



Behaviour & Attitudes Survey of Irish Sea Anglers

Inland Fisheries Ireland's Irish Marine Recreational Angling survey (IMREC) is a new survey programme, established in 2019, which is increasing our knowledge of the current state of recreational fishing around the Irish coast. It is part of a large scale effort by E.U member states to monitor fish stocks in marine waters.

The online survey on which this report is based is part of the overall IMREC survey. Its main aim was to collect information on the behaviours, attitudes and catch preferences of sea anglers in Ireland. This has been achieved due to an unprecedented response from anglers throughout the country.

In this survey **1033** anglers reported on their shore fishing experience, while **463** and **417** anglers reported on their small boat and charter angling experiences respectively. This short report presents some of the headline figures from a total of 50 survey questions, for which Irish anglers volunteered their answers.

BACKGROUND

Ireland is renowned as one of the world's premier sea angling destinations with 3,000 kilometres of coastline and a rich marine life.

Sea angling is an important recreational activity in Ireland, providing social and economic benefits across rural and coastal communities.

An estimated 300,000+ people living in Ireland go fishing every year and 140,000-150,000 overseas visitors also go fishing while staying in Ireland. Sea angling alone is estimated to contribute over €230 million to the Irish economy annually, supporting over 3,200 Irish jobs.

Anglers in this survey reported spending an average of €100 per fishing trip on trip specific items such as food & drink, transport and bait, while spending a further €970 a year on capital items.



Bass angling on the Copper Coast. James Barry ©

ANNUAL ANGLER SPEND

Popular capital items

- **Rods & Reels €280**
- **Clothes €115**
- **Boat equipment €186**

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WHEN DO WE FISH?

Although the values in **Fig. 4** correctly represent the average number of sessions that anglers fish throughout the year, it hides the times that a small, but significant group of anglers spend searching for that superlative fishing mark.

For example 128 shore anglers (12% of respondents) said that they fish more than 14 times in August. Cold winter weather was no deterrent to 22 brave anglers who said they go fishing more than 14 times in December.

While small boat anglers try to get out at least once a week in the summer months, charter anglers will sail on average less than twice a month.

