Suicide and Seafarers

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Contents

Foreword

Seafaring is a rewarding and important career. But it has unique challenges that for too long have gone unnoticed. It can be isolating, with months at sea, cut off from family and friends. This was made only worse by the recent pandemic which saw significant delays in ships able to dock. It's physically demanding work and given crew rotations it can be hard to form essential bonds with others. Finally, add in precarious contracts, poor pay, and inconsistent wellbeing support into the mix and you have all the ingredients for a mental health crisis. This is the context behind the important issue of seafarer suicide at sea, which this report explores.

Despite evidence that mental health and seafarer suicide are serious issues in maritime, the data is patchy. Historically, there hasn't been a single agreed international framework for recording suicides at sea, which has led many to believe that suicides remain underreported. The level of mental health support varies depending on the employer and there is a cultural challenge across the industry in destigmatising mental health. This report is the first step for long overdue change. It has been used to advocate, at the International Labour Organisation, for an international database to record manner and cause of any crew deaths at sea. This is a step towards better understanding of the scale of the problem, which will ultimately allow government and industry to create meaningful change.

But we're going further. Whilst there are many aspects of life at sea that cannot change, this research shows that there is more that can be done to improve seafarer mental health. It's clear there is real desire to see the industry tackle mental health among seafarers in a more holistic and preventative manner. To support these efforts, in July 2022 the MCA will launch the Wellbeing at Sea Tool that provides practical advice for seafarers and helps organisations monitor their employees' overall wellbeing onboard. The MCA has also published two books: 'Wellbeing at Sea: A Guide for Organisations' and 'Wellbeing at Sea: A Pocket Guide for Seafarers', in consultation with unions, ship owners and maritime charities. I am also pleased that this Government has recognised that it's high time that seafarers received fair pay and working conditions. Our nine-point plan will ensure we close loopholes exploited by cynical operators and mandate where necessary to give seafarers the rights and protections they deserve.

Finally, the fact that so many people from across industry, from shipowners and chaplains, to unions and charities, were keen to participate in the research shows willingness across the industry to address this

important issue. And I would like to thank the teams at DfT, MCA and Ipsos, as well as the maritime stakeholders who have been involved with this project. Our seafarers work tirelessly to keep the global economy moving, transporting essential goods to our shores. They are crucial to our national economy and way of life; they deserve our compassion, support and recognition. This report is a welcome start.

Robert Courts MP
Minister for Aviation, Maritime & Security

Executive Summary

Overview of approach

Ipsos was commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to conduct research into the mental health of seafarers and, specifically, suicide among seafarers. The research findings will help fill the gaps in knowledge on this important issue, and feed into the discussions about the mandatory recording of suicide at sea.

In total, 20 in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted between 7th March 2022 and 1st April 2022. Given the sensitive nature of this project, it was decided that seafarers themselves would not be interviewed, as it would be challenging to obtain all the necessary ethical approvals in time and given that it might be distressing for seafarers to discuss the issue of suicide among their colleagues. Instead, participants who work with or have expertise on seafarers were purposively sampled from across the industry. This ensured that a diverse range of perspectives were represented. These included: company representatives / ship owners, shipping management companies, insurers, maritime charities / chaplains, unions, and academics.

Key research findings

Mental health of seafarers

- The occupation was portrayed as extremely challenging, being based in a unique social environment.

- A range of structural issues were seen to impose strain on seafarer's mental wellbeing, including long working hours, isolation, fatigue, and financial instability.

- It was widely felt that COVID-19 has contributed to further strain among seafarers.

- Mental health issues were described as poorly understood, both among seafarers and across the industry more widely.

Mental health support for seafarers

- Larger shipping companies were believed to offer more comprehensive internal mental health support services than smaller companies – services included employee assistance programmes, telephone helplines, and wellbeing days/weeks.

- Participants described chaplains providing mental health support by either making themselves available to talk to seafarers while the seafarer was at sea, or when they arrived at port.

- Unions were described as providing education programmes on seafarers' mental wellbeing and often publicise mental health support services to raise awareness.

- Participants described how charities provide online, telephone, and face-to-face support for seafarers.

- Not all seafarers feel comfortable about accessing mental health support services, in part due to cultural stigmas around mental health and concerns over confidentiality.

- Mental health support is not consistent throughout the seafaring industry.

Suicide among seafarers

- Participants widely acknowledged that this is a self-evidently serious issue, about which the industry can and should do more.

- It was believed to be inherently rooted in the mental health challenges faced by seafarers, and not an isolated phenomenon.

- Suicide occurring on ships was described as a traumatic experience for crew, who often blamed themselves, further contributing to worse mental health.

- For organisations and employers, a death on board is costly, both financially (due to changes in schedules and having to replace crew) and reputationally (as it could make seafarers less likely to work for that organisation).

- It is a poorly understood issue, with seafarers reticent to discuss it – for cultural and religious reasons.

- There is a significant "uncertainty problem", where participants questioned the viability of ever being sure a particular case is definitively suicide.

Recording suicide

- Participants described how there are a variety of non-standardised ways of recording incidences of suicide, which are rarely shared across the sector.

- They identified several key challenges beyond the "uncertainty problem" – especially raising questions about how best to define the population of seafarers (i.e. just those onboard a ship, to include retired seafarers, etc).

- There was a sense that suicide is probably under-reported for several reasons. Primarily, this is driven by the difficulty in knowing for certain if a death is suicide and, on a related note, a desire to protect surviving family, both emotionally and financially.

- Perceptions of how insurance does – or doesn't – work around suicide leads seafarers to do what they can to ensure families receive pay-outs.

What could be done differently?

- There was a real desire to see the industry tackle mental health among seafarers in a more holistic and preventative manner, rather than the reactive way it is believed to be dealt with at the moment.

- This was widely considered key to addressing the issue of suicide specifically.

- Embedding mental health 'fitness' from the top down – through organisational and onboard culture – and from the bottom up – through cadet training and recruitment approaches – was believed to be central to addressing this issue.

- That said, despite the challenges around uncertainty, there was also a belief that more could be done to collect better data on suicide – both in terms of the data quality itself but also the wider impact it could have in normalising the discussion around mental health.

Background and methodology

Research objectives

There is a strong interest in seafarer mental health and in particular the level of suicide within the maritime industry. This has been further amplified by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on seafarer wellbeing, potentially leading to increases in the number of seafarers who have died from suicide. However, little data exists in this space, especially relating to the phenomenon of suicide at sea and how this is recorded – i.e. the nature of the problem, the enablers and barriers to reporting it, or the impact on crews from a colleague dying of suicide.

