



Department for Transport

Seafarers in the UK Shipping Industry: 2018

About this release

This statistical release provides estimates for the number of UK nationals working as seafarers, including some demographic breakdowns.

The release also covers some statistics on non-UK national seafarers who are qualified to work on UK registered vessels. These statistics are updated annually and reflect numbers as at the end of June 2018 for Chamber of Shipping data and September 2018 for MCA data.

In this publication

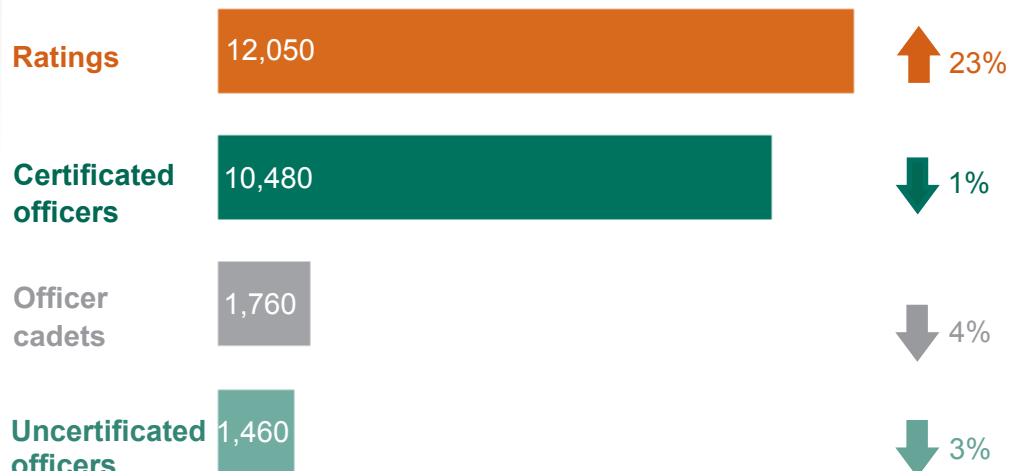
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An estimated 25,750 UK seafarers were active at sea in 2018, with overall numbers being broadly stable in recent years.

- ▶ Just under half of the total active at sea were officers (10,480 certificated and 1,460 uncertificated) with a further 1,760 officer cadets in training during the financial year 2017/18.
- ▶ There has been an overall downward trend in the number of UK seafarers over the past 15 years. Recent years' numbers have been broadly stable, however in 2018 the estimated total was 8% higher than the previous year, largely due to an increase in the number of ratings.
- ▶ The 23% increase in ratings between 2017 and 2018 is largely explained by a change in the coverage of the data provided by the Chamber of Shipping. For this reason the increase should be treated with caution.
- ▶ The majority of UK seafarers active at sea are male (an estimated 96% of certificated officers, 66% of uncertificated officers and 73% of ratings).
- ▶ Overall, there were 40,780 seafarers holding certificates to work on UK vessels issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, with around 14,480 of these being UK nationals.

UK seafarers active at sea by type 2018 ([SFR0101](#))

Change compared to 2017



Things you need to know

About these statistics

This release presents a range of statistics relating to the number of seafarers working in the UK shipping industry, including the best current estimate of the number of UK nationals active at sea. These figures are used to monitor broad trends in employment of seafarers and are used by the Department for Transport, industry bodies and trade unions.

Data sources

This release presents figures from two main data sources:

- ▶ **Section 2** presents data on officers who have certificates allowing them to work in the UK shipping industry, derived from data held by the [Maritime and Coastguard Agency \(MCA\)](#) in their Seafarer Documentation System. These figures should provide good estimates of seafarers with certificates, however, it is not possible to tell from the data whether someone is active at sea, and assumptions are required to estimate this.
- ▶ **Section 3** is based on data collected via the annual manpower survey conducted by the [UK Chamber of Shipping](#) (CoS) of their member companies. This provides an estimate of seafarers active at sea for member companies, of all ranks. Chamber membership does not cover all companies operating in the UK industry meaning that these figures do not provide complete coverage (with no uplift currently made to account for this).

The two sources are combined to produce an estimate of UK seafarers **active at sea** as set out in **section 1** - the best estimate of UK nationals working at sea in 'merchant navy' roles. This includes any UK national working on a registered vessel in a regular sea-going capacity (exc. fishing vessels).

Other relevant information is presented where possible, including on officer cadets (from MCA, **section 2**), maritime apprenticeships (Department for Education, **section 4**) and seafarer projections to present the fullest range of available statistics on seafarers.

Coverage and key definitions

Coverage. These statistics relate to the UK shipping industry, though this is not easy to define precisely. MCA data relates to officers of all nationalities who hold certificates to work on UK registered vessels; CoS data relates to member companies, which typically means that they will have some interest or base in the UK (though the seafarers they employ may work on vessels registered in another country). Tug owner companies have been included for the first time in the 2018 figures.

Time period covered. CoS data reflects the industry as at June 30th of each year. In previous years MCA data has been supplied on June 30th, however data for 2018 was returned to the Department in September 2018. It is not anticipated that the late return should have a significant effect on the statistics, however MCA data for 2018 should be treated with a degree of caution for this reason.

