

## Sea trout fishery statistics - 2021 season



### Summary

- The total reported rod catch of sea trout for 2021 is 12,636. This is the lowest on record and 77% of the previous five-year average.
- Catch and release in 2021 accounted for 87% of the total rod catch. This is the third highest proportion of released rod caught fish since records began in 1994. A proportion of the fish released may be re-caught and inflate the catch statistics by appearing in the reported data more than once.
- Reported retained catch and effort for the net fisheries were among the lowest recorded since records began. Released net-caught fish were reported for the first time in 2021.

This publication summarises the sea trout fishery statistics, based on returns from proprietors, occupiers and agents of fisheries throughout Scotland, for the 2021 fishing season. These data are derived from 1,951 forms returned from 2,155 forms issued (91% return rate). Catches for the previous 10 years are based on return rates of between 92% and 94%.

These statistics are part of a time series which began in 1952 and are collected and collated by Marine Scotland Science.

### Time series data

Catch data can be downloaded from the Marine Scotland Data portal. Available datasets include catch data for Salmon Fishery Districts from 1952 to 2021, and annual form return rate data for 1997 to 2021.

## Salmon Fishery Regulations

Statutory conservation measures are in place to regulate the killing of salmon in the early months of the fishing season (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/wild-salmon-spring-conservation-measures/>), in coastal waters and on stocks with poor conservation status (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/salmon-and-recreational-fisheries/conservation/>).

Although specifically related to the catches of salmon, these regulations may have an impact on the catch and effort data reported by Scottish sea trout fisheries as some target both species.

## Catch and effort reported by Scottish sea trout fisheries in 2021

### The rod fishery

Of the 12,636 sea trout reported caught in the rod fishery, 11,036 were subsequently released and 1,600 retained. Total rod catch of sea trout has declined over much of the period since 1952, when our records began. The 2021 total rod catch is the lowest on record and 77% of the previous five-year average (Figure 1).

Finnock are sea trout which have spent less than a year at sea and are making their first return to fresh water. They may also be known as whitling or herling. In the rod fishery, 6,067 finnock were reported as caught and released, and 267 were reported as caught and retained. The combined total, of 6,334, is 78% of the previous five-year average and the third lowest since our records began in 2004 (Figure 1). Finnock catches are not included in the sea trout data.

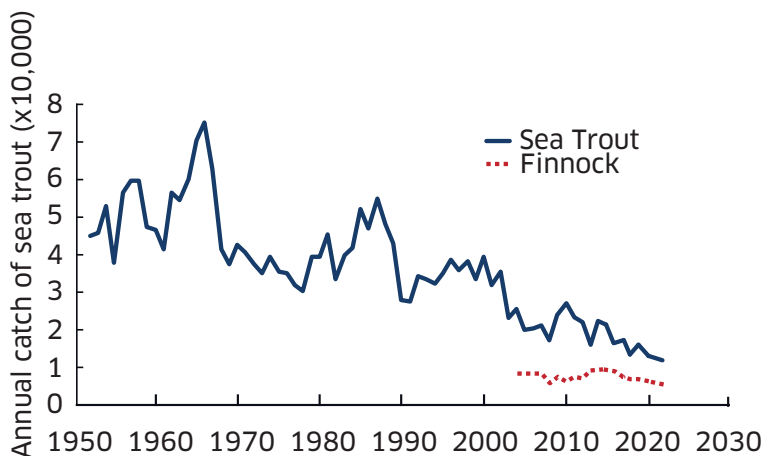


Figure 1  
Annual catch of sea trout and finnock, rod fishery

### Catch and release

The proportion of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release has generally increased since 1994, when catch and release information was first recorded (Figure 2), but has fallen slightly since a peak in 2018. The proportion released was 87% of

sea trout and 96% of finnock caught. A proportion of fish released from the rod fishery may be re-caught and hence inflate the catch statistics by appearing in the reported data more than once.

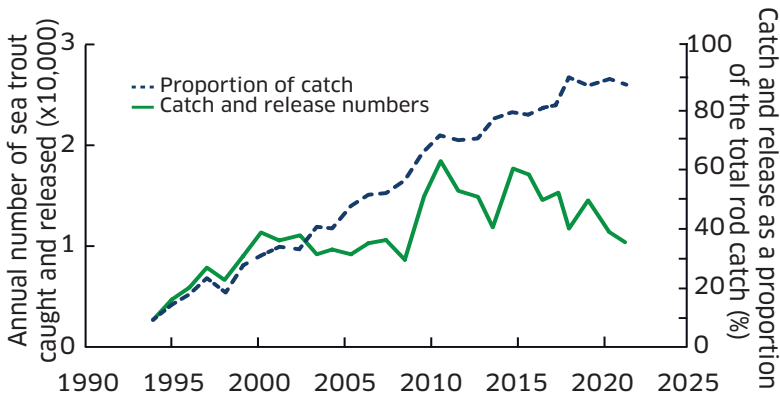


Figure 2  
Catch and release of sea trout, rod fishery

## The net fisheries

The haaf net fishery in the Solway Firth reported 318 sea trout caught and retained and 109 caught and released from a reported effort of 136 net months. Effort data from haaf net fisheries is omitted from the national fixed engine effort as it cannot easily be combined with that from other gear types.

Excluding the Solway Firth fishery, a total of seven sea trout and five finnock were reported caught and retained in the fixed engine fishery, from a reported effort of three crew months. No sea trout or finnock were reported as released.

From a reported effort of 33.5 crew months, 589 sea trout were reported caught and retained in the net and

coble fishery, and 33 caught and released. No finnock were reported caught in the net and coble fishery.

Reported catch and effort in both net fisheries have declined over much of the period covered by our records and remain at low levels (Figures 3 & 4).

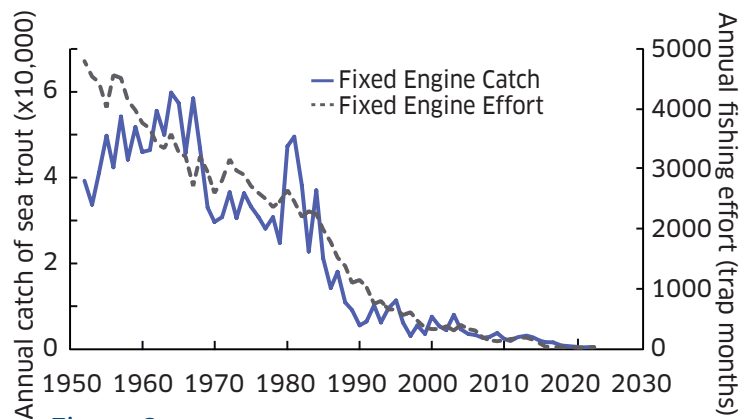


Figure 3  
Retained sea trout catch, fixed engine fishery

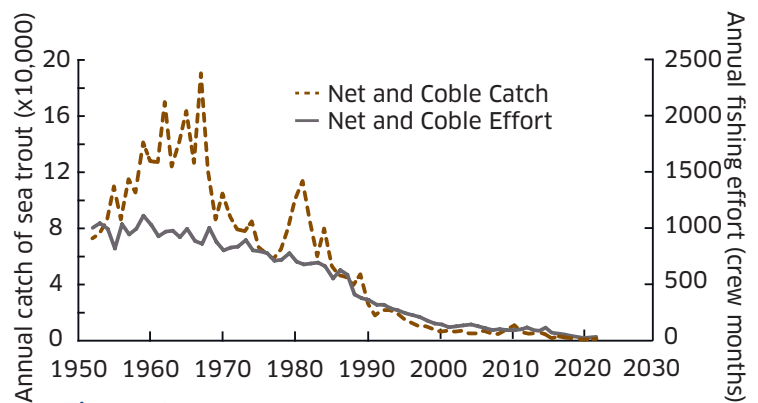


Figure 4  
Retained sea trout catch, net and coble fishery

## The catch by fishing method

In 2021, 92% of the total annual reported catch was accounted for by the rod fisheries. Net and coble fisheries comprised 5% and fixed engine fisheries accounted for 3%. Of the retained catch, rods accounted for 64% compared to 13% and 23% for fixed engine and net and coble fisheries respectively.

## Coronavirus and rainfall

The coronavirus pandemic had a negative impact on Scottish sea trout fisheries during the 2021 season. Stay-at-home orders during spring, along with restrictions on national and international travel, disrupted fisheries. Data available from the Met Office shows less than average rainfall for much of the 2021 season, which may also have contributed to the decline in catches (Figure 5).

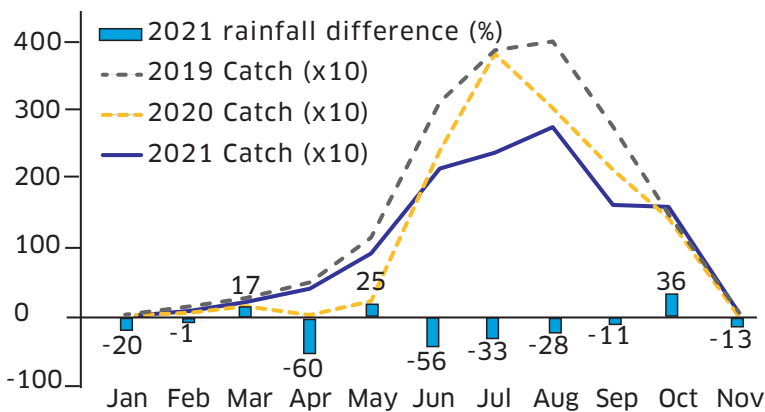


Figure 5  
Comparison of 2019, 2020 and 2021 catch number by month (all methods - retained), and 2021 rainfall difference to 1991-2020 average expressed as %

## Contact

If you have a specific request for Scottish salmon and sea trout fishery information, not available at the links provided on this page, please contact us directly at [ms.catchform@gov.scot](mailto:ms.catchform@gov.scot)

## Downloads

Topic sheet no. 67 (Collecting the Marine Scotland Salmon and Sea Trout Fishery Statistics) explains how we collect the catch statistics.

Topic sheet no. 68 (Salmon Fishery Statistics) summarises the salmon fishery statistics for the 2021 fishing season.

Both topic sheets are available for download at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-publications-information-on-scottish-salmon-and-sea-trout-statistics/>

Summary data for fishing seasons 1952 to 2021 are available from our data visualisation application (<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-salmon-sea-trout-catch/>), whilst more detailed data can be obtained from the Marine Scotland Data Portal (<https://data.marine.gov.scot/search/type/dataset>).

These data are provided as the most complete at the time of publication. Our records are amended when further information becomes available and updated annually when the statistics for the most recent fishing season are published.