



Department for Transport

Seafarers in the UK Shipping Industry: 2017

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 2017.

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An estimated 23,760 UK seafarers were active at sea in 2017, with overall numbers being broadly stable in recent years.

- ▶ Just over half of the total active at sea were officers (10,600 certificated and 1,500 uncertificated) with a further 1,830 officer cadets in training during the financial year 2016/17.
- ▶ There has been a downward overall trend in the number of UK seafarers over the past 15 years, though in recent years numbers have been broadly stable. In 2017, the estimated total was 3% higher than the previous year, largely due to an increase in the number of ratings (partly reflecting better data coverage).
- ▶ The majority of UK seafarers active at sea are male (an estimated 97% of certificated officers, 72% of uncertificated officers and 76% of ratings).
- ▶ Overall, there were around 39,000 seafarers holding certificates to work on UK vessels issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, with 14,480 of these being UK nationals.

UK seafarers active at sea by type 2017 ([SFR0101](#))

Change compared to 2016



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)

Time period covered. Unless stated otherwise, figures relate to end June of each year.

Trends over time. These figures are intended to provide broad indications of trends over time. Whilst MCA data should measure trends consistently, the 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 that any large fluctuations in year-on-year trends should be treated with caution.

Further information

A glossary of terms used throughout this release is provided at the end of the document (page 13). Further technical information is also available (see page 12).

1: Overview of UK seafarers, 2017

An estimated 23,760 UK seafarers¹ were active at sea in 2017, with overall numbers being broadly stable in recent years.

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

- ▶ 10,600 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
- ▶ 1,830 officer cadets currently in training
- ▶ 1,500 uncertificated officers and 9,830 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 recent years numbers have been broadly stable. In 2017, the estimated total was 3% 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

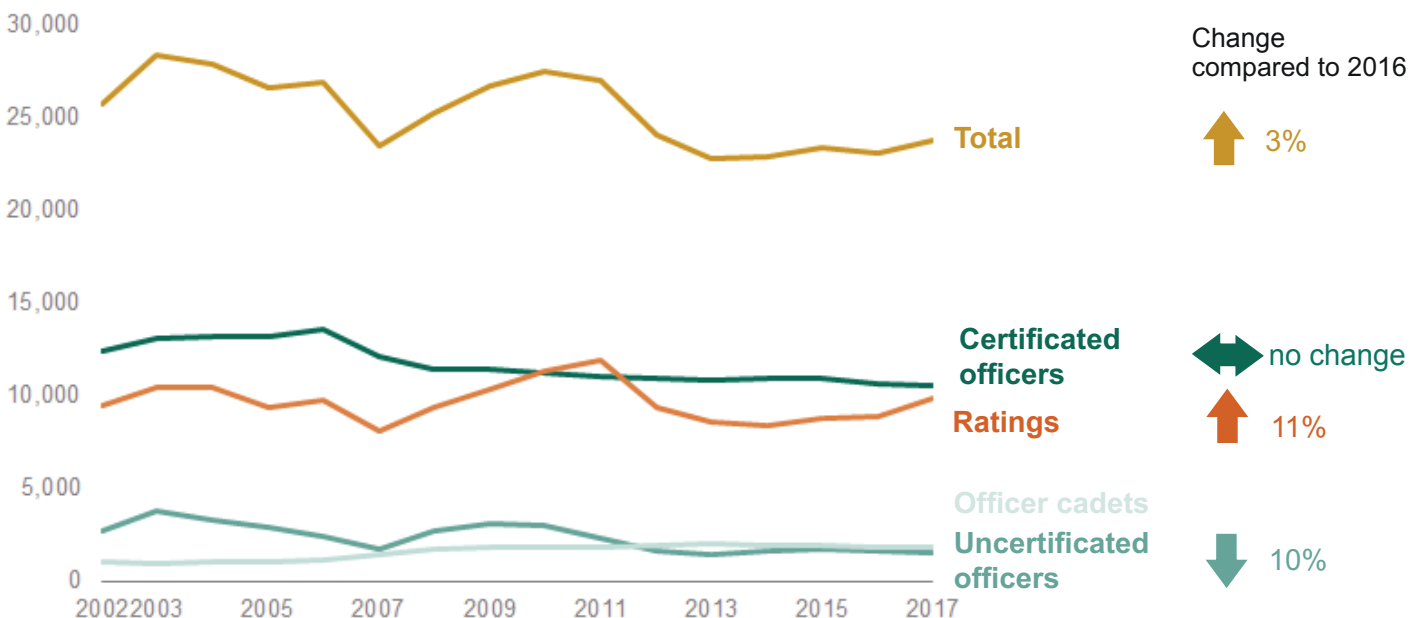
To serve as a **certificated officer** on a merchant ship, a Certificate of Competency (CoC) or equivalent must be obtained; in the UK these are issued by MCA.

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 - 2017 ([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; recent 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.

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 statistics 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**.

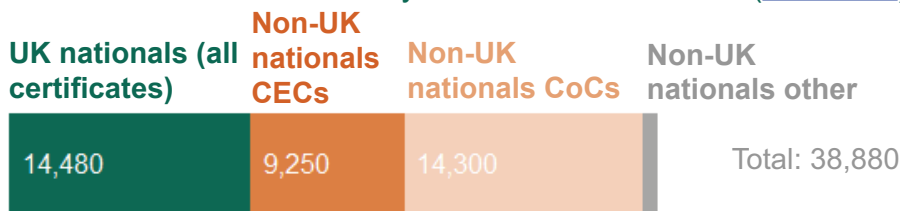
It is possible that seafarers can belong to more than one of these groups. Producing an overall estimate of all UK nationals working in at sea from the available data is challenging.

2: Certificated officers and officer cadets

At mid-2017, almost 39,000 seafarers held seafarer certificates issued by MCA - mostly Certificates of Competency (CoCs) or Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CECs). Of these, 14,480 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 mid-2017 ([SFR0203](#))

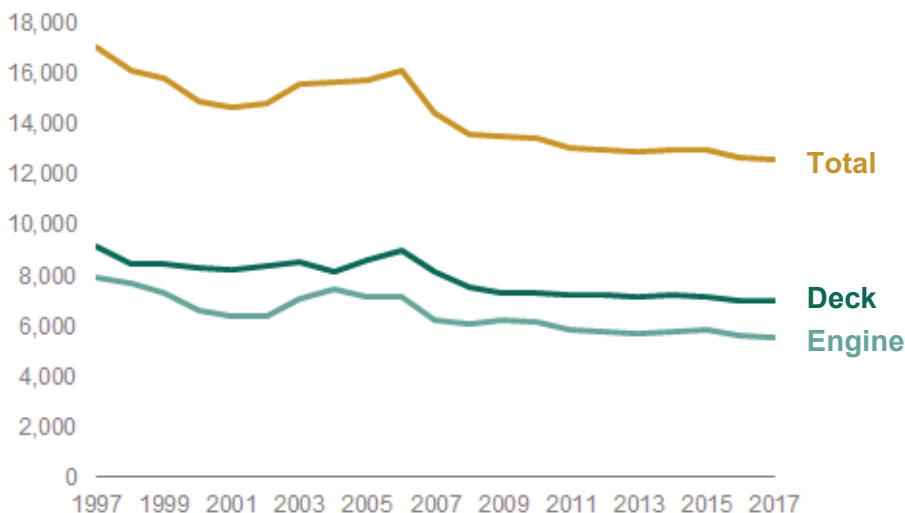


UK officers

The majority of UK nationals with certificates held CoCs (13,340), with 720 holding yacht certificates, 350 Tug and Inshore Craft (TIC) certificates and 70 CECs.

Of those with CoCs, the trend over time in the numbers holding deck and engine certificates have been similar - numbers last peaked in 2006 and have declined over the decade since then. This pattern may reflect a surge in renewed certificates prior to February 2002 with the STCW¹ regulations were fully implemented. Certificates are valid for five years and if not renewed, certificates issued in this period would have expired by June 2007.

UK officers (aged under 62) with CoCs, 1997 to 2017 ([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).

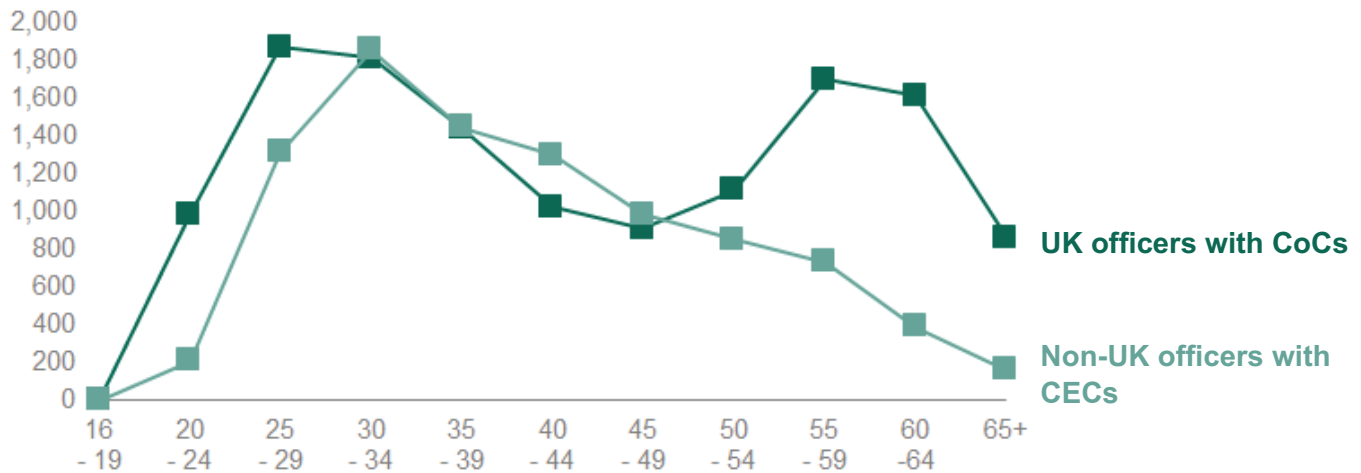
The estimates in this section make no assumptions about whether seafarers holding certificates are active at sea.

1. 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 2017, as in 2016. This varied from 96% of deck officers to 99% of engineering officers (equivalent figures for ratings are shown on page 9).

UK nationals holding CoCs were typically older than non-UK nationals holding CECs, with around a half of UK CoC holders aged 45 or over in 2017, compared to 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, 2017 ([SFR0202](#))

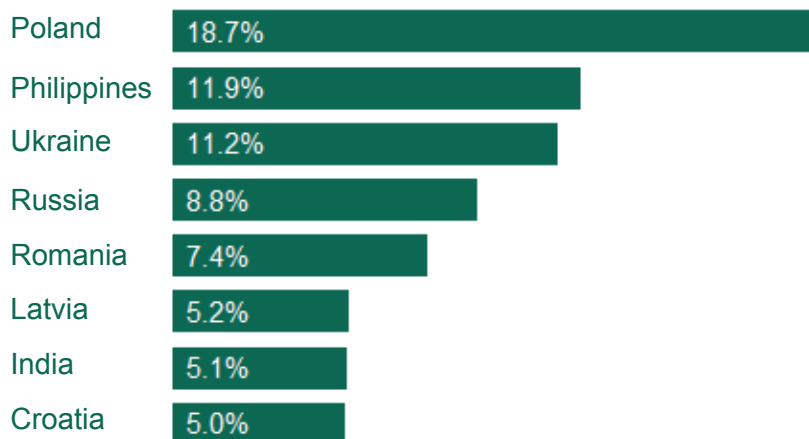


Non-UK officers: Certificates of Equivalent Competency

In 2017, there were 9,225 non-UK nationals with valid CECs, a fall from over 13,000 in 2009.

Together, Polish, Filipino, Ukrainian and Russian nationals accounted for just over half of those holding UK CECs. In recent years there has been a notable decline in Indian nationals with CECs.

Nationality distribution of non-UK officers with CECs, 2017 ([SFR0204](#))



CECs in the EU: EMSA data

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) publishes statistics on seafarers across the EU, with the latest report for [2015](#). These figures, derived from certification data from different EU countries, show the extent to which seafarers with UK CoCs seek CECs (or EaRs in EMSA terminology) to work on vessels registered in other EU countries.

In 2015, around 3,600 holders of UK CoCs gained an EaR, with the largest numbers for Malta, Cyprus, and Denmark - countries with relatively large ship registers.

Non-UK officers: Certificates of Competency

In 2017, 14,300 non-UK nationals held valid CoCs issued in the UK, with the majority (71%) 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, 2017 ([SFR0205](#))



Officer trainees

The estimated total of officer cadets in training for the financial year 2016/17 was 1,830. In the same year, the number of new entrants under the SMarT1 scheme was 740.

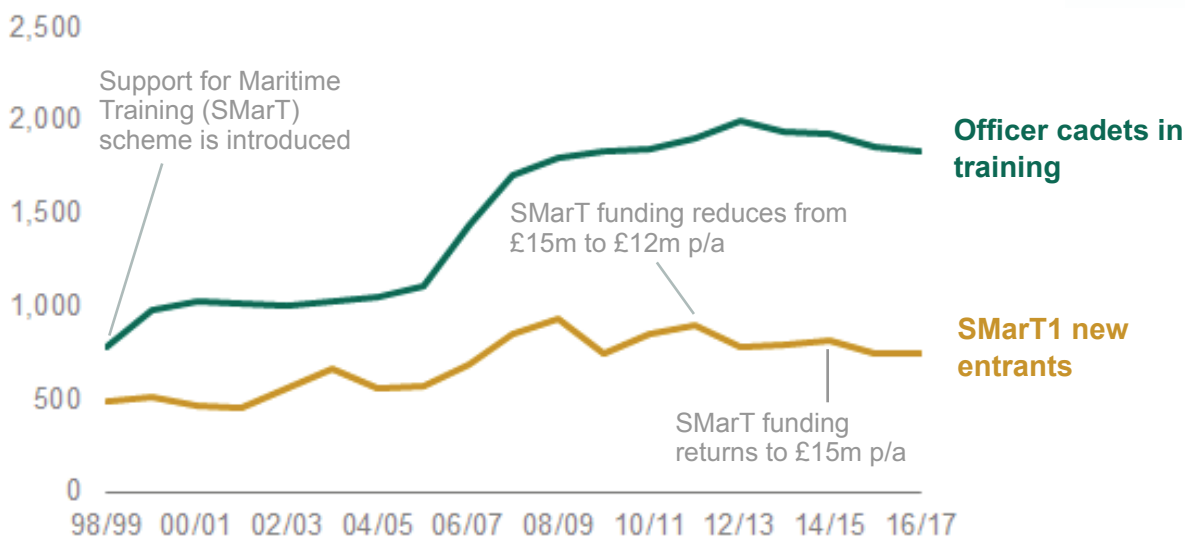
The number of SMarT trainees tends to reflect the level of SMarT funding, as can be seen in the chart below. In 2018 a [doubling of the future level of SMarT funding](#) was announced, with an expected increase in the number of new entrants in future years.

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 2016/17 ([SFR0206](#))



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

In 2017, a total of around 88,000 seafarers of all nationalities were estimated to be active at sea working for companies within the membership of the UK Chamber of Shipping. Approximately a fifth of these were UK nationals and two-thirds from outside the EEA.

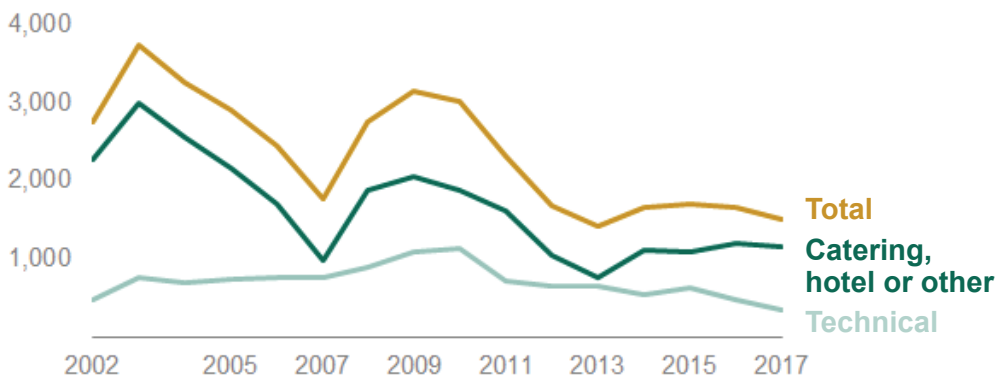
The CoS manpower survey provides the basis for estimates of UK uncertificated officers and ratings active at sea, though also collects information on certificated officers and non-UK nationals.

UK uncertificated officers and ratings: trends by type

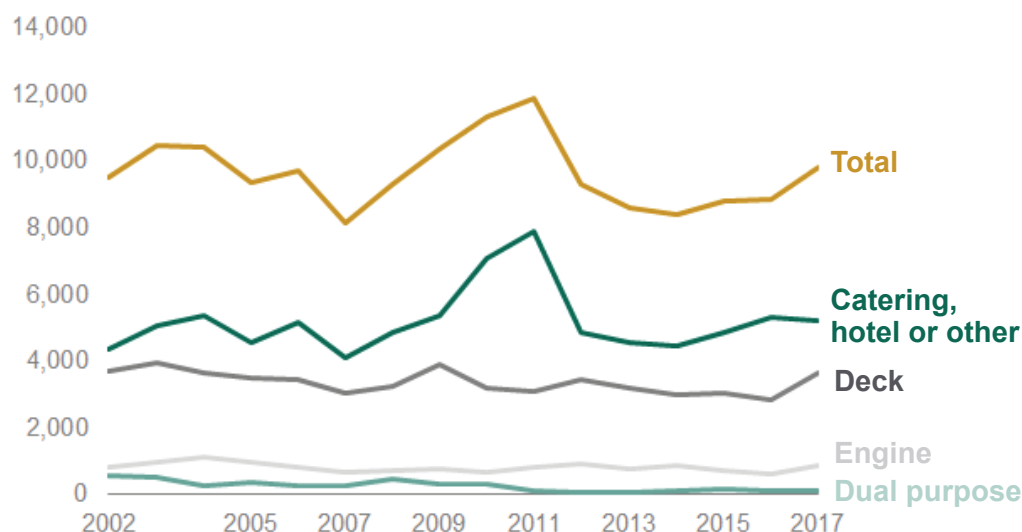
As in the previous year, the estimated number of UK uncertificated officers fell in 2017, by 10%, largely due to reduction in technical officers.

The number of ratings increased by an estimated 11% in 2017, continuing the slight upward trend of recent years. The largest increases were in the deck and engine categories, though this partly reflects one response from a large crewing company which did not return data in 2016. The majority of ratings remain employed in the hotel, catering, and other services area.

UK uncertificated officers active at sea by type, 2002 - 2017 ([SFR0301](#))



UK ratings active at sea by type, 2002 - 2017 ([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 is typically over 90%, though no adjustment is made for companies which do not provide data.

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

Uncertificated officers and ratings

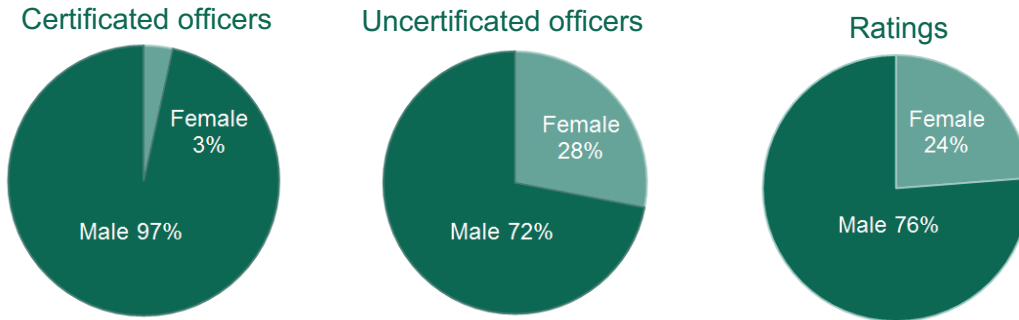
These officers are mainly employed by the cruise and ferry industry where large scale changes can rapidly take place affecting employment patterns, making these numbers volatile. For example, the total number of ratings in the catering/ hotel/ other sector fell dramatically between 2011 and 2012, largely due to a company transferring their operations out of the UK.

Age and gender profiles of UK seafarers active at sea

The majority of UK seafarers active at sea in 2017 were male; this was particularly true of officers. Amongst ratings, men accounted for an estimated 98% of deck and 99% of engine ratings, compared with 56% for the hotel/catering/other grouping.

Deck and engine ratings tend to be older on average than other seafarers, with over 70% of those aged between 16 and 62 being over 40, compared with equivalent figures of 42% for hotel/catering/other ratings, and 46% of certificated officers active at sea.

Gender distribution of UK seafarers active at sea (CoS members), 2017 ([SFR0302](#))



Seafarers active at sea by nationality

In 2017, an estimated 21% of the seafarers active at sea with CoS member companies were UK nationals, though this proportion was higher for officers than for ratings:

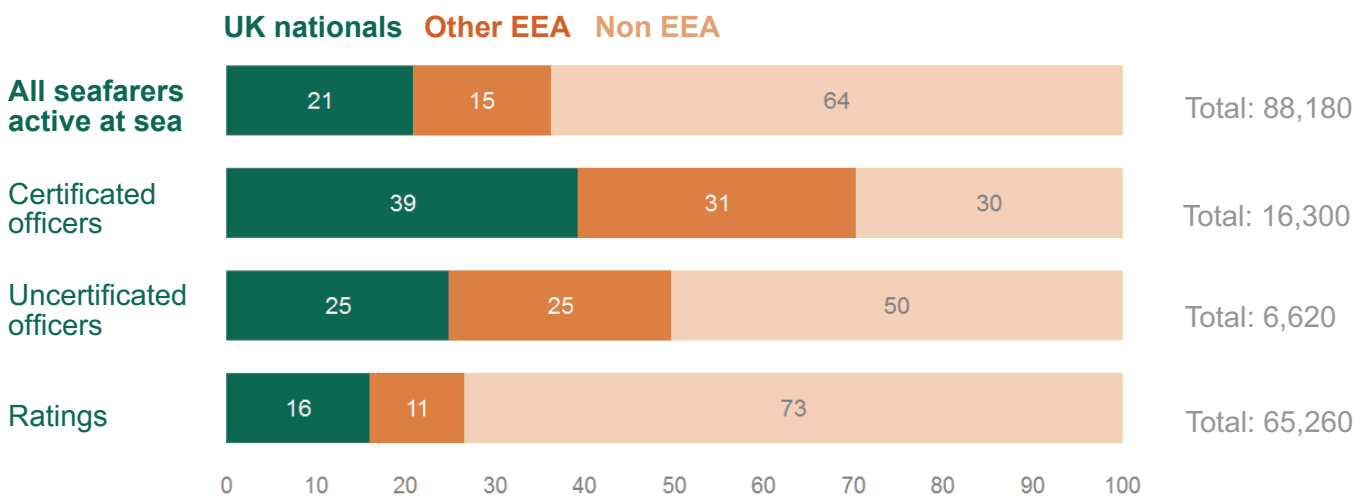
- ▶ An estimated 39% of certificated officers were from the UK, with a further 31% from other European Economic Area (EEA) countries
- ▶ This compares with 16% of ratings from the UK - over 70% of ratings were from outside the EEA, with the Philippines followed by India accounting for the largest numbers among individual countries.

Nationality groups

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

The seafarer nationality was unknown for around 6% of the total recorded in the 2017 survey. The proportions of the total calculated here exclude this group but figures are shown in the data table.

