

Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 3 2026



The
Seafarers
Happiness
Index



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

IDWAL


inmarsat

Seafarers Happiness Index: Q3 2026

The Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) provides a vital barometer of maritime sentiment, revealing the human realities behind global trade. In Q3 2026, happiness has declined again, continuing a troubling pattern since the highs recorded at the end of 2025. Yet beneath the headline figures lies a more complex picture of resilience, changing expectations and growing pressure on the systems supporting life at sea.

The defining theme of this quarter is the resilience gap. Seafarers continue to demonstrate remarkable professionalism, adaptability and mutual support, with strong crew relationships remaining a cornerstone of happiness. Yet persistent frustrations over shore leave, connectivity, wages and welfare suggest that the wider operating environment is not always providing the support they need.

The SHI is about more than numbers. By combining long-term trends with the experiences of seafarers, across surveys, direct testimony and social channels, we seek to understand not only how people feel, but why. In the responses and messages from crew, recurring patterns and individual accounts provide important signals that deserve attention, discussion and action.

We use the numbers to identify the issues, but seafarers' voices to understand their meaning. Importantly, we also recognise and celebrate what works. Supportive employers, cohesive crews, effective leadership, fair treatment and well-managed ships demonstrate that positive experiences at sea are achievable. These examples are as valuable as the criticisms, offering practical lessons for the wider industry.

Ultimately, the SHI is intended not simply to measure happiness, but to help improve it. The findings are an invitation to listen, recognise good practice, confront persistent shortcomings and ensure that the people carrying world trade are properly valued and supported. The issue for Q3 is whether the resilience of seafarers is being matched by the quality of the systems upon which they depend.

Executive Summary: Connected Aboard, Disconnected Ashore

The SHI fell to 6.81/10 in the third quarter of 2026, down from 6.87 in the previous quarter continuing a downward trajectory since late 2025. Beneath this headline decline lies a critical structural issue: while seafarers demonstrate extraordinary personal and professional resilience, the shore-based and operational systems supporting them are failing to keep pace.

Overview of Performance

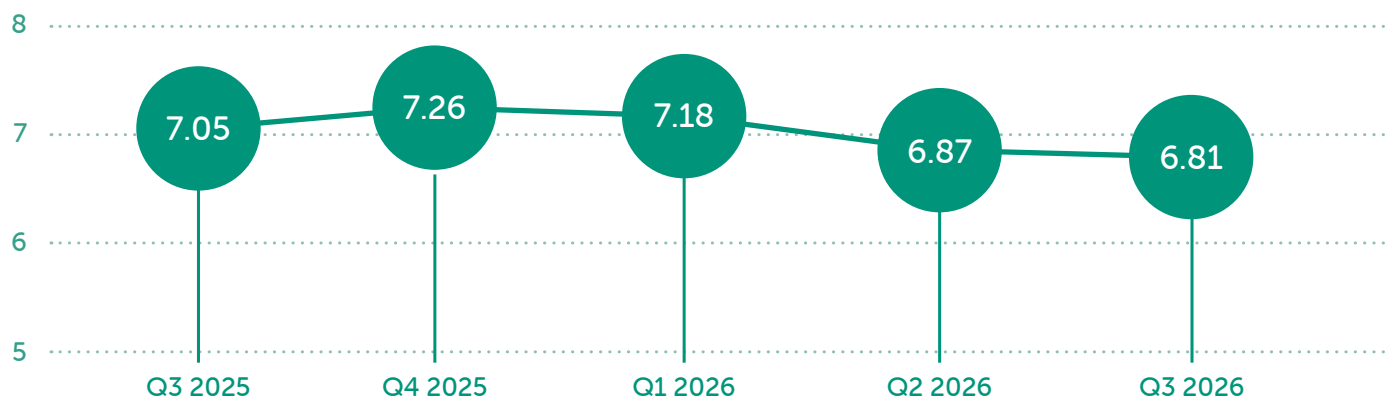
- **Deteriorating Categories:** Connectivity, Shore Leave, Wages, and Welfare Services. Connectivity suffered the sharpest fall, while Shore Leave remains the lowest-scoring measure overall.
- **Improving Categories:** Interaction, Training, Workload, and Health. Interaction remains the highest-scoring measure, driven by strong shipboard camaraderie, peer support, and professional pride.
- **The Core Tension:** Life aboard is increasingly sustained by human relationships rather than organisational support. The industry is relying on crew cohesion to absorb systemic deficiencies in connectivity, shore access, crewing, and administrative pressure.

Strategic Takeaways & Key Lessons

- **Avoid the “Resilience Trap”** Strong shipboard relationships are currently acting as a protective buffer against operational stress. We must not mistake crew adaptability for acceptable working conditions, nor rely on peer support as a substitute for structural reform.
- **Shift from Simple Access to “Meaningful Connectedness”** Satisfaction with onboard internet is no longer measured by basic Wi-Fi availability, but by affordability, data caps, speed, and trust. Rationing data or monitoring consumption while speaking with family actively undermines psychological wellbeing. There is also some security concerns expressed.
- **Solve the “Last-Mile” Shore Leave & Welfare Barrier** Shore leave is frequently permitted in policy and theory, but impossible in practice due to compressed turnarounds, administrative burdens, terminal security, and a lack of transport. Resolving this requires coordinated action across the ship–shore interface, including targeted “last-mile” port transport and mobile welfare visits directly to vessels.
- **Address Workload Compression in Port** Improved average workload figures mask severe operational peaks. The simultaneous convergence of cargo handling, inspections, bunkering, and husbandry during short port calls creates extreme fatigue and eliminates recovery windows.

Quarterly Comparison Overview

A Year Snapshot



The Seafarers Happiness Index has declined for three consecutive quarters, falling from a high of 7.26 in Q4 2025 to 6.81 in Q3 2026. The sharpest deterioration occurred between Q1 and Q2 2026, while the latest quarter shows a smaller decline.

