



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Negative Turn in Seafarer Happiness

Collaborative industry-wide action is being urged by The Mission to Seafarers, following its Seafarer Happiness Index (SHI) Q1 2023 report revealing a trending decline in overall happiness levels among seafarers.

Whereas seafarers were “relatively satisfied” in the last quarter of 2022 – where a score of 7.69/10 was recorded across a range of issues – sentiment has “since worsened”, stated the organisation.

“The average happiness level of seafarers in Q1 2023 was 7.1, which is lower than the levels recorded in Q2, Q3 and Q4 of 2022,” it stated.

“The Q1 2023 SHI was undertaken with the support of NorthStandard and Idwal, and identifies a return to growing frustrations among respondents, following a period of rising happiness.

“In fact, nine out of ten areas surveyed showed a decrease in happiness levels. Despite an optimistic outlook for improvements to seafarer welfare in 2023, the latest report indicates that these expectations have not yet been met.

“As ever, there is still much room for improvement.”

The only area to have recorded an increase in satisfaction during the quarter was connectivity.

“However, despite the rise in satisfaction, seafarers still reported connectivity issues at sea across different companies, as well as concerns about data allowances, Internet speed and connectivity limitations.”

Shore leave and a desire to access welfare services ashore were noted to have “once more” come to the fore as key areas for concern.

“Seafarers also reported growing frustration with owners who attempt to make seafarers sign on for longer periods than desired, as well as with the delays experienced in sign-off procedures.

“In addition, the challenges of coping with extended periods onboard have reportedly been made harder due to inadequate food provisions, bureaucratic and unnecessary paperwork demands, ineffective shipboard leadership and a sense of social isolation adding to the stress of life onboard.”

Furthermore, the SHI report identified several other challenges facing seafarers, including:

- a growing wellness gap between companies that provide health and wellbeing programmes and those that do not
- access to dental care in some ports but not others
- limited access to mental health support, medical advisory services and physical wellbeing consultations
- concerns about salaries, the cost of living and potential obstacles to career advancement

“Despite the challenges, seafarers recognise the importance of positive onboard interactions for their wellbeing and job satisfaction. However, insufficient entertainment options onboard are making it harder for them to find a reason to come together.

“Therefore, there is a need for improved social activities and shared spaces to encourage crew members to interact. This will not only enhance their overall experience but will also contribute to safer and more efficient operations onboard ships.

“Prioritising crew interactions and relationships is crucial for mutual respect, effective communication, camaraderie and teamwork on every ship.”

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