



Department
for Transport

Seafarer Statistics

Technical Note

About this statistics series

Seafarer Statistics provides estimates for the number of UK seafarers, including some demographic breakdowns. The release covers some statistics on non-UK seafarers who are qualified to work on UK registered vessels. These statistics are updated annually and reflect numbers as at the end of June of each year.

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The data in this publication is primarily supplied by the Maritime and Coastal Agency (MCA) and the UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS). These data suppliers carry out a census to supply the information on the 30th June each year¹.

1. Certificated Officers

1.1 Definition

The data in this publication is primarily supplied by the Maritime and Coastal Agency (MCA) and the UK Chamber of Shipping (UKCoS). The definition for UK certificated officers has changed over recent years as a result of changes to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW).

The certificates available are:

- **Certificates of Competency (CoCs)** – The holders of these certificates are available for employment on the full range of merchant ships and detailed data is available back to 1997. CoC officers are qualified to take responsibility for the handling of the ship (deck officers) or its engines (engineers).
- **Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CECs)** – The holders of these certificates will have obtained a foreign qualification and will need to then obtain a CEC to work on a UK registered vessel. They appear in the total from 1998 onwards but the breakdown for these certificates is only available from 2004 onwards. qualified to take responsibility for the handling of the ship (deck officers) or its engines (engineers).
- **Tugs and Inshore Crafts (TICs) only** – This is an endorsement limiting officers to work on tugs and inshore crafts only. They appear in the

1. In 2019 the MCA supplied data on October 18th.

total from 1998 onwards but the breakdown for these certificates is only available from 2004 onwards.

- **Yachts only** – This is an endorsement limiting officers to work on yachts only. They appear in the total from 1998 onwards but the breakdown for these certificates is available from 2006 onwards.

Active at Sea - The statistical release refers to seafarers 'active at sea'. This is defined as any seafarer working regularly in a sea-going activity.

1.2 Maritime and Coastguard Agency data

The MCA Seafarer Documentation System (SDS) is an administrative system designed to support the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in carrying out its responsibilities for certifying seafarers in accordance with STCW.

Data from the MCA is for all certificated seafarers aged 16 or over on 30th June for the publication year, who are registered as citizens of the United Kingdom. In 2019 this data was supplied on October 18th due to an issue with the SDS. This figure is used to produce the 'Total number of UK certificated officers', comprised of those seafarers holding any certificate administered by the MCA and is then used to form the basis for the estimates of UK certificated officers 'active at sea'.

Some data is supplied for non-UK residents who have not trained in the UK but are qualified to work on UK registered vessels.

1.3 Methodology

Active at Sea

Certificates are valid for a period of five years and the SDS does not hold any information regarding the current employment status of the officers, therefore the number of officers active at sea needs to be estimated.

The majority of certificated officers will be working regularly at sea but a large minority holding valid certificates will have shore based jobs and will rarely go to sea. Some officers work ashore but keep their certificates up to date. It is also possible that some officers who have revalidated their certificates subsequently leave the industry but their records remain in the SDS database until the end of the five year revalidation cycle.

At present there is no definitive estimate for the proportion of inactive seafarers, some propositions have been put forth as low as 7% and as high as 21%. This report assumes 16% of certificated seafarers are not currently active at sea²

2. United Kingdom Seafarers Analysis 2004, D Glen, J Dowden and R Wilson, London Metropolitan University

The UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS) survey (used to provide data for uncertificated officer and ratings – see below) is believed to provide a fairer representation of the split between deck and engine officers active at sea. Therefore the percentage split of deck and engine officers from the UK CoS survey is used to profile the UK certificated deck and engine officers active at sea.

Retirement age

As some seafarers will retire before their certificate expires estimates for the retirement ages have been made.

Under the present Merchant Navy Officers Pension Plan an employee can retire at any time between 61 and 75. However, the trade union Nautilus UK have stated that the typical retirement age is 61, i.e. on the 61st birthday. After 61 the employer has to agree to continuing employment and the employer and employee can continue to make further contributions to the pension.

