

# Scottish salmon and sea trout fishery statistics 2022

May 2023



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## Summary - Salmon

Overall, the number of Atlantic salmon caught by Scottish fisheries in 2022 was greater than the previous year.

- The total reported rod catch of wild salmon for 2022 is 42,204, the fourth lowest since 1952. This is an increase of 16% compared to 2021, and 96% of the previous five-year average.
- Catch and release in 2022 accounted for 97% of the total rod catch and 99% of the rod caught spring multi sea-winter fish (taken before 1 May).
- Reported spring catch in 2022 increased by 52% on the coronavirus (COVID-19) affected 2021 season and was 122% of the previous five-year average.
- Reported retained catch for the net fisheries was among the lowest recorded since 1952. Released net caught fish were reported for the first time in 2021.
- A total of 17 fish were reported as being of farmed origin, representing 0.04% of the total Scottish catch, by all methods, in 2022.

## Summary - Sea Trout

Overall, the number of sea trout caught by Scottish fisheries in 2022 was greater than the previous year.

- The total reported rod catch of sea trout for 2022 is 14,509, the fourth lowest since 1952. This is an increase of 11% compared to 2021 and 95% of the previous five-year average.
- Catches of finnock have been collected since 2004; the total reported rod catch for 2022 is 8,202. This is an increase of 25% compared to 2021 and 110% of the previous five-year average.
- Catch and release in 2022 accounted for 91% of the total sea trout rod catch. This is the highest percentage of released rod caught fish since records began in 1994.
- 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.

# Introduction

This publication summarises the salmon and sea trout fishery statistics, based on returns from proprietors, occupiers and agents of fisheries throughout Scotland, for the 2022 fishing season. These data are derived from 1,979 forms returned from 2,163 forms issued (91% return rate). Catch for the previous 10 years is based on return rates of between 93% and 95% and is not corrected based on the return rate.

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

Collected data for the 2020 and 2021 seasons is impacted by the restrictions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic and this will have a bearing on the five-year averages.

[Supplementary tables](#) contain the data sources for the charts included in this publication.

## Salmon Fishery Regulations

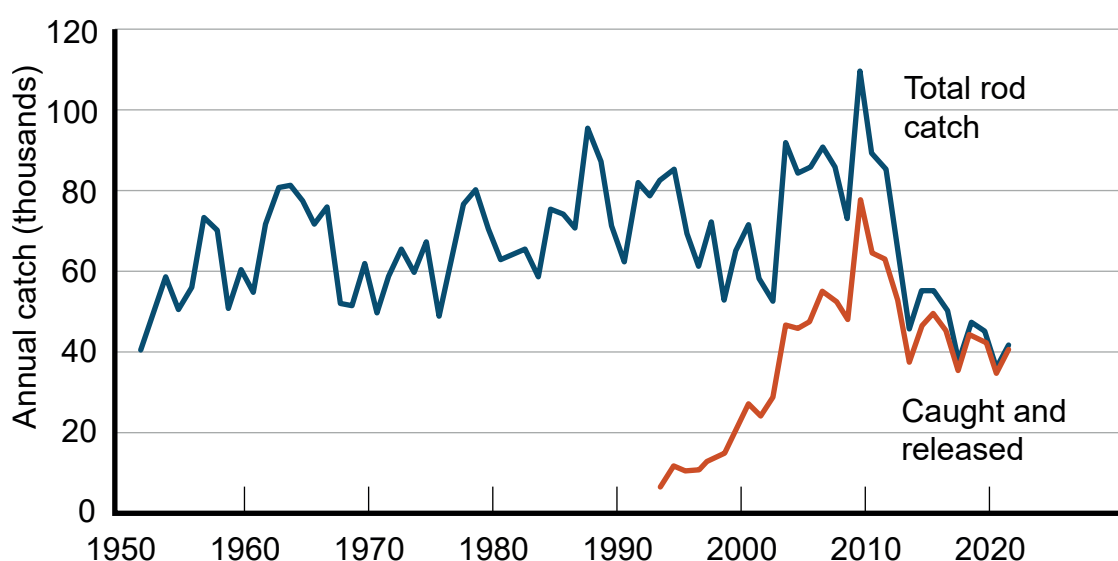
Statutory conservation measures are in place to regulate the [killing of salmon in the early months of the fishing season](#), in [coastal waters](#), and to protect [stocks with poor conservation status](#).

