

WOMEN SEAFARERS

WOMEN SEAFARERS - YOUR INDUSTRY
NEEDS YOU! LEARN HOW IT'S CHANGING



WOMEN HAVE PROVEN THAT WORKING AT SEA CAN BE A POSITIVE AND REWARDING CAREER FOR THEM. BUT IT CAN ALSO BE CHALLENGING TO WORK IN A PREDOMINANTLY MALE CULTURE. THAT'S WHY THE ITF IS WORKING WITH THE MARITIME INDUSTRY TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN SEAFARERS AND TO ENSURE A POSITIVE SHIPBOARD ENVIRONMENT.

There's never been a better time to be a woman seafarer

Now is a good time for women to go into seafaring jobs, as nearly half of the current workforce will reach retirement age in the next 10 years.

As the number of capable candidates is not keeping up with the growing maritime industry, companies are turning to women and young workers, who are currently underrepresented.

The nature of many jobs at sea is changing. With increased digitalisation and automation, success in maritime is much more about using your intellect than your muscles, and shipping needs trained crew who are up to date on new technology, which means more opportunities for young women.

Employers are always looking for employees who offer something valuable. Women provide new perspectives and leadership styles that can be very beneficial to a typically male-dominated industry. Employers are becoming more aware of and open to the positives and potential of employing women.

And ILO studies have indicated that having women onboard creates a more normal social environment and can reduce the sense of isolation felt by many seafarers.

Women at sea: the facts

- The number of women seafarers is rising. In 2020, there were an estimated 24,000 women seafarers, an increase of 46 percent since 2015. However, women make up just 1.2 percent of the world's seafaring workforce.
- There has also been a slight increase in the number of officers who are women seafarers - 0.85 percent in 2020, up from 0.7 percent in 2015.
- Women seafarers work mainly in the cruise and ferry sectors, where most vessels are covered by collective bargaining agreements signed by ITF maritime unions. These contain non-discrimination clauses.
- The coronavirus pandemic caused many to move from cruising into cargo, where a woman seafarer will typically be outnumbered 20:1 in an otherwise all-male crew.

- Women seafarers tend to be younger than their male counterparts.

Barriers to women entering maritime

Arguably the two most significant barriers to women going to sea are:

- a lack of awareness of the industry and of the opportunities it presents – unless you know someone who works at sea, it may be invisible to you as a career, and
- the persistent but outdated perception that seafaring is only for men – particularly if you don't know that more women are joining and never see images of women working on board ships.

The other main barriers are:

- the male-centred culture,
- the lack of provision and structures for women on board, and
- fear of discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual violence.

Changes needed to attract more women seafarers

The ITF is working at the global and regional level with employers, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and trade unions to prioritise the following issues to promote change in the industry so that more women are encouraged to join. ITF agreements all contain policies to promote diversity and equality on board.

Raise awareness of the maritime opportunities for women

Promote and support best practice example of companies that employ mixed crew and have policies in place to support diversity.

For example, AP Moller-Maersk announced India's first Women Seafarers' Cadet Programme in May 2022. Designed in association with the Academy of Maritime Education and Training (AMET) in Chennai, the programme will promote seafaring careers amongst young women. Maersk has also set an ambitious goal: for women to make up 50 percent of its cadet intake by 2027.

Employ more women on board

- There is evidence that women looking for

employment tend to choose companies which already recruit women seafarers to ensure a better ratio of men and women on board.

- Having more than one woman aboard for voyages can provide a more positive experience for everyone.
- It is known that if only one woman is working aboard a ship, she is significantly more likely to experience forms of sexual harassment and assault (SASH). So a big part of the solution to SASH is to hire more female seafarers.

Change the culture

The shipboard environment must be more inclusive of women.

- This requires training for all seafarers to include the importance and benefits of diversity on board and respect for diversity.
- Companies must develop, communicate and enforce policies on corporate diversity and inclusion, to tackle discrimination, harassment, bullying and sexual violence.
- There needs to be appropriate training in place on board about these policies.
- Companies must create confidential avenues for seafarers to raise concerns, and put in place fair and proper complaints and disciplinary processes.

