies and measures from the pilot companies contributed the most to the higher satisfaction of pilot vessels' crews.

The table below gives an overview of the respondents in the comparative study.

| Category           | Subcategory       | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|------------|
| <i>Gender</i>      | Male              | 375    | 94.2%      |
|                    | Female            | 21     | 5.3%       |
|                    | Non-Binary        | 1      | 0.3%       |
|                    | Prefer not to say | 1      | 0.3%       |
| <i>Rank</i>        | Senior Officer    | 201    | 50.5%      |
|                    | Officer           | 104    | 26.1%      |
|                    | Rating            | 44     | 11.1%      |
|                    | Cadet             | 12     | 3.0%       |
|                    | Other             | 37     | 9.3%       |
| <i>Vessel Type</i> | Dry Bulk          | 107    | 26.9%      |
|                    | Container         | 84     | 21.1%      |
|                    | Tanker/Chemical   | 73     | 18.3%      |
|                    | LGN/LPG           | 40     | 10.1%      |
|                    | Other             | 91     | 22.9%      |
|                    | No response       | 3      | 0.8%       |

## Expert consultations

At various points throughout the Diversity@Sea project, the Global Maritime Forum convened experts to contribute their knowledge and experience to the project. Extensive notes and insights gathered from the various meetings and workshops played a key role in shaping the Sustainable Crewing Guidelines.

In the spring of 2023, the Global Maritime Forum hosted a series of co-design workshops including representatives of companies from the All Aboard Alliance, seafarers of different ranks and genders, experts, industry leaders, flag states, and government officials, to develop measures that would address the 15 pain points identified in the interviews.

The industry leaders in the Diversity@Sea Committee who agreed to pilot the measures—12 out of the 25 companies involved—each designated a project lead who played a vital role in the initiative’s development and implementation. Through monthly meetings and regular communication with the crews of their respective pilot vessels, these leads acted as an essential link between the Global Maritime Forum team, the pilot companies, and the seafarers participating in the study. Two in-person pilot workshops were held in Copenhagen—the first served as a mid-project review, while the second, which included seafarers, contributed directly to the development of the project’s final guidelines.

## **All Aboard Alliance member companies**

- AET Tankers
- Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement
- bp shipping
- Bureau Veritas
- Caravel Group
- Cargill Ocean Transportation
- Chevron Shipping Company
- CMB.TECH
- Danaos Corporation
- Diana Shipping Inc.
- Dorian LPG
- Fleet Management
- GasLog
- Gorrissen Federspiel
- Hafnia
- Höegh Autoliners
- International Seaways
- Lloyd's Register
- MISC
- Mitsui O.S.K. Lines
- Navigator Gas
- Navios Maritime Partners
- Philippine Transmarine Carriers
- PSA BDP
- Purus
- RightShip
- Rio Tinto
- Shell
- Stena
- Swire Shipping
- Synergy Marine Group
- Turtle

## **Founding knowledge partners**

- Global Maritime Forum
- Diversity Study Group
- Swiss Re Corporate Solutions



### **About the All Aboard Alliance**

The All Aboard Alliance sets out to foster safe and inclusive work environments in the maritime industry. The Alliance's member companies are united by a collaborative drive to create a sustainable, forward-looking, and innovative sector that treats all current and future employees with dignity and respect and appeals to the next generation of talent. The Global Maritime Forum convenes senior leaders from across the Alliance to drive progress and strengthen collaboration among member companies.



### **About the Global Maritime Forum**

The Global Maritime Forum is an international not-for profit organisation committed to shaping the future of global seaborne trade. It works by bringing together visionary leaders and experts who, through collaboration and collective action, strive to increase sustainable long-term economic development and human well-being. Established in 2017, the Global Maritime Forum is funded through a combination of grants and partner contributions. It operates independently of any outside influence and does not support individual technologies or companies.

Learn more about the Global Maritime Forum and our work on human sustainability at [www.globalmaritimeforum.org](http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org).

