Shore-leave and other seafarers' challenges

Visites à terre et autres difficultées des marins

Mariners' Workshop

28-29 January 2026

Montréal

Short port Stay

Despite variability related to location or ship types

"The data […] involving 70 ports reveals that the **average vessel stay is 25.53 hours** […]"

In Slack, Brian, Claude Comtois, Bart Wiegmans, and Patrick Witte. 2018. "Ships Time in Port." *International Journal of Shipping and Transport Logistics* 10(1):45–62.

"Containerships have the lowest turnaround times.

In 2018, a given ship spent a median of 23.5 hours in ports, i.e. 0.97 days. **Dry bulk** carriers spent typically **2.05 days** during a port call, while **container ships** spent on average the least amount of time **(0.7 days)**."

in Benamara, Hassiba, Jan Hoffmann, Luisa Rodriguez, and Frida Youssef. 2019. "Container Ports: The Fastest, the Busiest, and the Best Connected." *Trade Logistics Branch, UNCTAD*, August.

"[…] many seafarers have reported feeling that **shore leave is no longer a realistic aspect of life at sea**"

In *Seafarers Happiness Index Quarter 2 2022 and Annual Review,* the Mission to Seafarers

DATA CONVERGENCE ON SHORE LEAVE

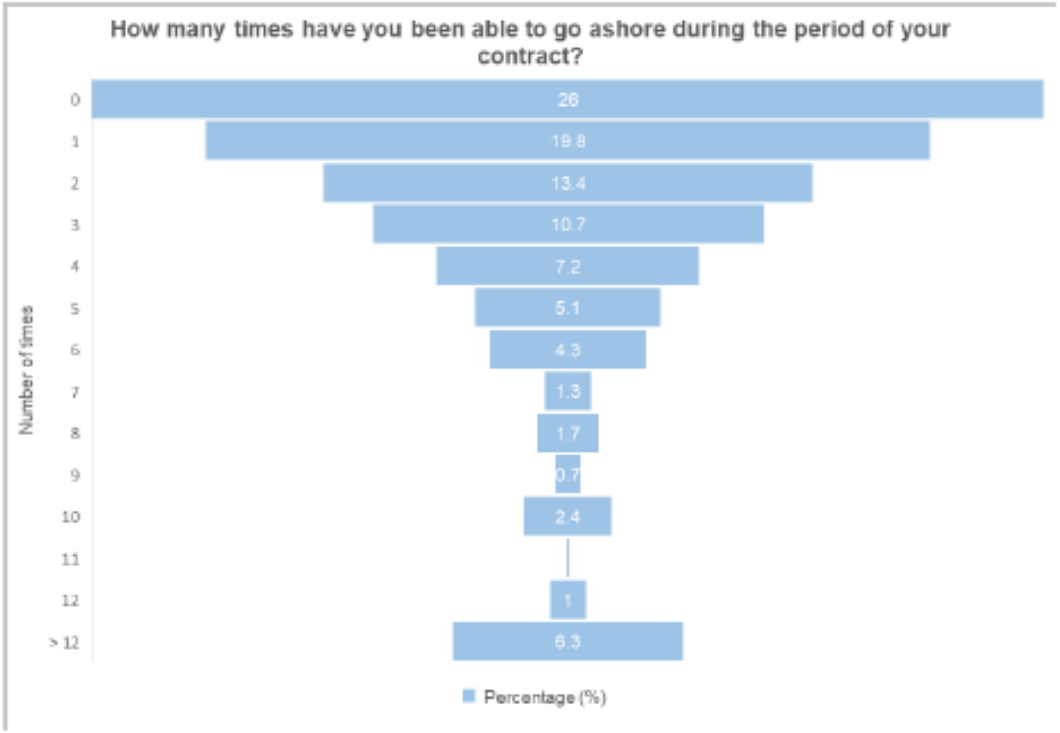
During an entire contract…

26% have no shore leave

Nearly 70% from 0 and 3 times per contract

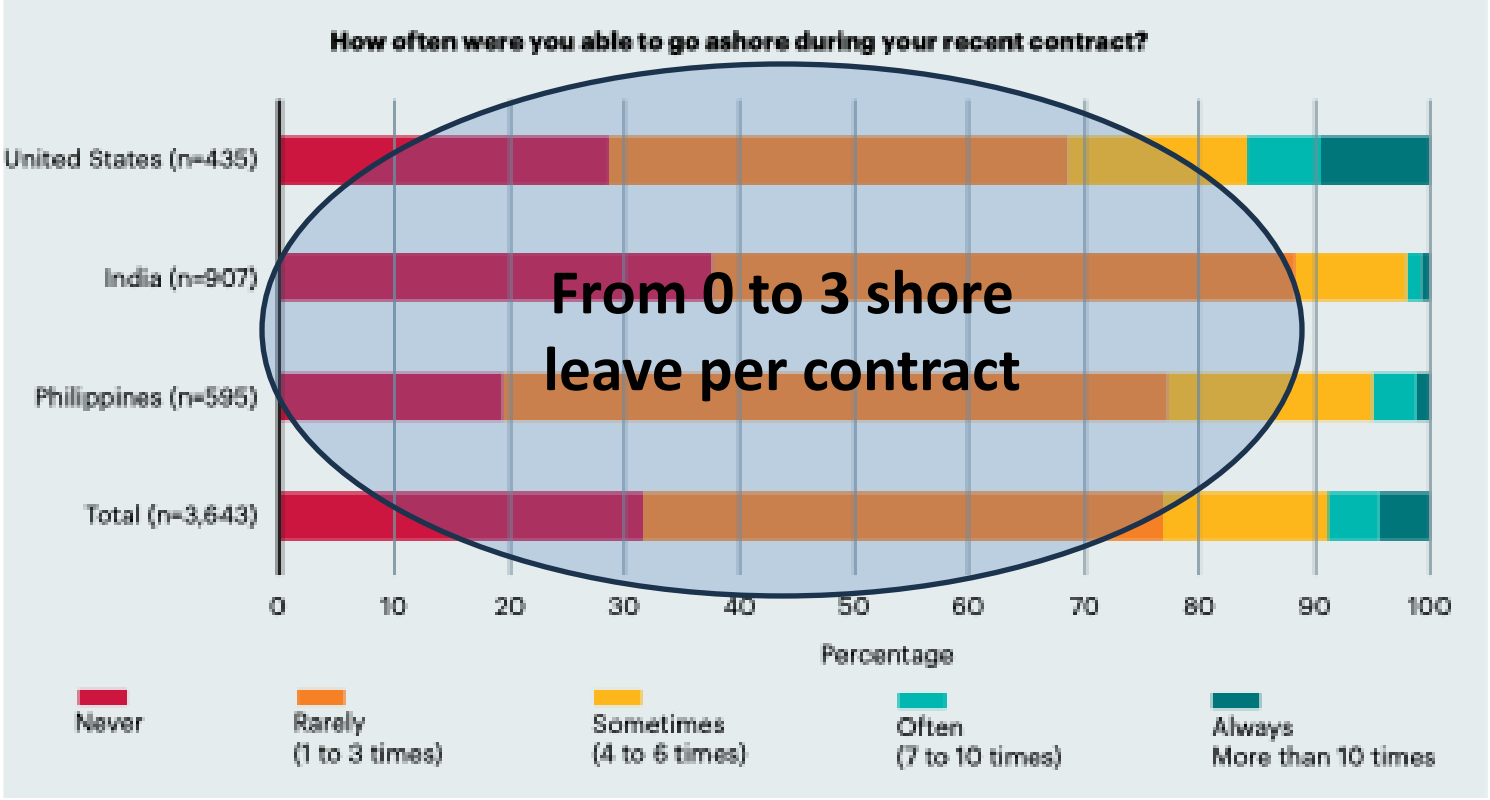
Officers are less likely to get shore leave

Figure 1. Seafarers' shore leave frequency (n=5,879)



During an entire contract…

76.9% of seafarers reported 'never' or 'rarely' going ashore (0 to 3 times per contract) - Variability by nationalities