Trends over time. These figures are intended to provide broad indications of trends over time, however CoS data can fluctuate for a number of reasons including changes in CoS membership or in the industry. No adjustment is made for these effects, so any large fluctuations in year-on-year trends should be treated with caution.

1: Overview of UK seafarers, 2018

An estimated 25,750 UK seafarers¹ were active at sea in 2018, with an 8% increase since last year.

The majority of these UK seafarers are officers or cadets, and the total includes:

- ▶ 10,480 certificated officers, based on MCA data on certificates held, with an assumption that 84% of those holding certificates are active at sea and an assumed retirement age of 62
- ▶ 1,760 officer cadets currently in training
- ▶ 1,460 uncertificated officers and 12,050 ratings employed by companies that are members of the UK Chamber of Shipping (including the Royal Fleet Auxilliary)

The overall trend in the number of UK seafarers over the past 15 years has been downward, though in the last four years numbers have started to increase. In 2018, the estimated total was 8% higher than the previous year. However, this change partly reflects changes in membership of the Chamber of Shipping, and differences in the number of members providing data over the last two years. This affects the number of ratings recorded in particular.

Seafarer types

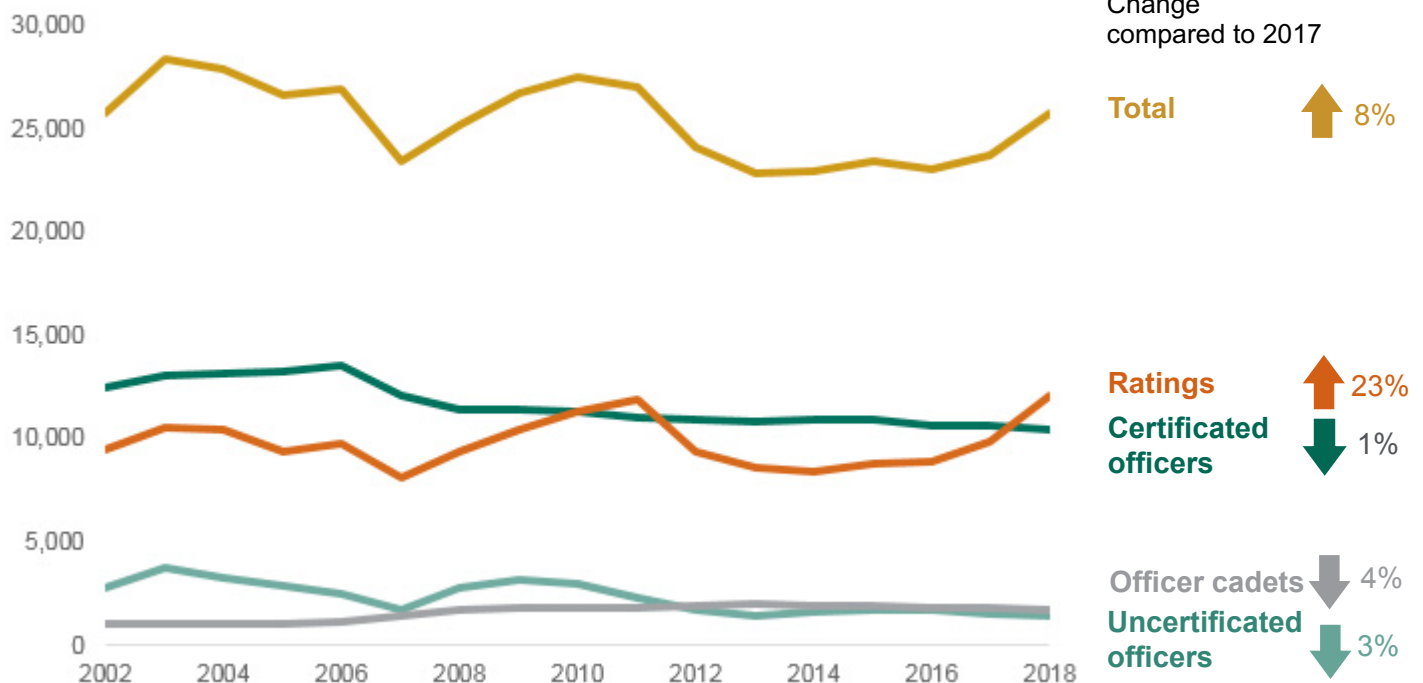
To serve as a **certificated officer** on a merchant ship, a Certificate of Competency (CoC) or equivalent must be obtained; in the UK these are issued by MCA.

Trainee officers, or **cadets**, are not part of a ship's crew but are on board to gain experience.

Uncertificated officers are those without certificates who are employed in technical or catering/hotel functions, mainly in the cruise and ferry sectors.

Ratings are semi-skilled experienced workers who are not required to revalidate their competencies as certificated officers are, or other staff without maritime training (e.g. hotel and catering staff).

UK seafarers active at sea by type, 2002 - 2018 ([SFR0101](#))



1. These figures do not capture all UK seafarers active at sea. Ratings and uncertificated officers employed by CoS non-member companies, or by member companies that did not respond to the annual survey are omitted; past attempts to collect data from non-member companies suggest that they employ some UK seafarers though a relatively small number of UK nationals compared to CoS members. Additionally, no attempt is made to adjust for seafarers collected in the CoS survey where nationality is not recorded. Taken together, these factors could mean that the total number of UK seafarers is undercounted by a few thousand.

