

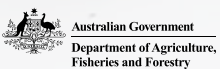
QLD



**FRDC**  
FISHERIES RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Social and Economic Survey of  
Recreational Fishers 2018-2021

**Queensland**



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**National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers 2018-2021**  
**FRDC Project No 2018-161**

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### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

## Introduction

Most Australians have gone fishing at some point in their life and for many, recreational fishing is something they do every year. In 2000, Australia's first national recreational fishing survey found that if you ask Australians when they last went fishing, almost one in five – 19.5%, had gone fishing within the last 12 months<sup>1</sup>. This is almost double the global average, with 10.5% of the global population estimated to be recreational fishers<sup>2</sup>.

Since 2000, the Australian population has grown, become more urban and more diverse. Between 2019 and 2021, a second national survey of recreational fishing in Australia was conducted to examine how participation in fishing is changing as Australia changes.

As well as finding out how participation in fishing is changing, the 2019-2021 National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers focused on improving our understanding of social and economic aspects of fishing, including:

- Which Australians are more or less likely to be recreational fishers?
- How much economic activity is generated by recreational fishing?
- Does going fishing support a person's health and wellbeing?
- Do Australians find fishing a socially acceptable activity?
- How many fishers invest time in supporting the health of the environment they fish in?

More than 20,000 fishers across Australia took part in the survey. This report gives a snapshot of findings about recreational fishing in Queensland.

1 Henry and Lyle 2003

2 Arlinghaus et al. 2015



## Recreational fishing in Australia

The *National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers* found that recreational fishing continues to be an important recreational activity. In fact, around one in five Australians goes fishing every year – similar to 20 years ago. Because Australia’s population has grown substantially in the last two decades, the number of people who go fishing every year has increased from around 3.4 million in 1999-2000 to 4.2 million in 2020. However, rates of participation in fishing depend on a range of factors including where a person lives, their age and their gender.

Australians spend an estimated 28 million days fishing each year with around 68% of fishers going fishing less than five days a year and 17% fishing between five and nine days a year. Of the 15% who go fishing 10 or more days a year, 4% are highly avid fishers who fish 20 or more days.

As of 2019-20, recreational fishing contributed just over \$11 billion to the Australian economy, and over 100,000 jobs nationally. This economic contribution occurs across Australia in both urban and rural areas - in the cities, activity generated by purchasing fishing equipment and supplies is a big driver of economic activity, while in rural areas, spending on accommodation and food are also important ways recreational fishers contribute to economic activity.

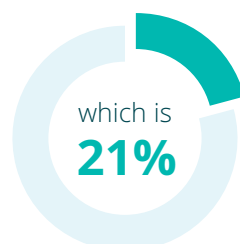
The survey was conducted over a period of time, starting before the Black Summer bushfires that affected many parts of Australia and continued through the COVID-19 pandemic. This timeframe provided an opportunity to understand how significant national and global events affect participation in fishing.

Recreational fishers surveyed numerous times during 2019 to 2021, reported fishing less often during the Black Summer bushfires, particularly those living in Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, where the bushfires were most widespread.

The first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns in the following year were also associated with a fall in how often people went fishing. The lowest level of fishing activity occurred in March and April 2020 when nation-wide restrictions on movement, and a recreational fishing ban in Victoria, were in place.

The data also showed that few people stopped fishing completely; while many fished fewer days than usual, it was rare for a fisher to stop fishing completely due to these events.