Duration of shore leave…

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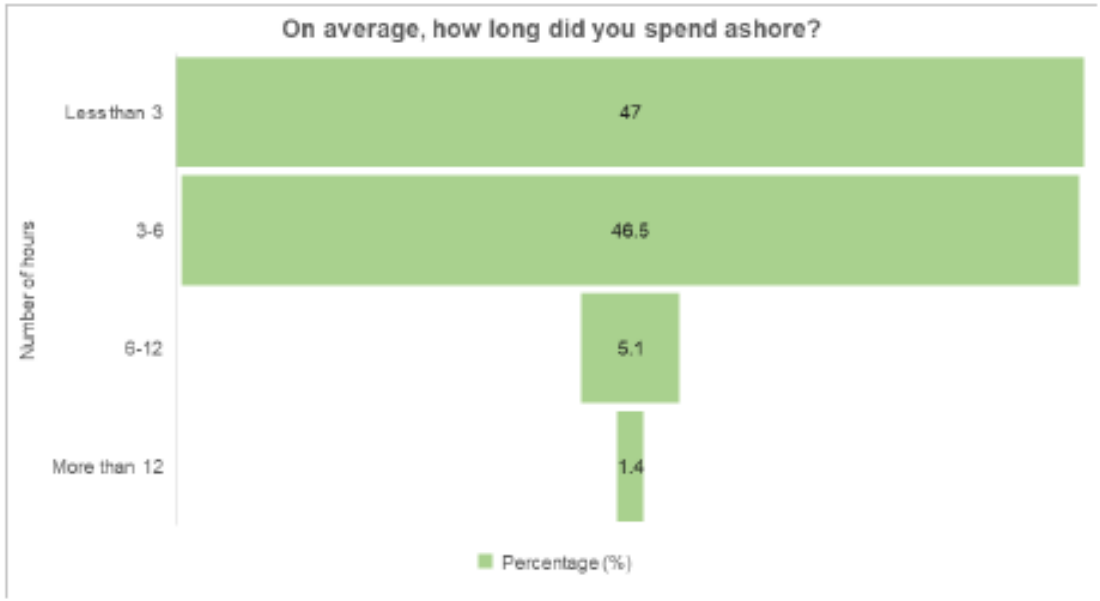
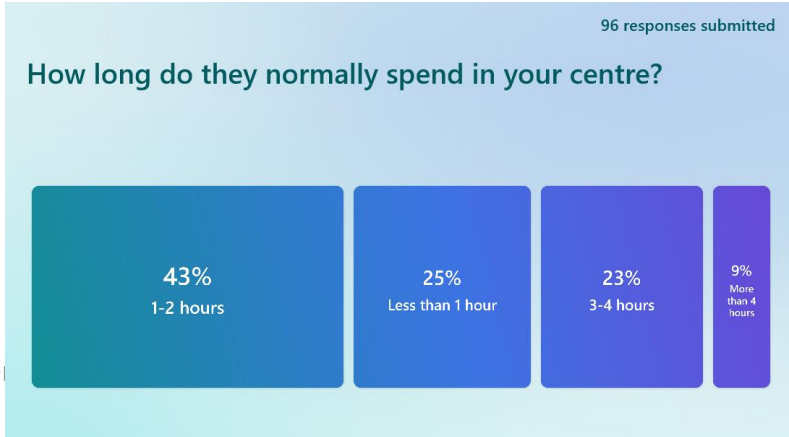
- For 47.0%, less than 3 hours ashore
- For 93.5% less than 6 hours ashore
- Only 6.5% of seafarers spent 6 hours or more ashore.

Figure 2. Seafarers' shore leave duration (n=5,879)



Confirmation by seafarers' center survey (ITFST survey)



Barriers to shore leave (3 datasets)

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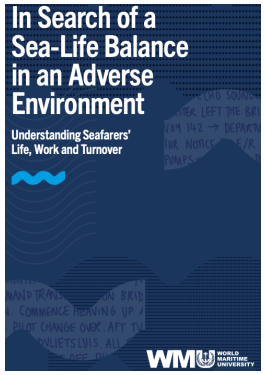
Two top barriers

