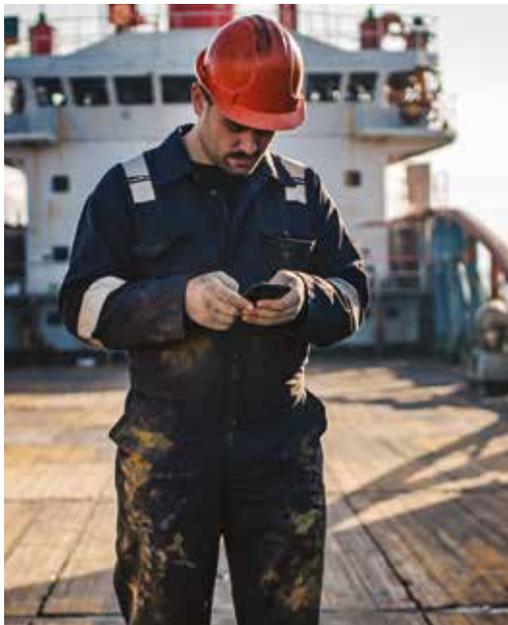


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SAILORS' SOCIETY CADET REPORT 2025/26:

The first digital seafarer generation

CADETS, RATINGS AND TRAINEES





“Wellbeing for me is about being supported and being mentally and physically safe.”

“If we use social media and forget we have prior commitments – that’s addiction and that’s not good.”

“It seems outrageous to me that cases of bullying and harassment at sea are not treated as seriously as they are on land.”

Participants at our 2025
Wellness at Sea Conferences

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Welcome to Sailors' Society's 2025/26 Cadet Report

The first digital seafarer generation

Welcome to this, our fourth Sailors' Society Cadet Report, providing the industry with valuable insight into our next generation of maritime - our cadets, trainees, and ratings - using data collected from our global Wellness at Sea Conferences.

The 2024/25 Cadet Report highlighted the structural realities facing specifically the next generation of officers: the challenges of securing jobs, the impact of contract terms and family separation on retention, and the barriers posed by diversity and inclusion. It was a wide-angle lens on recruitment and retention - setting out where the system was working and where change was urgently needed.

The data we collected this year around these areas mirrors the feedback from the previous years and, therefore, our 2025/26 report shifts its focus.

The demographics remain central, revealing regional nuances and global trends, but this report also zooms in on the 'inner world' of the next generation entering the industry and looks at three key areas: questions of connectivity, social media pressure and online harassment. Digital 'addiction' emerges strongly, alongside candid reflections on mental health, and finally confidence in rights and trust in the reporting system.

We explore the realities behind the statistics - how cadets, trainees, and ratings experience life in a digital age, how they build resilience in the face of stress and uncertainty, and how peer networks are becoming essential sources of support.

Last year showed us the external structures shaping cadets' opportunities. This year, we listen more closely to their voices, emotions, and lived experiences. The result is a report that not only captures what is happening in the industry, but also shines a light on how young seafarers are feeling and coping as they embark on their careers.

This report is therefore both a continuation and an evolution: it retains the global, evidence-based perspective of past editions, while offering new insight into the digital, psychological, and social dimensions that will define the future of seafaring.



Sara Baade
CEO, Sailors' Society

Home-like connectivity experience to empower a new generation of seafarers

The importance of maritime connectivity in supporting crew mental health is well documented, and for cadets beginning their careers at sea, its role is pivotal. Reliable Internet helps seafarers stay in touch with loved ones, access support and learning resources, and enjoy entertainment, minimising stress and the sense of isolation during long periods at sea.

This is reflected in several of the key findings in this year's Sailors' Society Cadet Report – as well as in research carried out by Inmarsat Maritime, a Viasat company. In a recent Inmarsat survey of nearly 400 seafarers, 70% of respondents reported that on board internet had a positive impact on their wellbeing during long voyages, while almost 90% said they primarily use connectivity to keep in touch with family and friends.

Alongside welfare, connectivity remains integral to operational safety and reliability. Since its foundation in 1979, Inmarsat has played a key role in protecting lives at sea through the delivery of resilient mission-critical communications. Beyond the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System seafarers rely on in the last resort, connectivity between ship and shore has provided the platform for enhancing operational safety, situational awareness, and decision-making in demanding and unpredictable environments.

As shipping continues to digitalise, on board internet has been integrated into almost every aspect of modern seafaring – from navigation, monitoring, and reporting to training, collaboration, and day-to-day communications. Cadets joining this increasingly automated and data-driven industry expect and require high-quality Internet access to perform their duties effectively while protecting their mental health.

Inmarsat is committed to ensuring that maritime connectivity evolves in line with these changing expectations and requirements. NexusWave, its intelligent bonded network solution, helps to create an on board environment that promotes learning, professional development, and wellbeing while maintaining the reliability and security that shipping depends on. For the new generation of seafarers, home-like connectivity experience lays the foundation for safe operations, stronger human connections, and – ultimately – a happier, more successful life at sea.



Gert-Jan Panken
Vice President, Inmarsat Maritime

Demographics



2025

9,138

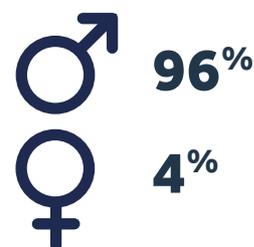
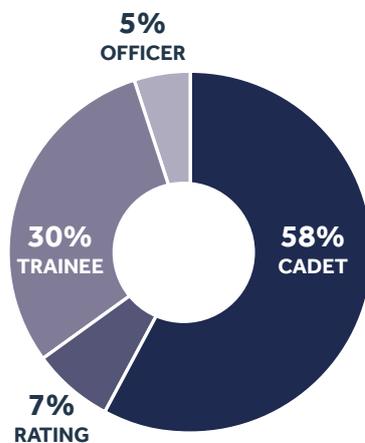
Participants attending the events

30

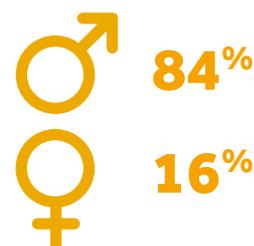
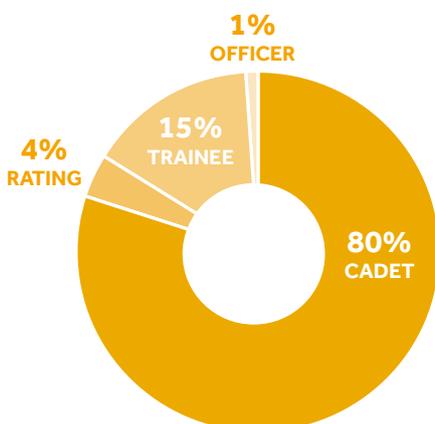
Number of countries represented

Global Spread

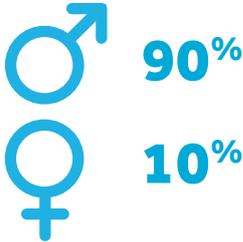
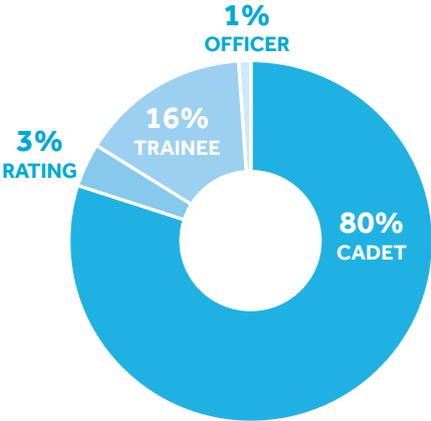
India Subcontinent



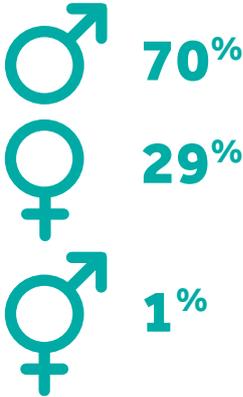
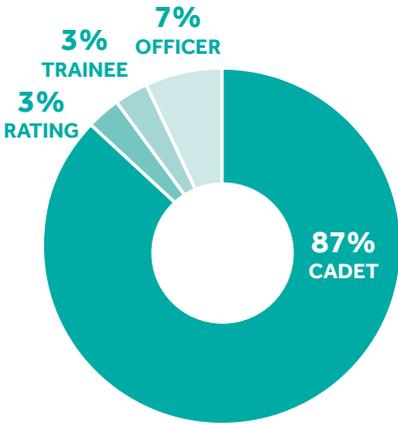
Africa