2: Certificated officers and officer cadets (MCA data)

At September 2018, 40,780 seafarers held seafarer certificates issued by MCA - mostly Certificates of Competency (CoCs) or Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CECs). Of these, 14,430 were UK nationals.

These figures relate to certificates issued, and some of those holding certificates will not be working at sea. Whilst it is likely that many UK nationals with CoCs and those holding CECs will be working on UK flagged ships, or in the UK industry, this is less likely to be true of non-UK nationals who obtain CoCs in the UK.

Seafarer certificates issued by MCA held at September 2018 ([SFR0203](#))

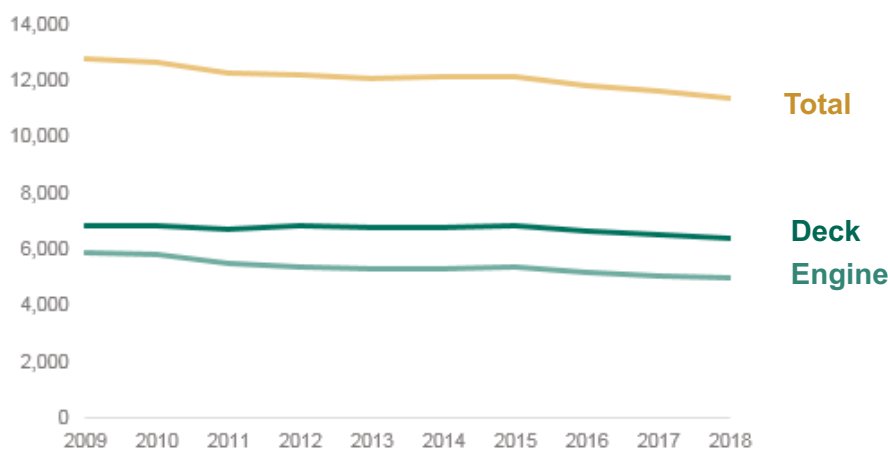


UK officers

The majority of UK nationals with certificates held CoCs (13,200), with 840 holding yacht certificates, 310 Tug and Inshore Craft (TIC) certificates and 80 CECs.

Of those with CoCs, the trend over time in the numbers holding deck and engine certificates have been similar, with there generally being slightly more deck officers than engine. Numbers last peaked in 2006 and have declined over the decade since then. This peak may have reflected a surge in renewed certificates prior to February 2002 with the STCW² regulations were fully implemented. Certificates are valid for five year and if not renewed, certificates issued in this period would have expired by June 2007.

UK officers (aged under 62) with CoCs, 2009 to 2018 ([SFR0201](#))



Seafarer certification

Under STCW95, seafarers performing deck or engine officer roles on commercial vessels are required to hold a **Certificate of Competency (CoC)** or equivalent.

Non-UK officers graduating from UK colleges obtain the same CoC as UK nationals. Some non-UK CoC holders will proceed to work on UK registered vessels while others will use the UK CoC to work on non-UK registered vessels.

Officers with training from outside the UK are required to hold a **Certificate of Equivalent Competency (CEC)** before working as a deck or engine officer on a UK registered vessel.

In 2006, newer forms of certificates were also introduced. Certificated officers are all officers holding CoCs, Tug and Inshore Craft (TIC) endorsements or yacht endorsements (excluding those holding only Master (yachts) certificates)

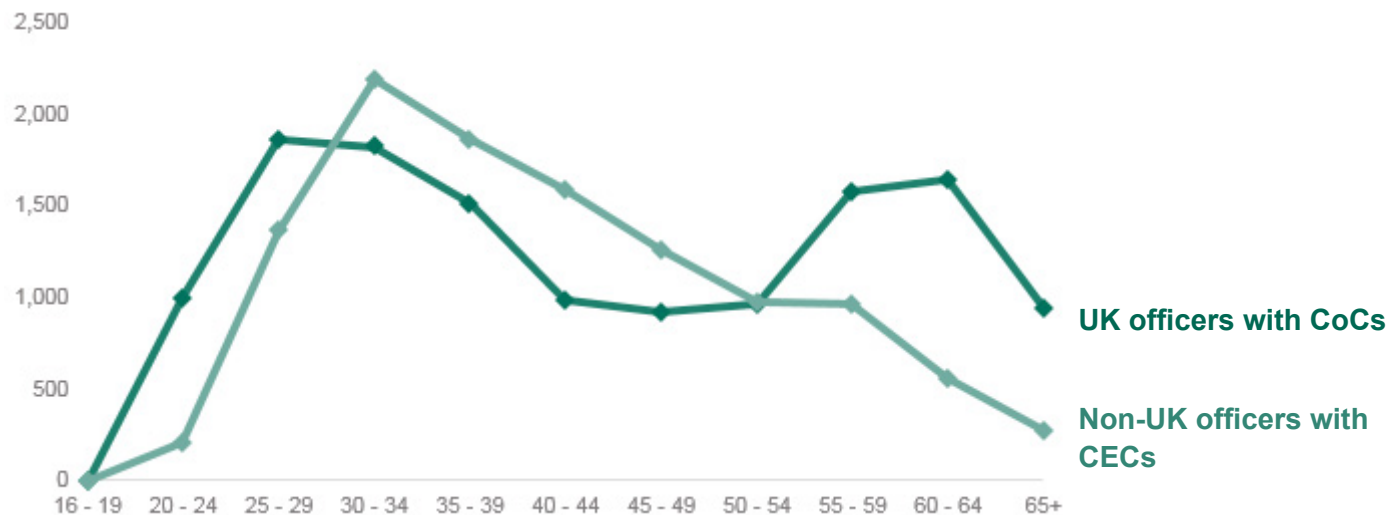
The estimates in this section make no assumptions about whether seafarers holding certificates are active at sea.

2. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping sets qualification standards for personnel working on seagoing merchant ships.

The vast majority (97%) of UK officers with CoCs were male in 2018. This varied from 95% of deck officers to 99% of engineering officers (equivalent figures for ratings are on page 9). The deck category has seen a 1 percentage point increase in female officers between 2017 and 2018.

In 2018, UK nationals holding CoCs were typically older than non-UK nationals holding CECs, with 46% of UK CoC holders being aged 45 or over in 2018, compared to just over a third of non-UK CEC holders. The ageing profile of UK seafarers was one of the issues identified in the 2015 [Maritime Growth Study](#).

Age distribution of UK officers with CoCs and non-UK officers with CECs, 2018 ([SFR0202](#))

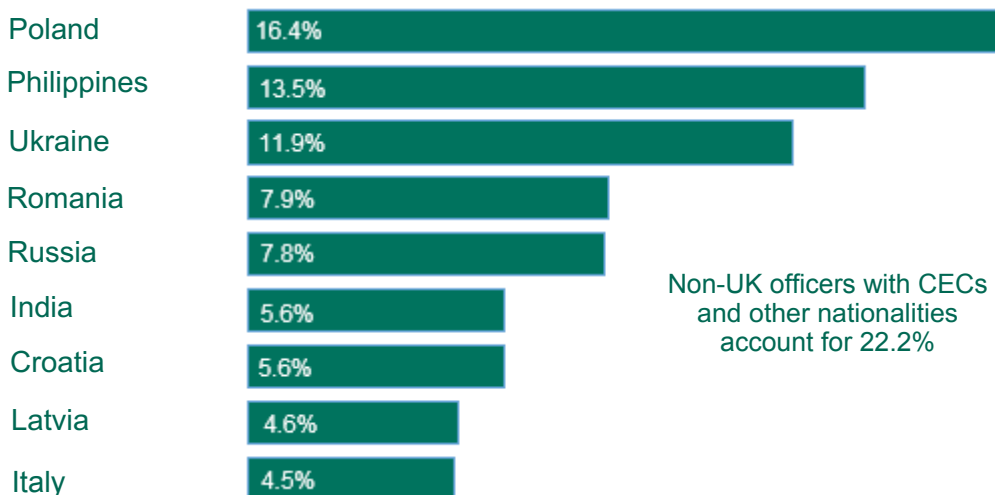


Non-UK officers: Certificates of Equivalent Competency

Together, Polish, Filipino, Ukrainian, Romanian and Russian nationals accounted for around 58% of those holding UK CECs.

In 2018, there were 11,205 non-UK nationals with valid CECs, an increase of nearly 2,000 compared to 2017. The increase in CECs over the past year however should be treated with caution due to a known technical issue with the data collection. The average number of non-UK nationals with CECs over the past five years equates to around 11,000, a figure which is broadly on trend with 2018 data.

Nationality distribution of non-UK officers with CECs, 2018 ([SFR0204](#))



STCW 2016 (Manila Amendment)

The STCW Convention 1978 has been recently amended by the 2016 Manila Amendments and contains new training requirements.

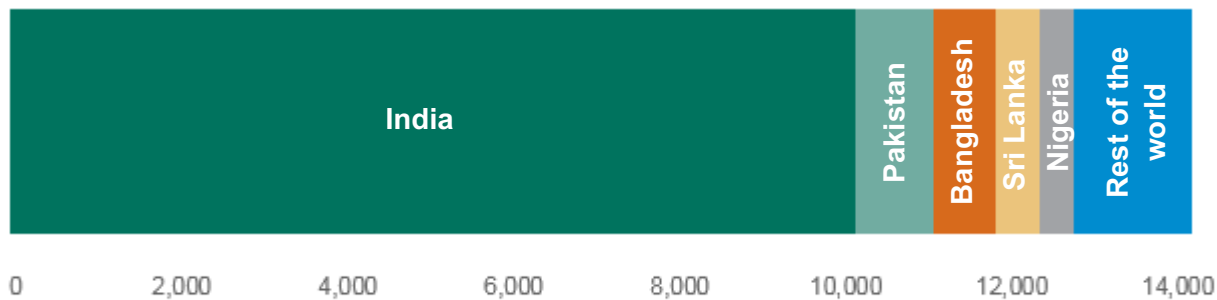
Between 1 July 2013 and 1 January 2017 seafarers were required to undertake additional training in compliance with these Manila Amendments and hold the requisite certification.