It is mandatory for the deaths of all UK citizens, and any deaths on UK flagged ships, to be reported to the Registry of Ships and Seamen, regardless of where the ship is registered. However, other flag states have different rules around reporting. Therefore, it is not currently possible to establish a global picture of the situation.

Ahead of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Special Tripartite Committee in May 2022, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned Ipsos to explore mental health and suicide among seafarers across a diverse range of stakeholders who deal with these issues within the industry.

The following research objectives were explored in a series of 20 in-depth interviews from participants across the maritime industry:

- How big of a problem, if at all, is suicide and attempted suicide at sea by seafarers, and to what extent, if at all, has this changed in recent times?

- What is the impact, if at all, on crews from a colleague dying from suicide, including what support is available following a colleague dying from suicide?

- Why are deaths from suicide under-reported at sea, and what could be done to improve accurate reporting of death from suicide at sea?

Sampling and recruitment

A diverse range of stakeholders were interviewed to understand the topic of suicide amongst seafarers. It was decided that seafarers themselves would not be interviewed as it could be distressing for them to talk openly about their experiences of poor mental health and colleagues dying by, or attempting, suicide. Instead, a diverse range of stakeholders across the industry who work closely with, or have expertise on, seafarers were interviewed, as it was felt that they would still be able to answer our research questions.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach was required – exploring under-researched issues in detail and in depth demanded more time be spent with participants. Additionally, the nature of the study required that careful thought was given to the sample design, to ensure that the participants included in the research reflected the full range and diversity of different views. relevant to the objectives. Ipsos worked closely with the MCA and DfT to agree a sample profile, based on the following categories:

- ▪ Company representative / ship owner's representative

- ▪ Shipping management companies

- ▪ Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Insurers

- ▪ Charities / chaplains

- ▪ Unions

- ▪ Academics

Most of the sample came from the merchant shipping industry, with a smaller proportion coming from the fishing industry.

Following this, a two-stage recruitment process was used to contact participants and arrange their interviews. In the first stage the MCA contacted around 40 organisations and asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. This resulted in very high levels of "opt in", with 33 organisations saying they would be willing to participate. This allowed us to sample purposively from the groups we identified to ensure the final sample of interviews reflected a range of perspectives across the sector.

In the second stage, Ipsos' executive recruitment team contacted those that opted in to arrange a convenient time to take part in an interview. These in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted by experienced Ipsos researchers and digitally recorded to support detailed and rigorous analysis.

Due to the sensitive nature of the project, all those contacted (by MCA and Ipsos) in relation to the project were provided with the appropriate mental health signposting support to protect their wellbeing. In addition to this, all participants were offered a chance to take breaks during the interview process. They were also given the option to terminate the interview at any point.

The 20 interviews were an hour in length, which provided sufficient time to explore the research questions in detail and provide a comprehensive exploration of the key themes.

The table below summarises the completed interviews against the opt-ins per category and demonstrates the spread across categories. The data gathered reflects the range and diversity of viewpoints from across the industry, including passenger, fishing, and cargo sectors. The sample also comprised of a range of participants who worked with seafarers from the UK, India, the Philippines, and China.

Category	Opt-ins	Completed interviews
Company representative / ship owner	4	4
Shipping management companies	4	1
Insurers	1	1
Charities / chaplains	13	8
Unions	5	3
Academics	3	2
Others	4	1
Totals	**33**	**20**

A note on fieldwork timings

Interviews took place between 7th March and 1st April 2022. Around this time frame two key events also occurred which were directly referenced in several interviews:

- On 24th February 2022, prior to the start of fieldwork, Russia invaded Ukraine.

- On 17 March 2022, P&O Ferries dismissed of its shipping staff.

In the research, participants were asked about seafarers' mental health, the impact of suicide on crews, and the recording of potential suicides at sea in the overarching sense rather than specifically related to these events. The findings in this report reflect the general perceptions of these topics rather than isolated impacts of these two events, although. However, it is accepted that these significant events may have affected the responses given by some of the participants.

Reading this report

Qualitative research is illustrative, detailed, and exploratory. It offers insight into the perceptions, feelings, and behaviours of people. Evidence in this report is based on the perception of participants. It is important to remember that even though some perceptions may not be factually accurate, they represent "the truth" to the participants and, as such, they are valid in understanding the attitudes and views of participants. The data presented here is intended to demonstrate the range and diversity of the views and experiences of the target sample, and not to be a statistically representative sample of a wider population.

At the beginning of each chapter there is a summary of the key findings and although we have included verbatim comments throughout the document as evidence to support the findings, efforts have been taken to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Acknowledgements

We would like to give special thanks to the representatives from the organisations who took part in this study. The following organisations consented to be named as taking part:

- Fishermen's Mission

- Freedom Training and Consultancy

- Human Rights at Sea

- Intercargo

- International Chamber of Shipping

- Lloyds Register Foundation

- Mission to Seafarers

- RMT, The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

- Seafit

- Stella Maris

- ▪ The International Transport Workers' Federation

The mental health of seafarers

Summary

- The occupation was portrayed as extremely challenging, being based in a unique social environment.
- A range of structural issues were seen to impose strain on seafarer's mental wellbeing, including long working hours, isolation, fatigue, and financial instability.
- It was widely felt that COVID-19 has contributed to further strain among seafarers.
- Mental health issues were described as poorly understood, both among seafarers and across the industry more widely.

Uniqueness of the seafarer's occupation

The seafaring industry was portrayed as an extremely challenging occupation that was based in a unique social environment, which often resulted in poor mental health. There was a clear sense that a combination of factors creates a unique social environment for seafarers onboard their vessels. Such factors included: the extended periods spent at sea, precarious employment contracts, the lack of opportunities to save money, the pressure of being the breadwinner for extended family, crew dynamics, and the issue of internet connectivity at sea and its subsequent impacts. Participants felt that such a distinct set of circumstances made the seafaring industry a unique place to work in.

"I think it's a unique environment [being a seafarer]."

Shipping Manager

Mental health challenges faced by seafarers

Participants described how seafarers were often at sea for periods of 9 to 11 months and confined to their ships for most of their working contract. As a result, seafarers were effectively shut off from the outside world, which in turn led to boredom and frustration. The physically demanding nature of the seafarer's work also resulted in them becoming increasingly prone to suffering from physical injuries and being susceptible to mental exhaustion. Participants who worked for unions also cited the long working hours onboard ships and the irregular sleeping patterns associated with such a regime. This in turn imposed significant strains on the mental wellbeing of the individual.

