

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Introduction

The Shipping Master is an officer of the Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI) who is appointed under section 10 of the Maritime Authority Act, 2013.

The Shipping Master primarily deals with crew welfare issues including complaints regarding things such as accommodation, food, repatriation, working hours, payment of medical expenses, assisting resolution of wage disputes and other contractual issues within the scope of the Law. The Shipping Master is available to all crew on all vessels, even those that are fully privately registered where the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) does not apply, albeit on a more limited scope

The remit of the Shipping Master is restricted to issues governed by the Merchant Shipping Act, as amended, and associated regulations and the statutory requirements of any contract made thereunder. The Shipping Master is generally not able to assist in non-contractual disputes and claims and cannot definitively rule on disputes and claims that do not relate to a statutory requirement or entitlement though can offer advice and assistance on such issues. The Shipping Master is not limited to intervening on express written contractual provisions and is able to assist with contractual provisions that are implied by Law.

The Shipping Master also handles inquiries into the conduct and fitness of seafarers to serve, as well as births and deaths onboard Cayman Islands vessels.

### **What happens when a seafarer complains?**

These reports are recorded, logged and followed up as appropriate.

- Any complaints made to the Shipping Master will be treated in strict confidence. However, should the seafarer wish this to be raised with the owner, Captain or management, the Shipping Master may have to name the complainant for the complaint to be acted upon. This will only be done if strictly necessary and only if the complainant has expressly given permission to be named;
- The Shipping Master will ask for as much information as possible and advise further, to try to resolve informally;
- Where informal resolution is unsuccessful the Shipping Master gathers evidence and, once express permission is given by the seafarer, writes to the owner, master or management to start mediation;
- If mediation proves unsuccessful then there is the option of a formal Shipping Master Decision which is binding on both parties<sup>1</sup>.
- It is important to stress that whilst complainants have the right not to be named without consent, the Shipping Master cannot deal with anonymous complaints.
- It is important to stress that the Shipping Master is responsible for dealing with disputes, and any enforcement of the Merchant Shipping Act is dealt with the Safety and Compliance section following referral by the Shipping Master to ensure independence.

This report examines the complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI during 2025. Historical trends are also presented over the preceding five years (2020 to 2025<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> See s96 of the Merchant Shipping Act (MSA) 2024 Revision

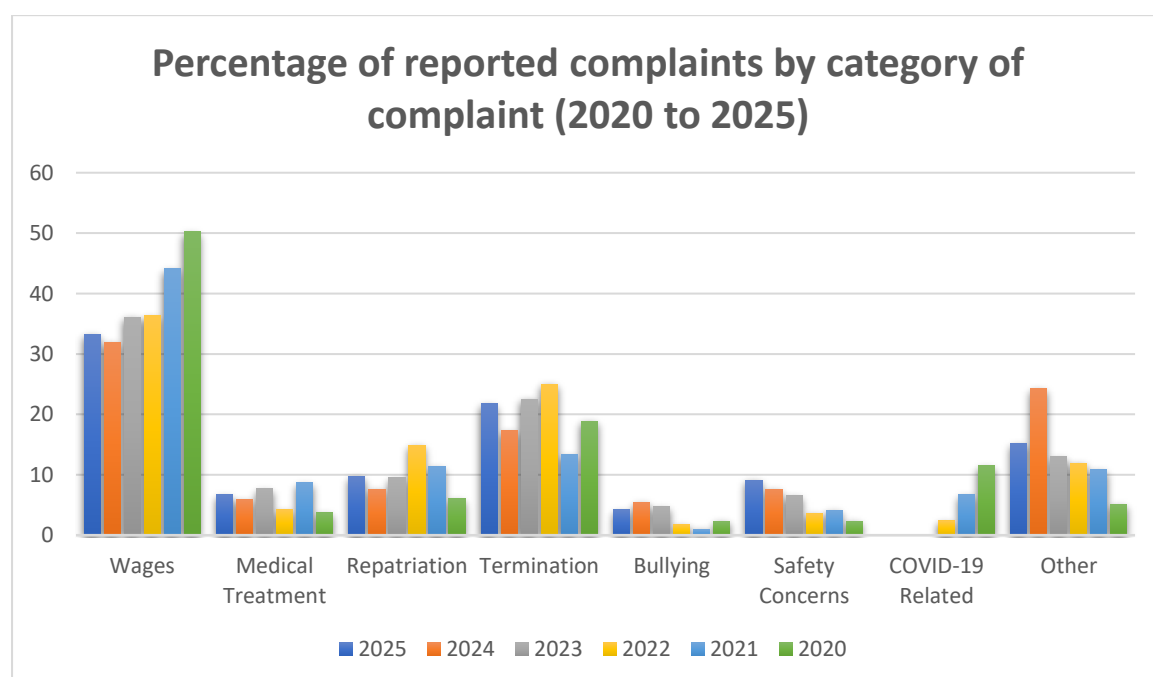
<sup>2</sup> Please see previous reports for data from preceding years (2019)

