



*“Let us make 2019 a year of action; a year to break down all barriers; empowering women in the maritime community”*

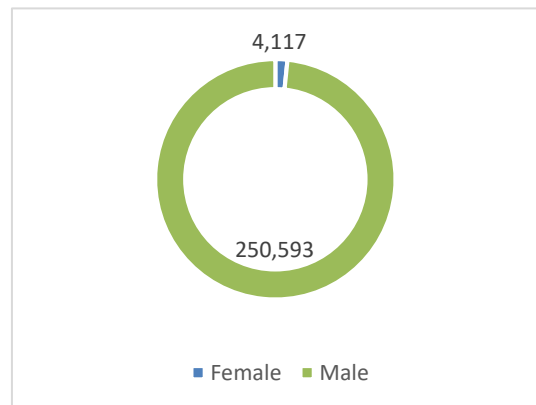
IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim, launching World Maritime Day 2019

It is often said (eg [here](#)) that only 2% of seafarers are female. That figure both significantly undercounts the number of women serving at sea (in fact 16% - eight times as many - would be more accurate), and misses important distinctions between different groups which we need to understand if we are to take more effective action to address the diversity imbalance. This Briefing explains the more complex reality behind the headline figures.

This chart from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), showing for 2017 the “gender distribution of masters and officers available to serve on board EU Member State flagged vessels”, is typical of the way that the percentage of female seafarers is normally presented:

4,117 female officers are a little under 2% of the EU total – 1.6% in fact.

The data here only covers officers, however, and only “certificated” officers (ie those in the deck, engine, and electro-technical room departments), so both ratings and “non-certificated” officers, who are primarily in hospitality roles, are excluded. And the data is at a very high level, so there is no detail by rank.



The [Department for Transport’s Annual Seafarer Statistics](#) give us much more to go on for the UK shipping industry, particularly the supporting tables rather than the published summary paper.

In Table SFR 0202 (2018 data) DfT uses data from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency on the number of live Certificates of Competence and Certificates of Equivalent Competence to provide a breakdown by deck and engine room, and by key grades within both.

There is a notably higher proportion of women on the deck side (5%) than in the engine room (1%), with a big drop between Chief Mate and Master (7% down to 2%) – though all the percentages are still very small indeed:

*NB: to avoid distracting detail we have simplified DfT’s tables, and not sought to show changes over time, or differences between years. In their [Technical Note](#) DfT statisticians caution that “the statistics can fluctuate from year to year and therefore should be treated with caution”. Note also that the UK Chamber of Shipping data set does not contain gender identifiers for each seafarer due to the way it is reported, resulting in a smaller sample size. However, it is a rational assumption that the gender ratio of the sample will be consistent for the overall population.*

[www.maritimeskills.org](http://www.maritimeskills.org)

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**Table 1: Distribution of women with valid certificates by department and grade**

		Total	% Female
<b>Deck</b>	Master	2,995	2%
	Chief Mate	1,105	7%
	OOW Deck	3,110	6%
	<b>All deck officers (CoC)</b>	<b>7,210</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Engine</b>	Chief Engineer	1,780	1%
	Second Engineer	1,120	1%
	OOW Engineering	2,705	2%
	<b>All engineers (CoC)</b>	<b>5,605</b>	<b>1%</b>

DfT's Table SFR 0302 takes a different set of data, drawn from the UK Chamber of Shipping's annual survey of members, which covers *those actually serving at sea* rather than those simply holding valid certificates. This data set also includes non-certificated officers and ratings who work in hospitality roles.

This shows much bigger percentages for women: they are **41%** of catering and hotel officers, and **47%** of catering and hotel ratings. Put it all together and female seafarers serving at sea are around 16% of the total – nearer 1 in 6 of all seafarers, than 1 in 50.

Type	Department	% Female	Total
Certificated officers	Deck	4%	2,190
	Engine	1%	1,625
	<b>All certificated officers</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3,815</b>
Uncertificated officers	Catering/Hotel/Other	41%	650
Ratings	Deck	2%	1,820
	Engine	1%	280
	Catering/Hotel/Other	47%	3,325
	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>5,535</b>
		<b>16%</b>	<b>10,000</b>

In a ranked table the range of percentages looks like this:

		2019	2018
Ratings	Catering/Hotel/Other	47%	45%
Uncertificated officers	Catering/Hotel/Other	41%	42%
<b>All categories</b>		<b>16%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Certificated officers	Deck	4%	5%
Certificated officers	Engine	1%	2%
Ratings	Deck	2%	2%
Ratings	Engine	1%	1%

The data is far from perfect and it is unwise to place too much emphasis on changes year-on-year, but the central point remains valid, that the proportion of female seafarers serving at sea is far higher than is commonly quoted.

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