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2024/25 CADET REPORT

**The next
generation
of maritime
speaks.**



Contents

3	Welcome
4	A message from our sponsor
5	A short history of our conferences in numbers
6	Demographics
7	Experience level
8	Trends over the last three years

Cadets have their say on...

10	Recruitment and retention
14	Diversity and inclusion
18	Getting help and assistance
21	Region by region focus
32	Conclusion
33	Our service
34	Maritime schools' conferences 2024 sponsors and funders
35	Our 2024 conference attendees said



Welcome to Sailors' Society's 2024/25 Cadet Report

The next generation of maritime speaks

We are delighted to share these latest insights into the next generation of maritime, in what is now the industry's most authoritative annual report on cadet wellbeing.

This year, more than 9,000 cadets participated in our global conferences - an astounding testament to the relevance and impact of our work. These record-breaking numbers reflect our expanding and ongoing commitment to giving voice to the future of seafaring, addressing their challenges, and fostering a more supportive maritime community.

We are thrilled to see the impact the data in our previous two cadet reports has already made, helping the maritime industry better understand the values, needs, and aspirations of Generation Z seafarers.

Our 2023/24 findings highlighted the regional uniqueness and universal values of young cadets, including their strong emphasis on ethical treatment, wellbeing, and career motivation. These insights sparked essential discussions and inspired actionable strategies across the industry.

This year, while these issues remain key, we are proud to deepen our commitment to capturing an even wider spectrum of voices, broadening our perspective to create an even more comprehensive report.

WHAT'S NEW

The Chinese Voice:

For the first time, we have included data from China, adding valuable depth and diversity to our analysis. This inclusion broadens the cultural scope of the report, allowing for a richer understanding of the global cadet experience.

The At-Sea Cadet Voice:

This year, we see an increased representation from currently active seafarers, alongside pre-sea cadets. This shift enables us to compare the views of those embarking on their careers with those already navigating the realities of life at sea, offering invaluable insights into both stages.

A More Global Voice:

With cadet participants from more countries than ever, our conferences have reached a truly international audience. This expanded geographic diversity enriches our data and supports a holistic understanding of the industry's future workforce.

With this expanded data and the new dimensions this brings, this Report will build on the work of its predecessors, serving as the guide for the maritime industry, highlighting the voices, values, and visions of the next generation of maritime.

We hope its findings continue to guide the industry in building a resilient, inclusive, and well-informed future workforce.

Thank you for joining us on this journey to empower cadets and create a more inclusive, supportive, and responsive maritime industry.



Sara Baade
CEO, Sailors' Society



Inmarsat Maritime's Commitment to the Future of Seafaring: Empowering Cadets

Inmarsat Maritime, a Viasat company, is honoured to support Sailors' Society's 2024/25 Cadet Report, which sheds light on the experiences and challenges faced by cadets, the future leaders of the maritime industry.

Our commitment to this initiative underscores our dedication to seafarers' wellbeing, safety, and connectivity, with a particular focus on the next generation of maritime professionals.

One of the key highlights in this report is the importance of attracting and retaining female cadets, who bring diverse perspectives and skills to the industry. One of the most significant challenges facing the maritime industry is the underrepresentation of women.

At Inmarsat Maritime, we are strong supporters of gender diversity and believe

in empowering cadets from around the world irrespective of race, gender or nationality as they embark on their journey towards a long-term career in seafaring. By providing reliable and high-quality communication solutions, we aim to create a more inclusive maritime community.

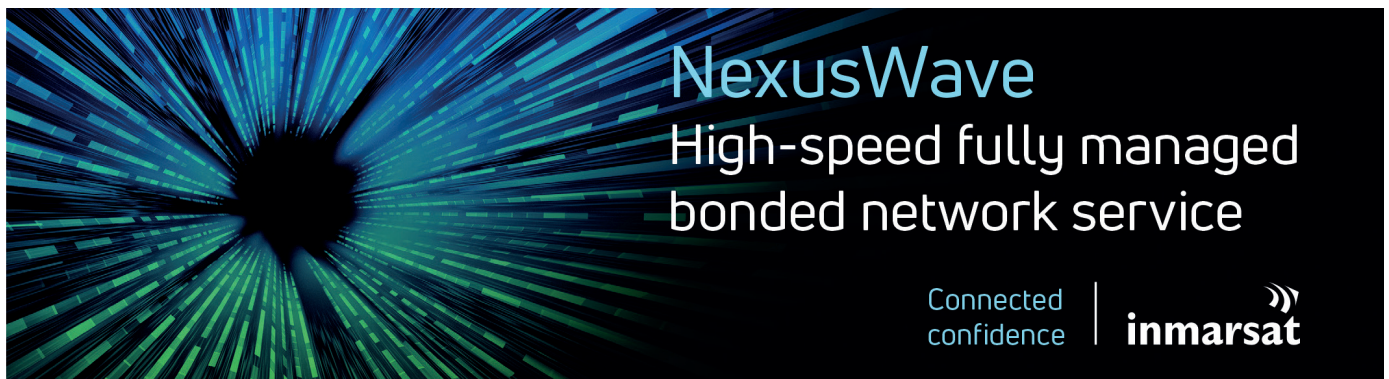
From the very beginning, Inmarsat Maritime's mission has been to keep the maritime community connected and safe. This commitment has driven every innovation and service we have introduced. We believe that technology, when used effectively, can significantly enhance safety and provide peace of mind for those who navigate the seas.

In the modern maritime industry, vessels are increasingly operating as 'floating offices' and 'floating homes' for seafarers. On board connectivity is essential

for both work and personal life. We understand that the new generation of seafarers requires digital technologies to unwind in their free time as much as they do to perform their jobs effectively.

With our connectivity solutions, we want to provide seafarers and cadets with the tools they need to stay connected with their families, continue their education, and access the resources necessary for their professional development. This not only enhances their wellbeing but also fosters a motivated and engaged workforce.

As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing our contributions to the development of future maritime professionals. Together, we can build a future where the maritime industry is a beacon of opportunity for all.



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A short history of our conferences in numbers

4

the number of years we've been hosting the Wellness at Sea cadet conferences.

More than
20,000

cadets have participated in the conferences

2,171

the number of participants who voiced their opinions in this report

26

the number of countries now represented

2021

1

conference in India.

2024

4

conferences in Africa, UK and Europe, South East Asia, North Asia.

768.7%
The increase in participants over 4 years

PARTICIPANTS:

2021

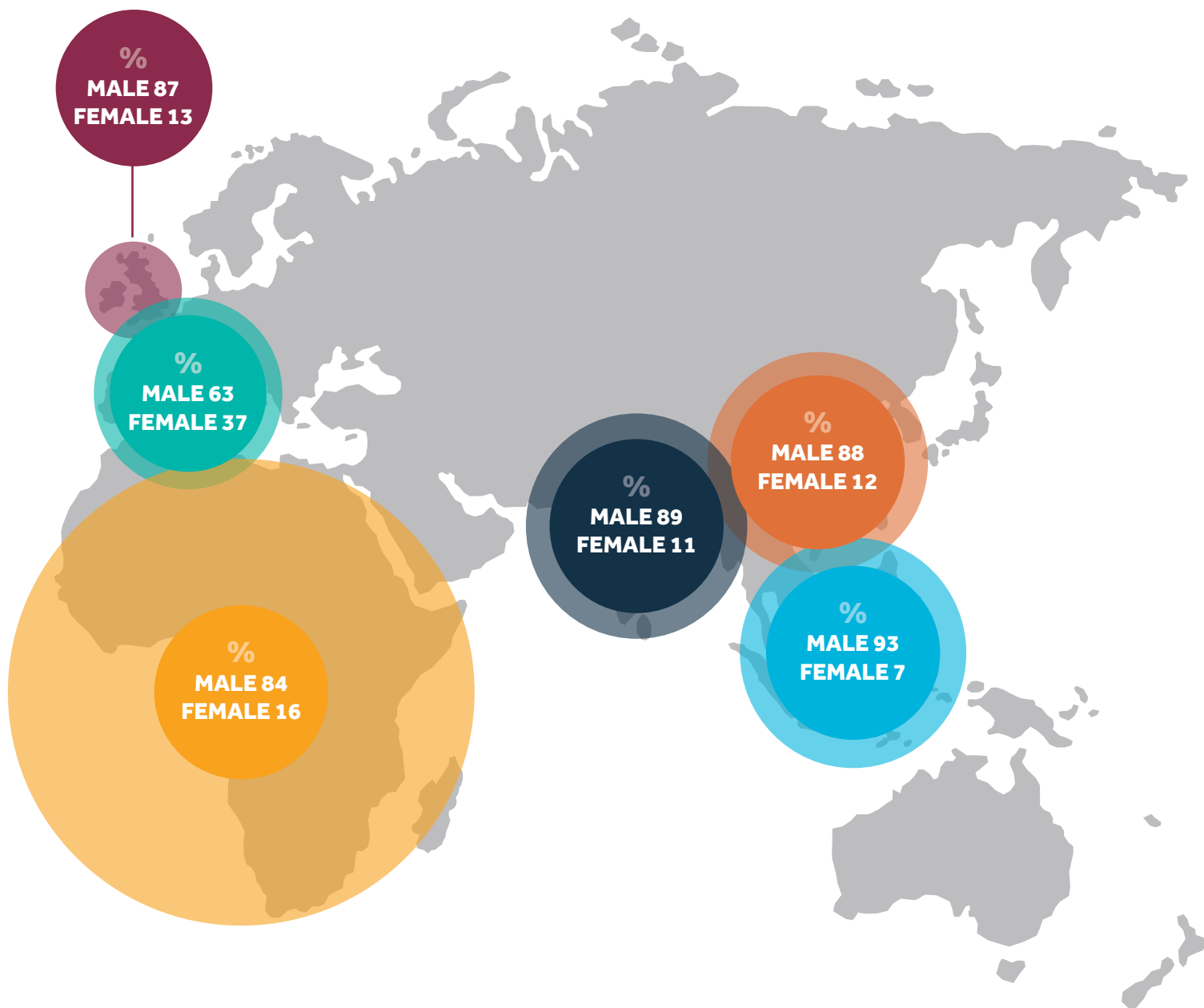
1,064

2024

9,245



Demographics



NORTH ASIA

Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka

AFRICA

Ethiopia, Ghana, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam

EUROPE

Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Turkey

UK

UK

CHINA

China

Data is collected through our four cadet conferences, except in the case of China where it has been captured through companies.

Experience level



	Completed my training, but do not have a job yet	Busy training, and have a job opportunity lined up	Have less than a year's experience	Have more than a year's experience	Don't plan to go to sea and will take shore-based job when I've completed my training
N ASIA %	27	71	4	2	2
AFRICA %	34	56	4	1	5
SE ASIA %	51	28	11	10	1
EUROPE %	20	27	36	15	2
UK %	14	25	30	20	11
CHINA %	12	12	47	29	0

■ Have not been to sea
 ■ Have been to sea

GLOBAL DATA:



The inclusion of ratings and those who have been to sea marks a significant milestone in broadening the voices represented in this Report and allows for some unique comparative analysis between the groups who have been to sea and the pre-sea cadets and ratings.

By integrating perspectives from active seafarers and specifically ratings, who are often overlooked, we are making strides toward a more inclusive understanding of the maritime workforce, enriching the Report with a wider range of experiences and insights, ultimately making it even more comprehensive and reflective of the global seafaring community.

"These cadet conferences created a unique platform for exchanging knowledge that can help shape the future of the field for the best."

2024 Africa Cadet Conference participant

Trends over the last three years

Once is accidental, twice is a coincidence, three times is a pattern...

As we enter the third year of the report, we can now identify consistent trends over time, underscoring the evolving yet stable nature of cadet perspectives. Notably, certain statistics have remained consistent, highlighting persistent themes in cadet motivations and expectations.

1. Motivated by family and financial stability

Global data

- 46%** To take care of my family
- 28%** To make loads of money
- 21%** To travel the world
- 3%** Not sure how I ended up here
- 2%** It is expected of me

Cadets continue to cite providing for family and financial stability as primary motivations for choosing a maritime career. This has been a recurring theme across all three years, especially in regions where economic challenges heighten the importance of a reliable income.

Chinese and European cadets - representing new regions in this year's Report - aligned with the global trend in their primary motivation for pursuing a career at sea: a desire to support their families.

Active cadets and pre-sea cadets displayed similar motivations, aligning closely with the global trend of prioritising family support as a primary reason for entering the maritime industry.

This shared focus on family responsibility underscores a common value that transcends regional boundaries, reinforcing the maritime industry's vital role in providing economic stability for seafarers and their loved ones.

The stability of this motivation suggests it is a deeply rooted value among young seafarers.

2. But the UK differs

- 41%** The desire to travel the world is my primary motivation
- 28%** My motivation is to make money
- 15%** I am going to see to take care of my family

However, another continuing trend is the distinctly different motivations cited by the UK cadets and ratings. A significant percentage of cadets cited the desire to travel the world as their primary motivation - an aspiration notably higher than financial considerations or family responsibilities. This is in sharp contrast to cadets from other regions where family responsibility is a leading factor.

Interestingly, another 15 per cent of UK cadets selected "I'm not sure how I ended up here" as their motivation - a choice notably higher than in any other region. This response may suggest that, for some UK cadets, the decision to pursue a maritime career may be influenced by circumstances or curiosity rather than a clear, predetermined goal.

These unique insights highlight the diverse motivations within the global cadet community and suggest potential areas of focus for tailored recruitment and engagement strategies in the UK.

3. A strong demand for ethical treatment and supportive workplace conditions

Global data

- My biggest motivation for choosing a shipping company would be:
- 68%** How they treat seafarers
- 29%** The amount of money I get paid
- 3%** Whether they have Wi-Fi on board

Year after year, cadets indisputably emphasise the importance of ethical treatment and workplace wellbeing over salary alone when choosing employers. This consistent expectation reflects Gen Z's strong commitment to social values and workplace culture, pushing the maritime industry to prioritise fair and supportive working environments.

For the first time, our sample includes active seafarers and not only cadets who have yet to experience life at sea, offering new insights into how motivations may differ between these groups.

	Pre-Sea cadets	Active seafarers
How they treat seafarers	72%	79%
The amount of money I get paid	26%	20%
Whether they have Wi-Fi on board	2%	1%

The addition of this new data reveals that both active and pre-sea cadets share a strong emphasis on ethical treatment and workplace wellbeing, aligning with the broader Gen Z commitment to social values and supportive environments.

However, active seafarers, having firsthand experience of life at sea, prioritise ethical treatment and a positive workplace culture even more highly. This suggests that exposure to the realities of maritime work reinforces the importance of fair treatment and wellbeing, and that those who have been at sea place even greater value on supportive conditions.

These findings highlight the need for the industry to create a work environment that meets the expectations of both current and future seafarers, ensuring that ethical practices are upheld at every stage of a cadet's career.

4. Females view seafaring as a long-term career:

90+% of females said they see seafaring as a long-term career.