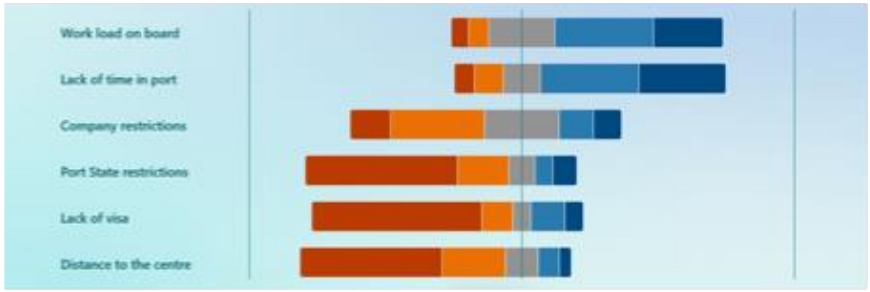
- **Workload**
- **Time in port**

Other barriers

- Restrictions (port/berth/visa)
- Distance and costs



	U.S.	India	Philippines	Total
Workload on board	1	1	1	1
Insufficient ship time in port	2	2	2	2
Port restrictions	6	3	5	3
Berth (or terminal) restrictions	5	4	6	4
Facilities too far from the port (e.g. shops, restaurants)	3	6	7	5
Prefer to stay on board to rest	4	10	4	6
High transport costs	10	7	3	7
Lack of visa or shore pass	8	5	9	8
Company restrictions	9	8	12	9
Lack of facilities in port (e.g. shops, restaurants)	7	9	10	10
Non-availability of seafarers' centre	12	11	11	11
Staying on board to save money	11	12	8	12

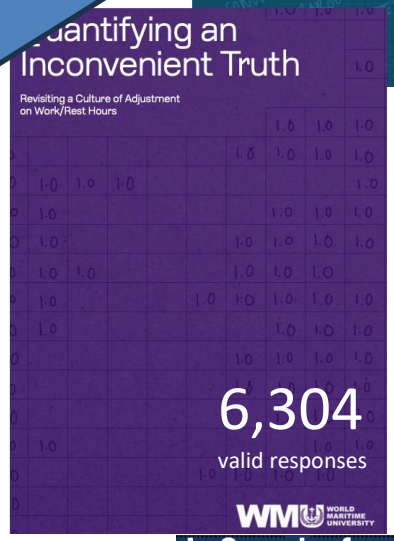


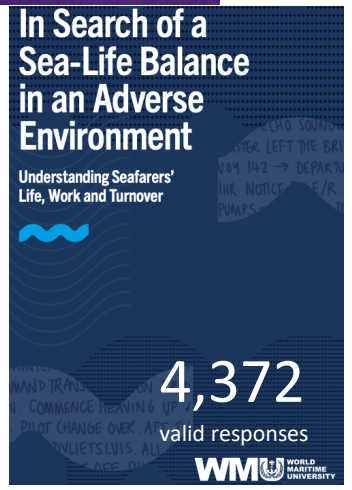
OTHER CHALLENGES / WORKING TIME, ADJUSTMENT, STRESS, BUREAUCRACY

High daily/week/annual working time

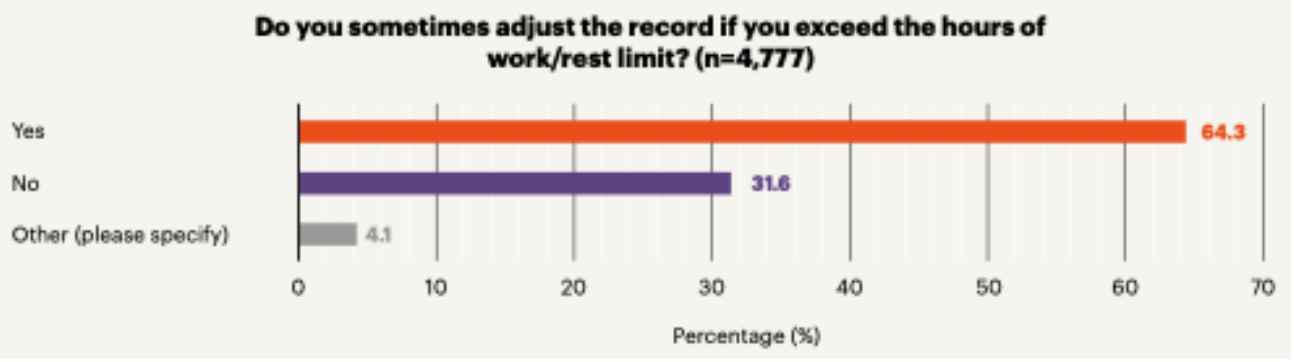
- Average 11.5 h/day (8% above
- Workweek average 7 to 11.7% report w
- 73.5% no day off per
- erage from 2,275 hours compared to ,694 hours in average in Canada (2023)

