



National Audit Office

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency's response to growth in the UK merchant fleet

Results of survey of Ships' Masters

As part of our study, we carried out a web and electronic mail survey of masters of UK registered merchant ships over 100 gross tonnage who had experienced a ship survey or inspection by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), or a statutory survey by a classification society acting on behalf of the MCA, in the last two years.

The questionnaire used similar questions to those used in our survey of ships' officers carried out in 2000 and used in the Comptroller and Auditor General's 2001 report, [Ship Surveys and Inspections, HC 338 2000-2001](#). This allowed comparison of the results of the two surveys. The key differences between the most recent survey and that carried out in 2000 are:

- we surveyed serving masters only and not other ship and engineering officers. We did this to avoid responses from officers who had experienced the same survey and to focus the questionnaire on the senior ship officer;
- the coverage of our survey included masters of UK ships whatever their nationality; and
- because our study focused on the UK registered merchant fleet, questions concerning Port State Control inspections of overseas registered ships were omitted.

The questionnaire was organised into three parts:

- Part A covers statutory surveys of UK registered ships (including those undertaken by classification societies);
- Part B covers the MCA's inspections of UK registered ships; and
- Part C covers the MCA's use of sanctions and enforcement (i.e. detentions and prosecutions).

We only used masters' responses if they had relevant experience of the MCA. We asked them to confirm whether, in the last two years, they had served on board a ship while it was surveyed or inspected by the MCA or surveyed by a classification society on behalf of the MCA. In total, 138 masters responded to our survey of which 97 had experienced a survey, an inspection or both a survey and an inspection. This level of responses compares well to our 2000 survey in which 204 officers responded, of which 21 respondents were masters.

Details about the surveys and inspections experienced

QUESTION 1

Ship type - survey (please tick one box)

	Passenger	Tanker	Container ship	Bulk carrier	General cargo ship	Other	Not stated
Per cent ¹	26%	8%	18%	1%	8%	34%	6%

NOTE: 1. Percentages may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding error.

Ship type - inspection (please tick one box)

	Passenger	Tanker	Container ship	Bulk carrier	General cargo ship	Other	Not stated
Per cent	17%	10%	12%	2%	12%	40%	8%

The distribution of ships represented by our survey of ships' officers in 2000 is set out in the box below.

	Passenger	Tanker	Cargo	Other
Per cent	27%	8%	8%	57%

Part A: Surveys of UK registered ships (including surveys delegated to classification societies)

*This Part is intended to obtain your views on how well the MCA, and classification societies working on its behalf, carry out statutory surveys on UK registered ships. By “statutory surveys”, we mean **the work required to issue or renew a ship’s certificates**. Relevant surveys include those relating to the following certificates: Passenger; International Load Line; Safety Management (ISM); Safety Construction; and, Safety Equipment.*

Please complete this Part only if you have worked on a UK registered ship during the time that it had a statutory survey by the MCA or a Classification Society in the last two years.

QUESTION 2

From your personal experience, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) Statutory surveys generally cover all of the things that affect ship safety .	34	53	6	1	-
b) Statutory surveys generally cover all of the things that help prevent marine pollution .	27	58	6	1	1
c) Statutory surveys generally examine each aspect of ship safety in sufficient detail	24	51	16	2	-
d) Statutory surveys generally examine each aspect of pollution prevention in sufficient detail.	27	53	10	2	1
e) MCA surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out statutory surveys	15	28	3	2	5
f) Classification Society surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out statutory surveys	8	18	3	1	1
g) The overall standard of statutory surveys carried out by the MCA is good	19	24	5	3	1
h) The overall standard of statutory surveys carried out by Classification Societies on behalf of MCA is good	11	16	4	-	-
i) Statutory surveys make a significant contribution towards improving UK ship safety .	36	45	7	3	-
j) Statutory surveys make a significant contribution towards preventing marine pollution by UK registered ships.	28	51	9	3	-

The tables below compare the results of our 2008 survey with the survey carried out in 2000

2(a) Statutory surveys generally cover all of the things that affect ship safety.

	Number		Percentage	
	2000	2008	2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	166	87	93%	93%
Disagree or strongly disagree	12	7	7%	7%

Note: percentages are calculated for those respondents expressing an opinion.