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

# Salmon Rod Fishery

Of the 42,204 wild fish reported as caught in the rod fishery, 40,743 were subsequently released and 1,461 retained. Total rod catch of salmon has generally declined from its peak in 2010. The 2022 total rod catch was the fourth lowest out of the 71 years since records began in 1952 and 96% of the previous five-year average.

Chart 1: Annual number of salmon caught by rod since 1952, and annual number of salmon caught by rod and released since 1994 (thousands).

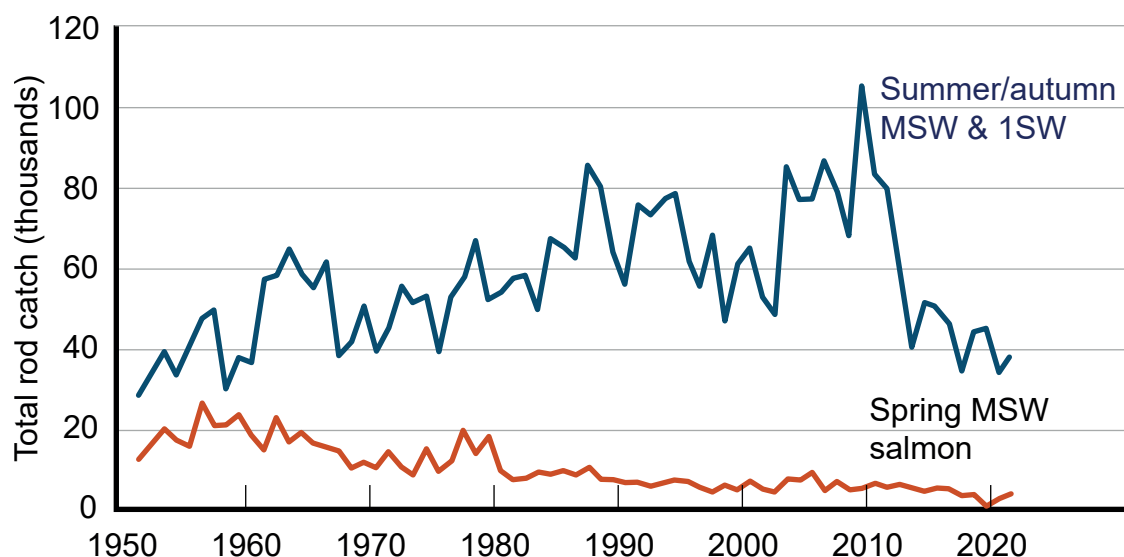


Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 1, from Marine Scotland.

## Stock Components

Trends in total rod catch vary among individual stock components (Chart 2). Catch of spring multi sea-winter (MSW) fish (taken before 1 May) has generally declined since records began though they have been relatively stable in recent years. The 2022 spring catch was 122% of the previous five-year average, which is affected by the fishery closures during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Following a period of decline, catch of MSW caught after April summed with one sea-winter salmon (1SW), increased in 2022. The 2022 total shows an increase of 13%, when compared with 2021, and is 94% of the previous five-year average.

Chart 2: Annual number of Spring MSW salmon and Summer/autumn MSW & 1SW salmon since 1952 (thousands).

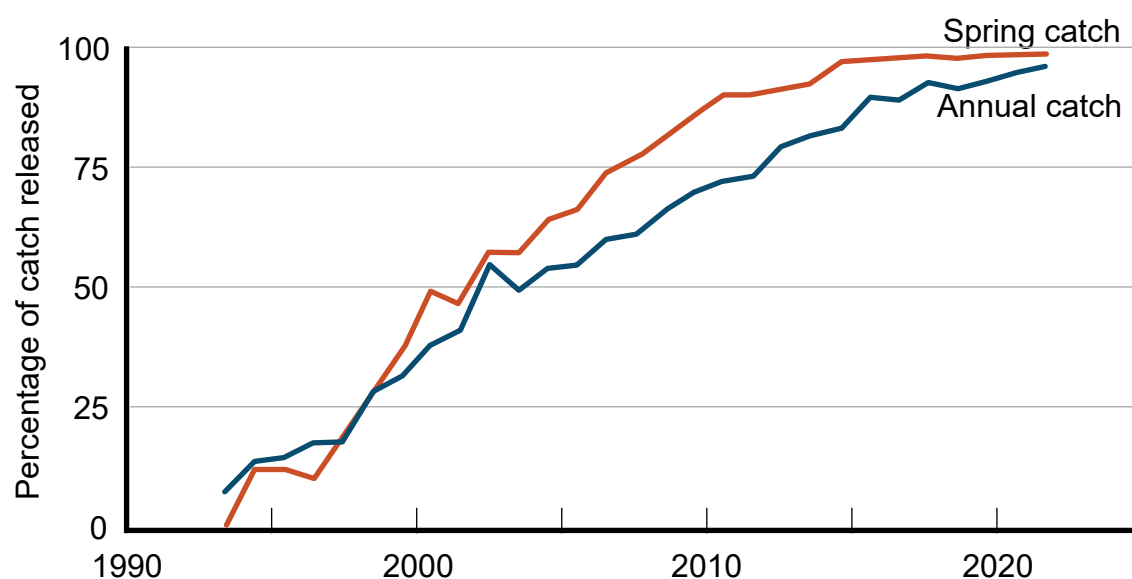


Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables, Table 1](#), from Marine Scotland.

## Catch and release

The percentage of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release has generally increased since 1994, when such information was first recorded. In 2022, 97% of the annual rod catch, and 99% of the spring rod catch, were released (Chart 3). 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.

Chart 3: Rod fishery, percentage of catch and release of annual and spring salmon.



Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 1, from Marine Scotland.

## Salmon Net Fishery

As a result of the Salmon Conservation Regulations, retention of salmon caught in coastal waters has been prohibited since the 2016 season, which applies mainly to fixed engine fisheries. Net fisheries were first required to report caught and released fish for the 2021 season. In 2022, 100% of fish caught by the fixed engine fisheries (including the haaf nets in the Solway region) and 22% of fish caught by the net and coble fisheries were released.

In 2022, a total of 475 wild salmon were reported caught and retained in the net and coble fishery, the second lowest catch since 1952. A further 136 wild salmon were reported as caught and released. The haaf net fishery in the Solway region reported no caught and retained salmon, and 411 caught and released salmon. Other types of fixed engine fisheries reported no wild salmon caught.

Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Tables 2, 3 and 4, from Marine Scotland.

## Salmon Catch by Fishing Method

In 2022, 98% of the total annual reported catch, including released and retained fish, was accounted for by the rod fisheries. Net and coble and fixed engine fisheries each comprised 1%. Rod fisheries accounted for 75% of the retained catch compared to 25% for the net and coble fisheries.

Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 5, from Marine Scotland.

## Farmed Salmon

A total of 17 fish believed to be of farmed origin were reported caught in 2022. These represented 0.04% of the total Scottish catch by all methods. Farmed origin fish were reported caught from the Clyde Coast, Moray Firth and West Coast regions.