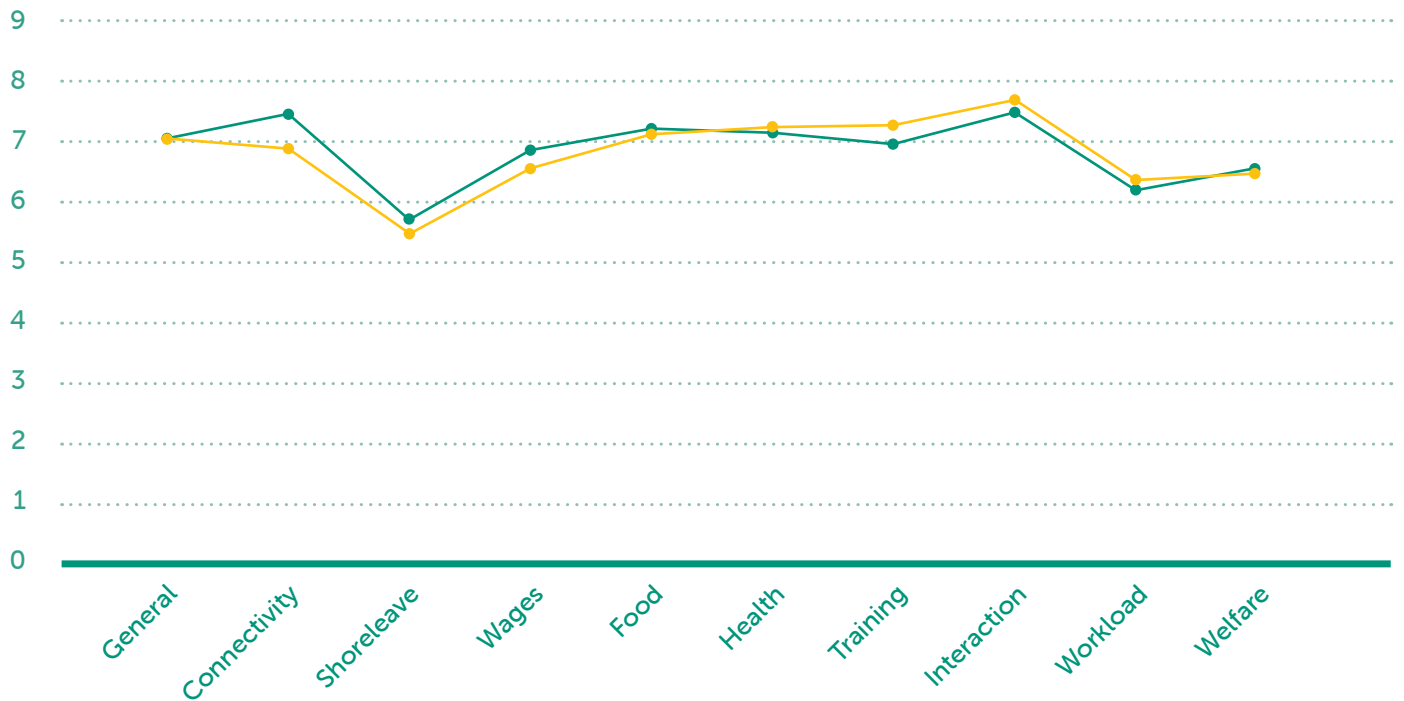
The emerging concern is not simply falling happiness, but the possibility that lower satisfaction is becoming an established feature of life at sea.

This suggests that the pace of deterioration may be slowing, but there is no clear evidence of recovery. Happiness is now below its Q3 2025 level of 7.05, indicating that the gains achieved towards the end of last year have been lost.

Question-by-Question Comparison

Quarterly Question Comparison

— Q2 2026 — Q3 2026



Q3 2026 reveals a mixed but concerning picture, with six of the ten happiness measures declining and four improving. Connectivity recorded the sharpest fall, followed by Wages and Shore Leave, which remains the lowest-scoring category.

Encouragingly, Training, Interaction, Workload and Health improved. Interaction is now the highest-scoring measure.

The emerging divide is clear: relationships and aspects of life aboard are strengthening, while connectivity, shore access and financial satisfaction are weakening. This reinforces Q3's central theme of a growing gap between seafarers' resilience and the systems supporting them.

What Seafarers Are Telling Us

Connected Aboard, Disconnected Ashore

Q3 seafarer happiness continues its post-2025 decline, though the headline figure masks a deeper shift in sentiment. While General Happiness dipped only marginally, its underlying drivers diverged sharply: human elements (Interaction, Health, Training, Workload) improved, while systemic supports (Connectivity, Shore Leave, Wages, Welfare) deteriorated. Life aboard is increasingly sustained by onboard community rather than shore-based support.

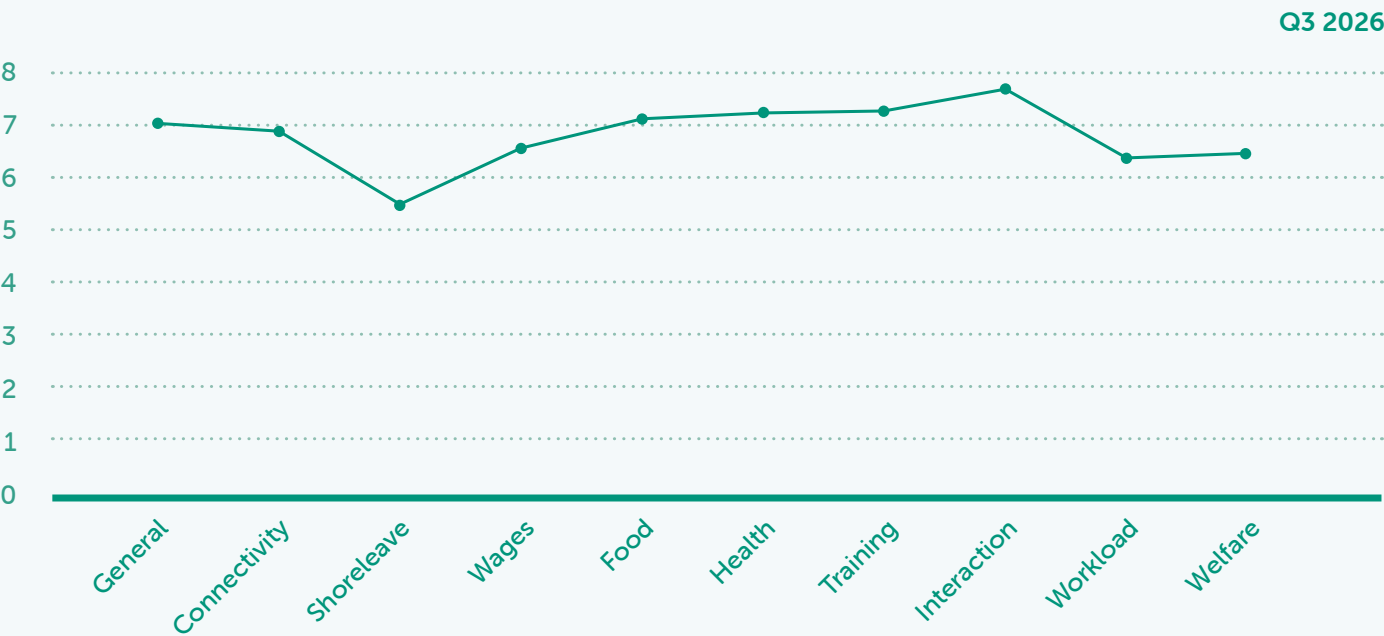
Key Drivers & Operational Pressures

- **Interaction vs. Isolation:** Interaction remains the highest-scoring category. Seafarers routinely liken supportive crews to “family,” relying on onboard camaraderie as a critical buffer against operational stress.
- **Connectivity Misalignment:** Despite expanded internet provision, satisfaction dropped sharply. The issue has shifted from basic access to affordability and restrictive data limits, which distract seafarers from meaningful contact with home.
- **Shore Leave & Port Compression:** Shore Leave remains the lowest-scoring category. Port calls are dominated by intense cargo, regulatory, and husbandry demands alongside short turnarounds, making shore leave an operational impossibility regardless of formal entitlement.
- **Workload Nuance:** Improved workload scores reflect manageable routines at sea, but work is heavily compressed during port stays. Reduced crewing and administrative burdens create acute operational peaks that drive fatigue and eliminate recovery time.

The Resilience Gap

A clear divide emerges between intrinsic motivators and external frustrations. Seafarers draw satisfaction from professional pride, supporting families, and onboard community, while frustration stems from management, administrative loads, costs, and restricted shore access.

Overall, Q3 demonstrates a widening gap between human connection and supporting structures. While strong crew cohesion provides essential resilience, relying on onboard relationships to compensate for systemic deficiencies is unsustainable over time. Q3 shows the question is not therefore simply how happy seafarers are, but how much of their happiness depends upon their ability to withstand the conditions we create for them. Perhaps more importantly, how long can we expect them to keep doing so?



General Happiness: Stable, Not Static

7.02 ↓ from 7.11

General Happiness is down slightly from Q2. The movement is small enough that the more important question is not whether happiness has “fallen”, but what is holding it up.