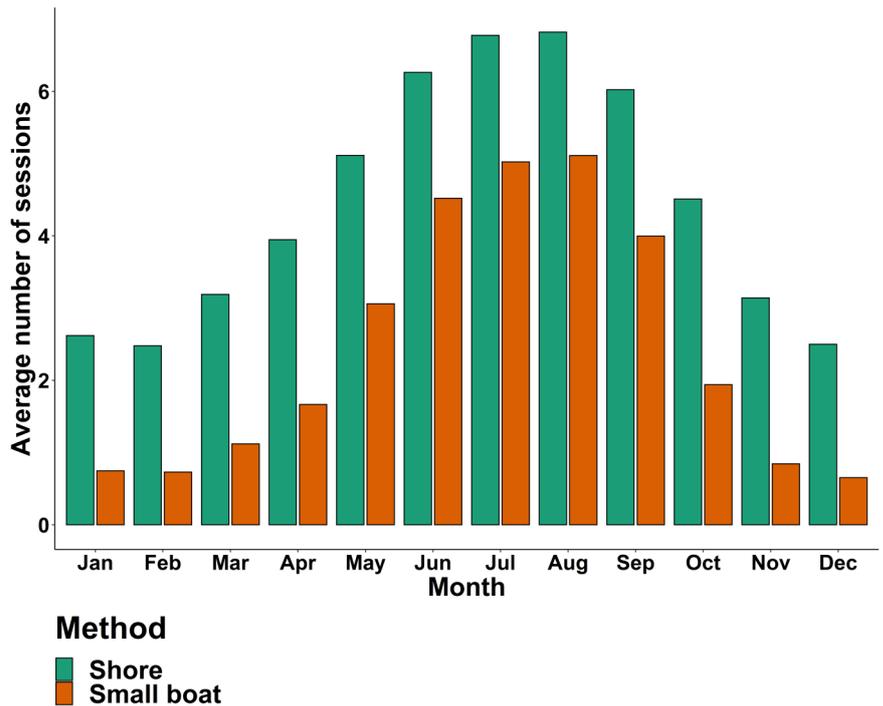
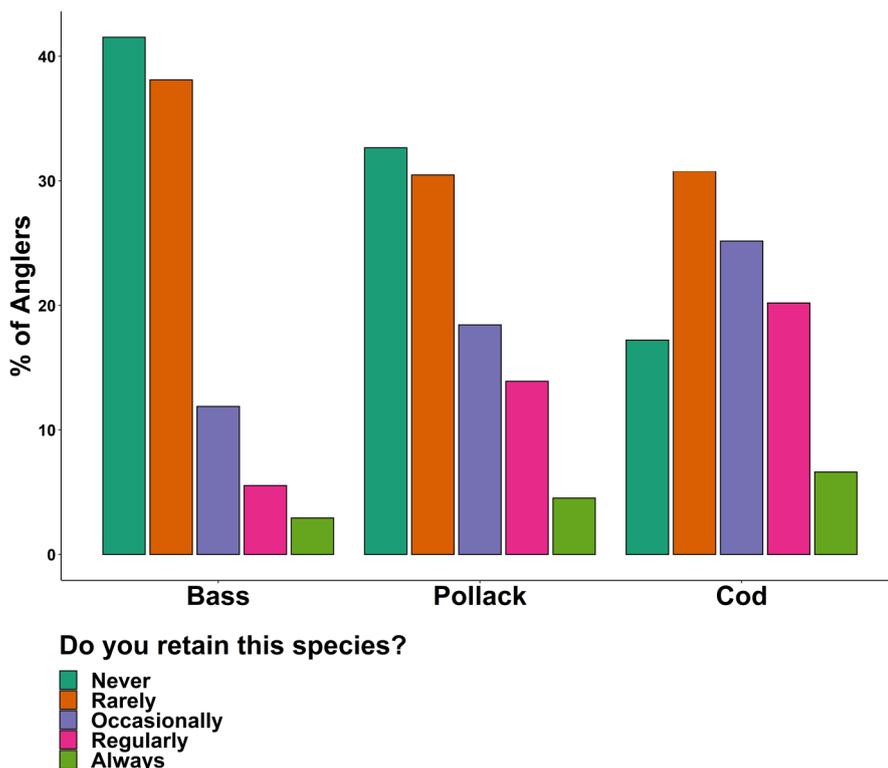


Fig. 4: Average number of times Irish sea anglers go fishing.

HOW DO WE FISH? – Catch & Release



Cod remains the most popular fish to retain for the table (apart from mackerel of course). Having said that, nearly half of sea anglers **never or rarely** retain cod (**Fig. 5**). Although some suggest that Pollack is becoming a more popular table fish in recent years, this survey would indicate that the large majority are still released (**Fig.5**).

Although small boat and charter anglers tend to keep slightly more cod than shore anglers, this is likely related to the size of the catch, otherwise, release rates were broadly similar between shore angling and small boat/charter angling.

Fig. 5: Response when shore anglers were asked how often they retain selected angling species.

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SEA ANGLING QUALITY IN IRELAND

The vast majority of anglers > 55 years old described a reduction in angling quality over their fishing career (Fig.6). However, almost half of our youngest cohort (<24 years old) felt that fishing quality has remained largely the same or has even improved.

It is hoped that the information collected through the IMREC project can assist in understanding recreational fish species status. This knowledge will contribute to improved management and conservation and demonstrate how anglers are contributing to this process. The sea angling community was asked to identify what they consider to be the main issues affecting sea angling. The response was clear. Commercial fishing was highlighted (Fig. 7). It is notable that the lack of marine protected areas (MPAs) around Ireland is very important to anglers. There is currently a process in motion through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) aimed at expanding Ireland's network of MPAs. We encourage all interested parties to engage during the public consultation phase, which is expected to commence in early 2021.