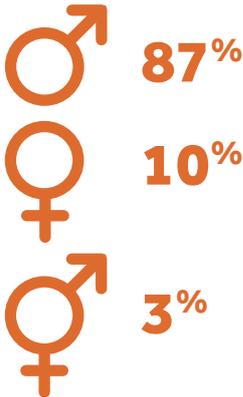
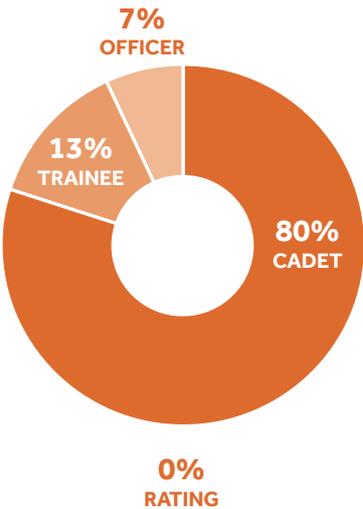
South East Asia



UK and Europe



China



2,624
Voices contributed to the report - a 20.9% increase on last year

Reflections for the next generation of seafarers from the Wellness at Sea Conferences keynote speakers

India Subcontinent

Dear cadets, you are aware you're joining a challenging career. Tomorrow you will be key workers, the people who connect the world, ensure global supply lines and keep the world alive.

Because if shipping were to stop and if there were no seafarers, then half the world would freeze to death, and the other half would starve to death.

I have 4 messages for you.

The first is, remember that safety is always first. The second is that you need to take care of yourself.

So be concerned about your Wellness and ensure that a healthy seafarer is a happy seafarer.

Third, follow your profession and keep yourself abreast at all times, updating your knowledge and avail yourself with all the latest in sustainability and in technology.

And lastly, be a good team spirit person, collaborate and always look out for your colleague while on board or even offshore.

God bless, all the best.



Shri Shyam Jagannathan
Director General
of Shipping, India

Africa

The seed you nurture will grow. This is not a job; this is a calling. It's about the responsibility that we do hold.

As a navigation officer, when I am there on the bridge, I not only get to see the world, but I am also responsible for the 20-plus lives on that vessel, and for the billions of dollars of cargo we are carrying. The maritime industry contributes 80 per cent of global trade.

So, how valuable are you on that ship and in the industry?

There are challenges we face on board. It's totally different from being ashore. When I joined, I was the only female on board and the only African. You may face loneliness, long voyages, being

away for months and being with a multi-cultural crew. You feel so lonely sometimes. But, as a trainee, you can fill that space with learning, what you are doing and pursuing. You have to have passion and be driven.

We have Wi-Fi now, so we can connect with our families. With the multi-cultural crew, you are gaining communication skills. And because we are often in the middle of the ocean, you are gaining creative skills, adapting to this environment. With every voyage, you are sharpening your leadership skills.

Take pride in what you have achieved, learn patience, and remember, this is your home, you need to make yourself safe, make yourself seen and support each other. And dream big.



2nd Navigational Officer
Pertunia Banda

South East Asia

The world is changing, and seafarers must change with it. We must build seafarers for the VUCAD maritime world. This is not just another catchy acronym; it is a reality we must confront head-on.

V stands for Volatile, the rapid, unpredictable changes we face. U is for uncertainty. We have a lack of clarity around future events. C is the complexity of global supply chains, technology and customs. A is the ambiguity around implementing new maritime laws and standards, and D is disruption, caused by the radical changes we have seen, everything from AI to the pandemic.

The VUCAD world is here. Are we ready for it?

One key area is safety, because in a world that is so unpredictable, safety relies not just on technology but on people, on culture and on courage. The courage to speak up. But how do we build a culture on board where speaking up is expected? Well, today's seafarers will be shaped by today's leaders. We need effective followers mentored by leaders who took the time to coach them and allowed them to learn from their mistakes. Effective followers become effective leaders. As the new generation of maritime, you should find a mentor but also be a mentor yourself, through a peer support group.

Friends, the VUCAD world is not going away, but with the courage to speak up and committed mentoring, we can influence culture and build seafarers who don't just survive, but thrive and excel, and our ships and seas will be safer for it.



Dr Michael Morales
President, MOL Magsaysay
Maritime Academy

UK and Europe

When you consider that 90% of goods are transported by sea, the role of the seafarer has a far-reaching impact on society. So, as you embark on your journey, take the time to step back and consider your purpose. While you are out there, you are connecting people from one side of the world to the other and sustaining the world around us.

I spent over 10 years at sea, and I am a master mariner, so I understand the environment you operate in can be very challenging. I recognise that being away from home and missing birthdays and festive holidays and having to manage situations where loved family members are unwell, can be very demanding.

So, while we acknowledge how difficult it can be, it is also vitally important to note that there is an incredible support network available to you and to your families at home. During tough times or times of crisis or struggle, the work that Sailors' Society does can be incredibly supportive.

There is a comprehensive circle of care that is there for you 24/7. And, the vital feedback that is provided through the Cadet Report is incredibly important to understand the challenges that you are facing.

Whilst it may not always be visible, there are also companies and people working in support of charities and in support of you, the seafarers of the future. They champion better conditions on board ships and raise awareness among the global maritime community.

I want to really re-emphasise that there is a world of opportunity that exists from a career at sea. You should consider yourself a future leader of this industry. Please do take encouragement from knowing that every voyage you complete is making a positive impact and a difference to someone, somewhere.

I wish you all the best for your future as a maritime professional and as a leader.



Andrew Roberts
Head of EMEA, Right Ship

Cadet, trainee and rating voices

On connectivity

POSITIVE

"Communication is very good on board, so I have time to call my family, and that helps me stay happy."

"We are so lucky we have access to Wi-Fi and can call our families while at sea."

"Social media serves as an escape from the harsh realities of life on board ship."

"Internet access to family back home to support me and online counselling if I need it, is great."

"Keeping up with studies and families and being able to scroll on your downtime is good for my mental health."

NEGATIVE

"As a cadet, I have found that too much time online can lead to cyber addiction. It is easy to get hooked. And this affects my focus, which is bad."

"If you get socially isolated on board, it can reduce the face-to-face bonding with your fellow crew. It weakens teamwork and moral."

"It's a difficult balance staying motivated and connected when far from home."

On mental health

NEGATIVE

"Stress is very common; our work is very hard."

"The loneliness I will face is what is worrying me."

"The worry is not knowing what to expect and being thrown in the deep end."

"I'm worried about the separation from my family."

"It can be overwhelming when you first get on board. That makes you feel lonely."

"My college just gave me links; I had no mental health training."

"At my school, the onus is on you to find the help you need. That's not good."

POSITIVE

"The crew I have encountered have been very supportive, and they encourage me to do things step by step, this keeps it from being too overwhelming."

"We need help so we can spot if we have mental health issues and get help from the get-go."

"I do feel stress but most of the time I manage it."

On bullying and harassment

POSITIVE

“When a fellow cadet was harassed, the company stepped in, gave her counselling and dismissed the officer.”

“We need clear and respectful communication on board and we need to set boundaries.”

“We now get training and are told to speak up.”

“We need senior officers to act as our mentors, not bullies.”

NEGATIVE

“I have heard that harassment of female cadets is very common.”

“I had prepared myself before going on board, but there are things you can't prepare for, like a retaliation culture.”

“I heard about and have experienced bullying and harassment at sea myself, and in some cases, they were handled poorly. That does leave an effect on the crew.”

“It's hard. If you have a complaint about someone senior to you, you are stuck with them for the next three months.”

“It's hard when you are at sea because you are so isolated.”

“There is always that fear that if I mess this up, I am going to get all the terrible jobs.”

“I think cadets don't report bullying and harassment because we don't know who to go to.”

“I've heard when you report it, it's brushed off as ship-life, or the life of a cadet, so why bother?”

“It takes a lot of courage to report someone superior to you.”



SECTION 1:

Digital life and social pressure

Why this matters

The rise of smartphones, social media, and constant connectivity has added new dimensions to the lives of today's cadets, trainees and ratings while they are at sea. Now, for the first time, we have the data that allows us to see how this digital life is re-shaping mental health, wellbeing and community for maritime.

We know from published research* that social media plays a dual role in the lives of young people. While it can provide sources of support, it can also shape wellbeing risks.

Platforms encourage selective self-presentation and upward comparison, creating pressure to appear happy and successful, even when this is not an accurate reflection of everyday experience. And the research shows that these dynamics are linked to increased self-monitoring, anxiety and depression, especially among adolescents and young adults who are establishing their identity and sense of competence.

For many, the expectation to perform with confidence or achieve success online becomes intertwined with academic or career aspirations.

At the same time, social media can provide valuable sources of belonging, support and connection. Researchers have shown that when used actively and relationally, it enables individuals - particularly those who are geographically separated - to maintain meaningful relationships, access encouragement, and reduce feelings of isolation.

For companies employing young seafarers, these dynamics matter because social media is where much of this generation's identity, stress and support is negotiated. Positive digital engagement can help maintain morale and resilience at sea, while unmanaged pressures can compound isolation and undermine wellbeing.

Awareness of these patterns can inform policies, wellbeing programmes and communication strategies that support retention, performance and mental health in a digitally native workforce.



Johan Smith
Head of Wellness, Sailors' Society

*Joshanloo, 2025; Keles et al., 2020

Khalaf et al., 2023; Le Blanc-Brillon et al., 2025

Yue and Meng, 2023; Zsila et al., 2023; Oldenkamp, 2024).

The data

Social media: Inspiration vs. pressure

We asked: Do you feel pressure to appear happy or successful on social media?

Region	Strongly	Sometimes	No pressure
Indian subcontinent	4%	31%	65%
Africa	7%	43%	50%
South East Asia	20%	58%	22%
UK and Europe	13%	35%	52%
China	10%	73%	17%

83% of Chinese and **78%** of South East Asian cadets, ratings and trainees felt some kind of pressure to appear happy and successful on social media.

Just **35%** of those from the Indian subcontinent.

Device use, 'addiction' and stress

We asked: How many hours do you spend online each day?



Region	Less than 1 hr	1 - 2 hrs	3 - 4 hrs	5 - 6 hrs	More than 6 hrs
Indian subcontinent	18.1%	54.3%	23.2%	3.7%	0.7%
Africa	31%	45%	17%	3%	4%
South East Asia	7%	23%	37%	20%	13%
UK and Europe	4%	21%	54%	12%	9%
China	28%	27%	31%	8%	6%

We asked: Have you ever felt addicted to your phone or digital devices?

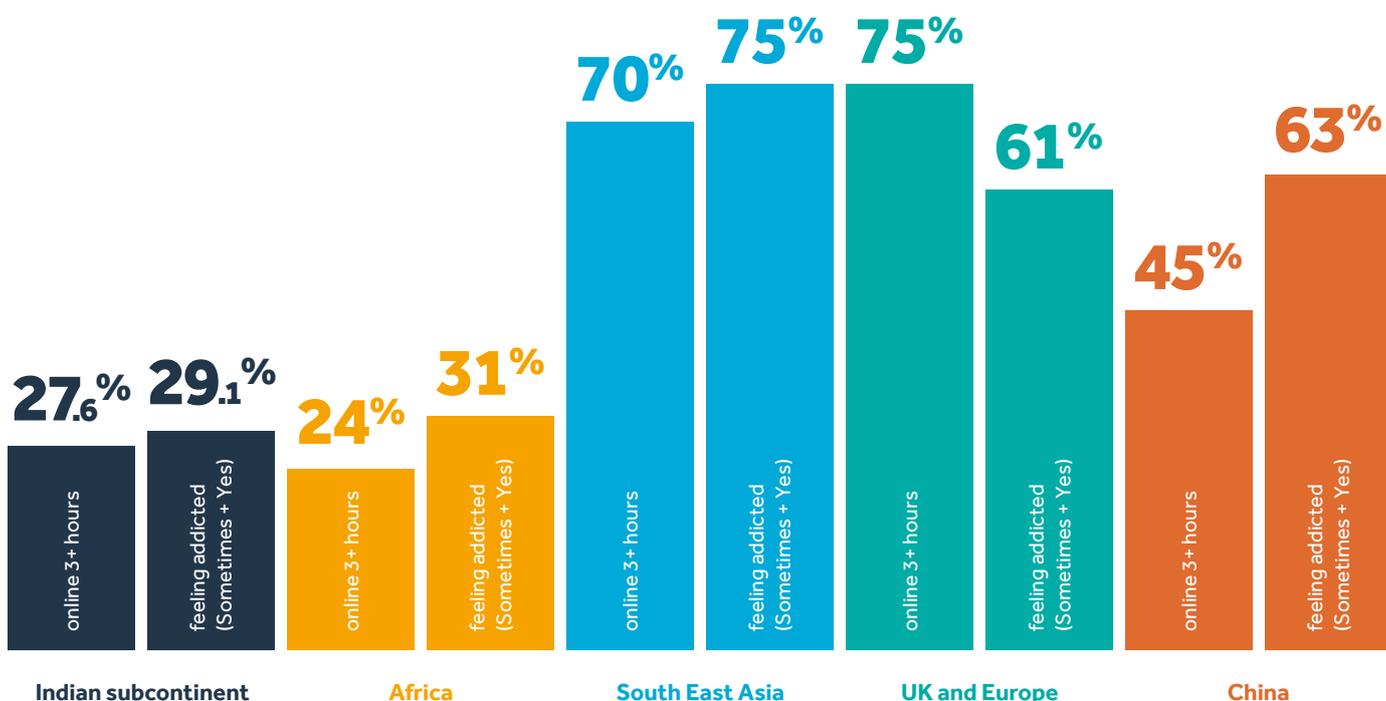
Region	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often
Indian subcontinent	42.1%	28.8%	25.4%	3.7%
Africa	37%	32%	27%	4%
South East Asia	7%	18%	59%	16%
UK and Europe	19%	20%	45%	16%
China	15%	23%	52%	10%



While it is important to recognise that all these findings are based on self-reporting, which carries potential biases in terms of recall and perception and so may not perfectly reflect actual screen time or addiction levels, these results still reveal meaningful patterns in digital behaviour across regions.

We see higher reported addiction in regions reflecting more time online, and those regions where cadets, trainees and ratings report low screen time also report low addiction levels.

This is especially visible in South East Asia and UK and Europe, where large proportions spend more than three hours online, and these regions also show the highest "Yes – very often" addiction rates. It is also the case that there are no areas where low hours online correlate to feelings of addiction.



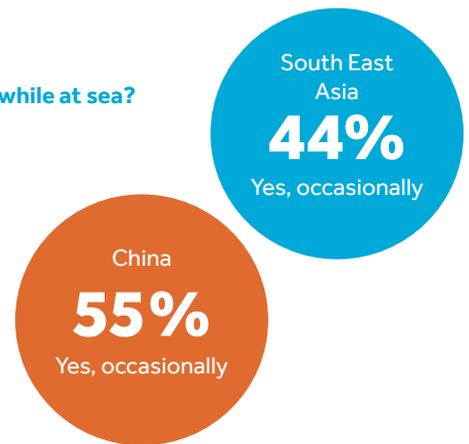
Percentages may add up to more than 100% if respondents selected multiple answers.

The data suggests an association between lower screen time and lower reported addiction. However, feelings of addiction may be linked to a range of social factors, such as pressure, FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) and competitive environments, not just time spent online.

Cyberbullying and online harassment

We asked active seafarers: Have online interactions ever caused you stress or anxiety while at sea?