2(b) Statutory surveys generally cover all of the things that help prevent marine pollution.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	85		-	92%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	7		-	8%

2(c) Statutory surveys generally examine each aspect of ship safety in sufficient detail

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	151	75		85%	81%
Disagree or strongly disagree	27	18		15%	19%

2(d) Statutory surveys generally examine each aspect of pollution prevention in sufficient detail.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	80		-	87%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	12		-	13%

2(e) MCA surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out statutory surveys

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	146	43		85%	90%
Disagree or strongly disagree	24	5		15%	10%

2(f) Classification Society surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out statutory surveys

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	151	26		87%	87%
Disagree or strongly disagree	23	4		13%	13%

2(g) The overall standard of statutory surveys carried out by the MCA is good.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	164	43		94%	84%
Disagree or strongly disagree	10	8		6%	16%

2(h) The overall standard of statutory surveys carried out by Classification Societies on behalf of MCA is good.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	153	27		90%	87%
Disagree or strongly disagree	17	4		10%	13%

2(i) Statutory surveys make a significant contribution towards improving UK ship safety.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	162	81		91%	89%
Disagree or strongly disagree	16	10		9%	11%

2(j) Statutory surveys make a significant contribution towards preventing marine pollution by UK registered ships.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	79		-	87%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	12		-	13%

Part B: MCA inspections of UK registered ships

This Part is intended to obtain your views on how well the MCA, as the UK Flag State Authority, targets and carries out inspections of UK registered ships. By “inspections”, we mean visits to ships to check continued compliance with the terms of their certificates and all other safety regulations and pollution prevention standards.

QUESTION 3

Do you think that the number of flag state inspections of UK registered ships each year is:

	2000 survey		2008 survey	
Too many	8	5%	10	11%
About right	102	64%	65	73%
Not enough	35	22%	8	9%
Don't know	14	9%	6	7%

QUESTION 4

From your experience in the last two years, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) MCA generally targets the right UK ships for inspection	7	39	17	2	21
b) MCA inspections of UK ships generally cover all of the most important things that affect ship safety	24	44	11	3	4
c) MCA inspections of UK ships generally cover all of the most important things that affect the prevention of marine pollution	20	50	12	1	3
d) MCA inspections of UK ships generally examine each aspect of ship safety in sufficient detail	20	44	13	4	5
e) MCA inspections of UK ships generally examine each aspect of pollution prevention in sufficient detail	18	48	12	3	4
f) MCA Surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out inspections	25	40	11	3	6
g) While carrying out inspections of UK ships, MCA surveyors advise on any safety and pollution prevention related matters that arise	25	50	4	-	5
h) The overall standard of MCA inspections of UK ships is good	27	43	8	3	5
i) MCA inspections of UK ships make a significant contribution towards improving UK ship safety	26	44	6	3	6
j) MCA inspections of UK ships make a significant contribution towards preventing marine pollution	22	48	7	2	5

The tables below compare the results of our 2008 survey with the survey carried out in 2000.

4(a) MCA generally targets the right UK ships for inspection.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	88	46		71%	71%
Disagree or strongly disagree	36	19		29%	29%

4(b) MCA inspections of UK ships generally cover all of the most important things that affect ship safety.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	137	68		88%	83%
Disagree or strongly disagree	19	14		12%	17%

4(c) MCA inspections of UK ships generally cover all of the most important things that affect the prevention of marine pollution.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	70		-	84%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	13		-	16%

4(d) MCA inspections of UK ships generally cover all of the most important things that affect ship safety.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	122	64		79%	79%
Disagree or strongly disagree	33	17		21%	21%

4(e) MCA inspections of UK ships generally examine each aspect of pollution prevention in sufficient detail.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	66		-	81%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	15		-	19%

4(f) MCA Surveyors generally have the right skills to carry out inspections.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	134	65		88%	82%
Disagree or strongly disagree	18	14		12%	18%

4(g) While carrying out inspections of UK ships, MCA surveyors advise on any safety related matters that arise.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	129	75		83%	95%
Disagree or strongly disagree	26	4		17%	5%

Note: The 2008 survey question also referred to prevention polluted related matters.

