

# THE SUPERYACHT SURVEY 2020



**faststream**  
recruitment group

**yotspot**  
yachting opportunities & training

#thesuperyachtsurvey2020

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# Welcome



The Faststream Recruitment Group was established in 1999, employs over 100 people and is a global people specialist in maritime recruitment. Faststream Recruitment operates across three maritime locations in the EMEA, Asia-Pacific and Americas, servicing their customers, both candidates and clients, across the world.

Faststream Recruitment's specialist Superyacht team is made up of a great mix of backgrounds to ensure they can give the best possible service to their customers. A combination of recruitment experience, Superyacht industry experience, thought leadership, marketing and management skills is putting the Faststream Recruitment Superyacht team ahead of the rest.

[www.faststream.com](http://www.faststream.com)



Yotspot has been a successful online community since launching in 2010, bringing Captains, Crew and employers together for jobs, sailing opportunities, courses and so much more.

They are a global jobs board for those seeking opportunities on yachts and for Captains, management companies and agencies looking for great crew. Since their launch, they have grown to become one of the industry's most successful platforms to connect with Captains, employers, companies, recruitment agencies and training providers.

They have spent nearly 10 years harnessing the power of technology to streamline the process of finding crew, yachting professionals, jobs and maritime courses across the entire yachting sector.

[www.yotspot.com](http://www.yotspot.com)

## Welcome *continued*



### **Mark Charman**

*CEO & Founder of Faststream Recruitment*

Mark is the CEO and Founder of Faststream Recruitment and founded the company in 1999. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience in recruiting for the maritime sector globally. As a Fellow of the Recruitment and Employment Federation, he is a renowned thought-leader in specialist recruitment. Mark's involvement as a speaker, panellist and writer provides a head hunters perspective into human factors in the workplace.



### **Steve Crawford & Daryl Bradley**

*Directors*

Steve entered the yachting industry in 2008 and would spend six years at sea on a variety of boats working his way up to 1st Mate. It was early in 2010 when Steve, frustrated by the experience of finding work in Yachting founded Yotspot and set out to change the way the industry connected with Crew, Jobs and Training forever. It was two years later when a chance encounter in La Ciotat led to Steve bumping into an old University friend who was looking for a company to invest in. Daryl had entered the industry two years prior after the offer of six weeks day work turned into a Bosuns position on a 56m. Daryl moved ashore to set up Yotspot HQ from the kitchen of his flat two years later. The experiment worked and Steve followed shortly after. They moved into their offices in Ocean Village in 2014 and years on... haven't looked back.

# Introduction

Specialist Superyacht recruiter Faststream Recruitment and industry-leading job board Yotspot have collaborated to survey over 1,200 Superyacht crew to gain a unique insight into the views, thoughts and feelings that these individuals have about the industry they work in.

This survey was completed by Superyacht crew before the COVID-19 pandemic. The release of our full report was delayed due to the short-term restrictions on mobility in maritime. As we have started to see borders open up, and markets returning, the Superyacht industry is heading into the uptick of its V-shape economic recovery. This data presents the thoughts and opinions of Superyacht crew before the pandemic but it remains compelling as we see the industry return.

The yachting industry is an incredibly diverse and ever-changing sector to work in and the crew needed for the Superyachts of the past, present and future have never been more important. The reliance of those onboard to meet the ever-increasing demands of owners, managers and guests and the growing size and complexity of Superyachts that sail the open seas are more vital than ever.

There has been much talk over the last few years around crew recruitment, retention and countless salary surveys published. In 2017, the first of its kind in the industry,

Faststream Recruitment and Yotspot brought you a report that covered topics such as learning & development, career performance, job seeking trends and levels of satisfaction & engagement in the world of Superyacht. In 2020, we aim to push the topics further to establish the wider thoughts and feelings of Superyacht crew and their views of the yachting industry as a whole.

The data collected in this survey represents a huge cross-section of the marketplace. This report aims to uncover the good and the bad of the industry, looking at yachting from an employment perspective and discovering where the industry excels and where it falls short.

