

Seafarers Happiness Index struggles in “yo-yo” 2021

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Seafarers' overall happiness declined slightly from 2020 to 2021, according to the Seafarers Happiness Index, published by the Mission to Seafarers with the support of Wallem Group and the Standard Club.

The index report for 2021 showed that the Index's measure of overall happiness decreased from 6.59 to 6.41.

The survey, covering what was described as a “yo-yo” year, found that seafarer happiness rose and fell throughout the year, reflecting the waves of Covid-19 infections.

When there was an opening up of economies and international movement, seafarer sentiment improved. Contrarily, in times of rising infections and movement bans, the seafarer happiness rates have fallen.

At the start of the year there was a slight upward trajectory from the data. During this period, there was an optimism that Covid-19 disruptions would end and that issues like seafarer vaccination, shore leave and freedom of movement would be solved.

However, concerns over limited freedom of movement, a shortage of vaccinations, and a perception that the profits of shipping companies are not being fed back into the workforce, led to a new downward trend of the happiness index.

Andrew Wright, secretary-general of The Mission to Seafarers, said that “this latest Seafarers Happiness Index report reveals the long-term impact of the pandemic on our global seafarers. With different variants emerging, new waves of infections and fluctuations between freedom and lockdown, seafarers are dealing with constant uncertainty”.

Relationships onboard also appear to have been strained, with an increasing number of seafarers talking of bullying, harassment, and tension on their ships, while there were also reports about xenophobia and even racism. Many seafarers have reported plans for a career change.

Wright said that “looking at the results of 2021 as a whole, we hope this report will encourage organizations to recognize the lessons for 2022, when it comes to investing in their seafarers, whether it is continuing to improve connectivity, adjusting working hours, or enhancing training”.