4(h) The overall standard of MCA inspections of UK ships is good.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	140	70		92%	86%
Disagree or strongly disagree	12	11		8%	14%

4(i) MCA inspections of UK ships make a significant contribution towards improving UK ship safety.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	132	70		87%	89%
Disagree or strongly disagree	19	9		13%	11%

4(j) MCA inspections of UK ships make a significant contribution towards preventing marine pollution.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	Not asked	70		-	89%
Disagree or strongly disagree	Not asked	9		-	11%

Part C: MCA Sanctions and Enforcement

This Part is intended to obtain your views on how well the MCA applies sanctions and enforcement to those ships, organisations and individuals that it considers to have breached maritime safety regulations and pollution prevention standards. The first section (questions 5 to 8) covers the detention of ships for breaches of maritime regulations and the second section (questions 9 and 10) covers the use of criminal prosecution for breaches of those regulations.

QUESTION 5

	2000 survey		2008 survey	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
In the last two years, have you worked on a UK ship when it was detained by the MCA on safety or other grounds? <i>If No, please go directly to Question 9. If Yes, please answer questions 6 and 7.</i>	7	190	1	88

QUESTION 6

	2000 survey		2008 survey	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Was detention fully justified by the seriousness of the breaches of safety regulations and/or pollution prevention standards?	3	4	1	-

QUESTION 7

	2000 survey		2008 survey	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Were all of the serious deficiencies fully rectified before it was released from detention by the MCA?	6	1	-	1

QUESTION 8

If you answered “No” to Questions 6 and 7, it would be helpful if you would provide an explanation for your answer in the space below.

QUESTION 9

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements **about the detention of UK registered ships on grounds of safety or pollution prevention?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) MCA generally detains all the UK ships that it should do	9	33	14	5	32
b) The costs and inconvenience to ship operators of detention are high enough to be commensurate with the seriousness of the breaches of maritime regulations	12	41	15	7	17
c) MCA only releases UK ships from detention after breaches of maritime regulations have been rectified	10	49	5	1	27
d) The threat of detention of ships by MCA is a significant deterrent against the operating of unsafe or sub-standard UK shipping	15	43	18	6	7

The tables below compare the results of our 2008 survey with the survey carried out in 2000. (Note: except for question 9d, all the questions in the 2000 survey referred to the detention of both UK and overseas registered ships.)

9(a) MCA generally detains all the UK ships that it should do.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	77	42		54%	69%
Disagree or strongly disagree	66	19		46%	31%

9(b) The costs and inconvenience to ship operators of detention are high enough to be commensurate with the seriousness of the breaches of maritime regulations.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	73	63		43%	74%
Disagree or strongly disagree	96	22		57%	26%

9(c) MCA only releases UK ships from detention after breaches of maritime regulations have been rectified.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	105	59		76%	91%
Disagree or strongly disagree	34	6		24%	9%

9(d) The threat of detention of ships by MCA is a significant deterrent against the operating of unsafe or sub-standard UK shipping

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	123	58		69%	71%
Disagree or strongly disagree	55	24		31%	29%

QUESTION 10

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements **about the prosecution of organisations and individuals for safety and other maritime offences?**

(Please tick one box per line)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) MCA generally prosecutes only the most serious cases	13	38	8	1	32
b) MCA generally prosecutes those most to blame for a safety or other offence	11	31	20	3	28
c) The sentences (fines or imprisonment) imposed on convicted offenders are generally severe enough to be commensurate with the offences committed	6	37	17	4	27
d) The threat of prosecution of ships' owners/operators by MCA is a significant deterrent against the operating of unsafe and sub-standard UK shipping	11	38	19	4	17

The tables below compare the results of our 2008 survey with the survey carried out in 2000.

10(a) MCA generally prosecutes only the most serious cases.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	113	51		89%	85%
Disagree or strongly disagree	14	9		11%	15%

10(b) MCA generally prosecutes those most to blame for a safety or other offence.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	63	42		51%	65%
Disagree or strongly disagree	61	23		49%	35%

10(c) The sentences (fines or imprisonment) imposed on convicted offenders are generally severe enough to be commensurate with the offences committed.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	72	43		52%	67%
Disagree or strongly disagree	66	21		48%	33%

10(d) The threat of prosecution of ships' owners/operators by MCA is a significant deterrent against the operating of unsafe and sub-standard UK shipping.

	2000	2008		2000	2008
Agree or strongly agree	103	49		62%	68%
Disagree or strongly disagree	64	23		38%	32%