Seafarers active at sea (CoS members) by type and nationality, 2017 ([SFR0303](#))



4: Other information

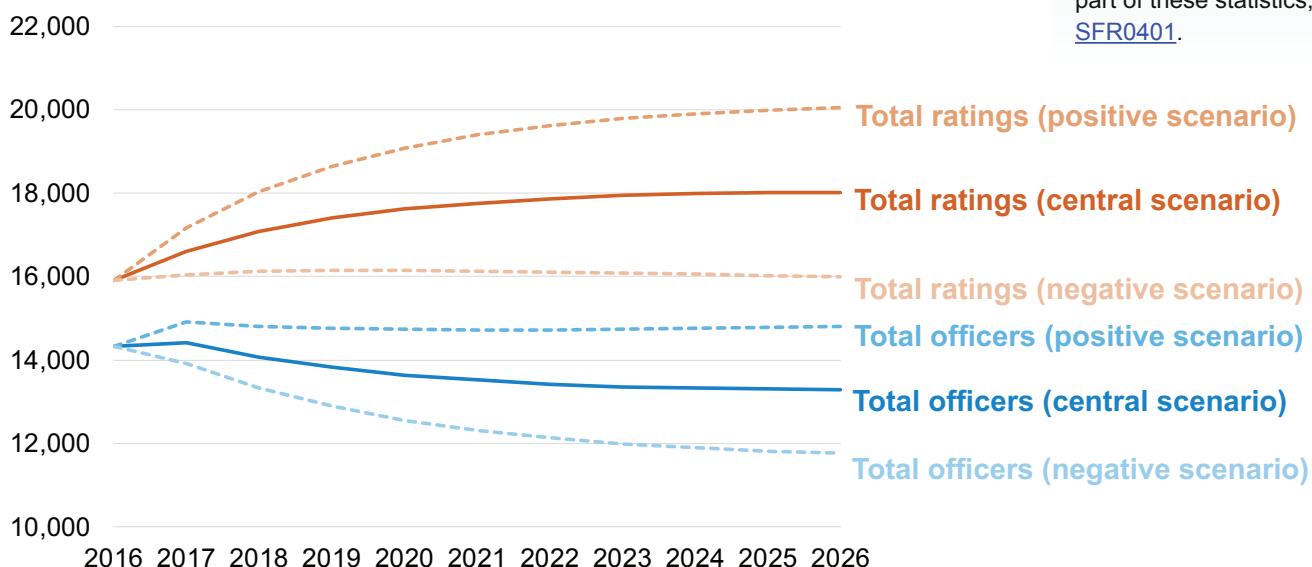
This section briefly summaries other data available on seafarers and trainees available from other published sources, in areas where users of these statistics have expressed interest.

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](#).



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 3 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 (or identification of any gaffes). This can be provided via maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk

Strengths and weaknesses of these statistics

These statistics are compiled using data from a number of sources:

- ▶ The data on certificated officers is from a good quality administrative source, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), but the proportion of certificate holders who are active at sea has to be estimated. This report assumes 16 per cent of certificated seafarers are not currently active at sea. This is based on a 2004 study by London Metropolitan University¹. There have also been small changes in the scope of the certification system, which cannot be fully adjusted for in the years 1998 to 2005.
- ▶ Data on seafarer trainees are based on claims from training providers for reimbursement under the Government's Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme. A small minority of trainees (e.g. Royal Fleet Auxiliary employees) are not eligible for such schemes.

¹ United Kingdom Seafarers Analysis 2004, D Glen, J Dowden and R Wilson, London Metropolitan University

- ▶ Data on uncertificated officers and ratings is sourced from a membership survey by the Chamber of Shipping (sponsored by DfT). A proportion of UK national seafarers, however, will be employed by UK companies which are not represented by the CoS. Furthermore, while the overall coverage of employment by CoS members is good, some details are incomplete or difficult to interpret, which may lead to some inaccuracies in the final results. Year to year variations in the statistics should therefore be treated with caution, and the results used rather as a general guide to broad levels of employment.

For more detail on strengths and weaknesses of the data, please refer to the technical guidance notes.

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-2017>.

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 the first quarter of 2019.



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For definitions of the different categories of seafarer referred to in these statistics summary, see the individual sections on each category above.

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.