**4.2 Million**  
recreational fishers  
per year **in Australia**



of the Australian population

## Who goes fishing?

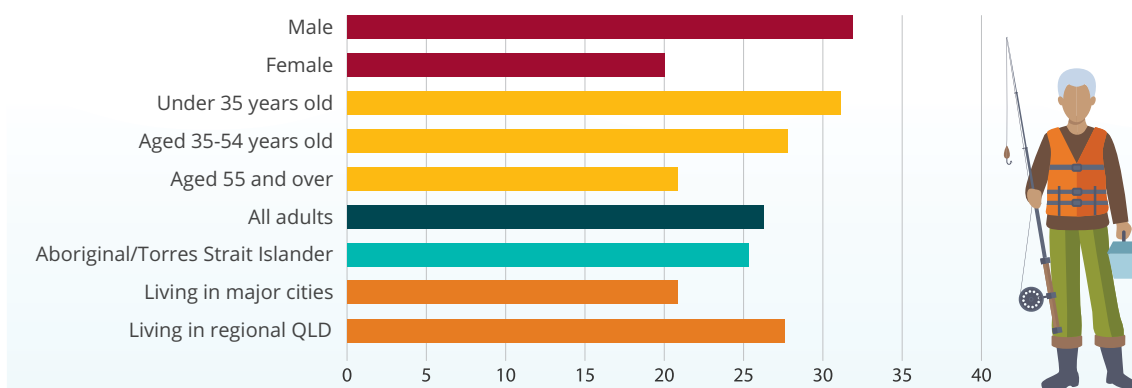
Across Australia, participation in fishing is higher amongst men (25.3%) than women (17.8%), and over the lifespan reaches its peak amongst those aged 35 to 44 (27.4%) and then declines with age, with 11.5% of those aged 75 and over going fishing. Fishing is a more common recreational activity amongst those living outside major cities (29.9%), with fewer people in major cities going fishing (18.0%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are much more likely to engage in fishing (38.1%) compared to those who are not Indigenous (21.0%), while those born in countries other than Australia are less likely to be fishers.

In Queensland, 25.9% of adults went fishing in 2018 – meaning approximately 1,015,700 adults living in Queensland went fishing at least once in that year. This participation rate is higher than the Australian average of 21.4%. This was driven in particular by higher participation in fishing amongst men, people living in Brisbane, and high

rates of participation in fishing by younger adults. When examined by gender, 32.5% of Queensland men went fishing – much higher than the 25.3% of men nationally who reported fishing. Queensland women were slightly more likely to go fishing compared to women in other parts of Australia (20.2% compared to 17.8%). In total, 21.9% of those living in Brisbane went fishing, whereas nationally 18.0% of those living in major cities went fishing. Amongst younger adults, 31.4% of Queenslanders aged 18-35 went fishing, compared to 23.2% of Australians in this age group.

These findings highlight that there is a strong recreational fishing culture in Queensland, particularly amongst men and younger adults. This extends into those living in major urban areas, although participation in fishing remains much higher amongst those living outside major cities compared to those living in major cities.

### % of adult (18+) population who recreationally fish per year



### % of people in Queensland that went fishing



## How often do people go fishing and where do they fish?

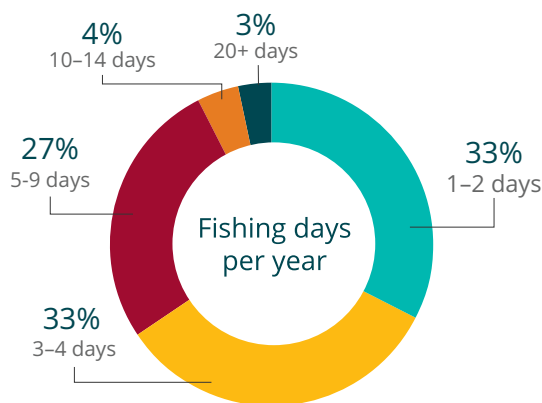
In 2018-19, Australia's 4.2 million fishers participated in 28.6 million 'fishing events'. A fishing event means going on a fishing trip for part or all of a day. Some of these fishing events involved a single fisher and other events involved many people fishing together. A large amount of this fishing effort was undertaken by avid fishers, who tend to go fishing many days every year. A smaller amount was contributed by the many fishers who go fishing only once or twice a year. Nationwide, 39.9% of fishers go fishing once or twice a year. However, this group makes up around 9.6% of fishing days. Meanwhile, only 5.0% of fishers go fishing 20 or more days a year – but contribute 21.5% of fishing days.

Many fishers go fishing in more than one type of place in a year: across Australia, 63.1% reported fishing in freshwater areas in the last year, 76.2% in estuaries and 85.0% in saltwater areas. Most fishers had gone fishing

in more than one of these in the previous 12 months.

Of the 28.6 million fishing events that occurred in 2018-19, 21.3% involved recreational fishers who lived in Queensland – a total of 6.08 million fishing events. Many Queensland fishers focus on saltwater fishing, with 86.8% reporting they fished in saltwater areas within the last year. Fewer fished in freshwater (50.1%, compared to 63.1% nationwide) or in estuaries (66.5%, compared to 76.2% nationwide).

As well as being more likely to go fishing than people in other parts of Australia, Queensland fishers are more likely to go fishing multiple times a year. In total 67.3% of Queensland fishers went fishing three or more days in the previous year, compared to 60.1% of fishers across Australia.