How do the crew rate their mental health on-board and do they feel there is adequate support if there is an issue? Do they feel they are spending enough quality time with their friends and family? Do the crew care about pensions or are they saving for the future in a different way? What matters most to the crew at work? What are the crew's future ambitions in their careers? These are just a few of the unanswered questions which are so unique to the Superyacht community and ones that only the crew themselves will be able to answer.

This report will cover Staying Connected, Health & Well-Being, Career Development, Pensions and Savings.



# Methodology

The Superyacht Survey 2020 was open for four weeks. A total of 1,211 Superyacht crew took part in the survey, which exceeded our target of 1,200.

## THE SURVEY

The survey was designed for Superyacht crew of all ranks to take part including Captains, Officers, Engineers, Steward(ess), Chefs, Deckhands and Housekeeping to name a few.

All respondents answered the questions anonymously online using Survey Monkey, an industry-leading survey platform. Superyacht Crew were asked 30 questions each and all responses were held as strictly confidential and the answers were not linked to any personal data.

## DATA GATHERING

The survey was promoted using the following activities:

- ◆ Yotspot website
- ◆ Faststream Recruitment website
- ◆ Yotspot job alert emails
- ◆ Faststream Recruitment job alert emails
- ◆ Yotspot social media including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook
- ◆ Faststream Recruitment social media including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook

## DATA ANALYSIS

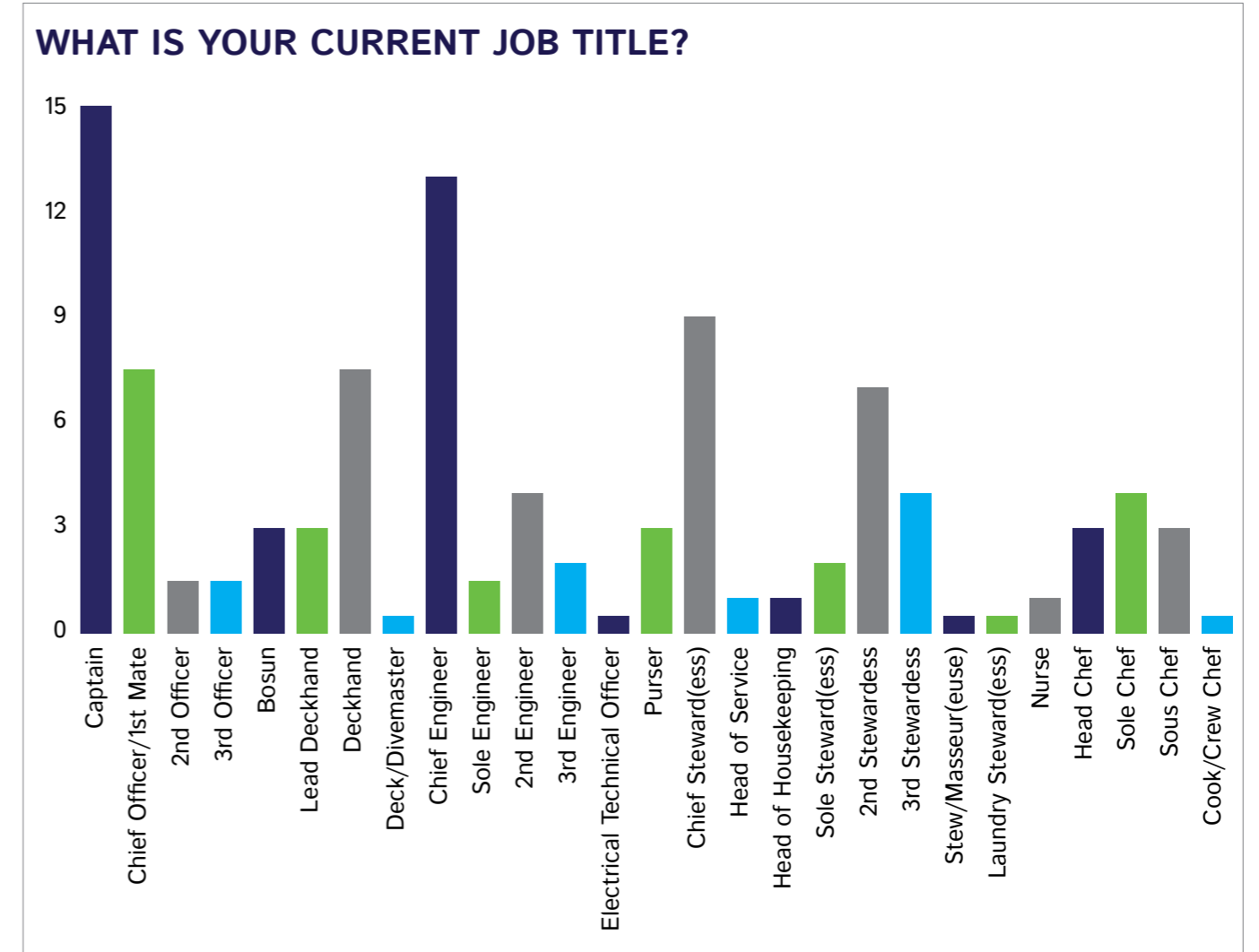
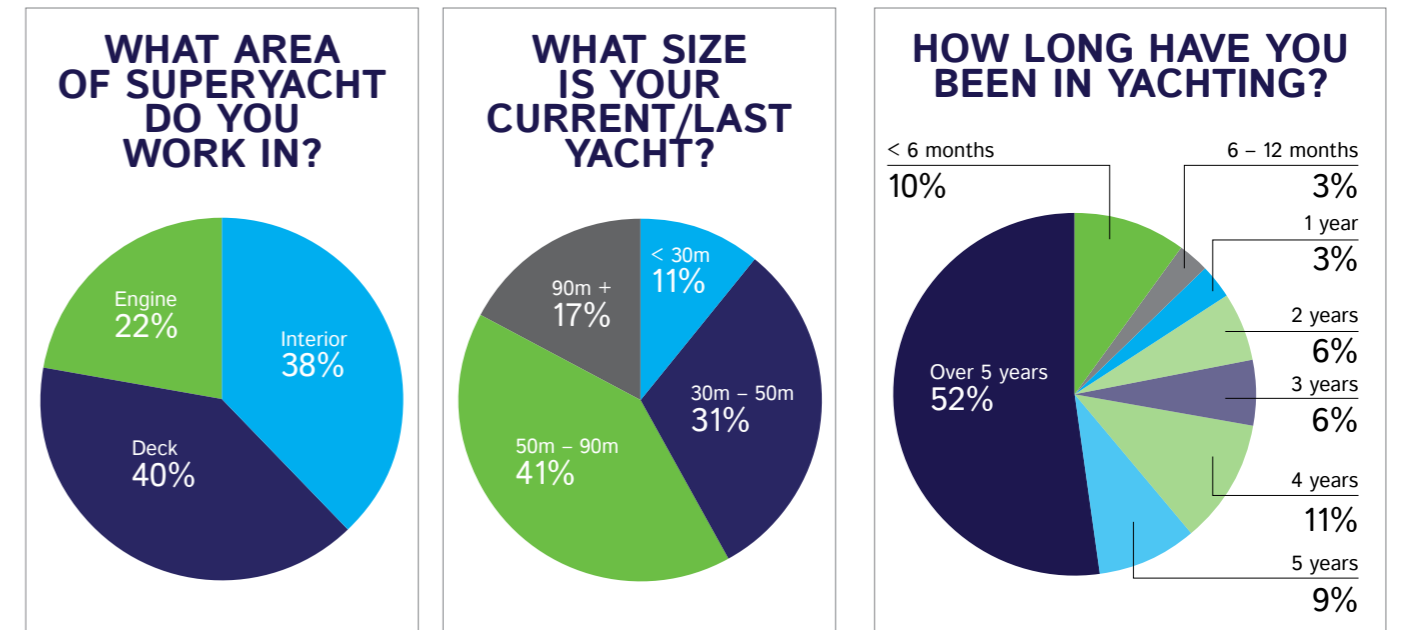
The responses from the survey were analysed to identify the most important trends and points of interest in the research. In addition, our Superyacht experts have reviewed the data to ensure that it reflects the realities of their local markets as well as global trends.