A fourth trend emerging over the past three years is the ongoing challenge to the myth that females view seafaring as a short-term career. Each year's data has consistently shown that female cadets, like their male counterparts, aspire to long-term careers at sea. This finding is pivotal in reshaping perceptions within the industry and highlights a strong commitment among females to pursue sustainable maritime careers. Their dedication underscores the need for industry practices that support and encourage gender diversity, as female seafarers are increasingly seen as a resilient and committed segment of the future workforce.



Cadets have their say on...

Recruitment and retention

The following section explores the factors that influence the next generation's long-term commitment to the maritime industry. It examines whether cadets and active seafarers intend to stay in the field, identifying what would prompt them to leave and what might encourage them to continue their careers at sea.

By understanding these motivations, we can provide insights into key retention drivers, helping employers and industry leaders address the needs of the future of seafaring.

The data reveals that regions like South East Asia and Africa demonstrate a stronger inclination toward long-term careers at sea, reflecting a high level of commitment to the maritime industry. In contrast, cadets from the UK, Europe, and even to some extent China, appear more open to exploring alternative career paths, with a notable portion indicating plans to limit their time in seafaring roles or transition to shore-based positions within the shipping industry.

An analysis of career longevity perspectives between active seafarers and pre-sea cadets reveals that, despite some regional variations, both groups largely share the view of seafaring as a long-term career.

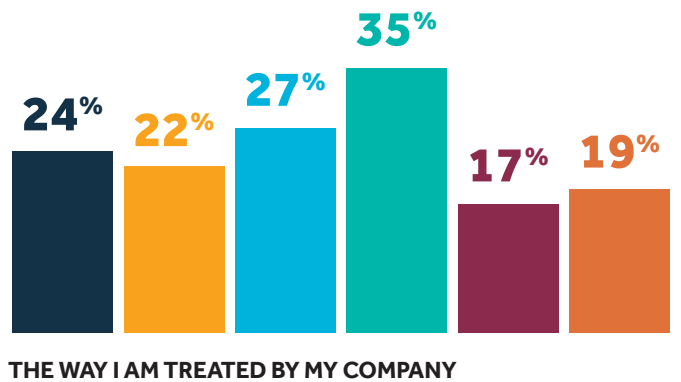
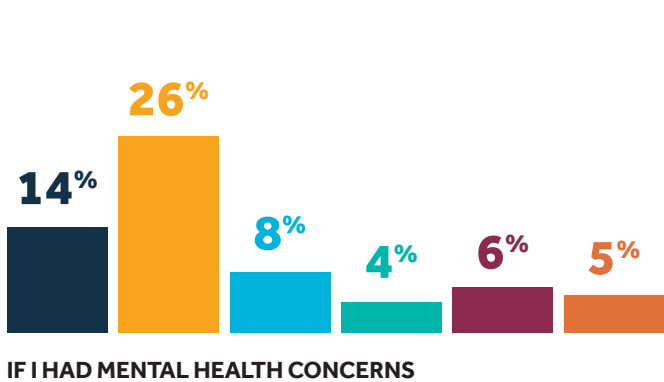
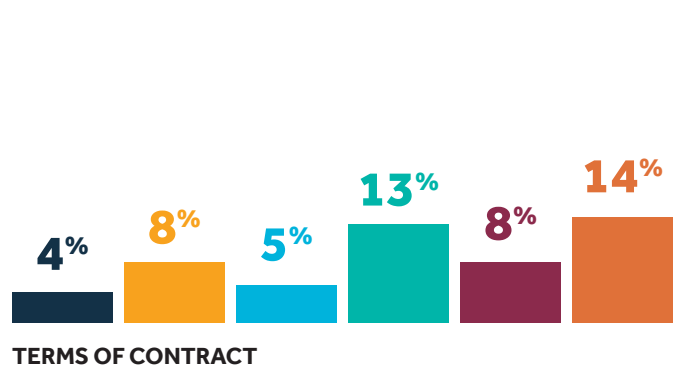
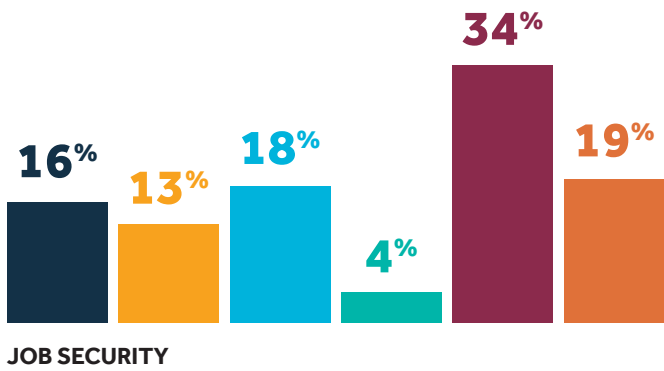
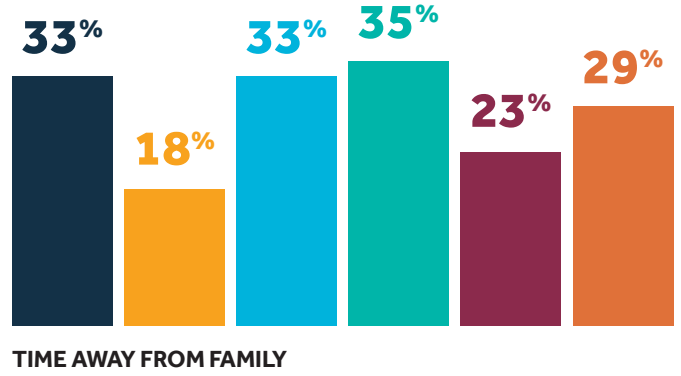
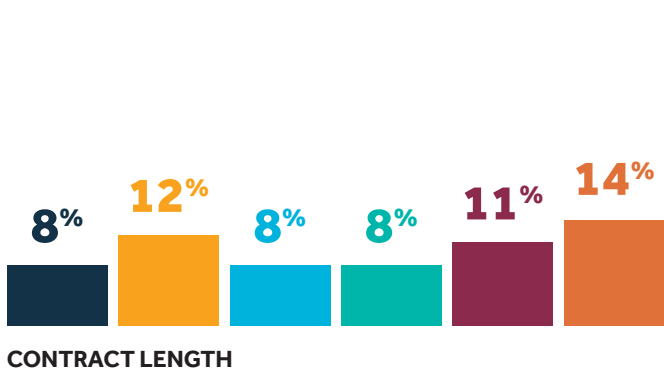
The industry should be delighted that this overarching trend highlights a shared commitment across stages of experience, with both groups demonstrating similar aspirations for sustained careers within the maritime industry.

Will you remain in the industry?

	If I get an opportunity, I see it as a long-term career	I plan to do this for about five years	I plan to do this for a year or two	I'm hoping to get a shore-based job in the shipping industry	I'll probably never work in the industry after my training
N ASIA %	84	5	4	4	2
AFRICA %	87	3	1	9	1
SE ASIA %	82	5	3	11	0
EUROPE %	64	21	2	10	2
UK %	63	17	6	10	2
CHINA %	71	19	0	10	0

What would make you leave the industry?

My biggest motivation for leaving the industry would be:



The data reveals that, with the exception of Africa, cadets identified “being away from family” and “how they are treated” as the primary reasons they might leave the maritime industry. This aligns closely with earlier insights in the report. With most cadets citing taking care of their families as a core motivation for pursuing a career at sea, we need to note the emotional and practical challenges that come with prolonged separation. Secondly, with cadets consistently emphasising treatment by their employers as the most important factor when choosing a company, it isn’t surprising that their motivation for leaving would be mistreatment.

It is notable that “concerns about my mental health” emerged as the top reason African cadets would consider leaving the maritime industry. This is significant not only within the African context but also as a broader trend across regions, where mental health is increasingly recognised as a critical factor influencing career decisions. This shift reflects a growing awareness and education around mental health issues within the industry, coupled with a willingness among cadets to break the longstanding culture of silence surrounding these challenges.