Region	Yes, frequently	Yes, occasionally	No, never
Indian subcontinent	5%	15%	80%
Africa	2%	18%	80%
South East Asia	17%	44%	39%
UK and Europe	4%	31%	65%
China	12%	55%	33%



More than half of both South East Asian and Chinese seafarers polled said they felt stress and anxiety linked to social media interactions.

We asked: Have you witnessed or experienced cyberbullying or negative behaviour online?

Region	Yes, I've experienced it	Yes, I've seen it happen to others	No	Not sure
Indian subcontinent	3%	21%	71%	5%
Africa	6%	22%	60%	12%
South East Asia	13%	37%	44%	6%
UK and Europe	13%	40%	39%	8%
China	11%	26%	47%	16%

More than **50%** of UK, European and South East Asian seafarers had experienced or seen others experience cyberbullying or negative online behaviour.

We asked: How does access to the internet affect your mental wellbeing?

Region	Very positively	Somewhat positively	Neutral	Somewhat negatively	Very negatively
Indian subcontinent	25%	24%	48%	2%	1%
Africa	21%	29%	41%	7%	2%
South East Asia	19%	34%	44%	2%	1%
UK and Europe	28%	26%	42%	3%	1%
China	17%	32%	43%	7%	1%

Regional breakdown

India subcontinent

LOW RISK HIGH POSITIVITY MODERATE USE



KEY PATTERNS

- **Moderate screen time** (27.6% spend 3+ hours)
- **Lowest perceived addiction** (29.1%)
- **Low stress** (5% frequent; 15% occasional)
- **Lowest bullying exposure** (3% experienced; 20% witnessed)
- **Highest positive mental wellbeing** (25% very positive)

This region stands out as digitally resilient and psychologically stable, despite moderate connectivity.

Africa

LOW ENGAGEMENT LOW RISK LOW IMPACT



KEY PATTERNS

- **Lowest screen time** (24% spend 3+ hours)
- **Low perceived addiction** (31%)
- **Very low stress** (2% frequent; 18% occasional)
- **Low bullying exposure** (6% experienced)
- **Mental wellbeing largely neutral**

Internet use here is functional rather than emotional. It neither strongly harms nor strongly improves wellbeing.

South East Asia

HIGH ENGAGEMENT

HIGH VULNERABILITY



KEY PATTERNS

- **High screen time** (70% spend 3+ hours daily)
- **Highest perceived addiction** (75% feel some addiction)
- **Highest stress from online interactions** (17% frequently; 44% occasionally)
- **Highest exposure to cyberbullying** (13% experienced; 37% witnessed)
- **Mental wellbeing is mixed:** strong positive/neutral feelings, despite pressure

This region shows **the most consistent risk profile** across all digital indicators.

UK and Europe

HIGH ENGAGEMENT

HIGH AWARENESS

MODERATE DISTRESS



KEY PATTERNS

- **High screen time** (71% spend 3+ hours daily)
- **High perceived addiction** (70% report feeling some level of addiction)
- **Lower stress** (4% frequently; 22% occasionally)
- **Relatively low exposure to cyberbullying** (5% experienced; 9% witnessed)
- **Mental wellbeing largely stable despite heavy connectivity**

This region shows **high digital engagement but comparatively lower psychological risk**, suggesting that usage alone does not automatically translate into poorer wellbeing outcomes.

China

HIGH ENGAGEMENT

HIGH AMBIGUITY

RISING DISTRESS



KEY PATTERNS

- **Moderate-high screen time** (45% spend 3+ hours)
- **High perceived addiction** (63%)
- **High stress** (12% frequent; 55% occasional)
- **Moderate bullying exposure**, with high "not sure" (16%)
- **Mental wellbeing mainly neutral**

This region reveals a strong cultural reluctance to classify negative behaviours as harassment.

Thoughts from the 2025 Wellness at Sea Conferences industry panel



Jacob Damgaard
Head of Loss
Prevention - Britannia P&I



**Captain (Dr) Shashank
Jahagirdar**
Managing Director/
Country Head in India -
MTM Ship Management



Captain Pritam Nihalani
Senior Manager, Fleet
Personnel - Seaspan Ship
Management

Reflecting wellbeing over the past decades and the impact of connectivity

How things have changed:

Shashank:

If we go 35 years back, to be honest, mental welfare wasn't heard of, but life was simple because the technology was simple. But we did sail for 10/12 months, and, while at sea, the crew was our family. Things have drastically changed. Technology is good and bad. Today, we hear challenges and concerns from our vessels much more than how it was during our time.

Jacob:

Today's masters have soft skills; those I sailed with had zero soft skills. If you had emotional distress, there was no one to talk to. Cadets are here to learn, and everyone makes mistakes. In the past, there was less understanding, now masters have those soft skills. If I were a master, I would be happy for someone to come to me with a personal issue. That they trust me shows that, as a leader, I am doing something right.

Pritam:

The shipping industry has vastly changed. When I joined, I used to call up my family once a week for two minutes. Now we have the privilege of being in touch anytime we wish. The nature of the work of seafarers has drastically changed. Today, seafarers are IT experts. But at the same time, our expectations have risen in terms of safety and compliance. For younger cadets, it is now a niche career. There is a shortage of officers; by 2030, we will be 100,000 officers short.

Jacob:

There has been a lot of positive change in the industry. The pandemic highlighted the issues with wellbeing. I see lots of positive steps from shipping companies today. The internet has enabled closer contact with family. But with increased connectivity, there needs to be a balance between how much time you spend talking with family back home and committing to the social life on board because it is your home for months.

Issues with connectivity:

Pritam:

At sea, we are keen to ensure our seafarers have a safe environment. One of the biggest concerns we have is the lack of situational awareness. Almost 90% of accidents are due to being distracted. There is a direct role connectivity plays in the lack of situational awareness. We need to make sure we are able to draw the line clearly and help people to filter away distractions so they can focus. When a person is an officer of the watch being distracted by a mobile phone, that's a very big risk for us, for the cargo and the 22 lives on board.

Shashank:

We know that many companies ban mobile phones from the bridge to prevent this. We also see seafarers deprived of sleep because they have spent too long online. Also, when something goes wrong at home, cadets don't know how to deal with it while on board. We tell family to be selective and not share everything with those on board.

Jacob:

The family play a big role. Because you can speak to your family every day, this makes you feel close, but you are miles away, and although you do get to hear everything, you can't help. This brings its own frustrations. So, yes, families do need to keep some things back, and that way crew don't become distracted.

Authentic human connection:

Jacob:

Connectivity is here to remain, and it needs to be there if you want to attract young people. But it is trying to strike that right balance on board. Increased connectivity means human connection may be through a screen, but simple things like sitting down with fellow crew for a BBQ or to play ping-pong make such a big difference. You need human interaction.

Shashank:

We encourage mentorship. This isn't just about being a good officer; it is also about mental wellness. We also encourage social life on board, it makes a big difference to mental wellbeing. We regularly connect with our vessels to check on the social life on board. We even encourage them to watch movies together, instead of watching alone in their cabin. We stress they remain connected with each other.

Pritam:

You have an opportunity to mix with a global set of seafarers. You get to learn from different nationalities, not only knowledge and culture, but a completely new perspective. Each nationality has its own strengths, each person has their own strengths, so it can be so enriching, if you look up from your phone.



Shifting digital life from a source of pressure to a source of connection

10 suggestions for the maritime industry.

1 Train officers in digital-era leadership and psychosocial risks

- Provide short, repeatable micro-learning for Masters/senior officers on:
 - digital stress and comparison
 - emotional impact of online validation
 - recognising withdrawal, anxiety, and low morale
- Include digital wellbeing in leadership competencies and promotions.

Why it matters

Management often haven't lived the digital experience of cadets and ratings; they need toolkits to recognise and respond appropriately.

2 Provide alternative and safe peer support channels

- Create moderated WhatsApp/Signal groups that are functional, not performative
- Build internal "community spaces" that prioritise connection, not curation
- Deliver confidential peer support groups (on/offline)

Why it matters

Social media pressures arise because identity is "performed" publicly. Private spaces reduce that dynamic.