We believe that the combination of the survey's unique scale and reach and our market expertise means that this report delivers a representative view of trends and opportunities in employment in the Superyacht industry, across the world.

*All quotes from Superyacht Crew represent their thoughts and views and not those of Faststream Recruitment and Yotspot.*



# Demographics



# Staying connected

In this digital age staying virtually connected whilst onboard a Superyacht is easier than ever before, with increasing access to Wi-Fi and telecommunications. The crew can communicate at any time of day from almost anywhere in the world with a Whatsapp, Text, Email or Skype, but is this virtual communication enough for the crew members? Or do they feel more disconnected from real life more than ever?

Connection is integral to us as humans and will influence our ability to interact with others and to build relationships. So what effect is working on a Superyacht having on the crew's relationships? 61% of those surveyed were in a relationship. Of those in a relationship, 14% were in a relationship with someone on board the same yacht as themselves, 27% were in a relationship with someone on another yacht, 51% were in a relationship with someone who was shore-based whilst the rest chose 'other' as to where their significant other was.

What was interesting was how where their significant other was located affected the happiness level of how often they got to see them. Unsurprisingly, those working together on the same yacht were all very happy with how often they saw each other. This decreased to 60% of those in a relationship with someone shore-based being happy, whereas those who had a partner who worked on another yacht were the least happy (29%) with the frequency in which they got to see their partner. We can certainly understand

the frustration that being on different yachts could have on a relationship, if your rotations and locality don't match up, there could be a huge amount of time away from one another. This will also no doubt affect their well-being too.

Human connection is really important when it comes to creating a family and having children too. Only 35% of those surveyed had children. Is this a difficult industry to have children in or does it show the age and stage of life of those working in the industry?

There was a mixed response in whether the crew surveyed were happy with how often they got to see their children – 43% were unhappy – the majority were getting to see their children every three to six months.

So how are the crew keeping connected whilst they are away from their friends and family? We asked what social media networks and communication apps they were using to stay in touch. WhatsApp was the most popular choice (86%), followed by Facebook (77%) and Instagram (40%). There has been a lot written that social media is making people feel less connected, lonelier, unhappy and that people are spending more time on their mobile phones than having face-to-face contact. However, when you are away at sea, you are reliant on these types of social media networks and communication apps to ensure you can keep in touch.

For the crew, it appears that these communication tools for the majority were actually making them feel more connected to their friends and family, with only 6% citing it made them feel less so. However, two comments really stood out to us:

*'It makes you feel both closer and more distant. You can catch up, but you miss out on so many things.'*

*'It never feels right having to communicate this way, but it is the only way to keep in touch.'*

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**'IT NEVER FEELS RIGHT HAVING TO COMMUNICATE THIS WAY, BUT IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH'**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Clearly, in an ideal world, it seems that the crew would, of course, prefer to be spending less time away from friends and family, not missing out on Birthdays, Christmas and celebrations, but what is apparent is that they genuinely appreciate having some ability to keep connected and perhaps appreciate it more than those who are shore-based, as they have no other alternative.

We also considered how easy it would be for the crew to connect with shore-based representatives of the Superyacht industry. Many yachts are managed by yacht management companies where there is an opportunity to escalate problems or concerns. However, we also see many yachts that don't retain yacht management services and we wonder what effect this might be having on the crew. If there is not an independent body easily available to talk to, this may make these employees feel alone and have no one in the industry they can talk to.



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**'IT MAKES YOU FEEL BOTH CLOSER AND MORE DISTANT. YOU CAN CATCH UP, BUT YOU MISS OUT ON SO MANY THINGS'**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

#thesuperyachtsurvey2020

# Health & Well-being

Is the life of Superyacht crew as exciting and glamorous as it is made out to be? We propose not. 64% of the crew we surveyed said they were experiencing a mental health issue whilst working on-board a Superyacht. What is more concerning is that it appears to have become worse since we asked how the crew were feeling in 2017.