“ Queenslanders spend an estimated **6 million days** fishing each year ”

### Fishing locations in last 12 months



## A significant contributor to the economy

Recreational fishing in Australia in 2018-19 contributed an estimated \$11.5 billion to Australia’s gross domestic product (GDP) and supported over 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs in Australia. These estimates include all economic activity related to recreational fishing in Australia, but do not include recreational fishing activity generated by international residents who visit Australia, or recreational fishing undertaken outside Australia by Australian residents. This is the first study able to capture all economic activity occurring within Australia, as previous studies have typically examined a single State or Territory and have not always included economic activity generated by visitors to that state/territory who travelled there from other parts of Australia to fish, or economic activity generated by residents of that state/territory in other parts of Australia they have gone fishing in. As a result, the economic contributions estimated are larger than previous studies, due to capturing all these flows of activity between different states and territories.

In Queensland, recreational fishing by both residents and visitors contributed an estimated \$2.52 billion to the state economy in 2019-20, and 23,602 full-time equivalent jobs. This included \$1.04 billion and 9,025 jobs in Greater Brisbane, and \$1.48 billion and 14,577 jobs in regional Queensland.

Much of this activity is not directly generated by fishing, but results from the flow-on effects fishing generates in other parts of the economy. In Queensland, fishing was directly responsible for 10,142 jobs in 2019-20 – for example, jobs in charter fishing, sales of fishing equipment, tackle and bait, and in accommodation and retail businesses used by recreational fishers when on fishing trips.

This direct activity then generated further activity (13,461 jobs) by creating demand through spending of wages/salaries by those whose jobs were directly supported by recreational fishing, purchase of supplies, etc. Of the \$2.52 billion, \$826 million was directly generated by recreational fishing, and \$1.69 billion by the further indirect activity generated in other parts of the economy.

Recreational fishing is one activity that helps spread city dollars into rural areas. In Queensland, 33.1% of the \$1.48 billion of economic activity fishing contributes in regional areas was generated by fishers who live in capital cities (Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney etc). This reflects the spending that occurs when people who live in cities visit regional areas to go fishing, and highlights the importance of fishing as a way of generating economic activity in regional areas.

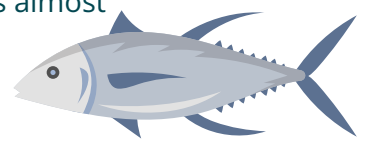
A lot of the economic contribution recreational fishing makes to the Queensland economy is a result of fishing by people who live in the region. However, a significant amount occurs due to spending by people who live in other parts of Australia and who either visit Queensland to go fishing, or who buy fishing equipment or supplies from Queensland vendors. In total, 80.0% of the economic contribution recreational fishing makes to the Queensland economy is a result of fishing activity and associated spending by fishers who live in Queensland, while 20.0% is a result of activity from interstate visitors who travel to Queensland to fish, or who purchase fishing equipment from Queensland vendors.



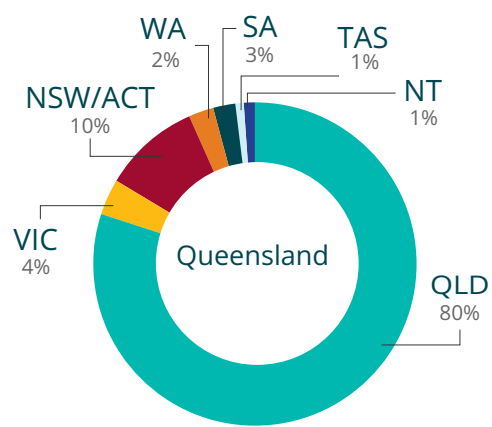
### Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

A measure of production. Specifically, the total value of all the final goods and services produced within a country.

“ Recreational fishing in Queensland contributes almost **24,000 jobs** and over **\$2.5 billion per year** to the Australian economy ”