This evolution signals progress in the industry’s efforts to address mental health, underscoring the importance of continued initiatives to support cadets’ wellbeing and normalise open conversations about mental health at sea.

In Europe, it is worth noting that all the cadets from Ukraine listed job security as a primary concern. This unanimity reflects the heightened importance of stable employment in regions facing geopolitical and economic challenges. The data underscores how external factors, such as conflict or economic instability, can significantly shape the priorities of cadets.

What would make you stay?

	Permanent employment	Shorter contracts	Having Wi-Fi on board	More shore leave	Higher salaries
N ASIA %	45	2	5	2	46
AFRICA %	47	1	1	2	49
SE ASIA %	39	4	7	4	46
EUROPE AND UK %	12	10	8	17	40
CHINA %	5	15	14	5	67

The responses to what would encourage cadets to stay in the maritime industry reveal a mix of universal and region-specific priorities. Across most regions, the desire for permanent employment and higher salaries stand out as key motivators, underscoring the importance of stability and financial incentives in retaining talent.

These findings align with global expectations for long-term job security and adequate compensation in demanding careers.

Interestingly, shorter contracts and having Wi-Fi on board resonate more strongly in specific regions, such as the UK and China.

This reflects cultural and practical differences, where flexibility and connectivity are particularly valued. In the UK, there is a notable emphasis on work-life balance, demonstrated by the higher prioritisation of shorter contracts and shore leave. Meanwhile, China highlights the increasing importance of digital connectivity at sea, emphasising the growing reliance on technology and communication for wellbeing.

Looking ahead to future employment

	I have a job lined up	I'm confident that I will get a job	I am extremely stressed because there are not enough job opportunities	I've been searching for a job for a long time without any success
N ASIA %	40.3	49.3	6.8	3.5
AFRICA %	12.6	68.4	17.6	1.4
SE ASIA %	33	50.7	10.7	5.6
EUROPE %	30.43	36.96	23.91	8.7
UK %	35.71	57.14	4.76	2.38
CHINA %	30	52	18	0

North Asia's strong job opportunities

North Asia leads with the highest percentage of respondents with jobs already lined up and stress levels comparatively low, which is particularly significant given the large sample size of nearly 1,000 respondents. This robust figure reflects a healthy job market with favourable employment opportunities in the region.

Africa's outstanding confidence

Africa boasts the highest confidence in finding a job, but has one of the lowest percentages of people who already have a job lined up. This shows strong optimism, despite limited tangible opportunities.

While previous years' data revealed that Africa had the most negative view of employment prospects, this year's sample reveals a new more positive outlook.

It is worth noting that in previous years the data was mainly from South African cadets, while this year Ethiopia formed the largest group with nearly 500 respondents. As a result, direct comparisons with past data are challenging. Nevertheless, the current data suggests that Ethiopia may have a relatively healthier job environment compared to South Africa, contributing to the improved outlook for the region.

UK's low stress and joblessness versus Europe's extreme stress levels

The UK combines a relatively high proportion of people with jobs lined up and those confident about employment with very low stress levels and minimal long-term joblessness. This is in direct contrast to their European neighbours.

Europe stands out with the highest stress levels among respondents, significantly higher than other regions. And, when we combine this with the data revealing that only a third of UK and European cadets have secured employment, it paints a concerning picture of job market challenges.

However, it is important to note that the vast majority of those who report being "extremely stressed because there are not enough job opportunities" come from Ukraine. This suggests that the high-stress levels are less a reflection of the broader European job market and more likely a result of the political environment and challenges faced in that country.

China's Zero Long-Term Joblessness

In China, none of the respondents reported long-term joblessness. This is unique and a notable statistic. However, this figure should be interpreted with caution as the respondents in China were primarily recruited through shipping companies rather than maritime schools, unlike in other regions. This recruitment method

likely skews the sample towards individuals already connected to employment opportunities in the shipping industry.

Implications

The good news for the industry is that across the board cadets demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing long-term careers at sea, particularly in regions like South East Asia and Africa.

However, as in previous years, we can clearly see that retention challenges will arise from factors such as prolonged family separation, treatment by employers, and growing concerns about mental health.

The data also reveals regional nuances around what are clearly evolving priorities for this generation of seafarers. While European cadets are more focused on job security amidst external pressures like geopolitical instability, we see that African cadets are significantly influenced by concerns around their mental health.

Similarly, cultural and practical factors, such as shorter contracts in the UK and enhanced connectivity in China, clearly play a pivotal role in shaping cadet decisions.

It will be important for employers to note these regional nuances when recruiting this future generation of seafarers, allowing flexibility for example when it comes to contract length depending on the region.

It will also be vital for retention in the industry that they address issues around mental health and welfare concerns.

Cadets have their say on...

Diversity and inclusion

"One of the major driving forces that made me join the profession was the opportunity for me to work with people from diverse backgrounds. I love to experience and witness different cultures as it defines a person".

Cadet Peer-to-Peer Group member

Our 2024 conferences confirmed that diversity and inclusion are still significant concerns for the next generation of seafarers with the data collected consistently mirroring that of previous years, including regional differences in perception and belief.

Discrimination

I have witnessed or experienced discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity:



I think discrimination against minorities is an issue in this industry:



Inclusion

Do you see the industry as:



Implications

Regional disparities highlight varying challenges and progress on discrimination and inclusion for the maritime industry.

Across the regions it seems the cadets did not see discrimination against minorities as a major issue. However, the levels of discrimination experienced by cadets and ratings show that this is an issue for the industry.

The answers from the African cadets pose questions as to why only half of those who experienced discrimination see it as an issue. But African cadets also reported the lowest level of experiences of discrimination.

The North Asia data reveals mixed perceptions about inclusion in the maritime industry with around a third of those polled stating diversity improves teamwork and emphasising

its role in better cultural understanding. However, a tiny minority (three per cent) believe diversity hinders teamwork, highlighting room for improvement in fostering inclusivity.

In South East Asia, the data revealed that the primary challenges identified for promoting inclusion included eliminating gender bias and improving equal opportunities for all seafarers. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that diversity enhances teamwork and brings benefits such as better cultural understanding and improved innovation.

Again, the UK and Europe stood out. In Europe, the maritime industry shows mixed progress on inclusion. More than half of those polled said significant barriers remain, particularly for minorities and marginalised groups.

While more than half believe diversity improves teamwork, systemic issues such as bias and lack of representation persist, requiring stronger policies and leadership commitment for seafarers from this region.

The overwhelming majority of the Chinese ratings and cadets saw the industry as either very or somewhat inclusive and more than half said they had neither witnessed nor experienced discrimination at sea. This might be due to the exclusive ethnic nature of the Chinese crews polled.

Gender bias - females in the industry

"The role of women in the maritime industry is steadily evolving. However, barriers such as unconscious bias, limited representation, and unequal opportunities persist, often stemming from outdated stereotypes and societal norms."

2024 Cadet Conference participant



The main challenges females face:

NORTH ASIA

36.7%

Unequal opportunities compared to males

23.4%

Limited access to career advancement

42.3%

Lack of interest among women in pursuing a seafaring career

15.9%

Highlighting gender bias

11.7%

Inadequate facilities for female seafarers

AFRICA

34.3%

Limited access to training and career opportunities

32.2%

Unequal opportunities compared to males

SE ASIA

57%

Unequal opportunities compared to male counterparts

21.1%

Limited leadership representation

EUROPE AND UK

40%

Limited leadership opportunities

38%

Unequal access to training and advancement

30%

Lack of awareness and outreach

19%

Gender bias in hiring processes

CHINA

32%

Limited career advancement

42%

Unequal opportunities

11%

Under representation in leadership role

"Traditional views see seafaring and maritime roles as physically demanding and 'unsuitable' for women. In some regions, societal expectations discourage women from pursuing maritime careers. The long durations away from home are a challenge, especially for women, balancing family responsibilities."

Peer-to-Peer Group member

Implications

Women play a vital role in the industry, bringing unique perspectives and skills that drive innovation and progress.

However, many continue to face challenges in what is a male-dominated world and despite progress, perceived barriers and discrimination continue to create barriers that hinder their full participation and advancement.

Creating a more inclusive and equitable environment requires intentional efforts and, yet again, regional disparities pose unique challenges for the industry.

In North Asia, there is a perception that there is a lack of interest in seafaring careers among women despite previous years' data showing this isn't the case, with the majority of female cadets seeing seafaring as a long-term career. Work needs to be done to dispel this misconception.

With less than half of our African cadets believing there is a place for females in the industry, much work needs to be done in terms of counteracting some of the cultural inheritance across this continent. The data also highlighted concerns about retention and workplace challenges, including harassment and inadequate facilities. Africa also faces systemic

barriers like limited training access and inadequate facilities. All this suggests the need for systemic changes to support gender equality.

By comparison, in South East Asia, there was strong support for gender inclusion, with 87 per cent affirming their place in the industry. But there were also high discrimination rates and concerns about harassment. Sexual harassment and discrimination on board remain concerns, contributing to lower retention rates among women. Despite these challenges, most agree that diversity, including gender inclusion, positively impacts the industry, fostering collaboration and driving progress.

The data from the UK and Europe reveals significant discrimination and limited leadership roles for women. Interestingly, while the Chinese respondents were all male, the overwhelming majority believed there is a place for female seafarers in the maritime industry. But almost a quarter said they believed females often don't stay long or face job restrictions. So, while showing optimism, they are struggling with the unequal opportunities they perceive exist and work needs to be done to address this.

It is clear these regional disparities highlight varying challenges and progress on inclusion within the global maritime industry. This calls for targeted efforts to address regional challenges and foster inclusivity.

Discrimination, whether overt or subtle, alongside challenges like inadequate infrastructure to support women on board, can hinder their growth. To address these issues, fostering an inclusive culture, implementing policies promoting equal opportunities, and highlighting the success stories of women in the industry are vital. Breaking these barriers will not only empower women but also strengthen the maritime sector as a whole.

"Women's roles in the seafaring industry have grown, with more participation in sectors like navigation and engineering. However, they still face barriers such as gender stereotypes, harassment, isolation. Efforts to promote gender equality through education is helping, but more support and inclusiveness is needed for women to sustain in this male-dominated field."

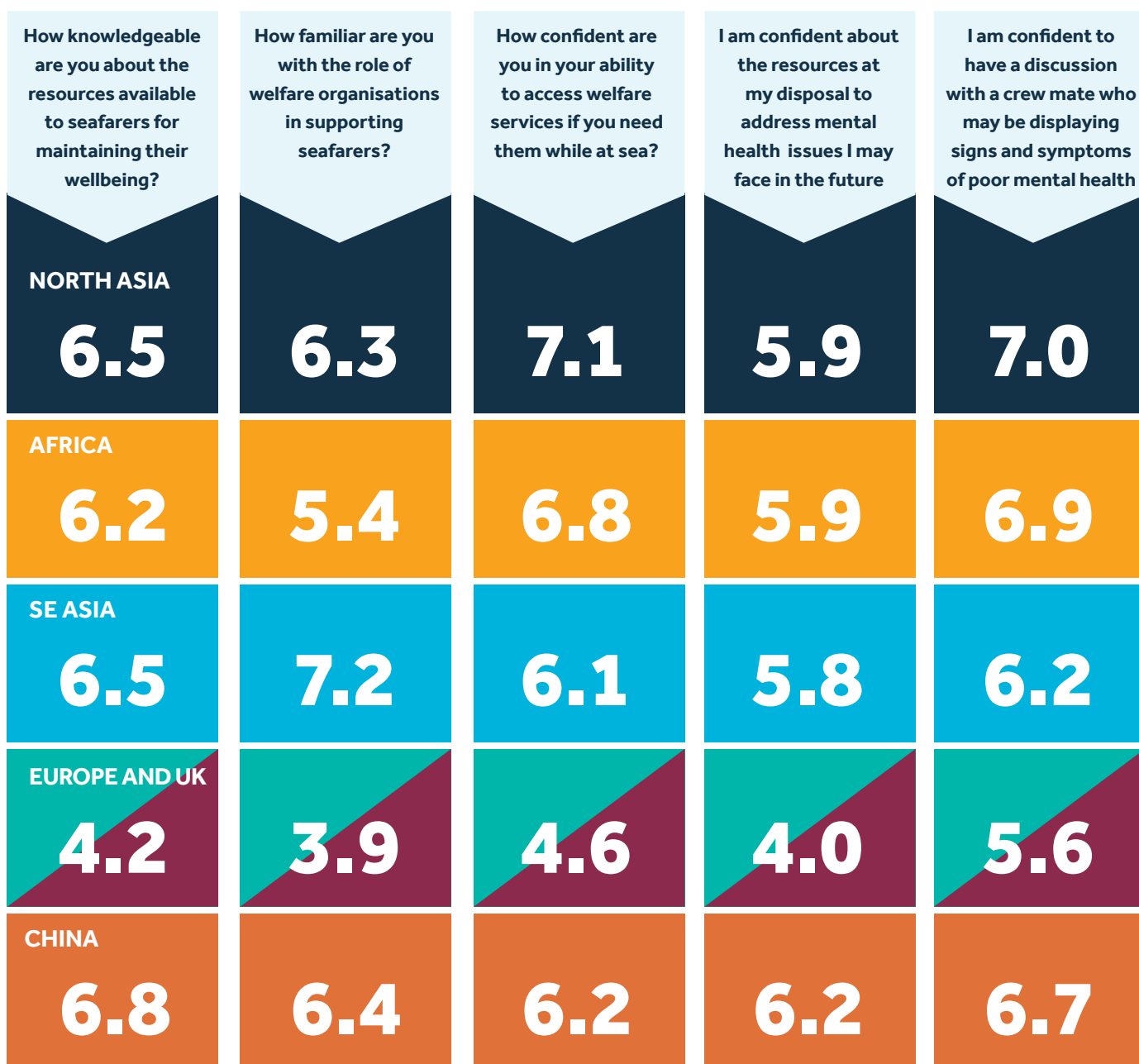
2024 Cadet Conference participant

Cadets have their say on...

Getting help and assistance

Knowledge about resources

(out of 10)



Examining the inverse of these scores reveals a significant issue - a considerable proportion of participants remain unaware of available support services.

In North Asia, nearly 30 per cent of respondents lacked sufficient awareness or confidence in accessing services. In regions like Africa, the gap is even more pronounced, indicating a widespread lack of knowledge about critical resources.

However, the most striking finding in the data is that the UK and Europe score considerably lower than other regions. They consistently report the lowest scores in terms of awareness

and confidence regarding seafarer welfare and mental health resources, with particularly concerning gaps in knowledge about available resources (4.2 out of 10) and familiarity with maritime welfare organisations (3.9 out of 10). This disparity is particularly alarming, given the established maritime presence in the UK and Europe.

This could reflect access to alternative resources outside the maritime industry, such as public healthcare and social support systems, reducing reliance on industry-specific welfare services - and this raises an important consideration for the maritime industry in these regions.