The amendments in training regulations is anticipated to somewhat explain the fluctuation in CECs between 2016 and 2018.

Non-UK officers: Certificates of Competency

In 2018, 14,245 non-UK nationals held valid CoCs issued in the UK, with the majority (72%) of these being from India, and all of the top 5 countries being members of the Commonwealth.

Nationality distribution of non-UK officers with CoCs, 2018 ([SFR0205](#))



Officer trainees

The estimated number of officer cadets in training for the financial year 2017/18 was 1,760. In the same year, the number of new entrants under the SMarT1 scheme was 750.

The number of SMarT trainees tends to reflect the level of SMarT funding, as can be seen in the chart below. In 2018 a [doubling of the future level of SMarT funding](#) was announced, with an expected increase in the number of new entrants in future years.

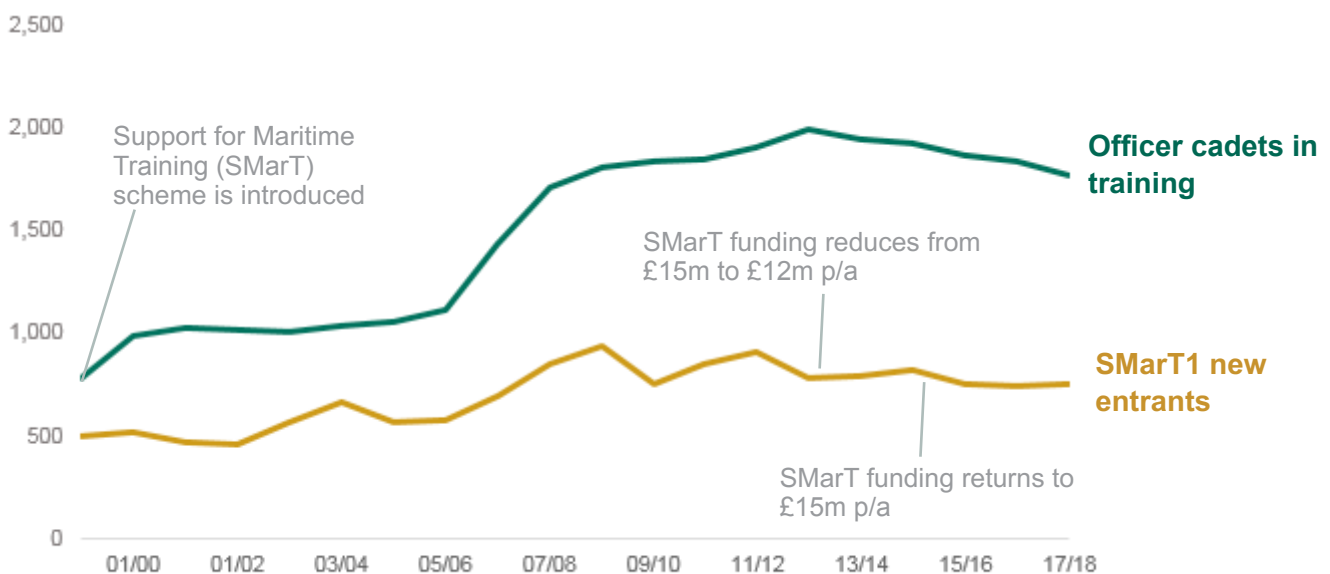
Additional data supplied by MCA highlighted that 5% of new SMarT entrants in 2018 were female. DfT and the maritime industry are working together through Maritime UK's Women in Maritime Taskforce to improve the gender balance at all levels in the maritime industry both at sea and on shore.

Officer trainees

Cadets can take up to four years to get a certificate of competency from the MCA. New entrants are supported by the [SMarT1 scheme](#).

The figures shown here are derived from monthly financial claims submitted to the MCA by training providers. Estimates of the total number of cadets in training are calculated as an average of the number in training in each month of the financial year.

Officer trainees, 1998/99 to 2017/18 ([SFR0206](#))



3: Seafarers active at sea in the UK industry (Chamber of Shipping members)

In 2018, a total of 101,160 seafarers of all nationalities were estimated to be active at sea working for companies within the membership of the UK Chamber of Shipping. Around 20% of these were UK nationals with 78% being from outside the UK. 2% of seafarer nationalities were unknown.