Mental health whilst working on-board a Superyacht is incredibly important; it will affect the crew's emotional, psychological and social well-being and will impact how they think, feel and act. It will determine how they will handle stress, relate to others and how they make choices, all of which are important aspects of working as a team in a confined environment.

With 1 in 4 people in the UK experiencing a mental health problem each year (source: MIND UK) the concept of mental health is now at the forefront of our daily lives, whether we are personally suffering from it or not. But the crew of Superyachts seem to be more affected than the UK nation as a whole, so what seems to be going wrong and why?

In 2017 we highlighted that 36% of the crew and 45% of Captains felt they were under excessive pressure in their current

role. In 2019 however, feelings of stress have become much worse, and a huge 49% of the crew cited they felt stressed. However, the number of Captains experiencing stress remained the same. This is a huge increase in two years – why are the crew suddenly feeling more stress and pressure? Overall, 61% of respondents said they had experienced stress, the top answer when we asked about their mental health. This was not affected by the number of years spent in the industry.

*"It is not surprising that more of the crew are feeling stressed working on-board the world's most luxurious Superyachts – it is hard graft. What is most concerning is that lower-level and entry-level crew are feeling increased pressure too, not just those in command."*

Anxiety (38%), depression (29%) and self-esteem issues (27%) were included in the top four mental health con-

cerns that the crew were experiencing. It is well-known that the Superyacht industry is highly image-based and it is common practice for yacht owners to dictate the age, nationality, weight, height and general attractiveness of its crew, but what effect is this having on the team? With over a quarter of respondents citing self-esteem issues, this dictation of looks appears to be having a detrimental impact on the crew. With increasing pressure to have the perfect 'look' from sources such as social media too, what future issues could this be creating for many young people onboard?

Depression is a hot topic in the Superyacht industry with factors such as long periods away from friends and family, the impact of social media, access to alcohol and recreational drugs are just a few items mentioned by the crew when they talk about depression. In 2018, we also saw an unfortunate incident of a young woman who made headlines across the world after she tragically committed suicide on-board a Greek Superyacht.

If mental health issues are getting worse in the industry, is support being provided to address the issue? As the concept of mental health has become more mainstream in the UK, Europe and North America, there has been an uptick in the support available through a variety of sources including; helplines, support groups, GPs, and therapies to name a few. However, with long periods away from home, how can the crew access these services and if they can't, can they turn to their employer? Only 27% of the crew felt there was appropriate support and advice from their employer with regards to the mental health issue they were

experiencing. This is a huge change from our 2017 survey where 72% of the crew believed their employer to be considerate about their well-being, as well as 68% feeling confident or very confident about disclosing a personal issue with their employer.

In particular, those working on private yachts may find the only person they can confide in is the Captain of the yacht. If the Captain is unapproachable then there is little support for the crew. We see a high turnover of staff on yachts and whilst it is difficult to attribute this to just one reason, we hear from the crew themselves that lack of support and conflict onboard has been a major contributor to staff turnover.

But we have to ask the question 'who is supporting the Captain?' There is a huge amount of pressure on this one person at top rank to support their crew's health and well being as well as having to serve as the lead management executive, the hirer of the crew, keeping the books and managing technical aspects of the yacht.

*"Mental health is a very personal and delicate subject to discuss. The mass media has tried to make headway in making it less of a taboo subject and something that we shouldn't be afraid to talk about. However, with the crew and employers being away from home so much, there is a need for more resources to be available to the wider seafaring community to ensure we don't see more tragic incidents. We hope to see a step-change over the next two years whereby the crew feel they can talk about their issues, feel supported and make progress to improve their overall well-being."*

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**“IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT MORE OF THE CREW ARE FEELING STRESSED WORKING ON-BOARD THE WORLD'S MOST LUXURIOUS SUPERYACHTS – IT IS HARD GRAFT. WHAT IS MOST CONCERNING IS THAT LOWER-LEVEL AND ENTRY-LEVEL CREW ARE FEELING INCREASED PRESSURE TOO, NOT JUST THOSE IN COMMAND.”** MARK CHARMAN

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# Career Development

There have been many reports that the crew are only working in the Superyacht industry for the short-term to make a quick financial gain but our results painted a different picture. We asked the crew how long they expected their career to continue aboard a yacht and the majority expected to work in yachting for five years plus (64%). Only 6% believed their career would last less than a year.