3 Audit on board connectivity and bandwidth policy for mental health impact

- Map when/how connectivity is most used
- Encourage "connection windows" around shift patterns rather than offer unlimited access
- Prioritise low-stress usage patterns (voice/video with family) vs scrolling

Practical example

WhatsApp video access 18:00–20:00
 > high positive wellbeing
 Unlimited TikTok scrolling from cabin
 > sleep disruption, stress, comparison

Why it matters

Connectivity is not neutral - it shapes behaviour.

4 Integrate digital wellbeing in pre-departure and induction training

- Understanding online pressure and comparison
 - Sleep hygiene and screen behaviours
 - Recognising emotional triggers
 - Building healthier digital habits
 - Balancing online/offline identities
- Why it matters**
 Cadets don't need lectures - they need skills and language.

5 Run proactive mental health pulse-checks linked to digital stress

- Give seafarers a micro-survey tool where they can monitor their digital stress and behaviour.
 - "Is social media affecting your sleep, mood, or morale?"
 - Ask specifically:
 - "Do you feel pressure to appear happy/successful online?"
- Why it matters**
 Social media pressures arise because identity is "performed" publicly. Private spaces reduce that dynamic.

6 Equip wellness officers or champions to spot early warning signs

- Train Sea Mate/Peer-Leaders to look for:
 - increased isolation
 - irritability
 - obsessive phone use
 - comparison statements ("everyone is doing better than me")
- Provide micro-interventions

Why it matters

Social media pressure often shows up as silent emotional drift, not crisis.

7 Normalise realistic communication and reduce performance pressure

- Actively discourage "perfect image" narratives in corporate messaging (recruitment campaigns, newsletters, social feeds).
- Highlight real stories with nuance-failures, learning curves, challenge and recovery.

Why it matters

Young seafarers are interpreting "success" as something they must display, not just pursue.

8 Create positive corporate content that models healthy identity

Instead of: "Be the best, be number one, showcase your success!"

Use

- effort
- growth
- teamwork
- resilience
- learning

Concrete outputs

- short "real-life" crew profiles
- highlight coping strategies, not only achievements
- celebrate collective wins, not individual status markers

9 Set clear expectations around privacy and digital etiquette on board

Policy items to include:

- permission before posting crew photos
- no posting during safety-critical times
- no crew shaming, mockery or comparison content
- supervisor modelling of healthy behaviour

Why it matters

Fear of being posted without consent is a stressor.

10 Integrate digital life into fatigue risk management systems

Because:

- late-night scrolling > sleep debt
- sleep debt > risk and incident probability

What to do

- include screen-use questions in fatigue checks
- build sleep interventions around digital triggers

Key insight - identity pressures

Young seafarers are not just using digital platforms - they are building identities on them.

And identity pressure drives:

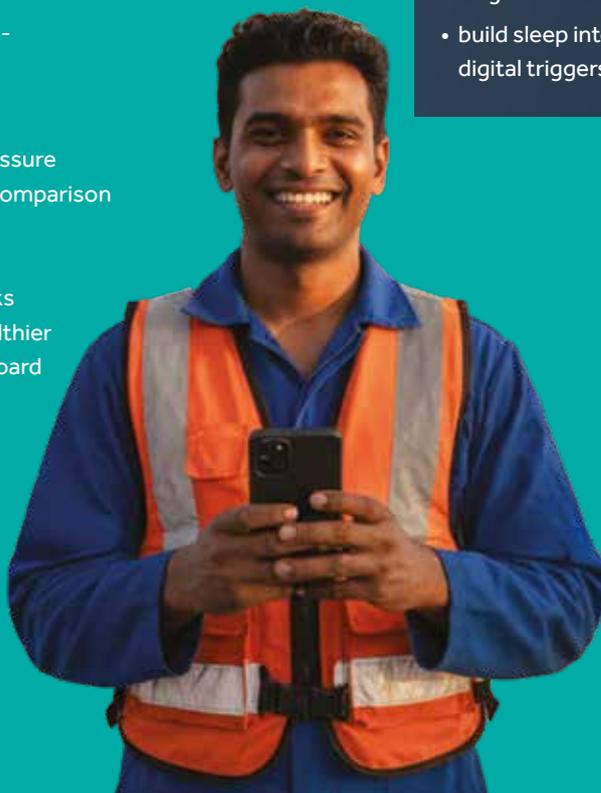
- emotional fatigue
- self-comparison
- status anxiety
- reduced self-esteem

Which are all risk factors for mental health and safety in confined, high-stress environments.

Shipping companies don't need to remove social media - they need to change the environment around it.

The goal is to:

- reduce identity pressure
- reduce unhealthy comparison
- build safer spaces
- upskill leaders
- track emerging risks
- and promote a healthier digital culture on board



SECTION 2:

Mental health and trauma at sea

Why this matters

Seafaring remains a demanding career, marked by long contracts, separation from family, and high responsibility at a young age. While welfare organisations and training schools have improved awareness of mental health over the past decade, the question for this generation is different: do cadets, trainees, and ratings feel personally prepared to cope with the psychological challenges they will face at sea?

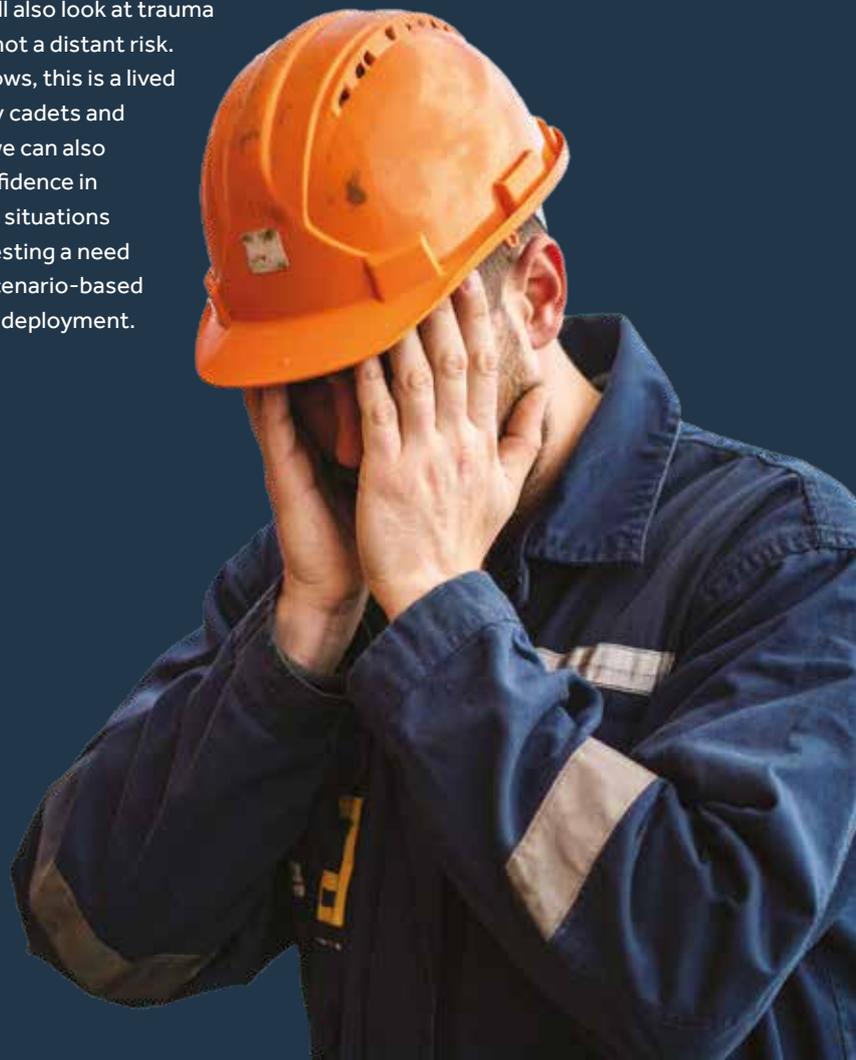
The following data gives a clear insight into their concerns, their knowledge and ability to cope with the pressures that face them and who they turn to for support.

It reveals that awareness of mental health issues has grown since we gathered our 24/25 data and this may be in some part down to the inclusion of mental health awareness in the curriculums of more training institutions.