+ frequent rest/work violations

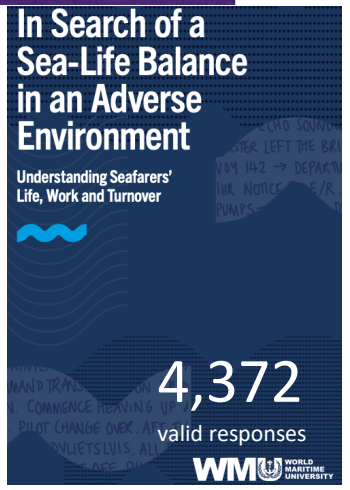




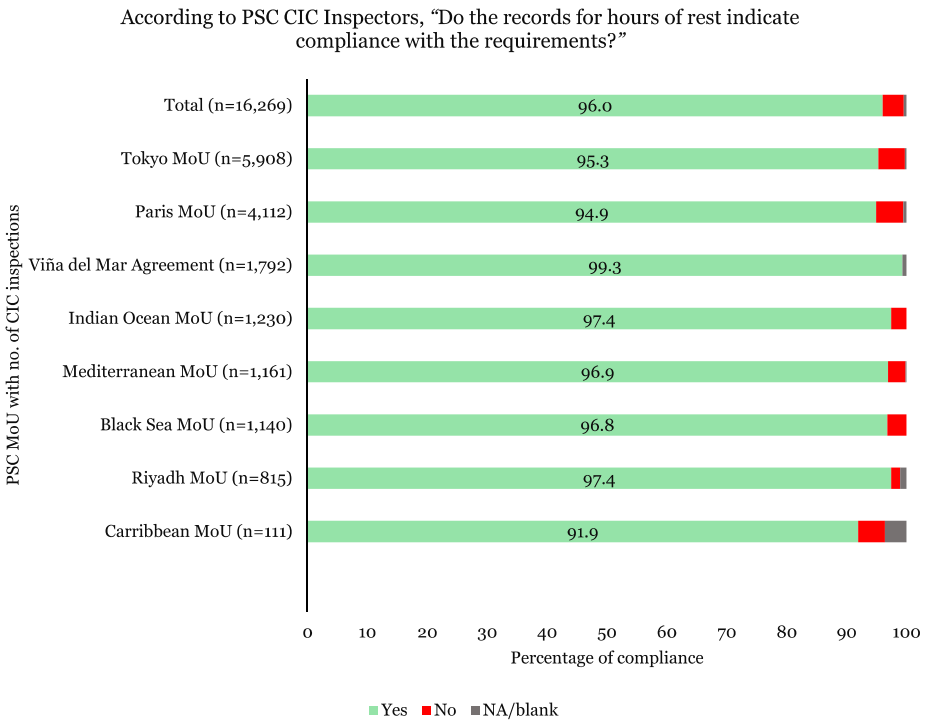
A Culture of Adjustment

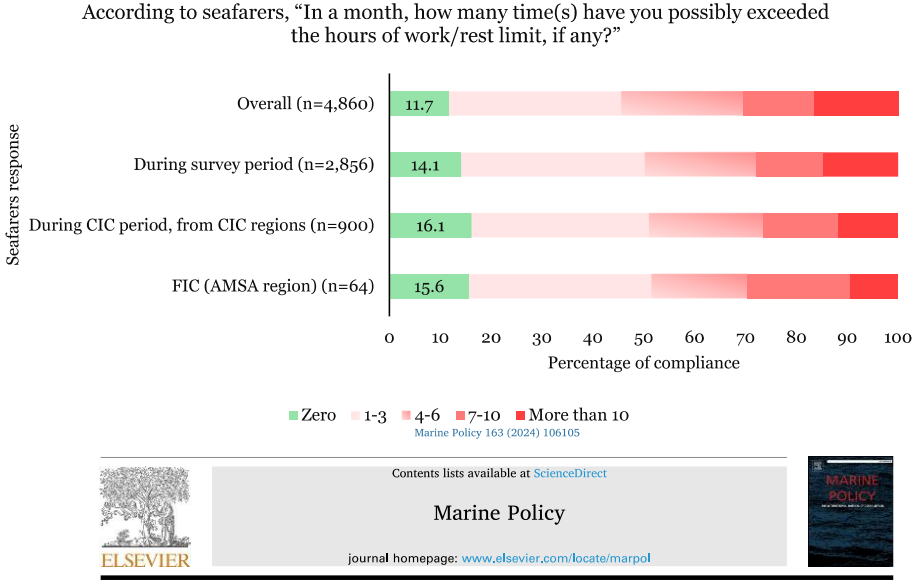


"[…] inconsistencies in implementation and non-dissuasive enforcement measures of flag and port States create an environment for the **normalization of deviance**."



Inefficient inspection system





Seafarers vs. Port State Control: Decoding Work/rest Compliance Data Disparity

Bikram Singh Bhatia [a,*], Maria Carrera-Arce [a], Raphael Baumler [a], Michelle Rita Grech [b]

Context matters: Weaknesses in port State control enforcement of work/rest hours regulations

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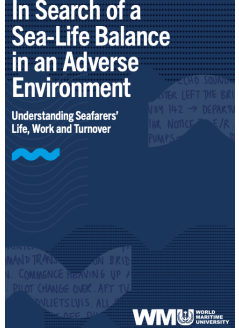
Work/rest hours

ABSTRACT

The decades of research showing the prevalence of seafarers' non-compliance with work/rest hours regulations suggest ineffective compliance monitoring and enforcement. This paper examines the practice of inspections by port State control (PSC) officers through 55 semi-structured interviews. Findings show that initial inspections remain simple document consultation. Cross-checking records accuracy is scarce, allowing many instances of non-compliance to go unnoticed. Additionally, PSC officers reported that seafarers skillfully align records, complicating the detection of inconsistencies. Current guideline limitations, time