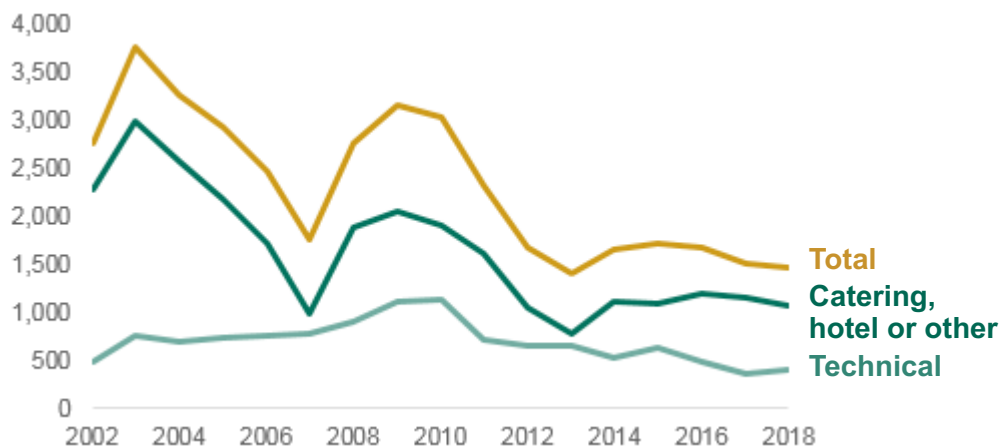
The CoS manpower survey provides the basis for estimates of UK uncertificated officers and ratings active at sea, though also collect information on certificated officers and non-UK nationals.

UK uncertificated officers and ratings: trends by type

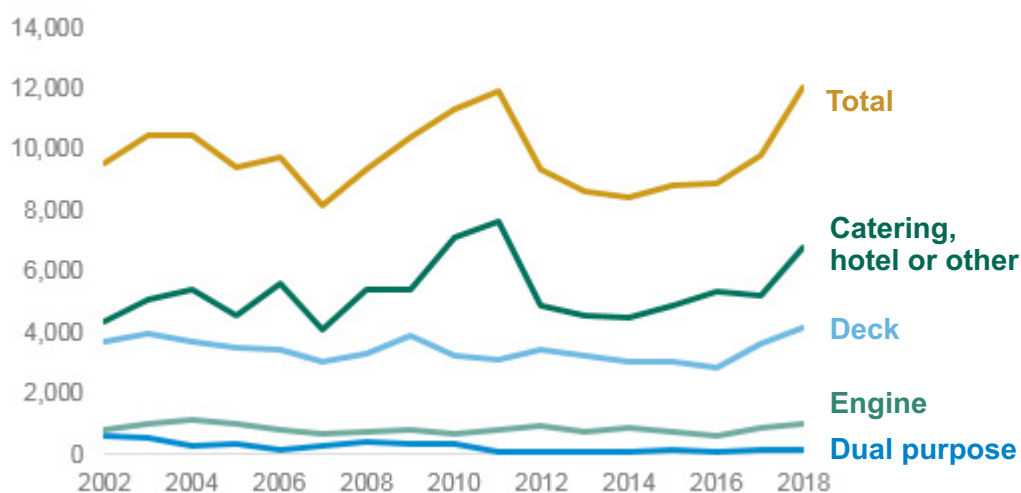
The number of UK uncertificated officers has been declining over the past four years, with 2018 seeing a 3% decrease.

The number of ratings increased by an estimated 23% in 2018, continuing the upward trend of the last three years. The largest increases were in the catering, hotel and other categories. This significant change is explained through a large company moving their business to the UK in 2018 (see CoS Manpower survey side box).

UK uncertificated officers active at sea by type, 2002 - 2018 ([SFR0301](#))



UK ratings active at sea by type, 2002 - 2018 ([SFR0301](#))



CoS manpower survey

The figures in this section are based on the UK Chamber of Shipping manpower survey, an annual survey carried out since 2002, which asks about crew employed including details of age, gender and nationality.

The survey response rate for 2018 was just under 90%, which is typical of previous years. No adjustment has been made for companies which did not provide data.

The CoS data does not provide complete coverage, and trends over time can be impacted by changes in membership or operations. For example, if a large market leader decided to move its operations or crewing outside the UK, this could result in large fluctuations in the figures. The data however, provides the best available source for monitoring patterns and broad trends of employment in the UK shipping industry.

Uncertificated officers and ratings

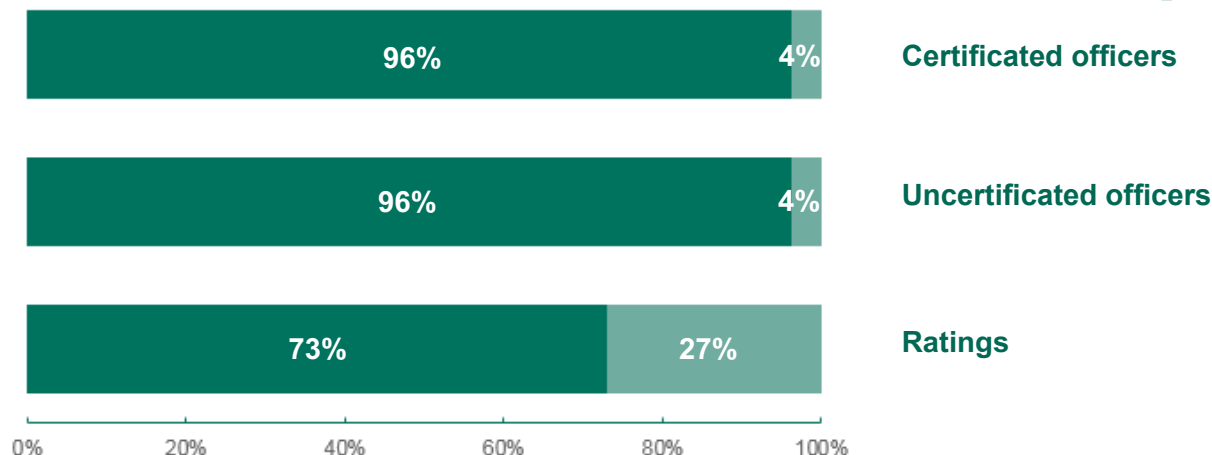
These officers are mainly employed by the cruise and ferry industry where large scale changes can rapidly take place affecting employment patterns, making these numbers volatile. For example, the total number of ratings in the catering/ hotel/ other sector has risen by over 2,000 in the last five years. This is largely due to new companies joining the UK Chamber of Shipping.