The physically demanding nature of the occupation would regularly lead to fatigue, while seafarers often lacked sleep as they would stay up late on the internet in their cabins mainly on social media or connecting with friends and family, as this would often be their only chance to do so while off duty. Seafarers' sleeping patterns were also disturbed due to the changing time zones while at sea. The level of background noise from the normal operation of the vessel also meant that regular sleeping patterns were not possible, with people being continually woken up.

"I suppose it's a bad combination, the work is hard, it's dangerous, you're isolated, sometimes away for months at a time."

Union

Also challenging for seafarers was the changing dynamics of their crewmates. Participants described how crew sizes have been considerably cut down over recent years. Consequently, the physical workload has increased among seafarers resulting in fewer opportunities for them to socialise. Additionally, the likelihood of crew members changing during a voyage meant that seafarers found it harder to socialise and form friendships onboard.

Participants also felt that seafarers were more prone than other worker populations to worry about their friends and family while away from them for an extended period. Concerns over the wellbeing of family or friends have been heightened by the internet connectivity on ships – poor and inconsistent internet connectivity at sea was deemed to frustrate and disappoint seafarers eager to connect with their loved ones.

Simultaneously, it was also widely remarked that serving on ships with strong internet connectivity could also facilitate heightened anxiety amongst seafarers could become more easily exposed to receiving bad news from home. Subsequently, it was felt that they might grow concerned at not being able to do anything while working away at sea. It is important to note however seafarers themselves were not interviewed and, therefore, seafarers themselves may hold a differing view. It is also important to note, as we discuss later in the report, increased connectivity may help facilitate greater access to mental health and wellbeing support.

> "Connectivity in itself is sporadic. Some companies have relatively good connectivity, others have relatively little and that one nugget that you hear from home and have no control over, can be really positive but can equally well be devastating."

> Shipowner

The challenging nature of the seafarer's occupation was deemed to be exacerbated in recent times. Charity workers described how the risk of contracting COVID-19 has reduced the opportunities for seafarers spending more time ashore due to several reasons: employers became reluctant to let crew go ashore; ports might have had strict lockdowns in place or not permit crew to come ashore; seafarers themselves worried about contracting the virus and in turn infecting their crewmates. Furthermore, participants described how seafarers were granted less shore leave due to the COVID-19 pandemic. and, therefore, felt less inclined to get off the ship, meaning that they would stay on board their ships for longer durations compared to before the pandemic. This resulted in increased periods of isolation which posed further strain on mental wellbeing.

> "It was quite hard for seafarers to get shore leave. And then COVID-19 has just run a coach and horses through that as well – seafarers themselves self-limit because they also don't want to get sick but, more importantly, they don't want to get sick and mess up the operation of the vessel and get into trouble with the company."

> Charity / chaplain

Participants also highlighted how the isolation from crewmates onboard could pose additional strain on mental wellbeing. Internet connectivity was one such example as seafarers at the end of their shift would often remain in their cabins at the end of their shift browsing the internet or using social media. This resulted in them not interacting with their crew mates. In addition, participants also discussed how instances of bullying and conflict involving crewmates and the captain would lead to further isolation for seafarers who would become isolated and lonely at sea.

Feelings of isolation were also perceived to be heightened among seafarers working with multicultural crews. For example, through language barriers between crews reducing opportunities for interaction. Participants subsequently recalled that crewmates of a shared nationality would typically gravitate to one another to socialise, thus isolating from seafarers of other nationalities.

> "If you've got an all-Polish crew and you're the only Brit onboard or whatever, even though the work language is English, people will socialise naturally in their own languages. So, I think that can have a negative impact on wellbeing. You become isolated, even onboard, if you're not able to socialise in the language that everyone else is using."

<div align="right">Academic</div>

As well as COVID-19, participants told us that seafarers have faced growing financial strain in recent years due to the precarious nature of work in the industry – seafarers with temporary work which led them to feel increasingly anxious over their future employment prospects and income. Such anxiety was deemed to be heightened among seafarers who were increasingly offered voyage contracts that only guaranteed temporary employment for the duration of a ship's voyage. Academics who spoke to us also felt that greater financial pressure was placed upon seafarers who tend to be the main income earner for extended family, or an extended social group, in their country of origin.

> "Voyage contracts, I think, impact wellbeing in the sense that you're always worried about your next employment."

<div align="right">Academic</div>

Poor understanding of mental health issues

Despite the mental health challenges faced by seafarers, there was a widespread belief amongst those interviewed that the issue is not well enough understood across the industry. Seafarers themselves were described as lacking awareness around mental wellbeing, particularly by those who worked in charities and unions. These participants pointed out the "macho" and "masculine" nature of the occupation, which they felt has created a general reluctance among seafarers to openly talk about their mental wellbeing with peers. Moreover, shipowners recalled how seafarers have previously been told to "man-up" by shipping organisations as mental health issues are sometimes perceived to be a weakness, particularly in the fishing and merchant industries.

> "Lots of senior people in the maritime world will turn around and say, 'We're not mental health practitioners. We didn't sign up to go to sea to look after people's mental health. They need to man up, they need to just get on with it."

<div align="right">Training Provider</div>

There were also reported cases of seafarers not wanting to disclose their mental health issues prior to boarding the vessel. For instance, participants reflected on seafarers' fear of not being allowed entry to work on a ship by the captain/skipper if they previously disclosed any mental health issues. Consequently, shipping organisations, captains, and crewmates would be unaware of pre-existing mental health issues that seafarers had prior to working onboard.

> "Of course, there's also the issue that if someone wants to admit they have a mental health problem the [captain] would probably not allow that person to go to sea with them. So, again, they would then not be earning a living."

<div align="right">Charity / chaplain</div>

The perceived lack of transparency over disclosing mental health issues also extended beyond the fishing industry. Seafarers working on voyage contracts were described as being increasingly reluctant to inform shipping companies about any mental health issues they had prior to boarding the ship and while onboard. This was because voyage contracts only guaranteed temporary work, hence seafarers were prone to grow anxious about disclosing any mental health struggles as they felt this could damage their changes of securing another voyage contract.

> "Voyage contracts, I think, impact wellbeing in the sense that you're always worried about your next employment. So, you might work differently on board, might be less inclined to report things…because…you are reliant on a good report to get your next voyage contract."
>
> Academic

The next chapter focusses on the support available to seafarers when dealing with mental health issues.

Mental health support for seafarers

Summary
- Larger shipping companies were believed to offer more comprehensive internal mental health support services than smaller companies – services included employee assistance programmes, telephone helplines, and wellbeing days/weeks.

- Participants described chaplains providing mental health support by either making themselves available to talk to seafarers while the seafarer was at sea, or when they arrived at port.