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Reported Complaints by Category of Complaint in 2024

A total of **165** complaints<sup>3</sup> were reported to MACI during 2025 a decrease of 20 compared to 2024. These can be broken down as follows –

	2025		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		Change 2025 vs 2024
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Wage Disputes	55	33.3%	59	31.9%	61	36.1%	61	36.3%	86	44.1%	109	50.2%	-4
Medical Treatment	11	6.7%	11	5.9%	13	7.7%	7	4.2%	17	8.7%	8	3.7%	-
Repatriation	16	9.7%	14	7.6%	16	9.5%	25	14.9%	22	11.3%	13	6.0%	+2
Termination	36	21.8%	32	17.3%	38	22.5%	42	25.0%	26	13.3%	41	18.9%	+4
Bullying / Harassment	7	4.2%	10	5.4%	8	4.7%	3	1.8%	2	1.0%	5	2.3%	-3
Safety Concerns	15	9.1%	14	7.6%	11	6.5%	6	3.6%	8	4.1%	5	2.3%	+1
COVID-19 Related	x	x	x	x	x	x	4	2.4%	13	6.7%	25	11.5%	-
Other <sup>4</sup>	25	15.2%	45	24.3%	22	13.0%	20	11.9%	21	10.8%	11	5.1%	-20

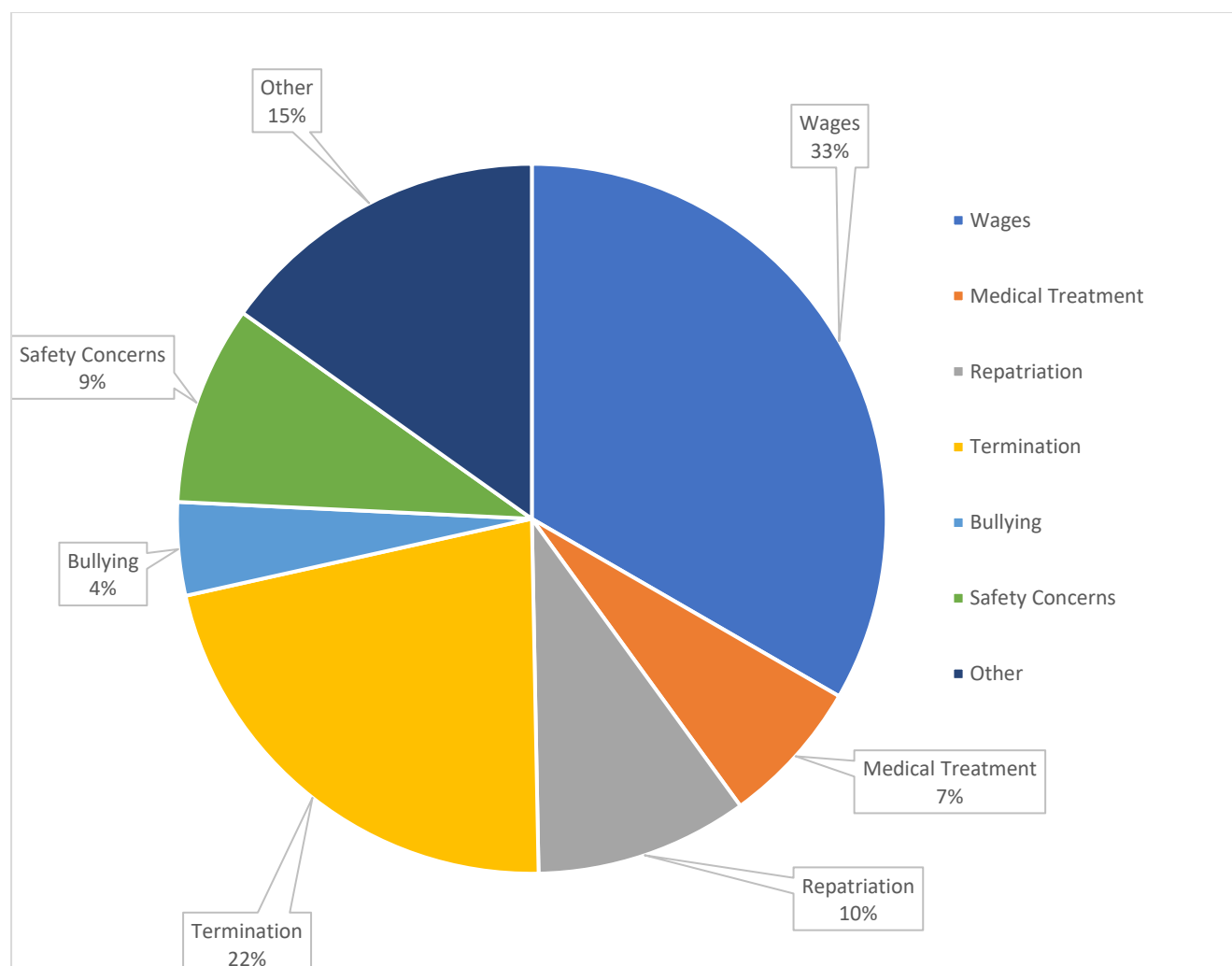


<sup>3</sup> These are 105 separate complaints as some of the complaints cover more than one listed category

<sup>4</sup> See Categories of Complaint section

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

Complaints by Category of Complaint reported during 2025

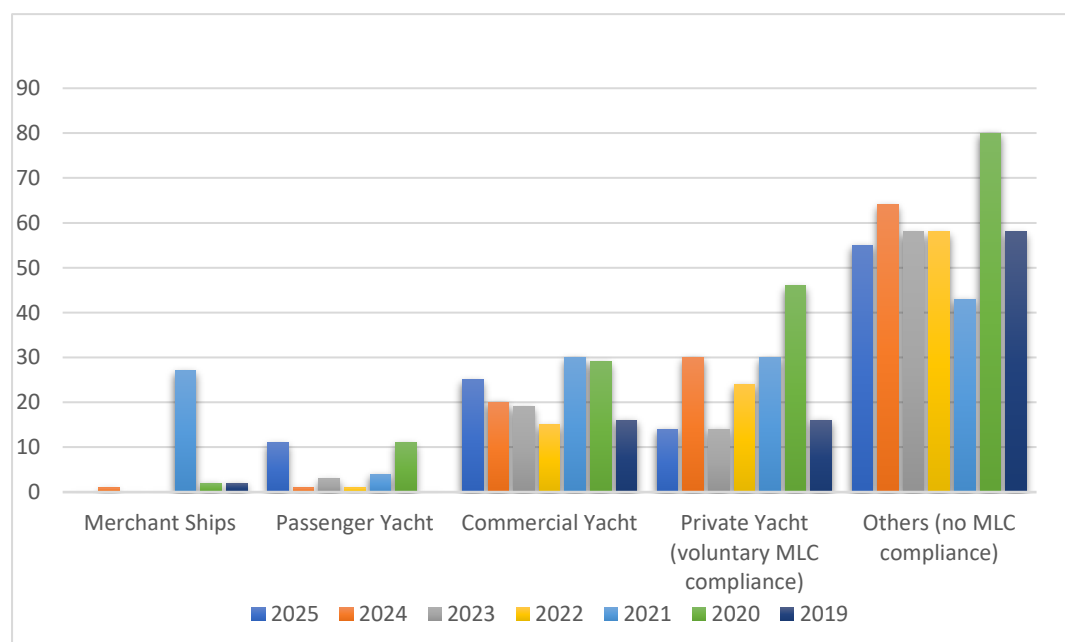


# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Complaints by Vessel Registration type in 2025

As well as breaking down the reports by “category of complaint”, the incidents were also analysed as to ship type as follows<sup>5</sup> –

	2025		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		Change 2025 vs 2024
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	Num	%	
Merchant Ships	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	27	20.3%	2	2	-1
Passenger Yacht Code Compliant Vessels	11	10.48%	1	0.9%	3	3.2%	1	1.0%	4	3.0%	n/a	6.5%	+10
Commercial Yachts <sup>6</sup>	25	23.8%	20	17.2%	19	20.2%	15	15.3%	30	21.8%	16	17.3%	+5
Private Yachts (in voluntary MLC compliance) <sup>7</sup>	14	13.3%	30	25.8%	14	14.9%	24	24.5%	30	22.6%	16	27.4%	-16
Others (pleasure vessels, etc)	55	52.4%	64	55.2%	58	61.7%	58	59.2%	43	32.3%	58	47.6%	-9



<sup>5</sup> This will include some multiple category complaints (as per note 1); these may also be complaints from multiple seafarers on a single vessel (each individual seafarer complaint is recorded separately).

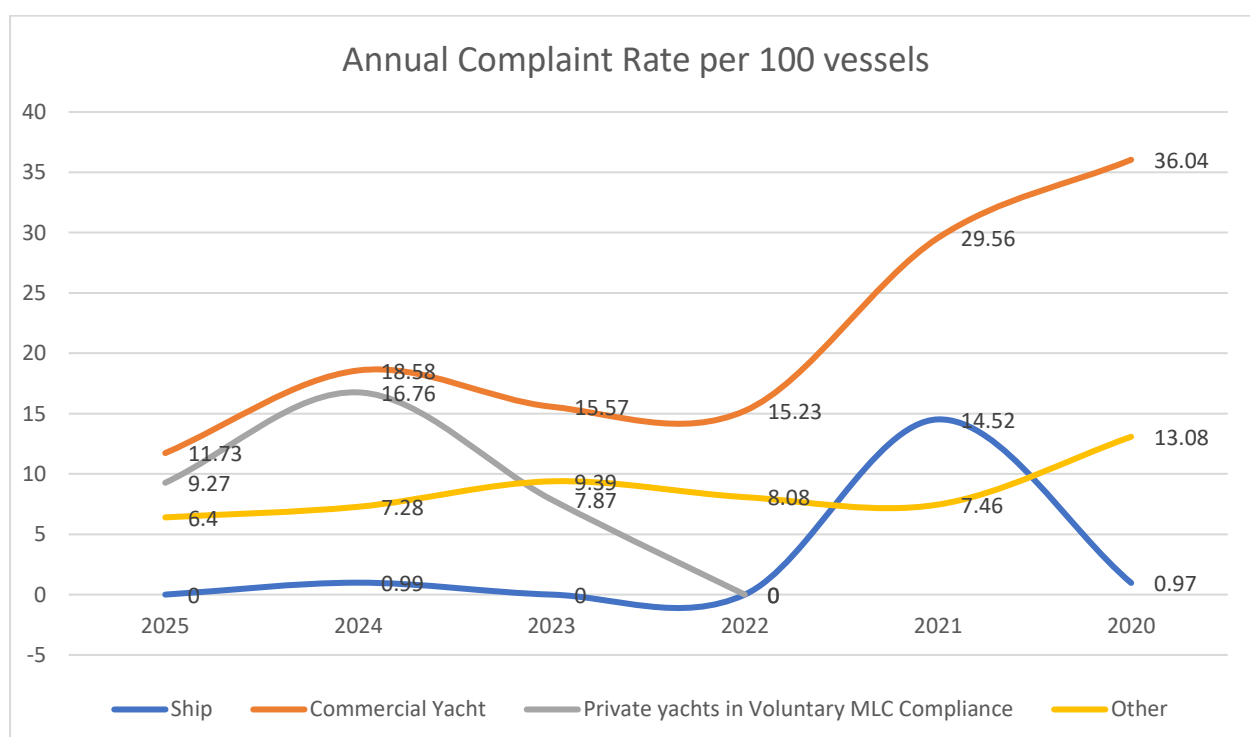
<sup>6</sup> Includes Yacht Engaged in Trade (YET) vessels

<sup>7</sup> Some pleasure vessels may choose to voluntarily comply with the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 as part of the Large Yacht Code and these are recorded distinctly from those which do not choose to maintain voluntary compliance.

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Complaint rate by vessel type

Ship Type:	Number of units registered	Number of complaints:	Complaint rate per ship type:	2024 Rate	Change
Merchant Ships	99 <sup>8</sup>	0	0 per 100 units	0.99 per 100 units	-0.99
Commercial Yachts <sup>9</sup>	172	25	11.73 per 100 units	18.58 per 100 units	-6.85
Private yachts in Voluntary MLC Compliance	151	14	9.27 per 100 units	16.76 per 100 units	-7.49
Other Vessels <sup>10</sup>	859	55	6.40 per 100 units	7.28 per 100 units	-0.88



<sup>8</sup> This year's figures exclude those demise chartered out of the Cayman Islands

<sup>9</sup> Includes Passenger Yacht Code Compliant and Yachts Engaged in Trade (YET) Vessels. This will affect the rate from this year as YET vessels were previously included in Private Yachts in Voluntary MLC compliance

<sup>10</sup> "other vessels" since 2023 annual report only includes those not in voluntary MLC compliance this will impact on the complaint rate is the graph below compared to pre-2023

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Categories of Complaint:

### Wages

Complaints about wages amounted to a third of all of the complaints received by the Shipping Master in 2025. This is slightly more as a percentage (but less overall) less than last year and a significant decrease both in actual numbers and in the percentage of total complaints from 2020 to 2023. This is the second lowest percentage of complaints in any year (after 2024) that the data has been recorded and the lowest in total number of complaints.

As in previous years most complaints relating to wages were for delays in payment. In addressing these complaints, the Shipping Master normally advises seafarers to wait at least 2/3 weeks before involving the Shipping Master formally. However, informal advice is given straightaway which often resolves the issue without formal involvement. In the majority of cases the delays are short and may be due to an oversight, bank delays or public holidays in the owner's home country.

In some cases, wage delays are more "intentional" for instance when a seafarer has been terminated due to a falling out or for misconduct. In such cases there may be a reluctance on both sides to resolve amicably, and the Shipping Master does become formally involved. In such cases the Shipping Master sometimes needs to affirm to owners and captains that recovery from wages of any costs other than for the actual costs of repatriation, subject to a cap, (following termination with cause) is not permitted and any recovery of other costs from seafarers should take place in the courts but wages should always be paid in full. In most cases when the Shipping Master becomes formally involved in such cases then the issue is resolved fairly quickly through negotiation. Occasionally the two parties are unable to reach agreement and, in such cases, there are two options; either a binding Shipping Master decision or either party can take legal action. There were no requests for a formal decision regarding wages in 2025. A small number of disputes have resulted in legal action by one or both parties. In such cases the Shipping Master necessarily steps back from the dispute.