Age and gender profiles of UK seafarers active at sea

The majority of UK seafarers active at sea in 2018 were male; this was particularly true of certificated officers, with 96% being male. Amongst ratings, men accounted for an estimated 98% of deck and 99% of engine ratings, compared with 55% for the hotel/catering/other grouping.

In 2018 deck and engine ratings tended to be older on average than other seafarers. Almost 68% of deck and engine ratings up to the age of 61 were aged 40 to 61, compared with equivalent figures of 32% for hotel/catering/other ratings, and 47% of certificated officers active at sea³.

Gender distribution of UK seafarers active at sea (CoS members), 2018 ([SFR0302](#))



Seafarers active at sea by nationality

In 2018, an estimated 20% of the seafarers active at sea with CoS member companies were UK nationals, with 15% of seafarers being from other European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

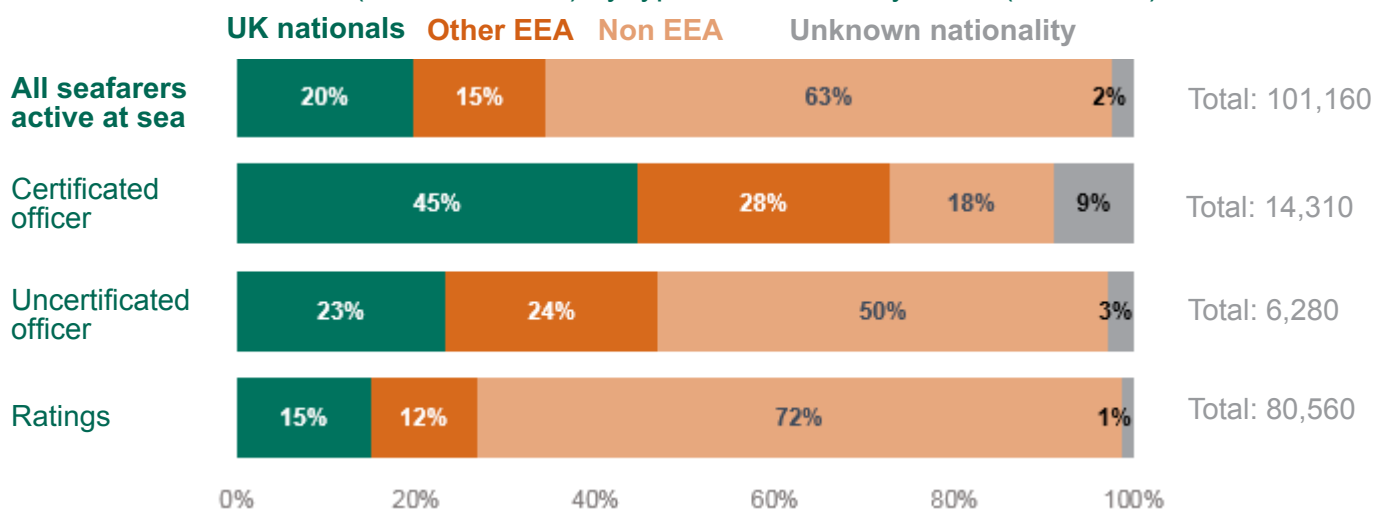
- ▶ An estimated 45% of certificated officers were from the UK, with further 28% from other EEA countries
- ▶ This compares with 15% of ratings coming from the UK - around 72% of ratings were from outside the EEA, with the Philippines followed by India accounting for the largest numbers among individual countries.

Nationality groups

The EEA is comprised of the EU and Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein.

The seafarer nationality was unknown for around 2% of the total recorded in the 2018 survey, with around 9% of certificated officers not having nationality recorded.

Seafarers active at sea (CoS members) by type and nationality, 2018 ([SFR0303](#))



3. Age figures should be treated with caution and should not be used in comparison to previous years due to a change in CoS membership in 2018.