This report assumes a retirement age of 62, i.e. on the 62nd birthday, as some officers will retire after the age of 61.

Adjustments (1999-2003)

The number of certificated officers from 1999 – 2003 have been smoothed using a three year moving average to try take account of inconsistencies in the data in those years and give a more comparable time series.

1.4 Strengths and weaknesses

The data on certificated officers is comprehensive and of a high quality as officers have to hold certificates issued or recognised by the MCA in order to work in their profession.

However, certificates are valid for five years and the MCA does not hold information regarding the current employment status of certificated officers making it necessary to estimate the number of these officers who are active at sea.

As a result of the STCW95 amendments it is not possible to fully adjust the data from 1998 to 2005 to take account of the changes in the certification system.

2. Uncertificated Officers and Ratings

2.1 Definition

- **Uncertificated Officers** - Officers who are not required to hold an MCA certificate but are engaged to meet company specific operational requirements. These can be broken down to those uncertificated officers working in technical capacities (e.g. electrical officers, refrigeration engineers etc.) and those working in the catering or hotel departments (individuals with equivalent officer status but without maritime training).
- **Ratings** – Semi-skilled, experienced workers who are required to hold specific certificates but who are not required to hold certificates of competency. Other staff without maritime training can also hold a rating status, such as those working in the catering and hotel departments.

2.2 UK Chamber of Shipping data

The UK CoS carries out Seafarer Employment Survey (formerly the manpower survey) of its membership, collecting information on the seafarers the companies employ. These surveys have been conducted annually since 2002. The survey is essential for providing estimates of UK uncertificated officers and ratings active at sea. This data is unavailable from the MCA source which only provides information on certificates held by officers.

2.3 Methodology

Adjustments - 2002-2005

Various actions were taken to address some of the difficulties faced in the collection of these statistics in 2002 – 2005. Clear anomalies in the data series to date were removed by averaging adjacent years. A 'respondent consistent basis' was used to avoid differential non-response and changes to Chamber membership i.e. only those companies with Chamber membership in all four years and who made at least two completed returns during that period were taken. This provides a consistent time series even though the absolute level may be understated.

It was also assumed that Chamber member companies employ the very large majority of UK uncertificated officers (all major UK shipping companies are members) so therefore the absolute level estimates derived by the above were realistic.

Adjustments - 2006-2012

Figures for 2006-2012 are based directly on 'maximised' UK CoS estimates. These differ slightly from the maximised estimate for 2005 in that if no return was made for say 2008, only 2007 data were used to estimate the missing figures. The more stringent approach was made possible by improving the response rate to the survey.

2.4 Strengths and weaknesses

There are several issues which need to be taken into account when considering the UK CoS data.

Although overall response rates have always been good, individual responses may vary across the years of the survey. Response rates have improved in recent years to an average of around 90%, and the data is now considered to be a reasonably comprehensive census of the Chamber's members.

Not all seafarers will be employed by CoS members. Though the numbers employed elsewhere are expected to be small there is little scope for collecting this data or making robust estimates of those not employed by CoS members. This is due to the profile of employees varying considerably between different shipping companies according to the nature of their fleet, their operations and their management practices. In 2018 a large company moved to CoS membership and are cited as the main factor in the increase of ratings between 2017 and 2018. Then in 2019 a different large company left CoS membership resulting in an almost equivalent fall in the number of ratings in 2019.

While the coverage of Chamber employees is considered robust, some returns provide incomplete demographic details or are hard to interpret consistently so that some inaccuracies are liable to be introduced into the statistics from year to year. The number of uncertificated officers and ratings also varies from table to table depending on the exclusion of seafarers where characteristics such as age, gender or nationality are unknown. Furthermore, some job titles may not be consistent between employers, opening up the possibility of misclassification or inconsistencies over time. In addition, a few seafarers are provided via manning agencies, and reporting practices may differ between the shipping line and the manning agency.

Employment by companies can change very substantially from year to year due to changes in fleets or operations. This is particularly noticeable in the cruise sector which is a relatively large employer of a diverse range of personnel.