and resource constraints, and the pressure on PSC officers drive them towards prioritizing technical issues over human factors-related issues such as fatigue and work/rest hours. Consequently, considering the impacts of PSC officers' working context, enhancing initial inspections, implementing tamper-proof recording systems, strengthening inspection teams, and updating guidelines are possible options to enforce work/rest hours regulations.

*"[…] we don't make the focus; because [of] **our instruction** […]; if all seems good, you have no proof – [we] **don't go deeper**, because there's no instruction about that." [PSCOFG_8]*

Top causes of stress



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Inspections

Onboard admin.

Port-related activities

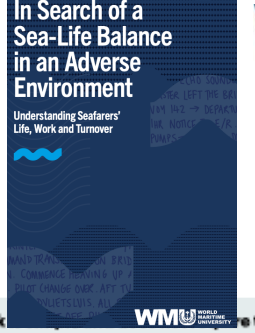
Company communication

	U.S.	India	Philippines	Total
Inspections	1	1	1	1
Onboard administrative duties	2	4	3	2
Port-related activities	4	2	2	3
Company communication	3	5	7	4
Cargo-related operations	5	6	4	5
Pilotage, berthing, and canal transits	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Port formalities (customs, immigration, etc.)	7	7	6	7
Commercial communication (agents, cargo-owners, charterers, etc.)	8	8	8	8

Paradox with objective risks

SMS = inefficient bureaucratic system

60% of seafarers consider SMS as **burdensome** with instructions **not matching ship's reality**