A complicating factor on some private yachts which are not voluntarily MLC compliant has previously been where seafarers have no formal written contract. In such cases this makes involvement by the Shipping Master much more difficult. One of the challenges faced is that whilst certain provisions, such as the right to wages and repatriation, are implied by the Act, the lack of a written contract made it difficult to prove what was agreed at the outset of the seafarer's engagement. The Merchant Shipping Act for the Cayman Islands has now been completely revised and under section 90 there is now a statutory requirement for all seafarers (including on all pleasure vessels) to have a written contract signed by both parties. Whilst this new requirement does not provide similar rights to that under the MLC it is hoped that this will ensure that many disputes can be resolved much more easily and protect both the seafarer and the shipowners' interests. MACI has produced [Guidance Note 05/2024](#) providing more detail on this. Please note that this new requirement will be being looked at in surveys and any dialogue with the Shipping Master and failure to abide by this requirement could result in enforcement action which ultimately could result in a fine. Although introduced in 2024, 2025 was the first full year of enforcement of this requirement and it is encouraging to see that this has been widely perceived as positive measure.

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## Examples:

The Owning company on a commercially registered yacht terminated the management agreement which left the vessel without ISM management. Furthermore, wages for all crew were delayed and in addition all crew were given notice of termination. The Shipping Master passed this on to enforcement who followed up with the ownership. The issues were resolved quickly and all crew were paid.

The wages on a Passenger Yacht were delayed for several months prior to the Shipping Master being approached by multiple seafarers. Once the Shipping Master was approached by the managers it was agreed to permit a small amount of time to try to resolve the issue prior to involving enforcement. Unfortunately, the issue could not be resolved quickly and the Shipping Master passed this to enforcement. The vessel was immediately detained for breach of MLC. Wages were paid (significantly delayed) shortly after the detention was imposed; however, it was determined that delays would likely occur again as there was no long-term arrangement for addressing the underlying payment issues. As such the detention was maintained. After 2 further months of delayed payment there a more permanent solution was achieved, and the Shipping Master closed the dispute.

A seafarer on a commercial yacht was terminated and there does appear to have been some significant disputes between all parties at the time which made negotiation rather complicated. The owner had determined to not pay a significant portion of the final salary as a result. However, the Shipping Master did determine that the seafarer had a valid claim and as a result there was a potential breach of MLC which could have resulted in enforcement action. The Shipping Master formally contacted the management company who also involved the owner's team. The Shipping Master and management company were successful in convincing the owner to make the required payments and it was determined not to need to involve enforcement.

## Medical Treatment

There were 11 complaints involving medical issues during 2025, the same as last year. As in previous years most of these complaints involved delayed payment of medical claims where a seafarer paid themselves, or where the vessel has refused to provide treatment and the seafarer has had treatment anyway.

The liability for legitimate medical claims is on the vessel (under MLC this is for medical care onboard and up to 16 weeks following the onset of illness or injury, for private non-MLC vessels this is for the period onboard and up to the point that the seafarer is repatriated where necessary). Therefore, as far as possible treatment should be arranged and paid by the vessel / employer. Sometimes this may not be possible such as when the seafarer is on leave or has left the vessel (but the need for treatment arises from their time onboard). In such cases they should always involve the vessel so that they are aware of a potential liability and early discussions with the insurers where applicable. In such cases when faced with a liability the employer / owner may well choose to request a second opinion on any diagnosis. Most vessels choose to maintain insurance against their liabilities for sick pay and medical treatment. However, it must be pointed out that even if insurance is held if there is any shortfall on any legitimate claim (such as a deductible or limit) or the insurance does not pay out the owner would still be liable for the whole costs. Due to the potential extended liability for medical costs, shipowners are strongly encouraged to cover this by medical insurance but this is not mandatory and self-insurance is permitted (though not for long term sickness and death as per the 2014 Amendments to MLC on MLC complaint vessels see [Shipping Notice 01/2017.](#))

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

Most claims were resolved quite quickly once the Shipping Master became involved and pointed out the entitlements and the liability of the employer.

## Example:

A seafarer on a privately registered vessel in voluntary compliance with MLC was working under a seasonal contract. They became unwell 7 days prior to the end of the seasonal contract but were signed off sick for a further two weeks after the contractual end date. afterwards. They were only paid until the contractual end point. This is not acceptable on MLC compliant vessels and the Shipping Master confirmed this immediately. When informed of this the vessel immediately agreed to pay sick pay for the period signed off sick.

## Repatriation

There were 16 complaints where repatriation was part of the dispute, this is slightly more than 2024. As in previous years often repatriation wasn't the focus of the dispute, which was usually linked to termination, in particular, when the termination was for cause. In such cases the vessel is liable to arrange for the repatriation but may be able to deduct the costs of doing so from the final wages (usually up to \$1000 CI (\$1200 USD) and it should be noted that this is an upper cap and only the actual cost up to the cap can be recovered).