But it is clear that confidence in personal coping skills remains uneven. And so many seafarers still enter the industry without feeling equipped to manage stress, isolation, or crises.

What is also clear from the data is that many of the new generation of seafarers will turn to social media and internet platforms for information about mental health strategies and are relying more and more on their peers for support.

This section will also look at trauma at sea. This is not a distant risk. As the data shows, this is a lived reality for many cadets and trainees. And we can also reveal that confidence in managing such situations is mixed, suggesting a need for practical, scenario-based training before deployment.



The data

Self-assessed readiness

We asked: How prepared do you feel to handle mental health challenges at sea?

Region	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not prepared	Not sure
Indian subcontinent	58%	36%	4%	2%
Africa	61%	34%	2%	3%
South East Asia	27%	60%	9%	4%
UK and Europe	23%	66%	10%	1%
China	42%	45%	7%	6%



We asked: How confident are you in managing stress?

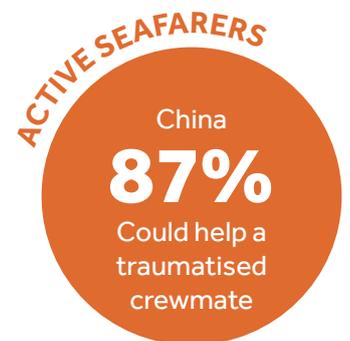
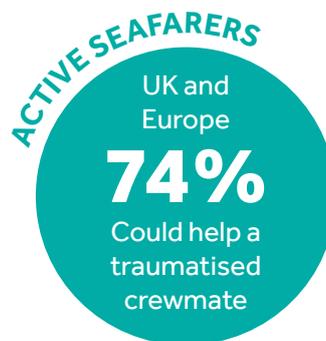
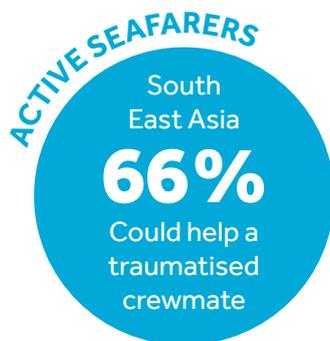
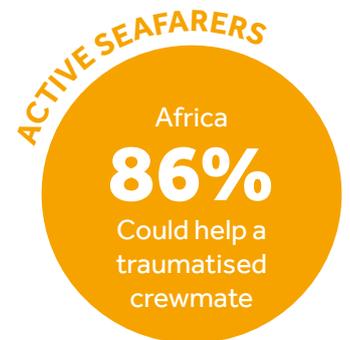
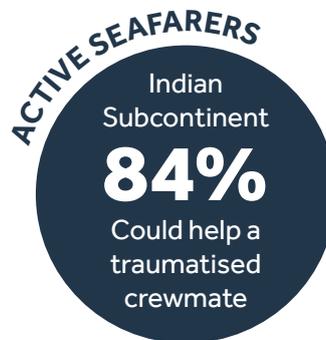
Region	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not very confident	Not confident at all
Indian subcontinent	64%	31%	4%	1%
Africa	73%	25%	2%	0%
South East Asia	27%	61%	11%	1%
UK and Europe	24%	62%	14%	0%
China	22%	65%	10%	3%

We asked: Would you feel confident supporting a crew mate who shows signs of poor mental health?

Region	Yes, I feel equipped	Somewhat, but I need more training	I wouldn't know what to do	No, it's not my responsibility
Indian subcontinent	72%	22%	3%	3%
Africa	68%	29%	2%	1%
South East Asia	59%	36%	4%	1%
UK and Europe	40%	48%	10%	2%
China	34%	46%	13%	7%

We asked: Do you know what to do if someone is traumatised or has a breakdown at sea?

Region		Yes, I am very clear on the steps	Somewhat, I know the basics	No, I have no idea	It's not my job
Indian subcontinent	Not been to sea	18%	53%	28%	1%
	Active seafarers	25%	59%	16%	0%
Africa	Not been to sea	20%	43%	35%	2%
	Active seafarers	14%	72%	14%	0%
South East Asia	Not been to sea	13%	54%	31%	2%
	Active seafarers	14%	52%	34%	0%
UK and Europe	Not been to sea	10%	40%	50%	0%
	Active seafarers	17%	57%	21%	5%
China	Not been to sea	19%	75%	6%	0%
	Active seafarers	19%	68%	11%	2%



The hidden impact of bullying and harassment

Extract from Dr. Monique Rizza R.Mendoza's presentation to the 2025 Wellness at Sea Conferences.

There is one case I encountered, from among thousands, that I can never forget.

A young male cadet reached out with multiple bruises and broken ribs. At first, he said it was from an accidental fall, but his voice began to tremble when the truth slowly came out. It was his own Captain; he did it because he refused his sexual advances.

He said he was so afraid to report the Captain because it might end his career before it even began. He also wasn't sure his company would believe him. He was also too ashamed to let his family know. He carried the pain in silence until he could no longer bear it at all.

This story is about the hidden trauma of harassment at sea. When the very people who are supposed to guide you and protect you become the ones who wound you, the question becomes 'where do we turn to then?'

It shows us how fear, shame and power balance can silence someone. But silence protects the abuser, never the victim.

And trauma isn't always this visible, sometimes its scars are invisible - caused by humiliation, harassment and threats. This leads to loss of confidence, isolation, sleepless nights and anxiety. And the effects don't end when the voyage does. They follow seafarers home, in their mental health, relationships and even their decision to leave maritime.

For the younger generation who value inclusivity and mental health, this conversation is really vital. Especially as they are stepping into a world where old traditions of toughness, hierarchy and survival sometimes collide with these new values.

There is a generational gap we are seeing more each year and if we don't talk about these realities, the toxic cycle just continues.

But together we can break it.

We need actions that lead to a new maritime culture. We need to **CARE**.

C is for communicating. Silence can be misinterpreted as compliance, while clarity prevents conflict, and respectful words can build bridges and prevent bigger problems. The second is **A** – ask. And do so with humility. This means being open to growth and mentorship. **R** is for respect. Boundaries don't break relationships, they protect them and respecting of boundaries must go both ways. **E** is for empowerment. Encouraging peers to speak up, using the wellness tool available and protecting each other from harm.

Today's cadets may be young now, but they will be future leaders. The culture they practise today will be the culture they pass on as Captains. It is what the next generation will inherit.

Together, we are not just protecting today, we are shaping tomorrow.



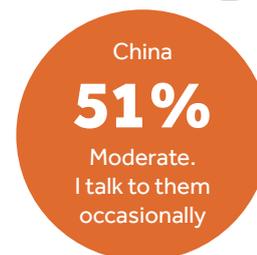
Dr. Monique Rizza R.Mendoza
Nordic Medical Clinic

Dr Mendoza is a certified Maritime Physician, working as Telemedicine Manager at the Nordic Medical Clinic in the Philippines. She has qualifications from authorities such as Panama, Malaysia, Netherland Shipping Inspectorate and OEUK. She leads the team of doctors and allied health professionals providing both medical and psychological assistance to seafarers and shore employees.

Sources of help

We asked: How strong is your support system from family and close friends?

Region	Very strong. I can rely on them any time	Moderate. I talk to them occasionally	Weak. I don't speak to them often	Non-existent
Indian subcontinent	79%	20%	1%	0%
Africa	59%	38%	3%	0%
South East Asia	68%	28%	4%	1%
UK and Europe	64%	34%	2%	0%
China	42%	51%	7%	0%



We asked: If you feel your mental health is under threat, please rank the following sources of support in the order you would most likely turn to them:

Indian subcontinent

- 1 Maritime instructors or mentors
- 2 A peer support group
- 3 Phone a helpline
- 4 A helpline chat service
- 5 Online resources (eg. mental health apps, websites)
- 6 Religious or spiritual support

Africa

- 1 Religious or spiritual support
- 2 Maritime instructors or mentors
- 3 A peer support group
- 4 Online resources (eg. mental health apps, websites)
- 5 A helpline chat service
- 6 Phone a helpline

Peer-to-Peer Groups are rapidly becoming one of the main support structures for the new generation of seafarers

South East Asia

- 1 Maritime instructors or mentors
- 2 Religious or spiritual support
- 3 A peer support group
- 4 Online resources (eg. mental health apps, websites)
- 5 Phone a helpline
- 6 A helpline chat service

UK and Europe

- 1 A peer support group
- 2 Maritime instructors or mentors
- 3 Online resources (eg. mental health apps, websites)
- 4 A helpline chat service
- 5 Phone a helpline
- 6 Religious or spiritual support

China

- 1 Maritime instructors or mentors
- 2 Online resources (eg. mental health apps, websites)
- 3 A helpline chat service
- 4 A peer support group
- 5 Phone a helpline
- 6 Religious or spiritual support



We asked: When feeling mentally unwell, which digital resource are you most likely to use first?

Indian subcontinent

5%

Mental health app/website

13%

Social media

10%

Helpline chat/call service

49%

YouTube/music

23%

I don't use digital tools

49%

YouTube/music

Africa

21%

Mental health app/website

8%

Social media

15%

Helpline chat/call service

41%

YouTube/music

15%

I don't use digital tools

41%

YouTube/music

South East Asia

18%

Mental health app/website

32%

Social media

8%

Helpline chat/call service

37%

YouTube/music

6%

I don't use digital tools

37%

YouTube/music

UK and Europe

0%

Mental health app/website

21%

Social media

5%

Helpline chat/call service

54%

YouTube/music

20%

I don't use digital tools

54%

YouTube/music

China

11%

Mental health app/website

36%

Social media

15%

Helpline chat/call service

37%

YouTube/music

1%

I don't use digital tools

37%

YouTube/music

Across the board, the majority of this generation of seafarers would use social media and the YouTube platform as their first port of call if they felt mentally unwell.

Key Insight: Peer Support Groups - a practical and preferred first line of help

We asked: Have you ever participated in a peer support group?

Region	Yes, and it was helpful	Yes, and it was not helpful	No, but would be interested	No, I am not interested
Indian subcontinent	36%	4%	45%	15%
Africa	40%	4%	52%	4%
South East Asia	41%	10%	41%	8%
UK and Europe	10%	4%	42%	44%
China	24%	16%	44%	16%

The evidence shows that young seafarers are not only willing to ask for help from friends and colleagues but are also increasingly confident in offering support to others.

This shift marks a step beyond awareness.

Last year's report emphasised the need for cadets to know where help could be found. These 2025/26 findings demonstrate that peer support has become a practical and preferred route for mental health assistance for this new generation of seafarers.

As the data shows, peers are the first and most trusted source of help above professional services and formal welfare channels, and the industry and training institutions should now seek ways to formalise and strengthen these peer networks.

Sailors' Society has built one of the largest peer support networks in the maritime industry, with more than 250 groups and thousands of active members worldwide. Alongside this, its revolutionary Sea Mate programme brings an extra level of peer support from trained wellness officers on board vessels.

These give those making their career at sea the tools and confidence to support one another effectively, while ensuring clear pathways to escalate when professional help is required.

The success of these initiatives shows that even in the most dispersed and demanding industries, meaningful connection is not only possible but essential and that peer support is not just a concept, it is a proven, scalable model already making a difference at sea.

The cadets, trainees, and ratings who were polled for this 2025/2026 report consistently pointed to peer support as a central part of their coping strategies.

TRIED AND TESTED

SAILORS' SOCIETY PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT GROUPS



Our confidential Peer-to-Peer Support Groups support individual wellbeing and foster an inclusive community that transcends geography, rank, culture, and ship type.

When individuals who understand each other's context come together, they build trust more rapidly, communicate more openly, and validate each other's struggles. For seafarers, this matters deeply. The maritime environment comes with pressures that are difficult for even close family members to fully grasp.

Sailors' Society's Peer-to-Peer Support Groups change that dynamic by bringing seafarers together in safe spaces, to speak freely, listen actively, and draw strength from one another. And should they need more help, our moderators are on hand to offer advice and help with any extra support needed, financial or emotional.

Participants say the groups become a constant anchor, developing relationships that endure beyond a single voyage.

Whether a seafarer is currently at sea, waiting or recently returned home, the peer-to-peer model ensures they remain connected to others who understand them. For them, the journey of seafaring is no longer something navigated alone, but something shared and understood.

Sailors' Society offers groups for:

- All seafarers
- Female only
- LGBTQ+
- Cadets
- Captains
- Pilots
- Families
- Those caught up in the Ukrainian conflict



250+
groups

3,500+
group members

8,000+
interactions in groups
in 2025

sailors-society.org/p2p



TRIED AND TESTED SAILORS' SOCIETY SEA MATE PROGRAMME



As crews spend less time in port and more time at sea, it is vital that seafarers get the support they need whenever and wherever they need it.

Sailors' Society's Sea Mate programme gives seafarers something they've not had at sea before - trained wellbeing support from their peers.

The programme creates Wellness Officers, crew members who genuinely understand life on board but have been equipped to offer psychological and emotional support while at sea.

With bespoke training provided by the charity's global team, Sea Mate trains these key support figures to provide crew members with someone to talk to – someone trained in wellbeing expertise, and someone directly connected to Sailors' Society's crisis response team for immediate assistance when needed.

Through expert-led guidance, ongoing mentorship, and a strong peer support network of its own, Sea Mate ensures long-term impact, fostering resilience, teamwork, and wellbeing at sea.

sailors-society.org/sea-mate

100%

of participants felt the training content was very relevant to their role

82%

said the training had improved their confidence in handling emotional support and crisis situations



SECTION 3:

Safety, rights and reporting

Why this matters

A safe and fair workplace is the foundation of a sustainable maritime career. Yet, for cadets, trainees, and ratings just entering the industry, safety and rights are often areas of uncertainty. While technical and operational training is thorough, the evidence shows that legal literacy, reporting confidence, and awareness of rights remain patchy.

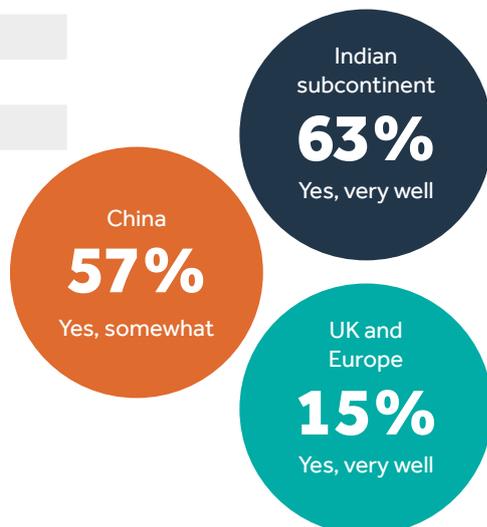
This year's findings provide a clearer picture of how prepared young seafarers are to protect themselves and their colleagues.

The data

Awareness of maritime law and rights

We asked: Do you know your rights as a seafarer under maritime law?

Region	Yes, very well	Yes, somewhat	Not really	No, not at all
Indian subcontinent	63%	28%	8%	1%
Africa	50%	33%	16%	1%
South East Asia	38%	44%	14%	4%
UK and Europe	15%	57%	24%	4%
China	29%	57%	11%	3%



Confidence to report harassment and safety concerns

We asked: If you experienced bullying or harassment, would you feel safe to report it?

Region	Yes, definitely	Maybe	No, I am afraid of retaliation	No, I don't think anything would be done
Indian subcontinent	72%	17%	6%	5%
Africa	69%	24%	4%	3%
South East Asia	57%	26%	9%	8%
UK and Europe	43%	34%	14%	9%
China	52%	33%	12%	3%



Regional breakdown

Indian subcontinent and Africa Legal awareness and reporting confidence

The data shows that the next generation of seafarers from the Indian subcontinent have the highest levels of rights awareness and the highest confidence to report harassment and safety concerns.

This suggests that legal literacy is a protective factor: where cadets understand their rights, they are more likely to believe they can act on them.

The cadets, ratings and trainees from Africa join India in having strong levels of awareness when it comes to rights. They also reveal high levels of confidence when it comes to feeling able to report issues like harassment and safety.