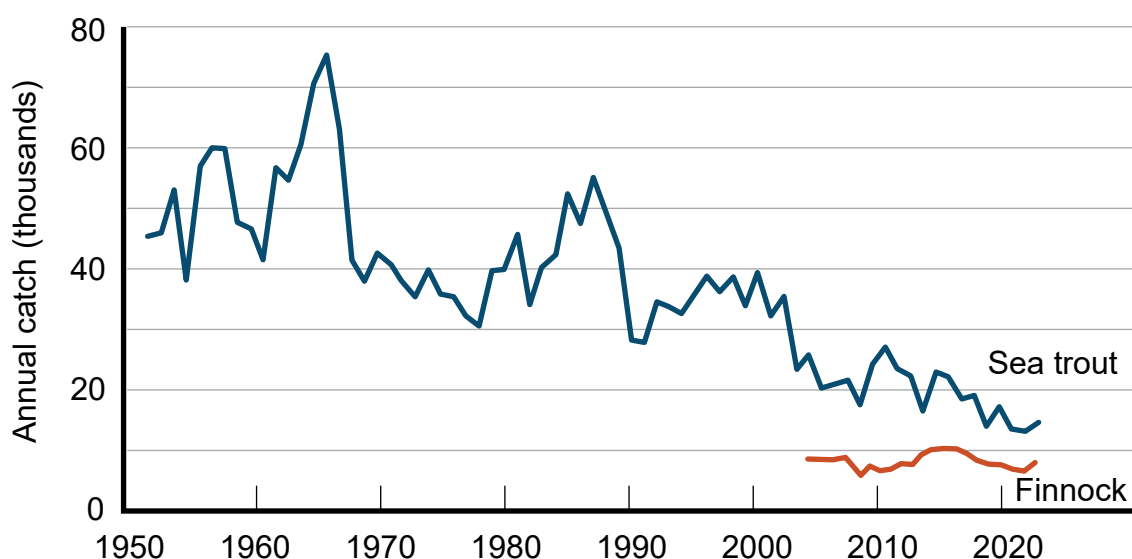
Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 6, from Marine Scotland.

# Sea Trout Rod Fishery

Of the 14,509 sea trout reported caught in the rod fishery, 13,137 were subsequently released and 1,372 were retained. Total rod catch of sea trout has declined over much of the period since 1952, when our records began. The 2022 total rod catch is the fourth lowest on record and 95% of the previous five-year average (Chart 4).

Finnock catch is recorded separately and not included in the sea trout data. In the rod fishery, 8,069 finnock were reported as caught and released, and 133 were reported as caught and retained. The combined total, of 8,202, is 110% of the previous five-year average and the 10th highest annual catch in the 19 years since our records began in 2004 (Chart 4).

Chart 4: Annual number of sea trout caught by rod since 1952, and annual number of finnock caught by rod since 2004 (thousands).



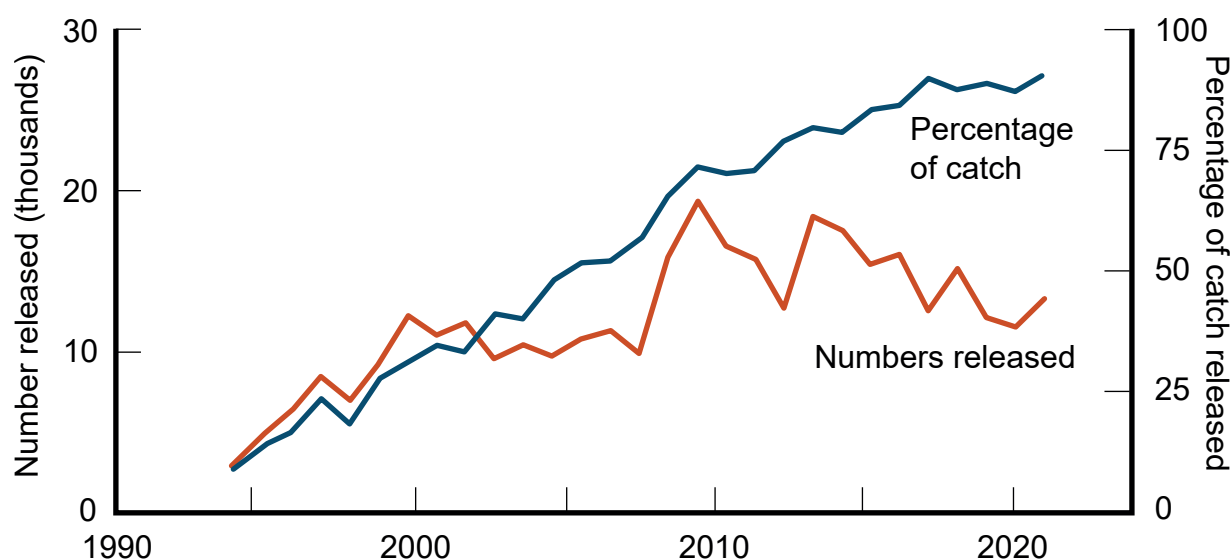
Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 7, from Marine Scotland.

## Catch and release

The percentage of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release has generally increased since 1994, when catch and release information was first recorded (Chart 5), and in 2022 was the highest percentage recorded for sea trout and finnock. The percentage released was 91% of sea trout and 98% 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.



Chart 5: Annual number of sea trout caught and released by the rod fishery, and sea trout caught by rod and released as a percentage of total rod catch.



Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 7, from Marine Scotland.

## Sea Trout Net Fishery

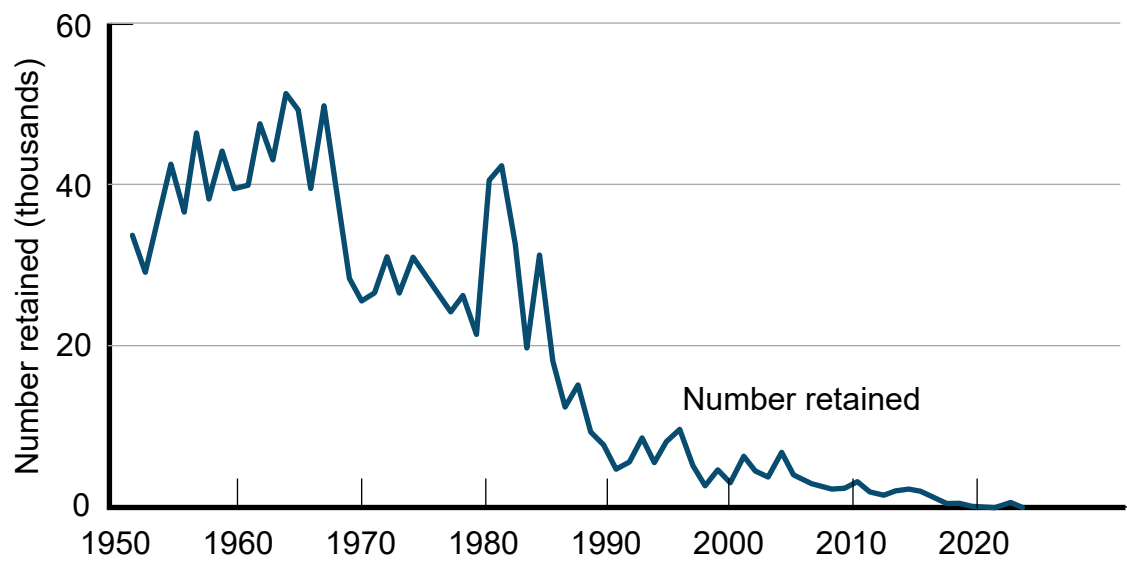
The haaf net fishery in the Solway Firth reported 248 sea trout caught and retained and 70 caught and released from a reported effort of 79 net months. Effort data from haaf net fisheries is omitted from the national fixed engine effort as it cannot easily be combined with that from other gear types. No finnock were reported caught from the haaf net fishery.

Excluding the Solway Firth fishery, no sea trout or finnock were reported caught in the fixed engine fishery, and there was no reported effort.

From a total reported effort of 19 crew months, 903 sea trout were reported caught and retained in the net and coble fishery, and 53 were caught and released. No finnock were reported caught in the net and coble fishery.

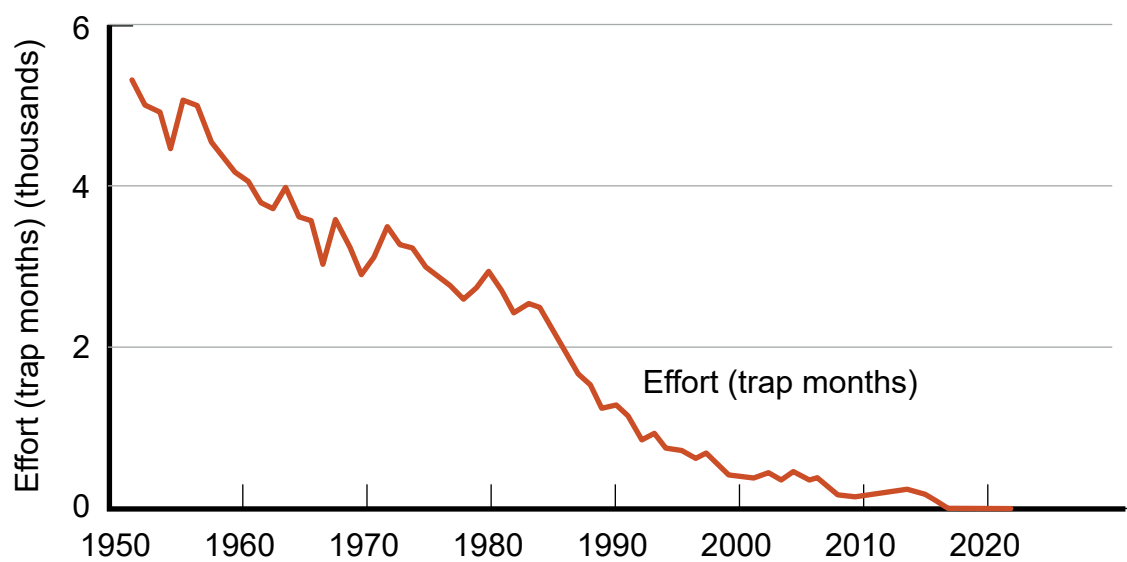
Reported catch and effort in both net fisheries have declined over much of the period covered by our records and remain at low levels (Chart 6a and 6b, and 7a and 7b).

Chart 6a: Annual number of sea trout caught and retained by the fixed engine fishery (thousands).



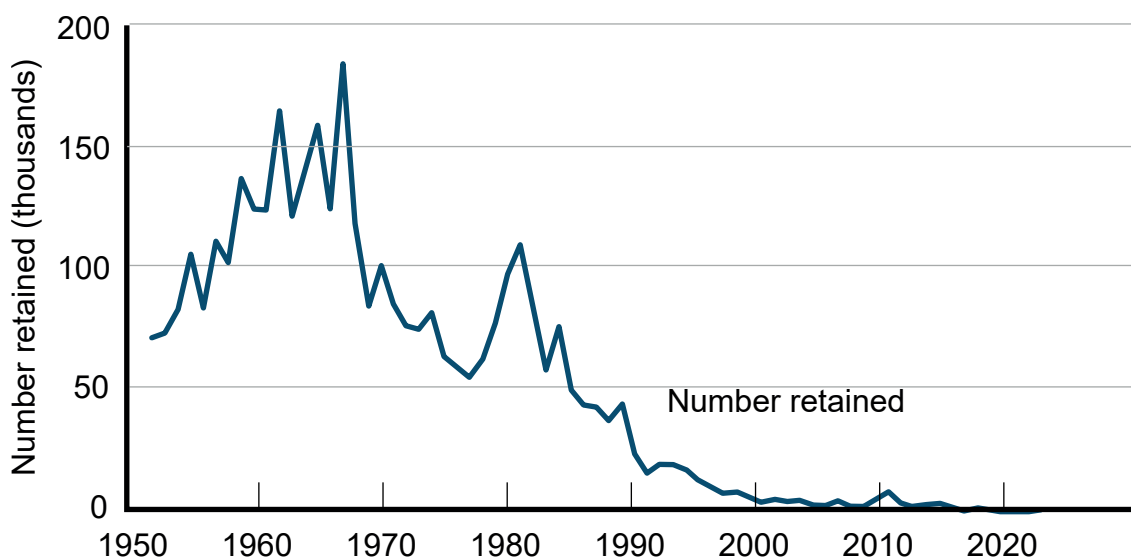
Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 9, from Marine Scotland.