- Unions were described as providing education programmes on seafarers' mental wellbeing and often publicise mental health support services to raise awareness.

- Participants described how charities provide online, telephone, and face-to-face support for seafarers.

- Not all seafarers feel comfortable about accessing mental health support services, in part due to cultural stigmas around mental health and concerns over confidentiality.

- Mental health support is not consistent throughout the seafaring industry.

Mental health support available

Participants outlined a variety of internal services provided by shipping companies to support seafarers' mental wellbeing. As well as various employee assistance programmes, telephone helplines have been set up for seafarers to speak to a trained psychologist or counsellor about their mental health issues. According to participants, helplines were mostly provided and funded by larger shipping companies for their employees.

> "You will have some shipping companies that will invest in tele-medical, tele-psychosocial services where crews can telephone a helpline and speak to somebody."
>
> Charity / chaplain

Moreover, cruise lines also provided wellbeing days and weeks onboard for seafarers to raise awareness over challenges to mental wellbeing. Larger shipping organisations also provided private health cover for their senior officers. Other large companies granted job security for seafarers taking time off with mental health issues and had policies in place to re-integrate these seafarers back into work.

> "I think well-meaning companies are putting policies in place…a policy that says if you go sick it doesn't matter why you're sick [i.e. could be for mental health reasons], your job is still secure, you're not going to lose your job and we will help re-integrate you."
>
> Shipowner

Chaplains have also been made available to provide support to struggling seafarers. These chaplains are either provided by the shipping organisation internally or from external charities and unions. The chaplain would board the vessel in port and would make themselves available as a point of contact for crews. These chaplains would make their presence felt onboard by walking throughout the vessel and

they would also have their own office. Seafarers would then be able to discuss any mental health issues with the chaplain. Other charities also provide chaplains who either visited vessels at port or boarded vessels at sea to provide a point of contact for religious seafarers.

> "There's the Apostleship of the Sea, The Seafarers' Society, places like that where they have padres, chaplains, visit ships in port and give seafarers support from I suppose a kind of a religious background. But also a friendly face, somebody that can talk to them about family issues perhaps."

<div align="right">Shipowner</div>

Further forms of mental health support have been provided by unions dedicated to supporting the rights of seafarers. – for example, providing seminars to educate seafarers and their families on mental wellbeing, or provided education and training around wellbeing, understanding stress, and mental health awareness specifically targeted at cadets and novice seafarers. These education and training programmes also signposted seafarers to counselling services provided by the union, while guaranteeing that such services would be based on strict confidentiality measures.

> "We have started educating the cadets, any seafarers going to sea have education on wellbeing including understanding of stress so they know that life as a cadet will be different as they go abroad ship, they know how to cope with it, they know where to go"

<div align="right">Union</div>

Unions also actively signpost external mental health support available to their members to raise awareness among seafarers. These external forms of support included counselling provided by charities such as Togetherall, Mind, and See Me Scotland. They are publicised through newsletters, flyers, and posters.

> "We are making employers aware that they should, as you say, signpost their employees to there. We're publicising that by way of posters, flyers. We did a newsletter, we're going to follow that up shortly, as well."

<div align="right">Union</div>

Charities also offered additional forms of mental health support services. These include one-to-one counselling sessions, outdoor walking therapy, informal discussions, as well as setting up online forums which seafarers can use to speak about and share their experiences with one another. Other examples include face-to-face and app-based support services for seafarers to promote mental wellbeing initiatives.

Cultural barriers to the uptake of mental health support

Seafaring culture was deemed to hinder the effectiveness of mental health support as it constituted a barrier to the uptake of such support. Participants discussed the influence of stigmas around mental health among certain nationalities. In such cases, mental health issues were described in the interviews as being stigmatised, frowned upon, and often dismissed, particularly so by seafarers from China, India, and the Philippines. Seafarers of these nationalities were considered reluctant to acknowledge any mental health issues and were also less inclined to admit such issues to others due to the associated stigma.

Another barrier to the effectiveness of mental health support was the culture among crewmates. There were cases where participants cited bullying on ships which meant that seafarers with mental health

issues found it difficult to come forward for mental health support. Additionally, participants felt that seafaring culture placed an expectation of stereotypically "macho" behaviour (not discussing emotions openly with colleagues, for example) among both male and female seafarers which subsequently created a stigma around mental health issues. This, in turn, resulted in seafarers who did seek mental health support being perceived as weak among crewmates.

> "You might as well put it on a poster and announce it because everyone knows what everyone's up to. It gets around quick enough. So, expecting someone to be able to make a confidential phone call on a ship, especially you're talking about people who share cabins and everyone shares a crew mess and that kind of thing."

> Academic

Inconsistency of mental health support across the sector

There was a clear sense that larger shipping organisations provided more mental health support services. Bigger shipping companies were contrasted with their smaller counterparts to highlight the greater efforts at embedding mental health support through employee assistance programmes, for example. Smaller companies in the fishing industry, however, did not provide as many policies nor internal programmes to support seafarers' mental health.

> "It depends on the company. I would say all of the majors, the big companies have some fantastic support in place. Conversely, you've got other companies where there's nothing. They don't talk about it."

> Shipowner

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that where mental health support services did exist, they were on occasions considerably overstretched – e.g., one chaplain would have responsibility for approximately eleven ships at a time.

The scope of mental health support services chaplains were able to provide was at times limited by GDPR regulations. A chaplain described cases where they were made aware of a seafarer struggling with mental health on a ship. However, they were unable to acquire the phone number of the struggling seafarer to offer their support as shipping organisations and captains would not provide contact details due to GDPR regulations.

> "And you ask people, 'Can I have this guy's phone number?' Because I know he's unwell and I know he needs to be contacted and the answer comes back, 'Well, GDPR means I can't give it to you'."

> Charity / chaplain

There were participants who reflected on how seafarers who lacked adequate internet connectivity while at sea were, therefore, less able and less likely to access mental health support. The lack of connectivity and limited internet access onboard ships was a barrier for seafarers wishing to access mental health support online and through apps such as Headspace, HeadFit, and Rebalance. There were additional

difficulties for seafarers who lacked computer literacy, as they struggled with using online forums and apps designed to support their mental wellbeing.

There was an underlying belief that available mental health support was often reactive rather than proactive. For instance, shipowners sometimes felt that it would regularly be a case of the seafarer reaching out to access mental health support, rather than the support reaching out to them. Consequently, mental health support systems were deemed as being overly reactive once a seafarer was identified as having mental health issues, rather than being proactive by reaching out to seafarers to prevent such issues from occurring in the first instance. There was a sense that until mental health support was targeted at specific issues, rather than the consequences or outward expressions that had manifested themselves, seafarers would continue to suffer in silence with mental health issues.