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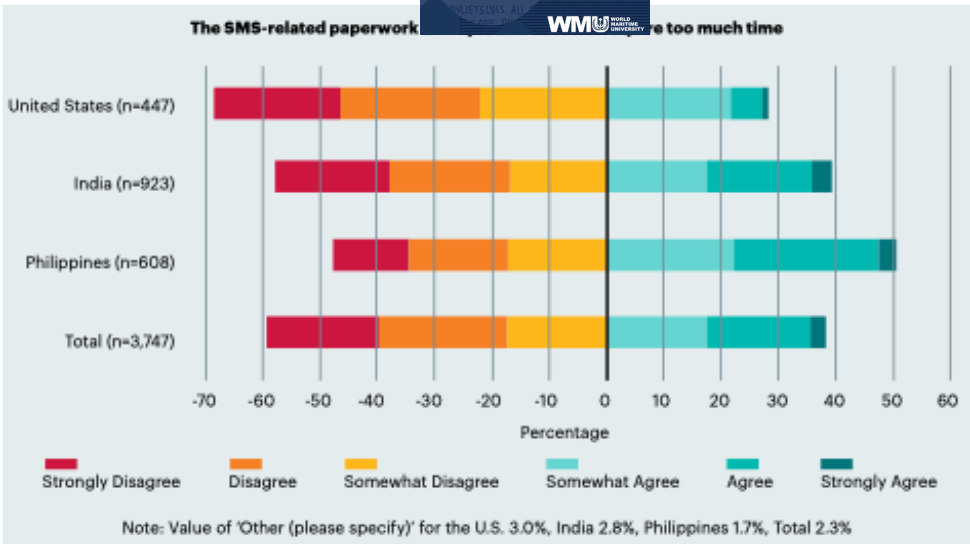
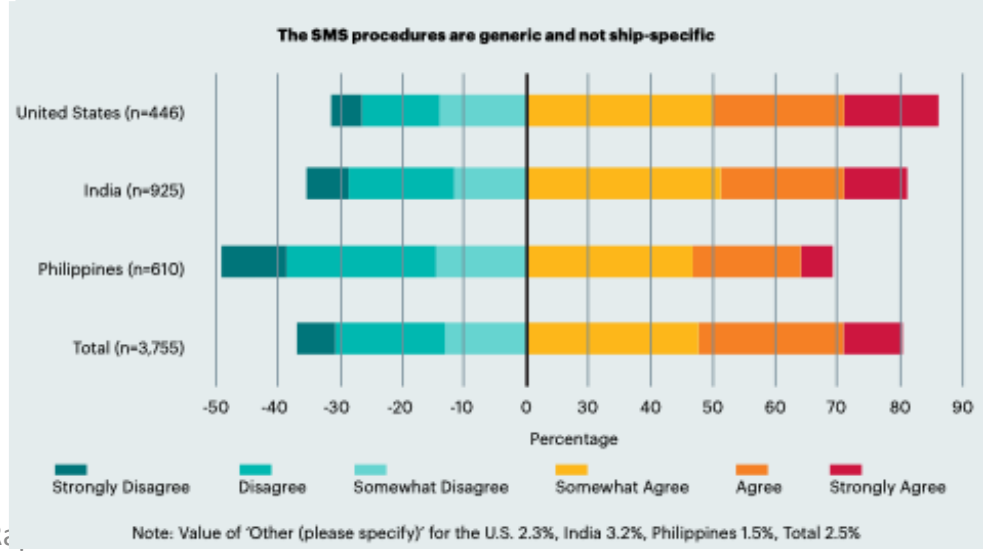
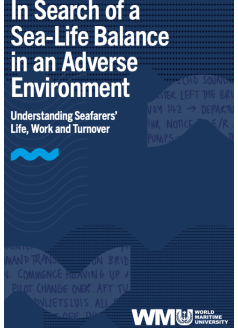