While general resources may meet some needs, they may not address the distinct pressures of life at sea. Cadets and seafarers need to be fully aware of the resources specifically designed for their unique challenges at sea. They also need to be confident in using them. The data suggests there may be a potential gap in how the industry communicates the value and relevance of its welfare services, even in regions with broader societal safety nets.

Where will you go to get help?

We asked cadets to prioritise where they would seek help for mental health and wellbeing challenges.

NORTH ASIA



AFRICA



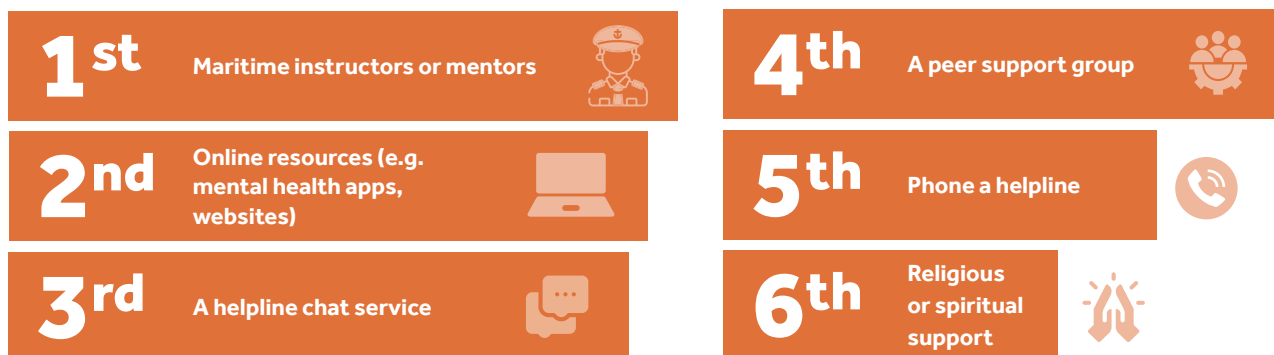
SE ASIA



EUROPE AND UK



CHINA



The feedback from different regions highlights the importance of a nuanced support system that considers regional preferences.

A blanket approach is wholly inadequate. For example, cadets from Africa are more likely to prefer seeking help through religious or spiritual support, whereas this option ranks last for cadets from the UK and North Asia.

These regional differences underscore the need for companies to tailor their mental health and wellbeing initiatives to meet the unique needs and cultural expectations of their workforce.

Region by region focus



By exploring the distinct characteristics and challenges of each region and understanding their nuances, we can better design interventions and support systems that address the unique and differing needs of seafarers, fostering a healthier and more resilient maritime workforce. While some challenges are shared universally, others are deeply rooted in regional contexts, emphasising the need for tailored approaches.

NORTH ASIA

Key motivations - Retention factors:

46.0%

Higher salaries

39.0%

Permanent employment

Regional challenges - Barriers to career entry:

36.9%

High costs and financial barriers

27.4%

Lack of job opportunities in their region

11.1%

Difficulty accessing maritime education/certifications

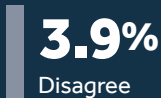
15.5%

Discrimination based on gender or nationality

MENTAL HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS:

I know enough about mental health to recognise the signs and symptoms:



I am confident I can access resources for mental health issues:



I am confident discussing mental health issues with peers/crew:



OPINION

Protecting Indian seafarers from illegal recruitment practices

Despite stringent International Labour Organisation (ILO) regulations prohibiting recruitment fees for seafarers, illegal employment practices persist in maritime recruitment. For Indian seafarers - who form a significant proportion of the global seafaring workforce - these challenges are particularly acute. Fraudulent agents and unethical recruitment agencies exploit the aspirations of young cadets and ratings, charging exorbitant fees with no guarantee of employment. This exploitation not only places financial strain on seafarers and their families but also exposes them to significant risks, such as wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and legal complications.

Illegal recruitment undermines the fundamental rights of seafarers, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Those employed without proper contracts often lack protections like insurance, fair wages, and access to grievance mechanisms. These seafarers may work on substandard vessels without adequate safety measures, putting their lives at risk. Moreover, the

emotional toll of uncertain job security and poor working conditions cannot be overstated. Many of these individuals endure tremendous mental health challenges, compounded by isolation and the fear of retaliation if they report issues.

As a leading seafarer-supplying nation, India must take decisive action to combat these illegal practices. Strengthening enforcement of ILO's Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and implementing stricter oversight of recruitment agencies is critical. At the same time, educating seafarers about their rights and empowering them to recognise and report fraudulent practices is essential. Employers, regulators, and maritime welfare organisations must work together to eliminate exploitation, ensuring that Indian seafarers are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. This is not just a moral obligation but a necessary step to safeguard the future of our maritime workforce and maintain India's reputation as a reliable contributor to the global shipping industry.



Capt. Manoj Joy
Support – India
Sailors' Society



AFRICA

Key motivations - Retention factors:

49.1%

Higher salaries

47.3%

Permanent employment

Regional challenges - Barriers to career entry:

28.7%

Lack of job opportunities

MENTAL HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS:

I know enough about mental health to recognise the signs and symptoms:



I am confident I can access resources for mental health issues:



I am confident discussing mental health issues with peers/crew:



OPINION

Africa is not a country

Africa is often mistakenly perceived as a single, homogenous country, a misconception that couldn't be further from the truth. In reality, Africa is a vast and diverse continent made up of 54 countries, each with its own unique cultures, languages, economies, and social dynamics.

In the sample, the largest representation came from Ethiopia, South Africa and Ghana, with more than 600 respondents from these countries. Interestingly, these countries also hail from different regions of the continent: Ethiopia from East Africa, South Africa from Southern Africa, and Ghana from West Africa.

The data reveals a glaring difference in attitudes towards the job market among cadets from Ethiopia, South Africa, and Ghana. Ethiopian cadets exhibit remarkable enthusiasm, with three-quarters expressing confidence that they will secure a job, while no respondents reported long-term job search struggles. In stark contrast, South African and Ghanaian cadets reflect a sense of hopelessness, with more than half reporting extreme stress due to a lack of job opportunities, and Ghana having 20 per cent actively searching for jobs without success. This disparity aligns with a consistent theme observed in previous cadet reports, where South African and Ghanaian cadets report substantial frustration and uncertainty in terms of the job market.

The data reveals stark disparities in perceived wellbeing support. Ethiopian cadets are overwhelmingly positive, but in contrast just over half of Ghanaian cadets report no support, with none feeling efforts are sufficient, possibly due to limited resources or systemic neglect. While the sample size was limited, it is significant that no respondent felt supported. South African cadets fall in the middle, with 38 per cent acknowledging real efforts but eight per cent reporting

no support, suggesting inconsistencies in implementation. These differences may stem from varying levels of institutional capacity, funding, and prioritisation of cadet wellbeing across the regions.

On questions related to mental health there were shared challenges. However, differences emerged when we look at the reasons for not reporting incidents of bullying. In Ethiopia, most non-reporters said they handled the issue themselves, suggesting a cultural preference for self-reliance. In South Africa, fear of retaliation was the primary reason, reflecting concerns about potential consequences. Meanwhile, in Ghana, non-reporting stemmed from a belief that nothing would be done, indicating a lack of trust in institutional systems. Interestingly, in a further question on how reported incidents were handled, the majority of cadets in Ghana said that the issue was ignored.

When we look at views on how bullying and harassment should be handled in the maritime industry, both South African and Ghanaian cadets want stronger enforcement of policies. However, Ghanaian cadets wanted to see a strong leadership culture that does not tolerate bullying. This recognises a need for stricter rules and reflects a desire for leadership accountability and cultural change within the industry.

This unique insight by region allows us to explore how regional and cultural contexts influence perspectives on key issues within the maritime industry. The data also shines a light on the complexities and differences that exist within the continent that the industry needs to take note of.