> "To me, they [the types of mental health support currently offered to seafarers] are all plasters, rather than actually tackling the root causes, to prevent this from having to get to that situation in the first place."
>
> Shipowner

The next chapter moves on to the subject of suicide among seafarers, including how the issue is viewed across the sector and the impact it has on crew and companies.

Suicide among seafarers

Summary

- Participants widely acknowledged that this is a self-evidently serious issue, about which the industry can and should do more.

- It was believed to be inherently rooted in the mental health challenges faced by seafarers, and not an isolated phenomenon.

- Suicide occurring on ships was described as a traumatic experience for crew, who often blamed themselves, further contributing to worse mental health.

- For organisations and employers, a death on board is costly, both financially (due to changes in schedules and having to replace crew) and reputationally (as it could make seafarers less likely to work for that organisation).

- It is a poorly understood issue, with seafarers reticent to discuss it – for cultural and religious reasons.

- There is a significant "uncertainty problem", where participants questioned the viability of ever being sure a particular case is definitively suicide.

A serious issue

Participants were keen to stress that suicide is self-evidently a serious issue and is recognised as such across the sector. This is despite the various cultural stigmas and negative associations among seafarers themselves. Despite the progress that had been made in the area, there was a strong belief that this is an issue the industry must improve upon.

> "Industry needs to acknowledge this is a workplace issue, and we have a collective responsibility to address it, including the insurance"
>
> Union

There was an equally widespread sense that the issue is inherently about seafarers' wider mental health. Participants typically talked about how poor mental health – an issue that is considered, as discussed above, widely prevalent among the workforce – lead to suicide without adequate support and appropriate intervention. The mental health challenges outlined above clearly demonstrate how, unchecked, the strains on seafarers can easily lead to suicide.

> "When you are halfway across the Pacific and you hear your girlfriend has dumped you, there is nowhere to turn really."
>
> Shipowner

In this way, there was broad agreement across the interviews that suicide should not – cannot – be discussed as if an isolated phenomenon. There was a firm conviction that suicide can only be addressed through proactively dealing with the full scope of mental health challenges faced by seafarers.

The impact of suicide

Participants discussed the impact of suicide from two distinct perspectives: the impact on a ship's crew and the wider impact on the industry.

When considering the former, participants typically discussed the trauma and distress experienced by crew. There were discussions of how a crewmate dying of suicide can raise worries about one's own future and how an individual might deal with their own pressures. There was a sense that it can make seafarers reluctant to continue in this environment even when, in the short or medium term, they cannot leave. Participants described "creepy" and highly distressing incidents such as having to store crewmates' bodies in freezers for weeks or months at a time, or situations where crew have attempted and failed to save a crewmate's life.

In relation to this, participants also described the trauma experienced by seafarers as they blamed themselves for not doing more to help – blaming themselves for failing to recognise a crewmate's situation until too late.

> "It would have a huge negative impact (on crew) there would be those who feel guilty, they didn't see it, because they knew it, I didn't do anything, I didn't speak to them maybe that wouldn't have helped."
>
> Charity/chaplain

There was also limited established support for crews after the suicide or suspected suicide of a crewmate. Where support did exist, it was provided by crews themselves. Examples included the setting up of WhatsApp groups to keep crew members connected and in touch with one another.

> "We've got to get seafarers talking about feeling suicidal without feeling guilty, or ashamed, or embarrassed, because for a lot of them, it is the only option."
>
> Training provider

Another form of support provided by shipping companies was the repatriation of crewmates who wished to leave the ship upon the suicide or suspected suicide of a colleague. However, repatriation was not always granted in cases where companies felt that seafarers needed to stay on board to work for the duration of their contract.

When considering the impact on the sector, participants discussed the cost in terms of crew and wider reputational risks. In relation to the direct cost, some participants talked about how crew are "expensive to replace" in terms of the time taken to return to a port, recruit (and perhaps train) a replacement, and ensure that the body (if there is one) is repatriated.

From a reputational perspective, participants discussed how organisations were sensitive about how incidences of suicide would reflect poorly on them as a whole. Consequently, the sector was reluctant to directly raise and address the issue. This in turn created a barrier to clearer and more transparent action on the issue – there was a sense that the sector can be reluctant to directly raise and address the issue if it shows people or organisations in a poor light.

Poorly understood

Much as with mental health more broadly, there was a strong sense among participants that suicide is poorly understood by the industry and by seafarers. This was, they felt, rooted in a deep reticence to discuss the issue.

This reticence was, participants felt, not only a consequence of the general "macho" culture that is believed to pervade the workforce and onboard working environment. It is further exacerbated by distinct cultural misgivings around conceptions of suicide specifically. Participants freely described how culturally problematic suicide can be for certain nationalities – they particularly highlighted perceptions that there were problems engaging seafarers with the issue, with those from Philippines and China being highlighted as especially difficult to engage. There was a sense that this could, in turn, result in shipowners being reluctant to raise the issue themselves.

> "Where you might have top to bottom Chinese crew, for example, would conversation around suicide happen? Probably not."

> Shipowner

In the next chapter, the issue of recording and reporting suicide is covered – in particular, the barriers to better recording and the issue of uncertainty.

Recording suicide

Summary

▪ Participants described how there are a variety of non-standardised ways of recording incidences of suicide, which are rarely shared across the sector.

▪ They identified several key challenges beyond the "uncertainty problem" – especially raising questions about how best to define the population of seafarers (i.e. just those onboard a ship, to include retired seafarers, etc).

▪ There was a sense that suicide is probably under-reported for several reasons. Primarily, this is driven by the difficulty in knowing for certain if a death is suicide and, on a related note, a desire to protect surviving family, both emotionally and financially.

▪ Perceptions of how insurance does – or doesn't – work around suicide leads seafarers to do what they can to ensure families receive pay-outs.

A variety of approaches

Across the interviews, participants described considerable variation in how different organisations recorded suicide. They described how individual companies might keep a record of all incidents onboard, typically in a non-standardised way, and how this data would be unlikely to be shared outside the company or across the sector.

Charities talked about how they did not hold data on cases of suicide. They suggested that the only viable official record are official coroners' reports. Participants also described how flag states often adopted wildly different approaches, talking in exasperated fashion about "cowboy states" with especially negligent approaches to the issue. Indeed, there were suggestions that some form of sanction could be employed to address their lax approaches – for example, denying offending nations representation within decision-making bodies.

