



WA Recreational Boat Fishing Survey 2023/24

Science update – August 2025

About the survey

Since 2011, we have carried out this survey every 2 to 3 years to compare catches over time.

Along with annual commercial and charter fishing catch data, the survey provides information to help us manage our aquatic resources and ensure recreational fishing in WA remains sustainable.

The innovative format has been used to generate catch estimates covering the entire state using:



12-month logbooks



boat ramp surveys



remote cameras.

Participants

More than **8,000 fishers** took part in our 6th major boat fishing survey, which continues to be one of the most comprehensive of its kind in Australia:

- **3,865** fishers kept logbooks and took part in phone-diary surveys
- **4,929** fishers were interviewed at boat ramps
- **9,215** individual fish or invertebrates were measured.

Participants collectively reported:

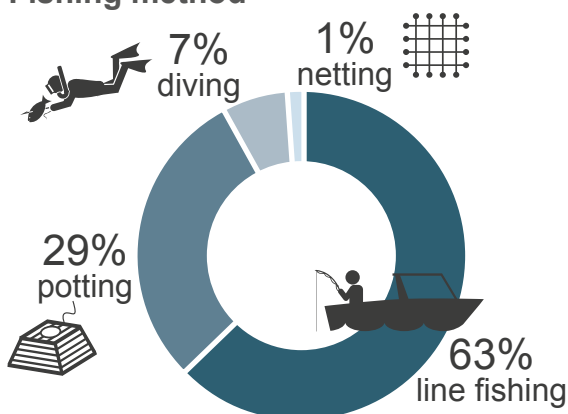
- **14,528** fishing events
- **33,880** fishing hours
- **192,658** individual fish or invertebrates caught (kept or released).

The number of recreational boat fishing licence holders that fished at least once in 2023/24 included:

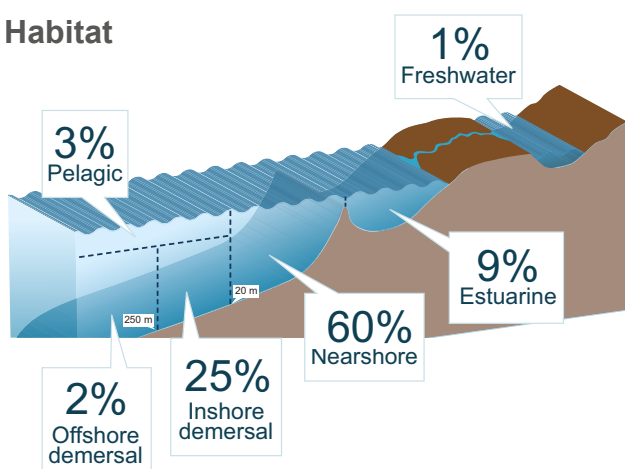
- **48,520** Perth metropolitan residents
- **49,872** regional WA residents
- **2,888** interstate visitors.