Johan Smith
Head of Wellness
Sailors' Society

SE ASIA

Key motivations - Retention factors:

46.1%

Higher salaries

45.2%

Permanent employment

Regional challenges - Barriers to career entry:

37%

High financial barriers

18.3%

Job security was a major concern - cadets concerned about finding stable roles after training

19.9%

Discrimination

50%

Half of the respondents are worried about their mental health, with stress, anxiety, and uncertainty about their futures being major issues

40%

Have experienced or seen bullying and harassment

MENTAL HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS:

I know enough about mental health to recognise the signs and symptoms:

77.6%

Agree

20.6%

Neutral

1.8%

Disagree

I am confident I can access resources for mental health issues:

40.9%

Confident

33.6%

Moderate confidence

22.7%

Low confidence

I am confident discussing mental health issues with peers/crew:

49.4%

Confident

33.9%

Moderate confidence

16.7%

Low confidence

OPINION

Action is needed

The responses collected here highlight the significant challenges and opportunities within the maritime industry as perceived by Filipino cadets and ratings.

This data serves as valuable input for Philippine maritime stakeholders to develop strategic policies and initiatives to support and retain talent in the industry effectively.

These need to address the critical need for wellness programmes; they should promote gender inclusivity and implement systemic reforms.

I have proposed seven action steps to address the identified challenges and opportunities taken from this Report's findings.



Alfonso "Jong" Pablo, Jr.
Executive Director, Homer Foundation, Inc. The CSR Arm of the Magsaysay Group of Companies

Seven action steps - a view from the Philippines

1. Enhance wellbeing and mental health support

Mental health issues, homesickness, and stress are the primary concerns of the respondents, with more than a third indicating they would leave their positions due to time away from family. Some 62 per cent of those polled believed that while wellbeing support exists, it could be improved.

ACTION STEPS:

Create structured mental health programmes:

Partner with mental health professionals to conduct regular counselling and stress management workshops and introduce on board peer support groups and mental health awareness campaigns.

Strengthen shore-based support systems:

Provide helplines and chat services specifically tailored for seafarers and build partnerships with faith-based and community organisations to offer spiritual and emotional support.

Promote family engagement initiatives:

Implement communication subsidies, such as free Wi-Fi access, to help maintain family connections during voyages.

2. Address barriers to entry

High financial costs and a lack of job opportunities represent significant barriers to the respondents and more than half said that, while they had never paid bribes, they knew someone who had.

ACTION STEPS:

Subsidise or provide financial assistance:

Collaborate with government and private companies to offer scholarships and financial aid for cadets.

Streamline recruitment processes:

Implement stricter regulations against illegal recruitment practices and increase transparency in hiring through government-certified maritime placement agencies.

Expand job opportunities:

Foster partnerships with international shipping companies to secure job placement pipelines for graduates.

3. Improve retention

Almost half of all respondents desired higher salaries and wanted permanent employment. While a third cited company treatment as a key factor in leaving.

ACTION STEPS:

Standardise better compensation packages:

Collaborate with industry stakeholders to review and enhance minimum wage standards for Filipino seafarers.

Enhance job security:

Promote long-term employment contracts with clear career progression pathways.

Foster a seafarer-centric workplace culture:

Train maritime companies in leadership and employee relations to ensure fair treatment.

4. Promote gender inclusivity

Some 47 per cent of respondents reported experiencing gender bias in recruitment, while female seafarers face limited leadership and training opportunities.

ACTION STEPS:

Launch diversity awareness campaigns:

Highlight success stories of female seafarers to encourage inclusivity.

Provide targeted support for women:

Establish mentorship programmes and leadership training for female cadets.

Ensure gender-sensitive facilities:

Mandate shipping companies to provide appropriate accommodation for women.

5. Combat bullying and harassment

Half of respondents reported verbal abuse, and more than a third feared retaliation for reporting incidents.

ACTION STEPS:

Implement zero-tolerance policies:

Enforce stricter penalties for bullying and harassment throughout the industry.

Establish anonymous reporting systems:

Create both digital and physical channels for the safe reporting of incidents.

Conduct anti-harassment training:

Educate cadets, ratings, and officers about acceptable workplace behaviour.

6. Strengthen training and education

A lack of adequate maritime training has been reported as a barrier by Filipino cadets and ratings with 46 per cent of respondents feeling unprepared to handle mental health challenges.

ACTION STEPS:

Expand curriculum content:

Include courses on mental health, leadership, and diversity training in maritime education programmes.

Upgrade maritime facilities:

Ensure that cadet training centres are equipped with modern technology and experienced instructors.

7. Foster industry inclusivity and innovation

Two-thirds of respondents believed that diversity improves teamwork and cooperation.

A third saw cultural awareness as a benefit of diversity.

ACTION STEPS:

Encourage multinational partnerships:

Promote exchanges between Filipino seafarers and international crews for cultural learning.

Introduce innovation-driven initiatives:

Provide incentives for research and development in maritime safety and wellbeing technologies.

All these steps need collaboration between government and industry. A task force should be formed consisting of government bodies, private shipping firms, and training institutions to oversee the implementation of the actions. There also needs to be the establishment of a feedback loop with seafarers so that the action steps can be adapted as the needs evolve.

This plan aims to address systemic issues and empower Filipino seafarers to thrive in the global maritime industry, but it could equally well be applied across the board.

Success will be measured through improved job placement rates, reduced attrition, increased female participation, higher satisfaction with wellbeing programmes and fewer reports of harassment or discrimination.

EUROPE AND UK

Key motivations - Retention factors:

33%

Travel

31%

Family support

29%

Financial incentives

Regional challenges - Barriers to career entry:

44%

High financial barriers

50%

Diversity and Inclusion - perceive the industry as "somewhat inclusive."

17%

Discrimination

Female challenges:

40%

Limited leadership opportunities

38%

And bias against minorities and females

MENTAL HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS:

I know enough about mental health to recognise the signs and symptoms:



I am confident I can access resources for mental health issues:



I am confident discussing mental health issues with peers/crew:



OPINION

Tailoring strategies is key

According to the UN, while only 28 per cent of the world's seafarers come from Europe, a third of the world's officers are European. Despite European shipping accounting for 40 per cent of the world's fleet, considerably less than 40 per cent of crew positions on these vessels are filled by European crew.

It is into this world that European cadets are heading, so it is probably not surprising that many express concerns over job security. In contrast, the UK's cadets, which make up a much smaller percentage of the world's seafarers, display inconsequential levels of concern regarding future employment.

And, it seems, our cadets also have very different motivations for choosing a career at sea. In the UK, the majority of the cadets seem focused on personal fulfilment and exploration, citing travel as their primary motivation for a maritime career. Just 15 per cent suggest that financially supporting family is a motivation.

Yet conversely, in Europe, nearly half of the cadets polled identify family support as their main reason for pursuing a seafaring career. In some European countries, even a junior officer's wage is considered to be in a high salary bracket. This is not necessarily so in the UK.

Differences also emerge when we look at their reasons for leaving the industry. In the UK, cadets are concerned about time away from family and poor treatment by their company, resonating with wider Gen Z concerns. However, in Europe, the dominant reason is job security and this was particularly evident among Ukrainian participants, all of whom list job security as their primary concern.

With conflict dominating this region and many of their home ports under Russian control, it is hardly surprising they worry about their future employment. I would suggest that more research needs to be done on why cadets from other European countries have the same concerns.

Interestingly, when asked 'If you are unable to secure a job in the maritime industry, which area are you most concerned with?', cadets from the UK highlight future career prospects and financial independence, while European respondents emphasise the impact on their role as the primary breadwinner for their families - a non-consequential factor for most in the UK.