The comments suggest several enduring foundations: pride in seafaring, the ability to provide for family, professional purpose, supportive colleagues and, for some, a genuine love of being at sea. These are powerful sources of satisfaction and should not be treated as sentimental extras. They are part of why the profession continues to attract commitment despite its demands.

Yet there is also a harder edge. Some seafarers describe being away from family, limited internet, paperwork, workload and the disappearance of shore leave. The overall score therefore contains two truths at once: attachment to the profession remains strong, but the terms on which that attachment is sustained are being questioned.

Q3 does not suggest a workforce in collapse. It suggests one making active calculations about value, sacrifice and quality of life. While the equation lands in the positive, then fair.

Shore Leave: Permission Is Not Access

5.46 ↓ from 5.72

Shore leave has fallen again, remaining the lowest-scoring element of the Seafarers Happiness Index. Its persistent position at the bottom points to a systemic failure rather than a temporary drop. Some seafarers even question why the Index continues asking about a benefit they rarely experience, with one respondent reporting no shore leave across four consecutive five-to-six-month contracts.

The testimony highlights a critical distinction: shore leave can be formally permitted while being practically impossible. Physical separation from the workplace offers crucial mental recovery and restored autonomy that onboard welfare cannot replicate. Yet, research shows over a quarter of seafarers receive no shore leave, and a third go ashore only once or twice in six months.

This erosion is driven by a compounding operational equation: Shorter port stays + remote terminals + security restrictions + transport barriers + heavy workload + inspections + administrative duties + minimum crewing = shore leave that exists in policy but disappears in practice.

Furthermore, fragmented responsibility across the maritime logistics chain creates a barrier of combined constraints. Shipowners may grant permission, but tight schedules prevent it; ports may allow access, but lack affordable transport; security and immigration impose further hurdles. Because each entity points to another, the burden falls entirely on the crew.

The central finding on shore leave is that access is rarely blocked by a single refusal, but by an operating system where multiple friction points make leaving the vessel unrealistic. Restoring shore leave requires coordinated action across ship-shore interfaces to treat practical access as seriously as the formal right itself. An entitlement that cannot be exercised remains nothing more than a right on paper.

Connectivity: From Access to Connectedness

6.89 ↓ from 7.46

Connectivity recorded a significant, surprising decline this quarter, a shift driven not by failing technology, but by rapidly advancing expectations. Over the lifetime of the Seafarers Happiness Index, internet access has evolved from a welcome privilege into an essential foundation of personal life, supporting relationships, entertainment, and psychological wellbeing during long stretches at sea.

Success, however, has raised the benchmark. The industry has moved past asking whether a ship has Wi-Fi to evaluating speed, reliability, privacy, and affordability. Satisfaction is no longer measured by mere availability, but by whether access allows crew members to maintain normal, unhindered connections with home.

This gap exposes a critical distinction between technical connectivity and meaningful connectedness. Limited data caps force seafarers to ration conversations—monitoring dwindling allowances rather than engaging naturally with loved ones. While a vessel may be digitally connected, its crew remains socially constrained. What once seemed generous now feels restrictive when measured against daily standards ashore.

The current drop in satisfaction highlights that baseline expectations have outpaced existing welfare provisions. Connectivity is no longer an optional perk; it is core infrastructure for family life at sea. Having achieved initial access, the maritime industry's next challenge is delivering internet that is dependable, affordable, secure, and unrestricted enough to let seafarers truly feel connected.

Q3 suggests that the industry's connectivity challenge is entering a new phase. Providing access was the first achievement. Making that access dependable, affordable, secure and genuinely useful is the next. The question is no longer simply whether seafarers can connect. It is whether that connection allows them to feel connected.

Connectivity, Security, and Trust

Q3 highlights an emerging concern regarding the security, transparency, and integrity of crew internet access. In one troubling account, a seafarer purchased a data voucher, briefly messaged home, and switched their device to airplane mode before watch. Upon returning, the full balance was gone. Server logs indicated streaming activity, yet the provider refused a refund because valid credentials were used, leading the seafarer to allege theft by a crewmate.

This incident illustrates a critical welfare risk. Voucher-based systems, shared credentials, weak account protection, and limited network diagnostics leave networks vulnerable. When balances vanish without clear explanation from providers or ship management, financial loss and isolation quickly turn into onboard distrust and conflict among crewmates.

Wages: The Changing Bargain of Seafaring

6.56 ↓ from 6.86

Wage satisfaction has fallen, but feedback reveals concerns beyond simple calls for higher pay. The core issue is fairness, recognition, and whether current rewards still compensate for the growing demands of life at sea.

Seafarers highlight static pay rates alongside rising responsibilities, particularly on advanced vessels:

"Salary is same for many years and not enough. We are working on an LNG tanker which is high risk and with more responsibilities, but no extra allowance."

"We work on dual fuel ship. Wage has not gone up for more work to do."

While some remain content with their financial security, dissatisfaction stems from an imbalance between growing operational complexity and stagnant compensation. Inflation, comparisons with shore-based careers, and uncompensated technological demands weigh heavily on morale.

Wages are judged against the full seafaring experience: separation from family, risk, heavy workloads, restricted shore leave, and out-of-pocket connectivity costs.

Historically, seafaring offered a clear bargain: enduring demanding conditions and isolation in exchange for a distinct financial premium. As living costs rise, shore-based pay becomes more competitive, and shipboard duties expand, that financial edge narrows.

The central question shifts from *"Am I paid enough?"* to *"Is what I receive worth what this profession asks of me?"*

Pay functions as a test of how the industry values skill, experience, and sacrifice. While money alone cannot solve every onboard pressure, inadequate reward makes surrounding frustrations harder to tolerate. When risks and responsibilities outpace compensation, the foundational bargain of seafaring weakens, putting the recruitment and retention of experienced crews at risk.



//

Salary is same for many years and not enough. We are working on an LNG tanker which is high risk and with more responsibilities, but no extra allowance."



//

We work on dual fuel ship. Wage has not gone up for more work to do."

Food Quality: Care Made Visible...and Edible

7.12 ↓ from 7.14

Food sentiment was down marginally this quarter but remains one of the stronger categories. The comments range from genuine praise to sharp criticism, often attributing the difference to the competence of the cook, the quality of provisions and the budget available. Seafarers do appear to be acutely attuned to whether problems in the galley are budget or skill related.

Food aboard ship has an importance that exceeds nutrition. It structures the day, provides comfort and creates opportunities for social contact. In a closed working environment, catering is also one of the most visible daily expressions of organisational care.

Several comments point to inflationary pressure on food budgets and to the difficulty of maintaining quality when provision allowances fail to keep pace with prices. Others report good food and competent cooks. Where there is good food there is far greater overall satisfaction.

The lesson is not that catering is universally deteriorating, but that relatively small operational choices can have an outsized effect on morale. The score remains fairly encouraging, which should also remind operators that food is an area where good practice is experienced immediately and repeatedly by every person aboard. There are no hiding bad meals, low spend and poor practices.

Health and Exercise: Facilities Need Time

7.24 ↑ from 7.14

Health and Exercise rose this quarter, which is a welcome movement. The comments show many seafarers making active use of gyms, exercise routines and available facilities. However, the same tension identified in Q2 remains visible: provision is not the same as usability.

A vessel can have good exercise equipment, but when operational patterns leave little energy to use it, then it is almost more frustrating. The real health environment is therefore created by the combination of facilities, sleep, working hours, food, routine and psychological recovery.

The Q3 improvement should be recognised and should be seen as a part of a wider sense. Where we see that health provision works best when operational planning protects the time required to benefit from it. A gym cannot compensate for chronic fatigue, just as a welfare room cannot create recovery if rest is repeatedly interrupted, and connectivity which no one can afford is no connection.



//

No time to go for gym or relax. All free time to recover sleep."

Training and Development: A Significant Improvement

7.28 ↑ from 6.97

Training rose with the largest positive movement in Q3. This deserves genuine recognition. Many respondents describe good training, experienced colleagues and satisfactory opportunities to learn.

The improvement is particularly interesting after Q2 feedback about repetitive, compliance-driven training. Q3 suggests that a substantial proportion of seafarers are experiencing training positively. Though, there are still areas of concern, especially where there is competing or overlapping demands.

That dissenting comment remains instructive. The challenge is not whether training exists, but whether it builds competence efficiently, and how it fits in with competing challenges. Nothing onboard exists in isolation; there is no vacuum of demands on seafarers. That is so often forgotten.

Therefore, duplication, poorly coordinated platforms and training imposed during rest periods can turn something inherently valuable into an administrative burden, which becomes resented.

The direction of travel this quarter is positive. The opportunity now is to protect what works: practical learning, meaningful familiarisation, competent mentors and development linked to genuine career progression rather than simply the accumulation of certificates.



//

I have received training before and am clearly certified to work on ship. So, why am I trained again and again then? There are 3 different apps here each training the same thing."

Interaction: Where Resilience Lives

7.7 ↑ from 7.49

Interaction rose and is the strongest Q3 category. It is perhaps the most important positive finding in the report.

Across the feedback, good crews are described in terms of family, friendship, cooperation, humour, respect and mutual support. These relationships matter operationally as well as emotionally. A cohesive crew communicates better; shares pressure and creates an environment in which people are more willing to ask for help.

The strength of this score creates responsibility. Crew cohesion must not become the welfare system of last resort. The fact that seafarers are good at supporting one another does not absolve employers, ports or the wider industry from addressing structural problems.

One of the clearest findings of Q3 is therefore that seafarers continue to be very good at looking after one another. The danger is allowing that strength to compensate for things the wider industry should be fixing.

However, there were some concerns as obviously not everyone can always get along. So, there are still tensions evident. There were also some allegations made, which tied into the issue of connectivity. There were separate discussions from different ships about the alleged “theft” of data by those onboard.

This is discussed in a separate connectivity discussion, but of course whether real or imagined, whether actual theft or bleeding of data in the background, such issues can fester and cause real problems onboard. This seems to be a security issue to be aware of, and to be managed as a matter of urgency.



//

Good team onboard. All crew are cooperative and supportive. We work together like a family and help each other.”

Workload: The Problem of Compression

6.38 ↑ from 6.2

Workload sentiment improved this quarter, a welcome reversal suggesting that effective planning, resources, and supportive management make a tangible difference. However, qualitative feedback reveals a more complex reality: the core issue is often not total workload, but its extreme concentration during specific operational phases.

Seafarers highlight a stark contrast between passage and port:

This operational compression explains why shore leave scores remain so low. The port calls that should offer recovery become the busiest parts of a voyage, as cargo, bunkering, inspections, maintenance, and administrative demands arrive simultaneously. Permission to go ashore may exist, but operational urgency removes any practical opportunity to do so.

Concerns also persist regarding excessive working hours, fatigue, and the reliability of work/rest records. Reports of 80-hour workweeks and adjusted logs indicate that formal compliance does not always match lived experience. Furthermore, seafarers' high adaptability risks normalizing unsustainable demands, meaning improved scores might sometimes reflect resilience rather than better conditions.

Ultimately, effective workload management must look beyond averages to examine the intensity, predictability, and distribution of duties. A vessel successfully completing its tasks does not prove its workload is sustainable. The question is not whether seafarers can absorb these pressures, but whether operations are being managed responsibly in the first place.



//

At sea, the workload is generally good, barring any unforeseen equipment issues. However, in port, we get slammed with dealing with various cargo, regulatory, and husbandry items, all while the office is pushing for the shortest turnaround time."

Welfare Facilities Ashore: The Last-Mile Problem

6.47 ↓ from 6.56

Satisfaction with Welfare slipped downward this quarter. As with shore leave, the score is best understood as an access problem as much as a provision problem.

Respondents report good facilities and useful services, and there is universal praise and gratitude for the volunteers and ship visitors who do such amazing work. However, where ships feel isolated there are those who ask what welfare facilities are available, say they have never used them, or describe ports where there is too little time to reach services.

The issue is therefore not simply whether a seafarers' centre exists somewhere within a port region. Welfare has a last-mile challenge. Information has to reach the vessel; transport has to be practical; security access has to work; opening hours must match port operations; and the seafarer must actually have enough time and energy to use the service.

Physical centres remain valuable, but the operating environment increasingly requires hybrid welfare: ship visits, transport, digital contact, targeted information and services designed around compressed port calls. Welfare must travel the final distance to the seafarer when the seafarer cannot realistically travel to welfare.



“

Most of the ports we visit do not have welfare facilities, or if they do, can be difficult to access.”

Q3 2026 Demographics

Satisfaction diverges across key demographics, highlighting critical pressure points for retention and welfare.

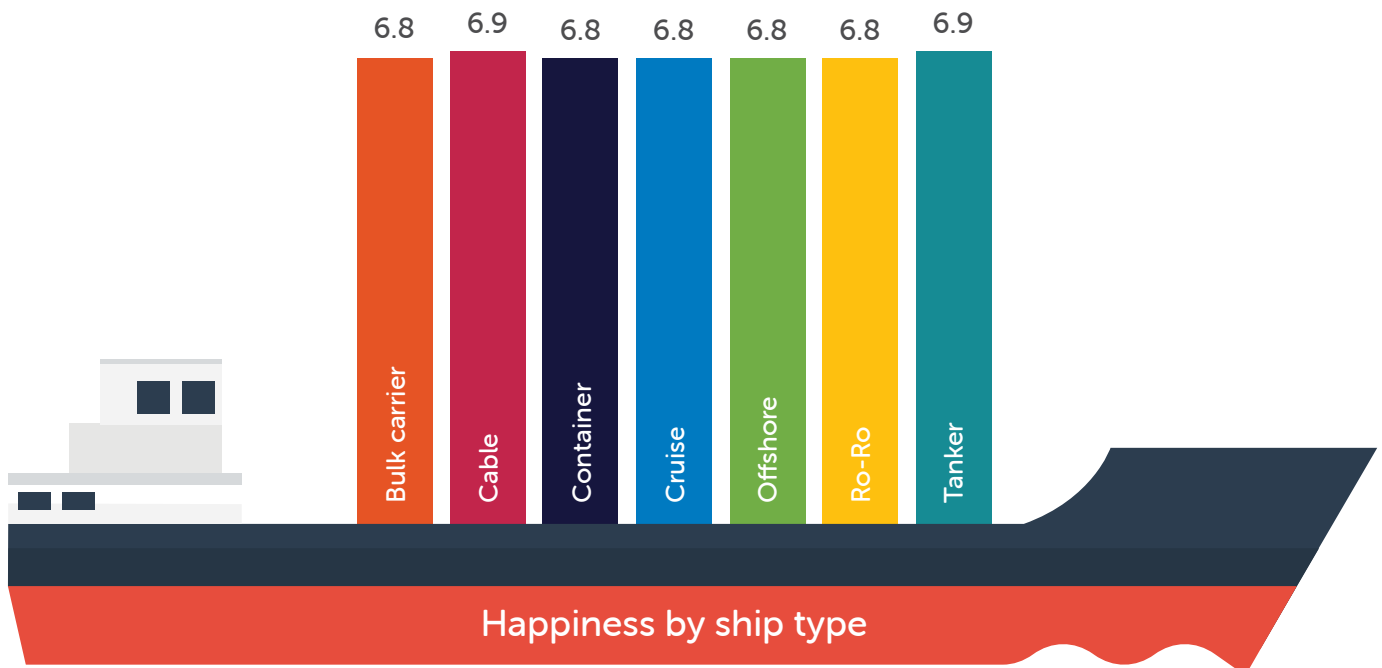
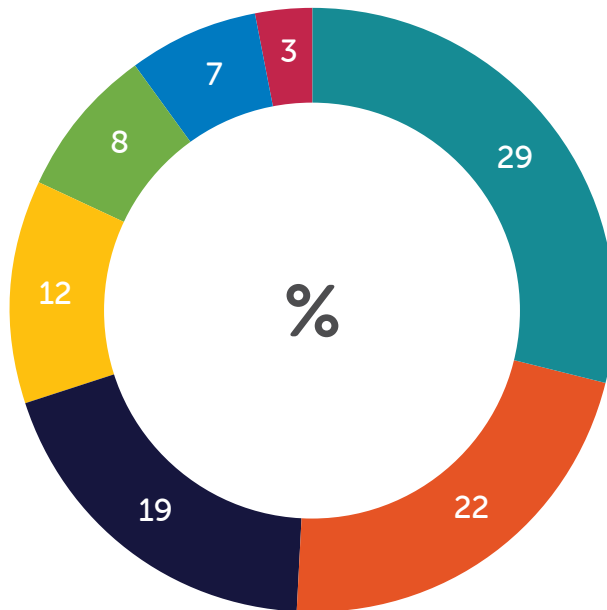
Key Takeaways

