

# [Making Your Catch Count: Sea angling in the UK – be part of it](#)

Ever wanted to know how many people fish and what is caught in the sea? New research led by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Substance has been released today, based on one of the biggest citizen science projects in fishing. The [report](#) provides estimates of the numbers of sea anglers, participation rates, and catches across the UK in 2018 and 2019.

This ongoing study is a very large citizen science project, where over 2,000 sea anglers from across the UK volunteered to provide data on their fishing trip locations and catches each year. Using a unique, free mobile app and online tool each individual diarist records their activity and demonstrates the importance that sea anglers place in supporting the conservation of fish stocks. Data collected is used by scientists to inform advice for the sustainable management of the UK's fisheries.

In the study, which is open for new participants online ([www.seaangling.org](http://www.seaangling.org)), diarists recorded over 8,500 fishing sessions and catches of over 70,000 fish of around 100 different species, making it a huge citizen science data collection exercise to reveal more about angling habits and catches.

In addition, 12,000 UK residents were surveyed, helping to develop a detailed picture of the UK's sea angling profile. This was combined with the data reported by sea anglers to estimate the numbers and tonnage of many different fish species retained and released each year.

This valuable information is being used to shape policy decisions to support sustainable fisheries and ensure the economic and recreational importance of sea angling is considered.

The findings showed:

- Between 551,000 and 758,000 of UK adults had been sea angling in each year, fishing for a total of around 6 million days each year.
- Estimates of numbers caught were produced for around 55 species and tonnages for about 40 species. This resulted in total catches of 46 and 43 million fish.
- The vast majority of fish were released – around 80% of all catches, demonstrating that conservation is becoming more of a feature of sea angling.
- Catch composition was similar between years with mackerel, whiting, lesser spotted dogfish, and sea bass caught most commonly.
- Catches were slightly lower than 2016-17 using the same survey approach, although release rates and catch composition were similar.
- Analysis included two approaches to assess the robustness of the survey and this work is continuing with 2020 data as we speak.

Kieran Hyder, Project Lead from Cefas, said:

When combined with data from 2016-17, we are starting to build a time series that will help to understand changes in participation, catches, and expenditure over time, and the ecological, social, and economic impacts that it generates over time. These data will provide a treasure trove of information to help to understand sea angling in the UK, and ensure that the needs of sea anglers are considered in marine policy and management.

Adam Brown, Head of Research at Substance said:

We cannot thank the diarists enough for their commitment and support, without which this approach would not have been possible. Using the app and tool that Substance's technical team developed, this makes a great contribution to the sustainable management of marine fisheries.

## **You can sign up**

The Sea Angling Diary Project is continuing in 2021 and it is open to anyone who fishes in the sea in the UK to join. Sea anglers get a free mobile app, catch recording kit, and online dashboard and reports of their activity. Anglers can sign up at [www.seaangling.org](http://www.seaangling.org).

## **Additional information**

Sea angling is a popular activity in the UK that has social and economic benefits, and catches can be significant. Data on participation, catch and economic value of sea angling are needed by government and stakeholders to support well-informed decisions and sustainable management of fisheries.

To obtain these estimates, the outputs from two separate survey methods were combined: 1. A survey of 12,000 UK residents was used to estimate how many people went recreational sea fishing, and the number of days they fished from the shore or from different types of boats. 2. A nationwide panel of sea anglers completed a diary of activities, catches and spend during the years. Volunteer anglers were provided with a free mobile app and online tool to record their activity. Data were provided by around 1,000 anglers catching 122,000 fish in 11,000 sessions over the two years.

The outputs from these two surveys were combined to estimate total UK catches, after correcting for differences in frequency of fishing (avidity), age, and type of fishing (shore, boat) between the diary sample and the UK sea angling population.

The study was led by Centre for Environment, fisheries & Aquaculture Science (Cefas) in collaboration with the research and technology company Substance. It was funded by Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

(Defra), Welsh Government, Marine Scotland, and Agri-food and Biosciences Institute of Northern Ireland (afbi) with support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This satisfies UK statutory requirements to provide sea angling catch estimates under the Data Collection Framework for Common Fisheries Policy and charter boat catches under the Control Regulation.

The project was supported by many parts of the sea angling community including the Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers, Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers, Irish Federation of Sea Anglers, Angling Trades Association, and BritishSeaFishing.co.uk. Support has been provided by Fishing Megastore.

Thanks to the thousands of individual sea anglers that have contributed to the diary programme since 2016 providing data and engaging with a wide range of surveys during this period.

For further information, please contact Kieran Hyder, [kieran.hyder@cefas.co.uk](mailto:kieran.hyder@cefas.co.uk) and Adam Brown [adam.brown@substance.net](mailto:adam.brown@substance.net).