**Economic activity in Queensland generated by recreational fishing came from fishers who live in...**



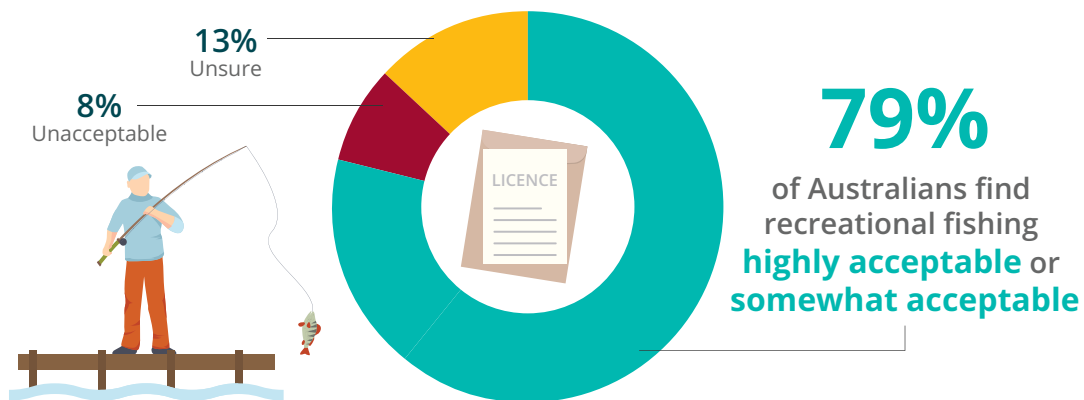


## Social licence

Having a 'social licence to operate' is increasingly recognised as critical to the long-term future of many activities. Recreational fishing is no exception. Across Australia, 61.0% of Australians felt recreational fishing was a very acceptable activity, and another 18.1% found it moderately acceptable. Only 8.2% felt recreational fishing was unacceptable, while 12.7% were unsure.

In Queensland, views were very similar to the national average. Overall, 80.5% of Queensland residents feel recreational fishing is a moderately or highly acceptable activity. This falls slightly to 75.7% amongst those living in Brisbane, and rises amongst those living in regional areas, to 89.6%. When examined by gender, 83.6% of men and 77.7% of women in Queensland found recreational fishing moderately or very acceptable. Of those who had gone fishing in the last 12 months, 91.4% felt fishing was acceptable, compared to 76.4% of those who last went fishing more than 12 months ago.

### Level of acceptability

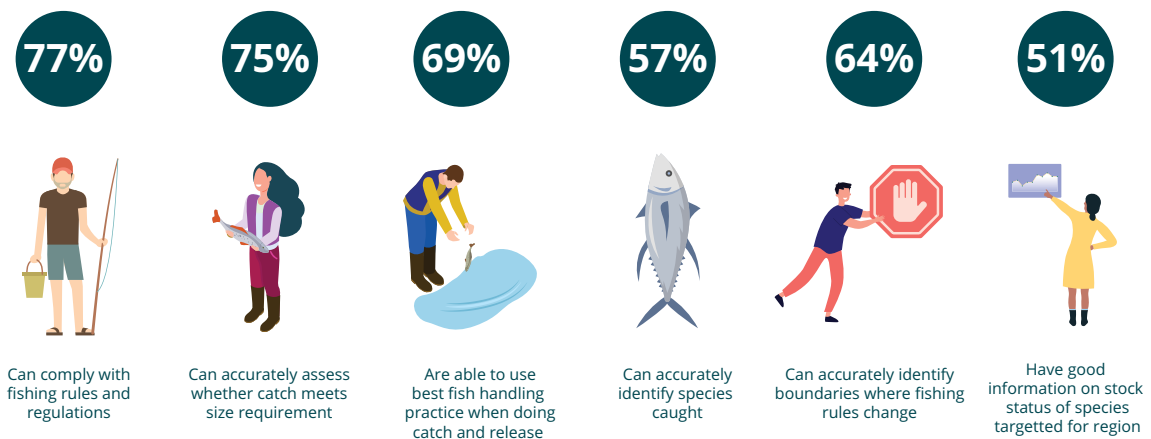


## Environmental stewardship

Environmental stewardship is important in all areas of life, and recreational fishing is no exception. Being a good steward of the environment is important for many reasons. First and foremost, for recreational fishing to be sustainable into the future, it is critical that aquatic habitats are in good health. Recreational fishers can contribute to this in many ways, from ensuring their own fishing practices are sustainable, to supporting activities like monitoring environmental health and habitat restoration activities.

In Queensland, while most fishers feel able to comply with recreational fishing rules and regulations, can assess whether their catch meets size requirements, and feel able to use best practice fish handling practices, confidence in all of these is lower than the national average. Whereas nationally 68.9% of fishers report that they are confident they can accurately identify species they catch, this drops to 56.8% amongst Queensland fishers, possibly reflecting the high diversity of fish species in Queensland waters