Despite being an industry notorious for high turnover, when we asked whether the crew would recommend a career in yachting to young people, 80% agreed that they would.

Of those who didn't see themselves working aboard a yacht for the rest of their life made it clear that they love the industry and what they currently do on their Superyacht. 59% answered that their career aspirations after working on a yacht would be a job working in a shore-based role related to their current job. When we asked what shipping industry they found most attractive, a resounding 72% still saw the yachting industry as the most attractive.

But what do those who don't want to work in yachting, whether at sea or at shore, want to do? We saw a group of budding entrepreneurs amongst the crew surveyed. 20% saw themselves as owning their own business after their yachting career had ended. With many commenting, they would open a business in the hospitality sector.

The second most attractive shipping industry after yachting was cruise. This came as no surprise to us.



*"We see that a lot of Superyacht crew find the new ships in cruise very attractive. It is an industry that has been booming for a long time. However, we have also seen a lot of cruise employees moving over to Superyachts due to the highly attractive salaries on offer."*

How many Superyacht crew have ever been asked what matters most to them in their job? For the first time, we asked the crew what their top priorities were at work out of five factors: Salary / Bonus, Company Culture, Training, Career Progression and Work-Life Balance. Resoundingly the crew voted that Work-Life Balance was the most important, beating Salary / Bonus to the top spot. This was quite surprising, as we already noted that many believe the crew are only in yachting for the money. Why is Work-Life Balance so important to them? And is achieving this even realistic? Work-Life Balance can be described as "the lack of opposition between work and other life roles. It is the state of equilibrium in which demands of personal life, professional life, and family life are equal". Although this is clearly their top priority, how will the crew balance their personal life, which could still be heavily influenced by their old shore-based life and the rotations that working on a

Superyacht dictates? Are they setting themselves up to be disappointed with their life aboard a Superyacht? Or do they value the time they aren't working whilst on the Superyacht and get to socialise with their co-workers?

Money is certainly still important to those working on a Superyacht, but not quite as much as other reports have stated. What the crew did make clear is that they don't value company culture aboard their Superyacht.



**"WE SEE THAT A LOT OF SUPERYACHT CREW FIND THE NEW SHIPS IN CRUISE VERY ATTRACTIVE. IT IS AN INDUSTRY THAT HAS BEEN BOOMING FOR A LONG TIME. HOWEVER, WE HAVE ALSO SEEN A LOT OF CRUISE EMPLOYEES MOVING OVER TO SUPERYACHTS DUE TO THE HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE SALARIES ON OFFER."**

MARK CHARMAN

## WHAT MATTERS MOST TO SUPERYACHT CREW?



# Pensions & Savings

80% of Superyacht crew did not have a pension. As with any working person, a pension is usually seen as an essential way to save for the future and enable you to retire in the way you want to. With the UK full State Pension of £168.60 per week for the tax year 2019-20, this is far below what most people say they hope to retire on.

48% of the working UK population (16 – 64) are currently using a private or public sector pension (Source: Office for National Statistic: Occupational Pension Schemes Survey UK 2018), 20% in the Superyacht industry is way behind.

*“Rising life expectancy means retirement is likely to be longer than ever before. Superyacht crew need to be planning ahead and taking control of their financial futures as early as possible.”*

So, why aren't more of the crew using a pension to save for the future? 13% of respondents felt they couldn't afford it. This was surprising when the Superyacht industry is one of the few industries that still offer tax-free salaries and pay scales are highly competitive.



**“THE PROOF WILL BE IN THE PUDDING, IF MORE EMPLOYERS START OFFERING A PENSION TO THEIR CREW, WE MAY SEE AN INCREASE IN THOSE TAKING THEM UP ON IT, BUT WE ALSO MIGHT FIND THAT NOT HAVING A PENSION AS A CREW MEMBER IS JUST THE WAY IT IS.”** MARK CHARMAN

19% of the crew said they were too young to think about pensions. The demographics of Superyacht crew remain young and in general, it is viewed by many as a 'young person's game'. However, pension advisers say that young people should be putting away as much as 12% of their salary for a comfortable retirement. With it predicted that the age of retirement to receive the state pension will continue to increase, pensions are more important than ever to ensure you can retire comfortably.

