

WE HEARD YOU

According to the responses submitted in Q1 2018, approximately 70% of the Cooks surveyed (Fig. 1a) experienced an increased workload to meet the requirements as set out in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2016, as amended (MLC, 2016, as amended).

SOS Officers conduct interviews and surveys routinely onboard vessels to understand the concerns of seafarers and to identify ways to assist in resolving them.

The figures of the survey were consistent to the observations made during ship visits – Ship's cooks are experiencing an increased in workload due to various requirements. Feeling stretched, Ship's cooks have gone beyond their primary duty of preparing nutritious food that meets hygiene requirements to ensure that the crew remains healthy onboard.

It is common in today's society for employees to be able to take on additional responsibilities. There appears to be important questions and issues for the industry to address to ensure that seafarers are not constantly loaded with additional responsibilities to a point where they are unable to fulfil their primary obligation.



Fig. 1a: Changes to workload as a result of the MLC, 2016, as amended.

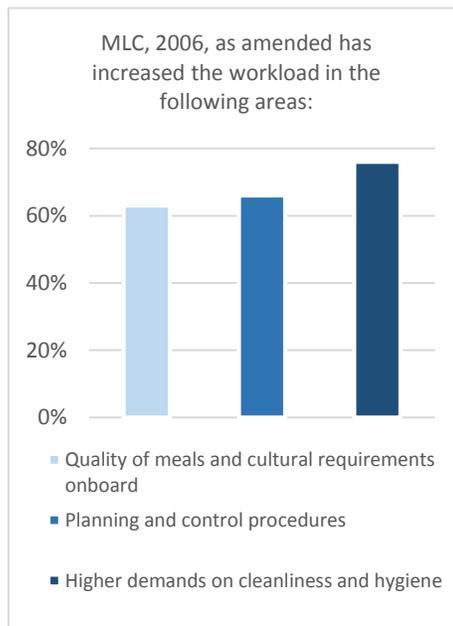


Fig. 1b: Breakdown on changes to workload

WHO DID WE LISTEN TO?

During the period of the survey, SOS Officers, with the assistance of its social partners and support from the shipping companies, completed the survey with cooks onboard 41 vessels.

Interestingly, over 80% of those surveyed (Fig. 2) had sailed for at least five years. This is important in understanding if the MLC, 2006, as amended had inadvertently contributed to an increase of the ship’s cook workload since its entry into force on 20 Aug 2013 – A ship’s cook that have been working onboard prior to the entry into force date would have had experience the difference. This allows for better understanding of the matter and gives weight to the findings.



Fig. 2: Ship’s cooks experience

WHAT DID WE OBSERVE?

Doing well during Port State Control (PSC) inspection prevents a ship from being detained and advert potential commercial losses. In this instance, maintaining a squeaky clean galley and store, and having ordered sufficient ration for the crew onboard could minimise the chances of a detailed inspection or detention; The responsibility and pressure lies on the Ship’s cook. This is corroborated by the results where 60% of the ship’s cooks expresses an increase amount of workload prior to their ship’s arrival in port (Fig. 3).

We also heard from our cooks that they felt the current staffing level in the catering department is insufficient to meet the workload, given the bonus and responsibility to implement the MLC requirements effectively (Fig. 4).

What do we notice from the trend above? Simple, the ship’s cook is now wearing two hats and it appears that they require more assistance– The responsibility of food ordering, cleanliness, safety and hygiene in the galley used to be the job scope of a chief steward; a position which is almost unheard of today because someone wants to please their bosses by combining two roles into one.

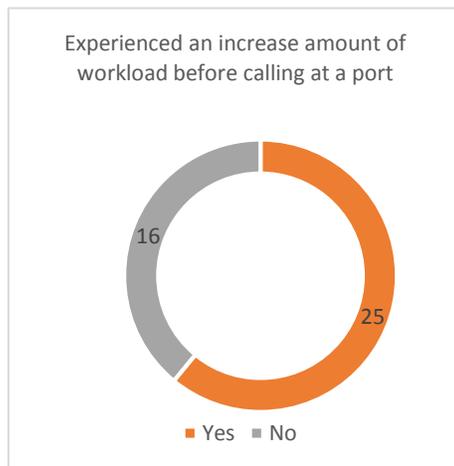


Fig. 3: Increased in workload prior to port call

Some may argue that there are other positions onboard and they can lend a hand, but reality differs. The survey results further reveals that the ship's cooks do not always get the necessary help they need to complete their tasks (Fig. 5), and 63% of those surveyed (Fig. 6) acknowledges that their work gets piled up from time to time.

We can't stress enough the importance of having nutritious food that are hygienically prepared for the wellbeing of the seafarers.

Food prepared with such care ensures that the crew remains healthy to perform their task, while quality food increases the morale of the crew. All of these factors may increase the crew and vessels' performance, in turn befitting both the seafarer and shipping company.

IN SUMMARY...

Good food, or good cooking could contribute to the upswing morale onboard to; While a balanced workload could reduce stress and pressures which promotes physical and mental wellbeing.

Although the Ship's Cooks experienced an increased workload while implementing the requirements of the convention, about 80% of the surveyed (Fig. 7) foresee themselves benefitting from the convention – which when effectively implemented would ensure seafarers rights are protected and creates a level playing field for quality ship owners.

There are sufficient catering staff to fulfil the requirements and intentions of the MLC.

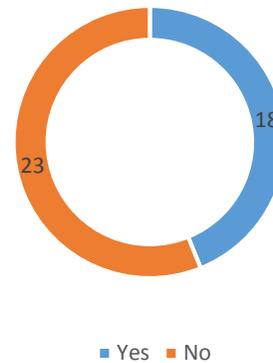


Fig. 4: Opinion on current manpower status in the galley

Do you get the necessary assistance from others to ease your workload?

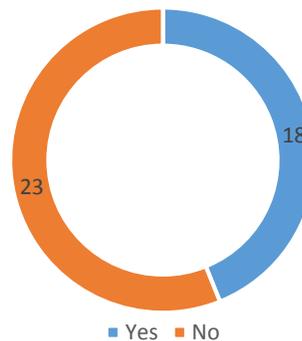
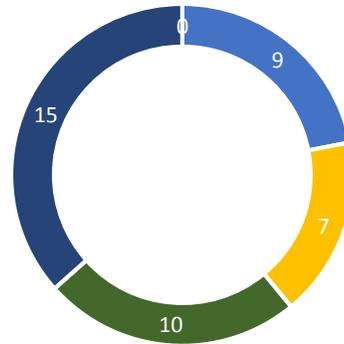


Fig. 5: Assistance from colleagues to help cope with workload

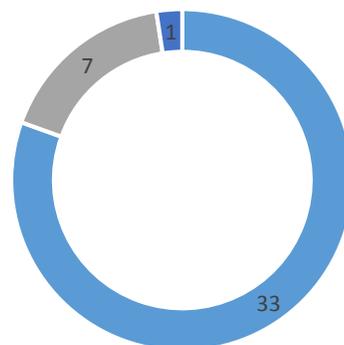
How often do you feel that you have work piled up?



- Everyday
- Most days
- 5-10 days a month
- Less than 5 days a month
- None

Fig. 6: Seafarers experiencing work piled up

Do you see yourself benefiting from the MLC, 2006, as amended?



- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Fig. 7: Perception on the effectiveness of the convention in benefiting seafarers