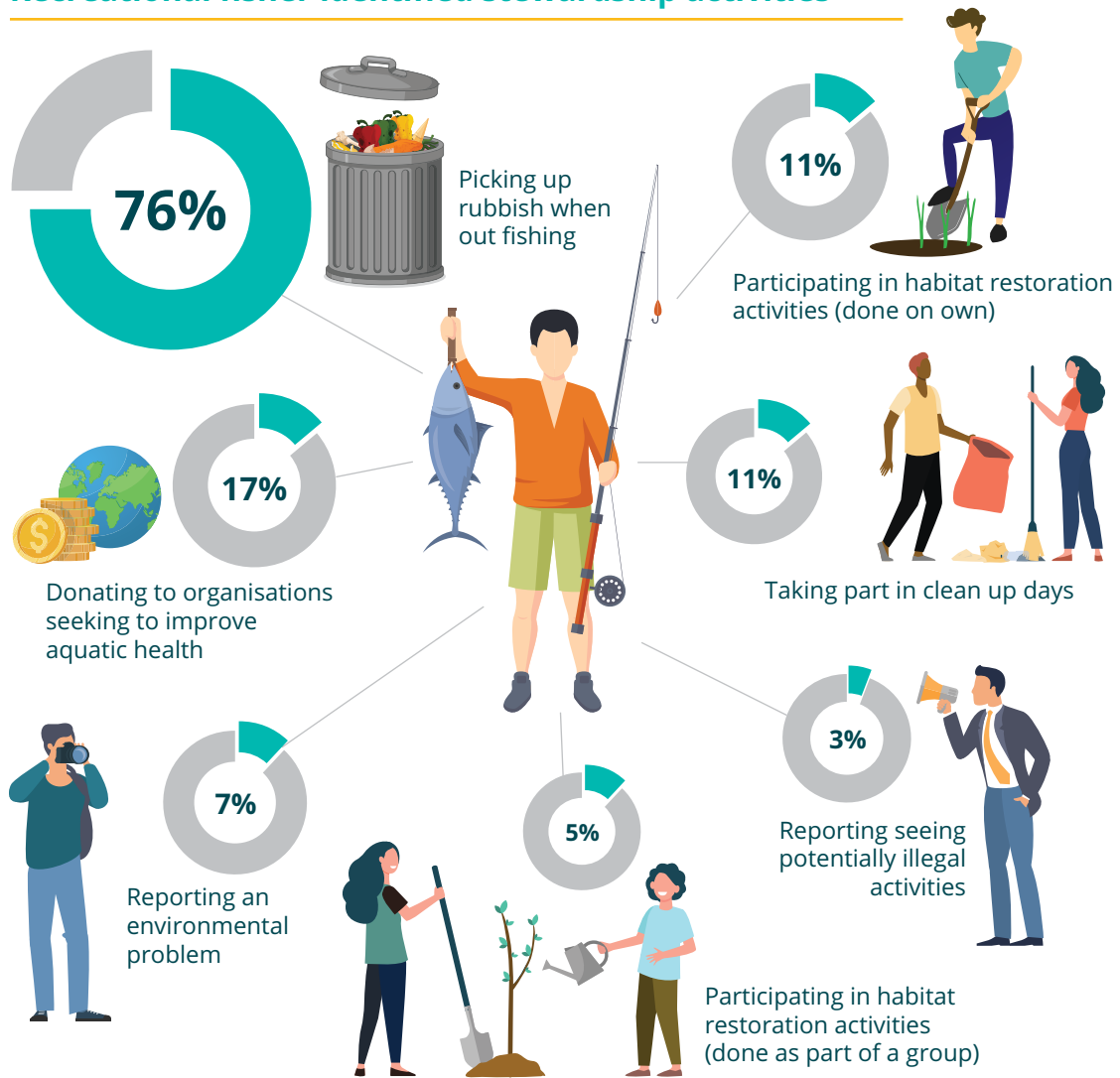
### Percentage of fishers who feel confident that they:



Many recreational fishers engage in different forms of environmental stewardship. The most common is picking up rubbish found when fishing and disposing of it responsibly, something done by more than 70% of recreational fishers nationwide and in Queensland in a typical year. Around 30% spent time reading, listening to or watching guidance on best practice fish handling in the last 12 months, and one in five had spoken to other fishers in the last year to encourage them to fish responsibly.

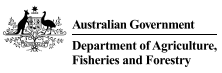
Encouraging continued growth in engagement in these types of actions, as well as others such as participating in clean up days, reporting environmental problems, and undertaking habitat rehabilitation and protection activities, can help continue building stewardship action amongst recreational fishers.

## Recreational fisher identified stewardship activities<sup>1</sup>



1 Some fishers do more than one of these activities





Photograph courtesy Aliah Banchik

Find out more about the  
National Recreational  
Fishing Survey