Chart 6b: Annual fixed engine fishery effort as trap months (thousands).



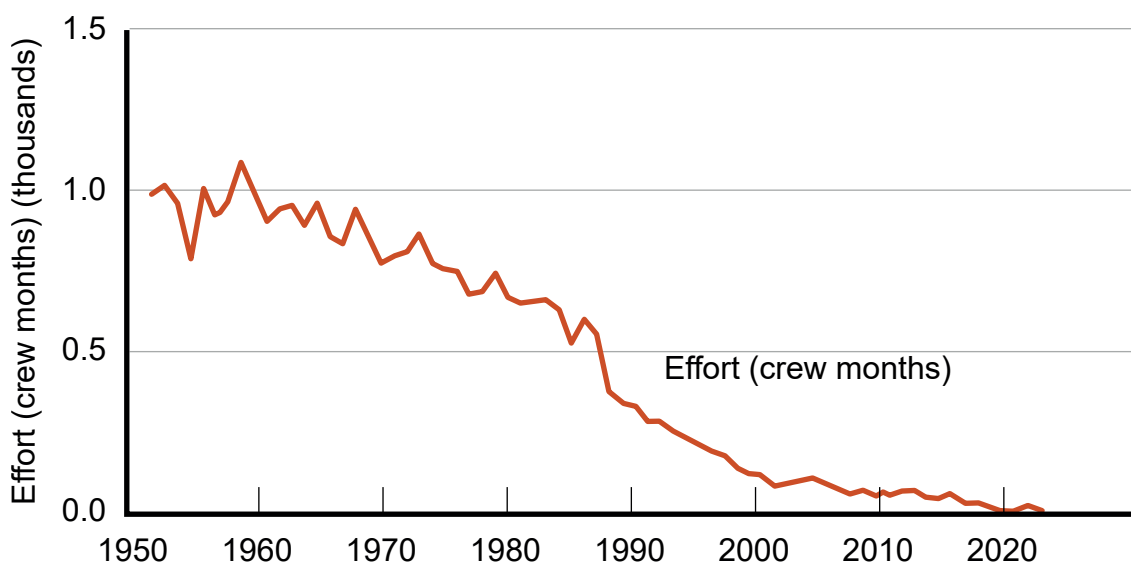
Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 9, from Marine Scotland.

Chart 7a: Annual number of sea trout caught and retained by the net and coble fishery (thousands).



Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 10, from Marine Scotland.

Chart 7b: Annual net and coble fishery effort as crew months (thousands).



Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 10, from Marine Scotland.

# Sea Trout Catch by Fishing Method

In 2022, 92% of the total annual reported catch, including released and retained fish, was accounted for by the rod fisheries. Net and coble fisheries comprised 6% and fixed engine fisheries accounted for 2%. Of the retained catch, rods accounted for 54% compared to 36% for net and coble fisheries and 10% for fixed engine.

Data source: [2022 Scottish salmon and sea trout statistics, Supplementary Tables](#), Table 11, from Marine Scotland.

# Supplementary Tables

The following supplementary tables are [available for download](#) alongside this publication in Excel format.