> "There are a lot of cowboy flag states out there that I'm concerned about…that don't have robust reporting in place."
>
> Shipowner

This variety of approaches led to a particularly murky picture and, perhaps, contributed to the fatalistic view of the near-impossible challenge of accurately collecting data on suicide among seafarers.

Challenges to accurately reporting suicide

The challenge of uncertainty

As interviews focussed on the issue of recording and reporting suicide, it became clear that there is, across the different perspectives included in this study, a concern about the inherent uncertainty around suicide. Participants talked about the challenges of ever knowing for certain if a death could be accurately defined a suicide.

They believed that there will always be doubts in some cases – where, most obviously, there is no body. But they also described situations where there are barriers to fully investigating whether a suicide has taken place – where GDPR prevents access to personal computers, for example.

There were also widespread anecdotes – from those representing unions and charities, in particular, of cases that may have been suicide but that remain nominally unresolved. This, in turn, raised questions about whether suicide can ever be accurately recorded, and whether international/cross-industry statistics are accurate or comparable.

"We'll never know what the true picture is."

Charity / chaplain

Defining the population

When probed to consider in detail the challenges of recording cases of suicide, participants stressed questions about defining the population – that is, how are "seafarers" being defined in this instance? For example, they asked whether the data should only include only suicide that takes place onboard a ship or also among seafarers not so (due to either shift patterns or unemployment). Furthermore, there were questions about whether the data should include retired seafarers or seafarers that now worked ashore. The issues of poor mental health and, specifically, suicide were felt to be widespread enough among the workforce that both these questions would need to be resolved before an accurate picture could be established. Participants representing charities and unions felt especially strongly about this, given their role and responsibilities.

Underreporting suicide

There was a widespread sense among participants that, for many of the reasons outlined above, any figures reporting suicide among seafarers are likely to be inaccurate and too low. Chaplains and unions, for example, described how they often speak to suicidal seafarers in their role – and this underreporting is a frustration.

That said, there was also a belief that there is rarely malicious or overtly cynical intent in this under-reporting. Participants talked about the "grey areas" or blurred lines between what does and doesn't constitute a case of suicide – specifically in relation to deaths overboard where a body is not recovered. They described again some of the cultural barriers to addressing this issue – for example, the religious beliefs within a diverse and multicultural workforce.

"There are some nationalities where loss of face is very important, perhaps to have a suicide on board the ship may be seen as a loss of face for the company, therefore they may record it internally, it might not go any further."

Shipowner

Perhaps most pronounced was the sense that crew, employers, and others across the industry often want to "keep it under wraps", primarily out of concern for family and friends. Organisationally, there was a sense that employers can feel "caught in the middle" – i.e. informing family, dealing with the bureaucratic and financial aftermath, repatriating a body (if there is one). Participants also talked about how there was an unwillingness to challenge or contradict the official coroner's report.

Among crew, this might be driven by an unwillingness to create further trauma for a victim's family, especially in cases where there is religious or societal stigma associated with suicide. There was also a distinct sense that and the participants, money from a life insurance policy was unlikely to paid in the event of suicide. This perception appeared to be a significant barrier to the accurate reporting of suicide as cause of death. Participants talked about there being an unwillingness across the industry to call anything but the most definitive cases suicide for this reason.

> "Under the insurance for the ship, if someone dies onboard the family gets about $150,000 in death in service payment. If they commit suicide the family get nothing. So that has to be a factor in it as well, that seafarers circle the wagons to make sure that the family's looked after. "

> Shipping manager

On the other hand, participants with direct knowledge of issues around insurance suggested that the perception of suicide being a limiting factor in pay-outs is incorrect. In this counterview, the argument is that such a perception is based in a "false, incorrect understanding" and that suicide is not, in fact, defined as a "self-inflicted injury".

When probed, participants suggested that there are significant discrepancies in how certain terms are applied in individual life insurance, P&I insurance, and how insurance works for larger or for smaller organisations across the sector. Addressing this perception, right or wrong, was considered one way to start addressing issues of under-reporting suicide among seafarers.

> "Allow for suicide to be an insured risk and the data would clarify itself very quickly."

> Shipping manager

In the next and final chapter, we summarise what the preceding findings mean and what participants suggest could be done differently to better address the issues of mental health, suicide, and recording of suicide among seafarers.

Conclusion: What could be done differently?

Summary

- There was a real desire to see the industry tackle mental health among seafarers in a more holistic and preventative manner, rather than the reactive way it is believed to be dealt with at the moment.

- This was widely considered key to addressing the issue of suicide specifically.

- Embedding mental health 'fitness' from the top down – through organisational and onboard culture – and from the bottom up – through cadet training and recruitment approaches – was believed to be central to addressing this issue.

- That said, despite the challenges around uncertainty, there was also a belief that more could be done to collect better data on suicide – both in terms of the data quality itself but also the wider impact it could have in normalising the discussion around mental health.

Ultimately, the interviews did not paint a positive picture of life at sea – of suicide among seafarers, the recording and reporting suicide, and of seafarers' mental health more generally.

Improving mental health among seafarers

There was a strong sense across the interviews that the industry has yet to firmly establish and embed the importance of good mental health both as a step towards greater productivity as well as a corollary to physical fitness. There was a widespread sense that the available mental health support was often reactive rather than proactive – it failed to seek out and offer support to those that might benefit, instead waiting for people to look for help themselves. Therefore, it was strongly felt that more proactive help would be key to improving mental health and reducing suicide amongst seafarers

The importance of focussing on greater mental health – and doing so in a holistic and proactive way – was considered key, rather than focussing more narrowly on suicide. And this was the case right across the interviews, whether speaking to charities, unions, or shipowners.

This, it was felt, will require cultural changes from within organisations and across the sector, from the top down as well as by offering individual support. Participants talked consistently about the need to "normalise" talking about mental health struggles and getting help. One common proposal was to establish "mental health champions" who can demonstrate how they have addressed their own issues and returned successfully to the workforce.

This, it was believed, would help combat the perception that reporting previous or current mental health issues harms a seafarer's likelihood of employment.

Participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring anonymity and privacy for those seeking mental health support. They acknowledged that this could be tricky onboard, where privacy is hard to maintain. Consequently, there were calls for employers to provide one-to-one support for all crew, thereby

normalising the use of this type of support. Overcoming this barrier – around privacy and normalising use of support – would, it was felt, help encourage people to seek support and, thus, improve the situation.

There were also calls for mental health screening for cadets and through recruitment processes, in much the same way that physical fitness is assessed. This, it was felt, would help ensure seafarers are placed where suits them and their employer best, avoiding some of the issues discussed above.