Combining all these considerations, the statistics can fluctuate from year to year and should be treated with caution. Therefore, the results should be used as a general guide to broad levels of employment.

3. UK Officer Trainees

3.1 Definition

- **Trainees** - These are cadets entering an approved programme of training leading to a first certificate of competency, generally with no prior experience and for whom full training is provided. Training may take up to four years to complete.
- **SMarT**- Government funding is available to support seafarer training under the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme administered by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Most UK residents undergoing training towards their first STCW Certificate of Competency are eligible for support under the SMarT1 element of the scheme.

3.2 Merchant Navy Training Board data

The Department for Transport supports maritime training through the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme administered by the MCA. Data derived from the SMarT payment administration system has been used to obtain figures on both trainee new starts and the overall number of cadets who are still in training.

3.3 Methodology

The Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) is the UK shipping industry's central body for promoting and developing seafarer training. For its own management purposes it compiles information from its membership on 'new starts' of seafaring trainees. The MNTB provided the historic data for the number of cadets.

However, since 2010 the number of new entries under SMarT funding have been supplied by the MCA. The figures are still collected from MNTB to cross check against the ones supplied by the MCA.

4. User Feedback

User feedback and development of these statistics

In 2016, a [Seafarer user engagement exercise](#) was published, seeking views on the use of the statistics and potential improvement. Although only three responses were received, together with a subsequent review of the statistics, the following areas were identified as being of interest:

- ▶ improvements to the methodology used to compile estimates of seafarers active at sea, though there was no consensus on how this should be done
- ▶ information on trainee ratings, where available
- ▶ statistics relating to seafarers of other nationalities working in the UK industry
- ▶ statistics on seafarer pay and conditions

In response to this feedback, we have:

- ▶ collected data on seafarers active at sea working for companies outside the membership of the UK CoS. Unfortunately this data proved to be insufficient to allow improved estimates to be published at this time. Instead we have attempted to more clearly set out the coverage and limitations of the existing estimates, and present additional information alongside to give wider context.
- ▶ included further statistics on maritime apprenticeships (in section 4), and non-UK seafarers from the EEA and rest of the world, based on CoS manpower survey data.

We will continue to develop these statistics, and in particular intend to further explore ways in which the estimates of seafarers active at sea might be improved. We continue to welcome feedback from users of the statistics, including suggestions for improvement. This can be provided to maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk

5. Glossary

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). An executive agency of the UK Department for Transport. Among other things, it is responsible for the certification of seafarers.

STCW95. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers sets qualification standards for personnel working on seagoing merchant ships. It was adopted in 1978 and significantly amended in 1995 - the standards as amended being referred to as STCW95.

Certificates of Competency (CoC) are issued by the MCA to UK nationals and non-UK nationals meeting the required standards under STCW for watchkeeping officers.

Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CEC) are issued by the MCA in recognition of CoCs issued by certain overseas countries to allow officers with qualifications from non-UK colleges to work on UK registered vessels. Most CEC holders are foreign nationals, but a small number are UK nationals, and the latter are included in the 'top line' UK certificated officer statistics.

CEC/TIC/Yacht. Among the administrative changes adopted by the MCA following the introduction of STCW95 was the recognition of Certificates of Equivalent Competency, and the introduction of Certificates of Competency with limited endorsement, specifically for Tugs and Inshore Craft only and for Yachts only.

SMarT. Government funding is available to support seafarer training under the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme administered by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Most UK residents undergoing training towards their first STCW Certificate of Competency are eligible for support under the SMarT1 element of the scheme.

UK Chamber of Shipping. The trade association representing the interests of UK ship owners. Organisations in some related fields are eligible for associate membership, including manning agencies, who are included in the Chamber membership survey on which some of these statistics are based.

Deck. Deck officers are responsible for handling the navigation, communications, cargo and overall management of the ship and people on board.

Engine. Engineering officers are responsible for operating and maintaining all the mechanical and electrical/electronic equipment throughout the ship.

General purpose / dual purpose. This rating is the denomination for seafarers working as ratings on both deck and engine. These ratings help officers sail and maintain vessels.