While the baseline figures give us a snapshot, looking at the tension points across the data reveals the human stories behind the numbers:

- **The Longevity Trap:** The drop in satisfaction between 0–2-year vessels and 3–5-year vessels highlight how quickly initial operational enthusiasm wears thin once routine maintenance debt, minor system wear, and ongoing operational fatigue set in, and the ships suffer.
- **The “Management” Grind:** Chief Engineers and Second Officers report lower scores than Deck Crew or Engine Cadets. They sit right in the crosshairs of administrative burden, commercial pressure from shore, and immediate responsibility for onboard safety without the buffer enjoyed by junior ranks.
- **The Friction of “Short-Haul” Port Visits:** Container Vessel crews score quite low this quarter compared to Tanker crews. Rapid port turnarounds, intense cargo watch cycles, and non-existent shore leave turn container shipping into a relentless assembly line compared to longer sea passages.
- **Contract Length Beyond the Threshold:** Happiness stays relatively flat across 1–3 month and 3–6-month tours, but steep drops occur once deployments pass the 9-month mark. Fatigue and home-separation hit a sharp non-linear wall once contracts cross three quarters of a year.
- **The East-West Disconnect:** A noticeable gap separates Southeast Asian crews from Western European and Eastern European crews. This divergence reflects differing baseline expectations around shipboard connectivity, pay parity, and career trajectory relative to shore-side alternatives.

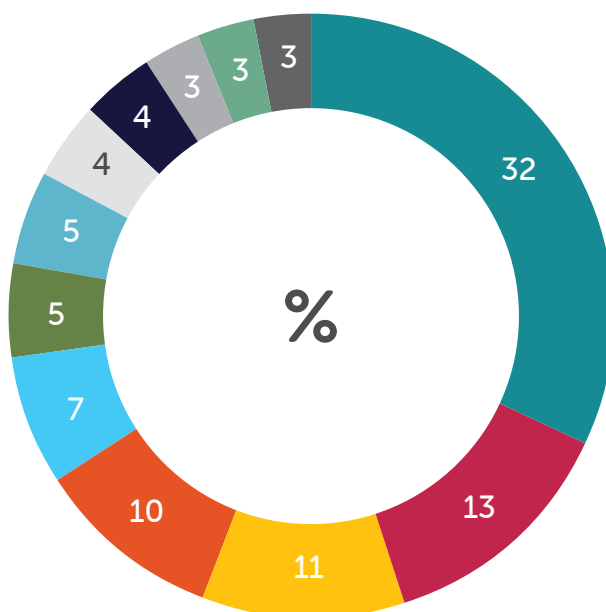
Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Cable
- Container
- Cruise
- Offshore
- Ro-Ro
- Tanker



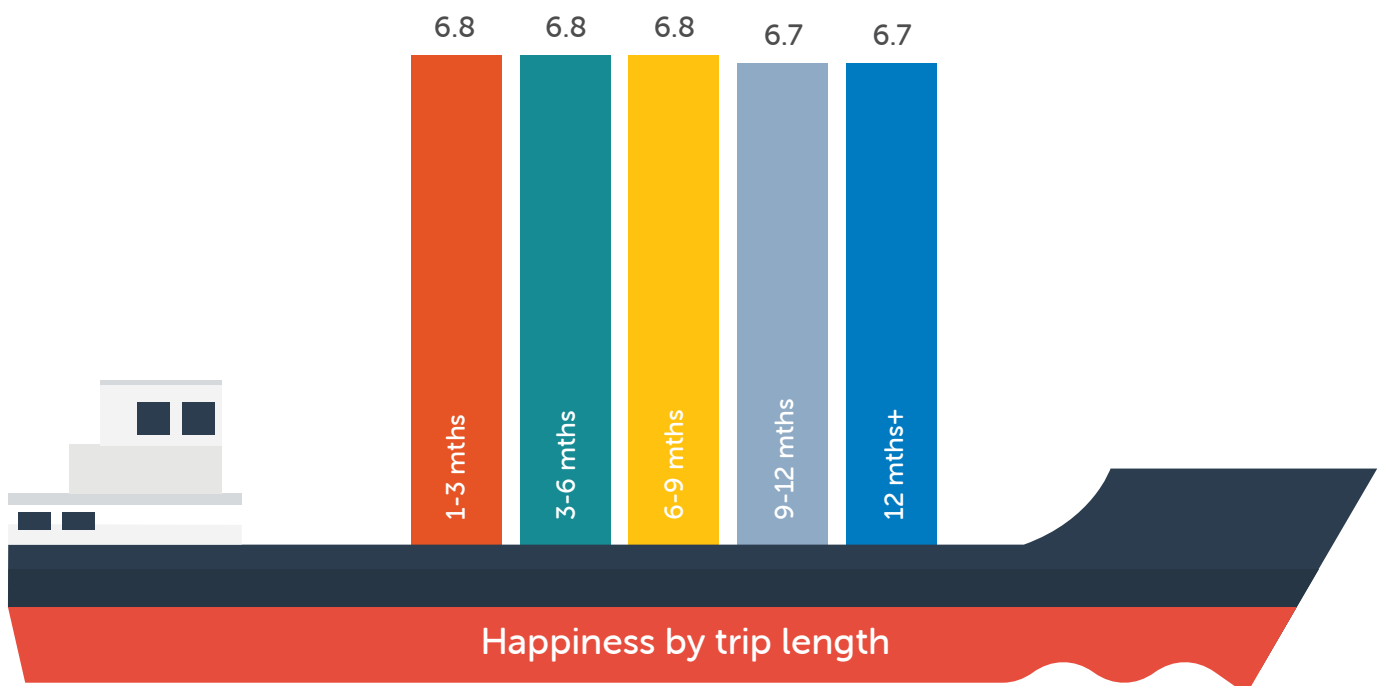
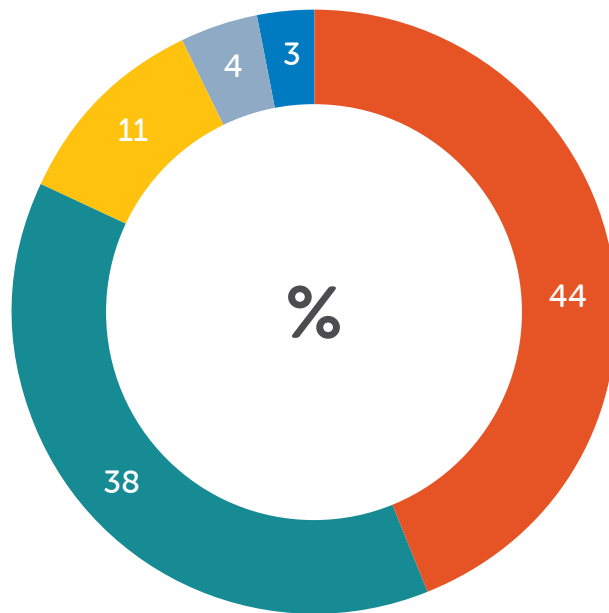
Rank