> "There should be a checklist of standard questions (at recruitment interviews)...to avoid putting square pegs in round holes."
>
> Shipowner

This might result in, as one participant put it, "an international standard for being mentally healthy fit for life at sea." This in turn would mean that individuals and organisations could be audited properly. All of this supported the strong sense across the study that it is important to take a step back and understand suicide from a more preventative perspective, rather than chasing statistics that may never be complete.

Improving reporting of suicide

Therefore, it was clear across the study that participants believed any discussion of suicide among seafarer should focus on prevention via better mental health support. This was the primary focus among the participants.

That said, while participants felt that reporting itself was not the problem, there was also the view that more can still be done to improve the way the statistics are recorded and reported.

Advocates of this position talked about how recording could be made mandatory but confidential, perhaps circumventing some of the reputational challenges discussed above. They talked about targeting the "cowboy" states and organisations through sanctions for not reporting – e.g., being prevented from sitting on committees and being involved in key decision-making bodies. Participants also talked about the importance of finding ways for those individuals reporting suspected cases of suicide to do so in ways that ensure anonymity, allowing people who currently worry about reprisals – both onboard and for their longer-term career prospects – to come forward.

Other suggestions included: Having a centralised database where all statistics on suicide among seafarers are retained; shipping companies to have a single body that provides guidance for how suicides should be recorded and what is classed as a suicide; and better contextualizing of the situation by including seafarers who commit suicide when off duty.

Finally, there was a belief that more, better data on the number of suicides – even if imperfect – can help address the prior causes of poor mental health. This could be done by strengthen campaigns and further emphasise the importance of preventative approaches to the mental health challenges that were considered so prevalent across the industry.

To conclude

This study demonstrated two key things. Firstly, that for suicide to be effectively addressed, a more holistic and proactive attempt to tackle the mental health challenges facing seafarers is required. This was clear across the range of different perspectives included in the study. Secondly, suicide is, for a variety of reasons, most likely being under recorded. While there are ways that this could be improved – and that improvements could be part of tackling the issue of suicide – narrowly focusing on this specific issue should not be to the detriment of addressing seafarers' mental health.

Appendices

Below is the discussion guide used by Ipsos moderators to structure their interviews with participants. The discussion guide ensured that all moderators approached the interviews in a consistent manner and that each interview focussed on the core research objectives. It also included indicative timings for how long should be spent covering each core topic, thus ensuring interviews covered a range of topics within the allotted interview time.

However, moderators had license to be flexible within this structure (both with questions asked and with timings), covering some topics in more detail than others, depending on the background, knowledge, and experience of individual participants.

It is important to note that the Ipsos moderators were all experienced qualitative researchers and also that they lacked specific technical knowledge of the maritime sector.

Suicide and seafarers: Discussion Guide
Research objectives:
- How big of a problem is suicide and attempted suicide at sea by seafarers, and has this changed in recent times?
- What is the impact on crews from a colleague dying from suicide, including what support is available in light of a colleague dying from suicide?
- Why are deaths from suicide under-reported at sea, and what could be done to improve accurate reporting of death from suicide at sea?

Discussion guide key:
Bold lower case = key questions
Non-bold lower case = follow up questions and prompts
CAPITALISED ITALICS, NON-BOLD = instructions for moderators

	Supporting information for Interviews
	- UK flagged ships are ships registered to the UK. The ship can operate anywhere in the world, and be manned by people of any nationality - UK seafarers usually refers to anyone working on a UK flagged ship, of any nationality - Many British seafarers (e.g. of British nationality) work on UK flagged ships, but many work on ships of any other flag - Under The Merchant Shipping Act of 1995, the Registry of Shipping and Seamen (RSS), part of the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, is responsible for registering any birth or death which occurs aboard a vessel in the following circumstances: - a person who has given birth or has died on a UK-flagged vessel - a British citizen who has been born or died on a vessel - Protection and Indemnity insurance, or as it is more commonly known – 'P&I', is the policy ship owners purchase to protect them against liability claims from crew or passengers - Many vessel owners join a Mutual P&I Club to access limits of liability that are generally unavailable in the commercial fixed premium market third parties - Liability claims include those such as collision, property damage, pollution, environmental damage and removal of wrecks - According to a 2016 study, it is estimated that 115 people are exposed to a single suicide, with one in five reporting that this experience had a devastating impact or caused a major-life disruption (general population, not maritime specific. We don't know how this translates to the seafaring population) - Seafarers have suffered during COVID-19, as travel restrictions left tens of thousands of them stranded on ships, unable to be repatriated or unable to join ships. - An article that provides useful context to the research: https://lloydslist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/LL1135870/Suicides-at-sea-go-uncounted-as-crew-change-crisis-drags-on - Further information on why the crew change crisis happened can be found here: https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/FAQ-on-crew-changes-and-repatriation-of-seafarers.aspx

5 mins	**Introduction and background**
	INTRODUCE SELF AND IPSOS:
	• An independent research organisation, here to gather your opinions and hear about your experiences.
	INTRODUCE PROJECT:
	• Previous research has suggested seafarers have a higher incidence of suicide per capita than many other sectors, however this research is dated. There is little robust data to understand the incidence of suicide amongst seafarers as the data is hard to collect.
	• This research project aims to help Department for Transport (DfT) and Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) understand any barriers to accurate recording of suicide, the impact on colleagues/ crews from someone dying of suicide, and the mental health support available to seafarers. While there has been some research on seafarers mental health, this project is specifically looking at suicide. This research is needed to inform the UK's negotiating position at the Maritime Labour Convention's Special Tripartite Committee in May 2022 (or just say "to inform policy" when speaking to port chaplains, who may be unaware of this).
	EXPLAIN TONE AND NATURE OF DISCUSSION:
	• This is a relaxed and informal discussion;
	• The are no right or wrong answers;
	• There is plenty to get through, so I may have to move the conversation on from time to time – it's not that we're not interested in what you have to say;
	• The length of the interview is estimated to be around 60 minutes;
	• It's a sensitive subject. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to refuse to answer a question, or pause or end the interview at any time;
	• Do you mind if I record our conversation? This is so that we can accurately report what has been said (fine if not – interviewer to take detailed notes)
	• All answers will be confidential and anonymous, in line with the MRS code of conduct, and you will not be individually identified in the report; your answers will be anonymised before we share our findings with the MCA or DfT
	• As a reminder, you were selected to take part in this research based because DfT or the MCA identified you as someone who can bring a valuable perspective on this issue;
	• Remind that we'll take details of £50 charity donation at the end of the interview
	• Do you have any questions about the research?
	• Can I check that you are happy to take part?
5 mins	**Background and role**
	Just to begin, please tell me a bit about your role?
	• What are your responsibilities?
	• How long have you worked there?
	• What contact do you have with seafarers?
	• Which regions of the world are your experiences from?
	• Which nationalities of seafarers do you/have you worked with?
	• What involvement, if any, does your role have with the mental health of seafarers? *IF STATED NO INVOLVEMENT WITH MENTAL HEALTH, COULD REFRAME TO 'HEALTH AND SAFETY'*
	• Do you work with any particular sectors of the shipping or fishing industries? Which ones? Which regions?
	• *MODERATOR NOTE: TAILOR TERMINOLOGY IF SPECIFICALLY ABOUT FISHING – MAKE IT CLEAR TO FISHING INDURSTY REPRESENTATIVES THAT THIS IS ABOUT BOTH*
10 mins	**The mental health of seafarers**
	What challenges do seafarers face in relation to their mental health?
	• What sort of things influence their mental health?
	• In what ways?

	What support do seafarers have when it comes to issues of mental health? • *PROBE:* from employers / company / colleagues / crew / external organisations? **How effective is this support?** • How consistent is this support across the sector? • What things may affect the level and quality of mental health support that seafarers receive?
15 mins	**Suicide among seafarers**
	What can you tell me about the issue of suicide among seafarers? • How much of an issue is it? • To what extent would you say these issues are unique to seafarers? • How familiar are you with cases of people dying / going missing at sea who are suspected deaths from suicide? **How is this issue dealt with by the industry?** • What makes you say that? **What do you know about the usual response if a suicide or suspected suicide occurs onboard?** • Who is informed about a death on a vessel? • PROBE: by a company / ship owner / employer / crew / flag state/other authorities • What happens to try and identify the cause of death? • For what reasons might a suicide not be acknowledged? **What impact does suicide among seafarers have?** • *SPONTANEOUS FIRST THEN PROBE:* on the crew; on the industry more widely? • What support, if any, is available to those affected by a colleague suicide? • To what extent are suicides typically talked about onboard (by the company, by seafarers)? • What other effects does it have? **What are the challenges to better understanding suicide among seafarers?** • *SPONTANEOUS RESPONSE FIRST, THEN PROBE:* cultural /religious stigma about discussing it; rules and norms around reporting
20 mins	**Recording suicide among seafarers**
	What do you know about how suicide among seafarers is recorded? • What is the process for recording suicide among seafarers, as far as you know? • *PROBE:* step by step process? How does this vary depending on context (i.e. whether the death occurred in territorial or international waters, where the ship is registered, sector of the industry / different populations / other factors)? • *PROBE:* Specific challenges to recording suicide – i.e. need for evidence, cultural / religious concerns • *PROBE:* What differences are there between how it is reported to the MCA / to flag states / recorded internally? • *PROBE:* do some flag states have higher or lower rates of seafarers dying from suicide than others? If so, why is this? **The number of suicides that the MCA are informed about is in the region of 1-2 per year across the UK flag (out of around 23,000 seafarers working in the UK shipping industry).** *NOTE TO FACILITATORS: IF ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STATISTIC, IT IS A BEST ESTIMATE FROM DFT AND MCA SOURCES* **To what extent would you say this was an accurate representation of how many suicides occur?** • What makes you say that?

	How well is suicide among seafarers recorded, would you say? • What makes you say that? **What factors affect how well suicide among seafarers is recorded?** • *SPONTANEOUS FIRST, THEN PROBE ON THE INFLUENCE OF:* stigma; differing cultural norms among crew members; inability to accurately determine cause of death; insurance and P&I clubs • What other factors can affect how accurately this is recorded? • *FOR EACH FACTOR MENTIONED, PROBE ON WHAT AFFECT THIS HAS* **What can be done to improve how well suicide among seafarers is recorded?** • *PROBE:* what effect would this have? More accurate / more consistent / what else? **If data was to be collected globally on suicide among seafarers, what could be done to make that data as accurate as possible?** • *PROBE:* What barriers are there to this data being accurate? • *PROBE:* How would you feel about this data being collected?
5 mins	**Reflections and wrap up**
	To wrap up, I would like you to reflect on the various issues we've covered the mental health of seafarers, the impact of COVID-19, the issue of suicide among seafarers, and how this is recorded. With these in mind, I'd like you to tell me two things: • What is the key thing you'd like to see done to help support mental health issues among seafarers? • What (if anything) would you like to see done to ensure suicide among seafarers is recorded as effectively as possible? **Is there anything else you'd like to mention on this subject which has not been covered?** *EXPLAIN NEXT STEPS:* • MCA/DfT don't know who has participated, but are very grateful for your time • These findings will be used to inform MCA / DfT position on requirements to report deaths including suicide • Report will be published subsequently – not before summer • If there is anything further you'd like to discuss with the MCA or DfT, information sheet has contact details *CHECK WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING THREE CONSENT LEVELS PARTICIPANT IS HAPPY WITH (STANDARD POSITION REMAINS THAT PARTICIPATION IS ANONYMOUS, BUT WANTED TO CHECK NOW INTERVIEW IS COMPLETE):* - *REMAIN COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS* - *HAPPY TO LET DFT KNOW THEY TOOK PART* - *HAPPY FOR NAME TO BE ON REPORT* *CHECK PARTICIPANT IS OKAY – ASK THEM IF THEY WOULD LIKE SIGNPOSTING TO MH CHARITIES. IF YES, PROVIDE THEM WITH LINKS/NUMBERS TO MIND AND SAMARITANS* *MIND: https://www.mind.org.uk/* *SAMARITANS: https://www.samaritans.org/* *RNLI: https://rnli.org/* *CONFIRM PREFERRED CHARITY.* *THANK AND CLOSE.*

Our standards and accreditations

Ipsos' standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a "right first time" approach throughout our organisation.

ISO 20252

This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.

Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partnership

By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos endorses and supports the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commits to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation. We were the first company to sign up to the requirements and self-regulation of the MRS Code. More than 350 companies have followed our lead.

ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.

ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security, designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018

Ipsos is required to comply with the UK GDPR and the UK DPA. It covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.

HMG Cyber Essentials

This is a government-backed scheme and a key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos was assessment-validated for Cyber Essentials certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.

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Ipsos is signed up as a "Fair Data" company, agreeing to adhere to 10 core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

For more information

About Ipsos Public Affairs

Ipsos Public Affairs works closely with national governments, local public services and the not-for-profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. Combined with our methods and communications expertise, this helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.

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