Other issues relating to repatriation involved places for return not being the normal place of domicile (or a different place during the early stage of employment) in the contract. This is acceptable where the seafarer agrees in the contract or the seafarer wishes to delay repatriation rather than take it as soon as practicable or to fly somewhere else other than the place for return. Both of these are not rights and could be seen as declining the right of repatriation.

In the past there have been issues where a seafarer does not have written evidence of the agreed repatriation destination. The recent requirement for a written contract from the revised Merchant Shipping Act should ensure that this is much less of an issue in the future as the repatriation destination is a requirement for the contract. It is important to stress that whilst a mutually agreed place for repatriation, other than the country of domicile, can be established, attention should be paid to the immigration status if the individual as the seafarer must have the legal right to reside in the agreed repatriation country.

## Examples:

A seafarer on a privately registered vessel in voluntary compliance with MLC resigned from their job and they had as their agreed contractual repatriation destination which was different to their home/place of residence. Whilst home is normally the agreed place it doesn't have to be and upon termination repatriation should be arranged to the agreed place. However, it was indicated that the local country where the seafarer was due to disembark does not permit someone to return anywhere other than their place of residence (which was a long flight). The vessel was unhappy about the costs of paying for a long flight to the place of residence and then a further flight to the agreed place of repatriation at this point the Shipping Master became involved. The Shipping Master confirmed that regardless of any local laws the seafarer must be repatriated to the agreed place or repatriation at owner expense unless mutually agreed otherwise. At this point the vessel agreed to pay for flights to the seafarer's country of residence and then onward to the agreed place of repatriation.

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A seafarer on a pleasure vessel was terminated and not paid or repatriated and the vessel refused to respond to any contact. The seafarer approached the Shipping Master which attempted to contact the vessel and also did not receive a response. At that stage it was decided to approach the Representative Person (RP) for the owning entity in the Cayman Islands. In addition, approval was obtained for MACI to purchase a repatriation flight for the seafarer is deemed necessary. Once the RP became involved the seafarer was quickly repatriated at owner expense and all money was paid to the seafarer along with expenses incurred whilst awaiting repatriation.

## Termination

The second most common complaint (though often alongside complaints about wages/leave pay or repatriation) in 2025 related to termination, this was a small increase from last year and quite a significant increase by percentage of complaints. In many cases these were allegations of “unfair dismissal” which can be very difficult to prove and for seafarers is generally excluded from employment tribunals in most jurisdictions<sup>11</sup>. The Shipping Master usually cautions on this at a very early stage in the dispute and suggests if the seafarer does wish to appeal their dismissal that they speak to a lawyer. The Shipping Master will still get involved in any linked complaints, such as delayed wages, which are normally resolved.

Fairly common complaints linked with termination continue to occur where accrued leave was offset against the notice period where the seafarer served some or all of their notice period off the vessel. Provided the contract does not prohibit this and any balance of leave or notice is paid<sup>12</sup> there is nothing to prevent this from being implemented. Although unfair dismissal is generally not available, action for wrongful dismissal, (where the termination provisions of the contract are not followed) is actionable and the Shipping Master will assist in these cases.

### Examples:

A Seafarer on a commercial yacht was on unpaid leave and resigned and the company was unwilling to pay notice pay (essentially immediate termination). The Shipping Master felt that unless mutually agreed otherwise there was a right to notice pay (though if they required the seafarer to return to vessel and they refused then no notice would be due). After dialogue with the Shipping Master the Manager agreed to pay 30 days basic salary.

A seafarer on a pleasure yacht in voluntary MLC compliance says they were terminated without cause and made a series of allegations. They had initially resigned but then retracted it. The Employer said that they had accepted resignation but not the retraction as such they paid according to the contract. The Shipping Master agreed that this was acceptable.

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<sup>11</sup> Whilst unfair dismissal is generally excluded a seafarer may be able to claim by virtue of their own country of domicile

<sup>12</sup> As an example, a seafarer’s contract requires 30 days’ notice of termination, and they resigned and were asked to leave immediately. At that stage they had accrued 45 days leave. In such case they should be paid the 30 days’ notice pay and then a balance of 15 days accrued leave. If they had 20 days accrued leave, then they would simply be due the 30 days’ notice period.

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## Bullying and harassment

There have been 7 claims where bullying and/or harassment has been alleged which is 3 less than 2024 and again is the most since the data has been recorded. Sometimes these complaints are linked to termination and often raised rather a long time afterwards. In such cases this may be very difficult to prove though the Shipping Master asks for as much information as possible and what action the seafarer wishes to be taken.

Whilst there have been no examples of this in 2024, where an allegation may be considered a breach of Cayman Islands criminal law, MACI could offer to inform the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) for their consideration of whether further action is appropriate. In most cases criminal activity would be investigated in the jurisdiction that the conduct was alleged to have taken place although the RCIPS may investigate crimes conducted on Cayman Islands vessels in international waters.