CONCLUSION AND CONSEQUENCES

Attraction and retention at risk



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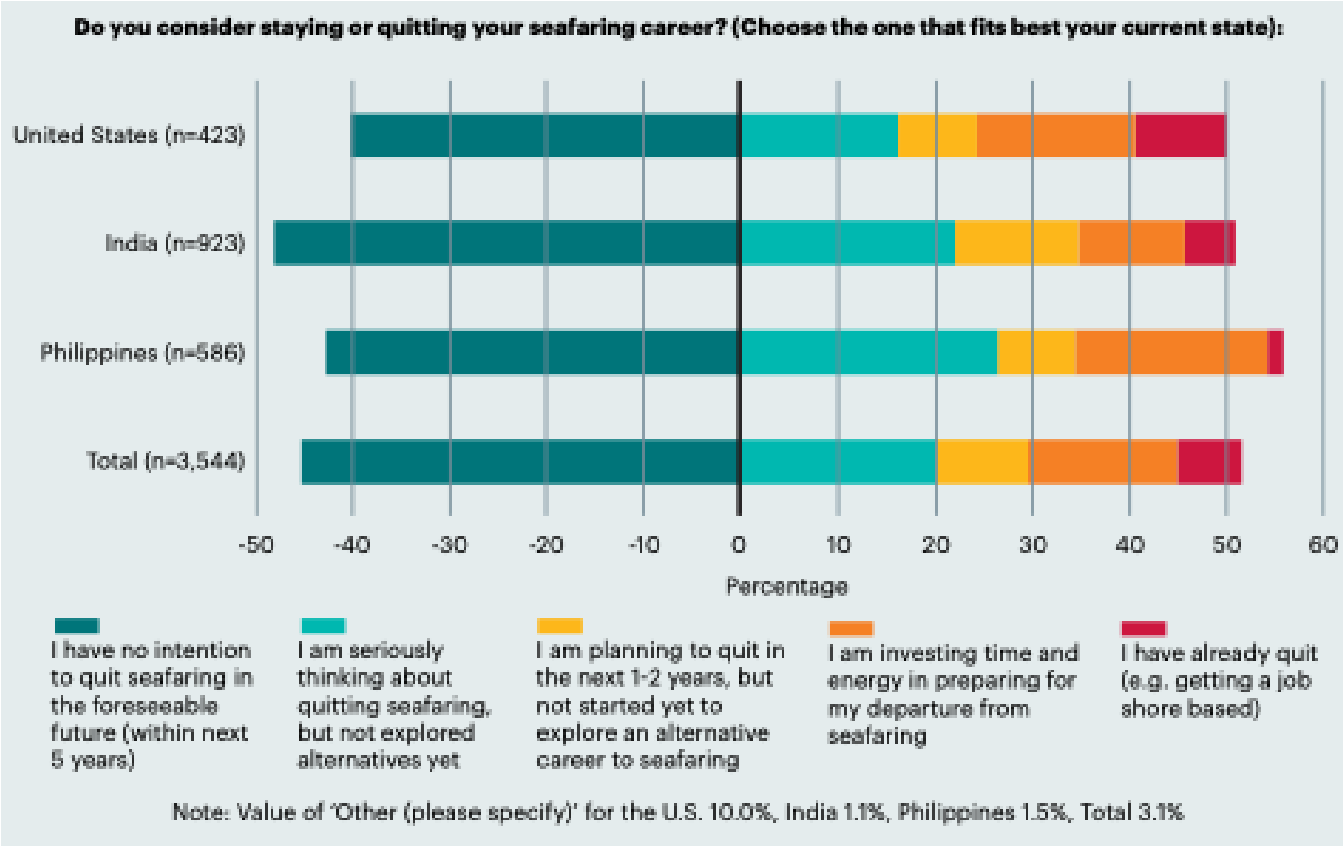
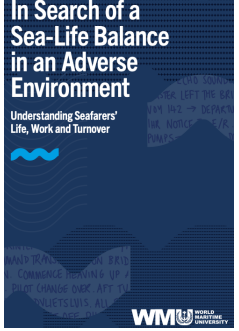
"When **half of them plan to quit** […], the exodus may **threaten the industry's fundamental capacity to operate**."



Financial compensation for hardship in question



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"When [the **financial] attractor is eroded**—and areas of **dissatisfaction** such as excessive **workload, stress, paperwork, and absence of shore leave continue to grow unaddressed**—

there is no objective reason to retain seafarers at sea."

Thank you - Merci

Prof./Capt. Raphaël Baumler

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