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Digital Access and Seafarers' Emotional Stress	
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Reference:	Cyber Security and MLC
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Digital Access and Seafarers' Emotional Stress

Reliable connectivity aboard ships, even limited, helps reduce some of the emotional stresses that seafarers who spend a longer period at sea experience.

A new report looking at crew connectivity on ships has revealed the emotional and operational impact on professional seafarers who are often away for up to six months at a time with limited opportunities to interact digitally with friends and family.

International maritime charity Sailors' Society and the global mobile satellite company Inmarsat have worked with researchers from Royal Holloway, University of London, to examine the effect on seafarers who have limited or non-existent digital access.

Researchers for this latest study, "Navigating Everyday Connectivity at Sea", used an immersive study approach on board two container ships for 10 days, one with on board Wi-Fi capabilities and one without.

The research also showed that where there were weekly limits of connectivity, this forced seafarers to ration their allowance to certain periods or to prioritize contact with friends. Restricting usage also meant that domestic issues could not be resolved immediately or in real time, adding to personal stress or anxiety.

In addition, one of the report's key findings was how connectivity is becoming a significant factor in recruitment particularly for those entering the industry. Young people are viewing an ability to get online as a significant deciding factor as to whether they commit to a career at sea.

One of the historic arguments from ship owners for not providing on-board connectivity has been that it disrupts work and rest patterns. However, this latest research shows that, in fact, not having reliable on-board internet impacts such patterns.

Digital connectivity at sea has been one of the major talking points of the decade in the maritime industry, which has been slow to adopt technology-enabling improvements in connectivity across the world's commercial fleet

While several studies have used surveys to try to establish the rate of these improvements and their wide-ranging implications, none – to our knowledge – has taken observations of crew behavior and conversations with seafarers as their starting point.

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REFERENCES:

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