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



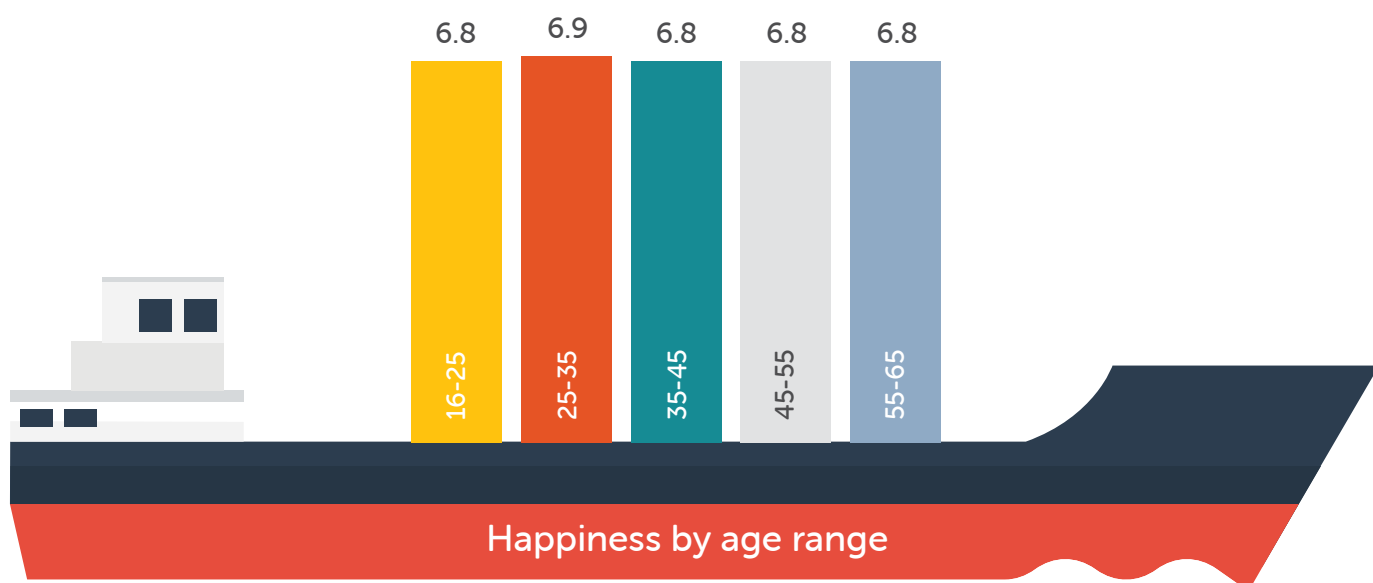
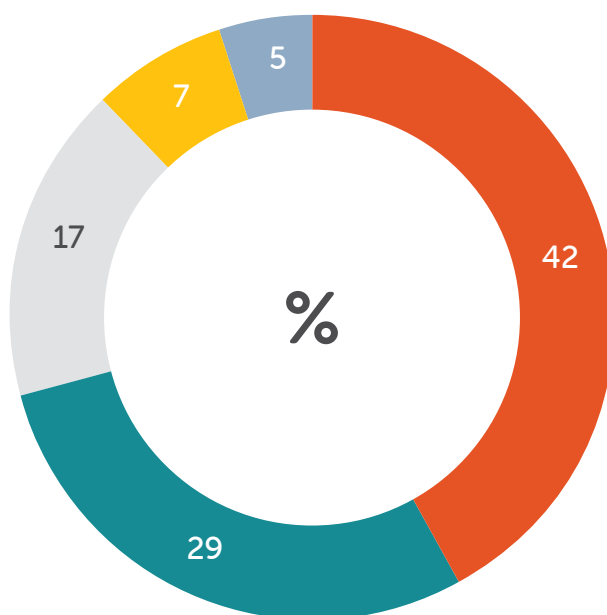
Trip Length

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



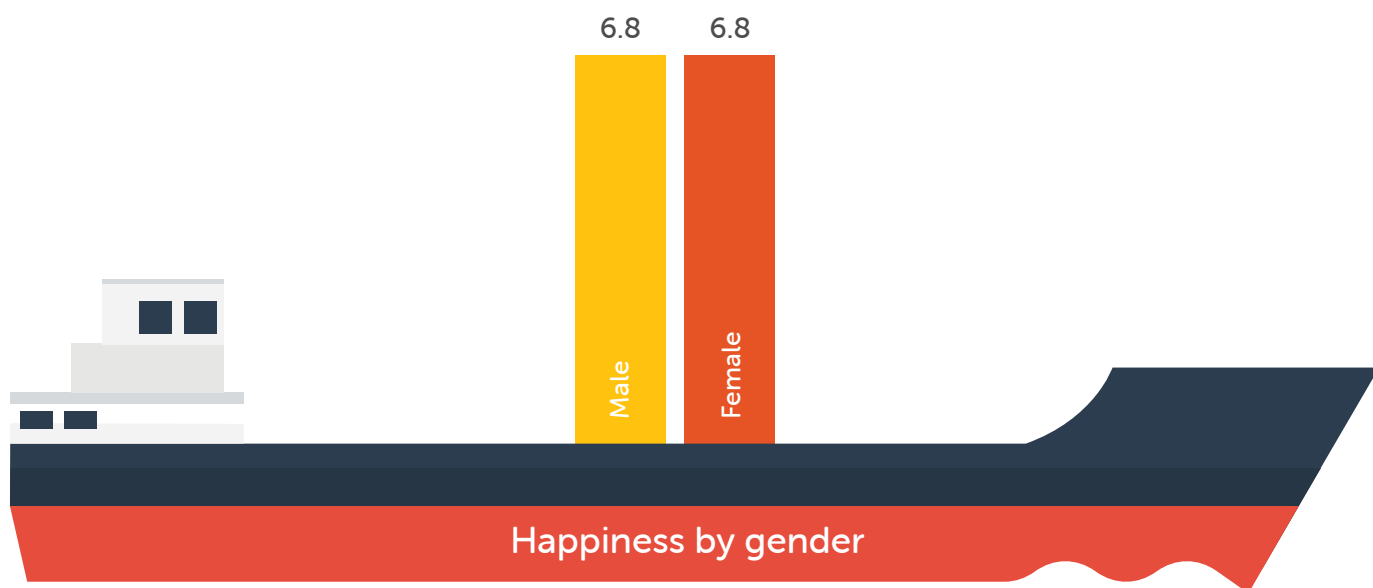
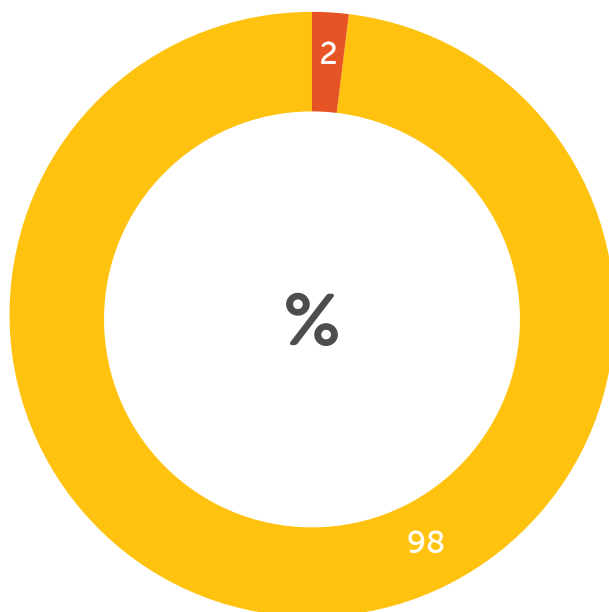
Age Range