INSIGHT:
Training that links rights to practical reporting pathways appears to strengthen confidence, not just knowledge.

South East Asia

Sitting consistently in the middle - but with a warning signal

The cadets, trainees and ratings from this region have moderate awareness of rights, but a non-trivial fear of retaliation and belief that reporting is ineffective.

This mirrors patterns seen in hierarchical or contract-dependent labour environments.

INSIGHT:

This is a region where reporting mechanisms exist, but psychological safety is fragile.



UK and Europe

Showing the weakest overall profile across both datasets

This new generation of UK and European seafarers had the lowest "very well" rights awareness, as well as the lowest "definitely would report" confidence.

They also had the highest combined scepticism: fear of retaliation and belief that nothing would be done.

INSIGHT:

Familiarity with formal systems does not equal trust in them. Young seafarers in the UK and Europe appear more cynical about outcomes, not less informed.



China

A strong knowledge base, but more hesitation in action

China has relatively low "not at all" awareness of rights, yet a noticeably higher proportion who fear retaliation compared to Africa and India.

Reporting hesitation is driven less by ignorance and more by perceived consequences.



INSIGHT:

In some contexts, the barrier is not "Do I know my rights?" but "What will happen if I use them?"

Across all regions

A small but critical minority feel unsafe everywhere

A consistent 7–23% (depending on region) either fear retaliation or believe reporting is pointless.

INSIGHT:

Even in the best-performing regions, there is a persistent group for whom formal policies are not enough - they need trusted, informal, or third-party reporting options.



A lived experience

Extract from Sailors' Society's State of the Industry Snapshot on Bullying and Harassment.

Being asked to contribute to this important Snapshot means a lot to me. I can share the lifelong impact of being on the receiving end of bullying.

It is the first time I have publicly spoken about this, but I wish to thank Johan Smith for convincing me to articulate the life-changing effects that this issue can have.

I speak with lived experience. I was bullied as a cadet at sea. The experience had a negative impact at the time and should have affected me even more badly than it did, but I have been able to turn that negative experience into a longer-term positive.

At the time, it was seen by some as part of the ritual of training, part of the process which was considered the norm. It should not have been. I was a young and impressionable individual on board a ship with nowhere to go other than a tiny six-berth cabin. What I now know is that to have been bullied by those in positions of power undoubtedly impacted my life.

But I refuse to see myself as a victim. Instead, this damaging experience has defined my outlook to ensure that I seek justice for those who cannot speak up for themselves. It has given me the moral courage to step in at whatever cost and to never walk past bullying and harassment in any guise.

Today, the impact of what happened in my earliest adult years at sea has driven me to become a more compassionate

person. It led me to create the charity and advocacy platform, 'Human Rights at Sea', dealing with the very topic of the protection of human rights of people at sea. It led me to become a lawyer in the maritime human rights field, a founder and a CEO in civil society organisations, and now to investigate abuses of others within a dedicated team.

It also provided me with the experience to be able to be a mentor for the next generation, enabling them to be better aware of what conduct is acceptable and what is not. It has enabled shared empathy. It has enabled the strength to challenge when it seems you are one of the few voices. I hope it has made me a better parent.

However, bullying and harassment undermine personal confidence, prevent the full development of the person, can take an individual down the road of substance abuse and self-harm and, at worst, lead to considerations of suicide.

At 53, I am not a 'snowflake' as some may describe those who speak about their personal challenges. I have had a demanding and exciting career in the military, have seen the world, have experienced the worst and best in people, and lived alongside humanity in action both at sea and on land.

What happens in our formative years and later on does shape our lives and the lives of those closest to us. It is, therefore, up to all of us to ensure that, where we

can, we step in when necessary to help positively shape the lives of others. Sometimes, the simplest action of genuinely asking the question "how are you?" could make the difference.

My lessons learned - do not walk by nor turn your head if you can step in when matters are not right. You could, quite literally, save someone's life.



David Hammond AFNI
Executive Director,
Human Rights at Sea International

David Hammond is the founder and President of the NGO Human Rights at Sea and Executive Director of Human Rights at Sea International, a global non-profit civil society catalyst driving necessary change through policy and legislative development for improved human rights protections at sea.

Key insight:

Safety, rights and reporting

The data collected from the cadets, trainees and ratings that attended our 2025 Wellness at Sea Conferences shows that while many young seafarers are aware of their rights, confidence in using them is uneven.

Across regions, a consistent minority fear retaliation or doubt that reporting will lead to action, revealing a gap between policy and practice.

When combined, the data shows:

- Knowledge gaps are narrowing
- Confidence gaps are wider and more uneven
- Trust in outcomes is the weakest link; in other words, young seafarers increasingly know what their rights are, but many are still unsure whether exercising those rights will protect them or put them at risk.

The real issue here is not ignorance; it is confidence erosion.

The industry has made progress in educating young seafarers about safety and rights, but has not yet earned consistent trust that reporting will be safe, fair, or effective. The primary challenge for the industry is not awareness, but trust.

For safety and rights frameworks to be effective, reporting systems must be visibly safe, confidential, and credible - especially for those early in their careers.

Cadet, trainee and rating voices

On Peer-to-Peer

"The support system I will need when on board is my family."

"It is easier for me to talk to those of my rank than senior officers."

"Our female cadets' WhatsApp group was a great help."

"We have a buddy system that we set up at college, and that's great."

Cadet advice to cadets

"Trust yourself and reach out if you are struggling."

"Don't feel less just because you are a cadet; your voice has a lot of meaning."

"Understand your own boundaries and that no can be a full sentence."

"Don't accept what you wouldn't accept on land at sea."

"Have your own time and focus on your wellbeing."

On knowing your rights

"Human rights are really important because this industry will die if its people are not protected."

"If our rights aren't protected, then there is nothing to stop us from being treated unfairly."

"Our rights are the most important thing for me."

"By creating a safe and supportive environment, the shipping industry can help young seafarers grow confidently and stay in this career."

CONCLUSION

Forward look - A digital seafarer generation

Our 2025/26 Cadet Report has clearly shown that the next generation of our seafarers is not simply joining the industry – it is reshaping it.

Across 30 countries and the thousands of voices that speak through the data, one message is unmistakable: today's cadets, trainees, and ratings are digitally connected, emotionally aware, and deeply committed to doing meaningful work at sea.

However, the data also reveals that these cadets, ratings, and trainees are navigating pressures that no previous generation has faced.

While the constant social isolation can now be mitigated by connectivity with the opportunity to remain strongly connected to family and friends back home, there is also a downside. This easy connection brings with it a different kind of self-inflicted isolation, the dangers of distraction from the job in hand and the strain of constant online comparison.

All this brings a new level of mental strain to a generation that may display a keen awareness of mental health, but worryingly, also shows deeply uneven levels of confidence and preparedness.

The data also reveals there is clear uncertainty about safety and reporting. While formal systems exist, it is clear that trust in them is very fragile.

Yet, despite all of this, something powerful and positive stands out from our data.

Again and again, the responses show that when seafarers feel seen, heard, and backed by one another, resilience rises and risk falls.

This unique report leaves us in no doubt that the next generation of maritime thrives when their support is human and provided in safe spaces, be that peer networks or positive, strong mentoring.

There is now a golden opportunity for the maritime industry:

- Not simply to provide internet or policies, but to build cultures of care.
- Not simply to react to crises, but to equip young seafarers with the skills, confidence, and community to prevent them.
- Not simply to recruit the next generation, but to truly support them.

If we take nothing else away from this report, we should note one simple and important revelation - the future of safe shipping will not be defined by technology alone; it will be defined by how well we protect, empower, and connect the people at sea.

If we listen to these voices and act decisively, we will not only improve wellbeing at sea, we will shape a stronger, safer, more human maritime industry for decades to come.



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.



WELLNESS AT SEA FUNDERS



TAKE ON A CHALLENGE FOR SAILORS' SOCIETY

From mountains to marathons and cycles, we've got an event for you...



Marathon



Virtual Marathon



Walk



Cycle



Mountain challenge

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

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