Just over 10% of the crew answered that they didn't view a pension as a priority for them. 13% answered with a variety of other responses but reasons quoted included; 'Very few pensions offered in the yachting industry', 'No one in yachting has a pension', 'Owners don't care about my pension', 'Not had time to look for a good option'. All of these answers are focussed on external factors. There doesn't seem to be a pro-active attitude toward owning the issue of pensions by the crew themselves, but instead relying on the owners to offer it at the start of employment.

So, who is utilising a pension? The majority of those who were saving using a pension were in top-level positions; notably Captains and Chief Engineers. At what point in a career in Superyachts do the crew finally decide to source a pension? Over 50% of our respondents had been in yachting for over five years but this was not reflective of how likely they were to be investing in a pension.

When we asked those who did have a pension whether their current employer provided it, the resounding answer was no. Why are Superyacht crew not being offered a pension? If more owners did offer a pension we wonder how many would take it up and how this would affect retention onboard?



*“What could be concerning for Superyacht owners is that if they don't invest in crucial staff benefits such as a pension, they might risk losing their brightest and best crew, or may fail to attract them in the first place”*

There is a misconception by some seagoing employers that they are not in a position to offer a pension. Many believe pension plans out in the market are inflexible for the maritime industry and are not reflective of the complexities of the working style of a Seafarer. However, with the likes of the Ensign Retirement Plan that entered the pension market with a product that was dedicated purely to this industry, it is now possible to accommodate often short-term, flexible working arrangements.

It still remains that few Superyacht crew are being offered a pension and are certainly not prioritising it as something to find themselves.

*“Crew retention is a major issue in the Superyacht industry. Offering a pension to your crew could be a sure way to attract and retain key talent on-board.”*

*“The proof will be in the pudding, if more employers start offering a pension to their crew, we may see an increase in*

*those taking them up on it, but we also might find that not having a pension as a crew member is just the way it is.”*

So, if Superyacht crew are not taking a pension, are they saving for the future in another way? Encouragingly when we asked whether the crew save any of their monthly salary, a staggering 86% said yes. What was even more positive was that nearly 60% saved 20% or more of their monthly salary, followed by 17% of the crew saving 16 – 20%. Less than a fifth of respondents saved less than 5% of their monthly salary.

The crew are seeing other investments as more attractive than pensions, or potentially more easily available. With a host of investment products available on the market, they are quite simply spoilt for choice.

*“It appears that crew have taken saving for the future into their own hands. A minority of employers are offering pensions and this has meant that crew have looked for alternative ways of investing in their future.”*

The Superyacht industry has a long way to go in establishing better fringe benefits and focussing on staff retention.



# Conclusion

As businesses operating in the Superyacht industry, we eagerly anticipate what the future will bring. In times to come, we may see huge changes in how Superyacht crew are recruited. We consider:

- ◆ What long term effect will virtual connectivity and lack of face to face time with loved ones have on the mental health and social engagement of the crew?
- ◆ What will be the impact of increased pressures on senior ranking Superyacht crew in the industry?
- ◆ How will new and younger generations change the Superyacht workforce with different needs and expectations?

- ◆ How will the Superyacht industry remain competitive in the wider merchant maritime industries in terms of career progression and ship to shore transitions?
- ◆ What will the Superyacht industry learn from other maritime industries in retaining staff long-term?
- ◆ How will yacht management companies evolve to be able to deal with the mental health of their Superyacht crew? And how will non-commercial yachts support their Captains to address this area of growing concern?
- ◆ What impact will the saving habits of the Superyacht seafaring community have on retirement ages in this sector?

It has been a privilege to create this Superyacht employment report for the industry and we hope that the insights have been as interesting and enjoyable to read as it has been to produce.

*Mark, Daryl and Steve.*

