



Seafarer Statistics Technical Note

Introduction

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

1. UK Certified Officers

1.1. Definition

The definition for UK certified officers has changed over recent years as a result of changes to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW¹).

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.
- **Tugs and Inshore Crafts (TICs) only** – This is an endorsement limiting officers to work on tugs and inshore crafts only. They appear in the 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. Data source

The MCA Seafarer Documentation System (SDS) is an administrative system designed to support

¹ STCW- 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.

the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in carrying out its responsibilities for certifying seafarers in accordance with STCW.

Data from the MCA is for all certified seafarers aged 16 or over on 30th June for the publication year, who are registered as citizens of the United Kingdom. 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 certified 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 certified officers will be working regularly at sea but a significant 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 per cent and as high as 21 per cent. This report assumes 16 per cent of certified seafarers are not currently active at sea.

The UK Chamber of Shipping (UKCoS) survey (used to provide data for uncertified 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 UKCoS survey is used to profile the UK certified 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.

An alternative retirement age of 65 years is also provided, this can be considered as giving a maximum estimate.

- **Adjustments (1999-2003)**

The number of certified 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 certified 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 certified 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. UK Uncertified Officers and Ratings

2.1. Definitions

- **Uncertified 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 uncertified 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. Data source

The UKCoS carries out a manpower survey of its membership, collecting information on the seafarers the companies employ. These surveys have been annual since 2002.

The data collected by UKCoS forms the basis of the estimates for the number of uncertified officers and ratings. The survey provides information on age, specialism and gender.

2.3. Methodology

- **Sample basis -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 uncertified officers (all major UK shipping companies are members) so therefore the absolute level estimates derived by the above were realistic.

- **Sample basis 2006 onwards.**

Figures for 2006 onwards are based directly on 'maximised' UKCoS 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 UKCoS 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 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.

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. 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 therefore should be treated with caution. Therefore, the results should be used as a general guide to broad levels of employment.

3. UK Officers Trainees

3.1. Definitions

- **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. Data source

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. These differ slightly because:

- Certain cadet trainees are ineligible for support under SMarT (such as those employed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary)
- All EU nationals can obtain SMarT support if residential conditions are met
- Differences in reporting may arise between employers reporting new trainee numbers to the MNTB and claims for re-imburement submitted by training providers to the MCA. This may be due to a number of reasons, e.g. as a result of students dropping out or changing their circumstances part-way through the course.

4. User Feedback

We continuously review the content of these statistics to ensure they are meeting users' needs. We welcome any feedback on these statistics via our [user feedback form](#) or by email to maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk