



Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies

# TASMANIAN RECREATIONAL ROCK LOBSTER AND ABALONE FISHERIES: 2024/25 FISHING SEASON

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## Executive Summary

This report provides an assessment of the 2024/25 recreational rock lobster and abalone fishing season and continues the time series monitoring trends since the mid-1990s.

The number of licence holders during the 2024/25 season was slightly lower compared to 2023/24. During 2024/25, 17,397 persons held at least one recreational rock lobster licence, a 0.9% decrease compared with 2023/24. During the same period, 11,208 persons held a recreational abalone licence, a decrease of 2.1% compared with 2023/24.

The assessment was conducted using a survey involving a random sample of licence-holders who were contacted by telephone prior to the start of the 2024/25 fishing season and invited to participate in a phone-diary survey to monitor their rock lobster and abalone fishing activity between November 2024 and April 2025. A total of 522 respondents completed the survey, resulting in 83% effective response rate. Respondents provided detailed catch and effort information for each fishing trip reported. Data were scaled up to represent the activity of all licence-holders.

### Rock Lobster

The 2024/25 rock lobster season for all waters outside the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone (ECSRZ) opened on 2 November 2024 and closed on 1 May 2025 in the eastern region and Western region for female rock lobster and 1 September 2025 in the western region for male rock lobster. The ECSRZ opened on 7 December 2024 and closed on 1 May 2025, marking the twelfth year that a split season opening has been applied in the ECSRZ. The split season has operated since November 2013, initially only two weeks apart, then extended to 4–5 weeks apart since December 2018.

Fishing activity was monitored until the end of April, which meant complete coverage of the fishery in the eastern region but only partial coverage in the western region. By the end of April, licenced recreational fishers were estimated to have harvested 86,039 rock lobster (95% CI: 70,509–100,247) across 78,971 fisher days (95% CI: 66,315–91,876). Conversion of lobster numbers to total harvest weight produced a statewide harvest estimate of 111.3 tonnes. Potting accounted for 77% of the effort (days fished) and contributed 64% of the total harvest. Dive collection accounted for 23% of the effort and 35% of the harvest, while ring usage contributed less than 1% of the effort and less than 1% of the harvest. The statewide average catch rate was 1.09 lobster per fishing day. By method, catch rates for dive collection, potting, and ring fishing were 1.69, 0.91, and 1.3 lobsters, respectively.

The east coast (Areas 1-3) accounted for 76% of the rock lobster harvest by number. Catches from the north (Areas 4 and 5) and west (Areas 6-8) coasts accounted for 17% and 7% of the harvest by number, respectively. The east coast accounted for 70%, the north coast 23%, and the west coast 7%, of the harvest by weight.

During the survey period, 71% of licence holders fished for lobster. Of those fishers, 15.1% harvested no lobsters, 45.2% harvested five or fewer lobsters, 26.7% harvested 6-15 lobsters and 13% harvested 16 or more lobsters. The statewide proportional breakdown was similar for the east coast fishery.

Overall, the recreational catch represented 65.5% of the Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC) of 170 tonnes and 9.1% of the 2024/25 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 1,221 tonnes, which includes the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 1,051 tonnes.

The East Coast Stock Rebuilding Strategy (ECSRS) was implemented in 2013 following rock lobster stocks on the east coast hitting historically low levels. To rebuild stocks a notional resource sharing arrangement of 200 tonnes which was set at 79% for commercial and 21% for recreational fishing. Commercial catch was managed by an East Coast Catch Cap and the recreational sector by a reduction in bag limit and a shortening of season dates. The ECSRS has now expired, but the previous allocation of the total catch in the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone (ECSRZ). The ECSRS continues to guide the management of this area whilst the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy is developed. If the ECSRS proportional allocations were implemented during this season, it would result in a notional catch allocation of 35 tonnes for the recreational fishery in the ECSRZ. Licenced recreational fishers were estimated to have harvested 61,335 rock lobster (95% CI: 49,841–72,830) across 62,512 fisher days (95% CI: 51,499–75,334) from the ECSRZ for the 2024/25 season. As a result, the estimated recreational catch for this zone is 77.5 tonnes which exceeded the share by 42.5 tonnes, or 121%. This over-catch exceeds that of all preceding seasons except 2023/24, for which it was very similar (Table ES1).

**Table ES1.** East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone recreational catches relative to notional catch allocations. Notional catch allocation, catch estimate and over/under catch units are in tonnes.

| Season                    | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Notional catch allocation | 42      | 42      | 42      | 41      | 40      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      |
| Catch estimate            | 55.6    | 35.7    | 50.2    | 40.4    | 48.6    | 33.6    | 51.1    | 46.5    | 71.7    | 78.0    | 77.5    |
| Over/under catch          | +13.6   | -6.3    | +8.2    | -0.6    | +8.6    | -1.4    | +16.1   | +11.5   | +36.7   | +43.0   | +42.5   |
| % over/under catch        | +32%    | -15%    | +19%    | -1%     | +21%    | -4%     | +46%    | +32%    | +104%   | +123%   | +121%   |

## Abalone

The recreational abalone harvest up to the end of April 2025 was estimated at 46,362 individual abalone caught (95% CI: 34,115–58,228), across 12,919 diver days (95% CI: 10,068–15,783). Blacklip Abalone accounted for 90% of the statewide catch, while Greenlip Abalone made up 10%. In total, 71% of the abalone catch (by number) was taken from the east coast, 22% from the north coast, and 5% from the west coast. The daily bag limit of 10 abalone was caught on 11% of dives on the east coast and 12% on the west coast. The average daily harvest rate across both regions was 3.6 abalone per day.

By converting the number of individuals to weight, the recreational harvest was estimated at 25.7 tonnes, equivalent to 3.3% of the 2025 TACC (773.5 tonnes). It is important to note that the survey only accounts for recreational harvest from December 2024 up to April 2025, not the full year. Currently, there is no TARC for the Tasmanian recreational abalone fishery.

### **Fisher's Observations**

During a wash-up survey that occurred following the conclusion of the telephone diary survey period, fishers were asked a range of questions about the rock lobster and abalone fisheries, key findings include:

- Seventy-five percent of respondents who fished for rock lobster in 2024/25 reported that the overall quality of the fishery was about the same or better than in the previous season, with 71% being at least “quite satisfied” with their rock lobster catch rates.
- Rock lobster dive fishers were more likely to be at least “quite satisfied” with catch rates (80%) compared to pot fishers (67%).
- Sixty-nine percent of respondents who fished for abalone in 2024/25 reported that the overall quality of the fishery was about the same or better than in the previous season, and 75% of abalone fishers were at least “quite satisfied” with abalone catch rates.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- Rock lobster and abalone have long been an important food source for the local Aboriginal population, as well as being highly prized by recreational fishers in Tasmania.
- Southern Rock Lobster (*Jasus edwardsii*) and, occasionally, the Eastern Rock Lobster (*Sagmariasus verreauxi*) are caught through potting, ring fishing, and dive collection.
- Blacklip Abalone (*Haliotis rubra*) and Greenlip Abalone (*H. laevis*) are targeted by recreational divers. The former species is harvested statewide and dominates overall catch, while *H. laevis* is generally restricted to the north coast and Bass Strait Islands. Rock lobster and abalone also support major commercial fisheries in Tasmania, both of which are subject to catch quotas.
- Recreational licences (first introduced in the late 1970s) are required to harvest rock lobster and abalone in Tasmania.
- Recreational licences are issued annually, with the licensing year extending from 1<sup>st</sup> of November to the following 31<sup>st</sup> of October. Recreational fishers may hold up to three categories of lobster licence (pot, ring and/or dive) and/or an abalone licence. For licence and fishery limits, refer to: <https://fishing.tas.gov.au/recreational-fishing>
- A sharp fall in licence numbers occurred in 2015/16 and 2017/18, largely influenced by early-season closures of parts of the east coast due to harmful algal blooms.
- A decline in licence sales in 2019/20 was partly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lyle et al., 2020b). However, during the 2020/21 season, licence numbers recovered to levels comparable to the mid-2010s, and abalone licence sales followed a similar trend (Lyle et al., 2021).
- Concerns about declining rock lobster stocks in Tasmania were identified in the late 2000s, and in 2011/12, east coast stocks were assessed to have hit historically low levels. This decline is attributed to prolonged impaired recruitment, due to environmental factors and heavy fishing pressure (Hartmann et al., 2013, 2019).
- To prioritise additional management for the areas of most concern, the fishery was split into two regions in 2011 (Figure 1). In the eastern region, bag and possession limits were reduced from 5 to 3 and from 10 to 6, respectively. These were further reduced to a bag and possession limit of 2 and 4 in November 2015.
- The East Coast Stock Rebuilding Strategy (ECSRS) was implemented in 2013 with the goal to rebuild east coast stocks to greater than 20% of the unfished stock level by 2023 (DPIPWE 2013). A key element of this strategy was to limit annual total catch (recreational and commercial) off the east coast to a level initially set at 200 tonnes. In 2016, the catch limit for the ECSRS (Figure 1) was divided, with 79% allocated to the commercial sector and 21% to the recreational sector, based on the proportion of commercial and recreational catches from the zone in a historic reference period chosen at the time. In 2019/20, catch limits were further reduced, with 113 tonnes allocated to the commercial fishery and 42 tonnes to the recreational sector. This was further reduced to 35 tonnes for the recreational sector for the 2019/20 season where it remained until the expiry of the strategy in 2023.
- Since 2013, a split season opening has been applied for the eastern region, with waters outside the ECSRS opening on the same date as the western region (approximately first weekend in November) while opening of the ECSRS was delayed by four weeks (approximately first weekend in December) as a measure to help constrain recreational catches.

- For the 2022/23 rock lobster season, new size limits were implemented. A 120 mm size limit for females and 110 mm for males was expanded to areas north of Cape Pillar (43° 13' 18" S) on the east coast and north of the Henty River on the west coast (43° 00' S). Bag, boat, and possession limits remained unchanged. New size limits south of Cape Pillar and Henty River consisted of 105 mm for females and 110 mm for males.
- A review of the management plan for the abalone fishery (Fisheries (Abalone) Rules 2017) in 2019 included a reduction in the statewide possession limit to 10 abalone and, for the eastern region, a reduction in the daily bag limit to 5 abalone and the introduction of a boat limit of 25 abalone. However, these rules were repealed on 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, and a statewide bag limit of 10 and possession limit of 20 abalone now apply, with no boat limit.

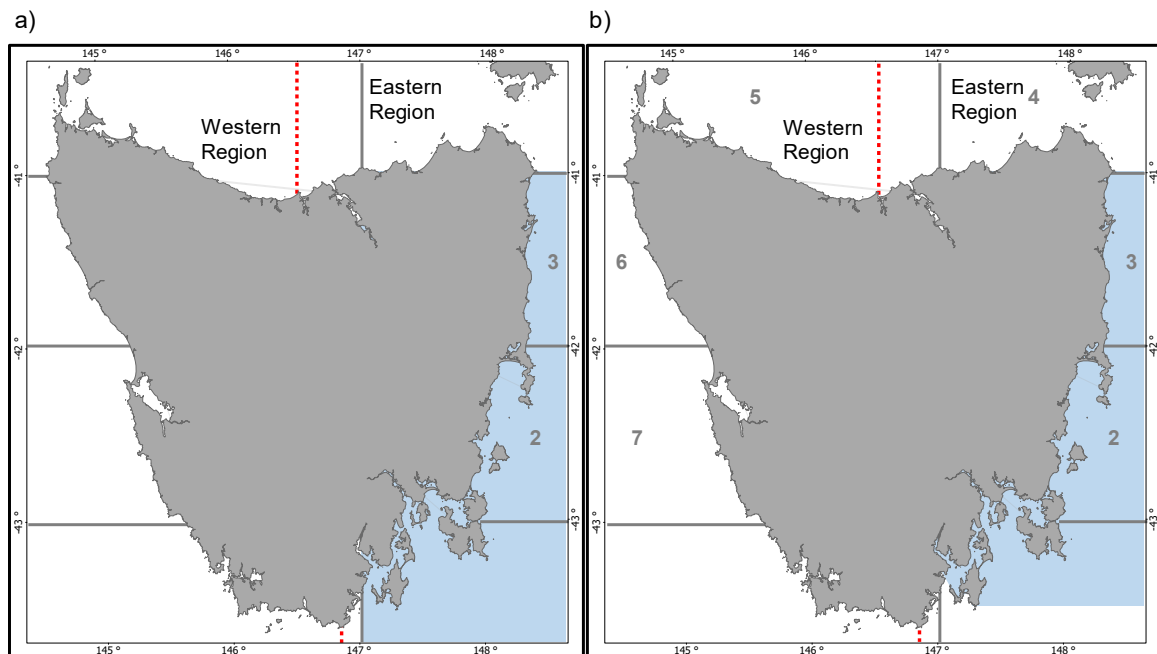


Figure 1. Map of Tasmania showing assessment areas (numbered), stock rebuilding zone (ECSRZ; shaded) and the Eastern and Western Region boundary (red dotted line). Showing the a) ECSRZ that applied between 2013/14 and 2016/17, and b) the adjusted ECSRZ that applied from 2017/18.

This survey is the 20<sup>th</sup> in a series for rock lobster and the 19<sup>th</sup> for abalone, undertaken since 1996. Key objectives include characterisation of the 2024/25 rock lobster and abalone fisheries in terms of participation, fishing effort and catch, with a particular focus on the east coast fishery.

## 2 METHODS

The survey applied the same methodology used in previous recreational rock lobster and abalone surveys (Lyle & Morton 2004, 2006; Lyle & Tracey 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016a,b, 2017; Lyle et al. 2008, 2019a, 2020b, 2021, Graba-Landry et al. 2022, Tracey et al. 2023, Twiname et al. 2024). This methodology was independently reviewed by Pollock (2010). The design involves two stages: 1) an initial telephone interview to profile licence-holders, establish eligibility for the second stage, and recruit participants, and 2) a telephone-diary survey in which fishing activity is monitored in detail over the diary period. This period included the licensing year up to the closure of the eastern region rock lobster fishery (1<sup>st</sup> November to 30<sup>th</sup> April). At the end of the telephone-diary survey, participants are then invited to participate in a 'wash-up' survey, where questions are asked about their personal views on the fishery in general, recently implemented or proposed management changes, and other information relevant for fisheries managers. This part of the survey is voluntary with a generally high rate of participation due to participants ability to provide their opinions on the fishery.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Rock Lobster

#### 3.1.1 2024/25 Catch and Effort

Information reported in here and in the following sections relates to diary survey data provided by fully responding licence holders (participants who completed the full survey period). It is presented as expanded estimates representative of the activities of all recreational rock lobster licence holders between November 2024 and April 2025, inclusive.

An estimated 71% (SE 2.3%) of licence holders fished for rock lobster at least once during the fishing season, with 60% (SE 2.4%) of these harvesting at least one lobster during the diary period. Specifically, out of the 17,397 licence-holders, 12,267 fished for lobster, with 10,430 retaining at least one rock lobster for the period.

Overall, total fishing effort was estimated to be 78,971 fisher days<sup>1</sup> from November 2024 to April 2025, yielding a total harvest of 86,039 lobster (Table 1). This represents an average harvest rate of 1.09 lobster per day. Pots were the most popular fishing method, accounting for 64% of the total harvest, followed by dive collection (35%) and rings (1%) (Table 1). Approximately three times as many fisher days were spent using pots (77%) compared with diving (23%). However, the total pot catch (64%) was only two times the number of lobsters taken by divers (34%). This difference reflects the higher average catch rate for divers (1.69 lobster per day) compared to potters (0.91 lobster per day). Although ring usage is comparatively uncommon (and typically limited to the west coast), recreational fishers are permitted to use up to four rings, with an average reported catch rate of 1.34 lobster per day.

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<sup>1</sup> A fisher day is defined as a day in which lobster was a nominated target species and/or lobster were caught.

Table 1. Rock lobster effort, harvest, and harvest rates for the 2024/25 season up to 30 April. Values in parentheses represent the 95% confidence intervals. Note: since multiple methods can be used on a day, total fishing days may be less than the sum of the method totals.

| Method       | Harvest (no.)                            | Effort (days)                           | Mean harvest rate (no. day <sup>-1</sup> ) |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Pot          | 55,103<br>(43,364–65,836)                | 60,607<br>(48,868–73,450)               | 0.91                                       |
| Dive         | 30,306<br>(20,850–41,606)                | 17,892<br>(13,987–23,290)               | 1.69                                       |
| Ring         | 630<br>(113–1,233)                       | 472<br>(113–1,033)                      | 1.34                                       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>86,039</b><br><b>(70,509–100,247)</b> | <b>78,971</b><br><b>(66,315–91,876)</b> | <b>1.09</b>                                |

### 3.1.2 Regional Catch and Effort

Catch, effort, and harvest rate by fishing areas are summarised in Table 2 and Figure 2 and indicate that the fishery was primarily concentrated on the east coast (Areas 1–3). Note that due to the nature of the randomised sampling of participants, regional estimates of catch and effort can be sensitive to the profile of a few individuals. This region accounted for 76% of the total estimated harvest by number and attracted 87% of the total effort during the survey period. Area 1 was the most heavily fished and accounted for 47% of the statewide harvest and 53% of the total effort. The north coast (Areas 4–5) accounted for 17% of the harvest and 9% of effort, while the west coast (Areas 6–8) contributed 7% of the total harvest and 5% of total effort.

There were regional differences in the proportion of the rock lobster harvest taken by different fishing methods (Figure 3). Pots accounted for most of the harvest in Areas 1 (71%), 2 (77%), 3 (84%), 6 (71%), and 7 (86%), while dive collection was the primary capture method in Areas 4 (62%), 5 (97%) and 8 (93%). Ring fishing was only recorded in Areas 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

Mean daily lobster harvest rates were highly variable around the state, ranging from 0.84 in Area 3 to 3.11 in Area 5 (Table 2). Stock abundance, differing regional bag limits, and the relative mix of fishing methods used (Figure 3) are key factors accounting for regional variability.

Table 2. Recreational rock lobster effort, harvest and harvest rates for all fishing methods pooled by fishing area for 2024/25. Values in parentheses represent the 95% confidence intervals.

| Area | Harvest (no.)             | Effort (fisher-days)      | Harvest rate (no. per fisher-day) |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1    | 40,865<br>(30,389–52,096) | 41,892<br>(31,070–54,208) | 0.98                              |
| 2    | 12,680<br>(7,739–18,108)  | 12,043<br>(8,012–16,546)  | 1.05                              |
| 3    | 12,242<br>(7,950–16,809)  | 14,537<br>(10,534–18,913) | 0.84                              |
| 4    | 4,415<br>(2168–7,338)     | 3,634<br>(1,935–5,694)    | 1.22                              |
| 5    | 10,117<br>(3,474–19,251)  | 3,255<br>(1,388–5,663)    | 3.11                              |
| 6    | 2,202<br>(758–4,128)      | 1,757<br>(466–3,319)      | 1.25                              |
| 7    | 3,089<br>(1,383–5,190)    | 1,428<br>(816–2,201)      | 2.16                              |
| 8    | 429<br>(0–1,268)          | 424<br>(0–1,007)          | 1.01                              |

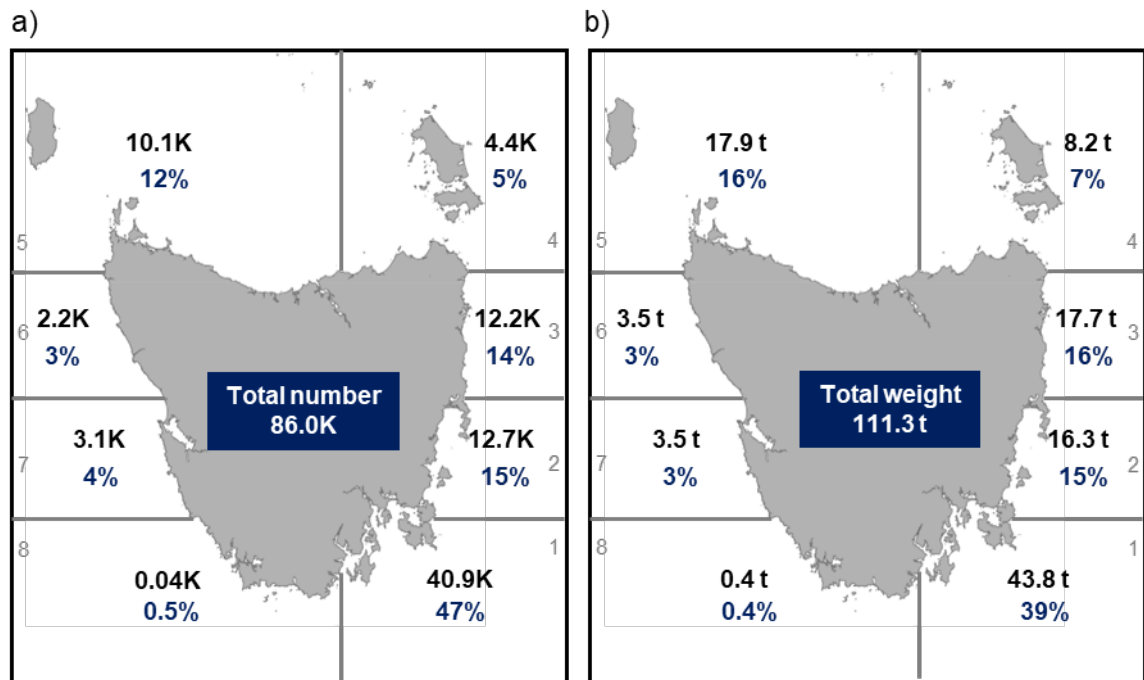


Figure 2. Recreational harvest of rock lobster by assessment area: a) Numbers harvested (in 1000s or K) and proportion (%) of total number; b) Estimated harvest weight (in tonnes) and proportion (%) of total weight.

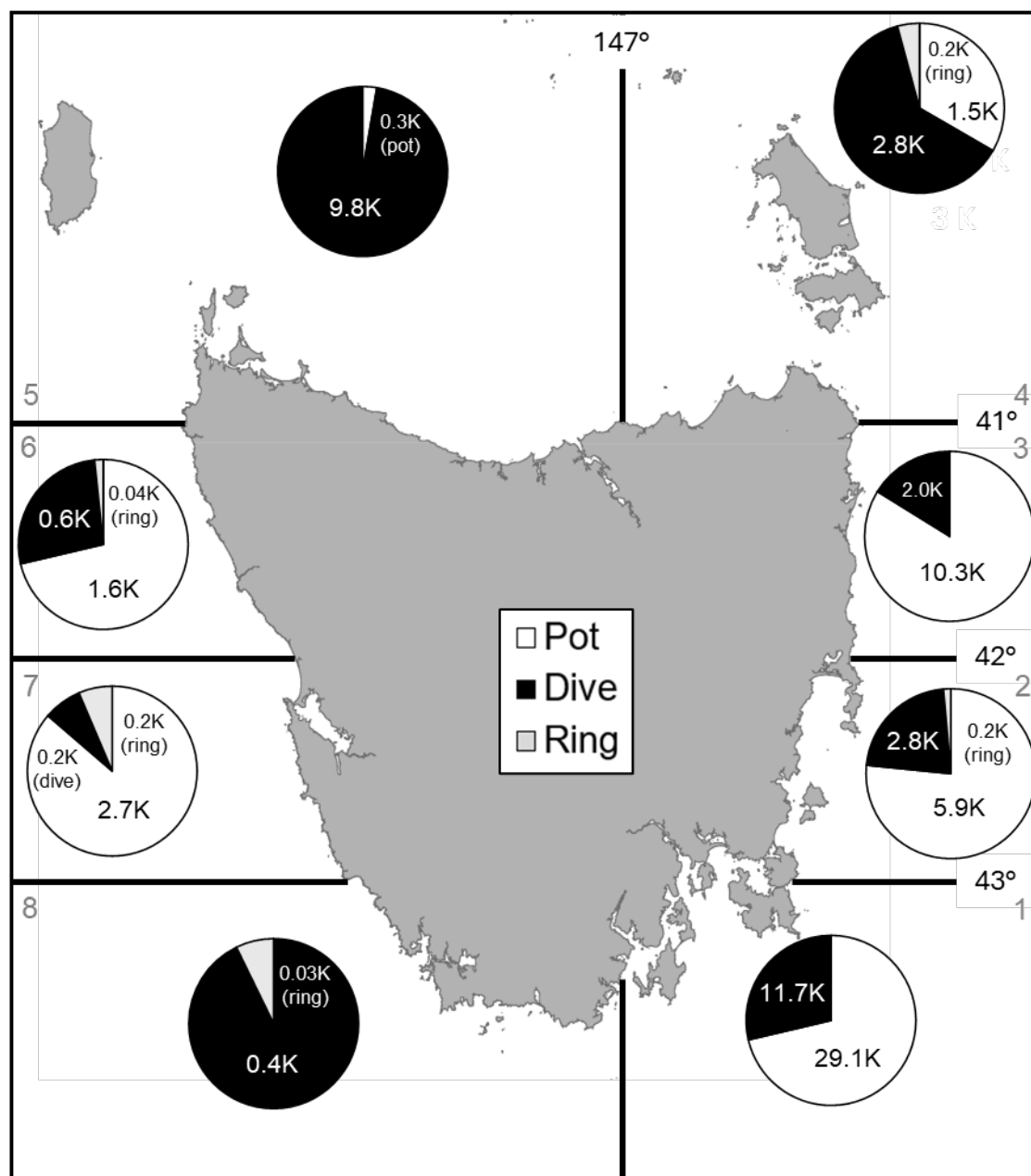


Figure 3. Proportion of regional harvest by fishing method (pie charts).

### 3.1.3 Southeast Coast

Catch data for Area 1 have been disaggregated into five sub-areas to better describe the spatial characteristics of the fishery in the southeast (Figure 4). Waters surrounding the Tasman Peninsula and Storm Bay (including eastern Bruny Island) accounted for 66% of the harvest by number, with the area to the south of Bruny Island contributing a further 13%. Norfolk and Frederick Henry Bays and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel accounted for 13% and 5%, respectively, while comparatively lower catches (3%) were reported from the Derwent Estuary.

There were also marked regional differences in the proportion of rock lobster taken by different fishing methods in Area 1 (Figure 4). Dive catches dominated in the Derwent, Norfolk and Frederick Henry Bays, and D'Entrecasteaux Channel, whereas pots accounted for most of the harvest taken from other sub-areas.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that there are restrictions on potting in the Derwent and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Potting identified in the Derwent comes from an area that is ambiguous to categorise, therefore the potting in this area may or may not be illegal. For the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, some of the potting is in an area that signals the edge of the zone (Dennes Point) meaning it could be outside the no-potting area, whereas some events were reported in areas definitively inside the no-potting zone.

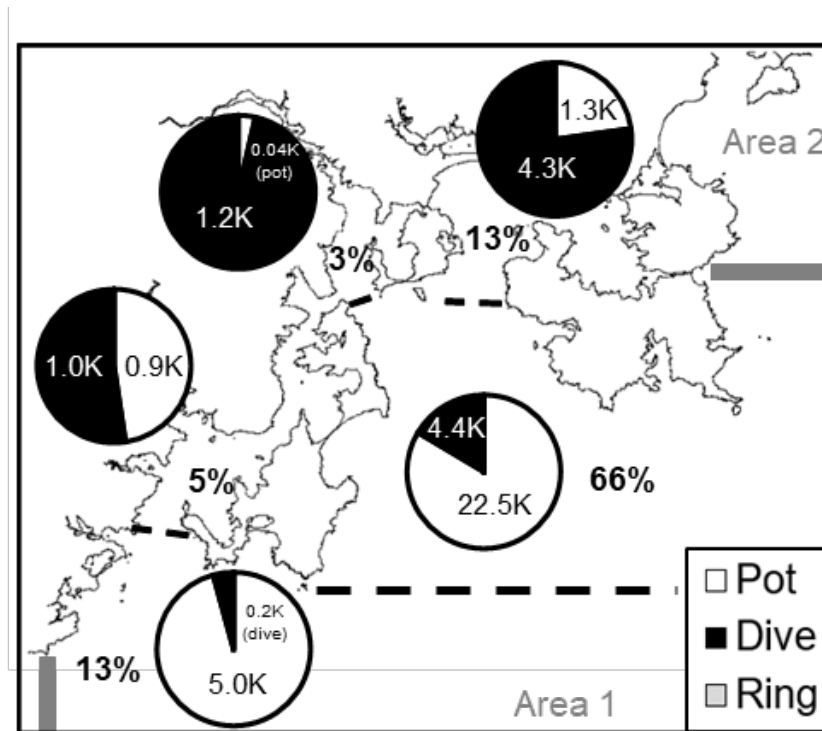


Figure 4. Regional distribution of Area 1 harvest (%) and proportion of harvest by method (pie charts).

### 3.1.4 Seasonal Catch and Effort

Waters outside the ECSRZ were opened during the first weekend in November (2 November 2024), while waters within the ECSRZ opened on 7 December 2024. The delay in opening the ECSRZ is reflected in the peak in fishing activity occurring in December (Figure 5). Catch and effort levels fell sharply thereafter.

<sup>2</sup> Note: The Recreational Rock Lobster and Abalone Survey uses a different area for the D'Entrecasteaux channel than the legislated area. For this survey, the D'Entrecasteaux Channel is considered from Southern Esperance Bay directly across to North Satellite Island and from Dennes point and a line to Pearson's Point (includes Dover, and the inside of Bruny Island).

Seasonal variation in catch and effort was largely driven by pot fishing activity, with most potting catch (75%) and effort (68%) occurring between December and January. Following a sharp decline in fishing activity in February, there was no second peak around the Easter holiday season as seen in previous years (Figure 5). Dive activity followed a similar pattern to pot fishing during the December–January period, and total fishing across both methods in this period accounted for 66% of the total harvest (Figure 5).

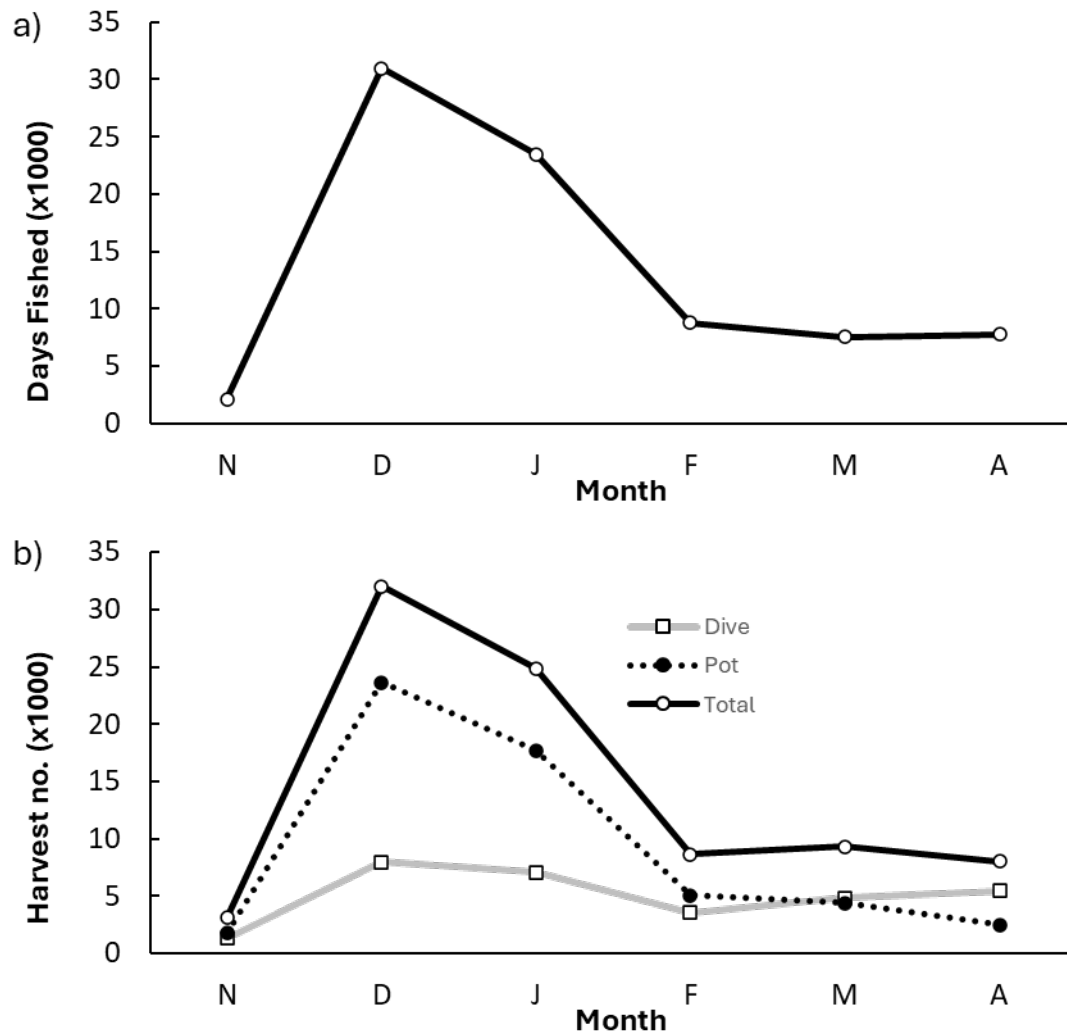


Figure 5. Recreational rock lobster harvest (numbers) and effort (days fished) by month and method for the 2024/25 fishing season.

### 3.1.5 Daily Harvest

Daily catch distributions differed markedly by fishing method and between management regions (Figure 6). For example, potting days resulting in no retained catch were 43% and 32% of total pot fishing days in the eastern (Areas 1–4) and western (Areas 5–8) regions, respectively. In the eastern region, the daily bag limit of two lobsters was achieved on 30% of pot-days fished, whereas in the western region, 41% of pot-days resulted in catches of at least two lobsters, with 7% of pot-days resulting in the western region bag limit of five lobsters caught. By contrast, divers had higher success rates, with 75% of all dives in the eastern region and 80% of all dives in the western region resulting in the harvest of at least one lobster. The daily bag limit of two lobster was achieved in 56% of the eastern region dives, whereas in the western region, divers took at least two lobsters in 76% of dives and the daily bag limit of five lobsters in 34% of dives. There were instances of reported over bag limit catch by fishers, with 0.5% of pot fisher days retaining over the bag limit of two lobsters in the eastern region and 2.3% of dive fisher days retaining over the bag limit of five lobsters in the western region.

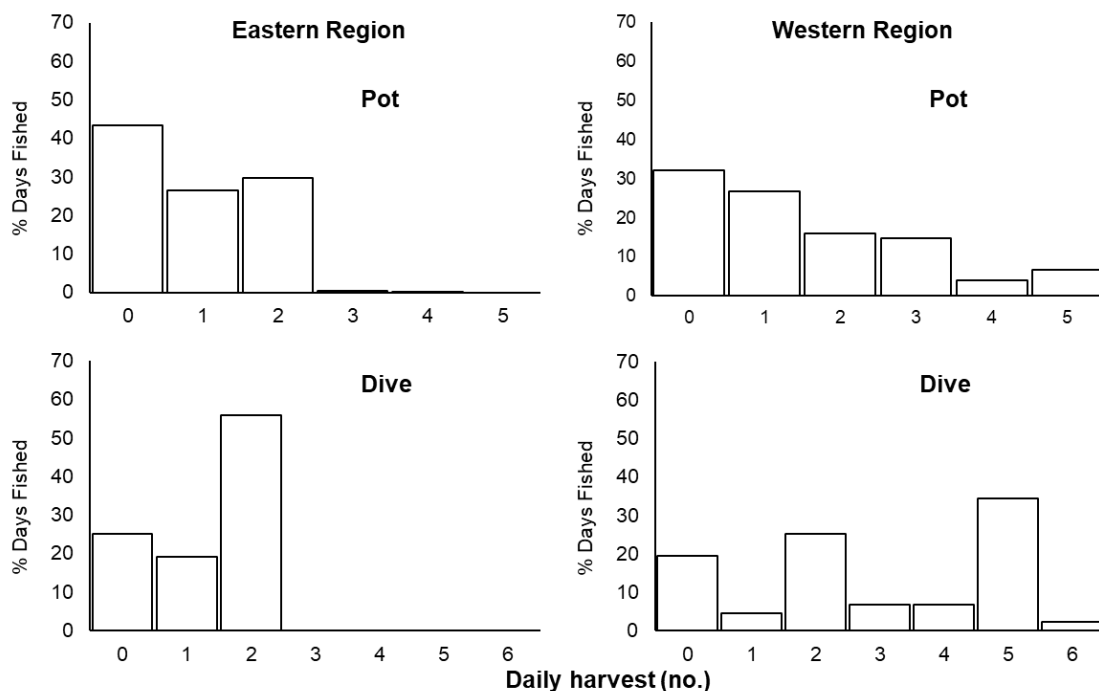


Figure 6. Distribution of daily rock lobster harvest by fishing method and management region.

### 3.1.6 Individual Seasonal Harvest

Individual season limits for recreational fishers have been flagged as a potential management option to constrain the overall recreational harvest and share catches more equitably between fishers. It is, therefore, worthwhile to report on the numbers of rock lobster retained by individual fishers up to the end of April (Figure 7). Statewide, 15.1% of the active fishers harvested no legal sized lobsters, 45.2% harvested five or fewer lobsters and 13% took 16 or more lobsters during the survey period. The proportional breakdown was similar when limited to the east coast fishery.

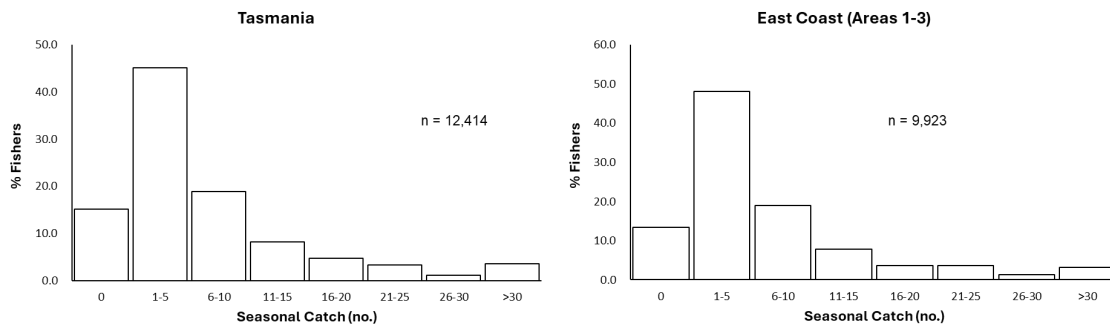


Figure 7. Seasonal harvest of rock lobster for fishers who were active within the east coast (Areas 1–3) and for the whole fishery. n is the estimated number of active licence-holders.

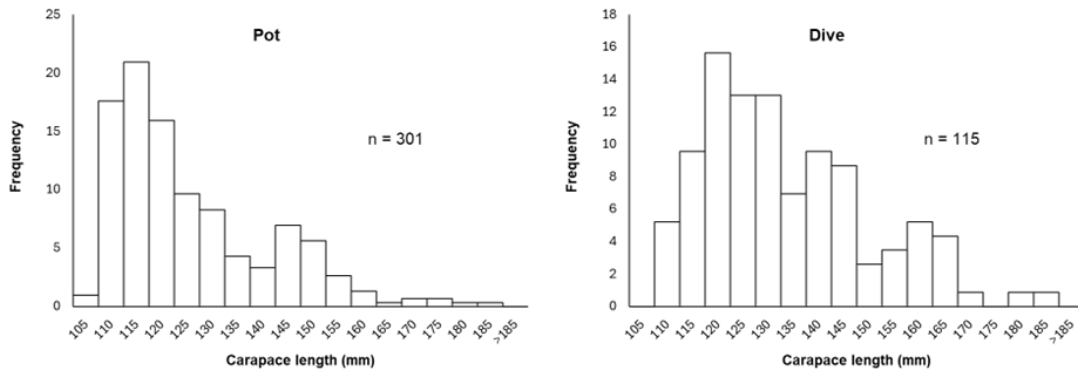
### 3.1.7 Released Catch

A total of 54,363 rock lobster were estimated to have been released from pots, equivalent to 1.01 for every retained lobster (55,103). About 76% of pot releases were due to the capture of undersized rock lobster, 22% were due to over catch limit, and 2% were discarded dead, damaged, or 'in berry'. Although divers release some rock lobster, much of this 'sorting' occurs underwater and therefore a similar analysis of reasons for release by divers was not attempted.

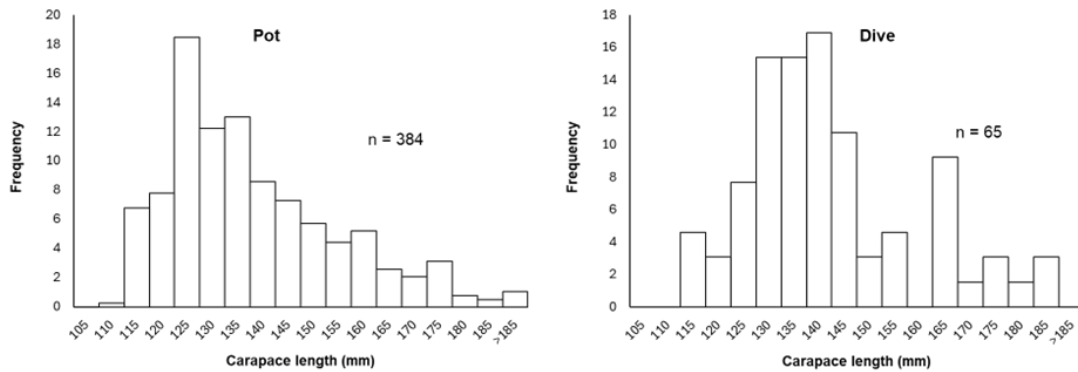
### 3.1.8 Size Composition

Diarists reported lengths for 738 pot-caught, 332 dive-caught, and 1 ring-caught rock lobster. Pot-caught lobsters had a size range of 105–202 mm and were on average 1,212 g in weight. Dive-caught lobsters had a size range of 107–200 mm and were heavier on average (1,555 g). The male-to-female sex ratios were 1.00:0.56 for pot-caught lobster and 1.00:0.38 for dive-caught lobster. Length frequency distributions by region are presented in Figure 8. Apart from the east coast (Areas 1–3), data were limited and may therefore not be broadly representative.

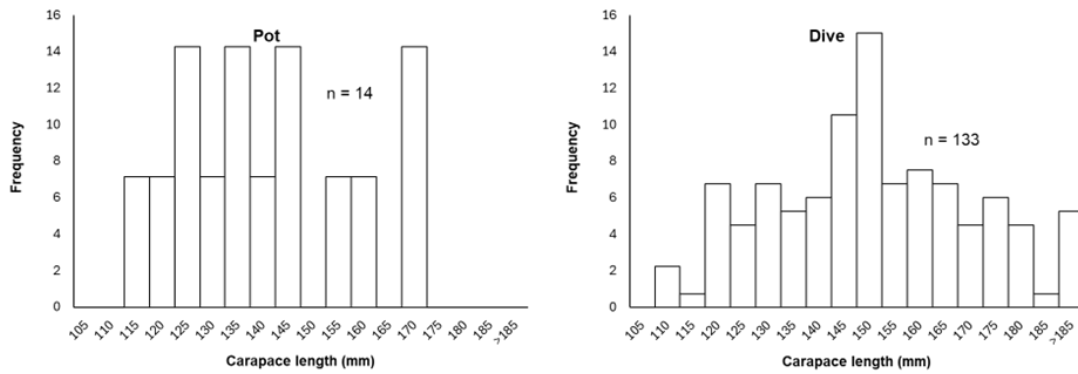
### Area 1



### Areas 2 & 3



### Areas 4 & 5



### Areas 6 - 8

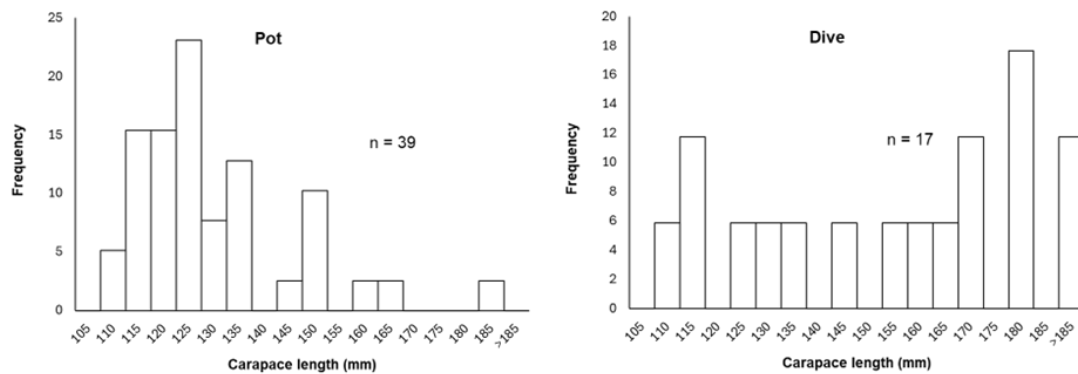


Figure 8. Length frequency distributions by 5 mm size class for recreationally caught rock lobster taken by pot and dive fishing methods by assessment area(s). n is sample size.

### 3.1.9 Harvest Weights

The weight of the 2024/25 recreational harvest was estimated by multiplying average lobster weights by the number of lobsters harvested by method and area. Average weights by area and method used to determine harvest weights are presented in Table 3.

The statewide harvest was estimated to be 111.3 tonnes<sup>3</sup>, equivalent to 65.5% of the TARC (170 tonnes). Regional harvest estimates ranged from 43.8 tonnes (Area 1) to less than one tonne (Area 8) (Figure 2b, Table 3). As a proportion of the statewide recreational harvest by total weight, the east coast (Areas 1–3) accounted for 69.9%, the north coast (Areas 4 & 5) for 23.4%, and the west coast (Areas 6–8) for 6.7%.

Table 3. Average rock lobster weight (g) by method and estimated harvest (kg) by area.

| Area         | Av. weight (g) |       | Harvest (kg)   | % total |
|--------------|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|
|              | Pot/Ring       | Dive  |                |         |
| 1            | 1,012          | 1,224 | 43,821         | 39.4    |
| 2            | 1,237          | 1,467 | 16,321         | 14.7    |
| 3            | 1,428          | 1,533 | 17,694         | 15.9    |
| 4            | 1,845          | 1,847 | 8,152          | 7.3     |
| 5            | 1,012          | 1,795 | 17,943         | 16.1    |
| 6            | 1,160          | 2,695 | 3,469          | 3.1     |
| 7            | 1,110          | 1,532 | 3,524          | 3.2     |
| 8            | 918            | 995   | 424            | 0.4     |
| <b>Total</b> |                |       | <b>111,348</b> |         |

<sup>3</sup> Any illegal harvest taken by recreational fishers, whether due to fishing whilst unlicensed or catches in excess of legal limits, is not included in the harvest estimates.

## 3.2 Abalone

### 3.2.1 2024/25 Catch and Effort

Information reported in this and the following sections relates to diary survey data provided by fully responding licence holders. It is presented as expanded estimates representative of the activities of recreational abalone licence holders between November 2024 and April 2025, inclusive. Note the abalone fishery is open year-round.

During the survey period, an estimated 34.9% (SE 3.2%) of abalone licence holders (i.e., 3,908 out of the 11,208 licence holders) fished for abalone, with 31.0% (SE 2.9%; 3,474 persons) harvesting at least one abalone.

The total harvest was estimated to be 46,362 abalone (95% CI: 34,115–58,228), caught across 12,919 fisher days<sup>4</sup> (95% CI: 10,068–15,783). This represents an average harvest rate of 3.6 abalone per day. Blacklip Abalone and Greenlip Abalone accounted for 90% (41,801 individuals) and 10% of the statewide total catch (4,561 individuals), respectively (Table 4).

Table 4. Abalone harvest, effort, and harvest rates by fishing area for 2024/25. Values in parentheses represent the 95% confidence intervals. \*indicates average weight based on commercial catch sampling data.

| Area         | Harvest (no.)                    |                               | Effort<br>(fisher days)          | Harvest rate<br>(no. per fisher<br>day) | Av.<br>weight (g)* | Harvest<br>(kg) |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|              | Blacklip<br>Abalone              | Greenlip<br>Abalone           |                                  |                                         |                    |                 |
| 1            | 23,267<br>(15,573–32,484)        | -                             | 5,931<br>(4,185–7,859)           | 3.9                                     | 590                | 13,728          |
| 2            | 4,533<br>(1,954–5,975)           | -                             | 1,825<br>(904–2,642)             | 2.5                                     | 520                | 2,675           |
| 3            | 4,986<br>(2,761–7,909)           | 273<br>(0–969)                | 1,663<br>(765–2,296)             | 3.2                                     | 399                | 2,735           |
| 4            | 2,917<br>(718–6,252)             | 1,275<br>(69–2,868)           | 1,374<br>(393–2,709)             | 3.1                                     | 452                | 1,673           |
| 5            | 3,088<br>(609–6,383)             | 3,014<br>(671–6,161)          | 1,407<br>(506–2,503)             | 4.3                                     | 698                | 2,758           |
| 6            | 1,579<br>(37–3,657)              | -                             | 272<br>(38–541)                  | 5.8                                     | 698                | 1,102           |
| 7            | 98<br>(0–300)                    | -                             | 49<br>(0–194)                    | 2.0                                     | 703                | 68              |
| 8            | 1,331<br>(0–3,588)               | -                             | 396<br>(0–1,031)                 | 3.4                                     | 590                | 936             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>41,801</b><br>(30,418–52,463) | <b>4,561</b><br>(1,788–7,882) | <b>12,919</b><br>(10,068–15,783) | <b>3.6</b>                              |                    | <b>25,674</b>   |

<sup>4</sup> A fishing day was defined as one in which Abalone was a nominated target species and/or Abalone were caught.

### 3.2.2 Regional Catch and Effort

Regional catch, effort, and harvest rates for abalone are presented in Table 4. The recreational fishery was concentrated off eastern Tasmania, particularly on the southeast coast (Area 1), which accounted for 50% of the total harvest (Figure 9a). Blacklip Abalone were taken from all areas, whereas Greenlip Abalone were reported only from Areas 3, 4 and 5. Regional harvest rates varied between 2.0 and 5.8 abalone per day, the highest catch rates were in the west (Area 6).

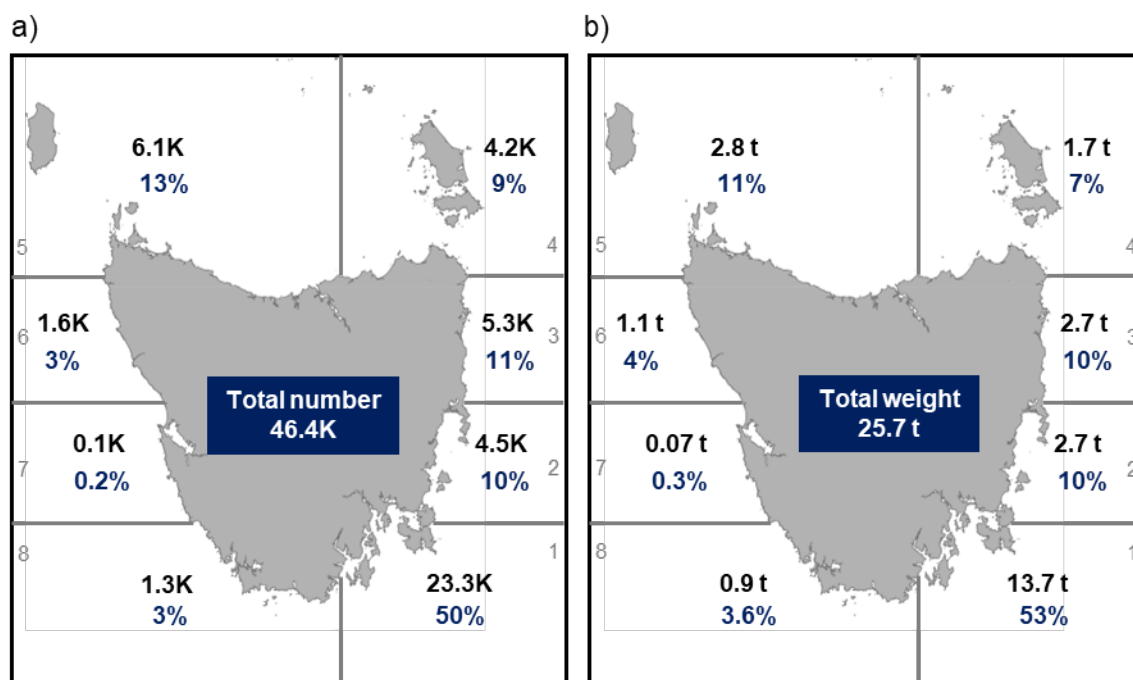


Figure 9. Recreational harvest of abalone by assessment area: a) Numbers harvested (in 1000s or K) and proportion (%) of total number; b) Estimated harvest weight and proportion (%) of total weight.

### 3.2.3 Seasonal Catch and Effort

The abalone fishery exhibited a strong seasonal pattern, with effort peaking in December and catch having two peaks, in December-January and in April (Figure 10), coinciding with summer holidays and the Easter holiday, respectively. A traditional peak during November was not evident in 2024 (also absent in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). This is likely due to the delayed rock lobster season opening for the ECSRZ in recent years, as most abalone dive fishers also target rock lobster and the ECSRZ is an area of high effort for abalone fishing as well as rock lobster.

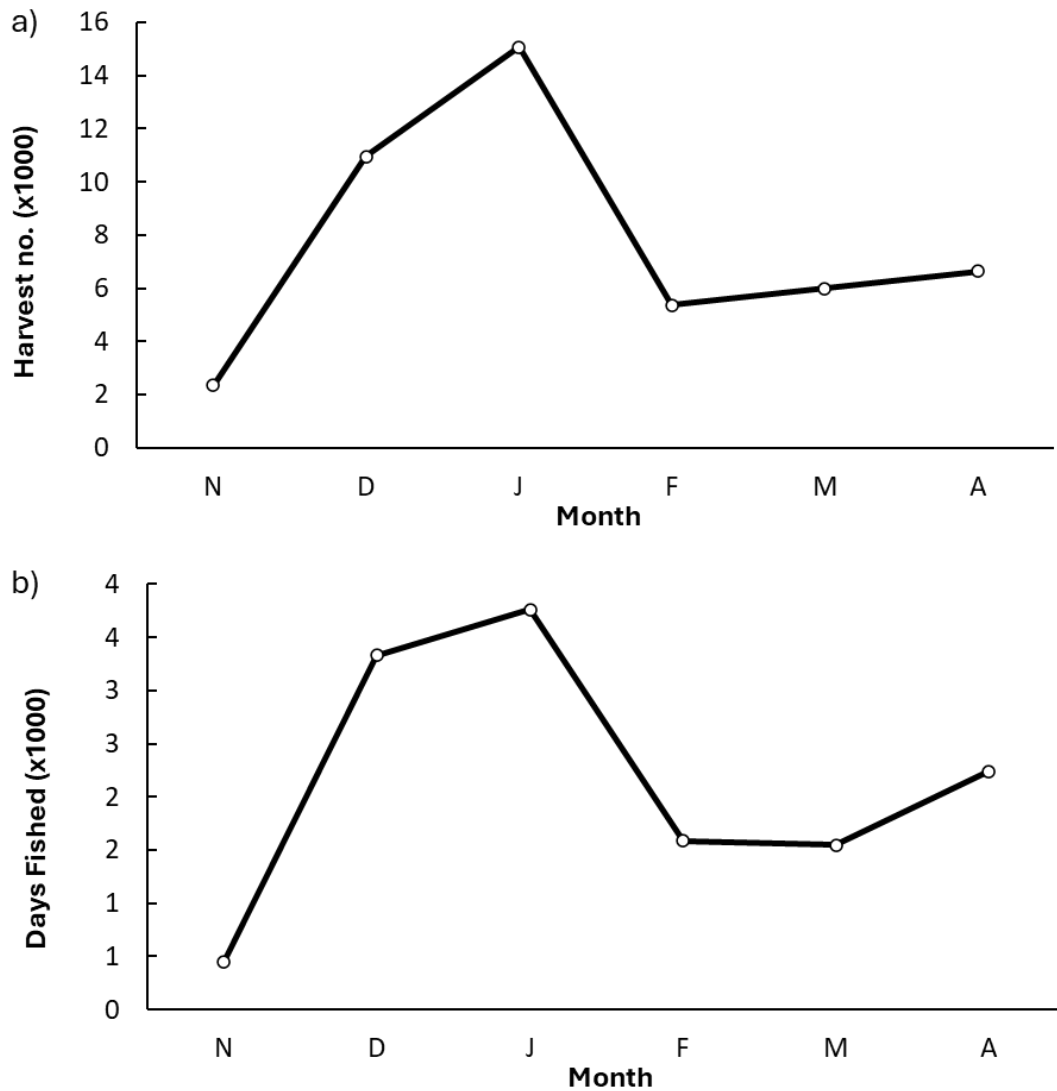


Figure 10. Recreational abalone harvest (numbers) and effort (days fished) by month during the 2024/25 fishing season.

### 3.2.4 Daily Harvest

The daily bag limit of 10 abalone was achieved in the eastern region in 11% of targeted dives and in 12% of dives in the western region (Figure 11). However, the sampling strategy was weighted towards respondents likely to fish off the east coast. Consequently, expansion of data for the western region was limited due to sample size, and the variance around the estimate is less precise and should be treated with caution.

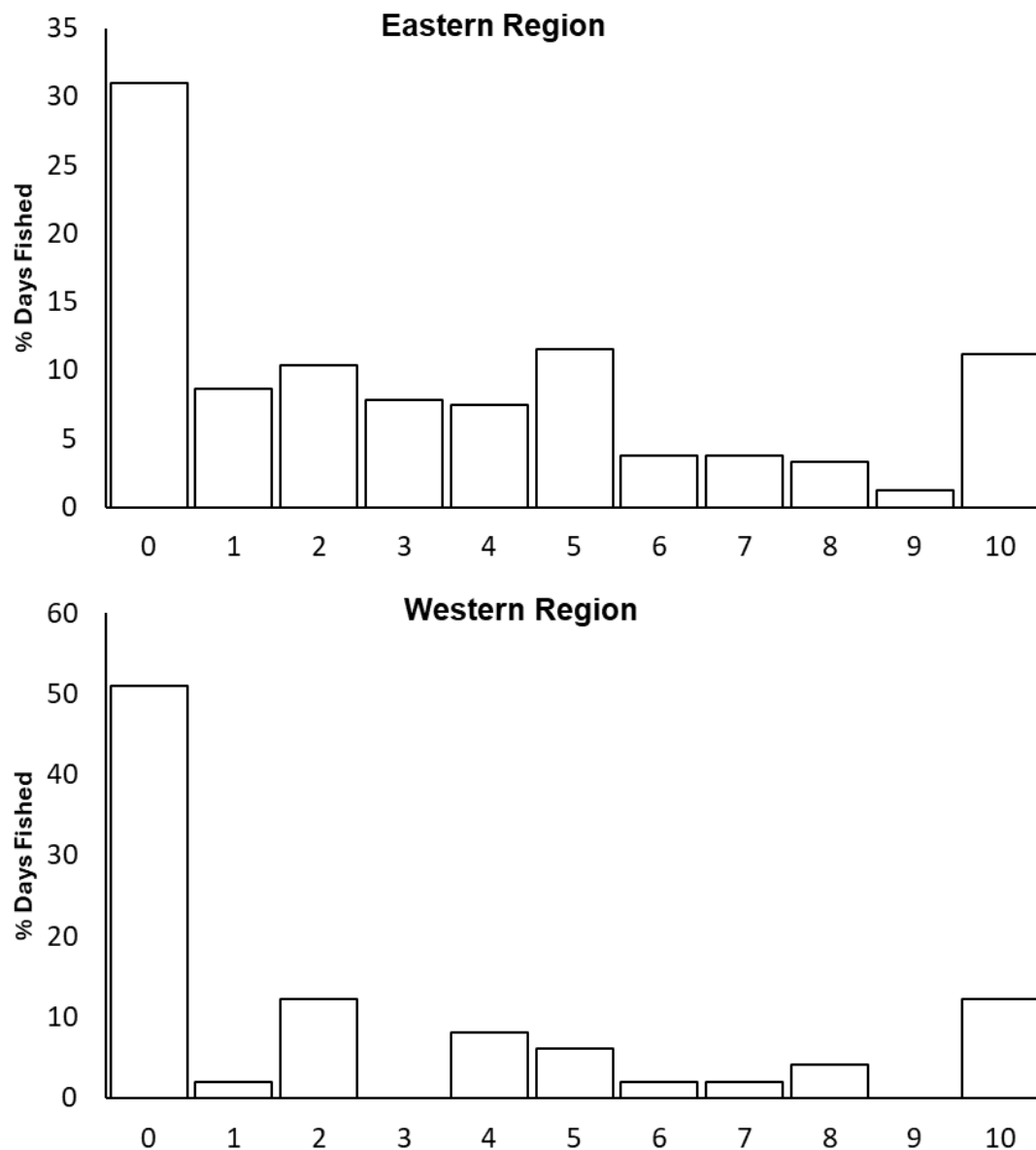


Figure 11. Distribution of daily abalone harvest by management zone for 2024/25 licence holders.

### 3.2.5 Individual Seasonal Harvest of Abalone

During the survey period, 12% of active fishers harvested no abalone, 23% harvested five or fewer, 43% harvested 6-15 and 22% harvested 16 or more (Figure 12).

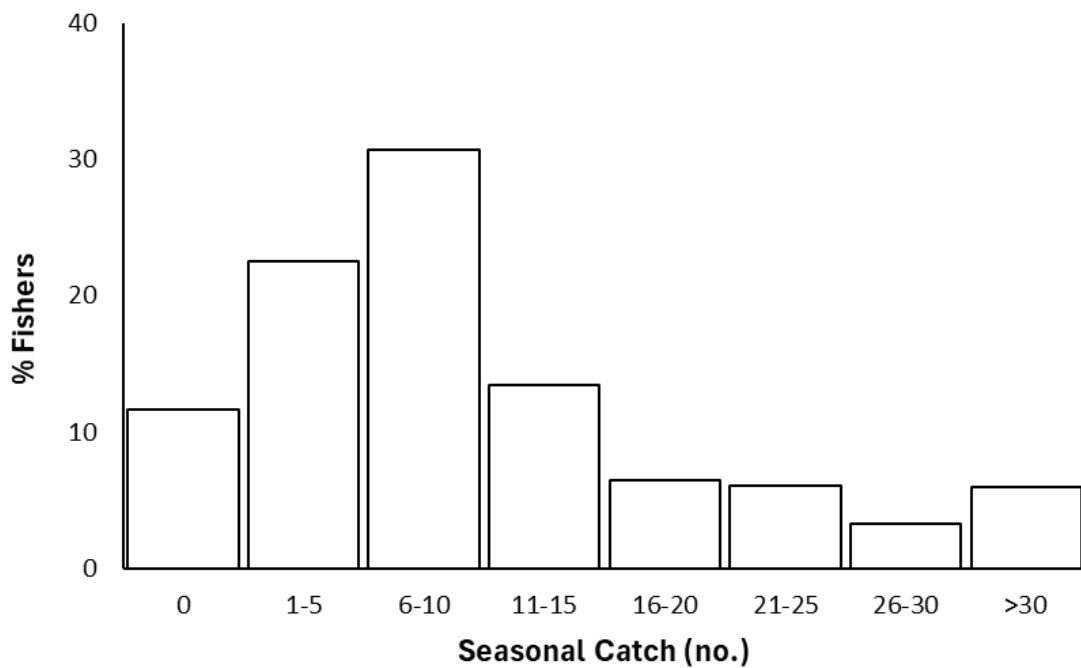


Figure 12. Seasonal harvest of abalone for fishers who were active within the whole fishery ( $n = 4,179$ ).

### 3.2.6 Harvest Weights

Size composition information was not available for recreationally caught abalone. However, based on commercial catch sampling, the average legal-sized abalone was between 399 g (Area 4) and 703 g (Area 8, Table 4). Using these values, the total statewide recreational harvest between November and April was estimated to be about 25.7 tonnes. Regionally, harvest estimates ranged from 13.7 tonnes in Area 1 to less than one tonne in Areas 7 and 8 (Table 4, Figure 9b). The catch for the combined east coast (Areas 1–3) was 19.1 tonnes, the north coast (Areas 4 and 5) 4.4 tonnes, and the west coast (Areas 6–8) 2.1 tonnes.

### 3.3 Wash-up survey

#### 3.3.1 General

Of the 522 respondents who completed the diary survey, 476 (91%) also completed the wash-up survey.

#### 3.3.2 Constraints to Fishing

Diarists who did not report any lobster or abalone fishing activity were asked why they did not fish during the season. A lack of time due to work, family and/or other commitments was the most cited reason, followed by injury/health issues (Figure 13).

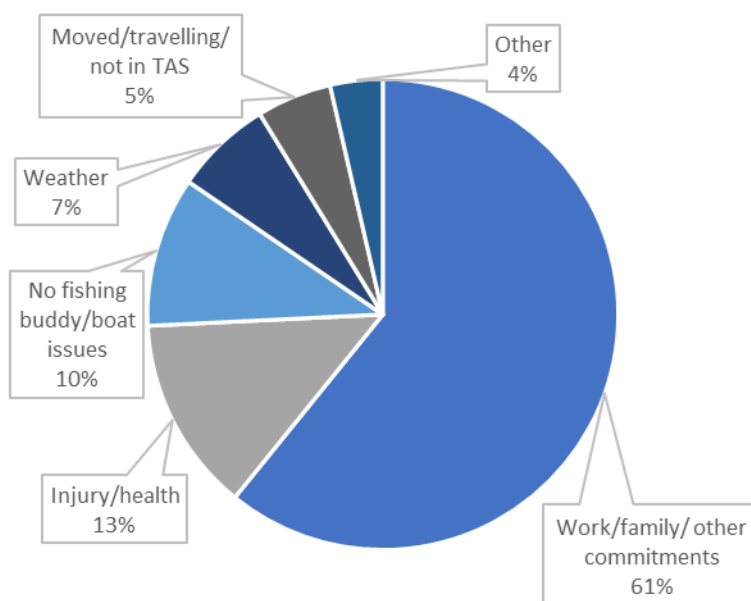


Figure 13. Main reason for not fishing for rock lobster or abalone during 2024/25 season ( $n = 194$ ).

#### 3.3.3 Fishing Quality

##### 3.3.3.1 Rock Lobster

About 75% of respondents who fished for rock lobster during the 2024/25 season indicated that the overall quality of the fishery was about the same or better than in the previous season (Figure 14). This is a decrease of approximately 5% compared to responses to the same question asked at the end of the 2023/24 season. Thirteen percent of respondents indicated that the current season was worse than the previous one, slightly lower than the percentage of responses to the same question in 2023/24 (15%).

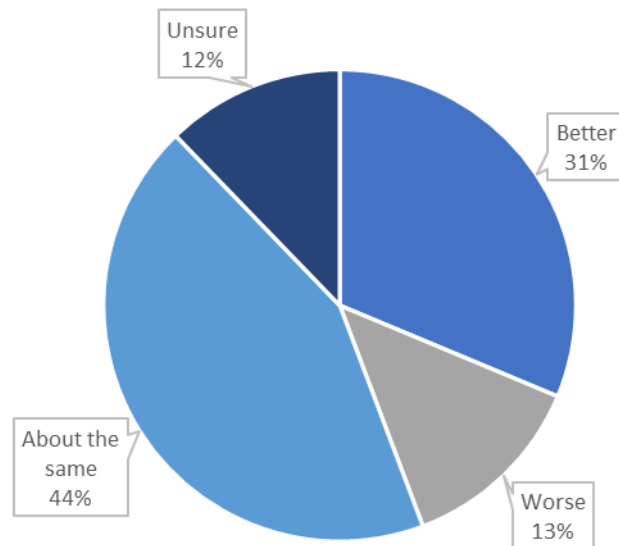


Figure 14. Perceptions about the quality of the rock lobster fishery in 2024/25 relative to respondent's experience in 2021-22 ( $n = 262$ ).

Respondents who fished for lobster during 2024/25 were asked whether the proportion of trips in which they caught at least one legal-sized lobster was higher, lower, or about the same as during the previous season (Figure 15). About 70% of respondents indicated that the proportion of successful trips was about the same or better than in the previous year, while 19% reported lower success rates in 2024/25.

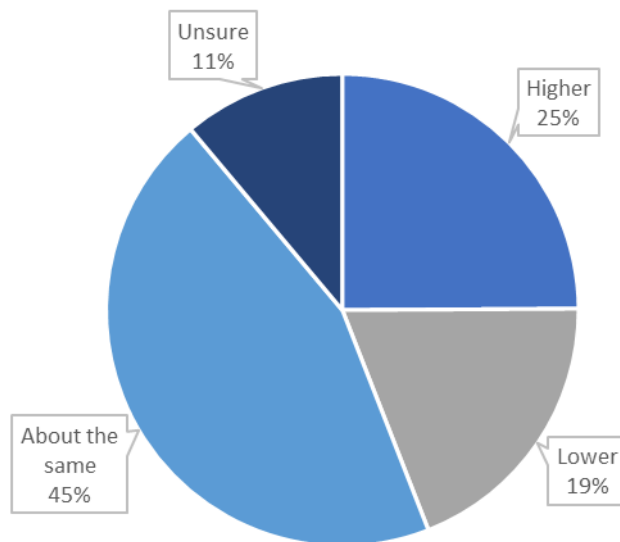


Figure 15. Proportion of respondents who indicated greater rock lobster fishing success (in terms of trips where at least at least one legal-sized lobster was caught) in 2024/25 compared with 2022/23 ( $n = 261$ ).

Respondents who fished for lobster were asked whether the catch rates they experienced (i.e. the average number of lobster caught per trip) this season were higher, lower, or about the same as last season (Figure 16). About 64% of respondents indicated that their catch rates were higher or about the same as last season, with 25% indicating they were lower than last season

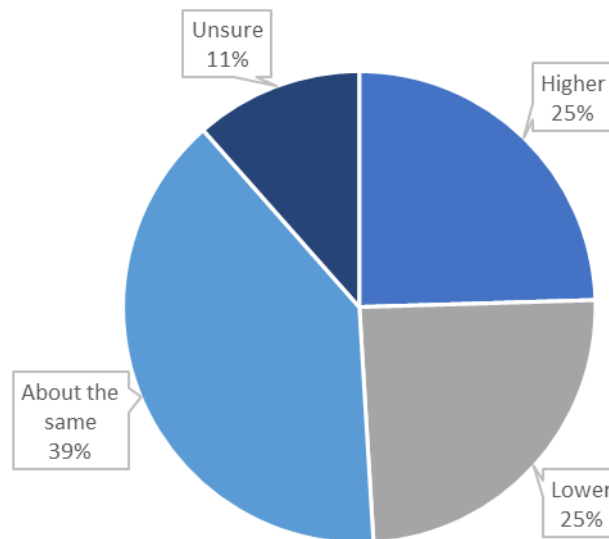


Figure 16. Perceptions about lobster catch rates by fishers in 2024/25 relative to respondent's experience in 2023/24 ( $n = 257$ ).

Respondents who had reported fishing for rock lobster were asked whether they were satisfied with their catch rates (number of lobsters kept per day fished) during the 2024/25 season. Overall, 71% indicated that they were at least “quite satisfied” (Figure 17), with divers more likely to be satisfied (80%; Figure 18) than pot fishers (67%; Figure 19). This was a decrease in satisfaction of both dive and pot fishers from the previous season (88% and 75% respectively in 2023/24).

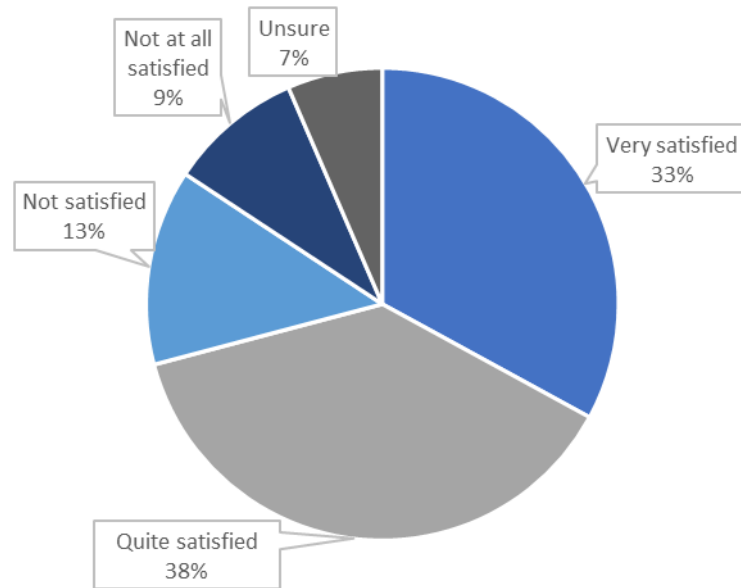


Figure 17. Fisher satisfaction with rock lobster catch rates achieved during the 2024/25 season ( $n = 261$ ).

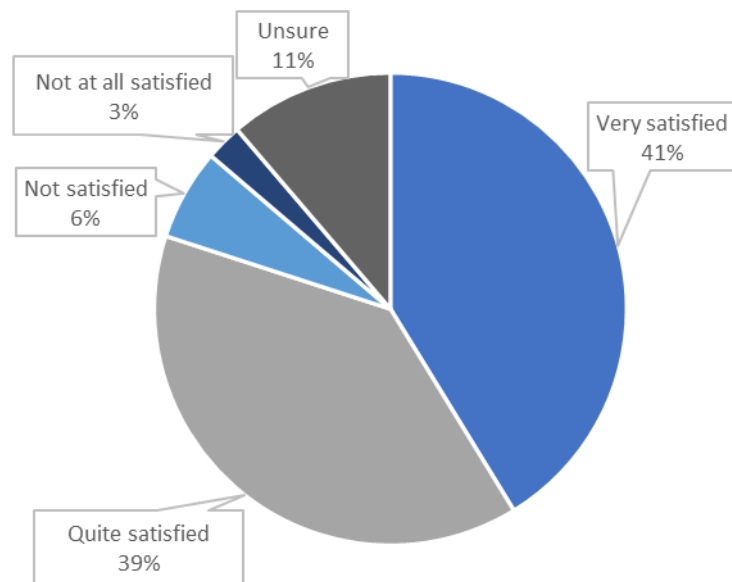


Figure 18. Dive fisher satisfaction with rock lobster catch rates achieved during the 2024/25 season ( $n = 80$ ).

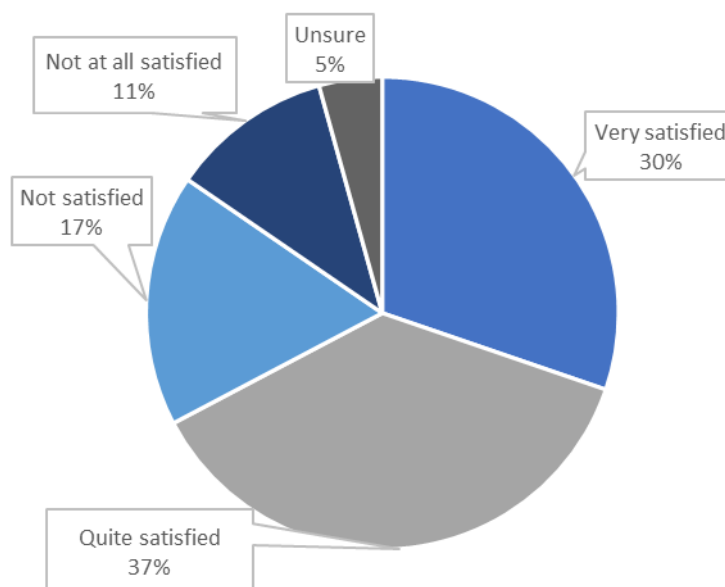


Figure 19. Pot fisher satisfaction with rock lobster catch rates achieved during the 2024/25 season ( $n = 162$ ).

In addition to the standard fishing quality questions asked every year in the survey, fishers who fished for lobster this season were also asked about the size of their caught lobsters and their satisfaction regarding those sizes. First, fishers were asked if the average size of the lobsters they caught this season were bigger, smaller or about the same size as the previous season. About 68% of fishers indicated they thought the lobsters they caught this year were bigger or about the same as the previous year, with 9% indicating they were smaller (Figure 20). Secondly, the same fishers were then asked how satisfied they were with the size of the lobsters they caught this season, with 70% of fishers indicating they were quite or very satisfied with the size of their catch, and 9% not or not at all satisfied (Figure 21).

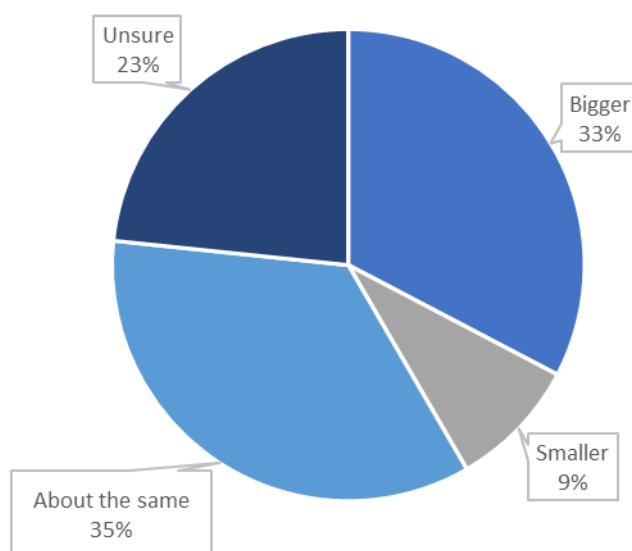


Figure 20. Perceptions about the size of rock lobster caught by fishers in 2024/25 relative to respondent's experience in 2023/24 ( $n = 257$ ).

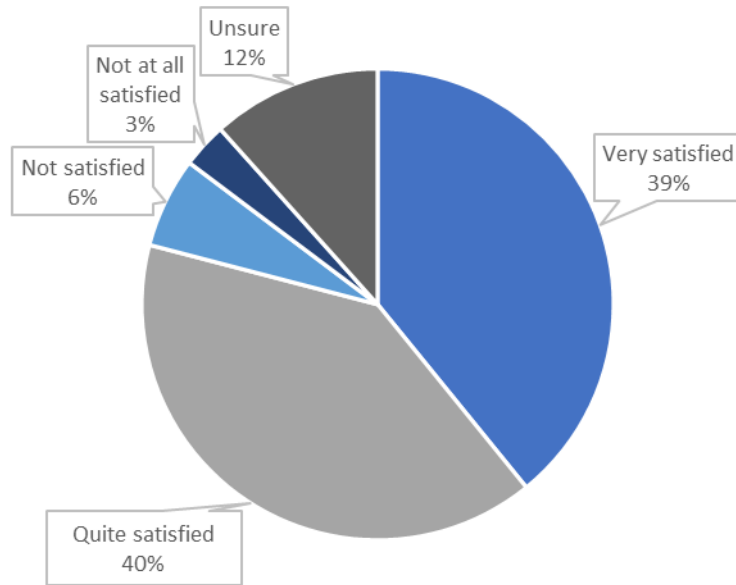


Figure 21. Fisher satisfaction with rock lobster sizes achieved during the 2024/25 season ( $n = 258$ ).

#### 3.3.3.2 Abalone

Abalone fishers provided their perceptions of the quality of the fishery in 2024/25 compared with the previous season. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that it was about the same or better, while 18% indicated that the 2024/25 season was worse (Figure 22). These indicate that perceptions of the fishery were more positive this season than the last (66% better or same quality, 27% worse in 2023/24).

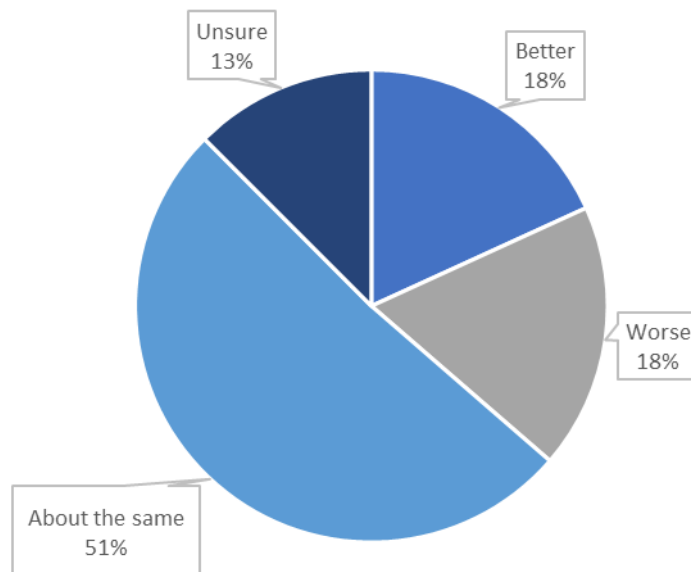


Figure 22. Perceptions of the quality of the abalone fishery in 2024/25 season compared to the 2023/24 season ( $n = 88$ ).

Respondents who fished for abalone were asked whether the catch rates they experienced (i.e. the average number of abalone caught per trip) this season were higher, lower, or about the same as last season (Figure 23). About 59% of respondents indicated that their catch rates were higher or about the same as last season, with 27% indicating they were lower than last season.

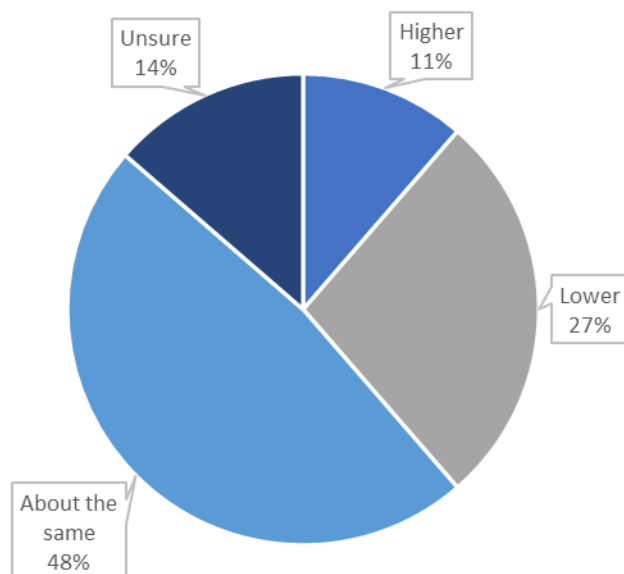


Figure 23. Perceptions about abalone catch rates by fishers in 2024/25 relative to respondent's experience in 2023/24 ( $n = 88$ ).

Abalone fishers were also asked whether they were satisfied with their 2024/25 catch rates (average number of abalone kept per day fished). Overall, 75% indicated that they were at least "quite satisfied" (Figure 24), up from 69% in 2023/24.

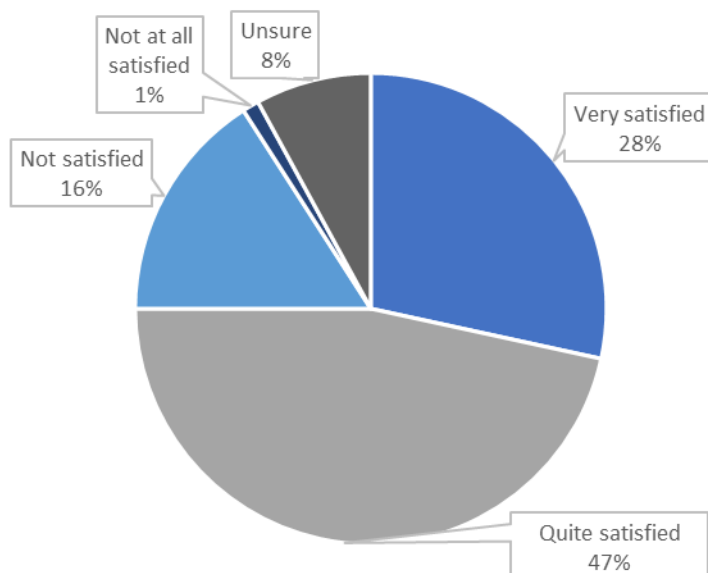


Figure 24. Fisher satisfaction with abalone catch rates during 2024/25 season ( $n = 88$ ).

In addition to the standard fishing quality questions asked every year in the survey, fishers who fished for abalone this season were also asked about the size of their caught abalone and their satisfaction regarding those sizes. First, fishers were asked if the average size of the abalone they caught this season were bigger, smaller, about the same size as the previous season. About 61% of fishers indicated they thought the abalone they caught this year were bigger or about the same as the previous year, with 17% indicating they were smaller (Figure 25). Secondly, the same fishers were then asked how satisfied they were with the size of the abalone they caught this season, with 82% of fishers indicating they were quite or very satisfied with the size of their catch, and 10% not or not at all satisfied (Figure 26).

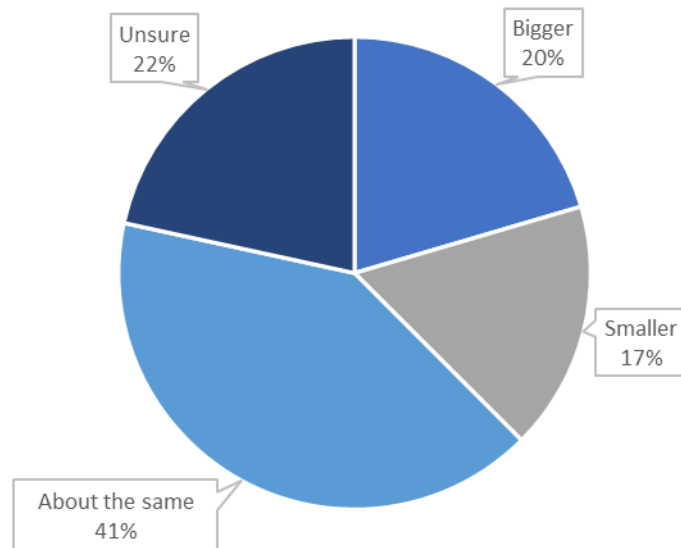


Figure 25. Perceptions about the size of abalone caught by fishers in 2024/25 relative to respondent's experience in 2023/24 ( $n = 88$ ).

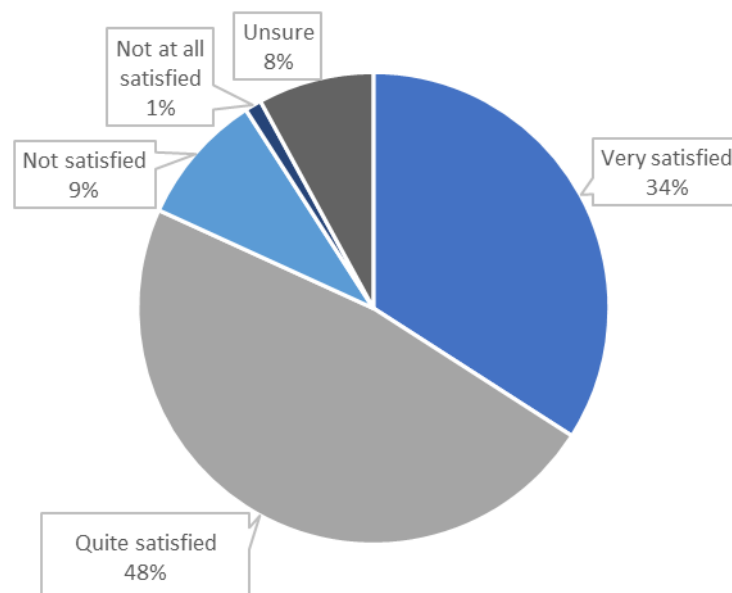


Figure 26. Fisher satisfaction with abalone catch sizes achieved during the 2024/25 season ( $n = 88$ ).

### 3.3.4 Policing, enforcement and compliance

Of 282 active fishers who responded to questions about policing, 45 (16%) indicated that they had been checked by Marine Police whilst fishing for lobster during the survey period, 9 (20%) of whom were checked on multiple occasions. Inspections happened almost equally on-water (49%) and off-water (44%). Some respondents were subject to both on-water and off-water checks (7%).

### 3.3.5 Recent management changes

#### 3.3.5.1 Rock lobster catch monitoring and reporting

Since December 2023, recreational rock lobster fishers have been required to report their catch either through the Fishing Tas App or via a telephone reporting service. This has been applied to collect real-time catch data to better understand the total recreational rock lobster catch.

Respondents who fished for rock lobster were asked if they used the app at least once to report their catch during the season. Most respondents indicated they had used the app at least once (83%), with some indicating they had not used the app (15%), or were unsure (2%).

Respondents were then asked if they had used telephone reporting at least once to report their catch during the season. Eleven percent of respondents had used telephone reporting at least once during the season, with 88% not using telephone reporting and 1% unsure.

Respondents were also asked if they missed any reporting of their catch and why (Figure 27). Seventy-three percent indicated they had not missed any reporting, with 25% indicating they had missed reporting at least one trip, and 2% were unsure. The reasons for not reporting were forgetting to report (30%), that it was too hard (7%), they had issues with the app (13%), didn't want to report (3%) and other (47%).

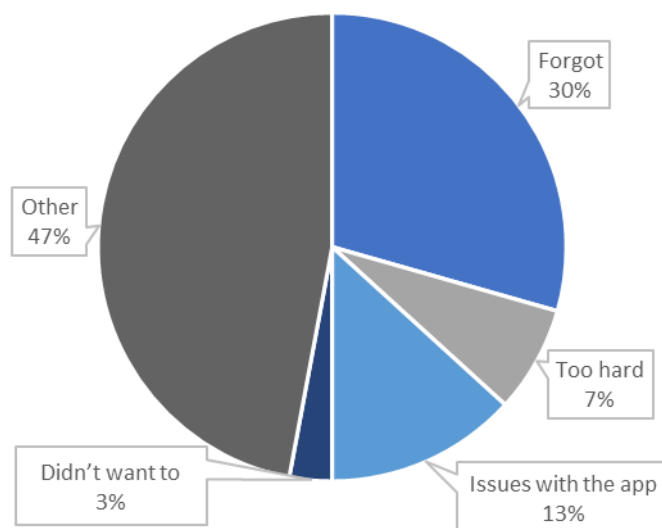


Figure 27. Reasons for why respondents did not report their fishing catches in the 2024/25 season ( $n = 68$ ).

If fishers used telephone reporting, they were asked the main reason they did not use the app (Figure 28). The reasons for not reporting using the app were forgetting (9%), that it was too hard (11%), they had issues with the app (23%), didn't want to report using the app (6%) and other (48%).

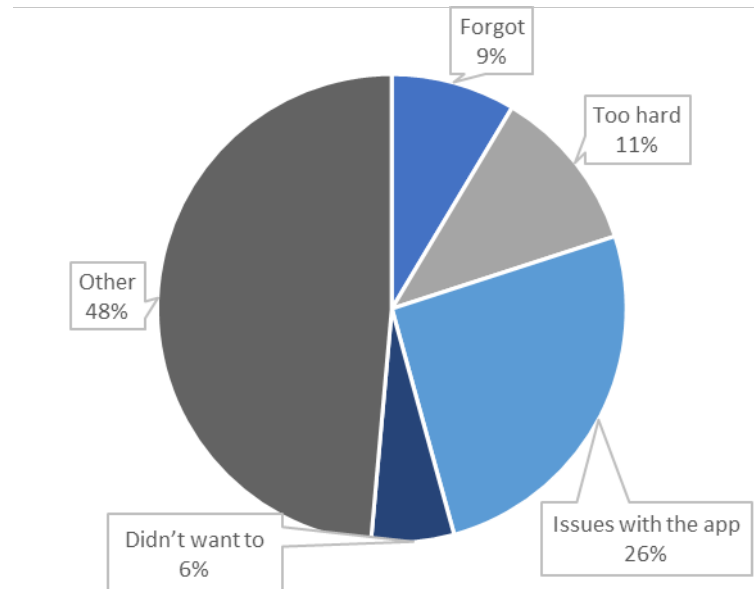


Figure 28. Reasons for why respondents did not use the catch reporting app to report their fishing catches in the 2024/25 season ( $n = 35$ ).

Respondents were then asked about their perceptions of other fishers using the Fishing Tas App to report their rock lobster catch (Figure 29). A relatively high proportion (28–39%) were unsure about the extent of others' use of the app. When asked whether they believed fishers were correctly reporting their catch, more respondents thought catch reporting was accurate 'all or most of the time' (44%) compared with 'some or none of the time' (29%). In contrast, when asked if they believed fishers were not reporting their catch, only 4% thought non-reporting occurred 'most or all of the time,' while 60% believed it occurred 'some or none of the time.'

For intentionally mis-reporting catch, only 4% of respondents think fishers are doing this 'all or most of the time', whereas 57% of respondents think fishers are intentionally mis-reporting 'some or none of the time'. Only 6% of respondents thought fishers might be having issues with the app while trying to report 'some or none of the time', with 60% indicating they thought this was occurring 'most or all of the time'

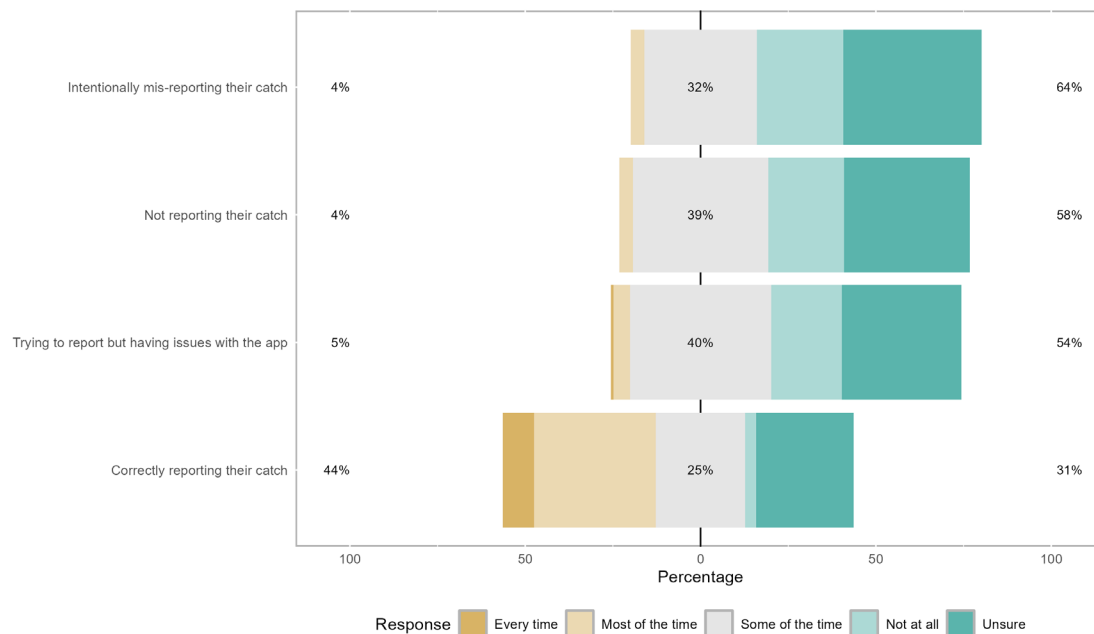


Figure 29. The response profile for a series of questions asked relating to catch reporting in the rock lobster fishery.

Respondents were asked to put aside their personal feeling about the mandatory reporting and were asked if they thought the app was a reliable way to estimate catch for the recreational lobster fishery (Figure 30). Most respondents thought it was at least a somewhat reliable method to estimate catch (75%), with 20% indicating it was not very or not at all reliable, and 5% unsure.

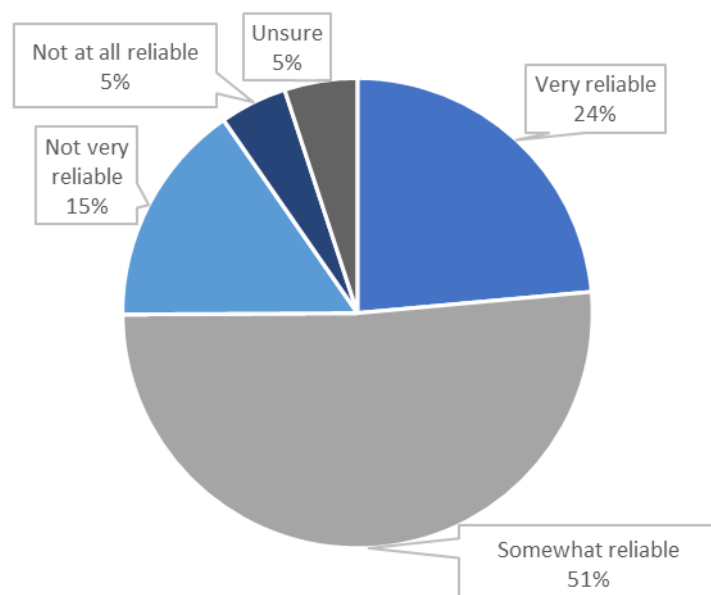


Figure 30. Respondent opinion on whether app reporting is a reliable way to estimate the size of the recreational catch for rock lobster ( $n = 259$ ).

Respondents were also asked if they thought there were any major issues with mandatory reporting in Tasmania (Figure 31), with 44% indicating yes, 52% indicating no, and 4% remaining unsure.

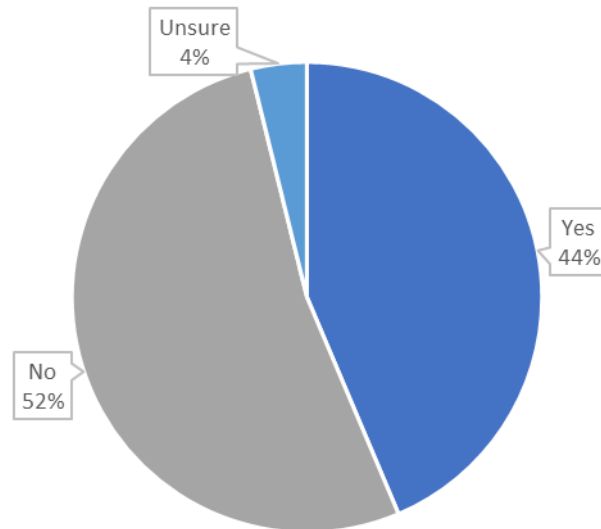


Figure 31. Respondent opinion on whether there are any major issues with mandatory reporting in Tasmania ( $n = 259$ )

The issues listed by fishers were varied (Figure 32), with mobile service as the biggest issue for mandatory reporting (26%), followed by compliance (25%), app issues (10%), safety and use at sea (9%), ease of use of the method (5%) and remembering to report their catch (3%). The 'other' category (22%) included reasons such as age barriers to app use, reducing the quality of the fishing experience, concerns about privacy of fishing locations, the timing of needing to report, and not knowing there was a requirement to report.

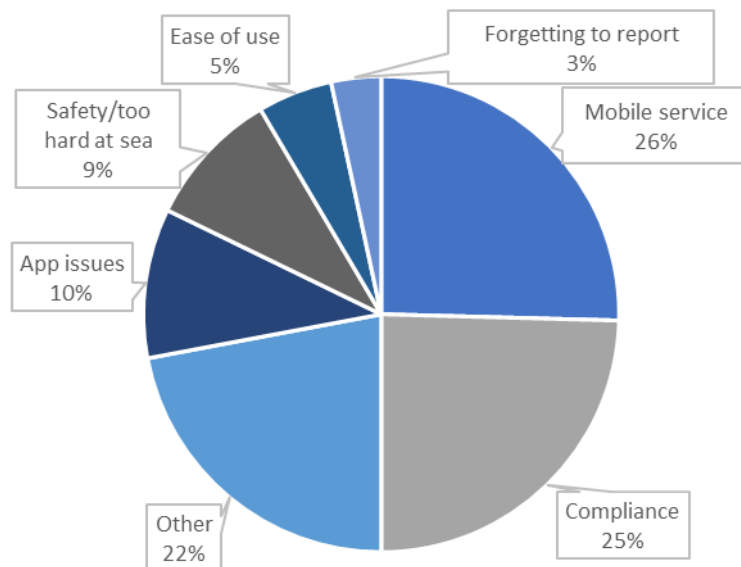


Figure 32. Perceived major issues with mandatory reporting ( $n = 118$ ).

### 3.3.5.2 Opening of Elephant Rock and North Bay research areas to recreational potting

In December 2023, two areas previously closed to fishing for lobster to preserve the areas for research into the predatory behaviour of lobster on long spined sea urchin were reopened as recreational potting only areas: Elephant Rock near St Helens, and North Bay near Marion Bay. Last season, respondents who fished for rock lobster were asked about these areas, including if they were aware they had been reopened for recreational potting, their thoughts on the value of reopening these areas to the recreational fishing experience, if they fished in these areas and over how many days, or why if they did not fish these areas. This season, respondents who fished for rock lobster were asked if they fished in either of these areas this season, and if they fished there last season, did they notice any changes to the fishing in the area.

Only 2% of respondents indicated they had fished at either Elephant Rock or North Bay during this season. Of those 2%, most provided comparisons to the previous season, including that it was now like other areas surrounding the previously closed areas, with fewer and smaller lobsters than the previous season. There were also indications that less fishers were fishing in the areas this season.

### 3.3.6 Abalone catch monitoring and reporting app

Respondents who fished for abalone were asked if they would use a catch app to record fishing details and catch for abalone. Of the 108 respondents asked, around 72% said yes, 21% said no, and 7% were unsure.

### 3.3.7 Gear loss in the recreational rock lobster fishery

Rock lobster fishers were asked about their instances of gear loss in the last season. Seven percent of respondents indicated they had lost some form of fishing gear (pots or rings) at some point during the season. Of those who lost gear during the season, 44% were unable to retrieve their gear within the 48-hour period before reporting. Of those who lost gear and were unable to retrieve it, 92% reported it to the NRE hotline.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Catch and Effort

#### 4.1.1 General Trends

The recreational fishery has been monitored using fisher surveys since the mid-1990s. During this time, rock lobster stock abundance has declined in some areas prompting several management changes, particularly on the east coast. Statewide recreational catch, effort, and catch rates for rock lobster have declined since the early 2000s, from a peak catch of almost 150 tonnes in 2002/03 to a low of under 55 tonnes in 2019/20, before increasing again to 107.8 tonnes in 2024/25 (

Figure 33). The initial decline occurred alongside a steady increase in licence numbers (refer Lyle et al., 2021) and corresponded with a general decline in overall stock abundance (Hartmann et al., 2019) and subsequent changes to management settings introduced as a component of the ECSRS. Overall, the statewide harvest has not exceeded the TARC allocation of 170 tonnes in any year for which there is survey data. Estimated catches since 2015/16 have been equivalent to half or less of the TARC, though this season was the highest at 65.5%.

Abalone catches have also declined since the early 2000s (Figure 34) though licence numbers continued to grow up until 2008/09 (Lyle et al., 2021). The 2024/25 harvest number (46,362) was slightly lower compared to the previous season (48,740), with the harvest weight following a similar pattern (25.7 tonnes in 2024/25, down slightly from 27.2 tonnes in 2023/24).

Social (e.g., motivations and availability of time, access), biological (e.g., stock size and catch rates), and environmental (e.g., weather) factors all play a role in influencing fisher behaviour, particularly participation in a fishery. The proportion of licence-holders who utilised their licences (i.e., fished) has varied between 88% (2002/03) to only 68% (2015/16) for lobster, and 64% (2002/03) to only 31% (2017/18, 2021/22) for abalone (Table 5). In the season's most impacted by biotoxin closures (2015/16 and 2017/18) and COVID/19 lockdowns (2019/20, 2020/21), about 30% of rock lobster licence-holders did not fish for lobster. For the 29% of licence holders who did not fish in the 2024/25 season, lack of time (due work, family and/or other commitments) and injury/health were the most cited reasons for not fishing.

Over time, there has been a general decline in the average number of days fished per season by active fishers for lobster, from nine days in 2000/01 to six days in 2023/24, picking up slightly this season to 6.4 days (Table 5). A similar trend was evident for abalone down from more than four to less than three days in the same period and 3.3 days for this season. This has corresponded with a decline in the average daily harvest per fisher (Table 5). Daily harvest rates for lobster have declined since the early 2000s (Lyle et al., 2021). This decline is particularly influenced by pot catch rates which fell from 1.0 in 2002/03 to below 0.7 lobster per day in 2015/16 and 2019/20 (Table 5). However, there has been a small increase in catch rates (for all gear types) since 2019/20, with an average of 1.09 lobsters per day across all methods, the same rate as 2022/23 and equal highest rate since 2006/07 (Table 5). Pot catch rates are also the highest they have been since 2002/03, with a catch rate of 0.91 lobsters per fisher day this season.

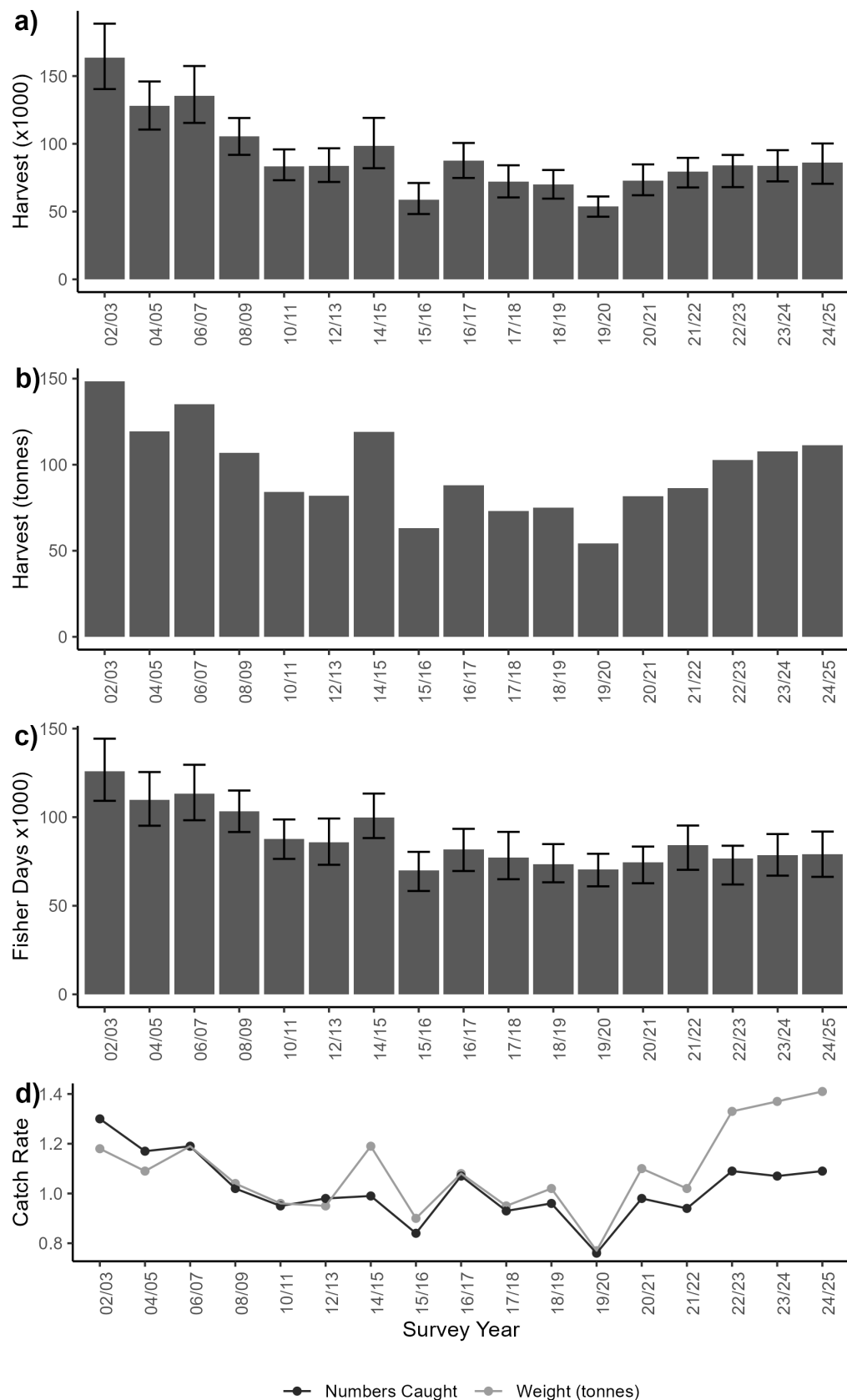


Figure 33. Tasmanian recreational rock lobster fishery: a) estimated statewide harvest (numbers); b) estimated statewide harvest (tonnes); c) effort (fisher days) by fishing season; d) and average catch rate (number per fisher-day). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

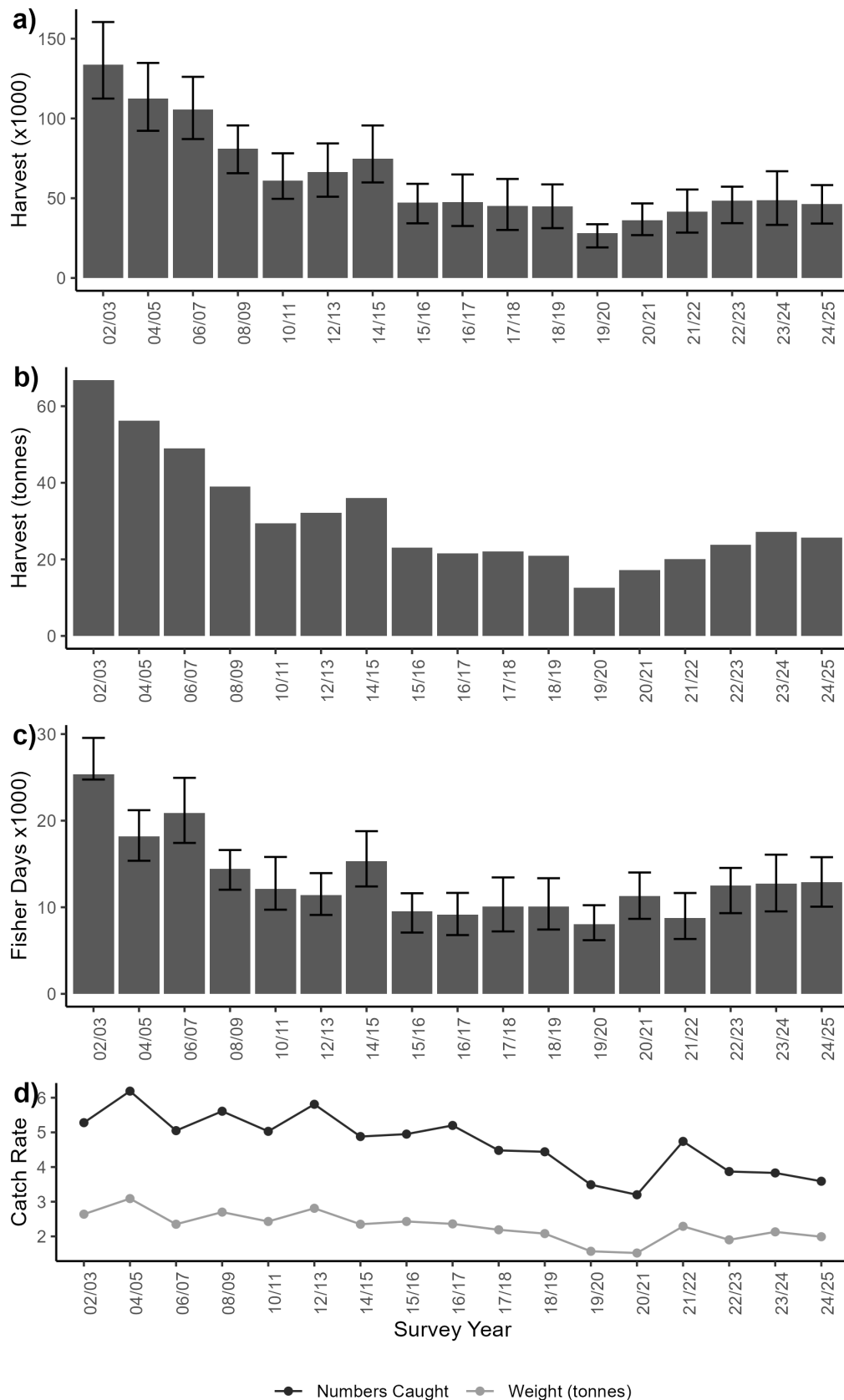


Figure 34. Recreational abalone fishery: a) estimated statewide harvest (numbers); b) estimated statewide harvest (tonnes); c) effort (fisher days) by fishing season; d) and average catch rate (number per fisher-day). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5. Number of rock lobster and abalone licence holders, estimated number and proportion who fished, total and average harvest and effort per fisher by year and average daily harvest rates.

|                              | Licence year |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |         |         |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|
|                              | 2000-01      | 2002-03 | 2004-05 | 2006-07 | 2008-09 | 2010-11 | 2012-13 | 2014-15 | 2015-16* | 2016-17* | 2017-18* | 2018-19* | 2019-20* | 2020-21* | 2021-22* | 2022-23* | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| <b>Rock lobster</b>          |              |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |         |         |
| No. licence holders          | 13,265       | 15,580  | 16,710  | 20,008  | 21,351  | 19,519  | 18,185  | 19,306  | 16,810   | 18,009   | 17,162   | 18,080   | 17,182   | 18,520   | 18,226   | 18,114   | 17,555  | 17,397  |
| % fished                     | 86.5         | 88.4    | 81.9    | 78.4    | 75.2    | 71.7    | 76.0    | 75.4    | 68.4     | 76.0     | 69.9     | 73.2     | 70.4     | 71.1     | 77.6     | 75.7     | 74.9    | 70.5    |
| No. active fishers           | 11,408       | 14,308  | 13,679  | 15,687  | 16,050  | 13,997  | 13,814  | 14,552  | 11,500   | 13,686   | 12,004   | 13,239   | 12,090   | 13,168   | 14,143   | 13,712   | 13,148  | 12,267  |
| Harvest (no.)                | 128,219      | 163,454 | 127,987 | 135,592 | 105,538 | 83,472  | 83,772  | 98,442  | 58,805   | 87,650   | 72,009   | 70,100   | 53,655   | 72,751   | 79,365   | 84,005   | 83,850  | 86,039  |
| Harvest (kg)                 | 116,509      | 148,526 | 119,354 | 135,067 | 107,027 | 84,261  | 81,849  | 118,996 | 63,022   | 87,941   | 73,187   | 74,982   | 54,345   | 81,606   | 86,338   | 102,608  | 107,768 | 111,348 |
| Av. no. per active fisher    | 11.2         | 11.4    | 9.4     | 8.6     | 6.6     | 6.0     | 6.1     | 6.8     | 5.1      | 6.4      | 6.0      | 5.3      | 4.4      | 5.5      | 5.6      | 6.1      | 6.4     | 7.0     |
| Fisher days                  | 100,866      | 125,898 | 109,788 | 124,305 | 103,985 | 87,617  | 85,849  | 101,699 | 69,920   | 81,690   | 77,209   | 73,327   | 70,473   | 74,453   | 82,945   | 76,741   | 78,624  | 78,971  |
| Av. days per active fisher   | 8.8          | 8.8     | 8.0     | 7.9     | 6.5     | 6.3     | 6.2     | 7.0     | 6.1      | 6.0      | 6.4      | 5.5      | 5.8      | 5.7      | 5.9      | 5.6      | 6.0     | 6.4     |
| Av. daily harvest (no.)      | 1.27         | 1.30    | 1.17    | 1.09    | 1.01    | 0.95    | 0.98    | 0.97    | 0.84     | 1.07     | 0.93     | 0.96     | 0.76     | 0.98     | 0.96     | 1.09     | 1.07    | 1.09    |
| Av. daily pot-harvest (no.)  | 0.87         | 1.00    | 0.90    | 0.94    | 0.75    | 0.68    | 0.78    | 0.71    | 0.65     | 0.87     | 0.74     | 0.74     | 0.62     | 0.82     | 0.77     | 0.90     | 0.82    | 0.91    |
| Av. daily dive-harvest (no.) | 2.61         | 2.30    | 2.31    | 2.15    | 2.27    | 2.36    | 1.83    | 1.92    | 1.61     | 1.90     | 1.59     | 1.67     | 1.27     | 1.49     | 1.77     | 1.52     | 1.80    | 1.69    |
| <b>Abalone</b>               |              |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |         |         |
| No. licence holders          |              | 9,272   | 10,133  | 12,514  | 12,976  | 11,972  | 11,157  | 12,084  | 10,509   | 11,035   | 10,797   | 11,127   | 10,600   | 11,742   | 11,781   | 11,658   | 11,452  | 11,208  |
| % fished                     |              | 63.5    | 55.8    | 52.3    | 38.8    | 36.3    | 42.0    | 42.4    | 37.9     | 33.5     | 30.7     | 35.9     | 31.5     | 37.7     | 31.1     | 43.5     | 38.2    | 34.9    |
| No. active fishers           |              | 5,853   | 5,653   | 6,542   | 5,033   | 4,349   | 4,682   | 5,126   | 3,896    | 3,695    | 3,313    | 3,990    | 3,341    | 4,420    | 3,664    | 5,071    | 4,375   | 3,908   |
| Harvest (no.)                |              | 133,711 | 112,571 | 105,515 | 81,021  | 60,943  | 66,438  | 74,769  | 47,113   | 47,522   | 45,142   | 44,740   | 28,150   | 36,168   | 41,552   | 48,439   | 48,740  | 46,362  |
| Harvest (kg)                 |              | 66,857  | 56,283  | 49,022  | 39,024  | 29,438  | 32,138  | 36,047  | 23,081   | 21,590   | 22,124   | 20,963   | 12,642   | 17,212   | 20,601   | 23,829   | 27,158  | 25,674  |
| Av. no. per active fisher    |              | 22.8    | 19.9    | 16.1    | 16.1    | 14.0    | 14.2    | 14.6    | 12.1     | 12.9     | 13.6     | 11.2     | 8.4      | 8.2      | 11.3     | 9.6      | 11.1    | 11.9    |
| Fisher days                  |              | 25,342  | 18,185  | 23,201  | 14,445  | 12,117  | 11,428  | 15,110  | 9,548    | 9,136    | 10,079   | 10,081   | 8,064    | 11,302   | 8,772    | 12,509   | 12,726  | 12,919  |
| Av. days per active fisher   |              | 4.3     | 3.2     | 3.5     | 2.9     | 2.8     | 2.4     | 2.9     | 2.5      | 2.5      | 3.0      | 2.5      | 2.4      | 2.6      | 2.4      | 2.5      | 2.9     | 3.3     |
| Av. daily harvest (no.)      |              | 5.28    | 6.19    | 4.55    | 5.61    | 5.03    | 5.81    | 4.95    | 4.93     | 5.20     | 4.48     | 4.44     | 3.49     | 3.20     | 4.74     | 3.87     | 3.83    | 3.59    |

#### 4.1.2 Fishing Methods

Pots have consistently been the main fishing method for rock lobster and have accounted for 55–69% of the total harvest numbers in each of the years surveyed (Figure 35). Dive methods have typically accounted for about a third (29–44%) of the harvest in all seasons. Lobster rings account for a relatively small proportion of overall catch (0.7–6.1%).

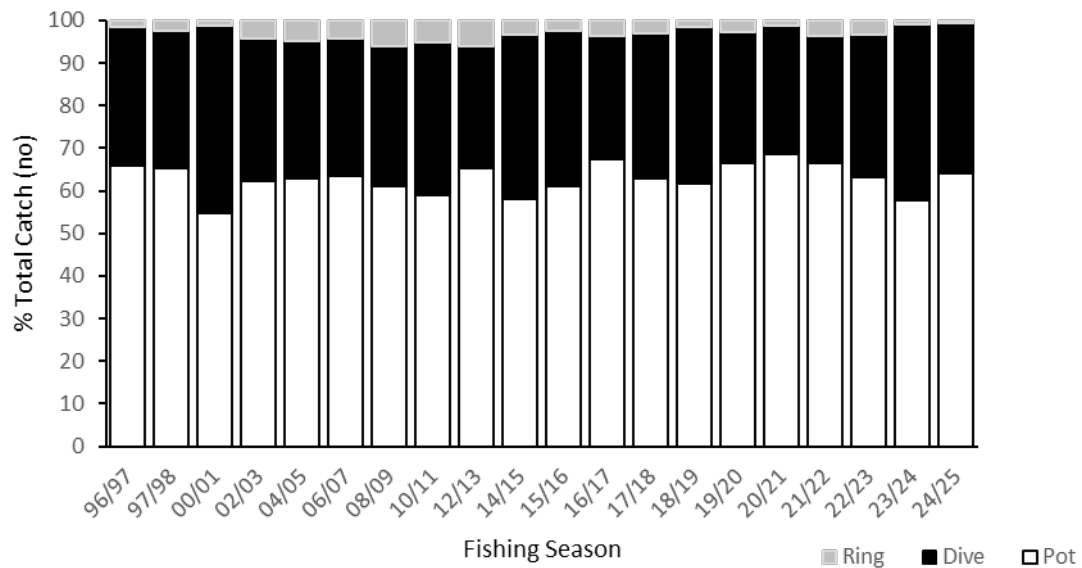


Figure 35. Proportion of the rock lobster harvest by method and fishing season.

#### 4.1.3 Catch Rates

Catch per unit effort is an important metric to assess fishery performance, as an indicator of stock biomass, economic performance in commercial fisheries, and as indicator of recreational satisfaction against which fishery performance could be assessed (Lyle et al., 2014, 2016a,b, 2017, 2019a, 2020b). Pot catch rates (i.e., kg of lobster per pot lift) vary with lobster availability and catchability (behaviour). Therefore, the trend in pot catch rates over the past decade has been consistent with changes in rock lobster population biomass (Hartmann et al., 2019, Lyle et al., 2021).

The average daily harvest rate during 2024/25 for pots (0.91 lobster) was higher than annual catch rates reported since 2006/07, despite higher daily bag limits prior to the 2015/16 season (Lyle et al., 2021). This suggests that pot harvest rates have remained largely insensitive to these bag limit changes, confirmed by two decades of survey data indicating that daily catches of two or more lobster per pot day are relatively rare (Table 5).

The 2024/25 average daily harvest number for divers was 1.69 lobsters per day—slightly lower than the 2023/24 season of 1.80 lobsters per day (Table 5). Divers actively search for lobsters and can maintain harvest rates by increasing search times such that a relatively high proportion of trips achieve the bag limits. Dive harvest rates for lobster have tended to fluctuate without an obvious trend, apart from the reduction in catch rate to below 2 lobsters per day since 2012/13 corresponding with the reduction in the eastern region bag limit.

Apart from slight increase in catch rate in 2021/22, abalone catch rates have been in steady decline from 5-6 abalone per day to 3-4 abalone per day since 2002/03 (Table 5). The 2024/25 average daily harvest rate (3.59 abalone) was slightly lower than the harvest rate from last season (3.83 in 2023/24).

Bag limits represent a key management strategy to constrain recreational rock lobster and abalone catches. Bag limits have a limited impact on harvest rates, with only a small proportion of pot fishing days resulting in bag limits being achieved (i.e., 30% and 7% of fishing days in the eastern and western regions respectively for the 2024/25 season). By contrast, bag limits had a greater impact on constraining dive catches, with 56% of the dive days in the eastern region and 36% of the dive days in the western region resulting in the bag limits being achieved.

#### 4.1.4 Regional Patterns

The recreational rock lobster and abalone fisheries are concentrated off the southeast and east coasts of Tasmania, with Areas 1–3 accounting for 76% of the lobster catch and 71% of the abalone catch (by harvest number). Fishing intensity off the southeast and east coasts reflects a combination of factors, including sheltered and accessible waters and proximity to major population and holiday centres.

Catches from the north coast (Areas 4 & 5) were higher than off the west coast (Areas 6–8) for abalone (22% from the north coast, and 6% from the west coast), but this trend was not consistent for rock lobster (17% from the north coast and 7% from the west coast). Due to the relatively low effort in the north and west coasts compared to the east coast, factors such as accessibility of suitable reef habitat off the north coast (apart from the Bass Strait islands), exposure to unfavourable sea conditions, and limited access points off the west coast, contribute to the lower levels of recreational fishing pressure observed in those regions. Despite this, this region represents a very significant area for both commercial rock lobster and abalone fisheries (Hartmann et al., 2019, Mundy & McAllister 2019).

In addition, it should be noted that the rock lobster catch in Area 5 more than doubled this season compared to last. Catch increased from an estimated 4,740 lobsters retained weighing approximately 6.3 tonnes in 2023/24 to an estimated 10,117 lobsters retained weighing approximately 17.9 tonnes this season. While these numbers are still significantly lower than the number and weight of harvested lobsters in Area 1 and slightly below Areas 2 and 3, this increase should be monitored to determine if it is a one-off peak in catch and effort in the area, or whether it may become a consistent increase in the area.

Another metric that should be monitored going forward is the participation and CPUE in the recreational abalone fishery. While the number of fishers taking out licences has varied over the years, there is no strong increasing or decreasing trend. However, participation rates (those with a licence that fished in the season) has been in general decline since the early 2000's, where participation rates were above 60% in 2002/03 to approximately 35% this season. This has coincided with a long-term decrease in the CPUE over the same time period, from approximately 5.3 to 3.6 abalone per fishing day.

There is considerable regional variability in the relative importance of the various rock lobster fishing methods. Pot catches dominate the harvest off the southeast and east coasts, whereas dive collection is the dominant method off the northeast and northwest coasts. Pots, dive collection, and rings are all important in the west coast areas. Such method-based regional differences are consistent with patterns observed in previous seasons (Graba-Landry et al. 2022 and references within).

## 4.2 Management Implications

Statewide, the 2024/25 recreational rock lobster harvest estimate of 111.3 tonnes represented 65.5% the TARC (170 tonnes) and was equivalent to 9.1% of the 2024/25 TAC<sup>5</sup> (1,220.7 tonnes). Although this survey did not cover fishing activity that may have occurred between May and August (noting that the eastern region is closed during that period), previous surveys have consistently indicated that recreational effort during the winter months is low and catches generally account for less than 5% of seasonal totals.

The east coast (Areas 1–3) catch of 77.8 tonnes exceeds most estimates for the past nine years except for the 2023/24 estimate, which have ranged from 35.7 tonnes in 2015/16 to 82.8 tonnes in 2023/24. It is relevant to note that the 77.8 tonnes in 2024/25 is greater than in Table 6 as it accounts for the whole of Area 1, whereas the table reflects the reduced area of the ECSRZ. In 2017 the ECSRZ was amended to exclude waters south of Bruny Island, thereby re-focusing the rebuilding strategy to where stocks were in the poorest condition (DPIPWE 2018).

In 2024/25, the total estimated catch in the ECSRZ was 77.5 tonnes, 42.5 tonnes (121%) greater than the previous notional catch allocation (Table 6). During the 2024/25 season, recreational fishing effort was not affected by COVID restrictions or biotoxin closures. This was coupled with an increase in available biomass within the region<sup>6</sup>.

Recreational catches in the ECSRZ have exceeded the notional catch allocation in most years since 2014/15, except for 2015/16, 2017/18 and 2019/20. (Table 6). However, for these years, external factors resulted in marked reductions in recreational effort (and catch), suggesting that management settings alone have been insufficient to constrain east coast catches to within recreational catch targets (Graba-Landry et al. 2022).

Table 6. East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone recreational catches relative to notional catch allocation.

| Season                    | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Notional catch allocation | 42      | 42      | 42      | 41      | 40      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      | 35      |
| Catch estimate            | 55.6    | 35.7    | 50.2    | 40.4    | 48.6    | 33.6    | 51.1    | 46.5    | 71.7    | 78.0    | 77.5    |
| Over/under catch          | +13.6   | -6.3    | +8.2    | -0.6    | +8.6    | -1.4    | +16.1   | +11.5   | +36.7   | +43.0   | +42.5   |
| % over/under catch        | +32%    | -15%    | +19%    | -1%     | +21%    | -4%     | +46%    | +32%    | +104%   | +123%   | +121%   |

<sup>5</sup> Total Allowable Catch: TACC plus TARC

<sup>6</sup> [Rock Lobster Assessment Model \(tasfisheriesresearch.org\)](https://tasfisheriesresearch.org) accessed 04/07/2025.

Since being established, the retained catch in the ECSRZ has trended upwards, with the largest increase in the 2022/23 fishing season (Figure 36). Effort (days fished) has decreased slightly over time while the catch per unit of effort (from retained catch) has increased. The increase in catch rates is not unexpected as the stock rebuilds. In the absence of additional management restrictions, the combined effects of higher catch rates and effort were predicted to lead to an increase in the east coast catch of between 57 and 125% above 2018/19 levels by 2023 (Lyle et al. 2020a). If the 2014/15 data point is removed, due to being an anomalous year with high effort, catch increases at a greater rate and effort changes from declining to a modest increase.

Monitoring this fishery through time has revealed that recreational fishing activity is highly responsive to changing lobster abundance (refer Table 5). This relationship is more pronounced for the number of active fishers than for the number of licenced fishers and fishing activity per individual. As lobster abundance is expected to continue increasing in the ECSRZ, lobster catch rates and fishing activity are also likely to increase. This is further likely to amplify existing management challenges to constrain the recreational catch within the east coast stock rebuilding zone notional catch allocation.

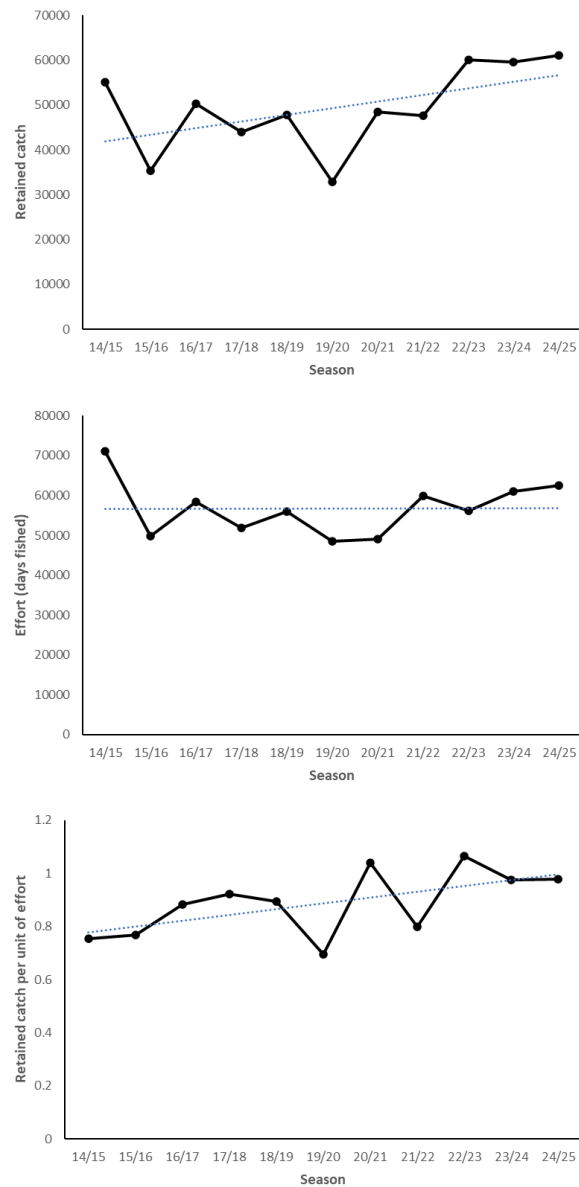


Figure 36. Catch, effort and CPUE (retained catch per day fish) for the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone, defined by the current spatial boundary (including assessment areas one [limited to the bottom of Bruny Island], two and three).

The recreational abalone harvest estimate of 25.7 tonnes was about 3.3% of the 2024 TACC (773.5 tonnes). Despite being a minor component of statewide catches, most of the recreational catch is taken from sheltered inshore areas of the east and south-east coasts, where the impacts of recreational abalone fishing can be significant. While there are no management performance indicators utilised for the recreational abalone fishery, there is a need to explicitly include recreational catches into annual stock assessments and future management of the fishery. This is particularly important since recreational fishers may continue to fish areas even when abalone densities are low, risking localised depletion (Lyle et al., 2021).

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