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



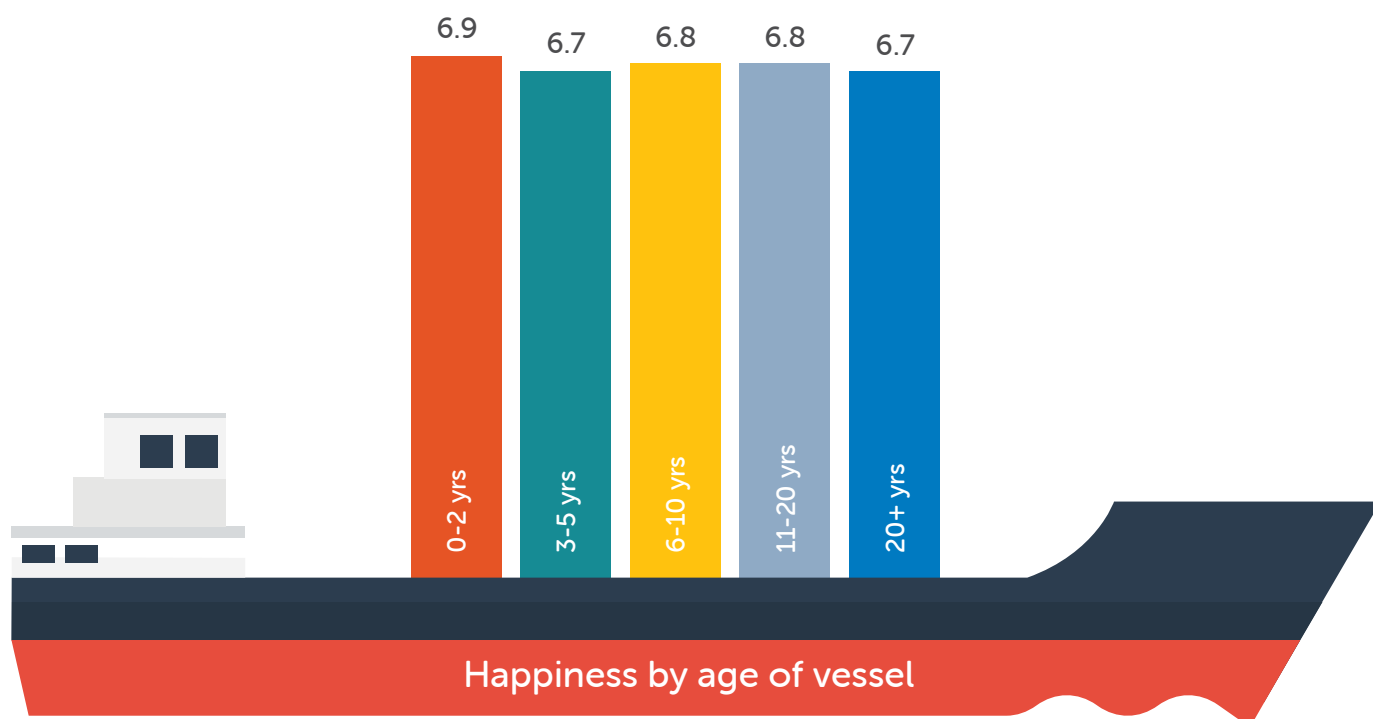
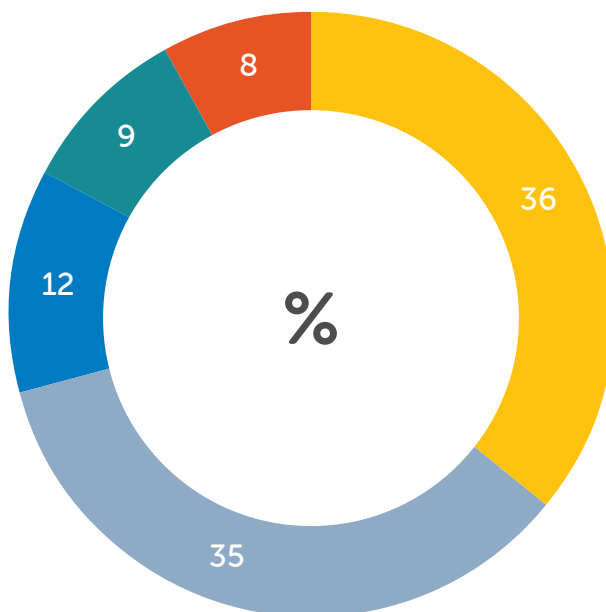
Gender

- Male
- Female



Age of Vessel

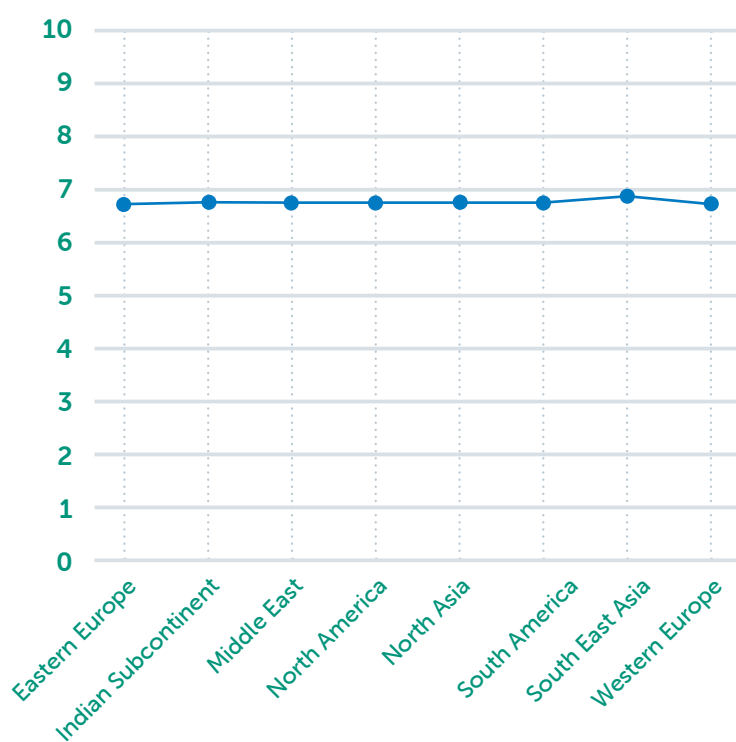
- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 20+ years



Where

6%
North
America

Regions and happiness



2%
South
America



Conclusion

The Q3 Resilience Gap

The latest feedback reveals a seafaring workforce whose resilience is increasingly being used to compensate for surrounding structural pressures. Rather than a series of ten separate numerical fluctuations, Q3 presents a coherent overarching narrative: a widening resilience gap. The closer an element is to human relationships aboard ship, the stronger the results; the closer to the ship–shore interface, the weaker they become. Seafarers are happiest with one another but frustrated by the systems built to support them.