During this year the Shipping Master, and MACI more broadly, has worked with a number of industry organisations leading to a detailed [Guidance Note](#) being published. In addition, implementation of prevention policies for bullying and harassment will be a Concentrated Inspection Campaign item for CISR surveyors during onboard surveys in 2026<sup>13</sup>. It is also to be noted that STCW amendments came into force on 1 January 2026 to require training on bullying and harassment.

### Example:

A number of seafarers on a commercial yacht made a series of allegations against another member of crew which they felt amounted to bullying and harassment. The Shipping Master considered the detailed allegations and determined that there was sufficient evidence to pass this on to enforcement for consideration of further action. The seafarers consented to deal directly with Enforcement who started an investigation. The managers were asked to complete a thorough investigation which they did and they presented a detailed report which MACI accepted as sufficiently thorough. The complainants were content with the results of the investigation.

## Safety Concerns

There have been 15 complaints during 2025 raising safety concerns as an issue. This is a slight increase from 2024 and is considerably more than any previous year where the data has been collected (both in numbers and by percentage).

Given that private vessels do not have to comply with SOLAS or the Large Yacht Code then complaints about “safety issues” on these vessels is more difficult. There is a general provision to maintain the vessel in a seaworthy condition, but investigating these cases can be problematic. Further action may be possible where the allegations would also break laws in the area (in which case MACI would advise involving the local authorities) or Cayman Islands Law. In the latter case could MACI offer to inform the RCIPS for their consideration of whether further action is appropriate. Whilst it is difficult to take action on such issues for purely private yachts, MACI does have the option to remove Certificates for vessels that may choose to hold these voluntarily, in the case of breaches of safety requirements.

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<sup>13</sup> The 2016 Amendments to the MLC (which entered into force in 2019) require shipowners, companies and employers to specifically address bullying and harassment in their procedures

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When the Shipping Master has the permission of the seafarer and claims seem reasonable on commercially registered vessels (Ships and Yachts), or private yachts which have chosen the voluntarily comply with the Large Yacht Code, the Shipping Master can pass on the claims to the CISR survey team. They further investigate or enforcement action as deemed necessary such as noting on the file for future surveys or for an unannounced survey. This happened on a number of occasions in 2025.

## Examples:

A seafarer on a commercial vessel made a series of complaints regarding the condition of the vessel, equipment and poor standard of ISM compliance. The Shipping Master passed this to enforcement who noted and agreed to follow up in detail at the next attendance for survey.

Serious safety issues were raised with the Shipping Master about a Yacht Engaged in Trade were reported by a number of different sources: an industry charity; former crew; and a Seafarer's Union. These issues were immediately passed to Enforcement who have followed up with the vessel.

A number of seafarers on a pleasure vessel made a series of allegations about working conditions on board and raised safety issues, along with suggestions that procedures for dealing with medical issues are not very well developed or managed. These were raised with management and flag. Management has fully investigated and the Shipping Master concurred with their findings.

## Other

There have been 25 complaints during 2025 relating to issues where there were not in previous years a significant number of similar complaints on such an issue as such these have been categorised as "other". These complaints include:

**Food – 2**

**Accommodation – 1**

**Visa issues – 1**

**Discharge Book / reference – 2**

**Hours of Rest – 5:** whilst a greater number than in many previous years as per previous year's reports this is slightly surprising as anecdotally this is seen as a significant issue, in particular on yachts during "the season". A couple of complaints relating to Hours of Rest were passed to enforcement and these were both followed up at the next attendance.

**SEA Terms – 6:** There has been a very large increase in questions and complaints about the terms of the SEA / contract from 3 last year to 18 in 2024. Many of these were on pleasure vessels where the MLC does not apply and provided that the contract complies with the basic new requirements of section 90 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2024 then we are limited in what the flag can do.

**Tips/Bonus/Gratuity – 2:** the Shipping Master cannot normally get involved in disputes over bonuses or gratuities unless these are contractually binding.

**No written contract – 3:** Since the revised Merchant Shipping Act came into force there is a statutory requirement for all crew on all vessels to have a written contract signed by both parties. Section 90 of the Act provides further detail on the minimum requirements and [Guidance Note](#)

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[05/2024](#) provides guidance on this requirement. It is an offence for this to not be complied with, and it is a focus in surveys, and the Shipping Master will also ask complainant if they have a contract and if they do not will pass this on to enforcement. There have been just 3 complaints about the lack of any contract which is quite low and taken with the increase in complaints about contractual terms suggests that this new requirement is broadly being complied with.

**Example:** a seafarer was terminated and alleged that they were asking for 3 months for a written contract. Upon termination they were not provided repatriation or notice pay. The Shipping Master provided the complaints with Guidance Note 06/2024 and an extract of the law. Possible “victimisation” as was allegedly fired for contacting flag. The Shipping Master passed to Enforcement. The vessel agreed to arrange compensation for the notice period and repatriation as if the seafarer had a bone fide contract along with expenses pending repatriation.