Boat-based fishing effort

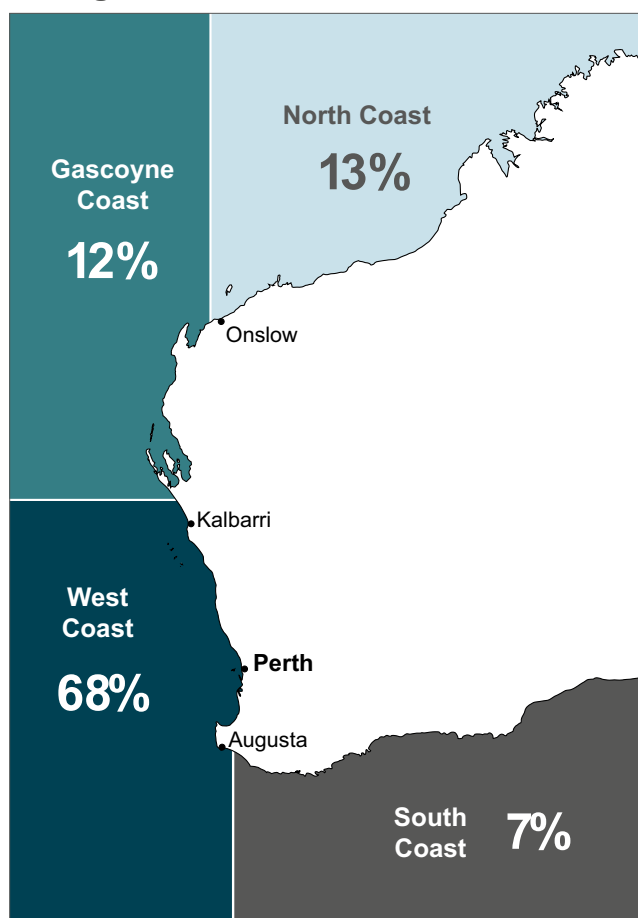
Fishing method



Habitat



Bioregion



What fishers caught

More than **2.1 million** finfish, sharks, rays and invertebrates were caught (kept or released) from **231** different species.

More than half the overall catch was kept (52% for finfish and 58% for invertebrates).

Fishers released similar proportions of finfish (48%) and invertebrates (42%).

Top species

School whiting (*Sillago bassensis*, *S. vittata* and *S. schomburgkii*) were the most popular finfish caught statewide with ~253,000 caught.

Australian herring (*Arripis georgianus*) followed with 130,000 caught, and pink snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) with 120,000 caught.

Licence holders caught 375,000 Western rock lobsters (*Panulirus cygnus*), making them the most caught species overall for the 12-month period.

The blue swimmer crab (*Portunus armatus*) recreational catch was 337,000 statewide, 94% of which was caught in the West Coast bioregion.

The highest release rates were for black bream (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*) with 86% released and Western king wrasse (*Coris auricularis*) with 82% released. On the other hand, the most frequently kept species was squid (*Family Loliginidae*) with just 5% released statewide.































The main reasons for release included personal preference ('too many' or 'too small'), bag and size limits, and catch and release fishing.

Finfish

About 61% of the recreational catch was finfish (1.27 million) from 195 scalefish species, and 21 ray and shark species.

Demersal finfish
















Most frequently caught species were:

Pink snapper			120,144 Caught 77% Released
Grass emperor			45,080 Caught 61% Released
West Australian dhufish			30,407 Caught 24% Released
Breaksea cod			18,100 Caught 29% Released
Bight redfish			16,200 Caught 17% Released
Baldchin groper			15,286 Caught 14% Released
Stripey snapper			15,066 Caught 65% Released
Spangled emperor			11,454 Caught 59% Released
Coral trouts (includes barcheek coral trout, common coral trout and yellowedge coronation trout)			11,336 Caught 30% Released
Blackspot tuskfish			9,808 Caught 52% Released
Redthroat emperor			8,862 Caught 42% Released
Mangrove Jack			7,881 Caught 73% Released
Red emperor			7,421 Caught 37% Released
Rankin cod			7,289 Caught 41% Released
Goldspotted rockcod			6,949 Caught 57% Released