Key Drivers & Core Arguments

- **Human Cohesion vs. Systemic Failure:** Seafarers are not merely “coping.” The shipboard community is actively absorbing the shortcomings of the wider maritime system through professionalism, adaptability, and mutual support. However, human adaptability is a finite resource. Goodwill can be depleted, and crew cohesion should never be treated as an excuse to leave systemic flaws unresolved.
- **Uneven Foundations:** Overall happiness remains respectable, with welcome improvements in Health, Training, Interaction, and Workload. Yet, while professional pride and onboard relationships remain strong, the operational and employment environments continue to deteriorate.
- **Shore Leave as a Structural Barrier:** Remaining persistently at the bottom of the Index, Shore Leave illustrates a deep structural failure. Formal entitlements mean little when port restrictions, transport barriers, compressed turnaround times, and heavy workloads make leaving the ship practically impossible.
- **Connectivity and Changing Expectations:** Technological progress has raised the baseline. Availability is now taken for granted; satisfaction depends on reliability, affordability, and freedom from restrictive data caps. A seafarer forced to ration family conversations may be technically online, but remains socially constrained.
- **Workload Compression:** Improved workload scores mask intense operational peaks. Sustainable routines at sea often give way to severe workload compression in port, where cargo, inspections, maintenance, paperwork, and crew changes converge simultaneously – eroding recovery time and shore access.

The Interconnected System

These challenges do not exist in isolation. Compressed workloads restrict shore leave; limited connectivity strains family bonds; restricted shore access eliminates relief from the working environment. Throughout it all, supportive crew relationships absorb pressures that would otherwise prove overwhelming.

The encouraging yet uncomfortable lesson of Q3 is that seafarers excel at looking after one another. However, the goal of the maritime industry should not be to manufacture resilient seafarers who endlessly compensate for external deficiencies. The true challenge is to build an operating system that requires less resilience to survive.

Ports and Their Impact: The Ship–Shore Interface

Reports from port welfare teams provide a vital complement to the Seafarers Happiness Index, capturing the operational reality from the other side of the gangway. Together, they illustrate why Shore Leave and Welfare Facilities Ashore remain persistent weak points. The core issue is rarely an explicit prohibition or a total absence of facilities, but rather the increasing difficulty of navigating the complex space between ship and shore.

Global port reports show how easily shore leave vanishes under everyday operational pressures. Industrial action in Europe created schedule uncertainty that led to outright refusals; port passes were unavailable in West Africa; and shifting security regulations in the Black Sea restricted access based on nationality. Though circumstances vary, the outcome is identical: formal entitlements disappear under the combined weight of immigration controls, terminal rules, tight turnaround times, and heavy workloads.

Physical accessibility represents a critical hurdle. Welfare provision is only as effective as a seafarer's practical ability to reach it. A well-located welfare centre minutes from the berth or a reliable shuttle service can transform a short port call, making a minibus as essential as the facility itself. Conversely, when crew members cannot leave the vessel, ship visits, deliveries, digital outreach, and psychosocial support become critical lifelines. Yet welfare workers face their own barriers, including boarding restrictions, agent approvals, and customs hurdles. Access is a two-way street; seafarers' access to welfare relies entirely on welfare providers' access to ships.

This challenge highlights a fundamental omission in modern port design. While terminals excel in logistics efficiency, security, and cargo throughput, human infrastructure is routinely overlooked. Safe pedestrian walkways, accessible gates, affordable transport, and nearby shops are not minor amenities; to someone isolated at sea for months, they are essential infrastructure.

Ultimately, the primary obstacle is not located purely on board or ashore, but at the ship–shore interface itself. The gap between a vessel and meaningful rest is measured in time, permissions, transport, and practical access. Practical solutions already exist—from streamlined port pass procedures to expanded transport networks and closer cooperation between port authorities and welfare groups. Ports are built to connect ships with global trade; they must now be designed to connect seafarers with the world as well.

Bridging Sea and Shore: Shorebased Happiness Index

While the Seafarers Happiness Index has long provided a vital pulse check on life at sea, the human element of the maritime industry extends far beyond the vessel. The newly launched Shorebased Happiness Index (ShoreHI) expands this focus to examine the experiences, pressures, and wellbeing of maritime professionals working on land, exploring the critical, often overlooked working and professional connection between ship and shore.

Launched alongside the Seafarers Happiness Index, ShoreHI aims to understand the experiences of maritime professionals ashore and explore the shared challenges connecting ship and shore.

You can have your say, share your experiences and be part of building a more complete picture of how the whole maritime industry, on ship and shore, feels. Early findings from the new Shorebased Happiness Index (ShoreHI) reveal a provisional happiness score of just 6.30 out of 10. Most notably, Workload and Resources (5.66) and Organisational Support (5.93) are the lowest-rated areas, pointing to concerns around understaffing, excessive demands, 24/7 availability and insufficient support.

While shore-based maritime professionals' express pride in their work and value their colleagues, the emerging picture suggests that working ashore does not necessarily mean escaping the pressures of life at sea. Instead, those pressures often take different forms.

These findings are preliminary, based on a limited number of responses, and are not yet an industry benchmark. We need more voices to build a reliable picture. These initial responses offer an intriguing perspective from former seafarers now working ashore.

While they report relatively strong general job satisfaction (7.18/10), their ratings for career development (5.64), workload (5.55) and organisational support (5.73) are considerably lower.

Their comments describe 24/7 availability, understaffing, limited progression and difficulty switching off from operational responsibilities. Moving ashore may change the nature of maritime pressures rather than eliminate them.

These findings remain preliminary, but they underline the importance of understanding the whole maritime working experience, at sea and ashore.

Do you work in maritime ashore? Have your say. Share your experiences and help us identify what is working, what needs to change and how the industry can better support its people.

We invite all shore-based colleagues to take part in this quarterly anonymous survey to help paint the full, true picture of our industry. Have your say today:
shorebasedhappinessindex.org

Thank you

Thank you to every seafarer who took the time to share their experiences, scores and comments for Q3 2026. Your voice remains the heart of the Seafarers Happiness Index.

Thank you also to the organisations, welfare bodies, charities, companies, unions, researchers and industry partners who continue to support seafarers and work to improve life at sea. The value of this report lies not only in measuring happiness, but in helping the industry understand what can, should and must change. Learning from things which are going well and guarding against those which are not.



Report by Steven Jones

The Mission to Seafarers

1st floor, 6 Bath Place, Rivington Street, London, EC2A 3JE

Tel: +44(0)20 7248 5202

Fax: +44(0)20 7246 4761

Email: HappinessIndex@missiontoseafarers.org

www.missiontoseafarers.org

 @FlyingAngelNews

   The Mission to Seafarers

JustGiving [JustGiving.com/themissiontoseafarers](https://www.justgiving.com/themissiontoseafarers)

Registered charity no: 1123613 (England and Wales) and SCO41938 (Scotland)