Changes in standards of shipboard accommodation

Neil Ellis
INTRODUCTION

• In 2011 SIRC undertook a large scale survey of seafarers’ working and living conditions on-board ship funded by the Lloyds’ Register Foundation.

• The survey looked at seafarers’ satisfaction with a number of aspects of the design of accommodation which have been shown to be important for both mental and physical health.

• The survey was repeated in 2016.

• This presentation today will look at where improvements to seafarers’ living conditions have been made, where there has been no change, and places where conditions have deteriorated, or are still in need of attention.

Both reports can be downloaded from the SIRC website (www.sirc.cf.ac.uk)
METHODS

• Questionnaires were collected from active seafarers at training establishments and welfare centres based in the UK, the Philippines and China.
  • 1,533 questionnaires were collected in 2011
  • 1,537 questionnaires were collected in 2016

The sample

• Seafarers in the two samples were similar in terms of gender and nationality.
• In terms of vessels, there was no change in ship types.
IMPROVEMENT IN ACCOMMODATION AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Tour length

• Tour length had reduced.
  • 34% had tours of 6 months or more compared to 55% in 2011.

• Tour length differed by nationality.
Tour length

The percentage of seafarers with tours of 6 months or more by nationality

![Bar chart showing the percentage of seafarers with tours of 6 months or more by nationality for Chinese, Indian, Filipino, and British sailors in 2011 and 2016.](chart_image)
The environment within the cabin

- Seafarers’ ratings of the standards of cabin furnishings had improved with 74% saying furnishings were good/very good, compared to only 51% in 2011.
• There was an **increase** in the percentage of seafarers that were able to adjust the electric light levels in their cabins.

• The ability to adjust light levels had improved on tankers, bulk carriers, and general cargo vessels.

The percentage of seafarers that were able to adjust electric light levels by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tankers</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk carriers</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General cargo vessels</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger/general cargo vessels</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication facilities

• The provision of internet *within cabins* had significantly increased (from 15% to 27% in 2016).

• Internet provision *in general* on-board had also increased (from 39% to 51% in 2016).

• The provision of free and unlimited internet had also risen.

  • However, there was a significant increase in the percentage of seafarers suggesting they had internet provision but with *restrictions in time* or that they *had to pay*. 
• The provision of email access had also increased.
  • The provision of free and unlimited email had increased from 27% to 39%
• Access to email facilities varied by seafarer nationality.
The percentage of seafarers that had access to email facilities by year

- Chinese
- Indian
- Filipino
- British

Year: 2011, 2016
**Food on-board**

- There was a marked improvement in seafarers’ ratings of the quality of food.

- Improvements were also seen in catering for dietary needs.
• There was little change in satisfaction with cabin size or storage space.

• There was no change in the proportions of seafarers that reported sharing a cabin or bathroom facilities.

• There was no change in the percentage of seafarers that were able to control the temperature in their cabin.
• There was no change in the percentage of seafarers that reported: natural light within cabins, being able to block out natural light, or being able to see out the window without restriction.

• There was no change in the proportion of seafarers that reported being disturbed by noise some or all of the time.

• There was no change in the percentage of seafarers that suggested the food on-board was unhealthy.
The ability to rest

• There was an increase in the percentage of seafarers that suggested they were unable to get adequate rest all of the time (35% in 2011 and 53% in 2016).
Recreational facilities

- The provision of recreational equipment such as TVs, music systems, DVD libraries and book libraries had reduced in 2016.

Recreational equipment provided by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cabin facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music systems</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radios</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music systems</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD libraries</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book libraries</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaoke machines</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shore leave

• The proportion of seafarers that indicated that they were never able to go ashore had increased from 7% to 11%.
Chinese seafarers

• For Chinese seafarers tour length had actually increased.
  • 62% reporting having a contract of 6 months or more in 2016, compared to only 54% in 2011.

• Chinese seafarers were also the least likely to have internet access in their cabins.

• Similarly, in both phases, Chinese seafarers were also the least likely to have access to email facilities.
The percentage of seafarers that had internet access in their cabins
Chinese seafarers

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  • 62% reporting having a contract of 6 months or more in 2016, compared to only 54% in 2011.

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Chinese built ships

• Those working on vessels built in China were the **least** likely to be able to adjust light levels.

• Those working on Chinese built vessels were slightly **more** likely to report being disturbed by vibration in both phases.

The percentage of seafarers disturbed by vibration by country of ship build

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

Room for improvement

• **One in ten** seafarers are still sharing cabins, and a **fifth** (21%) are still sharing bathroom facilities.

• **Twenty seven percent** of seafarers are still unsatisfied with the size of their cabins, and nearly a **third** (30%) suggest they had inadequate storage space.

• Despite improvements, just under a **sixth** (16%) of seafarers still indicated that furnishings were poor/very poor.

• Just over a **third** (36%) of seafarers are still unable to control the temperature in their cabin.
• Nearly two thirds (60% in both years) of seafarers in both years report being disturbed by noise some or all of the time.

• Despite improvements, 59% of seafarers still report being disturbed by vibration in their cabins.

• There was actually an increase in the percentage of seafarers that said they were unable to get adequate rest all of the time, from 35% to 53%.
• The proportion of seafarers that suggested they were never able to take shore leave has increased from 7% to 11%.

• In both phases, roughly a third of seafarers suggest the food on-board was unhealthy (31% in 2011 and 32% in 2016).

• Poorer living and working conditions seem to be more prevalent among certain groups of seafarers, i.e. Chinese seafarers.
THE BENEFITS OF IMPROVED ACCOMMODATION

For Seafarers

• Larger cabins/less sharing → Reduced crowding/improved mental health.

• Better conditions in cabins → Better mood, well-being and mental health.

• Lighting → Improved ratings of mood/quality of rest.

• More opportunity for shore leave → A restorative effect on mental well-being.

• Provision of the internet on-board → Reduced feelings of isolation and loneliness.

• Provision of better recreational facilities → Encourage socialisation on-board/reduces feelings of isolation.
Benefits for companies/employers:

- Better work performance
- Increased safety
- Improved crew retention
- Less repatriations
- Less unhealthy seafarer behaviour
CONCLUSION

• Although there have been some improvements in terms of seafarers’ accommodation and recreational facilities, many aspects have not improved, or have actually got worse.

• Indeed, there is still much scope for improvement to accommodation and recreational facilities on-board.

• This is worrying, especially given the increasing concerns about seafarers’ mental health that is currently being raised within the industry.