Key:  Kept  Released

Nearshore and estuarine finfish

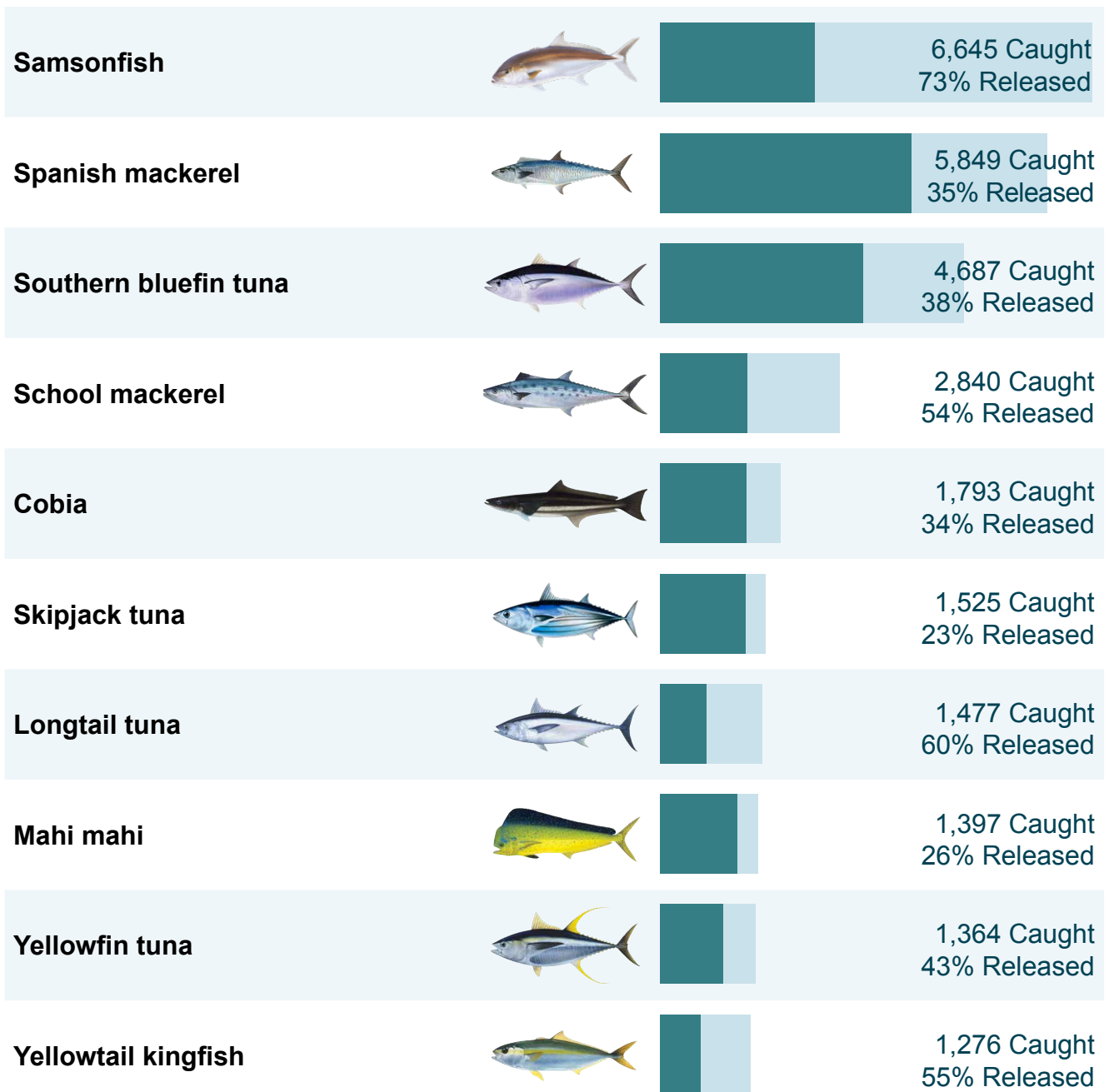
Most frequently caught species were:

School whiting (includes Southern school whiting, Western school whiting and Yellowfin whiting)		252,718 Caught 19% Released
Australian herring		129,644 Caught 21% Released
King George whiting		68,545 Caught 22% Released
Black bream		43,439 Caught 86% Released
Silver trevally		31,249 Caught 44% Released
Western king wrasse		31,245 Caught 82% Released
Western butterfish		22,781 Caught 84% Released
Brownspeckled wrasse		20,466 Caught 91% Released
Flatheads (includes Northern sand flathead, Southern bluespeckled flathead, yellowtail flathead & other flatheads)		18,114 Caught 62% Released
Chinaman rockcod		17,600 Caught 67% Released
Tailor		14,919 Caught 55% Released
Sea trumpeter		12,909 Caught 97% Released
Barramundi		9,129 Caught 83% Released
Leatherjackets (includes horseshoe leatherjacket, sixspine leatherjacket and other leatherjackets)		6,889 Caught 89% Released
Garfishes (includes Southern garfish, three-by-two garfish and other garfishes)		4,915 Caught 10% Released