Tackle violence and harassment

ILO Convention 190, which came into force on 25 June 2021, is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

The ITF and its unions are part of the global campaign for governments to ratify the convention, which will require them to put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment at work.

Provide women-friendly services and approaches

Existing structures and services on board must be designed or adapted to provide privacy and suitable accommodation for women. For example, women seafarers:

- need access to sanitary products during menstruation
- may require contraception and the morning-after pill
- need consistent and improved approach to maternity benefits and rights

- require equipment and uniforms designed to fit their bodies.

Establish networks and mentoring for women seafarers

Greater networking, mentorship and empowerment of women in the maritime profession may be the best strategy to achieve greater gender equality in the future, according to the International Maritime Organization's conference on International Day for Women in Maritime, on 18 May 2023.

Attending industry events, joining professional organisations, and connecting with others on social networking sites can boost the reputation and visibility of women seafarers and provide a stronger support system personally and career-wise.

Studies also show that women seafarers would fare better in their careers if they had knowledge of and access to women leaders in shipping. Mentoring is a source of support for seafarers, in particular for younger seafarers. It has also been believed to help reduce seafarer isolation, improve retention and seafarers' wellbeing.

There are many international, regional, and national associations or networks of women seafarers, including:

- the Women in Maritime Association
www.imo.org/en/ourwork/technicalcooperation/pages/womeninmaritime.aspx
- the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association
www.wistainternational.com
- Nautilus International's Women's Forum
www.nautilusint.org/en/creating-change/get-involved/nautilus-forums
- The ITF women's committee
www.itfglobal.org/en/in-focus/women
- Women Off-shore
www.womenoffshore.org/about

Some companies, especially in the cruise industry, have mentorship programmes that promote women to develop a career on board.

Your maternity rights

If you become pregnant and wish to take maternity leave, your rights will depend on where you work:

- If you are sailing under the flag of your own country, you will be covered by that country's legislation, and any rights guaranteed under your union's collective bargaining agreements.

- If you work on a FOC vessel, you will be covered by the legislation of that flag state – which might not give any maternity rights at all. However, if your ship is covered by an ITF-approved agreement, you are guaranteed minimum rights.

Maternity rights under ITF-approved agreements

These stipulate that pregnant seafarers:

- Must be repatriated at the cost of the company.
- Must receive two months' full pay in compensation.

The timing of the repatriation may vary depending on where you work and your stage of pregnancy.

Where the ship is trading coastally, or where a doctor is on board, it is generally safer for pregnant women to work later into a pregnancy – in the UK, for example, this is up to 28 weeks. However, if you are working on deep sea vessels or very high speed craft, the risks need to be assessed carefully.

Your rights under ILO Convention 183

The ILO Maternity Protection Convention (Convention 183) stipulates your rights to health protection, maternity leave, sickness leave, benefits, employment protection, and breastfeeding. You can read more at www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C183



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Advice and support

- If you are a woman seafarer facing discrimination or sexual harassment, or concerned about your maternity rights, contact your trade union. They will advise you on how to deal with it and direct you to confidential advice and support.
- The ITF has produced guidelines on dealing with violence at work www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/itf-action-guide-violence-against-women
- If you have experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment or gender discrimination on board, you can contact the Safer Waves charity for information and support at www.saferwaves.org.

Sources of information

- Joint research project commissioned by the Euro Community Shipowners' Associations ECSA and ETF addresses why women seafarers are under-represented in the industry, and sets out a number of recommendations to enhance recruitment and retention of women. Read the WESS report executive summary of Enhanced Participation of Women in European Shipping www.eumaritimewomen.org
- Podcast: Empowering young women in maritime featuring Gina Panayiotou www.seatrade-maritime.com/finance-insurance/podcast-empowering-young-women-maritime-featuring-gina-panayiotou
- UK: Women At Sea: What You Don't See (Video) www.mondaq.com/uk/marine-shipping/1321150/women-at-sea-what-you-dont-see-video

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