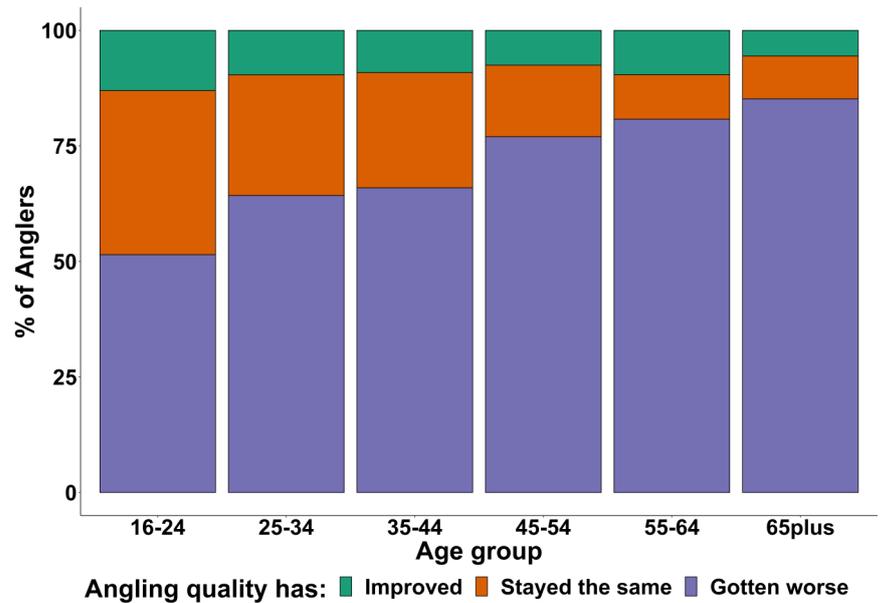


Fig. 6: Angler age and change in angling quality.

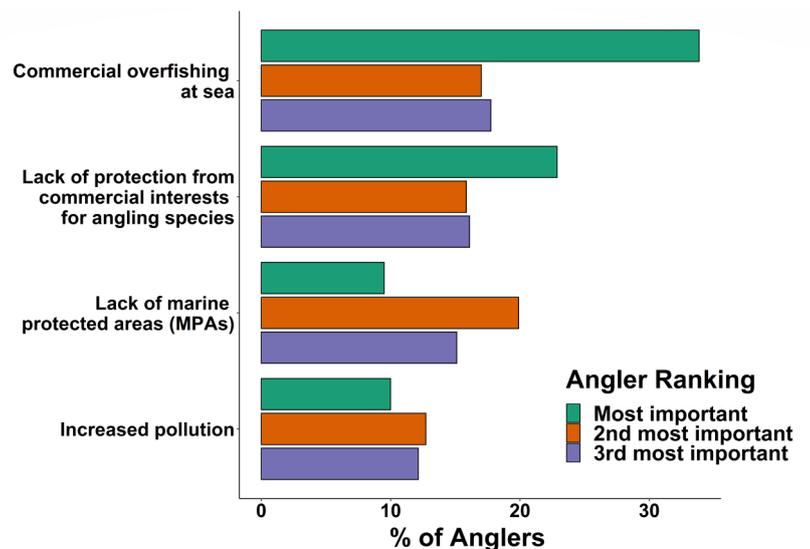


Fig. 7: The three most important issues facing sea angling.

NEXT STEPS

This short outline is intended to provide a flavour of the information collected from this online survey. IFI is currently integrating it into the larger IMREC project so that we can continue to build a better understanding of sea angling in Ireland. This will support the future protection of the resource for sea anglers and those that provide the services which support sea angling and provide jobs in communities around the coast.

If you are interested in any particular aspect of this survey which we haven't covered here, please get in touch. Likewise, if you would like to contribute further to this project, we are developing an online angling diary where anglers can share their angling catch data. All personal data will be protected under GDPR regulations. Watch this space for further reporting on this valuable project.

We always welcome feedback.
Contact Diarmuid Ryan at 018842600 or Seaangling@fisheriesireland.ie
<https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Projects/imrec.html>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