- Table 1: Rod catch of wild salmon time series – annual total catch, annual released catch, and stock components.
- Table 2: Net catch of wild salmon for 2022 – total catch, retained catch, released catch, and percentage released, by method.
- Table 3: Salmon fixed engine fishery time series – annual total catch, annual retained and released catch, and netting effort.
- Table 4: Salmon net and coble fishery time series – annual total catch, annual retained and released catch, and netting effort.
- Table 5: Salmon by method for 2022 – number and percentage of salmon caught, by method.
- Table 6: Farmed salmon for 2022 – number of farmed salmon caught, by Salmon Fishery Region.
- Table 7: Rod catch of sea trout and finnock time series – annual total catch, annual released catch, and annual percentage released.
- Table 8: Net catch of sea trout and finnock for 2022 – total catch, retained catch, released catch, and percentage released.
- Table 9: Sea trout fixed engine fishery time series – annual total catch, annual retained and released catch, and netting effort.
- Table 10: Sea trout net and coble fishery time series – annual total catch, annual retained and released catch, and netting effort.
- Table 11: Sea trout by method for 2022 – number and percentage of sea trout caught, by method.
- Table 12: Form return time series for Scotland – number and percentage of forms returned since 1997.

# Methodology

[Marine publications: collecting salmon and sea trout fishery data - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot) provides information on the methodology, and includes the catch return form templates which were sent to fisheries for the most recent season.

## Glossary and abbreviations

**1SW** One sea-winter salmon.

**Farmed salmon** Atlantic salmon believed to be of farmed origin when caught.

**Finnock** (also known as whitling or herling) are sea trout which have spent less than a year at sea and are making their first return to fresh water. Finnock have been reported since 2004 and are not included in the sea trout figures.

**Method** Fishing method (rod, net and coble, fixed engine). Descriptions are available in [Marine Publications: Collecting salmon and sea trout fishery data - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot).

**MSW** Multi sea-winter salmon.

**Multi sea-winter salmon** Atlantic salmon which have spent more than one winter at sea before returning to fresh water.

**Netting effort** Summarised median number of crews for the net and coble fishery, and summarised median number of traps for the fixed engine fishery. Effort for the haaf net fishery in the Solway Firth are not included.

**One sea-winter salmon** Atlantic salmon which have spent one winter at sea before returning to fresh water, also known as grilse.

**Previous five-year average** The mean of the five years previous to the most recently published season (that is, for the 2022 season publication, the previous five-year average is the mean of seasons 2017 to 2021).

The previous five-year average contains two years which were impacted by the restrictions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Released** Fish which were caught, by any method, and released back into the water.

**Retained** Fish which were caught, by any method, and not released back into the water.

**Salmon** Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*).

**Sea Trout** Anadromous form of brown trout (*Salmo trutta*). The categories used to report sea trout data have varied throughout the time series and are detailed in [Marine Publications: Collecting salmon and sea trout fishery data - gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-publications/collecting-salmon-and-sea-trout-fishery-data/pages/index.aspx) ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)).

**Spring MSW** Multi sea-winter salmon caught before 1 May.

**Summer/Autumn MSW + 1SW** Sum of multi sea-winter salmon caught after 30 April and one sea-winter salmon caught at any time during the season.

**Wild salmon** Atlantic salmon believed to be of wild origin when caught.

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## How to access source data

The data collected for this publication are available as:

- [Salmon statistical fishery district catch \(number and weight\) and net effort, by method and month, from 1952 to 2022 \(.csv\)](#)
- [Assessment area \(as used in the Conservation of Salmon Regulations\) rod catch \(number\), by month, from 2011 to 2022 \(.csv\)](#)
- [Annual return of forms, all Scotland, from 1997 to 2022 \(.csv\)](#)
- [Customisable visualisation of the detailed, District-level, data](#)

Additional data may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [ms.catchform@gov.scot](mailto:ms.catchform@gov.scot) for further information.

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