

The Maritime Barometer 2022

NAUTILUS INTERNATIONAL POLLING ON
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THE MARITIME INDUSTRY
AND MARITIME CAREERS



Executive Summary

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Maritime transport is the backbone of global trade and the global economy, playing a critical role in the improvement of living standards across the world. Its capacity to transfer goods and materials from production to the point of consumption underpins the essence of modern life. While most people are still unaware of the integral part the shipping industry plays in their daily existence, there seems to be a slow yet discernible change in perceptions.

This became clear when Nautilus International, the global trade union representing more than 20,000 maritime professionals at sea and ashore, conducted the 'Maritime Barometer' survey in July 2022. The survey intends to raise awareness of seafarers' critical role and ensure they experience fairness in their jobs and careers.

This report reflects the survey results and highlights a shift in people's attitudes and knowledge of the sector since the previous report, conducted in 2021. The impact of Brexit, supply chain constraints and the March 2022 P&O Ferries scandal – that saw the sacking of nearly 800 British maritime workers – all having an impact on people's views on the industry.

Introduction

In Summer 2022, Nautilus International conducted its benchmarking Maritime Barometer survey to highlight the current situation within the shipping industry and understand the attitudes and knowledge of those outside of it. Nautilus conducted the survey across 2,000 residents in the UK, representing a cross-section in terms of age, gender and location.

The report highlights the survey's key findings, drawing attention to the general attitudes and understanding of the nation toward the maritime industry and how these have changed since the previous survey a year ago.

Summary of findings

- Only one in a thousand respondents (0.1%) know that more than 90% of the nation's imports arrive by sea
- As many as 40% of people don't know where their nearest port is
- More than half of the respondents cannot identify the UK maritime flag, known as the Red Ensign – or even offer a guess – when shown an image of the flag
- Over a quarter (29%) of respondents believe that seafarers deserve key worker status, up from 21% the previous year
- On average, respondents believe the monthly global minimum wage for seafarers equates to £1,377 (£16,524 per annum). In fact, Nautilus International's own data shows that a ship master working onboard a cruise ship or tanker could earn in the region of £70,000 to £80,000 per annum
- UK residents believe that pirate attacks are more common than shark attacks (38% vs 21%) – in last year's (2021) report, it was the other way round.

This report shows that people are becoming more educated and can be mobilised by issues affecting the sector

Results summary

'Sea blindness'

While there is still a significant underappreciation of the maritime industry and general ignorance about it – known as “sea blindness” in the maritime lexicon – the wheel is seemingly slowly turning. The amount of media exposure generated by Brexit trade barriers, the resultant supply chain disruptions, and, more recently, the P&O Ferries scandal, has raised the level of public consciousness. The report shows that people are becoming more educated and can be mobilised by issues affecting the sector.

The retention of skilled and experienced professionals in the maritime workforce is more critical than ever

However, the extent of sea blindness in the UK is still high, with just one in a thousand people (0.1% of respondents) knowing that more than 90% of imports to the country arrive by sea. Instead, people believe that only just over half of these goods (52%) enter the UK's ports via ship. This figure is slightly up from 2021 when respondents thought that 48% of goods come to the UK via ship.

Out of several household goods, the only item that more than half the respondents identified as arriving in the UK predominantly by sea was bananas (63%). Fewer than half of all adults believe that oil/petrol (46%), t-shirts (41%), games consoles (40%) and medicines (37%) predominantly arrive on these shores by sea, with more than a fifth (22%) having no idea how many imports arrive by sea. That lack of awareness emphasises just how 'out of sight and out of mind' the maritime sector is when it comes to its critical role within the nation's supply chain.

As many as 40% of respondents don't know where their nearest port is. More than half of the

respondents cannot identify the UK's maritime flag as the Red Ensign, which most UK registered vessels must display during daylight hours.

More encouragingly, three in 10 people (29%) now believe that seafarers should have key worker status, an eight percent increase from the 21% reported in the 2021 research, likely motivated by the increase in media attention of Brexit-related supply chain issues and the P&O Ferries scandal over the past 12 months.

Careers at sea

The decline in popularity of seafaring as a career in the UK seems to have been stemmed for now, with 16% of people indicating they would consider a career at sea compared with just five percent a year ago. Men (22%) reported to be more interested in a career at sea compared with nine percent of women, emphasising that work still needs to be done to make a career in maritime a viable option for women.

The principal reasons why people would be interested in a career at sea – and at an increased level since 2021 – were found to be that it is an exciting career and offers opportunities to travel (44%), whilst there are a variety of career options (37%), as well as good career progression (34%). It is encouraging to see an increased focus on careers in maritime have a positive impact on the number of individuals willing to work at sea, despite the high-profile instances of exploitation in the past year.

The main reasons why people wouldn't consider a maritime career ranged from not wanting to be away from home (41%), seasickness (31%), inadequate working conditions (24%), to it not being a financially viable career (14%). Respondents believed that only a career in hospitality was less financially rewarding than a job in the maritime sector.

In comparison, Nautilus International's own data shows that a ship master working onboard a cruise ship or

tanker could earn in the region of £70,000 to £80,000 per year and a captain on a large super yacht could earn up to £120,000 per year. This compares with the average UK full time salary in 2021 of £31,285. In addition, a UK seafarer can access the Seafarers Earnings Deduction (SED) if they are outside the UK for more than 183 days.

Conclusion

While there has been an increase in public awareness regarding the UK maritime industry, the survey data again proves that it largely remains an “out of sight” sector. Despite its incredible contribution to the UK and its citizens, the UK maritime industry has faced a series of challenges, from the impact of Brexit to supply chain disruptions and the P&O Ferries scandal.

These issues have, however, put the nation’s maritime sector back into the public consciousness and subsequently showcased just how vital seafaring jobs are to the UK’s day-to-day operations.

Despite this, there is still work to be done to ensure a consistent and communal shift in attitude and a greater understanding of what needs to be done to future-

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proof the sector. This is a situation the industry can ill afford since the retention of skilled and experienced professionals in the maritime workforce is more critical than ever.

By driving a journey of shared education, Nautilus campaigns for fairness for seafarers and the wider maritime industry. There were some positive signs against an extremely challenging backdrop over the past year, with public awareness on the rise and support for the industry and those working within it. Building on this momentum, the industry can thrive in the years to come.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1002964/average-full-time-annual-earnings-in-the-uk>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/seafarers-earnings-deduction-tax-relief-if-you-work-on-a-ship>

To find out more about Nautilus International and its work to support maritime professionals, visit: www.nautilusint.org

Further reading

- **Nautilus International ‘Fair Ferries’ report – the public’s response to the P&O Ferries scandal**



- **2021 Nautilus International Maritime Barometer**



- **2021 Nautilus International Social Conditions survey**





About Nautilus International

is an independent, influential, global trade union and professional organisation, committed to organising and campaigning for maritime and shipping professionals, delivering high quality services to members, and maritime welfare support

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