Key:  Kept  Released

Pelagic finfish

Most frequently caught species were:



Key:  Kept  Released

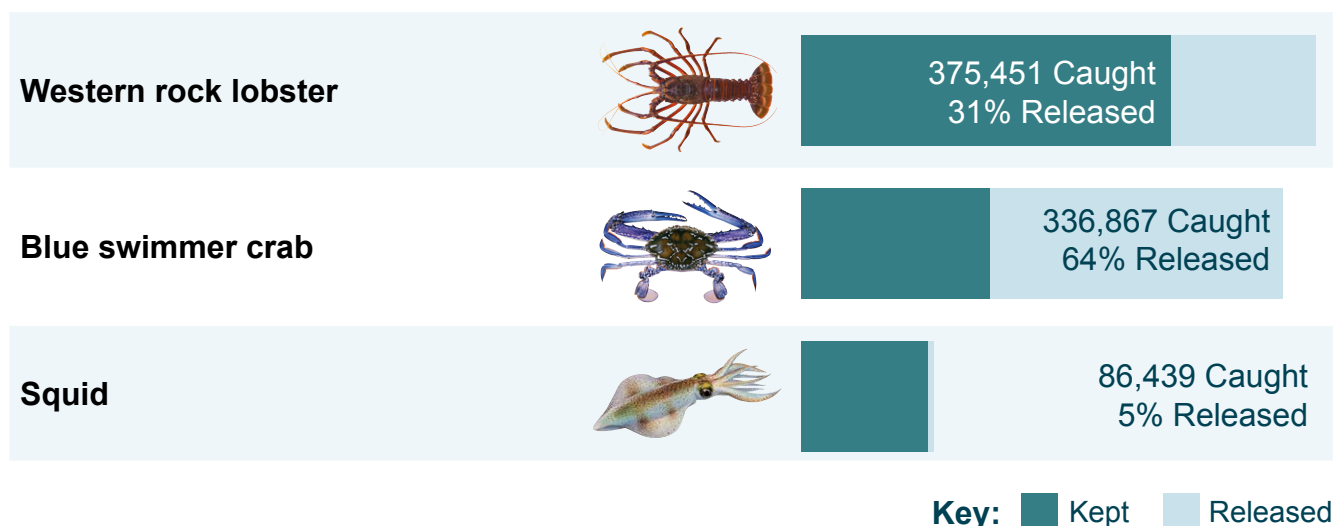
Invertebrates

About 39% of the recreational catch was invertebrates (820,000), including 9 species of crustaceans and 6 species of molluscs.

Environmental conditions have a significant impact on recruitment (addition of juvenile crabs to the fishery), which affects the abundance of crabs in different areas.

Recreational fishing estimates for each key crab fishery will be used, with environmental data and other information, to ensure we continue to carefully manage each fishery.

Most frequently caught species were:



Where to from here?

We will continue to monitor catches of these species to gain information over time about the sustainability of the stocks and help us make future management decisions.

We will use boat-based recreational fishing catch information, along with catches from charter-boat recreational fishing (reported in Tour Operator Returns) and shore-based recreational fishing (where available), to determine the total catch from the recreational sector.

We will keep working with our research partners at Recfishwest and Edith Cowan University to improve our understanding of fishing statewide and in each bioregion to ensure WA's fisheries remain sustainable.

The next statewide recreational fishing survey will commence in mid-2026.

A [full version of the report](#) is available on our website.

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