**Victimization – 1:** Where MLC applies it is a serious breach to take action against someone for making a complaint. This could be a complaint to management, onboard, to the flag or other authorities. The CISR takes this very seriously but this year there have been a small number of these incidents but not to the level to require enforcement action to be taken (unlike in 2024).

**Overtime – 2**

## Findings from 2025

Looking at the circumstances surrounding the seafarer complaints and welfare issues reported to MACI:

- There was a small decrease in separate complaints since 2024 from 116 to 105, but a smaller increase by category of complaint. The total is broadly with most other years where data has been collected (other than 2024 and the early stages of the COVID pandemic).
- In comparison to other similar flags (including the REG) MACI continues to see significant numbers of complaints but it is considered that this is in part due to the fact that complaints get heard and seafarers do have options.
- There have been no complaints relating to Merchant Ships in 2025.
- As in previous years the percentage of complaints from pleasure vessels (those that are voluntarily MLC compliant and those that are not) is highest but has dropped from over 80% of total complaints to just over 50%.
- On MLC compliant vessels there has been a significant decrease both in number of complaints and rate per 100 vessels. Complaints from vessels in commercial use have increased and exceed those from private yachts in voluntary compliance for the first time. This might be partly due to vessels registered a Yacht’s Engaged in Trade (YETs) being included with commercial yachts.
- Most complaints continue to stem from pleasure vessels not in voluntary compliance with MLC, though these are no longer the majority and the rate per 100 units is much lower than for commercial yachts or those in voluntary MLC compliance (less than half). This may be partially due to the requirement for crew on these vessels to have written contracts but further analysis in 2026 will be illustrative in this regard.
- 33% of all complaints concerned delayed or unpaid wages (similar but slightly higher than 2024). Most types of complaints are broadly in line with historical trends (with an uptick in both

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number and percentage of complaint linked to termination though 2024 was a particularly low year for these sorts of complaints).

- After a significant increase in 2024 there has been a large decrease in queries about the terms of the SEA / contract from 18 in 2024 to 6 in 2025. As in previous years most of these were from pleasure vessels where MLC does not apply. Provided that the contract complies with the recent requirements of section 90 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2024 then flag is limited in what it can do. It is further noted that most of the complaints raised in 2025 were early in the year, so it is possible the reason for this decrease (after last year's large increase) is that in 2024 the new requirement to have a written contract on all vessels came into force, this is now more well understood. That said there are still more complaints concerning this than prior to 2024.
- Despite the recent requirement (since March 2024) for all crew regardless of registration status to be working under a signed contract, as in 2024 there have been very few (just 3) complaints about the lack of any contract which is quite low and taken with the increase in complaints about contractual terms suggests that this new requirement is broadly being complied with.
- There has been a small decrease in the number of bullying and harassment allegations. This may be due to much greater awareness. This year this has been a particular focus, and we have worked with a number of organisations leading to a detailed [Guidance Note](#) being published. Moving forward implementation of prevention policies for bullying and harassment will be a Concentrated Inspection Campaign item for CISR surveyors during onboard surveys.
- There was another (after 2023 and 2024 also) significant increase in the number of allegations concerning safety issues reported to the Shipping Master. These now account for 9% of complaints to the Shipping Master up from 5% last year. A number have been passed on to enforcement for further investigation. Enforcement action has taken place in some cases.
- During DOC Audits of Management Companies in 2026, CISR will focus on how effectively crew complaints are being managed, as this is a key to creating a culture of compliance and safeguarding. More generally, companies should be encouraging honest feedback from their crew and consider exit interviews as part of their data gathering, compliance and management strategy.
- Most complaints are resolved fairly successfully and rapidly once the Shipping Master becomes formally involved.....or often if the seafarer advises the vessel that this has been raised or is considering raising this!
- The Shipping Master continues to play a significant role in the advancement of seafarer welfare, which is a fundamental tenet of the Maritime Authority.

## Limitations

This report is a presentation of raw data with limited analysis. The sample sizes are small, variables are large, and no formal statistical analysis has been undertaken. Where limited analysis has been undertaken there is no evaluation of statistical significance. This report contains comparison of reports received for 2020 to 2025. Inferring any trends should be treated with caution. These reports now follow a "six-year rolling" reporting period.

"What is reported" does not automatically correlate to "What has occurred".

# Seafarer Complaints and other welfare issues reported to MACI (2025)

## Reporting Complaints and other welfare issues

Complaints, concerns about working conditions and other welfare issues occurring on Cayman Islands vessels should be reported to the Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands –

**By email:** [shipping.master@cishipping.com](mailto:shipping.master@cishipping.com)

**Via the website:** Please click [HERE](#)<sup>14</sup>

**By telephone:** +44 1489 799 203 or +1 345 9498831.

**Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands.**  
January 2026.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cishipping.com/policy-advice/shipping-master/contact-form-1>