4: Other information

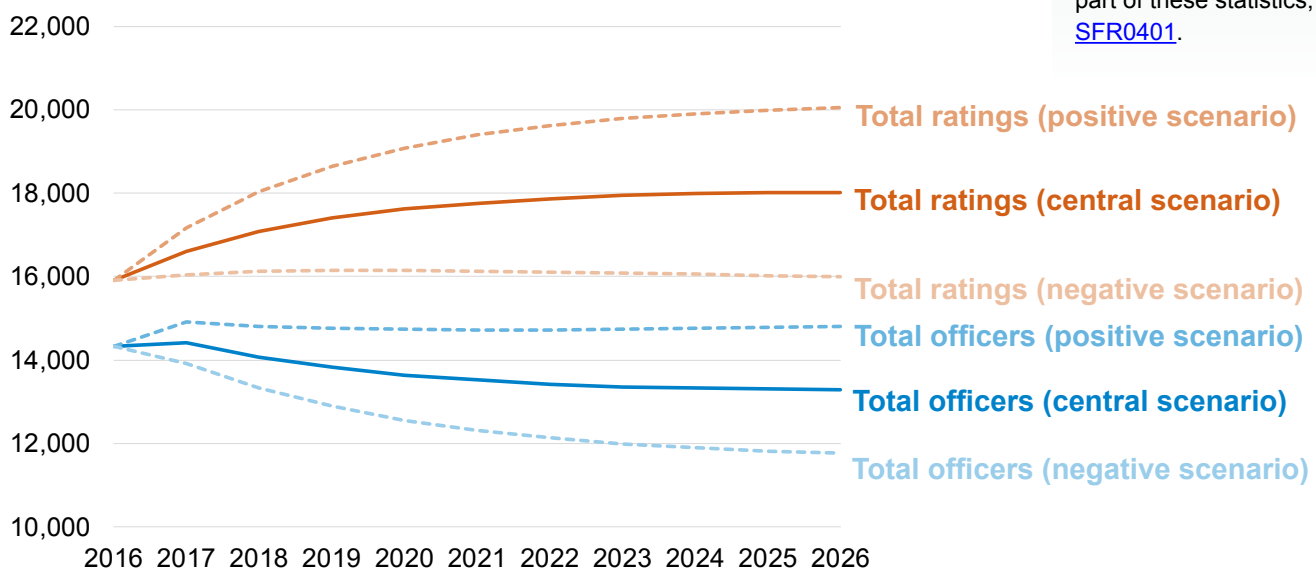
This section briefly summaries data available on seafarers and trainees available from other published sources, in areas where users of these statistics have expressed interest.

Seafarer projections

The latest seafarer projections were published in 2016; although based on the same underlying data as presented in these statistics, numbers were the results of a modelling approach which made a number of adjustments and assumptions, and so are not directly comparable.

The figures projected an increase in the supply of UK ratings, and a decrease in the supply of total UK officers - though sensitivity scenarios were also produced.

Sensitivity scenarios for the supply of UK seafarers, 2016 to 2026 ([SFR0401](#))



Seafarer projections

The full report containing the latest [UK seafarer projections](#) was published in 2017.

A summary of the [key findings from the projections](#) was published alongside the 2016 seafarer statistics.

A data table showing the key projections is included as part of these statistics, table [SFR0401](#).

Maritime apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are jobs with structured training which give apprentices a foundation to their career. Information on apprenticeships in the maritime sector is available via the [Maritime Skills Alliance](#).

Currently limited statistics are available, but the latest show that the number of [able seafarer \(deck\)](#) apprenticeships starts was as follows:

2016/17: 30 starts ([link to data](#))

2017/18 (to the end of Q2 of the academic year): 40 starts ([link to data](#))

These figures provide an indication of the number of ratings currently being trained via apprenticeships, but there are other apprenticeships related to maritime where statistics are not readily available.

Apprenticeships data

Information on the number of apprenticeship starts, numbers and achievements is published by the Department for Education and Education and Skills Funding Agency as part of their [FE data library on apprenticeships](#).

Wider context

The figures on page 3 do not attempt to count everyone who works in a seagoing capacity in the UK; the focus is on the 'merchant navy' for which seafarer certification is managed by the MCA. The following are other groups that are outside the scope of this publication but may be considered to be in seafarer roles:

- ▶ The **Royal Navy**, which has a regular trained strength of around 30,000 based on [Ministry of Defence statistics](#) (however the [Royal Fleet Auxiliary](#) is included in the above estimates)
- ▶ **Fishermen** – there were an estimated 11,800 UK fishermen in 2016 based on statistic compiled by the [Marine Management Organisation](#).
- ▶ **Superyachts** – most UK nationals working as crew aboard yachts will not be in scope of the above statistics (though officers with certificates not restricted to yachts will be). Industry estimates place the number of UK nationals work in the superyachts sector at 19,000.
- ▶ **Workboats** – those working on smaller vessels, such as those in companies belonging to the [National Workboat Association](#), are unlikely to be covered though no estimate is available.
- ▶ **Inland waterways** – MCA has issued 3,600 [Boatmaster licences](#) for work on inland waters and near coastal work over the five years to mid-2017.
- ▶ Those working in **roles on shore**.

It is possible that seafarers can belong to more than one of these groups. Producing an overall estimate of all UK nationals working in at sea from the available data is challenging.

Further information

Data tables. This release is a summary of a larger set of data tables, charts and documentation on seafarer statistics available from the Department for Transport website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/seafarer-statistics-2018>.

Technical information. A technical note describing the data sources, methods, definitions and data issues in more detail can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>.

National Statistics. These statistics are badged as National Statistics, meaning that they are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>

Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series>.

Next update. The next update in this annual series is provisionally scheduled for December 2019.



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