Throughout the data, we see clear differences between the answers given by UK cadets and their European counterparts and this suggests the industry would do well to tailor strategies on recruitment at a regional level.

When it comes to retention, another key issue for shipping companies, the pattern continues, emphasising these regional disparities in economic and professional stability. Permanent employment emerges as the biggest retention factor in Europe. Unsurprisingly, this is particularly important for the Ukrainians. However, once again the UK cadets disagree - higher salaries are the main driver in the UK.

We know that inclusivity is important to those classed as Gen Z, so it is interesting to see that UK respondents generally view the industry as more inclusive compared to European respondents. Worryingly for the industry, 61 per cent of participants from Ukraine state that the industry is not inclusive and discriminates against minorities. They are also 'unsure' that there is a place for females in the industry.



Joshua Hutchinson
Managing Director -
Intelligence and Risk,
Ambrey and
Sailors' Society
Trustee Vice Chair

The data from UK and European cadets reflects their uncertainty about gender inclusivity within the maritime sector. However, there are differences when it comes to their views on the perceived barriers female seafarers face.

European cadets overwhelmingly believe that a lack of interest in a career at sea is the primary issue, while UK respondents identify a lack of awareness and outreach as the major barrier. These contrasting perceptions point to differing cultural views and present challenges to shipping companies when it comes to improving female representation in the industry.

The data suggests mental health is also a key issue among this new generation of mariners – more than half of those polled have concerns about their own personal mental health. But only 14 per cent of the European and UK cadets and ratings polled strongly agree that they could recognise early warning signs of mental health issues, suggesting three-quarters could not. Companies should take note that more mental health awareness training is needed for these seafarers.

Overall, the data collected underscores the importance of tailoring industry strategies to accommodate the micro-regional socio-economic realities, mental health challenges and perceptions and experiences around inclusion and bullying. And we would do well to listen to the solutions proposed by the cadets themselves.

They advocate for stronger leadership, anonymous reporting to combat harassment, clear policies on wellbeing and bullying and improved outreach to attract diverse talent. Such efforts are essential to ensuring better recruitment, retention and wellbeing outcomes across the maritime industry.



CHINA

Key motivations - Retention factors:

67%
Higher salaries

Regional challenges - Barriers to career entry:

48%
Lack of job opportunities

22%
Insufficient maritime training

MENTAL HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS:

I can recognise the early warning signs of poor mental health

48%
Strongly agree

26%
Agree

26%
Disagree

UNIQUE TO THIS REGION:

Technology driven

Traditionally, it has been challenging to gather data from China. Although this Report relies on a smaller sample size from China compared to other regions, it still provides valuable initial insights into the mindset of Chinese seafarers.

One aspect that stood out head and shoulders above other regions was the Chinese seafarers' preference for and reliance on technology and connectivity.

From all regions considered in this report, Chinese cadets reported the highest preference for online mental health resources, such as apps and websites. This reflects a broader reliance on technology-driven solutions, aligning with China's emphasis on digital innovation across industries. Cadets see online platforms not only as tools for managing their mental health but also as accessible, user-friendly options that fit into their increasingly technology-focused lives.

China also stood out significantly for prioritising on board Wi-Fi as both a key retention factor and a decisive criterion when selecting shipping companies. While 14 per cent of Chinese cadets identified on board Wi-Fi as critical to remaining in the industry and 10 per cent considered it essential when choosing an employer, these factors were viewed as inconsequential in other regions, where connectivity on board ships did not emerge as a significant

priority. This highlights China's cultural and technological context, where digital access is seen as integral to maintaining both professional efficiency and personal wellbeing at sea.

Given this reliance on technology, it is unsurprising that China also reported the highest rate of cyberbullying, with 40 per cent of cadets who experienced or witnessed bullying identifying it as occurring through social media or messaging platforms. This underscores the dual-edged nature of technology in the maritime industry. While it serves as a lifeline for communication, mental health support, and professional resources, it also creates vulnerabilities to online harassment.

The data suggests a need for targeted interventions, such as cyberbullying awareness programme's, digital etiquette training, and improved access to secure online environments. By addressing these challenges, the industry can better harness the benefits of technology while minimising its risks, ensuring cadets feel supported and safe in their digital and professional spaces.

This is just a glimpse into the minds of Chinese seafarers and more data and analysis will expand the picture still further. This is something we hope to achieve in future reports.

Conclusion

This Report presents an unparalleled view into the voices of the next generation of maritime professionals. Through comprehensive data collection from cadets across diverse regions, we have provided critical insights into their motivations, challenges, and aspirations. It underscores the profound importance of ethical treatment, inclusivity, mental health support, and career stability for ensuring a resilient and committed maritime workforce.

This year's expanded data set - featuring insights from China, ratings, and active seafarers - adds invaluable depth to the Report. The inclusion of these voices allows for richer comparative analysis, providing actionable recommendations to stakeholders across the industry.

Several overarching trends emerge from the findings. Cadets globally continue to prioritise financial security and family support as key motivators, with ethical treatment and workplace wellbeing consistently rated above salary when selecting employers.

However, regional nuances continue to reveal varying priorities, from the UK's desire for travel and shorter contracts to China's emphasis on connectivity and technology. These differences highlight the importance of culturally tailored approaches to recruitment and retention.

Mental health awareness is another pressing concern, as regional disparities in knowledge and access to resources persist, particularly in Africa and Europe.

Gender bias and barriers to inclusion further complicate the industry's efforts to achieve equality. Female cadets consistently express long-term career aspirations but face unique challenges, including limited opportunities and inadequate facilities. Addressing these disparities will require intentional action to foster a more inclusive maritime community.

The seven action steps suggested by Jong Pablo in this Report suggest a way forward not just for the Philippines but globally. As we look to the future, this data and findings call for a collective commitment to address key issues: improving workplace culture, investing in mental health initiatives, embracing diversity, and tailoring strategies to meet the unique needs of different regions and demographics.

By doing so, the maritime industry can empower the next generation of seafarers to navigate their careers with confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose.

Sailors' Society remains steadfast in its mission to support cadets and seafarers worldwide. We invite industry leaders, policymakers, and partners to join us in creating a more inclusive, supportive, and sustainable future for the maritime workforce. Together, we can chart a course toward a stronger, healthier, and more equitable industry for all.



Johan Smith
Head of Wellness
Sailors' Society



Our services

Our award-winning Wellness at Sea programme provides the tools to help cadets, seafarers, and their companies, to thrive.



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OUR 2024 CONFERENCES ATTENDEES SAID

"It was great to be a part of the panel to share my experiences with others. I have connected with other cadets, including other future woman engineers and ETOs and been able to share support and guidance as well as creating connections for life."

Amilia Busby, cadet panellist at the UK and Europe event

Taking part in this year's cadet conference was a great opportunity and a valuable experience. The event encouraged meaningful discussions and created a platform for exchanging knowledge that can help shape the future of the field for the best.

David Aganzua, Final year marine engineering student, Regional Maritime University, Accra-Ghana

"This conference was a great platform. It was enlightening to hear about issues I hadn't considered before. I gained lot of knowledge through the experiences of others which will be helpful to me as a seafarer."

Shruti Mahajan – Cadet, Great Eastern Institute of Maritime Studies

SAVE THE DATE 2025 CADET CONFERENCES

NORTH ASIA
21 August

SOUTH EAST ASIA
18 October

AFRICA
18 September

UK AND EUROPE
13 November



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

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

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Sailors' Society, Seafarer House
74 St Annes Road, Southampton
Hampshire, SO19 9FF, UK

enquiries@sailors-society.org
+44 (0)23 8051 5950
sailors-society.org

